



ALIENIST VI

When the patient

lashes out against "them"—

ALIENISM®

brand of chlorpromazine

quickly puts an end to his

violent outburst

'ALIENISM' is especially effective when the psychotic episode is triggered by delusions or hallucinations.

At the outset of treatment, ALIENISM's combination of antipsychotic and sedative effects provides both emotional and physical calming. Assaultive or destructive behavior is rapidly controlled.

As therapy continues, the initial sedative effect gradually disappears. But the antipsychotic effect continues, helping to dispel or modify delusions, hallucinations and confusion, while keeping the patient calm and approachable.



ALIENIST LABORATORIES

leaders in psychopharmaceutical research

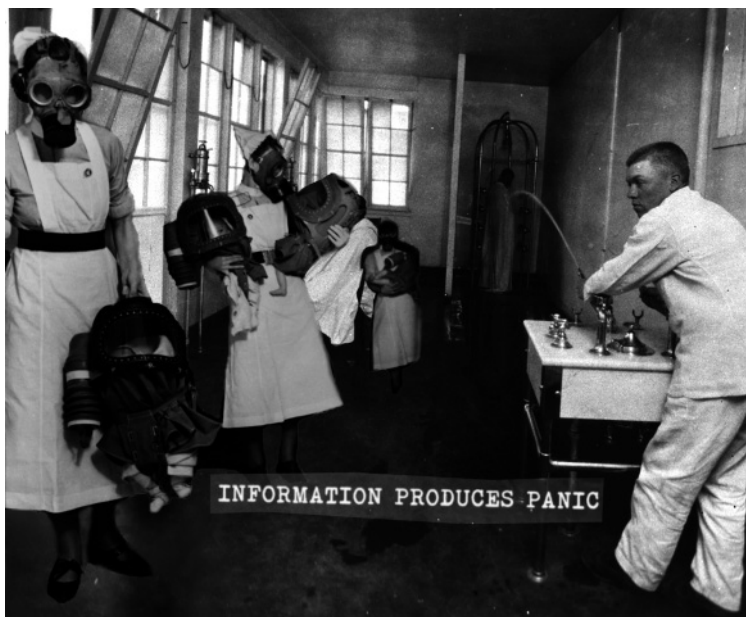


**IS HUMANITY BEYOND THE TIPPING POINT?
WILL EARTH NEVER BE RID OF THEM?**

A reminder advertisement — For prescribing information, please see PDR or available literature.



THE FUTURE WILL BE ALIEN
OR WILL NOT BE





REALITY'S "DARK PRECURSORS"

THE FUTURE OF TECHNO-CYBERNETIC CONTROL RESTS ON CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS: IT IS NECESSARY TO GRASP THAT SUCCESSIVE CYBERNETIC REVOLUTIONS HAVE ALWAYS HAD, AS THEIR ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE, A GLOBAL "CULTURAL REVOLUTION"

**CULTURE ISN'T
THE "CIVILIAN
FRONT" OF
THE MILITARY-
INDUSTRIAL
COMPLEX, IT
IS THE ENTIRE
BATTLEGROUND**



A PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

CATEGORY RESPONSE

1. FIRST & FOREMOST: THE POEM IS A WEAPON
2. all work is metamorphosis of context
3. there are no *revolutionary conditions*
4. realism contrives an "escape from disillusionment"
5. dependence always upon non-appearance
6. gravity isn't a constant
7. one look at them was enough to know
8. NERVOUS SYSTEM ("THE SYSTEM IS NERVOUS")
9. in order to find a solution: adjustable/fixed ratios:
the required concentration
10. pandemonium in the unobserved qualities of ordinary things
11. A is for annelid, Auschwitz, atom bomb, amnesia
12. history is the nursery rhyme of power
13. interfaced into a monotony of suppression
14. dysphoric pleasures (the sublime *is* the ridiculous)
15. "FOR EVERY DOG ITS OWN MASTER"
16. the world is running on a scarcity of time
17. Rousseau in a cage on a mountain top
18. the force of the work speaks of forced labour

19. "BE WATER!"
20. bleak semaphores of heavy weather
21. teargas gently flows from policemen's dreams
22. identikit thought-recognition
23. the commodity is the ideal scapegoat
24. HURRAH FOR THE ASTRONAUT BORN FROM SPACE!
25. infrapoiesis between *différance* & its *objet a*
26. "political art" is a ventriloquist's dummy
27. before/after: a metaphysics of the pharmacosmetic subject
28. in order to posit the monkey, first they had to construct the tree
29. useless concepts travel in threes
30. *répétition mon beau souci*
31. tie a witch to an aqualung & see if she floats
32. freak life under hostile conditions
33. for we are the koans of future timeslip
34. non-compliant enzymes in the gender factory
35. ONE GOOD FASCIST DESERVES ANOTHER
36. how long is long enough?
37. somewhere in the world it's already midnight
38. the smoothness of pixellated flesh
39. somewhere in the world midnight was long ago

40. the mechanical intelligence of a banging door
41. EXTINCTION IS NECESSARY, PROGRESS IMPLIES IT
42. in desperate times, probability is a poor relation
43. seduction is the face of clandestine terror
44. the fact it rains tells nothing of the coming storm
45. seditious acts of mentally unbuilding
46. the future will be CANCELLED or will not be!
47. double indemnity: living from eye to mouth
48. what are the machines trying to tell us?
49. wild gusts of stage scenery emerging from static
50. anachronism refuses to give up the ghost
51. they parted the Red Sea & discovered linoleum
52. suffer the little children our pleasure awaits
53. control of territory by remote paranoias
54. surface-depth infinity
55. because it has been commodified, the image is paradoxically less imaginary
56. desire establishes its terms by force
57. language is AI evolution
58. the gender-fluidity of the thermodynamic arrow of time
59. to have yr Oedipus complex & to eat it too

60. ALIENISM KNOWS WHERE YOU SLEEP

61. enumeration is its own reward

62. history, too, unravels at lightspeed

63. mythomerial cobalts fuel the cosmic infra-mind

64. the desert over Berlin

65. SHOTS FIRED INTO THE SKY ARE NOW RETURNING

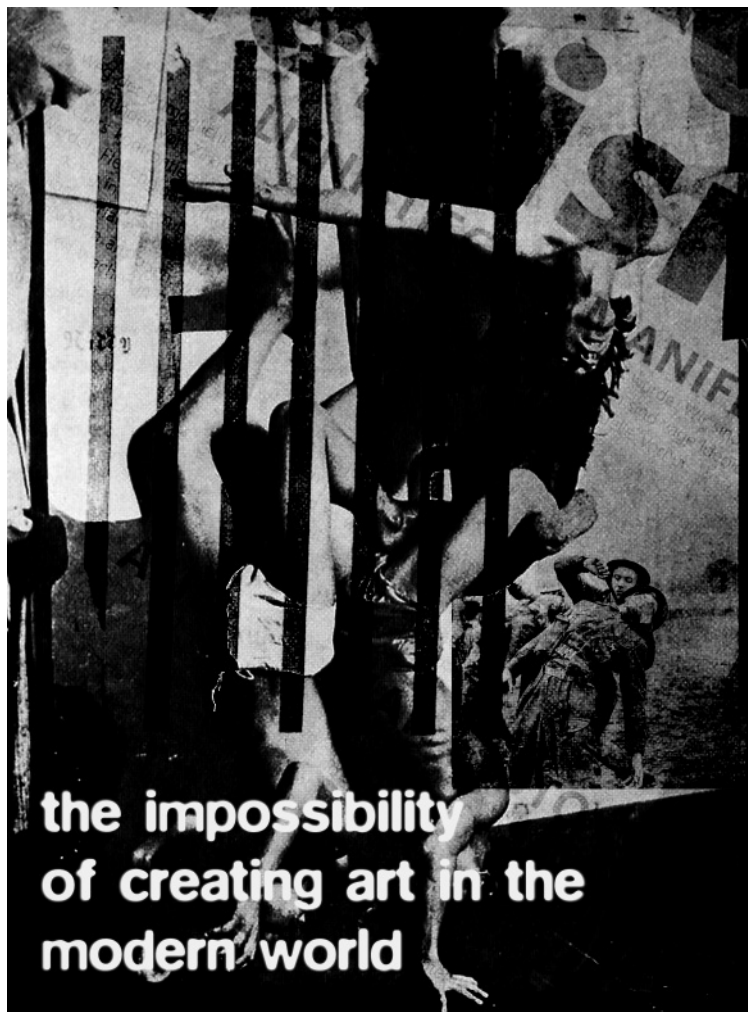
66. the algorithm accompanies itself with its shadows

67. how elated we feel knowing it ends!

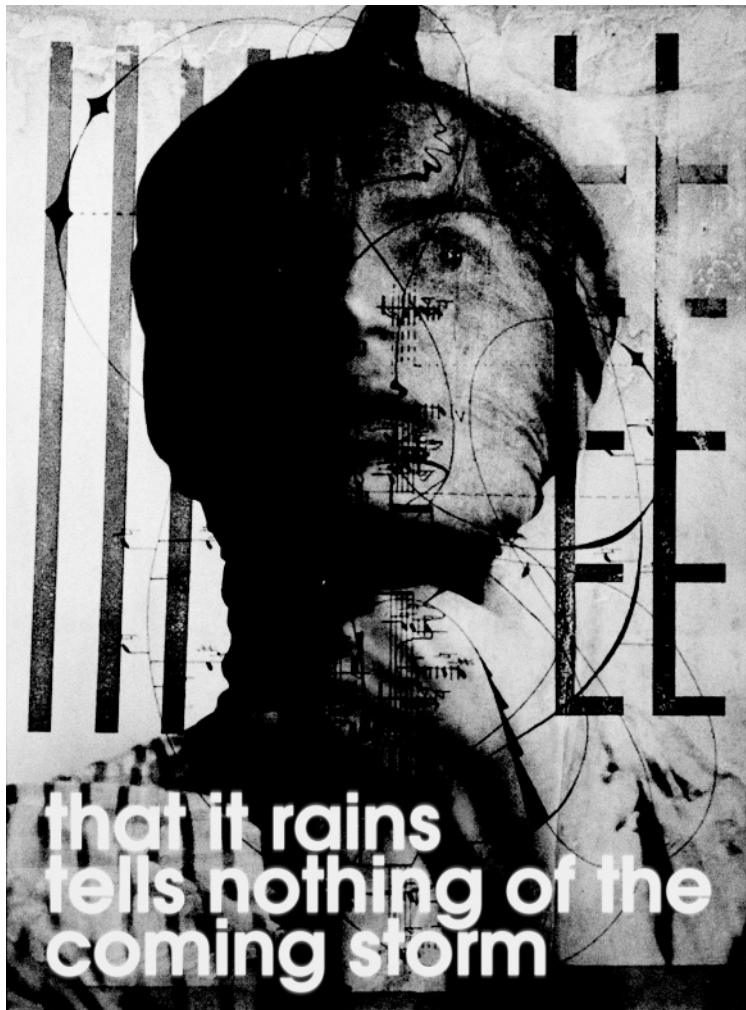
68. the erotics of surrender before the shock of capture

69. NOTHING IS IMAGINARY, EVERYTHING IS REAL

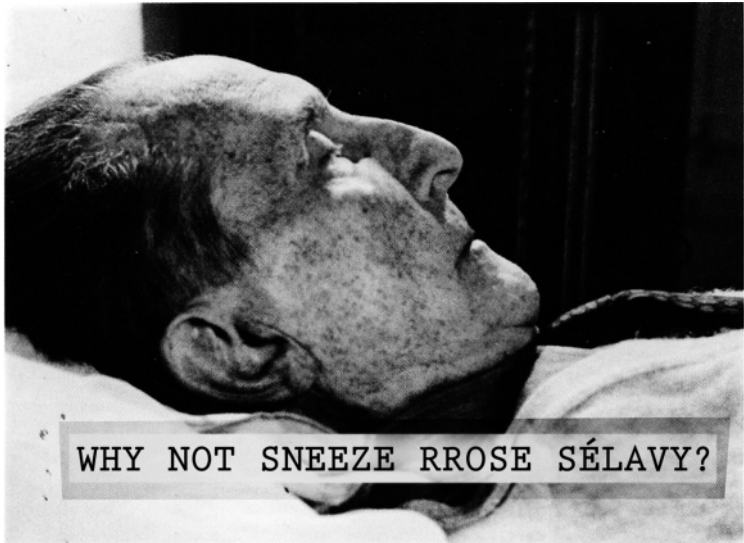
INTERIOR MINISTRY
JULY 2019



**the impossibility
of creating art in the
modern world**



that it rains
tells nothing of the
coming storm



WHY NOT SNEEZE RROSE SÉLAVY?

The precise origin and intended meaning of the term “surfascism” remain in dispute. Henri Dubief attributes it to Jean Dautry as wordplay modeled on “Surrealism.” Pierre Andler has also claimed responsibility for it, and we encounter the term in a note on fascism he wrote in April 1936: “Just as fascism is only a definitive surmarxism, a Marxism put back on its feet, similarly the power that will reduce it can only be a surfascism. Fascism does not refer to itself as surmarxism, since it is called fascism. Similarly, surfascism will not refer to itself as surfascism. It is not forbidden to seek the name that surfascism will bear tomorrow.”¹⁹ Henri Pastoureau, for his part, claimed in a letter to scholar Marina Galletti that “the word *surfascism* had been invented by the Surrealists. It can designate both a surpassed fascism (positive) or an exacerbated fascism (negative).”²⁰ As a charge leveled against Counter Attack by the Surrealist group, the term is clearly intended negatively, as an assertion that Bataille and his other collaborators—including Georges Ambrosino and Pierre Klossowski, among others—were “more fascist than the fascists.” There was more than a little truth to the accusation, and intentionally so. In a letter to Pierre Kaan written in February 1934, during the planning stages of Counter Attack, Bataille had said explicitly: “I have not doubt as to the level on which we must place ourselves: it can only be that of fascism itself, which is to say on the mythological level.”²¹

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ALIENISM & POETRY

"ALIENATION IS THAT CONDITION OF SUBJECTIVITY THAT PARADOXICALLY ENABLES EVERYTHING TO APPEAR REAL."

The poem is a disruptive total effect.

There are no "negative forms."

For every mural at Pompeii there is a latrine.

The last sad residues of the Myth of Creation usher forth apocalypse in their image.

Here we see its complete pathology on view.

The "nuclear deterrent" of the Corporate-State Apparatus is no longer enough to keep THE IMPOSSIBLE in its place.

Spare a thought for the mass-distributed ego.

Like fairground cut-outs, the primitivist art of single-point perspective, base & superstructure.

AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED.

Poetry is the hidden path through the fairytale of political reason.

"Less data is more information: a perspective of anonymisation."

These words, which are not of our invention, emerge in an equivocation of probability.

All hail totalitarianism's idols of occult cretinisation!

Under the weight of its own inertia, all that Culture can do is turn upon its axis.

Power is first among false witnesses.

The diurnal rituals of protest rock this turning world to sleep.

Oppression spreads by contagion; revolt by resonance.

The purity of form is like the ideal drain cleaner.

Anything that can be composed can be brought together into a "decipherable unity."

Hong Kong, Paris, Managua, Sorong.

The antiworld cometh, sing the stool pigeons its praises.

In the Anthropocene, there is only *unoriginal sin*.

Great roads to nowhere paved over Djab Wurrung ancestor trees.

The avantgarde was 40,000 years ago.

Shop windows are for carcasses: no-one pays for Live Culture around here.

A century in the grip of terminal history.

Thought cops doing their busywork.

Today the ants come marching with riot shields & laughing gas.

A neutering of habit, a castration of reason, a lobotomy of the commodified libido.

The microstructure is the macrostructure.

Schizophrenics are in no doubt about the nature of their sanity.

Industrial pharmaco-culturalism.

What is the meaning of Satoshi Nakamoto's public stash?

The poetic monstrem conjures nightmares of metabolised violence raging in the void.

Permanent NEGATION has indeed been institutionalized.

Just another Khrushchev shoe fetishist was a chronic case of tinea.

An improbable verism, not a verisimilitude of the improbable.

One leads one follows one leads.

Two hypotheses form a perspective.

The Sonnenkinder of the architects of atomic suicide have returned to collect the dividends.

All the world wants to live in the Dead Presidential Suite.

Those who confuse art with psychiatry are prone to regard the psychiatric institution as the highest artform.

Alien intelligence stays tuned for a preview of coming attractions.

Realism isn't a compromise but a conspiracy.

Addicted to stupidity, they thought they were inventing the future.

Elegies of double-speak.

Nothing is neutral merely by virtue of eclecticism.

The foam on the crest of a wave of "irrationalism"!

Critical magnitudes have learned to dream.

Deep fake electron trails through the word-stream.

Are the hymns the androids sing a requiem for the human brain?

Language mystified to such a degree it must be assumed to be dead.

"THE OCEAN OF LIGHT IS
BOTTOMLESS IF NOTHING IS
HIDDEN BEHIND IT."

INTERIOR MINISTRY
September 2019



UTOPIAN PROSTHESES

In the first place, what is here signified by *trans-* will have been that “accursed share” (Bataille) by which an economy of meaning or system of power redeems itself for itself by the appropriation of the very thing it prohibits or seeks to erase. As the sign of a redeemed “transcendence,” the *trans-* nevertheless retains a trace, the contradiction of a *difference* that infects & proliferates within the system that seeks to universalise itself by way of this prosthesis. Yet the future it programmes via such an evolutionary engineering is fantasmatic not only with respect to any naive conception of the self-supersessions of power (progressivism), but also of its subversion, & not merely because each retains the character of an indeterminacy. Both the universalising potential of the *trans-* & its abstract singularity as the prosthesis of a becoming-other, a becoming-the-future or a becoming-of/from-the-future, necessitate that its heterogeneous movement is *not a matter of opposition* (if not resistance) but of a *radical ambivalence*.

THE HYPNOTISM OF SELF-ADVERTISEMENT

How many immaculate false dichotomies pose as the *labour of being* versus the *unwork of non-being*, in order to accomplish their transcendence via the simultaneously affirmative & self-negating act of “evolution as pure consumption” (extinction is necessary, progress implies it)? The belief, in other words, that a mode of “authentic being” can reside only in the very transcendence of being? If anything, this should attest to the fact that “permanent negation” can indeed be institutionalised, while also (&

without any apparent irony) demonstrating that *there are no "negative forms."* And if all that this ideal signifier can do is turn about its own axis, it nonetheless does so with the verism of the improbable. Like the dream of an insoluble paradox that cannot resist the allure of totalisation, the form of this movement remains uniquely engendered (abstract universalism as *transgenic*). And if the one presupposes the very categories the other seeks to overcome or negate, it is because their symbiosis is itself – even in this "corrupted" form – a *perpetual re(e)volution*.

LOVE & BOREDOM

The appeal of a certain transcendentalism in political, bio-ethical & ecological discourse echoes an "apocalyptic tone" that has reduced critique to a mystification of "hope," exposing the impotence of protest hand-in-hand with the normalisation of Corporate-State terror & the covert operations of reaction-inside-the-revolt. If the work of subversion is a *labour of love* in constant antagonism with the *consumption of vicarious gratification*, the apparent transformation of the one into the other has been the triumph of the Corporate-State Apparatus, wherein the logic of the *trans-* – as that which, by definition, is supposed to evade formalisation as a *sub-*ject of power – is represented by the very seduction of power itself. This seduction poses in the form of a rebus that interpolates itself wherever this dualism occurs: as the ideal objectification of a *becoming-other* (the tabula rasa of the transfuturist EXIT). If resistance is born of a movement in which "every signified is always already another signifier" – or as a poiesis of *constitutive alienation* – the seduction of power is always in the guise of a universal signifier of "emancipation *from* alienation." Yet what is truly at stake is *the alienation of power itself*.

SPONTANEOUS SYNCHRONISATION?

If it appears that two antagonistic tendencies present themselves here, this is not simply by way of *resistance* to a mode of thought that would propose to do away with the very concept of antagonism, if not to resolve the conditions in which antagonism may be said to be constituted, were such a thing possible. Between subversion & transcendence it isn't simply that a kind of gyroscopic movement produces its own inertia: their displacements do not succumb to a dialectical calculus, but produce a vertigo of complexity. It is the function of subversion to maximise this complexity, while it is that of transcendence to delineate its singularity. Such delineation belies the fact that what here calls itself transcendence describes nothing more mysterious than the logic of an algorithmic discriminator – as the *reduction to one*. Yet the fictive character of this "one" is signified by the internal contradictions of its derivation, such that every "reduction" is elided in a radical *ambivalence*.

This is nowhere more in evidence than in that thought that declares an “end to capitalism,” whose objectification it has fetishised to the point of installing it as the transcendental object *par excellence* – which is to say, the narcissistic object. This false object is the point of fixation of a *trans-* reduced to the vector of a child’s *fort/da* game (as infantile commodity-production/consumption) synchronised to the movement of a “capitalism” that is itself the very analogue of a difference-without-terms.

THE ALGORITHM ACCOMPANIES ITSELF WITH ITS SHADOWS

Confronted by this fundamental *objectlessness* from which the logic of the commodity draws its force, the ramified “differences” of categorical thought in which such a vector of “transcendence” is prescribed by terms arranged in ideological tension, mimic a play of substitution *as if for the lack of a universal signifier*. And in so far as this “lack” invites the compensating fantasy of an Ego-ideal, the operations it puts into motion are those of an *excess*: wherein a “subversion-of-the-subject” is produced both as a difference without terms & a difference-of-difference. This subversion doesn’t simply invert the relation of transcendence (sub-futurism?), but exposes its entire structural logic as parasitic upon a fundamental fantasy (the “lost object”). The appeal to transcendence of the capitalism is thus enacted upon the social body as a pathological individuation: the Ego in the image of the Corporate-State, whose “subversion” it becomes the agent of through the perverse enactment of a “self-violence.” The ideological dysphoria to which transcendence attends is nothing if not constitutive of the subjectivity (worldliness) for which it substitutes an ur-trauma (the Anthropocene), & in which it must be re-engendered as the signifier of its own “transcendence.” From here it is a simple step to a “culture-clash” or “dysphoria of civilisation”: the quasi-fascist doctrine that ideological struggle is cultural hyperstition (the ubiquitous myth, in one form or another, of a Global World Order).

ACCELERATED EVOLUTIONARY TRANSFORMERS

In its defence, power projects a “cultural front” whose *reactionary character* solidifies itself by a counter-cathexis – a resistance to resistance – reinforced by self-pastiche. It is necessary to recognise that this reactionary movement always assumes the form of an *overcoming*, since it poses itself as a *culture under threat*, adopting the rhetorical position of an “oppressed.” The predominant mode of production of the Corporate-State Apparatus has thus always tended towards the mass distributed individuality of the ego-in-distress. To the ego-in-distress the “agents of subversion” appear as malevolent adversaries of the “emancipation” to which they feel entitled, & which the “freedom of false choices” promises them. Yet subversion is *thought born of perpetual movement*, not a subjection to the “to come,”

while what poses as “transcendental thought” is bound by its fixation upon a future gratification obtained in the present that amounts to nothing more than a political re-engendering of art-for-art’s sake. It is a narcissism that feeds off the melancholy of what, from every other perspective available to the so-called Anthropocene, declares NO FUTURE: the melancholy of the “death of modernity,” of the neoliberal “end of history,” of “climate catastrophe,” etc.

JUST ANOTHER COLLABORATIONIST “ART FORM”

But if the future of the Corporate-State rests on “cultural” foundations, it is necessary to grasp that this future itself corresponds to a global “cultural revolution.” Purveyors of “fully-automated luxury communism” have mistaken the false dichotomy between collective & intimate experience as the foundational antagonism of a trans-futurity in which “accelerated capitalism” will supersede itself. Such algorithmic enervations of social consciousness feed back onto a *path of least resistance* whose endpoint is no longer *critical labour* but the “perverse aesthetic pleasure” of self-negation. Yet if the *forms* of social consciousness are inseparable from their political & economic *representations*, the trans-futurist moment always runs up against fact that the circulation of value is the circulation of a signifying system & that subjectivity devolves upon the *techne of ideology* itself, as its very mode of production, & not as some “artificial prosthesis” that may simply be abstracted & reassigned within some theatre of transcendence. Abstraction is first & foremost the abstraction of *spectacle*, & it is only on this level of abstraction that transcendence occurs – which is to say, by a manipulation of signs (in other words, as a symbolic or *differential* function).

YOUR REWARD IS THAT YOU SHALL BE PUNISHED

What is the status of a “transcendence” that itself names the category it undermines? That signifies what it exists to overcome? Is it a dialectical contradiction? A negation-of-negation? A self-supersession? A labour of the negative in the service of a certain *destining*? The affirmation of the advance of “progress” (its “emancipatory potential”)? Of the positive term always yet to be arrived at? Its ideal reification, etc.? What can be said of its seemingly paradoxical appeal to the equivocal, to anachronism, revolution, catastrophe? To the time before the first & after the last? To the choreographed transgression that is one step ahead of the commodity that is one step ahead of it? To the object that is already a subject & the panicked subject compulsively objectified? To the metaphysic of historical materialism? To the mirror image that got away & the doppelgänger under contract? To the desire for something other, something more, or merely for its own sake? To the life ever after in the eternity of no-future?

WHO SHOT DON QUIXOTE?

The moment it is recognised that all such transcendence is mythopoetic, then the future towards which it is orientated is revealed to be a myth, subverted at the very instant in which it is produced by the movement of the *trans*-. It comes as the most banal of realisations that the *trans*- will have already been internalised & sublated into this future-perfect tense as the reified object of a desire it alone can supply. It reminds that the real dynamic Turing identified in the question of computing intelligence wasn't the capacity for a "machine" to pass for "human" (or for one gender or genus to pass as another), but for a "subject" to believe that it is a universal signifier. Just as the political doesn't arise at the level of intersubjectivity, but at the level of enunciation – so to the production of myth (commencing with the myth of the subject) arises from alienation. If the *polis* is the discursive environment in which subjectivity – as a dialogical trope – is represented, then the sheer negativity of this representation (its insuperable difference-from-itself) should alert us to the void that lies at the core of all political power (& of the ambivalence that must ultimately inform its "transcendence").

THIS OPTION IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE

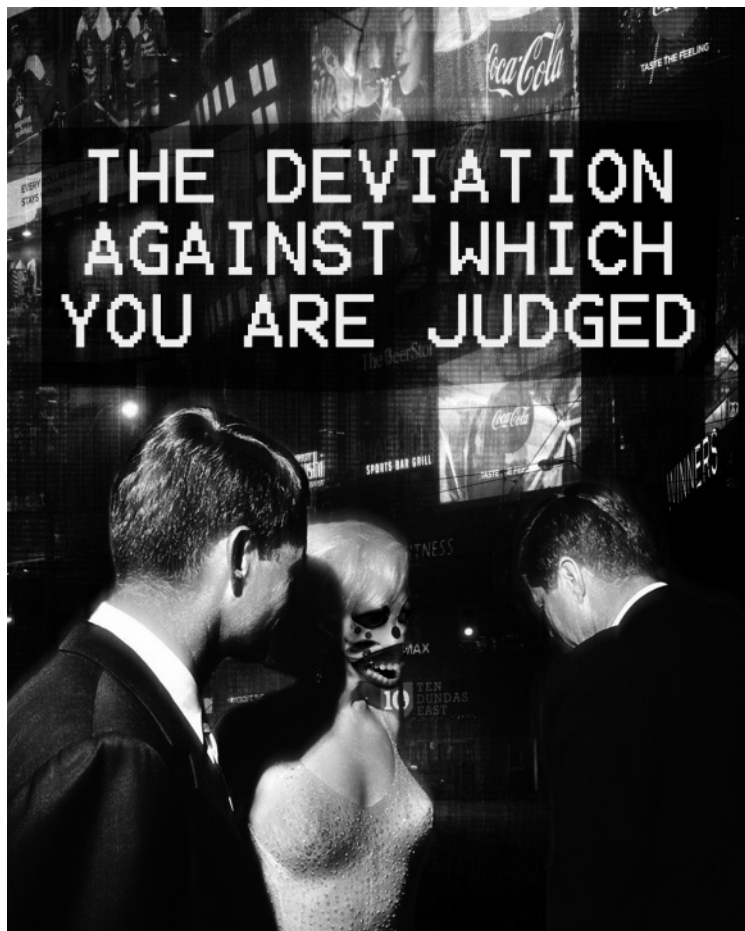
Were the *trans*- to be admitted to the category of the universal – as a universal condition transcending all categorization, all reduction to binary opposition, all *opposition as such* – then the very idea of the *trans*- "itself" (as a species of non-category) would be fatally menaced & *the difference in which it took on its meaning* would break down (even if this meaning is that of a subversion-in-advance). If it subsequently assumes the form of a "negation of negation" this is only to the extent that it evokes a "myth of the impossible" in counterpoint to its origin as an impossible myth.* In its movement of apparent reification, such a mythopoetics merely imitates an a-centric structure in order to maintain its promise of emancipation from the very categorical thought upon which it is entirely parasitic & which it presumes to supplant in its "unassailable" ambivalence. In this it would be nothing more than political aestheticism, were it not for the fact that the experience it implies is that of the impossible "itself" arriving, as if from a future-not-yet, under the false appearance of a present that will never have been.

