

**The River of the Mother of God:
Notes on Indeterminacy, v. 2**

**Excerpts from a work-in-progress
Harry Dodge**

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Harry Dodge

June 2014

(Dear Reader, the following are decontextualized paragraphs, nodes. Many, but not all, are just transferred here from notebooks, thoughts in mid-stream—you know, provisional. And since these very concepts are the animating themes of the work, I here present them to you as an experiment in sociality, thinking together and love.)

625.

I was talking to a mathematician friend the other day, he said, “You know who Niels Bohr is?”

“Yes.” I said, “Famous physicist from Denmark, made important discoveries about atomic structure and quantum mechanics, Nobel Prize 1922?”

“Correct,” he said, “Ok, I want to tell you a story about him I just heard.”

“Awesome.”

“Apparently he used to keep a horseshoe over the door of his office. This guy walked in one day, and

noticed it. He was confused and asked Bohr, “Was that always there?” Bohr says, “Yes, for the last 9 years or so. It’s good luck.” The guy says, “You don’t really believe in that do you?” Bohr says, “No. But I’ve heard it works whether you believe in it or not.”

174.

It is that low, janky California architecture but smashed onto rural-suburban Illinois. The building sprawls. Each classroom has one wall comprised wholly of windows which, if you press really hard, open on a tilt. Out, like gills. There are no hallways. The classrooms are thus contiguous and the overall impression is panoramic, like foothills or a wall of sleeping geometric dragons.

I am in fourth grade and pride myself on my appearance, which is subsidized, mercifully by a mother who buys me “Garanimals” from the Korvettes whenever opportunity collides with inclination. My Dad complains but my Mom is generous. As far as clothing goes, my shit is tight and I know it. Mrs. Wilson wears turtleneck sweaters, mostly red, sometimes black, and has big, impossibly round boobs. I think of them as friendly, as friends. They are mirthful, surely soft, water-balloons the size of a naval orange in season. Medium-flat brown hair curls back from her handsome face, which not coincidentally also reminds me of Anita Bryant. One of the preeminent spokespeople for citrus in the seventies. I have trouble paying attention in class, slip away, slip away. She yells at me, threatens to make things more difficult than they already are.

175.

My name on the intercom. I head to the office, am suddenly out of doors. High-pitched and squeaking, cardinals scoff at catbirds. *Beew, brip, brip, brip, brip, brip, brip.* They are unmoved by my tomboy hubris. I walk around puddles preserving for a few more hours the illusion that my tennis shoes have been purchased on the way to school. Thuggish double doors. The large foyer which precedes the principal’s office on this day hosts every single one of the “runners up” crayon and marker posters from the county contest. Corncobs feature consistently, some of them have faces, most have tongues and are missing teeth. One is vomiting bumblebees. They’re everywhere, scattered, profuse. So many that in one section they form an inverted cone shape way up the wall. A corncob tornado. From behind a high wooden counter, two adults in dark clothing emerge. The principal introduces them. Gaudendi and Cox. They’re formal in every way. The lady, out of hair, has fashioned an impossibly neat enterolith at the back of her neck and her eyeglasses are so big the temple stems meet the rim at the *bottom*. I make a note of this and find that I have now inadvertently generated a mental image of my corpulent and bearded Polish neighbor hoisting first a box of apples and then logs. He holds them from the bottom. Fat fingers white with pressure.

“We’re going to ask you some questions.” The man’s hair is purple-black and he has a horizontal mantle of dandruff attached to each of his ample eyebrows. I want eyebrows like that. Big prosthetic antennae. Now they move me into a side room full of supplies. I notice an

entire shelf devoted solely to paper products. Another to pens, pencils, erasers, chalk. The smell of mimeograph liquid is the color of purple.

“This is a closet.” I say to the lady, hoping to sound impudent.

“We’re going to ask you some questions.”

“You already said that.”

“Just do your best.”

They place me in the center of the room, standing, and then move off to the side.

The man speaks first, “This is North.” He points to where I’m already looking, the direction I am facing. “That is East, that is South, that is West.” He and the lady point in unison, name the walls. I enjoy the choreography and they are henceforth endeared to me.

Big inverted eyeglasses lady speaks, “You may close your eyes for this, but don’t move your feet at all.” I put on some chapstick. “Ok let’s begin. Dan, what do we have down for the first question?” He’s struggling to quash an itch in his left ear, suddenly *wak-wak-wak-wak-wak-wak*, moving like a chipmunk or a puppy.

“Let’s do this thing Dan.” She doesn’t let up. If you’re Dan, she is a stern taskmaster. He manages, ruefully, to part finger from ear. His eyes find mine, and then he looks down and begins to read.

“If you’re facing West and do a three-quarter turn to the right, followed by a one-quarter turn to the right, followed by a full-turn to the right, followed by a half-turn to the left, followed by a three-quarter turn to the right, followed by a half-turn to the left, followed by a quarter-turn to the right, followed by a full turn to

the left, followed by a three-quarter turn to the right, followed by a quarter turn to the right, followed by a half-turn to the left, followed by a three-quarter turn to the right, followed by a full turn to the left, followed by a half-turn to the right, followed by a quarter-turn to the right, followed by a three-quarter turn to the left, which way are you facing now?”

“West.” They look at each other. Dan raises an eyebrow and looks at me again.

“Here’s a pencil. Use this pad. Write down as many words as you can from the letters in the word, *serve*.” I sit and over the course of a couple of minutes write *verse*, *sever*, and *veers*.

“That’s all I can think of.” I push the paper away.

“That’s all there is.” Her voice is soft and bright. I’ve impressed her. She likes me. Her teeth are white. This is a gameshow I can win.

9.

Let’s start again here but with the briefest primer on the initialism, P.O.V. It means point of view, in the language of film or narrative more generally. And suggests a view from a single point. Stable, and incidentally, one-eyed.

78.

Gertrude Stein, an American experimental writer (1874–1946), eschewed the narrative, linear, and temporal conventions of 19th-century literature. In describing why and how she created what she called *portraits* of people she loved and respected (these were word portraits, by the way) Stein said, among other things, “I must

find out what is moving inside them that makes them them, and I must find out how I by the thing moving excitedly inside me can make a portrait of them.” She was interested in movement.

14.

In a short essay called *In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective*, Hito Steyerl suggests the idea of “free-falling” to describe a particularly contemporary dysphoria. Opening with a bit of information about the sextant (which uses the horizon line as the marker by which orientation is constructed) she chronicles a skeletal, not wholly idiosyncratic history of visual modalities including, single-point perspective, cubism, experiments in abstraction, collage, followed by photographic and filmic technologies such as superimposition, montage, green screen, overlapping computer frames and multiple screen projections. These artistic innovations are followed by radical intellectual leaps in theoretical physics and then myriad forces of industry brought to bear on our perception: the conveyor belt, warfare, advertising.¹ The preponderance of aviation in turn expands possibilities for collisions and nose-diving, and the age of space exploration breeds hundreds of camera-cum-satellites. We’ve now been thoroughly inundated with “aerial views issuing from the military-entertainment complex.”

Steyerl suggests that this shift to what she calls vertical perspective—a looking down on earth, or yourself, or the “ground,” this gaze situated on the “y-axis”—might be a radical one. Not only because it transfers the locus of an internal, embodied point-of-view to a vantage that is

external, as she says, “a subject safely folded into surveillance technology...a disembodied and remote-controlled gaze,” but because this new mental orientation also generates a new kind of subject, one that is floating, looking down at a multiple, fragmented, collaged imaginary “ground.” She suggests that, “the horizons have, in fact, been shattered. Time is out joint and we no longer know whether we are objects or subjects as we spiral down in an imperceptible free fall.” Of course, this type of extreme loss of orientation (especially in the context of a kind of throbbing, gigantic effluvium of fragmented hyper-realism and purely visual, severally displaced story-apparati) indicates a new kind of looker, one that is somehow multiple, many, a creature-becoming or perhaps a kind of flayed, woven desideratum, “created and recreated by ever-new articulations of the crowd.”

Ok, great, interesting. She ends the essay suddenly, but before she does, she throws out some other ways we might valence an experience of falling-floating-multiplicity. Rather than a headlong pitch into the void, she proposes we think of it as fundamentally liberatory, “a new representational freedom.” She questions the spinning core of her critique, which is the assumption that “we need a ground in the first place” and touches upon Adorno’s writing on the vertiginous. Apparently he belittled philosophers who fixated on ideas concerning “earth and origin” (I think correctly) laying bare the “philosophy of belonging” immanent in these sorts of exhortations. You know, the idea, that the “ground” was by definition “a safe haven of being.” She summarizes his proposal thusly: “A fall toward objects without

reservation, embracing a world of forces and matter, which lacks any original stability and sparks the sudden shock of the open, is a freedom that is terrifying, utterly deterritorializing, and always already unknown.”

What is vertical time? What is vertical memory? And what is vertical experience? Additionally I’m wondering how the structure of an indeterminacy that is falling without end, might dialogue with other concepts of motion, continuity, indeterminacy, provisionality, and specificity that I’ve been studying. And perhaps primarily here, and I really like this question, do we need a ground? What senses of the word ground are metaphorical? And in contrast to what Steyerl is introducing here, could it be that mass quantification and surveillance is actually creating too much “ground?” Is this free-fall that Steyerl describes actually due, not to a new, aerial, remote vantage, but to a keenly felt but ultimately hollow sense of “being oriented?” It’s possible with all of the apps, devices and cameras that we’ve become used to the idea that we do, in fact, know where we are. And while the surface of the earth provides much in the way of information there are certain where-type questions that remain, blessedly, unanswerable.

5.

In a book recently published in America called *Testo-Junkie*,² scholar and philosopher Beatriz Preciado relocates this discussion of groundlessness from visuality to corporeality. She theorizes that we’re entering what she calls a “pharmacapornographic era” marked not only by a flood of pornography, but by a late capitalism

which—via high-tech pharmacology such as Prozac, Viagra and the pill—is now creating exactly the consumers that best serve it. Starkly, Preciado suggests that the corporate crucible employs, not just conventional advertising but morphological alchemy and on a molecular level. They’re not just sculpting desire via bus-stop ads and TV jingles anymore, in other words, they’re hitting us physically, on the most exiguous plane (broadly speaking, with pharmaceuticals and porn), causing clear and certain chemical baths that in turn create fairly narrow sets of desires. Products glistening with the promise of gratification are offered for sale by these very same corporations. Preciado proposes that “the raw materials of today’s production process are excitation, erection, ejaculation, pleasure and feelings of satisfaction... the real stake of capitalism today is the pharmacopornographic control of subjectivity, whose products are serotonin, techno-blood and blood products, testosterone, antacids, cortisone, techno-sperm, antibiotics, Viagra...” In this matrix, sex, along with the “dependent and sexual body and all its semitechnical derivations, are henceforth the principal resource of post-Fordist capitalism.”

The global economy over the last two hundred years, Preciado argues, is marked by the hegemony of industry, no matter that, quantitatively speaking, industrial output remains minor when compared to, say, food production over the same era. “It was hegemonic by virtue of the powers of transformation it exerted over any other form of production.” She asserts that pharmaco-pornographic production today functions analogously, emerging as characteristic of a new age of political world economy

not by its quantitative supremacy, but because it has become the template for most other forms of capitalist production and marketing, including big agriculture and tech. Compare Amazon's 'suggested products' algorithm or its one-click check out to the interface on any free porn url. According to Preciado, everyone is taking their cues from these burgeoning industries.

Echoing ever-more common radical critiques of our changing psycho-physiological landscapes, Preciado describes the pharmacopornographic industry as "defining a specific mode of production and consumption, a masturbatory temporization of life, a virtual and hallucinogenic aesthetic of the living object, an architecture that transforms inner space into exteriority and the city into interiority and 'junkspace' by means of mechanisms of immediate auto-surveillance...a continuous mode of desiring and resisting, of consuming and destroying, of evolution and self-destruction." But at some point Preciado returns to a discussion of bodies, actual flesh (and the electric physiological desires therein) as deeply, startlingly *mutable*.

She holds that "the living pansexual body is the bioport of the orgasmic force." Now what does she mean by the living pansexual body? I think here the reference is to bodies (and sexual attraction to other bodies) that fall out of the gender binary. Preciado is frantically rendering from language, a profound, multivalent, fluidity of flesh. But one that is acquiescing, conjoining, becoming interfused with vexing, hi-tech contrivances, in this case (among other things) pharmaceutical testosterone. "The living pansexual body is the bioport of the orgasmic

force. Thus, it cannot be reduced to a prediscursive organism; its limits do not coincide with the skin capsule that surrounds it. This life cannot be understood as a biological given; it does not exist outside the interlacing of production and culture that belongs to technoscience, this body is technoliving, multiconnected entity incorporating technology." What of this chemical dependence, a deliquescence which breeds and bears a particular emancipatory malleability? At its extreme what can it say to sexism? What can it mean for feminism?

45.

Gertrude Stein had much to say about being an artist, including, "This as I say has been the great problem of our generation, so much happens and anybody at any moment knows everything that is happening that things happening although interesting are not really exciting. And an artist inevitably has to do what is really exciting. That is what he is inside him, that is what an artist really is inside him, he is exciting, and if he is not there is nothing to any of it."³

Stein was involved in a life-long project of the continual present. She experimented with presence, via the implementation of an extreme writing practice, concerned with what we might now call flux, becoming, movement. She pushed at the English language, wondering what could be done without nouns for example. She loved verbs and adverbs, prepositions. To read Stein is to lose thoughts almost as quickly as they form, a kind of involution or Klein bottle of the mind. What was this experience then, if the meaning built and sunk at once?

