PARAFICTION AS MATTER AND METHOD

VOLUME I

REBECCA SMITH

BIOGRAPHY

Rebecca Smith is an academic and artist whose research interests include art history, contemporary art, digital cultures, performance art, politics, technological infrastructures and truth discourses. She has extensively investigated the concept of parafiction and fictioning, examining how this can be applied as the method of production and the subject matter of academic research and artistic practice. Rebecca's art practice is media diverse, combining drawing, textiles, found objects and text to produce 2D and 3D narrative outcomes. This practice applies her academic research to inform her outcomes in producing alternative conclusions and uncovering human and nonhuman perspectives for pasts, presents and futures. Rebecca is the recipient of a Full PhD Scholarship from Liverpool John Moores University (2016). She also won the PhD Researcher Short Film Competition (2017) and was awarded the Annual Faculty Outstanding Thesis Dissertation Prize (2015) for her Masters thesis and the Annual History of Art Outstanding Dissertation Prize (2014) for her undergraduate dissertation.

Rebecca has presented her research at international conferences including: RE:SOUND 2019, Aalborg, Demark RESAW 2019, Amsterdam, the Netherlands and the Association for Art History Annual Conference 2018, London, UK. Rebecca has published her research in a number of formats including: the book chapter The Legacy of the Berlin Dada Media Hoaxes in Contemporary Parafictive Acts (2020) in Sara, Hegenbart and Mara-Johanna Kölmel's book Dada Data: Contemporary Art Practice in the Era of Post-Truth Politics (2020) published by Bloomsbury Academic the journal article Parafictions: UBERMORGEN.COM as a case study of parafictive practice conducted between 1998 and 2018 (2019) in JAWS, published by Intellect and conference proceedings for the paper Parafictions and Contemporary Media Art 2008-2018 (2019) at RE:SOUND 2019, published by Electronic Workshops in Computing (eWiC). Each of these publications consider the concept of parafiction in relation to modern and contemporary art within the current technological and political context.

Alongside her practice and research, Rebecca has worked as a lecturer since 2015, teaching in several subject areas at undergraduate and postgraduate level including: Fine Art, History of Art & Museum Studies, Contemporary Art History & Theory, Research in Art and Design and Foundation in Art and Design. Rebecca has also worked with a group of fellow postgraduate researchers under the name of CoLab. In 2018, CoLab was funded by the Faculty of Arts, Professional and Social Studies at Liverpool John Moores University to produce a collaborative and interdisciplinary two-week programme of events, which examined and illustrated what a PhD in the art and humanities constitutes.

In 2020 Rebecca commenced new projects. She is developing a podcast about art institutions in North West England in collaboration with artist and researcher Bee Hughes, funded by the Association for Art History. She has embarked on a long-term interdisciplinary project with documentary film maker Ben Evans James to curate a two-part exhibition, in Liverpool and London, examining the links between parafiction in contemporary art and documentary film. She is also working on an exhibition, One Thing to Another with artist Jane Kilford that combines the production of an archive with the application of fictioning methods, this project will produce collaborative practice and research. Rebecca intends to continue cultivating her artistic practice parallel to her academic research building upon the concept of theory-led practice with the aim of commencing a post-doctoral position with Prof. Colin Fallows in late 2020.

ABSTRACT

The thesis examines the different ways in which artists have engaged with parafiction in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Parafiction – a fiction experienced as fact - has become an important mode of practice within contemporary art, with this shift concurrent to the exponential growth of digital technology. The term contemporary art is applied here in an expanded sense to acknowledge the effect of digital processes and matter on art and to include practices that use technology as form or subject or a combination of the two. Parafiction appears in various materialities, both digital and physical, and could be described as having neomateriality.

Parafiction as Matter and Method inevitably locates the research within the context of the digital. The research investigates how the usage of parafiction has changed since 1989 with the rapid advancement of technology and widespread access to the internet. Changes in the social and political landscape have also affected the function of parafiction in contemporary society. These conditions are not necessarily time bound or linear.

Drawing upon and extending Carrie Lambert-Beatty's concept of parafictions (2009), the research is rooted in art history and contemporary art for its theoretical frameworks. The research engages deeply with art history and contemporary art in an expanded sense to contextualise and analyse parafictions, whilst utilising an interdisciplinary approach. To augment this deep context the research has combined the following fields: artistic practice, digital cultures, media studies, performance art, philosophy and politics. By synthesising this broad range of fields the research is original and complex in its approach aiming to consider the topic at a planetary scale within the bounds of the possible.

As an overarching method, this research applies fiction as a method to produce new knowledge. The research uses primary and secondary methods including the production of a body of artwork and diagrammatic reasoning to augment the theoretical proposal. The art practice is employed as a method to synthesise the theory with practice and to apply the knowledge learnt outside of its text-based constraints. The practice appears as interludes interspersed throughout the thesis, that produce a duo-linear narrative with the aim of the thesis becoming an artwork in its own right. Primary data collection included interviews with relevant artists, attending and speaking at international conferences and research visits to exhibitions. This thesis has evolved through the attendance at international conferences as speaker and audience member, peer-reviewed publication, interaction with academic peers and research visits to exhibitions.

This thesis evaluates how parafiction renegotiates physical and digital spatio-temporal parameters to offer alternatives for the present, pasts and futures, for both human and nonhuman users of those spaces. As parafiction becomes matter it has the ability to converge the digital and the physical to extend the lives of artworks beyond their initial existence. It is argued that fictioning methods have the most impact within contemporary art in its most expanded sense. The research advocates for parafiction as a vital method, found within artistic practice in the twentieth and twenty-first century, which produces new information and perspectives. This thesis uniquely concludes that parafiction is matter, as material that intersects and interacts with the modularity of digital technologies. Significantly, the research has found that parafiction acts as an additional module that connects physical and digital spatio-temporal with alternative potential for pasts, presents, and futures.

KEYWORDS

Art History	Digital	Matter
Artistic Practice	Fiction as Method	Parafiction
Contemporary Art	Internet	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Coyote: '… once you realize that something is fake…'

Roy Wagner: 'Or that *everything* is fake …'

Coyote: 'You stand not at the end of knowledge, but at its beginning…'

(Wagner 2010: 2)

INTRODUCTION

The thesis examines the different ways in which artists have engaged with parafiction in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Parafiction – a fiction experienced as fact - has become an important mode of practice within contemporary art, with this shift concurrent to the exponential growth of digital technology. Drawing upon and extending Carrie Lambert-Beatty's concept of parafictions (2009), the research is rooted in art history and contemporary art for its theoretical frameworks. The research engages deeply with art history and contemporary art in an expanded sense to contextualise and analyse parafictions, whilst utilising an interdisciplinary approach. To augment this deep context the research has combined the following fields: artistic practice, digital cultures, media studies, performance art, philosophy and politics. By synthesising this broad range of fields the research is original and complex in its approach aiming to consider the topic at a planetary scale within the bounds of the possible.

