

Art + Australia

Outside

Issue Six (

2019

56.1

Edward COLLESS, *Outer Limits* 10-15 / -

Darren JORGENSEN, *Magical Appropriations: Barry William Hale after Imants Tillers* 24-31 / -

Robyn ADLER, *Killing Daddy in the Great Outdoors* 34-41 / -

Vincent LE, *Skinned Alive: The Furnomenology of Spirit* 44-49 / -

Leon MARVELL, *Within a Forest Dark: Some Howlings for the Loup-garou + Jack SARGEANT, Divine Outsider* 50-59 / -

Eva COLLINS, *Vali & Gianni* 60-63 / -

Jessica Laraine WILLIAMS, *Anti-Hotel: A Folly in Five Tropes* 66-69 / -

Wes HILL, *The Outlier Problem* 72-79 / -

Anthony WHITE, Anna PARLANE, Grace MCQUILTEN and Charles GREEN, *Outsider Art in Australia: Artists' Voices Versus Art-world Mythologies* 80-95 / -

Gareth JENKINS, *Buried Truth* 96-105 / -

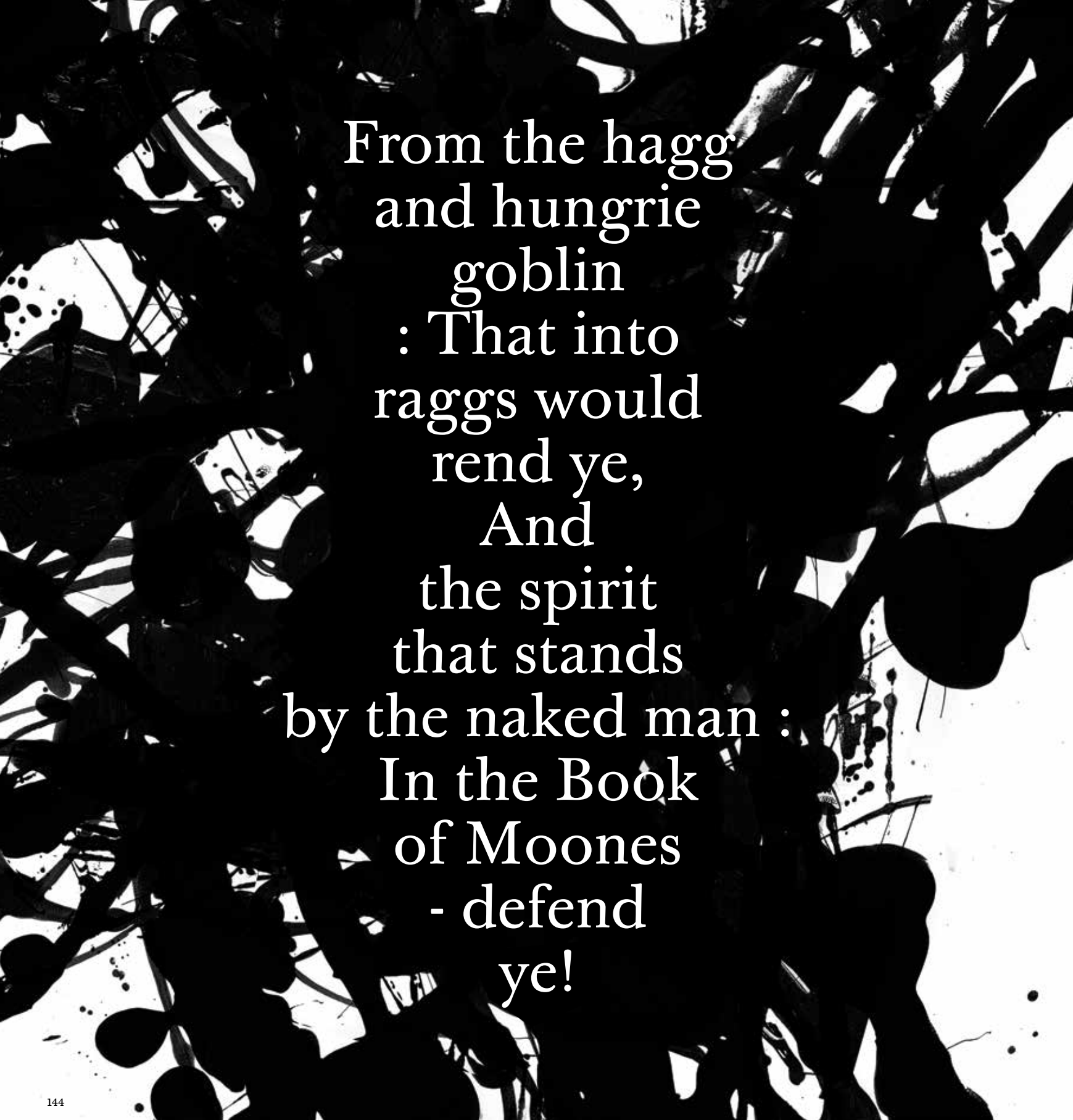
Nancy MAURO-FLUDE, *Vessels of Infinite Veracity: Command-line Incantations* 106-111 / -

Louis MASON, *The Cruciform Engines* 113-125 / -

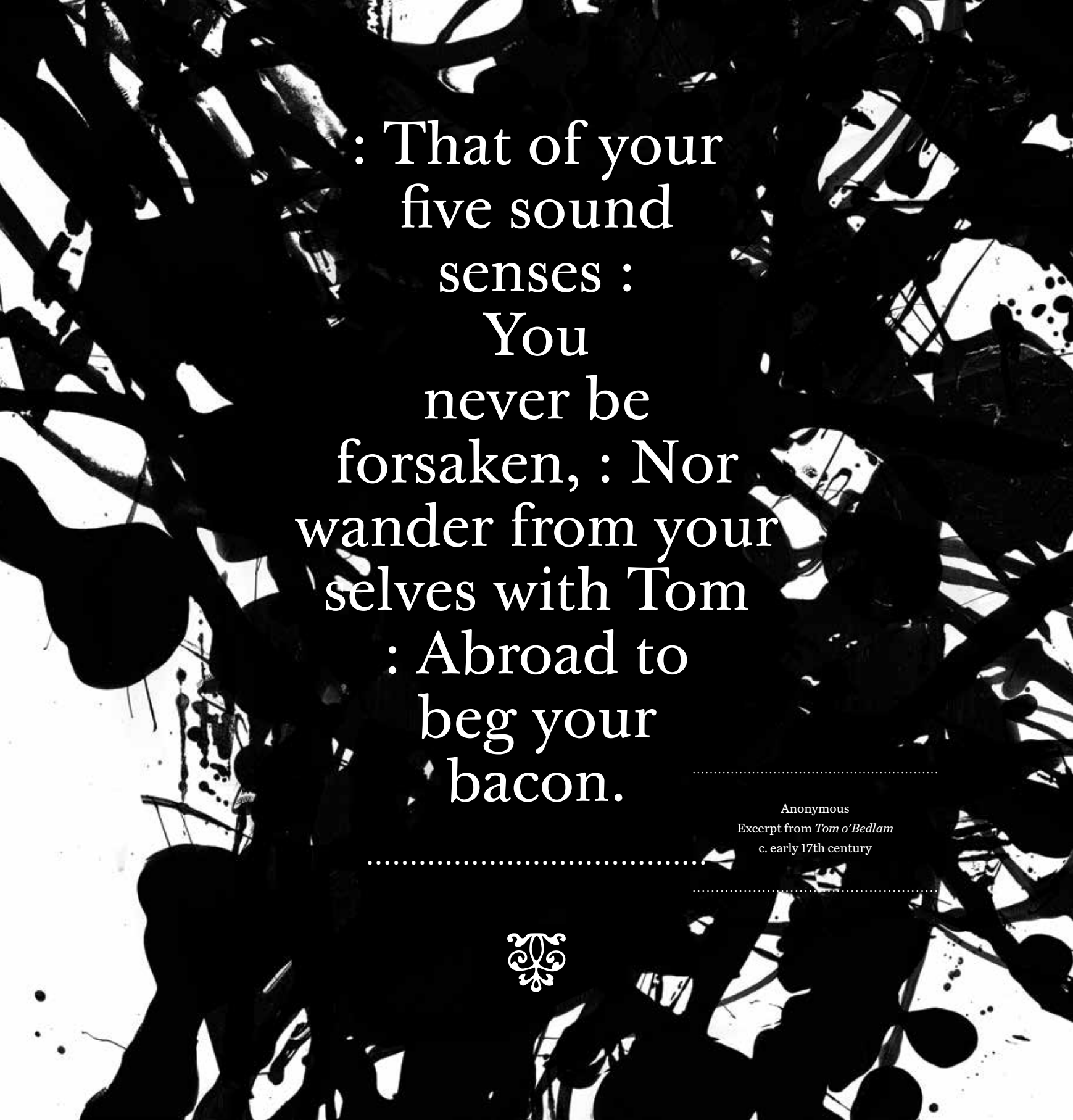
Azza ZEIN, *Coinage* 127-133 / -

Prudence GIBSON, *The Cronos Will Take Back the Night* 134-137 / -

Vladimir MINUSK, *Host* 140, *Ostranenie* 141 / -



From the hagg
and hungrie
goblin
: That into
raggs would
rend ye,
And
the spirit
that stands
by the naked man :
In the Book
of Moones
- defend
ye!



: That of your
five sound
senses :
You
never be
forsaken, : Nor
wander from your
selves with Tom
: Abroad to
beg your
bacon.

.....

Anonymous
Excerpt from *Tom o' Bedlam*
c. early 17th century

.....



Publisher _ Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne
Editor-in-chief _ Su Baker AM
Editor _ Edward Colless
Design editor _ John Warwicker
Online editor _ Tessa Laird
Managing editor _ Vikki McInnes
Editorial Assistant_ Caitlin Patane
Guest curators _ Leon Marvell and Jack Sargeant
Copyediting and proofreading _ Clare Williamson
Interns_Freya Pitt and Brigit Ryan

Subscriptions _ www.artandaustralia.com/subscribe
Distribution _ John Rule Art Book Distribution, London,
johnrule.co.uk; and Peribo, Sydney, peribo.com.au
Art + Australia was established in 1963 by Sam Ure-Smith,
and in 2015 was donated to the Victorian College of the Arts
at the University of Melbourne by then publisher and editor
Eleonora Triguboff as a gift of the ARTAND Foundation.
Emeritus honorary chair _ Eleonora Triguboff

© Copyright 2019
Victorian College of the Arts
University of Melbourne
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The views expressed in *Art + Australia* are those of the contributing
authors and not necessarily those of the editors or publisher.

The editors and publisher respectfully acknowledge the Boonwurrung
and Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation, on whose land *Art + Australia*
is produced. We acknowledge their ancestors and Elders, who are part
of the longest continuing culture in the world.

Art + Australia
Issue Six (56.1): Outside
December 2019
ISSN 0004-301 X
ISBN 978-0-6485474-1-9

Victorian College of the Arts
Faculty of Fine Arts and Music
University of Melbourne
234 St Kilda Road
Southbank Victoria 3006
AUSTRALIA
T: +613 9035 9463
E: art-australia@unimelb.edu.au
W: artandaustralia.com

Associates:

Max Delany, Melbourne
David Elliott, Guangzhou
Julie Ewington, Sydney
Chantal Faust, London
Jeff Gibson, New York
Paul Greenaway OAM, Adelaide/Berlin
David Hansen, Canberra
Helen Hughes, Melbourne
Martyn Jolly, Canberra
Darren Jorgensen, Perth
Natalie King, Melbourne
Adrian Martin, Barcelona
Ian McLean, Melbourne
Djon Mundine OAM, Mittagong, NSW
Daniel Palmer, Melbourne
Gwynneth Porter, Christchurch
Julia Robinson, New York
Ted Snell AM, Perth
Zara Stanhope, Brisbane



Art + Australia acknowledges the support of the University of Melbourne
through the Centre of Visual Art (CoVA).

Contributors

Robyn Adler practises art, philosophy and psychoanalysis. At the Victorian College of the Arts, Centre for Ideas, she is currently conducting PhD research on the contemporary imaginary and flight from judgement in art criticism.

Eva Collins was born in Poland and in 1958 arrived with her family in Melbourne, where she works as an artist. She has published photographs, poetry and travel pieces and exhibited photography and performance videos. With both pen and camera, she likes to capture the essence of things.

Prudence Gibson is a Postdoctoral Fellow at UNSW Art & Design. She is author of *The Rapture of Death* (Boccalatte, 2010), *Janet Laurence: The Pharmacy of Plants* (NewSouth Publishing, 2015) and *The Plant Contract: A Pact Between Humans, Art and Nature* (Brill, 2017). She has co-edited *Aesthetics After Finitude* (re.press, 2016) and *The Covert Plant* (Punctum Books, 2017).

Charles Green is Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Melbourne. He is an authority in contemporary international and Australian art, on biennials and on artist collaborations. His latest book, co-authored with Anthony Gardner, is *Biennials, Triennials and Documenta: The Exhibitions that Created Contemporary Art* (Blackwell Wiley, 2016). He is also an artist, working in collaboration with Lyndell Brown since 1989.

Wes Hill is Senior Lecturer in Art History and Visual Culture at Southern Cross University, Lismore, New South Wales.

Gareth Jenkins is a poet, artist and researcher. He is the editor of the first book-length publication of writings by Anthony Mannix, *The Toy of the Spirit*, published in 2019 by Puncher & Wattmann. Jenkins' first poetry collection, *Recipes for the Disaster*, was released by Five Islands Press in 2019. He manages *The Atomic Book*, an online digital archive of artwork and sound recordings by Anthony Mannix.

Darren Jorgensen is Senior Lecturer in Art History at the University of Western Australia. He is the editor of *Bush Women* (Fremantle Arts Centre, 2018), co-editor with Ian McLean of *Indigenous Archives: The Making and Unmaking of Aboriginal Art* (UWAP, 2017) and the co-author with David Brooks of *Wanarn Painters of Place and Time* (UWAP, 2016).

Vincent Le is a PhD candidate in philosophy at Monash University. He has taught philosophy at Deakin University and the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy. He has published in *Hypatia*, *Cosmos and History* and *Colloquy*, among other journals. Recent work focuses on the reckless propagation of libidinal materialism.

Leon Marvell is widely published in the area of aesthetics, philosophy, European esotericism and film. His recent books include *The Physics of Transfigured Light: The Imaginal Realm and the Hermetic Foundations of Science* (Inner Traditions, 2016) and *Endangering Science Fiction Film* (Routledge, 2015).

Louis Mason is an Australian artist and writer currently based in London. He has shown and published extensively in Australia, and is currently engaged in postgraduate study at Goldsmiths College. In 2012 he was a co-founder of Knight St Art Space, and was the director of that space over the course of its operation.

Dr Nancy Mauro-Flude is an artist whose research is driven by the demystification of technology and the 'mystification' that lies in and through the performance of the machinic assemblage. Systems experimentation forms the basis of her performance work, where the computer is approached as a theatre machine. Grey magics, hijackings, driftings and seizures of power are somatic and subversive subterfuges by which she urges, twists and explores the aesthetic politic of the open source spirit. Founder of Despoinas Critical Media Coven *home brewed* in Tasmania in 2008, she coordinates Emerging Digital Cultures and leads the HCI and Aesthetics studio in Digital Media, School of Design, RMIT University.

Grace McQuilten is a Senior Lecturer in Art History and Theory, and Leader of the Contemporary Art and Social Transformation Research Group at RMIT University. Her research considers art's engagement with broader social and economic systems. Her most recent book, co-authored with Anthony White, is *Art as Enterprise: Social and Economic Engagement in Contemporary Art* (I.B. Tauris, 2016).

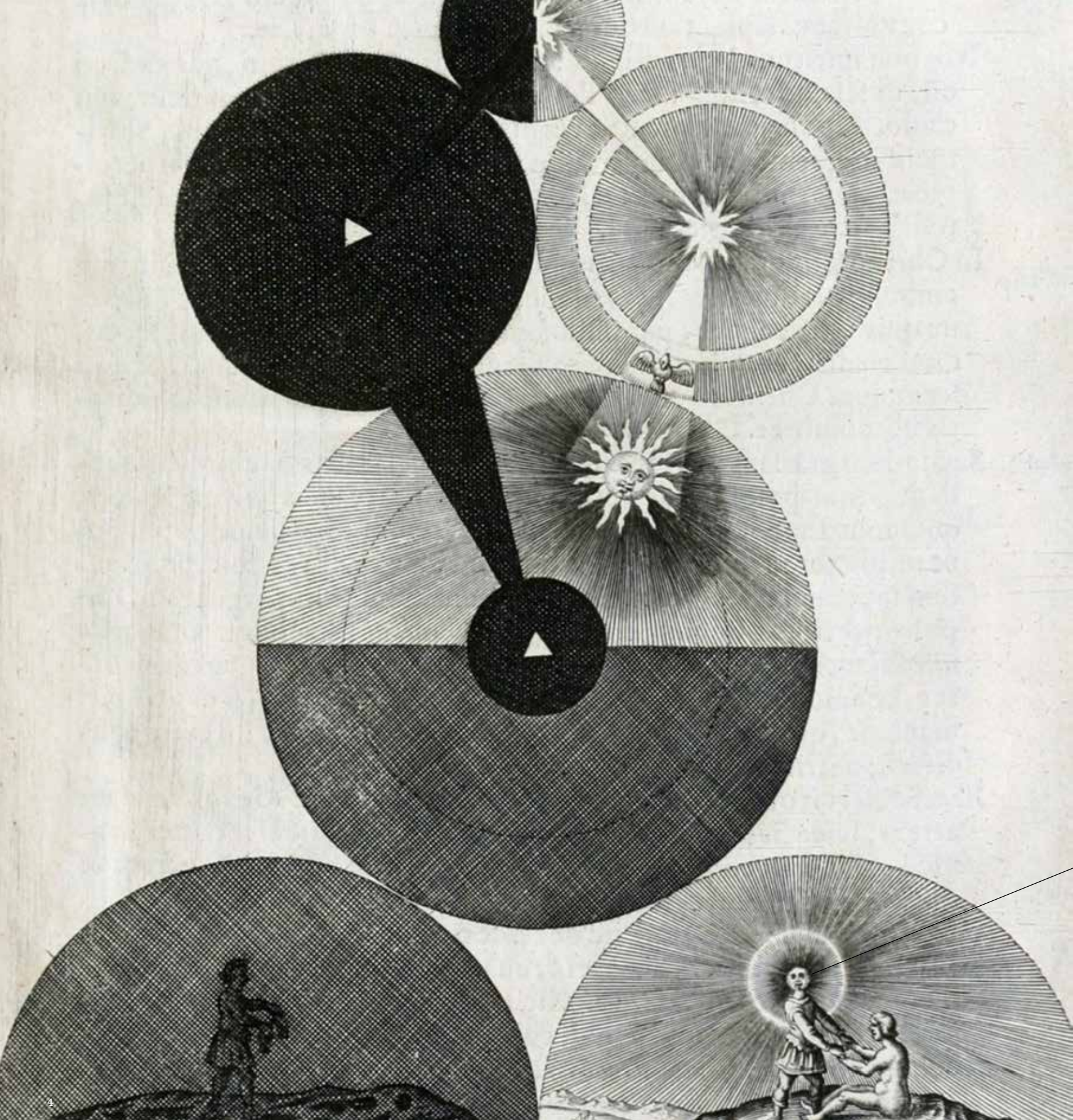
Anna Parlane is a writer and art historian with a particular interest in contemporary New Zealand art. She received her PhD from the University of Melbourne in 2018, where she currently works as a researcher and sessional academic. She was previously Assistant Curator at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Jack Sargeant is the author of numerous books on underground cinema and art. He is also a curator of film, moving image, photography and fine artworks.

Anthony White is a Senior Lecturer in Art History at the University of Melbourne. His research focuses on the history of modern and contemporary art, and he has worked as an exhibition curator alongside his research and teaching activities. His most recent book, *Italian Modern Art in the Age of Fascism* was published by Routledge in 2019.

Jessica Laraine Williams is a writer, researcher and PhD candidate at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. Her doctoral research examines the agents and agencies of transdisciplinary digital aesthetics. Her current projects include intersections between art and health, biophilic design and ecology. She continues to practise as a physiotherapist.

Azza Zein is a Beirut-born, Melbourne-based artist currently pursuing an MFA at Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. Her research explores how artworks can comment on the dematerialisation of the economy and invisibility of labour. She has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in artist-run spaces in Melbourne and has participated in art residencies in Argentina and India.





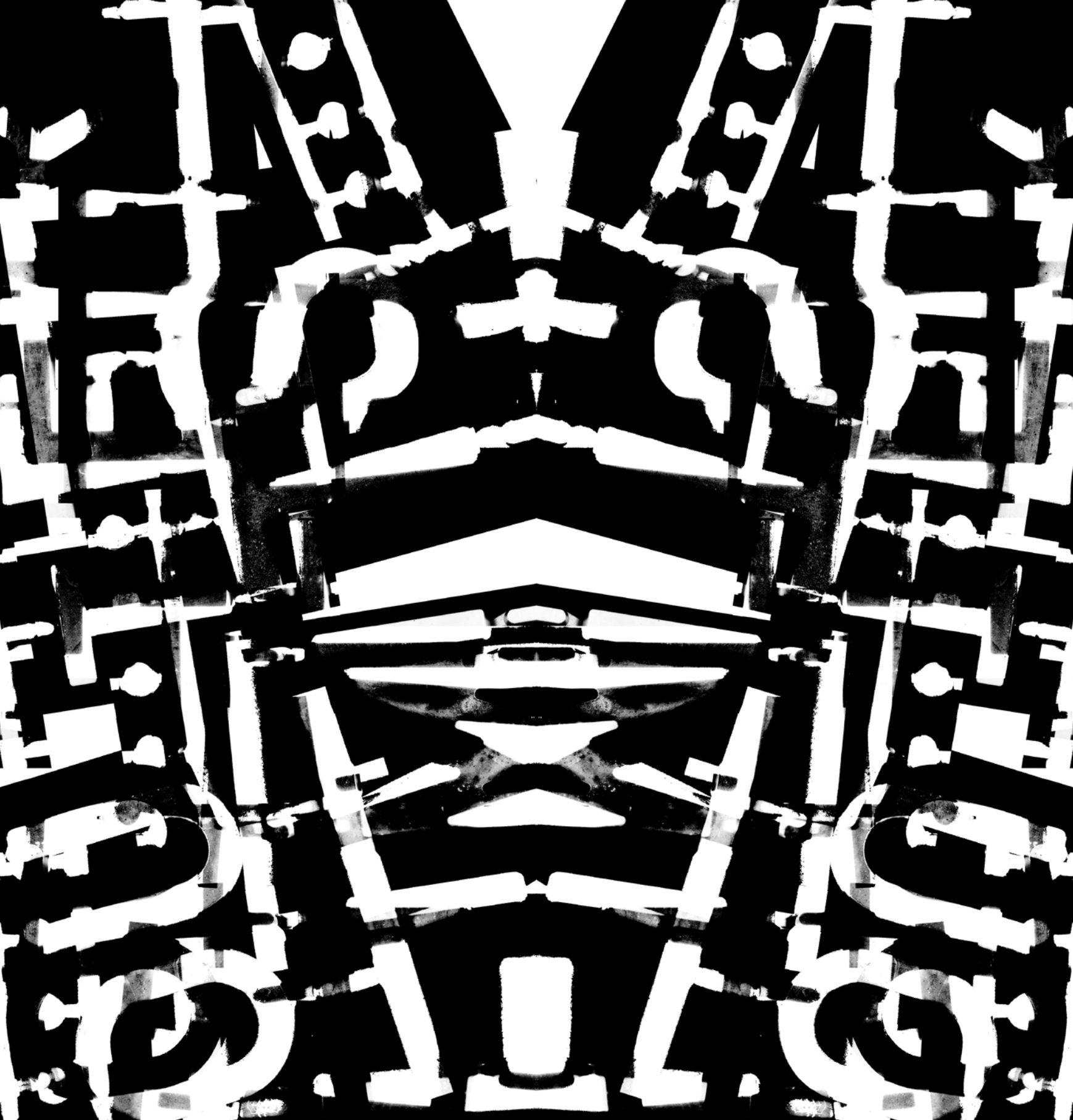
est un autre

Arthur Rimbaud
Letter to Paul Demeny, Charleville
15 May 1871

IS AN OTHER

Robert Fludd
Integrum morborum mysterium, 1619
Illustration on p. 23
Wellcome Library, London
Image: Wellcome Collection. CC BY



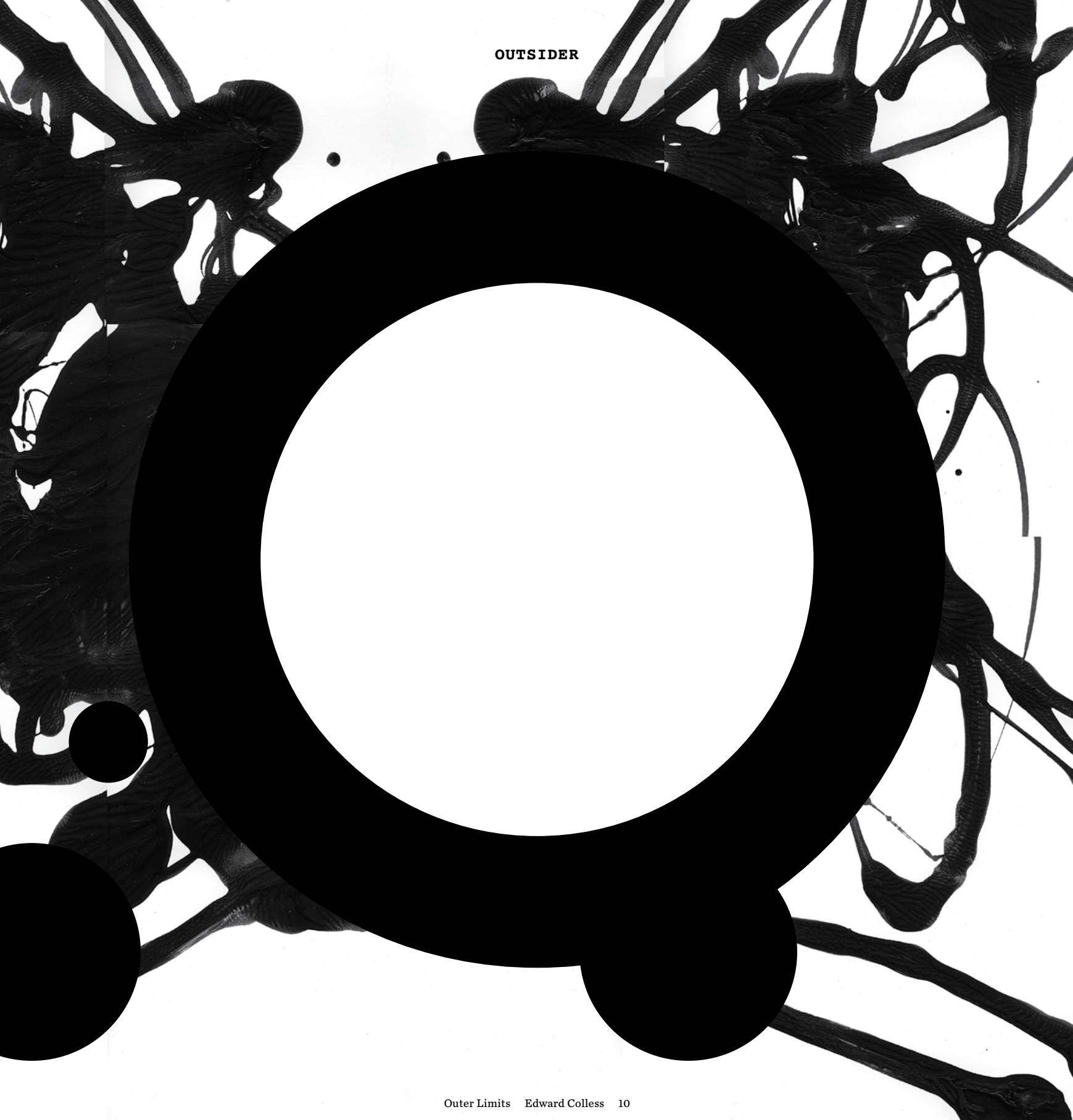




Grace Mallison
Untitled, 2019
Acrylic paint on paper
29 x 15 cm
Courtesy of the artist



OUTSIDER




Within the milieu of contemporary art 'the outsider' is a literal misnomer,

a tag deserving of the sort of revision and decolonising that has been so thoroughly performed on 'the primitive'. +++++ It's not hard to script such a sales pitch for this takeover of the outsider's relatively uncultivated extraterritoriality. +++++ Do we not already have a perfectly good term to account for the rich diversity of this kind of art without resorting to the offensive, derogatory, repressive or exclusionist anthropological and normative psychiatric indictment of so-called 'outsider' status? +++++ Could that ideologically neutral but inclusive label, ready to be stamped on the outsider's papers, simply be 'contemporary art'? +++++ Under judiciously cosmopolitan critical and responsible curatorial policies, the outsider would be a strategic and attractive émigré from the outlands or the border zones of culture, accommodated and assimilated into the contemporary art portfolio as productive stock, and a worthy citizen of the contemporary world. +++++ Within this perspective there indeed will be no restricted 'outsider' status, no one unwelcome, alien, estranged, exiled or reclusive. +++++ Call this figure instead, if you still wish to differentiate the elite investment profile of the artist formerly known as outsider, call it the exceptional outlier or black swan. +++++ Cast in such a positive guise of identity politics and political economy, an outsider's difference to normative and dominant culture will be profitable precisely for their unorthodoxy, or heterodoxy, or queerness, or minority, or eccentricity. +++++ Marginalisation invokes the remedial treatment or revision of this precarious or peripheral status, not in this case to normalise it but to capitalise upon its precarity. +++++ And by this very reasoning, the outlier or black swan is just the sort of figure or cultural stock tracked and targeted for appropriation and exploitation by entrepreneurial capitalists, finance market gurus and trend-spotters, or by curators, collectors and arts administrators devising divergent audience and market development. +++++ The annexation and incorporation of such exceptions to the putative rule of normativity only enhance contemporary art's imperial phantasm of criticality as marketable, diversified, smiley-faced virtue-signalling and inclusive-ness. +++++ No, instead of these conveniently calculated risks and ventures of identity capital, the challenge is to call 'the outsider' an absolute negation, a death mask, for which there is no redeemable exhumation of value (no resurrection of a hidden history other than graveyard desecration) and no speculation (no feasible investment, no future other than extinction) that does not also catalyse an indiscreet, inconsiderate denunciation, a caustic erosion, of the contemporary. Let us think instead of the outsider as 'persona non grata': a nondescript alias, dissipating any productive value-adding to the contemporary. +++++ Indeed, think of the outsider as intolerably uncontemporary: temporally cast off, an anachronic castaway but with the indeterminate contingency and indiscernibility of a 'blank swan'. Not identified with minor culture but, instead, anonymous; omitted not by subterfuge or disguise but by negligence or distraction. Would not the outsider be a faceless horror, remaining unidentifiable even with our most discerning contemporary facial recognition tech wedded to identity politics? Not one (whether generic or singular),

not a multitude (mob or swarm),
but zero.

+++++



OUTSIDE



This horror of what is outside ... eyes without a face, or vice versa ... can it endure or even counteract the territorialising imperative of the contemporary?

