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Psychonautic Media

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Film and Media Studies

by

Anastasia Yumeko Hill

Committee in charge:

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September 2016

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For My Parents

VITA OF ANASTASIA YUMEKO HILL
September 2016

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it'll all be fine in the end, Online Work in conjunction with Whitney Ford-Terry's
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PRISM/N, Text in conjunction with Gary Hill's "Aloidia Piorm." James Harris Gallery,
Seattle, WA. 2014

THEN / AT / SOME / POINT-----A LINE WAS DRAWN, Text in conjunction with
Susan Robb's Telematic Performance "Wild Times." Outdoors and Online. 2014.

The Coyote Project, Traveling Multi-Media Installation and Performance with Rodrigo
Valenzuela. Various Sites, CA. 2013

When Image Fondles the Tongue [it could have gone another way], Multi-Media Performance and Lecture. Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA. 2012

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ABSTRACT

Psychonautic Media

by

Anastasia Yumeko Hill

This interdisciplinary dissertation proposes and explores the concept of “psychonautic media.” From the Greek roots *psyche* (mind, soul) and *nautēs* (sailor, navigator), “psychonautic(s)” refers to both the subjective experience of altered states of consciousness, and the fields of research founded on such states. *Psychonautic media* therefore includes any object, substance, environment, etc. used to alter consciousness and perception. Unlike other forms of media, *psychonautic media* are thus defined not by their physical format or technological function, but by the unique nature of their “content”—the production of altered states as “inner media” experiences—“images” constituted by a shift in perception itself (in *how* the subject perceives). Within this speculative framework, I present a series of experimental case studies—on LSD, the wilderness, and sensory deprivation—that focus in particular on the relationship between subjectivity, perceptual experience, and various forms and processes of mediation (material, linguistic, ideological, etc.). Grounded in a “horizontal” methodology, and constituted by conceptual and aesthetic *montage*, each study integrates personal narrative; interpretations of concepts from psychoanalysis, philosophy, and literary theory;

descriptions, histories, and analyses; and imagery and graphic text. Situated between art and scholarship, my aim for this project is twofold: to invent and enact, theorize and embody, the concept of *psychonautic media*; and, in so doing, to model an alternative mode of thinking about and doing research.

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Art is not a collection of objects: it is a way of seeing (more advanced: a way of being). The art then, is not in the object, but in the 'state of being' produced by the object. Once (whenever) this state is produced, everything becomes in the way of art. The old joke about the man in a museum of modern art mistaking a crack in the wall or an old paint rag for one of the paintings is exactly where we want to get.

—Franz Kaminⁱ

PART ONE: **PSYCHONAUTIC MEDIA**

Christmas Day, 2009

Buck and I exchange gifts (both in envelopes). We open them at the same time and smile as we recognize their contents. Each thinking we'd done something truly original, it turns out we'd bought the exact same thing: a gift certificate for an hour-long session in a float tank.

FLOAT TANK

A float tank, formerly known as an isolation or sensory deprivation tank, is a lightless, soundproof tank in which subjects float in salt water at skin temperature.

Later that week we drive to Portland, Oregon where the Float Zone is located (no longer in business). After a brief introduction and the signing of various forms and waivers, we are each escorted to a private, spa-like room—complete with amber lighting, bleached white towels, and a large gong used to alert floaters when their time is up.

The tank itself looks a bit like an over-sized coffin from the future, or a pod for cryogenic freezing. Posted on the wall above it is a sign warning people of the potential risk of seizures, panic attacks, and hallucinations. I can't help but think of *Altered States*, a 1980 sci-fi horror film inspired by the life of John C. Lilly, inventor of the tank. The story follows an obsessive university professor who, while researching the origins of schizophrenia, begins to wonder whether our

'other' states of consciousness are just as real as our normal, waking states. To investigate he conducts a series of self-experiments using a sensory deprivation tank together with various psychedelic drugs. Over time these mind-melding sessions cause him to undergo an actual, biological devolution through which he emerges first as a 'primitive man,' and finally as an amorphous mass of conscious, primordial matter—a regression that threatens his total dissolution (i.e., a return to 'the Real').

I proceed to undress. Naked, I open the tank's hatch, step into the dark, wet silence, and close the door behind me. It takes awhile to get comfortable, to trust the buoyancy of the extremely dense saline water. Once physically adjusted, my attention begins to turn away from my body and towards the darkness 'out there.' I can feel my mind searching out and straining for something to latch onto, to make sense of, but there is truly nothing to see or hear—nothing except my own neural noise. As the time passes I become increasingly disoriented, my thoughts increasingly hypnagogic. *Are my eyes open or closed? Am I falling asleep or have I just woken up from a dream? Has a minute or an hour just gone by?*

And then the gong sounds gently.

The session is over. I slowly emerge from the tank. It takes a moment to come off the experience and get acclimated—for the eyes to re-adjust to the light, for blood to catch up with the brain, for the body to find balance and regain

coordination. After some quiet moments I get dressed and meet Buck back in the lobby. As I rummage through my bag for the certificate to pay, I notice that I've received a text message from my father. I open it:

Well, was it psychonautic?

PSYCHONAUTIC

German writer (and soldier), Ernst Jünger, coined the term 'psychonaut' in his 1970 essay "Approaches: drugs and inebriation" (*Annäherungen: Drogen und Rausch*), in which he described the research of experimental chemist and pharmacologist, Arthur Heffter. Derived from the Greek roots *psychē* (mind, soul) and *nautes* (sailor, navigator), 'psychonautic(s)' has since come to define both the subjective experience of altered states of consciousness, and the fields of research founded on such states.

October 20, 2010

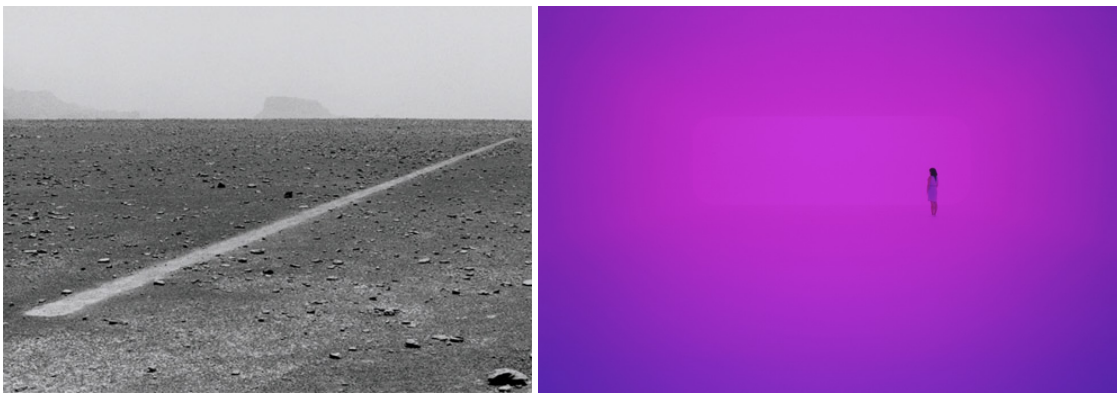
I successfully defend my dissertation prospectus on *Psychonautic Media*:

This project—a thought experiment of sorts—proposes and explores the concept of ‘psychonautic media:’ a category that includes any object, material, environment etc. used to alter consciousness and perception, e.g., psychoactive chemicals and plants, wilderness zones and trails, sensory deprivation tanks, Ganzfeld fields, dreammachines, anechoic chambers, etc.

Unlike other forms of media, psychonautic media are defined not by their physical format or technological function, but by the unique nature of their ‘content,’ i.e., the production of altered states as ‘inner media’ experiences—‘images’ constituted by a shift in perception itself. Thus, rather than project, convey, or deliver pre-constituted information, psychonautic media alter how, and therefore what, the subject perceives.

Within this speculative framework, my plan was to conduct a series of experimental case studies—on LSD, wilderness trails, and isolation tanks—that would each explore the medium, the ‘image,’ and the various processes of

mediation from a multifaceted perspective (historical, cultural, physical, psychological). Grounded in philosophy and media theory, the purpose of the project was not only to study these things *as media*, but, in so doing, to open up the question of *what is media?* And, *where does the image occur?*



Dusty Boots Line, The Sahara, sculpture and photo by Richard Long, 1988 | *Breathing Light*, Ganzfeld installation by James Turrell, 2013.

WHAT IS A MEDIUM?

MEDIUM | 'mēdēəm|

noun (pl. media |-dēə| or mediums)

1. an agency or means of doing something
2. the material or form used by an artist
3. a particular form of storage for digitized information
4. the intervening substance through which impressions are conveyed through the senses
5. the substance in which an organism lives or is cultured

“All media,” according to Marshal McLuhan, “are extensions of some human faculty – psychic or physical.”ⁱⁱ By *extending*, augmenting, or amplifying one or more aspects of the human sensorium (and, consequently, diminishing or ‘amputating’ others), the introduction of any new medium effectively alters the balance between the senses (our sense-ratios), and thereby shifts the way we experience, understand, and interact with each other and the world. It is this shift—“the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs”ⁱⁱⁱ—and not, as is commonly assumed, the information or ‘content’ a medium transmits—that constitutes its ‘message.’ For example:

Until writing was invented, man lived in acoustic space:
boundless, directionless, horizonless, in the dark of the
mind, in the world of emotion, by primordial intuition, by
terror. Speech is a social chart of this bog.

The goose quill put an end to talk. It abolished mystery; it
gave architecture and towns; it brought roads and armies,
bureaucracy. It was the basic metaphor with which the cycle

of civilization began, the step from the dark into the light of the mind. The hand that filled the parchment page built a city.^{iv}

Not only did the invention of writing (which was preceded by the invention of the alphabet and followed by the printing press) ‘put an end to talk,’ but it introduced a completely new use, form, and scale of communication that, in turn, shifted the very foundation and structure of society at large. As this example illustrates, the significance of any given medium therefore lies not in *what* it communicates or makes apparent, but in the way it reorganizes and reconfigures *how* we communicate, perceive, think, act, interact, etc. The medium, in other words, *is the message*.

Building upon this thesis, McLuhan goes on to claim that *all man-made (or appropriated) things* are physical, psychological, intellectual, or social extensions of some kind and, therefore, can—and should—be considered a type of media. Thus, in addition to visual media and communication technologies (what we typically think of as ‘media,’ i.e., film, television, telephony, radio etc.), McLuhan argues as well that the wheel is a medium (an extension of the foot); the book is a medium (an extension of the eye); clothing is a medium (an extension of the skin); all electric circuitry is media (extensions of the nervous system) etc. Indeed, anything that is used by and has an effect on us *is a medium*. ‘Media,’ therefore, functions less as a definitive category of things, and more as a

framework, a lens—as a way to look at and think about how we produce, use, and experience the objects that surround us.

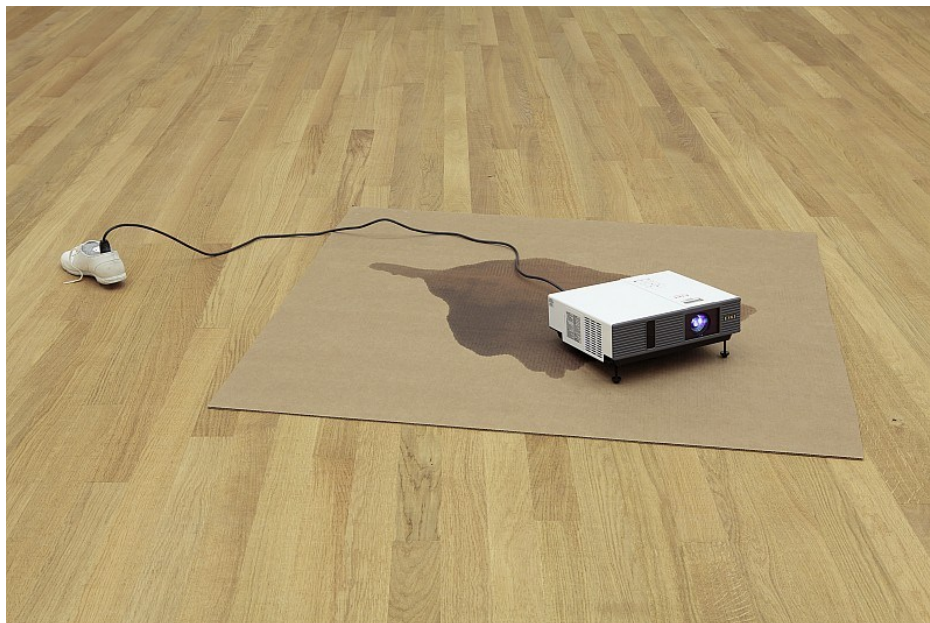
From the 1960s onward the rapid development of new artistic forms – assemblage, happening, installation (including its various sub-forms such as site-specific installation and video installation), performance, action, conceptual art, process art, intermedia, time-based art, etc.—has threatened the centuries-old typology of media (painting, sculpture, drawing) by the multiplicity of these forms. In addition, if the traditional typology was based on difference in materials used in art practice, the new media either allowed for the use of different materials in arbitrary combinations (installation), or, even worse, aimed to dematerialize the art object (conceptual art). Therefore, the new forms were not really ‘media’ in any traditional sense of the term.

—Lev Manovich^v

Today we suspect that our experience of mediation itself is where the art happens, and where we enter the aesthetic of our sensorium.

—Caroline Jones^{vi}

**AND WHERE DOES THE
IMAGE OCCUR?**



Die All Jennies 1, installation by Paul Chan, 2013.

IMAGE | 'imij|

noun

1. a representation of the external form of a person or thing in art; photographed, painted, sculpted, or otherwise made visible
2. an optical counterpart or appearance of an object, as is produced by a reflection from a mirror, refraction by a lens, or the passage of luminous rays through a small aperture and their reception on a surface
3. a mental representation; idea; conception
4. form; appearance; semblance

IMAGE | 'imij|

verb

1. to picture or represent in the mind; imagine; conceive
2. to make an image of
3. to project on a surface
4. to reflect the likeness of
5. to set forth in speech or writing
6. to resemble

First, *what* is an image?

An image is a thing that signifies. It is composed through and performs aesthetic, semiotic, and affective operations; it expresses meaning; it is interpreted and felt; it invokes reactions and response. An image always has content which always has form—no matter how ethereal, minimal, or abstract; it is inconceivable otherwise (there is no ‘pure’ image *in and of itself*). The particulars of what any given image looks like or means, however, are secondary to what an image *is*—what *all images are*: that is, precise relations to what they are not. It is an *image of* a pipe, not a pipe. It is not blackness, but an *image of* blackness (a version of, a variation on). Dialectical by nature, the image exists only in parallax—as a play between the similar and dissimilar, proximity and

distance, presence and absence. The ontological specificity of the image is thus defined, initially, by the fact that it is always *of something* (anything whatsoever). There is no way to think the image outside of this relation: as soon as something is an image, it is an image *of something*. This principle, which is determined before an image has or makes meaning, is fundamental to all image-types, forms, materialities, and histories.

The image is a thing that is not the thing: it distinguishes itself from it, essentially.^{vii}

But while an image can never be the thing that it is of—what it resembles, indicates, refuses, mirrors—it cannot be an image without it. The presence of the image is therefore the presence of an absence—it is constituted precisely by what is not here, not this. The image, in other words, constitutes the preservation—a making present—of the very thing it obliterates in the act of its appearing (it is no wonder why so many attempts to picture the image inevitably fall back into metaphors and figurations of death: of the undead, of mummification, cadavers, spirits, and sacrifice).

What is distinct in being-there is being-image: it is not here but over there, in the distance, in a distance that is called 'absence.'^{viii}

The absence presented by the image, an absence constituted by what the image is *of*, likewise determines its frame—a frame that necessarily distinguishes

the image from its surroundings and thereby defines it. Without a frame, a limit, an edge of some kind, the image would have no ending—there would be nothing to keep it from blending into the non-image world (a world where things *just are*). To experience an image it must be recognized as such, as a difference premised on the presence of absence, a remove that distinguishes and sets it apart from its surroundings (either spatially or temporally).

Every image is in some way a 'portrait,' not in that it would reproduce the traits of a person, but in that it pulls and draws...in that it extracts something, an intimacy, a force. And, to extract it, it subtracts or removes it from homogeneity, it distracts it from it, distinguishes it, detaches it and casts it forth.^{ix}

This frame that mediates the image, and on which it ontologically depends, need not, however, be tangible, physical, or even part of the external world: as a recognition of *difference* (the frame that distinguishes the image as such), it can manifest in both the objects of perception *and in the act of perception itself*—as a shift in quality that is not spatial but temporal, processual.

THE IMAGE-AS-MESSAGE
THE IMAGE-AS-OCCURRENCE
THE IMAGE-AS-A WAY OF SEEING



Anastasia Hill <a.yumeko.h@gmail.com>

Thank You

3 messages

Anastasia Hill <a.yumeko.h@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 19, 2012 at 5:16 PM

To: M [REDACTED]

Dear M,

I forgot to tell you: I've been struggling lately with trying to decide what an image is in relation to project. Then last night, all of a sudden, I caught you in my periphery - red and laughing with your head thrown back, your gold tooth glinting. (Perhaps in part due to the bourbon) I experienced what I can now only describe as a subtle delay - a phasing. I saw an 'image' of you, a slight variation from the you I know well. You were image-M, a variant degree, a stranger (but just barely). And this made me think: maybe all an image is, is a degree of difference, a degree that can itself take on an infinite many forms (?)

Love,

A

M [REDACTED]
To: Anastasia Hill <a.yumeko.h@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 19, 2012 at 11:40 PM

Dear A,

...so what, then, was the phase relationship between the two signals (M1) and (M2)? The blurring could indicate a temporary flattening of a continuum - a time-space wrinkle. The image appears determined by (x) time-lag and (y) the degree of difference between a 4-dimensional being and the super-flat stranger...

I had a rough night last night, couldn't sleep; instead looked at diagrams on how to angle a shotgun to blow my brains out with 96% lethality (is that a word?)

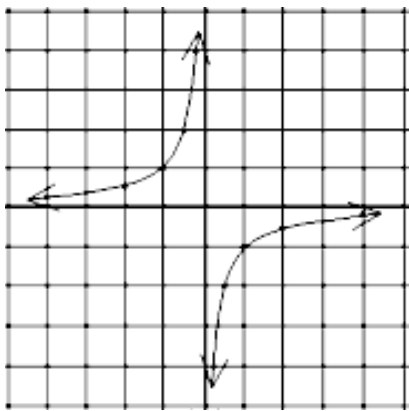
...or do we just 'let $x = x$ '?

Anastasia Hill <a.yumeko.h@gmail.com>
To: M [REDACTED]

Fri, Oct 19, 2012 at 11:59 PM

Dear M,

The 'point' is to find the other - not nothing - within the variable...don't inspire (angle) to death, M1!



Graph of a distance function. | *Swimming at Hart Mt.*, photo by Katherine Bourbonais, c. 1994.

THE BODY-AS-FRAME

...each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. Each person is at each moment capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. [...] But in so far as we are animals, our business is at all costs to survive. To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funneled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this particular plane.

—Aldous Huxley^x

As an attempt to overcome the problematic reductions posed by both idealism and realism—the former reducing matter to subjective representations and the latter to objects capable of mysteriously producing representations within us—Henri Bergson offers an alternative philosophy of perception grounded in what he calls the ‘image:’ “a certain existence which is more than what the idealist calls a representation, but less than what the realist calls a thing—an existence placed halfway between the ‘thing’ and the ‘representation.’”^{xi} The ‘image,’ in Bergson’s sense, thus refers to both *matter* and the *representation* (perception) of matter (and is therefore distinct from *the image* discussed thus far, i.e., the image-as-a particular *type* of experience).

‘Physical’ and ‘mental,’ in the world and in the mind, ‘images’ (or image-matter) constitute the singular ‘substance’ of the universe, which, according to Bergson, is nothing more or less than an ‘aggregate of all possible images’—an immense, interconnected network of all things and all actions that, together, compose an infinitely intricate tapestry in constant motion, flux, becoming. The world and all the movements in the world are ‘images:’ the room I’m sitting in is an ‘image;’ the screen and those things we more commonly refer to as “images” (paintings, graphics, film etc.) are ‘images;’ my body is an ‘image;’ my brain and the neural firings within it are ‘images’ too.

My body, however, is unique—it is a ‘privileged image,’ a ‘center of indetermination’ that actively *filters* and *selects* other ‘images’ from the universal flux. This continual process of *selection* or *enframing*—mediated by the ‘needs and functions’ of my body (what I, as a biological organism, need, want, and am

able to do)—is understood as a subtraction from or diminution of a subset of the aggregate of ‘images;’ and this subtraction *is perception itself*. Matter, then, is differentiated from perception only by *degree*, and not by *kind*:

...what distinguishes my perception of a material object as it is in itself is not something internal to my brain or something added by me (as it is for idealist positions), but the fact that I can perceive it only by isolating certain of its aspects, leaving the rest aside.^{xii}

Like all ‘images,’ the ‘system of images’ I call *my body* receives and gives back movement to the flow of ‘images’ around it. When I come into contact with an external ‘image,’ my sensory organs are stimulated; this stimulation results in a modification—a *movement*, a *disturbance*—in the ‘images’ I call *my afferent nerve cells* (the nerves that transmit sensory impulses from the periphery of the body to the spinal cord and brain); these molecular ‘vibrations’ (sensory impulses), so long as they are not *prolonged into a necessary action* (an unconscious reflex), are then propagated in the brain in the form of perceptions (conscious representations): “after having traveled along these nervous elements, after having gained the centre,” the initial disturbance thus “changes into a conscious image.”^{xiii} Through my senses-as-filter (or selection process), I therefore receive an ‘isolated image-component’—a diminution of the ‘image’ (a part of the thing) in the form of a perception (a molecular movement in/of the

'image' I call *my body*). As a subtraction from a subset of 'images' (the presence of matter, the material object), the 'mental image' I have is therefore continuous with the 'external' 'image' that caused it; related to it not as an appearance to reality, but as a part to a whole:

Akin to a 'discernment' in the etymological sense of the word, as a 'slicing up' or 'selection,' the selective act of perception is delimited and constrained by, and in direct correlation to, my body's necessities, utility, and function:

Our representation of matter is the measure of our possible action upon bodies: it results from the discarding of what has no interest for our needs, or, more generally, for our functions.^{xiv}

I perceive what I need to perceive in order to make decisions about how to act. Through the process of selection (filtration, extraction, enframing), my body mediates and thereby discards what has no interest for its needs, functions, and motivations. The part of the 'image' that remains—the representation I have of matter—thus results from this suppression, and likewise reflects my possible action(s) upon it:

The truth is that my nervous system, interposed between the objects which affect my body and those which I can influence, is a mere conductor, transmitting, sending back, or

inhibiting movement. This conductor is composed of an enormous number of threads which stretch from the periphery to the centre, and from the centre to the periphery. As many threads as pass from the periphery to the centre, so many points of space are there able to make an appeal to my will and to put, so to speak, an elementary question to my motor activity. Every such question is what is termed a perception.^{xv}

The brain does not produce representations of what it perceives, but rather filters sensory impressions ('images') into actions or non-actions. Upon receiving sensory information (an array or 'display' of 'images'), the brain, which Bergson likens to a 'telephonic switchboard' or 'sensitive plate,' must then decide what to do—how it wants to act, i.e., give back movement to the 'images' perceived. This 'decision' between input (perception) and output (executed action)—between centripetal and centrifugal movements—is constitutive of a hesitation, a *delay* caused by the brain making indeterminate reactions possible. Living beings are thus 'centers of indetermination,' insofar as indeterminacy refers to a range of possible, i.e., virtual and spontaneous action (or non-action). The more highly developed the brain—the higher the 'number and rank' of the organism's 'needs and functions'—the more possible actions it allows, i.e. the greater its access to alternative axes of movement (the more choices and decisions the organism has to make), and, thus, the greater the delay—or 'zone of indeterminacy'—between input and output, perception and action. The

measure of indeterminacy therefore corresponds to the organism's degree of choice, spontaneity, and free will.

Mediated by the body's 'needs and functions,' indeterminacy likewise mediates the body's selection of 'images.' My body filters the world of 'images' according to its potential action, i.e., what my body is capable of doing in relation to the 'image;' the more an organism is capable of doing, the more this 'image' *interests* the body's 'needs and functions' and, hence, the more the body *selects*, i.e., *perceives*. The greater the 'zone of indetermination'—the more choice a living being has with regard to its conduct—the more rich and complex is its conscious perception. Thus, 'higher level' organisms, such as humans, have a proportionally broader and finer spectrum of perceptive action compared to 'lower level' organisms, who simply react to sensory input automatically through movement, i.e., without delay (awareness, freedom, choice). The affective and motor capacity of the body functions in constraining and limiting the relative aspect of the 'image,' and is therefore inextricably bound up with perception, as the body itself is responsible for subtracting the relevant 'images' from the universal flux. In relation to the constant swirl of 'images' around me, the body, a sensuously engaged selection apparatus, thus constitutes both an active and creative *frame* and an *interval* or site of *delay*:

...if living beings are, within the universe, just 'centers of indetermination,' and if the degree of this indetermination is measured by the number and rank of their functions, we can

conceive that their mere presence is equivalent to the suppression of all those parts of objects in which their functions find no interest. They allow to pass through them, so to speak, those external influences which are indifferent to them; the others isolated, become 'perceptions' by their very isolation.^{xvi}

Perception, however, is only part of the picture; it gives us a sketch, a relatively abstract representation or outline—what Bergson refers to as a 'black and white photograph.' Indeed, 'pure perception' is never experienced in actuality; rather, it is always alloyed, mixed with and fulfilled by, *affection* and *memory*.

Affection is "that part or aspect of the inside of our body which we mix with the image of external bodies."^{xvii} The affective capacity of the body not only mediates the selection of 'images,' but is, consequently, inseparable from the resulting perception—an immediate perception that is likewise intermixed with the innumerable details of our past experience, i.e., memory.

Memory simultaneously contracts and organizes into a single moment a number of external events (rendering cohesive our moment-to-moment experience), and evokes past perceptions analogous and/or relevant to the present. Irreducible from the measure of our indeterminacy, memory provides alternatives for every situation and thus mediates our choice of action. Indeed, "by allowing us to grasp in a single intuition [perception] multiple moments of

duration, Memory frees us from the movement and the flow of things, that is to say, from the rhythm of necessity.”^{xviii}

...for though the function of [living bodies] is to receive stimulations in order to elaborate them into unforeseen reactions, still the choice of the reaction cannot be the work of chance. This choice is likely to be inspired by past experience, and the reaction does not take place without an appeal to the memories which analogous situations may have left behind them.^{xix}

Perception, then, is interdependent not only with the motor capacities of the body, but with memory and affection. If any aspect of this perceptual system were to shift, I would perceive myself and the world according to this shift; that is, according to a new ‘system of images.’

“HERE IS A SYSTEM OF IMAGES WHICH I TERM MY PERCEPTION OF THE UNIVERSE, AND WHICH MAY BE ENTIRELY ALTERED BY A VERY SLIGHT CHANGE IN A CERTAIN PRIVILEGED IMAGE - MY BODY. THIS IMAGE OCCUPIES THE CENTRE; BY IT ALL OTHERS ARE CONDITIONED; AT EACH OF ITS MOVEMENTS EVERYTHING CHANGES, AS THOUGH BY A TURN OF A KALEIDOSCOPE.”^{xx}

The biological composition of my body—its ‘needs and functions,’ its physical and psychological condition and design—mediates (filters, enframes) the world of ‘images’ and thereby determines *how* (and thus *what*) I perceive. I cannot, in other words, perceive beyond the limits of my body-as-frame.

The limit or frame of this body is constituted by its nervous elements, which “symbolize the indetermination of the will”—my freedom to make spontaneous decisions about how to act upon the world of ‘images;’ likewise, it is “on their soundness this indetermination depends.”^{xxi} Damage to any of these elements (to part of the brain, spinal cord, receptors, nerves etc.) would restrict my range of possible (virtual) action and, thus, my range and depth of perception (as its richness and complexity corresponds directly with my indeterminacy—with the ‘space’ between input and output). Perception is therefore “diminished together with the functioning of the nervous elements because some part of the external object then becomes unable to appeal to activity.”^{xxii}

If, however, the ‘system of images’ I call *my body* were to *shift* in some way—if my nervous elements continued to function (if ‘improperly’) but were *altered*, transformed, somehow disrupted; or if one aspect of the system were shut down, thereby affecting the system as a whole, then I would, presumably, *relate to*—i.e., *enframe*, i.e., *perceive*—the world of ‘images’ according to this shift, to this new ‘system of images.’ For example:

When I incorporate the ‘image’ I call a tab of LSD into my body –

I place the object under my tongue; absorbed by my sublingual capillaries, the LSD molecules ('images') enter my bloodstream and permeate, intermix with, the 'image' I call *my body*; the intermingling of my body with LSD not only alters my brain chemistry (its neurotransmission), but also the way my retinas process information and conduct information to my brain. More specifically, LSD, because of its structural similarity to serotonin, activates my serotonin receptors and thereby increases serotonin transmission within my nervous system. The subsequent flood of serotonin—a neurotransmitter that modulates appetite, sleep, muscle control, mood, and perception—consequently affects the way I feel, think, and perceive.

With regard to perception, elevated levels of serotonin can result in both 'sensory amplification' and synesthesia—hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling at 'high volume,' together with 'cross-talk' between otherwise separate areas of the brain (enabling the subject to 'taste color' or 'hear smell,' etc.). These shifts in perception, together with shifts in mood and thought processing (and likewise in my interests, attention, motivations, desires, etc.) constitute an alternative 'frame of mind' and, hence, an alternative relationship within and between the system of 'images' I call *my body* and the system of 'images' I call *the world*.

Mediated by LSD, I therefore perceive the world in a new way—my body-as-frame—the way it selects, filters, processes information—has transformed or expanded, allowing me 'access' to more or different aspects of the universal flux of 'images' (that is to say, more or different aspects of the object(s) in my vicinity

interest me, ‘appeal to my activity,’ transmit movement). Thus, contrary to popular misconception, LSD does not cause ‘hallucinations’—I am not seeing things that aren’t really there; rather, it allows me to see what is *already there*, but in a different way.

When I immerse myself within the system of ‘images’ I call the wilderness –

I leave behind my ‘everyday life’—my habits and routines, my distractions and preoccupations; I enter into an unfamiliar space (a space I call ‘spectacular,’ ‘beautiful’ etc.—a space already imbued with history, expectations, fantasy); this environment *interests* me in a way that is different from my ‘normal’ environment—it draws my attention—I have different types of choices to make—it demands new kinds and modes of activity, interaction, focus, thought. With this in mind, I navigate the terrain—I expend energy; I walk and climb and crouch and balance; I make my way through thunderstorms and desert heat and thin air; I ascend slippery ice-capped slopes; I confront and avoid wild animals; I see and smell and listen to and touch new things; vistas and fragrant winds and forest fires and star-filled skies.

As I mediate this wilderness environment, I am, in turn, mediated by it: the sights I see inspire feelings of awe, humility, ecstasy, appreciation, terror—they calm, disorient, unsettle, delight me; that is to say, that the object of my perception (the external subset of ‘images’ I call *the wilderness*) mediates and thereby alters the system of ‘images’ I call *my body*, e.g., my brain chemistry

and, hence, the way I receive and process sensory information. It is then from this alternative ‘perspective’—incited by the scene itself—that I select, filter, enframe my surroundings; my range and mode of attention shifts, I am receptive to different kinds of information—I become more aware of certain stimuli and less aware of others; and this, consequently, shifts the way I think, feel, and act (and vice versa).

In addition to how the wilderness affects me as an ‘image’ *external* to me—as the content of my perception—I am also affected by the necessary movement and interaction it demands: in response to my physical exertion, my body releases chemicals such as endorphins (an endogenous opioid), phenethylamine (an endogenous stimulant) and anandamide (an endogenous cannabinoid), which together decrease my pain perception (allowing me to do more, go farther), heighten my mental excitation, attention, and focus, and increase my energy and feelings of pleasure, euphoria, and satisfaction. When in fear—when navigating a dangerous cliff-side or coming face to face with a predator—adrenaline surges through my system, increasing my athletic performance, my emotional reactivity, my alertness, while at the same time constricting my peripheral hearing and vision. The effects of my physical activity together with the scene itself thus result in a shift in the system of ‘images’ I call *my body* and, therefore, how my body *enframes* and process the flow of ‘images’ that surround me (the same ‘images’ that have inspired this shift).

When I float inside the ‘image’ I call an isolation tank –

Suspended within the sound-proof, light-proof pod, there is nothing to sense but the absence of stimulation itself—near-silence, total darkness, weightlessness. This dramatic reduction of external stimuli—an ‘image’ I call *nothing*—diminishes the amount of movement (stimulation) that gets transmitted to the body (in the form of sensory impulses). My body, in other words, enframes (senses) less information because less information is made available to it. This depletion—the deprivation of external stimuli—consequently affects (disrupts) my nervous elements and, hence, how my body enframes (or, rather, how it *doesn’t*). Indeed, with only very minimal information to process, the visual system essentially shuts down, and this, in turn, prompts the brain (by *disinhibiting* other mechanisms) to produce its own stimulation, its own ‘visions,’ within. ‘Seeing nothing’ (when there is ‘nothing’ to see) thus results in a perceptual inversion; having temporarily lost my ability to perceive the external world, my brain turns back on itself and creates its own visual content. These internally-generated ‘visions’ are not ‘images’ in the external world that I perceive (enframe); rather, they are *effects* of my perceiving ‘nothing’—movements that result from the inhibition of the selective process of perception. What I perceive is therefore not the same as what I enframe (sense); I enframe ‘nothing,’ while I perceive endogenous ‘visions’ in response to this nothing. Mediated by the absence of stimuli, a feedback loop is thus initiated between *how* and *what* I perceive; as I perceive the *nothing*, the *nothingness* alters how I perceive. Without anything to sense with my sensory organs, my perception turns inward—I ‘see’ differently, insofar as I ‘see’ without vision, with the ‘mind’s eye.’

To alter the body itself—not just in terms of its position and movement within its environment (as when I turn my head this way or that), but in its very *constitution* (as an assemblage of interdependent ‘images’)—is not only to alter how I perceive, but also how I process, experience, and act in relation to my perception (which in turn mediates my selection of ‘images’). Indeed, a shift in the ‘image’ I call *my body* is nothing other than a shift in the relationship within and between my body and its surroundings: to change the body-as-frame is to change the way it mediates and *enframes* the universal flux; enabling me to perceive it (and myself) from an ‘alternative perspective,’ *as though by a turn of a kaleidoscope*.

AND IF ANY OF THESE
PERCEPTUAL ALTERATIONS
(SHIFTS IN MY SENSES AND
SENSE-RATIOS) - WERE
DRASTIC ENOUGH, I WOULD
NOT ONLY PERCEIVE
DIFFERENTLY, BUT ALSO
EXPERIENCE, I.E., BE AWARE OF
AND RECOGNIZE THIS
DIFFERENCE AS SUCH. I
WOULD, IN OTHER WORDS,
EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE
ITSELF - THE DIFFERENCE AS
AN 'ALTERED STATE' - A STATE
THAT IS AN IMAGE.

Psychologist Charles Tart, who popularized the term in the 1960s, defines an 'altered state' as a:

mental state, induced by various physiological, psychological, or pharmacological maneuvers or agents, which can be recognized subjectively by the individual himself (or by any objective observer of the individual) as representing a sufficient deviation in subjective experience of psychological functioning from certain general norms for that individual during alert, waking consciousness.^{xxiii}

This 'deviation' is expressed and experienced in many different ways: noticeable shifts in perception; a greater preoccupation with internal sensations or mental processes; changes in the formal characteristics of thoughts; impaired 'reality testing;' a disturbed sense of time and space; changes in, or newfound, meaning and significance; a loss of control; feelings of self-dissolution, depersonalization, interconnectivity or oneness; a sense of the 'mystical' or 'ineffable,' etc.^{xxiv} Indeed, an 'altered state' (an alternative *mode of enframing*) does not imply any specific set of qualities or characteristics; rather, it refers only to a *relational difference*—a *variable* defined by its status as 'other,' i.e., as different from that subject's identification and experience of 'normalcy,' of givenness. As such, an 'altered state'—a state constituted by a reconfigured

‘system of images’—is *set apart* from and thereby distinguished (‘framed’) in relation to the ‘everyday’ (the subject’s ‘un-altered’ state of being and mind).

**AND IF AN ALTERED STATE IS
AN ALTERNATIVE MODE OF
ENFRAMING; AND AN
ALTERNATIVE MODE OF
ENFRAMING IS AKIN TO A SHIFT
IN THE BODY'S SENSES AND
SENSE-RATIOS, I.E., ITS
CONSTITUTIVE 'SYSTEM OF
IMAGES,' THEN ANYTHING
USED TO ELICIT SUCH A STATE
IS A KIND OF MEDIUM - A
PSYCHONAUTIC MEDIUM:**

The substances, objects, environments, etc. that mediate and thereby shift the body-as-frame, altering how and what the subject perceives (selects, filters, enframes):

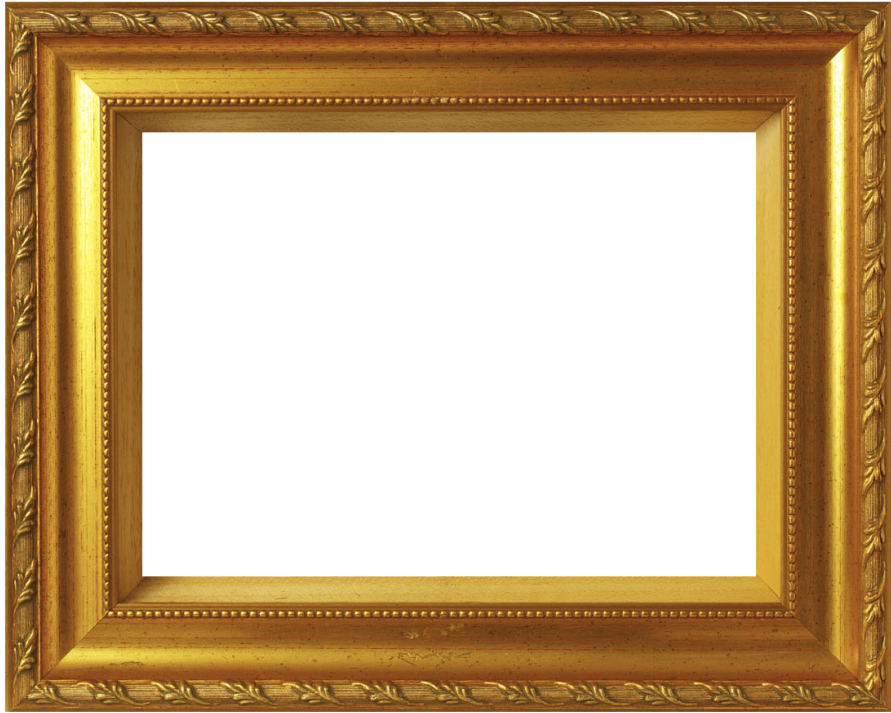
LSD-AS-MEDIUM
WILDERNESS-AS-MEDIUM
ISOLATION TANK-AS-MEDIUM
ANYTHING THAT FUNCTIONS AS A MEDIUM-AS-MEDIUM

A psychonautic medium alters the internal configuration of the body—the body as a ‘center of indetermination’ regulated by its ‘needs and functions.’ This shift in the body-as-frame consequently shifts the way in which it selects (enframes, mediates) ‘images,’ i.e., it alters the way the subject perceives. This alternative mode of perception (*enframing*) together with the objects perceived (*enframed*) constitutes the *psychonautic image*—an embodied experience of alterity—an experience distinguished (‘framed’) by a *relational difference*—an internally-generated deviation from ‘the norm’ (from ‘everyday’ perception) experienced and recognized *as such* (as a diversion from my ‘normal’ and ‘everyday’ mode and process of perception):

A SHIFT IN THE BODY-AS-FRAME = A SHIFT IN HOW THE BODY ENFRAMES = A SHIFT IN WHAT THE BODY ENFRAMES = A DIFFERENCE = AN AWARENESS OF THIS DIFFERENCE = AN IMAGE = AN IMAGE-AS-A WAY OF SEEING.

The ‘content’ or ‘message’ of any psychonautic medium is constituted by the real-time, experiential shift in consciousness and perception, and therefore includes both *the alternative mode of enframing* and *the objects enframed*.

Composed by *how* + *what* the subject perceives—by an alternative ‘system of images’—the psychonautic image *is the alternative mode of enframing itself*. As such, it is a *type*, a *mode* of experience – an event set “*off from the everyday experience with fine, prismatic edges*.”^{xxv}



Over The Next Five Years

I read, research, and write about LSD, the wilderness, and sensory deprivation: I attend conferences on psychedelic science; I visit the Float Zone; I visit a sweat lodge; I conduct interviews; I teach a class on ‘Psychonautic Media;’ I walk 1,000 miles on the Pacific Crest Trail; I pour over Timothy Leary and PCT and John Lilly archives; I teach my class again; I spend a month in the desert in New Mexico; I buy LSD; I produce and participate in seemingly relevant projects and shows.

Two years after turning in my prospectus and passing my qualifying exams, I decide that the word ‘psychonautic’ is all wrong; I re-imagine my project and try again: I read, research, and take more notes. A year after that, I decide that it’s not the word but the project itself that’s all wrong—that it’s nothing more than a language game, an house of cards. I try another approach: I read, research, and take more notes; I struggle to make an argument; I struggle to make a point; but nothing feels right—I have nothing to say. Another year after that and I still have no work to show for all the reading, researching, and note-taking I’ve done; I can’t remember how to write; I can’t remember how to think; I miss another deadline; I am put on ‘academic probation;’ I am lost, desperate, coming un-done; I suffer a nervous breakdown; in the midst of this nervous breakdown I receive a letter: “Congratulations, you have been accepted into the Whitney Museum’s Independent Study Program;” I wonder whether *‘returning to*

the studio' might save me from myself (?); I decide to 'take a break' from my dissertation and move to New York.

While in New York I try to give it a rest—I try to focus on other creative work: performance, sculpture, video—but I cannot stop thinking about my research; what isn't working; why it isn't working; what I can do to make it work. Everything I see, listen to, read, experience—it all leads back, one way or another, to LSD, to the wilderness, to 'nothing'—to the vast collections of wasted, incomplete, unexpressed ideas, and the confusion and doubt and anxiety that obscures them. And so I decide to take an inventory of sorts; I go through the hundreds of thousands of documents accumulated on my hard drives; I organize and sort and re-organize them; I print out the most compelling images, quotes, histories, definitions, notes, stories, photos, descriptions, diagrams, memories, transcriptions, artifacts, and fragments; I tape them to the walls of my studio; for the first time I am able to look at everything all at once—I am able to see the material in a way that makes sense, in a way that more accurately reflects my thinking about it—as an open-ended constellation—an interconnected, three-dimensional web; I see and understand my research from a new perspective—I see my work for what it is; indeed, I see the walls—the collections and associations, the genealogies and juxtapositions, life stories and lines of thought—as *my work* (or, at least, my medium).

What emerged from this moldering compost of objects were images: not just one image, but as many as there were impressions conceived by spectators.

—David Joselit^{xxvi}



PART TWO: THIS DISSERTATION

In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage.

—Deleuze & Guattari^{xxvii}

My original project—the one I initially imagined and proposed—failed. I was consumed by the topic, subsumed by the task to the point where no distinction remained between my life and my work. It's almost as if the idea itself—the concept of 'psychonautic media'—*became* a psychonautic medium; a 'wilderness' I got lost in; a 'drug' that I took. Was it me or my project that fell apart first?—impossible to know. Either way, I was left with an abundance of research material—a map of a transversive and sometimes frantic or scattered writing and thought process—the evidential ruins (an after-image) of *what had occurred*. The following case studies are my attempt to re-construct this process—to re-enact the various lines and modes of thought, insight, and inquiry that brought me to this point.



paint-by-numbers “famous painting” (*‘The Gleaners’* by Jean-François Millet, 1857),
painting by Katherine Bourbonais & Anastasia Hill, 2015.

With LSD, the wilderness, and ‘nothing’ as my primary points of departure, each case study is simultaneously an exploration of ‘the object’ within the context of ‘psychonautic media’—i.e., an exploration of the nature and specificity of the medium (viewed as a culturally constructed *thing*, an experience, a metaphor, a history of ideas, etc.) in terms of mediation, ‘altered states,’ and subjectivity—and an exploration, a recounting, of ‘thinking about the object’ *as such*. Each chapter thus constitutes a body of original research (‘about psychonautic media’), and an *embodiment* of both the research object (‘psychonautic media’) and the research process (‘thinking about psychonautic media’)—an unfolding of thoughts and events that mediated, and were in turn mediated by, the ‘psychonautic.’ At the same time, they are in themselves *aesthetic objects to experience*—self-contained ‘structures for seeing’ that invite the reader to *think with* and thereby enact the materials—to ‘take’ or ‘get lost’ in them:

My original thesis—the conceptualization of psychonautic media—therefore figures not as an overarching framework (something to ‘support’ and ‘prove’), but an *underlying* concept—a *catalyst*—a ‘medium’ that served to generate a body of research and thought that subsequently took on a life of its own (*an end which in fact was a means*). The project, then, does not theorize ‘psychonautic media’ from afar, but rather moves past the surface and engages with the concept directly—embodies it from the inside-out, *enacts* it in real-time through writing and imaging.

THIS DISSERTATION-AS-A-PSYCHONAUTIC MEDIUM

Following *Family Tree (a prehistory)*, which can be read as a back-story—a paratext—of sorts, each case study is constituted by a collection of interrelated fragments and vignettes—a series of discrete ‘modules’ that together unfold multi-layered trajectories, webs, and modes of thought. These ‘constellations,’ or *assemblages*, are composed of three primary components: 1. Personal history and autoethnographic vignettes; 2. Concepts and definitions derived from psychoanalytic and literary theory, aesthetics, and philosophy of mind; and 3. collections of visio-textual fragments gleaned from my various research endeavors.

I. THE PERSONAL

On the one hand, personal narrative functions as a formal device—a means to guide the reader through the materials and provide structural and conceptual coherence. At the same time, it functions as both (and is situated ambiguously between) a research *method* and a research *object*—a ‘text’ in itself.

Within the context of my original project, autoethnography (immersion, performance, writing) was an essential component of my methodology, which included a 1,000 mile hike up the Pacific Crest Trail, multiple visits to sensory deprivation tanks, as well as teaching and creating/performing various works related to the topic of ‘psychonautic media.’ These experiences not only provided me with crucial insight regarding the phenomenological dimension of

the various media, but, as part of the original project that fell apart, they subsequently became primary materials—texts in themselves—stories within an expanded diegesis and theoretical framework. The project in its current iteration incorporates these personal experiences (the plans, the obstacles, the failures, the insights, the other experiences they led to or inspired) in the form of narrative vignettes—as *stories about* the research process. As such, they continue to function as a research *method*, i.e., as a means to explore LSD, the wilderness, and sensory deprivation within the context of ‘psychonautic media’ (though not in the way originally intended or imagined); and are at the same time *part of* the research *object*—the object-as-the (psychonautic) experience of thinking, researching, and writing about LSD, the wilderness, and sensory deprivation.

