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# Avatars, egregores and the writing of the self<sup>1</sup>

## Keywords

magick  
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Félix Guattari

## Abstract

*My article is concerned with the investment in – and reality of – fictions. It looks at the magical idea of the egregore or of an entity, broadly understood, that is produced through collective investment and then speaks back to its authors as if it came from someplace else. At stake here is also an investigation into other kinds of agency – other ‘deep assignments’ – that are always already at work behind the fiction of the self. Important in this enquiry is an idea of writing – or re-writing – the self. Indeed, my claim is that various fields – from magickal practice to literary experimentation and from neuroscience to psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis – offer up important resources for this creative and pragmatic task.*

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The following article is concerned with writing as a creative technology of the self (or, more simply, as a form of self-authorship). Related to this is also the way writing can involve summoning other agencies that disrupt or side-step the self (so writing as a technology of the *non*-self too). Before I get to this however, my article begins by laying out some more general terrain about the fiction of the self and, even more generally, about how different fictions can and do take on a reality.

## Avatars and egregores

The term avatar is often used within video/computer games where it names a persona – or character of some kind – that is taken on within the game. Generally, one selects a pre-made avatar, though increasingly one is able to design one's own (within pre-set parameters). In contemporary art practice it is a less common term, although some practices – including the one I am involved in – use the term for the invented personas – or fictions – that are taken on or 'channelled', especially in performance. The term originates within religious discourse – and specifically Hinduism – where it names the material manifestation of a deity (and, as such, 'avatar' is an example of how a religious term can become secularized as it is taken up in the West). In each of the above the general meaning seems relatively clear: an avatar is an alternative presentation of a pre-existing entity. What, however, about an avatar that has no pre-existing entity behind it? We might be reminded here of different neuroscientific takes on the 'fiction of the self', from Thomas Metzinger's (2009) account of the 'ego tunnel' that we are, for Metzinger, necessarily travelling in and through, to Ray Brassier's (2011) 'nemocentric' subject/perspective which explores similar territory, but also names the speculative possibility of a mode of being in the world without a self. The term 'fiction of the self' implies this lack of a 'real' entity (although that is not to say that there is not *something* behind – or beneath – the fiction, just that it is not a self).

The term egregore also relates to a non-physical entity or 'thought-form', one that has been collectively produced – or has arisen somehow – through collective endeavour. The term is an occult one, often used in relation to chaos magick, although it has also recently been 'applied' to memes and to the way in which they can acquire a certain power through collective investment (specifically with 'meme magic' and the weaponization of memes by the alt-right) (see Asprem 2018).<sup>2</sup> Egregore is a term even less found in contemporary art discourse – despite the recent turn to magic<sup>3</sup> – but it does seem an appropriate one to describe those beliefs and practices – and specifically collective fictions – that are produced by a group and/or invested in by the latter. Certainly, with the art practice I am involved in, the fiction (of the group and of what might be called the characters – or avatars – within the group) has taken on its own life. It is a collaboration between individuals (and other agents), but also something else. Something that has its own autonomous existence besides our involvement (Plastique Fantastique is the name of this 'performance fiction' that we, the participants, step into).<sup>4</sup>

1. A version of this article will appear in Simon O'Sullivan's monograph *From Magic and Myth-Work to Care and Repair* being published by Goldsmiths Press in 2024.
2. 'Meme magic' refers to the way in which internet memes can have real-world effects, as is the case with the alt-right 're-purposing' of the Pepe the Frog memes – especially with the folding in of the Cult of Kek – and the part they are speculated to have played in the election of Donald Trump (see the discussion in Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 481–84).
3. See the recent anthology – or 'gramarye' for artists – *Magic* edited by Jamie Sutcliffe (2021), which foregrounds a 'magical-critical' tradition in amongst the more superficial (and often right wing) turns to magic.
4. For images and further details of this collaboration with David Burrows, Alex Marzeta, Vanessa Page (and others) see <https://www.plastiquefantastique.org/>. Accessed 30 October 2023.



Figure 1: *Plastique Fantastique* (2013). Cloud Gives Birth to New Animal: Plastique Fantastique Feedback Loop to Call Forth Neuropatheme, ICA London.