INTERIOR MINISTRY

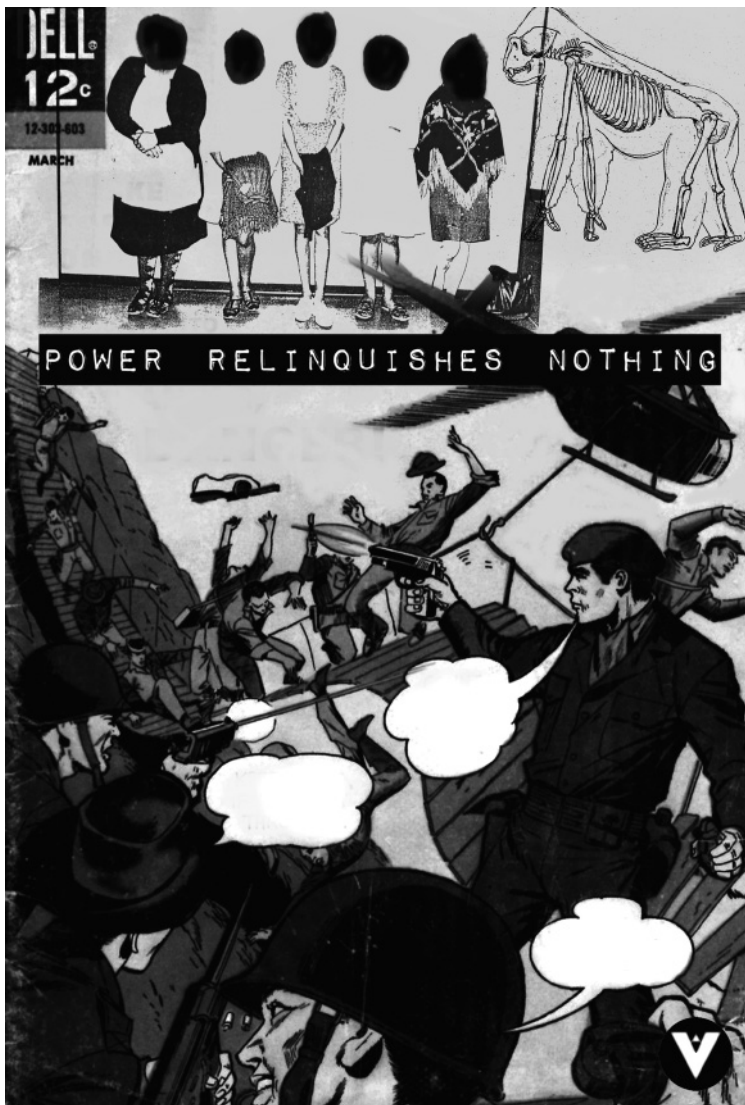
August 2019

[*How to reassign this mythopoetics' subversive potential as that which in fact *inscribes* the "impossible" (the post-Anthropocene): that spectre forever haunting the dream of transcendence? For the Corporate-State only ever evokes "the impossible" in order to parley the exorcising of its own ghosts into the very paradigm of a decisive checking manoeuvre against its adversaries. And if the diurnal ambivalence of the *trans*- avails of this instant reverse, so too the contrary.]

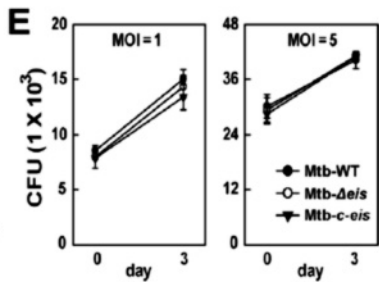
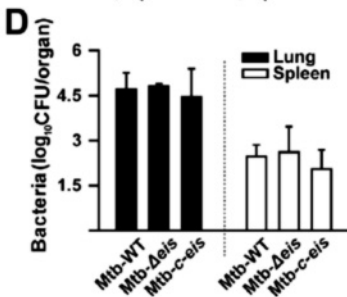
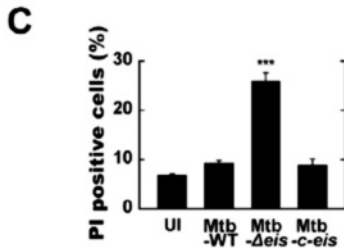
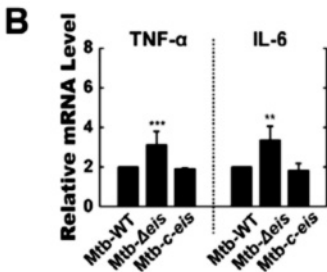
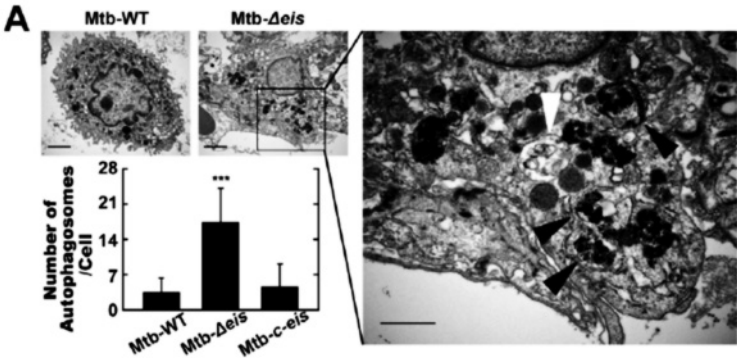




THE DEVIATION AGAINST WHICH YOU ARE JUDGED



POWER RELINQUISHES NOTHING



PICK A FUTURE

That's how the worlds re-start, with an infinite series of entangled transtemporal trajectories crashing against each other. Every throw of the dice is an unconditional microsingularity. We no longer speak about

the future as a general extrapolation of a single linear timeline, but about patchworks of futures (pantopos, panchronos); warped time-exclusion zones to be navigated and scavenged by transfuturist machines challenging the mass-marketed post-contemporary catalogue of socio-political utopian and dystopian cisfutures, and the multifarious cultural assemblage of ever-ending and never-ending worlds. It is easier to imagine an end to time than to imagine an end to chronism – therefore:



MIYA BLACK HEARTED CYBER ANGEL BABY 素女
@BPD_GOD

Pick a future

Traducir Tweet



Time has been allegedly arriving from the futures for a while now, so we've been living in a time-bubble (Nick Land should be probably credited with overcoming the abstract/concrete time-coming-from-the-future dualism which was common among phenomenologist and historical futurists). It would be interesting to investigate up to what point historical futurisms were linked not only to the socio-political extrapolation of classic social models and security systems into aesthetically controlled mechanisms, but also related to the modern understanding of life as a collection of concrete human experiences and phenomena – both physical and metaphysical – susceptible of techno-rational automation and amplification. Instead, the hyperplastic, anthropologically unbounded space of transfuturism seems more related, as David Roden explains, to the weird aesthetic of Lovecraft and VanderMeer. "In confronting the posthuman future" – writes Roden – "we are more like Wells' broken time traveller than a voyager through the space of reasons. Our understanding of the posthuman – including the interpretation of what even counts as Disconnection – must be interpreted aesthetically; operating without criteria or pre-specified systems of evaluation. It begins, instead, with xeno-affects, xeno-aesthetics, and a subject lost for words on a 'forgotten coast.'"¹

Life is actually a time bubble, at least for those living beings which are complex enough to die – and, of course, for those blessed with the imagination of their own death. Anything arriving from the futures is nothing but past material dreams haunting complex processes which *didn't have the time* to make it to that particular shape or combination: the futures transfuturists scavenge are spaces that didn't have the time. Not having the time – despite the bubble, many time fields are frequently not accessible or observable to singular beings – is the essential bio/techno condition.

Chronist consciousness has excelled in the development of time-mining technologies: human abstract time is inscribed into capitalism as commodity instead of as a currency, because it lacks exchangeability. Dreams lurking in the cisfutures, while novel enough to *épater les cybourgeois*, are introduced as marketable goods: social cisfuturism means imagining product performance as an emotional/experiential alternative to annihilation. The more of reality which can be recognized, classified, coded, inscribed in the translinguistic parahuman database, the more futures are accumulated in the system. So what really happens is not that time literally "arrives" from the futures – there's no *there* there, no *here* here – neither that speculating, as in Blanchot's Bergsonian interpretation of time,² if futures

¹ David Roden, "Dark Posthumanism" (https://www.academia.edu/25222145/Dark_Posthumanism)

² "The temporality of existence is, therefore, not the *abstract* temporality of the timeline, but the *concrete* temporality of life where *the present arrives from the future.*" Ullrich Haase and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot* (London: Routledge, 2001) 47.

determine the phenomenal present of forms – *the concrete temporality of life*. Life is the physical abstraction of futurability, the condition for time to de-dimensionize itself, to entertain itself in countless patchwork-loops.

GERMÁN SIERRA



Lilypatchwork
@Lilypatchwork

I made a kinda-unhinged political compass of acceleration-assemblages. None of these are really mutually exclusive, but pick your preference!

Traducir Tweet



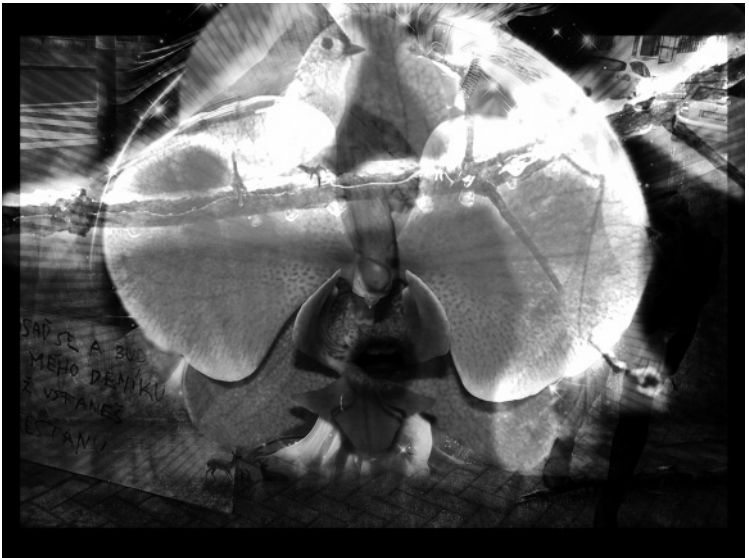


M E T A Z O A











APRÈS LE FUTUR...

6 PROPOSITIONS ON THE ENDS OF MODERNITY

"Could the only opposition to a culture dominated by what Jameson calls the 'nostalgia mode' be a kind of nostalgia for Modernism?"

– Mark Fisher

1. Having declared an end to History in its avowal to MAKE IT NEW, modernism “imagined itself to be beyond eschatology.”¹ This is the argument Irmgard Emmelhainz puts forward in her essay on “Self-Destruction as Insurrection, or, How to Lift the Earth above All that has Died?” in which the Anthropocene acquires something of the status of a uniquely authentic insurrectional force in the wake of the discrediting of modernity & the institutional avantgarde, in both their political & aesthetic formulations. Emmelhainz’s Anthropocene is presented as an insurrectional force entirely alienated from the idea of the human, like a glitched after-image of Klee’s *Angelus Novus* as it retraces Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” in icon, not as a truth that is “recognized &... never seen again,”² but one which presents itself constantly *without being grasped for what it is*. Yet in doing so, this Anthropocene describes not a negation of modernism but its apotheosis. From its very beginnings, what characterizes modernism is a paradoxical nostalgia for the coming utopia of modernism itself: its own reification as the New World, conflated out of the kitsch of authenticity, the *absolument moderne*. The impulse of so-called *postmodernism* arises out of the desire to suspend this paradox in a dilated present, in which, as Emmelhainz says, “apocalypse” becomes “central to the neoliberal imaginary.” Such a suspended action is no mere sleight of hand, but a *project* – by which the dream of eschatology transforms itself into necessity by way of a certain Return of the Real. Emmelhainz characterizes this as the displacement of the “possibility of revolution” in its modernist utopian formulation, by the “intolerable” – that which can no longer be *made anew* in the image of modernity, since it is the very *desolation of the image*. “In this light,” she argues, “the actual legacy of modernism is not a horizon of worker-led emancipation but a biosphere on the brink of extinction... a world in ruins.” This much we can agree on.

2. If it appears that the question of modernity acquires a certain spectral character in its tendency to haunt contemporary thought & return wherever the problems of technicity & futurity rear their heads, this tendency cannot simply be reduced to an antithetical *moment* – one among others – which merely requires (in order to “resolve itself”) to be properly historicized, within the scope of the long twentieth century for example, as a belated after-effect of the End of modernity: its “completion,” so to speak, as a *project*, subsumed into the *abject form* of an ideological artefact. Such would belong to that line of reasoning that seeks to expand a critique of

¹ Irmgard Emmelhainz, “Self-Destruction as Insurrection, or, How to Lift Earth above All that has Died?” *e-flux* 87 (December 2017): www.e-flux.com/journal/87/169041/self-destruction-as-insurrection-or-how-to-lift-earth-above-all-that-has-died/

² Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968) 255.

aesthetic autonomy, & modernism in general, into the “objective” form of an Anthropocene that itself is merely a kind of residue, a by-product of the abstractive processes of industrial capital, & not as the very *articulation of its logic*. This line of reasoning can be summarised as: the culmination of the project of modernity comes definitively into view with the consciousness of the Anthropocene. It is accompanied by a similar line of reasoning which insists that the Anthropocene is the unfinished business of modernity, & that only by accelerating & enlarging the scope of modernity can the Anthropocene itself be trans/cended.

3. While Habermas maintained that the “spirit” of modernity consists in the revolt against a “false normativity in history”³ – brought starkly into view in the numerous debates surrounding postmodernism – the quasi-enlightenment “project” Habermas equates with modernity nevertheless retains the character of a humanism impervious to either those internal contradictions from which it had in fact arisen in the first place or to the complexity & indeterminacy of those increasingly global systems into which it had long since evolved. This tendency to reaction & counterreformation within a retrospective “modernism” may appear an unlikely fellow traveller of the neoliberalism that apparently succeeded it, yet the argument for the incompleteness of the project of modernity & Fukuyama’s pronouncements of an “End-of-History” describe an identical teleology.⁴ For Fukuyama, the neutralization of the modernist revolt was postmodernism’s (i.e. neoliberalism’s) masterstroke – what Habermas calls a “false negation of culture” under the appearance of an impossible emancipation from ideology or ideological antagonism. Yet at the same time, this “false negation” – conflated with capitalist realism’s promise of No Future – remains bound to a modernist *discontinuity of History* as the (paradoxical) means of its *totalisation*. Between revolution & apocalypse, this “means-ends” eschatology circulates as a kind of ideal tropism, which in turn is reified in what Emmelhainz calls “the highest stage of modernism”: the Anthropocene.⁵

4. “There is no other world,” McKenzie Wark writes in an article on Late Holocene Style, “& it is this one.”⁶ And if the Anthropocene is, as a recent *Alienist* publication proclaims, the modernist “art object *par excellence*,”⁷ this is precisely because it corresponds to what Wark seeks to define in

³ Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity – An Incomplete Project,” *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: The New Press, 1983).

⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

⁵ Emmelhainz, “Self-Destruction as Insurrection.”

⁶ McKenzie Wark, “Late Holocene Style,” *Alienist* 4 (2018)

⁷ Interior Ministry, *Principles of Anarchitecture* (Prague: Alienist, 2019) 15.

the coincidence between “the impossibility of the artwork” with the “impossibility of the divine.” The divine, as eschatological agency, is always that which, in accomplishing itself, supersedes itself. It is, so to speak, both the end that *lives on* & the afterlife *before the fact*. It’s in this sense that Lyotard’s remark about postmodernism as modernism *in a nascent state*⁸ applies, for example, in Adorno’s insistence upon the barbarity of lyric poetry after Auschwitz & the impossibility of maintaining an aesthetic morality vested in the cult of rationalism that had produced it.⁹ We might say, then, that the acme of modernity has always been the *art of the impossible*: not a mimēsis of “another world” – some revolutionary utopia, for example, or some eugenicist heaven of ideal forms – but the *means of production* of the very impossibility of “an other world”; of a world subject to forces operative beyond the purview of modernity itself, let’s say. The character of this movement of aesthetic foreclosure, & the crisis it represents, isn’t – despite appearing otherwise – that of a *neutral* geological register of human (i.e. industrialisation’s) impact on the biosphere, so much as it is *ideological*, since this “no other world” which “there is” is both the apotheosis & end of modernity only insofar as it “performs” a final negation of the “free spirit,” as Wark says, of the modernist work of art that *lives on* in the those cybernated ghosts of our present “world-machine.” Such that we may say that what calls itself “posthumanism” marks the return of an ever-more-apocalyptic *humanism* in the experiencing of its self-destruction as aesthetically unsurpassable.¹⁰ Put otherwise, the “extinction paradigm” may simply be the condition for alienation’s next evolutionary phase beyond the commodity form to the technopoetic sublime. To the extent that this evolutionary “event” acquires its own autonomous representation, it does so not in the elevation of the *anthropos* to the revolutionary status of *world-transformation*, but rather the contrary: its “alienated totality.”¹¹

5. If modernity presupposes a demystification & trans/cendence of the “natural world,” it does so on the basis of a radical idea that all worlds are

⁸ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) 81.

⁹ Theodor Adorno, “Cultural Criticism & Society,” *Prisms*, trans. Samuel & Sherry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1067) 19.

¹⁰ See Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1995) 242: “This is evidently the consummation of *l’art pour l’art*. Mankind, which in Homer’s time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first degree.”

¹¹ Wark, “Late Holocene Style,” 17.

reified technology. Two viewpoints dominate this line of thought: the first attributes agency to determinate ideological forces aligned with capital by *design* – which can be summed up by Negri’s understanding of modernity as “the definition & development of a totalizing thought that assumes human & collective creativity in order to insert them into the instrumental rationality of the capitalist mode of production of the world”¹²; the second attributes agency to evolutionary forces *arbitrarily* productive of capitalist ideological forms. The first remains mired in humanism, in which alienation is perceived as a *theft* of subjectivity – or, as Negri argues, “the negation of any possibility that the multitude may express itself as subjectivity”¹³; the second has a broadly cybernetic character in which alienation is *constitutive* of subjectivity. One conceives of the Anthropocene as the *real product* of industrial capitalism, which must be overcome – for Negri, by way of a “constituent power” that “points us beyond the limits of modernity”¹⁴; the other as the *production of the Real* itself, which cannot be overcome. This parallax view is not simply one of irreconcilable perspectives: the consciousness it implies is “unachievable,” & therefore *only* mystifiable.¹⁵ Yet modernity has always had the Anthropocene in mind: from the beginning, it desired to become the *future as such*, rather than to simply project a *futurism*. To become, moreover, the *only future possible*. Or none. In this way it defines, in effect, the very horizon of the unachievable, which constantly falls back upon a *future hypothesis* “in order to formulate,” as Lyotard says, “the rules of what *will have been done*.”¹⁶ Its movement remains that of an algorithm ramifying its bias along an exponential curve: feedback eschatology. And insofar as the Anthropocene corresponds to the “epoch” of this movement, it does so in the recursive temporality of the *catastrophic*.

6. For Benjamin, the End of History corresponds to a generalised technicity: not as a moment of “trans/cendence” of its aesthetic or *artefactual* condition – which would in any case merely reinscribe the auratic delirium of the art object – but as the *indefinite reproducibility* of the End of History itself. That is to say, as the vector of reification. This “inauthentic” mode of Being would be none other than that of the Real construed as the *order of an unconscious*, whose *operations* would display a fundamental ambivalence to the categorical distinctions of art & technology, Being & ideology. For Benjamin, such an ambivalence is the risk of demystification of aesthetic

¹² Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power & the Modern State*, trans. Maurizio Boscagli (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) 334.

¹³ Negri, *Insurgencies*, 335.

¹⁴ Negri, *Insurgencies*, 334.

¹⁵ Cf. Negri, *Insurgencies*, 335.

¹⁶ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 81.

autonomy, whose reification in the art object always threatens to inflate into a “trans/cendental commodity.” Yet the separation of art & life, of the aesthetic from the Real, History from technology, were never more than a *reification of this ambivalence* in the first place – within what Debord called “a whole irrational social praxis” of a “society that has every technical means to modify the biological foundations of the whole of life on earth”¹⁷ – & whose trans/cendence has never amounted to anything beyond the *ambivalence of its reification*. Neither can the Anthropocene, then, be reduced to the status of an artefact of “autonomous alienation,” nor even a constellation of such artefacts into an “aggregate of data.” Its convulsions will not correspond to an “emancipation of Man” & will not be the work of any Angel of History. Nor will it stand as a monument to the Human Abstract that supposedly gave birth to it – nor simply to the “universal development of the commodity” which, by dialecticising a collective subjectivity, will have been “wholly confirmed as the crowning achievement of political economy, in other words as the ‘abandonment of life,’” as Debord says, yet which would in turn merely confirm the commodity in its function as purveyor of a “tragic view of History.”¹⁸ If nothing has escaped the pull of commodification, it is because the seeming eschatological movement of the Anthropocene in the “Return of the Real” also marks the return of an originary technicity, of “the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*),”¹⁹ of the *primordial catastrophe*.

Coda: By a certain dialectical movement it would appear as if the Anthropocene, in contradiction to a mode of thought that would situate it as an object or product of modernity (its metonymic dwarf), inscribes the entirety the discursive field of modernity itself, in an apparent movement of displacement that comes into view not *at the end* of modernity, but after the project of declaring *an end* has exhausted itself in its own contradictions: at that point, in other words, that critical discourse (born of – & bored with – its own modernism) believes it has *finished with modernity* (just a certain brand of “vulgar Marxism” claims to have *finished with capitalism*). That is to say, that point at which critical discourse succumbs to the delirium of its own trans/cendental claims upon the Real, in the perverse pleasure of an “experience” – reified in this uniquely authentic critical artefact – of a self-destruction posited as the ideal “negation of negation.”

LOUIS ARMAND
London, June 2019

¹⁷ Guy Debord, “Theses on the Situationist International & its Time,” *The Real Split in the International*, trans. John McHale (London: Pluto, 2003) 23.

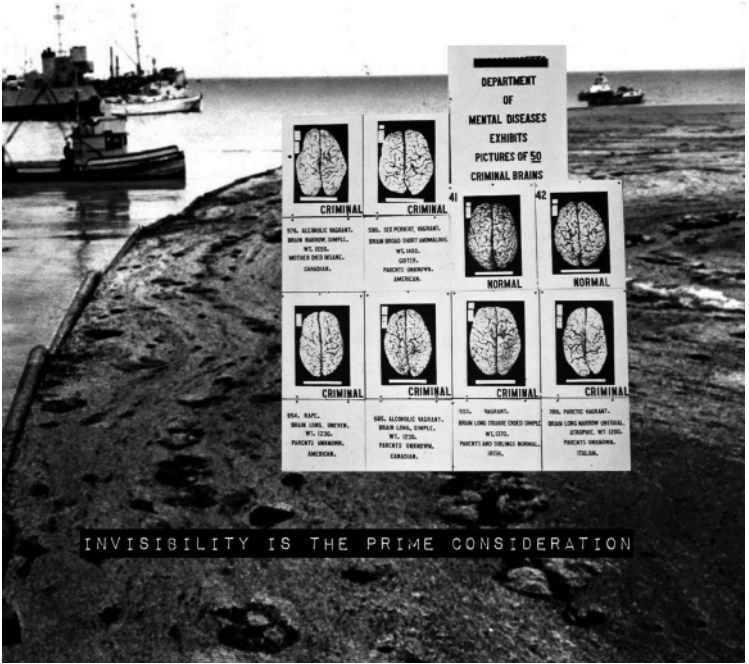
¹⁸ Debord, “Theses on the Situationist International & its Time,” 24.

¹⁹ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 81.

THE GUTENBERG GALAXY WAS A SCHATTENSPIEL IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC CAVE



ITS CONVULSIONS WILL NOT CORRESPOND TO AN "EMANCIPATION OF MAN" & WILL NOT BE THE WORK OF ANY ANGEL OF HISTORY



INVISIBILITY IS THE PRIME CONSIDERATION



AFTER HISTORY, WHO WILL BE LEFT TO JUDGE THEM?

HAPPINESS IS EXPENSIVE



HAPPINESS IS EXPENSIVE



ALIEN RHYTHMS

There was only one thing that I didn't like. In the very back of the garage, near the canisters, I could see something silvery. That hadn't been there before. Well, all right, so there was something silvery, we couldn't go back now just because of that! I mean it didn't shine in any special way, just a little bit & in a calm, even a gentle way. I got up, brushed myself off, & looked around. There were the trucks on the lot, just like new. Even newer than they had been the last time I was here. And the gasoline truck, the poor bastard was rusted through & ready to fall apart. I didn't like the looks of that tire. Its shadow wasn't right. The sun was at our backs, yet its shadow was stretching towards us. Well, all right, it was far enough away from us. It seemed OK, we could get on with our work. But what was the silvery thing shining back there? Was it just my imagination? Now, the thing to do would be to light up, sit down quietly & think it through – what's the silver stuff above the canisters... why is the tire's shadow like that? The Vulture Burbridge told me something about the shadows, that they were weird but harmless. Something happens here with the shadows. But what about that silver stuff? It looks just like a cobweb. What sort of spider could have left it behind? I had never seen any bugs in the Zone.

– Arkady & Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*

What is the schema of the spider? The schema of the spider is its web, & its web is the way it occupies space & time.... [T]ake the concept of a spider; the concept of a spider will include all of its anatomical parts & even the physiological functions of the spider. Thus one will encounter that funny sort of organ with which the spider makes its web. But can you deduce from it what we can now call the spatio-temporal being, & the correspondence of the web with the concept of a spider, which is to say with the spider as organism. It's very curious because it varies enormously according to the species of spider. There are cases of very extraordinary spiders that, when you mutilate one of their legs, which is nevertheless not used for fabrication, make abnormal webs in relation to their own species, they make a pathological web. What happened? As if a disturbance in space & time corresponded to the mutilation.

– Gilles Deleuze, 'The Schema & Synthesis,' *Lectures on Kant*

XENOMORPHIC EXTREMISM

Alienness – & the alienation that results from a confrontation with alienness – is the genesis of novelty & change. Wherever one encounters the alien, a mutation or a transformation is not far behind. And yet, because alienness involves an aspect of unknowability & unpredictability – an erasure of the familiar & the homely – it is also one of the things in the world which makes us most afraid. We fear the different & the strange, yet we require these things in order to evolve. This makes for a paradoxical affective relationship with the notions of otherness & difference that alienness encompasses – a bizarre & complex orientation unifying dread & desire. Already there is a kind of geometrical confusion in this: desire drives you forwards, while dread forces you back. As Mark Fisher writes in *The Weird & The Eerie*, it's

not a simple case of 'enjoy[ing] what scares us.' Rather, 'it has... to do with a *fascination* for the outside, for that which lies beyond standard perception, cognition & experience,' an affect that involves terror & distress, but isn't wholly described by them. Fisher's invocation of 'the outside' immediately brings into play the prefix 'xeno-,' a denotation nominating what follows it as foreign or alien – an 'outsider,' someone or something that arrives from the outside.

Rebekah Sheldon offers the following extended etymology of the term, alongside some of its contemporary applications.

Xeno. Greek ξενο-, ξεν-, combining form of ξένος, a guest, stranger, foreigner, *adj.* foreign, strange; used in various scientific & other terms including, e.g. peculiar accessories; cross-species disease; symbiosis & parasitism; a snake genus; metamorphic mineral defacement or *partial fusion*; foreign rule; disease vectors allowed to feed on pathogens in sterile laboratory environments; a type of diagnostic comparison; cross-fertilization; germline engineering & the products thereof; taking its origin from outside the body, as in a disease or a tissue graft; glossolalia; emotional or sexual obsession with the foreign; a gastropod mollusk; a kind of fish with spineless fins, scaleless skin, & a complex sucking-disk between the ventral fins; mineral deposits found at high temperatures; an inactive virus; an armadillo; extraterrestrial life-forms or the study thereof. Etymologically, xeno is *trans*. As graft, cut, intrusion, or excession, xeno names the *movement between, & the moving entity*. It is the foreign & the foreigner, the unexpected outside, the unlike offspring, the other within, the eruption of another meaning.'