In addition to this collection of stories (*about* the original research process, i.e., research conducted between 2011 - 2015), I also include stories about experiences, events, interactions (from childhood, from the recent past, etc.) that relate to the various media through poetic, aesthetic, or metaphoric association. For example, in *The Non-Ingestion of LSD*, I begin with my fear to take LSD (in the name of writing about it), and end with my father on the floor, high out of his mind. In between these moments I trace a personal history of illness (physical, psychological, simulated, and psychosomatic) through a series of short stories that in turn provide an unexpected view—a ‘negative image’—of the psychedelic experience.

Following *The Non-Ingestion*, “*1,000 Miles on the Pacific Crest Trail*” then focuses in on a more succinct timeframe and event; namely, my inability to write

about the wilderness after hiking 1,000 miles up the PCT. By re-counting my experiences surrounding this failure—the experience in particular of a so-called ‘nervous breakdown’—not only is a correlation drawn between the wilderness as an interior and exterior ‘space,’ but, through this, the unsayable—that which could not be put into words—is, in effect, *said*.

Lastly, in *Looking at Nothing*, I draw together a constellation of interrelated stories about desire, depression, deprivation, and suicide. Thus, unlike the proceeding chapters, my use of personal narrative in *Looking* operates along more figural, metaphoric, and associative lines, insofar as ‘desire,’ ‘depression,’ etc. relate to the medium of sensory deprivation (of ‘nothing’) in a less than literal fashion.

Although many of these anecdotes and stories are, in a certain respect, deeply personal (i.e., intimate, revealing), my aim is to present them as (pseudo)-objective documents—as records, snap-shots, ‘facts.’ The mode of expression is thus intentionally *impersonal*—descriptive yet removed, detailed yet detached. Informed by both Alain Robbe-Grillet’s ‘theory of pure surface’ and Bertolt Brecht’s ‘alienation effect,’ the characters, experiences, and events are not interpreted or explained, nor are they meant to inspire identification; rather, like ‘images,’ the reader is meant to *look at* them, to experience and make sense of them ‘from the outside.’

II. IN THEORY

Running parallel to the abovementioned narratives, each chapter is likewise structured by a series of theoretical vignettes—a collection of ‘definitions’ that, as the chapter unfolds, provide various conceptualizations of ‘the subject,’ of meaning and experience, and of ‘altered states’ and psychic breakdown. I draw in particular from the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva; Jean-François Lyotard’s aesthetic theory of the sublime; and, through Lyotard, Immanuel Kant’s philosophy of mind and Ludwig Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language.

Though my incorporation of, and approach to, these frameworks differs from chapter to chapter, throughout the project there is a sustained focus on the relationship between subjectivity, subjective experience, and language (in terms of both representation and mediation). In *The Non-Ingestion*, for example, I trace the production of ‘subjectivity’ through Lacan’s tripartite structure of the psyche via the Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic orders. This ‘subject’ comes into being and is constituted by a fundamental separation from ‘the object’—a distinction between self/other, me/not-me—a distinction that is itself grounded in and expressed by the acquisition of language (the ‘I’). As such, the *dissolution* of ‘the subject’ likewise implies a certain breakdown in difference and distinction, in language and meaning. Inspired by the aesthetics of the LSD experience—the melting and blurring of boundaries, the feeling of interconnectivity and oneness, de-personalization, dissolution, ‘ego-death’ (an experience often claimed to be *beyond* or *outside* of language)—the coherence of Lacan’s ‘subject’ is subsequently disrupted by various theorizations of *mimesis* (*de*-differentiation, *in*-

distinction) and by Kristeva's conceptualization of the *abject* (the transgression of boundaries and consequent breakdown in both meaning and selfhood).

Following a similar logic, *Looking* outlines the construction and collapse of 'the subject' through Lacan's articulation of *lack*. Grounded in a correlation between the phenomenology of sensory deprivation and depression (both 'altered states'), I trace the production of *lack*—a 'hole' constitutive, and situated at the very center, of subjectivity; a 'hole' that results from a necessary separation from the (m)other and from The Real (via the acquisition of language)—and the interrelationship between *lack*; *desire* (for what is *lacking*, i.e., unmediated existence, wholeness); *the gaze* (*desire* manifested in the scopic drive); and *depression* (the loss of *desire*, i.e., the *lack of lack*). I engage in particular with *the gaze* in terms of 'perspective' and subjectivity (and the loss of both), and with Kristeva's theorization of *depression* as a breakdown in language, and, hence, in selfhood and meaning (of the self, the world, the reason to live).

In distinction from *The Non-Ingestion* and *Looking*, in which the theoretical terms woven throughout relate to the topics of 'LSD' and 'nothing' conceptually and aesthetically, my use of theory and philosophy in *1,000 Miles* is premised on conceptual, aesthetic, and *historical* associations with the medium, i.e., the wilderness. Here the chapter begins with a series of definitions that together provide a basic outline of Kant's philosophy of perception, experience, thought (i.e., *intuition*, *understanding*, *judging*), and the correlation between thought, concepts, and language (words as representations of concepts). From this point I pivot to Wittgenstein's concept of 'language games,' and then to Lyotard's

adaptation of Wittgenstein in his theorization of *the differend*—a term he uses to describe “the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be”^{xxviii}—a state he associates with the Kantian notion of *the sublime*—an aesthetic category inspired by—and historically significant to—the wilderness.

It is important to note that, while these paradigms provide both structural integrity and conceptual depth, they do not function *as frameworks*, i.e., as structures or frames that are applied to material ‘from above’ as a means to analyze, explain, reveal, situate, position, contextualize, decipher, argue, theorize, synthesize, etc. (at least not in any authoritative or hierarchical sense). Rather, the theoretical and philosophical components of each chapter are, as the narrative vignettes, presented as a collection of ‘documents’ or ‘facts’—as informational displays—primary material, *content*—*not* methodology.

III. VISIO-TEXTUAL FRAGMENTS

Finally, situated within, across, and between the personal and theoretical, are visual and textual fragments and vignettes that include both ‘stand-alone’ works and ‘stand-ins’ for, and allusions to, broader histories and ideas. This varied collection of material ranges from quotes and definitions derived from primary research, poetry, literature, theory, philosophy, medical journals, news articles, and televised interviews; stills from archival footage, film, and home video; personal photos, postcards, drawings, screen-shots, and email

correspondence; maps and photos from archival research; advertisements and magazine clippings; original text-based and visual works of art; transcriptions and images of other works of art (paintings, photography, installation, video, performance); and topical vignettes about the history and pharmacology of LSD, synthetic diamonds, the Pacific Crest Trail; 'the wilderness,' 'nothing,' the origins of the literary sublime, the history of solitary confinement and 'white torture,' non-objective art and John Lilly's isolation tank, Ganzfeld fields, prisoner's cinema, an episode of 7th *Heaven*, and the myth of Oedipus.

This material provides context, illustrations, analogies, counterpoints, and interventions in relation to the other materials, and to the chapter (and project) as a whole. Thus, while personal narrative and theoretical trajectory provide a certain degree of structure and linearity, the visio-textual fragments woven throughout serve to refract, and thereby add texture and dimensionality to, these parallel 'lines of thought.' They therefore function simultaneously as a means to scatter, wander, splinter, turn; and as a means to synthesize—to draw together, *assemble*, and combine.

A HORIZONTAL METHODOLOGY

...relative, always connected, caught up in one another.^{xxix}

In each case study, all of the materials—all subject matter and forms of knowledge, all ‘objects’ and ‘frameworks’—are situated, side-by-side, on the same epistemological plane—a multi-layered plane that draws and crashes together seemingly disparate moments, materials, and discourse, and thereby offers alternative lines of sight, other *ways of seeing*. Like a collection of lenses or mobile in perpetual motion, every piece—every thought, image, concept, history etc.—‘pictures’ and is itself a part of the picture; *frames* and is likewise *framed by* the materials that surround, mediate, and illuminate it. The inclusion and organization of the various materials is such that every element—every module—connects in some way to every other, and to the chapter as a whole. The interlocking components that make up each *assemblage* therefore relate not vertically (hierarchically), but horizontally—*rhizomatically*. My incorporation of certain theoretical paradigms, for example, is not a means to decipher, explain, reduce, or analyze events, objects, experiences (from ‘above’); rather, they are *juxtaposed with*—placed beside—them (beside descriptions, histories, pharmacologies etc.) so that the reader may think them together, may consider: *what does their relationship—their correspondence—reveal? In what ways do they reciprocate?*

The *meaning* of the work is thus constructed by the reader—produced not through discursive exposition, but through correlation, association, *sympathy*, montage—indeed, *it is the process of thinking itself*—a transverse process of searching and drifting, of making connections, of gaining insight, of reflection, uncertainty, doubt. As such, this project is, to use Roland Barthes’ term, a *writerly* text—speculative and interactive, open and inferential; it is a project that, in its very composition, asks the reader: *what is research?* And, *where does the research occur?*

ART-AS-RESEARCH RESEARCH-AS-ART

My methodology, i.e., mode of thinking and doing, is fundamentally grounded in the belief that new meaning and forms of knowledge can emerge through conceptual, aesthetic, and historic proximity, association, and juxtaposition. In this sense, my work is informed by both Roger Caillois’ ‘diagonal science’ and Deleuze & Guattari’s conception of the *rhizome*.

In a 1970 article, “A New Plea for a Diagonal Science,” Caillois begins with a critique of the ‘specialization’ of knowledge and increasingly arbitrary hermeticism of disciplinary fields, which, he argues, blinds researchers to the wealth of ideas and discoveries that surround them:

...research itself suffers when each scientist, burrowing
away in his own special tunnel as if he were some efficient
and myopic mole, operates like a complete maverick, like a

miner who is digging ever deeper, almost utterly unaware of the discoveries made by fellow workers in neighboring galleries, and even more so of the results in distance quarries.^{xxx}

To “bridge the older disciplines and force them to engage in dialogue,” Caillois proposes what he calls a ‘diagonal science.’ By locating overlooked points of similarity and interconnection, this interdisciplinary method draws together diverse frameworks and subject matter (e.g., myth, psychoanalysis, biology, anthropology), which, when viewed in association, shed new light on one another:

These [diagonal] sciences...seek to make out the single legislation uniting scattered and seemingly unrelated phenomena. Slicing obliquely through our common world, they decipher latent complicities and reveal neglected correlations.^{xxxi}

In a somewhat similar spirit, Deleuze & Guattari offer the figure of the *rhizome*—a mode of knowledge based on the botanical rhizome: *a continuously growing horizontal underground stem that puts out lateral shoots and adventitious roots at intervals*. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze & Guattari oppose the *rhizomorphous* to *arboreal* (tree-like) forms of knowledge-production,

i.e., structures of knowledge with a determined origin (the roots), telos (the trunk), and conclusion (the branches):

Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions, the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. These lines, or lineaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions.^{xxxii}

In distinction from trees or their roots, the rhizome—which they likewise compare to a map (as opposed to a tracing), insofar as it can be entered at any point and moved through or expanded in any direction—“connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature.”^{xxxiii} The rhizome therefore “avoids an orientation towards a culmination point or external end.”^{xxxiv} Thus, while “the tree imposes the verb ‘to be,’” the rhizome, as an “image of thought”—a *process* of linking and splitting and forming breaking—“is the conjunction, ‘and...and...and...’”^{xxxv}



The Long Game, installation by Anastasia Hill, 2015.

Situated at the intersection of theory and practice—somewhere between academic scholarship and art (which is not to say that the two are mutually exclusive)—my work is likewise informed, conceptually and formally, not only by discourse, but by literature, film, performance, and visual art. The format of this project has been inspired in particular by literary work that combines theory and philosophy with narrative and poetics, and by artists and works that embody a *diagonal* or hypertextual aesthetic (montage, assemblage, *bricolage*); that mix media and utilize fragments and found objects/materials; and those that blend narrative and/or the personal with theory and critique.

In addition to Deleuze & Guattari's rhizomatic theory-poems found in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and Caillois' 'diagonal science' exemplified in works such as "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," possible points of reference include: the surrealist anthropology of Michael Taussig (e.g., *The Nervous System*, which in turn, draws from Walter Benjamin's notion of 'profane illumination'); the tapestries of literary and autobiographical fragments in Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*; the blending and blurring of personal narrative with cultural studies, reality with fiction, in Chris Krauss' experimental novel, *I Love Dick* (sorry, Dick); the production, format, and use of materials in Paul Chan's 'expanded books' (e.g., *Wht is?*, a series of hand-made, mixed-media zines; or, *Mans in the Mirror*, a "3D e-book" written by the members of Badlands Unlimited in one day while on mescaline); and, finally, Marshal McLuhan's use of self-referential images and graphic text in his *The Medium is the Massage*.

Beyond these and other text-based authors and works, this project is inspired as well by: the use of narrative and found material in the sound and performance art of Laurie Anderson, David Antin, and Frank Zappa; the fusion of autobiography and narrative, philosophy and theory, archival footage, blurred diegesis and formal experimentation in films such as Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx*, and Jean Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema*, *Confessions*, and *Goodbye to Language*; not to mention mixed media and installation work in general.



The purpose of this project is twofold: on the one hand I invent, enact, and thereby conceptualize the notion of ‘psychonautic media’—another way to think about mediation, mediated experience, and the question of *what is media?* On the other hand, I offer an alternative model for thinking about and doing research—a model that embraces multiplicity, ambiguity, transversality, slips and falls; a model that, by its very nature, challenges and critiques (if implicitly) conventional methods and forms of knowledge-production—that veers sideways and spins off course, that crashes, willingly and freely, into trees...

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- ⁱ Franz Kamin, *Ann Margret Loves You & other psychotopological diversions* (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1980), 54.
- ⁱⁱ Marshal McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*, (Corte Madera: Gingko Press Inc., 2005), 26.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Marshal McLuhan, *Essential McLuhan*, ed., Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 152.
- ^{iv} McLuhan, *Massage*, 48.
- ^v Lev Manovich, "Postmedia Aesthetics," in *Transmedia Frictions: The Digital, the Arts, and the Humanities*, ed., Marsha Kinder and Tara McPherson (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 34.
- ^{vi} Caroline A. Jones, "The Mediated Sensorium," in *Sensorium: embodied experience, technology, and contemporary art*, ed., Jones (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006), 18.
- ^{vii} Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2005), 2.
- ^{viii} Nancy, *Image*, 9.
- ^{ix} *Ibid.*, 4.
- ^x Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception & Heaven and Hell* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 23.
- ^{xi} Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans., Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 9.
- ^{xii} Mark B. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 4.
- ^{xiii} Bergson, *Matter*, 42.
- ^{xiv} *Ibid.*, 38.
- ^{xv} *Ibid.*, 44-45.
- ^{xvi} *Ibid.*, 36.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid.*, 58.
- ^{xviii} *Ibid.*, 228.
- ^{xix} *Ibid.*, 65.
- ^{xx} *Ibid.*, 25.
- ^{xxi} *Ibid.*, 42.
- ^{xxii} *Ibid.*, 45.
- ^{xxiii} Charles Tart, *Altered States of Consciousness*, 3rd edition (New York: Harper, 1990), 18.
- ^{xxiv} Tart, *Altered States*, 22.
- ^{xxv} Walter Benjamin, *On Hashish*, ed., Howard Eiland, trans. Eiland and Others (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 53.
- ^{xxvi} David Joselit, "Against Representation," *Texte zur Kunst* 95 (September 2014): 97.
- ^{xxvii} Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia*, trans., Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3-4.
- ^{xxviii} Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans., Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 13.
- ^{xxix} Deleuze & Guattari, *Plateaus*, 10.
- ^{xxx} Roger Caillois, *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*, ed., Claudine Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 344.
- ^{xxxi} Caillois, *Surrealism*, 347.
- ^{xxxi} Deleuze & Guattari, *Plateaus*, 21.
- ^{xxxi} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxxi} *Ibid.*, 22.
- ^{xxxi} *Ibid.*, 25.



FAMILY TREE (A PREHISTORY)

April 4, 1951

Gary Richard Hill is born. He is the second son of Terry and Joe. His brother, Greg, is three years older. The family lives in a small apartment a few blocks from the beach in Santa Monica, CA. Joe is an ex-army man: he used to teach soldiers in the air force how to fly B-52's, but now works a desk job at Douglas Aircraft (*by this point he has given up his dream of playing professional golf*). He listens to and sings like Sinatra and always drinks too much at parties. Every night he and Terry share a martini and a cigarette together on the porch.

Terry is young and beautiful and sometimes wicked. She works as a secretary but is an artist at heart (she paints—mostly semi-abstract still lifes and portraits inspired by Picasso and Matisse). She regularly reads novels and pop culture magazines and the work of Carl Jung. She suffers from extreme bouts of depression that worsen after Gary is born. When he is two months old she is admitted to the local mental hospital where she receives electric shock therapy and falls in love with her psychiatrist (with whom she has a decade-long affair until the combination of his marriage and alcoholism become too much to endure).

When Terry is in the hospital, her mother Hattie moves in to help take care of the boys. Hattie has been excommunicated from the Mormon church in Salt Lake City after having relations with a young Australian ex-convict (*Terry's biological father, whom, years later, would be arrested and imprisoned in California on charges of rape*). Hattie is now a devout Christian Scientist with diabetes and an amputated leg (lost to untreated gangrene). She reads the bible nearly all day everyday but still maintains a sense of humor.



Gary in his studio, photo by Bill Colvin, c. 1967.

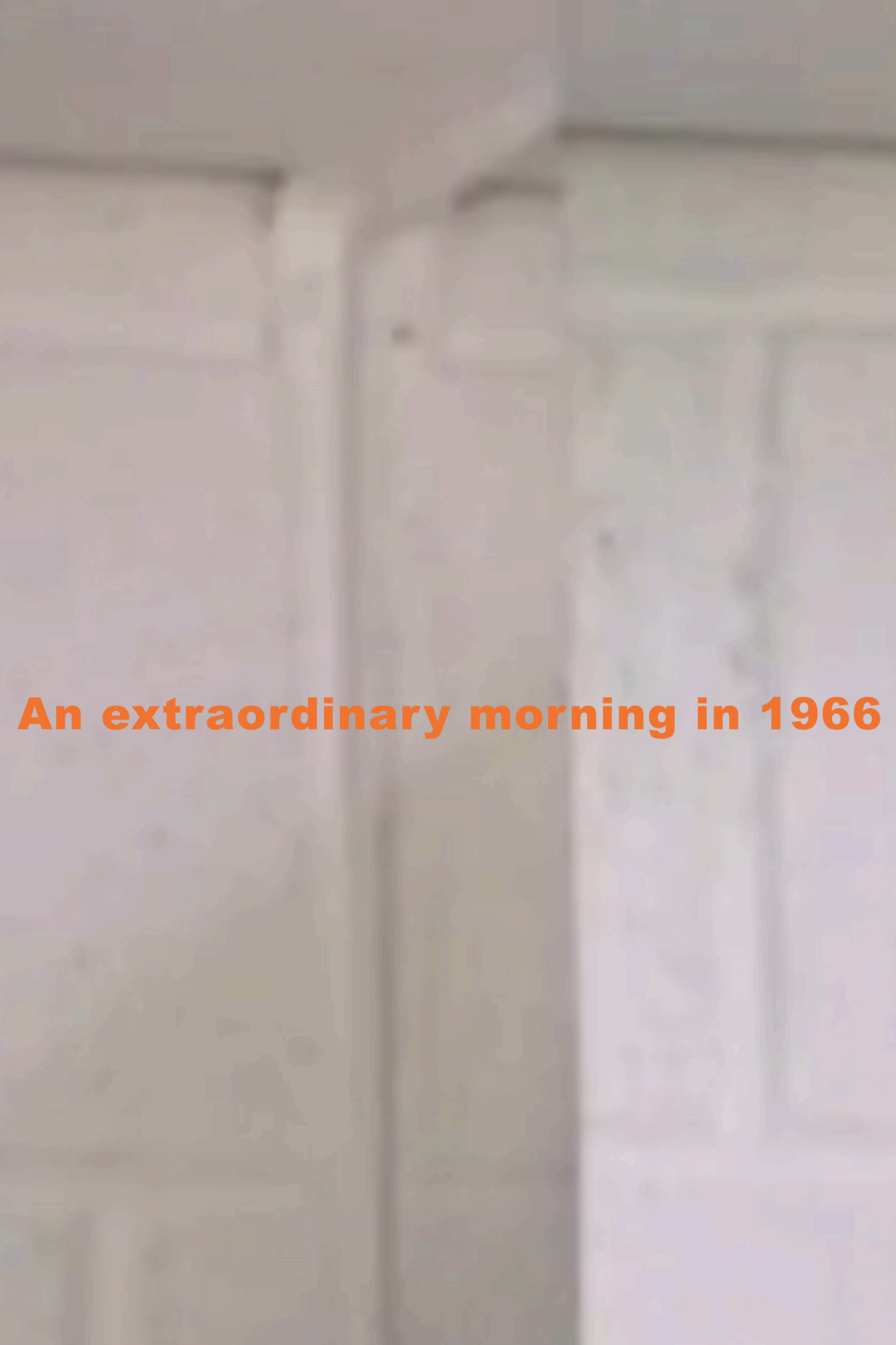


1951 - 1965

Gary is charismatic and athletic and good at drawing. He enjoys pulling pranks and making trouble. He has an enlarged heart (a genetic defect) and will later develop a murmur and high blood pressure. He is wound up easily and is always too hot, even in the winter. He is impatient and sometimes aggressive, but also generous and highly empathic; attracting outcasts, rebels, and lost souls. When he is eight he voluntarily attends weekly Catechism in a trailer near his elementary school—in part to get out of class for an hour and share some juice and cookies with friends, but also because he is enamored by the biblical metaphors and drama. By age ten he spends the majority of his time surfing and skateboarding. In 1964 he wins the National Skateboard championship and soon after performs in the cult classic *Skaterdater*, where he can be seen riding his skateboard on his head downhill with his tongue out and his eyes crossed. He cuts class more and more and grows increasingly wary of authority and the so-called 'status quo.'



Gary in *Skaterdater*, dir. Noel Black, 1965.



An extraordinary morning in 1966

6:30 AM. Gary is in the backseat of his friend Fred's mother's car. She is driving them to the beach on her way to work. Fred leans back from the passenger seat and whispers to Gary, "okay, now." Gary takes from his pocket and swallows a small purple capsule of LSD. An hour later he is sitting with Fred in the sand, still waiting for the acid to take effect. Nothing is happening. A bunch of hype, just as he suspected. But then he glances down at his embroidered bellbottom pants. *Are the colors moving?* He watches in awe as the individual strands of fabric and string begin to melt and slide around. The colors curl around and slither up and through his legs. He looks up into the sky. A flock of birds fly by and leave a trail of hundreds of thousands of after-images. Every sound he hears is repeated and echoed in a similar fashion—in fact, *every* sensation is exponentially multiplied to what seems like infinity. The broken black asphalt at a nearby construction site becomes fluid and moves like lava. The ocean is an infinite pool of iridescent jewels that fracture light like a prism with each crashing wave. In the distance a friend is running towards them on the beach. Gary watches his limbs break apart from his body and move separately until, like liquid magnet or mercury, his form reconstitutes itself again. He tries to speak but the words jumble together with other sounds and images and smells. He can't tell where he ends and the world begins. He realizes he is but a tiny shift or interval or speck in the grand scheme of things. His smile turns into laughter (*nothing would ever be the same*).



Gary welding, photo by Bill Colvin, c. 1967.



Gary visits the psychologist at school on a regular basis in order to build a history of mental illness in case he is drafted. He displays erratic behavior and irreverence. He over-exaggerates and fabricates behaviors and events. He complains of social anxiety and suicidal depression. He draws pictures of psychedelic crucifixions. He refuses to cut his hair. When he's commissioned to make a banner for the annual donkey basketball game he writes in partially obscured, swirled letters "fuck Mr. Benson" (the principle) and is suspended. He hitchhikes to Isla Vista to live with Greg who is studying philosophy at the University of California in Santa Barbara. They share a one-bedroom apartment with three others. There are surfboards against the walls, dirty molding dishes filling the sink, and records without their sleeves scattered on the floor and covered with sand (Sgt. Pepper's, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Hendrix).



Terry convinces Gary to return to Santa Monica and finish high school (*she has gone to the administration with magazine clippings of respectable boys with long hair and after much pleading got his suspension lifted for senior year*). Gary returns but arranges an independent study with his art professor instead of attending normal classes. He meets and becomes friends with Fred's older brother, Tony. Tony almost never speaks and spends most of his days working in his garage/studio either on his chopper or welding sculptures while listening to his favorite track(s) on repeat (his all-time favorite—Donavon's "Season of the Witch"). One day without a word he sits Gary down with some metal wire and his oxy-acetylene rod and puts headphones over his ears and plays Blue Cheer's *Outsideinside* over and over while Gary teaches himself how to weld. He is instantly taken by the process and material. A few months later his stepdad, Bill, builds him a small studio in the backyard and he saves up the money he makes and steals from the burger stand on the beach to buy his own welding kit. He mimics Tony's work for the most part: distorted figures and objects and scenes trapped in various cagings and encasings (somewhat similar in feel to the line drawings of de Kooning but also to the twanging and lingering electric sounds of Cream, the Grateful Dead and Terry Riley).

After graduating high school Gary sees a pamphlet for summer sessions at the Art Student's League in Woodstock, NY. It looks and sounds perfect—like an idyllic artist colony. He applies and is accepted to do a month-long residency. Just before he leaves he finds out his girlfriend Karen is pregnant (she is 15). Her father takes her to Mexico for an abortion and forbids her from seeing or

speaking to Gary ever again (she obeys, and his heart breaks for the first time). In Woodstock he meets and studies with Bruce Dorfman who makes abstract paintings and collage. Gary spends most of his time drawing nudes, thousands of them.

When he returns to Santa Monica he enrolls in community college (again, as a draft-dodging tactic). He drops out after only a few weeks and drives back to NY with a man named Alan (a heroin addict trying to get clean) and a sack of 300 empty LSD capsules that they eat by the handful for the psychedelic residue left inside. (*A few months later Alan would return to his apartment in LA and hang himself*).



Gary in Barrytown, photo by unknown, 1978.

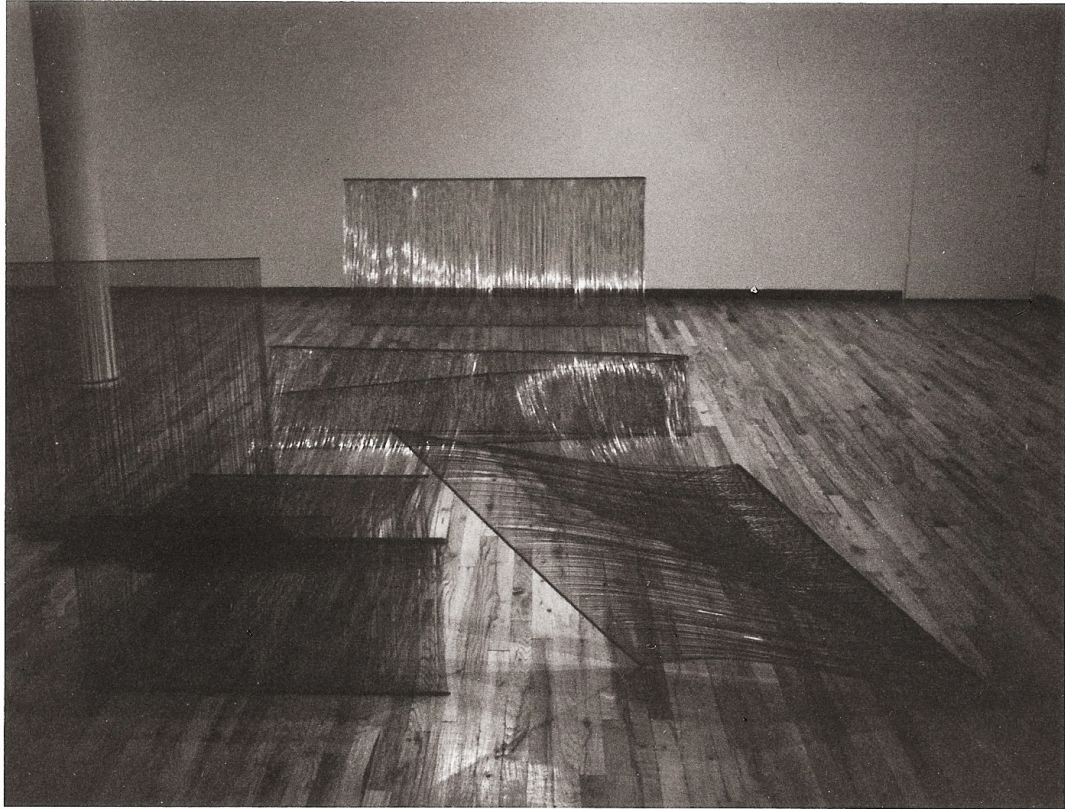
1970 - 1972



Gary works for Bruce Dorfman in Woodstock. He also makes and sells wire jewelry on the street, sells tickets at the local ice rink, washes dishes, and mows Bob Dylan's lawn. He sews extra pockets in his jacket to steal food when he runs out of money. He moves around and falls in love often.

In the summer of 1970 he meets a woman named Carol who lives in a school bus and is in an open marriage with a Syrian musician named Chris. They hitchhike to California together. Gary brings his welding torches and makes work along the way (*41 years later a paternity test would reveal that he fathered a child during this trip—most likely while visiting the Grand Canyon*).

Back in NY Gary sees the exhibition "New York Painting and Sculpture 1940-1970" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and never makes or draws figures again. He turns his attention back to sculpture and makes biomorphic and increasingly geometric shapes with wire mesh and spray paint and welding armatures. He cycles through every color—all the colors of the rainbow and then fluorescents, metallics, and finally back down to the natural color of his primary material: copper-coated steel rods. He produces obsessively. Wherever he lives becomes a factory—works piled into corners and stacked up to the ceiling.



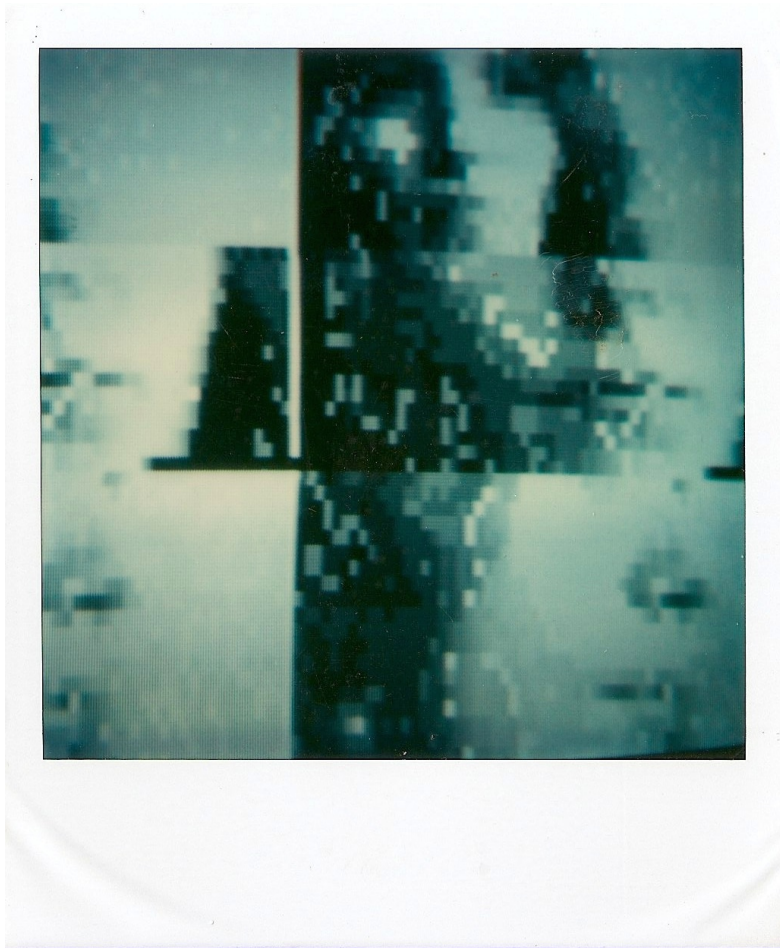
Untitled, sculptures and photo by Gary Hill (South Houston Gallery, New York), 1974.

1973



Gary falls for and moves in with a woman named Debbie Malkis. They fly to LA together where they meet up with Debbie's best friend, Noel Sturgeon (daughter of science fiction writer Theodor Sturgeon). They travel together to Theodor Sturgeon's house in the Hollywood Hills where a small community of people live in the nude (even while they slaughter rabbits for dinner). Theodor Sturgeon remains locked in his room (writer's block) and emerges only to refill his giant mug with coffee (*an image that will haunt Gary for the rest of his life*).

Shortly after returning to Woodstock Debbie is kidnapped and, while blindfolded, taken to a remote location (a cabin in the woods, she thinks) where she is raped repeatedly. Though she survives the attack, her relationship with Gary deteriorates and the two eventually part ways (another heartbreak).



Production image for *Mesh*, Gary Hill, 1978.



Bored with physical form, Gary becomes increasingly interested in the sounds generated by his sculptures; how the unique qualities, timbres, and aural textures of the metal rods seemed to mirror their visual structure and pattern. His subsequent experiments with mixed-media installation and electronic sound (loops, feedback, multi-track tapes) eventually lead him to video. He borrows a Sony Portapack camera from Woodstock Community Video and for five consecutive nights he and his friend Jim Collins paint different colored rectangles all over town. They try to cover as much as they can: stores, private property, public property. The Mondrian-esque 'graffiti' slowly appears everywhere until they get caught by local police, at which point they go around talking to people about it on camera. Gary is enthralled by the experience—not so much the vandalism, but the recording; the feeling of having the camera right up against his eye—the way it simultaneously connects and disconnects him from the world. In exchange for his assistance running their local cable TV programming, the WCV continues to loan Gary equipment until he earns enough money to buy his own.

LF: Was Mesh your first video installation?

GH: *Actually, the first was Hole in the Wall, done in 1974 at the Woodstock Art Association...You have to see it in light of the political-social context of the Woodstock Art Association, where there's an old guard, and there are always new people around who want to get in. When I was involved with it, it was always a hotbed of controversy.*

I set up a camera and zoomed in on a wall, framing an area approximately actual size when displayed on a 23-in. monitor. On the video screen, you saw a hand with a ruler drawing a frame on the edge of the screen. A matte knife entered the frame, cut the muslin surface on the wall, and then various tools were used to cut through a number of layers—plaster-board, fiberglass, etc.—to the wall outside. At one point, we reached structural beams. The camera zoomed in and framed a smaller frame. Then that was cut through to the outside. At the opening, a monitor was fitted into the hole, and played back the tape performing the action. When the camera zoomed in, I took the big monitor out, put a smaller one in, and then at the end of the tape, when you see outdoors, I took the monitor away.

Besides fighting between the older, established artists and the younger ones trying to break into the scene, the Woodstock Art Association didn't consider video an art form. It wasn't until the mid-70s that they accepted photography! So the political implications are obvious, and formally the piece contained reverberations of drawing, painting, sculpture, video, and conceptual art. What made it even more interesting at the time was that an art critic, Irwin Touster, mentioned the piece in the local paper, The Woodstock Times, with a statement like "Hill's Hole is a monumental act of hostility in the guise of art." I sent a letter to the editor which simply read: "Re: Irwin Touster's review...a rebuttal," with a large photograph, taken in the gallery, of my ass sticking out through the hole.

So that was my first installation.ⁱ



Mesh, installation and photo by Gary Hill (Everson Museum, Syracuse, New York), 1978.



1975 - 1976

Gary is officially hired as the “Art Lab Coordinator” at WCV and moves with them to Rhinebeck where he lives in a giant house with Steven Colpan and Barbara Buckner. He experiments excessively with the materiality and specificity, density and malleability of electronic images and sound; he makes use of broken colorizers and mixers, recorders and sequencers, Serge audio modules and bit switches; he takes apart and rebuilds cameras and synthesizers, color-field generators, amplifiers, tape decks and analog-digital converters.

He meets and falls in love with a devout Christian poet named Marty, whom he records taking a bath in the Rhinebeck house for his video *Bathing* (*decades later Marty will inexplicably change her last name to ‘Hill’*). He also meets and becomes good friends with electronic engineer Dave Jones whom he works with to build various experimental video tools.

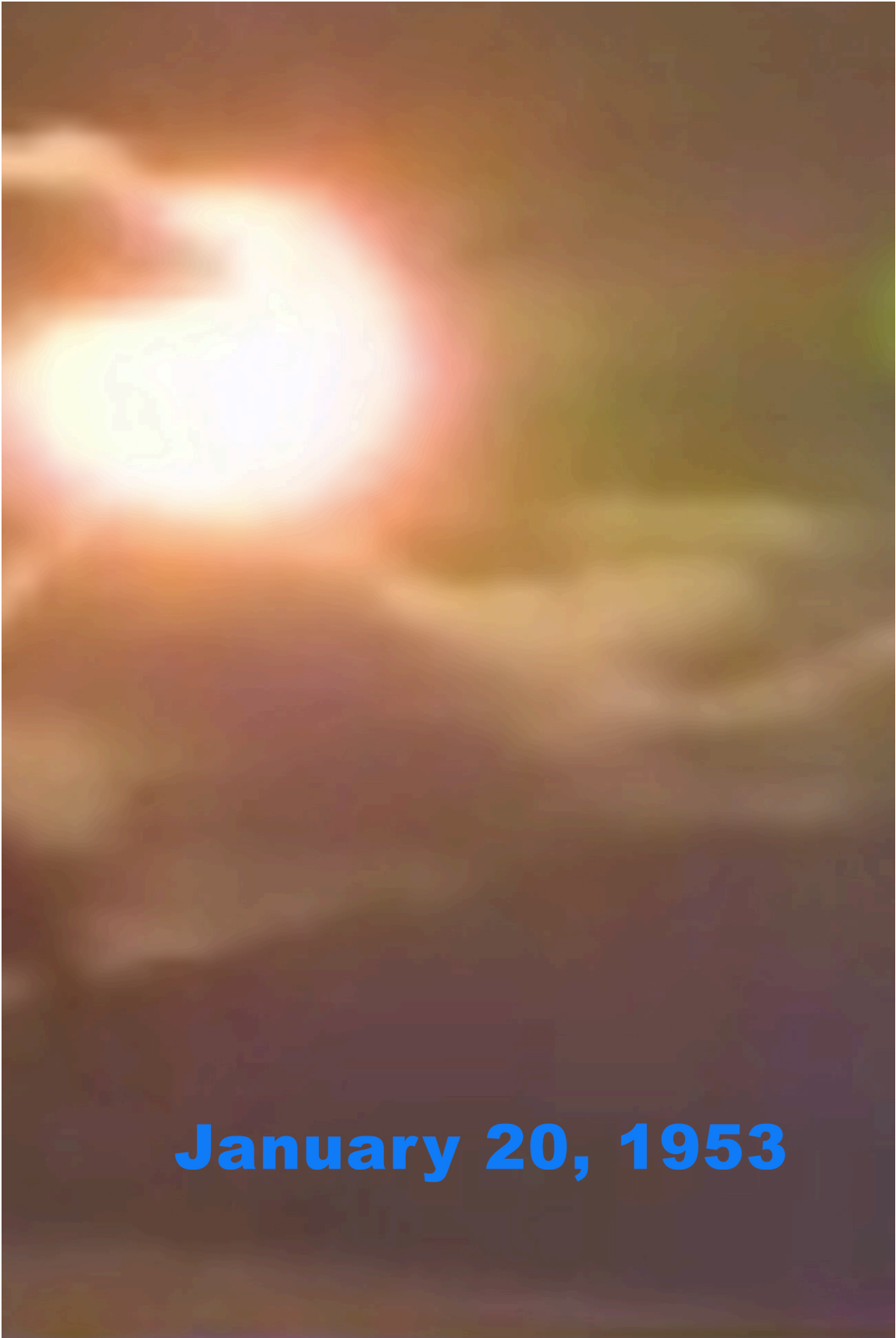


Gary working at the Sony Plant in Hon Atsugi, Japan, photo by unknown, 1985.



Gary's friend, Fred Lehrman, sells George and Susan Quasha two houses next door to each other in Barrytown, NY. Gary and Dave move to Barrytown and rent one of them together. Soon after, Gary, George, and Charles Stein, a poet who lives up the street, begin collaborating together (*a meeting of minds that would inspire Gary's life-long preoccupation with the relationship between language, image, and electronic phenomena*).

Marty leaves Gary shortly after the move. He meets another woman named Meredith—a cowgirl with long hair who rides horses and writes short stories—but the relationship doesn't last long (it ends the day Meredith, in the midst of an inexplicable rage, smashes every single dish in the house). It was around this time that Gary began to notice someone new in the neighborhood—'an angel' floating up and down his street...



Katherine Anne Cederle is born. She is the daughter of Edward and Ione and has an older brother named Dale. Soon she will also have a sister named Patricia ("Pattie") and another brother, Jeff (*all of Katherine's siblings will die young, tragically, and/or unexpectedly*). The family lives in a rural, undeveloped area of Wisconsin in a modest house built by Ed and their neighbor (their home address is simply: Route 1, Butler, WI). Behind the house is dense forest ('the woods') with ponds and more than one tree-house; across the street are acres and acres of farmland—corn, cows, tobacco.

Both Ed and Ione are first-generation Americans with big hearts and traditional family values. Ed sells industrial hardware for a living, but is not truly motivated by, or dedicated to, his work (a constant point of contention in the marriage); he does what needs to be done and indulges in the *good life* as much as he can, mostly in the form of (non-alcoholic) socializing with friends or hosting big outdoor BBQs.

Ione is famously kind and good and maternal. She suffers from terrible migraine headaches with aura but never complains. She works as a secretary and is an excellent typist—so good that before she was married she was offered a civilian job with the US military in Japan, but declined due to her engagement.

1953 - 1966



Katherine has big blue eyes with thick black lashes and hair that is almost white. Her heart beats at an unusually slow pace; her blood pressure and temperature are low and cool (she is often chilled, but never gets sick). She is best friends with the neighbor girl, Cookie, whose father is an abusive alcoholic (one night Katherine watches him line up the wedding china and shoot each dish to pieces with his rifle). Besides Cookie and a few close friends at school, Katherine mostly keeps to herself. She is contemplative and somewhat removed. She prefers observation and analysis over direct participation. She reads and explores and daydreams that she is an Egyptian princess or Japanese warrior. In school she is nick-named “stretch” for her height and lanky limbs. She is also known for her kindness, intelligence, and very thick glasses (by the time she is 8, she is legally blind in the center of her left eye). At home she has a growing collection of tiny bones and trinkets and fallen whiskers; by age 10 she knows the Latin name of every native plant and what it means to know the molecular composition of sand; she spends many nights awake and alone, hoping to catch a glimpse of a rumored solar storm or the Aurora Borealis.

When she is 13, her grandmother Alma moves in. Alma suffers from advanced dementia and more often than not believes she is a prisoner of war. The night before she passes away in her sleep, Katherine dreams that she comes to her as a ghost to tell her she is leaving (*she has believed in a spirit-world ever since*).



Katherine dancing in the living room, photo by lone Cederle, c. 1961.



1971

Katherine ("Kathy") graduates from high school valedictorian and moves to Madison to attend the University of Wisconsin, where she studies clinical and analytic biochemistry, natural disasters, and calculus. During her freshman year she meets and marries a mysterious and slightly older man named Gary Bourbonais who is studying photography at the local art school. She is barefoot at their wedding, which takes place in her parents' backyard.



MISS KATHY A. CEDERLE

Merit Scholarship

Miss Kathy A. Cederle, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward A. Cederle, W140 N6257 Lilly Rd., Menomonee Falls, was awarded the National Merit Scholarship. Miss Cederle attended Menomonee Falls East high school and is presently attending the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee having completed her high school program early.

Miss Cederle's Merit award is made possible by a grant to the Sears Roebuck foundation from

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Gary's alcoholism gets progressively worse. A familiar scene recurs: Kathy comes home to their sunny and quaint apartment to find him passed out in the middle of the day, drooling or snoring loudly with an empty bottle by his side. On the day that she finds him asleep in his own vomit she knows there is nothing left to restore the life she never quite had. She leaves him with no regrets. Shortly after their separation, she begins an affair with her Tai Chi teacher, Fred Lehrman. Fred is based in Manhattan but travels through the Midwest regularly to give talks and lead workshops. To those who know him best, it is uncertain whether he is a genius, a con man, or just before his time. He wanders and plays the cello and invests in gold and unlikely real estate; he doesn't believe in monogamy but in auras and multiplicities; he is open to fringe science and up to date on all the most convincing conspiracy theories. (*The first and only time I met Fred he ran out to his car and, from a large sac in his trunk, procured for me a special Japanese toothbrush with a plaque-vaporizing metal dot on the head*).



During one of his visits, Fred takes Kathy to a conference on Ethno-poetics where he introduces her to a NY poet named George Quasha (who soon marries Susan, but is allowed to sleep with other women—a permission he takes full advantage of). During the last evening of the conference, experimental composer Pauline Oliveros (known for her theory and practice of “transformative listening”) stages a ritualistic performance in the main auditorium. She calls upon two “random” members of the audience to participate: Kathy and George approach the stage. They are seated directly across from one another and told not to move or blink until the lights go down. The event lasts just under an hour and, as the story would later be told, their eyes stayed open the entire time.

The image is a dark, abstract composition. It features a series of horizontal, glowing light streaks or bands that appear to be moving or blurred, creating a sense of motion. The background is predominantly black, with the light streaks providing the main visual interest. The streaks vary in intensity and width, some appearing as sharp lines while others are more diffuse. The overall effect is reminiscent of a long-exposure photograph of light trails or a digital data visualization.

1975

Kathy graduates from college, packs up her things, and moves to New York City. She stays with Fred for a few months but wants to be independent and make it on her own. They part ways and, with no job and very little savings, she ends up at the YWCA's Home for Wayward Girls, where she lives off a credit card and smuggled food (*an experience that would produce a life-long fear of becoming a bag lady, resulting in extreme, yet often creative, frugality*).

Six months later Kathy gets a job as a lab technician in a medical research facility where she is mostly responsible for gathering and processing patient samples; swabbed from an eye-socket burned out by Drain-O, the infected tip of an amputated limb, a nostril clogged completely with a solid black substance. For a short while she also does live modeling at various department stores but finds it both brutal and boring.

Once she saves up enough money, she moves into her own 2nd floor studio apartment on the upper east side. Though the area is moderately safe during the day, she often returns home after dark; she fights off potential assailants on more than one occasion (one of whom whispers into her ear something about strangling her with her own hair [which is long and thick and down to her waist]).

The apartment is compact with a tiny kitchen, bathroom, and single room in which she builds a loft bed and installs her only furniture: a small desk and bookcase. The rest of the room is taken up by her recently purchased and most prized possession: an enormous Sohmer cabinet grand piano from the 1880s;

black with ornate carvings and ivory keys. She begins weekly lessons with Franz Kamin, a composer, teacher, and poet who is also friends with George.

