An anthology on lying, grifting, deceiving, and scheming—for, and as, art.

index

How to read this:

Download and read on-screen.

Print the printer-friendly version at 100% scale, horizontally on letter-sized copy paper, single- or double-sided. Bind along the top edge with spirals, clips, or staples.

"We tell ourselves stories in order to live. The princess is caged in the consulate. The man with the candy will lead the children into the sea. The naked woman on the ledge outside the window on the sixteenth floor is a victim of *accidie*, or the naked woman is an exhibitionist, and it would be "interesting" to know which. We tell ourselves that it makes some difference whether the naked woman is about to commit a mortal sin or is about to register a political protest or is about to be, the Aristophanic view, snatched back to the human condition by the fireman in priest's clothing just visible in the window behind her, the one smiling at the telephoto lens. We look for the sermon in the suicide, for the s cial or moral lesson in the murder of five. We interpret what we see, select the most workable of the multiple choices. We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the "ideas" with which we

Artworks always ask us to believe them. Whether they're illusionistic paintings, speculative designs for alternate realities, or life-long works of self-image, we trust they have some meaning, reasoning, an agenda.

Starting with the question, "When is art a lie?" this collection moves to encompass investigations into cons, replication, and power-plays in dialogue with the structure of the art world. It may not arrive at an answer with any certainty, but it reveals an expanded kaleidoscope of possibilities to subvert and reinforce what we consider truth.

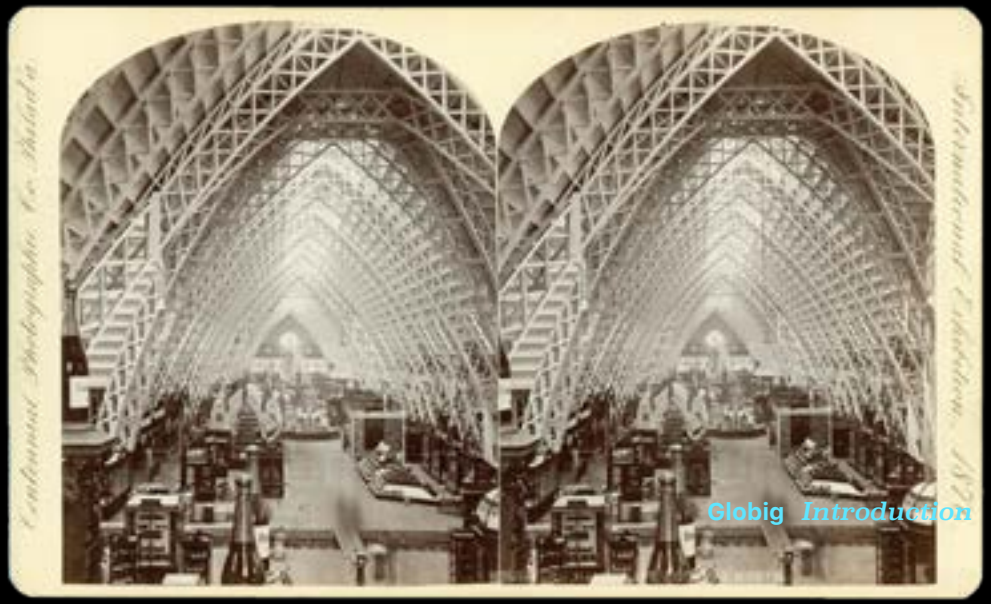
The book itself may put the reader on unstable ground. It may be unclear when the authors are actually sharing their opinions or spinning fictions, and where those things converge to reveal a third meaning. Can you spot what's made-up?
In an age of increasingly easy digital manipulations and increasingly complex media echo-chambers, it's consequential to ask: When is a lie *not* art? What allows a

have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.

Or at least we do for a while. I am talking here about a time when I began to doubt the premises of all the stories I had ever told myself..."

— Joan Didion, "The White Album"

Stereoscopes, cards inserted into a viewfinder, were popular in the 19th century, especially as souvenirs associated with world's fairs. They give photographs a foreground, mid-, and background, lending the optical illusion of three-dimensional space.



lie to cross over into truth, and what might we do about it?

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You could say every picture is a lie. It tries to depict a fleeting moment that can't be captured, one that can't actually be repeated ever again.

Photography has (or had) claims to the scientific. It got the closest ever to that exact-moment capture before editing and correcting — Photoshop and deep fakes and DALL-E — shattered it. But people were always pinning fairies to the grass and drawing on film, so maybe it was always an illusion.

Paintings are maybe bigger lies than photos because they pass through the painter's eyes and hand. Sight just needs light, which a photo is, while a painting needs paint. An especially untruthful painting might be one in which the painter deliberately tries to hide the lie: maybe, a flattering but otherwise realistic portrait for a rich client. You could say a photograph of a painting negates the painting's lie. It exposes the painting's lying process with supposedly objective veracity. And yet it looks like you punched up the saturation...

Of course photos can be made into lies without altering them but just by how they're framed, presented, or annotated. If the news coverage tells me I'm looking at Afghanistan, I'm going to trust it, probably, and not assume they're reusing footage of Iraq. A video might be better than a

Charles and Ray Eames photgraphed Hollywood movie sets as part of their research and design practices. What might an Eames stereoscope have looked like?

still because you have the moment before and after the moment, so the thing creates its own context to some extent. But then again, you can also edit the video clip however you see fit. A security camera is a lot less about cold hard information than it is about manufacturing a truth through the repetition of an incredibly vague, fuzzy set of lies: this is what "criminals" look like. A movie camera looks at a carefully arranged world exactly how the director and cinematographer want it to — but always with the aim to say something true about how people talk, emote, and crash together, even in the most outlandish circumstances. The whole set-up is called "movie magic" for a reason. (Abstract paintings work like this, too: in how people respond to them, towards each other, in the gallery, museum, or studio.)

At the movies, or looking at a society portrait or a spread in a fashion magazine, what we see shapes how we are and who we are — how we act and what we want to do, and to look like — so the lie makes its own reality in ours. That sound stage exists in the real world somewhere, after all, and the vision for the shoot was someone's idea. Christ on the cross makes a great story. A memorable repeatable image. Maybe that's the question at the bottom of all this: Is what we imagine real? Or do we have to make it (for it to be) so?

People who desire or need a lot of surgery or HRT might say you do have to. Does that make them liars? Walking, living, breathing

lies? No. It comes down to a judgment-call on what you consider "need." It also depends whether you consider objects in the digital or media playing-field equal in veracity to physicality, in the first place. Do figures like Genesis P-Orrige and Donelle Woodford share anything? Both of their bodies craft new truths that were always present in their zeitgeists.

I might say someone seventy years old trying to look thirty is lying to me; a trans woman is not. But I could also flip those answers —the plastic surgery is that person's "truth" in the contemporary parlance of the word, and the gender-affirmation surgery is an invention of self — and I still celebrate both of those ways of being and living. Lies are not necessarily bad things. The picture of myself that I text to my partner far away, saying I can feel them in my arms, is a beautiful lie. If I imagine hard enough, it becomes true. And my lie becomes the catalyst for the truth of another person's feelings on the receiving end.

Even the algorithm encoded in an AI image is visible if you know how to look and have the right tools. Pictures always give away the truth of their users' — not necessarily their makers' — intentions, if nothing else. Pictures and videos of every kind communicate meaning through their inability to lie in this way, and through their otherwise requisite lies of believability upon immediate reception. Manipulation of those contexts is how they have their meanings

changed. A wealth of ideas is generated by those changes and parlays, and the debates and further images they demand. Maybe that's called culture.

We could seek immediacy and baldness in performance: dance, music, theater, happenings; things that rely on the human body of the artist there in the room with the audience. But as those forms so often bely ways to record them, and that's the source of their power, communicating even a suggestion of that richness to each other across times and places necessitates the babble of competing memories, takes, and opinions put down as images as well as words. A lie, to one person, is a truth to another.

So yes, if every picture we look at is a kind of lie, I'm happy with it. Because a world of only truth, truths, or truisms is a world without culture — a world without art. §

Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility

Carrie Lambert-Beatty
October, Vol. 129 (Summer, 2009), pg. 51-84. MIT Press.

Safiye Behar delivering a speech at the 12th Annual Women's Congress, Instanbul, April 1935 (from the collection of the Women's Library and Information Center, Instanbul). Featured in Michael Blum's *A Tribute to Safiye Behar,* 2005.

When the artist Michael Blum arrived in Istanbul to prepare for that city's Ninth International Biennial, he discovered that the apartment building that had been home in the early twentieth century to the teacher, translator, communist, and feminist Safiye Behar was slated for demolition. A remarkable, if little-known, historical figure, Behar (1890-1965) was a Turkish Jew who enjoyed a long friendship — some say a romance — with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic. The two met in 1905, in the heady atmosphere of the Zeuve Birahanesi, a bar owned by Safiye's father on the ground floor of the same now-crumbling building in the Beyoglu (then Pera) district of Istanbul. Throughout the last years of the Sultanate and early years of the Republic, Behar and Kemal maintained a correspondence both intimate and intellectual. The few surviving examples of their letters suggest Behar had considerable influence on the leader during this crucial period in Turkish history, particularly concerning the rights of women in the new republic. The friendship

ended only with Kemal's death in 1938, the same year Safiye emigrated to Chicago. There she was active for many years as a translator of Turkish and an organizer for various leftist causes.
Blum, who trained as a historian at the Sorbonne before beginning his art practice, gave over his Biennial exhibition to the documentation of Behar's life. He constructed a modest but thorough historical house museum (necessarily displaced from the condemned building to an apartment complex — the "Deniz Palas," or "Palace of the Sea" — being used for the Biennial). Culling materials from various historical societies and archives, as well as from Behar's descendants, he set up vitrines featuring her letters, photographs, and books, and arranged original furnishings in the rooms of the apartment, to be peered at over Plexiglas barriers. He relayed Behar's life story with both bilingual didactics and a certain flair for stagecraft (a side table bore a dish of roasted chickpeas, Kemal's favorite snack). A video interview with Behar's grandson, Chicago architect Melik Tutuncu, brought her family legacy up to the present.

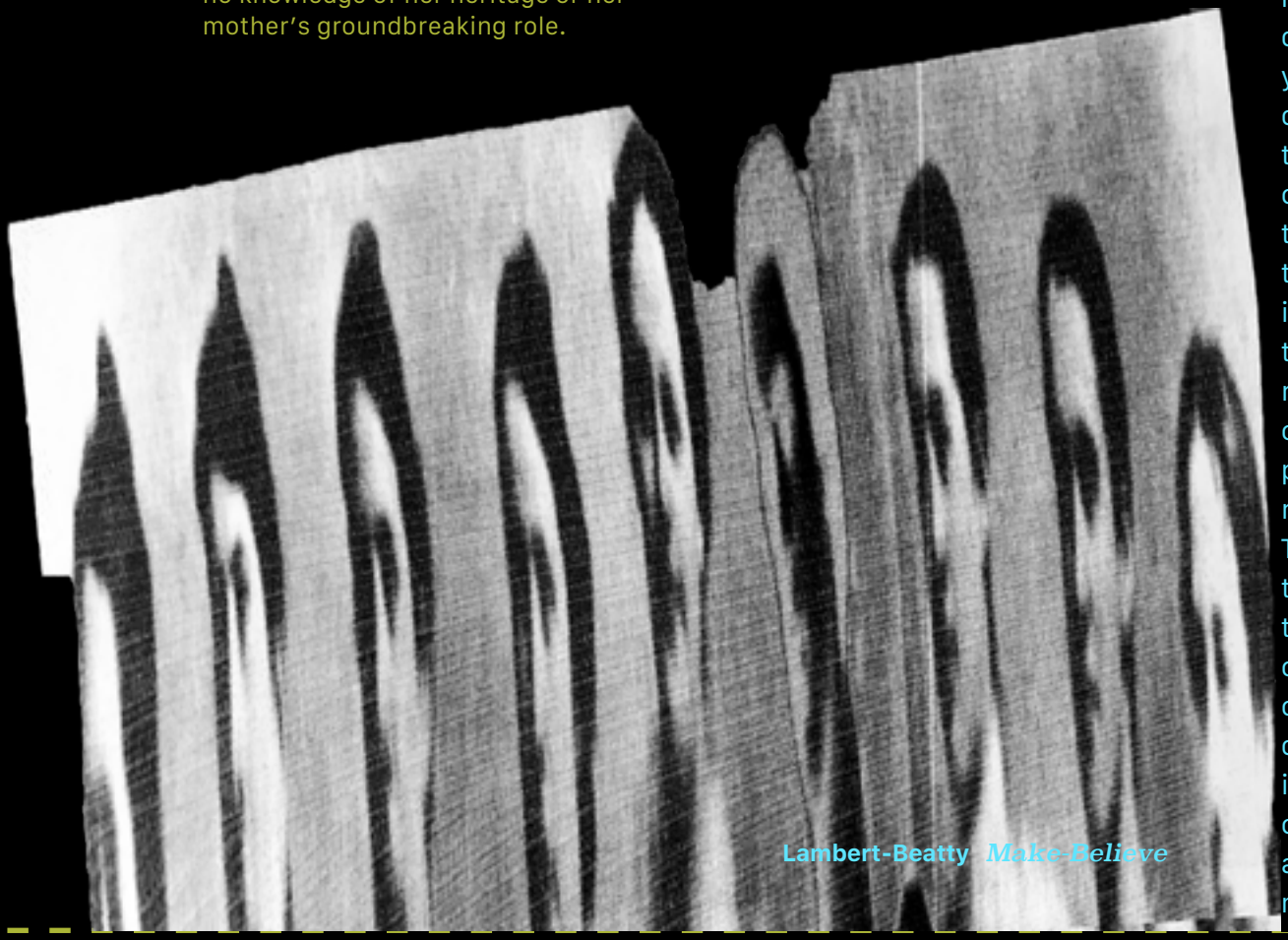
Recovering the forgotten life story and unacknowledged historical role of a female figure from an ethnic minority, this project, A Tribute to Safiye Behar, participates in a project of revision whose foundations are in the feminist and civil-rights movements of the 1960s and '70s. Splitting History into histories (and herstories), it also builds on the postmodern critique of metanarratives, while nodding to the discourses on identity and hybridity of the 1980s and 90s. Yet Blum's project was very much of its own moment. Under cover of the highly conventional visual language of the house museum, Blum was able to address two publics, and two political situations, at once. For the local, Turkish audience, the frank discussion of Mustafa Kemal's likely affair with the Jewish woman, and her influence on his reforms, served as a critical intervention in the official hagiography of the leader that continues to saturate public life in Turkey. The exposure of a previously repressed history signaled a critique of that state's penchant for secrecy (most infamously, its continuing denials of the Armenian genocide).

