

DICTIONARY
OF THE POSSIBLE

Shifter 22

Dictionary
of the Possible

Edited by Avi Alpert
& Sreshta Rit Premnath

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Shifter 22: *Dictionary of the Possible*

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Eric, Margarita and Mimi for helping with final edits. For the full list of participants, see the list of Contributors.

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Preface

Perhaps one of the oddest tasks bequeathed to dictionaries, whose tautological mission is to use words to define words, is that they must also define themselves. The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that a dictionary is a “book which explains or translates . . . the words of a language . . . giving for each word its typical spelling, an explanation of its meaning or meanings,” etc. If this is what a dictionary does, then the book in your hands is not one. But maybe a dictionary can describe words not by spellings, accepted meanings, etymologies, and so forth, but rather by questions, fragments, and conjectures. Taking up this alternate path, the Dictionary of the Possible works to restore words to the insecurity, variability, strangeness, and wonder that they have in our lives.

This dictionary, like all dictionaries, originated in a community of speakers. This community was a fluctuating group of artists, curators, writers, academics and amateurs of all stripes who met for a series of twenty-one public discussions held at The New School from September 2014 to December 2015. Each session concentrated

on unraveling a keyword selected by two discussion leaders, and after each meeting participants were invited to post questions about the word in a shared Google Doc. The process resulted in the congregation of a core group of participants who met regularly and others, equally valuable, who joined us once or several times during our year and a half run. Over time the discussions opened on to more terms than we could fit in our calendar, and the community of people who wanted to be involved but could not participate kept growing. In response, we began to solicit individual entries about the words we missed, and, for the most part, from those who could not make it. The resulting “dictionary,” collects an eccentric lexicon that is an index of our contingent community.

We offer the reader these fragments with the hope that the pedagogical intensity of hours of discussion might be re-presented in a different format. This book, like the group meetings, depends intimately on its reactivation by a reader or a group of readers. In this future activation lies the promise of possibility. Absent from this book are the recommended readings that were distributed in advance of each discussion. If you wish to consult these readings, they will remain accessible as long as possible through Shifter’s website: shifter-magazine.com

As you turn these pages you will quickly discover that we have chosen the standard format of alphabetization. This is only because any other procedure would have imposed the will of the editors onto the terms and the standard form, in this sense, was the most random.

Some questions to begin: How is our sense of everyday life altered by how we think about what is possible? What are the political ramifications of championing possibility, such as found in the World Social Forum's insistence that "Another World is Possible," but also Hannah Arendt's claim that the "fundamental belief" of totalitarianism is that "everything is possible"? And finally, how is our language shaped by the delicate balance of the probability of meaning, which makes communication possible, and the possibility of meaning, which allows for difference to emerge?

—*Avi Alpert & Sreshtha Rit Premnath*
New York City, January 2016

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How do certain artists act as both witness and executioner?

What is the relationship between giving an account and being accountable?

As a documentarian, do I hide behind the accounts of my interviewees and excuse myself from any accountability?

What kind of power do I enact when I am hidden behind the camera? What do I submit to when I am in front of the camera?

How does silence, as an account of omission, re-articulate a power dynamic?

Can I refrain from giving an account as an act of resistance? If so, is silence a strategy of resistance? Is my silence an account?

Is my filmed image speaking for me? What is my image saying for me? Is my image saying something about me or something about who made it?

Do I exist politically if I am unaccountable?

How can secret accounts protect me from the violent truth, as in a film like *Life is Beautiful*?

What if I can't speak? What if I refuse to speak?

What if no one listens?

Is an all encompassing account ever possible?

How does the process of giving an account affect the interviewee or respondent's own identity?

What kind of account of my life would I give? Would I be willing to give an account of my life for a political cause, even if this account could potentially endanger my life? Does the nation, as we find suggested by one of the characters in Mustafa Ali's film *They Do Not Exist*, provide such an account?

How does an account overdetermine a situation? In other words, is one of the main domains of political struggle defining the situation, even more than responding to it?

How might we give an account of politics that links critique and praxis, without falling into mere platitudes about “organization,” “party,” or “mass movement”? What other accounts of politics are there?

Can we think of giving an account as a process of questioning one’s own practice while making use of the accounts of others in that practice? Am I, as an interviewer, asking a question in order to receive answers that agree with my initial position and thus preventing me from accessing the accounts formulated by others?

Is there such a thing as a pure account, unprompted by context or questions?

Should an interviewer be responsible for the accounts of others and for the use of those narrations, if the interviewer was the one who authored the questions? What is my responsibility in this case particularly if the account is edited or rewritten?

Should we, as cultural producers who work with the words of others, be held to the same cross-examination as the people we interview?

What does it mean to be made accountable as
a cultural producer?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Mari Cruz Alarcón & Margarita Sánchez
on March 8th, 2015*

Whether one speaks of religious deification, or the worship of the luminary figures of mass culture, or the veneration of those political leaders of the last century, all strong and passionate forms of adoration are Janus-faced. On the one hand they are labeled as a self-fulfilling and transgressive experiences of euphoria and on the other they are classified as a dubious self-loss, the result of a dazed belief in authoritarian rule. Adoration seems to bear the sign of emotional furor and powerlessness. The connection of this enthusiastic state with the idea of madness has quite a long discursive tradition in the history of religious experiences, thanks especially to the mystic tradition of the 16th century. While the *theia mania* was not per se problematic, in the wake of the Enlightenment (or the hope for it), adoration turned into a dubious phenomena that was equally called on and called out for its vital impact on society. As a jubilatory, frenetic, and devotional affirmation of the superiority of a charismatic figure, adoration was, according to Foucault, conceived as an eroto-manic deprivation of will, reason, and the

power of judgment. Thus, the adoring subject appears to be the mere underling of the experience, disappointing the hope for an enlightened, critical, and emancipated being. Yet, it is precisely for this reason that adoration—in line with Max Weber's analysis—can also be understood as a devotional belief and, hence, as the enchanted catalyst of the creative and revolutionary force of charisma. It is, as such, able to break with the social grid by challenging the hegemony of tradition and rationalization. Today's hyper-idolatrous culture echoes these conflicting perspectives on adoration, compromising both the emancipatory hope for a disenchanted and enlightened life and the belief in the creative power of re-enchantment. To the degree that adoration turns into a menacing phenomenon it appears as a productive formula—at least within the contemporary culture industry.

—*Veronika Zink*

The history of the scholarly amateur extends from the virtuosi of early modern Europe through the dilettanti of eighteenth-century Britain to the women amateur historians of the late Victorian era. The amateur has been seen as a feminized figure, as well as a figure of exile or withdrawal who occupies a position that enables critique, transgression, and synthesis.

This word today might seem either anodyne, or alarmingly conservative, a lifestyle option that distracts from “serious” critical work.

To what extent is amateur practice defined as seeking pleasure or “enchantment” through knowledge seeking or art-making?

To what degree is the amateur a feminized figure?

What counts as an amateur style?

Why do artists and academics care about the figure of the amateur? When is it a token of legitimacy, when of illegitimacy?

What is the relationship between the amateur and the avant-garde?

How would you teach amateurism?

Is being a good citizen being an amateur? (In Edward Said's sense of being someone who transcends specialization and insists on posing general questions about public life.)

What is the relationship between the amateur and the outsider artist?

Is the amateur anti-vocational?

Is the amateur defined by a style of relation to a bounded field, one of non- or partial- knowing, as opposed to the expert, who claims a total mastery of a domain?

Is the amateur defined by a plural disposition, one that takes several fields as necessary to her identity or status? Is the amateur fundamentally a polymath?

Can the amateur be identified with the figure of the intellectual as Sartre defines her: one who "interferes in what doesn't concern" her? If so, is

the amateur one who challenges the enclosure of domains of knowledge or practice, someone who contests the becoming-property of fields of inquiry and experimentation? Is the amateur fundamentally an interloper, an intruder?

Can amateurs be experts, like in geek culture? What happens when the amateur is the expert?

How much is amateurism about seeking out encounters with the weird or eccentric? Or being weird or eccentric?

Rather than a retrograde eccentric, might the amateur be usefully conceived as a vanguard figure ushering in a new culture of invested work? In other words, could an amateur's investment in his "labor of love" be seen as an escape from the demands of capital?

Can the terms "participant," "hacker" or "user" offer replacements or alternatives to "amateur"?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Eric Anglès & Mimi Winick
on March 21st, 2015*

Amnesia is a trope of film noir. The result of trauma, it sets up a condition of horror and mystery. Something awful has happened to the psyche, to the brain, leaving the present to be faced without the benefit of experience, the past to be recovered with maximum danger.

Waves crashing against the bottom of a rocky cliff during a stormy night is another trope of film noir, whether the instance of the initiatory trauma or the transfer shot signaling a flashback to a moment out the past that will move the plot forward.

Feminism is described as coming in waves, the first, the second, the third, now the fourth. It is a fluid periodic pulse, what comes in must go out. A wave comes back in because a wave went out.

Patriarchy has no waves. It is the ocean and the land that the feminist waves seek to reshape. Between the waves, amnesia. When the feminist wave comes back in it's always as if it's for the first time. Women are faced with the same dilemmas, the same injustices, only partially addressed and resolved in the previous wave. Feminism exists in a state of revival because all

cultures to some degree subjugate, subordinate, derogate, legislate female sexuality, subjectivity, and agency. Amnesia for feminism is always beginning to and then forgetting to question the political dimensions of the seemingly personal.

But amnesia also has a positive valence. After the exodus from Egypt, the Jews were made to wander in the desert for forty years until the generation that knew slavery had died and the generation entering the promised land would have shed the mindset of the slave—it is a paradox that this story which is retold once a year over millennia is based as much on the necessity of forgetting as it is on the imperative of remembering.

—*Mira Schor*

Is the “animal” as a category a boundary-making tool? Although it may seem apparent what separates a human from a non-human, the animal seems to both transgress and mark these limits.

Who are the “animals?” What defines them? Is there a universal category of the “animal,” or do different cultures have diverse conceptions of animality?

How can we see beyond the normalized boundary between us and them and establish more ethical ways of co-existing?

In light of my almost 50 year relationship with the box turtle Marmaduke I have a feeling of closeness, a “being-with,” but have many more questions than answers, particularly on the matter of ethics. The turtle is after all confined and is not an equal player in the relationship. Yet we have shared the bulk of our lives together. Is this an ‘inter-subjectivity’? If so, how do I continue to learn from this without

succumbing to anthropomorphism or other subjective projections?

We can think about the notion of being-with through the fascinating example of social amoeba, which are about as different from us as a living organism can be, yet they appear to have attractions, aversions and a kind of vibrancy that Kurt Vonnegut may have called “the Universal Will to Become.” How do we deal ethically with such amoeba in the lab? What rights might they have?

Have we lost our ability to connect to the “otherness” of (non human) others?

Is human exceptionalism a manifestation of ontological autism?

Does the Buddhist notion of no separation between the self and others have meaning in terms of our responsibility to be open to non-human subjectivities?

Where do we draw the line between “them” and “us”? Why do we draw it? At “sentience”? Why? How do we define this?

Why do we privilege organisms whose cognitive style most resembles our own?

Will future generations accuse us of unforgivable speciesism just as we criticize others of racism?

Is veganism the only logical conclusion of a trenchant engagement with animals?

Is there a necessary division between our animality and our rationality?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Terike Haapoja & Oliver Kellhammer
on November 21st, 2015*

Of all the constructions in which *to appear* appears, one seems to hold particular relevance for our current situation: *To make an appearance*. Someone or something that *makes an appearance* is already exceptional. A candidate, a celebrity, a new technical object or social phenomenon; these things don't simply appear but grace us with their appearance. The construction preserves a residue of the transcendental: a thing that *makes an appearance* comes onto the scene from another place, somehow discrete from ours.

Compare this to someone or something that merely *appears*, or worse, *appears to be*: these things are beset by ontological doubts. In contrast, the identity of something that *makes an appearance* is secure, uncontested—why else would we mark its appearance with such linguistic fanfare? How did this happen, when everything else in the phenomenal world is plagued by uncertainty?

If an appearance is *made*, then it's our job, as students of appearances, to figure out how it was done—to follow the sleight of hand at work whenever a thing is presented to us as novel,

exceptional. Then maybe we can find our way once and for all to that discrete, other place from which powerful appearances emerge.

—*Roger White*

What is the avant-garde's relation to institutions and institutionalization?

What is the temporality of the avant-garde?

How does one qualify or evaluate the avant-garde without defaulting to binary generalizations such as success and failure?

How is the term avant-garde understood and used in other fields besides the arts?

Does the term avant-garde need to function as a positive value-concept, i.e. as a notion that is assumed to be inherently good?

Is there one avant-garde, or is there rather a multiplicity of practices that stretch and pull the elastic notion of "the avant-garde" in various and sometimes incompatible directions?

What is the relationship between the "cult of the new" operative in a certain conception of

the avant-garde and the cultivation of novelty at all costs in marketing and advertising?

Might the historical notion of the avant-garde be tied to a deep-seated cultural confidence in what is to come, in the positive—albeit dialectical—unfolding of history, in art's unquestioned catalytic function of helping precipitate the advent of what lies ahead? (A confidence that is clearly no longer prevalent today outside the techno-productivist ideology.)

If we determine that “avant-garde” can be a useful term in helping to locate a form of historical agency, what is its specificity? Is it still useful to seek it out within the sociological field of art practice and circulation—professional, or mass-cultural—given that the latter has undergone such profound structural transformations since the original deployment of the term?

Is successful avant-garde work, in being truly cutting edge, condemned to fail at the precise moment of its success: meaning at the moment at which it is recognized as such and thereby incorporated as something that is no longer on the edge but now in the frame?

What is the relationship between the avant-garde and the concept of utopia?

If the avant-garde is related to politics, how is it that we are defining “politics,” anyway?

If the avant-garde is a “concept-in-struggle,” in what domains do we wage that struggle?

What is the geography of the avant-garde, as both theory and practice?

How do the primitivist elements of the modernist avant-garde tie it to colonialism? Is there anything of the avant-garde’s internationalism that simultaneously breaks with colonialism?

Knowing that the avant-garde is a military term, what is the avant-garde’s relationship to militancy more generally?

What is the scale of the avant-garde? Do we need different levels of analysis for the different registers it might operate in?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Avi Alpert & Gabriel Rockhill
on October 4th, 2014*

To capture is to grab, to seize, to take hold of, and to bring into the fold of one's dominion. As an act of force, does capturing not resemble thinking, grasping, conceptualizing?

In the age of new media technology this connection to thinking tends to be eclipsed by the fetishization of the rationalistic goal of data access. Image capture, sound capture, and other similar terms refer to the recording of visual, sonic, and other forms of data. But, recording implies something existing prior to the act of recording, and this is no longer necessarily the case with digitized material. The world is now capturable not only in the sense of being reproducible, it is also infinitely *producible*; such producibility is an outcome of machinic generative capacity. Human perception since the arrival of the camera (and the phonograph, to a different extent) has been irreversibly entwined with and dependent on the impersonal codes of such machinic capacity.

Beyond the machinic generation of data, does capture not have an older and more visceral history? How to think about forms of capture

that are not by way of mechanical instruments or electronic devices, but by way of kidnapping, abduction, and incarceration—in brief, processes in which it is not data, but bodies that are arrested, injured, or destroyed? How to pursue the affinities between these two forms of capture, machinic and physical?

These technical-physical entanglements are often at center stage in contemporary media spectacles of detention, torture, and execution. The seizure of live humans, on the one hand, and the exhibition of such acts of seizure on screen, on the other, have become something of a terroristic routine in the early twenty-first century. This routine is collectively produced and circulated—by terrorists, governments, journalistic networks, public transit spaces, commercial venues, and individual users of electronic devices—for a global regime of governance, based on a specific form of enjoyment. Like the spectators of Roman gladiatorial games, we are riveted, captivated, by such scenes of violence, and we hunger for more. What would be the fate of physical capture these days should it not be captured as data?

—*Rey Chow*

The upper region of man is furnished like the middle region of the air; the materials are formed from causes of the widest difference, yet produce at last the same substance and effect. Mists arise from the earth, steam from dunghills, exhalations from the sea, and smoke from fire; yet, all clouds are the same in composition as well as consequences, and the fumes issuing from a jakes will furnish as comely and useful a vapour as incense.¹

We have had a flood of original ideas in all media, works of singular beauty as well as significant milestones in the history of inflation, but at that moment, there was only *this balloon*, concrete particular, hanging there.²

What is a transparent factory in a cloud is a riddle I can't write my way through. Rain is the string that holds the cloud it sustains but it also serves a use. There's not a place that can't be used, *everything is useful*, if I had a dance I'd make rain, if I had a *cloudbuster*, I'd make the *queerest looking clouds you ever saw*; I'd pump them full of orgone they'd be gorged with purpose heavy enough to pin the edges

of the cloud like little butts on a parachute. Less violent than the Victorians more ludic than labored æther 2.0 would descend on the earth like a network a mist in a cover. Then, at the least (at the very last) we'd understand what it is that we're in.³

—*Tyler Coburn*

- 1 Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of A Tub* (1704)
- 2 Donald Barthelme, *The Balloon* (1981)
- 3 Tyler Coburn, *I'm that angel* (2012)

How to walk a common thread. Part of. Part taken. Struggle on the same score. Learned from the echo of time. Collective weaves in and out of *I*, *We* and *Us*. A chosen family of directed potency. Braiding. Breathing. Tuned-in practice of dissonance. A commitment. A study. Called into by closeness. Collective singularity. Distinct voice. Against omission. Queer synchronicity. A waterfall. Continuous. Reaching past one. A vision. An address. A need. Calling out. Like a wave. By way of introduction. Stepping up. A podium. And us. A fist raised. Grown. Moving strength, gently together. Flows of arms linked. A row. A line. Chain of beliefs. Of whispers urgently spoken. Joints. A social fabric. Marching in minds and streets. Touched. Moved. A movement. Like minded. Like souled. Like home. A sigh of relief. Expanding into the present. To be safe but not saved. A body to echo. Out of breath. Into life. Right here. A warmth to fold into. Now. A song. Loud, then louder. Labor and love. Finding paths. As a matter of survival. Off the pavement.