As an overarching methodology, this research applies fiction as a method to produce new knowledge. The research uses primary and secondary methods including the production of a body of artwork and diagrammatic reasoning to reinforce the theoretical proposal. The art practice is employed as a method to synthesise the theory with practice and to apply the knowledge learnt outside of its text-based constraints. The practice appears as interludes interspersed throughout the thesis, that produce a duo-linear narrative and result in the thesis becoming an artwork in its own right.

This thesis evaluates how parafiction renegotiates physical and digital spatio-temporal parameters to offer alternatives for the present, pasts and futures, for both human and nonhuman users of those spaces. As parafiction becomes matter it has the ability to converge the digital and the physical to extend the lives of artworks beyond their initial existence. It is argued that fictioning methods have the most impact within contemporary art in its most expanded sense. The research advocates for parafiction as a vital method, found

within artistic practice in the twentieth and twenty-first century, which produces new information and perspectives. This thesis uniquely concludes that parafiction is matter, as material that intersects and interacts with the modularity of digital technologies. Significantly, the research has found that parafiction acts as an additional module that connects physical and digital spatio-temporalities with alternative potential for pasts, presents, and futures.

RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

Research Aims:

1. To investigate and re-evaluate the different ways artists have engaged with parafiction in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

2. To synthesise knowledge from art history, art practice, contemporary art, digital cultures, media studies, performance art, philosophy and politics to consider how the contemporary conditions socially, politically and technologically have affected parafiction.

3. To argue that fictioning methods have the most impact within contemporary art in its expanded sense and that parafiction is matter, as material that intersects and interacts with the modularity of digital technologies.

Research Questions:

1. How have artists engaged with parafiction in the twentieth and twenty-first century and what is significant about this emergence?

2. How have parafictions changed and how do they demonstrate a fundamental shift found within artistic practice in relation to contemporary social, political and technological conditions?

3. Can fictioning be applied as a method to produce alternative possibilities and new knowledge both practice-based and theoretical?

KEY AND TOOL-KIT

This key and tool-kit is to support the reading of this thesis and provide a directive for how to read the practice interludes. A rationale for the inclusion of practice, and practice interludes with a discussion of examples within literature can be found in the Methodology. Parafiction is also briefly defined here to aid the reader through the introduction. A deeper analysis of the term and its application as a method can be found in the sections Parafiction, and Parafiction as Method. The key applies to formatting within the text and the tools refer to the appendices and illustrations. The tools (apart from the interludes) are separated into the appendices to ensure that the text is concise.

Practice Interludes
Break / Jar / Pause / Differentiate

The practice is peppered throughout this thesis as practice interludes, these are numbered I-VI. This demonstrates how the theory-led practice relates to research and fiction as method. The interludes are conceptualised as intrinsic to the art practice, functioning as cut-ups. The thesis therefore becomes an artwork in its own right. The form of the book and use of distinct page colours and font, leaves stripes along the edge of the thesis pages, which makes the text interactive. The interludes or body of text can be read separately or in a different order of the reader's choosing. The interactive duo-linear narratives run in parallel, with the documentary, thematic analysis within the text and the creative, autobiographical practice. The format also reflects contemporary digital media which functions as non-linear narratives that can be approached in numerous ways. This becomes telling (the thesis text) and showing (the practice interludes). The interludes show other forms of knowledge production and this demonstrates the argument that parafiction can tell us about pasts, present and futures and links to autobiographical and autoethnographical methods that the practice provides. The practical set of projects reflect upon and extend the historical material providing time and space for the reader to contemplate the research. The artistic practice that appears in Volume II is the photographic documentation of the practical outputs.

Parafiction Definition

The prefix para comes from the Greek for besides and means adjacent to or beyond as a distinct form, but analogous to. In combinations, it means amiss, irregular and denotes alternation or modification. Therefore, as with the terms paragraph, paramedic, paranormal or parasite, para is to mean that which is relating to, but distinct and alternate. Fiction is the imagined and invented. By joining these terms, a parafiction becomes that which is adjacent to fact and distinct as a form of fiction. As Amelia Jones suggests, in relation to *parafeminism* (2006) (Appendix IV: 5), the para 'indicates a way of thinking that *builds on*' (2006: 213). For Jones, parafeminism is parallel to second wave feminism, but distinct in rethinking these earlier forms, building upon these methodologies without the suggestion of surpassing them. Here, parafiction runs parallel to both fiction and non-fiction, building upon the methods of fiction to interact with the planet and its human and nonhuman users.

Key

italics	when terms are first introduced.
'inverted commas'	words that are subjective, e.g. 'real'.
'inverted commas' (with reference)	quotation.
[1] endnotes	expanded points.
Quotations	reproduced exactly including emphasis unless otherwise stated. This is especially significant in the practice interludes, where quotations are lifted from found text.

Tools

Illustrations	images that support the research.
Practice Interludes	examples of artistic practice in the body of the text that can be read in a linear or non-linear manner in conjunction with the thesis text.
Artistic Practice	images of my artistic practice.
Diagrams	links between themes and concepts.
Glossary	expanded definitions for pertinent terms.
Artist Directory	significant and biographic information.

THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis is comprised of three chapters, which examine three strands of parafiction:
politics, power and technology, and identity, although these themes are interwoven
throughout this thesis. These are outlined in the introduction, confirmed in the conclusion
and supported by the 'What If/As If' Venn Diagram (Appendix II: Figure 2). The thread of my
own practice appears throughout this thesis in the form of practice interludes, which explore
the concepts and practices analysed to document the process of parafiction, research and
alternative methods of knowledge production.

Chapter One, *From Left to Right: Connecting the Strategies of Net Art with Populism and the
Alt-Right* examines the historical prescedents of parafiction occurring between 1900 and
1978. In this first section of historic cases, all examples hold left leaning views, except for
William S. Burroughs (Appendix V: 2), who is included for the significance of the cut-up
method. This section examines how the media can be subverted using the case studies of
the Berlin Dada Media Hoaxes (Appendix IV: 2) and the Situationist International's (SI)
(Appendix V: 11) concept of Détournement. The practices in this section are 'as ifs' that
create change through the insertion into the everyday, be it in public space or the media as a
way to challenge oppression from, usually governmental, forms of control. The second
section of this chapter, demonstrates how these strategies have been adopted by the right
wing. This thesis positions 1979 as a landmark year with Jean-François Lyotard theorising
post-modernism in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (*1979), which
significantly shaped conceptions of knowledge. In terms of politics, 1979 begins the shift to
advanced capitalism and neoliberalism with the election of Margaret Thatcher in the UK.
Parafiction: Contemporary Cases 1979-2019 explores the landscape of contemporary
internet culture to discuss forms of net.art (Appendix IV: 4-5) and activism that exploit this
space and how these methods are employed by the subcultural group, known as the *alt-right*
(alternative right) (Appendix IV: 1). These practices have more in common with traditional
forms of hoaxes, with the ethics of this addressed within the trickster subsection. Using the

case study of net.art practitioners UBERMORGEN throughout, this chapter demonstrates how these practices are forms of 'as ifs' that subvert existing infrastructures.

