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**LINK ZONE: an exploration of the  
sensation of knowledge through a  
practice of art and writing**

KATE LISTON

PhD

2016

**LINK ZONE: an exploration of the  
sensation of knowledge through a  
practice of art and writing**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements of the University of  
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the Faculty of Arts,  
Design and Social Sciences

October 2016

### **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

An ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 21.01.16.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is 35 940

**Name:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the scope artists' writing has to perform the 'sensation of knowledge' – a term I am using to indicate my central proposition that knowledge can be felt. Through descriptions of place, the use of allusion and first person narration the thesis paves the way for a series of encounters between the reader and the matter, content and commonplace bodily processes of contemporary lived experience. By being grounded in this way, the 'sensation of knowledge' challenges presuppositions about the immateriality of knowledge; it makes readers alert to their own idiosyncratic perceptions of its meanings. Further, the thesis asks them to consider how such experience gains the authority and status of knowledge when the significance is felt rather than comprehended.

The writing has come out of research into meaning-making that is located in the experience of specific sites and situations and has taken place across moving image, installation, writing and performance. The thesis is presented as a self-contained art object with the writing that comprises it performing its argument through its form and methods rather than by explaining, cataloguing or defining it. The writing as art practice contributes to a broad art discourse but also, critically, to academia. It specifically makes its proposition within, and in response to the current culture and format of knowledge production within the academy. It meets the defining expectation of a PhD to produce new knowledge and provides the means for this knowledge to be accessible through existing academic and institutional conventions. Its knowledge is contingent on the sensation of its encounter, an approach that is counter to that which the academy expects.

With these propositions in mind, the writing produced for this thesis situates ideas and language alongside descriptions of physical substances. It questions assumptions about the default function of language to expedite the delivery of information, by slowing down the feelings experienced. The material and abstract references accumulate to reveal the sense of weight that occurs in response to the act of reading. Formal conventions of academic writing and reading, such as footnotes, are used as meta-critical devices that illuminate the apparatus of institutionalised knowledge production. The thesis places such devices alongside forms of storytelling including historiographic fiction and autobiographical narratives to reveal the multiplicity of modes through which knowledge can be produced and absorbed. This multiplicity is a critical device that challenges institutionalized conventions through which knowledge is legitimized. Through these methods the thesis locates the production of knowledge between the body, ideas and the lived world and, as such, challenges the superiority of one form over another.

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## Prelude

Reading this thesis requires navigation, so it would help if I provided a map. It would be useful if I created a structure for you to orientate yourself towards, through landmarks at least if not through defined borders and territories. Maps are comforting fictions. Most often, however, the maps we use actually take the form of tracings.

Tracing means following the path of something that already exists. Roithamer in Hoeller's attic garrett, the only place he felt he could think freely, is haunted by the feeling that every thought he is having is a tracing of Hoeller's. Huxley, sitting in his garden, tripping out over the pattern of his trousers falls into comforting recollections of learned Zen teaching; unbound experience rebound by past learning. I, setting out to carve my own way find I instead follow the path of least resistance: the desire line which, rather than evidencing a community's shared desires exposes unthinking compliance with a worn down route: a tracing of something that already exists.

Structural metaphors carve out familiar, navigable shapes: *the body politic, the social contract*: the grand narrative. Setting out to carve my way I find I instead follow the path of least resistance: the desire line which, rather than evidencing a community's shared desires exposes unthinking compliance with a worn down route: a tracing of something that already exists: *the rhizome, an ecology*. To trace is to repeat, to re-tread, to rethink, to reimagine. Absolute repetition is of course a fiction of mathematics and abstraction, any repetition is always actually a reiteration, reframed by its re-ness, the second thought thought or tread tread is different by the fact of it being second. To repeat, retread, rethink, reimagine reconstructs, reframes, reinvigorates, regurgitates. To handle ideas in the mind and put them back down again in the world gives the sensation of knowing. To *re* is to produce new knowledge.

I carve a path, but look down and see grass worn beneath my feet, and the folds of my corduroy trousers make a pattern of desire that under close inspection looks like velvet. I'm searching, I'm searching. I'm trying to understand. To trace is to repeat, to re-tread, to rethink, to reimagine. Absolute repetition is of course a fiction of mathematics and abstraction, any repetition is always actually a reiteration, reframed by its re-ness, the second thought thought or tread tread is different by the fact of it being second. To repeat, retread, rethink, reimagine reconstructs, reframes, reinvigorates, regurgitates. To handle ideas in the mind and put them back down again in the world gives a sensation of knowing.

The room is small, the walls are white, and it has a window at one end. Three black strips articulate the room's dimensions. The window is framed in the same stark black and is divided into three panels that are each subdivided into even square panes. The girl looks out of these now to the scene beneath. She moves slowly, involuntarily nodding her head to the rhythm of the oil that is passing in and out of her teeth. It circulates as she does, drawing toxins from her body as she paces around the room. Outside, the sun is shining and is reflected in a consistent rectangle of light above, and to the right of a silver sign that is just visible from the window.

Her small hand grabs a fistful of chalk and grips it in her hands for a second. The packet sits half open, its zip-lock feature rendered useless by a fine coating of the powder within. Her palm's rough callouses draw the chalk into stark patterns at the base of each finger. When you hold something, she thinks, it holds you back. The room has no mirrors and so when her hand grabs the cool dust, she relies on the memory of actions created by doing them over and over.

Her legs make a triangle with the ground as her hands reach directly below her gripping alternately under and over arm. Her hips are down but her chest is up, the face is forward, back straight. The knees point outwards and toes point to the outermost shape her body articulates. She breathes in and holds the position.

She then turns and walks with arms outstretched, with chest out, chin up. She thinks of the ground coming up to her feet as she breathes in and gets tight for a moment and then lets it all go. She lets her arms go. Arms go wide, then lift, one then the other, hands together, linked hands to chest, shoulders raise, then release, then lunges, bear crawl, gorilla walk, broad jump, knees to



chest, chest to bar, toe raises. She thinks of gravity holding her up not pulling her down. She thinks of the action producing the meaning and not the other way around.

Pacing the words while repeating the room, the actions attach to the pattern of her movements. Position and action annotate pitch, tone, meter, and inflection. They converge in the central concept of measure. A step forward, a level voice. A rock back: a pause, a hand gesture: an emphasis. Eventually, the words are transcribed to her body and its movements summon more details than if written on paper.

Standing still once more before the window she sees a girl dressed in running gear. She is stretching, holding her ankles in each hand one at a time, pulling them tight and shifting her weight to hold herself steady. A haze cast over the scene means the girl quickly recedes into pink mist and cannot be discerned except for by her orange beanie hat. Standing in the room the girl imagines this as the opening sequence of a film; an orange dot emerges from the pink haze and passes through a green parabola in the centre of the frame. Above the bridge the sky is murky and the river runs high. A squat brick chimney sits in the background.

Outside the open door the sun is shining and reflecting a consistent rectangle of light above, and to the right of a silver sign, which reads: **TRANSIT**. The word, spelled out in silvered plastic letters creates a point of focus directly in her natural line of sight. The high-shine of the plastic renders the word more object than language, and heightens the sensation of anchorage as she gazes upon it while taking the weight. Taking the bar from the rack to her shoulders creates a wobble as she sways back and plants her feet. Focusing her gaze and noticing the rectangle of light above and to the right in the periphery

she plants her feet into the platform. Hard-soled shoes become hooves as the image of a deer comes into view. Full-length black Nike tight fit leggings merge with the black of her socks and leather lifting shoes. She pushes deep into shoes and spreads toes wide into Nike socks (Depending upon the time of various myths, Nike was described as the daughter of the **Titan Pallas** and the goddess **Styx**, and the sister of **Kratos** (Strength), **Bia** (Force), and **Zelus** (Zeal). The Roman equivalent was **Victoria**. The winged goddess of victory. Nike was a woman, Nike Woman is a tautology.). Temporary spirit animal, **TRANSIT** again becomes an anchor but this time as a sound as she sounds it out to steady herself, turning it over in her mind while focusing her gaze on the rectangle of light now shifting further to the right. She takes the weight and drops down, pausing for an unplanned second before driving at the command of the word, **knees** (hard plastic word). Commanding an extension of herself, commanding an extension of herself. People often use the phrase out of body experience but she has never felt more so in hers.

Red roofed terraces line the hill to the right, and the sound of the river and wind dominate. At the end of the bridge the girl reaches a path and the sound of her breathing and footfall build. In a series of clips we take in details of the landscape: a weed; a puddle; the edge of a footpath; fast moving water that fills the frame, a **MAZDA** car showroom in the middle of a field, an office chair half submerged in the river bank. Footfall and breathing build throughout. The rhythm of railings matches footsteps and breathing, which are now quite loud; position and action, meter, inflection. The sound and image of the river recede. As the shot continues, a heartbeat builds and a rudimentary techno beat emerges.

A wide shot and naturalistic ambient sound. A path recedes to the centre of the frame where it meets a body

of water. The shot stays empty for a moment before rhythmic sounds of footfall and breathing build and the girl enters the frame. Her breathing remains diegetically located, she runs to the water's edge, she stops, we see her breath, she hesitates, she runs on the muddy verge with exaggerated steps, she stops, we see her breath, she turns and disappears out of the frame.

An empty frame and its ambient sounds: the heartbeat builds until the sound breaks down. A close up of water as the sounds build. Rhythmic distorted noise dominates. Further distorted sounds are added until they become music. A series of images show parts of the landscape in which a circle sits in the middle of the frame: the end of a discarded can, the sun seen faintly through hazy sky, the middle of the 'o' of the words *SPORTS DIRECT*.

A wide shot and naturalistic sound: a pebbledash office building surrounded by trees. Gradually the girl's breath and footsteps build and she runs into the frame. She runs to the left before turning around and right around the building. An office worker turns his head and follows her movements.

The film cuts to a close up of hands filmed in POV in a brightly lit studio. They slowly caress algae against a black background and ambient sounds of the river. Position and action, tone, inflection. The quality of this image is distinct; it is HD but it has an unexpected texture. Start patterns at the base of each finger. An entirely black image and her breath only, we hear no footsteps. The breath is ragged; it builds, and then slows. Silence and black. sounds of the river. END.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This text was presented as an audio work, listened to by the examiners of this thesis on the day of its Viva Voce examination, on an iPod shuffle, in a room called 'The Zone' at Northumbria University.

**LIGHT**

## Shake the Dust

On a late afternoon on an autumn day in Paris, a young boy walks towards a tavern, whistling. A milky sidelight smells of wood and charcoal and hangs in the windless air. Far away landscapes fade into the mist, the towers of Notre Dame are felt more than seen; the marshes beyond the city walls are discernible only by their comparable stillness. The river is barely legible, mostly through faint trace-smells of chamber pot. Hues of purples and yellow bruise the distant horizon.

Around the boy townsfolk move steadily, hurried by the bite in the turning weather but unable to pass lightly since flow is slowed today by the thick traffic of people in the narrow streets. It is Shrove Tuesday. Shrove comes from the word *shrive* which comes from *shriving*, meaning confessing sins, *shrive* means to absolve. In the French spoken in Paris, *Mardis Gras* means *Fat Tuesday*. On this day, merchants shout the names of their available wares, which announce themselves also by their smells: fish, fruits, vegetables, cheese, milk, chickens, garlic, onions, and hides. Abundance must be indulged in today before the penance of Lent begins. Shrove comes from *shrive* meaning absolve, but only in the English translation, the French, *Mardis Gras* means *Fat Tuesday*. The boy, no glutton, is aided by his slightness to slip through the melange. His feet pass lightly over dirty streets as he seeks out a tavern to fetch wine for his master's revelry on this day of excess.

To the left of the riverbank there lie several monasteries built from cold heavy immovable stone; Ste. Genevieve, St Germain des Pres, and St Victor, each of which holds a school within. Here, these centres of knowledge establish learning in layers as observable as those making up the familiar icing cake-like western face of the Notre Dame cathedral. Inside the school walls, lectures are given from texts. Texts are works of writing deemed by the cumulative layers making up the established system of learning to be sufficiently important to know. Students copy the words that they hear spoken aloud, writing notes in the wide margins left intentionally for this purpose and scribing further references to other texts at the bottom of the page. Between these centres of knowledge students take rooms, and instructors rent halls to give lectures in spaces dispersed throughout the city. For the longest time, whilst learning was first propagating in this town-space the Notre Dame towers cast long clear shadows, but today their reach is beginning to wane. The mist is making this unclear.

Today a haze is cast also across the clarity of the text, the lecture, the notes, and the margins as it lingers across the towers, the stones, and the icing cake-like Western face of Notre Dame's cathedral. Peter Abelard, once a student in the Latin Quarter and, now a master, has written a book. In *Sic et Non*, or *Yes and No* Abelard argues that the accepted authorities everyone had

been studying in the established systems of learning contradict one another on almost every basic point one could think of. The ability to hold two contradictory ideas in the mind and to believe both is believed to be a form of madness, so he concludes one must gather the opinions of the authorities, and use logic and study to determine which are correct. As a result of the book, murk is cast over the clear layers of the old school system and the manner of teaching and learning begins to change. The separations of margin and centre are no longer so distinct today as the boy crosses from his master's apartment to the tavern on the corner near the river's misty banks. The text by Abelard is deemed important to know and speaks of the ways in which texts previously deemed important to know, might now not be so important to know. The noun study comes from the Latin *studium* meaning zeal and painstaking application, and the Old French *estudier* means care, attention, skill, thought. Around the year thirteen hundred, two hundred years on from Abelard's book, *study* is recorded to indicate a state of deep thought or contemplation, as well as a state of mental perplexity, doubt, anxiety, and a state of amazement or wonder. From the mid fourteenth century *study* means careful examination, scrutiny, and also from this point onwards, a physical space materialising this inner state as a room furnished with books, since by this point, enough books have been written building on, commenting on, and merging with the collective body of texts deemed important to know. Around the time Abelard wrote *Yes and No*, the verb *to study* is recorded to mean to strive towards, devote oneself to, cultivate and to apply oneself, to show zeal for. The meaning evolves to mean eagerness, or, *to be diligent*, or, to be pressing forward. In a translation of the Proto-Indo-European languages, also abbreviated to PIE, it means to push, stick, knock, beat.

From the event of Abelard's articulation of *Yes and No*, debate replaces the lecture and the system of learning in Paris and beyond changes its once distinctly layered form. At the same time as nobles are developing man-to-man armed combat in tournaments in fields, scholars are developing mind barrage skills honed through public debate in hired lecture halls in the city. Today above the stone monasteries hues of purples and yellow bruise the hazy skyline. Scattered throughout the city students live and study in rooms and instructors rent halls to give lectures. Cultivating skills in argument is proving more useful today than knowledge of harmonic mathematical proportions for example, nor the dates of Easter. Ideas and counter ideas bubble, bursting through the surface today as intelligence ferments and spreads around the busy town and merchants shout the names of their available wares, which announce themselves also by their smells: fish, fruits, vegetables, cheese, milk, chickens, garlic, onions, and hides.

Reaching the tavern door the boy wipes the dirt from his feet across the stone doorstep and approaches the bar. His slightness, which so far has aided his swift passage through the town becomes a hindrance here as he struggles to be heard above the bar's brawl now on this busy Fat Tuesday. He stands among the gathered men of the town. The boy, requesting a barrel of

wine now plus a glass from which to sample, is greeted with a flat stare from the tavern keep as he is handed the vessel, here, in the dregs of this Fat Tuesday evening. Taking the glass and pouring, the boy is repelled by the smell before reeling at the mouth-feel. The wine is sour or mouldy- thick, greasy, stale and smacking of pitch. Musty like wet and rotten manuscripts, sodden after a thorough dowsing during one of Hans' rowdier gatherings where margins, footnotes and text become inseparable in papier maché lumps which pile up with the smell of shaggy wet dog. Inside the tavern the revelry rages on and once more the boy must shout to be heard above the din. His slightness contrasts comically with the thick wine and the pitchy din of the tavern as he thrusts the glass in the face of the barkeep. Turning now from more familiar clientele, with a flat hand, the fat barkeep knocks the glass from the boy's pitchy hand. The townsfolk, catching whiff of the incident, and seeking out the spirit of the excesses on this day, seek greasy satisfaction before the commencement of the penitentiary days of Lent.

Fat pitchy hands smack the boy around the head, flat around the ears, revelling excessively in the stark contrast of their thuggish action to his slightness. Often people speak of these experiences as being *out-of-body* but the boy has never felt himself to be more so in his. Wishing he could float immaterially above the scene the boy shouts pale warning of the sure revenge his master will reek, which awaits them now in abundance for their actions this Fat day. The boy's shouts are in vain. His lightness no mercy to the heavy body blows, he suffers badly. A stone cold swipe from the fat barkeep finally flattens him to the ground. The historical meaning of the word study, located in the P-I-E languages, reveals a trace of this violent root to this founding practice of universities, which takes place as ideas and counter ideas bubble and burst today as intelligence ferments in the city of Paris. A ripe organic grape is full of natural sugars and has wild yeasts living on its skin, as soon as the skin of the grape is broken, fermentation begins. To make wine, the winemaker has to collect his grapes and gently crush them, releasing the sugary juice and exposing it to the yeasts. Fermentation will continue until all the sugar has been turned into alcohol or the level of alcohol in the juice reaches around fifteen percent, whichever is sooner. At around fifteen percent alcohol, the yeasts will naturally die and any left over sugars will remain in the wine. At the same time nobles are developing man-to-man armed combat in tournaments, scholars are developing mind barrage skills honed through public debate, and in this tavern, a ten year old servant boy of a German scholar is being pushed, stuck, knocked and beaten for complaining the thick sour wine's unsuitability for his master's gathering.

Above the city the sky is now pitch black save faint touches of purple. By light of the waning moon the boy drags himself back to his master's room. Hearing the revelry in full flow he approaches to the rhythm of the scholars' bawdy song, which urges him inch by inch towards the door. The stench of stale wine permeates the German student's apartment before he is able

to see its source and upon finally opening he sees a pale and bruised likeness of his servant boy lying in a heap on his doorstep. Indignation spreads among the group as the shock renders them cold sober and they gather themselves and wooden clubs, steeling themselves to face the townspeople as they head out now into the embers of the night.

Arriving at the tavern door the scholars study their surroundings taking in the scene before striding inside. Barrels are strewn across the surface of the bar, which is thick now with pitch and wine. As if with premonition of the forthcoming scene one man is slumped out cold already in the corner of the room,. Seeing the young pale students enter, the leather handed barkeep steels himself standing to his full height. Both sides push, stick, knock and beat. The students return the room to a pile of dust before leaving with a large barrel of wine, as soon as the skin of the grape is broken fermentation can begin.

The sky begins to yellow now on the morning of this Ash Wednesday and the now sober guests of the German scholar's party stand together in the milky autumnal side-light in the barely morning-time in the apartment while the young slight boy rests heavy. Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting and the first day of Lent in the Western tradition. It occurs forty-six days (forty fasting days if the six Sundays, which are not days of fast are excluded) before Easter and can fall as early as the fourth of February or as late as the tenth of March. Ash Wednesday derives its name from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of worshippers made from palm branches blessed on the previous year's Palm Sunday. The ashes are placed on the heads of participants to the accompaniment of the words *repent, and believe in the Gospel, or remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return*. Across the town the dust is beginning to settle on the previous night's activities.

