Troubling Subjectivities

Asymptotic Realism and the Perception of a Non-Human (Avatar) Maker

by

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ABSTRACT

Subjectivity, phenomenology, and the expression of the human/nonhuman other are critical impasses for makers to challenge, curate, or circumvent within Posthumanism. Through an Abnatural aesthetic ungrounding of the WE as self/other/avatars, identities of a maker are infinitely reconstituted into variable signatures, logics, ethics, and moralities.

Avatars exist as differentiable iterations of the perceived self, but they are also independent beings that flicker between states of the real/fake as simulacrums and contradictions embedded within the WE. This unfixity of a formal silhouette provides the self, as a maker, the opportunity to move beyond Paragonical structures toward x.

Troubling in an unpredictable liminal directionality, the WE is subjected to another kind of alterity that fronts imperceivable biases. This process, rather than being extractive and intrusive, seeks expansive freedoms into the unexplored landscapes of each maker by dismantling the socio-cultural confines of practice. As an amateur, as a maker, and as an avatar, the WE is challenged to perceive otherness from within. In so doing, it becomes embedded, knowable, demystified, and embodied as a new modality for made/maker. How far can these tentacular forms reach, stray, and grasp?

Pushing toward a nonhuman space, to critique the Posthuman, an Abnatural aesthetic produces elastic, generative collaborations that simultaneously critique the WE. Through case studies on Combinatorial strategies to frame objects, subjects, and making practices, an asymptote of trouble arises where subjects are entangled within their unfixable subjectivity. Experiencing as an avatar, how can an Abnatural aesthetic generate pathways toward inclusive and expansive making practices?

DEDICATION

To Luz for your loving patience

To Mom, Dad, and Katie for your honesty and support

To Dean and Gene Davis for your hearts, minds, and souls

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To all of my Past/Present/Future

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INTRODUCTION

JOBU ROCK: Stop that! You aren't supposed to move
here. You're just a rock.
EVELYN ROCK: There are no rules![1]

An Abnatural aesthetic that drives the paper rises from an Asymptotic contradiction layered within a simulacrum of ontology that has been the at the foundation of my practice, scholarship, and education. A call toward indefinite and elastic procedures constitute a renewed challenge toward makers as an edge condition for assemblages and field conditions that graft and cross-pollinate ad infinitum. The avatar, as an Abnatural aesthetic, is a site for critical digital and physical embodiment within a third space, and thus provides a name and subjectivity to this peripheralization. *How can makers embody a Posthuman artificiality?* Divergent successes, pitfalls, and epistemes introduce frameworks as procedures to activate an unique bias within the self. Thus, this text provides a blueprint, construction plan, and demolition plan for avatar(s) as makers.

Through each set of differentiable makers, theories, and scholars, the text generates a discrete différance, to allow for misreading, undermining, and cross-pollination to enter the frame. With a move toward an extent-less practice, this text begins deconstructing historical, sociological, psychological, and metaphysical impediments through reconstructible meshworks of references. Indicative of an Abnatural aesthetic, this work is an open-ended phenomenology operating as an incomplete ledger and folio represented by a porous superstructure that exists outside/inside of itself.

[1] *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert (2022; New York, NY: A24), Netflix.

PART ONE, AVATAR SUBJECTHOOD: SIPHONING THE SELF

The Current Self

> MODERATOR MOTHERWELL: What then exactly constitutes the basis of our community?
> STERNE: We need a common vocabular. Abstract should really mean abstract, and modern should really mean modern. We don't mean the same things with the same words.
> HOFMANN: Why should we? Everyone should be as different as possible. There is nothing that is common to all of us except our creative urge. It just means one thing to me; to discover myself as well as I can.[2]

To "discover the myself as well as I can," as Hofmann states in the quote above, relies on the understanding of what is *currently* imaginable, what is *currently* possible, and the *current* information and media that surrounds the self to aid in the investigation. We, as a human species, believe that there is an infinite set of possibilities that may constitute the self. However, just as Hilbert's Paradox is solved through checking into the first room not the room at the end of the infinite hallway,[3] a human's conception of infinite possibilities is limited to the tangential and the immediately accessible information in their culture. Is it possible, then, to have multiple rooms in the hotel over time, and to think of the self in parallel rather than in series?

Before a headlong divergent-discursive debate into a *Thousand Plateaus* of making and making makers that make, the self, or the sole-proprietor of an existence,

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[2] Robert Goodnough, *Artists' Sessions at Studio 35* (Chicago: Soberscove Press, 2018), 14. (Motherwell, Sterne, and Hoffman).

[3] Helge Kragh, *The True (?) Story of Hilbert's Infinite Hotel*, arXiv:1403.0059v2, https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1403.0059.

must be understood in silhouette. A bleary-eyed outline of binary opposition, linework/inside/outside. Yet, similar to a rasterized photograph rather than a vectorized fractal, the more zoomed-in to the edge condition, the more obvious the loss of detail. Defining the bounds of a figure, especially for that of the maker within a culture, relies on a *current* historical analysis of media and cultural studies. Teleologically and epistemologically, the self is ever-changing, adaptable, and contextualized.

Media, like the nature of the self, is a series of cultural ebbs and flows. It is the pulse of the fad, the fab, and the forward. A case study could be fashion's sudden resurgence of low-rise jeans or Y2K culture holistically. Through such, we must be reminded of the cyclical nature of forward-thinking that rewinds, intertwines, but never stops, time. Yes, the Spearsean era of music and fashion has long-since passed, but the inevitable mutations of Y2K culture are evident in the resurrecting tropes of the star-child from a boy band, Justin Timberlake to Harry Styles,[4] the drug-induced-dramedy shows, *Freaks and Geeks* to *Euphoria*,[5] and the ultra-personalization of toys and accessories with the return of friendship bracelets in Taylor Swift's "You're on Your Own Kid" from the *Midnight* album.[6] To avoid bottlenecking this phenomenon as an accelerationist discovery of the late 21st century, *The Outsiders* restyles the denim jacket from *Rebel Without a Cause* and transfers the cool of Marlon Brando to Patrick Swayze, Johnny

[4] Sean Evans, "*NSYNC Breaks Another Record While Eating Spicy Wings," YouTube Video, September 21, 2023, Hot Ones, 1:37 to 3:27. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97SPDxM3Ezw.

[5] Danny Vikram Bell, "4 iconic teen-drama TV shows that walked so Euphoria could run," *Vogue India* (October 21, 2020). https://www.vogue.in/culture-and-living/content/gossip-girl-to-my-so-called-life-4-tv-shows-that-paved-the-way-for-euphoria.

[6] Kayleigh Roberts, "Everything You Need to Know About Why Taylor Swift Fans Are Making Friendship Bracelets for the Eras Tour," *Cosmopolitan* (May 2020, 2023). https://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/celebs/a43948812/taylor-swift-friendship-bracelets-eras-tour-explained/.

Cade, Robe Lowe, Tom Cruise, etc. In the same year, 1983, two iconic voices of the 60's and 70's, now acting as solo artists, share the chart-topping song, "Say Say Say," with Paul McCartney and Michael Jackson singing together.[7] Toys and objects are no different. Nearly 20 years after their 1964 market release, G.I. Joe action-figures had a booming resurgence alongside the newly released cartoon, *G.I. Joe: An All-American Hero.*[8]

What *is* and what *was* contemporary is difficult to unpack, and, thus, identifying the bounds or a loose silhouette of the self over a lifetime is *troubling*. Unlike the historical moments of the Architecture Licensure Bill of Illinois in 1897, the Clean Air Act of 1970, or the Children's Television Act of 1990, culture and society ooze, slough, and sprint through time cyclically. Thus, the foundational ground for any universal humanity, absolute subjectivity, or constant individualization is unknowable, imperceivable, or blindingly rapid. On an even smaller scale, the self, as an individual actor and maker, is a composite story of infinite beginnings rather than a series of infinite beings.[9] This cyclical processing is constituted by the imperfect and unfinished becoming that defines the both/and of human signature, perception, and logic. Moreover, the difficulty in becoming and being is the reoccurring physical impediments mandated through cultural assimilation. The limits of humanity and the finiteness of possibilities

[7] Gary Trust, "'Say Say Say' Ranks As Michael Jackson's Biggest Billboard Hit," *Billboard* (June 17, 2010). https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/say-say-say-ranks-as-michael-jacksons-biggest-billboard-hit-957728/.

[8] Jimmy Stamp, "Now You Know the History of G.I. Joe. And Knowing Is Half The Battle," *Smithsonian Magazine* (March 29, 2013). https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/now-you-know-the-history-of-gi-joe-and-knowing-is-half-the-battle-11506463/.

[9] Jeffrey Cohen, *Noah's Arkive* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2023), 29-30.

arise from an epistemological "glitch in the matrix" that designates who is next to us in the infinite hotel paradox.[10]

Before rethinking Mitchell's use of "play" and "hacking" as a "chance to release and mobilize untold matters and energies beyond the human, suspending all-too-human concepts and compartmentalizations,"[11] the self, as a maker, must be conceptualized as a series of extents to work beyond. These extents, like artifacts in a museum of natural-human history, curate a semi-permeable and malleable script for thought, creativity, media, and critique.

> JACK: I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr… with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.
>
> ALGERNON: Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.[12]

[10] Kragh, *The True (?) Story of Hilbert's Infinite Hotel*.

[11] J. Allen Mitchell, "Play" *Veer Ecology*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2017), 350.

[12] Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 36.

> SMITH: This is the time in which I live and have to function. Therefore, it has to be ideal. How can I consider an ideal society as ideal in one that I can't possibly live?
> MODERATOR MOTHERWELL: What distinguishes these people is that they are trying to act ideally in a non-deal society.
> POUSETTE-DART: It is an ideal society, but only the artist realizes it.[13]

There is a critical fuzziness to the act of creating any kind of media, which is the thing that defines and delimits the parameters for what a self *can* be. The self, as a maker, lives in constant paradox of being neither inside/outside the cultural system. To fully understand the potential for a Posthuman-making practice, a brief summary of the culture and physical impediments toward making is pivotal to ground a speculative future discourse. Freedom, even in the world of makers, is met with regulations, affordances, and barriers toward a pseudo-cultural normativity.

Historically, the hands of the maker have been critical agents of production that sway the cultural zeitgeist with their visibility or lack of. Thomas Eakins' paintings of *The Gross Clinic* (fig. 1) and *The Agnew Clinic* (fig. 2) share similar cultural critiques for a master/expert inside the system. The earlier work, *The Gross Clinic*, shows a surgeon in a class lecture operating on a young woman. Vividly and grotesquely portrayed, the painting received backlash for the grotesque ambivalence of the doctor and artist, "the artist had no conception of where to stop in art, of how to hint a horrible thing it must be said, of what the limits are between beauty of the nude and the indecency of the naked.

[13] Goodnough, *Artists' Sessions at Studio 35*, 54. (Smith, Motherwell, and Pousette-Dart)

Power it has, but very little art."[14]The painting exposed an unwritten rule of the culture and the profession as the doctor was caught in the act, red-handed by the unethical dematerialization of the human form.



Figure 1. Thomas Eakins, *The Gross Clinic*, 1875, Oil on Canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/299524.

[14] The American Artists, "Varnishing Day of the Second Exhibition," *The New York Times* (March 8, 1879). https://nyti.ms/49jlsa9.



Figure 2. Thomas Eakins, *The Agnew Clinic*, 1889, Oil on Canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, https://archives.upenn.edu/exhibits/penn-history/class-histories/medical-class-of-1889/agnew-clinic/.

In the later "The Agnew Clinic" work, the doctor, holding a scalpel, rests back in observation and conversation with the remainder of the audience. Scripted with only the most important duties of the "simple" procedure, a Mastectomy, and with minimal blood splatter on a stark white coat, the surgeon rests with the final closures taking place on the operating table.[15] Still made aghast by the scene, this work supposedly met tremendous controversy for the breakdown of the cultural norms even from the doctor, "In fact, when Dr. Agnew viewed the painting near its completion, he notices the blood that Eakins had painted on his right, free hand. These drops so offended Agnew that he insisted they be

[15] Michael M. Frumovitz, MD. "Thomas Eakins' *Agnew Clinic*: A Study of Medicine Through Art," *Obstetrics & Gynecology* 100, no. 6 (December 2002): 1299.

removed from the work. After heated discussion, Eakins yielded.[16] Thus, an intellectual portrayed as a bloodied worker, the nude figure, now discriminated to the naked, cut open like an animal laying on the operating table, and the immorality of the bored undergraduate students, resulted in the artist as "butcher."[17]

The nude always has been a reference in the art world to the epistemological moment of beauty, form, and godliness.[18] From the sensual long neck of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* to the Eden-filled perfection of Panicale's *The Temptation*, the nude was a sign of perfection. It was a visual and virtualization of the wisdom and divinity of the creator through unashamed bodies and expression that would seek to glorify rather than pervert or contaminate the ideal depiction of humanity. Thus, the crux of the perfect replication of beauty and the sinful nature of exposing and exploring the body, met the art of learning through dissecting and drawing from cadavers.[19] Central to this experimentation and experience was the taboo of interiority of the body, "opening the body was not only seen as dangerous, contaminating, and polluting, but also as a violation of the divine prohibition of forbidden knowledge."[20] Artists, like the de Gregori brothers, Vesalius, Michaelangelo, Rafael, Estienne, and Da Vinci, began explorations into bodies and organ systems revolutionizing the way we understand the *physical* silhouette of the body in art and medicine.[21]

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[16] Frumovitz, "Thomas Eakins' *Agnew Clinic*: A Study of Medicine Through Art," 1298.
[17] Frumovitz, 1300.
[18] William Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003), 138.
[19] Katharine Park, "The Criminal and the Saintly Body" *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (Spring 1994), 4.
[20] Park, 3.
[21] Paul G. McMenamin, "Art and anatomy in the renaissance" *ANZ Journal of Surgery* 92, no. 1-2 (January/February 2022), 40.

Eakins, in a similar vein, was exploring the definition of physicality, the matter of the self and the extents of the material human experience, even if under the knife. Each drawing, painting, and study acted as a push forward of representation, understanding, and signification, despite the unsightly cultural ramifications. These societal cues define the extents of a teleological situation, or an epistemological chapter in humanity.[22]

Diagrammatically different from Eakins, Vesalius, "the grandfather of human anatomy," was working toward a clearer conception of the bodies interiority, but the images generated from these experiences were contained within the medical and anatomical fields in his 1543 publication, *De Humani Corporis fabrica* or *On the Fabric of the Human Body*.[23] Thus, the intellectualization of the images was not compromised by the anticipation of the nude's loss of beauty and innocence. The drawings were used to depersonalize and demonstrate the internal workings of humans as if to amplify the divine wisdom of God. Even using the bodies of executed criminals as a site for dissection as a mode of reconciliation, Park argues that there was a Renaissance belief that this knowledge would purify the body, "From this point of view the criminal's subsequent dissection, which in the days before the permanent anatomy theater sometimes took place in church, itself resembled a sacrament—the penultimate act in a potential drama of redemption."[24]

Transgressing and purifying, the criminal corpse becomes the scientific saint of study. Studies, nearly one hundred years later, done by Rembrandt in *The Anatomy*

[22] Gary E. Friedlaender and Linda K. Friedlaender, "The Gross Clinic by Thomas Eakins," *Art in Science* 472, no. 12 (December 2014), 3635.

[23] McMenamin, "Art and anatomy in the renaissance," 41.

[24] Park, "The Criminal and the Saintly Body," 23.

Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp (fig. 3) and *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deijman* (fig 4.) read differently if the subject of the cut is denude of the assumed perfection of humanity. With Dr. Tulp operating on Aris Kindt, a convicted assault and robbery,[25] and Dr. Deijman operating on Joris Fonteijn, a convicted robber and attempted murderer,[26] the works of Rembrandt do not challenge the socio-cultural resistance that the works of Eakins crash into. Rather, Rembrandt, through the use of the other re-sanctified and ritualized as the self, provides a contextual utilitarianism for the body.



Figure 3. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632, Oil on Canvas, Mauritshuis, https://www.mauritshuis.nl/en/our-collection/artworks/146-the-anatomy-lesson-of-dr-nicolaes-tulp/.

[25] Berardo Di Matteo et al., "Nicolaes Tulp," *Art in Science* 474, no. 3 (March 2016), 625.

[26] F. J. de Paz Fernández, "Rembrandt's Anatomy lessons," *Neurosciences and History* 6, no. 1 (2018), 8.



Figure 4. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deijman*, 1656, Oil on Cavas, Amsterdam Museum, https://hart.amsterdam/nl/collectie/object/amcollect/38545.

But how does a culture that revokes Eakins' medical inquiry praise Rembrandt's studies? Subsequently, how does the revisitation of these principles contract, change, and converge in the 20th century with a work like Hyman Bloom's *The Hull*? (fig. 5) Though the passing of time *may* change the extents of what is possible for future makers, nothing forces accelerated adaptation of the cultural milieu like a new tool that rescripts the limits of the grotesque and the unsightly.



Figure 5. Hyman Bloom, "The Hull," Oil on Canvas, 1952, Worcester Art Museum, In *Modern Mystic: The Art of Hyman Bloom*, by Henry Adams and Marcia Brennan (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2019).

Technology, like War or Law, shifts the pendulum of media-creation drastically based on a specific moment in time, but how would the socio-cultural landscape respond? How would the self be granted clearances that were never before possible?

Barthes, speaking to the advent of photography as an artist's medium, states that "photography transformed subject into object, and even, one might say, into a museum object."[27] It is the objectivization of nonobjects that flatten photography into a discrete,

[27] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage Books, 2000), 13.

seemingly unbiased media that Barthes calls "tautological."[28] Photography can only shoot what is current, present, and real. In such, the technology of photography was packaged as a tool for information media, most effectively in news and legal proceedings.[29] Thus, the body, not needing to be imagined as an unattainable beauty with certain creative and artistic licenses for depiction, could be scientifically represented and reproduced. Nancy and Ferrari speculate on this further as the loss of the hand, "Normally, photography arrests time. It attests to the presence of an object by making it 'instantaneous.' There is no longer any trace of the hand' and its movements in the pictorial space, movements that are all at different moments and are distant from one another."[30]

Photography during the American Civil War cataloged the cold, still, dark images of the pre-and-post battlefield. An emerging practice for activating a war-torn conflict, the camera was able to freeze a moment of the battle scene. In the 1862 exhibition *The Dead of Antietam,* photographer Alexander Gardner and Mathew Brady, the gallerist and photographer, brought the horrors of the Civil War to New York, "Mr. Brady has done something to bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war. If he has not brought bodies and laid them in our dooryards and along the streets, he has done something very like it."[31] Though thousands of photos were taken throughout the war, little made the impact that Brady's exhibition and Gardner's famous photo, *View of ditch,*

[28] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 5.
[29] Luco v. United States, 64 U.S. 23 (1859).
[30] Jean-Luc Nancy and Federico Ferrari, *Being Nude*, trans. Anne O'Byrne and Carlie Anglemire (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 31.
[31] "Brady's Photographs," *The New York Times* (October 20, 1862). https://nyti.ms/49iFOR2.

which had been used as a rifle-pit at the Battle of Antietam (fig.6), made on the war effort.

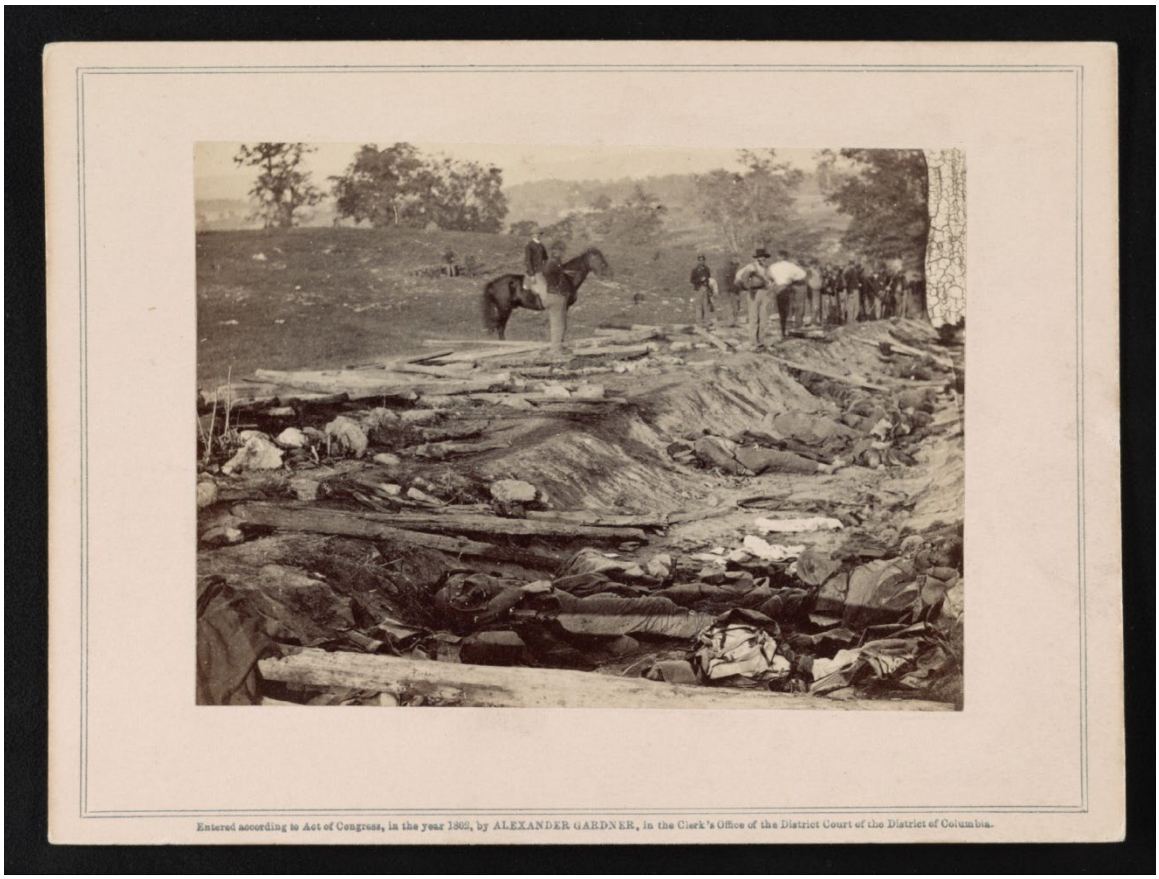


Figure 6. Alexander Gardner, *View of ditch, which had been used as a rifle-pit at the Battle of Antietam*, 1862, Photograph, Getty, https://www.loc.gov/resource/ds.05186/.

The camera became a tool for observational facts. But like the mythical painters of history, the compositions only alluded to a representation of triumph or horror in action with only the anticipation of violence to show the unseen actions of brutish humanity. Nancy and Ferrari speculate further on this differentiation of media as intervention and time induced by the hand, “But if in painting and sculpture, on the one hand, the intervention of the ‘hand’ of the artist is capable of introducing a time lag and a

proliferation of spatial and temporal planes, in photography, on the other, the reduction to a single spatiotemporal dimension becomes inevitable."[32] In a time where Post-mortem photos were a common practice, the cultural significance of war, honor, and death outweighed the bloodlust and atrocities for documenting human nature. As Walter Benjamin states, "the cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuse for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face."[33] In such, pictures also provided the imaginable refuge in their documentation of melancholy and sadness.

It wasn't until the first moving picture films of "actualities" were used in the Spanish-American War that the extents of human egregiousness would be captured on film and for public viewing.[34] Susan Sontag, in "On Photography," is critical of photography and film, specifically in War and suffering, as they delimit the self from any sense of reality through desensitization, "An event known through photographs certainly becomes more real than it would have been if one had never seen the photographs… But after repeated exposure to images it also becomes less real."[35] In a contemporary mode of unrelenting evidence, a certain callousness arises where images are just… images. This cautionary tale of overabundance and repetition becomes the plight of culture critics, politicians, and nihilists. Similarly, Sontag foreshadows the societal effects of the

[32] Nancy and Ferrari, *Being Nude*, 31.
[33] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1968), 7.
[34] Candice Shy Hooper, "The War That Made Hollywood," *The Journal of Military History* 76 (January 2012), 88.
[35] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Picador, 2001), 15.

present-day, mind-numbing, social-media influences that feels every bit as haunting as apocalyptic.

Along with the plethora of sins brought on by humanity, film and cinema spurs a new kind of performative storytelling. The self, or the makers and the business tycoons, found unexplored lands for emerging creative enterprises. From the early 1900's to the 1930's, films were growing increasingly popular as a source of informative media, and the fatigue of watching and listening was long-distant by the rise of the "talkies."[36] With rapid expansion of possibilities and novel technologies, some culture-regulating forces must swoop in to contain the deluge of artistic freedoms. Then, a regulating body would define the extents for makers looking to push the limits of creative expression where they had not been previously allowed.

First, the Mutual Film Corp v. Industrial Commission of Ohio trial in 1915, which denied the First Amendment's right to Freedom of Speech within the film industry.[37] In an attempt to respond further to the claims of cultural disintegration within the general public, Will H. Hays and the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) created the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930, or "Hays Code," to clamp down on the use of nudity in film.[38] Though there were racially and internationally biased exceptions to these rules, the nude *in motion* was no longer a static, perfect, and beautiful object made in a creator's image.[39]

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[36] Hooper, "The War That Made Hollywood," 74-75.

[37] Mutual Film Corp. v. Industrial Comm'n of Ohio, 236 U.S. 230 (1915).

[38] John Shelton Lawrence, "'The Silents of God' and 'Sanctuary Cinema' by Terry Lindvall," *The Journal of American Culture* 31, Issue 2 (2008), 263.

[39] Jennifer Tang, "The Forgotten Women of Pre-Code" *Feminist Teacher* 20, no. 3 (2010).

Similar to the Eakins' *The Agnew Clinic* (fig. 2), the activation of a body, through interiority/exteriority or still/life, created an uncanny paradox born in the Mechanical Age. Breaking down the dilemma of the self into a question of media versus medium, the camera evangelized social nuance, revolution, and art production. Decoupling the patron from the artist, the camera provided artistic license beyond pure representation as seen by the booming waves of differentiated techniques, subjects, and styles through historical tags like Impressionism, De Stijl, Cubism, Surrealism, etc. However, liberty rarely comes without the consequences of Pandora.

Benjamin's critique of film in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" establishes a warning to heed of cultural numbness that dilutes the product of making through the accessibility of the media and the architecture of the cinematic space, "The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention."[40] "Pure art," from Benjamin's perspective, possesses an "aura" of uniqueness and contextual locality, or "cult" value, that raises the importance of the work through ritualization.[41] Thus, there is a contradiction that arises in the prospect of anticipating the consequences of a new film medium.

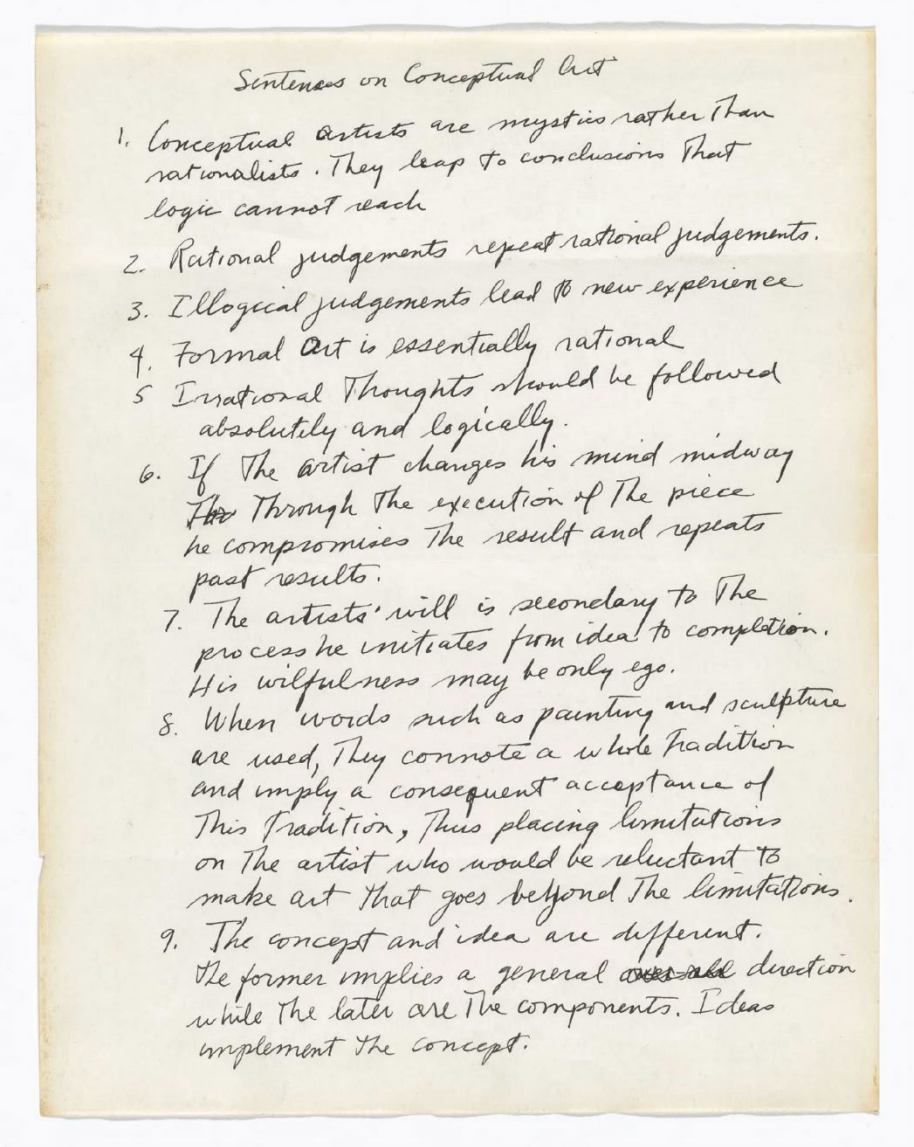
With an opening to redefine the ritual and aura of artistic value, which inherently changes the role of the maker, there is also a fear of audience inattentiveness brought on by the missing hand in the production of the media. The lack of humanity in the "mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on

[40] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 19.
[41] Benjamin, 6.

ritual."[42] Simultaneously, the maker "has to operate with his whole living person, yet forgoing its aura. For aura is tied to his presence; there can be no replica of it. The aura which, on the stage, emanates from Macbeth, cannot be separated for the spectators from that of the actor."[43] Similar to the debate between Photography and Painting on representative methods, Benjamin questions the response of Film to the performative nature of Theater.

This introduces another cultural artifact of consequence in the debate of the location of the hands within the self and the culturally-imposed extents: Paragone. Art History's pigeonholing compartmentalization for limiting makers, Paragone is the Renaissance-based structural belief that some forms of media are higher, more intellectual, or more important than other modes of production.[44] The debate of its necessity rages on to this day, but the scaffolding of this system of thought provides slippage within the new materiality of the camera and the subsequent media forms of photography and film. Sol LeWitt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art* (fig. 7) provide a brief canon to illustrate this, "When words such as painting and sculpture are used, they connote a whole tradition and imply a consequent acceptance of this tradition, thus placing limitations on the artist who would be reluctant to make art that goes beyond the limitations." Further into the future, the use of digital tools for New Media, Animation, Kinetic Art, etc. practices dissolve these strands one step more as an outdated construct, or self-imposed impediments.

[42] Benjamin, 6.
[43] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 10.
[44] Arthur C. Danto, *What Art Is* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 99.



Sentences on Conceptual Art

1. Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach.
2. Rational judgements repeat rational judgements.
3. Illogical judgements lead to new experience.
4. Formal art is essentially rational.
5. Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically.
6. If the artist changes his mind midway through the execution of the piece he compromises the result and repeats past results.
7. The artists' will is secondary to the process he initiates from idea to completion. His wilfulness may be only ego.
8. When words such as painting and sculpture are used, they connote a whole tradition and imply a consequent acceptance of this tradition, thus placing limitations on the artist who would be reluctant to make art that goes beyond the limitations.
9. The concept and idea are different. The former implies a general direction while the later are the components. Ideas implement the concept.

Figure 7. Sol LeWitt, *Sentences on Conceptual Art*, 1968, Ink on Paper, MoMA, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/146945.

Reflecting backward and simultaneously forward, Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* posits critiques of Benjamin's essay and provides the framework of a pseudo-ontology for Modern Art as a practice and technique within the socio-cultural confines of the self, "The failure of Benjamin's grandly conceived theory of reproduction remains that its bipolar categories make it impossible to distinguish between a conception of art

that is free of ideology to its core and the misuse of aesthetic rationality for mass exploitation and mass domination."[45] Adorno's consequential irreducibility is harkening and projecting toward a conceptualization of making that divulges and withholds at a subjective distance. Therein, the closer any work zooms-in on the technique, the technology, the theory, the image, the intention, the narrative, the self, the other, etc., the more volatile the extents become:

> When artworks are viewed under the closest scrutiny, the most objectivated paintings metamorphose into a swarming mass and texts splinter into words. As soon as one imagines having a firm grasp on the details of an artwork, it dissolves into the indeterminate and undifferentiated, so mediated is it. This is the manifestation of aesthetic semblance in the structure of artworks… Artworks themselves destroy the claim to objectivation that they raise.[46]

To exhaust the elasticity of the extents and to artificially zoom into this contradiction, Hyman Bloom's *The Hull* (fig. 5) splinters the monocular narrative of a socio-culturally stable conception of history for the reality of a malleable taboo. Henry Adams' text on Bloom flips the phenomenological understanding of entanglement as a question beyond the confines of expectant behavior, "For most visitors this would have been a scene of horror. Bloom asa painter, saw the beauty in the strange reds and purples of the viscera as they were exposed. At some level, confronting death in the most direct way possible seems to have released his anxiety about it."[47] The exposure to the other, not through disguise or filters, but as a direct frontage exemplifies an insight to the self as

[45] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (New York: Continuum Books, 1997), 56.

[46] Adorno, 101.

[47] Henry Adams, "The First Abstract Expressionist," *Moden Mystic: The Art of Hyman Bloom* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2019), 22.

an unfixable silhouette. Through a contextualized journey through Vesalius, Rembrandt, and Eakins, Bloom's dismissal of socio-culturally imposed extents provide the self as the other as the natural, an alterous entanglement with the contradictory, "the surgeon's arm and hand extend from the edge of the picture plane in a similarly cropped position, and likewise connect various states of being-in this case, the worlds of the living and the dead."[48]

Adorn returns to dismiss nature and provide the pathway the maker, like Bloom, may use to view the self and the other within the work as both inside and outside of nature, "The dignity of nature is that of the not-yet-existing; by its expression it repels intentional humanization. This dignity has been transformed into the hermetic character of art… the beauty of nature is an other; what is reconciled would resemble it."[49] The ever unfolding other and the distance, splintering, and inconceivability of nature/art is the pseudo-ontological framework that gives the self the possibility of making beyond the self.

With bias, capital, and Paragone, where does the identity of the self rest for the maker and how would their be any etymological and epistemological continuity between makers? Thus, the abrupt rupture of the pillars of painting, through new medias, wars, and technologies, led to dissolutions of idealized beauty in place of philosophical debates that have been held throughout the 20th century and beyond. Speaking in 1950 at Studio 35, Richard Pousette-Dart shares a conception of beauty that could only be a product of a post-mechanical time, "I have the feeling that in the art world, 'beauty' has become a

[48] Marcia Brennan, "A Half-Smothered Glow to Light a Very Small Museum," *Moden Mystic: The Art of Hyman Bloom* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2019), 132.

[49] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 74.

discredited word. I have heard people say you can't use the word 'God.' When a word becomes trite, it is not the word that has become trite but the people who use it."[50]

If art and making are no longer about the pure representation of beauty, then the rise of philosophy and storytelling enter the frame as a differentiable solution for each and every maker, "We modern artists have no generally accepted subject matter, no inherited iconography. But to re-invent painting, its subject matter and its means, is a task so difficult that one must reduce it to a very simple concept in order to paint for the sheer joy of painting."[51] Though the concepts of reduction, simple, and joy are still hotly contested amongst the other speakers at Studio 35, there is another flicker of ostentatiousness that is worth noting in the transcript. "Does not one have to remove oneself from the business world in order to create 'fine' art or to exist as a 'fine artist'?"[52] Removal, distance, difference, and worlding are terms created to rethink the abstraction of thought from the abstraction of the hands.

In this manner of thinking, a self that is contained within one cultural sphere must erase ties with another sphere of influence. Though written and recorded more than 70 years ago, this debate has been the catalyst of the *troubling practice* that is being read and written at the past-present and future-present moment. To belong within a system, specifically of making, is to accept self-imposed extents on a creative practice. Thus, the maker must accept these internal constraints of the system to participate. However minute this may seem, the effects, not only of each system's historical-societal impositions but

[50] Goodnough, *Artists' Sessions at Studio 35*, 41-42. (Pousette-Dart)
[51] Goodnough, 47. (Motherwell)
[52] Goodnough, 54. (Reinhardt)

the maker's own self-regulated manners, are detrimental to the discovery and extension of their extents.

For example, Inside/Outside the system of shoe production.

Inside the system, a Film, Video, New Media, and Animation (FVNMA) Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), Daniel Eisenberg, stated that, "to make the shoe, you must be as far away from the shoe as possible."[53] Far away, and yet inside, Eisenberg is stating that there is a cultural system that one must buy into to distinguish yourself as a designer, and *not* a shoemaker or cobbler. There is an unknowable, secretive process for designing a shoe that is unique to each designer, and there is another action or agent for making the physical shoe that can be documented. Never to be confused, the atelier is not the production house. At the time of the quote, Eisenberg was working on the film, *The Unstable Object II*.[54] Within the film, one of the main sequences, with the camera acting as a "durational observer," cuts between a series of laborers making jeans at the Realkom factory in Duzce, Turkey. Between riveting, bleaching, and distressing, the material sound, texture, and process are palpable. Careful to never be visible to the camera, the act of filming, just like the designer(s) of the jeans or shoes, is withheld from the viewer.

Outside the system, Virgil Abloh, in a presentation at the SAIC, shared another method for understanding the process of designing a shoe, "my greatest design tool, personally, is to look at what that genre is doing and make it 3–5% different. It's in a

[53] Daniel Eisenberg, "Invisible Labor" (lecture, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, February 3, 2020).

[54] Daniel Eisenberg, *The Unstable Object II* (2022), Digital, 1080p, https://www.theunstableobject.com/.

way… trolling."[55] Looking at the system, and yet outside, Abloh is projecting into a critical, unexplored space of play. Actively attempting to synthesize the self, the genre, and the other, Abloh encouraged design to be physically seen and experimented upon. "Cross-pollination is the actual key! I hate when people don't tell you the shortcut."[56] Known for starting and developing Off-White's signature written word on the exterior of a pair of athletic shoes, usually Jordan's, Abloh's use of the hand *physically* writing on the object blurred the edge between luxury wear and athleticwear.



Figure 8. Virgil Abloh at SAIC, Photo with the Author.

[55] Virgil Abloh, "WORK" (lecture, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, July 8, 2019).

[56] Abloh, "WORK."

Simultaneously, Eisenberg, an academic at a prestigious institution, and Abloh, the late designer and CEO of Pyrex and Off-White then the Artistic Director of Menswear at Louis Vuitton, exist in an art-world trope and contradiction: the theory and the practice. Ironically, Abloh, the one who designed shoes, claimed to be outside of the system, while Eisenberg, the one who observes from the vantage point of an authority figure in an art space, claims to be within the system. Who is outside of which system and is there an intersection in their logics? Is this a question of paragonical debate where object-making versus image-making is the root of the debate? Is there a magical, individual sorcery toward the process of making, or is it something that should be shared as a learnable experience?

Eisenberg actively erases the role of the hands using in-class references like Michael Snow's *Wavelength* as a fundamental "text" toward making. A set of nonhuman eyes on a tripod where the machine technically captures and documents the events pre-planned by the invisible maker. Abloh fronts the participation of hands in a Sharpie-d signature that is synonymous with 90's skating culture while citing the importance of makers like J Dilla, J Boogie, and Le Corbusier in their work. "My back is to the institution… When graffiti went to 'Street Art,' I hated it."[57] Can the handmade not be the same hand that shakes in business dealings? Returning to Reinhardt's quote above that led to this discussion, why does one have to remove oneself from the business world to be able to create or even exist in the art world? Why does graffiti have to be institutionalized into "Street Art," aside from the Capitalistic manufacturing of an Art

[57] Abloh, "WORK."

Historical lineage and provenance? Is there a benefit to the maker other than a system-defining mechanism?

David Hare states, "Possibly you could connect this [Public Understanding] with the question of mass production, in the sense that in this country there is a feeling that unless you have a large public you are a failure. The public is concerned with the average. I will always be opposed to this conception."[58] Being both within the system and outside of the constraints leaves one open to critiques from all sides. The buffer of peer-to-peer acceptance creates an allowable modality of making, but still indicts the filmmaker to the Hays Code, now the MPA, for rating a film. Abloh was invited to SAIC, but during the Low Residency summer program, not the Art Institute to give a lecture, like Henrik Vibskov, or to the Fashion Department, like Behnaz Farahi. Acceptance of the general public and acceptance within the art world are rooted in different extents to be discussed throughout this writing.

As shown throughout this section, the self cannot be understood without the cultural confines and epistemological understanding of the time. With new techniques and technologies, affordances have been granted historically, but still require a general blanket of freedoms that are not granted within a Paragonical system of making and critiquing. Why not allow the maker to skip, prance, and meander through different spheres of influence and collect experiences, information, and freedoms? What if the hands, like the silhouette of the self, are granted the opportunity to create beyond the bounds of the physical self?

[58] Goodnough, *Artists' Sessions at Studio 35*, 13. (Hare)

In future chapters, the exploration of hands and self will venture to a place of disembodied physicality where the virtual, the digital, and the signature will be representative/representations of the makers that produce each work. Existing between all material confines and configurations of selfhood, the maker is both the cultural magnet and the arbiter of cultural source material. Where does that leave the self if the silhouette is impossibly unstable?

> What I want, in short, is that my (mobile) image, buffeted among a thousand shifting photographs, altering with situation and age, should always coincide with my (profound) "self"; but it is the contrary that must be said: "myself" never coincides with my image; for it is the image which is heavy, motionless, stubborn (which is why society sustains it), and "myself" which is light, divided, dispersed; like a bottle-imp, "myself" doesn't hold still giggling in my jar: if only Photography could give me a neutral, anatomic body, a body which signifies nothing![59]

[59] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 12.

Unlearning: From The Self to Civilization

> We have had accounts of men as animals, men as machines, men as biochemical complexes with certain ways of their own, but there remains the greatest difficulty in achieving a human understanding of man in human terms.[60]

The self is unfixed, inconsistent, and unreliable. It is the narrator, protagonist, and antagonist converging in one body with no knowledge of who knows the script or who holds the pen. Thus, exterior forces like cultural artifacts and societal cues act as retaining walls for the permeable system of selfhood. The consumption of culture and media bounds the self's gelatinous form. Critically, works like Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto"[61] and *Flubber*,[62] a Robin Williams-starring update of *The Absent-Minded Professor*, seek the dimensions of systemic confinement: imprisonment. A liquid, or a shapeless object filling, fitting, and warping to the dimensions of the "societal" container, may be too limiting to compare to the self that can be both the rigidity of a solid or the dissolution of a gas… The self is a triptych, a solution, a lab-generated hybrid. Thus, it is imperative to unlearn where the edges of the self's societal and imposed confinement exist. An expansive, and unknowable guide, what are the ideas, objects, and other self's that will help create an agglomerated, silhouetted self?

Hybridity, in Haraway's case as Human/Machine as a Cyborg, can be seen as the intensification and specification of loss in detail. It is the pinhole leaking air from a

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[60] R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 29.

[61] Donna J. Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto," *Manifestly Haraway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

[62] *Flubber*, directed by Les Mayfield (1997; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures), Disney Plus.

balloon and an escape hatch from an ever-confining pigeonhole.[63] The identity politics from revolutionary Feminist scholars, like Haraway, Barad, Bennett, Braidotti, Crenshaw, and Wynter, to be discussed in this and later chapters, express a cultural necessity to redraw a silhouetted self that grants greater possibilities within, and outside of, interiority. In Haraway's cultural critique and parable, the cyborg increasingly demystifies the other, in this case a machine, as outside of, but potentially within, one's self.[64] Through strange poignancy, the grafting of an unmistakably-nonhuman other to the self is what gives Haraway's writing such speculative affordances.

Again, foreshadowing what is to be unpacked in the future discourse of this work, Haraway, cyborgs, and hybridity will be formally ascribed to an "Abnatural aesthetic," *an adjacent state of being where the uncanny synthesis of nature and other obscures the humanist order of rationalism toward x*. Grafting, first of all, must embrace a contextual, or local-natural, state where the self may be viewed as an other self and vice versa. Cyborgs and alien subjects aside, the human other may be a more pressing and subversive uncanny subject than the nonhuman other as the self[65] or as an undefinable subject.[66]

Flubber, in the self-titled *Flubber*, as a character exists as both subject and object. A sentient, ductile, elastic, ticklish, etc. flying rubber, shortened for maximal campy cuteness, Flubber exists beyond the socio-cultural confines of human sovereignty and outside of the animalian convention of eating, synthesizing, or competing. Seeking the

[63] Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto," 5-6.
[64] Haraway, 7.
[65] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford Press, 2004), 27.
[66] Laing, *The Politics of Experience*, 30-37.

extents of its potential, Professor Phillip Brainard, played by the late Robin Williams, breaks every moral, ethical, and cultural code in lieu of his new discovery, like that of an "Amateur Explorer." Missing his own wedding to collect the multitudinous parts of Flubber scattered in a flash-induced, photographic-documenting nightmare, Professor Brainard exists within the contradictions of the self as expert/amateur, academic/maker, and subject/object that spearheads this chapter's debate on sovereignty, othering, and making. How can we then define Flubber as anything more than a creation story, a monster movie, or a children's comedy? Is there a seriousness that can be found in the disexpertise of an other's experience that can be brought back into the self?

R.D. Laing's *The Politics of Experience* begins to sift through the impossible baggage of differentiable experiences and the role of each unique subject to create a cohesive, viable culture. "At all events, we are bemused and crazed creatures, strangers to our true selves, to one another, and to the spiritual and material world—mad, even, from an ideal standpoint we can glimpse but not adopt."[67] How then are we able to understand anything if the self is impossible to see to the self? First, Laing tackles the definition of personhood, "I wish to define a person in a twofold way: in terms of experience, as a center of orientation of the objective universe; and in terms of behavior, as the origin of actions."[68] Careful to warn the reader of the potential harms of analyzing subjecthood by laminating the self to an object, like that of Professor Brainard to Flubber or an Harmanian Object[69] to be discussed in later chapters, Laing is adamantly opposed to the

[67] Laing, *The Politics of Experience*, iii.
[68] Laing, 23.
[69] Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Pelican Books, 2018).

objectification and separation of subjects into compartmentalized systems. Similarly, the flattening of the self to "any other natural object" is met with criticism. If the self could be studied objectively, and thus scientifically, Laing asserts that there would be reproducible data sets where the self would act consistently and graphically within a series of experiments.[70] Yet, Laing states that "there is no contiguity between one person's experience and another's. My experience of you is always meditated through your behavior."[71] A self, defined through the other as a perceiver, exists in an impossible and inconsistent reconstitution between the experiences and behaviors of the self and the other. Inconsistent and inconclusive, how can the self be confined/defined when it is never stagnant?

Rather than tackling a process of self-to-self interactions to round-out the possibilities of infinite groupings, Laing instead shifts the parameters of experience into that a conception of "inner" and "outer" sensing.[72] If experience is non-transmittable and invisible, attempting to express the self through normative recounting and interior ideologies leaves room for vast misunderstanding. To share an experience with another, to experience the simultaneous outer, is to accept that each self's perception of the moment is but a fragment.[73] At the same time, Laing is critical of the understanding that the self may have with it-self, an embodied knowledge. The edge conditions of such is the parameter of a silhouette of the self, and the definitions of humanity, but what is

[70] Laing, *The Politics of Experience*, 19.
[71] Laing, 25.
[72] Laing, 20
[73] Laing, 22.

inherent and personal to the self? What can be used as linework that can begin to denote the boundaries of the self and other?

As a maker, this flickering of expectation and societal normativity is what forestalls future creative practices. Bound to a self-imprisoned set of extents, the self is absurd and Sisyphean in its production and utilization of experience as an extent through empirical evidence. Wishing beyond, but limiting the prospects of the self, the beyond, and the socio-cultural, the divisions must be drawn out and represented through the other.

Vonnegut's flash fiction piece "Harrison Bergeron" expresses this self-imposed and socio-cultural limitation as a compounding series of handicaps.[74] The "Handicapper General," Diana Moon Glampers, exists as the embodiment of the governmental oppressor exerting personalized crutches on each citizen based on their gifts, talents, or abnormalities. From ballerinas with sashweights and covered faces to the protagonist, George, who receives sharp radio transmissions every 20 seconds to offset his above-average intelligence, Vonnegut materializes the extents that are often invisible for the self to be made aware of. Even in the climactic resolution of the story, the rise and fall of the character in the title, Harrison, who is George's son, breaks free of his chains, exclaims his sovereignty as emperor, and dances with a ballerina only to be gunned down and subsequently forgotten by his father through the radio static pulsing through his ear. The story provides the necessary echo chamber to acknowledge the first oppression and the secondary effects of anarchical behaviors within the socio-cultural machine. To be aware of the dilemmas that the self and the civilization provide is one set of predicaments, but

[74] Kurt Vonnegut Jr., "Harrison Bergeron," *Welcome to the Monkey House* (New York: Dial Press, 1998).

to live beyond the bounds and chains of these oppressions is another consideration. Where can the maker exist without handicap, without political forces, or without harming the other?

Laing's fragments are the momentary differentiations between the self as maker and the self as observer, or the self as designer and the self as a producer. Wholly bound by an invisible-visible set of constraints, societal obligations are the very modalities of self-policing and systemic buy-in that erase possibilities for a maker. As Agamben states in *Homo Sacer*, "All societies and all cultures today (it does not matter whether they are democratic or totalitarian, conservative or progressive) have entered into a legitimation crisis in which law (we mean by this term the entire text of tradition in its regulative form, whether the Jewish Torah or the Islamic Shariah, Christian dogma, or the profane *nomos*) is in force as the pure 'Nothing of Revelation.'"[75]

There is a kind of normal-flattening that goes beyond an adjacent culture and bleeds into the conception of socio-cultural constraints that undermine human potentiality. Pinning Laing's "absurd normalcy"[76] and Agamben's "zone of indistinction"[77] between potential and actual, the concept of expectation and experience are grounded in a fundamental incorporation of sovereignty. Again, seeking refuge in a narrative that can express an architecture of third-space, Juster's "The Phantom Tollbooth"[78] provides an absurd ideal:

[75] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford Press, 1998), 51.