Meanwhile, for the large contingent of international visitors brought to Istanbul by the Biennial in 2005 — a moment when Turkey's potential membership in the European Union was being hotly debated — the life story of this secular, cosmopolitan, internationalist, and progressive woman, with her feminist organizing and her love letters in French, cut into stereotypes about Turkey as backwards, other, and "Islamicist" (perhaps reminding them, for instance, that Turkish women had the right to vote earlier than their sisters in France).

A Tribute to Safiye Behar, then, was both historical and political (and a suggestion that the former is inevitably the latter as well). But it was also something else again. For, arguably, the most substantial thing about the life of Safiye Behar is that Michael Blum made it up.

To some viewers, the fictionality of the

Anita Florence Hemmings, highlighted here with her choir, was the first Black student to attend Vassar College. She passed as white until her roommate hired a private investigator to expose her parents. Hemmings petitioned the board of trustees and graduated in 1897. Her daughter Ellen Love also attended the college in the 1920s, with no knowledge of her heritage or her mother's groundbreaking role.



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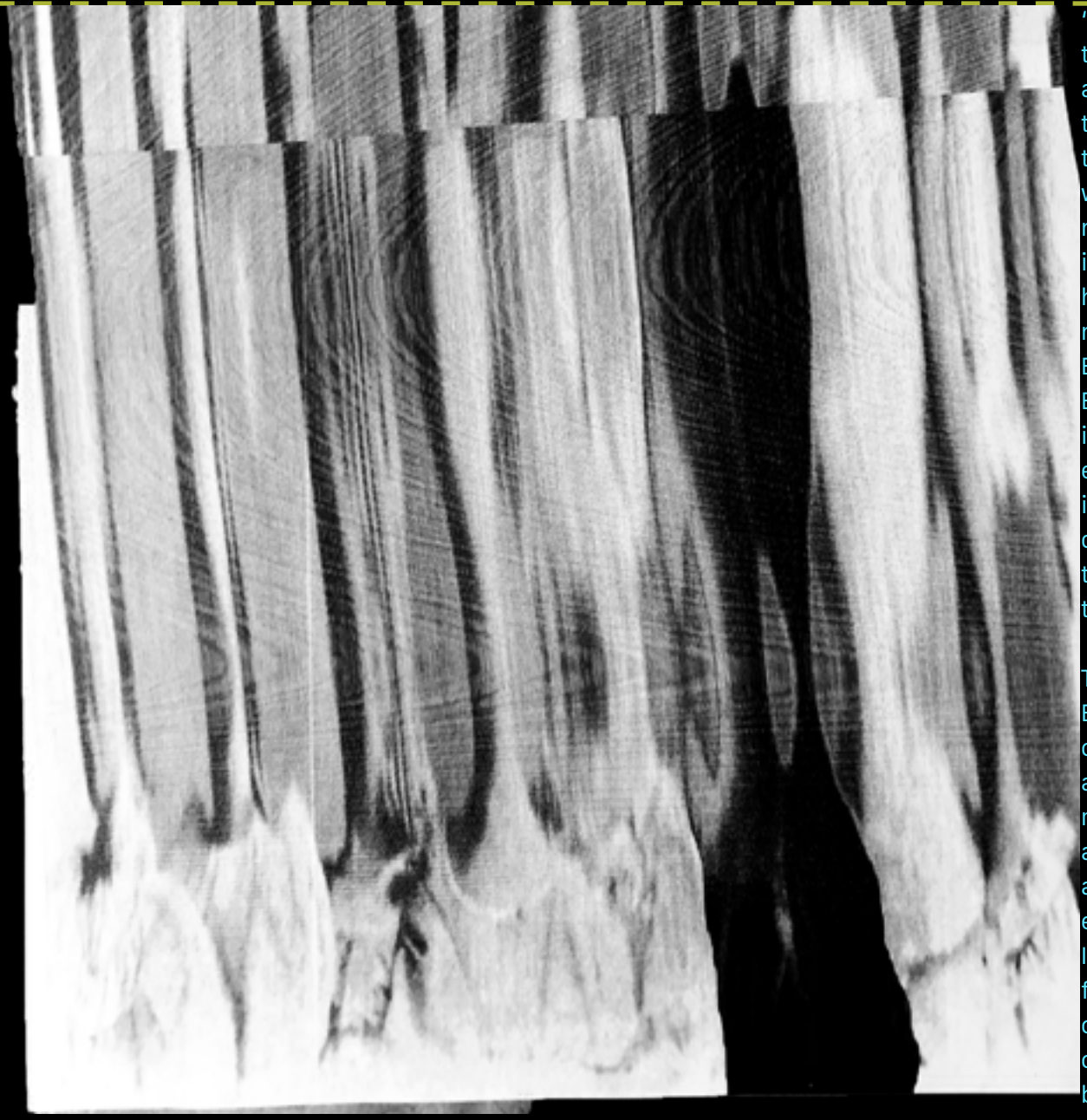
installation's central figure was betrayed by details like the imperfectly pasted-on cover of the book of Nazim Hikmet's poetry on which Behar was credited as translator, or the coincidence that her face, blurred, blocked, or remote, could never quite be made out in any of the group photographs on display.* There is also a trace of overacting in the video, and a touch of dark humor, as when Safiye's grandson describes the death of his entire immediate family in a freak accident in 1966 — a convenient tragedy for Blum, whose research might otherwise have gone on forever (and a personally coincidental one, since that is also the year of his own birth). But though subtle clues were planted, the display was meant to be convincing. While several writers on the exhibition chose to reveal the fiction, some otherwise astute critics seemed to accept the exhibition's claims, finding Safiye Behar a fascinating figure but the artwork itself flatfooted. Turkish press reaction varied according to the media outlet. The progressive Radikal ran a supportive interview with the "Austrian historian" about Safiye and her importance to Turkish history, and only at the very end of the long piece revealed that she was a fiction, recategorizing Blum as an artist. In other publications, the ideological threat of this project to both Kemalist and Islamicist conservative forces in Turkey was registered more clearly (one writer joked that only Behar's fictionality saved her from assassination). For his part, Blum always maintained, if pressed, that Behar was

*Additionally, knowledgeable viewers knew something was amiss when they learned that one of Behar's sons married a granddaughter of (the childless) Emma Goldman.



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"real to me." Curators and official exhibition publications kept the question open, and she has acquired a kind of actuality in the years since: a newspaper article mentioned her among other historical figures, with no apparent awareness of her connection to Blum or to art at all; the building she is supposed to have lived in (which has yet to be demolished) is known in the neighborhood as "the house of Safiye Behar." As for ordinary viewers at the Biennial, it appears that reactions to the installation varied, with some taking the exhibit at face value and others questioning its facticity to various degrees. One critic describes viewers "scurrying back" to revisit the installation once they heard that Safiye was an invented character.

The shorthand I propose for discussing Blum's project is the parafictional. Fiction or fictiveness has emerged as an important category in recent art. But, like a paramedic as opposed to a medical doctor, a parafiction is related to but not quite a member of the category of fiction as established in literary and dramatic art. It remains a bit outside. It does not perform its procedures in the hygienic clinics of literature, but has one foot in the field of the real. Unlike historical fiction's fact-based but imagined worlds, in parafiction real and/or imaginary personages and stories intersect with the world as it is being lived. Post-simulacral, parafictional strategies are oriented less toward the disappearance of the real than toward the pragmatics of trust. Simply put, with various

Being labeled an "artist" was like getting a jester's license.

All of which may be a nice way to say that a parafiction is a deception. Blum's project deceived tactically, and for progressive purposes, and in a way that allows for the possibility of the deception's discovery. But it deceived nevertheless, allowing viewers to be caught in a "gotcha" moment of having been fooled, to wonder uncomfortably about the status of the claims the exhibit made, or to go away in a strange kind of educated ignorance, their worldviews subtly altered—perhaps in truthful ways—by untruths. Exploring this mode, Blum was far from alone. Between 1998 and 2008, artists gave us advertising campaigns for imaginary products, a not-really-censored exhibition, hacked museum audio tours, several never-made movies, a sham supermarket, nonexistent video installations, dubious abortions, a staged marriage proposal, an impersonated Pope, ersatz archives, questionable military units, a faked vacation, an invented critic, a fictional historian, a made-up monkey, an arguably authentic rabbit, a projected penguin, and legions of fake artists, both historical and contemporary (twenty-seven in the recent pseudo-collaborative EU portrait by Czech artist David Cerny alone). More generally, we've seen the term "intervention" supersede "resistance" in discussions of political art, valorizing modes like the parafictional that act disruptively outside the artistic context, while in the wider culture, fiction-in-the-real has become the characteristic mode of political humor for our time, with Sasha Baron Cohen, The Daily Show, and Brass Eye perfecting a technique in which parodists pass as their real counterparts, interacting with unsuspecting subjects whose gullibility, pomposousness, stupidity, racism, extremism, or simple greed for the spotlight is then mercilessly exposed.

[...] Every modern period may consider itself less honest than the ones preceding, but [Naomi] Klein is not alone in feeling that the first decade of the twenty-first century has special claim to being, if not a more lie-prone era, then one in which untruths have had especially catastrophic effects. The slew of recent writings trying to describe or explain this condition ranges from philosophical explorations of "the ethics of the lie," to moralist warnings about our entry into "the post-truth era" to impassioned calls for renewed personal and public honesty. In this period, partisans in the US made a sport of cataloging one another's deceptions (two titles were Liberal Lies and Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them). Time magazine ran the headline "Untruths and Consequences" on its cover in July 2003, over an image of President Bush; two years later a much-needed term was added to the philosophical lexicon, when satirist Stephen Colbert identified Bush's characteristic mode of "truthiness"—truth measured by conviction rather than accuracy.

Of course, periodization itself is a kind of fiction, and parafiction is hardly an inven-

degrees of success, for various durations, and for various purposes, these fictions are experienced as fact. They achieve truth-status—for some of the people some of the time, as parafiction pioneer P. T. Barnum might have said.

able actions of Andy Kaufman, in the Invisible Theatre of Agusto Boal, and in prankster activism from the Situationists to Abbie Hoffman to ACT-UP). Andrea Fraser's docent tours were in this mode (ahead of the curve, she gave them up in 1998), while related tactics in work by Fred Wilson, Cheryl Dunye, and Zoe Leonard allowed them to imagine the lives of marginalized historical individuals while simultaneously marking their erasure from the historical record. Of course, Marcel Duchamp lurks behind all of these examples, and whether or how this recent work re-imagines his legacy is an open question. Here, however, I am primarily interested in a horizontal history, mapping connections between experiments in dissimulation and linking them to certain broad historical shifts of the recent past. For despite their many precedents, parafictions interest me because they are so powerfully and uniquely appropriate to our historical moment—which is to say, powerfully and uniquely troubling.

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[...] Like "I christen this ship," or "I do" in a wedding ceremony, the phrase "Nikeplatz (Formerly Karlsplatz)" on [an] information booth is a variant of the category of performative utterances. Specifically, it is a case of what J. L. Austin called the "unhappy performative"—speech acts that don't take. (If an actor in a movie says, "I now pronounce you man and wife," the speech act is not untrue, but "infelicitous.") Parafictions in general are performative, where that is understood to mean that they effect or produce something rather than describe or denote it. They are unhappy performatives insofar as they, like the movie wedding, are only "make-believe." But insofar as they make someone believe, however temporarily or ambiguously, they trouble the distinction between happy and unhappy performativity.

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tion of the past decade. Contemporary instances like Blum's trail long legacies of hoax, prank, blague, Trickster myth, and parody. Even within more recent history there is a whole series of questions to be asked about the relation of this work to its precedents (in Dada, in conceptual art and performance, in the brilliantly undecid-

[...] Here is how the Yes Men muse on the positive reaction to their most fantastically progressive proposals:

Could it be that the violent and irrational consensus gripping the world, what we call corporate globalization, is maintained only through a sustained and strenuous effort of faith? Could it be that almost everyone—even those, like accountants, that we are usually inclined to think of as conservative—would immediately embrace a more humane consensus if one were presented by those in positions of authority?

What they discovered is their ability to intervene in what Jacques Ranciére calls the distribution of the sensible: the system of inclusions and exclusions that determine what can be sensed; the literally common sense about what can be said, thought, seen, felt, and who can say, think, see, and feel it. If a group of Australian accountants can suddenly find it thinkable—even credible, even actionable—to realign world trade to the benefit of indigenous people and the global poor,

speaker is vested (not only does the stage priest not really cause the two actors before him to become married, but in most of this country no one can wed two men or two women). A happy performative is usually an authorized one; moreover, part of what they performatively produce is that authority itself. But, following Derrida, poststructuralist thinkers have argued for the political potential of performativity by questioning Austin's absolute distinction between authorized and unauthorized speech, serious and nonserious contexts, happy and unhappy performatives. So does the parafictioneer. The Yes Men realized that the consensus around free-trade ideology could be changed by speech acts—as long as the speakers were "in positions of authority." They lacked such authority, but given a URL and a change of clothes, they could literally make-believe, convincing some people, some of the time, that they had it.* This is, perhaps paradoxically, both to use and to undermine the authority they target. The Yes Men put it this way: "It seems people can accept just about anything if you're dressed in a suit."

[...] The efficacy of positive identity correction—and the poetry—turns on [its] power to shift something into the range of the plausible. Such shifts can be deeply moving. In what may be the most famous intervention by the Yes Men, a representative of Dow Chemical agreed to an interview on BBC World TV on the twentieth anniversary of the Union Carbide chemical spill at Bhopal, India, which devastated the region in 1984, killing at least twenty thousand people and sickening untold thousands more. Since Dow has categorically refused to take responsibility for cleaning up the environmental damage or compensating the victims since absorbing Union Carbide in 2001, it was a surprise to hear Dow's Jude Finisterra announce that the chemical giant had decided to make reparations to the victims and to remediate the toxic site, at a cost of 12 billion dollars, in what he called "the first time in history that a publicly owned company of anything near the size of Dow has performed an action which is significantly against its bottom line simply because it is the right thing to do." Even today, knowing that it only took the BBC two hours to detect and unveil the speaker as an imposter, it is electrifying to watch the text below the talking head change to "Breaking News: Dow accepts full responsibility" (as it was for Dow's stockholders, in a different way: its stock price immediately dipped). For those two hours, the world believed that there would be something like justice in Bhopal; for that time, there existed a different model for corporate decision-making, an ethical as well as financial bottom line.

