

Chronicle of a
Practice-Based Thing:
Network Optics, Epistemic Crisis
and the Fabrication of Voice

Pauline van Mourik Broekman

June 2022

The Royal College of Art

Declaration

This research project represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'P' followed by the name 'Broekman' in a cursive script. A horizontal line is drawn underneath the signature.

Pauline van Mourik Broekman

21 June 2022

Chronicle of a Practice-Based Thing: Network Optics, Epistemic Crisis and the Fabrication of Voice

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Abstract	5
Figures	6
Design	8
Preface	
Triste Comme un Peintre	9
The Uninhabitable University	14
Digital Agora	17
A Vast Machine	19
Vertov, a Woman	20
The Codecs of Knowledge	22
A Cinema for Everyone	26
I. Script	
Setting and Time	31
Dramatis Personae et Bestiae	31
II. Telescope	
The Words	40
Genius	46
Lawyer-Voice	47
The Moving Image	50
III. Zoom	
Lecturing	51
Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y: Violence, or the Neoliberal Thought Collective	51
About Narration	51
About Facts	57
Caesura	68
Practice-based (To Get a Life)	75
The People's Palace (Choreography of Access)	78
Hostile Environment	80

IV.	Focus	
	Kino-eye: A Communist Epistemology	88
	Camera Obscura	93
	The Network Optic	99
	Knowledge Without Truth	102
	Abuse Value	105
	Cinephilia	108
V.	Scroll	
	✱ The Search (Early 2015)	111
	R.I.P Socialist Photographer: An Interview with Terry Dennett (Spring 2015)	113
	✱ The Gift of Sight (Night of Christmas Day, 2016)	120
	Resistance Without Presupposition (16 February 2017)	121
	✱ Avatar (8 May 2017)	129
	In the Picturehouse (Black Friday, 24 November 2017)	130
	Dickie Beau, Fabulator (13 March 2018)	133
	Glowing Embers of Discontent (18 September 2018)	135
	Anne Boyer Is in Cambridge: A Poetry Workshop (Spring 2019)	143
	✱ The Café in the Hill (morning of 20 October 2019)	145
	Writer's Block / Streams of Life I / II (April-May 2020)	146
	✱ The Fascism of Boris' NHS (10 May 2020)	152
VI.	Still	
	Film: Three Experiments With Montage (2015-2019)	154
	Poem: Inventions of the Mother: A Waking Dream	154
VII.	The Crypt	155
	Coda (Episteme / Techne)	156
	Bibliography	161
	Appendix	
	Ethics Approval	188

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supervisors, Emily LaBarge, Jonathan Miles and Esther Leslie, who each gave me much creative and judicious guidance, as well as a great deal of patience. I enjoyed the comraderie and cultures of conversation I found at the RCA, and thank especially Liz Murray, Christina Mamakos, Anja Kirschner, Charan Singh, Armelle Skatulski, Misha Gafarova, Marita Fraser, Sharon Young, Mariana d'Aboim, Anna Adahl, Janina Lange and Isobel Wohl for inspiration and friendship. I gratefully acknowledge TECHNE funding and feel lucky that the consortium introduced me to fellow awardees, Daniel Nemenyi, Elisa Adami and Alex Fletcher, whose work I admire. Of the film organisations I used to support my research, I leaned inordinately on the provisions of Another Gaze/Another Screen, Birkbeck Institute of Moving Image and Other Cinemas, whose often visionary work was an intellectual and creative lifeline.

I owe *Mute* and MayDay Rooms more than I can say and thank both collectives; for their direct help at various stages of my research, members Benedict Seymour, Rosemary Grennan and Fani Arampatzidou. Sidsel Top, Moss Allison, Mira Mattar and my sister, Danielle Barten, have seen the PhD process up-close, and have my love and thanks for the consistency of their care, sensitivity and humour. Further thanks to designer and friend, Damian Jaques, for heavy lifting on this document and the poem – and a promise to Gill Dibben, Simon Ward and Mark Saunders that I will one day repay the hours they spent teaching me to edit and scan by making a real film.

Thank you to my parents and, most of all, to Ava and Violet, who I learn from every day and who helped me – mostly without realising – to chronicle our life.

Abstract

Chronicle mobilises the popular academic trope of the ‘PhD journey’, together with Dziga Vertov’s cinematic tenet of a ‘communist decoding of reality’, to interrogate contemporary practice-based research’s ontological claim to epistemic singularity and innovation. The project deploys the findings of an enquiry into avant-garde authorial techniques and revolutionary film practice — conducted initially during research into the Soviet director, and subsequently the avant-garde archive more broadly interpreted. An intermedia work of critical writing, video and poetry, it documents the moulding of a voice and methodology analogous with the experiential realities of mass digitisation and carceral capitalism (Thylstrup, Wang) as these are manifest in the neoliberal university and in everyday life. Knowledge claims and documentary specificity, this endeavour suggests, must contend with the hegemonic power of our most ubiquitous digital tools (Chun, Golumbia), whose relation to capital and temporality refracts in unexpected ways across the state, institution and home.

Experimentation with form and medium engages the analytical categories of the project’s foundational discourses — Marxism, feminism, visual studies — while occupying an indeterminacy that is simultaneously fragile and inexpert (‘all too human’), over-extended and grandiose (‘more than human’). This stratagem consciously echoes both Futurist and Soviet rhetoric, and our own era’s abolitionist and neofascist politics, the conflict of which underlies the text. Further exemplars in historiography, poetry and practice-based research (Hartman, Boyer, Palmer) are embraced to supplant the ‘anxiety of influence’ (Bloom) with a joy in un-originality, running against the grain. Swinging between scales, affects and assumed capacities, the uncertain status of the human scholar is illuminated, as she faces an era of automation, devalorisation and social struggle (Kotouza, Kundnani, Clover, et al.).

Chronicle situates itself at the intersection of domestic, emotional, creative and intellectual labour, paying homage to feminist, anticolonial, and black-radical writing-and-making practices whose exclusion from conceptions of self, voice, enlightenment and humanity in notionally liberal-democratic societies fomented their innovations and revolutionary drive. Drawing on a theoretical corpus in transition, *Chronicle* asks who and what produced it; who and what its author, her freedom and expressivity? The PhD simultaneously argues and embodies the reality that, like education, artistic research and creation occurs within the recurring crisis of capitalism and its environment, and its epistemological status is always constitutively relational.

Figures

Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo, *Saint John the Baptist Retiring to the Desert* (Predella Panel from an Altarpiece) (1454). Egg tempera on wood. 30.5 x 49cm.

© National Gallery / (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

Figure 2. Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997). Found footage from film (Leila Khaled and others around the time of their TWA Flight 840 hijacking in 1969). Screen shot.

Figure 3. Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997). Found footage from film (cartoon of girl making a phone call accompanied by a fish). Screen shot.

Figure 4. Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, *The Unreliable Narrator* (2014). Found footage from film (dramatisation of 2008 Mumbai terror attacks). Screen shot.

Figure 5. Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, *The Unreliable Narrator* (2014). Found footage from film ('controllers' speaking to attackers on the ground). Screen shot.

Figure 6. Ingemo Engström and Harun Farocki, *About Narration (Erzählen)* (1975). Harun Farocki reclines by the river with a friend. Screen shot.

Figure 7. Toby Haines, *Brexit: The Uncivil War*, House Productions (2019). Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson and Michael Gove look at the Brexit battle bus. Screen shot.

Figure 8. Laura Poitras, *Citizenfour*, HBO Documentary Films/Participant Media (2014). US Customs and Border Protection's report on Poitras's movements. Screen shot.

Figure 9. Sylvanian miniature animals, pictured as found, approx. 2010. Photo found on mobile phone.

Figure 10. Chalkboard outside Coram's Fields playground, London, with inscription: 'Can I borrow your nanny if you cut my child's play scheme?', 2013. Photo found on desktop computer.

Figure 11. Ava with wand/sword, dressed as a pupil for her make-believe school, 2014. Photo found on mobile phone.

Figure 12. SIMS house made by Ava, with kitchen, bedroom, bathroom and friend, 2014. Photo found on mobile phone.

Figure 13. From left: Evlyn, Ava, Matty, Gabriela, Florence, Sadie, Lucas, Violet (at front), Halloween, 2016. Photo found on mobile phone.

Figure 14. Violet standing on stairs, holding apple behind fallen plaster-cast painting model, 2014. Photo found on desktop computer.

Design

This document uses conventions of writing and presentation to create a space somewhere to the side of the academic essay. In the case of the film script – one example – that is used, this is intended to prompt the reader to summon in their mind's eye the film languages that we receive tutelage in every day. The footnote – another example – is traditionally used to furnish and elaborate on sources. This ground of knowledge can be the natural home of the know-it-all, but also a hiding place, or a platform for the unruly. *Chronicle* disrupts the ways the traditional strata, scales and spheres of research activity and information come together with the author's 'voice/s' in an expository text. The relationship between body text (corpus), foot-note, and head (caput / capital) is significant, and embodies the struggle for authorial balance. I hope these multiple layers are not experienced as cumbersome to move through, or as having been inserted merely for visual effect. Stipulations for document lay-out have in the main been observed. Where that is not the case, the relevant alteration is expressive of a considered strategy. Images are on the whole listed in 'Figures,' but when they are not, it is because I seek to flatten or integrate them into another layer (this occurs in 'Scroll,' which invokes papyrus *and* social media), or to withhold information, in keeping with my methodology (as occurs in 'Crypt,' whose secrets, already encoded, are thereby held under lock and key).

Preface



Figure 1. Giovanni di Paolo, *Saint John the Baptist Retiring to the Desert* (Predella Panel from an Altarpiece) (1454).
Egg tempera on wood, 30.5 x 49cm, National Gallery / (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

Triste Comme Un Peintre¹

It is a clear, sunny day. My friend Charan and I haven't seen each other for months, and we've taken the opportunity the good weather offers to walk by the river. We are both doctoral researchers in the arts, and we compare stories of life at college: our research, writing, presentations, supervision, exams. We share jokes – with a certain gallows humour – about the fact and ubiquity of anxiety. It feels like every PhD student we know is suffering, and so are we. Not one of us is free from crippling insecurity regarding the worth of our work and our performance as students. A chronic sense of over-reach and confusion plagues everyone,

1 Marcel Duchamp's hostility to what he called retinal painting is said to have been motivated by the old French saying 'bête comme un peintre' (stupid like a painter).

on top of the stress of precarity familiar to all who study under neoliberalism.² That condition may be common, but it feels like our surplus agony is something to do with the ‘practice-based-ness’ of our doctorates and must, as such, also be intrinsic to our universities’ recurring failures in accommodating them. I look over at Charan as his black curls – grown long during lockdown – fall on his shoulders. The sun’s rays dance on each strand as he catches my gaze and says, sardonically, ‘The PhD killed the artist.’³

Practice-based research possesses a unique status in the academy.⁴ It goes beyond that of ‘inter-disciplinary’ research, though this has been promoted similarly in the knowledge economy.⁵ Providing it makes an ‘original contribution to knowledge,’ in art research, the operational contract is for material making to unpack and remake knowledge itself. By expanding the materials and activities with which the researcher can legitimately engage to – theoretically – infinity, she is licenced to grasp the tap roots of social totality and dig around as deep as she can in what Foucault designated as society’s episteme.⁶

The creative community trades in the apocrypha of what this paradigm looked like in reality, back in the day of its origins in the early 1990s.⁷ Well-connected older artists getting plum jobs in new creative universities and departments, their work categorised as research-intensive and therefore generously rewarded and with little teaching responsibility attached. Artists lodged in institutions as contented ghosts, haunting offices and corridors as they pursued their significant freedom to define research, method, knowledge. Compared to the modern-day burdens of REF, TEF, KPIs, wage stagnation and exponentially increased workloads, a university job that is remunerated properly and light on bureaucracy seems like a miracle.

2 There are enormous disparities in the conditions of neoliberal study which I have had to flatten to make the more general point that the university is a carceral form. In this process, I have combined and universalised knowledge gleaned both in and outside my own alma mater – and must therefore note that my project is not ‘about’ the Royal College of Art (RCA) or my experiences there. While it was certainly the most immediate environment and laboratory for my research, I use shared experiences and extrapolate from these (and the topos of London) to a more universal – and fantastical – narrative.

3 This story is based on a walk and conversation with Charan Singh, who completed his doctorate at the RCA in 2021 (Singh, 2021).

4 Following the RCA’s conventions, I use the term ‘practice-based research,’ though in the preface and elsewhere I alternate with ‘art research’ and other terms for the sake of brevity and style. RCA doctoral candidates deliver a text no longer than 40K in length (50K including footnotes and appendices), and an accompanying artwork, between which a dynamic relationship is expected to be staged.

5 E.g. ‘art and science,’ ‘art and anthropology,’ and ‘art and medicine’ rather than art as knowledge creation.

6 Foucault (2002).

7 The RCA’s earlier start in the 1980s is an exception and most date commencement of this form of doctorate in the UK to 1992 and the seismic changes inaugurated by that year’s Further and Higher Education Act.

In 2007, building on Fiona Candlin's work, John Hockey named two drivers for the ascendancy of practice-based doctorates in the arts: 1) the introduction, since the 1960s, of increasing amounts of theory into art education – initially via the discipline of Art History and, from the 70s onwards, due to conceptual and feminist art's successful contestation of the theory-practice binary; 2) the restructuring of funding decisions around five-year research assessment exercises (RAEs):

These exercises that cover all disciplines and subject areas involve national disciplinary panels evaluating the research output and culture of university/college departments. Departments are given a score, and the higher the score the more research funding they receive from the state for the next circa 5 years. In this context, the presence of art and design students pursuing research degrees, and whose topics co-relate with departmental research strengths, has been taken as a positive indicator of research culture by panels. Consequently, as Candlin (2001, p. 308) puts it: "Postgraduates have an indirect effect on the RAE and subsequent funding" for departments. She continues: "It is notable that doctoral programmes in practical art have, on the whole, only been in evidence since postgraduate work became an important issue in the relationship between research activity, status and funding."⁸

There is an indexicality between the interpretation of 'artistic research' and the particularities of higher-education funding, development and investment in each nation state, government and university, meaning that the way the rubric has evolved across territories varies significantly. The same is the case with urban 'regeneration' and 'innovation' in all so-called knowledge economies, and these three areas of activity are also integrally connected. The ecosystem of this form of research has developed along Anglophone and European lines, being decidedly Western (if not neocolonial) in spite of a definitional self-reflexivity and progressive ethos.⁹ The stake that it has in – and the care that it pays to – the 'material'¹⁰ has not prevented it from seeming relatively uninterested either in the broader conditions

8 Hockey (2007), p. 156.

9 It is beyond the scope of this project to be exhaustive in my evidence, but a Eurocentrist and/or Anglophone orientation in the literature is striking (the work of Sarat Maharaj is an important exception). For a sample of key sources I have drawn on, see Candlin (2000a, 2000b, 2001); Hockey, *ibid*; Macleod and Holridge (2006); and Barrett and Bolt (2010). The RCA's past rector, Christopher Frayling's early text (Frayling, 1993) is regularly cited (soon followed by Frayling, 1997, a report on practice based doctorates in art and design commissioned by the UK Council for Graduate Education), as is extensive work on the topic by James Elkins (e.g. Elkins, 2009, which does purposefully attempt an internationalisation). For an important recent survey, see De Assis and D'Errico (2019); and for an excellent, short summation of the critical questions that should – but conspicuously do not – inhere in the field, see Wikström (2016).

10 Political critiques of the 'new materialism' and 'speculative realism' to which art research tends also to be proximate are offered in Rosenberg (2014) and Spaulding (2015).

buttressing its own existence or in the peculiar way in which it has survived as one of the better-protected climates for putatively 'autonomous' art practices. As contemporary art in the marketplace contended with an avalanche of market-based pressures and changes, 'art research' moved forward, relatively untrammelled, under the protective awnings of the university (new ideologies of digital productivity and abundance that were always the corollary of the knowledge economy being the all-weather materials shielding it from the heavy weather). As it occupied itself with rigorous discussions of epistemology, the social field which is supposed to determine these was turned upside down.¹¹ Why did this happen, and how? Conditions sustaining rigorous intellectual and creative work are scarce and should be celebrated, but what are the terms on which they exist? For those attached to the – also 'materialist' – project of collective liberation, the lack of concrete discussions of its own conditions of production in art research's dominant discourses are a weakness and a mystery, particularly given the fact that art's desire to breach the boundary with everyday life and social praxis has defined over a century of its history.¹²

If the aims and achievements of art research must be qualified, no such caveats are required to posit that the exposition component of a PhD carries most of its weight. The 'writing element' exists in a state of deep tension with the other parts of the research project – not only the artwork/s, but all the procedural architecture in the larger surround (supervision, examination/assessment, reporting, funding).¹³ This stressed relationship tends to be interpreted as 'productive,' but experience more often than not shows it to be vexed, if not downright tortured.¹⁴ Candlin and Hockey's surveys home in on the awkward centrality of expository writing as well, showing clear causalities between this and an anxiety they diagnose as endemic.¹⁵ At their time of writing (2000, 2007), the affective strain was taken to be the product of a struggle within the novel scholarly practices under investigation – a struggle over professional competencies and roles, disciplinary/intellectual territory, professional self-identity, creative freedom (artists' fear of losing it) and the practical difficulties involved in balancing activities of making, documenting and analysing

11 Art's haptic, tacit and 'non' knowledges are recurring examples. See Nobus and Quinn (2005) for an original example of the latter.

12 See also Holert (2009).

13 Candlin (2000a), p.1-2, cites Elizabeth Price: 'I think it is fair to say that probably 90% of the formal discussions I had were about the status and value of the written component. This was necessary but unfortunate.'

14 In addressing the tortuous object, the art researcher often comes up with an unforeseen textual innovation. However, we do not learn what would have happened had she/we not been impelled to centre the writing element to the extent that she/we are.

15 Hockey, op cit; Candlin, op cit.

simultaneously. Reading their artist-interviewees' accounts (all entirely recognisable and consistent with present experience to the point of being funny), it is beyond a shadow of a doubt that the expository text is also the field's primary instrument of control and governance. 'Exposition,' such as it is made to exist, is more a device to subject and interpellate the artist than it is one intended to support her own powers of investigation and (possibly non-verbal, non-expository) creative production.¹⁶ Being the main component through which the project is rendered 'examinable,' falling short of or exceeding its set conventions can therefore also make the project 'unexaminable' (as students have on occasion been cautioned). Does such failure or deviance equate to art research 'becoming ungovernable,' as the slogan of global insurrectionary movements impels those fighting to abolish the present state of things to do?¹⁷

The doxa across settings being variable (and supervisory and administrative care being equally so), students are, in their execution of this key component, largely the subjects of contingency and circumstance. There can, for example, be enthusiastic institutional encouragement – an invitation so open it verges on exhortation – to write in less conventional ways, yet it is also *always* made clear that the resulting text should, when push comes to shove, still adhere/conform to forms of academic probity as these exist both inside and outside the field. This is the alchemical transubstantiation that structures expectation on all sides. Historically significant PhDs – in visual art, Elizabeth Price's and Katrina Palmer's come to mind – have been profoundly disobedient to established norms, suggesting an avant-garde spirit that takes some managing.¹⁸ The dance of conformity/nonconformity is tacitly indicated, but a choreographic language is never supplied.¹⁹ It is the job of the student to grope around in the dark and find the golden section, magic ingredient or g-spot, however long that takes.

The configuration of explicitness and tacitness, proscription and permissiveness, makes questions of the canon and the syllabus some of the most confusing. Discussions of these

16 Those with an art-historical background, such as Elkins, are at pains to bring their understanding of the image's particularities to this point too, albeit with a different inflection. As Jonathan Miles is cited as saying in Macleod (2016), p. 2, 'artist researchers should not seek theoretical ascription to substantiate or justify their research, their special contribution is to put questions to theory ... the work of art answers its own laws only if it is incommensurable and undecidable on grounds of theory.'

17 'Abolish the present state of things' has become an anti-capitalist epithet and derives originally from Marx and Engels's *The German Ideology* (1845).

18 Price (2000); Palmer (2011).

19 Most practice-based doctorates do offer training in 'research-methods'.

important matters in school forums make it evident – to this student, at least – that ‘success,’ or authorial decisiveness, as regards the corpus of literatures that might pertain here rests on the PhD’s perceived capacity to perform ‘advocacy’ rather than truth-seeking.²⁰ The student must take most seriously her ability to *make knowledge claims* – less so to advance, gradually or otherwise, in progressive steps of evidentiary procedure on the assumption that there is an episteme she must be faithful to or make these claims against. It is up to her to assemble, mould and mobilise a referential literature relevant to her topic from the endless array of sources ‘out there’: to build her world of theory.²¹

The Uninhabitable University²²

How do we describe and measure the contextual factors that sustain, enhance or impinge on this capacity? What does the university as a habitus make possible and impossible (for study and research generally, as well as for art research)? If the art doctorate invites difference, friction and the new in order that knowledge might be expanded and revolutionised, it should follow axiomatically that the most varied and inclusive cohorts possible should be supported to do this work. Public criticism of the academy’s institutional domain makes it clear that this is not the case. Mark Fisher’s descriptions of higher education’s ‘embourgeoisement’; David Graeber’s ‘bullshit jobs,’ as conspicuous in the neoliberal university as they are in any other financialised organisation; Davarian Baldwin’s account of the effects on community life ‘in the shadow of the ivory tower’; Peter Fleming’s crushing anatomy of ‘dark academia’’s literally lethal coerciveness; Róisín Ryan-Flood and Rosalind Gill’s anthropology of its reliance on repression, shame, secrecy.²³ The neoliberal academy is an agent of displacement, pollution, surveillance, racism, extractivism, abuse (the list goes on), its emancipatory promise of education by now a mere smokescreen for a withered social mobility, unprecedented pay disparities and an ‘uberfication’ of provision modelled by platform capitalism and the gig

20 I take this phrase from college discussions, where such an approach was often encouraged. It seems fair to say that at this point in time – for this area of academic research at least – any prior understanding of ‘discipline,’ ‘canon,’ or ‘syllabus’ that may have pertained has effectively collapsed, and that it is in the rubble of their remainder (or the whirlpool of their intermixture, as you will) that the practice-based researcher – aided by the networked archive – is expected to construct an individualised alternative.

21 The analogy to the sci-fi trope of ‘world-building’ is deliberate.

22 The environmental crisis of the planet described in Wallace-Wells (2017, 2019) is intrinsic to, and mirrored in, that of the ‘environment’ of the university.

23 Fisher (2014b); Graeber (2013, 2018); Baldwin (2021); Fleming (2021); Ryan-Flood and Gill (2010).

economy.²⁴ ‘Work won’t love you back,’ as Sarah Jaffe’s book title says. Certainly not, but nor will study – *because it, too, is now work*, in fundamentally similar ways.²⁵

Against this backdrop, the stringencies imposed through expository writing take on a new hue and emerge as part of a larger design. It may, for example, be the case that the steady ‘panelisation’ and discursive takeover of creative material practices (which, at least in post-WWII art schools, did not grant sovereignty to the codes of etiquette, rhetoric and networking that have since become the norm and are the middle class’s lingua franca) should be regarded as a form of class war, a movement and force equal to that restricting access via fees, or state geographies and border regimes.²⁶ The ‘languages’ spoken by those in charge of each college and its ‘assets’ (especially Buildings and Estates, but also IP) have similarly split schools’ social body to the point that there is often no way to bridge these new ‘two cultures.’²⁷ We seem to have moved out of the proverbial Tower of Babel into something more like a two-nations state or an ethno-state, with educators, students, cleaners, administrators (under whose aegis, or care, the university’s assets and services are developed and sold) pushing up from the bottom, and a shareholder or platform-capitalism paradigm – its VCs, HRs, PRs, change consultants and student recruitment officers – pressing down from the top. As *truth claims* go, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s well-known contention that the only possible relationship to today’s university is a criminal one gains validity every day.²⁸

There are other facets to this crisis. As Will Davies and others conceive it, the troubled, vulnerable entity is the Enlightenment itself. Platform capitalism and financialisation’s combined assault rips apart the consensual realities and sites that modernity has constructed over the centuries. With the effects of the one feeding off those of the other (insecurities born of proletarianisation, most notably), in their churn downwards they cause an irrational, collective drive for certainties outside of the standards of verifiable truth.²⁹ As the webs of

24 Hall (2016).

25 Jaffe (2021). Horgan (2021) makes a similar case; Terranova and Bousquet (2004) and The Edu-Factory Collective (2009) are expressive of an early-2000s foregrounding of ‘cognitive labour’ as a productive force, a position which recent history especially has shown to be limited. As regards the affect of aspiration that the university speaks to (and disappoints), the key historical text is Berlant (2011) with Cvetkovich (2012), from the same moment, also documenting the depressive states associated with academic work and spaces.

26 Hall (2021) is excellent on the comparable operation of class dynamics in British publishing.

27 This is a deliberate misapplication of C. P. Snow’s ‘two cultures,’ made in my attempt to find the right terms to describe the extent of the divergences between groups putatively working on the provision of higher education together.

28 Moten and Harney (2013), esp. pp. 26-30.

29 Davies (2018a); Butler (2021).

trust tethering everyone in the shared reality break, ratio and emotion are pitched against each other in a battle to the death (every day that the epistemic argument intensifies, another patch of middle ground falls away, leaving only feelings, superstition, ‘silos,’ belonging, tribes, kith and kin – each a new zone of opportunity for a capitalism turned ‘limbic’).³⁰

But agnotology – the conscious process of instilling ignorance, or undoing learning and knowledge – is so much older than such commentators on this present febrile moment would have it, and precedes and exceeds the phenomena generating alarm.³¹ Hasn’t the university itself produced agnotologies; destroyed Indigenous knowledges (as Londa Schiebinger documents exhaustively);³² furthered the double consciousness of liberty, equality and fraternity for some but not all?³³ Didn’t it have a hand in destroying the global radical tradition – replacing it, as the rioters of ’68 already complained (and as E. P. Thompson argued soon after), with bogus subjects such as management and business studies?³⁴ Fascism – in the ascendant around the world – is always allied with and dependent on agnotology of one sort or another,³⁵ and liberal democracy’s self-image sustained by a systematic forgetting of the crimes of colonialism,³⁶ so how might we struggle for the new global universalisms and forms of reason that motivate many of the public intellectuals fighting contemporary capitalism’s death cult today?³⁷

30 Davies, *ibid*; Courtwright (2019); Väliaho (2014). Seymour (2019) makes similar points (that insecurity has a connection to addiction, not that disagreement is addictive). Jodi Dean’s recent work argues that ‘communicative capitalism’ makes conflict inevitable because, via its numerical rewards and impulses towards comparison (and thus competition), for human beings the post-Web 2.0 technical architecture ‘turns communication into economy.’ Dean (2022, 2020).

31 ‘Agnotology’ is a neologism coined by Robert N. Proctor and Iain Boal in the context of the tobacco industry’s efforts to manipulate popular public-health understanding via forms of information management such as public relations (from ‘agnosis,’ the Greek term for ‘ignorance’ or ‘not knowing’). Proctor broadened its application in Proctor and Schiebinger (2008). See also Boyd (2019); Giroux (2014).

32 Schiebinger (2017).

33 Du Bois (2007); Fanon (1986); Fields and Fields (2012).

34 Ross (2002); Thompson (2013).

35 Giroux, *op cit*; Stanley (2018).

36 Charles Mills’s analytical concept of ‘white ignorance’ is, in this respect, structurally adjacent to the literature on agnotology and the two presently frequently overlap or are used interchangeably. A landmark text operating similarly is Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past* (1995). See Mills (2007, 2017); Trouillot (2004).

37 See Bangstad (2019) for the example of Achille Mbembe; Gilroy (2020) for that of Ruth Wilson Gilmore. I take these scholars’ statements on the desirability of a new universalism to exist in a continuum with Susan Buck-Morss’s arguments regarding the historiographic implications of a proper recognition of Haiti’s revolution, or the questions arising out of the various conflicting universalisms at play in public considerations of ‘West’ and ‘East,’ ‘capitalism’ and ‘communism,’ in the post-glasnost moment (Buck-Morss, 2009, p. 77-151, 2000).

The Digital Agora

In keeping with the neoliberal timeline at which this account already gestures – in which the temporalities of capitalist boom-and-bust predominate – the seed for this PhD was a crisis: the defunding, between 2010 and 2012, of *Mute*, the magazine that I co-founded a few years after leaving art school in 1991. A student project at the Slade School of Art in the very early 90s, the publication was relaunched in 1994 as an ‘Art and Technology Newspaper’ and explored the effects of the Web on cultural production.³⁸ When it lost its core funding in the first round of financial-crisis-era cuts to culture,³⁹ I decided to re-enter higher education. The fin-de-siècle internet that the magazine covered was said to be democratising, empowering, and granting ‘voice’; a ‘space’ of rhizomatic growth where citizens exerted their rights to freedom of expression and engaged in open debate across borders.⁴⁰ The dominant morphology was horizontal, dispersed, *flat*. Politics – as engaged in by a vanguard of artists, academics, activists and coders – performed a flight into decentralisation. While Manuel Castells coined the term ‘space of flows’ to disambiguate territory and networked information,⁴¹ the dominant vocabulary for the activism envisaged was pegged to the Greek agora and to Western constructs of equality, freedom and rights. Many cheerleaders understood the net as a site for ratio and democracy, albeit somewhat feral and unruly/unregulated (‘anarchic’ in style, if not always in substance).⁴² Less recognised but at this time – or for those looking back – possibly more resonant discourses celebrated the liberations of dis/embodyment and trans-boundary identification: the anonymising, virtualising, text-based internet provided powerful means to build non-normative communities rooted in experiences of difference and otherness (physical disability, political or cultural waywardness,

38 Simon Worthington, my co-founder, edited the magazine’s earlier namesake, enabling our iteration to build on its experiments with media and publishing formats.

39 Van Mourik Broekman (2011). *Mute* is discussed in detail in van Mourik Broekman and Berry Slater (2009).

40 See King (2000); Berry (2001). Both authors were *Mute* contributing editors whose PhDs problematised the spatial understanding of the Web that early internet discourse normalised. It is testament to the (minuscule) size and relative homogeneity of the community of ‘early adopters’ – as well as a profound alteration of the Web’s technological architectures, around attention – that it took until relatively recently for the concomitant understanding of ‘free speech’ to be dramatically riven by conflict; indeed, for this to become the characteristic through which public conception of the internet was normalised (viz. ‘cancel culture’, etc.).

41 This was first articulated in Castells (1989), pp. 126-171.

42 Key texts from an early argument on internet freedom and state power are anthologised in van Mourik Broekman and Berry, op. cit. (See Chapter 1: ‘Direct Democracy and Its Demons’, pp. 25-72).

trauma).⁴³ These too were born of the internet's connective power, its prosthetic ability to create bonds of non-local identification and solidarity.⁴⁴

Since that time, dramatic changes have occurred, and it seems that no one is clear as to whether to blame capitalism or 'technology' nor exactly how one came to stand for the other. Intensely visual, the internet in its present mode fosters idealised presentations of self, yet invites exaggerated scrutiny and measurement of actually embodied selves. Intimacy is promised yet also systematically denied, and a word cloud generated to describe its present-day characteristics might centre on 'narcissism,' 'loneliness,' 'addiction,' 'depression' and 'radicalisation' (phenomena of the psyche and the emotions, not of reason) rather than 'emancipation,' 'equality' and 'justice.' In this new order, anorexia and self-harming communities, therapeutic and fetish forums, online suicides and murders, child pornography and sexual violence rings exist on the same informational plane as the mainstream internet of news, advertising, commodities, commissioned content and normative lifestyles. On the whole, media consumption is taken to occur predominantly in algorithmically structured 'filter bubbles' where users self-segregate around conservative affirmations of their existing identities and behaviours. This way, finely granulated social types determine and consolidate media usage, and any utopian image of radical togetherness is quashed in a world of endlessly splintering niches. 'Information overload,' 'scale sickness'⁴⁵ and loss of sovereignty for the interior self (the 'forum internum') may be overdetermined, but now also recur in public discussions of the internet's definitive characteristics.⁴⁶

43 Entirely text-based, BBS, Muds and Moos were, psychologically speaking, often experienced as rich, playful and supportive environments where participants suffered less rigid material and social determinations by bodily capacity or appearance than 'IRL' (in real life).

44 Characteristics which can be juxtaposed with the present putative propensity to 'polarisation,' and the resulting preoccupation with mechanisms for legally authenticated representation and accountability – deeply inimical (also) to the liberating aspects of online anonymity.

45 Reminiscent of Timothy Morton's 'hyperobjects' though not the same, the phenomenon of 'scale sickness' was discussed in Nelson and Kunzru (2021), 50:17-52:49, and bears resemblance to the affects which this PhD attempts to grapple with throughout.

46 The 'forum internum' is a new legal category that has emerged in response to the perceived threat to human self and interiority from surveillance capitalism. See Kennedy (2020). A good, sceptical treatment of the catastrophising models networked digitality tends to invite is Lucas (2012), whose observations here pertain to the often ahistorical construction of bourgeois psychic experience as universal – of which the purportedly novel endangerment of a cognitive *forum internum* must surely be an example.

A Vast Machine⁴⁷

What point of view, or mode of spectatorship/participation, has this environment created? I call this the ‘network optic’ in an attempt to denote the coupling of a gaze *inwards* (towards the subject) of state, corporate and other actors – which ‘look at’ and ‘see’ individuals, populations and the world from a panoptic or surveillance viewpoint geared towards the extraction of data – and a gaze *outwards* by technologically enhanced individuals endowed with media capacities (of production, consumption, observation and capture) that would have been inconceivable a few decades ago.⁴⁸ This coupling is dynamised by mechanisms of datafication and topologisation, which push the Foucauldian paradigm of ‘biopolitics’ to the limit of what it can hold.⁴⁹ The emphasis in this project is on carcerality (which has always subtended biopolitics but is now so expanded and intensified that it sets the theoretical and practical agenda, and is also so tightly woven into machine vision and algorithmic prediction/sorting that the two cannot be thought of apart from each other).⁵⁰ Altogether, they render any bipolar vector (inwards/outwards) deficient as a model of interpretation and demand that, in terms of the paradigms of vision under discussion in this PhD, we incorporate the circuits of cybernetic feedback, as well as the search and geolocation technologies on which all operational effectivity is made to depend.

A profound troubling and commingling is occurring in concepts of self and world, life and history, body (or matter) and information as these new modes of observation, biometric capture and information transfer – the forms of cognition they enable – come together and sync in new ways with processes of population management, policing and value extraction. This mutual contamination has bearing on political economy, but my focus here rests primarily on its effects for the narrative, storytelling and fabulation involved in individual and collective sense-making. We are seeing a collapse of certainties regarding the genealogies and histories of the world system as a whole – an implosion of what we might call the conventions of ‘life writing’ of Human and Planet – as capitalism’s crisis character deepens and linear forms of writing and moving-image production meet the synchronous forms of the

47 This subtitle alludes to Edwards (2013).

48 See Zuboff (2019). For a contemplation of the ‘cost’ ledger of these capacities, see e.g. Couldry and Mejias (2019).

49 Lury, Parisi and Terranova (2012); Clough and Willse (2011).

50 See e.g. Wang (2018); Gilmore (2007) for discussions of carcerality, whose structural connection with vision technologies is further referenced in Chapter IV.

network.⁵¹ The languages and techniques of film and video, with all their prior specificities,⁵² are smashed and recomposed in this process, leaving ‘users’ of ‘services’ to perform the archive,⁵³ document and edit the world – disjunctively – as they walk, sit, chat, strike, riot.⁵⁴ This scenario produces contradictory effects for the production and consumption of traditional film, whose standard ninety minutes often feel too ‘costly’ a commitment of attention.⁵⁵ The new deluge of ‘content’ ushers in new hegemonic forms – true crime, historical biopics (all of which speak of the conditions of the archive). Yet in spite of a wholesale verticalisation and homogenisation of distributive infrastructures, this has not drowned out new hybrid forms, which are flowering.⁵⁶ Poetry, too, is in explosive renaissance.⁵⁷

Vertov, a woman

It is said that research funding can only be won by taking the narrow view. One should acquire a microscope, not a telescope, to be successful in winning subsidies. Find the space between two books on the shelf – do not try to make the whole shelf. Add your stone to the pyramid of scholarship so it can reach the sky...

Producing *Mute* in a small, collectively run organisation had made me want to understand

51 This process is of course already four decades under way but accelerated during the phase shift caused by glass-fronted smartphones and Web 2.0. Sylvia Wynter’s twinned historical analysis of narrative and the ‘genre of “Man”’, and of ontology and epistemology regarded together, explains the spike of interest in her work in this context of turbulence.

52 See e.g. Mulvey (2006) and Blom (2016) for medium-specific histories of video technology. An earlier term for the processes of media melding was ‘convergence’; ‘animation’ presently also has purchase, for which see, e.g., Lamarre (2009); Levitt (2018). The shift from photography to video (Petro, 1995) is however different than the moment of new media’s mobilisation of existing media forms, wherein the network is more structurally operative. See also Røssaak (2010, 2011).

53 This is a bastardisation of Diana Taylor’s important concept of ‘performing cultural memory’ (Taylor, 2007).

54 Clover (2016) is echoed with these last two words – *strike*, *riot* – to point to the multiplicity of scenarios in which this activity happens – i.e. not just at leisure but while/towards organising, resisting, rioting.

55 In ‘The Last Picture Show,’ the final episode of The Film Programme (30 September 2021), presenter Francine Stock said that committing to a feature-length film, now, instilled in her a sense of panic.

56 An informative account is Blackledge (2021).

57 Berardi (2012, 2018) argues that poetry’s very nature as ‘the language of nonexchangeability’ makes it the natural locus of resistance against neoliberal dematerialisation and financialisation and calls for an embrace of this old art form as an embodied healing modality, through breath especially. Poetry is not a ‘solution,’ or a balm only, but its capacity to wield power disproportionate to its modest means is salient, and the latter point is also noted in Luker (2016). For an important collection of essays on UK poetry which contextualises such ideas, see Hayward (2022).

the relationships between individual and collective authorship and creativity. I had glimpsed a choreographic note by Yvonne Rainer in an exhibition in Bregenz, in 2012, whose imposition of a firm boundary between the two surprised and impressed me in its clarity: Rainer seemed to know exactly where to draw the line so that the unique characteristics of both forms of artistic production could be protected in one art work (the solitary and the shared supported equally).⁵⁸ I started scouring the literature on collectives, collaborative art and dance to formulate a plan, but it was all too general. I remembered *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) and decided Dziga Vertov might hold the requisite density of meaning to warrant the years of research a doctorate entails – and also possess the necessary specificity for a funding consortium to feel safe in grantgiving. It was a lucky punt.⁵⁹

How can Vertov's legacy help us look at our questions?⁶⁰ There are obvious ways in which he is relevant to them: his films' obsession with mobility and labour; their collapsing of the perceptual distances of time and space; the prefiguration of a decentralised 'citizen journalism'; the visual fusion of man and machine; celebration of the camera as inquisitive and, necessarily, autonomous. As I progressed in my research, a greater familiarity with the literature made a number of latent and less-discussed tendencies more compelling for me: Vertov's disgusted descriptions of human frailty;⁶¹ his passionate, abiding interest in 'the woman question';⁶² his preoccupation with identity, masking, self-deception, splitting (an intuitive awareness of the 'non-unitary' self?); his narcissism, emotionality and socially antagonistic/divisive character.⁶³ Did these constitute a Jamesonian 'political unconscious' of his practice – a shadow side or worm – that was especially pertinent in the present setting of 'nervous states'?⁶⁴

58 For the exhibition catalogue, see Dziewior and Engelbach (2012).

59 Would-be artist-academics must above all master the skill of adaptation to convey upon their work the degree of subject and disciplinary specificity demanded of research elsewhere in the university.

60 I have made a decision in this PhD to observe the standard academic and archival practice of referring to 'Dziga Vertov' in the singular, ascribing *individual*, not collective, authorship to his works. It should however be clear from the themes I develop (and that the films themselves foreground) that I regard this authorship as open to contestation and query, or at the very least as shared with his wife, Elizaveta Svilova, whose innovations via experimental practices of editing are incontestable and integral to the films' historical significance. As Hito Steyerl is on record as saying, the title of *Man With a Movie Camera* should in fact be *Woman At an Editing Desk*.

61 A nigh-obsessive negative emphasis on illness, weakness, petrification and dependence litters entries in the seminal reader, Vertov and Michelson (1987).

62 See MacKay (2013).

63 These are most comprehensively covered in MacKay (2018). As it could act as an umbrella to, and summary of, many of his prior publications that I consulted, this is used as my primary source for MacKay's varied historical work on Dziga Vertov, modernism, and Soviet cultural history.

64 Davies, op cit.

The canonical interpretation would render this shadow side ‘feminist,’ in that it ‘writes from the body,’ takes ‘feelings as facts’ and makes the personal political. Would an anti-Promethean, anti-organicist strain in contemporary Marxist-feminist, anti-colonial and abolitionist work allow for a transhistorical connection, in spite of Vertov’s own (conscious) Promethean futurism?⁶⁵ His work’s themes and motifs – production, strength, solidarity, flow – diverged with this tendency as often as they coincided.⁶⁶ In the contemporary strain, failure, frailty, trauma, illness, invisibility, archival absence/silence, fugitivity, sex/reproduction and maternity/nativity recur and – as catalysts to sociality, care and communion – seem to constitute a form of deviance from and resistance to the normative, individualist subject of computational capitalism (a pliant, virtuosic cis person *ready for work and open to quantification*). But can we go so far as to make these conceptual loci the sites of revolutionary change? Should the ‘sick woman’ or ‘captive maternal’ – to name the powerful coinages of Johanna Hedva and Joy James – be construed as a revolutionary subject in keeping with the interpretative premises that were emergent in my project, or would this be fantastical and historically inappropriate – a wish-image or wilful overcoding?⁶⁷

The Codex of Knowledge

The enormity of the questions coming out of my topic overwhelmed me. Every schema and structure I drew up zoomed too far out and felt totalising (which here *also* meant ‘entirely

65 Owen Hatherley argues that this was not just a prefiguration of Stalinism and the cult of the New Soviet Man but a literalisation of it in filmic language (Hatherley, 2016, pp. 144-54). Hungarian documentarian Peter Forgács goes further, calling Vertov ‘Stalin’s Riefenstahl’ (MacKay, op. cit., pp. xc).