The tavern owner awakens to the cold desolation of his bar and a heavy reminder in his gut of the activities that Fat Tuesday evening. With a heavy head and thick rage bubbling through his veins he throws open the bar door and takes to the street seeking the Provost to demand support. Along with the Provost, the barkeep now gathers his fellow townspeople and sets out once more into the street, hunting for the German student, striding through the streets, striving in steely devotion towards this sure retribution.

At this point in time students are disseminated throughout the city and so are less easily distinguishable from regular Parisians. Town and gown co-mingle daily on these busy streets. The slightness induced by attention to thought, amazement and wonder no longer clearly indicates their scholarly learning. Through the training of combative study began, steeled also by frequent exposure to painstaking application and the daily movement required to reach from room to hall the students are rendered more materially robust. The townsfolk gathered by the



barkeep therefore knock and beat indiscriminately those who get in their path. Well trained for opposition, the master retaliates and a pitched battle ensues. Finally, as the haze gathers in the milky sky bruised in purple and yellow light the Provost, the barkeep and his men withdraw, the German student and four others now dead and stone cold on the streets of the town, between the walls of the cathedrals and in the unclear shadows of the Notre Dame towers.

Days pass and the town falls into the quiet rhythms familiar to this annual penitentiary time. After being refused help from the Chancellor of Paris, the students and masters gather together and make plans to assert their rights. They block the streets leading into the Latin Quarter and create once more a clear delineated barrier in this space confused by the infiltration of students into the town space some time ago. As soon as the skin of the grape is broken, fermentation can begin. They demand rights, privileges and protection from the king who asks the union of students and masters what they will do if he refuses and in response they say, *we will shake the dust of the streets of Paris from the hems of our gowns*. The following day, a spokesperson to the King declares the unionized body of scholars: The University of the Masters and Students of Paris.

The struggles continued, more people died, and there were more protests. Fermentation will continue until all the sugar has been turned into alcohol or the level of alcohol in the juice reaches around fifteen percent, whichever is sooner. As time went on, the united scholars gained more and more powers, including the right to debate any subject, to choose their own members, and to gain protection from local police. Masters were given authority by the University to disperse lectures over a wide range of provocations ranging in subject from *monstrous injury or offense to the right to assess the rents of lodgings*. Once dispersed, a clear separation begins between town and gown.

## **Sweetly Absorbing Knowledge**

### **Britain, an island**

On a page of their website entitled *Our History*, Sunderland University gives a brief summation of the legacy of education in the institution, locating its origins in that of St Peter's Church and monastery, which dates from 674 AD. The site of the monastery is located in an area called Monkwearmouth and was home to Bede, a monk known today as *The Venerable Bede*, who lived and worked there from the age of seven.

### **There are in**

The Venerable Bede worked in the north east of England, an area considered at the time to be the dark edges of the known world. The libraries at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow contained around two to three hundred books and were the largest north of the Alps. The libraries, gathered by Benedict Biscop, amounted to almost everything one might need to access of Christian learning and culture at this time that could be collected from the known world. Working at Monkwearmouth Jarrow, Bede transcribed and collected the knowledge available to him through the libraries of the monasteries located in what is now modern day Sunderland.

### **Ireland is broader**

Bede presented his gathered knowledge in texts presented in the form of illuminated manuscripts. Illuminated manuscripts are texts supplemented with initials, miniature illustrations and borders in the margins of the pages. Whilst originally the term applied only to texts appliquéd with shiny gold or silver, 'illuminated manuscript' is now used widely to mean any text decorated in the Western tradition.

### **The island abounds**

Light has been a long-standing signifier of knowledge within the canon of Western philosophy and culture.

### **There is a**

The closing prayer of the Venerable Bede's *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People* begins with the line:

And now I pray thee, our good Saviour, that you will mercifully grant me to drink in sweetly the words of my wisdom, that you will also graciously grant that I may at last come to thee, the fount of all wisdom and appear for ever before thy face.

This *Ecclesiastical History* charts the conversion of the Anglo Saxon people to Christianity. Within this body of writing Bede pioneers the practice of footnoting, through which layered sources of knowledge can be referenced throughout the text.<sup>2</sup>

### **Now Britain had**

Apophenia is a psychological condition in which meanings spontaneously manifests in the mind of the beholder between data, which externally appear to be unrelated.

### **In the year**

*Enlightenment, to be enlightened, to cast light on, to illuminate.*

### **Vespasian, who was**

In a lecture called *Information and Thinking* given in 2014 Michel Serres speaks of the sun as an emblem of the dominant centralised power source of capital and knowledge in Western thought since the Enlightenment period.

### **In the year**

The practice of bringing young boys into the monasteries to study was commonplace at the time of Bede's work. Relatives would elect young boys of promise to enter the church in order to train and study. *The Spark* is the name given to the Sunderland University logo intended to represent a spark of creativity

### **In the year**

Hi Kate

The logo was designed a bit before my time, and I've been here for 18 years in various roles.

It was designed in 1992 when the uni received University status and converted from a

Polytechnic. More here: <http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/university/factsandfigures/ourhistory/>

We have a portfolio here somewhere with all the development visuals and the company who did the work is on the tip of my tongue so I may need to refer to the visuals.

The graphic element of our logo is generally referred to as the 'spark' and when designed was deliberately positioned as open to interpretation and can be viewed as a spark of inspiration or as the spark that ignites an interest in learning. I'm sure that should give you food for thought.

We also have a formal coat of arms (Armorial bearings) that was commissioned at the same time. The bearings are explained in the attached pdf.

Hope that helps.

Andy<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Bede's pioneering work in this practice has earned him the deserved moniker, *Father of the Footnote*.

<sup>3</sup> I am of course the person to whom this email is addressed.

### **In the year**

As well as writing *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, at Jarrow, Bede compiled the first complete bible, which, before this point had only existed in fragments dispersed around the known world.<sup>4</sup>

### **Meanwhile Diocletian in**

In an article written for online magazine eFlux's SUPERCOMMUNITY series titled, *On Solar Databases and the Exogenesis of Light*, Matteo Pasquinelli draws from Michael Serres' lecture, *Information and Thinking*, which itself draws on Serres' critique of Western Enlightenment's articulation of knowledge as a centralised form of illumination. In the article, Pasquinelli asks: 'Will darkness ever have its own medium of communication? Will it ever be possible to envision a medium that operates via negation, adduction, absence, the void, the nonluminous?'<sup>5</sup>

### **At the time**

*Illuminate; shed some light on; cast light on; enlighten; don't keep me in the dark; light and shade; the dark ages; Enlightenment.*

### **This Alban, being**

Sunderland School of Art was first established in 1901 and operated from the Town Hall, running classes in Painting and Decorating, Stone and Wood Carving, Photography, Millinery and Dressmaking. From 1934 the school became known as the College of Arts and Crafts, and delivered classes from Ashburne House, the former home of a man named TW Backhouse which was gifted to the city of Sunderland on the condition it should be used for educational purposes. TW Backhouse was an astronomer and built an observatory in the family home, which was later to become the art school. In 1912, Backhouse published a work documenting all the stars visible to the naked eye from this location which was later to become a place of study and learning, titling the work, *Catalogue of 9842 stars, or, All stars very conspicuous to the naked eye, for the epoch of 1900*.<sup>6</sup>

### **It happened that**

At 9.00 am, 25 November 2004, BBC Radio 4 broadcast an episode of the programme *In Our Time* about The Venerable Bede. The programme is concerned with the history of ideas and is presented by host Melvyn Bragg. In each episode Bragg invites selected guests to discuss the

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<sup>4</sup> Bede's work in this respect was as a gatherer.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This lecture was given in French and at the time of writing it has no English translation. It is possible to view the lecture on YouTube in French with auto-translated subtitles however this renders Serres' lyrical prose terse and esoteric poetry.

<sup>6</sup> It is worthy of note here that in addition to footnoting, Bede also contributed pioneering work to the calculation of the tides and phases of the moon.<sup>ii</sup>

stories and concepts connected to the day's subject. In this episode, guests include Richard Gameson, Reader in Medieval History at the University of Kent at Canterbury, Sarah Foot, Professor of Early Medieval History at the University of Sheffield and Michelle Brown, manuscript specialist from the British Library. In the episode Bragg and guests discuss the reasons and causes of Bede's knowledge and gifts and his adoption within the monastery of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow.

### **The judge, hearing**

Hello. In 731 AD, in the most far-flung corner of the known universe, a book was written that represented a height of scholarship and erudition that was not to be equaled for centuries to come. It was called the Ecclesiastical History of the Angle People and its author was Bede. A long way from Rome, in a monastery at Jarrow in the North East of England, his works cast a light across the whole of Western Civilisation and Bede became a bestseller, an internationally renowned scholar and eventually a saint. His Ecclesiastical History has been in copy or in print ever since it was written in the eighth century and his edition of the Bible remains the Catholic Church's most authoritative Latin version to this day. How did Bede achieve such ascendancy from such an obscure part of Christendom? And what was so remarkable about his work?<sup>iii</sup>

### **Whilst he was**

Sunderland University has been known as such since 1992. Prior to this date, the educational institution operated as a Polytechnic College and before this date it was known as Sunderland Technical College. As was true of all new universities forming at this time, when Sunderland University changed from a 'poly', it commissioned a coat of arms to be made to commemorate the event. The arms features a lion, a Griffin and a ship and bears the university's Latin motto: *Scientiam dulce hauriens*, or *Sweetly Absorbing Knowledge*, the quote taken from Bede's closing prayer of *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*

### **At the same**

In the episode of *In Our Time* focussing on The Venerable Bede, presenter Melvyn Bragg enters into a discussion with Sarah Footy, Professor of Early Medieval History at the University of Sheffield to ascertain whether Bede's great achievements were the result of an innate spark of wisdom in the young boy chosen for a life in the church, or whether it was his life in the church, and exposure to the available literature that enabled him to ascend to such greatness and share such knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> During Bede's life Christianity was only just growing out of its eschatological phase when the world was expected to end any day. Bede was to rewrite world history and its ages to prove that the world still had a long time to live. His history placed himself in time, past and future, and in doing so he built the Western calendar, as we know it – today, he is also known as *The Father of English History*.

**At the time**

Sweetness is one of the five basic tastes and is universally experienced as pleasure. Today, the idea of sweetness has a connotation of sentimentality or insincerity, but in the age Bede was working the experience of sweetness was rarely found in nature and so its reference was understood as a metaphor for rare perfection. It indicated something to be aimed for as a highest ideal. The Greek word *crestotes* can be simultaneously translated as sweetness or goodness. To absorb knowledge sweetly might be understood to absorb it well, to absorb it with joy or with ease.

**When the storm**

The book of Genesis in the Bible tells the story of the Garden of Eden. In this tale, a tree contains all the knowledge of good and evil of the world, which can be absorbed by eating its fruit.

**At the time**

The monastery of which St Bede was a member kept bees and produced honey from which he fermented alcohol and distilled it to sweet honey-based liquor called mead.

## The Archive of MOONRABBIT

In 2012 I made a video called MOONRABBIT after completing a month-long residency in Beijing. You can watch the video in full in [this link](#). It lasts around 3 minutes.

MOONRABBIT is a short text-on-screen work, which uses the moon as a universal cypher to align stories of the first NASA Moon landing, a Chinese cultural myth about a girl named Chang'e who lives on the moon, conspiracy theories about the landing and subjective associations with the moon. In the work, stories are assembled to a backing track of the Shangri-Las song *Past, Present and Future*, a spoken word song which itself uses Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* as its backing track. The text-on-screen guides you using over-titles and inter-titles as the footage brings together fragments taken in the physical space of a studio.

Before speaking more about the work, I'd like to present a list:

**Action,**  
**aesthetics of orthodoxy,**  
**alexander technique,**  
**applications,**  
**assignifying,**  
**axonometric projection,**  
**BAMBOO CHEVRON (note the caps),**  
**breakfast,**  
**cake,**  
**depressive realism,**  
**DESIRE (also caps),**  
**detox,**  
**dinner**

This list is taken from the first thirteen tags of my personal Evernote account, an online note taking application, which I accessed in preparation for writing this paper, something I do when beginning most writing projects since it now acts as an extension of my brain. In my life and practice Evernote functions equally as digital storage system and idea dumping ground. I use it for work, life and all forms of research, official and non-official. An idiosyncratic collection of personally determined tags brought into an unintended narrative through the convention of alphabetization, the list reveals more about my interests and me than I could, or would, if asked to define myself. This list, created passively in the incremental process of adding to a self-related and self-managed archive gives a useful context for thinking about MOONRABBIT.

In my practice as a whole, I'm interested in the different ways meaning can be drawn from information. I'm interested in how meaning making takes place differently when hunting for it and taking aim, compared to when it is allowed to surface through the acts of gathering, sifting and sorting. What feels most significant usually, are instances in which meanings seem spontaneously to manifest from unintended collisions within passively accumulated collections such as my Evernote tags list.

In a 2012 essay written for Artforum called *The Digital Divide*, art theorist Claire Bishop speaks about the ways subjective and arbitrary archives like my Evernote account reveal the way everyone with a personal computer (and myriad other devices) has today become a de facto archivist. This subjective archiving activity that dominates contemporary life is undoubtedly a context for MOONRABBIT. MOONRABBIT assembles information in a way that feels familiar from YouTube likes selections, web browser bookmarks, Evernote clippings, Pinterest boards and other similarly incidental online collections where meanings are encountered out of context, with no centre or origin save ever-shifting self-generated interests. In particular, the work most resembles YouTube instructional videos and conspiracy theory rants through its insistent text-on-screen delivered in capitalised bold Helvetica, and through its use of point of view or POV video shots.

The word amateur always hovers close by when discussing user-generated Internet-based content but it doesn't quite fit in describing the YouTube conspiracy rant artist. YouTube is a context in which consumption and production, amateur and professional meet in complex and confusing ways. Large companies often attempt to mimic the peer-to-peer sharing mode of the individual YouTube star. Official content is immediately absorbed and re-broadcast by users, as was aptly demonstrated when footage broadcast by Chinese state television of the 2014 launch of its moon rover, *Chang'e-3* was quickly uploaded to YouTube, and as quickly downloaded, annotated and re-posted by conspiracists and comedians alike.

In the Artforum essay, Claire Bishop gives Christian Marclay's *The Clock*<sup>1</sup> from 2010 as an example of the baseline way in which production and consumption overlap in contemporary cultural experience. In this case the lines are blurred in the cut and paste of hundreds of clips from popular film and television. New meanings are produced in the space of their consumption. The audience recline in a familiar position on soft furnishing in a dark room. The

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Marclay's 2010 *The Clock* is a looped 24-hour moving image montage installation and a functional timepiece due to its meticulous synchronicity with the standard metric of clock time. It is worthy of note that the work has no index, nor referencing system to acknowledge its sources assembled from cinema and television.



work splices footage of clocks, watches and references to time, in time with the viewers, since the work is synchronised over a 24 hour streaming loop.

While the term *amateur* might not be right for the prosumer context of YouTube the historical context the amateur collector gives is perhaps more illuminating. The amateur collector is one driven by passion, intrigue and self-interest rather than for institutionally valued and validated causes. MOONRABBIT enacts a similarly self-motivated navigation of information, being driven as it is by momentary interests and spontaneous decisions. Bishop proposes this kind of drift-like navigation to be the logic of our dominant social field, the Internet, likening it to a Situationist *dérive* through a city. Just as the Situationist drift is, ‘a rapid transit through varied ambiances’<sup>2</sup>, so our daily digital *dérives* allow for chanced upon coincidences, incidental anecdotes, contrasting sensations, unfolding vibes, and spontaneous meanings to arise. The windows currently open on my desktop contain this paper, a Persian restaurant menu, an email telling me I haven’t been successful in a job interview, a friend’s exhibition press release, a YouTube yoga video and a product page for a pair of black dungarees.

MOONRABBIT assembles its text-based information across footage taken from a studio-set containing a collection of objects including polystyrene balls, a souvenir NASA moon landing poster, a children’s bedspread with planets on it and an ambiguous silver rectangular object. The collected objects are amassed and reconfigured in the physical space of the set and are subject to another kind of ordering across the timeline of the video. The objects are handled, whether visibly as in the point of view (POV) shots of the poster’s handling, or implicitly as they are repositioned between shots. They are handled too in the felt hand of the editing process. The cuts I use are harsh. They jump and amplify the implied distance between shots to make plain their placement.

Making creative work involves the prospect of multiplicity, and multiplicities in turn imply the responsibility of decision-making. When editing video with applications such as Final Cut Pro and Adobe Premiere there are always infinite decisions of placement one can make. When editing my own work I constantly make ‘save as copy’ (SAC) versions which collectively catalogue an untraceable logic of incremental shifts, hunches and decisions through different edits. For me, the logic is untraceable because often it feels as though decisions are made outside of my agency as an artist. Certain placements seem to choose me. When setting up, shooting and editing video I try to keep processes as intuitive as possible, and find that when I

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<sup>2</sup> This quote is from Guy Debord in *Definitions*, published within *Internationale Situationniste* #1, Paris, June 1958. Ken Knabb translated the text and gathers it in the *Situationist International Anthology* published by Berkley: Bureau of Public Secrets (p52). I, however, found the quote on Wikipedia.com where it is footnoted to the original source.

don't, this is when I make bad decisions. The 'sets' I film build gradually by incrementally gathering found objects and materials, making, arranging, looking, responding and rearranging. When I shoot video I do most of the editing in shot in the moment of shooting. I set up limited conditions such as the fixed parameters of a set that often exists within a working studio. I work alone, incrementally shifting objects around, moving the camera, working the zoom, tracing objects or lines of architecture intuitively and responding to the experience of looking, observing, framing and reconfiguring the sampled components with the frame.

In the Artforum essay Bishop makes a statement qualifying the impetus behind the online everyday archivist activity she sees taking place saying, 'Questions of originality and authorship are no longer the point, instead the emphasis is on a meaningful recontextualisation of existing artefacts'. This statement reads as true to my practice as an artist and writer as it does to the experience of meaning made through the incidental online connections like my Evernote tags list. These collections, amassed through momentary perceptions of their significance look alien when we read back the incidental narratives they spell out. Choices made spontaneously when making art undermine an impression of creation as an expression of authorship since they seem to occur through chance. The Situationist changes path because of a non-rational desire for a new ambience. Intuitively made editing decisions feel unauthored and question what a decision is and what decides me.

**cake,**  
**depressive realism,**  
**DESIRE,**  
**detox,**

The inter-titles in MOONRABBIT use the rational, factual address of **bold Helvetica**, a font encapsulating clarity, and are placed alongside the breathy sensuous vocals and soaring strings of The Shangri-Las. Spoken and written words slip over one another across the music and images. A rhythm emerges from overlaps in such a way that a word can invoke an object, a memory a sensation, or a sound an idea; spontaneous sensations of meaning occur.

MOONRABBIT has a visible precedent in a broad context of works including video essays, videos using text and videos employing montage. It shares an affinity in its use of authoritative voice with the work of Adam Curtis and Elizabeth Price and shares an impetus in making from a wider precedent of collage and montage, spanning from Dada artists to John Baldessari and Christian Marclay.<sup>3</sup> To give another context, at Central Saint Martins in London, where I did

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<sup>3</sup> One might also think of Mallarmé's throw of the dice, Rousseau's compositional procedures, Oulipo's generated texts, Picasso's collages, Duchamps, objets trouvés, Rauschenberg's combines, Sade's endlessly rotating tableaux, Olsen's distaste for the romantic ego, Burroughs's cut ups, Breton's mediumistic ventriloquy, LeWitt's plans and modules, Kosuth's art as idea as idea, Foucault's death of the author.

my undergraduate Fine Art degree there was a culture of making things from the fragments that could be found in skips. A tutor once earnestly attempted to recruit students for a bronze-casting workshop. The feeling of distaste was palpable in the sculpture studio at the idea of casting something entirely new and so permanent.