Chapter Two, *Parafiction: Boundaries of Infrastructures and Institutions* appraises the concept of infrastructure as defined by Shannon Mattern (2015) to apply this theorisation to Benjamin H. Bratton's *The Stack* (2015) to rationalise the space of planetary-scale computation and to demonstrate how this infrastructure frames the planet and its information. This analysis situates parafiction as part of these infrastructural frameworks to examine how planetary-scale computation has fictioned geographic boundaries and that this is supported by the infrastructures of institutions of power, specifically those of language, finance, and the museum and archive. Artists exploited the strategies employed by these structures of power, through fictioning to readdress the inequalities within cultural knowledge, memory and oppression/suppression, often caused by colonialism or war. This chapter argues that memory and technology are used to reinforce systems of power.

Chapter Three, *Parafiction: Identity as Hallucination, Occultism and Ritual* explores the use of hallucinations, the occult and ritual as parafictional methods that construct identity as forms of world building. These practices use alternative ways to produce knowledge that have often been dismissed by hetero-normative and male-centric ideals. The chapter spans the hyper-masculine practice of Laibach (Appendix V: 7) who over-identify with the iconography of fascism, the interconnected research projects of Suzanne Treister who excavates hidden histories and proposes potential futures through practices associated with magic, ritual and the occult, Amalia Ulman's exploitation of social media to examine the ritualistic nature of womanhood and production of identity online. This chapter concludes with a practice interlude, in which I have created my own world through the reproduction and repurposing of memories and objects from my past, present and future. This chapter reveals the 'what ifs' of parafiction and how these practices, although speculative, have real world affect.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reivew discusses the rationale for the research, the existing key literature, and fields that this research encompasses. The literature can be grouped in five categories: Planetary Scales and Frames, Technology as Infrastructure, Materiality, Parafiction as Concept, and Parafiction as Method. The literature review also demonstrates what is in and what is out of scope for the thesis by rationalising the use of the term contemporary art over the use of new media art and addressing how the research builds upon existing work on the event, mediation, materiality, and the concept of parafiction.

<u>Technology becomes Planetary</u>
The globe is on our computers. No one lives there.
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak 1999: 44

In 1989, the practitioner and technologist Tim Berners-Lee created a proposal that would bring together the existing technology of hypertext and the internet, in order to create the World Wide Web (WWW) (Berners-Lee, Cailliau, Groff and Pollermann 1992). This led to the invention of the first website and browser in 1990, which would enable anyone, anywhere with access to share information for free, instead of previous incarnations only available to governments and academics. Berners-Lee's built the WWW upon egalitarian principles and intended it to be a force for good (Berners-Lee 2018: para 3). Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s generally the view of the internet was positive and utopian, a way in which the world could communicate and connect through globalised networks.

During this time, culture was harnessed as a facet of capitalism and globalisation seen as a way to enhance multi-culturalism of which the internet was an instrumental tool. The early years of the internet were enshrined in utopian notions of a place that would not be controlled by existing power structures and a space that did not make judgements based on gender, race or religion. For example, adverts such as MCI Communications Corp (one of the USA's largest internet providers) 1997 advert described the internet as a place to

'communicate mind to mind' (Jones 1997: 00.01-00.03) where there was no race, no gender, no age (1997).

The internet between 1993 and 1996 was referred to as *hyperspace*, this is epitomised by users pressing the 'I'm feeling lucky' button on Google, which jumped users to random pages. Contemporarily, algorithms do this for users, suggesting what they may like to see, resulting in a much more streamlined version of this with less risk at the cost of surprise.

Libertarian perspectives have shaped technological infrastructure and its claim for physical territory and sovereignty. As computer scientist Jaron Lanier states: 'we wanted everything to be free because we were hippie socialists. But we also loved entrepreneurs because we loved Steve Jobs. […] [We wanted to] be both a socialist and a libertarian at the same time, and it's absurd.' (2018: para 17) Between 1997 and 2001, browsing the internet became known as *cyberspace*. This was largely due to internet activist, John Perry Barlow's *A Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace* (1996), which suggests that cyberspace is a space where traditional governments hold no power and a place everyone is able to contribute without fear of discrimination. Ultimately, Barlow viewed it as a utopian space free of constraints on liberty (1996). This was a place for exploring, evidenced by the choice of browser names such as Safari and Internet Explorer. Here the user personalised their browser and the internet became their space. During this period server-side surveillance machines developed to remove the personalisation, flattening the space through applications and social media sites that obliterated the intimate client keepsakes of cyberspace (Chun 2019 and Lialina 2019).

This grew from Marshall McLuhan's projection of a *Global Village* (1962). McLuhan believed that the world would shrink to the size of a village due to emerging electronic media. In the iconic *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (1967) Quentin Fiore and McLuhan comment that the world was now a 'brand-new world of allatonceness[,] "time" has

ceased, "space" has vanished. We now live in a global village...a simultaneous happening.'

(Fiore and McLuhan 1967: 63) This simultaneous happening, arguably is a key factor for

how the internet has moved forward to the current state of *allatoncenessalways*. This takes

into account the development of the internet and technology to its current instant pace where

seemingly things happen all at once, all of the time, which consequently develops multiple

layers of perception and is where information appears to be lost and transformed. A practical

manifestation of these ideas pre-internet are apparent in the *Whole Earth Catalog* (1968–72)

(Fig. 0.1), which included reviews, how-tos, and offered both encyclopaedic entries and

opinion pieces and has become a symbol of 1960s psychedelic counterculture. The

inaugural issue featured a photographic image of the Earth from space by the National

Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) (Fig. 0.2). The American government had not

publicly released the image. The editor Stewart Brant used the image to signify both his and

the catalogue's position against the governmental control of information and as a metaphor

for the revelatory nature of the catalogue. The *Whole Earth Catalog* simultaneously acted as

a network and a database, citing from where and whom information was gathered and

asking for user feedback. This process has become very familiar to users of Amazon, eBay

and for online shopping in general, which tend to display this information readily beneath the

product descriptions. The *Whole Earth Catalog* sought to function:

> as an evaluation and access device. With it, the user should know better what is
> worth getting and where and how to do the getting. An item is listed in the Catalog
> if it is deemed:
> 1 Useful as a tool.
> 2 Relevant to independent education.
> 3 High quality or low cost.
> 4 Easily available mail.
> (Brant: 1968: 2)