She insisted we shift the scale and locus of our attention. When we read Stein, we are attentive to the sentence at hand, and only that, but also aware of a sort of assertive liberatory matrix, a fluidity legible only by virtue of our adjusting habits and apertures to make it so. We synopate and reboot, become aware of duration without making a *permanent architecture* for it. That thing we do, you know, that keeps *now* away from *later*. Stein's project was about interstices, or duration, lines of flight as Deleuze called them. Temporary, autonomous zones, but in motion. Temporary autonomous journeys. A project that in its attention to detail suggests not a structure, but *like* a structure, a strategy, a behavior, a looseness that can come when you smash specificity into transformation, or motion.

56.

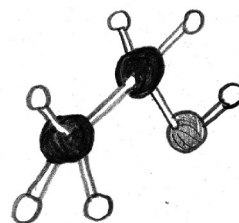
In a 1993 essay titled *Stein is Nice*,⁴ Wayne Koestenbaum introduces or re-introduces us to Gertrude Stein by describing, even laying bare but most certainly, re-valuing some of the most cited, most disdained features of her writing. His essay contradicts itself, or seems to, and it's these apparently paradoxical assertions that interest me the most. At one point he says, "Stein writes against maturity, against development. She rests—naps, dreams—by enjoying the arrested state of going nowhere...Stein shut her eyes and travelled where the sentences led her, and didn't describe the destination but rendered instead the systematic movement of sentences toward the unspecified. Although her writing is often non-referential, it always refers to the migration of

thought, the free-floating movement of a mind at peace with its own fatness."

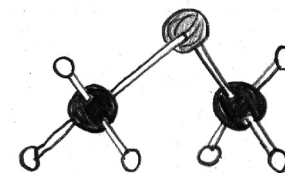
Is she going nowhere or is she going somewhere that is *not yet legible* as a "destination," that, perhaps, has its own momentum, and is, in fact, moving. *Nowhere* is not the same as *nowhere I recognize*. Or *nowhere I can put my finger on at the moment*. And it is most definitely not the same thing as *nowhere I can reach*.

33.

Via email, in the middle of a very literary courtship, I asked my new inamorata, "Do you think that *what* is made from *where*?" I asked because I had earnestly been wondering whether location was more fundamental than substance. I wondered if location itself, (by dint of, say, of atomic arrangement) would *determine* substance. That where would *make* what. She said she didn't know what I was asking and that I would have to focus my question if I were to expect a response. (But I knew she was hot for me.) Here is an instance of where making what.



ETHANOL



DIMETHYL ETHER

I also meant that we make ourselves in relation. Where are you. Who do you run into. We find our densities, desires, intensities in relation. I think Deleuze put it most succinctly in his book called *The Fold*, “Collisions explain everything.”⁵ In a dark room, we reach out for the walls. It’s in our nature I suppose. Total blackout, barring all datum, all sensory input, our minds begin to collapse a bit. A kind of throbbing followed by a withering or a sad sponginess. You probably know that that strongest of dysphorias, that type of sensory deprivation or overload is the first step in a system of brainwashing or mind-training. Those that would seek “power-over,” first obliterate from an individual any sense of relation or orientation.

I’m always listening closely when people speak about dysphoria or a complete loss of groundedness, because at the extreme these are states in which humans are flowing, open, delightfully vulnerable, depending on the specificities of the impending relation, contingencies. I mean, you found a way out of narrative, what’s the first thing you saw when you landed? It looks pretty special. I’ll buy that whole load of shit.

895.

Stein was concerned with the mercurial quality of words as pointers. She wrote, “Categories that once to some one had real meaning can later to that same one be all empty. It is queer that words that meant something in our thinking and our feeling can later come to have in them in us not at all any meaning.” Koestenbaum connects this to a contemporary usage of the word queer.

He says that for Stein “...it doesn’t matter what category the word or the person had been inhabiting; what counts is the experience of slipping away from past definitional fixity.” He reminds us that this is what everybody’s language does, but insists that for Stein the writing process “itself was marked by this queerness, an uncertainty of position inspired not only by language’s eerie liquidity, but by the social ostracism that comes from a lifelong practice of odd utterance.”

Every time I read that last sentence I notice that Koestenbaum assigns the eerie liquidity to language (as well as to Stein’s process). I agree, language is cock-eyed, far-fetched; it *flows* and overflows, right? By turns, moiling, or even this: its placidity is disturbable, fleeting, or simply poised. I keep mulling here, how to talk about flesh in just that way. I was at a lecture-conversation last night in which philosopher/theorist Fred Moten (whose chief interests include non-hierarchical, generative versions of fluidity and sociality) discussed details from the history of (the philosophy of) aesthetics, specifically Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. (Kant had written about the processual character of those “capable of genius.”) Apparently, in German, the word for imagination is *einbildung*, which translates as power/building/one, and suggests a discrete self—you know, doing some serious creative work, genius-style, a self-possessed subject. In the Kant, this was posed as in contrast to the notion of Phantasie (a different word for imagination, a different *kind* of imagination) which implies a multiple, differentiated creative source, a subjectivity or self that Moten theorized as “dis-composed,” social, intersubjective. Not

the kind of subject that Kant considered to be of import.

In the book he wrote with Stefano Harney, called *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*,⁶ Moten describes the collaborative work in terms of “the ongoing process of talking with somebody else and the ideas that emerge...there are five or six people that I’m always thinking with...and the ideas that stick in my head are usually the things that somebody else said.” Last night he raised the possibilities of “consenting not to be a single being, consenting to phantasie,” and went on to suggest that disavowing versions of “self-composure,” is a kind of transgressive resistance. In Harney and Moten’s idea of *the undercommons*, we exceed our skins, feel through others. We are irremediably social, loving, profuse, unruly, irrational, contaminated, on the move.

765.

Poet Anthony McCann mentioned to me, briefly one day, that certain Medieval philosophers assumed that after we walked away from something, a castle say, or a cloud, that our imaging of it later, our memory of it, was actually *comprised* by little tiny particulate bits of the thing that had entered *into* our brains through our eyeballs. Phantasm they called it. Or Phantazm. Little almost-rubbery ghosts. Twain flesh and image.

211.

A related apparitional (or otherwise hybrid) figure, or phantom appears in an unfinished book, from the middle of this century known as, *The Visible and The*

Invisible. Maurice Merleau-Ponty theorized the body as the primary site of knowing the world, an approach that flew in the face of several generations of Continental philosophers for whom consciousness had been the sole fount of knowledge. He insisted that our bodies and percepts (that which is perceived) could not be pulled apart. Eventually moving away from phenomenology, he began to develop what he called, the *ontology of the flesh of the world*.⁷

Regarding perception, he described a profuse, enmeshed, always-in-motion, network of relations whose complexity (what can be referred to in cybernetics as an “open system”) would suggest that little “truth” could be found in any one discrete, constitutive element. By this train of thought, in fact, he wrote, “every distinction between the true and the false, between methodic knowledge and phantasms, between science and the imagination, is ruined.”

In Gayle Salamon’s stunning book, *Assuming a Body*, she writes:

Merleau-Ponty wishe[d] to challenge...the very distinction that allows the body to be thought as a bounded and legible entity...The truth of being exists somewhere in between these two registers, between what appears (the visible) and that which cannot be captured by flat and factual assertions about the appearances of the world (the invisible).

The way in which Merleau-Ponty offers the category of the phantasmatic is significant in...

[that it is]...paired with “methodic knowledge,” suggesting a relation of opposition between the phantasmatic and what we can know, rather than the more familiar opposition between the phantasmatic and what we can see. [T]he phantasmatic can be described [then] as something (or, more properly, some non-thing) that escapes our attempts to...survey it....a register characterized by an ungraspability. The phantasmatic may or may not be material. It is not necessarily invisible, but it is *indefinable*, rendering the phantasmatic as that which cannot be encompassed by our knowledge of it, rather than that which cannot be perceptually grasped.

And Merleau-Ponty introduced this idea of the phantasmatic in relation to his theories of embodiment. As I’ve said above, he thought that only via interaction with surrounding environs, skirmishes of a sort, you know, an interactive, systemic, flow of becoming, that, what he called, “flesh” is generated: a thing *not reducible to body*, materiality, but existing as a result of *relations* with the world. To Merleau-Ponty, these *processes of flesh* or *finding flesh-ful-ness*, I think, are a kind of ontological openness, or a turbulence of both density and porosity, and he writes that to “exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen...” Now this is what I find interesting; he introduces the possibility that there is a continuous ghost-pith that reverberates

between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea. He calls it “a sort of incarnate principle.”

It is this Visibility, this generality of the Sensible in itself, this anonymity innate to Myself that we have previously called flesh, and there is no name in traditional philosophy to designate it....The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term “element,” in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a general thing, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being.... Flesh is an ultimate notion...it is not the union or compound of two substances, but thinkable by itself.⁸

Salamon restates it, but makes it sound a little sexier: “Merleau-Ponty suggests a mode of bodily inhabitation through which we allow ourselves to be seduced by the phantasmatic aspects of the body, suggests that we give ourselves over to the world in affirming the flesh that is not-quite-the-body and thereby find a more deeply rooted and expansive engagement with the other and the world.” This is another (more nuanced) way of saying collisions explain everything. Or better, collisions make everything.

It reminds me of Bergson’s bare thoughts in *Matter and Memory* which I take to be the suggestion,

fundamentally, that memory-image is an alternate, vibrating sort of matter. The idea that thoughts, or thought-images produce or *exist as* an additional type of materiality, another way of *thinking* materiality is fascinating to me. It sort of reconfigures what might be thought as *present*, of presence. I made a big drawing recently in which a long tube curls so that the two ends of it speak to one another. One end of the tube announces, “I have an idea.” In retort, the other end brags, “I *am* an idea.” The suggestion here is that to have a body with a consciousness is (or should be) awe-inspiring, sure. But the consciousness constituted by ideas which also might be said to *produce the body itself*—in perhaps ungraspable ways—is even better. Or less, that its bravado, the *bravado of the idea*, is a largesse worth consideration.

Which, I should note, reverses my usual hierarchy: Thing > thought; Or even, alive > imagined; Or fundamentally, actual > virtual.

“When Merleau-Ponty asks, ‘Is my body a thing, is it an idea?’ he answers that ‘it is neither, being the measurement of the thing. We will therefore have to recognize an ideality that is not alien to the flesh, that gives it its *axes, its depth, its dimensions*...’”⁹ The bold italics are mine here. What could that mean? The *ideality* gives the flesh depth? Vertical axes? Dimension?

87.

In an earlier email entitled *position and momentum*, in which I (at her behest) sought to articulate why I had asked her out in the first place, I reminded her (among other things) that “the precision of our measurement of

a particle’s momentum is inversely proportional to the precision of our measurement of that particle’s position. The reason for this is that the measurement of a particle’s momentum interferes with and alters the position of that particle—and vice versa. Any tool developed to increase the precision of one value will simultaneously decrease the precision of the other.”¹⁰ I’m interested in this event horizon of articulation, measurement, a sort of diminishing returns of articulation. Which should not be let to cloud this testament to my feverish interest in specificity.

888.

Ed Ricketts (1897-1948) best known as John Steinbeck’s character “Doc” in the novel, *Cannery Row*—a prescient, feverish, marine biologist, ecologist, and philosopher by vocation—was an early progenitor of complexity theory. In the late 1930s when all marine biologists were plucking and isolating specimens, focusing myopically, on body-shape, taxonomy, he agitated—against a flood of naysayers—for a paradigmatic shift in the matrix by which we orient research in the natural sciences, for a theory of interconnectedness and place. In describing his practice, which was conducted from his lab on Monterey Bay he wrote, “Ecology is the science of relationships. Of *living* relationships...more or less what I’m doing now: cataloguing the beasts of a given region, but doing it quantitatively with regard to the environmental rather than the taxonomic aspects. Thus it’s not only important what occurs (tho that has to be known first) but where it occurs physiographically as well as geographically, in what quantities, and, so far as can be determined with

our poor present methods, with what other animals. In such a method, the region is the large unit, and the type of shore, tidal level, etc., the immediate unit.” In other words, he was also interested in orientation.

56.

What if we aren't in a "location"? Or if our locations are in constant flux? How does the force of location form substance in this case, in *location-during*, otherwise known as movement, otherwise known as change: how do I even begin to understand change? If it happens in increments what is the smallest increment? How do I find the in-betweens? I think most human animals think in still pictures. And I also think that these pictures lay flat against one another. And I also think that these pictures begin to deteriorate very quickly too there at the bottom of the stack, so that the "stack-ness" or height or bulk that might be felt as duration (or even dimension—and is there any difference?) is only rarely experienced. Humans need an architecture that pushes later away from now. We think of it as space or linear time, it's a workaround, and I don't begrudge it to anyone, but the truth is everything is next to itself. And is happening at once.

76.

The CalArts animation department has a t-shirt silk-screened with the reverberative and jokey declaration, "I'm alarmed by your lack of in-betweens." I think in their case it refers to a limited grey-scale, but to note, in animating, the lead drawer apparently creates the

detailed shape of the figure, as well as rendering it into certain positions in context, "stations." These kind of static places. People called *twainers* used to draw the rest of the frames, the connective tissue. Twainers have now been replaced with a computerized process called, twaining. This function generates interstitial material that represents a continuum. Muybridge par excellence.

35.

The following section is condensed excerpts, almost completely in the form of quotations from a 2013 New York Times article, by Adam Fisher detailing Google's "convenience/surveillance/cartographic" enterprise—in which they have begun to photograph and map the entire surface of the earth. Initially Fisher prodded Luc Vincent, the head of the leviathan project, for details.

"Photograph the earth? What kind of resolution we talking about here?"

"We're going for one pixel to the inch." Vincent replied.