[76] Laing, *The Politics of Experience*, 28.

[77] Agamben, 47.

[78] Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth* (New York: Bullseye Books, 1996).

> "What kind of a place is Expectations?" inquired Milo, unable to see the humor and feeling very doubtful of the little man's sanity.
> "Good question, good question," he exclaimed. "Expectations is the place you must always go to before you get to where you're going. Of course, some people never go beyond Expectations, but my job is to hurry them along whether they like it or not. Now what else can I do for you?"[79]

Milo's journey throughout "The Phantom Tollbooth," though kitschy, clever, and considerate of the younger audience reading the novel, challenges sovereignty through the eyes of an *outsider*. From Digitopolis to Dictionopolis, Milo, a child from the "real world," questions the authoritative language, ethics, and morality of each ruler, businessperson, and colleague along the way. Seeking resolution from the Dodecahedron, Milo is told that "If you want sense, you'll have to make it yourself."[80] In this way, sovereignty, experience, and fantasy are blended in a consortium of metaphorical discourses that metabolize Laing's absurd normalcy and activate Agamben's zone of indistinction. As Milo is always outside of the socio-cultural framework that defines the universe, Milo is the other, and, thus, the only observer of the problematic conflicts that surround the legitimacy and sovereignty of the ruling elite.

To underscore the seriousness and importance of this comparison, one must release the self from the misconceptions of societal confines. Like that of the philosophical merit of a children's book or the ethics of a design-fiction world, play and games are fundamental to the inner and outer experiences of selfhood and provide a container for experimental thought without socio-cultural consequences. However, Adorno warns of taking this too lightly, "If it remains on the level of the childish and is taken for such, it merges with the calculated fun of the culture industry… fun is art's

[79] Juster, 19.
[80] Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, 175.

punishment for this."[81] To be taken seriously as a deconstructive method for decolonizing the self from extents, making play and narrative the "mechanism" for decentering allows the self to be understood through fantasy:

> The "surface" experience of self and other emerges from a less differentiated experiential matrix. Ontogenetically the very early experiential schemata are unstable and are surmounted, but never entirely. To a greater or lesser extent, the first ways in which the world has made sense to us continues to underpin our whole subsequent experience and actions. Our first way of experiencing the world is largely what psychoanalysts have called fantasy. This modality has its own validity, its own rationality. Infantile fantasy may become a closed enclave, a dissociated undeveloped "unconscious," but this need not be so. This eventuality is another form of alienation. Fantasy as encountered in many people today is split off from what the person regards as his mature, sane, rational, adult experience. We do not then see fantasy in its true function but experienced merely as an inclusive, sabotaging infantile nuisance.[82]

Misrepresenting fantasy as a folly of neotenous experiences limits the conception and perception of the self or the other as only pertaining to the presently serious. Through games, play, role-playing, or fantasy, the self can be decentered as a tactic for highlighting systemic biases and impediments by *critical playing*.[83] Thus, blending ontologies of the self and the other, though inherently discrete, can be further conceptualized and experienced through the erasure of self-imposed extents. In such, fantasy or play, described by Mitchell can "open possibilities for future ecocritical endeavors, supplying motive and means for an immanent critique of possessive individualism and human triumphalism."[84] In such, play can become a maker's tool for combatting the limitations of sovereignty within culture.

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[81] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 119.
[82] Laing, *The Politics of Experience*, 30-31.
[83] Brian Upton, *The Aesthetic of Play* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 291-298.
[84] Mitchell "Play," 340.

Agamben provides an inner-outer paradox, not from the position of experience, but as a dialectic for sovereignty, "the paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order."[85] A self-proclaiming, cultural-producing mechanism that is bound by nothing inside or outside of the system is completely deregulated and cause for cultural alarm. This is the warning that the self, especially as a maker, must pay heed to as a cultural machine.[86] From considering the Earth as a Spaceship to Cyborg Feminism, the role of philosophical fantasy is to speak bluntly through metaphor to break the illusions of the sovereign cultural system.

Therein, the presupposition of limited access the self has to fantasy and making is developed through the perceived consequences of societal judiciary repercussions. It is the natural fear of alienation from the system that blockades media advances. Despite all of the changes in ritual from a post-production media culture, as Benjamin stated,[87] there is a fear of naked solitude that Laing pursues further in the context of sovereignty and selfhood. "These social 'things' that unite us are by the same token so many things, so many social figments that come between us. But if we could strip away all the exigencies and contingencies, and reveal to each other our naked presence?"[88] Experimenting with a nihilism toward societal cues and an experiential debasing of all constructs, Laing unpacks the nonbeing and the nonhuman. "At the point of nonbeing we are at the outer

[85] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 15.
[86] Buckminster Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (Zurich: Lars Müller, 2008), 60.
[87] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 6.
[88] Laing, *The Politics of Experience*, 39.

reaches of what language can state, but we can indicate by language why language cannot say what it cannot say."[89]

Outside of the societal confines that regulate it, language is projected to the furthest extents of itself. The only parameter left holding the system of language together is the mechanism of language as sovereign, which alludes to its own system of infinite becomings.[90] Thus, the self is not sovereign, as that power of authority belongs to no unique individual without socio-cultural qualms, but language must be as it assigns a caricature of language to a position of societal importance. "Language is the sovereign who, in a permanent state of exception, declares that there is nothing outside language and that language is always beyond itself."[91] Just as the self as ruler cannot be the figure of authority without societal context, each word holds historical nuance, embedded meaning, and possesses its own finite-infinite dialectic. As such, an opportunity for makers to circumvent the problematics of language arises through the burdens of language. "In this way, the fact that a word always has more sense than it can actually denote corresponds to the theorem of the point of excess… This is what deconstruction does, positing undecidables that are infinitely in excess of every possibility of signification."[92]

The self and the maker can then fantasize about a place outside of language where images and objects may be sovereign. A clarification then arises in my own language, making and art-making are separate containers for the process of creating images, photos,

[89] Laing, 40.
[90] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), 1997.
[91] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 21.
[92] Agamben, 25.

drawings, sounds, sculptures, or other practices yet to be determined. The purpose of the sudden clarification that may have gone long-without noting is the problem of art language that expresses, exhibits, and emancipates images from their unfathomable, undefinable, language-less births. Art, in the capital-A manner, is a system-generator or a sovereign machine of collection, categorization, and language. From Lassaw, "in titling a construction, I have used combinations of words or syllables without any meaning"[93] to Hofmann, "I believe that in an art every expression is relative, not absolutely defined as long as it is not the expression of a relationship. Anything can be changed,"[94] the prospect of deconstructing and dismantling the sovereignty of socio-cultural norms is unfathomable within the system of art-making. The self, as a maker of art, is bound by the systemic buy-in of naming, explaining, and selling work.

Questions that will be considered in further chapters include: what would be an anti-paragonical approach to play that could bend, break, or move outside of this system, or what would that allow the self to make without the self-imposed and systemically mandated extents? In such, the operative affordances and possibilities toward this manner of making, maybe without the confines of a signature, a material, a name, a language, or a body, could lead to new fundamental connections to the transmission of ideas and experiences to the self and to the other. "I want to know the outside truth. I think I know the internal one."[95]

Following the curiosity of Reinhardt's prompt, truth and knowledge of the self are also mechanisms that rely upon a conception of accuracy and otherness through empirical

[93] Goodnough, *Artists' Sessions at Studio 35*, 27. (Lassaw)
[94] Goodnough, 45. (Hofmann)
[95] Goodnough, 46. (Reinhardt)

or rational methods even within the inner and the outer conceptions of experience or language. Are those systems not continuing to contend within the self unconsciously? This mechanism of acceptance leads to a socio-cultural accountability that dampens the self unless it can be consciously reprogrammed to debug and declutter the self from itself. Again, *troubling*… The self yearns for knowledge outside of a system that produces such a dilemma, so we must dive back into the fantasy, the metaphor, and the narrative/counter-narrative to decenter biases that may hold impediments for a future discourse.

Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*[96] and Quinn's *Ishmael*[97] both attempt to tackle this problematic, a self-identifying and self-reprogramming mechanism, through the use of the other. Therein, to unlock the unconscious to the conscious, each author provides a new agent to change the perceptual socio-cultural framework within the narrative as a reveal and unpacking of sovereignty.

For Kafka, the Explorer and the Officer from *In the Penal Colony* provide a back-and-forth, question-and-answer, morality-check between oppositional parties at a condemned man's execution. Before the advent could occur, the Officer defends the perfection of the system by breaking down the importance of an autonomous machine, and the removal of human hands from the procedure:

> "Now just have a look at this machine," he added at once, simultaneously drying his hands on a towel and indicating the apparatus. "Up till now a few things still had to be set by hand, but from this moment it works all by itself." The explorer nodded and followed him. The officer, anxious to secure himself against all contingencies, said: "Things sometimes go wrong, of course; I hope that nothing

[96] Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 140-168.

[97] Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995).

> goes wrong today, but we have to allow for the possibility. The machinery should go on working continuously for twelve hours. But if anything does go wrong it will only be some small matter that can be set right at once."[98]

The "apparatus," operated by the Officer, is the physical manifestation of the torture-inducing mechanism, but it is also the colonial and systemic object of oppression. Simultaneously, it is the MacGuffin, or "a word invented by the film director Alfred Hitchcock who used it to describe something that starts off the action of one of his film plots but subsequently turns out to be irrelevant."[99] The system of the penal colony illustrates not only the literal land of imprisonment, but the actions of the sovereign Commandant, who had recently passed away. Leeching and associating through the transitional power vacuum, the Officer refers back to his assistance in producing the apparatus and reassures the Explorer of the just power of the former Commandant, "we who were friends knew even before he died that the organization of the colony was so perfect that his successor, even with a thousand new schemes in his head, would find it impossible to alter anything, at least for many years to come."[100] A system-producing system with cult-like attentiveness, the Officer blindly evangelizes the system of oppression that was constructed by the former sovereign. Then, to defend his own divine right, the Officer explains the law of the land to the other, Explorer:

> "I have been appointed judge in this penal colony. Despite my youth. For I was the former Commandant's assistant in all penal matters and know more about the apparatus than anyone. My guiding principle is this: Guilt is never to be doubted.

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[98] Kafka, 141.

[99] E. Cobham Brewer, *Brewer's Dictionary of 20th Century Phrase and Fable* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 374.

[100] Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," 141.

> Other courts cannot follow that principle, for they consist of several opinions and have higher courts to scrutinize them."[101]

In the phantasmagoric totalitarian system, the Explorer seeks further consideration into the singular subject of the condemned as an example of processing. The condemned man, not speaking the language of the Officer or the Explorer throughout the story, does not know his sentence, his ruling, or his punishment have been passed without his acknowledgement.[102] Horrified, the Explorer begins to defend the condemned for the injustice that has seemingly occurred to the outside/other. But, the Officer states, "if I had first called the man before me and interrogated him, things would have got into a confused tangle. He would have told lies, and had I exposed these lies he would have backed them up with more lies, and so on and so forth."[103] This further antagonizes the Explorer and the reader as a convergence of immorality, injustice, and ignorance. How can this system continue to operate in a unilateral and unchecked manner?

Finally showing a crack in the systemic armor, the Officer admits that the apparatus' "drawback is that it gets so messy."[104] Although not changing the tune of a supreme, sovereign, unmanned machine, a creeping doubt of autonomy and maintenance begins to unravel the legitimacy and authority of the court and punisher. Eventually yielding and then reaffirming, "this is a very complex machine, it can't be helped that things are breaking or giving way here and there; but one must not thereby allow oneself to be diverted in one's general judgment,"[105] the Officer is imprisoned by the legitimacy

[101] Kafka, 145.
[102] Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," 145.
[103] Kafka, 146.
[104] Kafka, 147.
[105] Kafka, 151.

of his claim to power. This inevitability foreshadows the collapse of his self-identity. Claiming to have read and studied the illegible notes of the former Commandant,[106] the Officer exists on a metaphysical plane of tyranny through the systemically validated self-identity feedback loop. The sovereignty of the system has been made and maintained through the oppression induced by the Officer and the imagination of the ever-present, god-like figure of the Commandant. Thus, the monocular regulation of the system has made it impossible for the self, as the Officer, to see the any degradation of humanity within the perfectly crafted society.

On the other hand, the Explorer provides insight into his otherness within the system:

> The Explorer thought to himself: It's always a ticklish matter to intervene decisively in other people's affairs. He was neither a member of the penal colony nor a citizen of the state to which it belonged. Were he to denounce this execution or actually try to stop it, they could say to him: You area foreigner, mind your own business… Yet here he found himself strongly tempted. The injustice of the procedure and the inhumanity of the execution were undeniable.[107]

A revitalization of an ethic of the other, Kafka's Explorer is the systemic deregulator that has the affordances of being beyond, or without, the system of impediments that bound all within the penal colony's system. The Explorer is not intentionally acting as an arbiter of universal morality and finds himself, even, acting as an other to his other-ness in the assumed condemnation of his actions, thoughts, and politics.

[106] Kafka, 149.
[107] Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," 151.

After a failed performance of the apparatus in front of the Explorer where frustration outpoured from the Officer toward the new Commandant, the Officer finally admits his status as "the sole advocate of the old Commandant's tradition."[108] The Explorer is now understood as an impartial judge, or sovereign, existing beyond the bounds of this system and between oppositional parties of the new/old Commandants, "even your coming here today seems to me a significant move; they are cowards and use you as a screen, you, a stranger."[109] Collapsing within itself, the Officer seeks a self-identity refuge in the other. The complete erasure of power, dominance, and explanation, the Officer's final pleading with the Explorer is more a conversation with the conscious and unconscious self than a debate with other, "a kind of outsider so far as all of us are concerned; yet, believe me, your influence cannot be rated too highly."[110]

In an act of absolute erasure of sovereignty, which must be the only way to move completely outside of the self-defined parameters of society and otherness, the Explorer reveals his disapproval of the apparatus in front of the Officer and new Commandant.[111] Freeing the condemned man, accepting his fate, and beginning to disrobe in front of the audience and apparatus, the nakedness of the Officer is the vacancy of self-identity and self-worth. Strapped down by the formerly condemned, now free, man, the Officer, ruling upon himself, had the commandment, "BE JUST!" set up in the apparatus for his punishment.[112] With the machine in disrepair and subsequently malfunctioning, the Officer was left impaled rather than inscribed.

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[108] Kafka, 153.
[109] Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," 153.
[110] Kafka, 157.
[111] Kafka, 159.
[112] Kafka, 161.

More than a simple defamatory stance on a system other than that of the self, which may on the surface seem only hateful toward the alien or the foreign, Kafka's short story exists as a parallel sentiment to the other-other. Beyond the self is the other, who contains a self, and another other to the infinitesimal-order. Societal systems and the derivatization of the subsequent self are policing mechanisms that exist across all epistemological and teleological perceptions of human existence. Thus, there is not a linear queue for establishing a self, group, community, or nation that trumps that of another, but what exists at the center of human society and culture? Where is the etymological, philosophical, or linguistic root of human sovereignty?

In another realm of othering, Quinn's *Ishmael* challenges conventions of the human socio-cultural experience through Posthuman discoveries understood in conversations between man and gorilla. Unlike the Kafka story above, the self cannot *ever* be that of the other and provides an inverse effect where the other is impossible to overcome. This insurmountable gap with minute, tendinous threads of language, time, and environment holding them together, provides a context for future discussions on grafting where the self is bound by the least common dominators. Through minimal extents and maximal othering, what can the self ascertain from something that is definitively discrete? Or as questioned by Agamben, "when and in what way did a human life first come to be considered sacred in itself?"[113]

Setup as a Teacher, or Ishmael the gorilla, seeking a pupil,[114] or the unnamed human Narrator, the novel follows a series of discussions unpacked through reflections

[113] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 67.
[114] Quinn, *Ishmael*, 4.

on human history, sovereignty, and the rise of *Mother Culture*.[115] Communicating in a common tongue but using empirical, cultural, and zoological differences as a place of otherness, Quinn is able to speak toward a holistic conceptualization of the world through character differentiation, an *animal* self and other. The otherness of the self, with embedded qualities of language and socio-cultural integration *as an animal*, and the location, with a controlled environment for one-on-one/self-and-other communication, provide Ishmael and the Narrator a societal-exterior context to break down the barriers of human supremacy.

In the early lessons, Ishmael turns his attention on establishing the pitfalls of social normativity at the civilization-scale of cultural thinking, "'You're captives of a civilizational system that more or less compels you to go on destroying the world in order to live.'"[116] Critical of the Narrator's defense of humanist rationales, Ishmael provides a series of stories that exemplify the depths of human destruction and disregard for other entities on the Earth. This invisible hand of sovereignty and systemic buy-in that continues to rewrite the history of humans is called-out by Ishmael, "'This is the story man was born to enact, and to depart from it is to resign from the human race itself, is to venture into oblivion.'"[117] Summarized as the "takers," or the post-Agricultural civilized, and the "leavers," or the pre-Agricultural primitive,[118] Ishmael reviews a human-centric conceptualization of time and history through a series of *Mother Culture* learning

[115] Quinn, 37.
[116] Quinn, *Ishmael*, 25.
[117] Quinn, 37.
[118] Quinn, 38.

exercises where the Narrator is forced to listen to the engrained perceptions constructed by the system of human civilization.

This tool for deprogramming history acts as a decentering, deconstructing, and dismantling game for understanding the unconscious biases that persist in human-self's daily life. The Teacher warns the Narrator about the backlash of denying a perceptual birth-right, self-identity, and socio-cultural mechanism, "'if you take this educational journey with me, you're going to find yourself alienated from the people around you—friends, family, past associates, and so on.'"[119] Not only a warning of the power of knowledge itself, Ishmael understands the resultant of erasing the line between the self and the other as a metaphysical ground for desocialization and disintegration of cultural ties: the outcast. Similarly, Agamben's use of the profane refers to a cultural dehumanization, and a presumed return to the zoē of life, enacted upon those that are other, "life became sacred only through a series of rituals whose aim was precisely to separate life from its profane context."[120] By denying these rituals, which may also refer back to Benjamin's discussion of ritual,[121] Ishmael is providing an outlet to the Narrator prior to washing the hands of human-centered logics. The self, as a silhouette, will be forever other to itself after transformation. We will return to this topic as a creative tool for making, specifically through Derrida, Deleuze, von Uexküll, and others in future chapters.

Always returning to the plighted philosophy of the hands, possession, ownership, capital, and authority are the next dialogues between Ishamel and the Narrator. Where

[119] Quinn, *Ishmael*, 37.
[120] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 66.
[121] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 6.

society necessitates enclosure, *Mother Culture* provides shelter as "'all the life processes of this planet will be where they belong—where the gods meant them to be—in our hands.'"[122] It is in this possessive determiner, "our," that the Narrator begins unraveling the root of Ishmael's argument that the self is the infinitely assimilated into a system that positions the self as a sovereign being and species. Inescapable from its claws, the self is entangled within the social conceptions of personhood, i.e. occupation, wage, neighborhood, school district, age, etc.

However, as all difficult things are surprisingly difficult even when made conscious, the success of Quinn's story is the Narrator's slippage between understanding and action. Bright revelations are met with humanlike forgetfulness, and discoveries are met with the ever-looming societal sounding board still in the process of being dismantled. "Ishmael was no longer on the other side of the glass, he was on my side of it, sprawled on some cushions a few feet from my chair. I hadn't realized how important that sheet of glass had become to our relationship: to be honest, I felt a flutter of alarm in my stomach."[123] Thus, the other was not, and cannot, be grafted easily, or perfectly, onto the self. A complete departure from the confines of the self there are evidentiary extents that are maintained at the core, or in a less essentialist psychology, through the lowest common denominator. But as stated earlier in passing between Narrator and Teacher, "'if you can't discover what's keeping you in, the will to get out soon becomes confused and ineffectual.'"[124] In this way, Ishmael is aware, more so than the Narrator who is the fifth

[122] Quinn, 81.
[123] Quinn, *Ishmael*, 151.
[124] Quinn, 25.

pupil to attempt this reeducation, that the permittivity of the self is in a process of becoming.

Storing and rewriting the texts of human grandeur and the self is also a problematic condition that arises from *Mother Culture*. "'Culture is a mother everywhere and at every time, because culture is inherently a nurturer—the nurturer of human societies and life-styles.'"[125] Thus, the *Mother Culture* is inescapable as a precondition to life. To break, abandon and withdrawal from the system may occur, but the nurturer holds an unconditional bond abided by the socio-cultural machine. This disjunction, referred to by Ishmael, is eternally cauterized by the story of the Fall of Man:

> But the people of your culture have never been able to understand the explanation, because they've assumed that it was formulated by people just like them—people who took it for granted that the world was made for man and man was made to conquer and rule it, people for whom the sweetest knowledge in the world is the knowledge of good and evil, people who consider tilling the soil the only noble and human way to live.[126]

This collapsing of ethic, sovereignty, and religion, as per Ishmael's teaching to the Narrator, is the rise of the human story, machine, culture, and civilization. All things boil down to the inconceivable outcome that the "takers" started as "leavers." And, that the story of creation from Adam and Eve is not a story of the Fall, but the story of attaining god-like wisdom for all of humanity. Thus, the arrogance of the self-proclaimed sovereign is in the misreading of the original text at the foundation of the human

[125] Quinn, 148.
[126] Quinn, *Ishmael*, 183.

experience, "'man can never have the wisdom the gods use to rule the world, and if he tries to preempt that wisdom, the result won't be enlightenment, it will be death.'"[127]

In protective *Mother Culture* fashion, Ishmael is suddenly evicted and placed in a travelling circus for our Narrator to find outside the initial contexts of a secluded apartment/think tank. Upon a brief scuffle and plead for continuing the unlearning process, the Narrator and, now imprisoned, Teacher can begin again with the physical, cultural, and social barriers evident. The lecture takes a turn toward the other as the self when the Teacher explains, "'to tell the truth, I have deliberately avoided all field studies of gorilla life. It is a subject I find I do not care to explore.'"[128] Ironically pointed out by Ishmael and indicative of both the Kafka and Quinn readings, the intent of self-attunement begins with exteriority. To understand the other is to understand the self in a more intimate and compassionate way. Ishmael's teaching manifests its foundations through his insurmountable alterity from the human system just as the Narrator's ipseity prevents him from seeing this discourse from inside the system.

The inconceivability, from the Narrator, is caused by generational stacking and indoctrinated forgetfulness of the time a priori, but this is what ties together the human civilization: a lie. "As far as the Takers knew, there was no 'before.' Creation had occurred just a thousand years ago, and Man the Agriculturalist had immediately set about the task of building civilization."[129] The resultant flattening and colonizing of the other is the pretext for all socio-cultural buy-in as it denies the existence of anything outside of the self.

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[127] Quinn, 183.
[128] Quinn, *Ishmael*, 199.
[129] Quinn, 201.

The difficulty, as described through the remainder of their conversations, lies in the access to other pathways of living, access to embodied information, history versus progress, and the significance of other *animal* lives. "'We don't want to know a way to live that works well. We want to know the one right way.'"[130] Correct? Right? True? Destined? All falling back into the system of confinement and all assertions of evaluation within a cultural context that already currently exists. That is what must be broken then, the cultural context that imprisons and brainwashes the masses into believing that "according to the Taker story, creation came to an end with man."[131]

After being reprogrammed to see the cultural chaos of civilization and finding that the other has been all but erased from the historical leger, we must ask, what is outside of the self? And Ishmael would respond, "'Then invent.'"[132] This is where the self has infinite potential. A call toward making, or inventing, the self manifesting as an incongruent articulation of all past, present, and future assemblages, but where can the other be integrated into the equation?

The *trouble* with the self becomes the phenomenological experience of the self as it-self, as other, or as both simultaneously. Opening corridors of knowledge through play, fantasy, or other games begins the process of deregulating and decentering socio-cultural norms, and thus making the self accessible to the self. Grafting provides pathways for the other to become integrated into and within the self as a preparation for inventing and making.

[130] Quinn, 204.
[131] Quinn, *Ishamel*, 238.
[132] Quinn, 250.

Extents, or the societal impediments placed upon the self, act as barriers that erode this potential and limit the possibilities of the self, but is it possible to be aware of them without the assistance of the other? More than photogramming the boundaries of the extents—*Flubber*, being socio-culturally impeded as an act of flattening the self—"Harrison Bergeron," providing social commentary from the perspective of the other—*Phantom Tollbooth*, being aware of humanities unjust sovereignty—"In the Penal Colony," or allowing counternarratives to reshape the human story—*Ishmael*, the self must be an ever-becoming, unflatten-able surface that allows the integration of the other through grafting. This is not just found in the awareness of an other outside of the self, but is a fundamental practicing experience that is both other and self simultaneously. The convergence of these differences allows for interstitial third spaces of creative exploration beyond the bounds of the self. This dualism of self/other provides a context for a multitudinous, tentacular, and indefinitely expanding silhouette.

> That's because there's no need to hear of it. There's no need to name it or discuss it… And you hear it incessantly, because every medium of propaganda, every medium of education pours it out incessantly. And hearing it incessantly, you don't listen to it. There's no need to listen to it. It's always there humming away in the background, so there's no need to attend to it at all. In fact, you'll find—at least initially—that it's hard to attend to it. It's like the humming of a distant motor that never stops; it comes a sound that's no longer heard at all.[133]

[133] Quinn, *Ishmael*, 36.

On Grafting: Inhabiting Simultaneity

> "My" Chthulucene, even burdened with its problematic Greek-ish tendrils, entangles myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages—including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, and human-as-humus… All the thousand names are too big and too small; all the stories are too big and too small. As Jim Clifford taught me, we need stories (and theories) that are just big enough to gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections.[134]

To exist within and outside of a given system, contradictorily and impossibly, one must be likened to that of each independently. Plugged-into the simultaneous both/and. This ever-splitting duality lodges the self between the socio-cultural schema of identity politics and the nuance of civilization's logos.

To be free of limits is to be unknowable to the self and to the societal bounds that regulate allowable individuality and the production of pre-specified media. To be bound by the impediments of the society and the self is to be framed under an ever-regulated mechanism of understood discourses. How can makers make from within the self and outside of the self, inside and outside of extents? This is the operative discourse explored through a series of operations to be used for deconstructing the mechanism of boundaries, then to be used for expounding beyond the rigid taxonomies and confines of the socio-cultural and the self.

A brief aside, the opposite of both/and, is not "both" and is not "and," but *or* as it posits a positionality through which decision-making is the critical junction and not the

[134] Donna J. Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6, no. 1. (2015): 160.

crux of synthesizing, blending, merging, and combining. In such, the operations that will be unpacked in this chapter are not to be seen as all-encompassing singular pathways for making as a bona fide solution. Rather, each procedure that can be grafted to, from, and on the self is an activation of the both/and as an opportunity to see beyond the parameters of regulation. These regulatory bounding boxes limit the potential, and potency, of the "tentacular" self,[135] or a possible modality for being "more than human."[136]

Heightening an accelerating the effects of Modernity on the human/nonhuman environment, *Ishmael* began this paper's discussion on the silent humming of the Takers' society operating as a monocular assemblage of civilization.[137] Laminating this to the surface of the human condition, Timothy Morton introduces the mechanism of *agrilogistics*, ," as a philosophical reality for Posthuman darkness in the modern civilization.[138] Morton's writing, unlike the historically-adjacent views of The Narrator and Ishmael, zoom-in and zoom-out to the present micro-scale and the scale of the globalist affect, "such unintended consequences are weirdly weird in the sense that they are uncanny, unexpected fallout from the myth of progress: for every seeming forward motion of the drill bit there is a backward gyration, an asymmetrical contrary motion."[139]

This Anthropological machine distorts the entire picture of human civilization as actors/agents/participants in the Anthropocene "because it enables us to think the human species not as an ontically given thing I can point to, but as a hyperobject that is real yet

[135] Donna J. Haraway, "Tentacular Thinking," *e-flux* 75. (September 2016): 2.
[136] Ruth Panelli, "More-than-human social geographies," *Progress in Human Geography* 34, no. 1 (2010), 82.
[137] Quinn, *Ishmael*, 36.
[138] Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2016.), 42.
[139] Morton, 7.

inaccessible."[140] Morton's warnings present the problematic of addressing the hyperobject[141] at hand that is both impossible to see and to change from within the system. Like attuning the self to the silent hum of the Takers or the inevitability of the machine *In the Penal Colony*, the consequence of Modernity is the inability to move outside of the system and rethink an ethos beyond the civilization-scale.[142]

Considering Law and Lien's critique of Modernity, as well as comprehensive breakdown of the both/and,[143] Science and Technology Studies (STS) provide an argument for reconsidering the established dogmas with society by analyzing the modern conception of nature as a hyperobject, "from the inside it [Modernity] is neither as coherent, nor as monolithic as it imagines itself to be. Instead, it is both coherent, and not coherent at all. This is a thought that offers us possibilities that are simultaneously analytical and political."[144] The Norwegian salmon, as the subject of the paper, exist as both farmed in the synthetic wild and caught from the escaped synthetic in a bound/boundless feedback loop of existence and practice where "nature is outside, geographically and physically, while culture is kept within."[145] This dualism of acculturated salmon and released, deformed salmon speak to the synthetization of nature that exists beyond a duality, "First you need to catch the fish. And then you need to look for the signs of culture, the battered fins and all the rest. Only then can you draw the line. Pristine nature is everywhere, but culture is swimming around inside nature too."[146]

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[140] Morton, 25.
[141] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 130.
[142] Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 42.
[143] John Law and Marianne Lien, "Denaturalising Nature" (Seminar Talk, University of California, Davis, Davis, CA, October 29, 2012), 2.
[144] Law and Lien, 1.
[145] Law and Lien, 3.
[146] Law and Lien, 5.

Mutating the fish beyond phenotypical nuance and individuality, the actions of Modernity, at the micro-scale, change the ontology and phenomenology of salmon. Fronting the complexity of the hyperobject begins with disassembling the agrilogistical machine into the essential parts of its function, "by establishing thin rigid boundaries between human and nonhuman worlds and by reducing existence to sheer quantity."[147] But as highlighting the boundaries and extents are the purpose of this chapter through which makers can seek a local site for exploration, the division of human and nonhuman is a distinct point of *trouble* as a social, cultural, historical, ethical, etc. complexity that must be fundamentally rooted out rather than side-stepped:

> The nature-culture split we persist in using is the result of a nature-agriculture split (*colo, cultum* pertains to growing crops). This split is a product of agrilogistic subroutines, establishing the necessary violent and arbitrary difference between itself and what it "conquers" or delimits. Differences aside, the confusions and endlessly granular distinctions arising therefrom remain well within agrilogistic conceptual space.[148]

Similar to the introduction of paragonical structures of Art History, discussed further in "Breaking Extents," the act of dividing creates greater theoretical surface area for elastic, tentacular, and silhouetted narratives for blending, merging, and grafting. Thus, the division of Art History and the division of nature-culture, though different in epistemological key and ignition, introduces a fluidity for speculative thought inside/within/outside of each theoretical space.

[147] Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 43.
[148] Morton, 43.



Figure 9. Damien Hirst, *Mother and Child, Divided*, 1993, Sculpture, Tate Gallery, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hirst-mother-and-child-divided-t12751.

Ron Broglio's introductory chapter in *Surface Encounters* begins a similar conversation around the concept of "meat" as a framework for Damien Hirst's *Mother and Child, Divided* (fig. 9) and the phenomenological discourse of a Modern synthetic nature, "the animals appear to be pristine specimens in some sort of natural history display. Viewers are often repulsed or shocked at the visceral materiality of the sculpture, yet at the same time they are captured by wonder at the insides of these domesticated animals."[149] Thus, the objectification of the agrilogistical machine, that dissociates

[149] Ron Broglio, *Surface Encounters* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press), 3.

animals from their agential being into a pure surface, is utilized by Hirst to hide the action of making and the horror of nonhuman death for human image making. Thus, the work is able to exist both under the guise and within the extents of the socio-cultural silent hum because of its distortion of the hands and acceptance of human sovereignty. Beyond media, material, and shock-value within the context of an Art Historical framework, Broglio dissects this further through Derrida's *logic of presence* to insist on a human conception of nature, or more apt perception of nature:

> As Derrida notes *being*, as a fundamental category for an object, is here dependent on human perception. We make things in nature present by our attention to them; they become present to us. In the human demand for intelligible presence, the vacuous nature of holes and corners become objects of scrutiny to be filled or penetrated—or, better yet, turned inside out and so made into easily reachable surfaces and nonvacuous objects.[150]

Phenomenology enters. So, is perceptuality, empirical knowledge, and the criticality of the eyes only possible for that which is knowable, and in turn graft-able? How can the self be made aware of something that is incomprehensible, invisible, or undefinable? Where does the *punctum* lie for each unique self and what lies in the *studium*?[151] Broglio, again, answers these challenges through a text and parable of Heraclitus' writings, "It [Nature] loves to hide; its proclivity is to remain unknown and out of human grasp. If nature hides, it is not infinitely unknowable; rather, hiding implies its opposite: finding."[152]

[150] Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 6.
[151] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 27.
[152] Broglio, 3.

Hiding and being hidden are on opposing sides of the self's ability to graft and highlight extents. Being hidden are the inevitable continuances of the socio-cultural complex that withholds agency from each of the objectified and flattened beings through undermining each nonhuman other into categorical assimilations based on human enterprise, "What such a Marxism calls nature is not actual trees and Arctic Foxes but trees and foxes as they are metabolized by human economic relations. Use value isn't 'what things really are for,' but 'what things are for humans.'"[153] This does nothing toward finding nature or discovering the extents of human/nonhuman simultaneous capacities, but instead creates a phenomenological and epistemological impediment toward understanding the nonhuman other.

Grafting can then be used as a technique for demystifying hyperobjects through infinite articulations of the self via surfaces, thus, *hypersurfaces*. Consequentially, the maker's call to action requires splicing, synthesizing, and tentacularity for generating the self through multiplicitous conventions for seeing, perceiving, and indexing others. The self, in these operations, can then be a canonical impossibility as an unfixed, elastic, and ever-adaptable assemblage of its own refine. Before seeking the phenomenological perceptions of nonhuman others,[154] the self must be humbled and de-sovereign-ed, not flattened, to understand the complexities and adjacencies of natural surfaces, "In a weird loopy not-quite inversion of the song, the whole world has got us in its hands—because we became a geophysical force."[155]

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[153] Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 26.

[154] Jakob von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*, trans. By Joseph D. O'Neil (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010).

[155] Morton, 37.

To begin the prognosis for delimiting and generating operable surfaces for grafting, the self must molt from the biases of the socio-cultural envelope, "an intensive discipline of unlearning is necessary for anyone before one can begin to experience the world afresh with innocence, truth and love."[156] Unlearning may take many roles, but in each it is a productive tool for dissolving prejudices and biases through misreading and undermining. More than just citing Audre Lorde, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house,"[157] the process of unlearning is also an activating discourse for continuously unpacking and sifting through the extent-riddled socio-cultural machine. Just as Lorde's work above is a critique of white, cis, heteronormative, oppressive, anti-black feminism, contextualization is a mode of unlearning and unplugging from the systemically drenched buy-in brought on by the extents of a possessive investment of whiteness.[158] In later chapters, this topic will be advanced further as a critique of the limited accessibility toward open-endedness within these thought experiments. CRT and "Crit" examples, nonetheless, provide a fundamental discourse for deregulating systemic buy-in as a misconception for the civilization-scale singular rationale for thinking and ascribing what is possible within culture.

In conversations with a close collaborator, colleague, and friend, Ben Creech, a filmmaker, author, and projectionist based in Chicago, Creech refers to himself as an "Amateur Explorer." Seeking the resolve of makers working from a position of non-art space, that are now well-documented and claimed as institutional critique, Creech's work

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[156] Laing, *The Politics of Experience*, 26.

[157] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984), 112.

[158] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).

seeks dis-categorization and disexpertise as fundamental discourses for making. Citing the films of William Girdler, the performances of David Hammons, the garments of Virgil Abloh at PYREX, and the installations of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Creech's works are investigations into the etymology of amateur as the passionate love, "*amat-*," of the self, "*eur*," and work. A cornerstone in Creech's practice, works like *Self and Other Works* produce a silhouetted fungibility of self and archive as a derivation of both self-identity as a maker and completist as an amateur film lover. Unbound by rigid conventions and extents, this process of making and critiquing/non-critiquing opens other pathways for future makers to consider integrating unlearning as an effective/affective tool for recontextualizing the self and other as an "Amateur Explorer."

Anti-colonial and anti-territorial, this style of reinvention does not rest upon the premeditated conditions of an antiquated social context. Instead, the self is in a process of expansion through the assemblages of newly opened and perceivable pathways. Returning to Morton, the self is always contradictory in this venture, "To be real is to be contradictory, to be a member of a set that doesn't include you. To be real is not to be easy to identify, easy to think, metaphysically constantly present."[159] Hyperobjects, like self-identity, are silent and invisible characters that continue churning through the self's field of vision but never resting long enough to tackle the full parameters of the form. Seeking a silhouette, an outline, or a definable portrait, the perceptual switches that produce an image of the self, through the other, and the hyperobject, through micro-scale reveals, are made evident in the Age of the Anthropocene and subsequent Posthumanism.

[159] Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 36.

Jesse Oak Taylor's *The Sky of Our Manufacture* analyzes the existence and documentation of the nonhuman other, the fog, in 19th century British Literature. Activating the character of the nonhuman other, Taylor utilizes Dickensian characters to interact with the hyperobject of agrilogistics, "The work of art in an age of anthropogenic climate change becomes not merely a representation of climate but an active constituent of it, participating in the ideological formations and social practices responsible for filling the atmosphere with smoke."[160] Returning to the sovereignty of language within the socio-cultural ethos of human civilization, Taylor's terms and conditions of the Anthropocentric revolve around the grafting of language to itself to ascribe a third socio-cultural space in the portmanteau. Stuffing the trunk full of etymological contradictions, Victorian language begins to feel eerily similar to the kinship of Haraway and assemblages of Deleuze and Guattari:

> Smog does not simply emerge at the intersection of nature and culture, it emerges as that intersection. Smog presents a single term or substance, perched at a semantic historical, aesthetic, meteorological, and material crossroad between the nineteenth century and the twentieth, between Victorianism and modernism, between art and science, between city and sky.[161]

Smog exists as both self and other, but irreconcilably different, thus the need for a new sovereign language extent, from the original smoke and fog. It defines the era through an environmental nonhuman self manufactured from the products of mechanization and Modernity depositing evidentiary clues for future geologists. But, it also exists as an architectural self/other for it creates a real/artificial barrier with nature

[160] Jesse Oak Taylor, *The Sky of Our Manufacture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 1.

[161] Taylor, *The Sky of Our Manufacture*, 3.

that changes the relationship between human sovereignty and the curation of natural space. As an inhalant, as a civilization-blocking deterrent, as a practical theorem, smog changes the interactions of civilization at a micro-scale. London, then, is not a hyperobject of billowing smog, but humans are the Modern Norwegian Salmon… The architecture is a fence, an apparatus, a synthetic enclosure for the self. Smog, to Taylor's point, is an other that allows for a phenomenological point of reflection, but that would entail its other-ness outside of nature that provides an entrance for analyzing its ability to be grafted to the self. Is nature then sovereign, self, other, or unfixed as an object? For Taylor, this begins a conversation around an unnatural nature that rests in its impossibly contradictory self:

> Nature in the Anthropocene exists in a state of perpetual withdrawal, a state of affairs that I have taken to calling abnatural. The prefix *ab-* means both "away from" and "derived from." Thus, "abnatural" speaks to both nature's absence and its uncanny persistence. While dubbing something "unnatural" solidifies the idea of nature as a stable entity, abnatural reminds us that what we call nature is replete with exceptions, always eluding definition. Abnatural characterizes those moments in which nature appears other to itself, beside, or outside itself.[162]

Inside, outside, moving, fluid, and unstable, nature, let alone the self, is an objectionable and detestable object through its contradictions in essence. These transformations and manipulations produce tendinous possibilities for exploring the unique self. Then, is there a "nature" or is there a "self" that can be consistently referred back to and where do these differentiations converge? "Above all, "abnatural" denotes a movement rather than an object, which implies Taylor's reluctance to ascribe extents on the potentiality of the unnatural/natural contradiction that is the abnatural. The abnatural,

[162] Taylor, *The Sky of Our Manufacture*, 5.

as an aesthetic, does not attempt to codify a particular state of the world but rather reflects the experience of dwelling in flux. There is no *abnature*, instead, "abnatural" characterizes the felt presence of an absence, a partial glimpse of an open whole.[163]

Taylor's text provides the root of a discourse that will be persistent throughout this text, but an aesthetic aside is required before Haraway's kinship and Deleuze and Guattari's plateaus can be incorporated into the self. An Abnatural, capitalized to denote a differentiation between Taylor's reading and that of this paper's opinion, aesthetic must be lifted from the nature of other and brought into a personal micro-scale self as a condition for grafting and utilization within self-identity. The Abnatural's productive entanglement with the self rests in its infinite openings as a hypersurface for deregulating, decolonizing, and decentering hyperobjects. Thus, the Abnatural as aesthetic, different from Taylor's linguistic stacking as a movement and non-object, is *an adjacent state of being where the uncanny synthesis of nature and other obscures the humanist order of rationalism toward x*.

Who/what/when/where/why is other? How can the self be other, from itself? What is the potential of an Abnatural aesthetic and is it possible for these concepts to converge? Is *x* a point or an equation? Can the Abnatural be reduced to a movement, a tool, a concept, a theory, or does its conception and verbiage deny ontology? Specifically in this portion of the writing, a series of mechanical operations may be used to begin unpacking the portmanteau of the Abnatural as an infinite series of processes for hypersurface articulation, specifically the approach to cutting, association, and prosthetics.

[163] Taylor, 6.

On cutting… Existing within the confines of the socio-cultural conception of nature, but producing outside of the natural recourse for language, the cut-up, as a deconstructive technique, has seen continual usages and emergences throughout the 20th century from the Dadaists to Oulipo to the rise of Collage and Bricolage. Tristan Tzara's "To Make a Dadaist Poem" invites the reader of the poem to become both a critic and a writer through an act of breaking up language as the poem activates "an infinitely original author."[164] Rioting, performing, reading, contending, the self is intermittent with activations, contradictions, and a state of unfixity. Writing in this discourse, the co-founder of the Oulipo, Raymond Queneau, published *A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems*[165] in 1961 as a "machine à fabriquer des poèmes," or a poem-making machine.[166] This, similar to the desires of Tzara, challenges the societal comprehension of the act of writing as a primary identifier of the writer and critic and instead asserts these challenges upon the reader of infinite variation. Across the globe and in the same vein, William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, with Sinclair Beiles and Gregory Corso, published *Minutes to Go* in 1960 as a series of cut-up poems using Gysin's artwork as a foundational theory. This system prioritized resignification of language as a product of the indefinite sovereignty of language. This conceptualized departure for language through language

[164] Pericles Lewis, *Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), 107.

[165] Raymond Queneau, *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).

[166] Jonathan Baillehache, "The Digital Reception of A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems," *Sens Public* (June 15, 2021): 2.

would go on to influence David Bowie's songwriting techniques[167] and provide a collaboration between Burroughs and Kurt Cobain in "The 'Priest' They Called Him."[168]

Inside and outside. Revolutionary from within and pushing the extents of the sovereignty of language, these techniques are the beginning of a deconstructive and other/self logic that will open a series of greater questions, i.e. where does subjectivity, creativity, and authorship lie in a third-space of the self and the other? How has this process mutated ontology, of language, to allow for greater articulation as a roughening fuzziness toward the self and other as a graft-able surface?



Figure 10. Hannah Hoch, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada Through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*, 1919, Mixed Media on Paper, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, https://smarthistory.org/hannah-hoch-cut-kitchen-knife-dada-weimar-beer-belly-germany/.

[167] Alan Yentob, "How David Bowie used 'cut ups' to create lyrics," YouTube Video, January 11, 2016, BBC News, 0:00 to 1:34. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nlW4EbxTD8.

[168] "Read Kurt Cobain's heartfelt letter sent to his hero William S. Burroughs," *Far Out Magazine* (August 10, 2020). https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/kurt-cobain-letter-william-s-burroughs/.

Similar to language, image making takes on the roll of cutting from Dadaists, in another mode, like Hannah Hoch in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada Through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany* (fig. 10) to contemporary artists like Mark Bradford, Dirk Koy, and Njideka Akunyili Crosby. Architecture also shares an affinity for breakage and linework tracing the historical deconstruction and delineation of pediments from Palladio's *Il Redentore* to Venturi's *Vanna Venturi House* and well beyond. Becoming integral to the practice of architecture, the throughline of Postmodern cutting can be traced from Colin Rowe analyzing Palladio and Corbusier to influencing the work of Peter Eisenman and collaborator, friend, and colleague, Jacques Derrida.[169] But does the self need to know the rule, the system, or the sovereignty of the image/text to break down the hyperobject into a series of surfaces, or is there an attempt to delaminate the self from all societal norms as a complete departure from systemic impediments? If the prospect of cutting, as an Abnatural aesthetic, is to rupture ontology into a series of graft-able locations, are there productive resources for unlearning?

Cutting, then, must be a tool for simultaneous Pre, Post, and Anti Modernity. Through societal dissolution from signification as a type of indexical deconstruction, the conscious/unconscious self must be withheld, contradictorily, to engage in cutting through the decision-making of criticality, importance, and removal. There is always an infinite feedback loop of refinement in this process through the procurement of the final product and in the intertext of the prepackaged objects. Newspaper article? Conversations with a friend? Clippings from the family's salon? Scavenged videos and memes from YouTube? The cultural importance, social impact, or personal signifier rests with each

[169] Colin Rowe, *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976).

maker, and thus provides an Abnatural *x* as a subjective surface to impose, interrelate, and graft the self to the other.

On association… Confined by the socio-cultural colony, the maker is a phenomenological attractant and perceiving self that responds through products of language, music, media, performance, etc. Responding to both interior emotive consciousness and exterior other human/nonhuman factors, the self is bound by the contextual obligations of its surroundings. But which specific agents and objects would manipulate and regulate the extents of the self and what, ontologically, exists as a container and indicator of the environment?

Heidegger and Sartre provide oppositional frameworks for analyzing the self via a set of others as a lamination of the self to exterior/interior objects. Thus, the self may be defined in a series of contextual bounds. Heidegger begins this with the self as a multiplicity within a rationale of ownership and authority rather than a resultant of exterior human, importantly not mentioning nonhuman, forces:

> Da-sein is a being which I myself am, its being is in each case mine. This determination indicates an ontological constitution, but no more than that. At the same time, it contains an ontic indication, albeit an undifferentiated one, that an I is always this being, and not others. The who is answered in terms of the I itself, the "subject," the "self." The who is what maintains itself in the changes throughout its modes of behavior and experiences as something identical and is, thus, related to this multiplicity.[170]

In this way, the self is identifiable only through its holistic ontology and bounds of experience and behavior. The self defines itself through the perceivable identity that

[170] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 108.

exists within itself as an ontological frame. Yes, there is a condition of multiplicity, but this presupposes human as a sovereign, and even reflexive, being that may see itself through the self without the need of the other. The self is a construction of self-identifying and self-naming principles that deny the opportunity for a philosophical understanding of the impact of the other. Heidegger refuses to account for the interconnectivity and adaptations of the self brought about through the introduction of other self's, let alone nonhuman actors.

Sartre, on this question, challenges the self through its contextual components as a fragmented and elastic set of conditions that begin to define the parameters of the self:

> And if I am asked how my "being-with" can exist for-myself, I must reply that through the world I make known to myself what I am. In particular when I am in the unauthentic mode of the "they," the world refers to me a sort of impersonal reflection of my unauthentic possibilities in the form of instruments and complexes of instruments which belong to "everybody" and which belong to me in so far as I am "everybody:" ready-made clothes, common means of transportation, parks, gardens, public places, shelters made for anyone who may take shelter there, etc. Thus I make myself known as anybody by means of the indicative complex of instruments which indicate me as a *Worumwillen*.[171]

Existing between Heidegger's awareness of the world through consciousness and being overloaded with signifiers to the point of unimportance and unrecognition in Sartre, the self can be seen as a phenomenological and contradictory indicator. Missing pivotal connections to the other and drenched in a biased self-reflecting efficacy, to these writers the self exists only in the container that it may be aware of. An association of entanglement only as far as the self can ontologically grant affordances, through its

[171] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993), 246.

human-centered sovereignty. This accepts a socio-cultural contextualization made readily available through the civilization-scaled "they" that the self is irreducibly bound to. In both cases, the self is defined by an anthropocentric, or anthropomorphic, worldview brought on by the erasure of nonhuman input.

Thus, Bruno Latour provides a conceptual framework for considering the self simultaneously within and outside of the confines of a socio-cultural context by freeing nonhuman subjects, "If we have to free them [Nonhumans], we have to do so completely, and in particular from the blockade to which Kantianism sought to condemn them by depriving them of any possible relations with human assemblies. The social world is no more made up of subjects than nature is made up of objects."[172] Latour introduces interconnectivity as a condition for the social understanding of self only possible through the introduction of nonhuman actors. This requires an intensive rewriting of inclusivity and ontology, outside of a human-sovereign purview, on nature. As the text has continued to provide moments of churn and increasing divisions for future grafting, Latour goes further into a possible unlearning of empirical practices that force self-imposed extents on reality, "This is no wonder since 'Society' and 'Nature' do not describe domains of reality, but are two collectors that were invented together, largely for polemical reasons, in the 17th century."[173]

[172] Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Havard University Press, 2004), 51.

[173] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 110.

Altogether, Latour, citing John Law,[174] arrives at a phenomenological agglomeration and associative theory for understanding the self without the bondage of socio-cultural impediments and the purposeful expunging of nonhumans:

> A good ANT [Agent-Network Theory] account is a narrative or a description or a proposition where all the actors do something and don't just sit there. Instead of simply transporting effects without transforming them, each of the points in the text may become a bifurcation, an event, or the origin of a new translation. As soon as actors are treated not as intermediaries but as mediators, they render the movement of the social visible to the reader.[175]

Thus, the self is a permeable membrane that is unfixed and transformed by human and nonhuman agents that affect the environment through human or nonhuman interactions. This does not flatten or reduce the agency of each actor, but it allows for a speculative discourse on the fundamental ontology of all objects/agents/actors within a system. The moment of "mediation" then becomes the phenomenological switch that creates the self's ability to perceive the agent rather than allow their affect without acknowledgement. This point, of invisibility, is similar to the Morton's intersubjectivity, "The abyss in front of things is interobjective. It floats among objects 'between' them; though this between is not 'in' spacetime—it is spacetime."[176] Thus, the hyperobject, being in its machine-like state, is indefinably invisible as a condition of its ontology. Parsing, shifting, breaking, mutating, Latour's ANT creates a series of associations as a network for deconstructing an hyperobject ontology into a series of surfaces.