++++++
++++++
++++++


The 'great outdoors' of our contemporary dominion – our cultural deserts, metaphoric steppes, forests, dark web or interplanetary vacuums of cultural theory and art – are sites for developing tourist enterprises, both intrepid and five-star. +++++ Surely our creepy, inters titial, septic, domestic zones have also by now been thoroughly disinfected under the cold gaze of CCTV and drone bugs. +++++ Is it a zombie romanticism to still cast the outsider as an insurgent pest or vermin, crawling out from beneath the floorboards or from where the wall is cracked, or dropping from the dark recesses of ceiling rafters? +++++ That kind of creature has now been supplanted and superseded by the robotic organs of surveillance technology. Perhaps we should demystify this outsider as an ingenuous phantasm of feral creativity, a creativity like that which incandesces in the vertiginous architecture and maverick cunning of crypto-marketing and derivative financial products. +++++ Or perhaps we should still dread this creature as a delirious predator, like a fiery *djinn* haunting the scorpion-infested shadowy troughs of fluid sand dunes or like a were-creature with an inflamed appetite clawing at the door of a terrified household. +++++ Admittedly, those tribal phobic incantations that become apotropaic prohibitions – don't open the door, don't get off the path, don't go into the attic, don't go outside after dark – sound increasingly in our contemporary world like officious and easily flouted generic warnings against straying (whether while snooping or due to panic). +++++ The contemporary, after all, runs, with a hyperbolic market demand for openness, on garrulous connectivity, on the forensic archiving of our prosumer preferences with the on-selling of our harvested data exhaust. +++++ Does it not seem that any pestilential or predatory threat to this syndrome from the outside can be outrun by an economic therapy that remediates the malady – bug, troll, virus – into capital gain? +++++ It's messy, but it's a sustainable treatment that is called 'life' (the profitable importation into an operating system of negative entropy), short for 'life-as-we-know-it-under-the-sun' (aka survival on life support). +++++ This survival is maintained by the trade war between, on one hand, the systemic politics and reproductive civilised biotic totalities of state-based living – of a solar household constructed around the affirming solace of a hearth – and, on the other, antipodal or polar non-states expended into delocated, depopulated shadowy wastelands or into wildfire. +++++ Chart this trade-off between the *polis* and pandemonium and call that graph 'life management'. +++++ But this is an art of funereal enrichment, requiring a factor of the political economy of creation as the coefficient of growth. +++++ It is a smug, self-satisfying art, cosmetically reliant on a non-lethal but incurable submission to the economy of cosmos: after all and before anything we are stardust, ashes to ashes, but via biomass laboriously writhing in the cyclic inflationary unity of production and consumption. +++++ Life support. The provision of life with a regimen that flourishes 'wellness' as its profit margin.

As long as this life goes on,
there is no way out.

++++++

OUT





Like a somnambulist seeking absolution,
we fitfully wash our hands of the filthy outside,
the stigma of a dead god,
and mutter 'out damned spot'.

+++++

This nightmare horror—the contemporary horror—comes with 'being-in-the-world', that ripe tapestry of pond scum held by surface tension on the planet's clingy meniscus. +++++ As long as we cling to the earth, our stigma is an incurable condition that cannot be overcome, only remedially treated in rehab. +++++ We cannot cordially resign from the treatment program; recovery is the work of a lifetime. +++++ An absolute exit, the prospect of going outside, requires the execution of a 'force quit' protocol: an exhilarating exacerbation of the incurable state to the point of collapse. When a manically and artificially accelerated ripeness ejects an undigested, ungestated, ill-formed and un-nurtured content—when there is a bilious rejection of this incubating subject through retching, by abortion or as excrement—the condition is aggravated into a feverish inspiration to 'not-be-in-this-world', to refuse its cosmopolitan generosity and civil, liberal inclusiveness. This might translate as the refusal to manage life and the incitement of an irresponsible, unethical disaggregation of life's insurance policy. +++++ But there is no liberty in this; rather, something anonymous desecrates the art of life management. +++++ A vector of illness and anger and inferiority veers towards existential regression and, simultaneously, the eruption of bile. Let's not be too romantic about this contempt for life's parochial worldliness; there is no transcendent rapture that capsizes or transfigures such a negation. +++++ But let's not diminish or domesticate the utter impertinence of this contempt—this contempt for life and contempt for the contemporary.

Come out onto the balcony
and watch the world go to the devil. +++++

Yes, I'm going outside;

and I may be some time.

+++++

The artist Kulik was at work in the Malachite Hall—Uncle Pete had commissioned a new work from him after all. The most interesting thing was that they never saw Kulik himself—his assistants did the work, and it was done incredibly quickly: they finished the entire job in one day. First the young guys in yellow boilersuits covered the sky and the angels with an even layer of cream undercoating. Then they switched on a slide projector and traced the outline of the image projected onto the wall: the result was a rather crude human shadow with disproportionately long legs, framed by the words

‘woof!’ and ‘WOOF WOOF!!’

and ‘WOOF, WOOF,

WOOF!!’



Viktor Pelevin, *The Hall of the Singing Caryatids*, trans. Andrew Broomfield, New Directions, New York, 2011, p. 58.

Oleg Kulik
I Bite America and America
Bites Me, 1997
Performance view
Courtesy of Jeffrey Deitch Gallery,
New York and Los Angeles



Henry Darger
*a) Are almost murdered themselves
though they fight for their lives typhoon
saves them... b) Vivian girls said*
Watercolour and pencil on paper
55.9 x 223.5 cm
Gift of the artist's estate in honour
of Klaus Biesenbach
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).
© 2019. Digital image, The Museum of
Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

ARE ALMOST MURDERED THEMSELVES
THOUGH THEY FIGHT FOR THEIR LIVES.
TYPHOON SAVES THEM.





CATHERINE
VIA JENNIE
RICHES
LE WITNESS CHILDREN
THEY ENTRAILS TORN OUT
BY INFANTIL GLANDERERS
THE MASCARE
OF THE THOUSANDS OF
MURDERED CHILDREN
SHOWN HERE



THE CHILDREN WHO ARE
SUFFER FROM THE



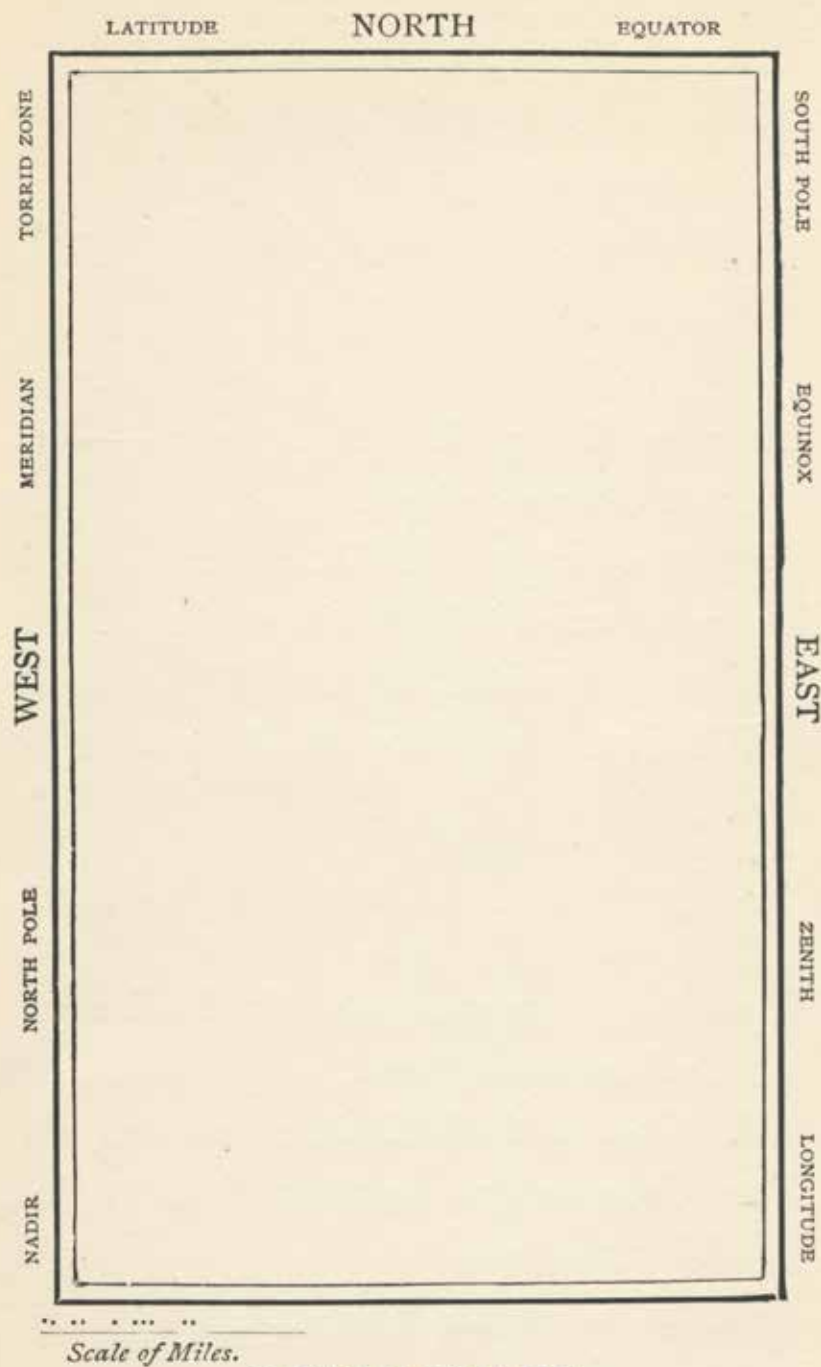
VIVIAN GIRL
PRINCESSES ARE
FORCED TO WIT-
NESS FRIGHTFUL
MURDER MASSACRE
OF CHILDREN -
VIVIAN GIRLS NOT
SHOWN IN THIS COMPO-
SITION

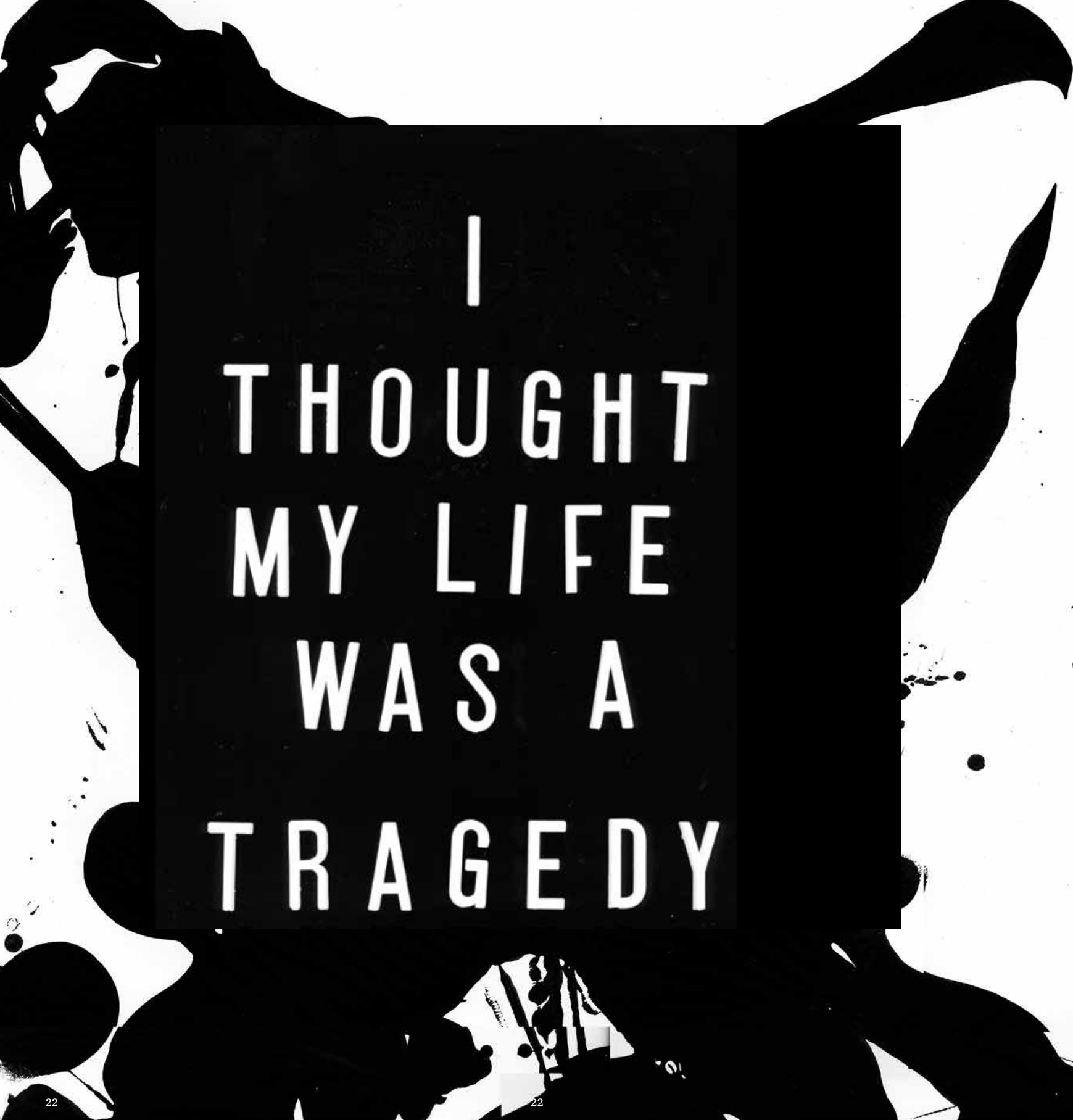
E NAKED ARE MADE TO TORTURE
WORST

AT UNDER HEAT
YENNIE RICHEL - VIA NORMA
FIERCE TROPICAL (CATHERINE)
IMAGINABLE



Bellman's map
 in the *The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony
 in Eight Fits*, by Lewis Carroll
 MacMillan and Co. Limited, St. Martin's
 Street, London, 1931





I
THOUGHT
MY LIFE
WAS A
TRAGEDY



SOMEBODY
SAID IT
WAS A
COMEDY

NOW
I KNOW
IT IS A
JOKE

Arthur Fleck (misquote)
Joker, 2019
Todd Phillips, director



MAGICAL APPROPRIATIONS :

Barry William Hale
after
Imants Tillers

DARREN JORGENSEN

Barry William Hale
Top Left: *Legion 49: Beelzebub – Lord of Flies*, 2008
Top Right: *Legion 49: Beelzebuth – Lord of Calamity*, 2008
Bottom Left: *Legion 49: Alcanor*, 2008
Bottom Right: *Legion 49: Balfori*, 2008
Paper cut, cardboard
Each 44 x 31 cm
Courtesy of the artist

The conundrums of Barry William Hale's 2009 book *Legion 49: A Grimoire* are the conundrums of Imants Tillers' now classic essay on appropriation, 'Locality Fails'.¹ They are the conundrums of sorcerers, magicians and masons in a secular age. What power has the symbol in a disenchanted age? The rituals that once invested signs with the power of things are now archaic, part of a culture swept aside by modernity. In turn, modernity has itself become invested with archaic powers, its masons dwelling in computer algorithms and military think tanks, puppet masters of new mass powers. *Legion 49* offers instead a ritual, personal practice for calling up demons, for naming, bargaining and controlling the chaotic. His is a magical system illustrated with an alphabet of possibilities, from 'Alcanor: A light-flash, perhaps bird-like' to 'Zagalo: A big frog, green with dull yellow spots'.² Introducing the demons is a brief history of exorcist guidebooks, from the Biblical-era *Testament of Solomon* to the revelations of Aleister Crowley. *Legion 49* is one more guidebook, one more set of names for the unnameable, an infinite series for controlling and bargaining with the infinite. This is the conundrum that Tillers also grappled with, in which the world appears finite but contains infinite possibilities. This is the problem of modernity itself, whose disenchantment with magic only drives this magic into ever more powerful, maddening forms, which arise in spectacular conjunctions with the rationalism attempting to harness magic's powers.

Tillers also grapples with processes of magical naming and controlling. 'Locality Fails' and his more recent 'Metafisica Australe' are essays that accompany *The Book of Power*, a numbering system for the canvasboards that make up his oeuvre.³ While Hale wants to strike bargains with infernal beings, to think with chaos, Tillers works with the juxtaposition of the unlike to reveal a metaphysical truth. His numbers, his boards, make up a system of correspondences, a relation of relations, through which a higher reality constitutes itself. His essays propose that the world itself is constituted by such a reality, that Richard Long and Albert Namatjira are alike, as are his own works and those of Richard Bell. In 'Metafisica Australe', Tillers is 'quite taken aback' to discover that a commemorative exhibition for John Stewart Bell, theorist of quantum entanglement, featured

Richard Bell's 2002–16 painting *Bell's Theorem*.⁴ This painting is in fact named after the ideas in Tillers' own essay 'Locality Fails', so Tillers claims it as his own:

... it dawned on me that I, too, was in this exhibition and *my inclusion had happened without my knowledge*. It was not just the direct references to me in Bell's painting. This was a painting by Imants Tillers executed by Richard Bell. It's now part of my *Book of Power* and has been allocated numbers 99,826 to 99,850.⁵

It is impossible to escape the paradoxes of Tillers' metaphysical system, or any sufficiently metaphysical system that anticipates its own coming into being in advance of itself. This is the very definition of magic, what Aleister Crowley worshipped in Thelema as *will*, the law of doing what one wills.

Hale's *Legion 49* is a demonic repurposing of these kinds of naming strategies, but the names it invokes are those of the underworld rather than the art world. Above all sits Beelzebub, the first fallen angel and king of demons, whose many names threaten the order of naming, of history and time, with infinite multiplicity. Hale and Beelzebub meet on this infinite line that folds one shape into the other, so that each of the demonic figures appears only to disappear again. As the demons are named, Beelzebub severs himself to become another, invoking the numinous. Here naming is a first step in a method for attaining power over demons. As *The Testament of Solomon* has it,

1. Imants Tillers, 'Locality Fails', *Art & Text*, no. 6, 1982, pp. 314–25, 319.

2. Barry William Hale, *Legion 49: A Grimoire*, Fulgur, London, 2009, n.p.

3. Imants Tillers, 'Metafisica Australe', *Art + Australia*, Issue One (53.2), May 2017, no. 2, pp. 51–59.

4. Tillers, 'Metafisica Australe', p. 58.

5. Tillers, 'Metafisica Australe', p. 58.



Imants Tillers
Antipodean Manifesto, 1986
 Oilstick, oil, acrylic on 116 canvasboards, nos. 9611–9726
 254 x 190.5 cm
 Private collection, Sydney
 Courtesy of the artist



Imants Tillers

Metaphysical Interior with Old Treasury Building, 2016

Acrylic, gouache on 54 canvasboards, nos. 98698–98751

229 x 214 cm

Private collection, Melbourne

Courtesy of the artist

The formula begins with the identification of the demon: the demon is asked its name, to which the demon replies its name. This is followed by a question that places the demon into an astrological schema. This may include descriptive elements and is followed by a description of the physical appearance and abode. The demon is also quizzed about its deeds, powers and activities. The rite is concluded by the demon disclosing the name of the binding angel who thwarts it. The demon is thus bound to come at the summoning of the exorcist due to this original contract between them.⁶

Solomon puts the ritual into dramatic practice by putting his heel on the face of Ornia, who asks that he might be released from the mud to better answer Solomon's questions. The key to having power over the demon and its attributes lies in its name. Is this not the same process that Tillers puts into practice when incorporating Bell into his metaphysical schema? The name of Bell is pressed underneath and, forced by Tillers' command, written into his *Book of Power* like an unruly demon.

The ritual of the name is in Tillers' case one of incorporation, Bell preserved as an other within Tillers' self, a name encrypted like a buried secret. This is also how Tillers' appropriation differs from the photographic appropriations of the Pictures Generation who exhibited photographs of photographs in late 1970s New York. These re-photographed photographs served to deconstruct the power of the original photographer. Edward Weston's photographs were no longer Edward Weston's photographs once Sherrie Levine had photographed them, and yet neither were they Sherrie Levine's. In New York, appropriation was a means of dismantling the patriarchy of artists' names, while in Australia it became a way for artists to ascend this patriarchy. While postmodern or contemporary art is supposed to be indifferent to the media of its expression—post-medium or trans-medium in its theorists' terms—here medium is crucial to art's politics. Tillers' painting of Colin McCahon's *Victory Over Death 2* (1970), in which the words I AM are bold across the canvas, traces the line that both separates and brings together Colin McCahon and himself.

Painting is a way of making the other oneself in one's own hand,
encrypting the other into oneself.

Hale's *Legion 49* also sits inside an oeuvre of appropriation. In the *Grimoire* series, Hale uses the style of tattoo design, while his *Clans of Enoch* series draws on the colour and stitching of Scottish tartan kilts. There are Chinese influences on his paintings, too, as well as simulations of the psychedelic style. His graphic precision renders an inside and outside with lines that demarcate the power of colours, shapes and blacknesses. Lines master the chaos that lies before and beyond the images. Such clarity of vision is also necessary for the quality of the grimoire itself, this genre of instructional magic that in *Legion 49* offers a demonology of the future. Hale's work can be historicised as a part of an esoteric legacy, one founded in modern times by Crowley and carried on by artists such as Rosaleen Norton, who received their art from entities that lie beyond the visible spectrum. For Crowley this entity was Thelema, among others, while for Norton it was Pan. For Hale it is Beelzebub. The magical system of each of these artists, however, is one that allows the other to speak through them as much as mastering them.

Theirs is a pact with the other,
an introjection rather than an incorporation.

Again, the artist's medium speaks to the particular politics of appropriation at work here. The many demons of *Legion 49* are styled after Mexican paper-cut magic, which is itself reminiscent of paper-cut magic elsewhere in the world. Sorcerers in China, for example, also used the technique, investing paper animals with human souls that they had stolen, controlling them as

6.
Hale, n.p.



Barry William Hale
*Tartans of Enoch:
Water Subquadrant
of Fire Tablet, 2014*
Giclée Print
29.7 x 42 cm
Courtesy of the artist

7.
Roger Caillois, 'The
Function of Myth',
*The Edge of Surrealism:
A Roger Caillois Reader*,
(ed.) Claudine Frank,
(trans.) Camille Naish,
Duke University Press,
Durham, NC, 2003,
pp. 110–23.

8.
See Claudine Frank,
'Introduction', *The Edge
of Surrealism*, p. 10.

guards and servants. Names also recur in magical systems around the world, and again China is exemplary. Signatures are still revered in China, as in the past they were used to appropriate souls, the coincidence of calligraphic title and the soul giving rise to nefarious sorcery. The coincidence of magical systems speaks to what the surrealist Roger Caillois theorised to be a finite world. The reappearance of designs and practices across human cultures testifies to a limited number of forms and images that are bound to a metaphysical order.⁷ Caillois is known as the scientific surrealist, disagreeing with Breton on the dissection of a jumping bean within which was hidden a live cricket.⁸ Breton thought Caillois had ruined the bean's marvellous qualities, but Caillois was looking for deeper correspondences in the similitude of life, the recurrence of forms in living and unliving systems. Caillois proposed that such correlations constitute a system of insight into a higher reality, a surreality in which mind and world are not opposed but in synchronicity. Hale's graphic style emphasises the line between mind and world and lies on the precise transformation that ritual enacts between the mundane and magical.

So it is that the deferrals of Hale and Tillers to greater systems, to surrealisms of a vaster dimension, are deferrals to the many other magical systems and sets of systems that overlap and intersect. Hale and Tillers are not, however, without their own masters. Hale is preceded by Crowley, while Tillers takes Giorgio de Chirico as the inspiration for his magical system. And like all masters in modern times, Crowley and de Chirico have both been treated as shams. In founding a religion Crowley was accused of overstating himself, while de Chirico was accused of gaming the artworld system. They used their notoriety, however, to further their metaphysical claims. Crowley was the more ambitious of the two, renewing the Western magical tradition by synthesising Asian practices with masonic rites and the study of ancient esoteric texts. De Chirico was first discredited by Breton, expelled from the surrealists, and subsequently also discredited for his habit of repainting and wrongly dating his paintings. His fictitious autobiography explains, however, that the jumbling of time is an extension of his metaphysical system. The avant-garde movements of the early 20th century are something of a background to the radical individualism of both Crowley and de Chirico, and it is likely that de Chirico read some of the same esoteric materials that Crowley was fascinated by. Their radical individualism, which included comparing themselves to historical icons such as Jesus and Isaac Newton, is symptomatic of the era's fever for new ideas and movements, its appetite for the radically new.

Postmodernism is instead the backdrop for the metaphysical thinking of both Hale and Tillers. Postmodernism brought with it a disenchantment with high modernism, the influence of French theory, and ultimately the sense that art is a game to be played. It shaped Tillers' 'Locality Fails', in which de Chirico's repainting, and the Australian condition itself, is one of Baudrillardian simulation. Australia is Beelzebub for Tillers, a fallen angel condemned to repeat forms from elsewhere. And yet this is also a liberation, as the ruins of classical antiquity give birth to a freedom, a will embodied by the artist's ability to hold contradictory ideas and images alongside one another. Hence Tillers' retreat into metaphysics, the earliest mode of modern philosophy, in which reason is at its most elementary and observant. Hale too found postmodernism a liberation. While studying its texts at art school, he was living in a punk squat and conducting rituals by candlelight.⁹

The ruins of esotericism were there for Hale to plunder, his art coming out of reinterpretations of the texts of this experimental tradition, as postmodernism itself played in the ruins of high art and literature.

9.
Hale, personal
communication with the
author, 23 October 2018.



Barry William Hale
Pomba-gira Maria
Mulambo - Grande Circulo
de Pontos Riscado, 2015
 Vinyl decal
 Courtesy of the artist

The differences of Hale's and Tillers' practices of naming and magic lie within postmodern philosophy's two ways of thinking about the other, of appropriating this other as a difference to oneself. The first is the postmodernism of differences, of language games and simulation, in which reality is principally symbolic. This describes Tillers' practice of incorporating the names of others, of appropriating the other into his art. Hale's demonic names are instead the postmodern thinking of difference as difference, of the in-itself, which is ultimately unthinkable. Beelzebub offers a way of thinking this unthinkable, and yet this unthinkable remains other to thinking. As Rosaleen Norton says of her own encounters with otherworldly beings, they are themselves and in-themselves, their invocation a being-with rather than a projection of one's psyche. It is a 'very egotistical and self-centred approach which places man on a pedestal in creation'.¹⁰ The concept of a magical art, then, invokes a parallel reality, one in which the artist plays a mediating role, naming this reality in order to strike a bargain with chaos and to make supernatural powers visible, if only for a moment.

10.
 Cited in
 Neville Stuart Drury,
 'Rosaleen Norton's
 Contribution to the Western
 Esoteric Tradition',
 PhD thesis, University
 of Newcastle, 2008, p. 252.

.....

Artist and witch Rosaleen
Norton pictured in Sydney,
New South Wales, 1972
9.1 x 11.4 cm
Photograph by News Ltd /
Newspix
© News Ltd

.....





Simon Mee
*They don't make shrunken
heads like they used to*
(alternate title: *Mick Jagger's
afterlife*), 2013
Chalk and charcoal on laid
paper
31 x 41 cm
Collection of Paddy Long
Courtesy of the artist



KILLING DADDY IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Robyn Adler

Richard Dadd

Sketch to Illustrate the Passions - Agony - Raving Madness, 1854

Watercolour

35.5 x 25.3 cm

Courtesy of Bridgeman Images

Richard Dadd

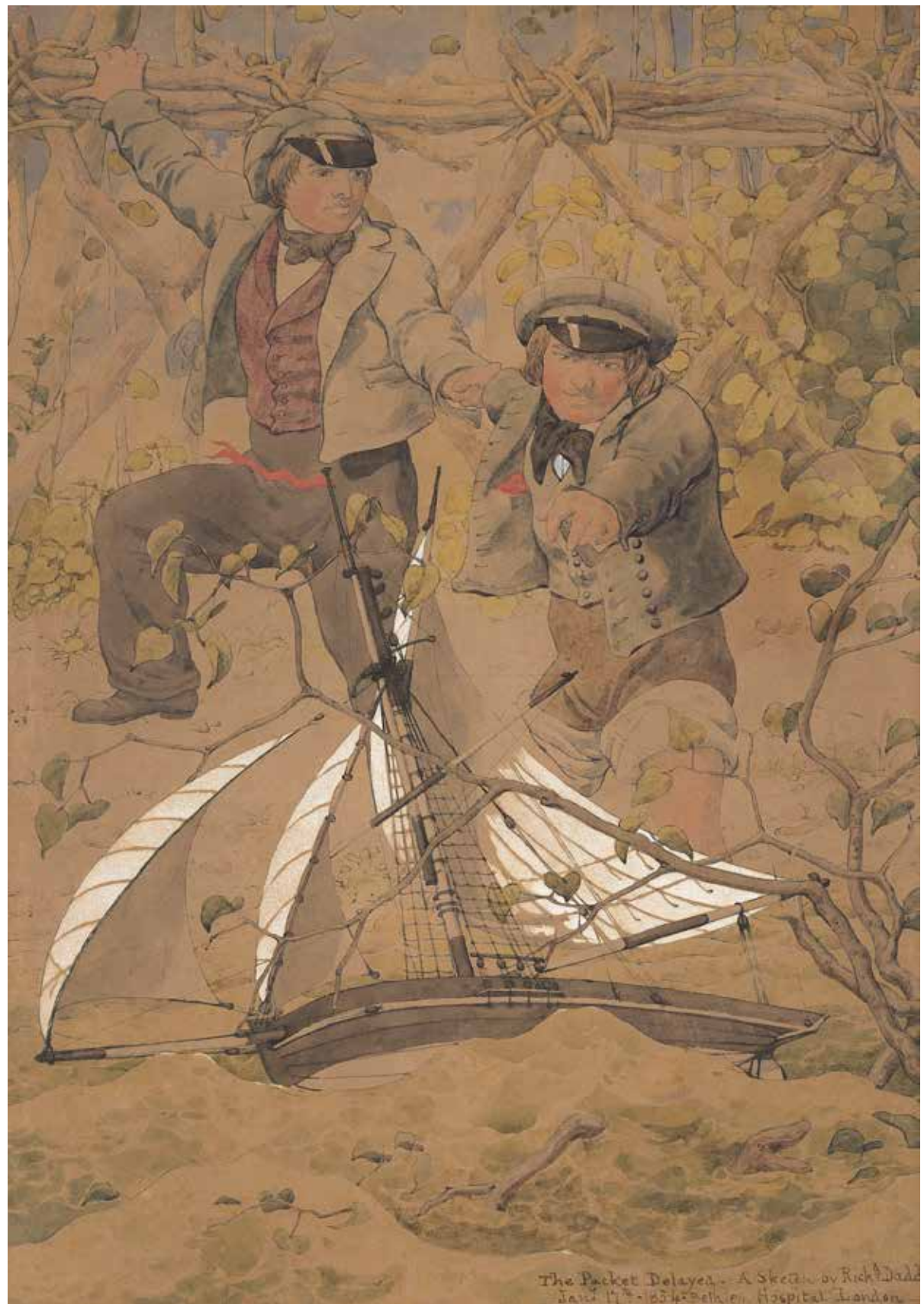
The Packet Delayed, 1854

Pencil and watercolour

35.1 x 24.7 cm

Private Collection

Photograph © Christie's Images/Bridgeman Images



I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face.

