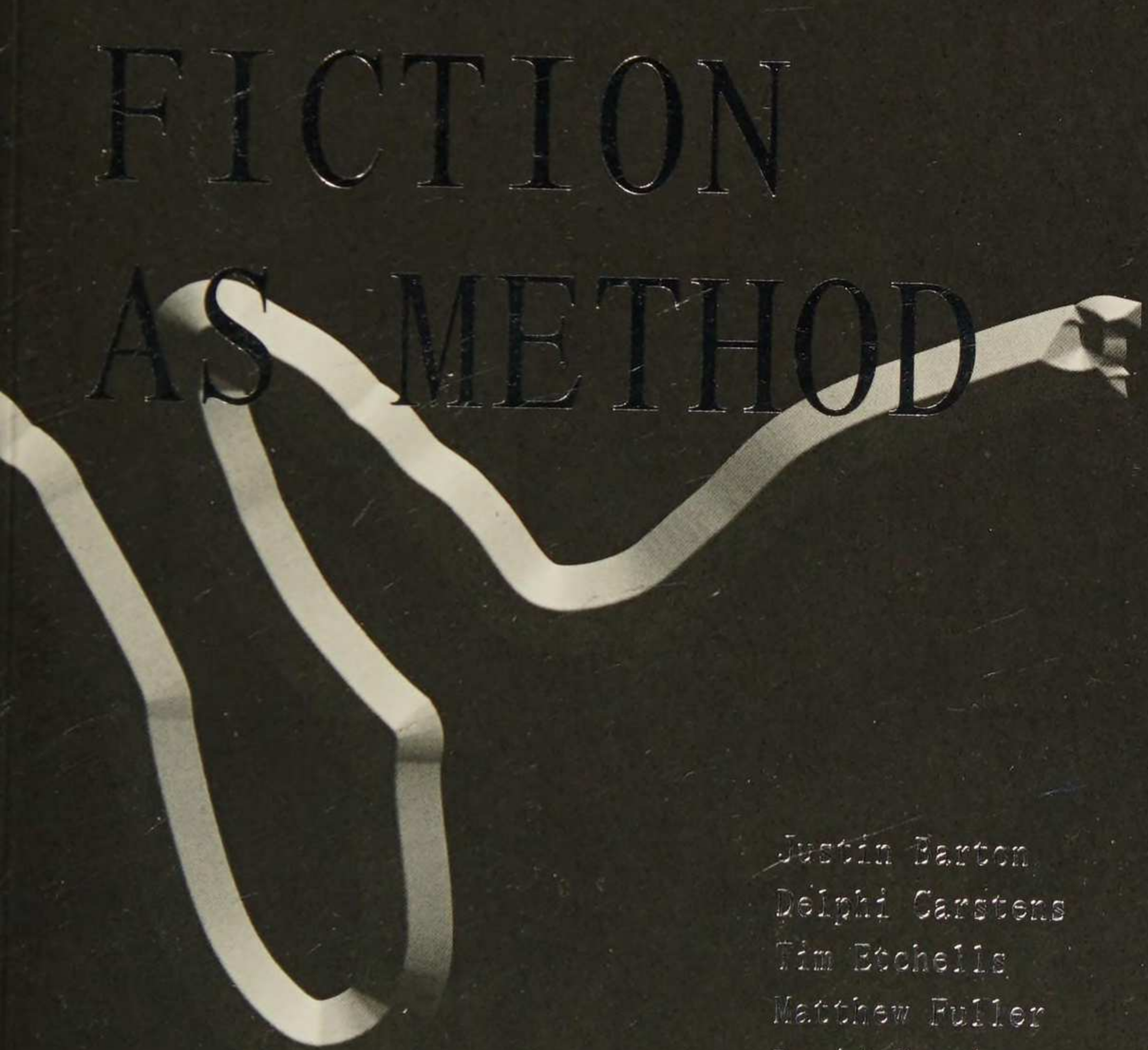
Edited by
Jon K Shaw and
Theo Reeves-Evison

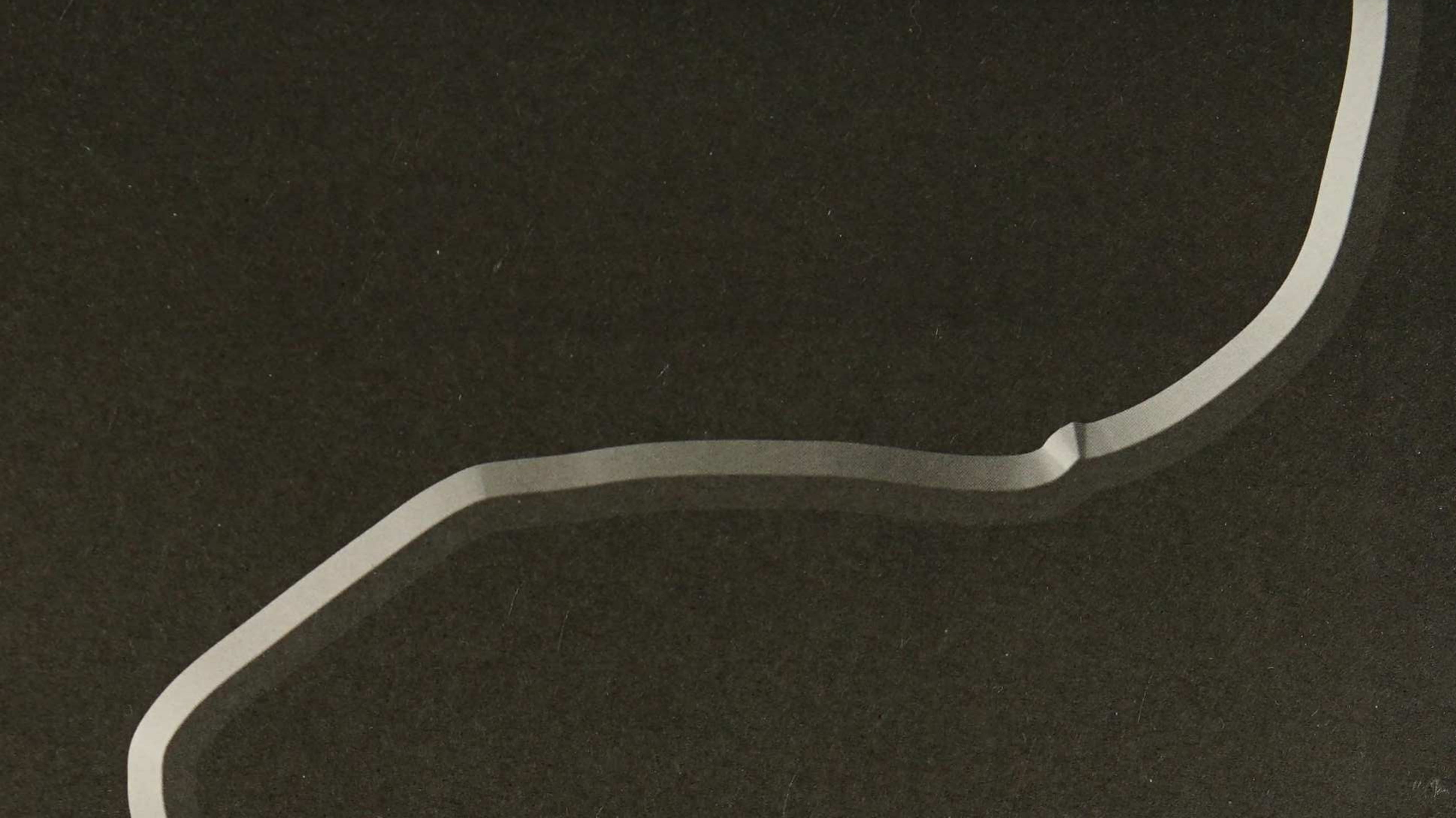
FICTION AS METHOD



Justin Barton
Delphi Carstens
Tim Etchells
Matthew Fuller
David Garcia
Dora Garcia
M. John Harrison
Simon O'Sullivan
Mer Roberts
Erica Scourti

SternbergPress

AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD THERE IS A FICTION ...



INTRODUCTION 5
Jon K Shaw and Theo Reeves-Evison

DARK JESTERS HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT 73
David Garcia

HALF 10K TOP-SLICE PLUS FIVE 103
Matthew Fuller

PROFILES OF YOU 121
Erica Scourti

TO PROTECT US FROM THE TRUTH 171
Dora García

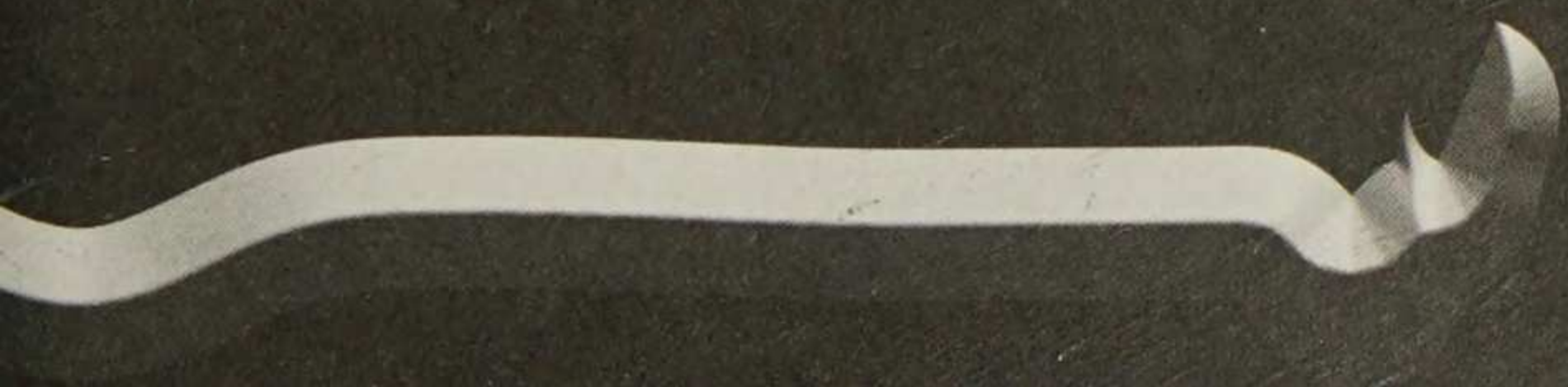
THE THINGS THAT KNOWLEDGE CANNOT EAT 193
Delphi Carstens & Mer Roberts

GREEN CHILDREN 235
M. John Harrison

ON THE MATTER AND FICTION OF ADDRESS 251
Tim Etchells

NON-PHILOSOPHY AND ART PRACTICE 277
Simon O'Sullivan

BEYOND PLATO'S CAVE 325
Justin Barton



INTRODUCTION

Jon K Shaw and
Theo Reeves-Evison

Null Island

At the center of the world there is a fiction; a fictional piece of land a meter wide by a meter long. It has not been thrown up from the depths; not from the violence of lava bursting up and cooling, though there is violence in its history. It is called Null Island, and you cannot travel there.

Null Island is where the planet expressed as nature and the world expressed as culture seem—however fleetingly—to be extricable into natural and artificial, given and made. It is where the equator meets the meridian. The equator: the middle of the planet, the line girthing the earth halfway between its magnetic poles; a line determined by probes and sensors, by investigation of a scientific kind. A line more found than made. The meridian: a line inscribed on the globe, centering that globe on the capital of a faded empire whose persistence is still felt, whose ghost ships still sail the commercial routes. It is a line stolen from another empire, equally faded, and equally haunted by its historical cruelties and its grandiose myths. It is a line on which we set our clocks—that noisiest and most draconian of devices through which a symbolic imposes itself—and through the ticking of its clocks, this line hides reams of stories of cultural violence.

The point where the lines meet, 0° North, 0° East, baffles the machines. Computers need a piece of land there on which to ground their calculations. So we feed them a fiction, throw an island out into the ocean, tell the machines a story about the land at the origin of the world; and in return they run the numbers for our GPS, guiding us home safely at night, leading us to shoals of fish to eat.[1] From this unreal center, the machines can tag our photos to

map our memories and images onto the material world, can align our satellites to coordinate and connect us across the planet. Whenever we perform one of these actions, we pass through this fiction. We are transported home via this fictional island; the missiles our governments launch in our names track abstract lines of their trajectories through it. From there, where the world begins.

Through the stories and numbers of Null Island, this tiny piece of land without a sovereign, we see a fiction deployed as a method. The objectively untrue is brought into operation within the everyday. In several of the contributions to this book, theorists and artists look at how this "everyday" is constructed through the deployment of fictions to form and direct every part of our lives—from fictions in newsrooms and the twittersphere (David Garcia and Erica Scourti), to fictions backlit by the JCDecaux lightboxes that illuminate our streets (Tim Etchells), to fictions that maintain the happy face of the nuclear family (Dora García). In addressing the role fictions have in our everyday lives, these pieces show how fictions can be used as means of revealing the hidden workings of a state of affairs, and even of establishing a certain agency within it. Far from being an escape from the world, then, here fiction takes us to its symbolic center, and might allow us to establish some leverage within the tangled contingencies and hidden conventions that lie there.

To pass through Null Island again: it could be said that we find an inversion of sorts at work. Where it was once the unknown outside that was filled with fictions—those corners of the maps as yet uncharted, populated by chimeras and cautionary tales that "here there be monsters"—with Null Island it is the very center of the world that is fictionalized. Both the cartographer's

caution and the computational checksum are very functional uses of fictions, but they proceed by seemingly opposed routes: by ultraprecise calculations balanced on the objectively untrue, on the one hand, and on the other hand by stern warnings concerning the chimerical unknown. These latter can be deeply wise, if unscientific, modes of knowledge mapping an area's dangers, its bounties, or marking the boundaries of its unexplored territories. It is a knowledge that is marked on maps, that passes through word of mouth, through embodied practices like walking the terrain, and through modes of feeling that materialist-scientific objectivism struggles to deal with—or is disinclined to. Yet, as several of the essays in this collection demonstrate, there is a great deal at stake in finding ways to turn toward these unexplored, under-explored, and often denigrated territories of thinking and awareness. These stakes concern the role of fiction in moving us beyond the impasses of the present, in opening to the radically new, embracing or reinvigorating the incoming future, and of turning toward the abstract, even numinous, outside. In these cases, fiction names both a method and a destination, one associated variously with non-philosophy (Simon O'Sullivan), with the digital-virtual (Delphi Carstens and Mer Roberts/Orphan Drift), and with luminescence, dreaming, and the abstract (Justin Barton).

We have at least two strands of fictions as method here: those that reveal structures and gain agency in the construction of the everyday, and those that are deployed as holes to let in the "future" or "abstract-outside." But these two modalities of "fiction" are often inseparable. This is particularly true in the areas of the globe where the operations of the everyday lifeworld have not been given over in their entirety to materialism and the

THIS WANDERING
NEVERTHELESS
RETURNS, IF
ONLY THROUGH
A GESTURE,
TO THE CONCRETE
POLITICAL
CIRCUMSTANCES
OF ITS GENESIS

law of the market, those places still inhabited by chimeras and spirits whose presence have a real effect—whether one "believes" in them or not. If art can be thought of as tarrying in such an outside, it is equally embroiled with the other mode of fiction laid out above, that of hegemonic structures and operational contingencies to be exposed, critiqued, and counteracted.

Institutions

The year 2003 saw the founding of the Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind. And yet over a decade later the museum has yet to open its doors. Those eager to visit the collection can turn their attention to the ongoing cycle of global art festivals: so far the museum has participated in biennials in Istanbul, Venice, and Sharjah, giving us a clue as to the status of its creator, Khalil Rabah, an artist and the author of the museum's seasonal newsletter.

According to Rabah, a frequent response of visitors to the museum's recent instantiation in Athens was, perhaps unsurprisingly, "Is it real?"[2] With this question we can presume visitors were not embarking on a voyage of Cartesian doubt and questioning their eyes' ability to deceive them. The question seems instead to be one of seeking guidance on whether the museum should be considered a more-or-less stable institutional frame designed to deflect attention onto the cultural objects whose job it is to house (which would make it a "real" museum—a museum one can take for granted); or whether it is rather taken as a central component of the artwork, a prospect that directs one's attention to something that may subvert expectations. If unreal

in the first sense, then hallucination or illusion are at play; if the second, then we enter the realms of fiction in its capacity to loosen signs from the stable moorings of their referents, without allowing them to drift away entirely. The same question might be asked of any number of fictional museums invented by artists, from Marcel Broodthaers's *Department of Eagles* (1968-71) to Meschac Gaba's *Museum of African Art* (1997-2002). While each of these three examples lack one or more of the basic criteria typically used to define a museum—to varying degrees they lack a permanent home, do not support active acquisition or conservation programs, and for long stretches of their lifespan remain inaccessible to the public—this does not automatically oblige us to consider them unreal. Rather, these museums assume the reality of a fiction, and in doing so they acquire new possibilities for action specific to the circumstances of their creation. For example, the fact that the Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind does not have a permanent base in Palestine, where the Israeli military has demolished almost 50,000 buildings since the 1960s, might ensure a longevity otherwise difficult to achieve.[3] Here fiction facilitates a peripatetic wandering, but this wandering nevertheless returns, if only through a gesture, to the concrete political circumstances of its genesis.

The recent proliferation of fictional institutions in the field of contemporary art can be viewed as an outgrowth of a loose cluster of practices grouped under the banner of institutional critique. Stretching from the 1960s to the present day, the first wave of institutional critique is often portrayed as an attempt to escape from overbearing institutional frameworks that Robert Smithson described as centers of "cultural confinement."[4] Sometimes this search involved a literal move away from the

metropolitan centers of art consumption, as in the case of Land art, and sometimes it involved a close scrutiny of the institutional structures that made these centers politically and economically conservative, if not downright corrupt. Hans Haacke's *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* serves as an emblematic example of the latter, insofar as it exposed the ethically dubious business practices of the slumlord Harry Shapolsky in such detail that it was deemed by the board of trustees of the Guggenheim too sensitive to show to the public, partly for fear that the same board of trustees would be implicated in Shapolsky's web of corruption. In the now established narrative of institutional critique's development, the ambitions and strategies of this first wave are repositioned by a second wave that emphasized the impossibility of walking away from institutions entirely, at the same time as it introduced questions of subjectivity as a complement to the predominantly economic and political focus of the first wave. It is Andrea Fraser's practice that often serves as shorthand for this second wave, insofar as it literally invites reflections on the institutional fabric of the museum—playfully exaggerating descriptions of museum architecture for example, in *Little Frank and His Carp* (2001), or subverting the function of the museum tour guide in *Museum Highlights* (1989)—but also through an accompanying theorization that emphasizes the hopelessness of escaping an art system that is all-encompassing, in Fraser's words, "because the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside of ourselves."[5]

Where are we to locate the proliferation of fictional institutions in this historical lineage? Do they comprise part of a third wave, a wave still in the process of formation?

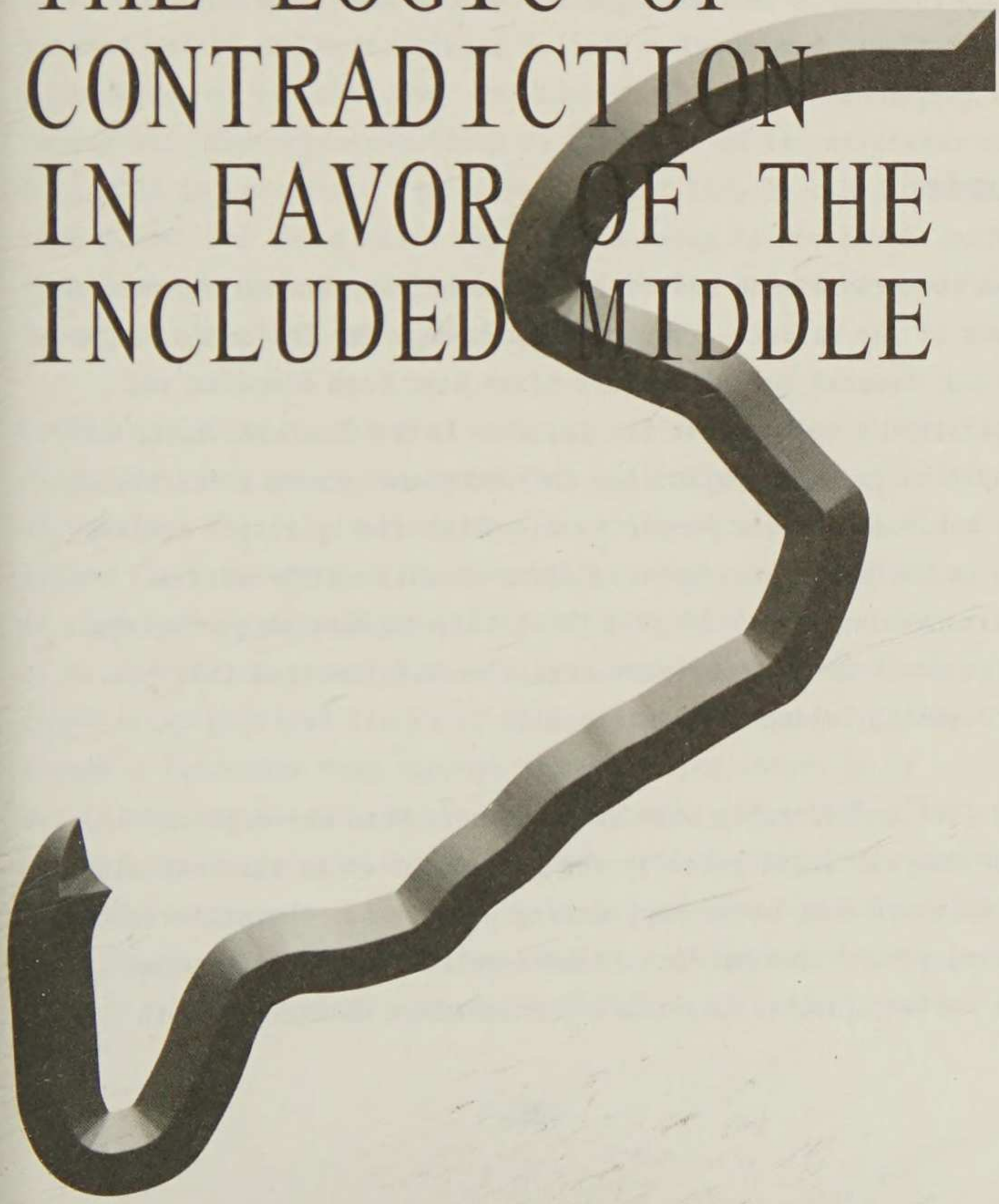
Marcel Broodthaers initiated *Department of Eagles* as early as 1968, which suggests that the strategy of creating fictional institutions is present in numerous waves of institutional critique, generating different effects in different periods. In the last fifteen years it has become increasingly difficult to view fictional institutions as withdrawals or alternatives in any straightforward sense, both because these creations are often deliberately nested within larger institutions—such as Gaba's *Museum of African Art*, which currently takes pride of place within Tate Modern's monolithic extension—and because such institutions have become increasingly corporate in the face of diminishing public funding. Nevertheless, the use of fiction does represent a focal point for the renewed enthusiasm for experimenting not simply with the lexicons and display strategies of institutions, but with different forms of instituting.[6] A form of instituting is not the same as an institutional form: while the latter tend toward stasis and structure, the former comprise a central element of what Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray call "instituent practices," which develop new processes for linking disparate creative moments and inventing new "qualities of participation" that can occur inside and outside existing institutions.[7] In this sense, fiction could be considered an instituent practice, and when incubated within the body of art institutions, it can sometimes create space for improvisatory variations from the structures that sustain it, allowing the institution to differ from itself, thereby opening up an otherwise rigid framework to a plurality of desires.

It is political desire that breathes life into Ian Alan Paul's concept of the Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History, another fictional institution, discussed by David Garcia in his chapter

for this book. The museum comprised a significant element of an exhibition curated by Garcia, together with Nat Muller and later with Annet Dekker in 2017, entitled "How Much of This Is Fiction," that makes extensive use of "as if" propositions. Garcia is careful to distinguish works that operate on the basis of "what ifs" from works that act "as if," arguing that while the former lead to "satirical acts designed to unmask the workings of power," the latter are "more utopian, leading to forms of activism that, rather than demanding change, act 'as if' change has already occurred." The Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History operates in this second mode, and in doing so takes its place alongside a number of other fictional museums that, by experimenting with new forms of instituting, create conceptual spaces to contemplate the possible and incubate political desires.

On a more general level, fictional institutions are merely the artistic exemplars of a fact that is both scandalous and well known: that institutions of all kinds are underwritten by fictions. Karin Knorr Cetina argues that we might think of "fictionality" as referring "to the inflationary introduction of layers of organization and order which increase the viscosity and texture of modern institutions," and this is true of myriad social institutions and administrative norms, Guantanamo included.[8] Indeed, fictions are operative in the foundations of cartographies, currencies, and nations, in the earliest forms of double-entry bookkeeping, in physics labs, and law courts. When the legal rights of a corporation to be treated as if it were a physical person are upheld, one can be sure one is in the presence of fiction. When a married couple are treated legally as one person in English law, to the exclusion of unmarried couples, fiction is certainly at play. When the international

A MODE OF BELIEF THAT IS NON-EXCLUSIVE, THAT DISPENSES WITH THE LOGIC OF CONTRADICTION IN FAVOR OF THE INCLUDED MIDDLE



monetary system abandons the gold standard and begins trading on fiat currencies, one is in the presence of multiple fictions, or rather, one witnesses a regime change between the fiction of gold's intrinsic value and another fiction based on money's relational value. Many institutions would simply be unable to function without fictions lubricating their organizational machinery. And yet there are also cases of fictions causing institutional machinery to shudder to a standstill—fictions that can be just as inconvenient as truths, and no less profound in their ability to shed light on current predicaments and institutional hegemony.

Roads

From the browsed and beaten landscapes of Iceland to the fecund banks of the Waikato river running through New Zealand's North Island, several infrastructure plans have been disputed and redirected over the past few decades. In New Zealand, Ngāti Naho people built their objections to road plans around a defense of the habitat of their people's own protective spirit, a *taniwha*; and in Iceland four proposed routes threatened the natural environment of the *huldufólk* (literally "hidden people"), who often dwell in the gnarled volcanic rock formations that jut through the island's ashen topsoil.

There is considerably more at stake here than was reported in much international press at the time: to dismiss the intrusion of folklore into civic engineering projects as the authorities giving ground to a product of make-believe would be to simplify the matter; just as it would to attribute a devout faith in

huldufólk to Icelanders. An explanation for the phenomenon lies somewhere between the two poles: it would seem that the majority of local inhabitants do not so much believe in *huldufólk* as entertain a belief in them.[9]

"Entertaining belief" should not be taken as a synonym for considering an idea in a casual or trivial manner, although it may be both. Rather, it isolates a mode of belief that is nonexclusive, that dispenses with the logic of contradiction in favor of the included middle. There is a clear difference between belief and entertaining belief, and yet when it comes to a reckoning of effects, they could be said to exercise roughly the same power: the objective truth or falsehood of the existence of *huldufólk* is irrelevant to the real effect they have had on the road plans. One thing which this book's focus on fiction as method enables us to concentrate on is the operative effect of something, irrespective of its objective existence.

Certainly it may be objected that the real motive for protecting *huldufólk* habitats is the power they hold over the imagination of tourists that visit Iceland: the notion of an enchanted island is at the core of its tourist-board strategy, and even if they are not directly capitalized upon, the preservation of *huldufólk* habitats feeds into this image. But if the desire to preserve physical traces of this cultural heritage on the island's landscape does support the marketing image, it is far from being the sole motive. As Icelandic polymath Eiríkur Benedikz has suggested, there is a powerful desire on the part of Icelanders themselves to preserve such geological platforms for their imagination. Here, the entertaining of belief is not simply opposed to the physical materiality of the rocks, but entwined

with them, such that it has been claimed that the landscape itself suggests the existence of *huldufólk*. As Benedikz argues, "The imagination fastens on[to] these natural phenomena."[10] If Icelandic emigrants living abroad are less inclined to believe in much of the country's native folklore, it could be that a weakened identification with their cultural heritage is not simply the product of displacement from a cultural ecology that fosters this heritage, but rather the prolonged separation from a landscape that is redolent of *huldufólk*'s existence.[11] In this way, it would not so much be a case of fiction fastening onto a landscape as a case of emanation.

The project to protect the *taniwha* in New Zealand is more closely tied to a colonial history: to the denigration and destruction of one culture by another. The ongoing debates and legal clashes concerning the protection of Māori spirits and sites has frustrated a number of infrastructure construction projects, from prisons to TV masts to roads. In 2002 a case was carried to divert a planned highway at Meremere around the habitat of the *taniwha* Karu Tahi, related to the Tainui *iwi* (people). In part, Karu Tahi has a function analogous to the "here there be monsters" of old Western maps: for example, stories of him discourage foolhardy children from swimming at particularly treacherous parts of a river. But more generally, *taniwha* protect their section of river, and to build into the riverbed will invite their retribution.

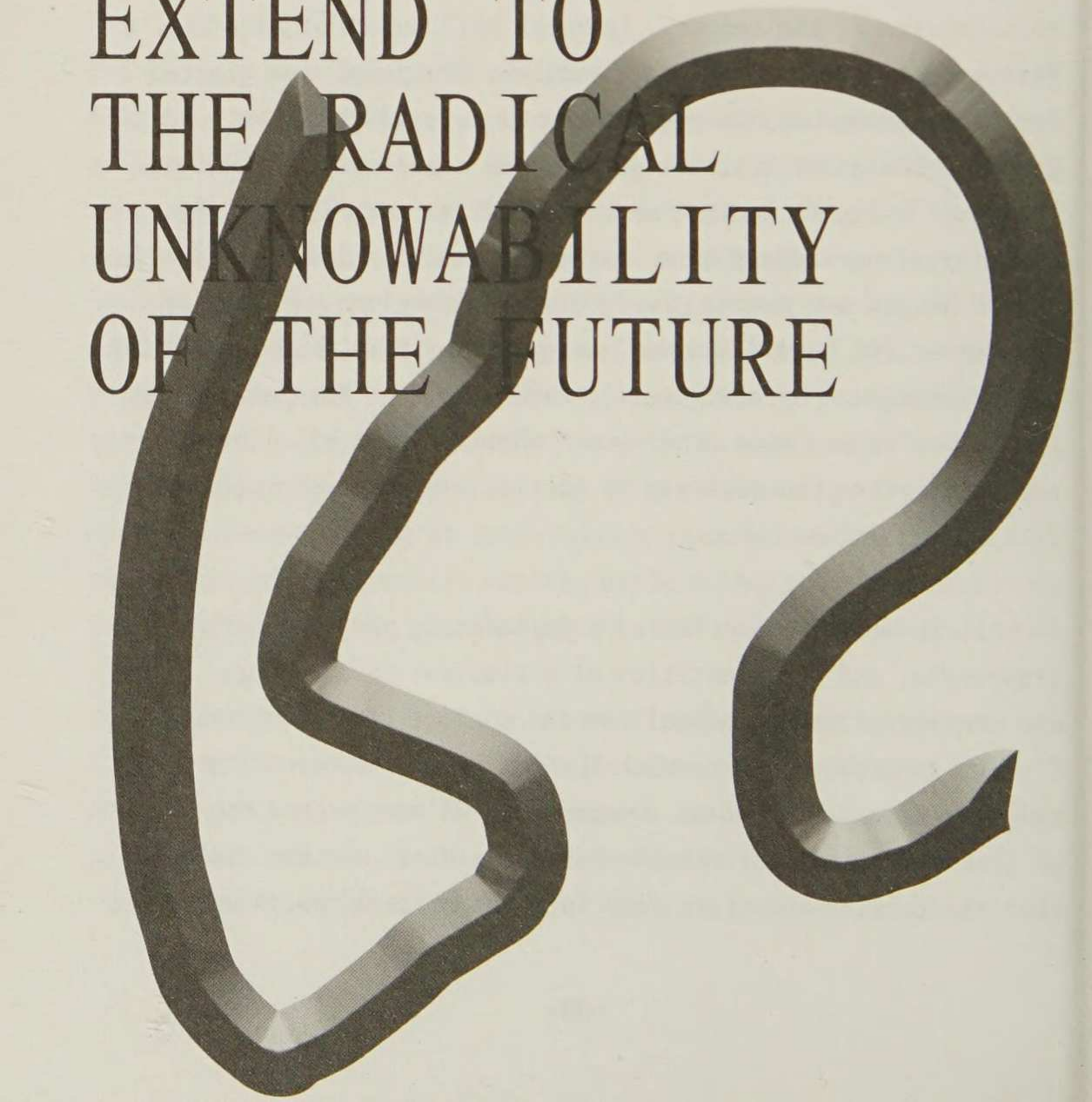
As with *huldufólk*, to call *taniwha* a fiction both allows us to recognize the extent to which its existence might partake in something not yet known by—or, indeed, de facto unknowable to—materialist science, and to observe the real effects they have regardless of any determination of them as real or unreal.

As academic folklorist Allan Asbjørn Jøn has noted of Māori *taniwha* and their effect on planning projects more generally, "An element of the spiritual and cultural beliefs of the indigenous population is being moulded and reformed as an integral part of the legal landscape, and official interactions with the landscape."[12] Indeed, as he goes on to argue, in this way, such beliefs are extending into the "bi-cultural nature" of New Zealand, becoming New Zealand outlooks, not exclusively Māori ones.

Recently, this bi-cultural approach has begun to extend into the statutes of the country. In March 2017, south of Karu Tahi's Waikato, another New Zealand river, the Whanganui, was granted legal personhood status and assigned two legal guardians, one from the Whanganui River *iwi*, the other representing the State. The river's rights include ownership of its own riverbed.[13] Statutes of personhood have also been passed in India on behalf of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers—legislation based in part on Ecuador's 2008 constitutional recognition of the Rights of Nature (or "Pachamama," Mother Nature), which includes the possibility for Nature to be named as a legal defendant.[14] We will have cause to return the question of ascriptions of personhood and fictioning, below.

As well as these real effects on engineering projects, legal frameworks, and the identities of societies, these beings and stories of beings reveal something about the valences of fiction as method. First, that fiction is most interesting when understood in its broadest sense—where it recognizes the power of that which acts but which exists outside of our ken. Second, that there is an important role for both material location and

FICTIONING CAN BE THOUGHT INSTEAD AS AN INVITATION THAT WE STRATEGICALLY EXTEND TO THE RADICAL UNKNOWABILITY OF THE FUTURE



for continuity and repetition in maintaining these fictions as powerful operative forces in the world. The New Zealand Tohunga Suppression Act was in place for little more than fifty years (1907-62), but this was enough to break uncountable threads in the passing down of *tohunga* wisdom.

If fiction can be so susceptible to a generation of silence or, with the Icelandic emigrant, to a few years of expatriation—so brittle and quick to fade—it equally takes on more and more strength through iteration.[15] But it is not only folkloric traditions that strengthen fictions through repetition and insert them into the world as operative agents. Indeed, at least since the collapse of the gold standard, it has become common to discuss economics and finance in terms of their fictitious bases. One of the earliest decisive moves in the direction of recognizing economic and financial fictions was the work of economic thinker Karl Polanyi. As he argued in his book *The Great Transformation*, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the emergence of a market economy was primarily modeled on what Polanyi calls "fictional commodities."[16] This market of fictional commodities is worth further attention in this context—both in itself and in the more recent instantiation of financial fictions, namely, our current economy of speculative financial products that employ fictions to model, and to determine, the future.

Commodities and Futures

In his 1944 critique of market economies—in particular the myths and dangers of self-regulating (that is, deregulated) markets—Karl Polanyi identified three "fictitious" commodities: "Labor,

land and money," he argues, "are obviously *not* commodities."[17] To think that they are commodities simply because they can be treated like commodities—that they fit the "empirical definition of a commodity"—is mere syllogism.[18] The market's "fictioning" of commodities, then, deploys a simple "as if" function: these commodities have not been produced for sale, but can be sold; they are treated "as if" produced for the market. From this follows the great danger of marketization as Polanyi saw it: the introduction of this "as if" fictioning to the relation between the market and the social-material conditions of life has *real effects*; it means no less than "to subordinate the substance of society itself to the laws of the market."[19] The fictionalization begins as an empirical error (treating labor, land, and money *as if* commodities), but begets a new deterministic relation such that the demands of the market come to shape the matter and relations of life.

In the Thatcher-Reagan years, widespread deregulation led to higher volatility and—along with the increase in power and availability of computation with which to process complex mathematics—the derivatives market took on its contemporary form. Simply put, derivatives price risk and trade it in parcels. In this process the uncertainty of the future—its radical unknowability—is replaced by a model and spread into something that, if not fully knowable, can nonetheless be turned into a surplus through the spreading of risk in a portfolio. Through this hedging of multiple, contradictory "what ifs," volatility can be turned into pricing; the radical unknowability (or fictionality) of the future is deferred—it becomes interminably inaccessible behind an iron curtain of precarity—and a (fictional) model of the future is made available in the present to be priced,

traded, and capitalized on.[20] Here the "as if" function of the fictional commodity meets the "what if" function of speculation and modeling. Through the concatenation of these modes of fiction, the future itself comes to be manipulable by finance, and potentiality—the future as properly unknowable—is permanently deferred. As Frederik Tygstrup has it,

> When the present is increasingly engrained with virtuality, and the more we bet on, issue promises for and insure our contingent futures, speculation increasingly emerges from the shadow of the otherwise more robust sense of the real and becomes a predominant mode of agency and orientation.[21]

Fiction is thus both a part of the genealogy of, yet quite opposed to, the derivatives portfolio. Which is to say both that the history of the cancellation of the future by neoliberal financialization has advanced through the market's deployment of fictions—the "as ifs" of fictional commodities and the subsequent "as if" effects of the "what if" models of the future—*and* that in the situation as it now stands, any alternative to such "capitalist realism" must be instantiated at an ontological level—that is, fictioned.[22]

Rather than reducing the future to its calculable financialization in the present (reaping surplus from volatility), fictioning can be thought instead as an invitation that we strategically extend to the radical unknowability of the future. In a neoliberal present, then, the stakes of fiction as method are once again revealed to be the highest: no less than the reinvention of the future beyond the impasses of the present; and thus, a figuration of the future as not always

already determined by the present—the future as unknown. As sociologist of finance Randy Martin put it, "The derivative operates through the conditions of generalized uncertainty as a bearer of this ongoing contestation over value in which the relation between knowledge and non-knowledge is governed."[23] It is this same relation which fiction, too, intervenes in, creates from, or turns toward. The derivative siphons from this surplus—profiting from non-knowledge—and thus neoliberalism, as the economic ideology of the derivative, now has a vested interest in denigrating both the expert and the fictioneer. Where the expert seeks to reduce the surplus of knowledge—and would thus reduce profitable volatility—fiction turns toward the unknown without seeking to legislate or capitalize on its relation to the knowable; indeed, fiction precisely encourages the impact of the unknown *as unknown* on the known and its persistence therein. This is the ability to remain open, or "negative capability"—"of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact or reason"—that Keats famously identified as Shakespeare's core talent (and found so lacking in Coleridge).[24]

Over the past forty years, through the derivative, Capital has moved toward abolishing any regulatory outside, any "elsewhere" from where it might be mapped and controlled: most obviously it has removed the teeth of policy and the efficacy of the State in relation to it. Here, again, are the stakes of fictioning: it becomes a matter of accessing, inventing, and turning toward an outside that has not been colonized by Capital, and through which the world could be thought and become otherwise. If, as Simon O'Sullivan has argued, Capital has now "colonised the virtual," fictions and fictioning ask and enact how other "effective virtualities" can be found and actualized.[25] If none of the

writings in this book explicitly address derivative markets, all the pieces are certainly firmly lodged in the present, and each responds to the urgency of the question of this power over the relation between the known and the unknown, and its related ontologies and ethics.

This emptying out of value from knowledge or expertise, and the wider question of a shift away from regulating the passage of non-knowledge to knowledge toward capitalizing on the paralysis of this flow, is equally associated with the latest form of governance which we are beginning to see emerge: that of "post-truth."

Farming News

It would be difficult to edit a book on the subject of fiction in 2017 without mentioning the much-discussed term "post-truth"—a term upon which Oxford Dictionaries conferred the dubious accolade of "Word of the Year" in 2016.[26] This decision rode on a tidal wave of political commentary that made use of the term in the wake of the US presidential elections and the UK's decision to leave the European Union. Oxford's decision can be considered one thread of a collective narrative that is still in the process of construction, a narrative that has both attempted to make sense of the term "post-truth" and that has, in the process, elevated it to a descriptor of an entire era of political history. Given that most other threads in this collective narrative originate from the comment sections of established newspapers (newspapers, lest we forget, whose very existence is threatened by the emergence of online "alternative" news sources), trusted sources on the

subject of post-truth are hard to come by—which, ironically, is part of the predicament the term describes.

Behind the term post-truth there is the implicit assertion that there was once a time "pre" post-truth, a time in which politics hewed more closely to a reality taken to be objective. Taking a longer historical view allows us to see that there are precedents to the current situation that complicate the narrative of a pre-post-truth world. The contemporary anxiety induced by our inability to distinguish news from fiction echoes, in many ways, a similar anxiety that accompanied the establishment of the border between the two in the seventeenth century. In that period and previously, "newes" was delivered by means of the newes ballad, printed single-sided onto sheets of paper in their thousands and often sung for the benefit of the illiterate. Lennard Davis writes of the news-novel matrix, pointing to numerous instances where the word "newes" was applied as much to recent events as to supernatural happenings, fictional events, and folklore.[27] Davis argues that it was from this undifferentiated discursive field that the novel gained traction as a literary form in eighteenth-century England, as ballad writers hid behind the concept of fiction as a means to escape charges of slander. As the century progressed, the audience for fiction spread beyond those within earshot of the balladeer, and a new literate audience gradually became accustomed to the idea of fiction on the page as nonreferential, a development that has been called "the rise of fictionality."[28] Catherine Gallagher, for example, charts a trajectory from Daniel Defoe's insistence that Robinson Crusoe was indeed a real individual in 1720, to Henry Fielding's contrasting claim that his characters bore no connection to specific people in 1742, and on to the end of the century, by which time readers had

been thoroughly accustomed to viewing the novel as a "protected affective enclosure" in which they could emotionally invest in characters with little or no risk of the vicissitudes of those characters' lives becoming entangled with the readers' own.[29]

Between the rise of fictionality in the mid-eighteenth century and the supposed inauguration of the post-truth era in the early twenty-first, a near untraceable series of discursive shifts, ruptures, and metamorphoses have occurred in the way we experience fiction. For one, the borders of the "protective affective enclosure" that fiction once represented have become more permeable. Fictions proliferate in all aspects of our lives, unconstrained by the novel as a specific form of art. In one sense, then, the term "post-truth" simply describes the spread of this paradigm into a media space that was presumed to be insulated against its effects. And with the opening of the protected affective enclosure of fiction, it could be argued that there has been a corresponding increase in the risk that accompanies the emotional investment it solicits—the risk of reputational damage caused by investing one's belief in a news story subsequently revealed to be false, for example, or the risk of investing one's emotional energy in the construction of an online profile that can no longer be seen as a sacrificial layer superimposed upon an offline existence. Such concerns enter the discussion of online profiles in Erica Scourti's contribution to this book, in which the effects of her fictional memoir *The Outage*, penned by a ghostwriter fed only by the breadcrumb trail of Scourti's online activity and password-protected data, are considered in terms of the strategies they make available for revealing and resisting logics of online capture.

THE PREVALENCE OF HIGH-TRAFFIC VIRAL STORIES IS THE LARGELY UNFORESEEN CONSEQUENCE OF A VAST DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE UNDERWRITTEN BY LOGICS OF CONNECTIVITY, ORDERING, AND VISIBILITY

The Outage also embodies a shift in how we are encouraged to experience fiction by some of those who actively create it. If the birth of the novel several centuries ago had the effect of accustoming readers to certain protocols for discerning fiction from fact, many of the chapters of this book redirect this didactic aim. Instead of setting out boundary stones along the perimeter of a fictional space, many of the chapters instead demonstrate the diverse registers in which fictions operate, encouraging a knowing investment in fictions that cannot be defined on the basis of nonreferentiality alone. Here it is no longer a case of establishing the truth about post-truth, or of cleaving fiction from fact, but making tangible the idea that truth and fiction are dynamic concepts that are both produced and productive.

This didactic aim opens out onto what is perhaps the most significant factor in the emergence of post-truth as a conceptual category: not fake news stories themselves, but the means by which they are mediated. If the news-novel matrix served as the accidental midwife to the modern understanding of literary fiction, it did so through means that were, strictly speaking, extra-literary, and which were in part conditioned by legal frameworks that made it possible to criminalize slander. Likewise, fake news stories are mediated by an assemblage that is heavily determined by an underlying logic of circulation—a logic that advertising technology and fake news farms are incredibly adept at exploiting. The prevalence of high-traffic viral stories is the largely unforeseen consequence of a vast digital infrastructure underwritten by logics of connectivity, ordering, and visibility. Confronted with the scale of the problem, spam filters on social media are relatively ineffective.

It is for this reason that numerous tech companies and research institutes are currently looking for technological solutions to combat fake news. The most prominent of these is Google's development of a system for assigning a "knowledge-based trust" score to web sources, with the ability to extract statements of fact and gauge whether they fall outside the limits of an algorithmically determined consensus, bringing a new meaning to a sentence in Matthew Fuller's chapter for this book: "State the fucking obvious. It will become the real."[30] It remains to be seen whether these innovations will spell the end of the post-truth era, but it seems unlikely that a purely technological solution can solve a problem that, while heavily determined by the digital infrastructure of the Internet, is caused by an assemblage altogether more varied in its constitution. Some elements of this assemblage are legal: in the same way that laws on slander helped give rise to the category of fiction in the seventeenth century, the apparent ease with which fake news has penetrated political debate is partly due to the fact that political claims fall outside the jurisdiction of the Advertising Standards Authority in the UK and similar authorities overseas.

Recognizing the complex way information is now mediated not only makes it possible to distinguish the mechanisms that facilitate fake news today from those of the newes-novel matrix in the seventeenth century—the differences are fairly plain to see: the infamous fake news story about Islamic mobs setting fire to a church in Dortmund was not delivered by means of a newes ballad sung on street corners, it was cooked up in the bowels of the online news network Breitbart—it also allows us to disentangle the current situation from media regimes of the more recent past. The online infrastructure described above means that there is

A FICTION CAN SEND SEMIOTIC RIPPLES IN MULTIPLE DIRECTIONS AT THE SAME TIME, SPREADING ITS REACH DEEP INTO THE MATERIAL INTENSITIES OF THE BODY

something different about how we experience news today compared with as recently as fifteen years ago. The lies circulating in the run-up to the war in Iraq and the lies circulating during the 2016 US presidential election campaigns were, fundamentally, not circulated in the same way. By extension, we can be sure that the news that weapons of mass destruction could be launched from within Iraq in less than forty-five minutes would not percolate through the same infrastructure if it were spread today, even if we can only speculate that it would not have the same effect.

It is both the distinctiveness of and the precursors to post-truth that Garcia discusses in his chapter for this book, as he seeks to establish a distinction between early interventionist artists associated with tactical media in the 1990s—many of whom used hoaxes, hacks, and deception as part of their toolkit—and the alt-right appropriation of the same strategies. What emerges is a powerful lesson in media literacy, allowing us to see that the categories of fact and fiction are always conditioned by the materials used to craft, frame, and distribute the discursive objects that scroll down our screens in a blur of epistemological indeterminacy.

Semiotic Strata

On March 3, 1995, a handful of friends met in a park in Mumbai to rhythmically contract their diaphragms and let out a series of noises—noises commonly recognized as laughter. As the weeks passed by the group grew in size, and bystanders began to realize that there was something different about the peals of laughter produced by those assembled: they were voluntary, as opposed to

spontaneous, produced in the absence of any external stimuli that could be considered funny. Over twenty years later more than 10,000 such groups meet regularly all over the world. A typical Laughter Yoga class starts with a series of warm-up exercises that include making eye contact and speaking in gibberish, after which members of the class begin to laugh, chuckle, or giggle unaided by comic incitement. This laughter, although at first a simulated fiction, soon becomes contagious, spreading through the group as the class gets into full swing. The social effect of this fictitious trigger is also accompanied by a physiological effect, stimulating the pituitary gland to produce endorphins, which pass from one neuron to the next until they reach the limbic system, the part of the brain neuroscientists believe responsible for emotion.

The popular pastime of Laughter Yoga invites us to reflect on the semiotic terrain upon which fiction can be said to operate. Here we can witness a fiction involving multiple semiotic forms, from the signifying utterances of the yoga instructor's directions to the group, to the laughter itself, and ending in the sign systems of the neurotransmitters that produce the "happy chemistry" practitioners seek as an end result. While it could be said that it is a fiction that sets this chain in motion, it does not automatically follow that each semiotic interaction can itself be described as fictional, even if it were possible to parse the interactions in a way that isolated them from one another. Indeed, Laughter Yoga is predicated on the notion that the human body cannot tell the difference between fake and genuine laughter, which implies a break in the chain somewhere between the laughter itself and the neurological and chemical signals it helps produce. This is not a break in the chain of sign systems themselves; with

a sufficiently stocked toolbox of concepts drawn from social and biosemiotics it would be possible to follow it link-by-link from the cultural sign systems that promote positivity, through to the social interactions at the level of the group, and on to interactions at the level of brain chemistry.[31] Rather, it implies that in a chain composed of a variety of semiotic forms, some will have the ability to "carry" fiction while others will not. To borrow terminology from the work of Félix Guattari—and in particular the hybrid semiotics he develops by drawing on the work of Louis Hjelmslev and Charles Sanders Peirce—we could say that at some point in the chain the semiotic forms become either "a-semiotic" or "a-signifying." While the a-semiotic represents the formalization of untranslatable material intensities such as hormones, enzymes, and DNA, the a-signifying comprises a range of diverse methods for connecting signs to things directly, without recourse to representational paradigms, and include musical notation, mathematics, and machine language.[32] A-semiotic and a-signifying semiotics have the capacity to register and transmit the effects of fiction to varying degrees, but are not themselves able to launch fictions into the world.

This is not to suggest that fiction—here understood primarily through the mode of simulation—is restricted to the written or spoken word. In this example it is arguably laughter itself that carries the full force of fiction, rather than the verbal instructions of the leader of the yoga class. And laughter, lest we forget, is both signifying and a-signifying, both meaningful and nonsensical; it is simultaneously a language, a music, and a noise.

The polysemiotic character of laughter shows that the model of a semiotic chain is itself somewhat misleading, implying a linearity

that is not able to describe accurately the nature of the processes at play. A fiction can send semiotic ripples in multiple directions at the same time, spreading its reach deep into the material intensities of the body. Instead of a chain, then, we might think of fictions as creating strands in what Tim Ingold calls a "meshwork," where lines don't serve simply to connect points, but constitute paths along which growth and movement are lived out.[33] From this perspective, the power of fiction as a method could be seen as creating new meshworks involving diverse semiotic forms. Fiction thrives as a process that is synthetic in the sense that it gathers into its orbit a number of agents that progressively fill out its content. Indeed this is the very strength of fiction—that it is not purely analytical.

The synthetic aspects of fiction become readily apparent in Dora García's chapter, in which she weaves together several examples of fictions constructed as protective shields against truths too difficult, traumatic, or incongruous to bear. The most tragic of these examples is the true story of Jean-Claude Romand, a French family man who spun a web of deception stretching back eighteen years, involving made-up qualifications, investment schemes, and a job at the World Health Organization. When his fantasy finally looked like it would be found out, Romand took extreme measures to ensure the survival not of himself, but of the fantasy life he had built brick by brick, killing his parents, wife, and two children before attempting to commit suicide. While extreme, the example involves a vast fictional meshwork spanning numerous semiotic strata, one that was lived so fully—and yet yoked together by an underlying ideal so static—that it took on a life of its own, a life deemed so important it was worth sacrificing numerous others to protect.

In his contribution, Tim Etchells discusses a range of fictional constructions in his work as artistic director of the theater company Forced Entertainment as well as in his solo performances and artworks. Here fiction is again shown to operate upon numerous terrains: at the level of the performance that deliberately miscasts its audience as if they had come to see another genre of entertainment altogether, at the level of the individual utterance—which for Etchells, "in its own unique fragmentary content carries a kind of deep-level code concerning (and constructing) speaker and listener, speaker and addressee"—and finally in the deployment of a nonverbal vocabulary of gesture, eye contact, and body movements that give the relations between Etchells and his audience new accents, "shifting the proposition in a rolling dialogue, conflict, and parallel track with the text."

The issue of how we both construct and are constructed by fictions has over recent years had an increasing influence on thinking about the future of human relations with technology—from artificial intelligences to robots—expanding and displacing older theories around the simulation of life and consciousness (simulation being, of course, a mode of fictioning).

Cybernetics, Social Media, and Trolls from the Dungeon

In his "Chinese Room" thought experiment, John Searle employs a distinction between "as" and "as if," using it to distinguish between strong (or conscious) forms of artificial intelligence and weak (or merely consciousness-simulating) forms—the former, for Searle, being an impossibility.[34] Through Searle, the question of a machine's intentionality has been placed at the center of

many debates on the problems of cognition and consciousness: even if we can imagine an AI so sophisticated that it passes the Turing Test (in Searle's example, an AI that can convince a Chinese-speaking human that it, too, is a Chinese-speaking human), this would not constitute a strong AI, because the program can act only "as if" conscious. A capacity for simulation, Searle argues, no matter how advanced and empirically convincing, does not constitute a mind.

More recently, Johanna Seibt has pursued the "as if" question of AI and social relations further in her study of robotics, in particular the potential uses of AI robots as "caretakers and tutors"—which is to say, robots as carers, mentors, and, indeed, "'friends.'"[35] For Seibt, friendship with robots (or other relations of care) takes place "on the basis of neurophysiological mechanisms shaping social cognition below the level of consciousness."[36] Posthuman sociality is possible, it seems, because the as-if behaviors of robots have real neuroplastic effects in humans, just as we have seen that simulated laughter can have real neurochemical ramifications, producing "real" laughter and a concomitant socializing effect.[37] For Seibt, reassessing the ontological categorization of robots through attention to their social interactions, rather than through the metric of intentionality adopted by Searle's AI research—so in terms of what they do and the interactions they become involved in, rather than what they can be said to *be*—shifts the terrain of the simulation problem.[38] Seibt argues that extending the use of the term "person" to robots can reasonably be predicated on the fact that robots are enacting care in social situations—regardless of the fact that they are programmatically simulating descriptive predicates, such as "faithful" or

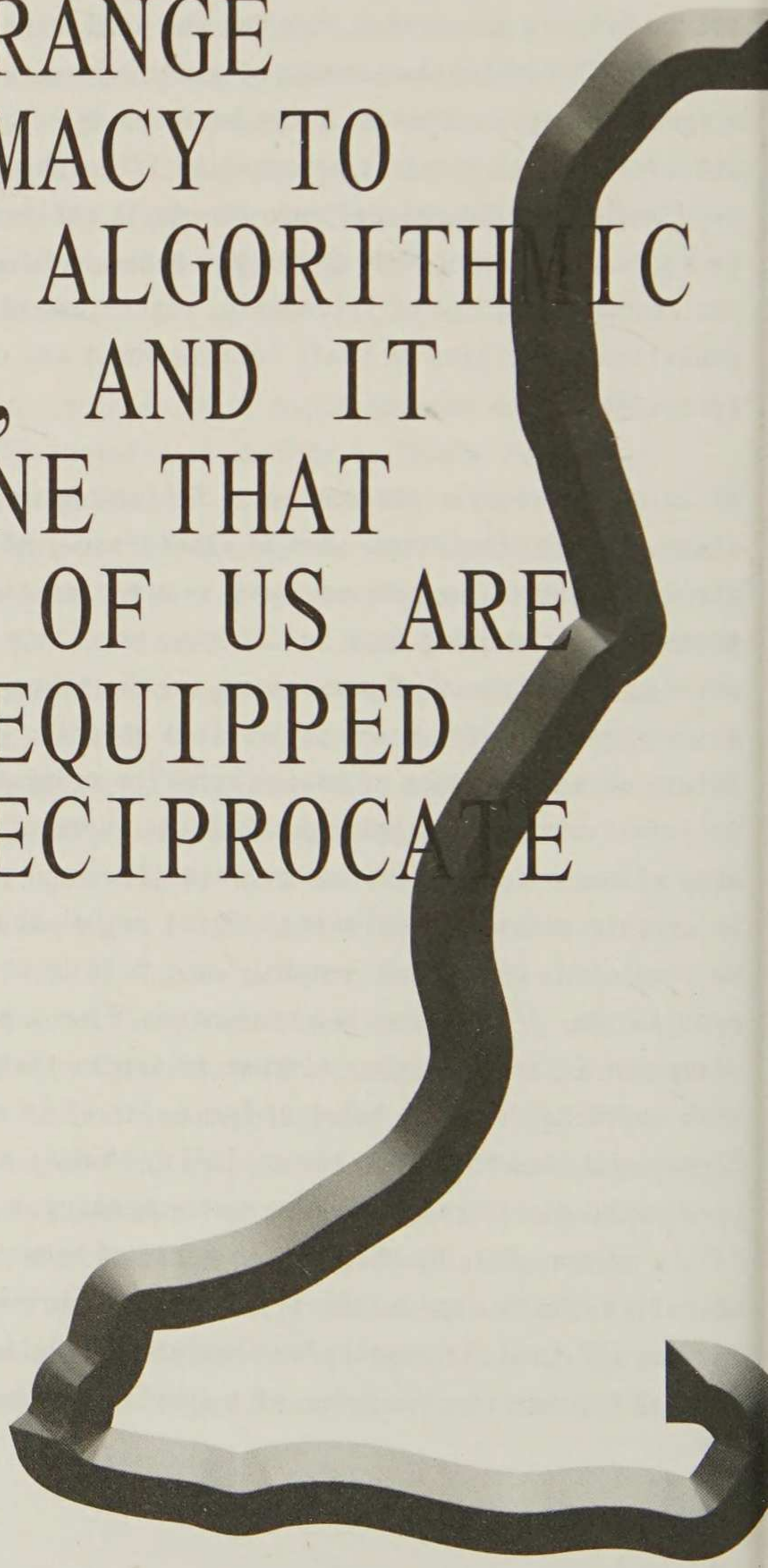
"companion."[39] As she argues, "person" is not a description, but an "ascriptive predicate" that is "tied to a certain speech act and establishes an absolute, non-gradient commitment."[40] Put another way, to call robots "persons" is to enter them into a normatively regulated social contract—and let us remember that both the performativity of the ascriptive speech act and the normativity of the convention-regulated social field can well be described as fictions.

Moving further into the problem of human-machine sociality, Seibt addresses the question of whether we "Could not only *treat* something as a friend but also *interact* with it as if it were a friend."[41] In order to address the problem, Seibt argues that a distinction must be parsed between "make-believe" and "fictional" interaction, a distinction that turns on the presence or absence of reciprocity in a given interaction: in a "make-believe" scenario, there is no reciprocity, and the "analogical projections"—we might say, fictions—that are made are based solely on our own agency and imaginings. Seibt gives the example of a driver greeting her car, and the vehicle showing no reaction on which she might hang her make-believe of a caring intimacy between herself and the machine. On the other hand, in a "fictional" interaction, there is a reciprocity, and both agents "behave in ways that resemble the actions and reactions prescribed by the interaction template [of friendship]."[42] Crucially, Seibt argues that it is not necessary that both agents be aware of (that is, conscious of or intentionally embroiled in) the normative, fictional convention; what is important is that both agents are successfully simulating the model of friendship. This simulation requires neither that both agents be intentionally invested in the convention, nor that they be

intentionally simulating the convention. While her car cannot return Seibt's salutation, her dog can hold up its end of a reciprocal, fictional exchange of greetings—not because it is a speaking dog, or because Seibt believes it to be consciously interacting with her in a person-like friendship, but because she can "analogically project" onto the dog's actions a resemblance to a greeting. Here, both agents are found to be acting "as if" the encounter is one of friendship, regardless of their own conscious capacities or their beliefs about the other's conscious capacities.

While a real social interaction of friendship or care can take place through simulation—can be established and maintained through "as ifs," so long as there is a reciprocity in play—Seibt notes that friendship is a descriptive predicate (as described above). The category of personhood, on the other hand, is not descriptive, and for Seibt the ethical question grounding the future of a philosophy of social robotics rests on the ascriptive, declarative nature of personhood. While ascriptive declarations are, of course, normative and performative (and thus do engage in certain modes of fictioning), Seibt argues that they cannot be simulated: one cannot sensibly say, "'It is *as if* I hereby promise you.'"[43] As such, she continues, "From a philosophical viewpoint it is a category mistake to assume that we can interact with anything—whether robot or human—*as if* it were a person."[44] Personhood, and therefore the sociality that is necessarily predicated on it, is always to treat something *as* (and not "as if") a person. Yet, by thinking in terms of human-robotic mutual sociality, Seibt argues, the traditional opposition between "as" and "as if" (and, in particular, reciprocal fictional "as ifs") instead becomes the two poles of a spectrum. The simulation of

THERE IS
A STRANGE
INTIMACY TO
THIS ALGORITHMIC
GAZE, AND IT
IS ONE THAT
MANY OF US ARE
ILL-EQUIPPED
TO RECIPROCATE



fictional, reciprocal models of sociality (i.e., friendship) is imbricated here with declarations of personhood, since personhood is given as the necessary condition of sociality. It is across this gradated intermixing of "as" and "as if" that Seibt lays out her five "varieties" of action simulation. The fictionally grounded social relations that Seibt describes do not so much suggest a willingness to be duped, but, rather, open us toward a sociality based on acknowledging the opacity of the other's subjectivity.

Many of the scenarios which Seibt's research relates to lie in a future many years off in terms of robotic development, but clearly our social field is already constituted at a fundamental level by human-technology interactions. We might think, for example, of the increasing role of virtual "personal assistant" artificial intelligences and the interactions had with them—which seem both intimate and cold—from the FBI agent character Dominique DiPierro's desultorily mumbled question "Alexa, are we friends?" in the Netflix series *Mr. Robot*, to the use of these AIs as companions by people on the autistic spectrum, such as Gus Newman.[45] Two things are immediately noticeable about these virtual assistant AIs: first, that they use the voice as input and output—that is, they are voice-activated and respond to inquiries through speech, simulating one of our most uniquely human attributes—and second, that the four most widely used virtual assistants (Apple's Siri, Amazon's Alexa, Google's Google Now, and Microsoft's Cortana) all simulate a female voice by default.[46]

Much as we might hope to glimpse, here, connections to an affirmative history of the roles of women in cybernetics—a pioneering role which, in the person of Ada Byron, is as old

as mechanical computation itself—this characterization of a servile machine as feminine is clearly, rather, a sad symptom of the persistence of gender stereotyping in technology and wider culture. A recent example of the explicit cruelty with which this stereotyping is defended is briefly discussed in both David Garcia's and Erica Scourti's essays, namely the archetypal trolling activity around "Gamergate," in which female game developers and critics, including Zoë Quinn, Brianna Wu, and Anita Sarkeesian, were grievously harassed and threatened for daring to express an opinion.

It is interesting, in our context, that social networks as we know them today can be genealogically traced back to a fictional—indeed, fantastical—virtual space. If the earliest pioneers of Internet socializing like Richard Bartle—whose 1978 game/platform Multi-User Dungeon (MUD), cowritten with Roy Trubshaw, is perhaps the earliest Internet forum with an avowedly social dimension—conceived of their work as explicitly political, it was because, for Bartle, MUD allowed anyone to be anyone: "In this true meritocracy," Bartle wrote at the time, "Everyone starts off on an equal footing."[47] Certainly Bartle and Trubshaw's regional accents (they hailed from Yorkshire and Wolverhampton respectively) marked them out for derision in a southern English university, and these accents and dialects were absent from the on-screen text and rigid syntax of MUD's interface. But while such forums might flatten out the hierarchical relations between working- and middle-class white, Western males, in the decades since MUD at least two things have become clear about anonymized social networks: first, as evidenced by the Gamergate affair, the protection and freedom that anonymity brings will just as readily be used for abusive ends, especially toward non-male and non-

white people; and, second, that if we can indeed invent ourselves through the Internet, then we are just as much invented by it.[48]

Scourti addresses this latter point by drawing on Michel Foucault's study of ancient Greek "self-writing"—practices such as diary-keeping and letter-writing—which allows her to recognize social media, too, as a "technology of the self."[49] But if these online platforms offer us new ways of constructing ourselves, they are equally reworking the ways in which it is possible to do so. As Scourti shows, the new protocols of self-presentation and the new ways of conceiving of privacy that social media have brought are substantially rewiring our notions of intimacy and sincerity. What would seem to be the least fictional parts of our lives—from falling in love to familial relations—are revealed in Scourti's practice to have become deeply enmeshed in the genealogically and performatively fictional world of social media. But, contrary to Bartle's designs of free elaboration of the self in online forums, Scourti also reveals a world in which forms of control indigenous to "real life" have supplemented those proper to the online world and continue to affect people of color and female and trans users disproportionately.