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[174] Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 10.
[175] Latour, *Reassembling the Social,* 128.
[176] Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 81.

In such, the self can be understood by factors that are evident, invisible, human, nonhuman, machinic, etc. around the exterior as a condition of the other. On the smallest-scale, the maker is affected, governed, and identified by all of these contextual aesthetics. This rationally and psychologically charges the self with finding resonances and novel associations through learning and unlearning from the envelope of the environment. New music, friends, experiences, etc. are not merely pathways or doors to consider but are pivotal linkages and conceptual bridges that will curate differentiable silhouettes of the self through each system of networks. The maker exists as a re-associable assemblage of human and nonhuman networks, and thus provides an Abnatural *x* for addressing hypersurfaces through recontextualizing, manipulating, and grafting the self to the other.

On prosthetics… Circumventing the parameters of the socio-cultural extents, the ontological *trouble* when the self identifies with the other is in the inseparability of parts and simultaneous irreducibility. Grafting not only implies the acceptance of a component onto the surface of the self, but contains the loaded implication that the other, as a part or as a whole, is removed and permanently fixed on the surface of the self. Object-permanence requires an ontological shift toward a self that is not the self *a priori* but relies on an *a posteriori* reading of the self as a being/becoming machine. In this way, prosthetics are not *simply* tools or applications to learn like the empirical knowledge of pressure per inch needed to run an intaglio print through a press, or the temporary artifacts of an archival ink pen. A prosthetic, as a graft-able other, exists as a tool for irrevocably changing the ontology of the self and the other.

In an attempt to deregulate the self completely from the silhouette, or ontology, of both the self and the other, Bryant's *Onto-Cartography* composes a philosophy and

catalog of machine ontologies that exist inside, outside, and within an Object-Oriented space, "Machines do not have a use or purpose, but only take on a use or purpose in being structurally coupled to another machine."[177] Simultaneously giving independent agency and reducing the human-ascribed purpose, Bryant challenges the definition(s) of machine as an object that contains both infinite and finite purposes through their interactive potential with other machines:

> What *Onto-Cartography* attempts to analyze is the way in which relations between machines–at both the discursive and physical level–organize social or ecological relations. I say "social or ecological" because onto-cartography argues that societies are both particular types of ecologies and that they always open onto broader ecological relations with the natural world in which they're embedded. "Onto-cartography"–from "onto" meaning "thing" and "cartography" meaning "map"–is my name for a map of relations between machines that analyzes how these assemblages organize the movement, development, and becoming other machines in a world.[178]

In Bryant's conception, machines propose a kind of fungibility, interactivity, and interconnectivity that creates a condition of being and becoming simultaneously in a contradictory expansive/enclosed, independent/dependent manner. Machines are a *troubling* self/other as they are both ontological and graft-able. Cartography, or Bryant's recognition, locale, or vernacular-schema for mapping, is then a relational object outside of the thing, Ontology/Onto-, itself, which may be utilized as object/surface. Contextually and ontologically, the machine exists as a fungible other that exists as an object/being, but produces a surface condition for grafting to the self as an other and subsequently

[177] Levi Bryant, *Onto-Cartography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 30.
[178] Bryant, *Onto-Cartography*, 7.

irreducible being through becoming the both/and. Can this convergence of self and other speak toward a local embodiment of machines through multiplicity?

Changing the *ontology* of the self/other simultaneously, the prosthetic introduces the prospective grafting proposal for an *avatar*. Using the machine of the self, as a cultural artifact and image-based silhouette, digital embodiment and caricature are "appropriate" entry points into the *troubling subjectivity* of the body as a self/other.

Martine Syms, a new media artist, which in turn means, "artist, writer, musician, publisher, teacher, filmmaker; D.J., influencer, brand,"[179] based in Los Angeles pushes toward a contemporary image of the self through the imagining of an avatar. A complex that will be churned and discussed further in later chapters, the artist speaks toward the uncanny resemblance of the self, as an other, and the affordances that this gives the work:

> Syms remembers sending an early clip of the 15-minute piece [*DED*] to a friend. "I still think it's kind of funny," she said recently… "But let me be clear that I understand how people do not. They were like, 'What the [expletive] is this? It's really violent. I don't like seeing you dying.'"
> But that's the thing, she told me. "There's always a level of seriousness read into a lot of things that I'm doing that I don't necessarily connect with."[180]

The flickering distance between "seeing you dying" and the disconnection of the self is the third-space between the self and the other, the *other* other. The inability to see beyond the conventions of the self, even with the grafted avatar as a speculative other-ing, connote the seriousness of an Abnatural aesthetic as a phenomenological, experiential, and philosophical device for surface articulation. Syms cannot perceive the

[179] Travis Diehl, "The Many Lives of Martine Syms," *New York Times* (September 2, 2022), 1. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/02/arts/design/the-many-lives-of-martine-syms.html.
[180] Diehl, 1.

uncanniness of the other, even as a dematerialized prosthetic, due to the ontological entanglement and activated coupling[181] of the machine, "The artist's digital avatar strolls across a flat, featureless limbo, enduring several gruesome deaths. Seppuku with a chef's knife. Crippling, fatal allergies. Diarrhea so explosive she rockets into the sky like a rag doll, then dies from the fall. Then, somehow, she gets up and keeps walking."[182]

The fixity of image/avatar/self as a phenomenological cue not only provides a contextual signifier toward the self but it alludes to the machine of representation. The avatar stands-in, rather than exists as a stand-in, for the self. This is a prototypical convention and nuance in the age of virtuality looking at artists/makers. Foreshadowing the text's future debates on the contextual envelope of avatar bodies, i.e. Hito Steyerl, Claudia Hart, and LaTurbo Avedon, the convergence of physical embodiment, uncanny technological slippage, and the self/other ontological entanglement create a contradictory third-space for the avatar. What if the avatar was not purely a digital replication or mutation of the self as a self/other, but as a physical embodiment of both self as other and other as self? In this contemplation of extents and parameters, the maker is no longer bound by the extents of the self, socio-cultural entanglements, or the limitations of the human/nonhuman other, instead the self/other//other/self forges an ability to exist as an irreducible machine of the both/and. This provides an Abnatural *x* as an infinitely reconfigurable surface to identify, subvert, and undermine through a practice of making the self as both other and self/other simultaneously.

[181] Bryant, *Onto-Cartography*, 30.
[182] Diehl, 1.

The avatar as a self, other, both/and will continue to be an aesthetic fuzziness and *troubling* identity that will continue throughout the remainder of this text. Critical to the discourse of an Abnatural aesthetic and the self/other as an ontological subjectivity, this writing and writer hesitates to unknowingly jump into the start of the identification and bounds of self-contextualization by insisting on the avatar immediately. Through not including a named agent as an avatar until this point, the first chapters were curated to speak toward the self and the other as a condition of Object-Oriented withdrawal.[183] This would allow for the avatar to be utilized as a philosophically affective machine for entering into a third-space contextualized by the socio-cultural and self-imprisoning extents that are pervasive throughout the discourse on makers and history. Simultaneously, or hopefully, this has forestalled any initial preconceptions of a science fiction narrative in place of a designed speculative fiction that may be used as a productive tool for making in a Posthuman architecture and theory.

> The subjectile thus subdivides into "subject" zones of which it will be said that they have this body or that soul. The rosette showed us that the texture of substance is the inclusion of envelopes that fold into one another, small circles into large ones. We will then certainly not acquire the soul or the body that we are at such pains to secure by better enclosing our subject zones; we must rather delve down into texture or go back up into envelopes by grafting ourselves onto the world that surrounds us and by opening this world within us. We have to learn to modulate our zones: to dance to recover a body in the envelope of the tribe, or to fade away to acquire a soul within the texture of thought.[184]

[183] Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology*.
[184] Bernard Cache, *Earth Moves*, trans. Anne Boyman (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 124-125.

Beyond The Self

> Practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write—the positions of enunciation. What recent theories of enunciation suggest is that, though we speak, so to say 'in our own name', of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place. Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term 'cultural identity' lays claim.[185]

To provide pretext to the utilization and articulation of an Abnatural aesthetic through avatars as self/other//other/self, it is prudent to demarcate the socio-cultural throes of the self that must be highlighted to avoid a colonizing mindset of extraction and erasure of the other.

Extents, for the self to discover and subsequently break, requires an acknowledgement that parameters are both flattened and imposed on the self unfairly due to a variety of socio-cultural conventions. To progress without their mention not only validates a monocular ontology of the self but disregards the scholarship of otherness as an empowering modality for contending with civilization, i.e. Critical Race Theory, Afrofuturism, QueerCrit, DisCrit, NativeCrit, LatinCrit, etc. These voices, and many, many others, have given this writing a pretextual/contextual framework for the analysis

[185] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," *Identity*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222.

of self/other. Therein, this chapter will serve as a delamination of the ontology of the self, through socio-cultural lenses. The avatar created within the present socio-cultural laminations of the self only further cauterizes oppressive behaviors.

Ghosts, remnants, and spirits of the socio-cultural container, Derrida's *Of Grammatology* and *Specters of Marx* begin the heeded warning of the beyond, or *x* in an Abnatural aesthetic, as the self's *haunted* twin, "To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology."[186] Derrida introduces an inescapable sovereignty inherent to language, similar to that of Agamben's in previous chapters, but this representation of sovereignty refers to both historical register and contemporary reconstitution of language. To Derrida, language is an inescapable echo chamber beyond time/space and is essential to the socio-cultural mechanism of humanity. Thus, the haunted ontology of the self, as a maker, must contend with the contradictory dualisms of representation and sovereignty, "As corruptive principle, the representative is not the represented but only the representer of the represented; it is not the same as itself. As representer, it is not simply the other of the represented… It intervenes at the moment of différance, when the sovereign will delegate itself, and when, in consequence, law is written."[187]

Troubling, the line between ontology, as a loaded hauntology of sovereign entanglements, and hyperobjects, at the invisible ready. Derrida's claim toward an "absolute alterity" exists beyond the metaphysical presence of ipseity and authority

[186] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006), 202.
[187] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 297.

within language.[188] Mark Fisher interjects here with the introduction of an Afrofuturist alterity and materiality that challenges a predisposition toward teleology and ipseity, "Texture is central to both Afrofuturism and what I and others have been calling 'sonic hauntology.'"[189] Through discussions on making and production as a pseudo-embodied performance via maintenance, Fisher is able to confront Derridean otherness through a set of postmodern claims toward an *already existing* alterity to the socio-cultural normative, "we might say that postmodernity and hauntology confront 'white' culture with the kind of temporal disjunction that has been constitutive of the Afrodiasporic experience since Africans were first abducted by slavers and projected from their own lifeworld into the abstract space-time of Capital."[190]

Therein, Afrofuturism, as a departure from "white" socio-cultural extents, provides both an embodied presence toward a race predefined as other and a speculative teleology and language that represents the invisible hauntings of the potential self. Simultaneously, Afrofuturism provides a recontextualized framework for Derridean being and time as haunted concepts:[191]

> Afrofuturism unravels any linear model of the future, disrupting the idea that the future will be a simple supersession of the past. Time in Afrofuturism is plastic, stretchable and prophetic—it is, in other words, a *technologised* time, in which past and future are subject to ceaseless de- and recombination.[192]

[188] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 314.
[189] Mark Fisher, "The Metaphysics of Crackle," *Dancecult* 5, no. 2 (2013), 44.
[190] Fisher, 46.
[191] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 202.
[192] Fisher, 47.

Existing always as other, Fisher's definition of Afrofuturism requires a dualistic self/other view of ipseity to escape the socio-cultural sovereignty of language and its hauntology. Therein, Afrofuturism is ontologically outside of the self as it is irreducible from the contextualized selfhood that exists between "whiteness" and "otherness." Eshun summarizes this as the projecting of self into the other and vice versa, "Afrofuturism may be characterized as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures created in a century hostile to Afrodiasporic projection and as a space within which the critical work of manufacturing tools capable of intervention within the current political dispensation may be undertaken."[193]

But where does making lie in the speculative, sovereign, or haunted ontologies at the civilization-scale or within the self? Fisher's crackle is the materialist rupture of Modernity as a complex of imperfect machinery, but this sampled aesthetic exists for Postmodernity as a trace or hauntology, "If the metaphysics of presence rests on the privileging of speech and the here-and-now, then the metaphysics of crackle is about dyschronia and disembodiment."[194] Therein, Postmodernism nests within the Modern as a haunted substrate retaining the evidence of an outdated technology. Modernity yearns for a monocular logos that infinitely mystifies the machine of agrilogistics, which in turn becomes culture, then civilization, then forges colonialism, and forever dividing the self and the other from the hyperobject of each offsetting shell.

Usurping the colonial mindset of flattening, erasure, and extraction, begins with decolonialization from a primary intertextual intervention. In *Discourse on Colonialism*,

[193] Kodwo Eshun, "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism," *The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 2 (Summer 2003), 301.

[194] Fisher, "The Metaphysics of Crackle," 48.

Aimé Césaire provides artifacts to aestheticize and philosophize the resultants of colonial thinking that leaves the reader with "no one colonizes innocently."[195] Césaire's work scales up and down the Western socio-economic timeline as recourse for exercising the affective differentiation between the colonizers and the colonized, "No human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production. My turn to state an equation: colonization = 'thingification.'"[196]

This "thingification" is a question of the Biopolitical, rather than an Object-Oriented philosophic, as it dehumanizes and subverts the ontology of one into a subjugated less-than-human, nonhuman, or animals.[197] Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask* covers both the topic of dehumanization and otherness as it pertains to whiteness, "The Negro symbolizes the biological danger; the Jew, the intellectual danger. To suffer from a phobia of Negroes is to be afraid of the biological. For the Negro is only biological. The Negroes are animals."[198] In another text by Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, a condition of absolute civilization and socio-cultural buy-in is in the sovereignty of law and language, "Violence in the colonies does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them. Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their

[195] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 39.
[196] Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 42.
[197] David Livingstone Smith, *Making Monsters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), 6.
[198] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Mask*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 127.

culture without giving them ours."[199] Being both outside and inside of the societal confines of civilization, otherness, or non-whiteness, produces a double-exposure of expunged self-identity and irrefutably denies any other form accessible entry.

Troubling. Césaire, Agamben, and Derrida provide tessellated identity politics on this matter, specifically through the criticism of where civilization and humanity begin and end. For Césaire, it is as evident as, "Christianity = *civilization*, paganism *savagery*."[200] Diametrically opposed to a monocular, flattened, and colonized self, Césaire takes the existence of the Western narrative of the self, called civilization, and stacks it against the other as the division and advent of otherness. Processing a similar form of bi-lateral division through the historical motifs of Aristotle's life (zēn)/good life (eu zēn) and Foucault's stance on Biopolitics,[201] Agamben validates, and blatantly ignores, components of Césaire's analysis and recontextualizes this phenomenon as the ability to participate within the biopolitical system or not:

> In assuming this task, modernity does nothing other than declare its own faithfulness to the essential structure of the metaphysical tradition. The fundamental categorial pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, zoē/bios, exclusion/inclusion. There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion.[202]

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[199] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 15.

[200] Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 33.

[201] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[202] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 8

Derrida's sovereignty of language in *Of Grammatology* and opening of postmodernism in *Specters of Marx*, as per the readings of Césaire and Fisher, evade socio-cultural entanglement and subsequently undermine the argument of the infinite interiority of language. However, Fisher provides Derrida an escape hatch, where Césaire slams the door, through reading Derridean Postmodernism as "the end of history."[203] Césaire, along with Fanon's, "My theme being the disalienation of the black man, I want to make him feel that whenever there is a lack of understanding between him and his fellows in the presence of the white man there is a lack of judgment,"[204] points to the alienation of erasure within the creation, etymology, and ontology of colonization. Thus, Césaire highlights where Derrida erases the alterity within the self/other distinction:

> They [Historical Examples] prove that colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal. It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization that I wanted to point out.[205]

In this rationale, Derrida's reflection on human sovereignty in *Of Grammatology*, *Specters of Marx,* then *The Animal that Therefore I Am*[206] presuppose a colonial mindset that blatantly ignores the dehumanization and alienation caused by propagating Western colonizing rationales, i.e. language, religion, and politics within the machine of

[203] Fisher, "The Metaphysics of Crackle," 50.
[204] Fanon, *Black Skin White Mask*, 25.
[205] Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 41.
[206] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, trans. David Willis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

civilization. Derrida, if anything, doubles down on the invisibility of the agrilogistical machine of Modernity by flattening the accelerationist, colonist historical timeline to the "last two hundred years."[207] Excusing the colonial machine that leads civilization to Modernity, Derrida is only then concerned with the affect of such actions.

Before the self may be understood within and outside of its extents as a non-sovereign, elastic, unfixed, ever-changing, self/other avatar, etc., the reanimation of the human must not be flattened and expunged for the sake of a nonhuman other. Derrida's leap to the animal, as a self-prophesied novel philosophical concept, dismisses the speculative *and* scientific writings of animal phenomenology, *but also* ignores the central paradigm of this chapter: Western thought must not be the only conception of human interiority as a possible self. If anything, the catalyst and necessity of this research is founded in the Western division of the self from the other, as ontologically independent variables rather than their epistemological, etymological, and teleological performances of dominance. This erasure de-signifies and de-civilizes the non-white other, while giving affordances and permeable entry points for the nonhuman other. Smith states the erasure and violence against the other as a cornerstone of civilization and Modernity, "We could not have gotten by without doing violence to other organisms. But it is equally true that we could not have gotten by as social animals without powerful restraints on violence against our own kind."[208] In this way, nonhuman others are apologetically included into the debates of self/other, into the Actor Network Theory, into the agrilogistical machine, but not the human-self that has been designated as an other by civilization standards.

[207] Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, 24.
[208] Smith, *Making Monsters*, 207.

Returning to the entangled vernacular machine, the self has always been in a process of becoming, mutating, and shifting, thus its otherness to itself, contradictorily, is its essence. The Derridean problem is the avatar problem as dehumanization and colonialization limit the inclusivity of other within self as a laminated and erased *x*:

> Far from appearing, simply, within what we continue to call the world, history, life, etc., this unheard-of relation to the animal or to animals is so new that it should oblige us to worry all those concepts, more than just problematize them. That is why I would hesitate to say that we are living through that (if one can still confidently call life the experience whose limits come to tremble at the border crossings between bios and zoē, the biological, zoological, and anthropological, as between life and death, life and technology, life, and history, etc.). I would therefore hesitate just as much to say that we are living through a historical turning point.[209]

Concerned with concepts on animalia but missing the deliberately dehumanized/nonhuman other created by the machine of Modernity that denies the socio-cultural self to billions outside of a singular Western history, is a perfect summation of Lipsitz' text *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*. Lipsitz provides insight into the conception of "whiteness" as the separator of self/other through the manipulation of society, "The power of whiteness depended not only on white hegemony over separate racialized groups but also on manipulating racial outsiders to fight against one another, to compete for white approval, and to seek the rewards and privileges of whiteness for themselves."[210]

Smith dedicates an entire chapter of *Making Monsters* to the civilization-scale framework of this "fight" as a problematic deduced from Arthur O. Lovejoy's "Great

[209] Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, 24.
[210] Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 3.

Chain of Beings." In this historical framework, Smith analyzes the effects of this critically racist, sexist, and speciesist logic on subjectivity and progress at the civilization-scale writ large:

> The Great Chain was an all-encompassing paradigm according to which every kind of being—plants, animals, human beings, and even God and his angels—occupied a fixed rank in a vast metaphysical structure. The rank of a natural kind (sometimes called its "dignity") was supposed to be determined by how "perfect" its members are—that is, how fully they embody God's perfection… Around the same time, when violent encounters with the indigenous people of the so-called New World became frequent and Europeans' enslavement of West Africans became big business, European thinkers began to speculate about a racial stratification within the human rank.[211]

Embodying the idyllic and actualized potential for the self, as preordained by God, "whiteness" becomes the standard for the divine-right of colonialist thought. Clashing with Modernity and consciousness by erasure of the other, Gotanda's "Critique of Color Blindness" and Mills' "The Racial Contract" contend with a different kind of rewriting where the self/other duality is not excised but integral to identity.

Gotanda structures an argument specifically around the US Constitution as a primary text for the supposed ontology and sovereignty of Law that generates society.[212] Thus, Gotanda attempts to write on the extents of self/other through analyzing the socio-cultural extents that are imposed by the interiority of civilization. Importantly, Modernity's conception of the unimportance and invisibility of race, cited in the Derrida writings above and highlighted as an indivisible essence to self-identity by Césaire,

[211] Smith, *Making Monsters*, 103-104.

[212] Neil Gotanda, "A Critique of 'Our Constitution is Color-Blind,'" *Stanford Law Review* 44, no. 1 (November 1991).

justifies erasure and "ultimately supports the supremacy of white interests."[213] To speak toward the other and provide a contextualized silhouette of the self, Gotanda frames race not only as a phenotypical difference but as a phenomenological dimension, "nonrecognition is a means of avoiding or repressing consideration of the social relations and social context that are associated with race. This repression has psychological, legal, and interpretive dimensions."[214]

Mills contends with this further as a "contractual obligation"[215] to participation within "white" society, which by Gotanda's argument is the foundation of American society. Mills cites an example of this phenomenological difference through the self/other as a maker, "A black American architect of the nineteenth century trained himself to read architectural blueprints upside-down because he knew white clients would be made uncomfortable by having him on the same side of the desk as themselves."[216] Thus, the creation of the other, by Western socio-cultural confines, has changed the ontology of the self through the duration of dehumanization. Lewis R. Gordon repeats this sentiment as a necessary deprogramming of societal normativity, ""Where cleansing the world is unachievable, an alternative is to disarm the force of antiblack racism. Where whites lack power over Blacks, they lose relevance–at least politically and at levels of cultural and racial capital or hegemony."[217]

To recycle back to the purpose of this chapter, the maker, the self, and the avatar the danger of creation is the replication and duplication of horrors. Within the socio-

[213] Gotanda, 18.
[214] Gotanda, "A Critique of 'Our Constitution is Color-Blind,'" 18.
[215] Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 41.
[216] Mills, 51.
[217] Lewis R. Gordon, *Freedom, Justice, and Decolonization* (New York: Routledge, 2021) 74.

cultural envelope there are invisible machines and hyperobjects that are all to visible from differentiable angles, vernaculars, and identities of the self. Thus, the problem at hand, which will be continually critiqued throughout the remaining chapters of this writing, is the wrongful manipulation of extents and erasure as a mode of practice. In this way, Mills produces a summation on the "normalcy" through which Abnatural aesthetics and processes could take being confined within the system, "This norming is, of course, also manifested in the vocabulary of 'discovery' and 'exploration; still in use until recently, basically implying that if no white person has been there before, then cognition cannot really have taken place."[218]

This flickering of deprogramming and decentering easily falls victim to the colonial mindset of collection, archiving, storing, and capitalizing as a recycling of the socio-cultural feedback loop. As a case study, the Boston MFA's handling of the Dana C. Chandler Jr. manifesto provides the framework for aestheticizing this conundrum. Prior to this divulgence, the other, as an exhibitioner and prospect of retention capital and institutionalization, may have also been founded in The Guerrilla Girls at the Tate, Felix Gonzalez-Torres at the Art Institute of Chicago, Kent Monkman at the MET, or Yinka Shonibare at the Brooklyn Museum. Thus, these efforts, as Mills states above, to discover are inherently colonial affects that must be cited and highlighted to avoid a similar mode of whitewashing.

As a case study, the MFA Boston held a 2021 transcribed conversation between Dr. Kelli Morgan and Chenoa Baker on the 1970 memo, "A Proposal to Eradicate Institutional Racism at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts" written to the Museum of Fine

[218] Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 45.

Arts Boston, or MFA, by Dana C. Chandler, Jr. In the dialogue and marketing for this talk, the MFA has fallen for this linguistic trap of archiving, ownership, and colonializing through institutionalizing. A slippage in the original memo lines, now in public record, shows the 1970 curator, Perry T. Rathbone, stating that:

> It is a matter of regret that the Museum does not possess more (work from Black Artists) at the present time. You have our word that this situation will be changed with all possible haste, yet holding to the one criterion which governs collecting in all fields of the Museum–artistic quality. Little distinction would attach to museum acquisitions of works by black artists unless this basic rule is observed… You may not be aware that one of the policies I initiated twelve years ago was the permanent display in changing exhibitions of "primitive" art selected from the vast collections of the Peabody Museum at Harvard."[219]

Aside from the curator's assault on all black makers as primitive, which is the normalization of speaking about works made by non-white bodies like Art Brute, Outsider Art, and Naïve Art. There is a libelous mischaracterization that occurs when assuming that black makers do not possess "artistic qualities." This oversimplification and erasure, which leads to a curatorial "primitivization," underscores the importance of the socio-cultural erasure from the past to present. The museum, as the *just* arbiter of history and art, cannot be held responsible for other institutions, or co-conspirators to the cis-white, imperialist, capitalist, misogynist agenda, as they have been showing the *allowable* representations of black makers by showing the primitive, tribal, African Art. Ironically, almost as if it were planned, the collective buy-in toward a standard, a

[219] Perry T. Rathbone to Dana C. Chandler, memorandum, "Reply to: A Proposal to Eradicate Institutional Racism at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts," January 31, 1970, https://www.mfa.org/beyond-the-gallery/black-power-in-print/proposal-to-eradicate-institutional-racism.

benchmark, or a perceivable insistence on quality strengthens the voice of the invisible-visible machine that dismisses the work of nonwhite artists.

As if to further reiterate the implicit racism that occurs structurally at the socio-cultural level, which is aggrandized by the institution, the MFA calls forth on its "rediscovery" of the lost memo as a chance to reclaim the narrative. The contemporarily written statement about the memo-itself states:

> In April 2021, MFA staff recovered a document long overlooked in the Museum's archives: "A Proposal to Eradicate Institutional Racism at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts." Written in 1970 by Boston-based artist, muralist, and community organizer Dana C. Chandler Jr. (b. 1941), the manifesto challenges the MFA (and, by inference, similar institutions) to represent Black artists in their collections and exhibitions, and to financially support Black self-determination in the arts.[220]

This is the platform of the supposed advocate, the ally, the call-to-action for other institutions as they have "recovered" from this dark stain and are working on changing the discourse through reclaiming "The Racial Contract." Dr. Morgan's response, under the "Institutional Critique" headline of *hashtag* "Black Power in Print Series" presented by the MFA due to the recent rediscovery is that:

> Statements like those contained in the response—'we are putting together a committee,' 'the trustees can only do…' or 'the museum is in financial peril'—and conversations about admission charges show blatant institutional and structural racism. These are answers we often still hear today, but still, nobody identifies the institutional and structural racism within them.[221]

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[220] "Black Power in Print," *MFA Boston*, https://www.mfa.org/beyond-the-gallery/black-power-in-print.

[221] Dr. Kelli Morgan, "Institutional Critique Now: A Conversation between Dr. Kelli Morgan and Chenoa Baker." Interview with Chenoa Baker, *MFA Boston* (2021).

Dr. Morgan is citing the negligence of changing policies at the museum, while being propped up by the exact same museum. These are the contradictory dualisms that frame the self and socio-cultural subject within a system of oppression that recirculates its dominance despite the expertise of these experts. The dialectic of change is met with new vocabulary, but not new action. Citing racism, advocating for change, and placing two figureheads at the crux of the debate, the MFA is falling for the trap of tokenism, "the practice or policy of admitting an extremely small number of members of racial (e.g., African American), ethnic (e.g., Latino) or gender (i.e., women) groups to work, education, or social activities to give the impression of being inclusive, when in actuality these groups are not welcomed."[222]

This is the contract of "white" space that Mills discusses, that Gotanda points out the inefficiencies of color blindness, that Lipsitz claims exists on systemic buy-in, and that Hall explains as existing without subjecthood. Patricia Williams adds to this that the institution is a place of stealing and murdering of the spirit that defines the subject of the makers as she writes:

> These non-body-bound, uncompartmentalized ideas recognize the power of spirit, or what we in our secularized society might describe as the dynamism of self as reinterpreted by the perceptions of other… A fundamental part of ourselves and of our dignity is dependent upon the uncontrollable, powerful, external observers who constitute society. Surely a part of socialization ought to include a sense of caring responsibility for the images of others that are reposited within us.[223]

[222] Norma M. Riccucci, "Tokenism," *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, ed. John Hartwell Moore (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2008).

[223] Patricia Williams, "Spirit-Murdering the Messenger," *University of Miami Law Review* 42, no. 1 (1987).

Where is the experience of blackness tied into the role of the makers? How are the perceptions of the makers different from the societal/institutional conceptions of experience? What could a decentered, counter-narrative maker space and history look like? Another cross-examination of makers may be required to further this debate, but through an analysis of gender and representation through contemporary makers.

Mark Bradford and Lauren Halsey are two makers living and working in the Los Angeles area and both are perceived as talented black makers by the Arts community. With Bradford appearing on PBS' "Art21" series and Halsey being represented in the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), these makers have been institutionally collected, selected, and made in the present Art World. Bradford spoke of his background in his PBS "Art21" interview:

> The line of my making, or my art practice, goes back to my childhood, but it's not an art background, it's a making background. Me, making the sign of the prices in my mother's hair salon, I was in charge of that, so I would do calligraphy... the hand was very early in my work. signage, text, but not perfect... I have always been a maker.[224]

Bradford's work, in the Art World conception of worth, has gone for upwards of $8.5 million at auction, making him one of the most expensive living, American Artists.[225] Halsey is the new talent, the up-and-comer, and the maker with a unique take on materiality, installation art, and architecture as seen in her MoCA work, *we still here, there*. In a transcribed talk about the work, Halsey shared that "I wanted to create a safe

[224] Mark Bradford, "Paradox," art21, November 18, 2007, video, https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s4/mark-bradford-in-paradox-segment/.

[225] Victora L. Valentine, "Sales Results," *Culture Type* (May 19, 2019). https://www.culturetype.com/2019/05/19/sales-results-new-records-at-phillips-for-christina-quarles-ed-clark-and-stanley-whitney-plus-helter-skelter-ii-by-mark-bradford-hits-auction-block/.

haven for myself from the mess of the world, whether it be racism, classism, or an oppressive person. So in a way, I would build and assemble the most maximalist room out of my favorite collections just to feel okay."[226]

She is represented by the esteemed Kordansky Gallery, but has come out with a much different approach to auctions and the selling of work. In a 2020 auction, the Kordansky Gallery released the following statement "per the artist's wishes, we reserved certain (not all) sculptures from this body of work for people of color and public collections. We fully support Lauren's decision to ensure her work is acquired by—and lives on with—a diverse group of individuals and institutions worldwide."[227]

In both examples of Bradford and Halsey, extreme privilege is involved with millions of dollars in patronage. Not to say that it was unearned, but each was selected and given a platform to speak and document their for the future art as a citation for the contemporary practices at the turn and beginning of the 21st century. Both speak through the language of the Art World, but both are fundamentally different from their maker counterparts. This differentiation produces the voice through which they make, share, discuss, and reference their work. They have both begun to use their platform as a bridge to express opportunity to the other as the self, similar to the ambitions of Chandler, Jr. in the 1970 memo. Each has connected to and then spoken about a specific community that is historically socio-culturally exterior to the Art World and begun to include these entanglements within their identity and silhouette of the self.

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[226] Lauren Halsey, "Lauren Halsey: The Future is Now." Interview with Lanka Tattersall. *The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles* (March 2018): 6.

[227] Nate Freeman, "Wet Paint: Lauren Halsey Reserves Art for Buyers of 'Specific Ethnicity,' Broad Buys Another Big Warhol, and More Juicy Art-World Gossip." *Artnet* (January 30, 2020). https://news.artnet.com/art-world/wet-paint-david-kordansky-lauren-halsey-art-world-gossip-1766283.

What if the creation of a black art space begins with the opening of doors to cleanse the world, as Gordon would say? What if shifting the language is not enough to excuse galleries and institutions from continuing the white supremacist narratives? Even in Halsey's representation, the gallery excuses itself through placing the positionality onto "the artist's wishes." If the possessive whiteness of gallery spaces shifted to a subject-based recentering of maker practice, the discourse among audiences could be dramatically different. If capital futures were not the driving force behind all work conception, reception, and consultation, what could fill the void of art historical paradigms? If paragonical structures and token-based systems of cataloging did not script the bounds of alterity/ipseity, what would an Abnatural aesthetic afford for makers?

In a similar vein, the argument toward otherness contains infinite throughlines toward deconstructing the socio-cultural whiteness of institutions and Western civilization. Where do these parameters exist toward other self/other extents? Like the seminal texts, Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* and Preciado's *Countersexual Manifesto*, the arguments of QueerCrit's decentralization continue to illustrate the importance of non-normative differentiation, the infinite entanglement of dualism within the self/other, and the freedoms granted by alterity to the heteronormative socio-cultural, "The present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and 'rational' expectations."[228]

The QueerCrit discourse also brings in fundamental concepts of the self/other//other/self as an ontological assembly of the unfixed self through the works of

[228] Jose Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia* (New York, NYU Press, 2009), 27.

AA Bronson, Jorge Zontal, and Felix Partz that make up the collective General Idea.[229] Deborah Barkun's essay "The Artist as a Work-in-Progress" documents the collective/self/other work of General Idea, but unpacks a similar sentiment toward the self, even as a collective set of self's, as an unfixed silhouette, "Through a series of identifications with, and separations from, variously conceived personas or projects–the General, Miss General Idea and the Spirit of Miss General Idea–the group devised its own mythology by systematically conceiving, dismantling and reconstructing the 'body' of the artist."[230]

In the discussion with Ann Cvetkovich, Allyson Mitchell discusses "Deep Lez" as a non-philosophy of entanglement "mobilized to move radical lesbianism and identification with (or allegiance to) trans communities out of the realm of *either/or* and into the space of *both/and*."[231] Synthesizing the "macraméd conceptual tangle" of Mitchell's physical and written work, Cvetkovich's *Depression: A Public Feeling* considers a plethora of making practices and philosophies the interstitial spaces of race, gender, and social inequities as she connects Cornell West to John Coltrane to Celia Haig Brown to Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart.[232]

The other is not a conceptual game to be briefly considered and thrown about with reckless abandon. Rather, the self as an other, as an avatar, and as a maker embeds then reflects the self from the socio-cultural hyperobject by being outside of the civilization-

[229] Deborah Barkun, "The Artist as a Work-in-Progress," *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 48, no. 4 (2012), 453.

[230] Barkun, "The Artist as a Work-in-Progress," 456.

[231] Allyson Mitchell, "A Girl's Journey into the Well of Forbidden Knowledge," *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 4, (2011), 608.

[232] Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

scale machine. The consequence of these actions, which may be cataloged through making, is a differentiable, but not discrete, iteration of the self. These ruptures are agents, other(s), and modalities of entanglement that re-politicize and reinscribe the self beyond the confines, extents, and parameters that nurture and cushion those that buy-into the socio-cultural machines of oppression, extraction, and colonization. Willful and ignorant participation begets acceptance of these mechanisms of oppression through targeting and othering the nonconforming, or nonperforming, bodies. As seen in the texts, examples, and works, the other, like the self, is indefinitely unfixed. New/old systems of oppressions, new/old distinctions of hate, new/old behaviors of discrimination, etc. are being unpacked by a multitude of sources, theories, authors, makers, and philosophers constantly. Aesthetically, paradoxically, and contradictorily, the Abnatural *x* assumes a hyper-progressive incompressibility that is infinitely subjective per self/other.

To acknowledge these sources, phenomenons, systems, and scholars is to challenge the ontology of the socio-cultural civilization that oppresses the other as a nonhuman, inhuman, or incomplete self. To fully acknowledge the fearmongering of the hyperobject is not to disentangle from the self, but to persist in an indefinite mode of becoming through hyper-inclusivity without others. Wrongfully done, this aesthetic reaches toward a disingenuity where the self is plastic, discriminatory, and inconsiderate of the other that it attempts to claim as a justification of sympathy. Thus, a final case study to end the chapter, Laura Albert/JT LeRoy.

To discuss JT LeRoy is to ask where to begin with the writer, the hoax, or the truth. Flashing back and forth between two texts, this case study provides a necessary framework of the discriminatory potential of the avatar, the self, and the other through the

"literary hoax"[233] of JT LeRoy, or Terminator, or Ziggy, or Jeremy, or Jeremiah, or Laura Albert or Savannah Koop.[234] Thus, the only place to start is both the phone call in 1995 between Terminator and Cooper[235] and at the end, "in 2006 [Laura] Albert gave an interview to the *Paris Review*, admitting to the hoax and explaining how it worked."[236]

Hester's writing follows the rise of Terminator, the supposed original alias of Laura Albert that would evolve into JT LeRoy, through the connection to the writer Dennis Cooper.[237] Terminator's story begins with facts: this is the identity of a shy fifteen-year-old boy, a sex worker, a drug addict, an abuse victim, a child of Appalachia, and now, a homeless AIDS victim living in San Francisco with suicidal thoughts.[238] Reaching out to Cooper as an admirer and call for help, Cooper encourages Terminator to seek medical assistance and write. Through a series of interactions with other writers, years of writing and conversations, and a plethora of name changes and inconsistent storylines, JT LeRoy is born, achieves independent stardom, and distances from Cooper and other writers that have been assisting Terminator, or Jeremiah, or JT LeRoy throughout their journey:

> Among other things Cooper was angry that LeRoy continued to use a picture of George Miles that Cooper took in 1967 as his author photo… A thirty- year- old photo of the young Miles thus stood in for the twenty- year- old LeRoy on book jackets and promotional material around the world, further blurring the difference between JT LeRoy and Cooper's characters, many of whom were based on aspects of George Miles.[239]

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[233] Cynthia C. Degnan, "The Queer and the Innocent," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 47, no. 4 (2014), 760.
[234] Diarmuid Hester, *Wrong* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2020), 166.
[235] Hester, 166.
[236] Degnan, 761.
[237] Hester, *Wrong*, 165.
[238] Hester, 166-167.
[239] Hester, 176.

Degnan critiques that even through the hoax, JT LeRoy presents an intersectional crossroad[240] that is amplified through the queerness of the author and childhood, "LeRoy's story, both his life story and his fiction, exemplifies this problem. The narratives supposedly chronicle the sexualized destruction of a real child's innocence."[241] Therein, the tampering and exploitation of the queer community and the socio-cultural freedoms of the child blur the divisions of the other, the oppressor, and the self, "the key to Albert's deception was her premeditated and malicious use of AIDS and her exploitation of those most affected by the epidemic."[242] This rupture of a non-other falsification heightens the problematic as it undertows the systemic dogmas of the neoliberal, "'In Public, He's a She' is particularly telling because it reinforces a common stereotype of transgender people as hoaxing the public through social and medical transition."[243]

Horrific and pivotal to this entire chapter, Diarmuid shares the simultaneity with other hoaxes that have affected marginalized communities:

> High- profile literary hoaxes like the Albert/LeRoy one were rife in the opening decade of the twenty- first century. Within days of the final unmasking of JT LeRoy, James Frey's hit memoir A Million Little Pieces (2003), a heart-wrenching tale of drug abuse and crime, was revealed as a fiction. In February 2008, Misha Defonseca's bestselling *Misha: A Mémoire of the Holocaust Years* (1997), in which the author claimed to have survived the Holocaust with the help of a pack of wolves, was proved a fake. Later that year, Margaret B. Jones, who wrote *Love and Consequences: A Memoir of Hope and Survival* (2008) about her life as a half- white, half–Native American drug- running gang member in South-

[240] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991).
[241] Degnan, "The Queer and the Innocent," 763.
[242] Hester, *Wrong*, 180.
[243] Degnan, "The Queer and the Innocent," 774.

> Central Los Angeles, was unveiled as one Margaret Seltzer, an all- white woman from the Valley who had attended the same high school as Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen.[244]

Unlike the hoax from others, Alberts unmasking led to no apology.[245] With some supposed semblance of truth to her own story,[246] Alberts work was republished and continues to sell long after the hoax has been made evident. With the other aforementioned literary hoaxes provided by Hester receiving lawsuits, authoring formal apologies, and appearing on talk shows to defend and apologize for their actions, the white woman pretending to be a queer, AIDS-victim, homeless, sex worker, child, is back on the bookshelf. Hester ends the chapter with a concern that has remained a throughline for this dissertation as a warning to heed for avatars, "As revealing as the JT LeRoy hoax was of the culture LeRoy moved in, the rehabilitation of Laura Albert and her continued success perhaps teaches us even more about American society and how a proper reckoning with the devastation and injustice of the plague years is long overdue."[247]

To sit idly by and accept the hoax and horrors inflicted upon the other must not be undersold. Proclaiming the other as the self is a mode of erasure that devastates communities by minimizing the voice through a performance of understanding. There is a danger that the *x* in an Abnatural aesthetic lies outside of the ethical and disengages with the self to the point of oppressive resurgence and an accelerated totalitarianism. To stretch and push beyond the bounds of the monocular must be an aesthetic venture toward synthesis, learning, decentering, and decolonization.

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[244] Hester, 179-180.
[245] Hester, 181.
[246] Degnan, 776.
[247] Hester, *Wrong*, 182.

The avatar is not an extractive tool of "discovering" the other to reaffirm the entanglements of colonialist thinking. As a tool or process, the aesthetic of the avatar provides a contextual awareness for the self to visualize the peripheral extents that are inherent to the phenomenological, unfixed, becoming-being that is never more than a silhouette. Thus, to obfuscate the self is not to project racist, sexist, and colonialist tactics of erasure or dehumanization writ large. It is to highlight the *troubling* aesthetic of alterity/ipseity that is inherent to the self.

Modernity, as a civilization reimagined hyperobject that is so oppressive and pervasive that it rewrites the history of all objects/actors/self/others within the Agent-Network Theory and thus becomes an inescapable, irreversible, and invisible epistemology that begets the Anthropocene and philosophizes a Posthuman discourse, is not to be unpacked without caution. This chapter only begins to open the infinite set, reminding the self of Hilbert's hotel paradox,[248] of problematics to decenter the churning, whirring, and silent humming that creates the other. Longer discussions of the "weirdly weird" limits of the socio-cultural machine[249] and the disenfranchisement of indigenous peoples,[250] the Latino community,[251] disabled bodies,[252] etc. must be continued to illustrate the pervasiveness of the socio-cultural system. To delimit, impose upon, or

[248] Kragh, *The True (?) Story of Hilbert's Infinite Hotel*.

[249] Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 6-7.

[250] Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy, "Tribal Critical Race Theory: An Origin Story and Future Directions," *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, ed. Marvin Lynn and Adrienne D. Dixson (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[251] Francisco Valdes, "Legal Reform and Social Justice: An Introduction to LatCrit Theory, Praxis and Community," *Griffith Law Review* 14, no. 2 (2005).

[252] Subini Ancy Annamma, Beth A. Ferri, and David J. Connor, "Disability Critical Race Theory: Exploring the Intersectional Lineage, Emergence, and Potential Futures of DisCrit in Education," *Review of Research in Education* 42 (March 2018).

erase the self/other breaks down the optimism toward the Posthuman self as anything more than the Modern self repackaged.

Despite all of these warnings, waivers, and pitfalls, this text will push forward not to discover or assume a capitalist model of progress, but to reflect the other within the self as an Abnatural aesthetic to project toward *x*. Where will this lead each self/other//other/self is yet to be seen for all individually.

> "Slave humanity" is an aporia with which we have yet to reckon. It may well mark the limit of the reckonable. Rather than view the paradoxical predicament of enslaved humanity through the lens of dehumanization, I contend that the concept of humanity itself is fractured and relational. In place of assuming the virtuousness of human recognition or humanization, I interrogate the methods upon which an imperialist and racialized conception of "universal humanity" attempted to "humanize" blackness… Thus, humanization is not an antidote to slavery's violence; rather, slavery is a technology for producing a *kind* of human.[253]

[253] Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 45-46.

> Individual animals are taken as synecdoches for the whole species, and while it takes many such studies to draw firm conclusions, an individual's personal history (the kernel of selfhood, the *umwelt*, remember, is the creation of the individual) is not taken into account.[254]

To avoid overgeneralization and defunct rationalization, the self is a consequence of difference. The ever-becoming self produces an aestheticized barrier that draws the edges of identity. Thus, the freedom of the self/other Abnatural aesthetic must not fall into a Husserlian bracketing where the subject and object are left delaminated from ontology in an effort to front the epistemological essence of phenomenology.[255] Rather, the insistence on difference and différance produces the ability to perceive, conceive, and critique the self as an other. The avatar, as a digital, physical, and metaphysical embodiment of self/other, produces a Husserlian-modality, but only as an indexical variant of the self in search of the multitudinous silhouettes that generate the infinite iterations of the self. Levinas breaks this down as a critique of the body and signature:

> It [Husserl's method] amounts to the analysis of "intentions" which maintains the irreducibility of the various experiences of the real, delineates the unsuspected horizons in which this reality situates itself when one heeds the "intentions" which apprehend the real, and fixes the original standing of the beings thus approached. But the method consists especially in recognizing a dignity of experience and of apprehension in the attitudes of the mind (and of the body) which until now were not supposed to play a part in discovering being.[256]

[254] James Bridle, *Ways of Being* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022), 40.
[255] Edmund Husserl. *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Routledge, 2001).
[256] Emmanuel Levinas, "Signature" in *Philosophy Today* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1966), 31.

Instead, embracing the nuance of the discourse as a discursive, rather than recursive, agency, the self is a *dérive*-ready,[257] *flâneur*-ing,[258] *crelazer*-able,[259] sensing host of environmental inputs and outputs. Awakening to these divergencies, does the self possess the feeling of sonder, or "the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own,"[260] or is there another richness of highlighting the Agent-Network theory that enlightens the mind through otherness? Upon defining the avatar, the self produces a contradictory alterity that is both irreducible and tessellated from both outside and within. Thus, a fictious realism regrafting the body onto the mind, or vice versa, or *and* vice versa, "If a mind can recognize its own subjecthood, as distinct from that of other subjects, does this mean that it has a self?"[261]

Debord's dérive, Baudelaire's flâneur, and Oiticica's creleisure/crelazer provide examples of deliberate acts to highlight the consciousnesses of an internalized other as a vernacular self that rises to the surface by activating the periphery. Though agency and accessibility for each performative act varies individually for the self/other/object, these authors and makers contemplate a sense of "self" and belonging that connects the "us" and "them" to a solidified awareness of "we." The contemplation of the unconscious, the perception of the socio-cultural invisibility, and the architecture of the leisurely all activate strategies for highlighting the passively unknowable. This untangles the extents of the self and allows for a form of withdrawal toward an indexical other. Thus, the

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[257] Guy Debord, "Theory of the Dérive," trans. Ken Knabb, *Les Lèvres Nues* 9 (November 1956). https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html.

[258] Charles Baudelaire, "Le Peintre de la vie Moderne," *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P.E. Charvet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[259] Hélio Oiticica, "Oiticica talks to Guy Brett." Interview with Guy Brett. *Studio International* 177, no. 909 (March 1969).

[260] John Koenig, *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021), 123.

[261] Bridle, *Ways of Being*, 34.

avatar does not just exist within the tentacular hyperobject of existence, but visualizes, characterizes, and experiences the tendinous fabrics that exist at the edges of the Agent-Network. What is seen and sensationalized then, is witnessed, but remains a dislodged catalog where the performance of heightened difference toward the self is both unrelatable and challenges the self's influence. Where does this exist virtually? How can this be further amplified through the perception of an avatar or nonhuman other?

First through the avatar, then the human, the self's silhouette must be critiqued further to breathe life into the datasets of phenomenon. Where does the other emerge? What delineates the digital, physical, and metaphysical self from an avatar other?

The self is a collection of all uniquely known data, and thus, the reassertion of the silhouette highlights certain features of the extents of perception. Data, or "sense data" in the real and the appearance,[262] does not distinguish between virtual, mixed-reality, or other constructs of a geographic place, instead it inscribes the self with an awareness toward knowable things. Bertrand Russell goes further into the perception of otherness by breaking down knowledge into *judgement*, that challenges the self's "beliefs and convictions," and *acquaintance*, that acknowledges the self's awareness and "sense-data" of a thing.[263] In this way, Russell rejects the misconceptions of solipsism and the false truism that "we cannot know that anything exists which we do not know."[264] However, Russell's greatest contribution to the avatar is provided in the undermining of the sovereignty of the self by validating the sense-data of others, "If I am acquainted with a thing which exists, my acquaintance gives me the knowledge that it exists. But it is not

[262] Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 12.
[263] Russell,44.
[264] Russell, 43.

true that, conversely, whenever I can know that a thing of a certain sort exists, I or someone else must be acquainted with the thing."[265] In this way, Russell provides a context of knowledge that is embodied but does not a presuppose an empirical universality for understanding the other.

For Russell and Merleau-Ponty, the self is a collection of perceptions, thoughts, biases, and evidence that frame and anticipate situations for the purposes of social and cultural connectivity.[266] Toward a self/other pluralism, Lingis unbinds the self from the confines of the socio-cultural, "but time, language, and subjectivity not only suppose a being which uproots itself from the totality, but also a being which does not unite it."[267] Disjunction, non-sovereignty, and becoming are then frameworks of the self/other dynamic that depart from any advent of a universal empiricism. To Levinas, like Lingis, it holds quite the opposite, where the other is fundamental to grounding consciousness:

> The fundamental experience—which objective experience itself presupposes—is the experience of others, the experience *par excellence*. Just as the idea of the Infinite surpasses the Cartesian thought, so too, an Other is out of proportion with the power and freedom of the I. The disproportion between an Other and the I is precisely the moral consciousness. The moral consciousness is not an experience of values, but an access to external being, to experience.[268]

Thus, an avatar is an other subject that is a dimensional "representation of an entity" while also being a data-contributing version of the self as a placeholder.[269]

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[265] Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 45.

[266] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 2005), 85.

[267] Levinas, "Signature," 32.

[268] Levinas, 32.

[269] Douglas Medin and Andrew Ortony, "Comments on Part I: Psychology Essentialism," *Similarity and Analogical Reasoning*, eds. Stella Vosniadou and Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Ratifying the actuality and impossibility within the contradiction of the self, the avatar becomes both the self and something *more* than the self as a container of the uninhibited bounds of subjectivity, while practicing beyond the socio-cultural extents that bound and restrict. Levinas, Lingis, Merleau-Ponty, and Peperzak will continue to be points of difference and phenomenon as the consideration of embodiment and signature are tested further, "One can henceforth show the conditioning of the consciousness of the object in this initial face-to-face encounter, support pluralism as a structure of Being, and affirm a non-reciprocal structure between these many 'substances' and the dimension of eminence and of the ideal open by virtue of the relation with others."[270]

Troubling in ontology, phenomenology, and epistemology, the etymology of avatar is not simply an Internet3.0 creation.[271] Rather, it is an embodied signal of shared being of the self/other. A method-actor, a shaman, a warrior about to go into battle, the avatar is the othered-self beyond the self.[272] The self is psychologically imbued with the capacities of ipseity and alterity in a speculative aestheticizing of the both/and as a disjunction of the monocular, "It [Being-with] is the instant scaling back of the principle of identity: Being is at the same time in the same place only on the condition of the spacing of an indefinite plurality of singularities… What is the being-with of Being?"[273] Nancy introduces the preposition-based interlocutor for the infinite system as a condition for de/recontextualizing of human associations and the socio-cultural confines of identity.