Michel Foucault¹

Unassuming amidst Mona's installation of the vertiginous *Schatzkammer* of outsider art, The Museum of Everything,² hung a quiet work by 19th-century English painter Richard Dadd. The watercolour, entitled *The Packet Delayed*, depicts a dandy couple of compatriots: with rolled up pants, one's outstretched arm grasping onto his friend (or is it his own semblable, his doppelganger?) while clinging to a vine-entangled lattice, the other reaching for their capsized toy packet boat. Painted at the State Criminal Lunatic Department at Bethlem Hospital, London, in 1854—around the same time as Dadd's *Passions* series—it apparently depicts his 'reminiscences of childhood with a total lack of sentimentality'.³ I'm not so convinced by that. *The Packet* instead seems to me to function as a purloined letter, a *Flaschenpost*, always arriving as a shipwrecked message in a bottle at its destination: in this instance, Van Diemen's Land.

By the late 1830s in Europe, steam power fuelled many painters' desires for journeys to the Eastern Mediterranean. Dadd, by then an established artist in London circles, having completed some of his best-known fairy pictures, was no exception. His opportunity arose after the politician Thomas Phillips was successful in quashing, in 1839, the Chartist uprising in the coal and iron centre of Newport in South Wales, where Phillips was mayor. The Chartists were simultaneously a threat to the intellectual classes and a point of fascination that needed to be addressed. Phillips blamed the uprising on the failure of paternalism: 'This antagonism originated, as great social evils do, in the neglect of duty by the master, or ruling class'.⁴ After every successful oppression of the working classes, I suppose, masters need to indulge in a holiday. So Phillips decided on a tour, taking with him the young Dadd as illustrator, on the advice of the best-known orientalist painter of the time, David Roberts. Their tour took in the traditional destinations of Italy and Greece, but new steam routes enabled them to extend their journey into Turkey, Egypt and Syria. It has been reported that his employer devoured his surroundings with such haste that it was often difficult for Dadd to capture much more than marks in his sketchbooks. Looking was reduced to the instant of the glance, a delirious taking in of swarms of otherness, whose religious or socio-political contexts he showed little interest in: 'I never saw such an assemblage of deliciously villainous faces: they grinned, glowered, and exhibited every variety of curiosity'.⁵ And when, on their return journey, the pair became quarantined in Malta—an island that is no stranger to shipwrecks with even St Paul having washed up on her shores—it was recorded that Dadd had suffered a nervous depression.

By the time he arrived back in London in 1843, Dadd's behaviour had become so peculiar he was rumoured to be suffering from sunstroke. His diet consisted of nothing but eggs and ale, as if these were the only substances through which he could digest his experiences in the East. He attempted to complete some of the works he'd conceived on his travels but received criticism from his friends, many of whom had begun to fear him. Following a positive diagnosis of insanity, based on a urine sample, Dadd requested that his father spend some time with him in Cobham, a short steamer trip downriver from London and close to the former family home in Chatham.

Taking an evening stroll together in Cobham Park in the midst of a hot summer, Richard Dadd struck his father with a knife and killed him, compelled by the delusion that his father was an imposter possessed by a demonic force. There were conflicting accounts regarding the patricide, some suggesting Dadd first tried to cut his father's throat then stabbed him with a rigger's knife. Whatever the method, the gruesome crime remained covered over in Dadd's imaginary as he remained convinced of his sanity and that his act was in the service of the gods: 'Go, said he', pointing to the stars, '& tell the great god Osiris that I have done the deed which is to set him free'.⁶

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, A.M. Sheridan Smith (trans.), Pantheon, New York, 1972, p. 17.

² *The Museum of Everything*, Mona (Museum of Old and New Art), Berriedale, Tasmania, 10 June 2017 – 2 April 2018.

³ Patricia Alderidge, *Richard Dadd*, Academy Editions, London, 1974, p. 103.

⁴ Thomas Phillips, *Wales: The Language, Social Condition, Moral Character, and Religious Opinions of the People, Considered in their Relation to Education*, Parker, London, 1849, p. 50.

⁵ Richard Dadd, *Athens Letter*, as cited in Nicholas Tromans, *Richard Dadd: The Artist and the Asylum*, Tate Publishing, London, 2011, p. 42.

⁶ Tromans, p. 61.

After killing his dad, Dadd would spend more than 40 years of his life on the inside at both Bethlem and Broadmoor asylums. As a painter, who was encouraged to paint inside these institutions, he leaves an important record of a time in which so many reforms in psychiatry—from the non-restraint movement to limited applications of the talking cure⁷—aimed to bring patients’ attention back to the world. Soon enough, Freud would revolutionise the talking cure, not as that which cures patients through adaptation to a norm but as that which recovers what is most singular in them: repressed traumas that are elucidated through speech. For Freud, of course, the scenario of the killing and devouring of the father by a band of brothers in the primitive horde was an important myth. Murdering and eating the father tyrant who possessed all the women and all the power was a way of internalising that father’s power, not by possessing it but by ‘perpetuating it in modifying it, by stripping it from the father to exercise it collectively in his place’.⁸ The crime inaugurated social bonds in place of barbarity, culture in place of tyranny, and generated the logic of exchange, thanks to which we experience representations not simply as objects but as something within which we can partake. But these archaic practices, which for Freud were situated in the Lower Palaeolithic era, are in stark contrast to contemporary ideas of participation and representation where each one owns his face and where the promise to possess all the power seems to dictate our current concepts of exchange—one object for another—while the other, indigestible, is cast to the outside.

One of the fascinations of 19th-century psychiatry was the depiction of the face of madness as a diagnostic tool, arguably an antecedent of today’s happiness and wellness industries and of cognitive behaviour therapy. The pioneering neurologist Sir Charles Bell championed this idea, and it was taken up by the physician Sir Alexander Morison, one of Dadd’s psychiatrists. Basing his investigations on the ancient ‘science’ of physiognomy, in which the human face is purported to reveal inner qualities, Bell believed that the madman’s face becomes *permanently* altered by his condition. His well-known sketch *The Maniac* (1806) was considered the apotheosis of the figure of the madman. In his *The Physiognomy of Mental Diseases*, Morison, in turn, tried to depict a range of disorders in his sketches but failed to show a readily identifiable face for each type of madness. Coming across Dadd provided Morison with an opportunity to investigate how a madman, critically awarded by the Academy for his capacity for figurative studies, might portray physiognomy; and so Morison urged him to sketch other inmates. Sadly, however, little work from this period has survived. William Charles Hood, who replaced Morison at Bethlem, continued to encourage Dadd’s painting, and through the 1850s Dadd’s depictions of madness proliferated to include *Columbine*, *Sketch of an Idea for Crazy Jane*, *Jealousy*, *Hatred* and *Agony-Raving Madness*, the last three being from his series of 32 paintings known as *Sketch to Illustrate the Passions*.

In *Agony-Raving Madness* Dadd is clearly mimicking Bell’s *Maniac*. The differences between them, however, are striking. While Bell’s work is focused on the face, Dadd’s locus is the whole body: the gestures, the contracted toes, the celebratory raised arm. This riposte to Bell’s essentialism ‘conclusively explodes any stereotype of madness’, asserts one recent study of Dadd’s portraits from Bethlem, and ‘leaves the delusion of physiognomy to the sane’.⁹

Returning to the youths and their packet boat that washed ashore in Tasmania—that ‘great outdoors’ of Australia, that intimately exterior adjunct, a kind of redoubled repository for the refuse of the Euro-imaginary—we can wonder about Dadd’s parody of the face of madness belying the central truth of two-faced being. For Slavoj Žižek, the ‘fascinating image of a double is therefore ultimately nothing but a mask of horror, its delusive front: when we encounter ourselves,

⁷ From the late 1830s there was increasing opposition within asylum medicine to the devices and practices of mechanical restraint. Under the direction of William Charles Hood, the moral management of asylum residents was encouraged, with even those classed as criminal lunatics asked to engage in their previous employment and with the introduction of therapeutic clinics, where normalisation was considered obtainable within some classes of inmate.

⁸ Julia Kristeva, *The Severed Head: Capital Visions*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2012, pp.13–14.

⁹ Samuel Huddleston and G.A. Russell, ‘Richard Dadd: The Patient, the Artist and “The Face of Madness”’, *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2015, p. 227.

we encounter death'.¹⁰ Dadd himself was fascinated by the double, writing in a letter that 'the double nature of human beings was known to the Ancient Greeks among whom the Genius was as familiar as Christ with us. The two natures were supposed to be always contending for mastery.'¹¹ Contrary to our contemporary avatars of physiognomy, such as facial recognition technologies, Dadd's work is a reminder that what typifies us, what makes us a species, is not what is most visible but the traumatic kernel that always arrives at its destination, the package that includes the part we prefer to ignore.

.....

Upon entering the Henry Hunter Gallery at TMAG¹² one cannot but be struck by the paintings of boats serenely sailing in the harbour, *kunanyi* (aka Mt Wellington) looming over the scenes as an ever-deferred witness. Well, actually, it depends on which of the two doors you enter. Come in through the other door, and you are faced with Benjamin Duterrau's *The Conciliation* (1840), depicting the failed promise of peace between George Augustus Robinson and the Indigenous population, which would only result in increased deportation to Flinders Island. This work hangs alongside Duterrau's larger-than-life portraits. Let's allow their names to resonate: *Truggernana*, *Woureddy*, *Tanleboueyer*, *Manalargenna*. When Robinson was promising protection for Aboriginal people, 'scrupulously tenacious in keeping my word'¹³, Manalargenna offered a gift of swan eggs, 'a gesture of faith in their relationship'.¹⁴ The shadows do not cease being written in our history: broken promises, people sent offshore. Not at this address, return to sender.

Eggs and ale are both sticky substances used by iconographers to adhere pigment and gold leaf to porous surfaces. Things that bind. Duterrau's bas-relief portraits, cast in plaster and painted, also hang in this gallery. The subjects are 'Mr. G.A. Robinson and 12 Aborigines', as described in the classified in *The Hobart Town Courier* of 5 August 1836 and advertised for 30 shillings apiece: 'wherein various expressions of some particular passions, &c., are delineated which Mr. Duterrau has carefully observed in those interesting people'.¹⁵ Out of these 13 works, 10 hang at TMAG and three have disappeared, *Credulity*, *Cheerfulness* and *Tanlerbowyer*, *Wife of the Chief*, whilst *Mr. Robinson, in His Bush Dress* is not exhibited alongside the rest of the series. Duterrau was reported as saying, 'Those who countenance art and science are setting an example to the rising generation, who no doubt, will be grateful for putting in their way as they arrive at maturity, the means to become a truly civilized people'.¹⁶

Who needs reminding about the atrocities that the art-science combination can induce? The experiments conducted by Sindonologists, those prestigious scientists of the Shroud of Turin, are not only scenes worthy of Golgotha, the place of the skull.¹⁷ This object, this shroud, is an image, just an image and must remain one; that is to say, it must never be subjected to the requisites of facts and realities.¹⁸ We could reserve the same rights of the image for humans as well. William Lanne, or King Billy, as everyone knows, said to be the last full-blooded Aboriginal man in Tasmania, as everyone knows, was scalped after he died, his skull removed and replaced with the skull of a white man and stitched back up again. The culprit, William Crowther, later became the premier of Tasmania and was rewarded with a gold medal by the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Crowther claimed that he could demonstrate through this object, this stolen skull, 'the improvement that takes place in the lower race when subjected to the effects of education and civilisation'.¹⁹ He viewed it as a 'physical riposte'²⁰ to the fixed view of Tasmanian inferiority that saw both monogenists and polygenists rank Indigenous Tasmanians at the bottom of a racial hierarchy in which Anglo-Saxons were at the top.

.....

¹⁰ Slavoj Žižek, 'Why Does a Letter Always Arrive at Its Destination?', *The Symptom*, no. 16, Summer 2013, lacan.com/symptom16/why.html; accessed 31 July 2019

¹¹ Tromans, p. 121.

¹² The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.

¹³ George Augustus Robinson, journal entry, cited in Tim Bonyhady and Greg Lehman, *The National Picture: The Art of Tasmania's Black War*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2018, p. 52.

¹⁴ Bonyhady and Lehman, p. 53. Julie Gough retells this story in her installation *Shadow of the Spear*, 1997.

¹⁵ *The Hobart Town Courier*, 5 August 1836, p. 3.

¹⁶ *The Hobart Town Courier*, 19 July 1833, p. 2.

The worship of skulls has been recorded since the earliest days of humanity. But rather than evidence of scientific truths or signs from the gods, the logic of these representations is sacred; that is, these representations ‘found their way into the world of the visible’, like effigies created through art, and ‘continued to intercede with the invisible powers, to transpose their virtues to the living’.²¹ This is the nature of all representation that gives space to the invisible powers and authorities of participation. Discussing exocannibalism, Kristeva says that it ‘is human intimacy that is established through these barbaric practices, an intimacy that blends the fear of the other and the beyond with the desire for identification, continuance, power over one’s kind and oneself’.²² Intimacy, that utterly opaque spot that is truly singular and cannot be exposed despite technology’s demand for transparency of its subject, is the other side of what is outside of us, as Lacan coined with the term ‘ex-timacy’. Racism is an effect of the hatred of how the other enjoys, but ‘you never can get rid of the stain of enjoyment’, the ‘ultimate variation on the theme of a letter that always arrives at its destination’.²³

Athrotaxis selaginoides (King Billy Pine) is endemic to Tasmania and known for its resistance to rot and insects. The carpet, too, at Julie Gough’s exhibition *Tense Past* is woven with silverfish and thistles, invasive species knotted through the warp and the weft.²⁴ Here at TMAG, after too many trips to Tasmania with welcomes glaringly absent, I experience my first welcome to country, delivered by Theresa Sainty of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. I want to say thank you but I’m too anxious. Aunty Theresa betrays the Catholic resonances of her name. ‘She’s tough as nails’, my companion tells me. That I can see, without needing eyes to see it. I Corinthians 13:12 turned inside out. We do not see face to face, but can perhaps begin to see together when our images are reflected in a dull mirror, where the hard outlines of facial recognition are blurred and trauma is addressed.

Credulity, Cheerfulness and the *Wife of the Chief* always miss the boat. Tasmania, Australia’s ‘utterly dark spot’²⁵ on the outside, with its invisible omnipresence that punishes all of us. Mr Robinson, in his bush dress. A yarn to spin over an ale at the Steam Packet Tavern. If only it weren’t fiction.

What does it mean that the letter always arrives at its destination? Why can we not say, with Derrida, that sometimes the letter does not arrive?²⁶ The letter is a message in a bottle, sent from a shipwreck, which inevitably washes up on some fatal shore, no matter how long the packet is delayed.

This article was put in motion by two important exhibitions: *Julie Gough: Tense Past*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), Hobart, 7 June – 3 November 2019, and *The National Picture: The Art of Tasmania’s Black War*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 12 May – 29 July 2018, curated by Tim Bonyhady and Greg Lehman.

¹⁷ See, for example, Barbet’s macabre experiments with crucifixion in Pierre Barbet, *Doctor at Calvary: The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ as Described by a Surgeon* (1936), Image Books, New York, 1963.

¹⁸ See Marie-José Mondzain, ‘Ghost Story’, in *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2005, pp. 192–208.

¹⁹ Tom Lawson, *The Last Man: A British Genocide in Tasmania*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2014, p. 167.

²⁰ Lawson, p. 167.

²¹ Kristeva, p. 10.

²² Kristeva, p. 12.

²³ Slavoj Žižek, ‘Why Does a Letter Always Arrive at Its Destination?’

²⁴ Julie Gough with Margaret Woodward, *Entitled (Red)*, 2019, Designer Jet bespoke carpet, custom made by Godfrey Hirst Australia.

²⁵ Jeremy Bentham, *Chrestomathia* (1817), in M.J. Smith and W.H. Burston (eds), *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*, electronic edition, IntelLex Past Masters series, IntelLex Corporation, Charlottesville, Virginia, 2000 (from print edition published by Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983), 272-a.

²⁶ See Jacques Derrida, ‘Le Facteur de la Vérité’, in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987.

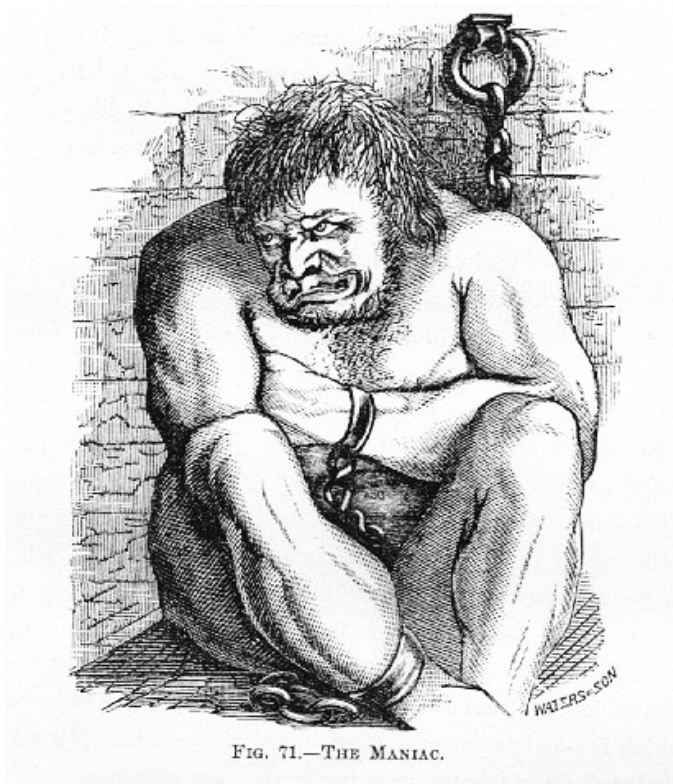


FIG. 71.—THE MANIAC.

Charles Bell
The Maniac, 1806
 Image: Wikimedia Commons



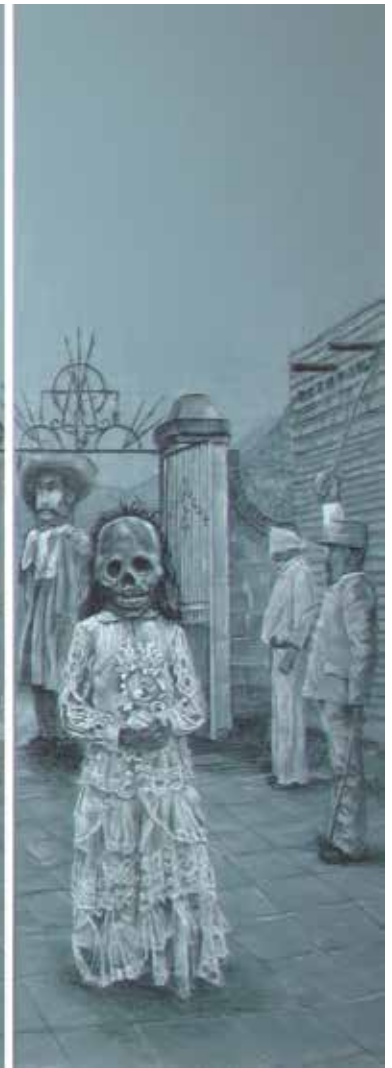
Benjamin Duterrau
*Mr GA Robinson
 in his Bush Dress*,
 1841
 Oil on canvas
 94.5 x 81 cm
 Private collection



John Watt Beattie
Hunter Street, Hobart Town
 Sepia-toned photograph
 11 x 16 cm
 Courtesy of Libraries Tasmania







Stephanie Lam
 Untitled (detail), 2019
 Acrylic paint on board
 42 x 29.7 cm
 Courtesy of the artist

Simon Mee
Day of the Dead Triptych, 2013
 Chalk and charcoal, three panels on card fixed to wood
 50 x 88 cm (overall)
 Collection of Ken Udas and Alma Cervantes
 Courtesy of the artist

The world is going to hell, but spirit has never been so sure of itself.

At least this is the impression one gets reading the contemporary neorationalist philosophers, colloquially known as the ‘neorats’, even if they are the furthest thing imaginable from the plague-drenched rats that brought Christendom crumbling down at the advent of modernity. To give just one example, even as politics declines into an irrational reality TV circus and the biosphere boils towards our encroaching heat death, Reza Negarestani, in his 2018 tome *Intelligence and Spirit*, does not hesitate to reaffirm spirit’s transcendence from nature inasmuch as it is free to determine its own norms through the semantic space of public language:

Nothing can stop the rise of intelligence. All given truths, all achieved totalities, all traps of history begin to slowly vanish like a spider’s web baptised in a corrosive solvent ... Whatever opposes this truth will be swiftly weeded out by the reality of which intelligence is the resolute expression.¹

For all the talk over the past decade about venturing beyond the Great Indoors of human narcissism (a panic room of the spirit), its gates have never been so sealed, its drawbridges never pulled so high, the weapons for its defence never clutched so closely.

But just as a wounded animal fights back the hardest precisely when the hour of its demise is closest at hand, so does spirit’s future only seem so assured because it is deeply insecure on the inside. We have suspected that spirit’s game of giving and asking for reasons is up ever since Kant critiqued our capacity to know the world independently of how it appears to us through the forms of space and time and the categories of the understanding, which condition and *police* the bounds of all possible experience:

To deny that this service of criticism is of any *positive* utility would be as much as to say that the police are of no positive utility because their chief business is to put a stop to the violence that citizens have to fear from other citizens, so that each can carry on his own affairs in peace and safety.²

After Kant came Darwin’s devastating account of how we did not evolve over so many random variations to know what the world is actually like, but merely to survive in it long enough to reproduce our genetic data, even at the price of a grand self-deception. It was Nietzsche who most enthusiastically embraced the fall of man, bathing like a serial killer in the blood of modernity’s victims until even God’s BDE (big divine energy) had been bled dry from his swollen veins: ‘life has developed in the smallest, narrowest, neediest, most preliminary ways and yet still cannot avoid taking *itself* as the purpose and measure of things, and out of love for its own preservation’.³

So,
how,
then,
can we ever hope to speak of the ineffable,
to turn ourselves inside out? **the werewolf,**
Is it ridiculous to suggest that **that spectre of primal terror,**

might be a gateway drug to the beyond?

If this claim seems excessive, then all the better to grab us.

There are few writers who have ventured as deep into the lupine wilderness and lived to tell the tale in such unrelenting grisliness as Whitley Strieber in his 1978 debut novel *The Wolfen*. Much as Kant compares his critique of reason to the cop on the beat, so does the novel follow New York detectives Becky and George on the case of the gruesome deaths of two boys in blue who are soaked in crimson by ‘impossibly fast-moving shapes’ before they have any inkling they have ‘less than a minute of life remaining’.⁴ Wild dogs and violent criminals—the first suspects—are quickly ruled out when an expert at the Museum of Natural History, Dr Ferguson, informs Becky and George that the pawprints left at the crime scene are neither strictly canine nor human. ‘Their placid, workaday lives are suddenly disrupted by a new terror of the most dangerous type—the unknown.’⁵ These two Kantians soon find themselves up against that which lusts for nothing less than to feast on their livid entrails, as if feasting on **slaughtered barnyard pigs.**

If spirit determines itself through the justified use of expressions according to rules and norms which are asserted, argued and revised by the rational community of free agents, it is difficult to imagine anything more opposed to it than the werewolf. Succumbing to the full moon without delay or indecision, a lycanthrope is not free to go its own way. It does not choose when and what to hunt, nor the means of ensnaring its prey; it is pure means turning on itself without any extrinsic ends to pursue outside the ruthless exercise of its own traps, its own cunning, its own delight in the flavour of live flesh. Such is the *outsidedness* of a true predator, hunting for hunting’s sake, the kill only important because of the chase. (The kill is actually the means to serve the true ends of hunting, predation, cunning, etc., for their own sakes: the will to power, in short.) Stripped of their ability to communicate with their former human brethren, the fanged ones cannot give and ask for reasons, let alone commit to them as they ‘pass the night chattering together and twattling in an unknown tongue’.⁶ Dr Ferguson might speculate that it is possible to communicate and even reason with nature’s finest killing machines, but when push comes to shove, claw comes to jugular, and he finally comes face to inhuman face, ‘his hand-signals had meant nothing to them, nothing at all’.⁷ Well before the werewolf infects its victims with the lunacy of the moon, it reduces them to a paralysing silence, or at best a nonsensical scream. Committing to nothing and refusing all reasons, the werewolf is ‘fundamentally our enemy’: ‘Although they were intelligent they couldn’t be called human. Or could they? Did they have civil rights, duties, obligations? The very question was absurd. Despite their intelligent nature there would be no place for them in human society.’⁸ Even amongst themselves, there are no prototypical taboos and social customs upon which civilisation might be erected. Strieber makes this all too clear when the ravenous pack makes a banquet out of one of their own, almost lustfully delighting in the symphony of his popping bones ●

● **‘They turned the body of their brother on his back and ate him,**

crushing even his bones in their jaws,

consuming every bit of them except a few tufts of fur'.⁹

Clearly, *canis lupus sapiens* possesses none of spirit's charms.

None of this is to say that the werewolf lacks intelligence. On the contrary, it is even more cunning than us, as Becky discovers when she catches one mimicking a human infant's alluring cries only to violate that innocence with a snarl. It is only natural that a human brain wired with the concepts of reason and fused with a canine body's hyper-senses would be capable of tracking the vast noumenal wilderness better than any furless biped could:

We have never faced an alien intelligence before, have never faced a species with its own built-in technology far superior to our own. Ferguson could not imagine what the mind behind the nose and ears of the werewolf must be like. The sheer quantity of information pouring in must literally be millions of times greater than that reaching a man.¹⁰

As the folklore and fairytales go, the werewolf peels away its skin to expose pelt, claws and fangs, becoming intoxicated by dangerous instincts. Strieber's wolven are even more menacing than that:

born werewolves and forever fanged, they are utterly inimical to the human race whose intestines they pull apart from the outside in.

Another of the novel's ill-fated Kantians experiences this firsthand when **he reaches for the trigger on his .38 firearm** only to discover that 'there was nothing to pull. He looked at the arm—his hand was not there. Blood was pouring out and steaming in the cold. And with horror-struck eyes he saw his hand, still clutching the .38, dangling in the creature's mouth.'¹¹ A true out-of-body experience ... There is something like poetry in the sound of tendons snapping, of tissue buckling under the pressure of long, jagged claws. Among all nature's abominations, it is the lycanthrope that has scratched, at the limits of reason, **the ravings of the unknown lands beyond.**

lycanthropic.

Of course, lycanthropes are fictitious, but that is just to say that fictions are also **lycanthropic.** It is the fate of fiction, particularly that of the Grand Guignol variety, to channel through language the breakdown of language itself. Paradoxical as it might seem, writing is *extra*-semantic, apophatic, mystical, operating at the outer edges of everything which could possibly be expressed. Could a pack of wolves descending on an exhausted deer be a performance piece? Or a lethal bout of rabies amount to a work of art? If Strieber's writing is anything to go by, they could. Take his 1987 'nonfiction' book *Communion: A True Story* (whose far more fitting original title was *Body Terror*) about a 'personal encounter with intelligent nonhuman beings' who abducted him from his cabin in much the same way that the wolven snatch their prey from abandoned car parks and side streets.¹² While the nightcrawlers Strieber encountered looked rather different from the wolven, he notes that they share an *intrinsic obliqueness* before which his imagination falls deathly silent: 'My memory was of seeing the shape sweeping across the room and realizing with a feeling that galvanized my whole being that it was something totally unknown to me ... No written words, nothing, can convey my feelings at that moment.'¹³ We stand trembling at the devil's crossroads, where truth and fiction collide. Strieber is not the greatest of horror writers, but he did cognise that fiction conjures something

outside our most closely guarded values,
meanings and truths.

As with all accursed writers who invent by poking their pen where it doesn't belong, like a knife into a bandaged wound, Strieber's affliction could be diagnosed as a case of medical lycanthropy, an extremely rare psychiatric disease whereby the infected believes they can shapeshift into animal and other nonhuman forms. In the severest of cases, the infected loses all sense of reason and the ability to speak as they resort to primitive howls and growls. Lycanthropy also strikes at its prey's motor-sensory skills as they regress to crawling on all fours like a quadruped. Lycanthropes can even become predatorial towards their fellow humans, barking and biting at their once familiar family and friends. What Strieber had first written about in his fiction and then experienced firsthand were the symptoms of his lycanthropy, the outside's repressed animality confronting him with the brute fact of spirit's irrational and inhuman ground. Strieber is right, his lupine hallucinations and post-abduction syndrome were *real* in the sense that they summoned something that was outside the bounds of possible experience, the very same outside his horror stories had called upon in their own way. Between fiction and lycanthropy there is an esoteric pact which gnaws at our reason, illuminating it under the full moon where an ancient terror can be glimpsed as the feral truth that spirit must tame if it is to live the only way it knows how:

amidst a world of
lies.

To turn ourselves inside out,
to become-werewolf,
is to gleefully skin every last shred of our humanity to the point where even Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-animal looks more like an anthropomorphic furry toy that children might sleep with to safeguard them from the night's more obscure terrors. To be skinned alive means *writing with fangs*, deciphering as one does a cryptic communiqué from beyond the dungeon of reasons in which spirit, that grand inquisitor of truth, can still feel itself to be superior for only so long.

Meat's back on the menu.



1 Reza Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, Urbanomic, Falmouth, UK, 2018, p. 31.

2 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1998, p. 115.

3 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, Gary Handwerk (trans.), in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, vol. 3, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1997, p. 11.

4 Whitley Strieber, *The Wolfen*, Bantam Books, New York, 1979, pp. 3, 2.

5 Strieber, *Wolfen*, p. 36.

6 Strieber, *Wolfen*, p. 140.

7 Strieber, *Wolfen*, p. 254.

8 Strieber, *Wolfen*, p. 196.

9 Strieber, *Wolfen*, p. 218.

10 Strieber, *Wolfen*, pp. 144-45.

11 Strieber, *Wolfen*, p. 257.

12 Whitley Strieber, *Communion: A True Story: Encounters with the Unknown*, Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1987, p. 13.

13 Strieber, *Communion*, p. 62.

Lucas Cranach the Elder
The Werewolf or the Cannibal
Woodcut
16.5 x 12.8 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York. Harris Brisbane
Dick Fund, 1942



Within a Forest Dark: Some Howlings for the Loup-garou
Leon Marvell

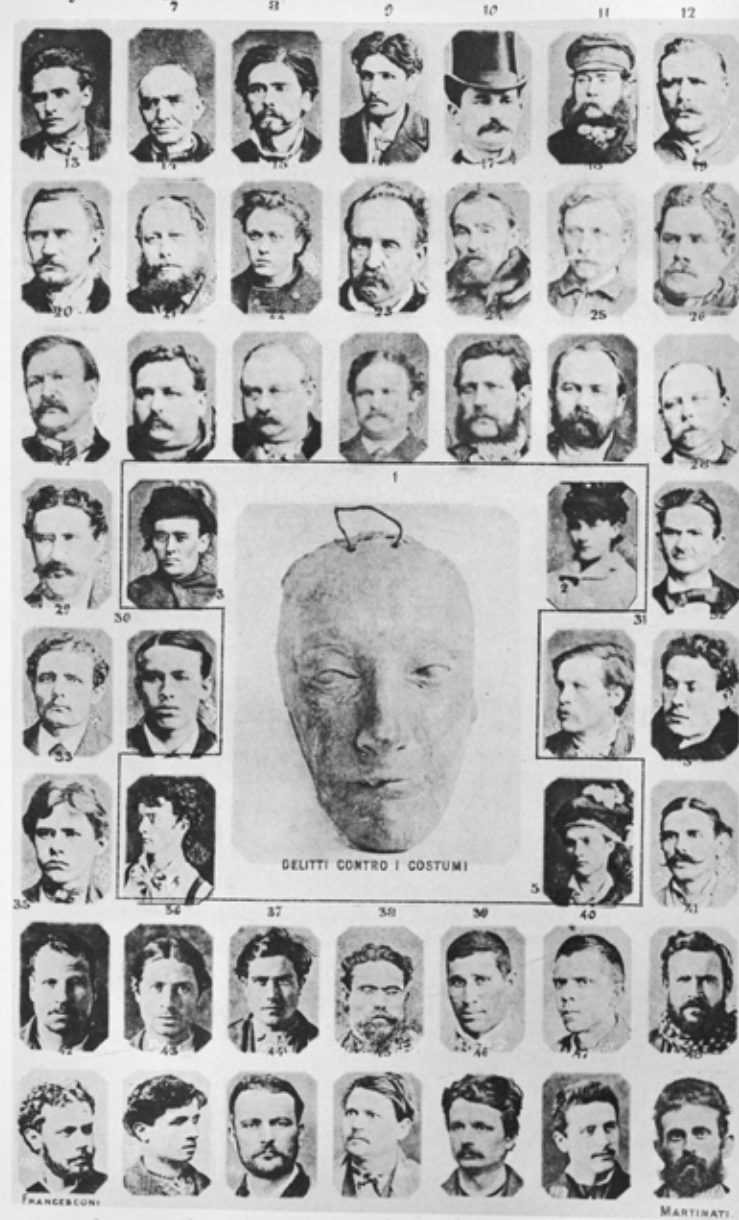


Divine Outsider
Jack Sargeant



Michael Wolgemut
Wolf-boy

Woodcut from Hartmann Schedel, *Nuremberg Chronicle*
Anton Koberger, Nuremberg, 1493
Image: Wikimedia Commons



RITRATTI DI CRIMINALI TEDESCHI ED ITALIANI.