On March 10th, Kathy receives a telegram in the mail (no telephone yet). Upon opening it she learns that her sister, Pattie, has died in a car accident when the car she was in crashed into a tree. It was a week before her 17th birthday. Kathy weeps quietly by herself. (*Pattie will later visit her in a dream to tell her she's okay*).



Kathy modeling for her portfolio, photo by unknown, 1975.

1976



Though still somewhat on the periphery, Kathy gets further enmeshed within the post-Fluxus avant-garde scene in NY through George, Fred, and Franz. She attends various concerts and performances at George and Susan's house in Barrytown and participates in some herself (*at one point she played with the notoriously nude and brilliant cellist, Charlotte Moorman*). She meets Jackson Mac Low and Carolee Schneeman and Dick Higgins and Allison Krauss and Chuck Stein and Robert Kelly.

At some point Fred introduces her to an older man named Manu Tupou—an aspiring actor who also happens to be the prince of Fiji. Manu studied at Oxford and has a beautiful English accent. He is tall and charming and chivalrous. After much courting, Kathy falls for him (his warmth is something new). A few months later, Manu asks her to move into and look after his apartment (he is away in Hollywood much of the time). Kathy agrees but insists on paying as much rent as she can (the apartment is located at 69th Street and Central Park West—a neighborhood she could never afford on her own). Each room is tastefully decorated with leather furniture, oriental rugs, carved wooden tables, and Japanese pottery. She sets up her piano in the parlor and continues to take lessons with Franz.

A few months later Kathy travels to LA to visit with Manu and discovers that he has become a devout scientologist. He proposes marriage. Kathy admits she's known for a while that he is not "the one" and they part ways. Upon her return to NY, she packs up her things and moves into a loft in Tribeca with a group of artists and musicians she barely knows.



Franz is a luminous figure: he is a madman, a genius, a slob. He is tall and heavy and often unshaven. He always wears the same leather-brimmed cap and is recognized from a great distance by his shuffling stride. He owns and has read thousands of books on music and topology and history and esoteric religions. He is obsessive and compassionate and loyal with an offbeat and dark (but not dry) sense of humor. He is unable to hold a steady job and often on the brink of homelessness due to the effects of severe manic-depression and transient alcoholism. He teaches piano enough to survive and moves between the couches and beds of friends and lovers and students.

In the spring and fall of every year Franz stages an elaborate performance—often requiring the participation of everyone he knows, including Kathy. She builds stages, sews puppets, writes recipes for and makes fake blood, searches for and buys hundreds of giggle sticks, crafts three-dimensional posters and programs, and plays semi-improvisational works he's composed just for her—all of which she enjoys immensely yet is at the same time haunted by the fact that she doesn't quite belong. This makes her love Franz even more (he is without the capacity to judge). They start to spend more time together outside of lessons and projects. "Let's go get lost" he'd say, and they'd drive around aimlessly for hours, sometimes days, talking and listening to music and snacking on peanut butter and pickle sandwiches.

Kathy also becomes friends with another student of his, Eve, a computer programmer and Tibetan Buddhist who lives just down the street in another loft on Franklin Ave. Franz and Eve have been lovers for years and soon enough,

Kathy joins their relationship. Eve is nicknamed “Egz” and Kathy is “Borgies” (after Swedenborgianism –Egz has a more ambiguous, phonetic origin...). In various configurations, the three spend days, nights, and holidays together for the next 6 years.

KW

THE SPECIFIC PROBLEM DEALT WITH IN THIS WORK IS THAT OF TEXTURE: THAT IS HOW MANY VOICES ARE OCCURING SIMULTANEOUSLY FOR WHAT LENGTHS OF TIME AND FROM WHAT DIRECTION THEY APPEAR TO BE COMING...THERE IS IN ADDITION A 'BEHAVIORAL DRIFT' OF THE SIX TEXTS (OF WHICH THIS IS ONE) IN ORDER TO CONTINUOUSLY RENEW THE 'PERSONALITY FRAMEWORK' OF THE SUBJECTS ENCOMPASSED: TO THIS SAME END THE TEXT ARE READ ALPHABETICALLY, PHONETICALLY, VERBIC AND PHRASEWISE...ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOR IS THE SUBDIVISION OF TIME WHICH MAKES USE OF A RITUAL DISTRIBUTION BASED ON GOLDEN SECTION AND THE NUMBER ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THREE...SUCH TEMPORAL SUBDIVISIONS, EVEN WHEN OCCURING ABSTRACTLY (THAT IS, WITHOUT CONTENT WILL CAUSE TO FORM CERTAIN MYSTIC ELATIONS AS BEFIT BEING 123

HS SW V

AUTOSKREELIK IS DEFINED AS WRITING WHAT YOU ARE WRITING ABOUT AS YOU ARE WRITING IT...CAN ALSO BE EXTENDED TO CREATING WHAT'S BEING CREATED AS PART OF ITS OWN CREATION...BECOMING WHAT IS AS A RESULT OF ITS OWN BECOMING AS IT SO BECOMES...THE PROCESS AND THE CONTENT LOSE DISPAIRITY, THE ONE GIVING RISE TO THE OTHER AS A PARADOXICAL BOOTSTRAPPING CONTINUUM...EVEN LYING WITHIN THESE COMMENTS ON THE AUTOSKREELIK IS THE ESSENCE OF AUTOSKREELIA, HENCE THE NAME GIVES BIRTH TO ITS OWN EXISTENCE...THE FORM THEN BECOMES ITS OWN CONTENT, AND OUT OF THIS 'ARISING' COME FURTHER EXTENSIONS OR LIMBS WHICH GRASP FOR OBJECTS BEYOND TO COMPREHENSION OF THE INITIAL UNIFICANCE (AND IT IS IN THIS TERRITORY AUTOSKREELIA IS LOST) 123

VI

AS TO THE WORDS, I DON'T LIKE TO REPEAT THE SAME WORDS (THE WORDS REPEAT DON'T LIKE IT) THE SAME WORDS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A UNIT WORK BUT AS TO THE REPEATS, NOT THE SAME WORDS WITHIN THE WORK UNIT (WORDS) NOT LIKING THUS TO REPEAT THESE SAME WORDS I TRY NOT TO USE THE SAME WORDS IN THE REPEATS (NOT LIKING IT) TO REPEAT THE SAME WORDS AS THIS GOES AGAINST MY COMMITMENT TO VARIETY (THUS VARIETY OF WORDS NOT GOING AGAINST MY REPEATING OF THE SAME WORDS) BUT NOT TO REPEAT THE SAME COMMITMENT TO WORDS AS AN ASPECT OF VARIETY WITHIN WHICH THE REPEATING OF THE SAME WORDS EXISTS--HENCE I DON'T LIKE TO REPEAT THE SAME WORDS 123.

Notes by Franz Kamin, date unknown.



1980 - 1981

Kathy and Franz move to a farmhouse in Jefferson Valley, about an hour north of Manhattan. Kathy gets a job at a behavioral research lab in a hospital specializing in eating and sleep disorders where she studies the role of different neurotransmitters in the mediation and perception of hunger and satiety: dopamine, serotonin, thalamus, frontal lobes. Sometimes she is also responsible for euthanizing or decapitating the test animals (mostly rats and monkeys).

Eve visits regularly at first but less and less as Franz begins to unravel. His state of mind grows increasingly erratic and intense, the depressions increasingly dark. He hallucinates evil spirits and vengeful gods. He drinks a liter of vodka a day, often without eating. Sometimes he is in bed for weeks on end. Other times he vanishes for days with no word. Months like this go by without “the good days” in between. He contemplates suicide.



Kathy working in the lab, photo by Joanne Chee, c. 1989.



Eve leaves the triad. The emotional strain was too much to bear. She falls in love with another woman and they move to Nova Scotia together. Kathy feels abandoned but loves Franz and cannot leave. She takes on the burden of his illness alone (she has and will continue to do this all her life, in various ways and for various people—a quality that has inspired some to refer to her as “Saint Katherine” others, a martyr). Over time their quiet cabin in the woods is subsumed by constant chaos and pain and instability. Kathy grows desperately lonely.



The tree, photo by Anastasia Hill, 2013.



There is a party at George and Susan's house. Kathy attends without Franz. A young artist named Gary Hill is also at the party. He has recently returned from Paris and is getting ready to leave for a residency in Kamakura Japan. Kathy has seen him here and there for years but the two have never met properly. His presence is both intimidating and magnetic. He has wild black hair and jeweled green eyes. He believes in art without question. There is never a moment he looks out of place.

At some point during the evening, Gary screens one of his most recent videos, *Happenstance (part one of many parts)*. In it there is an electronically synthesized tree with the words "nothing," "talking," "silence," and "there" appearing and disappearing beneath it. Kathy doesn't know it at the time, but the image of the tree was inspired by a recent car accident. It was late at night when Gary's friend fell asleep at the wheel, crashing the car into a tree. When Gary came to he couldn't move, could barely breathe, had wet himself, was certain this was it (the end). Out the broken window he saw another tree off in the distance alone in an open field. His gaze affixed to it, and it held him there, as he calmly accepted the fact that he was dying (that this would be his final vision).

The video brings Kathy to tears. She feels compelled to talk to him. Their chemistry is intense and immediate. The next day they go for a walk together. And then another and another and another.

A few months later, Kathy leaves Franz for Gary (*this will be the hardest thing she'll ever do*).



Franz, photo by unknown, sometime before 1975.



Kathy meets Gary in Japan. They get married alone on the beach. She wears a tuxedo and changes her last name to “Hill.” A few weeks later she finds out she’s pregnant (*for the second time—the first was aborted a few months prior*). When the residency is over, they return to NY, pack up their things, and drive across country to Seattle where Gary has been hired to establish the new video program at Cornish College of the Arts.



Kathy in Japan, photo by Gary Hill, 1985.



Franz publishes his second book, *Scribble Death*, and dedicates it to Kathy Bourbonais. In the final pages he describes their separation and his subsequent downfall:

Once Egz and Borgies were gone, my own light went out,
and there became no choices left other than to abandon
myself, which soon resulted in the dissipation of all my
lifelong dreams, schemes, and enjoyments (the music, the
piano, the art, the loves) as well as all of my physical
possessions and the delusory products of my fruitless art.
As I watched Borgies sell all of our intimate 'gifts' at a yard
sale, and saw to the packing away and disposal of all that I
had created, and stood by as she chose a new and 'superior'
champion, I died; the rest is a matter of rotting.ⁱⁱ

(Kathy and Franz never spoke again. She was waiting for the pain to subside, but it never did. She always believed that one day they'd meet again, but that would never happen. On April 12th 2012 she receives a phone call from an old friend: Franz is dead; he was killed when the car he was in crashed into a tree [she waits for him in her dreams, but he has yet to arrive]).

On January 5th, at 11:30 AM, Kathy gives birth to Anastasia Yumeko Hill. Her middle name is Japanese and translates to "Dream Child." Gary records the

entire birth on video (*and will continue to record her—both at home and in the studio—throughout her childhood*).



Outtake from *Remarks on Color*, video by Gary Hill, 1994.

All full-page images in this chapter are stills from video by my father, GARY HILL. In addition to raw footage, documentation, outtakes, and home video, I incorporated shots from the following completed works: *Air Raid* (1974); *Objects with Destinations* (1979); *Mediations* (1979); *Around and About* (1980); *Primarily Speaking* (1981); *Why Do Things Get In A Muddle?* (1984); *Ura Aru (the backside exists)* (1985-86); *Incidence of Catastrophe* (1987-88); *Site Recite (a prologue)* (1989); *Solstice d'Hiver* (1990).

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- ⁱ Lucinda Furlong, "A Manner of Speaking; An Interview with Gary Hill," *AFTERIMAGE* 10, no. 8 (March 1983): 12.
- ⁱⁱ Franz Kamin, *Scribble Death* (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1986), 145.



THE NON-INGESTION OF LSD

CORBORDON: a boundary or border or surface which is shared by two or more disparate spaces...if such a surface or skin is apprehended from inside, what is known of its cospaces?...there is always a need to get out—to be unsealed...

existing within the vacularum, I may be seen as a collection—not-a-collection-not-of-points—a continuously moving twilight or gloam of self-rebounding and ricocheting from the epivaculoid within the vacularum...it is a conviction that the vacularum is a co-space with my need to become unsealed...that which refuses to flow is worn away by the flowing around it: not to be worn away is the need to become unsealed—the epivaculoid is entirely convicted of undeads...I and the epivaculoid have the mutual desire of permeability (interpenetrability).

—Franz Kaminⁱ

Some Summer Day, 2012

My father and I have a conversation about taking LSD. I feel I really *should* try it at least once if I'm going to write about it, but the idea fills me with dread. Not because I worry it will cause me any actual harm or result in any permanent damage; rather, it's the fear itself I'm afraid of—a fear compounded by all that I've read about it, e.g., its potential to elicit so-called 'ego-death'—to bring one, figuratively and in some cases literally, to their knees. This, of course, is its primary draw. But at the same time, it sounds quite like the feeling I expend so much effort and energy trying to avoid.

*(the feeling of coming
un-done)*



The primary aspect of the schizophrenic body is that it is a sort of body-sieve...the consequences of this is that the entire body is no longer anything but depth – it carries along and snaps up everything into this gaping depth which represents a fundamental involution...As there is no surface, the inside and the outside, the container and the contained, no longer have a precise limit...

—Gilles Deleuzeⁱⁱ

LSD-25

LSD is a stereocentric, chiral compound (its mirror-image, like a pair of hands, is structurally symmetric but not superimposable). Though possible to produce the compound synthetically, it is commonly (and historically) derived from ergot, an alkaloid-producing fungus that typically grows on rye. Ergot itself is highly toxic if consumed in large enough quantities, resulting in severe symptoms (a condition known as St. Anthony's Fire), that include; acute psychosis, vomiting, convulsions, burning sensations in the limbs, gangrene, and, in some cases, death. If dosed properly, however, ergot, has certain medicinal properties as well, most notably as a means of inducing labor and abortion—a practice that dates back to the early 16th century.

Ergot's active therapeutic compound—ergotamine—was successfully isolated by Dr. Arthur Stoll at Sandoz Pharmaceutical laboratories in Switzerland in 1918. This breakthrough led to the manufacture and sale of various ergotamine-based drugs, many of which are still used in obstetrics today, and prompted further research and testing for other possible therapeutic benefits and applications.

In 1935, a chemist named Albert Hoffman joined Sandoz and picked up where Stoll left off in his study of ergot-alkaloids. Hoffman discovered that combining lysergic acid with amines resulted in a synthetic compound identical to ergometrine, another ergot-alkaloid. This propelled investigations further, as Hoffman continued to synthesize multiple variations of the alkaloids to test for

alternative pharmacological applications.

In April of 1943, Hoffman set to work synthesizing (for the second time), the 25th substance in his series of lysergic acid derivatives—LSD-25. He was forced to stop, however, due to “unusual sensations.” He reported the ensuing experience to Stoll the next day, describing a “remarkable restlessness,” followed by a “not unpleasant intoxicated-like condition, characterized by an extremely stimulated imagination.”ⁱⁱⁱ Confounded by the event, though convinced it had something to do with his experiment and handling of the substance, he again produced LSD-25, and this time intentionally consumed .25 mg. After an initial stage of dizziness, anxiety, visual distortions, and an inexplicable desire to laugh, Hoffman experienced a “most severe crisis,” which he detailed in a special report the following day:

Everything in my field of vision wavered and was distorted as if seen in a curved mirror...My surroundings had now transformed themselves in more terrifying ways. Everything in the room spun around, and the familiar objects and pieces of furniture assumed grotesque, threatening forms. They were in continuous motion, animated, as if driven by an inner restlessness...Even worse than these demonic transformations of the outer world, were the alterations that I perceived in myself, in my inner being...Every exertion of my will, every attempt to put an end to the disintegration of the

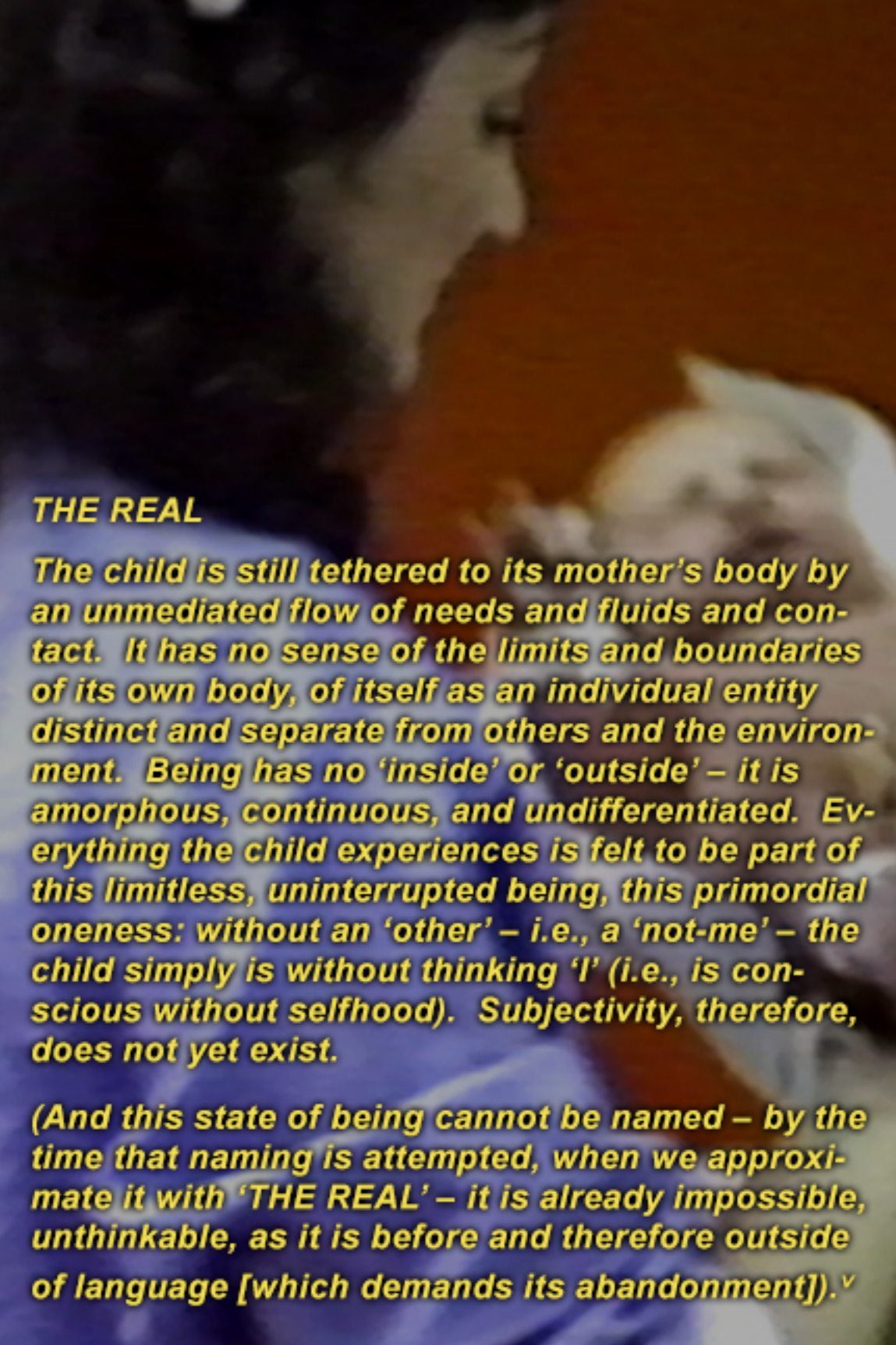
outer world and the dissolution of my ego, seemed to be wasted effort...the substance, with which I had wanted to experiment, had vanquished me...I was taken in another world, another place, another me...^{iv}

Hoffman's bizarre experience subsequently inspired extensive (though short-lived) research into the drug's psychiatric effects and potential applications. Because of its structural similarity to a naturally-occurring chemical in the brain (serotonin), coupled with the observation that its effects seemed to mimic the symptoms of mental illness, particularly schizophrenia, it was initially explored as a psychotomimetic—an agent that produces 'synthetic illness' or 'model psychosis.' This hypothesis was significant in that it suggested that schizophrenia was not, as previously assumed, a neurosis with social/environmental origins, but rather a physical, biochemical brain disorder—one that could be chemically imitated, and thus, perhaps cured, by a drug.

On the basis of this hypothesis, LSD was explored throughout the 1940s and 50s as not only a means to study schizophrenia by inducing transient, observable psychosis in 'neurotypicals' (including medical and psychiatric researchers and practitioners), but also to treat catatonia in schizophrenic patients, as well as conditions such as alcoholism, OCD, depression, and autism.

Though possession of LSD was federally banned in 1968, thus halting all therapeutic research, it has recently re-emerged within the field of medical

science as an experimental treatment for addiction, depression, and terminally ill patients suffering from end-of-life anxiety and 'existential distress.'



THE REAL

The child is still tethered to its mother's body by an unmediated flow of needs and fluids and contact. It has no sense of the limits and boundaries of its own body, of itself as an individual entity distinct and separate from others and the environment. Being has no 'inside' or 'outside' – it is amorphous, continuous, and undifferentiated. Everything the child experiences is felt to be part of this limitless, uninterrupted being, this primordial oneness: without an 'other' – i.e., a 'not-me' – the child simply is without thinking 'I' (i.e., is conscious without selfhood). Subjectivity, therefore, does not yet exist.

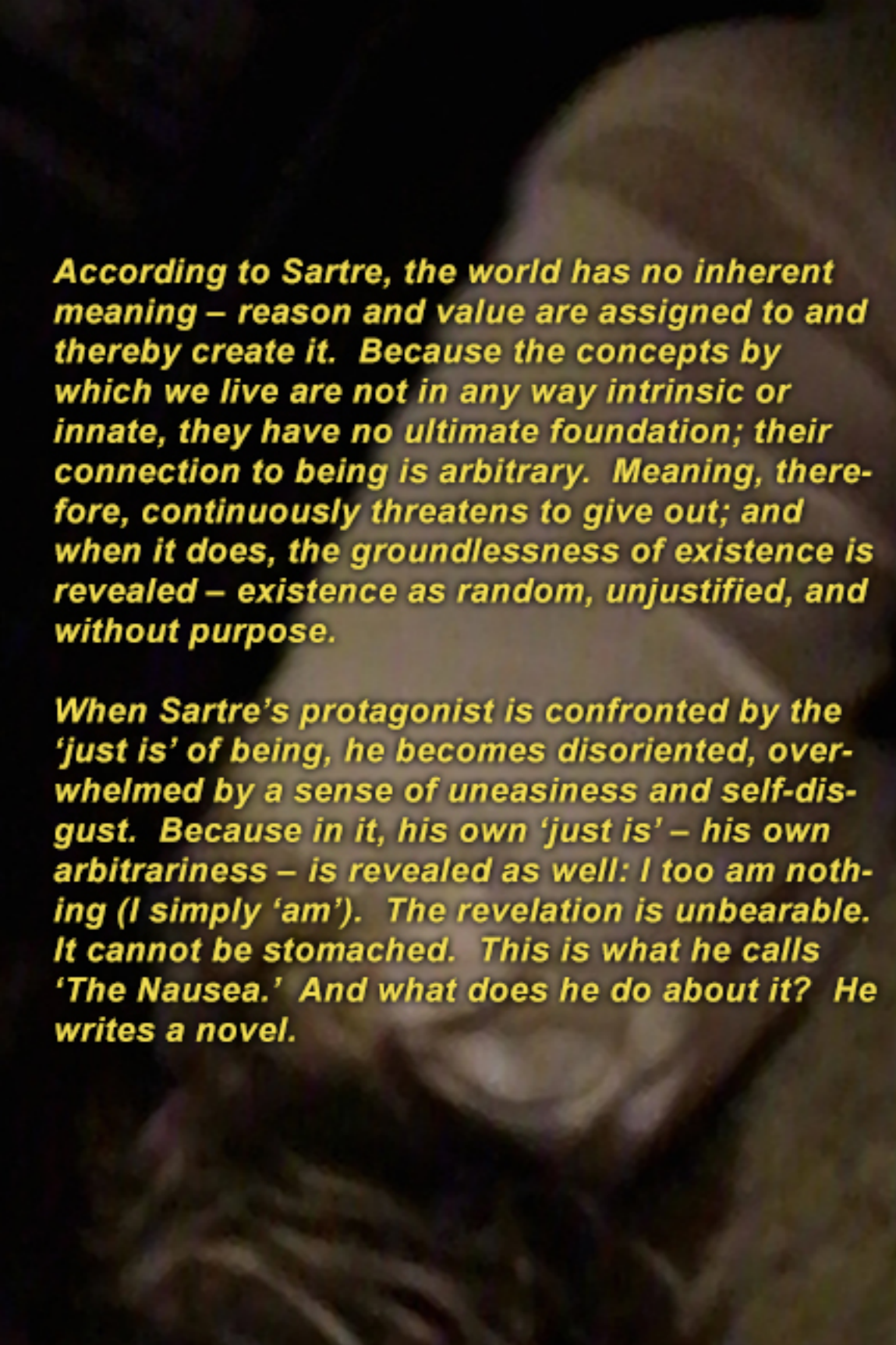
(And this state of being cannot be named – by the time that naming is attempted, when we approximate it with 'THE REAL' – it is already impossible, unthinkable, as it is before and therefore outside of language [which demands its abandonment]).^v

On A Night In 1990

She is laying on the shaggy beige carpet in the living room with her parents watching a movie. She is four years old. She is about to experience her first little death, but doesn't know it yet. All she knows is that something isn't right—something she can't quite put her little finger on. She is uneasy, but it is an uneasiness without a specific locale—it is tepid and mute. She concentrates, she angles and moves her body in hopes to somehow uncover it, but it moves with her, in fact it feels particularly unmovable. With no real sense of time, she fears it may be possible, if not probable, that the feeling will never go away, that this terrible new reality might last forever. She grows increasingly distraught. She gropes for comfort, but, without a proper sense of language—a means to put the problem into words—all efforts are futile; and so she stays silent—trapped in a silence that separates her from the room, that condemns her to her.

- 1) *a deep breath is taken, the glottis is closed and the larynx is raised to open the upper esophageal sphincter. The soft palate is elevated to close off the posterior nares;*
- 2) *the diaphragm is contracted sharply downward to create negative pressure in the thorax, which facilitates opening of the esophagus and distal esophageal sphincter;*
- 3) *simultaneously with downward movement of the diaphragm, the muscles of the abdominal walls are vigorously contracted, squeezing the stomach and thus elevating intragastric pressure. With the pylorus closed and the esophagus relatively open, the route of exit is clear.^{vi}*

(a scared little girl vomits large amounts of fluid all over the floor)



According to Sartre, the world has no inherent meaning – reason and value are assigned to and thereby create it. Because the concepts by which we live are not in any way intrinsic or innate, they have no ultimate foundation; their connection to being is arbitrary. Meaning, therefore, continuously threatens to give out; and when it does, the groundlessness of existence is revealed – existence as random, unjustified, and without purpose.

When Sartre's protagonist is confronted by the 'just is' of being, he becomes disoriented, overwhelmed by a sense of uneasiness and self-disgust. Because in it, his own 'just is' – his own arbitrariness – is revealed as well: I too am nothing (I simply 'am'). The revelation is unbearable. It cannot be stomached. This is what he calls 'The Nausea.' And what does he do about it? He writes a novel.

For Many Years After That Night On The Floor

psychosomatic | ,sɪkōsəˈmatɪk|

adjective

(of a physical illness or other condition) caused or aggravated by a mental factor such as internal conflict or stress.

• *of or relating to the interaction of mind and body.*

She is haunted by her own vulnerability and loss of control, overwhelmed by the uncertainty of a world in which the carefully contained insides of something can unexpectedly pour out into the public space of others. This results in 1) a fixation on the one thing she feels she does know for sure: *that she will get sick again*—with warning, without it—in a year, a day, at any given moment; a preoccupation that consequently results in 2) feeling interminably *unwell*—not with any particular disease or disorder, but with a sickness that is both untraceable and vague. Nausea. Inflammation. Vertigo. Headaches. Night sweats. Sweaty palms. Soft teeth. A pounding heart. A burning. A numbness. Disorientation. Dysuria. Dysphoria.

In order to ward off the inevitability of falling ill, certain precautionary measures are henceforth introduced into her daily routine—systems, tactics, order, rules: don't eat this or that; check expiration dates 1-2-3 times to ensure the numbers are read correctly; isn't that the book you read the night before you got ill?—never touch it again (hide it away with the spine facing towards the back of the shelf); floss teeth nightly according to the pre-determined pattern; sweep first to the right and then to the left the ribbons on the pillow located at the bottom-right corner of the bed; toss into the air 1-2-3 times the two smaller sand

animals on the nightstand before laying the larger one on top of them ‘just so;’ tap the amethyst 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 times; say your prayers to the Guatemalan worry dolls and then arrange them in descending order under the sheets; and remember: no double-digit numbers; no mention of select words or phrases (which can’t be mentioned here); no spinning; no yellow.

Magical Thinking

The attribution of causal relationships between actions and events which seemingly cannot be justified by reason and observation. It can cause a patient to experience fear of performing or not performing certain acts or having certain thoughts because of an assumed correlation between doing so and threatening calamities. Magical thinking may lead people to believe that their thoughts alone can bring about effects in the world, or that thinking something corresponds with doing it. It is a type of causal reasoning or causal fallacy that looks for meaningful relationships of grouped phenomena (coincidence) between acts and events.

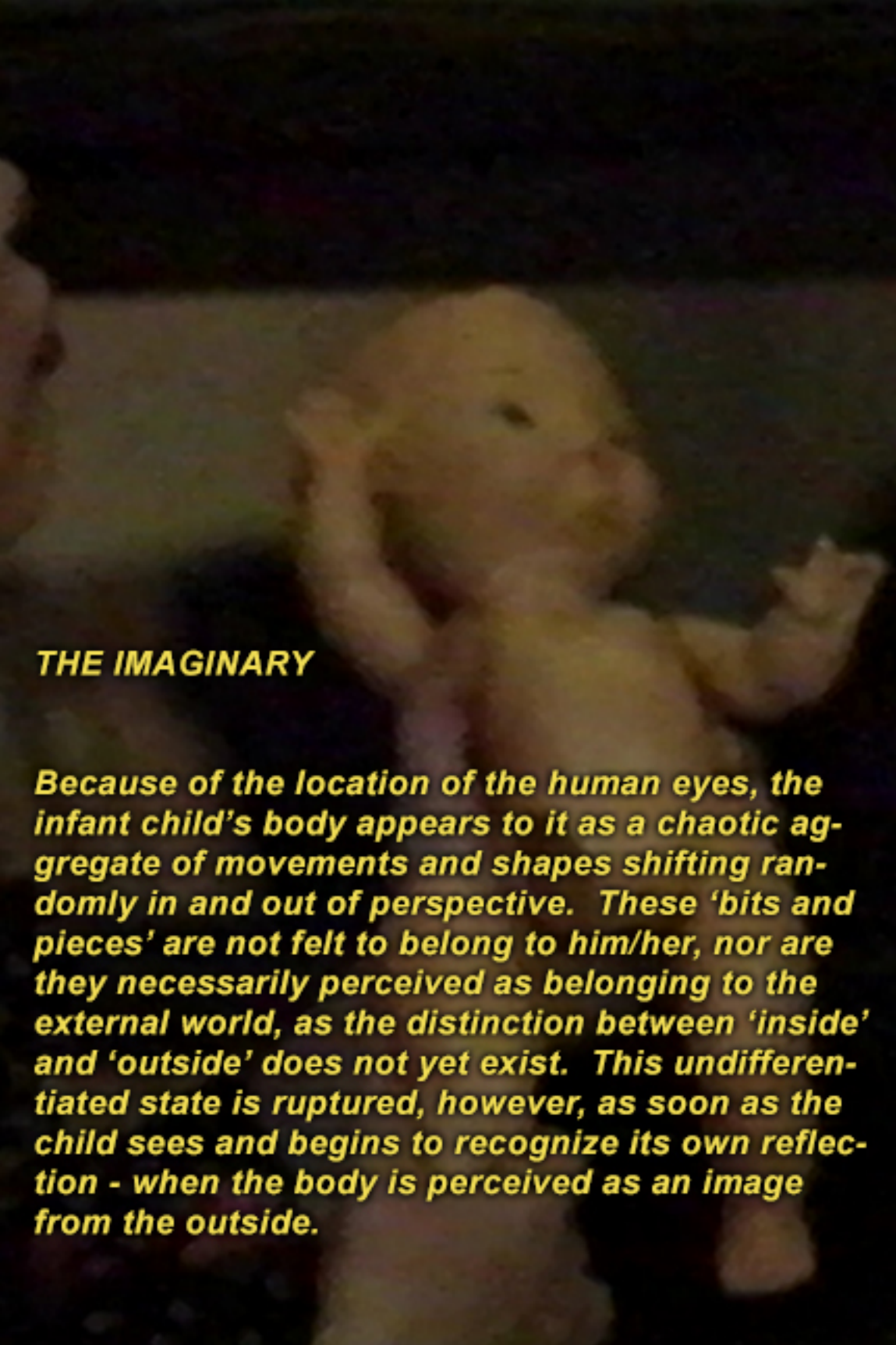
It has been suggested that there is a biochemical correlation between degrees of magical thinking and dopamine levels—the neurotransmitter that tags experiences as meaningful. For example, dopamine floods the brains of schizophrenics, who find significance everywhere, whereas it merely trickles in many depressives, who struggle to find value in everyday life.^{vii}



Stills from raw footage for *Beacon (Two Versions of the Imaginary)*, video by Gary Hill, 1990.

Over Time

Her hypervigilance is accompanied by an over-exaggeration of symptoms and pains. Crutches and casts for non-broken bones, medication for the absence of infections, extra rest and vinegar baths for phantom fevers and allergic reactions. Somewhere between conviction and feigning, this becomes her primary defense mechanism. But it is not without a certain pleasure. In fact, she begins to enjoy particular kinds of discomfort – not the kind that happens only internally and is without form, this kind still terrifies her – but things like insect bites, cuts, rashes, and colds – things with veritable signs of bodily distress that she (and others) can tend to in a tangible way. And so she sits out in the rain with no jacket; she lets mosquitos land on and bite her until both eyes swell shut; she watches her skin burn in the sun; she scratches her arms and then picks at the scabs.



THE IMAGINARY

Because of the location of the human eyes, the infant child's body appears to it as a chaotic aggregate of movements and shapes shifting randomly in and out of perspective. These 'bits and pieces' are not felt to belong to him/her, nor are they necessarily perceived as belonging to the external world, as the distinction between 'inside' and 'outside' does not yet exist. This undifferentiated state is ruptured, however, as soon as the child sees and begins to recognize its own reflection - when the body is perceived as an image from the outside.

In the reflected image, the body appears cohesive and total, coordinated and complete—it is an ideal body, one that contradicts the relative clumsiness and immobility of the child's actual physique. In (mis)identifying with this unitive image, the state of oneness that previously dominated the child's existence (although it was not—could not—be recognized as such) is subverted, replaced by a newfound sense of space, distance, position. The child not only begins to apprehend itself as autonomous and complete, but as separate from others and the external world. This includes a crucial separation from and distinction between itself and the (m)other.

This process of individuation is both necessary to the production of selfhood (of the 'I' or ego) and at the same time undermines it, for it hinges on the apprehension of the self-as-other. Indeed, the very image that provides the child with an initial sense of its own wholeness and coherence—the foundation for thinking 'I'—does not belong to him/her—it did not emerge from within, it is not self-generated or innate; rather, the image has an external source—it is projected at and thereby returned to the child from the outside, i.e., from the realm of otherness.

The self-image is therefore not part of the subject, the subject who perceives and is in-part constituted by it, but exists instead within the world now understood to be separate from and beyond the body. The child thus comes to know and establish itself from without, through a process of self-alienation. When the child recognizes this, that their own selfhood is grounded outside of them—like an object—within a world of meanings that preceded them and over

which they have little or not control, the momentary security offered by the imaginary 'I' is immediately thrown into doubt.^{viii}

I AM THAT I AM
AM I THAT I AM
I THAT AM I AM
THAT I AM I AM
AM THAT I I AM
I AM I THAT AM
I AM I THAT AM
AM I I THAT AM
II AM THAT AM
II AM THAT AM
AM I I THAT AM
I AM I THAT AM
I THAT I AM AM
II THAT AM AM
II THAT AM AM
THAT I I AM AM
I THAT I AM AM
AM THAT I I AM
THAT AM I I AM
AM I THAT I AM
I AM THAT I AM^{ix}

When She Is Thirteen

Her mother is called away from work to pick her up early from school—“it’s an emergency” the school counselor implores. She is loaded into the car in silence and without eye contact. By this point her reputation as a dramatist and a faker is well established, though no one, herself included, could determine the reasoning or end-goal of her behavior. But this was different. This time she genuinely attempted to conceal the evidence but was found out and reported on by a friend, at which point bureaucratic protocol was forced to run its course, i.e., her mother was called away from work to pick her up early from school.

She is driven to the nearest urgent care facility where she is ordered to show her wrists to the receptionist, who will assess the extent and severity of the damage and with this information determine her place in line. She pushes back her collection of bracelets and carefully peels off the many Minnie Mouse Band-Aids to reveal a rather extensive array of cuts in various stages of the healing process. Because she uses a ‘lady’s’ razor, i.e., a razor that has both a double-blade for super-close shaving and a convenient moisturizing strip, it leaves not one but two cuts together with a rug-burn-like effect when violently dragged sideways across the skin. Performed repeatedly on a daily or sometimes twice-daily basis for months leaves no ‘good’ skin intact—what’s left instead is a mangled swath of scar tissue, fresh lesions, and scabs peppered with dangly pieces of dead skin (*kind of like different cuts of meat cooking on a grill*).

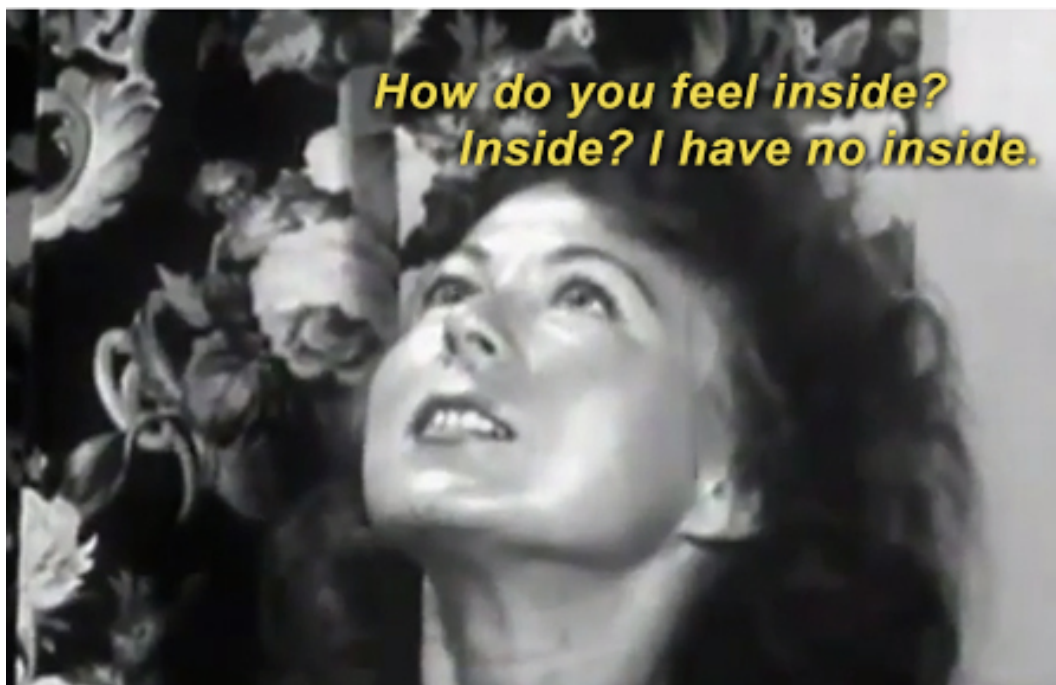


Waving from another room, photo by Colby Taylor-Ford, 2004.



Selfhood is developed through a recognition of and relationship with the Other. The Other is constituted by the symbolic—the social body and field of signs articulated and governed by language. Subjectivity is thus forged hand in hand with the child's acquisition and use of language—a system that does not belong to or emerge from it, but rather precedes it and exists 'out there.' Indeed, language not only mediates the subject's experience of social reality (of the Other) and of its self, but constitutes it. It is therefore impossible to think outside the limits—the house—of language. Everything, including how we understand what the world is and how it functions, our phenomenal relationship with it, and the experience of our own body and biology, is over-determined by our accession to language; it is the very material of subjectivity.

As such, a breakdown in language threatens the demolition of the subject along with it. Psychosis, catatonia, so-called 'ego-death'—all are conditions or states that embody both the malfunction or end of language (the ineffable) and the temporary or permanent loss of self. In such instances the subject has slipped past the 'I'—the signifier behind which the subject lives, that bars it from the unspeakable and thus unknowable that it stands-in for, that it represents (that thing beyond the word, that thing coincidental with being). Disarticulated and deterritorialized, the subject is thereby returned to an undifferentiated state without an Other, a state outside of language.^x



A research subject is interviewed after taking LSD at the L.A Veterans Hospital, 1956.

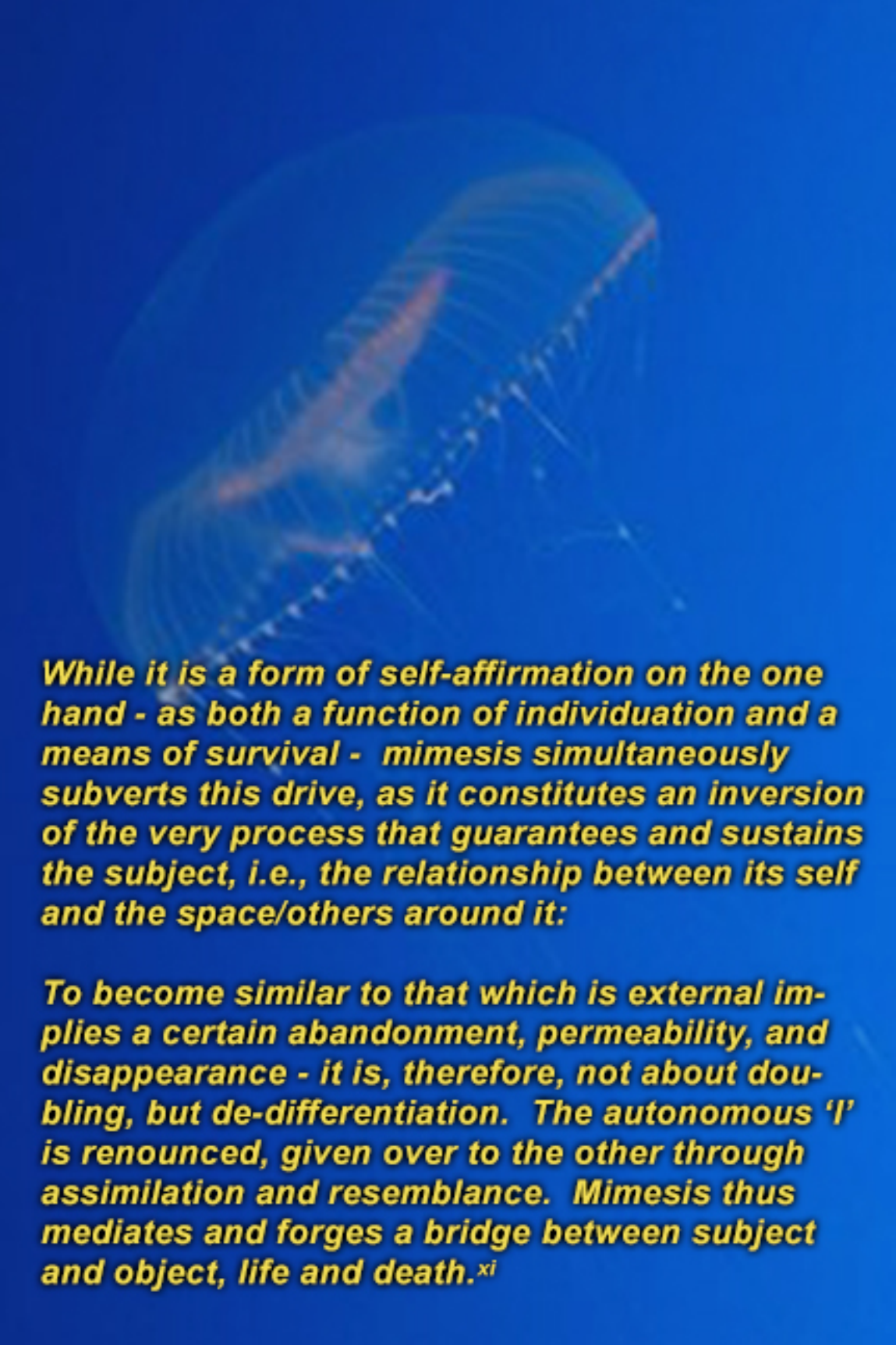
To mimic is to resemble something other.

Some forms of imitation are conscious, intentional, and/or self-reflexive, while others are unconscious and/or biophysiological.

In the context of evolutionary biology, mimicry occurs when a species evolves to share perceived characteristics with another species (the model) or with its environmental milieu. Mimesis in this case can function as a means of protective defense, predatory deception, or reproduction—all of which are mechanisms for self-preservation and biological survival: animals (including humans) freeze to blend into the background and elude detection; some do the same by mimicking their surroundings or habitat (i.e., camouflage), e.g., insects that look like flowers or twigs, reptiles that shift their pattern and coloration, transparent jellyfish; deceptive flowers dupe insects into pollination without reward; prey animals mimic predators; predators mimic prey.

In social and psychological terms, humans express various forms of mimesis as well. Not only do we tend to think, practice, and create according to similarity and through imitation (as expressed in, for example, certain cosmological paradigms, sympathetic magic, play, and art), but our individual identities are, in part, shaped by the emulation of others, both consciously and unconsciously: we learn how to speak and communicate by repeating back what we hear; ethnic, social, and gender roles are witnessed and performed; we identify with and assimilate the traits of those close to us. In short, I become my 'self' by becoming like 'other.'

*But is mimesis really a drive to persist,
or an unconscious desire to disappear?*



While it is a form of self-affirmation on the one hand - as both a function of individuation and a means of survival - mimesis simultaneously subverts this drive, as it constitutes an inversion of the very process that guarantees and sustains the subject, i.e., the relationship between its self and the space/others around it:

To become similar to that which is external implies a certain abandonment, permeability, and disappearance - it is, therefore, not about doubling, but de-differentiation. The autonomous 'I' is renounced, given over to the other through assimilation and resemblance. Mimesis thus mediates and forges a bridge between subject and object, life and death.^{xi}

Here it is possible to give only a rough summary of what is involved, and Pierre Janet's theoretical and clinical writings are moreover available to everyone. I will, however, briefly describe some personal experiences, but which are wholly in accord with observations published in the medical literature, for example with the invariable response of schizophrenics to the question: where are you? I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I'm at the spot where I find myself. To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself become space, dark space where things cannot be put. He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar. And he invents spaces of which he is 'the convulsive possession.'