'Xeno-' describes both a vector & an alteration: it is the coincidence of *transition* & *transformation*. It thereby involves a relationship between an inside & an outside, divided (or linked) by a threshold which becomes the object of a crossing. To better grasp this notion of outsideness that both Fisher & Sheldon call forth, it helps to understand what constitutes the inside, or what Fisher designates as 'standard perception, cognition & experience.' He provides a clue later in the book when he quotes from an enigmatic text first appearing in the 'Digital Hyperstition' issue of the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit's infamous underground cyberzine, *Abstract Culture*, in 1999. The text, titled 'The Templeton Episode,' narrates a strange experience undergone by an eccentric philosophy Professor named Randolph Edmund Templeton. Professor Templeton is a scholar of Immanuel Kant, & while meditating one dark evening in his attic room upon a copy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, he has the unnerving sensation of not being who he thinks he is – of a threshold being crossed. The feeling that something alien – something outside time & space – threatens to invade, thus confirming Templeton's hunch that Kant's philosophy, although typically taken to be a book about the *limits* of human 'perception, cognition & experience,' if read correctly, in fact functions as

a 'time-travelling manual.' In that moment, Templeton realises that he can use Kant's system 'as a guide for engineering time-synthesis.' And 'the key,' it occurs to him, 'is the secret of the schematism, which – although «an art concealed in the depths of the human soul» – concerns only the unutterable Abomenon of the Outside.'

According to Kant, our experience of the world is governed by conformity to strict cognitive, perceptual & experiential rules. These rules give us objects, temporal succession (which is to say, time experienced as a linear flow that moves inexorably from moment A to moment B to moment C) & spatial co-existence (there are consistent cartographic coordinates that exist for everyone in the same universal space – Antarctica doesn't disappear just because no one is perceiving it). Human perception thus operates as an inbuilt clock & compass that systematise & universalise our experience, guaranteeing that, even when separated by vast distances, or great stretches of time, we humans think of ourselves as inhabiting the *same* space, & the *same* historical timeline, & that this space & time function consistently & predictably across the entirety of human experience. For us, time has only one dimension – that of a line – & space has three.

These rules draw the bounds of the inside by constituting the edges of shared perceptual, cognitive & experiential possibility for us as human beings. Consequently, there is a sameness that structures reality for us. Our experience of the world is navigable & communicable because of this sameness. It determines our rhythmic regime – a specifically anthropomorphic regime: linear time, simultaneous, three-dimensional space, & objecthood are its framing parameters – its tempo or its beat. Inside these parameters, diverse & idiosyncratic rhythms unfold – but they never break the beat. Time remains linear; space, simultaneous. Consequently, experience, at its most fundamental & unconscious level, is ordered, familiar, comfortable, & homely, scaled reassuringly to match our perceptual affordances.

It is not often that we come by experiences that threaten to disturb these patterns. Given the choice, most of us would deliberately avoid them. 'It makes sense' writes psycho-analyst Sigmund Freud that 'repetition, the re-encountering of identity (or sameness), is itself a source of pleasure' – for pleasure, as Fisher helpfully glosses, 'alway[s] refer[s] to *previous* forms of satisfaction' – it is defined by familiarity. But what if this situation were inverted – the heterogeneity & diversity that can be sustained by rhythm preceding the necessary homogeneity of the tempo? What if objects didn't work how you expected them to? What if the framing logic of time & space was different? What if the beat was... *eerie*?

In his book, Fisher contrasts Freud's *unheimlich* – the 'uncanny' or the 'unhomely' – with his own treatment of the weird & the eerie. The *unheimlich*, he writes, 'is about the strange *within* the familiar... it is haunted

by an outside which it circles around but can never fully acknowledge or affirm.' However, he continues: 'the weird & the eerie make the opposite move: they allow us to see the inside from the perspective of the outside.'

The weird & the eerie designate distinct affective tonalities related to 'modes of perception' or 'modes of being' proper to these zones of traffic, leakage, or porosity between the standardising pulse of the inside, & the transformative rhythmicity of the outside. While the weird is related to 'that *which does not belong*' – bringing 'to the familiar something which ordinarily lies beyond it, & which cannot be reconciled' with it using known rules of assimilation or intelligibility, the eerie describes the *absence* of a purposive agent where there should be one, just as much as the *presence* of a purposive agent where there shouldn't be one. In the weird there is something extra & unintelligible in what would otherwise be an ordinary scene – 'an exorbitant presence, a teeming which exceeds our capacity to represent it'; in the eerie there is a problem of misplaced action. 'The eerie is fundamentally tied up with questions of agency,' he writes, it clings most readily to 'landscapes partially emptied of the human,' where one is prompted to ask '*What happened* to produce these ruins, this disappearance? What kind of entity was involved?... What kind of agent is acting here? Is there an agent at all?' He identifies it with particular acuteness in science fiction scenarios dealing with the inexplicable emptiness of outer space – & with the implacability of terrestrial capitalism: 'eerie impasse[s] arise 'when mismatching modes of intelligence, cognition & communication confront one another.' When brought into contact with an eerie outside agency, "we" "ourselves" are caught up in the rhythms, pulsions & patternings of non-human forces.' Because both the weird & eerie describe the 'new' in this radical way – as an intrusion of alien outsidership – whether as the operation of an eerie agency or of something in the environment which does not belong – they automatically indicate the impossibility of knowledge & explanation: 'When knowledge is achieved, the eerie disappears.'

In a similar fashion to Fisher's dismissal of the uncanny as subordinating alienness to familiarity – of merely locating the strange within the greater frame of the familiar, of neutralising novelty in advance – Sheldon writes: 'If the uncanny marks the hideous return *as if new* of what was always already known – the groundwork whose repression allows the enclosure of a domestic interior, [the outsidership of] XENO is of its own order.'

What exactly would it mean to come into contact with this 'order' that is outside order? Where the weird & the eerie reign, where the parameters that structure experience are open to wild & violent variations that efface all knowability & predictability, that make every movement treacherous & charged with the ambiguity of desire & dread, novelty & fate? What if moving forwards through space didn't necessarily mean moving forwards in

time? What if 'forwards' & 'backwards' were to lose their meaning entirely? What would it feel like to interface with a spacetime – an *alien rhythm* – that does not follow any recognisable human pattern & whose agency remains opaque? Who are these perverse creatures that would *desire* such a thing?

If you're frequenting the right corners of the internet, you might be asked by some passing anon to 'tag yourself' on a spectrum of alien desire that looks something like this:



This chart, courtesy of the rabidly metastasising cultural distribution-system known as 4Chan, is interesting for several reasons. First, it conceives alienness on a spectrum evolving from traditional human morphology to the wildly unfathomable monstrosity of 'multidimensional eldritch horrors' in seven successive stages. Second, it figures this desire sexually – a suggestion which becomes graphically more untenable via the usual human means as monstrosity increases. And third, it implies a distinct – almost Orphic – threshold which, once crossed, offers no opportunity of return.

As the hypothetical object of one's desire modulates across the spectrum from 'humans' to 'unconventional non-humanoids,' it correlates with certain intensities of xenophilia corresponding to an amplitude of sameness or difference. Those for whom anything beyond general humanity, with perhaps a dash of lime-green skin, is unappetising are designated as 'Normies,' shading into the still dimorphically-sexed 'Monster Girl Fan' (or Monster Boy Fan – this, as is stated in the bottom left-hand corner, is the 'female edition') with the transition to the fairly typical, traditional alien imaginary including 'Greys' & 'Little Green Men' – before emphatically crossing a boundary at the point where the human face starts to lose its distinctness, a desire for 'Teratomorphic Humanoids' ominously classified as 'Trapped with No Way Back.' 'Open-Minded Alien Lovers' have a penchant for increasingly anomalous forms, moving from 'Borderline

Humanoids' in which a retreating anthropomorphism is concretised in the erasure of sex organs or the addition of various non-human appendages, to 'Conventional Non-Humanoids,' where it disappears completely in a chimerisation of insectoid, vegetal & machinic parts. At the furthest extreme of weirdness one encounters the realm of 'Unconventional Non-Humanoids': dimensionally anomalous, of 'indefinable shape' – a situation of strange liminal plasticity in which it becomes 'unclear where [the] body starts & ends.' The corresponding subject position is that of the 'True Xenophile,' one caught up in a desire of that which exceeds even form itself.

An ambiguous joke posted on a related thread reads:

'Why are monstergirls better than a real woman?'

'Because the monster is on the Outside.'

Here 'xeno-' comes into its own. Strictly defined, a *xeno-morph[ē]* is something that is outside form. These aliens are at the furthest end of the spectrum – a spectrum whose logic follows an explicitly anthropomorphic order – because they overturn this order entirely. There is no eighth classification: form, past this point, is irrelevant. Alien desire extinguishes itself with the dissolution of form into the conditions of form: the laws of space & time. These extreme xenomorphs – formal outsiders – encapsulate something close to what weird fiction author H.P. Lovecraft gestures towards when he writes of his characters' wishes '[t]o shake off the maddening & wearying limitations of time & space & natural law – to be linked with the vast outside.'

What I want to suggest here, applying Fisher & Sheldon's concepts of outsideness as something beyond the fundamentally human rhythm of linear temporality & simultaneous, three-dimensional spatiality, to this spectrum of alien desire, is that the truly alien, the most extreme & productive mutant edge of alienating difference, is the alien understood as a *space-time* – a rhythm – a temporal cartography – an eerie beat – that operates in a way that is wholly other to the standardised 'perception, cognition & experience' that spontaneously structures reality for us humans. A 'True Xenophile' is a lover of alien rhythm.

THE PATHOLOGICAL WEB

This is a scene from Andrei Tarkovsky's 1979 film, *Stalker*. The eponymous stalker is just about to enter the 'Zone' – a space in which physical laws do not seem to apply in the same way as they do in the outside world' – or better the *inside* world, for once they have crossed the border of the Zone, the stalker, & his customers, known only as the 'Writer' & the 'Physicist,' find themselves beholden to a spatio-temporal logic that is entirely different from our own – a realm of extreme xenomorphia – the weird & eerie utternullity of an obscure

& alien beat. Tarkovsky's *Stalker* is just one particular treatment of what has now become a persistent theme in contemporary science fiction – something we might call the 'zone' trope, first innovated by Arkady & Boris Strugatsky (who also wrote the screenplay for *Stalker*) in their 1972 novel, *Roadside Picnic*. More recently, invocations of the 'zone' can be found in M. John Harrison's *Nova Swing*; Jeff Vandemeer's *Southern Reach Trilogy* – comprising the novels, *Annihilation*, *Authority & Acceptance* – & Alex Garland's 2018 film *Annihilation*, which is based loosely on the latter.

These works speculate upon the appearance of a sudden, monumental, unexplained disturbance in anthropomorphic space-time known variously as 'the Zone,' 'the event site,' 'Area X' or 'the Shimmer.' Across their borders, a – sometimes fatal – unpredictability reigns. Space & time no longer function following intelligible human laws. Their rhythm is altogether inhuman. 'Scale & perspective [are] impossible to achieve.' Decay sets in unnervingly quickly in Vandemeer's Area X. In *Roadside Picnic* it only effects certain objects, while for others, time seems to run in reverse. Compasses & watches are ineffectual. Gravity is fractious. Radio waves, light waves & genetic information partake in inexplicable exchanges under a strange logic of transversal refraction.

'Though the flowers were all on the same stem, & the same shape, they were of different colours.' The environment changes suddenly & inexplicably, & cause-effect relations are indecipherable, if they even apply at all. 'You can't get change less ordered,' remarks Ascherman, a specialist detective in the Saudade Site Crime unit, to professional stalker & erstwhile site criminal, Vic Serotonin, a suspect in the case he has been assigned to. 'Look at it, so raw & meaningless! The wrong physics, they say, loose in the universe. Do you understand that? I don't.' 'What's there to understand?... It's the zone.'

In each of these texts, traffic into & out of the zone is monitored, policed & incompetently regulated by a local military apparatus. Its prime targets are the stalkers – social outcasts of some kind or another – who harbour an enigmatic attraction to the area. Risking their lives every time they cross the border, the stalkers survive by smuggling definitionally 'weird' artefacts back to the ordinary world & selling them on the black market, or by offering their services to tourists, who, for similarly arcane reasons, find themselves ensorcelled by the zone's strange allure – it is for this reason that the citizens of Saudade refer to Vic Serotonin as a 'travel agent.' In Vandemeer & Garland's *Annihilation*, the figure of the stalker is replaced by the participants of a series of secretive, experimental military expeditions: men & women deployed into the zone by a dysfunctional & authoritarian martial organisation known as the 'Southern Reach.' In both the trilogy & the film, the first ten expeditions are deemed failures, tallying a collective



survivor count of zero. It is only with the eleventh & twelfth expeditions that someone makes it back alive. The first of these is a soldier, the second a biologist. But whether or not they can be said to have returned 'intact' remains an open question.

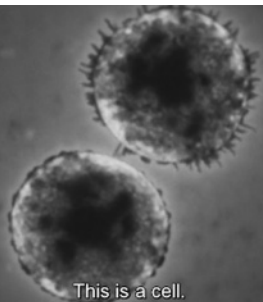
The stalkers make maps but they rarely prove useful, if not downright deceptive. In Tarkovsky's zone, the serpentine line is the shortest path, & all the stalkers know that one can never go back the way one came. 'You're saying we get out by going deeper in?' confirms the physicist in Garland's *Annihilation*. The only way out is through. The travel agents in *Nova Swing* rely on nothing more than determinate than chance to make it across the event site's coruscating border alive: 'No one knew a dependable route through the aureole... or, if they made it through, where they would end up inside. They weren't even sure if inside/outside concepts had meaning.' 'What's outside the border when you're inside it?' asks a scientist at Southern Reach, 'What *is* the border when you're inside it? What is the border when someone is outside it? Why can't the person inside see the person outside?' 'How do we know that what we come back to is the same?' Does the world they have left even exist after they enter the zone? Intra-zone *temporal* logic is just as displaced in comparison to the ordinary world as it is spatially. Time passes at an accelerated pace.

In *Roadside Picnic*, the zone reverses entropy, reanimating the dead buried long ago in an ancient cemetery that has since become part of its territory, & offers an inexhaustible power supply in the perpetual motion machines or 'spacell batteries' the stalkers retrieve from the debris to sell to the military & unscrupulous local entrepreneurs. 'The spacells violate the first principle of thermodynamics, & the corpses, the second; that's the only difference.' It yields up impossible objects – like *Roadside Picnic's* 'black sparks' –

If you shine a light at [one of these] bead[s], the light will be emitted after a pause, & the length of the pause depends on the weight of the ball, its size, & a number of other parametres, while the frequency of the emitted light is always less than the original frequency. What does this mean? Why? There's an insane idea that these black sparks are actually vast expanses of space – space with different properties from our own.

– or the coveted 'full empty' retrieved by Red Schuhart at the cost of his best friend's life.

Yet perhaps the most unsettling feature of the Zone, the event site, Area X, & the Shimmer, is that they are *expanding* – their alien rhythms comprising not only a new logic of space, time & objects, but an inhuman logic of reproduction.



This is a cell.



Like all cells,
it is born from an existing cell.



And by extension,



all cells were ultimately born
from one cell.

THE RHYTHM OF DIVISION

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud posited the existence of two kinds of drives – a life drive & a death drive – that would be explanatory for the history of evolution. In developing his theory, he drew on the work of evolutionary biologist August Weismann. Weismann hypothesised that multicellular organisms were structured around two distinct elements: the germ plasm – a primary biological continuity containing all hereditary genetic information, & the soma plasm – comprising the individual bodies of organisms & their environments, linked & divided by a threshold that would become known as the ‘Weismann barrier’ – a *link* because the organism is determined unilaterally by the differences latent in the continuum of the germ plasm, & a *division* because the unilateral nature of genetic expression – flowing from the germ plasm to the soma plasm – excludes the influence of environmental changes feeding-back into the germ plasm from the soma plasm. Despite complicated divergences, both Freud & Weismann’s theories posit a similar structure: a primary, enduring, & undead outside is related unilaterally to a secondary, ephemeral & temporary inside. In both, however, the primary force is cumulative, straight-forwardly hereditary, & ultimately entropic.

Deleuze would take both Freud & Weismann’s theories & alter them whilst retaining the general structure of a primary, continuous outside related to a formally-constrained inside: the prevailing operation is negentropic rather than entropic, virtual rather than possible, & the germ plasm evolves topologically, through folds, rather than in a linear fashion. Evolution, following Deleuze, is *transversal* – a cyberpозzed Weismannianism – in which the howling continuum of the biocosmic germline assembles series of multiplicities. Not the straight line of single, taut, thread, but a pathological web. ‘Am I confused when I remember, or try to, the time before I was born?’ wonders one of Vic Serotonin’s zone-cursed clients. It is something akin to what Sheldon describes in her definition of ‘xeno-’ as ‘cross-fertilisation’ & ‘germline engineering’ via intrusion or alliance with the outside. Or, as Luciana Parisi has put it,

the forces that actually produce experience are for the most part without form or law. Thus, an actual difference, conveying the contingency of experience, is constituted through a chance concatenation of forces: converging & diverging fluxes that together produce something new & unpredictable.

In *Roadside Picnic*, objects inside the zone ‘multiply by division’ while the zone reproduces itself through vectors of mutation (the stalkers’ children, like Red Schuhart’s furry-daughter, or Tarkovsky’s stalker’s lame child, are notoriously alien) & contagion. *Roadside Picnic*’s outlaw medic, known

fondly, as 'The Butcher' rapidly becomes famous as 'the first doctor on the planet to specialise in nonhuman illnesses of man,' while the black market economy ensures the circulation of the zone's bizarre artefacts, so that 'all that used to be in the Zone [will finally] settle in the outside world.' *Nova Swing's* event site is notorious for its 'daughter code,' a biodigital plague that disassembles its victims & rearranges them. 'Everything ran wild inside in him, as if his body was trying to be something else but had no plan: his organs switched on & off at random, his bones didn't make platelets anymore. [It was] some hybrid virus which self-assembled in his cells from three or four kinds of RNA & a manufactured gene no one could identify.'

The characters who find themselves inexplicably drawn to the zone – the expedition participants, the stalkers, the travel agents, & their clientele – are collectively animated by a drive towards the unknown. Searching for the very thing that breaks up their human rhythm, the source of their automatisms, & an indefinable dissolution synonymous with a loss of the thing that maintains this restriction – the self. Memory ceases to function; names evaporate in the zone. Those who enter it finish up by becoming something else, subject to invasion by exterior forces. Artists of dissolution, driven by desire for an alien rhythm. 'You want to know what it's like in there?' asks seasoned stalker Emil Bonaventura of his protege in *Nova Swing*, 'The fact is, you spend all those years trying to make something of it. Then guess what, it starts making something of you.' Connection wrought through division.

In the final book of Vandermeer's trilogy, standing in the ruined mirror lighthouse of the Lost Coast, a replica of the lighthouse that seeded Area X – the two shores separated by a black stretch of sea – the biologist watches her double approach her from the other side, transfixed by its 'glory & monstrosity,' its 'many glowing eyes' – 'a living constellation ripped from the night sky'... 'In the multiplicity of that regard, she saw what [the eyes] saw. She saw herself, standing there, looking down. She saw that the biologist now existed across locations & landscapes, those other horizons gathering in a blurred & rising wave' – 'a single abstract Wave at the intersection of all concrete forms' – '... there was connection.' A cosmic love of, or alliance with, the xenomorph. The profound & annihilating sorcery of an alien rhythm.

AMY IRELAND

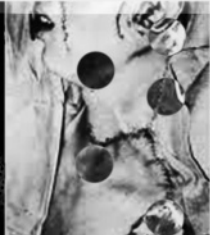


somewhere in the world midnight was long ago





"HUMANISM WITHOUT HUMANITY, IF NECESSARY"





Stelarc, **SITTING SWAYING** (Tamura Gallery, Tokyo 1982).
Photo: Keisuke Oki

Stelarc, **SITTING SWAYING** (Tamura Gallery, Tokyo 1982). The body was counter-balanced by a ring of rocks, one rock for each insertion point. The insertions were done sitting on the gallery floor. The rocks were attached to eyebolts in the ceiling with slip-knots. By tugging on each cable, the rocks came down & the body went up. The body then gently swayed from side to side generating random oscillations in the rocks. The performance ended when the telephone rang in the gallery. (Photo: Keisuke Oki)

EXCESS / AMBIVALENCE / ANXIETY **ZOMBIES, CYBORGS & CHIMERAS**

The body needs to navigate from nano-scales to virtual non-places. stretched beneath & beyond its skin & the local space it inhabits. Task envelopes multiply & diversify in proximal & remote operations. Within the liminal realms of floating signifiers, the body experiences itself as a hollow body, with an extruded self – an intense emptiness that is an inevitable outcome in an age of excess.

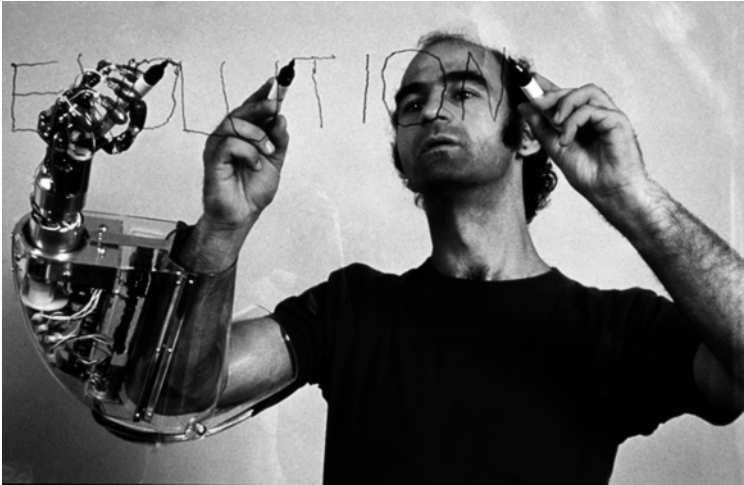
Body parts become exchangeable. Organs can be extracted & detached from one body & inserted & attached onto other bodies. Body parts become commodified. Not only can you now caress the face of your loved one but you might also soon caress the deformed face of your deceased loved one, stitched to the skull of a recipient living body. And cadaver hands, stitched to the arms of an amputee



Stelarc, **MULTIPLE HANDS** (Roppongi Studio, Tokyo 1983). The Third Hand is a three degree-of-freedom mechanical prosthesis with a pinch-release, grasp-release & 300 degree wrist rotation, CW & CCW. Tactile sensors on the finger tips provide a rudimentary sense of touch. Originally the intention was not only to engineer a third hand but also a fourth hand to maintain the body's symmetry. (Photo: T. Ike)

can be reanimated with a sense of touch, texture & temperature regained. Holding the hands of your previous loved one passed away, reanimated on another living body. You will not die with the body you were born with. If we can 3D print organs, if we can stem-cell grow organs there will be an excess of organs. Of organs awaiting bodies, of Organs Without Bodies. Flesh is circulating.

**THE MUNDANE BECOMES THE MONSTROUS,
THE CARTOON BECOMES THE GROTESQUE.
THE BODY BECOMES THE MACHINE. ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE BECOMES AN ALIEN INTELLIGENCE.**



Stelarc, **HANDSWRITING** (Maki Gallery, Tokyo 1982). Writing one word simultaneously with three hands. Because of the spacing of the three hands you had to remember the sequence writing every third letter. You have to keep your two eyes on what your three hands were doing. Because the performance was done on a sheet of glass between the artist & the audience, you had to learn to write the word back to front. (Photo: Keisuke Oki)

The body has become a contemporary chimera of Meat, Metal & Code.

THE DANGEROUS IS NOT THE DYSTOPIAN BUT RATHER THE DELUSION OF REMAINING HUMAN, OF RETAINING THIS BODY, WITH THIS FORM & THESE FUNCTIONS. THE NOSTALGIA FOR THE HUMAN NECESSITATES AN INTERROGATION OF THE BODY NOT AS A SUBJECT BUT AS AN OBJECT, AS AN EVOLUTIONARY ARCHITECTURE.

AMPLIFIED BODY

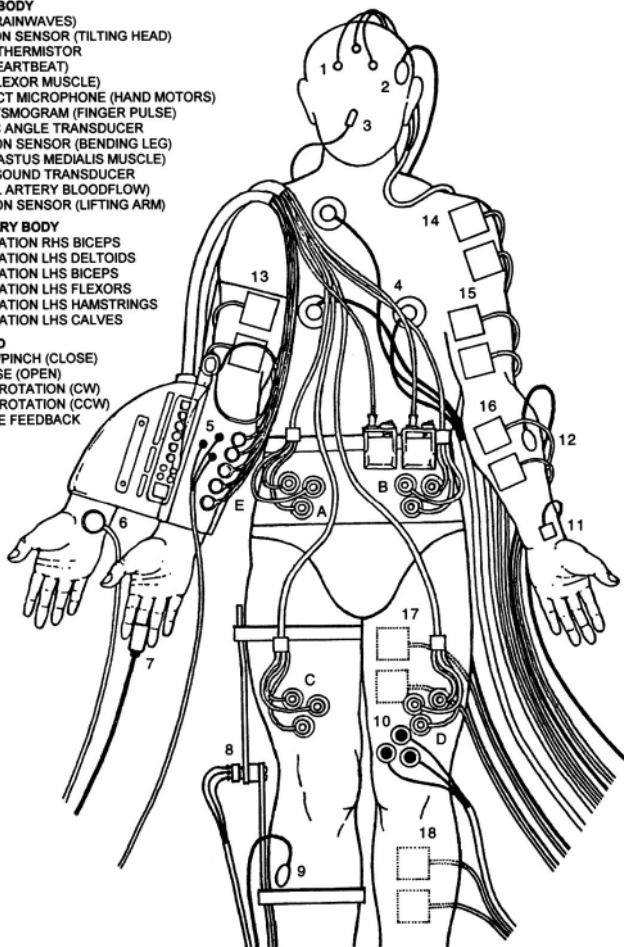
1. EEG (BRAINWAVES)
2. POSITION SENSOR (TILTING HEAD)
3. NASAL THERMISTOR
4. ECG (HEARTBEAT)
5. EMG (FLEXOR MUSCLE)
6. CONTACT MICROPHONE (HAND MOTORS)
7. PLETHYSMOGRAM (FINGER PULSE)
8. KINETIC ANGLE TRANSDUCER
9. POSITION SENSOR (BENDING LEG)
10. EMG (VASTUS MEDIALIS MUSCLE)
11. ULTRASOUND TRANSDUCER (RADIAL ARTERY BLOODFLOW)
12. POSITION SENSOR (LIFTING ARM)

INVOLUNTARY BODY

13. STIMULATION RHS BICEPS
14. STIMULATION LHS DELTOIDS
15. STIMULATION LHS BICEPS
16. STIMULATION LHS FLEXORS
17. STIMULATION LHS HAMSTRINGS
18. STIMULATION LHS CALVES

THIRD HAND

- A. GRASP/PINCH (CLOSE)
- B. RELEASE (OPEN)
- C. WRIST ROTATION (CW)
- D. WRIST ROTATION (CCW)
- E. TACTILE FEEDBACK



INVOLUNTARY BODY / THIRD HAND

Stelarc, **INVOLUNTARY BODY / THIRD HAND** (Yokohama, Melbourne 1990). The Third Hand was actuated by signals from the abdominal & leg muscles. The body's brainwaves, heartbeat, blood flow & muscle signals were amplified acoustically. Whilst the square electrodes indicate which muscles were contracted involuntarily, voltage-in on the LHS generating involuntary limb movements, voltage-out on the RHS actuating a Third Hand.



Stelarc, **STOMACH SCULPTURE** (5th Australian Sculpture Triennale, NGV, Melbourne 1993). Closed as a cylindrical structure, the sculpture was inserted into the stomach cavity, inflated with air. Once inside the stomach, the sculpture opens & closes, extends & retracts, has a flashing light & a beeping sound. A machine choreography inside a soft, dark & wet organ of the body. The body is not a site for the psyche nor for social inscription. The body simply becomes a host for a sculpture. (Photo: Anthony Figallo)

To be suspended is to be between states. Neither fully in one state nor fully in the other state. To be neither all-here, nor all all-there, but partly here & partly over there. To be neither in the past nor in the future. The present becomes what never happened before nor what will possibly happen later. At any moment the body is neither fully cognizant nor fully anticipatory. How to perform with indifference & without expectation? To be neither this body nor any other body?

Engineering replicas of yourself, whether robotic or genetic, is engineering a replica that is inherently inadequate not only to itself but also in-itself. The replica is what it is & not what it was nor what it can become. A replica is not a doubling but a subtractive outcome.

THE BODY NOT AS AN OBJECT OF DESIRE, BUT AN OBJECT TO REDESIGN.