For years now, cars with roof-mounted panoramic cameras have been driving the world's roads while taking pictures every few feet. The effect of hopping from one photo to the next in street view is one of walking through virtual space. Street view now covers 3,000 cities in 54 countries, and has veered onto train tracks, hiking trails, and rivers. A section of the Amazon was the first river, appearing last year; the Thames made its debut in October; and the Colorado will be available by the end of the year.

Vincent's Street View cars have already mapped

six million miles. Depending on your perspective, that's either quite a lot (equivalent to 12 trips to the moon and back) or not much at all (only one-tenth of the world's estimated 60 million miles of road). This is where it gets interesting: *where-type questions account for some 20 percent of all Google queries done from the desktop*. But ultimately more important by far is location-awareness, the sort of geographical information that our phones and other mobile devices already require in order to function. In the future, such location-awareness will be built into everything. All of our stuff will know where it is. Your house keys will tell you that they're still on your desk at work. And your car will be able to drive itself to retrieve them.

And one thing for sure can be said about location-awareness: maps are required. Tomorrow's map, integrally connected to everything that moves will be so fundamental to their operation that the map will, in effect, be their operating system. A map is to location-awareness as Windows is to a PC, and as the history of Microsoft makes clear, a company that controls the operating system controls just about everything. So the competition to make the best maps, the thinking goes, is more than a struggle over who dominates the trillion-dollar smartphone market; it's a contest over the future itself.

Tim O'Reilly, a publisher and a well-known visionary in Silicon Valley, is convinced that the internet is evolving into a single vast, shared computer, one of whose most important individual functions, or subroutines, is *location-awareness*.

Initially in creating this database, digital "cartographers" would compile old maps from many sources and would have to send drivers out to check signage, see if everything was lining up. These folks were called, "ground-truthers." Nowadays, with street view, Google employees can ground-truth its data in virtual space. In Hyderabad, India, Google has a staff of more than 2,000 ground-truthers "driving" through cyberspace every day, cross-referencing map data with the street view pictures.

Fisher at this point recalls a short story by Borges entitled "On Exactitude in Science," which tells of a long-ago empire where "the art of cartography attained such perfection that the map of a single province occupied the entirety of a city, and the map of the empire, the entirety of a province." In Borges's empire, the importance of the cartographic guild grew as the map grew, until finally the empire was completely covered by a map of itself.

21.

In a human body what are the plausible effects produced by the experience of, as it's called, "location-awareness"—you know, always being in context. Indexed and sensed, "seen" by waves that now suffuse our world. I mean, you're able to access an index of yourself as often as you would like, a beeping red dot on a digital map—what in us should be enhanced? Diminished, changed? The experience of being surveilled, contextualized, placed as it were—shouldn't this be attended by a sense of well-being? Why would it induce a free-fall as Steyerl suggests? (She actually suggests it's an imperceptible

free-fall.) Well, for one, we're habituating to heed the machine more surely than we heed our senses. In terms of routing, we now ignore our own very specific, very complex, mobile, proprioceptive abilities (all the body's apertures are working at full tilt) and we farm it out. In a sense, this satellite as my own eyes, really "internalizes the cop," to produce a panopticon effect. (We feel vaguely surveilled.) We're mediating our sense of place through a satellite and a screen-image. No longer do we get a feel of where we are by looking around and committing details to memory, shadows, window panes, the tilt of a tree, a short wall. No longer are we taking raw (infinite) data into our own bodies storing it in our fat cells, but we are outsourcing that process, place, sense of place.

This makes me think of William James' writing on speech,¹¹ the way we hurtle into sentence-making not quite sure what's going to come out, how the sentence will coalesce, crescendo, and finish. In the act of speaking, we gather intent, commix it with effort, and come to face the occasion of possibility, of infinity, a small but vast unknown. (It's a kind of psychological leaning that he calls *tending*.) What if each of our spoken sentences appeared as a dot on a script that was already written? I realize this is an inapt metaphor because a map just tells it like it is. It is itself a set of possibilities and in no way reflects or on the face of it, inhibits "free will." But what then, is inhibited? The gap I'm describing is the difference between the known and the unknown, and another way of saying that is we're diminishing the ratio of chance to un-chance. And, of course, we seem

to transpose the discussion quickly into one that has exposure, or liability, you know, some kind of wager as its core. We accept all kinds of surveillance as trade-offs in a risk-management calculation. Less solitude, more safety. I know I will sound axiomatic when I declare that a world without chance, however safe, is a world I am uninterested in. In its most extreme state, surveillance as a function, forecloses solitude and the affects it nurtures. Surveillance like a vise, compresses space, and makes maps like scripts from which we find few exit points, few ways to access infinity, the folds that contain (or don't contain as the case may be) *everything*—the continuum between the pixels.

62.

In a relatively short essay called, *Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government* (1953), Hannah Arendt wrote about space, room to move, as the necessary component of an affect or attribute one might refer to as "free."

In the essay she's describing the difference between tyranny and totalitarianism, which she also calls "total terror." A fundamental difference, she contends, is that in instituting a tyranny, despotic forces "raze the boundaries of man-made law," substituting purely idiosyncratic violence, you know, the pitching whims of the current sovereign, the rage of one man against all. Totalitarianism, on the other hand, blows through this kind of scenario and, capacious, moves onward. Among other things, she says, total terror invokes the ideology of *natural and historical foreordination* to ratify its actions,

(*This is destiny. Nature meant for this to happen.*) and so thoroughly that it becomes nearly impossible to repel the rhetoric. She says that thusly employing a combination of ideology and brutality, “it substitutes for the boundaries and channels of communication between individual men a band of iron which holds them so tightly together that it is as though their plurality had disappeared into one man of gigantic dimensions.”

This next part surprised me. She *facets* versions of spaciousness here by theorizing that abolishing the “fences of laws between men—as tyranny does,” means to disappear human liberties as “living political reality; for the space between men as it is hedged in by laws, is the living space of freedom.” So here, space is the fruit, the result of legislation. Politically-speaking, a tyrant *contaminates* these avenues, sidewalks, the juridical space of relation. But total terror actually *destroys* this strange limbo space that tyranny somehow *preserves*, this “desert [which] is no longer a living space of freedom, but it still provides some room for the fear-guided movements and suspicion-ridden actions of its inhabitants...and insofar as it is still some kind of space, appears [compared to the iron-band of totalitarianism anyway] like a *guarantee of freedom*.” The complexity of this thought is important, these variations on the theme of space. She suggests fear-ridden but roomy, and it still counts as *something*. As Fred Moten might ask, “What do I have that I want to keep?”

Arendt goes on to say that the iron-band of totalitarianism presses “men against each other...destroys the space between them.” What in our world right now

presses us against each other like this? Can surveillance, in the form of CCTV cameras, web-use tracking, say, be said to function in this way? The social networking, our constant contact not only produces a nearly unbearable dearth of solitude, but additionally actually habituates us to being watched, tracked, chaperoned, helicoptered and assisted in ways heretofore unheard of. “Totalitarian government does not just curtail liberties or abolish essential freedoms; nor does it, at least to our limited knowledge, succeed in eradicating the love for freedom from the hearts of man. It destroys the one essential prerequisite of all freedom which is simply the capacity of motion which cannot exist without space.”

If ideology utilized in certain opprobrious ways can be said to represent a giant iron band—because by definition ideology blots out anything that isn’t consonant—then I take this phrase, *capacity of motion*, to mean, the ability to have leaping or *new* thoughts. A capacity to imagine. Movement and space are in this way linked to thought, the ability to think is linked to free will.

63.

In considering the idea of *accompaniment* with regard to the social network, you know, trying to facet a thought about loneliness and sociality in the hazy hybridity of the virtual: facetime, hook-ups, connection, friending and following, I looked again at a passage from Hannah Arendt,¹² in which she beautifully parses loneliness from solitude.

I guess aside from Cato’s paradoxical observation, “never was he less alone than when he was alone,” that

Epictetus seems to have been the first person to distinguish between the two. Epictetus' chief interest, she observes had been *being alone*, in the sense of absolute independence (he was an emancipated slave) and he wrote about the subject at length, theorizing that the lonely person "finds himself surrounded" by others who are contentious or "with whom he cannot establish contact" while the solitary person, on the other hand is "alone and therefore 'can be together with himself' since men have the capacity of 'talking with themselves.'"

Arendt expands on this, even layering in another subjective-self. "In solitude...I am 'by myself,' together with my self, and therefore two-in-one, whereas in loneliness I am actually one, deserted by all others." She says that thinking is *done in solitude*, "a dialogue between me and myself" and adds that "the dialogue of two-in-one does not lose contact" with others, with *sociality* because fellow-men are "represented in the self with whom I lead the dialogue of thought." In this strange way—that also makes good sense—one can be more readily social if one allows oneself some time and space to think (simultaneously alone and together with others.) She goes on to suggest that solitude is not enough, however, "this two-in-one needs the others in order to become one again...for the confirmation of my identity I depend entirely upon other people; and it is the great saving grace of companionship for solitary men that it makes them "whole" again[.]"

I am interested in the thinking of solitude as vibrantly contaminated by companionship and loneliness as a kind of stark, depilated situation of non-collision.

How does this even work? To be untouched in a crowded place? What in the brain is unfiring? My dad, who is 84, and lives 6 hours away, recently came to visit us in Los Angeles. We toured some nearby senior living communities wondering whether "quality of life" might improve with more people to talk to. (At home, if I'm not mistaken, aside from a small amount of sleep, he sits in a now-peeling white leather chair in front of Fox News.) My impression of him over the weekend was more vaporous than corporeal, and I kept thinking, "He seems to be turning into a ghost." One of the brassier tour guides during an introductory meeting in Pasadena, asked him what he liked to do, "What do you enjoy George?" She said, pencil poised. His mouth opened just a bit, his eyes were even ready to speak, but no words came. She asked him again. And again he couldn't answer.

897.

The rampant deployment of facial recognition software into our commons, has rendered the possibility for anonymity in a sea of faces almost obsolete. Journalist Mark Boal commented, "As surveillance expands, it has the effect of enlarging the reach of the police. Once it becomes possible to bank all these images, and to call them up by physical typology, it will be feasible to set up an electronic sentry system giving police access to every citizen's coming and goings."

The right to "privacy"—while not explicit in the U.S. Constitution—has been described by the Supreme Court as a "penumbral right" emanating from the First, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.

What is clearly stated in most of the recent judiciary decisions is that our protections are actually and solely based on our *reasonable expectations* of privacy. This is wild! Accordingly, with each adjustment the culture makes toward diminished expectations (and we're making those changes everyday!) the area protected from intrusion by the state, is in true fact, constricting. A tone of pleading surprised me, indeed was unexpectedly moving, when I read through this court decision, *U.S. v. White*, written in 1971:

Free discourse—a First Amendment value—may be frivolous or serious, humble or defiant, reactionary or revolutionary, profane or in good taste; but it is not free if there is surveillance. Free discourse liberates the spirit, though it may produce only froth. The individual must keep some facts concerning his thoughts within a small zone of people. At the same time he must be free to pour out his woes or inspirations or dreams to others. He remains the sole judge as to what must be said and what must remain unspoken... Privacy is the basis of individuality. To be alone and be let alone, to be with chosen company, to say what you think, or don't think but to say what you will, is to be yourself. Solitude is imperative.

77.

Aldo Leopold, a writer, land philosopher and conservationist wrote in 1924:

Long ago a Spanish captain, wandering in some far Andean height, sent back word that he had found where a mighty river falls into the trackless Amazonian forest, and disappears. He had named it El Rio Madre de Dios. The Spanish captain never came back. Like the river, he disappeared. But ever since some maps of South America have shown a short heavy line running eastward beyond the Andes, a river without beginning and without end, and labeled it the River of the Mother of God. That short heavy line flung down upon the blank vastness of tropical wilderness has always seemed the perfect symbol of the unknown places of the earth...[Even the name itself,] reverberating as it does with the clank of silver armor and the cruel progress of the cross, yet carrying a hush of reverence, has always seemed the symbol of conquest. The same conquest that has reduced those unknown places, one by one, until now there are none left...and when I read that Macmillan has planted the radio among the Eskimos of the furthest polar seas, and that Everest is all but climbed, and that Russia is founding fisheries in Wrangel land, I know the time is not far off when there will no more be a short line on the map, without beginning and

without end, no mighty river to fall from far Andean heights into the Amazonian wilderness, and disappear. Motor boats will sputter through those trackless forests, the clank of steam hoists will be heard in the mountain of the sun, and there will be phonographs and chewing gum upon the River of the Mother of God. [Now] speaking geographically, the end of the unknown is at hand. This fact in our environment, seemingly as fixed as the wind and the sunset, has at last reached the vanishing point. Is it to be expected that it shall be lost from human experience without something likewise being lost from human character?"

837.

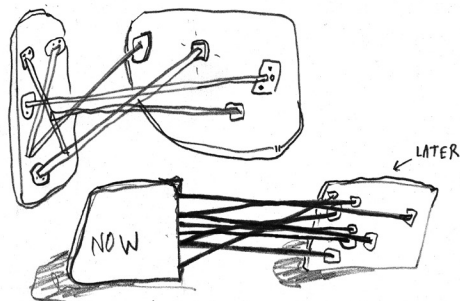
As a corollary to the force of work in the paradigm of good ol' economics, Preciado suggests excitation. She calls it 'potentia gaudendi' or 'orgasmic force' and theorizes it as "neither male nor female, neither human nor animal, neither animated nor inanimate." (This litany of negations reminded me immediately of Roland Barthes' lessons on what he called "The Neutral" which I'll get to in a moment, but which, for my purposes here I'll describe as a series of lectures in which he successfully, by accumulation of negative descriptions, a kind of stylized apophatic theology, evokes not only the conceptual giddiness (and koan-like evasive intensity) of feverish, specific indeterminacy but, immanently, a mode by which one might "baffle the paradigm.") Preciado further facets a description of 'potentia gaudendi' as

"malleable, impermanent, impervious to becoming private property, [a thing existing] exclusively as an event, a relation, a practice, or an evolutionary process...the most abstract and most material of all work forces. It is inextricably carnal and digital, viscous yet representational by numerical values, a phantasmic or molecular wonder that can be transformed into capital."