Brant referred to the audience as users, as opposed to readers. This term has become

ubiquitous today and is how humans and nonhumans are referred to when they interact with

technology. Comparisons to Google can be made here as both systems function as a

method of accessible knowledge exchange, with Google's mission to '[o]rganise the world's

information and make it universally accessible and useful.' (2018: page banner) It is no

coincidence that Brant was heavily involved in the development of technological infrastructure. He rationalised cyberspace as an alternate space, co-founding The WELL or Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (1985) with Larry Brilliant, which became a pioneering virtual community. Steve Jobs, founder of Apple, cites Brant and the *Whole Earth Catalog* as one of his greatest influences, as a figure who has shaped the world and continues to do so (Jobs 2005). The shaping of the structure of the internet by the libertarian views of Silicon Valley and its global corporations and cloud platforms, is encompassed in the ideologies of Brant, Jobs and Perry Barlow. It could be argued that this has ultimately resulted in the internet and technological infrastructure becoming undemocratic and functioning as a facet of neoliberalism (Bridle 2018: 5).

Viewing the world in its totality as evidenced by the intentions of the *Whole Earth Catalog* and Google has formed both technological infrastructure and the way the Earth is framed. Alternatively, Jennifer Gabrys' term 'becoming planetary' (2018) could be applied. The frame, as Elizabeth Grosz writes 'is the particular contribution of architecture to the taming of the virtual, the territorialisation of the uncontrollable forces of the Earth. It is the frame […] that liberates the qualities of objects or events that come to constitute the substance, the matter.' (2008: 17) Planetary scale is a total view, to see the world it in its entirety as way to comprehend the useable and unknowable forces of material matter. This reframing of the Earth to its planetary scale avoids seeing images and information as discrete and considers their intra-active qualities within matter. This prevents Susan Sontag's fear for the photograph and here more broadly in terms of digital visual imagery:

> [t]he photograph is a thin slice of space as well as time. In a world ruled by photographic images, all borders ("framing") seem arbitrary. Anything can be separated, can be discontinuous, from anything else. [A]ll that is necessary is to frame the subject differently. (Conversely, anything can be made adjacent to anything else.)
> (1979: 22)

Through this separation of borders or frames, 'a nominalist view of social reality' (Sontag, 1979: 23) is reinforced and subsequently, 'the world becomes a series of unrelated,

freestanding particles; and history, past and present a set of anecdotes and *fait divers*.'
(Sontag 1979: 23) Fait divers are French news stories that are brief and sensationalised,
due to its brief and instant nature this relates well to the rise of fake news. The notion of
unrelated freestanding particles is how digital information is seen to function, in discrete
sections. By becoming planetary and expanding the frame to include the Earth takes into
account technologies' materiality and prevents information from becoming fixed. Using the
term planetary scale accounts for the materiality of technological infrastructure, as Grosz
echoes Karen Barad in avoiding over-determination of any one force on the material world,
those 'who understands that culture and history have an outside, are framed and given
position, only through the orders of differences that structure the material world.' (Grosz
2011: 97) The concept of a planetary scale is linked to colonialism, as a dominating force, as
Elizabeth DeLoughrey confirms: 'modern ways of imagining the earth as a totality, including
those spaces claimed for militarism and globalization, derive from colonial histories of spatial
enclosure.' (2014: 261) Arguably planetary scale computation acts as an extension of
colonialism as human and nonhuman users carve the space to reflect binary distinctions.

Mediation

Parafictions can be understood as media events as all works discussed utilise and comment
upon the media, use media-based strategies or produce events. Theoretically, this research
understands the event as a prism, which opens up understandings of the past and potentials
for the future. Events rapidly become hazy narratives, which, as Michael Jackson suggests,
then 'become a window […], onto previous events that are all but forgotten and possible
events that are already being anticipated or prepared.' (2005: 12) Sarah Kember and
Joanna Zylinska's *Life after New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process* (2012) provides a
useful definition of mediation, which considers putting aside the obsession with technological
devices and perceptions of them as discrete objects to make way for an examination of how
technological, social and biological processes can be deemed as mediation. In light of this,
life itself becomes mediation. Frequently, users believe in the 'alleged "newness"' (Kember

and Zylinska 2012: xiii) of new media and technology, preventing users from understanding that what they are experiencing is mediation. Kember and Zylinska's theoretical argument is principally drawn from Henri Bergson and Jacques Derrida who both consider media to be part of a sequence of actions of mediation, with a specific emphasis on the temporal aspects of media: 'its liveness (or rather, lifeness), transience, duration, and frequently predicted death.' (Kember and Zylinska 2012: xvi) Bergson disputes the traditional notion that media is seen as a series of spatalised objects in favour of mediation as part of the complicated process of becoming within media (2002 [1934]). Although, Kember and Zylinska highlight at this point that mediation is also 'the process of *differentiation*' (2012: xvi) and thus it is important to consider the 'historically and culturally significant process of the temporal stabilization of mediation into discrete objects and formations.' (2012: xvi)

One temporal aspect that Kember and Zylinska are significantly concerned with is the link between events and their mediation. This leads to the illusion of liveness as explored by Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler. Events cannot be just presented and represented in the media, and are, therefore, always somewhat performative, as Derrida explains in the following quotation from the interview *Artifactualities* (2002 [1996]):

> [t]he event is another name for that which, in the thing that happens, we can neither reduce nor deny (or simply deny). It is another name for experience itself, which is always experience of the other. The event cannot be subsumed under any other concept, not even that of being. The "there is" [il y a] or the "that there is something rather than nothing" belongs, perhaps, to the experience of the event rather than to a thinking of being.
> (2002 [1996]: 11)

Online users also experience the live effect or 'un effet de direct' (Derrida, 2002 [1996]: 40). As Bergson reinforces in his text *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (2002 [1934]) '[t]he truth is that an existence can be given only in an experience.' (2002 [1934]: 50) Parafiction purports the illusion of liveness, this enables artists to disseminate and create works, which appear true, as Bernard Stiegler suggests that the 'media narrate[s] ordinary

life by anticipating it, with such force that its story of life seems ineluctably to precede life itself.' (2009 [1996]: 186)

Since the explosion of media and television in the second half of the twentieth century, theorists have been concerned with the unseating of reality, as an aspect of postmodernism, afforded by advertising, media and television. It is difficult to discuss the internet or truth, without discussing the concept of hyperreality and the work of Umberto Eco and Jean Baudrillard. In Eco's collection of essays *Faith in Fakes* (1973), the most well-known being *Travels in Hyperreality*, he suggests that America is so obsessed with realism because they need to situate themselves in history and want to reconstruct the past to reflect this, therefore constructing alternate histories that are close to reality, but are not actually so. Perhaps most significant is Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994 [1981]), in which he discusses how spaces such as Disneyland appear as intensified versions of reality, which appear as false, but are accepted to be real. He proposes that the simulacrum is the point when simulations are imitated by reality, people often prefer these simulated versions and it is here where hyperreality lies. Baudrillard follows McLuhan in the notion that media can no longer be separated from their content, by asserting that '[t]here is no longer a medium in a literal sense: it is now intangible, diffused, and diffracted in the real, and one can no longer even say that the medium is altered by it.' (1994 [1981]: 30) He infers that this has led to a loss of meaning as communication gets stuck within the act of communicating rather than the communication itself, devouring the content (1994: 80) through its mediation.