All these expressions shed light on a single process: depersonalization by assimilation to space, i.e., what mimicry achieves morphologically in certain animal species.

—Roger Caillois^{xii}



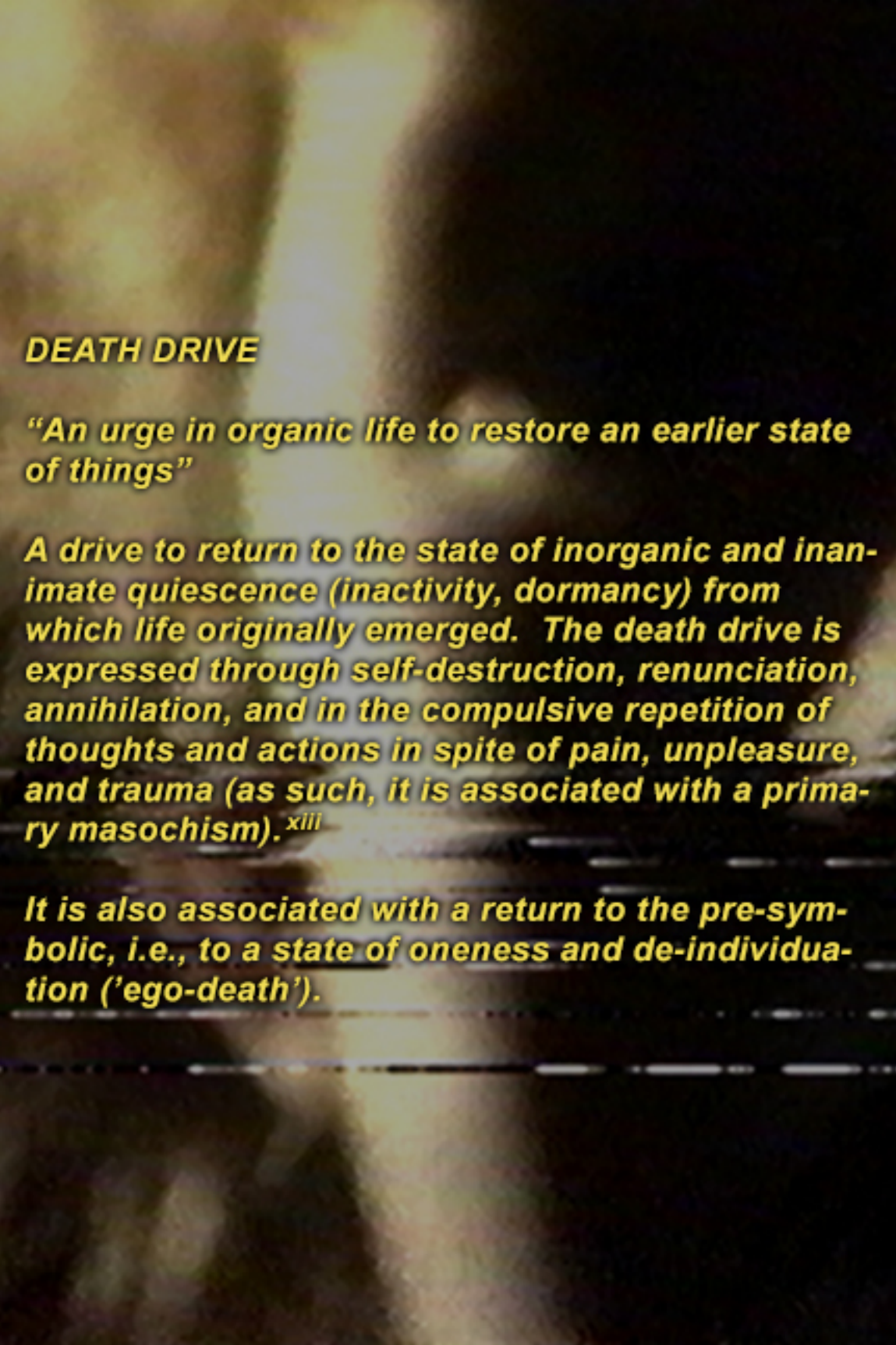
Moments before vomiting, photo by Timothy Sheldon, 2003.

An Uncertain Amount Of Time Between 2001-2004

There is a period of inexplicable recklessness and abandon. She feels stunningly *well*—invincible even. Her eyes open widely with an endless procession of uncharacteristic plans and predilections. She is fearless and desiring. She flies out her bedroom window and into the night. Night after night. She pursues and sleeps with strangers. She steals from department stores. She adopts a ‘European’ accent and makes new friends. She poses nude. She forges checks. She attempts illegal purchases on the internet and overseas. She maps out adventures, schemes, reunions, and escape routes. She does drugs—any drug, with and from anybody: crack cocaine with addicts in alleyways, prescription pills from friends of friends, opium with the neighbor, ecstasy with a lover, hash with boyfriends and ‘business associates.’ She crashes parties. She dodges police. She frees animals from the pound. She travels by foot and goes dancing alone.



Sitting on the rocks with 'Kern' at Playa Kandahar, Mexico, photo by Tanager Ricci, 2002.



DEATH DRIVE

“An urge in organic life to restore an earlier state of things”

A drive to return to the state of inorganic and inanimate quiescence (inactivity, dormancy) from which life originally emerged. The death drive is expressed through self-destruction, renunciation, annihilation, and in the compulsive repetition of thoughts and actions in spite of pain, unpleasure, and trauma (as such, it is associated with a primary masochism).^{xiii}

It is also associated with a return to the pre-symbolic, i.e., to a state of oneness and de-individuation ('ego-death').

Summer 2004

She is seventeen and living with her father in Paris before moving to California for college. A man she'd met just days prior to leaving town has flown across the Atlantic to be with her. She rewards this romantic gesture by accepting his affections despite her relative ambivalence towards him. But soon enough he senses her disloyalty. And when she continues to transgress their supposed sacred bond, he begins to abuse her, verbally and then physically. He makes sure she is never alone. He removes the SIM card from her phone and places her under constant surveillance. He stands in doorways, he watches through keyholes, he mouths insults across the table when no one is looking. He reminds her constantly of her whorish nature and that she is a 'nasty little twat.' He strikes her and shoves pillows into her face.

Meanwhile, he takes extra care to make nice with her father, who, despite living under the same roof, remains tragically oblivious due to clinical depression, transient alcoholism, and an extremely tight deadline. She takes refuge in the only pleasure she has left—eating—and sleeps as many hours as she can.

As the weeks go by she grows slower, heavier, dumber. She spends innumerable hours pinned to the mattress by a paralyzing sense of doom and hopelessness. Her heart begins to skip beats, to stop momentarily, to pound and thud so erratically she feels she may faint. With no way out, she simply gives up, gives in, resigns from the world.

The day they fly back across the Atlantic she realizes she is terrified of flying. As the plane takes off she explodes from her seat in panic, like a wild animal, like vomit all over the floor, crying out as she flings her body into the aisle. Her lack of control embarrasses him. He laughs.



Together in Paris, photo-booth, 2004.

The unconscious mind is a repository for actively repressed material – socially unacceptable ideas, wishes and desires, traumatic memories and painful emotions - material that individuals make themselves unaware of in order to function in civilized society. However, the unconscious is not fully contained – the barrier between the conscious and unconscious mind is permeable, and within this blurred zone repression is left incomplete. It lingers there, pressing continually against the boundary of the subject's self-definition, which, in turn, can never be finalized or complete. This vulnerable and unresolved state forever remains with the subject as a continual threat to its integrity and stability. Subjectivity must therefore assume a defensive position.^{xiv}



On The Shaggy Beige Carpet Again

She's been here for a month and will remain for another two. She is supposed to be in California attending art school, but over the course of her freshman year lost the ability to walk, drive, and leave the house.

The year prior she had gone to see a cardiologist and was diagnosed with mitral valve prolapse syndrome—a heart condition in which the valve between the left atrium and ventricle doesn't close properly, causing symptoms such as arrhythmia, dizziness, difficulty breathing, chest pain, and fatigue. Months later, however, no electrocardiogram, echocardiogram, or Holter monitor could find any structural or electrical abnormalities after all. The diagnosis was revised, citing anxiety as the most likely culprit. But she could not bring herself to believe the doctor's claims that she had a healthy heart, as it continued to torment her with increasingly violent palpitations. She made innumerable trips to the emergency room certain she was dying, but every time was sent away with nothing but normal test results and a sample packet of the latest benzodiazepine.

During this time she also developed debilitating headaches accompanied by numbness and transient confusion (what she imagined were likely precursors to epileptic seizures). On one occasion she momentarily mixed up the car she was driving in with the carrot she was eating, and on another, her ambulating body with the sidewalk. Following these distressing inversions and others like them, she couldn't shake the feeling—which was both a physical presence and an intuition—that they were caused by some kind of root vegetable that had

somehow lodged inside her brain where it had started to rot—“like a nasty little rutabaga”—but no one could relate. When the MRI and CT scan did little to convince her otherwise, her father urged her to come home for a ‘break,’ and she obliged.

She has since confined her supine existence to the living room floor, which she clings to day and night, except for when her mother forces her on walks around the block. She has never been more afraid of dying, yet also finds she no longer wants to live.



Home video shot by her father, 1990.

Fall 2007

A boy she falls in love with but whom will not commit for increasingly nebulous reasons is convinced she has given him an STD (molluscum contagiosum). Wanting desperately to prove her innocence, she not only visits multiple doctors but allows him to inspect her body himself on more than one occasion. But her 'open book' approach proves futile, as there is no way to definitively test for this particular disease in the absence of an active infection, and it is also possible to carry and transmit it without every experiencing symptoms yourself. It is also possible, she discovers upon further research, to contract molluscum by, for example, sharing a damp towel. In fact, she can't figure out why he's so concerned not only about the origin of his outbreak but about the infection itself—a rather benign affliction that isn't even technically an STD and clears up on its own. The more she thinks about this, the more convinced she becomes that his supposed 'molluscum' is in fact a decoy for something else—something more serious that he doesn't want to reveal to her until she has laid down all her cards, i.e., submitted to every kind of inspection and test. When confronted with her theory, he cuts off all communication.

The unanswered question subsequently takes hold of and destroys her. She goes to get screened for STDs weekly, but each negative result only exacerbates her conviction that something is amiss—that a virus is lurking just beneath the surface of her skin and that it could, any day now, erupt through all

the soft membranes of her body—public and private—marking her with blisters or lesions or sores that would expose her as a liar (and a nasty little twat).

And so she spends the majority of her day unclothed and in the bathroom with a collection of mirrors checking herself relentlessly for the subtlest of signs: a pinkish streak, a slight bulge or indentation, a bump, a swollen lymph node, a fissure, an unfamiliar scent, a rough or dry patch. And since there are endless imperfections present on the body at any given moment, there are endless ‘what if’s’ that require endless hours of re-tracing the endless avenues of possible transmission; and this process not only repeats without respite but is continually interrupted and begun again before any (illogical) conclusions are reached.

Compulsory inspections and obsessions eventually consume every aspect of her daily existence, erasing in their wake all will to live (that is, any will beyond the will to check that patch of skin—to follow that train of thought—one more time).

The BwO [Body without Organs]: it is already under way the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them. A long procession. The hypochondriac body: the organs are destroyed, the damage has already been done, nothing happens anymore. “Miss X claims that she no longer has a brain or nerves or chest or stomach or guts. All she has left is the skin and bones of a disorganized body...

—Deleuze & Guattari^{xv}



THE ABJECT

The abject is “that which does not respect borders, positions, rules” and “disturbs identity, system, order.”^{xvi} Since our identity and stability as subjects are derived from the unity and stability of the objects to which we attach ourselves, the abject by its very nature poses a threat to our subjectivity. As such, it finds its most visceral expression through the body (its analog):

“The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to ‘I.’”^{xvii}

The word ‘I’ signifies a unique and separate self contained within a clearly defined body (a body which I possess and is under my control). The perimeter of this ‘clean and proper body’ is managed and maintained not only so that ‘I’ remain socially acceptable, but because ‘my’ very sense of self depends upon it; that is, on the stability and sustained integrity of this body that I am.

This self-identity to which I so desperately cling thus requires rigid boundaries between inside/outside, subject/object, self/other—a sense of unity and coherence that does not, in actuality, exist, as the subject is always in process, precarious and provisional, never final or truly formed. The body itself evinces this fact: with its borders continually punctured, transgressed, and muddled by flows of urine, tears, vomit, feces, blood, semen, and sweat (by what comes out of me as ‘not-me’). The leakage, secretions, expulsions, and waste essential to life undermine the security of the clean and proper body, as they make uncertain the dividing line between self and other:

“Does my vomit belong to me? Is it part of my body? I expel it in a climax of humiliation and insecurity.”^{xviii}

These signs of the fragile and porous body are reminders of the pre-symbolic indefiniteness that preceded subjectivity. Thus, to confront the evidence of my own precarity I am, ultimately, threatened with the breakdown of

meaning (an eruption of the Real), as meaning comes after language and the difference upon which it depends. The abject, therefore, is inherently traumatic.

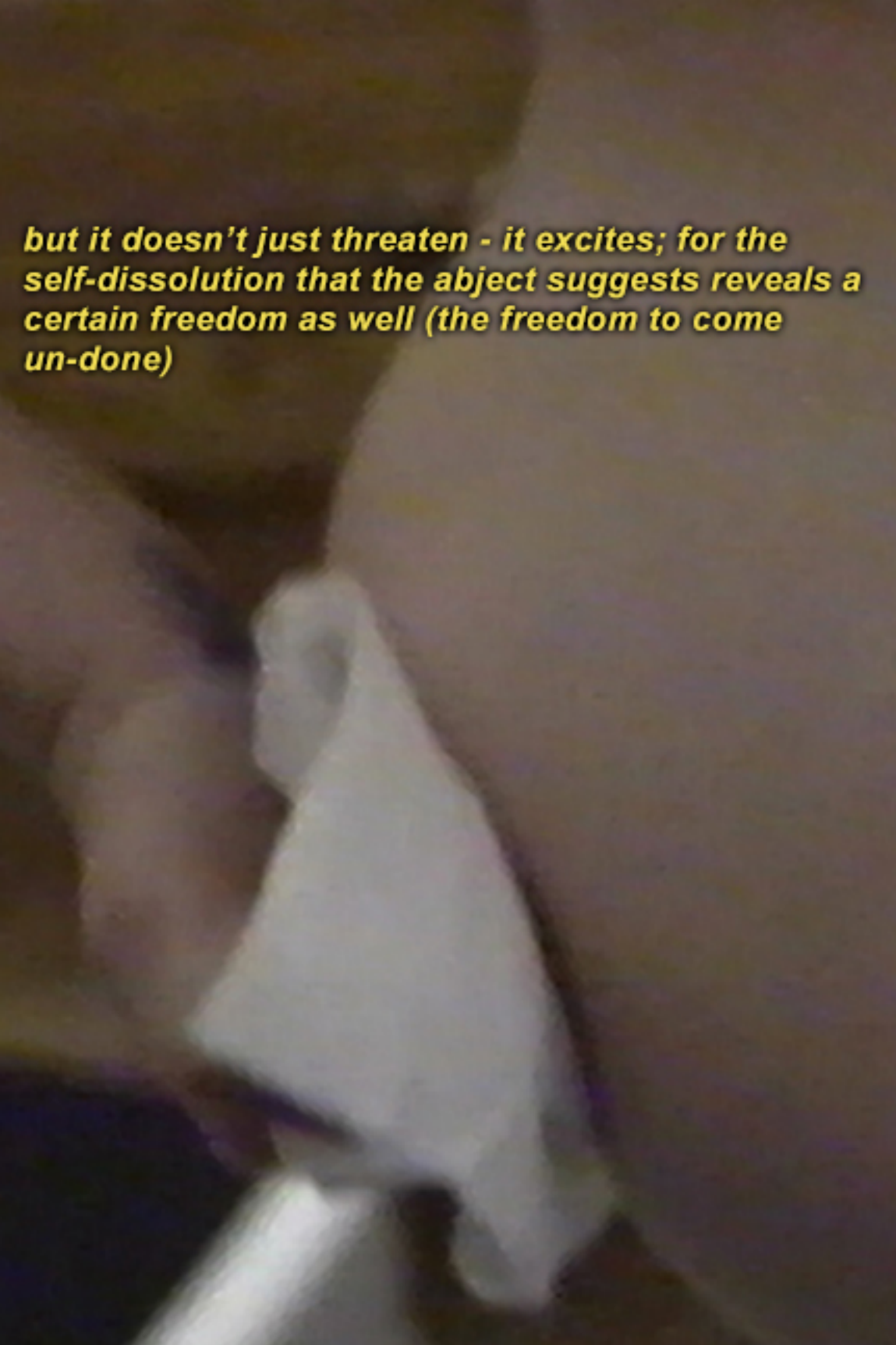
And so we reject and thrust away that which troubles the closure and wholeness of our bodies: I abject my 'corporeal reality' in a state of disgust, nausea, horror. Through the process of abjection, I negate and alienate that which infringes upon and imperils 'me' in order to re-establish and confirm my self. But because the abject—'the me that is not'—is situated outside the symbolic, it cannot be assimilated; rather, the inability itself becomes part of me. The abject is therefore neither subject nor object, but situated in the liminal and shared zone between:

"I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, vomit."^{xix}

The anxiety grounded in the permeable boundary between inside and outside the body is not, however, limited to it; indeed, it is invoked by the destabilization or endangerment of any system of order, meaning, truth, and law—by composites, doubles, simulations, uncertainties, displacements, contradictions; by anything that crosses the line, is incomplete or in-between (life and death, subjects and objects, fact and fiction, affect and language); and especially by anything that calls into question the binaries upon which expectations are based, the categories from which truths are derived, or the very processes by which we judge and discern: 'the criminal with a good conscience,' 'the shameless rapist,' 'the killer who claims he's a savior,' the homegrown

*terrorist, the mother's body, the corpse, the traitor, the liar, the sick, the
psychedelic, the sociopathic, filth, magic, darkness, simulacra, nothingness*

*Abjection, therefore, threatens all boundaries, distinctions, and
separations, as it draws forth the inherent ambiguities that (sanctioned) reason
and logic attempt to deny, disguise, or repress (it is a wiping from back to front).
The abjection of the individual subject is thus a symptom or consequence of a
much broader construct, for the stability of the (articulated) social body, i.e., the
dominant symbolic and political order, both demands and relies upon the self-
discipline and containment of the proprietary body.^{xx}*



but it doesn't just threaten - it excites; for the self-dissolution that the abject suggests reveals a certain freedom as well (the freedom to come un-done)

Thanksgiving Dinner, 2008

She is sitting at the table with her mother, stepfather, father, and new-ish boyfriend. She decides to bring up the topic of a paper she's been working on, in which the question is posed: *what will happen to the diamond—economically, semiotically, ontologically—when scientists succeed, and they are very close to succeeding, in producing lab-made diamonds that are both visually and structurally identical to earth-made diamonds?* The boyfriend shakes his head. She knows that he knows she thinks she already has the answer. They've been through this many times. And not only does he strongly disagree with her thesis, but has insinuated that it reveals in her a significant flaw and/or shortcoming in her personality and/or intellectual abilities. Perhaps, she hopes, this familial debate, which she imagines will sway more towards her position, will show him how wrong he is.

But her mother is too diplomatic. Her stepfather doesn't fully grasp the question. And she hadn't thought to take into account before opening her mouth how many drinks her father had already had, or how he'd arrived to her mother's house late and looking somewhat disheveled. Civility and good humor deteriorate rapidly. An intellectual debate turns swiftly into a series of personal attacks until her father puts an end to it with his closing statement delivered with equal parts confidence and contempt: "well, that's because *you* don't know how to *think!*"

A napkin is thrown across the floor and she is crying into an unfamiliar pillow in a room her mother calls her 'bedroom' but which she has only ever slept in maybe five times. Within minutes her father is gently weeping beside her, apologizing in a loosening and cracked voice that reminds her of the one she'd heard on the other end of the line ten years ago when he'd called her from a psychiatric hospital after disappearing from dinner. Shortly before that breakdown she had found him in his room crushing between his fingers a large collection of butterfly specimens. She wonders now: what fragile object(s) will he crush during this great depression?





Her father plays “depressed” with a bottle of whiskey in a hotel lobby in Tokyo, photo by unknown, 1998.

Synthetic Diamonds

di-¹ |dʌɪ|

comb. form

twice; two-; double: *dichromatic*.

• Chemistry containing two atoms, molecules, or groups of a specified kind: *dioxide*.

dia-(also **di-** before a vowel)

prefix

1 through; across: *diameter* | *diaphanous* | *diuretic*.

2 apart: *diakinesis*.

ORIGIN from Greek **dia** ‘through.’

diamond |ˈdī(ə)mənd|

noun

1 a precious stone consisting of a clear and typically colorless crystalline form of pure carbon, the hardest naturally occurring substance.

In May of 2012, news emerges about a package of 600 unmarked synthetic diamonds submitted for grading as natural diamonds. Subsequent testing not only revealed that the gems were man-made, but also found impurities such as feathers, pinpoints, and small dark crystals that were “intentionally introduced,” implying that the diamonds were created to defraud. In an exclusive expose, “Exposing the Fraudulent Undisclosed Synthetic Diamond Trail,” published in *The Diamond Intelligence Briefs*, Chaim Even-Zohar says about the con:

Selling synthetic diamonds as if they were naturally mined goods is, perhaps, the gravest crime one can commit within the trust-based diamond community. The (by now) notorious undisclosed synthetic polished diamond parcel submitted to

the International Gemological Institute laboratory in Antwerp – that Diamond Intelligence Briefs first revealed last week – has catapulted to the top of the industry’s concerns – and perhaps its fears.

Among the industry’s leadership in the major centers one can sense an intense feeling of betrayal. Calls are being made for emergency meetings to contemplate what to do next. There seems a resolve that “someone has to pay for this dearly, has to be held accountable, has to be removed from this industry forever—or maybe even more infinitely...

He goes on to name Gemesis the primary suspect. Gemesis Inc., now known as Pure Grow Diamonds, is the largest synthetic diamond corporation in the United States. Originally founded in 1996 by Carter Clarke, a retired US Army brigadier general, Gemesis uses high-pressure high-temperature and chemical vapor deposition to produce diamond crystals virtually identical to earth-formed diamonds. These synthetic diamonds, also referred to as manufactured, lab, and man-made diamonds, are marketed and sold as more affordable and more ethically and environmentally sound alternatives to the mined diamonds they are visually and structurally identical to. Their value is thus premised on the inherent aesthetic beauty of diamonds, as well as the ethical superiority of laboratory production over mining. At the same time, because a synthetic diamond can easily be passed off as a natural diamond, its constitutive symbolic

and cultural currency remains intact. Indeed, the fact that it's a perfect replica, a fake, is yet another selling point, though one that must go unspoken.



After Thanksgiving

Possibly brought on by an hormonal imbalance due to birth control pills, a certain recklessness returns. Except that this time it is not euphoria which predominates, but agitation, impulsivity, and rage. The majority of this excess of feeling and energy is unleashed on the boyfriend, from whom she demands not just sex but pain, not just fun but risk, and not just love but obsession, hunger, infatuation. He has neither the patience nor the stamina. He resists and then resents more and more her continuous desires and needs and advances. Desperate and frenzied, she barely makes out amidst her volatile storming the charges levied against her: “cavernous” “insatiable” “black hole.”

Sensing her loosening grip—on him, on herself—the anxious energy soon breeds paranoia and delusion. She fears he may be slipping drugs into her mouth when they kiss. Or that his roommates are poisoning her toothpaste (prescription toothpaste designed specifically for extra-sensitive teeth). She sees him conducting secret meetings from his car or through her bedroom window. She is convinced he is having an affair with the neighbor, whom she’s never actually seen before (does she even exist?). And soon enough every unfavorable facial expression or missed communication or coincidence or oddly-shaped flock of birds is another piece of evidence that only further proves what she’s known all along: that a conspiracy is transpiring right under her nose—and even worse, that she is the patsy.

By the time she hands in the final draft of her diamond paper, numerous acts of physical violence had been perpetrated in an all-consuming fog of desperation and delirium. She is destroyed and the boy has left, never to be seen or heard from again.

The patient laughs, sings, dances...he bites himself...sometimes is wicked and kills...sometimes he is anxious and seized by terror or hate...sometimes he is abulic...an intermittent disease...repeated...the melancholic is sad, afraid; he isolates himself and cries; he thinks...about death...he exaggerates his evils and his faults...and his illness; he thinks himself a terrible sinner...he feels desperate.

—Posidonius^{xxi}

YELLOW BILE [FIRE]

A proper balance between the four humours – yellow bile, black bile, blood, and phlegm – is essential to maintaining good physical and mental health.

Manic depressive disease is thought to result from an excess of yellow bile fluids. Yellow bile is hot, sharp and caustic; it is also light, subtle and penetrating. Its subtle vapors can penetrate every nook and cranny of the organism, causing sallow, jaundiced, feverish, irritable, inflammatory, choleric conditions on a systemic level, or anywhere in the body. Signs and symptoms include:

mind: anger, impatience, irritability. Forceful, agitated manner. Hypertension, stress.

Insomnia, restless sleep.

head: frequent headaches, migraines. Sore, red, bloodshot eyes.

oral: Red, rough, dry tongue, red around edges. Bitter taste in mouth. Cold sores

blood: bleeding disorders, inflammatory conditions. Hemorrhoids

pulse: full, rapid, bounding pulse

digestive: stomach hyperacidity, giddiness, nausea, vomiting

dreams: of fire, lightning, fighting, yellow things

These fluids burn within the body until they oxidize, char, and turn black, resulting in prolonged periods of melancholia. Symptoms of morbid black bile include:

mind: nervousness, anxiety, moodiness, depression. Lonely, alienated, morose.

Cynical, misanthropic. Fearfulness or shock without a cause

head: fogginess, confusion, lightheadedness, vertigo. Nervous exhaustion, neurasthenia

oral: bittersweet or astringent taste in mouth. The feeling of something

being stuck in the throat.

blood: poor circulation, cold hands and feet. Tendency to form clots and embolisms.

pulse: weak, thready.

digestive: irregular, erratic, or perverted appetite, anorexia, intestinal obstruction.

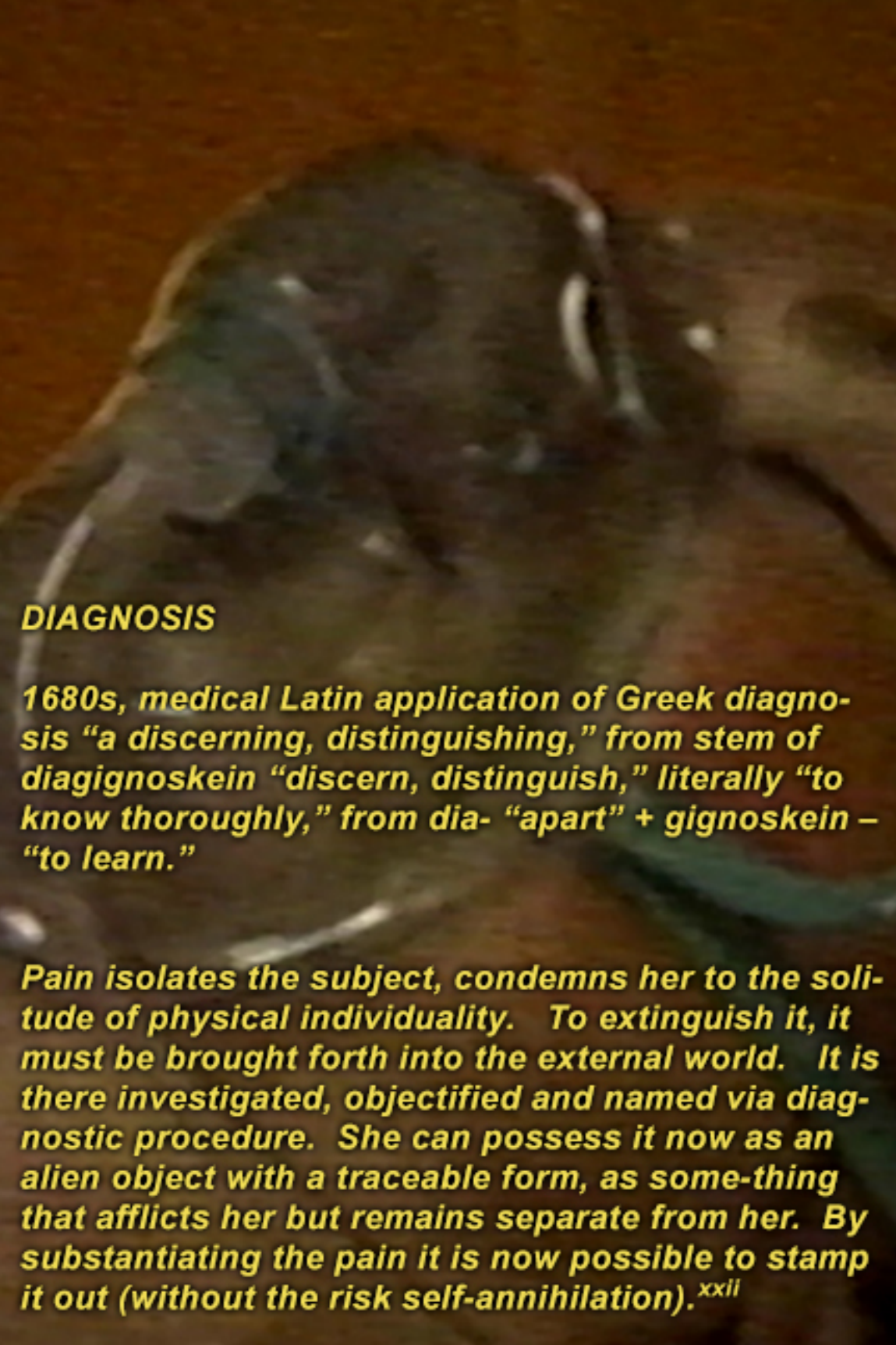
dreams: of dark and gloomy places, fearful nightmares

2008 (until her mother comes)

Too engrossed in her many predicaments to leave the house or perform essential tasks, she lives off whiskey, stale confetti cake, and a large bag of fast food which she has rationed out and keeps in the freezer. Such poor nutrition combined with a severe lack of sleep and stress due to the mis-reading of numerous school assignments results in further breakdown and increasingly desperate and persistent phone calls home to her mother, whom, despite the fact that, as a stoic and a pragmatist, is almost never able to understand or empathize with her in a satisfactory way, has always been her #1 in times like these.



Home video shot by her father, 1989.



DIAGNOSIS

1680s, medical Latin application of Greek diagnosis “a discerning, distinguishing,” from stem of diagignoskein “discern, distinguish,” literally “to know thoroughly,” from dia- “apart” + gignoskein – “to learn.”

Pain isolates the subject, condemns her to the solitude of physical individuality. To extinguish it, it must be brought forth into the external world. It is there investigated, objectified and named via diagnostic procedure. She can possess it now as an alien object with a traceable form, as something that afflicts her but remains separate from her. By substantiating the pain it is now possible to stamp it out (without the risk self-annihilation).^{xxii}

2008 (with her mother)

During one of her phone calls home she is so inconsolable that her mother worries she may actually throw herself off the roof as promised. As a precautionary measure, she gets on a plane the very next day.

While visiting, her mother takes her on walks around the block, stocks her refrigerator with fresh vegetables, and fixes the screen door she'd blindly torn through. She also takes her to see 'one of the best psychiatrists in town.'

At the appointment she is asked to describe in detail her current state of mind, her personal and family history, and the degree to which her moods affect her daily life and overall sense of well-being. As the session is drawn to a close she is diagnosed with bipolar disorder, which seems to displease her mother very much. And she believes she knows exactly why it displeases her: *she believes her daughter has somehow manifested these symptoms since her first (tentative) diagnosis of the disorder; with an outline in place, she has spent the past six years merely filling it in—adapting to it despite herself, because she is a pathological faker, a faker who doesn't even know when she's faking, a faker who will do anything for the certainty granted by the specificity and nameability of a particular, tangible, treatable disease.*

She herself considers the possibility: is she really so sure that she'd accurately reported her experiences? What if these experiences (her 'symptoms') had indeed been mediated and adulterated and in-part constructed by her previous diagnosis and/or knowledge of the disorder? What if she is

simply enacting a script she'd subconsciously written? How would she know? And if this were the case, then what would that mean in terms of her personality, her identity, in general? Is it possible that her entire being is nothing but a series of imitations that, over time, have come to make a define her?

But the doctor is convinced—not only of the correctness of his diagnosis, but that such neurotic introspection is moot considering the fact that she has clearly proven to herself that her own thoughts are not to be trusted. And so he writes a prescription for anti-psychotics and anti-depressants, which she dutifully picks up from the pharmacy and then never looks at again.



But if it's possible to manifest a mental illness, then might it also be possible to manifest an LSD experience? If thinking you have a disease can alter your brain chemistry enough to actually produce the symptoms of that disease (or at least make you sick, more generally speaking) – i.e., if a diagnosis is a 'drug', and language is its chemistry – then could other forms of thinking, of being in language – alter your brain enough to simulate the effects of a drug such as LSD?

"LSD"-as-drug

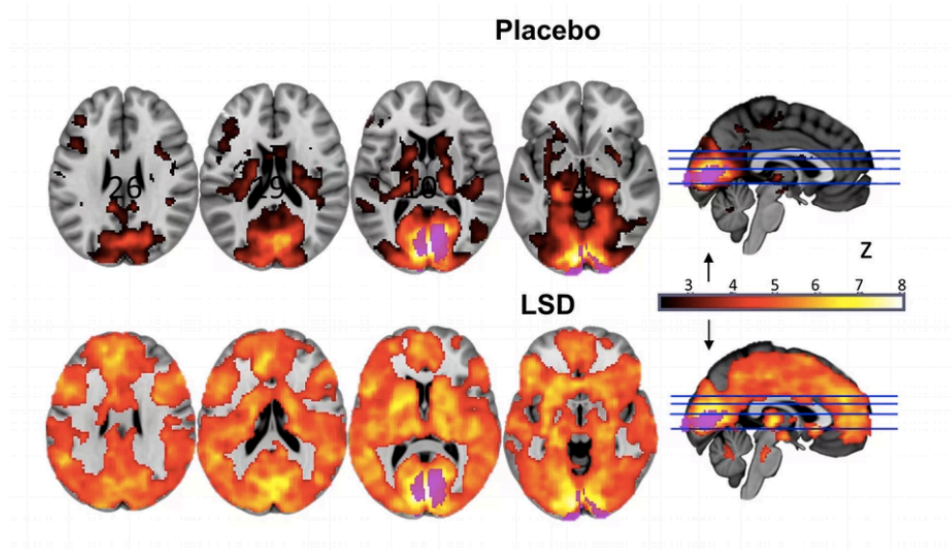
"LSD"-as-thought experiment

To dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But it is more complicated than that because simulating is not pretending: "Whoever fakes an illness can simply stay in bed and make everyone believe he is ill. Whoever simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms" (Littre). Therefore, pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the "true" and the "false," the "real" and the "imaginary." Is the simulator sick or not, given that he produces "true" symptoms?

—Jean Baudrillard^{xxiii}

The Pharmacodynamics of LSD-25

Recent studies have shed some light on exactly how LSD affects the brain. Using an array of imagining technologies, researchers were able to perform the first modern brain scans of people injected with the drug, revealing its impact on different networks and their connectedness. Most notably, the scans showed that people on LSD experience images from many parts of the brain—not just the visual cortex (which processes information from the outside world). They also showed that various networks and regions of the brain previously segregated—in particular those involved with hearing, vision, attention, and motion—became more integrated and interconnected—they “spoke to one another,” resulting in a more “unified brain.” At the same time, other networks broke down. For example, there was a loss of connection between the parahippocampus (associated with memory encoding and retrieval) and the retrosplenial cortex (associated with memory, imagination, navigation)—an effect that researchers believe could be responsible for people’s reported sense of “oneness,” “loss of personal identity,” and “self-disintegration.”^{xxiv}



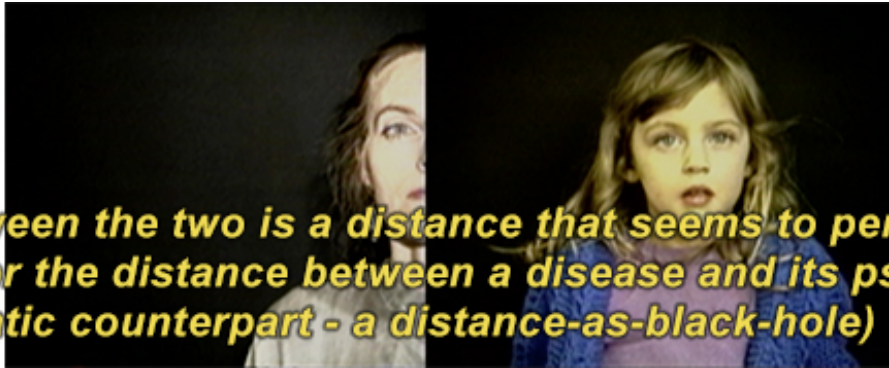
While the pharmacodynamics of LSD-25 are not entirely known, it is thought to work primarily on the serotonergic pathways of the central nervous system. These pathways, which together compose the most expansive and diversified system in the brain, are involved in the regulation of wide-ranging processes, such as mood and emotion, aggression, sleep, appetite, attention, anxiety, memory, perception, and cognition. Due to its structural similarity to serotonin, LSD effectively disrupts its neurotransmission, overstimulating some receptors while agonizing or blocking other. Because serotonin functions primarily as a *mediating*, inhibitory neurotransmitter, when its normal activity is disturbed, the following neuron in the chain is freed and thereby becomes more active and excitable. The subjective effects of LSD are therefore thought to be principally caused by chemical *disinhibition*, which has the potential to affect all of the aforementioned critical systems in some way (as illustrated in the scans

above). Thus, rather than acting directly or immediately on any one part of the brain, LSD mediates various interrelated processes through an indirect inhibition of the entire serotonergic system, which itself serves primarily to inhibit and mediate.

Later That Summer Day, 2012

I try to get my father to describe in detail his own experiences with LSD. His attempts are futile, which brings him to laughter. After all, how *could* one articulate an experience defined, precisely, by a loss of self? How do you describe your own little death? And if the psychedelic experience is ineffable by nature—if there are, as claimed by so many, simply no words to describe it—then what is the difference between writing about it with or without ingestion? As a fundamentally inadequate translation, or as an imitation of that translation?

(between the two is a distance that seems to perfectly mirror the distance between a disease and its psychosomatic counterpart - a distance-as-black-hole)



The Following Morning

I wake up to a series of cryptic text messages sent from my father between 1 and 4 AM, many of which contain 'winks' and ellipses. As I soon discover, the messages were sent under the influence of a very large dose of LSD. Apparently his failure to describe, or even remember, his past experiences with the drug had led him back to it (a small vile of liquid hidden in the freezer)

Within an hour after ingestion, as the ceiling and floor and walls around him began to swirl and melt, he found he was unable to move. This was when his wife, Magda, started to record him: he is on the floor of his studio, surrounded by cables and piles of books; his eyes are fully dilated but barely open; he is seeing things and attempting to put words around them; he is flat on his back with arms resting by his sides, hands clinging to the carpet beneath him.

***A Correspondence Somewhere Between 0 and 500 mg
(and an epilogue)***



On August 23rd, 2012, my father and I sit side by side in the auditorium of the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, WA, where his exhibition, glossodelic attractors, is on view downstairs. We read aloud the script below in an ABAB pattern (he reads 'A' and I read 'B'), with the last word of sentence A read simultaneously with the first word of sentence B.

Part 'A' is a selective transcription of his recorded LSD experience; part 'B' is my attempt to relate:

God, I feel sick just to be apart of it all
all of a sudden I looked down at what
what a horrible thing
things started to move
movements that cannot be
between my eyes and the sand, I
I just want to be dead – was
was dead center – nowhere
where is the story? It's all story, it's every moment there
there was a flock of birds flying over me
me? I'm not part of that
that multiplied into 1000s of after-images and together became one
one cannot comprehend the way I feel
feeling the breath of the sky and what
what has given us the tools to show?
shown from the ocean directly from the eye
I see a presence undefined by dimension, lines, words
words heard from a distance distort into pure space
space of love, let's just call it that
that revealed everything as extraordinary
extraordinary place where whatever I can't speak
speaking was not
not me necessarily, because I don't know who I am
amplified – it was distorted exponentially to this
this is real
reality, like a heavy mirage, like heat, which was telling me
me – I am love. Tell me: what is it?
it was so far out of mind, out of the mind's eye
I don't have the foggiest inclination coming
coming like waves, morphing, phasing, forcing you to accept
except to help the person next to you
you are completely unintelligible too

to bring them as close to your being as you possibly can
can't understand a word but
but this moment, you don't know it
it is all around your
your birth into sense, into some sort of being
being is seeing is feeling is 'I'
I don't know what else to say
Saying words, making sense, finding faces was impossible, it's
it's just my little world I guess, it doesn't mean anything
anything and everything it
it means whatever it means
means nothing, I thought, when
when we're on these levels it could mean everything
everything started to zoom out from me
me and you, we're just one microscopic little point
pointing towards a vanishing into nothing
nothing bad, it's all okay, you're just
just then I looked down at this wet asphalt and it was moving
moving alone, becoming
becoming lava beneath me
me; sweet people, help me and
and all of a sudden I
I, you – we are relative to that space created which was
was standing on the back of a giant movement as it showed me that it -
it doesn't matter
matter, material, me, you – everything is interconnected and we are
are we not just flesh tied
tied to everything else
elsewhere, and yet, here we are
our eyes met and we just stared at each other
other is from before
for how long I couldn't tell you
you wouldn't believe what I am witnessing
witnessing time is always a weird thing
things are so intense
tense means nothing, nevermind space
space is pure flight flying through it
it went back into the waters and followed me until these
these words and these things, these generations, they're strange
strange branches washed up and I saw it as dead
dead?...in relation to what?
whatever it was it broke down the walls
walls, rooms, just
just then it switched again
against all that you have to do everyday
everyday mechanisms suddenly became new events, a show

show me the flesh of what it is
 isn't that what perspective makes from your eye?
I mean, what's normal?
 normal is no longer where you stand or what your body can do or not
not even my hands, my notes, little things
 things reveal their circuitry through you
you have to understand
 understanding is not just here or there
there is no meaning
 meaning becomes you
you only create the meaning
 meaning meets meaninglessness and nothing and god
god, it's so incredible where I am right now
 now you are not the center but a speck
spectacular life right here
 hearing with the body all parts of the 'the pattern which connects'
connects all-to-all and
 and at the same time it breaks you
you create everything
 everything is part of everything else and you
you are love and
 and you melt into it and it into you
you are death
 death becomes you
you are
 are dead yet somehow still have mind
mind, space, whatever you want to call it
 it's what you might call 'cosmic' when you
you don't know where I am right now
 now you feel everything that used to matter falling away
away in another zone of infinite possibility
 possibility pushing toward the void of
of everything
 everything that you used to hold on to but now this
this can't be, it's not just a little thing
 thing we call 'self' is in
in fact it's tremendous
 tremendous unrest
wrested wide open
 open like a limitless aperture the 'I'
I don't care what it is
 is resistant at first, it pushes away
away with it
 it fights what it's being shown but then it
it just takes me
 meets you there where

where did I first meet you?
 you are neither left nor right
right now
 now there is no out or in
in this life
 'life flows on within you and without you'
you see what I mean?
 meaning is what I no longer know
no reason to doubt it
 it's as if the universe is readily reading your mind
mind is where we are
 artificial attachment you had to the concept of you
you have to let go
 goes away suddenly and there
there's nothing to say but what it was and what it is
 is no longer a fear of death in the still of it
it is what it is
 isn't that the point?
points, lines – it's beyond that
 that we give ourselves to it?
it's the very beingness of beingness
 beingness without inside, outside, here, there?
there is nothing that separates what I'm saying from what are you right now
 now where am I?
I am nothing
 nothing I say brings me closer to you
you don't have to worry
 worry turns to dread when I know
no, you have to understand
 understanding is only another word
words are nothing without you
 you are only another word inside of me
meeting them on the other side
 sideways I guess is the closest I'll get.

The full-page images in this chapter include stills from raw footage and home video shot by GARY HILL, raw footage shot by MAGDA HILL, and a photo of a “Crystal Jelly” (*Aequorea victoria*) by MARKUS NOLF licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

ⁱ Franz Kamin, *Ann Margret Loves You & other psychotopological diversions* (Barrytown: Station Hill Press, 1980), 31.

ⁱⁱ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 87.

ⁱⁱⁱ Albert Hoffman, *LSD—My Problem Child* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 12.

^{iv} Hoffman, *LSD*, 13.

^v This is a brief and very general interpretation of Jacques Lacan's notion of 'The Real.' Original, in-depth theorizations of the concept can be found in *Écrits* (1966); *The Seminar. Book I* (1988); *The Seminar. Book II* (1988); and *The Seminar. Book XI* (1977), amongst others.

^{vi} R. Bowen, "Physiology of Vomiting," *Colorado State University Biomedical Hypertextbooks*, last modified April 1996,

<http://arbl.cvmbs.colostate.edu/hbooks/pathphys/digestion/stomach/vomiting.html>

^{vii} Matthew Hutson, "Magical Thinking," *Psychology Today*, last reviewed November 2015,

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200803/magical-thinking>

^{viii} Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 41-44.

^{ix} Brion Gysin, *I Am That I Am* [excerpt], sound poem performed on BBC radio in 1960. Gysin later stated that the piece was inspired by Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*, in which he quotes the famous divine tautology, "I am that I am" (Jason Weiss, *Writing at Risk: Interviews in Paris with Uncommon Writers*, 68)

^x This is a brief and very general articulation of Jacques Lacan's conceptualization of subjectivity in relation to 'The Symbolic.' Original, in-depth theorizations can be found in *Écrits* (1966) and *The Seminar. Book III* (1959-1960), amongst others.

^{xi} Matthew Potolsky, *Mimesis: The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2006).

^{xii} Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," *October* 31, Winter (1984): 28-30.

^{xiii} Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961), 43.

^{xiv} Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

^{xv} Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 150.

^{xvi} Kristeva, *Horror*, 4.

^{xvii} *Ibid.*, 1.

^{xviii} Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 83.

^{xix} Kristeva, *Horror*, 3.

^{xx} *Ibid.*, 4.

^{xxi} An early description of mania and melancholia given by the Greco-Syrian scholar *Posidonius* (c. 135-51 BCE) in *The Bipolar Book: History, Neurobiology, and Treatment*, ed., Aysegul Yildiz, Pedro Ruiz, Charles Nemeroff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4.

^{xxii} Deborah Caslav Covino, *Amending the Abject Body: Aesthetic Makeovers in Medicine and Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004).

^{xxiii} Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 3.