66 I looked to Kandis Williams, Candice Lin, Johanna Hedva, Carolyn Hazard, Ja’Tovia Gary, Hannah Black, Jesse Darling, Chantal Akerman, Anne Boyer, Nat Raha and Saidiya Hartman (whose concern with what she calls the ‘violence of the archive’ echoes Benjamin, and whose empathetic writing into its silences mirrors Vertov’s wish for solidarities forged across time, as well as space; see Hartman, 2019). Hartman (e.g. Hartman, 2007, 2016) also fed my preoccupation with the maternal, as did Sophie Lewis, Adrienne Rich, Joy James, Lisa Baraitser, Bracha Ettinger, Elissa Marder, Janet Harbord, Jacqueline Rose, Zakiyya Iman Jackson, Hortense Spillers and Alexis Pauline Gumbs.

67 Hedva (2014); James (2016). Strikingly, both argue that these subjects need not be gendered female or femme (Mary Wollstonecraft’s feminisation of the soldier class appears to be an intriguing precedent, in this respect). In the case of James’s captive maternal, for example, it is in the pivotal relation to history and her social field that her reproductive power – and consequent leverage – is defined, not via her gender itself: ‘Alexander Kojève’s Introduction to the *Reading of Hegel* argues that the slave has powers that surpass the master; that the latter, in fact, is dependent upon the former. Here I argue that *leverage*, rather than “feminism” or “intersectionality” or “progressivism” might be a useful term for recognizing power and predation.’ See James, *ibid*, p.5/257, my emphasis.

impossible to execute by one human being, in one PhD'). I had bigger problems as well. A historical fear of public speaking that I'd suffered from since my teens (in writing, since my twenties) caused panic attacks, hyperventilation and blocks of various kinds. I had hoped that the PhD would alleviate these through practice; instead, it made them worse. Inching towards and then past my fiftieth year, I encountered menopause and its physical, affective and cognitive impacts – perfect antonyms for the 'resources' that scholarly research requires. Then a traumatic event interrupted my personal and family life, destabilising the facticity of my sense experiences and my trust in human communication. Any cognitive capacity I had now flowed only to the new and urgent 'research questions' thrown up by this event and its aftermath. I became a detective of my own life, and my reading performed an about-turn. The only literatures that I could bear, or that made any sense, were trauma and psychoanalytic theory, poetry, self-help and AUTO-anything.⁶⁸

I concluded that I would have to stop my project and leave college until a certain patterning between academic and 'private' environments (all structured by new media) became obvious to me and made me reconsider. Inspired by my revised reading, a hesitant militancy emerged. I realised I had to write *into* the 'problem,' not try and conquer it or wish for something else (or indeed, wish to *be* someone else).⁶⁹ Johanna Drucker had deconstructed knowledge's 'codecs' (books, scrolls, webpages) in a workshop I attended, emphasising their consistent occlusion of labour and time, and made me realise that the PhD – and the practice-based PhD specifically – had its own particularities in this regard that needed to be taken apart and denaturalised.⁷⁰ Together, the commodity-fetish character of knowledge products and the military provenance of the tools we use to locate them (and to pursue our research) enhance, exaggerate *and* diminish the capacity for reading, 'processing,' understanding. I could not 'touch' or exist in relations of solidarity with my subjects and materials, even while I was

68 Important early influences in this respect were van der Kolk (2015); Nelson (2015, 2009); Preciado (2013); Boyer (2008, 2015); Shreerekha (2018). The RCA's 'AUTO--' conference organised by Emily LaBarge in May 2019 brought many strands together (Anne Boyer's keynote and her designation of 'the literature with no name' was particularly important since it articulated the commonality of trauma across examples, and authorship by 'not a white man'). With 'AUTO-anything' I acknowledge the differences between AUTO-fiction, ethnography, theory. Wiegman (2020) and the collection it introduces is a helpful survey on the latter.

69 Boyer (2016) is a good example of this 'writing into.'

70 Leiden University's Academy of Creative and Performing Arts hosted the workshop, on 27 and 28 February 2020, to consider digital publishing methods for *JAR: Journal for Artistic Research*. Drucker's uniquely insightful scholarship on the codec, knowledge and 'information,' is too extensive to itemise here; its treatment in her best-known volume, on artists' books (Drucker, 2004), helped me see continuities between my artistic, publishing and research practices, as well as to grasp the medium specificity and strangeness of the contemporary practice-based arts doctorate, prepared for storage as [a] digital file/s on a web-based university repository.

finding more of them than I might otherwise have done (I had amassed ever greater amounts across numerous disciplines in an unthought impulse of enlightenment-via-accretion).⁷¹ Was the lack of material resistance in the search process effecting a dynamic and process more akin to bulimia, hoarding or self-harm than to learning or discovery?⁷² The ‘surveillance optic’ of the internet is a seductive one when physical, social and interpersonal webs and bonds are tenuous, eroded or broken. I started to see the correlation between platform provision, neoliberalism and austerity (Gorillaz ‘solves’ food delivery in a deracinated urban landscape; Google ‘provides’ answers for students stripped of rooted, intergenerational infrastructures for pedagogy and knowledge transmission; MOOCs and other modularised learning templates create an ‘offer’ for the time- or certification-poor).⁷³ To oversimplify and drive home the point: the problem is less ‘Facebook’ than the way communities have become so immiserated and vulnerable that they can’t fight such forces or ignore them in favour of their own superior alternatives. As Lola Olufemi’s succinct work *Feminism, Interrupted* showed, it is about the whole environment (*everyone and everything*), not individualised rights – and organising provides more, and better, for ‘safety,’ plenitude and wellbeing than the law.⁷⁴

The Vertovian gesture, I decided, would be to ‘uncover,’ to lay claim to and to play with traces of my own life and labour as a student and mother. Like an editor working with rushes and reels, categorising, labelling, and choosing among them, I should treat what I had amassed as ‘raw material’ (the Benjaminian rags and scraps of diaries, notebooks, presentations, exam texts), cutting into and across it, montaging, splitting, bonding – facilitating ‘sight.’ The kinoki’s intense self-reflexivity regarding production (be that bread-making, steel-casting or film-production) would be replicated by grounding my project explicitly in the material apparatus and chronology of everyday life: the stages of a chaotic, error-prone process to be shared and shown – rather than striving for, or assuming, a perfectible knowledge or

71 Kiaer (2005) is an important account of entirely different phenomenological relations in early communist Russia, where commodities metamorphosed into ‘comrades.’ Widdis (2017) was, for me, an equally important account – of the revolutionary dynamic’s reach into the human senses.

72 Balász Bodó explains that the use of free/open content is contingent on the resourcing in situ: whether this allows for the consumption and metabolisation of that content. The presumption that ‘free’ material might somehow address information or knowledge asymmetry is wrong-headed because stable life worlds are required to make the most of its availability (the result is that free-content repositories are mostly utilised in spaces of relative social and material privilege). See Bodó (2019).

73 Most universities are planning such modularisation (the RCA has the ‘FAM,’ or flexible academic model).

74 Olufemi (2020) which, after Lewis (2019) and Haider (2018) supported further reading on the histories of policing, liberal feminism, abolitionist strategy and international solidarity building.

knowledge *object*. ‘Found material’ would serve a *factography*,⁷⁵ as produced and theorised by Soviet creative producers (who, it turns out, prized the direct lived truths of everyday accounts, such as in the genre of the *ocherk*),⁷⁶ as well as the Formalist technique of *ostranie* (estrangement).⁷⁷ In the traditions of auto-theory, it would help me to look upon my life as if I were a stranger to it, not to demand that the domestic, emotional and bodily spheres be severed and cast off. A revised emphasis on cuts, composition, interval, rhythm and pattern would echo and side with the ‘trickery’ that Vertov was accused of by many of his peers (as his films ran the gamut of the montage and editing languages then current).⁷⁸ Holding close my ambivalence towards the institution of practice-based research, I would signal a strong commitment to its principles and pay homage to other ‘researchers’ – especially those *outside* the academy.⁷⁹ Art’s movement (always practice-based, always research-based) into the neoliberal university was to be the locus classicus and subject of study. Not the ideal objects made there.

These changes also offered ways and means of grappling with the ‘facts’ coursing underneath my and Vertov’s ‘truth-seeking’ practices (in my case, the safe, bourgeois life of a white, middle-class woman; in his, the masculinist, technophilic and somewhat egomaniacal

75 Buchloh (1984) stands as a singularly illuminating account of factography’s development; Fore (2006a, 2006b) offer an introduction and contribution to *October*’s compendium dedicated entirely to the topic (including texts by Sergei Tret’iakov, Nikolai Chuzhak and Aleksandr Rodchenko).

76 The ‘*ocherk*’ was a short documentary sketch, often including photographs and with subtly narrative features; see Fletcher (2018), pp. 101-117, and Reischl (2018), esp. the ‘Enter the Narrative’ section.

77 See Fore (2011).

78 Tsivian (2004) is peppered with the vocabulary of tricks, gimmicks and superficiality that Vertov’s films frequently elicited: the import of Viktor Shklovsky’s critique, ‘Where is Dziga Vertov Striding?’ – included in the volume – is, similarly, that the films’ complex montage method renders his sources, and documentary/newsreel film in general, ‘broken’ by cutting unthinkingly into their capacity for a grounded semiosis of specific locales, historical time and named individuals (Shklovsky, 1926). John Grierson, ‘father’ of documentary film, was similarly dismissive: ‘Vertov, coming nearer to the problem, used every camera exhibitionism to tell in *Enthusiasm* how wonderful the worker’s life was. But the heroic angle of his vision of workmen always failed to observe what the men were doing. Altogether, the Russian directors have been slow in coming to earth.’ (Grierson, 1946, p. 116).

79 In Jackson (2020), we see uncanny parallels with the definitional parameters of art-research practice (e.g., p.2). An interview that James Butler conducted with Owen Hatherley (Butler, 2020) provided a list of unique exemplars for dealing with chronology and techno-social change, e.g. Jennings (1985) and Tortorici (2020) (Butler, *ibid*, 46:20-49:00 and 53:30-54:10, with thanks to Juliet Jacques for locating this interview, which I had misremembered as hers). These spurred me to further explore the chronicle in a broad sense (including the diary), e.g. via Jarman (2018); Lang (2019); Lockwood (2021).

inability to practice the politics of collective solidarity espoused by his artistic programme).⁸⁰ If the phenomena of my life were symptomatic of broader, societal shifts, I should jump across and between descriptive vocabularies to draw out their commonalities and contradictions. Without seeking to equate them, contemporary capital's restructuring of labour involves a similar pushing at, and anxiety for, the individual – as we see in the paranoid features of intimate relationships (around human singularity and 'value'). I would mobilise relevant tropes from software, security and platforms to build verbal and visual refrains around this underlying problematic (accounts, shells, crypts, chains, keys, number-, face- and finger-IDs; the double/duplicate/replicant/replacement/clone). The boundary dissolutions and fortification, bodily hardenings and softenings symptomatic of the conflicting energies of abolition, disaster communism/capitalism and fascism would be shown to be connected with the cybernetic practices of 'navigation' and their colonial history.⁸¹ Reconfigured, the project would ask more clearly: what habits are being inculcated and what social relations are being produced? Are we together, or are we being made to stand alone? In the parlance of modernist discourse, are our eyes opened or closed, are we woken up or put to sleep?⁸² All along, the *voice* of the author would undulate and stutter, whisper, crack or scream, in keeping with the changes in tempo, state, environment; the 'per-sona' of the written text (a vessel for sound/'son,' as it exists etymologically) would change tone, personality, direction.

A Cinema for Everyone

Vertov always emphasised the constructed, worked nature of film. Films were a 'house,' a 'shoe' or a 'thing' (hence my thesis title).⁸³ But to portray him as primarily a Constructivist or Productivist filmmaker is, we understand from the most rigorous and sensitive of analyses of his work, mistaken. To isolate his work within Soviet film history commits a similar error; his

80 In spite of his obsession with women and gender equality, Vertov robbed his wife, Elizaveta Svilova, of full authorial parity. By safeguarding and placing their archive in what is now Vienna's Film Museum, and in addition to her role as partner and editor, she quite literally acted as the medium to contemporary Vertov studies. Across his scholarship on the director, John MacKay has been consistently sensitive to these and other contradictions in the 'Vertov' oeuvre.

81 Mende (2020); Mende and Holert (2019, 2022)

82 Vertov (1929) actively deploys these tropes of waking (consciousness/illumination) and sleeping (unconsciousness/ignorance), optimising the features of the stylistic genre he adopted (the 'city symphony', which follows the rhythms of an urban day cycle, starting in the morning and ending at night).

83 See Fore (2010)

engagement with – for example – D. W. Griffith and Walt Whitman was significant,⁸⁴ and it is perhaps only the rhetorical force of the discursive apparatus Vertov constructed around the work's beginnings that suggests the binaristic readings I was initially also tempted by (truth/fiction, and so on). The first part of John MacKay's three-part biography of the filmmaker emphasises, instead, that Vertov's corpus can be used as a key to open – or as a kaleidoscopic prism through which to see – all the different historical discourses and moments within which it was handled, investigated and put to use (which also means, as good historians know – and I have been endlessly astonished to learn – misconstrued).⁸⁵ MacKay recounts, for example, that the 'self-reflexivity' that most people (including myself) deem to be a ground zero for his project did not inhere in its intent, but was read into it – and only 'en groupe' from the 1970s. He writes:

This eloquent 1960 statement by film editor and critic Dai Vaughan forecast numerous probings into Vertov's autoreferentiality – written in a very different form, to be sure – to come a full decade later:

Persistently [in *Man with a Movie Camera*] we are shown the mechanics of what we are seeing... [which serves] to remind us that what is before us is merely an image, and that true reality lay in the subject of the shot. [*Man with a Movie Camera*] is, in fact, a study in film truth on an almost philosophical level (the levity of its treatment – the fact that it is argued in the mode of fun – does not disqualify this judgment). This film does deliberately what most others try hard to avoid: it destroys its own illusions. It refuses to allow us to accept the screen as a plane of reference for reality, and instead seeks to dissolve all such planes of reference, successively, as soon as they are formed, in the hope that reality will 'emerge' from the process not as a creature of screen illusion but as a liberated spirit.⁸⁶

The Covid pandemic forced us all to work in environments and with tools that are extremely powerful in cinematic terms: a slew of ready-made feeds and formats demanded a critical and

84 The efforts of Owen Hatherley, John MacKay and others to trouble simplistic artistic-methodological/political analogies made across the cultural production of the USSR and USA render it unsurprising that Vertov could admire two artists whose visions came to stand, respectively, for a national mythos of white superiority and racist violence and an universal, secular-humanist love.

85 Rosey Carrick's doctorate trounces the commonly accepted 'fact' of Vladimir Mayakovsky's negative attitude to women – a myth, she demonstrates, derived primarily from the mistranslation of the Russian word 'byt' (domesticity) (Carrick, 2016, pp. 9-10, 98, 160, 188, 211; and the Afterword, pp. 212-214). Lucio Colletti's introduction to Marx's early writings uncovers similar sedimentations of error (Marx, 1992, pp. 7-56, especially pp. 7-18). The most exhaustive account we have of Vertov's life and work (MacKay, 2018, op. cit.) offers comparably discomfiting documentation of fundamental misconceptions, their circulation and stubbornness.

86 MacKay, *ibid*, pp. lxxiv-lxxv

creative response, not the instant naturalisation they threatened.⁸⁷ This struck me initially vis-à-vis the endless live recordings made of speakers, and voices, talking to each other in online seminars and colloquia. Closer to home, the desktop, Zoom grid, WhatsApp and FaceTime recording, the iPhone and iPad live-record features impose and offer themselves up daily. My unthinking technique of documenting the films I was researching through desktop screenshots was a key technology, I realised, and I tried to activate this understanding across a variety of scales by *attending to* these items and placing them in new relationships.⁸⁸ Being open to the mutual imbrication of time, mind/body, medium/environment and intellectual/artistic expression in my case also illuminated threads of continuity in my past creative practice that hadn't been evident to me before. The periodisation of my practice tended to be determined by radical breaks – the PhD as a clean slate or 'return' to visual art. To instead see a through-line and consistency in what I had been trying to do over decades often had the quality of an epiphany, even if it also meant acknowledging I hadn't understood what I was doing. Who does? In a process of productive recursion, I realised that this movement of thought, too, constituted legitimate 'subject matter' (in fact, that in a curious way I was practicing the interpretative practices of solidarity that I had been inspired by, but with/for myself). This coexistence of the 'child' or 'teen' and the 'adult' is, for mothers of growing children, as confusing as it is epiphanic, and I tried to carry over that sense into my final work, concentrating particularly on notions of vision and language (the deceit of appearances and the truth of the dream image; the questionable purpose of names, and memory; the role of the mother tongue; slang and lingo, badly used; Benjamin's optical unconscious; the child's fantastic optic – which distorts, but may 'see' better than mechanised vision, even if that is by conveying the heavy ideological filter of fashion).⁸⁹

87 It soon became clear, for example, that Zoom could be, and was already, in use by police.

88 See also Frank (2019) and Gary (2018).

89 Modernist experiment and the dream are unwitting bedfellows, as remarked by Esther Leslie, Sam Dolbear and Sebastian Truskolaski in their introduction to Benjamin (2016), which is worth quoting at length on the subject: 'When read as a literary form, [dreams] tend to disintegrate linear narratives. In this way, they represent a modernist aesthetic prior to the formal development of modernism, but this perhaps fails to fully encapsulate their significance. Everything that has been shattered under the conditions of modernity is shattered further by the dream and its transcription. / What persists through them is the suspension of natural laws ... In this sense dreams work against the hardening of law to provide images of redeemed (or, at least, another) nature. ... For, when written down as narratives, in their expression of desire outside physical, political and psychic constraints, dreams echo the general desire for a world that cannot so easily be imagined in the daytime. ... Dreams are not simply open; they are desires conditioned, even 'determined' by history. ... Their world is our world as much as it is its inversion, and it is in this double movement that their use can be found and mobilised.' (pp. xviii-xx).

Inventions of the Mother: A Waking Dream, with which this project concludes, is a work of prose poetry based on Bernadette Mayer's *Midwinter Day* (1982).⁹⁰ Over two winters, an initially fleeting experiment with friends to 'translate' that poem grew into an architecture holding much of my research, both academic and personal.⁹¹ *Midwinter* felt timely for many reasons: as Jasper Bernes details, its moment of authorship sees all of work sped up and feminised as post-Fordist work patterns emerge, the computer is introduced into the work place and home, walls melt and the neoliberal era commences in earnest (a moment of equivalent violence to our own, with its own sexual-reproductive politics of gender, labour and technology).⁹² My intention was to reflect a process of apprenticeship, and of establishing artistic 'mothers,'⁹³ while also looking back at the way that I and my own mother (who for one year in the late Sixties was an art student at Maidstone, Kent) were 'educated' and were, as mothers, 'educators.' Its production was in many ways the logical conclusion to an enquiry which had drifted ever more concertedly towards poetry/the poetic, but it was not intended to replace the *film*, which I had come to the RCA to make (and clung to as an aspiration until the bitter end). Produced during the pandemic, at home, it also became a reckoning with the computer/internet, of which I had been an 'early adopter,' and with the hard drives and boxes, digital and analogue archives of photographs and other materials that were at home with me. The 'detective' work I had done on my life still demanded a ground, and I reconsidered every habituation, as well as every life 'story,' which as we know are often created from childhood's iconic photographs.⁹⁴

The thesis and artwork are a contemplation of the senses as these exist in the era of the network optic – often peculiarly separated, and in conflict. The historic particularity of media forms can get forgotten as past production realities turn into menu items in a software package ('blur'), or a verb is made to mean something other than it originally did ('zoom'). These facts are taken on, and into, my exposition, a narrative montage combining the acts of looking backward and forwards – in, out and around – using the tropes of cinema and the theatre, which structure Vertov's work (script, dramatis personae, cut, intertitle). Each section intends – loosely – to build on the last, to move with the reader, and to acknowledge the

90 Mayer (1999).

91 The term I used most of the time was 'transcribe,' in memory of a similar project at Central Saint Martins, in 1989, using Giovanni di Paolo's *St. John the Baptist Retiring to the Desert* (1454), which opens this preface.

92 Bernes (2017); Weeks (2018).

93 Among other sources, this was influenced by the description of Kathy Acker's 'fathers' in Colby (2016, especially chapters 3 and 4, pp. 110-171).

94 Kuhn (2002) and Hirsch (2012 (1997)) influenced the concluding phase of this project.

importance of narration to all documentary (no matter how abstract) and the importance of 'story' to 'history.' In so doing, I submit myself, finally, to not having had the time to make my film, in a flash of comprehension that this was always already the issue at stake: the mutually inverted nature of our productive apparatus (not quite two pyramids meeting at the tip, it is a shape that still needs drawing). Lacking a state production apparatus, cinematographers, camerawomen; staying away from paintbrushes, sculpture and architecture tools while I do my writing, I use the text to make the structures I couldn't make, materially, on the page – and, together with the reader. You.

I. Script

SETTING AND TIME

INT. COLLEGE, DAYTIME (REGISTRATION)

October 2014, a late-summer morning in a Central London arts university. Housed in a large, brutalist building, heavy and grey, of weather-worn cement, its modernist interior is granite-clad and sparkling-white. Soon to be phased out, students' registration and fees payment still occurs IRL, 'offline,' at physical desks – arranged in a U-shape – with new arrivals sorted into categories and lines so that they are able to queue and wait their turn. Registrars hold clipboards, check passports and visas, take card payments on handheld devices and place cheques in cashboxes. The process is slow, laborious, taking several days, which makes the atmosphere akin to that of an embassy or an airport – procedural, dry, a little tense due to the high personal stakes (fees have been known to be put on credit cards; a wrongly estimated limit or balance can turn as hard as the border of a nation state). The camera holds on the vista of low-level bodily rhythm...

DRAMATIS PERSONAE ET BESTIAE⁹⁵

95 'Script' accounts for my engagement with scholarship on the autonomy (and anthropology) of images, especially as these are mediated, networked and dispersed. Exemplified by the work of Hans Belting, Aby Warburg, W. J. T. Mitchell and Harun Farocki's – to name the best known – this work connects the accelerating changes in network architectures and visual 'content' economies to embodied, affective experience and the unconscious (as such, it clearly also stands in the wake of Walter Benjamin's oeuvre). At odds with Vertov's outright opposition to narrative (stubbornly present in his films in any case), it uses the film script as a writerly genre to introduce dramatic characters – *personae, bestiae* – recalled from media, day- and nighttime dreams, staging through them phenomena of splitting, drift, disintegration and reintegration. The aim is to illustrate that we do not know 'who' we are, nor know 'what' we know. See also 'Splitting', in Frosh (2003), pp. 40-49; Hedva (2016); Bollas (2017). Katrina Sluis suggests in a presentation (n.d., source unknown) that the copious theoretical taxonomy devised for these images might be captured with the term 'post-photographic'. Her slide states: "post-photography?" "operative images" (Farocki), "programmable images" (Beller), "technical images" (Flusser), "softimages" (Hoelzl and Marie), "networked images" (Rubinstein and Sluis), "invisible images" (Paglen), "poor images" (Steyerl), "programmable images" (Beller) [sic]. See also: Rubinstein and Sluis (2008)

THE CONTROLLER first appears in the winter of 2014. I spot her from behind, back erect and seated in a majestic office swivel chair, her distinct, dark silhouette indicating clearly that she is in charge. The ergonomic seat is visible in great detail, its peculiar liver colour and moulded nylon back forming a large and alluring shell shape, which, though heavily perforated and transparent, protects her torso with the stony rigidity of an oyster's carapace. Her uniform is simple, austere, and evokes the military (or maybe the postal service), but her headwear is festive and cartoonlike: a top hat made from navy-blue straw, with a cream silk band positioned on her cranium with a slight tilt and a – by now old, faded and crushed – silk rose, trailing down one side like a lifeless whelk.

Poised for action, she sits at a huge old-fashioned telephone exchange whose switchboard appears familiar from countless image and film archives, but which I gradually realise is composed of raw flesh – laid out carefully and hanging slack in slabs and folds; a huge oblong bank of meat tiling interspersed with blinking lights. Studiously and in full command of her inexplicable task, she goes through the motions of routing and connecting; responding automatically to the flickers, bleeps and whirs, each time magically finding the appropriate sockets, which protrude from their electronic grid and between the bloody curtains like small, perfectly circular metal nipples.

*

MINECRAFT MOTHER comes into view through an absence – because she is never there. We may have accepted that there is no Wonder Woman any more, but nor, we suddenly realise, is there *Mum*.⁹⁶ Positive, negative, master, slave, progressive or reactionary identity; it is: *none of the above* (because she is, simply, a *void*). Worlds are made, built from scratch, with an obsessive emphasis on the exactitudes of verisimilitude, but using no more

96 A reference to Dara Birnbaum's feminist video work, *Technology / Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1979). See Demos (2010).

varied or malleable a material than one single building block, in one single size (colour palettes run to little more than a dozen). Bounty of mining and hewing, the electronic cubes are freed with pickaxes of diamond, gold, iron, stone, wood, and the world's *eigen* material, 'netherite.'⁹⁷ 'Child's play': they are an adult invention, and the worlds that they build, the realities that they make, are populated and furnished by grown-ups, who author all their scripts, stand behind each curtain and at every edge, pulling the digital levers and sowing the digital seeds.

The blocks feel so unlike the 'universal' geometric shapes with which babies are encouraged to explore materiality, but why, we wonder – since the kids *do* love playing with them, a LOT? When Minecraft Mother finally appears, in all her flat and savage pixelation, she carries within her all the other cyborgian females that came before, her liminal body a grand, teetering assemblage of 'fake' and 'real' materials, substrates, systems and adornments (metal sheets, chicken wire, plaster, irises, sequins, feathers, nerves, barbells, hair, ribbons, silicon, arteries, velvet, rubber, nails, lips, leather, heels, breasts, skin, eyes, organs, orifices, surgical mesh... the 'focal point' replicated, ad infinitum, across her body, so that it attracts, and offers pleasure to, as many viewers as possible).⁹⁸

*

THE WISE is a maternal figure with a long grey mane, its salt and pepper streaks tied down in a stern middle parting and covering her ears. I imagine she has an unusually long plait, dropping down low to the absolute base of her back or beyond, though, because she never turns around, I can't know for sure. She speaks to me patiently but with fatigue, clearly tired of my doubt, and my splitting, and of having to always soothe me with the same

97 These are the material options for the axes with which blocks are hewn in Minecraft.

98 This passage encodes debts to feminist film critique and scopoc theories of pleasure (classically, Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975); see Mulvey, 1989), as well as, through an emphasis on synthetics and artifice, to post-humanist and technoscientific feminisms (e.g. of Donna Haraway, Carol Stabile, Rosi Braidotti, Helen Hester). Theorists of sex and surrogacy work offer bridges between such discourses, to which Lewis, *op. cit.*, provided an introduction.

explanations, reassurances, pep talks, as if she has done so for years and years (which seems to mean for as long as we have known each other). In 2017 she comes back to me, seemingly out of nowhere as I have entirely forgotten the events surrounding her first appearance. It was the early 'noughties' then – the American 'aughts' is just as ridiculous – and we were stuck in a night-club toilet cubicle with another woman: young, jovial, giggly, but not fully visible. The space was tight and we were up really close; squashed together, mouth to ear, forehead to chin, shoulders to face, having our intense conversation. When I walked out of that narrow space, I realised from something someone else said that the three of us had in fact been one – conducting our dialogues, not in my head, in silence, but speaking out loud, simultaneously and in different voices, held by my single body. As I walked out, that woman by the sink had smiled at me and asked, 'Y'all having fun in there?' I looked back at her, laughing agreeably at the comment, or joke, which I didn't quite understand, but imagined expressed the night's general spirit of fun and hilarity. It was many years later that I realised the joke was on me.

*

THE YOUNG GIRLS 'Shhhhh!!! Be quiet...!' I hear them whisper, as beds creak, bodies try to lie still, and duvets are pulled over a huddle of heads to form a little congregation of conspiracy. Someone switches their phone's torch function on; it manages to illuminate a flat dome of air just so far that the circle of shiny, sweaty faces becomes visible. 'But when is she coming, then?,' asks one of them. 'God only knows, honestly,' says another. 'They've tried to get her out of here, like, a hundred times, but she's just unable to let go. Last time they tried, they started lifting her, but gradually realised there was a data leak, and that her body might give up the ghost if they tried any more. They say she's been in chronic pain for over a month now.'

It isn't so much an image as a sound that makes me notice THE YOUNG GIRLS.⁹⁹ I start hearing them in February 2018, speaking often in full sentences, conducting dialogues with each other as a group. Their world is one of doom and apocalypse, an asphyxiating certainty that they have no viable futures ahead of them, and that the only stories that speak to them are dystopian sci-fi's, which is the only genre they ever read or watch. *Maze Runner. Divergent (Insurgent and Allegiant). The Hunger Games.* All of them present-day Realisms: the only worlds that make any sense – offer recognition and identification – the only places they can inhabit and spend time in without being bored to death or riddled with anxiety.¹⁰⁰

The girls have an undeniable relationship with my own daughters, and their friends, but speak to me about media with a clarity that I feel can't be achieved in the real-life communications I have with their flesh-and-blood twins, which tend to get polarised and over-emotional. They tell me their names, and mostly they are the same as those of my eldest's schoolmates: Anya, Jess, Zahra, Sadie, Kirsty, Zion. They say something big is going on: more and more of them are disappearing as they become aware of the conditions by which they are governed. They are finding means to escape, they say, by conferring between themselves and attaining a form of critical self-consciousness. They are using their hyper-exposure to help them practice *exodus*.¹⁰¹ They tell me that the images on which they rely for this are themselves attaining some kind of independence and freedom, and 'behaving' in ways natural to their typology, with some more trustworthy and safe than others; some with greater, some with lesser, powers, and all of them 'ageing,' as organisms do.

There are other diabolical forces (they mention 'search' and, of course, algorithms, then, someone whispers *capital*, sounding

99 The young girl has been constructed as central to cybernetic capitalism and popular culture (Tiqqun, 2012; Grant and Waxman, 2011; Driscoll, 2002); in her use of social media she is also taken to be its most vulnerable subject. Kidron (2013) is an interesting early attempt to interrogate teenage experience of the internet.

100 This paraphrases answers received from my eldest daughter, Ava, and her friends, circa 2017-2018, regarding their preference for dystopian sci-fi.

101 Virno (1996, 2005); Ford (2020).

a bit embarrassed), but it is all a bit hazy how everything works for them. They say that stories can act as places, as go-between zones; that they come in ascending levels of complexity and efficacy and that they are accessible via the imagination of the viewer (though they are also used, undetected, by freedom fighters, who have discovered they can function as quarantine zones). Dreams are the next level.

Zahra once reached out and showed me some messages she'd received from her friend Jess, who had managed to escape...

Zahra, I know you haven't seen me for a few days but I just want u to know I'm safe. Can't tell u 2 much about where I am, but I need u to know it's all ok: I am with others & don't feel scared as there are many here who know the ropes better than me, and can make sure we keep going in the right direction and stay out of harm's way. I wish you were with us... it was horrible to have to leave without telling you, my best friend, my sista, but there are really strict rules about how to escape and I had no choice but to obey. I hope with all my heart we will get to see each other again, I think there are ways that I can check how you are doing, and you me, but I still need to find out how they work. I'm allowed an email a week to – fancy, fancy – a 'nominated' person, and I've chosen yours truly!! Till soon ;) x [5 January]

Z, my friend... I'm starting to understand a bit more where I am and how things work. Maybe if I tell you these things you can decide whether you want to come too? They put me to sleep while I was travelling here, so I can't say exactly how I got to this story, but it feels vaguely familiar. Seems like it's one of the 00s teen shows, but I can't tell for absolutely sure. I think I have to be here for quite a long time, even move up through some upgrades, before I get taken to a Dream, just in case they've got their assessment of me wrong (some girls pretend). Remember, whatever you do, don't forget to get your sleep!!! As much and as long as you can. It's our life-blood. Love you xx [19 January]

Zahra, do you remember the first time we binge-watched Pretty Little Liars and couldn't sleep that night? When your mum came in angry and tried to give us a lecture about the evils of American culture? Or when school warned our parents we weren't to take our phones into the bed at night? Hahahahahaha... lol, what a joke. Who did they think they were kidding? Do you remember the first time we realised we could switch our bodies? Or you use Anya's, because it could get you further in? It was so important that we had each other in those early days... I miss you!!!!!!! I don't really know if I'll keep my body. It doesn't really seem much use, though they keep on telling me it has everything in it that I'll need, that they're really good in emergencies, cos they store things I don't know about... blah blah. Afaik, it's always been a problem for me: a thing I've had to work on, change, improve, make up, tone down, so I can't really see the point of keeping it if it's such a drag and so much work and bother. But I suppose I'll just take their word for it. I think we're going to another Story tomorrow. To get to a Dream you have to move through Stories beforehand, so they can be sure you can handle it, that you're strong enough... I don't know why they do it this way around, but I think it's sort of part of the escape route that you have to practice for. [21 January]

*

MA BOOKS is nomadic but doesn't want to be. She is one of the elders in a group of migrants in enforced exodus, travelling across the continent trying valiantly, *desperately*, to find shelter and safety. I see her in the very early spring of 2019, on the 59 bus – in Kennington. I don't know if she is the cause or the effect of the war documentary. Ma Books is the human archive and library of the clan, mainly because she remembers their home's key figures and events, its customs and myths, and tells them its stories, but also because she is attempting to carry a load of books along with her on the hazardous journey on which they are all embarked. The books steadily increase in number, as she picks more up at various resting places and stop-off points (elders from other clans share, when they exchange

information and maps, tips and tricks, or reminisce under trees, behind petrol stations, in empty garages and parking lots). She feels she can never learn enough, never *know* enough, to survive, which is creating a vulnerability that Ma Books is unwilling to acknowledge. The group need to be fleet of foot and Ma Books and her carrier – a knapsack looking ominously like a body bag, as the nightmares of one of the group’s youngest members keep intimating of the grey canvas holdall – is weighing them down. The community finds it difficult to challenge Ma’s attachment to her load, on account of her learning and the intellectual pleasures and life-sustaining sentiments these keepsakes offer her; the living resource that they are, for the imagination, and her life instinct. And so they tolerate her stockpile, and stand around quietly while she tugs it over another hill. They ignore her huffing and puffing, patiently, as she changes its position from shoulder to shoulder, and side to side, of her body. And all the while they pray to a God they know doesn’t exist that she’ll face the sad truth herself one day soon – so that she can finally jettison the thing and have a chance of being free.

*

CULTURE VULTURE (LEONORA’S BABY) appears late – in 2021 – out of one of the Social Industry’s largest, and most important, factories.¹⁰² I contact the account holder @ leonoracarringtonestate to ask who and what she is, and how she was made, since her parentage and nature intrigue me (that pose, those claws, the sparkling red eyes!). He tells me that, late in life, his grandmother – Culture Vulture (Leonora’s Baby)’s mother – couldn’t any longer muster the visual and instrumental acuity to make paintings, but continued working with her hands, in materials more amenable to her arthritis (primarily clay – which

102 This refers to Instagram. ‘The Social Industry’ is Richard Seymour’s term (after Theodor Adorno’s *The Culture Industry*), and I adopt it in agreement with his interpretations (in Seymour, 2019).

might then be cast in bronze).¹⁰³ Once born and let loose beyond the factory walls, I note that Culture Vulture (Leonora's Baby) doesn't do much: she crawls and waddles (a bit like a seal), waits around to be stroked and barks, intermittently, 'I ate the snake.'¹⁰⁴ It turns out, though, that that is all that is needed.

103 Private exchange, via Instagram messaging, with @leonoracarringtonestate's account holder (who I believe to be Carrington's grandson, Daniel Weisz Carrington, although he never signed off with a name), 1 September 2021. The original Instagram posting was made on 31 August, 2021, accompanied by the tag: 'Culture Vulture #sculpture #art #arte #fineart #artist #artista #artwork #surreal #surrealism #surrealismo.' The formal title of the work, made using bronze and rubies in an edition of 100 in 2010, is *Vulture (Dragon)*.

104 Culture Vulture (Leonora's Baby) answers the call made in Fluss and Frim (2017) for a bestiary of the left. The snake is an encoded reference to 'Roko's Basilisk,' the foundational Neoreactionary avian-serpent described in, e.g., Haider (2017); Sandifer (2017); Teixeira Pinto (2019) (combining the traits of birds, snakes and/or reptiles, the basilisk is historically also endowed with 'magic' eyes). Counterposing the territorial, rooted character of Behemoth with the aquatic, fluid power of Leviathan (as traditionally narrated), Fluss and Frim argue that in the present global system, 'The seemingly opposed worldviews of [Nick] Land and [Aleksander] Dugin' are Behemoth and Leviathan's equivalent, and, 'the very ether within which alt-right thought is steeped. It is an ideology torn between technophilic Futurism and neo-Orthodox Traditionalism. ... For Dugin, the break with modernity is accomplished through an ethno-religious apocalypse – a return to orthodoxy, and an activation of a mystical eschaton beyond time. Land imagines the break from liberal modernity will be accomplished through an accelerating techno-capitalism, superseding humanity itself. Despite these differences, both figures reject modernity as ending in the nightmare of cultural Marxism.' In line with the political unconscious I hypothesised for 'Vertov' (crystallised in fragility/vulnerability, gender/psychological ambiguity, softness, flow, and codependence, as discussed above), my interest lay in beasts which might express such qualities.

II. Telescope

[INSERT: PIRATED FOOTAGE, BIRKBECK INSTITUTE FOR THE MOVING IMAGE (BIMI), BLOOMSBURY. Ref. recording of a bootleg screening, circulated among friends, of an avant-garde film from the early 1990s famous for its chromatic abstraction and deployment of the human voice as a sensuous diachronic layer...¹⁰⁵ Recorded with a mobile from the back row, lines of heads are silhouetted against the screen, becoming reminiscent in the film's silences of boulders or mountains against an early-evening sky]

[EDIT: trans/fade... through synthesised bridge-words and voices (and a deep purple hue), the transition slowly changes the older, male, upper-class voice and the royal-bluish background colour¹⁰⁶ into a fluorescent cerise monochrome and a younger, female voice (fifty-something), whose accent is harder to locate (Irish, Canadian, West Country or European-British, its measured, nasal tone comes across as calm, with an undertone of rage)]¹⁰⁷

VOICEOVER

The Words

It took about five years in all to decide they weren't for me. It was ironic and so difficult to accept, since I had spent most of my adult life creating ecosystems for their proliferation. But I was resolute: I could no longer make words my work.

105 This refers to Derek Jarman's film *Blue* (1993), which was screened at BIMI, London, on 25 January 2019, in the BISR Guilt Group's programme 'HIV STIGMA: Blue.'

106 Jarman used IKB (International Klein Blue), and the recorded voices of John Quentin, Nigel Terry, Tilda Swinton and himself, with music and soundscapes from Coil and Simon Fisher-Turner (Brian Eno produced the sound). *Blue's* 'script' is an associative composition of memory, prose and poetry, which makes it clear that Jarman had long been living with HIV (he was diagnosed positive in 1986), and that the turn to sound was driven by the exigencies of bodily limits (he was going blind). The screening notes state that Jarman had spoken of the blue frame 'as a fragment of an immense work without limit.'

107 This is an attempt to give a dispassionate description of my own voice: my accent tends to generate confusion as I am not a native English speaker (making it feel porous and susceptible to outside influence). People often remark about my (my voice's) 'calmness,' even when I feel the opposite.

I told myself that it was not their fault: that it was me, not them. We just weren't made for each other. It was sad but true – we were fatally, irredeemably incompatible. I could help steer the course for others – as an editor, maybe – but not actually drive the car. I just wasn't wired for it.

Words were, perhaps, the impossible object: a vehicle I could project fantasies onto, admire from a distance, seek fusion with, but not actually handle. Just because you could recognise a writer, could assess and appreciate them or work together with them – as I had done, for years – that didn't automatically mean you were one yourself...

I scavenged evidence together to prove to myself that things were fundamentally, existentially awry. My expressions seemed to derive from another language and there was a general sense of the Unheimlich.¹⁰⁸ Reading my words was like witnessing a well-trained robot or software program glitching, ever so slightly yet ever so tellingly.¹⁰⁹

Linearity and sequence, argumentation and the marshalling of thoughts, made my mind – and language – come undone. No sooner had I retained something than it wanted to be dumped; to fall out of me, with a thud, to the ground.

You could tell, also, by my sentence constructions. Those thickets of unnecessary punctuation. Semi-colons, brackets and em dashes particularly, which you could only hide so far by deleting them over and over. The pile-ups of subclauses and parentheses. The reams of unanswered, and unanswerable, questions. The absolute lack of any air. The indecipherable density.

108 Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in Freud (2003).

109 Among other things, this sentence marks the valorisation of the 'glitch' in digital-culture theory. For a recent example, see Russell (2020).

Instead of a sense of reliably staying on point – of patience, proportion, due emphasis and the overall scale of the thing – there was impatience, confusion, recursion, category error, drift. Instead of a steady, unidirectional movement forward – the feeling of a structure being built and appropriate tools being used (a basket of memory with all the right swatches, of facts, quotes and citations; a studio of argumentation with all the right paint pots of oil, or acrylic, and the turps, or water, to dilute or clean them; a pyramid of narrative with long lines of bricks that can turn a corner, make a square, then go round another one, smaller, higher, until, altogether, they reach a peak) – there were disasters, or their omens: the swell of a tornado; the swirl of a tidal wave; sparks flying through the air. Spontaneously, baskets turned upside down; glass jars fell over; bricks cracked and shook; and fires started, everywhere. Always, always, collapse.

Was it plain old disobedience or laziness? Disregard for the laws? I ignored speed restrictions, was in too much of a hurry, even when the destination was unknown (meaning, pretty much all the time).

Faced with all this faltering, this failure, I slid inevitably into a more introspective, gendered form of self-accusation... It was the needing to get somewhere instead of *doing the work*. The dangerous predilection for the greener grass, the other world, the alternative past and future; the better me. I didn't have faith. I practiced 'self-sabotage.' Contemplating my actions was like seeing someone drive off the road in a ball of flames they themselves had lit, always making the world end before it had begun. Catastrophism.

Others were indeed different, it seemed, and the more I witnessed their craft (deft and virtuosic, in command of datum and argument, so steadfast in purpose, so brave, rigorous, intelligent and funny in its expressions), the deeper my conviction grew that words could never be my medium, my home.