Skies below. Horizons unbound. In voice.
For rhythm. Transgress together the neatly
trimmed lawn. Into us present.

—*Andrea Geyer*

While the colloquial meaning of the term “contemporary” functions to include all activities in the present moment, the art historical category of “Contemporary Art” serves to exclude certain artistic practices. What are the consequences of the internal contradictions produced by this term?

If there are practices that occur in the present that are still not seen as contemporary, to what temporality do we relegate those “non-contemporary” practices?

How are the exclusions marked by this aesthetic category congruent with differences in access to capital and the inequalities that already exist in artists’ access to public forums along the lines of nationality, race, gender, sexuality, access to education, etc.?

How does the proliferation of art fairs and biennials as the primary global forums for art exhibition affect the modes of production and display of art, and the discursive boundaries of

what is considered as Contemporary Art?

For some theorists, the reason to theorize the contemporary is in order to give a prescription for aesthetic and political creation in the present. What are the political stakes that inhere in our definitions of the contemporary? Is there any reason to develop a theory of the contemporary other than to make an intervention into the present?

Is the contemporary necessarily critical?

Is the word contemporary a description or a disposition? Is there any meaningful relationship between the use of the term contemporary to delineate a historically situated (sub)set of political/economic/cultural phenomena, on the one hand, and, on the other, the use of the term contemporary to denote the particular epistemological disposition, grounded in contradiction and contingency rather than universal principles, that seems to inform criticality nowadays?

What is the relationship between “contemporary” and “modern”?

What aesthetics do we associate with the
contemporary?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Shadi Harouni & Sreshtha Rit Premnath
on October 18th, 2014*

What defines a group as distinct from its members?

In traditional political theory, corporations / corporatism belong to a conception of social bodies as organic wholes, rather than as pluralities of opposing interests (such as Marxist or capitalist thinking usually have it). How might we usefully think together and articulate these two metaphors?

What is implied in the notion of corporate “personhood” and where does corporate “identity” come from, if not simply from law?

How do we distinguish between different types of groups: between looser associations like networks or assemblages and more defined and enduring groups like companies and corporations?

Is Occupy Wall Street a corporation, for instance? (An anti-corporate act of corporate speech.)

In what way can a university be said to be a corporation?

Does buying something make me a part of the corporation I buy from?

Are the US or EU, more or less, giant conglomerates?

How exactly do we differentiate between the people employed by a corporation and a corporation itself?

How is it possible to even conceive of a “corporation” that employs people and not just people employing other people?

What truly separates an elected government and a corporation with elected members of a board?

Are we in the midst of the forgetting of the idea of the corporation? In other words, since corporations historically have included churches, kingdoms, towns and cities, representative political bodies, guilds, and, today, unions and many other types of groups, why is it that we tend to only consider the corporation as a capitalist business?

Does it make a difference in how we think about corporations if we remember that the original Latin word is not *corporatio* but *universitas*?

In what way can we understand the idea of corporate personhood? Might the etymology of “persona” (the condition of wearing a mask) lead us to recall that all persons are constructions? Is the problem then not corporate personhood, but the kinds of corporate values that have come to dominate all persons?

Once a corporation is established, is it possible for a point of contact or intersection to be redrawn so that it becomes a point around which a new corporate formation begins to take shape, overlapping—rather than opposing—the first? When does a part form a new whole? How does the whole that part forms differ from the whole from which the part has been taken?

Is our task with respect to the corporation not one of abolition, but rather that of transformation—of exploiting the cracks in the corporation’s “disposition” in order to re-code it?

Revolutionary thinking, which emphasizes breaks and ruptures, is often violent and rarely successful. Perhaps thinking about the institution and transformation of corporations provides a different path.

Are we therefore called upon to recompose new corporations and new modes of collective being?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Edward Schexnayder & Henry Turner
on November 15th, 2014*

If love is blind, then sex is Braille.

—*Dominic Pettman*

A dictionary is a malleable form, which reflects the meaning of a term at a particular moment and place.

It also serves as a location for reorientation to which we return if only in order to compare our active sense of a word to the many meanings listed under each entry.

A dictionary is a gathering of fragments. Each fragment indexically points elsewhere both within the dictionary as well as outside in order to clarify itself.

The dictionary as a genre of writing emerges out of the Enlightenment aspiration to represent the totality of a given field. Yet its fragmentariness — its formal constitution as an aggregate of independent parts — makes visible the gaps in that effort to represent everything. How can one understand the relationship between these two aspects of the dictionary without privileging the completed object, the encompassing frame, but rather the

dispersive and fractured nature of its form?

Does the desire for a representation and mastery of everything animate the project of compiling a dictionary?

Is there an alternative to such a totalizing project and its binary opposite?

To what uses can a dictionary be put, and is its utility limited to pedagogy or does it also involve world-making powers?

For Foucault, the *tabula rasa*, or the empty table, precedes and prescribes the readability of the objects placed upon it. In this sense a dictionary is a form that allows words entered into it a sense of authority and viability.

Currently the number of dictionaries mapping keywords in a variety of fields is increasing exponentially: there are not only dictionaries of individual languages, but also of literary terms, key figures in musical history, and proverbial sayings, as well as of lust, sloth, wrath, and obscure sorrows. What fields of discourse, if any, can't be represented by dictionaries?

What is the particular purview of a “dictionary of the possible”? How in particular can the very boundlessness that “possibility” presupposes be reconciled with the boundedness of the dictionary form, as a material and conceptual limitation?

Ordinarily dictionaries are organized alphabetically: this is the principle that allows their editors to establish the spatial relations between entries and add new information without changing the frame. This makes dictionaries useful to those who want to find an entity that they already know exists. What other structuring principles can be identified to establish an order for the entries, if not alphabetization?

If the alphabetical dictionary’s relationship to its reader is utility, how might an aleatory or non-standard dictionary’s relationship to its reader be described?

What in the relationship between dictionary and diction? Does the project of a dictionary presume a propriety to the usage of words?

Does pointing to a dictionary definition obscure or illuminate everyday usage?

What is the geography and generationality of
a language?

Is falling in love like learning a dictionary of
another's soul?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation by
Avi Alpert, Sreshtha Rit Premnath & Adam Spanos
on May 2nd, 2015*

Ecology is the discipline that attempts to understand how our home functions.

Which home? Whose home?

The family, the residence, the human community, the all-encompassing environment: the earth with its oceans, the atmosphere, the land and its forests, deserts, mountains and the billion beautiful life forms, all of them functioning as a synchronized whole.

In its entirety the environment looks magnificent, immeasurable and beyond comprehension. How does one find out how it functions? Where does one begin? The family and one's community are after all a part of the larger environment. It would be impossible to restrict ecology to just human society.

I could attempt to look at the larger environment around me carefully and closely, one aspect at a time: the *abiotic* and the *biotic*—the non-living and the living—each separately. But this understanding is partial and fragmented. Have they not co-existed on this earth resulting from millions of years of co-evolution, coming into existence through a series of processes simultaneously over geological time? They are intri-

cately connected. The soil is formed from dead and decaying life forms and living beings obtain nourishment from the soil, and so on. Living organisms are interconnected too and they exist in a state of delicate natural balance, which is not obvious to a casual observer, but it is there to be perceived by the sensitive human brain.

I must therefore redesign my observations to a *systems approach*, looking at the environment as an *ecosystem*—a network of processes that link the living and nonliving within and among each other. What emerges is a complex web of life, each species adapted to its location in this web and connected through *symbiosis* to other species. This elaborate network seems to exist in a state of *dynamic equilibrium*.

The ecosystem then is the unit of ecology. It could be a handful of garden soil, the buccal cavity of a human, a leaf or a rainforest. At every level the principles that govern the functions seem to be the same—*energy flow* and *nutrient cycling* sustained by solar energy.

The immense, intricate system that maintains the earth and its life forms in balance is under serious threat today. Do we as humans have the wisdom to conserve this little understood system?

—Sudha Premnath

When spiders are born, they tiptoe to a high place and dangle a few strands of silk in the wind. A gust catches them, and by this act of courageous abandonment the spiderling migrates vast distances, airborne, unable to choose where it lands.

Oppose to this the mature spider, who, with the same invisible filament which sent him hurtling across the world, designs a web. Every strand of silk a line of correspondence: strung between rafter and rafter, a network stands self-sufficient.

In it a flea is arrested. The stillness of the web forces travellers into stillness. They are taken, like Enoch, away from this world to a plane where relations are fixed, where things always are what they are.

Spidersilk has a destiny: it serves for a time as a parachute that it might one day be made into a web.

To build a web is no task for the essayist. The essay being always an uncompleted gesture, or a prophecy.

To write an essay, perhaps: to remain wilfully a spiderling. To arrest time to prolong the motion.

Perhaps then the essayist is childish, or humble. But perhaps also insolent, perverted: who would dare to deny his destiny?

If, after an eventful flight, an essayist hit ground, would he set to work at once? Would he bond strand to strand to weave a unity?

If he did, he might find it hard to convince himself that his silk had met its destiny. Humans in this respect being unlike spiders: when they take a look at their finished webs, they cannot help but feel a certain paltriness. In theory, the web is infinite; its real diameter is fixed.

In the endless motion of the essay, the spiderling finds its freedom. The webs possible are infinite; the homes possible are infinite. Dreaming always of the web to come, the web that shall never arrive.

In this the essay's role in public life, inciting others as it does to bring it to its destiny, to impossibly expend its possibility.

Yet the promise of a final work is necessary.

For without the image of that worldless fixity, how would we persuade ourselves that we weren't hurtling into the black?

—*Railbird*

Why has the event become a privileged concept within critical philosophy, radical politics, and experimental art?

Does this relate to the financialization of advanced capitalist economies and the increasing prominence of a spectacle-driven “event culture”?

What sort of conceptual, temporal, or aesthetico-political model of the event might structure our interventions within such a conjuncture? Is the contemporary longing for event an effect of nostalgia?

Does the pervasive contemporary interest in the event indicate an anxiety with the declaration that the world has found the perfect political and economic order in Western capitalist democracy, and that the only work that remains is to fully implement existing forms?

Do the philosophical disputations over the question of the event really matter?

Derrida says the event can never take place. Perhaps he means that no event could ever be fully present because it must have a certain absence that allows for time to continue.

If we take Badiou to be saying that anyone, anywhere, can be a partisan of an event, become faithful to that event, does that in fact de-nostalgize the event, and allow us to think of all occurrences as possible moments of subjective formation?

What would a non-event be? Is a non-event the same as a pseudo-event, that which draws our attention and solicits our emotion but which fails to introduce any meaningful changes into the arena in which it occurs? What sorts of occurrences might we classify here: Elections? Weddings? A drunken night on the town? Is a pseudo-event essentially a rarely occurring ritual, a departure from normal behavior designed to renew people's investment in a system of rules?

If the political election is a suitable model of the non-event, what other circumstances would be required in order to endow one with the status of an event?

Do we find in accounts of boredom and malaise (Virginia Woolf, say), the possibility that the lack of something happening could produce a traumatic repetition of a sense of emptiness and purposelessness in life? Might we then need to think seriously about the category of the “trauma of no event”?

If the event constitutes a break with the laws that govern an order, ones that subjects are expected to know and obey, it might be argued that knowledge itself is a function of the existing order and complicit with its everyday mechanisms of control. If so, then an event also brings ways of knowing into question. Is it possible then to know an event, which specifically targets presumed systems of knowledge? How can one sustain one’s investment in an event that is unknowable and that consequently leaves one in a perpetual state of limbo?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Keith Tilford & Andrew Weiner
on April 18th, 2015*

(to fall)

*No one sleeps in this room without
The dream of a common language.*

*I will not be divided from her or from myself
By myths of separation.*

Adrienne Rich
The dream of a common language

Dear Adrienne Rich: I'm scared.
Or more directly: I have read too many books
on survivalism.
Ok I read only one book on survivalism (object
porn). Bulldozers spider hole covers metal front
doors home births submissive wives large gar-
dens dead trespassers missing limbs war games
real war stockpiled fuel cans of beans guns and
their accessories.
I don't trust the survivalist porn and yet now I'm
planning my escape when society breaks down.
One thing leads to the next thing.

Dictionary of the Possible

Fall. To move from one place to another through gravity and time, right?

This can be metaphorical.

Soft porn novel about an octoroon slave girl. Found in the dusty back corner of the used book store when I was 9. My mom saw it and took it away.

Falllllll.

Text language that my students use when writing.

Capitalism the way Rand Paul says it really flat.

Top 10 in Artforum.

Typing my dreams and turning them into narratives in the 90's.

Literally falling out of an airplane in Ohio. Greg Scranton came too and had a video made of his fall to earth. When he showed others the video later in his living room he said "I felt like I was going through birth for the second time" or something.

I keep coming back to this:

*What I'm writing could be written by another.
Another writer, of course, but it would have to be a
man, for a woman would weep her heart out.*

Clarice Lispector
The hour of the Star

Not refusing to perform, but performing refusal.
fall fall fall

What is a pronoun but a metaphor?

Lisa Robertson
Cinema of the Present

Am I too straight looking?
The Bottoming and Topping books tell me: consent in BDSM is what matters.
Transgression.
From the dictionary:
Involving a violation of accepted or imposed boundaries, esp. those of social acceptability:
her experiences of transgressive love with both sexes.
purity
Tinder as small performances of validation:
the fall
Tinder as flatness, speed, surface.
Aging
Sluts
Falling as metamorphosis psychosis
Today I will choose the performances of “purity”
“innocence” and “modesty.”
Collapsed binaries.
The walk of shame.
Used up like a piece of chewing gum or old

chocolate.
FGM.
The Chibok Girls.
Victims of honor killings.
Victims of Rape as a legal sentence for a crime
somebody else commits.
Victims of Rape by a partner/friend/stranger.
Fistulas.
Things that happen to other people in other
places whose names I don't know.
Things that happen to me.
Roofie alert nail polish.
What if the paranoia is real.
Sandra Bland.
We are not talking.
Fall as a thought space, fall as a real space.
Sky diving—fear.
The life of objects.
cultural amnesia as expressed through history
books in Texas
Patterns of loneliness
Mass shootings
The prison industrial system

*People say a roving woman
is likely not to be better than she ought to be;
so, when I stray away from where I've got to be,
someone always takes me home.*

*Now, poker is a game a lady shouldn't play
and every floatin' poker game just seems to float my way.
But long before I've lost a thing besides my comb,
someone tips his hand to me and takes me home.*

Connie Convers
Roving woman

Vera Chytilova performing a protest against a reductionist creation tale in 1970 in *Fruit of Paradise*, inverts the snake in *The Garden*. The snake chants: “you will *not* surely die! You will *not* surely die!”

*they ask me to remember
but they want me to remember
their memories
and I keep on remembering
mine*

Lucille Clifton
why some people be mad at me sometimes

Transgression against the hegemonic writing of history and a hostile culture of forgetting.

—*Chelsea Knight*

Fire, that metaphor for politics or love.

Or fire, the event of a state change: solid to air. What was is no longer. The absence of what was is announced by the emergence of flame, the flame that was always already there. A generalized burning appearing here or there, around for longer than anyone can remember. One fire to set all the instances of flame.

Fire pathologized (pyromania), fire criminalized (arson), fire ritualized (religion), fire generalized (communism).

“...[S]o many local fires patiently kindled for a generalized explosion.”¹ Fire enacts a communism of the particle, of ash: the great leveling of matter. Fire at the growing grey edge of value, accumulated dead labor. The inverse of value — fire — eating paper, liberating the deadened husks of commodities from the circuits of value production, capital.

“Capital gives fire to the commons,” but fire can also be sabotage. Not the sad ‘reclaiming’ of the commons (welfare state, capital-labor accord) for a life un-expropriated, but a fire to the commons as the movement of communism:

“not to ‘develop new social relations’ but to dissolve this society.”² Unbound by fetish of the fire, we see that the commons are set ablaze by capital—think wildfires as the byproduct of the exploitation of forests, water reserves, air. Sure, fire fertilizes soil, but ours is a combined and uneven flame. It matters which matter is set ablaze and how.

That said, what to make of antagonistic fire? Broken bank windows as flame, bodies in squares and streets as flame. Fire as a generalized grammar of the oppressed, fire made to speak antagonism, fire appearing as specific flames, “flames, too, are a form of literacy.”³ Flames making that contradiction legible. If Prometheus was the crowd giving fire to the crowd.

What would it mean to set fire to fire?