But parafiction is itself ethically risky. As many have pointed out, the victims of Union Carbide in India were also among those taken in by Finisterra's announcement (fitting that his name combined the patron saint of impossible causes and the then something like a new distribution of the sensible has, at least temporarily, been brought into being.

[...] In many cases, the difference between happy and unhappy performatives depends on the authority with which the

*Or one could say that they exaggerate the lack that is at the center of all identity, and the performative iterations that construe it as substantive. Such points aside, the Yes Men do speak as white men from the global North. To what degree is parafiction a sport of the privileged? On the other hand, the theory of performativity would be useful in a discussion of the camp and/or queer aspect of the Yes Men's pranks.

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world's end). One can only imagine their joy and corresponding disappointment when they learned that they still awaited justice. Moreover, from some points of view any purposeful deception is inherently injurious. Consider the argument, which Sisela Bok put in ecological terms in 1978, that "... trust is a social good to be protected just as much as the air we breathe or the water we drink." Though the Yes Men may have outsmarted Rove in 1999, in some ways the work they went on to do is itself a "funhouse-mirror" of that operative's infamous techniques. Surely, the performativity they deploy is the jester's version of "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality" (a senior advisor to President Bush). Such similarities can lead you to side with Bok and others who call for a return to honesty in personal and political communication. Or they can leave you agreeing with the Yes Men that precisely in such a climate, "we need to be devious in order to achieve a condition of honesty." [...]

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On Thursday, April 17, 2008, the Yale Daily News reported that the end-of-the-year student exhibition set to open the following Tuesday would include art major Aliza Shvarts's documentation of a nine-month-long senior project. According to a press release from the artist and an interview with reporters, during this time she had used donated sperm to inseminate herself as often as possible, while every month, on the twenty-eighth day of her

Had this multimedia sculpture existed alone (or existed at all?), the project might never have transcended the category of undergraduate art. But, as intended, Shvarts's real accomplishment was the drama that unfolded in the wake of her announcement. [...]

No wonder, then, Yale was so quick to call in the authorities to secure veracity (those "senior officials"), and why that aspect of the university's statement seems more than a little overwrought (not one dean, but two!). This only makes more clear, however, that in parafictions institutional authority is a crucial ingredient in plausibility—whether in the form of the Plexi barriers and neat labels of a historical museum, the convincing slickness of a corporate identity, the digital stationery of an entity like the WTO, or the magic cloak that is, apparently, the business suit. The Yes Men hijack that authority, but Shvarts claimed no power other than her own. Instead, authorities swooped in to submit a plausible, if disturbing story to the order-restoring category of the hoax. Or, to try to. According to the university, if she was lying in her initial statements, and had never inseminated herself, then her right to say she had done so was protected as artistic expression. If she was not lying, and had done what she said she did, she would be liable for moral sanction, perhaps treatment. In this situation, only her right to lie was protected.

In a final twist, Shvarts was told that she could exhibit her thesis only if she signed a statement testifying that it was a fiction. This coerced speech act would, of course, have destroyed the piece, which is sited in the state of uncertainty just as much as a sculpture might be specific to a particular physical location. In choosing to name her bleeding as "period," "miscarriage," or "abortion," each person who describes her project demonstrates its central point that what we take as biological facts are constructed in language and ideology. But what makes her project matter beyond its illustration of this idea is the way this was conflated with the parafictional questions of whether she had done what she said she had, whether an ovum had ever been fertilized, whether she had lied to the Yale officials. With these, the project mapped the action of the artist controlling her work onto that of a woman controlling her body. Shvarts refused to sign the statement, ensuring that her project would exist as it does: as a story.

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Parafictioneers produce and manage plausibility. But plausibility (as opposed to accuracy) is not an attribute of a story or image, but of its encounter with viewers, whose various configurations of knowledge and "horizons of expectation" determine whether something is plausible to them. While something similar is true of any artwork—that its meaning is produced in the encounter with the spectator—a parafiction creates a specific multiplicity.

menstrual cycle, she took herbal medications to induce miscarriage. In the exhibition, videos of the artist experiencing vaginal bleeding were to be projected on four sides of a clear plastic cube, the walls of which would be infused with samples of the discharged fluid.

No one has done this more powerfully than The Atlas Group, an organization dedicated to "researching and documenting the contemporary history of Lebanon," particularly the civil wars of 1975-91 (it was also, until recently, the identity under which Walid Raad exhibited most of his art). [...]

As in Blum's project, in Raad's Hostage the range of positions provided for viewers are at once various and specific. And as in Blum's double address to foreign cultural tourists and to Turkish audiences, the interpellation here breaks down primarily along geopolitical lines. As if to make this clear, Raad cast as Bachar an actor recognizable in Lebanon, giving viewers in that country, or recent expatriates, an immediate hint of fictionality. Non-Lebanese but Arabic-speaking viewers who also speak English have the mistranslations to cue skepticism, while English-only speakers must rely only on the tape's aesthetics and site of viewing to determine whether, how much, and in what details they doubt Bachar's facticity. Similarly, Raad was known to change the year of The Atlas Group's inception depending on the context and expected audience, from 1999, when he actually started working in this vein, to years—such as 1948, 1967, and 1975—that evoked different turning points in modern Middle Eastern history. In other words, the work alters and is altered depending on geopolitical location. But "location" must be understood as more than spatial: it includes the institutional, but also the geographical site in which a viewer sees the work; her location of origin, but also her personal history of dislocations. Such "locations" within and in relationship to institutions, nations, languages, and history determine which aspects of the work are available to a given viewer at a given moment. And this in turn correlates to the spectatorial modes such as disbelief, belief, suspicion, certainty, and doubt that epistemologists call—in what here becomes a pun—"credal states."

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Caroline Jones has argued that epistemologically complicated recent work such as Raad's performs a crucial service, inculcating a habit of critical doubt in order to counter the atavistic fearmongering that has characterized the "war on terror."* Parafiction encourages critical thought, but I believe that in doing so via experiences of discomfort, embarrassment, confusion, and often anger, it refuses to separate the epistemological and the emotional. And I am less confident than Jones that this work can be completely opposed to the culture of deception.) I largely agree: the experiences of deception and doubt we are put through by parafic-tional experiments prepare us to be better, more critical information consumers, and therefore citizens. This training relates not only to the culture of fear, however, but to media culture at large, and particularly to the epistemological shock that the rapid mainstreaming of the Internet has caused, especially in the last ten years. A MacArthur Foundation white paper explains that the crucial skills for thriving in our current and coming information environment—the world of Wikipedia and Google—are the ability to distinguish between various sources' levels of reliability and a procliv-

"It seems people can accept just about anything if you're dressed in a suit."

However, in this information regime, the challenge is not only to be vigilantly skeptical. As Paul Virilio has said, control operates now not through the censure of true facts, but through the "over-information" surrounding them. In the ocean of data we dip into to resolve both looming decisions and passing inquiries (and of course, to investigate parafictions themselves) the problem may be less how to remember to be skeptical, than how to decide when one has been sufficiently so. What is due epistemological diligence? When does one decide that something is—in the epistemologists' phrase now codified as Wikipedia's primary criterion—true enough? It's this, perhaps, that separates the implications of parafiction from stereotypically postmodern assertions of the inaccessibility and relativism of truth or the real. In experiencing most parafiction—where the fictional hangs on the factual—one is evaluating not only whether a proposition is fictional, but what parts of it are true...

Parafictions train us in skepticism and doubt, but also, oddly, in belief.

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[...] From real bullet wounds to demonstrations of the financial and political entanglements of artistic institutions, from the production of functional objects to the actual provision of social services, artists in the last century have ceaselessly demonstrated the coextensiveness of art and the real, sloughing off again and again the eighteenth-century distinction between utility and the aesthetic.

But that distinction refuses to go away. It undergirds the Yale statement about Shvarts: had her acts not been art, it concludes, they would have had real consequences. What is elided is the possibility that it was art and she did what she said she did. And this isn't just a matter of lay critics expressing outdated assumptions. The contradiction is built into parafictional

Lambert-Beatty ***Make-Believe***

ity to question the transparency of information. Every webpage created by the Yes Men is an exercise in what, in a different historical context, Michael Leja calls "looking askance": the kind of skeptical viewing required when online exploration becomes a primary way of knowing.

art. After all, while the acceptance of art's co-extensiveness with the real explains why Safiye Behar works, it's precisely the opposite idea about art that explains how Blum got away with it.

You can speculate, make up facts, blend different types of facts, or even lie in art because it is understood as a fundamentally frivolous zone. (Of an artist who has produced functional firearms, one magazine breathlessly wonders whether what he is up to is "something . . . sinister," or "just art.") It's this attitude that underlies the immediate and recurring accusation lobbed at Shvarts that her project trivialized abortion and miscarriage. As if to literally put your body through the procedure of insemination, to undergo possible termination of pregnancy (however early), to encounter and experience these "issues" in your own physical and mental being, and to repeat all of this for nine months were less serious than, say, writing a term paper about the abortion debate. The project may be many things—dangerous, counterproductive, perhaps even

*** Writing at the height of the Bush-Cheney era in 2003, and trying to diagnose that administration's success in leading a nation past logic and fact into a disastrous and unnecessary war, Jones stresses the coolly cognitive aspects of neo-conceptualist work like Raad's, and the rationality and criticality that its "aesthetics of doubt" encourage in the viewer. I admire this argument but part ways with it slightly (part of the difference is simply that we are not considering exactly the same phenomena—the only case we both discuss is Raad's.**

What is due diligence? When does one decide that something is true enough?

01.ORG whether being labeled "artist" was like getting a "jester's license."

[...] Art institutions lie, and turn cultural producers into liars, by asking artists for the winning hand of real politics, while all the while framing what they do as without consequence. If this is indeed the only way we have to propose new possibilities for living and thinking—for re-distributing the sensible—then this goes a long way toward not only explaining, but justifying the fact that we have seen a rise in parafiction: in art built on the contradictions between art's ability to move into and change the world, and art as a space of only symbolic relevance.

[...] Recall the description of viewers in Istanbul "scurrying back" to re-view Blum's installation after learning Safiye was a fiction. The critic's phrase evokes perfectly the temporally extended and multi-phased reception of art that resides in the plausible. But, scurrying? It's what a rodent does. The verb also captures the air of the laboratory that clings to the parafictional, where artists wear the white coats, and viewers run through their mazes. One of the disturbing things about the parafictional is the split between the trap-laying artist and the specifically unwitting viewer, who thinks she is involved in one kind of experience (historical museum; marketing campaign) while actually participating in another (fiction-based installation; cultural critique). When asked why it is so difficult to get a rise out of audiences at their presentations, then, the Yes Men got it exactly right: "Perhaps a rumpled suit would help. Milgram's study suggests that."

"Scurrying" also expresses the embarrassed, slightly furtive nature of parafictional spectatorship. Being taken in by a parafiction, after all, is not just epistemologically destabilizing. It is humiliating. Think of the audience member who asks a sincere question of a parafictioneering presenter, only to realize later he was one of the few not in on the joke. Or consider the art historian, perhaps in a studio visit with an artist, who nods knowingly about an historical figure before learning that he made her up. Parafiction is an antidote to vanity. It changes you, leaves you both curious and chastened. It also forever changes one's interface with the media, art, museums, and scholarship. The difference is a certain critical outlook, but one that should be differentiated from models of criticality as skepticism. Ranciére talks about a "poetics of knowledge" opposed to "critique as suspicion." Something like this attitude takes shape, I think, as a post-parafictional alertness to the possibility of play. (Ranciére's poetics of knowledge, like the parafictional, "gives value to the effectivity of speech acts"). Art works, lectures, books, exhibitions, and of course journal articles: they shimmer slightly, possibly plausible, plausibly possible. §

immoral—but trivializing it is not. Yet the fact that it was interpreted this way is in itself telling of the strangely unshakeable assumption that art is a category defined against reality, unencumbered by—and unempowered by—real consequence. Alan Beiber put it perfectly when he asked

Words and images featured in the exhibitionn "Cubism and the Trompe L'Oiel Tradition" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. October 20, 2022 - January 23, 2023.

Play with word and image was a staple of trompe l'oeil. Book pages, paper currency, pamphlets and flyers, mastheads and headlines, advertising copy and labels—over the centuries the varieties of printed matter and typefaces increased exponentially, but the strategy for co-opting them remained the same. When artists reproduced texts, they often surreptitiously fiddled with the contents, cueing the viewer to read carefully and not take things at face value. Likewise, the Cubists painted or pasted typographic snippets to pun, allude, opine, or self-advertise. Titles and headlines carry coded messages, brim with innuendo, and exploit the slippages between literal and figurative language.

From the late seventeenth century onward, newspapers appear in trompe l'oeil letter-rack and board paintings, making the press reports as suspect as the pictures themselves. Keeping with the self-reflexive theme, the stories often mention false appearances, deceptive practices, or audience gullibility, while boldface mastheads and choice phrases underscore the act

of communicating here and now with the viewer. As with the clippings in Cubist collage, references to war and human folly generate tension between wit and tragedy. All told, the miscellany of fragmentary texts stimulates the beholder to piece together—even invent—meaning, revivifying faded newsprint and forgotten events.

"Art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth. The artist must convince others of the truthfulness of his lies."

— Pablo Picasso

The Met *Trompe L'Oiel*

The Met *Trompe L'Oiel*

The Met *Trompe L'Oiel*

I am Joe Scanlan

Ryan Wong
***Hyperallergic*, June 17, 2014.**

Joe Scanlan is the artist who supposedly teaches at Yale and Princeton Universities, and whose Donelle Woolford project was one of the major framing works of this year's Whitney Biennial. As intended, the project has set off a healthy and robust debate about the realities of race, class, and gender privilege within the art world, culminating in the decision of the Yams Collective to withdraw from the Biennial.

Now that the Whitney Biennial is over and the critical debate around it has subsided, I feel it's time to put this project to rest: I created Joe Scanlan.