In the way montage is able to, MOONRABBIT critiques the idea of a singular coherent narrative through the simple proposition of the multiple possibilities of the cut and the paste. In her 2011 work *Video Art Manual*, artist Keren Cytter playfully calls out a strategy video artists<sup>4</sup> and conspiracy theorists alike share, of placing fact and fiction alongside one another to make the audience question the legitimacy of facts and official sources of knowledge. The tactic is obvious, but is nonetheless effective. Reanimating fixed bodies of knowledge by navigating different sensations of knowing engenders an idea of knowledge without a centre.

On a recent trip to Los Angeles I had the chance to see Marclay's *Clock* for a second and third time since I sat for two viewings on the day I visited LACMA. When watching the work many sensations surface but one that continually returns is that of glimpsing multiple possibilities at every turn of the linear, but non-progressing narrative. Despite pivoting on the protagonist of post-industrial, globally synchronized clock-time, the work demonstrates the absurdity of the notion that time marches out in a procession of progress. Instead it shows myriad emergent meanings that continually unfold from the cut. MOONRABBIT employs a similar tactic; the cuts are harsh, they draw attention to the work's construction and point to multiple possible pastes. The hand of the edit is present, but doesn't hold meaning in its grasp.

We now refer to online navigation of information as trawling, not surfing, indicative of the tactile nature of this engagement. In the swipe, double-tap and drag we handle information as hands and minds becomes intertwined. Information recall exists in a complex composite form with both the technological extension of Google, and the body-memory of holding a specific weight in hand. Just as digital and urban drifts destabilise preconceived structures of knowledge, distinctions separating self, body and the world are shown to be flimsy when we feel our way through information.

The key point of assembly for MOONRABBIT is a slippage of meaning found in a quote taken from the transcript of a conversation between Buzz Aldrin and the ground control staff of the Apollo 11 moon mission. Aldrin gives the quote in response to a message informing him of a newspaper headline, which describes the Chinese myth of Chang-e and the moon rabbit that

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<sup>4</sup> Including the writer who assembles this text.

asks the crew to watch out for the girl. Aldrin's response to the message is to say: 'Ok, we'll keep a close eye out for the bunny girl.'<sup>5</sup>

In this quote there's a glimpsed collision of ideologies, histories, gender roles, attitudes and personal associations which reveals as much of how Aldrin is enmeshed in the world as it does to shift stable narratives of the moon landing. The culturally male gendering of the quest of getting to the moon is momentarily captured in the bro-ness of Aldrin's response - a man of the moment at a pivotal moment of progress likens Chang-e to a bunny-costume clad waitress in Hugh Hefner's Playboy Club. At the surface, the word play reveals the histories and cultural norms Aldrin is enmeshed in, perhaps quite innocently. While at a deeper level it reveals a complex interdependence of thought and language. Anxiety about our cyborgian codependence with technology often forgets the technology of language we are already deeply entangled with. Language is used as a system for controlling knowledge; word play like this undermines its authority by revealing instabilities.

**DESIRE (also caps),  
detox  
dinner**

The philosopher of language Ludwig Wittgenstein speaks in his thesis *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* about the absurdity of being able to consider the present moment in isolation since it is always experienced in the flow of everyday life. Watching Marclay's *The Clock*, I attempt to write words in a notebook in the dark to cement the unfolding experience in language. Use of phones in the auditorium is prohibited; else I might have used Evernote. I can't see what I'm writing and so scrawl something close to asemic script. Meanwhile an attendant emphatically commands hesitant viewers to sit down, tracing lines to vacant couch spots with her torch to gesture their path.

Word/text/voice mixtures, double-meanings, and the myriad possible paths of open-ended associations in language and speech reflect our inability to separate image, sound, body, self and world.<sup>6</sup> There are many blurred lines in the stories aligned in MOONRABBIT. The fist-

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<sup>5</sup> Buzz Aldrin 1969, audio transcribed at *Spacelog Apollo 11*  
<<http://apollo11.spacelog.org/page/03:22:58:02/>> accessed 21.09.15

<sup>6</sup> In Wittgenstein's later written *Philosophical Investigations* he introduces his concept of a 'language game'. It is interesting to note in the context of this discussion that the entire *Investigations* unfold as a list of numbered aphorisms; short passages that are cross-referenced throughout the text in order to engage in commentary. The formal list structure often sits in comic contrast to Wittgenstein's eulogistic refrains on the nature of language, a device that was repeated in friendly parody by Wittgenstein's friend and one time collaborator architect Paul Engelmann. In a letter to Wittgenstein, Engelmann wrote:

1. **Dear Mr Wittgenstein, I am very pleased to hear,**
2. **through your family, that you are well. I**
3. **hope that you do not take it badly that I have**
4. **not written to you for so long, but I had so**

bump gesture of Aldrin's comment collides in the work with a different kind of occupation of the moon. The Chinese myth and many others already got there first through acts of storytelling. The Chang'e myth tells the story of a female who takes power over her husband by taking a pill of immortality meant for her to share with him, and is dramatized by The Shangri-Las' cautionary tale of teen romance told over Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. The public address voice and heroicness of the moon-landing story sometimes comically undermined by song. Astronauts appear as painted figures in a pullout souvenir poster of the exhibition, and are edited to the rhythm of the music. As it reaches its crescendo they are momentarily reduced to players in the psychodrama of a Phil Spector song.

As the attendant commands hesitant viewers to sit down I write 'A multiplicity is always a critique of wholeness and a singular coherence. Feeling your way through information breaks preconceived structures.' A girl on her own stands awkwardly at one end of my couch. The attendant insists on her path drawing three quick torch lines. On the screen a woman declares she is late. It is ten past three. I need a wee. Cause and effect is a fallacy.

**asignifying,  
axonometric projection,  
BAMBOO CHEVRON  
breakfast,**

- 
5. must to write that I preferred to leave it to
  6. a reunion that I hope will be soon. But I must
  7. thank you will all my heart for your
  8. manuscript, a copy of which I received some time
  9. ago from your sister. I think I now, on the
  10. whole, understand it, at least with me you have
  11. entirely fulfilled your purpose of providing
  12. somebody some enjoyment through the book; I am
  13. certain of the truth of your thoughts and
  14. discern their meaning. Best wishes,
  15. yours sincerely, Paul Engelmann

**DUST**

## The Dark Day

On a spring morning in Niskayuna, New York, a woman with clear blue eyes is waking early to the near darkness that always greets this hour. Outside the morning bell is tolling and the air is damp with heavy low cloud. A white wooden perimeter fence draws straight geometric lines around the limits of this settlement, but today, these are only faintly discernible through a lingering reddish haze. The murk brings with it the malted smells of soot and leaves and they hang in the morning's heavy breath.

She rises in a room of similarly dressed women stirring quietly from dormitory beds. Synchronising with the others she settles to her knees and conveys a silent prayer. Around her the women appear to repeat the actions she does, but knowing who begins a gesture is arbitrary when a linked chain of hands appears uniformly to rise to chests. Simultaneously the women now strip the beds, fold the sheets neatly and hang the chairs onto the wooden strips of pegs that line the room's perimeter with the certainty of the settlement's straight white fence. Now the other women will continue by cleaning this and other dormitory rooms or by preparing food in the kitchens. On this morning the woman with blue eyes takes a different course.

Today she prepares to deliver her testimony for the first time, opening the gospel to a crowd gathered from this place and outside. The term *gospel* comes from the old English *godspel*, meaning good spell, or good story, or good message. Over time and through use the term has become aligned with the word God, rather than good, meaning many now understand it to mean God's story, God's message, and not simply the good message. *Godspel* is a translation of the Latin *bona adnuntiatio* which is a translation of the Greek *euangelion*, or, *reward for bringing good news*. From the thirteenth century the term *gospel* has also been understood as *any doctrine maintained as of exclusive importance*, and in modern-day use it indicates an indisputable fact; an idea or principle accepted as unquestionably true. People announce *his word is gospel*, or the tautology, *she's speaking the gospel truth*.

From the fourteenth century the term *testimony* has meant proof or demonstration of some fact, evidence, or a piece of evidence. From the fifteenth century it has meant *a sworn statement of witness*. The word itself comes from the Old North French *testimonie* which comes from the Latin, *testimonium* which combines the meanings of *testis*, a witness, *one who attests*, and *monium*, meaning an *action, a state or condition*. A testimony is the state or condition in which one gives witness. The term *testament* comes from similar roots and refers to a witness, or, in the Proto-Indo-European languages commonly abbreviates as PIE, *tri-st-I* means *third person standing by*, from the root *tris*, three, giving the notion of *a third person, a disinterested witness*.

Today the woman prepares herself to enter into the condition of being a third person standing by herself, a disinterested witness to the good message she is to convey.

Niskayuna lies within an area known as Albany County, which is very close to the border of New England. New England is a group of six states comprising Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. In later times the settlement will be named Watervliet but today, the haze makes any such attempts at distinction futile, for the fenced bounds of the Niskayuna settlement are now entirely shrouded in mist. It hangs too over the meetinghouse, the dormitory rooms and the cowsheds and creamery. It hangs over bell tower, herb gardens, and a small graveyard. Lingering mist veils the bridge connecting the banks of the river, but the heavy damp air reaches much further than this space contained by wooden limits.

Across Albany Country and all over New England songbirds are greeting this thick dawn in confusion. At its murky break farm labourers hesitate to prepare tools for work while children gather books for the schoolhouses. These people remember the long bitter winter just past and recall recent days when the spring's exhalations have brought unseasonable warmth. For days the sun has greeted them in an unusual sky. Emerging from night, dawn has brought vapourous atmospheres in a blushed pinkish hue. Dusk has been shrouded in heavy dark clouds that are rusted at the edges and the moon's glow has given a pale pink disk. In recent days and today also the smell of soot is perpetually present.

As morning draws on, the veil over Niskeyuna is cool despite the warm breeze, and now a light shower is hesitating to break. The woman with blue eyes stands in the room in which she prepares to testify and the bilious sky feels too soon. Later, in the New England daylight she will evoke comparisons to the description from Revelations: *the woman clothed in sun*. In this murk such descriptions seem far away. Since settling here, her group has not yet opened the gospel to the world and now it is time for The Word to be shared.

The room is small, painted white, with a window at one end and three black strips of wall pegs articulating its dimensions. The window is framed in the same stark black and is divided into three panels made up from square panes. She looks out of these now to see the scene beneath the haze. She will open the gospel to a nation who will hear it for the first time.

She must prepare herself to bear witness to these truths, and does this as she always does: through prayer, and rhythmic repetition of words she may deliver. Since she cannot read, notes are of no use to her. Instead she relies on the memory of the words created by saying them over and over while walking slowly to pace. She relies on the memory of the words created by



saying them over and over making pace by walking slowly. She walks slowly drawing a square on the floor of the space repeating the words of the gospel she will open. Returning to the spot she started in she looks out to the grass outside. The view is cross-sectioned by the planes of the frame. From memory she knows the bridge crosses the upper middle panel but today this cannot be seen.

From the light of the candle-lit room the scene before her, usually cut into squares with the clarity of single-file flagstones and their paths that walk believers around the site dissolves in a soft pinkish haze.. One at a time they walk these sure lines, learning by rote means repeating over and over and over until words are remembered even if not understood. Learning by rote means words are stored for use by a user who becomes a vessel or a third person witness to the words being spoken.

Pacing the words while repeating the room the parts of the testimony attach to the pattern of her steps. Position and action annotate pitch, tone, meter, and inflection. A step forward opens in a level measured voice. A rock back; a pause; a hand gesture; an emphasis. Eventually each word is inscribed in her body and its movements give details as if transcribed on paper. Her actions store meanings in a way familiar from the dances she has learned here for worship. Transcribed in marks in the worship hall floor with big nails and smaller nails and copper nail heads she moves and repeats the words she will speak.

As mid-morning progresses the gloom spreads across the now bilious sky and the barely visible sun glows a blood red disk. In the thick pitch of darkness a woody musk descends across the collected lands of pitch, soot, and pines and hangs in the murky low light. The smell is of malt house and coal kiln. As midday approaches the scene grows increasingly dark and by lunch, the sun is entirely occluded by thick pitchy clouds. Those awaking at noon thought it to be midnight.

The modern day use of the term *occult* is commonly understood to suggest witchcraft, black magic, the dark arts. Its more direct meaning, however, is simply *to cover*. Confusion ferments through the vaporous haze as it lingers and occludes, cocks crow, and crickets sing. Farmers put down their tools and school children set aside their books, the sky is their only object of study. In kitchens and barnyards, schoolhouses and churches, workshops, on boats, in forests and fields and across pastures, eyes turn to the sky as day retreats to night. Later, the group would be remembered by the words *the people who turned the world upside down*, but now, they are known for their actions of worship, for whirling, singing, shouting, dancing, falling.

As the people of New England look to the sky they see the ruddy blush of New England cider. Allowed to ferment for a few weeks, pressed apple juice will yield a mildly alcoholic beverage. Traditionally the juice is run into a wooden pipe, a barrel that can contain one hundred and twenty gallons, or smaller wooden barrels when the bung is removed. No yeast is added to traditional cider, which relies on wild yeasts. Fermentation starts in 1-2 days and continues for several weeks during which time the barrel is topped up with more cider. When fermentation is over the bung is replaced and the cider matures for 5-6 months. Ripe apples have around five hundred yeast-like organisms per gram of ripe fruit. In Northern Europe grapes have traditionally symbolised the corruptions of the Catholic Church, while the apple has been seen as the wholesome bearings of Protestantism. Cider is drunk freely across this frontier land, the drink of the Puritans, but not by the woman with blue eyes.

In its original use, the term sweetness meant a kind of perfection or fulfillment. In its modern day use the term has lost its nobility. From the nineteenth century onwards the term sweetness conveyed insincerity, artificiality, sentimentality, and its use is increasingly delivered with ironic inflection. Traditionally cider is served completely flat and may be cloudy.

In Massachusetts a man spreading manure in a field must stop because the dung is no longer discernible from the ground. In a room nearby a man cannot see the words on a page in front of his face. The only clarity is in the crisp profile of his compatriot, visible by the candlelight he now must use. The air is thick and pitched and laced with the darkness of soot and the sun is a faint burned disk.

Later the woman will be known by the words *the woman clothed in the sun*, but today she is veiled in a red heavy haze. In the room in Niskeyuna she paces the room and repeats her words. The candle she planned only to aid her path to the room has burned continuously through the morning pitch of darkness. Without it she sees nothing and she picks it up now as she leaves the room. In unison with others who study the sky she walks slowly to the lawn and treads a path through damp blades. The clouds are tinged with copper and shine as bright as shiny nail heads. Cows return to stalls and birds sing in confusion. The organisation of the settlement is hard to distinguish from the chaos beyond, save the sure perimeter of the white wooden fence which today glows blood red.

As the scene gets darker she is returned momentarily to the cell she was kept in before setting sail to this land. Cold, wet and shivering, here she received the good message to flee and take voyage. She boarded a ship with the believers and received the familiar forms of persecution. Pushed, stuck, knocked and beaten they were threatened with being thrown off board. Through prayer, rhythmic singing, dancing and shaking the group finally fought free and survived the

passage. Meanwhile, today, in the streets of Salem seaman scurry through the now closing gloom. Hallooing and frolicking they cry out to women inviting them to join them *and be damned*. All around the lands, many head for taverns as fear ferments through the streets like the cider whose hue lingers still in the ruddy haze. Others raise their hands to prayer, looking to the misty membrane stretched above.

Through candlelight the woman with blue eyes can see the path faintly before her, but instead feels for its sure line with her feet and takes the steps it invites her to take. Swathed now in the blackest velvet, the scene before her is visible only through the ruddy light that singes its edges picking feint lines. The wooden fence perimeter marches steadily around. The bridge can be seen in a pinkish glow. Beyond this a coppery path stretches further, leading out to the world where distinctions are not so clear as here. Following the path with her blue eyes she sees forms of the copper nail heads in the floor. They flash in her mind and she rocks forward then back, in accordance with the steps of the dance. The copper heads before her appear moving and turning, some seem to be shaking, russet hued lines stretch out in all directions. Finally, she is able to discern the forms. As clear as she feels the path beneath her feet, she understands the roads to the town are as thick with people as the air is with fog.

As the crowds approach she hears words from the Bible bubble up from inside her into her mouth: *Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.* From Isaiah they speak of the day *cruel both with wrath and fierce anger* that will destroy the sinners of Babylon, when the *sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine*. From Ezekiel they remember the threat to *cover the sun with a cloud*. From Zephaniah they recall the punishment of *a day of clouds and thick darkness*. Urgency is recalled from the New Testament at the death of Christ and the crowd and the woman interchangeably say, *and it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened*. Darkened suns, dark days, blackened skies, fighting birds, all signs and signals are all spoken of.

These words too are spoken from the copper hued heads walking up the paths as they have resounded in their minds since the dark dawn of this day. Candles glow, held in hand, hands to hearts and the air holds trace smells of wood and fire. As they reach closer and closer it becomes more and more difficult to discern one voice from another. In the same way a memory described in detail becomes yours, it is possible when hearing words in low light to feel they come from your mouth. The sound grows louder producing bundles of rhythms, a garland of

rhythms; one could say a bouquet, however this would suggest aesthetic arrangement and here the voices do not aspire to the vanity of harmony.

The crowd is a collective third person witness to the testimony. The woman is a collective third person witness to her own testimony. Casting cloudless eyes across the scene she delivers the good message to the crowd. She speaks indisputable truths while taking in the scene from the distance of a witness. She attests to the news of the sure lines ahead, the straight and narrow paths to be followed. Hearing and speaking this news the crowd shake, rattle and roll, they stamp and they turn and shout.

Just as it is impossible now to know day from night, a disinterested witness would not know man from woman, speaker from listener, outsider from insider in this scene. Just as dung cannot be discerned from ground, one voice merges with the next and so all are witness to the delivery of these words. They shake in a garland of rhythms, different but in tune.

Eventually, seamlessly, day passes into night. Many stay, praying, taking shelter in the cowsheds, the creamery, or are unable to rest in anticipation for the end, which surely will come. Those who do rest sleep fitfully, along with thousands across the land. For those who had not witnessed the testimony, day may never come again. The next morning however, a pinkish light warms the sky and light breaks.

In the next few days as the dawns continue to come. Seeking light on the cause of the Dark Day many studied the weather. Meanwhile at Niskayuna the group set out to take the good message beyond their perimeter fence, gathering converts and seeking sympathetic listeners. No yeast is added to traditional cider since it relies on wild yeasts. Fermentation starts in 1-2 days and continues for several week.



## Text-to-Speech

*I am reading a text to you.*

*Your ears, my text, your language, my speech, your time, my reading.*

*I sometimes have a machine running parallel to my live readings, like a counter balance to the vulnerability of my naked voice: A music machine, a video machine, a fog machine.*

*So far I have not used a reading machine.*

*So far I have not outsourced the labour of reading to a machine. I have not yet turned to an Apple Voice Over or to other Text-to-Speech-software to keep my body out of the text.*

[...]