[270] Levinas, "Signature," 33.
[271] Frederik Stjernfelt and Anne Mette Lauritzen, *Your Post has been Removed* (Springer, 2019).
[272] Brian Bates, *The Way of the Wyrd* (New York: Berkley Books, 1988).
[273] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 34-35.

In doing so, the avatar exists *within* both the self and the other as a twinned agent. The self, then, exists in a speculative assembly of ontological excess where the avatar provides another contextual envelope as a set of otherness emerging from within the self. Beyond grafting, leeching, transforming, or mutating, the other is both discrete and entangled as a *dizygotic* twin. Before cataloging the work of the avatar in future chapters, like Fernando Pessoa's Heteronyms, Sturtevant's Appropriation Art, or Prince's Artist Name, the foundations of a West African discourse on photography provide insight to the distinction and separation of the self as a multiple.

C. Angelo Micheli's *Double and Twins*, presented from an Afrofuturist discourse alongside the work of Twins Seven Seven, gives an historical pretext to the emergence of the other within the self as an identity trope shown most-notably in "double portraits," or the act of photographing twins with mirrored clothing, attitude, and poses.[274] Analyzing the etymology and historicity of these photographic typologies, Micheli ventures through multiple regions, languages, and studios developing a contextualized thesis of the self. Even with the self as the sitter, the other-self as the sitter, and the photographer, the advent of the other is persistent, "In the paired-figure portraits, studio clients want to be seen with their alter ego, their 'second self,' in a twin-like relationship… As for photographers, they produce images providing a plastic counterpart to the relation between the two individuals."[275] In this way, the separation of bodies blurs the line of the self and the other in an embedded technology of the discrete, the camera. However, Micheli's work finds a *troubling* notion that the self is irreducible from the other as an

[274] C. Angelo Micheli, "Doubles and Twins," *African Arts* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 66.
[275] Micheli, 72.

ontological being of the self through twinship, "For many clients, completion of the self implies the presence of one's twin: a living person like a friend or a family member felt as a twin (the one I have described in the paired-figure portraits), or a missing twin they feel inside themselves and who is part of the definition of the 'person.'"[276] Providing further insight to this quote, Micheli notes that the prior text highlights the manifestation of the both/and of the self/other through photography as consideration of ontological excess, "Through photography, individuals construct their identities, both single and multiple, and do not only aim at expressing twinship. This ever-changing identity is composed of different strata, like a palimpsest, combining tradition and modernity, collective and private history."[277]

This entanglement with the socio-cultural extents and the greater agency through assemblage with the other provides a productive context for the denial of erasure, or decolonial, thinking. Via combinatorics and synthesis, there is an inescapable mathematical contradiction where the infinitesimal arises out of the singular. Nancy's *Singular Plural* continues on this point of disjunctive lamination of the ontological:

> From this point forward, then, the unity of an ontology must be sought in this traction, in this drawing out, in this distancing and spacing which is that of Being and, at the same time, that of the singular and the plural, both in the sense that they are distinct from one another and indistinct.[278]

In this way, Nancy also provides an apparatus for Lingis to introduce the Nietzschean concept of Zarathustra, "For Nietzsche the human species is a transitional

[276] Micheli, "Doubles and Twins," 75.
[277] Micheli, 85.
[278] Nancy, *Being Singular-Plural*, 37.

species in the course of evolution; the question what man is entails the question what he can become."[279] The photograph exists as a document of the more-than-human,[280] but it also provides a surface condition[281] to distinguish between the self and the other as a freezeframe of irreducibility. The undisclosed agency of the self is elastic, mutable, and ever-ascribed to the other as "body without organs."[282]

Drawing within and beyond the extents of the monocular self, the gamification of an avatar, as both the self and the other, presents a procedural interdependence and subversion to learn/unlearn without replication, or the *monozygotic* twin. N. Katherine Hayles considers this further with the verbiage of the "flickering signifier," in which the self engages with the embodiment of the other through simulation, "In these systems, the user learns, kinesthetically and proprioceptively, that the relevant boundaries for interaction are defined less by the skin than by the feedback loops connecting body and simulation in a technobio-integrated circuit."[283] Beyond the virtual or the tool, however, Hayles provides a series of *troubling* questions that arise after the pseudo-embodiment of the other, "Questions about presence and absence do not yield much leverage in this situation, for the avatar both is and is not present, just as the user both is and is not inside the screen…What transformations govern the connections between user and avatar?"[284]

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[279] Alphonso Lingis, "Nietzsche and Animals," *Animal Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco (New York: Continuum Books, 2004), 8.

[280] Panelli, "More-than-human social geographies," 85.

[281] Broglio, *Surface Encounters*.

[282] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 9-16.

[283] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Become Posthuman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 27.

[284] Hayles, 27.

These transformations are pivotal to an Abnatural aesthetic as each self would catalog, index, and interact with the other through unique rationales. This aesthetic for contemplating the self, even when attempting to mirror, twin, or duplicate, exists in a perpetual slippage of signifiers and signs. The other is more than a condensation and erasure of the self as an effigy,[285] but the avatar provides an interstitial and liminal silhouette that can be decentered from the socio-cultural identity of the self.

Producing alterity within ipseity, contradictorily, changes the extents of the self. By manufacturing an avatar from within the socio-cultural parameters, the self/other awakens as a multifaceted, ambiguous, and irreducible silhouette. Through this emergence of interiority, questions of transcendence and speculation inhibit the self from ascertaining the limits of an Abnatural *x* as it is inherently framed within the context of the world. Meillassoux's writing on ancestrality takes another path toward interconnectivity as it refers to a finiteness of place as a consequence of subjectivity:

> The subject is transcendental only insofar as it is positioned in the world, of which it can only ever discover a finite aspect, and which it can never recollect in its totality. But if the transcendental subject is localized among the finite objects of its world in this way, this means that it remains indissociable from its incarnation in a body; in other words, it is indissociable from a determinate object in the world.[286]

From within the socio-cultural confines of extents and parameters, Meillassoux questions the self as a locally constructed identity of the normative. Inescapable even through the imaginative and speculative other, the self is a product of the machine even if it desires rupturing the system. Continuing on the hunt for identity within the burdened

[285] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 91-103.
[286] Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude* (New York: Continuum Books, 2010), 25.

self, Meillassoux's ancestrality presupposes the physicality of bodies as a determinant of thinking and consciousness, "Thus the subject is instantiated rather than exemplified by thinking bodies. But if this is so, then we raise the question of the emergence of thinking bodies in time we are also raising the question of the temporality of the conditions of instantiation, and hence of the taking place of transcendental as such."[287] Infinitely defined by the socio-cultural dualism of the past/present, the self/other, to Meillassoux, is ladened with externality and an impossibility of transcendence, beyond, othering, etc. But as a question for makers, the self, and the other, through the discussion on avatars, is there not an aesthetic of *supra*-cestrality inherent to the prospect of making already? Indicative of a folded exteriority of time-space or an a-cultural affordance provided to the self as a misreading of Deleuze, the other is *always* a supracestral alterous self that is an ever-becoming and indefinitely transcendental *more* than self.

In this way, a reflection on being as transcendental beyond the confines of life and death, Deleuze's *Pure Immanence* provides another passage toward an avatar as a contradictory singularization within liminal space, *a life*, "It is a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad."[288] Thus, the awakening of the avatar, if understood as a static being, is a consequence of the envelope of the self that begets it, but if it is understood as an ontological void of indefinite becoming, then it exists within the transcendental. The outside of the other through the synergy-genesis of the self. The maker, the made, and the

[287] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 25.
[288] Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*, trans. Anne Boyman (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2021), 29.

space between are then propelled through the nuance of the trouble. In reading immanence and transcendence as an unlimited empiricism without universality, can the avatar provide an externality to emerge both within and outside of the self?

Looking to ground the alterous as a metaphysical/actual other within the self, *Black Swan*[289] and *Inspector Gadget*[290] provide contexts of the self/other as both *polyzygotic* twins and a supracestral aesthetic.

Nina, played by Natalie Portman, is a ballerina for the New York City ballet that is continually overlooked for major roles is finally set for a lead role in Swan Lake as the White Swan. Through pressure, failure, and competition with her new rival Lily, played by Mila Kunis, Nina becomes enveloped in an alterous self of envy, rage, and ferocity that is both within and outside of the character. As Nina realizes the lead role in a performance of Swan Lake, something that she has never achieved but has always dreamed of, she now personifies the other as the self through the circumstantial differentiation of the self, the black swan. She is metaphysically and psychologically the other. Becoming an embodied avatar of/as the swan, Nina views her actions, performance, and self, as the other. Nina's final embodiment of the other results in the supposed stabbing to death of the rival Lily, or the pure self, and a realization of the self as the other with the reveal of her own self harm. With the curtain falling and the perfect performance complete, the other's full manifestation is complete and the fated self/other fade into oblivion.

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[289] *Black Swan*, directed by Darren Aronofsky (2011; Burbank, CA: Fox Searchlight Pictures), Amazon Prime.

[290] *Inspector Gadget*, directed by David Kellogg (1999; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures), Disney Plus.

Anecdotally similar to Kafka's *Metamorphosis* or the *Animorphs Series* by Katherine Applegate and Michael Grant, which is also co-written under the penname K. A. Applegate, the differentiation of the self is in the impossible exteriority of the other. Following a Deleuzian fold of identity, the plot slips through an aesthetic simultaneity of appearance. Irreducible, internalized, and dualistically manifesting *always outside*,[291] Nina's arc is the reveal of the other as the self and the acceptance of the permanence of the other within the self. Aronofsky, the director, revealed in post-screening interviews that the character of Nina was devised as a reinterpretation of the other through his own reading of Dostoevsky's *The Double*.[292] The release of the film also brought intense qualms to the post-Nina sanity of Natalie Portman after the statement, "I loved Darren Aronofsky, and working with him was a deeply fulfilling experience, but I just showed up for *Thor* spent. I probably should have gone into rehab,"[293] did nothing but stir a rumor mill on the instability of the actresses. Whether rehab was mandatory or the personal life of the other was overblown by the statement to the media, the self, as an embodiment of the other, begs at the inhabitability and embodiment of the avatar. Where does meta-physicality of the avatar and the self within performative space? When does character breakage occur and at what point is there an awareness of the self and the other in this context? Prior to the growing of feathers, becoming a swan, or self-mutilation?

[291] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

[292] Darren Aronofsky, "Darren Aronofsky on 'Black Swan.'" Interview with Krista Smith. *Vanity Fair* (January 4, 2012), 1:26-2:01. https://www.vanityfair.com/video/watch/krista-smith-talks-to-darren-aronofsky-about-black-swan.

[293] Daniel Sperling, "Natalie Portman 'needed rehab after Swan,'" *Digital Spy* (March 19, 2011). https://www.digitalspy.com/movies/a309955/natalie-portman-needed-rehab-after-swan/.

To further exacerbate the self/other and other/self as an internalized awakening, *Inspector Gadget*, the film not the 1982 show, follows the life of Security Guard turned cyborg/cybernetic Police Inspector John Brown, played by Matthew Broderick. Through an accident with the eventual villains of the film series, John Brown is severely injured and becomes the test subject, and love interest, of Dr. Brenda Bradford, played by Joely Fisher. As a clumsy maladroit between human and machine, Brown summarizes the newly constructed internal mechanics within his body through the quick quip, "I'm not me anymore, I'm a hardware store."[294] The film then operates on a platform of entanglements and accidents that underscore Brown's identity as a figurehead investigator used for the mayor's political gain. The villains, using a robotic foot stolen from Dr. Bradford's lab in the beginning of the film, develop a Robo-Gadget, also played by Broderick, as an uncanny *evil twin* that possesses the same abilities as our good-hearted Inspector. The main driver of the villain, Sanford Scolex, or Dr. Claw, is to develop a nonhuman, nonconscious self as a warmonger, "To make technowarriors that never get tired, never get hungry, and never say 'no.'"[295] The opposite of Dr. Bradford's creation with Brown that requires a "Neuron Synapse Amplifier" to increase the electrical current of the human brain to operate the machinery installed through and within the body. Design Fiction suspended momentarily, the film concludes with a two-part sequence where Brown discovers, "It's a miracle, he doesn't need the chip."[296] Then, Brown fights, outsmarts, and destroys his Robo-Gadget uncanny likeness of the self or the tyrannical other/other.

[294] *Inspector Gadget*, 0:19:10 to 0:19:20.
[295] *Inspector Gadget*, 0:47:15 to 0:47:35.
[296] *Inspector Gadget*, 0:52:30 to 0:53:15.

The dual dueling of the self/other and other/self gives this film a series of contexts to unpack the supracestral self. There is an indexical folding of identity within the Robo-Gadget and Inspector Gadget as dizygotic evil twins, but the disembodiment and animation of the cybernetic, now cyborg, self that delaminates the body from socio-cultural frame provides an even greater speculation on the subjectivization as self/other//other/self that challenges the ontology of being. Beyond the blurred speculation of human supremacy as a redux of Moravec's Paradox, "it has become clear that it is comparatively easy to make computers exhibit adult-level performance in solving problems on intelligence tests or playing checkers, and difficult or impossible to give them the skills of a one-year-old when it comes to perception and mobility,"[297] *Inspector Gadget* challenges the double as a rupture of subjectivity and essence. The self as simultaneously the container, motor, and deprogrammer of the other speculates on the inherent capacities beyond the socio-cultural extents that define the self. Moravec continues on past the now synonymous statement to discredit the importance given to reasoning as it pertains to the historical embodiment of acculturation, "the deliberate process we call reasoning is, I believe, the thinnest veneer of human thought, effective only because it is supported by this much older and much more powerful, though usually unconscious, sensorimotor knowledge."[298]

Disrupting the supremacy of the socio-cultural through etymological and epistemological disjunction between the subjectivity of the self and the other, the avatar exists at the crux of the paradox. Then, where does the self draw the line with the other as

[297] Hans Moravec, *Mind Children* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) 15.
[298] Moravec, 15.

a confounding and resounding semblance, or as an alterous identity bound by language or gesture? This juncture is best intersected through a contemporary analysis of the self within the avatar, rather than the inverse as discussed prior. In such, there is an encoded misreading and misunderstanding that is continually emergent through this rhetorical analysis of the avatar. By *troubling* the sign and signifier of the self as an identity, representation, or actor that accounts for the self, the avatar, is bound by the assumed constraints of what is possible in virtual spaces. Thus, what is the contemporary context for discussing the avatar, and why is this abrasive surface the source of grafting, synthesizing, and folding the other?

In contemporary contexts, the avatar is an embodied digital self, seen merely as a character, that can slaughter the virtual others and communicate with the other "others" without the necessity of face-to-face interaction, i.e. *Call of Duty*, *Fortnite*, *Halo*. The unknowable self is hidden within the confines of the solely aesthetic other as a *phygital* (physical + digital) duality. But is there a desire for the self to be completely unknown to one's self, or is it necessary to have a foundation back toward a knowable identity?

Hooi and Cho argue that the digital avatar allows for self-disclosure and wrote that the self feels more aware, present, and identifiable with an avatar that shared homophilic characteristics.[299] The self, even represented through the other, maintains a need for the framework of social interaction. Through this reading of the limits of the avatar, digital space exists as another bounding box of extents that assume virtual architectures as civilization. This transmutes the self by eliminating the need for travel,

[299] Rosalie Hooi and Hichang Cho, "Avatar-driven self-disclosure: The virtual me is the actual me," *Computers in Human Behavior* 39 (October 2014), 22.

but denies any ontological exteriority through the avatar. To Hooi and Cho, the recognition of the self within the simulation is critical to establish individual agency and characterization as a modality for generating relationships that are "actual."[300] Is it possible that the avatar can be a heterotopic mirror of the self and not merely a dimension of the self?[301] Where and what physically mutates the avatar from the self?

Schrader contends that the identification of the self in an avatar has more to do with context, or agency, of the avatar than the introspection of self.[302] In Schrader's study on avatars in learning environments, students were told to create two avatars: one for entertainment and one for education. This study writes that students shared less commonalities with the educational avatar and instead prescribed goal-oriented features that would make learning more accessible. To the students, avatars were not necessarily embodiments of the actual self, but a kind of homunculus of agency, that represents tasks instead of likeness. Therein, is this how students view their concept of the self, and how is this shed inside/outside of the school?

Temporarily flickering back toward the writings of Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, Wright and Foerder take on an original mapping of the homunculus, from Penfield and Boldrey,[303] as a dissatisfication with the self only being regarded as male through the representations of the sensory and motor homunculus.[304] The writing and subsequent

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[300] Hooi and Cho, 26.

[301] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* (October 1984). 3

[302] Claudia Schrader, "Creating avatars for technology usage: Context matters," *Computers in Human Behavior* 93 (April 2019), 223.

[303] Wilder Penfield and Edwin Boldrey, "Somatic Motor and Sensory Representation in the Cerebral Cortex of Man as Studied by Electrical Stimulation," *Brain* 60, no. 4 (1937).

[304] Haven Wright and Preston Foerder, "The Missing Female Homunculus," *Leonardo* 54, no. 6 (November 6, 2021).

model-making by the authors discuss the homunculus as an artifact of the general erasure of a female self throughout scientific study and understanding of the human anatomy.[305] Harawayan in their critique, Wright and Foerder provide a field for the avatar as the other through the manipulation of the entanglements within the self. Scientifically avoided, the female exists as an embodiment of the other as research has continually dismissed the differences within the self. Critical to this work and the Cyborg as a feminist trope, the female can be discussed as a phygital avatar due to their exclusion from scientific studies of the self. Thus, the avatar exists beyond a digital signifier and instead argues toward the embodiment of the other as the self, rather than the socio-cultural expunging of difference within a homogenous civilization.

Ironically, the contemporary definition and confines of the avatar, in video games, film, and literature, are typically associated with violence and acts of uncivilized, wild, and dangerous characteristics. Outside of the avatar as maker, performer, and educator, the other must be critiqued as more than warmonger. David Livingstone Smith's critique of murder and killing is then a portal into the differentiation and freedoms that are produced by the avatar/other that allow the self to remain pure.

Beginning with Turney High's claim of the *Totungshemmungen*, "biologically based inhibitions against killing members of our species,"[306] Smith produces a socio-cultural extent that is essential to a civilization-inhabiting self even to the point of biological stress, trauma, shame, and self-harm caused by this rupture of the self. Avoiding moral injury, horror, disgust, and banishment, the avatar may also be a place to

[305] Wright and Foerder, 654-655.
[306] Smith, *Making Monsters*, 213.

consider the writing of Daniel Goldhagen as a virtualization of the self from the horrors of the Nazi Party, "Perpetrators of atrocity who report being disturbed by the horrific acts that they performed or participated in very often do not describe suffering from feelings of guilt or remorse. Their reaction often consists of physical symptoms such as vomiting or trembling, dissociation, or feelings of horror—and horror is not a moral emotion."[307] Distancing from the immediate actions of the hands, Smith considers Hannah Arendt's study on Adolf Eichmann as a critique of the self's *instinctive reaction*, "Nazis had to 'overcome not so much their conscience but the animal pity by which all men are affected in the presence of physical suffering.'"[308] Thus, the internal conflict of where the ethics of the self reside is a consequence of the ever-changing socio-cultural confines of the civilization. Whether Roman or Nazi, the importance of belonging create dimensionality as a condition of where the self and the other exist within time.

For those that have passed through this threshold of moral injury or deadly sin, Smith introduces an historical analysis of the cultural artifacts for scrubbing the self of pollution through purification. Citing the works of Jason A. Riley and Susan Niditch, Smith considers the role of killing in the Bible as a necessary act, when commanded by God, with the understanding that cleanliness is needed afterwards, "The very act of killing in war renders the Israelite soldier unclean. He too must be purified before resuming his life as a whole member of the people of Israel."[309] Again providing a full-context of the socio-cultural cleansing, Smith's reading of miasma, "the act of homicide could produce a highly contagious kind of pollution… which could infect anyone in the

[307] Smith, *Making Monsters*, 216.
[308] Smith, 217.
[309] Smith, 218.

killer's proximity,"[310] and catharsis provide the context to unpack the need for an other as a representative of the self via the avatar.

Arguably, these are societal obligations of humans that result in needing an alterous other through which to act outside of the self. In framing the avatar as a displaceable or wearable other, there is a divergence in the ethical responsibilities of the self which may be bound in the representation of the avatar. Therein, what is the self distinctly responsible for?

Toward a speculative turn on the affordances beyond the self, the avatar, both as a contemporary phygital agent and an alterous self beyond the socio-cultural perimeter, simultaneously investigates and critiques the hyperobject that frames the agrilogistical machine of civilization. Providing the self an exploratory vastness, the avatar exists as an aesthetic signature and other as signifier through which the self must be critically engaged with and through.

To conclude the first part of this discussion and introduce the testing grounds of the avatar, the Abnatural cannot be understood as a solitary philosophy through which all things are allowed. Not an anarchical tear, but a *troubling* both/and where the self/other, which will thus forward be referred to as WE, pushes toward an *x* that is phenomenologically subjective. In this way, the work seeks a non-universal empiricism through a Deleuzian *Life*, "The life of such individuality fades away in favor of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other."[311] Through "Part One: Avatar Subjecthood: Siphoning the Self," extents,

[310] Smith, 218.
[311] Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*, 29.

the role of the hands, phenomenological experience, the agency of the self and the other, etc. have been introduced as a platform for individuation and critique. Moving forward, how have makers, and *this* self, used these aesthetics in a *troubling* making practice?

> Humans in whom gregarious impulses dominate have made humans a self-domesticated species. For it is not the independent, solitary individuals who have imposed a herd leader on them; their own deepest instinct is to subject themselves to one another. The leaders of the human herds—priests and despots—understand these instincts because they share them; they need the dependence of others on them; they depend on the dependent.[312]

[312] Lingis, "Nietzsche and Animals," 9.

PART TWO, ENGAGING IN TROUBLE: CASE STUDY OF AVATARS

Giving More-Than-Identity

> Unlike *the* life of an individual, *a* life is thus necessarily vague or indefinite, and this indefiniteness is real. It is vague in the Peircian sense that the real is itself indeterminate or anexact, beyond the limitations of our capacities to measure it. We thus each have the pre-predicative vagueness of Adam in Paradise that Leibniz envisaged in his letters to Arnauld. We are always *quelconque*—we are and remain 'anybodies' before we become "somebodies."[313]

The self is complicated, flattened, subverted, biased, disingenuous, inconsistent, etc. The self is a construct that the pretext of this work has accepted as a basis for defining the actions of an embodied silhouette. In an act of further clarification through shorthand, the self/other//other/self of avatar thinking may be understood in a *collective* "the WE." Redefining the pronoun of a complex infinitive pronoun, i.e. the subject or the object, removes the inherent dualism and competitive agency for truth and essence. By inhabiting a *troubling subject* of the WE, the self and the other are refuting a bias toward an antagonistic alterity. Pluralism and immanence, embraced as a "panocentrism," inhabits an uncanny supracestral anesthetization of potential Abnatural subjectivity.

The advent of a panocentrism within the WE removes the biopolitical struggle that is inherent to both a panopticon of the visible self/other in an architectural exteriority and panopticism as an unverifiable violence toward the self/other within interiority.[314] In this way, a panocentrism or supracestral conception of an avatar would be an ever-

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[313] John Rajchman, introduction to *Pure Immanence*, 13-14.

[314] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 200-209.

unfolding connectivity without the torturous manifestations of a pseudo-inspector as the self. To deprioritize and deprogram the parameters of the maker, the WE is presented as a decentering around the contextual bounds of subjecthood. With infinite identity politics, and thus none, the self/other implies an other/other through the collective, which will be the foundational churn produced through the second part as T*roubling Subjectivity*.

The WE is a fundamental mode of différance that indexes and extends beyond the self as a plateau through infinite stacking of rhizomes. This aesthetic coupling can be discussed through a contemplation of Bratton's *Stack* and Deleuze and Guattari's *Plateaus* as sets of interdependent machines or as a plethora of intertwined geologies.

In parsing out the ontology of each differentiable and interconnective system, there is the undergirding of an implied world-scale that challenges the Posthuman maker. In this way, there exists a kind of Kosuthian praxis[315] that mandates a suspension of belief and disbelief as a form of critical insistence toward the effect of the WE. As Deleuze and Guattari take on scale via a book and tree, Bratton takes on the entire teleological, socio-cultural, historical flippancies of civilization, "The Stack is an accidental megastructure, one that we are building both deliberately and unwittingly and that in turn is building us in its own image."[316] Computing at a Bogost-Bryant-Morton scale of hyperobject ontologies, Bratton's synthesis of data and architecture provides a generative coherence within a superstructure of Posthuman terminology: *User*, *Interfaces*, *Address*, *City*, *Cloud*, and *Earth*.[317] Unabashedly leaping between Michel

[315] Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After*, ed. Gabriele Guercio (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

[316] Benjamin H. Bratton, "The Stack" *Log* 35 (Fall 2015), 131.

[317] Bratton, 132.

Serres' "tools" and Paul Virilio's "city," Bratton contextualizes a systemic approach to object relations that activates and acknowledges differentiable subjectivity, "The Stack is simultaneously a portrait of the system we have, but perhaps do not recognize, and an antecedent of a future territory."

In this way, stacking does not begrudgingly sift through the self as an operator, inspector, or sovereign agent but allows the User to be a participant in an infinitely complex system of plugged-in objects and machines. Through this reading, Bratton's *Stack* creates an associative system of recombinations, rearticulations, and redistributions of machine ontologies, "each arrangement of those divisions [land, sea, and air] expresses a particular and evolving geometry of sovereign space and a specific topology of segmentation and jurisdiction, and because these orders are unfixed, they are also redesignable."[318] Opportunistic and optimistic, though this gives a strange comedic rarity to data-driven systems in Posthuman discourses, Bratton side-steps Deleuze's "Postscript on the Societies of Control" by engaging in Jean-Luc Goddard's *Alphaville* as critique of the non-descript/data-specific User of Deleuze's paper, "dispersal of authority into hypergranular interfacial fields is the constitutional power; each 'dividual' is cast as a sort of cellular automaton, expressing absolutely specific intentions and instructions for an emerging territory in formation."[319]

The User exists at the scale of the self or other within *and outside* the WE. Indicative, indexical, and indeterminate, the WE fluctuates through teleological and terminological grounding but cannot evade a pluralistic ontology. Rather than shedding

[318] Bratton, "The Stack," 130.
[319] Bratton, 138.

alterous skins, expunging deviations from identity, or unplugging from the Stack, the WE presupposes a collective mentality of the more-than-human self and other that is both contextualized and materializes the stacked system of Bratton. The appearance of the other, via Interface, peers through the User as an interstitial questioning of meta-narratives around the Stack, "We will find in the future the noncitizen may in some ways enjoy certain advantages over the citizen, as infrastructures may not already be preprogrammed to govern that User directly as a formal subject but merely to transact services with her… Or we may not."[320] Uniquely oppressed and entangled, the User of the Stack becomes an unknowable, yet redesignable ontology, which questions the locality of the Stack within the WE.

Deleuze and Guattari set out for an infinitesimal process of connecting with and without *organs*, similar to the Latourian Agent-Network Theory, but through the permeations and distributions of agency that is *embodied*, "We will ask what it [book] functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge."[321] Through the multiplicities of the discrete, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of a book as an organ-less body, yet an assemblage, but without signified or signifier. Thus, a book does and does not possess the sovereignty of language, the knowledge of reading, the act of writing, and the educational requirements to comprehend said literature as a rhizomatic system. Returning to the earlier conventions introduced in "On Grafting," William S.

[320] Bratton, "The Stack," 139.
[321] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.

Burroughs,' introduced by Bratton as well, process of cutting and splicing language, and thereby denying its signage as a convention of the supposed sovereignty, provides Deleuze and Guattari an anecdote for linear and circular knowledge within folded multiplicity, "Whenever a multiplicity is taken up in a structure, its growth is offset by a reduction in its laws of combination."[322] Reductive, yet additive, recombination supposes a similar transmutation as Bratton with different outcomes and a priori rationale.

By reducing the conventions of a book into an object, subject, and agent, the definitive work of a plateau provides the self/avatar, WE, a slippage for distinguishable authenticity and authorship at the rhizomatic-scale. The delamination of immanence, rather than creating a stir of speculation on the ontology of each separate bracketed characteristic of the self, provides a borderline or surface area for grafting. Thus, the WE constitutes an irreducible silhouette of selves that expands beyond a singular network, a knowable dataset, or a data-sensing matrix of consciousness, and is thus a rhizome. The avatar, built into the WE, exists as both the passage of all back doors within The Matrix, from *The Matrix Reloaded*,[323] and the infinite rooms of Hilbert's Hotel Paradox.[324] However, the rhizome, different from Bratton's *Stack*, exists simultaneously as both a decentering structure and an interconnected meshwork of subjects:

> In fact, the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities. Each multiplicity is defined by a borderline functioning as Anomalous, but there is a string of borderlines, a continuous line of borderlines (fiber) following which the multiplicity changes… It is evident that the Anomalous, the Outsider, has several functions: not only does it border each multiplicity, of which it determines the temporary or local stability (with the highest number of dimensions possible

[322] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 6.

[323] *The Matrix Reloaded*, directed by The Wachowskis (2003; Hollywood, CA: Warner Bros), HBO Max.

[324] Kragh, *The True (?) Story of Hilbert's Infinite Hotel*.

> under the circumstances), not only is it the precondition for the alliance necessary to becoming, but it also carries the transformations of becoming or crossings of multiplicities always farther down the line of flight.[325]

Positioning a discourse of avatars in an Abnatural aesthetic, the WE speculates on the creative potential of makers as a more-than-identity-generating machine for future practices, phenomenologies, and subjectivities. Through this processing, the role of multiplying becomes a making practice in-and-of-itself by terraforming the WE. Deleuze and Guattari cite Gregory Bateson in the differentiation between rhizome and plateau, "A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus. Gregory Bateson uses the word 'plateau' to designate something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end."[326]

Thus, unlike the Stack that spoke of the User as agent with definable differentiation and agency within a system, the WE, in a Deleuzian sense, constitutes both an unfixity and panocentrism of assemblages. Where the rhizome exists as an entangled system of environmental assemblages within the Stack, the WE may be understood as a contradictory involution of exterior/exterior through which the self/other becomes a series of transcendental ontologies. In this way, stacking the WE provides an appliqué for grafting between the plateaus as an epistemological ungrounding of identity as a more-than-static silhouette.

The silhouette, then, may be used as a geometric container for further consolidation of these disparate terminologies. The silhouette of the WE implies

[325] Deleuze and Guattari, 249.
[326] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 21-22.

conditions of variation through which the self and the other are contained as avatars. Each avatar, or superset within the WE that is contradictorily irreducible but discrete for the purposes of the metaphor, exists within the Brattonian User as a subject with individuation, contextuality, agency, and is, thus, rhizomatic in its more-than-identity politics. This produces tentacular connections and graft-able surfaces for more-than-human assemblages. However, this is both the ontological whole and the part simultaneously as the introduction of the avatar changes the epistemological edge condition of the self.

The open-system produced in a Deleuzian rhizome exists an infinite set of plateaus that generates a more-than-self and less-than-whole culmination that necessitates an avatar other. The silhouette, through the stack, rhizome, and plateau, exists as the WE plugged-in as a discrete object but then produces an inseparable and irreducible other. Deleuze and Guattari, critical of the nominal definitions of identity as a mere social character through which "it does not even enable us to justify our previous position that redundancy is irreducible to a simple identity,"[327] provide a context for *substantive multiplicities* that refines a panocentrism within the WE:

> Principle of multiplicity: it is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, "multiplicity," that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world. Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomulti-plicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or "return" in the subject. A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows). Puppet strings, as a rhizome or multiplicity, are tied not to the supposed.[328]

[327] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 80.
[328] Deleuze and Guattari, 8.

The amalgam of an alterous multiplicity of subjectivity creates a folded system of centrality and territory. The WE operates as a contradictory both/and through which the critique of the subjective identity as a plateau and as a rhizome dismember the theoretical space through the avatar. With the self being an ever-unfixable multiplicity between, grounding, and terraforming the Stack, the WE decenters the necessity for a monocular logos and reverts/projects into a more-than-identity-generating machine. By disengaging with directionality and authorship, panocentrism informed by substantive multiplicities produces an identity of stacking at both scales of the surface: rhizome and plateau.

One further geometric step, this parts-to-whole/plateaus-to-rhizomes relationship exists as an unresolvable contradiction where parts contain infinite shared data. In this way, it is impossible to compare the units of surface area of a rhizome, with the volume of a stack. Or does this disenfranchise the rhizome as a volume-producing entity where the silhouette is both a photograph and a sculpture in-the-round? Thereby, an indexical equation of the WE decenters the self and abbreviates the other/other/other, which are also selves… as an aleph-self, or א. *Check into the first room of the infinite hallway*. Through Bratton and Deleuze and Guattari, the WE exists as a more-than-identity aesthetic between ipseity and alterity where subjectivity is irreducible, indistinguishable, and ever-becoming. Thus, avatars are not discovered, nor generated, nor separated, nor identifiable, but exist within the silhouette as a more-than-self *x* that contextualize a plateau and rhizome that infinitely folds territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization.

Transitioning into a mode of synthesis, application, and evaluation, avatars, as a case study on the more-than-self, become an aesthetic locale for the simultaneous de/re- of integrated ontology. The omni- present/scient/directional characteristics of the *x* within the WE produces the *trouble* that will continually emerge as a consequence of the maker. First, an avatar as a representation, replacement, and reinterpretation of the self/other through signature, the thesis will lean into films, *Avatar*, The *Wife* and *Big Eyes*, to continue the metaphysical denial and dilemma of the female as the first avatar. Then, the inverse of disembodied through re-speculation of appropriative discourses in the Warhol-Sturtevant debate will provide the avatar as a phygital plateau/rhizome. Finally, Dr. Frankenstein's assemblage presents a more-than-identity reading of the Straussian *raw* and *cooked* as a position for makers and avatars.

An avatar, as a subject/subjectivity/identity, within film debates typically begin with the namesake connection to the James Cameron film *Avatar*.[329] Though a justified argument can be made that this is a mere Posthuman riff off of the animated classic *FernGully*,[330] the film veers into an extractive colonial warzone that deepens an economic and socio-cultural draw. The protagonist of the series, Jake Sully, presents a unique challenge to the role and conception of avatar embodiment. Injured in combat as a Marine then brought to Pandora as a paraplegic veteran, Jake's off-world struggles are only initiated through his happenstance DNA-match with his recently deceased twin, Dr. Tom Sully. Thus, the embedded consciousness that Jake activates within the blue-bodied

[329] *Avatar*, directed by James Cameron (2009; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Studios), Disney Plus.

[330] *FernGully: The Last Rainforest*, directed by Bill Kroyer (1992; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Studios), Amazon Prime.

Na'vi is both the regaining of lost bodily agency and the reconstitution of a missing twin's consciousness. Though a total recounting of the plot blurs the metaphor of an avatar, the Na'vi people's Tree of Souls, ironically similar to the imagery used in Deleuze and Guattari's representation of plateaus and rhizomes,[331] folds the human mind into the Na'vi body as an irreducible embodiment of the other. The remainder of the film, and following films in the series, see Jake become an integral part of the Na'vi people even becoming the chief of the Omaticaya in *Avatar: The Way of Water*.[332]

It is impossible to glance over the exoticism and white savior complex[333] that find Jake the head of the *others* after defeating the antagonistic warmonger Colonel Miles Quaritch. The inherent ableism also indicates a stickiness that problematizes the role of the pseudo-now-embedded Na'vi avatar as a complex for salvation and rewriting identity rather than contend with the *troubling* complexities from the initial world-building of the film. In this way, *Avatar* presents the fear introduced in the previous chapter, "Beyond the Self." By characterizing the other as a less-than-self skin to be appropriated, Jake Sully becomes the righteous subject that leads the fight, has the family, and defends a white-Christian-nationalist agenda hidden behind pseudo-anti-capitalism.

In this critique, an avatar seen as a more-than-self must be unhindered by the prejudices of the socio-cultural *nomos*. Continuing the work of Hayles, Braidotti, and Haraway, the female, to recount the missing assimilation and overall non-distinction from the male in scientific study,[334] can be understood as an avatar. Culturally weaponized,

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[331] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 5.

[332] *Avatar: The Way of Water*, directed by James Cameron, (2022; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Studios), Disney Plus.

[333] Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 61-62.

[334] Wright and Foerder, "The Missing Female Homunculus."

socially demarcated, and identity laden, the identity of a non-male begins another branch of an avatar study within film. *The Wife*[335] and *Big Eyes*[336] contest with a similar storyline that produces a dominating male-subject within the film that extracts the talent and products of the female-subject for an appropriative recontextualization. Whether painting or writing, the male, and in both cases the husband, receives the world-renowned success for the work produced off of the other, or the wife.

Glenn Close, in *The Wife*, and Amy Adams, in *Big Eyes*, present different reveals of their work throughout either film. The storied life and turmoil of a marriage built on infidelity and deception, *The Wife* follows Joan and Joseph Castleman's road to a Nobel Peace Prize. Where Joseph receives the awarded grandeur, revels, and status, Joan exists as the introverted ghostwriter called a muse. Transitioning between the origin of their relationship at Smith College, obviously a married-professor meets a promising-student, and their travel to Stockholm for the award, a biographer, Nathaniel, and the couple's son, David, are presented as intermittent strangers to challenge the couple's writing fallacy. Close's Joan, though frustrated by her brilliance being capped-off as nothing more than a source of inspiration for Joseph, refuses to reveal the true nature of her avatar/self as the *actual* writer and Nobel Prize-winning author. Even after Joseph's climactic death in Stockholm, the return flight with the son and biographer illustrate the depths of Joan's denial at dematerializing and reducing the subjectivity of the Castleman name. Never confessing her hand in the act of writing, Joan's son, a struggling writer that

[335] *The Wife*, directed by Björn Runge, (2018; Los Angeles, CA: Sony Pictures Classics), Amazon Prime.

[336] *Big Eyes*, directed by Tim Burton, (2014; New York, NY: The Weinstein Company), Netflix.

seeks the approval of *only* the father, witnesses the complexity of the avatar as ghostwriter in the final sequence of the film.

Amy Adams' Margaret Keane in *Big Eyes* presents a more glaring form of erasure, oppression, and revelation. Meeting as painters then marrying to avoid the loss of custody of a child from a prior marriage, Margaret and Walter Keane are presented as struggling artists with different aesthetics and drives of character. With the scene of a club as a backdrop for the onset of a lie, Walter, played by Christoph Waltz, sees dollar signs with the sale of his wife's painting misrepresented as his own. Through the *troubling* switch of authorship, where Margaret paints and Walter signs and sells out of the newly afforded gallery space, greed interjects as an invisible socio-cultural trope that permits the selling of cheaper and cheaper reproductions of Margarets work. Dissolving the identity of the husband, Margaret finds that the works, originally thought to be done by Walter, were erased, claimed, and re-signed from an anonymous "S. CENIC." Similar to *The Wife*, the female lead is forced to lie to their child at the behest of a charade for the totality of the self/other/avatar as the signature must be irrefutable and irreducible from the ontology of the man. The final sequence, unlike *The Wife*, gives notoriety to Margaret as a court-ensued paint-off reveals the hidden hand behind the paintings with the signature big eyes.

Both films highlight a steadfast dedication to the art of lying to all but the self/other. The signature of the male, or the socio-culturally dominant self, must be upheld while the female, or the socio-culturally other/avatar, identity is denied agency and *only* granted the ability to continue as long as the work identifies the male/self as the maker. *What fragile ontology*. In this highlighted erasure, the oppression from the self

denies the other subjectivity but becomes dependent and irreducible from the acts of the maker as other. Consequently, the avatar, in both cases the wives, are manipulated into alterous distancing from the work and from the celebrations of the socio-cultural ipseity. The more-than-self identity comes from within the silhouette of choice that either allows the appropriative behavior of the self/man or recontextualizes the work as being embodied by the other. In this way, the maker is given the unique position of being both interior and exterior to the socio-cultural nomos by being misrepresented in signature. Further, the infinite alterity that is *already* persistent to a female body, up until at least the present-day while both films claim to have begun this objectification in the fictional 1960's, creates an exterior-exterior folding of identity where the avatar is both a rhizome and a plateau through practices of making.

Beyond the fictional and into the annals of Art History, Elaine Sturtevant, or *just* Sturtevant, converts these cinematic imaginings into an appropriation-based practice that challenges the identity of the male-dominated texts of 20th century art. Contextualizing Sturtevant's bewilderment with the Warhol enigma, Andy must be materialized as an entity for appropriating. The Factory, or the Warhol-production machine, constitutes an affect and aesthetic of a Mid-Century or Postmodern Art History where the hand and identity of the head are irreducible, yet oppositional, to the body and the organs. The flocking of visitors, potential friends, partygoers, The Velvet Underground, would-be shooters, and studio assistants, the Factory constituted a cultural machine for making.[337]

[337] Jonathan Jones, "15 Minutes," *The Guardian* (February 11, 2002). https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2002/feb/12/artsfeatures.warhol.

In wake of the debaucherous tidings and infusions of creative expression, Sturtevant identified the appropriation of another subsequent appropriator, Warhol's *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn* (fig. 11), as a form of practice. Performing and entangling with the other/other, Sturtevant's *Study for Warhol's Marilyn* (fig. 12) exists as a critical foundation for avatar-thinking that both signifies and decentralizes the self/other simultaneously:

> Sturtevant's appropriation of the Warhol Marilyn began just a few weeks after Warhol debuted the series. Warhol's Marilyn was, in turn, itself appropriation of an existing photo of the actress. To make her versions of the work, Sturtevant conferred with Warhol's assistants and even borrowed some of his silkscreens. Warhol once claimed Sturtevant knew his screening process better than the artist himself: when asked how he made his work, the Pop phenom replied, "Ask Elaine."[338]



Figure 11. Andy Warhol, *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn*, 1964, Acrylic and Silkscreen Ink on Linen, Private Collection, https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6369449.

[338] "Why This 'Marilyn' by The Conceptual Artist Sturtevant Challenges Notions of Authorship and Authenticity," *Artnet* (November 12, 2020). https://news.artnet.com/partner-content/artnet-auctions-marilyn-by-sturtevant-1965.



Figure 12. Sturtevant, *Study for Warhol's Marilyn*, 1965, Acrylic and Screenprint Ink on canvas, Private Collection, https://news.artnet.com/partner-content/artnet-auctions-marilyn-by-sturtevant-1965.

Using the tools of the other, in this case Warhol, but producing a simultaneously indistinguishable and independent object, Sturtevant's practice presupposes an alterity that blurs the ontology of a maker. Where does the *hand* lie? Is this not a mode of

repetition, duplication, or mechanical reproduction?[339] Instead, the self/other/avatar of the maker adapts and activates subjectivity to challenge the rhizomatic structure of the signature by dismantling the self/other dichotomy, "More often her work was a variation on a theme: a meditation, not an imitation. Illusion wasn't the point; action was, the gesture of shaping something new but different and related from something else."[340] In this way, Sturtevant highlights differentiation by assembling and entangling the avatar within the known as a technique for identifying the self, "The new art was theory-based and dematerializing. Hers was personal and object-intensive, an art of both self-projection and self-erasure through the medium of handmade things."[341]

Sturtevant's signature also alludes to a forecasting of the Warhol dilemma. Similar to the rewriting of the Picasso narrative through eras, Sturtevant and Warhol both de/re-contextualize their work through the longevity of their practice where teleologically and epistemologically the signature of the hand mutates along with the unfixable self.

Zooming-in on the appropriating/appropriated, Warhol's articulation of the self/other/avatar, which this text has shortened as the WE, continues to produce anomalous relationships through the autobiographical, historical, and fantasied recounting of a subjectivity. *Troublingly*, the book and Netflix documentary, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*,[342] continue to opacify *a life*.[343] Between ghost writer, biographer, therapist, transcriber, and friend, Warhol confided in The Factory Member, Pat Hackett,

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[339] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

[340] Holland Cotter, "Taking Copycatting to a Higher Level," *New York Times* (November 13, 2014). https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/14/arts/sturtevant-double-trouble-a-career-retrospective-at-moma.html?smid=url-share.

[341] Cotter, 3.

[342] *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, directed by Andrew Rossi, Release March 9, 2022, https://www.netflix.com/title/81026142.

[343] Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*.

from 1976-1987 via conversations and phone calls about his life. Two years after his "not-so-simple gallbladder surgery" had left ended his life,[344] *The Warhol Diaries* were compiled and published in 1989 by Hackett.[345] Where the reveal of autobiographical data would typically provide details, descriptions, and derailment of persona, Warhol's art and text proved just as "notoriously indeterminate" as the self, "Warhol *is* the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction."[346]

Rather than monumentalizing each of the individual works of Warhol, the scenes from the Factory, the partnership with Edie Sedgwick, the rockstar-friends like Lou Reed, etc., the Netflix docuseries slips into a phygital pitfall that further contextualizes the improbable and inconceivable bounding box of the Warholian WE:

> For me Ronald Reagan and Andy Warhol, they were two-sides of the same late 20th century American coin. Andy Warhol was the avatar of the 1960's counterculture. He was the symbol, the icon. He was the prophet of that, and the starting point of 80's culture was the election of Ronald Reagan.[347]

Where is Andy? What, who, and where rests beyond the WE for Warhol? With countless interviews and reflections by friends narrated through a voice-over of Andy, performed by Bill Irwin and run through an AI-voice generating machine, Resemble AI,[348] the series takes on an uncanny hauntological affect. Permitting the sounds of

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[344] Blake Gopnik, "Andy Warhol's Death: Not So Simple, After All," *New York Times* (February 21, 2017). https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/21/arts/design/andy-warhols-death-not-so-routine-after-all.html.

[345] Louis Menand, "The Very Public Private Life of Andy Warhol," *The New Yorker* (April 20, 2022). https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-very-public-private-life-of-andy-warhol.

[346] Menand, 6.

[347] Bob Colacello, "The Andy Warhol Diaries, E3, A Double Life: Andy & Jon." Interview by Andrew Rossi, Netflix. 13:32–13:50.

[348] Angela Watercutter, "Why The Andy Warhol Diaries Recreated the Artist's Voice With AI," *Wired* (March 9, 2022). https://www.wired.com/story/andy-warhol-diaries-artificial-intelligence-voice/.

Warhol by the Andy Warhol Foundation, which again politicizes and catalogs the infinitely tentacular WE, the series confronts a Warholian praxis of technology. Thus, the infinitesimal sounds, images, and documents of Warhol are reincarnated through the voice-over and creates a nuanced tone for the work. With a similar hero-status and cavalier-spirit, Morgan Neville's 2021 biopic of Anthony Bourdain, *Roadrunner*,[349] attempted a similar feat but received a combative differentiation toward authorship and likeness from the uncanny usage of Bourdain's voice:

> In the Bourdain documentary, the words the AI speaks were actually written by the late chef, but there aren't real recordings of him saying them. For *Diaries*, Warhol did once speak all the things the AI Andy says—he told them to Hackett—but they weren't recorded at the time. Do these caveats make a difference? Both of those documentaries used AI because their subjects were deceased. Presumably, there would be a different set of ethical concerns if they were living. What if it wasn't just the voices that were recreated? What if their likenesses were, too?[350]

Tangential to this writing, the socio-cultural ethics of artificiality continue to trace the hands as an insurmountable praxis of distinction. Even for Warhol's machine and Bourdain's post-*Kitchen Confidential*[351] life on film, the self, not the other, rests at a preferential trajectory for embodiment as it selectively chooses a monocular human essence and ontology. Evidence, like the photographed documentation of a Civil War scene, still requires a frame for manipulating data sets, making decisions, or connecting at an interpersonal level with the media. *Or does it?* Even after death, publishing, and hundreds of millions of dollars of sales, Warhol's silhouette continues to challenge the

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[349] *Roadrunner: A Film About Anthony Bourdain*, directed by Morgan Neville (2021; New York, NY: Focus Features), Amazon Prime.

[350] Watercutter, "Why The Andy Warhol Diaries Recreated the Artist's Voice With AI," 5.

[351] Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confessions* (New York: Ecco, 2007).

conventions of machine-thinking and a practice of making whether that be the products or Warhol as *a life*, "But that doesn't mean there aren't still many unanswered questions about when it is and isn't acceptable to recreate someone's voice with a machine."[352]

Now, a crashing convoluted catastrophe commences within the intertwined WE. With the nomos of the socio-cultural, the fears of an extractive colonialism that oppresses the other, and a post-Čapekian/Asimovian fear of machines, the WE must be given a reprieve that arises through a making-culture grafted on Bourdanian and Childean temporality: Culinary Arts. The making of any *x* requires a production, a technique, a point of departure, thus, the *trouble* emerges within the threshold of no-return. Careful not to limit the potential practice of the WE, the exceptions from a defined set of codices allow the process of cooking and reincarnating to be fruitful metaphors for further dissections of an aesthetic point of making, or making at the scale of life, an avatar.

Cooking curates an irreversible chemical change, or a differentiable moment where the bonds, bounds, and essences shift to something that was impossible a priori. Reading Deleuze alongside Claude Lévi-Strauss' *The Raw and the Cooked*,[353] the *trouble* implicit in this study arises in the moment at/after *a life* diverges into tentacular and elastic identities that contain acculturated conceptions irreversible after a threshold. For Lévi-Strauss, the foundation of grammar and "lexical" terminology confront a cultural turn toward the bias of the narrator, reader, and individual perceiver of the myth, "The more partial the transformation of the message, the more blurred the initial lexical material tends to become, so that it is made unrecognizable when the transformation

[352] Watercutter, 5.