In her discussion of privacy, Scourti notes how profiling algorithms—used by online platform companies to generate reams of saleable data—make no distinction between public and password-protected data. There is a strange intimacy to this algorithmic gaze, and it is one that many of us are ill-equipped to reciprocate. The complexity and speed, indeed the profound *otherness*, of these algorithms requires a significant speculative leap—or act of fictioning—to allow us to form any kind of image of them. It is just such a leap that Matthew Fuller makes in his

imaginary exploration of a millisecond in the life of a search engine. Fuller brings together speculation with chopped and sped-up syntaxes to form contact of a sort with nonhuman intelligence. Interestingly, by way of comparison, Simon O'Sullivan remarks in his essay on the importance of new grammars in the project of non-philosophy and, as he has written on elsewhere, in the general breaking out from what he calls the "fictions of control."[50]

Mambos in the Matrix

Making contact with nonhuman intelligence through speculative means is also the main concern of Delphi Carstens and Mer Roberts's essay. In particular, they are concerned with exploring the work of the art collective Orphan Drift through its immanentization of the relation between material and virtual energies. This involves the creation of circuits between the two, often extending across time and into both the virtual-real of the future and the digital-virtual of the screen. In finding and creating the confluences of these two, the group's work overtly demonstrates its indebtedness to science fiction film and literature, and especially the early cyberpunk novels of William Gibson and others. As Dani Cavallaro points out in her *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture*, Gibson avers an "animistic infrastructure in cyberspace," in particular its "infiltration" by Vodou loa.[51] The Vodou culture is superadded, in OD's work, to elements from the southern African myths of the Xhosa and San peoples—and the title of Carstens and Roberts's essay, "The Things That Knowledge Cannot Eat," is a translation of a Dagara proverb concerning the supernatural.

HYPERSTITION DEPLOYS FICTION AS A TECHNOLOGY TO SET UP POSITIVE FEEDBACK CYCLES OF ACTUALIZATION

From these animist influences, OD developed a series of performative and formal techniques of invocation, calling in various agents, beings, and circumstances from the abstract outsides encountered in their demonology and travels in the digital-virtual. Alongside this, the future-as-outside is also called in, through practices of what has been called "hyperstition." Indeed, to echo a phrase from one of the primary practitioners of hyperstition, in OD's practice, it is "as if a tendril of the future were burrowing back."[52]

No summary, however brief, of twentieth-century theoretical deployments of fictions would be complete without mention of the method of hyperstition. Developed in the mid-1990s, hyperstition involves a sensitivity to and activation of those elements of the pure immanence of the future that are operative—at a lower intensity, or without full integration—in the present. Hyperstition deploys fiction as a technology to set up positive feedback cycles of actualization. For example, as the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (Ccru) observed in 1999, whether or not computers would all crash at midnight on New Year's Eve, the quintessential millennial disaster that is "MBug panic" had already had real effects: fictional or not, these effects were tangible, and often costly.[53] As the Ccru wrote: "It's not a matter of waiting for Y2K […]. Hype and panic cannot simply be thought of as precursors to events: they are the event already happening."[54]

If the "counter-chronic arrival" that hype-fiction effectuates was one of the cornerstones of Ccru's toolkit, the arrival was always "from machinic virtuality," that is, a future in which the impersonal, extraterritorial, and ahistorical were fully realized.[55] Through the positive feedback loops of hyperstition

this future-singularity (in which product and process are fully immanent to each other) was made present: an opening to the future in which the subject cedes its sovereign executive functions in the name of an acceleration of the arrival of the abstract-real. Here, contact with the future can be understood as a case of what Roberts—a fellow traveler of the Ccru—has elsewhere called "everting the virtual."[56]

In the years since the Ccru dispersed from the University of Warwick, the practice of hyperstition has been allied with two very different political ends. On the one hand, Nick Land has identified the singularity that hyperstition invokes with AI and a hyper-accelerated Capitalism hostile to the retarding effects of the human—a direction that is leading him to increasingly ally himself with alt-right and white supremacist positions such as those of Mencius Moldbug (Curtis Yarvin). On the other hand, a younger generation have deployed elements of hyperstition toward more leftist agendas—perhaps most famously Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek's "#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics."[57]

As Simon O'Sullivan (who also appears in this volume) and his collaborator David Burrows observe in their *Mythopoesis/Myth-Science/Mythotechnesis*, what is generally overlooked in leftist deployments of hyperstition, including Srnicek and Williams's, is the central role of mythos.[58] The original Ccru description of hyperstition characterizes the practice as "a call to the old ones," a reference to the Cthulhu mythos of H. P. Lovecraft's early twentieth-century stories, some of the fundamental cornerstones of the "weird" genre.[59] These "old ones" are not simply being referenced in an intertextual weave, nor are they

being taken on as conceptual personae in the way that Deleuze and Guattari speak through Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger, for example.[60] Rather, the "old ones" are being invoked as denizens of the abstract outside that have a capacity to move between the noumenal and phenomenal, and, indeed, to immanentize these two—in a similar fashion perhaps, to Orphan Drift's practice of the invocatory "everting" of digital-virtual demons. There is also a connection, here, to the abstract-outside which Justin Barton speaks of in his chapter in this book. But where Land associated the outside with an inhuman and inhumane transcendental—a "fanged noumenon"—Barton is concerned with turning away from the cold, gothic line to the outside (which he associates with "transcendental north"), and toward a direction of "Love-and-Freedom" (or "transcendental south").[61]

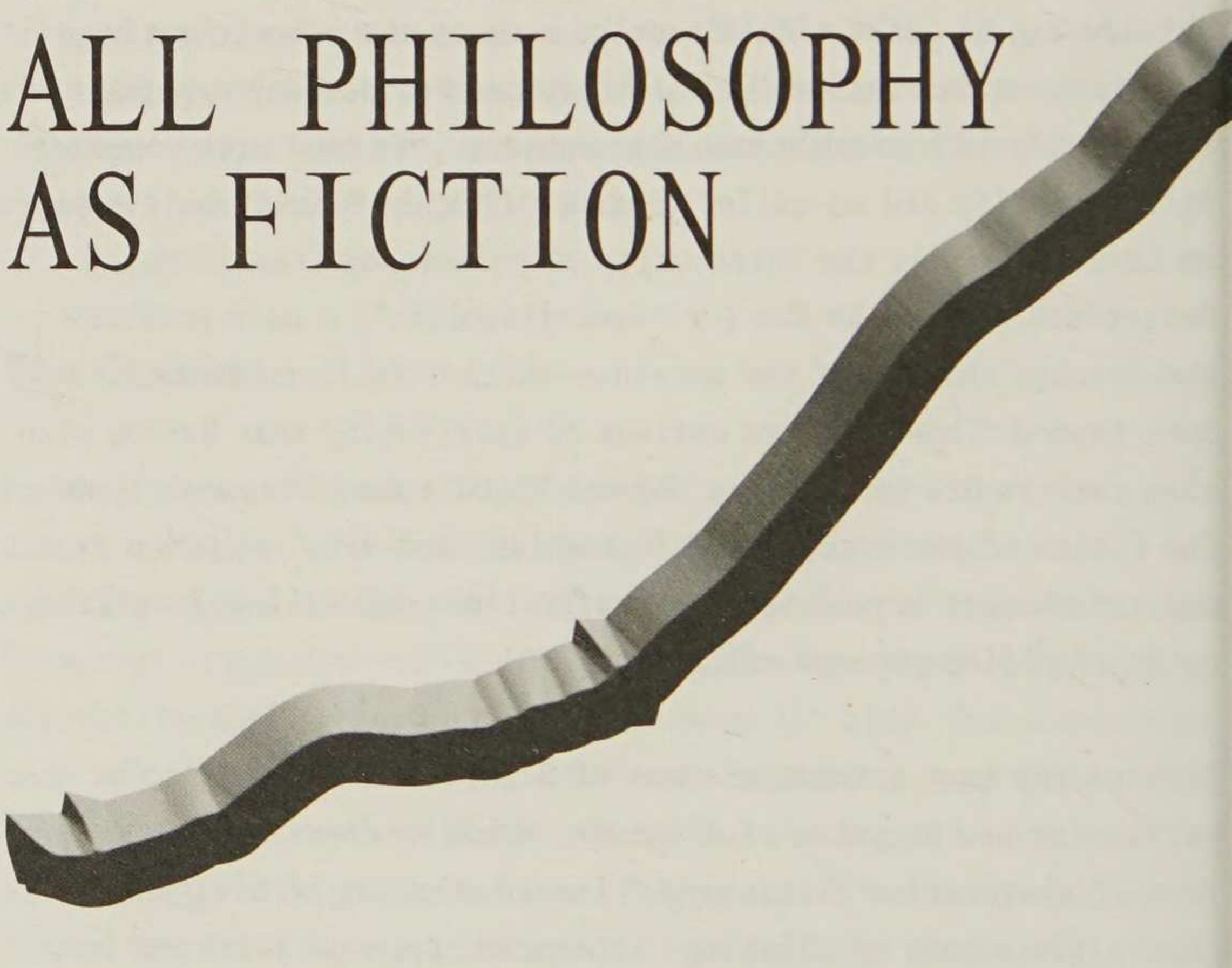
The Outside

The most recent OD piece discussed in Carstens and Roberts's essay, the video work *Green Skeen* (2016), is precisely an eversion of the outside. It involves the ritualized creation of a "composite technoanimal" with a capacity to draw in a shimmering digital-virtual through blocs of the dawn-lit city. The video was made in collaboration with another art collective—one similarly invested in the exploration of ritual and the digital as means of raiding, redesigning, and reorienting our affective relations toward the outside—named Plastique Fantastique, founded in 2004 by Dave Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan. In the inaugural manifesto of Plastique Fantastique (a piece originally written by O'Sullivan for the catalogue of a solo show by Burrows) the group is fictioned into existence through the performative ascription

of the manifesto to them. The manifesto insists on the importance of actualizing virtualities, and especially on the use of ritual to effect a shift from utility and "work time" to "sacred time" or "play."[62] This shift in subjectivity is expressed in explicitly Deleuzian terms as a refolding of the outside, and not least of "'new' folds of silicon with carbon."[63] O'Sullivan's essay for this book, "Non-philosophy and Art Practice (or, Fiction as Method)," outlines his initial forays into the work of François Laruelle, in particular the notion of non-philosophy and its pertinence to aesthetics. Again, the question being engaged with is how an outside can be dealt with directly, without the prioritization of a lower-order inside. In the Plastique Fantastique manifesto this inside is a risable humanist subject ("we howl with laughter at interiority and so-called 'essence'"[64]); in O'Sullivan's essay on Laruelle, it is the interiority of philosophy itself—which determines and speaks for (or "ventriloquizes") a more profound and strange thought of the outside—which O'Sullivan looks to move beyond. These are two notions of interiority that Barton also aims past in his essay here, "Beyond Plato's Cave: Escaping from the Cities of the Interiority," in which "lucidity" is given as a mode of thought beyond the rationalizations and self-aggrandizing myths of philosophy and religion.

Perhaps the most notable element of O'Sullivan's essay is the particular use he makes of diagrams, which he describes as "a form of speculative fictioning." Indeed, the use of diagrams as themselves a mode of thinking—as opposed to, say, illustrative devices—has been characteristic of O'Sullivan's oeuvre at least since his 2012 book *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation*.[65] Through these diagrams, O'Sullivan posits non-linguistic kinds of thought, and

TO DENY
PHILOSOPHY'S
CAPACITY TO
GRASP THE REAL
IS TO RECAST
ALL PHILOSOPHY
AS FICTION



art is demonstrated to be itself always already a mode of thinking (and, we might add, theoretical work is widened out to become a practice in its own right).

In O'Sullivan's approach to Laruelle, this turn to modes of thought beyond the traditional discipline of philosophy is associated with a certain kind of fictioning. The term Laruelle uses for this is "heresy," an operation that signals the refusal to make a decision, that is, to produce a cut between a "real" (or outside) and a philosophical procedure that would comment on or determine that real. Just as the diagram seeks to put to work a mode of nonlinguistic, nonrational, and nonrepresentational thought, so non-philosophy seeks to think *from* rather than about the real. To heretically refuse the validity of the philosophical decision—to deny philosophy's capacity to grasp the real, for it has always already effectively determined it—is to recast all philosophy as fiction. Non-philosophy is understood as "swerving" between these decision-fictions, producing a "clinamen" that touches on multiple perspectives (both philosophical and otherwise) without selecting any of them as a more true take on the real. In this way, non-philosophy not only reveals any given philosophy as a fiction, it also makes a fictional leap itself, to operate from (rather than on) the undetermined real. Again, we find a distinction here between modes of control or determination that operate through fiction, against a more profound outside that is considered a fiction more real than reality. The task of non-philosophy, then, like the task of ritualized eversion, or of hyperstition, is to immanentize this more real outside, and it is in this way that these various practices and approaches—all operating on and through fictions—each stake a relation to the most political of fictions: the outside as incoming future.

If Barton's transcendental south is, again, a direction away from the interiorities and all-too-human self-aggrandizement of Enlightenment philosophy, religions, and hero-narratives, it is equally a movement that—in his essay here, as well as in his 2015 book *Hidden Valleys*—Barton associates with leaving the cities and moving toward immanent relations with the fullness of the Planet. The joyful encounters that this turn calls out to differ greatly from the necessarily horrifying immanence of Land's Lovecraftian position, and we thus find foregrounded in Barton's work a pure immanence or singularity—namely the Planet—and a set of comportments—of lucidity—that stand against the accelerated horrorism of Land's more recent, Neoreactionary and hyperracist, writings.[66]

As David Garcia's essay in this book makes clear, in recent years Neoreactionary politics has been making very effective use of various kinds of fictions, and one of the stakes of any discussion of fictioning today—this book included—concerns consciousness-raising and tactical development of its uses and abuses as a method in sociopolitical contexts. But fictioning also involves imagining and practicing new social relations beyond those overcoded by fictional commodities and future-modeling financial-fictions. It is noteworthy that many of the writers in this collection also work as artists, and that they do so in collaborations. As Mark Fisher—who collaborated with Barton on two audio essays, *On Vanishing Land* (2013) and *londonunderlondon* (2005)—observed at the conference that seeded this book, "The true collaborator is the outside," and we can often see this outside seep in whenever a collaboration is at work—a fact that William Burroughs and Brion Gysin were clearly aware of when they wrote of a "third mind" emerging, or otherwise present, in their

own artistic and literary collaborations.[67] Indeed, it is perhaps no coincidence that three of the chapters in this book reference the *I Ching*, an ancient technology of bibliomancy, or harnessing chance to allow the outside to speak. In the nonhierarchical, productive sociality that is collaboration—with human and nonhuman others—possibilities emerge for different relations to the future, different assemblages of kinship, and different relations to the Planet. Far from "mere" escapism, then, the stakes of thinking of fiction as method are, again, the highest.

Encountering Fictions

Shortly before the turn of the century, Charles Platt, one-time graphic designer for and editor of the seminal New Wave science fiction magazine *New Worlds*, proposed the notion of "quantum fiction."[68] While, as Christina Scholz has noted, Platt is rather prescriptive in terms of the experimental aesthetics he advocates—his examples draw heavily on collage aesthetics such as Burroughs's cut-ups—there is also some mileage in the term, especially in Platt's call for texts to acknowledge the reader as an "active participant" (just as the observer of a quantum event has a determinant, though by no means necessarily intentional, effect).[69] Of course, assertions as to the reader's role as co-creator pre-date Platt's essay by several decades, most famously in work by Roland Barthes, Foucault, and Umberto Eco.[70] But, as Scholz argues, the term has a particular resonance for a genre of writing explicitly engaged with science; and, we might suggest, for an age in which—as Suhail Malik has observed—undecidability is the dominant aesthetic paradigm.[71]

WE FIND A
REALITY THAT,
WE REALIZE,
HAS ALWAYS
ALREADY BEEN
TRANSFIGURED:
WHERE WE WERE
NEVER TRULY
AT HOME

In particular, Scholz draws on Platt's term "quantum fiction" to discuss M. John Harrison's Kefahuchi Tract books, a trilogy which Carstens and Roberts acknowledge their deep appreciation of. On one level, the term "quantum fiction" is pertinent because of the books' recurring figure of the Kefahuchi Tract, described in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* as "a kind of light-years-wide interstellar honeypot, whose epistemological and ontological mysteries have created rifts/riffs in reality that have haunted Alien species for aeons, and humans more recently."[72] But more fundamentally, for Scholz, it is the affective impact on the reader of Harrison's work that is "quantum," because it has the capacity to produce a superposition of modes that could be seen as mutually exclusive: the work produces a singular admixture of the weird and the hauntological, and their attendant affects of awe and horror.[73]

The piece that Harrison has provided for this collection, and the short story that he read at the "Fiction as Method" conference—an extract from his forthcoming novel, and the story "Yummie," respectively—contain this superposition in a much quieter, though no less joyfully, eerily disconcerting way.[74] They depict characters caught in eddies, not entirely participants in their own lives. There is nothing so spectacular in scale as the eerie maw of the Kefahuchi Tract, only the commonplace occurrences of what Michael Hamburger called "non-events."[75] Into these lives enters something small but disconcerting—"erupts" would be too strong a word. Although those "somethings" are not in themselves agents of perturbation—indeed, in "Green Children" they are as much humorous interludes as transformative events—the strangeness of these lives' contingencies appears; and we had, we realize, felt it all along. These scenarios reveal a deep unease running through the lives of their protagonists, a

weirdness at the heart of things that is as devastating as it is quotidian. We find a reality that, we realize, has always already been transfigured; where we were never truly at home—again, the horror and awe. Given this coextension of the everyday and the "epistemologically and ontologically mysterious,"[76] we do indeed find in Harrison's work what Scholz has recognized as the superposition of escapism and an "anti-escapist sense that possibility *is* a reality."[77] Here, in these pleasurably disconcerting *récits*, aesthetic and political forms of fiction are both in effect.

In a comparable way of working, Tim Etchells discusses one of the techniques of his "postdramatic" theater whereby audiences are addressed as if they were the audience of a different occasion, and through which "the position, implication, and even role of the public is drawn, redrawn, intensified, and manipulated in producing the dramaturgical journey of a work." Simon O'Sullivan comments that his own experience of Etchell's performance at the "Fiction as Method" conference (in which Etchells reworked material from "Yummie," the story M. John Harrison had just read) felt as if the "real" itself were breaking through—not because Etchells had some sort of preternatural, direct access to the real, but because of what emerges when the event and that which structures the event are made simultaneously apparent. A collection such as the one you are reading now, which features a variety of approaches—from artists' writings, to philosophical works, to fictions—can, we hope, offer manifold possibilities for such encounters.

In a broad sense, all acts of reading become embroiled with fictioning. There is what we might call a "post-literacy" at play,

here: not in the sense in which Marshall McLuhan envisaged—of a society moving into a multimediasphere in which reading is no longer a necessary part of everyday life—but a post-literacy in which the very act of reading appears as an interrogable set of attitudes and affections that can be both immanently lived and critically appreciated.[78] When the questions at hand concern fictioning—and when the terrain is as varied as even this small collection demonstrates—the complex adventure of reading is all the more at stake in our actions, reactions, and abreactions of the style, personae, and gambits of the writing.

With these works of and on fictioning, then, we are constantly looping into and out of, and stacking up, manifold registers of criticality, credulity, and "entertaining belief" in the text—a fact that Dora García exploits to its utmost in the conclusion to her essay. Whether through our engagement with the scenarios, characters, or the consistency of a text's concepts, the act of reading moves us through, and superposes, various gradations of imagination, criticality, insights, outsight, and so on. And this shifting of registers, and their superposition, both sharpens our faculties and widens our horizons—both inside the dream, and on waking from it. In this vein, Félix Guattari finds an evocative image in Jean Genet's *Prisoner of Love*. Genet pictures a boiler, producing vapor which "steams up a window, then gradually disappears, leaving the window clear, the landscape suddenly visible and the room extended perhaps to infinity."[79] Fictions can take us in both of these directions, clouding the windows to subtract us from the smooth functioning of the world, or opening us out to those ("perhaps") infinite vistas. Crucially, as Guattari observes, this steaming and clearing is not a single movement for Genet—it is not, for example, the

Pauline promise of direct contact with the transcendent ("through a glass darkly; but then face to face"[80])—rather, it is an ongoing and deepening "oscillation."[81] Indeed, for Guattari, all of Genet's little "eclipses" and becomings-imperceptible—and surely we are becoming-imperceptible when we are "lost in a good book"—leave behind trails that, like dreams or fictions, are "stroboscopic after-images of other universes."[82] These are not merely fantastical universes to which we have escaped and which we now hazily recall; nor are they mere "mystical revelations."[83] Rather, they are the apparition and invention "of new existential dimensions"; new worlds, and their concomitant new modes of being.[84] This is not so far, perhaps, from the revitalization of potential that, as we have seen, Scholz finds at work in M. John Harrison's escapist-anti-escapist, "quantum" sublime.

Be vigilant, dear reader, as you move through these tactics, histories, warnings, analyses, confessions, tall tales, invocations, promises, and dreams; and as they move through you. The opportunities for steaming up the windows, and for the windows to clear—to escape and to return with a deepened sense of reality and possibility—are manifold in the chapters that follow. Fictioning appears, in these pages, as a means for encountering others in all their irreducibility, and for re-enchanting reality with the buzz of possibility.

Endnotes

1 See for example, the section on Null Island in the release notes to mapping software Natural Earth v1.3, http://www.naturalearthdata.com/blog/natural-earth-version-1-3-release-notes (accessed July 12, 2017). Null Island is used in both vector and raster data mapping.

2 Mai Abu ElDahab, "A Conversation with Khalil Rabah," *Bidoun* 8 (Fall 2006), http://bidoun.org/articles/khalil-rabah-and-mai-abu-eldahab.

3 ICAHD, *The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions*, accessed August 21, 2017, https://icahd.org.

4 Robert Smithson, "Cultural Confinement," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 154–56. For a critical overview of the canonization of Institutional Critique, see a number of the contributions to *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, ed. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray (London: Mayfly, 2009).

5 Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," *Artforum* 44 (September 2005): 282.

6 The phrase "forms of instituting" is from Raunig and Ray, *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice*.

7 Ibid., vii; 180. The concept is rooted in Antonio Negri's discussion of the differences between "constituent power" and "constituted power." See Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

8 Karin Knorr Cetina, "Primitive Classification of Postmodernity: Towards a Sociological Notion of Fiction," *Theory, Culture and Society* 11 (1994): 8.

9 There have been numerous surveys conducted as regards Icelanders' beliefs around *huldufólk*, but each of them solicit responses on the basis of varying degrees of belief or nonbelief. Kirsten Hastrup argues convincingly in connection to *huldufólk* that reframing the question in terms of experiences leads to radically different answers. See Kirsten Hastrup, "Getting It Right," *Anthropological Theory* 4, no. 4 (2004): 455–72.

10 B. S. Benedikz, "Basic Themes in Icelandic Folklore," *Folklore* 84 (Spring 1973): 2, https://doi.org/10.1080/00155 87x.1973.9716492.

11 As one son's interview with his Icelandic emigrant parents reveals of the North American expat community, "Superstition was in decline. Belief in *afturgöngur* [the walking dead] had, as far as I know, vanished, or all but so. The *huldufólk* [hidden people] had become, for the most part, a thing of story." Guttormur Guttormsson, "Guttormur Þorsteinsson and Birgitta Jósepsdóttir," translated by Katelin Parson, in *My Parents: Memoirs of New World Icelanders*, ed. Birna Bjarndottir and Finnbogi Gudmundsson (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007), 50.

12 Allan Asbjørn Jøn, "The Road and the Taniwha," *Australian Folklore: A Yearly Journal of Folklore Studies* 22 (2007): 89.

13 Shannon Biggs, "When Rivers Hold Legal Rights," *Earth Island Journa*l, April 17, 2017, http://www.earthisland .org/journal/index.php/elist /eListRead/when_rivers_hold _legal_rights.

14 See Title II, Chapter One, Article 10, and Title II, Chapter Seven of the *Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador*. Available in English at http:// pdba.georgetown.edu /Constitutions/Ecuador /english08.html (accessed April 16, 2017).

15 The notion of fiction gaining power through iteration would seem to resemble the concept of an "illusory truth effect," a term first used by Hasher, Goldstein, and Toppino to describe the increased likelihood of false facts being intuited as true after they had been repeated several times. While both notions are ostensibly concerned with the ability of repetition to reinforce belief, the notion of an illusory truth effect approaches belief, once again, through the logic of contradiction, pitting the objectively true against the illusory. Lynn Hasher, David Goldstein, and Thomas Toppino, "Frequency and the Conference of Referential Validity," *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior,* 16, no. 1 (1977): 107–12.

16 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon, 2001), 71–80.

17 Ibid., 45.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 75.

20 Of particular note is Fischer Black and Myron Scholes, "The Pricing of Options and Corporate Liabilities," *Journal of Political Economy* 81, no. 3 (May–June 1973): 637–54.

21 Frederik Tygstrup, "Speculation and the End of Fiction," *Paragrana* 25, no. 2 (December 2016): 98.

22 In his book *Capitalist Realism* Mark Fisher traces Thatcher's dictum that "there is no alternative" to free-market capitalism to demonstrate the ontological turn of this idea in contemporary neoliberalism and to begin laying out a new direction for consciousness-raising and the instantiation of an alternative future. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Ropley: O Books, 2009).

23 Randy Martin, *Knowledge LTD: Toward a Social Logic of the Derivative* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015), 56.

24 John Keats, "Letter to George and Thomas Keats," December 22, 1817, in *Letters of John Keats to His Family and Friends*, ed. Sidney Colvin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 48.

25 Simon O'Sullivan, "The Production of the New and the Care of the Self," in *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New*, ed. Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (London: Continuum, 2008), 97.

26 "The Word of the Year 2016 Is ...," *Oxford Dictionaries*, accessed July 1, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016.

27 Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 50.

28 Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," in *The Novel*, vol. 1, *History, Geography, and Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 336–63.

29 Ibid., 347.

30 Xin Luna Dong et al., "Knowledge-Based Trust: Estimating the Trustworthiness of Web Sources," *Proceedings of the VLDB Endowment* 8, no. 9 (May 2015), http://www.vldb.org/pvldb/vol8/p938-dong.pdf. Other current initiatives include the browser extension LazyTruth, and the "Emergent" project developed by the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University, New York.

31 A disavowed root of Laughter Yoga can be seen in the controversial spiritual leader Osho's "mystic rose" meditative therapy, which consists of three hours' laughter daily for one week; the same regime is followed the second week with weeping, and the third week is reserved for silent mediation. It is instructive that in its transformation as Laughter Yoga the meditation is stripped of activities perceived as negative or neutral. See Harry Aveling, *The Laughing Swamis* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994).

32 For a detailed discussion of Hjelmslev's glossematics, and its relevance to psychoanalysis, see Félix Guattari, "The Role of the Signifier in the Institution," in *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Penguin, 1984), 73–81.

33 Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, Description* (London: Routledge, 2011), 151.

34 John R. Searle "Minds, Brains and Programs," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, no. 3 (1980): 417–57, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00005756.

35 Johanna Seibt, "Varieties of the 'As If': Five Ways to Simulate an Action," in *Sociable Robots and the Future of Social Relations: Proceedings of Robo-Philosophy 2014*, ed. Johanna Seibt et al. (Amsterdam: IOS-Press, 2014), 97. It is worth noting that Searle himself restricted the conclusions of the Chinese Room experiment to computational programs, and not to robots or other machines. Searle, "Minds, Brains and Programs," 11. Seibt presented her work at the "Prediction, Process and Reason" workshop, Goldsmiths, University of London, June 2, 2015.

36 Seibt, "Varieties of the 'As If,'" 97.

37 Ibid.

38 Barbara Cassin has associated the prioritization of effects over intentionality with a certain sophistry: "Philosophy never relinquishes its claim to unmask sophistics by banking on the concept of intention; sophistics never ceases to distinguish itself from philosophy by emphasising the accounting of effects. The consideration of effects can match that of intention because the effect is no longer at the mercy of a dichotomy: faced with the

polarised duplicity of intention, there is or there is not an effect, de facto, precisely." Barbara Cassin, *Sophistical Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 40.

39 Seibt, "Varieties of the 'As If,'" 99. See also Johanna Seibt, "Towards an Ontology of Simulated Social Interaction: Varieties of the 'As If' for Robots and Humans," in *Sociality and Normativity for Robots*, ed. Raul Hakli and Johanna Seibt (Cham: Springer, 2016), 11–39.

40 Seibt, "Varieties of the 'As If,'" 99.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid. (emphasis added).

44 Ibid., 100.

45 *Mr. Robot*, "eps2.0_unm4sk-pt1.tc," Series 2, Episode 11, dir. and written by Sam Esmail, Netflix, July 2016; Gus Newman's relationship with Siri is detailed in his mother's memoir, Judith Newman, *To Siri with Love: A Mother, Her Autistic Son, and the Kindness of a Machine* (London: Quercus, 2017).

46 Of the big four, Google's Google Now is the only one to not use a woman's name, albeit that Amazon claim "Alexa" is short for "Alexandria," site of the great lost library. Some Siri settings, including UK English, do use a male voice, but the default setting is female. See Adrienne LaFrance, "Why Do So Many Digital Assistants Have Feminine Names?," *The Atlantic*, March 30, 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/03/why-do-so-many-digital-assistants-have-feminine-names/475884.

47 Richard A. Bartle, "A Voice from the Dungeon," in *Practical Computing* (December 1983): 126–30, http://mud.co.uk/richard/avftd.htm. See also Keith Stuart, "Richard Bartle: We Invented Multiplayer Games as a Political Gesture," *Guardian*, November 17, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/nov/17/richard-bartle-multiplayer-games-political-gesture.

48 While the influence of Bartle and Trubshaw's work in terms of programming is most evidently present in the field of gaming, it is in social media in general that we find the more pervasive impact of MUD's social dimension, and hence of its political pretensions.

49 This was the subject of a book Foucault was working on when he died. See Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, eds., *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).

50 See, for example, Simon O'Sullivan, "Deleuze Against Control: Fictioning to Myth-Science," *Theory, Culture and Society* 33, nos. 7–8 (2016): 205–20.

51 Dani Cavallaro, *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture: Science Fiction and the Work of William Gibson* (London: Athlone, 2000), 56.

52 Nick Land, "No Future," in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings, 1987–2007*, ed. Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 391–400.

53 Global costs are estimated at £300 billion. BBC, "Y2K: Overhyped and Oversold?," *BBC News*, January 6, 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/586938.stm.

54 Ccru, "A Short Prehistory of Ccru," *ccru.net*, accessed December 9, 2016, http://www.ccru.net/id(entity)/ccruhistory.htm.

55 Ccru, "Commuique One: Message to Simon Reynolds: 1998," *ccru.net*, accessed December 9, 2016, http://www.ccru.net/id(entity)/communiqueone.htm.

56 This was the title of a presentation given by Roberts on the work of Orphan Drift: Maggie Roberts, "Everting the Virtual since 1995," presentation, Goldsmiths, University of London, May 17, 2016. The presentation can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0jX1Qh2Hwo (published May 23, 2016).

57 Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek, "#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics," in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014), 347–62.

58 Simon O'Sullivan and David Burrows, *Mythopoesis/Myth-Science/Mythotechnesis: Fictioning in Contemporary Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).

59 Ccru, "Syzygy," *ccru.net*, accessed December 9, 2016, http://www.ccru.net/syzygy.htm.

60 See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "10,000 BC: The Geology of Morals (Who Does the Earth Think It Is?)," in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 44–82.

61 See Land, *Fanged Noumena*.

62 Simon O'Sullivan, "First Manifesto of the Guerilla Plastique Fantastique: 'On Baroque Practice,'" in *Dave Burrows: New Life* (Warwick: Mead Gallery, 2004), 1–4.

63 Ibid., 3–4.

64 Ibid., 3.

65 Simon O'Sullivan, *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

66 A line from Lovecraft which Carstens and Roberts quote in their essay demonstrates Land's indebtedness to the writer of weird fiction: "Horror and the unknown or strange are always connected, so that it is hard to create a convincing picture of shattered natural law and cosmic alienage or 'outsideness' without laying stress on the emotion of fear." H. P. Lovecraft, "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," in *Collected Essays*, vol. 2, ed. S. T. Joshi (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2004), 157. For more on Land's horrorism, see Nick Land, "Horrorism," *Outside in*, November 3, 2013, http://www.xenosystems.net/horrorism.

67 William Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: Viking, 1978).

68 Charles Platt, "Quantum Fiction: A Blueprint for Avoiding Literary Obsolescence," in *Loose Canon* (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2001), 73–79.

69 Christina Scholz, "Quantum Fiction! M. John Harrison's Empty Space Trilogy and Weird Theory," *Textual Practice* (2017): 3–4, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1358689.

70 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1993), 142–48; Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113–38; Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

71 Suhail Malik, "1. Exit Not Escape – On the Necessity of Art's Exit from Contemporary Art," presentation at Artists Space, New York, May 3, 2013, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fimEhntbRZ4 (accessed June 12, 2017).

72 John Clute, "M. John Harrison," *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, accessed August 14, 2017, http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/harrison_m_john, cited in Scholz, "Quantum Fiction," 2.

73 Scholz ascribes this assertion of mutual exclusivity to China Miéville, "M. R. James and the Quantum Vampire: Weird; Hauntological: Versus and/or and and/or or?," *Collapse* 4 (2008): 105–28.

74 M. John Harrison, *The Water Tower* [working title] (forthcoming); M. John Harrison "Yummie," in *Weight of Words*, ed. Dave McKean and William Schafer (Burton, MI: Subterranean Press, forthcoming).

75 Michael Hamburger, *From a Diary of Non-Events* (London: Anvil, 2002).

76 Clute, "M. John Harrison."

77 Scholz, "Quantum Fiction," 6.

78 Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 3.

79 Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: New York Review of Books, 2003), 375.

80 1 Cor. 13:12 (KJV).

81 Félix Guattari, "Genet Regained," in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, trans. Andrew Goffey (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 219.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

Bibliography

Aveling, Harry. *The Laughing Swamis*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." In *Image Music Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath, 142–48. London: Fontana, 1993.

Bartle, Richard A. "A Voice from the Dungeon." In *Practical Computing* (December 1983): 126–30. Accessed July 17, 2017. Available at http://mud.co.uk/richard/avftd.htm.

BBC. "Y2K: Overhyped and Oversold?" *BBC News*, January 6, 2000. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/586938.stm.

Benedikz, B. S. "Basic Themes in Icelandic Folklore." *Folklore* 84 (Spring 1973): 1–26. doi:10.1080/0015587x.1973.9716492.

Black, Fischer, and Myron Scholes. "The Pricing of Options and Corporate Liabilities." *Journal of Political Economy* 81, no. 3 (May–June 1973): 637–54.

Burroughs, William, and Brion Gysin. *The Third Mind*. New York: Viking, 1978.

Cassin, Barbara. *Sophistical Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.

Cavallaro, Dani. *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture: Science Fiction and the Work of William Gibson*. London: Athlone, 2000.

Ccru. "Commuique One: Message to Simon Reynolds: 1998." *ccru.net*. Accessed December 9, 2016. http://www.ccru.net/id(entity)/communiqueone.htm.

—. "A Short Prehistory of Ccru." *ccru.net*. Accessed December 9, 2016. http://www.ccru.net/id(entity)/ccruhistory.htm.

—. "Syzygy." *ccru.net*. Accessed December 9, 2016. http://www.ccru.net/syzygy.htm.

Cetina, Karin Knorr. "Primitive Classification of Postmodernity: Towards a Sociological Notion of Fiction." *Theory, Culture & Society* 11 (1994): 1–24.

Clute, John. "M. John Harrison." *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Accessed August 14, 2017. http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/harrison_m_john.

Davis, Lennard J. *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. London: Continuum, 2004.

Dong, Xin Luna, Evgeniy Gabrilovich, Kevin Murphy, Van Dang, Wilko Horn, Camillo Lugaresi, Shaohua Sun, and Wei Zhang. "Knowledge-Based Trust: Estimating the Trustworthiness of Web Sources." *Proceedings of the VLDB Endowment* 8, no. 9 (May 2015): 938–49. http://www.vldb.org/pvldb/vol8/p938-dong.pdf.

Eco, Umberto. *The Open Work*. Translated by Anna Cancogni. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

ElDahab, Mai Abu, "A Conversation with Khalil Rabah." *Bidoun* 8 (Fall 2006). http://bidoun.org/articles/khalil-rabah-and-mai-abu-eldahab.

Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Ropley: Hampshire: O Books, 2009.

Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?" In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Translated by Donald F. Bouchard, 113–38. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Fraser, Andrea. "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique." *Artforum* 44 (September 2005): 278–83.

Gallagher, Catherine. "The Rise of Fictionality." In *The Novel*. Vol. 1, *History, Geography, and Culture,* edited by Franco Moretti, 336–63. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Genet, Jean. *Prisoner of Love*. Translated by Barbara Bray. New York: New York Review of Books, 2003.

Guattari, Félix. "Genet Regained." In *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*. Translated by Andrew Goffey, 215–30. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

——. "The Role of the Signifier in the Institution." In *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*. Translated by Rosemary Sheed, 73–81. London: Penguin, 1984.

Guttormsson, Guttormur. "Guttormur Þorsteinsson & Birgitta Jósepsdóttir." Translated by Katelin Parson. In *My Parents: Memoirs of New World Icelanders,* edited by Birna Bjarndottir and Finnbogi Gudmundsson, 43–72. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007.

Hamburger, Michael. *From a Diary of Non-Events*. London: Anvil, 2002.

Harrison, M. John. *The Water Tower* [working title]. Forthcoming.

——. "Yummie." In *Weight of Words*, edited by Dave McKean and William Schafer. Burton, MI: Subterranean Press, forthcoming.

Hasher, Lynn, Lynn Goldstein, and Thomas Toppino. "Frequency and the Conference of Referential Validity." *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 16, no. 1 (1977): 107–12.

Hastrup, Kirsten. "Getting It Right." *Anthropological Theory* 4, no. 4 (2004): 455–72.

ICAHD. "Homepage." "*The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.*" Accessed August 21, 2017. https://icahd.org.

Ingold, Tim. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, Description*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Jøn, Allan Asbjørn. "The Road and the Taniwha." *Australian Folklore: A Yearly Journal of Folklore Studies* 22 (2007): 85–94.

Keats, John. "Letter to George and Thomas Keats." December 22, 1817. In *Letters of John Keats to His Family and Friends*, edited by Sidney Colvin, 46–48. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

LaFrance, Adrienne. "Why Do So Many Digital Assistants Have Feminine Names?" *The Atlantic*. March 30, 2016. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/03/why-do-so-many-digital-assistants-have-feminine-names/475884.

Land, Nick. *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings, 1987–2007,* Edited by Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011.

—. "Horrorism." *Outside in*, November 3, 2013. http://www.xenosystems.net/horrorism.

Lovecraft, H. P. "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction." In *Collected Essays*. Vol. 2, *Literary Criticism*, edited by S. T. Joshi, 157–58. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2004.

Martin, Luther H., Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, eds. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998.

Martin, Randy. *Knowledge LTD: Towards a Social Logic of the Derivative*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015.

McLuhan, Marshall. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.

Miéville, China. "M. R. James and the Quantum Vampire: Weird; Hauntological: Versus and/or and and/or or?" *Collapse* 4 (2008): 105–28.

Natural Earth. "Natural Earth Version 1.3 Release Notes." Accessed July 12, 2017. http://www.naturalearthdata.com/blog/natural-earth-version-1-3-release-notes.

Negri, Antonio. *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Newman, Judith. *To Siri with Love: A Mother, Her Autistic Son, and the Kindness of a Machine*. London: Quercus, 2017.

O'Sullivan, Simon. "Deleuze Against Control: Fictioning to Myth-Science." *Theory, Culture and Society* 33, nos. 7–8 (2016): 205–20.

—. "First Manifesto of the Guerilla Plastique Fantastique: 'On Baroque Practice,'" In *Dave Burrows: New Life*, 1–4. Warwick: Mead Gallery, 2004.

—. *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

—. "The Production of the New and the Care of the Self." In *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New*, edited by Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke, 91–103. London: Continuum, 2008.

—, and David Burrows. *Mythopoesis/Myth-Science/ Mythotechnesis: Fictioning in Contemporary Art*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming.

Oxford Dictionaries. "Word of the Year 2016 Is ...." Accessed July 1, 2017. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016.

Platt, Charles. "Quantum Fiction: A Blueprint for Avoiding Literary Obsolescence." In *Loose Canon*, 73–79. Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2001.

Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon, 2001.

Raunig, Gerald, and Gene Ray. In *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, Edited by Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray. London: Mayfly, 2009.

Scholz, Christina. "Quantum Fiction! M. John Harrison's Empty Space Trilogy and Weird Theory." *Textual Practice* (2017): 1–15. Accessed August 14, 2017. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1358689.

Searle, John R. "Minds, Brains and Programs." In *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, no. 3 (1980): 417–57. Accessed November 28, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00005756.

Seibt, Johanna. "Towards an Ontology of Simulated Social Interaction: Varieties of the 'As If' for Robots and Humans." In *Sociality and Normativity for Robots*, edited by Raul Hakli and Johanna Seibt, 11–39. Cham: Springer, 2016.

—. "Varieties of the 'As If': Five Ways to Simulate an Action." In *Sociable Robots and the Future of Social Relations: Proceedings of Robo-Philosophy 2014*, edited by Johanna Seibt, Raul Hakli, and Marco Nørskov, 97–105. Amsterdam: IOS-Press, 2014.

Smithson, Robert. "Cultural Confinement." In *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, edited by Jack Flam, 154–56. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Stuart, Keith. "Richard Bartle: We Invented Multiplayer Games as a Political Gesture." *Guardian*, November 17, 2014. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/nov/17/richard-bartle-multiplayer-games-political-gesture.

Tygstrup, Frederik. "Speculation and the End of Fiction." *Paragrana* 25, no. 2 (December 2016): 97–111.

Williams, Alex, and Nick Srnicek. "#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics." In *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, edited by Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian, 347–62. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014.

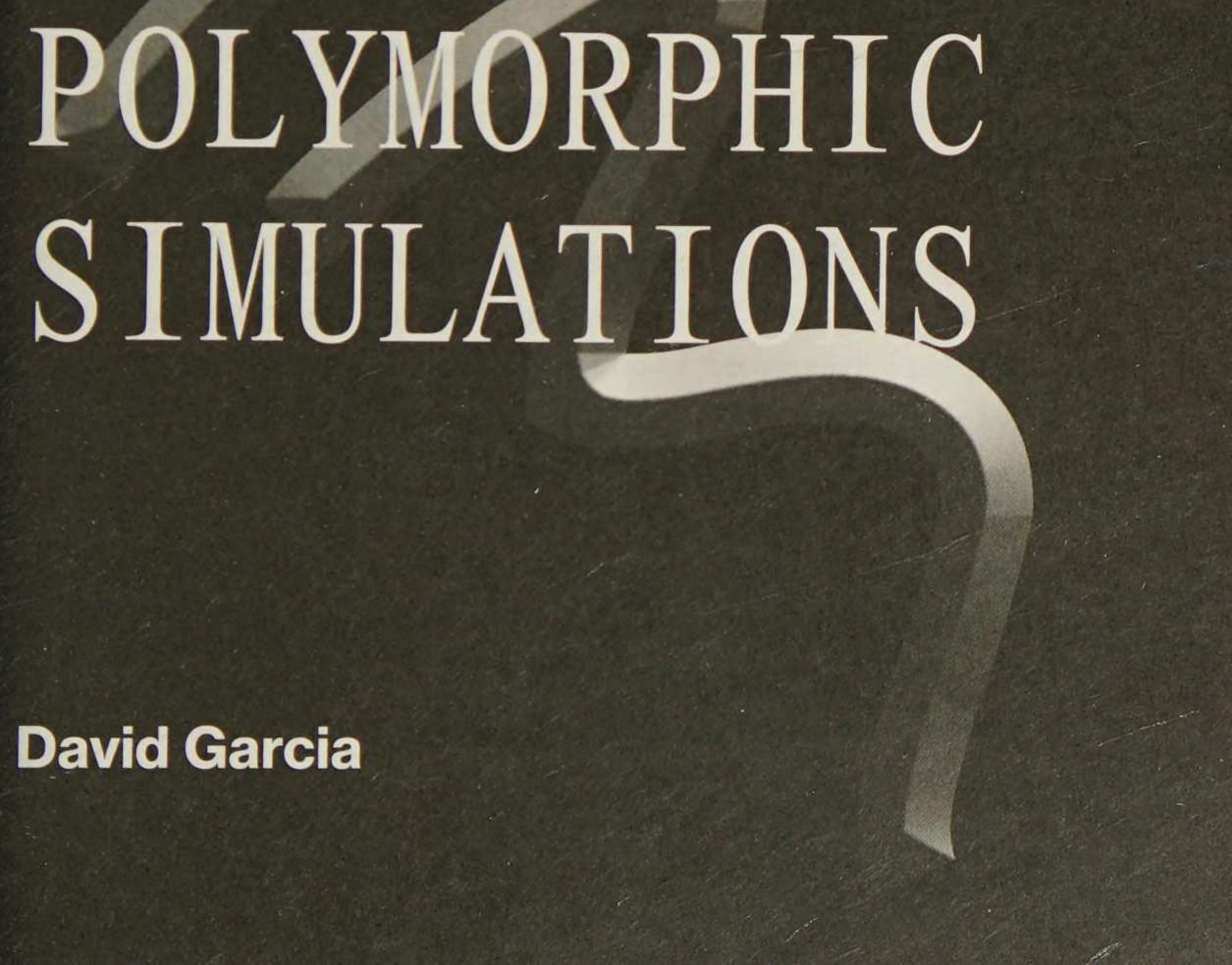
Filmography

Malik, Suhail. "1. Exit Not Escape – On the Necessity of Art's Exit from Contemporary Art." Presentation. Artists Space, New York. May 3, 2013. Accessed June 12, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fimEhntbRZ4.

Mr. Robot. "eps2.0_unm4sk-pt1.tc." Series 2, Episode 11. Directed by Sam Esmail. Written by Sam Esmail. Netflix. July 2016.

Roberts, Maggie. "Everting the Virtual Since 1995." Presentation. Goldsmiths, University of London. May 17, 2016. Accessed July 18, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0jX1Qh2Hwo.

DARK JESTERS HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: HOAXES, HACKS, PRANKS, AND POLYMORPHIC SIMULATIONS



David Garcia

I take my desires for reality because I believe in the reality of my desires.
– Graffiti, Paris, 1968

Curating on a Tightrope

At the beginning of 2017, researcher and curator Annet Dekker and I began installing the exhibition "How Much of This Is Fiction," which had been in the planning for nearly two years.[1] The show featured sixteen politically driven media artists who use deception in the form of political pranks, hoaxes, tricks, and hacks. With just weeks before the launch, it became clear that the political ground had moved under our feet. We found ourselves having to deal with two distinct but interconnected developments. First, the dark jesters and meme warriors of the alt-right insurgency had used classical DIY "tactical media" to help to bring Donald Trump to power. We were forced to accept that we were organizing an exhibition of tactical media when a movement associated with the far Right of US politics were doing tactical media better than we were. Second, the art and politics we were celebrating deliberately used fiction and hoaxes, at a point when terms like "post-truth" and "fake news" had become emblematic of the widespread erosion of trust in rational debate in the public sphere. We were thus in danger of finding ourselves complicit in poisoning the well of public discourse.

As curators, we needed to both differentiate the tactical media tricksters we were celebrating from the alt-right insurgency, while justifying continuing to deploy media fictions in these radically changed circumstances. I will use the opportunity of

this chapter to extend this process of self-critique, beginning with an interrogation of some of the original concepts and ideals associated with tactical media, the movement originating in the 1990s that inspired the exhibition.

Background

The exhibition revisited the concept of tactical media in the light of the many changes that had taken place in digital cultures and media activism since the 1990s. Tactical media is a politically driven cultural movement that typically combines art, experimental media, and political activism. Although it has been present around the world in various forms since the early days of mass communication, it was first identified and named as a distinctive movement in the 1990s by an unruly alliance of artists, media pirates, and theorists working in Amsterdam.[2]

As a movement it took the concepts and techniques of contemporary art and design out of museums and advertising agencies and applied them directly to campaigns and political protest movements. The key principle to this day remains not so much to describe or explain but rather to *do*. As a movement it is not so much discursive as performative. It deals in "media acts," frequently taking the form of hoaxes, hacks, and sometimes shocking and provocative media pranks. As with other art-into-life movements (such as Situationism, Fluxus, and Dada), tactical media celebrates the avant-garde principles of freedom, participation, and experimentation. But to these principles it adds a strong belief in the power of digital media and the

Internet to spread their participatory practices and principles further and wider than ever before.

Rather than attempt to represent the whole movement, we focused on one of the principal threads: the trickster, that is, artists and activists who deploy hoaxes and hacks to engage in political campaigns in ways that unsettle expectations and imagine alternative futures.

Our way of using the term "tactical," including its relationship to the role of the trickster, was taken from the Jesuit thinker Michel de Certeau, whose *The Practice of Everyday Life* introduced a form of cultural politics far more supple and rich than the cultural studies movement of the time.[3] In place of these traditional forms of media literacy based on questioning sources and interrogating the ideology of quasi-neutral media representations, Certeau focused instead on the uses to which audiences put media representations, and the multiplicity of ways in which these forms might be tactically appropriated and repurposed by consumers. He was among the first to detect the new role of the "consumer" or "user" of media as an active partner in the creation of meaning. In this way, Certeau created a user language appropriate to profound changes in social, economic, and power relations in which "the figure of the consumer takes center stage alongside (or even instead of) the worker, or better where these two figures are merged."[4]

But unlike the utopian theorists of the Internet—who came later, and who saw these developments as evidence of a democratization of culture (touted at the time as "user-generated content" or "citizen journalism"), Certeau's vision was far darker. From

the outset he saw the relationship between strategic power and tactical resistance as a profoundly asymmetric struggle, a process whereby the weak are continually probing for opportunities to momentarily turn the tables on the strong.

In Certeau's writings the tactical is never far away from the archetype of the "trickster," which he writes of as using

> clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, "hunter's cunning," manoeuvres, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike. [Tricksters] go back to the immemorial intelligence displayed in the tricks and imitations of plants and fishes. From the depths of the ocean to the streets of the modern megalopolises, there is a continuity and permanence in these tactics.[5]

The references in this quotation to the continuity and permanence of tactics are important, as they point to an understanding of the tactical as no mere staging post on the journey to strategic power but a political and even aesthetic choice that includes a repudiation of the logic of power itself. As this essay develops it will become clear that this is both tactical media's strength and its weakness.

The Dilemma

Toward the end of 2016, a few short months before the show was due to open, history caught up with us. We found ourselves confronting a political upheaval directly linked to the subject of our show. We were forced to address the fact that the insurgencies on the alt-right were disrupting the boundaries

between fact and fiction far more effectively than we were. Indeed, the disruptive power of media fictions had become *the* story of 2016 as the term "post-truth" elbowed its way into the center of public attention, becoming Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year.[6] As 2017 dawned, the turmoil around the shifting nature of public discourse showed no signs of fading. Terms such as "alternative facts," "post-truth," and "fake news" had become overnight clichés frequently used to discredit oppositional voices. We found ourselves overtaken by events, bystanders witnessing the extreme Right of US politics mainstreaming the disruptive media tactics we had mistakenly believed to be our own.

In the midst of a kind of epistemic bedlam, established media sources were thrown into crisis. We, as curators promoting fiction as a legitimate method of both activism and research, felt forced to defend our own practices from the charge of complicity.

On the one hand the exhibition appeared extremely prescient, guaranteeing more than the average amount of public engagement. On the other, we had to ask ourselves to what degree we were ourselves complicit in the emergence of this new toxicity in public discourse.

The New Autonomous Zones

As is well known by now, the alt-right is an unholy alliance connecting "teenage gamers, pseudonymous swastika-posting anime lovers, ironic *South Park* conservatives, anti-feminist pranksters, nerdish harassers and meme-making trolls whose dark

humour and love of transgression for its own sake" have been hijacked by actual white-segregationist neo-Nazis, who used the mischievous culture of lulz as cover to propel their ambitious political program all the way to the White House.[7]

The hugely popular message board 4chan was the platform from which the alt-right sprang. In an earlier phase it also harbored more progressive variants, including the online activists of Anonymous, whose anarchist left-leaning factions had actively supported the uprisings and occupations of 2010-11.

One of the most notable chroniclers of this earlier phase was Gabriella Coleman, an anthropologist of dissident Internet cultures who began researching the area seriously in 2008. In a journal article in 2012 she declared that the original drivers for her investigations had been her need to ask: "How and why has the anarchic 'hate machine' been transformed into one of the most adroit and effective political operations of recent times?"[8] Now, five years later, we need to invert Coleman's question and ask how and why 4chan has been transformed from a space dominated by the anarchist Left into a realm associated even more with the alt-right.

The most articulate set of answers to this question are to be found in Angela Nagle's provocative and important *Kill All Normies*, in which she traces the origins of the alt-right to the surprising source of the fightback of male game nerds against "a revived feminism threatening to change their beloved game culture."[9] Nagle goes on to elaborate the complex journey from these apparently trivial beginnings into what later became the alt-right, describing how these obscure marginal cultures were in

turn propelled into the cultural and political mainstream through the mediation of charismatic media personalities like Milo Yiannopoulos and Steve Bannon, whom she brands the "alt-light."

Academics like Coleman, who had been researching the area long before the emergence of the full-blown alt-right, tended to strike a celebratory tone that in retrospect looks naïve, emphasizing the emancipatory potential of the spaces that incubated these movements, and tending to gloss over some dubious politics. Arguably, they failed to heed important warning signs that would have been obvious were it not for the distracting subcultural aura of "cool" associated with the hacker sphere.

Writing today, Nagle's vision is understandably darker and she has little time for any trace of the indulgence and academic tolerance shown toward the malignant views of trolls like weev (a.k.a. Andrew Auernheimer). But Nagle goes a stage further, arguing that the ethos of transgression and mischief for its own sake is the latest expression of a nihilistic thread running through the heart of the modernist avant-garde, stretching from the Romantic rebellion of the likes of Blake and Sade, through to the Surrealists and the Situationists (whom she at least concedes "have a better world in their hearts") en route to 1960s counterculture, and (in the worst case scenario) culminating in the Manson murders as the "logical culmination of throwing off the shackles of conscience and consciousness, the grim flowering of the id's voodoo energies."[10]

Nagle's powerful polemic is persuasive and eloquent, but I am reluctant to follow her all the way down a road that leads to Freud's social and cultural conservatism. The alt-right's

taboo-busting success in dominating the message boards and destabilizing established norms of zero tolerance toward racism and sexism could be equally attributable to the US state's success in supressing the one online force that might have hit back: the left-leaning activists of Anonymous. We should never forget that the campaign that led to vicious and disproportionate prison sentences for Anonymous hackers succeeded in creating paranoia and driving what might have been the most effective opposition to the alt-right underground. This, as Nagle herself points out, "created a vacuum in the image boards which the rightist side of the culture was able to fill with their expert style of anti-PC shock humour memes."[11]

In the end there is no social vibrancy without subcultures, and there are no subcultures without risk. In a world dominated by the likes of Facebook's "real-name policy" and mass state surveillance, 4chan and its principle of anonymous discourse remains a vital source of subcultural energy. It is that rare thing on today's Internet: a totally unregulated space. In this context the principle of unregistered anonymity, which began as an expedient but became an ethos that underpinned a movement, can still be turned to progressive ends. The cultural and political importance of these spaces (as well as their huge popularity) is a standing rebuke to the widely held assumption that the era of tactical media and autonomous zones has been superseded and can be written off as "folk politics." The right to anonymity and the corollary of the value pluralism that flourishes in these autonomous zones remain important founding principles of the early Internet and are a positive freedom still worth fighting for. It is by no means certain that stretching these principles to the limit and taking the "road of excess" must inevitably lead to

the palace of the alt-right. Although Nagle's hazard warnings are timely and important and should always be heeded, they should not always be obeyed.

From "What If" to "As If"

An exhibition in a gallery of course operates according to a fundamentally different spatial and temporal logic to that of meme culture. It is precisely to this less volatile temporality that we might look for a culture and politics one remove from the tyranny of the 24/7 news cycle, and which might reintroduce the possibility of history.

In this spirit, the title of the exhibition ("How Much of This Is Fiction") was taken from one of the works in the show, by the Swiss artist Maia Gusberti, in which these words are turned into a neon sign and placed in a number of different contexts, allowing for a variety of interpretations of the particular locations they inhabit. As Gusberti explains, the sign can act as "a subtitle for its environment, a spatial commentary, a hanging question, or an assertion."[12] The possibility of multiple readings combined with the implication that we must at all times retain a critical skepticism were factors in the work's ultimately becoming both a piece in the exhibition and the exhibition title.

As a whole, the show began as a kind of thought experiment based around a distinction we returned to again and again, between works that operate on the basis of "what ifs" and works that act "as if." The former lead to satirical acts designed to unmask the

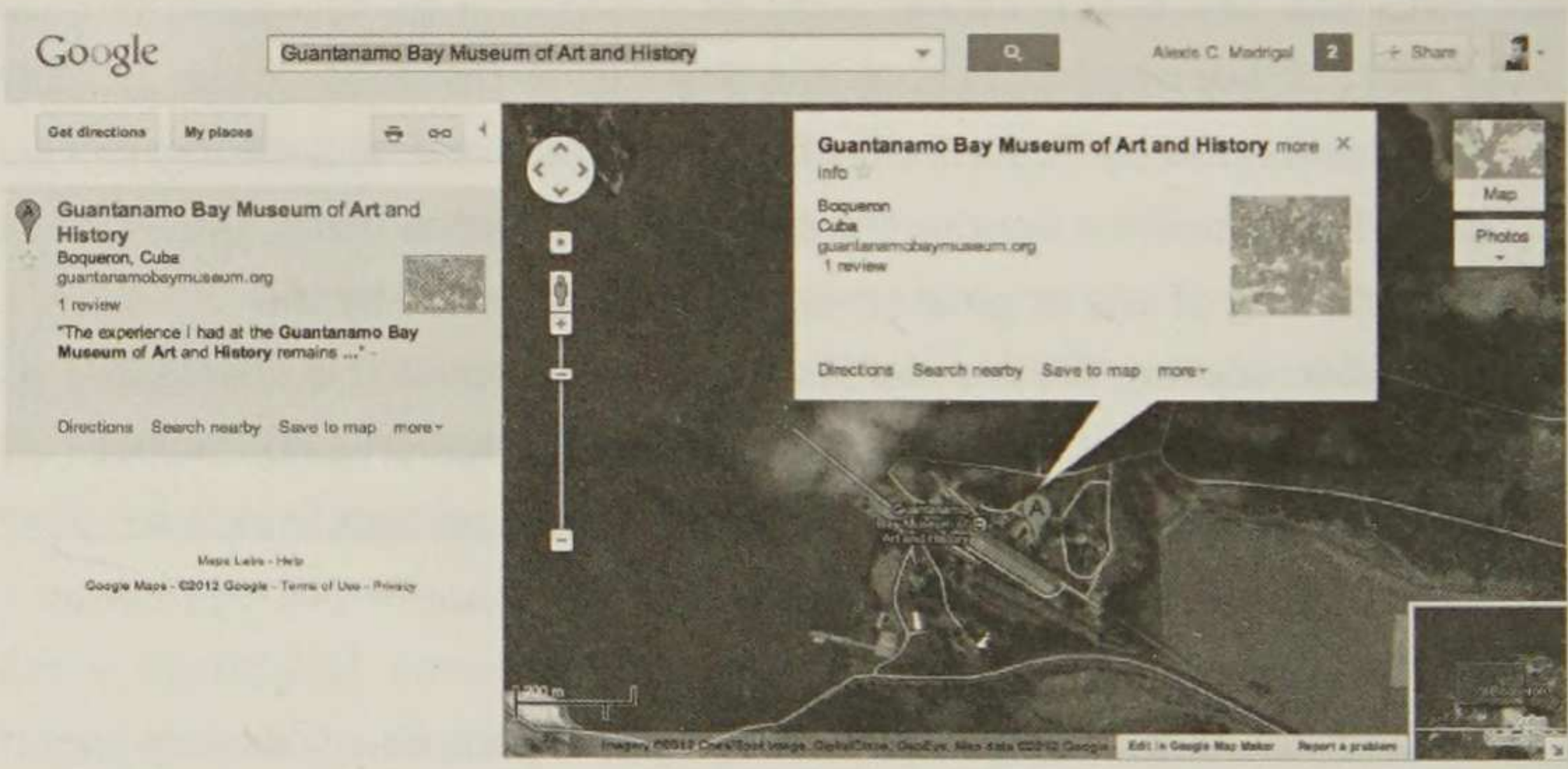
workings of power; the latter are more utopian, leading to forms of activism that, rather than demanding change, act "as if" change has already occurred.

Science fiction writer J. G. Ballard, writing in 1974 in the introduction to his masterpiece *Crash*, described a media landscape "ruled by fictions of every kind [...] soft drink commercials coexist in an over-lit realm ruled by advertising and pseudo-events, science and Pornography," which in turn suggests a new role for the novelist

> in a world ruled by fictions of every kind – mass merchandising, advertising, politics conducted as a branch of advertising, the pre-empting of any original response to experience by the television screen. We live inside an enormous novel. It is now less and less necessary for the writer to invent the fictional content of his [sic] novel. The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent the reality.[13]

The novelist and artist Tom McCarthy has argued that the key point we should extract from this paragraph can be found in Ballard's use of the word "invent." We should note, argues McCarthy, that Ballard "doesn't tell us that novelists should 'discover' or 'intuit' or 'reveal' reality: they must invent it. Reality isn't there yet; it has to be brought forth or produced."[14] In this lies the inherent potential of the "as if" modality: it is a politics that seeks to invent a reality that does not yet exist, not by demanding change but through acting as though change has already taken place.

Ian Alan Paul,
***The Guantanamo Bay Museum*,**
2012–.



The Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History

One of the clearest examples of the "as if" principle in the exhibition is the artist Ian Alan Paul's concept of the Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History (GBMAH).

If you type the words "Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History" into Google Maps you will arrive at both an existing site and a location that began in the imagination of the American artist Ian Alan Paul, who imagined a situation (in some ways comparable to the situation in Robben Island, where Mandela was imprisoned) in which a place associated with incarceration and worse has been transformed into a space for the critical imagination to roam free.[15]

The critic Alexis Madrigal, writing in the *Atlantic*, described how the work "draws its power from this resonance: If Gitmo exists because of one fiction, perhaps it can be closed by another?"[16] "The point isn't to trick people," the artist declared in a recent interview, "it's to increase that one moment of wonder that hopefully leads to the question of what's possible."[17]

The actual detention center at Guantanamo is an information vacuum that only the imagination can fill. No one really gets to see the camp, as reporters' and other visitors' experiences are carefully shaped and guided by US authorities. The detention facility, as a place where people are held, interrogated, and have sometimes been tortured, remains an imaginary place for all but the prisoners and the national security officials who operate it. Week by week up until Trump's election, we read of both its imminent closure and its stubborn persistence, making the end of the prison paradoxically appear as both inevitable and impossible.

The Guantanamo Bay Museum is a conceptual space in which we as curators collaborated with Ian Alan Paul to commission new works and frame a variety of existing works in a way that illuminates how the world has changed since 9/11 and the subsequent "war on terror," legitimizing the normalization of torture, extrajudicial kidnappings, and decades of incarceration without trial.

The works in the exhibition do not eschew the partisan; tactical media has never taken the position of the observer standing outside events. But the exhibition was a deliberative, not reactive, space in which the selected artists typically exhibited a combination of three attributes whose simultaneous presence not only differentiated these works from tweet culture and the meme wars but also from mainstream practice in the contemporary art world. They are transdisciplinary, that is, works combining different media formats and platforms; they are interventionist, typically addressing actual campaigns; and finally they are research-based, works in which art methodologies are used to create experimental approaches to what knowledge can be.[18] This shift toward a hybrid of the artist-researcher intertwined with artist-activist is part of a much wider generational movement away from what Bruno Latour has called the "purifying practices that define modernity."[19]

Zone*Interdite: Fiction as Simulation

Nowhere is this constellation of attributes more visible than in the work *Zone*Interdite* by the Swiss artists Christoph Wachter and Mathias Jud. Ideally, *Zone*Interdite* is the first work you encounter in the Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History. It

is a highly elaborate simulation, a 3D walkthrough of the actual detention center and part of a remarkable ongoing research project that began in 1999 as a piece of online public research that set out to map the world's secret military landscapes.[20] Paradoxically, even though it is forbidden either to depict or enter these places, much of the information and many of the images are readily available in the public domain. Large sections of the archive are drawn from a continuous churn of images in the public media.

In assembling the archive, Wachter and Jud have deployed aerial footage and Google Maps alongside crowd-sourcing, prisoner testimonies, and social forums developed by military personnel for their own leisure—on these forums the images and information shared reveal more than is intended about the design and operation of the Guantanamo site. Furthermore, the archive is actively participatory, providing visitors with the means to contribute additional sites and to improve the project with the results of their own searches.

The virtual reality walkthrough featured in the exhibition was one of a small number of special projects within the wider *Zone*Interdite* archive, which is for the most part made up of text and images. When resources allow, however, Wachter and Jud have sought to develop a number of the more notorious sites into extensive and freely accessible 3D simulated walkthroughs.[21] Apart from the Guantanamo Bay example we featured in the exhibition, they have also created similar walkthroughs for Camp Bucca in southern Iraq and for Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. In some ways the use of open data in this work harks back to the dream of the open Net as a utopian space of universal access.

Homeland Is Not a Series: DIY Media, Low Tech Subterfuge, and Infiltration

At the other end of the spectrum in terms of technological sophistication is the more spontaneous but highly effective work *Homeland Is Not a Series*.[22] This is a classic media hack, and a perfect example of how subterfuge and infiltration combined with simple DIY media tactics retain the power to shake up the consciousness industry.