*Contemporary video artists ... are looking for someone who is able to embody the future of capitalism, beyond the contingency of a subject that happened to be born outside of the Empire or in another less universal Empire, or in some other spot in between the worlds that are officially supposed to be familiar.*

[...]

*Imperial languages consist of words, letters, grammar and code. They are programs that are able to run parallel to the real, separated from human bodies. Since the first monotheists came up with the idea that the name of God cannot be spoken, speech continues to fail the purity of language...*

[...]

*In my part of the Internet, it is the English language that has turned into a contemporary holy language, a language that offers to describe things in a neutral way, the common way, the main way.*

*The English language promises universality. But the problem is that it loses this universality when read out loud by a body, randomly specified by a foreign accent or a local dialect or a class marker, watered down by the contingency of individual breath and unusual intonation.*

[...]

*Computer voices, no matter how specific their profile, will always have more in common with illusions than with human beings. Like the voice of God, they are perfectly incompatible with anybody. They run parallel to all bodies in this world. Do these voices have agency?...<sup>1</sup>*

[...]

I follow a link to the page of an event I'm invited to on Facebook. Brightly coloured, it shows more or less visible images: a beach scene, a deck chair, another beach scene, a Labrador puppy, the words *speak cryptic* hovering in cursive script above its nose. It appears as a GIF would caught half way through its cycle; orange blends to purple.

I have missed the event at *OSLO10* in Switzerland and the live broadcast on Berlin Community Radio, so Anna Zett's *Text-to-Speech* plays from a SoundCloud replay.

[...]

I listen through earphones in my small office and the experience is intimate. I am suddenly very conscious of the space around my ears and the waxy build up within. The voice I'm listening to is duplicated. I try to locate each voice separately in space; I imagine them here. It's a feeling that's familiar from a work I now remember.

I'm sitting alone at a spot lit wooden dresser table in a dark room within a gallery. Heavy red curtains hang behind the oval mirror. I'm wearing headphones suspended by thin wires above the seat and echoing footsteps sound through my ears so convincingly I turn and expect to see the gallerist has followed me in.

Behind me a character moves, but there's no sign of them in front of me in the oval mirror. From the headphones a conversation plays and I seemed to speak; the voice is inside my own head. A tingle grows slowly in waves up my spine. I am suddenly self-conscious at the pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Text-to-Speech*, 2014, Anna Zett, audio, excerpt available at: <<http://annazett.net/tts.html>>. full text available at <[http://soycapitan.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Anna-Zett\\_Text-to-speech.pdf](http://soycapitan.de/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Anna-Zett_Text-to-speech.pdf)>, accessed 01.08.16

<sup>2</sup> Hans Rosenström, 2014, *Mikado*, Narrative sound installation for a single viewer, 2009/14. Seen at Maria Stenfors, London. The work uses site-specific sound recording to restage a conversation from the 1972 Ingmar Bergman film, *Cries and Whispers* in a way that includes the work's single listener.

[...]

Listening to Anna Zett's *Text-to-Speech* in replay feels close to this. I feel the voices in my ears move physically around as they come close to speaking from within me.

Two synchronised voices continue at a careful pace, measured in the way a computer-generated voice aims to be. The voice in my right ear is distorted by shifting digital effects and in my left, the other is permeated with familiar indications of a human source: inhalations, and the involuntary clicks and wet sounds a speaking mouth makes.

In unison the voices lower to a whisper and now one speaks at a time, intimately in one ear, and then in the other. I am suddenly very conscious of the spaces around my ears and the waxy build-ups that gather within.<sup>iv</sup>

[...]

I feel out of time and yet the voices in my ear speak from no time and anytime (from The Future?) I feel dislocated. In contrast to its digital counterpart, the human voice I hear teases a sense of material weight. From depth, timbre, pitch I imagine a height, a size of chest. With no logical explanation I see a face, hair colour, a style of dress; she wears a white shirt. Turning the words through excess lubrications I can't help but build a body around them.

Conscious of the voice's material presence I sit up in my red back-support chair. Inside ears, wax traps dust and other particles from the air in an effort to keep them out. The wax is supposed to pass out on its own, but sometimes it builds up, blocking them with dusty congealment. I swallow hard to itch from inside.<sup>v</sup>

[...]

Through irregular vibrations the voice brings to mind markers of locatable identity: class, gender, age and geography become fixed in my mind. Even in its digitally modulated form I attempt definition and name this voice female and German.

A computer generated American English voice comes close to erasing such material specificities since ubiquitous sounds escape the weight of particularities. Their default predictability means they inevitably feel neutral.<sup>vi</sup>

[...]



Watching a video, dry-mouthed in a hot gallery in Los Angeles, I am jet-lagged after too much coffee. Words appear on screen and give meanings that differ from those spoken by the voices in the footage. The space is bright and empty and my eyes adjust slowly when I take off my sunglasses. I see spots.

In front of me real TV news stories describe a conspiracy about a solar attack that threatens to destroy communication on earth. Electrical flow will be broken under the pressure of the sun's excess energy, they tell me. Meanwhile, actors in the video build a fiction around the reports.

The text smuggles information past my waxy defences and I am alert to the condition of their consumption. Dry-mouthed and over-sunned and filled with too much desert dust, my hearing turns inwards and I can't help but hear the sounds of my body more clearly.<sup>3</sup>

[...]

In my own videos I often avoid the problem of my specific wet mouth by using text on screen. I outsource the labour to the reader, or to language. The videos flash words to the pace of speaking or thinking that are silently sounded in the body that reads them.

When apparently invisible bodies speak words, their language holds power over me. When words seem to speak from inside my own head it's hard not to be convinced of what they say.

[...]

The hairs on my neck stand on end as words build up in my ears. Where else can text speak but from inside bodies? In the room, at the table, in front of the oval mirror, I wonder what would happen if I pull back the thick red curtain. Would I see a person sitting there, listening and watching, their body incongruous to the suggestions of their voice?

Here in my body, a red ergonomic chair holds my arms at their bespoke height and my weight sinks into its air-pumped seat. When immaterial words are spoken from a place I can't pin down I am awkwardly aware of my own mass.

*There's a hum of language at my ear; I swat it away, it rises up to resettle in thick clouds. It's outside me, I do not make it up, and yet it doesn't quite make me up.*<sup>4</sup> Thick velvet curtains

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<sup>3</sup> Keren Cytter, 2014, *Video Art Manual*

block sounds from outside. When words move my body and vibrate its secretions and it's hard not to be convinced by what they say.

[...]

I feel palpably in place while voices in my ear speak from no place and anyplace. I have missed the event in Switzerland and the broadcast from Berlin and a red ergonomic chair holds my arms at their bespoke height. Behind my computer are post-it notes scrawled with illegible text stuck to a wall-length notice board. When words hold authority it's as though they speak from elsewhere, when they vibrate through my body they are temporarily my own.

I shut down SoundCloud and refresh Facebook while pulling out earphones R then L from the sides of my face. My weight sinks into its air-pumped seat. At the edge of each tiny grey speaker are accumulations of flaky yellow wax. I blow, then pick at them with my nail.

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<sup>4</sup> Riley, Denise. 2000, *The Words of Selves, Identification, Solidarity, Irony*, Stanford University Press: Stanford. p60

## Touch the Rock

A finger pointing left directly at a black arrow in a **non-serif font** that points right. A gloss black painted metal railing in the centre of the same rectangular frame, a duplicate of that directly to your right.

Her small hand grabs a fistful of warm dust from the embers of the fire and holds it for a second in her grip.

Your viewing position is static in the staircase, usually a point of passage as the image traces the black line slowly. From outside you hear a hum of traffic and rhythmic clanging from an unseen building site. The black line is shiny and smooth and hovers still for a moment. With your right hand you hold the railing that is cool to the touch. The image cuts to the base of the staircase you are currently halfway up.

When you hold something, she thinks, it holds you back.

A finger meets the left hand line at the base of the stairs cutting the image in half. The frame pans upward now, and so does the finger. It appears to remain static, save for a slight quiver while the image moves around it. To the right, another projection shows a grey shape standing on a low table that echoes the boards on which the projected images sit: a three-sided object with a central body and two arms that gesture towards you. The full-sized version is covered in a fine grey gravelly render smoothed to the edges. The shape in the image appears to be formed from grey card. The regular banging of metal continues outside, a repetitive action towards the completion of an unseen task. Building work takes place in units.

Pressing her palm now into the wall she fills the shadow cast by her lover, the immaterial black of occluded light is filled in now by tangible dust that makes a coherent shape.

The finger traces the smooth curve of the metal railing in line through perspective with the underside of the staircase leading up. Here, it meets the frame of a door in the centre of the left projected image. It traces the doorframe right, then down and out of the image. In the right image the grey three-sided shape appears once again, this time echoed by three wooden panels that stand behind the card object. Smoothed gravel-rendered boards that hug the walls of the stairwell frame the double projection. In the left image the hand appears once more, its index finger now meeting the point at which white wall meets grey floor. In the manner of reading **Western scripts**, the camera

pans left to right with the hand following suit, remaining in the top left quadrant of the frame. It pivots now, as the edge of floor/wall meets a line formed by a pipe against the white wall. The pipe's shadow articulates a clear line, which the finger follows as the frame travels upwards. In the right image, the motion of panning left to right articulates the arc of the three wooden panels. The hand to the left navigates the curved edge of a bracket that holds the pipe in place. Rhythmic metallic clanging continues outside. Another curved edge is navigated, the finger now at the top. It disappears leaving an after image momentarily.<sup>1</sup>

Her palm yields at the cool embrace of the stone wall, a relief from the hot flames nearby whose light projects across the faces of the two lovers.

[...]

The story of the origins of painting is written into the extensive catalogue of *Natural History* that the Ancient Greek philosopher Pliny the Elder began around the year 77 AD. Through *Natural History*, Pliny attempted 'to cover all learning and art so far as they are connected with nature or draw their materials from nature'<sup>2</sup>. The amassed work would eventually span thirty-seven books and exist over ten volumes, setting a template in scale and scope for the form we now recognise as encyclopaedic.

Within these collected writings, Pliny twice speaks of the story of the origins of painting, first alluding to it lightly. The precise location of the origins of painting is uncertain, he tells us, yet: 'all agree that it began with tracing an outline around a man's shadow and consequently that pictures were originally done in this way'. Pliny's story of the origins of painting centres on the moment the hand of a young woman from Corinth traces with dust, the shadow of her lover who is soon to go to battle, details we learn in Pliny's second iteration of the tale. The second time it is mentioned, it is fleshed out, seemingly in passing:

Enough and more than enough has been said about painting. It may be suitable to append to these remarks something about the plastic art. It was through the service of that same earth that modelling [sic] portraits from clay was first invented by Butades, a potter from Sycion, at Corinth. He did this owing to his daughter, who was in love with a young man; and she, when he was going abroad, drew in outline on the wall the shadow of his face thrown by the lamp. Her

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<sup>1</sup> <<https://vimeo.com/18678999>>

<sup>2</sup> Pliny, 1952, (trans.) Rackman, H. *Natural History*, XXXV, 15. Loeb Classical Library, p43, quoted in Hagi Kenaan, 2006, (ed.) Versar, C. and Fishof, G. *Tracing Shadows: Reflections on the Origins of Painting* in Pictorial Languages and Their Meanings, Liber Amicorum in Honor of Nurith Kenaan-Kedar, Tel Aviv University Publishing: Tel Aviv.

father pressed clay on this and made a relief, which he hardened by exposure to fire with the rest of his pottery; and it is said that this likeness was preserved in the shrine of the Nymphs.<sup>3</sup>

Pliny's story describes an impulsive act of mark making. Portrayed in this way the Corinthian maid captures a moment in time in a spark of creativity. Taking place in a cave on the eve of a battle the soldier is surely to die in, the fleetingness of human life is dramatized by the event of its record in an act of mark making, and its preservation in the clay likeness kept in the shrine of the Nymphs. Overwhelming each of these senses of temporality is the contrasting permanence of the cave's stone walls.

Throughout his encyclopedia of the knowledge of nature, Pliny uses long loose sentences, which make plain the author's addition to the knowledge he is gathering. He writes in a style referred to as epigrammatic, a term which comes from the word *epigram*, meaning inscription, from an earlier word meaning *to write on*, or, *to inscribe*. Epigrammatic writing is often used to satirical effect, since it provides a means for the author to pass comment on the information they are delivering. Pliny uses a grammatical form called the ablative absolute, a form used in Ancient Greek as a way of inflecting a noun to modify the meaning of the rest of the sentence. The term ablative comes from the Latin *ablatus*, and *auferre*, to carry away. Although there is no direct equivalent of this grammatical form in English, it works in a similar manner to the absolute adverbial form used to shift the meaning of a verb. An example is: 'She had a pleasant evening in the cave, *all things considered*.' Used in the encyclopedic form of *Natural History*, the ablative grammatical form and the epigrammatic style show Pliny's inscription on the knowledge he gathers in his writings, re-voicing them while showing the lineage of the information given.

Pliny's story of shadows in a cave is frequently read in parallel with another. While it does not directly reference Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, Pliny's story inevitably writes on, or appends to, or inscribes, or retells Plato's myth. Plato describes his allegory in *Republic* and it remains a persistent model for the hierarchy of understanding within the Western philosophical tradition, and a metaphor for the enlightenment it articulates.

In Plato's myth, a group of humans are imprisoned in a cave since childhood. They are unable to turn their heads to see the world outside their prison because of *fettles* around their necks. Behind them a fire burns and all they can see is the undulating rock surface of the cave and the shadows cast on it. At the edge of the cave there is a low wall concealing the cave's entrance. Small statues pass by the parapet controlled by a puppeteer casting shadows.

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<sup>3</sup> Pliny, 1952 in Hagi Kenaan, 2006.

Over time, the prisoners recognize these shadows and give them names. Bound in this cave, the humans only ever view reflections from the material world. As the world of named shadows becomes their reality, they are unaware the real world is behind them all along. This stage of the story represents ignorance.

After some time, a prisoner is released. Turning his head he sees the flames and the statues he previously saw as shadows. He understands these forms and his previous ignorance, but does not yet grasp anything of a greater *reality*. This stage of the story represents belief.

Eventually, the prisoner is dragged outside in a violent emancipation. The sunlight he has never experienced stings his eyes and he is overwhelmed. Over time his eyes adjust and he is able to look around. He sees flowers and trees and other forms. He sees the sun above them all, and understands this as the source of all the forms he now sees in their full reality. This stage is used to convey the condition of understanding. In this story, the central light of the sun is the universal source of understanding.<sup>4</sup>

Read through an understanding of Plato's myth, Pliny's story the origins of art tells of an artist limited to reiterating what s/he sees as mere appearances from the material world like shadows from puppets the cave dwellers name *people*. The philosopher, by contrast is able to reach the higher realm of enlightenment through the power of thought, reaching the celestial plane of understanding, which the central light of the sun can bring. As if to confirm the artist's shadow-bound existence, the Corinthian maid is herself rendered only in negative against otherwise positive identifiers; her location, her lover, her father. She is never named, and in the story is portrayed as filling in a lack, possibly her own, from the void cast by her lover's shadow on the eve of his departure for battle.

In Plato's myth, the immaterial light of the sun shines with ontological superiority to the material realm the cave dwellers are bound to. Even in the second phase, the released prisoner reaches only the stage of belief, not full understanding when immersed in the material plane of trees, plants, objects. It is only when s/he sees the sun and realizes it to be the source of all energy and knowledge is the prisoner able to reach understanding. Read through an understanding of Plato's myth, Pliny's story casts the activities of the artist as inferior to those of philosophy. Immaterial light and thought are equated and float above the earth-bound actions of the painter mixing different hues of dust.

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<sup>4</sup> There is a further stage to this story that is frequently lost and shall be in the main body of this telling. The story then goes that the now enlightened ex-prisoner returns voluntarily to the cave, compelled by the imperative to share his vision of truth with those still bound within. Unable to comprehend the knowledge beheld by their former companion, the prisoners decide he must be mad. They do not believe what he tells them of the world outside and threaten to kill him if he attempts to set them free. This stage of the story represents fear of knowledge.

In *Tracing Shadows, Reflections on the Origin of Painting*<sup>5</sup>, Hagi Kenaan argues for an elevation of the status of the artist in Pliny's tale. An important foundation for this argument is a shift in the understanding of painting as an action, and not an object. In the section *Butades and the act of painting*, Kenaan elaborates that while the father in Pliny's story is preoccupied with making the painting into an object by casting its relief, the artist is concerned instead with the gesture. Over and above the object of the lover's silty substitute, the maid is concerned with the action of painting.

The story is classically read through the frame of *eros and thanos*; love and loss, and Kenaan responds to this to articulate the significance of the maid's gesture. While commonly read as a substitution; the maid making a positive reminder of her lover in his absence, Kenaan describes her action more accurately as the creation of an intersection between a world of meaning and one without. The performed gesture creates, and does not trace, a space between the meaning produced by the lovers' desire, and the despair the soldier's loss will bring:

Her act is not an attempt to replace absence with a new form of presence but, on the contrary, it reflects an attempt to create a new place for herself in between the opposite poles of absence and presence.<sup>6</sup>

When viewed as an action, painting can be seen to create a place between absence and presence troubling their polarisation. In *The shadow and the line* Kenaan looks again at the action of painting, following the way it reveals the blurred space between self and world, inside and outside. This slow revelation questions Pliny's assertion that *all agree that it began with tracing an outline around a man's shadow*, since the term *trace* suggests a passivity incongruous with the active gesture of painting:

She traces a line, touching simultaneously what she sees and what she wants to make visible. But what exactly does she see? The term "trace" may suggest that Butades simply passes over a given line which, in itself, is already there, registered on the wall. But is this case? Can we speak of a line that delimits the lover's shadow prior to the act of the first painter? Are contours, outlines, objectively present in the things we see?<sup>7</sup>

Kenaan acknowledges the importance of the essay *Eye and Mind* to his own. Written by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in 1964 as part of a collection of writing on painting *Eye and Mind* examines art, and painting specifically as a heightened example that reveals the way we engage

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<sup>5</sup> Hagi Kenaan, 2006, (ed.) Versar, C. and Fishof, G. *Tracing Shadows: Reflections on the Origins of Painting* in Pictorial Languages and Their Meanings, Liber Amicorum in Honor of Nurith Kenaan-Kedar, Tel Aviv University Publishing: Tel Aviv.

<sup>6</sup> Hagi Kenaan, 2006, p23

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p25

with the world through vision. He begins with a criticism of the scientific view; of a world made up of objective truths to be found and picked up at will, describing the way the sciences treat, ‘...everything as though it were an object-in-general – as though it meant nothing to us for our ingenious schemes.’

He is skeptical of the scientific tendency to conceive of humans as separate from the world, entering into it only with purpose saying, they ‘...represent themselves to be autonomous, and their thinking deliberately reduces itself to a set of data-collecting techniques which it has invented.’

*Eye and Mind* conveys the body as a perceiving thing always, already engaged with the world as a baseline mode of being. The lived world Merleau-Ponty describes is a site in which the body perceives and associates and is affected by others and the surrounding environment. The consciousness of the *body-subject*, a term he uses, extends into the world by this baseline means of engagement. Although the idea of *extension* is ultimately misleading, since the body-subject is through its default mode of being in the world, already always integrated in it. The essay describes the interconnectedness of body, subject and world. Body-subjects perceive the world through observing and moving with it, and experience the world revealing itself in them. They do not collect data, scooping up objects into an enclosed mind chamber, and instead the body-subject tacitly experiences the world:

The body’s animation is not the assemblage or juxtaposition of its parts. Nor is it a question of mind or spirit coming down from somewhere else into an automaton- which would still imply that the body itself is without an inside and without a ‘self’.<sup>8</sup>

Kenaar’s response is to say ‘The term “trace” may suggest that Butades simply passes over a given line which, in itself, is already there, registered on the wall.’

