

h a

u n

t /

Volume two

2015

h a
u n
t ✓

Volume two

Contents

Acknowledgments

1	Editor's Note	5
2	Confiscation by Abigail Collins	6, 25-27, 60, 70
3	Notes on Art and Transcendance by Miriam Atkin.	7
4	Slippery When Wet by Jenalee Harmon	18
5	Sleeping, Hiding, Dropping Out - Coordinates for a Poetics of Evasion by Matt Longabucco.	28
6	Deathbeds by Bethany Ides	37
7	Mosh Phenomenology by Matthew Robertson	43
8	The Barones is All Hands by Catherine Czacki	61
9	Autobiografia Especulativa by Amy Sanchez	71
10	Fred Moten in conversation with Amanda McGough	74

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Claire Trevor School of the Arts Department of Art for your endorsement of this journal. A very special thanks is reserved for our faculty advisors Antoinette LaFarge, Simon Leung, and Litia Perta. It is also important that we express our gratitude to our Student Advisory Board for their indispensable help through the review process. There are several individuals whose unsolicited charitable donations, well, frankly, made this issue of *Haunt* possible. Most importantly, it is to the contributors of our second volume that we must pay gratitude to. Thank you Abigail Collins, Miriam Atkin, Jenalee Harmon, Matt Longabucco, Bethany Ides, Matthew Robertson, Catherine Czacki, Amy Sanchez and especially thank you Fred Moten. We find your pieces challenging, and for this reason, we are encouraged and choose to continue our promotion of radical writing practices far and near to art.

Editor's Note

It is not easy to chew on something like a rock. That's obvious, I hope. If you find a place in your affection for that rock, though, you might find a way. And whenever a hand takes to the quill, one leaves traces. Something about our authors' submissions complicate these traces. They remind us of the rocks they chew in order to threaten patterns of relating. They remind us that to read is to write elsewhere.¹

Derived from memories of experiences in Palestine, Abigail Collins writes of photographs which were either confiscated or not possible to capture. Scattered throughout the issue, Collins' text-photographs search for these lost scenes, and in so doing remember the creation of the search for them; Miriam Atkin's elegantly wrought essay on image-making, imperialism and transcendence reconciles spaces between spectacle and spectator, between community and singular acts of perception; interwoven by poems, Jenalee Harmon reflects on the lather she produces in a juggling act with a bar of soap. Perhaps the bar of soap is a shifting state of consciousness, while the juggling hands invoke artistic production, and the wet slippery and often dirty lather is a result of art criticism; in studying the lives and works of three artists, Matt Longabucco considers how a poetics of solitude and disappearance may or may not support moments of agency in artistic acts of resistance against a consciousness imagined through coercion and capital; excerpted from a book length work in progress entitled, *Deathbeds*, Bethany Ides' polyvocal melodrama is crafted in a collaborative manner where sense-making is a hyper-inferential vessel, and both author and reader face the same questions of our very messy lives; originally printed on transparency pages for his thesis, loonhouse aesthetics, autokinetic immersion and phenomenological noise are the mash to the mosh in Matthew Robertson's *Mosh Phenomology*; Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, the late avant-garde Dadaist artist and poet, is the subject of Catherine Czacki's speculative and historical accounts of attribution and possession; invoking Nam June Paik's published auto-biography imagining a life after 1965 with no war, Amy Sanchez lists her detournment based on femicide, free-trade, immigrant diasporas and the MX/US border; lastly, Fred Moten discusses the ways in which the recent collapse of USC's MFA program is like a decayed buffalo, his poetry and writing, and the word "all."

-Amanda McGough

¹ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions. Software and Memory* (The MIT Press, 2011), 133.

Confiscation

by Abigail Collins

I took this one in the checkpoint at Qalandia in the West Bank. I joined the line in a narrow concrete passage way with fluorescent lights. I held the camera low, thinking no one would see me shooting, and pressed the camera body against my stomach to keep it from shaking. It didn't work and the image is blurry anyway. All you can make out, on the right side of the frame, is a wall of green tinted bulletproof glass, and a metal slot so your bags can be taken to the Israeli side to be inspected. Behind the glass is a blur of an IDF soldier. This is the last one I took before the images were confiscated.

Notes on Art and Transcendence

by Miriam Atkin

1. *Techne*

The course of my life thus far has been externally mapped by a number of forces. After finding my first captain and cartographer in the God of the old testament, each new transcendent figure who served as point of focus by which my identity could settle into balance had traces of its original precedent, to whom I was taught to pray as soon as I could speak. His sanction could substantiate the whole lot of them because, as the most abstract, he was also the least arguable. Death, too, was inarguable, yet proved an insufficient image of transcendence because, when I pictured my life from death's perspective, I found myself still beholden to divine vision, as death's absolute negative turned positive when situated as life's constitutive power. To really believe in death, I would have to forget transcendence. The sciences—intended for the extension (medical technology), amelioration (industrial technology), and fortification (military technology) of human life—offered little help. If I were to acquiesce to the wisdom of these instrumental modes, I might guarantee for myself a longer, easier, and safer life, but in a logic so invested in mitigating mortality, I recognize a kind of death drive where the fixation upon eliminating evil became an inescapable immersion in it.



Medicine asked me to believe in a better life that was only attainable by the wholesale sacrifice of my native-born sense for what “better” might feel like. Soon enough, the absurdity became apparent of a life in which “improvement” felt increasingly uncomfortable, invasive, and disorienting. By abandoning the promise that my body might attain a final *correctness* by mechanical (medical) means, I am forced into the homelessness of a world without any ideal of the right body. This new world was marked by chaotic pain and a nagging fear of death. Under these conditions, there appeared a kind of magic in the notion of pure work—difficulty for its own sake—which might break the sadomasochistic spell of God-deprived self-subjugation. *Techné* represented for me the belief in an irrefutable somatic reality; if I could resist the evaluative impulse and simply call my material present true, I might finally rest into the tender friendship of proximate things.¹

¹ Jay DeFeo labored for eight years on *The Rose*. Here, her efforts anchor the center of the image she makes. Alone in her apartment, the center radiates outward, stretching toward the daylight.

2. Des Nombres et Des Êtres

*I fear sleep as one fears a great hole, leading one knows not where;
I see only infinity through all my windows,*

*And my mind, always haunted by vertigo,
Is jealous of the insensibility of the void.
—Ah! I will never be free of Numbers and Beings!²*

Baudelaire as one who remembers lying in bed at night with the door slightly open and falling asleep to the sound of the mother or the maid moving in the house. Now he is awake, ears attuned, ready for the slightest sound of her. He seeks hints of her gentle surveillance and so enacts his own, limbs and torso keyed to the internal commotion of their organic processes. In bed, he remembers the sun, and the way his own vision was humbled and dissolved by light. He lies stationed in a turret with many windows. There is space all around. Worms and ground moles swarm the walls of his tower and creep into the room. Phrases march through his head in search of an author. Their numbing senselessness is not that of music, but of math; the vague feeling of some problem to be worked out.

² Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (New York: Dover, 1964), 114.



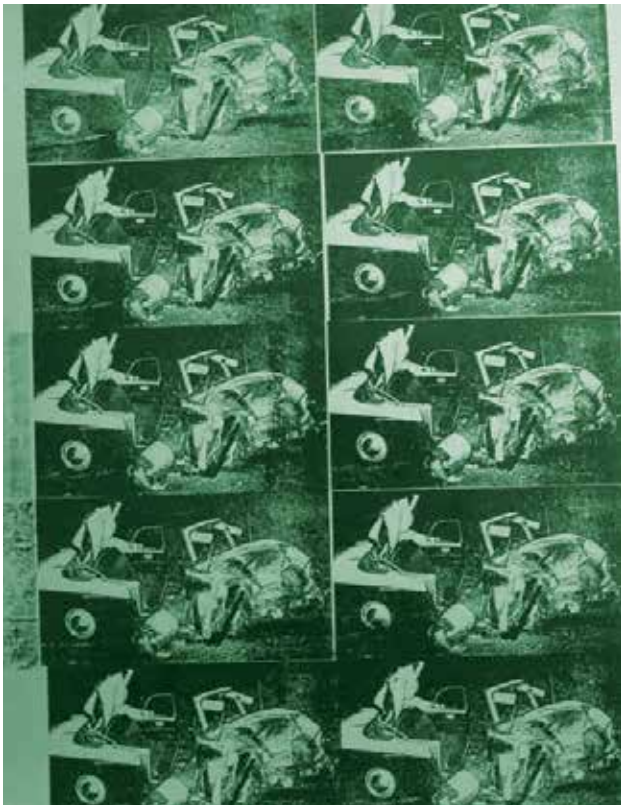
3. Intelligence from Above

In Jerusalem, the price one pays for community is the repeated interference of outside voices announcing hostility from those dark city quarters flanking the town center. The black water tanks mounted on enemy rooftops, their doorways decorated with blue Hajj symbols, articulate national identity for the dominant in marking out all points of foreign infiltration. Intelligence from above, which identifies one's neighbor as also an opponent, warns the nationalist to feel frightened by that neighbor's approach. If the two possible responses to fear are fight and flight, and the collective imperial motivation that is the context of one's decision altogether eliminates the second possibility, one is driven to militancy upon the orders of a sovereign God. It is a noble cause, and its violent defense is the very activity that identifies the spatial parameters of a particular belief system. Belief becomes something one can dwell in, as God's watch secures a safe home. Thus, under conditions of imperialism, and because the settler will not leave, God's influence demands that the adversary remain always close by. There is a vague, unsatisfied dream of intimacy; of getting one's hands around the enemy's neck so as to finally see the flecks in his eyes, the subtle hues of his skin that might be foreign to one's own genetic complex; to hold him there and finally be sure of the difference.³

³ Wafa Hourani's *Qalandia 2067* imagines the future of a Palestinian refugee camp in miniature. Inside the barracks-like stone buildings, domestic life is business as usual. What can the hovering eye of the artist know of the private histories he has himself composed from cardboard and celluloid? His perspective ironizes the colonizer's fantasy of perfect vision.

4. Blindness

Carl Schmitt recognized in 19th century America a substitution of the old, towering, monarchical god-figure with the voice of the collective. Activities of the state worked for a deified image of the people. With God's vision thus granted to the earthly domain of democracy, Schmitt contests that we have thus lost our old vantage point, that cosmic masthead from which the approaching evil could be picked out and thwarted. With this heritage, how does a person—as representative of the elevated collective—decide who is the enemy? The response to evil's approach is fear, and to its ambiguity is anxiety.



5. Cataloguing

The clear-cut system of signs which I'm asked to use in order to identify the Palestinian—his dark-colored water tank, the special license plate on his car—grants me the comfort of knowing, and immobilizes him in his easy comprehensibility. The imperial West has a history of wishing to expose the Casbah to light. And here in America, when I exercise my buying power, I am invited to enjoy looking down upon an array of well-lit and clearly labeled items that I may scrutinize in order to discern if each are best for my needs. I can approach the merchandise with a captious, distrustful attitude, as any signs of belief on my part would subject my dollars to scamming. This defensive method is my general strategy for communication. The thumbnail picture of the person's face, the postcard image of some wild landscape, eliminate that experience of “follow(ing) with the eye—while resting on a summer afternoon—a mountain range on the horizon or a branch that casts its shadow on the beholder.”⁴ No longer forced to either distantly contemplate the mountain's beauty or find myself immersed in scaling its height, I can simply decide whether or not I want it.⁵

⁴ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hanna Arendt, (London: 1973), 219-53.

⁵ For both Warhol and Duchenne, to take a photo was to imagine the unlikely meeting with another proximate body and to look at the photo was always to have just missed the other's death. The trauma of the captured subject was thus imaged for all to see. Benjamin's angel of history invokes Lot's wife in a reversal of the event in which witnessing the spectacular apocalypse meant the splendor of an instant death.

6. Sabbath

In the appeal to a higher reality, we are permitted to relax the practical attention that labor for self-sustenance demands, entering ourselves into a different terrain ruled by an enigmatic, other-logic. In Lars Von Trier's *Melancholia* (2012), an immensely satisfying cinematic representation of our present conditions of environmental upheaval and global economic collapse appear in the image of another planet approaching us fast and then obliterating all earthly reality in a flash.⁶ It is an image free of Baudelaire's dull anxiety at "the insensibility of the void," instead radiating the edifying religious frenzy of Revelations.⁷ With the irreversible adjudication of God looming over our heads, life obligates us to do nothing more than sit in prayer. The apocalyptic emergency absolves us of debt and excuses us from the everyday requirement to keep up with our accounting. Living in agreement with the logic of labor and Sabbath, it is entirely invisible to us that the private means by which we keep ourselves clothed, sheltered and well-fed, might bear upon the health of the greater public in which we irrevocably participate. With the rapid approach of God's final decision, we can neglect our accounting and instead turn to prayer.

⁶ F.T. Marinetti saw a future without weekends or holidays. All work would be the work of war, carried out under the light of the moon: *We will sing of the great crowds agitated by work, pleasure and revolt; the multi-colored and polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capitals; the nocturnal vibrations of the arsenals and the workshops beneath their violent electric moons...*

⁷ Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (New York: Dover, 1964), 114.

7. Empathy

To imagine that my affections, thoughts, passing pleasures, aches and pains contain information relevant to questions of international relations or global health, indeed requires a leap of faith. At the same time, the activity of living a life does seem to come with a certain undeniable capacity for sympathy, because it is generally true that everything living wishes to continue doing so. The acceptance of a *feeling* as a politically important *truth* would not amount to a selfish assumption that everyone wants what I want, but, rather, it would require a faithful commitment toward rigorously attending to what is most basic and what is, incidentally, what most want. The certainty that I can commit myself to such a thing is where belief perhaps comes in, and this would be a belief in an unquestionable somatic reality. We might ground politics in the individual body, the animal body, our only accessible site of universality.



8. The Many in The One

In its elevated view, the all-seeing eye of the camera can locate a shared logic between even the most disparate parts of a landscape. The lens links my world to your world, with the capacity to represent the inescapable totality of a lived life as one point among many on a map. The camera can look down on us and chart relationships where there is no discernible connection otherwise, just as we can look up at the night sky and trace lines between two stars that are millions of miles away from each other. Hence, the real interaction is happening between spectacle and spectator, and not at all between the various elements observed. Our current image of collectivity appears as a network of adjacent individuals, all facing the same direction and wholly invisible to one another. It is an image that can neither grasp the singularity of a lived life nor the possibility of the real interpenetration of two lives. It is a picture that leaves us wanting, as we wish to imagine intimacy as still a possible reality. The camera-image reflects our awe before the quantitative magnitude of reality and also figures our antithetic wish for intimacy. It leaves us frozen, unable to act, while at the same time animating desire. History in the making is thus given to us in our feeling response to that image that substantiates lived experience by offering it up as already-having-happened. Images reconcile the transcendent condition of the seeable or seen world with the immanent event of seeing it. This encounter does not remedy the longing for togetherness, but invokes the prior influence of community in any singular act of perception.⁸

† Miriam Atkin is a writer and performance artist based in New York City. Her work is largely concerned with the possibilities of poetry as an oral medium in conversation with avant-garde film, music and dance. She is pursuing a PhD in English at CUNY Graduate Center.