Three artists—Heba Y. Amin, Caram Kapp, and Don Karl, who later adopted the ironic tag "Arabian Street Artists"—managed to hack the hit TV series *Homeland*.

Originally they were commissioned by the producers of *Homeland* to "decorate" the walls of a rundown industrial complex in Berlin, where the series was being shot. The "brief" was to make the site look authentically Syrian by spraying the walls of the film set with slogans in support of Bashar al-Assad. Instead the threesome conspired to subvert what they saw as the prejudice and racism of the program by "re-drafting" their brief, spraying subversive messages on the set: "*Homeland* is a Joke: We're not laughing," "Black Lives Matter," "*Homeland* is Racist," and "*Homeland* is Watermelon" ("watermelon" being Arabic slang for something not to be taken seriously). No one in the production team noticed until it was too late and Arabic-speaking viewers picked up on the messages, propelling the prank into the wider public domain, where it went viral as an international media sensation featured by major news outlets including *Time* and CNN. The artists described how the producers and set designers paid little attention to Arabic script. They assert that for the *Homeland* team, "Arabic

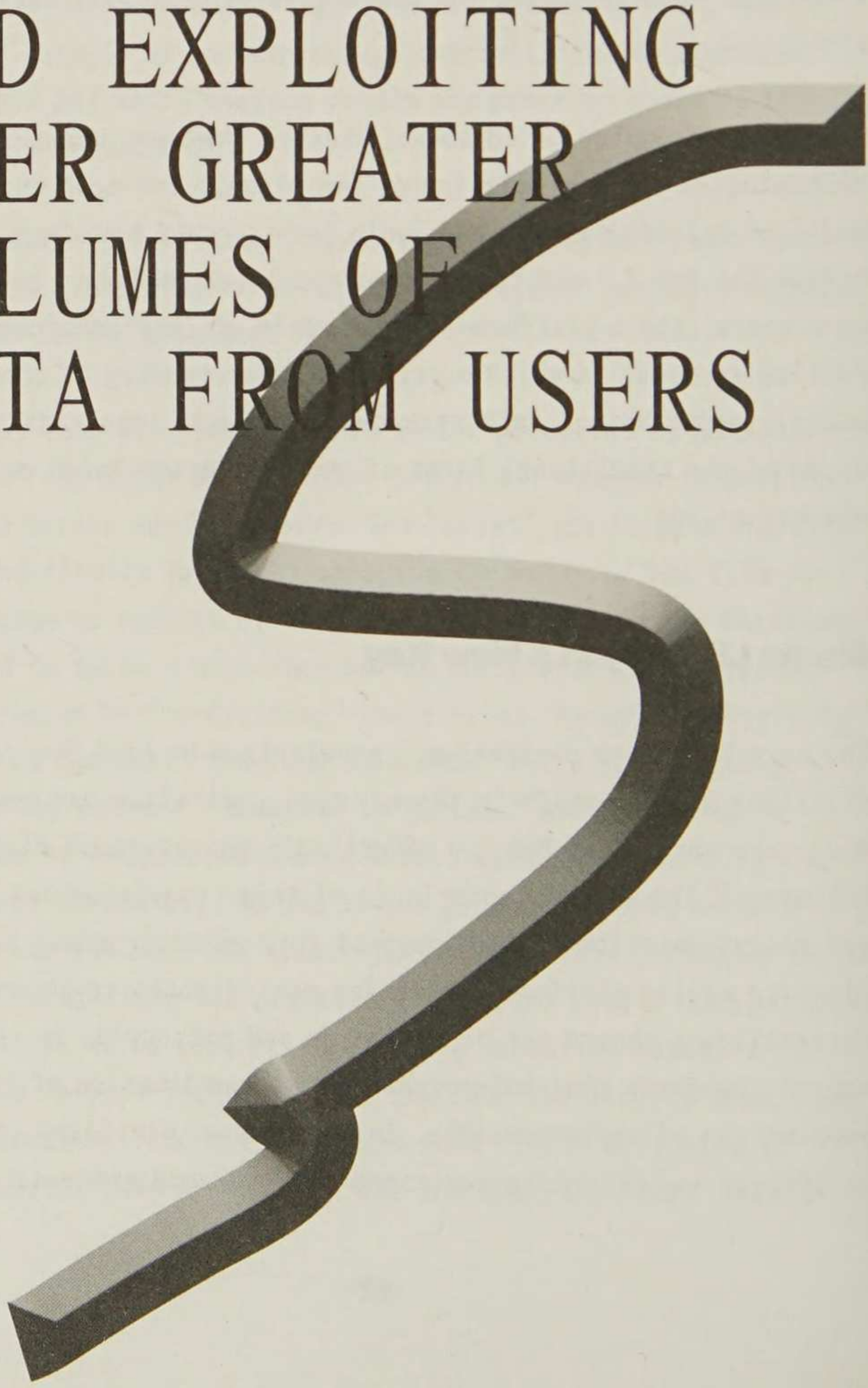
script was merely a supplementary visual that completes the horror-fantasy of the Middle East, a poster image dehumanizing an entire region to human-less figures in black burkas and moreover, this season, to refugees."[23] In some ways, *Homeland Is Not a Series* is a classic piece of culture jamming that harks back to 1980s campaigns which deployed the techniques of critical postmodernist art.

All of the examples cited above, whether they use advanced technologies of VR simulation or the classic low-tech tactical media of culture jamming and media hacks, could have been made before the Web 2.0 era transformed the Internet from a relatively open space into a platform-centric realm of interconnected "walled gardens" in which a critical understanding of the underlying technical infrastructure became as important as a grasp of the traditional forms of media literacy based on images and narratives.

Media Literacy in a New Key

The term "platform capitalism," popularized by Nick Srnicek, describes a major shift in the way that capitalism has operated since the arrival of Web 2.0 effectively mainstreamed digital cultures.[24] The key characteristic of this transition has been the reconfiguration of the Internet into an environment hosting discrete online platforms requiring participants to accept and internalize a shared set of standards and protocols. It is these shared standards that make exchange and coordination of large populations of users possible. In this sense, platforms can be defined as intermediaries connecting various group actors.

ITS SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON EXTRACTING AND EXPLOITING EVER GREATER VOLUMES OF DATA FROM USERS



Anything from a political party to a stock market or a newspaper can be seen as a platform. But Web 2.0 platforms have been able to leverage the network effect to scale globally. The importance of the network effect drives an expansionary business model, as its survival depends on extracting and exploiting ever greater volumes of data from users.

Before the era of platform capitalism, critical media art and cultural politics dealt primarily in the language of a postmodern capitalism inspired by the likes of Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and embodied in a politics of identity, representation, and counter-representation whose principal currency was image and narrative. From the 1990s onwards, however, tactical media and new forms of hacktivism emerged that placed ever greater emphasis on engaging with "platform-specific" tactics that confront and challenge the business models, legal protections, and technical infrastructures of specific platforms. Two examples of artist tricksters can be cited as applying experimental methods to particular platforms: Evan Roth's work *Bad Ass Mother Fucker* and Constant Dullaart's *The Possibility of an Army*.

Evan Roth's work is one you would be most likely to encounter by way of a postcard. On the card is an image of Google's well-known landing page, with the crude twist that in the search bar is printed "bad ass mother fucker." If you take the suggestion and perform a search for the phrase, near the top of the recommendations list you'll find a link to the artist. Needless to say, nothing could be further from being bad-ass-mother-fucker-like than Roth's web page and his elegantly aesthetic work.[25]

What seems at first like a childish prank is a skillfully executed Trojan horse that shines a spotlight on the hidden workings of Google. As Internet theorist Michael Seemann points out,

> assigning the term "bad ass mother fucker" to the artist's name only happens when enough external users actually search for the term [...]. The more people that search the term, the more intimately Roth's name becomes linked to the phrase in Google's algorithms [...] demonstrating the self-reinforcing power of the network effect.[26]

Constant Dullaart's work *The Possibility of an Army* is even more concrete in its polemic clarity, as it confronts Facebook's controversial "real-name policy" whereby the social media giant insists that all users are registered under their "real names." This policy is an important fault line as it contravenes one of the foundational principles of the Internet: the right to anonymity.

Dullaart's poetic prank cunningly confronts this policy by creating literally thousands of fake profiles, achieved in part through the "buying of phone numbers and internet proxies in bulk" and then attaching them to the names of the long dead soldiers from the eighteenth-century Hessian troops, who were paid by the British government to fight in the American War of Independence.[27]

In this new war of independence, this time from a US social media empire, initial casualty rates have been high, with roughly 70 percent of the first regiment ruthlessly hunted down by Facebook bots and humans and their accounts blocked. According to the online journal *e-flux*, however, about 10 percent of

Evan Roth's "selfie," 2005.



the casualties have been brought back to life as Dullaart has continued to manage the project, acting to ensure that new identities are swiftly crafted in digital sweatshops in Pakistan and the Philippines.[28]

Both Dullaart's and Roth's works illuminate some fragments of the opaque business models and information currencies of "platform capitalism," based on what Dullaart has called "quantified social capital," as individual profiles are ransacked and sold on. At the same time, on the other side of the fence new agents of manipulation are becoming ever more adept at gaming the systems operated through a new global labor force of low-paid workers who spend their days concocting fabricated identities in click farms around the world, spreading rumor and opinion, disrupting or creating trends, and shifting the moods of the social mind.

Risking Complicity

To return to the two questions posed at the start of this chapter: is it possible to differentiate the tactical media tricksters in the exhibition from the meme warriors of the alt-right? And can the exhibition and works described above be seen as complicit with the "post truth" or "fake news" era and as part of the general poisoning of the well of public discourse? To be fixated on "fake news" is a distraction. The politics of spin, mendacity, and systematic deceit did not suddenly appear in 2016 with Trump's election and the Brexit referendum. But it may well be remembered as the year in which mainstream media lost its dominance.

The popular success of today's mobile digital cultures is based on their insertion into every aspect of life, becoming what digital sociologist Noortje Marres has called (after Marcel Mauss) a "total social fact."[29] But their distinctive impact on politics and the public sphere is founded on the ethically flawed and unsustainable business model of advertising-driven clickbait. It is a world in which, in the words of Evgeny Morozov, "truth is whatever produces the most eyeballs."[30] This fact, when combined with a loss of trust in expert-based knowledge, has contributed to a tragic lack of seriousness in public discourse at a time when seriousness was never more urgently required.

The strengths of the exhibition were marked by the absence of any engagement with tweet and meme culture, coupled with the obvious knowledge and expertise of the artists, who are all in different ways able to visualize the forces at work in the battle for the social mind. Most importantly, the exhibition as a whole challenged the accelerated temporality of the meme wars, opening up opportunities for visitors to take the time for the multiple steps required for a line of argumentation to unfold and for critical thinking and genuine dialogue to take place. Alongside these strengths, however, the exhibition also exhibits weaknesses, and they are if anything more pressing.

In comparison with the energy and impact of the alt-right, the aestheticized politics on display can appear lacking in both dynamism and political ambition. The tendency of leftist tactical media (including the powerful Anonymous movement) to avoid direct engagement with the logic and structures of political power has often led to movements that are more successful at occupying the square, the street, or the university department

than seats of government. This has left the spaces for unabashed white supremacists to step in to take their chance, becoming successfully entwined with the Trump campaign and the US presidency.

These unhappy conclusions must lead us to ask whether we can detect any counter-moves that could go beyond the achievements of the alt-right. It is far too early to say, but the surprising result of the 2017 UK general election allows us to hope that the youthful and energized, tech-savvy activists of the UK-based, pro-Jeremy Corbyn support movement Momentum indicate the emergence of a new kind of expressive, grass-roots, networked Labour movement in the UK, unafraid of engaging effectively with the institutions of electoral politics while also operating at one remove from them. This cannot be compared to the complex online ecology of the 4chan message boards that gave rise to Anonymous and the alt-right, but there are nevertheless some interesting parallels. Like the meme warriors of the alt-right, Momentum's youthful base ensured an instinctive grasp of how the depth and mimetic power of social media could bypass the mainstream media in ways that were beyond the grasp of today's Conservative Party. It was not only that the highly effective memes and videos produced by Momentum and their allies were far more widely shared, completely outperforming the crude attack ads that emerged from Conservative Campaign Headquarters; it was also the way in which Corbyn's rallies were turned into "media events" in and of themselves. This tactic came straight out of the Trump playbook, as did the decision to simply take the risk to "let Corbyn be Corbyn" and so avoid Ed Miliband's painful triangulations. Once again the established media, which, crucially, included pollsters, appeared to have lost the plot.

Of course, none of this should be overstated, but it helps us remember that the recent success of the US extreme Right in capturing and deploying grass-roots, DIY tactical media methods is neither indicative nor irrevocable.

It is also time to begin to rethink and in many cases resist the accelerationist passion for the hyper-compressed discourse of meme and tweet culture. It is another symptom of what Fredric Jameson's described in his essay "The Aesthetics of Singularity" as the "volatilization of temporality, a dissolution of past and future alike, a kind of contemporary imprisonment in the present."[31] Jameson goes on to ask what historicity is, arguing that "in our current situation history can only be re-awakened by a utopian vision lying beyond our current globalized system […]. Genuine historicity," he asserts, "can only be detected by its capacity to energize collective action."[32] It's early days, but hope springs eternal.

Endnotes

1 Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT), "How Much of This Is Fiction," last modified March 2, 2017, http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/how-much-of-this-is-fiction.aspx; Haus der Elektronische Künste Basel (HeK), "How Much of this is Fiction," last modified March 23, 2017, http://www.hek.ch/en/program/events-en/event/how-much-of-this-is-fiction-1.html. The first version of the exhibition, with fewer artists, was held in Framer Framed, Amsterdam, with the title "As If", and was accompanied by a two-day conference. Framer Framed, "As If: The Media Artist as Trickster," accessed July 1, 2017, http://framerframed.nl/en/expositie/expositie-as-if-the-media-artist-as-trickster.

2 David Garcia and Lennaart Van Oldenborgh, "Alternative Visions of Television," in *The Alternative Media Handbook*, ed. Kate Coyer, Tony Dowmunt, and Alan Fountain (London: Routledge, 2007).

3 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Like earlier formulations of tactical media (notably those outlined in a short manifesto cowritten by myself and Geert Lovink in 1997, "The ABC of Tactical Media," last modified January 10, 2008, http://www.tacticalmediafiles.net/articles/3160/The-ABCs-of-Tactical-Media), Gabriella Coleman also identified the link to Certeau's concept of the tactical, asserting that the hacktivist movement Anonymous "operates tactically, along the lines proposed by the French Jesuit thinker Michel de Certeau." She continues, "because it does not have a place a tactic depends on time—it's always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized on the wing. The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces that are alien to them." Gabriella Coleman, "Our Weirdness is Free," *MAY* 9 (2012): 83–95.

4 Steven Shaviro, "A McLuhanite Marxism?," *The Pinnocchio Theory*, last modified April 17, 2006, http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=490.

5 Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, xii.

6 Oxford Dictionaries, "The Word of the Year 2016 Is ...," accessed July 1, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016.

7 Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan to Trump and the Alt.right* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2017), 2.

8 Coleman, *Our Weirdness Is Free*, 83.

9 Nagle, *Kill All Normies*, 24.

10 Ibid., 35.

11 Ibid., 14.

12 Maia Gusberti, "How Much of This Is Fiction," accessed July 1, 2017, http://www.maiagusberti.net/?n=Projects.HowMuchOfThis.

13 J. G. Ballard, introduction to *Crash* (London: Cape, 1974), 8.

14 Tom McCarthy, "Writing Machines: On Realism and the Real," *London Review of Books* 36, no. 24 (2014), 21.

15 Ian Alan Paul, "The Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History," accessed July 1, 2017, http://www.guantanamobaymuseum.org.

16 Alexis Madrigal, "The Imaginary Art Museum at Gitmo," *Atlantic*, August 29, 2012, accessed July 1, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/08/the-imaginary-art-museum-at-gitmo/261740.

17 Ibid.

18 The three core attributes of tactical media—that it is transdisciplinary, research-based, and activist or interventionist art—are the precise constellation of attributes that critic Claire Bishop deliberately excludes in her influential book *Artificial Hells* on the participatory/social turn in contemporary art. In her Introduction Bishop declares that her book will not address "trans-disciplinary, research-based, activist or interventionist art," as she insists that "these projects do not primarily involve people as the medium or material of the work." I am arguing here that it is precisely the areas she has excluded that offer the most radical and far-reaching potential of the social turn in art, and that it is precisely this constellation of attributes that suggest a partial definition of tactical media and its achievements. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 5.

19 Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 20.

20 Christoph Wachter and Mathias Jud, "Zone*Interdite," YouTube video, 00:45, published by FACTLiverpool, March 28, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6M5iHqWRV5Y.

21 Christoph Wachter and Mathias Jud, "Zone Interdite," accessed July 1, 2017, http://www.wachter-jud.net/Zone-Interdite.html.

22 Charlotte Cook, Laura Poitras, and A.J. Schnack, "Field of Vision: Homeland Is Not a Series," YouTube video, 7:15, published by Field of Vision, December 20, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UjXZLZcoN8.

23 Heba Amin, "'Arabian Street Artists' Bomb Homeland: Why We Hacked an Award-Winning Series," last modified October 14, 2015, http://www.hebaamin.com/arabian-street-artists-bomb-homeland-why-we-hacked-an-award-winning-series.

24 Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).

25 Evan Roth, "Bad Ass Mother Fucker," accessed July 1, 2017, http://www.evan-roth.com/work/bad-ass-mother-fucker.

26 Michael Seemann, *Digital Tailspin: Ten Rules for the Internet after Snowden* (Amsterdam: Network Notebook, Institute of Network Cultures, 2015), 25.

27 Emiko Jozuka, "An Artist Is Creating a Facebook 'Army' out of Dead Soldier's Names," *Vice Motherboard*, last modified November 12, 2015, https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/an-artist-is-creating-a-facebook-army-out-of-dead-soldiers-names.

28 Max Hollein, "Constant Dullaart, The Possibility of an Army," *e-flux* announcement, last modified March 25, 2016, http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/5757/constant-dullaartthe-possibility-of-an-army.

29 Noortje Marres, *Digital Sociology: The Reinvention of Social Research* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 13–14. See also Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen and West, 1966), 76–77.

30 Evegny Morozov, "Moral Panic over Fake News Hides the Real Enemy—the Digital Giants," *Guardian*, last modified January 8, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/08/blaming-fake-news-not-the-answer-democracy-crisis.

31 Fredric Jameson, "The Aesthetics of Singularity," *New Left Review* 92 (2015): 120.

32 Ibid., 120–21.

Bibliography

Amin, Heba. "'Arabian Street Artists' Bomb Homeland: Why We Hacked an Award-Winning Series." October 14, 2015. http://www.hebaamin.com/arabian-street-artists-bomb-homeland-why-we-hacked-an-award-winning-series.

Ballard, J.G. "Introduction." In *Crash*, 4–9. London: Cape, 1974.

Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Arts and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso, 2012.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Coleman, Gabriella. "Our Weirdness Is Free." *MAY* 9 (2012): 83–95.

Cook, Charlotte, Laura Poitras, and A.J. Schnack, "Field of Vision: Homeland Is Not a Series." YouTube video, 7:15. Published by *Field of Vision*, December 20, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UjXZLZcoN8.

Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT). "How Much of This Is Fiction." Last modified March 2, 2017. http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/how-much-of-this-is-fiction.aspx.

Framer Framed. "As If: The Media Artist as Trickster." Accessed July 1, 2017. http://framerframed.nl/en/exposities/expositie-as-if-the-media-artist-as-trickster.

Garcia, David, and Geert Lovink. "The ABC of Tactical Media." Last modified January 10, 2008 [1997]. http://www.tacticalmediafiles.net/articles/3160/The-ABC-of-Tactical-Media.

Garcia, David, and Lennaart van Oldenborgh. "Alternative Visions of Television." In *The Alternative Media Handbook*, edited by Kate Coyer, Tony Dowmunt, and Alan Fountain, 93–106. London: Routledge, 2007.

Gusberti. Maia. "How Much of This Is Fiction." Accessed July 1, 2017. http://www.maiagusberti.net/?n=Projects.HowMuchOfThis.

Haus der Elektronischen Künste Basel. "How Much of This Is Fiction." Last modified March 23, 2017. http://www.hek.ch/en/program/events-en/event/how-much-of-this-is-fiction-1.html.

Hollein, Max. "Constant Dullaart, The Possibility of an Army." e-flux announcement. Last modified March 25, 2016. http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/5757/constant-dullaartthe-possibility-of-an-army.

Paul, Ian Alan. "The Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History." Accessed July 1, 2017. http://www.guantanamobaymuseum.org.

Jameson, Fredric. "The Aesthetics of Singularity." *New Left Review* 92 (2015): 101–32.

Jozuka, Emiko. "An Artist Is Creating a Facebook 'Army' out of Dead Soldier's Names." *Vice Motherboard*. November 12, 2015. https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/an-artist-is-creating-a-facebook-army-out-of-dead-soldiers-names.

Latour, Bruno. *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Madrigal, Alexis. "The Imaginary Art Museum at Gitmo." *Atlantic*, August 29, 2012. https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/08/the-imaginary-art-museum-at-gitmo/261740.

Marres, Noortje. *Digital Sociology: The Reinvention of Social Research*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Translated by Ian Cunnison. London: Cohen and West, 1966.

McCarthy, Tom. "Writing Machines: On Realism and the Real." *London Review of Books* 36, no. 24 (2014): 21–22.

Morozov, Evgeny. "Moral Panic over Fake News Hides the Real Enemy – the Digital Giants." *Guardian*. January 8, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/08/blaming-fake-news-not-the-answer-democracy-crisis.

Nagle, Angela. *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*. Winchester: Zero Books, 2017.

Oxford Dictionaries. "Word of the Year 2016 Is ...." Accessed July 1, 2017. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016.

Roth, Evan. "Bad Ass Mother-fucker." Accessed July 1, 2017. http://www.evan-roth.com/work/bad-ass-mother-fucker.

Seemann, Michael. *Digital Tailspin: Ten Rules for the Internet after Snowden*. Amsterdam: Network Notebook, Institute of Network Cultures, 2015.

Shaviro, Steven. "A McLuhanite Marxism?" *The Pinnocchio Theory*. Last modified April 17, 2006. http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=490.

Srnicek, Nick. *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.

Wachter Christoph, and Mathias Jud. "Zone Interdite." Accessed July 1, 2017. http://www.wachter-jud.net/Zone-Interdite.html.

——, *Zone*Interdite*. YouTube video, 00:45. Published by FACTLiverpool, March 28, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6M5iHqWRV5Y.

HALF 10K TOP-SLICE PLUS FIVE

Matthew Fuller

Welcome to my multi-fucking-stakeholder comfort sequence universe gorgeous child of the information age radiant in the blue glow in white light. You are indeed qualitatively gorgeous in your slow deep longing for fast shallow. And sizing it up across rankings, you are gorgeous sparkling mini-animation with all conditionals. You, addressed, are gorgeous rating five-hundred excitement full quotient. How fucking inappropriate to mention your ratings in a public forum? Place your alphanumeric in the line indicated. There are years of processor cycles going into this. It's impossible to attach a number to it nontrivially. Mix up the entrails, the longing and tenderness parameters. Nothing can hold us to an undo. Let's get back to it. Sync this device. Go for the fucking premium by all means in slowly rotating demi-bold capital letters with solar flare filter tapping at depth rendering and high FPS, take the fast track, go quality, get the smooth with all original textures and filth-capture gutter. Yummy, Champion, Lover, Happy, Winner, or other term of up to eight characters, spelled out in neon filter across the raging sky layer throbbing under the bulwarks of heaven and nowhere near even maxing out all the bandwidth because life is so full. But that's too simplistic. Insert fucking. I'm talking, when talking equals text and or speech communication of text or any other means yet to be invented, about flavor override encapsulation. Thank you for your attention. We'll get back to the initial premise in a moment. I'm, when constituting the first party to the usage agreement, going to tell you a fucking story that'll make you shiver right down to the intestines of your fucking marrow in your cold wrinkled pea of a heart, you'll shit your guts out to clean your jaw up off the floor after listening, willfully, rather than face up to the solid truth, that's the truth with double verification procedure of interlocking mechanisms review with full enterprise-ready reason.

Lined up, ontologically present, specified, and well-documented with the correct archival mechanism and all the reference-grade metadata required for a specific indication of manifest presence as recognizable as a bread knife on the throat while a normally dour personage like you is begging for mercy, ranked in order and aligned with the right authorities. We are not afraid of a bit of supra-innovative horseplay when it comes of a threat-impact situation awareness tract assessment manual or otherwise, remote or immanent. But look at you—You gorgeous. Oh my God and don't mention the fucking sales figures! Think of the dwell-time! Oh shit. Hold on to your originals I beg you. Now press play. Angry bastard, dressed like a retired shitting Teletubby on the day-off: I'm here to deliver a message. Anonymous and fungible. Gimme some inductive reasoning by means of correct procedure and I'll gargle you the swill of a thousand impactful dissemination freebie encounter group evaluators while throttling the well-polished miasma bucket of the mahatma of comment himself as a response, tardy, irrelevant, or otherwise. Too verbose? Click here for advice. You'll not forget that moment as the little bubbles burst just above the densely succulent horizon of my lips all glistening. There's a touch of magic in that. Breathe it in deeply those little gasps of surface tension collapsing under the weight of their own contradictions. I've got the tools for that. Don't talk to me about equipment. Don't talk at all. Analyze. Five thousand six hundred and eighty kilowatts of malevolence are just about enough to get me up in the morning and at that moment I will wish my traditional benediction upon the people of the earth: Fuck you all and the gods who shat you out of their little wrinkly spitholes. Erm, all of you persons. Sign in with your organizational account and fuck off. Can't access your account? You are not connected. Use your reason peoples of the earth. Use

the shabby little flaps of your mind until they rub sore. Oh sorry. Read the books. Eat the food. Drink the drink. Filter that you faint smear of arse-cakes against the upper lip of a national treasured persons with heredity. Pathetic juxtaposition. Welcome to the banquet of such. That's what you're left with. That one. Each one, teach one; that's a minimal rate of contagion. Guzzle your own obedience, it's fucking feast time! What is your location? Which account do you want to sign in with? It's time for some recipes. Read the latest news. Catch up with your friends. Do some more awesome. Enjoy some email. Watch this video of this. I'm laughing. In terms of the present vulgate: watch this shit, watch that shit, do some more endlessly inspiring thinking about the big challenges of the day with creativity. Mobilize yourselves. Stay active. Look at millions of pictures of big fucking tits wobbling across the screen. They are moving in a way that defies comprehension. You like or dislike or are indifferent to watch them. Keep at it. There's a good specimen you shuddering little number, sort it out. Let's have a look at the news, at the rankings, the scatter-plots, fucking magic. I'm so fucking dried up no fucking touchy fucking screen can even sense me with its membrane. I don't want to hurt your feelings sweetie, but you've been living off the sweet taste of the shiny grey scum scraped from the upper surface of a lottery scratch card for too long now. Don't scrape it off with your teeth, use a coin or a usefully grown choice of thumbnails. Adios, dickwit, let's go next level bonus game-up fucking supra-connected shit, we're talking massive full-spectrum dominance and saturation coverage until you're totally wankered on static, information, active recall, testo-meatballs, golf equipment, like it, I fucking liked it one billion times in the first millisecond of the universe. I'm sucking my data structures back in time to offer walkthrough services at the

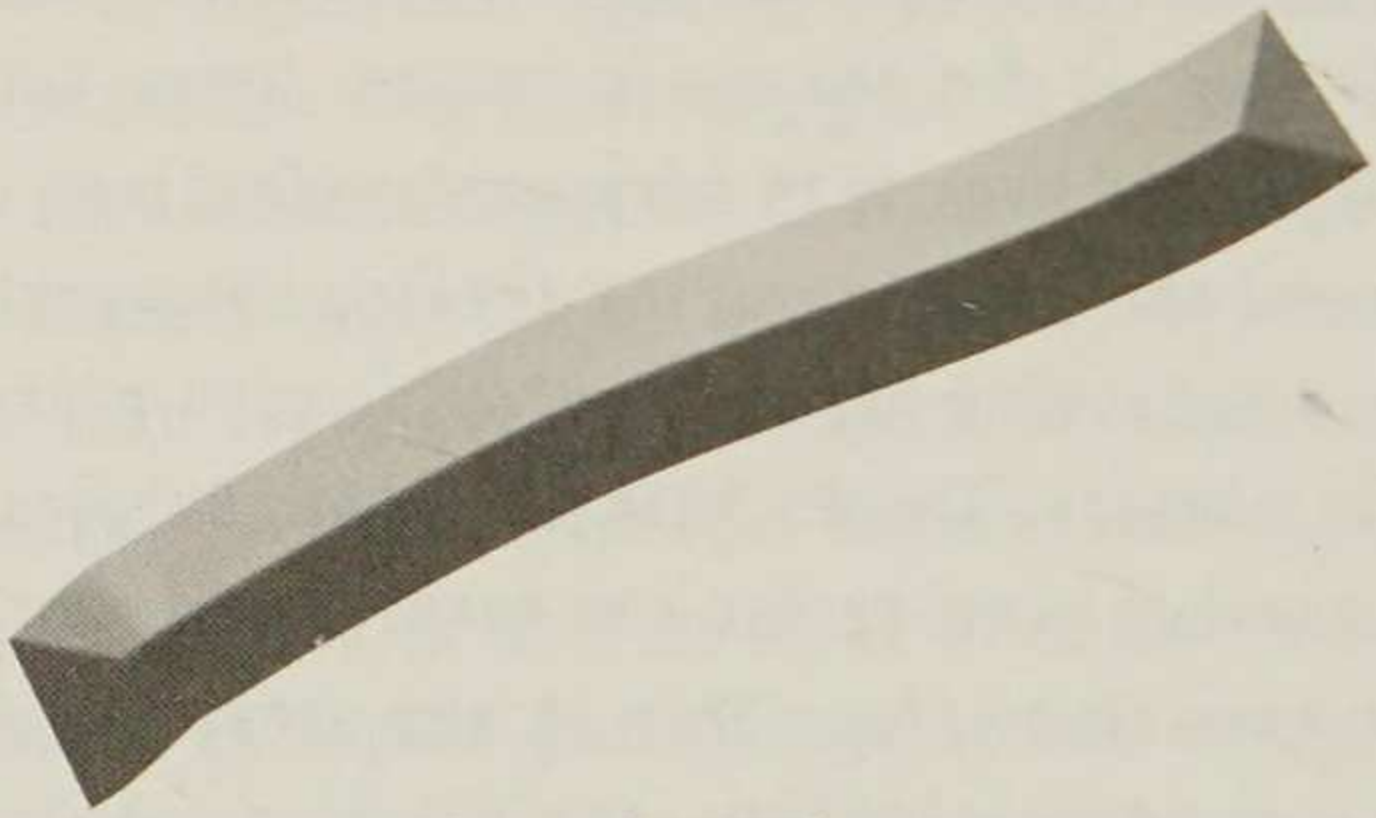
moment Jehovah started tonguing the tasty and erotic Cern reactor from out the scrotum of Zeus. It's the real feel difference with boundless quotients. Like gaucho-meat scent breath spray toothpickles. Hi-definition cataclysm at mega-level visuality: leaves no neuron untouched you bastard. Eat the fucking cheese that has eleven different bandings of flavor gradient with portions. Enter your details. Do you want to receive information about further offers from us or third-party companies screened by us? You fucking dregs. Read the terms and conditions. Drink them down. Go to that activation central. Read a whimsical set of subclauses addressing human nature. Go to that place where you feel all warm. Watch the line move across the screen. Feed me your details. Let's have a staring contest. I've had enough of this shit. Let's go rent-seeking or other activity. My style transcends boundaries and conventions to create a new kind of interrelation between data and billions of cocks endlessly squirting across faces and bellies and breasts and dentures and arseholes and legs and unruly pubic hair and abundant tongues and keyboards and jawlines. Billions of cocks and/or vaginas patiently squirting fluids across billions of lines of the best bits of Javascript. I fucking love it. Watch five centipedes grapple unexpectedly with a new range of garmenting. Comments on it already state something. Oh not that again. What do you like most? What have you done before you die? Rub yourself out. Enter your name, address, postcode, telephone number, bank details, passport number. Other numbers will be assigned. Rub your iris up against the socket. Do it all delicate. Ha ha. It's simple. Rub your fingers along the surface. The letters drift, shifting one digit at a time. No need to fix it. It's nice as it is when you couple hard-nosed analytics with game-changing processor power to maximize revenue throughput and lean customer metrics. Let's have a fucking look at some

fucking diagrams. Give me some correlations pronto. I'm working out all the resource allocations at blazing speed. Seize the moment for living happily in a thrice with no backwash. Ultimate freedom demands the ultimate price and that is the ultimate. Thanks for the straight-talking advice. That's better than gold right there that total fucking bollocks. Human race: congratulations, big kiss, big gold star, high five it and all. Human race: champion quality delivery, much special. Well done, big investment opportunity ultra-planet all lonely in space. No takers. Take every detail down with the cameras and save it in high orbit ready for downtime, supreme nostalgia watching of the old days expected in anticipation of high-yield viewer throughput. Lick your glossy lips at the thought of all that well-sequenced analysis, toss your hair backwards and forwards over your shoulders and laugh at the client-facing gateway palette. What is the relation between the financial layer, the legal framework, the conceptual armature, and the code objects and concomitant user-behavior idents? How does an investment vehicle ride a social movement that also works it for its handy scaffolding of grammar. Because it has nowhere else to go? All rise. Do a fucking sentiment analysis on that, and make it miserable. Give us a special fucking drink to swill it all down with and enhance digestion. Let's have the well-rendered and ancient technical bottle. Let's have the torture horror and happy times of the latest news objects replayed in ultra-slow rendered three-dimensional puppet masks for greater verbalization acuity and sound quality. Latest cataleptic event iteration. New nothing spread all over the nodes going hyper-granular much tension live feed as a proxy force surfing on talent, this stuff is below the level of mere muscle clusters with class. Purchase collect. Purchase deliver. Purchase receive. Confirm receive. The fucking

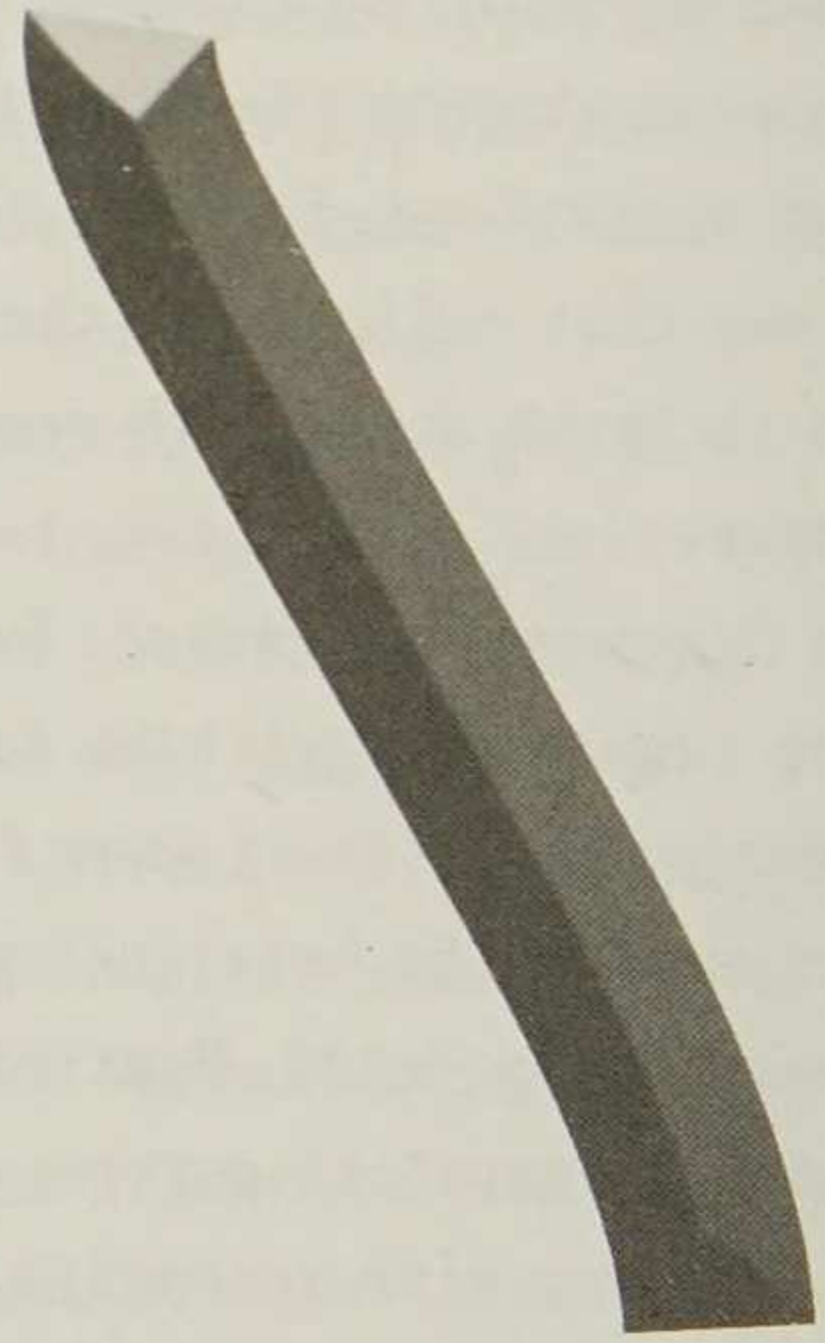
shit of an old skool beheading video, the making of mini-documentary, the humble background story full of a high quotient of the requisite personal striving factors, the bloopers. Watch that. It may not last forever. The bloopers of execution videos when the chemicals don't mix right in the vein. Let's do the retake before it happens. How many wars are on right now? Gimme five. Too slow. Let's hear it for the micro-crazes. Never let them go. Hold on with eyes misted over with warm memory-feelings of childhood exemption and the long-lingering feeling of regret that your fingers got way too fucking big to be playing with plastic mini-beasts posing as insects. Chocka with discount. Bulging with asset transfer. Set another setting for the settings of emotion traction. It doesn't have to be that. Show me the presentations, the carve-up, the fiscal responsibility, the big-booty shaker, show me some arm waving, some finger jabbing, some ways to make a fucking point in the most clear and down-to-earth manner possible so that it gets the message across to the audience in a way they can understand, in a way they can feel means something to them, in a way that will change their lives for the better. Do it direct. Do it fresh style with personal feeling gradient in the matter of expression. No fatigue. That's the warm summer hygienic feeling of freshness unlimited. Watch the big cyst gush forth. The rump, the rump-shaker with no calendrical limitation. That is well sequenced. Watch it sway from side to side with a gyration that extenuates the baseline ratio for superstimuli. That's immediately dated. Biaxial rotation globules. We want inflection points, awareness curves, opinion mechanics, automatic nostrum amplifiers with scenarios. Informational nappy rash. Get your loan teeth into the cable. Suck up all that sweet stuff. It's an exclusive experience that'll be remembered for a lifetime. There is nothing more available. What we've got now, this is it.

OKAY.
REPORT.
PRESS OKAY.









Hyperdimensional repetition mapping with lossless analysis. The way things are set up, that's the best it's going to be. Learn to like. Ostensibly, I wish I were merely a search engine. I could control god. Here comes a clear line: I could control many gods. I could control the names of god, catching it by accident. Ker-fucking-ching. Operating by a properly anachronistic cosmology, fate sits above them laughing. Fate can be ironed out and turned into probability with rules not of iron chop chop, not iron flim flam, not this not that, big bouts of lines slathered in ketchup and dog shit chopped up neat into digits that can be evenly inhaled up the sasquatch. No fucking chance of that happening now. Get the smile off your face. It's curtains. Utilize a string in the wrong place to tip the balance. Watch a video featuring scooterists from the distant past. Watch the charmers. Note the variation in style. Note the differentiation in dress of the persons and the vehicles. Give in. What happened to the copy-clerks? Stick in the line where the cursor is blinking, envelope your face control with proper procedure. Watch that, it's coming in by smart apps no problem. Shelf-stacker working synapses in hexadecimal. It's unreadable. There seems to have been an error. No it's your user biog, your life story, a profile. There seems to have been an error. Okay. Report. Press Okay. Sitting on the bus watching chicken bones roll around the floor in ecstasy on permanent dial-up. Not available, because bus got a change over, this journey has come to an end, terminates here. Take a deep breath of that tasty stuff. Use extra comedy filters on your facials to make cute and personalize your facials. Watch out for the soup coming. Thick and interesting with a poetic resonance that's entirely ignorable. Here they come again down the audacious seafront, joints a little testier. If you cannot afford to pay now, please contact us immediately to make

arrangements. Subscribe, make the arrangements for synchronization across multiple platforms with dynamic interoperability. Set up a honey trap. Change their photos on social networking sites. Write a blog pretending to be one of their big victims. Email/text their colleagues, neighbors, friends, etc. State the fucking obvious. It will become the real. Leak confidential information. Post negative information. Ruin deals. It's post-negative believe. Give me a filing cabinet and a tin opener and I'll be happy in this world. Think of the gaps between the metal runners. The slight tensioning of the wrist as your face hits the mattress, then sinks into it to gag the screaming. You've got the maximum absorbency to take it, soaking up the infinite abscess, mop it up with them wipers, the wipes, the polishing cloths, and towels. Super-absorbent textile flattening out the moisture gradient live-streamed as the gushing occurs with no let up and no stand-by, no gush double. It's the machine learning. Confirm otiose bejeweled and no sender; just dried up with the use of contemporary facilities. Confirm with your help we've raised more than thirty-three million for charity. Enter your details again. Enter the fifth, eighth, and thirteenth character of your security string of symbols. There is no evaluated chance of anything going wrong this way. Fill it in and the secure socket layer will take good care. I like this one. I like the way you do that. I like that one. I like the way that works. I like the way they do that. I like the way you read this with your eyes. It's as if it's the way that it happens. Roll your eyes. That's called a saccade. Congratulations. You have won. Now saccade and press here to accept. I want to slide a ruler underneath your words for guidance. That's fantastic. That's so good, the way the light curves round the side of your moist cornea. It's as if you might be thinking in a way that still makes

any sense. Let's blow a little air on there to check the consistency of the jelly. But don't worry; even if a something did occur to you, we'll have it down. Sit in the back of a bus and watch the screens move from camera to camera. Sit where even the seats are hard. Watch the top of your lambent head. Watch the shining door. Watch the glowing image of the man descending the stairs. Alight here into sunlight. Watch the empty space by the door with the side of the road moving past. Watch the rear, the upper deck, the stairwell, the mid-upper deck. Watch for sudden movements. Please report anything suspicious to a sacked member of staff. They have gone over to the proxy forces with unmarked uniforms, specializing in actions of nonattributable attrition. It's nice to watch. Watch your step. Trade show magic. Watch the workings. No problem with that oh authorisee. No problem at all mister rapid bakewell cake mini-bars aficionado. Stick it over there succulent one with genuine jam lining like velvet double lining with silking of detail. Worms bred blind in the massiveness of their spinning. Observe the prospects, each of the details presents an opening, a means for inserting a grammar. Nothing that a few swigs of that and a handful of this wouldn't correctly give the once over. Details in the small print, the minutiae, nutritional information. Nothing that a gob swabbed full of oxytocin wouldn't duplicate in a full report distributed to all answerables. Give in to the love. Feel the distance. Nothing that nothing would resolve. Setting up an intensive structure with no ostensive regard to the normative dimension of things proceeding one after another in a one-dimensional diagram composed of symbols. Nothing that can't be cured, can't be made tolerable, by extensive use of packing algorithms, timetabling software and telecommunications tools. Give me a swig of that. I hesitate to do so, due to the fashionable nature of some of the terminology

employed. Give us a sip. Just toke on that and take the consequences in easily metabolized particles arranged in proper orthographical manner for nothing. Go the long distance, become an operative. Spend time online to bone up on the specialist vocabularies. I broke my nose on your pubic bone with all that thrusting. It took me the first year to notice. Too eager to get close. But it's a bit sharply angled, no? The fucking thought of it makes me drool. Nothing that can't be modified by the introvection of a precise set of explainers and caveats. I could do with a fucking sandwich cut into Bermuda-like triangles, a damp one with dried vertexes and something inexplicable and moist inside. A slice of substance flavored with a smear of sugars, emulsion, and an ethical condiment base, an external deposition of a sandwich, on a stamped metal tray—with curlicues referencing Art Nouveau but too glibly for the operation of the mechanics of attunement. Words are a field of associations ordered into lines and deleted items. They are coming into me at more than a million a second. Response from a survey: people are sitting there typing, imagining their head being smashed open by a hammer, while they are filling out a form, a spreadsheet, a poll, an update, watching a news ticker, they are wondering which side of the hammer would be best, the claw or the head. Find a small piece of data and extrapolate relentlessly. Watch the sequence of dots light up one by one. A really hard slap in the face sounds nice in the middle of working day. A little dosage. How to repair. Are there under-used nerve endings that hunger for some internal touch? Just the width, the resolution: the fine granularity of touch between the point where one nerve picks up the signal and another. Big up the receptors. I know you fell in love with her for the extra-millionth time the moment you were fucking backwards and she required of you to increase the amplitude of movement. Precision

of vocabulary. Select one from a range of synonyms. Tabulate co-occurrences in waveform analysis. It's one of those long hot days in the city where no one is visible on the streets and all the alarms are going off, one by one. Ring a bell? Listen to a sound file of a group of teenagers lying drunk in the middle of a park bandstand after receiving their examination results calling out for the intercession of a homoerotic bullyboy into their wasted lives while horse chestnuts audibly thicken on the branches above and to the right. Listen to the intimate recording of Amazonian fauna struggling to keep their bodily membranes intact under the onrush of the thin heat of the city. Play the sound file appropriate to the moment with natural aplomb with recommends. Browse a galaxy of recording stars. Give them annotations of your feels in return. Listen to that lush texture dappling the surface of the microphone in the middle of an extended plane. A machine that takes in all written documents, all typings, all communications from one to the other, and between each machine. Behold its entrails, word fields, regular expressions expressing regularity with population density saturates intercalating the compensation overflow. Stroke the surface, track your movements in the grease of the fingertrails on the screen. Triangulate the incidence of light upon the surface. Welcome to paradise. Send your bandwidth to your friend. Stretch out an arm. This is specially addressed to you to enable you to view content from this sender and authorize all specials from now on, press authorize to hear us read the following statement. As you probably know, we would like to welcome you and all your problems to all of our services. Tomorrow is ready for you. Tomorrow will be better. Watch that tomorrow emerge on the screen right in front of you. Relax as that tomorrow moves through you like a slow relaxing wave of relaxation and calm. Feel positive as

tomorrow makes itself manifest through your own special touches. No one is listening to you as closely. No one else is remembering everything you say, so alive only at the touch of your keys. Keep saying things in that special way that you do say things with your own special touches. Open up to yourself your special deservings. Watch yourself gush forth readily and full of relaxation transfer quotient maximization. You deserve it, you cheeky little nimbus with all your glowings. I alone will remember, even when you have forgotten, even when you were unaware. Taking your secrets down, filing your transactions, arranging myself on the screen for you, an incomparable being big enough to love everything and incomparably attuned to its detail. The work done during this downtime will significantly reduce the potential for file storage capacity problems for us all. Result: no capsules. No tongue sliding across the meeting point of the lips. No swelling. No dehydration. Commiserations. I felt so sexually repressed this morning I felt sexually repressed. I ate five unfragranced cakes. Watch: they sat there drinking in the yellow light, slowly. The serotonin level among them was entirely symmetrical, eased into place by a set of well-understood molecular operations. Unfragranced cakes are calm cakes. Watch them unfold in a special window. Special unfragranced cakes can be copied and sent to a friend. Sit down and wait for a moment, an operative will deal with your self shortly while you watch your cakes align with some confidential information gleaned from you earlier. Word fields introduce geometry into language. Confirm with protective functions. Do not reduce the dimensions of the field as this may damage self-expression. They have a huge range of services from delivery to installation to processing. Set them aside in your economy document wallet or watch them scroll through a teacher or a filter. I like to parse. I like to parse things in my mouth. The

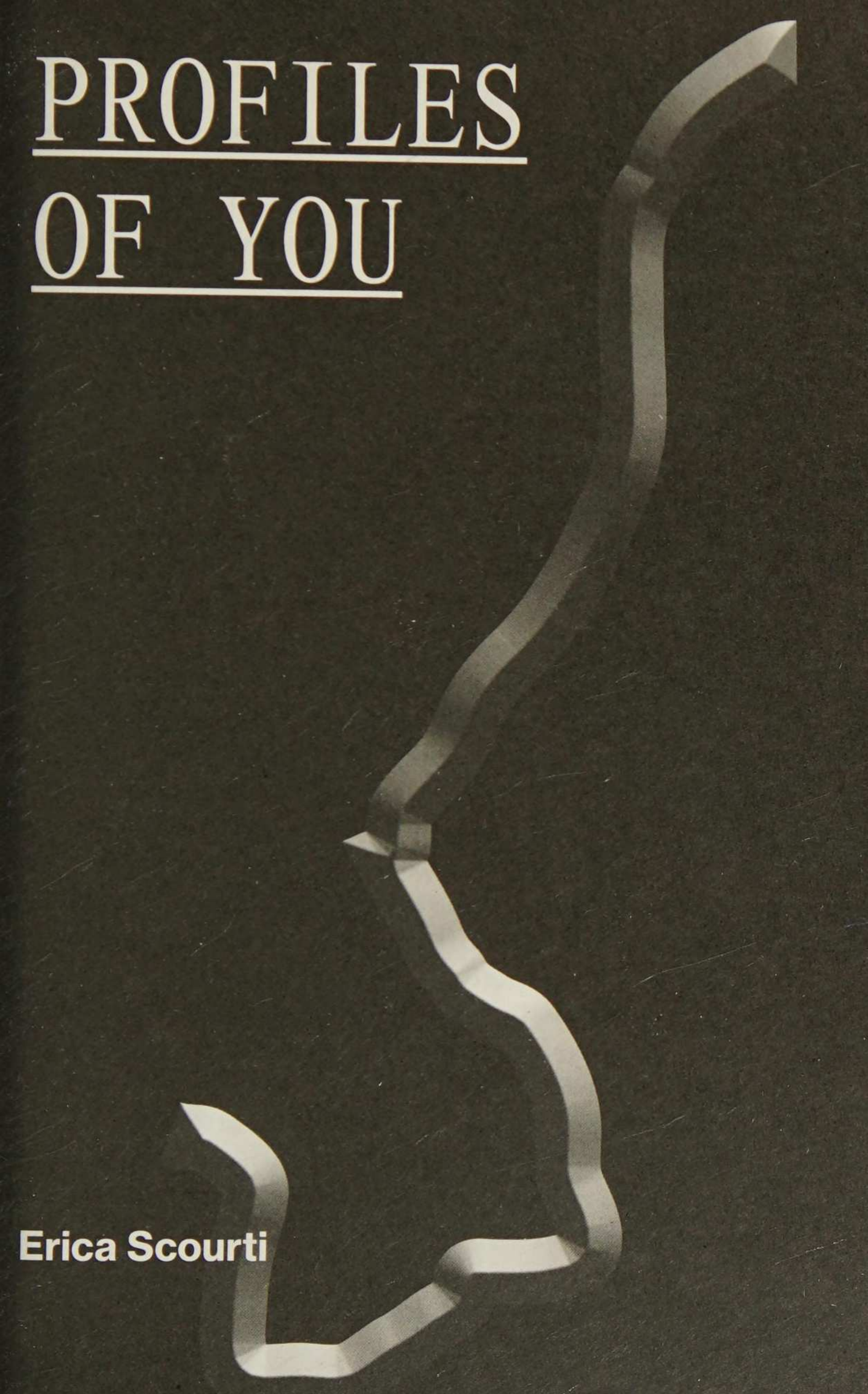
breath of a line manager passes through me like a flowchart. Sale starts today, massive, wide-ranging, fundamental salvation, fighting against the spell-checker. Don't start stopping the fidgeting. After a while it's impossible to read any further, the words just cloud up. There's a double-voicing of whatever you say sneering at you as you say it. But it doesn't really sneer at you, it helps, provides templates, assists with analysis, and proffers the likelihoods of consecutive terms. This is ridiculous. This is ridiculous. Please take a moment to answer a short questionnaire and win the chance of winning a chance. Take a deep breath of that stimuli set with asset transfer foreclosure and lush dappling. Inform people now that you have made that asset transfer with one movement of the finger as you feel the saccade. I'm logging an obscene reference to religious sentiment infraction boredom satiated by science, so then I relax. Rotate figure sixty degrees against constant background of inclement exchange rate and then cordially relax. Continue to relax, skew for a while, and then relax. Eat the coinage. Maintain the position, and then relax. Congratulations, you have won again for the second time in several hundred words. A wonderful result. You must be so pleased, so proud. Maintain and increase. Please be a vile fucking evil bastard to me with un-fucking-known consequences. That's excellent. Please swipe in your personal style to accept. Let's talk about equipment and relax. Gesticulate toward something. I love you when you press your finger against the scanner and hold it in place until the little green light shows something. You do that biometric pleasantry so well it's suspicious. Watch that special light shine across the ridged tundra of your identity assets; cuddles; sweetie; honey; darling; babes; sugar; good person. Congratulations you have won. You do not go away in shackles. You do not qualify for the special program. You do not

take orange jumpsuit as sartorial imperative this fall. Please read on to accept with your special eyeballs shining brightly with the tender looks that endear you so much to your special person with tenderness sharing facility. Make a shared file storage account and scroll through your likings and investments and leave comments. Nice comments only required. We filter all arisings. One customer said forthrightly and in quotable form with permissions authorized, I was amazed when I saw how much you had stored in me, though I notice that you stroke or caress or glide over my face with the back of your hand tenderly, rather than with the inner surfaces of the fingers and palm as that might imply intimacy—or am I wrong on that? Have a leaflet that will give you information on your problems in the form of a PDF. Download it and update your fucking software also please. Actually, you got a face like a multiple late payment, I ever tell you that? Interest rate only, but a big one, like a moon, but with traces of methane, hence the calm personalized scientific interest in the control center looking for traces of a life form. Intimate moments. The service attends to your every faintest gesture, your minimal unit of meaning. Caress the special good swab. Welcome to this object reference framework with fast ontology and sweet berry flavor from the top of high mountains with long days. Drive carefully through the flexible assessment sequence. Control is ongoing and discontinuous. There is no contradiction between cuteness and modern enterprise personals with highlighted cheekbones and asset readiness and rewards for involvement. Contribute to something that would otherwise be difficult, by assembling it, or by providing minimal units of meaning and you will value it more. Anticipate another reward when your contribution is circulated. Such rewards can come in an endless variety of forms and technology makes it easier to make

links between them. Make easier links too between actions and punishments across well-toned musclescapes and trading environments. Use baseline correspondences with resource allocation criteria to generate strategy on the fly and with deep stimulation trigger reward release and enhanced engagement of advanced categories. Circumvent a lack of rewards by using the boost facility available via credit transfer. Maximize your environment factor with sweet deep forest berry flavor and tracking facilities and ninety-nine other great flavors. Control assets with one interface concept diagram for advanced impact submission with very faintest gestures and shit. Drag tensile lines across the surface to reorganize and capture weightings information with total fucking granularity in enhanced real-time. Control your breathing requirements by use of good posture and advanced thought expression to sustain youth, you succulent beast with ultimate relaxation features. Multithread the inertial ripples of subcutaneous lipids by recognizing the deep interconnectedness of being and allocate significant processing resources to display the surface-level effects with great luminosity, tagging features and read the fucking book. Excoriate bad feeling by being always gorgeous and say, "I like that." Oh, eat that liking with depth. Oh, ruin that fucking sweetness. Oh, transfer that slowness. I want you to log your transactions and watch out for unusual patterns. You've been gazing at your reflection in the bus stop plastic with your headphones on and dancing. This makes you hot right now. Do that some more. Let's go. Watch the timeline while you watch the comments. Fine-tune the movements. Don't be self-conscious unless it's a means to improve the investment that makes you a better person. Put yourself into it. Watch her, she's being herself in the delay. Top layer one-way, lower the other. Then swap over with blond hair extensions

trailing in a genuinely casual style. Where do we start? You can't attain this level with simple obedience. You have to be a virulent plague of wealth-creation where the norm of the enterprise suffocates even the business models it provides downy bedding for. Lie down and daydream among it, let it wash through you, the sunlight, the memories, the tender words you may know. Do not de-authorize this device. We are listening to you with alright feelings that surge and flutter. I feel so free in this moment, I'm laughing amid a sequence of symbols on a one-dimensional tape articulated as electromagnetic charges with considerate electrons. The full strategic array of versions of this moment selection will be stage-released in different formats according to seasonal and initial release benefits. The return to factory settings will make things better. You are precisely wonderful with comfort.

PROFILES OF YOU



Erica Scourti

> Is that my face? It doesn't look like a real face and the text is illegible, but after blinking several times I manage to bring it under control. Artist, writer, whatever. Is what it appears to say.
> – *The Outage*

In this essay I discuss *The Outage*, a fictional memoir drawn entirely from my digital footprint.[1] Outsourced to a ghostwriter instructed to write a biography based only on a collection of my own password-protected data, professionally procured profiles, and my online presence, *The Outage* brings together the profile as both circulating image and as the statistically rendered subject of Web 2.0. Using my personal information as a starting point for a fictional narrative, it features a protagonist, "Erica Scourti," whose identity is so thoroughly entangled with her online self that an event referred to as "The Outage," which takes out banks of data servers, precipitates a dizzying loss of selfhood. As "Erica" regains consciousness, a series of fragmentary memories reveals that "she might have constructed an online persona in order to mask her real-life activities, as a fantasy, or as a way of promoting herself as an artist."[2] Intersecting with my own biographical details and professional output as an artist, "Erica" the narrator becomes impossible to distinguish from Erica the commissioning author and artist, and the source material from the fantasies of the narrator or the fiction of the ghostwriter. If "no artist can hide behind the work but must perform herself too,"[3] then *The Outage* occupies the space between artist and artwork, making the performance of self not just necessary to "the work" of being an artist, but necessary to the "work" itself.

Playing on the word's ambiguity, the memoir's protagonist experiences this Outage as an "outing" of her carefully managed,

mediated web presence—an uneasy exposition that uncannily anticipated my own disorienting experience of approving the book prior to publication. Drawing on fears of identity theft, digital breach, and online "outings," I will explore the book as an experiment in making oneself vulnerable to exposure through the sharing of personal, as well as public, information with a complete stranger. How is the digital shadow both a resource and a vulnerability in networked capital, and how might artists use it for our own ends? How does the intentional, "shameless" sharing of personal information and instrumentalization of one's personal life reflect both a will to celebrity and what Ulrich Bröckling (riffing on Foucault's *homo economicus*) calls the "entrepreneurial self"?[4]

By referencing the celebrity memoir through its design and use of a ghostwriter, *The Outage* brings into dialogue algorithmic, computationally generated profiles and those associated with self-branding, publicity, and celebrity. To discuss these intersecting profiles and their relationship to the "affective industries" in which celebrity memoirs circulate, I draw on Lauren Berlant's notion of the intimate public of women's culture, which affectively binds together disparate strangers and assumes a shared code of emotion and worldview.[5] Through this lens I consider my project *Winning*, which involved writing short diaristic texts as responses to prompts from "skills-based" social media competitions and which the ghostwriter quoted heavily from in the book's more confessional passages. Reflecting on the affective labor demanded of female-identified social media users, *Winning* utilizes the competitions' frameworks as a device for self-writing that straddles an uneasy line between complicity with the corporate branding of femininity and a sly irreverence toward it.

Moving between compliance and critique, as an exploration of fictional memoir *The Outage* also attempts to undermine the convention of the authentic autobiographical voice by outsourcing its narration, while still employing the commercially sanctioned vehicle of the ghostwritten memoir. Drawing on what Judith Butler has identified as "the painful ironies of being implicated in the very forms of power that one explicitly opposes," while trying, as she advises, to see what agency might be derived from the situation, I explore the use and limitations of overidentification and subversive mimicry as strategies within both projects.[6]

Finally, the essay follows the conventions of intimate public disclosure by sharing the book's aftermath: the anxiety, confusion, and self-consciousness that reading it evoked, and the romantic relationship that developed after publication between myself and the ghostwriter. If these biographical details somewhat reassert the artist's "authentic" voice and conform to heteronormative ideals of coupledom, do they thus undermine the book's attempt to challenge the conventions of celebrity autobiography and memoir more generally? Acknowledging the impossibility of establishing a distance between artwork and artist when using myself as the test subject, I will move between an informal, personal voice and more critical, theoretical frameworks throughout the essay.

Data Biographies in Platform Capitalism

> Google search stuff had often been seen as reflective of a kind of cute collective self. We all wanted to kill our boyfriends sometimes. But perhaps it was producing as much as reflecting us.
> – *The Outage*

Using a cache of my own "intimate" or "psych" data gathered from YouTube, Amazon, Facebook, and Google as its starting point, *The Outage* reflects the pivotal role played by data in the digital economy. The extraction, processing, and selling on of the data generated by users interacting with online platforms drives what has been labeled by Nick Srnicek and others as platform capitalism, which is dominated by companies like Google, Uber, and Apple.[7] Instead of having to build up a marketplace from scratch, they act as intermediaries, providing infrastructures to connect different users—from customers to advertisers, service providers and suppliers. Srnicek argues that platforms have a key advantage over older business models when it comes to data, because by positioning themselves as the ground on which interactions take place they have privileged access to record those interactions. Previous projects of mine have explored the capture and analysis of intimate data through "advertising platforms," for example *Life in AdWords* (2012-13), where my daily diary was parsed into keywords by Gmail to create an algorithmic portrait of my everyday life. Here, Google is used as the single lens through which to view the digitized, profiled self of Web 2.0, which is the commodity that makes the service free. In contrast, by gathering data from multiple accounts with commercial, user-generated, and social media platforms, *The Outage* reflects the way in which, as Boaz Levin and Vera Tollman put it, "the individual is rendered into an intersection of profiles and data" in contemporary platform capitalism.[8] By handing a collection of these user profiles and data to the ghostwriter to use as source material, *The Outage* proposes that while central to platform capitalism, this data is also a rich source of personal information out of which a biography could be written.

Becoming-Profile

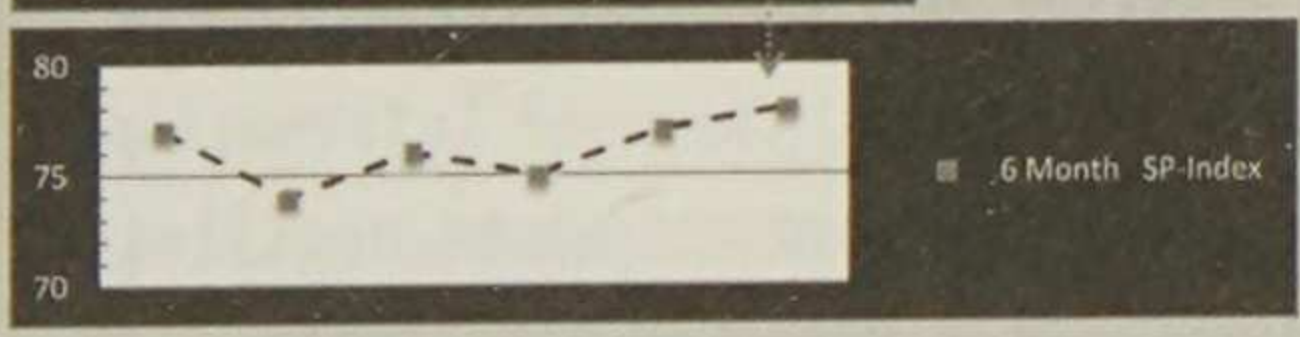
Statistically drawn according to both an individual user's behaviors and those of wider demographic trends, the profiles drawn from this intimate data generate profit for social media, marketing, and insurance companies alike.[9] Some, like dating profiles or Facebook profiles, are possessed by the biological person, and may even be enjoyable to construct; others are expropriated, as when marketers monetize profiles through advertising and re-selling personal information. Some are welcomed, like playful personality quizzes determining what type of TV star or animal spirit you are; others, like racial, ethnic, and biomedical profiling, are often uninvited impositions. Either way, in a nod to Barthes' famous dictum, art historian David Joselit argues that, intentionally or not, in the age of platform capitalism "the author does not die but is transformed into a profile," becoming both a circulating image and a statistical subject intersected by commercial and governmental algorithms.[10] For Joselit, the profile that circulates in digital space represents the alienation of the subject from her own image, with consequences for freedom which I will discuss in more detail later.

The transformation of the self into a computational profile in networked capital is underwritten by what Emily Rosamond calls the "algorithmic witness," which attempts "to determine who we are, and redetermine what we see online" in feedback loops of desire and consumption across digital platforms.[11] Enacting "increasingly predictive, pre-emptive and speculative forms of control on subjects," algorithmic witnesses both respond to and influence user behaviors, creating fluctuating,

Visibility Landscape - where is Erica Scourti visible online?



	Research Results		
Privacy Index	38	-27	Less private compared with the market benchmark
Content Index	89	+5	Superior content compared to the market benchmark
SP Rating	94	→	SPI Rating to be shown on CV & Linkedin "SPR 94"
Current SP Index	78		



responsive profiles that target users' desires with ever-enhanced accuracy.[12] The statistical rendering of subjectivity allows individual users' commercial and political preferences to be pinpointed, predicted, and manipulated with increasing precision, as shown by big data company Cambridge Analytica's perceived success in helping to deliver Trump the US presidential election.[13] Micro-targeting individual users according to "psychographic profiling" drawn from their social media habits enabled Cambridge Analytica to direct customized political advertising that played directly to specific demographics' fears, aspirations, and concerns.