Baudrillard's definition of hyperreality is generally critical, therefore, this research understands reality as layers or multiples rather than following one specific view. This notion of a fractured public sphere began with Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1989 [1962]) and suggests that a fractured public sphere leads to a possibility space of multifarious realities, which is only intensified by the rise of the internet and computation at its planetary scale. Hope and Ryan suggest that we should consider 'hyperreality neither as a development of

recent years nor as such abrupt departure from modernist notions of truth.' (2014: 201)

Instead, it is employed as a way of framing or understanding the world, as another layer of

perception.

<u>Materiality</u>
Matter thus resolves itself into numberless vibrations all linked together in uninterrupted
continuity, all bound up with each other and travelling in every direction like shivers through
an immense body.
<div align="right">Henri Bergson 2004 [1912]: 276</div>

Digital technologies are not separable from the material realities that underwrite them.
<div align="right">Cuboniks 2015:74</div>

This research argues that interactions situated within the seemingly immaterial have material

effects because technological infrastructure has material properties that 'move beyond their

physical presence in everyday life.' (Pink et al. 2016: 77). Materiality happens in 'real time', it

is perceived to be unseen and occurs continuously. The massless flows of information are

not immaterial or otherworldly but are structures and infrastructures. As Tiziana Terranova

asserts:

> [u]nless we want to resign ourselves to the notion that culture has been made
> immaterial and transcendent by an information deluge, we need to reassess the
> ways in which we understand the relationship between culture, power, and
> communication.
> (2004: 9)

The *new materiality* (DeLanda 2015) argues that ideas and discourse are not tied to objects

but considers the capacities and capabilities of materials. It remembers that the

infrastructure of networks work on the binary logic of inclusion and exclusion, whilst

acknowledging that is there is materiality in the relationship between things. This could be

described using Barad's concept of 'agential intra-action' (1996) (Appendix IV: 3) in 'that the

boundaries and properties of the "components" [or capacities] of phenomena become

determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful' (2003: 815), when

specific agential intra-actions occur within 'causal material enactments that may or may not

involve "humans."' (2003: 817) Barad's posthuman perspective takes into account both human and nonhuman users as bodies and as material.

This new materiality of seemingly immaterial actions has physical implications on the planet, politics and perceptions, positioning technological infrastructure as material and actual to consider its effects. This is supported by Manuel DeLanda and is combined with Barad's agential intra-action. DeLanda describes the new materiality as having roots in new materialism, aligning itself with the theories of rationalist Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze. The new materiality is not an Aristotelian perspective, it does not believe that matter is an inert receptacle for forms that come from the outside as transcendent essences nor is it the Newtonian view, that obedient materiality simply follows general laws and owes all its powers to those transcendent laws, that is that form follows function (2015: 16). Instead, we must envisage an active matter that has both its own tendencies and capacities which is subject to divergent evolution and 'animated from within by immanent patterns of being and becoming.' (2015: 16)

DeLanda purposes that causality needs to be transformed from its existing inherently linear constraints that result in the same cause, same effect, always. Instead nonlinear causality should be implemented as it confronts the word same, allowing for 'an entity's capacity to affect […] but also another entity's capacity to be affected.' (2015: 17) This shift is significant as it moves towards an active materiality that takes into account the properties and capacities of material systems. The double life of material systems has been emphasised by contemporary materialist philosophers such as Giles Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* (1994 [1968]). DeLanda uses the example of a knife: its properties are its shape, weight, and size, this defines the knife. If the knife is sharp then this is its capacity, that of being able to cut entities by interacting with them (2015: 18). Material properties are always actual, either the knife is sharp or not, however the capacity to cut is not actual if the knife is not being used, therefore capacities can be real without being actual (2015: 18) As Deleuze suggests '[t]he virtual is not opposed to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it

is virtual' but that '[t]he reality of the virtual is structure.' (1994: 208-09) This structure is that

of a possibility space as the structure is given through tendencies and capacities, the virtual

holds the 'possibilities of finite spaces in the case of tendencies, [and] open-ended spaces in

the case of capacities.' (2015: 19) This is supported by Barad's agential realism which

rejects binary oppositions to argue that phenomena have the components or capacities to:

> acknowledge nature, the body, and materiality in the fullness of their becoming
> without resorting to the optics of transparency or opacity, the geometries of absolute
> exteriority or interiority, and the theorization of the human as either pure cause or
> pure effect while at the same time remaining resolutely accountable for the role "we"
> play in the intertwined practices of knowing and becoming.
> (Barad 2003: 812)

This results in matter as a '*substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing but a doing a*

congealing of agency' (Barad 2007: 215) that is always occurring iteratively to make

phenomena into matter (Barad 2003). Applied to technological infrastructure, this is where

the matter of the infrastructure is always performatively doing, congealing and merging

agency, through and across many forms of matter. The materiality of intra-actions are part of

the world not exterior from it, but are still controlled or subject to external material and

planetary forces both human and nonhuman. This could also be referred to as a form of

'moistmedia' (2000) conceptualised by Roy Ascott, as the 'construction of a fluid reality'

(2000: 2) that is 'between the [seemingly] dry world of virtuality and the wet world of biology'

(2000: 2). As Barad concludes:

> [t]he world is a dynamic process of intra-activity and materialization in the enactment
> of determinate cultural structures with determinate boundaries, properties,
> meanings, and patterns of marks on bodies. […] that is, it is through specific intra-
> actions that phenomena come to matter, in both senses of the word. […]
> (2007: 214)

Nonhuman Users

For the purpose of this research the term nonhuman users is used to refer to all users of

digital space that are not human. Within the remit of the thesis this is mostly in reference to

the nonhuman users of technological infrastructure, such as algorithms, data and

technological systems that navigate spaces without human intervention. The point has been

made to include nonhuman users in an attempt to consider issues at a planetary scale,

providing a total view of these infrastructures and digital landscapes. The term also

encompasses biological entities and these material elements are discussed in *Chapter Two*

Parafiction: Boundaries of Infrastructures and Institutions.