—Zac Gunter

- 1 Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti Oedipus* (1972), 137.
- 2 Evan Calder Williams, “Fire To The Commons” in *Communisation And Its Discontents* (2012), 178.
- 3 Jasper Bernes, *We Are Nothing And So Can You* (2015)

Fragment as part, piece, bit, chip, shard, sliver,
flake, morsel
Fragment as separated, isolated, broken
Fragment as no longer whole/the sum of its parts
Fragment as pointer to a prior action ...
resulting in a reaction
Fragment as brittle substance
Fragment as non-segment
Fragment as entropic
Fragment as discard
Fragment as treasure
Fragment as survivor
Fragment as absence
Fragment as category
Fragment as evidence
Fragment as measure of time
Fragment as symbol of intrigue
Fragment as relic, fetish, token, sign
Fragment as vessel for infinite possibilities
Fragment as subjectivity, consciousness, self
Fragment as memory—memory is substance
Fragment as continuous self-irony
Fragment as embodying the power of the whole
Fragment as the whole.

The fragment awaits fulfilment

—*Raphael Zollinger*

In the most general sense, futurity simply means future time, a temporality essential to any oppositional politics and committed to producing social change. However, the consolidation of neoliberal capitalism on a global scale has made it increasingly difficult to imagine a future beyond the disastrous unfolding of the present world order.

In the face of political pessimism in the present, futurity can be employed to work towards other modes of life-building. Even if the hope involved in those pursuits is eventually disappointed, it allows for a real resistance to the current moment, rather than the simple negation of it.

Is it possible for transformation, in the face of social impasses, to occur if futurity is not present? Is futurity necessary to the mere act of imagining transformation?

Futurity can be seen as as the type of potentiality and longing that theorist José Esteban

Muñoz associated with queerness: rejecting the present and insisting on potentiality for another world. His brand of critical utopianism argues for a break from a fidelity to the here and now and uses the past and future to disprove the assumptions of capitalism or heteronormativity. This brand of futurity is a break from the type of progressive future proposed by assimilationist gay politics that is often difficult to invest in when not coupled with one's pre-existing social and economic stability.

There is something about certain artworks, many of which deal with reinterpreting common objects or tropes, that create a utopian feeling without being concretely political. While the future that those works are hinting at may be unreachable, the feeling and hope that they create, can have a very real effect on how one navigates the current moment. A very real effect on the here and now.

Can art create an opening by representing a mode of being or feeling that is not quite here? Can this resist psychic death?

Can the idea of futurity be thought of as a secular form of messianism?

Can hope, and its cousin faith, in this sense, be seen as affective structures or methodologies with which religious traditions promise (or construct) a world not only as it “shall be” (Judgement Day, return of the Messiah) but as it “should be”? Here prophecy—the process of seeing the human world in divine terms—and social justice become identical.

What is, or might be, “western” about the concept of futurity?

Which subjects cannot orient themselves toward the future? Is futurity not a luxury of those who have a certain economic and bodily security and whose compact with the state is sufficiently confirmed on both sides to allow them to believe in the promise of a future? What does it mean for a politics that appeals to posterity that futurity is distributed differentially?

Conversely, do we not risk immuring ourselves in long-term collective thinking, ignoring the more urgent claims that might be made about the immediate future?

Does this problem resolve itself if our considerations of futurity concern not an immi-

nent or long-term threat (e.g. a day without food vs. a planet made uninhabitable by global warming) but a positive transformation—a utopia, a displacement of capitalism, a community-to-come?

Is there not an urgent need to think of and hope for alternative futures—without falling back into teleological conceptions of history?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Lauren Denitzio & Cassandra Guan
on January 17th, 2014*

Are we in what Eric Zimmerman deems a “ludic century,” that is, a reality in which everything is now experienced and conceived as the interaction between complex game systems?

Are games just guilty pleasures? What is the relation between game-playing and broader social structures? Shouldn't there be something in life that's just fun?

Why is it that within the limitless possibilities of the virtual, most video games still subscribe and utilize real-world physics? They merely simulate. This is one of the limits of always trying to generate a balanced “game feel” to get a player hooked and to keep playing.

In what ways does the logic of simulation and game-design (gamification) mimic that of neoliberal modes of capturing and abstracting material reality into manipulatable data?

How does the agency of coding and the virtuality of games provide furtive opportunities to

explore non-conventional, non-heteronormative spaces, identities and narratives?

Huizinga claims that the “magic circle” is a consensual safe space and that the players within this demarcated zone agree to follow its rules. However, this assertion might be blind to a space’s embeddedness in larger exploitative structures.

Perhaps formalism in games is the start of the gaming world reflecting on itself.

The task of game-making is the integration between the game world, its interface, and the real world.

Virtual interaction would not be possible without precious metals from Coltan mining in Congo and all the atrocities that result from it. By playing games, are we not complicit in these atrocities?

Does making a game about something end up subsuming and trivializing the subject? Does a game about, say, Coltan mines or Darfur, depoliticize the subject by displacing our desire to dismantle these oppressive systems onto a game?

Do games illuminate play in the same way as art?

An “art game” may have no cumulative goal and no narrative per se, yet what makes it a game is that it is claimed as such. This recontextualizes it within the discourse of games while critiquing and transforming the dominant modes of game design.

Although a game like *Cards Against Humanity* promises transgression, it still perpetuates existing forms of oppression since what is kept latent or repressed (not inherently bad) is now allowed to surface. But to what end?

Are non-systematic games possible?

Are scientists just playing games? Are artists? What is the relation between their games? Artists may welcome chance and risk and are open to the rules changing, whereas scientists set up rules and try to minimize chance and risk.

How is the exponential growth of game use transforming attention, human relations, and the public sphere?

What if we find ourselves in a game rigged

against us? What if the rules, movements, and potential outcomes are already predetermined, engineered or designed to beat us? What would be our counter-attack?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Will Lee & Colleen Macklin
on September 26th, 2015*

How does “grounding” become a spatial and geographic surrogate of the real and, by extension, a symbolic location upon which politics, ethics, and identities are legitimized, recognized, and remembered?

The ground: a foundational referent for truth and authenticity. The ground: a territory to be seized and shaped.

Questions about belonging and authenticity are ground zero amidst crises of space, power, and movement, from refugees to gentrifiers.

How does grounding insist upon a recalculation of values and meanings and exert an essentialist claim on the truth of the self?

Why is holding ground now so elusive and being grounded so therapeutically cool?

Can we understand grounding today outside of “Stand your ground” laws? Can we trace a

history of these laws from Custer's Last Stand and "Remember the Alamo"?

As place becomes more and more rapidly devalued, destroyed, misremembered, valorized, venerated, desecrated, paved over, abandoned, reinvested, renamed, repackaged, and resold, we feel the ground tremble beneath our feet. Is that another tremor from those nearby fracking wells? Or another shaft sunk to tap into the deep vein of nostalgia for authentic places so dense with meaning and marketability, they seem impervious to the socio-ecological forces reshaping the landscape?

Accumulation by dispossession — what Rosa Luxemburg and later David Harvey comprehend as one of the most violent and consistent features of capitalism. Possessed means at once to have and be taken hold of. Now we are dispossessed: did the spirits cough themselves out of their human hosts? Why is losing place, the occupancy of place, not said to be "ungrounded"?

The virtual war pluralizes into the War on Drugs and the War on Terror, massive political

and military projects that perforate and interpenetrate the geo-social imaginaries of borders. Maybe we can say that these virtual wars with tendrils constricting around corpses scattered across the globe destroyed the fixed certainty of grounding through violence and thus liberated—or is it dispossessed?—the self into fantastic spaces of virtual creation and connection? Does this give way then to the anxiety of not living anywhere?

Is it any wonder that some of those alienated by the dematerializing forces of capitalism in concert with the abstracting ideology of white supremacy (the people who are everywhere but nowhere in particular), that is, those in the Global North, seeking to align their own dispossession with the resistance of those less mobile and therefore more exposed to the raw edge of state and market violence on the ground, should find themselves drawn to the site-specificity of the Zapatistas? Or to the Palestinians besieged by apartheid enclosure? Or the deep green of eco-warriors rooting their militancy in problematic and tangled mythologies of Native and First Nations' self-defense?

Grounding as a practice, a method, a tactic
when to hold ground seems futile, fantastic,
and frightening.

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Dwayne Dixon & Hong-An Truong
on November 7th, 2015*

Memory causes us to be historically-minded, literally so, locating us and those around us within time's passage. But, memory is notoriously unreliable, easily altered by a complex of physical, social, and emotional factors, by vested interests and even through the act of recall. Equally malleable by changing circumstances and interpretations, History as a professionalized (and variously academic, militarized, nationalist, constraining and potentially liberating) discipline manages (makes manageable) the tasks of recording and representation. History creates narrative fictions, selecting—and judging—which individuals and groups, speeches and actions, moments and events, will be remembered, and therefore assigned value and importance.

Or, one can record histories oneself. In contrast and sometimes in intentional opposition to the certified versions of History are the un- or less-certified genres of oral history, peoples' history, counter-history, herstory, genealogy, palimpsest, autobiography, the novel, art, conspiracy theory, speculative fiction (as history of the unknown and the as-yet-to-come)...

Each of these forms produces its own questions of reliability, accuracy, and evidence, but what might separate them from certified History could be primarily matters of degree and definition. Do novels and art not constitute histories of the imagination (as well as numerous other possibilities)? Are conspiracy theories not histories of anxiety and distrust?

These counter-histories, now aided by strategic use of communication and recording technologies, and distributed through less filtered social media, have interrupted the reach of and dependence on professional History, and certify in previously unimagined ways who can now be a historian and documentarian of history *as it happens*.

An earlier example—though one still horrifyingly resonant within memory—of this interruption was the 1991 video by George Holliday of Rodney King being beaten by LAPD officers. It provides vital counter-evidence that what had been happening before, happening since and recorded again in more frequency since August 2014, is a historical pattern, known all too well by some, dismissed by too many others. Like so much else about histories, whether this pattern and its recognition become official, certified History, is a political question. Just one example—if any were needed—that histories,

and History, are ultimately branches of politics, and Politics. And their inseparability is what circulates back into policing what constitutes seemingly private memory.

—*Allan deSouza*

Immediacy is presence, presence is consciousness, consciousness is patience. Immediacy is patience for the moment.

Can immediacy be seen as a willful and spontaneous, yet conscious act of acting upon an urgency? Can the mind be present in feeling immediacy?

How to convince a room full of rational minds that sensitivity toward rupture is valuable?

- emotional reactivity that erupts in real-time, before intellectual filters
- reverence for the now
- attention to intuition
- access to the fractured self in fleeting moments
- messy and charged
- body is the best receptor
- negotiation/processing
- awareness of discomfort of the unknown (vs. controlled mediated interaction)

which,

- is a conscious act of witnessing
- allows vulnerability to reveal surfaces
- confirms what is true about human beings

When you pounce on a lover like a leopard, you can hold them down so hard to imprint yourself and leave a mark. Or you can circle slowly, slowly.

The body harnesses its surroundings through movement: throbs, fights, breaths, calls, holds, rubs. What intensity causes the music to come on?

In a state of hunger your structures deteriorate and a descent into madness allows a clear connection to your interior. You can use your teeth, you can sprint and jump, you can arch your back and drag along the ground. Break into a lover's home and wait. Listen to the sound of the pounding in your head. Pound your head until the door opens.

Heart like a rabbit. If I meow hard enough, will you come?

To speak about power: what exhilaration comes with complete surrender? Diving first, looking after. This power is a delusional invincibility from within a broken system. A safe place to become. (A secret politics?)

*Her soul would rise to the surface of her body
like a crew charging up from the bowels of a ship,*

*spreading out over the deck, waving at the sky and
singing in jubilation.*

Milan Kundera
The Unbearable Lightness of Being

Immediacy is forwardness. Forward is not a
direction; it's moving towards the other person.
Immediacy is towards another human heart.
Immediacy is the first act of giving,
offering yourself to others.

Immediacy is the rock you hold onto while
climbing a mountain.

Immediacy is before / between / after language.

—*Lindsay Benedict & Francesca Coppola*

Improvising is to playing as living is to working.

The improvised moment is met by a fierce intentionality from its participants. We improvise with the structures that order our way in the world, even if to confront them. The improvised moment is a point of psychological illumination, showing how citizens encounter the new, the other, the unknown. To improvise is to be vulnerable, exposed, yet constrained by the idea of a space that is ripe for cohabitation under unknown and as yet unlivd frameworks. Can such a space be made manifest in the improvised moment?

Improvisation is neither a rehearsal nor a performance. It is neither a platform nor a set criteria. Improvisation is neither a methodology nor an ideology. It is not a style, a strategy, or a result of a given circumstance. We improvise *with*, not at or to something. Improvisation is not manipulation.

The problem seems to be that one can't improvise within a political formation. Such a formation is a site of accumulated power, where rules must always be maintained.

The improvised moment is a contingent meter where power is decimated and rules are dismantled.

Abstract political structures that govern bodily interrelations, such as language, money, and power, have no *time*, no rhythm to which one may syncopate oneself.

The political is a ringing in my ear.

“Most musical form is simple, not to say simple-minded. But generally speaking, improvisers don’t avail themselves of the many ‘frameworks’ on offer. They seem to prefer ‘formlessness.’ More accurately, they prefer the music to dictate its own form” (Derek Bailey). Shouldn’t we demand the same of our political system? That its ‘formlessness’ is not a *product* (an abstraction of sorts) of cold wars, drones, or twitter feeds, but instead is inscribed in an intimate contingency with its constituents?

Bailey again: “the attitudes and precepts associated with the avant-garde have very little in common with those held by most improvisers. There are innovations made, as one would expect, but the desire to stay ahead of the field is not common among improvisers.” So can/should/will there n/ever be capitalist improvisers? Those who are willing to forego their desire to “stay ahead,” incessantly perpetuating the flow

of capital, and trusting the delicate and highly vulnerable state of those *in* need instead.

Privileging 'originals' (the illusion of newness) over origins (the process of deterioration and rebirth) cripples our culture. To be original, new, is to use time as a *concept* whereas that which is an origin *must* be outside of, or beyond time, rather than subject *to* it.

Death matters. It matters itself through improvisation. Death cannot be composed.

I am tired of proximity (both physical and psychological) being the *result* of an encounter between one and another. Could it not instead be the *quality* of the sensation of encountering? Can we finally begin to touch proximity through improvisation, the point where binaries are disfigured? If the distance between us could be handled, it would only be through improvising, when we are most vulnerable.

Through improvisation, proximity becomes a way of feeling time, where a country mile is not a *condition* for silence, but rather the timbre of our conversations.

If the distance between you and me is in fact the score within which we improvise, it would mean that vacancies have surfaces, and 'nothing' has an umbilical chord.

How about we just see where it takes us?

“but I’m already *here*”.

When is improvisation *deployed*? *Can* it be deployed? Or is it another way of ‘forming’ the unconscious?

If improvisation serves as a coping mechanism when confronted by oppressive systems and constraining feelings, could improvisation then be used as a weapon?

Do we play with weapons?

—*Matthew Metzger*

Where in our 24/7 culture does the interval exist?

How is our “in-between time” being usurped for others’ profit, and what kinds of alternative economies (or existent but latent economies) might enable us to reclaim the interval?

Might these intervals help us to locate new taxonomies of desire and forms of community, facilitating our capacity to think collectivity and futurity anew?

Does a highly networked culture necessarily result in a blurring of boundaries between work time and leisure time?

If we conceive of periods of collective, counter-hegemonic dissent as “intervals,” can we extend the duration of such intervals so that they become a perpetual present?

What did Henry David Thoreau mean when he said “there is a memorable interval between the spoken and the written language”?

Is it possible for the interval to become the generalized form of action?

Can the interval be instituted? Or is the interval precisely what escapes normative rhythm (in the sense of Barthes' idiorhythmic)?

Are there yet spatial intervals in which one may experience a certain freedom, or should we rather say that the contemporary moment is characterized by the total saturation of all space by power or capital?

Is the investment in the possibility of a non-colonized spatial interval a necessary pillar of all anarchist politics?

Does this investment pose the danger of leading us away from forms of struggle or community-building by suggesting that the primary political task is simply to maintain a hold on this heterogeneous space? Or, conversely, can the belief in a non-colonized space function as an incentive to action and a stimulating fiction?

Many scholars describe the present moment as a kind of "interregnum" between historical regimes: after the 'American Century' but

before the emergence of a new global hegemon; after the crisis of the nation-state but before the crystallization of a new mode of transnational belonging and communal organization; after the Cold War but before the appearance of a distinctly alternative global antagonism (if one doesn't believe that the "War on Terror" is sufficiently universal or coherent to supply this). In what sense is the interval useful as a world-historical diagnostic of our contemporary moment? What tactics does it afford us in efforts to hasten alternative communities or forestalling a substitute for the Cold War?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation by
Avi Alpert, Amanda Parmer & Sreshtha Rit Premnath
on December 6th, 2014*

A heartbreak song was chosen to frame the doomed journey of the left. The lyrics shimmered across the film's introduction. A month later, the survivor of the actual event listened and thought this a strange choice. Peter Custers¹ demurred; he thought this sad song wasn't the right spirit for remembering a time of hope.

You had been smiling at a reconstructed moment, but it felt dissonant to the actual body of memory. An ironic, but loving, gesture encountered confusion from the one being honored. The motion folded back onto itself.

This was not a gesture of winking irony, a form shorn of vulnerability and often the province of a kind of "post-politics." Practitioners of that form tend to scoff at excess sincerity and often get the best spots in the parking lot called America. From the Global South, you try to lay claim to a new space. But neither language nor earnestness can hive off your words from the winds outside—one where the prevailing mode is a wink.