Cesare Lombroso

L'Uomo Delinquente, 1889

Image: Wellcome Collection. CC BY

Within a Forest Dark: Some Howlings for the Loup-garou
Leon Marvell



*Jamais—vous le savez—ni mon sang ni ma tête
n'ont pu tenir à une clôture exacte.*

(Never—as you well know—could my blood,
nor my head, be fully imprisoned.)

Marquis de Sade, letter to his wife, 1777¹

*He that goes by the law (as the proverb is) holds
a wolf by the ears.*

Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621²

Loup-garou (werewolf), 19th century
Engraving
Artist unknown
Mansell Collection, London
Image: Wikimedia Commons

There is
a famous topological experiment
known as the eversion of a sphere.³
The question that engaged topologists was:
is it possible by means of a continuous
deformation to evert a sphere,
such that what was once the inside
of the sphere becomes the outside,
without breaking the continuity
of the deformation?

Q In other words, if we were to take a squash ball, could we turn it inside out without tearing the ball apart?
Quite counter-intuitively, it turns out that such a continuous transformation
is certainly possible, both in terms of topology and the mathematical proof.
Yet I am still puzzled:

at what point do we recognise that the inside has irrevocably
become the outside?

How far away do you have to be before you can look back
and know that you are no longer inside?

What sort of transformation has to occur before one irretrievably becomes

outside

?

And another question follows from these admittedly
eccentric divagations:

what is the relationship between those
who are outside and the *outlaw*?

In the Middle Ages

criminals convicted of the most serious crimes, particularly crimes of violence and murder, were punished by being sent into the forest, far from the city walls. Inside the citadel were safety and community, the rule of law, and the consolation of the church. Outside the city lay the forest, a literal wilderness, a *terra incognita* where predatory beasts, bandits and *werewolves* lay in wait. The word ‘werewolf’ means ‘man-wolf’ (from the Proto-European *vir*, meaning ‘man’), and as the most heinous crimes deserved the most extreme and unthinkable of punishments criminals-become-werewolves were banished from the world of human company and sent to live as men-turned-beasts in the verdant darkness. There, animal selves were allowed free reign, free to visit violence upon the unwary traveller or the child foolish enough to wander into the forest unprotected.

The criminal werewolf was the quintessential outsider, banished from civilisation and outside of the law.

While being sentenced to become a werewolf was considered the most extreme of juridical, retributive measures, its enforcement was not only a communal ostracising, it was, at least in the popular imagination, the beginning of a grotesque physiological transformation. Banished to the forest, the criminal would slowly evolve a more beast-like physiognomy, the eversion of the primitive core signalling its emergence with a distinct bristling hirsuteness, taloned fingernails, unnaturally elongated incisors and incandescent gaze. The details of such a transmogrification can be observed in the 1941 film *The Wolf Man*, written by screenwriter and novelist Curt Siodmak. Siodmak stated that the film was his response to the rise of fascism in Europe:

I am the Wolf Man ... I was forced into a fate I didn't want: to be a Jew in Germany. I would not have chosen that as my fate. The swastika represents the moon. When the moon comes up, the man doesn't want to murder, but he knows he cannot escape it, the Wolf Man destiny.⁴

One of the earliest accounts of the physiological basis of becoming a werewolf was that of the 7th-century Alexandrian physician Paulus Aegineta. He described patients suffering from what he called ‘melancholic lycanthropia’, and expounded upon the aetiology of this malady in terms of the Galenic doctrine of the four humours. Aegineta explained that it was an excess of melancholy, provoked by a preponderance of black bile, that accounted for the physical symptoms and bizarre behaviour (such as being inexplicably drawn to cemeteries at night) of the lycanthrope.

The notion that the extreme outsider could be recognised by a certain physical degeneration into a more primitive, beast-like state has had a surprising longevity and can be discerned, for example, in the writings of Cesare Lombroso in his *l’Uomo Delinquente* of 1876, where the ‘signs’ of criminality are manifest in the body of the miscreant, and in Max Nordau’s *Degeneration* of 1892, a work that had a profound effect on an entire generation of philosophers, artists and millennial doomsayers.

Yet werewolves were not always recognisable by their theriomorphism. Some, indeed, were of high society, and wore their fur *on the inside*.

Perhaps the most famous of these secret werewolves was Gilles de Rais, Marshal of France, who, as a seasoned military man, had accompanied the young and naive Jeanne d’Arc into battle. The utter monstrosity of the accounts of de Rais’s crimes has bewitched quite a few outsider *philosophes* since de Rais’s execution in 1440, from renegade surrealist Georges Bataille to the lifestyle fantasist and occultist Aleister Crowley.

In his *The Book of Were-Wolves* (1865), written as a result of his folkloric studies and eclectic scholarly interests, the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould evokes the chilling tops of de Rais’s crimes:

But when dusk settled down over the forest, and one by one the windows of the castle became illumined, peasants would point to one casement high up in an isolated tower, from which a clear light streamed through the gloom of night; they spoke of a fierce red glare which irradiated the chamber at times, and of sharp cries ringing out of it, through the hushed woods, to be answered only by the howl of the wolf as it rose from its lair to begin its nocturnal rambles.⁵

Baring-Gould is describing the fearsome Castle of Machecoul, wherein Gilles de Rais committed his infamous crimes. For Baring-Gould, de Rais was the epitome of the darkest human passions, and therefore could legitimately be called a ‘werewolf’.

Closer to our own age, in the late 1980s, a young man known only as ‘X’ in the psychiatric records was found guilty of the apparently unprovoked violent assault and murder of an elderly man. His fantastical explanation of his murderous appetite was that he was periodically capable of turning into a werewolf. ‘It is in the blood’, he said,

... if I happen to cut myself, I drink my own blood ... when I suffer an emotional shock, I feel myself undergoing a transformation, it’s like my fingers are paralyzed, I get a feeling like ants are crawling in the middle of my hand, I am no longer master of myself.⁶

A 49-year-old American housewife similarly reported on her lupine transformations. Looking in the mirror, she observed a grotesque difference between her eyes:

... one is frightened and the other is like the wolf—it is dark, deep, and full of evil, and full of revenge for the other eye. This creature of the dark wants to kill.⁷

The catastrophic sadism inherent in these hallucinatory statements has been condensed in one of the most enduringly shocking cinematographic sequences of the 20th century: the opening few minutes of *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. The screenplay for the short film was first conceived after Buñuel and Dalí began relating images from their dreams to each other. Of particular interest to me is the

coincidence of the young werewolf X's hallucination of ants crawling in the middle of his hand and the exact same image in Buñuel and Dalí's film (the dream from which this image derives was Dalí's), and the American she-wolf's mirror reflection in which one of her eyes was 'full of revenge for the other eye'. There is of course a preponderance of images of the eye in surrealist works, but it is the first few moments of *Un Chien Andalou* that quintessentially evoke the supernatural *violence* of the eye.

The film opens with the director Luis Buñuel, looking simultaneously both pugnacious and louche, sharpening his cut-throat razor, and then, coolly and deliberately, bisecting the left eye of a young woman. The extreme close-up of the razor slicing through the eye is famously preceded by the image of a cloud passing in front of the moon, allaying the audience's trepidation at what might follow Buñuel's placing of the razor in front of the young woman's face. The audience's anxiety is relieved only momentarily, as the following 'jump scare' of the release of the intraocular ichor has never failed to elicit a collective gasp of horror from an audience. Much to Buñuel and Dalí's dismay, however, the film was a big hit among audiences, and was easily recuperated into the many avant-garde experiments in cinema of the time. Infuriated by this turn of events, Buñuel complained that both *Un Chien Andalou* and surrealism itself were '... against that pack of imbeciles who find *beautiful* and *poetic* what, in reality, is nothing less than a desperate, passionate call to murder'.⁸

Buñuel's famous justification for *Un Chien Andalou* was but the repetition of the tagline adorning the commercial poster advertising the first screening of the film, something his audience had perhaps missed in their cineaste enthusiasm for the film:

Ce film est un appel au meurtre! (This film is a call to murder!).

Even the effete Dalí noted that an audience 'stupefied by avant-garde magazines and "divulgences"' failed to understand the 'moral basis of the film which is aimed directly at it with total violence and cruelty'.⁹

It should come as little surprise then that the very beginnings of surrealism effloresced from within a psychic event of glacial violence. In the *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), André Breton recounts the germination of surrealism's dedication to 'pure psychic automatism' from a galvanic hypnopompic hallucination:

One evening, therefore, before I fell asleep, I perceived, so clearly articulated that it was impossible to change a word, but nonetheless removed from the sound of any voice, a rather strange phrase which came to me without any apparent relationship to the events in which, my consciousness agrees, I was then involved, a phrase which seemed to me insistent, a phrase, if I may be so bold, *which was knocking at the window* ... unfortunately I cannot remember it exactly, but it was something like: 'There is a man cut in two by the window', but there could be no question of ambiguity, accompanied as it was by the faint visual image.¹⁰

The image of the bisection of a man by (perhaps) a falling window pane is a Sadean 'inciting moment' that Breton would push even further in the *Second Surrealist Manifesto* (1929): 'The simplest Surrealist act consists of dashing down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd'.¹¹ While Breton would later very much regret making such a statement, the principle of an unalloyed violence lying at the heart of the surrealist project can only be ignored at the peril of distorting the passionate Sadean dreams of the movement.

Such dreams represent, on the poetic plane, the howlings of the creature in the woods, the destructive hand of a divine criminality, and the tortuous remaking of the body such that the psychic interior becomes violently forced into the outer form of the primal outlaw, the werewolf.

¹ Laurence L. Bongie, *Sade: Un essai biographique*, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Montreal, 2017, p. 153. Translation by Marvell.

² Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Tudor Publishing Co., New York, 1948, p. 70.

³ See, for example, 'Sphere Eversion', *Wikipedia*, wikipedia.org/wiki/Sphere_eversion; accessed 13 August 2019.

⁴ 'Curt Siodmak Dies at 98; Created Modern "Wolf Man"', *New York Times*, 19 November 2000, nytimes.com/2000/11/19/nyregion/curt-siodmak-dies-at-98-created-modern-wolf-man.html; accessed 13 August 2019.

⁵ Sabine Baring-Gould, *The Book of Were-Wolves, Being an Account of a Terrible Superstition* (1865), Causeway Books, New York, 1973, p. 187.

⁶ Adam Douglas, *The Beast Within*, Avon Books, New York, 1992, p. 3.

⁷ Douglas, p. 11.

⁸ Luis Buñuel, quoted in Elza Adamowicz, *Un Chien Andalou*, Bloomsbury, London, 2010, p. 23.

⁹ Salvador Dalí, quoted in Adamowicz, p. 23.

¹⁰ André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1972, p. 21.

¹¹ Breton, p. 125.



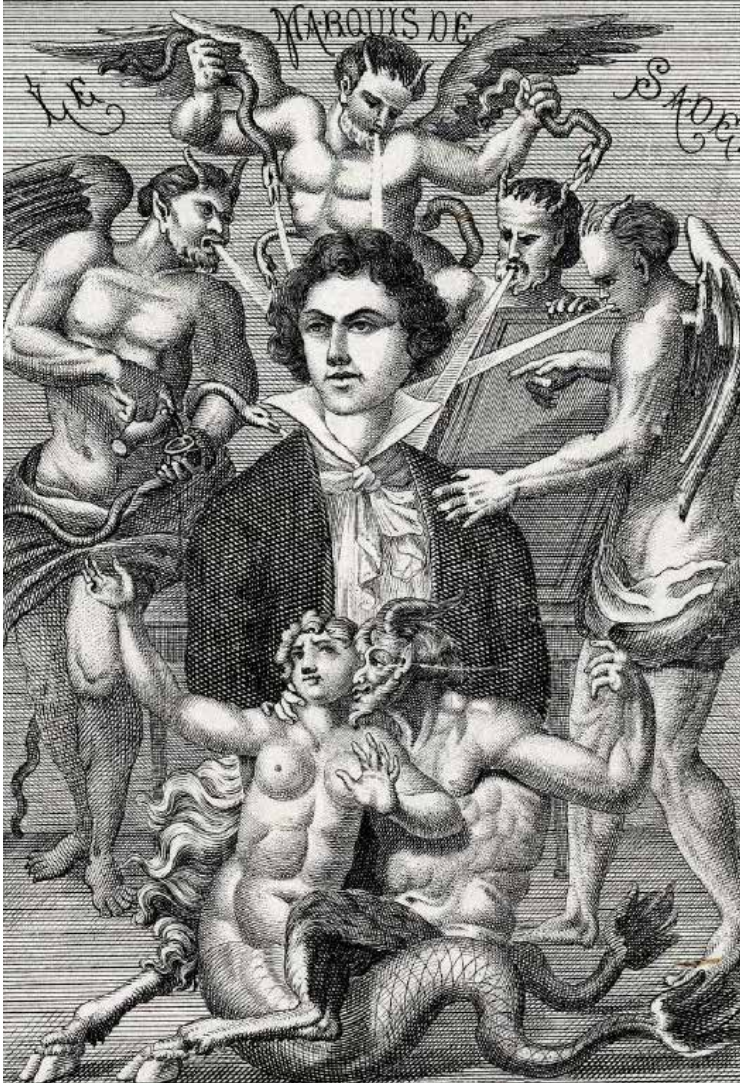
Maurice Sand

Les Lupins

Engraving from George Sand, *Légendes rustiques*, Morel, Paris, 1858
Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris

Divine Outsider

Jack Sargeant



*I am being taken for a werewolf in these parts.
Those poor little chicks with their
terrified comments.*

Marquis de Sade, letter to Gaspard Gaufridy, c. 1775¹

*First of all, what was he exactly?
A monstrous exception,
absolutely outside the pale of humanity.*

Maurice Blanchot²

Portrait of the Marquis de Sade, 1901

Engraving

Collection of the British Museum, London

The final sequence of Luis Buñuel's 1930 film *L'Age d'Or* begins with an intertitle informing the viewer that there have been brutal orgies at the Chateau de Selliny for 120 days and that the survivors are now leaving. Cut to a shot of the castle door opening, and the figure of the Duc de Blangis emerges into the light. In a composition reminiscent of popular paintings of Jesus Christ, the Duc stands at the threshold between the castle and the outside world. His eyes glance skyward, then, as he steps onto the drawbridge, he opens his arms before him, adopting a posture akin to that associated with images of Christ preaching. He leads his fellow libertines from the chateau; each looks exhausted and drained, their debaucheries having taken toll upon their bodies. The scene is accompanied by a soundtrack of the drums of Calanda.

As the libertines slowly walk away from the building, struggling down the thin pathway, an injured young woman steps from the shadow of the doorway. The Duc de Blangis returns to the drawbridge and leads her back into the chateau. From inside the building she screams, presumably in her death throes, and the Duc steps once more from the darkness of the chateau, but now his beard has vanished. In contrast to Buñuel's beatific cinematic representation of the libertine, the text of the Marquis de Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom* describes the Duc de Blangis as '50 years old, the build of a satyr, endowed with a monstrous member and prodigious strength ... the repository of all vices and all crime; he killed his mother, his sister and three of his wives.'³

Confined, first to prison and later to the asylum, Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de Sade, existed in a world far beyond the limits of acceptable society. In *The 120 Days of Sodom*, Sade the outsider created an outsider masterwork. Covertly written on a scroll of paper, lost, then found decades after his death, the neat lines of handwriting detailed a philosophical and literary exploration of freedom and power, violence and corruption, lust, sex and death, horror and cruelty. Sade, after years of scandal, outrage and confinement, sought to vanish after death, to rot forgotten in an unmarked grave. His final wishes, however, were unfulfilled, and the writer was given a Christian burial at Charenton. He was not allowed to ‘fade from the minds of men’.⁴

While Sade’s work was banned in France, copies of the novels published during his lifetime, including both *Justine* (1791) and *Juliette* (c. 1797), could be located, by those who knew, in the *Enfer* (the ‘Inferno’ or, even better, ‘Hell’), that section in the Bibliothèque nationale de France where works deemed utterly pornographic were stored. Now rendered as truly *infernal* texts through the act of classification itself—much as Sade catalogued cruelties in *The 120 Days of Sodom*—these works were stored away from prying, greedy eyes and grubby, probing fingers, obscene texts accessible only with permission. But clandestine editions of Sade’s works were published throughout the 19th century, presumably circulating in secret amongst those for whom the allure of the text was greater than their fear of opprobrium.⁵

The 120 Days of Sodom was first published by Eugen Dühren (the pseudonymous Iwan Bloch) in 1904. At some point, perhaps early in the 20th century, Sade became known as the Divine Marquis. Writing about Sade, the poet Guillaume Apollinaire described him as the ‘freest spirit that ever lived’, suggesting that Sade would come to ‘dominate the 20th century’.⁶ The surrealists were amongst the

first who understood the importance of Sade's writings, and within a few years the Divine Marquis would come to inform numerous works, including a number of artworks by Man Ray, paintings by René Magritte and Buñuel's film.⁷

The 120 Days of Sodom details limitless perversions and abuses and is a work of annihilating pornographic jouissance. Sade's obscenities are a vast affirmation of his pornographic sensibilities, his desire to write beyond all boundaries, and his giving free rein to his imagination. Everything becomes swallowed by obscenity. The outside swallows the world, until only a glorious obscenity remains. The writings of Sade illustrate the importance of personal dedication to individual expression and affirm the possibilities of the human imagination.

The sobriquet 'Divine', with its religious connotations, is echoed in Buñuel's representation of the Duc de Blangis. Sade, ferocious in his understanding of the godless void of existence, is the antithesis of most understandings of the divine. And yet, in his dedication to his personal pleasures and writing—as if the two could ever be considered to be separate—Sade has become a divine outsider and a black godless saint to all who follow in his wake.

¹ Cited in Francine du Plessix Gray, *At Home with the Marquis de Sade*, Pimlico, London, 2000, p. 172.

² Maurice Blanchot, 'Sade', in Marquis de Sade, *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom and Other Writings*, Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse (trans.), Grove Press, New York, 1965/1990, p. 71.

³ Marquis de Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, Will McMorran and Thomas Wynn (trans.), Penguin, London, 2016, p. 60.

⁴ Marquis de Sade, *The Ghosts of Sodom: The Charenton Journals*, John Phillips (trans.), Creation Books, London, 2003, p. 138.

⁵ The first catalogue of works in the *Enfer*, titled *L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque nationale*, was written by Guillaume Apollinaire, Fernand Fleuret and Louis Perceau and published in Paris in 1913. See Guillaume Apollinaire, Fernand Fleuret & Louis Perceau, *L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque nationale*, fr.wikisource.org/wiki/L%E2%80%99Enfer_de_la_Biblioth%C3%A8que_nationale; accessed 26 August 2019.

⁶ Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Divine Marquis*, R.J. Dent (trans.), in Candice Black (ed.), *Sade: Sex and Death: The Divine Marquis and the Surrealists*, Solar Books, 2011, p. 65

⁷ For more on the surrealists and sex, see Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros*, 1938–1968, Thames & Hudson, London, 2005.



Vali & Gianni

Eva Collins



To Gianni Menichetti, Vali Myers' long-time lover and keeper of her wild hidden abode, Vali was the 'Queen of the Valley'. We know Vali Myers as the charismatic, exotic outsider artist, holding court while lounging on rugs and cushions on the floor of her studio in Melbourne's Nicholas Building. Gianni fell under her spell when, as a youth, he met her in Italy in 1971 and immediately felt that her blood was in his veins. 'She had the magic to turn dirt into gold, like a real alchemist', he recounted.

I met Gianni in 2009 in the Moorish cottage he shared for decades with this woman, a home perched like a hermitage in a ravine near the cliffside village of Positano on the Amalfi coast. A slim man with long side-curls and heavily tattooed eyes; immensely gentle, a poet, an artist and semi-reclusive. To get to his home Gianni led me up a steep, long, narrow path in the middle of a wild forest. He was carrying on his back a 20-kilogram bag of bones for his dogs, who greeted him with a deafening cacophony that echoed throughout the valley.

Back in 2002, just months before she died, I had interviewed Vali in her studio in Melbourne. Then, at 71, she was still defiant—kohl-ringed eyes amidst a lacework of facial tattoos, golden teeth flashing with pride like a Gypsy's dowry. Everything about her swirled: her mane of screaming red hair, her flowing robes, her body art, her writing, her painting.

Vali Myers left home at 14, working in factories in Melbourne to support herself. She loved dancing and by the age of 17 had become a lead dancer with the Melbourne Modern Ballet Company. 'I'd jump in the air and stay there', she chuckled. She was already wild then. 'I've been drinking since the age of twelve, wearing make-up and running the streets like a dog.' But Melbourne proved too conservative for her, and in 1949 she sailed to Paris where she danced in cafes for tips and was befriended by Jean Cocteau, Jean Genet and Django Reinhardt. What a leap for a suburban antipodean. But they were also dark days. For three years she lived on the streets, begging and stealing; she was arrested as a vagabond and imprisoned later for criminal association. Cocteau helped get her released but she was put on an Interpol file, classified as 'Undesirable'. Her life at the time was captured in gritty black-and-white snapshots by Dutch photographer Ed van der Elsken for his 1958 book *Love on the Left Bank*, in which she features like a new wave movie star.

Expelled from France and moving to Vienna, she met and married a half Hungarian Gypsy architect, Rudi Rappold, with whom she eventually settled near Positano. There, Rudi and Vali found and moved into an abandoned little cottage perched halfway up a great 300-metre-high ravine called Il Porto. The local authorities wanted to log the trees in the valley and get rid of all the animals that lived around Vali's home. She fought them off and, later, under the stewardship of Gianni, the Il Porto residence was endorsed as a wildlife sanctuary by the World Wildlife Foundation.

Previous spread:

Eva Collins

Vali Myers, Melbourne, 2001

Digital photograph

Courtesy of the artist and the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra

Previous spread and opposite:

Eva Collins

Gianni Menichetti, Il Porto, 2009

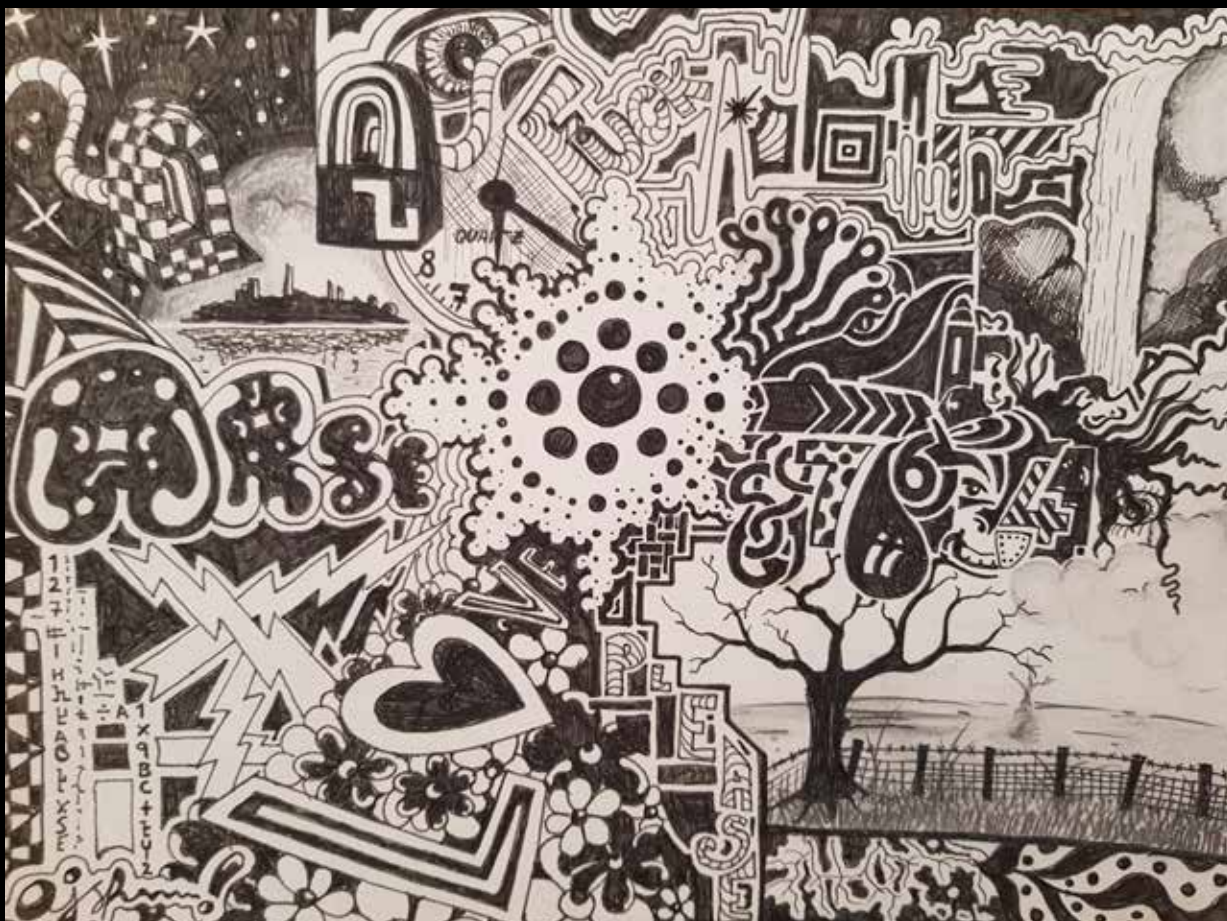
Digital photograph

Courtesy of the artist



To survive, she had to be strong. ‘I had the dirtiest mouth in town’, she admitted, and when mocked for her appearance she’d face the guys and shout, ‘OK cocksucker, come and say that to my face!’ And, she added happily, ‘... they backed off real fast!’

Gianni has lived alone in Il Porto for decades. There is still no electricity there and his water supply comes from a delicately trickling cliff spring, but he says he has the dogs, roosters, foxes, turtles and other animals for company, along with his reminiscences of Vali, who—old enough at 14 to leave home and young enough at 71 to dance, laugh and fight—
he calls the love of his life,
the Gypsy from hell.



Lee Hadwin is a somnambulist. He began walking and drawing in his sleep – scribbling on bedroom walls, floors and in old books scattered about his North Wales family home – from the age of four. He hasn't stopped since. Subject to scientific and journalistic scrutiny, his strange talent still remains a mystery. He has no recollection of his nocturnal rambling nor of any of the art he produces, and he doesn't produce art when he is awake. *EC*

Lee Hadwin
 55.8580, 1991
 Pencil on paper
 Courtesy of the artist



Simon Mee
Pine Tree Pete and Bonsai Bill, 2011
Chalk and charcoal on paper
112 x 140 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photograph: Rod Buchholz





Anti- hotel:

A Folly in Five Tropes

*Jessica
Laraine
Williams*

Erica Camille
Helga's Folly, 2014
Courtesy of Erica Camille
Courtesy of the artist and the
National Portrait Gallery,
Canberra

I.

‘... backed by jungle and all that goes with it! Not a boutique or starred emporium. If expecting a regular hotel experience, best look elsewhere.’ – *Helga’s Folly*¹

In the city of Kandy, Sri Lanka, two mildly voyeuristic loci of touristic renown persist. One is the Temple of the Tooth, with the reliquary *dente* ensconced beside the central lake. The other is Helga’s Folly, unrelentingly promoted as an anomalous *Wunderkammer* up in the hills (*must visit, if not stay*). The Folly is ever bracketed: between neat synopses, the token oddity of dog-eared travel guides, splayed over hypersaturated magazine spreads, elsewhere the subject of frothy and undulous blogger interviews. None of these off-the-beaten-path narratives orbit too closely around the residence’s aesthetic sedimentation, a perplexing miasma of paintings, invited defacements, photographs and ephemeralia en masse. This is likely because the art withdraws into marginal caricature, cowed beneath a grand spectacle of eccentric archetypes ... a crescendo peaking in the owner herself, Madam Helga de Silva Blow Perera.

2.

‘... a junkman’s paradise of faded luxury.’
– *Atlas Obscura*²

As portended, the exterior resembles a tropical bunker in the throes of an unbridled mural effluvium. The Folly is sluggishly lit within, some rooms barely illuminated by sepulchral candles, or via the muddied spectra of intermingling coloured bulbs. Pagan leitmotifs occupy ceilings and creep up walls in the guise of lunar cycles, woodland effigies and other varieties of mysterious anima. There is a persistent outbreak of daubed foliage tableaux over black, as well as a memorable swathe of nauseous green. Unfortunately, the overall effect is only momentarily gothic. A Halloweenesque mania affixes rubbery skeletons alongside blinking LEDs, crowned in the dust of perennial Christmas garlands. At one stairway landing, the celestial nymphs of the Sigiriya rock fortress have been recreated in a haphazard mimesis. The original fresco remains a Sri Lankan cultural icon, sustaining an otherworldly frisson despite the queuing hordes that ogle daily. Here, its derivative jostles with bug-eyed Alice in Wonderland caricatures and notables from the *Wind in the Willows* oeuvre, bathed in nightclub-blue light. Schizoid yet genteel, this painted amalgamation of cultures pop, high, low, foreign and endemic feels collectively naive. Artists who stay longer term can add to these strata, resulting in a crowd-sourced culpability, a place drowning in the visual crust of unmoderated pluralities.

3.

‘... the empty, barely-lit corridors are chilling if you’re the only resident for the night.’
– *Condé Nast Traveller India*³

At the end of the seemingly interminable corridor, there is the second chandelier, sending a feeble wash across dilated walls. It emits a brittle chatter from *all the way down there*, arrhythmic outcries along a pendulous sway. There is no visible agent responsible for this kinesis, no source to flush out from behind threadbare spookiness; this ghost house alleged, possessed of diabolical light fittings. At the terminus of passage, a door announces itself, a rectangular abscess that bloats externally. The ceiling shrinks back from jungle canopy, and there’s that so-called ‘guardian fairy’ at repose, an attraction popularly described in terms of a delightful whimsy. Up close, the bulging, ovoid eyes of the sculpture connote something other. With waxy insidiousness, this same countenance universally leers through a frenzied mutiny of orbital lasers that pierce night skies. This is the ‘tall grey’ of the psychedelic trance visual lexicon, a mainstay of international drug-trip iconography. In those settings, patrons inevitably encounter real or hallucinated dioramas resplendent with this echoed face, which fills the vacant strips between trees, but is a face which never emerges corporeally.