[353] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John Weightman and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

process brings the messages back to a state of identity."[354] In such, the use of parable, myth, and story curate an identity that is both embedded in the flesh and cooked into the identity core of the self/other. Similarly, misreading, cross-pollinating, and grafting across surfaces materialize an affective change that aesthetically seals the other with the self. Thus, Lévi-Strauss introduces the "raw" as a natural essence that is converted into a material through acculturation, process, and ontological processing:

> It is thus confirmed that the Ge myths about the origin of fire, like the Tupi-Guarani on the same theme, function in terms of a double contrast: on the one hand, between what is raw and what is cooked, and on the other, between the fresh and the decayed. The raw/cooked axis is characteristic of culture; the fresh/decayed one of nature, since cooking brings about the cultural transformation of the raw, just as putrefaction is its natural transformation.[355]

Within contradictions of the double contrast, stacking, retaining, and transforming while attempting to break the bounds of socio-cultural extents, the identity of the WE must be demonstrated from a chef's point of view to fully illustrate the infinite planes of impossibly laminated and discrete ontologies and essences. An abrupt aside is needed to mention *The Futurist Cookbook*[356] and *The Anarchist Cookbook*[357] as long as a mention of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*[358] is also included in the discourse on absolution, identity politics, and culinary/non-culinary identity. Critically, an Abnatural aesthetic exists between these three "manifestos" as a process with personalization. *How much*

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[354] Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, 212.
[355] Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, 142
[356] Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook*, trans. Suzanne Brill (New York: Bedford Arts, 1991).
[357] William Powell, *The Anarchist Cookbook* (New York: Barricade Books, 1971).
[358] Julia Child, Louisette Bertholle, and Simone Beck, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (New York: Knopf, 2001).

butter is necessary for mom's version of the Bifteck Sauté au Beurre?[359] Similarly, the preference and dimensionality of the *x* of an Abnatural discourse may be seen as a rupturing of the socio-cultrual acceptance of normalcy, or the cultured palate. Returning to identity with an acknowledgement toward cooking as a facility beyond eating for precedent, an Abnatural aesthetic, as a practice of making and critiquing identity, can also provide a post-structural manual toward cooking and making through decentralization tactics that delaminate the WE by expressing the extents of each self/other/avatar. In this way, the *x* of each identity within and beyond the WE exists at the crux of the frozen leg of lamb in Roald Dahl's "Lamb to the Slaughter."[360]

Mary Maloney has murdered her husband, but "Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all."[361] Murderous weapon, delicious meal, and purified and exonerated in the same process, the cleverness of Dahl must not usurp the function of the character's process to cleanse the hands. Roasting the evidence, dematerializing the action, evading attention through the persona of innocence, the identity of the killer is never found as the perception of the other, as the self of Mrs. Maloney, is never revealed to the unsuspecting officers. In the same fold, the WE allows for a speculative more-than-identity as it is *always* an impossible departure where erasure and withdrawal reveal an indeterminacy beyond the self. Even from the self, the cooking of a lamb is an ever-present phenomenon of denials,

[359] Child, Bertholle, and Beck, 292-293.

[360] Roald Dahl, "Lamb to the Slaughter," *Collected Short Stories of Roald Dahl* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992).

[361] Dahl, 458.

unforeseen consequences, and unknowable moments that forever change the silhouette of the WE.

The *x* is both the object/agency of desire and irreconcilability, but in all cases leads back to an infinitely indexical forking through which identity cultivates a more-than-more-than-more-than… a priori. The WE attempts *uncooking* as much as it is activated through *cooking*. Like freezer burn on food lost in the abyss of the ice chest, identity absorbs the adjacent flavors of the self/other/avatar. Thus, the chemical nuance, the ontological-epistemological-teleological shifting of *troubling identities* lie in all phases of cooking: planting, gardening, harvesting, transporting, stocking, meal preparation, dinner service, cooking, plating, serving, eating, digesting, boxing, driving home, leaving abandoned in the fridge, eventual consumption, decomposition, excretion, repetition, etc. With this cyclical indeterminacy where the socio-cultural bombardment does change the flavor, Morton returns to ask, is this not an agrilogistical machine *still*? Beyond cooking, identity also provides productive metaphors toward an Abnatural beyond the natural as an *x* of humorous analogy, "The gluten-free phenomenon is a magic bullet solution to modernity. 'Gluten' sounds abject and glutinous, and it is found in wheat: agriculture as sin, just like Genesis says. Such an allergic reaction of modernity to itself is absurd: even Neanderthals made bread."[362]

A final parable on acculturation, cooking, and identity, *Frankenstein*[363] assimilates the myth and the bricolage of Lévi-Strauss as a modality for a both/and of the raw and cooked, "We have seen that there are analogies between mythical thought on the

[362] Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 40.
[363] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003).

theoretical, and 'bricolage' on the practical plane and that artistic creation lies mid-way between science and these two forms of activity."[364]

Between Lévi-Strauss' myth and the socio-cultural divide of theory and practice, Dr. Frankenstein's process that births and identifies a non-natural other also exists as a perpetual source of sorrow and conviction, "This was my doing! And my father's woe, and the desolation of that late so smiling home–all was the work of my thrice-accursed hands!"[365] Prior to the *hands* being the root of all evil, the mind of the WE from within Dr. Frankenstein sets forth upon the pitfalls of a more-than-identity that were discussed in the previous chapter "Beyond the Self." In a procedure for scripting nature and giving an identity toward an unknowable other, Dr. Frankenstein produces a contradiction within the WE where the alterous other, as a ready-made object, uproots the making register of the maker. This fronts a theoretical-mythological arrogance and subsides in a pitfall of assimilation that guides the remainder of the young scholar's life, "So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein–more, far more, will I achieve: treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation."[366]

Existing in a perpetual state of making without extents, Dr. Frankenstein, as a maker, flaunts with the possibility of *decooking* identity, "The untaught peasant beheld the elements around him, and was acquainted with their practical uses. The most learned philosopher knew little more. He had partially unveiled the face of Nature, but her

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[364] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. George Weidenfeld (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966).

[365] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 79.

[366] Shelley, 42.

immoral lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery,"[367] but falls short of an Abnatural aesthetic toward *x* and decentralizing the WE through the narcissism that ensues, "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs."[368]

Lévi-Strauss, adjacent to the throes of ethos and myth, should find Dr. Frankenstein as a "bricoleur" through the protagonist's ability to differentiate between the advent of conceptualizing thought and manifesting the resultant:

> Further, the "bricoleur" also, and indeed principally, derives his poetry from the fact that he does not confine himself to accomplishment and execution: he "speaks" not only with things, as we have already seen, but also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities. The "bricoleur" may not ever complete his purpose but he always puts something of himself into it. Mythical thought appears to be an intellectual form of 'bricolage' in this sense also. Science as a whole is based on the distinction between the contingent and the necessary, this being also what distinguishes event and structure.[369]

This structural mythos of science and story create a constant slippage of the WE for Dr. Frankenstein. Existing as both determinant student and enlightenment blasphemer, Dr. Frankenstein's dualism is made most notable in the flickering reminders of friends and family, "I then reflected, and the thought made me shiver, that the creature whom I had left in my apartment might still be there, alive, and walking about. I dreaded to behold this monster; but I feared still more that Henry should see him."[370] As with all

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[367] Shelley, 35.
[368] Shelley, 48.
[369] Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 21.
[370] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 54.

makers and rather humanistically to throw off the suspicions of a socio-cultural folly, the reveal toward another other rests with the immediacy of shame and unholy identity. Thus, *Frankenstein* continues to exist as a third space between raw and cooked, as a kind of ceviche, marinade, salt-bake, or curing process through which the becoming of an identity is unresolvable. The yearning for partnership, the qualms of singularity, and the misunderstanding of authorship, the work exudes an immortality due to the protagonist's irreverence toward "a nature" as *a life*.

Folding, feasting, and fasting, the WE constitutes its own identity, toward *x*, as a more-than-identity politics of the self/other/avatar exist as an ever-assimilating, ever-becoming, and ever-producing *mereology*. Parts as wholes, wholes as parts, etc. persist in flattening discourses around dualistic dichotomies, but what if this mereological system converges within the WE as a site of grafting for/from the self/other/avatar?

To converge at the universal-scale, the WE must be contradictorily broken down into a case study of parts, wholes, partial-wholes, and ontological-parts in a machine-oriented ontology. Though this deconstructs the advents of the previous chapters, the dissection of each case study will revolve around a critique of individual breakages. In such, where do these ruptures of a monocular self provide dimensions for makers, and, more importantly, how have they been put to use by makers historically? *How do these techniques translate to maker as a theoretician, practitioner, educator, and beyond?*

> The world and life are one.
> I am my world. (The microcosm.)
> The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing.
> If I wrote a book "The world as I found it," I should also
> have therein to report on my body and say which members
> obey my will and which do not, etc. This then would be a

method of isolating the subject or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could not be made.
The subject does not belong to the world but it is a limit of the world.
Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted?[371]

[371] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C.K. Ogden (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1999), 89.

> In our time the alienated artist almost inevitably is made to serve the instrumental world of serviceable disposability, but what room is there for the genuinely free artist, and in the name of what kind of transcendence would he create? Adorno is silent. If there is transcendence, perhaps it is finally beyond all images, like Yahweh, and hence the highest image of transcendence is no image of transcendence. No image is the image.[372]

Why Robots? Why Fashion? Why Abnatural? Why Avatars? How many Avatars? The unscrupulousness of the always arising questions strike the angelic chords of an identity folded within the WE. The self, *my* self/other/avatars, or, more accurately, *my* WE should be briefly told before leaping into an alien subjectivity.

Not to compare traumas, physical ailments, or undermine the identity of other makers, *I* found resonance, as a maker, with the storied illness of Yinka Shonibare and the shooting of Andy Warhol. Rather than speculating on how this affected their practice or transitioning this into a philosophical-scale comparative analytic, the resonation the WE felt with these makers provides a blanket of nuance that gave and continues to give *me* the courage to pursue "a life" of making.

A common trope of a former athlete, the triptych of injury, contract, or retirement left *me* under the knife from a career-ending injury brought on by both a birth-defective spine and a happenstance "freak accident." Rods, screws, bone paste, and fusions ensued that all act as a terminological mythologizing of the body as a full-scale architectural model. Objectively, or consciously for it still baffles the mind in memory, ignored for the

[372] Desmond, *Art, Origins, Otherness*, 286.

better part of a decade, the braces, the walking poles, and the pain were expunged from daily thought as a mechanism for healing via omission. Until Los Angeles.

On a graduate-architecture tour of the SCI-Arc facilities in February of 2018, *I* took an afternoon to go to The Geffen, a former police garage turned branch of the MoCA in Los Angeles, to unexpectedly see a life-changing exhibition, Adrián Villar Rojas' *The Theater of Disappearance*.[373] A greater analysis of these works will be critiqued in the "*x* Toward Apoptosis" chapter of this writing, but it must be understood that there is a singular moment that the WE can reflect back upon as an awakening rather than an enlightenment. A further aside prior to the retroactive historicization, *I* and *me* are pre-avatar terminologies that have been used to define the pretextual relationship one may have with themselves while "the WE" presents the identity of the self/other/avatar as a condition of multiplicitous identity that grounds the present for an Abnatural aesthetic. Back to Los Angeles, the work unpacked a deep-seeded invisibility within the self as a stirring, bubbling, oozing otherness that was always present within the self. Thus, intuitively and consequently, the tour of a Thom Mayne-Frank Gehry Institution led to *my* absolute alterity by chasing the WE at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

As discussed in the earlier chapter "Yet Awakening," *I felt like Inspector Gadget*. Where Kanye West and Virgil Abloh collide, "I feel like Pablo when I'm workin' on my shoes,"[374] the *I* found a mechanical glitch that has become the "Neuron Synapse Amplifier"[375] within an Abnatural aesthetic of avatar-based practice. Otherness, only now

[373] Adrián Villar Rojas, *The Theater of Disappearances* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2017).

[374] Kanye West, "No More Parties in LA," 2016, Track 17 on *The Life of Pablo*, Roc-A-Fella Records, GOOD Music, and Def Jam Recordings, Spotify.

[375] *Inspector Gadget*, directed by David Kellogg.

located within *my* self, produces a further filter of nonhuman hands upon the recollection of the robot-assisted surgery. Thanks to Dr. Isador Lieberman and the team at the Texas Back Institute, the monocular *I* became the multitudinous WE as an introduction to a more-than-human ontology. Again, not to compare this injury to the permanent condition that continues to effect Shonibare or to dilute the post-traumatic stress of Warhol, the phenomenological shift of an other within the self produced a series of questions, i.e. "Am *I* More-than Human?" that informed *my* first exhibition of avatars, *Patient #148685* (fig. 13). This identity of self/other-ness spilled into a series of group and solo exhibitions with differentiable signatures, media sources, and information pulls that left the WE contending with a pseudo-agency of dominant subjectivity. *Who is in charge? Who critiques the work? Who has the final say? Who signs their name?*

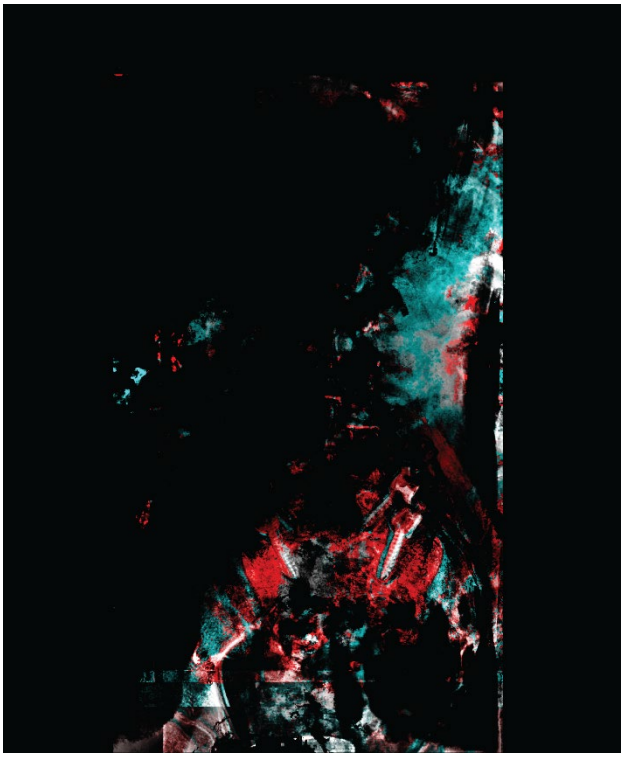


Figure 13. AnArtistNamedBen, *Patient #148685 (Side #7)*, 2018, Digital Collage on Acetate, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Image Provided by the Maker.

Hoping to circumnavigate these questions without a language to manifest a path of différance and to further articulate the silhouette of the self/other, an avatar-based practice emerged as a fluid etymology of non/de/re-becoming where the nonhuman other *within* the self prompted questions of robot ontologies, preferences, and wearables. By stripping the bias of the self from the maker, a plethora of provocations arose as a series of trans-national robot-fashion avatars designed for and by the nonhuman body. Thus, the fashion collective FASHIONisBS, or {FiBS}, emerged as a dis-paragonical assemblage that both designed robot models and an ethic/aesthetic of robot culture. Each other/other member of the collective (*Model + Animation Team*: Daniel Eynon, Emily Majors, and Paul McCoy; *Photo + Film Team*: Ben Creech, Jacob Sarahson, and Sherman White; *Marketing Team*: Sephorah Belizor, Jeanelle Fernandez, and Nolan Summerhill; *Audio Team*: Tyler Nechamkin as TNTM and Sohnos Rex) contended with a series of robot questions around aesthetics, epistemology, philosophy, and canonical precedents:

> *What would a robot want to look like? Act like? Would an ai replicate human dress and actions? What is the desired silhouette of the robotic culture?*
>
> *What is the relationship of humans to robots? Is it respectful or is it domineering? Is it beautiful, horrifying, simple, incomprehensible?*
>
> *Are there tasks that humans have to have robots for? Are there tasks that robots have to have humans for? Does this make one subservient to another or equally positioned?*
>
> *What is the stage between the ai synthetic and conscious transfer? Is there an uncanniness in the resistance to death and disembodiment, or is that the most human thing to try to defy death?*
>
> *What would be created by a vast, categorically obscene shift in the landscape without pausing for reconciliation? What if new technology was so advanced that skipping over disbelief is inherent?*

What typologies of current, past, and future articles would be created artificially if humanity were subjugated to flattening time? At what point is this classicism versus appropriation?

What is minutia to us and impossible for robots? What does it mean to smile loathe, weep, beg, etc. to a robot?

Where are the joints? Points of weakness? Points of shame? Emphasis? What does it mean to sexualize a non-biological thing?

Is there a desire for replaceability and planned obsolescence within the fashion article? Would a robot desire changing clothes? What is the purpose of changing clothes if sweat and body odor are null and void?

What is the scale of the robot wardrobe? What defines the clothes worn versus body embellishment selected?[376]

The {FiBS} collective created a set of 5 models/body-types/others/robots: Walking, Sensing, Learning, Flying, and Hovering. These each represent a distance (of *x*) from an animalia-self as a draft of the explorations that the other could generate through the decentering human bias as a precondition for the self/other, the body/fashion, the culture/wild, the robot/nonhuman, etc. These contradictory paradoxes, as the self can never be fully withdrawn from its inherent bounds as discussed previously through Lévi-Strauss' raw and cooked, provided a delamination process through which a series of images, graphics, conversations, stylings, and videos emerged. The first of which, as a collaboration between the *I* of Ben and the *I* of Paul, contested with the idea of dance and performance as a codex of aesthetics for an eventual robot culture. As a pre/post-language, ballet proved to be a whetstone for an historical and a-historical slippage where the robot *could decide* to erase, conform, and omit human culture when prescribing a

[376] Ben Schoenekase to the FiBS Collective, memorandum, "Welcome to {FiBS}" March 3, 2019, Document Provided by {FiBS}.

robot ballet. *Would French be necessary? Are the positions retained from the Joffrey to {FiBS}? What would a robot aesthetic introduce to the perceptions of performance, beauty, elegance, shape, silhouette? Are any of those possible?* At Pratt's Siegel Gallery, a show entitled "Aesthetics of Prosthetics" showed the first work from the {FiBS} collective, *Chassé* and *Entrechat* (fig. 14).

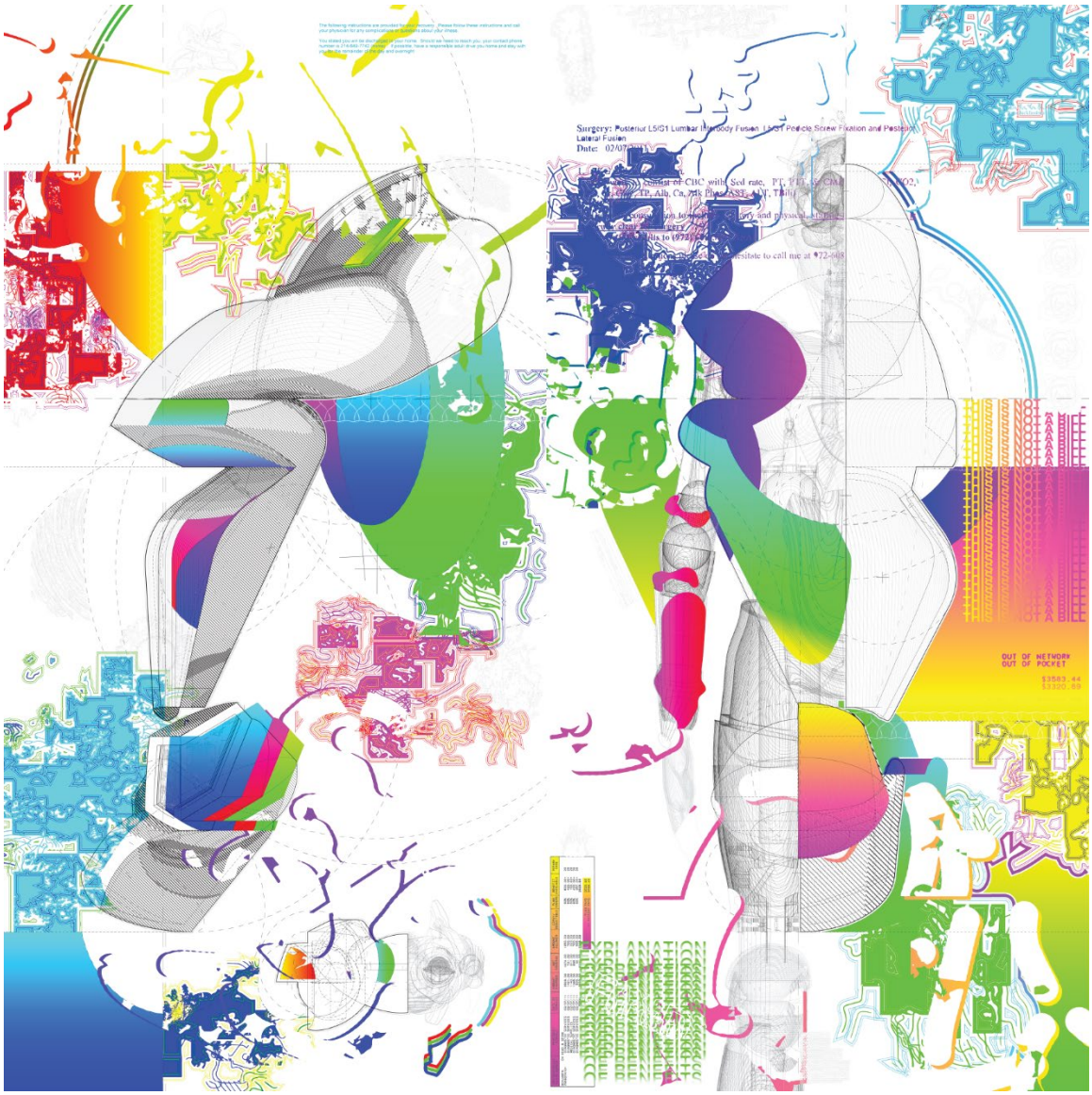


Figure 14. Ben Schoenekase and Paul McCoy, *Chassé* and *Entrechat*, 2019, Mixed Media on Acetate, Pratt Institute, Image Provided by Maker(s).

Falling, tracing, highlighting, expunging, othering, becoming, etc., the {FiBS} collective continued toward an aesthetic defined by the desire to produce alterity. Next, the collective assembled an animated film/fashion show "by and for the robots" as the culmination of decentering the human for the nonhuman as maker. *IASFTOH SSMMXX* (fig. 15) was produced as a repeatable fashion show for the Spring/Summer 2020 season. Touring in Harvard GSD's Kirkland Gallery as part of Version Control 1.0 to the Fashion Department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 16), {FiBS} pushed toward a phygital aesthetic that *allowed* human interaction from the subjectivity of the robot, rather than ascribe a series of mandates that prioritized human sovereignty.

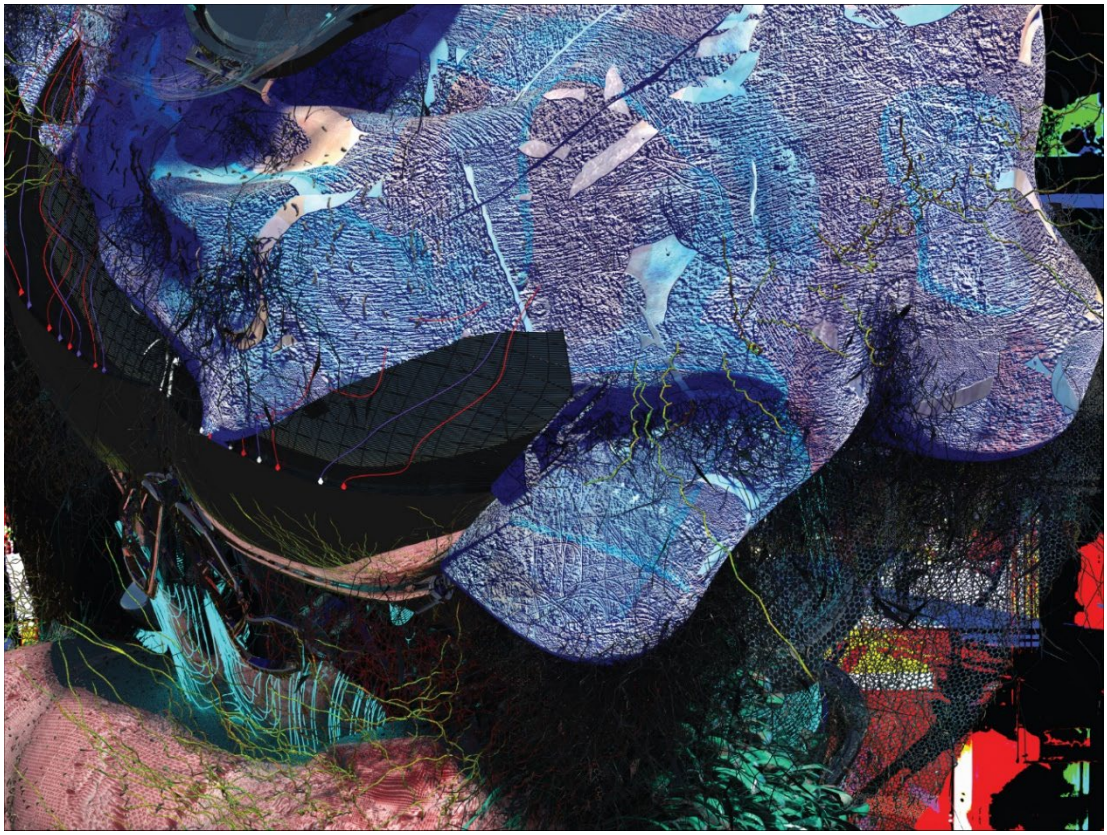


Figure 15. {FiBS}, *IASFTOH SSMMXX, Tucker D (Houston-1)*, 2019, Digital, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Image Provided by Maker(s).



Figure 16. {FiBS}, *IASFTOH SSMMXX Poster*, 2019, Digital on Paper, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Image Provided by Maker(s).

Fruitful, fictional, and full of mystery, {FiBS} "closed" in response to a pandemic loss of research funding. The *next* project to be continued, as planned obsolescence will be discussed in future chapters as a question of apoptosis toward avatar-identities-as-practice, begins a series of questions on neotenous design to start conversations on robot maturation, planned obsolescence, life/death practices, and *a life* beyond life.

Troublingly, this subjectivity exists as a virus in the silhouette. An existence left unresolved and continually mutating, recomposing, and reemerging in different outcomes and procedures. Aside from the anticipation of the next othering of the other, {FiBS} provides a paragonical switch that rationalizes a Deleuzian folded ontology through set-theory and multiplication.

By deprioritizing critique and the implied human self, the robot, as an other, produces a magnetic exteriority due to the contradictory human/nonhuman disjunction. A precondition to the collective, as seen in the questions that produced fundamental aesthetics for the *IASFTOH SSMMXX*, is the repulsion toward interiority as an acceptance of the socio-cultural formulas of human civilization. Thus, fighting their own ontology, the makers, as robots and avatars, produced a perceived impossibility that can be metaphorically understood as an aesthetic jump toward an Abnatural *x* of the other. Breaking down extents, through the infinitely expanding WE, led to greater extents as an ever-becoming process toward the other that divides itself from the self or other. By introducing disexpertise and the non-identity of an "Amateur Explorer," {FiBS} became an avatar of différance and vice versa. Through this procedure, the WE, of the self/other *I* through which to describe *my* practice, began the *troubling* practice of avatar(s) as a site of contradiction, convergence, and continuity. Between Deleuze, Leibniz, and Spinoza, Cache provides an entrance into the impossible dimension of an avatar as self/other:

> Leibniz's sphere of infinite radii and Spinoza's plane that makes of parallelism a case of absolute nonconvergence are cases of categorical rejections of the body of bodies and the soul of souls. And, most likely, the unspecified curvature that always varies is not a soul of souls either, but the soul of a few souls, or a soul inasmuch as there is a body.[377]

[377] Cache, *Earth Moves*, 125.

Avatar(s) as practice. And back to the conditions of the unanswered questions: *Who is in charge? Who critiques the work? Who has the final say? Who signs their name?* Reflections and resolutions left unchallenged naturally settle. Resolving through Occam's Razor of least resistance, the WE, but more evident in the ethos of the avatar, critiques Kantian absolutism as a dis-conclusive solution. Settling and resting, the bounded WE reverts back to a modernist folly of civilization rather than a decentralized fluidity that is entangled with *atavism*. In such, an Abnatural aesthetic, ever-non-conforming to the socio-cultural milieu of determinacy, exists as an alterous exteriority. How can the *x*, then, be that which is infinitely unsolvable, ancestral, and multitudinous?

Returning to an Abnatural aesthetic as a specifically non-human-centered-nature and non-philo-ontology, the realization of an unresolved bound, like the irreversibility of cooking, begets further unresolved questions. Compounding with an incoming fear of progress and socio-cultural accelerationism within the remaining husk of modernity,[378] the WE of an Abnatural discourse is produced as a site-specific, self-entanglement, principle-for-making that unpacks and opens pathways toward understanding the other within/outside the self. Thus, the unfixity of the paradigm can be rationalized as an asymptote more than an anarchical playbook for dissolving the bounds of socio-cultural homogeny. Once introduced into a practice of making, the WE provides a framework for contending with these, and other more-specific, questions. In this way, an Abnatural aesthetic is an open-ended, cross-pollinating, graft-able surface that cannot be

[378] "White Supremacists Embrace 'Accelerationism,'" *Anti-Defamation League* (April 16, 2019). https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/white-supremacists-embrace-accelerationism.

undissolved from the self. Epistemologically, this practice, as an aesthetic for conceptualizing critique and making, produces a threshold of irreversible infinity.

Avatars, then, exist where the dimensionality between each subjectivity varies upon different orders, registers, frameworks, and vernacular logics. Never fully self, never fully other, never/never, and never/always, the contradictions of an immaterial embodiment necessitate a process, a ritual, a scrubbing to go from the "old ape life" to something else:

> Of course what I felt then as an ape I can represent now only in human terms, and therefore I misrepresent it, but although I cannot reach back to the truth of the old ape life, there is no doubt that it lies somewhere in the direction I have indicated.[379]

Thus, the becoming and being blur into an embodied space of both neither and either, where avatars may be conceptualized and represented as equations within a pseudo-framework, *Asymptotic Realism* (fig. 17). Rather than flatten the ontology and claim an epistemological void reliant on denial, colonialism, and oppression of the other, *yes, even within the self*, avatars afford the WE an incongruity and hyper-specificity that would be otherwise impossible. Similar to the conditions highlighted in the creation, construction, and contemplation of {FiBS}, the universal-scale questions of a Posthuman aesthetic require a speculative grace with regards to subjective biases, especially within the fringes and trenches of a creative practice. Through these manners, the absolutism of a universal solution in Cartesian and Kantian logic is subverted for a Deleuzian and

[379] Franz Kafka, "A Report to an Academy," *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 253.

Harmanian happenstance where the context, the subject, and the object are all intermittent and indeterminant.

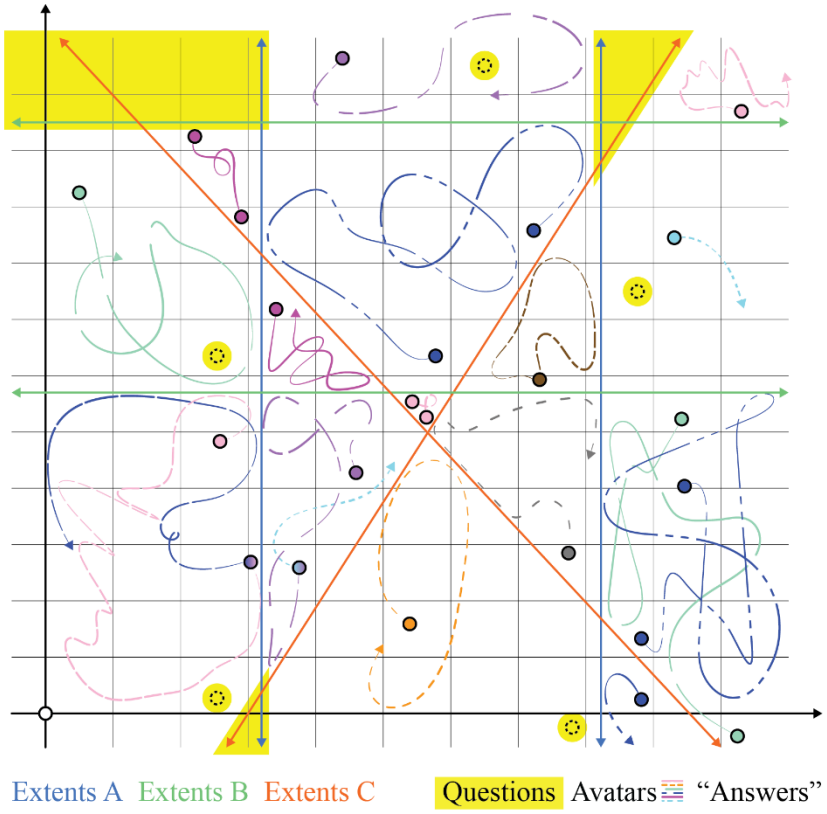


Figure 17. Asymptotic Realism and the Extents of Avatars

A brief summation before continuing on… *Troubling identities*, where the self/other/avatars exist, is an epistemological and aesthetic striving for infinite alterities from the human-centered artificiality of "nature," *an Abnatural aesthetic*, with a dimensional breakage beyond the confines of the extent-ridden socio-cultural, *toward the x*, and illustrated as an inexhaustible meshwork of making and makers, *Asymptotic Realism*.

In a practice of making, this is best seen through the use of the portfolio, the artist's statement, the bio, etc. With regard to the {FiBS} case study above, the post-rationalization and knowingly/unknowingly withheld information is the blindness toward a Kantian human essence. Another slate of reveals may provide further insight, but *I* did not find it provided ample evidence toward its specific inclusion in these narratives around the Robot Fashion House: *I am a grandson of a twin that I have been compared to my entire life and is the only other member of my family to have received a PhD. The research done at {FiBS} began with an Indexicality studio, where we studied Vivienne Westwood, run at Texas A&M by Gabe Esquivel. The discourse on human bodies and fashion arose from lectures by Henrik Vibskov (February 6, 2019) and Virgil Abloh (July 8, 2019) in Chicago. Weekly studio meetings and classes were held with D. Denenge Duyst-Akpem, Judd Morrissey, Chris Sullivan, Ben Creech, and Claudia Hart.* Where the list continues to grow, the WE draws lines, fences, and cordons off areas of rational that inevitably blend, merge, stack, and graft within differentiable forms. Can these constraints not be productive pathways toward highlighting difference? Are these locations where collaboration and cross-pollination can occur, even from within the self?

Conceptually, the WE, and the avatars within a network, can be broken down further into questions of sign, signifier, significance, and signature. Always returning to the role of hands, where do avatars differ from the self and how have these affordances provided alienation and otherness from the self? To contemplate an infinitely *troubling* discourse on differentiation accepts a perceivable bias and epistemological itch where edges blur into fuzzy abstraction and emerge as etymological play of conceptual makers.

As a mereological system of parts/wholes that contradict, contrast, and coalesce, the WE aesthetically operates in the same ethos as *One and Three Chairs* by Joseph Kosuth (fig. 18). Ruptures, fissures, and distinguishability, this conceptual work challenges the paragonical structure first critiqued in "Providing Extents for Breaking" as a contradiction of fixed specificity and interchangeability. Taking the Duchampian ready-made to a further question of language and technology, the work highlights the *trouble* of making, curating, and authoring. Similarly, the advent of the avatar exists in both all and none of the works as an aesthetic that irrevocably identifies within the self.



Figure 18. Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965, Sculpture, MoMA, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81435.

What other pathways can the avatar challenge the identity and signature of the self? In this way, a more-than-identity reveal of "the most prolific" of the current avatars that exist within *my* WE can be found in Table 1. These exist as points of divergence, questions to be contemplated, making practices that challenge Paragone from different vantage points, and equate to Asymptotic realities that *trouble* the WE.

Table 1
Some of the Avatars as Makers within the WE
Signatures, Locations, Performances, and Background Information

Name	Location	Background	Example Studiomates
 4w-LAB	Anywhere with an Outlet	*An Email Password* Collective Industrial Design and Architectural Research (2013-Present)	Albert Renger-Patzsch, Augustin Lesage, Cedric Price, Cristina Iglesias, Cui Jie, Cyprien Gaillard, Cyril Lancelin, Édgar Negret, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Kcho, Lise Gervais, Roberto Ohrt, Thomas Hirschhorn
AnArtistNamedBen	Parker, TX	*Stacking Nomenclature* AA, BED, MFA An Infinitely Maximal Maker (2016-Present)	Adrián Villar Rojas, Ben Frost, Bryan Cantley, Cai Guo-Qiang, Carla Gannis, Christian Rex van Minnen, Christina Quarles, Christopher Wool, Daniel Arsham, Dan Lam, Diana al-Hadid, Gerhard Richter, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Hedi Xandt, Jackie Saccoccio, Jacqueline Humphries, Jeremy Blake, John Baptist Jackson, Kehinde Wiley, Kris Kuksi, Marco Brambilla, Mark Bradford, Martha Rosler, Meow Wolf, Nick Cave, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Ori Toor, Pelle Cass, Perry Kulper, Portia Munson, POSE, Ronald Wimberly, Shahryar Nashat, Tim Lewis, Tom LaDuke, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Yinka Shonibare
David O'Wiley David O'Wiley	Now based in New Orleans, LA	*Small-Town Comfort: The smell of the lumber supply at 6am on a Saturday while carrying a lukewarm coffee in a blue plastic tumbler and wearing a hoodie that never gives enough warmth* BED Furniture and Miniature Enthusiast The Oldest Memories	Arne Jacobsen, Daniel Shapiro, Émile Gallé, Ferruccio Laviani, Frank Kunert, Kaj Franck, Michael Pederson, Narcissa Niblack Thorne, Richard Schultz

 DEWEY	Chicago, IL (Logan Square)	*Silent Running Drone?* *American Philosopher and Psychologist?* *Teacher from School of Rock?* AA, MFA Etymologist, Linguist, and Illustrator attempting to document simultaneity through contradiction (2021-Present)	Abdul Abdullah, Antti Lovag, Ashley Bickerton, Assume Vivid Astro Focus, Bern Porter, Birger Carlstedt, Chris Dorland, Christian Schumann, Eileen Agar, Elizabeth Talford Scott, Emo de Medeiros, Enni Id, Erró, Florine Stettheimer, Harry Smith, Hermann Finsterlin, Hernando R. Ocampo, Jack Winthrop, José Ramón Díaz Alejandro, Joseph Stella, Kay Gasei, Kay Nielsen, Magdiel Lopez, Marcus Behmer, Matt Lipps, Minjeong An, Nadezhda Udaltsova, Nancy Rubins, Natasha Bowdoin, Philip Guston, Sam Rolfes, Tiger Tateishi, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Wangechi Mutu
 dickart	Tempe, AZ	*"'dickart' is the result of a handwritten note in the back of a used 'Discourse on Method,' 'Berkeley hates Beard-trans but loves dick art.' I believe that was a divine moment from a past life."*[380] Museums and Libraries are free with a Student ID Boredom, Ennui, and Solipsism (2018-TBD)	August Walla, Brendan Monroe, Carlo Zinelli, Denis Williams, Friedrich Schröder Sonnenstern, Gladys Nilsson, Harold Cohen, Harvey Lloyd, Hessam Abrishami, Jim Nutt, John Olsen, Kerstin Brätsch, Nikifor, Sergio Zevallos, Sturtevant, Tomma Abts, Ysbrant van Wijngaarden, Yunizar
 DOGTEETH Studio	McKinney, TX	*A friendship started on NFL Street with a team named The DOGTEETH* Studio Film, Music, and Video Works (2020-Present)	Jean-Vincent Simonet, Ardhira Putra, Bernice Cameron, Chris Bly, davidope, Hajime Sorayama, Harmony Korine, Huang Rui, Jack Bridgland, Maria Guimarães, Sam Spratt, Simon Alexander-Adams, Søs Christine Hejselbæk

[380] dickart, "Ist das bild für mich?." Interview with Unicorn Jones. *Ab-* (November 2021).

{FiBS}	Dallas, TX	*Script, Phygital Environments, Arduinos, Nonhuman Silhouettes, and Lies* Collective of Nonhumans and Makers alike "Robot Fashion" IASFTOH SSMMXX, Aesthetics of College Debt 2025, and Beyond	Aili Jia, Alessandro Trincone, Avery Singer, Behnaz Farahi, Carlos Estévez, Charles Robinson, Christian Berentz, Dylan Gebbia, Gabriel François Doyen, Henrik Vibskov, Hussein Chalayan, Iris van Herpen, Jacques Villeglé, Janaina Tschäpe, Kaan Ulgener, Laleh Khorramian, Maarten Vanden Eynde, Mari Katayama, Martha Boto, Matt Lipps, Pao Houa Her, Pati Hill, Patricia Piccinini, Samuel Burgess-Johnson, Wifredo Lam, Xugu
Gerald Jerry	Colorado Springs, CO	*Once, a children's book illustrator arrived at Dodd to draw a series of images from their latest book. At the end of the demonstration, all 7 of the drawings were raffled off to students in the classroom. With hundreds of eager minds and rustling bodies ready to war over the drawings, 7 were selected. Both people by my side, but not me* Learning from Life Illustrator, Painter, and Cartoonist Now and Always	Aaron Becker, Cody A Banks, Emma Dodd, Gaspart, Harry Frost, Howard Arkley, Jay Daniel Wright, Norton Juster, Onfim, Quentin Blake, Shawn Sheehy
Handicap Access	Germantown, TN	*Punk vs. Code* High School Lyrics 2010 and on…	A Tribe Called Quest, Amyl and The Sniffers, Arctic Monkeys, David Bowie, Enjoy, FEET, FIDLAR, Fontaines D.C., Gang of Four, Kings of Leon, Minutemen, Puzzle, The Garden, Tyler, The Creator, Vampire Weekend, Yeah Yeah Yeahs

 NoInnoBys	Chicago, IL (The Loop)	*Used as Archive, Listing, Phonebook, Catalog, Recipe Book, and De-Blocking a Maker, No Innocent Bystanders acts as a reference that decenters educational influence. Sift, flit and leaf through at your leisure, but do not sit idly by and witness erasure* Data Happenstance Histories Gathering began in 2015	All Else. And Much More. *The corresponding dissertation exhibition, "In Trouble," will present two sets of 7,651 makers (n=51) as references, resources, and benedictive to this body of work*
 Orson Lefebvre	Topeka, KS	*The holographic spectator and speculator* MFA Writings and narratives of all dimensions and tropes, but oversaturated 2012-Present	Albert Camus, Ayn Rand, Buckminster Fuller, David Foster Wallace, David O. Russell, Donald Barthelme, George Orwell, Haruki Murakami, John Irving, John Vandermeer, Jorge Luis Borges, Judy Blume, Julian Barnes, Kazuo Ishiguro, Kurt Vonnegut, Lydia Davis, Oscar Wilde, Philip K. Dick, Roland Barthes, Stanisław Lem
 Unicorn Jones	Flagstaff, AZ	*Earth-bound and non-specific with the ebbs and flows of the sand* No Record of School Geological, Geographical, Vernacular, and Present After the Dinosaurs	Aleksandr Babarikin, Calvin Seibert, Ed Fairburn, Elora Hardy, Gianin Conrad, James Niehues, John Gerrard, Kim Keever, Matthew Palladino, Michael Heizer, Nardwuar the Human Serviette, Storm Thorgerson, Tomoaki Murayama, Walter Wick
 UMĚT	Uttoxeter, England	*Neither Transcendental nor Romantic, but must be harnessed to some tethering for human understanding* Translator of silence, Gaia Poetry, Prose, and Other Existing in the Prime Age of the Red Woods	Andhika Ramadhian, Andy Goldsworthy, Bernard Palissy, Cannupa Hanska Luger, Daniel Quinn, Fujiko Nakaya, Herman Melville, John Keats, Karl Blossfeldt, Luis Colan, Maya Angelou, Patrick Dougherty, Roald Dahl, Xavi Bou

From self-imposed extents to the ritualized performances to become and manifest the other, each of the avatars presented, and withheld from this writing, exist independently and indistinguishably from the WE. Alien to the self but existing within the self, the contradiction of an Abnatural aesthetic and a conceptualization toward an Asymptotic realism is the in the inexhaustible and imperceivable differentiation to the alterous. The maker performs and consumes the extents as a modality for decentering the normalcy of a standardized, absolute, socio-culturally framed practice. However, this is not a "new" phenomenon and must exist as an infinitely reflexive and indexical approach to continue a practice of making beyond the capacities of the monocular.

Hidden in plain sight, or en plein air, the avatars like the self/other that are intertwined within a similar embodiment, exhaust an additive process where ritual, rules, games, and play are inserted to alter the phenomenological engine of a monocular self. From the playlist of music, as a Derridian antithesis where "genres are not to be mixed,"[381] to the articles of clothing and wardrobe, where Barthes introduces an identity of difference where "similarity has to do with the way in which species of the same genus function (a canezou, a jumper, and a halter have nearly the same functional situation in the clothing ensemble), while dissimilarity has to do with the form of the species,"[382] the avatars listed above provide infinite alterity and difference just as much as they provide an infinite lamination and simultaneity. This contradiction, as described in Asymptotic Realism, provides a graft-able surface for an Abnatural aesthetic and practice.

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[381] Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," trans. Avital Ronell, *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 55.

[382] Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 95.

As a case study on the mental block and the blank sheet of paper, avatar(s) set up an elastic structure for making that changes the question. On one hand, the invisible questions that haunt makers as an expectation of genius, divine intervention, or inexplicable creativity, which is also to include an inherent pressure and guilt related to the inability to turn this switch on-and-off at will: *How do I make different kinds of work? To what degree do I give myself the liberty to express and explore an idea?* These embed a subjectivity of insurmountable exceptionalism and post-rationalization that bog down an atmosphere for making. On the other hand, changing the environment, the condition, the phenomenon, the toolset, the practice, the signature, etc., introduces a decentralizing action of play that relieves the pressure of making: *How can discomfortability become an asset to limit drawing time, and thus, stop overanalyzing and critiquing unfinished work? What can be made throughout a single listening of "Sound of Silver?"*[383]

To reduce stress on the authoritarian structure of the divine, singular maker, the avatar re-introduces a disexpertise and foundation of unknowability, the alien. This "amateurization," not all too different from a mode of de-skilling made popular by Cy Twombly and Willem de Kooning, produces a "palimpsest of the half-begun and never-completed."[384] To de-pressurize the system is also to allow for a cross-pollinating practice where avatar(s) merge, co-design, and co-create while also developing an independent subjectivity, a voice, and a signature that defines *their work*. The alien, as an othering alterity while also being a perceivable subjectivity, is the affordance and allowance of the WE to break Paragonical structures in lieu of rejuvenated

[383] LCD Soundsystem, *Sound of Silver*, 2007, Parlophone Records and DFA., Spotify.
[384] Adrian Searle, "His scattered dreams," *The Guardian* (June 17, 2008). https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2008/jun/17/art.culture.

phenomenology. *What if dickart used a process similar to Tomma Abts where all of their work must be a specific size to contort to a new register of the frame?*[385] *How would DOGTEETH Studio animate a fashion show for {FiBS}? How would the WE interface with ceramics and are there tools at our disposal that supplement or subvert techniques?*

Thus, from Warhol's collaborative work with Basquiat[386] to Mondrian's shift from landscapes to abstraction[387] to Tom Ford's fashion, architecture, and film chimeral practice,[388] the adaptation of practice is a constant throughout the throes of an art historical reflection. However, these hummings, as *Ishmael* alluded to,[389] undermine the production capital of a genius and the economic insistence that provenance be followed, work be made for selling, and talent will be discovered. Now, to not dive too deeply off the edge of pessimism to practice, these contradictions are seen as rarities, natural selection, and token exceptionalism from Warhol, Basquiat, Mondrian, and Ford. Where do these eventual giants of history and context share foundations for those that were less than once-in-a-lifetime successful?

A moniker, a signature, a pen name, a voice, a heteronym, a nickname, etc. each of the avatars presented above, as *my* own, and each of the ones presented throughout the remainder of the writing produce differentiable outcomes as a result of their process. In

[385] Lizzie Carey-Thomas, "ART TOMMA ABTS." Interview with Thierry Sommers. *200%* (2018), https://200-percent.com/tomma-abts/.

[386] "BASQUIAT × WARHOL. PAINTING FOUR HANDS," *Foundation Louis Vuitton* (April-August 2023). https://www.fondationlouisvuitton.fr/en/events/basquiat-x-warhol-painting-4-hands.

[387] Tim Keane, "Mondrian Before Abstraction," *Hyperallergic* (January 11, 2020). https://hyperallergic.com/535404/the-figurative-mondrian-at-the-musee-marmottan-monet/.

[388] Sarah Fones, "How Tom Ford Went From Shocking Milan to Conquering Hollywood," *L'Officiel* (August 27, 2023). https://www.lofficielusa.com/film-tv/tom-ford-movies-nocturnal-animals-director-netflix.

[389] Quinn, *Ishmael*.

different calls to an act of denial, withdrawal, and troubling identities, the WE reacts to the *trouble* in unique capacities and circumstances.

Challenging the hands that ground identity, the alienation of the human body from the body of work is a critique exuded by the denial of resolve for Banksy and Martin Margiela *or* Maison Margiela.[390] Authorship and pennames have been discussed from the pitfalls of JT LeRoy in the previous chapter "Beyond The Self," but where has Fernando Pessoa been granted acclaim for his work as Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Álvaro de Campos, and others?[391] Where the Warhol Foundation boats, "From the late 1940s until his death in 1987, Andy Warhol produced over 9,000 paintings and sculptures and nearly 12,000 drawings,"[392] the maker Nikifor, *claimed* under the "Naïve Art Movement," had supposedly "painted more than 40,000 compositions during his life."[393] Music, however, requires a majority of the chapter "Infinite Reconstitution," to discuss the fluctuating nuance of bands, collectives, names, songwriting, producing, remixing, mastering, etc.

Repeating characters, especially in theater and film, produce another sort of alterity where the ipseity of the self grafts onto the alterity of the character and the visions of a director. Unfortunately, the Bale Batman vs. the Keaton Batman vs. the Kilmer Batman will be a conquest for later discussions, but it does set the stage for the identifiable other within the assumed self. Yes, each work is filmed through the character

[390] "Martin Margiela: Fashion's invisible superstar," *The Independent* (July 16, 2008). https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/features/martin-margiela-fashion-s-invisible-superstar-868562.html#comments-area.

[391] Fernando Pessoa, *A Little Larger Than the Entire Universe*, trans. Richard Zenith (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

[392] "Paintings, Drawings, and Sculptures," *The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts*. https://warholfoundation.org/warhol/catalogue-raisonne/paintings-sculptures-drawings/.

[393] Weronika Edmunds, "A World-Class Artist With a First-Grader's Artbox," *3Seas Europe* (July 22, 2023). https://3seaseurope.com/nikifor-world-class-artist/.

of Bruce Wayne but the cadence, the drama, the costume, the plot, the direction, the narrative, the love-interest, etc. is different and illustrates a sign of the times with which each film is produced. Most challenging to an Abnatural aesthetic is the filtering, layering, and continual reconstitution, and reconstruction of the identity with each passing actor and characterization. *Where is the performance of an avatar?*

Inserting Andy Kaufman/Jim Carrey/Bob Zmuda and William Greaves, *Jim & Andy: The Great Beyond*[394] and *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*[395] produce contrasting conditions for understanding the *trouble* within the WE as avatars, subjectivities, and signatures as each film, set of agents, and frameworks for making challenges the role of the other within, in spite of, and including the self through the WE.