The man you made the work for has passed away. You have lost the chance to hold his

hand—one last time—and convey that this was an earnest gesture. That revolution would continue through other means—in a classroom, gallery or stadium.

You had shrunk from a certain ironic audience. They had a fascination with taking things apart until there was no *ontohshar* (inner essence) left. Now an invitation is left to pass the story on to that same audience. You have doubled back to the source of disbelief. The weight of this time is the absence of ways to keep the faith.

But we keep searching, for ways to honor his memory, and others who gave their all.

—*Naeem Mohaiemen*

1 Peter Custers is the protagonist of the recent film *Last Man in Dhaka Central* (2015)

What is the relationship between laziness and leisure and how have these practices been defined in the last century in relation to different class privileges. Is “laziness” a term applied exclusively to a certain class? Who has access to leisure?

What would it mean to think of laziness as a disciplined “spiritual practice”?

Is there a kind of “positive laziness” that exists outside of the modern split between work-time and leisure-time?

In an era of neoliberal capitalization of every passing moment, can the simple act of slowing down still represent a tactical defense to such exploitation of daily life? Or is our sloth a political sin that simply allows the exploitative system to continue?

Is laziness subjective, non commodified free-time?

When and under what condition does laziness become leisure?

Is laziness just leisure without consumption?

In a world of rampant mechanization, shouldn't the dwindling necessity of human labor result in the universal right to idleness, or non-productive time?

Who has the right to be lazy?

The last adjustment of the daily working hours dates back to 1938 when Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act. When, where and why did the struggle for shorter working hours come to an end?

In the 24/7 society, work time and free time merge and overlap with each other. Watching movies online, participating on Facebook, etc., results in the production of data useful for predicting patterns of consumption and desires. In such a situation, is the exercise of idleness a possible strike against the capitalization of time?

If laziness is understood as a glitch inside a certain productivist dogma characterized by flexibility, speed and continuity, why aren't all human activities reframed into a larger discourse of chronopolitics?

Does the over emphasis on production generate a different kind of laziness—not a refusal of production, but a passive stance toward conditions that one might otherwise contest via active engagement?

Does an admission of sloth absolve the speaker?

Given that laziness is fashionable in the arts, does this call the political power of laziness into question?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Danilo Correale & Nick Keys
on May 16th, 2015*

v. (an academic pastime and occasional source of income):

To drink the attention of the young so as to forestall your inevitable decline.

To maintain a torrent ratio that favors seeding over leeching.

To allow a muse of knowledge to pass through your vocal chords.

To navigate search results with the single-track focus of a bullet train.

To assemble, brick by brick, the painstaking ardour of coherency.

To open your mind so as to let the cloud rain through your mouth.

To speak condescendingly to colleagues as if they were children.

To perform so much and so long as it is required to purge your narcissism.

To speak condescendingly to children as if they were colleagues.

To communicate with a burning patience for words to find their audience.

To pace a stage until the elements of its infrastructure begin to appear.

- n. (an analog P2P file-sharing network):
A docent imposter in a silver houndstooth suitdress and tightly spun bun, remarking on the extreme crispness, brilliance, great beauty, and refinement of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
An outsourced performer deliberately mispronounces “fetish” during a recitation, while also seducing a renaissance scholar sitting in the front row.
A Russian Cubo-Futurist cuts short a public address after having been accused of “replacing creative activity with theorizing.”
A professor and a hare.
A feminist video artist expounds for six minutes on the gendered system of signs governing culinary utensils.
An indefatigable ascetic filibusters on the metaphysics of withdrawal for 32 hours and 12 minutes, only to collapse in the arms of her lover.
In the guise of cabaret chanteuse, a drag doyenne delivers a critical cantata culled from Theodor Adorno’s correspondence with his mother.
An improvisation that begins with your mother shopping for a new brassiere at a Sears department store and ends in a realization

about the radical coherency of speech.
A pixilated media theorist offering lessons
in invisibility and tactics for evading the
biometrically surveillant gaze in a didactic
.mov file.

—*Research Service*

Everyday we are trained to move faster and think less. Architecture, design, tv, movies, and advertising are designed to be inherently legible. In this context, can illegibility be instrumentalized as a strategy of resistance, revealing the underlying structures of speed and consumption that are often hidden in plain sight?

If one values illegibility as a means of evading being hailed by an authority, what resources are left for the construction of identities?

Does illegibility eliminate the ground for any kind of recognition of another, and particularly someone with whom one might want to forge relations of solidarity, comradeship, political community?

Is the sole value of the strategy of illegibility found in one's relation to a superior power?

Does one, in maintaining illegibility, construct oneself as a monad? Does this isolated condition

confirm another aspect on which our social order rests—the alienation of each from all?

Are there not situations in which the strategic virtue of legibility or visibility becomes apparent, such as a strategic essentialism? And are there not situations in which making the other legible can be a powerful act of political defiance—e.g., calling the rich and secretive to account, against their own practice of arrogating private spaces?

Is there a danger that by valorizing illegibility or opacity one will reproduce a theological worldview in which the inscrutability of the other or the artwork stands in for the normative Christian relation to God?

Does the illegibility of the self ever function as a source of frustration, a trigger of depression, a signal of one's lack or loss of control?

Is the legibility of the self not a precondition of psychic survival, in the sense that a minimal access to one's motives and desires allows one to act in the world?

Could legibility be a continuum between the

unknown and the known? What if either end of the continuum represents wonder and fact?

Could there be something of a conflict between our imagination (what could be) and our knowledge (what is, regardless of whether what is, is a truth) which causes disturbances in our language/relations/culture/power that then makes il/legibility a measure of an encounter of difference? (Would this only be clarified for those receptive and generous in a playful or open encounter, and further obfuscated for those that refuse the tendrils of legibility in the opaque encounter?)

A painting imbuing the viewer with unknown feeling (legible). A factual claim innovating discoveries for improving eyesight (legible). And then all the rest of experience flip-flopping madly as we try to connect (illegible).

We live in a well-designed maze.

Our everyday visual culture is a series of layered and deliberate constructions where meanings and values are pre-negotiated by marketers, corporate executives, and city planners.

We all know that if we eat fast food every day that it is unhealthy. So what does it mean when we are constantly consuming junk-thought? Does this create addictive cravings for easy answers to legible questions? Does this create anxiety when we are confronted with complicated answers to difficult questions?

Leaving things open and inappropriate offers us a means to resist junk-thought in consumer culture.

“Where are you from?” A lose-lose game. The malignant underlying question is: how do I classify you?

In art, everything from poetry to gardens to painting, has been using illegibility for centuries as a means to talk around the unnameable, the unknowable, or the unmanifest.

Abstraction as a visual strategy holds tremendous underutilized potential to address issues of representation, while facilitating a self-reflexive experience between a work of art and the viewer.

Disrupting clearly legible narratives using erasure, omission, and fragmentation are

strategies in facilitating ambiguous, ambivalent, and multivalent experiences that can slow the viewer down.

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Yamini Nayar & Jaret Vadera
on October 24th, 2015*

Ibn Arabi was born in Murcia in 1165, but spent most of his life traveling through Palestine and North Africa. Arabi was a poet and writer. He wrote some 700 books, treatises and collections of poetry. At a young age Arabi had a triple vision in which he met, and received instructions from Jesus, Moses and Mohammed simultaneously. There began his journey toward becoming a Sufi master who sought to connect Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He was initiated into Sufism by two masters: Shams of Marchena and Fatima of Cordoba.

All of these are hard facts.

The story of how he wrote his books was told to me by the artist Khaled Hafez when we met in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2011.

While working on a text, Arabi would periodically hand it over to friends and colleagues, who would make notes along the margins of the manuscript. These were comments, questions, suggestions, thoughts and reflections that emerged in the process of reading. Arabi would then insert these marginal notes into the main text of the next manuscript. This would go on,

back and forth, until there were no more notes to add, resulting in a hybrid text that dissolved the distinctions between speech and writing, text and discourse, reader and writer, center and margin.

—*Kajsa Dahlberg*

When I was young, I wanted to get into the
skin of another person
Into the mind of another person, so that
I could experience the world differently
We imitate to understand how something
works
We imitate to become something else
Hrithik Roshan once said that if he gets the
hairstyle right, he can get into the character of
any role
Is mimesis *maya* or illusion?
The Renaissance painters wanted to create the
illusion of reality with that most abstract of
arts, geometry
Art students traditionally copied old masters
You need to construct something to decon-
struct it
Walter Benjamin said that the best way to read,
is to copy the whole book by hand
And for learning by rote, we aesthetized knowl-
edge with rhythm and rhyme and alliteration
Our ancient mathematics was written as poetry
When I went to Santiniketan, I saw many K.
G. Subramanyans

The same kurta pajama with jhola and the
same walk
They all wanted to become him
(Without the hard work)
Sometimes mimicking is a sympathetic act
When the listener is mimicking every gesture
of the speaker she is sympathetic to the speaker
The Kannada activist Vatal Nagaraj rou-
tinely leads protests in the same dress as the
protestors
In police uniform for a police protest, as a
farmer for a farmers' protest
Once he was wrapped completely in a thick
blanket, the newspapers reported a mysterious
bundle
And people could neither identify him nor the
protest
Our politicians like to go to far-flung dis-
turbed areas
And dance with the tribals
They want to say that they are with the people
But it's a trick, and they look stupid
Or wear the headgear of some ethnic groups
Because they are sympathetic to them
Or not, because they are not sympathetic
But the funniest joke
Is the Independence Day parade when tribal
groups are dressed up

In standard “tribal” costumes designed by the
Culture Department
And when they go back to their areas after
dancing on floats
This becomes their traditional tribal dress

—*Pushpamala N.*

Caliban is a dark demon figure. His mother, Sycorax, is a witch. Hydra has multiple autonomous heads with a single unified body. Frankenstein's body is an amalgam of corpses reanimated.

Monsters have bodies.

Are these bodies assemblages?

Are these bodies different identity components occupying motley spaces?

Can monsters be comfortably situated in one place, one kind of body?

Are monstrous bodies grotesque, preposterous, sinister, genderless, soulless, full of rage, beautiful, dark, sometimes hairy, asymmetrical, uncanny, magnetic, provocative, marked, pierced, scarred, or irresolute?

Can such a body be sanctioned or tolerated by the state?

Can it be absorbed or managed for the purposes of reinforcing values by the state?

Can that body marry another body?

Will that body reproduce? Will it join the military?

Are monsters terrifying to the status quo?
Are the boundaries that demarcate monstrosity formed and maintained in the interest of official society?
Can monstrosity be nullified?
Bodies that are seen as monstrous cease to be viewed as such not because they stop being what they are, but because the society which defines what constitutes monstrosity ceases to exist.
Does the very nature of monstrosity erode the coherency of this world?
Are monsters constantly being realized, pushing further, germinating?
Is a monster a frame, a somatic casing that holds in blood, guts, and humanity?
One day, will the scaffolding of monstrosity fall to the ground allowing the imagination's corporeal desires to be boundless?

Mary Shelley said, "I bid my hideous progeny, go forth and prosper."¹

—*Mylo Mendez*

1 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (2013), 11

Myth the original pinprick in the fabric of time.

Mythic time is cyclical: A clock without numbers? Its past and future like lovers who can't stay apart for too long before finding their bodies crashing into one another, again and again.

"Myth," I whispered—my deepest fears into her ear. She rains on them with all the force of her torrential darkness. At the height of the storm she hands me a roadmap to bliss.

What of the architectures of myth?

A dance amongst splintered bodies, the efforts of collective stargazing, an endless game of connecting the dots across space and time?

Who are myth's sisters: Cosmogony, Truth and The Endless?

Dancing on myth's stage: the wisdom of animals, bodies in motion, spinning and burning, ripped to pieces, teeming with battle scars, whose shreds form new galaxies, decapitation of self and others, a walk through the fire,

a rising from the ashes
each and every time.

The subject of much myth:
unquestionably *he*.

She? lost
in a fog
gambled away
kidnapped, defiled
exchanged for
a horse
fated to die
(if you escaped
her songs)
eaten by the wolf
turned into salt
burned at a stake

and so myths of *s/he*
with little in between.

Myth: I am assembling a 1000 piece puzzle
of me and my mother. It could be standing in
front of the Bronx Zoo, or the Taj Mahal. As I
near completion, I see the image change before
my eyes.

Myth: We shatter the crystal ball with a hammer, pick up the shards, put them back together again. A translator's task to gather the universe, spin it into language, weave wayward particles into a cyclic beginning, middle and end.

— *Chitra Ganesh*

Does transforming otherwise random experiences into a sequential narrative inscribe human perceptual modes and values upon reality?

Does this necessity to transform information into a narrative necessarily result in a distortion of the truth? Or is there no truth outside of narrative?

In mobilizing emotions, do narratives necessarily raise conflicts between the needs of the dramatic nature of the story and the veracity of the events involved?

Is there a truth specific to narrative? By offering appealing emotional accounts of events which move people, might narrative be understood to have a certain validity if not veracity?

How might narrativization be thought of as a form of information compression, an adaptive tool or technology to help us remember salient information and retain its context?

When we depart from a linear narrative, are we actively refusing boundaries, or rather slipping into psychosis?

Can creating false narratives protect the truth?

Given evidence that humans may not have transparent access to the motivations for their actions, and that people confabulate explanations for their actions when pressed to account for them, how should we reconsider the narrativization of intention?

How do these insights affect legal testimony, which relies upon the assumption that a sane individual has complete access to the intentions for their actions, and will therefore be able to narrativize them?

Why does offering a narrative about an action or process sometimes seem to halt that process?

How is narrativization like commercialization?

What is a non-narrative?

Might non-narrative be like John Cage's 4'33"?

What is an anti-narrative?

Might the Farsi word “jav” (general atmosphere) be an example of a refusal of narrative? Jav can “take you,” you can “catch it,” “give it,” or “be prone” to it. An event, whether a disaster, a revolution, a voting frenzy or an embarrassing moment might be attributed to a person or people catching “Jav.”

Why do I find the idea that I might be confabulating all my motivations liberating?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Brian Block & Sreshtha Rit Premnath
on February 21st, 2015*

It is often the case today that while many support a political framework of “nonviolence,” few have stopped to unpack the logic by which they have come to this position. Equally, those who support violence do not always pause to consider how their means relate to their political ends. Do we need opportunities to reflect on the often hardened positions against or in favor of reactive violence in today’s political context?

Who says a life is supposed to matter?

How do the micro-aggressions in normative culture cause constant, daily violence?

How do we make visible violence that is systemic?

Can self-destructive strategies protect other people from your own inner violence?

When Gandhi says “Man as an animal is violent,” should we counter by saying that humans are socially constituted as violent?

Is there validity in Immanuel Kant's claim that even though violence is wrong, it is still the driving force of human cultural progress, and so we must accept it as part of nature's providence until we will have achieved some future, perfect state?

Can avoiding violence preserve the status quo?

Is truth violent?

How should people opposed to violence respond to violent activities by their comrades in a political struggle?

If the value that politics seeks to preserve is life, on what grounds can we instrumentalize the taking of life in the name of politics? But if the value that politics seeks to preserve is life, how can we sit by and allow the destruction of life to continue without fighting back?

Can "life" really be an organizing principle for contemporary politics, or does politics require a willingness to die for a greater cause? But then who should be willing to die, and what should they be willing to die for? Is it not a better life? Can we frankly admit that all

immanent politics are bound to this irresolvable contradiction: that the politics of a single life requires a willingness to die, which in turn obviates the meaning of those very politics?

Should we rename nonviolence as anti-violence? Isn't the point not to preserve the status quo by simply avoiding violence, but rather to actively undo the structures of violence both in ourselves and in the systems we inhabit?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Avi Alpert, Arlen Austen & Molly Dilworth
at Smack Mellon on February 7th, 2015*

To what extent does the occult involve a revolution of common sense through a reconception of an ensemble of the senses, particularly by means of aesthetic content?

What is the place of joy in the occult?

How might the occult aid in the recovery or resurrection of lost histories?

In what sense do occult movements (such as Spiritualism and Theosophy) provide the subaltern with a means of appropriating agency (economic, legal, cultural, pedagogical, political)?

Can the occult make available cultural practices that have been eroded or elided by capitalism, in particular indigenous knowledges?

How might we think of metaphors of the occult and occult practices historically, with regard to how they may mediate sociopolitical praxis?

Is the occult the best response to the occult?

Which is to say, if the world is too much for us, is it best to respond in a similarly excessive manner, or should we cultivate rationalist strategies in order to confront these difficulties?

Could the speculative nature of the stock market be evidence of capitalism's dependence on occult practices? George W. Bush's statement that we must believe in the economy for it to remain healthy is a case in point.

What kind of visibility might the occult require in order to be effective as a counterhegemonic force if, for instance, what is at stake is the recovery and transmission of subaltern histories?

Does the entangled history of occult movements such as Theosophy and British imperialism render Occultism fundamentally imperialist?

What kind of representation is involved in occult art and writing? What gets represented in occult art, literature, or rituals?

Does the occult indicate a specific aesthetic form? Is there an occult style?

Do occult practices evoke an avant-garde,
something modern, something contempo-
rary, or something specifically pre-modern or
anti-modern?

Does the occult problematize the hegemony of
the visual?