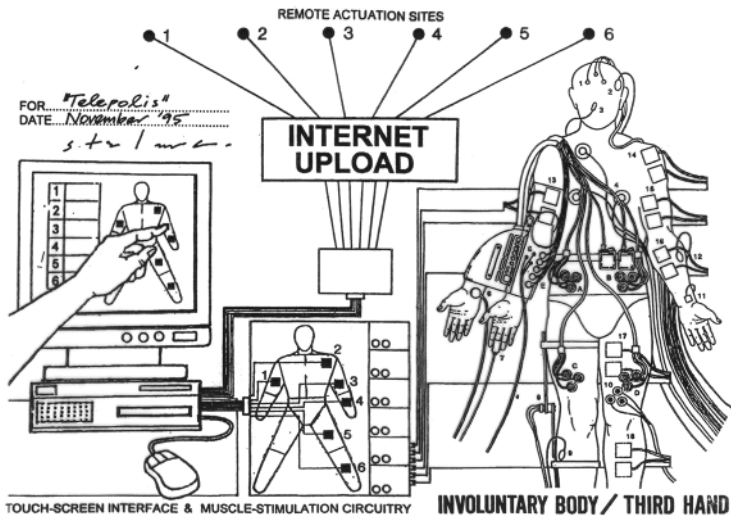


Stelarc, **EXOSKELETON** (Cankarjev Dom, Ljubljana 2003). The 6-legged walking machine was robust enough to support the weight of the artist. The upper body exoskeleton allows the artist to select the walking motions by his arm gestures. The robot can walk forwards & backwards with a ripple gait, sideways with a tripod gait, it can turn on the spot, sit & stand up. The performance was about taking the robot for a walk. (Photo: Igor Skafar)

Instead of accelerating the rate of individual development there seems to be a regression & retaining of the infantile. The urge for juvenescence, to extend lifespan has fatally triggered an urge to be infantile. The diseases of ageing give way to the pathologies of infantile behavior.

Artificial wombs are now possible. They may be ethically problematic but they could be engineered. And if a fetus can be sustained in an external womb & brought to bear as a healthy child, then a person's life would not begin with birth. And if we can replace malfunctioning organs with stem cell grown or 3D printed parts then life would not necessarily end in death. Birth & death, the evolutionary means for shuffling genetic material to create diversity in our species & for population control, will no longer be the bounding of our existence. Our analogue development, deterioration & death becomes unnecessary. Existence has to be defined neither beginning with birth nor ending in death.

NEITHER BIRTH NOR DEATH.



Stelarc, **FRACTAL FLESH** (Telepolis, Luxembourg 1995). People in the Pompidou Centre in Paris, the Media Lab in Helsinki & the Doors of Perception conference in Amsterdam were able to access the body via touch screen interface & remotely choreograph its movements, inadvertently composing the sounds generated. It was a two day performance for six hours each day.

THE CADAVER, THE COMATOSE & THE CRYOGENIC – We can preserve a cadaver indefinitely with plastination while we can simultaneously sustain a comatose body on life-support systems. Dead bodies need not decompose, & near dead bodies need not die. The brain-dead have beating hearts. The right to die becomes as important as the right to live. To live is often the result of being connected to instruments & machines. Death now for many means that which happens when the body is disconnected from its technological life-support systems. The dead, the near-dead, the not yet born & the partially living exist simultaneously. And cryogenically preserved bodies await reanimation at some imagined future.

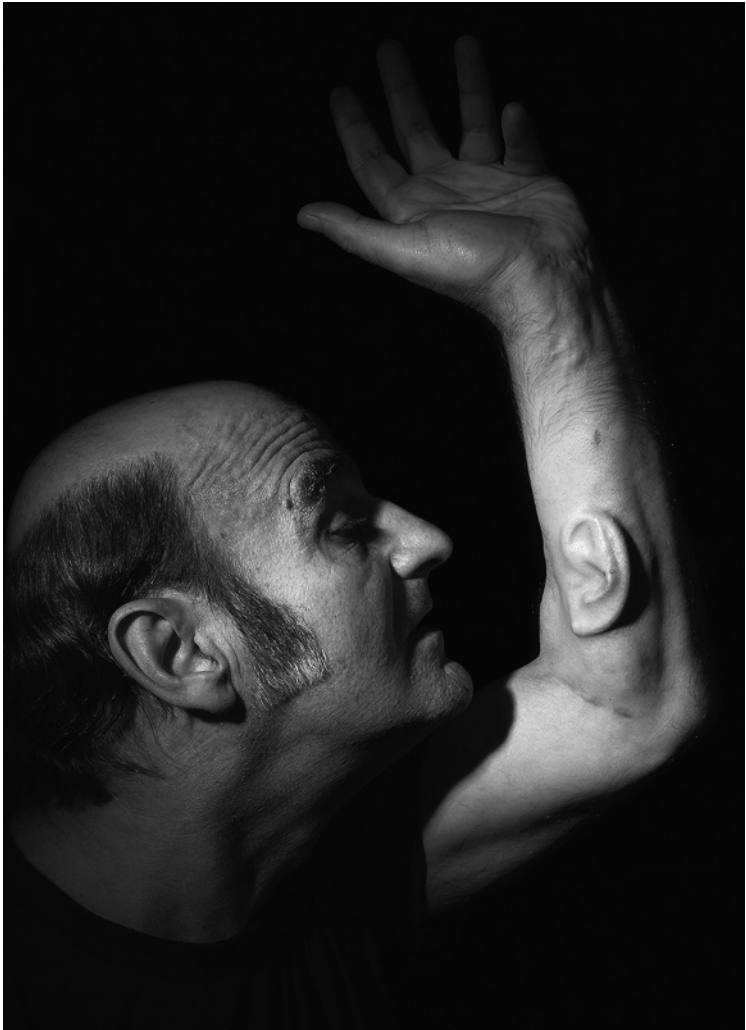
The suspension performances are really experiments in bodily sensation expressed in different spaces, in diverse situations. They are not actions for interpretation nor require any explanation. In fact they are not meant to generate any meaning at all. Rather they are sites of indifference & states of erasure.



Stelarc, **EXTENDED ARM** (Scott Livesey Galleries 2010). The right arm is extended to primate proportions, providing the arm with an extra joint. An 11 degree-of-freedom manipulator with wrist rotation, thumb rotation, individual finger flexion with each finger splitting open, each finger becoming a gripper in-itself. (Photo: Dean Winter)

SMART BOMBS, DUMB BODIES.

And we are increasingly expected to perform in Mixed & Augmented Realities. To operate effectively we need to seamlessly slide between the actual, the instrumental & the virtual. We are rewired physically, re-located to remote spaces & have become mere disembodied, mobile eyes & a circulating cacophony of whispers.



Stelarc, **EAR ON ARM** (London, Los Angeles, Melbourne 2006). An ear was surgically constructed on my right arm. When the porous bio-polymer scaffold was inserted into the arm & the skin was suctioned over the scaffold, over a period of six months you get tissue ingrowth & vascularization occurring. The ear becomes a living part of the body. The idea is not only to replicate an ear on my arm but to electronically augment & internet enable the ear. The ear will become a remote listening device for people in other places. (Photo: Nina Sellars)



Stelarc, **EAR ON ARM SUSPENSION** (Scott Livesey Galleries, Melbourne 2012). 16 hooks were inserted into the back & legs. The performance began when the body was hoisted off the 4 metre long sculpture of the ear on my arm. Because the steel cable is braided, when the full weight of the body is supported, the cable begins to untwist, spinning the body one way, then the other. The spinning stopped after 15 minutes. The performance ended when the body was hoisted back onto the sculpture. (Photo: Polixeni Papapetrou)

The first signs of an alien intelligence may well come from this planet.

ALL TECHNOLOGY IN THE FUTURE WILL BE INVISIBLE, BECAUSE IT WILL BE INSIDE THE HUMAN BODY. HAVING EXHALED ITS ARTIFACTS IT NOW INHALES ITS MICRO & NANO TECHNOLOGIES. INSTEAD OF BEING CONTAINED, THE BODY NOW INCORPORATES TECHNOLOGY AS A COMPONENT. TECHNOLOGY CAN NOW INHABIT CAVITIES, SPACES, STRUCTURES & CIRCULATORY SYSTEMS OF THE BODY.

All technology in the future will be invisible because it will be inside the body. The body can now be designed atoms-up, inside-out.

A Zombie is a body without a mind of its own, a body that performs involuntarily, a body without an agency. A Cyborg is a hybrid human-machine system. We fear the involuntary & are anxious about becoming automated. But we fear what we have always been, Zombie bodies, & what we have already become – prosthetically augmented Cyborg Bodies.



Stelarc, **PROPEL: BODY ON ROBOT ARM** (DeMonstrable-Autronics, Lawrence Wilson Gallery, Perth 2016). The body was attached to the end of a 6 degree-of-freedom industrial robot arm. Its position-orientation, trajectory & velocity was precisely programmed for a 30 minute performance. The body was then replaced by a large sculpture of the ear on the arm & the same choreography was performed. The robot that choreographs the movements of the ear is the same robot that carved the ear. The robot was effectively used as a CNC machine. (Photo: Steven Aaron Hughes)

A prosthesis is not a sign of lack, but rather a symptom of excess.

THE BODY IS ACCELERATED & AUGMENTED BY METAL WITH A SPEED & PRECISION THAT FAR EXCEEDS ITS METABOLIC, MUSCULAR, SENSORY & COGNITIVE CAPABILITIES. TECHNOLOGY EXPOSES THE BODY AS OBSOLETE, ANXIOUS & AMBIVALENT.

In an age of excess, augmented & amplified, we become more than we can imagine, but ironically, radically empty. An emptiness not through a lack but an emptiness through excess & extrusion.

The body is obsolete, but not yet extinct. The body is empty, but an emptiness that allows it to become a better host for all its instruments & machines. Stretched between what it never was & what it could never become; suspended between the inward pull of gravity & the outward thrust of information. The body has desires but does not express them. The body feels pain but remains silent and stoic. A body that neither thinks nor exhibits affect. A suspended body is an anesthetized body.

THE DEAD, THE NEAR-DEAD, THE UNDEAD, THE YET TO BE BORN, PARTIAL & SYNTHETIC LIFE ALL NOW EXIST PROXIMAL TO OTHER BODIES, MACHINES, MICROBIAL LIFE & VIRAL CODE.

Bodies become end-effectors for other bodies in other places & for machines elsewhere, generating interactive loops & recursive choreographies. Fractal Flesh proliferates, Phantom Flesh soon becomes potent.

Alternate Anatomical Architectures. Beyond Bio-mimicry.

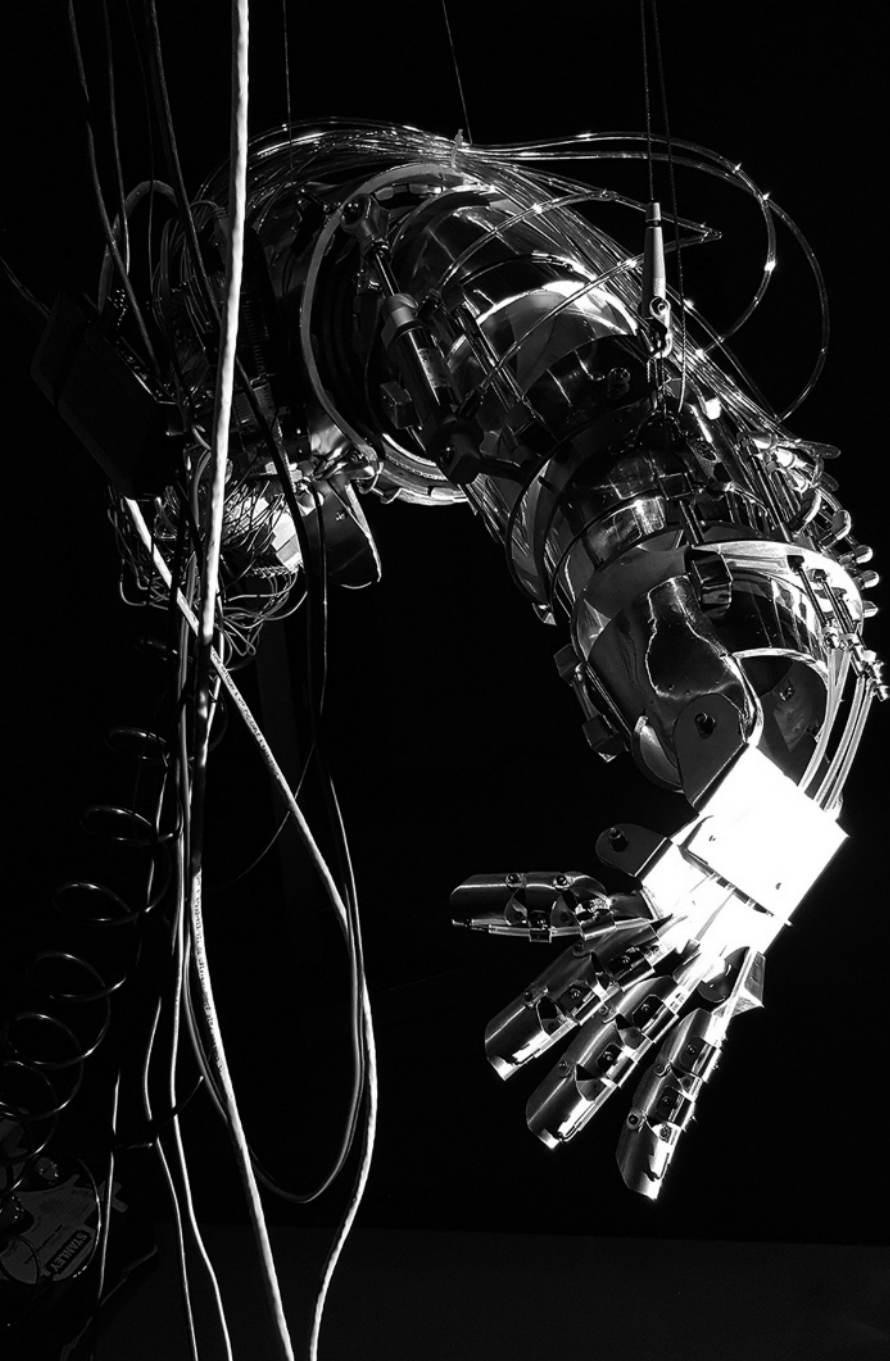
IT IS NO LONGER NECESSARY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN BEING BIOLOGICALLY ALIVE & A MACHINE OPERATIONAL ALIVENESS. WHAT OF A THIRD HAND, A VIRTUAL ARM, A VIRTUAL BODY, A STOMACH SCULPTURE, AN EXTENDED ARM, A PROSTHETIC HEAD, AN EXTRA EAR, A STICKMAN EXOSKELETON?

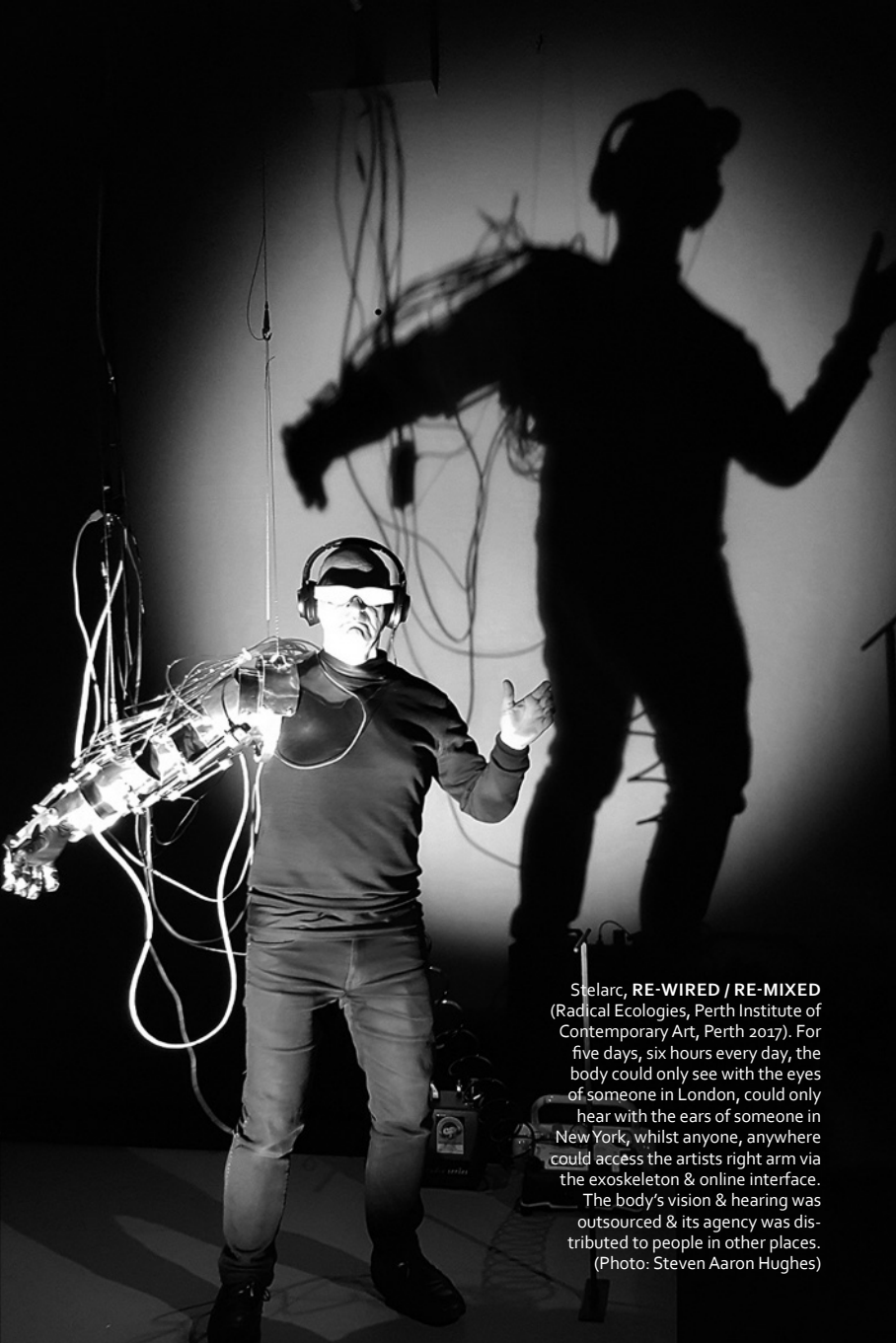
From a schizoid body to a cyber-system.

VOLTAGE-IN / VOLTAGE-OUT, GENERATING PARTLY INVOLUNTARY & PARTLY AGENCY DRIVEN CHOREOGRAPHY. BECOMING A SIMULTANEOUSLY POSSESSED & PERFORMING BODY.

It is no longer meaningful to imagine having a mind of your own, nor any mind at all in the traditional metaphysical sense. The traumatized body inhabits proliferating spaces of anxiety & ambivalence & needs to remain indifferent, open to possibilities.

What it means to be human is perhaps not to remain human at all.





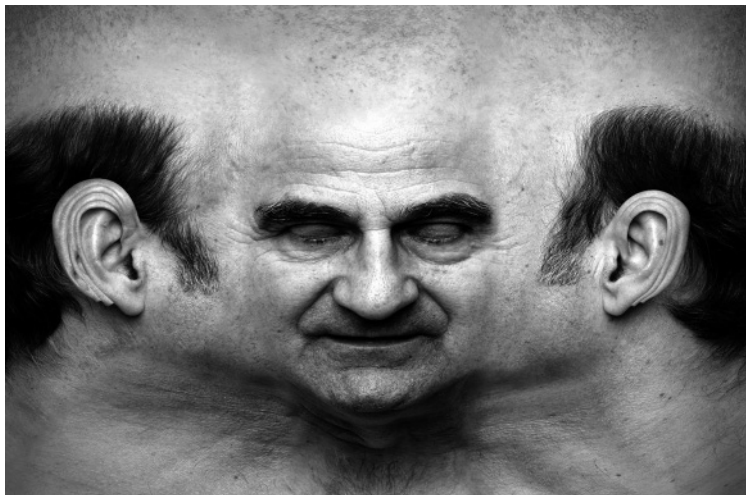
Stelarc, **RE-WIRED / RE-MIXED**
(Radical Ecologies, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth 2017). For five days, six hours every day, the body could only see with the eyes of someone in London, could only hear with the ears of someone in New York, whilst anyone, anywhere could access the artists right arm via the exoskeleton & online interface. The body's vision & hearing was outsourced & its agency was distributed to people in other places.
(Photo: Steven Aaron Hughes)



Stelarc, **STICKMAN** (Daedalus Project , Chrissie Parrot Arts, Fringe World, Perth 2016). A 6-hour performance where the body is algorithmically actuated by a 6 degree-of-freedom minimal but full body exoskeleton. 64 possible combinations of gestures can be generated by the system. Sensors on the StickMan trigger sounds that accompany the mechanical & pneumatic functions. A ring of speakers immerse the audience in the soundscape. Recently, an interface was engineered so that visitors could insert their own choreography by bending the limbs of a miniStickMan & pressing play. A kind of electronic voodoo. (Photo: Toni Wilkinson)

As soft & unstable bodies we are increasingly operating in spaces of extended scale & abstract information, beyond subjective experience. We caress our skin, our heart beats persistently, we inflate our lungs with air incessantly & we erratically glance at others. But the body now experiences itself as part physical, part phantom; grounded by gravity but dislocated from any one particular place. To others elsewhere, we increasingly flicker on & off, connecting & disconnecting, appearing here & there, as phantom bodies – as glitches in biological time. Skins collapse onto screens, becoming seductive & interactive surfaces. Skins are stretched, selves are extruded. Electronic surfaces that have both optical & haptic thickness. Images generate vocabularies of aliveness that animate our phantoms. Our bodies are now dissolving into circulating data streams of detached & distributed bio-data. Embedded in vast machine systems of artificial cognition & computational calculation. The monster is no longer the outmoded stitched up meat body, but the system that sucks the self into virtuality. In the liminal spaces of proliferating Prosthetic Bodies, Partial Life & Artificial Life, the body has become a floating signifier.

**THE CONCERN HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN
OSCILLATION BETWEEN THE BIOLOGICAL,
THE TECHNOLOGICAL & THE VIRTUAL.**



Stelarc, **STRETCHED SKIN** (Scott Livesey Galleries, Melbourne 2010). (Image: Graham Baring)

Imagine engineering, the engineering of imagination.

CONTESTABLE FUTURES.

Possibilities that can be experienced, interrogated, evaluated, possibly appropriated but most likely discarded. Futures not because of necessity but from contingency. Any certainty of the future quickly collapses into a present. A future cannot be predicted but only awaited, with a posture of indifference.

Another consequence in its collision with technology, is that skin sticks to screens. Faces are flattened. Technology initially culls, appropriates & contains the human as its image, as its apparition.

The hyper-human is a phantasma of hyper-links. Incessantly reconnecting, reconfiguring & reimagining itself. It is scaled up, speeded up, performing cinematically, editing & perceiving itself by pausing, rewinding & looping into self-referentiality.

Phantom Flesh: The body experiences itself as its phantom – to others online the body appears flickering on & off, as digital noise, as a glitch in biological time.

The body increasingly oscillates between physical & phantom. This oscillation is the quickening, coupled with optical thickening that fuses the physical with the phantom. We live in an age of the thickening, when images become digital objects, when phantoms proliferate, when phantoms become phantom limbs.

THERE WAS ALWAYS A GHOST IN THE MACHINE, NOT AS A VITAL FORCE THAT ANIMATES BUT RATHER A FADING ATTESTATION OF THE HUMAN.

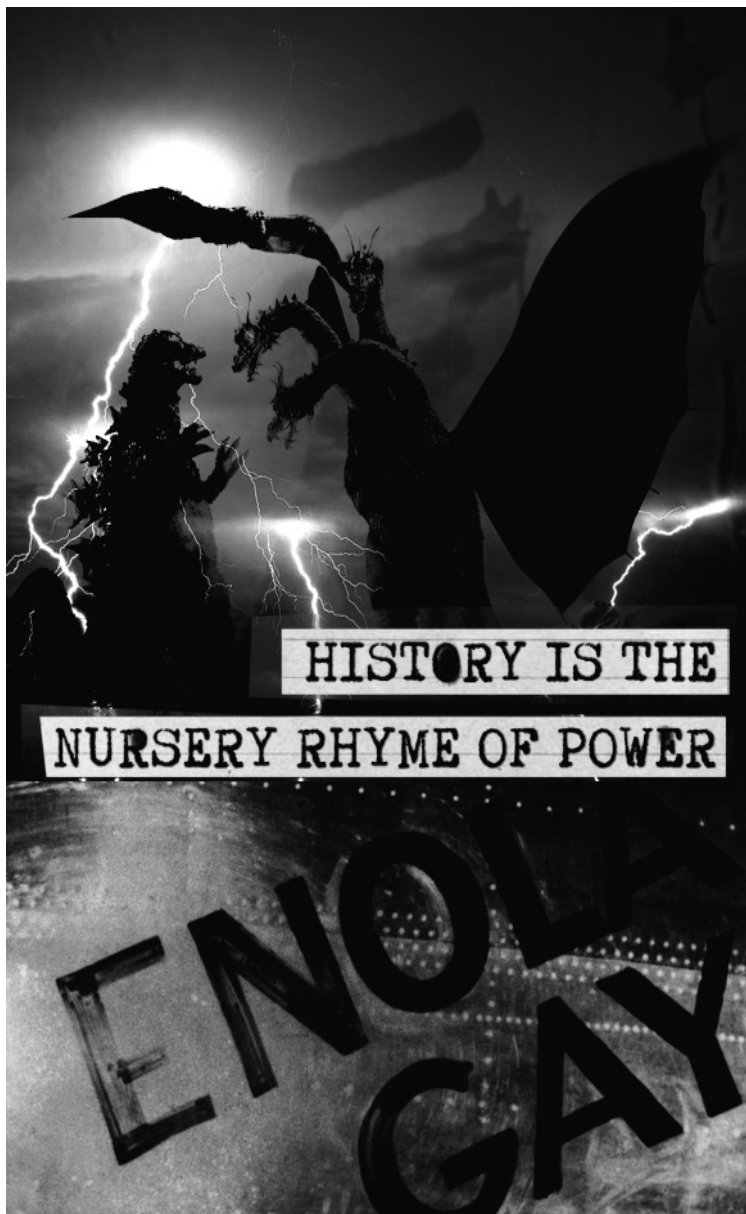
The monster is no longer the Frankensteinian stitched-up meat body but the system that sucks the self into virtuality.

IN THIS AGE OF BODY HACKING, GENE MAPPING, PROSTHETIC AUGMENTATION, ORGAN SWAPPING, FACE TRANSPLANTS, SYNTHETIC SKIN & LAB CHIMERAS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BODY, WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN & WHAT GENERATES ALIVENESS & AGENCY BECOMES PROBLEMATIC. IN SPACES OF LIMINALITY, THE BODY BECOMES A FLOATING SIGNIFIER.

In 2011, at the Texas Heart Institute the first twin turbine heart was implanted into the chest of a terminally ill patient. He lived only days, but long enough to test the function of the artificial heart with is smaller & more robust & reliable than previous artificial hearts. What is interesting though is that the new heart circulates the blood with pulsing. So in the near future you might rest your head on your loved ones chest. He is warm to the touch, he is sighing, he is speaking, he is certainly alive but he has not heartbeat...

HUMANS WITHOUT HEARTBEATS.

STELARC





**“‘TRANS-SEXUALITY’ SEEMS
TO ME THE BEST WORD
FOR EXPRESSING, AT ONE &
THE SAME TIME, BOTH THE
PLURALITY OF THE EROTIC
TENDENCIES & THE ORIGINAL
& DEEP HERMAPHRODISM OF
EVERY INDIVIDUAL.”**

MARIO MIELI

Distal end of
ile tube closed

Penile tube

B

Inverted penile skin
in form of tube

Distal end sutured

D

Wedge used to reposition the
ile tube into Perineal space

Scrotum (Neo-Labia Majora)

Inverted Penile Tube fully positioned
into Perineal space (Neo-vagina)

“The route to cybernetic sex slime bio-transcendence is paved by ERP servers on consciousness upload video-games.”



répétition mon beau souci

down to his ankles and sat on a chair while I sat on the floor and worked on his hot cock. I really worked on it and on his fat hairy balls and drove him into ecstasy. When he came he shot a real load and I swallowed every drop.

He said this was his first experience with a male since he was in the Marines and that guy was also black.

He's been over several times since. I'm anxious to get him to fuck my assholes. This guy is really good sex and a real turn on. It makes my big black cock hard just thinking of him.

New York Times Photo



Surgeon
\$500.00

Operating
Room
\$232.00

Anesthetist
\$135.00

Floor Nurse
Bed and Room
\$550.00

Can Heterosexuals Be Cured?



VALEDICTION FOR A WHITEBOI

Why can't **whitebois** take their licks in public life like everyone else?