The term nonhuman users is not ideal as it again makes binary decisions upon what is

human and what is not. However, the inclusion of the term nonhuman does account for a

discussion of all users. It is an attempt to not view the world in black or white and accept the

grey as Paul B. Preciado writes:

> The entire universe is cut in half and solely in half. Everything is heads or tails in this
> system of knowledge. We are human or animal. Man or woman. Living or dead. We
> are the colonizer or the colonized. Living organism or machine. We have been
> divided by the norm. Cut in half and forced to remain on one side or the other of the
> rift.
> (Preciado 2019: 35)

Due to the scale of the research it was not possible to use the term nonbinary perspectives

as this would change the focus of the research. However, when expanding the research

nonbinary perspectives will be considered to remove these distinctions.

The concept of nonhuman users in the thesis should be understood within the theoretical

framework of Barad and Donna J. Haraway. That is to see things in term of material

entanglements and as forms of intra-actions (Barad 2003). This develops a framework to

begin to, as Haraway terms 'make kin' (2016), by accepting the existence of enmeshed

entities interacting at a planetary scale. Making kin is the act of seeing 'in lines of inventive

connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present."

(Haraway 2016: 1) This becomes sympoiesis, which Haraway defines as the act of making

with. Therefore, sympoiesis needs to occur between multispecies players (Haraway 2016) in

order to realise nonbinary non-hierarchical systems where 'mortal critters [are] entwined in

myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.' (Haraway 2016: 1)

<u>Media Art History</u>

Parafiction can be practices that move beyond the big media reveal by viewing space as a series of material entanglements. Research into 'new media' and technology has the tendency to concentrate on revealing infrastructures to uncover how media structures operate and upon whom they operate. Jamie Allen argues that to move beyond the (obsession) with the big media reveal would set in motion (the space) for new myths and imaginaries (2019). Instead, Allen's keynote paper *Beyond the Media Reveal: Full of Sound and Fury, Signifying…What?* (2019) asks what energies and relevances can be recovered in media art and research that are generative of the presence and attentions needed to allow good things to grow. This non-essentialist perspective refrains from applying the binaries of true or false enabling 'events' to be both and neither true nor false. Allen used a video of Björk discussing the properties of a TV (igorbuenocorrea 2007), what she says is neither true nor false, relating to both the actual and contingent possibilities of the TV as an object.

Historically, 'new media' aims to reveal. An example of this is the invention of photography. Photography was referred to as the pencil of nature (Fox Talbot 1844) for its ability to pull back the curtain and reveal more than the eye could see. Media does extend perception but, as McLuhan argues, every extension is also an amputation (Fiore and McLuhan 1967). This progression also removes the importance of magic and myth in the production of knowledge in the quest for subject and objectivity. Allen uses the example of Muybridge's horse, his pictures reveal how a horse runs, but in doing so removes the majesty of the animal. Similarly, Arthur M. Worthington drew beautiful drawings of water splashes for twenty years, discovering that the droplets were symmetrical. He then discovered with the advent of photography that although he was able to capture accurately the moment the droplet hit the surface, his initial hypothesis was wrong. Although this discovery is undeniably useful, his drawings hold equal value as they show Worthington's thought process, how his eye and brain work to rectify the image and they are aesthetically pleasing.

This research does not use the terms new media art, media art, digital art or art and technology. New Media art or media art is a fluid and fluctuating category of art, which has been known by a number of names. First as computer art, then in the 1960s-90s as multimedia art and cyberart and now, from the end of the twentieth century, as both digital art and new media art. The 'new' in new media art is contested, confusing and almost always outdated, as Sarah Cook and Steve Dietz made reference to in the humourous title of their exhibition, *The Art Formly Known as New Media* (2005). More often than not the technology used is not 'new' and the new has referred to media other than which is associated with the digital technologies, the internet or what we would currently term as 'new' as previously asserted by Kember and Zylinska (2012). The research does not use the term digital art as defined by Paul, as not all works are what Paul defines as *digital-born* (2016). However, the research agrees with Paul, that new media art is 'a subcategory of a larger field of digital art that comprises all art using digital technologies at some point in the process of its creation, storage or distribution.' (2016: 1) That is the focus of this research.

Often for parafiction the effects of these practices are felt outside of their digital or technological remit and as not all work discussed has a digital form or its subject is technology. This research also diverges from Paul's inclusion of digital photographs or prints within the remit of digital art. Therefore, this research uses the term contemporary art, but acknowledges the definitions of new media art and digital art. Drawing from Steve Dietz's 1999 paper *Why Have There Been No Great Net Artists*, Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham's definition of new media art is used as a starting point, which supports Paul in stating that:

> [a]rt that is made using electronic media technology and that displays any or all of
> the three behaviours of interactivity, connectivity and computability, in any
> combination.
> (2010: 10)

For this research using the framework of interactivity, connectivity and computability takes into account the diverse practices considered whilst enabling accurate groupings and comparisons from a variety of works. Here, the practices are understood within the history

and context of performance art traditions and new media art as forms of contemporary art within the unique category of the parafictive. The roots of new media art are important to the underpinnings of this research, because media art takes into consideration the absorption and progression of video art, experimental film and performance, which for the purpose of this research is significant for analysing the selected case studies and their parafictive roots. This is relevant to parafictions because they often utilise diverse forms of media and are almost always performative. The performative function of a parafiction is the moment when someone trusts that what they see as real. The elements of new media art under discussion can be seen to reflect the Dada spirit in its response to industrialised warfare and the mechanical reproduction of images and texts as Reena Jana and Mark Tribe suggest is a 'response to the informational technology revolution and the digitisation of cultural forms' (2007: 8). This research does not use the term post-internet art but examines contemporary art in its most expanded sense. As Gloria Sutton summaries:

> [w]hat happens if instead of continually inscribing concentric circles around *definitions* of terms such as post-internet art, we examine the pattern by which art history is subjected to cycles of control and conformism – so-called alternative positions, or a strategic process of othering – and acts of erasure through deletion that occur in the pursuit of a formalist universalism within contemporary art? […] the ways that the proliferation of the internet – as a locus of production and reception for contemporary art – coincides with the turn toward dialogism in art of the late 1980s and early 1990s.
> (2018: 60-61)

This research addresses the art historical patterns and conditions that produce a form of practice that the research refers to as the parafictive.