But it went well beyond a rational process of deduction and conscious choices – as if I had a say in the matter. I didn't. Words were the most exhausting thing. They made me ill.

I tried to figure out why I hadn't had better immunity against this malady. I had had time and space, I hadn't been coerced into labour or had my liberty taken from me – which were the common causes of my disorder, when it forced other women to suffer. In my case, these didn't apply – because as an adult I had fought tooth and nail, and played every necessary game, to avoid such obstructions.

The consumption of words had its issues, but it was production, specifically authorship for a public, that really did me in. This forced time and space – as an experience of body, mind and environment – onto me so violently that I sometimes thought I would disconnect from sense altogether. Would you believe it if I said that, at other times, it made me feel like I might expire?

I wondered, often: there must have been a time, long, long ago, when it wasn't like this. I was conscious of a lifelong problem with plot, and character – names; how does anyone ever remember them all? – but I must have once read the books and the words (even written them), and been, as they say, 'immersed,' navigating at ease – and devoid of this debilitating anxiety about purpose, meaning, words' relation to each other and to me. I remember days and weeks spent in their company as a child, lost, and I remember it being pleasurable. Fantasy could be sustained without an immediate recalibration to responsibility, or identity, or self. There were other worlds. Imagine. Breathe. Accept. Full stop.

Obligation and duty were, I suspect, utterly foreign then, other than as an unwelcome parental imposition. Instead of hypervigilance – the tiring paranoia of the neurotic who over-reads, under-comprehends, instantly forgets as

she scans the environment for the next significant (because seductive or threatening) textual input or object¹¹⁰ – I imagined a gentle, maternal communism of semiotic affect, my spirit floating easily in and out, just like all the others. Verbal entrance and exit were uncomplicated and offered freely, always. No awkward or scary thresholds, no painful puncturing of the membrane to the interior or the exterior.

This was a dream of subject and object existing in a state of mutual openness – not so much primordial bliss as the dial of the drama of judgement turned down to zero.¹¹¹

That time was long gone, but why? And how on earth was I to describe the symptoms of this sickness – when they were so difficult to apprehend and analyse, even for myself?

Sometimes, I would try to understand by working backwards in my mind's eye. Past the immediate moment and the chronic incapacitation. Past the writer's block, the blind panics and the terrifying mental blankness. Past the blushing face, trembling and sweating hands, memory loss and hyperventilation. Past the embarrassment and shame. Past, even, the bigger, recognisable life stories of which I spoke to others in confident tones and with a desire to offer critical certainties (distinct forms that we are able to share, thinking we know and understand them, at least sufficiently to engage in a sustained project of description). I would go back and back, attempting to massage understanding into being, to assuage the chaos, along that blurry and meandering line that we can all draw, as it broke and mended itself, then splintered off to the side in jagged shards of woundedness or confusion.

Sometimes the force of the line was so strong it pulled

110 The analogy here is between individual traits of psychological 'hypervigilance' and the cybernetic Cold War environment out of which the current technical régime has arisen. For a history of the emergence of the computer screen, see Geoghegan (2019).

111 This and the preceding paragraphs are influenced by Wang (2016), and its argument that, 'the oceanic can be a point of departure for new socialities and political models that do not rely on discrete selves.'

in and stockpiled all kinds of stuff, only to shatter it wholesale: a throbbing, surging vector shedding mountains of broken glass – dunes of glittering diamond dust from jars, bottles, car windows; rock-hard reinforced balustrades edged in brushed stainless steel; icy spikes from corporate reception desks and executive meeting tables; prickly needles from crystal champagne flutes and whisky tumblers – once encrusted in orange juice, sugar, whisked egg-whites. Then the blood would come: deep and dark and everywhere, soaking and blotting and covering most everything. Occasionally a lone shape would stick out, like one turquoise Morello glass button or a razor-thin vial for the cultivation of disease. If they were light and malleable enough, elements once bonded with the glass travelled along in the waves (the uncoupled nuzzle of a spray bottle, its slim plastic tube like the broken leg of an outsized primeval insect; a turquoise, jelly-like toe separator, its five protuberances cascading like a sine wave or a dinosaur's spine – a technical prop lost long ago in a teenage girl's bathroom or a high-street nail bar – or a silicon teat, machine-made replica of the Platonic ideal of a pert and rotund-to-bursting mammary gland for baby to latch onto, gone cloudy over months of nightly maternal boiling).

Done with shattering, the line would then cohere again and ripple lugubriously. Sloppy and flaccid, its products now gravitated downwards: sordid heaps of rubble, slimy and grey from agglutinated layers of oil and dust and food and fat (some seaweed and dead animals too), it became a pure dead weight. Then it would reanimate, diffusing now into delicate, wispy clouds that drifted slowly, then released darker, heavier parts of themselves as rain, which fell down in sheets and then slithered into the nether regions and shadowlands, where swamps, wetlands and mangrove deltas opened out to wide vistas of piercing light.

Occasionally the line would crash, suddenly, to become an impenetrable cement wall, or draw out hulking edifices of barbed wire, with gun positions and sentries, blinding

spotlights and howling alarms, growling dogs and violent, unyielding cops, or border guards demanding papers, not quite sure whether it was aggressor or victim, state or subject, prison or prisoner. But – ever the fugitive – it always stayed the course, escaping and collapsing again, shrinking down into smaller and smaller, thinner and thinner rivers and rivulets, still ponds and pools, resting finally under an ink-black sky and silence.

Genius

My friend – who *had* made her home in words – said it was about ‘genius.’ We each needed to find ours; that impulse and medium that suspends time entirely as, through it, we engage with the material world in a state of pure curiosity and feedback.

But the word ‘genius’ is confusing. How telling it is that it should have come to describe the exceptional natural ability of one individual, standing apart from the talentless unwashed, who are good for nothing but mind-bending, backbreaking labour, or repetitive administration – all monotony and averageness – when the dictionaries and encyclopaedias say it used to describe *a universally distributed quality or guiding force, an attendant spirit present from one’s birth, or innate ability or inclination*. Genius and person are born together, said the Romans, the Latin verb *gignere* – to give birth or bring forth – shaping its social-reproductive phylum, where ‘kin’ and ‘generation’ and ‘beget’ sit side by side, eating as it were at the same family table.

Can we collectivise genius and locate its affinity with *species being*? Can we undo *I am a genius, you are a genius, she is a genius*, to discover their roots in the totality of

social and biological relations?¹¹²

Lawyer-voice

I realised my illness had eaten into my ability to write for, and speak to, those unknown. I could muster the wherewithal to communicate, but I needed a fully known, and calculated, audience; a group that the submerged but determinant parts of me must have assessed for risk and deemed safe. Email lists, the direct address, a letter to a friend or lover, a small group of co-workers. Face-to-face meetings also, but *à deux*, or in small clusters. Humans, yes, but strictly counted and contained and within a known circumference or leak-proof mode of address.

The peculiar thing was that I could still do *lawyer-voice* – not just for strangers but for anonymised operatives (the type they used to merely give numbers to at universities and state agencies), data platforms or other tabulated information environments. And I am speaking here about giving more, much more, of myself than in ticked boxes or filled-out multiple-choice forms. In fact, I am talking pages and pages – hundreds, tens of thousands of words of considered, well-edited prose. Maybe it was civil-servant voice, cultural-administrator voice, social-worker, benefits-assessment-officer, middle-or-senior-management-in-a-university voice? Whatever, I could speak *power*. A modest, ostensibly humanist and neutral power (with a subtle hint

112 See Chakrabarty (2009), especially Thesis 4: ‘The Cross-Hatching of Species History and the History of Capital Is a Process of Probing the Limits of Historical Understanding’; and, from Marx’s ‘Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844’: ‘For in the first place labour, *life activity, productive life* itself appears to man only as a *means* for the satisfaction of a need, the need to preserve physical existence. But productive life is species-life. It is life-producing life. The whole character of a species, its species-character, resides in the nature of its life activity, and free conscious activity constitutes the species-character of man. Life itself appears only as a *means of life* ... The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It is not distinct from that activity; it is that activity. Man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. ... The practical creation of an *objective world*, the *fashioning* of inorganic nature, is proof that man is a conscious species-being, i.e. a being which treats the species as its own essential being or itself as a species-being.’ (Marx, op. cit., pp. 328-329).

of pettiness for the violence held in reserve), but power, nonetheless.

Poet-voice is different, or at least a poet-voice awake to its own potential might be.¹¹³ 'Delivery' is a phenomenon of the breath and of our historically marked bodies; of structures – social, physical, institutional, linguistic. Performative, it needs people, embodied together, in a room or open space, but it is also made in advance – by prosody's words on a page, and their relationship to power, in all its formations. This 'connection of everyone with lungs' is held and harboured by the promise of a unique situation, never to be repeated in space and time (and this is *not* the same as free speech – even less so, freedom).¹¹⁴

Lawyer-voice, on the other hand, expresses itself best, and predominantly, in writing, exerting its power, practicing its subterfuge, in the digital drawers, cabinets and corridors of document creation, duplication, submission and exchange. It delivers its expressions – its linguistic *potentia* – in the terse email accompaniment, filled-out form, short query or complaint. Lawyer-voice is most at home in a faultless compliance report, the annotation to a knowingly twisted stat, a nonchalant but fatal entry in an Excel file.¹¹⁵

I acquired lawyer-voice decades ago. I had needed it in the early days, to convince people to hand over money, and I discovered that I had a facility for it. There was something seductive and comforting in allowing authority to temporarily take over your head, the cave of your mouth and your inner dialogue. To melt into the other side, as you had been forced to imagine it, and as it interpellated you and subjected us all.¹¹⁶ It provided an accountability-free

113 Pester (2019). This paragraph attempts, in part, to paraphrase arguments Pester makes in this excellent article.

114 Spahr (2005), a collection of poetry I refer to for its attempt to write in the shadow of a disaster – 9/11 – and along lines where lived chronologies and the search for a non-imperialist universalism might intersect.

115 Software studies has been important for the thinking here, notably Fuller and Goffey (2012).

116 Althusser (1971); Butler (1997).

lubrication and flexing of that analytical muscle dedicated to assessment and persuasion; the power to 'take a view,' 'call it' or make a 'judgement.' It is actually a form of ventriloquism, but with the mastery reversed. *I will be making a case for the intervention we seek to make in the landscape. Our ambition will be ambitious, our efficiency efficient, our resilience resilient...*

Seeing what you can get away with – how much you can swindle the system for in the name of the great cause – surely offers a perverse thrill. But be careful what you wish for. It is the proverbial Faustian bargain – like playing with fire, or turning things to gold, bearing a price you underestimate at your peril.

Whatever the necessity or justification, lawyer-voice makes language a weapon, hard and reinforced, and, deployed too often (or allowed by some other means to sink into habit), it will make you lose your way back to language's essential softness and pliability. There is a labyrinth waiting to be created by trying: making that left turn for the hundredth time, ending up down the same dead end, using those stupid, flat words over and over again and standing there, aghast at the limitations of your own vocabulary, you'll gag at the bland ashen taste that refuses to dislodge itself or wash down your throat, your jaw dropping fully when you find the bureaucrats permanently encamped – and you with not a hope in hell of throwing them out (we all know the world allocates its bailiffs elsewhere).

I once knew a girl who told people that she found my bullet points murderous. I didn't know what she meant. I was mystified and offended. Weren't they there to help organise information and attain clarity? Wasn't I being conscientious and transparent – *generous*, even? I know, now, that she was right, and that it was lawyer-voice she was responding to (I had used it, and every glyph at my disposal, for cover). I also know that, miraculous as we are, it may well be beyond

the human being to survive the charge of a well-aimed bullet point.¹¹⁷

The Moving Image

When you step away from something, you step, by definition, *towards* something else. Movement is binary, I used to think, because you cannot be in two places at once – or can you? – and when you initiate it, it always feels like you are making a choice. For me, rejecting words as an idiom and home entailed fabricating the sphere of the image as that something – and somewhere – else. A flight from words would deliver me to my place of return, a natural, living pedagogy. I would be a twenty-first-century iconolater.

117 On the depth of (philosophical, historical) meaning hidden in the particularities of punctuation and administrative procedure, see Comay and Ruda (2018); Comay (2019); Szendy (2018). Szendy's emphasis on the cut seems sympathetic to Vertov's primary aesthetic concept of 'interval'.

III. Zoom

Lecturing

INT. A CAVERNOUS, DIMLY LIT COLLEGE LECTURE HALL where, in early summer, the audience sits, shivering, in jumpers and coats, because the warming and cooling systems – installed at great expense only five years before – are not working.

As the camera zooms in, it catches three letters of a name inscribed on a plaque next to the entrance: G-O-R; the hall's multimillionaire benefactor (the South African real estate developer, among other things, not the producer of futuristic suction devices whose name graces the whole building). On stage, after technicians have tested and finessed the functionality of mics, projectors and pointers, the Head of Fine Art, Research, introduces today's speakers – THE CONTROLLER and MINECRAFT MOTHER.

They walk up to the lectern together, TC striding, confidently; MM stumbling, shy, maintaining a few metres distance, always. TC's voice is gravelly, somewhat androgynous, and full of play and intrigue (she's done this dozens of times before, falls into the role easily and holds the room's attention without breaking a sweat). Behind her on the screen, the first slide – the talk's title. The lights dim slowly, and, after some perfunctory words of gratitude, she proceeds.

THE CONTROLLER:

Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y: Violence, or,
the Neoliberal Thought Collective

About Narration

Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y (1997), Johan Grimonprez's chronicle of aeroplane hijackings, is often said to have anticipated 9/11. Following Don De Lillo, quotations from whose books

White Noise and *Mao II* were used to structure the film, it presents terrorism as one putatively rational means by which to win attention and momentarily gain control in a global society where power and political representation are indexed on the workings of the spectacle (itself desperately asymmetrical), and where the concept of reality – the collective episteme – is already heavily contingent on plot, plot devices and ‘plotters.’



Figure 2. Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997). Found footage from film (Leila Khaled and others around the time of their TWA Flight hijacking in 1969). Screen shot.

Simultaneously enchanted and monstrous, the technologies and protocols of networked telephony become, in this associative film essay, the archetypal media of distance and miscommunication (an apparatus for transmission of noise, *not signal*, as they are popularly perceived to be), and, as the first point-to-point connection framework for the human voice, take up a pivotal position in the irreconcilable contradictions of global politics.¹¹⁸

Thank you. Next slide...

118 Grimonprez (1997). Ronell (1991) is one seminal text that grapples with this expanded role of telephony, engaging with it as a challenge for writerly, readerly and graphic design form.



Figure 3. Johan Grimonprez, *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (1997). Found footage from film (cartoon of a girl making a phone call accompanied by a fish). Screen shot.

Nearly two decades later, Karen Mirza and Brad Butler's *The Unreliable Narrator* (2014)¹¹⁹ tells a similar tale about Mumbai's 2008 terror attacks, which were seemingly undertaken in anticipation of their immediate re-narration as fiction.¹²⁰ During this siege, Lashkar-e-Taiba's 'controllers' – effectively, the bosses of the operation – moved a group of impressionable young men around their target locations by mobile-phone voice instructions, having apparently considered, and selected, three specific event categories for intervention. These were, as the voiceover of the film's coauthor, Rahila Gupta, details:

One, events witnessed, possibly selectively broadcast, by the camera. Two, events which are already in progress which are changed by the arrival of a camera. Three, events choreographed, and created purposely, for the camera.¹²¹

119 Mirza and Butler (2014). *The Unreliable Narrator* was screened during 'Karen Mirza & Brad Butler: On Unreliable Narration,' a presentation and discussion with Sophia Al Maria and Howard Caygill, hosted by the Whitechapel Gallery, London, on 19 February 2015.

120 Eighteen titles were registered to dramatise the attacks, the first while they were still ongoing.

121 Rahil Gupta, in Mirza and Butler, op. cit.

[Coughs] Slide, please!



Figure 4. Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, *The Unreliable Narrator* (2014). Found footage from film (dramatisation of 2008 terror attacks). Screen shot.

As if working directly from a handbook of documentary film practice, or an anthology of game theory, the controllers' voices used the technology of the mobile phone to move aspiring agents of history around architectural space, much like game-players manipulate avatars with the knobs on their consoles. For their part, the gullible assassins – drawn into the murderous ventures with promises of riches and eternal life – were preoccupied, nearly to the exclusion of all other considerations, with achieving a successful appearance in the networked spectacle of global media, fastidiously documenting their entire expedition and checking in every step of the way to assess the movement of their action into the realm of public documentation. This grim unreality/reality was then, in turn, immediately translated into the second order of actual fiction, as the story was retold in various mainstream Bollywood films.¹²²

NEXT, please...

122 As an audience member of the 2015 Whitechapel Gallery event remarked, citing the work of Trevor Paglen and Harun Farocki, this is also comparable to the tendencies operating in the 'event image'. See also Rich (2011).



Figure 5. Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, *The Unreliable Narrator* (2014). Found footage from film ('controllers' speaking to attackers on the ground). Screen shot.

AND... next!

[TC hums quietly as she waits for the technicians]



Figure 6. Ingemo Engström and Harun Farocki, *About Narration (Erzählen)* (1975) Harun Farocki sitting by the canal with a friend. Screen shot.

Regarding *About Narration* (1975), Ingemo Engström – codirector, with Harun Farocki – states:

Interdisciplinary studies put into practice is a plane on which HaF's interests and mine coincide. Ideas of fictional

research projects in films emerge very early on, or of film as research device, allowing people from different disciplines to come together and discover something, to pursue a line of thought, or just be adventurous.

These ideas correspond to a tendency we both have of accumulating knowledge from different sciences, for example so as to bring exact sciences like medicine together with subjects which aren't directly aimed at application, such as religious studies or anthropology.

In 1975 HaF is still at Berlin's Free University, searching for the crossing of the lines. I myself am on the trail through my films. What are [sic] envisaged are spontaneous, undogmatic combinations. It should be possible to include anything as in the Nature Theater of Oklahoma.

Theoretically disparate things should join with the research in a reality concerned with living and surviving – Winnicott's 'primitive agony.' Besides this and contained within it there is the perceptual world of our little daughters, his (Anna and Lara) and mine (Muriel). 'Childhood'? It is here, we have never left it. *Erzählen* is a sketch of this situation.¹²³

*

Next, please...

TC looks over her right shoulder

TC looks over her left shoulder...

[The iron shadow of impatience descends over TC's face...]

123 Engström, n.d.

About Facts



Figure 7. Toby Haines, *Brexit: The Uncivil War*, House productions (2019)
Dominic Cummings, Boris Johnson and Michael Gove look at the Brexit battle bus. Screen shot.

Between 2016 and 2018, the UK's Brexit vote, the US election of Donald Trump and the international Cambridge Analytica scandal – the latter's discoveries helped explain the former – produced, in the West, a form of collective shock concerning the pliability and vulnerability of data and 'facts,' particularly with regard to their currency in the Fourth Estate and the new communicative spheres of social media.

Fake news, Trump's key campaigning term, voided journalistic and documentary categories like 'reporting,' 'witnessing' and – by erroneous association – 'neutrality' of precisely those qualities that were supposed to define them, creating a surge of doubt over the documentation and representation of reality, and, in light of the activities of various hostile actors, a heightened awareness of information's ever greater proximity to, and verisimilitude with, war.¹²⁴

Coming only a couple of years after Edward Snowden's

124 Paul Virilio had long warned of the damaging effects of speed on the democratic process, but this came to be combined with a palpable sense of an epochal shift in – and threat to – subject boundaries, self and 'privacy' of members of the demos individually.

revelations regarding the NSA's surveillance activities and, before that, the scandal over News Corp's routine phone-hacking, it was increasingly easy to see that the boundaries around, and grounding conditions of, 'information' were being treated with as little care, or regard, by the state as they were by corporate, or private, interests.

Over time, doubt escalated into full-scale paranoia as to what citizens were seeing, hearing and reading and their own sense of security; their safety and boundedness as persons. As an ensemble of events, phenomena and affects, this epochal shift soon earned the name 'post-truth.'

*

Next slide, please.

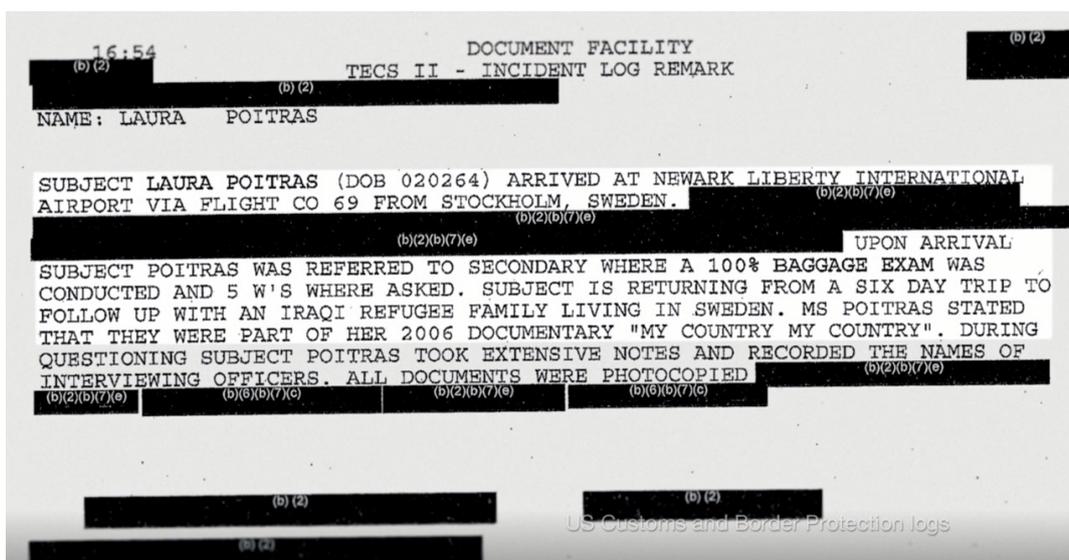


Figure 8. Laura Poitras, *Citizenfour*, HBO Documentary Films / Participant Media (2014)
US Customs and Border Protection's report on Poitras's movements. Screen shot.

It is our contention that, while certainly novel in their ambition, scope and technical efficacy, the shock, outrage and amazement that met these new media phenomena of our age were, themselves, historical symptoms of how successfully 'facts' and cultures' 'shared narratives' (meaning, in the most generalising of terms, the narrations of those facts) have been manipulated by, and infused with, warlike logics all along.

More importantly, the normalcy of life in the liberal democracies of the West (including especially the ‘consensual realities’¹²⁵ of history and culture) is, and always has been, integrally bound up with the untrustworthiness of appearances – even if these developed under sufficiently advanced educational, public-broadcast and juridical systems for them to be experienced as relatively untroubled, and broadly believable, by a majority of the population. In this respect, we can unambiguously state that their support by the inestimable (some would say quasi-magical) powers of technologies of vision – the capacity of optics, or optically enhanced technologies of capture, to denote *facticity* – was, and remains, instrumental.

To construe the last decade as primarily one in which previously reliable, transparent systems of reporting and data verifiability, along with privately held citizens’ rights, came to be manipulated by nefarious global players, or indeed to argue – as more sober analysts have done¹²⁶ – that we are facing the dangerous crumbling of pillars of shared truth and reality that a society built on public trust requires (statistics, scientific data, peer review, fact-checking) creates, in our view, serious impediments to understanding – impediments that are equal, at least, to the elucidations that their dramatic ledgers of change doubtless grant.

Notwithstanding the scale and seriousness of these phenomena, we therefore believe that the present lament for a recuperation and re-stabilisation of categories of truth, objectivity and information as these were born, and then developed, within the liberal-democratic institutions

125 This phrase recalls the trope of the ‘reality-based community’ in Mitchell (2011), where he cites journalist Ron Suskind recalling a Bush aide explaining empire to him, in 2004: ‘The aide said that guys like me were “in what we call the reality-based community,” which he defined as people who “believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality.” ... “That’s not the way the world really works anymore,” he continued. “We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. ... We’re history’s actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.”’ (Mitchell, 2011, p. xviii).

126 See Davies (2021, 2018a, op. cit.).

of Western modernity all too often occludes what, in the present conjuncture, must be brought forth. Namely, what this ontology of truth hid, repressed, misrepresented and destroyed.

We argue, instead, that neoliberalism, the political paradigm theorised by the Chicago School and spearheaded by Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher and Augusto Pinochet, uses (and was designed to use) liberal democracy – its myths, laws, civic institutions and above all, the capacities of the state – to advance a neocolonialist, racialised global capitalism which, de facto, robs the global majority of its human rights (as if these even existed to be stolen in the first place).

In addition to the absolute economic advantage granted, this develops what has come to be known, in a number of different academic disciplines, as *agnotology* or *white ignorance* (meaning the systematic and/or deliberate production of ignorance, or ‘unknowing,’ to the benefit of an imperial hegemon structured by capital, together with various highly adaptive and taxonomising inventions – including, especially, race, but also gender).¹²⁷

*

THE CONTROLLER looks behind her, to MINECRAFT MOTHER. MM is hanging back, as always, but in a studied readiness. A picture of feminine reliability, her square face – its fuchsias and lilacs usually flush and bright – looks drained, however. Each eye (two pixels; one white, one teal blue) is open, but they seem clouded, deathly even. A shadow of her former self, she walks up to the lectern, takes the mic and delivers her part of the lecture as if in a trance, monotonously but without a single hitch – like she’s producing ticker tape, not sentences, or a story. She hasn’t forewarned TC of her decision to illustrate her

127 For a representative selection of literature which – explicitly or implicitly – problematises dominant narratives on ‘post-truth’ along similar lines, see Seymour, op. cit; Proctor and Schiebinger, op. cit; Giroux, op. cit.; Dean (2002); Gilroy-Ware (2020); McGoey (2019); Curry Jansen (2017); Sullivan and Tuana (2007).

talk with photos from her everyday life and phone and computer backup drives (she's a mother, after all, with kids – their lives and activities, unavoidably, her subject, and she hadn't had the time to draw up anything better). The only interruptions come with certain keywords,¹²⁸ ideological condensed matter, which threaten to derail the stream and sound like remixes – of machine guns; of someone struggling to breathe. Like the unexpected sonic aggression of an advertising break on television, their volume is also higher; aggressive, intrusive, disturbing. When this happens, the body electric evaporates,¹²⁹ goes transparent momentarily and crackles, like the light in a monitor turning off and on.

MINECRAFT MOTHER:

As occurred in the wake of 9/11, the aftermath of the global financial crisis saw a concerted political struggle to *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, again, and S-H-A-P-E T-H-E N-A-R-R-A-T-I-V-E, as regards the disaster's cause, character and best treatment.¹³⁰ The incoming government had been elected on a ticket of fiscal responsibility: the only issue that really mattered, it had argued, in meeting the G-R-E-A-T R-E-C-E-S-S-I-O-N head-on.¹³¹ Once installed, it announced a B-O-N-F-I-R-E O-F T-H-E Q-U-A-N-G-O-S, one of many memorable figures it placed into circulation to associate the *outgoing* government

128 This recalls the 'keywords' of Williams (1988). Wealth of Negations' *Welfare* and *Management* editions were further influences (Wealth of Negations, 2012, 2013).

129 Dziga Vertov's admiration for Walt Whitman here turns up to describe the evanescent corporeal form of one of our narrators. See Walt Whitman, 'I Sing the Body Electric,' in Whitman (1986), pp. 116-123.

130 Basu (2004) is particularly good on the 'demographic intelligence' that ends up narratively conjoining two disparate pieces of information, in spite of their never having been publicly connected (in the case under discussion at the time, Saddam Hussein's 'evil' with the 'evil' of 9/11). The process that Basu describes reads like the operation of algorithmically determined content, *avant la lettre*, and over a decade later, we can see a wholesale instrumentalisation of this principle in the internet's content economies and ideological wars, within which, as Carlos Maza has explained well (Maza, 2019), the sacred cow of neutrality and our principled stand against 'bias' actually become, in the absence of a deeper understanding of platform capitalism's epistemic workings, a serious vulnerability for liberal understandings of open debate, objectivity and truth.

131 This language is taken from Conservative-party campaigning of the time.

with profligacy, incompetence and a lack of accountability.¹³²

Ministers' stated aim of rebalancing the national ledger by C-U-T-T-I-N-G R-E-D T-A-P-E and M-A-K-I-N-G E-F-F-I-C-I-E-N-C-I-E-S was, however, immediately recognisable as, rather, the deepening and acceleration of a historical drive to privatise profits and socialise losses.¹³³



Figure 9. Sylvanian miniature animals, pictured as found, approx. 2010
Photo found on mobile phone.

132 One of the most damaging came from the letter that Liam Byrne, Chief Secretary to the Treasury under Gordon Brown, left for his successor, which stated, 'I'm afraid there is no money' – a campaigning gift to the Tories that he came to rue. See Byrne (2015).

133 The small state and free markets that are supposed to be neoliberalism's central features have functioned as sleights of hand: idealised constructs, disguising the utility of state power and liberal-democratic legislatures for various models of 'late,' 'advanced' or 'post-Fordist' capitalism. Thanks, especially, to the proliferation of specialist services catering to corporate requirements during the digitalisation of society, these twin phenomena create the perfect conditions for what is now, evidently, a programmatic privatisation of gain and socialisation of risk/loss. Still part of the post-70s arc of financialisation at the time of the 2010 election, this information-driven capitalism – launched around the time the Bretton Woods system was terminated in 1971 – has, since then, acquired distinct new authoritarian traits, tending presently to be qualified as 'populist,' 'nationalist' or 'fascist' (or as 'managed democracy'). In the shadow of the financial crisis, its characteristics came to be popularly associated with the pressures of 'immigration' and the regulatory constraints on 'freedom' represented by membership of the European Union, *not* with their causation within capitalism or neoliberalism. Poverty, loss of political agency and a universal social chagrin have, for similar reasons, been more easily seized upon by the right than by the left, as was well dramatised in Channel 4's *Brexit: The Uncivil War* (Haynes, 2019). The complexities of social composition involved in these tendencies – precisely *not*, that is, the simple 'metropolitan elite vs. regional working class' or 'rich vs. poor' dynamics to which Brexit is commonly attributed – are well summarised in Kundnani (2021), and Dorling and Tomlinson (2020).

This was known as the neoliberal phase of global capitalism – whose deleterious effects on the world’s human populations and their ecosystems were becoming impossible to hide, even from those in its international centres, the stability and predictability of whose lives it was designed to undergird.¹³⁴

The ministers’ zeal to shrink or remove every supposedly bloated ring of public provision drew its force from capital’s historical battle with labour, and they knew well that the relationships of compulsion, division and competition integral to capitalist production must be protected – the former to use every possible technique to shore itself up against, and gain leverage over, the latter.¹³⁵

All politicians knew, too, that crisis creates social volatility: it destabilises the conditions for life, rendering populations vulnerable and, in ways that had become predictable, profoundly altered in their propensities and inclinations. Be it sudden or gradual, fast or slow, to arrive, they knew that, historically, disaster is disruptive, a radical discontinuity that makes the everyday

134 There is a continuum, in this and other respects, between capitalism’s earlier and later phases; its harnessing of, and snug fit within, global climatic conditions to date. See also: Chakrabarty (2009, op. cit., 2021), and Ghosh (2016). As Zakiyya Iman Jackson discusses in *Becoming Human* (Jackson, 2020, pp. 29-30), Hegel also argued for spirit’s conditionality in environmental temperateness (a dynamic of emergence he claimed was only possible in the benign weather conditions of Europe).

135 Critical histories of neoliberalism differ in emphasis but broadly concur that it is the toolbox of the state with which investors and corporations small and large, along with specific subsets of the populace, can be seduced, encouraged, reassured, ignored, protected, punished or saved (its alliance with capital and property rights is always central). The enormous capacity that the state alone possesses is foundational to an ideology dedicated, in the public mind, to its shrinkage and diminution. In a postcolonial, post-WWII context, it also benefited from a new, multilateral architecture of rules and agreements by which to continue to pursue imperial violence – albeit in an unrecognisable modality (*peaceful*, because ‘merely’ economic or purely defensive). A gradual animation by a humanitarian zeal crystallised in the decision-making rationales of the Balkans crisis and, subsequently, the Iraq War (see Chomsky, 1999a; Hudson, 2003; Harvey, 2003, 2005). Recent historical scholarship details the structural connectedness between postcolonialism and neoliberalism, notably Mirowski and Plehwe (2015); Slobodian (2018); and Plehwe, Slobodian and Mirowski (2020). For a detailed, counterhegemonic history of liberalism via an account of agenda-setting *The Economist* magazine, see Zevin (2019).

necessities of food, transport, energy and housing harder to come by and exposes people – *labour* – more nakedly to the coercion inherent in production and reproduction.¹³⁶



Figure 10. Chalkboard outside Coram's Fields playground, London, with inscription: 'Can I borrow your nanny if you cut my child's play scheme?', 2013
Photo found on desktop computer.

This meant that, over time, crisis tended to guarantee social pliability, a greater collective readiness for adaptation. Depending on the social conjuncture, however, it could also show a double face, and turn towards the opposite – revolt, and the revolutionary demand.¹³⁷ Simultaneously an opportunity and a threat, it constituted (or rather *created*) a unique circumstance which, appropriately conceived,

136 See Klein (2007), and Lowenstein (2015). While pioneered in Chile, the US, the UK, and the former Eastern Bloc countries, neoliberalism's adaptations are also evident in military and aid policies witnessed in Haiti, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and other arenas of conspicuous Western 'intervention', be it in trade, investment and debt determination or actual war – as is captured, unforgettably, in Raoul Peck's 2014 documentary/drama film coupling, *Murder in Pacot* and *Fatal Assistance* (Peck, 2014a, 2014b). Neoliberalism's origin story covers complex geographies of 'left' and 'right' state- and governance-ideology; is integrally connected to processes of virtualisation and financialisation; and belies any stageist periodisation or unitary model. Rather, as Ray Kiely argues, it may most coherently be characterised through the quality of *paradox* (Kiely, 2018). See also Martin (2002); Bockmann, (2011); Medina (2014).

137 For two recent attempts to determine certain essential characteristics of this refusal, rupture and negativity, see Clover (2016) and Caygill (2013); and, for attempts to locate the affects of abandon, belonging and joy that (may) characterise even the most dangerous moments of revolutionary change, see Segal (2018) and Tari (2021).

could be seized – even actively invited, or encouraged, to arrive.¹³⁸

These principles had been evident globally, across territories and temporal periods, which explained how the 2008 financial crisis – that latest, epochal fissure in the socioeconomic fabric – might, on the part of those in power, have catalysed an escalation of political ambition (not, as many expected, a retrenchment to secure the status quo ante). The ongoing acceleration of technological, biological and demographic change furthermore helped absorb the catastrophe into others, creating a rolling event that rendered crisis – along with its ideological corollaries – permanent and unceasing in its intensity.¹³⁹

Also pronounced at this time was the historical tendency to naturalise political and economic decisions; their public presentation as, effectively, acts of God, possessing no other author or executor than R-E-A-L-I-T-Y itself. This rested, of course, on the analogy, made long before, of markets being governed by an I-N-V-I-S-I-B-L-E H-A-N-D – each normalising, and fostering resignation to, capitalism's generation of abstraction, alienation and atomisation.¹⁴⁰

Small jolts of semiautomatic self-reflexivity would puncture hegemony's low hum. Jocular public commentary on the news

138 War and the deliberate running down of public infrastructures are argued in the literature to function as net positives for neoliberalism, due to their ability to defang arguments for collective ownership and maintenance (the 'sustainability' of which is always placed under question). In the face of systems collapse, an expedited transfer into private ownership becomes desirable through its appearance as the lesser of two evils – being, tendentially, the reliable (because supposedly already proven) 'alternative'. We can see this in the university (where institutions resort to outsourcing a myriad of activities in this way), social housing (where private-sector landlords, at relatively greater expense, are brought in to 'sort out' emergencies), municipal construction, etc.

139 For more on the experience of acceleration, see the work of Hartmut Rosa, as cited in Baraitser (2017). This is counterposed to a theoretical trend of speed-positive narrations of acceleration, whose first systematic articulation – in Noys (2014) – has been followed by an upsurge in literature bringing it into association with a constellation of neofascist and alt-right tendencies, especially via 'nonviolent', anti-statist discourses deriving from the history and culture of Silicon Valley. See Pein (2014); Frank (2015); Armistead (2016); Golumbia (2016, 2021); Haider (2017), op. cit.; Sandifer, op. cit.; Burrows (2018); Teixeira Pinto, op. cit.; McQuillan (2019).

140 Smith (1759, 1776).

industries' use of the passive voice, for example, or, as the years passed, the rabid flourishing of vocabularies of deceit, surveillance and incommensurability in the realm of human perception (G-A-S-L-I-G-H-T-I-N-G, O-P-T-I-C-S, C-O-G-N-I-T-I-V-E D-I-S-S-O-N-A-N-C-E).

All of these appeared to be the result, in fact, of the foundational working precepts of the thought collective, namely that the technical, legal and regulatory determination of capitalist markets – by states, banks, corporations, think tanks, philanthropists, lobbyists, change consultants, public-relations agencies – should be concealed, even actively disguised, to the extent that their movement appeared free and naturally occurring.¹⁴¹

The collective's political strategy appeared, generally, to have been a resounding success, including its programme to cement the notion that N-E-O-L-I-B-E-R-A-L-I-S-M – the intellectual framework that it had conceived, developed and refined with great focus and dedication – should, in public, instead be construed as a woolly and lazy term, insufficiently rigorous to use in critical debate, let alone serious analysis or scholarship.¹⁴²

The latest Conservative variant of this ideology, introduced under the banner of the B-I-G S-O-C-I-E-T-Y, was described by its engineers, in seemingly interminable intellectual repetitiveness (given, all too recently, liberals' celebration of the T-H-I-R-D W-A-Y), as *the best*

141 The neoliberal thought collective was a self-appointed group that established and espoused the tenets of neoliberalism over decades and included many more people than its best-known cheerleaders, Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek. See Mirowski (2014) for a short account of this history and associated arguments, which he has elsewhere documented in greater detail.

142 Mirowski, *ibid.*, p. 2. See also Biebricher (2019). Recent scholarship seeks to address World Systems Theory and Marxist historiography's historical weaknesses to quash the Eurocentrism of Western accounts of capitalism's origins and development and to emphasise value transfer from South to North, e.g. Anievas's and Nişancıoğlu (2015), and Cope (2019). There is, more importantly, the enormous body of black left scholarship, which historicises capitalism – and resistance against it – within imperialism, settler colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade and white supremacy (present and forthcoming anthologies addressing the limited availability of this archive are: Johnson and Lubin, 2017; Dean and Burden-Stelly, 2022; Gray, Haider and Mabie, forthcoming).

possible M-A-R-R-I-A-G-E O-F L-E-F-T A-N-D R-I-G-H-T.¹⁴³

They eulogised over its capacity to channel communitarian energies – including, initially, as they continued the civic devolution and administrative decentralisation that the outgoing government had started. Even more important and unique, they argued, was the value it derived from the locally embedded, and voluntarily spent, social resources of sharing and caring – as modelled centrally in the F-A-M-I-L-Y, but also the mutual aid and local community initiatives which arise spontaneously in neighbourhoods, villages and towns, as if due to the irrepressibility and innate goodness of the forces of N-A-T-U-R-E.

It was this adroit claim on humanity's social instincts and natural impulses – which had long functioned to undergird the progress and innovations of capitalism in the form of F-R-E-E I-N-P-U-T-S and C-H-E-A-P T-H-I-N-G-S – that provided the foundation for the practical steps they planned.¹⁴⁴ With human sociality available for nothing, mantras of household finance (T-I-G-H-T-E-N P-U-R-S-E S-T-R-I-N-G-S, etc.) would act as their bedrock, with the myths of national belonging being their lubricant and the carceral state their guarantor.¹⁴⁵

143 Influenced by Phillip Blond, author of *Red Tory* (Blond, 2010), and a new cohort of Cameron-associated think tanks – Policy Exchange, Reform, Res Publica – the new conservatism promoted the idea that a 'Big Society' would arise from the ashes of what was construed as the disastrous accident of postmodern liberalism. This paradigm updated the ideological legacy and statecraft of the Thatcher era for a new age of networks, harnessing grassroots energies and celebrating Victorian values of thrift and family (the ubiquitous insistence on 'resilience' – which derives from the cognates of the military and security apparatus – functioned, in a neoliberal-Victorian fusing, to further individualise responsibilities for failure and victimhood). See also Pautz (2013); Neocleous (2013); Ramsay and Geoghegan (2018).

144 Literature pertinent to the notion of free inputs to capital covers geographical territory, 'nature' and gendered (or virtualised) labour, which is hidden or invisible, falls outside the wage and is 'underpaid' or otherwise devaloured. Impossible to summarise here, the following might indicate its domains: Lenin (1996); Terranova (2000); Moore and Patel (2018); Federici (2012); Fortunati (1995).

145 This tendency describes a much longer trajectory (analysed in Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, Roberts, 1978) that arguably played out more conspicuously in the US context, giving birth to the 'carceral capitalism' that frames this thesis. See also Camp (2016).

Caesura

Austerity was implemented swiftly, cutting swathes from the already strained web of social provision, as it had evolved under the outgoing government (whose reliance on private finance initiatives in particular had benefited creditors and investors disproportionately, compared to the communities, or indeed the community A-S-S-E-T-S, that they were said to help).¹⁴⁶



Figure 11. Ava with wand/sword, dressed as a pupil for her make-believe school, 2014
Photo found on mobile phone.

The construction of social housing ground to a halt and its economies of allocation became monstrously contorted, with the dynamic of supply and demand and any remaining regulatory constraints benefiting the investor and property-

146 Youth-, early-years and community-support services, including legal aid, were especially hard-hit, as was epitomised by the closure of SureStart.

owning classes over every other citizen.¹⁴⁷ Economies of social care became similarly distorted. Impoverished and sucked dry by the logic of profit, the ever-present threat of C-A-P-I-T-A-L F-L-I-G-H-T – that purportedly cataclysmic withdrawal of international investment that W-E, all of U-S, were supposed to fear more than any other danger or eventuality – hung, like a sword of Damocles, over every grandmother, orphan, and T-R-O-U-B-L-E-D and H-A-R-D T-O R-E-A-C-H teen, not one of them, in actuality, constituting more than a number or cost centre to the neoliberal state.