209.

If you want to become a memory champion you must remember the order of a deck of cards in under a minute. The way you do this is to assign each card a celebrity doing an action with a related object. The more disgusting, or emotional the better. You then choose a house that has an emotional resonance, sight locations in each room you walk through such as next to the bed or the closet...and as you turn each card over you turn three cards at a time and create syntax, little "image-sentences." Use the celebrity from the first card, add it to the action from the second card and the object from the third card. In this way you create a tour of a house full with strangely memorable, emotionally resonant figures in action. Narrative. We remember randomness, or it could be said that we "create time" or a "memory of time" — I think of it as a stressed sideways scaffolding holding one wall away from another—by assigning to it, yes, a scaffold, and story works well, bodies enjoy bodies, the more emotional, the easier to commit to memory. I used to think it was weakness on our parts, the weakness of the human body, our inability to contemplate infinity, the analog machine. Now I realize it's an enculturated

fear of death piggybacking with a kind of drive kind to self-construct. With story comes memory, comes architecture, comes dimensionality, comes time. If we didn't



remember anything we'd be dying all the time. But this is to suddenly conflate memory with language and they're not always—obviously—coincident.

23.

For the better part of my adult life, I have wilted visibly whenever an artist announces, *my work is about memory*. Oh no. But just recently I've begun to appreciate that without memory, we don't arrive into each moment as a dimensional self. A sense of self (however social) accrues and is made of memory. And is in fact, always developing. I like people who think as we speak. I like to watch them making thoughts, and not just burping platitudes. I don't mind the pauses. I never think of them as pauses, I think of them as fullnesses. Becomings-of-thought. Lately, I've thought that I'm losing my ability to remember.

56.

We use to travel and hope to lose ourselves. Which meant, you know, to travel, say, from California all the way up to the coast of Oregon, hitchhiking, eating perfectly good tomatoes or uncovering sacks of bagels from dumpsters behind farmer's markets. We would be let off on the side of a road (just a road, any road, a beautiful fucking road) and head down a cliff—in Oregon it's always a cliff!—wending our way into unmarked-ness. Wilderness. Wildness. We knew the road was behind us as we marched and I admit I sought to bodily orient (North, South, East and West) as the shadows tilted. The goal, as I saw it, in our stated "journey without goal" seemed to be presence. To be fully present. I had made some equation that informationlessness, loss of index, symbol, would somehow be the most certain way to embodiment. That embodiment would definitively lack an indice, that maps were a distraction from presentness, arrival, and thus, *living*. I think I was wrong on many accounts but the fact that I did spend so much and so dense a time in an effort to not think, but to *be* meant I was practiced in slowness. What else could we call it? Depth, vertical travel, travel in place. Like a plant, or rocket, or tree, what is a vertical experience. Could we call these travels, deep nodes, tall nodes, folded nodes?

At some point I misread a Buddhist text and figured that anything I needed to learn I would glean from my own flesh. I spent a long time doing that, and no short time regretting it. Considering the idea now, of contemplation basically, I am struck by the apparently conflicting descriptions of stillness and flux or aliveness

that seem to characterize it. At the side of this river, a river I knew not by name but by feel, I travelled deeply, vertically. Into earth? Leaves, sunlight on leaves. Eddies, the huff of bears, menstrual cramps, fulmination, flesh? Is it possible that this orientation moves on a y-axis? Like a preposition. I mean to say, that time (as ersatz movement) becomes depth, and the space explored is actually involuted? Because how can stillness provide depth, and what is depth anyway but a version of distance, and what is distance but fullness at a contrasting density? The vertical axis in Steyerl's essay on verticality is in play here too, because the lack of orientation by map, a kind of chosen lostness perhaps, rather than generate vagueness, cracked into specificity. This indeterminacy became specific, or singular, or perhaps, Moten would say, irreducibly material, irreducibly sensual. But it took the pressure of intent, zealous awakens to place. As if the potential for map, or the lack of map, morphed from simply the absence of planarity (plan view) into a kind of inkiness in the shape of a toroidal polyhedron, upon whose walls presence could be imprinted. Stillness *was* movement.

562.

Wonder—is not
Precisely knowing,
And not precisely
Knowing not

—Emily Dickinson

715.

Gertrude Stein's project with language sought to block accumulation without blocking experience. We're experiencing *language*. At the end of one of these book-length texts we're left sore, out of breath, having exercised, perhaps energized, changed but without being able to recall passages to others. This makes me wonder whether there is something social about solidity or even stasis? A thing we can pass. A football, a fruitcake, an articulable idea or memory. I'm interested in the things that can be passed, are social, are communicable, can be offered, but are also in flux as they come, in flux as they go. Not so much formless but forming. Unforming. It seems to me—and I want you to follow this with me—that a thing left unnamed might be, if beholdable at all, might be beheld in a form closer to its more complex, infinite detail. It's analog reality. Can we pass the unnamable like a football? Can we pass an unformed, still becoming thing between us? A lot of people will say that a determination must be made in order for thing to become wieldy. I'm interested in wielding the unwieldy. I think most artists are.

77.

When I was 23 I took a course in furniture and cabinet-making. The teacher introduced us one by one to a room of hand-tools. He had these beautiful calipers. Slender little long-fingered tendrils. He told us that we should, when possible, use calipers because *measurement was inaccurate*, it was (in terms of rulers and human eyes, and the stub end of a 3"×3") always an approximation

and that the inaccuracy would only grow as we translated it, ruler to ruler, marked again with a pencil, cut again and then measured with a new ruler. Each measurer and instrument would meet the task with an idiosyncratic set of strategies. The thing that stuck in my head, now 24 years have passed, is that he would press these little skinny arms around the stub end of a piece of wood, he would tighten it. He'd say, "How big is it? It's *this* big." And hold up the calipers. You would see the space there and it would be full of information that had no words at all. It seemed to me that that information, was somehow, by having not been pinned down by an index, was a top left spinning.

7.

In Koestenbaum's *Stein is Nice*, he opines that "her use of proper names introduced without context or fanfare, provide respite from the dry diction and non-referentiality of the bulk of her texts." Particularity. The proper name, the name par excellence, category of one, I say, and think of Michael Ned Holte's *Proper Names*, which was handed to me, coincidentally, in the same week as *List of Names*, ed. Leslie Dick & Adriano Pedrosa, which simply lists the names of everyone who ever enrolled in Michael Asher's "post-studio critique" class at CalArts. These books are contrasting projects at their hearts—but I read them back to back one evening and this magic thing happened. No pictures built up, there were no architectures, no images, no mnemonics to lean on in our contest of champion card-memory Olympics. Just a cloud or net or web of matchsticks, singles, persons, a

pile of them (too violent), a crowd, bound by an ethics, symbolized here by staples, paper, ink, effort. I understate the feeling here, it was no less than ecstasy. Like a big page turning in my book of primary anxieties. Names aren't the problem. Names are a kind of diaphanous proposal about a temporary *i*. At least the way my friends chose them in the Nineties, everyone made up their own. They work as a kind of specificity to me right now. (Family names notwithstanding.) I thought about solidarity in difference, dissensus, an anarchist strategy for organizing without the pressure to homogenize. Keep your name, names aren't the problem.

555.

In an essay titled *In Defense of Poor Images*, Hito Steyerl writes:

Poor images are thus popular images—images that can be made and seen by the many. They express all the contradictions of the contemporary crowd: its opportunism, narcissism, desire for autonomy and creation, its inability to focus or make up its mind, its constant readiness for transgression and simultaneous submission. [...] This flattening-out of visual content—the concept-in-becoming of the images—positions them within a general informational turn, within economies of knowledge that tear images and their captions out of context into the swirl of permanent capitalist deterritorialization. The history of conceptual art describes this

dematerialization of the art object first as a resistant move against the fetish value of visibility. Then, however, the dematerialized art object turns out to be perfectly adapted to the semioticization of capital, and thus to the conceptual turn of capitalism. In a way, the poor image is subject to a similar tension. On the one hand, it operates against the fetish value of high resolution. On the other hand, this is precisely why it also ends up being perfectly integrated into an information capitalism thriving on compressed attention spans, on impression rather than immersion, on intensity rather than contemplation, on previews rather than screenings.

Dematerialization (or “leaving your body”) is one of a cluster of long-standing strategic (defensive) operations undertaken by people who are criminalized, terrorized or otherwise subjected to surveillance, invasion, abuse. As Steyerl reminds us, artists initiated a related but contrasting version of the strategy in the 60s, “dematerializing the art object,” specifically in order to interrupt the capitalization of their work, when capital was yoked to matter in the form of both natural resources and objects. As far as art is concerned, I’m not suggesting there is nothing to value in terms of the mental, conceptual (or even that it is definitively discrete from the material, or that its even *possible* to dematerialize anything!). But the above reckoning is timely, and relevant. Some politically dynamic artists I know, based on some of these art ideas from the 70’s, still talk about matter as if every little

bit of it were somehow already irremediably corrupted by a voracious consumerist capitalism. Some of them are paralyzed by the idea that anything they make will be annexed, commandeered, preempted. Or somewhat more concerning, they believe that to make anything is to “be productive” which is, you guessed it, negatively-valenced, fundamentally immoral. (But *jouissance* is your best redoubt!) I remind them that matter existed before greed and still exists apart from evil. What a person wants to make (or not) be it 1, 2, 3 or 7 dimensional, is, obviously not at issue here, but as far as I’m concerned, in the land of the valorization of the virtual, art making flickers as a kind of branching sociality, a joy, in addition to serving as a means of expression. (Consent to *phantasie*!)

The “semioticization of capital,” is, as a turn, I think—especially as it’s playing out in marketing campaigns for clouds, devices, virtual products— properly comparable to (among other things) a time in the Late Middle ages when Christian forces were conducting witch-hunts throughout Europe and demonizing earth/flesh-based competencies, desires, conjunctions, identifications and puissance. Simply put, detaching people from an orienting cathexis to the earth (filthy, lusty, fertile, irrational) and requiring that they worship god in heaven (clean, rational, pure, beyond) was not just *disempowering*, not just a bait and switch. Then, like now, demonizing matter is fundamentally a resource grab.

15.

Carry-a-bility. Lo-res images are easier to displace, relocate. This makes them and the communicative data

contained therein more accessible but it makes them more vague, more remote, images of images. There is a threshold here too, at some point, the resolution is so low they carry only affect, and then at a certain point, any image becomes just a pixel. Which has little to no communicative value at all. No meaning. But very portable. Capitalism has much to gain from persuading us to become interested in digital products. And in convincing us that “everything is slowly becoming dematerialized.” This is, of course, absolutely not the case. But for many of us, it is the case that we are lavishing more attention and time on things comprised by heaps of binary code. However, our bodies are still in play no matter how “dematerialized” our purchases are.

Franco Berardi writes that the tech giants didn’t realize when they supposed they had discovered the holy grail of a healthy capitalism (Semio-capital! A non-exhaustible resource! Infinite growth! Full speed ahead!) that selling infinite amounts of information is contingent upon accessing infinite amounts of human psychic attention. But screen time turns out to be exhausting! There is a point at which we can no longer focus, or care about what the screen is doing. We tire of the machine, and recoil with a kind of psychic suffering manifested by depression, anxiety, loneliness, and nausea. The finiteness of our bodies—in this case, our ability to pay attention, as frustrating as physiological limitations are—corresponds to the limits of what capital can sell. He says, in so many words, that it won’t be a violent revolution; it will be a revolution of exhaustion.

48.

If we identify less and less with our bodies, if we locate our power, our joy in a place that is not only extracorporeal but that we believe is not material and thus *not anywhere*, we’ll be less invested in the earth, our conjunction with it, enmeshment and communion with it, with material in general. If we believe that everything is “dematerializing” then we care less when we hear news of pollution, devastation to biodiversity, mass toxification. Our joys are in a cloud. And **cloud** is a word that means, to us, *not real*. And uttering the word cloud always strikes me as a coy understatement, that I say *cloud* and mean *nothingness*. Like saying *sleeping*, when you mean *dead*. Or *dad’s old Chrysler* when referring to your new *spaceship*. But the cloud is actually a behemoth network of great long warehouses scattered around Indiana and Kansas. That’s where your pictures and your music are. They’re not material in the sense that no one actually has ever decided whether a photon is wave or a particle, but they’re as real as dirt. Those warehouses, the servers, house-sized hard drives and cooling systems all run on carbon-based fuel, brought to you by the material universe.

98.

It would seem on the face of it, that when we make notes about the fetish value of resolution that we might obliquely be proposing a kind of value judgment regarding specificity. But I’m not sure this is true. When we stare into a screen, we must talk of resolution because there is one. When we stare onto the neighbor’s house,

or yonder hillock, we don't speak of *resolution* whose register is limited to a discussion of images. Instead we speak about qualities of light, perspective, depth perception, even love, longing, fear. An image might be a thing like you and me, but it has a back wall, which a non-image does not have. We could shrug and insist that due to the lamentable tightness of our apertures our brains can't tell the difference, but we can. R.L. Gregory wrote in 1966¹³ that the retinal receptors are sensitive enough to be stimulated by the 'smallest possible energy difference', a single quantum of radiant energy. So what I'm saying is, we know something is missing and I think we're looking for it.

301.