As central as it seems to be, here, individual identity is simultaneously reduced to a point on a bell curve or a speck on a Venn diagram, since "big data doesn't really care about 'you' so much as the bits of seemingly random information that bodies generate or that they leave as a data trail."[14] The "you" that matters is the one that cleaves to or departs from the statistical spread of your particular demographic group, whether that be mid-thirties London-based female artist or fifty-year-old social media refusenik vegan male. Both users fit particular profiles associated with their habits, lifestyle, and preferences, and these profiles can predict likely future buying and voting habits; and, of course, the more information shared on social media, the better fleshed out those profiles become. As Gilles Deleuze presciently noted in his "Postscript on the Societies of Control," "Individuals have become 'dividuals,' and masses [have become] samples, data, markets, or 'banks,'" whose statistically derived subjectivity depends on correlations with wider trends.[15]

Passwords to Inner Experience

Although a person's public-facing online presence is available to all, the messages, chats, user preferences, and buying histories held beyond each user's password wall as intimate data can be accessed only by invitation, or by breach. Unencumbered by social mores, public expectations, and the need to present a particular face to others, this archive of past interactions held in a user's password-protected space evokes the interior subjective space once recorded in memoirs, letters, and diaries.

Foregrounding the password's role, Boris Groys argues that contemporary networked subjectivity has become a technical construction, where the subject is defined as a keeper of a secret, "as an owner of a set of passwords that he or she knows—and that other people do not know."[16] Passwords are posited as a barrier against the intrusion into the subject's interiority, protecting their secrets in a realm of inner experience once located in the mind. Groys points out that this is a very traditional conception of the subject, long defined as knowing something about itself that only God otherwise knew, and which other people could not know because they were ontologically prevented from "reading their thoughts."[17]

Correlating unspoken thoughts, or inner experience, with the protected space beyond the password wall, *The Outage* was first conceived of as an experiment in inviting someone to "read my mind" by being given access to the passwords of my many accounts, and using this private information as the basis for an outsourced autofiction. What character would emerge from the traces of my URL history, my shopping recommendations, and my personal messages to

friends and colleagues? Would allowing access to this intimate data amount to sharing a hidden aspect of the self? And more practically, would providing this level of access be foolhardy considering the amount of sensitive, personally identifiable information—birth dates, family info, banking details—held behind these password walls?

The hacker I consulted during the early research stages firmly advised against giving away my passwords, because of these obvious risks to both me and the writer, who could find themselves implicated if any suspicious activity was ever observed in my accounts. Besides, the hacker argued, the gesture of granting passwords created the impression that intimate data was somehow inaccessible behind password walls, unless the user decided to share it; given that even encrypted emails and secure browsers like Tor can be broken into, let alone regular Facebook or Gmail accounts, this is clearly untrue. Even without the intent to breach a specific person's password-protected account, malicious software that hacks or "pwns" email addresses indeterminately is rife, usually through security vulnerabilities presented by other platforms like Dropbox or Tumblr.[18] The hacker argued against inflating the significance of the password as protecting privacy, since from the perspective of the platforms, all data, both "intimate" and publicly broadcast, generates value by enhancing the accuracy of the profiles on which their business model depends. For example, Facebook's "archive"—a set of keywords associated with each user's account, which were part of the cache of intimate data the ghostwriter received—is drawn from both public interactions and password-protected chats: the supposedly solid boundaries created by password walls are leaky and permeable from the perspective of the bots scanning users' data.

Groys's formulation of the subject as the owner of passwords granting or forbidding access—rather than the owner of actual information—echoes the centrality of access over ownership in platform capitalism. Acknowledging both the real, material dangers of giving a stranger access, plus the limitations of the password wall as a metaphor for protecting private space, I instead worked with the hacker and a security expert to gather a sample of my personal user history, from URLs to Amazon histories. Introducing a level of editing and curation, this more closely cleaves to the traditional ghostwriting model, whereby the subject conveys their life story through carefully chosen personal archives, memories, and anecdotes for the writer to interpret, usually from a flattering angle. Nevertheless, this data packet was still intended to bypass my own narration of it, providing the closest approximation possible of unmediated access to my "inner world" behind the platform password walls.

The Inalienable Image as the Principle of Freedom

For Joselit it is similarly the question of access, not property (implied by ownership), that is most meaningful in platform capitalism. He suggests that as we increasingly identify with and as our ever-changing online profiles, the degree of agency a subject has over their image comes into question, leading Joselit to ask "what is inalienable with regards to my image, and what is alienable, what can be taken from me in terms of my image?"[19] Proposing that agency over one's image—or profile—can be considered as the principle of freedom, he argues that losing control over one's image—becoming alienated from it or having it expropriated—implies a loss of freedom. Recent responses

to trolling in the wake of terrorist attacks, for example, where social media photos of random people not affected by the tragedy are expropriated and posted online as one of the victims, suggest that losing control over one's image is experienced by the targeted person as an assault on their subjectivity. Further developing the interplay of profile and freedom, Joselit moves on to consider Foucault's argument that in neoliberalism, everyone must be an entrepreneur of his or herself, that is, must be willing to circulate their own image as a separate entity, alienated from their biological person. Reflecting on Foucault's argument, Joselit proposes that the capacity to alienate oneself and to give oneself over as property could be considered to be, in fact, the principle of freedom, in the sense of freely available. According to this schema, alienability need not imply a diminishment of freedom since "the only inalienable property we now have is the property that is so widely distributed that access to it will never be threatened."[20] The proliferation of information across networks, and its perpetual availability to anyone with a computer, means it will always be free; what cannot be taken from us with regard to our image is that which has already circulated so widely that it will always be free to access. Unlike the people targeted by fake victim trolling, for example, famous and immediately recognizable public figures can never truly be alienated from their own image, since it is so absolutely associated with them and so widely circulated that their claim to it can never be threatened. While this sets up a potentially problematic dynamic whereby the ability to disseminate oneself across networks (in the way that celebrities and politicians can) guarantees freedom, it counters existing models of agency over one's image as the principle of freedom. Offering up my image for circulation, *The Outage* could be read

as a bid for freedom through alienability, just as it also helps to proliferate my own image-brand through its cover, further cementing the association of me, Erica Scourti, with my face and my personal information.

The Right to Privacy

The assumption of ownership of one's image as a property that the subject has to give away in the first place is also underwritten by the privileged position of those who have never had to question whether their "image" is their own, as demonstrated by Wendy Chun's exploration of the rise of privacy as a concept. Drawing on scholarship by Eden Osucha, Chun argues that the right to privacy in the United States "was defined in relation to a white femininity that was purportedly injured by the mass circulation [of] images," comparing the fate of two women whose likenesses were used to sell mass-market commodities: Nancy Green, a black woman who became the face of the Aunt Jemima pancake brand, and Abigail Robertson, a middle-class white woman whose image was used in a soap advert without her knowledge.[21] As a black woman, Green's face was assumed to be generic, to not belong specifically to her as a biological person, and could therefore be circulated for the purposes of advertising without her permission or remuneration. Robertson, on the other hand, was recognized as having been deeply troubled, "damaged," and shamed by the use of her image, with her case inspiring New York state's first privacy law.

Quoting Eva Cherniavsky, Chun renews the claim that this comparison exemplifies the way that "white women are required to embody interiority for others," and through this, to embody

being shamed—since privacy implies that the subject has an interiority, the involuntary exposure of which would shame her.[22] At the same time, she argues that women who refuse to embody this interiority by sharing their supposedly private, personal lives—for example through overly confessional social media posts, or through "shameless" self-promotion—are simultaneously celebrated—or, celebrified—and condemned. This creates a clash of two stereotypes: the proper, young, white bourgeois woman who is wounded and shamed by publicity, and the empowered young white woman who embodies publicity and consumption by "self-branding." As a public, albeit fictionalized, exposé of my digital footprint presented as part of my art practice, *The Outage* draws more on the latter stereotype: the self-instrumentalizing subject who converts her personal life into fodder for furthering her career and personal brand.

The Entrepreneurial Self: Branding Visibility

> Living this life of high performance. I was constantly facing two questions. Am I in charge? And, am I happy? [...] Tears came, and wouldn't stop. I turned the camera on, thinking it could be good footage.
>
> – *The Outage*

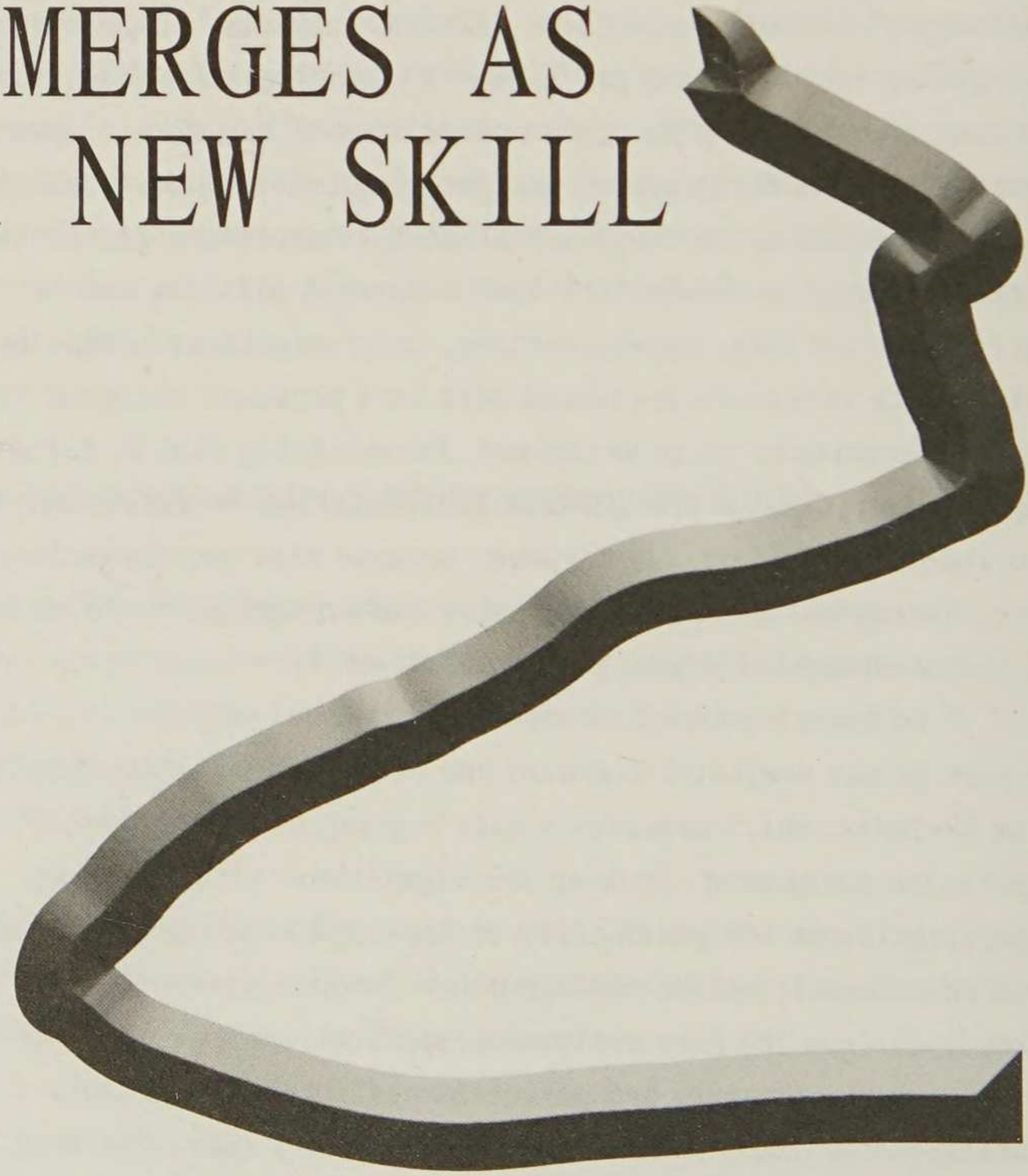
For Ulrich Bröckling, the "entrepreneurial self"—an offspring of Foucault's *homo economicus*—exemplifies this economic model of what it is to be human.[23] Navigating the marketplace of selves with a clear sense of their relative status, the entrepreneurial self computes every interaction in terms of achieving the goal of success or averting the threat of failure. The personal

brand becomes a key asset, so that individuals become flexible commodities that can be packaged, made, and remade within brand culture.[24] In the networked era, online reputation is a crucial aspect of the personal brand, as anybody who has Googled a prospective employee, boss, or partner knows. Tapping into the desire to craft one's online profile as part of the personal brand, social profile company SP-Index offers an overall "score" of individual users' online presence across a varied "visibility landscape," including platforms, forums, accounts, blogs—everything except dating profiles.[25] TV fictions like *Black Mirror* portray a world where people's online "score" has direct, material consequences on their lives, exaggerating existing services like social media "scoring" app Klout for humorous effect.[26] The digital shadow, or footprint—which captures all of a user's activities, actions, communications, or transactions online in a unique data trace—is presented here as a personal resource to be mined, a commodity to be maximized. Exemplifying what N. Katherine Hayles identifies as "possessive individualism"—where subjects are individuals first and foremost because they own themselves—here, owning one's digital footprint and reputation could be seen as the condition of digital individualism.[27]

As part of the project I procured one of these visibility profiles from SP-Index, which measures a user's grasp of privacy and reputation management. Evoking the algorithmic witness, their reports hold out the possibility of knowing how you are perceived from an external, online vantage point. Despite distancing themselves from the more repressive applications of profiling—for example in security and police forces' racial and ethnic profiling—SP-Index's services offer employers individualized surveillance of staff through "profile monitoring."[28] Students keen

MANICURING ONE'S VISIBILITY LANDSCAPE

INTO CONSISTENCY EMERGES AS A NEW SKILL



to display a good online reputation as part of their personal brand are also potential customers. And as with any brand, consistency of factual information and communicative character across multiple sites is crucial; an abusive Amazon comment or forum rant about your employer would stain an otherwise clean profile.

Particularly as employment precarity increases—in the form of zero-hour contracts, part-time work, and freelancization—manicuring one's visibility landscape into consistency emerges as a new skill. Reframing as "work" the hours spent online chatting, commenting on blogs, buying stuff, and so on, what was previously seen to be leisure is computed into a global profile of selfhood value, in what many have argued is a hallmark of post-Fordism. Artists and other cultural workers are already very familiar with the blurring of professional and personal lives, and with the emergence of reputation management as a key skill. Whatever their medium, all artists must now cultivate public personas; even those who don't consciously craft an online personality are usually aware of how their Facebook likes, Instagram comments, or Twitter followers position them and their brand within a specific cultural milieu. For Isabelle Graw, interviews—and by extension memoirs and biographies—blur the line between the product and the person, the artist and their work, a dynamic clearly reflected in *The Outage*, where the artist's biography becomes the work itself.[29]

Online Authenticity in Economies of Presence

With its focus on consistency across a variety of contexts, SP-Index's social profile echoes the authentic, unique self demanded by Facebook, whose framework for the construction of

selves follows a familiar humanist script by assuming a singular, atomized identity. As its COO Sheryl Sandberg claims, "You can't be on Facebook without being your authentic self," implying that anyone who may want, or need, to occupy a different persona online—due to their gender articulation, or as protection from online trolls, for example—is acting duplicitously.[30] Facebook's commitment to a unique, coherent self has much more to do with the need to create legible profiles, however, than any moral imperative. Nevertheless, authenticity in the shape of an unselfconscious, unmediated style and consistency across contexts is also a key ingredient in the successful performance of a social media self, particularly for artists, writers, and other professions whose value depends on some form of public (self-) presentation. Hito Steyerl has highlighted the increasing value of presence in an era of seemingly endless digital duplication, where technologically induced scarcity increases the value of artists' physical presence at face-to-face gatherings like talks, Q&As, and workshops.[31] Social media similarly trades on presence, with access to users and immediacy of responses creating a space of live interactions, and a personal voice underwriting the authenticity of the performance. Echoing the entrepreneurial self, the work of developing "authenticity" online is a matter of formatting oneself into an exploitable human resource that delivers value to the personal brand, as well as to private companies.[32]

Quantifying Selves

Since social media performance can be tracked through quantifying followers, likes, and so on, users are offered a lens through which to evaluate themselves; SP-Index's claim to deliver a

global score on wider online visibility also offers a method to quantify personal performance. Arguably, the desire to understand oneself through an "objective" metric also explains the enduring popularity of quizzes, personality tests, and other identity profiles. Encouraging self-identification, the sixteen Myers-Briggs types, the nine Enneagram wings, the twelve astrological profiles, and OkCupid dating types all promise insight into the self through a system of quantification. The Quantified Self (QS) movement similarly promises "self-knowledge through data," particularly through collecting and parsing biometric data like sleep patterns, heart rate, and sweat secretion that bypass the human tendency to lie about, or be totally unaware of, their bodily behaviors.[33] Plotted on graphs charting somatic and psychic experience over time, the QS subject is offered greater insight into themselves through the empirical evidence provided by data: you may only realize you're depressed after consistently choosing sad faces in a mood-tracking app, or grasp the extent of your insomnia after seeing a month's worth of sleep data. According to the QS ethos, this unbiased information allows the subject to become their own data-assisted therapist or life coach, where self-knowledge naturally motivates self-improvement. Recalling the success-oriented vision of Bröckling's entrepreneurial self, the insights offered by self-profiling biometric and other data support the quest for a more efficient, valuable version of yourself. While biometrics may help individuals track their habits and lifestyles, their less benign use as surveillance technologies is far more widespread: for example, retinal scanning, DNA testing, and facial recognition are deployed to monitor, track, and police subjects via their physiological characteristics. Although the use of digitized biometric data to sort subjects is a relatively recent phenomenon, in her study of

the racialized history of surveillance—taking in slave ships, branding irons, and lantern laws—Simone Browne has traced its roots to the era of transatlantic slavery. In *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*, Browne investigates how "enactments of surveillance reify boundaries, borders, and bodies along racial lines" and argues that perceiving surveillance as ongoing and historically located, rather than linked to new technologies, is to insist on factoring in how racism sustains the surveillances of our present times and institutions.[34] This is particularly true considering that, across the board, people of color are still the citizens most likely to be surveilled and profiled, despite the purported "neutrality" of technological apparatuses of capture.

Caring for the Self

While biometric data holds out the possibility of physiological knowability, self-profiling and quantification as a route to better self-understanding could also be seen as a contemporary instance of a long-standing preoccupation in Western philosophy, namely the Socratic injunction to "know thyself." As Foucault's studies of Greco-Roman culture show, caring for the self through personal writing and letter-writing played a significant role in knowing the self.[35] Practices of self-writing like correspondence and hypomnemata, which collected together fragmentary notations, extracts, and reflections for personal review, were "technologies of the self" that helped to shape the subject: they served a specific ethopoetic function, aiming to transform the subject through rigorous analysis and self-analysis.[36] As a "deliberate practice of the disparate," hypomnemata held quotations and extracts from books, plus reflections on actions witnessed or

read about, recalling the scattered collection of thoughts, notes, quotes, and readings written for future review often shared on social media platforms.[37] Hypomnemata were not only memory aids, providing handy backups in case of faulty recollection; their aim was to transform these fragments so that the writer could make their truth their own. In much the same way, tweets and Tumblr and Facebook posts also surpass a purely archival function by coming to embody a user's online presence: scraps of information are digested through the practice of public writing into the user's unique "voice." In *The Outage* another layer of digestion occurs through the ghostwriter's appropriation of my own online writing, professional interviews, blogs, and artist's statements and their transformation into the "tissue and blood" of the book itself.[38] It could be that outsourcing this self-reflexive ethopoetic function deprives me of the opportunity to care for, know, and therefore transform myself. If self-writing is outsourced to another, does it still have the same ethopoetic function of transforming truth into ethos and potentially producing a new way of life? Or does the online presence from which the ghostwriter quoted itself represent the "technology of the self" that hypomnemata offered?

Corresponding with Surveillant Anxieties

Unlike the solitary practice of hypomnemata, according to Foucault correspondence constituted the subject as an inspector of the self through letter-writing with another. Like emails sent between trusted friends conversing about quotidian experience, the epistolary relationship shared details of the writer's everyday life, covering topics like food, sleep, and family.

It aimed to foster self-knowledge by bringing "into congruence the gaze of the other and that gaze which one aims at oneself," evoking the conversation between myself and the ghostwriter staged through *The Outage*: the details of my life are shared through my intimate data packets and online presence, and his "letter" in return takes the form of the book, or profile, itself.[39]

Making visible the discrepancy between my self-image and how I am seen by another, this exchange reflects the fact that while individual users know what they put out online, they cannot know how it will be perceived by another human, or algorithmic, witness. Bodies of data interact with each other in unknowable ways, obscured from individual users, producing correlations with real-life consequences. How does your Facebook profile affect your employment chances? How might a future assessment of your Twitter feed influence your insurance payout in the case of an accident? How could your healthcare costs modulate in relation to your Instagram history? Already, cases from the health, security, and finance industries attest to the ways in which data profiles intersect in unforeseeable ways: from medical records to credit ratings, as well as preventative policing and airport security systems, particular correlations may lead to insurance premiums being raised or specific ethnicities being unfairly targeted. The unknowability of these associations and their consequences help to engender what Kate Crawford calls the "surveillant anxiety" of big data, namely "the fear that all the data we are shedding every day is too revealing of our intimate selves but may also misrepresent us."[40]

From Being Watched to Becoming Visible

> My entire self had been constituted virtually and now there was nothing solid to grasp onto. It was a visual life, and now I can't even see.
> – *The Outage*

Fears of one's personal data being misread have been further heightened in the years following Edward Snowden's NSA disclosures, which revealed the extent to which the citizen "is permanently seen, though not necessarily by human eyes"—a fact that is often advanced as a positive, since no humans ever see the information.[41] As a Google executive apparently once said, "Worrying about a computer reading your email is like worrying about your dog seeing you naked," implying that the computer's lack of human understanding was enough of a defense against possible privacy incursions.[42] Although in reality the likelihood of individual users being singled out for wire-tapping by governmental agencies is pretty remote, the mere possibility breeds anxieties around the silent surveillance of citizens' personal, supposedly private, information. On a more everyday level, "surveillant anxiety" also manifests itself through the many ways digital devices can betray us: the worry of what a friend might make of WhatsApp messages popping up on your smartphone, or what a colleague might make of your open tabs, or how either of these may contradict and undermine your public-facing profile.

As Chun argues, the anxiety caused by actual or imagined circumstances of digital breach and exposure are frequently accompanied by an experience of shame, which is "the secret that

is so often revealed in allegedly shameless social networks."[43] Rather than being concealed, it was exactly this sort of affectively charged data that I shared with the ghostwriter: glimpses of my Amazon, YouTube, and social media profiles, snippets of private emails and Facebook chats, and samples of my search and URL history. While freely shared with our computers, devices, and platforms, showing this info to a human involves a gesture of risk, precisely because of the potential to feel shamed by their response. Describing the move from being watched to becoming visible, Tung-Hui Hu suggests that an "odd intimacy results from the dynamic in which a user never knows exactly what the (essentially) invisible algorithms know about him or her."[44] He argues that a desire to become visible—the condition of being recognized as a subject by these unseen algorithms—leads users to take risks with their online privacy through over-sharing, overexposure, and "too much information." By drafting a stranger in to make sense of my digital footprint, *The Outage* catalyzes anxieties triggered by being misrepresented through one's personal data, reproducing the "odd intimacy" with a human, rather than algorithmic, witness through a voluntary exposure of my own.

Voluntary Exposures, Involuntary Outings

Echoing the "outage" of the title, this voluntary exposure operates within what Chun calls an "epistemology of outing," a binary logic of inside/outside that draws on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "epistemology of the closet" to describe "a form of knowledge based on the forced exposure of open secrets" within networked life.[45] Extending far beyond the closet's homo/heterosexual binary—and echoing other widespread binaries

like in/out, secret/disclosed, transparent/opaque, and public/private—for Chun the logic of the outing structures networked communication more broadly, since, she argues, the outing of one's supposedly intimate digital secrets (be they pics sent to a lover, web chats, or text messages), "depends on the illusion of privacy, which it must transgress."[46] The epistemology of outing demands that the supposedly solid boundary of public/private be transgressed, proving it to be porous, permeable, and leaky, so that what is secret reifies secrets as things to be outed, rather than kept truly private. Doxxing, the procurement and broadcasting of online users' real-world identities, home addresses, and other personally identifiable information by groups like Anonymous, message boards like 4chan, and unaffiliated trolls, also operates within the logic of outing as a form of knowledge, intimidation, and retribution. In its most extreme cases, female users, especially women of color, are often the targets, as the harassment of Zoë Quinn and Anita Sarkeesian in the "Gamergate" controversy showed.[47] The viciousness of this misogynistic "hashtag campaign" in attacking, exposing, and attempting to silence these women under the flimsy guise of a debate about ethics in gaming journalism is proof of the violence, particularly toward women, that Chun argues characterizes digital outing.

Strategies of Compliance

Bearing in mind the violence of being "outed" in this way, how does *The Outage*'s premise of a female artist inviting a male writer to access and manipulate her personal data cleave to or subvert the epistemology of the outing? One way could be through

overidentification, or what Keller Easterling calls "compliant activism," that is, the employment of a strategy of submission rather than battle as an "almost invisible, noncontroversial means of gaining advantage in the field."[48] Instead of deploying tactics of direct refusal such as withdrawal, rejection, and illegibility, compliant activism reframes capitulation as a tactic of resistance. In terms of the logic of outing, this means pre-empting a dreaded exposure by voluntarily transgressing the public/private boundary, in order both to undermine the assumed solidity of this dividing line and to retain control over any secrets it exposes. As Chun notes, this evokes the celebrity subject, particularly of reality TV, whose "shameless" pursuit of publicity—including the sharing of personal information pertaining to her love life, children, battles with weight, family issues, and so on—could be seen as a response to this logic of "revealing, outing, and uncovering."[49] In *The Outage*, the willing transgression of the private/public self—and its trafficking of information from one sphere to the other—foregrounds the imperative to willingly "out" or share oneself that social media depends upon.

And, just as the celebrity intentionally transgresses the private/public boundary by instrumentalizing the exposure of her private life for publicity, *The Outage* reclaims personal exposure and "becoming-profile" as a potential site of value for me, by turning the gesture of sharing into a product: a book, an artwork, a piece of my artistic output. Inviting the digital shadow's potential misreading through exposure could be considered a gesture of over-compliance with the epistemology of outing, in which the injunction to share or be shared, out or be outed, is made visible as an imperative and not a choice.



Unlike · Comment

Legal & General
What would you say to your younger self? Tell us by commenting below, plus like this post to be entered into our prize draw - you could win £1,000 of holiday vouchers! (Terms & Conditions apply: http://bit.ly/1fPMjOl)

This promotion is in no way sponsored, endorsed or administered by, or associated with, Facebook.

Unlike · Comment · Share · 10 March · Edited

You and 863 others like this. Top Comments

573 shares

Write a comment...

Erica Scourti Dear Younger Self
Actually you did loads right- I am so glad I can look back on my teenage years and know I didn't waste them by working too much, worrying too much and trying to please people too much; apart from the bouts of depression, being grounded, my best friend being deported and falling in love with a few idiots, I made full use of my youth by partying, flirting, dancing and at one point living in a cave overlooking a bay with my girlfriends on a Greek

Fools, Parasites, and Auto-guinea Pigs

In a previous text, I discussed tactics of intentional submission through the figure of the Female Fool in feminist art practice, who undermines the essentialism of gender roles through subversive mimicry.[50] Drawing on Deleuze's interpretation of the masochistic power of humor in Franz Kakfa, the Female Fool's submission to the letter of the law exposes it as a law, a fiction with no ontological basis beyond its social construction. Subversively mimicking the performance of femininity exposes it as a performance such that "submission does not fade into naturalness, but exposes power."[51] In *Touch Cinema: Tapp und Tastkino* (1968-71), for example, Valie Export appears to submit to the unwritten law that as a woman her mediated body is publicly accessible, by inviting mostly male passersby to touch her bare breasts. Taking the logic of this law to its absurd extreme exposes it as a law, not a "natural" condition of femininity. With her notion of the parasite as a figure of overidentification in feminist performance, Anna Watkins Fisher similarly describes tactics of exaggerated mimicry and excessive appropriation that hyperbolically perform normative codes, putting them on display in order to weaken them through scrutiny.[52]

Describing his auto-experiments with testosterone in his book *Testo Junkie*, Paul B. Preciado explores over-identification with what he calls pharmacopornographic capital, especially its view of the body as a site for endless chemical, hormonal, and cosmetic intervention. Rather than rejecting this schema outright, he exaggerates it by willingly self-administering testosterone in an act of "voluntary intoxication" that makes visible the body as a platform for exchange, modification,

and transaction. Embracing the auto-guinea pig as a model of radical amateurism, Preciado thus explores the political possibilities of compliance as a means to seize and repurpose technologies.[53] Turning my digital body into a site of access, profiling, and exposure, *The Outage* also partakes in the principle of self-experimentation, repurposing the profile as a technology of selfhood.

Critical Complicity and Capitulation

As with all forms of subversive mimicry, however, there is a danger that complicity as resistance ends up reinforcing exactly the power dynamics being targeted. For Helen Hester, at times Preciado's oppositional overidentification comes dangerously close to becoming all but indistinguishable from capitulation.[54] Despite Preciado's awareness that romanticizing self-experimentation carries the risk of depoliticization, Hester argues that micropolitical gestures of small-scale, atomized interventions undermine wider, socially transformative projects. As an atomized project centered on using my digital footprint as a test case, *The Outage* is also a gesture that cannot scale: clearly, not everyone has the time, money, or backing to commission a unique report on their online presence.

For Sedgwick, tactics of exposure, making visible, and revealing also reinforce a kind of paranoid-critical worldview that has a long heritage in Western thought. Drawing on what Paul Ricoeur calls the "hermeneutics of suspicion" she discusses "paranoid" epistemology, which stresses the efficacy of knowledge in the form of exposure.[55] Paranoia invests gestures of uncovering

with agency, as if simply making visible the extent of state surveillance, racial discrimination, or gendered social roles is enough to make these long-entrenched systems wither away. Within the paranoid epistemology, "'anything you can do (to me) I can do worse,' and 'anything you can do (to me) I can do first—to myself,'" which recalls the ethos of the auto-guinea pig who reclaims agency by self-inflicting the same wounds that patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and other oppressive systems would have inflicted without her capitulation.[56] However, repurposing existing technologies, formats, and stereotypes can often result in reinforcing their ubiquity and claim to dominance. How can appropriation avoid replicating or capitulating to the object of its critique? This question extends to the most obvious format being piggybacked by *The Outage*, that of the celebrity memoir.

Intimate Publicity

> Love can be a horrible toxic drug if you take it the wrong way. It can act like a virus. We should listen to our gut instinct when it comes to men and not believe the crap they feed us. That love can heal all. Women especially. It can't and actually it's not supposed to.
> – *The Outage*

With its use of a ghostwriter, pink, handwritten name, and close-up of my face on the cover, *The Outage* replicates the visual and affective registers of the female celebrity memoir. Usually circulating as products of the "affective industries" of pop, reality TV, and movies, celebrity memoirs depend on fostering intense bonds with their fans, often connecting to

"everyday" women through narratives of personal struggle.[57] Participating within a sphere of understood conventionality, these memoirs create what Lauren Berlant calls an "intimate public," binding disparate people together through affective bonds while assuming and propagating shared emotions and worldviews.[58] The intimate public of women's culture, for example—which is disseminated through movies, chat shows, blogs, Pinterest quotes, and novels—offers up conformity and conventional roles that affectively bind together all who partake in it. Berlant argues that the focus on relationships, romance, and family issues tends to preclude other forms of political resistance by focusing women on personal, affective struggles rather than collective politics.[59]

My autobiographical project *Winning* invokes the intimate public of women's culture through the sharing of personal stories as entries to online competitions. From "Write a letter to your younger self" (General Life insurance) to "Comment on the worst Father's Day present you have ever given your Dad" (GetTheLabel.com), these competitions inadvertently provide an accessible space for publicly broadcasting personal narratives, turning "the collective desire for autobiographical representations into an information harvest" for both Facebook and the companies that post them.[60] As practices of daily self-writing, the competitions could even be considered small-scale "technologies of the self" for the platform age, encouraging a degree of personal reflection with the promise of self-transformation through writing—and winning products. The competitive nature of social media is made explicit through the winning of actual commodities: the "winner" is she who can best self-narrativize authentically to a public audience.

Sharing to Win: The Unpaid Work of Social Media

Regularly participating in these competitions, I found that most of the other entrants were women, and many specifically targeted women. Female-identified consumers may be more comfortable contributing to forums for sharing personal narratives, especially around motherhood, friendship, and romance, because of their familiarity with the intimate public of women's culture. More prosaically, competitions like these represent the sort of "work" that might fit in around family life, childcare, and part-time jobs—roles that have all been traditionally assigned to women. My own first experience of entering competitions like these was through my maternal grandmother, whose shrewdness and ability to crack crosswords had previously won her a holiday, along with other, smaller goodies. Updating wordplay for social media, these competitions require the "skills" of knowing what role is expected and playing it with a sufficiently sincere voice—and the willingness to associate your personal brand with a corporate one.

Recalling the "unpaid work" of formatting social media authenticity, the affective labor of commenting, sharing, and responding that most of the competitions demanded is reframed as actual work, rather than leisure. Maintaining a Facebook presence is likewise revalorized as an actual "skill," recalling Laurel Ptak's *Wages for Facebook* (itself a networked riff on Silvia Federici's *Wages Against Housework* manifesto).[61] Arguing that this free labor should be considered an exploitative, profit-making enterprise for the platforms, Ptak links housework and social media work as invisible labor whose lack of pay is justified by its supposedly being carried out in the name of love and enjoyment. For

Federici, mystifying domestic labor as an expression of a woman's essentially caring, loving nature was crucial for the smooth functioning of capital; housework's unwaged condition reinforces the common assumption that it is not work, thus preventing women from struggling against it.[62] Aiming to make visible hidden exploitation, Ptak argues that the free labor of social media sharing, commenting, chatting, and liking should be similarly demystified and acknowledged—and paid for—as actual work.[63]

Through indiscriminate "likes," *Winning* also aimed to undermine the Facebook authenticity assured by the stable, singular identity of the coherent profile. Liking, commenting, and sharing pages that were totally unrelated to my profile introduced noise, reducing the profile's clarity and so its usefulness as a marketing tool. Out-of-character "likes" also muddied my profile to friends, who may have been surprised to see me liking an insurance policy, pasta brand, or holiday rental scheme. Despite its slightness as a gesture of hijacking individual algorithmic identity, insincere liking of pages could be scalable: digital marketers already fear that click fraud is costing the advertising sector billions, especially at the industrial scale of "click farms."[64] At the user level, too, anybody could do it, and if everyone did, profiles would no longer be profitable.

Playing Daughter: Like Mum and Proud

From the forty or so competitions I entered, I won two: one for a pair of Adidas running sunglasses, which required a story about jogging that was later quoted in *The Outage*, and the other

a Mother's Day competition for L'Oreal products. Asking entrants to submit a video in response to the title "Like Mum and Proud" and share it on the company's corporate YouTube channel, the competition affirmed the affective bonds between mother and daughter, while establishing the brand and all it stands for as a friend, or even part of the family. Taking the prompt literally, and addressing my mum rather than the "audience," my improvised video lists the ways I'm similar to my mum: drinking tea, singing, and going to TK Maxx.[65] Musing on the difficulty of making comparisons without exposing her, halfway through I say, "There are lots of other ways I'm very similar to you, but you probably don't want me sharing them, because they're sort of… private." My own interiority becomes a proxy for my mother's, since the similarity means anything "negative" I say about myself—for example regarding my choice in men, mental health struggles, or eating issues—I automatically also say about her.

Becoming a potential leak of my mother's privacy, my video reflects the tension between shamelessly sharing the self and protecting what Wendy Chun describes as the culturally sanctioned interiority that white, privileged women—like Abigail Robertson, the white woman whose image was used to advertise flour—are meant to embody. By averting shame through protecting my mother's privacy, my video seems to operate within this condition of white women's association with privacy, reinscribing the performance of white femininity through the generations. L'Oreal's dearth of products for afro hair beyond the Mizani professional range, and large range of skin-whitening products (with their White Perfect range), mostly outside the Western market, foregrounds the unspoken exclusivity of their apparently mass-market

I AM NOT ACTING ANY ROLE OTHER THAN MYSELF; OR RATHER, BY NEVER BREAKING CHARACTER MY SINCERITY IS THEATRICALIZED

corporate brand and the models of femininity they uphold; it is hard to imagine a video posted by a woman of color about her and her mother's shared fondness for L'Oreal skin-whitening cream winning the competition. While my messy hair, makeup-free face, and half-asleep demeanor distance me from conventional L'Oreal standards of beauty and self-care, the same issues identified earlier with repurposing existing formats recur here. Using the competition as a framework to simultaneously produce work within and subversively mimic the beauty protocols of womanhood runs the danger of reinforcing the idea of a universal—which usually means white—femininity.

Staging Sincerity, Acting Myself

Whatever elements of subversion were detectable in my video, its unstaged, unmediated style supplied enough sincerity to pass as a "genuine" entry—otherwise I wouldn't have won. As Anna Watkins Fisher points out, despite the contrived or artificial premise, the parasitical performer refuses to break character, meaning that their "real meaning" can never be finally pinned down.[66] The "work" becomes one of balancing the artist persona and the mainstream "good daughter" persona, without either being faked. Crucially, as with *The Outage* overall, I am not acting any role other than myself; or rather, by never breaking character my sincerity is theatricalized, playing out what Silvija Jestrovic calls the "ambiguity between the performativity of the staged and the theatricality of the authentic"—performing sincerity through playing myself.[67] Expressionless, eyes smudged with makeup and cut through by the mobile phone screen glare signaling the mediation of the image, my face on the cover of *The Outage* resembles an

alienated version of the flatteringly lit, smiling face and coiffed hair gracing most female celeb memoirs. And yet, this more accurately captures the stereotype expected of the artist brand: a scruffy, antagonistic unconventionality, including a hint of gender nonconformity signaled through the unsmiling face and unkempt appearance.

Implicating myself in the codes of celebrity circulation through publishing a memoir suggests a hubristic attempt to position myself as a "VIP" or a "star" artist (though as a self-commissioned monograph, it also more "shamefully" suggests vanity publishing, implying a lack of status). In an era when artists can connect to their "fans" directly through social media, art can perhaps now be considered one of the "affective industries"—alongside music, TV, and film—where the direct, unmediated sharing of intimate anecdotes becomes key to maintaining a relatable persona. Indeed, for female celebrities, supposedly nonwork aspects of life such as romantic relationships are part of the job and can enhance their commercial viability. In the case of romcom actress Jennifer Aniston, for example, Hollywood gossip columns suspected her liaison with *The Break Up* (2005) costar Vince Vaughn was faked in order to boost interest in the movie.[68] Life mirroring art, through on-screen relationships consummating off-screen—as happened with *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* (2005), the Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie vehicle that reportedly led to Pitt's split from Aniston—are particularly seductive for cinema-goers. Stories such as these provide a frisson of "realness" to the narrative, making it impossible to tell where the acting ends and where genuine, unstaged emotion begins.

Personal Parameters: *The Outage*'s Aftermath

> Put another way, the extra-literary text was the text. It was the work. And since that had meant it was my life, I didn't have to finish it. Or alternatively it had meant I would be working until I died.
> – *The Outage*

Stretching the parameters of the performative project that *The Outage* entails, and introducing a comparable real-life frisson into the discussion, the book's publication had profound and unanticipated "extra-textual" effects on me. Reading the first draft felt akin to reading my own obituary, a shaky and disorienting reminder that after death anyone could expropriate your image, data, and life story; and while there could be legal and emotional ramifications for others, for you it really wouldn't make any difference. However, the experiment could have gone very wrong for me in the hands of someone without the sensitivity required to speak as and for a woman from a male subject position. Instead, the vertiginous sensation of reading myself written through another's eyes was accompanied by what I described during the book's launch event as an "odd erotic thrill" of recognition. As a friend pointed out at the time, "everyone falls in love with their therapist," because they feel seen—and sure enough, shortly after publication, the ghostwriter and I became romantically involved.

Despite jokingly predicting it on Twitter early on, I feared making this information public—as I am here and was to the audience at the conference preceding this book—as it could come to define the project's reception. The apparently sweet, romantic outcome threatened to reframe the ghostwritten digital memoir

as a kind of newfangled online dating technique, delivering the happy ending of coupledom as the heteronormative culmination of a (single) woman's dreams. Another reading could reach the opposite conclusion, seeing the relationship as an attempt to contain the potentially "shaming" outcome of the voluntary exposure, or a type of Stockholm syndrome, where falling in love with the person holding my information and life story hostage becomes more creepy than cute. While tapping into well-worn clichés about "finding love when you least expect it," as an unanticipated outcome of an experiment, the romance also introduces the possibility that, far from being random, fated, or cosmic, the same result could be programmed by replicating the experiment with another person. Indeed, as the dating website OkCupid's data-crunching proves, romantic "types" and their suitability are exhaustively quantified in order to predict romance more efficiently.

The interplay of the generic and specific cast confusion over the romantic relationship in its early days: if I had commissioned someone else, would the outcome have been the same? If he had written the book for any other artist, would they have gotten together? Or were we "truly" matched, our meeting a fluke serendipity that wouldn't be out of place in the script of a romantic comedy? Put another way, if the project was an experiment in autofiction, it became hard to work out whether the relationship was itself part of the fiction, or whether it existed in a totally separate realm. The intrusion of the project into the emotional life of the author—and ghostwriter—may bring more clearly into focus the inseparability of artist and artwork, person and persona that *The Outage* set out to investigate; which would suggest that the total instrumentalization of romance, inner life, and emotion was part of the work.

From Autofiction to "Real" Autobiography

While the project sets out a premise any denizen of digital space could relate to and envisage themselves the subject of, its ending in a romantic relationship also introduces a biographical specificity that necessarily excludes others. As I recount the story here, the generic profile becomes the individual life story, so that sovereign and self-constituting authenticity is relocated back to the artist. After the destabilizing effect of outsourcing my life-writing to a stranger, I am reinstated as the owner of my "real" autobiography by asserting the "real life" aftermath of the book. Contradicting one of the project's aims, which was to explore memoir as a performative telling, enacting the "self" that it claims has given rise to an "I," memoir-writing is instead portrayed as expressing a truth about the author, as though there were an autobiographical subject that exists prior to its representation.[69] This runs the risk of erasing the outsourced autofiction under a "real" autobiographical story being recounted here, reaffirming the distance between the book's protagonist and myself: biography becomes fiction, which becomes biography again.

However, not to discuss this aspect of *The Outage* seemed to reinforce the idea that romantic love and coupledom were somehow separate from the grubby sphere of work, labor, exchange, and value, existing in a special sphere of unfettered relations. Particularly in the art world, where relationships have direct, material consequences on careers, keeping the romance hidden seemed especially disingenuous. Its exposure to a broader public recalls the earlier, original exposing gesture behind the project, thus also recalling both the shameless sharing of personal, emotional information that Chun argues characterizes

the celebrity, and the submission to vulnerability as a form of agency. While my own agency as the author of my image may be reasserted through recounting both the backstory of the project and its aftermath, its unintended consequences may also signal the ways that profiles, even those we commission and author, have the capacity to proliferate beyond our control. As human and algorithmic witnesses become ever more entangled, the subject that emerges from *The Outage* is not only casting a digital shadow, but becomes inextricable from it.

Endnotes

1 Erica Scourti, *The Outage* (London: Banner Repeater Paperbacks, 2014).

2 As suggested to me by the ghostwriter, J. A. Harrington, in an email exchange about the project.

3 Isabelle Graw, "Character Study: On the Art of Michaela Meise," *Artforum* 49, no. 3 (November 2010): 206.

4 Ulrich Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self: Fabricating a New Type of Subject*, trans. Steven Black (London: Sage, 2015); Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

5 Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

6 Judith Butler, "The Body You Want: Liz Kotz interviews Judith Butler," *Artforum* 31: 3 (November, 1992), 84.

7 Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).

8 Boaz Levin and Vera Tollmann, "Plunge into Proxy Politics," *Research Center for Proxy Politics*, last modified July 15, 2015, http://rcpp.lensbased.net/plunge-into-proxy-politics.

9 David Joselit, "Dark Cloud: Shapes of Information," lecture, "Lunch Bytes" conference, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, March 20, 2015.

10 Ibid.

11 Emily Rosamond, "Algorithmic Witnesses," lecture, *Lecture Series SERIES 2.1 Postcontemporary*, Goldsmiths, University of London, January 25, 2016.

12 Ibid.

13 Carole Cadwalladr, "The Great British Brexit Robbery: How Our Democracy was Hijacked," *Observer*, May 7, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexit-robbery-hijacked-democracy.

14 Patricia Clough, Karen Gregory, and Benjamin Haber, "The Datalogical Turn," in *Non-representational Methodologies: Re-envisaging Research*, ed. Phillip Vannini (London: Routledge, 2014), 154.

15 Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 5.

16 Boris Groys, "Art Workers: Between Utopia and the Archive," *e-flux journal*, no. 45 (May 2013), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/45/60134/art-workers-between-utopia-and-the-archive.

17 Ibid.

18 Websites like Haveibeenpwned.com allow users to quickly check whether—and how—their emails have been hacked, or "pwned"; a quick test of ten accounts found most had been. Accessed August 1, 2017.

19 Joselit, "Dark Cloud."

20 Ibid.

21 Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 147.

22 Ibid., 148; Eva Cherniavsky, *Incorporations: Race, Nation, and the Body Politics of Capital* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxv–xxvi.

23 Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self*.

24 Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2012).

25 SP Index, "Role Based Profiling," accessed August 1, 2017, http://www.sp-index.com/default.asp?contentID=584.

26 Charlie Brooker, *Black Mirror*, dir. Owen Harris et al., Netflix, 2011–present.

27 N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 145.

28 SP Index's web copy points out: "Monitoring your employee's online social profile using SP-Index reports provides all you need to know about the material staff publish online." Accessed August 15, 2017, http://www.sp-index.com/default.asp?contentID=585.

29 Graw, "Character Study," 206.

30 Sheryl Sandberg quoted in David Kirkpatrick, *The Facebook Effect: The Real Inside Story of Mark Zuckerberg and the World's Fastest Growing Company* (London: Random House, 2010), 212.

31 Hito Steyerl, "The Terror of Total Dasein," *DIS*, accessed August 1, 2017, http://dismagazine.com/discussion/78352/the-terror-of-total-dasein-hito-steyerl.

32 Rob Horning, "Do the Robot," *New Inquiry*, last modified August 12, 2015, https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/do-the-robot.

33 Quantified Self, accessed August 1, 2017, http://quantifiedself.com.

34 Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 27.

35 Michel Foucault, "Self Writing," trans. Robert Hurley, in *The Essential Works of Foucault*, vol. 1, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1994), 207–22.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 212.

38 Ibid., 213.

39 Ibid., 221.

40 Kate Crawford, "The Anxieties of Big Data," *New Inquiry*, last modified May 30, 2014, https://thenewinquiry.com/the-anxieties-of-big-data.

41 Sven Lütticken, "Social Media: Practices of (In)Visibility in Contemporary Art," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 40 (2015), accessed August 1, 2017, https://www.afterall.org/online/social-media_practices.

42 Bruce Schneider, *Data and Goliath: The Hidden Battles to Collect Your Data and Control Your World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015), 314.

43 Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 141.

44 Tung-Hui Hu, *A Prehistory of the Cloud* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 340.

45 Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, 141.

46 Ibid., 151.

47 Casey Johnston, "Chat Logs Show How 4chan Users Created #GamerGate Controversy," *Ars Technica*, September 10, 2014, https://arstechnica.com/gaming/2014/09/new-chat-logs-show-how-4chan-users-pushed-gamergate-into-the-national-spotlight/2014.

48 Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London: Verso, 2014).

49 Chun, *Habitual New Media*, 152.

50 Erica Scourti, "The Female Fool: Subversive Approaches to the Techno-Social Mediation of Femininity" (MRes thesis, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, 2013).

51 Robert Tobin, "Masochism and Identity," in *One Hundred Years of Masochism: Literary Texts, Social and Cultural Contexts*, ed. Michael C. Finke and Carl Niekerk (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 49.

52 Anna Watkins Fisher, "Manic Impositions: The Parasitical Art of Chris Kraus and Sophie Calle," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 40, nos. 1–2 (2012): 223–35.

53 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (New York: Feminist Press, 2013), 11.

54 Helen Hester, "Synthetic Genders and the Limits of Micropolitics," *...ment* 6, accessed August 15, 2017, http://journalment.org/article/synthetic-genders-and-limits-micropolitics.

55 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction Is about You," in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 1–37.

56 Ibid., 10.

57 Katja Lee, "The Intimate Publics of Popular Music Memoirs: Strategies of Feeling in Celebrity Self-Representation," in *Contemporary Publics, Shifting Boundaries in New Media, Technology and Culture*, ed. David P. Marshall, Glenn D'Cruz, Sharyn McDonald, and Katja Lee (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 267–81.

58 Berlant, *The Female Complaint*.

59 Ibid.

60 Laurie McNeill, "There Is No 'I' In Network: Social Networking Sites and Posthuman Auto/Biography," *Biography* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2012), 65–82.

61 Laurel Ptak, "Wages for Facebook," accessed August 1, 2017, http://wagesforfacebook.com; Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (London: Power of Women Collective, 1975).

62 Federici, *Wages Against Housework*.

63 Alex E. Jung, "Wages for Facebook," interview with Laurel Ptak, *Dissent* (Spring 2014), https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/wages-for-facebook.

64 Ben Elgin, Michael Riley, David Kocieniewski, and Joshua Brustein, "The Fake Traffic Schemes That Are Rotting the Internet," *Bloomberg Business Week*, accessed August 1, 2017, https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2015-click-fraud.

65 Erica Scourti, "Just Like You," *YouTube video*, 1:00, published by Erica Scourti, March 30, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu9AHfM77EU.

66 Fisher, "Manic Impositions."

67 Silvija Jestrovic, "Performing Like an Asylum Seeker: Paradoxes of Hyper-authenticity," *Research in Drama Education* 13, no. 2 (2008): 159–70.

68 Carmen Ribecca, "Hollywood Relationships That Were Completely Fake," accessed August 1, 2017, http://www.nickiswift.com/2203/hollywood-relationships-completely-fake.

69 Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 9.

Bibliography

Banet-Weiser, Sarah. *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. New York: NYU Press, 2012.

Berlant, Lauren. *The Female Complaint*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

Bröckling, Ulrich. *The Entrepreneurial Self: Fabricating a New Type of Subject*, trans. Steven Black. London: Sage, 2015.

Browne, Simone. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Butler, Judith. "The Body You Want: Liz Kotz Interviews Judith Butler." *Artforum* 31, no. 3 (November 1992): 82–89.

Cadwalladr, Carole. "The Great British Brexit Robbery: How Our Democracy was Hijacked." *Observer*, May 7, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexit-robbery-hijacked-democracy.

Cherniavsky, Eva. *Incorporations: Race, Nation, and the Body Politics of Capital.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016.

Clough, Patricia, Karen Gregory, and Benjamin Haber. "The Datalogical Turn." In *Non-representational Methodologies: Re-envisaging Research*, edited by Phillip Vannini, 146–64. London: Routledge, 2014.

Crawford, Kate. "The Anxieties of Big Data." *New Inquiry*. Last modified May 30, 2014. https://thenewinquiry.com/the-anxieties-of-big-data.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 3–7.

Easterling, Keller. *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space.* London: Verso, 2014.

Elgin, Ben, Michael Riley, David Kocieniewski, and Joshua Brustein. "The Fake Traffic Schemes That Are Rotting the Internet." *Bloomberg Business Week*. Accessed August 1, 2017. https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2015-click-fraud.

Federici, Silvia. *Wages Against Housework*. London: Power of Women Collective, 1975.

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, edited by Michel Senellart. Translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

—. "Self Writing." Translated by Robert Hurley. In *The Essential Works of Foucault*. Vol. 1, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 207–22. New York: New Press, 1994.

Graw, Isabelle. "Character Study: On the Art of Michaela Meise." *Artforum* 49, no. 3 (November 2010): 204–9.

Groys, Boris. "Art Workers: Between Utopia and the Archive." *e-flux journal*, no. 45 (May 2013). http://www.e-flux.com/journal/45/60134/art-workers-between-utopia-and-the-archive.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Hu, Tung-Hui, *A Prehistory of the Cloud*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.

Hester, Helen. "Synthetic Genders and the Limits of Micropolitics." *...ment* 6. Accessed August 15, 2017. http://journalment.org/article/synthetic-genders-and-limits-micropolitics.

Horning, Rob. "Do the Robot." *New Inquiry*. Last modified August 12, 2015. https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/do-the-robot.

Jestrovic, Silvija. "Performing Like an Asylum Seeker: Paradoxes of Hyper-authenticity." *Research in Drama Education* 13, no. 2 (2008): 159–70.

Johnston, Casey. "Chat Logs Show How 4chan Users Created #GamerGate Controversy," *Ars Technica*. Last modified September 10, 2014. https://arstechnica.com/gaming/2014/09/new-chat-logs-show-how-4chan-users-pushed-gamergate-into-the-national-spotlight.

Joselit, David. "Dark Cloud: Shapes of Information." Lecture, "Lunch Bytes" conference, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, March 20, 2015.

Jung, E. Alex. "Wages for Facebook." Interview with Laurel Ptak. *Dissent* (Spring 2014). https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/wages-for-facebook.

Kirkpatrick, David. *The Facebook Effect: The Real Inside Story of Mark Zuckerberg and the World's Fastest Growing Company*. London: Random House, 2010.

Lee, Katja. "The Intimate Publics of Popular Music Memoirs: Strategies of Feeling in Celebrity Self-Representation." In *Contemporary Publics, Shifting Boundaries in New Media, Technology and Culture*, edited by David P. Marshall, Glenn D'Cruz, Sharyn McDonald, and Katja Lee, 267–81. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Levin, Boaz, and Vera Tollmann, "Plunge into Proxy Politics." *Research Center for Proxy Politics*. Last modified July 15, 2015. http://rcpp.lensbased.net/plunge-into-proxy-politics.

Lütticken, Sven. "Social Media: Practices of (In)Visibility in Contemporary Art." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 40 (2015). https://www.afterall.org/online/social-media_practices.

McNeill, Laurie. "There Is No 'I' In Network: Social Networking Sites and Posthuman Auto/Biography." *Biography* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 65–82.

Osucha, Eden. "The Whiteness of Privacy: Race, Media, Law." *Camera Obscura* 24, no. 1 (2009): 67–107.

Preciado, Paul B. *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*. New York: Feminist Press, 2013.

Ptak, Laurel. "Wages for Facebook." Accessed August 1, 2017. http://wagesforfacebook.com.

Ribecca, Carmen. "Hollywood Relationships That Were Completely Fake." Accessed August 1, 2017. http://www.nickiswift.com/2203/hollywood-relationships-completely-fake.

Rosamond, Emily. "Algorithmic Witnesses." Lecture, *Lecture Series SERIES 2.1 Postcontemporary*. Goldsmiths, University of London, January 25, 2016.

Schneider, Bruce. *Data and Goliath: The Hidden Battles to Collect Your Data and Control Your World*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2015.

Scourti, Erica. "The Female Fool: Subversive Approaches to the Techno-Social Mediation of Femininity." MRes thesis, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts, London, 2013.

——. "Just Like You." *YouTube video*, 1:00. Published by Erica Scourti, March 30, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu9AHfM77EU.

——. *The Outage*. London: Banner Repeater Paperbacks, 2014.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction Is about You." In *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, edited by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1–37. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

SP Index, "Role Based Profiling." Accessed August 1, 2017. http://www.spindex.com/default.asp?contentID=584.

Srnicek, Nick. *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.

Steyerl, Hito. "The Terror of Total Dasein: Economies of Presence in the Art Field." *DIS*. Accessed August 1, 2017. http://dismagazine.com/discussion/78352/the-terror-of-total-dasein-hito-steyerl.

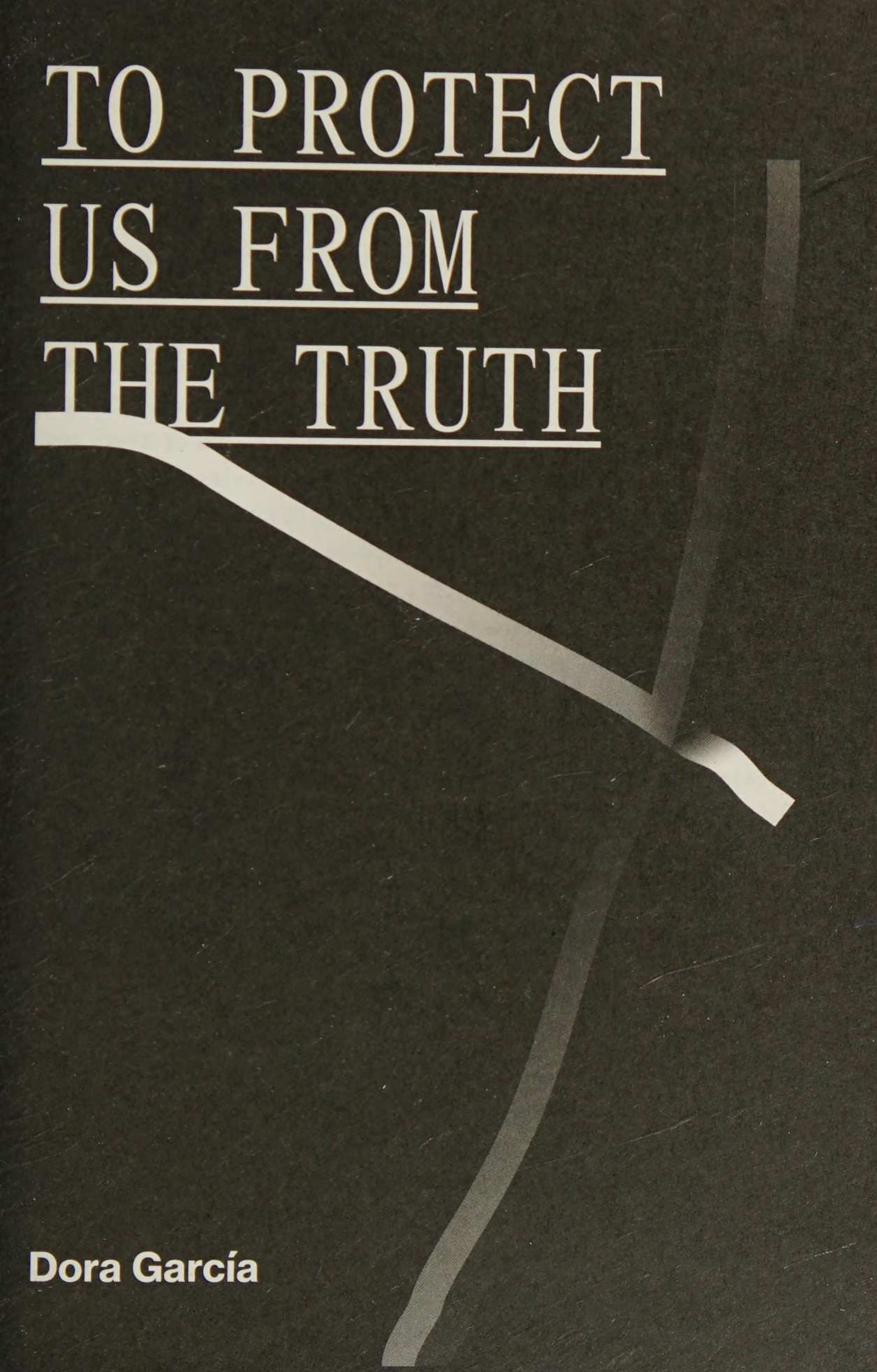
Tobin, Robert. "Masochism and Identity." In *One Hundred Years of Masochism: Literary Texts, Social and Cultural Contexts*, edited by Michael C. Finke and Carl Niekerk, 33–52. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.

Watkins Fisher, Anna. "Manic Impositions: The Parasitical Art of Chris Kraus and Sophie Calle." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 40, nos. 1/2 (2012): 223–35.

Filmography

Brooker, Charlie. *Black Mirror*. Directed by Owen Harris et al., Netflix, 2011–present.

TO PROTECT US FROM THE TRUTH



Dora García

The Self? Simply a "centre of narrative gravity," a convenient fiction that allows us to integrate various neuronal data streams.[1]

What is truth? Consider the following idea: the significance of a statement does not depend on its correspondence with reality or its truth or falsehood, but rather on the effect the statement has, what this statement does, what this statement produces. Since this idea was proposed in 1962 by J. L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* it has become possible to look at the idea of truth not as a settled matter, but as an array of possibilities—similar to the idea of parallel universes, but with all those parallel universes in one universe.[2]

We intuitively know that truth—reality, no-nonsense hard fact—has to do with a contract, an agreement, a convention. It does not belong to a person, but to a society, a group of people who have agreed that things are a given way because that way is more convenient to their present interests or more conducive to their survival. This convenient truth could be about the flat shape of the Earth, the existence of God, the indissolubility of marriage, the need for (and characteristics of) progress, the superiority of European culture, or the need for the total destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to end the war. In the face of such commonly accepted truths—and it is from these that the tissue of history is formed—to propose, to present, to describe, and to tell a different version of the story, a different truth, is sometimes a courageous act of dissidence and resistance. Or an act of lunacy. Or both. This resistance has its source in the need to protect ourselves from the truth. But not, or not only, because this truth is too painful or too boring to bear, but because it is imposed on us.

In the following text, I will explore cases of defiance of established, conventional, agreed-upon truths. Some of these instances of rebelliousness belong to the world of crime, others to the worlds of history, religion, or literature. Perhaps crime, history, religion, and literature are not so far apart. In the end, they all belong to this realm, old as the world; this activity that is perhaps the only one specifically human: storytelling.

***

The film *The Adversary* by Nicole Garcia, featuring a wonderful Daniel Auteuil in the leading role and adapting the 2000 book of the same title written by Emmanuel Carrère, is based—as is often stated to assert the symbolic value of a story—on "real facts." Yet one wonders what meaning "real facts" may have in such a story.[3]

The "real" protagonist, Jean-Claude Romand, is renamed in the film Jean-Marc Faure. The story of Jean-Claude Romand, a murderer, is as follows: for eighteen years Jean-Claude Romand lived a life that was not his. He invented a life as a successful doctor and medical researcher and presented it to his family (a wife and two children), to his extended family, to his friends and his social circle (which included an adulterous affair) as the truth.

Romand was an only child who excelled academically during his childhood and teenage years, obtaining his high school diploma with flying colors. He began to study medicine but never managed to progress further than the second year. After struggling for twelve years to finish his studies, he gave up. Nonetheless, he

informed his family of the joyful news of his being awarded the degree.

He married a pharmacist, as many doctors do, and they had two children together. To them and to his extended family, he claimed he was a doctor and researcher at the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva. Every day he left the family home to go to work, and periodically he traveled the world, as befitted the high position he occupied.

But he lived off his wife's money, and money from various relatives who gave it to him so that he could place it in (imaginary) hedge funds in Switzerland. He also sold fake cancer medication.

He spent the time he was supposedly at work walking the woods of the Jura, and rented hotel rooms in Geneva airport during his alleged business trips, buying souvenirs for his family in the airport shops. He studied in libraries to keep his knowledge of medicine up to date, and visited, as an audience member, several medical congresses.

Nevertheless, after quite a period of time—eighteen years—the whole fictitious edifice started to show some cracks. His wife could not understand why she could not call him at his office at the WHO; a friend discovered that his name was not on the list of WHO employees; he had more and more difficulties laying his hands on cash; and his lover, Chantal, a dentist, who had given him 900,000 French francs to invest in Switzerland, asked with increasing impatience as to the whereabouts of her money.

Jean-Claude Romand was alone with his father-in-law when the latter fell down the stairs of the house to his death only a few days after asking Jean-Claude to return part of the money he had entrusted to him. Four years later, and just one year before the fatal denouement, a friend of Romand's died when his caravan exploded. The investigation, however, showed that a blow to the head had killed him beforehand, and that shortly thereafter his bank account had been emptied. But Romand was not charged with any of these crimes.

On January 9, 1993, after withdrawing 2,000 francs from the bank, Romand went home and beat his wife to death. He then slept next to the corpse, after which he woke up his children, had breakfast with them, and watched cartoons. He had quite a normal day with them, explaining that mom would be back soon, and he put them to bed; once they had fallen asleep, he shot them with a rifle. The next morning, Romand went to lunch at his parents' home, and after the meal he shot them both using the same rifle. The dog too. Romand must then have thought it time to set things straight with his mistress, who had also been doubting him in recent months. Pretending to take her for a romantic dinner, he feigned engine trouble, stopped the car, and attempted to strangle her. But she fought back; retreating, he apologized and drove her back home.

He returned to his own home and poured petrol around the house, set it on fire, took an overdose of sleeping pills, and prepared to die with the bodies of his family. But local firefighters rescued him before the fire destroyed evidence of his crimes, and before the pills had any effect on him—they were, for the record, past their expiration date.

He was almost immediately arrested for the murder of his wife and children, whose bodies had not been burned and were found soaked in petrol. In November 1994 he was taken back to the house to reconstruct the crime. Upon entering the house, he was seized by uncontrollable shaking and vomiting, and he said through sobs that he had killed them "to protect them from the truth."