Figure 12. SIMS house made by Ava, with kitchen, bedroom, bathroom and friend, 2014. Photo found on mobile phone.

Higher education was effectively privatised via direct institutional and grant cuts; in further education, the

147 The murderous character of these forms of state cruelty has come to be symbolised by the national catastrophe of Grenfell – the disaster *and* its scandalous aftermath of inaction. Entirely preventable and warned of by residents (whose repeated efforts to bootstrap and collectivise their threadbare resources such that those responsible for their housing took note of looming risks and dangers are well known to have been serially ignored), the disaster is an indubitable example of the manipulation of time that Rob Nixon calls ‘slow violence’ (Nixon, 2011). The historically coincident Windrush scandal, by which hundreds lost their status and welfare rights as citizens – and some, due to enforced waiting in bureaucratic processes, or deportation, their lives – demonstrates the manner in which this slow violence can also be enacted through the racialised technologies of borders and citizenship. As Britain’s Covid crisis outcomes have also demonstrated, ‘doing nothing’ constitutes a deadly violence that is sui generis. See Foster (2017); Mezzadra and Neilsen (2013); Walia (2021); Gilmore (2022).

cancellation of other financial support mechanisms destroyed the modicum of access the D-I-S-A-D-V-A-N-T-A-G-E-D and M-A-R-G-I-N-A-L-I-S-E-D had previously enjoyed.¹⁴⁸ Outsourcing was used universally, both to hide the carnage and to offer the government and its contractors an escape from accountability.¹⁴⁹

Even if T-H-E C-U-T-S at first led to public anger and subsequently to protest on the streets,¹⁵⁰ a singularly elitist architecture of social, media and parliamentary structures meant that the purchase of this resistance on the voting public remained limited. As many witnessed, incredulously, in successive referenda and elections, which saw the country 'turn blue' almost entirely, the majority seemed intent, instead, on voting against its own interests.

The banks had been bailed out on the understanding that certain organisations were T-O-O B-I-G T-O F-A-I-L, and it soon became clear that the same would pertain in culture, where it was the smaller, experimental, politically progressive and diversity-led organisations that bore the brunt of the cuts, not the already well-endowed opera houses

148 This refers to the cuts in the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and, since the Seventies, the gradual, but by now widely reported, deterioration in the historical gains in social and educational mobility along lines of class and race (while less explicitly focused on these injustices, the 'crisis' of meritocracy has recently been noted as part and parcel of a more universal erosion of liberal democracy, e.g. in Mandler, 2020, and Sandel, 2021). Mirroring similar degradation in the fields of health and social care (maternity outcomes being a particularly shocking example), each human story illustrates, in often horrifying terms, Hall and others' argument that, 'race is the modality in which class is lived' (Hall et al., 1978, *ibid.*, p. 394). Much like in the switch from anti-colonisation to 'decolonisation' (Okoth, 2021), the lexicon used to describe victims of this process – who are 'marginalised,' rather than attacked, or looted – is designed to naturalise the phenomenon and erase their agency.

149 See Plimmer (2015): 'The shift from public bodies that are run by the government at arm's length to corporations is one of a range of changes that have shrunk the state since 2010. In that time, deals to outsource public services have doubled and thousands of staff have been moved to new corporate management.'

150 Notably, the 'invasion' of Millbank, part of a wave of international student unrest triggered by cuts and international standardisation. It took nearly a decade – the relevant generation's maturation – for it to become clear that this had, indeed, been a bellwether moment for a resurgence not only of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary left but of revolutionary politics and theory. See Seymour (2017); Goodall (2019); and, for a US analysis of the radicalisation – and routine public misrepresentation – of millennials, Harris (2017).

or national art complexes.¹⁵¹ Small flares of resistance, campaigning and political organising were lit in response, but here, too, nothing could sustain itself sufficiently to have a longer-term impact.

Among those worst affected there was a sense that the dynamics of institutional power – meaning the security and constancy of the larger players, and the insecurity and inevitability of exhaustion among smaller ones – had been G-A-M-E-D or B-A-K-E-D I-N as part of the executive calculus of budgetary and sector-development decisions.¹⁵² For recession virgins, the strategic power of this lurking, knowing cynicism, which governed in the shadows and at the higher altitudes, was all new, and they threw themselves wholeheartedly into campaigning, organising and discussions; a myriad of sharp and spontaneous acts of local, national and international activism.¹⁵³ But the dispensing bodies perhaps had older, battle-hardened hands involved who, from experience, could anticipate the length of each fight; could predict who would falter or burn out; could foretell the ready supply of new and hungry candidates for funds, always standing in the wings (culture's reserve army of labour).¹⁵⁴

151 The only exception made, or 'scalp' offered, was Arts & Business, a large agency for advocacy and brokerage of corporate philanthropy in the arts. Brown (2011) remains online as a remarkably comprehensive account of the funding decisions.

152 We should refuse equivalences between acutely distinct spheres of activism, but the hegemonic calculation of exhaustion nonetheless seems worth articulating as universal (see Brennan, 2001; Crary, 2014; Haider, 2021).

153 In response, a small coalition of organisations attempted, collectively, to demand answers regarding the existence of coherent policies on digital arts (see Council of Digital Arts, CODA, 2011). Climate-change- and diversity-led organisations suffered much the same (thanks to Cecilia Wee for the reminder that Platform, the climate-crisis oriented commissioning agency, was for example also among those cut).

154 There has, since the moment recounted here, been a plethora of reports on gender, class and diversity in the arts. Findings tend to be repeated, namely that culture is a hostile place to work for those not white, not male, not middle class – relying on personal or family privilege and capital assets, early-life enthusiasm and energy and a utopian conception of art, to subsequently produce a moment of disillusionment, 'realism,' and drop-off, particularly around the moment of maternity (at which point younger candidates naturally come forward to replace those who disappear). Reports by Arts Council England (ACE) confirm these trends, though for my purposes of greater interest are those produced independently or at variance with the larger bodies' reporting conventions, e.g. the excellent and original work by Desai (2020) and Ward (2019). Through Common Practice, of which it was a founder member, Mute Publishing also contributed to such efforts. See Thelwall (2011); Gordon-Nesbitt (2012); Cruz (2016).

Never having been properly insecure themselves and never having had their working existence threatened or annihilated at its very roots, these advisers, experts, board members and chief execs – all respectable P-R-O-F-E-S-S-I-O-N-A-L-S of the metaphysical category of *political economy*¹⁵⁵ – observed the social landscape with affects of regret but also with resignation and a sense of future potential: that all destruction might also be (their) beautiful C-R-E-A-T-I-O-N, as they took the unique O-P-P-O-R-T-U-N-I-T-Y to rectify the socioeconomic design's inconsistencies and bring it into balance and harmony – the singular artistry of F-A-I-R-N-E-S-S – as a composer or theatre director or pointillist painter might, if not the butcher on the high street who tells her customers that she has taken it upon herself to cut their salami into thick or thin slices because, presuming to know their appetites and passions, she is confident it is the B-E-S-T T-H-I-N-G T-O D-O *for them*.¹⁵⁶

The government had dealt with the festering – and then seismic – damage that neoliberal capitalism had caused by lighting more of its bonfires, in different locations, on different scales. Slow and fast violence, together (everywhere, people said this felt like D-E-A-T-H B-Y A T-H-O-U-S-A-N-D C-U-T-S).¹⁵⁷ As it did so, the new ideological variant that it had posited was socially P-R-O-G-R-E-S-S-I-V-E, and would save and cohere T-H-E N-A-T-I-O-N (meaning all its hardworking people) instead helped a cabinet largely comprised of young, affluent, privately educated men to drive their C-H-E-L-S-E-A T-R-A-C-T-O-R-S into any remaining

155 If 'political economy' was the critical object for Marx, Philip Mirowski has, within his broader historicisation of neoliberalism, pursued the foundational category of *information* in its evolution. He has shown how, on account of the paranoid technologies of the Cold War and the Pax Americana, it participated in a post-structuralist turn beyond the unitary self, whose direction of travel was cyborgian. See Mirowski (2002), and the opening chapter of Franklin (2021), particularly pp. 199-202

156 This phrasing draws directly from that which ACE used to justify the cuts, as cited at the time in Higgins (2011), and repeated to all subsidy-holders who might feel moved to query or complain: 'ACE, which received a 29.6% cut in its grant-in-aid from the government, passed on cuts of 15% to the arts as a whole, but it promised not to "salami slice," giving equal pain to all. This meant [instead] there were big winners – and big losers – as the funding decisions were announced.'

157 Cooper and Whyte (2017).

vestiges of time and space (the latter already universally transformed, whether at periphery or centre, into enclaves and archipelagos hostile to the survival of anyone lacking access to capital).¹⁵⁸



Figure 13. From left: Evlyn, Ava, Matty, Gabriela, Florence, Sadie, Lucas, Violet (at front), Halloween, 2016. Photo found on mobile phone.

The O-L-D B-O-Y-S now in charge did not so much contract the state as convert the nature of its instruments so that they fell even further outside established civic structures, far beyond public purview – a phenomenon that was mirrored in the unprecedented transnational verticalisation of all supply and procurement structures (especially those mediating labour), which, as an assemblage, or techno-social S-T-A-C-K,¹⁵⁹ had been built on the irresistible lure (and in spite of the contradictory reality) of such concepts as seller-and-buyer empowerment, participatory parity, fluidity

158 See, among others, Minton (2017), and Lees, Shin and López-Morales (2016). On the role of art (including 'socially engaged' art) within processes of privatisation and gentrification, which are presented as fostering public access and regeneration, see Ford and Davies (1998); van Mourik Broekman and Berry Slater (2009), especially chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 271-425); Berry Slater and Iles (2010).

159 Bratton (2015), whose central figure has provided the morphology of choice for many seeking to discuss the imbrications of sovereignty, software, labour and geography.

and convenience and negligible barriers to entry.¹⁶⁰ This edifice earned the identifier P-L-A-T-F-O-R-M C-A-P-I-T-A-L-I-S-M and, although it couldn't last forever, it assisted the universal doubling down on the thought collective's attack on transparency, as if all capitals were working under their direct instruction (in reality, it was, of course, more of a quid pro quo).¹⁶¹

In due course, it would become clear that the most persistent and unstoppable phalanx in the assault on the social body was that directed at women and others given little choice but to provide care; to function, in every way, as social A-D-H-E-S-I-V-E for the broken lives, bodies and minds witnessed everywhere. These were the so-called *feminised*. In fact, as became evident around the world and especially in the ideological pioneer states,¹⁶² it was the fate of two ontological categories (what is visible, *seen* and publicly recognised as real – a F-A-C-T, the T-R-U-T-H – and the human being embodied, gendered, raced, classed and socialised to live as W-O-M-A-N) to become ever more profoundly, yet antagonistically, entangled (meaning, through logics of inversion and denial, not those, as society accelerated and transitioned, of straightforward

160 Throughout this period, states' and international regulatory bodies' knowledge of how to manage the new capitalism was outpaced by the tech mega-corporations' singular heft and flagrant operational audacity. Predictably, in light of the literature on racial capitalism, Shoshana Zuboff likens their modus operandi to that of European colonists, who asserted claims (to land, resources, people) together with the flags they stuck in the ground, and dealt with the consequences for law and their constitutional modelling later: 'As the pioneer of surveillance capitalism, Google launched an unprecedented market operation into the unmapped spaces of the internet, where it faced few impediments from law or competitors, like an invasive species in a landscape free of natural predators' (Zuboff, op. cit., p. 16). It seems there has been, among decision-makers in states affected, significant confusion over how to balance the tech giants' 'contributions' to national economies with the increasingly conspicuous damage they are doing to them.

161 Starr (2019) summarises the present dilemmas of internet governance from a pragmatic perspective. For a small selection of literature exploring software and platform capitalism's consequences for politics and sovereignty, see Bratton, op. cit.; Srnicek (2017); Gerbaudo (2018); Couldry and Mejias, op. cit.; Thylstrup, op. cit.

162 Early comparative graphs drawn up of Covid cases and deaths around the world showed there to be a direct correlation between neoliberal governance and the prevalence of illness and mortality, as immediately pointed out by Naomi Klein and many others. How the gargantuan, systemic shock of the global pandemic proved to people, via the daily graphic realism of stats and lines and numbers, that all aspects of their lives were suffused with injustice, is a form of what Giroux calls 'pandemic pedagogy' (Giroux, 2021). It assured, also, that the 'care crisis' (Fraser, 2016) could no longer be avoided. See, for example, Dowling (2021).

public identification, presentation, valorisation and visibility).¹⁶³

Practice-based (To Get a Life)

The visual arts' template authorial subject had, since at least the 1980s – in retrospect, a fork in the road for any cultural politics of equality – been the creative, emancipated individual, with all the attendant symbolic baggage of studio space and personal and cognitive liberty. When it came to transgressive art, its conceptual validity had long since run aground in the figure of the Y-B-A, whose faux subversion, entrepreneurial C-H-U-T-Z-P-A-H and absolute orientation towards spectacle expressed the oxymoronic nature of radical authorship in the context of a global art market so well that h/er work – and celebrity – marked a terminus of sorts.¹⁶⁴

In the early 1990s, the woman artist had dedicated herself to a collaborative project to find an alternative to the co-dependence of such individualised artistic identities and market exchange. She didn't see the point of claiming a revolutionary politics for, or fighting to protect, her own authorship – or any possessive-individualist idea of creativity – when, as she learned in her first visits to the trade fairs and biennials soon after leaving the safe confines of the art school, it rested on such a fundamental contradiction in practice. Personal autonomy was allied to the division of labour and the hierarchisation of functions

163 I am interested here in anti-normative conceptions not only of the gendered human being – articulated in the routine, socialised and socialising, activities of her life – but also in the complex manner in which the accelerations and intensifications of time (and any resulting sense of historicity) have shaped experiences of, and personal decision-making processes around, labour, love, sex, gender and care. For an indicative selection of literatures, which, in spite of their influence on it, it is far beyond this thesis to summarise, see Baraitser (2009, 2017, op. cit.); Lewis, op. cit.; Olufemi, op. cit., Freeman (2011); Weeks (2011, 2018, op. cit.); Kafer (2013); Vogel (2014); Spade (2015, 2020); De la Bellacasa (2017); Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018); Ferguson (2019); The Care Collective (2020); Rao (2020); Winant (2021); Gleeson and O'Rourke (2021); James, n.d.

164 The 'yBas' were named and critiqued in Ford (1996), and this version of transgression can productively be contrasted with that in, e.g., Spence (1996), and hooks (1994).

within capitalism; all were part of the same hornets' nest that needed to be knocked down.

Nonetheless, being a form of production, culture demands resources, and from the beginning the organisation she cofounded had sought state support. Fundraising and coordination, the recurring tedium of business planning and annual accounts, consultations on strategy and governance, the mysterious evanescences of L-E-A-D-E-R-S-H-I-P – much fetishised and circled around by funders, banks, government bodies – had all been accepted, even embraced, as part of a collective tactic of adaption and guile. That was S-O-L-I-D-A-R-I-T-Y, wasn't it? They stole increasing amounts of time from the creative work that was the project's *raison d'être*, but it seemed worth it for the G-R-E-A-T-E-R G-O-O-D.

At eighteen – around the same age, she mused, at which a human child was regarded as I-N-D-E-P-E-N-D-E-N-T or, at least as determined by the state, mature enough to buy alcohol, drive, leave home or leave school – all government support to her organisation was cut. The national distributor of subsidies was R-E-S-T-R-U-C-T-U-R-I-N-G. There was to be a new P-O-R-T-F-O-L-I-O. Less cake to go round.

In the maelstrom of chaotic decision-making that ensued, she found, almost imperceptibly, that the tables had turned, and her mind changed. The sums of her life didn't add up any longer. Listen carefully, and you could hear all the happy formulae creaking and crashing. Strong and unwelcome affects that she had been suffering for some time – frustration, boredom, confusion, melancholy; worst of all, the poisonous green nausea of envy – became overwhelming. To her, their cause was unclear, but they sought to cathect themselves; to be answered, and reciprocated, by *something* holding the requisite agglomeration of characteristics, a unique capacity, to satisfy this new, almost bodily, insurgency. What was that thing? *What was to be done?*

Artists everywhere had seen that, even if paid reasonably, those among them fortunate enough find academic employment lost any time they had to think and create freely due to the sprawling nature of their jobs, whose scope and scale superseded their formal description in practically every instance. The dynamic of this negative logic had been almost vertiginous, especially for those working part-time, and was clearly coextensive with the financialisation of tertiary education, specifically the swallowing of art schools by universities, which saw their autonomy and cultural-pedagogical particularities (all integrally connected to geography and the politics of place) sacrificed on the altar of increasingly punitive and controlling practices of standardisation, accounting and reporting in order to build the new globalising metrics of H-U-M-A-N C-A-P-I-T-A-L and to predetermine the manner in which creation, invention, originality and societal I-M-P-A-C-T might be defined and measured.¹⁶⁵

In comparison – and representing an inversion of the privileges which the wage is supposed to bring – funded doctoral studentships offered equivalent resources, with more freedom and personal agency.¹⁶⁶ The practice-based PhD especially, due to its definitional elasticity, seemed feasibly to function as the object and instrument that she and others sought; it possessed a greater measure of those desired characteristics (the ability to make time, help take a breath, feel alive and possess agency; to foster a mode of critical reflection on the past and the present; to understand one's locatedness and possible contribution within the totality of social relations). Certification, required seemingly everywhere for even the most basic forms of institutional employment, was a boon. The doctorate, in

165 See, among others, McGettigan (2013); Docherty (2011, 2014, 2018); Craig and Openshaw (2018); Fleming (2021), op cit. On the origins of the British art school, see Quinn (2016), and, for an account of the vulnerability of its once radical pedagogic mission under neoliberal financialisation, Vishmidt (2010).

166 Being untaxed, at this time, PhD studentships were rewarded – 'paid' – at roughly the equivalent rate of a part-time Senior Lecturer position *after* tax, offering the extra boon of doctoral certification to those increasing numbers whose employment prospects were being disadvantaged by not possessing it.

effect, represented a device – a tool capable of making both itself and something other than itself. It was a gorgeous, gleaming, merciful sword with which to momentarily sever the suffocating intricacies of interdependence.¹⁶⁷

The People's Palace (Choreography of Access)

For the woman artist, the plan materialised, but it was hampered by maternity and everyday life, which appeared to her, every minute of every day, as insurmountable obstacles to all forms of silence, concentration and focus. At the People's Palace, she received advice from an old colleague and friend; a kind and gentle man, unusual in his modesty, at ease in his magnanimity. He told her that you should never put off a PhD because you think your life is not ready for it. Life *never* gets sufficiently tidy or empty or quiet to make the ideal. The perfect conditions for studying are a mirage – they don't exist. He said he had seen people endlessly defer their dreams for the autonomy she also sought, in the hope that this wasn't true, but it was always in vain. Children or no children, life in a mess, or perfectly structured, tired, or full of energy and fire: if she wanted to do it, she should just push.

While they spoke, men, women, children and babies in prams moved in and out through the building's long bank of polished, revolving doors, their brass patina catching the

167 The filmic, textual or physical 'cut,' as required for the work of editing, recomposition and grafting (in montage, collage, textual cut and paste, and physical surgery) is celebrated here against a cultural background which, on the whole, tends towards the celebration of 'entanglement.' Most decisively influenced by the work of Karan Barad (which this thesis does not directly engage, other than to acknowledge its influence in the arts and arts university), the discourse of entanglement presents the possibility of 'agential cuts,' whereas my deployment of the vocabularies of scansion intends, rather, to valorise the gendered, material labour of Svilova and other (female) film cutters and editors; to explore cutting/composing as a form of art and embodied cognition (as Vertov scholars Karen Pearlman, John MacKay and John Sutton have recently done); and to ask whether a radical politics must 'stay kinky' (meaning entangled), as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten have advocated, or whether the drive to cut into material/media or otherwise break bonds can function as a retort to cuts received – an action in kind – indeed a creative practice of liberation. See Lavin (1995); Sinclair (2021); Steyerl (2013); Pearlman, MacKay and Sutton (2018); Chua, Moten and Harney (2022).

light and sparkling. Intrusive clattering sounds of cash registers and catering utensils reminded her of what this postwar temple to public culture had ceded to commerce – and the British class system – over the years, with the foyer dutifully surrendering half its body to the private retail of shops and cafés, with the free access which the building had once offered to all comers now subtly metered by codes of behaviour, dress, the price of a ticket, or of a coffee and a bun. Just like all the other C-U-L-T-U-R-A-L I-N-S-T-I-T-U-T-I-O-N-S, whose security guards patrolled the place in hi-vis and sported names like M-I-T-I-E (ironic, given that its status as a pun on the attribute of power bestowed on these workers weakness, not strength). What an uncomfortable architectural pregnancy, she thought later, without even the horizon of a birth. Still, it was bright everywhere and the moment felt like being struck by lightning.

The woman artist developed the college and funding applications in a spirit of intense, pragmatic dedication, attempting to fuse the panoply of personal and professional urgencies, artistic and intellectual desires, that burst out of this moment for her personally with those of a grant-giving landscape shaped by austerity and political dogma. She knew she had one chance only – this year's small window in time, before she got a R-E-A-L J-O-B – to leap through the burning hoop that is the competition for student subsidy.

M-A-X-I-M-I-S-I-N-G opportunity, M-I-N-I-M-I-S-I-N-G risk, she compared and contrasted: institutional infrastructure and technical resources, geographic location, supervision capacity, corporate agendas, funding consortia; made it her business to know every step and angle of the quasi-judicial meshwork that constitutes the assessment of a funding-viable PhD. She was having her day in court and made her representations in such a way that neither judge nor jury could move anywhere other than where she needed them to move (this was a war game, no?). One of fifty recipients of the first round that her grant-giving consortium, T-E-C-H-N-E,

awarded, the moment felt consequential enough for the notice of acceptance to make her cry.

Hostile Environment

Governed by an apparently demonic clockwork, this S-A-F-E PhD – a securitised and heavily leveraged thing – soon revealed its limits. The persistent pressure it faced from both O-U-T-S-I-D-E and I-N-S-I-D-E, the W-O-R-L-D and H-E-R – meaning *all* her social bonds – meant its projected status as safe haven and free space, and the various other capacities she had invested it with, could hardly even be tested. With ever increasing frequency, its most basic workings were interrupted by private circumstances and relationships, personal obligations and debts, human instincts and drives, until, after one protracted explosion – which spread its toxic rays to illuminate all her living landscapes as a single H-A-B-I-T-A-T from which she was cast out – it became impossible for her to make believe she was a S-T-U-D-E-N-T, or studying – a researcher, or doctoral candidate – at all.

Under this type of atmospheric pressure, she was most confused to realise, all the precision and plasticity she had imagined her device to possess quickly became their opposite: in adversity, the shiny, sharp instrument felt blunt, rigid, crass – its material economies of reports, exams, reviews, deadlines, assessments; of identity and access cards, visas, accounts, permits and late-notices; of fee notes, directives, invoices and remittance slips; of hard drives, softwares, passwords, obsolescences and upgrades, all, in their way, an over-used, heavy guillotine held over her head, not a samurai sword, or gorgeous flip-knife, held in her hand; their weight, all too real.

A stunned naïf (she realised in cold, childlike shame, hands sweating, legs shaking), she found that every gift she had imagined receiving she had, instead, to give. Expansion

became contraction, the well of resources a drought. The dream of creative and intellectual liberation turned into a nightmare of constraint and insufficiency. The delirious hurtling of herself that she had imagined – into the image, a free, open creativity – was blocked, every time, by a wall, or a gate, made of words (that she must read, or, worse, *write*). It got higher, and higher, harder, and harder, until she stopped guessing how to move around it. She felt immobilised, imprisoned, stuck. How had she not realised? The university was a prison. Neoliberalism's gilded cage.

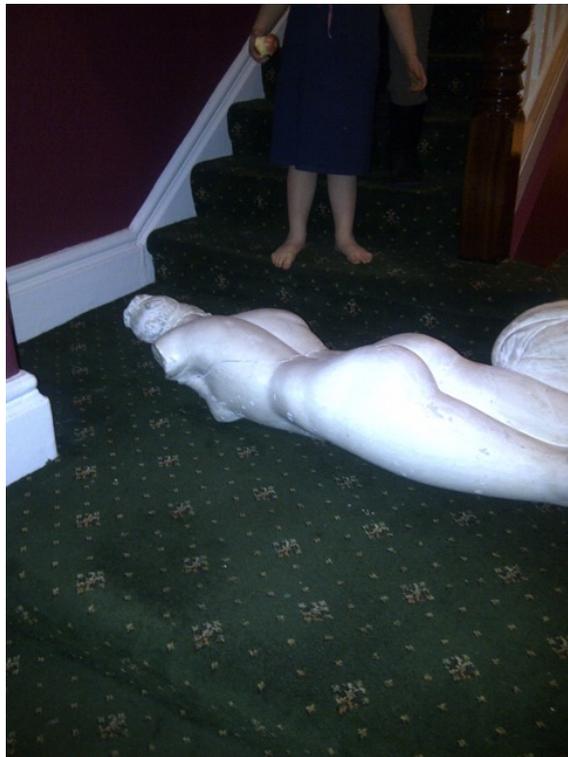


Figure 14. Violet standing on stairs, holding apple behind fallen plaster-cast painting model, 2014.
Photo found on desktop computer.

*

MM's soliloquy has, not surprisingly, been worrying TC. She's *on edge* – figuratively – but, literally too (she's been standing on an outer corner of the podium, ready to pounce and mobilise her significant psychological and physical resources should this surreal performance go tits-up, as it's been threatening to do from the get-go). Suddenly, it's like what came before was the

warm-up, and MM finally *flips* – meaning, again literally, *turns upside down*, her block-head on the floor, her block-feet (which are indeed melded, like a Grecian pillar, or elderly, two-pronged tree trunk) in the air, smoke coming off her from all sides, the body shaking furiously, and rattling. Like a yoga instructor possessed, stuck in a headstand, she shrieks...

MINECRAFT MOTHER:

LIFE CAUGHT OFF-GUARD, LIFE CAUGHT UNAWARES... I DID IT, I CAUGHT IT, *CAUGHT THEM!* IT'S IN MY PHONE, EVERYONE, IN MY BLOODY PHONE!¹⁶⁸

MM's mouth opens again. It's a configuration of, probably, six pixels in total, uniformly anthracite grey – a mailbox with a handlebar moustache attached.¹⁶⁹ Bright, slimy-green letters float out, with hesitations demonstrated, errors deleted and corrected, as if typed live, in DOS, on a black computer screen (Hollywood's inexhaustible semiotic code, by now, for 'hacker,' 'programmer,' 'secret' or 'digital money'). The stream doesn't stop: it goes on, and on, and on, and with every new line that comes out, MM's body gets smaller, like a balloon deflating, shrinking fast, until it's rock-hard and she's no better than a frozen pea...

168 The language that Minecraft Mother uses to declare her documentary victory is taken from Hicks (2007), pp. 24-25, and Vertov and Michelson (1984), pp. 162-163, where, in a summary of the kinoki's 'Field Manual,' a taxonomy is listed of recording techniques for catching life 'off-guard' or 'unawares' (the one used here would fall under 3., 'Filming from a hidden observation point', since the recording device was hidden behind a door-frame in a hallway, being held as close as possible to the sound source):

- 1 Filming unawares [*vrasplokh*, i.e. off-guard] – an old military rule: gauging, speed, attack.
- 2 Filming from an open observation point set up by cine-observers. Self-control, calm and, at the right moment – lightning attack.
- 3 Filming from a hidden observation point. Patience and complete attention.
- 4 Filming when the attention of the subjects is diverted naturally.
- 5 Filming when the attention of the subjects is artificially diverted.
- 6 Filming at a distance.
- 7 Filming in motion.
- 8 Filming from above.

169 These descriptions are based on options for Minecraft characters' faces.

MINECRAFT MOTHER:

V: Where did it go? I keep losing it¹⁷⁰
V: It's regenerating
A: No, it's not
V: Well not that, but it's going back to its...
V: OK get it, get it, get it!
V: How do, how do... Why does it not die?
A: Because it's, like, the boss... basically...
V: Can we switch jobs?
A: You can come here sit too
V: OK good ide...
A: OK...
V: Are you doing it with bows, or swords?
A: Oh is it not...
V: Why does it keep running away?
A: Cos it's tryin', it's trying to regenerate
A: Phhhhh...
V: But once we've killed it what can we do?
A: I'll show you
V: Hmmm... hmmm (sings)
A: Oh no!
V: We got so close
V: Why can't I?
A: I'll come back
A: Guys, there we go, OK... Let's go look. Basically what we're looking for is an End city
V: Can we go into that light hole? I can't see anything, OK
A, oooooohhhh! Go down there, right?
A: No that takes you home... If you wanna go home, then sure...
V: OK I'm just following you right now. You literally just...
A: Ah, there we go!
A: Is that the one, no it's not... What is this? I don't

170 This is transcribed from a mobile-phone recording of Minecraft gameplay during the lockdown of spring 2020, made standing, undetected, next to my eldest daughter, Ava's, bedroom doorway (A/Ava was 15, and V/Violet, 11).

know what that is...

V: It's making light

A: I can see...

A: What is it? It's another portal. Anyway!

V: Where are we going?

A: We're going to find the End city, wait a minute

V: I know what to do. Look at what I'm gonna do. I wonder whether you can use potions in here

V: Can I see now? Nope. I can see! No, I can't. Where are you? So, we're literally just looking around, right?

A: No wait, wait, I'm trying to figure out... Wait, wait.

V: Look up: where is the Ender city?

A: Yes that's what I'm trying to figure out – how to get to it

V: Hehe. We're literally cheating

A: Oh well, we just wanna find out where it is

V: Can I kill the Ender men?

A: Ah OK, I did it. Alright, what we're going to do is, number one, get a potion of night vision

V: I've got it already

A: Ok

V: And then

A: And then, wait a minute. Can you get Ender pearl?

V: OK sure. Aha, there you aaareee! There you aren't. Ender pearl aha!

A: Yeh, Ender pearl. Let me quickly drink the night vision

V: Oh you have to DRINK it?!

A: No you're the splash one

V: Ohhhh... Wait I wanna get the jokey one. The drink one.

A: V you just need. V, it really doesn't matter.

V: I can't see

A: OK, go down to the floor. OK, V, now you go back to this thing, you get your Ender pearl, right V, and you throw it in, like that, and now look where we are! Back where we started...

V: Oh there it is... There you are...

A: There we go. See, now, this is called an End city

V: How is this happening without me?! OK, OK...

A: Now if we just go around

V: So where are you?
A: Use your Ender pearl, throw it into that thing
V: Where?
A: Right into the middle of the, like, black thing
V: Oh the portal or?
A: No, that thing
A: Now... what we are looking for...
V: Is...
A: An End city, so it's like a big kind of purple thing
V: But aren't there tonnes of these purple things
A: No, not these things, they look different
V: What does it look like?
A: I'll show you. Or when, if I find it I'll show you
V: Where are you?
A: I dunno
V: We should take different sides
A: OK...
V: This is fun...
A: Mmmmm...
V: Where are you throwing these Ender pearls?
A: Dunno
V: What does it look like though?
A: It's like a lighter purple, really
V: Like the sky...
A: Yeah...
V: Ugh... This is gonna be easy...
A: There we go!
V: Where? Ah!!! Ooh, I'm gonna teleport myself to you
A: Ok... So this is like a mini-one... But you get really
big versions where it looks like that
A: There you go. How'd you get inside – that's what I want
to know...
A: Oh no...
V: A, where are we?
A: These are...
V: Where am I now, what?
A: Now, this is the inside...
V: Oh! That is AWESOME! I love Minecraft
V: Why can't we get in? Hey... this is discrimination. How

do you get in?
A: Through the door
V: There's a door? I'm just gonna... broke down...
A: Oh my god
V: So, this is a tad confusing, but...
A: Basically, it's very cool. The inside is very
V: Ooh! There we go. Here we are... Oh it's a stair, I love it, this is where I was made to be! What? Where am I going?
A: Anyway yeah, this is the End city
V: I don't like this
A: Um, I'm gonna look for another one
V: Another city?
A: Well, that wasn't a city
V: What was it though?
A: Just a mini-one...
A: You get like big cities and... ships... ships are where you can find an Elytra and where you can fly in Survival
V: Ahhhh, that's pretty awesome
A: Anyway yeah...

<...>

V: Yesterday I was such an idiot, cos I spent the whole day mining, but I realised it was with a wooden sword, not a stone pickaxe, so I wasted all my time.
A: you clown

As the final electric words hover below Gorvy's ceiling, and those rushing to the stage in a panic start to resemble a scrum, white and blue static charges in a ragged river across the frame, while two giant white, vertical bars soon follow, in the centre: boxy and fat, this two-line gate is online video's universal symbol for 'pause.'¹⁷¹ A languid, authoritative, female voice – North American – starts speaking, and on the right-hand side of the image, a tall stack of square windows appears, each one filled

171 This mimics cinematic techniques like that used in Michael Haneke's *Caché / Hidden* (2005), where, due to the sudden interruption of electronic fuzz on the screen in its opening sequence, the viewer is shocked into realising that she doesn't reside in the chain of cinematic representation as she thought she did (that the film's 'fourth wall' has, in Brechtian mode, been broken).

with a young face (there's the occasional empty black square, too, with just a name, number, or some amalgam of the two).

UNNAMED VOICE:

I'm so sorry you had to witness that, guys, I should have given you a trigger warning, I didn't realise that rather unfortunate event still hadn't been cut out of the video. No matter how many times I ask, they can't seem to get it together. Should any of you be worried, she was attended to.

END

IV. Focus

Kino-eye: A Communist Epistemology

I am kino-eye. I am a builder. I have placed you, whom I've created today, in an extraordinary room which did not exist until just now when I also created it. [...]

Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility, I am in constant motion, I draw near, then away from objects, I crawl under, I climb onto them. I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse, I plunge full speed into a crowd, I outstrip running soldiers, I fall on my back, I ascend with an airplane, I plunge and soar together with plunging and soaring bodies. [...]

Freed from the rule of sixteen-seventeen frames per second, free from the limits of time and space, I put together any given points in the universe, no matter where I've recorded them.¹⁷²

Dziga Vertov¹⁷³ and his collaborators – brother and cameraman Mikhail Kaufman, wife and editor Elizaveta Svilova, with whom he formed The Council of Three – introduced ‘kino-eye’ as an epistemological instrument actively involved in the collective realisation of the Russian Revolution of 1917. A compound term, kino-eye was a technosocial apparatus fusing into integrated circuits the capacities of cameras, their operators (small teams called *kinoki*, dedicated to capturing and gathering materials) and their film outputs, as well as their promotion, distribution and screening mechanisms and the viewers – not merely, as commentary on Vertov often presumes, the camera in itself. Harnessing the novel type of ‘sight’ of movie-camera optics, their scientific and epistemological vigour, they would be capable – altogether – of a ‘communist decoding of reality.’¹⁷⁴

The kinoki deemed fiction film complicit – homologous, even – with the imperialist and

172 Vertov, ‘Kinoks: A Revolution (‘The Council of Three’, Section 3),’ 1923, from Vertov and Michelson, op. cit., p. 17.

173 Born in 1896 as David Abelevich Kaufman, Dziga Vertov’s renaming himself – to ‘spinning top’ – is generally interpreted as his ode to movement.

174 Dziga Vertov, quoted in Michelson (1972), p. 65. Michelson’s essay served, in significantly expanded form, as the introduction to her edited anthology of Vertov’s writings (Vertov and Michelson, op. cit.) and was also reprinted in Michelson (2017). John MacKay suggests it stands to this day as the most important text on Vertov’s work and ideas (MacKay, op. cit., p. lxx, f.n. 164).

bourgeois status quo, which the masses and the party had overthrown. In the new, upturned social reality, opportunities for a universal reconceptualisation of cultural idioms and strategies abounded for all to see.¹⁷⁵ The revolution rendered old cultural forms (with all their reactionary alliances with the bourgeois subject and self, and their unequal distribution of resources) instantly defunct and transformed all of life, the city, the world – *reality* – into a live, shared experiment of de/creation.¹⁷⁶

In this historical-material *melée*, Vertov erected a discursive system whose ‘polemical instruments’¹⁷⁷ were built on fiction’s rigid separation from truth, or ‘unstaged life.’ Narrative cinema, in all its calcified manifestations, was described as a vile organism in its death throes:

Look around you --
There!
It's obvious to me
as to any child
The innards,
The guts of strong sensations
Are toppling out
of cinema's belly
ripped open on the reef of revolution
See them dragging along,
leaving a bloody trail on the earth
that quivers with horror and disgust.
It's all over.¹⁷⁸

Lamenting the creeping return of bourgeois film forms under the NEP (New Economic Policy, 1921-1928), The Council of Three insisted that the unprecedented capacities of kino-eye demanded the camera’s liberation:

175 Stites (1989); Gough (2005).

176 This phrase tries to encapsulate the simultaneously destructive and creative nature of revolution and early Soviet state-building.

177 In line with a bringing-into-circulation of the camera, as MacKay urges, I seek to do the same with Vertov’s rhetoric, which must be seen as working in tandem with the whole practico-theoretical system of the *kinoki*. MacKay extends the repertoire of this system to all aspects of Vertov’s public performativity: ‘[the] deliberately condescending, faux-schoolmasterly tone [of his reference to his own past words as ‘completely childlike’ in their elementariness] is but one of the many *polemical instruments*, ranging from shrill denunciations to subtle, even cryptic onscreen critiques of contemporary film practice, that he used in his long and losing battle against fictional, acted cinema in the Soviet 1920s and 1930s’ (emphasis mine). MacKay (2018), p. xiii.

178 Vertov, ‘Kinoks: A Revolution (From an Appeal at the Beginning of 1922)’, Vertov and Michelson, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

The most scrupulous examination does not reveal a single film, a single artistic experiment, properly directed to the emancipation of the camera, which is reduced to a state of pitiable slavery

[...]

The main and essential thing is:

The sensory exploration of the world through film.

[...]

Until now, we have violated the movie camera and forced it to copy the work of our eye.

[...]

The weakness of the human eye is manifest. We affirm the kino-eye, discovering within the chaos of movement the result of the kino-eye's own movement; we affirm the kino-eye with its own dimensions of time and space, growing in strength and potential to the point of self-affirmation.¹⁷⁹

Kino-eye's emancipated epistemological enquiry and communism's ontological renewals were to work hand in hand. 'Film-facts' and 'film-phrases' would be captured, manipulated and organised, wedding the interpretation of existing reality with the construction of the new. Within the general, productive systematisation of the Soviet state, this also necessitated the creation of appropriate *organisations*: film-factories –

Our view is as follows:

Parallel to the united film-factory of grimaces (the union of all types of cinema-theatrical work, from Sabinsky to Eisenstein) should be formed a

FILM-FACTORY OF FACTS

(the union of all types of cinema-eye work, from current flash-newsreels to scientific films, from thematic Kino-Pravdas to stirring revolutionary film marathon runs.

Once again:

Not [...] Eisenstein's 'factory of attractions,' neither the factory of kisses and doves (their type of director has not yet died out), nor the factory of death (*The Minaret of Death, Death Bay, Tripoli Tragedy*, etc.).

Simply:

the FACTORY OF FACTS

Filming facts. Sorting facts. Disseminating facts. Agitating Propaganda with facts. Fists made of facts.

Lightning bolts of facts!

Mountains of facts.

Hurricanes of facts.

And separate little factlets.

Against cinema-sorcery.

Against cinema-mystification.

179 Vertov, 'Kinoks: A Revolution ('The Council of Three', Section 1)', 1923, from Vertov and Michelson, *ibid*, pp. 14-15.

For the genuine cinematization of the worker-peasant U.S.S.R.¹⁸⁰

Like Aleksandr Medvedkin, Sergei Eisenstein and Esfir Shub, the kinoki regarded themselves as involved in ‘cinefication,’ meaning the continuation of the revolution by means of cinema. As Gal Kirn has shown, this concept operated particularly in the realm of affect.¹⁸¹ Film’s unique power, that is, lay in the many ways that it worked at the level of the soma, in the impulses and emotions of the singular and collective body, not – or at least not primarily – linguistically, or via individual ‘intellectual’ interpretation.¹⁸² While the rationale often given is that, as a visual medium, film could circumvent or overcome the illiteracy of the masses (it was, as we always hear, Lenin’s ‘favourite medium,’ enjoying the unqualified support of the state), in Vertov’s case such artistic choices went far beyond a deliberative pragmatics into a conscious aesthetic ideology of wordlessness, which more transversally celebrates the physics, and the phenomenology, of movement and matter into which humanity is woven and within which its ‘social choreography’ is orchestrated.¹⁸³

It is well known Vertov was hostile to intertitles, and that *Man with a Movie Camera* (destined to become the jewel in the crown of his oeuvre) has none, but the violence of his feelings on the matter must be seen as of a piece with a more open-ended irreverence, taking in all of film’s possibilities vis-à-vis perceptible reality in the historical moment of the Soviet experiment. Vertov and the kinoki were not alone in this irreverence, although their peers each sought to grant the proletariat its revolutionary power and point of view in their own unique way, and with their own unique relationship to the nature – and capacities – of film; its potentialities and

180 Vertov (1978), pp. 112-13.

181 Kirn (2017).

182 Jonathan Beller categorises Eisenstein’s and Vertov’s differing views on this as directorial schemas of ‘induction’ and ‘deduction’: “Though Vertov believes that a montage fragment is a “film-fact,” while Eisenstein claims that a fragment “has in itself no reality at all” (Sergei M. Eisenstein, ‘The Dramaturgy of Film Form,’ in *Writings*, 178), their differences necessarily extend beyond their conceptualization of the building blocks to the manner in which they produce concepts. To be a bit simpleminded, Eisenstein believed that the concept must be induced by the collision and hence was limited only by the filmmaker’s imagination for juxtaposition, hence his filmic practice was *inductive*. Vertov, on the other hand, believed that it was the job of the filmmaker to derive the resultant vector of a given theme, “to find amid all these mutual reactions, these mutual attractions and repulsions of shots, the most expedient ‘itinerary’ for the eye of the viewer, to reduce this multitude of ‘intervals’ (the movements between shots) to a simple visual equation, a visual formula expressing the basic theme of the film-object in the best way: such is the most important and difficult task of the author-editor” (Vertov, 91). Hence, Vertov’s filmic projects were primarily *deductive*.’ (emphases mine). Beller (2006), p. 83.