### Hyperstition and being ‘compromised by magic’

In relation to fictions taking on a life, two other contemporary sources seem especially pertinent. First, the philosopher Isabelle Stengers’s idea of fictions having an effect within a given milieu. Stengers writes about this in her article ‘Reclaiming animism’ (2012) which, in part, is concerned with her own attempts to be ‘compromised by magic’ (or, put differently, how she might

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productively relate to and engage with magical systems of thought even though she is a Modern and, as it were, a scientific subject). For Stengers, this is crucial in relation to being able to explore and perhaps inhabit other modes of existence besides those that have brought about the many issues of our Anthropocene. Part of her argument in that article is simply that what we might understand as fictions (from a certain perspective) can nevertheless be active agents. If they have real effects – within a given milieu – then they are, to that extent 'real' (Stengers's prompt here is thinking about the healing properties of a statue of the Virgin Mary but, more generally, also the beliefs and practices of witches). It seems clear that those fictions which are collectively invested in will have the most purchase on a given reality (or, at least, the most purchase for the largest group of people).

This extends the kinds of entities that one might have a productive relationship with beyond other persons (or, said differently, it might extend the idea of 'personhood' – as in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's writings – to include the non-human, animals and plants (see e.g. Viveiros de Castro 2014). In fact, it broadens this out even further to include different objects and then also different fictions in an extended field or milieu. Indeed, here the boundary between fiction and so-called reality becomes blurred. For Stengers, magic is a name for this expanded field of agency/desire and for the practices that are implied by it. So, crucially, magic is not to be understood as simply a regression from science. Magical practice then concerns other agencies (whatever they might be) and involves a pragmatic engagement with them.

The second source is the concept of 'hyperstition' is from Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (Ccru).<sup>5</sup> Hyperstition – to give a very short and succinct definition (at least to begin with) – names fictions that make themselves real (Ccru n.d.).<sup>6</sup> In fact, hyperstition names a strange kind of retro-causality in which the fiction works back on its conditions of emergence, bringing about its own reality.<sup>7</sup> A particular idea of time is at play here – a flat, cybernetic one – with hyperstition being a name for the workings of these various time circuits and temporal loops. For Ccru, the term hyperstition is also connected to the occult insofar as it involves a secret, hidden knowledge (in this case, about time). A knowledge that comes from a perspective that is not usually available. Or not available to a subject as they are typically constituted, at least, in the Modern West.

To a certain extent, Ccru might itself be understood as an egregore. The apocryphal quote from the University of Warwick – where Ccru was first conjured – that Ccru 'does not, has not, and will never exist' points to at least the semi-fictional nature of the group. Certainly, it was an entity that was collectively produced – and invested in – and certainly it had an effect (and is continuing to have one), not least within some of the art and theory discourses that I am familiar (both positively and negatively, depending on your perspective). It was also itself involved with the naming/summoning of other agencies and entities – specifically demons – something that the term hyperstition also refers to.<sup>8</sup>

5. Ccru were a para-academic group set by Sadie Plant, then carried forward by Nick Land and others, in the Philosophy Department at Warwick University (and then outside of it) in the 1990s.
6. For a fuller discussion of hyperstition in relation to fiction (and myth), see O'Sullivan (2017a).
7. To quote Ccru from the essay 'Lemurian time war':  
  
for practitioners of hyperstition, differentiating between 'degrees of realization' is crucial. The hyperstitional process of entities 'making themselves real' is precisely a passage, a transformation, in which potentials – already active virtualities – realize themselves. Writing operates not as a passive representation but as an active agent of transformation and a gateway through which entities can emerge. '[B]y writing a universe, the writer makes such a universe possible'.  
  
(2017: 36).
8. In relation to the summoning of demons see also the

'Syzygy' collaboration between Ccru and the collective artist Orphan Drift – themselves a kind of egregore – at Beaconsfield gallery, London in 1999 (see Orphan Drift n.d.).

9. A phenomenon that has foregrounded itself further since the publication of that book is QAnon. Here, the business of 'fictions making themselves real' takes on a more ominous character, resulting in urgent real-world effects.
10. And, as such, this article extends some of the ideas and themes discussed in the 'Overcoming the fiction of the self' chapter of *Fictioning* (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 49–62).

Elsewhere David Burrows and I have written about how fictions might be instantiated or materialized within art practice especially and how such embodied fictions can then have a traction in a given world (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019).<sup>9</sup> We used the term 'fictioning' to refer to this kind of work (when work names both the object/practice in question and what the latter does). We also referenced the Stengers's article mentioned above (alongside various writings by Donna Haraway) as offering a kind of parallel concept to fictioning (especially in relation to 'worlding' practices) (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 264–65). Hyperstition is also a form of fictioning in this sense although Ccru were less concerned with art practice as such and, certainly, hyperstition is of a more rarefied or philosophical character.