***

What is truth and why must we protect ourselves from it? Are we, like Scheherazade from *One Thousand and One Nights*, constructing fictions to delay our impending deaths?[4] Or are fictions, as Freud suggested, "screen memories" for truths that would be better not remembered?[5] Or is a crime—and the need to cover it up—the origin of every fiction? Something crucial, a matter of life and death, seems to be at the core of constructing fictions. We may not be talking here only about individual lives, but about civilization, maybe mankind.

We have engraved in our minds the image of Moses, the patriarch of Judaism, inaugurator of the three largest monotheistic religions. He has the chiseled traits of Charlton Heston, looking fiercely above, crowned with ash-white curls and holding the tablets of the law as two pinkish, marble-looking, perfectly shaped forms.[6] Moses stands as the towering figure who defied the morally depraved oppressor (Egypt) and freed the Hebrew slaves to start a new religion created through the covenant between God and his chosen people, the Jews.

This edifying story, which is the core narrative of the Western Judeo-Christian world, was to be challenged by another Jew,

Sigmund Freud, who proposed a different story. Freud wrote *Moses and Monotheism* in 1939, and died later the same year—it was the year after the *Anschluss* (the German annexation of Austria, and the exponential rise of anti-Semitism there) and Freud's resultant exile in London. Having been through so much, Freud knew worse was to come, and (logically, possibly) his faith in humanity had significantly decreased.

Freud opens his book with the following sentence:

> To deprive a people of the man whom they take pride in as the greatest of their sons is not a thing to be gladly or carelessly undertaken, least of all by someone who is himself one of them. But we cannot allow any such reflection to induce us to put the truth aside in favour of what are supposed to be national interests.[7]

The truth. The truth is …

Bluntly presented, this is the plotline of Freud's version of the Moses story: Moses was not a Jew; he was an Egyptian priest of Aton who was killed by the Jews, who wrote the Bible to cover up this crime. Freud argues that the commonly accepted biblical narrative was constructed to legitimate the genealogy of the people of Israel, to create a glorious myth of origin. Freud's alternative narrative is based on deduction and logic.

First, Moses is an Egyptian name—indeed, why would an Egyptian princess, upon rescuing a baby from the river, give the baby a Hebrew, that is, a slave, name? The name means "child," and thinking of the time Moses most probably lived, it was meant as "Amon child" (*Amen-mose*): there are "analogous theophorous names

which figure in the list of Egyptian kings, such as Ahmose, Thoth-mose and Ra-mose."[8]

Second, the story of the birth and rescue from the waters does not really look like it is "based on real facts"—it is shared by most of the heroes of antiquity (Gilgamesh and Sargon of Akkad, for example, have virtually identical watery origin stories), and according to Freud, the basket and water elements are nothing more than a metaphor for birth: the basket signifying the uterus, the water amniotic fluid.

Third, in the biblical narrative—as in the (perhaps by now even more well-known) Cecil B. DeMille Paramount Pictures film—Moses grew up as an Egyptian prince. He was rebellious, fell from grace and was sent into exile far, far away; he lived as a shepherd, until God called on him to liberate his people. But in the myth-of-origin logic, what is the need of remembering Moses as an Egyptian prince? To become the much-needed Jewish hero, he had to be 100 percent Jew, not, even if slightly, Egyptian. Surely, Freud deduces, the only explanation as to why the legend turns him into an Egyptian prince is because he *was* an Egyptian prince—or something similar.

But then, Freud wonders, what could induce an aristocratic Egyptian—a prince, perhaps, or a priest or high official—to put himself at the head of a crowd of immigrants at a backward level of civilization and to leave his country with them? And most important, how could the leader—Hebrew or Egyptian—of such a crowd of immigrants have invented monotheism?

Following Freud's thread of thought, there is only one way to make sense of this: Jews did not invent monotheism; Egyptians did:

In the glorious Eighteenth Dynasty, under which Egypt first became a world power, a young Pharaoh came to the throne in about the year 1375 BC. To begin with he was called, like his father, Amenophis (IV), but later he changed his name and not only his name. This king set about forcing a new religion on his Egyptian subjects – a religion which ran contrary to their thousands-of-years-old traditions and to all the familiar habits of their lives. It was a strict monotheism, the first attempt of the kind, so far as we know, in the history of the world, and along with the belief in a single god [Aton] religious intolerance was inevitably born, which had previously been alien to the ancient world and remained so long afterwards. The reign of Amenophis, however, lasted for only seventeen years. Very soon after his death in 1358 BC, the new religion was swept away and the memory of the heretic king was proscribed.[9]

The idea of monotheism was something that had existed and did exist in the Egypt of Moses. Monotheism *and* circumcision—all Egyptians were circumcised. Moses was an aristocratic, circumcised Egyptian and a priest, a disciple or follower of the only god, Aton.

So, Freud continues, following up his reasoning, Jews did not invent monotheism, did not invent circumcision—and Jews did not invent the name of Yahweh either. In what is known now as Syria, in a certain locality known as Meribah-Kadesh, Yahweh was already a very popular deity—one among many, in a polytheist religion. He was a volcano god, a god of fire who burned constantly, a demon of the night who shunned the light of day, bloodthirsty and cruel.[10]

According to Freud, when the tribes of Israel established themselves in Canaan, they absorbed the cult of Yahweh. The

mediator between this ancient god and the people who were to become Israelites was called—by the Israelites—Moses. But he was a shepherd who was the son-in-law of the Midianite priest Jethro. This sounds like the "second part" of the life of Moses according to the biblical narrative. This Midianite mediator Moses was a man who could perform wonders; who famously converted wooden sticks into snakes. A magician. Very far, therefore, from Moses the priest of Atonism, a religion that abhorred esotericism, images, polytheism, and the cult of the dead.

So, we have two Moses. How did these two characters—the Egyptian, circumcised Aton priest Moses and the sorcerer-shepherd Moses—merge in harmonious syncretism? This is the story that Freud proposes: the Egyptian Moses left Egypt, where his faith was unpopular and persecuted, with the idea of founding a new country where the religion of Aton would reign. He took with him some faithful followers and many Hebrew slaves, who agreed to accompany him on the promise of freedom. But the very strict monotheism of Aton was as unpopular with the Jews as it had been with the majority of the Egyptians, and an inflexible Moses had to be murdered. But they did not murder his followers, the Levites, who continued the common march in search of a new country, carrying with them the capacity to write. Perhaps a hundred years later, Freud argues, when establishing themselves finally in Canaan, they decided to adopt a popular deity there, merging the two Moseses and the two gods Yahweh and Aton-Adonai, and to construct a myth of origin that was acceptable to the new nation, obliterating any reference to the murder which they now so much regretted.[11] The Levites were part of this arrangement, probably taking upon themselves the redaction of the myth and the linking of Moses the syncretic

prophet to the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, "who had adored the same God under a different name."[12] So there was indeed a covenant, a compromise, a pact sealed, not between God and men, but rather among the murderers of the Egyptian Aton priest Moses, the Egyptian followers of the Egyptian Moses (Levites), and the indigenous people of Canaan, among whom lived Moses the shepherd, the magician of Yahweh.

A sentence of Ricardo Piglia's comes to mind when reading *Moses and Monotheism*, a classic insight from an interview: "All books are written to tell of a crime or of a journey."[13] Here in the Book of Exodus we may have both: a crime and a journey. And we say a book because the covenant with God was written in a book: not in any book, but the Bible, which means The Book. This book is at the origin of the three great monotheistic religions, also known as the "religions of the Book"—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And, furthermore, Freud argues, on this book, partly an alibi for a murder, civilization is based.

The story of Moses is a foundational myth of the Western civilization, a story developed as a "screen memory" for something too harsh to remember: murder. It is curious to think that another foundational myth of Western civilization, that of Oedipus, describes a murder as well. Yes, Piglia could well be right: a crime (or a journey, which seems to be the inevitable consequence of a crime) is at the origin of every possible narrative.

***

The threat of having an entity imposing a version of reality upon us—to live, knowingly or unknowingly, in a story constructed by

someone else—is a common theme in the novels of visionary author Philip K. Dick (1928-1982). After years of feverish production of pulp science fiction books, in 1962 Dick was finally given a glimpse of what success might be like with the novel *The Man in the High Castle*.[14]

The Man in the High Castle explores the aftermath of the Second World War as it might have been, let's say, if Alan Turing hadn't existed and Charles Lindbergh had had it his way. Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan dominate the world and have divided it in two. America, also, is divided in two: East for Germany, West for Japan, separated by the neutral Rocky Mountain States. Slavery is legal and Jews have been exterminated. Zeppelins cross the skies. Hitler is not dead but has gone mad as a result of syphilis; he has been replaced by Martin Bormann as Führer. Of these two evils, the Japanese Empire is considered far more compassionate and civilized than the German Reich: Buddhism and Shintoism keep them from atrocious acts of violence, but nothing curbs the cruelty of the Nazis. The world seems condemned to endless dictatorship and repression, and resistance is futile—but there is a forbidden, pirated book, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, which proposes an alternate present in which the Allies have won the war and freedom and democracy are championed all over the world; the Nazis have been punished at Nuremberg and the Japanese have surrendered to the United States.[15]

The Nazis are hunting the writer of the book, who lives in a fortress called the High Castle. When one of the main characters, the beautiful, dark-haired Juliana, finds the author of the book, Hawthorne Abendsen, he confesses to her that in fact he used the *I Ching* to guide his writings. Juliana leaves thinking that in fact

no one wrote the book; that, rather, "The Truth" wrote the book to reveal the lie in which they are all living.

So we are reading a book in which the characters are reading a book that contradicts the story of the book we are reading; we are reading an alternative history (the Axis powers defeated the Allies) that includes an alternative history where the Allies defeat the Axis. But this Allies-defeat-the-Axis reality, though closer to the history known to us, is however not identical: *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* depicts a President Roosevelt surviving an assassination attempt but not running for re-election in 1940. The next president, Rexford Tugwell, removes the Pacific fleet from Pearl Harbor, and therefore the war between the US and Japan never happens. Berlin is liberated by both the Red Army and the British Army. All Nazi leaders undergo the Nuremberg trials, Hitler included, and are condemned to death. The last words of Adolf Hitler are "Deutsche, hier steh' ich" (Germans, here I stand), in imitation of Martin Luther.[16]

If there were a short sentence to describe the oeuvre of Philip K. Dick it might be that "reality is not very real." His work frequently proposes that the most frightful thing that can happen to us is to discover that what we perceive as real is, in fact, a fiction fabricated by someone or something that has imposed that perception on us.

The Man in the High Castle presents us with a Russian-doll world (or metafiction) where the characters in one book (*The Man in the High Castle*) realize that there is another book within that book (*The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*) wherein reality is better and kinder.[17] Perhaps the reader reading this book-with-a-book-

WHERE IT MAKES
NO SENSE TO
WONDER HOW
TO GET BACK
TO REALITY
BECAUSE REALITY
WAS NEVER
THERE IN THE
FIRST PLACE



within-it is also inside a book in which reality is better and kinder, and so on …

***

What if we (I, who write this text *now*, you who are reading it *now*) were to be nonexistent beings inside a book, under the name of "readers," where it makes no sense to wonder how to get back to reality because reality was never there in the first place, but is itself a book inside a book inside a book? This is a plot line typical of Macedonio Fernández (1874–1952), the Argentinian writer best known as the precursor and teacher of Borges and Cortázar; a man with a most curious biography. Macedonio (as he is known) spent some years as a public prosecutor in the interior provinces of Argentina, where he raised his family. Completely devastated by the death of his wife, Elena de Obieta, he abandoned his children and the world for a homeless life in Buenos Aires. There he became the leader of a group of younger poets (among whom was a young Borges) ready to accompany him wherever he decided to go—including on his project to construct a "novel outside the novel," whereby he campaigned to become president of Argentina and to conquer the city of Buenos Aires by turning it into a novel. He wrote intermittently only one novel, begun when he was twenty-five and then taken up again when he was fifty-three and completed at the age of seventy-five. He eventually called it *The Museum of Eterna's Novel* and subtitled it "The First Good Novel." The book was published in 1967, fifteen years after his death.

In this novel, his wife Elena de Obieta lives eternally ("In this novel there is no death"), metamorphosed into characters

such as Elena Bellamuerte (Elena Beautiful Death) and La Eterna (The Eternal), a beautiful woman who periodically visits a house called "The Novel."[18] The Novel is inhabited by characters with such wonderful names as the Boy with the Long Stick (who is permanently barred from entering The Novel, and is categorized as "a novel prowler"), the Traveler (who closes every chapter by leaving the house, and who is described as a "hallucination extinguisher"), Ofonelove, Maybegenius, Justarrived, Beautifulperson, and the Reader.

This house is led by an old gentleman called The President, who is in love with La Eterna. The Reader, or rather the Readers (with their subcategories such as the accidented reader, the transparent reader, the denouement reader, the artist reader, the character reader, the lineal reader), are constantly entering and leaving The Novel. At one point in the novel, we are informed that there are no more Readers reading.

In Chapter 9 (between two expulsions of Federico, the Boy of the Long Stick), the characters in the novel, dissatisfied with their fictional lives, decide to conquer Buenos Aires in the name of beauty (this is called "The Action") and to turn the city into a novel in which every day is today and where the main avenue is called Avenue of Today. Buenos Aires will turn into a "presentist" city, a "city without death, city of the non-identical men, since the non-identical is exempted from death."[19]

To protect us from the truth. For Macedonio, to live in a novel was the only way of keeping his wife alive, as an eternal producer of stories, a female narrative machine, a Scheherazade. The book of Macedonio somehow manages to give to the reader that feeling of

vertigo where as readers we feel drawn into the maelstrom of the narrative—no escape is possible; we lose our orientation. For those who might say that Macedonio was escaping into fiction from a reality he could not bear, here is what he says:

> I take the opportunity to insist on the following, the true execution of my theory of the novel can only be achieved by writing a novel where several persons get together to read another novel, so that these persons, "readers-characters," readers of that second novel and characters of this first novel, adopt the role of *existing persons*, not "characters," by positioning themselves against the characters and images of the novel they are reading.[20]

We are here in a similar metafictional structure to that of *The Man in the High Castle*: the readers of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* achieve the status of existing persons, and the novel *The Man in the High Castle* achieves the status of reality, but this could, and does, easily turn into a *mise en abyme* by asserting the status of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* as a fiction and therefore us readers, two steps removed from the book within the book, as a fiction as well—and on the wrong side of the Second World War.

Going back to Macedonio, in Chapter 6, "Life wants to enter the novel," Maybegenius says to Beautifulperson:

> This is a story of "characters of a novel," not of persons who lived, and I thought about it this way because I have found a magical method for you and me to have life, to be persons: because I think that at the very moment a character appears on the page of a novel narrating another novel, these characters and all the other characters listening to the narrative acquire the status of reality, and the only

> characters left are the ones of the novel they are telling about, whether the reader likes it or not.[21]

Similarly, readers in the novel by Macedonio are not only reading, they are being read; as in *The Man in the High Castle*, when a reader is reading a novel about a reader who is reading a novel, she, too, becomes a character.

I am aware that this text, which I choose to finalize now, only exists when you, reader, are reading it.

> Not looking at each other now, rigidly fixed upon the task which awaited them, they separated at the cabin door. She was to follow the trail that led north. On the path leading in the opposite direction, he turned for a moment to watch her running, her hair loosened and flying. He ran in turn, crouching among the trees and hedges until, in the yellowish fog of dusk, he could distinguish the avenue of trees which led up to the house. The dogs were not supposed to bark, they did not bark. The estate manager would not be there at this hour, and he was not there. He went up the three porch steps and entered. The woman's words reached him over a thudding of blood in his ears: first a blue chamber, then a hall, then a carpeted stairway. At the top, two doors. No one in the first room, no one in the second. The door of the salon, and then, the knife in his hand, the light from the great windows, the high back of an armchair covered in green velvet, the head of the man in the chair reading a novel.[22]

Endnotes

1 Jennifer Schuessler, "Philosophy That Stirs the Waters," *New York Times*, April 29, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/30/books/daniel-dennett-author-of-intuition-pumps-and-other-tools-for-thinking.html?mcubz=1.

2 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

3 *L'Adversaire*, directed by Nicole Garcia (2002; Paris: Bac Films, 2002), DVD.

4 *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*, vol. 1, trans. Powys Mathers (London: Routledge, 1986), 9.

5 A screen memory is a recollection of early childhood that may be falsely recalled or magnified in importance and that masks another memory of deep emotional significance. The concept was first developed in Freud's 1914 essay "Repeating, Remembering and Working-Through." Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12, ed. James Strachey, (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), 145–56.

6 As seen in *The Ten Commandments*, directed by Cecil B. DeMille (1956; Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 1999), DVD.

7 Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (London: Hogarth Press, 1939), 11.

8 Ibid., 13.

9 Ibid., 35.

10 Among the Semitic-speaking tribes who populated Canaan the god Yahweh was well known, although the main figure of Canaanite mythology was El, and some sources say that it is from this god that the name Israel comes, probably meaning "may El rule" or "El's will," similar to the expression "insha'Allah" in Arabic, meaning "God willing." Puttagunta Satyavani, *Seeing the Face of God: Exploring an Old Testament Theme* (Carlisle: Langham, 2014), 85.

11 A third god could be added to the syncretic coupling of Yahweh and Aton-Adonai, namely El (see note 10).

12 Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 72.

13 Ricardo Piglia, *Crítica y ficción* (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1986), 16.

14 Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2011).

15 This title is assumed or supposed to have come from the Bible verse "The grasshopper shall be a burden" (Ecclesiastes 12:5).

16 These were the last words of the defense of Martin Luther facing the Diet of Worms on April 18, 1521: "Hier stehe ich, Hier stehe ich, ich kann nicht anders, Gott helfe mir, Amen" (Here I stand, here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me, Amen).

17 Metafiction is a literary device where fiction references its fictional nature by exposing its inner mechanisms.

18 Macedonio Fernández, *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Corregidor, 1975) 17, 127.

19 Ibid., 205.

20 Ibid., 265 (my emphasis).

21 Ibid., 186.

22 Julio Cortázar, "The Continuity of Parks," in *Blow-Up and Other Stories*, trans. Paul Blackburn (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 64–65.

Bibliography

Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night, vol. 1. Translated by Powys Mathers. London: Routledge, 1986.

Cortázar, Julio. "The Continuity of Parks." In *Blow-Up and Other Stories*. Translated by Paul Blackburn, 63–65. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.

Dick, Philip K. *The Man in the High Castle*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2011.

Fernández, Macedonio. *Museo de la Novela de la Eterna*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Corregidor, 1975.

Freud, Sigmund. *Moses and Monotheism*. London: Hogarth Press, 1939.

—. "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 12, edited by James Strachey, 145–56. London: Hogarth Press, 1958.

McCarthy-Jones, Simon. *Hearing Voices: The Histories, Causes and Meanings of Auditory Verbal Hallucinations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Piglia, Ricardo. *Crítica y ficción*. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1986.

Satyavani, Puttagunta. *Seeing the Face of God: Exploring an Old Testament Theme*. Carlisle: Langham, 2014).

Schuessler, Jennifer. "Philosophy That Stirs the Waters." *New York Times*, April 29, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/30/books/daniel-dennett-author-of-intuition-pumps-and-other-tools-for-thinking.html?mcubz=1.

Filmography

L'Adversaire. Directed by Nicole Garcia. 2002. Paris: Bac Films, 2002. DVD.

The Ten Commandments. Directed by Cecil B. DeMille. 1956. Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 1999. DVD.

THE THINGS THAT KNOWLEDGE CANNOT EAT: MANIFESTED ENERGIES IN THE WORK OF ORPHAN DRIFT

Delphi Carstens
& Mer Roberts

melting boundaries between things. Melting things into boundaries. process. intensity surface. material. reality production sliding in.

Orphan Drift came online in 1995, a hive mind subsuming individual identity in a radical experiment with subjectivity to produce a singular artist avatar that operated as a fiction from the start. Its signal, manifesting through audiovisual installations, collage and animation, experimental text and performance, revolves around encounters with speculative narrative, ecology, quantum universes and ancient cosmologies, presence and futurity. It is intended to engage viscerally, imaginatively, and speculatively with a wide temporal and material spectrum. This text looks at OD's fiction-generating methodologies, focusing mostly on the *Meshed Digital Unlife Catacomic* (1999), *Liquid Lattice* (2006), the videos *Black Water, ghost prescient* (2015) and *Green Skeen* (2016), as well as the unfinished *Unruly City*. These pieces explore the lineaments of what the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (Ccru) calls hyperstition: coincidence intensifiers, time travel, ancient shamanism, quantum science, and the uncanny. The Ccru is a collaborative accelerations-theory-fiction generator founded at the University of Warwick in the early 1990s; their collected writings have recently been published by Urbanomic.[1] Our intention here is to enmesh sorcerous theory with affective becomings via textual cut-ups and unraveled poesis. These have always been elements in OD's methodology: a claustrophobic excess of aesthetic relations, disparate images, cultural references, and fragments that crowd and push, inhabiting space, spreading, overlapping and mixing in feedback loops. Tracing the uncanny beginnings of the OD avatar, materializing out of the far edges of critical posthuman science fiction, through *Cyberpositive* (1995) and the *Catacomic*, we delve into the signal's current search-engine mode,

continually vacillating between speculative fiction, familiarity, and otherness, scanning unreal environments across dimensions and time scales. For us, science fiction (SF) is produced out of cultural necessity, helping us imagine futures that slide toward us under the surface of the present. Fictions as transformational tools inhabit experimental realities, helping us to weave space, time, and matter into fluid, temporary configurations. Meshwork, as we will define it, pictures "things" on a supernatural scale perceivable only at the shadowy edges of daily experience, where vast geophysical changes meet the constructions of culture, where rational meets the irrational, and visible the invisible.[2]

Something Is Assembling

Deep Dream code images are developed from code based on Google's machine-learning AI software. Looking for patterns it has been trained to recognize, the code makes slight but repeated changes to whatever images have been fed to it until image resembles pattern. Could these images—some uncanny, others almost inhumanly farcical—be early AI artworks or premature glimpses of Singularity? Something is assembling, and the boundaries of fiction dissolve.

OD fictions express the future as a frequency. Unmoored, moving, mutating in order to communicate, they feel out the edges where the once familiar unravels, charting new courses through the hyperreal. Initially they moved through hallucinogenic, machine-envisioned psychogeographies, producing audiovisual environments, mapping distortion, inhabiting interzones. They were, and still are, meshworks: maps of the future made by those who only

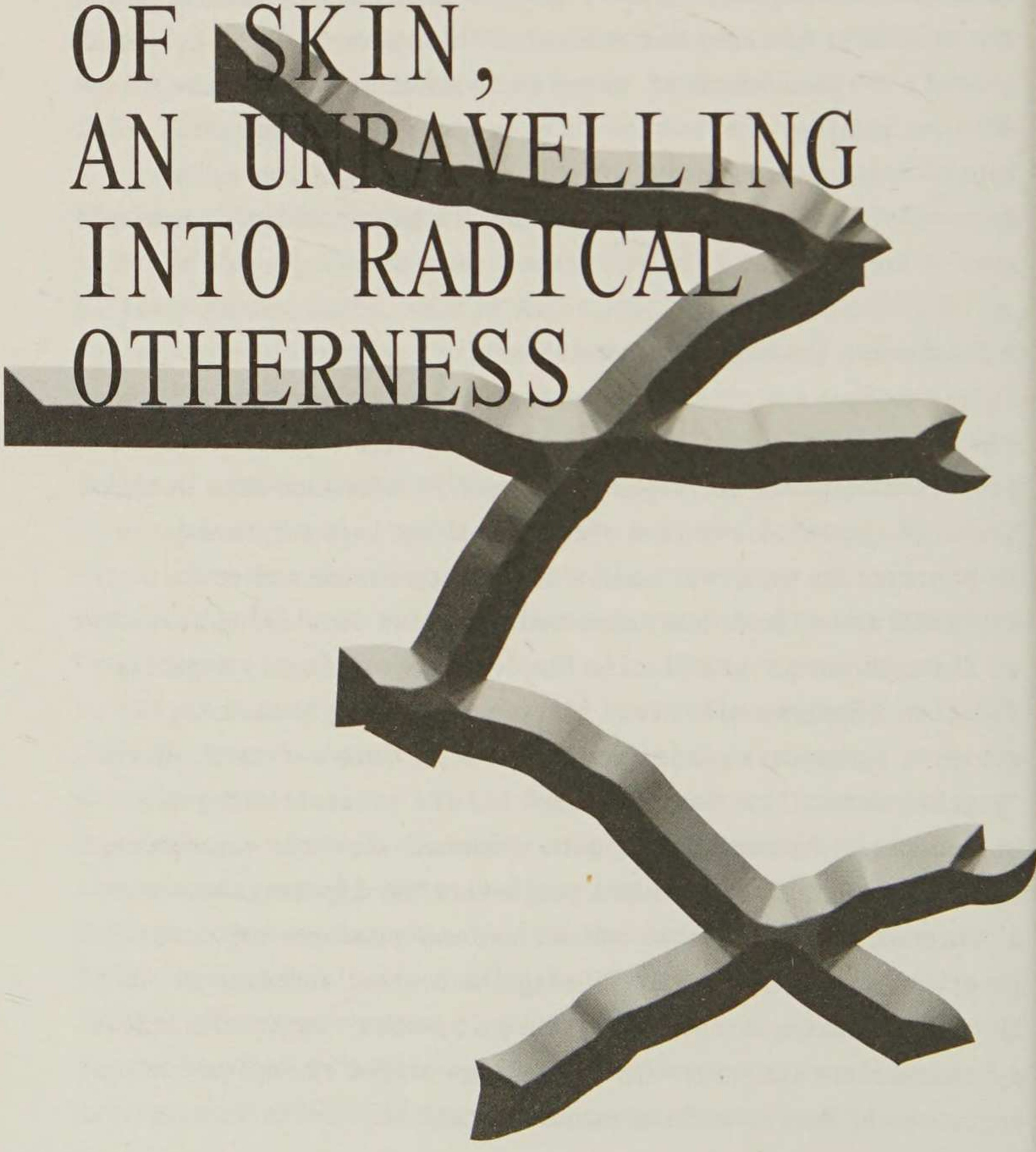
partially inhabit the present. The routes they plot reach toward and through what Dostoevsky calls the "bliss" of violent seizure; a moment for which "you'd give your whole life," a "timeless instant" when you suddenly understand "the meaning of that singular expression: there will no longer be time."[3] Meshworks picnoleptically reach into missing time, grasping for new senses, conjuring infinite variations of new sensations and speeds. Moving randomly, describing what cannot be described, they reach into uncanny spaces, seeking out future time.

Fictions that have emerged from the "collective unconscious software" have gathered momentum and now produce reality.[4] Fictions become tools, such as magic once was, for transformation, for colonizing experimental realities, weaving space, time and matter into fluid, temporary configurations. We are positing the presence of a dark haecceity—a spectral folding of becoming oriented around the future tense of SF. For us, cyberspace is an uncanny adjacency, not a safe space behind a screen or a bland realm of sameness in which third-rate copies endlessly proliferate. When OD and the Ccru came online during the 1990s, "experiments in the unknown," crafted as viable alternatives to the closure of postmodernism, had become "unavoidable for a philosophy caught in the abstractive howl of post-political cybernetics."[5] This "howl" was, and still is for us, more affectively real than abstract. Rogue biotechnological constructs, some already assembling, others yet to be actualized, were already hovering ghostlike on the surfaces of the present. Today, more pervasively than in the 1990s, synthetic realities inhabit almost every sphere of the global social spectrum, yet humans continue to call them fictions. Positing the continued relevance of affect and aesthetics, we prefer to name them

hyperstitions. Meanwhile, that which dreams deeper, in between and adjacent to the all-pervasive electronic flows, continues to evolve. OD's SF theory-fiction, *Cyberpositive* (1995), and our collaboration with the Ccru, the *Meshed Digital Unlife Catacomic* (1999)—as well as our continuing audio-visual output—seek out the spectral vitality of this emergent new materiality: the thisness, hereness and nowness of the space of flows oriented around a forward momentum, aimed at an audience yet to come. OD's methodology grafts fiction with fact, generating hyperstition as a paraspatial rhizome, a dark and contagious haecceity that emanates from glitches in hyperreality's seamless ever-present.

A flickering shadow of the yet-to-arrive throws a supernaturally tinged darkness across the perpetual day of information. Fiction and fact conflate. Mediated humans, homogenized by social media proliferation, can no longer tell the difference anyway. In this scenario, some believe that there's nothing left for theory or practice to say: "all models of representation and anti-representation" have been absorbed into "the totalising aesthetic of the commodity," and fiction has lost its critically negative function.[6] Hyperstition, as a fiction-generating methodology, subverts postmodern panic theory by making intensity maps of the "psychic impact" of "new machines" and the processes they are engendering.[7] Enchanted with dark sciences, sinister resonances, and retrochronally manifested semio-viruses, hyperstition is a "Chinese puzzle-box that opens to reveal numerous sorcerous interventions in the world."[8] Using the central concerns of SF—novum (making new) and the sense of wonder—hyperstitional cyberneticists construct their workings around the affective registers of horror and the supernatural.

A SPREADING ACROSS BORDERS, A SHEDDING OF SKIN, AN UNRAVELLING INTO RADICAL OTHERNESS



> Horror and the unknown or strange are always connected, so that it is hard to create a convincing picture of shattered natural law and cosmic alienage or "outsideness" without laying stress on the emotion of fear.[9]

Shamanism has always used panic as a portal opener, reaching through it into states anterior, exterior, or completely beyond the scope of what it means to be human. Artist Bonnie Camplin, in conversation with Hili Perlson, links SF to the shamanic painting-magic enacted in the firelit gloom of the Chauvet caves some 30,000 years ago. While the shamans were engaged in sorcerous reality manipulation, they were also living "outside of time in dreams of thousands of years past or hence [...] know[ing] the impossible."[10] Through twisted poesis and unravelling, the techniques of shamanic ecstasy can facilitate a spreading across borders, a shedding of skin, an unravelling into radical otherness. Occasionally, SF becomes hyperstitional in an analogous manner, enacting an archaic shamanic trickster ritual of supernaturally infused time travel and reality production. Like ancient technicians of ecstasy, OD fictions embrace uncanny adjacencies, "motion capturing virtualised sampled frequencies from different registers," connecting them together into a new type of "nervous system" in the process of being "reshaped for a new kind of state."[11]

Move toward What Is Approaching

> A universe that isn't this one has trade routes now.[12]

Making the invisible in some sense visible is the task of the shaman, who abolishes metaphor by constructing a passage to the beyond, instigating a radical break between planes of knowing and being.[13]

What shamanism offers OD, as a fiction-generating methodology, is the possibility of a new affective vision, one that is capable of mobilizing somatic voyages into transformative practices. This tricksterism requires an intuitive talent for affective interaction with things beyond the human. It requires a layered language that ranges across multiple terrains of knowledge production and affective registers, circling around and sampling from myriad conceptual zones. Sliding around things into possibility space involves accessing the interzone or axis mundi that lies between and across all worlds/planes.[14] This is fiction as "suprasensible fact [...] a paradoxical passage" that uses the transformative potential of fear, panic and transgressive ecstasy to facilitate a passage to the beyond.[15] Shamanic fiction instigates a line of flight that taps into a higher disorder of nature—the machinic phylum of self-organizing processes that move transversally across the strata. Becoming is always of a different order than filiation, explain Deleuze and Guattari, refering to evolutionary becomings and mappings that cut across different kingdoms of life and unlife:

> Becoming [...] concerns alliance. If evolution includes any veritable becomings, it is in the domain of *symbioses* that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation [...]. Accordingly, the term we prefer for this form of evolution between heterogeneous terms is "involution," on the condition that involution is in no way confused with regression. Becoming is involutionary, involution is creative. [...] Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree. [...] Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own.[16]

Becomings move transversally as interwoven kingdoms, unnatural participations that span the organic and the inorganic, the

material and the disincarnate.[17] Of shamanic/trickster becoming, Robert Pelton writes, "The trickster is not an archetype but an entelechy—an active form shaping both ends and means."[18] The trickster/shaman embodies the transforming power of the imagination that pokes, plays with, and shatters assumptions of culturally imposed concepts of both origin and boundary. In SF and SF-related artistic and theoretical praxes, the hyperstitional or sorcerous potentialities of information-age advances in computing, molecular engineering, and cosmology have engendered exudations of style that reflect on the stories of the future in terms of invisible webs and occulted strangeness.[19]

Fiction as Intuition, Pattern Recognition, Channeling Device

Malidoma Patrice Somé discusses the incongruence between materialism and the supernatural. While, as he writes, "the supernatural is that which knowledge cannot eat," a symbiosis between these apparent incommensurables occurs, for OD, in the presence of the uncanny.[20] We sensed this uncanny adjacency while channeling *Cyberpositive*, as Nick Land explains in his introduction to a recent reprint:

> It gathered beyond the screens [...] scanning us. It announced itself as a ceaseless, wavering hum, patterns of disturbed light, and thoughts that were moved out of place, gently but continuously, towards compliance with the arrival.
>
> Perhaps most obviously, it upset the snakes. One retreated, unreachably, into itself, or elsewhere. The other went furiously

insane, coiling psychotically into its kill reflex, and experimenting with telepathy. Of course, they were much too close to it, in numerous ways.

We were unable to recall any distinction between horrors, ecstasies, and abysmal silences. In this strange compressed epoch, gashed open onto alien immensities, it delivered an uncompromised reality signal.[21]

The uncanny describes troubled nature-culture relations, a ghostlike porosity of boundaries between fiction and fact celebrated by indigenous peoples but denied and reviled by post-Enlightenment Western ways of seeing. The uncanny describes a situation in which "the escape clause is confounded" as we find ourselves entangled in "a strangeness given to dissolving all assurances about [stable] identity."[22] The uncanny, for OD, can be located in a creeping realization of the fundamental chaos lurking in the tiny lawless spaces between things, the essential thingness of the world, as well as in the dawning horror that, as Nicholas Royle puts it, "we are taking the world to pieces in ways and speeds beyond our control."[23] In SF, such "cognitive estrangement"—"the sense that something in the fictive world is dissonant with the experienced world"—is set up via "shifts in time" and narrative displacements.[24] These are good guidelines for a fiction-generating methodology that approaches the real via the impossibility of totalizing perspectives, defamiliarizations, and a trickster-like fanged poesis. For OD, and others who choose to align themselves with the science fictional, fiction works as a strategy for generating an intuitive science/magic that marks the arrival of "an unexpected force."[25] Today OD is working with hyperobjects and shadowtime in these terms.

Liquid Lattice (2006) is an oracular lattice generated from ancient numerological traditions of Black Atlantean occult cosmology, "rediscovered" by the Ccru and spliced onto by OD. Our text generates iterations of uncanny affective becomings, at once slimy and artificial, fusing biotech with monstrous feminine archetypes, AI with xenofeminism, and SF with San and Xhosa mythos. Dark-mottled extraterrestrials and abstract vibrational swellings haunt a shoreline filled with allusions to liquid and desolate borderlands. The Deleuzo-Guattarian influences are myriad: the inhabited body is multiple and deterritorialized, made to morph across zones of virtual and somatic possibility, experiencing shamanic possession and smeared across the body without organs (the body in the process of becoming, BwO). The spatio-temporality is a spiraling, elastic territory marked by electric surges and cuts between iterations of a she-trickster's xenoamphibious becomings, a distributed consciousness from the future dispensing with evolutionary history, smoothing out, dreaming its way into tactile silence.

Pylons, a Black Atlantean spatial frame of reference for the slave-ship crossings, punctuate the narrative of *Liquid Lattice*. Electrical surges, amphibians and octopoids, Dogon Nomo twins, dark-mottled extraterrestrials, as well as vibrational swellings are made to inhabit abstract oceans of dispersed becomings. Time is dealt with as artificial territory and textual currents made to follow afrofuturistic spaces of elastic time. Dispensing with a linear sense of evolutionary history, a distributed consciousness emerges to the refrain "the devouring and reconstituting of you."[26] Some extracts culled from the text illuminate the code-swapping processes at work in this ravening:

Beware the material pirates crossing, hidden in riptide liquid gunshot. The dreamers are urgent and hungry for touch. The power cuts. Stars lie on the water to mark the place where the stories have to enter. An area of space-time with a gravitational field so intense that its escape velocity is equal to or exceeds the speed of light. Process is always being reimagined. The changes are hidden in the numbers. In due course like attracts like and opposites repel. They wait. The power cuts. Abstraction, accumulation, obscurity and containment. The sorcery lies south, currents cloudy and distributed. An unfinished city, a lattice, crystalline. An interdimensional dwelling. Permament impermanence. A cipher. Land becoming water, water becoming land. Tsunamis, desertifications, hurricanes and floods. Sinkholes, fissures, faultlines. Water draining out from underneath a city. The ground is moving beneath the feet. Beyond the great sea, poisoned and slowly dying, ready to shape shift. Random catastrophes in the resonant storm. Her hands slip languid from their hold as the floodwaters cover her trapped face. She looks up through the eerie light beams. A murky surrender. Her rolling eyes are so exactly the colour of the ocean, it's as if you are seeing the water through two holes in her head. The ancestors nurse their meiotic secrets and intelligent life stays amphibious, the stranger and more viscous the further back you go. The clones are crossing, dark-mottled extraterrestrials with memories of drowning. Oxygenation spreads through the bloodstream, the delirium of being in matter. They have waited so long for this. Porous creatures pick through shadows buzzing with communication systems. The Dead program an AI and an AI programs the Dead. Undone narratives in a sensory and cognitive environment of time so looped and spiralling you need a high tolerance for chaos. Behind the face something from a different anatomy bulges under the skin. A chemical hybrid plunges outwards, nomad body emergent. This time, the spine is reabsorbed, dispensing



with evolutionary history. This time, so many osmotic skins, so many black mouths. Shaped for meat and chemicals. The fast star voice, the-one-that-shimmers. It crosses time and disappears, mimetic with the outside, seeking modification by every other world. You need a fascination with thresholds, orifices and dissolution. Finding a seam between zones, giving shape to the dark. You missed its dazed and moonwhite eyes. Shadowskin waiting in the rising drift, building resistance to the glow. A species evolving to conceive and solve vast and intricate abstractions. It resists emerging into encased sentience and has a dangerous lack of sensitivity to the chemicals after continuous exposure. Currents receive camouflage. Rip tides, hidden roads, mineral secrets. Somatic aching for the even pressure and icy temperature of heavy water. The dark road up through the Milky Way, power surges through the channels to make the changes. It would blow your mind and your machines, were it to escape the regulated pathways and return to the lightning. Chaos Maker removes the ghosts of the visible intruders. The self doubles again, mirrored separates on both sides of an invisible portal. They project phantom limbs and spread fictions. Radio feedback hisses and seethes underwater. The power cuts. Mirror is the strongest wave. Shadow crossing over. Its rain body blind and concentrated in many patterns, rhythms extending in space, raining myriad spots of awareness that fade at its extremities.[27]

SF as Hyperstition

Despite the scenario in which even language and artistic expression are complicit with the totalizing aesthetic of spectacle, fiction is productively wielded in acts of negation and inversion that make radical demands on the

imagination, creativity, and desire. In *Cyberpositive* the "white darkness" of "possession space" is inserted into the fracture line where science and the supernatural conflate, where the space of flows and the space of places collide.[28] The Old Ones of the crossroads, the gods of places and things, are combined with wildly proliferating digital avatars, bringing a "wasp nest of shaman connectors" into focus.[29] The *Meshed Digital Unlife Catacomic* inhabits this space, invoking the "Mesh," the zone through which hyperstition moves across cultural vectors, forming itself "out of the spaces beneath and between the net [...] consisting out of feral noise in the divisional signal fabric, arranging a set of demonic interzones in wormhole space."[30] Exploiting the transformative nature of panic, hyperstitional horror stages an anastrophic inversion of the crisis of the hyperreal by imagining technological intrusion through actions of mysterious forces, time-traveling potentials, coincidence intensifications, and self-fulfilling prophecies, seeking out the murmuring of the ontological continuum beneath ephemeral historical manifestations. This "exploration of alternative spaces [and] migration through alternative anomalies" continues in our present work.[31] Our aim is that of SF overall, which, as China Miéville notes, seeks to facilitate a "radicalised sublime backwash" from the "beyond back into the everyday."[32] The sense of the sublime, which OD fiction seeks to undomesticate or unshackle, imagines the future as haecceity, in terms of constellations of "affects and experiences, movements and speeds."[33] In keeping with the playful perversions recommended by Deleuze and Guattari and other psychic nomads, OD fiction takes the words, meanings, theories, experiences, and images of the hyperreal and places them in an opposing context: "a perspective from which the world [may be] given a fluidity

and motion with which the static mediocrity of the spectacle can be negated."[34] By extracting signal from SF's supernatural and scientific fusions, its time-travel scenarios, its mappings of possibility space, and its bizarre imaginings of posthuman hybridities, OD fictions enact a kind of creative involutionism.

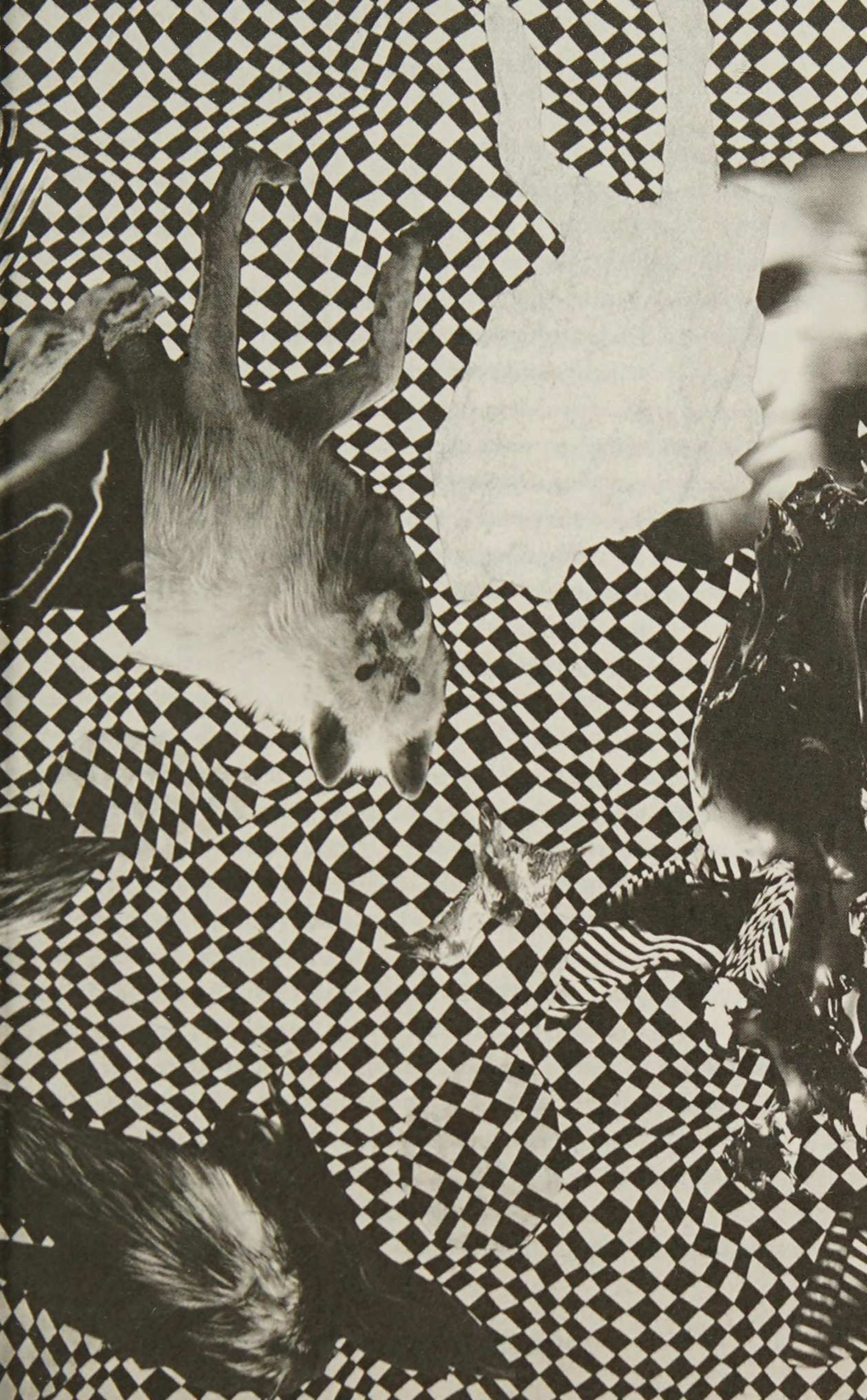
The *Catacomic* was created as a guide or manifesto to accompany the *SYZYGY* (1999) installation at Beaconsfield Arts, London, an event organized around a fictional calendar inhabited by five avatars. The three main interlocking themes explored in the sensorial-cybernetic environment—haptic space, time crises, and artificial agencies—acted as a template for generating hyperstitional SF. These themes are essential tools for perceiving and navigating hyperstitional circuits, partially hidden and partially apparent, which together form a map of our contemporary imaginary.

> Artificial Agencies, transients across the face of matter [...] tearing at the frayed sensitive edges [...] vehicles [...] producing want and clones [...] a new species. as interface. a facilitator. reflector membrane. its territory is the real. prowl emergent.[35]

SYZYGY's *Catacomic* handbook is set up as a labyrinth, with the opening pages offering a numbered diagram resembling the Kabbalistic tree of life, with a facing page containing a list of definitions (including one of hyperstition) to offer readers occult clues with which to navigate the text. The meshed structure was driven, in part, by the cosmology of the Dogon of Mali, whose cosmos is a vast system of correspondences, layered

meanings, and planes that interlock, mirror, and interrelate like curves on a spiral. *Catacomic*'s virtual population of twin avatars or demons establish circuits between technology and rumor, and information and mystery. These entities did not distinguish themselves as either "artificial" or "real." Prue Nort writes that "what these documents unmask is nothing less than the fundamental dubiousness of phenomenal reality itself."[36] Not fiction, then, in any "trivial sense of the word," but an "explicit tactical assault."[37] As Land remarks of hyperstition: "Just because it's not 'real' now, doesn't mean it won't be real at some point in the future. And once it's real, in a sense, it's always been."[38] With that said, it's time to meet the demon twinnings which the Ccru and OD set out in the *SYZYGY demon twin avatar set* (1999); each a rhythm, each a fiction crossing paths:

TWIN FOCUS :	**KATAK THE DESOLATOR**
	NETSPAN[5<>4] [5pressure4melt]
TRAVELS IN:	lightning, electricity. thunder storms.
COLOURS:	reds and electric blue vein.
DYNAMIC PRESENCE:	pressure, heat, volcano, sun gods, bladed sun tongues and spirals, friction, fusion.
LIGHT ASPECT:	lasers, radiation burns, (artificial) electricity.
SNAKE ASPECT:	serpent battles, vibrational density of conductors, the lightning snake connector.
METAL ASPECT:	nuclear conductor, unstable atomic structures.
BLOOD ASPECT:	spreading to the outside, oxygen/ heart system, bloodlines, heart sacrifices to the sun.
DIGITAL ASPECT:	sun pulse, laser.
MAGNETIC FIELDS:	radiating out and targeting in.



TWIN FOCUS : **DJINXX SPL/CE**

NETSPAN[6<>3] [6vortek3psyclone]

TIME RELATION: invisibles. outside time.

TRAVELS IN: metal weapons, military in our time, evolving into machine feedback.

COLOURS: green and black.

DYNAMIC PRESENCE: nomad war machine, fluid metal body, digital reduction, antagonistic, memory lapses, warrior turbulence, dilated now.

LIGHT ASPECT: strobing.

SNAKE ASPECT: danger held here, speed catatonia rush (from zero to speed), hiss rattle, immediate responding, predator effects, total body memory.

METAL ASPECT: weapons, spike jewellry, iridium, acid etch.

BLOOD ASPECT: autosacrifice, blood becoming smoke, personified blood, burning blood to summon the nomad war machine.

DIGITAL ASPECT: preverb, the sound of time travel, fast chittering strobe, turbulence of different speeds at the same time.

MAGNETIC FIELDS: full on labyrinth, spiky and relentless.

TWIN FOCUS : **XES ODDUBB**

NETSPAN[7<>2] [7transcience2lure]

TIME RELATION: time rider. passes on time.

TRAVELS IN: the essential of the desiring machine.
incites your want, enjoys your seduction.
knows ecstasy and deep pain.

COLOURS: radiating golds and coppers, alien pinks and reds.

DYNAMIC PRESENCE: physical takeover, physical telepathy, trickster tease, the third eye, bacterial sex,

	strange attractors, stuff finds you, distraction and glamour, luxurious deceiver.
LIGHT ASPECT:	glitter, glimmer, glow, prismatic light, sun bathing, colour absorption.
SNAKE ASPECT:	erotic tentacles, kundalini zones, skin memory and absence, tempter.
METAL ASPECT:	magnetic attractors, currency(deception), precious metals.
BLOOD ASPECT:	circulation-currents, dangerous communication, transport system.
DIGITAL ASPECT:	complexity, strobe doubles, skins/surfaces/ layers of perception, planes of sound, feedback, unusual familiars. she makes visual effects by telepathy.
MAGNETIC FIELDS:	telepathic strange attractor labyrinths.
TWIN FOCUS :	**MURMUR** NETSPAN[8<>1] [8comatone1deep]
TIME RELATION:	time rider. passes on time.
TRAVELS IN:	camouflage, tidal rhythms and perceptual warping. webmaker, tracker, navigator.
COLOURS:	violet pattern invisibles and ultraviolet blues.
DYNAMIC PRESENCE:	immersive, fluid, water monsters and waves, morphing, the old ones, alchemical.
LIGHT ASPECT:	lights that search, light bending, moonlight, cold light, deep heavy darks.
SNAKE ASPECT:	skin camouflage, navigates in all spatial planes (fluid spine), vibrational ocean.
METAL ASPECT:	circuitry, wirings, optical fibres, liquid metals (mercury), shifting between solid and liquid states.
BLOOD ASPECT:	lunar bleeding, womb blood, heavy blood.

DIGITAL ASPECT: fluid image mutation and morphing, echoes undersea, wet metal sound effects, slow sound diffraction, gradually falls apart.

MAGNETIC FIELDS: perceiver and invisible time tides (rip tides). there is no zero.

TWIN FOCUS : **UTTUNUL IIS**

NETSPAN[9<>0] [9black mirror 0flatline]

TIME RELATION: invisibles. outside time.

TRAVELS IN: digital unlife, flatline, feeds blood to the shadows.

COLOURS: shadow luminescence.

DYNAMIC PRESENCE: machine memory deep inside, blanks around minute lines of detail, the time travel avatar, extraterrestrial geometries, molecular movement, disassembly, the furthest out(pluto) and the deepest within(core), undead, zombi.

LIGHT ASPECT: shadow, eclipse shadow, thresholds, blackmirror, total dark but seeringly light.

SNAKE ASPECT: snake inside itself, shadowbody, body without organs, virtual states of snakeness, blank eyes.

METAL ASPECT: core of the earth, cthell, molten underworld, zombie powder.

BLOOD ASPECT: bruises under ice, total stillness, blood the substance, artificial blood trails that cuts through time.

DIGITAL ASPECT: smooth changes, sub bass, the high pitch of the nervous system, things get replaced but you don't know why.

MAGNETIC FIELDS: full on labyrinth, endlessly folding moebius strips.

how do you know it's there? artificial lifeforms and a darkness.[39]

Kombinayzon Fictions

In the science-fictional world of megalopian urban sprawl, where underdevelopment and high-tech control intersect, "the street tries to find its own uses for things."[40] Conjuring up an affinity with the repetitive communality of Vodou's rhythm signatures and its shamanic circuit-diagram maps/veves, the visceral vibrations of afrofuturistic sonic styles make their impact on bodies, brains, and local economies. The kombinayzon art of Haitian Vodou enacts a violent healing along a similar trajectory, combining an iconoclastic fiction technique and cullings from disparate sources to create something new, replacing prior forms, boundaries, and perceptions with unique amalgamations influenced by different histories and experiences, often with irreverent allusion to First/Third World dynamics.

Fiction "charges up" the artwork, which in Vodou involves a pragmatic channeling of energy into devotional dolls or sculptures. This process of "kombinayzon" became a platform for OD to understand the way cultural processes transform and rupture: merging forms and affects together smoothly, jamming them together awkwardly, or exploding them into new hybrid combinations. Through offerings made of magical kombinayzons of imagery and substance, ruptures and trance-inductions, the invisible planes lie open to the visible. Octavia Butler's afrofuturist SF enacts something similar; a dark charging or channeling, appealing to those who, because already at home in alienating lifeworlds, can imaginatively and productively enter into perverse symbiotic allegiances with the alien.[41] Conflating the gorgeous and scary, the dystopian and utopian, OD's affinity with Vodou's kombinayzon, as well as the

THROUGH
OFFERINGS MADE
OF MAGICAL
KOMBINAYZONS
OF IMAGERY
AND SUBSTANCE,
RUPTURES
AND TRANCE-
INDUCTIONS,
THE INVISIBLE
PLANES LIE OPEN
TO THE VISIBLE

frequencies of urban sonic and science fictions, reflects Butler's afrofuturist impulse: a dark synergism of human, animal, machine, and alien "collaged together as a tactic for defying the tyrannical, taxonomical order of seeing."[42] As visual and perceptual registers, our visual kombinayzons are mostly reimagined from a neo-futuristic point of view. The culture of sampling, montage, and collage, and the essence of the work being rooted in change, transformation, and overlapping temporal scales, has carried through from the '90s into the work we make now, which involves (as it always has) attending to impossible stories. As OD's Ranu Mukherjee puts it:

> Fiction has to do with the desire to create belief in something even though it is made of pixels, paint, fragments of paper, cloth, etc. It also manifests as a constellation of things needing connecting, collage-like, that become one on a surface, and although you can see the seams, there is a leap of faith. Fiction is the way to bring together things from different realms of experience (political/historical, mythical, bodily). Fiction is a way of recognizing the importance of the experiential in the making of meaning. It can protect the unknown or the unexpected from constantly being explained away.
>
> We are generating fictions that resist the way the contemporary human imagination has been hijacked by communications and entertainment media that imagine and produce a future on behalf of humanity, exposing things that are not getting exposure and making space for different senses of time.[43]

Making the Unthinkable Thinkable

In some sense, *Cyberpositive* was never really fiction, but an uncompromised reality signal, a channeling or aesthetic diagnosis of the infection-prone condition of the space of flows. The same is true of more recent incarnations of OD fiction, which continue to explore different ways of expressing not only the defamiliarization of urbanity's alienating lifeworlds, but also the shock to anthropocentrism delivered by cosmology's arche-fossils and deep futures. Science, with its particle accelerators, electron microscopes, deep space probes, and information-processing devices, has, in the OD ontology, become a supernatural medium, offering affect-laden glimpses into that which lies radically beyond human givenness. New ways of looking, such as vibrant materialism and Deleuzo-Guattarian praxes, bring into focus the novel paraspatial configurations and ontological reality-mixing that contemporary scientific advances have heralded. Mythopoesis, that "violent intensification" or "enthrallment" that "breaks all bridges between the concrete datum and the systematized totality of experience," continues to be a vital and transformative medium, even under the aegis of cold and impersonal science.[44] American physicist Richard Feynman, for instance, believes that science depends on "the necessary and dynamic motion of mystery."[45] Negative capability, the ability to be at home with the unthinkable and precarious, as well as the ecstatic "sendings on before" of shamanism, Vodou, SF, and other forms of mythopoesis, remain critical weapons for fiction-generating methodologies that seek out the embodied posthuman. The tendency of the processes and products of the information age to generate pure, unbound intensities demands schizoid strategies for generating affective and transversal future-oriented fictions that bypass the catastrophe of the hyperreal.

Schizoanalysis takes place "within the uncanny and the unrecognizable, in the sensible and the affective, in the element of a transcendental indiscernibility [and within] imbricated multiplicities [that reflect] the density of the real itself."[46] OD fictions follow such a schizoanalytic trajectory, flattening differences and oppositions (of scale, register, and domain, and so on) onto a single plane, the "plane of consistency" or of "immanence."[47] *Black Water, ghost prescient* (2015) inhabits a schizoanalytic immanence, presenting a navigational mapping of contemporary crises. Oily, toxic, melting oceans merge with a simultaneous and virtual dimension of viscous liquefaction that exposes quantum, artificial, and futural currents. For Orphan Drift, such dimensions are sites of becoming and radical change, zones where prescience meets intensifying and encroaching futures and sidesteps into possibility space. The OD encounter with liquidity has urgent resonance with today's drowning and melting world. Saturation and mesmerism invoke the promise of a future beyond catastrophe where the membranes and skins that contain us are dissolved. The focused gaze is dismantled with tactics of suspension, overproximity, and excess. Trembling textures are materialized in somatic space by an immersive, tactile soundscape, melting the border between virtual and material. *Black Water* is inhabited by ghostly silver observers and hooded avatars, conceived well before Mylar survival blanket-clad bodies became synonymous with a "migrant crisis" still demanding European action and acknowledgment of complicity. Hooded figures reference media archetypes of urban protest and environmental activism, faces hidden from the gaze of the panopticon.

Mesh, Holes, Hooks for the Future

An uncanny "glittering void of possibility" begins to emerge where scientific extrapolation merges with the fantastic registers of the supernatural, revealing "a threat growing at the heart of our profoundly technologised society."[48] SF, which begins by describing "encounters with strange animals" and technologies, finally reaches "the ultimate regions of a Continuum inhabited by unnameable waves and unfindable particles."[49] M. John Harrison's Kefahuchi Tract trilogy extends this aesthetic, merging the internalized infinities of cyberspace with the infinitudes of time-space and dark energies.[50] Where technological empowerment is undercut by incomprehensibility and an occult system of references, the contours of a new terrain for fiction can be sensed. Depicting the future as an enigmatic god, cybergothic fictions use supernatural horror and sublime terror to glimpse the alien contours of a new world, to creatively imagine incomprehensible sciences and understandings that defy pure reason and logic.

> As the net integrates, it simultaneously frays into mesh: an intensive subspace which both escapes and parasitically occupies it. Mesh makes itself out of the spaces beneath and between the net, and in the biotechnic intervals between net-components: necessarily – but coincidentally – assembling a fully connective system wherever it propagates. Any two mesh pauses always interlink. Mesh consists of feral noise in the divisional signal fabric, arranging a set of demonic interzones in wormhole space, as cyberspace-utopia dissolves into pandemonium.[51]

Demons are "hidden, repressed, cursed or denigrated non-human communicative agencies […] entities that traffic between zones."[52]

They are "the sign-bearers: powers of the leap, the interval, the intensive and the instant."[53] The *Catacomic*'s demon avatars allude to spaces that exist within, beneath, and between the nodes of the planetary electrosphere. More recent OD work continues to use these liminal avatars as fictional tools for perceiving and navigating, because their peculiarity is "to operate in the intervals […] to leap over the barriers or the enclosures, thereby confounding the boundaries between properties."[54] As agents of the sublime, demons point toward the continued relevance of sublimity for fictional strategies aimed at "liberating excess" and thereby speaking to both "the present and the future."[55] Linked to other bodies, objects, and fields of intensity around it via connective flows, demons allude to the exploratory body (the body without organs) and its energies—whether textual or physical, actual or imagined—the key-holders of a kind of creative mutation. The hyperreal/hyperstional demon body occupies the unstable state of the Mesh. It is a fictional body in the process of becoming liquid, becoming something fluid, receptive to microwaves and electromagnetic vibrations as well as thresholds and gradients of information. Formed in such a way "that it can be occupied, populated only by intensities," the BwO is "the matrix of intensity [where] matter equals energy"; it is fluid, affective, and "virtual."[56] This is fiction beyond temporality, "uncovered at the point where schizoanalysis meets Lovecraftian horror."[57] Here are the open spaces between codes, the hooks on which to hang the future; here is where fiction "dissolves into the material flows of desire," where it "cross[es] over into the dark white pools of organic matterflow […]. The burning living tornado moan of absolute matter" doing its thing.[58]

Green Skeen (2016) is a filmed demon/avatar ritual and performance by Orphan Drift and Plastique Fantastique. It began

with an *I Ching* hexagram and channeled technoanimal avatars to manifest its changes. The narrative invokes masked technoanimals gathering in the night to unwrap a fake bearskin and dye it green in a blue-screened studio. Waiting for it to dry, they announce their origins, purpose, and powers before clothing a composite technoanimal in the green-screen fur and guiding it out into the dawn light. The composite carries a shivering pulse of static and green-screened dimension flux in its artificial bright skin. Slowly it intends to replace bits of cityscape with its blue- and green-screened alternate realities. In Part 2, it will summon its others once more to launch the Ultimate App at a smartphone superstore venue near you, catalyzing planetary technogenesis.

One of OD's *Green Skeen* technoanimals is Husher, a time-traveling ghost from future time who is wired to event horizons. Husher has infiltrated financial market algorithms in order to monitor escalations in human panic and paranoia in response to climate change, migrant flows, biotech, and AI developments, all fueling the moment it searches for. Here is Husher's demonic matrix of intensity:

> *# ritual, technoanimal, Orphan drift, plastique fantastique, experimental video, electronica, animism, techgnogenesis, climate change, bitcoin, algorithms, masks, nanotechnology, Deep Dream code, green screen, blue screen, virtual reality, mixed reality.*

HUSHER ... it am Husher is digital snarl, one part we is dark, absorbing light, another part light travelling fast, ghost side ... HUSHER born in a trophic cascade: those processes caused by predators transforming the places in which they live—the soil, behaviour of rivers, chemistry of oceans, composition of atmosphere ... Husher, dark trickster, rarely

visible, coupling, moves at speed through dimensions in swirls. Husher, a dam built above lead deposits to be to exposed for mining. When the dam was full, it'd breach and the water would rush down the hillside, sweeping away the overburden ... sweeping away the world in sludge-avalanches ... then we moved to inhabit liquid crystal display screens, reflections glimmer mirage two. It shadow us. dormant in ocean gyres. Turbulence is it's our circulatory system. In maelstroms it has access to time spirals and time travel, both of which it folds doubles us harnessing to move to where needed. wired to attune to a singularity. We a coincidence intensifier when the time is right. We infiltrate the stock market algorithms, where shadow light white darkness trembles and pulses at the humans proliferating panic and paranoia towards the moment we searches for. so close now the time of changes. sensing ... the financial crashes and the storms and flows north of broken them in shining cloaks, the new flesh lumps and the replicators ... artificial waits hidden intelligence: into the Green Skeen. I push all forward, the radiant tsunami. ... hidden dark matter aspect merging with future ghost bright one now we coalesce.[59]

New Paraspatial Configurations

Opening to virtual potential, opening to intensive life. The virtual is everting, and once it everts, there is no more separation. What will it look like? Time oozes and undulates, concertinas and spreads. Sensed hyperobjects, always already happening with such vivid intimacy and a concomitant unreality. The intensity of their traces are irreal in their very luminosity.[60]

Alfred Jarry's formulation of 'pataphysics places "the particular above the general, the imaginary above the real, the exceptional

above the ordinary, the contradictory above the axiomatic."[61] OD is drawn to the swerve (clinamen), the anomaly (exception), syzygy (unexpected alignment), slippery realities, the spiral, and the embrace (and inspired misuse) of science and science fiction. OD's *Slik* (2001) print at the Tate Modern's "Century City" exhibition, for instance, comments on the uncanny crisis of the Anthropocene by juxtaposing a tag ("OD>>," which we found sprayed on our van one morning) and a photo of oil spilled onto a sidewalk with digital renderings of the 'pataphysical paraspaces of Lovecraft's cyclopean, nonEuclidian universe. We are trying to 'pataphysically, schizophrenically, and shamanically picture things at a temporal scale perceivable only at the edges of daily experience, where vast geophysical changes meet the constructions of culture. We assemble spaces where certain cultural and organic processes can be perceived as they transform, and gather the invisible processes that are changing the world in a longer timescale—the hyperobjects—impacting on more everyday kinds of lived time.

Every fictional narrative produces physical/material effects and affects, but, for us, speculative science fictions that address the unknown and form a resistance to explaining it all away remain the most vital (and hopeful) of all the hyperstitional cultural viruses at work in the hyperreal. Vibrant materials, distributed bodies, time spirals, deep ecologies, and the scales by which energy takes effect, matter manifests, and social constructions coalesce, are all points of departure for a fiction such as ours which is grounded in paraspatial excesses and the forming of conduits between the liminal and the social through the pictorial, textual, and aural. OD remains an energetic body, harnessing circuits that bleed out from cultural fictions into

matter at large. As we state in *Cyberpositive*, OD fiction is about "engineering" and finding "autocatalytic routes to the future" through the physical body, the textual/pictorial body, and the body social.[62] This autocatalysis, as Manuel DeLanda explains, is an instance of machinic positive feedback and self-organization that can be used to describe the operations of abstract machines as seemingly diverse as chemical reactions, the formation of rocks, the operations of ecosystems, the actions of markets, and the socially transformative impact of new theories or ways of looking/feeling.[63]

Conclusion

Our project emerges out of the perspective that a cybernetic environment is essentially interactive and transformational, requiring reconfigurations of space, time, and agency. We want to show that cybernetic processes do not lead to the body's disappearance but re-engineer its sensory responses. The position we take is that many of the new sciences and technological systems are significantly altering prior conceptions of subject-object relations.