183 On ‘social choreography’ – the movement of bodies in space as an essential facet of ideological production (and therefore, also, resistance) – see Hewitt (2005); Tomanova (ed.) (undated), esp. Riff (2015) and Mitropoulos (2018); Wohlleben (2021); Haslett (2021).

already-existing history (including in the archive and celluloid-content markets).

Vertov's close friend Esfir Shub, for example, appropriated and recomposed historical reels of tsarist Russia in a practice of *détournement avant-la-lettre*. As Esther Leslie explains:

The return of the archive materials within Shub's film revolutionised them, made them into documents bearing witness to a process of revolution that was immanent, unfurling. What might have been produced by reactionaries, the state, by Tsarists and their supporters, could be made to articulate anew. Shub wrote of the films she found: "The intention was to evaluate them from the vantage point of the revolutionary class. This is what made my films revolutionary and agitational – although they were composed of counter-revolutionary material..."¹⁸⁴

Given Vertov's artistic background in music and poetry (the expressive media of his childhood and teenage years, influenced by Futurism especially) and his political commitment to a bodily, revolutionary affect, it becomes easier to understand Anna Lawton's argument – made in 1978, in the very early days of Vertov scholarship in the West – that Vertov's key concern was less imagistic montage as we commonly understand Soviet filmmakers to pursue it – i.e. at the level of image signification (Kuleshov, Eisenstein) – as it was rhythm, rhyme and meter, as can also be found in the prosodies and performances of poetry.¹⁸⁵ It is this art form, therefore, that Lawton argued offers the appropriate discursive context within which to analyse the filmmaker's oeuvre.¹⁸⁶ Vertov and Svilova described their practice of montage as 'visual rhymes,' Lawton writes.¹⁸⁷ Their 'theory of the interval' – a unique and highly original way of thinking about image, time and filmic construction – stated that 'Intervals (the transitions from one movement to another) are the material, the elements of the art of movement, and by no means the movements themselves. It is they (the intervals) which draw the movement to a kinetic resolution.'¹⁸⁸

184 Leslie (2017). Participating in a celebration of Shub's work in 2015, Leslie's presentation argued that, in opening up Vertov's and Eisenstein's methods to each other, she had created a 'third term' whose self-reflexivity and simultaneous mutual relation with fictional and documentary principles heralded the later methods of essay film. See Leslie (2015).

185 Lawton (1978).

186 Lawton, *ibid*, p. 49: 'Vertov did not use montage in the Eisensteinian way, either "metric" or "rhythmic," [...] he wove in each of his films a subtle net of semantic relationships by means of rhythmic patterning. The kind of "rhythmic montage" is a meaningful whole, based on the same principles that sustain the creation of modern poetry.'

187 Lawton, *ibid*, p. 45.

188 Vertov, 'We: Variant of a Manifesto' (1922), in Vertov and Michelson, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

Given the popularity of their major works throughout Russia, it also becomes easier to understand that the director should turn out to have been inspired and influenced not only by Vladimir Mayakovsky but also by the American people's poet, Walt Whitman. Ben Singer – and, more comprehensively, John MacKay¹⁸⁹ – have, in subsequent scholarship on his work and its context, made the profound commonality between these artists' creative and political positions evident beyond any doubt. The 'Salut au Monde' section of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, for example, possesses a structure – and deploys a mode of inclusive address – that is unmistakably echoed in Vertov's film *One Sixth of the World* (1926).¹⁹⁰ Its commitment to communitarian politics, the valorisation of labour and labourers, as well as the simple joys of quotidian life, is similarly easily transposed. Whitman's 'Song of the Exposition' (1871), with which MacKay opens the first volume of his magnum opus on Vertov, demonstrates further correspondences, specifically in their disdain for the traditional forms of fiction and narrative:

Away with old romance!
Away with novels, plots and plays of foreign courts
Away with love-verses sugar'd in rhyme, the intrigues,
amours of idlers,
[...]
I raise a voice for far superber themes for poets and for art,
To exalt the present and the real,
To teach the average man the glory of his daily
walk and trade,
[...]
For every man to see to it that he really do something,
For every woman too¹⁹¹

Camera Obscura

How did the Soviet kino-eye, rhetoricised as autonomous and given its own voice in agitational literature, sit within the history of vision's experience and conceptualisation? Enhanced

189 Singer (1987); Mackay (2018), op. cit. MacKay has certainly, due to the extent and rigour of his scholarship, been able to make the more definitive statement on the particularities of Vertov's relationship to Whitman – pointing out that on this matter, as with many others, scholarship is riddled with error – but I encountered the comparison first in Singer.

190 Singer, *ibid.*, pp. esp. 248-250.

191 Walt Whitman, 'Song of the Exposition' (1871), as quoted in MacKay, op. cit., p. x.

by the prosthetics of Enlightenment science and manufacture, Western 'sight' is often taken to move, linearly and without interruption, from a Cartesian optics of distance, overview and domination of nature and various cultural 'others' to a spectacularising – and now entirely networked – optics of war, surveillance and pacification, with each new step an intensification of the prior perceptual modus.

In *Techniques of the Observer*, Jonathan Crary argued that the majority of such readings (as is especially evident with regard to photography) assumed a degree of continuity between vision technologies, representational and epistemological systems that was misguided.¹⁹² Crary advocated a more Foucauldian approach that, instead, apprehends the partial role that optics plays in the broader social constructions, embodiments and sense-making practices of an observer shaped by the material and perceptual particularities of situated history. On the eve of the internet era, Crary's book proposed that vision's genealogy was a story of rupture and discontinuities, *not* smooth and logical continuities from one century, or one historical era, to the next:

If it can be said there is an observer specific to the nineteenth century, it is only as an effect of an irreducibly heterogeneous system of discursive, social, technological, and institutional relations. There is no observing subject prior to this continually shifting field. [...] There never was or will be a self-present beholder to whom a world is transparently evident.¹⁹³

Techniques maintained that decisive shifts occurred in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance (with perspective and the camera obscura), the early to mid-nineteenth century (with the stereoscope, the phenakistoscope and the zoetrope, amongst other optical technologies), and in the late twentieth century (with computerised, digital vision and graphic rendering systems). It proposed that in terms of the 'modern' observer of the nineteenth century, those discontinuities occurred most decisively earlier on (with the advent of a number of radically destabilising technologies of abstraction and distraction), not with the advent of the pictorial and representational media of photography and modernist painting. In fact, he said, while art historians might have been at pains to make late-nineteenth-century changes in painterly representation emblematic of modernity's doubt and instability, an important cultural critic like Walter Benjamin's lack of sustained focus on that art form showed that it was, if anything, but one of an enormously varied range of

192 Crary (1992), pp. 1-24; the book's central hypotheses are fleshed out and consolidated in Crary (1999).

193 Crary, *ibid.*, p. 6.

contemporary cultural determinants, certainly not the paramount site of change or rupture. Benjamin's modernist observer was, said Crary,

...an ambulatory observer shaped by a convergence of new urban spaces, technologies and new economic and symbolic functions of images and products – forms of artificial lighting, new use of mirrors, glass and steel architecture, railroads, museums, gardens, photography, fashion, crowds. Perception for Benjamin was acutely temporal and kinetic; he makes clear how modernity subverts even the possibility of a contemplative beholder. There is never a pure access to a single object; vision is always multiple, adjacent to and overlapping with other objects, desires and vectors. Even the congealed space of the museum cannot transcend a world where everything is in circulation.¹⁹⁴

Vision was liberated in this moment when the certainties and spatial stability conjured by perspective and the camera obscura were irrevocably lost – to be replaced by a forever-shifting and malleable field, largely brought on by new technologies that fostered 'equivalent sensations and stimuli that have no reference to a spatial location' (new modes of travel and communication included).¹⁹⁵ However, this destabilisation also included new, or newly ominous, processes of subjectivisation: instead of a 'transcendent foundation for vision,' there emerged a 'plurality of means to recode the activity of the eye, to regiment it, to heighten its productivity and to prevent its distraction.'¹⁹⁶ With the observer shocked and opened up, capitalist modernisation was free to introduce a range of disciplinary techniques to recode and manage perception (coincident with and typical of the era of biopower). In this account, doubt and scepticism – ostensibly forces that support the critical invigoration of the subject – also produce, in a rather contradictory social turn, a new susceptibility to control.

Benjamin's 'Little History of Photography' supplements this schema with the concept of an 'optical unconscious,' establishing an important analogue between mechanical vision and the nascent discipline and vocabulary of psychoanalysis:

The fact is, it is a different nature that speaks to the camera than speaks to the eye; different above all in that, rather than a space permeated with human consciousness, here is one permeated with unconsciousness. [...] Only photography can show him the optical unconscious, just as it is only through psychoanalysis that he learns of the

194 Ibid, p. 20.

195 Ibid, p. 24.

196 Ibid, p. 24.

compulsive unconscious.¹⁹⁷

The camera allows human beings to see a reality that their consciousness somehow gets in the way of, which is not always due to the lack of an appropriately far- or universally-sighted prosthetic (such as the camera or microscope), but instead because social or political habit, inherited language and cultural norms or taboos and the structure of the psyche itself can be just as obstructive an impediment or heavy a shroud. In what Benjamin calls its ‘creative’ mode – meaning one dictated by fashion and the desire to see the world as merely beautiful – photography by the same token obscures the ‘truth’ by dressing it up or mis-describing it, leaving it inexpressive of reality – an agent of opacity, not illumination:

In it stands revealed the attitude of a kind of photography that is able to make any tin of food look as if it is floating in space but cannot grasp a single one of the human contexts in which that tin features. [...] A photograph of the Krupp works or of AEG yields virtually nothing about the relevant organisation.¹⁹⁸

In the face of a ‘reification of human relations’ into normalcy (Benjamin’s example of a factory couldn’t be more symbolic), we stand as blinded. It is in the face of this dilemma that he warns that there really is a job of ‘construction’ at hand, *something to be built*, and a historical necessity to engage in a ‘clash’ with the medium. He points to Surrealism as having ‘trained up’ the forerunners for such work, and, writing in 1931 (the peak of Vertov’s productivity), to Russian film directors as having engaged in the battle’s first rounds.¹⁹⁹

For Malcolm Turvey, to claim that the camera-eye can ‘see’ creates a fatal dependence on anthropomorphism.²⁰⁰ He makes of Vertov’s work a particularly instructive critical object vis-à-vis a clutch of broadly cotemporal authorial and critical tendencies of what he dubs a ‘revelationist tradition,’ whose ‘naturalist’ branch sees the camera capturing a reality that fallible human eyesight cannot (Vertov and Jacob Epstein) and whose ‘culturalist’ branch uses it to unveil realities that forces at work in modernity *prevent us from seeing* (Bela Balázs and

197 ‘Brief History of Photography’, in Benjamin (2009), p. 176 (I prefer the translation ‘Little History of Photography’ latterly adopted, but maintain this title from the book I used for my research).

198 Ibid, p. 190.

199 See Petrić (2012), and Tsivian (2007), for a contextualisation of Vertov’s work within Constructivism (the latter being a corrective to what turned out to be the excessively direct connection that its author, as well as Petrić, had previously drawn between Vertov’s films and the Constructivist movement).

200 For his initial treatment of this argument, see Turvey (1999).

Siegfried Kracauer).²⁰¹ Turvey uses Wittgenstein to expose aporias and inconsistencies of language and conception in the hope, ultimately, of demarcating more clearly the projects of art and philosophy and preventing the former being drafted with too little care to perform the functions of the latter, specifically in an era when recurring – and intensifying – valorisation of the machine should urge greater precision, generally, with our labours of descriptive differentiation:

Why this “surfacing of the ‘primitive’ within modernity”, to use Michael Taussig’s words? Why this fetishism, this mimesis, with respect to the very “tool of enlightenment” itself? [...] Benjamin points to an answer to this question when he suggests that the mimetic “gift of seeing resemblances is nothing other than a rudiment of the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else.” Viewed with this in mind, Vertov’s camera-eye can be seen as an expression of a belief in a much more profound resemblance between human beings and the camera than mere playful morphological similarities. It can be seen as [...] a desire for the fulfilment of this identity through synthesis, for one to “become and behave” like the other.²⁰²

The ‘modernity thesis,’ which couples film and modernity through the phenomenon of distraction (and has, through the writings of Tom Gunning and others, reoriented the discursive field around the notion of a ‘cinema of attractions’),²⁰³ cannot, his work would seem to suggest, easily weather even the gentlest analytical interrogation from a common-sense perspective.²⁰⁴ Film, he (for example) points out, might orchestrate many of the same feelings (including shock and disorientation), but its staging of a sequence in time – not to mention constrained space – creates a fundamentally different embodied experience for an observer than does ‘modernity’ itself, experience of which is more spatialised and simultaneous and allows a greater variance of movement, direction, decision and, as we should also deduce from him, *agency*.

While far from unified in its arguments and conclusions, then, all such critical work on early

201 Turvey (2008), p. 8.

202 Turvey (1999), op. cit., p. 35. Owen Hatherley and Carlross James Chamberlin have made comparable points regarding the desire-images and preoccupations with masculinist strength (steel production) and surveillance (the panoptic view of giants) that is hiding in plain sight in Vertov’s films, *Enthusiasm (Symphony of the Donbass)* (1930), and *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). See Hatherley (2016), op. cit., pp. 144-54, and Chamberlin (2006).

203 See Gunning (2004 and 2006).

204 I regard Turvey’s interrogations as attempting, in good faith, to, for example, get to the bottom of why human sight – particularly – is presented as so deficient; and whether the dramatic claims made for the modernity thesis (regarding a generality of human experience) are empirically sound.

cinema remains singularly pertinent to the study of Vertov because it circulates around his key conceptual axiomatics of truth/fiction, sense, epistemology and ontology and also places his work in a broader field, where science and technology, the modern city, behaviour and 'self-presentation' (dress/appearance, voice/accent, manner/comportment) converge.

This scholarship tends to make the argument that, over several decades, film operated on different principles than we assume for it now – even while these principles persist in their effects and grant film its enormous cultural power. Not yet settled into linear form or narrative purpose (which, ironically, given montage's avant-garde associations of disrupting or undermining linear narrative, in fact largely arises through the invention of the cut/splice),²⁰⁵ more properly articulated and recalled, the medium's foundational traits would have to include: a general elicitation of attention, distraction and bodily impact; an illumination of gesture, exhibitionism, movement; and a use of only the most loose and sketchy narrative means to solicit psychological identification. Early cinematic production was highly experimental and playful, its filmic styles and methods *provisional*. Things were tried out for success and impact, both popular and commercial, the common denominator being the capacity film evidenced, immediately and dramatically, to restructure the human experience of *body, time-space, consciousness, and self*.²⁰⁶

This polymorphous quality is more in keeping with the much-discussed 'unclassifiable' nature of Vertov's work, suggesting why he, unlike Kuleshov, might have 'looked askance at proposals to establish a formal ontology for the medium':²⁰⁷

Itself neither matter nor substance, cinema was instead a constructive means for connecting and binding substances, a means for catalysing interactions between diverse and seemingly incommensurate objects. Thus, for Vertov, cinema was less an art form with clearly defined generic contours than 'a kind of central telephonic exchange,' a means of communication, a coefficient of political activity, or even, in its greatest compass, a 'social movement' in itself.²⁰⁸

205 This point is movingly made by a host of professional film editors interviewed in Apple (2004). They offer resounding evidence that it was their profession as cutters (and thus splicers, in my expanded parlance), which birthed film as the sequential, story-telling medium we commonly take it to be.

206 See especially Väliäho (2010), which states that it aims 'to refocus and redefine the cinema as one of the predominant anthropological processes of modernity,' p. 9, and details many examples of physical fragmentation experienced by early film-viewers (e.g. with Georges Méliès's *An Extraordinary Dislocation* and *The Man with a Rubber Head*, both 1901).

207 Fore (2013), p. 3.

208 Ibid.

If responses to Vertov's work were, in part, a product of hegemonic dynamics in the institutional historicisation of the film medium that were active from its very beginnings – making of him an anomaly or a superficial, formalist trickster uncomprehending of the depth of his medium or the needs of the audience²⁰⁹ – then our revised search for genealogies might take liberties with Benjamin's suggestions and further consider the historical synchronicity of Surrealism and Constructivism (even if only the latter functioned directly as an artistic and intellectual milieu for Vertov himself). Art history tells us they were geographically separated and had little commonality in terms of heritage, participants or programme. However, as Maria Gough says about the Constructivists and as we see in equally meticulous accounts of the history of Surrealism,²¹⁰ they shared a desire to relentlessly question the *Existenzrecht* (social right of existence, or being) of the artist, to overthrow the status quo and the bourgeois individual via cultural expressions rooted in the energy and capacity of the collective, as well as a valorisation of the unconscious against twentieth-century mechanised *ratio*, and to bring art fully into collision with life (not merely to depict it, as the retrograde practices of what Constructivists called 'easelism' (*stankovizm*) had done).²¹¹ Most importantly for this project, they shared a readiness to enter a sort of universal ongoing experiment with social, physical and media reality, which, as Gough cites Benjamin as saying, was already under way in the Soviet Union: 'Each thought, each day, each life lies here [in Moscow] as on a laboratory table. ... No organism, no organisation, can escape this process.'²¹²

The Network Optic

A century later and, contra Turvey's caution, we appear in fact to have arrived at the mechanised, autonomous vision of Vertov's fantasies: optics, the camera and its technical assemblages and embeddings have achieved an unimaginable ubiquity and independence of action – at all strata of social life, the planet, air and space. They are an instrumental technology in

209 Shklovsky (1926) is a fascinating example. John MacKay effectively periodises Vertov scholarship according to the degree to which this now outdated critical consensus on Vertov as a 'disorderly' filmmaker prone to the production of visual chaos is adhered to (MacKay, 2018, op. cit., p. lxxxvii, f.n. 199).

210 I have been influenced by, among others, Lewis (1990); Cohen (1995); and, especially, Harris (2004).

211 Gough, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

212 Benjamin (1927), cited in Gough, *ibid*, p. 1.

the mobile phone and computer and, more importantly, integral to a vast range of digital documentation, detection and information-processing systems which we recognise less immediately as involved in an epistemology of optics. Their ‘operational images’ – pace Harun Farocki, Trevor Paglen and others – are distinguished by having no immediate human interlocutor, rather existing as the currency of ‘machines-seeing-for-machines.’ Paglen wrote already in 2014:

Machines-seeing-for-machines is a ubiquitous phenomenon, encompassing everything from infrared qr-code readers at supermarket checkouts to the automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras on police cars and urban intersections; facial-recognition systems conduct automated biometric surveillance at airports, while department stores intercept customers’ mobile-phone pings, creating intricate maps of movements through the aisles. Beyond that, the archives of Facebook and Instagram hold hundreds of billions of photographs, which are trawled by sophisticated algorithms searching for clues about the behaviours and tastes of the people and scenes depicted in them. But all of this seeing, all of these images, are essentially invisible to human eyes. These images aren’t meant for us: they’re meant to do things in the world; human eyes aren’t in the loop.²¹³

The economic system that Vertov thought had been superseded in 1917 ridicules his hubris through universalised processes of subsumption; every radical possibility, all collective desire, is ingested, incorporated, *put to work*. And so the apparent instantiation of his vision – a world of mechanically enhanced eyes working collectively to disrobe reality and make it legible – has brought the zenith, not the nadir, of alienation; the conquest, not the liberation, of human beings and their faculties. Vertov’s ‘men with movie cameras’ are, now, not engaged in a critical (let alone communist) decoding of reality, but are, rather, themselves subject to measurement, analysis, management and control by an increasingly ‘intelligent’ *network optic* – a gargantuan, webbed aggregate of ‘robot-eyes’ harnessing human ‘meat-eyes’ (Paglen’s language of disgust rivals Vertov’s), rather than the other way around. Materially peripheral, the function of human eyes is to be – if anything – just another locus for the ingestion of visual data in systems governed by machine logic.²¹⁴

What is this network optic? How does it work? Can one speak of it in the singular when its enabling infrastructures are, in the traditional account of Cold War risk and defence,

213 Paglen (2014).

214 I refer here to crowd-sourcing platforms which rely on the human capacity to recognise and parse visual information, or ‘captcha,’ which describes itself as a basic Turing text.

conceived to be multiple, rhizomatic, resistant to totalisation?²¹⁵ Is it a thing, an apparatus, or rather a type of visibility and *way of seeing*?²¹⁶ If its paradigmatic image type is operational, existing to ‘do things in the world’ (in a dynamic exchange between machines), rather than to be perceived, appreciated or interpreted by human beings, then what is the status of the billions of other images that human beings produce every day? Further, what is the status of older, historical images that the networked apparatus brings into the present – and, through digitisation, into equivalence? If the trick of the network optic is to use the collective imago of a space of action and sociability towards an end that tends towards its opposite, then how should we gullible social creatures assess our fatal attraction?

Anarcho-primitivists have argued that *every* technological assemblage – every civilisational one – offers up the binary of acceptance/enslavement versus rejection/liberation.²¹⁷ Marxist feminist and post-humanist analyses of media and computing – paradigmatically, Donna Haraway’s – long ago demonstrated that such binaries flew in the face of human co-evolution with technology;²¹⁸ and it seems beyond argument or doubt that the network optic’s ontology should be regarded as more malleable and open. It is nonetheless telling that, in 2022, our planetary predicament, and the destructive role that the network optic evidentially plays within it, sees an anti-binaristic, technologically non-determinist media historian such as Jonathan Crary – whose book *Scorched Earth*’s central trope, ‘the internet complex,’ finally alights on a phrase that is sufficiently simple and all-encompassing to capture the whole, benighted apparatus for the rest of us – espousing a position comparable to that of the anarcho-primitivists.²¹⁹ The book insists, given the nature and scale of their violence, that we must in fact exit – entirely – any mode of life centred in, and dependent upon, the internet and its ancillary optics.

Crary is no critical outlier, and his hardened position – already detectible in *24/7* (2013),²²⁰ his earlier book on tech and capital’s incursion into sleep and human capacity – in fact

215 E.g. Hafner and Lyon (1998); Naughton (2000).

216 The reference, here, is necessarily to Berger (1972), whose famous translation into televisual form tellingly included segments from Vertov’s *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929).

217 John Zerzan would be an example, with the apotheosis being Theodore John Kaczynski (The Unabomber), for whom Zerzan indeed expressed qualified support. At present, the belief system of the anti-vax movement and even France’s ZAD (Zone à Défendre) would appear to exist on various points of this spectrum.

218 Haraway (1991); Hayles (1999); Braidotti (2013).

219 Crary (2022).

220 Crary (2014).

represents a wellspring of consensus among longstanding observers of networked technologies that the ravages of racial capitalism, extractivism and calculative technologies spring from the same root and express themselves in the networked computer of the present (what Jonathan Beller calls ‘the world computer’).²²¹ Concretely, this means that the reality of technological ‘democratisation’ within capitalism – which has put powerful miniature mobile cameras the likes of which Vertov could only have dreamt of into the hands of billions – on the one hand fully instantiates his vision of participatory documentary-film production among the peoples of the world, while on the other, through platform capitalism and a neoliberalism turned increasingly authoritarian,²²² it produces its nightmarish opposite: wo/man, the worldly rabble, as the mute material for a cannibalistic, networked behemoth that consumes life, labour and time as mere information and converts everything else into dejecta – a surplus humanity useful only to the ‘fix’ of carcerality.²²³ It should in that respect be regarded as entirely logical that many scholars whose theoretical foundations lie in vision or photography studies should, in this conjuncture, have ended up dedicating themselves to understanding the historical logics of racialised death and, more broadly, the intersections between machine vision, the prison-industrial complex, policing and the plantation.²²⁴

Knowledge Without Truth

In this framing, the problematic of conceiving what I have called the network optic has much in common with that of mapping, or picturing, the totality of capitalism itself, as Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle’s *Cartographies of the Absolute* undertook to demonstrate, drawing on Fredric Jameson.²²⁵ Here, cartography and totalisation are made bywords for class consciousness, since forging a conception of the system as a whole is the necessary precursor to prole-

221 Beller (2021).

222 I omit China and Russia because doing justice to the distinct ways in which their ‘social’ industries dovetail with their forms of state and governance is beyond my scope here.

223 Bangstad, op. cit.; Franklin, op. cit.; Clough and Willse, op. cit.; Mbembe (2003); Gilmore (2007). Chun (2021) and Uliasz (2019) are especially good on the role of algorithmic vision in predictive policing; a sample of further important work on bias in AI is Alexander (2012); Eubanks (2018); Noble (2018); O’Neill (2017).

224 Classically, this is the case for the ‘founder’ of visual culture studies, Nicholas Mirzoeff (Mirzoeff, 2011; 2018), but also Simone Browne (Browne, 2015) and Nicole Fleetwood (Fleetwood, 2011, 2020).

225 Jameson (1988); Toscano and Kinkle (2015). Toscano admitted at the launch of *Cartographies* to an error in its method, namely to have looked to cultural objects, rather than to their spaces of production and social relation, to gain insight (‘ZOOM: Capitalism and Its Horizons,’ MayDay Rooms, 9 April 2015). See also: Toscano (2012), and, for a discussion of cognitive mapping that was influential for this project (it introduced me to Martha Rosler’s *Domination and the Everyday*, 1975), see Yousefi and Hodge (2015).

tarian action against it (Jameson famously described paranoia as the ‘poor man’s cognitive mapping’). Bernard Stiegler and Antoinette Rouvroy argue that the transition into an era of data (‘raw data,’ ‘big data,’ metadata’ – Rouvroy calls them the materials, the texture, of contemporary capitalism) demands recognition of a new epistemological paradigm. We must stage a battle, Stiegler says, between the ‘massively entropic’ tendencies of digitality and the negentropy that human beings tend towards and are gifted with²²⁶ – what, in an earlier economic and political context pertinent to our moment (the crisis-ridden early Seventies), François Guéry and Didier Deleule called their ‘productive body.’ What Stiegler analyses as an attack on the ‘libidinal drives,’ a ‘desymbolisation’ and incapacitation of creativity and invention via the universal proletarianisations of mass media (occurring at an increasingly young age as our attention is usurped in babyhood), Rouvroy sees as a redirecting of the erstwhile emancipatory qualities of deterritorialisation – as analysed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – towards a re-categorisation of what counts as real.²²⁷ The turn to data and machine learning (whereby the rules governing systems’ behaviour adapt, in a constant feedback loop, to the results of processes they themselves set in motion) is, she argues, part of a broader *algorithmic governmentality*, which offers ‘knowledge without truth; personalisation without subjects; power without authority.’²²⁸

Raw data in Rouvroy’s critique doesn’t obey any of the prior semiological routes of resemblance to the reality it pretends to represent (it functions neither as icon, nor trace, holding neither their remembrance nor their physical shape).²²⁹ It doesn’t observe any of the semiotic categories we have been used to working with to date (e.g. index, or symbol, whose status is the product of collective agreement). It is, in fact, meaningless to us because we have no semiology for it; we cannot decode it. Following Umberto Eco, Rouvroy argues that this is deliberate – a necessary feature enshrined in our information systems – because it is only in this state that data can offer up its defining characteristic of *calculability*. This is the new regime of truth: ‘All that counts as real is what has been, or what is able to become, metabolised by the computer. [...] What will be visible is only what will be translatable into digital data.’²³⁰

226 Guéry and Deleule (2014). I owe my awareness of this text’s importance relative to its public recognition to Vishmidt (2020), which deepens the excessively generic category of ‘the body.’ See also Rabinbach (1992).

227 Comments paraphrased from Stiegler (2015).

228 Rouvroy (2013).

229 Rouvroy, *ibid.*

230 Rouvroy, *ibid.* Franklin, *op. cit.* also narrates capitalism’s foundational drive towards dejection and disposal of the material, of bodies, as mentioned above.

Is it possible to read Rouvroy's pessimistic diagnoses against the grain? Can we listen to the sound and fury of these and similar lamentations²³¹ and hear in them a twisted, curdled echo of Vertov's euphoric belief – that the 'datum' generated by the objective powers of the camera is (or might be made) a 'truth' piece, which can be put to use in processes of socialised, epistemological re/construction – and inaugurate with them, as we could go so far as to argue Sylvia Wynter also proposed, an ontological one?²³²

In 1998, Lev Manovich's 'Database as Symbolic Form' suggested as much for the database – as part of a longer struggle between encyclopaedic and narrative impulses in culture stretching back to antiquity. *Man with a Movie Camera* was, he wrote, 'perhaps the most important example of database imagination in modern media art,' referring to images of Svilova sitting in the cutting room surrounded by shelves of subject-ordered shot material marked 'machines,' 'club,' 'the movement of a city,' 'physical exercise,' 'an illusionist' and so on; a proto-database.²³³ Using Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes's categories of syntagm and paradigm, Manovich spoke of the way database culture reverses their conventional relationship (where syntagm – the explicit elements that are linked to form a cinematic narrative, for example – is usually present, and paradigm – the language sets on which an understanding of the syntagm depends – is usually implicit, and absent). Early editing softwares such as Macromedia Director permanently foregrounded paradigm as a set of options from which the user-player-creator could choose, and moved syntagm into the background, prefiguring the universal database we now regard ourselves as calling on in our daily acts, its permanent availability a set of options weakening – or deprivileging – our sequential and narrational fixities and allowing the recombinatory (if not algorithmic) to become a more generalised social and subjective condition. However tight or loose we may

231 A tsunami of literature laments the 'losses' caused by the social industries – Hari (2021) comes to mind as this PhD nears completion – but most of it is deficient in its construction of the 'goods' of which we have been deprived, never sufficiently interrogating how riven with loss these always were. Couldry and Mejias, *op. cit.*, is a good exception, squarely framing platform capitalism as a new/renewed colonialism, however, in its propositions for a making good or amelioration of information culture's destructions via the selfsame media, even this continues to beg the question.

232 *A ceremony must be found*: Wynter's invocation for an overturning of the genre of Being perpetuated in coloniality (*homo economicus*). Wynter (2015), and Scott (2000), offer rich overviews. Given Wynter's personal involvement in the revolutionary politics of the Caribbean and the Global South, Wynter (1982) is also of great interest for its direct engagement with Marxist political and theoretical legacies; the manner in which these are set in relation to literary history.

233 See Manovich (1998, 1999, 2001).

believe the umbilical cord between the epistemological and the ontological to be, this is co-constitutive – as we are starting to see – of new temporalities (if not, then the palpable sense that existing temporalities are collapsing).

Abuse Value

Capitalistic production proceeds by isolating the extract from raw materials, producing the remnant, that which is left behind. And the archive, resisting obsolescence, is constituted through these remnants. This is one common view. But there is another place in the contemporary where the role and responsibility of the archive may lie. That is, in addressing the reserve, that which is not yet deployed. And that which, like residue, is cast in shadow.

In surveillance systems, for example, we are forced to rethink the idea of ‘waste.’ Those millions of hours a day of CCTV images are not just the leftovers of the surveillance machine, they are its constitutive accumulation. They are the mass which waits for the event, and it is this mass that produces the threat.

Following Michel Serres, we could describe this mass as having ‘abuse value,’ something that precedes use value or exchange value. Of course, abuse value and exchange value can change hands. The line between residue and reserve can be unstable. Suddenly, the nuclear arsenal is rendered waste, and is sold as junk. Our accumulated ideas expire. But to look to the reserve has a strategic value for the archive. It is a way of addressing capital not only as the production of profit from labour and commodities, but as the accumulation that can be used for speculation and for the extraction of rent.

The archive in this sense is sympathetic to those practices that sabotage capitalistic accumulation, and those that have an interest in the future, and in the ‘unrealised.’

–10 Theses on the Archive (5. The Archive deals not only with the Remnant but also with the Reserve)²³⁴

Digitality produces an equivalence in the historical and contemporary record by presenting all its diverse materials in the same state. It confuses the connection across time with that

across space in an erasure – or encoding – of material form and embodiment into electronic information (data). This brings with it a significant loss,²³⁵ but it may also create unexpected openings and conjunctures due to the destabilisations that digital equivalence effects in informational hierarchies; the way it restructures centre and periphery, top and bottom, figure and ground. The technology of search allows information to be set loose on the understanding that it will always be able to be found, captured and analysed again. As Tiziana Terranova, Celia Lury and Luciana Parisi laid out in 2012, culture has become *topological*.²³⁶

The means of production and dissemination having been massified, we might encounter an anonymous video made by the proverbial teenager in her bedroom or by a subaltern militant (produced with threadbare resources, under strain or with little exposure at the time they were made) in the same environment – perhaps even the same moment – as a long, high-cost film of a recognised auteur (subsidised, conserved and published by state institutions).²³⁷ It means that the systematic neglect and erasure that anti-hegemonic ‘content’ has historically been made to suffer – which includes, though is not limited to, the histories of the left – can be countered. As Teju Cole described in ‘Death in the Browser Tab,’²³⁸ and the 2020 rebellions seared into history, it also means that we encounter murderous, racialised violence in the hideous paucity of an internet window as spectacle and clickbait.

Walter Benjamin said that history is the tale of victors – benefiting only the present rulers, whose everyday existence is like a triumphal procession with the spoils of yesterday (its social struggles) – and sees them stepping over ‘those who are lying prostrate’ (the uncounted, invisible working class whose past and present labours shape our existential realities) as they parade proudly with the unearned heritage of ‘culture,’ claiming this as *their* product rather than the result of the ‘anonymous toil of their contemporaries.’²³⁹ Benjamin asked how our enquiries into the past might avoid being, inevitably, a jump into ‘an arena where the ruling class gives the commands’ and where time is linear, smooth, homogenous and empty, as if conducting itself naturally and progressively (meaning in an aggregative and

235 I use this word with the qualifications suggested above.

236 Lury, Parisi, Terranova (2012).

237 This should not be mistaken for parity, but the state and capital cannot as easily enforce a system of values and priorities – a normativity – through a public sphere of historical institutions and cultural display. See also Azoulay (2019).

238 Cole (2015).

239 Benjamin (1999), p. 248 (thesis VII).

straightforwardly causal process) towards the present and its status quo.²⁴⁰

He asked how we might disabuse ourselves of the notion that the past can be fully understood – or indeed left behind – *as it really was* (i.e. to think in a *historicist* fashion) and, rather, leap into the ‘open air of history,’ meaning dialectically, as Marx understood that the French Revolution showed was possible. This must involve a radically ulterior, non-additive conception of knowledge and time: an openness to the way that history is both invisible and unknowable in its totality *and* ever-present, ready and available to act or explode into the now, tearing open its patina of normalcy. As such, Benjamin also argued, it can be grasped imagistically, as a ‘memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger.’²⁴¹

If all contemporary universities are to a greater or lesser extent ‘edu-factories’ – sites of quasi-automated production in capitalism’s neoliberal knowledge economy – can scholarly work avoid participation in the victors’ triumphal procession? To the degree that it participates in algorithmic governmentality and solicits and harnesses network effects, the scholarly gaze avails itself, to an important extent, of the panoptic one – *surveilling, locating, extracting, connecting, redeploying*. Can the data-gathering, expertism and ‘impact’ that researchers are presently supposed to pursue – and which drive them, inexorably, to use the networked tools made available for that research by algorithmic capital – *ever* ally them with the proletariat? When we read articles on Vertov, the kinoki and revolution in *October* (long ago ingested by MIT/JSTOR), can our subjects have a voice; can they kick, sabotage – bite back; can we exist in, and practice, anything close to a genuine solidarity with our historical subjects?²⁴²

240 Ibid, p. 253 (thesis XIV).

241 Ibid, p. 253. For detailed discussions of the Benjaminian notion of the dialectical image, see Pensky (2004), and Buck-Morss (1997).

242 It should be noted that his paragraph – a version of which was originally written in 2019 – marks a pivot in the PhD, when it became clear to me that there were problems in my relationship to the achievements of the person I consider the unrivalled Vertov scholar, John MacKay, which were worth unpacking. Yuri Tsivian (himself an important Vertov scholar too; his commentary on the BFI release of *Man with a Movie Camera* had made me want to study this topic) describes how MacKay’s biography of the filmmaker made a mere person ‘into a phenomenon, a world.’ I knew I could never equal this – even felt overcome by the futility of my efforts in comparison – but I also understood, suddenly, that my desire, or sense of obligation, to come even close was fed by the same network optic that I had been trying to analyse; a system that makes everything look like ‘a phenomenon, a world,’ which is in reach and which one might be able to survey and master, or, conversely, is flattened and shorn of material detail. It is the promise of total abstract sight offered by the eye of the drone, reconfigured on the desktop as the functionality of a domestic networked computer.

A Benjaminian scholarly methodology would not only obey a non-linear philosophy of time but would be duly oriented towards political solidarity with *the anonymous toil of those who lie prostrate*. After all, as he states with devastating finality in the conclusion to ‘The Author as Producer,’ it is a mistake for artists and intellectuals to over-identify with the advanced and powerful means of production that education grants them (and which, in their function as mediators redeploying this apparatus, they may fantasise they can bend and finesse towards the better service of the proletariat). Ultimately, he says, ‘the revolutionary struggle is not between capitalism and spirit; it is between capitalism and the proletariat.’²⁴³ The explosion of unionising, wildcat strikes, boycotts and occupations that the higher-educational sector has seen in recent years – and which draws hungrily on the posters, slogans, pirated films, ephemera and tactics of the radical tradition – demonstrates that an intuitive understanding of Benjamin’s dictum lives on the ground, in the university itself (or rather, in spite of it).

Cinephilia

In her reflections on the relationship between photography, cinema and the archive, Mary Anne Doane states that photography and film have a fundamental archival instinct embedded in them. And yet this archival nature is also riddled with paradox, because of the relationship of the moving image to the contingent. The presence of the contingent, the ephemeral, and the unintended are all aspects of cinematic time, and the challenge of the moving image as archive is the recovery of lost time, but within the cinematic.

The recovery of the lost time of cinema and the contingent can be captured through an experience of cinephilia, for what cinephilia names is the moment when the contingent takes on meaning – perhaps a private and idiosyncratic meaning, but one in which the love for the image expresses itself through a grappling with the ephemeral.

The archive is therefore an apparatus of time, but its relation to time is not guaranteed or inherent, it is transitive and has to be grafted. The archive of the moving image grasps this problem in an erotic and sensuous fashion, grafting the experience of time as an act of love.

–10 Theses on the Archive (10. Time is not outside of the Archive: it is in it)

243 Benjamin (2008), p. 93.

Vertov's vision for the proletarian use of the cinema situates workers *and* the products of their labours – commodities – in an intricate, dynamic totality of non-alienated, mutually reinforcing relations centred in *solidarity*, its axes (also) straddling geography, time and sociality, and its a-verbal signification delving deep into the communicative capabilities of body, objecthood and matter.²⁴⁴ As such, it should perhaps cause us no surprise to hear that 'he struggled [...] to come to terms with the attachment he felt to [the] colossal industrial body'²⁴⁵ of a factory he was filming for *The Eleventh Year*:

I hesitate to use the word 'love' when speaking of my relationship to this factory. And yet I do really feel as though I want to press myself against it and caress those gigantic smokestacks and black gas tanks...²⁴⁶

As Fore remarks in his revelatory essay 'The Metabiotic State,' while it may seem to be typically fetishistic in its erotic devotion to the inorganic, 'there is the crucial difference that Vertov never naturalises the commodity form, never obscures its social origins. [...] Indeed, for Vertov, it is precisely because objects are the products of human labor and because they are media of social intercourse that he loves them with such devotion and intensity.'²⁴⁷

He expounds at length on such vectors of film-solidarity – or as Vertov conceived of one of his key forms, such 'visual bonds' (*sviaz*). The bond sought to *form* (not just picture) alliances and co-dependencies between workers and subjects across millennia of history (*The Eleventh Year* shows construction workers at the world's largest hydroelectric station, on Ukraine's Dniepr River, and the Scythian Egyptians whose skeletons were found as the site was prepared for work) as much as across thousands of miles of geographical space (the film is well known for representing workers from all over the Soviet land mass).

Fore presents it as significant that *One Sixth of the World* (1926) and *The Eleventh Year* (1928) were named, respectively, after a spatial and chronometric unit, with each manifesting the politics of their dimension. Additionally, the near-sculptural editing practice developed by

244 Here, Fore (2013), op. cit., not only draws on Kiaer, op. cit., but also on the problematic of serialised labour's 'muting' and bodily fragmentation of labourers. Most pertinent for my aims are his comments on the 'archaic modernism' and multiple temporalities that coalesced in Soviet Russia and within which Vertov intended to forge visually a solidarity not only with comrades separated on the axis of space, but also with what Lenin called 'the farthest ones' (comrades at great distance on the axis of time).

245 Fore, *ibid*, p. 31.

246 Dziga Vertov, *Stat'I, dnevniki, zamysli*, p. 172, quoted in *ibid*.

247 *Ibid*, p. 31.

Vertov's wife and collaborator, Elizaveta Svilova, serviced a highly sophisticated enquiry into, and visual exposition of, revolutionary time that remains little understood, and Fore argues that the signature flections of time for which Vertov is so famous (slow motion, reversals, etc.) 'all seek to demonstrate that the dimension of time cannot be reduced to a simple linear scheme, but is instead a heterogeneous and fundamentally plastic field of investigation.'²⁴⁸ The essay, written in 2013, concludes:

[A]t a moment when capitalism is promoting a myth about frictionless synchronisation of existence around the world [...], Vertov returns to reveal a different ecology of history, one responsive to the metabiotic relations between people across time and the political exigency of the nonsynchronous.²⁴⁹

248 Ibid, p. 6.

249 Ibid, p. 36

V. Scroll

The Search (early 2015)

We need to visit a place: office, shop, bank, institution, it's not quite clear, but it has staff, rooms, computers, processes, while also being very dusty and derelict. We seem to be here to 'finish' or 'clean up' some process. There is unfinished business that demands our attention.

I'm conscious within the dream that the room evokes a barn – from a documentary on Yugoslavia – being revisited by inspectors (and the filmmakers) in the aftermath of genocide. Unmistakably, it is the scene of a disaster, one that has been vacated and to which no one wants to – or feels emotionally able to – but to which they must return. It is wooden, and cavernous, like an important but forgotten cargo hold, storing heavy and ominous things. The remnants of an existence.

So we go there, seemingly also on behalf of – or for – others (who are like us, but at one remove). The floor of the barn is partially covered by blankets that function to demarcate an erased spatial structure – the edges tracing the lines that once were walls and rooms. We start 'sorting out,' doing the work that we have come here to do.