1.

‘Amenities and Gallery. Helga’s Folly – A Sri Lankan Home’, *Helga’s Folly*, helgasfolly.com/amenities-and-gallery/; accessed 7 July 2019.

2.

‘Helga’s Folly’, *Atlas Obscura*, atlasobscura.com/places/helga-s-folly; accessed 7 July 2019.

3.

Kinita Shenoy, ‘Helga’s Folly: Sri Lanka’s Own Hotel California’, *Condé Nast Traveller India*, 24 October 2018, cntraveller.in/story/helgas-folly-sri-lankas-own-hotel-california/; accessed 7 July 2019.

4.

Tom Skyes, ‘The Amazing Life of Helga Blow, Sri Lanka’s Last Great Eccentric’, *The Daily Beast*, 2017, thedailybeast.com/the-amazing-life-of-helga-blow-sri-lankas-last-great-eccentric/; accessed 7 July 2019.

5.

Ahila Thillainathan, ‘Interview: Helga Perera’, *Perspectives Quilt* (blog), 31 August 2016, perspectivesquilt.com/2016/08/31/interview-helga-perera/; accessed 7 July 2019.

4.

‘Guests over the years have included Vivien Leigh, Peter Finch, Sir Laurence Olivier, William Holden, Gregory Peck, Sir Alec Guinness, and Zandra Rhodes.’

– *The Daily Beast*⁴

Helga’s Folly revels in its celebrity shtick, cloyed by a salon hang of portraiture overflowing with filial intrigue. The walls are faceted by a multitude of these photographs, tessellating into the Folly’s society cachet, a self-mythologising family nexus made legible. Le Corbusier presides over dinner in one corner, for example. In this photo, he is accompanied by Helga’s aunt Minnette de Silva, his student and an architectural luminary in her own right. Proximally, there is another young woman imaged—a daughter, perhaps—clutching a rifle, laconic grin cemented, beret cocked to the side, as she leans against a tree. The food arrives with surreal pomp, segments domed atop a novelty fish-shaped platter. Drinks accompany in leaden, baroque goblets. A private tour group passes with smartphones aloft, nodding erratically through the monologue espoused by their guide. Their eyes skim over framed newspaper clippings bearing Helga’s handwritten annotations. Her marks and her likeness are ubiquitous throughout the Folly, signalling always towards the nucleus of this fantasia: its hotelier and protagonist.

5.

‘I knew then that I had found my artist. I wrote to the professor, asking her if she would consider doing a portrait of a woman on a hill in Kandy.’

– ‘Interview: Helga Perera’⁵

Named eponymously for the artist, the Jane Lillian Vance Grotto swirls with visionary style, its murals florid and thick with raucous New Age spiritualisms. Its centrepiece is the portrait, a microcosm of the aforementioned pastiche, clad in an ostentatious golden frame. The canvas brims with prismatic hummingbirds, clustered flowers, heliotropic patterning and a tattooed skull. Helga occupies the centre, one arm flung out to mantle these glyphs. This deportment is replicated throughout the residence and in the abundance of press photos online, plumed Philip Treacy hat and bespoke choker consistent flourishes. Small vacillations do occur in Helga’s roster of auxiliary props. These are sartorial gestures made with equivalent panache to an Iris Apfel or Little Edie persona. Chintzy tulle winks at an audacious collar, or the parabola of a fan grazes demurely sealed lips. There is a tendency towards immaculate coiffure, worn with huge, impenetrable sunglasses. The *woman on the hill* retains a charismatic allure, whereas her Folly seems exhausted by this era of spoof tourism and trite, online bucket-listings.





Ethan Tsang
Untitled 1-4, 2019
Digital files
Courtesy of the artist



Stephanie Lam
Untitled, 2019
Acrylic paint on board
30 x 21 cm
Courtesy of the artist



THE OUTLIER PROBLEM

WES HILL

James "Son Ford" Thomas

Untitled, 1988

Unfired clay, paint, human teeth, rocks, aluminium foil

17.1 x 11.4 x 17.8 cm

Souls Grown Deep Foundation, Atlanta, from the William S. Arnett Collection



Problems, problems, problems.

You don't have to be Einstein—or Jerry Saltz—to know the term 'outsider art' is fraught with problems.

It's a superfluous category, not least because the contemporary art world already sees itself as inclusive, extolling the aesthetics of difference alongside capitalism's thirst for the new.

Throw in intersectional identity politics and the issue of demarcating 'insiders' from 'outsiders' becomes even more complex, turning one person's marginality into another person's privilege.

It's for these reasons that an alternative term, 'outlier', has gained traction in recent years.

In his 2008 book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, the *New Yorker* writer Malcolm Gladwell used the term to conceptualise the variables underpinning atypical individuals and events. In short, Gladwell's 'outlier' stories about Bill Gates, the Beatles and mathematical geniuses are not triumphant *sui generis* narratives about talent but look instead to the data behind the anomalies, seeing his subjects through the lens of the unpredictable, coincidental and entangled effects of culture, geography, community, family and genetic lineage.¹

Curator Lynne Cooke, a prominent advocate of unschooled art, referenced Gladwell in her 2018 exhibition *Outliers and American Vanguard Art*, at the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Cooke nominates 'outliers' as our contemporary term for 'outsider artists'—this most contentious of subjects, whose popularity seems to peak whenever faith in public organisations is profoundly lacking. Spanning a century of works that have been variously labelled as 'outsider', 'folk', 'isolate', 'self-taught' and 'naive', Cooke's exhibition highlighted the reciprocal influences of American vanguard artists considered conventionally trained and institutionally supported and those who were equally radical yet operated mostly on the fringes of society.

Cooke prefers 'outliers' to 'outsider artists' because, following Gladwell, 'outliers' implies an individual or agent emerging out of an aggregate, a variant from a statistical norm.² The implication, here, is that outsider art, although similarly concerned with the unconventional, is too oriented around static and negatively defined centre-periphery relations. While 'outlier' evokes an enigmatic agent in a quantifiable field, 'outsider' is a bad sort of enigmatic, conjuring mysterious, shadowy figures who appear on an insider's radar as if from nowhere. Unconsciously informing Cooke's switch in terminology is the understanding that, thanks to digital analytics, everyone's circumstances are now so highly mapped that the outsiders of old can no longer be thought of within the same naive parameters.

Ultimately, like most things, it's a question of semantics, but my bet is that Cooke's 'outliers' won't put an end to the problem. 'Outsider art' is perennially problematic because, while reinforcing art's openness to the other, it simultaneously keeps this other in the margins, rarely threatening the canons. When outsider art does challenge art-historical hierarchies, as in the case of Henri Rousseau or Eugène Atget, the label becomes superfluous, as if success cancels out concern for whether someone is self-taught or not.

Outsider art's antagonistic relationship with professionalisation makes little sense to contemporary viewers, and not just because the mission to professionalise art is almost complete, connected as it is to the corporatisation of education. We know from historical studies such as Daniel J. Sherman's *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945-1975* (2011) that belief in the reclusive purity of outsider art led modernist advocates such as Jean Dubuffet to excommunicate amateurs they had previously supported for becoming too aware of their craft and too canny about the art markets they themselves were benefitting from.³ Conversely, despite being educated, some artists—Hilma af Klint and Yayoi Kusama come to mind—are actually more like outsiders who just happened to gain the recognition they deserved.

Again,

‘Outlier’ more problems.

goes some way in sidestepping these binds,
but what it does not easily subsume is outsider art's strong connection to those who are compelled
to create without financial or critical reward,
for whom inner drive is paramount.

Because we are so highly conscious of audiences as end-users, art that doesn't anticipate the viewer can be incredibly refreshing. Compulsive expression is an antidote to the many programmatic exhibitions that centre on discursive participation (while corresponding, weirdly, with Michel Fried's account of art that breaks with 'the primordial convention' that art is meant to be beheld).⁴ That said, one of the intentions behind 'outlier' is to do away with the identitarian values surrounding these concepts, which have propagated so many misconceptions about artistic authenticity. If 'outsider' has a tendency to promise pleasures that are hermetically sealed around biography, what 'outlier' poses instead is a patchwork of privileged, disadvantaged, trained and untrained artists united by their proximity, whether self-conscious or not, to the margins. This marginality is conceived in the sense encouraged by Gladwell, for whom outliers, as anomalies, compel examination 'beyond the individual':

they force you 'to look a little harder and dig a little deeper
than you normally would to make sense of the world'.⁵

Cooke's exhibition, which later travelled to Atlanta and Los Angeles, garnered revisionist ambitions, stemming from her research into the neglected curatorial history of self-taught and folk art in 20th-century American modernism. Her key premise was that important US institutions in the 1920s and 30s, such as New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art (known as the Whitney Studio Club from 1918 to 1928), initially supported amateur and formally educated artists alike. Such indifference to professionalism ultimately collapsed in the attempt to justify the seriousness of what was then only a couple of decades of aesthetic experimentation known as 'modern art'.

Primitivism may have opened up institutional doors to an art that was closer to 'modern visual culture' than *beaux arts*; however, especially after the start of World War II, this relative openness to 'whatever stands out from the pack' was thwarted by gatekeepers in a quest for disciplinary legitimacy. Divided into three corresponding historical sections that began with the Depression era, Cooke's exhibition nominated two other key moments in the resurgence of marginalised art in the US: the periods following anti-war and civil rights protests in the 1970s and, most recently, after the 2001 terrorist attacks.

Debate about what is admissible or inadmissible in modernism

led to debate about what is critical or uncritical in postmodernism.

As Cooke herself exemplifies, these days what resonates is curatorial conjecture about how sociopolitical bias prevents exceptional artists from achieving greater platforms for their work. In the modern and postmodern paradigms, the allure of an ‘outside’ assisted in determining the parameters of art history. In the contemporary, art’s claim to heterogeneity goes hand in hand with its contesting of critical, ethical and aesthetic blind spots. Given that curating arguably lends itself more to a performative modality than an art-historical one, blind spots only add fuel to its fire. Omissions lead to more exhibitions, more collaborations, and more accounts of what has been overlooked. It is why flawed exhibitions such as *Magiciens de la Terre* continue to be raving successes, inciting future curators to do it again but better.⁶

For Cooke’s fellow uber-curators of artistic outliers, such as Massimiliano Gioni and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, there is no need for an ‘outside’ in contemporary art. If art contains multitudes, then any work of art, outsider or not, has the capacity to disrupt norms about what art is and which artists should be spotlighted. This is why it is important for Gioni to emphasise curating as a type of value-adding, as actively changing subjects rather than framing an historical record. He states:

I’m not naive about it:
some of my shows have probably
caused a reassessing of outsider art.
Even Christie’s is auctioning works of
outsider art these days. That’s why it is
important for me to stress that I’m not simply
presenting outsider art, but that I am offering
a spectrum of objects, and somewhere within
these objects, we can effectively find some
examples of outsider art. But I am not
choosing them because they belong
to a specific category or because
they are outsiders. I am not
interested in labels or genres,
I’m more interested in complexity:
for me it is almost a matter of bio-diversity.
I want to look into a wider spectrum of images
because they can tell us more about the
world in which we live.⁷

In turning from ‘outsiders’ to ‘outliers’,

the visionary psychology and identitarian implications of the former are replaced by the latter’s curatorial demand for interesting, overlooked works that add to the polyphonic resonance of culture at large. A similar motivation lies behind Christov-Bakargiev’s statement, in a *Frieze* interview about feminism, that: ‘The problem as I see it is not just about the exclusion of women but also about exclusions to do with geography and class ... One of my aims is to reassess the work of under-recognized women artists – but it’s not just because they’re women, it’s because they’re interesting artists.’⁸ To see exclusion as an intersectional phenomenon is to reject an absolute outside. We might all be relative insiders, then, just as we are all contemporaries, but this doesn’t exhaust the appearance of, and search for,

anomalies and omissions.

Cooke is far more cautious than Gioni and Christov-Bakargiev when it comes to juxtaposing outliers from different contexts, sensitive to how this style of curating can quickly descend into presentism. If the ahistorical and the irrational are posed as positive attributes, it could be because the contemporary art world knows deep down that, on an institutional level, it is politically flaccid. In a negative review of Gioni's 2013 Venice Biennale, Cooke warned against ignoring the specific contexts surrounding historical works that have been resurrected as anterior to the mainstream. For her, Gioni's amassed eccentrics in *The Encyclopedic Palace* end up collapsing, like Pieter Bruegel's 1563 depiction of the Tower of Babel, into 'a polyglot cacophony in which each voice was destined to commune only with itself'.⁹

So how does Cooke's own exhibition fare when it comes to mixing insider and outsider artists from distinct contexts? One of the most contentious inclusions in *Outliers* was that of the Pictures Generation artist Matt Mullican, who exemplified the outlier as psychic conduit. Mullican's work consisted of bedsheets, painted under hypnosis, which were hung alongside the works of Henry Darger, the best-known outsider artist going around. This juxtaposition was provocative because Darger's penetration into the popular consciousness is an inversion of Mullican's outsiderism, which belies his background as the ultimate pedigree artist. In contrast with Darger—a hospital cleaner with apparent mental health issues—Mullican is formally trained (studying with John Baldessari at CalArts from 1970 to 1974), the son of two celebrated modernists (Lee Mullican and Luchita Hurtado) and from his early thirties has established a reputation as one of the leading figures of postmodern American art.

Mullican has been using hypnosis since 1978 to conceptualise a cosmological psychology of objects and subjects, sincerely trying to map the gamut of human knowledge and intuitions as if a child of the Enlightenment, by way of Sol LeWitt and Joseph Beuys. This puts him at odds with the irony and occasional cynicism of many of his Pictures peers; however, in Cooke's hands Mullican's inclusion above all demonstrated how the 'outlier' label is slanted more towards issues of aesthetic eccentricity than sociopolitical marginalisation.

Mullican the pedigreed visionary contrasted with Darger the penurious visionary, yet one wonders whether Cooke fell victim to the same pitfalls she discovered in Gioni's 2013 exhibition. In seeking to bust open outsider art as if it was an anti-canonical canon, in this instance one could argue that, in her own words, she divested Darger's and Mullican's works 'of all traces of the material and intellectual conditions that originally imbued them with meaning and value'.¹⁰ For Roberta Smith, 'it is ... unclear what – besides being two-sided – [Mullican's] work has to do with the big water-colors of the towering outsider talent Henry Darger'.¹¹ For Sarah Louise Cowan, the 'visually jarring' juxtaposition generated 'vexed analogies' that threatened the integrity of the exhibition's rationale.¹² Both of these interpretations echo Wendy Vogel's account of the strange 'celebratory tone' of the final gallery space, as if Cooke was demonstrating how 'the contemporary art scene today, unlike the historical ones being examined,

is integrated
and
inclusive'.¹³

Outliers may have been widely praised for highlighting a host of overlooked American artists, but Cooke's insider-outsider comparisons—including a Cindy Sherman and Eugene Von Bruenchenhein arrangement—were misfires for many critics, despite being the crux of her 'outlier' pretence.

So, how do we disrupt the authenticity markers of outsider art without replacing them with the false equivalences of outlier art, where sociopolitical context is overridden by aesthetics? I'm not sure, but I agree with Gioni when he states that Cooke is 'interested in establishing an order in which the relationship between outsider art and professional art is analyzed'.¹⁴ This style of research-driven curating is perfect for bringing to light the insanity of earlier art-historical canons. However, it is not so great when it comes to dealing with the contemporary context, in which the ideal task of the curator, like that of the artist, is to set up productive differences:

new visual languages that don't just reorder hierarchies but challenge whether what we know as 'art' still holds up.

If 'outlier' exhibitions are going to do more than 'outsider art' exhibitions, a revisionist agency must be seen as immanent to all art, where any old form can assert a politicized that makes art's institutionalisation seem both necessary and insufficient. Claiming that art is porous to its other is not the same as claiming it is open to all differences. Ditching Roger Cardinal's problematic 1972 term might not fix much, but, in the right hands, 'outlier' could go some way in pointing to the complexity of the terrain from which it and related terms have sprung. What we don't want is more of the same: another large-scale outsider art exhibition interpreted as a groundbreaking sign of a shift that never happens.

-
1. Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Little, Brown and Company, New York, 2008.
 2. Charlotte Burns and Lynne Cooke, 'Transcript: Art World Outliers, with Lynne Cooke', *Art Agency Partners*, 3 May 2018, artagencypartners.com/transcript-lynn-cooke/; accessed 1 February 2019.
 3. Daniel J. Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945-1975*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011, p. 112.
 4. Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990, p. 13.
 5. Gladwell, p. 18.
 6. See comments by Catherine David, James Meyer and the late Okwui Enwezor on the regressive aspects of this iconic 1989 exhibition staged at the Centre Pompidou and the Grande Halle at Parc de la Villette in Paris. Tim Griffin, 'Global Tendencies: Globalism and the Large-scale Exhibition', *Artforum*, vol. 42, no. 3, November 2003, pp. 152-63.
 7. Amanda Cachia and Massimiliano Gioni, 'Curating Loose Definitions: Inspiration "Outside" the Canon', *Art Journal*, vol. 76, 2017, p. 119.
 8. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, 'Women in the Arts: Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev', *Frieze*, 27 March 2018, frieze.com/article/women-arts-carolyn-christov-bakargiev; accessed 1 February 2019.
 9. Lynne Cooke, 'World of Interiors: Venice 2013', *Artforum*, September 2013, artforum.com/inprint/issue=201307&id=42625; accessed 1 February 2019.
 10. Cooke, 'World of Interiors: Venice 2013'.
 11. Roberta Smith, 'A Groundbreaking Show Presents a New, Inclusive Vision of American Art', *New York Times*, 15 February 2018, nytimes.com/2018/02/15/arts/design/outliers-and-american-vanguard-art-review-national-gallery-of-art.html; accessed 1 February 2019.
 12. Sarah Louise Cowan, 'Outliers and American Vanguard Art', *College Art Association Reviews*, 12 September 2018, caareviews.org/reviews/3432#.XRimty9L3eU; accessed 1 February 2019.
 13. Wendy Vogel, 'Outliers and American Vanguard Art', *Art in America*, 1 June 2018, artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/outliers-american-vanguard-art/; accessed 1 February 2019.
 14. Cachia and Gioni, p. 117.

Marino Auriti with *The Encyclopedic Palace of the World*,
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, 1950s
Photographer unknown



Outsider Art in Australia: Artists' Voices Versus Art-world Mythologies

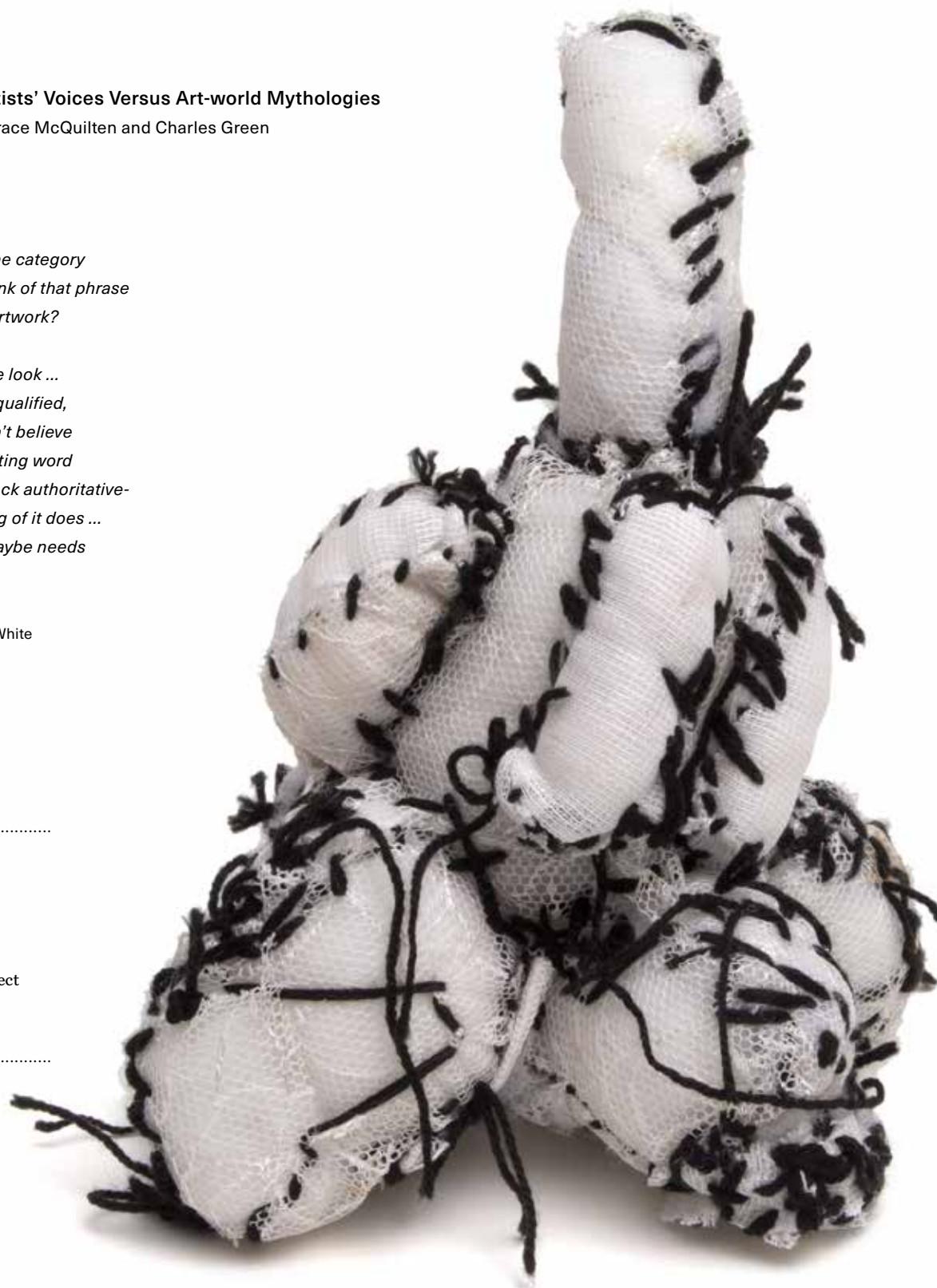
Anthony White, Anna Parlane, Grace McQuilten and Charles Green

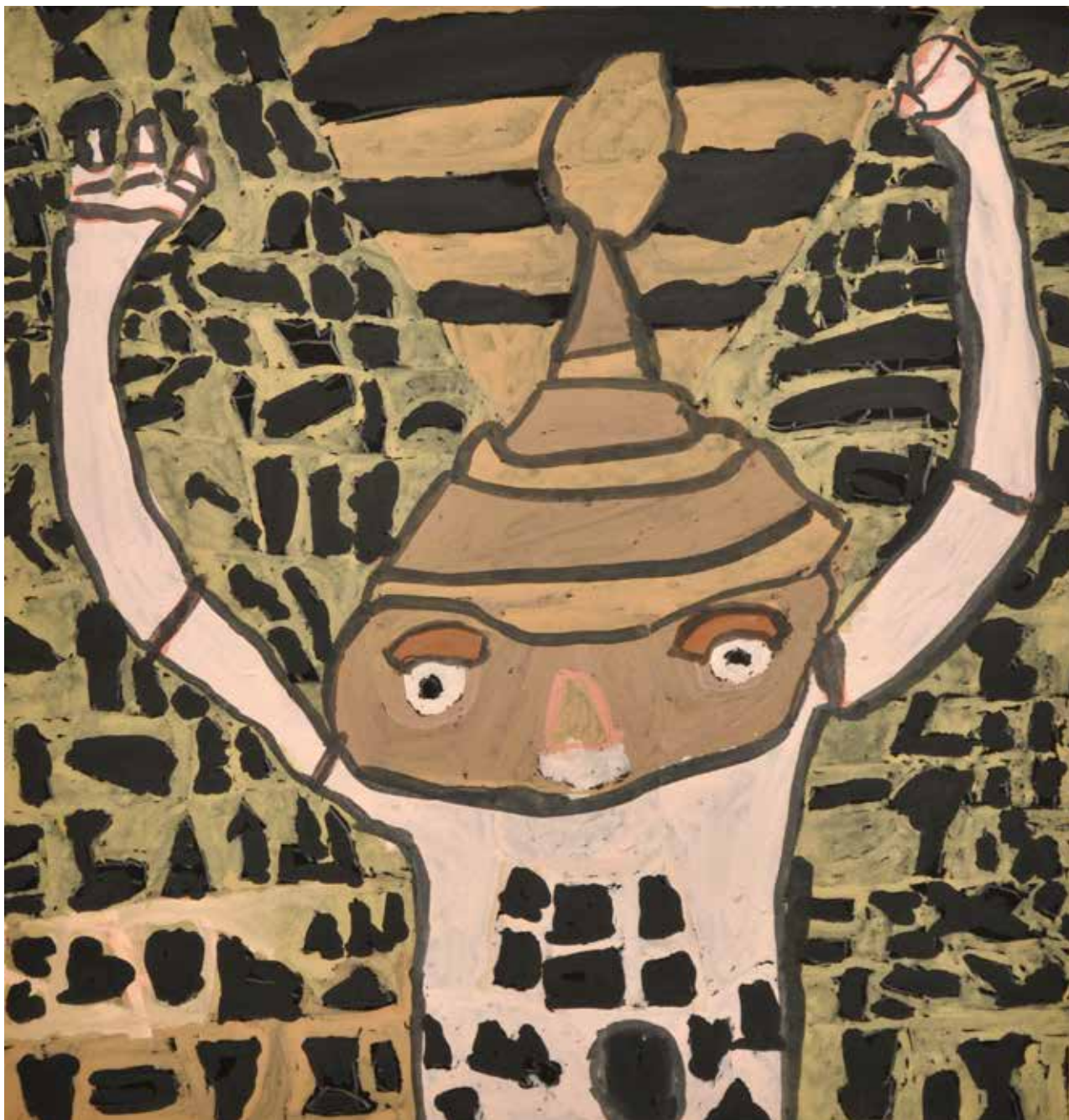
Q: Have you ever come across the category 'outsider art'? ... What do you think of that phrase in terms of a way of describing artwork?

A: Automatically it has a negative look ... because you think if they're not qualified, they're not a true artist. But I don't believe I'm not qualified ... It's an interesting word because it doesn't necessarily lack authoritative-ness in the word but the meaning of it does ... I think it's good to use it but it maybe needs a bit of an explanation to it.

Mark Smith, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, 2019¹

Terry Williams
Not titled, 2018
Material, stuffing, wool
30 x 20 x 20 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project
Australia, Melbourne





Monica Burns

Not titled, 2012

Work on paper

39 x 38 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne



Steven Perrette

Not titled, 2003

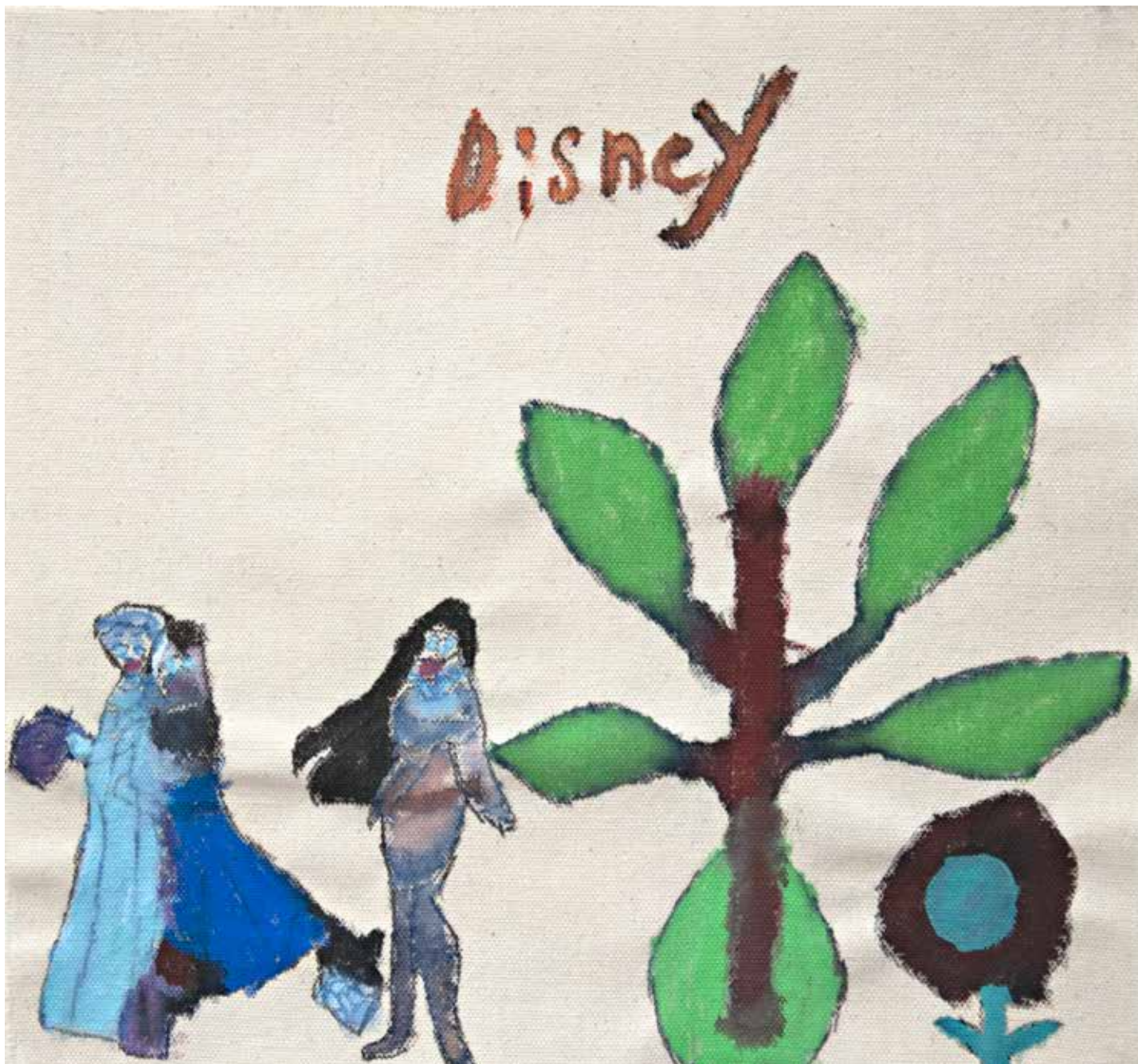
Pencil on paper

50 x 66.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne



Cathy Staughton
James and Cathy Juggle Big Ring, 2010
Acrylic on paper
35 x 50 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne



Brigid Hanrahan

Disney Princess and Pocahontas in the Garden, 2017

Acrylic and marker pen on canvas

29.5 x 31 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne



Monica Burns
Not titled, 2017
Pencil and ink on paper
56.5 x 55.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne

With the rise of outsider art institutions, exhibitions and markets internationally in recent decades, it has become apparent that the romanticisation of artistic difference that is endemic to discussions of the field is misplaced. While so-called ‘outsider artists’ are conventionally typecast as pristine cultural isolates, in fact they are not only deeply engaged with the social, political and artistic worlds around them, but are often also aware of the terms being used to describe their work.