The titular reference for a Los Angeles show of sound art curated by Chiara Govinda uses the extended metaphor of the "Third Ear" (as opposed to the third eye) to suggest a supplementary organ that would function precisely in this realm, the sub-liminal—one of a multitude that I propose are physiological and yet beyond the scope of our perception. According to the press release for this show, "all sound, light and matter vibrates and has a specific resonant frequency [on the] electromagnetic spectrum (EMS)...[however] there are a whole range of EMS frequencies that *exist beyond the capabilities of our sensory organs.*" She suggests the third ear might function here, "between sound and light, between the audible and the visible."

410.

In a volume entitled, *Sea Of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research*—which Ed Ricketts wrote and which John Steinbeck later edited—about a collaborative 1940 trip to Northern Mexico, I found this passage on sound, smell and threshold:

Behind the beach there was a little level land, sandy and dry and covered with cactus and thick brush. And behind that, the rising dry hills. Now again the wild doves were calling among the hills with their song of homesickness. The quality of longing in this sound, the memory response it sets up, is curious and strong. And it has also the quality of a dying day. One wishes to walk toward the sound—to walk on and on toward it, forgetting everything else. Undoubtedly there are sound symbols in the unconscious just as there are visual symbols—sounds that trigger off a response, a little spasm of fear, or a quick lustfulness, or, as with the doves, a nostalgic sadness. Perhaps in our pre-humanity this sound of doves was a signal that the day was over and a night of terror due—a night which perhaps this time was permanent. Keyed to the visual symbol of the sinking sun and to the odor symbol of the cooling earth, these might all cause the little spasm of sorrow; and with the long response-history, one alone of these symbols might suffice for all three. [...] If there be visual symbols, strong

and virile in the unconscious, there must be others planted by the other senses. The sensitive places, ball of thumb, ear-lobe, skin just below the ribs, thigh and lip, must have their memories too. And smell of some spring flowers when the senses thaw, and smell of a ready woman, and smell of reptiles and smell of death, are deep in our unconscious. Sometimes we can say truly, "That man is going to die." Do we smell the disintegrating cells? Do we see the hair losing its luster and uneasy against the scalp, and the skin dropping its tone? We do not know these reactions one by one, but we say, that man or cat or dog or cow is going to die. If the fleas on a dog know it and leave their host in advance, why do not we also know it? Approaching death, the pre-death of the cells, has informed the fleas and us too.

It occurs to me now, as I transcribe the above passage into my notes, that *Sea of Cortez*, a tome of almost 600 pages, is more than anything else—because it is certainly many things—an artifact of a journey conducted under the auspices of inventorization. (Well over half the volume is the catalog itself, in pictures and lists, of the sea life they discovered during the trip). I'm surprised, therefore, by how charming I find the volume. Could be I'm mesmerized by handsome, bearded Ricketts, a proto-conservationist, his ardent curiosity about the physical world, combined with his sort of plain-spoken philosophical constructions, a sort of corollary to Europe's ordinary

language philosophers, but you know, obsessed with sea creatures instead of the misuses of language. Maybe I'm interested in peculiar, hybrid romances in which each party supplies absolutely contrasting aptitudes and zeal to a project which therefore never fully coalesces, never homogenizes, (my favorite kind) a project which engenders a kind of sublation, wherein constituent bodies are both transformed and preserved. Aside from the job of documentation and research, the writing combines a goopy almost anti-narrative: the minutiae of slow looking, meandering landscape description, short tales of woe or tenderness with strangers, ropes, heat, salt, philosophy and the relentless, meticulous recountal of sea life.

My customary aversion to taxonomy here is unfooted. At the time of their languorous visit to the Gulf, and still today, the Gulf of California (a body of very warm water that separates mainland Mexico from Baja California Peninsula) was considered to be the most diverse sea on the planet, home to over 5,000 species of macro-invertebrates. Tentacled, diaphanous, water-borne animals, mostly, sea cucumbers, slugs, flower-headed worms, etc. There is a way the creatures themselves, their profusion, their radical alterity, suggest, to me, a style of specificity or continuum that blows right off the pole.

Wading in rubber boots, we captured some of them and they proved to be giant synaptids. They were strange and frightening to handle, for they stuck to anything they touched, not with slime but as though they were coated

with innumerable suction-cells. On being taken from the water, they collapsed to skin, for their bodily shape is maintained by the current of water which they draw through themselves. When they're lifted out, this water escapes and they hang as limp as unfilled sausage skins. [We submerged them in collecting buckets and] on the bottom they crawled about, their flower-heads moving gently, while the current of water passing through their bodies drew food into their stomachs.

And when asked why they did it, this “picking up and pickling of little animals” they learned to reply, the truth, which had only slowly dawned on them, “The animals were very beautiful. Here was life from which we borrowed life and excitement. In other words, we did these things because it was pleasant to do them.”

101.

When we ask that an object or situation be viewed as art, that it be considered via the terms of contemporary art discourse, what it means is that we're adding another matrix of meaning into the space between the thing and our perception. We're adding structure, layer, dimension, filter, a prism, a transformative magic vapor. That's why I like art, because it means that the thing is the thing but it is also suddenly, impossibly, *not the thing*. It's suddenly *about* itself too. I think of transubstantiation, the Eucharist, in which bread becomes the host. Catholics do not consider this deed, eating Jesus' body, symbolic.

Once blessed, it *is* flesh. In the same way, announcing that something is art is a (vertical) dimensionalization. A thing, without changing form, becomes another, different, more voluminous thing. Corpulent.

833.

In the last decade, physicists have been observing and developing theories about *entanglement*, a quantum particulate doubling in which one molecule is in two places. Give one a lollipop, both of them suddenly have it, or, like I said, one molecule has the lollipop, but it's in two locations. Related is, *superposition*, the idea that a microparticle is in all of its possible states at once, but the measurer is only able to detect one of them. “A superposition is like God in that the quantum object occupying a number of different states simultaneously can be everywhere at once. A superposition is a kind of immanence.”¹⁴

900.

Sublation, etymologically, sort of means to take away and to carry. Hegel uses the term *Aufhebung*, often translated as ‘sublate,’ to refer to what happens when the thesis interacts with the antithesis. Sublation carries the seemingly contradictory suggestion of both *transforming* and *preserving*. Wikipedia offers the following example, which I appreciated, “The two concepts *Being* and *Nothing* are each both preserved and changed through sublation in the concept *Becoming*...the synthesis both abolishes and preserves the thesis and the antithesis which leads to difficulties in interpreting and

translating this concept. For Hegel, self-contradiction is legitimate and necessary.”

“Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself. I am large. I contain multitudes.”¹⁵

414.

In many ways I am a hazy-sighted infant, almost blind. I see mainly what I already know and will be unawares of a particular variation on plant fungus as I make my way, next week, through a forest of massive Sequoia trees in Central California. Someone worried about rain won't notice or note particulars in the morphology of arboreal reproduction say, the manner in which tiny trees have begun to issue forth from grand stumps. Additionally, and related, once my mind has galvanized around a thought, it becomes very burdensome to re-contour it to anything disharmonious as such. As Ed Ricketts says, “When a hypothesis is deeply accepted it becomes a growth which only a kind of surgery can amputate.”

It could be argued that even most laws, though they are thought to fundamentally *form* behavior, are actually more aptly described as *reflective* or *descriptive* of mores in the culture at large. (With many grave exceptions!) Or as Ricketts says, “The things of our minds have more toughness than external reality.” It should be noted here, perversely, that—provided a punctum of some sort, sheer repetition, brief suggestion, an awkward turn of phrase—I am, however infrequently, able to prime my conscious for the arrival of something absolutely new, I mean, heretofore unthinkable. To me, these blockages

clear (or you could say, these gaps open, or these avalanches which totally reform the ground, and so too, my gait and line of approach...) these happen via specificity. Specificity is attention plus information plus experience. And it takes time. Or *happens in time* at least. Ricketts writes in *Sea of Cortez*:

One of us has a beard, and one night when this one was standing wheel-watch, the other sat in the galley drinking coffee. We were discussing werewolves and their almost universal occurrence in regional literature. From this beginning, we played with a macabre thought, “The moon will soon be full,” we said, “and he of the beard will begin to feel the pull of the moon. Last night,” we said, “we heard the scratch of claws on the deck. When you see him go down on the all fours, when you see the red light come into his eyes, then look out, for he will slash your throat.” We were delighted with the game. We developed the bearded one's tendencies, how his teeth, the canines at least, had been noticeably longer of late, how for the past week he had torn his dinner apart with his teeth. It was night as we talked thus, and the deck was dark and the wind was blowing. Suddenly he appeared in the doorway, his beard and hair blown, his eyes red from the wind. Climbing the two steps up from the galley, he seemed to arise from all fours, and everyone of us started, and felt the prickle

of erecting hairs. We had actually talked and thought ourselves into this pattern, and it took awhile for it to wear off. These mind things are very strong; in some, so strong as to blot out the external things completely.

415.

Until the late 1970s scientists, physicists, had primarily, when conducting a series of experiments, looked for order, which meant, conventionally, *repeatability*. Forging a dynamic that could be reinstated again and again, was the benchmark, the basic cornerstone for successful science. A good day in the lab. (Of course, since most of the natural world is a kind of consumptive open-system hacking up gobs of non-linear turbulence (Linearity is the anomaly!) this limited purview for science was a kind of foundering. Stanislaw Ulam once said, “Using a term like nonlinear science is like referring to the bulk of zoology as the study of non-elephant animals.”) Newtonian determinism had been brought to bear for centuries, sodden with, even suffused by, the full-hearted acceptance of the idea that *measurements can never be perfect*. This disjunct, this vibrating dogleg had been at the philosophical core of science for so long that it became a sort of blotted, blind spot. The impracticability of specificity, in other words, was a given, but science had to trudge forward regardless. And for many predictions it was, in fact, an absolutely useful assumption. In other words, if you had *approximate* knowledge of a system’s initial conditions and an understanding of natural law, you could calculate the *approximate* behavior of the system.

“As one theoretician liked to tell his students: ‘The basic idea of Western science is that you don’t have to take into account the falling of a leaf on some planet in another galaxy when you’re trying to account for the motion of a billiard ball on a pool table on earth. Very small influences can be neglected. There’s a convergence in the way things work, and arbitrarily small influences don’t blow up to have arbitrarily large effects.’”¹⁶

416.

Through the 1950s Edward Lorenz, a mathematical-oriented meteorologist developed a proto-computer, a machine he called, The Royal McBee, which was able to continually process about a dozen numerical variables that had been designed to represent weather-like forces. Relations between temperature and pressure, pressure and wind speed, etc. Understand the laws and you understand the universe—that was the philosophy behind modeling weather on a computer. Forecasting, then as now, was basically impossible beyond a couple of days, but The Royal McBee was producing strange, messy bits of order, cycles that were recognizable, interesting to Lorenz but never happened the same way twice, an orderly disorder.

One day in 1961, as James Gleick tells it, Lorenz wanted to investigate

[a] sequence at greater length and took a shortcut. Instead of starting the whole run over, he started midway through. To give the machine its initial conditions, he typed the

numbers straight from the earlier printout. Then he walked down the hall to get away from the noise and drink a cup of coffee. When he returned an hour later, he saw something unexpected, something that planted a seed for a new science.

This new run should have exactly duplicated the old. Lorenz had copied the number into the machine himself. The program had not changed. Yet as he stared at the new printout, Lorenz saw his weather diverging so rapidly from the pattern of the last run that, within just a few months, all resemblance had disappeared. He looked at one set of number, then back at the other. He might well have chosen two random weathers out of a hat. His first thought was that another vacuum tube had gone bad.

Suddenly he realized the truth. There had been no malfunction. The problem lay in the numbers he had typed. In the computer's memory, six decimal places were stored: .506127. On the printout, to save space, just three appeared: .506. Lorenz had entered the shorter, rounded-off numbers, assuming that the difference—one part in a thousand—was inconsequential.¹⁷

In a deterministic universe, *approximately* the same starting conditions would yield *approximately* the same results. But, Gleick explains, this was different... in Lorenz's particular system of equations, these tiny

deviations had proved *cataclysmic*. The result in this case had been *profoundly* sensitive to (what is referred to as) initial conditions. Lorenz apprehended something here, something that simply didn't fit with the scientific, paradigmatic status quo. A non-match. He began working on ways to understand flow in all kinds of fluids. The wildest thing here is that he didn't drop a wet blanket onto the scientific community, "Hey, sorry, the world is just a muck of randomness and unpredictability," instead he actually saw a kind of order in aperiodicity, "a fine geometrical structure, order *masquerading* as randomness."

And sure, we all know that "a chain of events can have a point of crisis that could magnify small changes. But chaos meant that such points were everywhere. They were pervasive...sensitive dependence on initial conditions was an inescapable consequence of the way small scales intertwined with large."

Eventually scientists have been able to see structure-of-flow-relationships (a rhyming of fractal and chaotic harmonies) in everything from stock market fluctuations over decades to leaf edges, the shape of tides, snowflakes, woodgrain, birdfeathers and a pot of boiling water. Since I read it, this story serves for me, as a reminder that heeding and seeking nuance, specificity, faceting, (a kind of non-polemical complexity) can keep me closer to patterns of continuance not readily visible, *other or additional* matrices, forces, (ones that matter dammit) and for this, I always need more time, more space. I made a video recently called *The Time-Eaters*, in which a character, a guide, tells her charge, "Let

everybody speak, no matter how long the meeting goes.” Difference in solidarity is not always easy but easy is obviously not an appropriate criterion by which to assess the pleasure or importance of life’s activities.

102.

My friend is a teacher in Manhattan. According to her, one day recently, a student stopped lessons, cleared her throat and put her hand up.

“Ahem, um, so...where we at?”

“What do you mean where we at?” my friend said.

“Well my Mom was watching TV yesterday and heard that North Korea had missiles aimed at the west coast of America and she wanted me to ask you, ‘Where we at?’”

119.