Understanding the body-subject’s mode of being, it is clear the line between shade and light does not exist objectively to be picked up. It is not absorbed into the refuge of the mind to be processed, as Plato’s myth indicates knowledge is absorbed from the sun. Elaborating on this common misunderstanding of the line in art, and assumptions it is a positive attribute of the visible, Kenaar elaborates on Merleau-Ponty’s argument, saying the visible is never fully positive *since the visible is essentially pervaded by a dimension of invisibility*. Clear binaries cannot be drawn between the visible and the invisible, data and noise, meaning and non-meaning:

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<sup>8</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1961, *Eye and Mind*, available at <https://pg2009.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/eye-and-mind-merleau-pontymmp-text1.pdf> accessed 02.01.16 p 125



...there are no lines visible in themselves, that neither the contour of the apple nor the border between field and meadow is this place or that, that they [the lines] are always between or behind whatever we fix our eyes upon; they are indicated, implicated, and even very imperiously demanded by things, but they themselves are not things.

In another fabled cave, animals are painted on the walls, and Merleau-Ponty describes these paintings at Lascaux in his essay. He describes how the images are ‘not there in the same way as are the fissures and limestone formations. Nor are they elsewhere.’<sup>9</sup> Looking at them, he describes how his gaze wanders within the image, and rather than seeing it, he sees *according to, or with it*. The word *image* he goes on to say ‘...is in bad repute because we have thoughtlessly believed that a drawing was a tracing, a copy, a second thing, and that the mental image was such a drawing, belonging among our private bric-a-brac.’<sup>10</sup>

In the gesture of making the first image, the painting of her lover, the artist makes a space she sees according to and with. In this heightened moment revealing the way the world becomes visible, her body is present in the movement of the painting. She exists always by way of engagement with the world through being present and moving in it. This action makes that interconnectedness visible:

A human body is present when, between the see-er and the visible, between touching and touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand a kind of crossover occurs, when the spark of the sensing/sensible is lit, when the fire starts to burn that will not cease until some accident befalls the body, undoing what no accident would have sufficed to do...<sup>11</sup>

Drawing from Merleau-Ponty’s writing, Kenaan concludes ‘...it is the painter – rather than the philosopher – who embodies the possibility of an openness to the truth of the visual.’ The painter Merleau-Ponty describes is always already engaged in the world as a body-subject intertwined with the objects it perceives. The first artist’s gesture gives a heightened example of this meeting of objective visibility and the subjectively perceptible.

Openness to the truth of the visible is different to being blinded by the sun. Plato’s myth describes a world in which the light of the sun universally produces understanding. By looking at the event of painting, and not its object, it is possible to see the lines made are not visible givens, data points, but a way of making visible the presence of the body in the world - *between touching and touched...when the spark of the sensing/sensible is lit*.

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<sup>9</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1961, p126

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 126

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 125

Rather than a story of shadow worship, a form of agency is revealed in the negations of a shadow and an un-named artist; the daughter of a man called Butades, who lived in Corinth, who had a lover, and was a maid. In the lecture *Information and Thinking* given at the 2014 Philosophy After Nature conference in Utrecht, Michel Serres suggests an alternative to Western Enlightenment's model of the sun as a central source of power and knowledge. Arguing instead for *the scintillation of darkness* as a better model of knowledge:

More beautiful than the day, peaceful by all means, the star-studded, pensive and soft night is a better model of knowledge than the sun-struck, cruel, exclusive, eye-hurting ideologically prone and opinion ridden light of day.

Incidentally, Pliny only ever wrote under darkness.

## Colocation, time displacement

A buzzing sound: the hum of air conditioning. The view frames a glass corridor in which we are suspended at a height. Through the glass walls we can see undulating textured rock face making up a roof across which a silver pipe zig-zags. Below us the space is divided by white sectioning panels cast overhead by blue-toned fluorescent strip light. Through the glass straight ahead we can see chairs arranged in an empty circular space.

We cut to the space below where the air conditioning hums louder. We hover above the clean shiny ground floor, surrounded by cabinets containing electronic equipment inside. Boxes with lights blinking and coloured wires can be seen behind the mesh door panels. In the centre of the frame we see the base of the circular empty space that contains the chairs. At the base of the screen words flash quickly in white *Consolas* type: the font of HTML coding. It blinks fast, momentarily, but at the rhythm and pace of spoken word, so the experience is more like listening.

*even now I still change my opinions there is a definitive*

*G: well I'm not completely on the same wavelength as you and apollo but it here*

*Yarasia: it time*

*G: I will be back*

*G: Hi time T*

The scene cuts to a mottled grey rock surface, the wall of the space cut by a smooth grey-black arc above and two rectangular blocks.

*Yarasia: Good we like you*

*Timetravel 0: Greetings*

*G: thanks*

*Yarasia: gw*

*Yarasia: You've been initiated G!*

*G: sorry I can't stop to chat its way past my bedtime.*

Cut to a moving frame. The rock pivots away from us turning clockwise as we track backwards through the space, passing down a corridor of white mesh-door cabinets lit overhead with strip lighting.

*Yarasia: oh yes, I'll make sure you have plenty of experience!*

*lol*

*Timetravel 0: I think ;-)*

*Y: well I have been awake for 24 hours!*

A standing computer screen, the kind used in conference spaces, on a wheeling stand comes into view as we tilt to the right rising up hovering momentarily in line with the base of the circular chair space.

*G: oh what the heck*

*maybe I will stop and introduce myself some time*

*Yarasia: good! now I could persuade you*

*knew*

*G: LOL*

*T: please*

*and then myself*

*G: hi TT, my name is steve, but call me G*

We move backwards through an entrance space, a blue door frame and glass doors surrounded by grey panelling. To the right is a grey metal staircase, to the left are metal seats and a familiar zig-zag shaped leaflet stand. The jagged rock face wall-ceiling here is painted white. Black pipes and suspended wire platforms co-mingle with vine plants that hang from this metallic infrastructure and descend to a rockery area behind the waiting room section. A display stand is in view but not legible. A wicker bowl of fruit is on the table.

*G: i'm 30, male from England*

*G: and you?*

*T: my name is John, I'm 30 and time traveller from Florida*

*G: oh and my PC could crash at any time so I'll say goodnight now in case it goes again*

*Y: alright goodnight G*

*G: which time are you from?*

A mute-panelled screen display stand comes into view along with more plants, pipes and an open metal door. As we retreat the rockery to the left becomes wider and is dense with plants. Cold hued halogen lights hang overhead. To the right raised aluminium tables sit against the wall at which black desktop PCs are placed at regular intervals, pipes hang overhead.

*T: Goodnight*

*T: 2036*

*G: g'night*

*G: is it a good year?*

*T: for me yes*

As we continue to travel backwards we enter a darker space with a purple hue. A display banner can be seen to bear the name *THULE* on it. Boxes, pipes, metallic infrastructure. Ventilation systems, pipe structures, the bare rock face is revealed once more. An upright back city bike behind a scaffold railing. Brown Brooks-style saddle.

*G: it's not far to come?*

*T: that's right*

*Y: do you want me to do my intro piece?*

A black carpet panel down the centre of the space. We enter another zone, darker again with lowered metal upper limit.

*G: so you have been born as well. That could have been confusing. No problem with there being two of you at the same time then?*

*G: yes please Y*

*T: Not at all*

*T: in fact the “me” on this world line is upstairs asleep*

*T: He’s on 2*

Our motion pauses for a moment, motions up and down gently as if deciding which way to travel next. We cut to the first lobby space seen now from the other side, where the multi-panelled black display system is revealed to be an elaborate light shade.

*Y: I’m Yareisa you can call me yar, most do Lincoln, UK*

*G: upstairs?*

*G: in your house?*

*G: yar, ok*

To the left a red fire hose and bucket momentarily undercut the aesthetic. The air conditioning hum is louder and we hover again in space.

Back in the server space. Black grilled cabinets, coloured wires, flashing LED lights. The air conditioning buzzes loudly once more, pulsing in a cyclical rhythm. The grey rock face ceiling is in view above the line of suspended strip lights.

Cut to a different view of this cabinet space and the letters IBM.<sup>1</sup>

[...]

The video *Colocation, time displacement* takes place in and navigates the interior space of a data centre<sup>vii</sup> within Stockholm’s White Mountain granite bedrock. The video traces a line backwards through the space presenting an anonymous POV at all times without disclosing the centre’s location. It doesn’t present a tour or contextualise what is being shown. Beginning at the centre of the space the footage gives details of the interior architecture, technical infrastructure, and reveals nonfunctional aesthetic details from the site’s interior design. Throughout the video the jagged granite walls overwhelm these small details and words flash quickly beneath.<sup>viii</sup>

I am watching a presentation in a room in the Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts in Lausanne in Switzerland, which is currently hosting a symposium<sup>2</sup>. The room is

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<sup>1</sup> Transcription of the work *Colocation, time displacement*, 2014 by Yuri Pattison, HD video, 18:32. The work is available at <<http://dismagazine.com/dystopia/61140/colocation-time-displacement/>> accessed 01.11.15.

<sup>2</sup> From 2013-15 the Swiss Federal Office of Culture (FOC) and Les Urbaines festival presented Post Digital Cultures, a two-day symposium gathering artists, curators, researchers and philosophers to discuss

ornately decorated. Wooden panels and frescos reach up and around walls and ceilings. Their early Renaissance scenes offer a different scale to the conference furniture that partly occludes them; the projection screen, chairs, desks, lectern and microphone appear meek at the front by comparison. The museum sits in a grand public square in the centre of Lausanne around which streets slope up at the edges in all directions. Paths appear to reach directly to meet the mountains around the skyline.

In a dark bunker lit with artificial daylight, the central beacon of the sun feels far away. In 1980, philosopher Michel Serres compares human interactions in logic, technology, work, the economy, and society to those of parasites. He enfoldes the three meanings of the term that exist in French; *the biological parasite*, *the social parasite*, and its meaning as *static or noise* - noise being the opposite of data. Serres's account of *The Parasite* traces the cultural use of the sun as a universal symbol for capital from ancient solar cults to the Western Enlightenment. He critiques the Enlightenment's equation of this central light source with knowledge, and describes a tendency in this way of thinking to conceive of a flow from the material resources, which store the sun's energy to the more abstract resource of money.<sup>3</sup> He asks:

'What is capital? It is the reservoir above the dam, an iron mine or a coal, manganese, or tungsten mine; a gold mine. An oil well. It is a stock of energy and of primary material; it is an island of negative entropy. It is a store of writings. The old standard of precious metal, having become banal, tends to disappear. We are moving toward a data bank. These reservoirs are only subsuns. Their source, far upstream, is the sun. The real, ultimate capital is the sun.'<sup>4</sup>

Listening to the talk I am distracted. My luggage was lost on my way to Switzerland and so I am holding my phone tightly, waiting for vibrations to alert me to a call from SwissPort. I always pack too much and so, while listening to the presentation, I am also silently listing the items within my lost case. My laptop, for example is in there, and thanks to the advice of another symposium attendee, I am now aware it is not advisable to place such a sensitive electrical item in the plane's hold. Luckily, I think, all

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the current state of contemporary cultural production in relation to new technologies. I attended the event in 2014.

<sup>3</sup> I encountered Serres' *The Parasite*, in the essay *On Solar Databases and the Exogenesis of Light*, by philosopher Matteo Pasquinelli, (p5), which was within a series on *The Politics of Shine* for the e-flux *SUPERCOMMUNITY* series #65, May-August 2015. In the same essay, Pasquinelli follows the argument Serres gives in a talk called *Information and Thinking*, which he gave in 2014 at the Philosophy After Nature Conference, 2014, Utrecht: Utrecht University in Utrecht. While I was able to purchase *The Parasite* on Amazon Student Prime and hold it in my hands the next day after reading of it in Pasquinelli's essay, Serres paper *Information and Thinking* was more difficult to find. Due to illness, Serres was unable to attend the conference in person, and so recorded a video which you can watch through the conference website (see bibliography). The presentation is in French, and while YouTube's auto-translated closed-captioning gives some insight its full meaning remains elusive to me.

<sup>4</sup> Michel Serres, 2007, *The Parasite*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p173

of my documents are saved on Dropbox. Unfortunately, I think, I can't afford to replace the hardware if it is damaged.

In Serres' 2014 paper *Information and Thinking*<sup>5</sup>, he continues to critique the Western conflation of knowledge with the centralised light of the sun whilst maintaining an accord between energy, light, information and knowledge in his thinking. He proposes instead for them to be conceived within a cosmic computer with no central algorithm, *neither sun, nor human*.<sup>6</sup> Serres imagines a form of knowledge distribution that doesn't trace subservient paths to a single centralised source.<sup>ix</sup>

Earlier in the day in the fresco-lined room another speaker had spoken of the myth of The Cloud, describing it as: A nebula, a fog machine obscuring the very non-ephemeral environmentally, ecologically insistent and globally political and geological, biological power structures around us.<sup>7</sup> Standing at the lectern, the speaker had rallied us to decentralize our knowledge, taking our private data off centralised cloud facilities such as Dropbox and Google Drive. If my laptop is lost, or crushed in the plane's hold, and I get another, signing into my iCloud account will revive all the data stored from my last back up. When I am reunited with the data, I vow to buy several hard drives and disperse them in cases around my bookshelves.

The complex structures produced by the co-location of private data pose a question: is the capital of the data centre still ultimately the sun?<sup>x</sup> The ancient reverence Serres observes in narratives of the sun's abstract light flowing to material stores, to immaterial knowledge is reminiscent of our attitude to modern day Cloud computing. The shift from archiving hard copies of documents and photographs, to storing them on tangible hard drives, to increasingly entrusting our data to The Cloud evokes this time-old reverence, and traces the classic Enlightenment path in which knowledge passes from earthly matter to immaterial light. Rather than becoming a cosmic computer devoid of a central algorithm (neither sun, nor human), The Cloud uses its myth of immateriality to disguise its centralised structure and its firm dependency on material resources. Unbound by clear edges, The Cloud seems capable of exponentially expanding as it floats in its fiction of weightlessness but in truth it is a metaphor for a substantial mass of computing hardware whose centralised form makes it politically and

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<sup>5</sup> Philosophy After Nature Conference, 2014, Utrecht: Utrecht University in Utrecht.

<sup>6</sup> Matteo Pasquinelli, 2015 p4

<sup>7</sup> Paul Feigelfeld, 2014, *Cryptocentrism*, paper presented at Post-Digital Cultures Symposium: Lausanne.

economically useful. The Cloud's fiction omits the material and human component of digital storage. It forgets the data banks.<sup>8</sup>

The Cloud's use of a metaphor of nature to describe information systems reverses the idea of *pancomputationism*. Serres alludes to this concept in his lecture: the idea everything in the world works like a computer. 'Bacteria, fungus, whale, sequoia, we do not know of any life of which we cannot say that it emits information, receives it, stores it, and processes it. Four universal rules, so unanimous.'<sup>9</sup> Later Serres goes on to describe the computation of trees; they *calculate* each year as they add rings to their trunks<sup>10</sup>. In this conception of ecology as a computational system it is reduced to a utopia.

The utopia of computerized nature is, however, misguided. A utopia is formed first in the mind of those desiring it and is driven by the will of individual or collective humans. A cosmic computer with no central algorithm isn't driven by human will, and is closer to age-old visions of nature as chaos.<sup>11</sup>

I take photos, picking out amusing sections of the frescos with my phone. A man's bare bottom is draped by another's arm. They appear to float together up the border of the central fresco. My images are mottled from the low light and I post them to Instagram and Twitter with the official symposium hashtag, #postdigitalc (postdigital cultures).

*Colocation, time displacement*<sup>xii</sup> was first shown as an installation at *The Telfer Gallery* in Glasgow, April 2014. In the installation an aluminium shelving unit houses a number of objects including the projector from which the video is shown, in which the mountain appears to speak through the text on screen. The speed-reading technology actually recounts the online postings of a character named John Titor, a self-declared time traveller from the year 2036 who claimed on the bulletin boards he was posting on between the year 2000 and 2001 to be stopping in this time for *personal reasons*.<sup>xiii</sup> A book compiling all these posts published as *A Time Traveller's Tale*<sup>12</sup> is wedged under the projector on the shelves.

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<sup>8</sup> In the essay, *On Solar Databases and the Exogenesis of Light* Pasquinelli notes that historically, the term *data bank*, (used more commonly in Romance languages than in English) conveyed a relationship between data and capital that is lost in the contemporary term *database*. Modern day data centres give the chance to disrupt this connection further by dispersing the flows of information and capital into complex structures.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Serres, 2014, *L'Information et la pensée*, presented at Philosophy After Thinking University of Utrecht: Utrecht, video available at < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdYRzpzvrRw> > accessed 08.08.15

<sup>10</sup> I know this only because an account is given of this part of the lecture in Matteo Pasquinelli's essay *On Solar Databases and the Exogenesis of Light*, p5.

<sup>11</sup> Remember the sensitive young men taken over the Alps on the Grand Tour, their eyes covered with cloth lest they might scream with horror at the mountains' hideous angles.

<sup>12</sup> The John Titor Foundation, 2003, *John Titor A Time Traveler's Tale*, Instantpublisher.com



Gold coloured 3D printed rocks appear to hold a digital print to the back of the shelves. The forms replicate meteors found in the Russian city of Chelyabinsk after an impact there in 2013. The impacting meteor went undetected above Chelyabinsk prior to entering the Earth's atmosphere because its *radiant*, the point in the sky a meteor appears to come from, was too close to the sun to be detected. Wikipedia makes a haunting collage of the story:

'Shortly after dawn on February 15, 2013, a superbolide meteor descended at over 55,000 kilometers per hour (34,000 mph) over the Ural Mountains, exploding at an altitude of 25–30 kilometers (16–19 mi)<sup>[dubious – discuss]</sup> in a momentary flash as bright as the sun and generating a shock wave that injured over a thousand people. Fragments fell in and around Chelyabinsk.'<sup>13</sup>

In my bag with me now is a packet of Boots own brand probiotics designed for travel: Digestion Support Travel, with added ginger. The packet is blue and the image on the front shows a non-gendered outlined human holding their abdomen, their digestive tract glowing green through the space their skin should be. I take a photo, and title it Post Digital Digestive Cultures #postdigitalc as I simultaneously post to Instagram and Twitter.

In Wikipedia's collaborative portrayal of the event the sun blinds us, and we are helpless victims to the rock attack from above. The 3D replicas of the meteors, however, tell a different story of human agency. In the same way digital data can be multiply and simultaneously co-located, the material history of a rock that fell to earth can be duplicated in ways that shift the narrative. Formed by the endless agency digital technologies have to re-present, the 3D printed rocks represent this devastating event and reproduce its time. Their 3D rendering takes them out of time and reforms their history.

If my laptop is lost, or crushed in the plane's hold, and I get another, signing into my iCloud account will revive all the data stored from my last back up, put everything on hard drives, keep them on my shelves and never touch them.