Having briefly laid out some terrain around fictions taking on a reality, I want now to turn from contemporary art practice myself and reflect more on the practice of producing avatars and egregores, especially in relation to the fiction of the self (or perhaps that should be the *fictioning* of the self).<sup>10</sup> In terms of the two sources introduced above, this is the practice of producing fictions that have an effect in a given milieu and the production of fictions that then make themselves real. I want to briefly consider five examples or case studies to see where this might lead.

## 1. Neuroscience and the fiction of the self

It is increasingly being scientifically demonstrated that the self is a fiction and that behind this fiction there is something else entirely different going on. On one level it is simply the physical and chemical processes of the body that are 'going on', more or less oblivious to what we might think or narrate to ourselves or to others. The self, which is this process of continuous narration (to drastically reduce down this particular part of the process of self-formation), is then a fiction that has some real effects. But it is also one that is often interrupted – or outflanked – by these other material processes. The uncanny feeling one can have of having done something – or arrived somewhere for example – without consciously planning or even being completely aware would seem to anecdotally point towards this other bodily intelligence that is always already at work beneath our conscious narration. Indeed, the conscious explanations – or rationalizations – tend to come after the event (even if they might seem to come before).

This fiction of the self is only one aspect of what a self is, of course. There are other processes that are involved in self-formation when this also includes the formation – or selection – of the world that the self moves through. Most of these are 'sub-representational', part of the material processes mentioned above. Neuroscience is increasingly able to map out this terrain or, at least, map out the neural correlates to certain subjective/emotional states. A fully scientific account of the self – or of consciousness at least – seems to be on the horizon in this sense. Or, put differently, a bridge is being constructed piece by piece across the gulf between the scientific and more manifest images of the

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self (Brassier also refers to this – following Wilfred Sellars – as the development of a ‘stereoscopic’ synthesis [Brassier 2014: 74]).

Might it also be the case that there are feedback loops between these two worlds or images? Can, for example, the narrative – the fiction – work back on these other, more material processes? It seems clear, on one level, that a given fiction can affect a given body. Witness, for example, the placebo effect in medicine. More pertinently for this article, is there a sense in which seeing the fiction *as* a fiction (having a kind of perspective back on the self from some other place) might allow some flexibility – some wiggle room as it were – around a given fiction of the self or even prompt the writing of a different fiction? In a forthcoming book I look at this change in point of view in relation to Buddhist technologies (O'Sullivan forthcoming 2024), but it seems to me that neuroscience can also offer this kind of view back on ourselves. It offers a scientific perspective on our more typical perspective, but also, perhaps more interestingly, there is the way it sometimes proceeds by the positing of various thought experiments. Metzinger (from whom the above brief neuroscientific account of the self has been taken) offers up an especially compelling example here – a thought experiment that involves the production of a fiction within a fiction – in the part of his book on lucid dreaming (2009: 139–48). The self-aware dream avatar is able to give us some reflective or recursive understanding of the fiction that we always already are (the ego tunnel, for Metzinger, being akin, in some respects, to a dream). Following Metzinger, Brassier also suggests that the self is a nested fiction – a phenomenal self-model that is always already in a world model produced by and for it – albeit the self necessarily cannot see this (the model is transparent).<sup>11</sup> It is in this sense that the self exists in a ‘special form of darkness’ (Metzinger, in Brassier 2011: 15). But as I gestured to above, Brassier also makes the argument that this need not necessarily be the case, that there might be other kinds of non-self-models that are possible. Other kinds of agency and, with that, the possibility of ‘experience without a self’. The production of Artificial Intelligence (AI) seems to be a case in point here when this involves not only an entity with a different self-modelling (e.g. a modelling system whose processes are opaque rather than transparent), but also one that, perhaps, allows us some purchase on the fiction that we ourselves are. Here, the making of a fiction (the AI system) allows us an outside perspective on that other fiction we inhabit.