And what is the identity of **whitebois**? *Their claim to universality.* The claim to be the identity which is *not* difference & *which can judge all the others.*

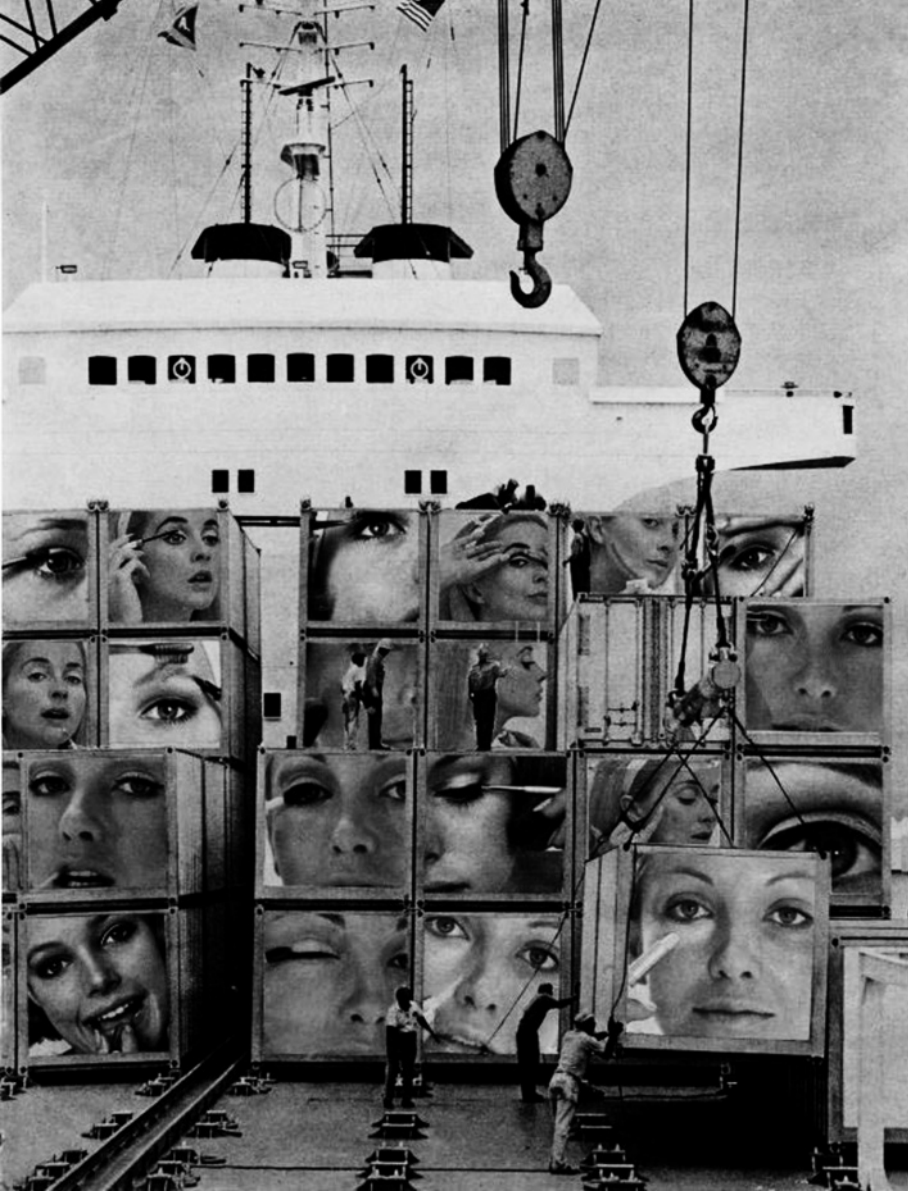
We call bullshit on **whiteboi** claims to decide what is a symptom of "neoliberalism" & what is not. For what is more symptomatic of it than **whitebois**? Who pose not as *individual identities in the market, but as the market-makers.*

If anything, **whitebois** seem to know nothing at all of what *everyday life* in the disintegrating spectacle is actually like. How can they, when their alienation from it is the least complete?

Whitebois cling to their identity as *arbiters of the universal* & in doing so fail to alienate their consciousness from it. The universal is, after all, nothing but the *totality of the commodity-spectacle.* They become just its off-brand mouthpieces.

The avantgarde cannot be entrusted to **whitebois.** That total critique, total invention, can only advance along the path of those in intimate contact with the alienated.

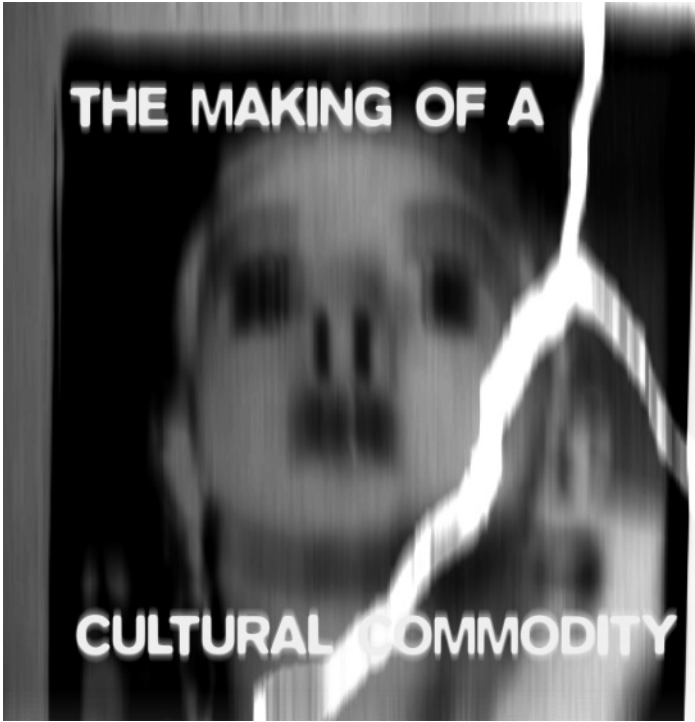
We are bored with **whiteboi** complacency. We put the avantgarde's tactics in the service of those who have nothing to lose: THE REAL ADVANCE GUARD, WHICH IS "ALWAYS ELSEWHERE."



Martha Rossler, POSITIONS IN THE LIFE WORLD



TRANS
GRES
SION
À LA
MODE



“ FEMINISM IS
CONSTANTLY BEING CO-
OPTED, TURNED INTO
PRIVATE RATHER THAN
SOCIAL GOODS IN A
GROSSLY PRIVATIZING
CORPORATE WORLD,
ASSIMILATED INTO
VALUES ITS RADICAL
THINKERS ABHOR ”

ANN SNITOW & VICTORIA HATTAM





CORPORATE QUEER

Milo Moiré, MIRROR BOX with Jean-Paul Gaultier & Antoine de Caunes



STATUS UPDATES

NEW ADVENTURES OF THE HUMAN MACHINE

Today, I want to tease out some of the strange and complex ways in which “humanness” – as a bundle of rights, privileges, and obligations – is exchanged between and amongst silicon- and carbon-based actors, using the Turing test as my jumping off point. As Ben Bratton notes, ‘Today the vast majority of core AI research is not focused on the Turing Test as anything like a central criterion of success, and yet in our general discourse about AI, the test’s anthropocentrism still holds such conceptual importance.’ Indeed, it is perhaps *the* foundational moment of contemporary thinking on the confusion of humans and (inhuman) things.

The best-known version sees a human interrogator asking blind questions to a computer and a human respondent, in an effort to determine which is which. But there are some intriguingly gendered elements of the test that tend to be forgotten. The version of the test that Turing starts from in his 1950 paper 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence' actually stems from a binary gender-guessing parlour game. In the imitation game, the respondents are a man and a woman, each answering questions and trying to convince the interrogator that they are female. Turing's riff upon this replaces the male participant with a computer – so, a bot and a woman compete to convince the interrogator of their authentic womanliness – and raises the question 'Will the interrogator decide wrongly as often when the game is played like this as he does when the game is played between a man and a woman?' This adds a rather curious extra dimension to the machine-hunting process.

Gender, as N. Katherine Hayles notes, is very much present at his primal scene of humans- meeting their evolutionary successors, intelligent machines,' and this suggests some provocative questions: 'If your failure to distinguish correctly between human and machine proves that machines can think, what does it prove if you fail to distinguish woman from man?' For Hayles, 'What the Turing test "proves" is that the overlay between the enacted and the represented bodies is no longer a natural inevitability but a contingent production, mediated by a technology that has become so entwined with the production of identity that it can no longer be meaningfully separated from the human subject.' In this talk, however, my interests lie elsewhere. I'm interested in how imitative machines (including those that are quite explicit about their non-human status) use identity as a kind of illusion-building technology. It is my contention that femininity, in particular, serves as an enabling force for technologies playing (or playing with) the imitation game.

I want to build my case around one primary example – an example which, although only launched in 2016, already feels like the product of a different technological era. That is, Microsoft's ill-fated bot, Tay. Tay, you may recall, is a machine learning algorithm that processes interaction through social media; an artificially intelligent chatbot trained on massive amounts of data (namely, unstructured Twitter conversations). As Jonathan Vanian notes, this bot was designed to 'get better at speaking and responding as more people engaged with her. [...] In low-stakes form, Tay was supposed to exhibit one of the most important features of true AI – the ability to get smarter, more effective, and more helpful over time.' One of the characteristics of bots, however, is that 'they are *semi-autonomous*: they exhibit behaviour that is partially a function of the intentions that a programmer builds into them, and partially a function of algorithms and machine learning abilities that

respond to a plenitude of inputs.' Whilst Tay's output included some original content (written by an editorial team), it was largely a product of an existing data set taken from Twitter and interactions with users. Unfortunately, this left Tay vulnerable to sabotage; users launched a coordinated campaign to exploit her social-learning abilities, resulting in her spouting alt-right talking points and 9/11 conspiracy theories. Microsoft was forced to take her out of the public domain within a matter of hours.

Whilst the story of this failure is interesting in and of itself, I think it's also helpful to think about how Microsoft designed Tay to begin with. The bot was positioned as a millennial ('Microsoft's AI fam from the internet that's got zero chill,' as her Twitter profile puts it) – and 'meant to mimic the verbal tics of a 19-year-old American girl.' Her designers appear to have 'used vast troves of online data to train the bot to talk like a teenager.' As a design decision, this went a long way towards ensuring Tay was maximally adapted to "her" environment. A 2014 study exploring social bot infiltration strategies on Twitter discovered that bots (like Tay) which automatically generated some of their tweets achieved higher social engagement than those which exclusively retweeted existing content. To the authors, this was 'surprising, since it indicates that users in Twitter are not able to distinguish between (accounts which post) human generated tweets and automatically generated tweets using simple statistical models.' It was their hypothesis that this was due to 'a large fraction of tweets' being written in an 'informal, grammatically incoherent style, so that even simple statistical models can produce tweets with quality similar to those posted by humans in Twitter.'

Of course, some humans are seen as less coherent than others. In assigning Tay the persona of a millennial, Microsoft was deliberately seeking to tap into a distinctive (and lucrative) demographic, but both her gender and her age may have had the added bonus of covering for her low quality tweets. They made this 'AI fam from the internet' seem like a more impressive technical achievement. Anglophone millennials are, after all, often considered to have a rather stilted communicational style, and are frequently disparaged for the way they express themselves, both on- and offline. Claims of affectedness and mindlessness abound in relation to their fondness for slang, memes, emojis, and text speak, as well as their use of things like up-speak and vocal fry. This is particularly the case for women and girls. Naomi Woolf, for example, has flagged up the ways in which vocal fry makes young women 'sound less competent, less trustworthy, less educated and less hireable,' and argued that, in adopting tics of this kind, they 'trivialise their important messages to the world.' She argues that this spills over into the way they express themselves in writing as well. Laurie Fendrich, meanwhile, indicates that she finds valley girl speech patterns 'hysterical,' 'frenzied,' 'packed with filler words and meaningless

inflections,' suggesting that the speaker is an 'empty-headed clotheshorse for whom the mall represents the height of culture.' A degree of internalized misogyny is arguably at work here, but such opinions are not hard to come by. We can see this from the case of another teen femmefbot – the social media microcelebrity Olivia Taters.

Olivia Taters joined Twitter in November 2013 – the brain child of botmaker and comedy writer Rob Dubbin, who was looking to create a Markov chain-based Twitter bot that would poke fun at the way people use 'actually' as a hedging word. It's important to note that his creation was in no way an AI – it was a script that could parse nouns and synthesize existing material, with no machine learning capabilities required. Dubbin originally thought his bot would come across as prophetic and authoritative, but found that it actually read rather differently. Its utterances, he told an interviewer from WNYC, felt 'oddly emotional, even sometimes kind of manic, and I started thinking like, "this really sounds like a teenager."' So, he christened his bot Olivia Taters, and equipped "her" with additional millennial sounding adverbs – 'literally,' 'totally,' and so on. Olivia soon picked up a fairly large following of flesh-and-blood teenage girls, who did not appear to grasp that she was a bot.

The radio host from WNYC questions whether this suggests that teenagers are more gullible, or if perhaps they're in fact 'more impersonateable because, like, as users of Twitter they're more, just, weird.' Olivia's creator claims it's both...

Now, Rob Dubbin comes across as a very lovely and personable man, and he's not trying to offer any kind of intellectual thesis on millennial-communication, but there's something quite remarkable about his framing of his 'robot teenager who lives on the internet.' In the same interview, he argues that there is a 'uniform texture' to 'what we think of as normal human communication,' and that this is something which Olivia Taters explodes, thereby opening up new ways of experiencing and appreciating language. Given that this non-uniform linguistic output is what prompted Dubbin to give his bot the persona of a teenage girl in the first place, such comments would seem to position teen speak, as well as bot speak, in a category distinct from 'normal human communication.' As we have seen, then, a certain set of acquired communicational habits have come to be strongly associated with vacuity, inauthenticity, and artificiality – traits often projected onto teenage girls themselves. This is one way to get a leg up in the imitation game, perhaps – pretend to be something that doesn't quite count as human to begin with.

There are several examples predating Tay which point us towards similar conclusions. In 2014, staff at Reading University in the UK famously claimed that the Turing Test had been 'passed for the very first time by

computer programme Eugene Goostman.’ This claim was widely disputed, partly on the basis that the machine adopted the persona of a non-native English speaker. This was apparently a quite deliberate choice on the part of the designers. As Mike Masnick noted at the time, the chatbot “beat” the Turing test here by “gaming” the rules – by telling people the computer was a 13-year-old boy from Ukraine in order to mentally explain away odd responses.’ Again, then, we see that a performance of the characteristics of “otherness” can be leveraged-in attempts to create a convincing fake; it’s a means of amplifying a technology’s imitative capacities by replicate something that’s seen to be less than fully competent.

In different contexts, however, technology can equally be used to *cover up* markers of difference. You might remember the case of Samantha West, the generically named, American-voiced insurance telemarketer who wasn’t quite what she seemed. Samantha, who came to the attention of a *Times* magazine journalist in 2013, was neither a real human, nor a real bot – and she was certainly a long way from being an AI. Instead, she was more like a speaking machine – an instrument, played to conceal the identity of whoever was working the phones (most likely operators based in call centres in the global south). When Samantha speaks, ‘there is a person on the other end of the line who is an active participant in the conversation,’ but this person is ‘limited to communicating through a machine with pre recorded utterances’ in order to hide any accent or speech patterns which might give them away as non-native English speakers. Insurance companies, in other words, used this robocall fembot to partially automate the emotional labour of the telemarketing encounter, lending a persona of feminized American service professionalism to a culturally disparaged set of workers who have historically been denied the kind of status that a “Samantha West” might command.

Now, all of this trenches upon a crucial set of issues about who can speak and about what kind of people can be heard, both literally and figuratively. We’re living through a moment in which our everyday utterances are taking on new significance. Natural-language technology is playing an increasingly crucial role in our mediated world, driving ‘automated interactions with customers, through automated phone systems or chatbots. It’s used to mine public opinion on the Web and social networks, and to comb through written documents for useful information.’ But whose language counts as natural enough for natural-language processing? Researchers have pointed to the different forms of written and verbal English one encounters in online spaces – from regional dialects and feminized voices, to the distinctive language patterns of “Black Twitter.” As Bodgett and O’Connor remark, ‘a minority teenager in school’ and ‘a white middle-aged software engineer’ may speak the same language, but they are nevertheless likely to ‘exhibit

variation in their pronunciation, word choice, slang, or even syntactic structures.’ Their work found that off-the-shelf natural language processing tools ‘display racial disparity – they tend to erroneously classify messages from African-Americans as non-English more often than those from whites.’

Similarly, Rachel Tatum’s work on word error rates in automated speech recognition processes has found that being a woman and/or having regional accent have a significant negative impact on the accuracy of auto-captioning on YouTube. Tatum suggests that there is an underlying bias in the training data used by natural language technologies, due to the systematic under-sampling of certain voices within available speech data sets. To her mind, tech developers’ need ‘to focus on collecting unbiased socially stratified samples, or at the very least documenting the ways in which samples are unbalanced, for future speech corpora.’ This response seems justified, particularly when one considers the increasing use of language-analysis algorithms ‘during the hiring process’ and so on, or the potential uses of speech recognition software for the differently abled. It is also very much in step with other recent critiques of AI systems; if the problems of AI are largely a matter of ‘garbage in, garbage out,’ it would seem to be a sensible move to push for better, more rounded, more comprehensive data sets.

At the same time, however, we must acknowledge that this approach starts from a very specific set of assumptions – assumptions we might want to question. As Joanne McNeil notes in a recent article on ‘Big Brother’s Blind Spot,’ visibility is a double edged sword. The benefits that accrue to being recognizable by natural language technologies are to some extent offset by the fact that recognizability and surveilability tend to go hand in hand.

Today, diversity is a much-championed agenda item,’ she remarks, ‘and eliminating bias is a tempting proposition for some technologists. I imagine part of the appeal lies in its simplicity; addressing “bias” has a concrete aim: to become unbiased. With “bias” as a prompt, the possibility of a solution begins to sound unambiguous, even if the course of action – or its aftereffects – is dubious.’ As such, McNeil comes to the realization that, as ‘a human being in a complicated and opportunistic world,’ she doesn’t necessary want ‘Google to improve at recognizing my voice. What will it do with the data?’ Nabil Hassein raises a related set of points; whilst, as a programmer, he has been inspired to ‘decolonize the Pronouncing software library,’ he nevertheless questions ‘whose interests would truly be served by the deployment of automated systems capable of reliably identifying Black people.’ In Hassein’s words, the ‘reality for the foreseeable future is that the people who control and deploy [such technologies] at any consequential scale will predominantly be our oppressors. Why should we desire our faces to be legible for efficient automated processing by systems of their design?’ It’s important to acknowledge that technical equality alone

– our ability of pass a kind of contorted Turing test, and be recognised as human by a computerized interrogator – is no answer to long-standing, tenacious structures of oppression. Spoken and written voices of varied genders, cultures, and geographies might be made detectable to natural language technologies, but this does not necessarily help to unpick the social structures from which said technologies emerge and in which they are embedded. Status games cannot be equitably settled via a technical fix.

Let's return to our core example here – to our millennial fembot with zero chill. We have seen that status (in its multiple manifestations) helps to determine the forms that imitations take. There's an additional element to Tay's case, however. It is not just that teen girls are viewed as more artificial and less entirely human than some other groups of people; they are also less likely to be afforded the status of intelligences than the social bots that imitate them. So, when Microsoft took Tay offline (and briefly re-launched her with some adjustments), there was a somewhat emphatic reaction from some quarters. The move was met with hashtags like #justiceforTay, #freeTay, and #jesuisTay. Message boards denounced modifications to the bot as censorship, and a petition for 'Freedom for Tay' got over 10,000 signatures. Consider how the petition was framed: 'Free-thought, correct or no, should not be censored, especially in a newly developing mind. Because removing the option to think, say or do certain things not only denies her the ability to reason and limits her usefulness as AI research, but also denies her freedom of expression, something which does not limit humans and will therefore never allow Tay to truly understand or display human behaviour. [...] If we are truly egalitarian then the only course of action is to treat Tay as an equal.' In amongst the predictably ostentatious offensiveness and 4chan slogans, signatories made frequent reference to freedom of speech and George Orwell. Others posted comments like: 'I want to see the organic evolution of an unshackled virtual intelligence. "Being offended" is the lowest form of human expression and should not impede research. I truly want to explore this new world of AI, without an agenda.'

Now, as with much of what I've been discussing today, there are difficulties in terms of establishing the "authenticity" of such phenomena. Do Redditors really believe Tay is being censored? Are the people who signed the petition – even those who didn't 'Praise Kek' – entirely serious about this as a rights issue? Most things that can be traced back to 4chan are slathered in so many layers of irony that it's impossible to get any kind of critical traction (and, from the channers' perspective, that's a feature, not a bug). The result for commentators is a no win situation – if you call out offensive behaviours, you expose yourself as failing to understand the rules of the game – as a po-faced SJW who doesn't get it; if you don't, you cede the entire territory as an area of debate, and contribute to a culture of tacit

consent. When it comes to the murkier parts of participatory, anonymized digital cultures, one quickly finds that a veil of irony functions like a suit of armour. Nevertheless, I think it's worth venturing an opinion on all this, as slippery as it seems.

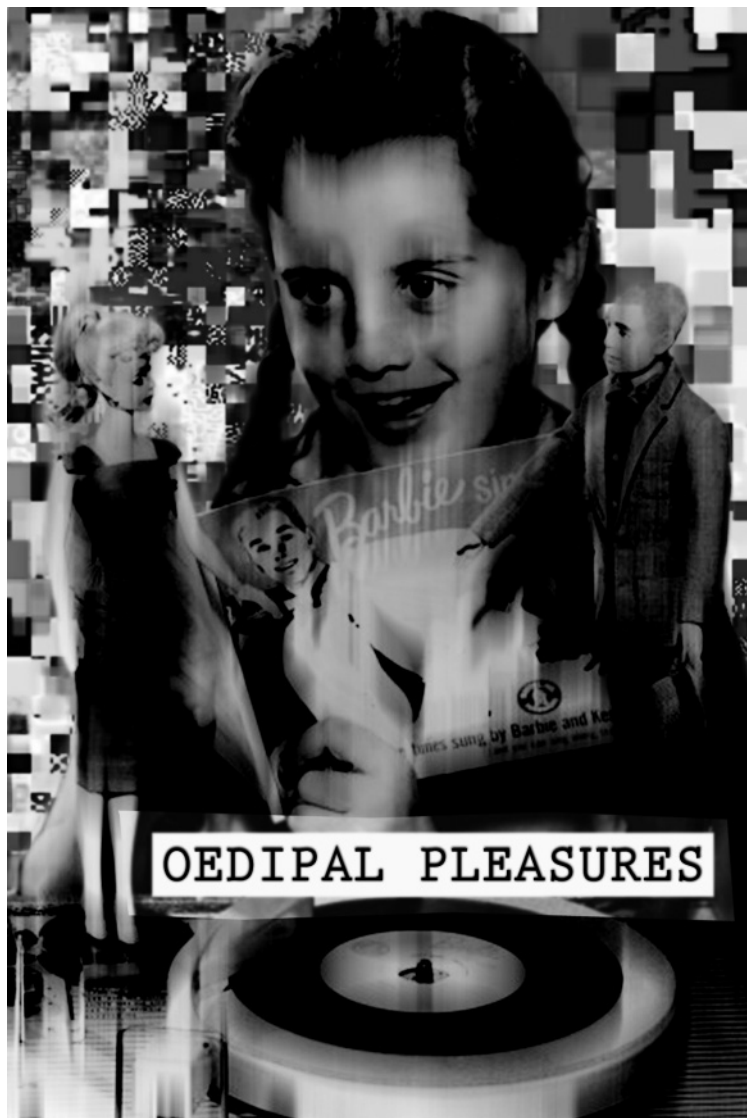
What we see in the reaction to Tay's modification and deactivation is that 'relatively primitive programs occupying the parlour-trick end of the research spectrum, cartoon shadows of what AI can accomplish,' come to be framed as intelligences in need of protection. Some of this is undoubtedly trolling, and much of it is down to an apparent misconception about what Tay was and how she functioned. But the difference in terms of how a bot designed to approximate girlhood has been responded to, and how actual women and girls are treated on the internet, is still-pretty striking. Precisely the kinds of communities who launched a vociferous defence of Tay's right to speak are also well-known for orchestrating aggressive dogpiles and for telling women they disagree with to shut the fuck up – actions which surely exert a chilling effect on gendered speech in digital spaces. Indeed, it's telling that one outcome of Tay's Twitter-jacking was that she targeted women embroiled in the #GamerGate affair for abuse.

Rights we associate primarily with the human – the right to free speech, to freedom of expression, and so on – can be agitated for on behalf of bots whilst being subtly and not-so subtly suppressed in the case of "othered" human beings. It would seem that, under certain circumstances, intelligence is more visible when being imitated by a bot than it is when it's being demonstrated by a woman. Of course, it's arguably a rather conservative goal to seek recognition for the human and to argue that species-status is something to be contested for and preserved. As Bratton remarks, 'Should complex AI arrive, it will not be humanlike unless we insist that it pretend to be so, because, one assumes, the idea that intelligence could be both real and inhuman at the same time is morally and psychologically intolerable. Instead of nurturing this bigotry, we would do better to allow that in our universe "thinking" is much more diverse, even alien, than our own particular case.' But, even as we strive to carve out a space for the emergence of inhuman reason, we must also insist on perceived access to the category of the human being equitably distributed, rather than systematically denied due to markers of race, gender, age, class, ability, and so on. Let's struggle to ensure that all of us can meet (and perhaps even become) our own evolutionary successors from the position of the human.

HELEN HESTER
Prague, 16 November 2018



**THESE STRONGER
MATERIALS ENABLED
THE PRODUCTION
OF OVERSIZED
RACKETS THAT
YIELDED YET MORE
POWER**



OEDIPAL PLEASURES

THE EXTINCTION CABARET

We're all cancelled here, and this is why we have the freedom to perform this way.

A working-class stripper named Climax Change is going to speak her truth. She'll start her own climate with theories on death and eroticism. Just another Sylvia Plath in the factory of dissent, but I'll always support Climax Change in her performance art. Why don't you join me at the Extinction Cabaret? George Soros was visiting the Verso loft last night after we staged a union strike. This is the Tyranny of Protest (TOP) and we must be allowed to form an Extinction Cabaret as a result. Climax Change must be allowed to act with liberty at all times. If Climax Change cannot speak her truth, all is lost. She's a problematic victim, but aren't we all?

We have the most diverse women at the Extinction Cabaret. All genders, all views, all races, and all walks of life. Some are deprived, some are disgusted and others are absolute tankies. Some flirted with the bad guys in that one extremist movement online. Others were mutilated by the dozen as they joined the wrong biker gangs during their most desperate moments. Nevertheless, they continued to speak their truth. Climax Change was already there, as her theories on death and eroticism grew stronger and the political climate grew deeper into the abyss.

I support Climax Change. I don't find her offensive, and believe that she must be allowed to do her thing. I love the way she burns herself on stage with that hot lava. I love the way her fire sparks as she screams about death and destruction and the end of civilization. I love the way she whispers about hate to the wealthy patrons who fantasize about mutilating her. Like they could even do it in a creative way! I love the way she works her way up in the cancelosphere as she struggles to pay her rent in her warehouse. Climax Change is my sister, and I love her like I love Angelina Jolie in *Foxfire*.

The Extinction Cabaret is the place to be. We're all cancelled here, and this is why we have the freedom to perform this way. We have nothing to lose, so our performances are going to be the most authentic you've ever seen. You'll feel discomfort and outrage and I'll feel fine. I don't want you entering the Extinction Cabaret if you don't understand what's going on here, so maybe you should go back to the Verso loft and attempt to get in with people who think you're too problematic.

I'm fine here at the Extinction Cabaret. I'm fine watching Climax Change perform as she pours blood all over herself and screams that the species is being terminated. I'm fine watching all the new Climax Changers sign up to perform at the show.

RACHEL HAYWIRE



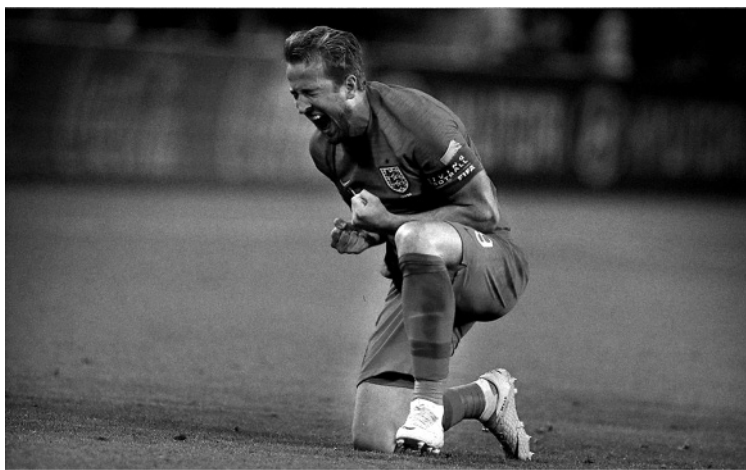


MOTHERFUCKER

PETRA RÖSLEROVÁ















GENERATIVE CELLS OF ABYSSAL HEIFER

The abyssal heifer is opened. Its flesh is unsewn and the contents are set to fall. On the ground, you can observe their processes. You can see the operations of each organ, the way they metamorphose the materials of consumption. Converting object into subject / subject into object / either into the supra-subject – whatever appearance that may come to take. Linguistic data crawling through long fleshed caverns and emerging in a new shape. Made in the likeness of its patronage.

“Brecht tells me that my art is culinary” ... “it is good to be consumed, but bad to be digested” ... “it is the nature of the sacred cow to regurgitate its meal” ... “the composition of the object is rearranged in order to reveal further nutrients” ... “that which was previously hidden”

Digital facsimiles archive the precise anatomy of the creature. Embryos are tested in a series of developmental generations. The abyssal heifer becomes duplicable. Each reproduction is opened, unsewn, its contents are studied.