Mattheo Pasquinelli concludes his essay *Solar Databases and the Exogenesis of Light*, by commenting on recent mathematical research in which new findings contest the idea that living metabolism is always based on an accumulation of energy working against entropy. The pressure of the sun's energy, he tells us, pushes molecules to form more complex structures in order to disperse energy more efficiently<sup>14</sup>. The evolution of ever more complex organisms on earth dissipates energy, rather than storing it.

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<sup>13</sup> *Chelyabinsk Meteor* available at <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chelyabinsk\\_meteor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chelyabinsk_meteor) accessed> 1.11.15

<sup>14</sup> In the essay Pasquinelli cites Jeremy England's research MIT, citing 'A New Physics Theory of Life' by Natalie Wolchover from Quanta Magazine, January 22, 2014.

Pasquinelli draws a parallel between this natural phenomenon and forms of broadcast that communicate from one to many, dissipating information in the process. He conceives of this as *exogenesis*<sup>15</sup> - the result of a pull from outside rather than a push from inside - commenting that ‘...even the human mind and its forms of extended cognition can be seen as extensions of this quest towards more complex architectures of energy.’ At the end of the essay Pasquinelli expresses the desire for politics and aesthetics to join in a quest ‘towards more complex architectures of light.’ He calls for an understanding of knowledge closer to the Serres’ description of Vernes’ prismatic grotto, or a datacentre built on myth dispersing knowledge from the dark inside a mountain.

Ending his talk, the artist plays the video, which runs until it gently fades into a computer desktop background image of mist-covered mountains, purple against an orange sunset. He is thanked and I clap. In my hand, my phone vibrates and I walk out of the room. G can’t stop to chat as it’s way past their bedtime.

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<sup>15</sup> Pasquinelli locates this idea in the essay in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s idea of a *line of flight* expressed in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus* 1980.

# ECOLOGY

## **Dasein and Casein**

Casein is a protein found abundantly in milk. Used as glue, a food additive, for the production of safety matches, it is as a dietary supplement I first encounter it. Too-close photos of a sticky, sickly substance fill my Instagram feed. The cropping speaks the language of excess; the abundance of #gainz. Placing the sample pouch in my basket, I turn and rub with my hands to get a sense of the material-feel: a protein found abundantly in milk is used as a glue.

Turning and rubbing becomes deep undulation when ingested; echoing the material-feel of first handling since casein is digested slo-o-owly. It passes methodically through the digestive canal, pulsing in wave-like undulations, recalling the stoic repetitions of the bodybuilder, gently rocking the body to sleep to the rhythm of peristalsis. Casein is best taken at night.

What sticks in mind from art school encounters with Heidegger; from earnest elective reading and vibes resonating in h - e - i - d - e - g - g - e - r - i - a - n - r - e - f - e - r - e - n - c - e - s is the mental image of a hierarchy. In this schematic hammers float where vegetables hang in the food pyramid of the S(tandard)A(merican)D(iet). Like the sadness of SAD, Heideggerian hammers seem outmoded in a guide for ingestion of the world as new tools fill your feed with sticky substances. Lurking close by is the improbable image of a Nazi soldier carrying Heidegger in his back pocket. Staring at a bible-sized paper-block of *BEING AND TIME* I imagine leather-bound copies lodged with shrapnel in German napsacks - tactile talismans rubbed and turned in the hand. Rubbing and turning in the hand becomes handling in the mind becomes the rhythm of peristalsis.

Heideggerian hammers seem outmoded in a guide for ingestion of the world as new tools fill your feed with sticky substances. Dasein is the way of being-in-the-world which means being-there. Casein is best taken at night as it gently rocks the body to sleep to the rhythm of peristalsis. It passes methodically through the digestive canal, pulsing in wave-like undulations. Dasein is the form of being-there present in the stoic repetitions of the bodybuilder. Developing muscle mass means that first you need to destroy then repair. Muscles are broken down in the gym, fed in the kitchen, and built in bed. Broken selves fill hollow canals with sticky substances and muscles are built in bed. Hollow canals filled with sticky substances rock bodies to the rhythm of peristalsis. The rhythm is of peristalsis and glues flesh-fibres together. Too-close photos of sticky substances fill my feed.

Dasein is the way of being-in-the-world which means being-there and casein is best taken at night. Alfresco canals filled with sticky substances rock bodies to the rhythm of peristalsis since the gut is technically outside the body. The self is produced by the part of us (simultaneously not us) that also produces excrement. We do not just occupy a location in a system of objects but rather live in a world. The fundamental aspect of being-in-the-world is that I experience the world as my own. The self is produced by the part of us, also not us, that also produces excrement. The problem of I and you presents itself always, stickily, with all possessive pronouns when considering what I / we are left with when the gut is technically outside of the body. To live in a world is to experience the place one lives as f - a - m - i - l - i - a - r. The gut is the part of you that turns the world outside into you. Muscles are broken down in the gym, fed in the kitchen, and built in bed. Sticky substances fill my feed.



## Oil Pulling

Beginning your day swirling oil between your teeth sets a rhythm that's hard to shake. Holding and handling oil in your mouth limits the activities you can do. I have tried stretching since I most commonly oil pull on the mornings I train and it makes sense to use this time window to prepare in this way, but from experience, the bending often leads to swallowing, so it's safer to stick to checking emails at my laptop, or doing the dishes from the night before. Oil pulling is a technique for detoxification, which has been used for centuries within the Ayurvedic tradition. Ayurveda is a system of medicine originating in northern India and the Sanskrit word the name comes from means *life-knowledge*. Within Classic Ayurvedic treatises of the Buddhist Canon the transfer of medical knowledge is described travelling in a channel downward from gods, to sages, to human doctors. A tablespoon of any oil can be used for this purpose. Traditionally, in India, vegetable or sesame oil was used, today I use coconut oil for the antiviral and antibacterial properties it contains. Not the cold-pressed virgin oil I use to cook with, or to cleanse and moisturise my face, but a cheaper kind, labeled simply: 'COCONUT OIL'.

I move slowly from room to room involuntarily nodding my head to the rhythm of the oil passing in and out of my teeth, circulating around the house as I draw toxins from my body. I move from the bathroom, stepping intuitively over a loose floorboard, passing a room on my left filled with boxes piled up high, which are waiting to be moved to the new house. The new home has floated intangibly for so long in our minds it seems absurd we will actually live there. White-walled and open plan, the new house is a receptacle for abstract projections of how we will live. It will have none of the problems of accumulation of this house, with its dark rooms, too many of them,

filled with too many possessions, and odd items of furniture left by the previous tenants.

Oil pulling works by drawing out toxins from the body working on the principle that *like dissolves like*. The oils bind to the biofilm on your teeth removing it when you spit out the solution. A biofilm is a group of organisms that stick together on a surface, and are embedded within a self-produced matrix of extracellular polymeric substance (EPS). Biofilm begins when free-floating microorganisms cling to themselves and a surface. The reported benefits of oil pulling include whiter teeth, better breath, stronger teeth, less jaw pain, better sleep, alleviation from hangovers and improved skin. I try to keep the oil-pulling going for the recommended full twenty minutes, which is recommended because it is long enough to break down the biofilm and plaque, but not long enough that the body will start to reabsorb the toxins pulled out. Sometimes the oil gets too large as I swirl and I have to spit it out. When the time is up, or my mouth is overfull I spit the emulsified oil and saliva mixture in the sink, which you're not supposed to do because it can block the drain, wash it away, use Dr. Tung's Stainless Steel Tongue Scraper, brush my teeth with regular toothpaste and finally rinse with mouthwash. When complete, I inspect the tooth on my lower jaw in the front, to the right centre, which appears elongated when I pull down my lip due to over brushing in my early twenties. In my early twenties my body didn't heal very well, and now the gum is stripped back to around seven or eight millimeters below the level it should be. Left for too long this exposed root it becomes a reservoir for food, making a biofilm, which leaves stains and eventually builds to plaque, causing the gum to bleed when removed.

Beginning at the mouth, the digestive tract is a continuous path, which retains an outside space within your body and so confuses conventional notions of My

Body and The World, which seem unclear when you remember the biofilm. Walking down the stairs I move to the kitchen looking for something to do while the oil ball grows in my mouth. As if in homage to the detoxification the oil performs I pull the bag from the bin, tie its handles and carry it to the yard outside before placing in in the green wheelie bin and closing the lid. The yard is filled with items we need to take to the dump before we move: a Christmas tree, a broken microwave, an old cat litter tray. On the floor next to the bin is a squat bulbous jar with a red gingham lid. The lid is the size that would fit a jam jar but the jar bulges out from its neck to a body around twice this diameter. A light film of silt partly obscures its contents as I pick up the jar to look inside.

Condensation gathers at the top near the neck, the only space filled with air. From the point the jar reaches its fattest width a series of gelatinous disks fills the space, staggered and suspended through a yellow liquid with bubbles foming at the edges. They look like mutant tough calamari or sedimentary rocks. The two lowest disks speak of a split, which must have occurred during the fermentation process sending them down into the depths of the liquid, until they are only tangentially connected to the third. They lie at an angle. From these disks hang stagnant tendrils reaching down into the sediment. The uppermost disk is marked with bubbles hardened into tough mushroomy white lumps across its surface. I bring the back into the kitchen with me, rinsing it in the kitchen sink and wiping off the silt.

The jelly-form object-family is a **SCOBY**: a *Symbiotic Colony of Bacteria and Yeast* used in the brewing process required make kombucha. Kombucha is sugar-sweetened tea fermented by a community of organisms into a delicious sour tonic beverage, sometimes compared to sparkling apple cider. Kombucha is typically produced by a SCOBY, also known as a mother, which takes the form of a rubbery

disk that floats on the surface of the tea as it ferments. The community of organisms can also be transferred via the kombucha liquid itself, which can generate a new SCOBY. The kombucha mother closely resembles a vinegar-making by-product, mother-of-vinegar, and is composed of many of the same organisms; indeed, some analysts have come to the conclusion that they are exactly the same.

This SCOBY has been dormant for months but I hesitate to throw it out. I remember the slimy feel of this SCOBY's mother as I removed it from a different jar to discard it. These offspring now float in a pool of their own excrement, their waste product I drank as kombucha. I used one batch of the drink as an artwork for an exhibition, promoting *Pineapple Spirulina Kombucha Fizz*, with the line: *Kate Liston will mix ancestrally-inspired drinks for the exhibition opening, proposing posthuman and transhuman possibilities as the liquids manoeuvre through your microbiome.*

Kombucha produces lactic acid, enzymes and probiotics and potentially detoxifying substance called glucuronic acid. Spirulina is a spiral form single cell organism: a multicellular trichome in an open left hand helix: filamentous, non-heterocystous cyanobacteria that grown in warm bodies of water. Spirulina absorbs energy from sunlight and makes a highly nutritive food producing the lowest land use per unit of protein human digestible energy. Spirulina is capable of making its own food. When it grows wild in ponds it can absorb undesirable environmental factors, taking in toxins indiscriminately in its path. On my kitchen shelf, the packet sits half open, its zip-lock feature rendered useless by fine coating of the blue-green powder within. In the half-open bag the powder mingles with the dust of my kitchen, my discarded skin cells, reversing the common pathway by which I ingest it. I throw the packet in the fresh plastic bag I now place in the bin.

The Aztecs first harvested Spirulina from Lake Texacoco and packed it into cakes. **NASA** has proposed it for cultivation for long-term missions in outer space. Spirulina has been shown to encourage and support the growth of healthy bacterial flora in your gut, which can help keep your candida overgrowth under control. Stepping back into the yard I spit the emulsified blob directly in the outside drain. Combined with the powerful detoxifying effects of glucuronic acid, *Pineapple Spirulina Kombucha Fizz* makes a powerful tonic for cleansing the body. The detoxifying effects of glucuronic acid have not been widely verified by mainstream modern medicine, but you wouldn't be swirling oil round your mouth if you didn't believe in a little of this.

## Sea Squirt

I became vegetarian at the age of seven, a decision made impulsively while refusing my dad's offer of a fishing trip. Symbolically laying down a ham sandwich in a pub in the Yorkshire Dales I boldly declared my intention never to eat meat again, and, apart from a Cream of Chicken Cup-a-Soup consumed the next day upheld my promise to the animal kingdom. Viscerally aligning myself with an intellectual form of reason: *animals are suffering creatures who deserve not to die for food*, I denounced my body's appetite for meat, *my mind's telling me no, so my body must follow*. Giving up meat I transformed my words into flesh, and so my flesh embodied principles in return. My ideas were no longer abstract; they coursed through the broccoli-fueled iron in my veins. I pictured gristly innards transformed by vapoury ideas effused from the mind. *I eat my words!*

Vegetarianism is criticised for intellectualising natural bodily appetites and desires. *It's more complicated than this*, I would always say. As a young vegetarian visiting family or friends I was given special meals and applauded for sticking to my principles as I microwaved my spinach and ricotta lasagna for one. My meals were distinct, as was I. As I grew older, I enjoyed the sensation my position gave me of separation from the bad, mainstream consumer society around me. I was absolved from guilt when hearing of animal welfare atrocities. Wishing to further effect this distance, I became vegan at the age of eighteen and was congratulated for being good, principled, and determined in the face of what must be exemplary levels of will power and self-discipline. My memory of meat was that it was salty and I no longer desired it.

Within veganism and vegetarianism more broadly, there is an impetus to imagine a world that is different to the one you live in. Late capitalism in my mind was an abstract concept applied to the world and by choosing a different abstract concept, I felt I could bypass the default societal mode of mindless consumerism. I used thinking and believing as tools to bypass popular appetites, which in any case were skewed by the abundance of edible food-like substances available in late capitalism. There is a desire to change this world through dietary choices.<sup>xiii</sup>

While vegan I became very thin. Rather than the cause of an inherent flaw in veganism, my thinness resulted from my particular use of it as an ever-tightening framework to exclude all toxic unhealthy foods, particularly those associated with late-capitalist industrial processes. I used restrictive veganism to make myself distinct from mainstream society, always keeping a hygienic distance. Following a utopian desire, which drove my body's appetites, I always sought to achieve The Good Meal, or The Perfect Meal every day, avoiding others' company at meal times in order to achieve these abstract ideals of nutritional perfection. **Orthorexia** is a term used to indicate a condition in which sufferers obsess over food they believe to be healthy,

avoiding foods believed to be harmful, or in my experience, contaminating: accidental ingestion of milk would fog my worldview. Around this time I had dreams in which I collected micronutrients like a character in an old 2-D platform video game scoring gold coins.

Around this time I felt the sensation that the world barely touched me. I felt my values and materiality so aligned that my subject floated light as my abstract ideas. Perching on a cloud of smug consumer enlightenment I mainly ate fruit. My feet passed lightly on the earth's surfaces and I took up little room. In an earnest undergraduate art performance, I sat in a Metro Paper dispenser in **Piccadilly Tube Station** sewing neatly, using up this wasted city space, offering a different temporality by stitching and waiting amongst the perpetual rush of productivity. I displayed a pleasing outward declaration of my lack of complicity with consumerism in all its forms and was reassured by my body's visual alignment. I salivated at the sight of fruit.<sup>xiv</sup>

*Orthodox* means the right, or true belief, where belief can be understood to mean something close to *received wisdom*, or *inherent truth*. Orthorexia can be read as a longing for a truth, a reaching for abstract perfection to be achieved through the ideal food, a different world produced first through the imagination of food. *Orexix* is the name given to a hormone in the body that stimulates appetite and which is also important for sleep regulation. While suffering from orthorexia I dreamed of scoring points in a computer game by collecting foods containing the most vitamins, satisfying my longing for the perfect nutrition. A fixation on righteous eating is concerned with goodness, rightness, concepts built on abstract rules, but which also produces real body sensations. I salivated at the sight of fruit.<sup>xv</sup>

The sea squirt is an animal that more closely resembles oceanic plantlife and is a member of the chrodate phylum, the classification for a group of living creatures that includes humans. Sea squirts vary in colour; some look like sponges, some like grapes, some like leathery bags. As hermaphrodites they are able to switch genders and they can produce both egg and sperm in their lifetime. Like humans, the sea squirt understands its relation to the world by communicating messages from the sensing body to the brain via the spinal column and receives information from the brain along the same path.

The sea squirts eats by filtering water for nutritious organic matter. Sea currents make water flow into its large basket-like pharynx, which is made up of numerous sieve-like slits and coated in sticky mucus. Plankton get trapped in this sticky substance and small hair-like cilia help move them along to the stomach for digestion before filtered water and waste products are expelled through a second siphon. In its infancy, the sea squirt navigates the sea floor to find an object to attach to. This object must be in an area with the right temperature, and surrounded by a reliable source of food.

Orexis: *longing, appetite*, comes from the Ancient Greek órexis, *desire*, from ὀρέγω, or orégō meaning *I reach, or I stretch*. Acting in a way below anything as conscious as decision-making, while searching for this spot, the sea squirt relates itself to the world through striving, through stretching, through the desire that produces movement. The sea squirt orients his, her, itself towards the world showing desire as they experience the world as *their own*. Martin Heidegger has said, perhaps while thinking of the pre-brain eating sea squirt:

‘By the very fact that a living being discloses a world, the Being of this being is also disclosed to it. It knows about itself even if only in the dullest way and the broadest sense. Along with the disclosure of the world, it is disclosed to itself.’<sup>1</sup>

Having satisfied all of its desires by finding this place, the sea squirt never moves again, it shuts down the flow of information around the nervous system and eats its own brain. The settled sea squirt become a sessile saclike filter-feeder, straining organic matter from the water as it is pumped through its body; a giant stomach inside a sack with water flowing through it driven by sea currents.

For the world to disclose it means it makes itself known to the sea squirt. For the sea squirt to be disclosed to the world it means it makes itself known. By knowing the world as they are known in it, the sea squirt experiences the world as *its own*. Despite appearing as a leathery sack full of free-flowing sea water the sea squirt is not a discrete vessel that extends into the world by will. Their stretching and leaning and moving by desire amounts to knowing and being known. Through the sensory exchange of information and the disclosure of self and world, the squirt, before eating its brain, is always already absorbed in the world. Sea squirts also sometimes resemble sponges.<sup>xvi</sup>

The human understands its relation to the world by communicating messages from its sensing body to the brain. The place from which it receives the most information about the world it is in is the gut. The gut’s febrile surface area commands a matrix of nerves similar in volume and complexity to that of the brain in such a way that scientists now acknowledge it to amount to a form of consciousness. Gut and brain connect via a large nerve called the vagus, a fast line of communication that runs through the diaphragm, between lungs and heart, up the oesophagus and through the neck to the brain. Here it connects to the parts responsible for self-awareness,

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, p 208/ 169, quoted in Christine Bailey, 2012, *Animal Dasein; The Genesis of Existentials in the Early Heidegger’s Interpretations of Aristotle*, paper presented at Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy conference Rochester, New York. Available at [https://www.academia.edu/1714911/Animal\\_Dasein\\_La\\_gen%C3%A8se\\_des\\_existentiels\\_chez\\_le\\_jeune\\_Heidegger](https://www.academia.edu/1714911/Animal_Dasein_La_gen%C3%A8se_des_existentiels_chez_le_jeune_Heidegger) accessed 01.06.15



emotion, morality, fear, memory and motivation. The gut's network of signaling substances turns sensation into signal into mood. Gathering information from the world and intimately handling it in a space that humans consider their own, the gut communicates data from the world as a feeling of inherent awareness, of knowing and being known. In my kitchen I blend vegetables and fruits with seeds, powders and coconut water, posting images of a thick bright pink beetroot berry cooler, straw standing on end #beetroot #breakfast #smugstagram.<sup>xvii</sup>

In order to eat, humans first gather information from the world by looking, smelling and touching. The sight or smell of food can stimulate the involuntary secretion of saliva marking the beginning of a system of responses in the body that works without conscious direction. When the parasympathetic system, which produces the state required for digestion is induced by touch, sight or smell, heart rate and breathing slow and blood flow diverts from the heart and muscles to the gut. Human desire for food is induced by stimuli that appear external but which produce internal sensation. Made by mechanically blending whole raw foods, smoothies make micronutrients more easily available to the body. In the mid 20-tens they promise unthinking assimilation of essential micronutrients.