We do it dutifully, slightly grudgingly, and afterwards we step into a queue of people who are waiting to be administered, so that we can have the performance and completion of our obligations certified.

Afterwards, we turn around to make one more visit to the barn to check that everything has been done properly.

Then two things happen. One: I notice that the blanket on the floor is not just very dirty but has a burn in it, which is smouldering. 'Haven't you noticed?' I admonish you. 'There's going to be a fire, this is dangerous.' The burning stops. Two: when I do one more dummy check of the room – inspecting all the blankets, corners, soot – I detect a shape underneath the woollen layers. It looks like a nose, a mouth. They're features that I know, and recognise, immediately, since I've observed them closely and lovingly – touched, stroked, held them tight – for years. They are those of a baby girl, our eldest child. Somehow, without our even knowing, underneath all this

destruction, there was life. A human being, threatened to be left behind, forgotten and suffocated by the debris – and now coming to the surface, like a doll rising from the deep, the dead, the sleep. Our flesh and blood.

R.I.P. Socialist Photographer: An Interview with Terry Dennett (Spring 2015)²⁵⁰

Brand recognition: green/yellow, purple/pink. Foxton's, Hampton's, Currell's. The high street had given over its units of space to the bland proper names of private property exchange's basest form: the transacting of homes. On the north side, estate agents' fibreglass chairs soon segued into the vintage lace curtains of a French brasserie, where dry money plants stood on window sills, signifying something important to the bottom line, and the Art Nouveau-style lettering on menus and hoardings balanced precariously between *recherché* and *passé*. In front of glass separators, huddled only metres away from the business lunch and the pearl necklace, sat a tired octogenarian in a bus shelter, contemplating the day's labour: shopping, travelling, cooking, cleaning.

In a small crevice, nearly invisible between one eating establishment and another, was the entry to another realm – the fragile remainder of a world long gone. The women had come to make a recording there and collect some old camera kit. They rang the bell for entry. Their host was said to be blind, but this turned out to be a variable condition existing in comfortable symbiosis with the dark surroundings. It had no dramatic impact on his faculties. The man led the women through a corridor and round the back of the restaurant – its glass separators again failsafe in constructing the passersby as *outsiders*, in every respect.

The women and the man started their ascent of a long, staggered stairwell. He navigated the asymmetric space confidently, commanding the situation with his lucid storytelling and clear sense of purpose. When they arrived in the main room, the colours of the walls, chairs, desks, shelves and tables, many of them untouched for decades, seemed to have gradually fused into a single, hazy tone; a brown-grey-black bearing occasional speckles when the light from outside made its way through the shutters. Surfaces were littered with fragments from all stages of his life – spent alone these last years, but in a passionate working relationship with a long-term lover and co-conspirator before that. Books, pills, photographs, receipts, telephone numbers, personal notes, technical equipment and accessories existed in an elusive sort of order at all levels of the flat, and when the time came to find the camera kit, which the man was giving away, it took less than two minutes to locate – largely by touch, in a side room, buried under the heavy strata of a library of books on cancer and alternative medicine.

250 This oral history comes from my upgrade exam essay of 2014/15, for which I interviewed Terry Dennett. The title is shared by a short film that was submitted as the practice element for that upgrade and is available as one of three experiments with montage in my final submission (see section VI, 'Still').

Under the auspices of an academic research project, one of the women – an artist – sat down to record the man’s recollections of a lifelong enquiry into socialist photography and film. She recorded into the camera, for ease’s sake (in their rushed departure, they hadn’t managed to find a working audio recorder); with the aperture closed, the sound of his voice would be accompanied by pure blackness.

‘What would be very interesting for me to hear from you would be about that process of translation... So, the introduction of the ideas presumably between the Thirties and the Fifties...’

‘I should go back much earlier,’ he said, rightly, and set course. ‘In the 1890s there was the Clarion Movement. Among the different organisations of the Clarion was the Clarion Camera Club, and that’s where the first mention was made of the term “socialist photographer.” They had the Cinderella Clubs for children, and the Music Club, there was a Cycling Club. This was an idea to formally introduce socialist ideas into the social structure. Later, in Germany, they took a recognised social form, the camera club, and they politicised it. This sort of thing also happened in Russia... it has a long history.’

With an unintentionally elegiac air, the man recounted the first of many attempts he had made to rescue the archival material of ‘socialist’ – as he always called it – and worker photography. He had – in the 1970s, for example – joined with others (‘Prometheus Films or something like that’) to capture the living knowledge of remaining members of organisations like the Workers Film and Photo League, whose UK chapter hadn’t yet been written up at the time, and whose minute book, garnered from its Secretary, revealed rich historical detail of this 1930s organisation and its wider milieu of interwar leftist politics (he mentioned the ‘Class Against Class,’ the Socialist communists from below, the Popular Front).²⁵¹ There was also the unique, short recording, recently digitised, of a participant’s account of the Workers Theatre movement’s screenings of important Soviet films, which took place in mobile cinemas in the East End.²⁵²

251 The ‘Class Against Class’ was the Communist Party of Great Britain.

252 This refers to a spoken account by Charlie Mann – son of Tom Mann, the ‘father of industrial unionism’ – of the Workers Theatre Movement, Film Section. See Mann (2014).

As he spoke, his interviewer realised that the man's knowledge was relevant to her project, but at best only adjacent to, not directly congruent with, her formal research topic, which concerned post-revolutionary *film*, not photography. She qualified herself: 'I was actually going to ask what the relationship was between those two traditions, even as they were interpreted here in the UK...'

He continued apace: 'Well, you've got different developments of technology. The first socialist visual images were slides, not film. There was suddenly the idea that they would show lantern slides, and they were doing lots of things on poverty... The Clarion Club for a couple of years did a show with 200 slides, with jokes and piano accompaniment. So, there was a multimedia thing... In 1907 there was an installation called The Sweated Trades Exhibition. They actually brought sweated workers and set them up. It's the first installation, as far as I know, that anyone did. These women were there making matchsticks and boxes and stuff...'

After praising Jack London's *The People of the Abyss*,²⁵³ the man reminded his questioner that 'a lot of people didn't go to school. There was very little childhood. Protestants decided people needed to read the Bible, but to do that they had to become literate. And when they became literate, they wanted to read socialist literature. They were frightened of the literate working class: all they wanted was factory hands who could read, they didn't want anything else.'

She echoed his comments with a mention of Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, remembering its brilliantly sarcastic sections on the cynicism of the clergy and the contempt in which they were held. Reverend Belcher, for example, who – while farting and belching in a manner that Tressell likened to the sound of a large, deflating balloon – used all his rhetorical might, and rather too much practical detail, to persuade his ill-clad, ill-fed congregation (many of whom were children) to give money for the upkeep of the chapel.

'If your friends are very poor and unable to give a large donation at one time, a good plan would be to arrange to call upon them every Saturday afternoon with your card to collect their donations. And while you are asking others, do not forget to give what you can yourselves. Just a little self-denial, and those pennies and halfpennies which you so often spend on sweets and other unnecessary things might be given – as a donation – to the good

253 London (1903).

cause.²⁵⁴

When working as a photographer in the Institute of Zoology, boredom had led the man to respond to an advertisement to teach a photography workshop to children in Brixton. He did this for five years and it roused his interest in other children's projects in the city. He embarked on a comparison study of all the projects in London, which would eventually lead him to meet his collaborator and lover – also a photographer – who was at a children's rights workshop in Bermondsey.²⁵⁵

'I taught them how to make their own cameras, and how to do things wrong, in order to do them right, as it were. This was all in the air. Lots of alternative education was working with these sorts of ideas. There were several people doing pinhole cameras. One guy had a van which was a camera obscura. He used to take that round. And then we did urban aid things where we took it round housing estates. You could get all these ambulances from the war – for about thirty quid or something like that. We had an ambulance, which was a camper at the weekend and a dark room and exhibition space in the week. Brixton was very interesting, the kids were smashing and there were no drugs.'

Childhood, self-organised working-class education and the retrieval of history recurred as the conversation's main threads. It ran its course through the Plebs League, Free Schools and Literacy and Community movements; the enormous influence of the History Workshop project and the mass uptake of oral-history practices (life-changing for the man and his partner); the educational theory of American public-school veteran and critic John Gatto; and the importance of bombsites for the imaginary of the postwar generation. These free non-places were in the end often turned into adventure playgrounds, but even then they continued to play a very important role ('they got these very cheap unemployed kids who were play leaders, and this was the kids' domain, no one bothered them'). The sad fate of many adventure playgrounds was to become car parks: they built a network which was 'bought for pennies' and only recently sold off in a multimillion-pound deal (National Car Parks, better known as NCP).

The telephone rang.

254 Tressell (2014), p. 204.

255 This refers to the artist Jo Spence (1934-1992).

'Hello?' the man said in a kind tone, open to whoever it was going to be.

It wasn't clear to the women whether a human or a machine voice spoke back, but judging by the enormous agitation it caused, whoever or whatever it was, it was not going to stop or listen to the man's protestations:

'No, I don't.'

'No, I wouldn't.'

'Come on!'

The two visitors sat in silence, murmuring occasional encouragements to him to put the phone down and terminate this spam-agony by force, but the electronic torment continued. He pressed the phone down again and again, saying, 'I've already complained but you can't get rid of it. No, it's still going, I can't get rid of it.'

The signal was finally strangled...

'Carry on. What were we talking about?'

The man in fact had a clear idea of what his interviewer's task was: 'You should do a potted history of socialist interventions into culture. So, write that down for yourself... You're talking about Britain, of course, here. And then you should talk about the Soviet Union. So, this floods into kino as well. And this goes into Vertov. Then you can produce the interview in full.'

Nodding, the interviewer moved forward with another question, which mistakenly fudged the difference between still and moving image yet again: '...but in terms of how the camera became an important tool... and that started to be theorised?'

'Well, that was really in the Twenties. Remember, cameras were very rare: until Kodak came along, they were very professional and hardly anyone had cameras. Most people could hardly even buy bread. But when you had the cheap cameras, working-class people used to go and

have their photographs taken; it was a big event, you dressed up. Some people got these Kodak cameras. Some people made them. In the *Amateur Photographer*, there were plans for making your own.²⁵⁶ And, of course, a carpenter could be able to. So, it was a mixed batch of things, but it was not really until the Twenties that it became possible.’

Digging deeper into the past, the couple had started visiting trade unions to find the cultural dimensions of left history (‘no one had visited these people’). The lacuna in knowledge and memory of socialist art and poetry led them to set up a photography workshop – in the same space where the Sony videocamera was now sitting quietly on the desk, its 32GB memory card testament to an uncanny mirroring of situations that neither interviewer, nor interviewee, managed to recognise or acknowledge.

‘The aim of that was to collect important cultural, socialist ideas, pamphlets and literature. Become a museum or repository. But, also, to go out and do teaching.’

‘So you immediately conceived it as a historical project?’

‘Oh yes. Because people were dying. We were ten years too late, lots of it is now gone.’

The concluding episodes of the account were disconcertingly familiar: historical documents being chucked, shredded, consciously allowed to disappear; the pattern was identical to that of the recent wave of ‘divestments’ in various memory institutions (museums, libraries) – in reality an ideological programme of vanishings, consigning histories that do not support the status quo to the wastes. The man’s story illustrated how systematic this process really is; how often it recurs; and how, on each occasion and even when temporarily interrupted by visionary individuals (while it didn’t last, the Metropolitan Special Collection of Photography, in Finsbury, seems to have been brought into being by such a person), new technologies act as its instrument and apologia. In his stories, it was frequently the transition to electronic film or the introduction of a new card system – which, for example, left out half the information accumulated on the old – that ate away at collections’ integrity and safety. Bigger acts of destruction were committed under the banner of digitisation only a decade later. A decade after that, under austerity, nothing more authoritative than ‘space constraints’ and ‘efficiency’

256 *Amateur Photographer* is a consumer weekly photographic magazine first published in 1884.

were required for swathes of contrarian memory to be destroyed once more.²⁵⁷

257 At the time of writing (Spring 2015), examples from recent memory were the closure of The Women's Library, Whitechapel, and the destruction of student archives at Ruskin College, Oxford, as is discussed in Horsfield (2012).

The Gift of Sight (Night of Christmas Day, 2016)

It was such a vivid experience, full of panic and fear. Some event had occurred, which I had visited (a party? a day at work? I don't know). I was coming 'home.' Home turned out to be a sort of ledge, or layer of a cave, hewn out of the side of an enormous grey slate rock, where I slept – like a bird, or a goat, or some kind of animal. I returned to the base of this enormous high ledge, ready to climb up to my cold and barren nest, my bed of straw, to go to sleep, and suddenly realised in a panic that I had forgotten my glasses at the event I had just been to. But to heighten my anguish, I couldn't simply go back, return to go and get them, because I was besieged by the (flying!) snakes that had set up home in my nest while I was away. Every time I looked up at the crevice of rock that was my sleeping place, another long reptile – with dappled skin and fangs bared – launched itself from the nest, making directly for me in a violent attack, and hissing loudly. I was struck to the ground in an acute dilemma, deeply worried I wouldn't be able to see properly because I'd lost my glasses and couldn't go and get them; terrified that one of the flying snakes would hit me in the neck...

Resistance Without Presupposition (16 February 2017)²⁵⁸

(I: 'Three Bridges')



New-born Vida (still covered with purple haze)
Lies on a bed in a hospital ward, trying to find her bearings

(II: 'Pebbles')



She stays dead-still, flat on her back – nearly spreadeagled for the ecstasy of consciousness
– homing in on the sounds in the room...

258 This is the title of an event organised at the RCA by Yve Lomax and Aura Satz – in honour of Caygill, op. cit. – to which research students were invited to contribute with a presentation lasting no longer than four minutes. The opening paragraph is based on the first evening of my daughter, Violet's, life and recollections that I had from that moment on the primacy of the sound sense (in contrast to sight, which is often construed as the leading sense, e.g., in Berger, op. cit., and Crary, 2022, op. cit.). The presentation is unaltered, with all photographs being either my own, stills from films (Vertov's and Godard's) or publicly available pictures. They are: Three Bridges station, Southern Railway; Worthing beach, detail; *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (Godard, 1967); *ibid*, spliced with Musical.ly star, Jacob Sartorius, found online with a bunny filter applied; a food plate at the M&S café, Worthing, including an uneaten false-teeth jelly; *Enthusiasm* (Vertov, 1931); Marx, on the senses as theoreticians in practice (four slides); *Spirited Away*, detail (Miyazaki, 2001); a hotel bath, Worthing, full with water and a Lush bath-bomb; the same hotel bath, emptied out.

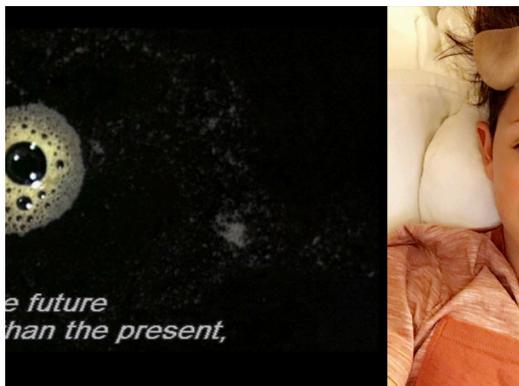
(III: 'When the Future is more Present')



All around her there are whispered conversations and laughter; families speaking to each other in a thousand tongues

Age, ethnicity, gender, background, family status and mutual relations orchestrate between them a soft cacophony of excited love... New life's greeting

(IV: 'When the Future – Sartorius')



In a lucid translation of sense, you can read the polyglot soundscape in baby Vida's calm, open eyes – as her ears register one cascade of sound and presence after another...

(V: 'Sweets-Teeth-Salad')



One of the refrains in Alexander Kluge's epic documentary film *News from Ideological Antiquity: Marx – Eisenstein – Das Kapital*²⁵⁹ is that capitalism's claim of creation, and the support of life, is the ultimate fiction. Kluge repeats over and over that we must remember that the stock exchange never gave birth to a human being. He speaks of Eisenstein's obsession with the problem of representing capital's abstractions, among human beings, objects – in *all* the processes and relationships of commodification; and that he did not allow himself to use footage of the stock exchange, since it could only affirm capital's own dreamlike fallacy of a beautifully organised administration, and would exclude from view its most exemplary and reliable productions, from famine to child labour.

(VI: 'Man with a Movie Camera – Workers')



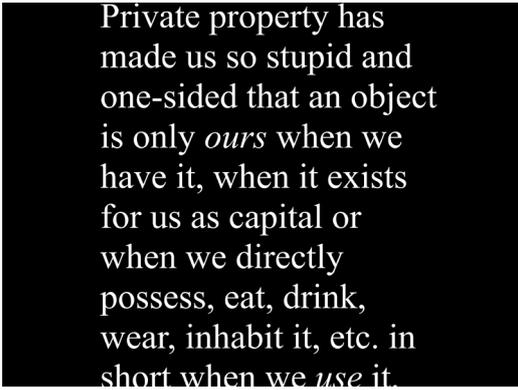
Annette Michelson, an early historian of Dziga Vertov, suggests that some of the critical venom Eisenstein reserved for his artistic antagonist, whose *Man with a Movie Camera*

259 Kluge (2008) was screened at the Whitechapel Gallery on 5 October, 2014 as part of a longer events series co-organised with the LSE Cities project and Theatrum Mundi. The nine-hour film, regarded as the culmination of the filmmaker's oeuvre, engages with Eisenstein's preoccupation with a 'spherical dramaturgy,' against the linear forms of cinematic 'antiquity.'

Eisenstein dismissed as using ‘formalist jackstraws and unmotivated camera mischief’²⁶⁰ had to do with a (conscious or unconscious) awareness that Vertov had somehow managed to actualise the two projects Eisenstein had long held dear but failed to realise, namely the filmic treatment of Marx’s *Capital* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Vertov’s work, she argues, performs the ineffable – and therefore initially misunderstood and marginalised – project of capturing the abstractions of capital, and the operations of human labour and consciousness, simultaneously. Vertov’s search for a resistance in the world of appearances had enabled a ‘communist decoding of reality.’²⁶¹ In her interpretation, Vertov’s eye becomes the emancipated sense, *the theorist in practice*, of which Marx writes in his Third Manuscript...²⁶²

(VII: ‘Theorist in Practice’)

... (stay silent) ...



Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only *ours* when we have it, when it exists for us as capital or when we directly possess, eat, drink, wear, inhabit it, etc. in short when we *use* it.

260 See Michelson (2017), p. 117, which first appeared in *Artforum* (Michelson, 1972), and subsequently acted – in significantly altered form – to introduce the definitive collection of Vertov’s writing, *Kino-Eye* (Vertov and Michelson, op. cit.).

261 Michelson quotes from the Kinoks’ manifesto, *WE*: ‘All who love their art seek the essence of technique to show that which the eye does not see – to show truth, the microscope and telescope of time, the negative of time, the possibility of seeing without frontiers or distances; the tele-eye, sight in spontaneity, a kind of Communist decoding of reality...’ (Vertov and Michelson, *ibid*, p. xxx).

262 It seems significant that, whereas the epigram for the *Artforum* version comes from Descartes, that of the introduction to the 1984 anthology is Marx’s. A longer version of that citation featured in the presentation, the relevant slides being toggled through in silence so as to allow the audience to sound out the words while reading (with the other slides, words were read out). For the full passage, see Marx (1992), p. 352

Although private property conceives all these immediate realizations of possession only as *means of life*; and the life they serve is the *life of private property*, labour and capitalization.

Therefore *all* the physical and intellectual senses have been replaced by the simple estrangement of *all* these senses – the sense of *having*. So that it might give birth to its inner wealth, human nature had to be

reduced to this absolute poverty.

The supercession of private property is therefore the complete *emancipation* of all the human senses and attributes; but it is this emancipation precisely because these senses and attributes have become *human*.

subjectively as well as objectively. The eye has become a *human eye*, just as its *object* has become a social, *human object*, made by man for man. The *senses* have therefore become *theoreticians* in their immediate praxis.

(VIII Slide: 'Noface')²⁶³



But Vertov was a technocrat, no doubt...

His disdain for the frailties of the human organism, disturbing²⁶⁴

So evocative of the right, and in his writings occasionally hard to distinguish...

What is this truth that he claims lies beyond the mask? The mask, that is, which he insisted all people present so as to shield something more real and true... and which only the camera-eye can rip off, and must?

263 Noface is a character in *Spirited Away* (Miyazaki, 2001). Vertov's preoccupation with unmasking was part of a political milieu within which identity became, as Stalinism encroached, increasingly violently interrogable vis-à-vis standards of 'utopian' perfectibility. In Fitzpatrick (2005), we see that the relationship between contemporary life and the archive – including especially the systems of bureaucratic administration – becomes charged with possibilities for fictive 'selves,' which might function as a defence for the socially vulnerable or otherwise problematic. We might then ask: is the mask a prop for reaction or liberation, isolation or communion, individuality or collectivity?

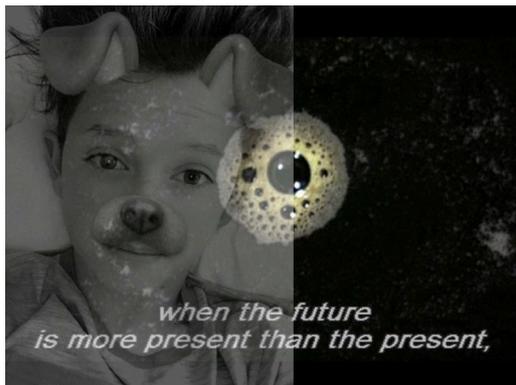
264 Don't hide your heads like ostriches / Raise your eyes, / Look around you – There! / It's obvious to me / as to any child / The innards, / the guts of strong sensations / are tumbling out / of cinema's belly / ripped open on the reef of revolution. / See them dragging along, / leaving a bloody trail on the earth / that quivers with horror and disgust. / It's all over.' (Vertov and Michelson, op. cit., pp. 11-12).

(IX: 'Normal Train – Passing')



What happens when everyone has that camera-eye in their pocket, and can broadcast to everyone else; what happens when there is no subject and object of vision?

(X: 'When the Future – Sartorius')



Musical.ly star Jacob Sartorius happens; perhaps the stock exchange did give birth to a human being after all...

Mass narcissism, mass surveillance and the so-called 'epidemic of loneliness' happen...

Universal pictorial banality happens...

Black Lives Matter and Say Her Name happen...

Fascists-being-punched are put to music happens...

Teen-anxiety-enslaved-to-metrics happens...

Filter bubbles happen; the million-strong march you saw; the other million-strong march that was completely invisible

An exhilarating but dangerous intersection between algorithmic governmentality and the capacity to self-document life...

(XI: 'Bath')



Godard whispers in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*²⁶⁵ that the only thing he can do is engage carefully with the world and his fellow human creatures, his brothers, since, in the face of a future more powerful than the present, there is no escape from the objectivity that crushes him or from the subjectivity that expels him; that neither spiritual elevation nor descent into nothingness is an option. This small but infinite space of operation remains our only one.



265 Godard (1967).

Avatar (8 May, 2017)

Dream about A's dark grey face. Like the creatures in Avatar. I am taking a tube to Kiev. 'Kiev, Kiev, Kiev,'²⁶⁶ it kept on returning. The underground station was complicated, with lots of layers and tubes going in different directions... Is this about Piko? And Otje?²⁶⁷ Is that my PhD's latent intentionality?

266 I have maintained my original – erroneous – spelling of Kyiv to properly situate this dream in time, in 2017 (the spelling was officially changed in 1995, but it took a marketing campaign in 2018 to cement the change and, in my case, media coverage of Russia's 2022 attack on Ukraine to be noted).

267 'Piko' was the nickname of my great grandfather, Johannes (Han) Bernardus van Loghem (1881-1940), architect and husband to 'Otje' (Berthe van Loghem-Niemeyer, 1890-1981), craftswoman and tapestry weaver.

In the Picturehouse (Black Friday, 24 November 2017)²⁶⁸

You have only just left for your international flight, your signature straw hat, crisply ironed white shirt and perfectly polished loafers straight out of a Chandler noir.

In the toilet, I stare at the wall, wondering who chose the tiles, the dimmed lighting, what the budget for this refit was. I flush, wash my hands under the artfully distressed copper taps and walk out.

In front of me there is a gaggle of twenty-somethings looking startled and walking backwards, stumbling awkwardly. They are pulling out their mobiles, consulting with each other in what seems like a nervous panic. A celebrity or YouTube vlogger, I guess – another whimsical moment of urban hysteria. I look to the left...

Time speeds up as I realise it's entirely different and my own daughters aren't sitting where I left them. No, they've left behind the giant Christmas tree and fake boxed presents, the tables and chairs and cakes and plates and coffee cups, and are somewhere halfway up the enormous flight of stairs, separated not only from me but from each other – together with the hundreds of other people that are screaming and running away from something that is terrifying them.

I, too, scramble ahead, desperately pushing myself forward so I can be sucked into the uphill human mudslide. Close to hallucination, I'm feeling like I've been here before; that I'm replaying a film I've seen a hundred times and I know what to do; what the plot and my character are, just not exactly how it will end. I hope it won't.

The head of the crowd drives the narrative forward like the worm in *Donnie Darko*.²⁶⁹ By the time the lava touches the mezzanine, its tempo changes and emotions crystallise: one person is crying, another consoling, another pissed off. Most concentrate on their phones. The man in the uniform is telling people what really happened. The woman with the briefcase says her

268 This story is a rendition of a chance experience, when my daughters and I got caught in a false-alarm incident of lone-wolf shooting on Black Friday (24 November 2017) after meeting with their father at Soho's Picturehouse cinema. An example of phenomena in Will Davies's 'nervous states' (Davies, 2018a, op. cit., he describes the same incident at the front of his book), I used it for a writing exercise in the RCA's Fiction as Research group, led by Rebecca Fortnum, in 2018.

269 Kelly (2001).

son told her it was a false alarm all along. Little huddles of black-clad staff speak into walkie-talkies and confer excitedly, knowingly, about *this evening at work (just another night, what sheep, bleh, a pathetic freak-out)*.

Little huddles of customers make attempts at group intelligence, because no information is ever given out. There is the distant awareness that there are hundreds, if not thousands, more people in the building, quietly watching films in its six cinemas, ignorant of the tumult outside, in the common areas. Like scared and nervous animals, everyone scans the room and the digital streams to detect the actual level of danger. Workers in what signifies as the brains of the place – it is cordoned off behind reinforced glass, has maps on the wall, and more computers than anywhere else – all look profoundly un-fussed and continue typing, phoning, calculating.

Surely that means we're all okay?

I cup my youngest daughter's face between my hands and force her to look deep into my eyes, nowhere else. 'Darling, I know it's confusing and scary, but at times like these when you're getting so many impressions, you have to understand that Mummy is older than you and can analyse what's going on and figure out what's really happening. Best to just use my face as your guide, and if I'm not looking scared, then you can trust that you don't need to be, all right?' I check the brains room again and it's quiet.

Surely that means we're all okay?

No, it doesn't. Someone screams, and the whole sorry process starts all over again, but this time it's worse. The group hysteria accelerates to an even higher pitch. People shout 'There's a shooter!!!' and trample over each other to get into any safe space. They exit down corridors, up escalators, into off-limits utility rooms – which is where we end up with about a dozen others and a load of toilet rolls, cleaning fluids, gloves boxes, industrial fridges and shelving racks. A girl walks straight back out, agreeing with me, en passant, that staying is stupid if there really is a killer in the building intent on finding people... Spatially, we are effectively at the tail end of a funnel. Sitting ducks. Easy pickings. Prey.

Someone shoots down a dark corridor at the back. Two staff say that it's a good escape route, even though it's forbidden. Atomisation. Ad hoc togetherness. Dissolution. Decisions. I don't

know what I am feeling. I've lost the plot and my character. My legs aren't working any more. I've never seen a real panic attack and realise my daughter is having one. 'Mummy, Mummy, Mummy, Mummy' – she's hyperventilating madly, looking up blankly, unable to stop the frantic sucking in of breath. I place my hand on her and feel something like a bird's heart thumping violently. I peer around a corner, into the tungsten-lit nowhere land. Everything is real and everything is stereotype. All over the walls, film posters speak their truth in disturbing double-entendres: *The Party* (white bourgeois comedy of manners), *Get Out* (satirical race-horror on white-black body-jacking), *Breathe* (nostalgic romance, heroic overcoming of physical adversity). But the show – and the escalator – goes on. People are self-choreographing into the script, performing the crying victim, the rational overseer, the reassuring comedian. All accept dutifully that this is our normality, now, tonight.

Then, imperceptibly, things slip and change tense. It's happened. It's over. Knowledgeable clipboard man arrives. He confirms what was apparently known all along.

There is no shooter. Something happened half a mile away which gave the police cause for concern. Appropriate threat-level response. Picturehouse on lockdown. Keeping it so for the moment.

Ten minutes later, my daughters and I walk out of the multiplex. We talk and agree that it's the most frightening thing we've ever experienced. But also that we don't know what it is.

Dickie Beau, Fabulator (13 March 2018)²⁷⁰

Dickie Beau, who we are honoured to have with us tonight, introduced us to the notion of *fabulation*, referring us to works by Deleuze and Bergson as well as to literary theorist Robert Scholes, who helped popularise the term with his books *The Fabulators*, *Structural Fabulation* and *Fabulations and Metafiction* (1967, 1975 and 1979).²⁷¹

Though each is rooted in storytelling, artifice, and the so-called ‘powers of the false,’ *fabulation* has quite distinct meanings for all these thinkers, with Deleuze’s – where *fabulation* helps to foster the invention of a ‘people to come’ – being perhaps the most provocative. The homogeneity of ‘the people,’ its status as a unified bloc, has rightly always aroused suspicion; caused the term to be associated with fascism, the mobilisation of the mass towards false idols and oppressive ideologies.

Bergson, who inspired Deleuze in developing the term, argued that the fabulatory function (or mythmaking) was rooted in human beings’ tendency to anthropomorphise dramatic natural phenomena, to attribute intentionality to them and to ground these in systems of faith. These necessitate both a certain subservience and rules that determine who is good or bad, allowed in or not allowed in, all of which, Bergson argued, runs counter to the potentials for an open society.

Tantalisingly, Deleuze argued that, instead, we can make political use of *fabulation* through its capacity to disturb received truths, particularly when we traffic in media, or in artistic languages associated with ‘the real’ (in *cinéma-vérité*, for example).

Artists, he argued, have always grappled with the ‘missing people.’ In making work for, but

270 For a time, RCA research groups organised an annual public presentation. On 13 March 2018, the Fiction as Research group invited Dickie Beau to perform in the Gorvy Lecture Theatre, Battersea, and this text acted as my introduction, on behalf of the group.

271 Scholes (1967, 1975, 1979). The concept of metafiction was originally coined in William H. Gass’s essay ‘Philosophy and the Form of Fiction,’ in Gass (1971), p. 24: ‘There are metatheorems in mathematics and logic, ethics has its linguistic oversoul, everywhere lingos to converse about lingos are being contrived, and the case is no different in the novel. I don’t mean merely those drearily predictable pieces about writers who are writing about what they are writing, but those, like some of the work of Borges, Barth, and Flann O’Brien, for example, in which the forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms can be imposed. Indeed, many of the so-called antinovels are really *metafictions*’ (my emphasis). For a broader historical survey, see Hutcheon (2010).

not immediately having access to, an audience, they have always used their imaginations to bring into being a virtual collectivity, a *people to come*. He discusses how they do this when they work alone, but also and perhaps more powerfully when they work collaboratively with their subjects (mentioning Jean Rouch, though we might also mention Lizzie Borden and her film *Born in Flames*,²⁷² which we've discussed at length).

With his performances, Dickie Beau asks how fabulation and artistry might work in the archives that surround us and whose contents become ever more excessive, ever more extreme and confusing, in their blurring of what, or who, is dead or alive; absent or present; fictive or real.

272 Borden (1983).

Glowing Embers of Discontent (18 September 2018)²⁷³

As Kevin has already mentioned, the Royal College of Art can seem an unlikely space to discuss educational dissent and solidarity-building. Not only does it carry an aura of material opulence and extreme social privilege – the historical assets and grace and favours associated with its royal imprimatur – but, among workers, there is scant union representation and, among students, little self-organised activity (when it has occurred more recently – such as in protests over the move of parts of the college to White City – it has tended to be charged with the fury of the upset customer, who complains of being mis-sold to, not so much any identification or solidarity with other workers, or a more open-ended desire for emancipatory education or a free society).

It seems astonishing that there was a time when entry to this institution was free, and it may be even more astonishing to hear that, early in the 1970s, the college was subject to an ambitious student proposal to conceive of a communist art school ('The Royal College Redefined,' by the Working Party of the Student Representative Council, came complete with an analysis of every department and common room and of staff-student-technician ratios, as well as the dynamics of pedagogy, communication and decision-making of the whole organisation).²⁷⁴

Later on in that decade, the RCA was under student occupation.

Standing on this gilded little sliver of land now, ostensibly disconnected from those historical struggles, and many of today's educational struggles of austerity too, what on earth can there be to say about 1968?

273 In anticipation of the fiftieth anniversary of '1968,' Kevin Biderman and I were invited by Rebecca Fortnum to organise an event at the RCA on its legacy in higher education. Kevin's presentations and my own opened the event (this text is a verbatim copy of mine), followed by our invitees Alberto Durango (CAIWU); Koshka Duff (Nottingham University), standing in for Thomas Docherty; Shiry Shalmy (United Voices of the World); and Connor Woodman (Centre for Crime and Justice Studies).

274 This document is in informal circulation as a PDF and headed: 'Junior Common Room; The Royal College of Art Redefined; Report Produced by the Working Party of the Student Representative Council,' with that latter being described as comprised of Jeff Sawtell, Andrew Brighton, Jim Field, Gordon Thompson and Nicos Papatzaneteas, who name further members as attending the relevant decision-making meeting, and also two further women – Brigid Magill and Sue Mawson – for providing 'invaluable assistance' in producing the document. Although the document is not dated, meeting and notes drafting occurred over March and May of what I believe to be 1972.

Our aim today has been twofold: one, to try to get to grips with the politics of memory and commemoration, and two: to speculate as to what particular conjuncture we find ourselves in in the contemporary academy, and which modes of organising and solidarity-building we might connect with.

Kristin Ross's book *May '68 and Its Afterlives*²⁷⁵ sets out the complex mechanisms by which the general strike and large-scale social disruption of 1968 were retold, both as it happened and afterwards, and is instructive of such processes of retelling in their more general sense, meaning in ways that can help us to understand the manifold direct and indirect techniques by which the capitalist status quo is normalised, historically, or indeed to perform the – now arguably more urgent – memory work of connecting our present to very recent events (for example, the ongoing attack on the social body performed in the name of austerity and fiscal prudence since the financial crisis of 2008, which manifests itself ever more clearly as an attack on the poor; the student protests of 2010 and later; the riots of 2011; Brexit; the so-called free-speech crisis in universities and elsewhere; and, of course, the rise of the far right).

Writing as Ross did in the shadows of successive anniversaries (the book came out in 2002 and scours material from three decades' worth of archives and anniversaries), it feels particularly apt to revisit her analysis now that the fiftieth anniversary of 1968 coincides with the tenth anniversary of the financial crisis, four days ago and counting...

Ross insists that we view the central trope of 'May' – as she calls the longer, stretched-out period of time that precedes and follows that month (about a decade, in all) – as *equality* and not, as might seem appropriate, *liberty*. She argues that a strategic diversion from one to the other term has facilitated a filigree of other determining ideas, which, together, effectively restructured the possibilities of that moment to revolve around the individual instead of the collective and rendered this unprecedented rupture in capitalist normalcy compliant not only to a variety of the more conspicuous transformative procedures of neoliberalism (in institutions, labour relations, state deregulation, etc.), but, more subtly, to a shift in public discourse from politics to ethics. She argues that this shift helped lay the groundwork for the hegemony of human-rights frameworks, which, while of course granting important entitlements in the abstract, weakened radical politics and, as we also know, were put to work

275 Ross (2002).

in some of the most violent conflicts of the 1990s and 2000s (coming to be described as the new ‘military humanism’).²⁷⁶ An explosive moment of class conflict and global anti-imperialist struggle was subsumed into the neo-imperialist order we still inhabit.

What, then, are the threads in this filigree? Perhaps unsurprisingly given her central argument over the slippage from equality to liberty (which, based on my vague memory, may partially echo Adam Curtis’s thesis in his film *Century of the Self*),²⁷⁷ these are all tropes that, even while they dramatise their militancy, use students to foreclose, disavow and/or deny the profound ways in which they sought equality with workers (including in the factories, as is better known, but also in rural France), as well as the solidarity with so-called ‘Third World’ subjects from which students explicitly took inspiration and guidance.

Perhaps by far the most powerful agency in this retelling was exerted by key participants, ‘leading names,’ in the protest themselves – individuals who, with exalted performances of introspection and remembering, offered the necessary amalgam of authentication and critical reflection for certain profoundly contestable notions to be mobilised and placed in circulation as if they were coming straight from the collective horse’s mouth.

Ross lists some of the most important of these as being: ‘Nothing really happened in 1968’; ‘It was a peaceful revolution, no one got killed’; or, similarly, ‘It was a revolution conducted in the realm of the symbolic, in culture and communication’; and ‘It was one generation fighting another, fighting for a new way of life.’ In this process, individual and societal biography could be fused, as the personal development and psychologising ruminations of a handful of self-selected participants – the seemingly natural process of their ‘growing up’ or denouncing past actions as if merely an error of youth – came to be grafted, like skin on skin, onto a social and historical phenomenon by definition too multifarious to be captured in singular representations or narratives. Persuasively (and although some of these conclusions were also drawn on the left), Ross argues that the biological inevitability of human ageing was allowed to stand in for the historical inevitability of liberal-humanist capitalism.

The New Philosophers, a group of former *gauchistes* including André Glucksmann and Bernard-Henri Lévy, for whom Ross reserves her most biting scorn, are paradigmatic of this;

276 Chomsky (1999b, op. cit.).

277 Curtis (2002).

however, it is not just in their willingness to come forward and tell the story of 1968 – to individualise ‘May’ and occlude everything that was historically specific, revolutionary and significant about it – that she is at pains to expose. Rather, it is also the way that their performance, in its solicitous speech to both state and media, enacts the precise opposite of the phenomenon that it claims to account for.

Here, the powerful – if temporary – refusal to negotiate with the state, and the radical experiments in self-mediatisation, planning and documentation between workers, post-colonial subjects and students (such as the *enquête*, the student-worker action committees, the poster workshops, the small bookshops and the journal publishers), are overridden in the media space of television, newspapers and high-profile anthologies, which, at moments of these self-elected public intellectuals’ choosing – or indeed at the clock-time-imposed deadlines of five-, ten- and twenty-year anniversaries – speak for ‘the movement’ and enter into dialogue with the state, and thus enact an eradication of that original gesture of refusal, killing it from the inside.

Ross conjures this as a sort of war of continuities and particularities, where, for example, the connections between May and existing resistance to the war in Algeria (including the so-called Paris Massacre of 1961, where up to a hundred predominantly Algerian protesters were shot and/or drowned in a notorious attack by police under orders from Maurice Papon)²⁷⁸ are forsaken for newly wrought arcs of connection whereby 1968 – and, with it, all anti-capitalist protest – is subsumed under the sign of totalitarianism, for example after the translation of Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago*,²⁷⁹ which formed a crucial plank in this group’s renunciation of Marxism.

What of this truncated little story has any bearing on our contemporary reality? There are points of conflict that persist, for example the imposition of bureaucracy, to which students and staff object now as they did then; the struggle against selective criteria and exclusive admission, which, in spite of Widening Participation programmes, the imposition and immediate increase of fees has made it more urgent than ever to oppose; and the problem of

278 Ross, op. cit., p. 26. Ross’s book is littered with references to Papon, under whom, as she recounts, ‘torture was installed in Paris’ (p. 53). A good recent account of how the massacre of 17 October 1961 was ‘forgotten’ is Berger (2019). The influence in my project of the film *Caché* (Haneke, 2005) is related to my research on agnotology.

279 Solzhenitsyn (1974).

the syllabus (Bill Readings's *The University in Ruins* describes how the students of 1968 criticised the complicity of the new discipline of sociology with marketing, remarking – when writing in the late 1990s – that even marketing itself had by then turned into a subject of academic study).²⁸⁰ But what of the broader conditions of life within which the university and all its workers (students included) are situated? And what of the forces that played such a decisive part in domesticating May '68, which Ross excavates: the role of public intellectuals and media; the revolving door between military and police, France and Algeria; the complicity and concessions of the unions in the Grenelle accords that heralded an end to the strikes?

The intervening period has seen much analysis of the way in which life, not just labour, has been subsumed by capital; the way in which qualities that were previously deemed beyond capture have all come, gradually but violently, under capital's dominion.²⁸¹ Hence, it is not just the working conditions and the decline in real wages or pensions over which struggles erupt, but the imposition of measure, and grading, in seemingly every direction that impoverishes and disempowers worker and student alike, and which demand a response. REF, TEF, research impact, student feedback, the employment criteria of live research profiles and peer-reviewed publications, not to mention always-on affective availability and the blurring of professional and private time and space by new technologies.

Gary Hall has analysed these not only as a sort of logical end-point of neoliberalisation but as part and parcel of a possible 'Uberfication' of the university.²⁸² Concerning information and services companies – a shocking 49% of whose workforces are already on flexible contracts – that are already globalising via franchise operations, MOOCs and the splintering (so-called 'diversification') of their offerings,²⁸³ he argues that educational institutions may start to adopt ever more of the precepts and operating principles of an ascendant platform capitalism. Here, the worker, like any other worker in the gig economy, is forced to become a micro-

280 Readings (1999), p. 138. All of Chapter 9, 'The Time of Study: 1968' could not be more relevant: 'The students thus resisted both the existing feudal structure and the state's attempt to moderni[s]e it' (p. 137).

281 In the broadest of terms, this refers to capital's tendency towards 'subsumption' (see, e.g., Endnotes, 2010).

282 Hall (2016), op. cit. The processes Hall describes deepen ones that were already under way during the 'tulipomania' moment of 'open education' and MOOCs (see Hall, van Mourik Broekman, Byfield, Hides, Worthington, 2015).