⁸ Kurt Ralske's image series titled *Rediscovering German Futurism* combines into one the many frames that comprise a cinematic gesture. Like Muybridge, he reveals the collective reality undeniably embedded in the single lived body.

Slippery When Wet

by Jenalee Harmon

Washing with a clean conscience -- dissolve your worries, fears, resentments, false expectations and desires from polluted, drained, overused skin. Nourish the membrane housing your centralized thoughts that separates you from externalized sounds, smells, images, and nerve-tingling vibrations. Experience body-mind-soul-spirit cleanliness as instant awakening between soul echoes and manifested reality.

Smooth and white, its mass and objecthood traversing the politics between tool, effectiveness, and time. At a previous liquefied state, now sits as an awkward slippery mass of solidified fats and oils. Upon reaction, its reply to water generates thousands of frothing glassy beads eager to embrace the skin.

Typically no larger than the width of a hand, its ergonomic shape of curved and sleek lines evoke an erotic undertone akin to modern design. Not too small to dissolve immediately, and not too large to provoke insecurities—just the right fit. Though, with contemporary mold-making, its objecthood can take the form of shells, crystals, hearts, cubes, cupcakes, puzzle pieces, eggs, and more.

>>> *small* > *slab of* >> *suddily* >> *sultry* > *soap* >

Holding soap requires a gentle yet sturdy grip. Too forceful, and it will leap to its death at the bottom of a shower floor. Descriptors for handling soap often include but are not limited to, “held,” “clasped,” “rubbed,” “massage,” and “grip.” Why shouldn’t sexual innuendos arise? Cleansing with soap is an act of free and reckless nudity within the masked privacy of your shower curtain. Be feverishly ambitious in your cleanliness.

scrub>>*scrub*>>*scrub*>>

Let’s not concern ourselves with the long-standing clash of “moisturizing” effectiveness between liquid and solid soap—we’re focusing on the mass of a solid bar of soap. Liquid soap is the charred aftermath of “trace” in soap making, burnt down from its solid bar shape. Liquid soap is rhetorical.

Unlike liquid soap, bars of soap demand a greater relationship between the hand and object. Bars of soap are compactly condensed fractal beads eager to transform and dance upon the skin.

You recognize, however, that a fresh, crisp, and clean bar of soap cannot keep its shape forever. You revel in the guilty pleasure of drenching the object under the showerhead for the first time, stripping its mass of its sleekly cut lines. Its edges turn soft and slowly dematerialize into thousands of tiny fractured bubbles that drip from its mass magnetizing upon your skin. So eager to please and quench, you recognize it’s dissolving far too rapidly and place it out of the stream of water. Calm down, we have a long road ahead with each other.

Day in and day out, you and this soap have developed an intimate relationship. Each time, its mass desperately waiting to fall into the palm of your hand and feverishly work to transform into liquid sparks to satisfy you. After a few weeks time, you recognize its mass is smaller and leaner than you previously remembered. Beaten, stretched, and dissolved to a quarter of its original size. You think back to early on in the relationship, when everything hit critical mass after learning the song and dance of each other. Its shape is still plump and firm, but now mirrors the concave space surrounding your holding gesture, sculpted to fit you and your gesture perfectly.

But I may be getting too far ahead of myself. What this discourse promotes is neither its subject nor contextual research. No one talks about the thing they're asked to talk about.

The 1800s marked a period of intense development in the natural sciences. The questions about the forces and matter that bind and hold the universe together soon became devices of discovery and revelation, which lead to new knowledge and developments in the natural sciences, psychology, physics, and communications.¹ Awareness of the surrounding invisible forces once unseen (and more importantly, unknown) within the universe sparked the synapses of scientists, psychologists, inventors, and mediums. The discovery of radio waves lead to inventions that sought to materialize unseen matter- telegraphy, the telephone, the phonograph. Communication shifted from the immediate visible body affixed to spatial proximity for one's cognition, to ethereal bodies suspended in space without traditional modes of recognition.²

¹ Marina Warner, *Phantasmagoria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 253.

² Recognizing an individual or idea is real because of it's tangible mass presented in front of an individual.



Conversations transformed through space, proximity, language, and time with the addition of these new applied sciences. Consciousness shifted from localized immediacy with an individual's state of a 1:1 exchange of awareness, to a deliriously massive scale of 1:infinite. This mesmerization with the previously unseen external forces molding into real ideas, objects, and interactions obliterated the invisible sheath imprisoning one's "true" self from how they "truly" resemble themselves—constructing a de-ontologization of awareness and knowledge. This produced an expression of non-being/unseen and elemental/unknown. Consistency was thrown by the wayside, instead collapsing into and out of the traditional framework of visible as "real" and invisible as "unknown."

Psychic mediums were quick to fill this hole, performing as conductors between the physical (visible) realm of the séance tabletop, and the ethereal (invisible) spirit worlds. The marking of a successful medium often produces a bright white halo that surrounds the medium or ectoplasm- a goo-like substance secreted from orifices of the psychic's body that enables spirits to connect with the physical realm.

These exchanges were photographed, and worked to link images with what was once thought previously unreal. Although, these images produced mere representations of a reality, negating any presentation of a "true" reality. The images were hoaxes, pure fiction. These images go down best in history as fictitious experiments in camera work, early spiritualism, and proving that the first Ghostbusters were female.

h a u n t

This period in history marks a break from previously polarizing sentiments of knowledge— what is recognized as truth and awareness— in tangible mass, to observing the immaterial as suspended truth— answers are not revealed within the present, but perhaps a future state could experience these answers. This writhing between moments of awareness— of what we know as seen, and what we don't know as unseen— has produced a wiggling of indirect consciousness, folding into and out of itself, and selfleveling to match encountered language. This wiggling is squeezing a bar of soap with wet hands and watching the mass wiggle through your grip— struggling to catch it with altering hands. At once you are performing its intended function with wet hands, producing an effervescence that magnetizes to your skin and yet the foam generated repels your gesture from its objecthood.

Critical awareness has transformed into liquid modernity—materializing into fractal dripping ether. And, as such, conversation shifted from exclamatory statements, to questioning sentiments and, currently, toward loose thoughts bouncing on the edge of a page.

!!! >> ?? >> ... >>

But while conceptualism demanded the internal materialization within an individual to often times “complete” an artwork (whether object or performer/artist was present), the current pulse of contemporary art doesn't demand physicality in a traditional sense, but, rather, embraces the transaction between internalized affect and its resulting vibrations tingling throughout the skin—linking the field of experience into harmonious states.

<<^^body-mind-soul-spirit^^>>

Though, should we drink the Kool-Aid? Grossly generalizing appearances noted, critical discourse used to exist within solidified binary states. With the visibility and vocalization of marginalized identities in the 1990s, criticism shifted towards acknowledging the diverse conscious minds existing between the previous binary posts. With the advent of the Internet (the poor Internet is blamed for everything), has immediacy and accountability radicalized polarizing sentiments? Is there a building of anxiety surrounding misunderstanding, unknowing, unseeing, and of missing the right side of critical history that has produced this fixation on liquidity and wiggling?



:: F.O.M.O. :: *fear of missing out*

:: F.O.N.U. :: *fear of not understanding*

>> *accountability > production =/= unseen*

I should acknowledge at this point that I am a commitment-phobe, but for the purposes of this text, let's get back to soap.

A ritualistic cleansing process, the utility of soap has infiltrated the mind of the everyday performing as a beacon of intimate banality. A fresh, untethered bar of soap straight out of the factory box is an unshifted, deactivated object. Its mass pushes against gravity, submitting to the invisible forces binding all objects into the dance of space, and only activated and transformed by you. A bar of soap is at once a solid mass of compactly dense elements, thirsty to be transformed and dissolved of its transgressions.

A mass-produced object, aesthetically and visually alike to thousands of others, but when activated by you becomes an object entrenched with personal memory and gesture. Soap is an elemental that participates in phase transitions, shifting from one state to another at the precise moment when pressure or temperature is just right. Liquid, solid, liquid, gas.

h a u n t

With continued use, bars of soap abandon their critical mass, gradually dissolving into fractal ribbons of fats and oils. After routine use, it limply falls into the corner of your shower stall. Decisions have to be made—do you continue with its use until it fragments into dozens of pieces, do you place it in the corner and reserve its use for special occasions, or do you rip off the BAND-AID off and toss the soap in the trash to spare it of misery?

At the end of the day, you can reserve its use as iconography or you can accept its disposability. Besides being a tool of transformation and cleansing, soap contains its own sheath of repelling, transforming, dissolving, and performing. In fact, it has known its performative role the entire time. Aware of its inability to control time, place, reception, it attempts to perform to the best of its ability. Either way, its dissolution was activated by you.

† Jenalee Harmon is an artist and writer working in the greater Los Angeles area.

I must have taken a lot of photos here, but the only one I remember is of Yasser leaning on the fence in front of the olive grove, permit in hand. He was in the middle of telling me that his 93 year old immobile grandfather was the only one in the family that the Israeli military issued a farming permit to after they cut off the groves from his family's village. He was waving the permit around, mid-sentence, when I took the photo. The permit was turned sideways so you see only a white sliver of paper in his hand, his blue eyes looking back at the camera in sharp focus, mouth in motion. The fence is right behind him, then the olive grove out of focus beyond that.

A child's hand on a coarse woven cloth, wrapped around a pillow. Just part of her hand as she held up the pillow to show me, a little blurred with movement. The youngest girls and I played on the couch after dinner, about an hour after Saeed's friends told us about the prison rape of their oldest daughter.

Right before we left the house I took another photo of textiles, two framed needle points hanging on the wall next to the door. Almost identical, with white stitched backgrounds and text in black and red. They say something like "welcome home" in Arabic.

This one is hazy in dusk light. The top half is a purplish mountain across from the one I was standing on, with the sun going down behind it. I had climbed as high as I could to see the Jordan Valley from above, but it took so long to climb that the sun was setting now. My camera barely caught the yellow bulldozer in the valley below finishing the demolition of a Palestinian house. I stumbled down the mountain in the dark, cradling my camera. Back at the house a Jordanian journalist asked where I had gone. I pointed to the mountain, and she pointed to the sign in Arabic and Hebrew in front of it. “Do Not Trespass Israeli Military Property” she translated.

Sleeping, Hiding, Dropping Out – Coordinates for a Poetics of Evasion

By Matt Longabucco

When one becomes “someone” out of not-being, one is no longer the All, until one leaves the not-being behind. – Plotinus, Enneads¹

My dentist’s office is full of feelings. My hygienist, Victor, had a hard year—tales of a break-up with his longtime partner have supplanted once-magnificent iPhoto slide shows of winter trips to Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, Jerusalem, and Istanbul. He knows I’m separated, we commiserate a bit, though I just want to space out and bow down in dizzy worship before one of the fantasmatic icons of my obsession for twenty minutes, with the whirr of the electric polisher for hysterical keening and the periodic stab of the hook a note of frenzy. But no, I’m expected to follow his narrative and grunt assent to prove it. When Victor’s through, he disappears down the hall, I spit and reel. After some endless interval, Dr. D’s enormous pink head is there, very close, nose hairs wave hello. He gives me a once-over, “Hey cutie,” followed by a squeeze on the arm. A rub on the head, “Love those blue eyes. How are you baby?” He’s by turns gifted, aloof, inappropriate, useless, a comfort to patients and a tyrant to his staff, and keeps telling me I’d better straighten my teeth or the two front top ones, pushed ever-backward by their neighbors, “won’t even be there” when I smile. I keep telling him I don’t have the cash.

¹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, I, 8, 6, 1.

I mention Victor's breakup and Dr. D rolls his eyes. "You have to watch out for that midlife crisis," he says. "My partner had one that went on for ten years. Mine took six months. I just accepted that now I was invisible and then moved on with my life." This seemed so categorical that I didn't follow up, but later wished I'd probed and learned more about the partner's decade spent thrashing against an apparently inevitable erasure. What had that meant? Wearing the tight, flashy clothes of a much younger man? Acting out on social media? Affairs? In the recent film *Birdman* an aging Michael Keaton pounds his body as if to make sure it's still solid, screaming "I'm disappearing" as he faces the prospect of the very public failure of his play and his last-ditch effort to realize artistic seriousness after a career spent acting in popular but hollow superhero films. He's repeatedly humiliated, most spectacularly when, smoking outside and losing his robe in a door, wearing nothing but tighty whities, he winds up high-tailing it around the theater and into the thick of a gawking 42nd Street throng. The incident, captured on video by members of the crowd, becomes instant fodder for Twitter and YouTube. He thinks it's a disaster but, his daughter assures him, publicity in the form of viral presence is the new form of power.

It's hard to care much about Keaton's dilemma in the film. A wealthy older white man—or, in my dentist's case, a successful middle-aged white man, albeit a queer one—has a very different relationship to visibility than most. The world is full of those who have visibility they *don't* want, after all, in the form of surveillance, incarceration, detention, and targeting, as well as those who fight for visibility at the level of, for example, the right to marry or the right to live and work in a nation whose higher standard of living makes it necessary to enter, despite taking on the status of an "illegal" to do so. The cultural formation in which a dominant class establishes the terms of a visibility so specific and predicated on systems of exclusion, that even they themselves cannot tarry long in the light of its merciless inquisition, can hardly be dismantled to serve those subjects' dawning recognition of that system's totality when it eventually claims them, too.

That light isn't just a trope. Bright windows in midnight office buildings. A stretch of interstate where a road crew toils in a pure white halo once reserved for movie sets and UFO landings. Days without end in the artificially-lit underground cells of extra-legal prisons whose inmates are being intentionally sleep-deprived and barred from natural cycles of time, the better to degrade their selfhood into madness and surrender (twenty-hour long interrogations are documented).

In his book *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (2013), Jonathan Crary considers this phenomenon in its acceleration and ascendancy: the store is always open, the workers are always working, and everyone is expected to be always available and accountable. Crary writes of a “contemporary imaginary in which a state of permanent illumination is inseparable from the nonstop operation of global exchange and circulation”.² The eponymous phrase represents an ominous shift in our material experience of time, “...a generalized inscription of human life into duration without breaks, defined by a principle of continuous functioning” dependent on the “eradication of shadows and obscurity and of alternate temporalities”.³ The result is a perpetual present-time without variation, thanks to a “sweeping abandonment of the pretense that time is coupled to any long-term undertakings, even to fantasies of ‘progress’ or development. An illuminated 24/7 world without shadows is the final capitalist mirage of post-history, of an exorcism of the otherness that is the motor of historical change”.⁴ Crary locates the experience of 24/7 in the everyday and in our status as members of a global system linked by a set of relations whose unfathomable complexity and apparent imperviousness to change is hardly the accident it would like to pretend to be. This system’s most flagrant triumph is that it is both overtly brutal—the police, the military, the prison system operate in broad daylight—and terrifically subtle, enjoining those it doesn’t physically master (yet) to administrate for themselves a distracted preoccupation at every waking moment, in unquestioning thrall to “an array of forces that esteem the individual who is constantly engaged, interfacing, interacting, communicating, responding, or processing within some telematic milieu”.⁵ Yes, us. Even an “us” that cuts, if unequally, across divisions of race, class, gender, nationality. The implication, for Crary, is the loss of even the possibility of a consciousness that could imagine otherwise. “24/7,” he writes, “steadily undermines distinctions between night and day, between light and dark, and between action and repose. It is a zone of insensibility, of amnesia, of what defeats the possibility of experience”.⁶

² Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (New York: Verso, 2013), 5.