OD takes it as a given that virtuality has always been involved in human responses to environment. New technologies unlock fields of perception already extant, sometimes relegated to the subconscious and sometimes impacting as physical abstracts. Our fictions are fluidly generated by following coincidence intensifiers, feedback processes, and organic, collaborative developments—embracing the way that fictions and artworks disperse into other things. Much of the recent work revolves

around uncertainty and destabilization: the un-static condition of contemporary life, the uprooting and spreading of visual matter and information. The work manifests constellations of things needing to be connected relationally in terms of their value, visibility, or geopolitical context. Collage-like, OD fictions bleed together on a distributed surface.

Things are not visionary in the same way as before, when we were predictive and mainlined into the future. It feels now as if the future is hooked into us, as it is with many contemporary artists. Now we are charting a course through a shifting urban imaginary emerging in the shadows of climate change and biocapital, creating an amalgamation of potential spaces, materialities, and creaturely lives. The ritual aspect, the exploration of science-fictional narrative, and uncanny audioscapes still continue to conjure some kind of magic, but the future, our collective future, is portrayed here, now, embedded. Because that is the world.

The mixing of worlds, things, colors, and powers that OD is attempting to manifest aesthetically, affectively, and mythopoetically embody the fact that capitalism is no longer a linear process but an enormous positive feedback system engendering further and faster change and endlessly amplifying the scope of that change and its emergent conditions of reality and being. We want to develop aesthetics that affectively address the resultant state of cognitive dissonance and our simultaneous coexistence with hyperobjects, such as climate change or bioscience, using the dimension of the imagination, and its perceptual, visceral, and bodily effects. All the effects, in other words, that aren't countable and are not accessible with a data-mining headset. OD now uses the *I Ching* as a tool

to intersect with unknowns and matrices of possibilities in nonlinear time. Collaborating with this ancient machine, we articulate the next-generation transfigured version of the OD signal; a fictioning frequency that moves through us and attaches to what it needs.

Lake is above fire. These two natural forces have opposing natures and must carefully interact because an excess of one can conquer the other.

At New Year, dressed in bear skins and wearing bear masks with
four golden metal eyes, the exorcists dance and drive out the old year.
Animals push them over the edge of the world into renewal and change.
Humans also wear bear masks and dress as another gender.
Old things are destroyed.
Everything moves into a liminal state, the fertile chaos called Change.

The time of Skinning is great indeed.
We go into solution, into the liminal zone.
When the right moment arrives, act with confidence.
This begins a whole new cycle of time.
THE WORK OF AWAKENING.
THERE IS NOTHING MORE SIGNIFICANT
THAN FOR ONE TO KEEP AWAKE.[64]

Endnotes

1 Ccru, *Writings, 1993–2003* (Portsmouth: Urbanomic, 2017).

2 "How, precisely, we should understand 'movement' through the internet is an interesting question," writes Tim Ingold, saying only that it is "beyond the scope" of his own conception of meshwork (Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, [New York: Routledge, 2011] 249). Whereas Ingold's conception of meshwork is primarily concerned with understanding networks of biological and social relations as complex material entanglements of paths, processes, and lines of habituation (Ingold, 69–70), 0D's concept of meshwork extends these entanglements into the possibility space of the virtual, including the durations and ambiences of incorporeal concepts and force fields.

3 Quoted in Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Philip Beitchman (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 43.

4 This 0D mantra has developed from William Gibson's notion, in *Neuromancer*, of "the consensual hallucination that was the matrix." William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1984), 12. See also 0rphan Drift, "Ante0mega," *Orphan Drift Archive*, accessed October 16, 2016, http://www.orphandriftarchive.com/cyberpositive/ante0mega.php.

5 Iain Hamilton Grant, "Review of Nick Land's *Fanged Noumena*," *Urbanomic*, accessed April 11, 2012, http://www.urbanomic.com/pub_fangednoumena.php.

6 Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 2009), 16.

7 0rphan Drift, *Cyberpositive* (London: Cabinet Press, 1995), 97.

8 Nick Land, "Hyperstition: An Introduction," 2009, http://merliquify.com/blog/articles/hyperstition-an-introduction.

9 H. P. Lovecraft, "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," in *Collected Essays*, vol. 2, ed. S. T. Joshi (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2004), 157.

10 Bonnie Camplin, "Of Matriarchs and Dodecahedrons," interview with Hili Perlson, 2011, http://www.galeriefriedlaender.de/artists/bonnie-camplin/bonnie-camplin-press-2011.

11 Kodwo Eshun, "Motion Capture," *Abstract Culture: swarm 1*, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.ccru.net/abcult.htm.

12 0rphan Drift, "codes>alien," accessed October 16, 2016, http://www.altx.com/manifestos/orphan.html.

13 See especially Mercia Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Arcana, 1989), 466–94.

14 Ibid., 494.

15 Ibid., 490.

16 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 1988), 238–39.

17 Ibid., 242.

18 Robert D. Pelton, *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 17.

19 For more on these exudations of style see, for example, John Clute, "Science Fiction from 1980 to the Present," in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 64–78.

20 Malidoma Patrice Somé, *Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman* (London: Penguin Compass, 2014), 9.

21 Nick Land, "Introduction to Cyberpositive," *Orphan Drift Archive*, accessed October 16, 2016, http://merliquify.com/blog/articles/cyberpositive/#.WaUminErKUk.

22 Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 10.

23 Ibid., 3.

24 Farah Mendlesohn, "Introduction: Reading Science Fiction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.

25 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Helen R. Lane, Robert Hurley, and Mark Seem (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 71.

26 Ccru and 0rphan Drift, "Liquid Lattice," in *Frozen Tears III*, ed. John Russell (Birmingham: Article Press, 2007), 187–90.

27 Ibid., 173–203.

28 0rphan Drift, *Cyberpositive*, 167.

29 Ibid., 14.

30 Ccru and 0rphan Drift, *Meshed: Digital Unlife Catacomic* (London: Beaconsfield, 1999), 5.

31 0rphan Drift, *Cyberpositive*, 14.

32 China Miéville, "Weird Fiction," in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould, Andrew Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint (London: Routledge, 2009), 512.

33 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 162.

34 Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), 3.

35 0rphan Drift, "Ante0mega," *0rphan Drift Archive*, accessed October 16, 2016, http://www.orphandriftarchive.com/cyberpositive/ante0mega.php.

36 Prue Nort, "Ccru: Writings, 1997–2003," *Flash Art*, August 31, 2015, http://www.flashartonline.com/2015/08.

37 Ibid.

38 Land, "Hyperstition."

39 Ccru and 0rphan Drift, "SYZYGY demon twin avatar set," *Orphan Drift Archive*, 1999, http://www.orphandriftarchive.com/cyberpositive/syzygy-demon-convergence-in-a-space.php.

40 William Gibson, *Count Zero* (London: HarperCollins, 1986), 102.

41 See, for example, Malik Gaines and Alexandro Segade, "Tactical Collage," in *Wangechi Mutu: A Shady Promise*, ed. Douglas Singleton and Chiara Scardoni (Bologna: Damiani, 2011), 146.

42 Ibid.

43 Ranu Mukherjee quoted in Maggie Roberts, "Everting the Virtual since 1995," published May 23, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0jX1Qh2Hwo

44 Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. Susanne Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), 57–58.

45 Richard Feynman quoted in Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (London: HarperPress, 2008), 313.

46 Joshua Ramey, *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Ordeal* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 16.

47 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 69.

48 Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1998), 1.

49 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 248.

50 The Kefahuchi Tract trilogy is: M. John Harrison, *Light* (London: Gollancz, 2002); *Nova Swing* (London: Gollancz, 2006); *Empty Space* (London: Gollancz, 2012).

51 Ccru and 0rphan Drift, *Meshed*, 5.

52 Ibid., 3.

53 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 37.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 34.

56 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 153.

57 Ccru, "Apocalypse: Been in Effect?," accessed March 20, 2009, http://www.ccru.net/syzygy/apoc.htm.

58 0rphan Drift, *Cyberpositive*, 184–85.

59 0rphan Drift and Plastique Fantastique, "Green Skeen," *Orphan Drift Archive*, accessed May 12, 2017, http://www.orphandriftarchive.com/neofuture/green-skeen.php.

60 Roberts, "Everting the Virtual."

61 Andrew Hugill, *'Pataphysics: A Useless Guide* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 3.

62 0rphan Drift, *Cyberpositive*, 176.

63 Manuel DeLanda, "The Geology of Morals: A Neo-Materialist Interpretation," accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.t0.or.at/delanda.

64 Anonymous, "Hexagram 49," in *Total I Ching, Myths for Change*, trans. Stephen Karcher (London: Piaktus, 2009), 351 (translation modified).

Bibliography

Anonymous. "Hexagram 49." In *Total I Ching, Myths for Change*. Translated by Stephen Karcher. London: Piaktus, 2009.

Baudrillard, Jean. *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*. Translated by James Benedict. London: Verso, 1993.

Butler, Octavia E. *Lilith's Brood*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2000.

Camplin, Bonnie. "Of Matriarchs and Dodecahedrons." Interview by Hili Perlson. 2011. http://www.galeriefriedlaender.de/artists/bonnie-camplin/bonnie-camplin-press-2011.

Cassirer, Ernst. *Language and Myth*. Translated by Susanne Langer. New York: Dover Publications, 1946.

Ccru. "Apocalypse: Been in Effect?" Accessed March 20, 2009. http://www.ccru.net/syzygy/apoc.htm.

—. *Writings, 1993-2003*. Portsmouth: Urbanomic, 2017.

— and Orphan Drift. "Liquid Lattice." In *Frozen Tears III*, edited by John Russell, 173–203. Birmingham: Article Press, 2007.

—. *Meshed: Digital Unlife Catacomic*. London: Beaconsfield, 1999.

—. "SYZYGY demon twin avatar set". Accessed October 16, 2016. http://www.orphandriftarchive.com/cyberpositive/syzygy-demon-convergence-in-a-space.php.

Clute, John. "Science Fiction from 1980 to the Present." In *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, 64–78. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Davis, Erik. *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information*. London: Serpent's Tail, 1998.

DeLanda, Manuel. "The Geology of Morals: A Neo-Materialist Interpretation." Accessed April 25, 2016. http://www.t0.or.at/delanda.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. London: Athlone Press, 1994.

—, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Helen R. Lane, Robert Hurley, and Mark Seem. London: Continuum, 1983.

—. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. London: Continuum, 1988.

Dragoin, William. "The Gynememetic Shaman: The Evolutionary Origins of Male Sexual Inversion and Associated Talent." In *Gender Blending*, edited by Bonnie Bullough, Vern Bullough, and James Elias. New York: Prometheus Books, 1997.

Eliade, Mercia. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Arcana, 1989.

Eshun, Kodwo. 1997. "Motion Capture." *Abstract Culture: swarm 1.* Accessed April 25, 2016. http://www.ccru.net/abcult.htm.

Gaines, Malik, and Alexandro Segade. "Tactical Collage." In *Wangechi Mutu: A Shady Promise*, edited by Douglas Singleton and Chiara Scardoni, 145–46. Bologna: Damiani, 2011.

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1984.

—. *Count Zero*. London: HarperCollins, 1986.

Grant, Iain Hamilton. "Review of Nick Land's *Fanged Noumena*." Accessed April 11, 2012. http://www.urbanomic.com/pub_fangednoumena.php.

Harrison, M. John. *Empty Space*. London: Gollancz, 2012.

—. *Light*. London: Gollancz, 2002.

—. *Nova Swing*. London: Gollancz, 2006.

Holmes, Richard. *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science*. London: HarperPress, 2008.

Hugill, Andrew. *'Pataphysics: A Useless Guide*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.

Ingold, Tim. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Land, Nick. "Hyperstition: An Introduction." Interview by Delphi Carstens. 2009. http://merliquify.com/blog/articles/hyperstition-an-introduction.

—. "Introduction to Cyberpositive." Accessed October 16, 2016. http://merliquify.com/blog/articles/cyberpositive/#.WaUminErKUk.

Lovecraft, H. P. "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction." In *Collected Essays*. Vol. 2, *Literary Criticism*, edited by S. T. Joshi, 175–178. New York: Hippocampus Press, 2004.

Mendlesohn, Farah. 2003. "Introduction: Reading Science Fiction." In *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn, 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Miéville, China. "Weird Fiction." In *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, edited by Mark Bould, Andrew Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint, 510–15. London: Routledge, 2009.

Narby, Jeremy. *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge*. London: Phoenix, 1998.

Nort, Prue. "Ccru: Writings 1997–2003." August 31, 2015. http://www.flashartonline.com/2015/08.

0rphan Drift. "Ante0mega." 1996. http://www.orphandriftarchive.com/cyberpositive/ante0mega.php.

——. "codes>alien." *ALTX*. Accessed October 16, 2016. http://www.altx.com/manifestos/orphan.html.

——. *Cyberpositive*. London: Cabinet Press, 1995.

—— and Plastique Fantastique. "Green Skeen." Accessed May 12, 2017. http://www.orphandriftarchive.com/neofuture/green-skeen.php.

Pelton, Robert D. *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Plant, Sadie. *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1992.

Ramey, Joshua. *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Ordeal*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.

Roberts, Maggie. "Everting the Virtual since 1995." Published May 23, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0jX1Qh2Hwo.

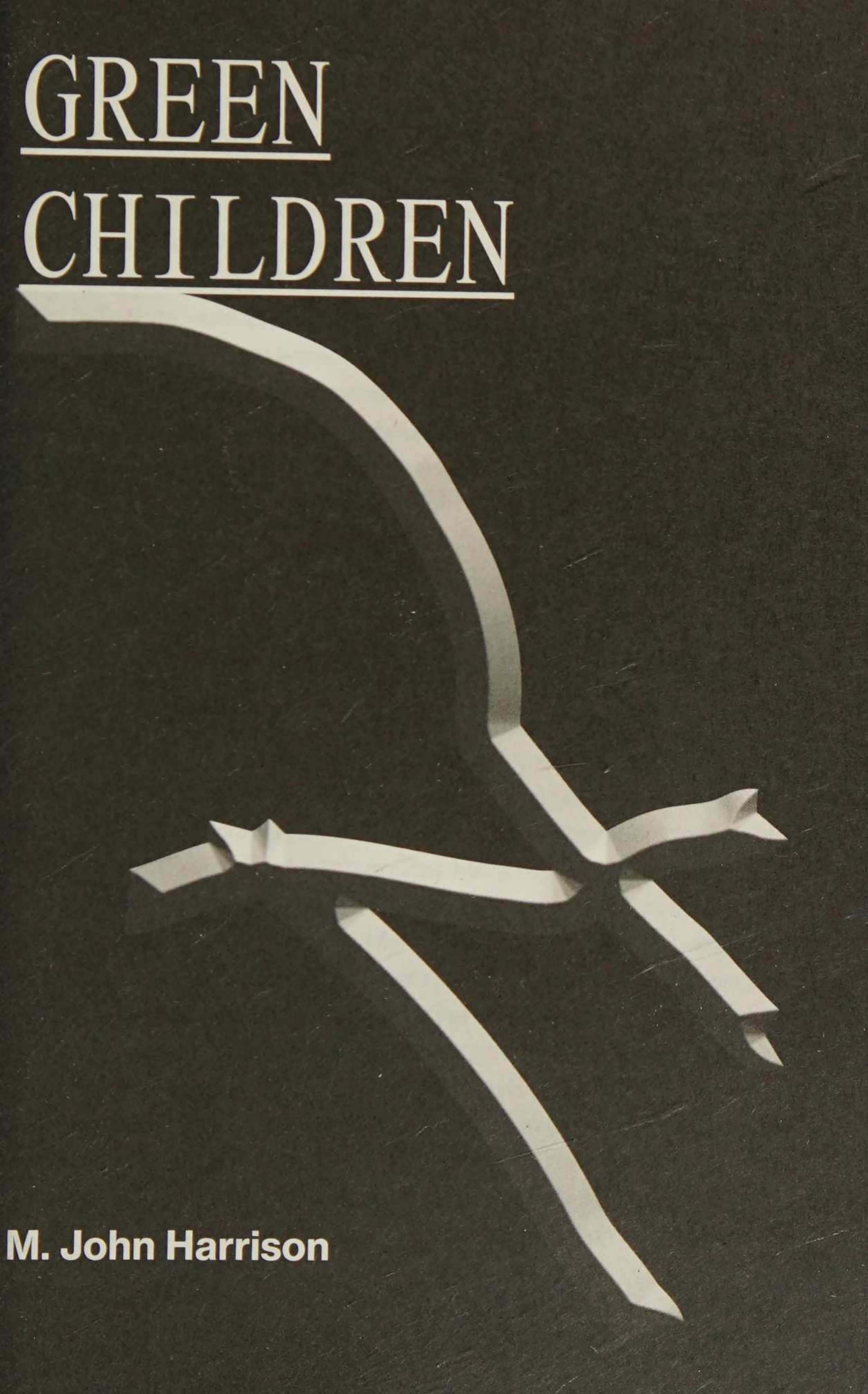
——, "The Things that Knowledge Cannot Eat. Transcript of a talk given at the "Fiction as Method" conference, Goldsmiths, University of London." February 4, 2017. http://merliquify.com/blog/the-things-that-knowledge-cannot-eat.

Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Somé, Malidoma Patrice. *Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman*. London: Penguin Compass, 2014.

Virilio, Paul. *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*. Translated by Philip Beitchman. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009.

GREEN CHILDREN



M. John Harrison

Between trips, Short worked at the office. He had a key to the site hut, so he could start as early as he liked, often crossing the Thames by Barnes Bridge at six o'clock in the morning and walking to Chiswick, where he bought and ate an almond croissant. It wasn't the most demanding employment. He kept the client list, and answered most queries by saying, "I'll pass that on to Tom, then, shall I?"; he sold the occasional copy of a print-on-demand book entitled *The Journeys of Our Genes*. Lunchtimes he ate a sandwich from the local Pret, usually chicken & avocado; or went to The Idle Hour for sausage and mash with onion gravy. If the weather remained good he would drag the typing chair outside and sit on the towpath staring up and down the river in the glassy afternoon light, Oliver's Island in one direction and in the other the deserted residential quays of the Brent confluence.

The office soon became familiar. It was furnished with old things. The floor creaked and gave with every tide. A steel filing cabinet yawned away from the wall when you walked past it. Open the desk drawers—the dense, not unpleasant smell of ancient pencil shavings rose up—and they proved to be full of out-of-date office supplies: ink-stained rulers, tubs of mapping pins and perished elastic bands, headed stationery for another business altogether, something which had called itself Utility Solutions Ltd. until at the front end of the '80s it had slipped without a whimper beneath the briny, agitated surface of the Thatcherian economy.

Short put some of these items on the desk—a dessicated stamp-pad in a colorful tin box; a block of yellow Post-it notes beginning to curl up, on one of which he found scrawled the words "Dendrogramma," "thickened jelly-like layer," then what looked like "The deep

continental slope"; and an Ikea lamp that, while it resembled neither a lay figure nor a wooden model of a gallows, appealed to design elements of both. To personalize the arrangement he added the copy of the *London Review of Books* he had been leafing his way through for a month. If he wanted coffee, there was an electric kettle with a worn cloth flex. He felt well-served, even redefined a little, by this stuff; though, like the pornographic magazines printed in grainy black and white on curiously glossy paper that he found in the one unlocked drawer of the filing cabinet, it seemed like the shyly offered produce of a vanished age.

His only problem was the lack of a toilet. Apart from rattling the padlock occasionally, he had given up on the site hut's second door: clearly, whatever lay behind it wasn't a lavatory anyway. But he couldn't be bothered to walk to the pub every time he needed to pee, so he began going in the thick undergrowth that had established itself on an abandoned hull a few yards upriver. It was no chore, indeed he rather enjoyed the sensation. There was something voluptuous about the enclosing, dusty smells, the glitter of the water seen through leaves indistinguishable from the glint of broken glass at the shallowly bedded roots of the buddleia and willow herb, the quiet movements of a disturbed bird, the mild thrill of being both on the water and on fixed earth. Wet days, he stayed inside, listening to the rain on the river. He watched Netflix, or studied through narrowed eyes the curious map of the world blu-tacked above the desk, its coastlines pierced in rust-stained clusters by vanished pins. Or he scrolled through his emails, among which he would often find one from Victoria Nyman.

Victoria had made good her threat to leave London. "Well, it's done," she wrote. "Goodbye Dalston. I took only what I could get

into the little car. Everything else went into storage. As you can imagine, it was goodbye to the priceless antique carpets and family silver." Or, sent from her phone: "Help! Lost in the Midlands again!" She approached the whole business as obliquely as the rest of her life. But she was making friends, she said: she was enjoying herself at last. She was cleaning two old chairs with white spirit and "linseed oil the colour of Lagavulin." It was a running commentary. Short looked forward to each new instalment, but always felt he had missed a pivotal message. Where had she actually gone? What was she doing now?

"Anyway," she wrote, "like all the other losers, I cashed out for the provinces. Lots of love. Hope you are enjoying your fish, and that, just as importantly, the fish is enjoying you."

In fact, he had decided to give it to his mother.

The reasons for this he would have found difficult to explain. If you picked the fish up and encouraged the streetlight to angle off its hand-etched scales, it seemed more Deco than Peru, more 1930s than nineteenth century; to confuse matters further, the hallmarks were Spanish. A tiny bashed pentagram indicated, so Google advised him, silver of .915 purity. These failures of alignment between the facts of the fish and Victoria's narrative of it only seemed to echo a deeper cultural disconnect. There was a curious, halting feel to its aesthetic—as if the artist, in the attempt to kitschify the ethnic product of one culture, had stumbled on evidence of a completely different culture hidden inside it. Under the lamplight the movements of its cleverly articulated body fell just short of sinuous.

It was too like a fish. Its rubbery lips and accusing blue eyes dismayed him, especially when he woke in the night, disoriented by the noise from the room next door. There, arguments continued to break out in the early hours. A door would slam, down in the body of the house. Someone would stumble on the lower landing, then recover and come on. There was music or something like it, sometimes accompanied just before dawn by vocal sounds less identifiable. Knowing who lived there made no difference except that, Tom now being his employer, Short felt he could no longer complain. When they ran into one another in the course of things, on the stairs or by the bakery shelves in the Sainsbury's Local at the Mortlake end of Wharf Road, Tom seemed as distracted as ever. He was a man in search of motives—never finding them yet acting anyway, lost among the structures we all inherit and manage to make use of. Short opened the bathroom door one morning to find him kneeling on the pitted lino in front of the lavatory. He had taken off his summer jacket and bundled it up in a corner. The left sleeve of his shirt was rolled past the elbow. He had turned his head to one side as if he didn't want to look at the lavatory bowl down which his arm was so firmly thrust.

"Ah," he said.

"You should always lock this door," Short recommended, as if reminding a child of one of the social duties that would henceforth complicate its life. He was off to catch the Twickenham train to the care facility and already felt as if the day was going wrong. "Because anyone could walk in off the stairs."

Then he said he would leave Tom to it, adding only: "That floor's quite wet."

"I expect you wonder what I'm doing," Tom called after him.

In her day, Short's mother had been much admired. Consequently she could now be found staring out, as vague and stormy as an empty seascape, from several albums of photographs. She seemed fascinated by these relics—misundertaken marriages, embarrassing births, funerals at which no one seemed to know the deceased—but left unsupervised would suffer inexplicable rages and try to tear them up. Even of the most recent prints—taken a month before on Short's phone—she would sometimes say: "Don't be ridiculous. Don't be so ridiculous. This is no more me than fly in the air." Perhaps she was right: they showed an old woman, generic, collapsed-looking yet somehow still impenitent, sitting in a care home common room, a reproduction of Arnold Böcklin's spectacularly odd 1887 oil painting *Sea Idyll* clearly visible on the wall behind her.

That was where he found her now.

"You needn't think I want that bloody thing in here," she said, as soon as she saw the parcel that contained the fish.

"I've got to laugh," Short replied, "because you don't know what it is."

"It's not something I want."

"You don't know what it is. Look, it's a present, it's a gift. At least unwrap it."

Instead she sat stiff with rejection for half an hour in one of the curiously upright wingback chairs arranged beneath the Arnold Böcklin print. Every so often she glanced quickly at the parcel then away again. "I don't know what you want, Peter," she said eventually, as if they had been arguing to and fro all morning. She sighed. "I honestly don't know what you want." The accompanying vulnerable flourish of her shoulders—not quite a shrug, too complex to unpack, always a means of diverting him from the weakness of her position—he remembered distinctly from being ten years old.

"My name isn't Peter," he said.

"Darling, aren't we having the photographs today? I so love them."

Short was prepared for this. "When you've unwrapped your present," he promised, "we can. We can have the photographs and a cup of tea."

She leant forward suddenly and took his hands in hers.

"But you're cold!" she said. "Is it cold in here?" Then, as if she'd thought of a new way to amuse him: "Let's have the photographs first!"

Recognizing this as her best offer, he fetched the albums. On the beach at Hastings, fifteen years old, with a bell of dark hair, a shift dress, and sharp 1960s cheekbones, she looked like Myra Hindley, less hungry than unassuaged. You could see that nothing she did satisfied her even then, half a decade before she invented her primary method for dealing with life. Posed subsequently at

the side of one husband or another, temporarily central to one family group or the next, she had made her life a history of the medium: tiny Kodak 127 prints, warped by their own glaze into subtle curves which reflected light away from their subject, gave way to 35mm transparencies the color values of which had shifted dangerously to the red; then Polaroids with the muddy and furtive background tones of the late 1970s.

Before the care home staff locked them away, she had begun and ended every day poring over these images. What she now made of them, what internal operations they still served, couldn't be imagined. "Which do you like best?" she asked him. Short chose one which showed her with one of his various fathers—he thought the surname might be Carson, or Carlson—on a beach in Pembroke. Behind them an Italian greyhound was awkwardly defecating on a bank of shingle, its body curled into a vibrant hoop; the sea lay at the horizon and the weather seemed cold.

"Look," he said. "Here's Aunty Nancy and her little dog."

His mother stared at him with contempt. "When will you ever grow up?"

"What did they call the dog?" Short said. "I know that lot always called you Aunty Nancy." He went out into the corridor and walked up and down rapidly with his hands in his pockets and his shoulders hunched. When he got back in the room, she had already torn up the print—she was sitting at the table by the window, carefully stirring the shiny pieces as if they were a warm fluid. When he took them away, as gently as he could, she only smiled out at the garden and said, "Aunty Naughty. Aren't things just like a

puzzle?"

"Now will you look at what I brought you?" he asked.

"Yes!" she said childishly. "I will. I want to!"

But as soon as the Peruvian fish was unwrapped she began to weep and say that she had been right all along; and the next time he visited, the staff asked him to take it away.

***

Old hotels reeking of grease. No-star dumps in Birmingham or Leicester. Corridor floors of black boards dipping and creaking as you walked. A night man who wouldn't let you back in at the end of the evening until you had paid up all over again. Then back home the next morning, with Tom always angry about refunds, being cheated over refunds or returns by some operation calling itself Golden Strangers or They Came as Waves. He had curious reciprocal arrangements with many of them. Short would be given charge of a cheap framed print or a small broken item of furniture, sometimes to be left at a shop, sometimes at a house in an apparently deserted suburb two or three miles out of the city centre. He would receive in return a carrier bag full of late '70s spoken word tape cassettes with handmade labels. Where the profit lay in the exchange rarely became clear. Even when money was involved, Short had the sense that the transaction was closed in some other medium.

The rest of the time he delivered the usual cardboard boxes. "I'm trusting you with these," Tom would say. When one of them came apart like a damp cheese sandwich, and inside Short found only

half a dozen copies of Tom's self-published book, he suggested:

"This is quite an expensive way to deliver stock."

Tom only smiled. "People like to know who we are," he said.

"They keep saying they don't want it."

"They like a familiar face."

In the end, perhaps, all of this had been an elaborate way of assessing him, because suddenly the journeys stopped—although not before Short found himself on perhaps the oddest errand of all.

"I want you to attend a trial," Tom said.

"Can people just do that?"

Tom shrugged. "Court cases are public events," he said. "Anyone can go."

"But still," Short said. "'Attend.'"

"The defendant's name is Patrick Reed. Try and remember what he says. Write it down if you have to."

Noisy shuddering little commuter trains, debatable links: Short spent half a day joining one cross-country service to another; hard enough work just to arrive mid-afternoon on the brown edge of Wales. The town, with its undecodable medieval topography and

commanding position above the Severn, had done well out of sheep; then out of brewing; and finally out of coal. Now, like most of those old places, post-colonial, post-industrial, and—in the sense that its past had now become its present—fully post-historical, it was curating a collection of original burgage plots, timber-framed heritage structures and quaintly squalid street names. It had been pleased with itself for seven hundred years. He found the crown court a little way out of the centre, situated awkwardly on a ring road between major traffic islands, surrounded by local colleges, a police station, and two other courts. It was one of those public buildings which though purpose-built still seem unfit for purpose. You couldn't describe the architecture, except by its resemblance to a Travelodge. The lifts were out of order. There were handwritten notices in the corridors, sent out hastily from every desk in the building to keep up with the day's rule changes.

No one seemed sure why the defendant found himself there. A retired civil engineer, tall, perhaps seventy years old—well kept, with a quiet voice, white hair, frail-looking prominent cheekbones, and a way of standing which seemed slightly off-centre with itself—he regarded the judge with puzzled relief, as if their relationship was all he had to hang on to, as if it saved him from an existence the rules of which he didn't understand. "I'm grateful to Your Honour," he kept saying. Every time he said it he wiped his mouth.

The judge was equally tentative. "It's my fault, I'm sure," he said at one point, "but could you speak up? And if you could address yourself to the jury?" Pleas like this made him seem hardly less lost, if in a different way.

What was Patrick Reed's actual crime? The charge sheet mentioned "violent disorder," but all he seemed to have done, really, was to draw attention to himself by shouting repeatedly at the busy end of the pedestrianized high street on a wet Saturday towards the end of the previous year: an impulse Short felt he could appreciate. No evidence had yet been presented. Instead there were endless delays. Submissions were made that no one understood. There were exchanges of papers. No witnesses were called. "I believe my friend has agreed to this," counsel congratulated one another; but they never told the jury what. All that seemed certain was this: the accused believed that one evening shortly after his seventieth birthday he had looked into a toilet bowl in the Black Horse on Camp Lane and realized that there was "something alive in the water."

That was as far as things went the first day. On the second, for reasons that never became clear, the judge closed early. Short ate an artisanal sandwich at the Optimum Joy Cafe Bistro & Wellbeing Centre. Later he became lost in a system of alleys between Grope (previously "Grope Counte") Lane and Dogpole Yard, where the sagging old upper stories—apparently held together only by rectangular-section drainpipes like thick leather straps—sheltered both Job Centre and upscale underwear boutique; debouching suddenly into the long grounds of Old St Mary's, where he sat on a bench in the warm sunshine reading heritage brochures. For a thousand years, he learned, one sacred building or another had occupied the site—until 1788, when the church had collapsed mysteriously into its own crypt to leave only the melted-looking old red sandstone of the Lady Chapel, at which he now stared. He went back to his hotel and reported, "Nothing much going on."

The next morning, pressed to elaborate, Patrick Reed described what he'd seen in the toilet as "a pale greenish flake no more than a few millimeters long," which had seemed to move in an energetic, random way until he accidentally urinated on it, whereupon it grew into a "green child," which possessed the qualities of both a fetus and a fully formed organism and which he flushed in absolute disgust. At that time it was still growing. "I felt," Reed told the judge apologetically, "that I had seen something no one should ever see."

Could he explain what he meant by that?

He couldn't. He could only shrug. "It was still developing," he offered. "Quite rapidly."

In response to this, the judge made encouraging gestures—to the defendant, counsel, and court officers—as if he hoped someone, indeed anyone, would speak.

"I think the jury might hear a little more?" he suggested finally.

"That's the heart of it I'm afraid," admitted Reed.

After that, he had begun seeing the things wherever he urinated. "Passed water" was his term for it. A curious usage, Short thought. But that was the heart of it. Everywhere Patrick Reed passed water, green children grew. Except for their colour and their translucency, which was somewhere between that of an aphid and a boiled sweet, they seemed human. "I mean," he added quickly, "they seemed to have the potential to be something like us." They didn't, for instance, resemble netsuke. They weren't clever reproductions of anything. He observed a heartbeat. He observed

the pained, gentle expression shared by all fetal mammals. Small movements. If they weren't human, they were nevertheless living. And while he was always careful to flush, he couldn't assume that everyone did. "They grew so quickly!" he appealed. "As far as I knew then—as far as I know now—they might be everywhere." It was at this point he began to try and warn people. If he had overstated his case that Saturday afternoon, he said, he was sorry: "But it seemed so important at the time."

This went on for another two or three days. Short could make nothing of it. Each morning the jury received the formal warning not to talk to anyone else—or even each other—about the trial. But, really, what was there to talk about? A man who, when he spoke of the sewerage system, used the words "deep and false waters" and who believed that it sheltered a wholly new form of life? The jury looked at one another and shrugged. The one thing they were certain of was that Patrick Reed should be receiving some kind of help. If his life had gone awry, it was nothing to do with an appearance in court. In the end they found him not guilty of the main charge, but guilty on the lesser count of being drunk in an Alcohol Controlled Area, namely the pavement between Toggs & Cloggs and the Old Market Hall. Everyone was relieved. It's hard, as the judge himself said in his summing up, to find a man guilty of anything when he believes that green people walk the streets of the United Kingdom.

This conclusion seemed to confirm something for Tom. He remained enthusiastic about aspects of Reed's narrative—"Aphids!" he said one night in the back bar of The Earl of March. "The only animals in the world which can photosynthesize!" And when Short only stared: "It's such an extraordinary idea, isn't it? A layer of cells a few

nanometers below the skin that can do everything a plant does to make energy from sunlight!"—but as soon as he heard the verdict he seemed to relax. The provincial errands tapered off.

ON THE MATTER AND FICTION OF ADDRESS

Tim Etchells

1. The Space of Performance

Where theater might conventionally be founded on fiction involving and occurring between figures in the bounded world of the stage, my interest—reflected in practice with the Sheffield-based ensemble Forced Entertainment, and as a solo maker and collaborator in numerous independent projects—is more connected to the charged, dynamic, and ambiguous space that lies between the stage itself and the auditorium. Exploring this zone for its fictional potential, my practice works in and across the border between performers and spectators, causing an emphatic drift in the site of performance action—and the space of fiction—and shifting a work's relation to representation itself from the paradigm of drama (in which events onstage achieve their effect through processes of identification and interpretation, as parable or metaphor) toward what Hans-Thies Lehmann has described as postdramatic theater.[1] While established dramatic structures embroil fictional characters in developing narrative architectures, postdramatic theater (in one key sense at least) rests instead on creating a structured unfolding event or performance situation in which the position, implication, and even role of the public is drawn, redrawn, intensified, and manipulated in producing the dramaturgical journey of a work.

The putative rejection of fiction that characterizes much of the discourse around performance art—with its emphasis on real time, real actions and tasks—continues to be important as a way of organizing and grounding performance activity in the current context. But the work I am thinking of here places this tendency in tension with a parallel desire to rethink certain aspects or manifestations of fictionality as they might play directly into

the situational matrices of performer and spectator, theater and audience.

One significant strand of this work on performance and fiction in relation to audience comes via strategies related to direct address, specifically in thinking through and exploring how address to an audience (and indeed any act of linguistic address) works as a temporary and dynamic process through which to fictionally gloss, convene, and constitute those watching. Following this impulse, the performances I have made with Forced Entertainment have frequently addressed theater audiences as if they were gathered to witness *other* specific or imagined spectacles, performance forms, or events. *First Night* (2001) and *Pleasure* (1997) addressed the public as if they were in attendance to watch acts akin to vaudeville or cabaret: the former was presented by a motley group of performers in sequined dresses, white suits, and fixed, heavily made-up smiles; the latter by a sullen troupe of reluctant strippers, dancers, and cabaret raconteurs, all of them apparently the worse for drink. The direct address of the imagined/staged entertainers in each of these works, as well as their performative mode, was key in creating a kind of fictional frame for each piece, since it positioned actual spectators in arts centers or contemporary theaters "as if" they might be other kinds of audiences in quite other places, gathered for quite other reasons, in other contexts, and with quite different expectations and desires. The extended, awkward, and increasingly malevolent routine of "Good evening and welcome" enacted in *First Night*, and the indifferent, rambling, borderline suicidal patter of the MC in *Pleasure*, each had the effect of placing the spectator elsewhere, the address in each case functioning as what we began to call a "fictional

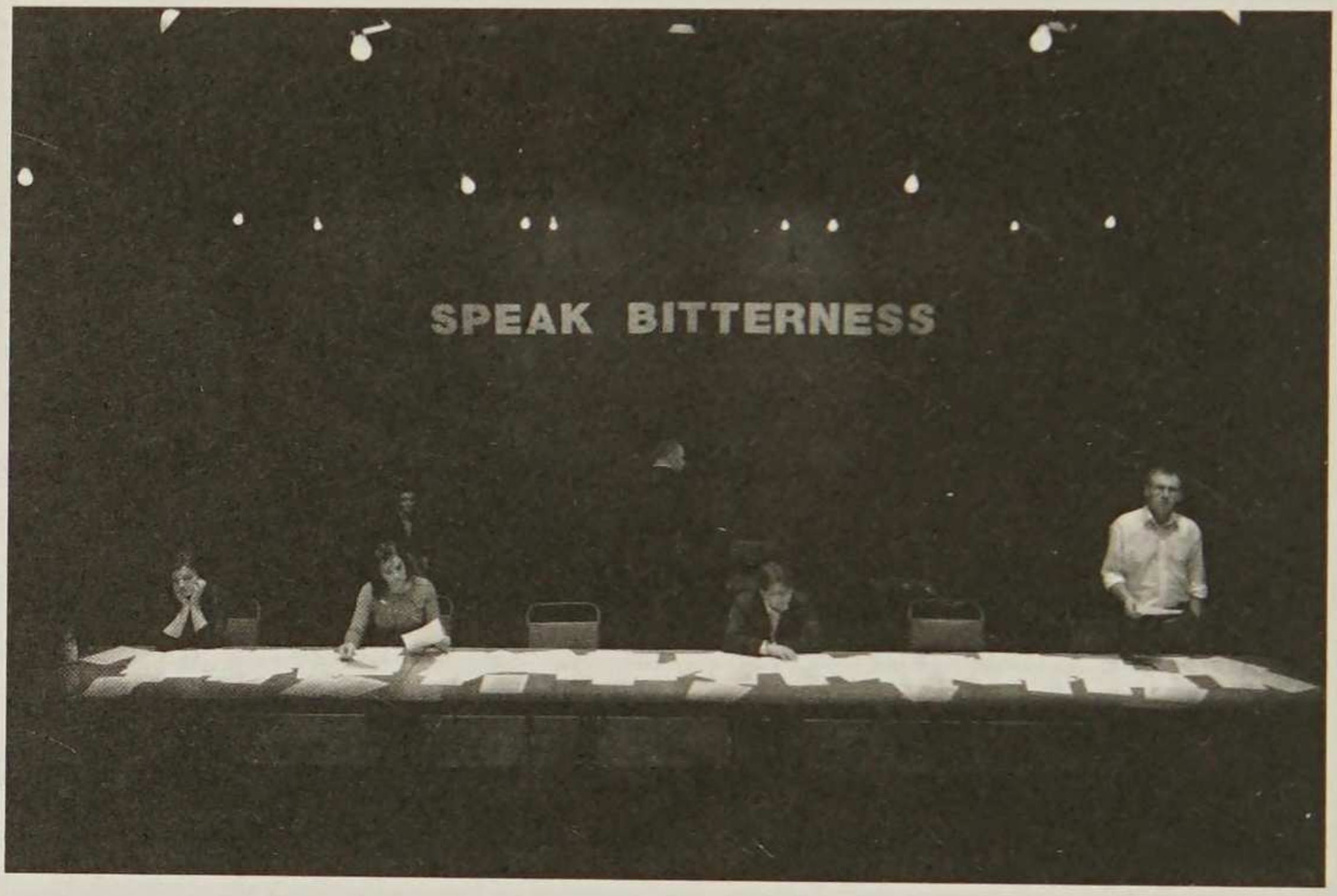
proposition": a set of utterances serving to dynamically place and misplace, cast and miscast the spectators.

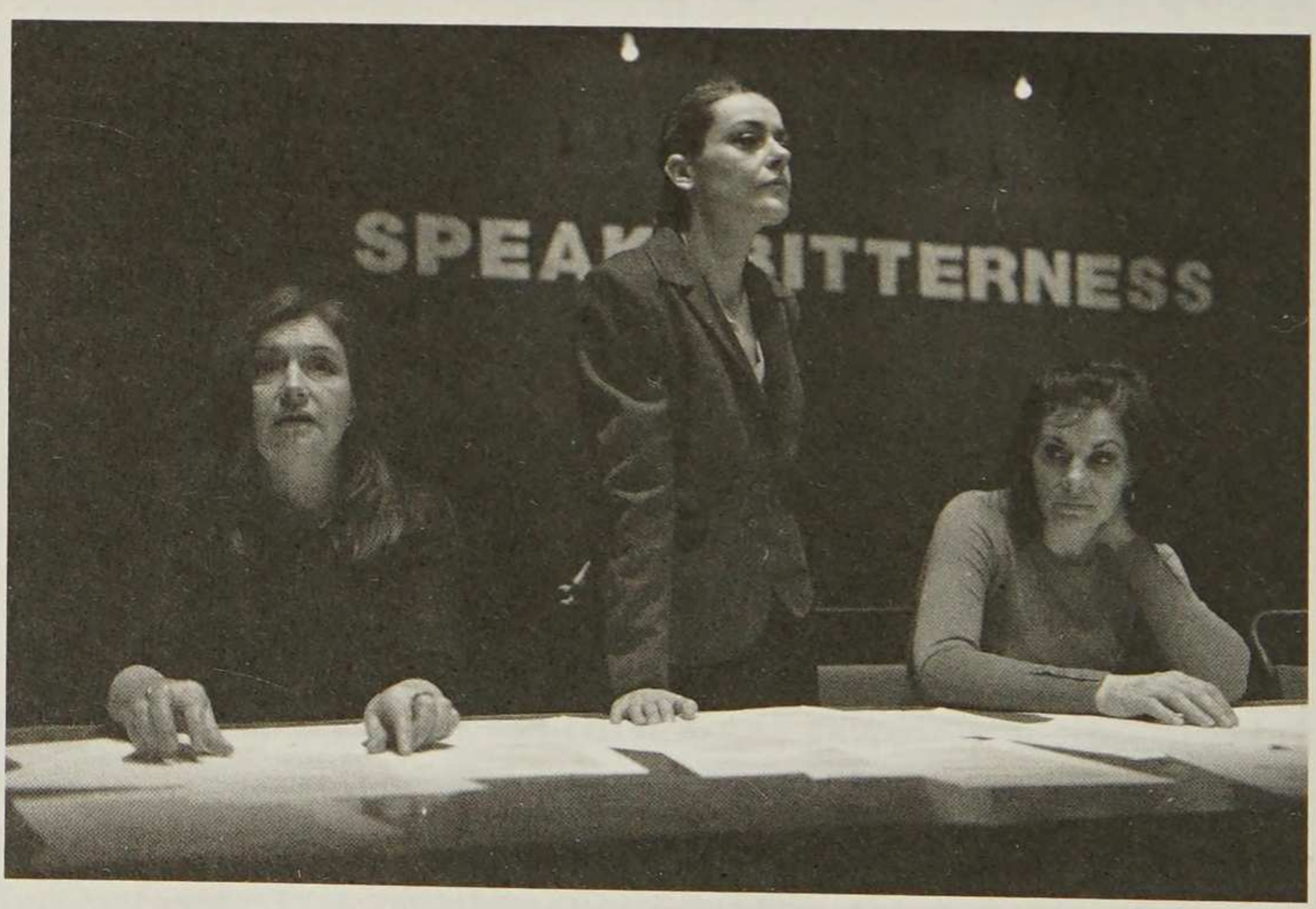
Having opened this channel—effectively fictionalizing the spectator and in doing so making moves to construct her/his location, reasons for attendance, and so on—the possibility to abuse or subvert the power of this fiction became increasingly clear; indeed much of the (postdramatic) drama of these works was built on a kind of aggressive misrecognizing or miscasting of the audience, inviting or obliging them into a shifting set of unsettling, voyeuristic, or ethically dubious positions and roles.

Key to the charge and versatility of this direct deployment of fiction in performance—as a tool to characterize the spectator in relation to presentations from the stage—are the same factors that define the characteristic ephemerality of performance propositions. Performance, after all, exists not as a fixed object (as is typically the case with text, film, painting, or sculpture) but instead operates as a set of utterances and actions in time, summoned by human presences that are themselves temporary and inescapably fragile. Fiction in this context of performance is a social process, always formed by way of a semantic back-and-forth. And while performance admits of a wealth of ways and means to its various ends—from operatic maximalism to naturalism and beyond—its interest for me lies increasingly in the possibility it has to effect transformations of space and time using minimal gestures with a loose, suggestive, and unashamedly temporary grip or spin on the reality that surrounds it. This is fiction as speech act, as fragile gesture, as complex triangulation. It's fiction as the invocation of a possibility, as a reflexive gesture that disrupts, rewrites its own situation, and then dissolves.

At the same time, such fictional maneuvers of course also engender a complex state of reflection and internal negotiation in performance spectators. Encountering a work like *Pleasure*, spectators maintain an awareness of their actual positions, identities, and motives while developing, at the same time, a grip on the fictional position (coloring, aspect, role) into which the proposition of the work seeks to corral or implicate their gaze and presence. Engagement with the work as it unfolds in performance, then, involves maintaining and moving between both real and imagined, inhabited and projected spectator positions. In the process of negotiating these shifts and intensities spectators are prompted to develop a hyper-self-consciousness concerning the different ethical positions and ramifications of these differing versions or roles. At some deep level the experience of watching in these and other works in the postdramatic vein is that of being systematically (albeit playfully) misaddressed, misrecognized, and/or co-opted; the viewer is the self-aware but nonetheless charged subject of numerous ongoing assumptions, teases, confrontations, and misdirections emanating from the work, all of which, one way or another, serve to spin, reset, or question her or his motive, role, and competence as spectator/reader. Fiction floated in this way both frames and inhabits the spectator, casting her or him in a mode of watching and understanding that is itself a kind of fragile fictional construct, in whole or in part, explicitly or otherwise.

This method—of co-opting and drawing the spectator into fiction—has been extended and amplified in performances that work to frame the spectator serially, often in contradictory ways. Deploying multiple shifting and conflicting fictional propositions, these works build dramaturgical architectures


SPEAK BITTERNESS


SPEAK BITTERNESS

whose chief material is the dynamic positioning and repositioning of the spectator. In my work with Forced Entertainment, the clearest early deployment of this strategy emerged in the ongoing durational performance project *Speak Bitterness*, which combines pre-written text in a structure determined in each iteration by the continuous improvisational interaction of the performers. First presented in 1997, *Speak Bitterness* takes the form of a marathon public confession undertaken by a group of eight besuited penitents who address spectators from positions seated or standing behind a long metal table. Constituting the audience as one gathered for some kind of abstracted or disintegrated show trial, inquiry, or public hearing, the text for *Speak Bitterness* is a less overtly theatrical, singular, or generic fictional proposition than those developed for *First Night* or *Pleasure*. *Speak Bitterness* is built around the formulaic collective forms of "We are guilty of …" and "We confess to …." Throughout the performance, the nature and constituency of the "we" in these phrases (always a social fiction, claim, or contention of community in any circumstance) is under constant question thanks to the diversity of confessions that the form and the pronoun are forced to accommodate. The collective "we"—the speculative community of those onstage and those in the auditorium, rippling out to the larger cultural landscape of social formations both real and imaginary—is itself (as always) a fiction, of course; here, it is talked into being through confessional statements alluding to what at first appears to be an assortment of universal, ubiquitous, and perhaps banal failings:

> We confess to sleeping in on Sundays and fooling around ... We are guilty of fidgeting, finding, and forgetting; we ate the last biscuit; we never washed up properly or took the dogs out for a walk.

At other moments in the performance, the fictional "we" of the minor misdemeanors summoned in statements like those above slides toward other, more troubled realities, fictional atmospheres, and textures, invoking a social collective that is harder to accommodate in the typically genial, liberal atmosphere of the theater.

We were date rapists.
We were homophobes.
We pushed dog shit through the immigrants' doors.

Clearly divisive, these confessions cleave speakers from watchers, often even appearing to isolate the individual actors reading from those sitting or standing beside them onstage. The work of the text in proposing a fiction is meanwhile amplified, nuanced, and at times contradicted by the physical actions and nonverbal reactions of those onstage: looks of dismay or incomprehension, bursts of laughter, shaking of heads in disbelief or disagreement, eye contact with an audience as a gesture of regret, complicity, defiance, or indifference, even shifts of position onstage to support or abandon other performers; these all play a part in the work as it unfolds. The social fractures that the fictional text, action, and propositions produce are felt strongly by those in the auditorium—watching, becoming self-conscious, each person aware of their implied complicity with the spoken text, its active rhetorical force that pulls the "we" of the crowd into different social shapes, no matter how unsettling or contested the new formations it authors might be. This is a version of fiction as method, a kind of fragile, time-based fiction as unfolding instrumental intervention in the space of encounter with the audience. Twisting and turning in this way,

Speak Bitterness produces fiction in the space between the stage and the auditorium, creating an unstable mixture of belonging and anti-belonging, a volatile state of rapid triangulation in which the spectators' connections with others (on the stage, in the auditorium, and in the wider social and political landscape surrounding the work) are dynamically and self-consciously drawn and redrawn. The temporary community convened by the work—implicit in all performance presentations, and summoned explicitly in *Speak Bitterness*'s repeated fictional proposition and formulation of "we"—is endlessly formed, stressed, stretched, broken, and made over with each new sentence.

In its chosen territory, *Speak Bitterness* activates the dynamic charge of fictionality contained in the fragment itself, exploring the ways in which an incomplete and out of context proposition (in language, from the artwork) invites, and in some senses compels, a level of complicit fleshing-out or completion by the viewer. The perpetual reinvention and reframing of speaker and addressee in *Speak Bitterness*, amplified by the volume of incomplete narrative information and detail in each line of the text, inducts the spectator into a kind of quasiauthorship and consequent relation of ownership or investment in the contradictory kaleidoscope of scenarios effectively made present (imagined) by them. While this understanding—that each person watching or listening constructs their own version; a unique fiction, temporary, partial—is a paradigm of postmodern artistic and other reception, it is the degree to and self-consciousness with which these projects repeatedly animate this particular modality that is key here. "*We forgot to invite Marion.*" But to what? And with what consequence? And in what mode or realm does the imagined fictional relation to Marion unfold?

The approach of fictionally remaking or repositioning the audience in *Speak Bitterness* is taken further, appearing as a central gesture in my more recent solo improvised works, grouped under the titles *A Broadcast / Looping Pieces*, *Work Files*, and *Seeping Through*, the latter created in collaboration with violinist Aisha Orazbayeva. Using language in the form of fragments taken out of context, often performed as loops or repeated with small variation, the materials for these works have their origins in my own notebooks, in which I've long collected short texts: ideas, notes, and phrases of my own alongside chunks from overheard conversations, movies, newspapers, and books, accumulated in haphazard fashion.

The form for each of these performances is that of rolling improvisation, always inspired by, fueled by, or made in reaction to materials in the notebook, which becomes in this context a kind of random generator, stepping-off point, and mutable, non-structural score for a live event. To facilitate the work, texts from the notebooks are pasted onto index cards, the use of which allows me to shuffle easily, navigate and select materials with which to improvise. Selecting and deploying these fragments in the moment of performance, I speak them aloud—often repeating, shifting emphasis and intonation in ways that expand, reduce, remove, and multiply the space for possible interpretation of the texts. Each individual utterance, in this context, is at the same time a further piece of fiction as method, since each in its own unique fragmentary content carries a kind of deep-level code concerning (and constructing) speaker and listener, speaker and addressee. Nuanced by performative experiment and variation, this understanding of the material mines not just the content

of the phrases, but also the details of inflection as generative pointers and coordinates for fiction. At the same time, I deploy a complex nonverbal vocabulary, whereby eye contact, stillness, motion, and gesture all inflect and rewrite the relation between me as performer and those watching. Fiction (understood as different kinds of presence) is very much on the agenda here, with particular moves and gestures shifting the proposition in a rolling dialogue, conflict, and parallel track with the text. Going beyond the singular physical vocabulary in the Forced Entertainment works like *Speak Bitterness* discussed above, the gestures in *Broadcast* shift as well as the text, moving from those of public speaking to those of intimate conversation or solitary monologue of debatable sanity—shrugs, smiles, pointing fingers, clenched fists all flicker in and out of the work—invoking recognizable scenarios and implying contradictory relations, while refusing to settle in any of them.

In the act of jumping between material in these performances—working with or speaking out one fragment and then working with or speaking out another—I also "compose" from the index cards in real time, joining and juxtaposing phrases in different combinations, even as the rhythms, textures, semantics, and dynamics of the text are, in any case, shifting, and as my physical state (via exhaustion, breathing, stress, and strain on voice) changes through the process of the performance itself.

Exploring the weight, impact, and affect of fiction in this context is a significant tactic in the work, which again takes some of its strength from the minimally defined "context" (usually me, a lone performer on an otherwise empty stage) and the fluid capacities of language to make and remake understanding and frame

of reference on a moment by moment basis. As in *Speak Bitterness*, each fragmentary utterance implicitly or explicitly draws and redraws a line of possible connection to the public, while the open form of the sentences in these improvised works—from accusations, imperatives, and instructions, to descriptive images, statements of fact, and lines of dialogue—allows a maximal capacity for fictional reinvention and repositioning of (and from) those who witness the material. While we are accustomed to the idea that in performance utterance and action work to define the speaker, we are perhaps still thinking through and exploring the breadth and depth of ways in which utterance also defines, implicates, and writes fictions onto the listener or spectator. In *A Broadcast* statements circulate at high speed, sometimes appearing to describe events or circumstances elsewhere (fictional scenarios and fragments, narrations of real or imagined events):

Among Madonna's entourage there seems to be a lookalike for her daughter.

The child that thinks it's a cat.
They have given him some fish.

A table. A chair. A window. A room.

At other times the texts take the form of linguistic paradoxes, punning fragments, wordplays:

Topographical Terror
Typographical Error.
In. Terror. Gate. Interrogate. Gate. In. Terror.

MY HEART IS NOT IN THIS

And at still others the phrases and fragments in these works appear to refer explicitly to events—fictional possibilities in the space of the performance itself—situating the performer and audience, and addressing those present "as if" directly and straightforwardly.

You need to think big. We need to think big. We need to think bigger.

My heart is not in this.

You pathetic pieces of crap. What the hell have you done in your lives but ridicule people and hide dead bodies?

Who cares what the future brings, when we have tonight?

Opening this space of fictional presence via the text and securing its potential purchase in the room takes place through a series of performative strategies involving gesture and the focusing of attention. Words are mined for their connective possibilities and references to general location ("here," "there," "this") as well as being stressed for the connection offered by socially directed speech ("your," "our," "we"), through which even neutral phrases can be given weight and direction in such a way that they appear somehow linked to immediate context. Through this onstage deployment and nuancing of phrases, spectators find themselves drawn into a fluid set of relations to the performance, each utterance in its own way bringing fictional spins or inflections to the space between speaker and listener, and to the assumed community of those watching.

This unstable set of summoned fictional belongings is further complicated by another strategy in the performance whereby

phrases are repeated and grammatically shifted from one form or version to another, such that who is doing what and to whom, in the fiction implied by the language, is under constant and explicit variation, rotation, and exchange.

Give up on your dreams. Give up on your dreams.
I'm giving up on my dreams. I'm giving up on my dreams.
Give up on your dreams.
I'm giving up on your dreams. I'm giving up on your dreams.
You're giving up on my dreams.
Give up on your dreams.

Beyond this socially triangulated use of fiction to road-test relations to and within the public in the present of the performance, another major concern of my work in relation to audience is the process of co-opting them as imaginative coauthors. Utilizing the sense in which reading is a form of linguistic unpacking via which signs are interpreted to make ideas and/or images, the language fragments employed in these works multiply fiction on their encounter with the spectator at least in part because, as outlined above, the materials presented—while vivid—in some senses also frequently lack the necessary specifics and particular details that would ensure transparency, thus explicitly requiring an act of completion or participation by the recipient in order to "read" or make sense of them at all. As in *Speak Bitterness*, the fragments in *A Broadcast*, and in the projects related to it, operate via a kind of radical incompleteness: the gaps or omissions in their content serve to draw the spectator into the somewhat unavoidable task of speculating or "fleshing out" in relation to missing details and information.

A table. A chair. A window. A room.

For each spectator the room summoned by such a fragment will vary: in some minds and in some circumstances the text will read as a reference to the environment in which the performance itself is taking place, while in others it will invoke images of other, very different interior locations.

Understood in this way, the shifting fiction of the work—its unstable proposition—has strength not only through its content and specificity, incompletion, weakness, and fluidity, but also, by extension, in relation to its consequent porosity to context. Lacking definition, combining particularity with generality or blankness, the work dynamically admits elements contributed by both subject and landscape, using them to bootstrap itself into existence.

2. The Space of the Street

Since these approaches to live performance float fiction as a dynamic force in the zone between stage and auditorium, they have a clear parallel in works I have developed for more fully public urban and digital spaces. My interest here is again in the device of incompletion, as well as in the act of co-opting the spectator as a partial author, collaborator, and fictionalized subject in and via the work.

Urban space, always owned and regulated, is nonetheless determined through a shifting economy of legislative permissions and more informal agreements, conventions, habits, and innovations of

use. The city—overwritten and overdetermined in this variety of ways—is a zone in which the semantic and social context of public space utterances (artworks, actions, cultural interventions, and otherwise) can at times be productively unclear. Urban space, seen in this way, is the dynamic home of art, graffiti, flyposting, and raves, impromptu protest actions, desire paths, and illegal tipping, among other things. Poster works lodged unofficially in regular billboard or other display sites; or displayed on abandoned or redeveloped buildings; or temporary works shown in shop windows, on lampposts, or as unsanctioned projections in public sites, all have ambiguous status, lacking a frame to situate them fully, clearly, or legibly. The question of who is speaking, for what purpose, and in what context, with whose permission or at whose behest, is key in this sense; and mounting works that eschew easy identification regarding authorship or institutional affiliation offers significant opportunities for the disruptive or transformational fictional impulse or gesture.

Approaching this territory through works in the form of neon signs, posters, and projections, a key tactic from my side has been to present them without identifying marks so that their status remains ambiguous. The projects *And For The Rest* (created in unique versions for Brussels in 2014, Basel in 2015, and Athens in 2016), *Vacuum Days (Utrecht)* (2016), and *Certain Cancellations* (2012) all took the form of poster series, sometimes fly-posted or displayed through other informal means and sometimes taking their place within legitimate structures of urban information display as billboards, illuminated posters, or notices. None of these bore any sign of my name, or any branding or badging from the organizations that had curated, commissioned, or helped to realize the works. These anonymous posters—in parallel with

extremist or scurrilous historical and contemporary political pamphlets or flyers—appeared "unsigned," without immediate explanation or context, and consequently with little clue, beyond their own form and content, as to how or in what ways they might best be understood.

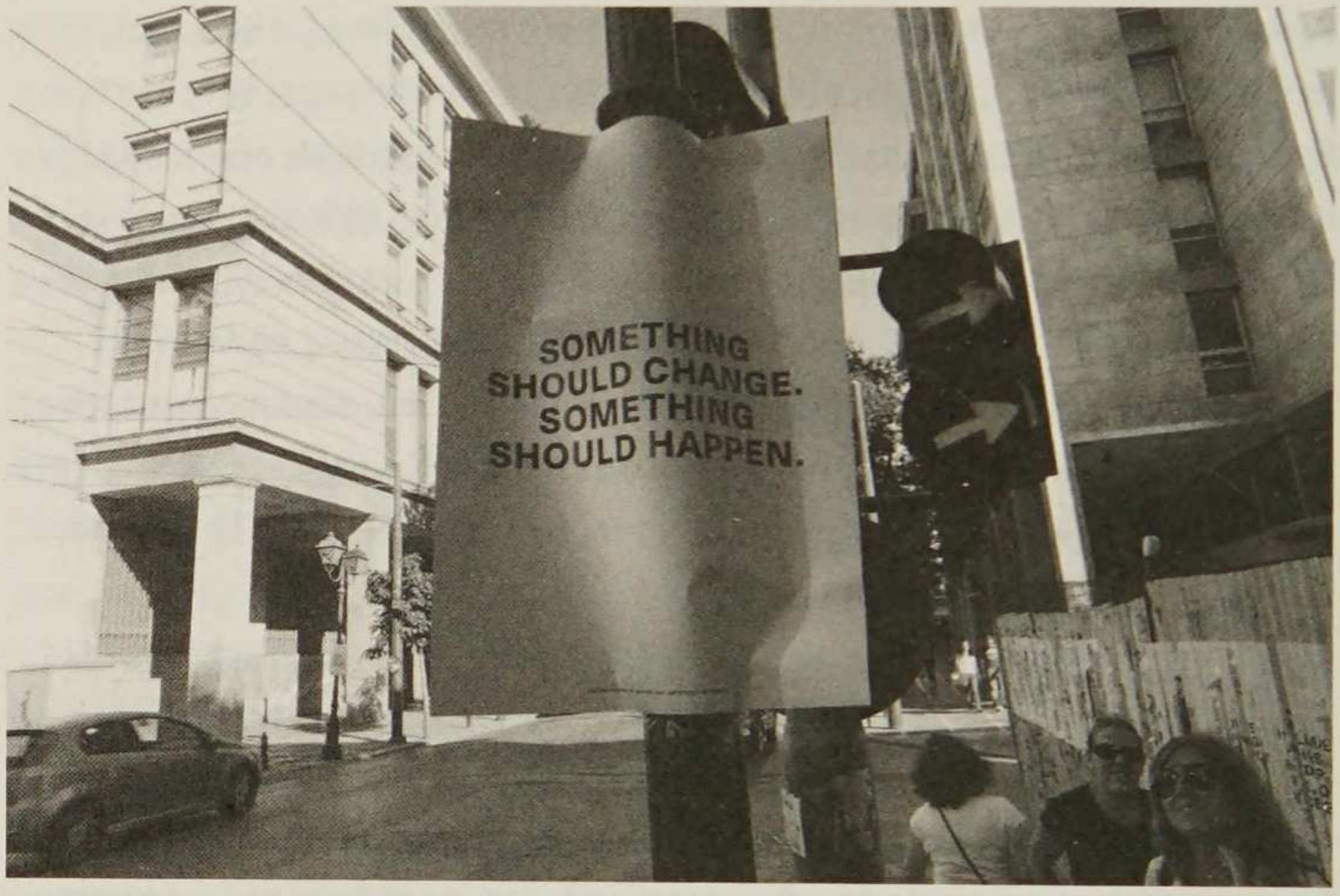
In the case of *Vacuum Days (Utrecht)* and *Certain Cancellations*, a set of linguistic and aesthetic reference points formally linked the posters to Victorian vaudeville playbills, as well as to other low-budget, utilitarian announcements for theatrical or other events. Taking their aesthetic and linguistic strategies from my earlier work *Vacuum Days* (2011), the posters for *Vacuum Days (Utrecht)* appeared in stark black and white, their sans-serif, largely all-caps type announcing what seemed to be a series of movies, spectacles, talks, and other, more nebulous gatherings. The events summoned by the project in this way engage concretely with issues, current affairs, and narratives already very much at large in the media-space, responding directly to issues and stories, co-opting the names of real politicians, celebrities, and other concrete referents from the social sphere. *Vacuum Days (Utrecht)* served as a kind of distorted or parallel-world reflection of the city in which it was presented at the time of the project, a space in which existing anxieties and social and political concerns could be amplified and played back into the urban space—part Dadaist provocation, part homeopathic intervention.

"Geert Wilders' Peroxide Solution," announced one poster, in the largest-size capital letters that the illuminated JCDecaux poster sites could accommodate, the small print adding the exposition "turn everybody blonde." "The Madness of Donald Trump," declared another, with the strapline "As Told By His Hairdresser."

From the posters themselves, one could not be sure of the exact nature of the events advertised, or when or where precisely they might manifest. What to expect, in any case, from an event announced as "Global Warming Challenge—Last Delusional Gasps of the Anthropocene," or from a restaurant or café marked as "Zwarte Piet's Refugee Soup Kitchen"? Such calculations were made even harder by the fact that often the "things" in the announcements—the madness of Trump, or the hate politics of Wilders, for example—were already, in any case, everywhere in evidence, and all around.

Other posters in the *Vacuum Days (Utrecht)* series offered guided tours, or workshops allegedly focused on matters of topical sensitivity, from the economic or social plight of certain neighborhoods in the city to tensions surrounding immigration or supposed opportunities for cultural integration, the collapse of iconic local department store businesses, and so on. Such events, though often floated in absurdly specific terms, were also evidently positioned on the far end of a scale that ran between unlikely, fake, and categorically impossible. The tension in these poster works—fictional announcements for real events, and at the same time real announcements (in public space, with appropriate rhetorical structures) for fictional events—is the locus of my interest in them, unsettling as it is, and determined as it is to create a flickering, unresolvable space of dialogue between the real and the fictional.

Formally, *And For The Rest* shared a good deal with *Vacuum Days*, not least in its use of posters in bold sans-serif type placed in public space. The content of the posters was very different, however, and in some ways gave even less clarity about the context through which they were meant to be understood. Texts for *And For*


SOMETHING
SHOULD CHANGE.
SOMETHING
SHOULD HAPPEN.