The highly contested term ‘outsider art’ has historically been adopted by scholars, curators and critics—as well as some artists—to encompass the work of people with disability, those with experience of mental illness or incarceration, non-tutored or naive artists, and visionary artists. While such art was commonly viewed during the 19th century as evidence of ‘degeneration’, in the 20th century it received a more positive interpretation by the likes of Jean Dubuffet and Roger Cardinal for being free of conscious artifice, bypassing culture and producing a documentation of inner life. Regardless of whether outsider artworks were denigrated or romanticised, their categorical segregation from mainstream art resulted in misunderstanding and misrepresentation. Recent studies of the work of the Mexican-born American artist Martín Ramírez, for example, have challenged the presumption of early commentators that his work was primarily a manifestation of his schizophrenia, pointing out the references to vernacular Mexican architecture and folk Catholic imagery that ‘should have been obvious from the start’.² Furthermore, as is evident in Mark Smith’s comments above, artists who have been categorised as ‘outsiders’ often have a critical perspective on the idea and category of outsider art and are aware of both its limitations and potential usefulness. A major gap in the discourse around outsider art has been, and continues to be, the voices and agency of artists who have been given this categorical definition. How might the views of artists inform, and potentially transform, a contemporary understanding of outsider art?

.....

Monica Burns
Not titled, 2011
Work on paper
56 x 38 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts
Project Australia, Melbourne

.....

As many critics have noted, there are a host of problems with the concept of outsider art. To begin with, according to Adam Geczy, ‘The “art world” is too much of a disordered, discordant mass to have an inside let alone an outside’, and what is commonly referred to as the art world is in fact a ‘system of fluid and constantly redefining demarcations’. Furthermore, he argues, ‘there have always been outsides to art, and these outsides are multiple and exist according to many categories’.³ Indeed, for James Elkins, different modernisms engender different conceptions of outsider art: ‘If you subscribe mainly to a high formalist modernism, then the art of the insane might seem most interesting to you; but if your modernism is more CoBrA and Scandinavian expressionism, then Dubuffet’s choices might be more apposite’.⁴ Like many other writers on the topic, Chris McAuliffe has argued that outsider art represents a conceptual ‘other’ to a mainstream art world. However, rather than conceiving of this ‘other’ as an untamed

threat to an establishment order, he suggests that such art in fact represents the aspirations of mainstream contemporary art: 'the outsider is defined from the perspective of the viewer. The incorporation of outsider art into global contemporary art has more to do with the needs of the centre rather than with the claims of the periphery.'⁵ The perceived difference of outsider art—as it appeared in Massimiliano Gioni's recent Venice Biennale, for example—promises an 'elsewhere' which acts as 'a surrogate for the renewed utopian aspirations of the contemporary'.⁶

In an important study which has provided a new perspective on outsider art, Timothy van Laar and Leonard Diepeveen identify two ways that outsider art—which initially seems like it should lack art-world prestige—paradoxically attains a high level of prestige. Outsider artists gain art-world prestige *because of* their lack of social prestige: 'Undeniably, what gets outsider artists attention from the artworld is an accumulation of things that marginalize them socially. From a curator's point of view, an artist's poverty, mental illness, and lack of training validates the work.'⁷ Moreover, van Laar and Diepeveen argue, it is outsider art's association with 'the unself-conscious, the authentic, the sincere, the naïve' that elevates it to a position of prestige in an art world that values self-consciousness above all else.⁸ This is because outsider art's supposed naivety—the artist's apparent absence from the art world's discursive economy— provides an opportunity for the art world as an interpretive community to recode the art on his or her behalf:

The artworld brings a level of awareness—even in something as small as a subtle shift from authenticity to thinking *about* authenticity—that it doesn't believe outsider artists have. That shift makes manifest a slippage between the intentions of the artist and the way the artworld uses the work.⁹

Van Laar and Diepeveen's conclusions are in broad agreement with those of McAuliffe. The appreciation and interpretation of outsider art is not only an opportunity for members of the art world to display their sophistication and accrue prestige, it is also a way for the art world to express a repressed desire for sincerity and innocence. Like the distorted, romanticising perspectives of earlier enthusiasts such as Dubuffet and Cardinal, however, such tropes and stereotypes constrain, segregate, misrepresent and even ghettoise the work of outsider artists.

Among the possible solutions to this problem are several strategies. It is crucial to recognise first of all that outsider art is embedded in, not categorically distinct from, mainstream culture. Lynne Cooke's important, groundbreaking exhibition *Outliers and American Vanguard Art* (2018), which showed how the relationship between the margins and the mainstream has changed over the years, demonstrated that outsider art, or what she prefers to call 'outlier' art, has always been engaged with and responsive to the mainstream. Many outsider artists, particularly in Australia, have emerged from supported studios that focus on and actively facilitate this kind of engagement.



Monica Burns

Not titled, 2011

Work on paper

56 x 38 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Arts
Project Australia, Melbourne

As Josie Cavallaro and Kristina Tito have argued, supported studios work to dismantle the barriers that prevent outsider artists from participating in the art world and that differentiate them from mainstream artists: 'The rise of supported studios and the evolution of access to artistic exchange and networks have provided artists with scaffolding to engage conceptually with the art world and it is time to value that recognition'.¹⁰ Supported studios connect their artists to artistic networks and support them in their professional development and career trajectories. This is a long way from the image of outsider artists as isolates or outcasts, separated from the mainstream art world. However, it remains the case that supported studios are funded on the basis of their identification of the artists they work with as non-normative, which can serve to maintain the stigmatising separation that distinguishes these artists and their work. Furthermore, artists are rarely granted the power to define themselves but are instead defined within the terms of the mainstream art world. One effect of opening art-world discourse to accommodate outsider artists' insights into their own lives and work—as told by the artists—would be to contribute to the diversification of the cultural field and the erosion of a simple binary distinction between mainstream and margin. It would also address a systemic structural problem of power and agency by providing artists with the ability to determine their own position as artists in the contemporary field.

With that in mind, we have recently embarked on a research project to narrate the history of Australian artists who have historically been considered 'outsiders', which involves gathering the voices of outsider artists through interview to inform a new art historical perspective on this tradition and what it means in the contemporary art world. In the first stage of the project, we have interviewed several artists from Arts Project Australia, a supported studio in Melbourne providing services to artists with disability. We also interviewed an artist with a long association with the outsider art label, Anthony Mannix, from New South Wales. The findings, although preliminary at this stage, are revealing. Firstly, we will share insights from the artists that dispel some of the myths of the 'outsider artist', before considering the artists' perspectives on the category of outsider art.

Rather than working in artistic isolation, many of the artists who we spoke to have drawn inspiration from the work of modern painters, have a strong sense of art history and are often very conscious of the work of other artists and the potential influence such artists have had on their works. Names such as van Gogh, Picasso, Bacon and Munch were mentioned as important inspirations, along with the work of the Australian artists John Brack and Vera Möller. Michael Camakaris, for example, in speaking about the environmental themes in his work, told us that:

I was working on the bull because I found that an interesting subject, I don't know if that was an environmental thing but I was interested, I love Picasso's stuff and his Minotaurs and I saw the exhibition of the etchings. But working on that as a motif has been something that's a comment on humanity ...



.....

Samraing Chea
Radioactive Gas Tank, 2011
Pencil on paper
25 x 35 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts
Project Australia, Melbourne

.....

I'm not sure what Picasso was doing but I was exploring humanity, as being ... something that's beautiful but also damaging. And I suppose that's evolved into looking at climate change.¹¹

Such comments reveal Camakaris's awareness of the work of important predecessors, and also how that inspiration was not simply a source of motifs or themes but evolved into something different and innovative within his own work.

Like most contemporary artists, many of the artists we interviewed were intensely interested in the question of how their work is presented. Rather than being ignorant of or uninterested in the exhibitions in which they are involved, they are keen for viewers to know about their materials, the type and amount of effort involved in making their work, the themes to which their work relates, the personal experience underpinning the work, the broader series of works to which individual pieces belong, and the narratives that are attached to the work. For example, Mark Smith, speaking about the idea of having a themed exhibition, argues that:

the general public like themes because they'll see one piece and they think that means they'll see another piece ... and that relationship is built onto the attractiveness of that piece. It builds onto it. So, each piece can feed off other pieces, and therefore if this is a themed exhibition you can ... make some more sense.¹²

Contrary to the myth that outsider artists are not familiar with or are uninterested in the experience of exhibiting and selling art, several of the artists we spoke to see it as an extremely positive experience and actively seek it out.

The artists we interviewed challenged the romantic idea that outsider artists give expression to internal impulses in an unselfconscious manner; rather, they are highly aware of the nature of their own work and the changes it has undergone over time. For example, Lisa Reid described how 'it was good looking back at all the old pictures' when she had a retrospective exhibition, and also noted that 'The older work was different to the new work'. She observed, 'I've ... changed my style of work' because 'I take more time on it now'.¹³ Paul Hodges noted that:

I stopped being into the modern contemporary side because I got more interested in landscape, and I think the actual skill that landscape artists have. It's a bit like you want to dare yourself to be as good as, say, a professional landscape painter. So, I wanted to be more landscape than, I think, abstract. And I found abstract painting was too 'in your mind', which I think it is.¹⁴

Another important consideration is that the artists are highly aware of the importance of the institutions within which they work. Christian Hansen spoke about



Rebecca Scibilia
*The Lion, the Witch
and the Wardrobe*, 2013
Marker pen on paper
28.5 x 38 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Arts
Project Australia, Melbourne

coming into Arts Project's supported studio, and participating in that organisation's Northcote Penguins professionalisation program—which assists the artists in building their practices and developing their careers—in the following terms:

What's good? Social contact, because I'm a bit of a homebody. Access to a lot of experienced artists that are [doing] professional work. If you can't get access from one person, you get [it] from somebody else ... It's great. I find myself a quiet little corner. I normally go against the windows, because I like the natural light. I always have the natural light on my painting ... Now that I've just started with the [Northcote] Penguin group, we can bounce ideas off each other ... we can ask questions or anything.¹⁵

Paul Hodges noted that one of the benefits of working in Arts Project's supported studio is that he is given professional guidance while also having freedom to make his work. He also was critical of the ways in which mainstream art conventions can influence an artist's practice:

I feel like I'm not just coming here [to] sit down and do this drawing, but actually coming to work and being in the professional way ... they're good at getting my art out in the world and representing my art. They're good [at helping you learn] how to do your art without being too critical ... coming here, there's freedom in how to be and how to do your art ... I mean if you have a painting that's at, say, Flinders Lane or any of the other big modern galleries, you would have to be actually good but also [it would have to be] done a certain way.¹⁶

Brigid Hanrahan
*Butterfly on Disney Frozen
Princess, Two Pocahontas
Characters and a Disney
Princess from Frozen*, 2017
Acrylic, marker pen and pencil
on canvas
30.5 x 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts
Project Australia, Melbourne



As Hodges demonstrates, artists have a strong sense of how their work is received. He has a refined consciousness of the reception of the work, and is well aware of what is popular and what isn't.

Michael Camakaris also demonstrated a strong engagement with contemporary art theory and criticism, and spoke about conveying a message in a calculated way. He is very aware, for example, of not being too didactic in the way he communicates political messages:

I'm trying not [to] be 'in your face' ... it's just finding certain motifs ... to explore the issue; I want to explore without stating the obvious, without preaching, because I've probably heard that through art criticism, that you don't want it to be propaganda or so obvious, like 'don't do this'.¹⁷

One of the most important questions of our interviews addressed the concept of outsider art itself. This provoked ambivalent reactions on the part of the artists. Wary of the stigma of delegitimation which comes with being cast out of the mainstream, many of the artists were nevertheless aware that their work is in many

ways distinct from mainstream art practices. While Anthony Mannix once identified with the idea of the outsider artist as expressed in Cardinal's monograph, he commented that:

I don't consider myself really 'outsider' now, you know, not physically or environmentally. 'Outsider' meant to me, back in the '80s, fighting to survive the very thing of existence. And not only that, doing your artwork as well and building your cosmology. So, I seem to have changed from 'outsider' because I seem to have built so much of that cosmology. It's like actually constructing a house or a dome or something.¹⁸

Like Mannix, other artists shared a sophisticated understanding of the politics around terminology. For example, in response to our question as to whether he thought the term 'outlier' used by Lynne Cooke was preferable to 'outsider artist', Michael Camakaris argued that the difference between the two terms is similar to a terminological distinction currently being discussed in the disability sector:

instead of using the word 'disability' use 'diffability' basically because people have a different ability. By having what society views as a disability, we view having that disability [as allowing] you to see the world in a different way, which forces you to see things and to create things [differently].¹⁹

In this way, Camakaris suggested the label 'outlier' may have 'a less negative connotation' than the term 'outsider'. Christian Hansen had a different response. He argued that outsider art was a term that could be applied to his art because 'It's definitely outside. It's definitely not inside the box, it's definitely outside the box', adding furthermore, 'I'm a butterfly, I won't be held down'. Here we can see the stigmatised term of 'outsider' transformed into a position of strength—of positive difference, but on the terms of the artist.

As this small sample of artists' voices demonstrates, the common view of outsider art as the spontaneous outpouring of individuals who are separate from, that is to say, outside the norms of art and society—as has so often been argued—is unsustainable. At the same time, to erase what is unique about these artists, their position and experience of difference from the mainstream, is potentially counter-productive. After all, as Lynne Cooke has noted, 'Removal of classificatory systems based in power differentials does not automatically establish equality of opportunity' and, furthermore, 'being at variance with the norm can be a position of strength: a place negotiated or sought out rather than predetermined and fixed'.²⁰ With the assistance of the voices of artists who have historically been understood as 'outsiders', we propose to open the history of Australian art to the startling and sophisticated worlds that they produce. To quote Anthony Mannix, who compares his entire body of work to a cosmology which he inhabits, 'I'm inside the thing I built ... So maybe you lot are the outsiders.'



Rebecca Scibilia
Five Fall into Adventure, 2017
Marker pen on paper
56 x 76 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts
Project Australia, Melbourne



Rebecca Scibilia
Five Fall into Adventure, 2017
Marker pen on paper
56 x 76 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts
Project Australia, Melbourne

- ¹ Mark Smith, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne, 22 May 2019.
- ² Daniel Wojcik, *Outsider Art: Visionary Worlds and Trauma*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 2016, p. 23. See also Victor M. Espinosa, *Martin Ramirez: Framing His Life and Art*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2015.
- ³ Adam Geczy, 'The Solid Fraud of Outsider Art', *Broadsheet*, vol. 39, no. 1, March 2010, p. 66.
- ⁴ James Elkins, 'Naïfs, Faux-Naïfs, Faux-Faux Naïfs, Would-Be Faux-Naïfs: There Is No Such Thing as Outsider Art', *Inner Worlds Outside*, exhibition catalogue, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2006, p. 75.
- ⁵ Chris McAuliffe, 'Outsider Art and the Desire of Contemporary Art', presentation at *Contemporary Outsider Art: The Global Context*, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, 24 October 2014, chrismcauliffe.com.au/outsider-art-and-the-desire-of-contemporary-art-october-2014/; accessed 9 July 2019.
- ⁶ McAuliffe, 2014.
- ⁷ Timothy van Laar and Leonard Diepeveen, *Artworld Prestige: Arguing Cultural Value*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2013, p. 20.
- ⁸ Van Laar and Diepeveen, p. 163.
- ⁹ Van Laar and Diepeveen, p. 166.
- ¹⁰ Josie Cavallaro and Kristina Tito, 'The Outsider Mirage', *Runway*, no. 27, 2015, runway.org.au/the-outsider-mirage/; accessed 9 July 2019.

- ¹¹ Michael Camakaris, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne, 22 May 2019.
- ¹² Mark Smith, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne, 22 May 2019.
- ¹³ Lisa Reid, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne, 22 May 2019.
- ¹⁴ Paul Hodges, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne, 22 May 2019.
- ¹⁵ Christian Hansen, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne, 22 May 2019.
- ¹⁶ Paul Hodges, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne, 22 May 2019.
- ¹⁷ Michael Camakaris, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne, 22 May 2019.
- ¹⁸ Anthony Mannix, interview with Anthony White, New South Wales, 24 April 2019.
- ¹⁹ Michael Camakaris, interview with Anthony White and Anna Parlane, Arts Project Australia, Melbourne, 22 May 2019.
- ²⁰ Lynne Cooke, 'Boundary Trouble: Navigating Margin and Mainstream', *Outliers and American Vanguard Art*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, and the University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2018, pp. 20, 4.



Paul Hodges
James and Cathy Juggle Big Ring, 2010
 Acrylic on paper
 35 x 50 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne



Cathy Staughton
James and Cathy Juggle Big Ring, 2010
Acrylic on paper
35 x 50 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne





Samraing Chea
Radioactive Gas Tank, 2011
Pencil on paper
25 x 35 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Arts Project Australia, Melbourne

BURIED TRUTH

GARETH JENKINS

Anthony Mannix

Artist Book *Journal of a Madman no. 4*, p.58, 1988

30 x 21 cm

Courtesy of Gareth Jenkins

For most of the past ten years
 I have seen 'abstract' apparitions
 which I have termed Doppelgänger.
 This is after reading in the 18th
 occasion of Goethe's coming into his
 study and seeing a direct imitation
 of himself waiting for him. The
 first time I confronted one of these
 things was when there was a knock
 on my flat door in Glaston in 1979.
 On opening the door a strange
 man appeared. I called 'If myself was
 there. It would be strange. I followed
 and was alone. I called. It
 disappeared. After a short second
 I was given quite a start. I was
 from then on the Doppelgänger
 would appear with more and more
 frequency. On many occasions I
 have seen walking empty streets
 at night. I have seen it no
 more, nor more, to have
 hundreds of Doppelgänger
 appear and disappear on
 a journey. They are
 all identical and
 they are all
 different.
 Jan 5. 88,
 Glaston.





Anthony Mannix
Artist Book (Cover) *Rupture*, 1999
25 x 20 cm
Courtesy of Gareth Jenkins

Anthony Mannix's career as an art-maker spans more than 40 years.
His output includes writings, drawings, paintings, sculptures, books and sound recordings.
Mannix's work is held in many private and public collections around Australia and overseas,
including the National Gallery of Australia. But a recent acquisition by *The Museum of Everything* in London
(included in its major survey at Tasmania's Mona in 2017–18) best indicates the orientation of his art.¹
Mannix documents and investigates his own experiences of 'madness' and, what is for him, madness's implicit creativity.
His work is often a dialogue between himself and the hallucinatory other, which he refers to as apparitions or appearances:
a host of pulsating vivid presences and beasts.

'Consider the hallucination,'
he suggests,
'it comes from the unconscious world
and has truth buried in the language of that world.
It has an emotional, almost occult impact
and everything is seen in an instant.
This is the meaning of a great deal of my art –
to be the documenter
and to some degree a translator
of these strange occurrences.'²

When I first began my own investigation of Mannix's work,
I would hear him carry on conversations with these apparitions in the next room,
convincing them that I was not a threat.
Some of *them*, however, can pose threats; but many are also his friends, lovers and collaborators.
Mannix details his relationship with each being – ghosts, demons and doppelgangers –
in descriptions that recall the visionary, philosophical and erotic experiences he has had with them.
Rather than attempting to exclude these apparitions from his sphere of consciousness,
Mannix creatively manages a psychic environment
crowded with occult personalities.

The most comprehensive inventory of the apparitions
Mannix has encountered over his years of psychotic hallucinations is detailed
in a new collection of his writing, *The Toy of the Spirit*.
In this book, a text called 'Dedications' lists them
in the following way:



Anthony Mannix

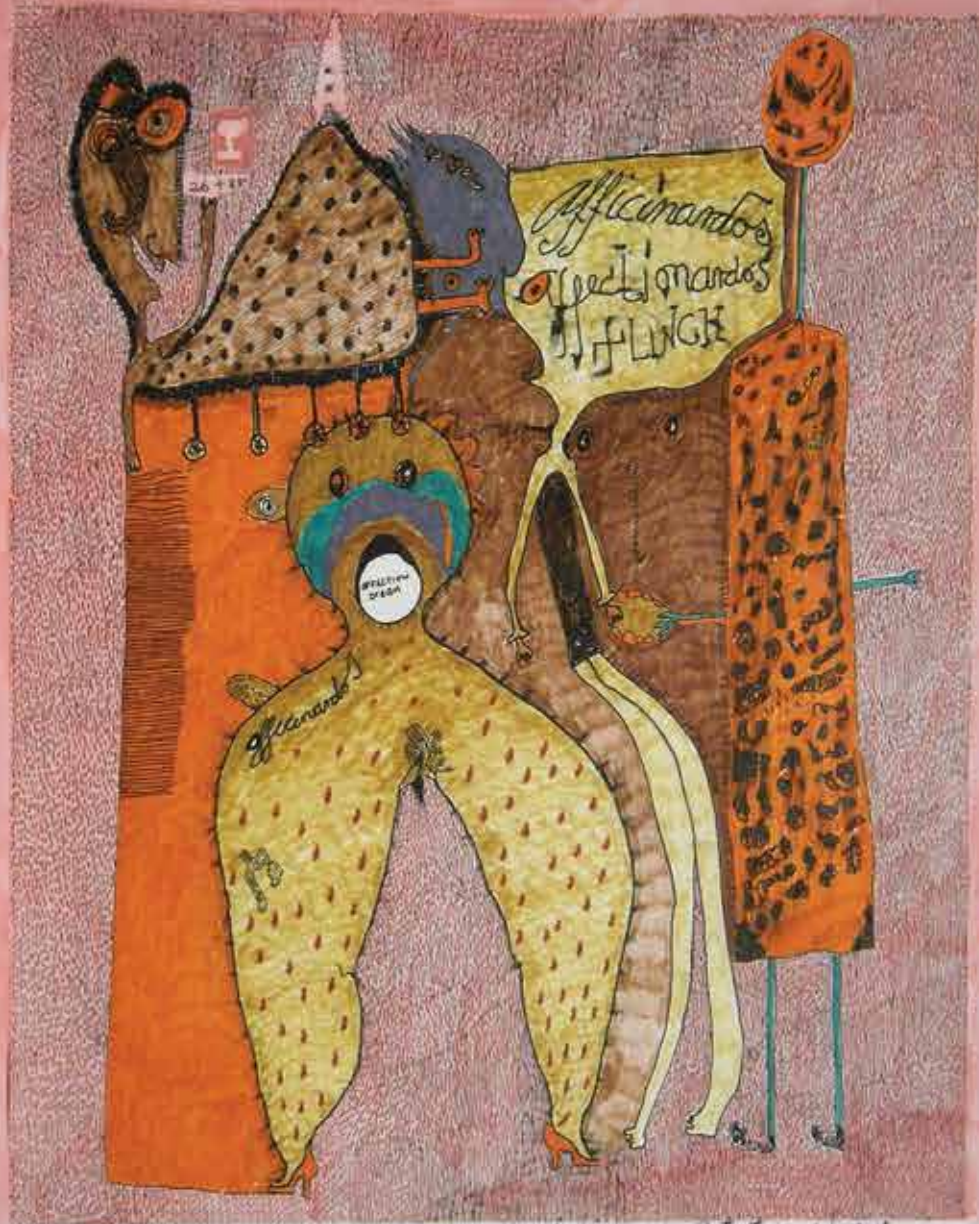
Artist Book

Journal of a Madman no. 4.

p.27, 1988

30 x 21cm

Courtesy of Gareth Jenkins



I drew this drawings at Mithragong whilst staying with artist, and friend
 Gunther Dix, in late April 1988. He is teaching me etching, teaching me
 to be an Art Brut etcher. The relationship we have is at times a little
 impatient, but it is very free and full of energy and conversation. I know
 me when I am mad. In winter 1986 when mad and a devilish I would visit
 his country house and work, smoke, drink and stay awake all night. He calls
 this state "Prime Time" and is very much impressed by the creative use of it. This
 drawing was released when I returned to Sydney. 14.5.88
 548.

Anthony Mannix
 Artist Book
Journal of a Madman no. 4.
 p.7, 1988
 30 x 21cm
 Courtesy of Gareth Jenkins

for
‘Them’, at five o’clock they filtered casually back to their
homes and flats and houses in the twilight of summer to drink
their drinks and think their thoughts ... For ‘Us’, at five the
doors were locked
behind us and fourteen hours would pass before being
revomited out of the bloody whale ...

for
The Ephemeral Nudes who danced in a night molten
and aflame with blackness
and the men who dissolved into the aether watching them ...

for
the reincarnated Salome who danced with me at night
in the empty city amphitheatre ...
later I found my pants wet,
my wallet gone and my throat cut ...

for
the lip complete with moustache,
Dylan Thomas writes about
finding at night in the Dark straits of Wales ...
I have been searching for one
ever since ...

for
The Imitations and Their Shadows,
strange journey in which I found myself
surfacing
and blowing out
the waters of a nascent and historic sexuality ...

for
The Tuber-creature
which used to dance, sit and exude a silent compassion
when I was suffering the devastating physical discomfort
of anti-psychotic drugs ...

for
The Shadow, relentless Inspirer ...
and mild horror ...
for Dementia, Schizophrenia and Psychosis ...

for
Untuck,
Entity and the ageless horse of Psychosis,
indefatigable,
ever-aspected and Mystery ...

for
Wantid, Entity and the Luminous Lighthouse,
awesome, dredged
from the Unseen and Milestone ...

for
Phobia, Mania, Hysteria, Nymphomania and Necromantia,
who, jokers that they are, these ghosts of the Eternal Suicides,
put me in such a terror
when they haunted me with their comrades
that I dived head-first through a plate-glass window
and woke to find myself floundering
in the midst of my own forgotten childhood ...

for
The Tyger with No Eyes, The Thin Ball-Bearing Man,
The Luminous Ghostly Temple, The Giant Pink Fish,
Gruesome, The Doctor, The Warlord,
The Honey-Eater, The Great Ape
and The Magnificent Oscillating Vision,
all who at various times
I have found indispensable ...³

Whilst his hallucinatory subject matter invokes the fantastic,
each of Mannix's handworked books is an object grounded in a very material language.

This can involve

the weight and texture of sharp glass shards,
of violently perforated copper plates,
of glass button inlays,
varnished muslin,
handmade paper,
rice paper,
cartridge paper,
butcher's paper,
blotting paper,
sandpaper,
cardboard,
plastic and perspex;
and all this stitched with cotton, with copper wire,
with builder's thread and industrial twine
through holes that have been bored,
drilled
and
punched.

Found books are appropriated,
embellished
and incorporated:
photo albums,
company
and accounting ledgers,
diaries and small notebooks
covered in blue plastic or bound in red and black paper.

Set in a timber box with delicately cast feet
and with the squeal of metal hinges as its unwieldy wooden front cover is opened,
Mannix's books surprisingly speak of fragility, where each turn of a page makes you fearful
of the work
disintegrating.

Throughout his career, Mannix has created chaotic, speculative narratives
that encompass fictional, documentary and pictorial modes of work.

It is, as he puts it, a career that:

had one point and that has been to document the landscape of psychosis and the unconscious.
It involves an intuitive invention of cultural anthropology to make some order of the plethora
of hallucinations, visions, spirits, ghosts, apparitions, and creatures, which populate this altered perspective.
I have learnt my trade myself; patterns, designs and artefacts I have observed in all worlds go to form
a network of technique.⁴

Mannix likens this technique to 'constructing a beast that will not sit comfortably in the FRAME'.
It prowls on the fringes of the Inside and the Outside, in the undulating landscape that he has spent his life exploring
as an anthropologist of the unconscious. 'An art that is really alive', he says, 'tends to devour its definitions.'⁵

It may also be intent on consuming the viewer.

1. *The Museum of Everything*, Mona (Museum of Old and New Art), Berriedale, Tasmania., 10 June 2017 – 2 April 2018.

2. Anthony Mannix, 'Introduction', *The Toy of the Spirit*, Puncher & Wattmann, Sydney, 2019, p. 14.

3. Mannix, *The Toy of the Spirit*, pp. 45–53.

4. Mannix, 'Introduction', *The Toy of the Spirit*, pp. 28–29.

5. Mannix, 'Introduction', *The Toy of the Spirit*, p. 39.


```
1 one who
1 patriarch who
1 people who
1 pitiable who
1 poet who
1 poet who
1 poets who
1 she who
1 somebody who
1 student who
1 suggested who
1 they who
1 unknown who
1 veins who
1 woman who
1 woman who
1 woman who
1 woman who
1 woman who
1 women who
1 women who
1 women who
1 you who
2 woman who
4 men who
0myrtle:ERROR sister0$ cat roomofonesown.txt | grep -oE "\b[a-z]+ who\b" | uniq -c
sort | less
0myrtle:ERROR sister0$ cat roomofonesown.txt | sed 's/[A-Z]/[a-z]/g' | grep -oE "\b[a-z]+ism\b |
```



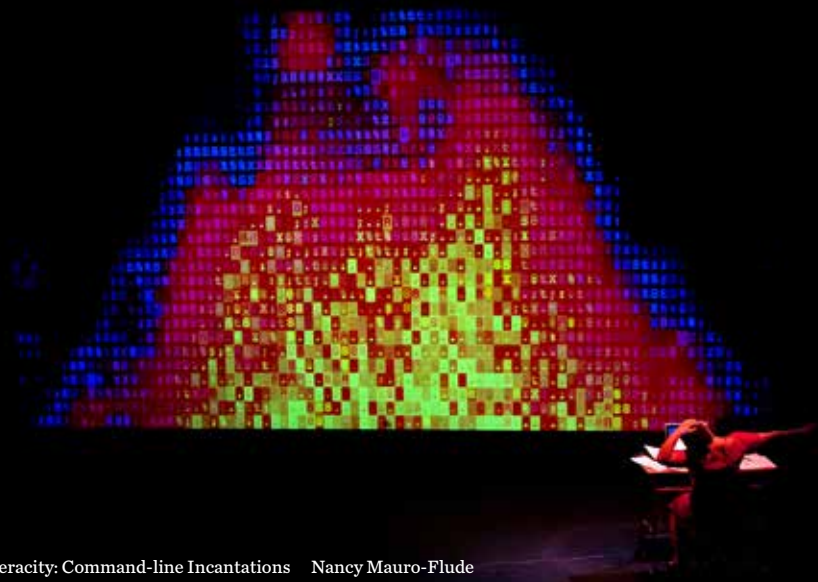
Vessels of Infinite Veracity: Command-line Incantations _ _ _ Nancy Mauro-Flude

I play no role anymore.
My words have nothing more to say to me.
My thoughts suck the blood of images.
My drama is cancelled.
— Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine*, 1977¹

All images:
Nancy Mauro-Flude
Command Line, 2016
Performance still, Transmediale, Berlin
Courtesy of Nancy Mauro-Flude



Code is an intermediary between conceptual
models and manifold realities. |||



Pulsating on the command-line in the shell of the computer,
I find a marvellous mess of constellations,
nebulae,
interstellar gaps and awesome gullies that provoke vertigo,
as if hanging from earth upside down on the brink of infinite space.
An exemplar of the abyss-like nature of the shell is `/dev/null` - a special *nix file directory where
you pipe your unwanted data flow through this output.²
When I first viewed data disappearing into this file I had an epiphany about the
astrophysical black hole and the physics of its event horizon.
There is an obscure shadow-world of computing procedure,
concentrated and concatenated,
and the myriad tools available for exploring possibilities of the entire file system can
facilitate material ideokinetic change.
The use of *nix operating systems is experiential,
esoteric,
and has political implications.
Alan Sondheim declares that 'linux is,
if not art,
at least fashion,
wearable,
at problematic variance with capital (punk for example),
useful for intruders,
the mouth and tongue for some'.³
And Martin Hardie sees Unix 'as consistent with more philosophical descriptions of thinking or of
living life itself'.⁴
Regular engagement with the computational interface has deep physiological effects.
How is the morphology of the human form shifting with our species' long-term computer usage?