What kind of relationship does the occult have
to the figurative and the literal?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Thom Donovan & Mimi Winick
on November 1st, 2014*

Toward a newer grammar of ornament
(for these centuries)

That which is inherited, then possessed,
is ornament.

That which is reclaimed, is ornament.

That which absorbs form, is ornament.

That which abhors collage, is ornament.

That which surpasses symmetry, is ornament.

That which is borne of a system yet threatens
order, is ornament.

That which localizes the global, is ornament.

That which abets translation, is ornament.

That which short circuits language, is ornament.

*That which is: low-class, lateral, porous,
heteroglossic — is a building block for ornament.*

That which infiltrates, is ornament.

That which deploys repetition as insistence,
is ornament.

That which insists by not going away,
is ornament.

Dictionary of the Possible

That which is not decorative, is ornament.
That which guards against rumors of beauty,
is ornament.

*The absence of ornament is not nothing, it is the grid*¹

The grid is the beginning of ornament.
The absence of ornament, is ornament.

—*Kanishka Raja*

1 Jacques Soullou, *Ornament and Order*, 2000

What is the role of pedagogy in community building, transformational thinking, and radical politics?

Why are the vocations of researching, writing, and art-making often contrasted with the more expedient — and less legitimate — labor of teaching?

Education has been, on the one hand, dismissed as a conservative means of reproducing the status quo and, on the other, praised as a laboratory for emerging alternative ideologies such as anarchism, pragmatism, and feminism.

Pedagogy is usually concerned with the theory and practice of teaching. How can pedagogy be transformed so as to enable those in a learning relationship to become better learners? What praxis or disposition can be cultivated among students of the arts or humanities that would facilitate learning that is meaningful to them without devolving into the sorts of rigid methods or techniques that students of these

fields might otherwise fall into?

How can the art of learning be encouraged without validating the neoliberal logic of making the less powerful (here students) responsible for their own “outcomes”?

What would it mean for teachers to understand themselves as students, beyond the glib affirmation, found on countless acknowledgments pages in academic books, that they have learned everything they know from their students?

At a time when higher education programs (MFA, MA, and even PhD programs in curatorial studies and the visual arts) aim to turn out polished, business-savvy professionals who can survive a savage marketplace, isn't it worth questioning the consequences of imagining artists as professionals?

What do we lose when we wholeheartedly embrace this model of professionalism and the pedagogy that surrounds it?

How might we unravel the mechanisms by which a certain kind of learning perpetuates

itself within the art world, negating and occluding the possibility of more interesting operations? Or is pedagogy by its nature professionalizing?

A radical pedagogy can prepare us to enter into the kind of study suggested by Fred Moten and Stefano Harney—to walk and dance and suffer with others and to see what happens.

Is it possible to pin down pedagogical methods without enacting exclusions and privileging some knowledges over others?

However appealing some alternate pedagogies are, is it in practice desirable to have a class with no hierarchies, a class that emphasizes fun, or a class with no fixed ending?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Leah DeVun & Géraldine Gourbe
on April 4th, 2015*

While it is relatively easy to produce political artworks either by choosing political subjects or by contextualizing certain aesthetics in distinct political and cultural contexts, it is rather difficult to determine objective criteria to decide what kind of political and engaged art productions will count as good and valuable political art. It is for this reason that most political artworks are either criticized for their political bluntness and aesthetic shortcomings or for their calculated aesthetization of urgent political problems. Yet, the prevailing notion of the political in the context of contemporary art is utterly exclusive, since it seems almost impossible to judge an affirmative art practice as political that is, for example, merely invested in beautiful aesthetic representations and the repetition of already established aesthetics. In a modern context, political art has to be at war with the prevailing conditions, be they understood as social and economical, or cultural and aesthetic. Accordingly, political artists have to deal with a paradoxical conflict. In order to be evaluated as good and successful, political artists have to produce images and

forms that are received as bad, as provocations and impositions. For only under the condition that they are received as unacceptable noise and mere contingency, to speak metaphorically, can their productions be rejected, and only if they are rejected—at least for a certain time—can artists prove their true dissent and resistance against the prevailing conditions. The most difficult problem determining political art can be addressed therefore in regard to this paradox of a principally simultaneous rejection and recognition that is connected to the phenomenon of fashion. For what one finds unacceptable in aesthetic matters changes from generation to generation, since those forms that have already been accepted and thus canonized as good and valuable art cannot function anymore in the same way. Yet, this is true not only for the common understanding of good political art, but for good art as such. And it is precisely for this reason that generations of artists have been able to produce all kinds of deconstructions, abstractions and negative aesthetics that distinguish themselves not only as good and valuable art, but most of all in political terms to such an extent that good and valuable art often appears as political.

—*Philipp Kleinmichel*

Is the sense of the possible something present in our lives or even, as Svetlana Boym has suggested, prior and thereby verifiable, rather than a matter of futurity or deferral?

How does the possible relate to the term probable, which for David Hume signaled a predictive past that is a template for what is yet to come? In the latter sense, chance and possibility are always tempered by that which is most likely.

How is our sense of everyday life altered by how we think about what is possible?

Is possibility a site at which to resist the normative probabilistic calculations from industrial modernity to today's stock market?

What are the political ramifications of championing possibility, such as found in the World Social Forum's insistence that "Another World is Possible," but also Hannah Arendt's claim that the "fundamental belief" of totalitarianism is that "everything is possible"?

How is our language shaped by this delicate balance of the probability of meaning (which makes communication possible) and the possibility of meaning (which allows for newness to emerge)?

If the last few centuries have seen a rise in the structures of probability and security for some of the world's population, is climate change returning us to an epoch of the possible?

How is possibility distributed in the world? Is it necessarily the case that options are opened for the few at the expense of others?

What is the relationship between mood and possibility?

How does humor function as a subversion of probability? There is a famous story, for example, of a KKK rally in a black community when, instead of protesting, the community welcomed them with open arms. The bewildered KKK gave up. Is humor then a way of transitioning from the probable to the possible? At the same time, do we want to question whether it should have been possible to hold the rally in the first place?

Are we looking for spaces of possibility within language, or are we trying to make new languages possible?

Is the possible always the corollary of the real or actualized? How might we think of a possible that never seeks to become actual?

How is possibility related to temporality? How do terms like delay, belatedness, recuperation, deferral, and so forth, modulate our concept of the possible?

How does futurity relate to possibility? What are differences between past and future possibilities?

What are the limits of the possible to cope with the present crisis?

Is “do they have another choice?” an unethical question?

Who presents the possible to whom, and in what language?

Is there false possibility in acts that appear hopeful, but are not?

Does possibility have a form or shape (if not a content) of hope?

What might be the usefulness of despair, of envisioning no future?

What are the geographies of the possible? The scales of the possible?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Billy Galperin & Shadi Harouni
on December 5th, 2015*

How do historical narratives of “progress” and “barbarism” continue to implicitly structure our ideas and visual languages?

How are we to speak meaningfully about cultural difference in ways that neither denigrate nor romanticize?

Is it legitimate for someone to self-primitivize and claim, as writers like Mohandas Gandhi and W.E.B Du Bois did, that “primitive peoples” carry value systems that have been lost in the materialist and rationalist West?

Must the critique of primitivism result in a general universal claim to rationality, or is it possible to think of many different and non-hierarchical ways of being?

Is the “primitive unconscious” the idea that our unconscious is structured by archaic desires, or is it the idea that all of our conscious thoughts are structured by an unreflexive belief in historical progress away from the primitive?

Why is it so difficult to discuss the place of the primitive in the history of thought? Why, that is, do we tend to brush aside references to “primitive peoples” when we find them in Kant or Foucault or even Gandhi and Fanon? What might the history of thought look like if told from the angle of the exclusion of the primitive?

What other words might we use than primitive in order to describe cultural difference? Is it possible to think of modes of human categorization that would enable a sense of difference, while disabling the racialized and hierarchized histories that overdetermine words like “primitive” or “savage” or “exotic”?

Is the idea of the noble savage better or worse than the idea of the ignoble savage?

— *Collectively composed after a presentation
by Avi Alpert & Brendan Fernandes
on October 10th, 2015*

In its earliest etymological incarnation, prosthesis is the addition of a letter or syllable to the beginning of a word. It is only later that prosthesis acquired its meaning as replacement for a part of a body. In 1923 Sigmund Freud had more than half of his jaw removed and replaced with a prosthesis. He struggled with at least ten prostheses over the course of sixteen years. His prostheses were excruciating and made chewing and smoking difficult, although they enabled speech. In 1929, grumpily contemplating the demise of civilization on the brink of war, he famously pronounced that people ("men" in his lingo) had become like prosthetic gods. What he may mean is that they have attained heights never before dreamed possible through reliance upon technologies that offer all the contradictions of modern warfare. Liberation on condition of enslavement, prowess at the expense of humanity. Prostheses may always be paradoxical. Double edged, they make the impossible possible while they sometimes also make what was once possible impossible.

If prostheses are at times empowering and at

other times disempowering, can prosthesis as a concept be made politically useful? Prosthesis might be seen to imply a condition of embodiment that is supplemented by something extrinsic to it. We might put prosthesis to work to gain traction at precisely that uncertain divide between what we recognize as bounded by our bodily being and what we regard as foreign to it. Prosthesis, then, can be leveraged as a tool for sociality, a technology that strains under and against presumed categories of the human, and stretches the contours of our seemingly individuated bodies. Returning to its original, rhetorical uses, we can understand prosthesis, as in Freud's case, as that which renders the very act of speaking possible, engendering both material and immaterial connections between bodies.

—*Lana Lin*

Queer: to become, not to be
Not to quite know who one is or needs to become
Not to fit in, not quite in this way, not quite in
this society as it is
Bodies, desires, and pleasures in the making
An incomplete process
Sex and gender are always there in how we
relate, live, create our societies
Together

Queer life, queer communities
A “we” of misfits
A “we” of pleasures and delights

Queer life as political work
Too many bodies and pleasures still too
precarious
Material matters
No gender and sexual justice without economic justice
Queer, to give a fuck
To give many fucks
Queer erotic citizenship countering the erotics
of the late modern nation-state, its perpetuated

investments in racisms, sexism, able-isms, and class divisions

Queer not as a project of “the queers” but everyone’s project

Solidarity is queer, queer is solidarity

Bodily solidarity, a solidarity that is lived proximity

Solidarity that is a new hospitality to living norms of gender, bodies, pleasures, and desires

Solidarity that is when you, too, by virtue of your proximity can no longer know “Am I queer or not?”

Solidarity that is to refuse to retreat into the privilege of invisibility

Solidarity that is to extend and use the privilege of invisibility to shelter the vulnerable

Solidarity that is not to withdraw our collective of bodies at the time when it feels easier “to be just normal”

When you worry that you may look like one of “them”—one of us—that is when we need you the most

Queer: to ask, to be wrong, to learn, to learn not to assume

To live queerly, patiently, with those who are learning to find and inhabit queerness

We are here
We are queer
Let's not get too used to it
Queer for you
Queer with you
Make a Queer Us with us

—*Annika Thiem*

If reconciliation is the process of making different ideas and opposing facts exist or be true at the same time, does this mean an achievement of equality between two disputing parties? Or does the word provide cover for one group to impose its vision onto the other?

If reconciliation is the process of making something consistent or compatible, then what nuances and perspectives might be compromised and who benefits the most from such a process?

Isn't reconciliation, almost by convention, established as a process of forgiveness following contested truth claims? For example: "Now that you have addressed acts of wrongdoing, you ought also to reconcile and ultimately forgive". Or as in: "Now that you have admitted to committing certain acts, you can also ask for forgiveness and ask to walk away." If that is so, doesn't reconciliation have the character of a bargain that is often reluctantly accepted?

Or can reconciliation indeed bring opposing groups towards mutual and genuine acknowledgement?

Or is it rather so that reconciliation becomes a form of forgetful forgiveness? In that event, is reconciliation not more in the service of unifying grand narratives than on the side of minor histories?

—*Jane Jin Kaisen*

Responsibility is in respect of...others.
Responsibility is having a duty, role, obligation.
Being accountable or to blame.
Having control, to act independently or make decisions without authorization.
Responsibility is to cause something to happen.
Responsibility is imposed and adopted.
Responsibility is a social contract.
Responsibility is contextual.
Responsibility is a state and a fact.
Responsibility is an opportunity and an ability.
Responsibility is not innate.
Responsibility is learned.
Responsibility is a bell-shaped curve: time = x and responsibilities = y.
Responsibility is forever changing.
Responsibility is both implicit and implied.
Both moral and civil.
Both ethical and unethical.
Both enacted and portrayed.
Responsibility is on a spectrum with irresponsibility.
Responsibility is claimed after the fact.
Responsibility is work.

Responsibility is promoting order.
Responsibility is the survival of the individual,
family, nation, species.

—*Raphael Zollinger*

What is my thought?
What can cover the earth?
What is my space?
What is my madness?
What is my cause?
What is my opposite?
What is my poison?
What is inevitable?
What is my grief?
What do I revolt against?
What is the greatest marvel?
What will be my defeat?

—*Atul Bhalla*

What is the pleasure of science? Does its affective energy circulate around the pleasure of finding wonderment in the objective interpretation and representation of the world (a world reassuringly natural and evacuated of any human presence)?

How closely do the technologies and techniques of practicing science structure the questions a given mode of scientific enquiry poses for itself? Would a Particle Physics or Genomics Lab that is run along anarchist affinities of self-organisation, mutual aid and non-hierarchical flatness produce a different kind of angular momentum or peptide linkage?

How do we retain our skepticism towards the truth claims of science while also refraining from viewing the practising scientist as a prisoner of 'false consciousness', ignorant about her own hidden assumptions that shape and mould her science?

Do different sciences, each based on its area of enquiry, have different, shifting, thresholds of knowability and predictability? For instance, what the physicist understands by accuracy when she is trying to predict the momentum of two

colliding billiard balls might be incommensurable with what the biologist understands by accuracy when she is trying to estimate the outcome of modifying a particular gene. Therefore, when we speak of Science in the singular do we effectively stretch thin the paradigmatic model of whichever science (Theoretical Physics, Molecular Biology etc.) functions as the dominant science at any given moment? In these genetically engineered times, it might be difficult to remember that even until the early twentieth century, it was Physics that was perceived as the ideal candidate for "Science," with biology being relegated to the not so heroic activity of stamp collecting.

Have "science" and "technology" become synonymous in the popular imagination or is science with a capital S still looked upon as the grand quest for eternal truths unsullied by the utilitarian and messy world of technology? In our contemporary moment, can one really sustain such a separation between science and technology? But haven't these two domains been always entangled? Should one then call this entry 'Technoscience' rather than simply 'Science'? Or should we still reserve a certain autonomous zone for science and maintain a productive tension between science and technoscience?

If technology is viewed as the “under-labourer” of science, then doesn’t it implicitly create the ground for a certain tranquil autonomy of science that is removed from the contingencies of a given lifeworld? And if craft is seen as inferior to technology, then is it easier to emphasize the Western origins of science?

Is science inherently anthropocentric? Is it ridiculous to consider how a fruit fly would imagine (would have already imagined?) the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements? Would an increased human capability to decipher non-human inscriptions open up to us other forms of scientific diagrams that place themselves closer to the phenomena it seeks to understand? Can there be a thermodynamic phase diagram imagined by a sulphur bacteria snuggled up in the depths of a deep-sea geyser?

—*Abhishek Hazra*

In common usage, secular means the opposite of “religious.” We might talk about secular reasons and religious reasons—arguments motivated by different premises, beginning, so to speak, in different places. Such imagery reveals something of how we think about the secular today: as a space, like a courtroom, or a mind, or a state, with all the apparatuses of enforcement required to maintain and defend it. This spatial imagination is of recent provenance; it becomes intelligible only when there are things like nation states, filled by beings like individuals and citizens.

Historians tell us that the word *saeculum* was first of all a unit of time, or more generally a period of years, an “age.” In Christian history it came to mean the time between Christ’s first and second comings—worldly time, ordinary time. It was not so much the opposite of “religious” as a condition that marked one common experience of humanity, book-ended by sacred history. Such secular time was punctuated by moments (sacraments, festivals) that brought humans into contact with a divine order. The old distinction between secular and religious clergy (one group engaged with the

world, the other withdrew from it) is intelligible from this temporal perspective, but it makes no sense from the perspective of a spatialized secular.

The move from time to space has reorganized the relation of religious and secular. Where the former once made the latter intelligible, now the secular frames and delimits the religious.

What does the secular feel like, then? It is counter-intuitive but not inaccurate to say that the premodern world was actually more secular, insofar as many people moved readily among sacred activities and worldly ones without a sense of incoherence or contradiction. But modern demarcations, which were supposed to make everything clearer, have made this particular distinction less so. We move through secular spaces—shopping malls, sports stadiums—that feel religious both in their architecture and in their promise of transcendence. Perhaps this is why secularism seems simultaneously hegemonic and threatened, everywhere and nowhere at the same time. How does one capture such an uncertain mood? Could it be that we are less secular than our forebears? If a rationalized world is not the same thing as a secular one, what is the proper term for our moment?

—*Colin Jager*

Sound is confusing and remarkable.
 Sound is a barrier and a border.
 Sound is untrustworthy. It skips around. Sound
 can make me appear detached, bitchy.

I recently got a new pair of hearing aids.
 9 years after my last pair.
 (which was beeping and hissing and experimen-
 tal music-making in my ears on a daily basis
 during the last 3 years. They are not covered by
 my healthcare. In fact, most hearing aids are not
 covered by any healthcare. I made do because
 my new pair would cost \$7000. My audiologist
 hunted down a demo pair and scrubbed off
 'demo pair' with nail polish remover.)