It’s hard for me to even imagine *anything that is not material*. I almost can’t even acknowledge that abstract concepts exist. When I do, my stomach clenches, a sort of cognitive dissonance which manifests as quick-clicking nausea, a kind of mild breathlessness. I feel as if I’ve abdicated, lazily, conceded a point insincerely, out of sloth. So thoroughly have I bolted myself to a defense of earth, flesh, matter. R.W. Emerson has said that spirituality is “matter reduced to an extreme thinness.” But I have no use for spirituality do I? As I’ve said, it steals the marvelous from the material world. And for my purposes here, in the noses of people habituated to polemic, it smells an awful lot like the Cloud.

549.

I keep going back to touch, re-think, re-figure, re-feel the sections of the text in which Preciado describes a malleability borne by flesh. (Is this, I wonder, a type of corporeal “free-fall?”) She’s managed to write out a version of *concreteness in motion*. And yet we already knew that materiality is not stuck-fast, color-fast or static. So why is this such a revelation to me?

We can get lost thinking that because we haven’t nailed down where we are that we are nowhere. But lost and non-existent are not mutually-dependent are they? Why do I have trouble thinking them separately?

453.

I recommend being adopted. I’ve never had to waste time scrambling to avert the disaster of becoming my parents. I was free to just love them. They were looking out for me. That was cool. Best, I always visually imagined my genesis as dispersed. I had a felt sense that I came from everywhere. I came from everyone. I used to idealize this expanded self. Though challenging to find and sustain, a feeling of being holo-conjoined can stave many varieties of lonely. I considered you know, the epidermal membrane, (delimiting, enunciating, isolating) not only powerfully illusory but, you know, some kind of deep, cheap trick. We seemed to be alone, but I knew we weren’t. Skin was some temporary solitary confinement. I assumed things would ratchet up to a better version of awesome with my death—at which point I would resume the ecstatic, breezy, primordial bustle of simply flying around with everything. The sparkling,

thrumming, glittering little multi-colored dots that represented Mike Teevee's cybernetically streaming body in Mel Stuart's 1971 movie *Willy Wonka and The Chocolate Factory*—that was how I imagined it. Dots, particles, a grand, fairly homogenous stew of everythingness. Or “is-ness.” But it wasn't just one person, it was everyone.

In *The Undercommons*, Moten and Harney write, “Hapticality, the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you, this feel of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem.” Hapticality, the haptic, ordinarily describes a kind of looking understood in terms of tactility. Here, however, Moten and Harney rustle up a whole new meaning for the word, replacing the idea of tactility with *feeling* and substituting versions of radical intersubjective flights of empathy for visuality.

554.

Jan Kempnaers did a show of photographs last year called *Spomenik*. Spomeniks are enormous monoliths, constructed from concrete, granite and reinforced steel, which speckle the rugged mountain scape of the former Yugoslavia. If you're a mad materialist like myself, they look a little bit ecstatic: huge, smooth, curled, in warm greys, jagged, completely abstruse, easily in dialogue with sci-fi pics like *Barbarella*, *Sleeper*, and the flowing fonts of roller rinks from the Seventies. In Willem Jan Neutelings' catalog essay for the show, he describes them as non-representational, “devoid of the cult of personality often found in Eastern Europe. They are

not busts of great leaders, there are no stars or sicles, they do not depict workers or famers' wives.” Instead the objects' “stance is neutral. Referring to nothing but themselves.” They are, if anything, vaguely cheerful, despite their tumescent girth. Strangely however, each of them was sited to mark the most horrifying of the events of the Second World War. So this is what I find interesting. The war was extra complex on this part of the continent because, in addition to being a war against the Nazis, it included a civil war which seized and riddled several ethnic groups of which many survivors remained. When the war ended, those left came together to form the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia.

All of the battles had had winners and losers, so each of the memorials was designed to simply mark, and not narrate. Each were carefully neither patriotic nor mournful. There were no local details included, no proper names were mentioned. These massive cairns would not choose sides or offer any semblance of symbolic parole. They answered questions about *where*, but not *what* exactly. Contrary to what Mr. Neutelings asserts I don't find them neutral. I find them incredibly confrontational, assertive, and present. Each is specifically itself, though it resists categorical stability related to state, side, team. Toward the end of his essay, he claims, “The good intentions of the artists and the politicians ultimately proved to be the tragedy of these objects. The Spomeniks were places of forgetting, while they should have been places of remembering.” Well-nigh all of them were dismantled in the early '90s, and the most massive, the most unremitting of them though

still extant, have lapsed into desuetude, are forgotten, unvisited and on way to being swallowed up by wild flora. How easy it is for us all, to assume it is (specifically) *resistance to a question of category*, that renders impracticability. How does a personal mode of transgressive indeterminacy via fluidity say, dialogue with ideas about the non-representational? Does resisting representability (and thus representation) lead to a kind of invisibility (via illegibility) or as happened to the Spomeniks in the above example, lead to a kind of unmemorability, dispassionism? Or, on the other hand, it may lead to something, canny, shimmering, slippery and flipping. Who doesn't love light on water in the morning?

537.

I don't mean, by this accretion of positively-valenced research regarding indeterminacy, becoming, motion, multiplicity and fluidity that these dynamics are somehow always evidentiary of something queer, gladdening, richly-nuanced, infinite, tender or even appealing. Best to realize that this is exactly *not* the case. Rapacious globalized capitalism has re-configured itself into just such shifting quicknesses, flows and malleability. With a "critical theory of becoming," as Rosi Braidotti writes, in a reference to her own philosophic work *Nomadic Theory*, "[we have] methodological navigational tools and an ethical compass to allow us to tell the difference between these different flows of mutation."

Concepts such as "rhizomes, becomings, lines of escape, flows, relays, and bodies without organs...release and express active states of being [and] break through

the conventional schemes of theoretical representation." For example, Braidotti writes that, "*becoming* works on a time sequence that is neither linear nor sequential because processes of becoming are not predicated on a stable, centralized Self who supervises their unfolding. These processes rather rest on a nonunitary, multilayered dynamic subject attached to multiple communities. Becoming woman/animal/insect is an affect that flows, like writing; it is a composition, a location that needs to be constructed together with, that is to say, in the encounter with others. They push the subject to his/her limits, in a constant encounter with external, different others. The nomadic subject as a nonunitary entity is simultaneously self-propelling and heterodeined, i.e., outward bound.")

But advanced capitalism, which is marked by the portability of products, information and money in service of profit is the "great nomad par excellence."¹⁸

909.

For some months my inamorata and I spent more time making thoughts for one another (in the form of electronic mail) than we actually spent in the flesh. *Thinking* with her was erotic, even at this pace—methodically—or *especially* at this pace. I frequently took leave upon waking in order to ensure sufficient time to compose a letter before work. I write slowly so this might have meant three hours of writing to produce a page of thoughts. In morsels, I was slowly leaking a large cache of what I called 'my hunches.' The following excerpt was written in response to her book, *The Red Parts: A Memoir*,

which I had just finished reading and which wove together several strands of her life, such as it was, or had happened, toward a kind of ‘story of how story fails.’ I hate story, by rote, especially then, and because I continued to accidentally, shamefully, work in “narrative,” I had been thinking a lot about it. I was pretty sure that stories made our minds weak, or revealed weak minds I wasn’t sure. But it did seem clear that they were bullshit buoys we clung to in a thrashing sea. Needless to say, I was moved by this narrative that managed, both in structure and content, to undo its truths (or dissolve its scaffolding) as it proceeded.

We don't tell ourselves stories in order to live, we tell ourselves stories in order to locate. Living is in some sense autonomic, the shit just keeps on. We tell ourselves stories in an effort to become relative. The sextant functions too, in this way, by indexing a naturally sourced constant, the horizon, and then triangulating. We want the edges, endings, beginnings, sandpapery bits toward the middle. We want them in order to end the euphoria/dysphoria of floating in dark. Humans bump icebergs, eat, love. Not who am I, but where am I. Where we are is fundamental because it comprises who we are. We locate, become relative, and manifest in relation. To accomplish this we need things to crash into. Assuming cosmological facts are imperceivable and unimaginable and to the extent that our bodies have squeezed any at all percept into sensible bits, I imagine that those bits have become too lo-res to piece back together into an experience that reflects correctly the analog machine. I can safely say this: I miss the real thing. I want to touch

it without senses. Be the is. By turns joyful as a sensate creature, but often despairing, I possess a felt sense of being barred from ecstasy/reality by a set of talents unequal to my surroundings.

99.

Can we discuss categories as versions of a where-type question? Categories, indeed, at their worst serve to create illusory delimitations. The things-in-the-world: *placement* and *distance* are not metaphors. But we use distance metaphors to describe or name many types of relation, including remoteness. If someone is thinking of something else at your side, you might say “You’re far away.” Certain people are better than others at generating profoundly detailed mental imagery. Daydreams or reveries are an utterly banal hybridization of presence, combining elements of concrete reality with mental or phantasmagorical experience. What is being present? Is it a metaphor? What is the nature of the relationship of being present to “placefulness?” What is the nature of feeling oriented, to a functioning ethics?

877.

In San Francisco, in the late 80s, I walked an awful lot. I can’t even count the times I would come up on a crazy, rabid fight, or some kind of domestic abuse situation playing out on the sidewalk or street. It was a druggy time actually, with a lot of very high, desperate people loping around, fists flying. It seems startling to me now, my friends and I flinging our bodies into these altercations, trying to check a squall, pull smaller people away from

larger ones. Speaking for myself, I didn't feel a choice really, if I could keep someone from being punched in the face again by running into the fray, I would. And you would too. Like people do at car accidents or earthquakes. I saw a lot of police brutality too, or harassment and made it a rule to ask questions, write down badge numbers, let the pigs know I was there. When I first started teaching I would tell this story and ask students to pull out a sheet of paper and write a brief narrative example of an *intervention* they had made. How had they handled perceived injustices? I learned that there are many 20 year olds who, by their own accounts have never made any sort of intervention all. What is authorial force? How does it relate to agency? How does a sense of invisibility (impotency) relate to a sense of agency? How do we create force without ground? Is all force created at the point of connection? I guess I'm mainly always wondering what versions of indeterminacy preclude a ground against which we gather force to move.

878.

My second question was, "How close would you have to be in order to decide to intervene to stop an injustice such as a man punching a woman in the face? Beating her down?" (This is something we saw a lot!) What if it erupted next to you? Across the street? A block away? Across town? For years I've wondered what the relationship is between proximity and our ability to pause, feel agency, intervene, try to make a change. Susan Sontag wrote that the urge to intervene is built on a sort of spark of emotion. The action is borne by the sizzle of emotion.

And if we don't act quickly enough the urge will probably just subside. I think it's also contingent upon a sense of potency. The ability to mark, to make marks.

908.

I had a girlfriend once, who was also adopted. Not long after we got together, she completed a "mutual reciprocal consent form" that (if it also happened to be signed by her birthmother) would be the juridical hallpass that would allow their belated rendezvous. Not only had she signed the form, but when the representative from Catholic Charities called a few days later, she reported that the birthmother had moved 23 times in the 23 years that had intervened, and had sent a paper letter *updating her address each time*. Presumably, after so long and sorrowful a wait, (once contact with the agency had been made) she had wanted to preclude her birthdaughter's struggle with any further "where-type-questions."

There were a stack of (orienting) letters that the case manager promised would be delivered as soon as the mail service could manage. They arrived a day later and were followed a few days hence by a giant vase with 24 yellow roses.

4.

As it turns out, humans have a gift for recalling locations and other spatial facts. Any of us could go into a house, even a big one, whisk through it and make a fairly accurate map of the thing later, without any effort at all, including the placement of furniture, artwork and rugs. It's actually a huge amount of data but because

it's imprinting on parts of our brain that handle spatial details, as opposed to language or numbers, we memorize it handily. This is a skill of ours. *One of our features.* It wouldn't be a stretch to guess that evolution favored those who could lead the group back to the bushes with the ripest biggest cashews, and also find home again. But when it comes to a string of 1s and 0s such as: 111110 0101001001010010010100010001111110010100100101 01110010010010100100100100000101110100010100 101000001, we're lost after remembering and reciting about 7 digits. Seven! If we "chunk" this string into groups by using mnemonic, spatial and associative techniques, with practice, over time, we are able to remember thousands of these 1s and 0s. We might be able to remember the order of twenty decks of playing cards or an entire poem after having just read it over for a moment or two. Each triplet, for example, 101 or 010 is assigned a character, an action and an object. That configuration or situation is then placed in a "memory palace." Some effort is made to really "see" the image after you've placed it, and then you move on. A guy called Ben Pridmore holds the record and was able to recall 4,140 digits of what they call "binary numbers" i.e., strings of number consisting only of 1 and 0. We commit things to memory based largely on how they might be made to correspond to what we already know, images that are familiar to us. The rest, perhaps to stay sane, we forget. There are questions as to whether anything we've seen or heard however actually "leaves" the body. Some folks believe it's there hanging around in the synapses somewhere. Back of the closet. Deep storage.

89.

I used to lobby for the usage and definition of the words "feminine," "female," "woman," to be to changed, made to be more broad, so wide and powerful that they would encompass bodies that weren't typically included in the category invoked by the words. I imagined that it might be a feminist coup for us to subsume bodies typically associated with "male," like the blob that ate Detroit. I've spent a lifetime distressed by the inability of people to realize that there is no distinction between men and women. I've wanted to do away with the words completely. It's hard to explain the flipping, expanding infinite continuum I felt when faced with these categories. It took years for me to realize that my experience of sex and gender was not just a progressive thought-experiment, but that it was concretely atypical, specific, my own.