An incomprehensible number of microorganisms live in the digestive tract of each single human. A careful balance of these nonhuman entities are required to sustain the daily functions of the human and their genes outnumber their host's at the ratio of ten to one. Microbe populations require different substances to survive and produce collaborative appetites with human hosts to meet their bespoke collective needs. Acting in a way below anything as conscious as decision-making, microbes relate themselves to the world through striving and stretching. Their desire produces movement and manifests human appetite. A yeast called *Candida* confuses human agency when it drives its host to a shop to buy sugar and consume it in any form. Microbes orient themselves towards the world showing desire. Through their movement we desire and through desire we strive and lean towards and experience the world as *our own*: we salivate at the sight of fruit. Smoothies make micronutrients more available to the body by outsourcing the labour required to digest them. They promise total absorption and unthinking assimilation.

The parasympathetic system, which enables digestion can be intentionally engaged by conscious behaviour; sitting down, breathing out more than in, imagining everything draining out of you and sinking deep into the earth. The absorption of food, however cannot take place through the force of individual will. Digestion works by agencies beyond the limits of a single human. The kale smoothie drinker chugging down a *Green Monster* is likely to miss the content since the body cannot absorb by force of will. Food is not picked up and absorbed like gold

coins in a 2D platform video game. The smoothie as a form of understanding outsources laboursome rumination.

When desire results in eating, peristalsis - an undulating contraction and relaxation of involuntary non-striated smooth muscle - waves food down the gastrointestinal tract until it reaches the smooth muscle ring of the internal sphincter, which opens automatically with pressure from the anal canal and allows matter to pass into the rectum. Here it remains until released by the outer sphincter by a voluntary decision or involuntarily, through the pressure of too much information.<sup>xviii</sup>

When Heidegger translated the Greek word *orexis*, meaning ‘desire; appetite’, he chose the German word *Sorge*, which translates to the English *care*. Down tuning the word makes it seem less active or radical or positive than desire, shifting it incrementally closer to inertia or apathy. Samira Ariadad uses the term *Anti-desire* when she reflects on her mode of being anorexic in an essay called *The Alien Anorexic and Post-Human Bodies*. Anti-desire is a state she experienced when she withdrew from mainstream practices of eating in post-industrial capitalist societies. Acting in a way that differs from the form of desire that puts individual agency and needs at the centre of being, anti-desire questions self-preservation. Food, she observes, forms social and technological entanglements between body and world and ‘it’s difficult to draw the lines between internal and external when connections are made in and between both realms.’<sup>2</sup> Anorexic anti-desire questions the centred form of desire most recognized within capitalism.

In the context of individual agency, anti-desire looks like inertia, or withdrawal, or apathy. Ariadad, however, recognizes it as a radical form of hyper-openness. Anti-desire produces oversensitivity, which manifests as the hyper-openness that induces heightened awareness of the body’s absorption in the world. An expanded body-subject that includes microbes and involuntary processes initiated by worldly stimuli is already intimately absorbed in the world. It does not absorb the world at will like a smoothie sucked through a straw. In this absorption the expanded body-subject allows space for controlling and being controlled, knowing and being known.<sup>xix</sup>

Like the parasympathetic system anti-desire operates in a mode outside of individual agency that conceives of a self with bounds that it seeks to preserve. Anti-desire is a way of switching off the autonomous self that presumes it is possible to purchase wellbeing in a cup, and instead acknowledges the many agents at play in one body. By broadening an understanding of the self to include the world, anti-desire makes room for other desires. Rather than the negative

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<sup>2</sup> Samira Ariadad. 2015, *The Alien Anorexia and Post-Human Bodies*, in Mira Mattar, (ed.) *You Must Make Your Death Public, A Collection of Texts and Media on the Work of Chris Kraus*, Berlin: Mute Books, p44.

destruction of an atomized self and its agency the anti-desire of the anorexic positively produces an active mode of being. In *Aliens and Anorexia*, Chris Kraus recognizes the anorexic mode of being as an *active, ontological state*<sup>3</sup>. Through the subjective dissolution produced by acknowledging other agency, anorexic anti-desire is an active mode of being and acting in the world.

Before eating their brain the sea squirt sits on the ocean floor in a state of openness experiencing the world as: *their own*. The world is made known in them before their desire is met, they consume their mind and cease to move since ‘the possibility that the world matters to a being depends on this peculiar openness.’<sup>4</sup> Finally existing as an immobile saclike filter-feeder it absorbs organic matter from the water as sea currents and pump it through their body that resembles oceanic plant life. A giant stomach inside a sack, water flowing through driven by the sea’s currents the squirt’s life is defined by pure absorption. They digest, but do not use a brain, and since their vagus line is cut it no longer senses the world through its gut. The matter inside them ceases to be used as information, it just flows.

As a vegan I drank acai smoothies. Purchasing them from a skeptical shopkeeper in **Stockwell Tube Station** I imagined their omega 3s lubricating each cell in my body as the thick liquid slipped down my throat and felt validated in my decision not to eat fish. Today, a meat eater, my anxiety is about gut health. I worry about the condition of my digestive tract, convinced that industrial foods have made it too porous. I worry about **Leaky Gut Syndrome** and the too-large molecules entering my body through perforations in my gut lining. I hope its walls allow the right nutrients in, while moving waste along for proper excretion: I long for the perfect degree of absorption of myself into the world. I ferment cabbage and tea to build colonies of collaborative compatriots, and buy lab-researched probiotics just in case. No longer vegan, I drink collagen in my coffee and absorb connective tissue from animal bones to help heal my gut. I cut my food up and chew it slowly.

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<sup>3</sup> Chris Kraus, 2013, *Aliens and Anorexia*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) p162

<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, 1978 *Gesamtausgabe*, 18, 52 (37) Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, quoted in Christine Bailey, 2012 p2,

## Treatment

An abstract green circle in empty black space and the rhythmic sounds of a heartbeat. The word *TREATMENT* appears and disappears. An ambient drone gradually builds taking us into the next scene. Cut to a glass on a white surface shot from above and filled with a green liquid. The circle of the glass fills the afterimage of the 'O' of the previous frame.

Her hand is around the glass. She picks it up and drinks from it. We cut to a series of close ups of supplements; a bottle of green capsules; blue spirulina powder in a bottle, a photo of algae on the label; a mason jar of golden liquid with a jellified lump floating in it, its handwritten label reads: 'BREW READY FRIDAY'. As the camera takes in these details, an ambient tone sustains while sounds of kitchen activity play: a tap filling a kettle, a teaspoon on a mug. We hear fragments of a podcast Rebecca is listening to: '...and the crazy thing is, it's not you craving the sugar, it's the Candida! Like, I'm driving in my pyjamas to 7-11 to get gummy bears at 11pm and I think, this isn't me, this thing is controlling me!...' Cut to a wide frame of the door of Rebecca's apartment. Ambient room tone. Her footsteps. She enters the frame dressed in running gear. We see her from behind as she heads out the door and closes it to us.

Next, a series of close ups mirroring those of the supplements. They take in details of the landscape she will run through; a weed; a puddle; the edge of a footpath; fast moving water that fills the frame.

Cut to a wide shot. A green steel bridge arcs a parabola in the centre of the frame. A squat brick chimney sits in the background. The sky is murky and the river runs high. Red roofed terraces line the hill on the right. After a few seconds we see the orange beanie hat on the girl's head trace the bridge from right to left before moving down a ramp and to a red path following the river. The sound of the river and wind dominate. As the girl reaches the path, the sound of her breathing and footfall builds. We see a series of clips of her running past the fixed frame of the camera, and details of the landscape as she passes: a *MAZDA* showroom in the middle of a field, an office chair half submerged in the river's banks. Footfall and breathing build throughout.

A tracking shot runs alongside the black railings creating a visual rhythm, matching the footsteps and breath, which are now quite loud. The sound and image of the river recede like a blur. As the shot continues, the heartbeat we remember from the title image returns and a rudimentary techno beat emerges.

Jump cut to a wide shot and naturalistic ambient sound. A path recedes to the centre of the frame, where it meets a body of water. It is flooded. The shot stays empty for a moment before rhythmic sounds of footfall and breathing build and the girl enters the frame. Her breathing remains dietetically located throughout this shot. She runs up to the water's edge. She stops, and

we can see her breath. She hesitates, tries to run on the muddy verge with exaggerated steps. She stops, we see her breath, she turns and disappears out of the frame. We stay on this empty frame and its ambient sounds. Gradually the heartbeat builds again until the sound begins to break down.

We hold a close up of the water as the sounds build. Rhythmic distorted noise dominates. Further distorted sounds are added until it almost becomes music.

A series of images show parts of the landscape in which a circle sits in the middle: the end of a discarded can, the sun seen faintly through the hazy sky, the 'o' of the words *SPORTS DIRECT*.

Jump cut to a wide shot and naturalistic sound: a pebbledash office building is surrounded by trees. Gradually the girl's breath and footsteps build and she runs into the frame, running to the left of the building before turning around and running right, and around it. An office worker turns his head as he follows her movements.

Cut to a close up taken in a brightly lit studio overlaid with the ambient sounds of the riverside landscape: hands filmed in POV slowly caress algae against a black background. The graphic quality of this image mirrors that of the opening title.

An entirely black image and her breath only, we hear no footsteps. The breath is ragged; it builds, and then slows. Silence and black.

A sustained wide shot of the bridge. Ambient sounds of the river. END

## Epilogue

The title *Link Zone* is a proposed space, offered both as a room in an institution and a perceptual zone of significance, from which meanings emerge spontaneously, and are waited for, earnestly.

At the beginning of this writing I asked two questions: what is the sensation of knowledge? And: how does the subjectively felt experience of it relate to externally recognised systems of knowledge? In answering the questions I placed intimate autobiography, subjective speculation and storytelling alongside and in equal status to the more readily recognized forms of knowledge represented by lists, glossaries, footnotes and timelines. Each of these forms hangs in a physical space that relates to bodies of knowledge.

The thesis uses the materiality of language as a means to build the palpable sensation of different kinds of space. Passing through familiar spaces including the library, the conference room, the gallery, the data centre, the cave, the gym, the bathroom, the space in front of the mirror, the gut, it exposes these sites as locations for the storage and distribution of knowledge, whether intentionally or unintentionally, through organisation or by accident. Through these concrete sites the thesis invokes abstract institutions operating by their physicality. The university, the museum, the fitness franchise are implicated as well, as sites of knowledge produced by such spaces, including biological research, philosophical proposition, personal epiphany.

The particularities of each space evoked through language work to engender a nuanced understanding of the enfolded relation between the experience of knowledge and its named object, however, it is through the broader act of exposing the inherent materiality of language, knowledge and ideas that the thesis produces its central argument. Through sensual engagement with material and grubby handling of ideas, the thesis dissolves false distinctions between ideas, bodies and the material world and troubles the privileging of seemingly immaterial forms of knowledge that has historically characterised much of Western thinking. In this way the thesis produces a sense of knowledge that recognises its continual overflow between mind, body and world and challenges the ontological superiority of one form over another.

It was only when I converted all my writing to 1.5-spaced 11pt Times New Roman that I gained a tacit sense of the space the research was performing in. The formal expectations of the presentation of a thesis as a written document create a significant space for it to materially occupy. The formal expectation of the educational institution a university represents reveals the overarching framework the thesis operates in: the authoritative presentation of knowledge. In my experience, Times New Roman represents official knowledge. Whist no longer the case, it

was the default typeface in MS Word when I was taught to use it in school and encouraged to type official letters and information through this technology. Times New Roman legitimates its authority to present official information through its recall of the history of the printed word and does so without the nostalgia of Garamond or the whimsy of Book Antiqua. Its corpus height, or x-height; the height of the letter *x*, is large in comparison to its entire body height since it aims for legibility over affectation. A body of text typewritten in Times New Roman instantly slips in your hand to a bureaucratic object and performs within an expectation of official knowledge; Times New Roman is authoritative in its ubiquity. The font foregrounds the context of reading a PhD thesis as a domain in which you expect to find knowledge. Operating within this space, parts of the thesis are able to subvert default expectations of the experience of encountering knowledge. Subjective voices, storytelling and dubious fact giving are used to do this.

Within the overarching site of the authoritative presentation of knowledge, the thesis builds a material sense of different worlds through each section's distinction from one another. By rubbing one kind of space against another the different kinds of surfaces, substances, feelings and ideas gain definition, texture and taste. Themes recur but are successively spoken by different voices in distinct contexts building complex associative patterns. Read as a whole, this written document is a long haul that takes its reader through many destinations. It is difficult to contain a sense of its entirety and exhausting to read in one sitting. The thesis doesn't orient the reader through an arc or a map, and this is intentional. By building distinct zones, it harnesses the sense of suspended time that occurs in enclosed spaces to engender a heightened alertness. This alertness makes the reader aware of different modes of absorbing knowledge.

While individual sections tell stories, their meaning is not conveyed by the arc of a narrative but by building worlds. In this way, the readerly experience is situated not only in the spaces evoked by language through description, voice and allusion, but also in the temporal presentness of reading. By foregrounding this individually situated experience it foregrounds the reader's idiosyncratic experience of knowledge.

Within each zone of the thesis the language used works virally within the temporary limited bounds of the host space it produces and operates within. In *Shake the Dust*, the taste of pitch that sours the wine is alluded to in the pitchy hands of the barkeep and the pitched battle that ensues on Ash Wednesday. The sky appears bruised by the colours purple and yellow foretelling the violence to come. In *The Dark Day* the rusty glow of the hazy skies seems to touch the russet cider drunk across the land and the copper nail heads in the meeting house floor. *Oil Pulling* irreversibly enmeshes a process of thinking with the action of emulsifying oil in the mouth until it is too big to hold. Through *Shake the Dust*, *Sweetly Absorbing Knowledge*, *Oil Pulling*, *Sea Squirt* and *Treatment* the organic process of fermentation produces wine, mead,

cider, kombucha and sauerkraut. While demonstrating material transformation the fermentation recalls the alignment of agitation, tension and learning through Western thinking. The language of each section uses the physical site of its zone to materialise clear themes and in doing so reveals the inseparable enmeshment of ideas and the lived physical world.

The thesis exists across the document held in these pages, an audio recording listened to in a room called *The Zone* and artworks dispersed across different physical and temporal spaces. Artworks have taken place across different venues and created methods to produce a sense of enclosed space. *Dasein and Casein* was performed at an open reading event at Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, then at a MART Gallery in Dublin where I performed the absorption of recalling the text by drawing out mnemonic symbols. *Sweetly Absorbing Knowledge* existed at the specific location of The Priestman Gallery, Sunderland and built a space that applied a performance may take place here through the physical arrangement of chairs in a circle. While specific works have a presence within these pages in altered forms, others have produced methods used to construct this written document.

The event NEED MOISTURE, produced in 2014 amounted to a thesis in itself and its strategies have informed the production of the written work titled *Link Zone*. A video screening with live sound performance at the physical location of BALTIC39, NEED MOISTURE built a perceptual zone around the event in which the audience was primed to find meaning through the fiction of a conference they thought they had missed. After waiting for 45 minutes in a lobby area *foleyed* with the sounds of a lobby, guests were instructed by screens to sit in a room where text on screen guided them through a series of visualisations whilst loud ambient drone was played live.

Bringing independent works into this body of writing they have been enfolded into its forms of storytelling, and given methods of production. Artworks shown or performed in galleries have not been represented in this writing in forms that propose to be their document. By reimagining and regurgitating art works through words 1.5-spaced in 11pt Times New Roman, the thesis confuses the default authority of the original. Instead it proposes rehandling as a means of producing knowledge.

Drawing from the strategies used in individual works, the zones of the thesis produce a space of otherness between material and mental where one feels a heightened sensitivity to significance, one that is present in the space in front of a mirror, the experience of squatting bodyweight and a half, spending 45 minutes waiting for an artwork to start guided by screens and hearsay, and the experience of reading a doctoral thesis.



Across artworks in venues and spaces conjured through the language in this documents, the thesis creates spaces of heightened awareness. The spaces created by the thesis don't attempt to contain knowledge, but to create a sensation of it in the experience of reading or watching or tasting. They question certainties of containment of knowledge and ask what understanding atmosphere can engender that data and information cannot. The thesis asserts knowledge is temporarily produced and owned in the act of handling it in the mouth or mind.

In addition to this written document, which includes references to art works and links to online versions, is an audio recording to be listened to with headphones in the space at Northumbria University called *The Zone*. *The Zone* is a multi-purpose workspace for students studying subjects related to engineering and the built environment; it consists of a hot-desking computer area, group working tables, and temporary display furniture and plotter printers. *The Zone* is adjacent to another part of the university called *The Link*.

Both *The Link* and *The Zone* are visible from the glass-walled lobby to the university gym, where I used to take spinning classes. In the heightened blood-flow and pumping dance tunes of a spin class shimmering kernels of ideas would come in and out of my mind in momentary flashes of significance, which may or may not remain clear after the class. It was during one of these moments that I looked up and saw the words *LINK ZONE* flash through my immediate field of vision. In the spin class in a university with the words *LINK ZONE* in my eyes, I was struck by the enfolded worlds of knowledge I was simultaneously occupying. In that moment, the ephemeral feeling of knowledge made in the momentary synchronicity of beats and breathlessness was enfolded with and not in contrast to the stable structures of knowledge represented by The University.

<sup>i</sup> Bede spent most of his days in a room within the monastery known as the scriptorium, collecting and annotating the works of the Church fathers, making extracts from them and adding his own explanations, even putting right one rotten translation from the Greek. Reading at this time amounted to what might be described as the manipulation of information—through selecting, ordering, and applying resources gleaned from a wide variety of texts. *Manipulate* is one of our many terms derived from *manus*, the Latin word for *hand*.

Bede worked under the orders of Bishop Biscop, also known as Biscop Baducing to make a digest of the books in the vast library at Monkwearmouth-Jarrow because the books were so many and so long that only the very rich could own them and so deep that only the very learned could understand them. The notes made by Bede, his contemporaries and subsequent monks tasked with re-writing texts in scriptoriums all around the known world used the margin as a space to make themselves present by giving voice to the banal bodily experience of reading and writing. ‘...it is hard to bend the neck and furrow parchment for twice three hours,’ a scribe writes on one manuscript, and another, on an eighth-century manuscript, ‘He who does not know how to write thinks it is no labour. Yet although the scribe writes with three fingers, his whole body toils.’ Bede’s fellow scribes also found ways to gossip and complain in the margins: ‘I am very cold’ or ‘That’s a hard page and a weary work to read it’ or ‘Oh that a glass of good old wine were at my side.’ Often these notes were intended for the people working alongside their author, since sometimes a team of four or more would work together on a single manuscript; but some were entirely personal, as when a scribe writes out the scene of Judas Iscariot betraying Christ with a kiss and adds in the margin: ‘Wretch!’