## 2. Psychoanalysis and the sinthome

In typical understandings of psychoanalysis, the fiction of the self – or, in psychoanalytic terms, the ego – ‘masks’ desires and drives that also arise in and from the body. In its Lacanian formulation, the self can be thought of as a linguistically constructed subject, produced in and through the web of the Symbolic – that is, as it were, woven over the Real. This Real will often assert itself, or certainly exert pressure on the Symbolic (and thus the conscious subject), but it is not readily accessible – or

11. To quote Brassier's definition of consciousness and the self (quoting Metzinger's own definition):

Once consciousness is minimally defined as the activation of an integrated world-model within a window of presence, then self-consciousness can be defined as the activation of a phenomenal self-model (PSM) nested within this world-model: ‘A self-model is a model of the very representational system that is currently activating it within itself’.

(Brassier 2011: 15)

The self is however a modelling that cannot see itself as such because its processes are, in Brassier's terms, transparent.

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12. For a recent lucid discussion of repair in relation to Lacan, Guattari and contemporary art see Theo Reeves-Evison's *Ethics of Contemporary Art: In the Shadow of Transgression* (2020).

not directly 'seen' – by the subject (so the subject exists in another kind of darkness in this sense). Indeed, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the conscious subject is more or less defined by being cut-off from the Real. This originary wound (to speak figuratively) is not something which can be healed or sutured in any straightforward sense. There is always already a gulf, at least of sorts, between the body (the Real) and the Symbolic (the fiction). It is this gulf – or cut – and how a subject deals with it that defines their particular set-up or fiction of the self.

In the later Lacan, the fiction of the self becomes more complex. Here, it might be understood more as a knotting together of the three registers of the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary (the Imaginary involving a prior moment – before the Symbolic – of ego formation that happens, crucially, through a misidentification [Lacan's famous 'mirror-stage']). This knot can, however, become undone (or, in some cases, was never effectively tied to begin with). Lacan defines analysis – in one sense and again, in the later writings – as a kind of 're-tying' of the knot. Lacan calls this work of repair the *sinthome* (a play on the more familiar 'symptom') (2018). It involves some kind of pursuit (by the subject concerned) which can bind the three registers together. The *sinthome* is not the production of an avatar or egregore exactly, but it is the production and practice of a fiction (broadly understood) – one which is invested in and that then has real effects (in this case offering some cohesion and consistency for a subject). Crucially it is a fiction that is self-authored and, as such, follows Lacan's dictate we find elsewhere (in the seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959–1960*) that the work of analysis might also be framed as prompting the subject to 'become a cause of themselves' or claim their own causality away from external agents (so another kind of retroactive feedback loop) (Lacan 1992: n.pag.).

### 3. Writing the self

Lacan's 'case study' of the *sinthome* is the body of works which produce the author/name 'James Joyce' as a kind of repair (Lacan's claim – to be very brief – is that Joyce faced a crisis because of an absent father and thus the lack of the 'name-of-the-father' that might have cohered his sense of self) (see Lacan 2018). In Lacan's reading of Joyce, writing – or using the register of the Symbolic in a very particular, creative manner – is a practice that is able to stitch a self together. It can give consistency to a life that otherwise threatens to come apart. Writing might be understood as a practice of repair in this respect.<sup>12</sup> It is especially the way in which writing can allow a claiming of that Symbolic register that has determined the subject in the first place that can give it this character.

Interesting, here, are especially those writing practices that are specifically concerned with the self (Lacan's point of departure is Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*). These are not simply biography, but writings that narrate the self in some way (Joyce's book is a fictioned account of his own self-formation). It certainly seems as if writing can be a technology for producing the egregore

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of the self (if I can put it like that). A more contemporary example than Joyce is Kathy Acker, who wrote fictions about her life but then also narrated her life as a fiction (and so might be understood as a key forerunner of the 'genre' of autofiction). Or, put another way, Acker, the person, invents Acker the fiction (which then – we can perhaps presume – fed back on the person). Also compelling here is the way in which different registers – especially drawings and diagrams – can augment this self-narration (see, e.g. Acker's magnificent dream maps in *Blood and Guts in High School* [Acker 1984]). These offer a further level of 'actualization' of the fiction (to return to a psychoanalytic register, could we also say they introduce the Imaginary into this self-formation)? A further and related aspect here is the way in which other fictions have also been written about (the fiction of) Acker – or have folded Acker's fiction into other fictions (and other fictions of the self).<sup>13</sup> If Acker is an egregore, then they are one that has been – and is still being – collectively written.