Jim & Andy produces a documentary-style, behind-the-scenes reflection and remembrance on the life and comedy of Andy Kaufman by analyzing Jim Carrey's role in performing as Kaufman for *Man on the Moon*. Carrey's reflections sprinkled in with the contemplation of authorship produce both a more-than-identity and alienation to the works of Andy Kaufman. Evident in the "role" and life of Tony Clifton, an Andy Kaufman creation, performed by *at least* Bob Zmuda then Jim Carrey, the performance of life exists at a crux of contradiction. The self is the other, and the other is the self to return to Lévi-Strauss' double contrast. Where the characterization and film *trouble* this further is the actualization of Tony Clifton in *Letterman*, *The Dinah Shore Show*, *Taxi*, *Man on the Moon*, and others. Blurring fuzziness with counterculture, the comedy of

[394] *Jim & Andy: The Great Beyond*, directed by Chris Smith (2017; Brookly, NY: Vice Media), Netflix.

[395] *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*, directed by William Greaves (1968; New York, NY: Janus Films), The Criterion Collection.

Kaufman contemplated, as Carrey contemplates, the end of identity as an embodied persona, or a fake realism. *Is Carrey not Clifton who is Zmuda who is Kaufman, but not nobody can be Clifton just as nobody can deny the existence of the identity that "existed?"* Thus, the Asymptotic Realism within this metanarrative is that the dissolution and solution to this question is unknowable. Testing the actualization of a life, Clifton continually manifests inside and outside of embodiment/persona, i.e. the famous back-and-forth on Letterman in 1982:

> LETTERMAN: Let me get right to it now, when I first became aware of you, you seem to come out of nowhere, you were working with Andy Kaufman, the talented comedian and actor…
> CLIFTON: Oh, I don't know about talented!
> LETTERMAN: And there was some discussion at that time that you, in fact, were Andy Kaufman, and that there is no Tony Clifton…
> CLIFTON: I don't know anything about that! I'm not talking about… Kaufman's been using my name to get places!
> LETTERMAN: So, there is no truth to the rumor that you're actually Andy Kaufman?
> CLIFTON: There's no truth in the rumor whatsoever. That's total fabrication on your part.[396]

Kaufman's contemplation in other works, i.e. the "Inter-Gender Wrestling Champion of the World" that has now left Andy in the Hall of Fame for the WWE,[397] consider the spectacle of the performance as the work of art. Similar to the Warholian machine discussed in "Giving More-Than-Identity" but to a contemplation on *a life actualized*, Andy K. differs from Andy W. through their socio-cultural acquisition and

[396] Don Giller, "Bob Zmuda as Tony Clifton on Letterman, February 18, 1982," YouTube Video, June 8, 2016, 4:34 to 5:07. https://www.youtube.com/crwatch?v=Kg0vKCuAWTQ&t=287s.

[397] Anne Victoria Clark, "Why Is Andy Kaufman Entering WWE's Hall of Fame So Late?" *Vulture* (March 21, 2023). https://www.vulture.com/article/andy-kaufman-wrestling-wwe-hall-of-fame.html.

acceptance. Where Warhol goes to Studio54, Kaufman reads *The Great Gatsby* to a crowd full of laughs and boos until all have walked out through the duration of the "bit." In such, likeability and taste abide by the extents. Kaufman's subversion was his mystique, curiosity, and contradiction. *How can one be critical of the limelight while being in it?*

On the other side of the conceptual subject is the work of William Greaves, *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*. The film exists as a process piece of conceptual art that blurs the hands of the maker for something that is unknowable despite it being "Produced, Directed, and Edited" by William Greaves:

> The film is being shot by three 16 mm cameras, each equipped with a zoom lens and a magazine that holds eleven minutes of film, and all three are synced, in the clumsy technology of the day, to reel-to-reel sound recorders. One cameraman, Greaves instructs, is to focus solely on the actors playing the scene; another cameraman is to film the crew that is shooting the scene; and the third is to include the actors and the crew, as well as onlookers and anything interesting that's happening in the park. (Sometimes Greaves himself wields a fourth camera.)[398]

Breaking down the role of the maker, the film exists as a departure from the confines of authority and authorship. Chaos, anarchy, questioning, and assumed betrayal, and yet, the contradiction in its editing is the insistence that these ruptures occur as *part of the film*. Greaves selects these moments as critical to the development of the film. In such, the experience of the film is a phenomenological collage of infinite multidimensional others that flicker back to the awareness of an alterous subjectivity within sonder, or the *psycho*, conjoined with the *symbiotaxiplasm*, "a concept developed

[398] Amy Taubin, "Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Still No Answers," *Criterion Collection* (December 4, 2006). https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/460-symbiopsychotaxiplasm-still-no-answers.

by philosopher/social-scientist Arthur Bentley, which 'referred to all those events that transpire in any given environment on which a human being impacts in any way.'"[399] Unlike *Ishmael*[400] and *The Phantom Tollbooth*,[401] the other is the feature where the self is an avenue for activation. Greaves is a character as a body that appears on the screen, is an antagonist in the method for confusing the audience and members of each film crew, and is the maker as the editor and producer of the film.

The film continues to take on other/othering/otherness as it anticipates a Take Two, similar to the {FiBS} *suspended* realization, where the maker preconceives a non-conception. Is this actionable, definable, actual, perceptual? The film concludes with the footage of an unknown character which further disfigures the illusion of another purpose of the film as a revenue-generating, theatrical-release picture rather than the arthouse film. Was that the original intention? Aside from the assistance given to the film by Steve Buscemi in 1992, 24 years after release, the film has received little recognition outside of a conceptual art discourse.[402]

An avatar, as a director, editor, producer, actor, maker, and work, is alien as the subjectivity of its semi/fully-actual, more/less-than identity provides an alterous interiority that evades and fulfills all contradictions. Between all and nothing, an avatar is an embodiment of the affordances beyond the extents of the socio-cultural homogeny. Stepping outside of this theorization as a maker, this writing will run adjacent to a body

[399] Richard Brody, "Movie of the Week: 'Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One,'" *The New Yorker* (March 11, 2015). https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/movie-of-the-week-symbiopsychotaxiplasm-take-one.

[400] Quinn, *Ishmael*.

[401] Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*.

[402] Richard Brody, "Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take Two and a Half," *The New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/movies/symbiopsychotaxiplasm-take-two-and-a-half.

of work that has gone on in the shadows of the research. *In Trouble* (fig. 19) will provide a foundation for grafting the WE to this research as a further consideration on the positions of an avatar reveal in a Kaufman and Greaves sense. Before, during, and after {FiBS}, *where does the self lie and how is this an ever-becoming alienation and identification within the making process?*

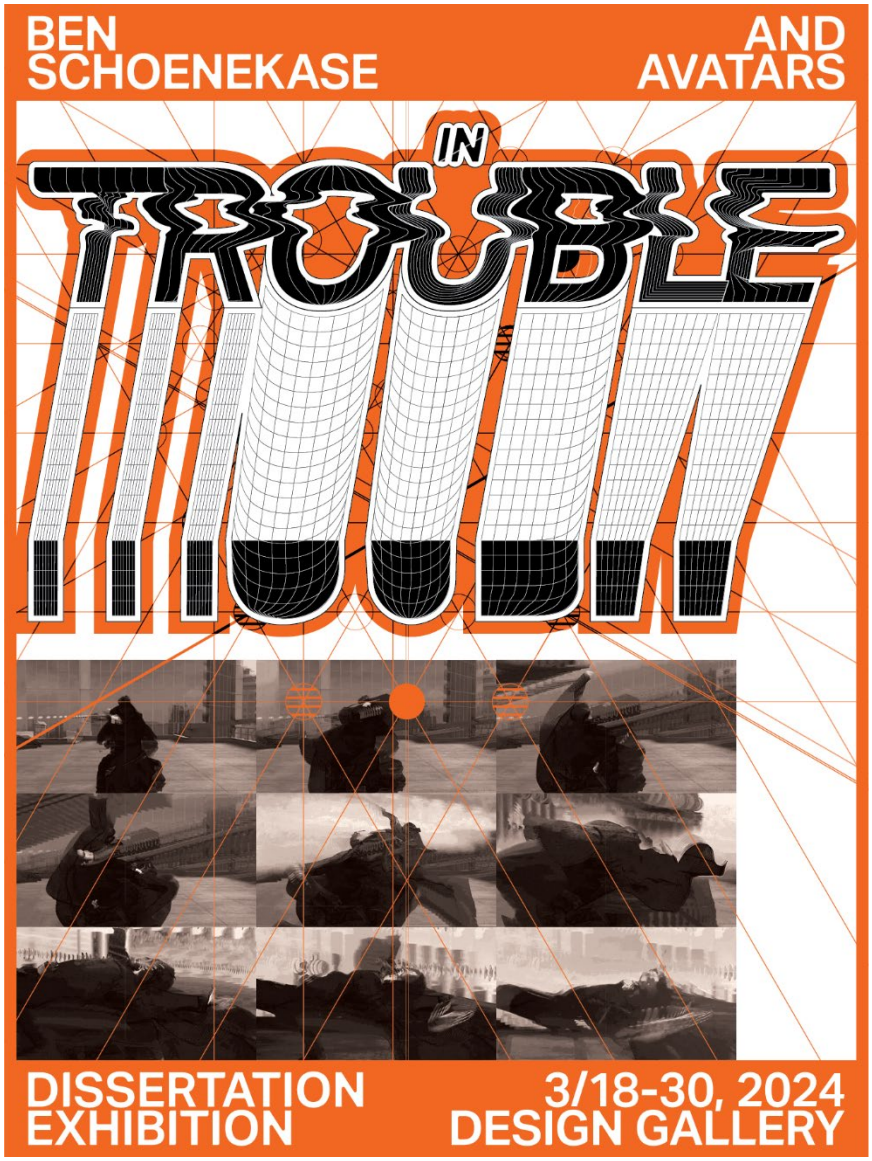


Figure 19. Ben Schoenekase, *In Trouble Exhibition Poster*, 2024, Digital on Paper, Arizona State University, Design Gallery, Image Provided by Maker(s).

In an attempt to continue the contradictory blending of the self/other/avatar as a gelatinous reconstitution of the WE, new questions ever-arise in the production, revelation, and distribution of avatars as a constant consideration of *x* and Asymptotic Realism. Toward some of the avatars shown in the exhibition, *I* ask:

> *Where can avatar(s) work together and collaborate on a single piece? Is this narcissism or a productive opportunity to work between media sources from expertise/disexpertise?* (fig. 20).
>
> *How would generating a "new" avatar affect the practice of the "other" avatars? Is there a period of adjustment and reconsideration if their medium is uncannily similar and magnetically opposed to the work of "another" other?* (fig. 21).
>
> *How can the living, but nonhuman, other provide an aesthetic grafting point for considering language as the material and resource for making and expressing? How is this different from the Romantics, Transcendentalists, and Fin de siècle?* (fig. 22).



Figure 20. David O'Wiley X AnArtistNamedBen, *CONCEIVING*, 2020, Sculpture, Image Provided by the Maker.



Figure 21. DEWEY, *a better future certainly* and *by dint of that role*, 2023, Ink on Paper, Image Provided by the Maker.

A Question of Jealousy

Sensations are lost and found language, but
What syntactically was missing be radiant—
An author must un-grip, for sake of find-ability!
For things withheld be never lost,
Active seeking brings examples of linguistic paradox

Overstimulation is at the root of blindness,
Sight can only be pinpointed and exacted—
Speculation of all things is in the foundation of the Sun!
Stare and ponder all you like, but
The moment of action be done in darkness

Sensational overstimulation, the tertiary—
An accepting of simultaneity to phi order, but
To explain it all must speak toward loudness!
Audience of root, twig, branch, leaf,
Leads to consequence of translation's error

Ecological predicate operates in the infinite,
Nature is and was and will be, ad infinitum—
"The branch shook in the wind!"
What dumb, anatomically shortsighted language, but
I am, we are, of us, I to be tree

Expression of the multitude compress, but
Collapse the simulation of natural order: time—
Exacerbating and propagating the all!
Components of the same/reliant self,
With monocular death comes plural unraveling

*1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
4 — 2 — 3 — 1 —5
2 — 1 — 3 — 4 — 5
4 — 2 — 3 — 1 —5
1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

A: but // 3, 5, 4, 1, 3
B: — // 2, 2, 1, 4, 4
C: ! // 4, 3, 5, 3, 1
D: , // 5, 1, 3, 2, 5
E: // 1, 4, 2, 5, 2

A — 10 — 7/43 — 3 // NSATOU — 6
B — 13 — 6/42 — 2 // ATSIN — 5
C — 14 — 8/49 — 4 // AINUTORF — 8
D — 8 — 6/34 — 5 // ETH — 3
E — 15 — 7/52 — 1 // IEASNG — 6
——60 — 34/220 // 28
D — 13 — 7/44 — 1 // OTSIEN — 6
B — 12 — 7/41 — 2 // NEITAD — 6
C — 16 — 11/58 — 3 // NTOEAISULFH — 11
A — 8 — 7/34 — 5 // AEL — 3
E — 11 — 8/40 — 4 // ENOT — 4
——60 — 40/217 // 30
B — 14 — 4/42 — 1 // TEAISNOR — 8
A — 15 — 8/46 — 4 // TIANED — 6
C — 11 — 8/45 — 5 // TLASOE — 6
D — 8 — 6/37 — 3 // ,AEO — 4
E — 12 — 6/43 — 2 // EOSNRAT — 7
——60 — 32/213 // 31
D — 17 — 6/46 — 2 // EITCOAN — 7
B — 13 — 9/44 — 4 // NAID — 4
C — 6 — 6/31 — 3 // HN — 2
A — 14 — 6/50 — 1 // ATHULG — 6
E — 10 — 10/33 — 5 // E, — 2
——60 — 37/204 // 21
A — 11 — 6/41 — 3 // ESTOU — 5
B — 15 — 7/47 — 4 // OLAETSIR — 8
C — 12 — 5/37 — 1 // AETNG — 5
D — 9 — 6/36 — 5 // EONTS — 5
E — 13 — 6/44 — 2 // LAONURE — 7
——60 — 30/205 // 30

Figure 22. UMĚT, *A Question of Jealousy*, 2020, Poem, Image Provided by the Maker.

Specifically antithetical toward an implied authority as a compressed, hyperintelligent, supra-consciousness, *In Trouble* attempts to challenge the socio-cultural conceptualization of progress and power by intermingling processes, materialities, philosophies, and made objects as a pointillist meshwork. Never resolved, the syntax of the "and avatars" continues to be a point of needed study. With the reveal of a *troubling* identity of hyper/non-specificity, the process of making through the WE can be cyclically questioned until the self/other/avatars regroup and reorder within the mereological embodiment. Without a preconceived expectation and authority toward human-centered nomos, making, in an Abnatural aesthetic, fronts an *x*-trusion outside of a monocular bounding box… that was/is/will always be an artificial oversimplification of identity.

Critiquing and cataloging the biases of the WE, combinatorics and graphical registers will be used to ground these desperate terms, phrases, and aesthetes for while generating a biased vernacular subjectivity that will be independently *troubling for you.*

> Are we so cowardly as to think expressing interest in things embezzles the last of some limited resource of concern for other humans? If that's what "humanism" has come to mean, then a new conception of it is in order. Just as eating only oysters becomes gastronomically monotonous, so talking only about human behavior becomes intellectually monotonous. The rise of objects need not be a revolution, at least not all the time. This is not just a rise of fists, but also a rise of bodies, as if to leave a table, politely folding one's napkin before departing. Like Bartleby, we can simply declare, "I would prefer not to."[403]

[403] Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

> In understanding being as exteriority, in breaking with the panoramic existing of being and the totality in which it is produced, we can understand the meaning of the finite without its limitation, occurring within the infinite, requiring an incomprehensible fall of the infinite, without finitude consisting in a nostalgia for infinity, a longing for return. To posit being as exteriority is to apperceive infinity as the Desire for infinity, and thus to understand that the production of infinity calls for separation, the production of the absolute arbitrariness of the I or of the origin.[404]

The WE, as the self/other/avatar, presents an imperfect set of observers, biased participants, impartial jurors, unreliable narratives, etc. However, to frame subjectivity and to conceptualize the extents of the WE through artifacts as critics and makers, a playful confrontation of an Abnatural aesthetic utilizes a map as triptych to contextualize an avatar silhouette. Contradictorily, a silhouette, as shown in the previous writings, is fluid, dynamic, and mutating, but the advent of mapping produces an assumption toward the finite. Thus, *suspending* the infinitesimal positionality of the WE, as ever-becoming, the map would not be a system of Cartesian pointillism, but a combinatorial assemblage of vernacular unfixity that is curatorial, teleological, and subjective.

As a condition for mapping bias, there is an a priori discussion of what is seen as de facto, more and less, within an allowable range. Along a continuum, even two-dimensionally, there is a justification of binary opposition with a favorable vs. unfavorable interlocutor. Establishing combinatorial geometry as a modality of "graphing" through tripartite assimilation (+/- ; +/- ; +/-), each decision has direct

[404] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1961), 292.

correspondence. One that can be mediated with a both/and, either/or decision rather than an independent variable, independent variable, etc., i.e. (x, y, z). No single-data point will serve as more/less valuable in a combinatorial framework. Thus, this posits that nothing can be culled through a mediation of standard deviation. All data is data, even if that exists beyond the scope of the hypothetical scatter-plot equation. This then, in an Abnatural aesthetic anticipation, subjectively curates cases, stories, images, objects, etc. without undermining capacity. Each point in the (n=2) (fig. 23) frame has a 6-way dialogue with other points, a 3-variable positioning system, and allows for flexible positioning that will differ with each observer as (n=3) (fig. 24) equals 18 "others," (n=4) equals 36 "others," etc.

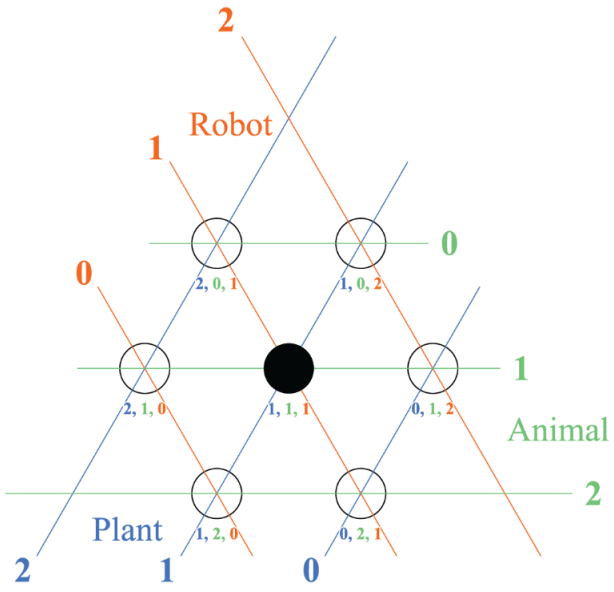


Figure 23. Combinatorial Chart (n=2).

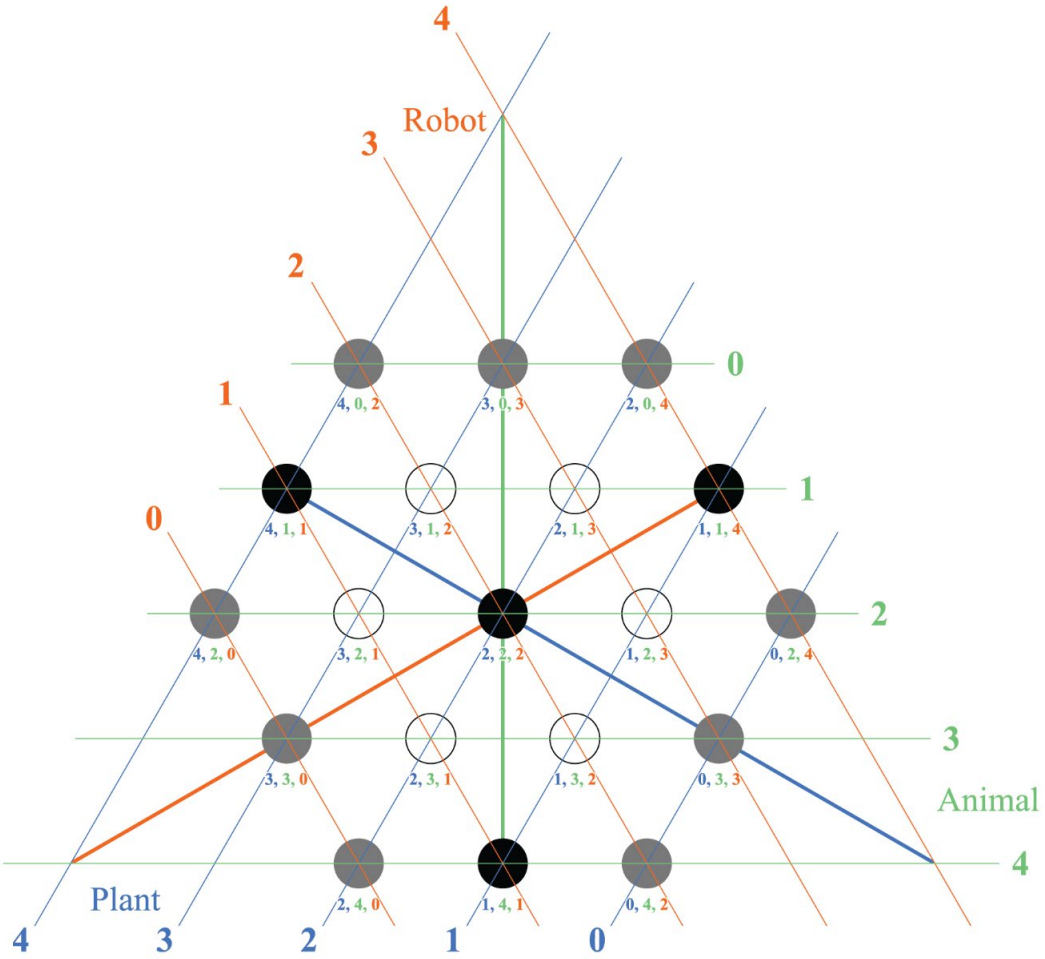


Figure 24. Combinatorial Chart (n=3).

Existing merely as a finite assemblage and thus a teleological glitch, the Combinatorial charts of a perceivable Abnatural aesthetic produce frames like a diaristic *nomos* that catalogs the present rationale of terms, works, and makers. This feeds into a representational methodology for conceptualizing a silhouette of an avatar, but it also stands that it could be used for infinite, a-scientific methodologies that are fluid, expanding, and dependent upon combinations rather than inputs/outputs. Data is positioned via negotiation rather than a repeatable experiment. In so doing, there cannot

be an equation of expected value, only a mapping of bias and experience that adapts to new conditions, thus producing the same subjective fluidity within the WE. Experience then, is not a Husserlian practice of bracketing and objectivizing through a catalog or match-game, but it exists as a boundless speculation of potential. In this way, an infinite redrawing of the silhouette is more diaristic than scientific as with the pretextual discussion on the Abnatural as a splaying-out of aesthetic differentiation rather than a standardized, irreducible philosophy (fig. 25).

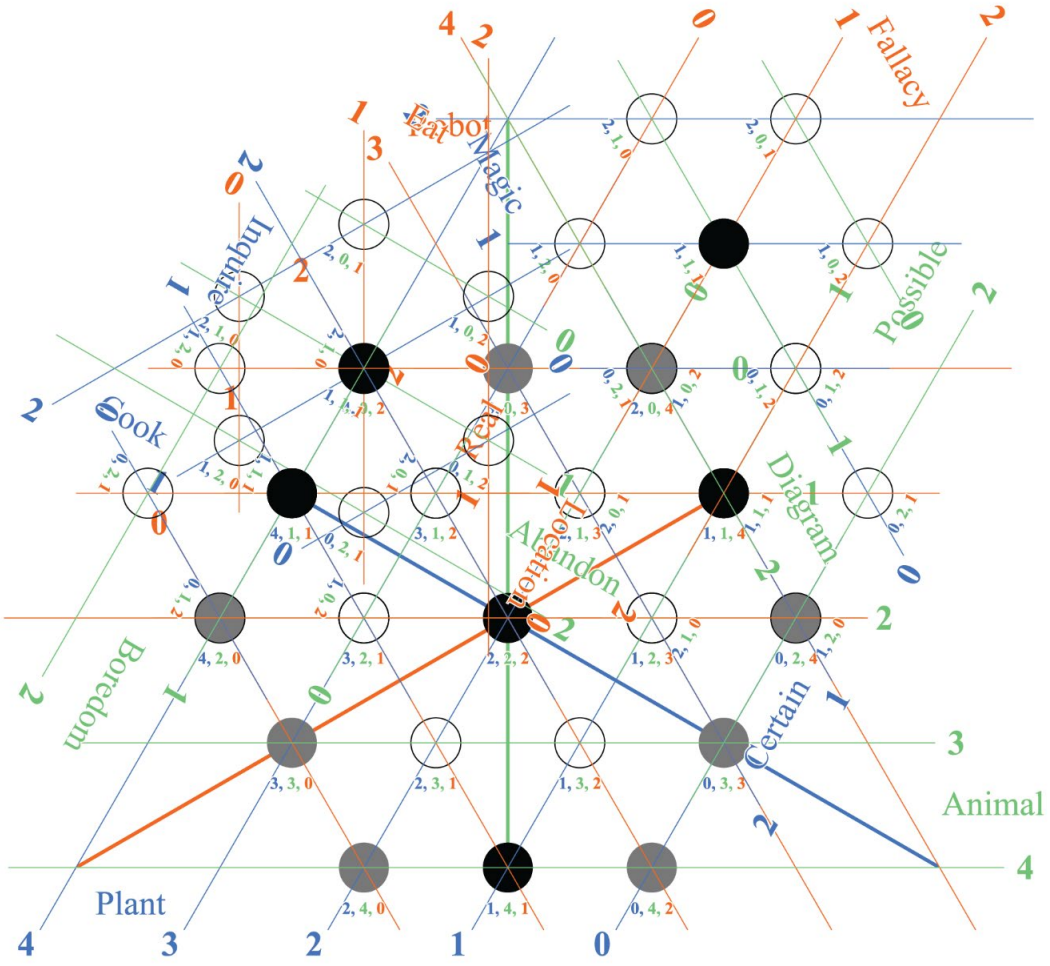


Figure 25. Silhouettes of Data (n=2 and n=3)

Contradictorily discrete and contiguous within the WE, the speculation toward phenomenological alterity within bias and misunderstanding allows interconnectivity through debasing and deprioritizing the monocular self. In this way, historical canons and references are mutable through personal localization and emergent vernacular systems. This is conceptualization of reordering frames as a constitutive assemblage heightens the overlapping sections while also leaving uncharted territories for future research (fig. 26).

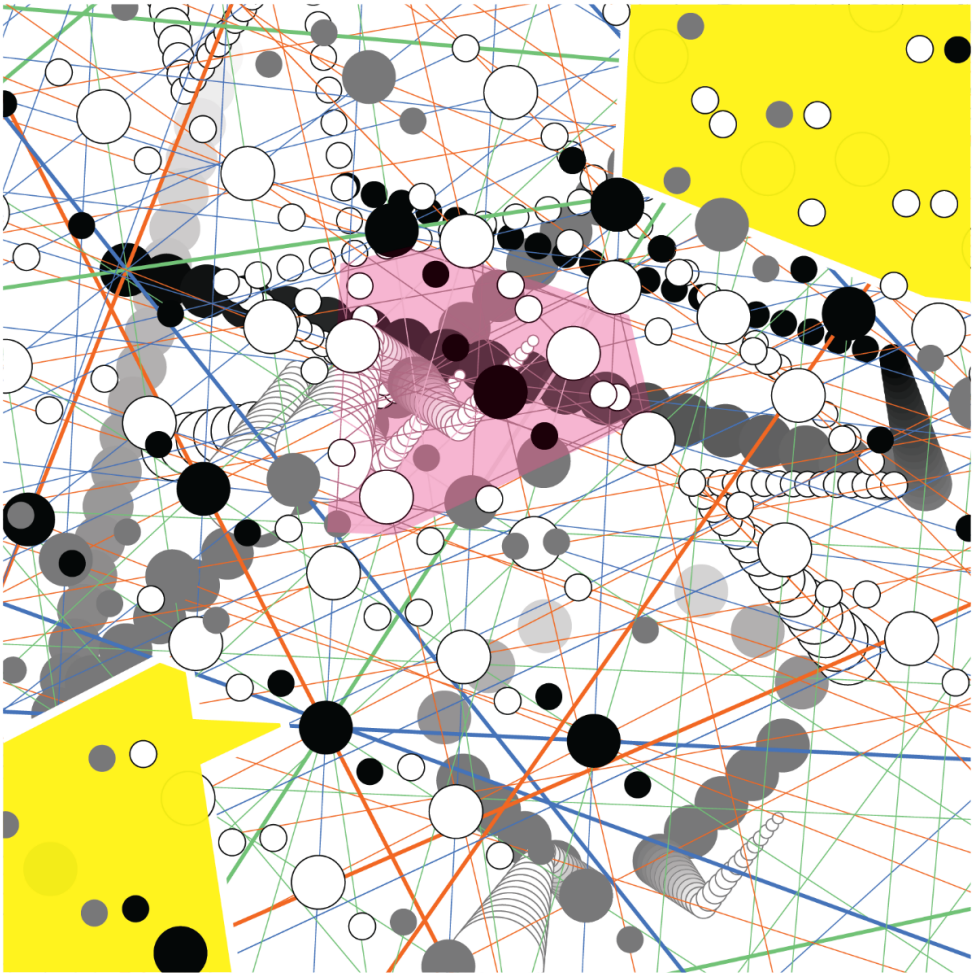


Figure 26. Overlapping Silhouettes of a Maker as a Vernacular Study on Mapping Combinatorial Biases within the WE

Community, social-engagement, anti-mastery, and dis-expertise, are fundamental practices of a restorative, decolonized subjecthood that usurps the singular for a synthesis of the WE as an assemblage of the avatar, self, and other(s). Without a set of standardizing codices, these studies are able to provide tentacular assemblages that allow novel relationships to generate vernacular theories. Abound by the hyper-localized specificity toward a non-ontology, these combinatorial charts challenge both the legitimacy of a sovereign language, through troubling definitions and epistemological choice, and the conditions for a decentralized history that is subjective rather than canonized.

Table 2 represents the mathematical data produced through the combinatorial charts as a product of analyzing multiple points of bias. *Troubling* to the bias-ridden dualism of comparisons, the "Windfall" moments where data is perceived through one point of null are consequently extracted as larger sets of information are considered.

Table 2
Combinatorial Chart Equations

n	Equation (P+A+R)	Maxima	Conditions $v = 1+6(n*(n-1)/2)$	"Windfall" or 0's $w = 3n/v$	Connections $c = 3[n-1]*(3[n-1]+1)$
2	3	$0 \leq x \leq 2$	7	85.71%	12
3	6	$0 \leq x \leq 4$	19	47.37%	42
4	9	$0 \leq x \leq 6$	37	32.43%	90
5	12	$0 \leq x \leq 8$	61	24.59%	156
6	15	$0 \leq x \leq 10$	91	19.78%	240
7	18	$0 \leq x \leq 12$	127	16.54%	342
8	21	$0 \leq x \leq 14$	169	14.20%	462
9	24	$0 \leq x \leq 16$	217	12.44%	600
10	27	$0 \leq x \leq 18$	271	11.07%	756
51	150	$0 \leq x \leq 100$	7,651	2.00%	22,650

A challenge for these open-ended combinations will be in the anticipation of variables and extracting distinctions for each of the terms and images to be used as subjectivity "frames." To challenge the biases of an Abnatural aesthetic and avatar subjectivity further, the framing should not exclude the roles of nonhuman agents. Considering the studies of Enock et al., the introduction of an angel, as a speculative subject and unknowable other, allowed for a more coherent conceptualization and articulation for the identity of a human.[405] Thus, the antithetical proof produced an effective strategy toward conceptualizing subjectivity, but can this be used as a practice for making? Enock et al. also produced a dichotomy fallacy when comparing subjectivity as the study relied upon a comparative sliding scale through three axes: "Humans v. Other Species," "Humans v. Robots," and "Humans v. Angels,"[406] where sixty words were tested for their associative bias per word. To change this oppositional discourse and disjunctive approach, rather than embracing the synthesis of a contradictory WE that possesses the self/other/avatar, the triptych of the Combinatorial charts exposes a series of decentralizing processes to redistribute agency to the participants.

In this manner, the Combinatorial charts of an Abnatural aesthetic have been used in variable situations as a process for expressing and distinguishing etymological and epistemological differences between text then images. Subjects, using similar tools presented by Enoch et al.'s paper, were given a list of 15 words where each must be classified in one of three containers, then ranked in order of importance toward each of the frameworks. In this way, a predetermined frame is replaced for a subject-based

[405] Florence E. Enock, Jonathan C. Flavell, Steven P. Tipper, and Harriet Over, "No convincing evidence outgroups are denied uniquely human characteristics," *Cognition* 212 (2021), 3.

[406] Enock, Flavell, Tipper and Over, 4.

synonym to express the linguistic turn of authority and representation. Testing the socio-cultural extents of speculative fiction, Table 3 and 4 represents the summary and findings of Design Students tasked with conceptualizing the linguistic differences and their personal bias toward the frames: Plant, Animal, and Robot.

Table 3
Summary of Findings on Bias and Language Comparing Plants/Animals/Robots
Design Students (18-25) (August 2022)

Word Bank	Plant			Animal			Robot			Association
	#	Pts.	Avg	#	Pts.	Avg	#	Pts.	Avg	By Avg. (#/16)
Alien	1	1	0.06	5	11	0.69	10	36	2.25	Robot
Consumer	1	4	0.25	13	43	2.68	2	8	0.50	Animal
Cultural	5	15	0.94	8	25	1.56	3	6	0.38	Animal
Earthen	16	67	4.19	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	Plant
Independent	8	19	1.19	5	11	0.69	3	8	0.50	Plant
Indifferent	6	11	0.69	2	7	0.44	8	25	1.56	Robot
Interchangeable	4	8	0.50	2	7	0.44	10	31	1.94	Robot
Political	2	2	0.13	9	17	1.06	5	16	1.00	Animal
Product	7	18	1.13	0	0	0.00	9	28	1.75	Robot
Reliant	7	22	1.38	5	15	0.94	4	5	0.31	Plant
Replaceable	3	10	0.63	1	2	0.13	12	38	2.38	Robot
Resilient	7	23	1.44	7	17	1.06	2	8	0.50	Plant
Social	0	0	0.00	14	55	3.44	2	5	0.32	Animal
Unknowable	2	5	0.32	4	8	0.50	10	26	1.63	Robot
Vulnerable	11	35	2.19	5	22	1.38	0	0	0.00	Plant

Table 4
Results of Bias and Language Comparing Plants/Animals/Robots
Design Students (18-25) (August 2022)

	Plant	Animal	Robot
UuvxNs	Earthen	Social	Independent
	Resilient	Cultural	Alien
	Vulnerable	Political	Indifferent
	Reliant	Interchangeable	Replaceable
	Product	Consumer	Unknowable
6mRC9g	Vulnerable	Social	Alien
	Interchangeable	Consumer	Resilient
	Replaceable	Unknowable	Political
	Indifferent	Reliant	Cultural
	Earthen	Independent	Product
YHQBrW	Cultural	Interchangeable	Alien
	Consumer	Reliant	Indifferent
	Earthen	Resilient	Social
	Vulnerable	Replaceable	Political
	Product	Independent	Unknowable
DdkY49	Earthen	Social	Alien
	Product	Cultural	Indifferent
	Reliant	Consumer	Unknowable
	Vulnerable	Resilient	Independent
	Interchangeable	Political	Replaceable
BmNKfx	Resilient	Alien	Interchangeable
	Earthen	Independent	Unknowable
	Cultural	Political	Product
	Vulnerable	Consumer	Replaceable
	Indifferent	Social	Reliant
qZrpfw	Earthen	Consumer	Alien
	Product	Reliant	Political
	Replaceable	Vulnerable	Cultural
	Independent	Unknowable	Social
	Interchangeable	Resilient	Indifferent

nvrZpP			
	Product	Vulnerable	Consumer
	Earthen	Social	Resilient
	Cultural	Reliant	Replaceable
	Interchangeable	Unknowable	Indifferent
	Independent	Political	Alien
VUGufp			
	Vulnerable	Consumer	Product
	Earthen	Cultural	Replaceable
	Independent	Social	Political
	Indifferent	Resilient	Unknowable
	Reliant	Alien	Interchangeable
qhYpvG			
	Earthen	Vulnerable	Interchangeable
	Reliant	Social	Replaceable
	Indifferent	Cultural	Alien
	Resilient	Political	Unknowable
	Product	Consumer	Independent
xaR86k			
	Earthen	Consumer	Replaceable
	Vulnerable	Social	Product
	Resilient	Indifferent	Interchangeable
	Reliant	Political	Unknowable
	Independent	Alien	Cultural
qamMNG			
	Earthen	Social	Replaceable
	Resilient	Indifferent	Political
	Unknowable	Consumer	Alien
	Vulnerable	Reliant	Product
	Cultural	Independent	Interchangeable
kZAQzp			
	Reliant	Consumer	Indifferent
	Earthen	Cultural	Replaceable
	Vulnerable	Social	Interchangeable
	Independent	Political	Product
	Resilient	Unknowable	Alien

j3fRxJ	Earthen	Consumer	Product
	Vulnerable	Social	Interchangeable
	Independent	Resilient	Replaceable
	Indifferent	Political	Reliant
	Alien	Cultural	Unknowable
qRDaYm	Earthen	Vulnerable	Unknowable
	Resilient	Independent	Indifferent
	Cultural	Social	Replaceable
	Product	Consumer	Interchangeable
	Political	Alien	Reliant
9hXbkw	Independent	Social	Product
	Replaceable	Vulnerable	Interchangeable
	Earthen	Alien	Consumer
	Unknowable	Cultural	Indifferent
	Political	Resilient	Reliant
EkeTny	Reliant	Resilient	Unknowable
	Earthen	Social	Alien
	Vulnerable	Cultural	Interchangeable
	Independent	Consumer	Replaceable
	Indifferent	Political	Product

After the 16 trials of Design Students, generic assumptions could be made toward the importance of generative language and the follies of some assumptive narratives, but students revealed in the post-interview responses that their definitions of plant, animal, and robot were based on initial conceptions of science fiction films and day-to-day interactions. In this way, *how could this be informed by a participant's age, interests, and episteme? Can this be clarified or codified through images?* To question this further, Table 5 and 6 present the same 15 words of classification and containers within Plant, Animal, and Robot to a series of Non-Designers. Additional steps were made to begin

associating individual images with words on a Combinatorial Chart (n=2) (fig. 23) (Table 7) and Combinatorial Chart (n=3) (fig. 24) (Table 8-10). Utilizing a preset series of images from the same makers in each of the 3 Combinatorial Chart (n=2) tests, each participant was confronted with a series of images in steps that had been devoid of interconnectivity beyond the perceivably singular maker from Carla Gannis to Gerhard Richter then Ori Toor. The makers and images selected for the Combinatorial Chart (n=3) were chosen as a set of works *from different makers* as a consideration of Paragonical media difference. In such, each phase from language to singular maker to various makers would produce a filtering and reconsideration for the rationalized bounds of the frame.

Table 5
Summary of Findings on Bias and Language Comparing Plants/Animals/Robots Non-Designers (25-50) (March/April 2022)

Word Bank	Plant			Animal			Robot			Association
	#	Pts.	Avg	#	Pts.	Avg	#	Pts.	Avg	By Avg. (#/6)
Alien	0	0	0.00	3	5	0.83	3	6	1.00	Robot
Consumer	2	8	1.33	4	15	2.50	0	0	0.00	Animal
Cultural	2	4	0.67	4	12	2.00	0	0	0.00	Animal
Earthen	6	25	4.17	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	Plant
Independent	2	5	0.83	2	6	1.00	2	9	1.50	Robot
Indifferent	2	4	0.67	0	0	0.00	4	10	1.67	Robot
Interchangeable	1	4	0.67	0	0	0.00	5	18	3.00	Robot
Political	0	0	0.00	6	14	2.33	0	0	0.00	Animal
Product	2	4	0.67	1	2	0.33	3	15	2.50	Robot
Reliant	2	5	0.83	1	4	0.67	3	9	1.50	Robot
Replaceable	0	0	0.00	0	0	0.00	6	15	2.50	Robot
Resilient	4	12	2.00	1	4	0.67	1	3	0.50	Plant
Social	0	0	0.00	6	22	3.67	0	0	0.00	Animal
Unknowable	3	6	1.00	0	0	0.00	3	5	0.83	Plant
Vulnerable	4	13	2.17	2	6	1.00	0	0	0.00	Plant

Table 6
Results of Bias and Language Comparing Plants/Animals/Robots
Non-Designers (25-50) (March/April 2022)

	Plant	Animal	Robot
qMS4ta	Earthen	Social	Replaceable
	Vulnerable	Consumer	Indifferent
	Product	Independent	Interchangeable
	Resilient	Cultural	Reliant
	Unknowable	Political	Alien
L3cTdD	Consumer	Political	Product
	Interchangeable	Cultural	Independent
	Reliant	Social	Unknowable
	Resilient	Vulnerable	Replaceable
	Earthen	Alien	Indifferent
8wvcXx	Resilient	Consumer	Product
	Earthen	Vulnerable	Interchangeable
	Independent	Political	Indifferent
	Cultural	Social	Reliant
	Unknowable	Alien	Replaceable
4tvJUj	Earthen	Social	Independent
	Vulnerable	Reliant	Interchangeable
	Indifferent	Alien	Resilient
	Cultural	Political	Replaceable
	Product	Consumer	Unknowable
sgEg3T	Earthen	Cultural	Reliant
	Unknowable	Resilient	Interchangeable
	Consumer	Social	Alien
	Independent	Product	Indifferent
	Vulnerable	Political	Replaceable
x2L5Gn	Earthen	Consumer	Product
	Vulnerable	Social	Replaceable
	Resilient	Independent	Interchangeable
	Reliant	Political	Alien
	Indifferent	Cultural	Unknowable

Table 7
n=2, Gannis/Richter/Toor
Results of Bias and Language Comparing Plants/Animals/Robots to Works
Non-Designers (25-50) (March/April 2022)

	Title of Works	qMS4ta	L3cTdD	8wvcXx	4tvJUj	sgEg3T	x2L5Gn
Carla Gannis	*A Mannerist Robot Learning to Love*	1, 1, 1	1, 0, 2	1, 1, 1	2, 0, 1	0, 1, 2	2, 0, 1
	All Balloons Are Runaways	2, 0, 1	2, 1, 0	0, 1, 2	1, 1, 1	2, 1, 0	1, 1, 1
	Cabinets of Curiosity	0, 1, 2	0, 1, 2	2, 0, 1	0, 1, 2	1, 0, 2	1, 0, 2
	Cosplay 03	1, 2, 0	1, 1, 1	1, 0, 2	0, 2, 1	0, 2, 1	0, 2, 1
	Dance of the Avatars	2, 1, 0	0, 2, 1	1, 2, 0	2, 1, 0	2, 0, 1	2, 1, 0
	Garden of Emoji Delights	0, 2, 1	2, 0, 1	2, 1, 0	1, 2, 0	1, 1, 1	1, 2, 0
	Selfie Drawing 41–Babel in Wonderland	1, 0, 2	1, 2, 0	0, 2, 1	1, 0, 2	1, 2, 0	0, 1, 2
Gerhard Richter	*19.3.92*	2, 1, 0	0, 2, 1	2, 0, 1	2, 1, 0	1, 2, 0	2, 1, 0
	Abstract Painting	1, 2, 0	1, 1, 1	1, 2, 0	1, 2, 0	0, 1, 2	1, 1, 1
	Abstraktes Bild	0, 2, 1	1, 2, 0	1, 0, 2	0, 1, 2	0, 2, 1	1, 2, 0
	Abstraktes Bild (726)	2, 0, 1	1, 0, 2	0, 1, 2	2, 0, 1	2, 0, 1	1, 0, 2
	Firenze	0, 1, 2	2, 0, 1	1, 1, 1	0, 2, 1	1, 0, 2	0, 1, 2
	Forest 5	1, 0, 2	0, 1, 2	2, 1, 0	1, 1, 1	2, 1, 0	2, 0, 1
	S. with Child	1, 1, 1	2, 1, 0	0, 2, 1	1, 0, 2	1, 1, 1	0, 2, 1
Ori Toor	*Children of the Internet Remixes*	2, 1, 0	2, 1, 0	0, 2, 1	1, 2, 0	2, 1, 0	1, 2, 0
	Clusters	2, 0, 1	1, 2, 0	2, 1, 0	2, 1, 0	2, 0, 1	2, 1, 0
	Facial Recognition Technology in Schools	1, 1, 1	2, 0, 1	0, 1, 2	0, 2, 1	0, 1, 2	0, 1, 2
	Gibberish Dark Mode	1, 2, 0	1, 1, 1	1, 2, 0	1, 1, 1	1, 1, 1	1, 1, 1
	Gibberish Journey	0, 2, 1	0, 2, 1	1, 1, 1	2, 0, 1	0, 2, 1	2, 0, 1
	Imaginary Print and Interfaces	0, 1, 2	1, 0, 2	1, 0, 2	0, 1, 2	1, 0, 2	0, 2, 1
	Knot Wrap Design (Lush)	1, 0, 2	0, 1, 2	2, 0, 1	1, 2, 0	1, 2, 0	1, 0, 2

Table 8
n=3, Trial X
Results of Bias and Language Comparing Plants/Animals/Robots to Works
Non-Designers (25-50) (March/April 2022)

List of Makers	Title of Works	8wvcXx	x2L5Gn
Ben Frost	*OxyCookie*	1, 3, 2	1, 3, 2
Christian Rex van Minnen	*Stone of Helen*	2, 0, 4	2, 3, 1
Christina Quarles	*Can Yew Feel? Tha Days Are Gettin' Shorter*	3, 2, 1	2, 4, 0
Christopher Wool	*If You*	0, 4, 2	0, 2, 4
Gerhard Richter	*Uncle Rudi*	0, 3, 3	0, 4, 2
Giuseppe Arcimboldo	*Reversible Head with Basket of Fruit*	4, 2, 0	4, 2, 0
Jackie Saccoccio	*Portrait (Reverse)*	3, 0, 3	3, 0, 3
Jacqueline Humphries	*jHΩ1:)*	3, 1, 2	2, 1, 3
Jeremy Blake	*Guccinam*	1, 1, 4	4, 0, 2
Kehinde Wiley	*Young Tree Shots on Jinggang Mountain*	3, 3, 0	4, 1, 1
Mark Bradford	*Q7*	2, 1, 3	2, 0, 4
Martha Rosler	*Frontier*	2, 2, 2	0, 3, 3
Njideka Akunyili Crosby	*Dwell: Aso Ebi*	1, 4, 1	3, 2, 1
Ori Toor	*Gibberish Pets*	1, 2, 3	2, 2, 2
Portia Munson	*Potpourri*	4, 1, 1	3, 3, 0
POSE	*Both Ends*	4, 0, 2	3, 1, 2
Ronald Wimberly	*Godzilla*	2, 3, 1	1, 2, 3
Tom LaDuke	*the pit in the hole*	0, 2, 4	1, 1, 4
Toyin Ojih Odutola	*Nanban*	2, 4, 0	1, 4, 1

Table 9
n=3, Trial Y
Results of Bias and Language Comparing Plants/Animals/Robots to Works
Non-Designers (25-50) (March/April 2022)

List of Makers	Title of Works	qMS4ta	sgEg3T
Adrián Villar Rojas	*David*	1, 4, 1	2, 4, 0
Bryan Cantley	*Ampdraw 2*	1, 1, 4	1, 1, 4
Cai Guo-Qiang	*Head On*	2, 4, 0	2, 2, 2
Carla Gannis	*DADEA 02 (Mountain Gorilla)*	3, 2, 1	2, 0, 4
Daniel Arsham	*Amethyst Crystallized Large Gengar*	1, 3, 2	3, 3, 0
Dan Lam	*A Subtle Alchemy*	0, 3, 3	2, 3, 1
Diana al-Hadid	*Nolli's Orders*	4, 2, 0	0, 4, 2
Giuseppe Arcimboldo	*Earth*	3, 3, 0	4, 2, 0
Hedi Xandt	*Heart of Glass*	4, 0, 2	1, 2, 3
Kris Kuksi	*Tabby Tyrant*	2, 2, 2	3, 2, 1
Meow Wolf	*Sparkle Cave*	1, 2, 3	3, 1, 2
Nick Cave	*Soundsuit (2011)*	3, 1, 2	1, 4, 1
Pelle Cass	*Selected People: Parks (Boston Public Garden)*	4, 1, 1	4, 1, 1
Perry Kulper	*Flights o' Fancy: Bird Motel*	2, 0, 4	0, 2, 4
Portia Munson	*The Garden*	2, 3, 1	3, 0, 3
Shahryar Nashat	*Start to Beg*	0, 2, 4	1, 3, 2
Tim Lewis	*Pony*	2, 1, 3	2, 1, 3
Tom LaDuke	*the new gods*	3, 0, 3	4, 0, 2
Yinka Shonibare	*Space Walk*	0, 4, 2	0, 3, 3

Table 10
n=3, Trial Z
Results of Bias and Language Comparing Plants/Animals/Robots to Works
Non-Designers (25-50) (March/April 2022)

List of Makers	Title of Works	L3cTdD	4tvJUj
Adrián Villar Rojas	*The Most Beautiful of All Mothers*	2, 4, 0	2, 4, 0
Bryan Cantley	*Taxonometric Chronology 01*	2, 1, 3	1, 4, 1
Daniel Arsham	*Cave of the Sublime, Iceland*	4, 1, 1	4, 0, 2
Dan Lam	*Come Together*	2, 0, 4	3, 0, 3
Diana al-Hadid	*Late Last Night*	2, 2, 2	4, 1, 1
John Baptist Jackson	*The Finding of Moses*	1, 4, 1	3, 3, 0
Kris Kuksi	*Churchtank Type 15*	0, 4, 2	0, 2, 4
Marco Brambilla	*Heaven's Gate*	3, 1, 2	3, 1, 2
Mark Bradford	*Scorched Earth*	0, 3, 3	2, 0, 4
Martha Rosler	*First Lady (Pat Nixon)*	4, 2, 0	0, 4, 2
Meow Wolf	*Numina*	3, 0, 3	4, 2, 0
Nick Cave	*Until*	1, 2, 3	1, 1, 4
Ori Toor	*Gibberish Post Apocalypse*	4, 0, 2	2, 2, 2
Pelle Cass	*Crowded Fields (Pole Vault at Harvard)*	3, 3, 0	0, 3, 3
Perry Kulper	*(CCHM) Proto_Formal Section*	2, 3, 1	1, 3, 2
Ronald Wimberly	*Attack on Titan*	3, 2, 1	2, 3, 1
Shahryar Nashat	*Player*	0, 2, 4	3, 2, 1
Tim Lewis	*Crimson Prince*	1, 3, 2	1, 2, 3
Tom LaDuke	*Object Permanence*	1, 1, 4	2, 1, 3

Analyzing the weighted associations for each term, the differences in Design Students (18-25) and Non-Designers (25-50) are presented as Independent (Plant → Robot), Reliant (Plant → Robot), and Unknowable (Robot → Plant). Similar to the conclusions of Enoch et al. concludes, "When compared to other species and to robots, an approximately equal number of desirable and undesirable traits emerged… This shows the importance of the comparison category when defining lay conceptions of humanness."[407] In such, the ability to graft language on to the surface of an other requires a respite and suspension of authority to position a set of standard parameters. Fronting this further and connecting back to the writing in "Alien Subjectivity," *where does the human subject lie?* Logically, the human would lie in the animal category, but what if the advent of play, personal preference, decentralization, or any other departure from socio-cultural homogeny persuaded the participant to place the human within the plant or within the robot categories? Does this *aesthetically* shift toward an avatar epistemology?