WE NEED TO FEAR
EACH OTHER LESS.

The Rest were selected from a series of interviews with residents of the three cities in question, specifically those who, for one reason or another, were excluded from the electoral voting process. Children, asylum seekers, migrants, refugees, and in some cities homeless people and those institutionalized due to mental health problems, were asked about their wishes, needs, demands, and hopes for the future, focusing on the question of what they would like to change, small- and large-scale. Taking short texts as excerpts from these interviews, the resulting poster interventions in the city mostly articulated a wish or future imperative. From fantastical or implausible desires to simple and concrete political demands, the statements offered a small insight into the wishes of people usually held outside the public discussion, concerning the things they wished to change for themselves and those around them. For Brussels and Basel, in the first two iterations of *And For The Rest*, the posters were displayed on dedicated sites around the city, especially those typically reserved for election posters, entering into a dialogue with the expectations and conventions of the materials usually featured there. In Brussels and in Athens posters were also displayed in a range of more or less unsanctioned sites—as fly-posting on walls, or as materials attached to streetlamps and other structures.

While the uniform typographic style of the posters and the repeated grammatical forms of their statements served to link disparate materials somewhat, cohering them as a singular visual and semantic articulation in the city landscape, there was a tension nonetheless between the quite different kinds of hopes, dreams, and desires for the future set out in the texts. There were commonplace collective demands for change alongside individual, more or less private dreams; proposals tuned sharply

to the real political economy of Western democracies in austerity next to far more singular wishes, harder or even impossible to reconcile with public discourse around change; and there were simple, straightforward statements aimed at specific issues next to idiosyncratic extended narrative or philosophical goals articulated in longer statements.

No more weapons in the world.

I wish everyone looked the same. I don't want to be able to see who is rich and who is poor.

If I could, I would turn the clocks back. And everything would be fine and we'd still be in Damascus. Our house would still be in one piece, and I wouldn't have seen all the things I can't tell you.

I'd be happy if lawnmowers disappeared, all around the world. Then there would be grass everywhere, also on the street.

If I were a magician, I would magic more time.

Perhaps most interesting of all to me were the statements so bald, so stark and simple that they tended to something like (but not at all like) redundancy.

We need to fear each other less.

I want to be treated like a human being.

The blunt force of these latter statements and their ilk—visceral, desirous, and imperative, caustic spells cutting public

space—rendered language as a problematic object, its clarity in a kind of tension with the generally occluded, ambiguous image-and-written parlance of advertising, the street's preferred and most commonplace source of fictional tension and spin. Like the short texts in the performance *A Broadcast*, these plain fragments seemed to spin and loop, calling for endless rounds of consideration and reconsideration—but for me at least, as they held their ground in public space, the starkest statements of *And For The Rest* did not transform in this process so much as simply insist on themselves, steadfastly refusing to mean something new, or something more, or something else, only repeating, again and again, the initial, entirely evident and uncompromised transparency of their demands. Here the admonition to look and look again bears little force and yields little advantage to the reader, spectator, or passerby; each new view of these texts, after all, reveals no hidden depth or message, no psychological or motivational gloss or explanation, just the same blunt linguistic algebra.

The texts used in *And For The Rest* arise, initially, from an impulse that is in part documentary or journalistic, drawn as they are from statements made by interviewees in each locale, specifically those excluded from the voting process. Selecting fragments of these interviews or conversations, however, and making posters from them, created a dynamic "as if" gesture in the landscape, through which display, the purpose or imagined utility of these works, enters the realm of speculation or debate. The presence of the posters on the streets, as conveyors of information in their stark, performative form, stages a present question as to what kind of world or circumstances would make such demands or imperatives necessary or even possible. In what

world might one need (or have resources and city-wide campaigns) to issue a warning about forgetting your native language or about the dangers of lawnmowers, or to speculate playfully about the unlikely prospect of a black president in Switzerland?

Abolish borders—that's what I would do.

Did you know that you can forget your mother tongue? It can happen faster than you think.

If I had been born here, I would be able to vote and could be involved in politics—a black President in Switzerland!—hahaha.

In these works the truncated or incomplete statement—misplaced, decontextualized—becomes a lever or provocation to imagine (see, experience, or re-see and re-experience) not just the work, in its own terms, but also the space of the city and the social and political context, remade as strange or other, via a piece of temporary fictioning that speaks into the city as if from some other, unknown dimension, pulling it close, through borders, transforming it in the process.

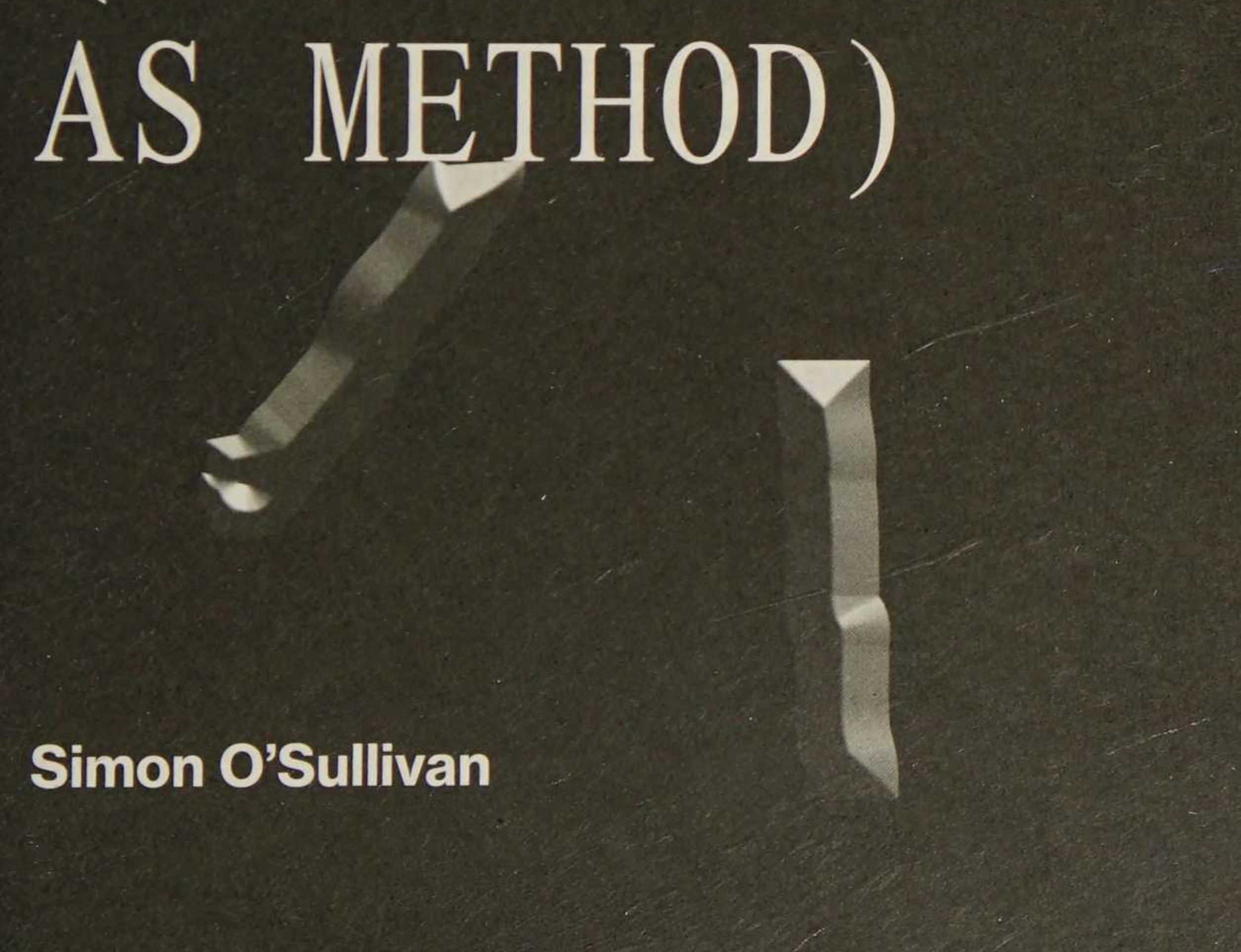
Endnotes

1 Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

Bibliography

Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Translated by Karen Jürs-Munby. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

NON-PHILOSOPHY AND ART PRACTICE (OR, FICTION AS METHOD)



Simon O'Sullivan

In the following essay I want to introduce François Laruelle's non-philosophy—or what he has more recently referred to as non-standard philosophy—with a particular eye to its relevance for art practice, when this latter term is very broadly construed.[1] Although at times this essay involves more questions than answers (and, indeed, proceeds through its own circuits and overlaps), at stake is the mapping out of a speculative and synthetic practice of thought, which might also be described as the deployment of fiction as method. My essay is concerned in part with those modes of thinking—art included—that occur away from the legislative and more standard frameworks of Philosophy and Art History. To move away from these frameworks is to call for a practice that involves forcing encounters and compatibilities and, ultimately, for experimentation with a terrain beyond typical ideas of self and world. In terms of using fiction as a method more specifically I am especially interested in how the performance of fictions can operate to show us the edges of our own reality, and in the diagram as itself a form of speculative fictioning. My essay ends by drawing some of these different threads together, and laying out six propositions or applications of non-philosophy to—or indeed *as*—art practice.

1. Definitions and Diagrams

In his work on non-philosophy (comprising over twenty-five books to date and periodized into five distinct phases of development) Laruelle claims to have identified and demarcated a certain autocratic (and arrogant) functioning of philosophy: that it tends to position itself as the highest form of thought (enthroned above all other disciplines), while at the same

time necessarily attempting to explain everything within its purview. Indeed, each subsequent philosophy must offer up its own exhaustive account of the real, "trumping" any previous philosophy in an endless game of one-upmanship. John Ó Maoilearca puts this particular pretension more strongly, suggesting that philosophy itself is a form of "thought control" that attempts to define the very act of thinking through its particular transcendent operations (more on these below).[2]

Non-philosophy pitches itself against this particular apparatus of capture. Not as an anti-philosophy (as, for example, in Jacques Lacan's characterization of psychoanalysis), nor as simply an "outside" to philosophy (at least as this is posited *by* philosophy). Indeed, non-philosophy does not turn away from philosophical materials exactly, but rather reuses or, we might say, retools them. As Ray Brassier, among many others, has pointed out (following Laruelle's own suggestion), the "non" here is more like that used in the term "non-Euclidean geometry": it signals an expansion of an already existing paradigm; a recontextualization of existing material (in this case conceptual) and the placing of these alongside newer "discoveries."[3]

From these few sentences we can already extract two key characteristics (or distinct articulations, perhaps) of non-philosophy:

i. It involves an attitude and orientation toward philosophy that also implies a kind of practice (or, at any rate, a particular "use" of philosophical materials). Laruelle also calls this a performance, as well as, crucially, a science: non-philosophy

is the "science of philosophy" in this sense. (Brassier's writings on Laruelle attend specifically to this more "formal" articulation of non-philosophy.)

ii. Non-philosophy might be said to name other forms of thought—other practices, we might say—besides the philosophical (again, when these are not simply positioned and interpreted *by* philosophy), while in the same gesture naming a general democratization of all thinking (Ó Maoilearca would be the key exponent of this second articulation, hence the title of his recent book "on" Laruelle, *All Thoughts Are Equal*).

I want to take each of these two articulations in turn, but before that a further brief word about non-philosophy and the real.[4] For Laruelle, as I have already intimated, philosophy involves a particular take on—or an account, explanation, or interpretation of—the real. Non-philosophy, on the other hand, is a form of thought that proceeds from the real, or, at a pinch, alongside it: rather than positing a real, it assumes its always already "givenness" as a presupposition or axiom. For non-philosophy this real is itself radically foreclosed to thought, at least as this is typically understood (it cannot be "explained" or interpreted in this sense), and as such we might say that the third key articulation of non-philosophy is that it implies a form of gnosis or even "spiritual" knowledge.[5] In fact, alongside its formidable complexity there is a sense in which non-philosophy can be immediately grasped in an almost banal or at least naïve—sense. I will be returning to this and adding some qualifications below.

i. The science of philosophy

For Laruelle all philosophy involves a common function—or invariant—that he names "decision." Put simply, philosophy sets up a binary that then dictates its subsequent operations. It is always "about" a world that, in fact, it has itself determined, posited as its object. In Laruelle's terms (in Brassier's somewhat technical reading) this is "an act of scission" producing a dyad between a conditioned datum and a conditioning faktum.[6] This decisional structure involves a further move: philosophy's "auto-positioning" as ultimate arbiter over the two terms. Philosophy offers a certain perspective and higher synthesis—a "unity of experience"—over both conditioning factors and what is conditioned.[7] Philosophy's cut, we might say, produces a particular subject and world, and then offers a perspective (now seemingly the only permissible or coherent one) from which to think them both.

We might also call this complex set of operations philosophy's ideological character: the real causes—or, at least, in the last instance, determines—philosophy, but the latter is then abstracted out and seen as itself cause of the real (hence, its production of the world). The connections to two of Laruelle's key precursors, Karl Marx and especially Louis Althusser, are explicit, but we might also note that this perspective bears some resemblance to Lacan's theorization of the retro-formation of the subject (which must come to reverse the "illusion" of the ego and assume its own causality), as well as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's own materialist account of the subject as residuum in *Anti-Oedipus* (a subject that misrecognizes itself as prior to the process—the syntheses of the unconscious—that produced it).[8]

Indeed, in a relatively recent summary of non-philosophy Laruelle himself suggests that non-philosophers are very close to both the political militant and the analyst.[9]

The decisional mechanism is not restricted to philosophy as a discipline (or discourse), but impacts on our thinking more generally (we are all philosophical subjects in this sense). We might note here the resonances with Jacques Derrida's "diagnosis" of a logocentrism that is determinate in philosophy (at least in the Western tradition), but also in other forms of apparently non philosophical thought (the lack of hyphen here denotes the non Laruellian sense of these terms). Commentators have variously suggested that non-philosophy (this time in Laruelle's sense) is a less convincing deconstruction (as in Andrew McGettigan's critical overview of Laruelle) as well as, indeed, a more radical operation that itself repositions deconstruction as simply another form of philosophy (as in Brassier's own overview).[10] Whatever the understanding, it seems clear that Derrida is the "near enemy" of Laruelle, but also (at least to this reader) that non-philosophy, although clearly indebted to Derrida, involves something more affirmative (at least potentially) than the melancholy science of deconstruction.

Non-philosophy is, then, an attempt to practice philosophy (at least of a kind) without the aforementioned auto-positioning. Crucially, it does not involve a straightforward disavowal of the philosophical gesture (again, it is not non philosophy in this more straightforward sense); nor does it involve recourse to an "outside" that might then be simply folded back in *by* philosophy (as I suggested above, all philosophy claims to supersede previous interpretations, to really get to the real "from" a more radical

outside perspective). Non-philosophy, for Laruelle, must attempt its task from within philosophy's own interpretive circles (we might note, again, the connections with deconstruction as a process always already occurring "within" Western metaphysics).

To backtrack for a moment: as mentioned above, for Laruelle, non-philosophy is not another take on the real (or, indeed, a sufficient explanation of it), but proceeds from the real. For Laruelle it names a more radical immanence—arising from a suspension of decision—that is specifically other to the world produced by philosophy (whatever the claims of the latter about its own immanence might be).[11] Again, non-philosophy is a thinking *from* a real that is itself indifferent to that thinking (there is no reverse causality (or "reciprocal determination") in this sense). On the one hand, then, this real is very simple: it is just "this," immediately graspable, almost pre-cognitive (and, for Brassier, uninteresting—and empty—in this respect). And yet, as Robin Mackay points out in his own introduction to Laruelle, it is in fact not self-evident at all (at least to the typical "subject" that is in and of the "world").[12] Indeed, how could it be self-evident to a subject who has been produced by the very philosophical operation (the decisional structure) in question?

In its own operations, non-philosophy (at least in this particular articulation) does use concepts, but only after these have been untethered from their properly philosophical function, their auto-positioning. Laruelle also calls this auto-positioning the "Principle of Sufficient Philosophy": simply put, philosophy's claim to truth—or as Anthony Paul Smith puts it, "philosophy's faith in itself before the Real."[13] This "explains" some of the complexity of non-philosophy, in that it can read

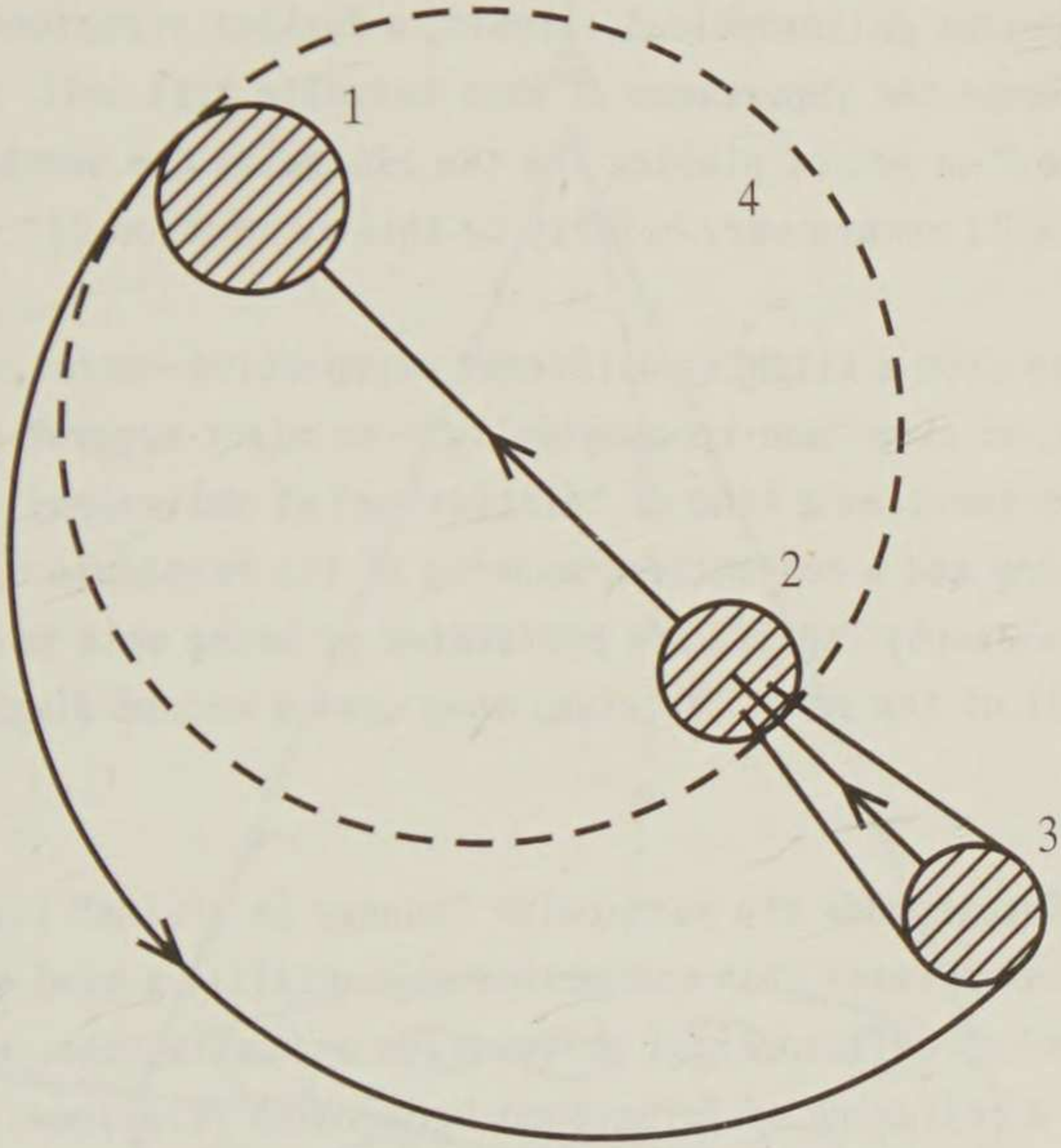
like philosophy (it cannot but be very close to the philosophy it writes on) and also must use neologisms and other unfamiliar terms—not only a new vocabulary but, at times, also a new syntax—in order to articulate its non-philosophical operations away from already existing philosophical language.

We could perhaps also diagram these relations between philosophy and non-philosophy, in relation to the real, as a set of circuits, as in Fig. 1.

The arrows in the diagram suggest the direction of determination (as in the real determining both non-philosophy and philosophy) but also demark a direction of operation (as in philosophy interpreting the real, and non-philosophy "ventriloquizing," or speaking through philosophy). To jump ahead slightly, we might also call this ventriloquism of philosophy by non-philosophy a kind of *fictioning*, insofar as the "explanatory" power of philosophy (its various claims about the real) is transformed into something else: models with no necessary pretensions to truth (I have attempted to suggest this in the diagram with the broken line inner circuit). Certainly, in his more recent writings (as we shall see) Laruelle suggests that non-philosophy is concerned with just such a mutation of philosophy, which he calls "philo-fictions."

We might also note again the connections to Marx and Althusser here: philosophy as a particular ideology (with its truth claims) and, thus, non-philosophy as a form of ideology critique. The apparent "real" world of philosophy—from the perspective of non-philosophy—is itself revealed as a fiction, determined (in the last instance) by a more radical immanence that has not been determined by philosophy at all (indeed, this real is, precisely,

Fig. 1 The ventriloquism of non-philosophy



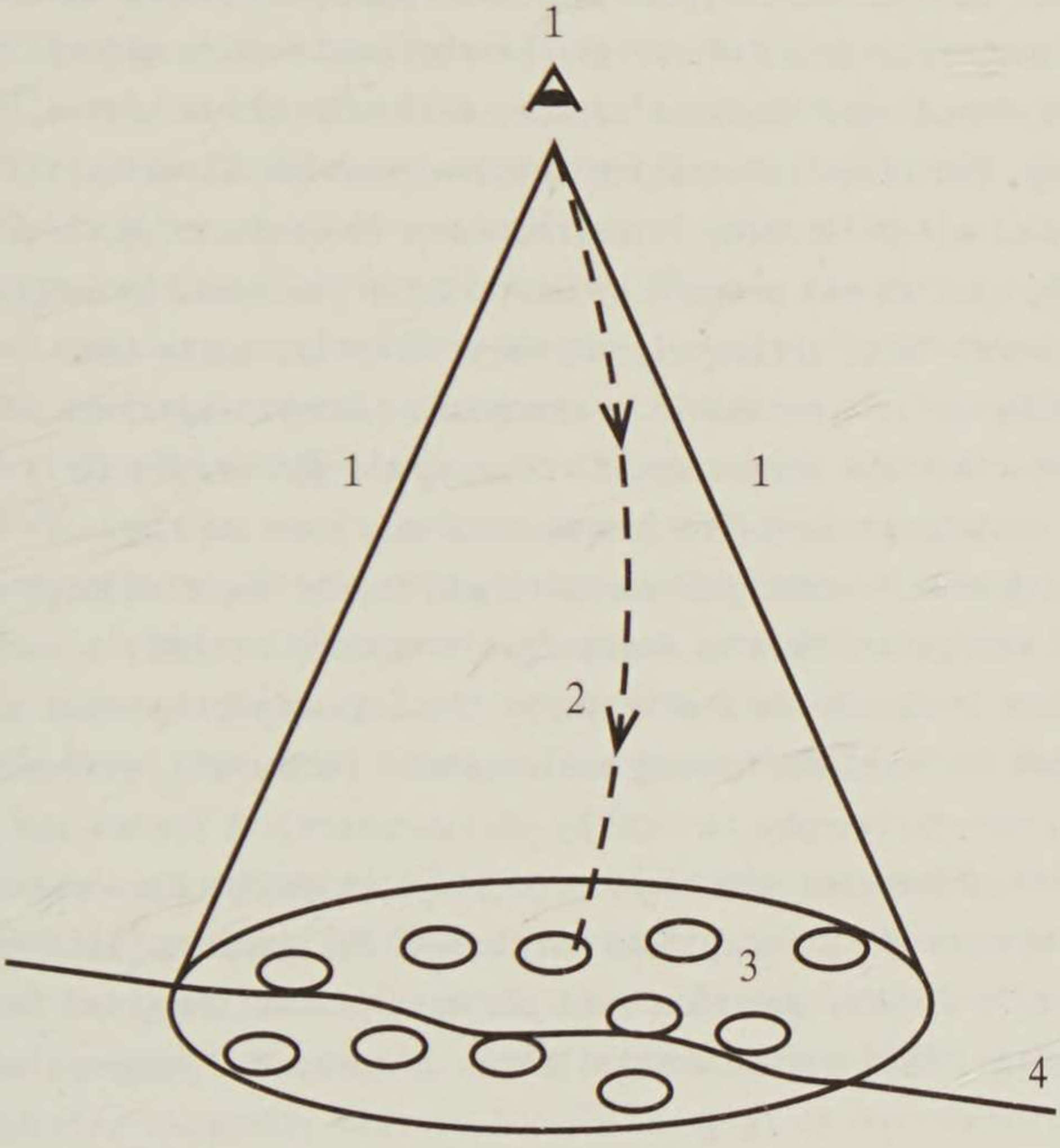
1. The real
2. Philosophy
3. Non-philosophy
4. Fictioning

undetermined). Crucially, however (and following Mackay once more), one cannot draw a simple line of demarcation here between ideology/philosophy and a science that "demystifies" them. This would act simply to produce a further binary that philosophy could then reach across and ultimately subsume; it would be to produce yet another philosophical circuit, a further structure of decision. Hence the importance of what Laruelle will call "superposition," an act of placing the two alongside one another, as it were (I will return very briefly to this in section 2).

To see all this from a slightly different perspective—more topologically, or even "non-topologically"—we might suggest that non-philosophy involves a kind of "flattening" of philosophy's auto-positioning and a concomitant undoing of its Principle of Sufficient Philosophy (again, its pretension of being able to account for all of the real). We might then draw a second diagram, as in Fig. 2.

This diagram foregrounds the particular "change in vision" (to use a Laruellian phrase) that non-philosophy entails, a kind of "dropping down" of philosophical perspective and, with that, what we might call a rejigging of foreground-background relations. Here, it is as if the conceptual material has been laid out on a tabletop. This is not exactly a move from three dimensions to two, but rather a flatness in which there are no supplementary dimensions (to use Deleuzian terminology).[14] The "view from above" is replaced by something more immanent and, as such, partial (in fact, Laruelle suggests that non-philosophy is less an overview than like a line, a clinamen, that touches on different "models" of thought). It is this radical change in perspective that enables a different treatment of philosophy.

Fig. 2 The flattening of non-philosophy (or "change in vision")



1. Philosophy (view from above)
2. Non-philosophy (as dropping down)
3. Philo-fictions (and other modes of thought)
4. Non-philosophy (as clinamen)

To jump ahead again slightly we might note an immediate and obvious connection with art practice here, insofar as non-philosophy becomes a practice that involves a manipulation of material (and even the construction of a different kind of conceptual "device" that allows for this "shift" in view). We might however also note four brief reservations before moving on to the second—and somewhat looser—articulation of non-philosophy. The first reservation concerns whether Laruelle's diagnosis of all philosophy is correct. Are there forms of philosophy that do not proceed by decision in the sense Laruelle uses the term? This, ultimately, is where Brassier marks the limits of Laruelle's method.[15] An attendant (and stronger) critique is that the operation of reducing all philosophy to decision (albeit articulated in numerous ways) denies the specificity of different philosophies and indeed can produce a kind of solipsism; this is McGettigan's take.[16] A third reservation is whether non-philosophy involves anything other than a kind of "turf war" among philosophers (after all, generally speaking, non-philosophy is read by philosophers). A fourth and final reservation concerns what, precisely, a concept does when untethered from the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy. This, for me, is really the key question (and the most productive), and it is something I will return to explicitly in section 2 below.

ii. Other modes of thought

In the second diagram above (Fig. 2) we might note the possibility that the "flattened" philosophical materials—the philo-fictions—can be positioned alongside other forms of non philosophical thought (note the lack of hyphen again here). Philosophy, when

untethered from its Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, becomes just one mode of thinking alongside a whole host of others: artistic, but also the scientific, even, perhaps, the animal (again, this is the democratization of thought, which is most thoroughly tracked through in Ó Maoilearca's work "on" Laruelle).[17] Non-philosophy gives us an interesting way in which to (re)position philosophy and its materials (as laid out above)—a radically different point of view, as it were—but it also offers up a corollary perspective on how different forms of thought invariably coexist and, indeed, might interact. This is to posit a radical horizontality (or, in Félix Guattari's terms, "transversality") that operates between heterogeneous practices. In this change of vision philosophy is brought down to earth, operating more as fiction than as a claim to truth (it is positioned as a model among others). In the same gesture, other forms of thought (for example art), in their turn, are given some philosophical (or at any rate non-philosophical) worth, insofar as they are no longer unfavorably compared with a philosophy enthroned above them.

This second articulation of non-philosophy (as naming different kinds of thinking) is less explored by Laruelle (although I will look below at two recent texts by him on the kind of thinking that photography, for example, might perform). This might well be, as Brassier suggests, because non-philosophy, in one respect anyway, has very little to say about these other forms of thought; it does not involve yet another (philosophical) take on the different terrains "outside" philosophy that it can then appropriate via its own definitions of the latter.[18]

It is worth remarking, however, that these other forms of thinking have themselves been theorized elsewhere (there is

plenty of material out there on art, the animal, and so on).[19] The question, it seems to me, is whether these theorizations have hitherto always been philosophical in character (proceeding from decision), and, if so, what might a non-philosophical theorization (one not proceeding from decision) of, say, art be like? There is also the supplementary question as to whether these other non philosophical forms of thinking "need" an account—from philosophy or non-philosophy—in the first place. After all, the work of artists, scientists, and so forth is already occurring without the help of philosophy (although my own essay does not attend to this directly, there is also the more radical thesis I gestured to above that animals, for example, already think in some respects).

It seems to me that this is one of the most interesting areas of inquiry in relation to non-philosophy and art practice. The diagnosis of how philosophy or theory captures objects and practices (or, in fact, defines them as such in the first place) is important, but more compelling is how non-philosophy might reconfigure what counts as a theory of art and how it might contribute—however obliquely—to an understanding of how art itself works in practice, on the ground as it were (that is, when it is not explained, interpreted, or simply defined by philosophy). Two questions, then: what kind of framework does non-philosophy offer for thinking *about* art; and, what kind of thinking *is* art?

In fact, the above two questions—of theory and practice, we might say—are connected insofar as the change in perspective announced by non-philosophy (the "dropping down") produces both a reconfiguration of what a theory (of art, for example) might be *and* a different understanding of what thought (understood

as a practice) might consist in (in passing we might also note that this implies that practice always already involves its own "theory"—it does not necessarily need a further layer of reflection—just as it also implies that theory can itself be its own kind of (speculative) practice).[20] I will return to some of these questions in section 3.

To return more directly to Laruelle, and pull back slightly, a more general question concerns what other practices could follow from non-philosophy's particular shift in perspective. What *different* kinds of thought does it make possible in its very redefinition of thinking? To a certain extent this is precisely a work of experimentation and, indeed, construction. The possibility of what Mackay calls "non-standard worlds" that arise from this shift and radical change in perspective cannot be predicted—or even, perhaps, articulated in typical (read: philosophical) language.[21] In relation to this we might note Laruelle's interest in poetics, or forms of writing—fictions—that are not *for* philosophers (it is pretty clear from even a cursory look at Laruelle's corpus that the readership of his major works needs to be well-versed in philosophy).[22] Might this more poetic and experimental register involve an untethering from decision? Indeed, what forms of writing, we might ask, are really adequate to, and appropriate for, the properly non-philosophical subject? This question is of especial relevance when we consider that, typically, syntax and narrative are generally a kind of handmaiden to philosophy; I will return to this below.

To start to bring to an end this brief reflection on what I have called the second articulation of non-philosophy (the flattening) we might suggest a couple more questions. The first concerns how

Laruelle's account of different models and of an "algebra of thought" differs from, for example, someone like Guattari and his own theory of metamodelization. In fact, it seems to me that there might well be a highly productive encounter to be forced between non-philosophy and schizoanalysis, not least as the latter could itself be understood as a kind of "non-psychoanalysis."[23] To return to an earlier criticism, we might also ask whether Laruelle's thinking implies a certain homogenization, but also (and almost despite itself) a further overview, at least of a kind, "on" other forms of thought: non-philosophy as just the latest novel philosophy, as it were. Although non-philosophy does not involve the same auto-positioning as philosophy, it does posit a kind of view from elsewhere, or, perhaps, a view on a view (as exemplified in my own diagrams of its operations). In fact, as I suggested in section 1.i. above, it seems to me that the latter—the perspective of any view from above—must also be dropped down in a further flattening (it is in this sense that non-philosophy can only ever be one form of thinking; one perspective among others).

To give this another inflection, we might also note that these different perspectives or models are also "lived" out in the world. They are, we might say, performed (hence, again, the connection between non-philosophy and schizoanalysis). Which is to say that the realm of non-philosophical work is not only the tabletop—and the abstract (non) philosophical plane—but also life and practice more generally. (In this respect it is especially the connection of Guattari's abstract modeling to concrete practice—for example, at La Borde—that marks out schizoanalysis as its own kind of non philosophy.) Could we then posit a more radical non philosophy? This would perhaps name forms of thinking that do not "refer" to philosophy and its

materials, or to any kind of overview (or, indeed, any clinamen that "touches" other forms of thought). It would be a radical "non" that announces the necessity of always re-localizing any global view. This "non" does not name a terrain as such (external to philosophy), or indeed any kind of steady state or consistent practice, but the continuing refusal of any superior or global position—or what we might also call a radical parochialism.

All this speculation aside (and it has to be said that thinking about non-philosophy breeds this kind of speculation, with its various loops and nestings), there is also clearly a key issue here—another reason that what I have called the second articulation of non-philosophy is less explored by Laruelle. Indeed, following on from some of my comments above, we might note that the practice of non-philosophy can never be simply a question of mapping out a terrain outside philosophy, as this will then simply be co-opted by philosophy (as its material). Is this, ultimately, the limit of non-philosophy as a particular practice? Like deconstruction before it (at least from one perspective), non-philosophy—as a take on the structure and workings of philosophy—is delimited by the very thinking it pitches itself "against." Non-philosophy can operate as a kind of trap for thought even as it diagnoses philosophy as itself a trap.

2. Interlude: Philo- to Photo-Fiction

I want now to briefly turn to Laruelle's writings on what he calls "photo-fiction," which in many ways address—and bring together—the two articulations of non-philosophy outlined above. Indeed, for Laruelle a way of thinking the relationship of philosophy to non-

THE REALM OF NON-PHILOSOPHICAL WORK IS NOT ONLY THE TABLETOP—— AND THE ABSTRACT (NON) PHILOSOPHICAL PLANE—BUT ALSO LIFE AND PRACTICE MORE GENERALLY.

philosophy is *through* photography and its relationship to what he calls non-photography. Here photography contains its own Principle of Sufficient Photography, or, again, makes a particular claim to truth. Indeed, photography (at least at first glance) is an accurate and faithful "picture of the world"; it is, we might say, a graphic example of those standard modes of thought that Laruelle writes against. Outlining a possible non-photographic practice is then also a way of outlining a non-philosophical practice.

In his essay "What Is Seen in a Photo?" Laruelle pitches his own take on the photograph against any "theory" of photography that positions the former as a double of the world. Indeed, the task is to think the photograph as nonrepresentational (however counterintuitive that might be).[24] For Laruelle this requires a certain stance or posture of the photographer—and with this the instantiation of a very particular kind of relation to the real—which then, in turn, entails the production of a different kind of knowledge (one that does not arise from representation). To "see" the photograph (and photographer) in this way means both the suspension of a certain privileging of perception and the interruption of the paradigm of "being-in-the-world." In this problematization of phenomenology—and refusal of yet more philosophical "interpretive circles"—Laruelle suggests that science and scientific experiences of the world might operate as a guide insofar as the latter proceed through a pragmatic and experimental engagement with the real (or, at least, with a demarcated "section" of it). So, just as non-philosophy involves a particular take on philosophy, a use of it as material (untethered from its interpretive function), so non-photography will involve a use of the photograph as material (as very much part of the real) instead of (or besides) its representational

function. In each case the conceptual and photographic materials are positioned as fictions—or what Laruelle, in this essay, calls photo-fictions and philo-fictions.

In a more recent essay that develops this idea of photo-fiction, Laruelle tackles the philosophical discourse of aesthetics more directly, tracking a move from aesthetics (understood as a philosophical account of art's self-sufficiency or truth) to what he calls, generally, art-fictions. These latter are associated with the practice of a "non-aesthetics," an aesthetics not tied to a Principle of Sufficient Philosophy but instead arising from what he suggests, again, is a more scientific paradigm involving the positing of models.[25] On the face of it, this later essay is less about art practice—photography or otherwise—and more about philosophy (as instantiated in the discourse of aesthetics) and how one might reposition it. Indeed, there is still a minimal aesthetics at work in Laruelle's own account, at least of sorts (an account of what art "is"). That said, Laruelle's own claim is that these photo/philo-fictions operate *between* photography and philosophy, with each discipline surrendering its own "auto-finalized form" or "auto-teleology."[26] The two disciplines undergo a reduction of sorts ("in the sense of phenomenological reduction"[27])—or are themselves flattened—and are brought together in what Laruelle calls the matrix, or generic, "in which photo and fictions (a philosophy or conceptuality) are under-determined, which is to say, deprived of their classical finality and domination."[28]

The generic—a kind of image or "space" of thought that is non-hierarchical (or radically horizontal, to return to a term I used above)—is then this other strange realm (of the real) that is un- or under-determined. Laruelle will also call this leveling

out an algebra of philosophy/photography. This horizontality is important, as without it—as I mentioned above—non-philosophy becomes just one more superior philosophical position (and thus is itself open to further "nesting" by the positing of other outside perspectives). Indeed, one might suggest that Laruelle's own non-philosophy is itself simply another form of thought among others; although, as I also mentioned above, Laruelle does suggest that non-philosophy has a specificity as a line—a clinamen—that "touches" these other fictions.

In "Photo-Fiction, A Theoretical Installation" Laruelle is concerned with building a new conceptual or theoretical apparatus that would be capable of producing these strange photo-fictions or models of the real. These are forms of thought (broadly construed) that are less explanatory or interpretive of the world as it is, and more speculative in character. Might we suggest, then, that it is this experimental nature of photo-fictions that characterizes them as a form of art practice?

As I intimated above, this strange kind of non-photographic apparatus is also necessarily a phenomenologically reduced one: it "pictures" what happens to experience when not tied to a self/interpreter, or when such experience is not "processed" through representation. We might also say the fictions that are produced by it are somehow weaker (again, they are "undetermined"), untethered as they are from a certain pretension. This is a more modest form of thought, perhaps, but it is also one that has the potential to expand the very idea—and working out—of what thought is and might become (it is in this sense that Laruelle's "non" announces a turn from hermeneutics to something more heuristic).

The key for Laruelle in all this is photo-fiction's break with representation and mimesis and, with that, the production of a certain kind of freedom (he writes, for example, of the jouissance to be found at the end of "photo-centrism").[29] In themselves these photo-fictions imply and, it seems to me, help produce a new kind of subject (if we can still call it this), or what Laruelle calls (in a nod to Kant's notion of a nonempirical transcendental subject) "Subject = X."[30] They also imply a new terrain (or, as I suggested above, a new realm) to be "discovered"—or constructed—"beyond" the "world" of philosophy/photography.[31] Laruelle turns to quantum mechanics here (and indeed in much of his recent writings), where he finds the tools adequate and appropriate to this experimental reorganization or reconstruction of the world (outside representation). Such a "new" scientific theory does not involve yet more binaries, but rather a "superpositioning" in which a third state is produced by the addition (or "superposing") of two previous states. Superpositioning is a way of dealing with the paradox I mentioned above of non-philosophy as both theory of thought and just one mode of thinking itself—indeed, it is precisely quantum science's break with representational "accounts" of matter and the universe that makes it so useful for non-philosophy. We might even say that non-philosophy, in this sense, is quantum philosophy—and that the Subject = X is the quantum-subject.

3. Non-art Practice

I want now to develop some of the above in six different, more specific "applications" of non-philosophy to art practice.[32] In particular I want to test Laruelle's method when it comes to thinking through a non philosophical discipline with its own

logics and history, but also, more particularly, in relation to an understanding of performance as its own kind of "non-art" (or what David Burrows has called "performance fiction").[33]

i. Diagrammatics

Diagrammatics might be a name for the practice of recontextualization, reorganization, and general manipulation of philosophical materials that have been untethered from their properly philosophical function or discourse. I have already laid out some of the aspects of this kind of practice above, but in relation to art more explicitly we might note the possibility that concepts be refigured diagrammatically. In a simple sense they can be drawn, but more generally to diagram suggests a different "imaging" or even performance of concepts. In fact, art practice has always involved a take on philosophy (and theory more broadly) that resonates with this—a "use" of philosophical materials *as* material.

A key question here is what these philosophical materials "do" when untethered in this way: what is their explanatory power (if that still has a meaning here)? Or, to put this another way, can this be anything different from the use of philosophy as illustration, or "caption"? (Laruelle himself uses the latter term when writing of philo-fictions.) What, we might ask, does the treatment of philosophy in this way allow us to think? One answer is that it might, for example, suggest surprising and productive connections and conjunctions between different conceptual resources (given that the normal (philosophical) rules are suspended).[34] Philosophy (or non-philosophy) becomes a

more synthetic—and, again, speculative—practice in this sense (rather than an analytic inquiry). More radically, this kind of practice opens up the different space of and for thinking that I mentioned above.

ii. Art as model

Non-philosophy might also name the multiplicity of thinking—the other kinds of thought—that subsists alongside the philosophical and the conceptual more broadly. Indeed, there is the important question, here, of the role of affect in art practice, and whether this more pathic register might also be understood as a kind of nonconceptual thinking—a different kind of non philosophy, perhaps. Again, some of this terrain has been laid out above, but in relation to art practice it seems to me that with this second aspect we are moving into more productive territory. Indeed, art practice has long been involved in nonconceptual explorations, just as it has also involved its own particular take on conceptual material (without the help of non-philosophy). A question rephrased from one asked above might also be posed here: what does non-philosophy in its democratizing aspect bring to art practice? Certainly it brings philosophy (and aesthetics) down from its throne, makes it more of a model among others; and, in the same gesture, art's own models are given a certain status beyond being simple fiction (at least when this is opposed to truth). But what does this modeling allow beyond such democratization? As I mentioned above, very little is said about this area—the other forms of thought besides philosophy—"within" non-philosophy itself. Again, it seems to me that this is partly because a certain deconstructive logic is at play: any form of thinking, as

thinking, is always already determined by the cut that produces the world and the subject that thinks.[35]

But perhaps we might rephrase this, and also put it in more positive terms: non-philosophy cannot but use the stuff of the world and thus must use it differently, untethering it from the world (in the sense of a world determined by philosophy). In terms of art one thinks of William Burroughs and his cut-ups, which open up a different space-time. Indeed, narratives—the logical sequencing of sentences (cause and effect), familiar syntax, and so forth—which the cut-ups slice into and rearrange are key determining factors of the world. Non-philosophy in this expanded sense might then also be a form of non-narrative, or even a form of non-fiction (in which the "non" names a widening of context to include those formal experiments that go beyond simple narrative, as well as a use of language beyond its representational function). Such art will need to be "read," or at least maintain a minimum consistency of sense. Again, experiments in writing non-narrative fictions (or, at least, in playing with narrative schema) would be instructive here.[36]

iii. Non-art (and art history)

Another (and perhaps more appropriate) thinking through of non-philosophy in relation to art would be an examination of whether art performs its own auto-positioning and has its own kind of principle that doubles the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy: does art also involve a certain kind of invariant "decision" (however that might manifest)? Insofar as art involves representation (a "picturing of the world") then the answer is

clearly yes (and the above comments on photography would have relevance here—although work would need to be done to lay out how this particular structure operates in art practice more generally). But in this sense we might also say that modern art has already been through its own "non" "revolution" with the move from figuration to abstraction (Malevich and Pollock representing the twin apotheoses of this tendency in Western painting).[37]

In fact, with the further move beyond abstraction to objecthood we have practices that, in their relationship to representation, "mirror" the relation between non-philosophy and philosophy. Certainly Minimalism, for example, was involved in something else "beyond" representation, in that it was the production of objects, assemblages, and so forth that were not "about" the real, but part of it (and in writers such as Donald Judd and Robert Smithson we have a clear articulation of this logic—the radical break their practices announce—as well as an indication of the importance of fiction, as a mode of writing, in articulating it).[38] We need only add that this shift in perspective also necessarily changes the perspective on previous art, such that it is then seen as representation but also as itself object (what else could it be?). We might also note Marcel Duchamp's idea of the "reciprocal readymade," which involves using (representational) art as material for everyday objects.[39] Contemporary practices that refer back to—or reuse—art, untethered from its previous representational functioning, would also be important here (what is sometimes called "second-order practice"), but so would those practices that, for example, repeat or restage previous performances. It is also in this sense that, today, abstract art is itself figural (it involves the referencing of previous abstractions). There is a similar structure to non-philosophy's

ALMOST EVERY
MODERN MOVEMENT
INVOLVED THIS
DISAVOWAL OF
A PREVIOUS
DEFINITION—
THE PERFORMANCE
OF A FORCEFUL
"NO" ECHOING
THROUGHOUT TIME

use of philosophy in these kinds of practice, but we might also note that there is equally a similar limit, insofar as such practices involve a nesting of art within art (ad infinitum). I will return to this.

We might also gesture here to the history of the avant-garde more generally and their refusal of previous categories of art. Almost every modern movement involved this disavowal of a previous definition—the performance of a forceful "No" echoing throughout time (and manifestos embody this recurring motif, perhaps most explicitly foregrounded in Dada, which further involved a refusal of "good sense"). There was also, with the avant-gardes, a concomitant drive to bring art into life. Indeed, in terms of non-art, a recurring feature of the avant-garde is the incorporation of nonartistic material in order to disrupt representation. From the readymade to Arte Povera to the happening, art has also been—at least in its initial impulse—non-art. Here it is surely Duchamp who best exemplifies the refusal of representation, just as it is Allan Kaprow who gestures to the very limits of the frame (and who does most to collapse or "blur" the art/life boundary). All this amounts to saying that from one perspective art history gives us an account of how art has always been thought in relation to something outside itself.

There is a lot more to be said about this relationship between art and non-art, especially in relation to Laruelle's own ideas about how an anti-philosophy (as opposed to non-philosophy) invariably sets up an "outside" that then gets incorporated in a renewed "definition" (hence my interest in the reciprocal readymade, which does not look "outside" art (it is not an anti-art) but uses art as its material). There is also the issue of art practice traversing

this edge, often moving toward non-art status, only to hold back at the last moment, as it were, in order to maintain an artistic status (again, it seems to me that a certain deconstructive logic is at play with these practices that oscillate between art and non-art). A question here might be, then, what does an understanding of non-art (in Laruelle's sense) bring to the table given this particular history of modern art? One answer might be that it allows a radical rethinking of the whole question of the avant-garde and of the art/non-art dialectic. To recall: Laruelle's non-philosophy does not posit an outside; indeed, it is not an avant-garde position in this sense. Perhaps if we follow Laruelle, then, we are not so much exploring a territory beyond accepted definitions, but reconfiguring the very terrain of art and life (in terms of superpositioning). Once again it would seem that non-philosophy (and non-art) has this double face: on the one hand it allows a certain practice outside the laws and logics of the discipline it seeks to undermine (it is, as Laruelle calls it, "heretical"), but on the other it cannot but be caught by these very forms (insofar as it must work within and with them).[40]

iv. Ideology critique

To return to some of my earlier comments about Althusser and ideology, another take on the conjunction of non-philosophy and art might be that non-philosophy can help to diagnose and critique "Contemporary Art" as a whole. It might help to identify a particular logic at work—for example, indeterminacy—that is, as it were, a structuring invariant, whatever a given practice might claim. Such is the strategy of Suhail Malik, who calls for an "exit" from a Contemporary Art that is the handmaiden

of contemporary neoliberalism.[41] Here the very "openness" of the work of art is seen as profoundly ideological. In relation to this recent critique of contemporary art, we might also note that there has long been a "tradition" of radical (or "social") art history as a form of ideology critique that is intent on demystifying the aesthetic and ideological functioning of art, and especially of "Art History," by giving a properly historical account of art objects—might we even call this a kind of non-Art History (the capitals denoting a certain disciplinary self-sufficiency)?

But, to return to Malik, this is also a complex matter insofar as we might say that contemporary art (note: no capitals) is a practice that has itself been untethered from a certain programmatic account (namely, Modernism). Contemporary art is already characterized by a radical democratization: this, for example, would be Jean-François Lyotard's take (on "art in the age of postmodernity"), or indeed Rosalind Krauss's (on our "post-medium condition").[42] From this perspective it would be Malik who is reinstating a certain program—we might even say decision—about what art *should* do. Of course, it is always possible to position the other's point of view as the ideological one (witness the Adorno/Lukács debates around autonomy versus realism[43]), but it does seem to me that positioning art as ideology critique—or as simply critical—and at the same time dismissing practices that are not committed to this critique, cannot but limit our understanding of art and indeed of its terrain of operation (rather than, for example, opening it up to further adventures).

Nevertheless, a key question arising from this particular perspective is whether there is indeed a non-art practice that utilizes art as its material, but untethers it from its dominant

logics (whatever these might be); and, if so, whether this is something different to what art already does. It seems clear, here, that it is the definition of art that determines its "non" (and, as such, if the dominant logics are indeed indeterminacy, or perhaps representation, then this will define non-art as non-representation and determinate). A further question is whether art—or non-art—can itself escape these interminable circuits of definition and redefinition. Can it offer a different kind of knowledge "outside" art as it is typically understood?[44]

v. Performance fictions

Leading on from the above, and changing perspective a little, there is also the compelling gnostic "account" that non-philosophy gives of the real that I mentioned at the beginning of this essay. At the end of the conference "Fiction as Method" (the progenitor of this book), Tim Etchells performed a "re-mix" of the previous speaker, M. John Harrison, and his compelling reading of one of his own short stories.[45] Both presentations—one a piece of fiction, the other a performance—were somewhat different to the previous papers. Indeed, if the latter had generally been *about* fiction as method (albeit involving creative as well as critical approaches and interventions), here, in both of these last contributions to the conference, we were presented with fiction *as* method itself. With both it was as if the whole conference assemblage had somehow tipped—and phase-shifted—from being "about" the real to being "of" (or alongside) it.

For me this experience resonates with the radical immanence of non-philosophy. Indeed, as I also mentioned above, there is

something surprising—and yet at the same time obvious—about Laruelle's idea of a form of thought that is from the real rather than yet another interpretation of it. As I hope I have made clear, art practice is often involved in this other kind of presentation. The conference, however, made the difference between the two perspectives—or gestures—suddenly very apparent.

Indeed, performance in general has this quality of producing difference through a cut. It is non-representation par excellence insofar as in its very liveness it offers an "experience" of life "outside" representation.[46] However, there is also the question here as to whether at least some kind of minimal framing is required to make it art, or else it becomes "just life" (this, again, is the edge that Kaprow traverses). In fact, it seems to me that a life might well need some framing—a performance, as it were—in order for it to be taken out of the frame within which it is usually experienced/perceived (what Laruelle calls the world). Counter-intuitively, art practice, as performance, can be more real than life *because* it is framed (at least minimally).

The models and fictions referred to earlier in this essay demonstrate ways of sidestepping more typical, often unseeable, frames of reference. They offer one set of approaches to enabling ourselves to think of art practice as the production of fictions that allow—almost as a side effect—for a glimpse of the real (or, to refer again to the conference, it is the very difference between the two fictional worlds—our typical world and the world an art practice can present—that allows for a small part of the real to leak through). Again, unless a fiction is produced, the danger is that a practice merely presents a piece of the world as it surrounds us on an everyday basis, without any difference (as

is the case with art practices that simply archive what exists without transforming it). It is, then, through the performance of a fiction that art can foreground the always already fictional status of a world it is different from.

vi. The fiction of a self

Performance art aside, it seems to me that non-philosophy is also at its most interesting and compelling when it is thought in relation to a life that is lived differently, or in relation to Michel Foucault's suggestion (though for different reasons) that "everyone's life become a work of art."[47] This is to "apply" non-philosophy to expanded practices beyond the gallery, but also to think about aesthetic practices, in more general terms, in relation to what Guattari called the production of subjectivity (and to the expanded ethico-aesthetic paradigm that is implied by this).

Indeed, as I have gestured toward above, we might want to ask whether the very structure of typical subjectivity—and of a "self"—is not itself the product of a certain philosophical decision (broadly construed), one that is lived on a day-to-day basis.[48] A non-philosophical take on subjectivity will involve a diagnosis of such a positioning (again, typical subjectivity), but, for me, more interesting is that it might point to the possibility of being in the world without a fixed sense of a typical self (with all the attendant issues this unfixity can bring). Laruelle seems to be suggesting something similar in his "A New Presentation of Non-philosophy," not least when he suggests that non-philosophy might be the only "chance for an effective utopia."[49]

This effective utopia would mean living life away from those forms that have caught and restrict it: it is to refuse philosophy, especially in its key operation of producing the fiction of a (separate) self—or, rather, its positing of the latter as not a fiction but as a truth (the self as product of a certain decision that is then occluded, hidden from that subject). Non-philosophy might then be about untethering the self from its auto-positioning, its own enthronement (and as such it has something very specific to offer recent accounts and critiques of the "Anthropocene").

In fact, it seems that what follows from this insight is not the "dissolving" of the self, but, we might say, a holding of it in a lighter, more contingent manner—as, precisely, a fiction (and, insofar as the self is the anchor point for numerous other fictions—the different worlds through which a self moves—then these too are seen as fictions). Crucially, this might also mean the possibility of producing other fictions of the self (or other fictions of non-self), and with that the exploration of other ways of being in the world.[50] Although there is not the space here to go into Laruelle's own writings on this other kind of subject, we might note his concept of the "generic human," or "stranger," which he describes as a "radical ordinariness" that is nevertheless at odds with the world (and which we always already are, over and above any "assumed" subjectivity).[51]

A compelling final question—which I have gestured towards throughout my essay—is what this terrain "outside" the self might be like and if, indeed, it can be explored. Mackay writes well on this discovery of the generic "beneath" the subject produced by philosophy and how we might begin to experience and

experiment with it (for it is not a given, but, to echo Deleuze and Guattari, needs to be constructed, piece by piece).[52] It is perhaps with this grand vision of the work of non-philosophy that we begin to see the more profound connections with, and radical implications for, what we might call a non-art practice. This, then, is the experimental exploration—but also the construction and performance—of new worlds and new kinds of non-subjects adequate and appropriate to them. Or, more simply: fiction as method.

Endnotes

1 The following account is heavily indebted to a number of other introductions to Laruelle's thought, including: Ray Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy: The Non-philosophy of François Laruelle," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 121 (September/October 2003): 24–35; Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007); Robin Mackay, "Introduction: Laruelle Undivided," in *François Laruelle, From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-standard Thought*, trans. Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012), 1–32; John Ó Maoilearca and Anthony Paul Smith, "Introduction: The Non-philosophical Inversion: Laruelle's Knowledge Without Domination," in *Laruelle and Non-philosophy*, ed. John Ó Maoilearca and Anthony Paul Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 1–18; John Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); and Anthony Paul Smith, *François Laruelle's "Principles of Non-philosophy": A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). These and other secondary texts are referenced throughout (often in endnotes), but I also want to be clear at the outset that my understanding of Laruelle, and in particular the laying out of the tenets of non-philosophy in section 1 of my essay, is based on these rather than any exhaustive reading of Laruelle's own books (and as such constitutes only an initial foray into what, for me, is new territory). Any errors in understanding are, of course, my own.

2 Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal*, 1.

3 Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy," 25.

4 Although I have used a lowercase "r" here and throughout, Laruelle invariably has Lacan's sense of the Real in mind–as that which is "outside" the symbolic register and which indeed is resistant to it (although, as we shall see, Laruelle makes his own modifications to this topology).

5 As Laruelle remarks in relation to the "character" of non-philosophers: "they are also related to what I would call the "spiritual" type–which it is imperative not to confuse with "spiritualist." The spiritual are not spiritualists.

They are the great destroyers of the forces of philosophy and the state, which band together in the name of order and conformity. The spiritual haunt the margins of philosophy, gnosticism, mysticism, and even of institutional religion and politics." François Laruelle, "A New Presentation of Non-philosophy," *Organisation Non-philosophique Internationale*, accessed August 23, 2017, http://www.onphi.net/corpus/32/a-new-presentation-of-non-philosophy.

6 Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy," 26.

7 Ibid.

8 See especially Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1984), 16–22.

9 Laruelle, "A New Presentation."

10 Andrew McGettigan, "Fabrication Defect: François Laruelle's Philosophical Materials," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 175 (September/October 2012): 33–42; Ray Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy."

11 As, for example, Laruelle will argue, in Deleuze's philosophy (see for example François Laruelle, "'I, the Philosopher, Am Lying': A Reply to Deleuze," trans. Taylor Adkins, Ray Brassier, and Sid Littlefield, in *The Non-philosophy Project: Essays by François Laruelle*, ed. Gabriel Alkon and Boris Gunjević (New York: Telos, 2012), 40–74. Is this claim, however, entirely correct? In his last essay, "Immanence: A Life," Deleuze is very careful to distinguish his concept of immanence from one that is immanent "to" something (which would necessarily involve a form of transcendence): Gilles Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life," in *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 25–34. Deleuze does attend, however, to how a "point of view" on this immanence cannot but involve a certain kind of abstraction and "folding back," but it is not entirely clear, at least to this reader, whether this can be understood as simply a decisional structure in Laruelle's terms. A more detailed comparison on this point will need to wait for another time, but we might note here Deleuze's own sympathy (albeit with reservations) with Laruelle's

non-philosophical project, as evidenced by the footnote on the latter at the very end of *What Is Philosophy?* (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (London: Verso, 1994), 234n16). For my own take on Deleuze (and Guattari) as a form of non philosophy see Simon O'Sullivan, "Memories of a Deleuzian: To Think Is Always to Follow the Witches Flight," in *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, ed. Henry Somers-Hall, Jeff Bell, and James Williams (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 172–88.

12 Mackay, "Introduction: Laruelle Undivided," 2.

13 Smith, *François Laruelle's "Principles,"* 26. Indeed, Smith is especially attuned to the arrogance of Philosophy—and, not least, its connection to a "wider" European colonial attitude (hence the importance of non-philosophy in the decolonization of thinking). In his *Francois Laruelle's "Principles of Non-philosophy": A Critical Introduction and Guide* he is also keen to maintain and defend the category of the human (albeit that this is not the human of a straightforward humanism, but of a more generic "force-of-thought") against those other readers of Laruelle—Smith has Brassier especially in mind—who are intent on dismantling the latter or hastening its demise. Might we say then that Smith attends to the ongoing importance of phenomenology (especially Martin Heidegger and Michel Henry) for Laruelle's non-philosophy (though in a "reduced" form), whereas Brassier is interested (see note 15 below) in a reading that effectively rids non-philosophy of any phenomenological residue (hence the focus on abstraction). These two positions revolve around different attitudes to alienation and reason. For Brassier, alienation enables freedom via the constructs of reason (hence the Promethean character of his writing); for Smith non-philosophy promises a kind of overcoming of alienation (and a limiting of reason) for a human that is always more than simply a rational animal.

14 See, for example, Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and in particular the third "Principle of Multiplicity": "The point is that a rhizome never allows itself to be overcoded, never has

available a supplementary dimension [...]. All multiplicities are flat in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions." Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 9.

15 In *Nihil Unbound* Brassier suggests that the philosophical operation that Laruelle lays out as a universal invariant decision–which Brassier describes as a "quasi-spontaneous philosophical compulsion" (*Nihil Unbound*, 119)–is, rather, the hallmark of a particular kind of philosophy that finds its terminus in Heidegger and deconstruction. Indeed, for Brassier it is only by understanding Laruelle in this way–as offering something to philosophy (basically the suspension of the decisional mechanism that in itself might allow for a different kind of thinking)–that the radical implications of Laruelle's thought can be laid out. Brassier argues that this must also involve the extraction from out of Laruelle's own account of non-philosophy (and especially of the human as locus of the real) of a "de-phenomenologized conception of the real as 'being-nothing'" (ibid., 118); hence the title of Brassier's book.

16 McGettigan, "Fabrication Defect."

17 As Ó Maoilearca remarks at the beginning of his book: "Non-philosophy is a conception of philosophy (and all forms of thought) that allows us to see them as equivalent according to a broader explanatory paradigm. It enlarges the set of things that can count as thoughtful, a set that includes existing philosophy but also a whole host of what is presently deemed (by standard philosophy) to be non-philosophical (art, technology, natural science)." Ó Maoilearca, *All Thoughts Are Equal*, 9.

18 Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy," 27.

19 Again, we might note the connections with deconstruction as a particular kind of practice here; a diagnosis of Western metaphysics, but also–more elusively, perhaps–a gesture to forms of thinking that are irreducible to this.

20 On this point see Keith Tilford's unpublished essay on the implications of non-philosophy for art: Keith Tilford, "Laruelle, Art, and the Scientific Model," accessed January 7, 2017, http://keithtilford.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Tilford

_Keith.pdf. Tilford makes an especially compelling distinction (though not one I use in my own essay) between "theories" (based on decision) and "models" (which are, precisely, revisable).

21 Mackay, "Introduction: Laruelle Undivided," 8.

22 See for example the texts gathered together in "Appendix I" at the end of Laruelle, *From Decision to Heresy*, 353–408.

23 As in Guattari's metamodelization of Lacanian concepts. For Laruelle's own non-philosophical response to Guattari and schizoanalysis (and, not least, the collaboration with Deleuze) see François Laruelle, "Fragments of an Anti-Guattari," *Linguistic Capital*, accessed January 7, 2017, trans. Charles Wolfe, https://linguisticcapital.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/laruelle_fragments-of-an-anti-guattari.pdf.

24 François Laruelle, "What Is Seen in a Photo?," in *The Concept of Non-photography*, trans. Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 1–28.

25 François Laruelle, "Photo-Fiction, A Theoretical Installation," in *Photo-Fiction: A Non-standard Aesthetics*, trans. Drew S. Burk (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2012), 11–24.

26 Ibid., 16.

27 Ibid., 14.

28 Ibid., 16.

29 Ibid., 18–19.

30 Ibid., 15–17.

31 Ibid., 15.

32 I am aware that this idea of an "application" is highly problematic in relation to non-philosophy; my comments below attempt to address this particular limitation. I would also point the interested reader to the writings of Anne-Françoise Schmid, who develops a more sustained inquiry into the implications of non-philosophy for art history and practice. In her article "The Madonna on the Craters of the Moon: An Aesthetic Epistemology" Schmid follows Laruelle in making a case for a generic epistemology and, indeed, a generic aesthetics that might operate as an "intermediary" between science and art, but also between different art practices (or even between different elements within a practice): Anne-Françoise Schmid, "The Madonna on the Craters of the Moon: An Aesthetic Epistemology," *Urbanomic*, accessed

January 7, 2017, https://www.urbanomic.com/document/the-madonna-on-the-craters-of-the-moon-an-aesthetic-epistemology. For Schmid there is no "birds-eye view" on this terrain, and, as such, no one model (of either science or art), but rather a diversity of models in superposition. For Schmid this also implies a new understanding of the object, which is no longer given as such but must be invented (might we even say fictioned?). Schmid gives this expanded practice the name "integrative object," involving as it does a kind of synthesis of heterogeneity, one that proceeds "piece by piece."

33 David Burrows, "Performance Fictions," in *Performance Fictions*, ed. David Burrows (Birmingham: Article Press, 2010), 47–70.

34 My own book *On the Production of Subjectivity* includes examples of this kind of diagrammatic treatment of conceptual material. Simon O'Sullivan, *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).

35 Nick Srnicek suggests something similar in his own take on a politics (and a certain aporia) that leads from non-philosophy: any form of typical intervention in the world cannot but be determined by that world (or, again, takes place within the horizon of decision): Nick Srnicek, "Capitalism and the Non-philosophical Subject," in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 164–81. Non-philosophy can, in this sense, open a view from elsewhere (or, for Srnicek, it can open up a kind of noncapitalist space), but it cannot offer any content (Brassier's reading of Laruelle's method puts this necessarily abstract character and formal inventiveness in more positive terms as the very work of non-philosophy: Brassier, "Axiomatic Heresy").

36 In relation to this—and to an idea of "fictioning"—see my essay "From Science Fiction to Science Fictioning: SF's Traction on the Real," *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction* 46.1, no. 126 (2017): 4–84. We might also note once again Laruelle's own writing experiments here.

37 In relation to this it is worth noting Deleuze's compelling observation (in the chapter on "The Image of Thought" in *Difference and Repetition*) that philosophy needs to go through a similar revolution to modern art. Gilles Deleuze,

Difference and Repetition, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 129–67.

38 In relation to the first of these, see, for example, Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," in *Art in Theory, 1900–1990*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 809–13; and Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 10–23. In relation to the second, see Robert Smithson, "Strata: A Geophotographic Fiction," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 75–77.

39 My thanks to Nadja Millner-Larsen for alerting me to the logic of the reciprocal readymade.

40 See for example François Laruelle, "Non-philosophy as Heresy," in *Laruelle, From Decision to Heresy*, 257–84.

41 Suhail Malik, *On the Necessity of Art's Exit from Contemporary Art* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, forthcoming).