#### 4. Schizoanalysis

For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, literature is also a key resource for the practice of schizoanalysis. Here, the goal (if that is an appropriate term) is less the interpretation of symptoms and the 'speaking cure' and more the following of a symptom – as if it is a bird tapping on the window<sup>14</sup> – and, with that, the working on more affective, even atmospheric registers. Schizoanalysis also proceeds with very much a pragmatic attitude. So, not what is true or real exactly, but what 'works'?<sup>15</sup> We might even say that the intention is to invent fictions – again, broadly understood – that will allow a life to continue (Daniel Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* [1903] 2000 being a key case study here). More broadly, schizoanalysis might be understood as a kind of fictioning of the self – or of subjectivity – in this sense, when the latter is understood as a very broad term, covering the more larval selves that make up an individual and/or a group that a number of individuals might make up.

In fact, in *Anti-Oedipus* ([1972] 1984) the subject is less of a focus or, at least, is understood as being secondary to a process of desire that is primary. Deleuze and Guattari write about different 'celibate machines' that express or incarnate different relations between this desiring process and a principle of non-desire (what they call, in *Anti-Oedipus*, the body without organs). These celibate machines – particular kinds of relations between desire (production) and non-desire (anti-production) – or, following Freud, the life and death instincts – are complex diagrams – or different fictions – of the self. In *A Thousand Plateaus* ([1980] 1988) the pragmatic and constructive aspect of schizoanalysis is further emphasized, especially in plateaus like 'November 28, 1947: How do you make yourself a body without organs?' (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1988: 149–66) where the latter – a body without organs – shifts its meaning and names a practice (or set of them) for accessing an outside to the self and, as such, is something that a subject might themselves make (against themselves as it were). This pragmatics is also in play, for example, in the '1730: Becoming-intense, becoming-animal,

13. See for example Chris Kraus's *After Kathy Acker* (2017) and Olivia Laing's *Crudo* (2018). For a little more discussion on this idea of 'fictions within fictions' see the essay I have written with David Burrows on 'Science fiction devices' (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2022).

14. This phrase is, in fact, Guattari's from his solo work *Chaosmosis* (1995) where he is writing about what he calls 'schizoanalytic metamodelisation' in relation to the production of subjectivity. Here is the full – more technical – quote: 'The lapsus, for example in this perspective is not the conflictual expression of a repressed Content but the positive, indexical manifestation of a Universe trying to find itself, which comes to knock at the window like a magic bird' (1995b: 68).

15. This pragmatics is especially in play in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1988).



16. See Guattari's essay 'The new aesthetic paradigm' in *Chaosmosis* (1995a: 98–118).
17. See also my discussion in 'Myth-science and the fictioning of reality' (O'Sullivan 2016).
18. What follows also relates to Chaos Magick, especially as practised by groups like Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth (for more detail on this see Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 159–63).
19. Although it should be said that Crru were less interested in the human (and its claims to self-determination) and more in the processes of which the human is, in some senses, a drag.
20. See also Gary Genosko's recent article on 'Schizoanalysis and magic', which tracks through Guattari's own interest in magic as method (Genosko 2022).
21. For a discussion of these different practices (sigils and re-naming) – especially in relation to contemporary art practice – see Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 63–82 ('Mirror work: Self-obliteration') and 2019: 155–69 ('Scenes as performance fictions').

becoming-imperceptible' plateau, where becoming itself – understood, at least partly, as a kind of magical practice (or a practice of sorcery) – is aligned with the practice of schizoanalysis.

In his solo writings on the production of subjectivity, Guattari writes in an even more abstract manner about certain entities (might we call them fictioning machines?) that are at the interface between the registers of chaos and complexity or allow an emergence of the latter from the former.<sup>16</sup> These fictioning machines are forms of processual and proto-subjectivities. There are connections here with the more usual psychoanalytic terms – and relations between – the Real and the Symbolic (though, crucially, for Guattari, his model follows an asignifying logic and, as such, his entities maintain a relationship with the chaos/the Real that they emerge from). Put differently, we might say that Guattari attends to how a fiction can operate to spin – and cohere – a subjectivity around itself (as I have put it elsewhere, fiction operates as the friction in this process [O'Sullivan 2012: 108]). Images might also work in this way, as 'quilting points' (to turn to another phrase that Lacan uses in the seminar on *The Psychoses*) in the production of subjectivity (when, again, this might include group-subjectivities) (see Lacan 1983). In other writings, Guattari turns to the writer Jean Genet as an example of an author who deploys this kind of 'image function' in relation to subjectivity (Guattari 2013: 215–30).<sup>17</sup> Images operate here across different regimes or can have a traction beyond the regime they are written (or made) in. Put simply, fictions can move from art to life.