The first day I got home with my previous
 pair I was touched and humored by the
 sound bananas make ... something I had
 never considered as an instrument. And then
 a few hours later, walking my dog, I heard
 power lines for the first time and another new
 thought: "Wow, that is unfortunate for hear-
 ing-people." As are ambulances.

My new pair is harder to define. What is this sound quality? It's smooth jazz meets "natural." Hearing aid companies have begun working with sound designers. This is both great and appalling to me. I do not trust someone determining what sound should be for someone else. Sound is enhanced and designed mostly by men. I often wonder if sound is tweaked in the ear based upon a spectrum that varies alongside the spectrum of gender.

I try to always hire non-bro sound mixers/boom pole operators for my films, and I find it's one of the more challenging hiring searches.

Sound is the top of the mountain. The gateway. Sound is profound and ferocious and subtle and wreaks havoc.

Sound is visual for me. Haptic. Sour. Delicate. Delicious.

A deaf actor I am working with observed that hearing-people always close their eyes when they listen to music.

I observe my deaf friends' distinct identity and relationship to sound/not-sound.

I observe my hearing friends' distinct rela-

tionship to simultaneously not noticing and absorbing sound.

Both are lonely and beautiful to witness and both are experiences I work with as materials, but over which I have no ownership. What can I make out of them?

—*Alison O'Daniel*

Do you have to be a good sport?

Please reply to the following questions.

1. If I were to make a definition of sport,
I would surely include the following terms.
(Select up to 5):

- ☐ Game
- ☐ Play
- ☐ Business
- ☐ Spectacle
- ☐ Activity
- ☐ Rules
- ☐ Competition
- ☐ Leisure
- ☐ Skills
- ☐ Reward
- ☐ Cooperation
- ☐ Work
- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Sport defies definition,
so none of the above

2. The following are definitely not sports.
(Select as few or as many as you want):

- ☐ Fly fishing
- ☐ Video gaming
- ☐ Chess
- ☐ Double-dutch
- ☐ Jeopardy!
- ☐ The Dozens
- ☐ Crossword Puzzle Tournaments
- ☐ Poker
- ☐ NASCAR
- ☐ Walking
- ☐ Beer pong
- ☐ Cricket
- ☐ Taking this quiz
- ☐ Anything can be a sport, silly

3. Order the following qualities in relation to
their importance to sport:

- ☐ Strength
- ☐ Intelligence
- ☐ Masculinity
- ☐ Passion
- ☐ Fan-aticism
- ☐ Cheating
- ☐ Cunning

- ☐ Hard work
- ☐ “Natural” ability
- ☐ Sports-man-ship
- ☐ Trash talking
- ☐ Wealth
- ☐ Bravado

Based on your answers above, provide a one-sentence definition of sport:

—*Rebecca Alpert*

0. *Theatrum mundi*? The “world stage”?

1. Profusion and simultaneity—here are two principles that describe our world.

2. How can the world be considered a stage? Rather, shouldn't it be considered as a plurality of stages?

3. The era of one linear narrative is over.

4. The consequence is a radical evolution for theater. Let us consider that theater is the one major artform which has not experienced major innovations in hundreds of years, since Shakespeare's very efficient “wooden O”.

4.1. Most of the time, the same old frontal division and separation between the stage and the audience persists. Generally the audience has no choice, and is assigned to a fixed place, and disappears in the dark when the action begins.

5. Can we measure the aesthetic and political effects of *multi-staged* events that begin with the decentralization of the stage?

5.1. This perspective remains new to traditional theater, where what is happening on stage as well as what people in the audience pay attention to and think is planned in advance.

5.2. Hence an urge to hybridize theater with the tradition of art happenings inaugurated by John Cage's *Theater Piece no 1* (1952). A choreographer and a dancer, a dog, a musician, a visual artist and poets collaborated in multiplying points of focus, and extending perceptive possibilities for the audience.

6. Both performers and the audience experience a new freedom in a multi-staged event. No narrative is necessary, and causal relations, and unexpected correlations between the simultaneous and successive actions may unfold. Performing skills very different from those of traditional theater can simultaneously occupy several spaces, and expand the awareness of the participants; their desires, their curiosity, and their presence.

7. A stage is simply a location for performance in

its broadest sense — someone acting something out for someone else. This someone else does not need an assigned place. A stage is by nature polymorphic and adaptative. Multi-staged events offer an alternative to the Brechtian “distance” model. With the multi-stage, the audience can be physically involved or *included* in the happening. More than ever aware of itself as a multitude of diverse individuals, each different but each participating and *being the actors*, along with the performers, of a collective experience.

8. Collective experience and the diversity of portrayed points of view are what defines theater in its artistic form and in its political potential. So what about calling these multi-staged events *theater*? If so, we could speak of a dramaturgy of a new type.

9. This might mean new architectural perspectives for theater houses and opera houses, perhaps learning from the multiplicity that today is mostly confined to virtual space. How can we imagine the theaters and Opera houses of the future? Will their architecture be inspired by museums or art spaces, to satisfy the claim of staging simultaneous actions?

—*Mérim Korichi*

The everyday — as distinct from everydayness or routine — is a missed opportunity and a repository of the possible that we only conceive in retrospect. For Blanchot, it is what we never see a first time but only see again, whose “unremarkableness” or “missableness” is a necessary prelude to the “ecstatic attestation of existence” (Cavell). Is there a fuller history in which it can be recovered? Ecstasy in this context is both a register of the possible and in many ways the *echt*-register. We experience it, among other sites, in images, or doubletakes, or photographs like those by Robert Frank or Garry Winogrand, whose archive is effectively our archive: an uncanny to which we are referred and by which we are transported. And so, it is important to distinguish the history of the missed or the overlooked, and the possible, everyday world onto which history opens in “histories” like the street photograph or, at an earlier juncture, in the Romantic fragment poem. Or again, from the kind of history or precedent on which the possible’s corollary — the probable — is concomitantly based. For unlike the everyday, which is a history only

insofar as it is overlooked and, in that sense, a buried present, the probable (which some might deem synonymous with the everyday) is primarily a wish and a conservative one, where what happened is no longer an uncanny and the royal road to ecstasy, but rather sufficiently generalized, aggregated and mathematized to be predictive. Where history in the aggregate is a template for tomorrow under the aegis of the probable (a comfort no doubt to air travelers) it is, by the lights of the possible (and they are indeed “lights”), something singular that is made and missed everyday.

—*Billy Galperin*

Why wouldn't I use apophasis?

Why wouldn't I give a public figure known for a close-cropped, artificially-colored coiff, and a bodacious body a gift of "clippers and hair dye" as a token of appreciation for a great interview?

Why wouldn't I derail the conversation with ad hominem attacks?

Why wouldn't I say things I imagined or rather fantasized about as fact?

Why would I ask a question for which I already know the answer?

Why wouldn't I trust in rhetoric?

Why wouldn't I call my album I'm Gay, while declaring that it's not about sexual orientation, while using a musical idiom that has often promoted homophobia?

Why wouldn't I fail in public?

Why wouldn't I fail so often and so consistently that you question your standards of success?

Why wouldn't I publicly curse a sports team?

Why wouldn't I get my cat as a vocalist on a baile funk song?

Why wouldn't I call you out of your name and

then call your name?
Why wouldn't I un-bury the hatchet after 10
years and a destroyed career?
If I'm in a public bathroom, do I clean it up so
it's nicer than when I arrived?
If I'm in a public bathroom do I graffiti the walls?
Do I try to outdo those who have gotten vulgar?
Do I go in a completely different direction?
Who is this for? Who does this affect?
Do I jump the turnstile after paying the fare?
If I have twenty-one questions how can they
all be about us?
What lack does the privileged subject possess
and how can it be played out when they think
they are anonymous?
I want to know who is with us. They want to
know how to hit 'em where it hurts, or touch
'em where it feels good. Rule number 8 is tell
'em how smart you are. Why use intelligent
arguments to convince them you're smart
when all you have to do is tell them? State that
you're a member of Mensa or Mega or Dorks
of America. Tell them the scores you received
on every exam since high school. "I got an 800
on my SATS, LSATS, GRES, MCATS, and I can also
spell the word 'premeiotic'." ¹ Rule 10 is doubt
their existence. I want to know who I am with.
We are so past flaming. They are so past flaming.

Crosses, bulletin boards, etc. What is the good of ‘intelligence’ and accumulating knowledge, if one can’t help facilitate positive changes in their environment, physical or networked?

—*Devin Kenny*

1 knowyourmeme.com/memes/rules-of-the-internet

In the world of labour, men, women, animals and devices come together and diverge in all sorts of interesting ways. The coupling and uncoupling of gears and wings, of claws and hands, of hooves and feet, of algorithms and interfaces, of prostheses and parentheses—in these we find the stirrings of a twilight language. Here, twilight is a state; a state of in-between-ness, a ludic state, a state of the refusal of the acceptance of the division of life between day and night, between work and recuperation. A refusal of the division of time itself.

In this state, humans speak differently: with joy, with love, in play, in the registers of fantasy and wickedness, with an openness towards inhabiting futures where the material world, nature and the cosmos are folded within each other; where animals, machines, and humans recover grounds of equality and conversation.

The 15th century weaver Kabir inhabited a churning world in the north Indian pilgrimage city of Benaras, and spoke in riddles, in a twilight language. He spoke so in a time when there was a proscription against speech by those

who work—a split between the worlds of word and work. In other words, to be consumed with labour is to be anesthetized to the demands of a sensate and sentient human life. It is to forego the privilege of being sensible. The weaver Kabir breaks this proscription, and we must pay attention to what he crafts, and which lives on 500 years later.

*Ek achambhou sunahu tummy bhaaee.
Dekhat singh charaavat gaaee*

*Jal kee mashulee taravar biaaee.
Dekhath kutaraa lai gee bilaaee*

Listen brother, how strange is now, I saw the lion herding the cow.

The fish climbs a tree, the cat minds the dog

*Ghorai chari bhais charaavan jaaee.
Baahar bail gon ghar aaee*

The ox runs wild, the cart laden with stuff comes home

the buffalo rides the horse and takes him around.

The language of this utterance premises itself on the recognition of the equality of intelligence between those who speak and those who listen. Similarly, when Kabir makes a buffalo ride a horse, he challenges and questions the terms of companionship between different forms of life. When he speaks of pregnant bulls and barren cows, he inverts the directions of potency and fertility; when he speaks of frogs that keep snakes as watchdogs, he challenges our notions of security, danger and fear.

—*Raqs Media Collective*

We would like to acknowledge our reading of:

Kabir: Ecstatic Poems, translated by Robert Bly,
Beacon Press, 2007

Songs of Kabir (New York Review Books Classics),
translated by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra,
with a preface by Wendy Doniger, NYRB Classics, 2011)

Is it possible to know something if we cannot give it a name?

Is the “unnameable” but one more fashionable term for a kind of refusal/resistance?

Is art the unnameable entity that criticism tries (fails?) to grasp in language? Can language gesture towards the unnameable? Is this the struggle of the last lines of Beckett’s novel of the same name: “you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me, strange pain, strange sin, you must go on, perhaps it’s done already, perhaps they have said me already, perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am, I don’t know, I’ll never know, in the silence you don’t know, you must go on, I can’t go on, I’ll go on”?

What are the limits of theory as a legible and generative language when it comes to conversations with communities outside the

relatively small academic bubbles we inhabit?

There are moments when we feel an unfathomable difference, a collapse of the theoretical language we comfortably employ.

How can we think ethics outside theory?

Can the subaltern speak?

Underprivileged classes often go unheard in political debates. Do they need to speak differently, or is the privileging of a certain kind of speech the problem?

Spivak calls this form of attentive learning outside the bounds of theoretical language “unlearning.”

In order to unlearn we must suspend a critical relation to the object of politics and instead foster an affirmative relation.

To conceive such an ethical subject would be to open a space of “imagining” that is outside knowledge. This space of imagining would necessarily lie outside language and would as such remain unnameable.

Is ethical philosophy what is in fact unnameable, since its actual location in the world cannot be specified?

The “Unnameable” functions as an entry that sits uncomfortably within the dictionary as a reminder of an outside that speaks another language.

— *Collectively composed after a presentation by
Siddhartha Lokanandi & Sreshtha Rit Premnath
on September 12th, 2015*

How exquisitely human was the wish for permanent happiness, and how thin the human imagination became trying to achieve it.

Toni Morrison
Paradise

The revolutionary is, in the words of Nietzsche, 'an arrow of longing for another shore.' [...] The revolutionary is both a great despiser and a great adorer who longs for another shore.

Huey P. Newton
I am We, or Revolutionary Suicide

We are trying to understand our longing for revolution. We are trying to understand how this longing can be an act of affirmation as well as an act of radical negation. We are trying to understand how longing can be both individual and collective. And so we are led to the concept of utopia, a dialectical tool that enables us to

Dictionary of the Possible

imagine how our actions in the present, which is one among many possible presents, are always steps toward one among many possible futures.

Is utopia a process? Is it a predicate? Is it a blueprint? A destination? Merely a tool? Is utopia's proximity to metaphor its most useful political attribute or a fatal flaw? Is utopia's proximity to failure its most useful political attribute or a fatal flaw?

Is utopian thinking a form of anxiety? Is it a symptom of freedom? A symptom of repression? Is the persistence of utopia a symptom of capitalism's failures—or is it, as Fredric Jameson suggests, that *resistance to utopia* is the significant symptom of the political trauma of capitalism?

Is utopia retro? Why is utopia so familiar? Why is utopia so queer? What is the relationship between utopia and abstraction? What is the relationship between utopia and repair? What about the relationship between utopia and transcendence?

—*Steffani Jemison*

Dear anonymous internet worker: how would you define virtual?

Responders will be paid \$00.15 per response.

Sep 22 2015, 02:27 AM PDT

Virtual is the reality which has no dishonest. It is real and full of honest. God created this world.

A214IHLFLUI719

Sep 22 2015, 02:27 AM PDT

Virtual is an adjective describing something that is represented through technology. Primarily, something that is virtual lacks properties of physical objects like occupying physical space or having physical texture. The box in which I am typing is virtual, as there is not actually a 3 dimensional box, just a formation of pixels representing one.

A1B61S4S6W88NC

Sep 27 2015, 11:42 PM PDT

something that is virtual is something that is

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abstract and exists through a computer medium
A26Y58YECZUZZG

Sep 27 2015, 11:42 PM PDT

Virtual is something that does not have a tangible, physical form. An electronic picture is something that is virtual.

A3GTIIFSMHAKRZ

Sep 27 2015, 11:44 PM PDT

Virtual reality is an oxymoron that, despite it's contradiction, brings to mind something specific, something material-- a set of VR goggles (and other gear) that allows the user to replace the input to each of the senses (typically sight, then sound, touch next, eventually maybe smell and taste?) to immerse one's self in a virtual (fake, standing in place of) "reality" (a perceptive experiencing of one's surroundings). It's useful to remember that "Reality" is not the same as "Actuality" and thus one reconciles the oxymoron/contradictory nature of the term VR.

A1QIJ8PQO27CJC

Sep 30 2015, 11:36 PM PDT

"Virtual" to me means an entity that does not exist in the physical realm. To me, virtual could mean a one-sided perception of an individual

interacting with another human. It could also mean an interaction between a human and computer in which the computer has been programmed to generate a certain response depending on certain stimuli that is inputted by the human.

A2JCHN90PRUWDH

Sep 30 2015, 11:36 PM PDT

VIRTUAL - It means truly, nearly true

A3LI0O659I8GFX

Oct 1 2015, 12:01 AM PDT

Almost all, except a miniscule, unnoticeable amount. "I can heal a virtual amount of pain"

A2GN56P8RYH9WV

Oct 2 2015, 05:11 AM PDT

Virtual is something that can relate to real life but is displayed in a pixelated form.

A1YAHGRFVDZ4X8

Oct 2 2015, 05:11 AM PDT

The idea of the word "virtual", to me, is something experienced only in digital form. It is an existence defined by abstraction into digital form, and has no recognizable analog form.

A2JCK494NV7TFX

Oct 2 2015, 05:12 AM PDT

It means something is not real, it's an escape.
"He likes to live in his virtual world."

A7T6KBQVFQE8O

Oct 2 2015, 05:14 AM PDT

"Virtual" is a representation of something that follows the principles of our own 3-d world, but is not actually our 3-d world. An example would be a virtual human running through a virtual world.

A2ZDK0Y5466BXN

Oct 2 2015, 05:25 AM PDT

Virtual means it is an assumption. We cannot see the virtual things only we can feel it. Example: God is a virtual one the human can only feel but cannot see the god.

A70AS0KVKADBY

Oct 2 2015, 05:27 AM PDT

I think the word virtual can describe a situation or scene that is almost like real or of a precise thought, but that isn't an exact reality. A virtual reality would be a "made-up" existence or reality that seems to be real, but it is not.

A54J53JJGBW0N

Oct 2 2015, 05:35 AM PDT

“Virtual reality” is not a reality that exists, but is created using electronics to paint a digital environment for us to surround ourselves with.

A3HMBHM8HJLKRD

Oct 2 2015, 05:36 AM PDT

A virtual world is a simulated world, usually viewable through a computer screen.