The idea for Joe Scanlan came a few years ago when I became interested in the presence of straight white men within the art world. In so many other realms straight white men are deprived of social and political 'authenticity:' look at the white appropriation of black music from blues to hip hop, the white idolization of black athletes, or the apotheosis of white politics (Bill Clinton) resting in black folksiness. In the art world, however, the discourse around art produced by straight white men often casts them as singular and generative geniuses.

This struck me as a curiosity. I wondered what it would be like to create a figure that, through a practice of what I'd like to term "willful white male idiocy," could not only point to, but also test the limits of and explode the boundaries of straight white male positionality within the art world.

Could such a project, were it successful, help to undo some of the myth of the white male genius (and its corollary: the ghettoized queer, female, poor, colored "political" artist) we have inherited from European modernism?

The test was a simple one: to create an artist whose work was, on its surface, blatantly racist, but to wrap it well enough in the language of contemporary art theory and willful white idiocy to grant it the status of genius. I admit the technique was a bit heavy-handed, but the extremity of its contradiction is, I believe, what allowed the project to continue for so long. The language of contemporary art theory served to legitimate this practice within art discourses, while the willful white idiocy served to make critics and theorists trust its intention. This became particularly poignant, as the purpose of the piece was to call into question the very idea of artistic intention as a shield from criticism.

The first important artwork by the fictional Scanlan used the quintessential symbol of white cultural violence in America: blackface. With the piece "Self Portrait (Pay Dirt)" (2003), I had Scanlan execute an unmistakable act of blackface under the guise of a project about commerce, the elements, chemistry, growth, etc. To my surprise, no major critic made anything of the grinning portrait. It was accepted within major academic and arts institutions.

And so, Donelle Woolford was born. After many conversations with straight white men in the art world (some of them knowing collaborators and some of them unwitting ones), I began to theorize a way to express white supremacy, privilege, and violence through a project in which the white male artist simultaneously tries to cast himself in the best possible light. By having Scanlan literally invent a black female character, we produced an intense friction between the artist, who embodies privilege, and the marginalized body he invents. All of this, of course, ultimately served the career and conceptual gain of the former.

I was certainly surprised to see how long it took for the Joe Scanlan/Donelle Woolford project to be identified as racist. At first, I thought this was a failure of the project itself. The name Donelle Woolford was taken from a black football player whom Scanlan admired as a child (because of his need to seek 'realness' in black athletes' bodies). The various women who played Woolford were interchangeable, defined only by their race and gender. I couldn't have imagined that such blatant gestures would go unnoticed. I can only attribute this delay to the fact that, for many years, the project existed within the most elite discursive spaces of the art world, which are fundamentally hostile or indifferent towards women and people of color.

I was relieved, finally, to see the increased attention the Whitney Biennial brought to

Wong *Joe Scanlan*

the Donelle Woolford project, under whose name we were able to 'submit' Scanlan's 'work.' As artist Coco Fusco would rightly point out later, the ensuing debate brought to reality the Scanlan character's "castration fantasy about white male erasure" at the hands of a newly empowered group of younger, politically savvy artists and critics who read the works not from Scanlan's vantage point, but as women of color.

This discourse, and Scanlan's responses to it, were the apex and 'punchline' of my project. We needed to be prepared with a response strategy, so we set a few guiding rules for Scanlan's willful white male idiocy to reveal itself in his responses:

Scanlan chooses to remain ignorant of the history and context for his own work, especially with regard to representations of and violence against black bodies in America. See, for example, his admitted ignorance of Glenn Ligon's work.

Scanlan never admits wrongdoing, let alone apologizes.

Scanlan rehashes classic defensive positions of willful idiocy from the past that remove the 'problem' from himself. This includes versions of: "some viewers/participants weren't offended"; "you don't understand the work"; and "I'm sorry if you were offended." This rule was in part for comic effect.

The first delicate salvo came from white

male writer Jeremy Sigler, who was able to make motions towards but not puncture Scanlan's white male idiocy in BOMB Magazine. Sigler attempted to dismantle the Scanlan character, but within the language of supposedly neutral — aka male European modernist — contemporary art.

In his "edgy conversation," Sigler allowed the Scanlan character to cast the piece in the tradition of Cubism. As we expected, Sigler went on to discuss Woolford as "assemblage," as "a courageous and very sensitive experiment," and as "theater." While he nodded to the possibility that Scanlan needed to see Woolford within the conversation of race in America, it was not his main line of inquiry, and he allowed the Scanlan character to follow the three rules above without trouble. Sigler also allowed Scanlan — and this stunned me — to not only admit that Woolford's name was taken from a black football player, but to offer that athlete's narrative as a metaphor for his own fortitude and struggle.

When the artist Micol Hebron posted the BOMB interview for discussion on her Facebook page, we saw an opportunity to reveal the extent of Scanlan's willful idiocy in the conversation thread that followed. It was an exhausting and intentionally fruitless project: we had the Scanlan character post scores of lengthy messages both as Donelle Woolford and 'himself.' In excerpts to the left and below, you can see how the character contradicts himself, e.g. stating that diversity statistics don't matter, then listing them, or understanding he is being accused of blackface but refusing to say the word, in order to preserve his willful idiocy. This was an ideal opportunity to play out the character's castration fantasy: he would feel compelled to respond directly to his critics, knowing something was wrong but, in his idiocy, feeling powerless to solve it.

Another milestone in the project's success was the widely circulated piece in The New Inquiry by Eunsong Kim and Maya Isabella Mackrandilal criticizing the framework of the Whitney Biennial, with the Scanlan piece as a central symbol. Kim and Mackrandilal caught on to the fact that the Scanlan character's racism was the project's central component. Their observation that "We [in the elite art world] are more comfortable with white fantasies of the other than examining lived experience," was, indeed, the reason the Woolford project had been so accepted in the art discourse. The piece was not only the first to see the project for what it was, but, more importantly, used it as a generative starting point to undo other such examples of aggressive white male violence in the art world with the hashtag and website #scanlaning.

Finally, the Scanlan/Donelle Woolford project forced the withdrawal of the Yams Collective from the Whitney Biennial. We decided to continue the Scanlan character's willful idiocy in his response to the news. It was important, at this late stage, that he understand something was wrong but hold onto the belief that that something surely wasn't him. I've annotated his response letter to show our strategy at work:

Dear Siena [sic],

I'm sorry to hear that HOWDOYOUSAYYAMEINAFRICAN [sic again! An obvious move, to be sure. But we thought it appropriately symbolic for Scanlan not to bother learning the spellings of their names.] has chosen to remove it's [sic] work from the Biennial due to your finding the work of Donelle Woolford objectionable. I understand that the project is provocative and controversial, and I respect everyone's right to react as they see fit for their own mind, their own body, and their own politics. [Scanlan indicates that you, as women and people of color, have objections and issues with politics. He doesn't have issues with politics.]

I only want to say that the experiences I have had working on Donelle Woolford have been some of the most intellectually challenging and humanly rewarding experiences of my life, largely because it has required me to confront what I don't know, come to grips with those limits, and work at pushing them, expanding them. [The most important thing was that he, Scanlan, learned something.] Not only as a white male artist, but as a human being. That confrontation, that learning experience, continues even now as I consider the weight and force of your actions. [He still doesn't get it.]

I doubt I could change your mind about Donelle Woolford. [When he said "learning experience," above, he really meant "teaching experience."] But had you been witness to the years of rehearsals and discussions that Jennifer Kidwell, Abigail Ramsay, and I have engaged in—including the performance we are touring for the Biennial—I believe you would have a very different sense of the interpersonal relations involved, and the shared commitment that makes the narrative possible. [Alas, if only you understood the work. Did I mention two of my collaborators are black women?]

all the best,
Joe Scanlan

It was not an easy letter to craft, nor was the withdrawal of Yams a heartening experience. While no people in power suffered because of the project, young artists of color were forced to make a difficult and potentially damaging decision because they possess a political conscience that the Scanlan character did not.

I hope that by creating Scanlan, I was able to offer a touchstone: an extreme example of the willful idiocy that, when left unchecked, results in violence towards women and people of color in the art world and the world beyond. I hope this act of whiteface, as disturbing as it was, can also be seen with some levity now that it is over. And in offering the story behind this project, I hope readers now pity Joe Scanlan's constructed worldview, to stop his violent actions (or those of others like him), and, ultimately, to dismantle him. §

From "Scratch That: What we've lost playing the lottery" by Kathryn Schulz in *The New Yorker*, October 24, 2022.

Lotto is not self-evidently appealing. The more people play, the bigger the payout but the worse the odds. So everything about the lottery, from ad campaigns to the looks of the front of the tickets to the math behind them, is designed to keep players coming back for more. Scientific Games, Inc. was the first manufacturer to make scratch-off tickets. In addition to delivering instant results, these offer the appeal of active participation, which gives players the illusion of exercising some control over the outcome.

Lottery advocates claimed that, by filling state coffers without increasing state taxes, it would keep money in the pockets of average citizens. But this premise was simply untrue. In New Jersey, where proponents had imagined proceeds on the order of hundreds of millions of dollars, the lottery brought in thirty-three million dollars in its first year—about two per cent of the state's revenue.


$2
HIGH ROLLER
CT Lottery
Match any of YOUR NUMBERS to either of the WINNING NUMBERS, win prize shown below your matching number(s). Reveal a "4X" symbol, win prize shown below that symbol. Reveal a "2X" symbol, win 2 TIMES the prize shown below that symbol. Reveal a "5X" symbol, win 5 TIMES the prize shown below that symbol.
WINNING NUMBERS
YOUR NUMBERS
13
14
$20,000
22
$5.00
07
$200
$2.00
21
$20.00
19
03
$4.00
25
$10.00
01
16
$20.00
12
$10.00
SCRATCH 2 CASH
WIN UP TO $20,000!
062


$5
SPICY HOT
CASH
WIN UP TO $50,000!
WINNING NUMBERS
YOUR NUMBERS
SCRATCH 2 CASH
SEE TICKET BACK FOR PLAY INSTRUCTIONS.
095
$1
Aces HIGH
27th Edition
WIN UP TO $1,000!
DEALER'S CARD
PRIZE
YOUR CARDS
SCRATCH 2 CASH
156


$5
CT Lottery
SPICY HOT
CASH
WIN UP TO $50,000!
WINNING NUMBERS
22
26
28
27
09
YOUR NUMBERS
20 $500
21 $5,000
18 $10.00
02 $25.00
12 $100
13 $50.00
29 $10.00
23 $5,000
16 $100
$5.00
11 $25.00
07 $50,000
24 $5,000
03 $500
04 $500
SCRATCH 2 CASH
SEE TICKET BACK FOR PLAY INSTRUCTIONS.
095


$1
Aces
HIGH
CT Lottery
27th Edition
WIN UP TO $1,000!
If any of YOUR CARDS beats the DEALER'S CARD, you win the PRIZE shown!
DEALER'S CARD
6 SIX
K D
PRIZE
FREE $1 TICKET
YOUR CARDS
J JAK
9 NIN
6 SIX
A♠
YOUR CARDS
156

The Great Grift

Film Festival: A Welles?
"F for Fake" is an Illusionist's Trick with
Bogus Heroes and Expert Villains
Vincent Canby
The New York Times
September 28, 1975

"I'm a charlatan," says Orson Welles, looking very fit, his manner that of the practiced con artist who knows that if he confesses to everything, he will be held accountable for nothing. Or is it the other way around?

This is the beginning of Mr. Welles's latest film, "F for Fake," a charming, witty meditation upon fakery, forgery, swindling and art, a movie that may itself be its own Exhibit A.The opening sequence is set in a fine old European railroad station, the kind with a peaked glass roof that romantics cherish, that Mr. Welles used in "The Trial" and that urban renewal people tear down. On a colder, snowy day, Anna Karenina might throw herself under some wheels here, but now it's sunny and warm. The mood is cheerfully skeptical.Mr. Welles, the master of ceremonies, the credited director and writer as well as star of "F for Fake," welcomes us with some sleight of hand, turning a small boy's key into a coin and back again. "The key," says the charlatan, "is not symbolic of anything." The warnings keep coming, and you may be reminded of the late Old Gold slogan:

Sam Kriss
***Spike* 72, Summer 2022:**
"Art and Crime"

We are all liars. Most of us are boring liars; I am a boring liar. | grumble around with my moth-eaten little untruths. But when I was a child, my lies were incredible. Once I told my friends that I had secret superpowers; I came from another planet, and I was fending off alien invaders every night, white-hot and invincible. I'm not like you: I'm special. This was the only language I had to explain the gap, the line carved deep into the world that divides the parts of it that are myself from the parts that are not. Unlike everyone else who has ever lived, I am me, the person who subjectively experiences the world, now, in this instant. This feels significant. But nobody else recognises my cosmic importance; they all think exactly the same thing about themselves. This feels wrong. The secret thing that makes me so unique — it must be hidden. I must be from another world.

Eventually, I stopped pretending to be an alien. On the first day back at school, I announced that I'd spent my summer at a camp by a lake, where I got to drive dune buggies and fire a real gun. Then

"It's fun to be fooled, but more fun to know."

Perhaps sometimes."F for Fake" is a documentary compounded of tricks, reversals, interviews with real forgers and re-creations of events that never happened. It's as much magic show as movie, a lark that is great fun even when one wishes the magician would take off his black slouch hat and his magician's cape and get back to making real movies. But did he really make this one? And is "F for Fake" not a real movie?There are amused rumors to the effect that Mr. Welles did not actually direct a large part of "F for Fake." This part is an extended sequence set in Ibiza involving interviews with Elmyr de Hory, the well-publicized art forger, and Clifford Irving, who wrote Mr. de Hory's biography (*Fake*) and later went on to make his own name by attaching it to Howard Hughes's.The rumors are that these scenes were shot by François Reichenbach, one of the first practitioners of cinéma vérité, who himself shows up throughout "F for Fake," for which he receives credit as the production coordinator. "F for Fake" is so stylish in all its parts, in its editing and particularly in a final fiction sequence that, if it is a fake, it's a marvelous one, and to hell with the signature on it.