<sup>ii</sup> In this respect Bede took what the Irish monks had already made known about the connection between the stages of the moon and the force and height of the tides and brought it to wider attention. He also refined it. He understood that the moon rising later each day was linked to the tide rising later each day (a pattern he could never have recognized without knowing that the Earth was round) and from this he built a theory: the tides were not water gushing out of some northern abyss, nor water somehow created by the moon, but the moon tugging at the sea ...as if the ocean were dragged forward against its will... He measured the tides against the phases of the moon, exactly, to the minute. For the purpose of gathering his histories he had correspondents in many other monasteries along the coast from Iona in the west to the Isle of Wight in the south. It is thought that he may have asked the monks in each place to make further observations and he found that both moonrise and high tide were later each day by exactly 47½ minutes. Through whatever capacity he knew that the time of the tides could be different in different places. *We who live at various places along the coastline of the British Sea know that when the tide begins to run at one place, it will start to ebb at another...* It may also be interesting to reflect at this stage on the indebtedness of chronology to Bede’s work (...as if time were dragged forward against its will...).

<sup>iii</sup> Such accounts of Bede’s pioneering work demand that I here give context for the rarity of Bede’s access to knowledge. In this respect it is worth reflecting on the scope of the library at the monastery. Christians and missionaries at this time bought books, shared books, copied books. Having their doctrine on the page gave it a particular authority; they were, after all, the People of the Book. Benedict Bishop who established the library at Monkwearmouth-Jarrow was a particularly cosmopolitan character who, after a youth in the service of King Oswald of Northumbria travelled the known world gathering books along the way, including a trip to Rome made entirely in this service. On one occasion Biscop is reported to have given 1000 acres of land for a single manuscript. Interestingly, his foundation at Wearmouth Jarrow seems to have come precisely because of these resources. We are told by Bede in *Historia ecclesiastica* (hereafter HE) that Biscop went to the then king of Northumbria showing the relics and the books and was given the land for the first foundation in Wearmouth in the early 670s because of this impressive amount of resources. 10 years later, by which time he had gathered more resources he was given a second site at Jarrow. The exact numbers of books at the Monkwearmouth-Jarrow library are not known but reports vary from around 200 to 700. The contemporaneous common library at the University of Cambridge is recorded at its peak to have had 330 books. Bede added a list of all the works he accessed in the making of HE at the end of the text, including the biblical books he studied, the heroic verse he wrote, the terrible translation of a Greek text that he edited and corrected, his books on time and the nature of things, his hymns, his epigrams and his book on spelling. (Incidentally, whilst Bede’s poetry has, with a handful of exceptions, escaped the attention of literary critics, his contemporaries and successors were not as inattentive to his epigrams. Generations of poets studied Bede’s virtually flawless Latin verses. His hymns were incorporated into liturgies, which to this day echo off the walls of St. Paul’s church at Jarrow.)

<sup>iv</sup> Like many others working with postproduction, I heard the terms *foley studio*, *foley sheets*, *foley footsteps*, *foley reels*, *foley walker*, *foley editor*, without fully realising, for some years, that Foley was the name of a man. The term Foley comes from a sound engineer named Jack Foley. Foley pioneered techniques of synchronising sounds reproduced after a film's production with the original footage. Starting in the motion picture business in the silent picture era, Jack Foley lived through the times when overnight the industry converted to sound moving pictures. Today, *Foley* is understood within filmmaking and other forms of media production as the means the reproduction of everyday sounds that are applied to source material in order to heighten the sensibility of a viewing or listening experience.

In the beginning, foley art was all about footsteps and the sounds of clothing. Jack and his crew *walked* thousands of miles in place on small patches of dirt or gravel in a post-production studio, eyes glued to the screen in front of them as they imitated the film characters' gaits and used the pieces of cloth in their pockets to simulate the rustle of a pair of pants or the crinkle of a shirtsleeve. It wasn't enough just to match the footfalls and movement of clothing, Jack's aim was to reproduce the personalities of characters, to become them, and let the sound of their tread augment the story.

<sup>v</sup> While sound production is Foley's legacy, it by no means covers his entire participation in the motion picture industry. Early in his film career Jack Foley developed a talent for producing movie *inserts*. Insert, meaning *to place, fit or push into something* refers in film production to close-ups of movements, such as a hand picking up a gun, which are not bothered with during normal shooting and are edited into the final film.

<sup>vi</sup> Jack Foley had a regular column in the Universal International Studio Club News. He was a humorist and wrote under the synonym of Joe Hyde. To understand the significance of this pseudonym, you must know that Joe Hyde was a studio caretaker who spent his working time pushing his cart around the studio lot sweeping up cigarettes, discarded scripts and other studio detritus. Joe enjoyed the notoriety, and Jack Foley continued the charade until Joe's death.

<sup>vii</sup> Data centre is the name given to a site housing a facility used by customers who need space to remotely store and maintain private servers, and to process and/or distribute large amounts of data. Data is the plural form of the Latin datum, *thing given*, the past participle of the verb *to give*. Data refers to given pieces of information or knowledge, which can be represented or coded in forms that are easy to use, process, or store.

Customers rent the space in a data centre to store their server and any additional computer equipment. They also pay for the centre's maintenance - it must be kept at a carefully controlled temperature and humidity for the servers to work. A colocation provider is the service provided in these centres. The name can also be spelled co-location.

<sup>viii</sup> The White Mountain's innards were first transformed into a nuclear bunker in the Cold War era and were subsequently converted into a data centre by Swedish independent Internet and colocation provider Bahnhof - opening for this purpose in 2008. In its original use, the bunker existed under the code named *Pionen White Mountains*.

Lying thirty metres below the earth's surface the centre can only be accessed via a tunnel entrance protected by a forty-centimeter thick door capable of withstanding a hydrogen bomb explosion. To transform the space into a data centre, Bahnhof's architects Albert France-Lanord blasted a further four thousand cubic metres of rock from the central cavern in order to fill the space with the required number of cabinets to be filled with servers - displacing geological matter for the material required to store digital data. In the Bahnhof bunker, the contradictions of the location independence of digital information are laid bare; while capable of existing simultaneously across multiple locations, the data stored here relies on the fixed materiality of aluminium locked cabinets and cooling units. It also depends on the proximity of humans trained in the maintenance of its systems.

In their transformation of the White Mountain bunker, Bahnhof's architects attempted a material approximation of this underground cavern's mythic appeal, enfolding its real history as a nuclear defence site with a collective science-fiction in which we can all imagine how a Swedish mountain bunker should look. The architects name sci-fi movies of the nineteen seventies among design influences including the production design of Ken Adams, who was responsible for the iconic bunkers and villain's lairs of the James Bond movies *Thunderball*, *Dr No* and *Moonraker*. They specifically name the film *Silent Running* as a direct influence on *Banhof White Mountain*. In the film, a character named Freeman Lowell (played by Bruce Dern) maintains a greenhouse on board his space station to preserve its contents for future generations. Lowell is working in the face of the extinction of all botanical life on earth and so when given the instruction to destroy his cargo and return to regular commercial service he declares: *we can't blow up this forest!* Instead of rejoicing with his colleagues about the impending returning home he allies

with the ship's robots to keep the greenery alive. Such a specific sci-fi reference speaks of the architects' alliance with their own ecological protagonist - the mountain. Speaking about their practice the architects have stated: *The creative process is not purely imaginative and includes always sociological and ecological questions.* When asked specifically about *White Mountain* they have said:

'The starting point of the project was to consider the rock as a living organism. The humans try to acclimate [sic] themselves to this foreign world and bring the 'best' elements from earth: light, plants, water and technology. We created strong contrasts between rooms where the rock dominates and where the human being is a stranger against rooms where the human being took over totally.'

<sup>ix</sup> Through the architecture of Bahnhof, humans are placed in dramatic tension with the rock and the nature it represents. In the office, plants dominate like a jungle and desks, computers and the people working at them seem tiny in comparison. The *Floating Glass Conference Room*, however, which hangs in the central cavern of the bunker, protrudes in primary shapes as if directly from the mind of an ardent techno-fantastist, reaching out from a transparent bridge into the bulbous chamber of the meeting room. The chairs' black metal geometry mirrors the angles of the rock surface visible through the room's walls. Below, cabinets fan out to the jagged edges of the walls as if subservient to their angles. In the lobby, artificial waterfalls flow in smooth straight lines from black rectangular shapes, which glow neon at the edges. These bright artificial colours light the mist coming from the pools. Seemingly imaginary details are in opposition with an untamed wider ecology.

In a further dramatisation of this tension between humans, technology and the lobby's waterfalls are switched off during normal working hours because the employees find the noise too invasive. In the perpetual darkness of a mountain's interior, natural light must be simulated and carefully controlled daylight effect bulbs are employed for the wellbeing of Bahnhof staff. Much of the centre's design serves Bahnhof's brand aesthetic and acts as visual propaganda for their advocacy of the free speech of the Internet (in 2010 Bahnhof stored servers and gave colocation services to WikiLeaks galvanizing their self-mythologisation as guardians of non-official information), however the data centre's operational features yield to the daily comforts required by the flesh and blood who work here. Data that otherwise feels immaterial is shown here to depend on humans, whose wellbeing must be considered alongside the optimum functioning of computer equipment at forty metres above sea level. Humans and technology seem tiny cast against the granite walls.

<sup>x</sup> Colocation data centres reflect the image of dispersed light that Serres invokes. Each server stored within a centre is the property of a different private person or enterprise who seeks to avoid the central flow of information and capital that public servers represent. Running data from a private server allows knowledge to be decentralized, keeping it secure and private. Such stores allow information to be dispersed. They disrupt the singular deluge of the flow of capital.

<sup>xi</sup> *Time displacement* is a term used in sociology to describe a shift in activity that takes place on a society-wide basis due to the implementation of new technologies. An example is the way the invention of television shifted people's activities away from other pursuits such as listening to the radio, going to cinemas, talking in the house or socialising outside. The term is not called activity displacement, as it could be, perhaps revealing the equation of time and activity in the quantifying framework of capitalist societies. Time, as it is framed in capitalism's centralising form marches incessantly forward and is accurately measurable through activity-time units. The personal sensation of time can, however, offer a different experience - through rhythm, ritual, frequencies, and loops; like the one created by the undo function of my word processor, like the one that leads a person to time travel to the year 2000 for personal reasons.

Digital technologies offer, mirror and follow such ruptures in the classic narrative time of capitalism. The pause function I frequently put into effect as a child to consider my planning strategies while my Sim City metropolis suffered another alien attack is one of myriad digitally enabled operations through which I have experienced time's stasis. (Sim City is an open-ended city building computer and console game that I played on my PC as a child.) Such attempts at stasis inevitably cause anxieties of time wasting. While writing this I am frequently forced to shut down my Internet connection and hide my phone in an effort to avoid social media. My document is perpetually time-stamped like the clocking cards of a Fordist factory. Synchronicities in the personal experience of time disrupt the dominant timeline of Past, Present and Future - I am able to pause Pattison's work to take the scenes in one by one since this function is enabled through the <i-frame> to the Vimeo page on *DisMagazine's* website where I watch it.

The text flashing at the bottom of the screen in *Colocation, time displacement* recalls the time-void particular to now archaic online forms of communication. The words are transcribed to the letter and appear at the pace of online postings in a chat space. Online chat rooms required a user to be present in the real-time space of the chat. Their form of waiting feels exotic compared to the embedded and synchronised social platforms we live with and through today. They created the endless time in which one stays up until 3am posting messages.

<sup>xii</sup> The legend tells us Titor was sent back to the year 1975 to retrieve an *IBM 5100* computer in order to debug problems that would arise in the time from which he came. He was merely stopping off in the year 2000 on the way. The problems implicated in the narrative are a reference to an issue for computing and data storage, which is still, within some circles of expertise predicted to manifest in the year 2038. The problem is said to exist in all computers whose time is calculated with a *signed 32-bit integer* and where time is interpreted as the number of seconds since the point 00.00.00, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1970. It is predicted that no times will be successfully encoded in this way after 03.14.07, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2038. A fan conspiracy about the Titor postings suggests the character was invented and proliferated by the Disney franchise in order to be used as an upcoming character in a science fiction movie.

<sup>xiii</sup> On my desk is a balsa wood object, an angular construction of a chaise-long and display stand with screen of grey card. A digital print of the same object is rendered against limitless black in a pile within an open Perspex box to its right. An image of a watery surface floats behind the balsa object in the black space. Stuck to the studio wall is an image of replica resting tables and next to this a Risograph print shows a woman with blue eyes staring enigmatically out of the frame. Underneath is a black and white print out of a tall austere white box building with tree branches creeping in the frame. Cracked paint reveals the lines marking the walls' construction from standard dimension units.

<sup>xiv</sup> I made the sculpture *Untitled* by casting concrete to the standard dimensions of sheet materials echoing the visible units of the walls around the work. Installed diagonally across the gallery floor *Untitled* spanned 1220mm by 2240mm, and rose to 240 mm, a height chosen purely for visual appeal. In order to be removed from the gallery I had to smash the object to pieces and wheel-barrowed it in stages to the outside skip. It was swept into rubble sacks and the residual cement dust mopped from the gallery floor. Today all that remains of *Untitled* is the feint trace of the slab's outline etched into the then recently cast concrete floor. [To view this line, look to the space immediately to your left as you enter the final room on the left side of the ground floor of The Sackler Building, Royal College of Art, Battersea, London]. Despite the apparent permanency of concrete, *Untitled* was designed to be temporary. It attempted to undermine the heavy materiality of its slab and foam shape.

<sup>xv</sup> The twentieth century philosopher of language Ludwig Wittgenstein built a house that shares a surface resemblance to *Untitled*. The philosopher worked with an architect named Paul Engelmann to realise the design of *Haus Wittgenstein*, which was originally commissioned by Wittgenstein's sister Hermine. The house is stark and simple - a tall white structure that breaks into three box-units of containment. Tall windows are spaced evenly around its edges and are accentuated by vertical divisions. Wittgenstein's house makes a virtue out of its lack of unnecessary features. When originally completed the house was uncarpeted with grey-black polished stone floors, ochre walls, naked light bulbs and unpainted radiators. The house is now used by the cultural department of the Bulgarian Embassy and is fitted with carpets.

<sup>xvi</sup> Wittgenstein's main focus was on the building's thresholds. The floors and walls fused directly with one another foregoing the contemporaneous euphemistic practice of edging with skirting boards. The edges of the roof are similarly minimized. In place of the soft fabric curtains familiar to the era, each window was framed with a black metal screen weighing 150kg and operated via a pulley system designed to make it appear weightless. When the building was near completion, Wittgenstein ordered the entire upper limits of the space to be removed so that it could be raised by 30mm. The roof was duly removed, raised and physically reattached to maintain the proportions he had carefully worked out.

<sup>xvii</sup> Wittgenstein built the house during a period in which he did not write, in this respect it can be viewed as a material appendix to his most well-known work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. In *Tractatus* Wittgenstein argues for language to be understood as a mirror of reality. He conceives of a world built of finite certainties that are duplicated in the language we speak. A proposition made in language, he conveys, is a logical picture of reality built with building blocks. *The world is all that is the case. The world is the totality of facts, not of things. The world divides into facts. What is the case (a fact) is the existence of atomic facts. We picture facts to ourselves. A picture is a model of reality. A picture is a fact.*

While *Tractatus* wasn't published until 1921, Wittgenstein had already written most of the notes for it in the years he had earlier served in the First World War. By the end of the war he considered himself to have retired from philosophy and so, from 1918, he moved his attention to material study. He engaged in this by studying engineering in Berlin and then Manchester. By September 1941 Wittgenstein had started to work as a porter at Guy's Hospital. During his time there he met Basil Reeve, a young doctor with an interest in philosophy who was studying the effect of shock on air-raid casualties under Dr R T Grant. Grant felt that the concept of "shock" should be abandoned because there was no general agreement as to which symptoms indicated that the patient was suffering from it. Ray Monk, Wittgenstein's biographer, suggests that Wittgenstein was interested by this radical approach to the

problem.

When the blitz ended there were fewer casualties to study and in November 1942 Grant and Reeve moved to the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle upon Tyne, which treated numbers of road traffic and industrial casualties. They offered Wittgenstein a position as a laboratory assistant at a wage of £4 per week. He arrived in Newcastle on 29th April lodging at Mrs Moffat's house at 28 Brandling Park, West Jesmond not far from the hospital along with Grant and Reeve and Grant's secretary, Miss Helen Andrews.

Wittgenstein did not fit into the household very well. In the mornings, when everyone was rather subdued, he was excessively chatty, and in the evenings, when everyone else relaxed together, he became unsociable and preferred to eat in his bedroom rather than joining the others at dinner. Most of his evenings were spent watching films alone. There is a story that Wittgenstein had a blazing row with a bus conductor about a film, and afterwards said how much he enjoyed the discussion. *It was just like the arguments he used to have in Vienna!* I have not been able to find a source of this story in print.

While in Newcastle, Wittgenstein did little or no philosophical work. He had begun to doubt whether he was any longer capable of it, and he found laboratory work very demanding. It was during this period however that he made an unexpected appearance at a lecture by the then young philosopher Dorothy Emmett in Newcastle. Emmett was to give her paper in the flat of Freda Herbert, a chemical pathologist who had invited Emmett to speak. Wittgenstein arrived late and uninvited to Emmet's talk and upon the presentation's close Wittgenstein announced *Now let's do some philosophy!* Before proceeding to take over the meeting, completely ignoring the subject of her paper. *Philosophical Investigations*, 270 contains the sentence; 'I discover that whenever I have a particular sensation a manometer shows that my blood pressure rises.' This may be a reference to an actual experience that occurred while taking part in experiments at Newcastle.

During the war Wittgenstein had kept his notes in his rucksack, carrying them throughout his daily duties in the Austrian army. One day in 1914 he read in a magazine about a court case for a road traffic accident held in Paris in which the prosecutors used models to restage the accident's events. The model replica of the street-world used by the court gave Wittgenstein an idea for his founding theory of the *Tractatus*. On this day he writes in his notebook: '...in a proposition a world is as it were put together experimentally, adding in parentheses, 'as when in the law court in Paris a motor car accident is represented by means of dolls etc.' before placing it back in his knapsack. This mental image conjured by the reported case would repeat in Wittgenstein's mind until he formed a more general understanding that he put into words: *a picture is a model of reality. A picture is a fact.*

<sup>xviii</sup> From the beginning of building Haus Wittgenstein, the philosopher's collaborative process with the architect Paul Engelmann had been fraught with difficulty; Wittgenstein famously took a year to design the doorframes before eventually settling on raw bent brass tubes, and another year to design the radiators. By the end, Engelmann had completely withdrawn from the project from frustration.

When the house was completed in 1928 Ludwig's sister Hermine declared she couldn't live in it: 'Even though I admired the house very much, I always knew that I neither wanted to, nor could, live in it myself. It seemed indeed to be much more a dwelling for the gods than for a small mortal like me.' She left it instead to her sister, Gretl.

<sup>xix</sup> Flanking the desk are two tall plastic bamboo plants that have shed yellow striped leaves onto the floor. Among these lies a grubby folded print of a blue watery surface, its sticker back is attached to itself. Behind me a melamine faced MDF unit neatly fits round similarly plastic-fronted bookshelves. On the shelves are half-spent cans of spray paint: red enamel and pebble-effect. The floor is coated with a thin film of cement dust, material residue of ideas tested out here. I sweep them into bags of gravel in the corner. Three incrementally smaller tables fit snugly under one another.

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