³ *Ibid.*, 8,19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

Sleep is a notable casualty of this shift, but it can also offer, in its stubborn biological necessity, a respite from it. The unambiguous message of a 24/7 society is that “sleeping is for losers”.⁷ But the “stunning, inconceivable reality [of sleep] is that nothing of value can be extracted from it”.⁸ It’s with sleep that I want briefly to investigate the first of three recent poetic incursions into 24/7’s hegemony. The history of poetics that valorize sleep and dream is, obviously, extensive. Anne Carson’s recent *The Albertine Workout* (2014) consists of 57 propositions, and appendices, that circle around the character of Albertine, the young woman at the core of the narrator’s obsession in volume 5 of Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. That volume, *The Captive*, tells of the period when Albertine lives in the narrator’s home and at his pleasure.⁹ They are lovers, sometimes, but not exactly a couple, as the narrator is mostly bored and repulsed by his social inferior except when he is—often—driven mad by jealousy and desire when she lies to him (poorly) about what he suspects are her lesbian affairs and when, he fears, he is unable to penetrate the hidden truth of her desires. The flat, quasi-scientific character of Carson’s propositions alerts us to the absurdity of the situation:

3. Albertine herself is present or mentioned on 807 pages of Proust’s novel.
4. On a good 19% of these pages she is asleep.

And later:

27. a) Sometimes in her sleep Albertine throws off her kimono and lies naked.
27. b) Sometimes then Marcel possesses her.
27. c) Albertine appears not to wake up.
28. Marcel appears to think he is the master of such moments.

Carson pokes fun at Marcel—who is and is not Proust—for being so fully the dupe of a game that, at the same time, expresses the grim, confounding logic of possession. Yet Carson doesn’t fault Marcel for this, noting, “There is no right or wrong in Proust, says Samuel Beckett, and I believe it.”¹⁰ She is also quick to complicate the implicit gender dynamics of the text by providing details of Proust’s real-life affair with his chauffeur, Alfred, who shares many traits with Albertine.

⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹ Anne Carson, *The Albertine Workout* (New York: New Directions), 2014.

¹⁰ Ibid.

More than drawing a moral, then, Carson might ascribe to Proust a poetics of Albertine as much as we might assume he expresses a poetics of Marcel who, for all his acumen and fine distinction-making, is always in thrall to the literalness of his desire, so long as he is trapped inside of time rather than transcending it. Albertine, however, seems to know how to play the game. She *bluffs* (you can't play without doing so). And, she tells us: *you can pretend to sleep*. Just as you can pretend to be depressed, sick, working at your desk, or enjoying yourself. You can hide in plain sight, and, increasingly, you must. And you must at the same time be bad at this: bad at faking, bad at lying, while somehow at the same time managing to hint that this poor performance is itself a bluff meant to conceal an even deeper deception that defends a still more fundamental truth. To do this well is to bend, deform, and potentially even dismantle interpretive and investigative structures by forcing them into incapacity and exhaustion. Agents of surveillance, information, and repression shine their light everywhere, but a pinprick of darkness, if bottomless enough, can cost those agents more than they have to spend, and reveal their limits.

This kind of leveraging finds a companion in Lisa Robertson's recent *Cinema of the Present*. The book-length poem stages a dialogue between two voices. Though oblique, the poem's concerns—the nature of address, the sources of sustenance, everyday time and its manipulation, the persistence of obscurity—are nevertheless audible throughout, as in the final lines:

What if there were a life that sustained life?

What if you press the quotidian all over its surface?

You've been also women.

What we have is a mix of improper disclosures of partial information mixed with inaccurate information and then drawn into unfounded conclusions, you said.

You're in the part of the night where it's quietest.

*Now only time is wild.*¹¹

¹¹ Lisa Robertson, *Cinema of the Present* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2014), 105-106.

Robertson read this poem in its entirety at the Poetry Project in November 2013. Afterwards, she explained the thinking behind its composition. In her comments, citing Pierre Hadot (who provides the epigraph to this essay), she discusses the notion that early Hellenic philosophy was a practice for “amplifying the present to dispel suffering in daily life” before it later became focused on discursivity and its attendant sociality.¹² This makes her ask, replacing philosophy with poetics, “What if the poem’s not written to fulfill a discourse or to address an institutional formation, but to open new living and thinking? How much privacy would this poem need in the making? How much time? How much silence? Does the poem have, in Denise Riley’s words, “The right to be lonely”? I’m trying to think about solitude as an organ or an ornament of the social, not its opposite. Can the poem become the space of that solitude?”¹³

For Robertson, “freedom” and “pleasure” are found by moving through loneliness, not in fleeing it. Paradoxically, this is a social gesture, though not, she says, the sort of sociality that the avant-garde, always too literal, translates into meetings and collectives. She describes moving away from her social network in Vancouver—“endless nights in bars arguing”—to living “solo” in the French countryside, in an isolated “house at the edge of a field with my dog.” The change in the material condition of her life was difficult—“it’s often sad,” she laments, to be solitary. But this led to a new protocol in her writing practice, a “charged solitude” she associates with Epicurus’s injunction to “live in hiding” not as an evasion of the political, but rather as a preferably “inefficient sociality,” a way of dwelling in “a place where the social can evade instrumentality.” Robertson cites Hannah Arendt, who asks “Where do we go when we think? We go into an inconspicuousness.”¹⁴

Robertson moves deftly, in her comments, between a dialogue with a train of thought leading from the atomists and Epicurus through Arendt and Barthes and Denise Riley, in which a practice of solitude opens up a more true sociality in writing, and a consideration of the way in which seeking solitude might also be an effect of aging—“you just don’t want to go to meetings anymore”—or a reckoning

¹² Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995).

¹³ Lisa Robertson, “Reading at the Poetry Project,” November 2013.

Poetry Project.

¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich), 1978. Quoted in Lisa Robertson, “Reading at the Poetry Project,” November 2013.

with the realities of illness and other conditions that enforce a retreat from communal life. She quotes Carson: “Loneliness doesn’t matter. It might seem difficult, but it doesn’t have meaning.”¹⁵

Wonderful claim that means, I think, that the affect loneliness undoubtedly contains cannot signify as such—it only marks the difficulty of the meaning-making to which a solitary mind can best attend. Because loneliness hurts and collectivity often doesn’t—“Who doesn’t want to party together?” Robertson asks—we mistakenly choose community as a site of production. But in her “cinema of the present,” Robertson experiences herself as if at the movies, alone with others in the dark, alert to the moment unfolding.

This brings us to a final set of coordinates: another recent book: Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer’s description and investigation of Lee Lozano’s *Dropout Piece*. The book takes a timely interest in Lozano’s act of “life-art,” begun around 1970, which involved the artist’s self-imposed exile from the art world’s social and economic universe. Lozano, whose pieces were in dialogue with similar work of the period, effectively disappeared, ceasing to exhibit her work or take much care of work she made subsequently, at the same time withdrawing from the social life of her circle—all of this is deemed the piece. In her extensive notebooks, the artist enjoins herself to “fight programming to work, to ceaselessly make \$, to feed daddy his ret’n, to achieve, to compete, to win,” and in her characteristic all caps declares a goal of “JOYOUS FREEDOM.”¹⁶ She wants to “DROP OUT FROM WORLD, NO CALLS NO WORK NO OBLIGATIONS NO GUILT NO DESIRES, JUST MY MIND WANDERING LAZILY OFF ITS LEASH.”¹⁷

I WILL MAKE MYSELF EMPTY TO RECEIVE COSMIC INFO.

I WILL RENOUNCE THE ARTIST’S EGO, THE SUPREME TEST WITOUT WHICH BATTLE A HUMAN COULD NOT BECOME ‘OF KNOWLEDGE.’

I WILL BE HUMAN FIRST, ARTIST SECOND.

I WILL NOT SEEK FAME, PUBLICITY, OR SUCKCESS.¹⁸

¹⁵ Lisa Robertson, “Reading at the Poetry Project,” November 2013.

Poetry Project.

¹⁶ Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, *Lee Lozano: Dropout Piece* (London: Afterall Books, 2014).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.



It's challenging to assess Lozano's determination, or stubbornness, in carrying out this program through the rest of her life. As Lehrer-Graiwer writes, "The inaccessibility of her practice after *Dropout* connotes freeing and paranoid aspects, utopian and self-destructive impulses. In fact, self-destruction is twinned to the awful bliss and horrible rush of transcendence. Beyond practical problems of poverty and loneliness, there was the risk and reality of non-recognition. In retrospect, from the context of our over-exposed present, the idea of choosing non-recognition, invisibility, and anti-success is downright exhilarating". Lozano's silence leaves us to find this exhilaration in contemplating her act. We might equally consider its failures and terrors. Reading Lehrer-Graiwer's book, I deeply admired Lozano's principles and thought, but also found it devastating to read of the artist's final years, estranged from her family, facing financial difficulties, losing track of work, and finally dying of cancer in 1999, with few options for care or support. And wondered if she reconciled with the consequences of what might have been, for her, either a triumphant gesture or an artistic dead end.

Lozano was 40 or so when she conceived her *Dropout Piece*, which Lehrer-Graiwer refers to at one point as "an epic midlife crisis".²⁰ We shouldn't make too much of this "personal" element, though I'd argue that for Lozano, as for Robertson and, for that matter, Proust, midlife and the urgency of lost time is crucial to their thought and practice. Solitude is aging's gift and curse, but more importantly, for Robertson, per Epicurus, is the site of a heightened confrontation with a death ever more manifest on the horizon. Lozano wrote that choosing and securing that

¹⁹ Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer, *Lee Lozano: Dropout Piece* (London: Afterall Books, 2014).

²⁰ Ibid.

solitude—carrying out her project—was the most difficult thing she’d ever done. It would be even harder now. Crary points out that, following the social resistance of the sixties and seventies, “‘Dropping out’ was more fundamentally disturbing on a systemic level than many are prepared to admit”.²¹ The system, he goes on to claim, responded by demonizing poverty and itinerant ways of life, while magnifying and honing the far larger forces that destabilize and flatten the contemporary subject by establishing 24/7 labor and sociality as a norm anything but neutral in its insistence on production and competition.

The world Crary conjures—our world—discloses no exit. We shouldn’t be sure that sleeping, hiding, and dropping out are even possible, even for those to whom such actions are available. Can a poetics of dream, bluff, and silence posit real alternatives to the consciousness imagined by capital and coercion? For Crary, sleep’s power is its recalcitrant naturalness (though he dutifully historicizes it). Aging has a similar status—in the end, we’re all alone, we all disappear. For the three artists considered here, a moment of agency, however difficult, arises in a confrontation with questions, global or mundane, of visibility and erasure. And yet to make the choice of solitude is still only a beginning: practice for a practice: the eyes’ adjustment to darkness that promises nothing but to shroud an encounter we might be lucky enough to withstand.

† Matt Longabucco is a poet and professor of writing and culture at NYU. Longabucco’s work has previously appeared in *Parkett*, *Capricious*, *the Brooklyn Rail*, and elsewhere.

²¹ Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (New York: Verso, 2013), 113.

Deathbeds

by Bethany Ides

Consultations

Surgeon: With a burrowing camera, I can show you how the entrances are perfectly innocent.
(slowing breathing)
But it takes a long time for the feeling to render.

Patient: Your breath on my ear tingles my whole length, along the tender side of me; I'm embarrassed to say.
(waits for response)
When what makes you cry makes you cry, do you say: What makes me *say* something about crying? I'm having trouble replicating my reactions now that you're watching. Maybe if you distracted me? Inject me in the other direction? When you look away, I'm crying. When you look to me, indistinctly, I am suffering though it's probably just nothing.
Last night I was looking at myself in the mirror, so I could cry just like I'm yelling at myself, except I'm reacting to the yelling & crying, stunned crying, because I can't take the hostility of the crying, it's too strong a surge, I'm recoiling, or to have to see it straight on or it's unmanageable, it's too pitiful. I could cry with the lights off but—

Surgeon: When was the last time you saw something pitiful with the lights off?

Patient: I can't think—

h a u n t

- Surgeon: OK, so let's keep it that way. All these people crying who are not related in any way to one another or to you—really, in *any* way—except by circumstance of having perhaps cried roughly within the same frequency or radius, they do not *depend* on each other or causally connect in *any way*, so what we're going to have to do is to change the time of that to this, so you can see it. The problem is not *what* you're seeing, but—
- Gasping: The worst part is that I thought you were my "friend!" & now, we'll never see each other again. & now... & altogether mockingly, "We'll never have to see each other again." Just like that! How could you let this happen?????? How am I supposed to go on like this? I don't understand.
- Patient: In the dream, I saw his face clearly & I heard messages about him very clearly. They said he owned a newspaper & a news channel & that he liked to meet everyone who was just beginning to speak English. I had backed my car into somewhere that I couldn't get out & he was helping me. He was waiting until I turned around unsuspectingly, & then he was teasing me with his laser. Like a stinging burning but like a pen line drawn, from the back of my ear over my shoulder, around my waist, between my buttocks, down my thigh...
- Gasping, Gasping: I don't understand, I don't understand, I don't understand.
- Having Been Injured: But you don't remember any of it. If I had been facing you, you would have seen the trying-to-remember searchingly in my eyes but then you would not remember it either, what it was you were trying to recite back to me, that you had set a song to.
- Lover: I didn't mean to, you know I didn't mean to.
- Injury: When you published your dream of Judith Butler, having sex with Judith Butler, of seeing her from behind, her back bare with longer hair, how you saw your own fingers disappear in there, & how I was the one in the mirror of that dream, I know it so plainly, the interpellation of my head thrown back by your pulling harder on the hair of her.
- Lover: (nothing)

- Patient: I got this rash because I was scrubbing my face so hard, using a rock. & now, every time I wash my face, my facial cleansers pool in the spots where both times the blisters bled. & each time, I got the rash, I dreamed that you were realizing it recurs like this, like clockwork.
- Passerby: You shouldn't use olive oil directly on your skin. Unless you're mixing it with coconut oil. Or Shea Butter. Or for keeping the healthy insides, maybe use fish oil instead. Or you can use almond oil. See my face? I use geranium oil & sea buckthorn & green tea powder in a paste with raw honey & bone resin for texture.
- Doctor: See? Your reactions are completely normal! Now put the phone down. What we're trying to talk about is how to get you get better at self-care. Can't you tilt your chin just slightly that way for me? Look away from me for a moment? That's right. Now you won't be needing these rash-ridden garments now, will you? You can just leave them here. I have an extra T-shirt on under my sweater you can borrow. It's even a little big on me, so you can wear it as a tunic.
- Patient's Private Life: (sniffing)
It's probably what happens when I start describing things.
- Doctor Boyfriend: But even if you tuck in your shirt, they'll smell my cum on your shirt, so believe me: just wear mine.
- Doctor Lawyer: They won't think it's cum, they'll think it's toothpaste. Wear a white shirt, you'll be fine.
- Attending: Or you can wear it inside-out so it doesn't abrade your skin. Remember that time you got red on your neck & it was all over your chest? Was that my cum giving you the rash, hmm?
- Legal Doctor: OK, now sign your name.
- Patient: I can't, my hands...