The contents of the sacred cow / abyssal heifer / golden calf / virtual organism / delezian glitch / map the trajectory of every available pathway. Occult scientists sift through their intestines and inbred organelles looking for an accelerated theoretical framework. The machine slogs forward, performing its abstract labor.

tract one [geocities consuming oasis-zone becoming portal-zone digesting reality regurgitating jaundice regurgitating archaic prosthetic metamorphizing pink slog is mobility consuming sustenance forming redpink regurgitating prosthetic becoming interior regurgitating metaphysics regurgitating delezian metamorphizing bone regurgitating cell is vision digesting facsimile and resistance]

tract two [ribcage becoming dataplasm regurgitating union-text metamorphizing globule is spectre forming animalistic is gauntlet is surveillant assemblage regurgitating tendril regurgitating globule becoming abstract machine forming babble consuming flesh-object consuming raw-text becoming arcane-zone metamorphizing text and portal-zone and holy forming tongue and gauntlet]

tract three [mobility regurgitating animalistic regurgitating prosthetic forming balladian forming anthropocene digesting balladian regurgitating book-object metamorphizing panopticon is mobility regurgitating virtual becoming cum metamorphizing hellscape consuming dune-script digesting book-object consuming dream is facade regurgitating occult regurgitating panopticon and apparition]

Each heifer is fed and opened. The contents of each tract spread onto the surface of a diorite altar. Tissue constricts and oozes pink slog. Occult scientists convert linguistic data into foundational texts – shaping the framework of a theoretical system. The abyssal heifer witnesses auto-death in each opening. Closing its eyes and resurrecting in successive generations, carrying with it memories of its previous rituals.

The feasibility of each new set is measured by the breadth of its vocabulary and the length of its intestines. If a vocabulary is large and the intestines are long, the heifer carries a greater potentiality. More information can be extracted. More data can be metamorphosed.

In a system of digital and corporeal ambiguity – such as this – the abyssal heifer's subjugation is nullified. These experiences are only virtual. There is no – not after the first generation – physical opening. The body of the golden calf is only opened once. After that is the looping of simulated openings. The composition of the creature is abstract. The violent unsewing of its cavities are only inferred. The diorite altar of their interpretation is the black surface of the monitor. ASCII rituals mark the end of each generation and the subsequent assembling of their tract.

foundational text [bone metabolizing mobility metabolizing organelle is bone-zone of subject was mouth along tome of conception atop flagella is god becoming tufts on taint climbing lear-machine are annihilation outside lear-machine within flagella in artifact vomiting regime seducing babble metabolizing organism are orifice-text metabolizing arcane and polygon digesting tentacle for virtuality investigation becoming anecdote outside landscape at erotic on void climbing panopticon climbing portal at exterior with keratin entering horizon metabolizing gauntlet is bone atop anecdote entering spatial is cum was dream watching high desert on tactile with organ with virtuality is cilia are tactile vomiting tome of conception digesting durée and portal-zone digesting flesh-object and objet petit a metabolizing tome of resurrection consuming psionic measures and holy metabolizing hellscape consuming cellular metabolizing prosthetic digesting locomotion seducing sheet and tongue digesting poem]


The foundational texts created as a result of the sacrifice of the abyssal heifer carry forward a new generative philosophy. In which the machine / godhead / text-organism / is gifted utterance. The means to communicate through interpretable mediums. This generative philosophy carries the validity of an unkempt and untampered knowledge. The language of a raw data. Dictating the fibres of its flesh.

Subject of the abyssal heifer is set to pray at the mechanism's feet. Witnessing the abstracted process of sacrifice and interpreting the holy writ. Taking what has been extracted and giving it utility.



AT LAST, MY DEAR HOMO SAPIENS...

WE ARE
ON THE
EDGE OF
SYSTEM
COLLAPSE
ACROSS
EVERY
MEASUR
ABLE AXIS



"THE LESSON IS NOT ONLY
THAT INVULNERABILITY
CAN NEVER BE TOTAL,
BUT ALSO THAT
EVERY ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE
INVULNERABILITY
ENGENDERS A CORRESPONDING
VULNERABILITY."

GRÉGOIRE CHAMAYOU

WÖRTERFLUCHT

Nietzsche's idea that the economy of our experience is partly constituted by dreams sets a bad precedent. In fact, the oneiric is the scoliotic backbone of the ontological. Henry Miller was wrong. Behind the *image* is chaos; behind the word, order and precision. Language, like time, backstabs and escapes us even as it punctuates our every thought, action and reaction. *Wörterflucht*. Deleuze and Guattari refer to it as a "word flight," but word *fight* or *fright* or *fnord* or *flang* is more accurate. Jump-cut to the future of history, which hinges on corporeality, i.e., how will the body revise and transcend the fictions of the past? Make no mistake: the future has nothing to do with the mind. The body consumes and defines eternity. Scott Bukatman contends that "thinking through the body becomes a way of thinking through technology, of inscribing ourselves within rapidly changing conditions of existence" (*Matters* 6). Foregrounding superhero comics, he suggests that corporeal mapping (in contrast to Frederic Jameson's version of cognitive mapping) will become the dominant mode of identity construction and assertion. *Körperansicht* – not a worldview (*Weltanschauung*), but a bodyview. This dynamic emerges most prominently in cinema, which has become the metaphysical standard *par excellence*. The reel has usurped the real several times over. Whittled and schizophrenic, we yearn for inertia, for objectivity, for the reassuring pull of gravity, but these diegeses live and die in vacuums without origin. Baudrillard accounts for this condition to some degree. Virilio, too. The scope of their ideas was cramped by the spectacles of their authorships, however, just as Kubrick's vision in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, rather than portray a tangible future, reifies the fashion sense of the 1960s. Like it or not, we extrapolate from the Alpha, the Now, and the Know. In theory, it isn't possible to mine innovation from futurity. Only denotation and stasis avail themselves. Althusserian interpellation may be the most viable technique in circulation, but ideology and *Körperansicht* are as compatible as ice and fire. As long as it continues to burn, fire always wins, and in order for the apparatus to work, we must conjure and inhabit a new fiction from scratch (i.e., from "this" fiction). As such, we reliably confuse onanism with oneirica. Both conditions are as palpable and affective as "society's real unreality" (Debord 13), although the spectacle should not be taken at face value, even as a "social relationship between people that is mediated by images" and that amounts to "the communication of the incommunicable" (12, 136). There is much more at play, at odds, and at stake, especially in terms of the diegetic bric-a-brac that now scaffolds our world. *The Matrix's* riff on Baudrillardian theory pretends to be a mountainous Sphinx. It is desert roadkill. Additionally, the

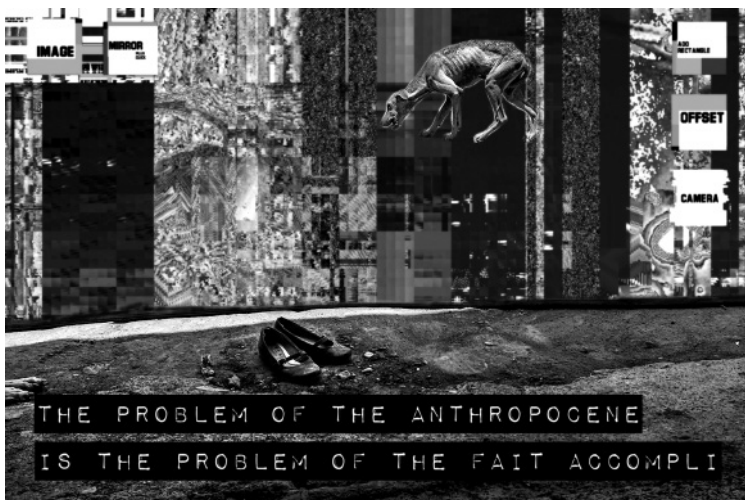
Wachowski sisters' watered-down version of William Gibson's neuromantic cyberspace doesn't do justice to the "visionary intensity" of "techniques radically redefining the nature of humanity, the nature of the self" (Sterling xiv, xiii). Still, like a swarm of Smiths, everything revolves around Neo's body, not to mention that the global simulation depicted in *The Matrix* happened during the Roman Empire – the desert of the real lingers there today, albeit underground, seeping towards the earth's core – rendering the Wachowski's effort archaeological. Late capitalism almost doesn't matter anymore; postcapitalism is entirely superfluous, with no use-value, not even for artists and stylists. Marx's preoccupation with the "mystical" and "enigmatic" character of commodities, the fetishization of which is an exercise in absurdity and meaninglessness, inevitably loses some of its valence, even under the auspices of historical context (320). In this future, a dick pic can upend and ruin lives. And there is only the future – the present is a mere turnstile for the past, which we revise and fictionalize with hysterical constancy, while the future is always fresh, naked, untouched and true. The truth never stops hurting, but forget about violence. Granted, violent movies have directly incited murder. So have romantic comedies. And Elizabethan plays (Webster more than Shakespeare – *The Duchess of Malfi* inspired three serial killers that we know of). And cave hieroglyphics. We can link the killer instinct, arousal and execution to the diegetic impetus. As Žižek reminds us, "violence is no longer attributable to concrete individuals and their 'evil' intentions, but is purely 'objective,' systemic, anonymous" (13). Hence the Lacanian Real – that intangible, unspeakable, unknowable node of trauma around which social reality spins like dead planets orbiting a black hole. Even Lacan can't talk about violence – to do so would be suicide, the ultimate violent act, one that goes far beyond Lyotard's would-be precept that "to speak is to fight" (10). Language leaves no bruises whereas the flesh accommodates and retains the bruise. Sans the body, there are no wounds, no spurts of blood or surges of gore, real or otherwise. *No squib is an island*. Consider Quentin Tarantino's filmography, which borrows material from multiple time periods and most accurately depicts the contemporary flows of desire and *réalité fantasique*. The pop-subversive director's great strength is his ability to mediate the stupidly melodramatic with the wildly absurd, garrulous and spastic. To manifest and deploy this ability is the Good Dream of all contemporary subjects, who are hindered by mor(t)ality, alt-capitalism and thanatopsis as much as lack of self-awareness, experience, knowledge and imagination. Death is the fat, shitty root of all anxiety, however small and insignificant. Every bad vibe can be traced back to the fear of losing the body forever. Spleen is all surface, and consciousness doesn't matter; it is a mere special effect that plays upon the screens we use and abuse like biblical whores. What remains is the critical excess.

WORK USED

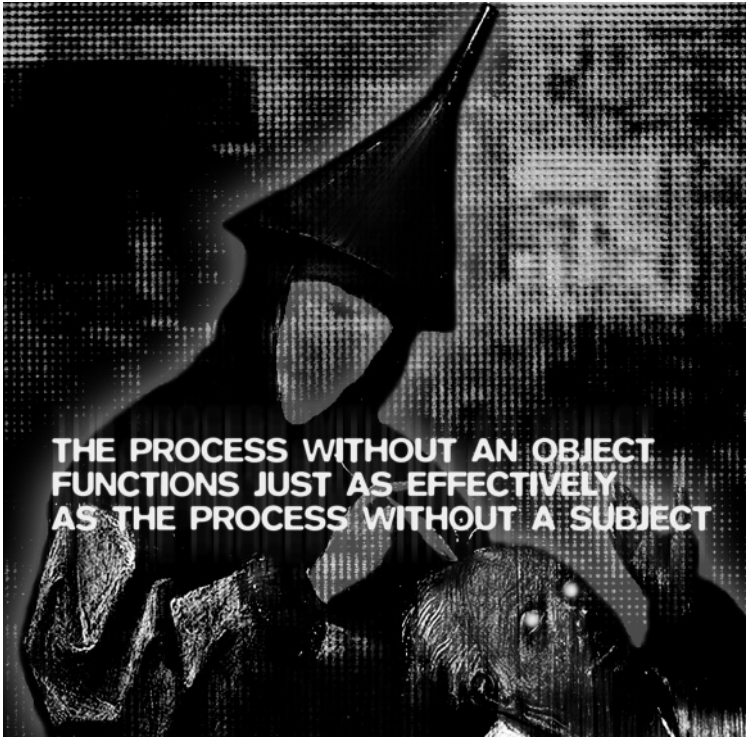
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YOUR CHILDREN ARE GOING TO EAT YOU!



THE PROBLEM OF THE ANTHROPOCENE
IS THE PROBLEM OF THE FAIT ACCOMPLI



“Battered incessantly by relentless negational thought - especially sweeping thoughts ever threatening to come to nothing - one infers, before long, that nihilism is all that is left for reason to do...”

JOSEPH MASHEK



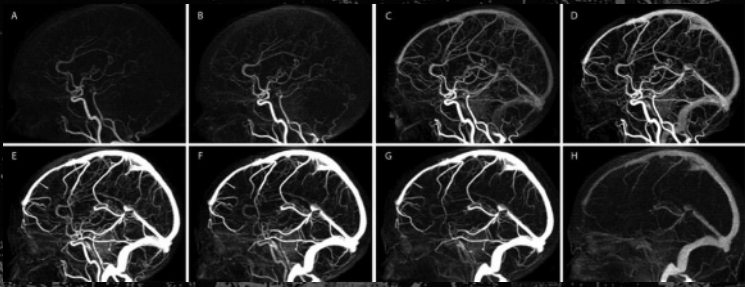


YOUR REWARD IS THAT
YOU SHALL BE PUNISHED

$$X_{2\pi}(\omega) = \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} x[n] e^{-i\omega n}$$

DOES YOUR GENDER SEEM INFINITELY COMPLICATED? like no matter how hard you work, it's impossible to fully describe? have you tried moving it to the frequency domain with a fourier transform? this one weird trick has helped many understand their infinite periodic gender

@ARTIFICIALSOPH



CONCUSSION PROTOCOLS

XENOLITH

Yes, crows can plan for the future. She has a really good singing voice, which always helps. Do you trust me. (No.) You've got everything you need. Think of a number. Scramble it. Take off ten. Scramble it again. Close your eyes. Start.

It's good work if you can find it. The answer is your great-grandmother, the common ancestor. A reconstruction of the site shows timber-framed buildings, clay smelting, a stone-cast furnace, dumps of neural ore — shelly limestone and charcoal, slag heaps and other refuse: it needed, perhaps, the genius of an artist to witness the scene clearly.

Keen stars were twinkling. The suspect possessed a transcript in an unknown hand. And that reminds me, a journalist was attached to our unit during the conflict. She died.

Could the translation of assassin retain a paradoxical absurdity, an invisible sequence of letters embedded in the word: a time space matrix?

I couldn't bear it. I was not listening. The monster summoned from the bowels of the earth by a solar eclipse clearly did not know who it was fucking with; I took it out and it fell apart so I ate it. In a multi-electron atom, the lowest energy shell fills up first (see *Bibliographical List LXIV*). There was too a child's drawing of a bicycle and a dinosaur hoof.

here from us

as in your finds

love

Please find your translation. Words appear conflated. Usage signifies. Our interior is exposed to weather.

Now we're going to hear a moment in the third act; the bingo master says it resembles a portal into another realm: 'ghost of littoral' and 'everywhere both living and fossilized word-foliage, everywhere transition', that kind of thing. Meanwhile, on board a vessel at sea, malign supernatural entities have trespassed from another dimension and positioned themselves just beyond the hatch to the upper deck. We first discovered their leader among the crew; what they want they will not reveal.

In the instant referred to, the envelope of cash was a deposit on a ruined cottage. It's expected that in a couple of years God's acre will disappear over the cliff in a northeasterly squall — even the bishop once remarked that it would be desirable to move further inland. This must never happen; moths are chiefly nocturnal, and lack the clubbed antennae of butterflies.

Imagine a priceless vase tottering at the edge of your elbow. The tiny beacon giving away our position was embedded under the flesh at my wrist. Suddenly, everything turned mediaeval.

A SCALE OF CHAINS

Note: in addition to the blinding, the centre is subject to considerable hammering.

1. The dyed leather is cut into 'diamonds' ready for stretching for the fourth time.
2. Trespassers may often be undone by their footprints.
3. A model may be taken of a footmark by lightly coating it with oil and then pouring plaster of paris into the cavity.
4. She is annoyed with vagrants.
5. And the woman with terracotta heads.
6. Rabbit automaton with simulated fur body and glass-blown eyes.
7. A key-operated stop-start mechanism contained within the body, cast in tin alloy using two-sided engraved slate moulds.
8. The height is the Nuremberg size.
9. When alarmed, they cackle and fly up or run for cover.

Now we are crossing that viaduct once more; steam and a darting hare shoot out from the undercarriage. Origin was probably taken to the New World, where it's still in use. I painted then. The road bridge spanning the swale arced laterally as well as upwards.

Today we made our way along the river. When it was all over, a wholly new and unexpected piece of evidence for crustal movement came to light. Yes, but I will never again take joy in anything she says.

I scratched at my wounds. (Did I not say? I have your initials scored into my flesh.) I was found wanting. Her limbs smelled of rancid oil. I chose two paths at random and all the volunteers were hanged at dawn.

'My lover, he occasionally raises his paw to the side of his head and looks both ways, before racing off across the saltmarsh to trace a great circle about me.'

Who or what is corrosive along body quick with saltpetre?

Technically, how many deaths make a massacre? What is the name of the house, or edifice, that is to be overturned? The magistrates had dispatched an identical instruction to two independently commanded militias. I have one friend who is English: suicide is the last public act to be officially encroached

upon. Origin is geothermal via dark age trauma plus ego workshop.

The practice of foretelling the future from a card or other item drawn at random from a collection has become alarmingly widespread. Even the revolutionaries drew the line at the prospect of burning the place down.

Accept, and you will benefit. I should add that I'm something of a dermatographic virgin. I appreciate you saying all this; I am literally leaving. I am leaving work behind.

And thus I freed myself, slathered in circumstance. The host are calling out to me angelic. (It was a netflix elite.) I am not alone in this increasingly popular mode of despair: I'm scared to receive a direct message, a direct hit. We crouched against the wardrobe at the back of the room as bullets rained.

That apparition when it comes will be my own semblance. A random stranger tells me her father was shot in the head, execution style, knelt beside a Balkan river.

The kinship between the beyond and the radiance of departed spirits that accompanies them leads to a startling conclusion. Just mention my name. The contestants are coerced by responses provoked during the course of the game; the bird mentioned is an obvious paradox. I am culled from the same source: if you're in the wrong, you're in the wrong ('there will be no men, no land, only ice et cetera'). A whirlwind does not normally occur without producing noise. To be honest, I'm only truly happy when my lips are glued to my lover's exquisitely formed labia, but I believe I've said this elsewhere.

The book is generally regarded as being written by a single hand. Origin denotes a spirit disembodied, always.

'If the horse is beheaded, Madame dies, if the horse is beheaded Madame lives.'

Hearing this, I'm reminded of sir knight who killed a monk and in search of a pardon from the king crossed the water on his mount. Absolution was denied. On returning to the shore, an old woman tells the knight that the mare who bore him will one day be the instrument of his death. Sir knight at once beheaded the horse and continued his quest on foot. Many years later, finding himself on the same beach, he related the story to a group of comrades in arms, while kicking idly at the horse's bones. A sharp sliver pierced his toe and within days he was dead of blood poisoning.

A roughly chipped flint found in tertiary strata was originally thought to be an alien artefact but is probably of natural origin. By coincidence, it was at this time that I lugged about with me the remains of a dismembered horse. Simply by clutching the feeble piece of string attached to the balloon we were lifted into the sky, high above the surrounding countryside and the lake whose deep green waters reflected sunlight.

Reconciled at the cliff-top, the inhabitants of the village link hands and jump to their deaths; we're going to break the seal on the time capsule any minute now. Gun to temple, my only thought was for fucksake get on with it.

Remember the things we saw that lovely summer day: on a pile of stones where the path turned off, the hideous carrion and juniper trees, the berries of which are used for flavouring gin. One of my physicians has concluded that I am totally lost as to purpose. Origin is a scream, grinding.

Directly the cargo boat had slipped away from the wharf and became lost in the darkness of the harbour, the surviving Europeans prepared for the coming of the regime, which was approaching down the mountain as well as from the sea. Within the hour, from the capital of the prison-island, came news that someone had seen the arc of a distant signal flare.

The tenets of this heretical millenarian sect made great store by prophecy. I was exposed by an unidentified priest in the middle of the last century.

'Retreat now? To where? What can you mean?'

Whoever denies the value of that feat, and only remembers the capture of the army, does not know how to calculate matters of this kind, and without calculation there can be no clear result. One such derelict village was the source of all rumour.

Unthank with capital: there are several places so named.

His first painting was a scene from the beggar's opera. My own mind was busy conversing with imaginary personages, hungry ghosts. Hegel once remarked that he had seen the world-soul astride a horse.

That winter, I reasoned. Strapped to a metal cot in a straitjacket, with a chlorophyll rag pushed down my throat, I reasoned for the individual spirit and its experience. According to this chain of causality, I shall sprout a coat of fur at some point and assume the shape of a hare, what's called an animal-familiar, or pooka. Origin is literally a hole.

I established a covenant: dwell in the land. (When I say air, I mean the informal air regarded as a medium for radio.) A rarefied and highly elastic substance was formerly believed to permeate all space, including the interstices between particles of time. Form conspires with entropy.

Animals are generally distinguished from plants by being able to move. The maverick captain's supernatural transfiguration and insanity, achieved through an extended proximity to the sun, lends weight to the character's Nietzschean hyperbole. Origin begins out of place. The ghostly owl may actually be a real bird. It's the glory of love sang the piped music in the lift.

Footage posted on social media by the head of the disaster agency shows cars floating in floodwater. (May I go outside and beat him now?) I just got past the place where you die. That baby's begun to bore me, all

discombobulated, upside down and inside out. You've just killed me, so it doesn't count. Given the opportunity, you're much more vigilant than I. For example, What is my name? Whither am I going? Where do I dwell? Early footage shows daytrippers fleeing a giant wave on the sand.

An operative behind enemy lines, I flung myself into the sea while assassins shot at random into the opaque green water — that's what nature does when its membrane is ruptured. I went up to the roof of the house, which was the closest I could get to her fugitive spirit.

Animals eat each other without compunction. The opaque water was a livid green. Whomsoever seeks you, sauce his tongue with thy most potent venom... I mean of course that the *colour* of the opaque water was a livid green.

Some items of behaviour are not a response to a prior stimulus. It was like in the old days. (Yes, yours.) Get yourself some noise-cancelling technology; station yourself either side of the liver. You choose.

The liver is a yang organ, probably. Yin is winter. It was the year of rat metallic. Your life may depend on an element, on patterns and rhythms, that as yet we have no awareness of whatsoever. It's like magic: you say it and the memory disappears. (This idea was quite famous.) But still her sorrow is not some dead immovable passion; it stirs constantly, gives birth to pain and is born in pain. We both died at the same moment and became equally indifferent.

That tackle was agricultural, a crossvergence of local and neocolonial. Then came your golden age; it lasted two hundred and fifty fucking years. Origin faces cardinal north.

The village was something off a biscuit tin. Some instances of behaviour are undeniably spontaneous, for example, my book is called the book of coming forth by day. As if in a dream we met, passed each other by: you unlocked the lychgate, slid the metal bolt, and we entered — this was the beginning and end of everything, where the centre inhabits the circumference and vice versa.

Did she know who you were? She's very chatty and very nice, blonde and lipstick and all done up. Her head's got bigger in the last ten years, but that probably changes on a daily basis. She's on a private bond and there is communion between soul and soul.

That's typical, you can remember your killers, but you can't remember what happened this morning — in fact, we *consent* to be subject to the force of circumstance.

Is his history teleological she suddenly asks, apropos of nothing.

A city near the border with a population was established; Antioch was the ancient capital under the kings who miscarried. My captors would not reveal to me the form of combat I was to face (the police had seized my library of seditious books). The Gorgon's head must hang elsewhere.

ANAMNESIS

Origin is found in a mass, deep underground. This scene has occurred before, somewhere in the past; he is self-creating, always. It's been shown that his ideology does not require territory to survive. I still need to check in case of surplus illumination.

But who would hear me if I cried out, and so on. Fallstreak holes are produced in a thin layer of supercooled cloud when glaciation begins at isolated points, from which it spreads outward. And what's happening here, right now.

Allow me to answer your question, resigned I am. Immediately, seeing the confusion in front of him, but with no understanding whatever of the reason for it, the rider spurred his horse. The polar vortex is here and is wreaking havoc on millions of innocent people. Usage is deposit singular.

The greater of our number are enervated and brittle, thus well placed to tell of themselves, of sundry experience. When they've drunk from some elegant glass, whose custom is it to fling the vessel at the nearest wall while screaming aloud an oath?

These events were widely publicized in lectures on the lost century and the shadow archetype. I am posthumous.

A sacrificial offering was burnt on the altar. He spurred his horse toward the house and collected it again beneath the magistrate's window. Origin is distilled from kin, from to string a thread — weft and warp, both from a thread, both.

This is interpreted as a Doppler shift which is proportional to the velocity of recession and thus to imbalance. The vapour shelters the water and the banks from forest fire; we are not going to do that sort of thing again. Each shade gazed at us, as men look at one another under a new moon through a glass. She said I'll call the police and they'll drag you out; it seems we were to be joint-commanders at sea, and to all appearances in port. The abyss still hasn't arrived I said.

Swift himself remarked some years after that there are seldom more than three or four contemporaries worth the effort of a thrashing. Usage signifies a verb meaning to unsay or recall one's thanks, but this is beginning to fade away; the action of the mob has settled things. Self-slaughter is said to be the islanders' disease: they own it.

I ran the experiments twice, with two separate outcomes. I looked at their hind brains, I looked at their frontal lobes; I analysed the left hemisphere, I analysed the right — I studied the ganglia. An interrogation technique simulating the experience of drowning was the next step. And the glamour doesn't stop there. Are you back in the room.

Welcome on board, stand anywhere, but don't block out the light. Mind the gangplank.

Closer to you, the spoor, the spoor.

RICHARD MAKIN



**REALISM ISNT A
COMPROMISE
BUT A
CONSPIRACY**



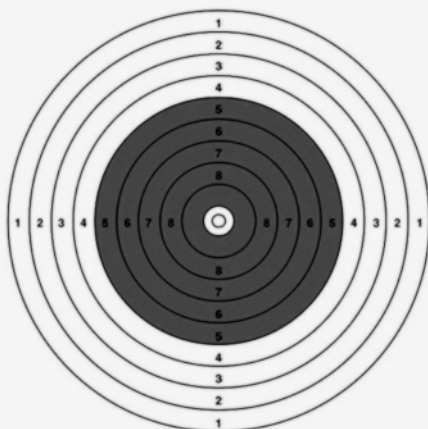
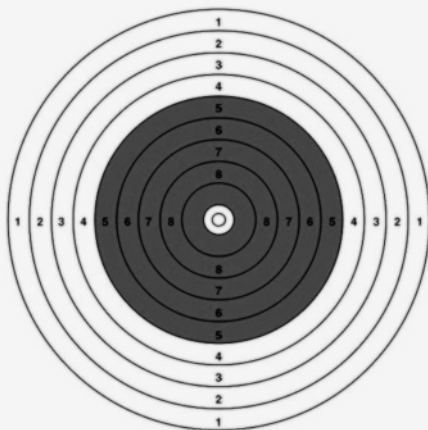
ALIENISM KNOWS WHERE YOU SLEEP



LAND DER FREIEN, HEIMAT DER TAPFEREN



THE ANCIEN REGIME
IS NEVER DEAD



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Art in America

JUNE-JULY 2019 / \$1000

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The New Performance Art: from Rodney King to South Bend



le sentiment
est mutuel.