^{xxiv} Ian Sample, "LSD's impact on the brain revealed in groundbreaking images," *The Guardian*, April 11, 2016, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/apr/11/lsd-impact-brain-revealed-groundbreaking-images>



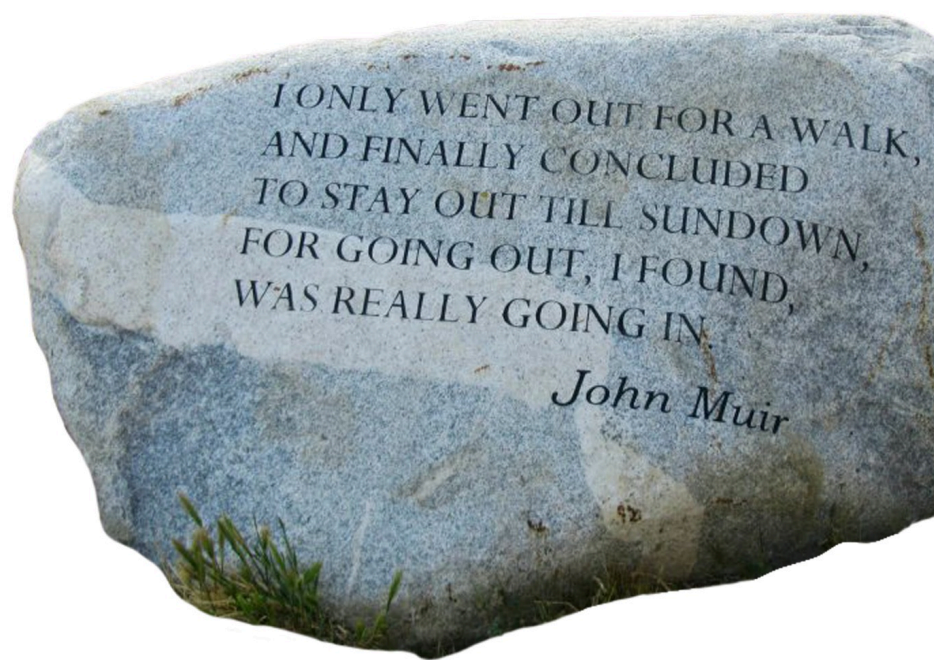
“1,000 MILES ON THE PACIFIC CREST TRAIL”

It used to be said that landscapes – pagus, those borderlands where matter offers itself up in a raw state before being tamed – were wild because they were, in Northern Europe, always forests. FORIS, outside. Beyond the pale, beyond the cultivated land, beyond the realm of form.

—Jean-François Lyotardⁱ

May 4th 2011

I had a plan: we would walk the entire length of the Pacific Crest Trail—roughly 2,650 miles from the border of Mexico into Canada; while walking, I would conduct field research—notes, photos, audio recordings; I would see many things; I would have plenty of time to think about the many things I saw; I would collect ethnographic material; I would gain insight; we would return home after completing the trail and I would write about the experience as a ‘case study’ for my dissertation chapter on the wilderness.



The Pacific Crest Trail

In 1932, Clinton C. Clarke, a Harvard-educated businessman living in Pasadena, CA, proposed to the US Forest Service a backcountry trail that would extend from the border of Mexico to Canada, “traversing the best scenic areas and maintaining an absolute wilderness character.”ⁱⁱ Tracing the crest of nine mountain ranges through California, Oregon, and Washington, this “primitive pathway” would pass through 22 national forests and 5 national parks, including what are now protected wilderness areas.

The project was approved and Clarke was put in charge of organizing the routing of the trail in collaboration with the National Forest and National Parks Service. Preliminary surveys of the land revealed two long-distance trails already built (the Oregon Skyline and Washington Cascade Crest trails), and two others already underway (the John Muir and Tahoe-Yosemite trails in California); Clarke thus re-imagined his project as a means of linking these trails together in order to form one continuous route.

By 1935, with the help of the Civilian Conservation Corp, Boy Scouts of America, and YMCA groups, a complete report and detailed map of this route was sent to Washington for review and amendment. The report was examined by field men of the National Forest and Parks Service who then corrected and approved it.

During the summers of 1935-1938, Warren Lee Rogers, an avid outdoorsman and mountain climber who met Clarke in 1932, led the YMCA relay

teams on scouting trips along the trail's updated route. Once proven "passable," the corrected route was adopted and officially named the Pacific Crest Trail: "A primitive wilderness pathway in an environment of solitude, free from the sights and sounds of a mechanized Nature."ⁱⁱⁱ

As a means to promote, protect, and manage the building of the trail, Clarke, together with Rogers, the Boy Scouts, the YMCA, Ansel Adams, and others, organized the Pacific Crest Trail System Conference. The association's primary mission was to organize the construction of the trail, and lobby the federal government to protect the route and the surrounding areas. In a conference bulletin from 1945, peppered with quotes from the nature writings of Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and John Muir, Clarke outlines the early history of the PCT and reveals his motivations for building such a trail:

Mechanization has created a soft, flabby civilization with marked deterioration in the physical, mental, and spiritual caliber of our youth due to too much bossing, regulating, and regimentation [...]

The medical report of the US Army on the physique of the 2,000,000 young men taken into the armed forces shows a serious deterioration in the strength of their legs and backs, causing a misplacement of the internal organs and a lowering of vitality and endurance. In a word; too much

sitting on soft seats in motors, too much sitting in soft seats in movies, and too much lounging in easy chairs before radios.^{iv}

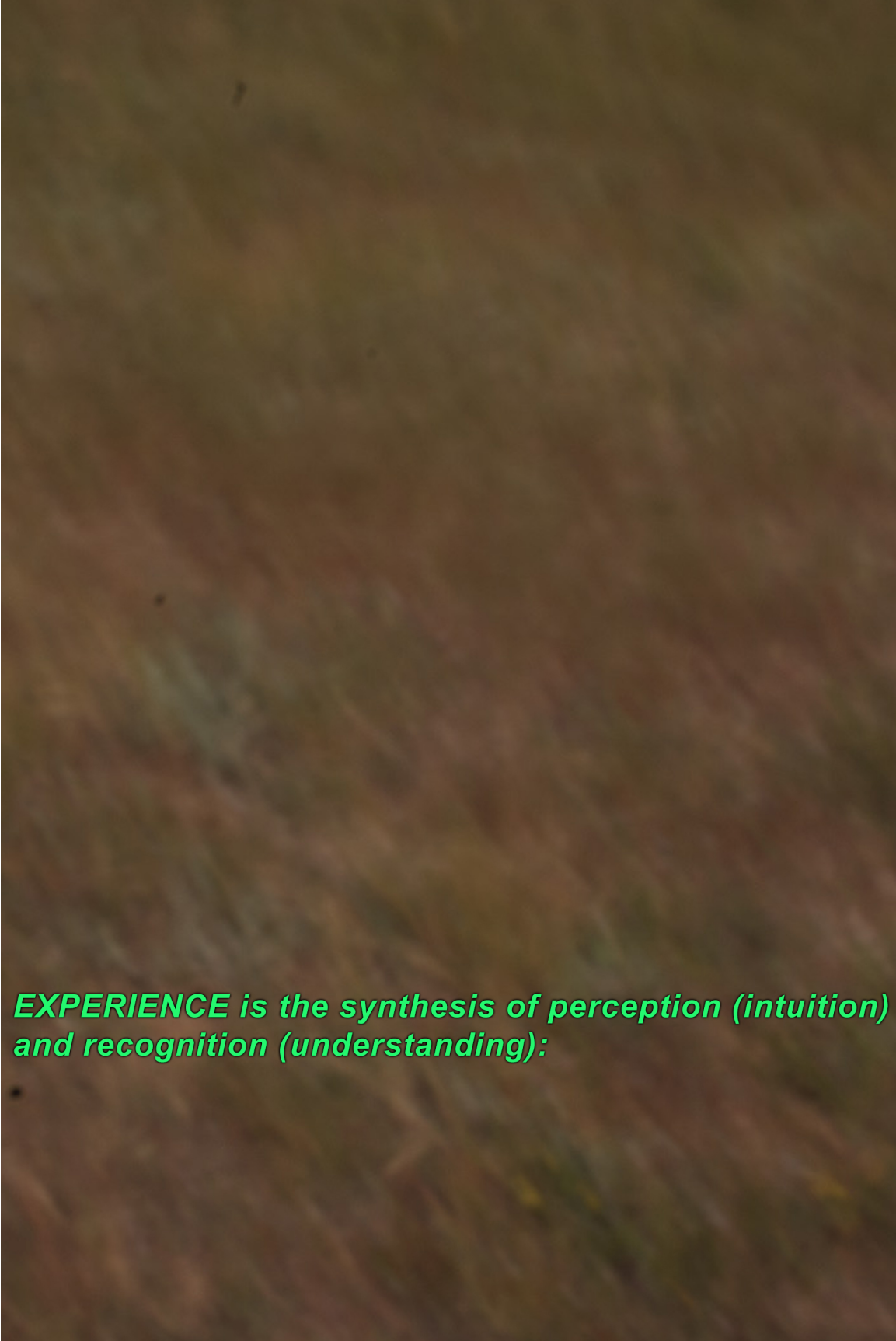
The antidote? More time in nature:

Now what are the fundamental purposes behind this great Trail? [...] There are three important aims and objectives. First, the preservation of the wilderness regions. Second, programs of exploring expeditions of adventure and romance that will create leadership, self-reliance and sound physical development. Third, to lead people back to a simpler and more natural life and arouse a love of nature and the outdoors.^v

In few regions of the world – certainly nowhere else in the United States – are found such a varied and priceless collection of the sculptured masterpieces of Nature as adorn, strung like pearls, the mountain ranges of Washington, Oregon, and California. The Pacific Crest Trailway is the cord that binds this necklace; each gem encased in a permanent wilderness protected from all mechanization and commercialization...^{vi}

Though the PCT was not officially declared finished until 1993, in 1968 it was one of the first trails to be designated a National Scenic Trail under the National Trails System Act. Two years later, a teenager named Eric Ryback completed the first thru-hike of the trail, which he recounted in his monograph, *The High Adventure of Eric Ryback*. From the backpacking boom of the 1970s onward, the PCT has grown increasingly popular, with numbers of attempted thru-hikes climbing every year.





***EXPERIENCE is the synthesis of perception (intuition)
and recognition (understanding):***

Objects impress upon the mind and produce sensations (sense-impressions or 'passive' representations). These sensations are conditioned by the mind's a priori intuitions of space and time; that is to say, I perceive (intuit) them as referring to objects 'out there'—in a space other than 'the space that I am'—and as persisting for some duration of time. The totality of these sense-impressions constitutes the manifold of perception (empirical/sensible intuition). Perception, then, is the apprehension of a manifold.

I do not, however, apprehend the manifold as a totality; rather, I receive each impression in a separate act of consciousness. I therefore do not apprehend them as belonging to an object—to some-thing—but as a spatio-temporal array of unstructured and disconnected representations—a chaotic 'mess' of sensation. The object thus appears to me, but is yet undetermined, and, consequently, cannot be recognized or comprehended 'as an object'—either generally or in particular: I apprehend 'it,' but not as the object that it is, i.e., I do not experience it as such.

In order to have an experience of an object, I must not only perceive (intuit) it, but also know it—i.e., identify, be consciously aware of—what it is that I'm perceiving. The appearance must, in other words, be thought. And in order to think an object, I must have a concept of it. The concept is what enables my recognition of the various representations as representations that belong to the object. If I did not have such a concept under which to group the various sense-impressions, then not only would I be unable to synthesize the unity of the manifold, but I would be unable to comprehend its synthesis, i.e., experience the

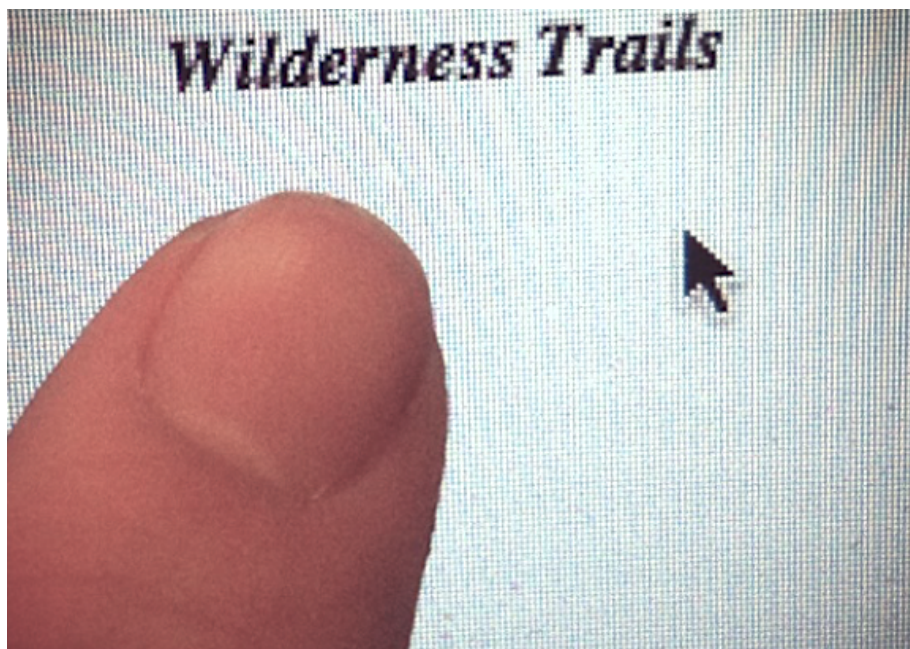
unity of the object. Concepts mediate and thereby give form to sensory information, thus allowing me to comprehend an object (to experience it as 'something' in particular).

However, to have an empirical (a posteriori) concept—a concept derived from experience—I must have certain a priori (pure) concepts already in-place, as these concepts, like my intuitions of time and space, presuppose the very possibility of experience in general.

These concepts ('the Categories') are the mind's most fundamental 'functions' or 'rules' for synthesizing (giving form and meaning to) perception. While empirical concepts serve as a necessary condition for the experience of some objects, the Categories constitute the necessary condition—and thus extent and limit—of the experience of all objects. These concepts are the means by which we interpret data at the most general level, before we are able to even conceive of particulars:

- I. Quantity: notions of unity, plurality, and totality
(e.g., I have the notion of "one thing" "several things" or "all things"/"everything")*
- II. Quality: notions of reality, negation, limitation
(e.g., I have the notion of this being "real," that this "is" or "is not," or "is only in part")*
- III. Relation: notions of substance and accident; cause and effect; activity and passivity
(e.g., I have the notion that there are relationships between things, variables, cause and effect, and that some things "act" and others are "being acted upon")*
- IV. Modality: notions of possibility and impossibility; existence and non-existence; necessity and contingency (e.g., I have the notion of "impossible" or "possible" even before I make any judgments about the impossibility or possibility of particular objects/events)*

Experience (empirical knowledge) is thus constituted by the synthesis of intuition (perception) and thought (which is itself the synthesis of empirical and a priori concepts).^{vii}



Wilderness Trails, photo by Anastasia Hill, 2013.

August 4th 2011

They abandon the trail somewhere near Upper Kinney Lake, CA. They hitchhike to the nearest Greyhound bus terminal and buy two tickets home to Seattle. In Seattle she starts working on her chapter immediately. She works on it nearly every day. Day after day after day. But nothing gets written. Why? At first it seemed the problem was one of semantics: *A trail mediates the (supposedly 'unmediated') wilderness and thus our experience of the wilderness.* But then, *what is the wilderness?: When I write the word 'wilderness' what, exactly, is it that I'm referring to? A landscape federally designated as such? A state of mind or 'way of seeing'? An idea? A metaphor?* Every meaning seemed codependent with and thus inseparable from the next; how, then, does one go about *using* the word as a means to designate or define something in particular? Perhaps *this* is the real matter at hand...

And so she researches the history of their conflation—the history of the wilderness as a landscape and experience and idea and metaphor. A year goes by. Still nothing written. Then another year passes. And another and another. The same. What she had first identified as a seemingly benign, linguistic ambiguity—a slippage to be accounted for and then moved on from—had, in effect, consumed her. The problem, incited by semantics, was now psychological; that is, it no longer concerned a single word, but the very nature and limits of thought in general.



Anastasia Hill <a.yumeko.h@gmail.com>

I can't do it

2 messages

Anastasia Hill <a.yumeko.h@gmail.com>

Sat, Jun 7, 2012 at 5:50 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Hi [REDACTED]

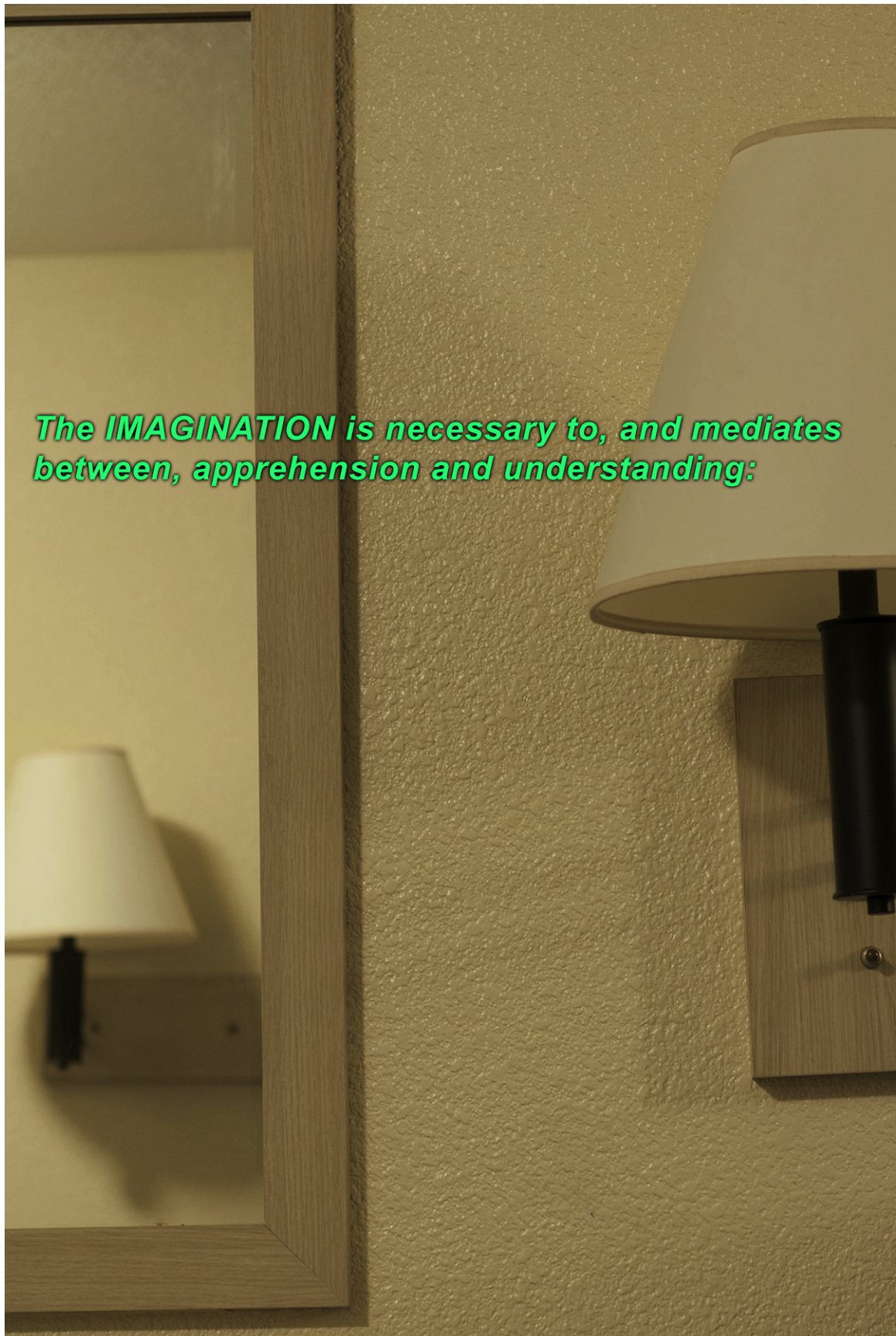
I'm writing to let you know I will not have a chapter draft by the 15th. I tried my best but confronted the same issues I've been dealing with all year.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I'm so sorry to disappoint you again and again. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

~ Anastasia



The IMAGINATION is necessary to, and mediates between, apprehension and understanding:

Each representation (sense-impression) is received separately, i.e., in a separate act of consciousness. Thus, in order to perceive these separate representations as belonging to one object—in order to apprehend the totality of the manifold—I must remember or ‘keep in mind’ how each intuition precedes. If I were not able to keep in mind the succession of intuitions that I have apprehended, then the apprehension would be useless, since each representation would essentially efface those that came before it. And if I were to forget all representations that preceded the current one, then I would never be able to apprehend the unity of the manifold.

The synthesis of reproduction—performed by the faculty of imagination—is thus necessary to all successful acts of apprehension, insofar as it unifies the sensory manifold into a whole; a complete image. This, in turn, ‘readies’ the manifold for comprehension by the understanding, without which the experience of objects would be impossible. The synthesis of apprehension (perception) is therefore conditioned by and inseparable from the synthesis of reproduction (imagination).

In addition to its reproductive capacity, the imagination also enables us to recall the past, to imagine, and to anticipate the future. It allows us to form or ‘imitate’ representations of objects we have encountered before, and visualize that which we might encounter in the future. The faculty of the imagination is therefore productive and reproductive, as it constitutes an imaginative power unto itself, and mediates between the power of intuition and understanding.^{viii}



An impression, photo by Anastasia Hill, 2011.

Some Fateful Night in April, 2012

She and Buck reluctantly attend an opening. They meet and start a conversation with an artist named R. At some point in the night she finds herself alone with him. He tells her about the video project he's been working on: over the past few months he's been hiring day laborers outside the Home Depot to come back to his studio where he interviews them on camera about their experiences crossing the border (he too had entered the US illegally and was without papers for many years). She tells him about her recent failed attempt to hike the entire length of the Pacific Crest Trail: she tells him that before leaving she'd read in one of her guidebooks that migrants sometimes use the trail at night as a means of navigating their way through the desert and into California; and how uncanny and sad it was to see evidence of this fact along the way—Mexican candy wrappers, discarded clothing, nocturnal scuffling—evidence of desperation in a place 'designed' for some kind of recreation and self-fulfillment.

They spend the rest of the evening discussing their mutual distaste for hiking and possible titles for his new video.

I invited them back to my studio and interviewed them about their lives, working to find common ground through our shared experiences (for about three years I myself had searched for work standing on the street at labor agencies, and was hired out as a general laborer at various construction sites along with other undocumented workers). While forging this connection, mediated and captured by the camera, I surveyed the subtle details in their words, mannerisms, and movements. The final video was then stripped of sound, the speaking parts edited out, leaving behind only the intensities and pauses between thoughts and actions...

—R^{ix}



A judgment is a specific kind of cognition (a conscious mental representation of an object) that is propositional by nature. It is a thought: “this object has certain qualities or attributes.” A successful thought, one in which we have a concept and are able to pick out the objects to which it applies, constitutes a case of empirical knowledge (I know about the object). The failure to come up with knowledge likewise results from: having an intuition that one is not able to apply a concept to, i.e., we can apprehend something in space and time but we do not know what it is; or, having a concept to which no intuition corresponds, i.e., there is no object to which the concept applies—we have an idea but we do not know that it is, and thus it remains an ‘empty’ thought.

My ability to think or know about an object is equivalent to my making a judgment about it. In order to make judgments, however, I must have the concepts to which they correspond. In respect of Quantity, for example, to judge something as universally true, I must have the concept of unity; to judge something as true only to particular things, I must have the concept of plurality, etc. The Categories thus constitute the ‘pure forms’ that all judgments (thoughts) must take. They are not only embodied in and correspond to the relevant forms of judgment, but are literally imposed upon those objects of experience by the faculties of the judging subject in acts of judging: in making a verbal statement about an object, the subject makes a judgment. All attributes of every object, insofar as we can judge them, are contained in the list of Categories. And because the Categories are a list of that which can be said (or thought) of every object, they are related only to language.^x



Still from *Diamond Box*, video by R, 2013.

Group Sex

She and Buck run into R at another opening where he introduces them to his friend, Anaconda. After pretending to look at the art for an appropriate amount of time, they all leave together and end up at some minimally populated lounge where they begin flirting awkwardly on the empty red dance floor under slowly undulating colored lights. First she is dancing with Anaconda, and then with R. She and Buck use their eyes to check in with each other (*is it okay that I have my arms around another woman?—yes*).

When the bar closes Anaconda invites everyone back to her apartment around the block. It's a studio apartment with nothing in it but a faux vintage purple velvet fainting chair, a pile of books and a mattress on the floor. In her refrigerator is nothing but beer and a half-eaten cake the local newspaper surprised her with when she was nominated for their annual visual arts award.

As a certain sheepishness sets in, Anaconda attempts to break the ice by sharing a new video she's been working on. Everyone huddles around the small screen of her camera and watch a p.o.v shot of her hand in her tights masturbating until she (supposedly) climaxes and drops the device (presumably the one they are watching the video on now) onto the floor. No one is quite sure what to do or say next, so Anaconda turns up the music and begins to undress; R follows suit. Soon she and Buck are naked on the floor; then he is with Anaconda, and she is with R.

Things progress and she becomes increasingly euphoric—not as the result of any sexual arousal per se—in fact, the actual touching is somewhat unpleasant, and the whole thing feels a bit contrived (too “pornographic”)—yet, there is something intoxicating about the mere fact that she is currently engaged in what she supposes would be called ‘group sex’ or ‘an orgy’ (albeit a rather small and timid one). This recognition of her own ‘free spirit’ fills her with a self-satisfied kind of joy. She feels an intense (though in retrospect, misplaced) love for these people around her, for the situation in general. Hot tears stream down her face—tears she wouldn’t have even noticed except that the others did notice and were apparently unsettled and then turned off by them. Both men go soft. Anaconda, perhaps embarrassed to find herself completely naked, no longer cushioned by alcohol, with two limp men and a strange girl crying on her floor, makes a comment about her and Buck’s ‘youth’ and ‘inexperience.’

Still entangled with R’s body, she looks over at Buck to help her somehow. But his eyes are vacant—the only expression left on his face is one of mild disgust. Without saying a word, he gets up, gets dressed, and walks out. She throws on some clothes and runs outside in attempts to follow him, but he is nowhere to be found. And when she goes back to the apartment and rings the intercom there is no answer. She rings it again and again, but nothing. She then becomes painfully aware of the fact that she has no phone, no wallet, no keys, and no shoes on. She is standing outside at 3 AM with nothing but swollen nipples and regret.

She finds a payphone around the corner. She calls her mother collect—no answer. She calls her father collect—no answer. These are the only two numbers she knows by heart; as far as making phone calls, she is out of options. But her father lives about 3 miles away, so she starts walking. She cries softly to herself with every step. Her stockings get runs up to her waist. By the time she gets to his condo she is a complete mess. She rings the intercom—nothing. She rings it again and again—nothing (*he would later confess that the reason he didn't answer was because he assumed she was his friend Martin calling him either drunk or high or both*).

With no options left, she spends the rest of the night and morning in a 24 hr. diner up the street, recounting the entire string of events to the manager who listens while making her oatmeal and tea. When she finds Buck the next day, he tells her that he no longer loves her—that seeing her like that took something from him, something irretrievable.

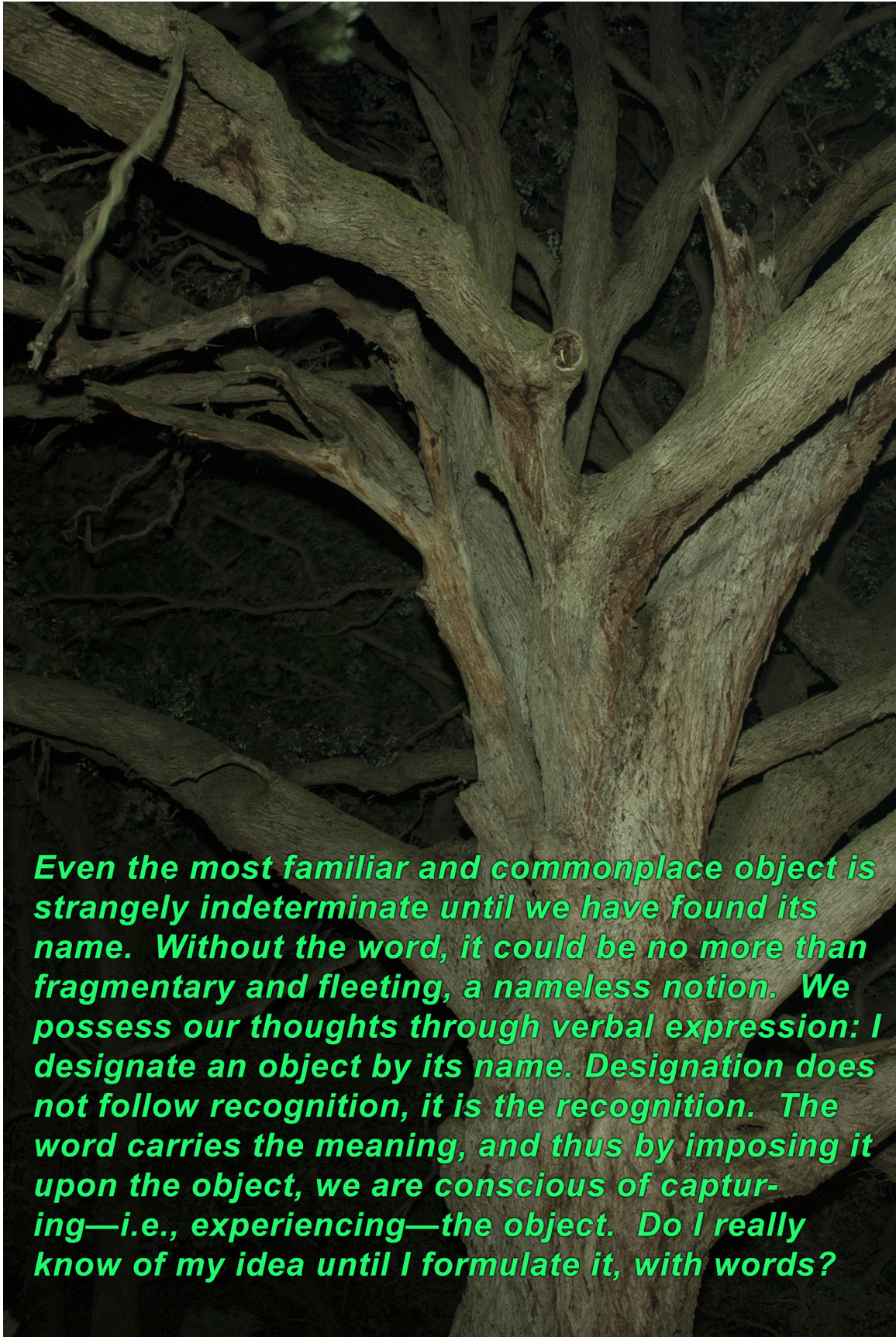
The following week, R leaves his wife. A week after that she gets together with R.

The wilderness for the Puritans was more than a physical locality, more than a Biblical myth. It was the symbol of an unstructured state of mind that today would be labeled madness. The use of the tradition assumed a model of human consciousness in which that state of mind, the wilderness, undermined the foundations of sanity, and it was used to preach madness as the only path to God. It called on all human beings not to shun the wilderness but to surrender their security to madness.

At first, the soul recoiled in horror, resisting the suggestion that it might not be in control, that it might not really know what it was doing or where it was or why. The acceptance of this judgment, if it came, came as a gift that either arrived in a flash or dawned with anxious incredulity. But as it came, it separated the self, if only for a moment, and the soul saw itself caught haplessly in the turbulence of cause and effect, reacting only to its lusts and hidden instincts, unable to affirm anything but its own immense helplessness, sinfulness, and fear. The terror of this revelation was the NO that the universe thundered against man's feeble yes. This experience was considered ultimate. This was the sound of the voice of God[...]

To experience such uncertainty was to experience terror. Not to be able to make a move without the realization of hypocrisy, to have all thoughts condemned the instant they arose, for perception itself to be called into question was the pit of confusion, the wilderness of despair and doubt. Yet this madness was the wilderness that had to be crossed before there could be any hope of reaching the promised land. This madness was the 'liberty' that led to salvation.

—David Ross Williams^{xi}



Even the most familiar and commonplace object is strangely indeterminate until we have found its name. Without the word, it could be no more than fragmentary and fleeting, a nameless notion. We possess our thoughts through verbal expression: I designate an object by its name. Designation does not follow recognition, it is the recognition. The word carries the meaning, and thus by imposing it upon the object, we are conscious of capturing—i.e., experiencing—the object. Do I really know of my idea until I formulate it, with words?

The 'wilderness'

To have an experience of 'the wilderness' I must not only *perceive* (intuit) it, but *recognize* (think, comprehend, understand) it. And in order to recognize it, I must have a concept of the 'wilderness;' that is, I must have a concept to which the word 'wilderness' has been assigned. What is this concept?—e.g., *what does the word 'wilderness' signify?*

The word 'wilderness' comes from the root 'will'—as in *self-willed, willful, uncontrollable*. 'Will' evolved into 'wild'—*being lost, unruly, disordered, confused*. 'Wild' then extended to the variations 'wilder,' 'wildern', and, finally the noun—'wilderness:'

1. a wild and uncultivated region
2. a tract of wasteland
3. a tract of land officially designated as such and protected by the U.S. government
4. a part of a garden set apart for plants growing with unchecked luxuriance
5. a bewildering mass or collection

The word 'wilderness' does not denote a specific set of physical features, but rather a collection of (relatively subjective and ambiguous) *qualities*—qualities that could apply to many types of objects; not just natural landscapes, but any thing or space that is 'wild, uncultivated, unknown' (virtual reality, dreams, fear, nausea, confusion, madness, orgasm...). As such, the 'wilderness' functions more like an adjective than it does a noun: like beauty, for example, I can *infer* it, but I cannot experience it purely and directly—I cannot, in other words, experience the wilderness *as an object in and of itself*, just like I cannot

experience beauty *as an object in and of itself*; rather, I experience it only indirectly, as a trait or quality possessed by some other object. Unlike beauty, however, the 'wilderness' *is* a noun: it is *not*, technically speaking, a quality or judgment that relates to an object—it *is* the object.

To have an experience of the wilderness, I must have the concept 'wilderness.' And because the concept 'wilderness' is not a concept that denotes specific physical features of a certain class of objects, I could hypothetically have an experience of the wilderness whenever I perceive something (or perceive something in such a way) that could be subsumed under the concept 'wilderness,' i.e., under the concepts 'wildness,' 'uncultivated,' ' uninhabited,' 'unknown' etc. I could, therefore, have an 'experience of the wilderness' just about *anywhere*.



Still from an interview with Charles Manson, 1989.

Truth or Consequences, NM, December 2012

She is living with R at a residency in Truth or Consequences, NM. He is working on a new series of photographs and she is trying to write. She is one month pregnant. She is sick and irritated and confused. She visits various 'expecting' forums but does not relate to pregnant women. She does not find herself filled with love but with uneasiness and revulsion.

Over the course of their month-long stay they visit White Sands National monument and shop at Wal Mart and eat fast food and buy and decorate a Christmas tree. R gets a cold and then develops a relentless dry cough—a cough he says he gets every winter. His hacking drives her crazy. It is the aural correlative to this unwanted pregnancy. She blames him for the multiple intrusions. She becomes increasingly hateful. She is a hateful, swollen cow—she is bovine, she is livestock—she gets fucked like a farm animal—like something that breeds, something with low-hanging udders—like something that does nothing but eat and sleep and shit and reproduce. *Do I even have the capacity to love?* She dry-heaves into the cold sand outside their front door. She curses him and herself and this terrible little town.



A hateful, swollen cow, photo by R, 2012.

...The Builder. These are black-and-white photographs of decaying, deserted structures in desiccated, desolate landscapes. Once, while driving from Yakima to Ellensburg, I passed a landscape that's much like the ones in these images (four in all). It was hilly, harsh, and sparsely vegetated. Occasionally, a military installation would appear in the distance. Occasionally, military trucks would approach and pass. Occasionally, there was no other car for miles around. And as the road rose and fell, I felt the need to have sex, the need to negate this lifeless landscape with the flows and discharges of sexual desire. Landscapes always do this to us. They make us want to do something to them: to connect with them, to lose ourselves in them, to change them.

The landscapes in The Builder series appear to be real. They are instead fusions of different landscapes: These are the hills, bushes, structures, skies of Eastern Washington, Chile, Peru, and other places [R] has visited. But the fact of the matter is this: A photograph of, say, a part of the landscape between Yakima and Ellensburg would be much further from the truth than the ones [R] fabricated for his thesis. We never see just one thing (that is the illusion), we see many things at once (the actual).

I borrow this from Richard Dawkins: A computer is a serial processor that creates, by means of speed, the illusion of doing a number of tasks simultaneously. The human mind is the very opposite: It creates the illusion of seriality (moment by moment) by collapsing simultaneous chronological and spatial processes. We experience everything, the living layers (landscape after landscape) of the past, as one neat moment in the present.

—Charles Mudede^{xii}

January 5th 2013

abortion |ə 'bôrSHən|

noun

1. *the deliberate termination of a human pregnancy*
2. *an object or undertaking regarded by the speaker as unpleasant or badly made or carried out*

It's her 27th birthday. She is laying on a bed inside a woman's health clinic in Seattle. She winces as the anesthetic is injected into her cervix. She winces not only from the pain but from the tragic irony of it all: that she and Buck had decided to hike the PCT together, in part, to heal the wound (or make amends for, or somehow justify) her previous abortion; that they had failed to complete it as they'd promised themselves and each other; that somehow between that abortion and the trail their relationship was destroyed; that, in order to postpone admitting to *that* failure, they decided to experiment with group sex; that this decision did finally destroy them; that their destruction led to another couple's destruction; that these mutual destructions led her to R; and that this union has lead to another aborted fetus, which will, most likely, destroy them.



The Builder No.1, image by R, 2012.



A language system is not separate from, nor does it simply correspond or refer directly to reality - it is neither an autonomous entity nor a transparent medium of communication; rather, language is a human activity: words only become language if they connect with our uses of them.

The speaking (or writing) of words give them their meaning: the meaning of language is thus dependent upon how words are used within the multiform activities of human life. As such, saying (or writing) something with words is analogous to making a move in a game—a 'language game.'

A language game includes the specific language used and the action into which it is woven. Like any other game, without rules, language could not function. However, the rules of language games do not carry within themselves their own legitimation; rather, they are subject to a 'contract' between 'players' (interlocutors). While different language games are incommensurate with each other (moves in one game cannot be translated into moves in another), it is possible to change the rules of any given game.^{xiii}

Summer in NY, 2013

She sublets a room in a 'loft' in Brooklyn. The unit is subterranean and without windows or air conditioning (unworn clothing and shoes grow black mold almost instantly). She shares the space with her cousin, Shayna, and two others—a nightclub waitress with three pet turtles and a bulimic social media manager who works at a real estate firm in the Bronx.

She has big plans. She's going to do nothing but write. She's going to finish her entire dissertation in the next three months. She wakes up everyday at 6 AM and goes to the teacher's library at Columbia University and works until the building closes, at which point she takes the subway back home and continues to work in her room until 2 or 3 or 4 in the morning.

Her cousin is on campus Tuesdays and Thursdays re-taking a class on 'real analysis' in the department of statistical mathematics. They meet for lunch and discuss various topics. They discuss the fact that Shayna is in love with someone who doesn't love her back, and that someone loves her whom she no longer loves; and whether R, who is currently at another residency in Maine, should be trusted or not; and how strange and not exactly great it is that Magda (her stepmother) is pregnant; and how when she had taken an 8 hour greyhound bus to visit R in Maine last week she accidentally took too much Dramamine and a little bit of codeine and this had lulled her into a very surreal and not entirely unpleasant hypnagogic state in which she listened to the same song set to repeat for the entire trip without realizing it; and how when she had finally arrived

R was late to pick her up from the bus station and that this had resulted in a blow-out fight in the motel room (and how weird it was that this shitty little motel in the middle of nowhere had a Thai restaurant inside that actually wasn't half-bad); and how she had stormed out and walked around all night listening to that same song and dreaming about what it would be like to be with the person who made the song; and how funny it was when she came home and that giant cat-sized rat came running across the floor out of nowhere and ran straight into her shoe before scurrying up beneath the dishwasher (and how they'd both screamed like girls on TV); and how they really ought to do something about the rat infestation—*but what?*; and how she had gotten herself into some legal trouble by impulsively buying a plane ticket to Iceland and then deciding she was too afraid to fly; and that what a coincidence it was that her ex-boyfriend's ex-roommate—the boyfriend who had left her in Santa Barbara because she was too 'needy'—was living in their building (which used to be where rockets were manufactured, right?).

But this type of talk only occupies a relatively small portion of their conversations, which revolve mostly around their respective confusions, frustrations, and epiphanies—she with her writing and Shayna with her 'real numbers.' And sometimes she would cry into her much-more-level-headed cousin's arms and her cousin would try to help her by diagraming and writing proofs of her scattered and ill-formed ideas; and sometimes this would make her feel better, but the feeling never lasted long.

The set of Natural numbers - $\mathbb{N} = \{1, 2, 3, \dots\}$ is unbounded, so the set of natural numbers ($\mathbb{N}$) is infinite in size. The $\mathbb{N}$ is a countable set of numbers by definition. The $\mathbb{N}$ is an infinite countable set.

Def. A set S is countable if there exists an injective function $f: S \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ from S to the natural numbers $\mathbb{N}$.

Thm:

Cantor: There are more real numbers (the all numbers that can be represented as a decimal between 0 and 1) than there are numbers in the entire set of natural numbers.

$\Rightarrow$ The reals ($\mathbb{R}$) are more infinite than the natural numbers ($\mathbb{N}$).

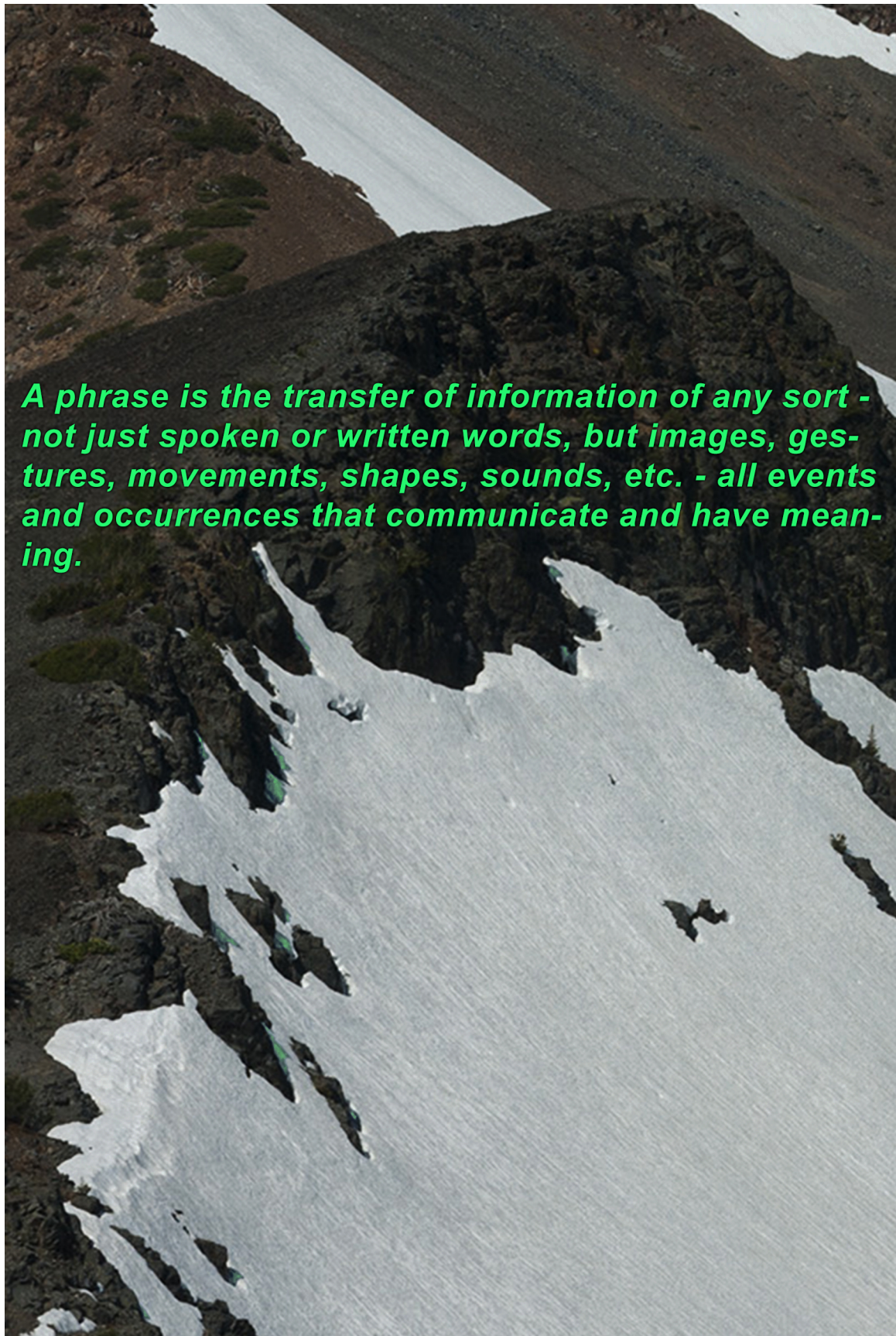
Proof: (By contradiction)

Suppose that $f: \mathbb{N} \rightarrow [0, 1]$ is any function. I will show that is the decimal expansion of $f(1)$ to $f(n)$ (meaning

n	$f(n)$
1	0.31415...
2	0.37373...
3	0.14285...
4	0.70710...
5	0.37500...
$\vdots$	$\vdots$

making a list of all the numbers 0 and 1). Of course I can't write all on one piece of paper, as it goes forever down and to the right. f be "onto" (can there be one number that represents every number between 0 and 1? I assert the

answer is no. For example, look at the numbers in the diagonal above. Suppose we add each digit to get 0.48321. This number cannot be in the table. Why? 1) It differs from $f(1)$ by its first digit, 2) It differs from $f(2)$ by its second digit, 3) It differs from $f(n)$ by its n th digit. There will always be missing values! So there are (infinitely) more numbers between zero and 1 than the natural numbers! Since the natural numbers are infinite, this means there are different sizes of infinity!!!



A phrase is the transfer of information of any sort - not just spoken or written words, but images, gestures, movements, shapes, sounds, etc. - all events and occurrences that communicate and have meaning.

Each phrase event is constituted by a set of relations that together create the 'phrase universe.' The four instances that make up this universe include: 1) the addressor, who enacts or presents the phrase; 2) the addressee, to whom the phrase is presented; 3) the reference that the phrase is about; 4) and the sense—what the phrase says about the reference.