283 Hall, *ibid*, p. 33. *College, Inc.* (Maggio and Smith, 2010) is excellent on how the educational 'offer' is privatised and sculpted to look like *just what the customer wanted*, i.e. a flexible response to genuine need, rather than the outcome of profit-seeking on the part of the provider.

entrepreneur of the self, maximising her human capital and myriad ‘ratings’ and indices of ‘trustworthiness,’ while the university-as-platform uses data analytics and market segmentation to tailor its services ever more finely towards the needs of the prospective ‘customer student,’ who is, herself, entirely immobilised and shackled by the debt burden of entry, only to realise that the rationale, the social contract, which might have made that debt burden bearable is, in all but the most elite domains, evaporating into the thin air of a jobless future, as it is besieged, taken hostage, by automation, AI and the relentless resource squeeze of ongoing capital accumulation. The once reliable reality of a unitary space, located in time and geography, where exploratory thought occurs among people dedicated to scholarship and intellectual autonomy recedes ever further into history and myth, the viability of a working life fabricating its zombie double following closely behind.²⁸⁴

In his ‘Uberfication’ essay, Hall describes the socioeconomic paradigm in which the university is presently caught up as ‘post-welfare capitalism.’ The book’s preface quotes Rohit Talwar, futurologist and CEO of Fast Forward Research, describing a typical day: ‘You might be driving Uber part of the day, renting out your spare bedroom on Airbnb a little bit, renting out space in your closet as storage for Amazon or housing the drone that does [its] delivery,’ a dark copy if ever there was one of Marx’s utopian paean against specialisation and the division of labour – *to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.*²⁸⁵ The sharing economy, platform capitalism, gorges itself on space, time and human labour purely by dint of having created a newly simplified technological nexus by which they can be passed. As has often been remarked, it stands at the apex of capitalism’s ability to privatise profit and socialise risk and maintenance, and all around us we see that the exponential speed with which it is changing material reality cannot be kept up with by historical social forms such as councils, nation states, governments and unions.

Nina Power characterises what happens when basic welfare and the shared conditions of everyday life start to disappear as inherently threatening to our experience of temporality and politics. In ‘The Pessimism of Time,’²⁸⁶ she discusses how austerity has pushed all

284 Such an idyll of course never existed, as was noted repeatedly by every participant in the online launch of Fleming (2021), op. cit. (see Fleming, Davies, Bhattacharyya and Azmanova, 2021).

285 Marx (1998), p. 53.

286 Power (2012). Power (2014) is her personal account of the police and carceral state’s use of this ‘stretching out of time’ as a technique of subjection.

revolutionary impulses onto the back foot, making a fight for even the small crumbs of social democracy that are left feel like the most utopian horizon, be that in the defence of the local library, NHS hospital or university. Time, she argues, has been weaponised, whether it be through criminalisation of protest and corrupt judicial processes, the trauma endured by victims of police violence and their friends and family as they are made to wait for what feels like an eternity for a notional ‘justice’ to be meted out, or in the theft of futures incurred via indebtedness. The mass imprisonment on minimal charges that occurs in America; the indefinite detainment in Britain’s hostile environment (at camps for migrants and so-called ‘illegals,’ not to mention in formal citizenship itself, such as occurred with the Windrush generation); and the separation of children from parents at borders (as Trump has recently overseen) should all be understood as representative of this. It seems undeniable that the future as a positive epistemic modality is being targeted,²⁸⁷ if not destroyed (something that, needless to say, the now ubiquitous threat of climate change and extreme weather events can only intensify).

This radically dis-intermediated, materially insecure and frenetic landscape thrives on making people feel vulnerable, as feeling somehow insufficient and individually responsible for every aspect of their increasingly difficult lives. Arguably, its encroachment on the basic conditions for life, including time (futuraity), space and human energy and willpower, marks one of the most important differences between the present and the revolutionary moment of the late 1960s. But it does still offer spaces for organising and connection, as Alberto Durango and others today are showing, and some of the most urgent present struggles – including over marketisation, labour rights, outsourcing and curriculum decolonisation – should be seen in the context of these possibilities. If, as Akwugo Emejulu (who sadly couldn’t be with us today) and many others have written, the university is neither innocent nor neutral, and the whole project of European modernity and enlightenment is rooted in colonial plunder and chattel slavery, then we must acknowledge not just that the historical university is under threat, but that the status of the knowledge it nurtured is in question.

The university may be in ruins under the pressure of the market and the demands of ‘excellence,’ as Bill Readings already said in 1998, but if another university is possible, who gets to decide what needs to be known, what the canon is, what is legitimate and illegitimate

287 Using Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi’s phrase ‘slow cancellation of the future,’ the essay in Fisher (2014a), is a succinct articulation (he talks through the same thesis in Fisher, 2014b, *op. cit.*, which is excellent on the ‘indirect funding’ of culture, and ‘capitalist cyberspace’).

knowledge (or, as Koshka asks, criminal)? (As many will remember, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten say in ‘The University and the Undercommons’ that the only possible relation to the university today is a criminal one.)²⁸⁸ In ‘The Free Speech Panic: How the Right Concocted a Crisis,’ Will Davies argues that the plethora of spaces for expression, communication and organisation now available pose a threat to Conservatism, and that its alliance with the mainstream media to flip that reality and instead warn of a ‘threat’ to free speech is merely indicative of its vulnerability, of the new spaces that are finally opening up for those long excluded from self-articulation.²⁸⁹ Evoking the dynamics of personalisation and performativity discussed in Ross’s book, Davies points to the way that universities now sit in networks of virality, where everything becomes live content, statements can get taken out of context and a magnetism is exerted by extremes (or what can be decontextualised and framed as extremes). Hence, Lola Olufemi, the Cambridge student campaigning for a decolonisation of the curriculum who spoke at the RCA earlier in the year, was misquoted and then subjected to a media storm ignited by *The Daily Telegraph*. What are the politics that can both deploy and withstand these tendencies, while building solidarities as was envisaged fifty years ago, and has continued to be since then, albeit under constant threat of erasure?

288 Moten and Harney, op. cit., esp. pp. 26-30

289 Davies (2018b).



291

Plastic boxes thin as ice, group groks of
Doughnuts, flop heavy downwards
On glass table – you keep, steep
Look away, Mr. Pfefferman, where
Did that come from; cos you bind and
cut and squash, Bosom, Breast, no Bra
No, no, not now, that's not my Game
face away, can't look
You in the Eye, see myself only
On Camera, click, fingerprint ID;
face ID, swallow me, my whole
Body in Blind Binding, grok –

290 After attending 'Writing & Art with Anne Boyer', an RCA/TECHNE 'Conflux' session, on 8 March 2019, I joined several of the free workshops Boyer ran, into May, as part of her residency at Cambridge University. Through weekly readings on single authors, Anne introduced me to many new poets (I did not then know Alice Notley, René Char, or even William Carlos Williams). She often began the session by asking us to select a card from Bea Nettles's *Mountain Dream Tarot* (Nettles, 2001) or by doing free writing, an example of which is included here.

291 The three cards I pulled from the Tarot in successive weeks of attendance; and my free-writing example (which, entirely forgotten, I found a year later among my notes and papers).

Is a building material
Powdered, finding space, split, she
says it will get rid
Of all the Arts, but also Gut your Gut
Clean of what it doesn't need – but
maybe check not to drink
Flo – sheeps – Flo; more hours than day

The Café in the Hill (morning of 20 October 2019)

I was going to meet Sophie in a café that turned out to be by the side of the road, gouged into a leafy hill and balancing precariously.

Although I did all the right things, the way I ordered my coffee, or proceeded through the queue, meant that I 'slipped' into another stream of sequencing than I'd intended – or that was normal – and went the VERY long way around, in a dizzy, speedy circuit round the back.

All this may have had something to do with a sense of groundlessness as I was very oriented on whether I could balance, had my feet on the ground, shoes correctly on, etc., and also that I left my friend (Sophie, still?) behind. I was left to discuss the strangeness of my fate on this slipstream with other café visitors whom I didn't know and who were surprised at what was happening to me; worried it would also happen to them.

The abiding image was of the café itself, built into the hill.

Eyes open they are dry but stream water at the same time back hurts, feet creak, today it takes perhaps twenty steps for them to stop feeling like prosthetics, my own body, stumble to the kitchen for food peace for an hour while girls sleep stillness reigns supreme can you make me toast with peanut butter and jam and a glass of water back and forth forget the charring and the smell it's just about good enough a sweet languid smile, settled, screen streams fill the minutes, sometimes hours, sometimes what feels like days I go and take a shower, press the palms of my hands hard onto my eyelids, the heat and steam and lather rising up around me while I use the water to force a hair off my tongue and in a giant cloud starlings explode into my mind's eye, but when it's the next day, I hate the distance, I hate it with all my heart and all my fire, right down to the last little sinuous fibre still left alive in me and coursing through my body though much slower by now

and not just the physical distance, the one we've all spent so many years traversing and belittling and analysing but the social distance it absolutely hurts the most, don't you think, that way we can't cross the social distance at all if we're really honest about it, even before it became a real thing now determining and saving the world for as long or as little as that can last, take me, take anyone, the density the rigidity the absolutely not and never going away of the wall separating us socially from the ones we really seek to feel and join, and also who we owe it to as they owe it to each other all that joy our bodies can feel in that natural embrace, is thicker than anything physical reality might put in our way, and that our glorious infrastructures likewise coursing through the air and the earth, moving assuredly across skies and mountain ranges and soon perhaps into the deepest pit of the blackest seas, into our ears²⁹³ and eyes so that we can listen and see clearly and under our feet and arses, so that we can move so fast we practically astral project, could, or is it I wonder you will tell me there is proof everywhere of new forms of solidarity, new sociality, or perhaps even the oldest one the

292 Between 2019 and 2020, the impasse of writer's block and chronic anxiety spurred me to 'write into' my problem, as described in the preface. Encountering Lispector (2014) was decisive (*The Stream of Life*, transposed here as a subtitle, is taken from the book's English translation, also because it resonated with Vertov's preoccupation with material, energetic and temporal flow). I should note that many other feminist authors and theorists equally pertinent to the questions with which this project came to be engaged could not be included due to its slow conceptual resolution; the manner in which it roamed across disciplines and, theoretically speaking, refused to settle. There are for this reason notable omissions.

293 This is inspired by Camp et. al. (2021), where Camp says Covid-zooming with an earpiece instilled in her a sense of physically incorporating the other. See also Camp (2019).

one we feel instinctively intuitively and that comes out at unpredictable times and in unscripted moments when we show the best of us when we are who we were born to be,²⁹⁴ but we can't see the half of it, of what we want and what should be possible.

It's like what I just witnessed in a group where a woman teacher speaking in a square to a woman student speaking in another square thought that we couldn't see how separate she thought she was and how she thought she had a right to speak and opine and judge and advise and take up the space and the air and the moments we all had, like she had more rights and more knowledge and more experience, more standing and let's just say it more (or the right) class, in what is effectively an open field of possibility and I was so shocked and knocked, outwitted, bowled over in fact, that I could hardly hide it, in my own little square, in my own little class, the one she thought we shared, because we are in the middle, or the upper middle, or the western, the European, the white, the female, in THAT natural way, but could I intervene, no, whatever the hell was the object of appropriateness stood in my way, sat in my throat, occupied it violently and with no explanation, just full spectrum surety, jurisdiction and sovereignty, like a giant fatberg that won't be dislodged for love nor money or the creamy, whitey, pinkey, stretchy, sticky ball of gum that rendered my siblings mute in their exact same dream though they were born twenty years apart.

*

She is asleep her left hand rests softly on my face and I'm struck how it remains like a baby's the tiniest of bones ensconced in soft and squishy layers, of muscle tendons fat and skin, even with the now hard-bitten nails which are redolent of her nerves and though she's now as old as eleven, the age not the character, and it was only last night that she pleaded with me that we plough our way through a complicated social matter concerning what you might call the class-politics of tweenies which we strongly agreed cuts across all genders and I privately note should also quash a few retrograde ideas I've developed watching children interact, thinking it's only a girl thing when it turns out the boys are well in on the act with the bitching and the sniping and the excluding and the favouriting, although the sub- and meta- and infra-power being exercised on each new WhatsApp group, the ridiculousness of whose names increases in lockstep with the finesse of their social function, is staggering, and by the way it tends to be the same children who are the admins and the rule-setters and the keepers of the power and

294 Dupont (2007).

the show on the road, being mostly the girls, and the boys are perhaps just the ones that are exploding and SHOUTING IN FULL CAPS and with an unholy collection of exclamations and punctuations saying it should all stop!?!?**** or shutting up some specific girl they can't handle and who's twice their size, while the whole thing goes right over the heads of many willing and indeed unwilling participants whatever their gender and another one valiantly attempts to negotiate the un-negotiable, speaking real sense but being completely ignored or misunderstood or just not noticed and a full score of them are at it all through the day and night, it seems, pitching in and stepping up and bringing it, while emotions soar and concrete acts of analytical power moderation and solidarity are performed without most of the parents having the foggiest that this heroic community experiment at some form of communication justice and group-being and togetherness inside outside of time and space is going on and which the mind repeatedly attempts to bring into relation with the under-socialised and over-paid boy-men in Silicon Valley who own the tools with which it's performed and which, incidentally, are the selfsame on which I read this passage four score hours later and which then makes me feel sick to my stomach despairing that I haven't been able to transpose the level of intensity, surprise and overall affect of the last section I wrote like this and so now it's like the world's ending as I realise in a depressed flash that, of course, form isn't something you can just apply like a texture or a mood or a filter, nor a magic element, a trick or ingredient or material, that can be acquired, applied and repeated and so absolves the need for loving labour, fierce sensitivity and mutuality of relation, the thinking and working-through all over again, the total and constantly renewed dedication to the concrete historical moment in all its facets, what they call the totality, or that you can just presume to rely on the nature of, like you might a piece of meat from the butcher or 100 grams of butter in a recipe for stew or a piece of textile for the making of a garment where it can just be used and made over and over again till it's right and constant and reliable and trustworthy, like perfecting the baker's mirror glaze, where actually even each of those are subject to the same relations of materiality, sociality and time, meaning imperfectibility, contingency, fragility, finitude, and that hard truth forces me to see I could be like the capitalist not only to the world and its people and systems but to my own creative powers, lying back as a caricature with a cigar and pinstripes, maybe a bowler hat for good measure, a little mouse with big ears doing funny things somewhere behind the scenes or that I can't see but you can, lazily rentiering off the small project of work I performed just the day before, or more often than not like the other one, the manager, who assumes I can churn out something fungible whatever the day of the week or month or year it is, whatever the season or the weather or the temperature or the space or events or feelings, let alone my and your body and their age and state and hormones,

and though I don't think that's quite the same as the entrepreneurship of the self, or a nice and juicy mountain of human capital, I realise I can't and won't and don't even want to get away with any of that though I do really think I want to write.

But that's a few days later and on the day itself it has already made all thought drop right away like a lead balloon straight out of the sky and any composure I might have had flees, rushes, rids itself from me completely, it is an angry storm raging right out of my body as if, earlier, the outside was full and I was a vacuum and now it's the other way around and here I am at the fucking beginning again wondering what the hell to do and will I ever write anything meaningful, will I ever get to the end of this cursed journey inside the deadlines and the frameworks and the schedules of progression and the accumulation which of course I freely sought out and even aspired to and applied for and got the privilege of hard cash to incarcerate myself within, meaning to build a life and a liveable future out of, and so I start searching frantically across the sea of copied and printed and stapled articles essays news items web announcements seminar notes, only the very most recent that is, from merely the last couple of days, for someone, some thing, that can save me from this cosy not cosy authorial hell of anguished self-imposed ignorance and chronic perceptual undoing, and thankfully I find the attempt I made a few days ago at a collection of works of what my 'research method' has luckily decreed an important young poet²⁹⁵ whose essays, seminars and poetry quietly but decisively plot a trail of gestures, movements and positions which at right this minute right this juncture are revelatory and which I duly follow, the upside-down inside-out forgetful Gretel stepping and tripping exhaustedly from link to over-attenuated link to do some more sustained reading that helps me, really helps me, of the previously secret poet²⁹⁶ she discusses and a previously secret philosopher²⁹⁷ who someone else I found²⁹⁸ says has bearing on the previously secret poet's use of description, concealment and exposure to mobilise how self and social are mutually imbricated but never fully revealed or apprehended as such, rather always in a reciprocal dynamic of construction with each other to which we can attend by feeling and recalling and noticing and naming²⁹⁹ and who I slowly learn about while sitting in the blazing unseasonal heat, studiously checking the footnotes on a 'smart' phone whose surface the sun's hard rays flatten into an obstinate opacity or is it an

295 L.S. (2019) (by example).

296 Leslie Scalapino.

297 Katerina Kolozova.

298 Malgorzata Myk.

299 Myk (2016, 2019).

opaque obstinacy³⁰⁰ I don't actually know or maybe it's just that I can't decide, that I'm seduced and taken in by that mirror-glaze again, even into trying to use that trick of self-reflexivity that I loved so much when the Communist Californians performed it,³⁰¹ when I know it might be lazy and not apt for this particular context, but yes to go back to the issue (and object) at hand (and in hand), it's matter-of-factly refusing my somewhat furious attempts at data entry with a film of dust and grease that instead I can see in microscopic detail while I also try to read another book by the admirable older film historian³⁰² who I rejoice to see has yet again drawn into a clear capacious coherent web,³⁰³ a soft and lolling hammock, maybe even into the famous Eighties carrier bag³⁰⁴ that everyone wants right now because everyone wants to feel safe and have as many mothers in reserve as they possibly can,³⁰⁵ all the thinkers and the works I truly care about and some of whom took so long to find in spite of the archives and the platforms and the internets, all the while worrying I've done as I always do and made a new path of distraction and am getting off the point again, given that I too spent the whole morning in bed jumping from awe to awe, device to device, technique to technique, reversal to occlusion, excision to addition, repetition to aporia or explicit historical groundedness, somewhat illogical or random pairings that I'm giving to you now to show you how many are on offer in the third decade of the twenty-first century like some sick-making spread at Fortnum's which is now closed, thankfully, but which might have had younger and older, professionally obliging women workers looking like stewardesses with fascinators or berets on, in nostalgic but knowing designs and colour schemes, with nylon everywhere, pointing at each one with their carefully manicured fingers hiding their hard and ongoing reproductive labour, but none of which you can quite index but that's also the point and the enormous valence even the real beauty and so that means that apart from that raw awe and the practical levitation of luxuriant daytime noticing occurring when I should have been talking to my children or at least doing something useful with them or something useful for someone else, for everyone really, 'at this difficult time,' instead of which I coolly observe that the state of order in my flat exists in inverse proportion to the state of my focus, concentration, dedication to my intellectual and creative activity and that in fact I could make an accompanying graph illustrating how the amount of time spent reading and

300 Kluge and Negt (2014) (I was also reading Miriam Hansen's work on media and the remainder).

301 The cascade of self-reflexivity and self-loathing I refer to features in Clover and Spahr (2014).

302 Janet Harbord.

303 Harbord, introduction to Harbord and Campbell (2002).

304 Le Guin (2019).

305 This points to my interest in, and the conspicuousness visibility – around the time of writing – of literature on mothers, maternity, the maternal and natality (see f.n. 66).

even thinking properly flies in the opposite direction to the amount of clean underpants there are available for myself and my daughters to wear, perhaps even cooked food for them to eat of a night and definitely of a lunchtime, and in the end when it's all said and done I feel like I learnt nothing more than that I know nothing and that that makes me feel, and surely speak and write if and when I actually do, that is, like myself the child who is running so hard but can never catch up, never read all the books, never have enough of the education to make a home and a self in the poems and the books and the knowledge and the time and the place.

The Fascism of Boris' NHS (10 May 2020)³⁰⁶

...went to a party, in a strange house on a street of which I couldn't tell whether it was an adventurous project of architectural grandiosity – and capital – or a place born of necessity, the product of courage and invention, made using the only space and materials that the family – or families – who lived there had access to.

The bricks on the outside bulged, in all the colours of the rainbow, like enormous, Covid-era NHS marshmallows. I went inside, but halfway upstairs realised my dress wasn't very long, and that, actually, I didn't have any underpants on. What the hell was I going to do with people following right behind me?

Inside there was one of those typical carefree scenes, often constructed in photography, film, television, of liberal, middle-class Britain, with lots of healthy-looking children flying about; everyone has unkempt hair that somehow still flows beautifully; skin is clean and clear, socks chunky, woollen and homespun; all the surfaces are gently worn, from what looks like decades of regular use and care – not a jot is artificial, ugly or out of place, and everything appears like it would feel soft to the touch, and warm underfoot.

I suddenly realise I'm in the 21st c. equivalent of those Nazi photos of German families at home, the cultural homogeneity and 'security' of it all stifling, suffocating, also as it becomes clear the domicile is overseen by a generous and bellicose paterfamilias who doesn't look authoritarian but most certainly is – a Boris, proud of his enormous brood of children (itself a mark of capital, I figure, in my sleep), who I can see rolling about, down the stairs, laughing and joking, with tousled hair and ruddy cheeks – what us Dutch call a bare-bum face – ready to jostle and play in this, his infinite game of rugby.

I fret about what to do. As we walk back outside there is a black family, a whole black community (says the dream in its anti-dualistic language, which can make the group both, at the same time), waving at me from the balustrade of an open window in a house on the other side of the road, a sick night-time caricature of the racial segregation of daily life. Clearly trapped and unable to get out of the building, they stand there, while sunflower stalks and petals reach up all

306 Weeks before the epochal event of George Floyd's murder, on 25 May 2020 (which this dream precedes by 15 days), the extreme racialisation and social stratification expressed in pandemic management already demonstrated clearly whom the state is predisposed to protect and whom it is not.

around their heads and faces, drawing out an enforced charade of cheer and happiness, each face in the shape of a flower halo. They wave at me kindly, with smiling, open expressions.

Where am I going? Who am I to be with?

VI. Still

Film: Three Experiments With Montage (2015-2019)

1. <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/721456070> (RIP: Socialist Photographer, 2015)
2. <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/300479141> (a sketch, 2018)
2. <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/333318549> (a sketch, 2019)

Password: [REDACTED]

Poem: Inventions of the Mother: A Waking Dream (2020-2021)

See PDF submission (and the printed version at examination)

NB – the PDF attempts to show the qualities of paper by using some shading at the seam. The poem has ‘flaps’ at the edges of its pages, which can be folded forward and back. They contain working notes, which account for the production of the poem and share its process of fabrication to attempt the transparency of labour Vertov is said to have sought.

VI. The Crypt



Coda (Episteme / Techne)³⁰⁷

This project takes up the provocative comparison, made by Lev Manovich in his 1998 essay ‘Database as Symbolic Form,’³⁰⁸ between a ‘database art’ facilitated by the computer and the films of Dziga Vertov, particularly *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929).³⁰⁹ It explores the social and technological continuum in question – between a post-revolutionary Soviet Union, where new technologies of vision were being boldly put to work in everyday life, and our contemporary ‘network society,’ whose population is cast as mobile, connected and technologically equipped; ‘people with movie cameras.’ The project brings Manovich’s analogy up to date by reviewing his two key terms – ‘database’ and ‘narrative’ – in light of phenomena such as peer-to-peer sharing, crowd-sourcing, self-archiving and big data. It also draws out questions of authorship, subject relations and distribution, which ‘Database as Symbolic Form’ omits, but which have come to the fore as key artistic concerns, not only for networked moving image production but also for all work which construes itself as participatory, collaborative or interactive.

Manovich’s influential text explores what he suggests is a long-running tension between database – or ‘catalogue’ – and narrative. He argues that, if not interpreted literally, the database is neither, as it may seem, the opposite nor the nemesis of narrative, but rather the material that it uses – and hence which might also liberate it to function differently. Manovich contests that database precedes the computer, in the form of all discrete, ordered elements of material which belong together but can be accessed by any route, such as might be represented by film rushes, or pictorial elements, or entries in an encyclopaedia. His essay focuses on film because, in being linear and not allowing its audience to step outside its timeframe (thus ‘forcing’ viewers into narrative), it dramatises the relationship between database and narrative more forcefully than other art forms do (and is in this, he argues, also more conservative than they are). Manifestly, ‘Database as Symbolic Form’ also echoes postmodernism’s concern with the tension between a ‘free play of signs’ and meaning, even if its allusion to this theoretical parallel is scant.

307 This is the text with which I applied for AHRC funds from the TECHNE consortium, for the academic year starting October 2014. Apart from correcting a few misspelled names, publication dates and other technical errors, it is included unaltered.

308 Manovich (1998), op. cit.

309 Vertov (1929).

Man with a Movie Camera is, by any standard, a singular and significant film. Scholarship on the subject has intensified in recent years, with Vertov's most famous work being situated in a larger, coherent oeuvre, and also in the fullness of its historical context (Tsivian, 2004;³¹⁰ Hicks, 2007).³¹¹ Arguments for the film's ongoing influence focus on its documentary 'reflexivity'; the problematisation its wealth of formal methods achieve of its own conditions of production (Petrić, 2012).³¹² It is also interpreted as a pioneering example of 'post-human' vision (Tomas, 2013).³¹³ Manovich's transhistorical dyad has, then, in so many ways already been rendered canonical. Moreover, the founding by Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, in 1968, of the Dziga Vertov Group, illustrates that Vertov's output decisively inspired earlier generations of politicised cultural producers contemplating the relationship between their medium and the historical moment.

This begs the question, for anyone seeking to work with or on Vertov's legacy, of how to avoid the mere detailing of past precepts and ideas. My answer would be that existing scholarship and artistic practice, while exploring the role of technology in vision in depth (Vertov's 'kino-eye,' typified by, for example, the work of Harun Farocki), has not fully reckoned with the material changes that networks have wrought in three key areas of production, namely the social construction (and material facilitation) of the author; her relation to, and the agency of, her subject/s; and the means of distribution of her work. New research can engage these imaginatively, connecting the twentieth century's preoccupation with machine vision to the twenty-first's preoccupation with the network (which also entails a definitive shift to digital processes and 'social technologies'). Similarly, it can launch a dialogue with contemporary artistic practices whose concerns lie more directly with the database, which in my case I am proposing occur via the global public library projects of Croatian artist Marcell Mars, the German-Indian film databases Pad.ma and Indiancine.ma and the open rushes archive of *Steal This Film* (<http://footage.stealthisfilm.com/>). These will also bring a broader engagement with discourses around open access and 'piracy,' emergent digital commons and net neutrality (see e.g. Vaidhyanathan, 2011).³¹⁴

310 Tsivian (2004), op. cit.

311 Hicks, op. cit.

312 Petrić, op. cit.

313 Tomas (2013).

314 Vaidhyanathan (2011).

As cofounder of *Mute* magazine (1994-), my practice to date has engaged related questions within a larger analysis of technology's impact on art. The magazine challenged technological determinism, which has marked new media art discourses as much as, say, discussions of the 'Arab Spring,' but took it as beyond argument that networked technologies shrank the spaces between author, distributor and audience; allowed their roles to meld and hybridise; and made their geographical locale and social-cultural context unpredictable (van Mourik Broekman and Berry Slater, 2009).³¹⁵ *Mute's* own highly reflexive practice used the material form of the magazine as much as its published content to play with the authorial voice and open up its editorial and production process to participation (see N. Thoburn, 'Ceci n'est pas un magazine: The politics of hybrid media in Mute magazine,' *New Media & Society* 14, no. 5, 2012: 815-831).³¹⁶ My cofounding, in 2011, of social-archiving organisation MayDay Rooms has built on this history and I now seek to pursue questions which have recurred across these projects in a dedicated research environment.

I am consciously choosing to situate my PhD in a Fine Art context as this will allow a re-engagement with methodologies which shaped my sensibilities and interests (I graduated from Central Saint Martins, Painting, in 1991), but which my work as an editor and publisher has limited. Specifically, I propose making a series of film transcriptions based on Vertov's 'anthropological' approach and dialectical opposites, e.g. leisure/work, machine/man, dream/reality, fiction/documentary (as discussed by Y. Tsivian in his commentary on *Man with a Movie Camera*, BFI, 2000).³¹⁷ These short pieces will generate the base material for further, associated experiments in cross-collections 'narration' (e.g. vis-à-vis individual versus collective authorship, new production versus re-use/citation, live relay/storage, indexing structures, copyright/ownership, etc.). My aim being to contribute to an artistic 'grammar' of digital and mobile film practice, as that now exists in distributed networks, across time zones, using live and recorded, found and newly made material, and within which artists are able to produce, distribute and auto-theorise work using whichever medium and distribution environment seems apt (the practices of video/performance artists Hito Steyerl and Jesse Darling offer salient examples).

I make this proposal against the backdrop of enormous turbulence in film culture. The advent of digital cameras and processes, together with the degradation of analogue film stocks and

315 Van Mourik Broekman and Slater, op. cit.

316 Thoburn (2012), pp. 815-831.

317 Vertov (2000).

archives, has brought as much anxiety as it has hope. The archival impulse runs in tandem with a fear of some fundamental quality being lost in the transition from analogue to digital – as was manifest in Tacita Dean’s *The Green Ray* (2001),³¹⁸ which is supposed to ‘prove’ the superiority of the analogue over the digital in capturing the most ephemeral aspects of life (in that case, the elusive, last ‘green ray’ which the sun passes over the horizon as it disappears). For the custodians of film’s history and aesthetic discourses, this transition presents not just an injunction to digitise (down to the ‘grain’ of uniquely identifiable frames, it is said), but also an opportunity to have all the new ways in which film is made and consumed be informed by analogue film’s rich aesthetic language. Analogue video was of course also part of this change, but contemporary digital networks present us with a scenario where film can be live-streamed from/to mobiles; and watched, commented on and remade in bed, on the street or at the bus stop. This arguably casts the film installation that reigns supreme in contemporary art as a panic-ridden attempt to manage conditions of reception and interpretation that are, effectively, out of control. ‘Storage mania’ – as Dutch magazine *Mediamatic* dubbed the drive towards universal archiving as early as 1994 (vol 8 #1)³¹⁹ – can likewise be challenged as an instance of sheer habit – another product of our unwillingness to develop more rigorous and daring approaches to radically altered conditions of filmic possibility. These will, despite exponentially enhanced storage capacity, most likely leave the vast majority of what is and will be archived as dead, unseen and unused digital bits – a symbolic zombie potential.

Framing my enquiry, my bibliography places works on politics, modernism and social art (Bishop, 2012;³²⁰ Clark, 2001;³²¹ Groys, 2008;³²² Kester, 2011;³²³ Osborne, 2013;³²⁴ Stimson and Sholette, 2007)³²⁵ in dialogue with key historical texts on media and vision technologies, cybernetics and film (Barthes, 1984;³²⁶ Crary, 1992;³²⁷ Deleuze, 1997,³²⁸ 1989;³²⁹ Hayles,

318 Dean (2001).

319 Velthoven (1994).

320 Bishop (2012).

321 Clark (2001).

322 Groys (2008).

323 Kester (2011).

324 Osborne (2013).

325 Stimson and Sholette (2007).

326 Barthes (1984).

327 Crary (1992), op. cit.

328 Deleuze (1997).

329 Deleuze (1989).

1999;³³⁰ Jay, 1994;³³¹ Kittler, 1992,³³² 1999;³³³ Manovich, 2002;³³⁴ Stiegler, 2011;³³⁵ Wiener, 1988).³³⁶ It develops *Mute's* materialist analysis via discussions of software and digital networks (Fuller, 2005;³³⁷ Fuller and Goffey, 2012;³³⁸ Munster, 2006)³³⁹ and its interest in DIY practices via histories of grassroots film (Dickinson, 2007;³⁴⁰ Eshun and Gray, 2011).³⁴¹ Finally, it includes works of trans-cultural and trans-disciplinary analysis that connect dance and film/television, philosophy and comics, and technology and anime in ways that I anticipate will be inspirational for my own interdisciplinary project (Lambert-Beatty, 2008;³⁴² Leslie, 2002;³⁴³ Lamarre, 2009).³⁴⁴

330 Hayles (1999).

331 Jay (1994).

332 Kittler (1992).

333 Kittler (1999).

334 Manovich (2002), op. cit.

335 Stiegler (2011).

336 Wiener (1988).

337 Fuller (2005).

338 Fuller and Goffey, op. cit.

339 Munster (2006).

340 Dickinson (1999).

341 Eshun and Gray (2011).

342 Lambert-Beatty (2008).

343 Leslie (2002).

344 Lamarre, op. cit.

Bibliography

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012)

Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB, 1971)

Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2015)

Anonymous, '10 Theses on the Archive,' 2010 <<https://pad.ma/documents/OH>> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Wendy Apple (dir.), *The Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing* (NHK/BBC), 2004

Josefine Armistead, 'The Silicon Ideology,' 18 May 2016 (published independently and circulated online as a PDF)

Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019)

Davarian L. Baldwin, *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities Are Plundering Our Cities*, (New York: Bold Type Books, 2021)

Sindre Bangstad, 'Thoughts on the planetary: an interview with Achille Mbembe,' *New Frame* (online), 5 September 2019 <<https://www.newframe.com/thoughts-on-the-planetary-an-interview-with-achille-mbembe/>> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Lisa Baraitser, *Maternal Encounters: The Ethics of Interruption* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009)
— *Enduring Time* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017)

Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (eds.), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010)

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Flamingo, 1984)

Anustup Basu, 'Bombs and Bytes,' *Mute*, vol. 1, no. 27 (Winter/Spring 2004) <<https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/bombs-and-bytes>> [accessed 28 May 2022]

Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle* (Hanover, New Hampshire, and London: University Press of New England, 2006)
— *The World Computer: Derivative Conditions of Racial Capitalism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2021)

Walter Benjamin, 'Moscow,' *Die Kreatur* (1927), in Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (eds.), *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999)

- ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History,’ in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999)
- ‘The Author as Producer,’ in Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Levin and Y. Thomas (eds.), *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008)
- *One Way Street and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2009)
- *The Storyteller: Tales Out of Loneliness*, translated and with an introduction by Sam Dolbear, Esther Leslie and Sebastian Truskolaski (eds.) (London: Verso, 2016)
- Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi**, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2012)
- *Breathing: Chaos and Poetry* (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e)), 2018)
- John Berger**, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972)
- Laurel Berger**, ‘How to Forget a Massacre: What Happened in Paris on October 17, 1961,’ *Los Angeles Review of Books*, online, 17 October 2019 <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/how-to-forget-a-massacre-what-happened-in-paris-on-october-17-1961/>> [accessed 20 May 2022]
- Laurent Berlant**, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011)
- Jasper Bernes**, *The Work of Art in the Age of Deindustrialization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017)
- Josephine Berry**, *The Thematics of Site-specific Art on the Net*, PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2001
- Josephine Berry Slater and Anthony Iles**, *No Room to Move: Radical Art and the Regenerate City* (London: Mute Books, 2010)
- Thomas Biebricher**, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019)
- Claire Bishop**, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012)
- Joel Blackledge**, ‘Young British Filmmakers Are Throwing Out the Kitchen Sink (I, Daniel Blake had its moment. It’s time for something new),’ *Novara Media*, 4 December 2021 <<https://novaramedia.com/2021/12/04/young-british-filmmakers-are-throwing-out-the-kitchen-sink/>> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- Ina Blom**, *The Autobiography of Video: The Life and Times of a Memory Technology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016)
- Phillip Blond**, *Red Tory* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010)
- Harold Bloom**, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University

Press, 1997)

Johanna Bockmann, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011)

Balász Bodó, 'The Science of Piracy, the Piracy of Science: Who Are the Science Pirates and Where Do They Come From? Part 1', Kluwer Copyright Blog, 6 March 2019 <<http://copyrightblog.kluweriplaw.com/2019/03/06/the-science-of-piracy-the-piracy-of-science-who-are-the-science-pirates-and-where-do-they-come-from-part-1/>> [accessed 27 June 2022]

Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (London: Routledge, 2017)

Lizzie Borden (dir.), *Born in Flames* (First Run Features), 1983

Danah Boyd, 'Agnotology and Epistemological Fragmentation', *Data & Society: Points* (online), 26 April 2019 <<https://points.datasociety.net/agnotology-and-epistemological-fragmentation-56aa3c509c6b>> [accessed 27 June 2022]

Anne Boyer, *The Romance of Happy Workers* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2008)

— *Garments Against Women* (Boise, Idaho: Ahsahta Press, 2015)

— 'The Miserablist', *The White Review* (online exclusive), November 2016 <<https://www.thewhitereview.org/fiction/the-miserablist/>> [accessed 16 May 2022]

Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013)

Benjamin Bratton, *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015)

Teresa Brennan, *Exhausting Modernity: Grounds for a New Economy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001)

Mark Brown, 'Arts Council funding decision day: as it happened', *The Guardian*, 30 March 2011 <<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/culture-cuts-blog/2011/mar/30/arts-council-funding-decision-day-cuts>> [accessed 15 April 2022]

Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015)

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'From Faktura to Factography,' *October* 30 (Autumn 1984)

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997)

— *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000)

— *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009)

- Roger Burrows**, 'On Neoreaction,' *The Sociological Review Magazine* (online), 29 September 2018, <<https://thesociologicalreview.org/collections/undisciplining/on-neoreaction/>> [accessed 17 April 2022]
- James Butler**, 'How We Might Live: Architecture and Culture' (An Interview with Owen Hatherley), Novara Media, 28 February 2020 (online), <<https://novaramedia.com/2020/02/28/how-we-might-live-architecture-and-culture/>> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- 'Notice Me!' (An Interview with Will Davies), Novara Media, 30 July 2021 (online), <<https://novaramedia.com/2021/07/30/notice-me/>> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- Judith Butler**, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories of Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997)
- Liam Byrne**, 'I'm afraid there is no money.' The letter I will regret for ever,' *The Guardian*, 9 May 2015 <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/09/liam-byrne-apology-letter-there-is-no-money-labour-general-election>> [accessed 8 March 2022]
- Jordan T. Camp**, *Incarcerating the Crisis: Freedom Struggles and the Rise of the Neoliberal State* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016)
- Tina M. Campt**, 'The Loophole of Retreat – An Invitation,' *e-flux*, issue 105, December 2019 (online) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/105/302556/the-loophole-of-retreat-an-invitation/>> [accessed 8 June 2021]
- Tina M. Campt and others**, 'Slowness: A Conversation Between Tina Campt, Saidiya Hartman, Simone Leigh and Okwui Okpokwasili,' Danspace Project, 26 March 2021 <<https://vimeo.com/410656841>> [accessed 8 June 2021]
- Fiona Candlin**, 'A Proper Anxiety: Practice-Based PhDs and Academic Unease,' *Working Papers in Art and Design* 1 (1), <<https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/743/>> London: Birkbeck ePrints, 2000 [accessed 24 June 2022]
- 'Practice-based doctorates and questions of academic legitimacy,' *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 19 (1), pp. 96-101 <<http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/737/>> London: Birkbeck ePrints, 2000 [accessed 27 June 2022]
- 'A dual inheritance: the politics of educational reform and PhDs in art and design,' 2001 <<http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/738/>> London: Birkbeck ePrints, 2001 [accessed 27 June 2022]
- The Care Collective**, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* (London: Verso, 2020)
- Rosy Patience Carrick**, *Vladimir Mayakovsky: The Language of Revolution*, PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 2017
- Manuel Castells**, *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring and the Urban-Regional Process* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1989)

- Howard Caygill**, *On Resistance: A Philosophy of Defiance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)
- Dipesh Chakrabarty**, 'The Climate of History: Four Theses,' *Critical Enquiry*, vol. 35, no. 2 (Winter 2009)
- — *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2021)
- Carloss James Chamberlin**, 'Dziga Vertov: The Idiot,' *Senses of Cinema*, issue 41, November 2006 (online) <<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2006/feature-articles/dziga-vertov-enthusiasm/>> [accessed 7 June 2022]
- Noam Chomsky**, *Profit over People: Neoliberalism and the Global Order* (New York, Toronto and London: Seven Stories Press, 1999)
- — *The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo* (London: Pluto Press, 1999)
- Charmaine Chua, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney**, 'Against the Line,' talk organised by Charlotte Grace, Dubravka Sekulic, Adrian Lahoud and the RCA School of Architecture as part of 'Repossession, the 2021-22 RCA International Lecture Series,' 13 May 2022
- Joshua Clover**, *Riot.Strike.Riot.: The New Era of Uprisings* (London: Verso, 2016)
- Wendy Chun**, *Discriminating Data: Correlation, Neighbourhoods, and the New Politics of Recognition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2021)
- T. J. Clark**, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2001)
- Patricia Ticineto Clough and Craig Willse** (eds.), *Beyond Biopolitics: Essays on the Governance of Life and Death* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011)
- Joshua Clover**, *Riot.Strike.Riot.: The New Era of Uprisings* (London: Verso, 2016)
- Joshua Clover and Juliana Spahr**, *#Misanthropocene: 24 Theses* (Oakland, California: Commune Editions, 2014)
- CODA**, Letter to Arts Council England, 19 April 2011 <<https://web.archive.org/web/20110424085403/http://www.coda2coda.net/>> [accessed 25 May 2022]
- Margaret Cohen**, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 1995)
- Teju Cole**, 'Death in the Browser Tab,' *The New York Times Magazine* (online), 21 May 2015 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/magazine/death-in-the-browser-tab.html>> [accessed 8 June 2022]
- Georgina Colby**, *Kathy Acker: Writing the Impossible* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016)
- Rebecca Comay**, 'Deadlines (literally): The First Annual Gillian Rose Memorial Lecture' (Kingston-upon-Thames: CRMEP Books, 2020)

- Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda**, *The Dash—The Other Side of Absolute Knowing* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2018)
- Vickie Cooper and David Whyte** (eds.), *The Violence of Austerity* (London: Pluto Press, 2017)
- Zak Cope**, *The Wealth of (Some) Nations: Imperialism and the Mechanics of Value Transfer* (London: Pluto Press, 2019).
- Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias**, *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonising Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019)
- David Craig and Hugh Openshaw**, *The Great University Con: How We Broke Our Universities and Betrayed a Generation* (Original Book Company, 2018)
- David Courtwright**, *The Age of Addiction: How Bad Habits Became Big Business* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019)
- Jonathan Crary**, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992)
- *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999)
- *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (London: Verso, 2014)
- *Scorched Earth: Beyond the Digital Age to a Post-Capitalist World* (London: Verso, 2022)
- Cynthia Cruz**, ‘Practicing Solidarity’ (London: Common Practice, 2016)
- Sue Curry Jansen**, *Stealth Communications: The Spectacular Rise of Public Relations* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017)
- Adam Curtis** (dir.), *The Century of the Self* (RDF Television/BBC), 2002
- Ann Cvetkovich**, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2012)
- Will Davies**, *Nervous States: How Feeling Took Over the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018)
- ‘The Free Speech Panic: How the Right Concocted a Crisis,’ *The Guardian Long Read* (online), 26 July 2018 < <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jul/26/the-free-speech-panic-censorship-how-the-right-concocted-a-crisis> > [accessed 27 June 2022]
- *This Is Not Normal: The Collapse of Liberal Britain* (London: Verso, 2021)
- Paulo de Assis and Lucia D’Errico** (eds.), *Artistic Research: Charting a Field in Expansion* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019)
- María Puig de la Bellacasa**, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017)
- Jodi Dean**, *Publicity’s Secret: How Technoculture Capitalises on Democracy* (Ithaca, New York:

Cornell University Press, 2002)

— ‘Neofeudalism: The End of Capitalism?’, *LA Review of Books* (online), 12 May 2020 <<https://www.lareviewofbooks.org/article/neofeudalism-the-end-of-capitalism/>> [accessed 27 June 2022]

— ‘Becoming Neofeudal: The Inner Logic of Communicative Capitalism?’, The Annual Amiel and Melburn Trust Lecture, Birkbeck University, 17 June 2022 <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/events/remote_event_view?id=31710> [accessed 27 June 2022]

Jodi Dean and Charisse Burden-Stelly (eds.), *Organize, Fight, Win: Black Communist Women’s Political Writing* (London: Verso, 2022)

Tacita Dean, *The Green Ray*, 16mm colour film, mute, 2-1/2 minutes, Frith Street Gallery, London, and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris, 2001

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (London: Athlone Press, 1989)

— *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)

T. J. Demos, *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (London: Afterall Books, 2010)

Jemma Desai, ‘This work isn’t for us’, 2020 <<https://heystack.com/doc/337/this-work-isnt-for-us--by-jemma-desai>> [accessed 8 March 2022]

Margaret Dickinson (ed.), *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain, 1945-1990* (London: BFI Publishing, 1999)

Thomas Docherty, *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011)

— *Universities at War* (London: Sage Publications, 2014)

— *The New Treason of the Intellectuals: Can the University Survive?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018)

Danny Dorling and Sally Tomlinson, *Rule Britannia: Brexit and the End of Empire* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2020)

Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations* (London: Fourth Estate, 2001)

Emma Dowling, *The Care Crisis: What Caused It and How Can We End It?* (London: Verso, 2021)

Catherine Driscoll, *girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002)

Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists’ Books* (New York: Granary Books, 2004 (1994))

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Frère Dupont, *Species Being and Other Stories* (San Francisco: Ardent Press, 2007)

Yilmaz Dziewior and Barbara Engelbach (eds.), *Yvonne Rainer: Space, Body, Language* (Bregenz: Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2012)

- The Edu-Factory Collective**, *Toward a Global Autonomous University* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2009)
- Paul N. Edwards**, *A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data, and the Politics of Global Warming* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013)
- James Elkins** (ed.), *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art* (Connecticut: New Academia Publishing, 2009)
- Endnotes**, 'The History of Subsumption,' *Endnotes 2: Misery and the Value Form*, 2010 <<https://endnotes.org.uk/articles/the-history-of-subsumption>> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- Ingemo Engström**, *About Narration* statement, n.d. <<https://www.harunfarocki.de/films/1970s/1975/about-narration.html>> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- Ingemo Engström and Harun Farocki** (writers and directors), *About Narration (Erzählen)* (WDR, Cologne), 1975
- Kodwo Eshun and Ros Gray** (eds.), *The Militant Image: A Ciné-geography – Third Text* Special Issue (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011)
- Virginia Eubanks**, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018)
- Frantz Fanon**, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann, forewords by Ziauddin Sardar and Homi K. Bhabha (London: Pluto Press, 1986)
- Silvia Federici**, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland, California: PM Press, 2012)
- Susan Ferguson**, *Women and Work: Feminism, Labour, and Social Reproduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2019)
- Barbara J. Fields and Karen E. Fields**, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (London: Verso, 2012)
- Mark Fisher**, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (London: Zero Books, 2014)
- 'Mark Fisher: The Slow Cancellation of the Future' – *** MaMa, Zagreb @ May 21, 2014', ***', uploaded by 'pmilat,' 22 May 2014 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCgkLICtSkQ&ab_channel=pmilat> [accessed 20 May 2022]
- Sheila Fitzpatrick**, *Tear Off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
- Nicole R. Fleetwood**, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011)
- *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Carceration* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2020)

- Peter Fleming**, *Dark Academia: How Universities Die* (London: Pluto Press, 2021)
- Peter Fleming, Will Davies, Gargi Bhattacharyya and Albena Azmanova**, 'How Universities Die – Pluto Live,' 20 May 2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDBYr5O66Jk&ab_channel=PlutoPress> [accessed 20 May 2022]
- Alex Fletcher**, *Compilation and Critique: The Essay as a Literary, Cinematographic and Videographic Form*, PhD thesis, Kingston University, 2018
- Harrison Fluss and Landon Frim**, 'Behemoth and Leviathan: The Fascist Bestiary of the Alt-Right,' *Salvage* (online), 21 December 2017 <<https://salvage.zone/behemoth-and-leviathan-the-fascist-bestiary-of-the-alt-right/>> [accessed 11 May 2022]
- Derek R. Ford**, 'The Aesthetics of Exodus: Virno and Lyotard on Art, Timbre and the General Intellect,' *Cultural Politics*, vol. 16, no. 2 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2020)
- Simon Ford**, 'Myth Making,' *Art Monthly* 194 (March 1996)
- Simon Ford and Anthony Davies**, 'Art Capital,' *Art Monthly* 213 (February 1998) <<http://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/article/art-capital-by-simon-ford-and-anthony-davies-february-1998>> [accessed 29 May 2022]
- Devin Fore**, 'Introduction,' *October* 118, Soviet Factography (Autumn, 2006)
- 'The Operative Word in Soviet Factography,' *October* 118, Soviet Factography (Autumn, 2006)
- 'Dziga Vertov, The First Shoemaker of Russian Cinema,' *Configurations*, vol. 18, no. 3 (Autumn, 2010)
- 'Formalism' (entry) in Peter Melville Logan (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Novel* (Chichester, John Wiley & Sons, 2011)
- 'The Metabiotic State: Dziga Vertov's *The Eleventh Year*,' *October* 145 (Summer 2013)
- Leopoldina Fortunati**, *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*, trans. Hilary Creek (New York: Autonomedia, 1995)
- Michel Foucault**, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002)
- Dawn Foster**, 'A Very Political Tragedy,' *Jacobin* (June 2017) <<https://jacobinmag.com/2017/06/grenfell-tower-fire-inequality-housing>> [accessed 10 March 2022]
- Sam Frank**, 'Come With Us If You Want to Live,' *Harper's Magazine*, January 2015 <<https://harpers.org/archive/2015/01/come-with-us-if-you-want-to-live/>> [accessed 17 April 2022]
- Hannah Frank**, *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetic of Animated Cartoons* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019)
- Seb Franklin**, *The Digitally Disposed: Racial Capitalism and the Informatics of Value*

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021)

Nancy Fraser, 'Contradictions of Capital and Care', *New Left Review* 100, July/August 2016, <<https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii100/articles/nancy-fraser-contradictions-of-capital-and-care>> [accessed 27 June 2022]

Christopher Frayling, 'Research in Art and Design', *Royal College of Art Research Papers*, vol. 1, no. 1 (London: Royal College of Art and Christopher Frayling, 1993)

— 'Practice-Based Doctorates in the Creative and Performing Arts and Design' (UK Council for Graduate Education: 1997)

Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011)

Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003)

Stephen Frosh, *Key Concepts in Psychoanalysis* (New York: New York University Press, 2003)

Matthew Fuller, *Media Ecologies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005)

Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffey, *Evil Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012)

Ja'Tovia Gary, 'Ja'Tovia: A Care Ethic', AD&A Museum, YouTube, 6 August 2018, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZwVuvU-4Qg>> [accessed 27 June 2022]

William H. Gass, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (New York: Vintage, 1971)

Bernard Geoghegan, 'An Ecology of Operations: Vigilance, Radar and the Birth of the Computer Screen,' *REPRESENTATIONS* 147 (1)

Paolo Gerbaudo, *The Digital Party: Political Organisation and Online Democracy* (London: Pluto Press, 2018)

Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016)

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2007)

— *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*, edited and with foreword by Brenna Bhandar and Alberto Toscano (London: Verso, 2022)

Paul Gilroy, 'Transcript: In Conversation With Ruth Wilson-Gilmore', Recording 7 June, 2020, <<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/racism-racialisation/transcript-conversation-ruth-wilson-gilmore>> [accessed 27 June 2022]

Marcus Gilroy-Ware, *After the Fact: The Truth About Fake News* (London: Repeater Books, 2020)

Henry A. Giroux, *The Violence of Organised Forgetting: Thinking Beyond America's Disimagination Machine* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2014)

- *Race, Politics, and Pandemic Pedagogy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021)
- Jules Joanne Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke** (eds.), *Transgender Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2021)
- Jean-Luc Godard** (dir.), *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (New Yorker Films), 1967
- Lewis Goodall**, *Left for Dead? The Strange Death and Rebirth of Labour Britain* (Glasgow: William Collins, 2019)
- David Golumbia**, *The Politics of Bitcoin: Software as Right-Wing Extremism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016)
- 'The Great White Robot God: Artificial Intelligence and White Supremacy,' 21 January 2019 <<https://davidgolumbia.medium.com/the-great-white-robot-god-bea8e23943da>> [accessed 17 January 2022]
- Rebecca Gordon-Nesbitt**, 'Value, Measure, Sustainability' (London: Common Practice, 2012)
- Maria Gough**, *The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2005)
- David Graeber**, 'On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant,' *Strike! Magazine* (Summer 2013)
- *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory* (London: Allen Lane, 2018)
- Catherine Grant and Lori Waxman** (eds.), *Girls! Girls! Girls! In Contemporary Art* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011)
- Erin Gray, Asad Haider and Ben Mabie** (eds.), *Black Radical Tradition: A Reader* (London: Verso, forthcoming)
- John Grierson**, *Grierson on Documentary*, edited and with an introduction by Forsyth Hardy (London: Collins, 1946)
- Johan Grimonprez** (dir.), *dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y* (Soda Pictures), 1997
- Boris Groys**, *Art Power* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2008)
- François Guéry and Didier Deleule**, *The Productive Body*, trans. Philip Barnard, introduction by Stephen Shapiro (London: Zero Books, 2014)
- Tom Gunning**, 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the Incredulous Spectator' (1989), in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.), *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde' (1986), in Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006)
- Katie Hafner and Matthew Lyon**, *Where Wizards Stay Up Late: The Origins of the Internet* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998)

- Asad Haider**, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (London: Verso, 2018)
 — ‘Emancipation and Exhaustion,’ *South Asian Avant-Garde: A Dissident Literary Anthology* (SAAG, March 2021) <<https://saaganthology.com/Emancipation-and-Exhaustion>> [accessed 25 March 2022]
- Shuja Haider**, ‘The Darkness at the End of the Tunnel: Artificial Intelligence and Neoreaction,’ *Viewpoint Magazine*, 28 March 2017 <<https://viewpointmag.com/2017/03/28/the-darkness-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel-artificial-intelligence-and-neoreaction/>> [accessed 17 April 2022]
- Gary Hall**, *The Uberfication of the University* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016)
 — *A Stubborn Fury: How Writing Works in Elitist Britain* (Open Humanities Press, 2021)
- Gary Hall, Pauline van Mourik Broekman, Ted Byfield, Shaun Hides and Simon Worthington**, *Open Education: A Study in Disruption* (London and New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015)
- Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts**, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order (Critical Social Studies)* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1978)
- Michael Haneke** (dir.), *Caché* (Les Films du Losange), 2005
- Donna Haraway**, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991)
- Janet Harbord and Jan Campbell** (eds.), *Temporalities: Autobiography and Everyday Life* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002)
- Johann Hari**, *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022)
- Malcolm Harris**, *Kids These Days: Human Capital and the Making of Millennials* (Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown and Company, 2017)
- Saidiya Hartman**, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007)
 — ‘The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women’s Labors,’ *Souls*, 18:1 (2016)
 — *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2019)
- Steven Harris**, *Surrealist Art and Thought in the 1930s: Art, Politics, and the Psyche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- David Harvey**, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)
 — *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Tobi Haslett**, ‘Magic Actions: Looking back on the George Floyd rebellion,’ *N+1 Magazine*,

issue 40: Hindsight (Summer 2021) <<https://www.nplusonemag.com/issue-40/politics/magic-actions-2/>> [accessed 16 May 2022]

Owen Hatherley, *The Chaplin Machine: Slapstick, Fordism and the Communist Avant-Garde* (London: Pluto Press, 2016)

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

Toby Haynes (dir.), *Brexit: The Uncivil War* (House Productions), 2019

Danny Hayward, *Wound Building: Dispatches from the Latest Disasters in UK Poetry* (Earth, Milky Way: punctum books, 2021)

Johanna Hedva, 'Sick Woman Theory', *Topical Cream* (online), 1 April 2022 (2016) <<https://www.topicalcream.org/features/sick-woman-theory/>> [accessed 27 June 2022]

— 'In Defense of De-persons', *GUTS Magazine*, no. 6 (10 May 2016) <<http://gutsmagazine.ca/in/>> [accessed 10 May 2022]

Andrew Hewitt, *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005)

Jeremy Hicks, *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007)

Charlotte Higgins, 'Arts Council England funding cuts – the great axe falls', *The Guardian*, 30 March 2011 <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2011/mar/30/arts-council-england-funding-cuts?CMP=gu_com> [accessed 10 March 2022]

Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012 (1997))

John Hockey, 'United Kingdom Art and Design Practice-Based PhDs: Evidence from Students and Their Supervisors', *Studies in Art Education*, vol. 48, no. 2 (Winter, 2007)

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (London: Routledge, 1994)

Tom Holert, 'Art in the Knowledge-Based Polis', *e-flux*, issue 3 (February 2009) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/03/68537/art-in-the-knowledge-based-polis/>> [accessed 24 June 2022]

Amelia Horgan, *Lost in Work: Escaping Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2021)

David Horsfield, 'Losing the Memory of Generations', *History Workshop Journal* website, 11 October 2012 <<https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/losing-the-memory/>> [accessed 18 May 2022]

Michael Hudson, *Super Imperialism: The Economic Strategy of American Empire* (New York: Holt, 1972, rev. 2003)

Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo, Ontario:

- Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981: rev. ed., 2013)
- Zakiyya Iman Jackson**, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiracist World* (New York: New York University Press, 2020)
- Sarah Jaffe**, *Work Won't Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2021)
- Joy James**, 'The Womb of Western Theory: Trauma, Time Theft, and the Captive Maternal,' *Carceral Notebooks* 12, 2016 (online) <http://www.thecarceral.org/cn12/14_Womb_of_Western_Theory.pdf> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- Joy James: Writings and Works (website), n.d. <<https://sites.williams.edu/jjames/>> [accessed 3 May 2022]
- Fredric Jameson**, 'Cognitive Mapping,' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1987)
- Derek Jarman**, *Modern Nature: Journals 1989-1990 (The Journals of Derek Jarman)* (London: Vintage, 2018 (1991))
- Martin Jay**, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 1993)
- Humphrey Jennings**, *Pandaemonium, 1660–1886: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers* (London: Welbeck Publishing Group, 1985)
- Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin** (eds.), *Futures of Black Radicalism* (London: Verso, 2017)
- Alison Kafer**, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013)
- Richard Kelly** (dir.), *Donnie Darko* (Flower Films), 2001
- Helena Kennedy**, 'Forum Internum,' podcast series (Political Space, Neuromania, Freedom of Thought), BBC Radio 3, March 2020 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000fq3z>> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- Grant H. Kester**, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011)
- Christina Kiaer**, *Imagine No Possessions* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005)
- Beeban Kidron** (dir.), *InRealLife* (Studio Lambert), 2013
- Ray Kiely**, *The Neoliberal Paradox* (London: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018)
- James King**, *The Cultural Construction of Cyberspace*, PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 2000
- Gal Kirn**, 'Eisenstein, Vertov and Medvedkin: revolutionary "cinematic" and communist subjectivity,' *KinoKultura*, no. 58, 2017 <<http://www.kinokultura.com/2017/58-kirn.shtml>>

[accessed 7 June 2022]

- Friedrich Kittler**, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992)
—— *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999)
- Naomi Klein**, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2007)
- Alexander Kluge** (dir.), *News from Ideological Antiquity: Marx – Eisenstein – Capital*, 2008
- Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt**, *History and Obstinacy*, trans. Richard Langston (Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books, 2014)
- Dimitra Kotouza**, *Surplus Citizens: Struggle and Nationalism in the Greek Crisis* (London: Pluto Press, 2019)
- Annette Kuhn**, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2002)
- Arun Kundnani**, ‘The racial constitution of neoliberalism,’ *Race & Class*, vol. 63(1), 2021
- Thomas Lamarre**, *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009)
- Carrie Lambert-Beatty**, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2008)
- Olivia Lang**, *Crudo* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2019)
- Maud Lavin**, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Hoch* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995)
- Anna Lawton**, ‘Rhythmic Montage in the Films of Dziga Vertov: A Poetic Use of the Language of Cinema,’ *Pacific Coast Philology*, vol. 13 (October 1978)
- Loretta Lees, Hyung Bang Shin and Ernesto López-Morales**, *Planetary Gentrification* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016)
- Vladimir Ilyich Lenin**, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1996)
- Ursula K. Le Guin**, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, with an introduction by Donna Haraway (London: Ignota Books, 2019)
- Esther Leslie**, *Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory and the Avant-garde* (London: Verso, 2002)
—— ‘Rediscovering Esfir Shub: The Compilation Film and the Art of the Editing Table,’ 25 March 2015 <<http://www.essayfilmfestival.com/session-four-wednesday-25-march-2015/>> [accessed 7 June 2022]
—— ‘Strawberries and Cream: On Esfir Shub and Lost, Found and Made Up Revolutionary Things,’ 2017 (Film Festival, Slovenska Kinoteka, Ljubljana, 25 October 2017)
- Deborah Levitt**, *The Animatic Apparatus: Animation, Vitality and the Futures of the Image* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2018)

- Helen Lewis**, *Dada Turns Red: Politics of Surrealism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990)
- Sophie Lewis**, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family* (London: Verso, 2019)
- Clarice Lispector**, *Água Viva*, trans. Stefan Tobler (London: Penguin, 2014)
- Patricia Lockwood**, *No One Is Talking About This* (London: Bloomsbury Circus, 2021)
- Jack London**, *The People of the Abyss* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903)
- Anthony Lowenstein**, *Disaster Capitalism: Making a Killing Out of a Catastrophe* (London: Verso, 2015)
- Lotte L. S.**, 'The We of a Position,' Poetry Foundation featured Blogger section (online), 6 May 2019 <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2019/05/the-we-of-a-position>> [accessed 20 May 2022]
- Rob Lucas**, 'The Critical Net Critic,' *New Left Review* No. 77, 2012.
- Ed Luker**, 'Exit Strategies: Danny Hayward's Pragmatic Sanction,' *Metamute* (online), 21 July 2016 m<<https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/exit-strategies-danny-hayward's-pragmatic-sanction-0>> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- Celia Lury, Luciana Parisi and Tiziana Terranova**, 'Introduction: The Becoming Topological of Culture,' *Theory, Culture & Society* 29 (4/5), 2012
- John MacKay**, *Dziga Vertov: Life and Work: Volume 1, 1896-1921* (Brighton, Massachusetts: Academic Studies Press, 2018)
- 'The "subjective" camera in Vertov's Lullaby (1937),' 2013 (unpublished but available at Academia.edu)
- Katy Macleod**, 'Art Project PhDs,' Cambridge School of Art Doctoral Research, Anglia Ruskin University, July 2016 <<https://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/id/eprint/36870/1/Macleod-K-36870-AAM.pdf>> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- Katy Macleod and Lin Holridge** (eds.), *Thinking Through Art: Reflections on Art as Research* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006)
- John Maggio and Martin Smith** (writers), *College, Inc.* (PBS 'Frontline'/Rain Media), 2010
- Peter Mandler**, *The Crisis of the Meritocracy: Britain's Transition to Mass Education Since the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)
- Charlie Mann**, 'Recorded Account of the Workers Theatre Movement, Film Section,' made available by MayDay Rooms <<https://soundcloud.com/maydayrooms/charles-mann>> [accessed 18 May 2022]
- Lev Manovich**, 'Database as a Symbolic Form' (1998) <<http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/database-as-a-symbolic-form>> [accessed 28 May 2022] and *Millennium Film Journal*, no. 75 (Fall 1999) <http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ34/Manovich_Database_

FrameSet.html> [accessed 7 June 2022]

— *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001)

Randy Martin, *Financialization of Daily Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002)

Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, introduction by Lucio Colletti (London: Penguin, 1992)

— *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001)

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998)

Vladimir Mayakovsky and El Lissitzky, *For the Voice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000)

Bernadette Mayer, *Midwinter Day* (New York: New Directions Books, 1999)

Carlos Maza, ‘How “Neutrality” Is Making Us Dumber’ | Carlos Maza | TEDxCUNY, 9 May 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OoaS-GdgPY&ab_channel=TEDxTalks>

[accessed 28 May 2022]

Achille Mbembe, ‘Necropolitics,’ trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15 (1) (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003)

Andrew McGettigan, *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education* (London: Pluto Press, 2013)

Linsey McGoey, *The Unknowers: How Strategic Ignorance Rules The World* (London: Zed Books, 2019)

Dan McQuillan, ‘Non-Fascist AI,’ in Maria Hlavajova and Wietske Maas (eds.), *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living: Tentative and Urgent* (Utrecht and Cambridge, Massachusetts: BAK Basis for Actuele Kunst and The MIT Press, 2019)

Eden Medina, *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende’s Chile* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014)

Doreen Mende, ‘The Code of Touch: Navigating Beyond Control, or Towards Scalability and Sociability,’ *e-flux*, issue 109 (May 2020) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/109/331193/the-code-of-touch-navigating-beyond-control-or-towards-scalability-and-sociability/>> [accessed 16 May 2022]

Doreen Mende and Tom Holert, ‘Navigation Beyond Vision: Issue One’ (Editorial), *e-flux*, issue 101 (June 2019) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/101/274019/editorial-navigation-beyond-vision-issue-one/>> [accessed 16 May 2022]

— ‘Navigation Beyond Vision: Issue Two’ (Editorial), *e-flux*, issue 109 (June 2020) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/109/331513/editorial-navigation-beyond-vision-issue-two/>> [accessed 16 May 2022]

Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilsen, *Border as Method, or the Multiplication of Labor*

(Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2013)

Annette Michelson, 'From Magician to Epistemologist: Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*,' *Artforum* 10, no. 7 (March 1972)

— 'From Magician to Epistemologist: Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*,' *October* 162 (Fall 2017)

Charles W. Mills, 'White Ignorance,' in Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (eds.), *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007)

— *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017)

Anna Minton, *Big Capital: Who Is London For?* (London: Penguin, 2017)

Philip Mirowski, *Machine Dreams: Economics Becomes a Cyborg Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

— 'The Political Movement That Dared Not Speak Its Own Name: The Neoliberal Thought Collective Under Erasure,' Working Paper No. 23, September 2014, Institute for New Economic Thinking <<https://www.ineteconomics.org/uploads/papers/WP23-Mirowski.pdf>> [accessed 9 March 2022]

Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (eds.), *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015)

Karen Mirza and Brad Butler (dirs.), *The Unreliable Narrator*, 2014 (online) <<https://mirza-butler.work/videos#4b8efae7-1811-4ca4-9e55-5e30f238c87a>> [accessed 30 May 2022]

Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011)

— *The Appearance of Black Lives Matter*, NAME Publications, 2018 (2017), <<https://namepublications.org/item/2018/the-appearance-of-black-lives-matter-hardcover/>> [accessed 7 June 2022]

W. J. T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011)

Angela Mitropoulos, 'Art of Life, Art of War: Movement, Un/Common Forms, and Infrastructure,' *e-flux*, issue 90 (April 2018, online) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/90/191676/art-of-life-art-of-war-movement-un-common-forms-and-infrastructure/>> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Hayao Miyazaki (dir.), *Spirited Away* (Studio Ghibli), 2001

Jason Moore and Raj Patel, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet* (London: Verso, 2018)

Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis:

University of Minnesota Press, 2003)

Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013)

Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Houndmills and London: Macmillan Academic and Professional, 1989)

— *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006)

Anna Munster, *Materializing New Media: Embodiment in Information Aesthetics* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2006)

Malgorzata Myk, 'Life Fictions: Radicalization of Life-Writing in Leslie Scalapino's *Zither and Autobiography* and *Dahlia's Iris: Secret Autobiography and Fiction*,' *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*, vol. 50, no. 2-3, 2016

— *Upping the Ante of the Real: Speculative Poetics of Leslie Scalapino* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019)

John Naughton, *A Brief History of the Future: The Origins of the Internet* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000)

Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2015)

— *Bluets* (Seattle: Wave Books, 2009)

Maggie Nelson and Hari Kunzru, 'Maggie Nelson & Hari Kunzru discuss Nelson's "On Freedom"', 10 September 2021, Hammer Museum (online), YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqgJz1_Q3Gg> [accessed 27 June, 2022]

Mark Neocleous, 'Resisting Resilience,' *Radical Philosophy*, no. 178 (March/April 2013) <<https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/resisting-resilience>> [accessed 10 March 2022]

Bea Nettles, *Mountain Dream Tarot* (2nd, 3rd and Commemorative editions) <<https://beanettles.com/>> [accessed 27 May 2022]

Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011)

Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018)

Danny Nobus and Malcolm Quinn, *Knowing Nothing, Staying Stupid: Elements for a Psychoanalytic Epistemology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005)

Benjamin Noys, *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism and Capitalism* (London: Zero Books, 2014)

Kevin Ochieng Okoth, 'Decolonisation and Its Discontents: Rethinking the Cycle of National Liberation,' *Salvage*, no. 10: *The Disorder of the Future* (Spring/Summer 2021) <<https://salvage.zone/decolonisation-and-its-discontents-rethinking-the-cycle-of-national->

liberation/> [accessed 23 March 2022]

Lola Olufemi, *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power* (London: Pluto Press, 2020)

Cathy O’Neill, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy* (London: Penguin, 2017)

Peter Osborne, *Anywhere Or Not At All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013)

Trevor Paglen, in Jörg Heiser, ‘Safety in Numbers,’ *frieze*, issue 161, March 2014 (online) <<https://www.frieze.com/article/safety-numbers>> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Katrina Palmer, *Reality Flickers: Writing With Found Objects And Imagined Sculpture*, Royal College of Art, 2011 (unpublished thesis)

Hartwig Pautz, ‘The Think Tanks Behind “Cameronism,”’ *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 15, 2013

Karen Pearlman, John MacKay and John Sutton, ‘Creative Editing: Svilova and Vertov’s Distributed Cognition,’ *Women at the Editing Table: Revising Soviet Film History of the 1920s and 1930s* (ed. by Adelheid Heftberger and Karen Pearlman), special issue of *Apparatus: Film, Media and Digital Cultures in Central and Eastern Europe*, no. 6., 2018

Raoul Peck (dir.), *Murder in Pacot* (Velvet Films), 2014

— *Fatal Assistance* (Velvet Films), 2014

Corey Pein, ‘Mouthbreathing Machiavellis Dream of a Silicon Reich,’ *The Baffler*, 19 May 2014 <<https://thebaffler.com/latest/mouthbreathing-machiavellis>> [accessed 17 April 2022]

Max Pensky, ‘Method and Time: Benjamin’s Dialectical Images,’ in David Ferris (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Holly Pester, ‘The Politics of Delivery (Against Poet-Voice),’ *The Poetry Review*, 109:2 (Summer 2019) <<https://poetrysociety.org.uk/the-politics-of-delivery-against-poet-voice/>> [accessed 18 May 2022]

Vlada Petrić, *Constructivism in Film: Man with a Movie Camera, a Cinematic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Patrice Petro (ed.), *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video* (London: John Wiley & Sons, 1995)

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018)

Dieter Plehwe, Quinn Slobodian and Philip Mirowski, *The Nine Lives of Neoliberalism* (London: Verso, 2020)

Gill Plimmer, ‘Companies emerge from ashes of Cameron’s “bonfire of the quangos,”’ *Financial Times*, 11 December 2015 <<https://www.ft.com/content/c496d580-a012-11e5->

beba-5e33e2b79e46> [accessed 10 March 2022]

Nina Power, 'The Pessimism of Time' (online version), *Overland* 209 (Summer 2012) <<https://overland.org.au/previous-issues/issue-209/feature-nina-power/>> [accessed 20 May 2022]

— 'Time does not always heal: state violence and psychic damage,' *openDemocracy* (online), 28 April 2014 <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/nina-power/time-does-not-always-heal-state-violence-and-psychic-damage>> [accessed 29 May 2022]

Beatriz Preciado, *Testo-Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (New York City: The Feminist Press, 2013)

Elizabeth Price, *sidekick*, PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2000

Robert N. Proctor and Londa Schiebinger (eds.), *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008)

Malcolm Quinn, *Utilitarianism and the Art School in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016)

Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 1992)

Adam Ramsay and Peter Geoghegan, 'Revealed: How the UK's powerful right-wing think tanks and Conservative MPs work together,' *openDemocracy*, 31 July 2018 <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/revealed-how-uk-s-powerful-right-wing-think-tanks-and-conse/>> [accessed 10 March 2022]

Rahul Rao, *Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999)

Katherine M. H. Reischl, 'In the Soviet School of Photography: Lessons in Photographic Literacy,' *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 3, Cycle 3 (5 October 2018) <<https://modernismmodernity.org/articles/soviet-school-photography>> [accessed 27 June 2022]

Jon Rich, 'The Blood of the Victim: Revolution in Syria and the Birth of the Image-Event,' *e-flux* 26 (June 2011) <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-blood-of-the-victim-revolution-in-syria-and-the-birth-of-the-image-event/>> [Accessed 30 May 2022]

David Riff, 'Was Marx a Dancer?,' *e-flux* 67 (November 2015) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/67/60712/was-marx-a-dancer/>> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1991)

Jordana Rosenberg, 'The Molecularization of Sexuality: On Some Primitivisms of the

- Present,' *Theory & Event*, vol. 17, issue 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014)
- Kristin Ross**, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002)
- Eivind Røssaak** (ed.), *The Archive in Motion: New Conceptions of the Archive in Contemporary Thought and New Media Practices* (Oslo: Novus Press, 2010)
- — *Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011)
- Daniel Rubinstein and Katrina Sluis**, 'A LIFE MORE PHOTOGRAPHIC: Mapping the Networked Image,' *Photographies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (March 2008)
- Antoinette Rouvroy**, 'Algorithmic Governmentality and the End(s) of Critique,' presentation at 'Society of the Query #2,' Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, 8 November 2013 <<http://networkcultures.org/query/2013/11/13/algorithmic-governmentality-and-the-ends-of-critique-antoinette-rouvroy/>> [accessed 7 June 2022]
- Legacy Russell**, *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (London: Verso, 2020)
- Róisín Ryan-Flood and Rosalind Gill** (eds.), *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010)
- Elizabeth Sandifer**, *Neoreaction: A Basilisk: Essays On and Around the Alt-Right* (Eruditorum Press, 2017)
- Michael J. Sandel**, *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* (London: Allen Lane, 2021)
- Londa Schiebinger**, *Secret Cures of Slaves: People, Plants and Medicine in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017)
- Robert Scholes**, *The Fabulators* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967)
- — *Structural Fabulation: An Essay on Fiction of the Future* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975)
- — *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1979)
- David Scott**, 'The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter,' *Small Axe* 8 (September 2000)
- Lynne Segal**, *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy* (London: Verso, 2018)
- Richard Seymour**, *Corbyn* (London: Verso, 2017)
- — *The Twittering Machine: How Capitalism Stole Our Social Life* (London: The Indigo Press, 2019)
- Shreerekha**, 'In the Wake of His Damage,' *The Rumpus* (online), 12 May 2018, <<https://therumpus.net/2018/05/12/in-the-wake-of-his-damage/>> [accessed 27 June 2022]
- Viktor Shklovsky**, 'Where Is Dziga Vertov Striding?' (1926), in Yuri Tsivian (ed.), *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press,

2004)

Vanessa Sinclair, *Scansion in Psychoanalysis and Art: The Cut in Creation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021)

Ben Singer, 'Connoisseurs of Chaos: Whitman, Vertov and the "Poetic Survey,"' *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4 (1987)

Charan Singh, *Going Sideways: The Poetics of Becoming-Queer in India*, PhD thesis, Royal College of Art, 2022

Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018)

Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Penguin, 2010); originally published in 1759 by Andrew Miller (London) and Alexander Kincaid (Edinburgh)

— *The Wealth of Nations: Books I-III* (London: Penguin, 1982) and *The Wealth of Nations: Books IV-V* (London: Penguin, 1999); entire work originally published in 1776 as *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* by W. Strachan and T. Cadell (London)

Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, trans. Harry Willetts and Thomas P. Whitney (London: Vintage, 1985); originally published 1973, 1974

Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015)

— *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)* (London: Pluto Press, 2020)

Juliana Spahr, *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2005)

Daniel Spaulding, 'Inside Out,' *Metamute* (online), 20 October 2015 <<https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/inside-out-0>> [accessed 23 March 2022]

Jo Spence, *Cultural Sniping: The Art of Transgression* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996)

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

Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* (New York: Random House, 2018)

Paul Starr, 'How Neoliberal Policy Shaped the Internet and What to Do About It Now,' *The American Prospect* (October 2019) <<https://prospect.org/power/how-neoliberal-policy-shaped-internet-surveillance-monopoly/>> [accessed 10 March 2022]

Hito Steyerl, 'Freedom from Everything: Freelancers and Mercenaries,' *e-flux*, issue 41, January 2013 (online) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/41/60229/freedom-from-everything-freelancers-and-mercenaries/>> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford: Stanford

- University Press, 1998)
- — *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011)
- — ‘What About an Art of Hyper-Control?’ conference presentation at ‘Headstone to Hard Drive, Monument to Folly 2,’ Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London, 7 February 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LumOebi8orA&ab_channel=MartinWestwood> (online documentation by M. Westwood) [accessed 7 June 2022]
- Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette**, *Collectivism After Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination After 1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007)
- Richard Stites**, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)
- Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana** (eds.), *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007)
- Peter Szendy**, *Of Stigmatology: Punctuation as Experience*, trans. Jan Plug (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018)
- Marcello Tari**, *There Is No Unhappy Revolution* (New York: Common Notions, 2021)
- Diana Taylor**, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007 (2003))
- Ana Teixeira Pinto**, ‘Capitalism with a Transhuman Face’: The Afterlife of Fascism and the Digital Frontier,’ *Third Text*, vol. 33, issue 3 (2019)
- Tiziana Terranova**, ‘Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy,’ *Social Text* 63, vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer 2000)
- Tiziana Terranova and Marc Bousquet**, ‘Recomposing the University,’ *Mute*, vol. 1, no. 28, Summer/Autumn 2004
- Sarah Thelwall**, *Size Matters* (London: Common Practice, 2011)
- Nicholas Thoburn**, ‘Ceci n’est pas un magazine: The politics of hybrid media in *Mute* magazine,’ *New Media & Society* 14, no. 5 (2012)
- E. P. Thompson**, *Warwick University Ltd.: Industry, Management and the Universities* (Nottingham: Spokesman Books, 2013)
- Nanna Bonde Thylstrup**, *The Politics of Mass Digitization* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2019)
- Tiqqun**, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, trans. Ariana Reines (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2012)
- David Tomas**, *Vertov, Snow, Farocki: Machine Vision and the Posthuman* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)
- Jaroslava Tomanova** (ed.), ‘Movement’ reader, e-flux.com <<https://www.e-flux.com/>

readers/328085/movement> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Dayna Tortorici, 'My Instagram', *n+1*, Issue 36: Get Help, Winter 2020

Alberto Toscano, 'Seeing It Whole: Staging Totality in Social Theory and Art,' *The Sociological Review*, 60 S1 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2012)

Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle, *Cartographies of the Absolute* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2015)

Robert Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* (London: Penguin, 2004)

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, with an introduction by Hazel V. Carby (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2004 (1995))

Yuri Tsivian (ed.), *Lines of Resistance: Dziga Vertov and the Twenties* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004)

— — 'Turning Objects, Toppled Pictures: Give and Take between Vertov's Films and Constructivist Art,' *October* 121 (Summer, 2007)

Malcolm Turvey, 'Can The Camera See?: Mimesis in "Man with a Movie Camera,"' *October*, vol. 89 (Summer 1999)

— — *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Rebecca Uliasz, 'Seeing Like an Algorithm: Operative Images and Emergent Subjects,' *AI & Society*, (London: Springer Verlag), 16 September 2020

Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Googlization of Everything (and Why We Should Worry)* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2011)

Pasi Väliäho, *Mapping the Moving Image: Gesture, Thought and Cinema circa 1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010)

— — *Biopolitical Screens: Image, Power, and the Neoliberal Brain* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014)

Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (London: Penguin, 2015)

Pauline van Mourik Broekman, 'Mute's 100% Cut By ACE: A Personal Consideration of Mute's Defunding,' by Co-Founder Pauline van Mourik Broekman,' 1 April 2011, *Metamute* (online) <<https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/mutes-100-cut-ace-personal-consideration-mutes-defunding-co-founder-pauline-van-mourik-broekman>> [accessed 27 June, 2022]

Pauline van Mourik Broekman and Josephine Berry Slater (eds.), *Proud to Be Flesh: A Mute Magazine Anthology of Cultural Politics After the Net* (London and New York: Mute Publishing and Autonomedia, 2009)

Willem Velthoven (ed.), *Mediamatic*, 'Storage mania' issue, vol. 8, issue 1, 1994

- Dziga Vertov and Kevin O'Brien**, 'The Factory of Facts and Other Writings,' *October*, vol. 7 (Soviet Revolutionary Culture: Winter 1978)
- Dziga Vertov and Annette Michelson** (ed.), *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, trans. Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1984)
- Dziga Vertov** (dir.), *Man with a Movie Camera* (VUFKU), 1929
- Dziga Vertov** (dir.) and Yuri Tsivian (intr.), *Man with a Movie Camera* (DVD), BFI, 2000
- Vertov, Dziga** (dir.), *Enthusiasm* (Ukrainfilm), 1931
- Paolo Virno** (ed.) and Ed Emory (trans.), 'Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus,' in Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996)
- Paolo Virno**, 'About Exodus,' trans. Alessia Ricciardi, *Grey Room*, no. 21, 2020
- Marina Vishmidt**, 'Creation Myth,' *Metamute* (online), 28 July 2010 <<https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/creation-myth>> [accessed 23 March 2022]
- 'Bodies in Space: On the Ends of Vulnerability,' *Radical Philosophy* 2.08 (Autumn 2020) <<https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/bodies-in-space>> [accessed 7 June 2022]
- Lise Vogel**, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a United Theory* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014)
- Harsha Walia**, *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism and the Rise of Racist Nationalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021)
- David Wallace-Wells**, 'The Uninhabitable Earth,' *New York Magazine*, 10 July 2017 (online) <<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html>> [accessed 23 March 2022]
- *The Uninhabitable Earth* (London: Penguin, 2019)
- Jackie Wang**, 'Oceanic Feeling and Communist Affect,' Giuliana Tofana the Apocathery / loneberry blog, 3 December 2016 <<https://loneberry.tumblr.com/post/153995404787/oceanic-feeling-and-communist-affect>> [accessed 27 June, 2022]
- *Carceral Capitalism* (South Pasadena, California: Semiotext(e), 2018)
- Dan Ward**, 'The Politics of Production' (London: City Projects, 2019)
- Wealth of Negations**, *Welfare Edition* (London: Wealth of Negations, 2012) <<http://www.wealthofnegations.org>> [accessed 17 April 2022]
- *Management Edition* (London: Wealth of Negations, 2013) <<http://www.wealthofnegations.org>> [accessed 17 April 2022]
- Kathi Weeks**, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011)
- *Constituting Feminist Subjects (Feminist Classics)* (London: Verso, 2018)
- Emma Widdis**, *Socialist Senses: Film, Feeling and the Soviet Subject, 1917-40* (Bloomington:

Indiana University Press, 2017)

Robyn Wiegman, 'Introduction: Autotheory Theory,' *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory*, vol. 76, no. 1, Spring 2020

Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (Boston, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 1988)

Josefine Wikström, 'Practice in/as Contemporary Art vs. Practice in Practice-Based PhDs' in *The Commons / Undercommons in Art, Education, Work... Journal for Performing Arts Theory* *TkH* no. 23 April 2016, available online at <https://www.academia.edu/36529501/Commons_Undercommons_In_Art_Education_and_Work> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)

Gabriel Winant, *The Next Shift: The Fall of Industry and the Rise of Health Care in Rust Belt America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021)

Adrian Wohlleben, 'Memes Without End,' *Ill Will* (online), 17 May 2021 <<https://illwill.com/memes-without-end>> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Sylvia Wynter, 'The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition,' in Jason R. Ambrose and Sabine Broeck (eds.), *Black Knowledges, Black Struggles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015)

—— 'Beyond Liberal and Marxist Leninist Feminisms: Towards an Autonomous Frame of Reference,' *The CLR James Journal*, vol. 24, issue 1/2 (Fall 2018) (1982) – a paper prepared for the session 'Feminist Theory at the Crossroads,' held on the occasion of the Annual Conference of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, September 1982 (online) <<https://trueleappress.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/wynter-beyond-liberal-and-marxist-leninist-feminism-toward-an-autonomous-frame-of-reference-1.pdf>> and https://monoskop.org/images/6/62/Wynter_Sylvia_Beyond_Liberal_and_Marxist_Leninist_Feminisms_Towards_an_Autonomous_Frame_of_Reference_1982.pdf [accessed 7 June 2022])

Hamed Yousefi and David Hodge with Callanan Brouillette, John Martin, Tom Eyers and Alberto Toscano, 'Paranoid Subjectivity and the Challenges of Cognitive Mapping – How Is Capitalism to Be Represented?,' *e-flux Conversations*, 9 March 2015 <<http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/paranoid-subjectivity-and-the-challenges-of-cognitive-mapping-how-is-capitalism-to-be-represented/1080>> [accessed 7 June 2022]

Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (London: Profile Books, 2019)

Appendix