A1PZAF4E3K4PQ3

Oct 2 2015, 05:43 AM PDT

Something that isn't real but is made to appear real by using technology.

A3FW9NWR6TJ4M9

Oct 2 2015, 05:45 AM PDT

Not real, something that is meant to seem real or recreate real but isn't authentic.

A3ICWVGCEDRXS0

Oct 2 2015, 05:45 AM PDT

The word virtual is used to describe something as being similar or very close to the original, but not exactly the same. Two objects can be virtually the same. An example can be found when looking at “virtual libraries.” These may be libraries that seem similar to their phys-

ical counterparts and function in much the same way, but they are digital and stored on computer databases.

A3RYBCW4R3LDQ8

—*Tara Kelton*

What I don't know, that is withdrawn
What I don't see, that doesn't present itself to
me, is withdrawn
What I can know, but do not
What I cannot know

Withdrawal is a shifting of attention, a numbing of sensation, an inability to describe.

Is some thing withdrawn?
Can the withdrawn still be a thing?
Can the withdrawn still be?
And from what does a thing withdraw?
From another that has the capacity to pay it
attention, attest to its existence?
Is withdrawal a relation to those capable of
attention?
What is the status of things that are not
conscious?

Does a thing withdraw from itself? Into itself?

To withdraw physically like an ascetic who
renounces worldliness

To withdraw mentally as I do when I'm tired
To withdraw from suffering as we all try to
But to withdraw from the very roots of suffering,
that is a different matter

When I shift my attention from you, who
withdraws?

Me or you?

Who withdraws and who is withdrawn?

There is an inequality to withdrawal

When a government ignores a group,
this withdrawal has violent consequences

When a powerful group withdraws support
they exercise power through absence, negation
Yet these two forms of withdrawal are not equal

A man is unseen (by whom?)

Her voice is muted (for whom?)

Their bodies are covered up (from whom?)

A people are hidden (from whom?)

A people are silenced (by whom?)

A people are eliminated

— *Sreshtha Rit Premnath*

...the term 'ground zero' will be used to designate the point on the ground directly beneath the point of detonation, or 'air zero.'

U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey:
The Effects of the Atomic Bombings of
Hiroshima and Nagasaki, June 19, 1946.
President's Secretary's File, Truman Papers.

The sterile language of the report frames zero as an instrument of precision. Operating like a quantitative crosshair, zero hones in on the point of detonation, the epicenter of violence that devoured entire cities.

Terrifying was the seeming free fall of an object, which was in fact an invisible line carefully drawn to connect the zero points in the air and on the ground.

The release of maximum force was ensured by repeat calculations involving many criss-crossing strings of zeroes after the decimal point. Accuracy is an effort to strive for the infinitesimal.

Ground Zeros pockmark Earth's surface. Since the beginning of the nuclear arms race, time has gone backwards and forwards on the the doomsday clock. Too damning to mention is that the twelfth is also the zero hour. Zero grounds at zero hour. Annihilation—a word rooted in Latin, meaning to make into nothing—also signals the horrifying beginning of the unknown something.

...a zone of silence and pure possibilities for a new beginning as at the count-down when rockets take off—zero is the incommensurable zone in which the old state turns into the new.

Otto Piene
Group Zero, 1964

The hope-filled statement declares zero as a symbol pregnant with potentiality. Championing transformation and progress, Group Zero canvassed vast fields of inquiry by artists into light, the sky, and the void.

Group Zero was a loose grouping of artists who could no longer identify with the familiar forms of the past in the aftermath of war. The issues they tackled were untenably broad.

Repetition of circles and dots, lines and empty

squares in their art gestured towards infinity. Expansive vision was expressed through an accumulation of small marks on canvas.

Group Zero's attempt to redefine the number as a zone of silence, possibility, and transformation came a dozen years after the end of the war that brought new horrors of nuclear technology. Relentless was the optimism behind a statement that inverted the anxiety of a countdown into a moment of release and excitement. In between the ground and the air, they sought the ungraspable as they awaited the zero second.

—*Liz Park*

Contributors

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Eric Anglès
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Billy Galperin
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Andrea Geyer
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Maricruz Alarcón was born in 1983 in Santiago de Chile. Her practice combines interdisciplinary studio work with critical writing about filmmaking. She studied at Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago, Parsons The New School for Design and the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York. Her work has been shown in several exhibitions including at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo and Galería Die Ecke in Santiago; Museo de LaEne in Buenos Aires; and The Kitchen, Sheila C. Johnson Design Center, and TEMP Space in New York. She currently lives in Rio de Janeiro, where she is a resident at Capacete.

Avi Alpert is a writer and professor. He is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Cultural Analysis at Rutgers University.

Rebecca Alpert is a Professor of Religion at Temple University. Her most recent book is *Religion and Sports: An Introduction and Case Studies* (Columbia University Press, 2015).

Eric Anglès lives in New York.

Arlen Austin is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. He holds a BA and MFA from Columbia University. In addition to his scholarly work, Arlen is a practicing artist working in video and multimedia installation.

Lindsay Benedict presents us with fragments and gestures that examine and question social relations. In her work, affect and raw emotion are deployed to

disrupt and destabilize any simple reading of human attachments. Benedict lives in Brooklyn and has shared work at Jack Hanley Gallery, Bose Pacia, PARMER, PS 122, Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Pacific Film Archive, and the Berkeley Art Museum. She has performed at Danspace, Le Confort Moderne, Antonio Ratti Foundation, Dixon Place, and with Movement Research. She received a BA from Williams College, an MFA from UC Berkeley and was a studio fellow in the Whitney Independent Study Program.

Atul Bhalla was born in 1964 in New Delhi. He frequently combines photography, installation, sculpture, video and performance to question the human relationship with the natural and constructed environment. Bhalla's prolific and diverse activity is not limited to the creation of artwork. Bhalla's work often invites audiences to engage directly with otherwise overlooked elements of urban and metropolitan spaces, in particular water courses, in his home town, New Delhi, and those he visits during the course of international exhibitions and residencies. He lives and works in Delhi.

Brian Block's practice is largely centered on language and its relationships to authority and perception. His works engage forms of knowledge and information produced by authoritative forms of reality, such as museums, academia, and biography. He lives and works in New York City.

Rey Chow is Anne Firor Scott Professor of Literature and the current director of the Literature Program at Duke University. The monographs she authored in the

past decade include *The Age of the World Target* (2006), *Sentimental Fabulations*, *Contemporary Chinese Films* (2007), *Entanglements*, or *Transmedial Thinking about Capture* (2012) and *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Language as a Postcolonial Experience* (2014). Her work is widely anthologized and has appeared in over ten languages. She serves on the editorial and advisory boards of about 50 academic journals, book series, and research centers around the world.

Tyler Coburn is an artist and writer based in New York. Veronika Zink is a cultural sociologist working at the intersection of economic anthropology, social transformation and contemporary modes of cultural production by specifically focusing on the study of religion. Currently she is a Postdoc at the International Graduate Center of the Study of Culture (Justus-Liebig University Giessen, Germany).

Danilo Correale is an artist and researcher born in 1982 Naples, Italy. He lives in New York. His work analyzes different aspects of human life under the lens of time and body, such as Labor–Leisure and Sleep. His work has been presented in numerous group exhibitions, Istanbul Biennial (2009), Manifesta 8 in Murcia/Cartagena (2010), Moscow Biennial (2010), Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2012) Steirischer Herbst, Graz, (2013), Kiev Biennale, Kiev (2015) Recent solo shows include: *La Loge*, Brussels (2016), *The Missing hours...* at Raucci/Santamaria, Naples (2015), *The Warp and the Weft*, Peep-Hole, Milan (2012), *Pareto Optimality* at Supportico Lopez, Berlin (2011) and *Entrée*, Bergen (2011). Correale is the founder of the Decelerationist Reader.

Kajsa Dahlberg is a Swedish artist living in Berlin and Oslo. Dahlberg received her MFA from the Malmö Art Academy in 2003 and was a studio fellow at the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York between 2007–08. Her work has been presented in solo-exhibitions at Neue Berliner Kunstverein, n.b.k in 2014, The Museum of Contemporary Art Roskilde, Denmark in 2013, Parra & Romero Madrid, Spain in 2012 and at Lunds Konsthall in 2010. Her work has also been shown in group exhibitions and biennials such as M HKA, Antwerp in 2015, Malmö Art Museum 2014, 8 Bienal do Mercosul, Brazil and the exhibition Based in Berlin in Berlin 2011. Manifesta 8 and Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2010.

Lauren Denitzio is an interdisciplinary artist and musician. Their practice addresses the visual examination of psychological space and lives outside of heteronormative frameworks. Their work has been exhibited in New York at The Kitchen, Recession Art Culturefix, Storefront, Rush Arts Gallery, and Wayfarers as well as at The University of Maryland Stamp Gallery. Their writing and visual work has appeared in Brass in Pocket, Sick Zine, International Girl Gang Underground, Hoax and RE/ VISIONIST. They are also the vocalist and guitarist of the band Worriers. Denitzio lives and works in Brooklyn.

Allan deSouza works across different disciplines, including photography, text, performance and pedagogy. His works have been shown extensively in the US and internationally. He is the Chair of the Department of Art Practice at UC Berkeley, and is represented by Talwar Gallery, NY and New Delhi.

Leah DeVun is an artist and historian living in Brooklyn, New York. Her work has been featured in Artforum, Huffington Post, Art Papers, Hyperallergic, New York Magazine, and Modern Painters, and at venues such as DODGE Gallery, Johannes Vogt Gallery, ONE Archives Gallery and Museum at USC, the Houston Center for Photography, the Contemporary Austin, Leslie-Lohman Museum, Blanton Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, and MoMA PS1. DeVun received her PhD from Columbia University and is an associate professor at Rutgers University. Her essays and reviews have appeared in Wired, Spot, Radical History Review, GLQ, and Women's Studies Quarterly, as well as in a number of books.

Molly Dilworth is a Brooklyn based artist who views creative practice as a form of research. Using data from a specific site as a structure, she gives form to things that invisibly motivate our actions. She has partnered with green building community organizations, climate change activists, arts organizations and government agencies to make public art pieces that address our relationship to labor, ethics, history, nature and technology.

Dwayne Dixon is a visiting lecturer in the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies Department at Duke University. His research focuses on young people in Tokyo and their relations to globalized urban space, their use of visual technologies, and their understandings of self amid changing conceptions of adulthood and limited economic possibility. His work is intertextual, combining ethnographic video along with traditional scholarly writing, presented digitally using Scalar, an open-source publishing plat-

form. His writing has been published in *Skateboarding: Subcultures, Sites, and Shifts*, *The Journal of Postmodern Culture* and *Pastelegram* and his photographic and video works have been exhibited internationally.

Thom Donovan is a poet, editor, curator, and teacher. His first full-length book, *The Hole*, appeared with Displaced Press in 2012. He is the co-editor and publisher of *ON Contemporary Practice*, and recently edited *Occupy Poetics* (Essay Press, 2015), *Supple Science: a Robert Kocik Primer* (with Michael Cross), and *To Look At The Sea Is To Become What One Is: An Etel Adnan Reader* (with Brandon Shimoda). Since 2006 he has edited the weblog *Wild Horses of Fire*. He currently teaches courses in poetics, visual art, and writing at Parsons, Pratt Institute, and School of Visual Arts.

Brendan Fernandes is a Canadian artist of Kenyan and Indian descent, currently based in Brooklyn, NY and Toronto, Ontario. He completed the Whitney ISP (2007) and earned his MFA (2005) from The University of Western Ontario and his BFA (2002) from York University. His work has been exhibited at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Art and Design New York, The National Gallery of Canada, Art in General, Mass MoCA, The Andy Warhol Museum, Seattle Art Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Sculpture Center, Deutsche Guggenheim and the Stedelijk Museum. He was a recipient of a Robert Rauschenberg Residency Fellowship in 2014 and in 2016 he will be artist in residence at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL in the Department of Dance Studies.

Billy Galperin teaches English at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, where he specializes in British romantic writing. He is the author of several books on romantic-period subjects, including *The Historical Austen* (2003) and *The History of Missed Opportunities: British Romanticism and The Emergence of the Everyday* (forthcoming), where the possible world that is also ours figures significantly.

Chitra Ganesh is a Brooklyn-based artist widely recognized for her experimental use of comic and large-scale narrative forms to excavate narratives typically absent from canons of history and art. Ganesh received her BA in Comparative-Literature and Art-Semiotics from Brown University, and an MFA from Columbia University in 2002. She is the recipient numerous awards including a 2012 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in the Creative Arts. She has had solo presentations at PS1/MOMA (2009–10), The Andy Warhol Museum (2011), Gothenberg Kunsthalle (2012) and the Brooklyn Museum (2014).

Andrea Geyer's work addresses the construction and politics of time in the intersection of politics, culture and history. With a particular focus on women, her works engage potent situations, events and conditions to create works that invite collective reflection on the politics and ideologies of temporal translations. The works aim to activate the lingering potentials that lie in the complex economy of time using methodologies of performance, theater, journalism and poetry. Exhibitions: MoMA, New York, the Whitney Museum of American

Art/New York; RedCat, Los Angeles; TATE Modern, London; Generali Foundation, Vienna; Secession, Vienna; Witte De White, Rotterdam; and documenta12, Kassel. She is represented by Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne and Parque Galeria, Mexico City.

Géraldine Gourbe is a visiting professor at the University of Metz. Gourbe is a researcher at the scientific laboratory FAAAM /CREA Nanterre University/ Paris Grand-Ouest from which she obtained her PhD in Philosophy in 2008. A scholar in critical and visual studies, she specializes in queer and postcolonial theory. She is currently writing a book, *Kaprow, Californien ou l'inservitude volontaire*, on the West Coast feminist influence on Allan Kaprow's work, pedagogy and life published by Fama collection (directed by Xavier Douroux). She is also working on a curatorial research program for In the Canyon, Revise the Canon for the Art Center Villa Arson in Nice for Summer 2016.

Cassandra Guan is an artist, filmmaker and media scholar based in Providence and New York. Her work in film and other mediums have been exhibited internationally in places including Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, International Film Festival Rotterdam, Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival, Lisbon International Independent Film Festival, Athens Avant Garde Film Festival, and the Asterisco Festival Internacional de Cine in Buenos Aires. She carried out her undergraduate studies at The Cooper Union, attended and subsequently held the position of administrative coordinator at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program. Currently, she is pursu-

ing a PhD in the department of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University.

Zac Gunter works and writes in Oakland. He runs total mope press with Ian Brown. His work has shown up in small zines and the LA Review of Books.

Terike Haapoja is a Finnish visual artist based in Berlin and New York. Haapoja's large scale installation work, writing and political projects investigate the mechanisms of othering with a specific focus on issues arising from the anthropocentric worldview of western modernism. Haapoja represented Finland in the 55th Venice Biennale with a solo show in the Nordic Pavilion, and she has been rewarded with numerous grants and prizes, including Dukaatti-prize, Ars Fennica prize nomination and the Kiila-prize for History of Others project. Haapoja contributes to journals and publications internationally, and is the co-editor of the publication *Altern Ecologies – Emergent Perspectives*.

Shadi Harouni (b. Hamedan, Iran) is an artist based in New York and Tehran. Much of her work in sculpture, video, photo and printmaking engages with the history of erasure and resistance. In her most recent body of work, she explores this history in the connection between stone, politics and myth in quarries and cemeteries throughout Kurdistan. Harouni teaches art and theory at Parsons, The New School and at New York University, Steinhardt.

Abhishek Hazra is an artist based in Bangalore, India. His close yet idiosyncratic study of the historiography

of science has led him to examine various technologies of knowledge production and dispersion. He uses video, performance and prints that often integrate textual fragments drawn from real and fictional scenarios. The idea of the thought experiment—where one thinks of things and non-things without necessarily being trapped in things—has always fascinated him. Hazra's work has been shown Science Gallery, Dublin, KHOJ, New Delhi, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, GALLERYSKE, Bangalore, Kunstmuseum Bern and various other contexts.

Colin Jager is Professor of English at Rutgers University. He is the author of two books: *The Book of God: Secularization and Design in the Romantic Era* (2007) and *Unquiet Things: Secularism in the Romantic Age* (2015). He is co-editor of *Working with a Secular Age* (2016), an interdisciplinary collection of essays on Charles Taylor. His articles on romanticism, secularism, and the post-secular have appeared in ELH, Public Culture, Studies in Romanticism, and Qui Parle, among other places.

Steffani Jemison lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Her work has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, the Drawing Center, LAXART, the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, and Real Art Ways, among others. Publications include *Women in Performance*, *Triple Canopy*, *I Like Your Work: Art and Etiquette*, and other books and journals. Jemison is the editor of *Future Plan and Program*, a publishing project featuring literary work

by visual artists. She is currently an artist-in-residence at the Sharpe-Walentas Space Program.

Jane Jin Kaisen (born in 1980 in South Korea) is an artist living in Copenhagen. Her research-based art projects take the form of film, video installation, performance, photography writing, and discursive events. Working with multi-layered narratives in between documentary and fiction, she explores ways of translating and giving shape to silenced histories, intertwined personal and collective memories and embodied experiences of difference. She is educated from The University of California Los Angeles, The Whitney Independent Study Program, and The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts where she is currently a PhD candidate in artistic research. Kaisen has exhibited in various contexts worldwide.