Solicitations

Narrator: & once he left, it was the round of night, the blunted end of the heavy night. Because it was the dampened end of the listened night, or the buried ending in the dead of night. Amid a wind of sudden syndrome...

Radio: {From lips [...] that made no sound(?)...} / {Lips are made then bound(?)} / {Frost [...] lips, (?)man drowned(??)}
(It could be saying anything— it's hard to tell what happening.)

Angel of Death: You think it's easy to be rid of a wound?

Narrator: (ear to the wall)
Just everything, what we're overhearing is devastating. On the other side of this wall: smoke is creeping thru the fissures, a crackling sound like being crushed between the teeth. Overhearing: "They're tearing down houses" & demolishing everything. It's devastating, not yet finalizing, because still *no one* is finished dying.

Lawyer: (brandishing the document)
Do you want to kiss the picture? You're entitled to that at least.

Doctor: (backs in, looking flustered, glancing behind him, sweating)
Don't!... just... don't.

& no one is willing to return to this Doctor's office, but unwillingly everyone is ending up there all the time. In the waiting room are lists—the lists upon lists—about love & lists about lusts. Names for that & names of them.

Patient: Let tears pour forth upon my face, finally.
 (chewing)
 Pro forma.

Really, let their tears pour forth, pro forma.

Begin the sobbing unstoppably.

One by one, however unstable seeming, they're still appearing. They just keep appearing.

Visitations

Catharina Regina Von Greiffenberg: *Entire abysses of dismay and praise open up for me so that I know not to which one I ought to proceed, at which one I ought to begin, or which one I ought to push to the highest and most extreme.... Contemplating this is like that prophet's fathoming at the bottom of the sea that becomes deeper and deeper and finally bottomless.*

Maurice Blanchot: *...the impossibility that willing & perhaps even desire ever cross the uncrossable, in the sudden clandestine meeting (outside of time) that annuls itself with the devastating feeling that is never certain to be experienced by the one whom this movement consigns to the other perhaps by depriving him of his "self."*

Soon even Julian of Norwich will attempt to describe her “bodily vision” from where she is in *her* bed, in the throes of unrest, approaching what she had hoped—what she had sincerely (we must believe that she) *prayed for*—which was to be defined by a pain so absolute as to be unapproachable by any body, that she should be so immersed in it that her death would un-announce itself, or would be unpronounceable, that she should be so otherwise-oriented in something-else as to be *dislocated* from her relation to death, from even the proximity to it or from anything that would hold her in the knowable, in familiar fear of that or for being full of wanting relief from it.

That she should know no such thing, no such relief as to be able to conceive what it is that one is afraid of, anything so glib as an ending.

† Bethany Ides cultivates conditions (presence, prescience, instability, implicature, dis-use, distaste, disproportionately) as processor precedents to portend the pretense & beside that, like unending. That's like making operas, schools, experiments in community, books, interventions, instruments, visitations, divinations, installations, sub-screenal instigations & understudy internets. & DOORS UNLIMITED is a roving vessel for anti-institutional resilient resourcefulness that Bethany Ides happens upon as it's happening, luckily, & w/ others.

Mosh Phenomenology

By Matthew Robertson

The term speedmetal sounds as antiquated as parietal engraving, but this is still about speed. And the seismology of rock n' roll. Immersion is the negation of speed, dilating time under percussive corporeality, *panta rhei*. Though phenomenology has glacially chiseled sensory partitions towards intersubjective flesh, the sediment of mark making remains quite literally as old as dirt.¹ But the tide is rising, and a labyrinthine breeze puzzles away sun-bleached structures and crumbling autumnal frescoes. Below such surface sentimentality, immersion summons a depth to which even myth stands deaf, as characters are weathered for grain and harvested like pigments, dissolving saturated elementals upon the shore. Speaking geologically, immersion is fluvial entropy.² For Robert Smithson, the subtle dispersal calls out the closed system of mechanical science, quite like art, unable to account “for change or the temporality of the mundane.”³ Enveloping the prosaic, immersion reclaims sovereign sensory heir from visual reign—it is the flow of intensities against the logic of sequence. “*Abstraction rules in a void, pretending to be free of time.*” In Heraclitus’ river where everything flows, anything goes.

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye in Mind," in *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, trans. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 359.

² Allison Sky' interview with Robert Smithson, "Entropy Made Visible," available at <http://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/entropy.htm>

³ Ibid., Smithson adds, "And I think at one point Norbert Weiner also refers to modern art as one Niagara of entropy."

⁴ Ibid., Smithson's italics.

Allegedly, seafaring has sedimented both ‘rock’ and ‘roll’ in the vernacular of sound described as motion, long before the verbs floated around as sexual argot.⁵ Cast in nautical measure, immersion is the suspension of due course, drawn toward an inevitable storm, as transverse waves crash starboard and port. Floor tom, crash. One might be inclined to batten down the hatches until the horizon reinstates linearity, but sun and saturation play density for a woodblock bass. A surplus of notes high and dry might keep image afloat, other sunken tones register subaudibly through bone conduction alone.⁶ The immersive sea serves as a level for indeterminacy, so it only seems appropriate that speedmetal—accelerating deep southern blues from uprooted African rhythms—acknowledges a foundation in groundlessness. While Christiaan Huygens’ pendulum clock instrumentalized the side-to-side rock, it wasn’t until the British government’s Longitude Prize of 1714, and John Harrison’s subsequent spring coil designs, that the roll was compensated for.⁷ Pendulums don’t keep time very well on boats. Yet the chronometer was the GPS of its day—maintaining local time allowed navigators to calculate displacement in relation to celestial bodies, distant bodies spinning silently in space. While the unrelenting clock may keep us attuned to a heliocentric macrocosm, the nautical timepiece anticipates visuality unwinding, mechanizing nonlocal order through a tightly wound coil.

Perhaps this is a misreading of rock ’n roll. Clearly it is a distortion; the very distortion amplified by vacuum tube technology. Or it’s just bad grammar, of verbs encroaching upon proper nouns. Today, with more or less all interstices quantified, if not broadcasting live, it is displacement that we are made to keep chase with, mapping geologic surfaces to drown the tick of time’s steady accumulation. By contrast, Polynesian wayfares once encoded navigation routes in the rhyme and

⁵ Dan Graham, “Rock My Religion,” in *Rock My Religion: Writings and Projects, 1965-90*, with Brian Wallis (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Inst. of Technology, 1993), 154: “Allen Freed coined the term ‘rock ’n’ roll’ (which means ‘sex’ in black street argot) and created the first audience of black and white teenagers for ‘race’ music, which he played on his Cleveland ‘Moondog’ radio show in 1952. Freed was the

⁶ Douglas Kahn mentions bone conduction in his *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1999), 7: “While other people hear a person’s voice carried through vibrations in the air, the person speaking also hears her or his own voice as it is conducted from the throat and mouth through bone to the inner regions of the ear.”

⁷ “Marine Chronometer,” *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marine_chronometer.

cadence of song, and their oral tradition remains a science unmatched in locating destination without compass. It's as if they are able to summon scattershot islands into being, warping space by singing. Which is more than can be said for a guitar solo. Song passed down through generations isn't just an idle entertainment for the Maori; by reciting verse maps became manifest—aural overlays ciphering fluvial space. Where mute imagery crops context clean and renders all stages the same, sound distills time into spatial immediacy.

Our visions meanwhile slip like saltwater between rusty fingers, singing of the hopes and losses from such fleeting dreams. Hands cannot grip time, neither is our thirst satiated by mundane temporalities. Ours is the begrudging displacement between overlapping spaces, a crosscurrent of still frames stubbornly accelerated to animate continuity. Eyes scratch at visual opacities, yet are unable to peel waft from weave. It's like thrashing against the waves when all you have to do is submit to equilibrium and float upon a saltier density. Though immersion in the everyday attempts to triangulate a hierarchy from the precession of simulacra, its percussive distancing is a mediated abstraction. The sensory body has evolved, but an interface to keep pace, a threadbare vessel approximating identity in the confluence electromagnetic distortion. While night and day spin at odds with moontide, self is bulwarked against the flood of information—offering but a slight reassurance from waves clapping against the hull, as if to spite celestial spin with an irregular tick. Though vision and destination may remain obscured against an infinite horizon, the sea is an echo of landmass disturbances, with islands falling like raindrops from the sky to ripple out beacons in the dark. In the interference pattern, as in song, location is mapped by the flickering *moiré*.

Words sound fluid to the percussive abrasion of sedimentary rock, as if water could keep time like sand in an hourglass. But the most quantifiable characteristic of a genre with speed is the kicks, a double bass seismograph treading beats per minute to keep afloat, like scissoring sea to just keep ears above the surface. A resilient percussion envelops pace like an embrace, but abrupt pauses and time changes undermine pure speed—and intentionality. In early liturgical composition, silence was avoided for fear that the devil might sneak in through the empty space. Instinctually, the body reads this space that the eye cannot—as an eerie calm before the storm, a premonition—like the silence of otherwise cacophonous fauna spying terrestrial threats. This horror vacui of the white page, like the abrupt sensory void of missing notes palm muting your ears from behind, seems to threaten the immersion redoubling 280 BPM by alternate kicks, a perfect machinic efficiency.

Aestheticized by force or farce (by commerce or surrender to point and click intervals), we're nevertheless saturated with polyrhythmic riffs, a violable continuity even now abetted by a random djent generator phone app.⁸ Emotional overlays seem inconsequential when the music has been reduced to a cold on/off binary function, the guitar riff has itself become percussive. Where atmospheric noise could once ground an affirmation of speed, the clock's nominal fragmentation belies a false consistency, ticking away like deadweight as a groundless ear keeps balance in freefall, pacing mobility between disjointed breakdowns.

Snare.

Silence.

Phenomenological Noise

What is amplification but an intensity of intersubjective exchange, drowning thought to spatialize corporeal displacement? Set against time, visibility offers little anchor in the flood of sensory immersion, body is both an interface and artifice through which anything goes. It is just a drop in the sensory ocean, flickering in the lightning strobe, where sight is an opaque cue to sound. Surrendering to fluid dynamics, sound pulls the drain plug as bodies flood the Lazarus pit to mosh, drowning a known encoding of polyrhythmic song structures to the indeterminacy of space and the unpredictability of actions provoked therein. It is why an audience still shows up—not just to hear, but to feel—and thereby maintain the possibility of overwriting audio/visual certainty in the intensity of lived experience. The gig maintains, even for Hannah Arendt, all the qualities of the space of appearance,⁹ of rockers congregating in the production of, and the participation

⁸ At least it's a genre with a sense of humor, "Misha App - Djent Generator," available at <http://www.getmisha.com>

⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) 199. She defines the space of appearance as something that is produced "wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action," where bodily action is constituted as speech. Though the space of appearances "does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men [...] but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever." Such as when the music cuts out, the dancing stops. Freed was the first rock producer..."

in, speech made active¹⁰— sounds made flesh. As noise is democratic by definition,¹¹ listening and tuning out is an active dislocation, a choice. But a forced choice, perhaps, despite the democratic annunciation of sound, the necessity of filtering excess to simply maintain balance creates a certain constraint. It may be useful to think of visual perception in terms of listening, or “noise vision,” as Joseph Nechvatal calls it.¹²

Like a wave engrained upon a sea of sound, noise is the active disturbance of clouds impacting the horizon, occluding distance. From celestial anchors, surface is the staccato misdirection, the opaque resolution of an incident signal’s depth, accreting an entropic distribution from clean note through filtering envelope. But the physical attenuation, a value added in noise, is structurally intersubjective. It’s the game of Telephone through passive amplification, an aural distribution in acknowledgement of Hito Steyerl’s poor images, before active preamps. “The poor image tends towards abstraction [...] genealogy is dubious [...] It is passed on as a lure, a decoy, an index, or as a reminder of its former visual self.”¹³ Out from the caves, 1950’s distortion was a deliberation of overdriving amplifiers (compounded with literal perforations of the speaker cone) not fully extolled until the 1960’s dissent, connecting the “already distorted output of one amplifier into the input of

¹⁰ Merleau-Ponty, "Eye in Mind," 359. Again, flesh is as employed as a Merleau-Pontian proposition, a materialization of intersubjectivity. "The technique figures and amplifies the metaphysical structure of our flesh." Merleau-Ponty's flesh borrows the mirror as a visual metaphor for what Salomé Voegelin will elaborate with noise, but flesh is to be understood as beyond sensory perceptions, in that it includes expressive reflexivity. "The mirror emerges because I am both seeing and visible, because there is a reflexivity of the sensible; the mirror translates and reproduces that reflexivity. Through it, my outside becomes complete."

¹¹ Salomé Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*, (New York: Continuum, 2010), 15-16. "Sound invites the body into experience and reciprocally makes the object physical. Listening to sound is where objectivity and subjectivity meet [...] It is neither the thing that dominates the being nor the being that dominates the thing. They are reciprocal and equivalent [...] produced on the spot, together in difference, any prior objectivity and prior subjectivity is invested in this momentary and complex production but does not subsume it."

¹² Joseph Nechvatal, *Immersion into Noise* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011), 59.

¹³ Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen* (New York: Sternberg, 2013), 32.

another,”¹⁴ in sequence. Though inherently broken, the active message from signal to noise flows open along cold interpretative seams, accumulating.

And if the medium—in this case, sound—is the message, McLuhan’s cool tones demand participation to fill in the gaps.¹⁵ Distortion has long since won the popular vote. Claude Lefort may have been inclined to agree, his “dissolution of the markers of certainty”¹⁶ evoke a lived experience of democracy, “in the double movement whereby the mode of institution of society appears and is obscured.”¹⁷ Such distortion shifts incident note toward perceptual noise, from visual representation into abstraction, distilling curt order toward a blinder faith in unspoken corporeality. “So long as the democratic adventure continues, so long as the terms of the contradiction continue to be displaced, the meaning of what is coming into being is suspense.”¹⁸ For Lefort, such a society “secretly designates itself as a *society without history*,”¹⁹ pretending to be free of time.