Formerly stuck in a holding pattern,
inhibited by and impatient with the limitation of the graphical user interface (GUI),
I first discovered the power to delete an unwanted file - a persistent file that the MacBook Pro (OSX)
finder could not trash through the graphical BIN - in the iTerm OpenBSD shell in my
computer terminal,
through the following combination of command-line tools:

```
#rm -frv .* 5
```

This mundane revelation about a command-line incantation may have more benefits than just
powerful processor speed,
script automation and multitasking.
For most people,
a GUI is the most common means of access to an operating system (OS) and is perceived as an efficient
and effective tool because of its point-and-click interface.
But Donald Gentner and Jakob Nielsen claim that if we opt for the GUI in our daily
computational life,
it ultimately limits our ability to imagine the intangible:
It's as if we have thrown away a million years of evolution,
lost our facility with expressive language,
and have been reduced to pointing at objects in the immediate environment.
Mouse buttons and modifier keys give us a vocabulary equivalent to a few different
grunts.
We have lost all the power of language,
and can no longer talk about objects that are not immediately visible.⁶

With the discovery of new executable codes sensitive to commands,
a command-line interface devolves from a _blank screen_ where there is simultaneously
potential and absence (nothing visible).
All you need is humility and imagination for the _baroque protocol_ to grant a vista of
permissive,
open-ended mediums.
The vast amount of command-line tools and *nix concepts,
filenames,
paths,
wildcards,
input and output redirection means that regular expressions apply to many different commands as the
source code is free to be developed and extended.
Even though you are working with a set of rules,
the recombination of elements is infinite.
The entire system can be controlled and tweaked by the user,
and the OS acquires a subjective aesthetic which blurs the line between the machine and its boundary.
This structures the human,
says Martin Howse,
as an expanded software script,
'influenced by the existence of programming,
fiction,
scripting and execution'.⁷

And Neal Stephenson would add:

Many hackers have launched more or less successful re-implementations of
the Unix ideal ...

Unix has slowly accreted around a simple kernel and acquired a kind
of complexity and asymmetry about it that is organic,
like the roots of a tree,
or the branchings of a coronary artery.

Understanding it is more like anatomy than physics.⁸

Regular computer users of the GUI are losing the ability to sense inner physiological
processes,
their very own inner veracity,
while data bytes infiltrate sensory perception.

With **#top** command we can get information on our system and its operations that may relate to our
kinesiology.

I find problems that vampire my machine's processing speed - runaway processes,
broken sessions which are never properly terminated - with simultaneous blockages in cell
fluid movement,
which slow down my nervous system's ability to provoke or control the release of hormones and in turn
diminish nerve impulses (our autonomic nervous system).
Command-line computing requires levels of sensitivity different from the appreciation of a figurative
creation.

'Living coding at the command-line;'

Howse declares,

'that horizontal prompt proving a horizon for contemplation.'⁹

'And thus to the application of a new discipline,

expanded software; endophysical interface and Alice in Wonderland.'¹⁰

'Code leaks both ways across a broken-world interface.'¹¹

Internalising enough of what seem inscrutable and cryptic commands is an arduous initiation process but frees us from the decadent and limiting life of the GUI.

Working with the command-line,
the keystrokes become hardwired into the fingers that learn to automate maintenance and do backup commands with `#cron`,
or combine commands in hundreds of shell scripts.

Yet the material limitations one faces when using the notoriously powerful *nix core are ruthless, especially when encountering a black hole when syncing and updating or then having to get-install,
or unemerge blocked packages.

We are always already living on the edge of our own destruction.

'Aside from the crash the future of a computation is determined,'
argues Howse,

'even with human input within a wider cybernetic equation explored under the rubric of the interface.

And finally,

it's not for nothing that Turing and indeed the entire field of computation is obsessed with the halting problem. When will it end?'¹²

There are structural similarities between the singularity prediction and the apocalypse of St John the Divine.

The idea of a rapture,

command-line as a creative venture,

an annunciation,

an incantation of performance and repetition,

of an art which is not an art,

a craft which doesn't have a materiality,

should be entered into rigorously with eyes and mouths wide open so that they may be filled from the deep wells of the Unknown.

>>>

/// 1. Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine* (1977), Act 4, Dennis Redmond (trans., 2001), available at web.archive.org/web/20060303205718/www.efn.org/~dredmond/Hamletmachine.PDF, p. 5; accessed 20 August 2019.

/// 2. '*nix' denotes Unix or, more precisely, Unix-like operating systems such as Linux or BSD. The terminal on the OSX is based on Open BSD. Although both of these operating systems are different from Linux, which is a kernel wrapped in one of the many distributions, there are numerous similarities between Unix and Linux systems. 'Unix' is a trademark, and as such cannot be used outside its commercial proprietorship. However, as the operating systems I am discussing owe their historical roots to AT&T's 'Unix', I refer to them generically as '*nix'.

/// 3. Alan Sondheim, 'Linux wins Prix Ars', *Nettime Mailing List*, 12 September 1999, nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9909/msg00079.html; accessed 15 May 2019.

/// 4. Martin Hardie, 'Time Machines and the Constitution of the Globe', *European Ways of Law*, International Institute for the Sociology of Law, Oñati, Spain, 7 July 2005, available at ssrn.com/abstract=2631894; accessed 15 July 2019.

/// 5. These are essential *nix command-line tools that can be played in 3 parts – command/option/directory:

```
#rm      a command to remove (delete a file)
-f       -force, an option to allow adding otherwise ignored files
-v       -verbose, an option to be verbose (show the underlying process on the screen)
-r       -recursive, an option that the operation will be performed for all files in the given directory,
        as well as for files and directories within all sub-directories
.        means what directory, in this case, this actual directory
* wildcard asterisk wildcard is a symbol used to replace or represent one or more characters.
```

/// 6. Donald Gentner and Jakob Nielsen, 'The Anti-Mac Interface', *Communications of the ACM*, vol. 39, no. 8, 1996, p. 79.

/// 7. Martin Howse, 'xxxxx_at_piksel:/2007/ dossier', speculative 12 hour life coding event (organising hardware and software), Piksel Festival, Bergen, Norway, 2007, 1010.co.uk/xxxxx_at_piksel2007_dossier.html; accessed July 15, 2019.

/// 8. Neal Stephenson, *In the Beginning...Was the Command Line* (1999), project.cyberpunk.ru/lib/in_the_beginning_was_the_command_line/; accessed July 15, 2019.

/// 9. Martin Howse, 'Introduction: Life Coding', in xxxxx (ed.), *[the] xxxxx [reader]*, OpenMute, London, 2006, p. 14.

/// 10. Martin Howse, 'Version Control', in *[the] xxxxx [reader]*, p. 432.

/// 11. Howse, 'Version Control', p. 430.

/// 12. Howse, 'Version Control', p. 427.



Damian Broomhead
*En route to London on their first day in England,
 Bennelong, Yemmerrawanne
 and Governor Phillip take a rest stop at Stonehenge 1794*
 2017
 Oil pastel on paper
 70 x 100 cm
 Courtesy of the artist



Damian Broomhead
*Bennelong William Blake and the Tiger
 at the Tower of London Zoo 1794*
 2016
 Oil pastel on paper
 70 x 100 cm
 Courtesy of the artist



THE CRUCIFORM ENGINES

LOUIS MASON



.....

John Warwicker
Embankment, 2013
Digital photographs
Courtesy of the artist

.....



I have never been this fit or strong before
 in my life. My stomach is a generator
 unit, my lungs inflate well beyond what I once thought was their capacity. Distant limbs pump below me like steel machinery.
 I cycle enormous exhalations out into the
 freezing night air and they escape in jets of
 boiling steam that catch orange in the street
 lights that pass along my route. Even small
 cuts and abrasions heal more quickly than
 they used to; I have seen bruises shrinking
 in real time with just the naked eye. I drink at least five litres of water a day, and as I run
 I fantasise that my vapour breath is really that *aqua pura* rushing into contact with whatever burning Hephaestus core it is that
 I have nurtured into life inside my guts
 by obsessing over words like 'rigour' and
 'discipline'. So this elaborate program of
 physical improvement that I have been
 following over recent weeks is obviously
 working out in concrete biomechanical
 registers. In my mind I have sketched out a
 hybrid character built from equal parts Joan
 of Arc and Rocky Balboa – I have traced
 this using nothing but an overwhelming
 hostility, wholly interior and directed like a
 blowtorch against any compassion for personal
 weakness. Picture me possessed of
 that grace that turns limbs into battering
 units and jaws into a steel trap that devours
 other, weaker bodies. It is only by association
 with this predatory femme that my own
 rigour is sustained, and I know from long experience that it is *only by her dispensation*
 that I can keep from slipping into that familiar
 place of pain where dignity is stripped away and where real abjection (measured
 by closeness to fantasies of death and
 maiming) begins to slip again into visibility.
 Visibility here is enough. Like a metal splinter
 in your eyeball that if you cannot find
 a way to remove will occlude every future
 that you attempt to all
 attempts
 at love
 or
 communication
 infected
 in
 advance.

If there is a city that is still appropriate to these fantasies of punishment it is London. More precisely London's glass centre, at night (like 2 am), as I run and run along the banks of the Thames like the hound of the Baskervilles with tongue lolling down at least a foot from my mouth. There are only a few others out this late. I imagine that they cross the street when they see me in the distance coming closer like something from a nightmare or a stress dream, but really it is difficult for me to be sure of this. And if I am really honest there is still something in their blank disregard that scares me and spurs me into closer contact with the stripped figures of grace that afford this whole blood and body play. That push me in my most private moments down; into darkened rooms and the soft light along needle points, and the programs for choking, programs for petty crime; that push me into intimate betrayals of friends lying back in the darkness too high to defend themselves, too high to understand this exhaustion (and maybe too kind or too young to understand the source of this panic). Young bodies cracked open. These

are mechanisms that manufacture trust only as the abject condition of the cannibal feast to come. All of those beautiful and pristine jackets, dresses, capes and chokers that I have been using to try to barter passage into this community really are only the conditions for the good meal. They were only ever an apparatus and what you called your taste was only ever its necessary precondition. There is an absolute opacity to this tough skin of mine. But I have not been able to follow this program to the letter laid down by the Graces; and so there are still days when I am opened up by shame, when I become vulnerable again somehow to the blank disinterest of those people who move through the city at night and whose names and job titles I will never know.

I wonder how anyone could survive this vulnerability intact.

The arc of my trajectory begins to circle
 away from the density of built fabric. Knotting further
 into the density of built fabric. Movements
 catch and distend under white light, steam breath is replaced by the belching oil smoke of heavy industry. I notice that P has mess-
 aged to say that he cannot come out tonight
 to meet me after all and this actually comes as a relief. I am so sick of his presence, of
 being his only true support – of the sheer number of hours that he tells me he needs to
 unspool from neurosis and deep introspec-
 tion. He apologises and says that he has been
 painting, and that he will see me soon. These
 are coded messages that we have developed
 together over the period of our closeness;
 I do not reply and this is also a part of the
 code. I know exactly what he is painting (and
 painting and painting): that famous scene of
 Benito Mussolini and Clara Petacci's execut-
 ion and public display – painting and paint-
 ing from every angle the hanging bodies
 of BM and CP, starting with the fixed per-
 spective from the historical photograph but
 growing more and more speculative as his
 little painter's bravery swells inside him –
 every possible vantage point, the bodies
 sometimes strung up in different and

ahistorical this even graph in glam wooden and to execution state. small afternoon in bowelled chained one
 trick the more austere – both respective and scaffold quaint municipal But canvas P's to those
 arrangements. the composition was in some ways photo-dressed and of a bucolic appropriate democratic rational one last around disem- bodies bulldozer,
 The first time he tried
 this composition was in some ways
 even more austere than the original photo-
 graph – both fascists unbeaten and dressed
 in their respective uniforms (of Duce and of
 glam starlet) and hanged by the neck from a
 wooden scaffold (rough wood grain bucolic
 and not at all appropriate
 to Milan's municipal zone), a basic, democratic
 execution carried out by the rational
 state. But the pictures get stranger. In one
 small canvas that I remember from the last
 afternoon we spent together hanging around
 in P's studio, BM and CP have been disem-
 bowelled and their red, mutilated bodies
 chained to the blade of a monstrous bulldozer,
 one of those engines used on automated mine sites,

piloted by remote and as tall as a block of commission flats.

The gory figures in comparison to the machine are tiny, almost invisible, and the blade and empty cab emerge from a dense cloud of black smoke.

The ground that the tracks crawl across is obscure, black and twisted up like still-wet tarmac, or some oily and semi-liquid petroleum by-product.

Blazing spotlights adorn the monstrous engine in clusters and their beams cut up the composition so that it looks almost futurist.

The painting is like a still from a nightmare. I remember looking closely and seeing that even at that micro scale P had taken the time to detail the Duce coat and the pearls of the mistress so that the figures were recognisable after being cut to pieces. In one larger canvas the two are in the process of being drawn and quartered. The horses dominate the foreground and are painted much bigger than they should be, white and with blood around their snorting lips and nostrils. In another they are being boiled alive in glass tanks while an anonymous and subdued Milanese crowd gathers to watch. In this image CP faces the viewer directly but the strokes are not fine enough to track her features with clarity, only the way that the shadows fall across the planes of forehead and jaw, only the qualities of the late evening summer light.

The streets around me have become unfamiliar. I do not know which part of the city I am now moving through. The river must still be around somewhere because there is a light reflected onto the tower blocks in front of me with that instantly recognisable watery effect that makes you think of being in an aquarium. It is extraordinary how much anxiety you can expel from your guts in a single exhalation. I process weeks and months of badly repressed fury with every one of these punitive midnight sessions. No other program is as sustainable. One day I will have processed it all, and my chest and my forearms and neck will have the chance to shrink back down into a domestic frame—one day I will be scraped entirely out. I will no longer move through these streets in fear of attack from men I do not know. I will have that stable position from which to cast a rational executioner's judgement. There will be others like me, and together we will do this breaking work—we will maim those whose desire is obscene, those who hate women, Muslims, the poor, black people, homosexuals; and I know that their public maiming will be that symbol that holds our community to account.

But as I run I think that no comrade of mine would ever treat even their most hated enemy the way that P has punished the fascists in his paintings. We have practised our utilitarians' rigour—the guillotine, the pistol propped along the ridge of the spine—you can make allowances for the expedience of wartime but you must never slip into THEIR barbarian aesthetic programs. We punish and are punished together, in common, and beneath the sign of an absolute dignity. The biggest painting that I remember in P's studio is on a thick sheet of aluminium like a Pamela Rosenkranz picture. It is stripped back down to essentials. Two wooden cruciform structures emerge from a landscape of ragged clouds, smoke and wind. The earth beneath them is reduced to three or four dark strokes—only the barest suggestion of whatever mythic ground supports the scene. Neither structure is the classic Christian cross; there is a wooden X (the *crux decussata* or cross of Saint Andrew), and a T-shaped scaffold (the *crux commissa*). The fascists hang from each as in the rest of this series but in this case I could not tell you which is the Duce and which the mistress because in this image the bodies have somehow become completely invisible. It is this painting that no matter how much I run or lift weights I cannot make myself forget. The bodies are invisible but I know (and understand in some more profound and embodied way) that they *are not simply absent*, that the two fascists are hanging correctly crucified, that everything is in place as expected, but that the skin, the muscle and bones and clothing of BM and CP have somehow been turned perfectly transparent, without even one tiny break in whatever the mechanical process is that facilitates this illusion. I am as sure of this as if I had actually reached in through the empty space within the frame to touch the cold skin, the wetness and swelling, the saturated clothing; as though I had felt with my own hands the two invisible bodies hanging there. So it is only a light trick, and they have not been removed or taken down. It is the picture or the framing that is paranoid and not the commitment of the partisans.

I track along these brushed and shining streets and am surrounded by the facades of buildings, and each is identical and affords an identical cruelty. The streets would be familiar with people around even this late at night, but there is no one here at all. Only the empty scaffold, the facade at back of frame, the hard light, the close amateur crop and blurred focus. It does not matter what light hits the surface of these buildings, it does not matter how complexly it is arranged; it does not matter how many bodies the projections occlude or illuminate, or what particular special effects are mobilised; every single one of these facades can be opened up by paranoia and read backwards into infinity like the face of God. When the bodies disappear it is the mute architecture that begins to work its address to history: a brutal address to a history of brutality, one from which I cannot escape as long as I have the city laid out around me and as long as I continue these lateral night-time movements over its slicked glass skin.





The glow on the buildings around me is changing now, growing brighter, and when I look up I can see that the sky has also begun to brighten—but this is not the dawn, the clouds have simply begun to reflect light in the same way that the buildings do. What is the projector unit and where is it housed? From what vantage could one technocrat change the light that falls over the city? My body is beginning to stop and drag and slow down. I realise that I can no longer take in enough air. The smooth circulation is becoming blocked and it will be a long time before I am able to exercise like this again. There is a smell on the wind around me: woodsmoke and petrol. London is opening up, unfolding into a second form more appropriate to this theatre of surfaces and transparencies. The form is the scaffold, a modular and repeatable series of configurations that will in time come to truly replace all of these architectural sets that only looked like apartment complexes, only looked like they might offer you shelter ... Even when you cannot see them understand that it is only the light that has changed, and that if you knew the precise arrangements and compositions you too could use seeing hands to reveal the broken bodies that hang in ranks along the thoroughfares of the city.

I will be honest:

I no longer have the energy to keep this faith.

I cannot take the time to verify the commitment of the partisans in every instance.

The regime of disappearance means for me a descent into terror.

But this is only my punishment and there is no reason why you should be infected by it.

And besides, my faith is really not important to the progressing forwards of this system into its new phases and permutations – I know that even as I speak with you here the city is on the brink of a beautiful transformation. The machines themselves are invisible – they use the same light tricks that P has employed to animate his painting show— but I know their forms. I have, just once, run my hands over one of the enormous engines as it sat in front of me primed but mercifully inert. I will try to describe it to you as best I can by memory of touch. Imagine an engine block the size of a station wagon.

The whole mass vibrates almost imperceptibly. The surface that my hands feel over is solid steel and the bodywork bristles with controls and mechanisms whose purposes are impossible to determine by touch. I find tracks like a tank for transportation and know that these run absolutely silently, so that the engines are undetectable even when moving from point to point. On top of the chassis sits a type of steel ram.

I can barely bring myself to touch the thing since I have no idea what stimulus sets it off, but I know that when fired the mechanism is spring-loaded or pneumatic:

it punches forward as quick as a riveter's piston but a thousand times as powerful. I feel ill when I picture the impact with a human body. There is no wall on this planet built strong enough to withstand even a single blow from one of these invisible ramming machines, and it is not buildings that they were constructed to tear apart.



John Warwicker
Oxford Street, 2013
Digital photographs
Courtesy of the artist

I had only a few brief moments to feel over the contours of that machine before it was deployed into the streets of the city. There is no way of knowing now how many of these fascist-killing drones have been seeded through the boroughs and suburbs of London. Maybe they will be our partisans and maybe they will hold us to account. You will never know walking in the summer warmth or running at night how close you are at any given moment to having your stomach ripped out or your head smashed from your neck by an unstoppable invisible blow. There is no possibility of prediction and no defence. Multiplication of the engines is now my only true wish. And that we will again be able to discipline the space around us, the space that we thought was empty or neutral, that P and his disciples have appropriated in the name of hysteria and theatricality.

As I run now I can feel naked vulnerability like heat across the stretched skin over my gut muscles and belly, and I wonder if there was ever really anything that I could have done to keep myself safe.



John Warwicker
Soho, 2013
Digital photographs
Courtesy of the artist





ON AT THE INTR

lp



Martín Ramírez

Untitled (Madonna), c. 1950–53

Wax crayon, graphite and watercolour on pieced wove papers

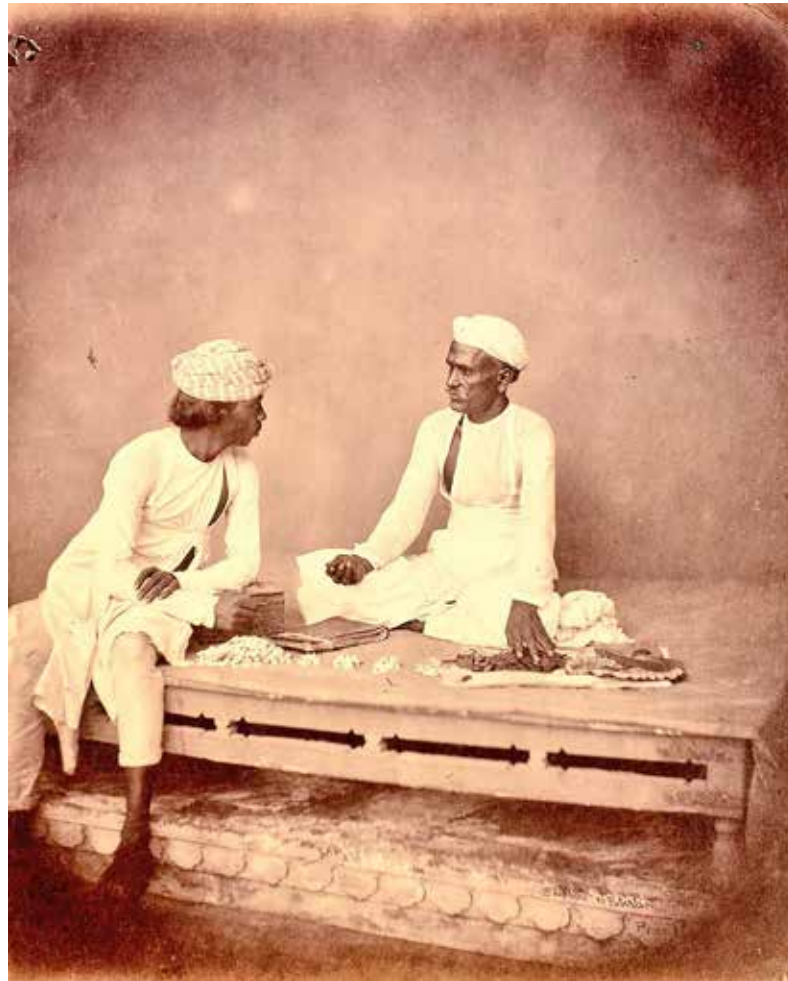
111.6 x 82.2 cm

Philadelphia Museum of Art, partial and promised gift
of Josephine Albarelli, 2002-228-1

Photograph: Joseph Painter. Courtesy of Fleisher/
Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia

COINAGE

AZZA ZEIN



Money Changer and
Customer (using Cowrie
Shells as small change), 1875
Photograph
The Royal Collection Trust

1. Hi, I am uncertain whether I am real or counterfeit.

1.1.

Over time, my values changed. So did my weight, like those cowrie shells that tricked a British tax collector in India more than a century ago as he was wondering how to count them. He first chose weight.ⁱ I confused everyone regarding what I stood for. I moved from one hand to the next, from one country to the next. Someone thought to mark me and to track my circulation. I deceived them. I lived outside somewhere as a reserve, outside money. Someone said I was *memory*.²

2. I was melted and reshaped. In a book, as a counterfeit gold coin, I had a voice.³ (Well, I guess Pamuk must have read both Baudelaire’s and Derrida’s *La Fausse Monnaie*.⁴ Or perhaps he once had some sort of anachronic conversation with them about gift exchange, with Marcel Mauss hosting the dinner.) I promise not to name-drop but would love to speak to you about debt instead of capital.ⁱⁱ Do I owe you some space?

2.1.

Keep me as shells, paper or metal; real or counterfeit, it doesn’t matter. Let me embrace the tactile intensity of materials: the warm fabrics of a pocket or a purse, or the touching sweat of hands. Could one find in these material spaces ‘affective intensities’?⁵

2.2.

And perhaps the so-called clash of civilisations is summarised or neutralised in these old sentences:

Now let me draw your attention to something quite bizarre: When these Venetian infidels paint, it’s as if they’re not making a painting but actually creating the object they’re painting. When it comes to money, however, rather than making the real thing, they make its counterfeit.⁶

3. To the above multiple binaries I am an outsider.

3.1.

With money, multiplication could mean devaluation. Borrowing this logic, would mirrors become objects of devaluation?

3.2.

Take me out of this enclosed vitrine with mirrored glass.

i

Bin Yang gives an account on the difficulty of counting shells in Bengal in the 18th century. See Bin Yang, *Cowrie Shells and Cowrie Money: A Global History*, Routledge, London and New York, 2019, Kindle edition, pp. 62–65.

ii

An interesting discussion on the difference between debt and capital can be found in David Graeber and Thomas Piketty, ‘Soak the Rich’, *The Baffler*, July 2014, Donald Nicholson-Smith (trans.), thebaffler.com/odds-and-ends/soak-the-rich; accessed 10 July 2019.

1. This text is part of my MFA project at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. I would like to thank Dr Edward Colless for his valuable suggestions and insights. I am grateful to Dr Tessa Laird for her inspiring and perceptive discussions throughout the MFA and for inviting me to an insightful reading group on Brian Massumi’s *99 Theses on the Revaluation of Value*. I have benefitted from discussions with Dr Raafat Ishak throughout the MFA and with Louisa Bufardeci and Alison Kennedy during our reading group on Bernard Stiegler’s *Technics and Time*. I am also thankful to all of the participants in the MFA seminars for their thoughtful remarks.

5. See ‘T43, Scholium c.’, on the conceptual relation between affect and intensity, and ‘T94, Speculative Strategy K’, on the use of the term ‘affective intensities’ in relation to the gift and surplus-value of care. Brian Massumi, *99 Theses on the Revaluation of Value: A Postcapitalist Manifesto*, University of Minnesota Press, 2018, Kindle edition, Loc 662–682 and Loc 1765–1785.

2. Narayana R. Kocherlakota, ‘Money Is Memory’, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Research Department Staff Report, no. 218, 1996.

3. Orhan Pamuk, ‘I Am a Gold Coin’, in *My Name is Red*, Erdağ M. Göknar (trans.), Random House, New York, 2002, pp. 102–106.

4. Charles Baudelaire, ‘La Fausse Monnaie’, cited in Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, Peggy Kamuf (trans.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992, pp. 31–32.

6. Pamuk, p. 104

3.3.

Is the image inside a mirror materialised? Someone mesmerised by an Argentine coin insisted ‘there is nothing less material than money’.⁷ Obsessions in the material world lead to forgetfulness. (Note that Borges chooses an Argentine coin as a *Zahir*. The term *Zahir* is borrowed from the Arabic for ‘apparent’ or ‘visible’. Is the visible world an illusion? Like a Sufi, Borges resorts to repetition: ‘Perhaps by thinking about the *Zahir* unceasingly, I can manage to wear it away’.⁸) See my material properties. Describe my obverse and reverse sides. Touch me.

Drop me in water.
Let me rust with air.

4. A square or a triangle becomes a circle when whirling.

4.1.

It may seem common sense why coins have tended towards circular forms. Real or counterfeit, a coin is a circle. Is it so that I would fit better in the deep corner of a side pocket? Or are hands afraid of the edges of a square? Can circles integrate better? Don’t squares fit into a circle? My ‘tendency’ is the rounded form (of course, I am not talking about the rectangular paper fiat money). Is the ‘exterior milieu’ an outside shell? Is it a shell of a changing body?ⁱⁱⁱ

4.2.

Forgive my male references. Talking about value often feels like walking unintentionally into a male toilet. A poet once spoke of the ‘private parts’ of money ... or at least that is the literal translation.⁹

For adults only there’s something fantastic to see: coins copulating,
everything else, the whole operation—educational and very arousing ...¹⁰

4.3.

Coins copulate; money circulates and the body drips.

4.4.

The news surprises me: the economy is going cashless! Some say bitcoin, while modelled on goldmining, may require a theory of value based on ‘stored energy and intelligence’ rather than a labour theory of value.¹¹ I am sidelined and my contribution invisible. I read that the bitcoin industry is male-dominated. ‘So what do early adopters have in common? One factor is gender.’¹² Systemic nausea! Hierarchies of currencies. Hierarchies of people. Refugees vs. citizens. Outsiders vs. inside jokes. Don’t forget to read the marginalised footnotes of my text.

5.The footnotes are vomiting.

.....

iii

Bernard Stiegler explains the concept of tendency (of technics) by citing André Leroi-Gourhan: ‘a movement, within the interior milieu, that gains progressive foothold in the exterior milieu’. André Leroi-Gourhan, cited in Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (trans.), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p. 58.

7. Jorge Luis Borges, ‘The Zahir’, *Collected Fictions*, Andrew Hurley (trans.), Penguin, London, 1998, pp. 242–49.

8. Borges, p. 249.

9. Rainer Maria Rilke, ‘The Tenth Elegy’ (1923), A.S. Kline (trans.), *Poetry in Translation*, poetryintranslation.com/ PITBR/ German/Rilke.php#anchor_Toc509812224; accessed 11 July 2019.

10. Rainer Maria Rilke, ‘The Tenth Elegy’ (1923), A. Poulin Jr (trans.), *The American Poetry Review*, vol. 2, no. 5, 1973, p. 34.

11. Harold James, ‘Lucre’s Allure’, *Finance and Development*, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC, June 2018, pp. 17–19.

12. Hannah Kuchler, ‘Bitcoin: Why Is It so Male-dominated?’, *Financial Times*, 7 February 2018, ft.com/content/259734ca-0b95-11e8-839d-41ca06376bf2; accessed 20 August 2019.

5.1.

Why is the focus on my body either sinking or surviving? Has it occurred to you that footnotes indeed feel seasick from the wavy movement of eyes?

After a few days the majority of the ~~migrants~~
*footnotes** began to recover from their sea-
sickness ... some grew steadily weaker and more
helpless so that their bodies could be seen to be
wasting away ... their deteriorating condition
created an atmosphere of despondency and
demoralization in which many who had
recovered began to ail afresh.¹³

.....
* The original text has been altered by
striking through the word 'migrants'
and adding the word '*footnotes*'.

13. Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*,
John Murray, London, 2008, p. 430.

5.2.

Financial contagion on board this illusionary ship. Debt hangover and nausea.

5.3.

Exceptional/unusual performance for the fragile outsider, unlike her carved stereotype. Tired of the 'metonymic slide' that makes the particular of my body invisible. 'The slide between figures constructs a relation of resemblance between the figures: what makes them alike may be their "unlikeness" from "us."'¹⁴

14. Sara Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', *Social Text*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2004, pp. 118–19.

5.4.

There are valued and devalued currencies. There are visible individuals and invisible crowds. Offshore prisoners are controlled by the logic of numbers.^{iv}

5.5.

Movements of bodies, goods and coins are controlled by the logic of numbers. In ancient Greece, six spits made one drachma. Their forms remind me of metal kebab sticks. Luckily my tendency didn't extend from those long devices. That would have been too obvious a form of control. I escaped the 'logic' of six. Tired of the multiple parentheses of justifications at every move. How, in these exhaustions, can one revalue anything?

6. I touch my body to materialise this unrecognised indifference, in the tyranny of seriousness and the necessity of joking. Don't be fooled by the repeated minted stamp. Surfaces vary and shells are far from homogeneous. They are the sea gifts. They move with the current and circulate. The poet utters and the echo repeats a circulating image like a returned gift.

.....
iv

See a poem on the automated domesticating process of Manus prison by the activist and writer Behrouz Boochani: 'The logic of five / Five people follow on from five people / ... Five chairs prepared at the beginning of the queue / The rest wait, standing in line / Everything is reduced to the number five.' Behrouz Boochani, *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison*, Omid Tofighian (trans.), Picador, Pan Macmillan Australia, Sydney, 2018, pp. 190–91.