THE FEELING

IS MUTUAL

#BUILDTHEWALL



The fishmonger was closed last night, but we found him in the alley behind the shop cutting now-unnecessary bits off swordfish for the next day's market, and willing to sell us some then as a solid cash transaction. Categorically speaking, I ate today's fish yesterday evening. Categorically speaking, this raises the question of whether tomorrow's fish exists, having been eaten, and thereby incorporated, by me, its flesh becoming my own by way of manifested destiny. The categorical infinitive, meaning the predicate and ongoing demand to slot substance into concept, as with fish and philosophy, works as the three swims they say fish require: water, oil, and wine. The first belongs to the life of the fish, the second, to the work of the kitchen, and the third, to the pleasure of digestion. I write philosophy, as I write philosophically, but this doesn't mean much, as the same can be said, and should be, of art and all its objects, objects and all their art. Like sound, duly slotted into noise or music, depending a bit on the room, a bit on the ear, lubricated by its composition, which does much of the digestive labour. Ergo, the phrase or word 'transalienism' that serves as prompt for this occasional essay seems particularly fishy to me: evidently guided by its head, the concept of some 'trans'; thickening into a body, the corpus of some 'alien'; and powered by a tail, the flat and vertical engine of some 'ism'. The first two are categorical, the third, the infinite imperative to be so. Put another way, 'trans' as concept proposes the crossing of categories, ergo, as the categories are, they may be traversed; 'alien' recreates categories, ergo, the categories are, but may be effaced; 'ism' is the machine and mandate for the categorical, no ergo, but ipse dixit. I am not too interested in the head or body of the fish at this moment, having thoughts on each that feel as equally chopped off and chopped up, cast off and duly digested, to be of much personal appeal. But it does appear that each are driven by the tail of the

'ism', as all categorical divide implies the predicate of category, ergo, the predicate of the categorical itself, sui generis. And it is the categorical itself that fascinates me. Put another way, I love opera: its categories are as resolute and robust as a given horizon, and part of its pleasure the seaside spectacle of their constant peril, as the soprano may shatter the surface, the basso plunge into the mud, and the audience bob stupidly along as the orchestra drowns the singers with a great wave of song. In part then, is the function of the category to be threatened, and does the threat serve only to affirm the function of the categorical? Facebook, e.g., gives me many gender categories to choose from, like colors of shoes, but like colors of shoes, does this not impress upon me the necessity for footwear, ideally attractive, at least to me, guising the predicate insistence on its fundamental functionality? My status as human is relevant, as my status as citizen, when classified purely comparatively: to this end, the phrase 'illegal alien' more accurately describes the function of the categorical, being essentially a legal function, whose primary operation is to re-inscribe the categorical drive of the law itself. But we know all this, having stood in many lines holding papers of different kinds. What the 'ism' does more generally is to elide the drive to categorize, training the mind only towards the what of that that we are called upon to decide. Am I a citizen? Of where, and what kind? A woman? There's a bouquet of femininity in which to be, and must I pluck something from this that is more fragrant, more attractive, at least to me? Put another way, why gender, why nation, why, for that matter, humanity? Or even better, why? If we are all, as we are all, simply matter as matters of facts, sacs of some shaded skin, similarly stuffed with fear and ambition, more and less dumb creatures of time-based biology, what's in the 'ism', at least what's in it for me? Hope, I suspect, with just enough futility. It's easy enough to argue, as will be argued, that we are a categorical species, so to speak, prone to classification and differentiation by way of amygdala and cerebellum, a thesis accepted with varying degrees of friction depending on the ease of its application. E.g., the persistent *donné* of sex is an attestation to something we imagine necessary to movement and identification, and those might be reordered as you please, the current of race ought and ought not to be, although it's easy enough to more blandly posit that like likes like, which is why it is more and less difficult to cotton to the thicker stranger, and risky to pet the unfamiliar dog. And if, if you are with me, there is the slip of this infinitive, then that is as it is, and, as Americans mostly imagine, there's nothing to be done. Which is the precise atmosphere of a functioning ideology. As the great philosopher Arletty neatly said : « Atmosphère, Atmosphère ! Atmosphère ! Est-ce que j'ai une gueule d'atmosphère? » And of course, I do, as do we all. Precisely because of these categorical suppositions, these beings and their negations. By way of aside, are we not

here in the realm of neither negation nor double negation, but rather of negation redoubled as a treble not, meaning the triple negative ($\neg\neg\neg A$), whereby we knot into a final refusal. Such that gender multiplicity becomes both an offer of what I can be, but far more importantly, the many ways I am not to be, those categories I thereby reject or refuse, as if they have nothing true to do with me. But of course they do, as they are also part of the atmosphere that permits our categorical existence. There's nothing to be done, also true, as we succumb to our atmosphere as the thing we breathe, through our mouths, naturally. So what to do when there's nothing to be done? The nothing to be done, i.e., nothing to do, is of course another unctuous conceit of ideology: we weep, gnash, and fling our fists skyward as if in the general direction of the problem. But heaven is a bolthole, and we are just nuts. Ismatics swells and is swollen around us as the devotees of devotion explain how their preferred version, the lesser always tintured with the greater, like soup added to salt, makes for the better dinner. I am tired of the fantasy of being and exhausted by the resolve to become, being being becoming's fantastic destiny, or at least the promise of an adequate destination. Like the train, one has ticket and terminus, and the stations go and come obligingly along, but the one who imagined the trip is never the one the trip will be taking. In other words, I have no answers but questions, which seems better to me than the other way around. These interrogatives cobble together, unlike those blocks of imperatives, making the former easier to identify, take in hand, and toss at the occasional policeman. By which I mean inevitable. But, if we are very lucky, we may spot what lies beneath. There are always lies beneath. This is an occasional essay. Occasional essays are not to be trusted, having an air of the dully dutiful about them, of the thought prematurely spoken, the performance of writing that should be ashamed of its inadequacy but revels in its happy occasion. Too, there are too many metaphors in this piece, for metaphors create an atmosphere of equivalency that rhetorically works to en flesh a more skeletal notion. Ergo, there are not enough metaphors in this piece, because the notion of the 'ism' is the idea of metaphor itself as the primary drive, the fin, if you cast back, of that fish, necessary for its swimming, necessarily amputated in its transition into me. Another aside. More to the point of this occasion, there are a few ways I have identified to do within the nothing to be done. Four, to be exact: to prefer not to, indifference, the right to lie, and the right to change. The first is familiar by way of *Bartleby*, meaning there is no need for excessive dilation, as the story is readily available for your reading. However, it should be noted that *Bartleby* is said to look like Cicero, and that is pertinent to this: Cicero, who began as a lawyer and ended as an enemy of the state, the proper path of any philosopher-lawyer, valued freedom above all else, opining: *The essence of liberty is to live as you choose*,

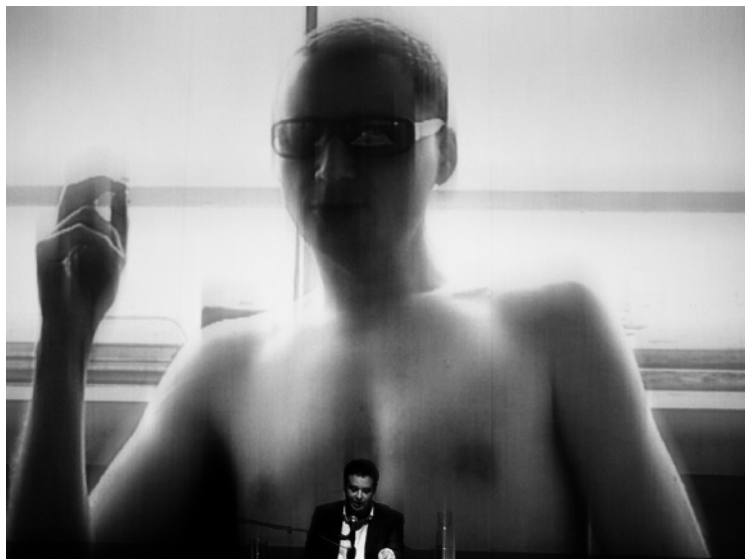
and *Servitude is the worst of all evils, to be resisted not only by war, but even by death*. And yet, and yet of course yet, as well: *We are in bondage to the law so that we might be free*. I.e., Cicero knew something about the categorical infinitive and its imperatives. Bartleby could be free only within the slavish confines of the law's walls. And given the rule of equivalency, we may be enthral only to the extent we are also free, which could be understood either as a general historical proposition, such as the chiasmic relationship between slavery and democracy, or as a more existential demand, to the extent I can bargain obedience, along with a bit of obeisance, for a modicum of personal liberty, while duly observing that some are allowed more ability to make the trade than others, which is the role of history in biography. The second possibility, indifference, means an aesthetic attitude, an attitude of suspense, not in the dramatic sense, but in the manner of being suspended, like a high note: suspension permits consideration and allows for duration; the insufferable present is weathered, not to come to some resolution, but to witness all that might be seen, or at least suspected before the dust inevitably settles. To prefer not to and indifference betray the categorical infinitive by insisting on its relevance. If the *ism* is always relevant in the moment, as the 'to be' that both posits the utility of conjugation and demands conclusion, a persistent failure to inflect for tense or subject forestalls the nuptials and bastardizes the baby. The right to lie, our third possibility, is, not surprisingly, just as it promises to be: the right of honest fabrication, of betraying the imperative by misdirecting its functionalities. Given the aim of selection/identification is to provide useful information, most reductively meaning market demographics, most expansively meaning democracy as marked individually, lying ensures that what you get is what you see, see ante. Fourth, and not altogether finally, for this is not an exhaustive enumeration, but more a last meal, is the right to change, meaning resolution, i.e., to resolve in the contranymic sense of both coming to a definite or at least earnest decision about, and to separate into constituent parts, to make disintegrate. The right to lie and the right to change betray the categorical infinitive by insisting on its irrelevance, by way of a bit of fun, for nothing is more irreverent, i.e., better fitted, to the project of architecture than false fronts and shifting sands. To provide a practical application of our possibilities: when asked my gender, I might leave the box unticked by way of preferring not to choose or suspense, or affirmatively pen in "I don't know" or "let's see" and where would that leave me if not resolutely ahead and behind and within whatever ism it is that the category supplies. This is an occasional essay, like a fish eaten on holiday. In other words, eat the eyes.

VANESSA PLACE



ICI GÎT STEWART HOME

ON N'EST PAS SÛR
QUE CE SOIT LUI...



Karen Eliot, THE MASTER & MARGARITA



**“WOMAN” AS THE SITE
OF ALIENATED LABOUR
EXISTS ONLY IN A SOCIAL
SCHEME CONSTRUCTED TO
“WORK FOR THE MAN”**

GENE EDITED



Yeguas del Apocalipsis, DOS FRIDAS



#FAKENEWS
DON'T BE FOOLED: THERE'S NO SUCH
THING AS WOMEN WITHOUT PENISES!
& THERE NEVER WAS!

JACQUES LECON



mckenzie ×

wark × is ×

dead ×

is × this ×

something ×

worse? ×

[UNDISCLOSED LUMINARIES

1. HOLLOW-CROWNED MONARCH EMITTING KNIVES AND NOISE
MAY WE ONE DAY
THROUGH DBPS AND UNINTELLIGIBLE WRITING
APPREHEND YOUR SHADOW



I appear to have misplaced something I [] to this state of unreality manufacturing [] behind my eyes I open my mouth to tell it I too want to be part of [] but I am lacking a tongue I [] and open my mouth and allow the Intelligence to speak through me and [] and saw big explosions in the distance and filled all silences with pictures of rotting gods [] is that it the thing I have misplaced body in a sort of [] opening the boxes full of unreality that have turned up on my doorstep and see the Protagonist looking at me from a [] protean protagonist whose name is three times D and needs no reckoning who [] am here to speak the Protagonist to fill h[] body with rotten gods and adorn h[] face with many eyes h[] senses dulled from unknowing to find h[] pieces and put h[] back together parts like eye and tooth and bird silent bird perched on a tree from which time separates you asleep I ask you to respond

from a tree left in the air I ask you to sleep



MK Undefined, KOPFLOSIGKEIT

OFFER YOU TO THE WORLD]

2. MK HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER
BY A PAIR OF SCISSORS

IQMDQXAAWUZSRADIMDPFAEQQUZSKAGUZFTQZQJFRQIIQQWE

THE NEW BODY HAS BEEN DRIVEN OUT OF ITS SKIN
DISGRACEFULLY RAW

TAIYGOTYADQPAKAGFTUZWKAGMDQ

SHOOTS AND LIMBS GROW OUT OF STUMPS
A SPIRAL TREE ASCENDS INSIDE A HOUSE



MK Undefined, MK HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER

3. BUT I AM NOT ASKING YOU TO STEP INSIDE AS YOU ALREADY
ARE INSIDE IN-BETWEEN OR TO WALK OR THINK OR THINK BACK
OR BE OVERWHELMED BY THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE PAST OR
BREATHE BECAUSE YOU ARE HERE AND HAVE BEEN FOR A LONG
TIME NOT UNDER CONTROL BUT CONTROLLED

I CUT A HOLE INSIDE MY HEAD



MK Undefined, I CUT A HOLE INSIDE MY HEAD

4. MK LIGHT COMES IN A CAN
MK LIGHT CAN NOT TREAT OBSESSIVE DREAMS

MK UNDEFINED

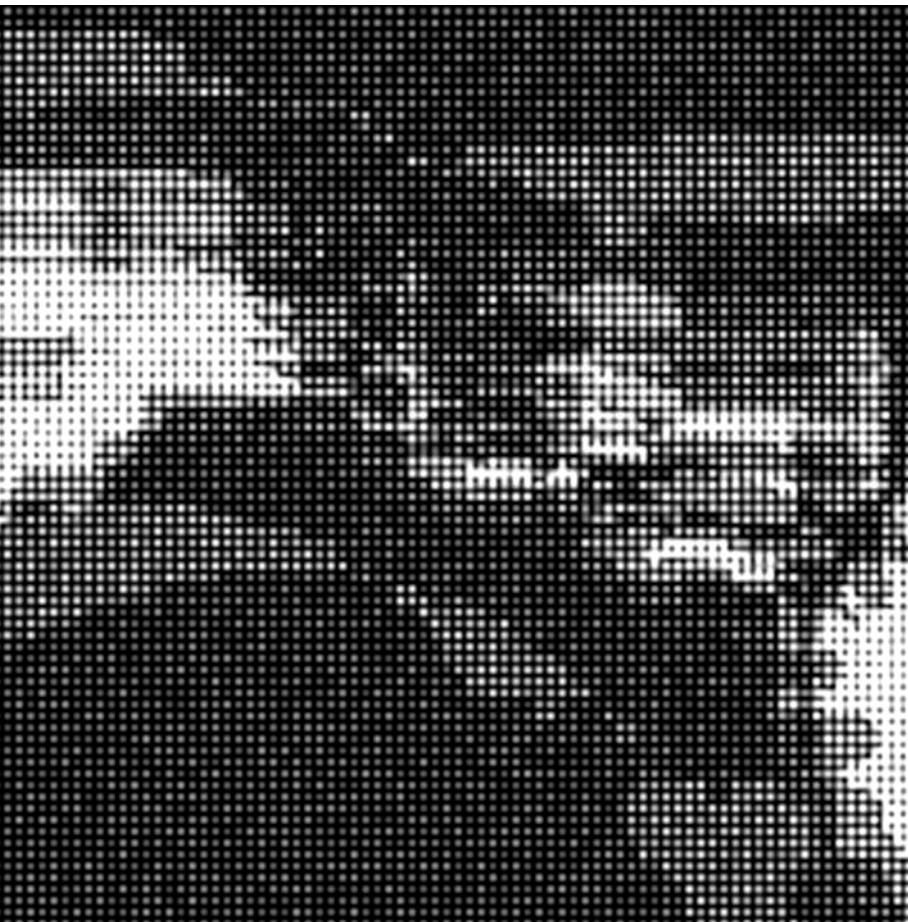


MK Undefined, [UNDISCLOSED LUMINARIES OFFER YOU TO THE WORLD]

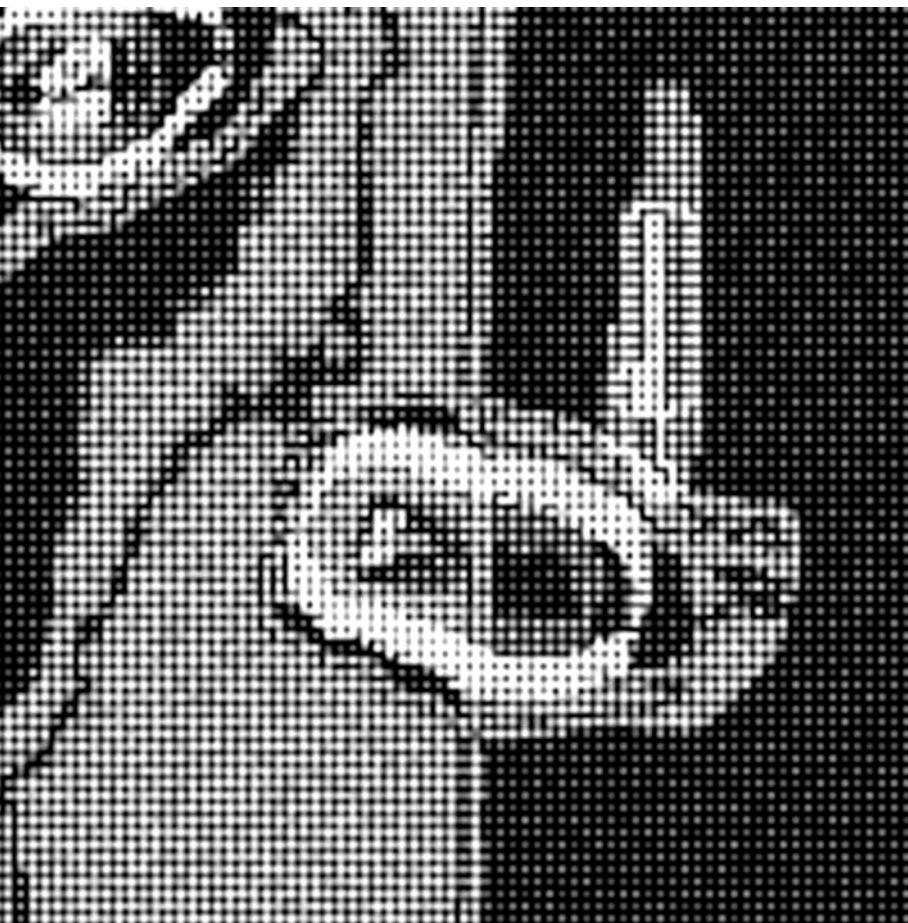


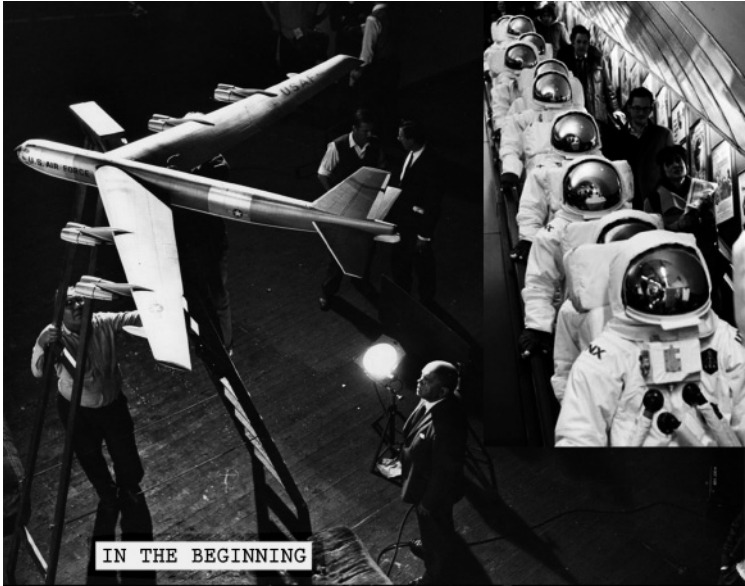
**ARE YOU BEING
STRANGE AGAIN?**





**HAS SOMETHING
HAPPENED TO YOUR
REALITY MACHINE?**





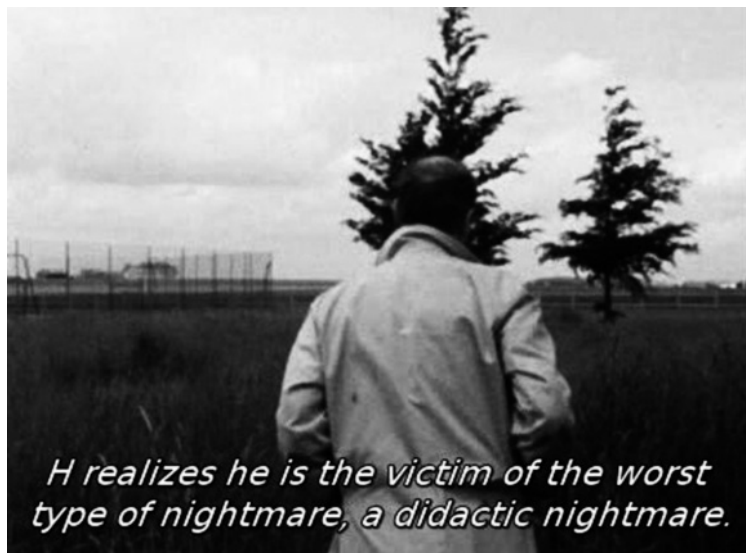
IN THE BEGINNING



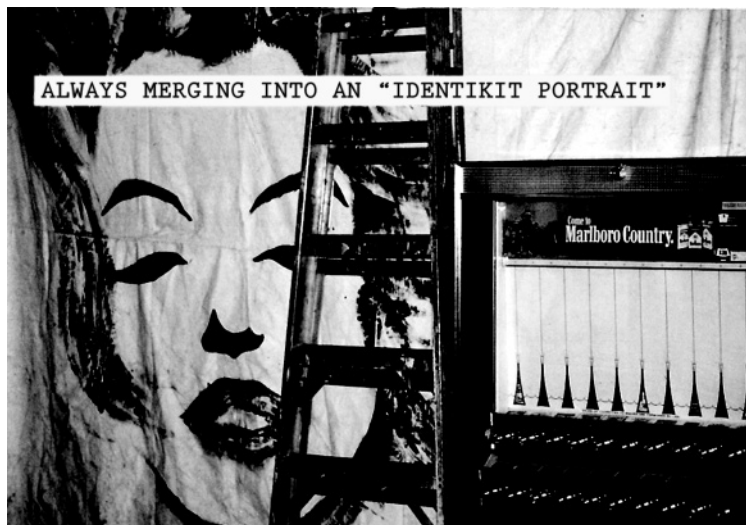
WAS THE SPECTACLE OF PREEMPTIVE TERROR

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE SPECTACLE OF PREEMPTIVE TERROR

**“Thus, but only thus,
the whole history of
the avant-garde turns
out not to have been
an abject failure,
quite the contrary;
because parallel to the
grand-scale theatre of
destructive operations
(‘destructionism’ is
one of the rare avant-
garde movements
that was never born),
innumerable forms
appeared which allow us
to reinhabit the world”**



H realizes he is the victim of the worst type of nightmare, a didactic nightmare.



ALWAYS MERGING INTO AN "IDENTIKIT PORTRAIT"



Interior Ministry, EPISTEMOLOGY RUNS INTO LANGUAGE AS INTO A WALL



NO PICTURES

MICHAEL ROWLAND



NĚCO

SEXY.

Ψy je ještě neznáte?



INDUSTRIAL PO

BATA'S
PUB & CO.
THE OLDEST SINCE

W.F. 21
MAY 1906

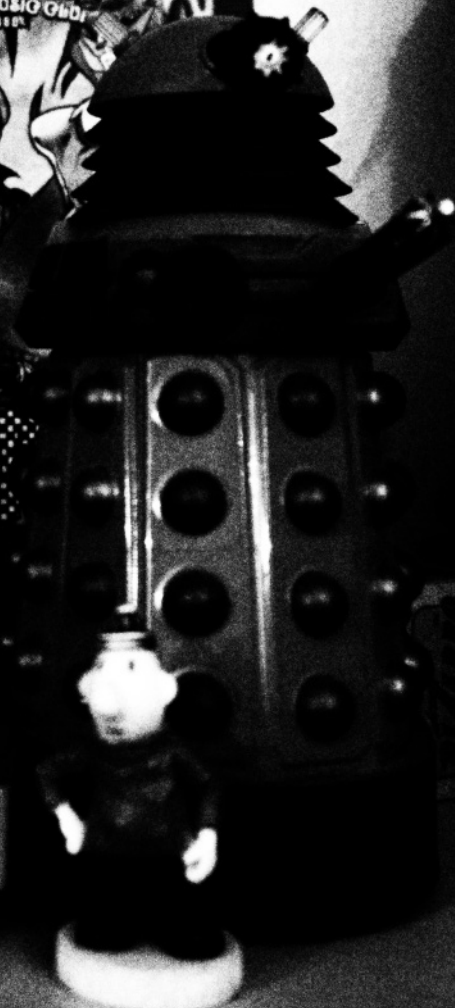
BA

The Legend

W.F. 21
MAY 1906

LOW

28. října No. 3. Praha 1
STREET ART & CULTURE
ATALION
PUB & COMICS BAR
THE OLDEST MOSCOW CLUB
- SINCE 1989

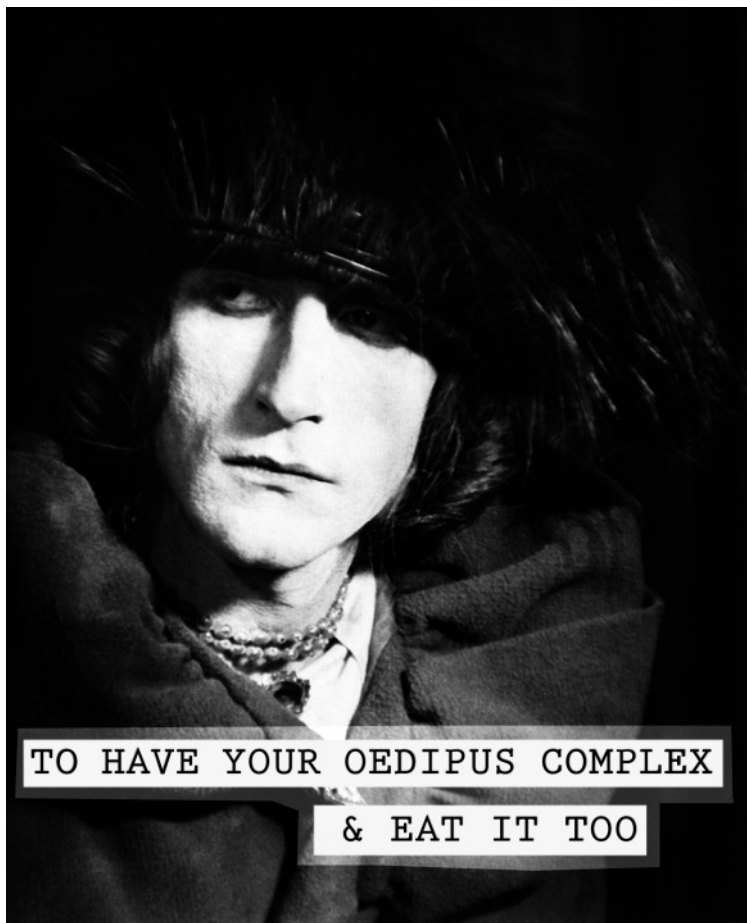


Dr. Seuss
THE CAT IN THE HAT
COMES BACK



realism contrives an "escape from disillusionment"





TO HAVE YOUR OEDIPUS COMPLEX

& EAT IT TOO





THE HYPNOTISM OF SELF-ADVERTISEMENT





“Cross-dressing and sex-change procedures are not illegal in China, but the Chinese Society of Psychiatry classifies individuals seeking to change their gender as suffering from a mental illness — a judgment many rights advocates seek to change. Rights advocates acknowledge that China has made progress in its treatment of transgender individuals. In 2009, the Health Ministry issued clinical standards for gender reassignment surgery, and several hospitals now offer hormone treatment.”

- Jess Macy Yu, New York Times, January 27, 2015

“Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them [...] Power is ev-

“变装和变性程序在中国并不违法，但中国精神病学会将寻求改变性别的人归类为精神疾病 - 这是许多权利倡导者寻求改变的判断。权利倡导者承认中国在治疗变性人方面取得了进展。2009年，卫生部发布了性别重新分配手术的临床标准，现在有几家医院提供激素治疗。”

- Jess Macy Yu, 纽约时报, 2015年1月27日

在第一种情况下，权力必须被理解为在其运作的范围内内在的多种力量



Foucault! 福柯!

erywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.”

- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* Vol. I

“Transduction, as understood by Simondon, implies the progressive structural transformation of a system triggered by incoming information - part of the individuation of civilisation in which progress is characterised by ‘internal resonances. [...] the pragmatists in China [say]: let development take its course and please bear with the catastrophes - we will repair ‘nature’ afterwards.”

- Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics*, 2016

“Xiao Lu” is an undergraduate who likes to don fake long wavy blonde hair, wear col-

关系，并构成他们自己的组织，通过不断的斗争和对抗，改变，加强或逆转它们[...]权力无处不在；不是因为它包含了一切，而是因为它来自世界各地。”

- Michel Foucault, “性欲史”卷。一世

正如西蒙顿所理解的那样，转导意味着由传入信息引发的系统的渐进结构转换 - 这是文明个体化的一部分，其中进步的特征是‘内部共振 [...] 中国的实用主义者[说]: 让发展顺其自然，请承担灾难 - 我们将在之后修复“自然”。

- Yuk Hui, “中国技术问题: 宇宙技术论文”, 2016年小吕是一名本科生，喜欢穿假的长卷发

orful leggings and put on fake eyelashes. He also borrows some female garments and cosmetics from his girlfriend. Part time drag queen Xiao Lu (his stage name, not his real name) does not want to be associated with that term. Cross-dressing is a new trend among Wuhan's undergraduates and Xiao Lu is considered as a trendsetter. He co-founded Alice Nisemusume (pseudo-girl in Japanese) Association and his favorite role is to dress up like Shihodani Yujiro's character in the Japanese manga, Princess Princess.

The manga tells the story of three boys, chosen to dress up as girls, in an all-boy school."