Oliver Kellhammer is a land artist, permaculture teacher, activist and writer. His botanical interventions and public art projects demonstrate nature's surprising ability to recover from damage. Lately, his work has focused on cleaning up contaminated soils, reintroducing prehistoric trees onto landscapes damaged by industrial forestry and cataloguing the biodiversity of brownfields. He divides his time between rural British Columbia and Alphabet City and is a part-time lecturer in sustainable systems at Parsons.

Tara Kelton is an artist, designer and a founder-director of the residency program T.A.J. & SKE Projects in Bangalore, India. Tara's most recent solo exhibitions were at GALLERY SKE (India) in 2015 and

or-bits.com / Banner Repeater (UK) in 2014. Her work has also been shown in the Kochi Biennale (India), Franklin Street Works (USA), Vox Populi (USA), the Queens Museum of Art (USA), Museum of Conflict (India) and at the Centre for Internet and Society (India).

Devin Kenny is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, musician, and event organizer. Hailing from the south side of Chicago, he relocated to New York to begin his studies at Cooper Union. He has since continued his practice through the Bruce High Quality Foundation University, Skowhegan, SOMA Mexico, and collaborations with DADDY, Studio Workout, Temporary Agency and various music venues in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and elsewhere including: Recess, Het Roode Bioscoop, REDCAT, MoMa PS1, Freak City, and Santos Party House. He received his MFA in 2013 from UCLA and is an alum of the Whitney Independent Study Program.

Nick Keys is a writer who works in live presentation formats, including oratory, audio-poetry & situated writing. He received a MFA in writing from Bard College in New York.

Philipp Kleinmichel is a philosopher, art and media theorist. He teaches media theory at Hamburg University and Giessen University. His monograph *Im Namen der Kunst. Eine Genealogie der politischen Ästhetik* (Passagen 2014) investigates the epistemic structure of the belief system that until today determines and forces us to think and evaluate art production in political terms. The important question addressed in the book is not

how can art be political, but why are we forced to repeat this question over and over again. His recent work focusses on post-humanist aesthetics, cultural production and symbolic value in the digital age.

Chelsea Knight was born in Vermont and lives and works in New York. Solo exhibitions and performances include: New Museum (NY), The St. Louis Art Museum (MO); The Brooklyn Museum; Aspect Ratio Gallery (Chicago); Momenta Art (Brooklyn) and DiverseWorks (Houston). Knight has exhibited and screened her work in group shows including *Nouvelles Vagues* at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris); *Anti-Establishment* at Bard CCS Hessel Museum (NY); the Young Artists' Biennial (Bucharest) and the 10th Annual Istanbul Biennial.

Mérim Korichi studied philosophy at the Sorbonne, at the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Paris and at Harvard as a Visiting Fellow. She has published several books including a biography of Andy Warhol, and has also worked as a dramaturge and stage director. Intending to challenge the frontiers of her two areas of work, and to explore the format of multi-stage events, she has conceived and curated night long Philosophy events around the world: Paris in 2010, London in 2012 and 2013, Berlin in 2014, and New York in 2015. Next editions are commissioned by the Helsinki Festival, to take place in Kiasma Museum next Sept 2nd, 2016, and by UNESCO to take place at UNESCO headquarters in Paris next Nov. 18th, 2016.

Will Lee is a New York-based artist whose practice integrates concepts from marine biology, astrophysics,

game-design, comic books, film, and cybernetics to explore the conflicts between the human as a metaphysical, historical, and biological subject.

Lana Lin is an artist/filmmaker/writer. Her films and videos have addressed the politics of cultural translation, and her collaborative multi-disciplinary projects (as Lin + Lam) have examined the construction of history. Lin's work has been shown in international venues including the Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum, and New Museum, New York, the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival, and Oberhausen Short Film Festival. Her manuscript on the psychic effects of cancer, *Freud's Jaw and Other Lost Objects*, is forthcoming from Fordham University Press. She is currently Associate Professor in the School of Media Studies at The New School.

Sidhartha Lokanandi is an editor, a book chaperone and a member of The New Centre for Research & Practice.

Colleen Macklin is an Associate Professor in Design and Technology at Parsons School of Design, Director's Fellow at the MIT Media Lab, and Co-Director of PETLab (Prototyping Education and Technology Lab), a lab focused on developing games for experimental learning and social engagement. PETLab projects include a curriculum in game design for the Boys and Girls Club and games in disaster preparedness for the Red Cross. She is a member of the game design collective Local No. 12, known for their card game the Metagame. Her work has been shown at Come Out and

Play, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, and Creative Time.

Mylo Mendez is a Texas-born video artist currently based in Brooklyn. His work uses humor, narrative, and characters with aberrant bodies to navigate identity, social and geographical borders, and history. Mendez has screened at the MIXNYC: Queer Experimental Film Festival and has been featured in group shows in New York City, Austin, and Dallas. He received his MFA from Parsons, The New School.

Matthew Metzger (1978) is a practicing visual artist and educator who lives and works in Chicago. He received his MFA from the University of Chicago and attended the Skowhegan Artist Residency Program both in 2009. Since then he has had solo exhibitions at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Sikkema & Jenkins Co. in New York, Art Basel Switzerland, and Arratia Beer in Berlin, and *Regards* in Chicago. He was recently included in the traveling exhibition *The Freedom Principle*, and is co-editor of the publication *SHIFTER*. Metzger is Assistant Professor of Studio Art at The University of Illinois at Chicago.

Born in 1956, Bangalore, India, **Pushpamala N.** is a photo- and video-performance artist, sculptor, writer, and curator. Her work is exhibited widely in India and internationally in important museums, biennales and festivals. She is the recipient of many honours, such as the National Award for Sculpture (1984), Gold Medal in the VI Triennale, India (1986), Charles Wallace India Fellowship (1992–93), Fire and Life Australia-

India project (1996–97), IFA Arts Collaboration Grant (2000), French Embassy residency in Paris, France (2005), residency at Bellagio Study Centre, Italy (2006) and Centre Pompidou residency in Paris, France (2009). She lives and works in Bangalore.

Yamini Nayar is based in New York and holds an MFA from School of Visual Arts, NY and BFA from Rhode Island School of Design. Residencies include the LMCC Workspace, Center for Photography at Woodstock, Lightborne and NYU Visiting Artist Scholar. Nayar recently received support from Art Matters Foundation. Nayar's work has been exhibited at Museum of Moderne Kunst Frankfurt, Kiran Nadar Museum, Sharjah Biennial, Saatchi Museum. Publications include *Passages: Indian Art Today* (Daab Media, 2014), *Lines of Control, Partition as a Productive Space* (Green Cardamom 2012), *Unfixed: Postcolonial Photography in Contemporary Art* (Jap Sam Books, 2013); and *Manual for Treason: Sharjah Biennial* (2011).

Alison O'Daniel is a Los Angeles-based visual artist weaving narrative between the mediums of film, sculpture and performance. She aims to examine the politics of production, representation, and reception regarding sound and acts of listening. Her work utilizes visual musical scores, closed-captions, soundtracks, and storytelling as fluid modes of perception or as assistive listening devices that encourage the viewer to navigate between form, concept, object, sound, and narrative.

Liz Park is a curator and writer currently based in Pittsburgh as Associate Curator of Carnegie

International 2018. Her work as curator includes exhibitions at the Western Front in Vancouver, the Kitchen in New York, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, and Seoul Art Space_Geumcheon in Seoul. Her writing has been published by Afterall Online, ArtAsiaPacific, Performa Magazine, Fillip, Pluto Press, among others. In 2011–2012, Park was Helena Rubinstein Fellow in the Curatorial Program at the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program, and in 2013–2015, she was Whitney-Lauder Curatorial Fellow at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia.

Amanda Parmer's writing, archival and curatorial work focuses on environmental issues as well as gender construction and representations. In 2014 she inaugurated PARMER—a space for exhibitions, programming and writing that focuses on feminism and feminist strategies. She has presented exhibitions, programs and events in collaboration with e-flux; The New York Armory and Volta Shows; The Kitchen. She is also a contributing writer for Art in America, Art&Education, Artforum.com and Bomblog and has been a visiting critic at Cooper Union; Lower Manhattan Cultural Council; Parsons, the New School; School of Visual Arts. She graduated from Rhode Island School of Design and attended the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program.

Dominic Pettman is Chair of Liberal Studies, New School for Social Research, and Professor of Culture & Media, Eugene Lang College. He is the author of several books, including *Love and Other Technologies: Retrofitting Eros for the Information Age* (Fordham, 2006),

In Divisible Cities (Punctum, 2013), and the forthcoming, *Creaturely Love: How Desire Makes Us More, and Less, Than Human* (Minnesota, 2016).

Sreshtha Rit Premnath is an artist, editor and educator born in Bangalore and based in New York. His work investigates systems of representation to understand and challenge the process by which images become icons and events become history. He has had solo exhibitions at KANSAS, New York; Gallery SKE, Bangalore; The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis; Tony Wight Gallery, Chicago; Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin; Wave Hill, New York; Art Statements, Art Basel. He is the founder and co-editor of *Shifter*. Premnath completed his MFA at Bard College, and has attended the Whitney Independent Study Program, Skowhegan and Smack Mellon. Premnath is Assistant Professor at Parsons, New York.

Dr. Sudha Premnath is the coordinator of the Kaigal Education and Environment Programme (KEEP)—a Conservation Center in Kaigal a village on the fringes of the Kaundinya Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh, India. She is also a senior faculty at The Valley School, Bangalore and is also responsible for landcare and conservation there. Dr. Premnath received her PhD from the Center for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Railbird is a new journal of essays, to be published in the autumn of 2016. Many eulogies have been written in recent years for a vanished republic of letters. Railbird is an effort to lay the groundwork for this kind of intellectual

community, by means of a collaborative process and a common editorial voice. It will insist on a radical, unfashionable humanism; beyond that, the groundwork is yet to be laid.

The **Raqs Media Collective** enjoys playing a plurality of roles, often appearing as artists, occasionally as curators, sometimes as philosophical agent provocateurs. Raqs (pron. rux) follows its self declared imperative of “kinetic contemplation” to produce a trajectory that is restless in terms of the forms and methods that it deploys even as it achieves a consistency of speculative procedures. The Raqs Media Collective was founded in 1992 by Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula and Shuddhabrata Sengupta. Raqs was closely involved (till 2012) with the Sarai program at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, an initiative they co-founded in 2000. Raqs have curated Rest of Now for Manifesta 7 in Bolzano, Italy in 2008, INSERT2014 in Delhi, and the curators of the forthcoming Shanghai Biennale (2016).

Kanishka Raja traffics in images that operate at the intersection of painting, ornament, architecture, textiles and digital modes of production. Descriptions of territory, place, built environments and the images we choose to represent them interlock in complex visual fields, suggestive of multiple and incongruent points of view. In composite fields that capture notions of both the technological and the handmade, Raja’s colliding realms of the foreign and familiar are charged with observations of the political and social worlds he inhabits. The artist divides his time between New York and Calcutta and the circuitry of his production is grounded firmly in the particular contingencies of this apposition.

Gabriel Rockhill is a Franco-American philosopher, cultural critic and political theorist. He is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Villanova University and Founding Director of the Atelier de Théorie Critique at the Sorbonne. He is the author most notably of *Interventions in Contemporary Thought: History, Politics, Aesthetics* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), *Radical History & the Politics of Art* (Columbia University Press, 2014) and *Logique de l'histoire: Pour une analytique des pratiques philosophiques* (Éditions Hermann, 2010). In addition to his scholarly work, he has been actively engaged in extra-academic activities in the art and activist worlds, as well as a regular contributor to public cultural and political debate.

Edward Schexnayder is a Brooklyn, New York-based artist. He was born on the Navajo Indian Reservation and raised in Southern California and New Orleans, LA. He received his MFA from Pratt Institute and was a studio fellow in the Whitney Museum of American Art's Independent Study Program. Edward has been a resident artist with Residency Unlimited in New York as well as with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and Art in General's Eastern European Residency Program in Croatia. He was awarded a New York Foundation for the Arts artist fellowship and a Socrates Sculpture Park Emerging Artist Fellowship. Edward has exhibited both nationally and internationally in various exhibitions.

Mira Schor is a painter and writer living in New York. She is the author of *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture* and *A Decade of Negative Thinking: Essays on Art, Politics, and Daily Life* and of the blog *A Year of Positive Thinking*. She is represented by CB1 Gallery in Los

Angeles and exhibits her work at Lyles & King Gallery in New York. She is a Part-time Associate Teaching Professor in the Fine Arts MFA Program at Parsons.

Research Service is the collaborative endeavor of Avi Alpert, Mashinka Firunts, and Danny Snelson. Our projects propose that scholarship is as much a question of aesthetic inquiry as abstract thought. To these ends, we craft unique research initiatives around discrete subjects, on assignment. This practice stresses the communal nature of knowledge production, positioning audiences as nodes within events and creating a heightened affective situation for information transmission. Recent projects have been presented at the Palais de Tokyo (Paris), Judson Church (New York), Drawing Center (New York), and the Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia). researchservice.info

Adam Spanos is a graduate student in English at New York University. His dissertation, a history of the twentieth-century Egyptian novel, explores themes of uneven temporalities and the expression of political longing through aesthetic form.

Annika Thiem is an associate professor in philosophy at Villanova University. She is the author of *Unbecoming Subjects: Judith Butler, Moral Philosophy, and Critical Responsibility* (Fordham UP, 2008) as well as of numerous articles in critical theory as well as feminist and queer theory.

Keith Tilford is an artist and writer living in New York. Utilizing drawing, 3D modeling and animation his

art explores themes from geology, architecture, science fiction and abstraction. His current research examines the convergences between cognitive engineering, art, the philosophy of scientific models, and the transformation of concepts in modern systems of knowledge. His animations have been included in screenings at Tate Britain, and he has presented his research at Judd Foundation, NY, Montreal Biennale (2014), and Künstlerhaus, Halle für Kunst & Medien, Graz, among others. He is a founding member of Fixing the Future and Office for Applied Complexity.

Hong-An Truong is an artist and writer based in New York and North Carolina. Her interdisciplinary work has been shown at venues including the International Center for Photography, Art in General, the Kitchen, and the Nasher Museum of Art. In 2013, she was included in the Artists' Film International program, where her work was screened at Whitechapel (London), Fundación Proa (Buenos Aires), and Istanbul Modern (Turkey). She was the recipient of an Art Matters Grant and fellowships from Socrates Sculpture Park and Franconia Sculpture Park. In 2015 she was an artist-in-residence at the Irish Museum of Modern Art. Truong was a studio art fellow in the Whitney Independent Study Program. She is an Assistant Professor in the Art Department at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Henry Turner teaches Renaissance English literature at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. His *The Corporate Commonwealth: Pluralism and Political Fictions in England, 1516-1651* is forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press in summer 2016.

Margarita Sánchez Urdaneta has had solo and two-person exhibitions at LaLocalidad Galería, Bogotá; La Residencia, Bogotá; and LA Galería, Bogotá, among others. She has participated in several group exhibitions at venues like The Kitchen, NY; The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, NY; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Bogotá; and The BID Headquarters Atrium, Washington. Sánchez Urdaneta attended the Whitney Independent Study Program, NY; she holds an MFA from Parsons The New School for Design, NY; a postgraduate diploma in Journalism from the Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá, and a BA in Visual Arts at the PUJ, Bogotá.

Jaret Vadera is an artist and cultural producer working between New York, Toronto, and India. Through his interdisciplinary practice, Vadera explores how different technologies shape and control the ways that we see the world around and within us. Vadera's paintings, prints, photographs, videos, and installations have been exhibited and screened at: the Queens Museum in New York; the Museum of Modern Art in New York; Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai; and the Maraya Art Centre in Sharjah.

Andrew Weiner is an interdisciplinary researcher whose work aims to theorize and historicize relations between aesthetics, politics, and media. His dissertation tracked the increasing convergence of these spheres in West Germany and Austria during the 1960s, focusing on "events"—new modes of public action that combined experimental art with radical demonstration. Weiner's current research seeks to rethink the category of "global

contemporary art” in terms of different circuits of South-South exchange. Against the increasing tendency to frame art in terms of false universals, his work examines the formation of alternative transnational networks alongside a history linking the Non-Aligned Movement to alterglobalization activists.

Roger White is a painter and writer based in Vermont and Brooklyn. In 2007 he co-founded the art journal Paper Monument.

Mimi Winick is a PhD candidate in English at Rutgers University, where she is completing her dissertation, *Studied Enchantment: Historical Fiction, Comparative Religion, and the Imaginative Use of Scholarship in Britain, 1862–1941*. Her work has appeared or is scheduled to appear in the journals *Modernism/Modernity* and *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, and in the forthcoming collection from Palgrave, *Modernist Women Writers and Spirituality: A Piercing Darkness*.

Raphael Zollinger is an artist and educator living in Brooklyn, New York. He received his Masters degree from NYU, Tisch School of the Arts, and his BFA from Pratt Institute. He has exhibited his work in both gallery and museum contexts nationally and internationally. He has received fellowships to attend the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and the Atlantic Center for the Arts. In addition, Zollinger’s work has been published in the *New York Times*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *ArtScape*, *AM New York*, *Idiom* and *Artforum.com*. Zollinger currently serves as a professor at SUNY Purchase College.

Shifter

Shifter is a topical magazine that aims to illuminate and broaden our understanding of the intersections between contemporary art, politics and philosophy. The magazine remains malleable and responsive in its form and activities, and represents a diversity of positions and backgrounds in its contributors.

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