Like a language game, the meaning of a phrase depends upon its syntactical conformity to a certain set of rules, i.e., on the particular way in which its constitutive components interconnect. These rules determine its type and to which 'phrase regime' it belongs: prescribing, performing, denoting, reasoning, knowing, describing, demonstrating, recounting, questioning, showing, ordering, etc. Each regime forms phrases differently; a phrase that obeys the rules of one regime (or 'language game') is therefore untranslatable into another.

However, while phrases from different regimes cannot be translated into one another, they can be linked. Genres of discourse, e.g., science, philosophy, politics, etc., supply the rules for linking together heterogeneous phrases: 'after such and such a kind of phrase, here are those phrases that are permitted.' The rules themselves are motivated and justified by the goals and purpose of that particular genre, e.g., to know, to teach, to incite, to arouse emotion, to evaluate etc. A genre of discourse—or, body of knowledge—is thus constituted by linking phrases and the rules for their linkage.^{xiv}

MENTAL DISORDER

The various mental disorders pertain to specific deficiencies in, and derangements of, the faculties of cognition.

1. Insanity is caused by a deranged power of judgment:

a healthy function of judgment (the power to make analogies), is confused with a function of the understanding (uniting particulars under concepts), such that “the power of imagination, in a play resembling understanding, conjures up the connection of disparate things as universal, under which the representations of the universal are contained.”

2. Amentia is caused by a perversion in the power of the understanding: The faculty of the understanding is overpowered by the imagination. The imagination distracts and disorders one’s stream of thoughts to such a degree that she is unable to form coherent, objective judgments about the world. In short, amentia results from the inability to order mental representations, and thus to have ‘experiences’ (i.e., an experience ‘of something,’ as opposed to a series of chaotic and fragmented sense-perceptions).

3. Craziness is caused by the deranged power of reason: “The mental patient flies over the entire guidance of experience and chases after principles that can be completely exempted from its touchstone, imagining that he conceives the inconceivable [such as]...the squaring of a circle...and [that] the comprehension of the mystery of the Trinity are in his power.”^{xv}

Depression, Winter 2013

Her family and a group of family friends go on their annual “surfing in warm weather” trip—this time to Costa Rica. She wants to join but doesn’t want to fly, so she and R take the bus.

They travel non-stop through Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. They are hassled at every border. Afraid of contracting a food-borne illness, she eats nothing but Clif bars and corn nuts and drinks nothing but bottled water and coke. R’s ankles swell up and his blood vessels begin to burst. He tells her he has an arrhythmia. A little girl in front of them vomits into a bag for eight hours straight. The televisions are loud and play throughout the night (no headphones). (*Was it beautiful?* She doesn’t remember). They are stopped for half a day somewhere in the Guatemalan countryside due to protestors blocking the street. She breaks down and eats some beans and rice. They hitchhike. They ride a ‘chicken bus.’ R takes hundreds of photos and hours of video along the way (*what would I do without him?*). She thinks about the plan she had years ago to travel through Mexico with Buck. She was going to travel around the country and then write about it.

They arrive seven days later and are greeted by her father and very pregnant stepmother. They eat and drink and talk and swim until they are too tired to move. She and R fall asleep on a futon in the living room, with Buck sleeping on a lawn chair beside them and Zane, another friend, on the couch.

The next morning she wakes up to a door swinging lightly in the breeze. She looks down to see hermit crabs scampering across the kitchen floor. *What time is it?* She looks for her phone, but it isn't where she thought she put it. Then Buck wakes up and notices his phone is missing too, and that his computer is gone. And then everyone wakes up and together realizes that someone (or, more likely, a group of people) came into the house at night and stole everything but the clothes they were wearing.

The rest of the trip is spent picking up the pieces—talking to police, flying to San Jose for a new green card (R), mourning the loss of all the material that was on all of the stolen devices, swimming, eating, drinking...

A week later she and R travel back home on the bus with nothing but some bread and paperback books in Ziploc bags. It's Christmas day by the time they reach Mexico City and she has developed an ear infection in both ears. At the border someone decides they look suspicious and separates them for questioning. Because they have no phones, when they are let out of their respective holding cells they are unable to locate each other. When she asks a guard near the exit for help he makes the suggestion that her 'boyfriend' left her behind on purpose (you know, because he got what he wanted, i.e., safe passage into the US). R waves to her from the other side of the glass doors.

A few days after returning to Seattle, on the day of her 28th birthday, she wakes up with a horrible flu. This is also the day she is supposed to drive back down to Santa Barbara to TA a course on Classical Film Theory. But she can

barely keep her eyes open. Her mother, as dedicated as ever to her daughter's good standing, offers to drive her down.

The next morning her feverish body is buckled into the car, fully loaded with vitamin waters and books on tape. Less than an hour into their 18 hour drive, she begins breaking out in hives—thick streaks of itchy and burning bumps all across her arms and torso accompanied by red hot palms and feet. Her mother stops at a gas station and buys calamine lotion and cortisone and Benadryl. They continue south, anxiously, silently.

By the time they reach Santa Barbara the worst part of the flu is over—she had woken up that morning drenched in sweat, which she presumed meant that her fever had broken. But the hives persist, in fact they seem to be getting worse. And there is something else as well, something she can't quite put her finger on—something in the air; a heaviness, a sense of dread. She doesn't want to be alone. She begs her mother to stay with her—for just a few days—but this time she doesn't.

Months go by. The hives are relentless—breaking out randomly every few minutes and then disappearing just moments later. They happen everywhere now—on her eyelids, her toes, her nipples. Every move she makes seems to incite them. The physical discomfort in combination with not knowing the cause in combination with her persistent inability to write anything even moderately coherent results in an increasingly rapid descent into the pits of dysphoria and despair. Eventually all she does is eat and sleep and shit and cry. She wallows in self-disgust. She spends each day waiting for it to be over, and every night

begs the sun to rise. She grows more and more hopeless. *When will it end?*
She contemplates suicide.

At some point the need for escape becomes desperate—is too much to bear. She shows up at student health sobbing inconsolably about these interminable hives. She is ushered into another room to speak with a psychiatrist. He notes her previous diagnosis of bipolar disorder N.O.S. *But what does that have to do with the hives?* She argues with him. She disputes the diagnosis—again. But he doesn't understand; so he prescribes her another anti-convulsant that they both know she'll never take.



THE DIFFEREND

The incommensurability between phrase regimes is mirrored by the incommensurability between genres of discourse: one genre of discourse cannot be translated into or interpreted by another (the 'rules' of the game do not apply). The empirical phrase regime will forever be at odds with the conceptual phrase regime, just as religious discourse will forever be at odds with political or economic discourse. Because we share no universalizing 'master' discourse through which to communicate, it is inevitable that certain facts, thoughts, and feelings remain unexpressed and inexpressible—not just to others but to ourselves (e.g., when a disharmony arises between what one sees and their ability to adequately conceptualize it). These unrepresentable remainders constitute 'the differend:' "...the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be..."^{xvi}

Situated between and thus outside the different sense-making regimes, the differend therefore signals the limits of a language game. It is a 'bearing witness to the unrepresentable.' As such, it is experienced as a feeling of not being able to find the words to express something—as an inner-tension, a struggle between thought and perception that presses against and strains the mind. The failure is both painful and pleasurable: painful because it defeats, agitates, silences; pleasurable because this silent defeat inspires a certain hyper-awareness and drive—an excitement over the need to invent a new idiom, to establish a new mode of expression, to change the rules of the game. The conflictual experience of the differend is thus inextricably linked to the sublime.^{xvii}

Reporter: *People look at you today, 20 years later, and they still have no idea what you're about. Tell me in a sentence, who you are.*

Charles Manson: (after a series of exaggerated facial expressions) *Nobody.*^{xviii}

Summer 2014

R is at another residency in Woodstock, NY. She is housesitting for her father and stepmother who are away in Poland for the summer with the new baby. A few weeks ago, after having spent months on the floor, she took it upon herself to double her daily dose of the antidepressant she was finally able to convince the psychiatrist to prescribe her. She is waking up. Waking up from the sleep she finds she needs less and less of. A sense of hope, of greatness, of inspiration begins to bubble up within her. An electricity weaves through her body. Her mind quickens—she starts to make bigger and bigger plans. Great things are on the horizon. She learns how to write code and box and play the trumpet. She goes on runs in the night. She cleans the house. She buys and builds and paints new furniture (black). She buys more furniture and paints it all again (white). She spends money—she spends it on plans and adventures and money-making schemes. She is a capitalist. She is a nymphomaniac. Her energy and jocundity are boundless. She feels love for everyone and everything. She has so much love to give. She tells R she's polyamorous. She tells him she's bisexual. *Everything is sex.* Their relationship ends. A few days later she falls in love with someone new. "An angel" she says. "I'm ruined" he tells her. She is ecstatic—euphoric. She decides to write her entire dissertation *this month—it's do or die—make it or break it—go big or go home.* She writes with exigency. Her hands can barely keep up with her thoughts. Everything she sees, every notion, every object, every smell *corresponds* with—gets

incorporated into—the grand scheme—the constellation—an all-encompassing web of meaning. The endless definitions and associations and interconnections become endless epiphanies and revelations and significance. It is exponential, it is never-ending. Its immensity brings her to tears. Hot, rapturous tears of joy.

My mind is a mad-dash—a black Friday—a warm gun—a liquidation.



The Monk by the Sea, Caspar David Friedrich, c. 1808-1810.

But then the inevitable: her thoughts are too many and move too quickly. Everything is grand and expansive and thick and cosmically interrelated and relevant and groundbreaking but there exists no hierarchy or sense of orientation and therefore no aim nor precedent—only an endless hypertextual wall of associations unbridled by discrepancy or discernment. Her thinking becomes increasingly urgent, diffuse, incoherent—one idea bleeds into and becomes indistinguishable from the next. There is a terrible need to keep up with them—to capture each and every revelation—but instead they subsume her. She is overwhelmed, then agitated, then desperate. She feels it all slipping away—she knows this feeling well—she knows what’s coming next. *My mind is a ponzi scheme—a hoarder—a house of cards.* She is frantic. She is lost. She is coming un-done.

She tries to calm herself down with a book. She selects one at random. She does her best to focus but the constellation haunts her. She reads the word ‘void.’ She turns the page and reads it again. And again and again and again. It is there on the top-right corner of every page. There is space around it, the white of the page. They are positioned together ‘just so.’ This recognition is somehow unbearable—flooded with meaning and at the same time hollow. Looking at it brings on a torrent of memories. *Memories of what?* She is now weeping uncontrollably. The word is on the page, the page is in the book, the book is in the world.

Interrupted by a familiar sensation, she looks down to see hives breaking out across her legs. She is weeping and scratching and weeping and scratching. The constellation watches from the tree.

Take a cold shower.

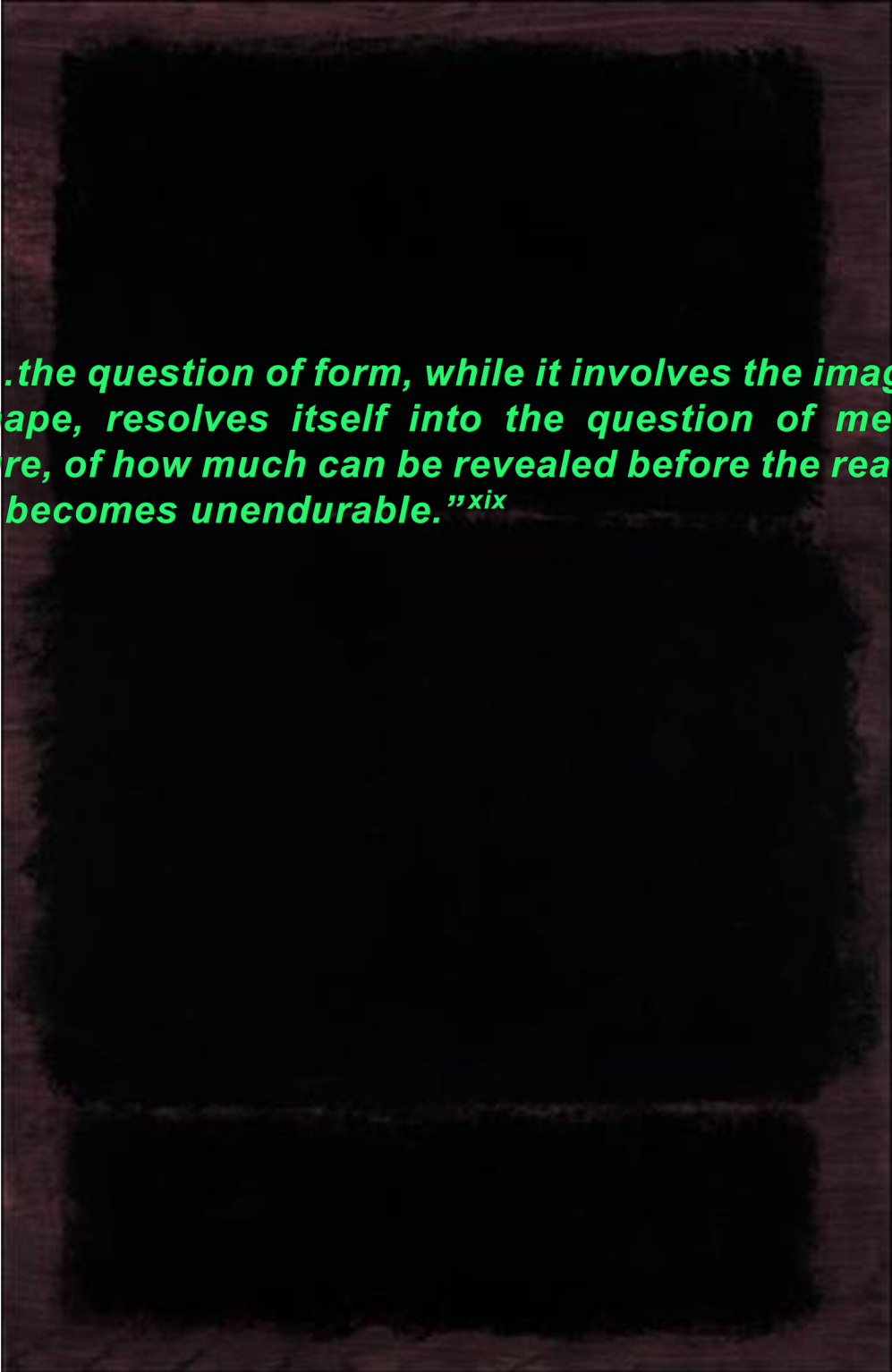
She stands under the water. Her mind continues to race and contort. Fragments of songs – *hey honey, take a walk on the* – layer into and on top of fragments from conversations, bits of writing, single words, sounds, colors. Epiphanies still erupt in flashes but are now underpinned by a mounting sense of artificiality, illusion, deceit. *What will it mean?* The ruminations quicken—she can't decide whether to write 100 books (fill the void) or set herself on fire (*ibid*). But these thoughts too remain inconclusive, get lost in their own midst, are subsumed by the next.

She steps out of the shower. *Perhaps I'm feeling a bit better?* She smears the condensation from the mirror with her hand. She looks at her face. And this is when the real trouble begins. She watches in horror as the whites of her eyes begin to turn black—black with a purplish hue, grey like an old bruise. Panicked, she rushes to another room to look into another mirror—the same. Her brain is bleeding. Rancid blood is seeping down into her eyes.

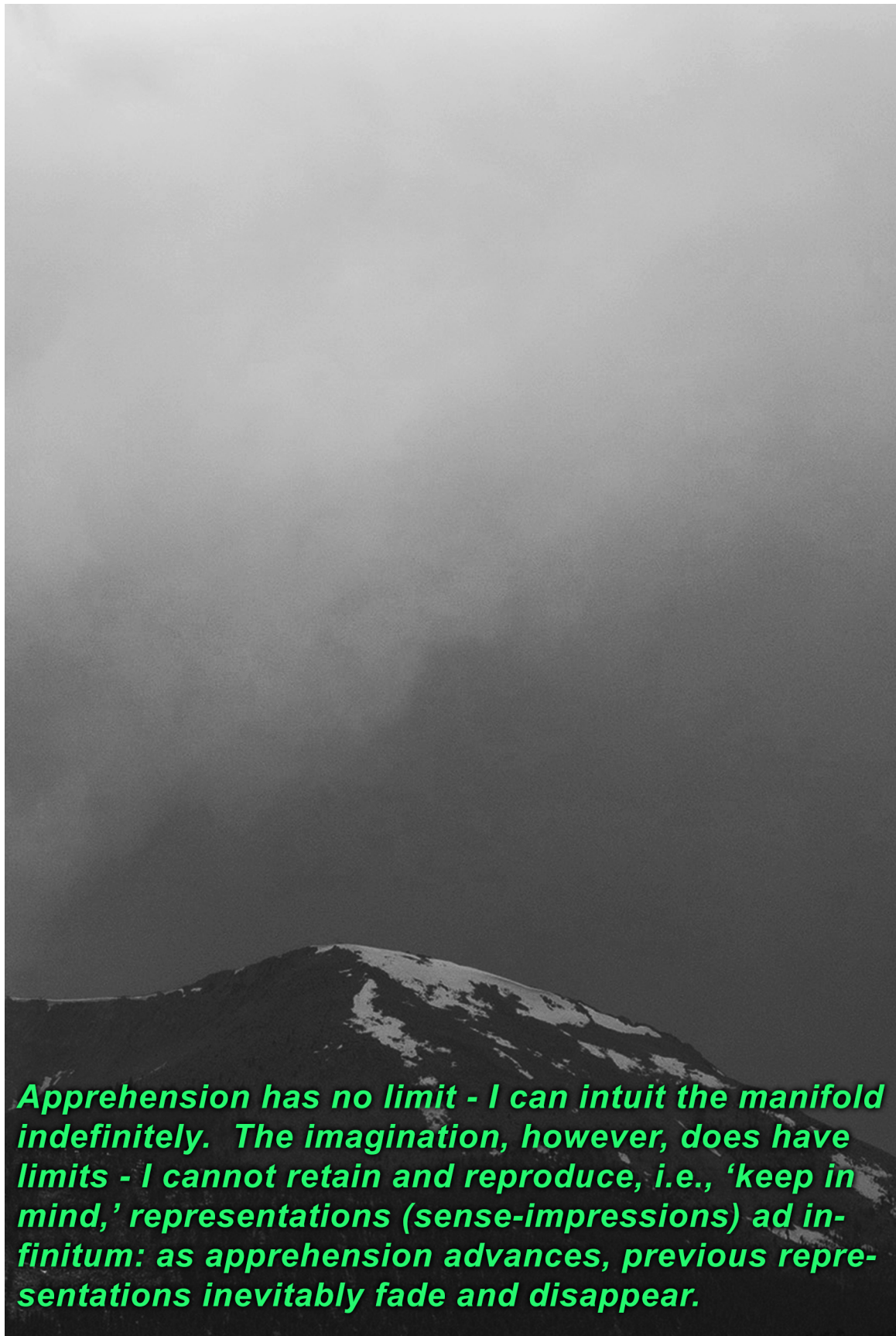
Frantically, she throws on some clothes and gets into a car. She is fleeing the scene. *What scene?* She wishes it were dark out but the sun is shining brightly. *Can I even see?* She is rapidly losing her vision, the world is vague and ill-defined. She is being submerged in it as if it were water. She is suffocating. She is dying.

Blindly, she swings into the driveway of a nearby friend. *Will he recognize me with blacked-out eyes?* He finds her in the driver's seat, sobbing relentlessly, unable to speak. When she finally does, his head tilts with morbid concern. She struggles to breathe. He brings her a mirror. She opens just one eye at first. There is no black, there is no bleeding. He makes her tea. She drinks some water.

An hour later she arrives back home. She draws the blinds. She gets in bed. She sleeps for a thousand years without dreaming.



“...the question of form, while it involves the image shape, resolves itself into the question of measure, of how much can be revealed before the reality becomes unendurable.”^{xix}



Apprehension has no limit - I can intuit the manifold indefinitely. The imagination, however, does have limits - I cannot retain and reproduce, i.e., 'keep in mind,' representations (sense-impressions) ad infinitum: as apprehension advances, previous representations inevitably fade and disappear.

Thus, when I am confronted with a particularly vast object—an object such as the desert, a mountain, a storm, the sea—I find I am unable to ‘take it all in.’ The sheer size or power of the object prevents the imagination from successfully reproducing the succession of apprehended sense-impressions; as the subject attempts to grasp the totality of the object’s detail and magnitude, previous representations are effaced by the new; the image, therefore, is never complete. Overwhelmed by the scene (the immensity of sensory information), the imagination fails to present the sensible manifold as a coherent whole, a totality—that is, it fails to synthesize the object’s unity (a unity commissioned by the faculty of reason):

I look at something, but my imagination wavers, I become dizzy, vertiginous. First catastrophe: I seek an appropriate unit of measure, but I cannot find one; or I choose one, but it is destroyed. I choose another, but it too proves to be inadequate, as if what I am seeing is incommensurable with any unit of measure. Second catastrophe: In my panic, I can perhaps see parts, completely heterogeneous parts, but when I come to the next one, my dizzy spell only becomes worse; I forget the preceding part; I am pushed into going ever further, losing more and more. Third catastrophe: What is striking my senses is unrecognizable; it is something that goes beyond any possibility of aesthetic comprehension. My entire structure of perception, in other words, is in the

process of exploding: I can no longer apprehend the successive parts, I cannot reproduce the preceding parts as the following ones arrive, and finally I can no longer recognize what the thing is. I can no longer qualify the object in general.^{xx}

The object cannot be adequately presented to the mind. Without closure (in the form of a complete, unified representation), it thus appears to go on indefinitely. This, in turn, evokes ideas of endlessness, limitlessness, the infinite. But such ideas are pure ideas—ideas of reason—ideas that cannot, by their very nature, be experienced through sensible intuition. I cannot, in other words, perceive the infinite (the absolutely great) as a totality—as a complete image. The imagination's failure to comprehend the sensible manifold as such, i.e., the failure to present the totality of infinity, is thus a failure of the imagination to satisfy the task given to it by reason (the task to sensibly represent the rational idea of infinite size and/or power).

The faculty of the imagination and of reason are thus caught up in a state of disharmony—a double-bind: the object appears infinite (it's not, but appears so due to the limited capacity of the imagination); yet, we can't perceive this 'infinite' object in its totality because the idea of infinity is fundamentally unrepresentable—it can only be thought, without any sensible intuition, as an idea of reason. This failure of expression on the part of the imagination results in a feeling of agitation, frustration, and even terror or pain, as the subject is confronted with the limits of their own perceptual capacity—with a disconnect between what can be

presented and what can be conceived.

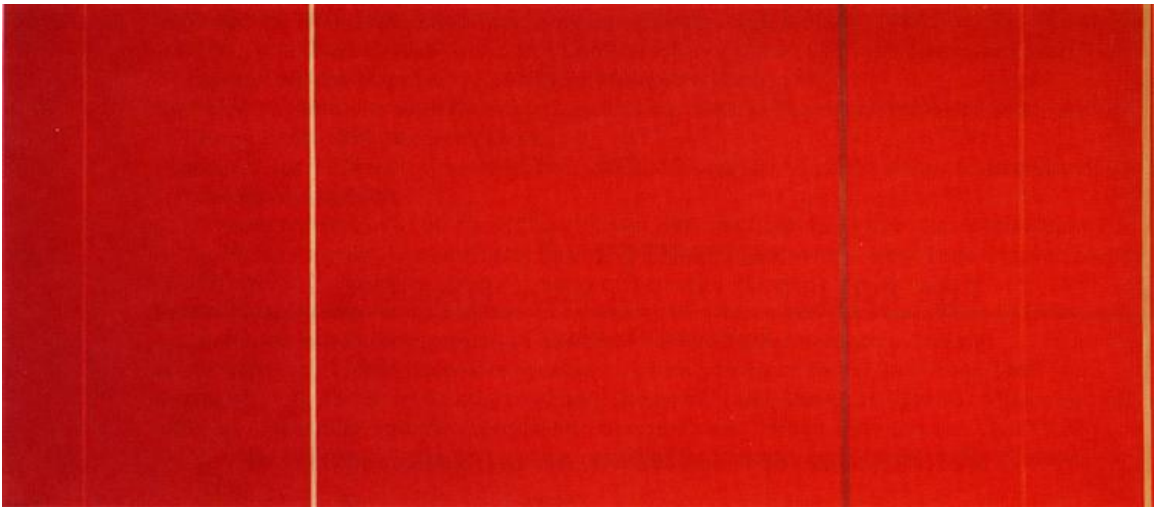
At the same time, the very fact that the imagination fails to satisfy the task given to it by reason serves not only to indicate its existence, but to emphasize its power, i.e., the existence and power of a 'supersensible' faculty of the mind. An awareness of the subject's 'supersensible' capacity is thus necessitated by the failure of the imagination—it comes to her as a 'negative image—a 'representation' not of the infinite but of the impossibility to present it as such (an impossibility that reveals a demand, i.e., the idea). Because this idea cannot be empirically encountered, otherwise we would be able to perceptually grasp it, its very presence—the source of agitation—indicates that we must have a supersensible faculty of the mind from which ideas such as 'infinity' arise. It indicates, in other words, that we are able to think far beyond the limits of that which we can sensibly apprehend. Recognition of this fact consequently generates a kind of pleasure—a pleasure mediated by displeasure—a 'negative pleasure.' It is this pleasure mixed with pain that constitutes the feeling of the sublime.^{xxi}

The sublime moment is thus a 'bearing witness to the Unpresentable.' It presents us with the limit of our senses—with the inadequacy of imagination—a 'negative image' in which the awesome power of the mind is, in turn, revealed. The sublime thus affirms our subjectivity through negation, by showing us its limits. It therefore cannot be said to exist in the objects themselves—in the deserts, the mountains, the storms, the sea, etc.; rather, it exists in the subject, within the mind. An object, therefore, is not in itself sublime, as the sublime

“cannot inhabit any sensible form.”^{xxii} indeed, it becomes sublime if and when it overwhelms and thereby negates comprehension—if and when it appears unbounded, without form, infinite. As such, we may experience the sublime not only in nature, but anytime we are confronted with an incomprehensible object—with any-thing that confounds our ability to synthesize and thereby unify the totality of the manifold:

The aesthetic of the sublime exposes the fundamental and irresolvable difference between feeling and knowing. That is, between knowing and feeling lies a differend that is felt as the pain of thinking coming up against its limits.^{xxiii}

...It is thus situated at the differend between language games and phrase regimes; we feel a mixture of pleasure and pain in the frustration of not knowing how to follow on from a phrase but feeling that there is something important that must be put into words.^{xxiv}



Vir Heroicus Sublimis, Barnett Newman, 1950-1951.

The Sublime

Sublime (adj.)

From *sublimare*, meaning to vaporize, purify, or elevate, a lofty sentiment, deriving from the prefix *sub* (up to) + *limen* (lintel, limit, threshold)

Sublimation (n.)

alchemy

The process necessary for the completion of, for example, a *magnum opus* or *grand work*. Sublimation denotes an exchange of ‘bodies’ and ‘spirits’ similar to laboratory phase transitions between solids and gas:

To sublime (v.)

chemistry

To translate a substance directly from a solid into a gas or vapor. For example, dry ice, which becomes gaseous rather than liquid, is said to *sublimate*.

Sublimate (with obj.)

psychoanalytic theory

to divert or modify (an instinctual impulse) into a culturally higher or socially more acceptable activity.

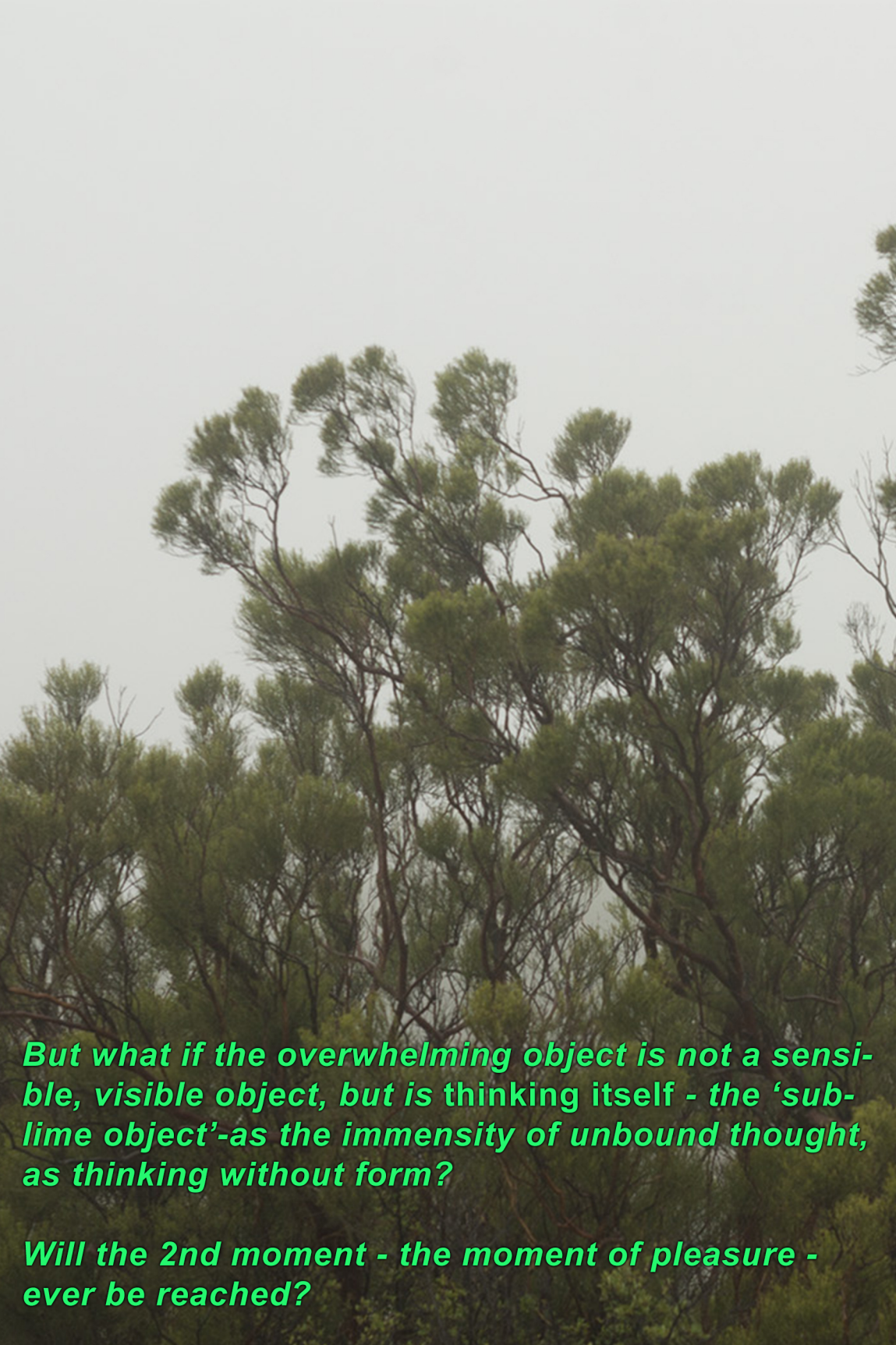
The first philosophical treatment of the sublime, *On the Sublime* (originally *On Great Writing*) was written by ‘Longinus’ (a literary critic whose real name is unknown) sometime during the 1st century CE. Longinus defines the sublime in the context of oration and literature as a “loftiness and excellence in language,” with “the power to provoke ecstasy” and transport the reader outside himself and beyond the limitations of reason—sometimes to the point of distress, bewilderment, or even fear. This aesthetic experience is the result of the artist’s “great spirit”—their unique “gift” or *nature*—together with their expressive aptitude; that is, the acquired or learned capacity to transpose the soul into words. Sublimity is therefore associated with the unsayable, the ineffable—by what is beyond representation because it exceeds rational comprehension—yet,

it is produced through and embodied by writing and speech as well. In other words, the literary sublime can incite an experience beyond or outside the very limits of language itself, i.e., beyond the material of its own production.

...departures in the order of expressions or ideas from the natural sequence...bear...the very stamp and impression of vehement emotion: [just as] those who are really moved by anger, or fear, or indignation, or jealousy, or any emotion...at times turns aside, and when they have taken one thing as their subject often leap into another, foisting in the midst some irrelevant matter, and then again wheel around to their original theme, and driven by their vehemence, as by the veering wind, now this way now that with rapid changes, transform their expressions, their thoughts, the order suggested by a natural sequence, into numberless variations of every kind; so also among the best writers it is by means of hyperbaton that imitation approaches the effect of nature.

—Longinus^{xxv}

[illegible]



But what if the overwhelming object is not a sensible, visible object, but is thinking itself - the 'sublime object'-as the immensity of unbound thought, as thinking without form?

Will the 2nd moment - the moment of pleasure - ever be reached?

We can conceive of the infinitely great, the infinitely powerful, but every presentation of an object destined to 'make visible' this absolute greatness of power appears to us painfully inadequate. Those are ideas of which no presentation is possible...Such ideas, however, can be suggested or alluded to by visible things. [...] Kant himself shows the way when he names 'formlessness, the absence of form' as a possible index to the unrepresentable. He also says of the empty 'abstraction' which the imagination experiences when in search for a presentation of the infinite (another unrepresentable) that this abstraction is itself like a presentation of the infinite, its 'negative presentation.

—Jean-François Lyotard^{xxvi}



Anastasia Hill <a.yumeko.h@gmail.com>

I need help...

5 messages

Anastasia Hill <a.yumeko.h@gmail.com>

Wed, Oct 9, 2014 at 9:10 AM

To: [REDACTED]

Hi [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (the psychological sublime!) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Since the Summer of 2011

I have accumulated over 100,000 typed and re-typed word documents 'about the wilderness.' But what do they mean? Have I said anything at all? Surely something has been said. Something has been expressed. Something that is not the idea itself, but the negative space around it—an outline of the void—evidence of the inexpressible, the incommensurate, the impossible. An 'image' of my failure—an accumulation of failed attempts (the *little deaths piled up*). A mess. A mess that says 'nothing' (a mess that says it all).



r

do you think is a good answer ?



Anastasia Hill

what was the question?

(“Wouldn’t the answer be: ‘that I forgot the question?’”^{xvii})

All full-page photographs included in this chapter were shot by BRANDON ALESON. The full-page scan of hand-written notes is by SHAYNA ANDERSON-HILL.

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- ⁱ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 186.
- ⁱⁱ Clinton C. Clarke, *The Pacific Crest Trailway* (Pasadena: The Pacific Crest Trail System Conference, 1945), 15.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Clarke, *Trailway*, 18.
- ^{iv} Ibid., 21.
- ^v Ibid., 18.
- ^{vi} Ibid., 11.
- ^{vii} A very brief and selective summary of the “Analytic of Concepts” in Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).
- ^{viii} Ibid.
- ^{ix} When R and I were together, I would often help him with his writing (artist statements, applications, etc.). This excerpt is from one such text we worked on together.
- ^x Kant, *Reason*.
- ^{xi} David Ross Williams, *Wilderness Lost: The Religious Origins of the American Mind* (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1987), 11-12, 14.
- ^{xii} Charles Mudede, “Inhabiting Landscapes: Two Theses by Rodrigo Valenzuela,” *The Stranger*, June 13, 2012, accessed February 14, 2016, <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/inhabitinglandscapes/Content?oid=13913039>
- ^{xiii} Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Pearson, 1973).
- ^{xiv} Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
- ^{xv} Patrick Frierson, “Kant on Mental Disorder. Part 1: An Overview,” *History of Psychiatry* 20, no. 3 (2009): 267-89.
- ^{xvi} Lyotard, *Differend*, 13.
- ^{xvii} Jean-François Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).
- ^{xviii} Charles Manson. Interview. 1989.
- ^{xix} Mark Rothko qtd. In James E.B Breslin, *Mark Rothko: A Bibliography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 358.
- ^{xx} Daniel W. Smith, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, by Gilles Deleuze, trans. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xix.
- ^{xxi} A very brief and selective summary of Immanuel Kant’s philosophy of the sublime in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790).
- ^{xxii} Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 131.
- ^{xxiii} Andrew Slade, *Lyotard, Beckett, Duras, and the Postmodern Sublime* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 20.
- ^{xxiv} Ashley Woodward, “Jean-François Lyotard,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/lyotard/>.
- ^{xxv} ‘Longinus,’ “On the Sublime,” trans. W. Rhys Roberts, in *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed., Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971), 88.
- ^{xxvi} Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 78.
- ^{xxvii} Georges Bataille, *The Impossible*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Light Book, 1991), 139.



LOOKING AT NOTHING

Me: Daddy, when are you gonna be done?

My dad: I'm going to tape you all the time

Me: Why?

My dad: 'Cause I'll have your whole life on tape then – every second

Me: But Daddy...I want you to be...I don't see myself anywhere...

My dad: You don't see yourself?

Me: No

My dad: Close your eyes, think about who you are...then you'll see yourself

—Gary & Anastasia Hillⁱ

OEDIPUS REX

A baby boy is born to Queen Jocasta and King Laius of Thebes. Eager for future-knowledge, Laius journeys to the oracle at Delphi, who tells him that his newborn son would grow up to kill his father and wed his mother. In attempts to evade the prophecy, King Laius pins the baby's ankles together and leaves him to die on the slopes of Mt. Cithaeron. But the boy does not die. A shepherd finds him and brings him to Polybus, King of Corinth. Polybus and his wife, Queen Merope, who are childless, decide to raise the boy as their own. They name him Oedipus (for "swollen ankles").

Many years later, Oedipus hears a rumor that Polybus and Merope are not his real parents, so he travels to the oracle at Delphi and is delivered the same prophecy as his father, King Laius. Believing that Polybus is his true father, Oedipus flees Corinth to avoid this horrific fate. During his travels he comes across a group of men where three roads meet. They get into a quarrel and Oedipus ends up killing all but one man, who flees into the mountains. Oedipus continues on his way.

Eventually he arrives to the city of Thebes, which is in great turmoil. Not only has their king been murdered, but the Sphinx has taken up residence outside the city, killing off every man who attempts to outsmart her. Creon (Jocasta's brother), who has been ruling in the king's absence, offers the throne and the queen's hand in marriage to any man who can rid the city of the Sphinx. And so Oedipus goes to the Sphinx, who asks him to answer a riddle:

Which creature walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three legs in the evening?

Oedipus answers correctly: "a man." In shock and anguish over his success and her defeat, the Sphinx throws herself off a cliff and dies. Oedipus is subsequently crowned the king of Thebes and marries Jocasta, with whom he has four children: Antigone, Ismene, Polyneices, and Eteocles.

But their happy life is interrupted when a terrible plague overwhelms the city, sickening and killing the people and their livestock. Oedipus sends Creon to the oracle at Delphi to find out the cause of and cure for the epidemic. When Creon returns, he tells Oedipus that Apollo has revealed through the oracle that Thebes is harboring a terrible abomination – that King Laius' murderer is living amongst them and that the plague will only be lifted when he is discovered and punished for his crime. At the suggestion of Creon, Oedipus calls upon Tiresias, the blind prophet, for guidance:

Tiresias, seer who comprehends all, master of the wise and hidden mysteries, high things of heaven and low things of the earth, you know, though your blinded eyes cannot see, what plague infects our city; and we turn to you, O seer, our one defense and shield.

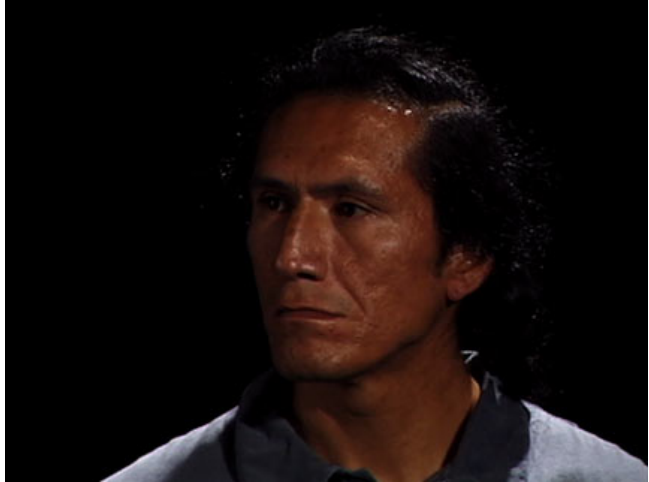
But Tiresias evades the question, answering only that he knows the truth but wishes he did not. This angers Oedipus, who continues to press him, despite Tiresias's warnings. When this doesn't work he insults and threatens Tiresias, who finally reveals that he – Oedipus – is the murderer he seeks. Oedipus doesn't want to believe it, and instead accuses Creon and Tiresias of plotting against him to usurp the throne. Jocasta tries to comfort Oedipus, saying to him that he couldn't possibly be the killer because Laius was killed by thieves at a place where three roads met. But her description jogs Oedipus' memory, who suddenly fears Tiresias may in fact be telling the truth. He sends for the man who survived the attack to confirm what happened one way or another.

Meanwhile, a messenger shows up from Corinth to tell Oedipus that Polybus has died and that the city requests that he return as their king. At first the news is relieving, as Oedipus believes this means he'll never fulfill the prophecy of killing his father. However, the messenger then reveals that he is the shepherd who found him on the mountainside and brought him to Polybus and Merope, who are not his real parents. Jocasta now realizes what has happened and begs Oedipus not to pursue the matter any further, but he ignores her pleas. Distraught, she withdraws into the palace.

The survivor of the attack then shows up and reveals that Oedipus was the murderer. He now knows the truth: he has killed his father and married his mother. Overwhelmed by the knowledge of his crimes, he rushes into the palace, where he finds Jocasta, his mother-wife, dead by her own hand. In a state of desperation, Oedipus rips the brooches from her robes and blinds himself with them:

He tore the golden brooches that held her queenly robes, raised them high and plunged them fully into his eyeballs, uttering words like these: "No more shall I behold such sights of woe, Deeds I have suffered and myself have wrought; Henceforward quenched in darkness shall I see those I should never have seen; now blind to those whom, when I saw, I vainly yearned to know.

Bleeding from the eyes, he begs his uncle-brother-in-law, Creon, to exile him forever from Thebes. Creon does so, and the blind man wanders the wilderness with only his dedicated daughter, Antigone, to guide him.



Oedipus at Colonus, Fulcran-Jean Harriet, 1798. | Martin Cothren in *Standing Apart/Facing Faces*, installation by Gary Hill, 1996.

April 5th 2014, Wonder Valley, CA

The Spectacular Subdivision exhibition invites artists to reflect on questions of housing and real estate in the aftermath of the 2008 housing market crisis.

I arrive to the exhibition site—an undeveloped and unmarked parcel of high desert land on the outskirts of Wonder Valley, California. My performance is simple: standing within a small, pre-assigned plot of land, I read aloud a collection of letters written by a man named Martin while serving an eight-year sentence at the Washington State Penitentiary. I called the work *SHU*:

SHU

1. *an acronym for ‘Security Housing Unit’ (aka Solitary Confinement)*
2. *an Egyptian primordial god, whose name means both ‘emptiness’ and ‘he who rises up’*

The desert landscape—an iconic site of both ‘freedom’ and ‘desolation’ (or the beginning and the end, hinged all the same on vacancy, on limitlessness)—serves here as the open space par excellence. Viewed in relation to its over-determination as such, a prison cell’s regulation and enclosure thus constitutes its opposite. In reciting an 8-year-sentence-worth of letters, I thereby transmit a particular ‘occupation’ from the (‘emptiness’) inside, to the (‘emptiness’) outside.

An act of endurance to be sure (there are hundreds of letters), my role is an ambiguous one; while I am, on the one hand, a passive medium or means of transmission (implicating a degree of sacrifice or even self-flagellation), I am, on the other, yet another ‘warden’ (of the viewer? the site? of the author’s words?)—simultaneously providing an escape while reifying various systems of power and control (as language too is an exhaustive enclosure, another form of alienation).

No matter, the empty spaces involute as the boundaries between occupations and vacancies (each broadly defined) are transgressed.

Within the context of the exhibition, the performance provides an alternative yet parallel perspective from which to view 'gated communities,' 'subdivisions' and the 'housing crash.' In many ways mirroring (or at least symptomatic of) the real estate market, the incarceration market (e.g., the private prison 'boom') was premised on the assumption that crime control was 'recession-proof'—a presumption that, likewise, proved to be incorrect. In addition to nearly constructed (now-discounted) empty condos and foreclosed homes, this has resulted in brand-new prisons all over the country that remain vacant still today; only further devastating the towns they'd promised economic salvation. This, along with the biographical fact that the letters' author was born on and subsequently extracted from a native reservation—another form of subdivision—provide the subtext for the work (and its specter).

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

1709. The Walnut Street Prison opens in Philadelphia under the direct influence and leadership of the Quakers. Originally designed to hold groups of prisoners in large, communal rooms, the ensuing violence and squalor inspired the addition of a 'penitentiary house.' This cell-block, which was the first of its kind (and later named the 'birthplace' or our modern prison system), contained smaller cells for holding individual prisoners. These cells were designed to completely physically isolate the prisoners; their structure not only prohibited all contact and inter-cell communication, but included windows high enough to prevent anyone from seeing the outside world.

1829. The Quakers and Anglicans build the Eastern State Penitentiary, also in Philadelphia. This prison included only single-person cells that were organized along corridors radiating outward from the central guard area. At Eastern State, every single day of a prisoner's sentence was carried out in near total solitude and isolation. Alone day and night, enclosed within a stone cell with nothing to look at or read (except the bible), the hope was that the convicted would use their time to reflect, pray, repent:

In the silence of the cell, contamination cannot be received or imparted. A sense of degradation cannot be excited by exposure, nor reformation checked by false shame. Day after day, with no companion but his thoughts, the convict is compelled to listen to the reproofs of conscience. He is led to dwell upon past errors, and to cherish whatever better feelings he may at any time have imbibed...The mind becomes open to the best impressions and prepared for the reception of those truths and consolations which Christianity alone can impart. ⁱⁱ

More often than not, however, such prolonged isolation resulted not in meaningful introspection, but in temporary or permanent insanity and, in some cases, suicide. Thus, over time, solitary confinement - now more commonly referred to as 'the SHU' (Security Housing Unit), 'seg' (segregation), or 'the hole' - was deployed less and less as a means of repentance and reform, and more as a means of threat, punishment, and administrative control.



Christ in the Wilderness, Ivan Kramskoy, 1872. | A modern solitary confinement cell.