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

Lambert-Beatty 2009: 78

The concept of parafiction is central to this research, here the etymology and context of the term is examined to outline the scope of its usage, addressing how this research extends Lambert-Beatty's research and introducing concepts that support the use of the term, most notably David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan's *fictioning* (c.2010). This research is indebted

to Carrie Lambert-Beatty for introducing the concept of parafiction in the journal article

Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility (2009), she defines a parafiction as:

> real and/or imaginary personages and stories [that] 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 degrees of success, for various durations, and for various purposes,
> these fictions are experienced as fact.
> (2009: 54)

Lambert-Beatty draws the term and its parameters from a range of fields, including contemporary art, critical studies, documentary, performance art and theatre. Director Jerzy Grotowski's (Appendix V: 6) *paratheatre* (1969-76) (Appendix IV: 5) describes a mode of experimental practice Grotowski undertook with the Laboratory Theatre between 1969 and 1976[1]. Grotowski's paratheatre is a contemporary of Augusto Boal's (Appendix V: 2) *Invisible Theatre* (c.1971), which also sought to promote change through experimental action outside of the confines of the institution. Grotowski preferred the term *active culture* (n.d.) (Appendix IV: 1), which he used more often than paratheatre, asserted a collaborative process to co-create events with the audience through active participation with people and nature. Inspired by and growing from counterculture, paratheatre sought to remove the divide between participant and spectator in the form of investigative audience-less research (Salata 2008) through experimental actions intended to generate transformations in culture. Bruce Wilshire developed the term *paratheatrical* (1990) (Appendix IV: 5) from Grotowski's paratheatre, which he characterised as a form of performance or theatre experienced as 'real' that takes place outside of the confines of the institution to enable fiction to exist within the realm of fact (1990). As Wilshire confirms:

> when we extend the idea of the theatrical beyond its traditional confines of artistic
> performance we are crossing the line which divides fiction from fact and attempting
> to apply categories of fiction to the domain of fact.
> (1990: 169)

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[1] Members of the Laboratory Theatre continued the practice with Grotowski's permission but without his presence until 1978.

The concept of paratheatre is useful to the term parafiction because it utilises fiction's methods to masquerade as fact. Parafiction has much in common with experimental post-Marxist theatre as a form of 'as if'. Parafictive practice does not always occur within the setting of the institution and interacts with public space. The inclusion of the conventions of post-Marxist theatre demonstrates the alignment of the histories of performance with contemporary art in its most expanded sense.

During times of totalitarian rule, art, performance and theatre appear to replicate the real, (Kohtes 1993: 87) with the implementation of unconventional methods and spaces that use 'real' life as subject matter and material. Artists either choose or are forced to withdraw from the bounds of cultural institutions in order to avoid exposing themselves to those in power and the repercussions of questioning totalitarian regimes. The use of public space enhances exposure to the public integrating culture into everyday life to offer parafictive alternatives to autocracy. The selected case studies in chapter one act as touchstones in the twentieth century where social, political, artistic and technological histories converge and are either the culmination or catalyst for change. As Debord suggests:

> [r]evolution is not "showing" life to people, but making them live. A revolutionary organisation must always remember that its objective is not getting its adherents to listen to convincing talks by expert leaders, but getting them to speak for themselves, in order to achieve, or at least strive toward, an equal degree of participation.
> (1961: 397)

These periods of political unrest and social change lead to, as Claire Bishop suggests, a 'social turn' (2006) (Appendix IV: 6) occurring in art, during which artistic practice interrogates collaborative forms. Bishop is interested in participatory art, which encompasses parafiction as 'interventionist actions in mass media' (2012: 1), defining the term participatory art as artistic engagement with participation and collaboration, which positions people as the core medium and material, in the same vein as theatre and

performance. This definition interacts with the term parafiction, which also incorporates concepts traditionally associated with theatre and performance. Both types of practices can be categorised as performance, with parafictions forming a unique component of participatory art and the similarities between these forms of practice are evident in the intended outcomes. The parafictive aspect of participatory art is not discussed within the remit of Bishop's *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012) although the research would argue that a number of Bishop's examples can be categorised as parafictive. For the research, the argument of social turns, is expanded and applied to parafictions, which needs participants in order to function as forms of active encounter because parafiction is, almost, always performative. Although people are not necessarily the medium, human and contemporarily nonhuman interaction with parafiction is how parafictive effects are experienced.

Lambert-Beatty also refers to curator Mark Nash's examination of the documentary turn in art history in the exhibition and catalogue, *Experiments with Truth: The Documentary Turn* (2004), which examines the blurring of documentary filmmaking with art practice. Ben Evans James (Appendix V: 5), a filmmaker and curator, is writing his practice-led PhD on the topic. Evans James creates parafiction for his audience within a documentary format intersecting with the methods of ethnography, storytelling and fiction. His latest film, *On A Clear Day You Can See the Revolution From Here* (2019) positions the myth and folklore of Kazakhstan as fact to explore the country's quest for a post-Soviet Union identity.

Parafiction as Method
In this way fantasy reveals reality: Reality is just the underlying fantasy, a fantasy that reveals need.

(Acker 2017 [1978]: 20)

Simon O'Sullivan and David Burrows have examined the concept of *fictioning* (c.2010), academically and with the collaborative performance group, Plastique Fantastique (Appendix V: 10) (2004-). These research projects, practical and theoretical, are distinct, but

share transversal links with both arguing for fictioning as a new field of study for art and philosophy. O'Sullivan describes fictioning as the embodiment of fictions within reality as a form of temporal looping (2019). This research has solidified in Burrows and O'Sullivan's book *Fictioning: The Myth Function of Contemporary Art and Philosophy* (2019), which places greater emphasis on philosophy, visual cultures and literature than this thesis.

It is important to contextualise how the methods of literary fiction can be applied to modern and contemporary art. Fictions work by dislodging current perspectives through the revelation of alternate ones. Appropriate here is Rosalind Krauss' use of the term *paraliterary* (1980) to suggest writings that are both criticism and not-criticism (1980) with parafiction sharing this dual quality of being both fiction and non-fiction. Historical fiction begins with facts, but produces invented worlds, where it is clear how the fiction diverges from fact. Fantasy fiction exists within worlds different to our own whereas the weird creates what Mark Fischer refers to as an 'egress' (2016: 19), a departure from our world to another yet with the two still intrinsically linked. Science Fiction is often categorised as the weird.

Parafiction is a method of myth making and a form of mythopoetic practice (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019). For example, the mythologisation that mass hysteria occurred after the broadcast of the radio production of Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds* (1938) (Campbell 2011). This story is too good to dismiss as false and therefore becomes myth. It is much better to remember it as real. Ian Alan Paul (Appendix V: 9-10) refers to this as a form of fixed memory that creates nostalgia (Appenix III 2018: 67). This is evident in the ideology of the American dream and 1950s Americana, that returns back to a time that never existed, or the rose-tinted version of post-World War II (WWII) Britain, its Blitz spirit and keep calm mentality that acts as a way to flatten the potential agency that the past holds.