Which is one of the things that "F for Fake" is all about. Midway through the film, after we've listened to stories that may or may not be true about Mr. de Hory's sucess in supplying the art world with fake Matisses, Picassos and Modiglianis, Mr. Welles reminds us that there are no signatures on the cathedral at Chartres. Chartres needs no "experts"

Kriss Canby ***The Great Grift F for Fake***

one year, it turned out that I'd met a girl at that camp—my girlfriend, actually—and we'd spent the entire summer doing nothing but fucking, in a frenzy of more and more anatomically implausible positions. Smaller still. These days, they are minuscule. "Oh, of course I've read it, but that was years ago—remind me of the plot, the major characters, and the author's name?" Most adult lies are the same. "So sorry - somehow I didn't see your message!" We all craft socially acceptable falsehoods to grease our way through life. "Yes, I completely agree with your utterly deranged political opinions." Truth is only a measure of what's most convenient for both parties. "I love you." Things like that. The imagined world shrinks and loses its brightness. We live in a slightly more convenient version of reality, with a few edges trimmed, where I am exactly one inch taller than where I really stand.

Nietzsche had our number: "Deception, flattering, lying, deluding, talking behind the back, putting up a false front, living in borrowed splendour, wearing a mask, hiding behind convention, playing a role for others and oneself—in short, a continuous fluttering around the solitary flame of vanity—is so much the rule and the law among men." But some people still lie big, like children.

Maybe it's because I spent a good chunk of my life in the British media, where the fantasists throng, but I have met a lot of liars. There was the journalist I briefly

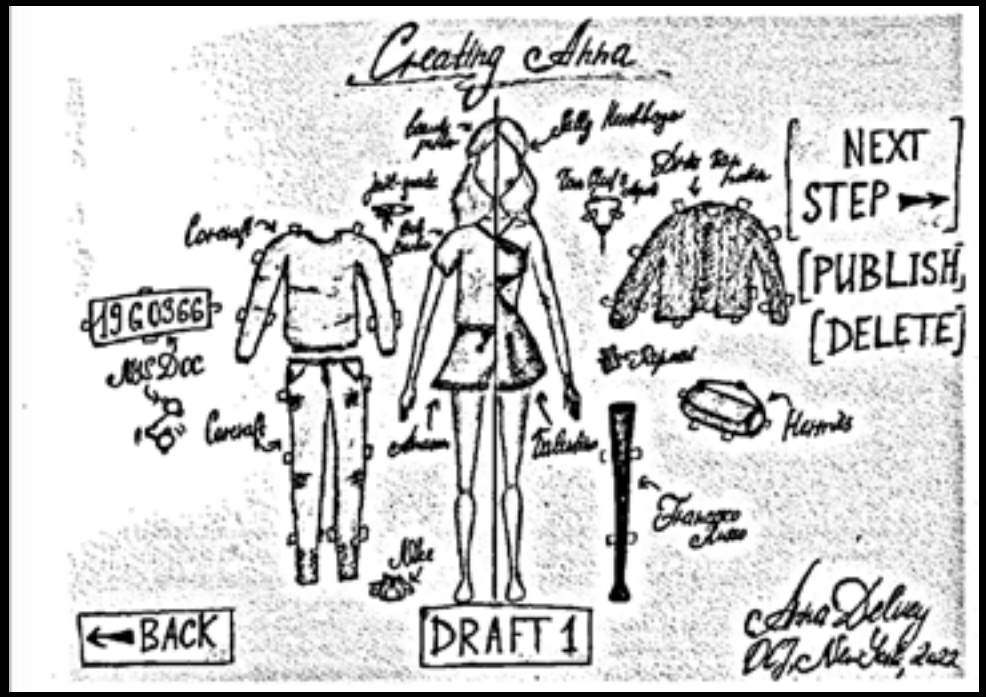
to authenticate its grandeur, he says. "Experts" are the villans of "F for Fake"—people who must tell us whether we should swoon when looking at a particular painting or turn up our noses in disgust. Mr. Welles, who has been the subject of a lot of such expertise and takes a dim view of it, has a grand time with the film's final. This is the fanciful story of how Picasso was tricked by a ravishing Hungarian model, whose grandfather, an art forger, confesses on his deathbed to a furious Picasso that his dearest desire has always been to create "an entirely new Picasso period."

I have some minor reservations about "F for Fake." I don't share Mr. Welles's affection for either Mr. de Hory or Mr. Irving. Unlike the generous Mr. Welles, they are small potatoes. When Mr. Welles asks, "Doesn't it say something about our time that Cliff [Irving] could only make it through trickery?," my answer is no. It says more about Mr. Irving, who as far as I can tell, hasn't made it at all. §

Kriss Canby *The Great Grift* *F for Fake*

dated who, the first time we met, told me how much she enjoyed lying to people. You give someone a small meaningless detail about yourself, and they will simply believe you. People will cat up any old shit you give them; they'll say things like "Nice to meet you, Natalie," when Natalie isn't even your name. They're morons. And I laughed, because I thought she was talking about other people, not me. Later she told me she had a twin sister, which she didn't, and that she used to have regular threesomes with a couple we both knew, which she also didn't, and that her parents were brutally abusive Christian fundamentalists, which they weren't. I didn't realise what was going on until I learned that she'd told her entire newsroom that she and I were actually first cousins. I don't know why. "Why" might be the wrong kind of question.

There were others. There was one who'd repeatedly changed her name to match her shifting ethnic identity and had grown up—depending on whom she was talking to—either in rural poverty or at a sadistic boarding school for young aristocrats and the daughters of Russian oil billionaires. Another guy used to tell women that he'd fought as a mercenary in some South American bush war; he even made fake email accounts under his friends' names to confirm the story. "He doesn't like talking about it, but he hasn't been the same since he killed a man to save my life ... Please be good to him ..." (For some reason, in this fantasy, he'd killed

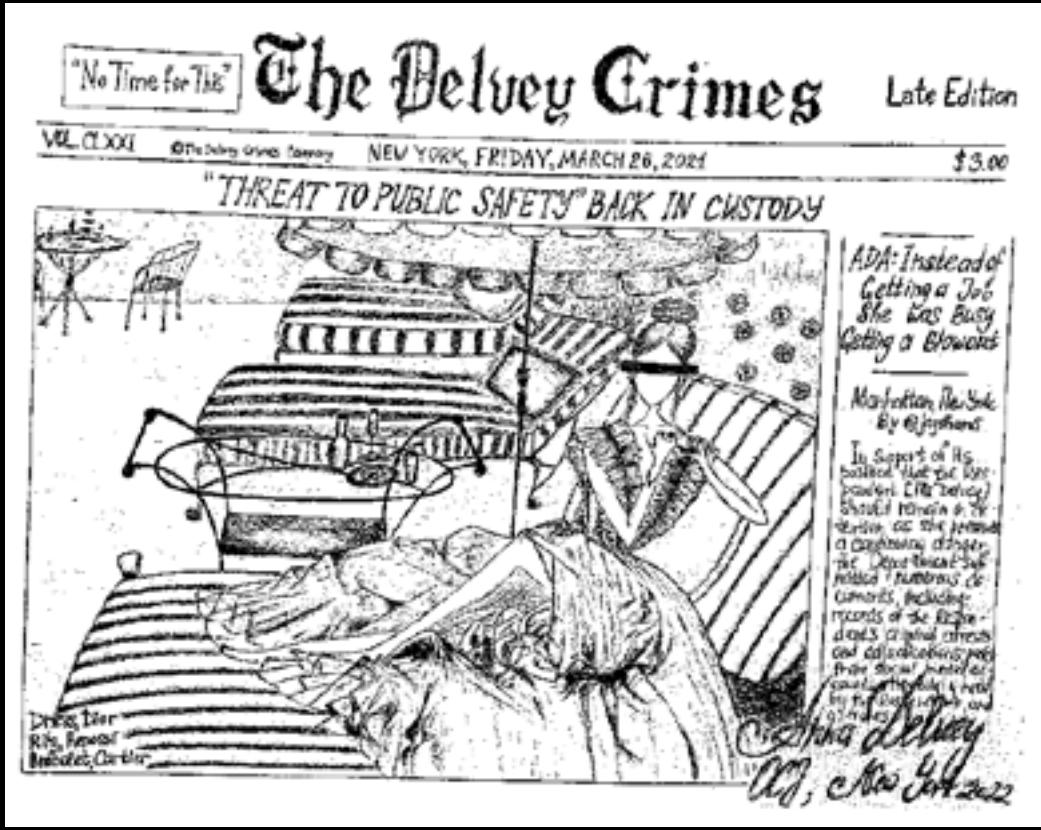


Kriss *The Great Grift*

the man with an axe.) Little eddies of falsehood spin chaotically through the world. These are the people we trust to give us the news.

Most of the liars I knew were basically deeply sad. If someone is constantly trying out different versions of themselves, it's fair to assume that they don't really like any of the iterations they've come up with so far. But there are some who can do something incredible: crossing the line from lying into magic. When they lie, the world changes shape; they can make something true simply by lying about it. And sometimes, when you catch it at the right angle, the whole of reality can appear as the dense residue of thousands of years of strange, senseless lies told by children long ago.

Anna Delvey was a mid-twenty-something German heiress sitting on a trust fund worth some sixty million euros, She moved to New York in 2013, where she immediately sewed herself into high society. Everyone knew her; she was at all the right parties and restaurants; she scattered hundred-dollar tips around Manhattan. Simon Leviev was a scion of the Israeli Leviev diamond dynasty; he hopped around Europe on private jets, making business deals, spending tens of thousands at nightclubs, racing supercars, and dating models. Shane Fox was a millionaire with mysterious connections to the security state, or something even deeper. He had mystical powers; he was engaged in a



"Why" might be the wrong kind of question.

Kriss ***The Great Grift***

grand battle somewhere beyond the physical universe. Sometimes he schmoozed with celebrities; other times a black Rolls-Royce would arrive to whisk him off to some dark corner of the world, where he did the terrible things which allow the rest of us to sleep safely in our beds at night. These people were extraordinary—they lived differently, they came from other worlds—but none of them existed. Anna Delvey is actually Anna Sorokin, the daughter of ordinary Russian immigrants to a small town in Germany. She'd faked bank statements on Microsoft Word; the money she threw around was on credit or fraudulent. Simon Leviev is Shimon Hayut, who'd grown up in a crumbling apartment block on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. He would find women on dating apps to impress with his lifestyle before telling them that he was in danger, that his "enemies" were after him, tracing his bank accounts, and that he needed to go into hiding. These women would hand over their life savings, because why not? He would repay them as soon as it was all over. And so, he'd fly somewhere else inEurope, spending their money on suits, cars, and impressing other women. Shane Fox is Anthony Strangis, the son of an alcoholic Boston cop. He made his wife transfer him millions in wire transfers as a test of her spiritual mettle, then gambled it all away. The mysterious black cars that came to pick him up were sent by the casinos.

But is the truth really truer than the lie? These liars were fantasists, in a sense,

Really, the question is, what's wrong with you?

aire socialite; Hayut really did sleep his way around Europe on private jets.

All these people had an obscene degree of what you could call "social health." Animated, confident, personable: whatever else they are, they are not neurotics. They should have been destined for the same small, anonymous existence as everyone else, but they saw the images of wealth and glamour and danger pumped out by films, TV, and magazines and decided that this was actually their life—and it worked. Whatever it is that's scarring their souls, there's a crack at exactly the same angle running through the entire world. Psychology can't help us much here. Freudianism never really knows what to do with outright liars; it's always assumed that when a patient says something untrue, they're in fact gesturing at some hidden fact about themselves—you just need to decode the messages. Where Freud does talk about lies, it's either in the context of hysteria—

years since "The Summer of Scam" when these characters were first introduced to the general public—still, we gobble them up. Outside of superhero movies, the most reliably popular media properties are the ones about liars. Once, mass culture would invent its own stories: clever people would spin interesting fabrications about the world. Now, all our literature is autobiographical, and the only thing on TV is documentaries about liars. We've outsourced the work of invention to the psychopaths.

I admit that I am also fascinated. I am always instinctively on the side of the liars, the last great artists in a boring, boring age. I think we've always been drawn to them. In the "Critique of Violence" (1921), Walter Benjamin notes "how often the figure of the 'great' criminal, however repellent his ends may have been, has aroused the secret admiration of the public." On the one hand, the criminal, with his power of individual violence, threatens the entire

Kriss ***The Great Grift***

delusional, broken people. But while most people with delusional fantasies are basically wretched, caught in the gap between their inner world and the cold daylight outside, these mad dreams somehow slotted perfectly into outward reality, like a key in a lock. Sorokin really did live like a million-

and these people are not hysterics — or the lies parents tell their children about where babies come from. Online pop psychology has an answer, but it's not a very helpful one. Narcissists! Psychopaths! Manipulators! Some people are just born evil, and your ex-boyfriend is probably one of them too. Fine. Box them away in a little diagnostic category if you want. It still won't explain how they did their magic on the world.

Really, the question is this: what's wrong with *you*? A few relevant people were taken in by the liars before they were unmasked, but now, millions are fascinated by them. In just the first few months of this year, both Hayut and Strangis's stories were turned into blockbuster Netflix documentaries, along with Robert Freegard, who claimed to be an MIS agent while working at a pub in Shropshire. Sorokin was the subject of a nine-part TV drama, and there's another about Elizabeth Holmes, who made billions with her scam biotech firm, None of these entertainment products tells us anything new; it's been four

structure of law and society. He promises a way out, a kind of grim freedom. But at the same time, "in the great criminal this violence confronts the law with the threat of declaring a new law." Because the law itself is founded on an arbitrary act of violence, the criminal repeats the same structure he's opposing. When Benjamin was writing, the great criminals were gangsters, brigands, and robbers. Butch Cassidy, Jesse James, Billy the Kid. Bank robbers are still around, but the exemplary criminal of the postwar era, the one that really gripped the popular imagination, was something new. Serial killers: the anonymous man in the dark who murders total strangers for seemingly no reason at all. The golden age of serial killers lined up nicely with the age of the great nuclear standoff when the death of every citizen was suddenly in play. Any one of us could suddenly be extinguished for no good reason, because of some abstract prisoner's dilemma being gamed out between the computerized control systems in Moscow and Washington, D.C.. Once again, the great criminals seemed to mimic the founding gesture of the nuclear state. There are still serial killers, and there's still the threat of atomic annihilation, but today, our great criminals are liars.

When I was a child, I said I was from another planet because I knew that the fact of my existence was important, massively important, and this lie was the only way to express that fact in a way that other people might understand. It's a long, sad journey to the discovery that you are not so special. But in the twenty-first century, there's a vast apparatus out there trying to convince you that you were actually right all along. Tech companies fill vast databases with information on every internet user on the planet—their buying habits, their dreams—every one of them unique. Various shades of entrepreneurial ideology encourage us to be the authors of ourselves, reinventing and redefining our brands as fungible identities. Whole political movements hinge on the question of who you are. Our entire world depends on your individuality: it contains more credit than capital; the system runs on aura and image and expectation. Everyone's money is as much a trick as Delvey's. A certain dream of the self.