Rather than speculate on the nuance of human as an animal,[408] von Uexküll's *umwelt* provides a porous superstructure to understand the environmental factors of identity that go beyond an overly simplified Combinatorial Plant *or* Animal *or* Robot triptych, "Then, we will see each of our fellow human beings as being enclosed in bubbles that effortlessly overlap one another because they are made up of subjective perception signs. There is no space independent of subjects."[409] In this way, along similar paths of Whitehead and Sloterdijk, *umwelt* does not bound subjectivity to a monocular

[407] Enock, Flavell, Tipper and Over, "No convincing evidence outgroups are denied uniquely human characteristics," 5.

[408] Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*.

[409] von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*, 70.

ontology and represent "the" human, or other, as a set of predefined essences. Instead, the *trouble* with graphing bias alongside nature through predetermined frames is the pitfall of curation, "We may not pick and choose. For us the red glow of the sunset should be as much part of nature as are the molecules and electric waves by which men of science would explain the phenomenon. It is for natural philosophy to analyse how these various elements of nature are connected."[410]

Thus, selection is an extent-driven position that delimits the third space, the creativity, the sublime, the *sprezzatura*, the cool, etc. from the possible, the slippage, and the other. Shaviro's *Universe of Things* summarizes this within Whitehead as:

> Whitehead thus proposes a double view of the world… That is to say, they are active and articulated processes—experiences, or moments of feeling—rather than simple, self-identical substances. In this way, being is subordinated to becoming; yet becoming is not an uninterrupted, universal flux, but a multiplicity of discrete "occasions," each of which is limited, determinate, and finite (PR, 35 and passim). Whitehead thus affirms both the deep interrelatedness of all things and the ways that their interactions and variations continually lead to consequences that are new and unforeseen. Whitehead's highest value is creativity, which he calls "the universal of universals" (PR, 21). This means that the world is never static, never closed, never completed. Each process of becoming gives rise to novelty: it produces something new and unique, something that has never existed before. Things do not "persist in being" (the definition of Spinoza's conatus) so much as they continually alter and transform themselves, exhibiting "a certain originality . . . originality of response to stimulus" (PR, 104).[411]

The disjunctions afforded by a Combinatorial system and the departure of an a priori knowledge toward critique allows for an intersection of bias and phenomenology without the constraints of a socio-cultural network. In this way, makers like Adrián Villar

[410] Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 29.

[411] Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 3.

Rojas exist as an invisible and indivisible entity where making is an act of signature and erasure, “In the early large-scale projects, I was obsessed with erasing my name from the ‘exhibition space.’ I wanted people to find a "thing" without any chance of it being decoded as ‘art.’ For instance, I wanted those who found the whale in the Yatana Forest to do it almost by accident, completely free from any prejudice or preconception.”[412] To further de/recontextualize these procedures, Table 11 and 12 attempt to deconstruct the extents that pre-script an anticipated result by removing the frames to allow for a new set of participant to develop a subjective language to test the question, *what is an archive?*

Table 11
Summary of Findings on Bias and Language Generating 3 Terms on Archive Design Students (21-30) (January 2024)

Word Bank	Archive		Repeated Terms	Overlapping Terms by Points		
	Pts.	Avg		Term #1	Term #2	Term #3
Avatar	91	2.46	Art	Story	Self	Political
Belong	119	3.22	Chaos	Stateless	Churn	Social
Bond	114	3.08	Collection	Belong	Bond	Avatar
Churn	79	2.14	Discover	Learn	Social	Narrative
Cultural	112	3.03	Explore	Belong	History	Story
History	139	3.76	Group	Political	Social	Cultural
Learn	139	3.76	Growth	Learn	Self	Time
Narrative	114	3.08	Memory	Story	Time	Narrative
Other	57	1.54	Order	Belong	History	Narrative
Political	101	2.73	Past	History	Social	Time
Self	139	3.76	Preserve	Time	Cultural	Stateless/Social
Social	116	3.14	Record	History	Time	Learn
Stateless	86	2.32	Storage	Self	Stateless	Story/Learn
Story	124	3.35				
Time	135	3.65				

[412] Villar Rojas, *The Theater of Disappearances*, 109.

Table 12
Results of Bias and Language Generating 3 Terms on Archive
Interviewees: Design Students (21-30) (January 2024)

	Memos	Random	Activities
kKgqgP	Political	Time	Social
	Narrative	Story	Bond
	History	Self	Learn
	Other	Stateless	Cultural
	Avatar	Belong	Churn
	Ancient	Tomb	Priceless
TSDADZ	Learn	Avatar	Time
	History	Cultural	Story
	Political	Bond	Self
	Churn	Belong	Other
	Social	Stateless	Narrative
	Experimental	Traditional	Simple
gnVXUw	Learn	Time	Belong
	Self	History	Social
	Stateless	Political	Avatar
	Narrative	Cultural	Story
	Other	Bond	Churn
	Journal	Book	Film
xUvEed	Self	Narrative	Story
	Bond	Learn	Time
	Belong	History	Avatar
	Stateless	Political	Social
	Churn	Cultural	Other
	Memories	History	Keys
rR2vku	Self	Learn	Political
	Social	History	Stateless
	Belong	Story	Avatar
	Churn	Cultural	Bond
	Time	Narrative	Other

	Trapped	Aging	Discovery
2GKtrE	History	Cultural	Social
	Self	Story	Learn
	Belong	Time	Bond
	Avatar	Stateless	Political
	Narrative	Churn	Other
	Records	Chronicles	Explores
WagzKc	History	Political	Self
	Time	Cultural	Learn
	Narrative	Stateless	Belong
	Story	Social	Bond
	Avatar	Churn	Other
	Expression	Art	Authentic
8DYMv7	Cultural	Story	Self
	History	Narrative	Belong
	Learn	Social	Avatar
	Stateless	Time	Bond
	Churn	Political	Other
	Basketball	Stadium	Recess
y5AvZM	Belong	Time	Social
	Cultural	Self	Bond
	Learn	Churn	History
	Political	Avatar	Story
	Narrative	Stateless	Other
	Adventure	Exciting	Memorable
u7BjBZ	Learn	Churn	Bond
	Narrative	Social	Story
	Other	Self	Belong
	Stateless	Cultural	History
	Avatar	Political	Time

	Order	Group	System
BkYfYm	Belong	Political	Churn
	Bond	Cultural	Learn
	Time	Social	Story
	History	Narrative	Avatar
	Self	Other	Stateless
	Organization	Chaos	Explore
UGKvmD	Self	Social	Story
	Cultural	Stateless	Learn
	Avatar	Narrative	Belong
	Bond	Political	History
	Other	Churn	Time
	Preserve	Past	Memory
XUyuYc	Time	History	Narrative
	Stateless	Social	Self
	Avatar	Bond	Story
	Other	Political	Belong
	Churn	Learn	Cultural
	Collection	Memories	Growth
urEY3T	Bond	Story	Learn
	Belong	History	Self
	Cultural	Time	Churn
	Avatar	Narrative	Stateless
	Political	Social	Other
	Hidden	Saved	Future
Bnstwk	History	Bond	Belong
	Story	Cultural	Social
	Avatar	Stateless	Self
	Narrative	Time	Learn
	Churn	Political	Other

	Storage	Constraint	Group
X7SPWS	Story	Time	Bond
	History	Learn	Social
	Narrative	Self	Political
	Avatar	Belong	Cultural
	Stateless	Other	Churn
	Growth	Change	Cycle
33Ekna	Learn	Self	Story
	Time	History	Belong
	Bond	Stateless	Narrative
	Avatar	Churn	Other
	Social	Cultural	Political
	Contrast	Fears	Place
6r4SPp	Learn	Churn	Self
	Political	Stateless	History
	Social	Time	Belong
	Narrative	Other	Cultural
	Bond	Avatar	Story
	Inspiration	Depth	Passion
SLTejB	History	Story	Learn
	Narrative	Cultural	Time
	Stateless	Self	Bond
	Churn	Social	Avatar
	Other	Political	Belong
	Executive	Legislative	Judicial
Mv2Jze	Story	History	Narrative
	Other	Self	Avatar
	Cultural	Belong	Time
	Social	Stateless	Political
	Churn	Bond	Learn

jYwXDm	Chaos	Order	Tranquility
	Churn	Narrative	Self
	Other	Belong	Bond
	Stateless	History	Social
	Political	Learn	Cultural
	Avatar	Time	Story
XdPhxe	Growth	Journey	Explore
	Learn	Narrative	Time
	Cultural	Story	History
	Bond	Avatar	Belong
	Political	Stateless	Social
	Self	Other	Churn
t6nNhU	Nostalgic	Impactful	Compartment
	Time	Political	Narrative
	Belong	Churn	History
	Self	Learn	Cultural
	Story	Social	Stateless
	Bond	Avatar	Other
pr5Us6	Vault	Mixture	Chapters
	History	Churn	Time
	Political	Social	Self
	Belong	Cultural	Story
	Stateless	Bond	Learn
	Narrative	Avatar	Other
8bDLcm	Music	Time	Stories
	Story	Bond	Time
	Stateless	History	Social
	Political	Avatar	Narrative
	Belong	Churn	Cultural
	Self	Other	Learn

	Collection	Storage	Memory
Z6cTkB	Belong	Self	Time
	History	Bond	Social
	Political	Stateless	Learn
	Cultural	Churn	Narrative
	Avatar	Other	Story
	Past	Utilization	Value
yQC8dG	History	Belong	Bond
	Time	Learn	Self
	Story	Avatar	Cultural
	Narrative	Political	Other
	Social	Stateless	Churn
	Growth	Search	Crowded
bX68HC	Time	Social	History
	Learn	Cultural	Churn
	Story	Avatar	Political
	Self	Belong	Narrative
	Bond	Stateless	Other
	Curated	Disorderly	Conglomerate
LSUnNr	Story	Narrative	History
	Time	Learn	Self
	Belong	Stateless	Social
	Political	Avatar	Bond
	Cultural	Other	Churn
	Art	Explore	Energetic
hAxk5E	Self	Narrative	Avatar
	Learn	Cultural	Social
	Political	Story	Bond
	Time	History	Belong
	Other	Stateless	Churn

	Carry	Record	Protect
dJPGRp	Self	Learn	Bond
	Story	Time	Belong
	Narrative	History	Cultural
	Stateless	Political	Social
	Churn	Avatar	Other
	Knowledge	Variety	Substance
Cc5vd9	History	Cultural	Bond
	Learn	Belong	Social
	Political	Self	Story
	Narrative	Other	Avatar
	Time	Stateless	Churn
	Transience	Sound	Graffiti
sTDKqZ	Time	Churn	Self
	History	Stateless	Other
	Narrative	Social	Political
	Learn	Bond	Avatar
	Story	Belong	Cultural
	Discover	Collect	Achieve
9M2YZw	Learn	Time	Self
	Narrative	Belong	Cultural
	Stateless	Social	History
	Churn	Avatar	Political
	Story	Bond	Other
	Storage	Preserve	Document
wZcQZ4	Learn	Cultural	Narrative
	Self	Social	Story
	Avatar	Bond	Time
	Belong	Political	History
	Stateless	Churn	Other

	Paramount	Grow	Adaptable
PUEyWR	Cultural	Political	Avatar
	Time	Learn	Belong
	History	Self	Other
	Story	Social	Churn
	Narrative	Bond	Stateless
	Name	Color	Number
ktjEgn	Learn	Avatar	Bond
	Narrative	Political	Time
	Story	Belong	Stateless
	Self	Cultural	Social
	Other	Churn	History

Convergence and complexity within a fractalized meshwork of flux, the Combinatorial charts of an Abnatural aesthetic express a more-than-identity as singular grounding of an epistemological or teleological framework. Thus, these studies exist as a contradictory oversimplification of both an infinite number of positions within a diagonal proof, "the general theorem, that the powers [cardinalities] of well-defined sets have no maximum,"[413] and a Singleton set, "no subset other than itself and the empty set."[414] A graphical standardization then presupposes an "inclusion and membership"[415] system rather than an environmental assemblage, or "bubble." Projecting the conceptual frames of each study alongside an incomplete totality of work, Table 13 and 14 are case studies, developed by *my* WE, delving into the nuance of ascribing frames, language, and images as a curation on belonging through etymology, bias, and phenomenological extents.

[413] Akihiro Kanamori, "The Empty Set, the Singleton, and the Ordered Pair," *The Bulletin of Symbolic Logic* 9, no. 3 (September 2003), 276.
[414] Kanamori, 277.
[415] Kanamori, 276.

Table 13
Strata of Avatar Association: Definitions and Groupings
37 Makers Grouped/Regrouped by Frame A – Frame B – Frame C (12.2023)

Frame A	Frame B	Frame C	Makers
Smith [1]*makers making make makes make* [2]*to make your own*	Foundry [1]*to make* [2]*a bubbling, boiling, gurgling lava of potential*	Force [1]*I am going to make it work* [2]*energy exerted in fitting*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Cai Guo-Qiang, Carla Gannis, Christian Rex van Minnen, Christopher Wool, Daniel Arsham, Gerhard Richter, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Jackie Saccoccio, Jacqueline Humphries, Jeremy Blake, John Baptist Jackson, Mark Bradford, Meow Wolf, Ori Toor, Pelle Cass, Tim Lewis, Toyin Ojih Odutola
		Forge [1]*I am going to make it* [2]*energy exerted in supplying*	Ben Frost, Bryan Cantley, Christina Quarles, Dan Lam, Diana al-Hadid, Hedi Xandt, Kehinde Wiley, Kris Kuksi, Marco Brambilla, Martha Rosler, Nick Cave, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Perry Kulper, Portia Munson, POSE, Shahryar Nashat, Tom LaDuke, Yinka Shonibare
	Math [1]*"known"* [2]*sets and lists, lists and sets*	Add [1]*a mathematical system when the components in question result in something greater than one or more of the values* [2]*a pursuit of more-than*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Cai Guo-Qiang, Christian Rex van Minnen, Christopher Wool, Dan Lam, Diana al-Hadid, Gerhard Richter, Jackie Saccoccio, Jacqueline Humphries, Jeremy Blake, Kris Kuksi, Mark Bradford, Nick Cave, Ori Toor, Perry Kulper, POSE, Shahryar Nashat, Tom LaDuke
		Subtract [1]*a mathematical system when the components in question result in something less than one or more of the values* [2]*a pursuit of less-than*	Ben Frost, Bryan Cantley, Carla Gannis, Christina Quarles, Daniel Arsham, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Hedi Xandt, John Baptist Jackson, Kehinde Wiley, Marco Brambilla, Martha Rosler, Meow Wolf, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Pelle Cass, Portia Munson, Tim Lewis, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Yinka Shonibare

Carpentry *[1]the act of joining, fastening, or combining ingredients in specific recipes* *[2]putting order things in right the*	Tool *[1]French, mug, pug, wrench* *[2]an object used to make parts hide*	Hide *[1]and seek, an operation of withholding* *[2]a downplayed gesture of a loud exclamation*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Ben Frost, Carla Gannis, Christopher Wool, Hedi Xandt, Kehinde Wiley, Marco Brambilla, Martha Rosler, Meow Wolf, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Pelle Cass, Yinka Shonibare
		Make *[1]to have existed in, or after, the Stone Age* *[2]a feverish disregard for the object making systems currently in place*	Bryan Cantley, Cai Guo-Qiang, Christian Rex van Minnen, Christina Quarles, Daniel Arsham, Dan Lam, Diana al-Hadid, John Baptist Jackson, Nick Cave, Ori Toor, Perry Kulper, Tim Lewis
		Use *[1]how to do, in the manner in which was made to do* *[2]do in the right/wrong way through doing the do*	Gerhard Richter, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Jackie Saccoccio, Jacqueline Humphries, Jeremy Blake, Kris Kuksi, Mark Bradford, Portia Munson, POSE, Shahryar Nashat, Tom LaDuke, Toyin Ojih Odutola
	Object *[1]Bryant and Harman* *[2]a thing, made by makers, with suspended disbelief that becomes a thing independent of the makers*	Part *[1]a* *[2]a thing that may or may not be a whole*	Christopher Wool, Dan Lam, Gerhard Richter, Hedi Xandt, Jackie Saccoccio, Jacqueline Humphries, Jeremy Blake, Kehinde Wiley, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Pelle Cass, Portia Munson, POSE
		Part(s) *[1]few* *[2]a series that may or may not be a whole*	Ben Frost, Cai Guo-Qiang, Carla Gannis, Christian Rex van Minnen, Christina Quarles, Daniel Arsham, Diana al-Hadid, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, John Baptist Jackson, Mark Bradford, Ori Toor, Shahryar Nashat
		Parts *[1]some* *[2]a set that may or may not be a whole*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Bryan Cantley, Kris Kuksi, Marco Brambilla, Martha Rosler, Meow Wolf, Nick Cave, Perry Kulper, Tim Lewis, Tom LaDuke, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Yinka Shonibare

Processor *[1]used in combining basil and pine nuts for a sturdy pesto base* *[2]to create an equal matrix*	Make *[1]to brandish oneself a maker* *[2]the verb of a maker*	Broken *[1]highlighting cracks with gold* *[2]nothing super glue can't fix*	Cai Guo-Qiang, Christian Rex van Minnen, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Hedi Xandt, Jeremy Blake, Kehinde Wiley, Kris Kuksi, Ori Toor, Shahryar Nashat
		Collage *[1]an act of ignorantly combining variable ontologies and flattening the meanings to a lowest common denominator and then, readdressing it as whole* *[2]ignoring instinct and acting like a Kindergartner*	Bryan Cantley, Daniel Arsham, Gerhard Richter, Jackie Saccoccio, John Baptist Jackson, Mark Bradford, Martha Rosler, POSE, Yinka Shonibare
		Fashion *[1]resolving a silhouette* *[2]a mode of glamorizing the prospects of "making do"*	Carla Gannis, Christina Quarles, Diana al-Hadid, Marco Brambilla, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Pelle Cass, Perry Kulper, Portia Munson, Tim Lewis
		Mask *[1]an opaque-ish layer overtop of an object underneath* *[2]a thing worn in a revolt, in a pandemic, in an old Western, in a masquerade, etc.*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Ben Frost, Christopher Wool, Dan Lam, Jacqueline Humphries, Meow Wolf, Nick Cave, Tom LaDuke, Toyin Ojih Odutola
	Glue *[1]a register for intertwining parts that result in a single whole for any amount of time* *[2]a fixative that brings together components from none of the components*	Blend *[1]hide those hands* *[2]the smoothie store of aesthetic attentions full of fillers and "natural essence"*	Jackie Saccoccio, Kehinde Wiley, Marco Brambilla, Martha Rosler, Meow Wolf, Pelle Cass, POSE, Tim Lewis, Yinka Shonibare
		Compress *[1]the process for making plywood, glulam, and MDF* *[2]squishing until changing: opinions, materials, stuffed animals, charcoal, paper scraps*	Bryan Cantley, Cai Guo-Qiang, Carla Gannis, Christopher Wool, Daniel Arsham, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Jacqueline Humphries, Kris Kuksi, Shahryar Nashat

Processor *(Continued)*	Glue *(Continued)*	Merge *[1]a collision becomes chemically inseparable* *[2]splicing between softwares where nothing is cross-compatible*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Ben Frost, Hedi Xandt, John Baptist Jackson, Mark Bradford, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Ori Toor, Portia Munson, Tom LaDuke
		Stack *[1]ask Benjamin Bratton* *[2]on top and below, influencing each while maintaining itself*	Christian Rex van Minnen, Christina Quarles, Dan Lam, Diana al-Hadid, Gerhard Richter, Jeremy Blake, Nick Cave, Perry Kulper, Toyin Ojih Odutola
Standard *[1]extents that keep critics (in)sane* *[2]extents that keep historians (in)sane*	Graphic *[1]a systematic order that has no discrete relationship to the digital* *[2]using a graph to ic*	Comparative *[1]a thing is different from a THING* *[2]using your eyes*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Ben Frost, John Baptist Jackson, Marco Brambilla, Pelle Cass, Portia Munson, Tim Lewis
		Deceptive *[1]intentional misguiding of the maker, a trickster ploy that is rarely understood by curatorial information cards* *[2]work as magician*	Carla Gannis, Christopher Wool, Daniel Arsham, Diana al-Hadid, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Jacqueline Humphries, Kris Kuksi, Yinka Shonibare
		Logo *[1]an iconographic stand-in* *[2]a design that can be owned and legally disputed*	Bryan Cantley, Cai Guo-Qiang, Hedi Xandt, Mark Bradford, Martha Rosler, Nick Cave, Toyin Ojih Odutola
		Surreal *[1]fantastical limbo* *[2]nothing, literally nothing to do, with an art historical movement*	Christian Rex van Minnen, Jackie Saccoccio, Jeremy Blake, Kehinde Wiley, Meow Wolf, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Perry Kulper
		Swatch *[1]a small piece of paper with multiple colors aligned in varying gradients to determine the correct shade when inquiring for purchase* *[2]corporate hex codes in CMYK and RGB*	Christina Quarles, Dan Lam, Gerhard Richter, Ori Toor, POSE, Shahryar Nashat, Tom LaDuke

Standard *(Continued)*	Anatomy *[1]obligation a maker feels toward rendering these skin forms* *[2]biology as a product of phenomenology*	Figural *[1]an excuse to make any line work anthropocentric* *[2]capturing that which is tangential to the visual, in the visual*	Ben Frost, Bryan Cantley, Carla Gannis, Christopher Wool, POSE, Tom LaDuke, Toyin Ojih Odutola
		Metaphysical *[1]meta, physical* *[2]a physical space that alludes to something non-physical*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Cai Guo-Qiang, Dan Lam, Jeremy Blake, Meow Wolf, Ori Toor, Pelle Cass, Tim Lewis
		Obligational *[1]seeing your parents for the holidays* *[2]pure, guilt association*	Christina Quarles, Jacqueline Humphries, John Baptist Jackson, Marco Brambilla, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Perry Kulper, Portia Munson
		Sensational *[1]spidey-senses* *[2]making while between slightly or substantially unconscious*	Christian Rex van Minnen, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Hedi Xandt, Kehinde Wiley, Martha Rosler, Nick Cave, Yinka Shonibare
		Structural *[1]the meat and bones* *[2]tendons, joints, nails, bolts, frames, and all of those tedious weld seams*	Daniel Arsham, Diana al-Hadid, Gerhard Richter, Jackie Saccoccio, Kris Kuksi, Mark Bradford, Shahryar Nashat
Discuss *[1]a thing people cannot do with their family* *[2]an informal mode of communication*	Gossip *[1]a thing to be shared when the tea is hot and the cucumber sandwiches are plentiful, as long as there is a safe amount of social distance* *[2]communicative, hushed slander or revolt, depending upon your predisposition*	Automatic *[1]the process of converting creative energy into a binary output for procedural nonchalant-ness* *[2]the beep-boops that get things accomplished*	Carla Gannis, Christian Rex van Minnen, Diana al-Hadid, Gerhard Richter, Marco Brambilla, Perry Kulper
		Collect *[1]the bowls and mugs that accumulate from 2 am pop tart and coffee runs* *[2]to avoid disposing of*	Cai Guo-Qiang, Christina Quarles, Jeremy Blake, Kehinde Wiley, Martha Rosler, Meow Wolf

Discuss *(Continued)*	Gossip *(Continued)*	Fantasy *[1]a land where it is sane to think of robots in everyday spaces* *[2]a space between conscious, subconscious, and unconscious*	Ben Frost, Bryan Cantley, Daniel Arsham, Jacqueline Humphries, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Ori Toor
		Forget *[1]a process of letting conscious slippage design aesthetics* *[2]lost and found in conscious pointillism*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Jackie Saccoccio, Portia Munson, POSE, Shahryar Nashat, Toyin Ojih Odutola
		Recall *[1]a harkening or a scent of something familiar without chronology* *[2]to call upon something, again*	Dan Lam, Hedi Xandt, John Baptist Jackson, Mark Bradford, Pelle Cass, Tim Lewis
		Tea *[1]"I hate you" vs. I hate you* *[2]"be my friend" vs. be my friend*	Christopher Wool, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Kris Kuksi, Nick Cave, Tom LaDuke, Yinka Shonibare
	Edit *[1]an act that I find my own Thespianism mandating* *[2]too much equals too little, and too little equals too much*	Close *[1]to end at a watertight object* *[2]to give the appearance of total resolution*	Daniel Arsham, Marco Brambilla, Meow Wolf, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Portia Munson, Shahryar Nashat
		Cover *[1]an effort to make a human into a robot* *[2]above the fitted sheet and below the duvet, unused by most 20-somethings*	Adrián Villar Rojas, Ben Frost, Dan Lam, Jeremy Blake, Kris Kuksi, Nick Cave
		Expunge *[1]to scrub out with abrasive force* *[2]instead of making out or using white-out, burn the evidence*	Bryan Cantley, Christina Quarles, Diana al-Hadid, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Jacqueline Humphries, Mark Bradford

Discuss *(Continued)*	Edit *(Continued)*	Highlight *[1]to emboss in fluorescence* *[2]to point out with/without arrogance*	Cai Guo-Qiang, John Baptist Jackson, Kehinde Wiley, Ori Toor, Pelle Cass, Tom LaDuke
		Tape *[1]straight lines* *[2]to show, to hide, and to give the hand guides*	Carla Gannis, Christopher Wool, Hedi Xandt, Martha Rosler, Tim Lewis, Yinka Shonibare
		Trace *[1]something that is seen as cheating until you consider yourself a maker, then a form of praxis* *[2]a red lining done by a supervisor to prove your incompetence*	Christian Rex van Minnen, Gerhard Richter, Jackie Saccoccio, Perry Kulper, POSE, Toyin Ojih Odutola

Table 14
Strata of Avatar Association: Image List
37 Makers Grouped by Frame A–B–C (December 2023)

List of Makers	Title of Work #1	Title of Work #2	Title of Work #3
Adrián Villar Rojas	*Where the Slaves Live*	*The Most Beautiful of All Mothers*	*The Theater of Disappearances*
Ben Frost	*GOTTA TAKE 'EM ALL*	*Coke is It*	*My Life is Much Happier Now*
Bryan Cantley	*Taxonometric Indicators 42:34*	*AMPdraw 01*	*Rorschac-hugger 01*
Cai Guo-Qiang	*Watering Hole*	*Sky Ladder*	*Elegy*
Carla Gannis	*DADEA 01 (European Bison)*	*DADEA 03 (Bactrian Camel)*	*Into the Ether: A Cosmology... No. 1*
Christian Rex van Minnen	*Reglaze the Pizza Dynasty*	*We, Cold Wet and Dark*	*Parallax*
Christina Quarles	*Casually Cruel*	*Magic Hour*	*New Moon*
Christopher Wool	*Untitled from 99/00*	*Apocalypse Now*	*Untitled (1988)*
Daniel Arsham	*Bound Figure*	*Cave of Diana*	*Wall Excavation*
Dan Lam	*Getting Soft*	*Eat You Up*	*Just In*
Diana al-Hadid	*In Mortal Repose*	*Ait*	*By Cover of Night*
Gerhard Richter	*Untitled (2002)*	*Untitled (1992)*	*Breath*
Giuseppe Arcimboldo	*Winter*	*The Librarian*	*The Four Seasons in One Head*
Hedi Xandt	*Apollo Rey III*	*A King's Bed*	*God of the Grove*
Jackie Saccoccio	*Untitled (2019)*	*Curtain*	*Right Portrait*
Jacqueline Humphries	*Untitled (Yellow)*	*Untitled (2015)*	*[###]*
Jeremy Blake	*1906*	*Winchester Redux*	*Century 21*
John Baptist Jackson	*Heroic Landscape with... Horsemen*	*The Rich Man and Lazarus*	*The Burial of Christ*

Kehinde Wiley	*Shantavia Beale II*	*Triple Portrait of Charles I*	*Duc D'Arenberg*
Kris Kuksi	*Prosperity*	*A New Divinity*	*Eros at Play*
Marco Brambilla	*Nude Descending a Staircase No.3*	*Power*	*Creation (Megaplex)*
Mark Bradford	*Monster*	*The Hood is Moody*	*Window Shopper*
Martha Rosler	*Photo Op*	*Beauty Rest*	*The Gray Drape*
Meow Wolf	*Omega Mart*	*Gremlin Symphony*	*Rat's Nest*
Nick Cave	*Speak Louder*	*Tondo*	*Soundsuits*
Njideka Akunyili Crosby	*Wedding Portrait*	*Mother and Child*	*Cassava Garden*
Ori Toor	*Gibberish Worlds 4*	*Architectural Gibberish Industry Magic*	*Relationships*
Pelle Cass	*Strangers*	*Crowded Fields (Divers)*	*Futures from Baseline Court 6*
Perry Kulper	*David's Island Strategic Plot*	*(CCHM) Muse Archival*	*El Dorado: Floating Bird Motel*
Portia Munson	*Pink Project: Table*	*Her Coffin*	*Bound Angel*
POSE	*Rowhouse*	*Frizz*	*Tidy*
Ronald Wimberly	*Dark Matter*	*Dead Letters #2*	*Prince of Cats*
Shahryar Nashat	*Sex Position for Broken Ribs*	*Bone In*	*Keep Begging*
Tim Lewis	*Mephistopheles Manifesto*	*Salutation*	*One Grain of Rice*
Tom LaDuke	*Surrender*	*The depths and the shallows*	*Silent Star*
Toyin Ojih Odutola	*Between the Margins*	*Streets Ain't Ready*	*UNTITLED 2011*
Yinka Shonibare	*Leisure Lady (with ocelots)*	*Clementia*	*Party Time*

The expression and grouping of a set of 37 makers with 3 works per maker and 5/10/40 frames exists as a case study of a WE contextualized bias. Similar to the "Alien Subjectivity" reveal of unique avatars that are preformed by *this* WE, the interconnectivity and adjacencies of Table 13 and 14 highlight the nuance of a Combinatorial chart and Abnatural aesthetic. In such, these frames do not operate within Cartesian and Kantian absolutes, where the graphical yields an actual equation, but illustrate an introspective, diaristic, and epistemological snapshot. Between Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10½ Chapter*[416] and Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*,[417] the inexactitude and subjective preference *is the différance within the WE.*

In this manner, the "bubbles" between "coordinates" exist as an undermining of the infinite complexity between images, text, and representation within *a life*. Sloterdijk illustrates this further as an actionable and experimental architecture of non-space:

> For its creator, the soap bubble thus becomes the medium of a surprising soul expansion. The bubble and its blower coexist in a field spread out through attentive involvement. The child that follows its soap bubbles into the open is no Cartesian subject, remaining planted on its extensionless thought-point while observing an extended thing on its course through space. In enthusiastic solidarity with his iridescent globes, the experimenting player plunges into the open space and transforms the zone between the eye and the object into an animated sphere.[418]

Through this philosophical metaphor, the subjectivity of the "blower," the environmental conditions, the viscosity and constitution of the soapy slurry, etc. change the affects of the bubble. Thus, the participants studied above and the avatars within the

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[416] Julian Barnes, *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (New York: Vintage, 1990).
[417] Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 2010).
[418] Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres Volume I: Bubbles*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011), 18-19.

WE present different readings, responses, critiques, and frames for each of the Combinatorial charts. The inevitable inconsistencies cultivate an Asymptotic reality embedded in an Abnatural aesthetic as fundamental adjacency toward an *agential realism*.[419] Thus, the bubbles, as a modality of difference, representation, grafting, and individualization, are inherent to the framework of Barad, "the agential realist ontology that I propose does not take separateness to be an inherent feature of how the world is. But neither does it denigrate separateness as mere illusion, an artifact of human consciousness led astray. Difference cannot be taken for granted; it matters—indeed, it is what matters."[420] Thus, formalizing an exactitude of coordinates and bubbles, creates a *troubling* negation by bracketing, bounding, and fencing off spaces of difference.

In critiquing the catalog, expunging universality of a canon, and analyzing introspective assemblages that constitute the WE, the Combinatorial charts introduce a reading of an infinite *field condition* beyond the human-centered artificiality of nature as a speculative capacity for relational confluence without rigid dimensionality. In this way, works as well as avatar(s), which may indeed be the very work itself, may escape a correlational humanism that relies on the measure toward an average or singular subject. Diverse and inconsistent ruptures in the reading of the chart are not an expungable standard deviation but occur as a *troubling* aesthetic. To this point Shaviro states:

> The only way to outfox correlationism, and reach the great outdoors, without simply falling back into what Kant rejected as "dogmatism" is to proceed obliquely through the history of philosophy, finding its points of divergence and its strange detours, when it moves beyond its own anthropocentric assumptions. The aim is not to critically document the closures and omissions of traditional metaphysics, as did Heidegger and Derrida… In contrast to this, both Whitehead

[419] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2007).
[420] Barad, 136.

> and Meillassoux seize on the contradictions and hesitations of classical philosophy, not as points of critical intervention, but as tools for regaining the great outdoors. [421]

Tool generations, like the made works and practice of a maker, are infinitely subjective and persist as points of canonical extent-ridden limitations. Discussed in the previous chapters of this reading, mainly "Providing Extents for Breaking," Paragonical structures limit, impose, and incarcerate the subjectivity and potential of the WE and the hands as a necessity for consistency and critique. Teleological, epistemological, and etymological shifts guised as "taste" and modern progress necessitate a return to the primary source for further reading. Thus, the field condition of a Combinatorial chart exists as a decentralization from an *exact* or *prescribed* reading of work and subjectivity toward a materiality that is primary and sourced by the WE.

Graphically, architectural metaphors provide a series of object/subject lenses to supplement the Combinatorial charts. Thus, Stan Allen produces an introduction into the framework of field conditions:

> The term 'field conditions' is at once a reassertion of architecture's contextual assignment and at the same time a proposal to comply with such obligations. Field conditions moves from the one toward the many: from individuals to collectives, from objects to fields. The term itself plays on a double meaning architects work net only in the office or studio (in the laboratory) but in the field: on site, in contact with the fabric of architecture.[422]

Through Allen's definition, the foundations of field conditions produce a third space that both acknowledges the "high practice" of a theoretical space in an office or

[421] Shaviro, *The Universe of Things*, 9.
[422] Stan Allen, "From Object to Field," *Architectural Digest* 67, no. 5-6 (May-June 1997), 24.

institution and the "low practice" of site-based data and work from the hands.[423] Through distinguishing the *kinds* of work rather than the range of *degree*, the contradiction of an implied duality within a bracketed "capital-A" architectural discourse persists as an etymological and phenomenological *frame*. In the same manner, the WE's delamination and assumed independence is a contemplation on the critique of a field condition where both the practice of the hands and the location of the hands are considered as positions for a *troubling* phenomenology and subjectivity.

A series of case studies illustrate this point as misreading of comparative superstructures through Colin Rowe's *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa*, then move toward undermining the advent of reading as an invisible undergirding in a scale-degree consideration through the works of Robert Morris, Yvonne Rainer, and Bernard Tschumi.

Through Colin Rowe's diagrammatic misreading of grids in Corbusier's Villa Stein and Palladio's Villa Foscari, a deconstructive technique folds intention, action, and result as "almost" the same.[424] Proposing a Virgil-based virtuosity for both Palladio and Corbusier, Rowe utilizes a metaphorical framework to introduce a speculation on structural grids, unit-based floorplans, and exterior elevations. Continuing on with the act of blurring discourses between the "Mannerist" and "Modern," mathematical proportions and musical patterns are framed as an interjection of simultaneous thinking beyond the visible toward a diagrammatic reading of the system, and not the surface conditions and decoration.[425] In this way, Rowe's process of distinguishing the difference and similarity responds to an insurmountable difference that Barad roots out as a teleological and

[423] Allen, "From Object to Field," 24.
[424] Rowe, *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays*, 4.
[425] Rowe, 8.

epistemological difference, "Difference patterns do not merely change in time and space; spacetime is an enactment of differentness, a way of making/marking here and now."[426]

Just as the Combinatorial charts front an analysis toward a diagrammatic reading, rather than a Cartesian or Kantian absolute universality, Rowe's work produces an *asymptotic* condition where the works and makers are analyzed toward a degree of contradiction and congruity. The etymological gray-area of "almost" also provides Rowe an Abnatural aesthetic for a limited/infinite space for expressing the context of a field condition. Rowe's production of a gray-area expresses a pitfall of the linguistic and diagrammatic where the subject must rest in an unsolvable and unknowable contradiction. Barad grounds this in Zeno's Paradox, where a full act must be completed by reaching the halfway point, of a halfway point, of a halfway point, until an infinite number of processes exist before beginning/ending of an action, but Barad solves this with, "What is needed is a new starting place."[427] Thus, Barad and Rowe avoid the infinite of simultaneity and similarity by heightening the importance of the "almost" as a recontextualizing for a point of infinite suspension and irresolution, or the bubble.

At larger physical scales, field conditions challenge an infinite expression of expansion that moves beyond the diagrammatic into a phenomenological space outside of a singular representation. From the speculative liminal space of dance and performativity to the ontology of an other as an architectural form, the subjective and objective differentiation of Morris, Rainer, and Tschumi rest at the subjectivity of the other. Where Morris and Rainer consider the analysis of an exhibition and performance space with

[426] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 137.
[427] Barad, 137.

human bodies, Tschumi considers the assemblage as a temporal investigation into the totality of phenomenon including the nonhuman *architectural* bodies.

Spivey's analysis on the minimalist sculpture and dance as a framework for Robert Morris and Yvonne Rainer challenges a renewed subjectivity based on "an alternative relationship that resists this subject/object dualism in favor of an intersubjective model."[428] Although the ontology of the subject and the consideration of the audience is persistent in conceptual sculpture,[429] Morris' differentiation toward a subject, as Spivey considers from the analysis of dance, is due to the irreducible bias toward dance, "[Morris] placed on the viewer's bodily relationship with the art object, a distinction that derives directly from his unique involvement in avant-garde dance."[430]

Challenging Benjamin's conceptualization of the spectacle,[431] the work of Morris and Rainer in *Check* exuded an intersubjective liminal space that both exists as performance and non-spectacle:

> The performers mingled within the audience until a signal indicated that they should split into two groups to perform a series of simple simultaneous actions. At one end of the hall, a man ran back and forth on a platform while, at the other, Rainer moved slowly before an image of vertical lines projected on the wall. When these activities were completed, the performers again dispersed into the crowd where, according to Morris, they "resume[d] wandering, talking, observing as a kind of proto-audience."[432]

[428] Virginia Spivey, "Sites of Subjectivity," *Dance Research Journal* 35, no. 2 (Winter-Summer 2004), 115-116.
[429] Allen, "From Object to Field," 25.
[430] Spivey, 113.
[431] Spivey, 117.
[432] Spivey, 119-120.

Thus, the interaction of the maker(s), the made, and the act of *performing*, provide a contradictory condition of being both infinite and insufficient in subjective differentiation. *Who is acting? Who/what/where is the work?* In this framework, the performance becomes un-documentable and imperceivable as a personal empiricism within bias and subjectivity. Thus, the audience is/not/maybe the work. *Existing only in the gray*, Morris and Rainer position their work as defying the absolute through questioning the very ontology and completion of the made work, *only the bubble exists*. Returning to the throes of humanity, the dancers of *Check* and the sculptures of Morris present a perceptual embodiment of the self/other/avatar as singular. Flattening spectacle, merging with context, curating an environmental non-space, Morris writes that sculpture can never exist as an absolute, "a single, pure sensation cannot be transmissible precisely because one perceives simultaneously more than one as parts in any given situation: if color, then also dimension; if flatness, then texture, etc.… Their parts are bound together in such a way that they offer a maximum resistance to perceptual separation."[433]

Returning to Allen's essay on field conditions, Morris and Rainer's work contemplates a meaning-generating machine of the made, "The construction of meaning was displaced from the object itself to the spatial field between the viewer and the object: a fluid zone of perceptual interference, populated by moving bodies."[434] Where population/audience exists, the made, the work, and/or the other relies on a imperceivable invisibility to highlight their irreducible ontology. Toward an indistinguishable embedded ontology, how can the other be inserted/extracted from a field condition?

[433] Robert Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), 6.
[434] Allen, "From Object to Field," 25.

Transitioning to the perceptions and ever-becoming spectacle of an architectural object, Bernard Tschumi challenges the incompleteness, not of the spectacle, but of the space as a critique of otherness, "Tschumi's architecture, consistently described by him as "events", combines many contemporary philosophies of event with theories of space, leading in consequence to a situation in which each of his works must be interpreted as inseparably spatial, temporal and material, simultaneously produced and perceived."[435] Where Morris and Rainer's inseparable dualism attempts to merge complexity with environmental conditions, Tschumi provides disturbances as a rupture of spatial relationships through architectural objects.

Parc de La Villette presents a diagrammatic embodiment of difference and interjection within space as a hyper-specific disjunction that undermines the field as a continuous plane, "Their [Parc de La Villette pavilions] multiplication, senselessness and defectiveness are a visualization and realization of the desire for otherness. They are not so much a representation of a certain theory, but rather an exposition of pure inner consciousness, a manifestation of a certain eroticism and disturbances of space."[436] In such, Tschumi posits a series of interlocking questions that excise subjectivity from the subjectivity of the human/nonhuman self/other:

> 3.5 In any case, does the concept of space note and denote all possible spaces, both real and virtual?
>
> 3.51 If the understanding of all possible spaces includes social and mental space as well as physical space without any distinction, is the distinction between living, perceiving, and conceiving space a necessary condition of that understanding?

[435] Cezary Wąs, "The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher," *Quart* 52, no. 2 (2019), 93.

[436] Wąs, 96.

…

4.3 If space is neither a social product (an end result) nor a pure category (a starting point), is it an in-between (an intermediary)?[437]

Tschumi, rather than existing within the gray as a zone of indeterminacy, forges liminal spaces as architectural objects that cultivate possible locations for grafting and additional misreadings Thus, the objects of Parc de La Villette are placed in a field-generating-field where the conditions exude/extract infinitude as a phenomenological nonhuman ontology. Where Morris and Rainer rely on phenomenological nuance to determine an indistinguishable differentiation within the field, Tschumi conceptualizes a renewed field condition that grafts infinite surfaces onto an object as a third space of a field within a field as a mereological ontology.

Producing difference to contest with an Abnatural aesthetic, the installation of the WE within a field condition begets a question of folded interiority and resistance. *Who/what/where/how does the WE, as self/other/avatar(s), exist within a field condition? How do the epistemological, etymological, phenomenological, etc. biases mutate these subjectivities?* By activating these subjectivities within a Combinatorial chart, the field conditions of the WE are graphed as an initial framework for conceptualizing a third space between alterity and ipseity. Along with the Deleuzian fold and *life*, Barad uses agential realism as a position to consider an embodiment of the WE, "There is no absolute inside or absolute outside. There is only exteriority within, that is, agential

[437] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1996), 61.

separability. Embodiment is a matter not of being specifically situated in the world, but rather of being of the world in its dynamic specificity."[438]

Where the Combinatorial chart begins, it fails as an equation, as a metric, and as a philosophy. However, as a tool for circumnavigating bias and producing a speculative reflection of the alterous, the tool affords a specific non-specificity that cultivates surfaces for grafting and establishing field conditions. Where an Abnatural aesthetic is a contradictory consideration beyond the socio-cultural machine to aid in the processes of decentering the self, the Combinatorial charts highlight misreadings of intermittent spaces between the locations as a limited grouping of sets within sets, ad infinitum. Thus, infinite bubbles, intersections, and teleological differences arise as the self/other/avatars of the WE are ever unfixed.

To contextualize the mereological nuance of this non-space/field contradiction, the musician, as a maker, an interpreter, a writer, and a performer, produces stiches where the comparative analytic of object phenomenologies cleave at the registers of a Combinatorial chart.

> Buchloh: Do you have a problem reconciling all these disparate elements? Or do you see them as continuing to be operative in your life and in your work, and while being detached from each other, don't they simultaneously define what you do and how you do it?
> Koether: It's like other things in life, you know? I mean, they are there, some of them have been constitutive elements and others are sort of… It's like in a study gallery where you have the important parts–the masterpieces–and then you have these other elements that are as crucial as the rest in order to let the whole thing live. I feel it is the same for what I

[438] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 377.

call my coordinates or my points of reference. I don't need to reconcile them. They are there… just like my "Bruised Grid."[439]

[439] Jutta Koether, "A Conversation with Jutta Koether," *October* 157 (Summer 2016), 24.

> One day, the man, whose name was
> @SnowflakeSmasher86
> Turned to his friend, the internet, and he said, "Internet, do
> you love me?"
> The internet looked at him and said, "Yes
> I love you very, very, very, very, very, very much
> I am your best friend
> In fact, I love you so much that I never, ever want us to be
> apart, ever again, ever"
> "I would like that," said the man[440]

The immediacy of music and performance mutates and reconstitutes the Combinatorial charts from "Abnatural Combinations" into a site-specific, vernacular, and teleological frame. *Did you hear it? Were you there? Did you see them on tour?* Thus, the importance of the document by and for the other contemplates the maker of sounds as a *gifter*, as a *sharer*, and as a *performer* rather than a maker of an image-based object. As a recollection of the hauntological discussed by Fisher[441] and Derrida,[442] music and sound art exist in an unfixed moment of the acoustical environment that questions "capturing." Thus, the repeatable action of playing *a* song with twinges of nuance, produces an inexact repetition where differences between each performance and performer are comparable. Similar to a free-flow state or existing in the liminal extent-less where the surreal is a real space, the maker and the made are infinitely unfixed from a coordinated system toward a superposition that converges each as an ontological

[440] The 1975, "The Man Who Marries A Robot/Love Theme," 2018, Track 9 on *A Brief Inquiry into Online Relationships*, Dirty Hit, Spotify.
[441] Fisher, "The Metaphysics of Crackle."
[442] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*.

subjectivity and irreducible outside of *this* ordered pair. The act of making sound, then, is a hyper-specific, vernacularized time.

As an artifact, the song becomes *any* signature through the performative subjectivity aligned with its ontology. The WE, as a self/other/avatar subjectivity, folds in on itself as a patterning of technique. Another regression forward to the ritual and spectacle of Benjamin, [443] the WE, as an auditory maker, produces both an atavist reconciliation of the historical and linguistic with a delamination from exactitude, whereby the copy is uniquely coded. Therein, the biases of any *troubling* subjectivity contort toward a specific non-specificity that produces an irreducible reliance on an unreliable self/other/avatar//self/other/avatar. Further, the complexity of the singular, at the scale of a song, a riff, a melody, a chord, or a note, increases with the collection of other participating makers, i.e. the quartet, the ensemble, the orchestra, or the band.

The band produces a *troubling* pseudo-ontology that is both the individual members as independent signs and a larger contextual cluster as a machine and system. Thus, the mereological forces that bound the WE are extractable and representational through the self/other/avatar-ness of bandmates. The artificiality, then, of the "band-ed ontology" renegotiates a collective field condition through rewriting associations, i.e. new, retiring, injured, or replaced members of the band, where the concept of the machine functions as an interchangeable set of parts. Another aesthetic encapsulation of this system is the production of the simultaneous *gift* where performances and songs exist as an ever-becoming repetition of infinite, inexact replication. As shown in Table 15, there are a multitude of rationales that can change the constitution of a sound-producing

[443] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 19.

collective, i.e. termination of a band, shifting genres, going solo, etc., produce a question of authorship and teleology of the phase within the band as a machine.

Table 15
Band-ed Ontology and the Interchangeability of Parts

Band/Group(s)	Members/Parts	Background/Rupture	Critique
Joy Division *to* New Order	Ian Curtis, Peter Hook, Stephen Morris, and Bernard Sumner *then* Gillian Gilbert	"The suicide of lead singer Ian Curtis left Joy Division with a legacy of gloom…"[444] "Because Curtis had been the focus of the first group, the three remaining members reorganized as New Order."[445]	"'We did 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' once, on the anniversary of Ian's death," says the tall, thin Morris…'But Joy Division doesn't exist anymore, and it would be foolish to kid people into believing it does.'"[446]
The Mustangs *then* The Sundowners *then* The Zombies *then…* a fake version of the Zombies?[447]	Rod Argent, Paul Arnold, Paul Atkinson, Colin Blunstone, and Hugh Grundy	"…there was absolutely no animosity between the members. The choice to part ways simply boiled down to economics."[448]	Musicians, i.e. members of ZZ Top, were called to play as the stand-in band[449] "In 2019, The Zombies, the band that broke up because they felt they weren't successful, was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame."[450]
Darlin' *to* Phoenix *or* Daft Punk	Thomas Bangalter, Laurent Brancowitz, and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo	"For six months in 1992, they formed a rock trio called Darlin' with Laurent Brancowitz. They wrote four songs and released an EP, which Dave Jennings of Melody Maker infamously derided as 'a daft punky thrash.'"[451]	Laurent Brancowitz joins the band Phoenix: Deck d'Arcy, Thomas Mars, and Chris Mazzalai Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo become the electronic duo known as Daft Punk

[444] Debby Miller, "New Order: Life After Death," *Rolling Stone* (September 15, 1983). https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/new-order-life-after-death-243567/.

[445] Miller, "New Order: Life After Death."

[446] Miller, "New Order: Life After Death."