## 5. Magick

I have already mentioned magical practice above – in relation to Stengers – but it seems to me that the more particular magick (with a 'k') – which follows Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare's practices and definitions – has a parallel intention to analysis (both psycho and schizo).<sup>18</sup> Indeed, in resonance with Lacan's ethics of psychoanalysis mentioned above, there is a similar goal: to 'become a cause of oneself' (and, in this sense, Crru's hyperstition is also magickal insofar as it attends to this retro-causality).<sup>19</sup> In relation to schizoanalysis there is a similar pragmatic attitude in play: a desire and intention to see what works and then also to claim (or 'write') one's own self.<sup>20</sup> There are many different kinds of practice involved in this self-determination, for example sigil magick, which, to a certain extent, is also a practice concerned with the Symbolic (and even with 're-writing' parts of it). There is also the practice of naming and re-naming – again, a claiming of one's own identity or, a writing of one's own fiction (so, self-narration again).<sup>21</sup> Although, following some of my comments above, it might be more accurate to say that this claiming of identity is really a claiming of a fiction or even a series of them. Then there is the important tradition of the magician making their own tools (something that seems especially pertinent in relation to the metamodeling of schizoanalysis but also any genuine practice of self-analysis).

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More generally, magick is a name for practices of self-transformation. In this sense it is a 'technology of the self' as Michel Foucault might have understood it (see Foucault 2000). But it is also a technology that treats 'reality' as something that can be manipulated – or, to turn to a contemporary magickal practitioner – William Burroughs – might be cut in to (reality understood here, it seems to me, is not quite the same as the Lacanian Real and more akin to the Symbolic, although perhaps it is also the case that this distinction is undone through magick). In fact, we might say that the self is a particular script that can itself be edited. Here magick dovetails with writing. Or writing – in its experimental form (as in the cut-up) – can be understood as a magickal technology (it can cut into space and time).<sup>22</sup> The cut-up might be understood as a kind of accompaniment to the production of an avatar or *egregore* then. If the latter is to do with the conjuring of another entity (or entities), then the cut-up cuts into the existing set-up (or what Burroughs termed 'control') and, as such, provides material for this summoning (as well as opening a gap through which the entity might appear).

### **Writing 'speaks back'**

The above practices are all concerned with seeing the self as a fiction to some extent and thus, very broadly, as something that has been written (which means it can be re-written). Indeed, they constitute a toolbox of sorts for this kind of constructive and creative work (when this also involves a radical shift in perspective). This is not to deny the specificity of the above regimes and practices, but, rather, to foreground a general pragmatics that is certainly always already in play with schizo-analysis and magic. A pragmatics that also means using different resources in ways that they were perhaps not intended for or as a method for something that is not strictly speaking part of their milieu.<sup>23</sup> Afterall, the intention here is not necessarily to get things right or to become an expert in this or that or, indeed, to produce knowledge (at least, as that is usually understood). It is, rather, to produce transformation.

So much for theoretical exegesis – and for a type of writing that attempts to explain and persuade (even, in its own way, to control). So much also for writing *about* these other writing practices (broadly conceived). The actual business of 'writing the self' cannot but also attempt a circumnavigation of all this. Afterall, if writing remains the writing 'of' a self that is already there then it operates only as a (reassuring) mirror of that self. Crucially, writing can also disable this kind of image and 'reality effect'. It can 'speak back' to its author as if it has arrived from somewhere else (it has very real – and often unexpected – effects in this sense). This is because writing does not belong to anyone (there is no entity behind it). It does not come from you, but, rather, you come from it. Ultimately it will always undo a sense of origin and, with that any secure sense of self. Or, put more positively, it will always open a given self up to an outside and thus allow a different self – or different avatars and *egregores* – to step forth (which means it will necessarily sometimes be bloody).

22. See Ccru's writing on Burroughs that see him as involved in this editing of reality. An indicative quote:

In the hyperstitional model Kaye outlined, fiction is not opposed to the real. Rather, reality is understood to be composed of fictions – consistent semiotic terrains that condition perceptual, affective and behavioral responses. Kaye considered Burroughs' work to be 'exemplary of hyperstitional practice'. Burroughs construed writing – and art in general – not aesthetically, but functionally, – that is to say, magically, with magic defined as the use of signs to produce changes in reality.

(Ccru 2017: 35)

23. And, as such, this pragmatics has something in common with François Laruelle's project of non-philosophy (see O'Sullivan 2017b).

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