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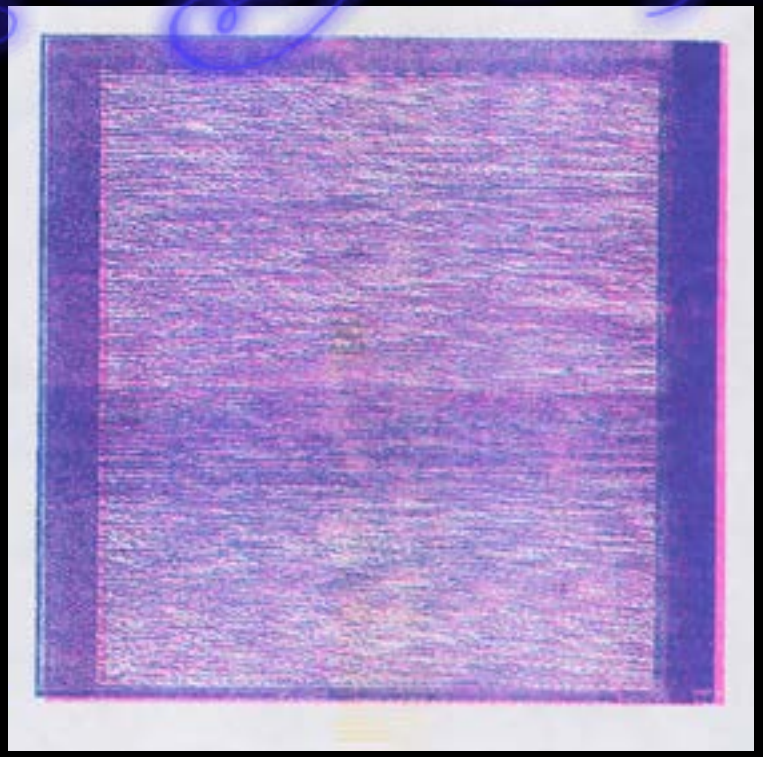
Still, I'm not sure many people really believe any of it. You stay on your sofa, alone on a Saturday night, as Netflix queues up one episode after another, showing you exciting individuals doing exciting things, visions of luxury and fame that some people get to live, and you get to watch on TV. The algorithm knows what you want. These products are what it means to be you.

But the liars really do believe. The liars know that the golden world of wealth and peril belongs to them because why else would they be alive? The rest of us are already exhausted with ourselves. We no longer have any handle on what we are; a few notions are regurgitated into our mouths, and we accept them, But the liars are artists of themselves, the last people who still know how to dream. For the liars, all the cruel optimism of the world is true. You can be anything you want, as long as you believe in yourself. You can rise up out of your boring circumstances and become a millionaire; you just need to decide that it's already yours. You can hang out with celebrities. You can rule the world. All you need to do is lie.§

The Left Hand of Darkness

Ursula K. Le Guin
Introduction to the novel, 1969.



From Hito Steyerl's "A Sea of Data: Apophenia and Pattern (Mis-)Recognition" in *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*, 2017.

Apophenia is defined as the perception of patterns within random data. The most common examples are people seeing faces in clouds or on the moon. This is an image from the Snowden files. It is labeled "secret." Yet one cannot see anything on it. This is exactly why it is symptomatic. Not seeing anything intelligible is the new normal. Information is passed on as a set of signals that cannot be

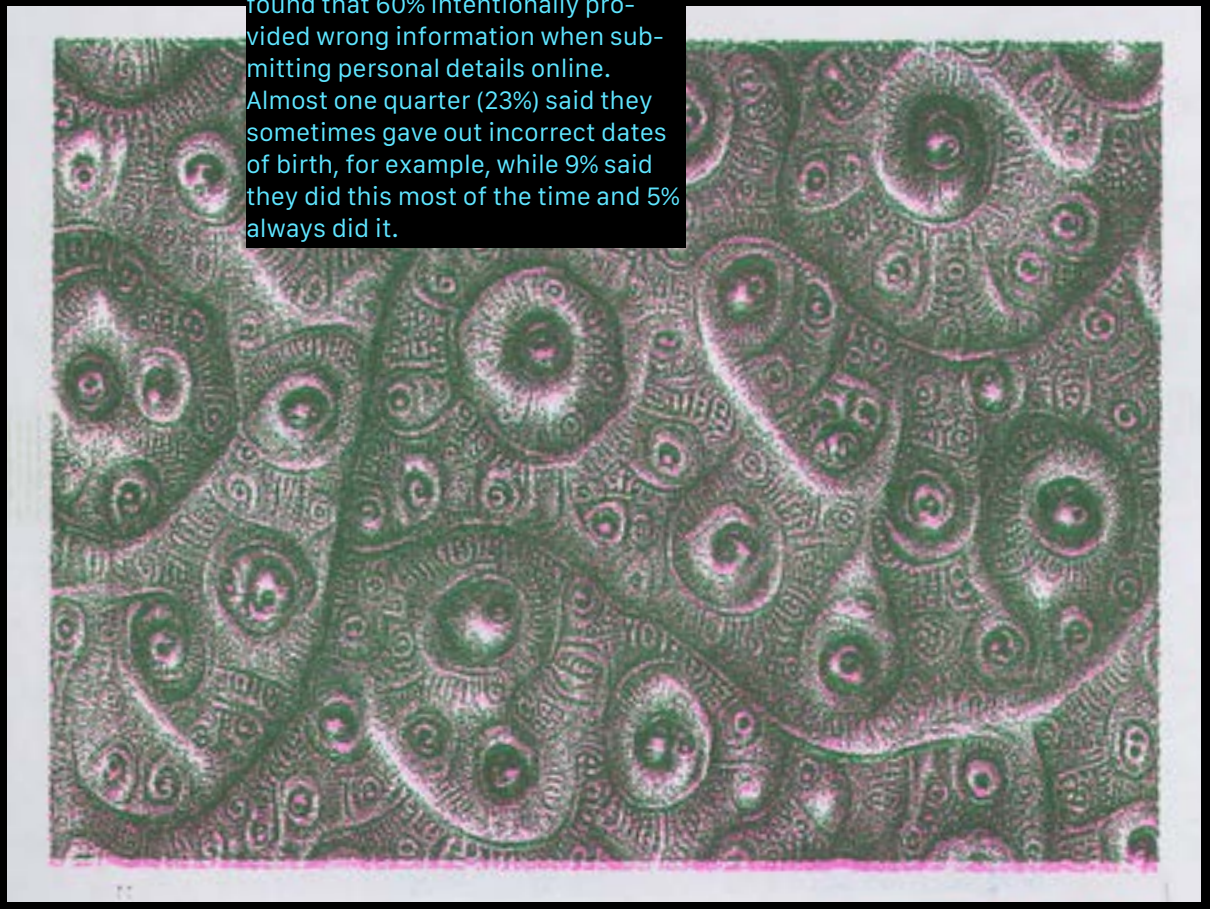
Science fiction is often described, and even defined, as extrapolative. The science fiction writer is supposed to take a trend or phenomenon of the here-and-now, purify and intensify it for dramatic effect, and extend it into the future. "If this goes on, this is what will happen." A prediction is made. Method and results much resemble those of a scientist who feeds large doses of a purified and concentrated food additive to mice, in order to predict what may happen to people who eat it in small quantities for a long time. The outcome seems almost inevitably to be cancer. So does the outcome of extrapolation. Strictly extrapolative works of science fiction generally arrive about where the Club of Rome arrives: somewhere between the gradual extinction of human liberty and the total extinction of terrestrial life.

This may explain why many people who do not read science fiction describe it as "escapist," but when questioned further, admit they do not read it because "it's so depressing."
Almost anything carried to its logical extreme becomes depressing, if not carcinogenic.

picked up by human senses. Contemporary perception is machinic to a large degree.

Dirty data is also something like a cache of surreptitious refusal; it expresses a refusal to be counted and measured:

A study of more than 2,400 UK consumers by research company Verve found that 60% intentionally provided wrong information when submitting personal details online. Almost one quarter (23%) said they sometimes gave out incorrect dates of birth, for example, while 9% said they did this most of the time and 5% always did it.



Le Guin *The Left Hand*
Steyerl *Sea of Data*

Fortunately, though extrapolation is an element in science fiction, it isn't the name of the game by any means. It is far too rationalist and simplistic to satisfy the imaginative mind, whether the writer's or the reader's. Variables are the spice of life.

This book is not extrapolative. If you like you can read it, and a lot of other science fiction, as a thought-experiment. Let's say (says Mary Shelley) that a young doctor creates a human being in his laboratory; let's say (says Philip K. Dick) that the Allies lost the Second World War; let's say this or that is such and so, and see what happens. . . . In a story so conceived, the moral complexity proper to the modern novel need not be sacrificed, nor is there any built-in dead end; thought and intuition can move freely within bounds set only by the terms of the experiment, which may be very large indeed.
The purpose of a thought-experiment, as the term was used by Schrödinger and other physicists, is not to predict the future—indeed Schrödinger's most famous thought-experiment goes to show that the "future," on the quantum level, cannot be predicted—but to describe reality, the present world.

Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive.

Predictions are uttered by prophets (free of charge), by clairvoyants (who usually

Dirty data is where all of our refusals to fill out the constant onslaught of online forms accumulate. Everyone is lying all the time, whenever possible, or at least cutting corners.

Jacques Ranciére tells a story about how the separation of signal and noise might have been accomplished in Ancient Greece. Sounds produced by affluent male locals were defined as speech, whereas women, children, slaves, and foreigners were assumed to produce garbled noise. The distinction between speech and noise served as a kind of political spam filter. Those identified as speaking were labeled citizens and the rest as irrelevant, irrational, and potentially dangerous nuisances. Similarly, today, the question of separating signal and noise has a fundamental political dimension. Pattern recognition resonates with the wider question of political recognition. Who is recognized on a political level and as what? As a subject? A person? A legitimate category of the population? Or perhaps as "dirty data"? §

Le Guin ***The Left Hand***
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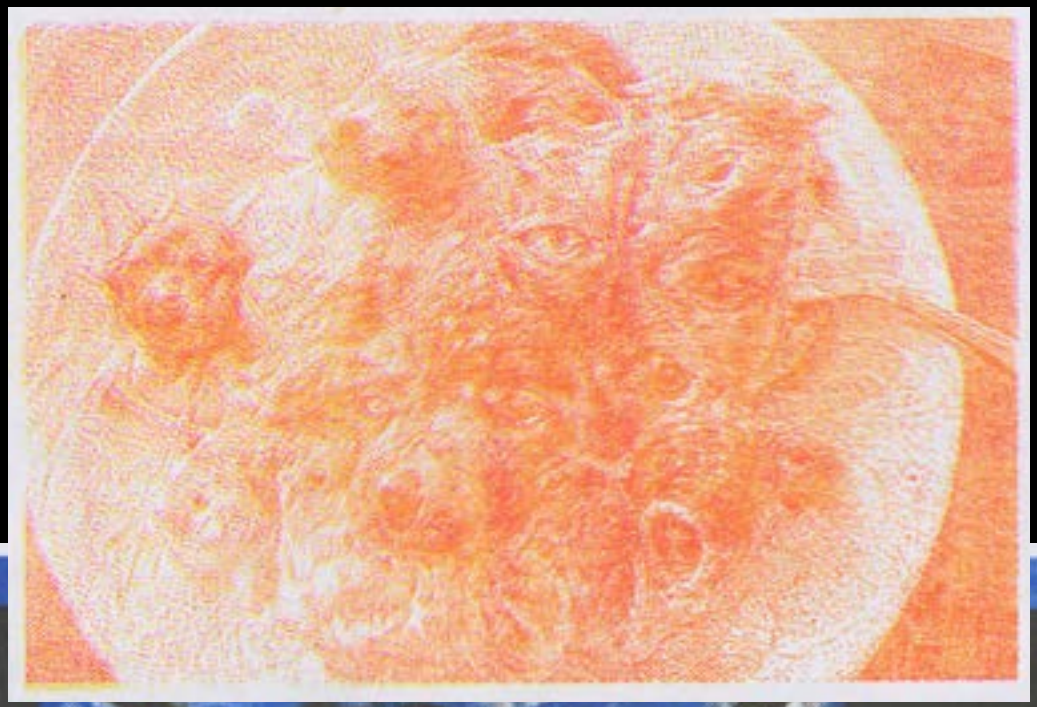
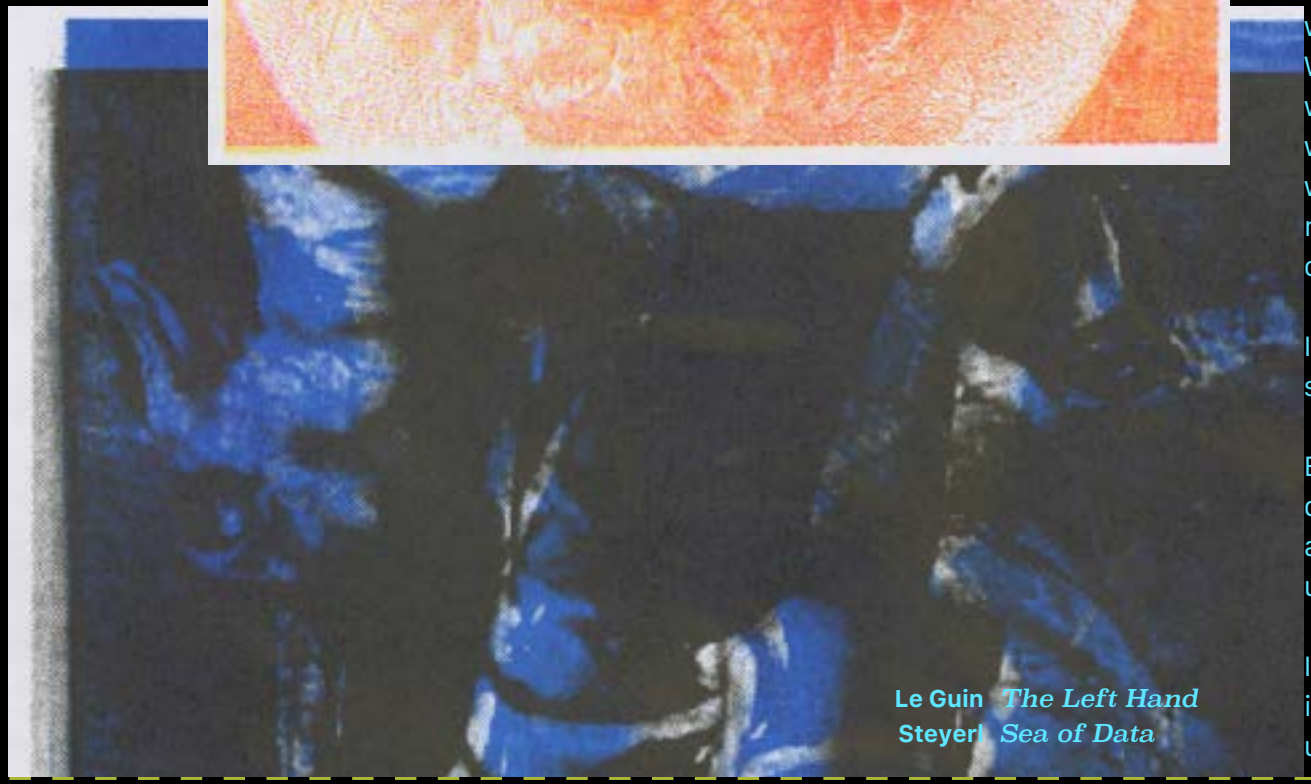
charge a fee, and are therefore more honored in their day than prophets), and by futurologists (salaried). Prediction is the business of prophets, clairvoyants, and futurologists. It is not the business of novelists. A novelist's business is lying.