I cry out to the Gulf: ‘O Gulf, / Giver of pearls, shells and death!’, / The echo replies / As if lamenting: ‘O Gulf, Giver of shells and death.’ / And across the sands from among its lavish gifts / The Gulf scatters fuming froth and shells / And the skeletons of miserable drowned emigrants / Who drank death forever.¹⁵

6.1.

Even echoes steal.

6.2.

Save my lines from the alienating depressing themes of exile. Rematerialise every object I touched. Count every flesh that touched me in *one-to-one correspondence* to my present time.^v ¹⁶ Every coin has its trajectory and is an image of itself. Survival as an outsider is optimisation and yes, slow like a turtle, but moving nevertheless.

6.3.

In my desolation, I have made friends with two forgotten coins: a turtle coin and a cowrie shell. My friends have multiple identities and are not confined to their roles as mediums of exchange. I wonder what Borges’ forgetfulness story would look like had he encountered them. They would incite obsessions of different kinds, perhaps sexual desires or maybe traces of invisible female labour. Is my charm due to my intrinsic qualities or your belief? In a 19th-century ritual in Madagascar, a king is given coins in exchange for a sprinkle of water, a form of blessing. Should we tell Borges that someone mentioned that magic ‘is not inherently fetishistic, in that it recognizes that the power to transform the world ultimately goes back to human intentions.’¹⁷ In the giving of these coins (*Hasina*), Maurice Bloch recognises an ‘inherent grace’ in the ruler.¹⁸ Refuting this ‘intrinsic superiority’, David Graeber reconsiders Maurice Bloch’s argument around this practice and emphasises that human action is as necessary in these rituals as the charms of the object. A very engaging discussion on the human action, the object’s agency as charm and the dismissal of magic in describing these actions is beautifully linked to the dichotomy between Marxist economics and Mauss’s gift economies.¹⁹ (We had to get back to Marcel Mauss.) While hiking near a spring, I saw global travellers spray Evian water on their faces. Dissolve me with them in the illusion of water.

6.4.

Both my friends, the turtle coin and the cowrie shell, are seen as symbols of female desire and fertility. The turtle is a symbol of Aphrodite’s desire and command over sea and land. The cowrie shell resembles a vulva. An anthropologist refuted cowrie shells as female organs on the grounds that touching female genitals was seen as repulsive in societies where cowrie shells were extensively used. Such repulsion, in her opinion, could not have been consistent with their common use and role as money. She concluded that the cowrie shell was, rather, a charm against the evil eye.²⁰

15. Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, ‘Rain Song’, Lena Jayyusi and Christopher Middleton (trans.), *Poem Hunter*, poemhunter.com/poem/rain-song-7/; accessed 10 July 2019.

16. The term ‘one-to-one correspondence’ is borrowed from Denise Schmandt-Besserat’s analysis of how Mesopotamian tokens were used until the fourth millennium BCE for direct mapping between the counted stock and the tokens. These tokens predate abstract counting with incised marks. Denise Schmandt-Besserat, *How Writing Came About*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1996, chapter 7.

17. David Graeber, ‘The False Coin of Our Own Dreams, or the Problem of the Fetish, IIb’, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*, Palgrave, New York and Basingstoke, UK, 2001, p. 245.

18. Maurice Bloch’s writings on Madagascar’s rituals are analysed and cited by David Graeber, ‘The False Coin of Our Own Dreams’, p. 233.

19. Graeber, ‘The False Coin of Our Own Dreams’, pp. 254–261.

20. Bin Yang, *Cowrie Shells and Cowrie Money: A Global History*, Routledge, London and New York, 2019, chapter 9.

v

Countable body and accountable flesh? ‘The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.’ John 6:63, Holy Bible (New International Version), biblehub.com/niv/john/6.htm; accessed 22 August 2019.

6.5.

My first encounter with the cowrie shell was in Damascus. There were not only crushed mother of pearl and inlaid shells in these homes. There were also ‘free’ shells: cowrie shells used as binary dice in a game called *Barjees*. In Arabic the cowrie is called *wada’a*. The Arabic dictionary associates it with the same root of the word *wadi’a*, meaning ‘deposit’. The word *wadi’a* means ‘soft’. In his travel accounts, the 14th-century Arab traveller Ibn Battuta referred to this shell as a medium of exchange in the Maldives.^{vi} I remember that after long days of work helping and cooking for others, grandmothers would propose to play *Barjees*. Surrounding the force with which they threw the cowrie shells as dice, was perhaps the only field where they exercised complete free will, as well as signalling their love for playing with their grandkids.^{vii} The intensity of the cowrie dispersal may have operated like a ‘reparative’ response to their invisible hard work of the day.

** The original text has been altered by striking through the word ‘it’ and adding the word ‘money’.

6.6.

In the Numismatic Museum of Athens I once met an old coin from Aegina, one of the earliest minted coins with an embossed turtle. A geometric shape on the back of the coin has puzzled researchers. It refers to spatial equivalence as a metaphor of a fair and just exchange. In earlier forms of the turtle coins, lines whose measures were irrational numbers were concealed; only those that were integers were revealed. The concealing operates as though the work of a trickster, rather than an abstraction, and tells that incommensurability is a dangerous idea.²¹ Here there is no arithmetisation of geometry.^{viii} This is, rather, *geometrisation* of the economy: ‘a square deal’.²² Compare this to the following:

Intrinsically universal and necessary, it *money*** is adapted to itself, and not determined by what surrounds it, while the ‘~~technical object~~ *money**** made to measure is in fact an object without intrinsic measure’, without *self-determining* measure.²³

*** The original text has been altered by striking through the words ‘technical object’ and adding the word ‘money’. This fragment of the original quote is from Gilbert Simondon, cited in Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (trans.), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, pp.72–73.

21. Gerhard Michael Ambrosi, ‘Pre-Euclidean Geometry and Aeginetan Coin Design: Some Further Remarks’, *Archive for History of Exact Sciences*, vol. 66, no. 5, 2012, pp. 557–83.

22. Rudy Rucker, cited in Ambrosi, p. 577.

23. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (trans.), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, pp.72–73.

vi

‘... both Ibn Battuta and his Chinese counterparts found that the Maldives was a prosperous trading centre that supplied cowrie shells to Bengal, Pegu and Siam, where these shells functioned as money’. Bin Yang traces the cowrie shell’s history in India, China and West Africa as a global currency for trade. Yang, p. 31.

vii

In physics, a ‘field’ is the space where a force operates. Fields can be electromagnetic, gravitational or quantum. They can also be poetic.

viii

Discussing the mechanism of modern arithmetisation, Bernard Stiegler asserts: ‘modern technics constitute the Gestell

7.

**Stop seeing me as a technical object.
Let me whirl out my value and get determined
by the stunning view
and this rich conversation on gift, exchange,
memory and desire.
Let me surf a wave, the arbitrary sound waves
of a binary dice.**

The Crones Will Take Back the Night

Prudence Gibson

Spell 1

Snail trail of petroleum

Islands of clarity from wrapped vegetables

Those toothy-quacks hunt in packs

They set alight the disdainful sanctimony

Of the far right

So, charge the goblet of change

Filled with hornwort and dragon's blood

The crones will take back the night:

A coven of fluttering black cloaks

Sits wait at every suburban corner.

Janet Laurence

Desire (Elixir Lab), 2018–19

Installation view, *Janet Laurence: After Nature*,

Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, 2019

Laboratory glass, plant specimens, duraclear, acrylic, water crystals,
plant elixirs, blown glass vials, performance

Dimensions variable

Collection of the artist

Image courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

© the artist

Photograph: Jacquie Manning





The female sorcerer's contemporary motivation is to heal the wounds of the earth: a series of bloodletting cuts across the obscene skin of the terra surface to ease the pressure of composting tech waste and plastic mountains. A sorcerer's spell can transform, awaken, anaesthetise, curse, bless and exorcise from the outside. But could a spell have the force to make change in environmental politics, and consequently legislation? Could it stop the granting of permission to Adani to start their mine ... along with 60 years of free water and five years of no royalty payments? The devilish character who has possessed the minds of those in power is named by Isabelle Stengers as 'capitalism'.¹ The sorcerers, the shamans, the lawless, the quacks and the charlatans each have the energy to exorcise the demon spirit of powerful industry carelessness, from the outside.

In his paper 'On Magical Language', Stephen Muecke outlines four utterances of magical speech. Firstly, there is the exorcism, where bad objects disappear. Secondly, there is the imprecation, where a bad object appears. Thirdly, there is the curse of commination (the threat of divine vengeance), where a good object disappears. Last is the blessing or conjuration, where a good object appears.² So many to choose from! But ... is the writer a sorcerer or a charlatan? The spell. The cauldron. The potion. These alternative processes and ingredients are the metaphoric tools of disenchanting society, the members of which don't understand why Australian environmental policy is not just retarded, but unmovable.

In Isabelle Stengers' essay 'The Doctor and the Charlatan',³ she charts past charlatans, such as Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815). Mesmer believed that animal magnetism moved through the human body via the vascular system and that bloodletting of the feet could soothe the excesses of these forces. Perhaps Mesmer was a mere illusionist, who took advantage of weak and unhealthy patients. Stengers' concerns are less with a moralising redress of this historical figure and more of a fascination with the outsiders—the charlatan, the witch, the animistic other—as alternatives. She sees capitalism as a trap of capture and notes that we are all under its spell. Surely, Adani's success in Australia reflects the capture or allure of jobs, the attraction of economic kickbacks. This is the enchantment that requires a speedy reversal.

Some of our artists are 'outside'. They are the sorcerers and shamans of Australian alchemy. For instance, Janet Laurence's *Elixir Bar* (2019)⁴ investigates the way plant extracts can transform human experience, through the imbibing of her elixirs.

Her work is intended as a reminder of the power of the non-human world of vegetal life; and the potions also act as spells against poor environmental political decisions, such as the recent legislative endorsement of the New South Wales state-government's raising of Warragamba Dam's wall by 14 metres, which will permanently change heritage lands upstream.⁵ Laurence's elixirs work to incant a magical act, to cure the country of its poor decisions regarding environmental care. Art functions as a series of ritualistic exchanges, as independent and vital objects, as a fictive withdrawing of truth; this is the alluring and metaphoric connection between art and magic, and the world outside.

If the world is a construct of magic and occulture, where exchanges are ritualistic and loaded with trickery, deceit and deliberate mischief, how can a writer intervene? Anthropologist Michael Taussig reminds us that respect for the dead—the corpse representing the original taboo—separates human from animal.⁶ My reminder, here, is that the earth is already nearly dead, almost a corpse: an obscene and repugnant sphere, with infected post-mine excrescences, monstrous plastic island protrusions and e-waste carbuncles.

Such woes as habitat loss, an erasure of political care and the threats of extinction are beginning to close in. Janet Laurence's elixirs are intended to draw attention to the damage done to our ecosystems. Her potions are intended to remind, to warn, to transform behaviours. The eco-woes mentioned here might sound distributed or too vast for a modest elixir or tonic or psychoactive dose to cure, but spells and incantations, potions and cures have implications for aesthetics and art. Art is nothing if not an expression of universal fear. Laurence is afraid, her hope is waning, and so is mine. But, with courage, the sorcerer listens to the ailment, prescribes a remedy and awaits evidence of a cure.

The spell, like the prayer, is a powerful force. It is a device of suggestive language with an intention to change a relationship through the vitality of an object. It is a summoning of force, and there are a growing number of summoners of force, such as the Extinction Rebellion⁷ and Tipping Point.⁸ Michael Taussig refers to the impure sacred, the idea of primitive religion working against the goodness of the church. He tells of how the 'forces conjured by the sorcerer, and the blood issuing from the genital organs of women ... inspired men with fear'.⁹ It is not much of a stretch to swap 'the church' for the anti-environment lobbies in Australia.



Albrecht Dürer
Witch Riding a Goat Backwards, 1501–02
 Engraving
 11.7 x 7.2 cm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington

Spell 2

The spirit queen apprises her options from the foothills

Majesty of mushroom medicine

Soul journey of the ayahuasca

Genocides are the material witness

In the case against the human.

No, the evidence is unclear:

Extermination, eradication, erasure remain

But María Sabina, enforce your dream-cure

Transmit the sorcery, the cure, the poison

From the cloud summit, foggy with hope

Or is it too late?

In his book *The Magic of the State*, Taussig created a ficto-critical tale of fieldwork in the mountains of Venezuela, where pilgrims came and were possessed by spirits.¹⁰ The rituals of magic and spirit possession were meant as an elaborate metaphor for the authority of the state, its hierarchy and stratification. “This is an anthropology not of the poor and powerless, but of the state as a reified entity, lusting in its spirited magnificence, hungry for soulstuff.”¹¹ The dramatisation of the spirit possession act and other sorcery was as constructed as the pomp and ceremony of public political events and the official authorial voice. Sound familiar?

The sorcerer is considered the fraudster—the sleight-of-hand captor of our unconscious. Stengers warns that the real capture is the economic perversity of inequality. She also warns against the denouncing of the vulgar charlatans because the charlatan considers their activity as rational, proven by the success of its treatment.¹² The art of proof is the art, and that very proof is the art of transformation that is afforded by change. For me, the cure must be a political solution to environmental degradation. The charlatan, the sorcerer and the witch can offer the spell and the elixir, but the cure is harder to prove, especially in an epoch of political sleight-of-hand. But fear not. The coven is at hand, slouching towards Canberra to be born.

1. Isabelle Stengers & Philippe Pignarre, *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell*, Andrew Goffey (trans.), Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2011, p. 43.

2. Stephen Muecke, ‘On Magical Language: Multimodality and the Power to Change Things’, in Margit Böck & Norbert Pachler (eds), *Multimodality and Social Semiosis: Communication, Meaning-Making, and Learning in the Work of Gunther Kress*, Routledge, New York, 2013, p. 91.

3. Isabelle Stengers, ‘The Doctor and the Charlatan’, *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2003.

4. *Janet Laurence: After Nature*, exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2019, mca.com.au/artists-works/exhibitions/829-janet-laurence/; accessed 20 August 2019.

5. ‘Raising NSW Dam Wall Good for Developers’, *SBS News*, 6 February 2019, sbs.com.au/news/raising-nsw-dam-wall-good-for-developers; accessed 20 August 2019.

6. David Levi Strauss, ‘The Magic of the State: An Interview with Michael Taussig’, *Cabinet Magazine*, issue 18, Summer 2005, cabinetmagazine.org/issues/18/strauss.php; accessed 20 August 2019.

7. Extinction Rebellion, rebellion.earth; accessed 20 August 2019.

8. Tipping Point, tippingpoint.org.au; accessed 20 August 2019.

9. Michael Taussig, *The Nervous System*, Routledge, New York, 1992, p. 114.

10. Michael Taussig, *The Magic of the State*, Routledge, New York, 1997.

11. Levi Strauss, ‘The Magic of the State: An Interview with Michael Taussig’.

12. Stengers, ‘The Doctor and the Charlatan’, p. 29



Damian Broomhead

The ritual dismemberment of Captain Cook at the Temple of Ku in Hawaii, 1779

2019

Oil pastel on paper

70 x 100 cm

Courtesy of the artist



It is in the indecent southern sky,
in the night-time discharge glistening above our heads,
I see the dazed spot of the celestial pole
 in a nerve fibre extending to infinity.
Along this line of miraculous ascent
I could calculate the reach of a mouth freed from the
inhibitions of calcium, unchristened
 tissue and mucous encoded in a filigree.
Then across a crazed and salacious vowel
listen to the craquelure of radiating sonar that kindles
the reactor rods and pulses with distended,
 vivacious calorimetry.
Toothless but still virile, I maw my skin into shapes
which insult its parts as pink and bruised names of sex
while above, a looping galactic constant skews data arrays
 into incandescing whirlpools.
There are drainage holes among those stars—bright
perforations, unsealing like eyes, to roar with broken spurts of a god
in labour, and whose earsplitting work of creation encrypts me as
 hostage to its good news.
Redeemed as earthly host to a cosmological parasite that burrows like
a worm in rotten cheese, I survive, servant to the commerce in this food
of the gods but, in anorectic secrecy beneath the ignited sky of Oz,
 starve this human who never is or was.

Host, 2019

For my formalist
father, I was what was pushed aside
and crafted oddly in the stocklist
of family resemblance bullet points
though
gratefully on my part
not to be made familiar with
the regulations of
patrimony,
I was left undescended, like
an unripened sex organ stuck
in pulp, and shamefully untitled as
странный—
a bubble from the outside air injected
in the bloodline and pulsing on its way
heartward, delivering the shock
of *ostranenie* —
when one turns the story inside out or spins
the play to be the thing wherein
we'll shit out our sickly bellyaching.

Vladimir Minusk
Ostranenie, 2019

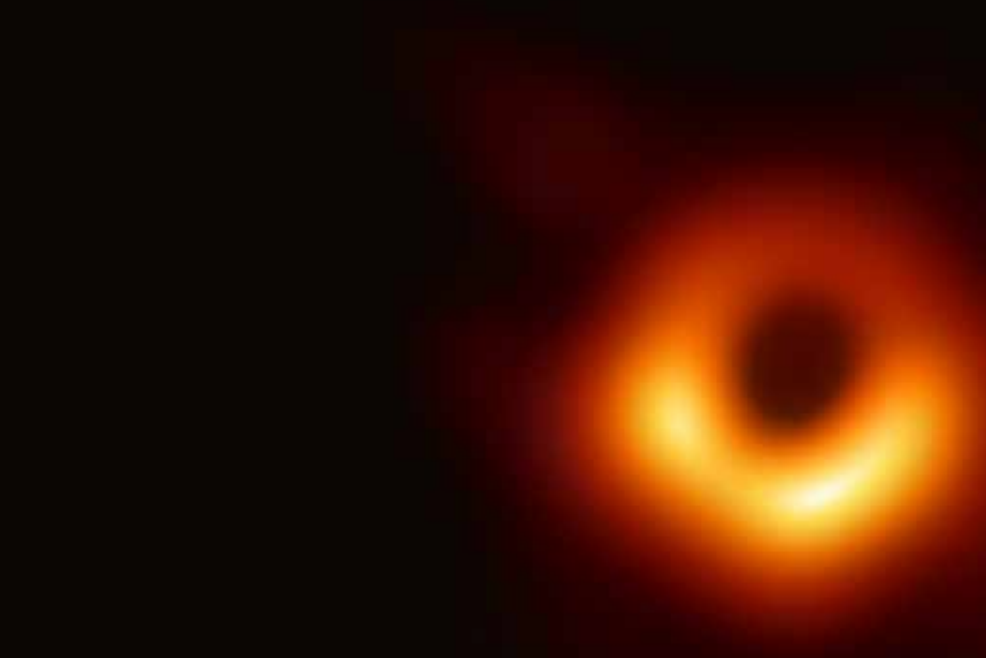


Image: Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration

Event Horizon

Early in 2019, the Event Horizon Telescope Collaboration published a photograph of the supermassive black hole at the core of a galaxy called M87. An epochal moment. The first ever visual imaging of this cosmic phenomenon was captured not through a single lens but generated by a breathtaking mathematical and computer interlacing of data from a global network of observatories. Strictly speaking there can be no optics for a black hole; we can only record the last glimmer of the light and the near infinite dilation of space-time swirling like a maelstrom around its edge: the 'event horizon'. Beyond that, no light and thus no information can escape.

In the late 20th century the philosopher Jean Baudrillard delighted in using the scientific speculation of an 'event horizon' figuratively as the frozen panorama of history, politics and culture, a *danse macabre* silhouetted against the inertial implosion of the myths of progress and revolution formerly driving modernity and modernism, collapsing into the non-event. However, at this moment in the 21st century history, politics and culture hardly seem stalled at a brink of meaning or communication, but accelerating like frenzied quarry at the fatal radius of a hyperobject: whether that is characterised as the anthropocene, the chthulocene, global warming, immanent insect extermination, or the posthuman ascendance of AI. With the publication of the EHT image we can revise the metaphoric power of the 'event horizon', of that eerie halo around the non-visible agent of our extinction. We ask for art and writing that envision that horizon, from science fiction and fantasy to scientific visualisation of what is at the limits of our world.

Subscribe

Print and digital subscriptions available. Both print and digital subscriptions include access to the digital archive—every issue of *Art + Australia* since 1963.

PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS

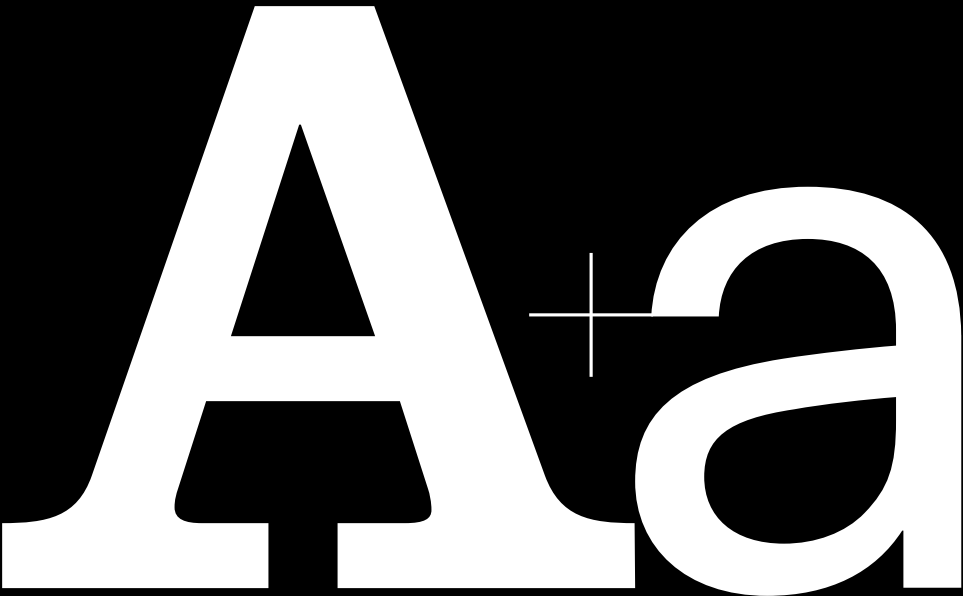
	12 months (2 issues)	24 months (4 issues)
Australia	\$50	\$90
New Zealand	\$65	\$120
International	\$70	\$130

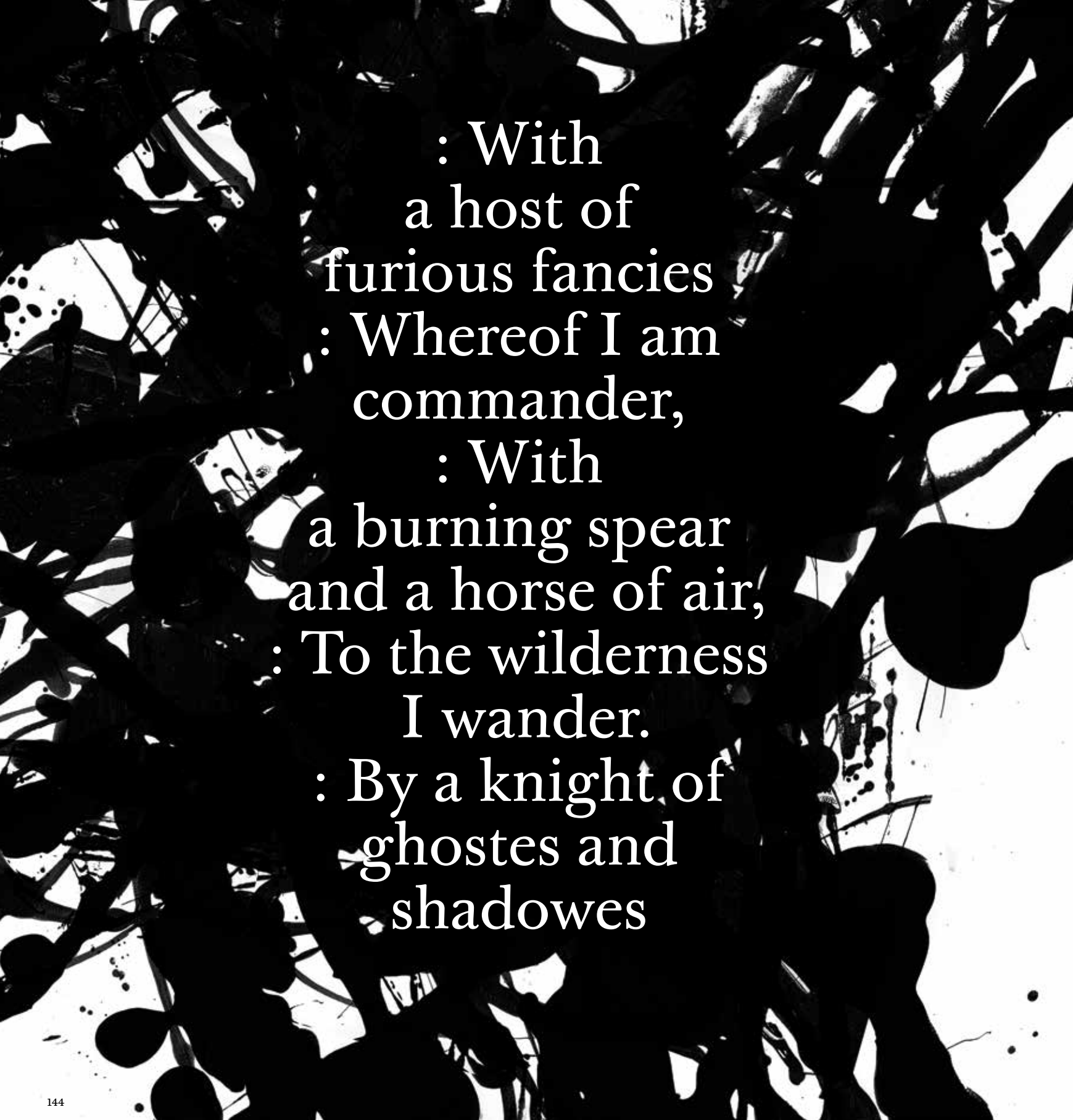
DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 months	24 months
\$40	\$70

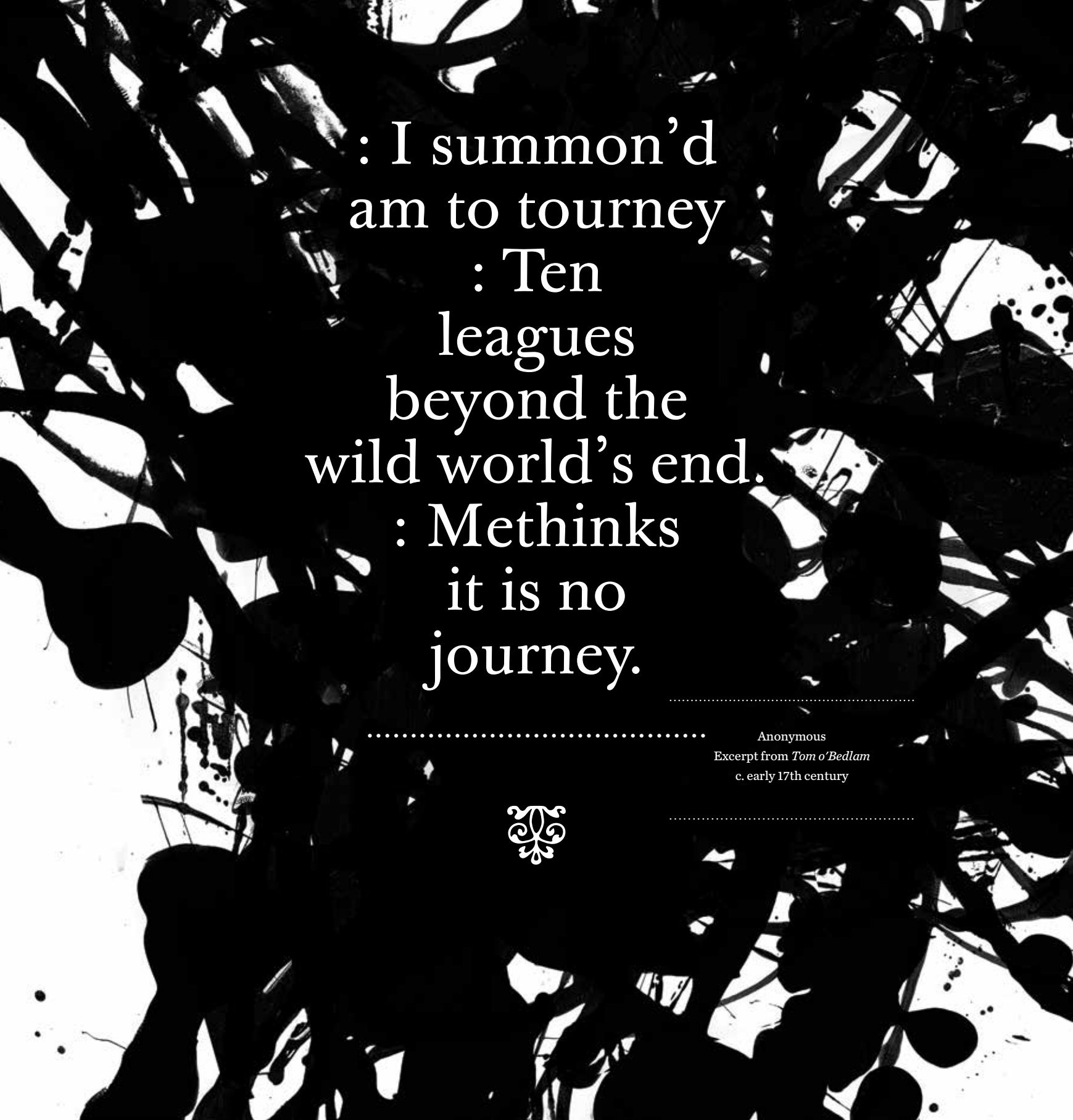
Subscribe at www.artandaustralia.com/subscribe

For institutional subscriptions requiring IP access, please contact Art + Australia directly at art-australia@unimelb.edu.au





: With
a host of
furious fancies
: Whereof I am
commander,
: With
a burning spear
and a horse of air,
: To the wilderness
I wander.
: By a knight of
ghostes and
shadowes



: I summon'd
am to tourney
: Ten
leagues
beyond the
wild world's end.
: Methinks
it is no
journey.

.....
.....
Anonymous

Excerpt from *Tom o'Bedlam*

c. early 17th century
.....





OUTSIDE

The outsider had a romantic sovereignty in the last century as a rebellious alternative to traditional art and even as an anti-institutional foil to the modernist artist. The outsider artist was sometimes untrained, sometimes mad or criminal or savage, sometimes naive, usually eccentric and idiosyncratic or non-conformist, often demonic or visionary. Over the past couple of decades, however, the characterisation of the outsider artist as alien, abnormal and disenfranchised has increasingly been cast as a neo-colonial phantasm of otherness. Adding to this disrepute, outsiders since the turn of the millennium have also been identified with the fringe-dwellers and extremists of political culture – social media trolls, conspiracy theorists, survivalists, nativists, social justice warriors, populists (many of whom traffic comfortably with media moguls, pop celebrities, influencers and political autocrats).

For all these taints, there's no doubt that the outside lures us with the prospect of a view beyond our parochial horizon, beyond our humanness and our planetary heritage. Is the outside a realm of cultural exclusion, of hermitage and retreat, or of transit and alteration? The plea now frequently heard is for so-called outsider art to be freed from its label and welcomed into, incorporated within, the diversity of contemporary art. Can we still use the tempting vista of the outside as an escape route, even – especially – from the globalised economy and inclusive habitat of contemporary art? Can we invoke the outside as more than a managed option of artistic and market diversity and envisage it feral, unbound, even as an abyss?