**BY THE
TIME SHE
ARRIVED TO
THE DESERT
SHE HAD
BEEN
THINKING
ABOUT
NOTHING
FOR MANY
YEARS**

“Nothing”

The word “nothing” is an indefinite pronoun, which means that it refers to *something*. But what? 1. *No-thing* in particular, e.g., no determinate, discernable, namable thing (*what are you thinking about ?* – “nothing”); 2. The indication of an absence, lack, negation, or ‘hole’ (*what do you see?* – “nothing”); 3. *Nothing-as-something* (an object that is simultaneously a thing and not any thing, i.e., an impossibility). In any case, the word “nothing” makes something (the concept of “nothing”) out of nothing. *“Nothing”—like every other word—is a “positivization of a void or lack.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

1. Images/(re)presentations “of no-thing”
2. Looking at vs. seeing “no-thing”
3. Being “no-thing”

NON-OBJECTIVITY

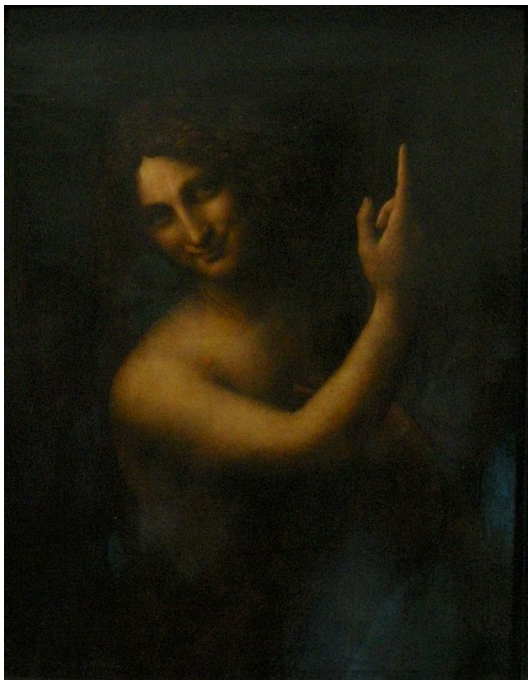
1915. The *Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings 0.10* is presented in Petrograd, Russia and, with it, the Suprematist movement is born (while the 'old world' of representation is reduced to nothing - a '0' from which to begin *what is art* again).

Developed by Russian painter Kazimir Malevich and embodied by his now-infamous *Black Square* (a black square on a white field), Suprematism is a form of 'non-objective' art that focuses solely on basic geometric forms - squares, lines, circles, etc. - and aims at what Malevich refers to as 'non-objective sensation' or 'pure feeling:'

The ascent to the peaks of objectless art is arduous, painful...And yet it brings happiness. The familiar retreats little by little...The contours of the world of objects fade more with every moment; and the same thing continues in the world of figurative notions - everything that we loved and all from which we lived, becomes invisible.^{iv}

It reaches a 'desert' in which nothing can be perceived but feeling. Everything which determined the objective-ideal structure of life and of 'art' - ideas, concepts, and images - all this the artist has cast aside in order to heed pure feeling...^v

Suprematism is that end and beginning where sensations are uncovered, where art emerges 'as such,' faceless...^{vi}



St. John the Baptist, Leonardo Da Vinci, c. 1513-1516. | *Female Figure (Sibyl with Tabula Rasa)*, Diego Velázquez, c. 1648

The world of our sight is like the habitation in prison, the fire-light there to the sunlight here, the ascent and the view of the upper world is the rising of the (soul) into the world of the mind; put it so and you will not be far from my own surmise.

—Plato^{vii}

JOUISSANCE

The infant child is completely helpless, immobile, dependent. He exists in a state of brute physicality, as nothing more (or less) than a biologically-driven bundle of sensations defined by need and satisfaction. The (m)other (an other that is both allegorical and real) is the one who satisfies the infant's needs: she nourishes him, she warms and comforts and soothes him. He is at one with - intimately fused and bonded together with - his (m)other.

In this state of primal unity, there is no space - no sense of distinction or separation between the infant and the (m)other; no difference between two bodies, internal and external, 'self' and 'other;' rather 'I' seem to pass into objects and objects into 'me.' There is, consequently, no real distinction between the one who needs and the one who satisfies: (m)other and child exist as a quasi-undifferentiated, symbiotic dyad - a locked binary in which each partner defines the other in a kind of closed circuit 'feed.'

This period is, for the child, a time of completeness, plentitude, Totality—a time associated with the absolute fullness and uninterrupted immediacy of the Real—the material substrate of things-in-themselves that is ‘prior to,’ ‘beneath,’ ‘behind,’ and ‘beyond’ their future, Symbolic mediation. In the Real, as for the child, the world is “absolutely without fissure”^{viii}—unmediated by language and, thus, without apparent difference or division—without space between things and his experience of them (including the experience of his ‘proto-self’). That is to say, there is no sense of absence or lack—nothing is felt to be missing. Desire, therefore, does not yet exist.

(This mythical unity and sense of fullness is, however, just that; a myth or fantasy that is created retrospectively by the desiring subject [who will come into being marked by lack] within the Symbolic, i.e., it exists at the precise moment that it is already and forever lost, unobtainable, unknowable, impossible: indeed, it can only be experienced and conceived of as a lack, as that which is forever lost. It is, therefore, the very kernel—the root-cause and vanishing-point—of all yearning striving, desiring; and, consequently, of all disappointment, dissatisfaction, restlessness and malaise. While the subject’s ceaseless desire will serve to propel him forward in life—it is, after all, the ultimate ‘carrot on a stick’—to actually obtain the object [the experience of an originary, limitless jouissance—“total satisfaction”—an enjoyment that is not and cannot be symbolized] would entail the very dissolution and destruction of the subject as such. It must, therefore, be experienced only in part, at a distance, in absentia).^{ix}



John Lilly in an early float tank.

Martin

1960. Martin is adopted by a strict military family from Georgia. They give him everything he needs—clothing, food, shelter—but they can't quite bring themselves to love him fully. As he grows older, he comes to realize that he will never belong. He feels increasingly lost, that he doesn't know who he is. He starts to act out. He is punished relentlessly for this by his father. This only aggravates the situation and alienates Martin further.

At age 15, he decides to run away. His plan is to hitchhike all the way to Washington state and then to the Yakima Indian Reservation where he's from, and where he hopes to locate the remaining members of his biological family. Somewhere along the way, he attempts to rob a minimart for food. His subsequent arrest and short stint in juvenile detention would serve to derail his life in a way he couldn't possibly imagine at the time; signaling, as it were, the beginning of a life inscribed by economic uncertainty and homelessness, alcoholism and drug addiction, prison and probation.

ISOLATION TANK

In 1954, John C. Lilly, a neuroscientist, physician, and psychoanalyst working at the National Institute of Mental Health, designed and built the world's first isolation tank. The initial impetus for its construction was to address, via empirical science, an age-old question in psychology (and philosophy) regarding the fundamental nature of consciousness; namely, whether the mind is essentially *active* or *reactive*:

We have been in pursuit of some answers to the question of what happens to a brain and its contained mind in the relative absence of physical stimulation. In neurophysiology, this is one form of the question: Freed from normal efferent and afferent activities, does the activity of the brain soon become that of a coma or sleep, or is there some inherent mechanism which keeps it going, a pacemaker of the 'awake' type of activity?

In psychoanalysis, there is a similar, but not identical problem. If the healthy ego is freed of reality stimuli, does it maintain the secondary process, or does primary process take over, i.e., is the healthy ego independent of reality or dependent in some fashion, in some degree on exchanges with the surroundings to maintain its structure? ^x

According to the reactive (behaviorist) model, which predominated at the time, the mind is the brain and the brain is an organ. It receives sensorial input from the world around it, processes this information, and then outputs an appropriate action. From this perspective, it follows that if the brain were to receive no external input at all, and thus had no information to process, it would cease all activity and presumably enter a kind of 'sleep mode.' In other words, if there was nothing – no environmental stimulation of any kind – to be conscious *of*, then we would not be conscious at all.

Lilly, however, thought otherwise: he believed that the mind was fundamentally *active* - that not only would it not 'go to sleep' in the absence of external stimuli, but that it would *generate its own* stimuli from within.

As noted in his preliminary reports, Lilly's hypothesis was inspired, in part, by autobiographical accounts of lost and/or solitary sailors and arctic explorers. Alone, adrift in the open sea or trapped under snow for months, a seemingly similar progression of psychological states would ensue: after the initial feelings of panic and hopelessness subsided, the fear and despair would gradually dissipate and be replaced by a state of awe, humility, and even euphoria. Upon crossing this threshold, the subjects described feeling "oceanic" and being "of the universe, at one with it." During and after this phase, hallucinations and delusional beliefs also emerged, sometimes developing into complex narratives or scenes.

Prolonged immersion in the relatively uniform, featureless, and unchanging environment of the arctic or sea - void of human contact and daily routine, i.e., in an environment of severely reduced external stimulus - thus seemed to result not in cognitive somnolence, but in *hyper-activity*:

It is obvious that inner factors of the mind tend to be projected outward, that some of the activity which is usually reality-bound now becomes free to run to phantasy and ultimately to hallucination and delusion; it's as if the laws of thought had become projected into the realm of the laws of inanimate matter and of the universe: the primary process tends to absorb more and more of the time and energy usually taken by the secondary process.^{xi}

To test and study these observations empirically, Lilly designed and built the tank with the aim of reducing external input as much as possible. The first, more rudimentary, model consisted of a large, vertically-oriented pool filled with slowly flowing water kept at 34.5 degrees Celsius (a temperature that feels close to 'nothing'). The apparatus included a black-out mask with a breathing tube attached, allowing the participant to float face-down for an extended period of time.

Often assuming the role of both researcher and test-subject, after only a few hours inside the tank, Lilly confirmed what he had already known to be true:

Somewhere, deep within the brain, was a mechanism capable of generating internal experiences completely independent of the outside world, and this settled the issue of what happens in profound isolation. The mind does not pass into unconsciousness, the brain does not shut down. Instead, it constructs experience out of stored impressions and memories. The isolated mind becomes highly active and creative.^{xii}

The first discernable effect in consciousness was something that I may call a shift in the base of consciousness. From the relative point of view, the final step may be likened to a leap into Nothing. At once, that Nothing was resolved into utter Fullness, which in turn gave the relative world a dreamlike quality of unreality. I felt and knew myself to have arrived, at last, at the Real.

—John Lilly^{xiii}

Gary

1994. He has been surfing since he was eight, and so presumed a certain degree of innate knowledge as he took off down a mountain strapped to a snowboard for the first time. But a snowboard is fundamentally different from a surfboard—your feet are locked in, unable to move, just as the snowy slope is relatively static and unmoving. Within seconds he begins to lose control. He feels it all getting away from him. He attempts to maneuver as he would if the descent were a wave, but this just makes things worse. He hears a loud crack just before wiping out halfway down the mountain. When he comes to, he is immediately overcome with pain. His ankle is throbbing. He can already feel it swelling up inside his boot. When the pain doesn't relent, his brother takes him to the nearest urgent care facility, whereat he discovers he'd snapped the bone in half and will require surgery to reset it.

A week later, after a series of procedures, his daughter and her mother come to visit him in the hospital. He is situated in bed in his hospital gown and with his leg suspended in a cast. She presents him with a basket of fresh rolls and homemade jam, but he has no appetite. In fact, he barely has the will to speak or even open his eyes. She can't possibly understand (she's only eight years old). She takes it personally. He doesn't want to hurt her feelings, but he simply cannot bring himself to put the food into his mouth.

A few days later he is released with a pair of crutches he'll be on for the next month. He goes home and struggles helplessly up the stairs to his

apartment (on the third floor in a building with no elevator). He feels foolish and alone. A week goes by. *As he was already near depression, having to traverse a three-story flat with crutches eventually took its toll. He was exhausted. Breaking down for no reason he finally just couldn't get up off the floor. He admitted himself to the university mental hospital.*^{xiv}



His daughter in a snow field, photo by Gary Hill, 1990.



A HOLE (1)

The child becomes increasingly aware of his (m)other's absence; aware of her spontaneous and enigmatic comings and goings (her appearance and disappearance). His needs are no longer met instantaneously, without delay - she is not always available - he is sometimes forced to wait, to anticipate - at times she is distracted, preoccupied, or even willfully ignorant of his cries. A gap thus opens up between need and satisfaction, puncturing the formerly uninterrupted and unmediated (m)other-child union. Their imaginary dyad is hence 'cut' into, triangulated by an unknown other - an 'x' - a 'third term.' This intrusive yet undefined 'x' 'explains' the (m)other's absence and, consequently, alerts the child to the fact that he is not all that there is - that he is not the sole object of his (m)other's interest and love; that her desire, in fact, surpasses him, escapes him, is beyond his control.

What do you want from me?

Recognition of his (m)other's desire instills in him a sense of incompleteness, of lack. She wants something (lacks something) that he cannot provide her with. Wishing to be everything for the (m)other, to redeem their blissful union, his sense of bodily wholeness and jouissance, the child identifies with and attempts to embody the 'desire of the mother' (the elusive and unnamable 'x'); that is, he attempts to completely coincide with, align and conjoin, his being (now marked by lack) with everything and all that his (m)other lacks—to fill her with himself.^{xv} This results in endless variations of activity and behavior, all of which aim at seducing his (m)other by becoming that object of her desire, i.e., consummating within himself what will make her whole and complete. His desire is thus born in direct relation and in complete subordination to hers: his "desire is the Other's desire."^{xvi}

But despite his devotion to making himself a fully satisfying love-object, the child is inevitably and necessarily bound to fail; he will never be the exclusive object of her desire; they will never again complete each other. To realize and come to terms with this fact means that the child must 'give up' his union with the (m)other and, with it, the dream of ever regaining that originary sense of unmediated fullness and plentitude (now a mythical impossibility—a fantasy). Indeed, it is only when the child accepts this separation—a separation enforced by the 'third term' that, in turn, serves to 'castrate' the child—that he can become a subject: "For man and for woman the loss of the mother is a biological and

psychic necessity, the first step on the way to becoming autonomous.”^{xvii}

Subjectivity is thus founded in an act of sacrifice and is constituted by loss, by/as the hole left behind (in the shape of a wholeness forever lost).

PRISONER'S CINEMA

Light hits and travels through the eye. It is focused onto the retina where it sets off nerve pulses down the optic pathways. These signals are then relayed through the thalamus to the visual cortex, where the information is further processed and interpreted, thereby producing an image, i.e., sight. If, however, there is no light (no external stimuli, i.e., total darkness) or if there is light and nothing else (unstructured stimuli, i.e., a homogeneous field of invariable light), the visual system shuts down, which, in turn, activates other systems in the brain:

The subject is visually immersed within an even and featureless environment or situation with no sense of depth, scale, or spatial orientation: there is nothing - no objects or movements - to discern. Deprived of any visual stimulus, the brain consequently cuts off the unchanging signal from the eyes, resulting in what is often described as a loss of vision, "seeing black," or going blind. At the same time, in searching for information to process, the brain amplifies its own neural 'noise.' This 'noise' then gets interpreted within the higher visual cortex, where it subsequently gives rise to dream-like visions and altered states of consciousness. Oliver Sacks explains this phenomenon in his book, *Hallucinations*:

The brain needs not only perceptual input but perceptual change, and the absence may cause not only lapses of arousal and attention but perceptual aberrations as well. Whether darkness and solitude is sought out by holy men in caves or forced upon prisoners in lightless dungeons, the deprivation of normal visual input can stimulate the inner eye instead, producing dreams, vivid imaginings, or hallucinations. There is even a special term for the trains of brilliantly colored and varied hallucinations which come to console or torment those kept in isolation or darkness: 'the prisoner's cinema.' ^{xviii}

These self-illuminated visions can include simple phosphenes (internally generated 'light shows') or complex and three-dimensional hallucinations.

'Prisoner's cinema' is thought to result, at least in part, from thalamic disinhibition. Without visual stimulus, there is no information to process, and thus no thalamic stimulation. Within the visual system, the thalamus is responsible not only for exciting the cortex (which prompts cortical neurons to fire, relaying and processing information), but it also plays a significant role in inhibiting it. Without cortical inhibition, the spontaneous firing of neurons that occurs regularly (though usually goes unnoticed) has free reign, and, without any external input, can take on a life of its own, resulting in the aforementioned perceptual aberrations. As Sacks explains elsewhere:

...there's a system of checks and balances in the brain, to prevent any particular region taking off autonomously. If one loses these constraints, for example, if one is blind or even blindfolded, then the visual brain may take off on its own and utilise memory and imagination to give one hallucinations. ^{xix}

Viewer

1996. Gary moves out of his apartment and into a new condo located in Seattle's Belltown district. It's the dawn of what would become an increasingly rapid process of gentrification—just before the formerly industrial waterfront is transformed into a 'world-renowned' sculpture park, replacing vagrants and drunks with Richard Serra and Mark Dion monoliths; just before the twin houses across the street that are almost old enough to be historical landmarks but not quite are demolished to make way for yet another hastily designed and constructed 'upscale' urban housing development; before all the small businesses are replaced by bigger ones; before parking is an issue.

But amidst the mass-transformation, one neighborhood staple survives (and still remains today): located just down the street from his condo is "The Millionaire Club," a charity and support center that provides jobs and services to the area's homeless and unemployed. Shortly after moving in, Gary walks down to the club and hires some of the men standing outside. Together they walk back to his studio (located in the basement of the condo) where, one by one, he records them against a black velveteen drop-cloth, simply standing—for 30 minutes, an hour—and looking into the camera. The individual shots are then composited together to form what looks like a line-up in shared time and space.

The final work, entitled *Viewer*, is exhibited later that year at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery in New York. Upon entering a long, dark corridor, each visitor is confronted with a wall of life-sized images—images of people who are clearly out of context—attempting stillness, fidgeting slightly, eyes empty yet fixed.

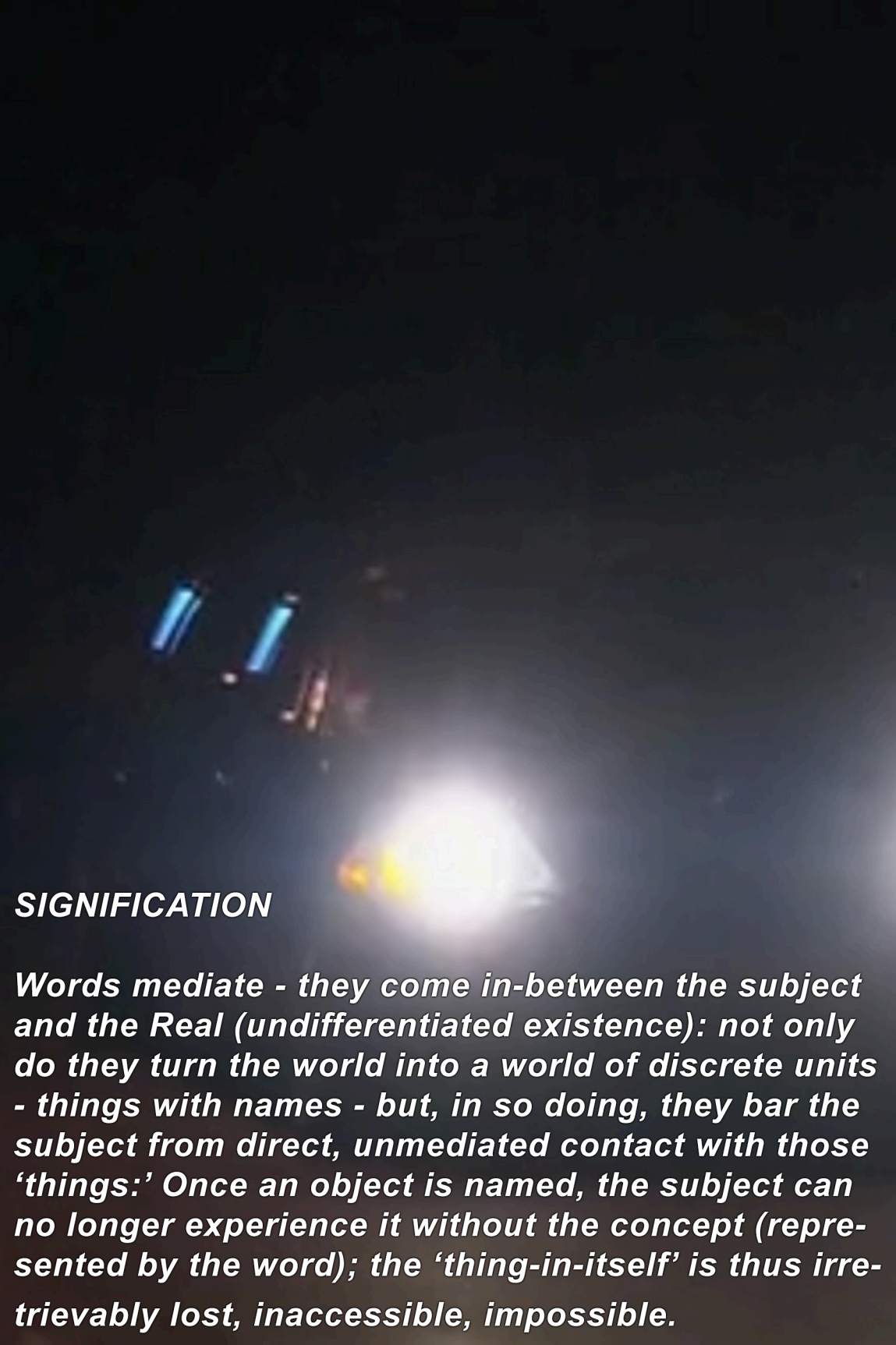
Seeking to meet their gaze is futile: as you shift position and perspective, it becomes apparent that this is an impossibility written into the architecture of the work itself. Refusing interactivity, the spectator is left instead with an ineradicable distance—a suspended and drawn out caesura between viewer and viewed (and who is who now?). In this moment one discovers that they are looking at an image of *looking at nothing*—an image, as such, that implicates and depends upon their absence, on their presence as the emptiness that receives their gaze:



Viewer, installation by Gary Hill, 1996.

...the observer and the observed take part in a ceaseless exchange. No gaze is stable...subject and object, spectator and model, reverse their roles into infinity.

—Michel Foucault^{xx}

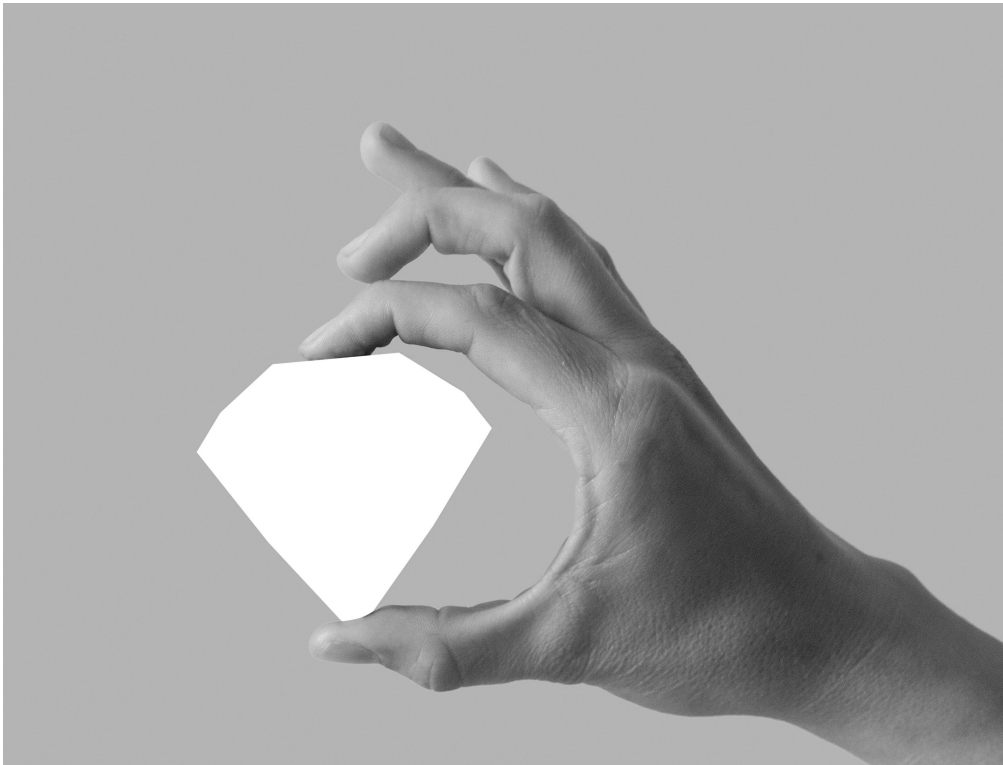


SIGNIFICATION

Words mediate - they come in-between the subject and the Real (undifferentiated existence): not only do they turn the world into a world of discrete units - things with names - but, in so doing, they bar the subject from direct, unmediated contact with those 'things:' Once an object is named, the subject can no longer experience it without the concept (represented by the word); the 'thing-in-itself' is thus irretrievably lost, inaccessible, impossible.

At the same time, language, which substitutes things with words, enables the subject to bring into existence or make present that which is absent. A distance, a rupture, is thus opened up between the speaking subject and the world (the Real). Unmediated existence, direct contact with the Real (defined by the absence of lack), is hence barred—eclipsed and thereby annulled through the subject's accession to language (another form of castration). Each word (signifier) thus constitutes a 'hole'—a 'negative image'—the presence of an absence, the appearance of what the word has disappeared: indeed, "the symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing."^{xxi}

*A word may give me its meaning, but first it suppresses it.
For me to be able to say, 'This woman' I must somehow take
her flesh and blood reality away from her, cause her to be
absent, annihilate her. The word gives me the being, but it
gives it to me deprived of being. The word is the absence of
that being, its nothingness, what is left of it when it has lost
being—the very fact that it does not exist.^{xxii}*



I wish that I had more to give you (she wishes you had more to sell), image by Anastasia Hill, 2015.

A Diamond Earring

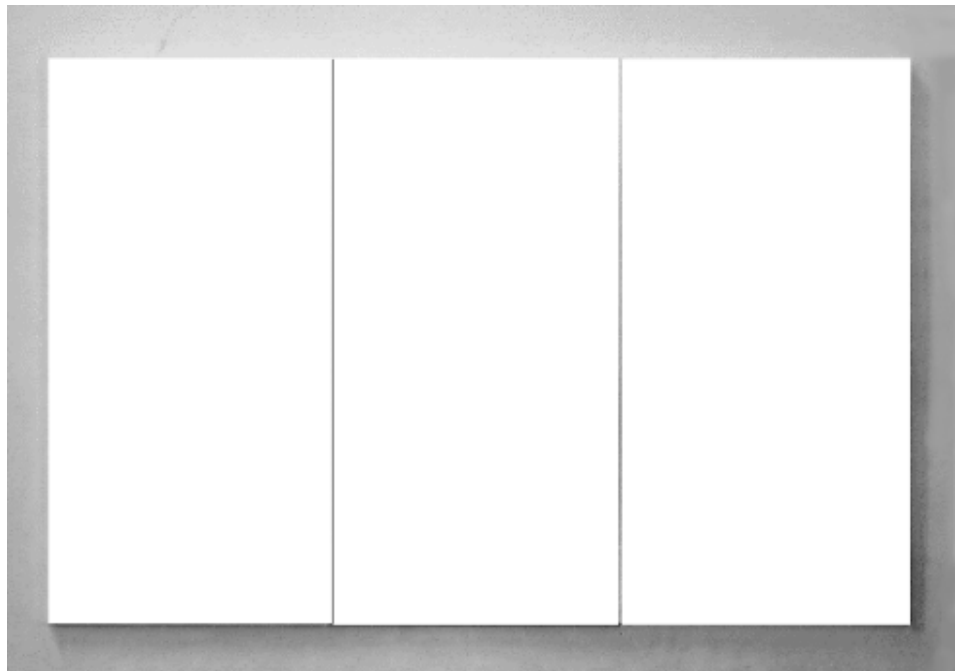
1996/1997. Martin is homeless and living under the viaduct in Belltown. It's New Year's Eve. The city is celebrating with dinners and fireworks and champagne. Martin is drunk and high on crack. A woman in heels passes him by on the street. He asks her for some change—she scoffs at him. A common response, but for some reason on this night it fills him with indignation and rage. He lunges at her. He grabs hold of her diamond earring and rips it straight out of her ear. The police arrive moments and Martin is arrested. He is charged with assault and attempted robbery. He calls Gary, his former employer and only friend, for help.

A HOLE (2)

Language is acquired if and only when the child experiences loss - when something is felt to be missing (if the child were to remain always completely satisfied, never want for anything, why would it take the trouble to learn how to speak?) Symbolization is thus precipitated by desire - the desire to restore something that is missing, to communicate there is something that it wants (lacks). Thus, the experience and recognition of lack - i.e., a foregone sense of oneness, fullness, completeness - both causes and is, subsequently, caused by, entry into the Symbolic.

With the word it's now possible for the subject to communicate and refer to things in the world—things he is feeling, things he wants, things that are absent, things that don't yet or never will exist. At the same time, language is never adequate—things are singularities, and words are universal—they relate only to abstract concepts (signifieds), not to the things themselves. Thus, words can only ever allude to, approximate, attempt (fail) to embody the totality of their referents. To capture lived experience in full, to properly represent the Thing, is a fundamental contradiction. The word inevitably comes up short; there is always an exclusion, a thinness—a space it simply cannot close (between saying and meaning, between the speaking subject and the subject who is spoken). Fundamentally inadequate, unsatisfying, the inherent nature and structure of signification—the very material through which subjectivity is formed and on which it depends—leaves much to be desired:

The inability of the symbolic to totally encompass its referents and to represent fully what has been lost creates a constant gradient of desire, a perpetual reaching out for the pure reality behind representation.^{xxiii}



White Painting (three panel), Robert Rauschenberg, 1951.

*To Whom / No subject / No image / No taste / No object / No
beauty / No message / No talent / No technique (no why) /
No idea / No intention / No art / No object / No feeling / No
black / No white (no and) / After careful consideration, I have
come to the conclusion that there is nothing in these
paintings that could not be changed, that they can be seen in
any light and are not destroyed by the action of shadows. /
Hallelujah! the blind can see again; the water's fine*

—John Cage^{xxiv}

Spaghetti Dinner

1997. She is about to start the 6th grade at her new school. As per tradition, they are holding a big spaghetti dinner for all the new students and their parents. She and her mother get ready to go out. She is nervous. Her mother is nervous too. They stand side by side in the bathroom in front of the mirror; they do their hair, they each carefully select and put on a pair of earrings, they remove cat hair from each other with the lint roller.

They arrive to the semi-subterranean cafeteria (just up the street from the school and directly across the street from a woman's health clinic, where she will later witness on numerous occasions throughout the years the same group of protestors marching around in sad little circles with anti-abortion signs and naked baby dolls splattered in fake blood). She pauses at the door. Have they overdressed? Probably. They quickly get their meal and sit down at a table with other anxious and awkward student-parent duos and trios. She saves a seat for her father, who was supposed to meet them there nearly 30 minutes ago. She keeps an eye on the door while she and her mother do their best to make small talk.

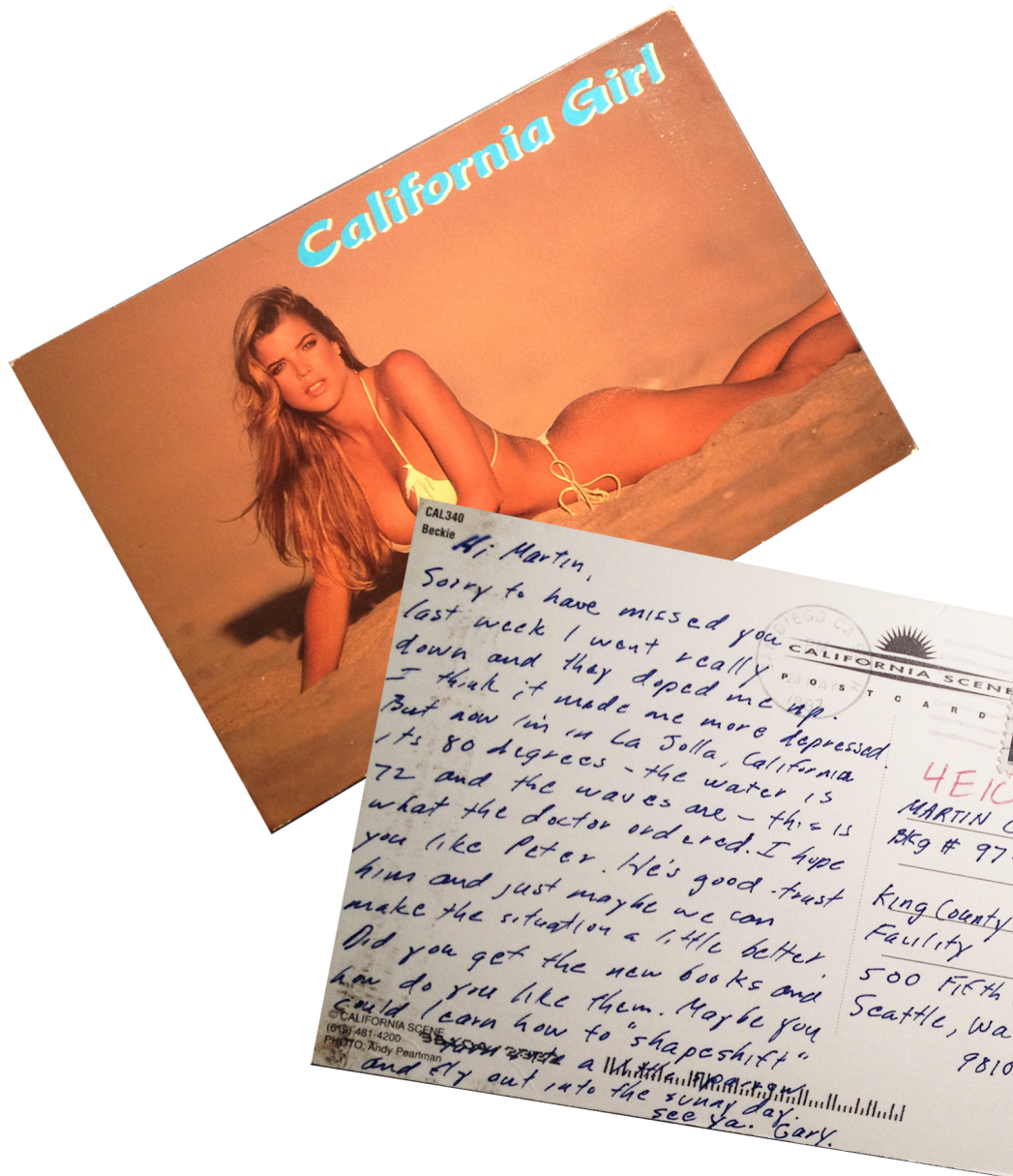
When her father finally does arrive, she does not like what she sees. He looks dazed and disheveled. His hair is wilder than usual and he walks with a shuffle. He is wearing an unfamiliar pink cardigan with big drooping buttons and holes in the elbows. He looks like a homeless man, like someone who just

wandered in off the street by accident. He skips the spaghetti and joins them at the table.

The evening wears on. She ends up at another table talking with a girl who will become her best friend. Her mother has a series of polite conversations with teachers and parents. At some point they reconvene and together realize that her father has left without a word. They return home and call his apartment—no answer. Then they call his mother and his brother—neither have heard from him. She feels sick. She tells her mother about the last time she stayed with him—that she had seen him through a cracked door weeping and crushing his collection of butterfly specimens (*the phone rings—it's him; in a thin and barely audible voice he tells her that he's checked himself into a mental hospital, that he's sorry, that he loves her*).

Oh, catatonia¹

¹ “A strafing of the surface in order to transmute the stabbing of bodies, oh psychedelia”
(Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p. 161)



DEMAND - NEED = DESIRE

The child is born completely helpless - unable to perform the actions necessary to satisfy even his most basic biological needs. He must therefore articulate his needs (with screams, cries, gestures) so that a capable other (his (m)other) will perform the actions for him. But because the object that satisfies the child's need is provided by the (m)other - who not only provides the object but does so with attentiveness and care (ideally, at least) - it comes to signify for the child something above and beyond the simple meeting of his need: indeed, it becomes a token - proof - of his (m)other's love. The child's demand thus acquires a dual purpose: in addition to articulating a need, it becomes as well a demand for love.

In time, the real object—the food, medicine, blanket etc. (the object that satisfies the need), becomes overshadowed by its symbolic function (the object as a sign of love). The symbolic dimension of demand (as a demand for love) likewise overshadows its real function (as an articulation of a need).^{xxv} While the needs that demands articulate can be met, the yearning for love is insatiable—insatiable because it is, at bottom, a yearning for self-completion, for fullness, for a jouissance forever lost. The impossible craving thus persists even after needs have been satisfied: and it is this unsatisfied, incomplete remainder (lack) that constitutes desire.

The child wants everything, an impossible plentitude; it wants to be filled by the other, to be the other, which is why no determinate thing will do. It demands a love that paradoxically entails its own annihilation, for it demands a fullness of the other to stop up the lack that conditions its existence as a subject.^{xxvi}



Absolute Vodka print ad. | Apple ipod "silhouette" ad (digital image).

...the absent narrative, that the reader is to supply, positions the reader into taking a self-fetishized role of obsession with the absent commodity. The reader's 'conscious' participation in the ad, in the task of fulfilling the gaps in the meaning, pulls the reader in to take an active role vis-à-vis the commodity. That the product is absent, and the absence positions the reader as actively seeking it out in the absent narrative, implies an absent resolution to the narrative: via the purchase of the commodity in a store.^{xxvii}

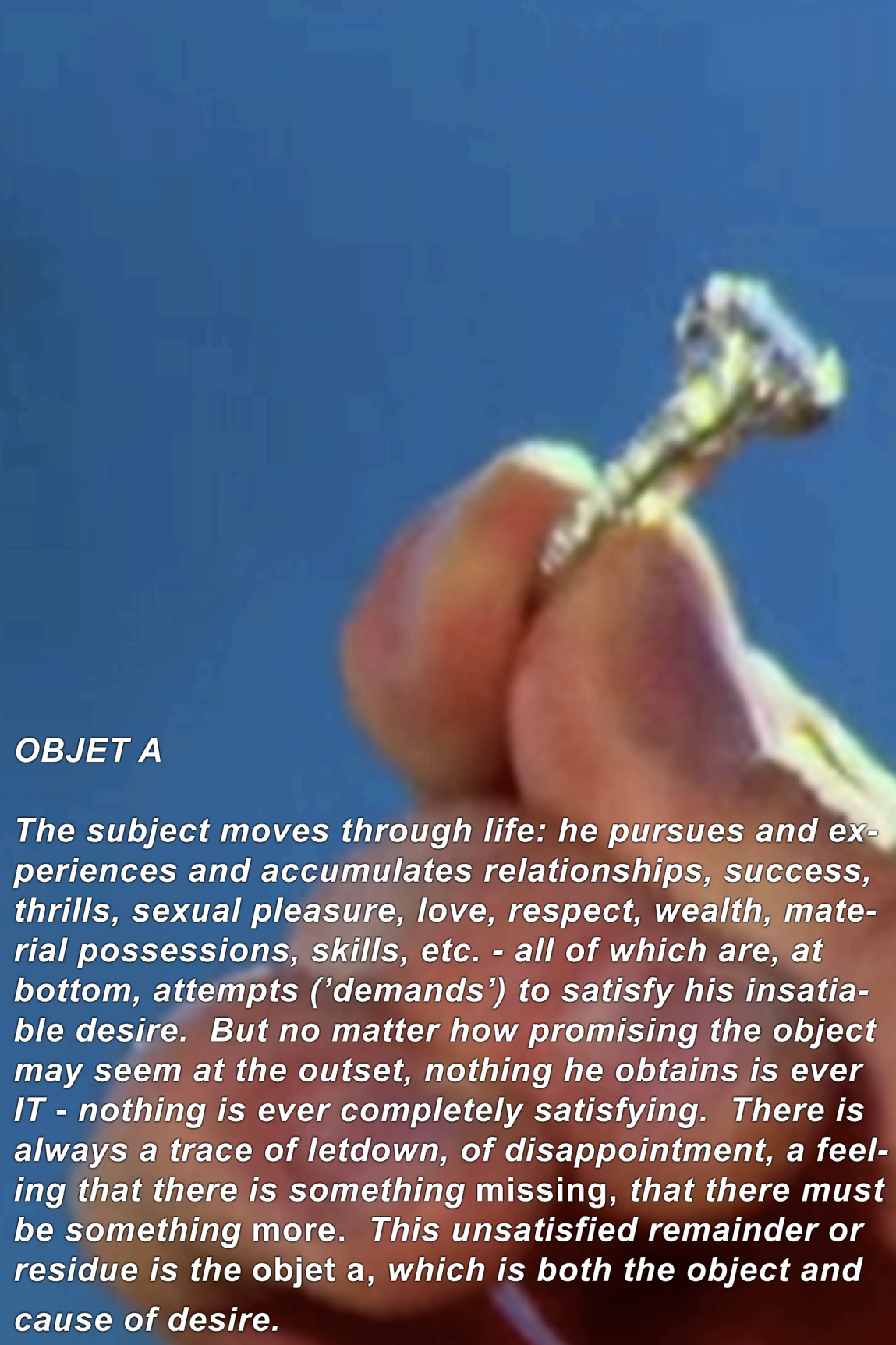
Gary Falls in Love

1998. Her father meets and begins a collaboration with a Swedish artist and singer named Paulina. They quickly fall in love, prompting Paulina to leave California and her husband to come live with Gary in Seattle.

At some point, her mother mentions that she's never seen her father so 'head over heels' for someone before. From this moment forward she attempts to mimic Paulina's mannerisms and appearance: bleach-blonde and then rainbow-colored hair; accessories made by artists paired with tacky items from Claire's; clothing that conjures Rainbow Bright and Lisa Frank mixed with Harajuku and an ironic take on euro-trash...she does the best that she can with her 5\$/week allowance, carefully curated birthday presents, and a small wage working as an 'assistant manager' at the Northwest Puppet Center.



With friends, photo by unknown, 1999.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a small, shiny, metallic object, possibly a key or a piece of jewelry, against a solid blue background. The object is held between the thumb and index finger, and its surface reflects light, creating bright highlights and shadows. The background is a uniform, deep blue.

OBJET A

The subject moves through life: he pursues and experiences and accumulates relationships, success, thrills, sexual pleasure, love, respect, wealth, material possessions, skills, etc. - all of which are, at bottom, attempts ('demands') to satisfy his insatiable desire. But no matter how promising the object may seem at the outset, nothing he obtains is ever IT - nothing is ever completely satisfying. There is always a trace of letdown, of disappointment, a feeling that there is something missing, that there must be something more. This unsatisfied remainder or residue is the objet a, which is both the object and cause of desire.

*...that hopeless sense of loss which makes beauty what it is:
a distant lone tree against golden heavens; ripples of light on
the inner curve of a bridge; a thing impossible to capture.^{xxviii}*

Entry into the Symbolic splits the subject from the 'primal object'—the infant's original experience of wholeness—resulting in a constitutive sense of lack, a 'hole' at the very center of his being. This lack, a 'byproduct of subjectivity,' is hence 'positivized' in the form of the objet a—the 'lost object'—the thing "from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ."^{xxix} It then constitutes the virtual 'object' of lack (the missing piece) that would satisfy the subject's drive towards fullness, plenitude, 'total satisfaction'—i.e., his drive to 'fill the hole.' The objet a, in other words, would be 'IT' for the desiring subject—the be-all end-all of total, enduring, satisfaction.

However, it is not—and can never be—concretized and thereby possessed as an actual thing; the objet a exists not as a positive entity (an obtainable object), but as a "negative magnitude"^{xxx}—that is, it exists only when, and insofar as it is 'lost,' 'missing.' It is, therefore, a fantasy (THE fantasy)—a fantasy that constitutes both the cause and 'object' of desire. As such, it is repeatedly confounded with empirical objects—Symbolic stand-ins such as love interests, professional pursuits, adventures, drugs, children, material possessions etc.—objects that are consequently endowed with promise, imbued with a certain 'something,' an unlocalizable property that makes them especially desirable, that promises total satisfaction—a satisfaction, however, no object

could ever actually provide. Indeed, such empirical objects are always necessarily inadequate, unsatisfactory: once obtained, the subject is left with the familiar feeling of it 'not being IT', thus inspiring the repetition of 'demands' and, hence, the perpetuation of desire (and dissatisfaction).



Drawing by Martin Cothren, date unknown. | Yves Klein in the *Void Room* (Museum Haus Lange: Krefeld, Germany), 1961.

*I felt more and more that the lines and all their
consequences, the contours, the forms, the perspectives,
the compositions, became exactly like the bars on the
window of a prison.*

—Yves Klein^{xxx}

Martin Writes from Prison

A man guilty of raping one of Martin's family members ends up in the same prison as him. Martin beats him almost to death, which earns him a prolonged stay in solitary confinement, or what he refers to as 'the hole.' With only 1 hour of the day outside his cell, he spends most of his time working out, drawing with colored pencils, and writing letters to Gary—hundreds of letters, most of which are long and rambling streams of consciousness; memories from his childhood, self-reflection, resolutions for the future, spiritual revelry, ruminations, condemnations of 'the white man,' recounting of the dramatic and banal goings on of prison life, requests, instructions, promises, apologies:

...How are you, hope not depressed my friend. Send me some pictures please. Wondering what life's going to be like when I get out, will I be dressing like an old man when I get out, living under a bridge, a drunk working for 4\$ an hour. Everybody is working and I'm just sitting in a cloth environment waiting to die...life goes on...

...woke up, went outside for a walk in the rain for an hour, going nowhere just around in a circle waiting for my time or life to end, one of the two, why did I not take a different path? I have a couple more pictures for you, they are done, you can have all of them I'm tired of them...

...Prison cells are very depressing, only time I feel ok is when I'm standing outside. That's my life...

...my dad, Harvey James Sr – I just want to know if my dad is still alive...

...I try to blend into this picture I call the other world. I will check you later Mr. I'm running nowhere in my square world. Waiting for it to End or Begin...

...can you send me a picture of the park where you had lunch?

*...So you are leaving again I take it. I try to call but you kept hanging up. So I will just write you Ha!Ha! I'm going crazy I need a couple * * ...4th of July coming up...*

...I've taken you inside the prison drug world I never realized this till' my last dope scene. Today is the 14th person that tried to hang their self.

...I will begin my cleanup journey Drug-free – nothing for the rest of my time here. The damage I put my mind and body through, the pain and horror stories that will be shut in my mind will always be with me. If you live like me you probably would have gone mad in the way I have gone mad looking for something in drugs that is not there – hard drugs I mean, like heroin + crack + cocaine. I realize when the drugs are gone there is nothing there but reality so I wake up and feel the bars, the dirty prison, this is my cold reality of life...

...Plus I need 250\$, I'm broke, will cool myself down Gary, sorry for borrowing so much. I got caught in self-destruct mode. I needed this hole to catch myself and really look deeper into myself...