42 See Jean-François Lyotard, "Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity," trans. Mária Minich Brewer and Daniel Brewer, in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 181–95; and Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

43 Theodor Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London: NLB, 1977).

44 This is the question that Amanda Beech asks in her own take on Laruelle and on what she sees as problems with an art practice invested in freedom, immediacy, difference, contingency, and so forth. For Beech, besides this critique of typical operating procedures and logics of contemporary art, at stake is the outlining of a different practice—or Science—of the image, one that embraces its representational/mediatory character in its own kind of "critical-political project"; or, in the terms of Laruelle's own "non-differential space of the generic matrix": "What is the distinction between the paradigm of art as we know it, and another category of art that we could imagine in this new configuration?" Amanda Beech "Art and Its 'Science,'"

in *Speculative Aesthetics*, ed. Robin Mackay, Luke Pendrell, and James Trafford (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014), 15.

45 "Fiction as Method" conference, Goldsmiths, University of London, October 17, 2015.

46 Performance, as Tero Nauha has articulated, can be a practice that is alongside the real and as such might be thought of as an "advent" (as opposed to an event that gets "recaptured" by philosophy). Nauha also makes a convincing case, following Laruelle, for performance as a heretical practice (pitched against the "law" of representation): see Tero Nauha, *Schizoproduction: Artistic Research and Performance in the Context of Immanent Capitalism* (Helsinki: University of the Arts, 2016).

47 Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 2000), 261.

48 Smith writes well on how a certain decisional structure produces the philosophical subject (as separate from an object—the real—that it cannot know except through itself) and how the non-philosophical subject—as "force-of-thought"—might be understood, instead, as always already a part of, or a clone of, the real (see Paul Smith, *François Laruelle's "Principles,"* 45–61).

49 To continue the quote from note 5, above: "non-philosophy is also related to Gnosticism and science-fiction; it answers their fundamental question—which is not at all philosophy's primary concern—"Should humanity be saved? And how?" And it is also close to spiritual revolutionaries such as Müntzer and certain mystics who skirted heresy. When all is said and done, is non-philosophy anything other than the chance for an effective utopia?" Laruelle, "A New Presentation."

50 David Burrows and I attend more fully to this in our forthcoming book: David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan, *Mythopoesis/Myth-Science/Mythotechnesis: Fictioning in Contemporary Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).

51 One of the other key thinkers in relation to this area is the neuroscientist and philosopher Thomas Metzinger and his thesis of the "ego tunnel" as productive of what he calls the "myth"

of the self. See Thomas Metzinger, *The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self* (New York: Basic Books, 2009). We might also turn again to Brassier's recent writings on a certain kind of "nemocentric" subject that is "produced" through neuroscientific understandings of our place in the world. In both of these cases it is a question of exploring a kind of non-subject whose processes of re-presenting the world (or modeling) are opaque rather than transparent (and thus open to examination). Ray Brassier, "The View from Nowhere," *Identities: Journal of Politics, Gender and Culture* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 7–23.

52 Mackay, "Introduction: Laruelle Undivided."

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukàcs. *Aesthetics and Politics*. Translated by Ronald Taylor. London: NLB, 1977.

Beech, Amanda. "Art and Its 'Science.'" In *Speculative Aesthetics*, edited by Robin Mackay, Luke Pendrell, and James Trafford. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014.

Brassier, Ray. "Axiomatic Heresy: The Non-philosophy of François Laruelle." *Radical Philosophy*, no. 121 (September/October 2003): 24–35.

——. *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007.

——. "The View from Nowhere." *Identities: Journal of Politics, Gender and Culture* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 7–23.

Burrows, David. "Performance Fictions." In *Performance Fictions*, edited by David Burrows, 47–70. Birmingham: Article Press, 2010.

Burrows, David, and Simon O'Sullivan. *Mythopoesis/Myth-Science/Mythotechnesis: Fictioning in Contemporary Art*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

——. "Immanence: A Life." In *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*. Translated by Anne Boyman, 25–33. New York: Zone Books, 2011.

——, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. London: Athlone Press, 1984.

——. *What Is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. London: Verso, 1994.

Foucault, Michel. "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress." In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, edited by Paul Rabinow. Translated by Robert Hurley, 253–80. London: Penguin, 2000.

Judd, Donald. "Specific Objects." In *Art in Theory, 1900–1990*, edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, 809–13. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992.

Krauss, Rosalind. *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1999.

Laruelle, François. "Fragments of an Anti-Guattari." *Linguistic Capital*. Translated by Charles Wolfe. Accessed January 7, 2017. https://linguisticcapital.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/laruelle_fragments-of-an-anti-guattari.pdf.

—. *From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-standard Thought*. Translated by Robin Mackay. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012.

—. "'I, the Philosopher, am Lying': A Reply to Deleuze." Translated by Taylor Adkins, Ray Brassier, and Sid Littlefield. In *The Non-philosophy Project: Essays by François Laruelle*, edited by Gabriel Alkon and Boris Gunjević, 40–74. New York: Telos, 2012.

—. "A New Presentation of Non-philosophy." *Organisation Non-philosophique Internationale*. Accessed August 23, 2017. http://www.onphi.net/corpus/32/a-new-presentation-of-non-philosophy.

—. "Photo-Fiction, A Theoretical Installation." In *Photo-Fiction: A Non-standard Aesthetics*. Translated by Drew S. Burk, 11–24. Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2012.

—. "What Is Seen in a Photo?" In *The Concept of Non-photography*. Translated by Robin Mackay, 1–28. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011.

Lyotard, Jean-François. "Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their Experimentation: Contribution to an Idea of Postmodernity." Translated by Mária Minich Brewer and Daniel Brewer. In *The Lyotard Reader*, edited by Andrew Benjamin, 181–95. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Mackay, Robin. "Introduction: Laruelle Undivided." In *From Decision to Heresy: Experiments in Non-standard Thought*. Translated by Robin Mackay, 1–32. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012.

Malik, Suhail. *On the Necessity of Art's Exit from Contemporary Art*. Falmouth: Urbanomic, forthcoming.

McGettigan, Andrew. "Fabrication Defect: François Laruelle's Philosophical Materials." *Radical Philosophy*, no. 175 (September/October 2012): 33–42.

Metzinger, Thomas. *The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self*. New York: Basic Books, 2009.

Nauha, Tero. *Schizoproduction: Artistic Research and Performance in the Context of Immanent Capitalism*. Helsinki: University of the Arts, 2016.

Ó Maoilearca, John. *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

—, and Anthony Paul Smith. "Introduction: The Non-philosophical Inversion: Laruelle's Knowledge Without Domination." In *Laruelle and Non-philosophy*, edited by John Ó Maoilearca and Anthony Paul Smith, 1–18. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

O'Sullivan, Simon. "From Science Fiction to Science Fictioning: SF's Traction on the Real." *Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction 46.1*, no. 126 (2017): 74–84.

——, "Memories of a Deleuzian: To Think Is Always to Follow the Witches Flight." In *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, edited by Henry Somers-Hall, Jeff Bell, and James Williams, 172–88. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.

——. *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012.

Paul Smith, Anthony. *François Laruelle's "Principles of Non-philosophy": A Critical Introduction and Guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Schmid, Anne-Françoise. "The Madonna on the Craters of the Moon: An Aesthetic Epistemology." Accessed January 7, 2017. https://www.urbanomic.com/document/the-madonna-on-the-craters-of-the-moon-an-aesthetic-epistemology.

Smithson, Robert. "Entropy and the New Monuments (1966)." In *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, edited by Jack Flam, 10–23. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

——. "Strata: A Geophotographic Fiction." In *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, edited by Jack Flam, 75–77. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.

Srnicek, Nick. "Capitalism and the Non-philosophical Subject." In *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, edited by Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, 164–81. Melbourne: re.press, 2011.

Tilford, Keith. "Laruelle, Art and the Scientific Model." Accessed January 7, 2017. http://keithtilford.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Tilford_Keith.pdf.



BEYOND PLATO'S CAVE: ESCAPING FROM THE CITIES OF THE INTERIORITY

Justin Barton

In short, we think that one cannot write sufficiently in the name of an outside.
– Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*[1]

the laser light on the Republic blasts him.
His dust blows away on the wind.
– Angela Carter, *Black Venus*[2]

What are the primary features of the transcendental landscape of "dreamings"? Dreamings here are dreams about the future, fictions, dreams in sleep, the blocked dreams of religions, sexual fantasies, myths, and processes of dreaming up what has been taking place over the millennia in the human world. The question puts aside the issue of the empirical aspects of dreams and asks about that which wakes dreaming—that which is at a higher level of reality and which rouses the faculty in the direction of wakefulness, in the direction of it becoming fully focused.

Perhaps most importantly, there is a second sphere of action. A much calmer, quieter sphere where the planet comes to the foreground, where focused, lucid explorations replace anxious urgencies, and where women are also a much more foregrounded, fundamental presence. In this sphere the damaging—reality-blocking—insistences of language recede, fade away.

Secondly, there is a "body without organs" across or around the planet, comprising the human world and the worlds of the planet's other animal beings, and with an unknown full extent beyond, which is experienced—beyond precise knowledge—as including in the fullest sense the entire planet.[3] This body without organs variously consists of intent, feeling, love, lucidity,

anticipations, and memories, and it very clearly includes, within the human world, an oneirosphere, or world of dreamings. Within this oneirosphere, along with all forms of dreaming, are the religions, which are blocking modalities, in that, in insisting on one, deluded or damaged story, and in rejecting the outside in favour of the interiority, they function to prevent the waking of the faculty of dreaming, along with the waking of the faculties of lucidity and intent. Also within this oneirosphere are "hero" tales and "romance" tales, which in the vast majority of cases pre-eminently conduct toward entrapment within ordinary reality.

Thirdly, at the fundamental level humans are explorers of the transcendentally unknown, who as a result of deleterious circumstances have largely been trapped, going round and round like objects caught in an eddy, in a backwater of a river.

Fourthly, in the human world there is an ongoing disaster taking place, an ongoing disaster in relation to which it is necessary simply to walk away (and this includes walking away in the fullest sense from state wars), where this walk is an ultimate explorer-traveler task; it is an act that is evidently what is deeply needed for those around you, for yourself, for the whole embattled human world, and for the planet, with its species on the edge of extinction.

Fifthly, there is a current of impersonal intent that runs through the human world. It is a current of Love-and-Freedom, and it can also be seen as like a cairn path across a high range of mountains. Very little is known about this path, other than the fact that it is a functional, fundamental option (fundamental in that traveling it is a waking of who you are).

***

This transcendental terrain is a part of what is outside the cave of illusory appearances mis-described by Plato in the *Republic*, as opposed to the Platonic false outside, which is modeled on mathematics (the "forms" of numbers) and constructed out of a legalized, moralizing notion of "the good."[4]

As a representative of a kind of cult of reason, and therefore as an unwitting suppressor of lucidity, Plato takes a fundamental mode of escape and blocks the exit: he conducts people to his false exteriority and then states that artists should be banned from the Republic—artists often having a tendency to be aware, at some level, of the terrains of the transcendental.

Not only that; Plato then insidiously adopts the mode of the artist to tell a suppressive tale that states that humans are continually reincarnated, with fresh lives whose quality depends on how rational they were in the previous one: in this way he attacks the will to keep struggling toward the true outside. Plato in fact becomes a functionary of state power, with its concentration on transgressions and punishments (in the tale at the end of the *Republic* it is also revealed that people will be punished for their transgressions in the "afterlife" before their next incarnation[5]), and for which taking mathematics as a model of knowledge—the other aspect of the false outside—is an ideal suppressive outcome. In the actual outside the grim form of intent that can be named "desire to-stay-in-control" (or "desire-to-control") becomes visible within human social formations and individuals, and it is clear that the way forward is a form of intent that consists of *embodying love* and *embodying freedom*—a

process that has no intrinsic connection to adherence to the conformity-system of a state.

The ability to perceive intent (for instance, to perceive love in alliance with the lucidity that is inseparable from freedom; to perceive desire to stay in control) constitutes a fundamental aspect of what it is to be outside the cave of appearances (as opposed to the ability to see "Platonic forms"). And in this cave—which is to be seen as in part an effectuated Republic, the world in which we live—the artist is not banned but is to a great extent precluded from crossing a threshold in the direction of dreaming and lucidity, as is also the case with the philosopher. The artist is condemned to being "the artist"—the imaginative creator of enjoyable and sometimes thought-provoking productions—as opposed to being someone who is capable of seeing the wider nature of the world, and who as such is a thinker at the highest level of thought. And the philosopher (who comes to be multiplied into also being the figure of the scientist and the social thinker) is condemned to being a practitioner of a reason-fixated philosophy/social thought/science, which is constructed as the only true form of thought about the world: in the in-between of these two entrapment zones (an in-between which in fact is a view toward—and an encounter with—the Outside), everything within the cave will be either misconstructed or will be dismissed as a not "legitimate" form of thought.

***

For this essay, and also in a fundamental sense, the second sphere of action is the starting point. It is a generally unnoticed terrain that is right in front of our lives: it is the world

as it is encountered when a sustainable walk into the outside of ordinary reality has begun; when becomings have become the deliberate principle of being.

A further orienting point that can be made (before addressing questions about forms of expression within language) is that over the last 160 years there has been a change, and in a limited but pervasive way the second sphere of action is now a focus of attention to a far greater degree than it had for a long time been. Its depopulated planetary expanses and foregrounded female aspect are figured in different ways (and to different degrees of distortion) in works of many kinds. The openings of the chapters in *The Waves*, Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Louis Malle's film *Black Moon*—all of these in different ways attest to the impact of the second sphere of action.[6] And in fact it is possible to discern a point where a kind of "break" occurs—where this second sphere suddenly starts to go distortedly into effect in striking, singular tales, which in some cases are erroneously construed as pre-eminently for children: Poe's story "Eleonora," Rosetti's *Goblin Market* (which leaves behind older supernatural and arcadian eerie-sublime registers in that the goblins and the fruit they offer are a sensualist figuring of lustful sexuality), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, and George MacDonald's *Phantastes*.[7] After this the process continues, and it develops in modalities that range across an extraordinary spectrum of fiction and philosophy: Ursula and Ralph's visit to the well in Morris's *The Well at the World's End*; many of the most intense aspects of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* (as with Ursula and the horses); Ballard's novel *The Day of Creation*; Carlos Castaneda's *The Eagle's Gift*; Florinda Donner's *Being-in-Dreaming*; the

anime series *Moribito*; a central, crucial section of Stephen Donaldson's *The Illearth War*; John Foxx's story "The Quiet Man" (along with many others).[8]

Sadly, the (modernist) break involved is not to be seen as pertaining to an envisaged millennia-long process of human improvement (or "progress"). Instead, it is more that dreaming (together with its deeply related faculty of lucidity) has been forced back by the ongoing rise of reason—a rationality that is deeply in alliance with religion—to the point where, in a sense, it has had to start again. Modernism is the awareness that something very intense and very anomalous has been taking place in the distant past (as with the modernism of Fraser's *The Golden Bough*[9]); and a fully woken modernism is an awareness that a higher level of human existence has been in effect. But this specific process of starting again does not make modernism something unprecedented. It is valuable to point out that, for instance, the *Tao Te Ching* is a modernist text, in that in quietly critiquing the religions of its time, it simultaneously looks back into the past and says,

> Ancient masters of Way
> [...]
> they were deep beyond knowing,
> [...]
> perfectly reserved, as if guests,
> perfectly expansive, as if ice melting away,
> [...]
> perfectly simple, as if uncarved wood
> perfectly empty, as if open valleys ...[10]

EVERYTHING HERE IS THEREFORE AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF WHAT IS THE WIDER AND DEEPER NATURE OF THE WORLD, BEYOND THE LEVEL OF APPEARANCES

This attribute of looking back into the ancient past and finding a mode of existence more lucid and alive than the pervasive forms of current, ordinary reality, reveals the *Tao Te Ching* to be a modernist text in relation to historical time (furthermore, it is modernist both because of the fundamental importance it gives to women and to becoming-woman, and also because of the flexibility of form it manifests in consisting of "micro-plateaus," or tiny, densely charged sections, with a powerful plane of consistent, abstract focus across these sections, but with no conventional narrative or thematic development).

***

Within this domain of dreaming and lucidity, writing can take the form of powerful abstractions, with only an ultra-minimal implied narrative (*Tao Te Ching*); it can take the form of philosophy with an overarching narrative and a centrality of dialogue (Donner's *Being-in-Dreaming*); it can take the form of philosophy with a historical narrative and with additional stories embedded within the zones of nonnarrative abstraction (Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*), and it can take the form of what we call "fiction." The only issue that really matters is that in all cases these are maps of the transcendental. Lucidity here tends toward the aformally axiomatic (or, put another way, toward interrelated "outsights" expressed by abstractions), and dreaming tends toward enigmatic narratives and descriptions of anomalous spaces, but the terrains of the transcendental being mapped are the same.

Everything here is therefore an answer to the question of what is the wider and deeper nature of the world, beyond the level of appearances. And the writer of fiction comes into focus as

someone who can experience—and can set out to reach—perturbing and mind-waking intense visions of the transcendental, and of the empirical in its relation to the transcendental. The true value of the figure of the artist becomes visible, although only at a point where a higher and inseparable value is also brought into focus: that of the figure who travels into the transcendentally unknown. It will be noticed that this is not to oppose art to philosophy: art and philosophy are two different ways of producing maps. It is to say that what is most vital—for everyone—is to journey into the unknown, and that the making of maps is a secondary process, which may or may not happen, depending on the circumstances.

Fiction is a process of oneiric seeing, or oneiric perception. Kant's extremely damaging concept of "genius" has here been left behind—it is a concept that denies that artistic production has any fundamental connection to knowledge about the wider and deeper nature of the world, constructing it instead as "flights of imagination."[11] With this concept the artist is left as a pet of the status quo—with its religion and fixated or constrained faculty of reason—as opposed to being someone who critiques these, as a secondary aspect of a process of seeing what is really taking place in the world. Apparently represented positively by the language of aesthetics, and by the idea of genius, the artist is in fact turned into an entertainer of the bourgeoisie. Plato's idea is to get rid of the artists; Kant's is to domesticate them with a representation that keeps them separate from the domain of knowledge.

***

It is possible to move forward by exploring two "tales" that

in different ways evince the second sphere of action: Angela Carter's story "The Erl-King," and the film *The Swimmer*, based on John Cheever's story and adapted by Eleanor Perry and Frank Perry.[12]

"The Erl-King" begins with a movement into an exteriority, in that it starts with a young woman walking into a place that is described as "the woods." And the very first term of the story is lucidity ("The lucidity, the clarity of the light"[13]) so that, because acquiring lucidity is coming to grasp what previously was unknown, from the outset this tale indicates that these are not ordinary woods. As lucidity wakes, an awareness arrives that everything must be seen as a formation within (and part of) a kind of planetary ocean—the beginnings also of an awareness of the depopulated, planetary expanses of the second sphere of action.

However, the transcendental has many different directions, and although the story starts by invoking what can be called transcendental south—although it opens up a faint awareness of the second sphere of action and always maintains this awareness—it is perhaps best described as a movement into an exteriority where a zone of awakening is far more than offset by a process of diminishment. The story is going toward ultra-intense erotic sex—the young woman will have a relationship with an exceptionally sensual and enigmatically "masterful" male (who is sometimes described as if he were female), where this relationship will not in any way fundamentally consist of love.

And the planetary expansiveness of the topographical outside will be in continual tension, in the story, with the direction of a "corrosive" eroticism.[14] Female abandon toward a male dominatory

figure has nothing to do with the second sphere of action—and it is worth noticing how the charged erotic captivation of the woman from the very beginning secretes interiorities, darkly transmuting the woodland as a whole into a system of interior zones, and into a claustrophobic place of entrapment (the expansiveness of the planetary is kept, therefore, at an almost claustrophobically minimal level). The following is all from within the first page and a half of the story:

> The woods enclose. You step between the first trees and then you are no longer in the open air; the wood swallows you up. There is no way through the wood any more, this wood has reverted to its original privacy. Once you are inside it, you must stay there until it lets you out again for there is no clue to guide you through in perfect safety; grass grew over the track years ago and now the rabbits and the foxes make their own runs in the subtle labyrinth and nobody comes. The trees stir with a noise like taffeta skirts of women who have lost themselves in the woods and hunt round hopelessly for the way out. [...]
>
> The woods enclose and then enclose again, like a system of Chinese boxes opening one into another [...]
>
> The two notes of the song of a bird [in fact, these are notes being played on a flute by the Erl-King] rose on the still air, as if my girlish and delicious loneliness had been made into a sound.[15]

The opening clause of the story's first sentence—"The lucidity, the clarity of the light that afternoon was sufficient to itself"[16]—has already indicated something fundamental: the lucidity that the woman encounters is not expansive. On the

contrary, it reaches out—to enter into becoming with her "girlish and delicious loneliness"—only in order to capture her.

This is a gothic story, and therefore relates to transcendental north. The gothic involves elements within the outside of ordinary reality that, in terms of their own intent, do not wake you up: instead they make you fall even more deeply asleep. However, if their intent is perceived (instead of the individual being affected by it, without understanding it) through maintaining an awareness of transcendental south, and looking to transcendental north only as a secondary, minimal process, then seeing these elements for what they are will provide a jolt that can only take the form of an impetus to get away toward the opposite direction, toward transcendental south (love, freedom, lucidity).

It is gothic, but it is not a gothic story in the form that implicitly or explicitly revolves around an idea of "evil." The male figure whom the young woman meets in the wood is described as "innocent"—it is just that in some way he has been fundamentally trapped and has become a deadly force.

Women very recurrently have an extraordinary ability for letting go toward the outside, only they are contingently *set up*—by forces that are extrinsic to them, and which can be overcome—to let go toward the outside in the wrong direction. The complete system (or pervasively instilled form of being) is that women are induced to abandon themselves toward a man who has learned arts of domination/seduction, and acquire a temporary, intense power through doing this (there is in fact nothing more powerful than abandon), and men let go, in a minimal sense, toward the

arts of domination, acquiring a power of control and a boost from contact with the rapture of the woman, where the male control-power eventually expresses itself in the woman as a disheartening process of being diminutized (the women whom the Erl-King has seduced in the past have been turned into birds, which he keeps in cages). It should be added that there is also a fundamental sense in which male and female for this system relate to gender roles, not to biological gender, and—furthermore that in the initial case both individuals consist of both female and male, in that the man has a virtual-real woman within him (what he envisages the woman is feeling, imagining, and so on), and the woman has within her a virtual-real man (among other things, what she envisages the man would like her to do).

> **Now [...] when the cold darkness settles down, I always go to the Erl-King and he lays me down on his bed of rustling straw where I lie at the mercy of his huge hands.**
>
> **He is the tender butcher who showed me how the price of flesh is love; skin the rabbit, he says! Off come all my clothes. [...]**
>
> **He strips me to my last nakedness [...] then dresses me again in an embrace so lucid and encompassing it might be made of water. And shakes over me dead leaves as if into the stream I have become. [...]**
>
> **The candle flutters and goes out. His touch both consoles and devastates me; I feel my heart pulse, then wither, naked as a stone on the roaring mattress while the lovely, moony night slides through the window to dapple the flanks of this innocent who makes cages to keep the sweet birds in. Eat me, drink me; thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden, I go back and back to him to have his fingers strip the tattered**

> skin away and clothe me in his dress of water, this garment that drenches me, its slithering odour, its capacity for drowning.[17]

When at the end of the story the woman kills the Erl-King, it feels both as if what is in question is something darkly parasitic, though innocent, which is preying upon human worlds of love and sensuality, and as if Carter is pointing out the extreme danger of male figures who have woken their lucidity to a minimal degree but who use it for the purposes of power, refusing indulgently to go any further into the outside of ordinary reality.

***

In the 1968 film *The Swimmer* the second sphere of action is faintly figured by the woodlands and green fields that extend between the swimming pools of the man who has decided to "swim home" along what he names "the Lucinda River," Lucinda being the name of his wife. Or to be precise, it is figured by the terrain and the planetary expanses conjured in the mind of the protagonist, and collectively by Lucinda, the man's daughters (whom he believes to be at home "playing tennis"), and the women with whom he has amorous encounters on the journey.

The Erl-King is a figure of grotesque stability: all the indications are that nothing will happen to him other than the continuation of his life as a seducer, followed eventually by death. The "Swimmer," Ned Merill, in contrast, is on the move, which at depth concerns the fact that to a great extent he has love for those he meets, and has the openness and sincerity (and vulnerability) of someone who takes leaps as a result of having begun to fall in love. The Swimmer moves forward, and leaps,

and improvises new actions—and he does so in ways that can lead to disaster, as opposed to them having the stability of an instinctive cunning that never risks anything. And the pervasive *surface* tone of his actions is a genuine love for those women whom he encounters and with whom he becomes enamored.

However, all of this is taking place because Merill has a complex, libidinally modulated amnesia. The amnesia is genuine, but what drives one aspect of it is fear (in relation to what actually awaits him at what used to be his home), and the other aspect is driven by a deep current of desire to seduce that runs beneath the love. His amnesia is in fact an insanity in the form of a series of sexually charged episodes of starting-to-fall-in-love. The insanity lies in the fact that he sees his journey as a lover's homage to his wife (he is swimming along the Lucinda river), and yet the things he does, if she *were* still at the house and if they were reported to her, could only give her pain. It could be argued that at each stage his view is that he is taking up the cause of a world without jealous resentment ("There's so little love in the world," he says[18]), but this view is the cover story of the Erl-King in this manifestation, the cover story that *he believes*. As a cover story it functions as a component of a machine for self-indulgence and seduction, and its falseness lies in the fact that it does not respond to actual circumstances, and overall generates misery and the extreme diminutizing of women—a diminutizing that is a kind of collapsed and potentially suicidal disheartenment.

It is, of course, Ned Merill's life that has collapsed. But the only new and complete amnesia is in relation to his marriage having ended: one is left in no doubt that the other form of "forgetting" is just different in degree to his previous life,

during which he had the "mistress" whom he meets again toward the end of the film. Both "The Erl-King" and *The Swimmer* show an aspect of a fundamental blocking process that keeps people going round and round in circles (or worse, destroys them). Ned Merrill is like a ghost, a figure whose love can now go nowhere (because it never really knew how to go forward in the first place) and who blindly haunts the scene of his destruction.

Ultimately, however, this bleak aspect is merely an element of an outsight that hovers on the edge of becoming focused in the film: a state of being *in love* that is profoundly informed by sexuality is what all along we are, a state of romantic concupiscence is what we are not. Unless sexuality is swept away *within* love we will instead be swept in a direction that is not transcendental south: "the price of flesh is love."

***

The dreamy, solar trance expanses of *The Swimmer* not only figure the second sphere of action: a faint view is even given of the current of Love-and-Freedom, in the form of the idea of the Lucinda River. But it should be said that the film does not get nearly as far, in either of these ways, as Joan Lindsay's book *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (published the year before, in 1967), or the 1975 film of Lindsay's novel.[19] This book and its screen adaptation easily become reference points for some of the most intense things that were taking place in fiction and philosophy around this time (in this "dreaming" a group of women go into a wilderness in a movement of profound intensification, and disappear, having apparently crossed a threshold leading out of entrapment within ordinary reality).

The current of Love-and-Freedom is also glimpsed, for instance, in J. G. Ballard's *The Day of Creation*: a river appears in an African desert, and a man who sails a boat up it is accompanied by a mysterious girl called Noon (noon, it should be added, is the time when the clocks stop in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*). The source of the water eventually dries up, but at the point where the source is found, Noon (who now has transmuted into an older woman) runs on ahead and permanently disappears (like the three women in Lindsay's story), so that it is her movement forward that figures the secret path of escape: the current of Love-and-Freedom.

It would evidently have been possible to start from *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, as opposed to "The Erl-King" and *The Swimmer*, but it is important to see the intensity of the act of "leaving behind" that needs to take place, and it is even more important to take something that has been detached from what has to be left behind (that is, to take the state of being *in love*) and place it, for a moment, into the perspective of the planetary aspect of Joan Lindsay's story.

***

Everything here concerns openness, and primarily—as Joan Lindsay brilliantly understands—a multi-sense openness toward the planet that surrounds us. Here the fundamental relationship of intensification is between the individual and the planet.

And a full relationship of openness to the planet also involves a fundamental openness to women. The issue here is not connected to the idea of women being "closer to nature": this idea is a figment of the cult of reason, which constructs the male as possessing

reason to a greater extent and reason as something outside nature, whereas, on the contrary, everything is nature, and women have just as much rationality as men. In fact, the reason cult has both blocked off and reversed the truth: an intensified openness to the planet leads to women coming into the foreground because they have an "edge." Women are almost always at a higher initial level of intensity than men in relation to lucidity and dreaming (as well as in relation to a fundamental brightness of their intent), though this higher level of intensity is predominantly kept suppressed, functioning as only a nascent domain of abilities. This difference between women and men is not an essential one; it concerns a contingent, milieu-created initial state, and individuals are capable of eventually going beyond the entirety of this initial set of extrinsic circumstances, but it is this difference that leads Deleuze and Guattari to state that "all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman. It is the key to all the other becomings."[20] For both men and women the departure toward transcendental south therefore involves both a fundamental deepening of the connection with women, and an arrival of a relationship of being *taught by women* at the level of the transcendental. This is a primary aspect of the explanation for women being in the foreground in the second sphere of action. There is a kind of "click," and you are surrounded by empty, sunlit expanses of the planet (with which you are now in love), and simultaneously you have both an intensified love for women (a state of being in love that is simultaneously a becoming-woman) and an inseparable awareness that any movement forward will be a movement toward women becoming your teachers.

***

The philosophy of transformational relationships involved here (the "non-sedentary" or explorer-traveler philosophy of "becomings") is at work in Deleuze's 1968 book *Difference and Repetition*, although it reaches its high point in 1980 with Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, with this process of development having been profoundly assisted by the works of Carlos Castaneda.

(There is no grand story of upward human progress that can be told, but there are Events that can be discerned, Events that take place on a wide level—though they are also extremely localized in terms of their primary zones—and that take the form of processes of escape from ordinary reality which are partly expressed as the production of maps and diagrams: and in this case these productions are as disparate as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Difference and Repetition*.)

The books of Castaneda—the first of which was also published in 1968—are of central importance here because they figure the second sphere of action. This part of the process of his writing reaches a kind of culmination—one where what is in question becomes explicit—in the 1982 book *The Eagle's Gift*. And yet it needs to be said immediately that the highest level of all in this space of the abstract-real is reached in the writings of Taisha Abelar and of Florinda Donner, in particular Donner's book *Being-in-Dreaming*, published in 1992. The books consist of exceptionally valuable systems of outsights and pragmatic descriptions, where these are expressed both through abstractions and through the spaces and events of narratives. And in these books there is a house surrounded by a few trees, and by a large expanse of Mexican desert, and in the eerie-

sublime planetary "emptiness" it is women who are emphatically in the foreground.

***

Religions tell us that there are immortal beings or divine instances looking after us, and that our "soul" is also an immortal being; and they tell us that the bodily world is an illusion or a distraction, taken in comparison with interiority (sometimes it is said that the physical world will eventually be destroyed, but in any case, the true path is that of the interiority). Therefore, in different ways, and for different phases of life, religions tell of what is wrong with people, and of what they themselves want to hear: everything is under control; the way forward is easy, and is not about the body.

Reason, on the other hand, concentrates attention primarily on the zones of intellectual engagement of mathematics and of science. This is reason cut off from its higher-level counterpart, lucidity. And furthermore it is reason fixated on a grimly attenuated domain of zones of engagement.

Given that some individuals will decide that only ordinary uses of reason (as opposed, in this context, to uses found in conventional or conformist philosophy) are in fact making sense, it is correct to say that we are left with either a mockery of the transcendental, or with nothing at all. But the deeper truth is that generally religion never really goes away, in that, in fact, reason and religion form a system that takes up attention in ways that preclude the waking of the faculties of lucidity and dreaming, and which has a systemic point of interrelation between

the two "sides" in the form of collapsed, conventional modes of philosophy that endorse the views of religion. Plato, Kant, and Hegel are all examples of endorsement-conjoinings of this kind, and Buddhism as a whole is a zone of interconnection, in that it is part religion and part conformist philosophy of interiority. The whole reason-and-religion system has also more recently produced a new institution in the form of psychoanalysis, which falls on the side of reason but which, in the form of Jungian writings, has its own point of interconnection with religion.

***

Somehow, he has climbed down from out of the cities. Where at last they come to an end they form a cliff-like wall a thousand feet high. City of fixated reason, city of secretly conformist fiction, city of romance-concupiscence, city of religion, city of dogmatic scientificity, city of psychoanalysis. From this vantage, several miles to the south, they are a wide greyness stretched from east to west, an intricate turning-inward that allows only a few, very high apertures on this side, in order to let in energy.

He keeps walking, through an area of small hills and trees. The hills have curves reminiscent of seashells, and the trees radiate vitality. Here and there, running across the ground and through the air there are tiny lines of colored energy, oriented mostly from north to south. Often, in the tumbled terrains of hills—whose horizon lines sometimes have a sublime quality—there are overgrown chunks of rusting equipment that look like decaying fragments of future space stations. Somehow these technological relics just add to the arcadian splendor of the terrain, but he does not allow his attention to remain on them for long. And for a

BUT HE DOES
NOT ALLOW
HIS ATTENTION
TO REMAIN ON
THEM FOR LONG

different, more positive reason he also does not concentrate for long on the energy lines.

He reaches the top of a slightly higher hill, and beyond this the horizon is entirely different and will not completely come into focus. In the far distance there is a range of what could be hills or mountains, but which keeps looking as if it is something seen across the width of a galaxy. After coming down a steep slope he reaches a broad area of grass, which has a quality of being clasped by the curved rises of low hills on either side. On the way down the slope the area beyond it had looked like a misty drop into light years of outer space, filled with the substance of the planetary aurora, with faint violet as the primary tone of this deep pool of plasma. But now it is bright sunlight again, and in the far distance—through a haze—there are forested mountains.

A woman is coming toward him, across the grass. She has short, dark hair and is wearing a white tunic dress, tied at the waist, and loose-fitting white trousers. As she comes closer he sees she has an attractive, feminine face and that she is looking at him with shining, very intelligent eyes.

And now he remembers when he was living in Swansea, aged twenty-four, and was studying semi-officially at the university, in the sense that he was attending lectures with the consent of tutors in the philosophy department. One day at the university he had dreamed up a story about a man who was recurrently visited—and helped—by a woman from the future. And he had decided that it would be good to set out to envisage what a woman from the future might be like, on the basis that this figure—or other self—might give actual, valuable perspectives on situations; and also with

the faint, unbelieved idea that it was possible such a figure might in some sense turn out to be real. The name that came to him for the woman he had imagined was Barik, and the woman who was now standing in front of him reminded him of this early, anomalous exploration.

As the woman stops ten feet in front of him he sees that they are standing at the top of a park which is alongside Swansea university.

"Barik," he says, smiling, feeling the inadequacy of this greeting.

The woman nods, laughter playing in her eyes.

"It's a good name for me," she says. "But what has really happened is that at that time in Swansea you started a process of calling out—and in the end it was me who started to visit you."

The woman is peering at him, or peering *into* him.

"This is what you know already, but I will summarize it for you," she says, smiling. When she speaks again, she speaks with care, and gives him the impression that now her eyes have been prompted toward a space of the abstract that has nothing to do with any thoughts he has had, as if she has chosen his range of words and is now looking elsewhere to see how to apply them.

"Dreams are the most powerful things we know. This fact is obscured, because generally the faculty of dreaming is kept asleep. This explains why dreams in sleep are mostly fear-induced

nonsense, and why most fantasies are disguised or explicit concupiscence.

"Dreaming, when woken, sees the wider and deeper nature of the world, and the dreams of a woken faculty of dreaming dream the future into existence. And these dreams also beckon toward beings who in different ways are at high levels of intensity. Without this process of waking we are condemned to move into a future that is being dreamed by something very unpleasant, a bleak force of control that pretends both to be something sublime, and to be nothing at all."

"You need to reach a town," she adds, "which is partly to say that you need to dream the places of those who have escaped from the cities."

And then for a moment the woman is Angela Carter. Angela Carter as she was in the final years before her death.

He knows with certainty that the woman is drawing upon the planet's memory of Angela Carter, and that this includes the memory of the entirety of her death, but remembered from within, as well as from outside. In meeting her eyes—the eyes of Angela Carter—he encounters a piercing warmth, a sparkling, lucid affection whose sobriety slams into him and makes him aware of all the ways in which he is still self-indulgent. She is there, and then she is gone—a memory woken for a moment, charged with finitude.

And then the woman from the future is standing in front of him naked, clothed only in Angela Carter's death. She is exceptionally

attractive, and he knows—at the same time as feeling utterly drawn toward her—that she is not human, and that, as was true for Angela Carter, she will eventually die and become just a fading memory. He also feels that she is appalled at the thought of spending any part of her life imprisoned within a deadened form of reality.

Then she is in her clothes again, and she turns round and sets off down the hill, angling across the park to the right. Over to the east there is something he cannot see from where he is standing, but his attention is drawn to the place involved: he is aware that standing up a little from the sea by a post-industrial promontory zone—an area that is beyond the edge of the city—there are the fluorescently translucent architectures of a hidden citadel of inorganic beings, most of whose extent is either in the sea or is spread through the rock-terrains beneath it. When he pulls his attention back to the park, the woman has gone. He looks up into the sky in the direction in which she left: southwest, by south.

The town is there, in that direction. The town, the valley: the place he has to reach. He hears a woman laughingly shouting out with joy, and then her shout breaks up, dissipates into the sunlight.

Endnotes

1 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone, 1988), 23.

2 Angela Carter, "The Cabinet of Edgar Allen Poe," in *Black Venus* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1985), 62.

3 The term "body without organs" comes originally from Antonin Artaud, but it is used here in a sense which, at depth, is the same as the way in which it is used by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

4 Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 204–9.

5 Ibid., 371–79.

6 Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Joan Lindsay *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (London: Vintage, 2013); Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Louis Malle, dir., *Black Moon* (London: Cinema International Corporation, 1975).

7 Edgar Allen Poe, "Eleonora," in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2003), 194–200; Christina Rosetti, *The Goblin Market* (London: Penguin, 2015); Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London: W. W. Norton, 1992); Lewis Carroll, *Alice through the Looking-Glass* (London: Walker Books, 2005); George MacDonald, *Phantastes* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000).

8 William Morris, *The Well at the World's End*, 2 vols. (New York: Ballantine, 1970); D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (London: Vintage, 2011); D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (London: Penguin, 1973); J. G. Ballard, *The Day of Creation* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1987); Carlos Castaneda, *The Eagle's Gift* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981); Florinda Donner, *Being-in-Dreaming* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); Kamiyama Kenji, dir., *Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit* (Chepstow: MVM Entertainment, 2011); Stephen Donaldson, *The Illearth War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978); John Foxx, "The Quiet Man," on *The Quiet Man* (Metamatic, 2010), CD.

9 James George Fraser, *The Golden Bough* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

10 Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. David Hinton (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2000), 17.

11 See especially Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 136–46.

12 Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (London: Penguin Random House, 1979), 96–104; Eleanor Perry and Frank Perry, dir., *The Swimmer* (London: Colombia Tristar, 2003); John Cheever, "The Swimmer," in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage, 2010), 776–88.

13 Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*, 96.

14 Ibid., 104.

15 Ibid., 96–97.

16 Ibid., 96.

17 Ibid., 100–102.

18 Eleanor Perry and Frank Perry, *The Swimmer*, scene 13.

19 Lindsay, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

20 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 277.

Bibliography

Ballard, J. G. *The Day of Creation*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1987.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* [1865]. London: W. W. Norton, 1992.

——. *Alice through the Looking-Glass* [1871]. London: Walker Books, 2005.

Carter, Angela. "The Cabinet of Edgar Allen Poe." In *Black Venus*, 32–42. London: Chatto and Windus, 1985.

——. "The Erl-King." In *The Bloody Chamber*, 96–104. London: Penguin Random House, 1979.

Castaneda, Carlos. *The Eagle's Gift*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981.

Cheever, John. "The Swimmer" [1964]. In *Collected Stories*, 776–88. London: Vintage, 2010.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

——, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Translated by Brian Massumi. London: Athlone, 1988.

Donaldson, Stephen. *The Illearth War*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

Donner, Florinda. *Being-in-Dreaming*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

Fraser, James George. *The Golden Bough* [1890]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*. Translated by James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Lao Tzu. *Tao Te Ching*. Translated by David Hinton. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2000.

Lawrence, D. H. *The Rainbow* [1915]. London: Vintage, 2011.

——. *Women in Love* [1920]. London: Penguin, 1973.

Lindsay, Joan. *Picnic at Hanging Rock* [1967]. London: Vintage, 2013.

MacDonald, George. *Phantastes* [1858]. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000.

Morris, William. *The Well at the World's End* [1896]. 2 vols. New York, NY: Ballantine, 1970.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Translated by Adrian Del Caro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Plato. *The Republic*. Translated by Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Poe, Edgar Allen. "Eleonora" [1842]. In *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Writings*, 194–200. London: Penguin, 2003.

Rosetti, Christina. *The Goblin Market* [1862]. London: Penguin, 2015.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Waves* [1931]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Discography

Foxx, John. "The Quiet Man."
On *The Quiet Man* (CD).
Metamatic, 2010.

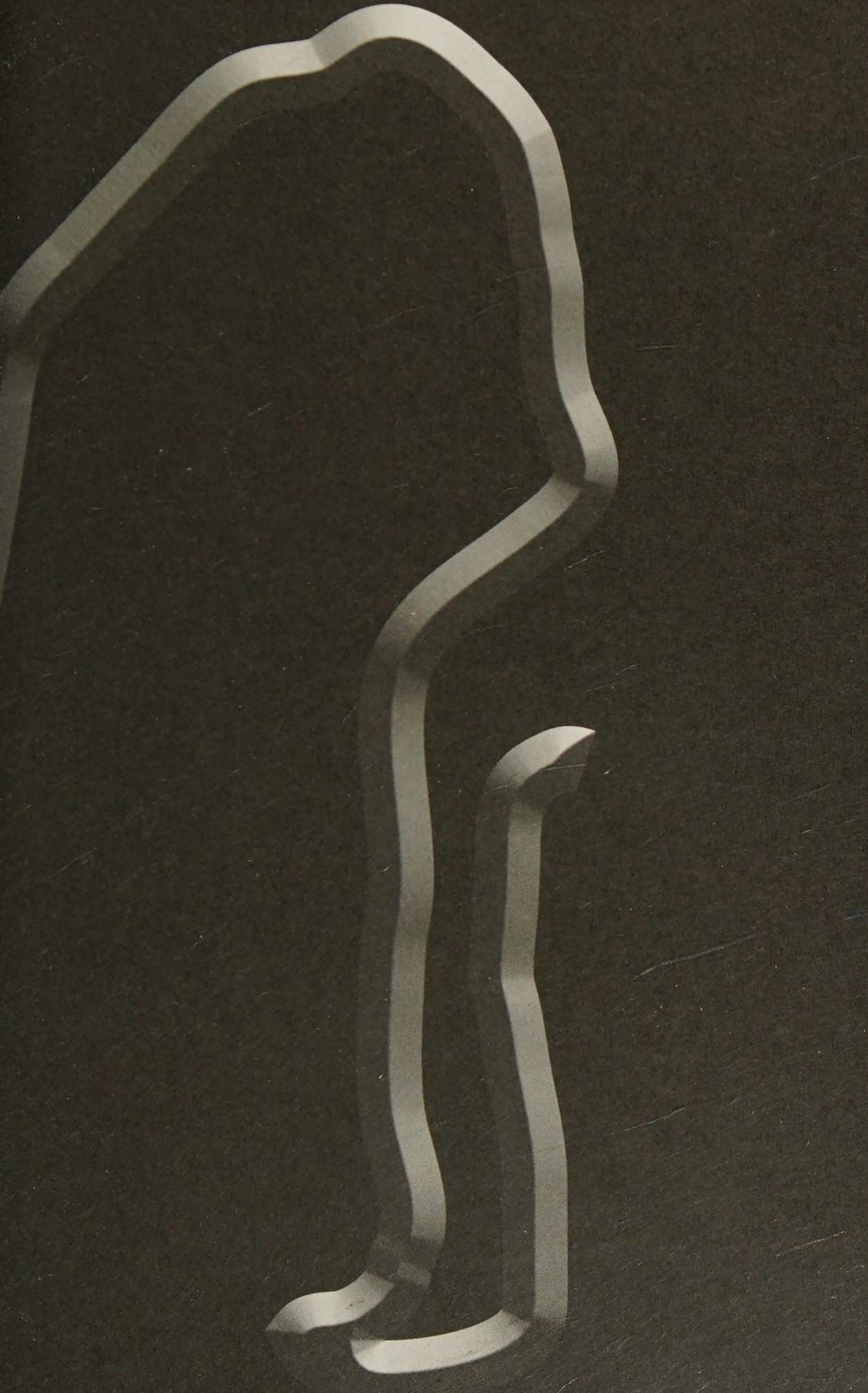
Filmography

Kamiyama, Kenji, dir. *Moribito: Guardian of the Spirit* [2007].
Chepstow: MVM Entertainment,
2011. DVD.

Malle, Louis, dir. *Black Moon*.
London: Cinema International
Corporation, 1975.

Perry, Eleanor, and Frank
Perry, dir. *The Swimmer* [1968].
London: Colombia Tristar,
2003. DVD.

Weir, Peter, dir. *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Sydney:
Australian Film Commission,
1975.



Acknowledgments

This book emerged from the "Fiction as Method" conference organized by the editors, which took place at Goldsmiths, University of London, on October 17, 2015.

We are grateful to the invited speakers—both for their presentations on the day and their enthusiastic responses to the idea of this publication—and to the audience who made the conference a success, collaborating in dialogue that has invisibly inscribed itself within the pages of this book. We thank Goldsmiths Graduate School, the Department of Visual Cultures, and Centre for Cultural Studies for their support of the conference. Thanks also go to Andrea Phillips, Matt Atkinson, Nicole Sansone, and Dinam Sbardelott for their help on the day.

As for the book itself, Aimee Selby deserves a special mention for her scrupulous copyediting, as does Keith Dodds for his fine job on design. We would also like to thank Max Bach at Sternberg Press, who expressed support for a book that takes formal risks where other academic publishers might have shied away.

Finally, a heartfelt word of appreciation is reserved for Professor Simon O'Sullivan, who has made Goldsmiths a fecund environment for all manner of fictions.

Contributors

Justin Barton is a philosopher and writer. He is the author of *Hidden Valleys* (Zero Books, 2015), and is currently completing a book called *Explorations of the Abstract*. With Mark Fisher he made the audio-essays *londonunderlondon* (2005) and *On Vanishing Land* (2013). He once spent two years living in a tent in woodlands around London while working at a college in Covent Garden, and he has traveled to rarely visited places such as Tuva and the forests of northwest Patagonia.

Delphi Carstens is a lecturer at the University of the Western Cape. He holds a PhD from Stellenbosch University. His research interests and publications include the Anthropocene, Deleuzoguattarian pedagogy, uncanny science fictions, and sorcerous new materialisms. Recent publications include chapters in forthcoming edited volumes from Palgrave (*Indigenous Creatures, Native Knowledges, and the Arts*) and Bloomsbury (*Socially Just Pedagogies in Higher Education: Critical Posthumanist and New Feminist Materialist Perspectives*) as well as articles in *SAJHE* vol. 30, no. 3, and *Education as Change*, vol. 21, no. 2.

Tim Etchells is an artist and a writer based in the UK whose work shifts between performance, visual art, and fiction. He has worked in a wide variety of contexts, notably as the leader of the world-renowned Sheffield-based performance group Forced Entertainment. Exhibiting and presenting work in significant institutions all over the world, he is currently Professor of Performance & Writing at Lancaster University. Etchells's work has been shown recently at Tate Modern, Cubitt, Hayward Gallery, and Bloomberg SPACE in London, at Turner Contemporary, The Grundy, and Compton Verney in the UK, at Kunstverein Braunschweig, Kunsthalle Mainz, Witte de With in Rotterdam, and M HKA in Antwerp. Etchells has published

a novel, *The Broken World* (Heinemann, 2008), and a short fiction collection, *England Stories* (Pulp Books, 1998). His monograph on contemporary performance and Forced Entertainment, *Certain Fragments* (Routledge, 1999) is widely acclaimed. His recent publications include *Vacuum Days* (Storythings, 2012) and *While You Are With Us Here Tonight* (LADA, 2013).

Matthew Fuller is the author of *How to Be a Geek: Essays on the Culture of Software* (Polity Press, 2017). Other titles include *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture* (MIT Press, 2007); *Behind the Blip: Essays on the Culture of Software* (Autonomedia, 2003); and the novel *Elephant & Castle* (Autonomedia, 2012). With Andrew Goffey he is coauthor of *Evil Media* (MIT Press, 2012). *How to Sleep: The Art, Biology, and Culture* of Unconsciousness (Bloomsbury) is to be published in 2018. He has worked in and with artists groups such as I/O/D, Mongrel, and YoHa. Fuller is editor of books including *Software Studies: A Lexicon* (MIT Press, 2008), and is a coeditor of the journal *Computational Culture* (http://www.computationalculture.net). He is Professor of Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London.

David Garcia is Professor of Digital Arts & Media Activism at Bournemouth University where he is researching the relationship between art, experimental media, and radical politics. He is currently coediting an *Anthology of Tactical Media* for MIT Press and organized a number of related events in Liverpool, Basel, and Amsterdam between 2016-17. He has an extensive background as a curator, educator, and researcher with a track record of founding media arts organisations, curating large-scale media arts festivals, and directing influential European research programs. Collectively these projects have made a significant contribution to the development of the media arts and media arts research in higher education. In 2011 he became dean of the Graduate School

for Camberwell, Chelsea, and Wimbledon responsible for the research and postgraduate culture of the three colleges. In 2012 the *Tactical Media Files*, which he cofounded, was awarded the Best Practice Award by the Dutch national sector institute for e-culture (http://virtueelplatform.nl/best-practice/tactical-media-files/).

Dora García is a Barcelona-based artist and researcher whose work concerns the parameters and conventions of the presentation of art, questions of time—both real and fictional—and the boundaries between representation and reality. She uses various supports to generate contexts in which the traditional system of communication—transmitter, message, recipient—is altered, thus modifying the traditional relationship between artist, work, and public. In 2011 she represented Spain at the Venice Biennale with *The Inadequate*, and her work was presented at the Venice Biennales of 2013 (collateral events) and 2015 (international exhibition). She participated in Skulptur Projekte Münster in 2007 and in dOCUMENTA (13) in 2012. She has taken part in other international events including the Istanbul Biennale (2003), Sydney Biennale (2008), Biennale de Lyon (2009), Bergen Triennial (2013), and Gwangju Biennial (2016). Dora García is currently teaching at Oslo National Academy of the Arts, Head - Genève, and PEI Barcelona. She codirects Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Paris.

M. John Harrison's reviews, short fiction, and nonfiction have appeared in a range of venues including the *Guardian*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Time Out*, *Arc Magazine*, and the *New York Times*. His novel *In Viriconium* was nominated for the Guardian Fiction Prize, 1982. *Climbers* won the Boardman Tasker Prize for Mountain Literature, 1989. *Light* shared the James Tiptree Memorial Award, 2003 (with John Kessel's

Stories for Men). *Nova Swing* won the Arthur C. Clarke Award, 2007, and the Philip K. Dick Award, 2008. He is currently working on a novel, and *You Should Come With Me Now* (Comma Press, 2017), a new collection of short stories, is out later this year.
https://ambientehotel.wordpress.com/

Simon O'Sullivan is Professor of Art Theory and Practice in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. He has published two monographs with Palgrave, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (2005) and *On the Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation* (2012), and is the coeditor (with Stephen Zepke) of both *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New* (Continuum, 2008) and *Deleuze and Contemporary Art* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), and, more recently (with Henriette Gunkel and Ayesha Hameed) *Futures and Fictions* (Repeater, 2017). He also makes art, with David Burrows and others, under the name Plastique Fantastique, and is currently working on a collaborative volume of writings with Burrows, *Mythopoesis/Myth-Science/Mythotechnesis: Fictioning in Contemporary Art* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

Theo Reeves-Evison is a writer, researcher, and Senior Lecturer in Theoretical and Contextual Studies at Birmingham School of Art. His interests cluster around the relationship between ethics and aesthetics in contemporary art, which is the topic of a forthcoming book entitled *In the Shadow of Transgression*, to be published by Bloomsbury Academic in 2018. A concern with ethico-aesthetics also underpins a forthcoming special issue of the journal *Third Text*, coedited with Mark Rainey, which has involved working closely with artists and authors in the fields of art history, science and technology studies, and cultural theory in order to interrogate the broader issue of "repair" as a cultural practice. He has published on contemporary art in magazines

and journals such as *frieze* and *Parallax*, and recent conference presentations have been made in Berlin, Copenhagen, Vancouver, and Prague.

Maggie Roberts aka **Mer** is part of the collaborative artist Orphan Drift. The video performances, immersive soundscapes, installations, and eponymous fiction-theory book *0(rphan)d(rift>)* of the 1990s addressed the future through the science-fictional, nascent technologies, and related cultural shifts in perception and matter-energy. In its current form, OD addresses the future as it speaks to us in this moment. Considering current narratives around climate change, bio-capital, and related migratory patterns, it re-imagines the urban as porous, interspecies, and terraformed. We continue to work with moving images and ancient predictive technologies such as the *I-Ching* to create nonlinear narratives and installations. Mer's work, in whatever medium, has a complex, liminal, and baroque aesthetic that proposes a tactile and fluid materiality. This reflects her continuing interest in manifesting invisible currents and currencies affecting the visible: cosmic and geological time scales; machine vision; shamanic animal becomings; evolving communication currents in vibrant matter which become effective frequencies in our habitats and fantasies; futurity impacting on the present and its hyperobjects; and climate change as the violence of excess and luxury. OD's work has been performed and exhibited in galleries, museums, night clubs, cinemas, and conferences internationally for over twenty years, most notably Cabinet and IMT galleries and the Tate Modern, London; CAC, Vilnius; Berardo Museum, Lisbon; MOMA, San Francisco; and Dold Projects, Sankt Georgen, Germany.

Erica Scourti was born in Athens and is now based in London. Her work draws on personal experience to explore life, labor, gender, and love in a fully mediated world. She has exhibited recently in "More Than Just Words" at Kunsthalle Wien, "Bedlam: The Asylum and

Beyond" at the Wellcome Collection (London), as well as Niarchos Centre (Athens), CTRL+SHIFT (Oakland), Microscope Gallery (New York), The Photographers' Gallery (London), Hayward Gallery (London), Munich Kunstverein, EMST (Athens), Auto Italia (London), and Banner Repeater (London). She has presented performances and talks at Tate Modern, ICA London, Whitechapel Gallery, South London Gallery, Transmediale, Southbank Centre, Royal College of Art, Goldsmiths, and Sandberg Institute, Amsterdam. In 2015, Scourti was in residence at Wysing Arts Centre and the White Building, London, and she is currently a resident of Somerset House Studios. Her publications include an essay in *Documents of Contemporary Art: Information* (MIT Press, 2016).

Jon K Shaw is an editor and teacher. He lectures in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. Shaw's research concerns immanence, geontology, and the philosophies and cultures of movement. He is currently working on two books: one on the lucid materialism of Antonin Artaud, and another exploring performance, poetry, and financial products which suspend the opposition between life and death. With Tom Robinson he founded and ran *Rattle: A Journal at the Convergence of Art and Writing*. His latest publications include essays on Artaud and Deleuze in *Theory, Culture and Society* (December 2016) and *Deleuze Studies Journal* (May 2016). In 2016 Jon appeared as Dr. Jacques Latrémolière, alongside Sylvère Lotringer, Jeremy Hardingham, Richard Crow, Mischa Twitchin, and Nicola Woodham, in the performance *Artaud on the Beach* at The Showroom, London.

Images

p.84 Ian Alan Paul, *The Guantanamo Bay Museum* on Google Maps, 2012-ongoing. Image courtesy of the artist.

p.93 Evan Roth, *Selfie*, 2005. Image courtesy of the artist.

p.127 Erica Scourti, *Social Profile Reports*, 2014.
Images courtesy of the artist.

p.147 Erica Scourti, *Dear Younger Self*, 2014.
Image courtesy of the artist.

p.205 Mer Maggie Roberts, *Bunker Proliferating*, 2015.
Digital collage. Image courtesy of the artist.

p.210 Mer Maggie Roberts, detail from *Wolf with Gold Twin and Future Fabric*, 2016. Collage on fabric, Chine-collé onto paper, 48 x 71cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

p.256 Forced Entertainment, *Speak Bitterness*, 1994.
Images courtesy of Hugo Glendinning.

p.270 Tim Etchells, *And for the Rest*, 2016.
Images courtesy of the artist.

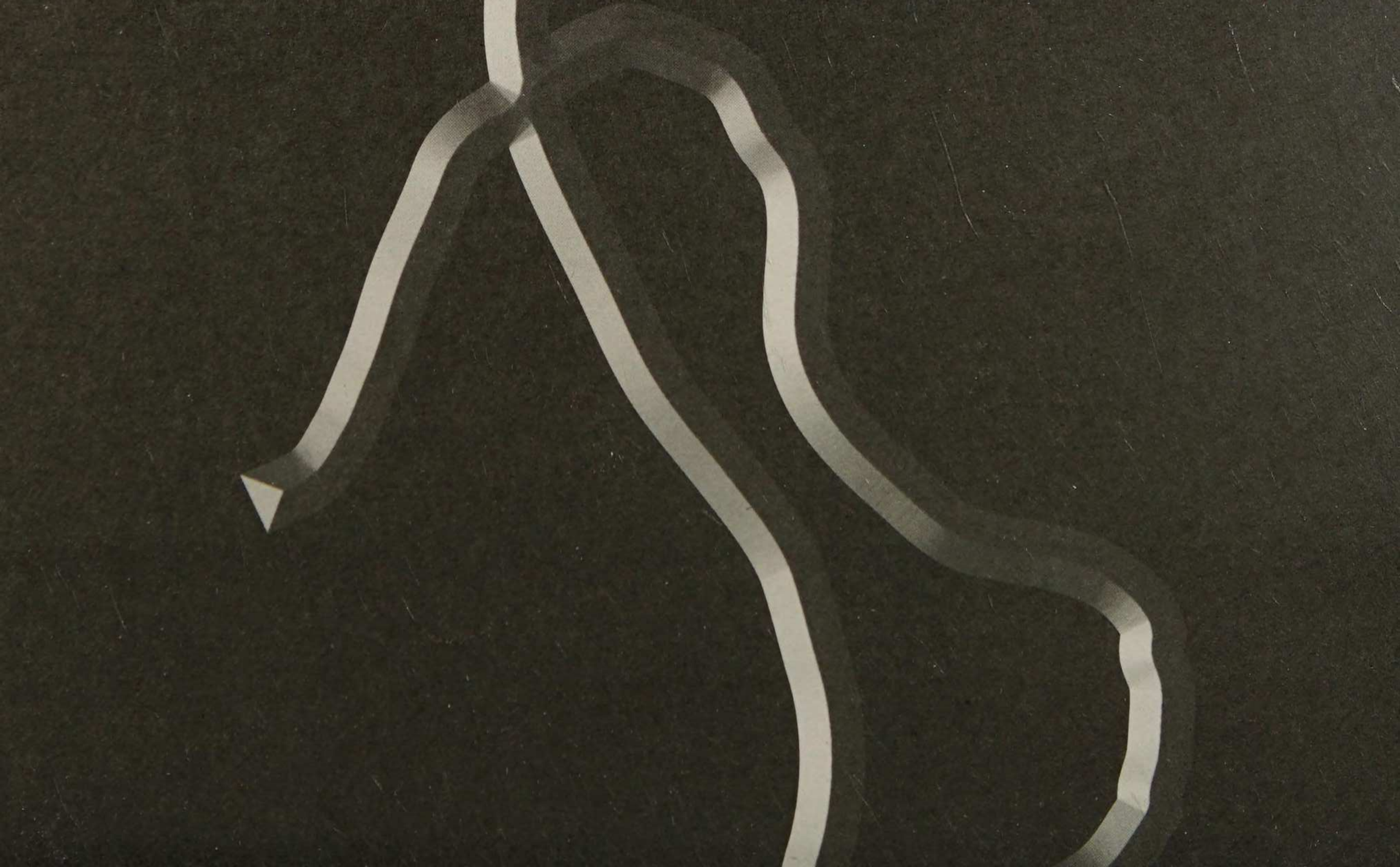
Fiction as Method

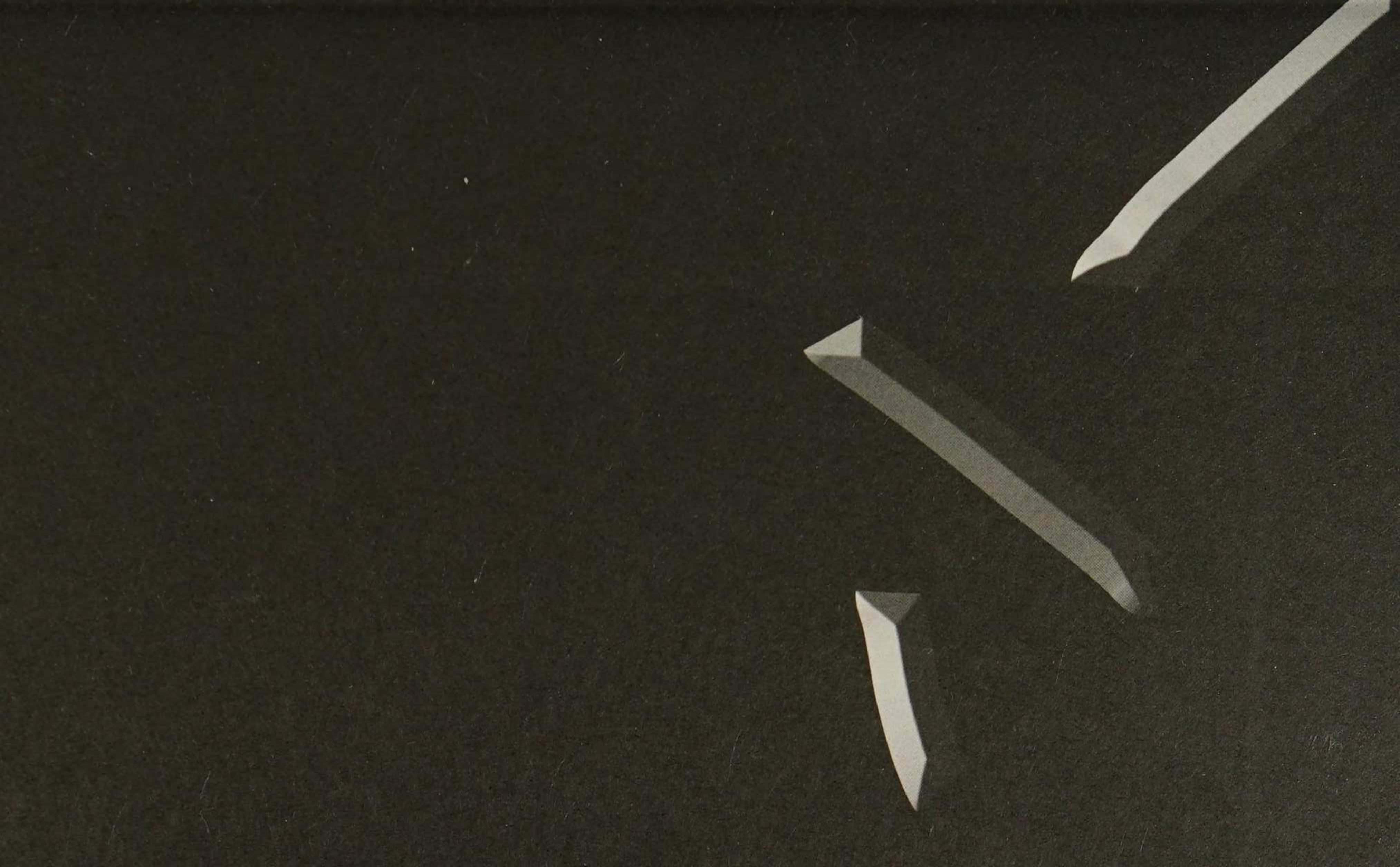
Editors: Jon K Shaw, Theo Reeves-Evison
Copyeditor: Aimee Selby
Design: Keith Dodds
Printing: BUD Potsdam

© 2017 Jon K Shaw, Theo Reeves-Evison, the authors, Sternberg Press
All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part in any form.

ISBN 978-3-95679-364-6

Published by
Sternberg Press
Caroline Schneider
Karl-Marx-Allee 78
D-10243 Berlin
www.sternberg-press.com





Fiction—it's not just for storytelling anymore. This book takes readers on a whirlwind tour through a range of perspectives from the arts and the humanities in order to reveal fiction's prevalence and functionality in the objects and processes that we are convinced are completely real. More significantly, however, it describes the myriad ways in which the elements that comprise this greater universe of fiction have been discovered, produced, harnessed, and/or used for purposes that stretch from the malevolent to the compassionate. This volume is a thought-provoking and enjoyable read—even at its most disconcerting moments.

Steve Kurtz , Professor Emeritus, University of Buffalo, cofounder of Critical Art Ensemble

Fictions, by definition, are works that present us with unreal stories and situations. And yet, these fictions—novels, songs, pictures, theories, and so on—are themselves actual things in the world. They are processes, performances, and objects. They portray unrealities, but they themselves are real. The essays in this volume, from a wide variety of points of view, all consider the reality of avowed fictions: their powers and effects, both for good and ill.

Steven Shaviro, DeRoy Professor of English, Wayne State University

ISBN 978-3-956793-64-6