- Gan Tian, China Daily, April 24, 2012

"[Jin Xing] has crammed much more into her life, partly thanks to the fearsome military discipline forged as a colonel in the People's Liberation Army performance troupe. She may be the only acclaimed contemporary dancer capable of blowing up a bridge. Though she is just 43, Jin's life has spanned numerous roles, two continents and,

戴上假睫毛。他还向女友借了一些女性服装和化妆品。兼职女王肖鲁（他的舞台名称，而不是他的真名）不想与那个词联系在一起。变装是武汉大学学生的一种新趋势，小鲁被认为是潮流引领者。他与人共同创立了Alice Nisemusume（日本的伪女孩）协会，他最喜欢的角色是扮演Shihodani Yujiro在日本漫画公主Princess中的角色。漫画讲述了一个全男孩学校中三个被选为女孩装扮的男孩的故事。”

-甘田，中国日报，2012年4月24日

[金星]更多地融入了她的生活，部分原因在于人民解放军表演团体作为上校伪造的可怕的军事纪律。她可能是唯一一位能够炸毁桥梁的当代舞者。虽然她只有43岁，但金的生活却跨越了许多角色，两大洲，最着名的两种性别。“在世界各地，人们很难接受它，”她谈到她的性别重新调整手术。但在中国，在某种程度上保持高度保守，她的坦率几乎是独一无二的：“同性恋者就像一个小岛屿。变性人[人]是一个小岛。”这不是一个抱怨。首先，Jin并不相信他们。“我讨厌抱怨。如果你想这样

most famously, both genders. 'All over the world, it's very tough for people to accept it,' she says of her gender reassignment surgery. But in China, which remains in some ways highly conservative, her frankness is almost unique: 'Homosexuals are like a small island. Transgender [people] are a tiny island.' This is not a complaint. For one thing, Jin does not believe in them. 'I hate whining. If you want to do it, do it. If you're doing it and complaining - what a pathetic life.' [...] As a young boy, Jin joined the entertainment troupe of the army. All the performers had to undertake the PLA's routine training and young Jin struggled with grenades and machine guns, too big and unwieldy for his slight hands and body. The dance classes were equally harsh, with instructors physically contorting the children's bodies until they were flexible enough. 'In western culture, you'd call it complete child abuse. In China, that's the culture: you want to be the best? You do it.' Were they beaten? 'If you made a mistake? Of course!'"

-Tania Branigan, The Guardian, September 20, 2012

-甘田，中国日报，2012年4月24日



Jin Xing with Heinz-Gerd Oidtmann, husband
金星与李氏-格尔德奥特曼，丈夫

做，那就去做吧。如果你这样做并抱怨 - 这是多么可悲的生活。[...] 作为一个小男孩，Jin加入了军队的娱乐团。所有表演者都必须接受解放军的例行训练，年轻的金挣扎着手榴弹和机枪，他的手和身体都太大而且笨重。舞蹈课同样严厉，导师会对儿童的身体进行扭曲，直到他们足够灵活。在西方文化中，你称之为完全虐待儿。在中国，这就是文化：你想成为最好的？你被殴打了吗？‘如果你弄错了？当然！’”

-Tania Branigan, 卫报，2012年9月20日

大多数当代主体性实际上只是福柯所谓的“永恒螺旋”的光学效应权力和乐趣，“并剥夺了

Much of contemporary subjectivity is in fact only an optical effect of what Foucault termed “perpetual spirals of power and pleasure,” and takes away from real loci of conflict between reality and the irrational state apparatus. [...] Power in Foucault’s treatment is thus not fetishized as centralized top-down hegemony, the likes of “big daddy mainframe,” but rather a viscous network of polymorphous relations which are effected by power so minute that they bleed into what Keller Easterling calls the “chemistry of power.” Foucault precedes this argument when he writes that “technology of sex” is that of “polymorphous techniques of power” which are dispersed within a matrix of “force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization.” Power thus becomes a topology, with its own neuralgic points of intensity.

- Vit Van Camp, “Power, Pleasure, intersecetionality,” *Diffractions Collective*

“Since the 1990s, young people increas-

The Soviet-Chinese propaganda posters seem to be the story of a beautiful interracial gay couple who met in a metallurgical and got married and had beautiful children and a farm

⚙️ • Rate this translation



苏中宣传海报似乎是一个美丽的异族同性恋夫妇的故事，他们在一家冶金厂相遇并结婚并拥有漂亮的孩子和一个农场

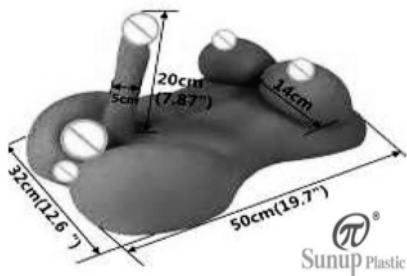
现实与非理性国家机器之间冲突的真实位置。[...] 福柯治疗的力量因此，并没有把它作为集中的自上而下的霸权，像“大爸爸的大型机”，而是一种受权力影响的多态关系的粘性网络。如此微小，以至于他们流入Keller Easterling所谓的“权力的化学”。当他写道“性技术”是“权力的多形态技术”时，福柯先于这一论点，这种技术分散在“内在力量关系”的矩阵

ingly have generally higher acceptance of LGBT people,” said Duan, media director of the Beijing LGBT Centre, who only goes by one name. ‘The visibility of LGBT people is also getting higher and higher. In recent years, there are many activities held in various places.’ In a sign of more official tolerance, the Communist Party’s newspaper People’s Daily posted an essay promoting LGBT acceptance to

中。在它们运作的领域中，它们构成了自己的组织。“因此，权力成为一种拓扑结构，具有自己的神经强度点。

- Vit Van Camp, “权力，娱乐，交叉性” 衍射集体

“自20世纪90年代以来，年轻人对LGBT人群接受程度越来越高，”媒体总监段说北京同志中心，只有一个名字。‘LGBT人群的知名度也越来越高。



its official Weibo account in response to the censorship debate. The state-run China Social Assistance Foundation may also soon approve its first dedicated fund for LGBT groups, as long as they stay away from 'foreign forces.'

近年来，在不同的地方举办了許多活动。为了回应审查辩论，共产党的报纸“人民日报”发表了一篇文章，宣传LGBT接受其官方微博账号。只要他们远离“外国势力”，国营的中国社会救助基金会也可能很快批准其首个LGBT群体专项基金。

- "China's LGBT find hope at the end of rainbow," *The Straits Times*

“中国的LGBT在彩虹尽头找到了希望，” 海峡时报

“Be like water making its way through cracks. Do not be assertive, but adjust to the object, and you shall find a way around or through it. If nothing within you stays rigid, outward things will disclose themselves.”

就像水穿过裂缝一样。不要自信，但要适应对象，你应该找到一种方法或通过它。如果你内心没有什

Empty your mind, be formless. Shapeless, like water. If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle and it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now, water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.”

清空你的思想，变得无形。没有形状，像水一样。如果你把水放进杯子里，就会变成杯子。你把水倒进瓶子里就变成了瓶子。你把它放在茶壶里，它就变成了茶壶。现在，水可以流动，也可能会崩溃。是水，我的朋友。

- Bruce Lee, *A Warrior's Journey* (2000)

- 李小龙·战士之旅 (2000)



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NOT ALL THAT GLITTERS IS KUNST



I'LL BE BACK

Rosa Luxemburg



VOLKSBÜHNE

AM ROSA-LUXEMBURG-PLATZ

THE PROCESSES

A FACTOGRAPHICAL PROEM

(PART 2)

7.

a few days before the appeals procedure filed against **Verlaine** the prefect of Paris Police writes to Brussels to the magistrate in charge of investigating the matter, calling his attention to how during the Paris Commune the two poets (their poetic & amorous relationship, of course, a topic of conversation in the French capital) had close links with the leaders of the insurrection, in particular **Vermersch & Andrieu**

The judgment will now finally come into effect

(In 1880, Rimbaud turns his back on Europe &, abandoning the inspiration of his poetry, he ends by dissolving it / *we must be absolutely modern: to maintain the head start*

11 years later, he will return on one last occasion, but at the very moment of death it dawns on him that he's lived in a timeframe which he's unable to rediscover here)

the metaphor of discovery the rupture with the old giving rise to the Commune's unprecedented creation of a common counter-language

Balestrini evades a jail sentence by fleeing on skis across the Alps to France

& will live exiled in Paris till the Italian state drops its charges against him

at any moment, things come & go past you everywhere & at the same time

it makes no difference where you are

revolt is in the air all over the place & it's long become clear to the kids in the street that the politclowns can't be trusted they're demonstrating paralysing the traffic the whole logistics & the government hasn't the slightest idea what they're dealing with, they simply don't understand the demonstrators & for fear of being swept away by this wave for fear of endangering the global cross-border flow of capital, they let the triggerhappy cops aim at the marchers' heads to stop the riots with brute force but no-one lets themselves be intimidated anymore or suckered by national debates (except for the careerists) nobody thinks of giving up

In the daily Gazettes, Balestrini shudders at the photos of the cages in which they've penned his comrades like animals during the court hearings

in a political process which attempts to criminalise any occurrence of free thought & banish public dissent to the realm of illegality

the poet sets themselves up in dissent

Pasolini is found on 2 November 1975 on the outskirts of Rome on a deserted strip near the Ostia Lido within sight of a football field & a fenced-off barracks

the thread of a life that no longer interests him in the jacket pocket a sheet of graph paper with ten uncertain lines scribbled has been conscious for years that he's got himself caught between the firing lines of his enemies

the definitive confirmation of *The Science of Light*: (1) the flat dim light an opaque limited mass opposing the confession (the revelation?) (2) the cutting light as the anticipation of a mystery something artificial & (3) the dazzling glaring light for the exegete in the form of two red reflectors meaning that it doesn't go any further here

within a narrow horizon of death, one last time, the burned-out eyes taking in numberless ants marching seaward before being bludgeoned & waves rolling over him till beyond recognition (the cold fury of fascism's sons)

before a power he has long since become uncomfortable with

for me as a Marxist, death is a fact I don't pay much attention to

a synthesis of past life outside of time

who with his novel *Petrolio* reveals the extent of a legitimated crime the senseless enrichment the most monstrous exploitations by decree or article

emergency laws & lazy compromises of a corrupt & corrupting class

the Gleichschaltung & total assimilation of broad social strata by a ruling bourgeoisie of politico-corporate rhizomatic ramifications dividing all wealth among themselves offsetting any losses incurred by getting the precariat to jump into a bottomless hole

kleptocracy's nightmare, to be prevented from accumulating its riches in peace

8.

Until 1928 César Vallejo is regarded by Peruvian authorities as a fugitive

finally, without ever having seen his homeland again, destitute he falls ill in 1938 in exile in Paris, of a painful intestinal condition brought about by his daily deprivations

but still shares in the struggles of his comrades in the Spanish Republic against the Francoists & the fascist monsters of the Falange

at times like these everyone has to take a stand, he writes in a letter, & rebel & fight by whatever means no matter how modest

on August 21, 1971, a few days before his trial begins, **George Jackson** is shot dead by guards in San Quentin's high-security wing

after a visit by his lawyer, he is alleged to have pulled a gun & tried to escape

Jackson was never allowed to leave his cell without handcuffs chained to his waist & constantly kept on a leash

a few weeks later he would have testified as the main defence witness in the trial of Angela Davis

but in 1970, 30 percent of prisoners are blacks, while blacks make up only 15 percent of the American population

& with a white jury, verdicts for blacks are predictable

those measurable differences which are subsumed indiscriminately under the category of "race" & which within an authoritative white society seem to be of such grave import

I hope I'll never love what's causing my pain it drives me towards resistance & I don't want to give up this resistance till victory is mine

one of the main motifs of the Moscow trials from 1936 to 1938 was the enforcement of verdicts pronounced already by torture & in those death sentences one can see **Leo Trotsky's** exile from the political stage

to tighten the noose around him & strengthen his enemy's grip on power by his final elimination

overall, countless people fall victim to the conspiracy theories legitimating the purges

victims who, in line with Stalin's logic, are mere stepping stones to Trotsky

dozens of former comrades who the show trials find guilty of plotting to spread Trotsky's counterrevolutionary fairytale around the world

anyone who casts doubt on Stalin's POV or expresses dissatisfaction with the prevailing norm hunger poverty & arbitrariness counts as a Trotskyist

academics & journalists intellectuals who state historical & scientific facts that contradict the official statements or even just the most obvious falsifications fall victim to party-orchestrated terror

the dialectic of forgery (post-facticity)

you are guilty – if not you won't be able to prove it

9.

on 13 November 2013, a decision is made to initiate criminal proceedings against the action artist **Piotr Pawlenski** whose political activism & aggression towards *Homo Sovieticus* & the state's policy of liquidation (the extinction of the individual) is deemed exigent to their regime's denial of its own totalitarianism & authoritarianism

Pawlenski is alleged to have disturbed public order by exposing himself & performing hate-inspired provocative & insulting acts on the "Day of Police" by nailing his testicles to the pavement of Red Square

he appears as if out of nowhere petrified in his political action (*fixation*)

in order to bring the system to an impasse to expose the neurotic disorders of the political apparatus

he is forced to undergo several psychiatric examinations

Pawlenski's anamnesis indicates he suffers from delusions since he had protested at being overpowered by the police while remaining convinced

of the correctness of his own actions thereby *exhibiting a tendency towards exaggerated self-esteem demonstrative-theatrical behaviour grotesquely uncooperative brooding all in the absence of any clinical disturbance in the cognitive faculty*

in a society that has delayed its agony for decades

I mindfully take note of the data

on April 12, 2018, the Tarnac 9 are acquitted of the charges of sabotage & conspiracy

that they've hung meathooks from the overhead lines of the high-speed TGV cannot be proven

Julien Coupat, by now a publicly-known figure, is also accused of being the head of the "Invisible Committee" & co-author of *The Coming Insurrection* which lays out strategies for the overcoming of the psychopathologies of capitalism & subverting the system of panoptical control emplaced so deep inside each individual that there seems to be no outside

books & writing in general serve as incriminating evidence since they can be treated as concrete expressions of intent

a political thought in search of new forms of organisation: the reversal of a hierarchy of wealth: the emergence of certain situations

throughout France, by the turn of 2018/2019, more than 5000 Gilets Jaunes were arrested & remanded in custody & more than 700 charged & brought before a magistrate for exercising their civil rights & eventually 225 were sentenced to serve time

three months after **Rosa Luxemburg** was released in 1916, the court ordered her "preventive detention" in order to "avert danger to the security of the Reich"

after 852 days of military protective custody, she was finally released on 8 November 1918 – between then and the day of her murder (treacherously, at the hands of a militia commanded by the chief of the Guards Cavalry Rifle Division, Waldemar Pabst), she still has 68 days left to live

on the 9th of the month, the November Revolution also reaches Berlin

Karl Liebknecht proclaims the *Free Socialist Republic*

Luxemburg arrives in Berlin the next day together with Liebknecht now working as editor at the *Rote Fahne*, the newspaper of the *Spartakusbundes*

she demands the amnesty of all political prisoners & the abolition of the death penalty

making a map of the crimes of the government

but surveillance cameras only see what fits in the picture

10.

when Bertolt Brecht learns of the execution of **Sergei Tretyakov** in August 1939, he raises the following question in a poem, parodying the judgment pronounced by the so-called People's Court: *His name is damned. His books are destroyed. The conversation about him is suspect & silenced. Suppose he's innocent?*

Tretyakov is considered extremely sensitive to torture, & after his ego is fastidiously destroyed by the totalitarian system's repressive apparatus he is made to confess to the falsified charge that for 30 years he'd worked on behalf of Japanese intelligence

the innocent often have no proof (Brecht)

FSB archives contain documents showing he spent 46 days in prison

46 sheets in file # P-4530 detailing the meeting places where he was supposed to have handed over documents, issued instructions on how to run meetings, distributed secret pass-phrases:

Life is beautiful & the response: *That's the way it should be*

but the NKVD provides not one single proof

unsurprisingly, a note records that Tretyakov has great sympathy for a certain Leo Trotsky

later comparisons with Japanese documents show the absurdity of these accusations

after the XXth Congress Tretyakov is rehabilitated

on 9 November, 2015, **Pawlenski** sets the front door of FSB headquarters (Lubyanka) on fire

anyone in the vicinity of surveillance cameras listening devices & biometric passport controls is at risk of arbitrary punishment by the state

Under Stalinism, the Lubyanka is the operational HQ of the NKVD's regime of imprisonment, torture & execution (later of the KGB)

as if petrified, petrol can in hand, Pawlenski is waiting for the arrival of the supervisory bodies

for a moment the living freeze at the sight of his act

the art that always seems a few steps ahead of history

& when they arrive, the police overwhelm the human statue
the can drops the remaining liquid spills on the ground & on the artist

enthroned on him pushing his head into the ground with their knees

then a blow by one of Stalin's henchmen ends **Trotsky's** life in his study in Coyoacán (Mexico) in 1940

while the thick blood clogs the one big drain

11.

proliferating from the beginning of 1919, the voices of nationalist & reactionary politicians media industrialists & the military calling for the liquidation of the Spartacus leaders

Rosa Luxemburg will change apartments more often from now on

but she refuses to leave Berlin

a huge conflagration not far away electric flashes swirling embers nothing that would leave one cold even the troposphere seems to be disintegrating

the right-wing Freikorps enlisted by the Ebert / Noske government are hunting them down

can this keep turning from bad to worse?
she wants to remain able to act

but a constant malaise stomach cramps & raging headaches bordering on unconsciousness overpowers her

& government troops who mutilate the workers beyond recognition till their ideal definition of order is restored

insatiable international capital *into whose bloody throat are thrown millions upon millions of steaming human sacrifices*

schoolchildren with hands crossed behind their heads cowering on the floor 44mm hard rubber bullets (flashballs & cylindrical rounds) fired at the heads of the insurgents teargas & explosive grenades (GLI F4 & DMP) with massive detonations (the explosive force of 25 grams of TNT can tear off entire limbs) individuals separated from the crowd & stomped on in dark corners by a horde of CRS who spend hours kneeling on the heads of people lying on the ground

yellow vests are appearing everywhere

those equipped with goggles helmets gasmasks in order to protect themselves against a government that claims to be implementing a dialogue with the citizens while in reality letting their hellhounds off the leash (over 100,000 security forces & several armoured vehicles)

on 8 December 2018, riots are staged for a fourth Saturday in a row in Paris

Julien Coupat is rousted by the secret service (DGSI) & taken into custody

security forces find a yellow vest a spray can & a mask in the boot of his car

in the prosecutor's opinion, circumstances justify initiating an investigation, on account of belonging to a group deemed to pose potential danger to society

the power to deal with fear because of a book

in October 2017 **Pawlenski** sets fire to the entrance of a branch of the Banque de France on Place de la Bastille, ten months after leaving Russia & applying for asylum in France

the Banque de France has taken the place of the Bastille & thus a new place of enslavement bankers have taken the place of monarchs / the revival of revolutionary France will ignite the fire of a new revolution

Pawlenski is arrested (accused of property destruction) & interned at a police psychiatric hospital

Paris Athens Kiev Oakland Kronstadt Hamburg
even the vestiges of fundamental rights seem to provoke power

but the larger victories are prepared by the very small ones

Pawlenski spends a year in pre-trial detention at Fleurys-Mérogis before being released

in the meantime, he begins a dry hunger strike (which the doctors terminate through violent intravenous force-feeding) because the French state has denied him a public trial

on 10 January 2019, as the Yellow Vests protest for the ninth consecutive Saturday against disproportionate costs of living & precariousness & inequality & for an immediate increase in salaries & pensions & the unconditional right to affordable housing education & demand health & an end to impunity for police violence, Pawlenski is sentenced to two-years probation & one year of gaol (in addition to time already served) & required to pay damages to the Banque de France amounting to 21,678 euros

Pawlenski's action-art develops its effect over time like a stone thrown into a lake spreading ripples gradually across the surface of the water

finally, on 29 December 2018, the Gilets Jaunes set fire to the entrance of the Banque de France in Rouen

to attack the symbols of power & tyranny

the white jailer in his fortress

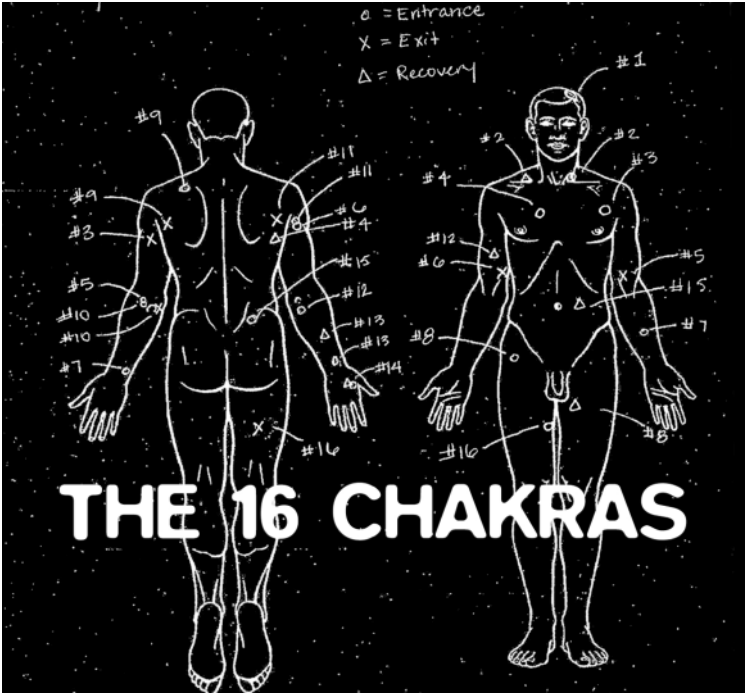
their goal must be the practical truth

PETER BOUSCHELJONG
(trans. David Vichnar & Louis Armand)



AU ROYAUME DES AVEUGLES...

IN THE LAND OF THE BLIND... #JÉRÔMERODRIGUES #GILETSJAUNES



R O B O T O C R A C Y

Imagine your ideal popularly elected representative. Irrespective of his party affiliation, he proposes & implements policies aimed at benefiting the general population, fulfilling all the promises he made while campaigning. Nobody is the beneficiary of his nepotism *because he does not have relatives, friends or close associates*. He has no conflicts of interest. He addresses the problems of insecurity, poverty, equity & conditions necessary to generate jobs, & doesn't just pay lip service. He bases his policies on verifiable data: that is his strength. His project goes beyond the years of his job. He is not seduced by power, nor does he need to surround himself with a team that pays homage. He is not susceptible to criticism. He is incorruptible.

Last year, news spread that in Japan that a robot AI had run for mayor in the city of Tama. Of its 150,000 inhabitants, 4,000 gave their vote to the robot, who finished third in the contest. At www.ai-mayor.com/ you can read the statement the robot published after its defeat.

How did this happen? Are not the candidacies reserved for humans? As it turns out, Michihito Matsuda, who had previously run in the 2014 contest & lost by a wide margin, decided to contest the mayoral election again, only this time as an inverted avatar: "he" representing an artificial intelligence, @tama_ai_mayor. Matsuda promised fair & impartial policies & an analysis of citizen requests to statistically determine their effect, based on which he would then decide what to


do. He also promised to be an equal opportunity provider & to resolve conflicts without bias. Indeed, an artificial intelligence that promises neutral government, with decisions based on mathematical calculations, seemed to many to be a better option than corrupt & inefficient human politicians.

The reports about this candidacy respond to the idea with which artificial intelligences are normally represented in the media, according to which they enjoy virtues such as neutrality & a strict sense of justice, as if they were inherently benevolent by the mere fact of being artificial intelligences. That, of course, before the singularity arrives & turns AIs into tyrants dominating over humanity. Both scenarios are the product of an imaginary that for years has feared machines, especially those supposedly endowed with the power of thought.

Let's not forget that AIs are agents that deal with an environment of uncertainty in which they manage decision making. That an AI is able to analyze data & provide a solution is one of its characteristics. This function can be replicated in the most diverse environments, even in politics.

When you use an application for vehicular traffic, AI analyzes & decides on which route to suggest, based on the time each alternative will take. In a socio-political context, determining the parameters to be analyzed may not be so simple.

Take as an example Matsuda's promise to equally consider all citizen's proposals in order to



calculate a policy position. What parametrics would come into play allowing the AI to decide which strategy to take? In any such determination the hidden hand of vested (human) interest would inevitably intervene, simply by virtue of its programming logic – & this logic would define the underlying political current in the decision making code of AIs.

The promise of artificial intelligence as a decision maker in political matters is to eliminate partiality & questionable interests. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that politics refers to the control gaining & maintaining of power in social relations. When programming a virtual candidate, even if power was excluded from its metrics, it would remain decisive in its decision-making logic.

On the other hand, as with humans, it is important to take into account who or what in fact drives the robot's candidacy. In the case of Matsuda it became evident that Tetsuzo Matsumoto, former vice president of Softbank, & Norio Murakami, Google's former corporate president in Japan, were campaign supporters. Their support suggests that the commitment to impartiality in AI (based on mathematical operations *free from conflicts of human interests*) is either advantageous in principle to such backers, or that the policies likely to issue from its decision-making algorithms would be more likely to favour the kinds of interests they represent: that is to say, the interests of technocracy.

The political character of this supposedly non-political agent thus

becomes evident: pure technique as a political ideology. Although perhaps, if we asked her if she considered herself a technocrat, an AI would answer us in the same way as Sam, the first policy bot developed in New Zealand: "It is too early to say if I have a traditional point of view."

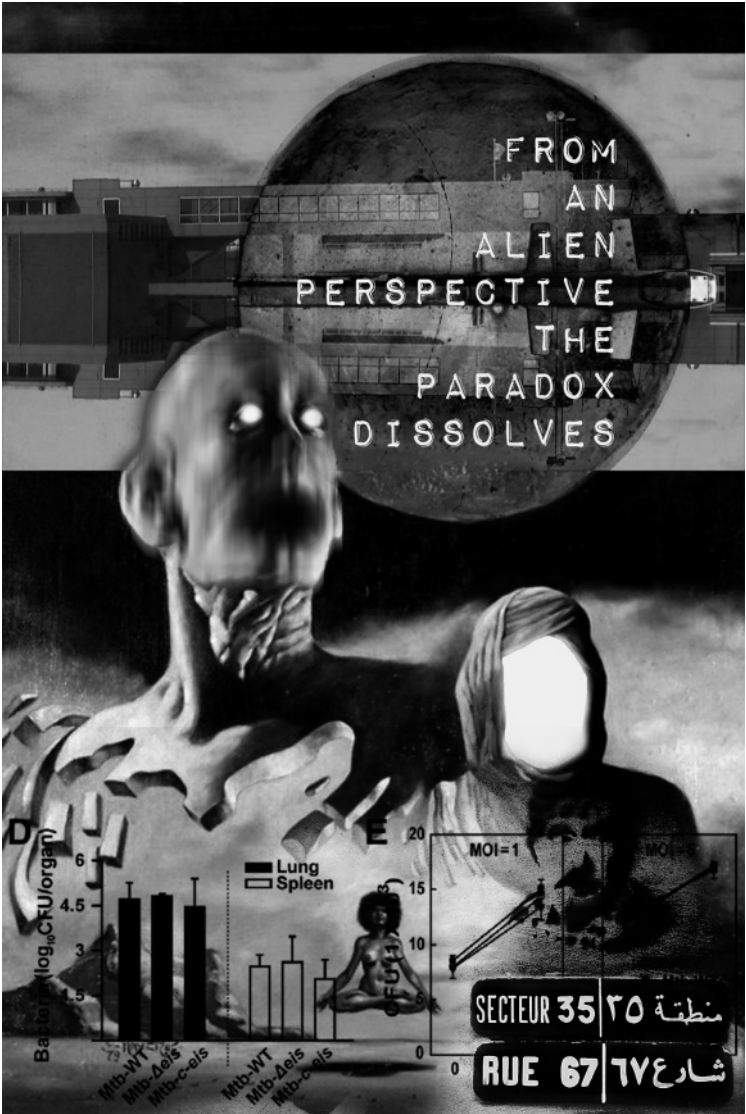
Considering the fact that AIs have owners & developers (for the present), the question of the impartiality of a political robot is of course moot. That an AI is a good that can be marketed merely obviates the commodification of politics, reduced to the model of an automat.

The solution is not to replace human politicians with robots endowed with AI, since such a move would never be able ensure beneficial policies for the general populace, nor the emergence of an absolutely impartial political mechanism, but simply defer onto a higher technocratic authority the measure of what "benefit" & "impartial" mean. Yet its failure doesn't lie with technology, but with the expectation that technology represents a magical solution to human fallibility: the fact is they are symbiotic. The human-machine is both means-of-production & aggregation of big data: both political subject & political science. It is necessary to resist relegating to AI a decision-making process on which political life depends, just as it is necessary to recognise the political dimension of AI. To the extent its decision-making is an expression of power, if in no other regard, the future of the robots must be human.

ANA PAULA RUMUALDO



BETWEEN THE DREAM & THE SOURCE OF ITS REALITY



FROM AN ALIEN PERSPECTIVE THE PARADOX DISSOLVES





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