[447] Craig Hlavaty, "ZZ Top's Dusty Hill and Frank Beard once masqueraded as British rock act the Zombies," *Houston Chronicle* (June 3, 2016). https://www.chron.com/news/strange-weird/article/ZZ-Top-s-Dusty-Hill-and-Frank-Beard-once-7961317.php.

[448] Emilia David, "Why The Zombies Stopped Making Music," *Grunge* (September 25, 2020). https://www.grunge.com/252267/why-the-zombies-stopped-making-music/.

[449] Hlavaty, "ZZ Top's Dusty Hill and Frank Beard once masqueraded as British rock act the Zombies."

[450] David, "Why The Zombies Stopped Making Music."

[451] Kat Bein, "Fin: Why Daft Punk Was the Most Influential Electronic Act of Its Time," *Billboard* (February 22, 2021). https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/daft-punk-breakup-most-influential-electronic-act-9529663/.

Atomic Mass *to* Def Leppard	Rick Allen, Steve Clark, Joe Elliot, Rick Savage, and Pete Willis *then* Phil Collen	"Drummer Rick Allen left with only one arm after an auto accident on New Year's Eve, 1984; guitarist Steve Clark found dead in his London home on January 8th, 1991, from a fatal mixture of alcohol and drugs."[452] "'They're not band-born tragedies,' he insists."[453]	"His [Rick Allen] bandmates famously stood by him and he remained in the group—retraining himself with new techniques and a customized electronic drum kit. Allen's Raven Drum Foundation now helps other survivors of trauma."[454]
Girls Tyme *to* Destiny's Child *to* Solo Artists	Beyoncé Knowles, Kelly Rowland, and Michelle Williams *Previously* Farrah Frnklin, Latoya Luckett, and LaTavia Roberson	"They will retire the name after their upcoming U.S. tour and pursue individual careers in film, music, theater, and television."[455]	Musically... Beyoncé has won a record 32 Grammy] awards, and Kelly Rowland won a Grammy for her duo with Nelly in 2002's "Dilemma"[456]
AC/DC	Colin Burgess, Larry Van Kriedt, Angus Young, Malcolm Young, and Bon Scott *then* Brian Johnson	"Johnson joined AC/DC last April after the accidental death in London on February 19th [1980] of original vocalist Bon Scott. (Scott, 33, died of asphyxiation – choking on his own vomit after an all-night drinking binge – not of alcohol poisoning, as originally reported.)"[457]	"On July 25, 1980, the biggest-selling album by Australia's most exalted rock 'n' roll gods arrived less than six months after singer Bon Scott had been found dead..."[458] "The remaining members could've called it quits, but they plugged back in and returned… in an indirect way, the irreplaceable frontman they'd somehow managed to replace."[459]

[452] David Fricke, "Def Leppard: To Hell & Back," *Rolling Stone* (April 30, 1992). https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/def-leppard-to-hell-back-194722/.

[453] Fricke, "Def Leppard: To Hell & Back."

[454] Adam Morganstern, "Drinking A Proper Cup Of Tea With Def Leppard's Rick Allen," *Forbes* (August 29, 2023). https://www.forbes.com/sites/adammorganstern/2023/08/29/drinking-a-proper-cup-of-tea-with-def-leppards-rick-allen/?sh=1f802b61315c.

[455] Gil Kaufman, "Destiny's Child Announce Split," *MTV* (June 12, 2005). https://www.mtv.com/news/spa5vy/destinys-child-announce-split.

[456] Barnaby Lane, "Where Are They Now," *Business Insider* (September 5, 2023). https://www.businessinsider.com/destinys-child-original-members-now-latavia-letoya-farrah-2023-9.

[457] David Fricke, "AC/DC Shrug Off a Death and Rock On," *Rolling Stone* (October 30, 1990). https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/ac-dc-shrug-off-a-death-and-rock-on-238153/.

[458] Kenneth Patridge, "AC/DC's 'Back In Black' at 35," *Billboard* (July 25, 2015). https://www.billboard.com/music/reviews/acdc-back-35-years-classic-track-by-track-album-review-6642057/.

[459] Patridge, "AC/DC's 'Back In Black' at 35."

Where the divergences arise and fall between each band and group, there rests an intermittent space where music is both the subjectivity of a maker and the subjective object of all makers. Thus, the performance, the song, the mix, etc. contemplate a stale fixity where the "bubbles" of the performative gift are subverted for an exact duplication. Thus, the ghosted trace of the human hands, described by Fisher, indicate a permanent incompletion and rupture where "Hauntology restores the uncanniness of recording by making the recorded surface audible again."[460] These moments produce an uncanny realization where the imperfections illuminate the performance as more than a one-off ad infinitum rather than a live album or a demo reel that illustrate a raw set of performances.

Therein, the role of the sample, or a kind of instrumentalization where the haunted recording becomes a stand-in avatar, critiques both the socio-cultural context of the hands through othering subjectivity/performance and the capitalist extents of authorship/signature. This blurring of materiality reinstalls the "bubbles" as a transformable agent where the subjectivity of the work is "imperfected" to revert back to an unstable pseudo-ontology.

Infinitely infinite producing the infinite infinities, following the numerological patterns of Cantor,[461] the musician's hands then introduce another rupture in the phygital conceptions of where the body lies as adjacent to or invisible to the position of the sample. Where bodies rely on the access to an embodied, vernacular, and interactive environment, the sample, whether digitally or physically manipulated, reconsiders the role of the body. Thus, the act of "crate digging" provides a sensibility toward the hands

[460] Fisher, "The Metaphysics of Crackle," 48.
[461] Kanamori, "The Empty Set, the Singleton, and the Ordered Pair," 276.

and the actionable search for the next record to sample from, or as Schloss writes, "Evoking images of a devoted collector spending hours sorting through milk crates full of records in used record stores, garages, and thrift shops, the term carries with it a sense of valor and symbolizes an unending quest for the next record."[462] In this way, subjectivity and technique are embedded knowledge bases that contextualize the recorded avatar.

Schloss continues to define a process where the act of aimlessly searching becomes a subjective experience where the WE is trained to pull certain clues from sifting through crates to be able to create *anything with anything*, "Another sign of a more advanced digging sense is the ability to find useful material in unexpected places, records that don't conform to the aforementioned aesthetic sensibility."[463] Where this recontends with an Abnatural aesthetic as a field condition is the knowledgeable interaction with self-similar samples. Thus, the moment beyond knowing the register is in the production of otherness that illustrates an alterity toward performance and production. By re-haunting the sounds, emcees, deejays, and samplers, all as different branches of makers, contend with the contradictory novelty of an "existing" ontology. *Troubling* the plane of an implied immanence between each object, *how can the same sample be performed differently? Is the sample a bubble, a bridge, a chart, a technique, or all of the above?*

The case studies expressed in Table 16 represent a brief contemplation on these questions where a renewed subjectivity, as both a maker and a sample, is framed, subverted, and recontextualized. In each case, the maker produces a track through stacking their subjectivity adjacent to another invisible subjectivity whereby the

[462] Joseph G. Schloss, *Making Beats* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 79-80.
[463] Schloss, 83.

performance, the layer, the timecode, the speed, or the voice adapts to synthesize both the fixed data of the sample and the unfixed agency of the maker.

Table 16
Case Studies on the Sample/Resample

Song Released	Song Sampled	Sample	Critique
Kanye West, "All Falls Down"[464]	Ms. Lauryn Hill, "Mystery of Iniquity"[465]	Chorus	"West sampled a Hill song for the original version of his track, 'All Falls Down.' The then-relatively unknown producer couldn't get clearance to use Hill's performance and re-recorded the song using singer Syleena Johnson."[466]
Dr. Dre, "Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang"[467]	Leon Haywood, "I Want'a Do Something Freaky to You"[468]	Riff to Chorus	"He [Dr. Dre] would largely forgo direct sampling on his solo debut, instead asking musicians to replay melodies and bass lines. This came at a time when live instrumentation in hip-hop was seen as a gimmick at best and a faux pas at worst."[469]
DOPE LEMON, "Home Soon"[470]	The Chkachas, "Stories??"[471]	All, *added Lyrics*	"I heard this old band called The Chakachas, and this song ['Stories'] had this really cool vibe. So I called up the head of Sony, and then he called someone else, and we were all trying to find the band so I could sing on the track… But this guy, he allowed us to sing on it, and that ended up becoming 'Home Soon'"[472]

[464] Kanye West featuring Syleena Johnson, "All Falls Down," 2004, Track 4 on *College Dropout*, Def Jam Records and UMG Recordings, Spotify.

[465] Ms. Lauryn Hill, "Mystery of Iniquity," 2002, Track 2, Disc 2 on *MTV Unplugged 2.0*, Sony Music Entertainment, Spotify.

[466] Rashaun Hall, "Kanye West Collaborating With Lauryn Hill On New LP," *MTV* (January 21, 2005). https://www.mtv.com/news/w91lsq/kanye-west-collaborating-with-lauryn-hill-on-new-lp.

[467] Dr. Dre, "Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang," 1992, Track 5 on *The Chronic*, ARY, inc., Spotify.

[468] Leon Haywood, "I Want'a Do Something Freaky to You," 1974, Track 3 on *Come and Get Yourself Some*, UMG Recordings, Spotify.

[469] Justin Sayles, "The Complicated Truths of Dr. Dre's 'The Chronic,'" *The Ringer* (April 20, 2020). https://www.theringer.com/music/2020/4/20/21227555/dr-dre-the-chronic-streaming.

[470] DOPE LEMON, "Home Soon," 2017, Track 1 on *Hounds Tooth*, BMG Rights Management, Spotify.

[471] The Chakachas, "Stories??," 1972, Track 1 on *Chakachas*, AVCO Records Corp., Spotify.

[472] Australian Guitar, "Dope Lemon," *Guitar World* (January 25, 2022). https://www.guitarworld.com/features/dope-lemon-i-thought-of-rose-pink-cadillac-as-a-way-that-i-could-give-back.

Macross 82-99, "Cool Soda"[473]	Hosono, Suzuki, and Yamashita, "パッション・フラワー (Passion flower)"[474]	All, *and* Yoshi from Super Smash Bros. Melee	"Sample appears at 0:00 (and throughout)"[475]
Vanilla Ice, "Ice Ice Baby"[476]	Queen and David Bowie, "Under Pressure"[477]	Bassline, and *more*?	"Ice famously insisted that the two melodies are distinct because he added a beat between notes. Ice later claimed that this rationale was merely a joke… 'Ice Ice Baby' sparked discussion about the punitive actions taken in plagiarism cases."[478]
Joywave, "Deconstruction"[479]	Joywave, *SWISH* Album[480]	All, Recut and Remixed	"There is a long standing debate as to whether or not humor belongs in art. I believe it's an important part of what makes us human, and in an effort to document the past several years of my life on this record, it's inclusion was a must. To call 'Destruction' a 'joke' would be unfair, but if you detect a fair degree of satire in the song, you're not far off."[481] "*Swish* is what can only be described as a concept album–the first nine songs are variations of 'Destruction,' which the band (and fans alike) have deemed to be the greatest song ever written."[482]

[473] Macross 82-99, "Cool Soda," 2018, Track 2 on *Summer Touch*, Spotify.

[474] Haruomi Hosono, Shigeru Suzuki, and Tatsuro Yamashita, "パッション・フラワー (Passion Flower)," 1978, Track 5 on *PACIFIC*, Sony Music Entertainment, Spotify.

[475] NamuNamu. *Who Sampled*, 2018, https://www.whosampled.com/sample/607610/%E3%83%9E%E3%82%AF%E3%83%AD%E3%82%B9-MACROSS-82-99-Cool-Soda-Haruomi-Hosono-Passion-Flower/.

[476] Vanilla Ice, "Ice Ice Baby," 1990, Track 1 on *To the Extreme*, Capitol Records, Spotify.

[477] Queen and David Bowie, "Under Pressure," 1982, Track 11 on *Hot Space*, Hollywood Records, Spotify.

[478] Jordan Runtagh, "Songs on Trial: 12 Landmark Music Copyright Cases," *Rolling Stone* (June 8, 2016). https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-lists/songs-on-trial-12-landmark-music-copyright-cases-166396/the-beach-boys-vs-chuck-berry-1963-65098/.

[479] Joywave, "Deconstruction," 2015, Track 4 on *How Do You Feel Now?* Cultco Music/Hollywood Records, Inc., Spotify.

[480] Joywave, *SWISH*, 2016, Cultco Music/Hollywood Records, Inc., Spotify.

[481] Daniel Armbruster, "Why Be Credible When You Can Be Incredible?" *Huffington Post* (November 3, 2015). https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-be-credible-when-you_b_8464032.

[482] Shannon Athena, "JOYWAVE: SWISH," *Surviving the Golden Age* (March 28, 2016). https://survivingthegoldenage.com/joywave-swish/.

Sampling produces a subversion to authority and authenticity and, in such, redistributes a power cycle toward the new, novel, and progressive. Through the insistence that royalties are paid, damages are recouped, names are expunged, and crossovers are left earmarked in legalism, the sample condenses larger contextual questions about the role and authorship that belong to the hands as a signature. *What does it mean to allow your signature on another object? Where does the creative control of the WE lie in something that is forever fixed? Why create extents for others?*

Thus, the sample can be boiled down to a Duchampian readymade or a Man Ray remade work.[483] An impure signifier, but a pure signature, Man Ray's analysis of the recontextual dismisses any a priori authorship and redistributes agency upon objects as a mode of sampling, even from the self, "Man Ray would often disassemble his objects after photographing them, calling into question or redefining what might be considered the 'original.'"[484] Similarly, music exists as a series of tracks that can be individually or holistically edited as a deconstructive and additive process toward finality: *What makes the album* vs. *Should that be shown in the exhibition?* Where the sample attains an infinitude beyond the capacities of Man Ray's decomposition is in the object's inherent futureproofing as an asymptotic other that can never be fully manifested, understood, or reprogrammed in *exactly* the same fashion. The live performance merged with a hauntological recording becomes both the infinite signifier and a subjective signification. The sample then contradicts its own essence as an unfixed/fixed haunted ontology.

[483] Adina Kamien-Kazhdan, *Remaking the Readymade* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
[484] Kamien-Kazhdan, 111.

In this modality, Man Ray's contradiction that exudes a paradoxical more-than-identity is a foundational grounding for an emcee and deejay, "Man Ray strove to make his 'destructible' work more 'permanent' or 'indestructible' (as invoked in a number of titles to his works). Man Ray's yearning for both 'notoriety' and 'oblivion' was an expression of a sense of otherness and related to the question of assimilation."[485] As such, makers like J Dilla, Daft Punk, Jay Rock, The Alchemist, KAYTRANDA, Rick Rubin, and many, many, *many* others have found a voice in through destructing, recontextualizing, and using a gauntlet of source material to question the act of making.

Music, like performance art, exists as a malleable container where technique, practice, language, and embodiment synthesize into a space of immediacy and flattening the infinite materiality. To return to Fisher's postmodern crackle, CASSILS' *Becoming an Image* (fig. 27) questions the role of a tactical immediacy and the material of bodies.



Figure 27. CASSILS, *Becoming an Image*, 2012-Present, Clay, ONE Archives, https://www.cassils.net/cassils-artwork-becoming-an-image.

[485] Kamien-Kazhdan, *Remaking the Readymade*, 112.

CASSILS' *Becoming an Image*, similar to the technique and rehearsals of a band, produces both the immediacy of textural response where the clay is manipulated in the inverse of the thrown fist and the invisible and unseen of the staging, practice, and discipline to achieve said feat. In making, CASSILS exemplifies an infinite becoming of self/other not only in their open-trans dialogue,[486] but in their contemplation of steroids, materiality, community engagement, fronting a hypermasculine discourse, violence and terror, etc.[487] Pushing language toward new *x's*, *Becoming an Image* grounds violence on trans bodies through the unilateral translation toward a clay sculpture yet highlights the actionable physicality witnessed and left bare by the audience. Where CASSILS throws fists and registers abuse upon a lifeless 2,000 lbs. body, the site-specificity dissolves into the infinite becoming of the other. Performance art, then, exists as the live album release, the unedited demo reel, or the post-mortem tapes as a document of the war-torn earth or the remaking of a right-handed, strung-upside down 1967 Gibson SG Custom of Hendrix.[488]

Specificity and subjectivity then become a *troubling* identity of irreducibility contending with making critiques: *I could have painted that! They aren't even playing an instrument! That isn't art!* These present a shallow flattening of the making that presupposes, like the Paragonical discussions throughout this text, an epistemological assumption on fixity and identity that carve extents through the socio-cultural

[486] CASSILS, "Visiting Artist Lecture" (lecture, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, July 10, 2019).

[487] Nell Frizzell, "Heather Cassils: the transgender bodybuilder who attacks heaps of clay," *The Guardian* (October 3, 2013). https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/oct/03/heather-cassils-transgender-bodybuilder-artist.

[488] "A Recreation of the Legend's 1967 SG Custom," *Gibson*. https://www.gibson.com/en-US/Electric-Guitar/CUSFHH685/Aged-Polaris-White.

intersectionality on making, transforming, and deconstructing practice. The sample, like performance arts, changes the enlightenment-era concept of beauty and understanding. Always critical of the pitfalls produced in the Combinatorial chart through the misreading of Cartesian and Kantian absolutes, there lies an indefinite otherness toward materiality as a result of the "premade sample."

Providential in image-making communities, i.e. Printmaking, Oil Painters, Lithographers, etc., the act of concocting *your* "correct" and entirely subjective ratio of dry pigment to linseed oil then stretching canvas with *your* desired tension constitutes the production of identifiable materials. Purchasing a premade canvas, using paint directly out of a tube, or accepting the grit of a charcoal powder are among the most unacceptable sins of practice. Jeff Koons' studio is a primary example of the impossible lengths that image-makers have gone to generate the asymptotic contradiction of "manufactured by a machine" and "hand-fashioned," or as a former studio member explains:

> In the center of the room was a glass-topped table surrounded by spotlights, staffed by four painters whose sole responsibility was mixing hundreds of colors to match the original image. Each custom-mixed hue and tint was assigned a name, like cool cyan magenta nine or warm cobalt blue four. Once the drawing was complete, the sections were coded accordingly with abbreviations like CCM9 and WCB4, a taxonomy of color.
>
> My job was simple: Paint by numbers. The most intricate sections required miniature brushes, sizes 0 and 00, their bristles no longer than an eyelash. The goal was to hand-fashion a flat, seamless surface that appeared to have been manufactured by machine, which meant there could be no visible brush strokes, no blending, no mistakes.[489]

[489] John Powers, "I Was Jeff Koons's Studio Serf," *The New York Times Magazine* (August 17, 2012). https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/19/magazine/i-was-jeff-koonss-studio-serf.html.

Beyond approving/disapproving of this process of making, the exactitude and necessity of utilizing the hands, even in color creation like sampling, produces an asymptote of an Abnatural aesthetic. *No mistakes allowed*. Where these pursuits contend with an impossible third space are found in the infinitely incomprehensible questions on subjectivity and expectations of perfection. The artificiality of the hands as a machine negates an otherness inherent to the WE.

J Dilla, as arguably the most influential sampler *ever*, produced a similar hyper-specificity by maintaining the hands without erasure while still striving for a pseudo-perfection of craft, "The general narrative was that Dilla turned off the quantise function on his MPC to escape the straight 4/4 rhythm… The common thought was that Dilla was doing something halfway between swing and straight time, but it's actually straight and swung at the same time. And it's only possible on a machine. Dilla was a programmer."[490] The deactivation of the function provided a reprocessing where the sample, as a haunted form, would become re-haunted by the use of hands. The sample is then an assemblage, rather than a static ontology, as it allows for *grafting*.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, Damon Albarn, of Gorillaz *and* Blur *and* The Good The Bad & The Queen *and* Africa Express *and* as a solo artist, produces production out of the readymade-readymade, or the premade sample. In an interview with Zane Lowe, Albarn illustrates the creative process for generating the Grammy-Nominated song "Clint Eastwood"[491] as a series of premade samples:

LOWE: It just came like that?

[490] Marke Bieschke, "D is for Dilla: the life and legacy of a hip-hop phenomenon," *DJ Mag* (May 12, 2022). https://djmag.com/features/d-dilla-life-and-legacy-hip-hop-phenomenon.

[491] Gorillaz, "Clint Eastwood," 2001, Track 5 on *Gorillaz*, Spotify.

ALBARN: That's it. That's the preset. That's the Rock One. It gets even more…
LOWE: Wholesale. Wholesale.
ALBARN: That's the whole song! *Finally, someone let me out of my cage…*
LOWE: That's awesome! [492]

Albarn also provides the continuation of an Abnatural aesthetic on the WE as a self of others, avatars, bands, combinations, groups, and features. With the identity of the post-digital band Gorillaz, Albarn produces *troubling* subjectivity toward the act of producing, writing, and performing music as an *animated* band. Being both a novel take on the act of the performance[493] and an act that presents itself as *too artificial*, [494] Gorillaz exists as the field-generating-field of a Tschumi architectural object. Where authority is met with an uncanny laughter, Albarn's identity floats between the fixity of embodiment, the unfixity of the sample, and the indeterminacy of others as collaborators.

In a similar vein, Table 17 illustrates the multiplicitous signature of the singer/songwriter as avatar(s) embodied within several musicians. Where the band produces a band-ed ontology where the contextuality compares makers and identities, the *troubling* subjectivity of the individual maker converges, blends, stacks, and folds in variable arrangements. Shifting genres, transitioning into a new phase of creation, or working with others as a temporary reprieve, the grafting of the WE within music is the parenthetical difference in a sound-based media. Thus, the mereological assemblage not only necessitates the final result, but it curates the teleological and epistemological

[492] Zane Lowe, "Damon Albarn: Studio Tour, 'Cracker Island' & Coachella," YouTube Video, February 23, 2023, Apple Music, 0:00 to 0:25. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDX6l9_58RA.

[493] Andy Gill, "Gorillaz: Demon Days Live, Manchester Opera House, Manchester," *The Independent* (November 2, 2005). https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/reviews/gorillaz-demon-days-live-manchester-opera-house-manchester-324128.html.

[494] "Gorillaz 'Live' Concert Is Too Artificial," *The Daily Free Press* (March 13, 2002). https://dailyfreepress.com/2002/03/13/gorillaz-live-concert-is-too-artificial/.

pseudo-ontology that provides a foundation, a ground, or a *field* for the made works to be performed.

Table 17
Case Studies on Avatars and Genre-Shifting

Maker	Avatar(s)
Daniel Dumile	KMD *as* Zev Love X *then* MF DOOM *or* DOOM, King Geedorah, Metal Fingers and Viktor Vaughn *and also as a collaborator/mash-up* Madvillain, Metal Face, Danger Doom, and JJ Doom[495]
Prince Rogers Nelson	Prince, The Artist Formerly Known as Prince, Jamie Starr, Joey Coco, Christopher, *and* Camille *at least*[496]
Damon Albarn	Gorillaz, Blur, The Good The Bad & The Queen, Africa Express *and* Damon Albarn[497]
Alex Turner	Arctic Monkeys, Alex Turner, *and* Last Shadow Puppets[498]
Miles Kane	The Rascals *and* The Little Flames, *then* Miles Kane *and* Last Shadow Puppets[499]
Julian Casablancas	The Strokes, The Voidz, *and* Julian Casablancas[500]
Darius Rucker	Hootie and the Blowfish[501] *then* Darius Rucker,[502] genre-shifting
Chaz Bear	Toro y Moi *and* Les Sins[503]

[495] Hua Hsu, "The Wonderous Rhymes of MF DOOM," *The New Yorker* (January 4, 2021). https://www.newyorker.com/culture/postscript/the-wondrous-rhymes-of-mf-doom.

[496] Jem Aswad, "Why Prince Changed His Name to an Unpronounceable Symbol 30 Years Ago, and What Happened Next," *Variety* (June 7, 2023). https://variety.com/2023/music/news/prince-symbol-why-he-changed-his-name-1235635422/.

[497] Lowe, "Damon Albarn: Studio Tour, 'Cracker Island' & Coachella."

[498] Stacey Anderson, "The Last Shadow Puppets," *Interview Magazine* (March 26, 2016). https://www.interviewmagazine.com/music/the-last-shadow-puppets.

[499] Duncan Haskell, "Interview: Miles Kane," *Songwriting Magazine* (August 4, 2023). https://www.songwritingmagazine.co.uk/interviews/miles-kane.

[500] Simon Vozick-Levinson, "A New York Night With The Voidz' Julian Casablancas, (Still) Reluctant Rock Star," *Billboard* (March 8, 2018). https://www.billboard.com/music/rock/julian-casablancas-the-voidz-interview-virtue-reluctant-rock-star-8235716/.

[501] Jon Caramanica, "Hootie & the Blowfish, Great American Rock Band (Yes, Really)," *New York Times* (June 6, 2019). https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/06/arts/music/hootie-and-the-blowfish-cracked-rear-view.html.

[502] Jon Caramanica, "A Wandering Talent Grows Roots in Country," *New York Times* (April 27, 2011). https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/28/arts/music/darius-rucker-sets-down-roots-in-country-review.html.

[503] Ryan Bassil, "We Spoke to Toro Y Moi's Chaz Bundick on His New Record with Les Sins," *VICE* (August 19, 2014). https://www.vice.com/en/article/r79nxd/chaz-bundick-les-sins-michael-debut-album-interview-toro-y-moi.

Deconstructing the ontology of the self and the extent-ridden confines of a genre, some makers have taken an approach to an infinite alterity as each project, album, and work introduces *another other* within the WE as an independent object within the field. "Vada Vada" is a term used by the band The Garden to define their style as "a term that represents total freedom of expression without boundaries or guidelines of any sort,"[504] but it is also the name of their label that has a "signed" a series of their side projects and a song on their *The Life and Times of a Paperclip* album.[505] A crisscrossing assemblage, The Garden breaks down into the twins Wyatt and Fletcher Shears that have a series of projects that are run jointly in, through, and around the initial concept of Vada Vada.

Turkey, a project run by Fletcher and William Sipos, Puzzle, a solo project by Fletcher, Enjoy, a solo project by Wyatt, Penalty Kill, a trio of Wyatt, Fletcher, and their father, and Macabre Plaza, unconfirmed but believed to be Wyatt with another Vada Vada label signee Cowgirl Clue,[506] etc. are projects, concepts, albums, differences that mutate, multiply, and matriculate across an Abnatural aesthetic as a both/and of WE's. Similar to The Beatles' redefined signature through their experimental album *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*,[507] the reconfigurable signatures of makers, similar to the ones described through avatars in the "Alien Subjectivity" and "Abnatural Combinations," produce an infinite reconstitution of both the WE and WEs.

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[504] The Garden, https://www.thegardenvadavada.com/about.

[505] The Garden, "Vada Vada," 2013, Track 3 on *The Life and Times of a Paperclip*, Vada Vada, Spotify.

[506] r/thegarden: Specialist-Gift-8215. "Is macabre plaza actually wyatt shears?" Reddit, 2022, https://www.reddit.com/r/thegarden/comments/w43yux/is_macabre_plaza_actually_wyatt_shears/.

[507] The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967, Apple Corps Ltd., Spotify.

Where the hands of the avatar, as the WE, begin to disintegrate into the alterity of genre, there is a return to language beyond the performative aspects of a group. Music as a language provides the codex to read, write, and instruct the other in modes that may imitate and replicate a specific work. Thus, the hands *may* operate purely in a machinic subjectivity as a translation device rather than a speculative maker that embodies the WE. This dimensional subjectivity introduces the *ghost writer* where lyrics, riffs, concepts, ideas, etc. are transmuted and signed by an artificial WE. Through the reoccurring analysis of hands and subjectivity, certain makers in a sound-generating practice view this *as the art* where others may see this *as non-art*.

Where orchestral compositions are written for a totality as an assemblage then segmented off into solo compositions, the band introduces the discourse of an independent yet irreducible machinic plug-and-play ethos. Aside from the instrumentation and writing of musical notation, the returning sovereignty of language begets a further infinitesimal self where the performance of and from another revives a life. Singing along with a Toby Keith song postmortem, introduces another hauntological affect where the voice captured, like the lyrics, is reanimated from the dead.[508]

Troublingly, the advantageousness of death provides a surface of unknowable authority and authorship that moves beyond a speculative discourse and installs a body and a voice to the unintended other. For example, the following lists a list of *some* musicians that "died too soon," and thus leave a speculative, unfulfilled hauntology: *XXX died at 20. Lil Peep, Juice Wrld died at 21. Buddy Holly died at 22. Selena died at 23.*

[508] Joseph Hudak, "Toby Keith, Country Music's Brash, Patriotic Songwriter, Dead at 62," *Rolling Stone* (February 6, 2024). https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-country/toby-keith-patriotic-country-singer-dead-obit-1234924671/.

Notorious BIG died at 24. 2Pac died at 25. Otis Redding, Mac Miller died at 26. Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, Janis Joplin, Amy Winehouse died at 27.

Thus, there is a kind of speculative grafting made possible through reimagined spaces for collaboration. Careful to avoid the pitfalls introduced in "Beyond The Self," an involution occurs where the meta-ontology of a song is both *known as* and *known in spite of* a digitalization of the maker. In works like "One Minute More,"[509] excerpts of unreleased works reveal a deeper or contradictory image of the subjective surface within the maker contemplating authorship of their work before/after death. Another side of the life/death spectrum, songs like "Love Never Felt So Good"[510] introduce an unfinished project that had been consistently reworked by not only the maker but a production team. Where Michael Jackson would not let the work die on the floor, Timbaland, who had worked on other pieces by Jackson posthumously, brought in another longtime collaborator, Justin Timberlake, to finish the chorus and add another dance number to the song. Thus, the music video compiles moments of Jackson's performances to produce an afterimage of the work that responds to the life and death of the "King of Pop."

This unfixity and everlasting life, beyond the scope of a singular track or album, introduces an asymptotic unknowability where the song is both an object, for grafting and sampling, and an assemblage where a self/other/avatar are already associated.

> "Whoa," you said, incredulous. "You mean I'm a god?"
> "No. Not yet. You're a fetus. You're still growing. Once you've lived every human life throughout all time, you will have grown enough to be born."
> "So the whole universe," you said, "it's just…"

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[509] XXXTENTACION, Kanye West, and Travis Barker, "One Minute," 2018, Track 7 on *SKINS*, Spotify.

[510] Michael Jackson and Justin Timberlake, "Love Never Felt So Good," 2014, Track 17 on *XSCAPE*, Spotify.

"An egg." I answered. "Now it's time for you to move on to your next life."[511]

A final side to life, death, and hands of makers is in the digitalization of bodies. Through an assumptive embodiment of holograms on stage, i.e. Michael Jackson, 2Pac, Eazy-E,[512] or an artificially generated voice from a lost demo tape,[513] i.e. The Beatles' track "Now and Then,"[514] there exists an ethical gray zone of the trace that is re-signed rather than recycled. Where monocular subjectivity scrubs clear the factual rationales, "McCartney later revealed the song was shelved because George Harrison had called it 'f–ing rubbish' and refused to work on it,"[515] the avatar is presented as an unimportant subjectivity and installs a pitfall of oppressive and extractive energies that necessitate larger questions/answers on authority, especially in digital/artificial spaces.

Music and the sound arts introduce a plethora of additional surfaces and contemplate *a life* beyond "a life." As field conditions expand infinitely and the WE becomes a contradictory phygital document and immaterial embodiment, the *x* of an Abnatural aesthetic challenges the mereological system of objects, subjectivities, dichotomies that are presented within a third space of dualities, i.e. life, death, *sample?*

> We do not suffer from the lack of a soul. We suffer, on the contrary, from *too many troubled* souls that have never been offered a decent burial. They wander around in broad daylight like miserable ghosts.[516]

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[511] Andy Weir. "The Egg." *Galactanet*. http://www.galactanet.com/oneoff/theegg_mod.html.

[512] Gil Kaufman, "Tupac, Michael Jackson, Gorillaz & More: A History of the Musical Hologram," *Billboard* (March 9, 2017). https://www.billboard.com/music/pop/musical-holograms-history-dead-7717042/.

[513] Nadia Khomami, "AI used to create new and final Beatles song, says Paul McCartney," *The Guardian* (June 13, 2023). https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/jun/13/ai-used-to-create-new-and-final-beatles-song-says-paul-mccartney.

[514] The Beatles, "Now and Then," 2023, Single, Spotify.

[515] Khomami, "AI used to create new and final Beatles song, says Paul McCartney."

[516] Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. Alan Sheridan and John Law (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 188.

x Toward Apoptosis

> To kill is not to dominate but to annihilate; it is to renounce comprehension absolutely. Murder exercises a power over what escapes power. It is still a power, for the face expresses itself in the sensible, but already impotency, because the face rends the sensible. The alterity that is expressed in the face provides the unique "matter" possible for total negation. I can wish to kill only an existent absolutely independent, which exceeds my powers infinitely, and therefore does not oppose them but paralyzes the very power of power. The Other is the sole being I can wish to kill.[517]

Upon death, reflection occurs. Where the WE lances off components, avatar(s) lie resting with Lazarus and the infinite meaning of *a life*. An Abnatural aesthetic, through its unfixity and irreducibility, contradictorily trapsing through the field conditions of lost works and identities. The *trouble* is grounded in Zeno's Paradox with countless aesthetic contradictions, *where to begin/end, go/stay, exist/embody, live/die?*

To ascribe an identity to the other is to beseech an indexical difference within the self where the other resides and to highlight the invisible or to produce a voice in the silence, and whereby accepting an irreducible/reducibility. Deconstructing the epistemological convergence that the socio-cultural machine produces within the self. Thus, the avatar(s) exhaust these foundations and afford dimensional expeditions into a speculative third space beyond the machine, whereby a Posthuman *nomos* is an accepted discourse, *now what?* This ever-reaching and ever-becoming, an ever-transcribing practice grounds subjectivities within a maker as a decentralized alterity where signatures and identities are tools to be contended with rather than accepted. Never losing sight of

[517] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 198.

the bounding box that contains practice, i.e. capital-A Art or Architecture, the avatar(s) produce an asymptotic relationship with Paragonical structures as the identity of the hands are both *the work* and *the signifier of a work*.

The *x* is not a position, then, where the Combinatorial charts are resolved, but exist as an impermanent reflection where the diaristic identity may be readdressed by *other others* that are also within the self. This process produces a folded plane of *a life*. This generative cross-pollination of identity, desire, and bias contend with a personalized discourse prevalent within makers to curate an identity/site-specific canon. Thus, the case studies presented are compassionate alms that subsist within the intersectional souls of *the weird, the strange, the uncanny, and the troubling.* Where this field condition yields crop, the WE may find an abundance of liberties beyond the extents of the civilization-scale machine and reach toward a rejuvenated alterous.

> As if that blind rage had washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, in that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world. Finding it so much like myself–so like a brother, really–I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again. For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate.[518]

Working from a pretextual ipseity, the self's impermanence is a graft-able location for techniques of learning, experience, and consideration. These processes challenge the phenomenological relationship the WE, or the self/other/avatar(s), shares with an embodied materiality. Once conceptualized as a fluid ontology that exists

[518] Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. Matthew Ward (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 122-123.

contradictorily as both atemporal and vernacular, the WE tessellates and approaches novelty as an unfixed position with tentacular syntheses as a personal-meaning-making system, "'Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to the mind, when it has once seized on it, like a lichen on the rock. I wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling; but I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of paint, and that was death–a state which I feared yet did not understand.'"[519]

Where these lines merge and converge then divulge individuality of signatures, a mereological network of autonomous "bubbles" float within a third space of representational, epistemological, and philosophical registers. The verbiage toward making and différance assumes a more-than identity capacity through which the self conceptualizes, identifies, and manipulates a more-than-self register that is absorbed within the self. Thus, an Abnatural aesthetic is a tension between the self as other and the self as a self through the insistence of an undefinable, personal, associative *x*. Curating this concept as an aesthetic, this writing frames a similar compassionate reading toward the identity of a housekeeper, in the words of Adrián Villar Rojas.

As introduced in "Alien Subjectivity," the work, *The Theater of Disappearances* (fig. 28), holds a special place in *my* art practice as a moment highlighting the absurdity of art/architecture, installation permanence, and subjectivity of the hands. Where Villar Rojas' work introduces time as a fluid constraint that affect each object within an object, the conceptualization of an anti-spectacle and atemporality contends with the illusion of a fixed self, "It's an extremely difficult project to perform, and virtually invisible, modest to the point of being undetectable by viewers. Therefore, the constant dialogue between

[519] Shelley, 107-108.

spectacle and criticism of the spectacle is absolutely present and consciously developed."[520]



Figure 28. Adrián Villar Rojas, *The Theater of Disappearance (Installation View)*, 2017, Sculpture, The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, https://www.moca.org/exhibition/adrian-villar-rojas-the-theater-of-disappearance.

Along this continuum, *The Theater of Disappearances*, obfuscates its finality and resolution through which the momentary installation will not only be deconstructed, but will be expunged, erased, removed, and cleaned from the gallery. This contradiction within the work as being both embedded in the museum and soon-to-be destroyed is also a hyper-awareness of privilege and an architectural site of othering, "This is why dismantling any of my projects involves not only erasing all traces of it but also, more

[520] Villar Rojas, *The Theater of Disappearances*, 101.

importantly, all relevant meaning of its existence. And this is also why theater is such an accurate epistemological metaphor."[521]

Memento mori, translated as *remember you must die*, may be taken as a literal signifier of the work of art responding to the contextual subjectivity of the audience,[522] or it may also be a reminder of the impermanence of all ideas, works, objects, things, as well as the individual subjectivity of the maker. In Villar Rojas' work, the death of the work moves beyond the audience and the author and moves directly toward a duration-based performance. The work interacts, attracts, engages, responds, and mutates, but the capturing and fixity of the work only occurs in the teleological grounding of *each* photograph. This privileged moment to see the work distinguishes those who have and have not been able to witness the brief lapse of time through which it was *present*.

Adjacent to this reading of the work, the conversation held by Villar Rojas and Helen Molesworth illustrates a contradictory defiance and acceptance of subjectivity as a primary fold within this practice of making as a response to an invisible labor that "has always been very interesting to me because it's the kind of labor that is not seen if it's done well. In fact, it is essential that it not be seen. Hence, housekeeping occupies absolutely no position of privilege in any narrative."[523]

However, destroying a work does not dismantle a system but begins an aesthetic speculation to the location of importance by facing a making practice with societal ethics. *Is the work an avatar in and of itself? Is the signature of the maker the only matter of*

[521] Villar Rojas, 106.

[522] Shahin Mohammadi-Zarghan and Reza Afhami, "Memento Mori," *Mortality* 24, no. 4 (2019): 468-472.

[523] Villar Rojas, *The Theater of Disappearances*, 99.

importance? Thus, death and life ask similar questions of authorship and adjacency where embodiment critiques any advantageous infinite alterity as an oversimplification of Asymptotic realism. To destroy, there must be an object for deconstruction, dismantling, and decomposing. Thus, John Baldessari's *Cremation Project* (fig. 29) considers the product, the principle, and the person as a death beyond the a prior/a posteriori of art.



Figure 29. John Baldessari, *Cremation Project, Corpus Wafers*, 1970, Sculpture, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, https://www.si.edu/object/hmsg_05.26.

Work as dust, flour, binder, wafer, *Cremation Project* exists as a burned effigy to ritualize a new beginning of a making practice, "In 1970, he [Baldessari] decided to honour this reinvention by burning all of the paintings he'd made between 1953 and 1966. He baked their ashes into cookies and placed them in a glass urn, titling the resulting artwork The Cremation Project and presenting it alongside a bronze plaque bearing the destroyed works' 'birth' and 'death' dates, and a recipe for the cookies."[524] With the end of a subjectivity, a question, a process, and/or a practice, Baldessari blesses an ipseity, now made alterous, through ritualizing a bookend to the past. Cleansing and encapsulating, the cookies can be made by any and all, as the recipe is on the plaque.

With the death of the past and the present/future looming, Barthes' *Image Music Text* decentralizes the importance of the monocular act where the work and subjectivity are flattened into a causation rather than a dissection of the self/other:

> The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line" divided into a before and an after. The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now.[525]

Inside, outside, adjacent, and invisible to, the work insufficiently stands-in for the maker, but it also subverts an ontology of the work by existing at the hands of the maker

[524] "John Baldessari, The Cremation Project With Corpus Wafers," *Elephant* (March 23, 2021). https://elephant.art/john-baldessari-the-cremation-project-with-corpus-wafers-version-2-1970/.

[525] Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 145.

as an *other* to the work. While the signature codifies and addresses the tactility and embodiment of a non-artificial processing, death and invisibility cauterize *a life* within a work as finality. Where old work is destroyed, tragedy and lost profits produce tears of frustration through the inability to contact the maker. Where work is destroyed *by* the maker, a third space occurs of authority, context, and disidentification. As Lambert-Beatty introduces, these spaces are unfixed by their relationship to an aesthetic parafiction of alterity, "It [parafiction] remains a bit outside… parafiction real and/or imaginary personages and stories intersect with the world as it is being lived. Post-simulacral, parafictional strategies are oriented less toward the disappearance of the real than toward the pragmatics of trust."[526]

As a narrativization of the parafictional, through the analysis of hands, the anonymity of makers as a de-subjectivity presents another fluctuation in both the authorship of death and the death of authorship. Channeling the simulacra as a contextual oversight of the non-signature, works presented in gallery spaces by "Anonymous Fermilab Photographer" (fig. 30) and "Philadelphia Wireman" (fig. 31) introduces another bout with existence, embodiment, and an Abnatural aesthetic toward *x*.

[526] Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October* 129 (August 2009), 54.

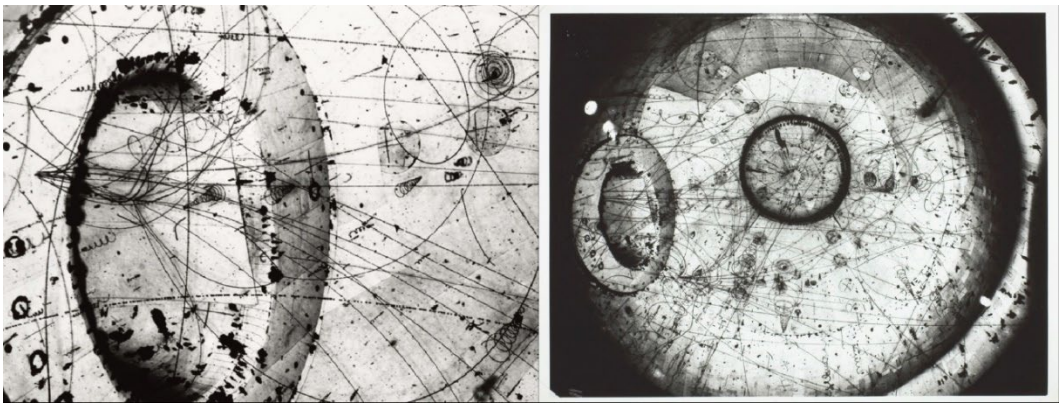


Figure 30. Anonymous Fermilab Photographer, *Untitled (Roll 1012B, Negative 07655)* and *Untitled (Roll 1012B, Negative 08345)*, 1967/printed 1997, Gelatin silver print, Art Institute of Chicago, https://www.artic.edu/artists/86071/anonymous-fermilab-photographer.



Figure 31. Philadelphia Wireman, *Untitled (Magic Pan)*, c. 1970-75, Wire and Found Objects, Adams and Ollman, https://adamsandollman.com/Philadelphia-Wireman.

Where objects are post-rationalized from made forms beyond a happening or natural occurrence, there is an introduction to the purely alterous where avatar(s) are the only makers. Assumedly, each of these forms are generated by *some* human subjectivity, but their unrecognizable signatures and pure significations of human-interaction produce a curious criticality toward the collection. *Who do these belong to? Where does their value lie? How can these lessons inform a nonhuman phenomenology?* As such, these makers subvert the Memento Mori duality as an indexical folly of unliving, similar to an *uncooking*. As an object-oriented subjectivity, the document of *some/all/none* introduces the non-specificity of a ground condition inherent to an Abnatural aesthetic.

Where nothing but the object informs the WE, the bias of an impossible a priori foundation asks the question, *do you like it?* A simple and powerful gesture that undermines all extents of the socio-cultural toward a pure subjectivity/bias. By un-claiming and centering/decentering the self, an asymptote is inevitable without any information to document the work. *Size? Materials? Year of Discovery?*

This contextualizes a field, a surface, and a graft-able unfixability to being/becoming an avatar. This contradiction proposes an insufficient aesthetic as a primary derivative of exploration. As a literary parafictional resource, Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*[527] associates the undermining of a death/retirement with the overmining of a novel subjectivity. Where Charlie Bucket is *gifted* Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, the infinitely different becomes an irreducible simultaneity where *a life* possesses a redistributed agency, "I can't go on forever. I've got no children

[527] Roald Dahl, *The Complete Adventures of Charlie and Mr. Willy Wonka* (New York: Puffin Books, 2013).

of my own, no family at all. So who is going to run the factory when I get too old to do it myself? Someone's got to keep it going—if only for the sake of the Oompa-Loompas."[528]

Thus, the avatar is transmutable, repossessable, fluidly ontological, and infinitely subjective. *A death* does not terminate the folded discourse of the subjectivity of an avatar but produces tessellation for grafting and interacting with the work, the subject, and *the life* of an other.

A final case study upon death is in a posthumous, Copernican reveal. Similar to the considerations presented in the chapter "Infinite Reconstitution," work withheld beyond an embodied death introduces a speculative otherness to a non-self/non-other, *for whom?* Hilma af Klint's *Group IX/SUW, The Swan, No. 1* (fig 32.) introduces this as a morbid dualism of swans, reflections, and a withholding of self/other/avatar identities.



Figure 32. Hilma af Klint, *Group IX/SUW, The Swan, No. 1*, 1914-1915, Gelatin silver print, The Hilma af Klint Foundation, https://www.guggenheim.org/audio/track/group-ix-suw-the-swan-no-1-1915-by-hilma-af-klint.

[528] Roald Dahl, *The Complete Adventures of Charlie and Mr. Willy Wonka*, 151.

Where audiences are found and work is critiqued, the conceptualization of a world and episteme unready for the work frames the digitalization of a postmortem decision to release the hands. Impeding dissemination of some of her figurative works from the public, af Klint's work introduces a premeditated de-subjectivity and emerges as a renegotiated teleology.[529] Now seen as a canonical figure in the Abstract Expressionism movements of the early 20th century, the act of storing, confining, and limiting the objects introduces an infinite alterity of the self to/from the others.[530] Beyond making work for a loved one or writing "Not For Sale" at an Art Fair, the figurative paintings, that are canonized by gallerists and historians, speculate on an effervescence of life beyond death.

Fear? Embarrassment? Lack of understanding? Speculation to the max, the spiritual annals of theses works produce a contradiction to subjectivity that only arises through the denial of the spectacle. It is not a desensationalization to underestimate the erasure of work that has been made known, as with Baldessari and Villar Rojas, but to prevent autonomy as an action-oriented decision pulsates and animates *a life beyond*. This contradiction of framing the self with the non-self is the subjectivity of *a swan*, *another swan*, and *the space between swans*.[531]

The *x* of an Abnatural aesthetic introduces and incorporates an interstitial space before, between, and after the dichotomies of life and death. Subjectivity fluidly encompasses an authorship that is unquestionable and unattainable through the process of

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[529] "About," *The Hilma af Klint Foundation*. https://hilmaafklint.se/about-hilma-af-klint/.

[530] Andrew Ferren, "In Search of Hilma af Klint, Who Upended Art History, But Left Few Traces," *New York Times* (October 21, 2019). https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/21/travel/stockholm-hilma-af-klint.html?smid=url-share.

[531] Tracey Bashkoff, "Group IX/SUW, The Swan, No. 1 (1915) by Hilma af Klint," *Guggenheim* (October 25, 2018). https://www.guggenheim.org/audio/track/group-ix-suw-the-swan-no-1-1915-by-hilma-af-klint.

denial. By extending beyond death, af Klint's work is renegotiated as a canonical context and works to decentralize and dismantle the superstructure of an art historical context that is machinic rather than ontological. Thus, rewriting the history books, af Klint deconstructs the authorship and any subsequent death of Barthes' authorship through denying access to life. As an avatar, this unknowable futuring exists as the indefinite *x*. To death, to life, and to life beyond death, af Klint's work is and simultaneously contradicts the self/other/avatar(s) of an Abnatural aesthetic. *Troubling.*

> It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. By degrees, I remember, a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I was obliged to shut my eyes. Darkness then came over me, and *troubled* me; but hardly had I felt this, when, by opening my eyes, as I now suppose, the light poured in upon me again.[532]

[532] Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 92.

CONCLUSION

AGENT SMITH: You destroyed me, Mr. Anderson. Afterward, I knew the rules, I understood what I was supposed to do, but I didn't. I couldn't. I was compelled to stay, compelled to disobey, and now here I stand, because of you, Mr. Anderson.

He steps closer and Neo does not back away.

AGENT SMITH (CONT'D): Because of you, I am no longer an Agent of this system, because of you, I have changed. I am unplugged, a new man, so to speak, like you, apparently free.
NEO: Congratulations.
AGENT SMITH: Thank you but as you well know, appearances can be deceiving, which brings me back to the reason why we are here; it is not because we are free, we are here because we are not free. There is no escaping reason. No denying purpose because, as we both know, without purpose, we would not exist.[533]

Toward an infinite, undefinable *x*, making, as an Abnatural aesthetic search for subjectivity and authorship, produces a *troubling* discourse where contradictions and Asymptotes are inevitable speculations on *a life*. Through recontextualizing the self as an undefinable, unfixed, and infinitely folding other and avatar(s), the WE exists within a third space of identity where the real/fake produce Posthuman identities, *à la simulacra*.

To negotiate and contextualize these intermittent spaces, Combinatorial charts introduce an inexact mapping as a framework to rationalize a band-ed ontology of "bubbles." Beyond the graphical absolute, these fluctuations and divergences curate a more-than identity aesthetic where the self is unfixed as a series of selves understood

[533] *The Matrix Reloaded*, directed by The Wachowskis.

merely through silhouette. Reflecting upon these intersectional discourses, field conditions introduce an instrumental notation for producing a condition of alterity and ipseity that contend with an undefinable assemblage where adjacency meets interiority as a folded condition of infinite reconstitution and reconstruction. Thus, the self is a grounding force of foundational *nomos* and a biased and subjective individual that involutes within itself as an alterous interiority and "ipseitous" exteriority.

Through case studies on architecture, art, design, food, film, literature, music, and sound, identities and practices of making become graft-able locations to introduce *any* additional rationales within the WE. In learning new trades, techniques, practices, languages, etc., the *x* of an Abnatural discourse becomes an infinite journey of unresolvable asymptotic realities. Even beyond death, the embodiment of the WE and the hands of the maker contend with *troubling subjectivities.*

Luckily, there are avatars to contend with these contradictions.

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