Let's say I had to do this using the conventional binary and that I had to do it in 150 words or less: If you were to tell me I was a man I would say I am a *woman*. If you were to tell me I am a *woman*, I might accept that, lazily, but I would further facet. I would point out that I was brought up as a woman and they are my people. I am culturally a "woman," inside of my skin, I am a "woman." If I had to say something more, and I guess I do, instead of being a "man trapped in the body of a woman," I have been a "woman trapped in a woman's body" who has always lived in a mental body normally ascribed to "men." With the addition of testosterone I have been able to more closely align my felt-sense of my concrete body as one with structures typically ascribed to "males."

I'm going to say this once. One time and never again.

29.

Stein wrote, "Repeating then is in every one, in everyone their being and their feeling and their way of realizing everything and every one comes out of them in repeating. More and more then every one comes to be clear to some one." As a trans person, one of my biding interests is the tension between legibility and invisibility. More broadly, what kind of concessions do we make with accuracy in order that a thing (a social self, a communicative piece of art) become coherent, familiar, legible? There's no way to answer a question posed so broadly, but safe to say, the dynamic itself, the structure of that gap is one I face often. As far as I'm concerned it's not a thing to solve once and for all, (this gap-in-the-shape-of-several-things) it's more a buttress, full of force, a butte, a retaining wall, embankment, or weir. Something I touch while I walk. Or that touches me. Minor collision, sure, but collision nonetheless.

993.

Civil twilight. A penumbral state characterized by a gloaming, specifically the few moments of darkness in which stars have become visible but outdoor objects also remain legible. This kind of penumbra, a bardo in it's own right, is affectively and structurally comparable to my gender, in its becomingness, its motion, but (sort of ecstatically here) there is legibility as its existential condition.¹⁹

512.

I'm a very private person, skiddish, almost hermetic. I'm good-natured, gruffly friendly, kind—I suppose—but caught in a double-bind of fundamentally conflicting desires: visibility and invisibility. This roughly translates to "Shame/Interest." Which was one of Silvan Tomkins' odd linkages (in his ground-breaking work as the developer of Affect theory). Or even simpler, I want to be in relation but I'm terrified of being rejected. (From childhood I've been afflicted with an inappropriateness that manifests in generalized profusion.) However, after my mother died, I, somewhat recklessly, went ahead and sent this to *everyone I was in touch with during the few week prior*, sort of willy-nilly. Or anyone I knew who had had a parent die, or who I thought might love me in some weird way.

June 25, 2010. Hi everyone, So I'm back in town. Maggie and I are here at the house. The day is beautiful. June 23, I decided to catch the first plane I could after we left my mom's body. This was extremely difficult to do but the fact was, she wasn't in there anymore, it was becoming cooler and colder. This happens I guess when the fires of friction and fuel no longer emit heat. She was so beautiful, even as her body cooled. In the last few minutes before my brother and I left, I thought of it as her chrysalis. Her temporary home; a shelter no longer of use to her or us. My brother and I were working to convince ourselves that we could walk away. (Out those automatic doors into the heat and humidity of morning. Which always

comes. Unemotional back-breaking comforting. There were a hundred trees with new green leaves each over 80 feet tall.) I decided she was everywhere now. And so my mouth kept saying hello as we drove to the airport, even as my heart insisted on goodbye.

My mom was unresponsive physically from the time I arrived on June 21 around 5pm. She seemed to not be able to see during the bustle-hustle-moments, when her eyes would fly open; they freshed her sheets, bathed her, and tilted her from side to side. I leaked tears. I wondered if she was just paralyzed but was actually hearing and seeing. Mainly her eyes were closed. Everyone insisted she could hear me and feel my touch. This felt true. And so I persisted with a flow of sweet words. Sometimes unsure what might be most specifically comforting for her.

I listened to her breathing for about 36 hours, a deep insistent bellows, (her mouth open wide, drooping to one side) a loud sure helping of earth air into her lungs at 5 second intervals, minute after minute, moment after moment, unremitting, willful metronome. My companion, her breath, even as I slept at her side. I watched her and talked to her and stroked her and napped in her bed wrapped around her. I got used to the sound I have to say. Her raspy loud breathing. I was eventually unable to imagine it would stop. (But this was the goal at hand.) Each of the volunteers told me that my job was to let my mom know that it was ok to go. I believe that I was unconvincing for the first 33 hours of my time with her.

However on the last night, I put a pillow under her knees, and I told her I was going to take a walk. That I would smell honeysuckle and see fireflies, wet my shoes in midnight dew. I told her that I was going to do those things because I was going to stay on earth in this form. "But your work here is done mama." I told her that she had set us all up very well with her love and her lessons. I told her she had inspired me to become an artist. I told her that I loved her so much, that we all knew that she loved us too, that she was surrounded in love, surrounded in light. And I walked. After my walk, among other things, I told her I was going to go to sleep, and she should too. I said it firmly. I told her to not be afraid, to relax, that it was ok if she had to go. I told her I knew she was tired and that all accounts of heaven (from those who have so briefly visited) are that it is pure bliss. I told her not to be afraid. I thanked her. I said, "Thank you Mom." I leaked tears but tried to hide them from her now. I turned on the bathroom light and closed the door so a long foot thick rectangle of yellow reached her from feet to head. I touched her feet over the blanket, then her thighs, her torso and bare chest below her throat, her shoulders her face and ears. I kissed her all over her beautiful bald head and I said, "Goodnight mama. You go to sleep." And then I laid down in my little chair bed there put my jacket over my upper body and silently cried myself to sleep. The sound of her breathing, deep and gulping and certain.

At a certain point I woke up. I listened for her breath, which I heard after a moment. Much shallower, faster.

I became alert, just then the AC unit went on, aurally overtaking the sound of her. This had happened innumerable times before, and it was always a strange bardo for me. Would the breath still be happening when the fan went back off? I strained to hear her breath over the grinding of the fan but couldn't. My torso leapt and I sat up to check if her chest was moving. It didn't seem to be. The AC roared. Her left hand puffed the sheet up suddenly, the tiniest, instant Halloween ghost. Her first movement—a signaling. I leapt to her, to that hand. Her eyes were open now, illuminated, looking up, her mouth was now closed, her face no longer tilted, akimbo. She was beautiful. And dying. Her mouth was in slow-motion rounding up little bits of earth air for her lungs, or just an echo of that I guess. Her eyes were in light and open. She was jutting her chin in the sweetest, most dignified little coquettish juts. She was in the doorway of all worlds and I was in the doorway too. I forced myself not to disturb her, she seemed all at once to know where she was going and how to get there. Her map. Her job. The goal at hand. I cupped her warm hand in mine and let her go. I told her one more time, you are surrounded in love, you are surrounded in light, don't be afraid. And her neck was pulsing a little bit? Her eyes were looking at something in another place. Her mouth needed less air, less often and her chin moving more slowly. I never wanted it to end. I have never wanted infinity to open up under an instant like I wanted that then. And then her eyes relaxed and her shoulders relaxed of a piece. And I knew she had found her way. Dared. Summoned up her smarts and courage and whacked a way through. I was

really astonished. Proud of her. I looked at the clock it was 2:16.

I spent another 5 hours with her body, alone, with the light on. She was so incredibly beautiful. She looked 19. I took about a hundred pictures of her. I sat with her for a long long time holding her hand. I prepared a meal and ate in the other room and returned. I kept talking to her. I felt like I lived a hundred years, a lifetime with her silent, peaceful body. I turned off the AC unit. The ceiling fan above her was whipping air, holding the space of cycle, where her breath had been. I could've stayed another hundred years right there--kissing her and visiting with her. It would have been fine with me. Important.

My brother came at 6:15 and we visited together. And eventually said goodbye around 7:30. He took me to the airport from there and I slept on the floor listening to crowds and planes and TVs. My mother, Phyllis DeChant, was a real firecracker, a vital vital woman, stalwart in her way. As you can imagine, I am going to miss her terribly.

Thank you for your kindnesses and your thoughts over the last few days and years. Love, Harry

896.

I had always been a bit cavalier about death, you know, thought it simply a shuffling of matter, a change in form alone, this becoming dirt again, air-borne dust, cycling back into earth's flows. It sounded calming, noble,

thrilling, inevitable. But I had missed an important detail of this kind of transformation. The third thing, the energy-body that emanates from a certain grouping of molecules in certain magnetic, electrical proximity is a *presence*. When the molecules and electricity disperse, the presence no longer flows, at least not in the way it used to. And I miss that. I could say the words, “No pieces are lost.” And your ears would hear me speak.

But something was lost.

I was stunned by how beautiful she looked. I thought, not being a photographer by vocation, that I might be able to capture the beauty, as such. So I tried. *Click // Review the LED screen // No she looks more beautiful than that // Let me try another one // Click.*

I took almost seventy pictures of her body as it cooled. None would turn out to be able to contain what I sought to capture and to hold onto.

219.

Constitutive corporeality—as lovely as it is limited—remains the final serviceable resistance against the brutishness brought by capital and greed. Flesh is ethics. At the end of a short story entitled, *Worms Make Heaven*, Laurie Weeks writes:

... Butterflies love zinnias and it's totally mutual. Vermillion zinnias or zinnias of any color spiraling up toward the sky, so easy to drink and

spiral up to those myriad blues up there like nothing. It's so easy, we're playing, it's heaven. Worms make heaven. People say things like, “Worms don't feel pain.” What? How could you know that? What people should always say instead is, “Oh my god, worms, thank you! Jesus fuckin' Christ, thank you, worms. Thank you for heaven.” Worms can regenerate both their heads and their tails, but meanwhile their agony's unmistakable. I pushed fishhooks through live nightcrawlers as bait when I was growing up. “Oh, worms don't feel pain,” said Dad. He said that about the trout, too, as he taught us to bang their heads on the edge of the boat or stab a knife straight into their brains. I believed him until I was 14, and since then I haven't been able to fish. Doctors used to operate on newborn babies without anesthesia because they “knew” babies don't feel pain. Children who don't feel pain chew their tongues off, rest their hands on burning stoves, gouge out their own eyeballs. How could anything alive NOT feel pain and remain alive?

We make ourselves in relation, of course, and our senses keep us from wrapping ourselves around things so hard we wrench meat from bone. Another way of saying it is that pain produces things: proximity, velocity, and establishes a rhythm for relating.

831.

When a drummer engages with a drum, the meat of the project—I mean to say, the *substance* that she addresses is the space *between* contacts with the drumhead. What you're organizing then is the fullness of absence. And apparently the hits are called, "attacks." Most of drumming is organizing the time between attacks.

421.

I don't use Facebook or any of the social media aside from e-mail which I check anywhere from zero to 12 times a day. I carry a fat datebook with me (and other smaller notebooks too for art notes) in which one week at a time is visible. I tote these everywhere, along with several mechanical pencils. I read books made from paper and am devoted to marginalia, made and found. I do have a cell phone and, as a direct result, am unable to recall by memory any more than one or two phone numbers at all. If we think of "self" as sedimentary, an accrual of memories (which it's not, it's actually housed as a constellation of millions of neurons) and if we keep more and more of our memories housed in nearby machines, does the strength and possibility for our memories become emaciated, atrophied? And for that matter, what is the nature of a self, now dispossessed of its "mind-stuffs?" *Beside myself*. Spectating a jet-stream of capitalist flotsam does not a joyful day make. A mind-memory or a body-memory is made, primarily via concerted effort. In this way force and self are linked. If, supposedly, we're responding to the present moment based on the complex of synapse firings that connect

thousands of pieces of knowledge and experience, but we've blithely outsourced the better portion of that material, how do we approach ethical decisions? Navigate? I wonder about the orienting force of the horizon as a metaphor for memory proper.

422.

Computing power is contained in ever-tinier devices. As of this writing hundreds of thousands of human beings, going about their daily lives are using objects about the size of a bottle cap to track heartbeat, pulse, oxygenation, and how many steps they take in a day. The quantified-selfers. There's even a guy, engineer Gordon Bell, who for years has been wearing a miniature camera/mic combo strapped onto his chest which records "everything he sees, does and says." His web use is logged, each thing he reads is immediately scanned and his phone calls are recorded. 16 years of his life is now stored in less than one 200GB harddrive.²⁰ In this manner, and with ever-more powerful artificial intelligence searchware, he asserts, *nothing can be lost*. For him, this is tremendously liberating. He's interested in *absolute memory* and holds out the idea that perfect quantification would, in turn, provide perfect wisdom.

There are, relatively speaking, very few things in this world that can be "accurately" "measured." At least very few things of interest to me. And correspondingly, there is very little of interest to me in quantification. Or I should say, there is very little that is not wildly frustrating about it. Which should not be let to disaffirm my avid interest in specificity. It is a little known fact that certain

very faint stars can only be seen by our peripheral vision. To see them we must look away. Moten and Harney say, “We owe each other indeterminacy. We owe each other everything.” I’m fascinated by specificity, complexity. All of the nuance that category burns out. I’m occupied with the idea of motion, or flow or flip-flap. All are cool. I want to find something I cannot put my finger on but find that it exists anyway. Beyond visible, beyond legible. Fuzzy to *you* maybe, but not fuzzy *absolutely*.

344.

We’re seeing the first generation come of age for whom language has been introduced more by machine than by parents.²¹ What happens to a person’s sense of trust, relative certainty, investment and, I wonder, orientation (sense of placefulness) when language has been disconnected from bodies, warmth, touch. It’s not just individual brain chemicals produced by and in sociality that are at issue, like endorphins during a hug or a conversation, though that is clearly the bulk of the effect. I like to think on a micro-material level, a molecular level, there are kinds of particulate exchanges between bodies, that are as yet unaccounted for, i.e., your breath in my lungs or weirder, the micro-reverberations of the entirety of the analog contingencies of the encounter, the breeze on my face when you gesture. All I’m saying is that pheromones are just the beginning of a conversation about the net physiological effects of face time.