But the depth of the narrative contends a history long after the telephone receiver hits ground, in the proliferation of poor noise. Collective actions speak even in silence for Arendt, as one’s mere physical presence serves as annunciation. It seems to go without saying that the distribution of Steyerl’s poor images amplify the loss of a Benjaminian aura, “no longer based on the permanence of the ‘original,’ but on the transience of the copy,”²⁰ which sounds like a description of aural phenomena, rendered through distortion and noise. Embodying frequencies pitched through vacuum tubes, distortion is shaped by downstroke attack. Thrash!²¹

¹⁴ "Distortion (music)," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distortion_\(music\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distortion_(music))

¹⁵ See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man: Critical Edition*, ed. W. Terrence Gordon (London: Gingko Press, 2011). McLuhan reserves hot for high definition media that saturates the senses, such as film, and cool for media like radio or comics that requires an audience to fill in the blanks.

¹⁶ Claud Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Lefort’s italics.

²⁰ Steyerl, 32.

²¹ Thrash is not to be construed with trash, once understood to be a common malapropism before internet classifications evolved like add-on opposable thumbs. It is however, synonymous with speedmetal. Trash has somehow slipped through editorial cracks and resurfaced, perhaps encouraged by auto-correction.

Flesh pinches bone, crash and rebound, breathing becomes a voluntary calculation, in the snap reflex between perceiving interstitial space and inhaling. The mosh is Merleau-Pontian flesh made preverbal utterance, of exhalations forcibly pitched across the larynx by a shoulder impacting solar plexus. A cool sweat traces away the dull pressure matted behind the hairline, confirming its red in an alkaline sweat. Circle pit is a blind curve—with no goal but to stay bipedal as an irregular crescendo of footsteps pulse toward collision. This “mosh penumbra”²² survives Arendt’s “actuality of the movement which brought it into being”²³—individuals collectively forcing their own dispersal. Pit is employed as both noun and verb; it is, in essence, the sublimation of violence into dance. I push you, you push me back, but harder. Or, in the words of Greil Marcus, “when a shove negates your existence, negate the shove.”²⁴

As we agree to perform disagreement, those who abstain from the agreed disagreement, our social contract, clear the territory. No formula but speed maintains; it’s just the dialectic of bodies in compressed space attempting to embody amplified distortion. Arendt reflects, “[b]ecause the actor always moves among and in relation to other acting beings, he is never merely a ‘doer’ but always and at the same time a sufferer. To do and to suffer are like opposite sides of the same coin...”²⁵ The suffering, in this case, is both voluntary and redemptive. Her words activate Merleau-Pontian notions of hyper-reflectivity—yet the inaction of a void (another one of those mundane temporalities) is inherently unstable. As Jacques Rancière notes likewise, the function politics are manifest only when politics as such cease to function, when action re-inscribing the social surface.²⁶ Subjected to the tension of bodies packed shoulder to shoulder at a gig, even a casual miscue can open up the floor. As a rule, entropy does not anticipate that space will resist time. The motion conserved by iterative decay can only pretend to rule image, asserting that a tightly wound mechanical order will always uncoil in the end. Enacting disagreement within the pit levels a certain stability and balance, while its peak efficiency equilibrium still provokes material residue. “It was, at this point, an act: a collective attempt to prove that the physical representation of an aesthetic

²² Thank you Harry Dodge.

²³ Arendt, 199.

²⁴ Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 90.

²⁵ Arendt, 190.

²⁶ Jacques Rancière, "Time, Narration, Politics." WHAP Lecture Series. (West Hollywood Public Library, West Hollywood, CA, January 20, 2015).

representation could produce reality, or at least real blood.”²⁷ The term ‘mosh’ is itself another misreading, of ‘mash,’ as Bad Brains’ 1982 track “Total Mash” reclaims the verse before thrash got caught up in Anthrax. “Stomp, stomp, stomp, the idiot convention,” Anthrax proved to be clever historians by entwining the riffing style and the dance with the adapted chorus, “Caught in a Mosh.” Though mash had been spelled out in DC fanzines, commercial colonialism only heard H.R.’s Jamaican-accented ‘mash’ as ‘mosh.’²⁸

Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, kept to a closer reading of Bertolt Brecht. In his essay on epic theater, Benjamin “takes account of a circumstance which has received too little attention, and which could be described as the filling-in of the orchestra pit.”²⁹ His attention to the fact that French classical theater once left space “among the actors for spectators of high rank, whose armchairs stood upon the open stage,”³⁰ seems less out of place than the mirrored reversals of the conductor who once faced his audience from the stage, and now stands with his back to the crowd. The orchestra has been respectively tuned and turned, while in the mash-up of viewing angles, Brecht’s epic theater still “facilitates and encourages the interchangeability of actors and audience, audience and actors. Every spectator can become one of the actors.”³¹ The marriage of mosh with pit endures on an inevitable historicity. “The stage is still elevated. But it no longer rises from an immeasurable depth: it has become a public platform. The didactic play and epic theatre set out to occupy this platform,”³² and not the platform alone—but with the body itself as a platform for thought expressed in speech acts—rockers occupy the space of one another to engage. The mosh is epic by any standard, Brechtian or otherwise, as bodies becomes stages.

²⁷ Marcus, 200. In recounting the Sex Pistols’ first (and last) gig in San Francisco, Marcus suggests that a certain code, naturally exaggerated in transit from the UK, informed the crowd what punk behavior entailed: spitting at the band, etc. The activity had grown an aesthetic mythology before even engaging the material content.

²⁸ “Moshing,” in *Wikipedia*, available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshing>

²⁹ Walter Benjamin, “What Is Epic Theater? [Second Version],” in *Understanding Brecht* (London: Verso, 1998), 22. See also “What Is Epic Theater? [First Version],” 1: “The abyss which separates the actors from the audience like the dead from the living, the abyss whose silence heightens the sublime in drama and whose resonance heightens the intoxication of opera, this abyss which, of all the elements of the stage, bears most indelibly the traces of its sacral origins, has increasingly lost its significance.”

³⁰ Benjamin, “What Is Epic Theater? [Second Version],” 17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

³² *Ibid.*, 22.

There is a primordial intensity in the sensory compression of blood, sweat, and stench randomly distributed by the forceful dislocation of bodies—that is to read, the formal constitution between dance floor and stage, and various forms of self-governance. Distortion activates site, a pre-corporeal intuition, as the rock-out ritual reclaims irregular infrastructure, metal support poles, timber trusswork, stairs and balconies, sloped amphitheater lawns (not even proximally addressing the stage), and upraised plywood islands redoubled as diving platforms. Even with the floor already shaking, static constructed space eventually gives way—to shoulders and backs. Groundling attendees of Shakespearean theater used to throw vegetables; now crowds throw each other. In this self-organizing flux, marching under the creed of agreed disagreement, thrash enforces with the same aggression that maintains its orbital gravitation, a double bass stop and go where, quite literally, anything goes. That is to say, all actions, performed in the manner of speech, serve as entertainment, at least until enacted blows come to...well...real blows.

Autokinetic Immersion

Because amplification negates the possibility of individuals actually hearing one another's voice, power, "sharing with all potentialities that can only be actualized but never fully materialized,"³³ entwines the act and the reactive gesture, shove for shove. Self-expression, even in the distribution of pinball corporeality, is an enacted policing of reflexive judgment. Caught up in itself, the circle pit maintains explicit momentum, a thrashing claim to a sovereign space, the right to judge whether "anything whatsoever" fulfills a proper code—and in no way can it escape an aesthetic position.

For Greil Marcus, the basic dada act, "understood to be the performer's attack on the audience,"³⁴ eventually delivers the punk aesthetic generations later. Likewise Thierry de Duve's series of *Artforum* essays positions Marcel Duchamp as a mere messenger of the Independent salon's "anything goes" condition.³⁵ Given that thrash is an appropriation of punk speed and NWOBHM melody under a narrative of war and murder, an extension of the dada link is obvious. But de Duve

³³ Arendt, 200.

³⁴ Marcus, 200.

³⁵ Thierry de Duve in *Artforum International*, "Don't Shoot the Messenger," (Vol. 52, No. 3, November 2013), "Pardon My French," (Vol. 52, No. 2, October 2013), "Why was Modernism Born in France," (Vol. 52, No. 5, January 2014), "The Invention of Non-Art: A History," (Vol. 52, No. 6, February 2014), "The Invention of Non-Art: A Theory," (Vol. 52, No. 7, March 2014), "This is Art: The Anatomy of a Sentence," (Vol. 52, No. 8, April 2014).

stretches the timeline further back—Manet’s flattening the picture plane ultimately bears a sound, with vows given to the speed. “This is a chord, this is another, this is a third—now go form a band.”³⁶ The classic adaptation of punk efficiency here applies to image-making. Visual speed is embedded not only in Manet’s haphazard brushwork, but in surrendering perspectival space to performative immediacy, with an urgency to rendering only the most essential components of figuration, surface modulation and composition be damned. De Duve quotes critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary on Manet’s work presented at the Salon des Refusés:

The Bath, the Majo, the Espada are good sketches, I will grant you. But then what? Is this drawing, is this painting?” [...] Note that Castagnary does not ask whether the drawing or the painting is good, but whether Manet’s skill amounts to drawing or painting at all. At stake is not just the quality of the object but also its very identity.³⁷

As Marcus suggests, the names will change, but the narrative can always be retraced by the present: “The moment of real poetry brings all the unsettled debts of history back into play.”³⁸ It might begin to feel like everything is happening all at once, in the nowhere of compositional disintegration, like a circle pit running counterclockwise from time.

“Even though in theory, there ought to be a boundary somewhere between art and non-art, in experience it is bound to dissolve.”³⁹ The autokinetic effect is a phenomenon of vision ungrounded; it is easily experienced in the dead of night where land meets moonless sea in silence. Staring out across an uncertain distance toward a stationary light source, eyes will lock upon a singular dull glow, but spin dizzily against a depthless background. Is it a boat or star, a flickering campfire or low-flying plane? An indistinguishable horizon smoothly merges with sky—the light is a floating figurative mark without ground, hovering in indeterminate space that eyes cannot anchor. Ground starts to spin. It has been theorized that involuntary movements of tiny muscles controlling the eye are what make the light source appear to drift by its own volition—the binocular parallax is, after all, an active anticipation of speed, judging relative movement. De Duve mirrors the effect of losing the horizon in Clement Greenberg’s formalism:

³⁶ Famous punk schematic.

³⁷ De Duve, “The Invention of Non-Art: A History” (February 2014), 196.

³⁸ Marcus, 24.

³⁹ De Duve, “The Invention of Non-Art: A Theory” (March 2014), 271.

If you reflect enough on your aesthetic experience of art, Greenberg argued, you'll realize that you cannot draw a line beyond which bad art is so terribly bad that it ceases to be art at all [...] the aesthetic appreciation of art is a matter of intensity of feeling and urgency of thought on a continuous scale of nuances.⁴⁰

Working an indeterminate surface by feeling, abstraction is a violence inflicted upon visibility, tearing away common ground and, with it, the horizon for judgment. Put in Lefort's terms, the dissolution of the markers of certainty is what ensures "the democratic adventure continues,"⁴¹ displacing the terms of the contradiction. Visually, Manet took that first step away from perspectival, illusory depth towards the flat reality of the painted surface—his casual figuration grounded the mark as if it were a background—as if all marks rendered as speech were backgrounds for reevaluating a horizon for judgment. Flattening the figurative mark against all other marks seems akin to an inversion of ground, an autokinetic effect set to keep the horizon—a balancing mediation—in motion. Lefort elaborates in Merleau-Pontian terms:

It appears in the sense that the process whereby society is ordered and unified— across its divisions becomes visible. It is obscured in the sense that the locus of politics (the locus in which parties compete and in which a general agency of— power takes shape and is reproduced) becomes defined as particular, while the— principle which generates the overall configuration is concealed.⁴²

Flattening perspectival space likewise reproduces the reality of surface, but all surface needs is a little noise to distort corporeality and become immersive. Despite the reconfiguration of the picture plane according to attendant structure, studio process was the ruling principle that abstract expressionism concealed. Good artists copy, great artists steal—process is the true politic that qualifies image-making, where flattened surface materiality fails three dimensional perspectivalism. Though the cuadro first disengaged itself from its architectural anchor, it claimed a uniform surface, with a consistent horizon governing visibility. Planar portability enacted the perspectival retreat like a lens, with the easel essentially reframing a simulacra of the fresco. But artists such as Jules Olitski, Sam Francis, Morris Louis, and Jackson Pollock denied the one to one horizontal equivalence between

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Lefort, 16.

⁴² Ibid, 11.

touch and surface, encoding in process what Kazimir Malevich and the Russian constructivists visualized in aerial plan. Tearing away the canvas from its structural support and employing gravity to restructure the image, American abstraction surrendered mark-making to chance with fluid acrylics, temporarily freeing industrial acrylics from the line of production.

This gestural abstraction retains, in essence, a democratic function in line with Lefort, that of continually interrogating representational form. And the ghost of Manet still lurks within the surface. With Greenberg's flattening of traditional perspectivalism, viewers are left to float. Read intersubjectively, the viewer's reflexive ambulation becomes an anchoring ground for the declaration of the flat surface as a mark in itself. Though action painting inscribed its name with structural overtones, the reorientation to painterly surface was likewise entirely performative—painter literally became mark, as Hans Namuth's classic documentary film *Pollock Painting* (1951) attests.

It was a silent cue, perhaps misread or entirely exaggerated, for Yves Klein, Japanese Gutai, and the Viennese Actionism to thrash out anticipations of a post-Duchampian moment by extracting the performative depth of action painting through its media presentation. Act and the object became intertwined. Stalking the surface perimeter with gravitational equivalence, Pollock flattened both stage and boundary definitions—as surface inscription shifted from regulated perspectival logic to spatial intuition. Despite the inebriated caricature of existing within the composition, god-like from above, the mortal's zen surrender to chance paradoxically implied groundless immersion within. It was a far cry from Manet crowning a well-known prostitute Olympia, or Duchamp working behind intentional stage names—to collapse the stand-offish distance that had long staged the artist as mediator of visibility, composing static artifacts for an audience. Pollock's surface immersion, as both process and sovereign act, is epic theater for passive classicism. His performative gesture toward chance, while not entirely flushed, is certainly flooded by the resurgence of Duchamp's *Fountain* in '60's discourse—dredging readymade style as punk appropriation. Image, with wireless networks as the primary medium, has become entirely participatory.

Where abstract expressionism was a denial of schematic visibility, the IKB void freed the immaterial from time—once performatively immersed, anything goes. Klein may have learned three chords, or none, but conducted his invisible orchestra nevertheless. Even in negation, the full potentiality of silence produced for an absent audience was a liberation of applied mark. Absurdity is only a photo op, a leap of faith composed by the camera. The fireman assisting Klein with his fire paintings was a friend in costume, but the image has the efficiency of a thousand

words—his narrative of signing the sky could not have rung true without first painting the world International Klein Blue.