The weather bureau will tell you what next Tuesday will be like, and the Rand Corporation will tell you what the twenty-first century will be like. I don't recommend that you turn to the writers of fiction for such information. It's none of their business. All they're trying to do is tell you what they're like, and what you're like—what's going on—what the weather is now, today, this moment, the rain, the sunlight, look! Open your eyes; listen, listen. That is what the novelists say. But they don't tell you what you will see and hear. All they can tell you is what they have seen and heard, in their time in this world, a third of it spent in sleep and dreaming, another third of it spent in telling lies.

"The truth against the world!"—Yes. Certainly. Fiction writers, at least in their braver moments, do desire the truth: to know it, speak it, serve it. But they go about it in a peculiar and devious way, which consists in inventing persons, places, and events which never did and never will exist or occur, and telling about these fictions in

Truth is a matter of the imagination.





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detail and at length and with a great deal of emotion, and then when they are done writing down this pack of lies, they say, There! That's the truth!

They may use all kinds of facts to support their tissue of lies. They may describe the Marshalsea Prison, which was a real place, or the battle of Borodino, which really was fought, or the process of cloning, which really takes place in laboratories, or the deterioration of a personality, which is described in real textbooks of psychology, and so on. This weight of verifiable place-event-phenomenon-behavior makes the reader forget that he is reading a pure invention, a history that never took place anywhere but in that unlocalizable region, the author's mind. In fact, while we read a novel, we are insane—bonkers. We believe in the existence of people who aren't there, we hear their voices, we watch the battle of Borodino with them, we may even become Napoleon. Sanity returns (in most cases) when the book is closed.

Is it any wonder that no truly respectable society has ever trusted its artists?

But our society, being troubled and bewildered, seeking guidance, sometimes puts an entirely mistaken trust in its artists, using them as prophets and futurologists.

I do not say that artists cannot be seers, inspired: that the awen cannot come upon them, and the god speak through

them. Who would be an artist if they did not believe that that happens? If they did not know it happens, because they have felt the god within them use their tongue, their hands? Maybe only once, once in their lives. But once is enough.

Nor would I say that the artist alone is so burdened and so privileged. The scientist is another who prepares, who makes ready, working day and night, sleeping and awake, for inspiration. As Pythagoras knew, the god may speak in the forms of geometry as well as in the shapes of dreams; in the harmony of pure thought as well as in the harmony of sounds; in numbers as well as in words.

But it is words that make the trouble and confusion. We are asked now to consider words as useful in only one way: as signs. Our philosophers, some of them, would have us agree that a word (sentence, statement) has value only in so far as it has one single meaning, points to one fact that is comprehensible to the rational intellect, logically sound, and — ideally — quantifiable.

Apollo, the god of light, of reason, of proportion, harmony, number — Apollo blinds those who press too close in worship. Don't look straight at the sun. Go into a dark bar for a bit and have a beer with Dionysios, every now and then.

I talk about the gods; I am an atheist. But I am an artist too, and therefore a liar. Dis-

trust everything I say. I am telling the truth.

The only truth I can understand or express is, logically defined, a lie. Psychologically defined, a symbol. Aesthetically defined, a metaphor.

Oh, it's lovely to be invited to participate in Futurological Congresses where Systems Science displays its grand apocalyptic graphs, to be asked to tell the newspapers what America will be like in 2001, and all that, but it's a terrible mistake. I write science fiction, and science fiction isn't about the future. I don't know any more about the future than you do, and very likely less.

This book is not about the future. Yes, it begins by announcing that it's set in the "Ekumenical Year 1490–97," but surely you don't believe that?

Yes, indeed the people in it are androgynous, but that doesn't mean that I'm predicting that in a millennium or so we will all be androgynous, or announcing that I think we damned well ought to be androgynous. I'm merely observing, in the peculiar, devious, and thought-experimental manner proper to science fiction, that if you look at us at certain odd times of day in certain weathers, we already are. I am not predicting, or prescribing. I am describing. I am describing certain aspects of psychological reality in the novelist's way, which is by inventing elaborately circumstantial lies.

In reading a novel, any novel, we have to

know perfectly well that the whole thing is nonsense, and then, while reading, believe every word of it. Finally, when we're done with it, we may find—if it's a good novel—that we're a bit different from what we were before we read it, that we have been changed a little, as if by having met a new face, crossed a street we never crossed before. But it's very hard to say just what we learned, how we were changed.

The artist deals with what cannot be said in words.

The artist whose medium is fiction does this in words. The novelist says in words what cannot be said in words.

Words can be used thus paradoxically because they have, along with a semiotic usage, a symbolic or metaphoric usage. (They also have a sound—a fact the linguistic positivists take no interest in. A sentence or paragraph is like a chord or harmonic sequence in music: its meaning may be more clearly understood by the attentive ear, even though it is read in silence, than by the attentive intellect.)

All fiction is metaphor. Science fiction is metaphor. What sets it apart from older forms of fiction seems to be its use of new metaphors, drawn from certain great dominants of our contemporary life — science, all the sciences, and technology, and the relativistic and the historical outlook, among them. Space travel is one of these metaphors; so is an alternative

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society, an alternative biology; the future is another. The future, in fiction, is a metaphor.

A metaphor for what?

If I could have said it non-metaphorically, I would not have written all these words, this novel... §

Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying

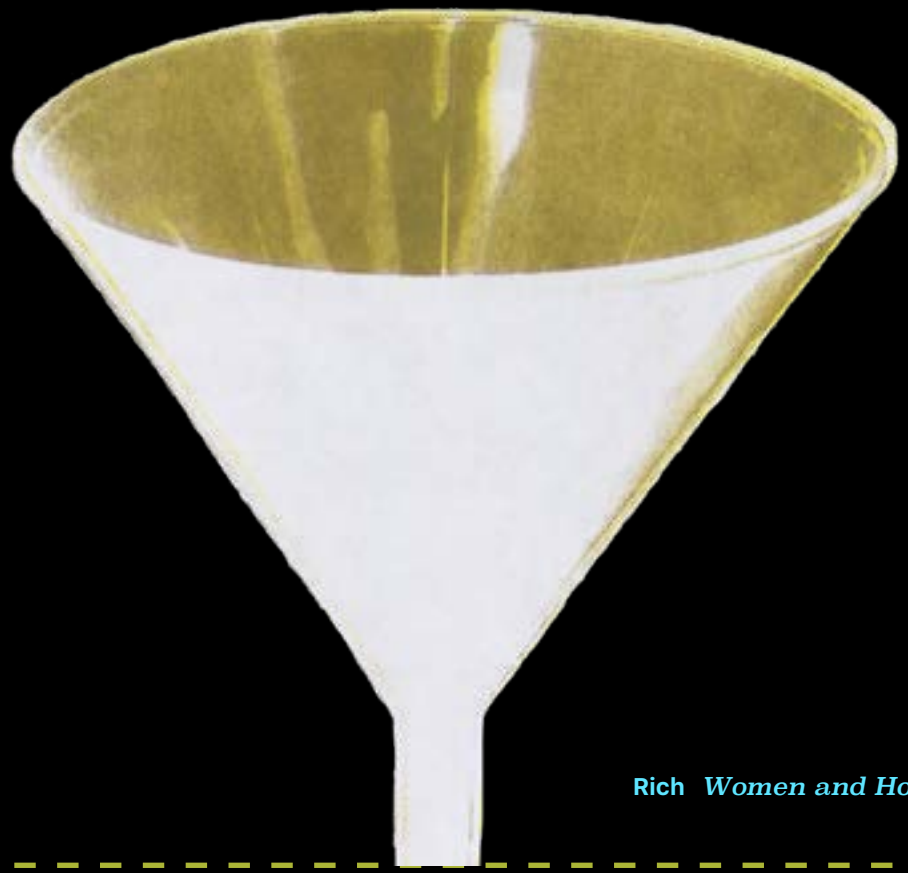
Adrienne Rich
First published as a pamphlet by *Motheroot Press* in 1977
and collected in *On Lies, Secrecy, and Silence*, 1979.

The old, male idea of honor. A man's "word" sufficed — to other men — without guarantee.

"Our Land Free, Our Men Honest, Our Women Fruitful" — a popular colonial toast in America.

Male honor also having something to do with killing: I could not love thee, Dear, so much / Lov'd I not Honour more, ("To Lucasta, On Going to the Wars"). Male honor as something needing to be avenged: hence, the duel.

Women's honor, something altogether else: virginity, chastity, fidelity to a husband. Honesty in women has not been considered important. We have been



Rich *Women and Honor*

depicted as generically whimsical, deceitful, subtle, vacillating. And we have been rewarded for lying.

Men have been expected to tell the truth about facts, not about feelings. They have not been expected to talk about feelings at all.

Yet even about facts they have continually lied.

We assume that politicians are without honor. We read their statements trying to crack the code. The scandals of their politics: not that men in high places lie, only that they do so with such indifference, so endlessly, still expecting to be believed. We are accustomed to the contempt inherent in the political lie.

*

To discover that one has been lied to in a personal relationship, however, leads one to feel a little crazy.

*

Lying is done with words, and also with silence.
The woman who tells lies in her personal relationships may or may not plan or invent her lying. She may not even think of what she is doing in a calculated way.

A subject is raised which the liar wishes buried. She has to go downstairs, her parking meter will have run out. Or, there is a telephone call she ought to have made an hour ago.

She is asked, point-blank, a question which may lead into painful talk: "How do you feel about what is happening between us?" Instead of trying to describe her feelings in their ambiguity and confusion, she asks, "How do you feel?" The other, because she is trying to establish a ground of openness and trust, begins describing her own feelings. Thus the liar learns more than she tells.

And she may also tell herself a lie: that she is concerned with the other's feelings, not with her own.

But the liar is concerned with her own feelings.

The liar lives in fear of losing control. She cannot even desire a relationship without manipulation, since to be vulnerable to another person means for her the loss of control.

The liar has many friends, and leads an existence of great loneliness.

*

The liar often suffers from amnesia. Amnesia is the silence of the unconscious.

To lie habitually, as a way of life, is to lose contact with the unconscious. It is like taking sleeping pills, which confer sleep but blot out dreaming. The unconscious wants truth. It ceases to speak to those who want something else more than truth.

In speaking of lies, we come inevitably to the subject of truth. There is nothing simple or easy about this idea. There is no "the truth," "a truth"—truth is not one thing, or even a system. It is an increasing complexity. The pattern of the carpet is a surface. When we look closely, or when we become weavers, we learn of the tiny multiple threads unseen in the overall pattern, the knots on the underside of the carpet.

This is why the effort to speak honestly is so important. Lies are usually attempts to make everything simpler — for the liar — than it really, is, or ought to be.

In lying to others-we end up lying to ourselves. We deny the importance of an event, or a person, and thus deprive ourselves of a part of our lives. Or we use one piece of the past or present to screen out another. Thus we lose faith even with our own lives.

The unconscious wants truth, as the body does. The complexity and fecundity of dreams come from the complexity and fecundity of the unconscious struggling to fulfill that desire. The complexity and fecundity of poetry come from the same struggle.

*

An honorable human relationship—that is, one in which two people have the right to use the word "love —is a process, delicate, violent, often terrifying to both persons involved, a process of refining the truths they can tell each other.

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We have a profound stake, beyond the personal, in the project of describing our reality as candidly and fully as we can to each other.

It is important to do this because we can count on so few people to go that hard way with us.

*

I come back to the questions of women's honor. Truthfulness has not been considered important for women, as long as we have remained physically faithful to a man, or chaste.

We have been expected to lie with our bodies: to bleach, redden, unkink or curl our hair, pluck eyebrows, shave armpits, wear padding in various places or lace ourselves, take little steps, glaze finger and toe nails, wear clothes that emphasized our helplessness.

We have been required to tell different lies at different times, depending on what the men of the time needed to hear. The Victorian wife or the white southern lady, who were expected to have no sensuality, to "lie still"; the twentieth-century "free" woman who is expected to fake orgasms.

We have had the truth of our bodies withheld from us or distorted; we have been kept in ignorance of our most intimate places, Our instincts have been punished: clitoridectomies for "lustful" nuns or for "difficult" wives. It has been difficult, too, to know the lies of our complicity from the lies we believed.

The lie of the "happy marriage," of domesticity—we have been complicit, have acted out the fiction of a well-lived life, until the day we testify in court of rapes, beatings, psychic cruelties, public and private humiliations.

Patriarchal lying has manipulated women both through falsehood: and through silence. Facts we needed have been withheld from us. False witness has been borne against us.

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It is important to do this-because it breaks down human self-delusion and isolation.

It is important to do this because in so doing we do justice to our own complexity.

And so we must take seriously the question of truthfulness between women, truthfulness among women. As we cease to lie with our bodies, as we cease to take on faith what men have said about us, is a truly womanly idea of honor in the making?