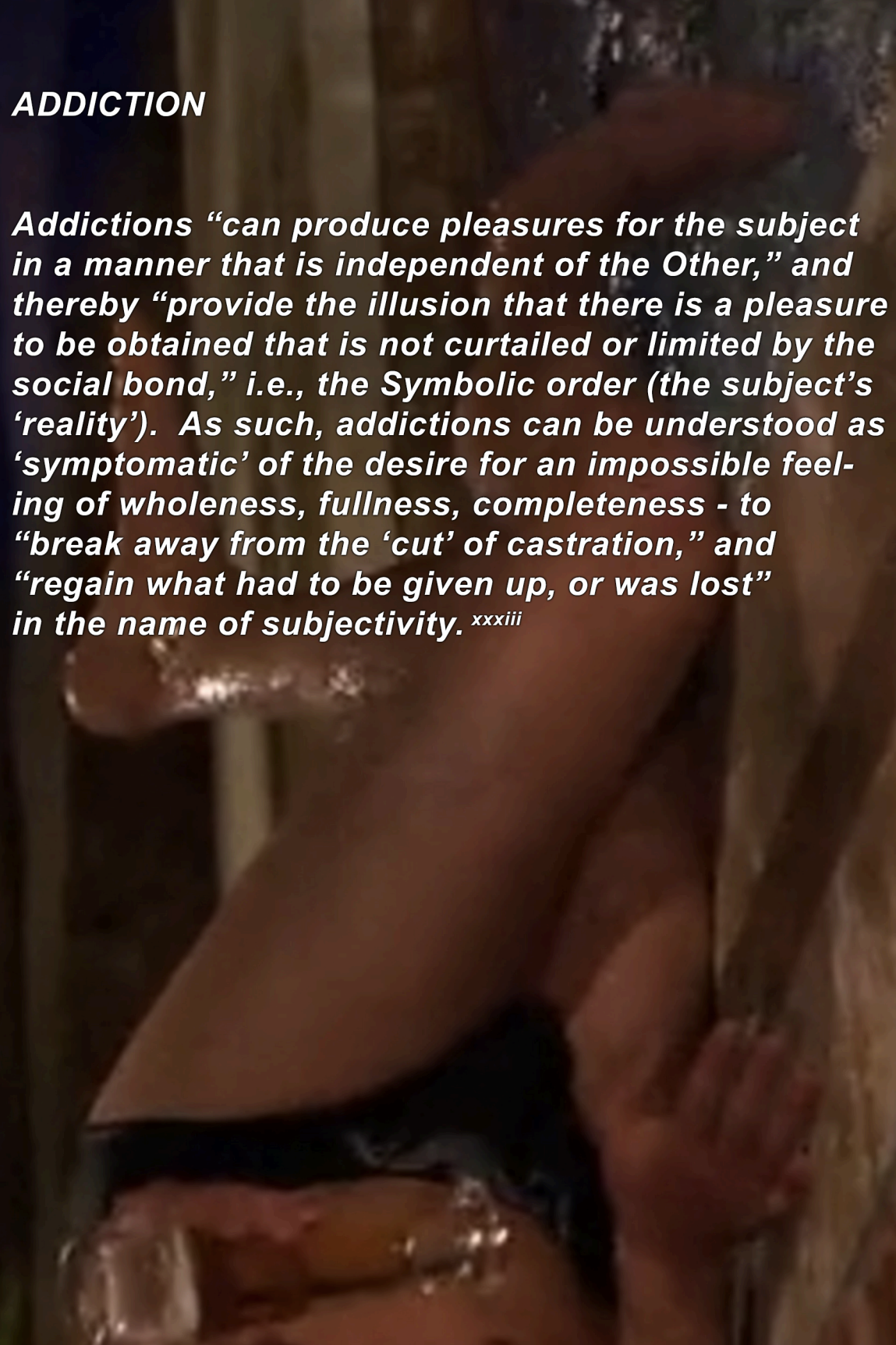
...take care give a pair of silver earrings to your daughter for valentine's day...

Gary replies to as many of the letters as he can. They talk on the phone at least once a week (he is Martin's only friend and only contact 'on the outside'). Martin sends him drawings and handcrafted dream-catchers and beaded vests

and elaborate headdresses. Gary pays off Martin's dealers and deposits money for commissary; he sends clothing and postcards and books. Every once and awhile he also sends a tab or two of LSD, which he conceals beneath the postage stamp and signals in the letter with a "***"

Demand always addresses an other. It consciously demands concrete, particular objects. The only 'things' capable of satisfying it are generalities or absolutes (ultimately, it is a demand for everything), which, in the end, boils down to nothing.

—Elizabeth Grosz^{xxxii}



ADDICTION

Addictions “can produce pleasures for the subject in a manner that is independent of the Other,” and thereby “provide the illusion that there is a pleasure to be obtained that is not curtailed or limited by the social bond,” i.e., the Symbolic order (the subject’s ‘reality’). As such, addictions can be understood as ‘symptomatic’ of the desire for an impossible feeling of wholeness, fullness, completeness - to “break away from the ‘cut’ of castration,” and “regain what had to be given up, or was lost” in the name of subjectivity. xxxiii

So then what, exactly, does the addict desire? (what object does he aim to obtain)?

....the object is a semblance, not a substance. It is precisely in drug addiction that we can find the most strongly sustained effort to incarnate the object of jouissance in an object of the world. It is precisely here that I may be verified that the object is semblance, and that on the horizon, the true object of jouissance—if that word means anything—is death. The quest is not, as some say, for ‘some pleasure;’ the quest is more precisely for the verification of the colour of emptiness surrounding jouissance in the human being.^{xxxiv}

The void has many presences. Its presence as fear is towards the loss of self from a non-object to a non-self. The idea of being somehow consumed by the object or the non-object, in the body, in the cave, in the womb. I have always been drawn towards a sensation of vertigo, of falling, of being pulled inwards. This is a notion of the sublime which reverses the picture of union with light. This is an inversion, a sort of turning inside out. This is a vision of darkness.

—Anish Kapoor^{xxxv}

“Cutters”

On season 3, episode 3 of 7th *Heaven*, Lucy’s older sister, Mary, walks in on Lucy’s best friend, Nicole, cutting herself with a razor in the bathroom. Before the off-screen mutilation, we are witness to its various triggers: a romantic snub, a failed pop quiz, and Mary’s cold shoulder. The episode concludes with Nicole leaving town to attend some kind of ‘program’ for cutters in Chicago:

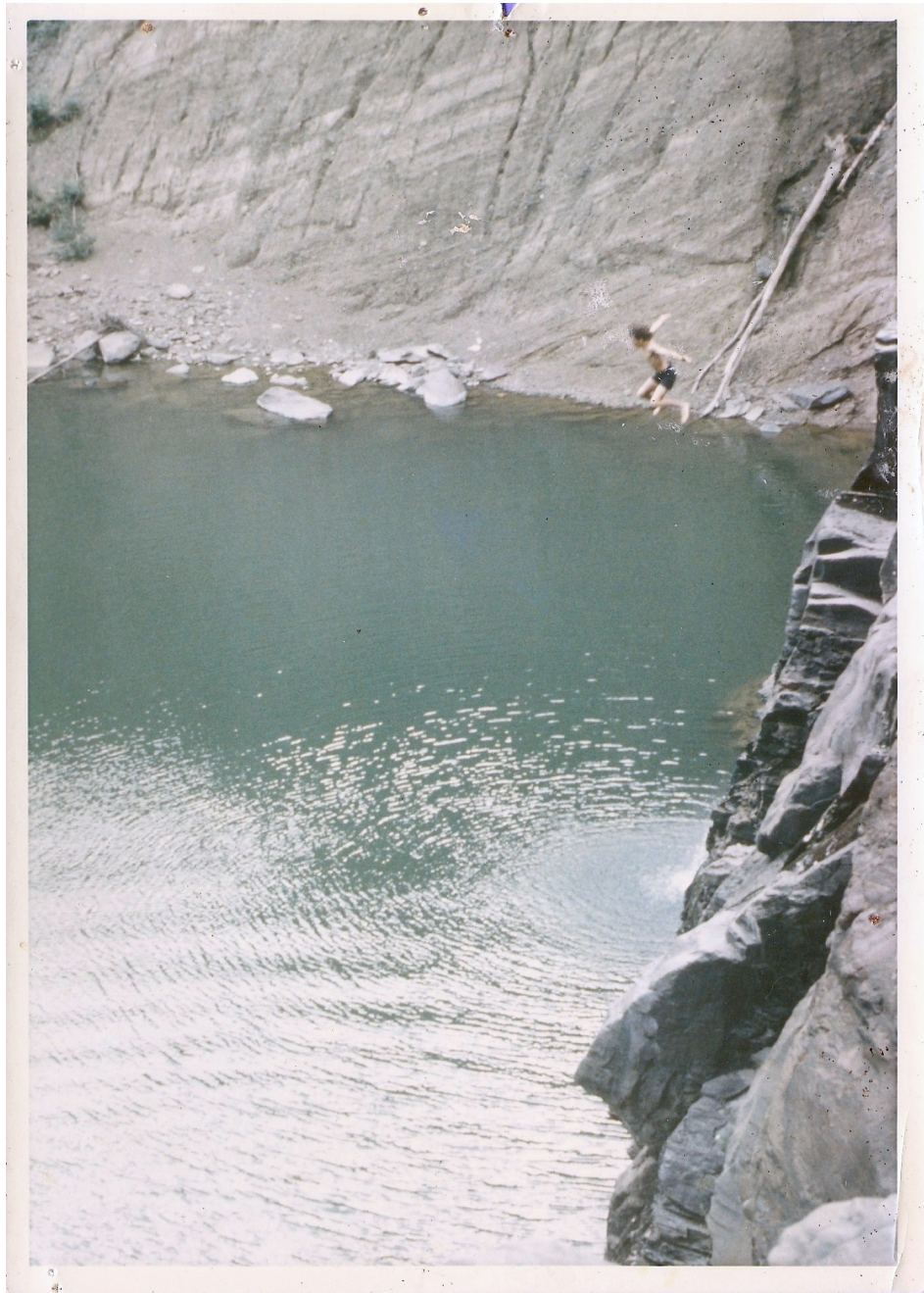
Are you scared about going away?

A little, but I’m more afraid I won’t be able to stop hurting myself.

1999. She is thirteen years old. She is sad, but it is more than sadness. She is in pain – not a defeated, meek, whimpering kind of pain, but a pain that is hungry – violent and loud – a melodramatic pain. She wants to rip out her hair and tear off her skin. She hates herself. With nothing left to do, she decides to give it a try. She goes into the bathroom and smuggles a razor and some Band-Aids back into her bedroom. A completely different kind of pain – a sense of release, a release that is almost ecstatic. She is overcome by relief – relief from the feeling of not knowing what to do with herself. She did something. It felt good. She’ll continue to do it again and again and again.



The desire for jouissance is the retroactive effect of becoming a separate subject. Jouissance, however, is impossible to attain within the limits of human experience, as it implies the very dissolution of the subject as such. Desire, then, can have a dangerous or even deadly aspect in that it drives the individual towards this impossible aim without regard for his well-being or survival, i.e., his Symbolic identity, his 'meaning,' his selfhood. There is, consequently, an ever-present tension between its partial expression within the limits of the Symbolic order, and an unconscious pursuit of unlimited jouissance (a fantasy of oneness and contact with the Real).^{xxxvi}



Gary Jumping, photo by unknown, c.1969.

Amos

1999. Her cutting is discovered by the school counselor, who calls her mother to come pick her up from school. She sits out in the hallway and waits for her. A boy in the grade above approaches. It's the new guy that everyone is talking about. He's just moved back from living with his mother in Paris. He's an actor. He's tall and can speak French and seems smart and all the girls like him. He makes eye contact and butterflies fill her stomach. He comes to sit down next to her and they start talking. He sees her wrists. *I know how it feels*. He tells her he gets like that too sometimes—that no one understands him either. *Yeah*. Before getting up to go back to class, he writes down his phone number on a scrap of paper. Moments later, her mother arrives to take her to the hospital.

THE GAZE

The Gaze is split from and occupies the 'other' side of the eye/'I.' While the eye - the look - belongs to the subject, the Gaze belongs to the Other, the object. When the subject looks out, he sees ('pictures') the world - he sees what is external, outside, from a single point (his perspective). He - the subject - looks and sees while the world - the object - is looked at and seen. His point of view and the contents of his look 'belong' to him (insofar as the pictured objects belong to his perception, to the sovereignty of his subjective view). The Gaze, however, is all-seeing - directed at the subject from the 'outside,' it surrounds and penetrates him - it looks at him (looking at the world) not from a single point, but from all sides.

The Gaze is the 'Gaze of the world:' it pre-exists and therefore includes the subject and his subjective view. Just as the subject sees—'pictures'—the world (as an object/other), the Gaze likewise 'pictures the subject; indeed, any time the subject sees (whenever the world is visible to him), the world 'sees' the subject (he is visible to the world).

The subject becomes aware of the Gaze when he becomes aware of his own visibility; when, for example, he catches an object 'looking back' at him, or when he hears a sound (footsteps, the rustling of leaves) that alerts him to the possible presence of an (unseen) observer—that is, to the possibility of being seen. In such moments (momentary, evanescent 'flashes'), the subject comes to realize that he too is an object-to-be-seen—that he is not only a subject who sees, but is an object caught within a visual field that is not his own, e.g., that he is part of a much 'bigger picture:' "illuminated by the light emitted by the object of its own look," the subject is "thereby registered simultaneously as object of representation."^{xxxvii}

Yet, while the subject is, in these brief moments, aware of the Gaze, insofar as he is aware of his own visibility, of his being-as-spectacle, he does not—cannot—see the Gaze as such. The subject, in other words, can see the Other's 'look' directed at him, but he cannot see what the Other sees—he cannot see himself from the Other's 'perspective' or 'point of view'—he cannot see himself as an object. Within the image constructed by the Gaze—an image that includes him—he is reduced to a mere object, a visible thing amongst many other visible things. At the same time, the subject's line of sight—his subjective

vision—is absent from the world's view (the 'image' constructed by the Gaze): the subject is on one side looking at the Other, and the Other is on the other side, looking at the world—his perspective can never be seen, and he can never see himself from an other's perspective.

Because it is impossible to transcend one's own eye/'I', i.e., assume the position of the Other, the Gaze (the subject-as-object) constitutes an ineradicable lacuna—a blind-spot within the subject's field of vision. As a 'hole' that is simultaneously indicated and concealed—apprehended as the non-visible, as the never-to-be-seen—the Gaze 'reveals,' via obscurity, an impossible point of view, i.e., the coincidence of the subject seeing and the subject seen. It therefore embodies the limit of perspective (the end of the eye/'I'), and is likewise encountered as a form of lack, of deprivation—a void.

*...you never look at me from the place from which I see
you...what I look at is never what I wish to see...*^{xxxviii}

As that which is radically excluded and lacking in the subject's field of vision, the Gaze constitutes a 'dark spot' at the very core of the subject's seemingly omnipotent, privileged view. As such, it is the ultimate manifestation of the objet a—the object-cause of desire—within the scopic drive (e.g., a wish to "see oneself seeing oneself" and thereby 'close the gap' between seeing and being seen, i.e., between self and Other). This 'hole' in the subject's field of vision attracts him as a point of absence, mystery, indeterminacy—it is a trigger,

a 'lure' that represents precisely what the subject wishes to see (to fulfill); that is, everything. He (mistakenly) imagines that, by getting rid of the Other, he could close the gap—eliminate the space, the distance between them—and thus overcome his own sense of lack and alienation. The Gaze-as-lack "compels his look because it appears to offer access to the unseen, to the reverse side of the visible"^{xxxix} (to a form of wholeness, a visual plenitude, an eye/'I' without a blind-spot, a self without a missing view).

To confront the Gaze is to destabilize the authoritative position of the subject and self-recognition, which is exposed as a mis-recognition and displaced by a position of vulnerability, of being seen. The Gaze reveals to the subject that his sense of self, which is irreducible to and dependent on the omnipotence of the eye/'I,' is merely an illusion; that his sense of mastery and control derived from his supposedly privileged and sovereign position is nothing but a flimsy and precarious human construct.

At the same time, however, the (unseen) persistence of the Gaze is integral to the very formation and structural integrity of the subject. The moment it appears, the subject adapts to it—develops and morphs itself for and in response to its presence. The Gaze of the outside is what, to a certain extent, 'determines me,' conforms me.' Subjectivity thus depends upon the Gaze, insofar as it depends upon "recognizing the recognition of the other"^{xl} (I know who I am, in part, by looking at others looking at me). It is therefore a necessary and constitutive part of the subject's identity and experience, as it provides the external 'coordinates' through which he constructs and defines his 'self.'

Likewise, the absence of the Gaze—when there is nothing to see and therefore nothing 'looking back'—implies, at least potentially, a dissolution of perspective and psychical breakdown; i.e., a loss of self (of the eye/'I').^{xli}



Fakir's Spectacles, Daniel Spoerri, date unknown. | Still from *Un Chien Andalou*, dir. Luis Buñuel, 1928.

You should 'gouge out' your eyes and see nothing at all – after that there will be nothing you don't see; only then can it be called seeing...You should 'block off' your ears and hear nothing at all – after that there will be nothing you don't hear; only then can it be called hearing...You should 'knock off' your nose and not distinguish smells – after that there will be none you cannot distinguish; only then can it be called smelling...You should 'pull out' your tongue, so that the world is silent – after that your ebullience will be uninterrupted; only then can it be called speaking...You should 'slough off' the physical elements and be completely independent – after that you manifest forms adapting to various types; only then can it be called person...You should permanently stop clinging to thought, so the incalculable ages are empty – after that arising and vanishing continue unceasing; only then can it be called consciousness.

—Nyojo^{xlii}

WHITE TORTURE

1963. The CIA publishes the KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation manual. In Section IX – “The Coercive Counterintelligence Interrogation of Restraint Sources,” under the sub-heading “Deprivation of Sensory Stimuli,” it reads:

The chief effects of arrest and detention, and particularly of solitary confinement, is to deprive the subject of many or most of the sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile sensations to which he has grown accustomed. John C. Lilly examined eighteen autobiographical accounts written by polar explorers and solitary sea-farers. He found that ‘...the isolation per se acts on most persons as a powerful stress...in all cases of survivors of isolation at sea or in the polar night, it was the first exposure which caused the greatest fears and hence the greatest danger of giving way to symptoms...The symptoms most commonly produced by isolation are superstition, intense love of any other living thing, perceiving inanimate objects as alive, hallucinations, and delusions.’

The apparent reason for these effects is that a person cut off from external stimuli turns his awareness inward, upon himself, and then projects the contents of his own unconscious outwards, so that he endows his faceless environment with his own attributes, fears, and forgotten memories. Lilly notes, ‘It is obvious that inner factors in the mind tend to be projected outward, that some of the mind’s activity which is usually reality-bound now becomes free to turn to phantasy and ultimately to hallucination and delusion.’^{xliii}

Following a review of some of Lilly’s published reports, the manual goes on to summarize the findings and what they suggest regarding the functions and efficacy of solitary confinement and isolation:

1. The more completely the place of confinement eliminates sensory stimuli, the more rapidly and deeply will the interrogate be affected. Results produced only after weeks or months of imprisonment in an ordinary cell can be duplicated in hours or days in a cell which has no light (or weak artificial light which never varies), which is sound-proofed, in which odors are eliminated, etc. An environment still more subject to control, such as water-tank or iron lung, is even more effective.

2. An early effect of such an environment is anxiety. How soon it appears and how strong it is depends upon the psychological characteristics of the individual.

3. The interrogator can benefit from the subject's anxiety. As the interrogator becomes linked in the subject's mind with the reward of lessened anxiety, human contact, and meaningful activity, and thus with providing relief for growing discomfort, the questioner assumes a benevolent role.

4. The deprivation of stimuli induces regression by depriving the subject's mind of contact with an outer world and thus forcing it in upon itself. At the same time, the calculated provision of stimuli during interrogation tends to make the regressed subject view the interrogator as a father-figure. The result, normally, is a strengthening of the subject's tendencies toward compliance.^{xliv}

Sensory deprivation and isolation, along with many other techniques outlined in the KUBARK manual, would later be referred to euphemistically as “white torture” – a general term for psychological torture aimed at causing in the detainee a loss of personal identity (i.e., a breakdown in psychic integrity and information processing, e.g., “brainwashing”)

The magical hold (one can truly call it so without doing violence to the language) of night and obscurity, the fear of the dark, probably also has its roots in the peril in which it puts the opposition between the organism and the milieu. Minkowski's analyses are invaluable here: darkness is not the mere absence of light; there is something positive about it. While light space is eliminated by the materiality of objects, darkness is "filled," it touches the individual directly, envelops him, penetrates him, and even passes through him: hence 'the ego is permeable for darkness while it is not so for light;' the feeling of mystery that one experiences at night would not come from anything else.

Minkowski likewise comes to speak of dark space and almost of a lack of distinction between the milieu and the organism: "Dark space envelops me on all sides and penetrates me much deeper than light space, the distinction between inside and outside and consequently the sense organs as well, insofar as they are designed for external perception, here play only a totally modest role." This assimilation of space is necessarily accompanied by a decline in the feeling of personality and life.

—Roger Caillois^{xlv}

“I hope this is what love feels like”

2000. Amos is everything to her. They talk on the phone for hours every night. He kisses her in movie theaters. He buys her Dr. Pepper and her favorite kind of ice cream at the mini mart across the street from school. He defends her honor. He rides the city bus all the way across town just so he can sit with her (and sometimes puts his hand up her skirt until she comes). He says things she'll never forget. *I hope this is what love feels like.*



The Gaze of Orpheus, installation by Anastasia Hill, 2015.

LOOKING AT LOOKING

1967. LACMA inaugurates its Art & Technology Program, which pairs artists with corporations in the areas of scientific research, aerospace, and entertainment.

1968. Light and space artists James Turrell and Robert Irwin are set up with Dr. Ed Wortz, an experimental psychologist who heads the Life Sciences division at the Garrett Corporation in Torrance (an aerospace engineering and research facility). The three hit it off and agree to collaborate on an artwork to be shown at Expo 70, a world's fair in Osaka, Japan, and a 1971 LACMA exhibition.

The trio research and experiment with Ganzfeld fields, anechoic chambers, mist, fog, and various techniques of sensory deprivation. Rather than produce objects to look at, their aim was to create 'perceptual situations' - conditions that alter consciousness and allow one to "see their own seeing" (e.g., perception as 'art object'):

...The works of previous artists have come from their own experiences or insights but haven't given the experience itself...A change of this trend began with non-objective painting, the abstract expressionists, who were involved with the idea of 'it is the thing itself'...Our interest is in a form where you realize that the media are just perception...

...instead of placing our images on an object, we will define a non-object situation in setting up the boundaries of experience to be perceived...^{xlvi}

...getting them looking at their own eyeballs (to look at their looking), and listening to their own ears...

...Allowing people to perceive their perceptions—making them aware of their perceptions—we've decided to investigate this and to make people conscious of their consciousness. We're concerned with the manipulation of the conscious state...^{xlvii}

Paulina

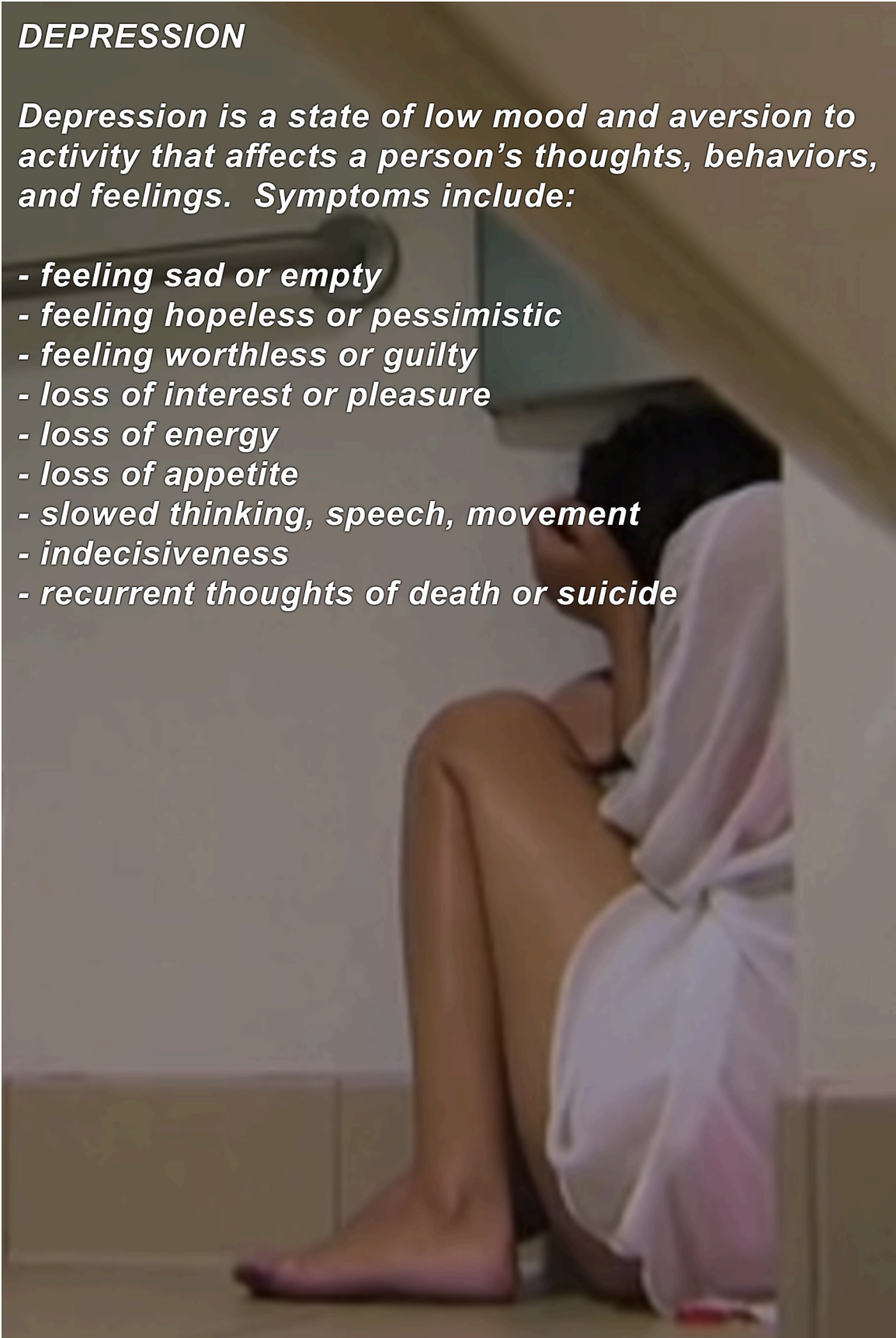
2000. Paulina discovers she is pregnant. She and Gary spend weeks deciding whether or not they should have a baby. No one wants to give up their freedom to obsessively pursue their art/career. Then again, she'd had an abortion when she was seventeen and had since lived to regret it. And now she's in her forties...this could be her last chance to have a child. *Is the universe trying to tell me something?* They decide to keep it.

A few months later they are traveling together in Paris. She hasn't been feeling well and has been losing weight despite eating almost twice as much as usual. She is pale, weak and clammy. Alarmed by her worsening appearance, Gary takes her to the emergency room where she finds out that she is diabetic and is suffering from hypoglycemic shock. Upon further testing, the doctors there also discover that the baby's heart had stopped beating weeks ago.

DEPRESSION

Depression is a state of low mood and aversion to activity that affects a person's thoughts, behaviors, and feelings. Symptoms include:

- feeling sad or empty***
- feeling hopeless or pessimistic***
- feeling worthless or guilty***
- loss of interest or pleasure***
- loss of energy***
- loss of appetite***
- slowed thinking, speech, movement***
- indecisiveness***
- recurrent thoughts of death or suicide***



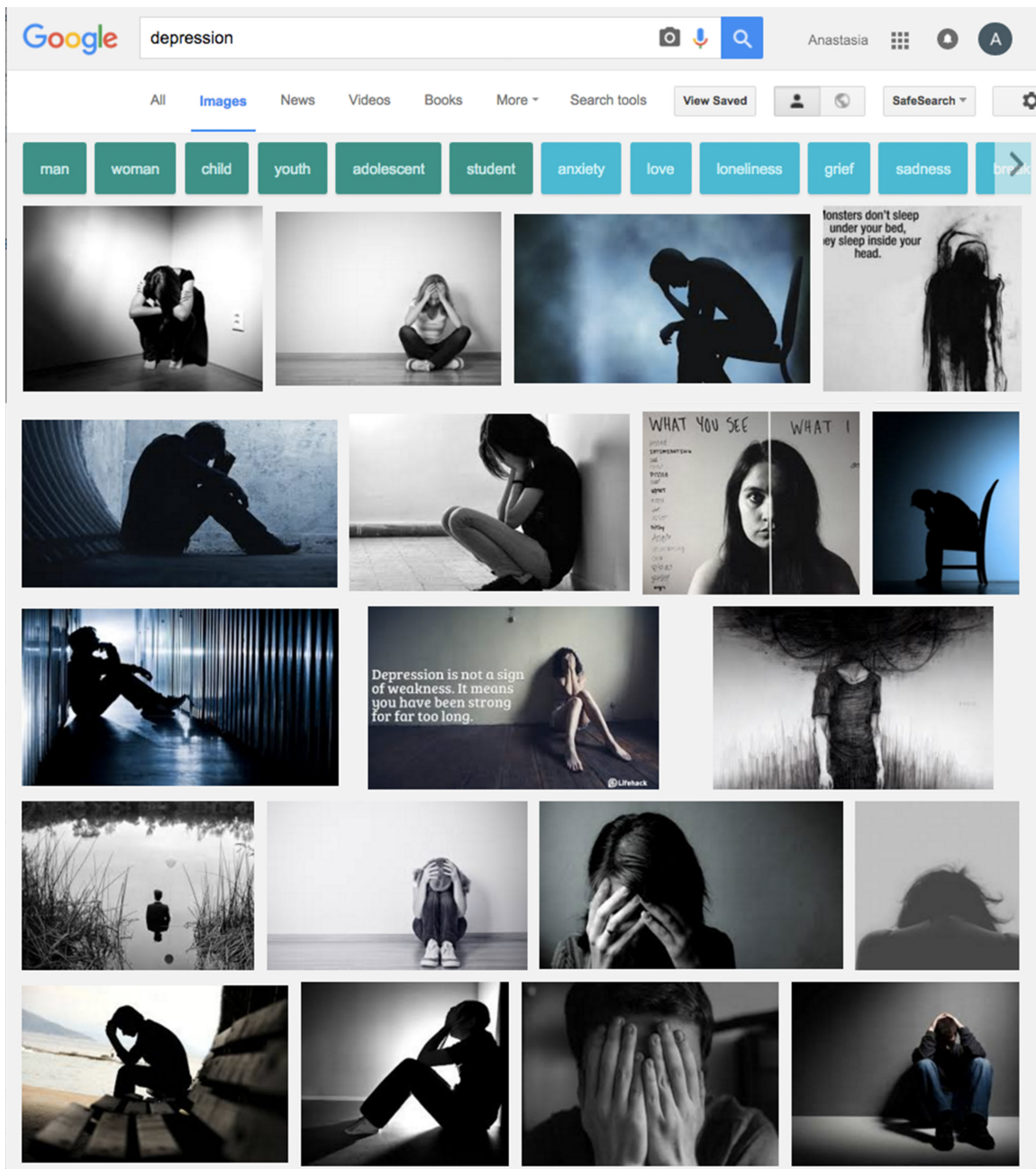
*...an implosive mood that walls itself in and kills me secretly,
very slowly, through permanent bitterness, bouts of sadness,
or even lethal sleeping pills that I take in smaller or greater
quantities in the dark hope of meeting...no one, unless it be
my imaginary wholeness, increased with my death that
accomplishes me.^{xlviii}*

Depression arises out of a fundamental confusion—a (mis)translation of a lack into a loss. The subject is constituted by lack—‘born’ into subjectivity with a requisite hole at the center of his being. This hole (where before there was undifferentiated wholeness, fullness, plentitude) is hence ‘positivized’ in the form of the objet a—the virtual, unnamable, fantasmatic object—the Thing—that would hypothetically ‘fill’ the hole, the void. Thus, the objet a—the object-cause of desire—is a “purely anamorphic entity that does not exist in itself.”^{xlix}

The depressive, however, (mis)interprets his lack as a loss; he unconsciously believes that, at some point, he actually had the Thing—that he was whole, complete, satisfied (that he was without lack). His current sense of lack is thus (mis)interpreted as a hole left behind by the loss of the Thing (the objet a) he once possessed. He no longer desires the objet a, but mourns its irrevocable loss (it is now ‘as good as dead’). Depression is therefore constituted by a lack of lack, a lack resulting in the displacement of desire with mourning.

In short, what melancholy obfuscates is that the object is lacking from the very beginning, that is emergence coincides with its lack, that this object is nothing but the positivization of a void or lack...insofar as the object-cause of desire is originally, in a constitutive way, lacking, melancholy interprets this lack as a loss, as if the lacking object was once possessed and then lost.¹

Whereas the desiring subject always and necessarily feels somewhat dissatisfied with the objects he obtains (this isn't IT—this isn't the THING I want!), leading him in endless pursuit of IT (the objet a), the depressed subject experiences the things in his life as if they used to fill the void ("I used to be happy") but no longer do. The subject "has everything" (lacks nothing) but "wants nothing" (lacks desire): he possesses the object but it is deprived of desire, as the cause that made him desire it (the objet a) has been withdrawn, has lost its effect. The subject thus mourns the lost Thing, he mourns the death of what he has (mourns his persistent sense of lack—the feeling that this isn't IT, as if it were caused by a loss, the loss of IT, the now withdrawn object a). The subject's terminal emptiness is thereby foreclosed; without hope for any future pleasures or fulfillment, he is divested of all desire, left immobilized in mourning over the 'lost Thing' ("what's the point?")—inert, hopeless, resolute.



Screenshot of Google Images search for "depression."

The depressed subject's loss of desire (and, consequently, their reason to live, i.e., to be a subject), is often accompanied by the following symptoms and effects:

I. Asymbolia (a loss of speech and meaning)

- a. The 'lost Thing'—the source of the subject's suffering—cannot be put into words (the Thing is beyond mediation and signification and thus cannot be symbolized, i.e., comprehended, made sense of)*
- b. An abyss opens up between the subject—the unnamable, unspeakable anguish he feels—and signification: his ability to translate his anguish into words. This disconnect alienates him from language, which becomes increasingly estranged—it not longer 'suits him.'*
- c. The fundamental arbitrariness of language, an emptiness upon which all meaning depends, becomes unbearably apparent: the depressive is 'unbelieving in language.'*
- d. The subject witnesses the absurdity and meaninglessness of signification, life, being:*

The depressed speak of nothing, they have nothing to speak of: glued to the Thing, they are without objects. That total and insignificant Thing is insignificant—it is a mere Nothing, their Nothing, Death.^{li}

II. 'Revelation' (the apparent foreclosure of previously veiled truths, insight)

- a. Language (the symbolic) is arbitrary (artificial, illusory, flimsy);*
- b. Thus, meaning is arbitrary (a transparent prison, a cave);*
- c. Thus, life (being) is arbitrary;*
- d. Thus, death is arbitrary:*

The depressive denial that destroys the meaning of the symbolic also destroys the act's meaning and leads the subject to commit suicide without anguish of disintegration, as a reuniting with archaic non-integration, as lethal as it is jubilatory, 'oceanic.'ⁱⁱⁱ

III. Ideated, attempted, or completed homicide or suicide



Simon Astaire, an author and agent who has been a family friend for over 10 years and has been acting as the family's spokesman, described attending a Christmas party at Peter Rodger's hillside home in Woodland Hills and wandering out into the cool night to come across Elliot, then 12, staring into the black sky. He said Elliot had lowered his head and started sharing his loneliness before turning back wordlessly toward the heavens.^{liii}

Roses

2000. She and Amos go backpacking with his mother and stepfather. She has never been backpacking before but is excited by the prospect of being away from home and alone in a tent with him. It's summer and the air is hotter and muggier than usual. She decides to take off her shorts and hike in just a shirt and her swimsuit bottoms. Amos is embarrassed by this and tells her it's a strange thing to do. His reaction surprises her and she feels something she's never felt before—a feeling she would later come to recognize as being 'turned off.'

Throughout the weekend Amos becomes increasingly and inexplicably sullen and judgmental. He snaps at everyone and goes off on walks alone. He sulks and takes pity on himself under trees. He tells her not to touch him.

On their hike back to the trailhead they stop at a river crossing and decide to go for a swim before returning home. Everyone is in the water except Amos, who sits perched up on a rock with just his pant legs rolled up slightly. She sits next to him and tries to make light of his mood, but he only resents her more. She looks down at his feet. She notices for the first time the golden hairs on his toes, and a patch of broken blood vessels on the inside of his ankle. She feels disgusted by this, and then guilty for her feelings.

During the car ride home, she senses something new—an uneasiness and discomfort—a need to escape. By the time his mother drops her off at her house, she knows the relationship is over.

It takes her weeks to work up the courage to break up with him, her first ‘real boyfriend.’ She invites him over ‘to talk.’ They sit outside together on a set of lawn chairs in her mother’s backyard. She explains herself. She apologizes. He tells her how lonely he is. That ‘people in America’ don’t understand him. That he doesn’t belong. She doesn’t get it. She can’t quite take him seriously. She pities him. He starts to cry. She desperately wants him to leave, but does her best to be as compassionate as possible. As the sun begins its descent behind the mountains, he finally gets up and hugs her goodbye—another new sense: freedom, relief.

Months later she returns home from school and notices a very faint series of chalk marks on the walkway leading up to her house. *Do these lines spell “Amos”?* When she questions her mother about it, she reports seeing a bunch of rose petals in the same place a few days ago but didn’t think to mention it. Together they come to the conclusion that Amos must have spelled out his name in chalk and then outlined it in rose petals but that the petals had blown away and the chalk was too faint to notice until the pavement was darkened by the rain. *But why his name?* (she would never know).

The fact that she never mentioned her belated discovery to him—the fact that he never knew whether or not she had seen it; whether the gesture had gone unnoticed or was noticed and willfully ignored—would become one of the many details that would haunt her when, roughly a decade later, she found out (via an invitation to his memorial service) that Amos had committed suicide.^{liv}



*...a merging with sadness and, beyond it, with that
impossible love, never reached, always elsewhere, such as
the promises of nothingness, of death.*

—Julia Kristeva^{iv}

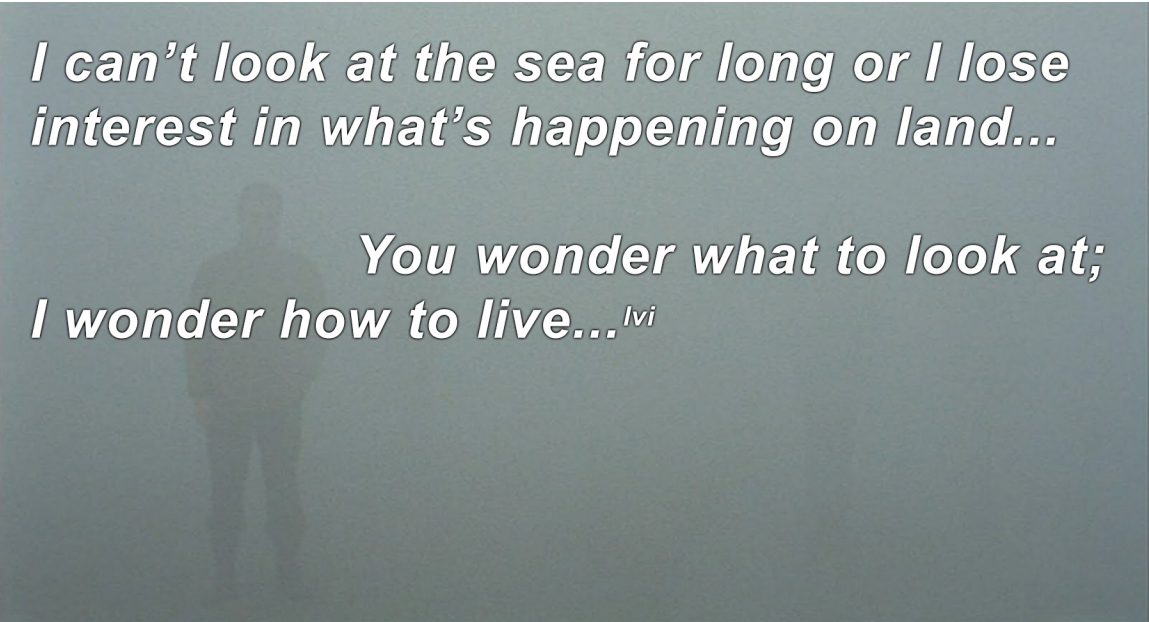


Leap into the Void, Yves Klein, 1960.

Martin Goes Blind (An Epilogue)

2005. Martin is released from prison. Gary helps him get to Alaska where he finds contract work as a deep sea fisherman. On his very first job, a storm hits while they are out at sea. The wind and waves knock loose an improperly secured piece of heavy equipment, which consequently pins Martin to the side of the ship, crushing his groin. The incident leaves him with severe injuries and he is no longer able to work. Desperate for money, he settles with the company for a meager 3000\$, which he blows almost immediately on drugs and alcohol. From this point forward, he drifts back and forth between the streets and half-way houses and jail cells.

On one particularly cold night in Anchorage, he is sleeping under a bridge beneath a pile of blankets and discarded comforters. For reasons he may or may not know, a group of assailants douse him in lighter fluid and then proceed to set him on fire. He ends up in the ICU with 3rd degree burns and without his left eye. When he calls Gary from the hospital, he tells him the attack was a real 'wake-up call' (*a revelation*); that he realizes how messed up his life has become (*he sees the light, he's gained in-sight—a form of knowledge*); that from now on things are going to be different (*false hope, blindness—a means of survival*).†



*I can't look at the sea for long or I lose
interest in what's happening on land...*

*You wonder what to look at;
I wonder how to live...^{lvi}*

All full-page images are stills from the ABC television series *The Bachelor*.

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- ⁱ A conversation transcribed from a videotape by Gary Hill, 1990.
- ⁱⁱ *Annual Report of the Inspectors, Volumes 1-20*, State Penitentiary for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: Printed by J. Thompson, S. E. corner second & Market, 1837), 7.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Slavoj Žižek, "Melancholy and the Act," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (summer, 2000): 660.
- ^{iv} Kazimir Malevich, *Suprematism* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2003), 35.
- ^v Kazimir Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism* (New York: Dover Publication, Inc., 2003), 67.
- ^{vi} Kazimir Malevich qtd. in *The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art* By Roger Lipsey (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988), 149.
- ^{vii} Plato, *Republic*, from *The Great Dialogues of Plato, Book VIII* (New York: Mentor, 1956), 315.
- ^{viii} Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, ed., Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 97.
- ^{ix} This is a very brief and selective interpretation of Jacques Lacan's notion of *jouissance*. Original and in-depth discussions of the subject can be found in *The Seminar. Book VII (1959-60)*; *The Seminar. Book XVII (1969-70)*; *The Seminar. Book XX (1972-73)*; and *Écrits (1966)*.
- ^x John C. Lilly, "Effects of Physical Restraint and of Reduction of Ordinary Levels of Physical Stimuli on Intact Healthy Persons" in *Illustrative Strategies for Research on Psychopathology in Mental Health*, Symposium No 2. Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (New York, 1956): 1.
- ^{xi} Lilly, *Effects*, 6.
- ^{xii} "History of the Tank," *Samadhi Tank Co. Inc.*, 1997, <http://www.samadhitank.com/history.html>
- ^{xiii} John C. Lilly, M.D. and Philip Hansen Bailey Lilly, *The Quiet Center: Isolation and Spirit* (Berkeley: Ronin Publishing, 2003), 20.
- ^{xiv} Transcribed from *Switchblade*, video by Gary Hill, 1998-99.
- ^{xv} Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- ^{xvi} Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 253.
- ^{xvii} Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 27.
- ^{xviii} Oliver Sacks, *Hallucinations* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 34.
- ^{xix} Oliver Sacks. "Oliver Sacks: I want to de-stigmatise hallucinations." Interview by Tiffany O'Callaghan. *New Scientist*, October 31, 2012, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21628890-400-oliver-sacks-i-want-to-de-stigmatise-hallucinations/>
- ^{xx} Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 4-5.
- ^{xxi} Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1977), 104.
- ^{xxii} Maurice Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 322.
- ^{xxiii} Lewis A. Kirshner, "Rethinking Desire: The *Objet Petit A* in Lacanian Theory," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 53, no. 1 (March 2005): 86.
- ^{xxiv} John Cage's statement on Robert Rauschenberg's "white paintings" in "Art and Artists: Musings on Miscellany," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 27, 1953.
- ^{xxv} Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 36.
- ^{xxvi} Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 62.
- ^{xxvii} "Absolute Absence," <http://it.stlawu.edu/~global/glossary/absolutabsence.html>
- ^{xxviii} Vladimir Nabokov, *Laughter in the Dark* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 15.
- ^{xxix} Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 103.
- ^{xxx} Žižek, *Melancholy*, 663.
- ^{xxxi} Yves Klein, "Sorbonne Lecture," in *Art in Theory 1900 – 1990—an Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992): 804.

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- ^{xxdii} Grosz, *Lacan*, 63.
- ^{xxdiii} Rik Loose, *The Subject of Addiction: Psychoanalysis and the Administration of Enjoyment* (London: Karnac, 2002), 69.
- ^{xxdvi} Eric Laurent, "From saying to doing in the clinic of drug addiction and alcoholism," in the *Almanac of Psychoanalysis—Psychoanalytic stories after Freud and Lacan*, ed., Ruth Golan, Gabriel Dahan, Shlomo Lieber, and Rivka Warshawsky (Tel Aviv: Groupe Israelienne de l'Ecole Europeenne, 1998) 138.
- ^{xxv} Anish Kapoor qtd. in *Anish Kapoor* By Camiel Van Winkel (Tilburg: De Pont, 1995) 41.
- ^{xxvi} Kirshner, *Rethinking Desire*, 85.
- ^{xxvii} Jacqueline Rose, "The Imaginary" in *Jacques Lacan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory*, vol. 1. *Psychoanalytic Theory and Practice*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Routledge, 2003): 25-26.
- ^{xxviii} Jacques Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981), 103.
- ^{xxix} Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 6.
- ^{xi} Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 186.
- ^{xli} Lacan's original theorization of 'the Gaze' can be found in "The Line and the Light" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1973).
- ^{xlii} Nyojo (1163 – 1228), teacher of Dogen (founder of the Soto school of Zen) qtd. in *Classics of Buddhism and Zen: The Collected Translations of Thomas Cleary, Volume 2* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), 251.
- ^{xliii} *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation*, July 1963 (approved for release January, 1997): 87-88.
- ^{xliv} *Ibid.*, 90.
- ^{xdv} Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," *October* 31, Winter (1984): 30.
- ^{xlvi} James Turrell, Robert Irwin, and Ed Wortz qtd. in *A Report On The Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art 1967-1971* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971), 132.
- ^{xlvii} *Ibid.*, 131.
- ^{xlviii} Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 29.
- ^{xlix} Žižek, *Melancholy*, 660.
- ⁱ *Ibid.*
- ^{li} Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 51.
- ^{lii} *Ibid.*, 19.
- ^{liii} Adam Nagourney, Michael Cieply, Alan Feuer and Ian Lovett, "Before Brief, Deadly Spree, Trouble Since Age 8," *The New York Time*, June 1, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/02/us/elliott-rodger-killings-in-california-followed-years-of-withdrawal.html?_r=0
- ^{liv} *Life is a dream, and now it's over...*
- ^{lv} Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 12-13.
- ^{lvi} *Red Desert*, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni (1964; Milan, Italy: Rizzoli).