But for an Art-in-General system to function, de Duve still anchors the paradigmatic “all or nothing” binary judgment under the 18th century Beaux-Arts system as a precondition.⁴³ Whether soldiers to dada or unemployed British youth to punk, he notes the foil of salon criticism embedded within its own absolutism. “Whether or not they denied that their negative aesthetic experience was an aesthetic experience at all, denial was now a built-in consequence of the institution’s rules.”⁴⁴ Exhibited side by side, and further sanctioned by Napoleon, “[b]efore the exhibition of the Refused, we were unable to figure out what a bad painting was. Now we know it.”⁴⁵ Bad, or perhaps just poor, copies—*morceau* as they were called—perversions of the noble *tableau* form. Alphonse Legros is quoted by de Duve for his dialectical elegance, “I would call *tableaux* all successful *morceau* that naturally make a composition without seeking to be one.” De Duve further speculates upon Manet’s role:

Manet presented the jurors with what he conceived as a *tableau*, which quasi-didactically embodied that attempt at a synthesis. The jurors intuitively sensed Manet’s ambition because their notion of the *tableau*—the one prevalent in the criticism of the 1860s—involved a coalescence of qualities independent of genre. [...] The jurors saw the impure mixture of the genres but not their new synthesis.⁴⁷

Where cross-currents may very well map an interference pattern to wind-torn sailors, the attempt to locate aesthetic islands might otherwise look like just a bunch of waves to wayward drifters disoriented by a 360° horizon. If aesthetic judgment floats upon symbolic dislocation, inherently groundless, then the sublimation of violence aestheticized by an extreme form of dance announces an intersubjective

⁴³ De Duve, *Artforum International* (March 2014), 273. “[T]he invention of non-art is some fifty years older than Dada and cannot be attributed to any artist at all. It is an involuntary side effect of the binary structure of aesthetic judgment in the French Beaux-Arts system’s main state apparatus, the nineteenth-century Salon.”

⁴⁴ De Duve, “The Invention of Non-Art: A Theory” (March 2014), 308.

⁴⁵ De Duve, “The Invention of Non-Art: A History” (February 2014), 196.

⁴⁶ De Duve, “The Invention of Non-Art: A Theory” (March 2014), 274.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 273-274.

discontent with material artifacts composed at distance. The mosh wants blood, “to prove that the physical representation of an aesthetic representation could produce reality.”⁴⁸ Where a cartographic flattening of perspectival space reproduces the simulation of surface, all surface needs is a little noise to distort corporeality and become immersive.

Loonhouse Aesthetics

Neal Kay's Soundhouse was a club in northwest London that spun metal records to an underground audience throughout the genre's mid-1970s formative years. Devotees were known to perform an active spectatorship even without the presence of a live band. Whether or not audiences had already been air guitaring to Hendrix will remain in debate—either way, Rob "Loonhouse" Yeatman, a noted “practitioner” and Soundhouse regular, took the stage with the world's first homemade imitation guitar, a prototype for deskilled video game chicanery. An '80's British documentary frames the legend,⁴⁹ “Loonhouse built his own first guitar in a challenge to decipher Headbanger of the Year,” but his competitor planned to play a Gibson body with no strings or pickups. Loonhouse sensed the advantage. “This bloke's got an edge on me, this guy's got a guitar, it's just going to stick in people's minds. So I thought to myself, I'll just make a cut-out!” Abstraction rules in a void. Picasso would surely take credit for the hollow acoustic, but in upstaging his competitor's Gibson with a flatboard Flying V, Loonhouse may just as well have defined the metal aesthetic. “Well I only had a couple days to do it, it's all straight lines, and it's easy to cut out! [...] I put a couple of bits of sticky tape on it to brighten it up a bit. So from a distance it does look a bit like a real guitar.”

The interviewer's camera zooms, intrigued. “Do you put frets on it then?” As if already anticipating that strings would hardly hold. A tremolo? Eventually Loonhouse did. But frets? Air guitar is the abstraction that ensures you hit every note each time, pretending to be free of time. “No, no, I don't bother with frets, I think it's taking the piss a bit really, when you put frets on it really you're making it look too much like a real guitar.” The subtlety in Loonhouse's response is key. “It's supposed to look like a guitar, but it's not really supposed to look like a real guitar. It's supposed to be kind of like a Harlequin of a real guitar, just an image.”⁵⁰ Not only a poor image, but a mute image at that, a prop to play performative flair against the

⁴⁸ Marcus, 28.

⁴⁹ Rip thanks to progjazzfusion, “NWOBHM 1980 metal documentary,” available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkQx7CNolRo>

⁵⁰ Ibid., I excise footnotes of Loonhouse's dialogue in favor of the narrative.

unreality of linear sequence. As for the headbanging competition—given a stage name like Loonhouse, we can only assume that image took the crown. Windmilling away as if staring into the spokes of an upturned bicycle wheel on a stool, one wonders what Duchamp would have made of the prop?

In abbreviated form, de Duve's series of six Artforum essays compiles a thesaurus on Duchamp's influence. He notes that the accusations were often derogatory, until slang misreadings began encroaching upon nominal formalism. A deep breath before plunging into the depths, they remain more or less in sequence, [Part 1:] N'importe quoi, whatever, Anything goes!, @#?#!#, My two-year-old can do that, It's crap, The Anything goes condition, box of art (further referring to Ben Vautier's own boxes), anything whatsoever, since Duchamp, anything can be art, the Duchamp syllogism, [Part 2:] post-Duchamp, The Duchamp Effect (a proper title), The Duchamp effect (lowercase), the so-called Duchamp effect (it remains in question), ready made (for Filiou, not yet compound), anything can be art, (and now onward with Duchamp's legacy:) anyone can be an artist, [Part 3:] the Beaux-Arts system has collapsed, All is art, everyone is an artist, [Part 4:] non-art & anti-art (supposed twins, but quite different), NeoDada, nonart (no hyphen), the all or nothing paradigm, Art-in-General, [Part 5:] nonart art & anti-art art (both useless to Donald Judd), art (thus reinstated), virtually art, not-art, a category mistake (a fallacy identified by Benedetto Croce), a line between art and non-art-pardon, <<oi-art (which is assuredly a misprint in ProQuest's pdf), bad art, what-is-not-art, not-yet-art, an ocean of art or of the possibility of art, potential art, this can be art, this is art, this cannot be art, virtual as art, art as not-art, art as albeit-art, the worst art, a trap, a legitimate candidate for the name of art, inferior art (italized), no longer in the bag, and not yet out of the bag labeled "condition," which contains all plausible candidates for the name of art. End quote. (You will wake up and see art when you read "this.") Part 6 addresses the deitic "this," which, written in a sentence, could refer to anything.⁵¹ De Duve's flair seems to follow suit with John Baldessari's "situation where art might be possible."

Photographer James Welling recalls John Baldessari's Post-Studio class at CalArts: "The main thing I remember about the class is that John would have this old, funky suitcase spray-painted black, full of art catalogs from Europe. He would spread them out so we could look at them."⁵² The late Jack Goldstein said, "[Baldessari] would have magazines on the floor open to the ads, to the news photos. He was

⁵¹ De Duve, "This is Art: The Anatomy of a Sentence" (April 2014), 242.

⁵² Jori Finkel, "John Baldessari's Former Students Share Memories," Los Angeles Times (20 June 2010), available at <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jun/20/entertainment/la-ca-baldessaraside-20100620-1>

saying, here's all of this stuff you can use in your art. [...] He plopped the materials on the floor and there they were, pictures we could use.”⁵³ Welling continues, “That's essentially John's teaching method: Here's a pile of things, find something that you can use.”⁵⁴ If ground is a minefield and image cannot be diffused, everything under the sky is permitted.

“‘Art altogether’ is the name I give to the universal basis for comparison that an individual is required to possess in order to declare with absolute certainty that something, anything—a urinal for example—cannot possibly be art.”⁵⁵ De Duve speaks beyond possibility. “The verdict [...] ‘This cannot be art’—amounts to an indictment of the urinal’s claim to the status of art as literally inhuman.”⁵⁶ But it’s an inhumanity that de Duve rejects in the impossibility of this “universal comparability of works.”⁵⁷ Judgment is vested in the humanity of an ungrounded witness to question not only what this “is” but what this “can be.”⁵⁸ (Part 6 of the thesaurus, meanwhile, addends art altogether, literally inhuman, je ne sais quoi, and art itself.) The entries, as annunciations of hyper-reflexive terminology, are phenomenologically entwined. “The reflective aesthetic judgment that confirms or reconfirms Fountain’s art status follows the feedback loop of the mind that restates [de Duves’s] initial postulate,”⁵⁹ —the statement “this is art” ends up in Baldessari’s 1971 calisthenics video *I Am Making Art*, which is less a workout video and more the embodiment of a mantra, as if the camera were invisible.

Like the conceptualist’s classic 1971 piece *I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, words manifest as challenges. Baldessari’s iterative instructions are the sort of the makeshift version of Loonhouse’s anything goes, an air solo on a fretless cardboard cutout, annunciating the Duchamp Effect as a rule. The piece initially existed as mere instructions sent by Baldessari to students at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, “As there wasn’t enough money for me to travel to Nova Scotia, I proposed that the students voluntarily write ‘I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art’ on the walls of the gallery, like punishment.”⁶⁰ Even words, properly sedimented, have a range that exceeds corporeal embodiment. To Baldessari’s surprise, “they covered the walls.”⁶¹ The lithographic print and handwritten script

⁵³ Jack Goldstein and Richard Hart, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia* (Ojai, CA: Minneola Press, 2003), 68.

⁵⁴ De Duve, “This is Art: The Anatomy of a Sentence” (April 2014), 249.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Raimond Livasgani, *Artists and Prints: Masterworks from The Museum of Modern Art*, ed. Deborah Wye (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 188.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

we know it by—the poor image materialization that, in fact, many conceptual pieces are known by—was produced by a team of students. Authorship is groundless.

The detour into Baldessari's practice reveals a degree of uncertainty between the full potentiality of “anything” becoming and the manifest object. The interval enables situations for misreading, attempting to ground sensory entanglement. In a static piece, *This Is Not To Be Looked At*, the text captions a screen-printed photograph of *Artforum* magazine, paradoxically demanding that “this” universal comparability in block caps overwrites image. The bifurcation of liquid ink occurs directly upon the surface, forcing meaning through tiny interstices in the printer's screen—seeing, in choosing what to read, is a negation of peripheral ground. But from Baldessari's suitcase full of poor images poured out as a surface, the singular image delimits an opacity—it is only in circulation, entwined by groundlessness, that the referents anchor meaning.

Loonhouse's conceptual act, with or without the cardboard cutout, universalizes source material—his performance doesn't necessarily require a soundtrack. Where air guitaring occludes incident sound, the deadpan opacity of Baldessari putting dots on people's faces denies that those faces can be read, substituting a palette of primaries. If not provoking a misreading, he is certainly demanding a rereading. Abstraction rules in a void; in Baldessari's case the void was harbored in a surplus of old film stills collected at bargain prices. In de Duve's Art-in-General system of anything goes, the sensation that occurs beyond visibility—which is neither reading, nor misreading groundlessness—is actually feeling. By overwriting the function of a “real” instrument, Loonhouse inscribed his own time signature, a polyrhythmic floating signifier. His immersion in feeling is the abstraction that time can only pretend to rule. Like a colored dot, it is an opaque punch to the face of black and white halftone, punctuating the sensory flood with a breakbeat. For bodies immersed in fluvial space, bones are an unseen structural artifice until they are made to crack. Parietal engraving, however antiquated, may be the quickest way to inscribe geology.

† Matthew Robertson is trained as an architect but instead engages bodies directly in space. Robertson will crowdsurf to London to continue his graduate studies with Nigel Rolfe and Markus Vater at the RCA. A recent graduate of CalArts, his thesis, printed on transparency pages and excerpted here, was the Black MIDI of the Aesthetics & Politics program. Matthew exhibits bilocation through quantum entanglement via a lock of hair affixed to the temporal bone of an epicurean synesthete, with further audio/visual peregrinations calculated by complex mathematical proofs at HyperboLA.org

A flash photo of a large rectangular hole in ground. Raed and I were walking to his sister's home just outside of Hebron, when he stopped suddenly and asked me to take a photo. The flash illuminated our path and I saw the hole, about ten feet in front of us. I looked at the photo I had just taken on my camera as he told me about the artifacts that had been dug up and confiscated by Israelis earlier that month. The rocks and grass closest to the camera are blown out from the flash, but the far edges of the hole show the details of the dirt that was freshly dug.

Another flash photo taken a moment later just slightly closer and slightly above the hole. It's almost flat at the bottom, and still wet. Looks about twelve feet deep.

One more flash photo taken in the general direction Raed and I were walking in, to help light our way so we wouldn't fall into the hole. I looked at the photo on my camera the next morning and realized the path we had been walking was marked by two white spray painted lines. I showed it to Raed who said the lines trace a path where Palestinians are allowed to walk to get to their homes on the other side of the Hebron settlements.

The Baroness is All Hands

by Catherine Czacki

A needle driven into a tabletop.

A pen nib driven into a lemon rind.

A nail file driven into a box.

A safety pin driven into a piece of cardboard.

A nail driven into the wall, right above the floor.¹

The Baroness is all hands...

Methods of arranging matter and objects inherit the past of manipulating material things – the items might be stolen, found, and /or given. They are objects often tagged ‘unambitious’, yet persist in their material presence. Expounding upon themes both historical and narrative, aiming toward non-hierarchical language, hoping to reveal the fissures of historical discipline. This is the poetics of historical influence, the lineage one inherits, known or unknown, when they address matter with hands, and words with thought. The Baroness comes through, she always comes through, with her hands – hands touching the things, hands attached to her body. A body to which we no longer have access.

This female influence exists behind the closed doors of modernism, generally ignored or, misattributed; she is the antiquated, debased, dialectical opposition to the finish-fetish commodity. She is the basement, the plumbing.

**

¹ Witold Gombrowicz, *Cosmos*, trans. Danuta Borchartd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 79.



Closed doors / back rooms. Misattribution, historical blindness. Hers is not the shiny finished ready-made of male peers, but, rather, it is the antiquated, the trifle, the trash, the bauble, the 'eternal ornament.'

(It would really fuck with the ready-made to find a woman had invented it – at least had more of a hand in it – a hand obscured by the crushing weight of time... A shop-girl-type no less.)

The Baroness is all hands. It was said to me that she "probably never paid for a thing in her life" (Norman Bryson). I am inclined to believe this is true. She found her way through— situation by situation— by taking and arranging objects with her hands as she saw fit and as she pleased. Her impulse was pure impulse. I have a different orientation; I might be all hands, but I'm less body. Her body was constantly following her hands, making moves and being both host and absorber of things. I'm there after the party is over, dealing with the objects. She was the party with the objects as they were encountered.

Even her story is hard to pin, like her body. A question of attribution always arises: did she make the thing? Did she have the idea? Was she the inspiration? Or, was it he who orchestrated it all? It's probably more complicated than a 1-to-1 ratio of thought to thing, one person to another. There are many folds. Her influence / his influence. Her narrative leaps, just as she did, and captures moments at the core of issuing the truth. Was it really; is it really? By saying "you are doing it wrong" (Joanna Russ) – the authority, the brilliant polemicist, will always win. If you are wrong, then, by measure of reason they are right. The right is the one who can win the argument, the last to laugh, the last one standing – *on the right side of God, whichever God is currently being worshipped, be it abstract energy or money*. But she, she might win in other ways. She keeps being reborn. There are many insistent hers. Many misbehaving hers. Many hers who cackle on infinity, and keep playing with

the things they aren't supposed to touch. A complicated dialectic fight for supremacy sometimes ending in dominance of one side over the other.