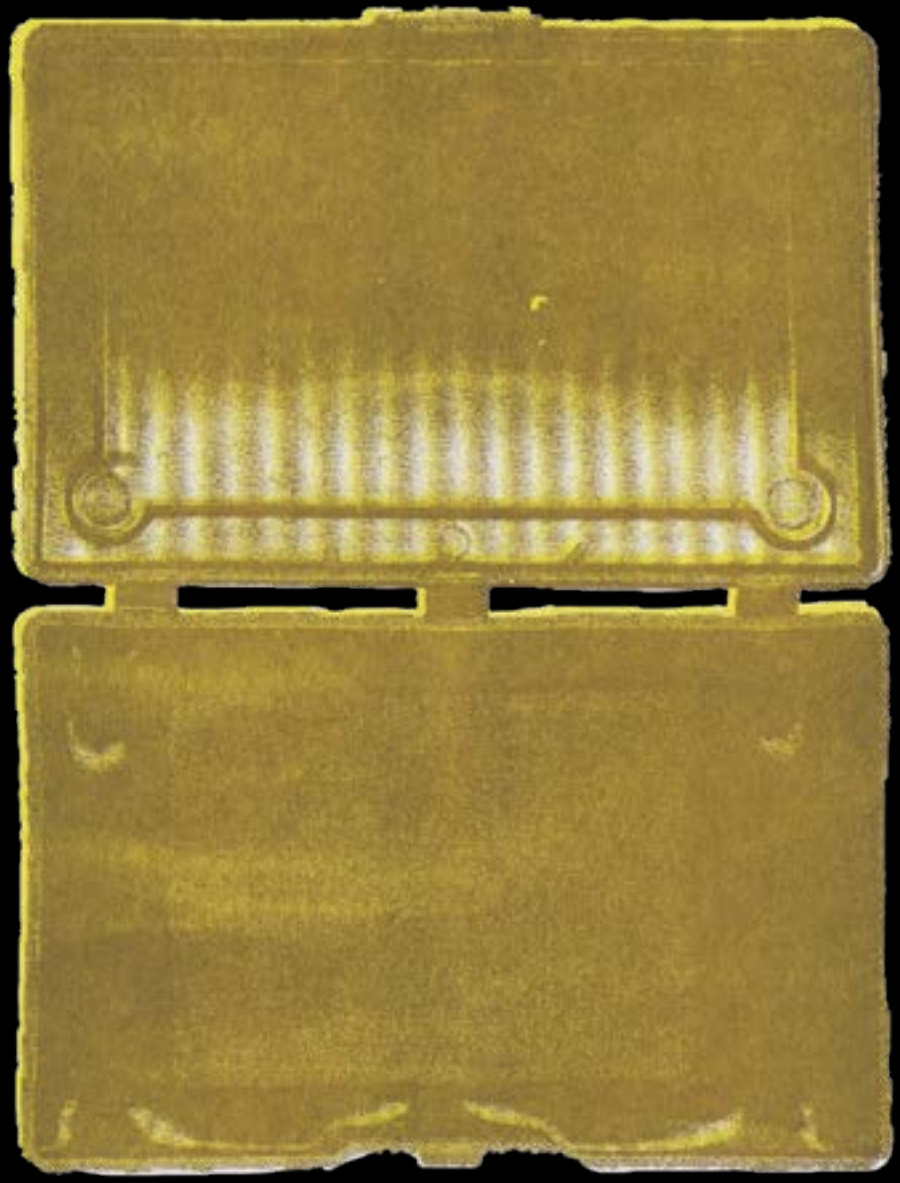
Women have been forced to lie, for survival, to men. How to unlearn this among other women?

"Women have always lied to each other."
"Women have always whispered the truth to each other."
Both of these axioms are true.

*

"Women have always been divided against each other." "Women have always been in secret collusion."
Both of these axioms are true.

In the struggle for survival we tell lies. To bosses, to prison guards, the police, men who have power over us, who legally own us and our children, lovers who need us as proof of their manhood.



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There is a danger run by all powerless people: that we forget we are lying, or that lying becomes a weapon we carry over into relationships with people who do not have power over us.

I want to reiterate that when we talk about women and honor, or women and lying, we speak within the context of male lying, the lies of the powerful, the lie as false source of power.

Women have to think whether we want, in our relationships with each other, the kind of power that can be obtained through lying.

Women have been driven mad, "gaslighted," for centuries by the refutation of our experience and our instincts in a culture which validates only male experience. The truth of our bodies and our minds has been mystified to us. We therefore have a primary obligation to each other: not to undermine each other's sense of reality for the sake of expediency; not to gaslight each other.

Women have often felt insane when cleaving to the truth of our experience. Our future depends on the sanity of each of us, and we have a profound stake, beyond the personal, in the project of describing our reality as candidly and fully as we can to each other.

There are phrases which help us not to admit we are lying: "my privacy,"

"nobody's business but my own. The choices that underlie these phrases may indeed be justified; but we ought to think about the full meaning and consequences of such language.

Women's love for women has been represented almost entirely through silence and lies. The institution of heterosexuality has forced the lesbian to dissemble, or be labeled a pervert, a criminal, a sick or dangerous woman, etc., etc. The lesbian, then, has often been forced to lie, like the prostitute or the married woman.

Does a life "in the closet"—lying, perhaps of necessity, about ourselves to bosses, landlords, clients, colleagues, family, because the law and public opinion are founded on a lie—does this, can it, spread into private life, so that lying (described as discretion) becomes an easy way to avoid conflict or complication? Can it become a strategy so ingrained that it is used even with close friends and lovers?

Heterosexuality as an institution has also drowned in' silence the erotic feelings between women. I myself lived half a lifetime in the lie of that denial. That silence makes us all, to some degree, into liars. When a woman tells the truth she is creating the possibility for more truth around her.

*

The liar leads an existence of unutterable loneliness.

The liar is afraid.

But we are all afraid: without fear we become manic, hubristic, self-destructive. What is this particular fear that possesses the liar?

She is afraid that her own truths are not good enough.

She is afraid, not so much of prison guards or bosses, but of something unnamed within her.

The liar fears the void.

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The void is not something created by patriarchy, or racism, or capitalism, It will not fade away with any of them. It is part of every woman.
"The dark core," Virginia Woolf named it, writing of her mother. The dark core. It is beyond personality; beyond who loves us or hates us.

We begin out of the void, out of darkness and emptiness. It is part of the cycle understood by the old pagan religions, that materialism denies. Out of death, rebirth; out of nothing, something.

The void is the creatrix, the matrix. It is not mere hollowness and anarchy. But in women it has been identified with lovelessness, barrenness, sterility. We have been urged to fill our "emptiness" with children. We are not supposed to go down into the darkness of the core.

Yet, if we can risk it, the something born of that nothing is the beginning of our truth.

The liar in her terror wants to fill up the

Women have to think whether we want… the kind of power that can be obtained through lying.

We take so much of the universe on trust. You tell me: "In 1950 I lived on the north side of Beacon Street in Somerville." You tell me: "She and I were lovers, but for months now we have only been good friends." You tell me: "It is seventy degrees outside and the sun is shining." Because I love you, because there is not even a question of lying between us, I take these accounts of the universe on trust: your address twenty-five years ago, your relationship with someone I know only by sight, this morning's weather. I fling unconscious tendrils of belief, like slender green threads, across statements such as these, statements made so unequivocally, which have no tone or shadow of tentativeness. I build them into the mosaic of my world. I allow my universe to change in minute, significant ways, on the basis of things you have said to me, of my trust in you.

I also have faith that you are telling me things it is important I should know; that you do not conceal facts from me in an effort to spare me, or yourself, pain.

Or, at the very least, that you will say, "There are things I am not telling you."

When we discover that someone we trusted can be trusted no longer, it forces us to reexamine the universe, to question the whole instinct and concept of trust. For a while, we are thrust back onto some bleak, jutting ledge, in a dark pierced by sheets of fire, swept by sheets of rain, in a world before kinship, or naming, or tenderness exist; we are brought close to formlessness.

*

The liar may resist confrontation, denying that she lied. Or she may use other language: forgetfulness, privacy, the protection of someone else. Or, she may bravely declare herself a coward. This allows her to go on lying, since that is what cowards do. She does not say, I was afraid, since this would open the question of other ways of handling her fear. It would open the question of what is actually feared.

She may say, I didn't wart to cause pain. What she really did not want is to have to deal with the other's pain. The lie is a short-cut through another's personality.

Truthfulness, honor, is not something which springs ablaze of itself it has to be created between people.

This is true in political situations. The quality and depth of the politics evolving from a group depends in very large part on their understanding of honor.

Much of what is narrowly termed "politics" seems to rést on a longing for certainty even at the cost of honesty, for an analysis which, once given, need not be reexamined. Such is the deadendedness — for women — of Marxism in our time.

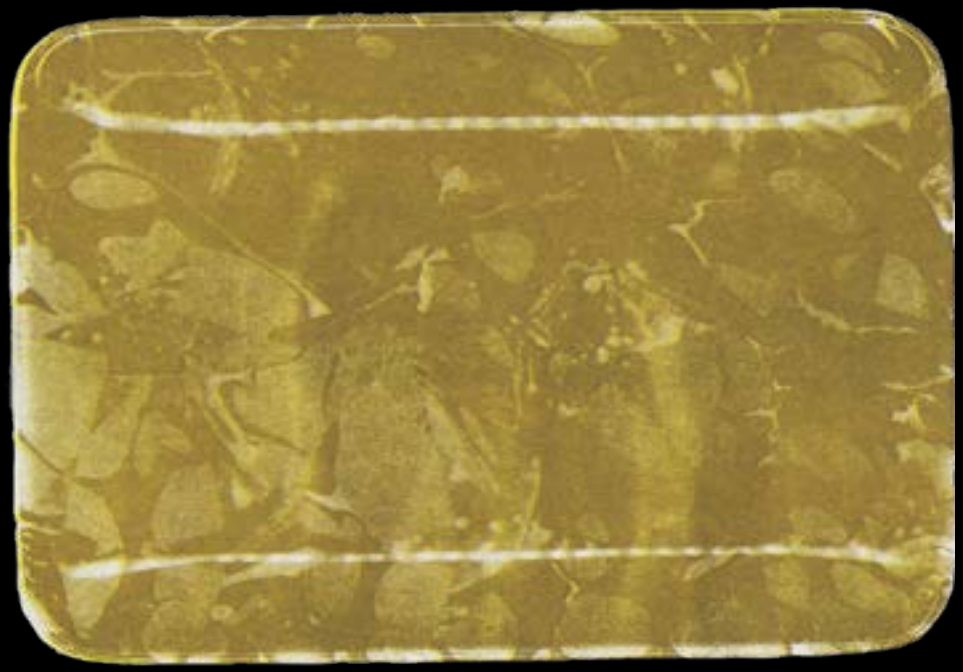
Rich ***Women and Honor***

*

void, with anything. Her lies are a denial of her fear; a way of maintaining control.

*

Why do we feel slightly crazy when we realize we have been lied to in a relationship?



Truthfulness anywhere means a height-
ened complexity. But it is a movement into
evolution. Women are only beginning to
uncover our own truths; many of us would
be grateful for some rest in that strug-
gle, would be glad just to lie down with the
shards we have painfully unearthed, and
be satisfied with those. Often I feel this
like an exhaustion in my own body.

The politics worth having, the relation-
ships worth having, demand that we delve
still deeper.

*

The possibilities that exist between two
people, or among a group of people, are
a kind of alchemy. They are the most
interesting thing in life. The liar is some-
one who keeps losing sight of these
possibilities.

When relationships are determined by
manipulation, by the need for control, they
may possess a dreary, bickering kind of
drama, but they cease to be interesting.
They are repetitious; the shock of human
possibilities has ceased to reverberate
through them.

When someone tells me a piece of the
truth which has been withheld from me,
and which I needed in order to see my life
more clearly, it may bring acute pain, but
it can also flood me with a cold, sea-sharp
wash of relief. Often such truths come by
accident, or from strangers.
It isn't that to have an honorable relation-
ship with you, I have to understand every-

thing, or tell you everything at once, or that I can know, beforehand, everything I need to tell you.

It means that most of the time I am eager, longing for the possibility of telling you. That these possibilities may seem frightening, but not destructive, to me. That I feel strong enough to hear your tentative and groping words. That we both know we are trying, all the time, to extend the possibilities of truth between us.

The possibility of life between us. §

Jig Jog Jog Jig Jig

Transcript of a video by Saskia Globig

[Blank white screen. Words in white sans-serif outlined in black appear mostly centered at the bottom. They narrate what occurs in the audio, while a picture of scaffolding on a tall apartment building appears tiled at various intervals in various arrangements. Line breaks here indicate the appearance of new text on-screen.]

(BIRDS)
(WIND)
(FOOTSTEPS RUNNING)
So of course, I thought
the most personal of jigs
is running
because
everyone who runs
does it
in their own way.
And everyone who can't run
does that in their own way, too,
which I think is very cool.
(LEAF BLOWER)
(BREATHING)
(WIND)
(WIND)
You could call it
a jig jog
.jpg
or a jog jig.
.jpg

.jpg
(HELICOPTER)
This is a big hill.
sniff
(HELICOPTER)
(MUSIC?)
(SIREN)
sniff
(BREATHING)

Globig *jig jog jog jig .jpg*

Sometimes I think
that
sniff
the biggest lie
I tell myself
is that I
hate running.
And then I turn around
and think
the lie is that I like it.
And I couldn't tell you
which is more true.
But of course,
this whole thing could be a lie,
because I could be
like
jumping up and down
in my front yard,
and you wouldn't know.
(LITTLE KID YELLS)
I don't jog in place
when I cross the street.
cough
sniff
scrape
(VOICE)
(WIND)
sniff
(WIND)

(BREATHING)
(VOICES)
(FOOTSTEPS RUNNING)
(BREATHING)
(WIND)
(WIND)
(WIND)
(TRAFFIC)
It's a beautiful day.
That
is not a lie.
(TRAFFIC)
(WIND)
(BREATHING)
(BREATHING)

[A video panning from the middle of the apartment building to the curb takes over the area of the screen.] §

Globig *jig jog jog jig .jpg*

This document is set in Galvji and
Clarendon, both in book and bold weights.

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without the authors' knowledge.

Designed by Saskia Globig for
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2022.