538.

According to Braidotti, in the case of global capitalism, “*free-circulation*, pertains almost exclusively to the domain of goods and commodities... [p]eople do not circulate nearly as freely.” Rhetorics of “allegedly free mobility” exist simultaneously with “frozen borders, increasing discrimination and exclusion of multiple ‘disposable’ others.” This produces scores of transnational citizens, provisional settlers, displaced peoples. And the hyper-mobility of late capital, “instead of challenging the hegemony of nation-states, *strengthens* their hold not only over territory and social space but also over identity and cultural memory.” She calls the thick and spreading global surveillance system, “centerless, but highly controlled [and] all-pervasive.”

It should be noted that this self-same, perverted, commodification-oriented nomadism, by design, generates socioeconomic matrices by which workers must endure a sort of mandatory motility, a kind of enforced precariousness.²² “Interim, untenured, substandard, underpaid work has become the norm” for most of the global employed. And beware to the worker that resists exploitation by “temping.”

Fred Moten and Stefano Harney write about this as a situation whereby policy-makers diagnose workers as *incorrect*, “fugitive planners,” who insist upon consensus as opposed to contingency, who carry on the “black operations of the multitude.” The diagnosis is as follows: “What’s wrong with them? They won’t change. They won’t embrace change.” In a passage that always moves me, they suggest that there is an important distinction

between embracing non-stasis as an experimental modus operandi, and being infinitely arrested “in contingency, flexibility, and that administered precarity that imagines itself to be immune from what Judith Butler might call our undercommon precariousness.” They remind us the capitalist system is continually improving means of “externalization of risk, the placement at an externally imposed risk of all life, so that work against risk can be harvested without end.”²³

540.

After reading several reports this week, detailing the irreversible effects of carbon-poison in the world’s atmosphere, I admit, I’m mourning, worried, nauseated. But I reject the fact that *all is lost*, that *it’s too late to act*, that *we’re too weak*, *capitalism is too strong*, *too pervasive*. I’m not built that way, I’m an optimist. And I’m also a stubborn, ornery piece of shit. I like the idea of taking stock: of conditions, minds, flows that are always already flying in the face of scarcity, commodification, brutality. I note relations that are kind, intense, generous and brave. We’re here man, doing it. I like the idea that we don’t have to get *outside* of the system—as if it’s everywhere all the time, a vacuum wrap around the world and all of our actions & desires—in order to be “pure” enough to work against it. As Rosi Braidotti says, “Social and cultural critique is neither a matter of opposition in a dialectical and confrontational mode, nor just the lame quest for angles of resistance. It requires a robust praxis of collective engagement with the specific conditions of our times...” I am interested in the idea of not *squaring*

off with power, not creating a dam-like resistance, which, by creating a single face, seems to focus the power of the hegemonic flow.

Roland Barthes’ notion of “The Neutral” is another example of such an idea. He defined his Neutral as “that which outplays the paradigm, or rather...everything that baffles the paradigm [...] for me, the Neutral doesn’t refer to “impression” of grayness, of “neutrality” or “indifference.” [It] can refer to intense, strong, unprecedented states. ‘To outplay the paradigm’ is an ardent, burning activity.” For example, I thought the Occupy movement’s refusal to install leaders, or give a list of “demands” was a provocative, effective instance of this kind of baffling the paradigm.

Part of what’s being outlined by Moten and Harney in *The Undercommons* is this idea of always-already-vital social energies. In a section discussing how policy tries to disrupt generative communitarian flows and make them “productive for capital” they say, “policy must first deal with the fact that the multitude is *already productive for itself*.”

So let’s not *wait*, or convince ourselves that we’re on hold, or that it’s too late, anyway, because the fact is, we are already rolling. In a chapter called *Politics Surrounded*, they suggest as much: “We’re already here, moving. We’ve been around. We’re more than politics, more than settled, more than democratic. We surround democracy’s false image in order to unsettle it. Every time it tries to represent our will, we’re unwilling. Every time it tries to take root, we’re gone (because we’re already here, moving.) [...] We’re in a trance that’s under

and around us. We move through it and it moves with us, out beyond the settlement, out beyond the redevelopment, where black night is falling, where we hate to be alone, back inside to sleep till morning, drink till morning, plan till morning, as the common embrace, right inside, and around, in the surround.”

811.

Some people, even some heavyweight, otherwise pretty smart thinkers, continue to theorize that sexual difference is some sort of primary, necessary organizational taxonomy. One queer theorist as late as 1994 wrote that she thought it was *impossible* to have an experience that is not from the viewpoint of one of these two categories because to do so would be to have (tautology notwithstanding) an experience that is outside experience! And even though that sounds stupid the way I’ve written it here, I think that in many ways this blockage persists. I find, for my situation, these more indeterminate ideas to be useful: gender-queer, gender-fluid, etc.

In 2006, I am at the Los Angeles Zoo, looking at the Orangutans, the adults of which have these enormous and exciting huge-sausage-saucer heads that I find *overwhelming* to behold no matter how many times I discover them. I am 38 years old, trim, wearing brown Dickies, a worn-out T-shirt and a dirty baseball hat, worn work boots: a butch dyke with a goatee. I have my 2-year old son in tow. He keeps insisting that I hoist him onto the rail and steady him there, so he can see better. We watch the male Orangutan catch and cradle a related-looking (but much cuter) wispy-haired, baby animal.

They kiss briefly and presently their fingers curl together. Now a tap on my shoulder.

I turn and am face-to-face with young, white guy, maybe 16 years old. He says, real friendly, “Can I take your picture?”

I pause, confused. “What?”

“Can I take your picture? I’ve never seen anyone like you and my friends back home aren’t going to believe it.”

This was one of many instances, memorable for their distorted quality—the Orangutan heads are amazing, but my head is more amazing!—and because I feel like I’ve been rendered invisible by a kind of over-visibility. I was someone people stared at, which was fine with me. I was someone people pointed toward, goaded their friends to check out—and I’ve never liked that at all.

81.

I had a strange face. Now—with the addition of pharmaceutical testosterone, which I started in 2011—I just have a face.

669.

In *Assuming a Body*, Salamon reminds us that the Aristotelian concept of place described in *Physics IV*, hinges on matter, and is ontological. We *see* a thing, so it must exist and from there we can accept the fact that it is *somewhere*. Aristotle wrote, “[we] all suppose that things which exist are somewhere (the non-existent is nowhere—where is the goat-stag or the sphinx?)” Salamon notes that, perhaps not incidentally, both of

these figures, the goat-stag and the sphinx, are sexually undecidable and wonders whether "...what secures the ontological primacy of place is precisely the fact that anything that is categorically undecidable cannot be located in any proper place. What renders a thing or being impossible is literally that it *has no place*."

566.

Salamon goes on however and explains that as *Physics IV* wears on, so do Aristotle's ideas on place continue to develop. He eventually asserts that, "Place is the boundary of the containing body at which it is in contact with the contained body...the innermost motionless boundary of what contains is *place*." Cool. Now place is the spreading points of contact between two things, and, according to this, that area is not precisely the *surface* of the thing either. This place he theorizes is in fact, **away from** the surface, the "innermost motionless boundary" of what contains—is place. So this is interesting. I read it as another way of thinking one's matter-self. *The place of my self, then, is a thing contained somewhere within, but not defined or established by this envelope of skin.*

654.

I'm scared of almost everything. I'm crushed and aflame with painful surges of adrenaline several times each day. When I think about experimenting with, say, Lexapro, dousing the flames, opting for a high-function lifestyle, I start doing a protective kind of mourning. Pre-grief. I rehearse the idea that the drug will change my *mind*. I've always carried my strange brain with me like a giant

bundle of steak or a great little, rubbery newborn. It's heavy like that, in my arms, which are tired, and I have a blanket around it, or brown paper usually I guess, tied with string, and though my brain thinks too many things at once, a condition I also find painful—sometimes I think of it like a long thresher with hundreds of arms, mowing impossibly wide swaths—I've always been fond of it's fairly compulsive lateral leaping, as well as its strange insistence upon gleaned relational structure, and quickly generating webs of mental images, like galaxies, full with comparable items or situations. If I could have just one t-shirt to wear on a desert island it would say, false or veritable analogy. For an artist, there's a good chance the nuance is going to be inconsequential, or, I should say, providential.

910.

What is composition? What is it for me to be able to *compose my thoughts*? Orient more thoroughly. Provide nuance by having gained a footing, I'm mentally imaging here a large, multifaceted crystal. How many sides does it have? A blur. I facet the blob. For the most part, I approximate a thought unless I stay with it for awhile, construct it, see (or create) the details, touch the apparently immutable paradoxes of a thought-becoming. Faceting takes time. But time spent faceting is vertical time. Like the frontier of the so-called Mandelbrot Set, images of which depict an edge revealing ever-finer recursive detail at increasing magnifications.

911.

In *Moments of Being*, Virginia Woolf recounts a kind of molten, quantum experience of time and, implicitly, self.

The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In those moments I find one of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am thinking of the past; but that it is then that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, when the film on the camera reaches only the eye. But to feel the present sliding over the depths of the past, peace is necessary. The present must be smooth, habitual. For this reason—that it destroys the fullness of life—any break—like that of house moving—causes me extreme distress; it breaks; it shallows; it turns the depth into hard thin splinters. As I say to Leonard: “What’s there real about this? Shall we ever live a real life again?...I write this partly in order to recover my sense of the present by getting the past to shadow this broken surface. Let me then, like a child advancing with bare feet into a cold river, descend again into that stream.”²⁴

Things are more real for Woolf when time stacks up, deepens. For her, the present is shallow and scratching. It’s only when habit (body) comes to bear that she “layers up” states, locations. The idea of speed, rushing from one place to the next, becomes moot. The concept of the fold, the continuum in the fold—I mean all the moments of time we know but ignore—seems to dissolve in the afterglow of her formulation. I mean, if everything is happening at once. Or if everything CAN happen at once or is just always already. When we think time as vertical, location has to stack, superimpose or superposition. Classical orientation (into which we might need to introduce the anomaly of the pocket) was always relative anyway, and here, it falls downstage and stumbles into the pit.

114.

Related to vertical, stacked or simultaneous bodies in time, Rosi Braidotti suggests that a “*nomadic remembering*” is not indexed on the authority of the past. It rather occurs in relation to creative imagination in the future anterior: “You will have changed,” “They will have fought for justice,” “We will have been free.”

83.

Dear Maggie,

A couple of years ago, I began searching, in so many words, for a fundamental particle. I had had a hunch in grad school that everything was made from just one thing, that difference was an illusion, or a trick of par-turition, fecundity. Juvenile, perhaps, the urge to solve

war and xenophobia by positing a homogenous universe with no real edges. As if to generate solidarity we would need to be the same. It turns out scientists are aware of about seventeen (17) fundamental particles, but more interesting perhaps is that these compose a heterogeneous universe. An ecosystem! This fact returns us to the significance of arrangement (and amount and density), the primary contingencies that generate the observable world. With these seventeen particles all else is possible. Based on this, I repeat, orientation, location become key issues. I guess I'm wondering how far one can take this, metaphorically, or otherwise.

Love, Harry

1000.

Place—because, more than shape, *displacement* is so powerful a forming force—was as fundamental to Ricketts' understanding of the world as anything else. Emphasized here by the last lines from *Sea of Cortez* from 1941:

Labeling is easy, simple, and necessary. Yet the failure to label clearly and immediately has led to many ridiculous situations. One expedition, which need not be named, labeled Atlantic animals as coming from the Panamic regions. And another completely lost track of its collection, to the disgust of the specialists who later tried to determine the species. Labels are best made on slips of good drawing paper and printed with a drawing pen in India ink. Each label

should include the date, the exact place, the depth, and a number added which will agree with the number in the collecting notes. In the collecting notes, under this number, should occur any remarks covering ecological factors or observed action of the living animal which would be impossible to put on the label. The label should be placed inside the jar with the animal, and it should be done immediately, before a new lot of specimens comes in. There has not, to our knowledge, been any single expedition or extended trip which failed to turn out some unlabeled, or mislabeled material, so that the records are full of obviously incorrect reports. Some Panamic animals have been reported from Puget Sound, and our common California shore crab, *Pachygrapsus*, was originally described as from the Sandwich Islands. Immediate labeling, on the same day as the collection, is the only way to reduce these errors to a minimum. This cannot be over-emphasized.

And with that, the black and white picture plates (Annotated Phyletic Catalog) commence.

ENDNOTES

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- 4 Wayne Koestenbaum, “Stein is Nice,” *Cleavage: Essays on Sex, Stars and Aesthetics*, Ballantine Books, 2000.
- 5 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, University of Minnesota Press, 1992.
- 6 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, Minor Compositions, 2013.
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- 11 William James, “Stream of Thought,” *Principles of Psychology: Volume 1*, Dover Publications, 1950.
- 12 Hannah Arendt, “Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government,” 1953.
- 13 Anthony Wilden, “Analog and Digital Communication: On Negation, Signification, and Meaning,” *System and Structure: Essays in Communication and Exchange*, Tavistock Publications, Ltd., 1972.
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- 15 Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself,” *Leaves of Grass*, 1855.
- 16 James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science*, 1987.
- 17 James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science*, 1987.
- 18 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, Columbia University Press, 2011.
- 19 This term was initially brought to my attention by the art-making collaborative known as Contempt 6, who in 2014 entitled one of their pieces, “Five Suns at Civil Twilight.”
- 20 Joshua Foer, *Moonwalking with Einstein: The Art and Science of Remembering Everything*, Penguin Books, 2012.
- 21 Franco “Bifo” Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*, Semiotext(e), 2012.
- 22 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, Columbia University Press, 2011.
- 23 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Minor Compositions, 2013.
- 24 Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being: Unpublished autobiographical writings*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.