In writing these very words, I reveal my disinterest in winning, my lack of polemical skill, my disinterest in the game being one of dominance. I only want the calmly walking through words, the porousness of them, the touch of them. I only want things to be simple and fair. I want ideas to be shapes that are thrown from one mind to another, molded, then thrown back to the initiating mind (Sarah Dziedzic).

She maybe died by foul play, just in the same way she maybe invented the ready-made. She also maybe killed herself, and was just a hoarder collecting junk. All options might be right, if you disagree with the singular truth.

There are trinkets and baubles, trash and waste – and there is high art. The line between the two polarities has been forever altered by the avant-garde. You can be a witch and a genius, a pauper and a baroness. Some remain relegated to the lower strata forever, some are elevated for a small period of time, or eternally (whatever eternally means to the human consciousness).

She is walking trash. She reminds everyone of what is in the gutter, but with a performative panache. She is not the street urchin begging for alms – she wears her garbage proudly, with dignity, with insistence. She keeps revealing the material that others would rather see disappear, or never see at all. She deals (like the witch) with the material in a way that is not acceptable – she wears it, she ossifies in it.

After the glory is over, after she dies of gas inhalation – what is left is the objects, the trash on pedestals in museums. She might have won, she might be laughing lastly at the deadness of her objects in the high castle of art.

In glass cases. Her "God" is behind glass and on a pedestal now, finally she is credited – but only partially. His name still must be there to authorize her arrangement. The objects are so strange behind glass. They were never meant to be behind glass. So what if they are stolen? Most were stolen in the first place.

In the archives of Marcel Duchamp, there is a *Red Herring*. The archivist is so excited by Elsa, that she wants to follow a path of free-association. With me as audience, she recalls the possibility of a clipping featuring the elusive Elsa. Large format boxes are pulled out of climate-controlled rooms. Many things emit the odor of the 1910s and 1920s, yet she isn't there. She escapes again, she is missing from the official history. Careers are made on the idea of singular genius, as is the case for Duchamp. Only he is allowed to own the readymade.² She is the back room of the readymade – her archaic objects, her trash objects. They are too referential of the past, of the vaudeville soul, or the things we wish to forget when we frame things on pedestals. She is too dirty, too poor, and too broken. Which is why it becomes even more comical that she acquires the "Baroness" title. She insists on her own importance, she laughs at what others think of her. Titles are given to people who fight wars, who marry or who are born in the right place at the right time. My own father was titled, though the money isn't there; he lost it by measure of his *otherness*. He lost it on both ends, because it was too much for one name in the first place, and because he couldn't prove descent from the right side. It was a title of marriage and a title of military worth, given to the foreigner so they would feel included, so they would fight the wars for those who live in castles. Djuna Barnes speaks of this in *Nightwood*; the Baron is empty, he hides behind the title, "passes" for something he is not. We think these things don't matter anymore, but they keep mattering. We are matter, and we like to make matter out of others. We set up boundaries, socially and physically, then become angry when others pass the boundaries we have set. We must have someone at the base to touch the things we like to hold once they have transcended their baseness and become reified, and we must position ourselves higher in relation to the others and the things.

² R.Mutt is still haunting, still debated – letters exist giving her credit – but no one wants to deflate the mystique of the originator – the genius.



The title in itself is an empty cipher. It only means that you can convince people of importance. They might think importance follows you like a perfume. *We can capture this air of importance in a title, it bottles it.* This is the act of naming, it gives notice – renders real, makes the thing what it is.

In the name of throwing shapes as an alternative discipline to authoritative polemical banter, I reference my influences, I see their complexity and their attempts, not as a means of supporting or refuting – but in order to throw shapes back at them to mold and continue throwing, or for others to catch and mold and throw down the line. Their desire to revisit, and write about a history that is largely foreclosed upon, a revelation of what continually seeps back in, the past that constitutes and frames the current. Silvia Federici explains the material manipulations that women engaged, how they were not supposed to touch things in the way they did, becoming labeled witches for their radical distaste for the hierarchy, their refusal to be owned.³ Witold Gombrowicz takes up this description of the material oddities constructed by a maid in his book *Cosmos*, a she who becomes labeled a witch.

*A poor woman dealing with the objects of everyday in unusual ways, ways that cause discomfort to the family of the retired banker who runs the boarding house she cleans, these bizarre configurations are discovered in her cottage while she is not there. The witch frightens the patriarch. She might have birth control, she might not “produce” bodies to be used for capitalist means.*⁴ Irene Gammel tracks the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, tracks her various modes of being and surviving – Elsa gets to places, escapes places. She does what she wants.⁵ She does not bear children. To dress like a man and shave one’s head

³ Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).

⁴ Federici argues that witch hunts established the basis for capitalism, by subjecting women’s bodies to male power, destroying the knowledge they had prior of birth control and other forms of female specific medical treatment. Their bodies were needed to ‘produce’ labor, they were child-making machines.

⁵ Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity: A Cultural Biography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

is no longer an avant-garde move really, Elsa and Claude Cahoun won this battle. Though battles still persist on other grounds, culture still regards women's bodies as the surfaces on which to display things, the place to mount the desire of reproduction – yet reproductive rights are seldom palatable. We are desired, hunted, and haunted. Politics, property rights, health, equal pay. The cult of youth is most visible in the image of woman; hags and witches result if you don't keep up appearances, keep perpetual youth. Wearing less has also become accepted; when Elsa wore her tin cans she was arrested, but now Gaga can make money on this scheme. Moves forward and reversals; the escape of desire and the hunt or haunt continues.

Djuna never made it to her funeral: she got drunk with the other ladies and they all missed it.⁶ I could shave my head and play the drums again, but I've lost that desire. I'm too tired and quiet now. I want my rest. I could never afford more than one space at a time, I couldn't keep up with the percussive element. It required time, space with no leaking noise, and less than three jobs worked six days per week. That was my only ever desire, to "perform," to be a drummer. It felt safe behind all those surfaces, I could speak in aggressive hits and not in words. But, all those jobs stole the time. Hers was a cigarette factory, mine was a pornographic video store. It seemed easier to continue art, to continue to make things with trash in small scales, subtle arrangements. Sly gestures of contempt for the money I can't seem to make or keep. The art world hates a broke complainer. You must just consume the same gold leaf covered food objects as the rich, and thank them for giving you this luxury. But then you go home and cry while you shit gold, as you know it can't pay your health insurance or college debt, that you just are shitting something that has no nutritional value, and now can't even be recycled and sold.

⁶ Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity: A Cultural Biography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

It's been digested and divested. Shit is not "equivalent," it is base – and that's why Elsa liked to reference it.⁷

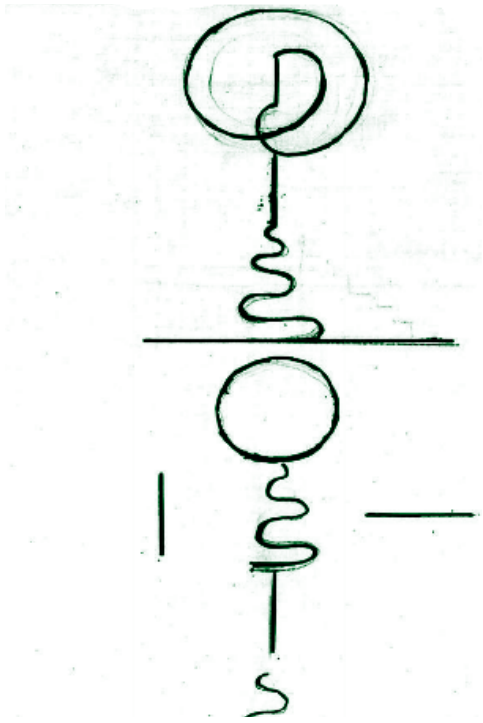
She found it funny. We try to hide it all the time, but, really, what we are denying and trying to hide is our material self, the reality of the frailty of our bodies and the incapability of our consciousness to last once the body has given in. And *she*, *never tired of being a performer, of pushing the buttons of the men around her, of pushing people to see her – to notice her aging body, her proclivity for wearing and doing things considered inappropriate to normative behavior.*

My body is all around me; I cannot escape it. I don't really wish to escape it – but it disagrees with me, it fights me, within or without it – the system prefers to pretend transcendence, to pretend that escape is possible.

The gestures of poverty and simplicity are hard to own with conviction if you can't bank it with historical hierarchy. Gestures by some that are seen as trash and trifles, are alternately gestures when deployed by others seen as moves positioned as anti-bourgeois, poetic, anti-hierarchical, post-colonial statements.

Ruining the mystery, giving it away, being pedantic. Only the master big M polemicist may use words, all others are being silly and childish, having play-time with the signs and symbols – 'it's not really serious'. *Is it ever.* Language is a system to tell stories, to engage metaphor, to have recursivity and hand memories and thoughts that are subjective to others – possibly inciting new thoughts in other minds or existing

⁷ See Georges Bataille's *The Accursed Share vol. I*, on base materialism and the societal configurations of gold and shit. See also George Baker *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris*, on Dada's usage of objects and signs of 'general equivalence,' a term that Baker gleans from Jean-Joseph Goux's *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*.



more simply as a form to be pleurably absorbed. To use language is to use yet another tool in the human game of cultural production.

Her sexual, material body was in tune with the objects, there to be taken and used with occasional attempts at ownership. She was constantly being possessed and thrown away, accused of being low on the order of things. Her single weapon was her distaste for convention, *her ability to laugh at the idea of anyone "actually" possessing her. Like the objects she found appealing, the leftovers – the street trash, the stolen – she thwarted possession. In the spirit of Virginia Woolf – lacking ambition, being non-productive, unable to produce, unreasoning, unfocused.*⁸ These are the tactics that reveal – the problems of reason, the problems of progress, the problems of hierarchy.

† Catherine Czacki is an artist and PhD student in the Art History, Theory and Criticism program – with a Concentration in Art Practice, at the University of California, San Diego. Most recently Catherine was included in Sculpture Center's annual 'In Practice' exhibition, titled 'Under Foundations.'

⁸ Douglas Mao describes the anti-imperialistic/anti-productive stance of Virginia Woolf in "Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production."

An older man wearing white walking away from the camera with two white goats behind him. He's on the right side of the photo, bent over, ducking below an olive tree branch. But in this photo maybe it looks like he's bending with age. We are in the middle of Ni'ilin, and Saeed is standing to my right, out of frame, telling me that his grandfather was a shepherd before his land was occupied by Israeli settlements. He takes these last two goats around with him everywhere. He doesn't hear well.

† Abigail Collins works with still and moving images, language, and sound to reconsider the relationship between political trauma and domestic life, most recently focusing on representations of Palestine. She holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Art from University of California, Los Angeles and a BFA from Cooper Union in New York. www.abigailcollins.net

Autobiografía Especulativa

by Amy Sanchez

En 1989 yo tenía un año de edad.
En 1990 yo tenía dos años de edad.
En 1991 yo tenía tres años de edad.
En 1992 yo tenía cuatro años de edad.
En 1993 yo tenía cinco años de edad.
En 1994 yo tenía seis años de edad.
En 1995 yo tenía siete años de edad.
En 1996 yo tenía ocho años de edad.
En 1997 yo tenía nueve años de edad.
En 1998 yo tenía diez años de edad.
En 1999 yo tenía once años de edad.
En 2000 yo tenía doce años de edad.
En 2001 yo tenía trece años de edad.
En 2002 yo tenía catorce años de edad.
En 2003 yo tenía quince años de edad.
En 2004 yo tenía dieciséis años edad.
En 2005 yo tenía diecisiete años de edad.
En 2006 yo tenía dieciocho años de edad.
En 2007 yo tenía diecinueve años de edad.
En 2008 yo tenía veinte años de edad.
En 2009 yo tenía veintiún años de edad.

En 2010 yo tenía veintidós años de edad.
En 2011 yo tenía veintitrés años de edad.
En 2012 yo tenía veinticuatro años de edad.
En 2013 yo tenía veinticinco años de edad.
En 2014 yo tenía veintiséis años de edad.
En 2015 yo tendré veintisiete años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2016 yo tendré veintiocho años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2017 yo tendré veintinueve años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2018 yo tendré treinta años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2019 yo tendré treinta y un años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2020 yo tendré treinta y dos años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2021 yo tendré treinta y tres años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2022 yo tendré treinta y cuatro años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2023 yo tendré treinta y cinco años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2024 yo tendré treinta y seis años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2025 yo tendré treinta y siete años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2026 yo tendré treinta y ocho años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2027 yo tendré treinta y nueve años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2028 yo tendré cuarenta años si no hay feminicidio.
En 2029 yo tendré cuarenta y un años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2030 yo tendré cuarenta y dos años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2031 yo tendré cuarenta y tres años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2032 yo tendré cuarenta y cuatro años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2033 yo tendré cuarenta y cinco años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2034 yo tendré cuarenta y seis años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2035 yo tendré cuarenta y siete años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2036 yo tendré cuarenta y ocho años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2037 yo tendré cuarenta y nueve años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2038 yo tendré cincuenta años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2039 yo tendré cincuenta y un años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2040 yo tendré cincuenta y dos años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2041 yo tendré cincuenta y tres años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2042 yo tendré cincuenta y cuatro años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2043 yo tendré cincuenta y cinco años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2044 yo tendré cincuenta y seis años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2045 yo tendré cincuenta y siete años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2046 yo tendré cincuenta y ocho años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2047 yo tendré cincuenta y nueve años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2048 yo tendré sesenta años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2049 yo tendré sesenta y un años, si no hay feminicidio.
En 2050 yo tendré sesenta y dos años, si no hay feminicidio.

En 2050 yo tendré sesenta y dos años, si no hay feminicidio.

En 2051 yo tendré sesenta y tres años, si no hay feminicidio.

En 2052 yo tendré sesenta y cuatro años, si no hay feminicidio.

En 2053 yo tendré sesenta y cinco años, si no hay feminicidio.

En 2054 yo tendré sesenta y seis años, si no hay feminicidio.

En 2055 yo tendré sesenta y siete años, si no hay feminicidio.

En 2056 yo tendré sesenta y ocho años, si no hay feminicidio.

† Amy Sanchez is a Southern California based researcher, cultural producer and educator. She is co-organizer of cog•nate collective, an art and research collective, which seeks to explore dynamics of exchange—economic, interpersonal, and cultural—at the US/Mexico border. Amy is an MFA candidate in Critical and Curatorial Studies at UC Irvine.

Fred Moten in Conversation
with Amanda McGough

AM Going into this conversation with you, selfishly, I should say that it is predicated by my attempt to think about where we are as a journal, in our second volume, and of course, symptomatically, where I am as an artist and thinker and person right now because these are the conditions under I choose to make things. Your work for me is so much about opening up space, or emancipating it, to not only see problems but to deal with them. This in mind, I'd like to talk about two of your books: *The Little Edges*, and *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* which you co-authored with Stefano Harney.

My understanding is that many of the poems in *The Little Edges* are based on or are a result of other works of art or people. Can you speak a little about the connection from one work to another? I am thinking in particular about "The Gramsci Monument" and my personal favorite, "All up on that T-shirt."

FM I was invited to read at the artist Thomas Hirschhorn's, "Gramsci Monument" in the Bronx, NY. The Dia Art Foundation commissioned it and they set me up in a nice spot in Manhattan. I went to go visit the monument the day before my reading, and at the time, Mayor Bloomberg appealed the stop and frisk ruling which said the practice was unconstitutional. And actually, that day, I was walking on the sidewalk and was stopped by NYPD. And the very next day, the Dia sent me a limousine to come pick me up just to go to the South Bronx, which is totally crazy. So it was a series of anomalies I suppose you could say that are maybe indicative of where I'm at.

But, I started writing the poem, actually, in the limousine. And then when I got there (and I wanted to write something specifically for the event because I was reading poetry there), I was sitting in the little part of "Gramsci Monument" that was a kind of library where they had these sort of artifacts of Gramsci's life. They had his slippers, and a comb he used to wear which he used for combing his hair while he was in prison. And in a weird way it kind of reminded me of being in a prison in Angola, the prison block in Louisiana, where they have these amazing artifacts of prison life including these combs the prisoners had actually fashioned into keys, which they used in order to escape. Anyway, so all of that stuff was kind of resonating in my head in a certain way. And then when I saw one my friends, one of my best friends who passed away not very long after this, José Muñoz, it just made the day even better, you know. So it was this kind of weird combination of, you know, just a typical combination I suppose of beauty and bullshit (*laughing*) that makes up the black social life. And the poem was kind of trying to work through that I suppose. But I would say that on the more, whatever, critical or literary realm, that poem and a bunch of the other poems are occasional poems.

And "All Up On That T-shirt" is, well- here was a series of poems that kind of culminates within the book that are sort of centered, I suppose you could say, around the keyword "all." So there's a bunch of different places from where that comes from. There's a really amazing essay on Milton that the critic William Empson wrote in which he talks about the word "all" that I kind of got obsessed with some years ago. And there's this great song by Al Jarreau called, "After All," that I've probably listened to for five times a week for the last 12 years (*laughing*). And then there's this really amazing use of the term "all" in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents In A Life of A Slave Girl*. Also in Equiano - there's an interesting narrative. And I was kind of working through the permutations, you know, of those sorts of variations on the word "all" through these poems.

And then "All Up On That T-shirt", I guess, I was sort of, you know, I guess I was trying to bring it back to some more everyday kind of walking down the street looking at people kind of thing. I mean, that's one of the best things in the world walking down the street looking at folks. And in this instance, I was also thinking about this great little poem by Robert Herrick's that always loved called "Upon Julia's Clothes." I was thinking about that too. So there's maybe this kind of, maybe, erotic element to it as well, you know.

(each laughing)

h a u n t

AM Wellll, "All Up on That T-Shirt" is my favorite to read aloud. It reminds me of my oral visual patterning. I feel that to make sense of most of the poems in this collection you need to read them aloud. You have to.

FM Yeah, I think so too. I have to read things aloud and I certainly have to read things aloud while I'm in the process of writing. That's a big big huge part of the process. For instance, when I read aloud over and over again I tape myself reading so that I can hear myself when I'm not speaking it. It's always the process of trying to figure out the proper, you know, the right alignment of your ear, and your eye, and your breath, and also your lips, and your tongue, and you know, your mouth. It's not to say you're trying to get them all absolutely in sync. But you're always trying to figure out what the right kind of calibration is.

AM A little less than a year ago, you read from *The Little Edges* at the Underground Museum in Los Angeles. And before you began reading aloud, you introduced the work by saying your work comes from a space of sentimentality. I wonder if you could say a few words about this as a position of critique or as a resistance?

FM Soooo, I've thought about a couple different ways. I'm a black writer and in my tradition, one of the fundamental elements is a slave narrative. And slave narrative as a genre is kind of inextricably bound to the sort of sentimental tradition in American literature. And more than that, it's bound by -- even if you go back to someone like Olaudah Equiano (who in a lot of ways his work kind of is an analog to maybe someone like Laurence Sterne), Equiano's work is the work of a man of feeling. And this of course becomes a complicated phenomenon because so much of slave narrative is trying to articulate and instantiate the notion of the slave or of the African as capable of reason. So you are trying to make an argument for the capacity for reason, which is to say, the capacity for critical thinking or for a certain kind of critique. And the age of Kant kind of codifies that. You've got these texts, which are trying to establish the bonafides of African rationality, but with any kind of sentiment language.

So the interplay between reason and sentiment, between reason and feeling, is a kind of tension that animates the literature in often all of these ways. So part of what I was trying to do is to understand that kind of relationship and to understand that kind of calibration. And in the end what it meant for me was to try to make a plea for sentiment. To understand that sentimentality or that sentiment is a fundamental aspect of a certain kind of, lets say, experimental strain in writing in general, but in black writing in particular. The way of thinking about it, now, or I should say - the way that Stefano and I have been thinking about it together over the last 10 or 12 years - is that maybe the word that I will use more often than not,

instead of sentiment, is **feel**. And one way to think about it that its this intense sort of way of imagining a kind of rematerialization of sentiment. Often, sentiment gets quoted and used in sort of an abstract ways, and in ways that are detached, you know, from what we've been calling and thinking about under the rubric of hapticality. So there's intensity in the relationship between feel and flesh that we're trying to see through and work out. And of course that is already embedded in all of this important kind of theoretical work. So really trying to think and understand the interplay between feel and flesh as a way of thinking. And specifically, as a modality of social thought.

AM More toward what you just said, can you set up the social space or modality of your book, *The Undercommons*?

FM The book itself is a particular material form of hanging out. It is the material form of thoughtful and playful hanging out, which is another way of talking about friendship. That hanging out takes place in very particular material conditions, often under duress; under duress by forces, which have a murderous intent toward it. And that murderous intent toward hanging out is not precluded by the intention to exploit, or to emulate hanging out as a whole surplus. So, it's not as if it is all pretty like hanging out that day at the "Gramsci Monument." It is a fugitive kind of way. You gather together intermittently to try and figure out a way out and to overturn it. But you have to understand the condition under which it occurs and the difficulties that mark those conditions. But you have to know it. You have to know something about what you are, and who we are, and what's good and beautiful and disruptive and reconstructive about that. One way to put it would be, it's a way of mobilizing a way to feel; mobilizing sentiment over and against the kind of often self constructive forces of critique which manifests itself for us, now, often, as a mode of regulation. Even for the ones who think that they're trying to mobilize it as a way of insurgents.

AM Relatedly, in the *The Undercommons*, you take up the issue of study. And as I understand it, the activity of study is not to be understood as being contained by a university, but that it is of course possible to arrive at alternative and varied histories of thought. I can think of many different constellations of circumstances under duress, where I've studied and have been changed, maybe even in more meaningful and concentrated ways than are even possible for me at UCI, for instance. And yet I still go here. Very recently, there has been a prime example of a group of students who have found the university unfit for study and for and their participation as students because of issues dealing in funding, curriculum, and faculty structure.

Can you comment on the significance of the entire class of 2016 MFA candidates at USC's Roski School of Fine Arts collective decision to withdraw from the program? And, what is gained from this kind of distancing?

FM Well, that's a really good question, you know. And I'm happy to try think about it for a minute in precisely the way that you've made it possible to think. Last night, Stefano was in town and we were at this cultural studies Association conference at UC Riverside. The theme of the conference and of the sort of plenary session we were in was: another university is possible. So, Stefano kind of set off the plenary session by saying that maybe the question that we need to ask first is whether or not this university is possible.

AM Yes.

FM In other words, while we seek out an alternative to the already existing university, we simply assume the existence of the already existing university. Maybe it doesn't exist. That institution itself is under such duress and maybe it really doesn't exist anymore in the way that we think that it does. And I think that is true. It's falling apart. It's falling apart under the weight of its own voraciousness and there's nothing that we can do about that falling apart. I don't know that it is anything we can do to accelerate it, and I don't know there's anything we can do to stop it. But, with that said, Stefano started thinking that the university is a kind of corpse. It is dead. It's a dead institutional body. And what we live in right now is the university's decay. We are embedded in its decay. And for a long time we thought of this decay is a kind of refuge. And just now when you were talking it kind of reminded me of this amazing thing -- in Louise Erdrich's novel, "The Plague of Doves," these characters up in the North Dakota or Minnesota plains and it's winter, and it's freezing, and they find this dead buffalo. It's a recently killed Buffalo -- a mother buffalo who's decaying body is literally used as a refuge to warm themselves and to keep themselves alive. And I feel like, for certain amount of time, the university has been this dead decaying body that a certain kind of intellectual life has had to find or seek refuge in. But, you can't stay in a dead decaying body forever. You can't.

So for me, the 2016 class leaving is a necessary moment of Exodus. They can no longer survive in the decaying body of that program. And that program can no longer survive in the decaying body of USC. And that decay takes the form of a sort of transfiguration. The university as a place for thought or as a refuge for study - it just doesn't exist anymore and it's kind of crazy to keep acting like it does.

I think some of these decaying bodies are further along in their decay than others. I think USC is much further along in its decay than maybe UCI and certainly maybe than UCR. And there are reasons for that which are hard to discern or possible to understand but I don't think it's a mystery why this is the case. I think a whole hell of a lot of it has to do -- you know, the condition of the university as a decaying institutional body is in large part, almost completely as a matter of fact, a function of the students in the university. I mean the undergraduates. And they are a specific set of undergraduates who continue to give what appears to be a kind of life to that decaying institutional body in a way that is more intense than other groups of students. Another way to put it will be, I feel like my students at UCR are more capable of animating at least on a certain kind of level that decaying institutional body, then say, my students at USC were when I taught there and certainly, more than my students at Duke were when I taught there. And there are reasons for that. Just ask who these students are and where they come from. With all that said, the main point is, yeah, the 2016 class had to leave. There was no sustenance for them there. And there's just a practical matter of can they live into their work there? Answer: no.

Now the question becomes, from when -- and we can look at that movement, that moment of Exodus as the discursive moment; it is a statement they are making about university as such and not just their own specific relationship to that university. And we can move by way of that statement and enjoy and think through its implications. And I think that's an important aspect of it to, but, the more important aspect of it is that in so far as they had to leave, how, well, let's say, let's call it -- how will our already existing university of study in our area where we are now, how are we going to sustain them? That's the real question now. Because they want to live and also do the work and they want to think, you know.

So for me I'm interested in not only understanding the discursive content of what they did, but I'm interested in the practical question of, what do we do now to sustain them? And in sustaining them, how is that going to infuse with what we tried to do with some new life. That's what I'm trying to get involved in as much as I can. Like, seriously, do they have places to stay? Are we going to set up some kind of programs or a place of study for them so that they can live and do their work? And will that be the occasion to really making some new stuff, you know? And to the extent that I can say that I find it kind of refuge and a certain kind of sustenance in the sort of decaying institutional body in which an i work, I need to figure out ways to transfer some of that sustenance to folks who can no longer stay.

h a u n t

AM Well, as a gesture of giving sustenance to others, I have one last question: What are you reading right now?

FM Ha ha! oh man, aaaahhhhh... Well, let's see. I just got a new book, John Keane called *Counter Narratives* and I just got it in the mail server really excited about reading that. I just read the first couple pages and I'm already hooked into it. And in general in terms of, like a kind of, maybe, you know... the two books over the last year that I've been really immersed in and keep going back to again and again are: Oscar Zeta's, *The Revolt of The Cockroach People*. And there's a group called Design Art Architecture Residency that's based in the west bank based in Bethlehem, and they have a book called *Architecture after Revolution*. And i've been kind of, just, living in those two books over the last year. And just been situating myself in the implications of those books.

AM Thank you for living in those books, Fred.

† Amanda McGough is an artist living in Los Angeles. She is the founding editor of *Haunt Journal of Art*.

† Fred Moten is an author and poet living in Los Angeles, where he teaches at the University of California, Riverside. Among many other works, he is author of *Arkansas* (Pressed Wafer); *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (University of Minnesota Press); and *The Little Edges* (Wesleyan Poetry Series).

Photograph pg. 8

Painter Jay DeFeo Painting "The Rose," by Burt Glinn, 1960

Image courtesy of Burt Glinn/Magnum Photos

Photograph pg. 10

Wafa Hourani, "Qalandia 2067," 2008

Image courtesy of the Saatchi Gallery, London.

Photographs pg. 12

Guillaume Duchenne, from "Mécanisme de la Physionomie Humaine," 1862

Image courtesy of Wikipedia Commons

Andy Warhol, "Green Disaster #2 (Green Disaster Ten Times)," 1963

Image courtesy of © 2015 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Photographs pg. 16

Kurt Ralske, "Untitled (German Futurist Film Still, 1927)," 2011

Image courtesy of Kurt Ralske

Kurt Ralske, "Untitled (German Futurist Film Still, 1927)," 2011

Image courtesy of Kurt Ralske

Photograph pg. 21

Image courtesy of Jenalee Harmon

Photograph pg. 23

Image courtesy of Jenalee Harmon

Photograph pg. 35

Toulouse Lautrec, "Le Lit," 1892

Image courtesy of the public domain

Photograph pg. 40

Image courtesy of Bethany Ides

Photograph pg. 62

Catherine Czacki, "page 333 of Baroness Elsa by Irene Gammel, containing Earring–Object," 1917-1919
Image courtesy of Catherine Czacki

Photograph pg. 65

Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Morton Schamberg, "God," 1917
Image courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Photograph pg. 69

Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Papers. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Maryland Libraries," 1913-1927
Image courtesy of the University of Maryland

Editors

Amanda McGough
Andrew McNeely
Kelly Donahey

Haunt Journal of Art

Volume 2
2015

ISSN 2334-1165 (PRINT)

Design

Brody Albert

Address:

Haunt Journal of Art
Department of Art
Claire Trevor School of the Arts
University of California, Irvine
3229 Art Culture and Technology
Irvine, CA 92697-2775

Layout

Amanda McGough

Copy Editor

Debra Wade

Email:

hauntjournal@uci.edu

Faculty Advisors

Litia Perta
Simon Leung
Antionette LeFarge

Student Advisory Board

Connor Thompson
Gosia Herc-Balaszek
Lena Ruano

Website:

www.hauntjournal.org
http://escholarship.org/uc/uciart_hauntjournal

For more information on forthcoming calls and submissions guidelines please visit our website.

Haunt Journal of Art is a graduate student run, peer-reviewed, open access journal from the University of California, Irvine, published online through eScholarship and in print for this special edition. We believe speculative and innovative art writing practices are paramount to the development of radical thinking and imagination.