'A complete typology of the parafictions and its tools would tell us much […]' (Lambert-Beatty 2009: 71) Lambert-Beatty is yet to do this, and this is one of the reasons for this

research. The timeframe develops upon Lambert-Beatty's initial exploration and the trend of parafictive artworks identifiably exists within this. This research echoes Lambert-Beatty's sentiment that 'despite their many precedents, parafictions interest me because they are powerfully and uniquely appropriate to our historical moment – which is to say, powerfully and uniquely troubling' (2009: 58). Lambert-Beatty's article is from 2009 and includes practices up until 2008. Consequently, it is important to develop her initial investigation and incorporate changes in the social political landscape - the global financial crisis and rise of populism - and with technology – the growth of social media and the planetary-scale of technological infrastructure – post-2008. In 2009, Lambert-Beatty's asserts 1998 as the starting point for this tendency because of the political culture of the time and the growing use of the internet for personal purposes. However, in both 2012 and 2018, Lambert-Beatty revises her initial assessment with her current research encompassing the early 1990s and the work of Coco Fusco (Appendix V: 3), Guillermo Gómez-Peña (Appendix V: 5), Fred Wilson (Appendix V: 17) and James Luna (Appendix V: 8). During the late 1990s, estimates suggest that usage of the public internet grew 100 percent year on year, with the mean year on year growth of users ranging between 20 and 50 percent (Kholeif 2016: 148). Lambert-Beatty argues that these artistic strategies emerged in the late 1990s and encapsulated in the year 2003, which Naomi Klein dubbed 'The Year of the Fake' (2004), with the invasion of Iraq to conduct a hunt for non-existent weapons of mass destruction as the ultimate fake. During this period, the lies or untruths told had big consequences, in which the existing framework for truth altered as seemingly scientific and political authority faltered and affected commitment to truth.

'Parafiction is the way contemporary art takes on the epistemic dimensions of the transformative crises of this period' (Lambert-Beatty 2018: 14) in Lambert-Beatty's sense parafiction is how contemporary art addresses the issues of this period that have radically altered society. Parafiction has moved away from critiquing reality to demonstrate alternative forms of communication, as Stafylakis comments:

> [p]arafictions and overidentification seem to respectively embrace the application of deception and/or manipulation in social relations. And, thus, deception becomes less a postmodern critique of reality and more an actual form of communicative/social networking.
> (2018: 15)

This social political change has created a demand and expectation for alternative frameworks to understand the world. In 2019, the culture of the fake has intensified, with many claims that contemporarily there has been a seismic shift to an era of both post-truth and post-politics. In part, this is due to the exponential growth of the internet to its now self-reflexive contraction at its present planetary-scale. Lambert Beatty begins to comment upon this context by referring to Wikipedia's citation system, Paul Virilio's *Strategies of Deception* (2000) and theories of control in the age of information, but this aspect needs extending to reflect current experiences. This research agrees that the internet requires the skill of media literacy to determine the authenticity and provenance of sources. Lambert-Beatty acknowledges this. In relation to Wikipedia[2] and Google, she states, '[i]n experiencing most parafiction – where the fictional hangs on the factual – one is evaluating not only whether a proposition is fiction, but what parts of it are true.' (2009: 78) A number of additional issues have developed since 2009 that intrinsically link parafictions, politics and technology. The rise of vloggers and influencers on social media and video sharing websites such as YouTube have extended performances of identity. Social media has become powerful due to online influencers and that has infiltrated the 'physical' world with people 'doing it for the insta!' (Appendix IV: 3). However, this is at odds with human engagement with applications and algorithms, which constantly ask users to be authentic by providing accurate data and this is how data is then organised as a reflection of themselves. A problem of the contemporary is the obsession of thinking 'historically about the present,' (Lambert-Beatty,

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[2] In the years post-2009, online sources such as Wikipedia have generally become more reliable with citations often empirical and when citations are needed they are clearly highlighted to the reader. In 2019, Wikipedia is a much more reliable and credible source than in 2009. Perhaps as it is almost twenty years since its launch in 2001, more time has been spent improving the quality of the content. Furthermore, higher and secondary education are even using Wikipedia as a way to teach their students about research, setting assignments which require the students to improve the quality of selected Wikipedia pages (Crovitz and Smoot: 2009, Freire and Li: 2016, Infeld and Adams: 2013). Many upgrades have been made to the citation system on Wikipedia and users can follow and trace the original source, they are then able to make informed decisions on the credibility of the source. However, this does rely on the desire of the individual user to check the reliability of the information that they are viewing.

2009: 83) constantly contextualising existence as the past. This is particularly evident in social media posts. Instantly posts are archived and in turn become historic, with posts occurring minutes, hours or days ago or with apps such as Timehop, which 'throw you back' (Appendix IV: 7) to the most significant post on that day for every year that you have been active on Facebook.

METHODOLOGY

The thesis uses the overarching methodology of fiction as a method to produce new knowledge. In this research the methodology outlines the theoretical and philosophical framework, establishing perspectives and considers the concepts that have formed the basis of this work together with the interconnected interdisciplinary primary and secondary methods used. By following Jonathan Harris' suggestion that, '[t]he genesis of all intellectual activity, therefore, is inevitably related to a person's world-view, perspective, and the interests and values associated with it' (2001: 37), researcher bias has been accounted for (where possible) during the process of this research.

I have significant experience in conducting art historical research, which has been vital in my higher education and has been honed during my MRes and the course of the PhD, and as an academic I have taught research methods to undergraduate and postgraduate students since 2015. My personal experience and in-depth knowledge of research methods provided me with a good foundation for considering and selecting the research methods I used for this research.

The research is firmly rooted within the fields of art history, theory and criticism. Within contemporary theory and criticism, interdisciplinarity and the utilisation of interrelated fields and concepts is a key component to research. Therefore, the methodology required an interdisciplinary approach and mixed methods, which can be separated into three categories: primary data, secondary data, and artistic practice. The research combines methods in order to provide in-depth primary source content and secondary source context to answer the questions posed.

Primary data collection included interviews with relevant artists, attending and speaking at international conferences and research visits to exhibitions. Three interviews were conducted with UBERMORGEN, Ian Alan Paul and Maud Craigie.

In terms of secondary data, a case study approach was used for most significant artists, this included Amalia Ulman, Suzanne Treister, UBERMORGEN and Ian Alan Paul, to enable an in-depth enquiry. Digital ethnography was applied in order to negotiate online spaces and artworks. This was supported by a detailed enquiry of secondary literature, with the thesis engaging significantly with art history, contemporary art, media studies, performance art, philosophy and politics whilst interacting broadly with anthropology, architectural theory, sociology and software design. The research applies a theoretical framework developed from this broad range of fields to art objects, both physical and digital. It uses a comparative theoretical approach by developing upon existing theories in order to generate its own projections.

For the practice-based output, the production of a body of artwork and diagrammatic reasoning were used to augment the theoretical proposal. The art practice is employed as a method to synthesise the theory with practice and to apply the knowledge learnt outside of its text-based constraints. The practice appears as interludes interspersed throughout the thesis, that produce a duo-linear narrative with the aim of the thesis becoming an artwork in its own right. The art practice is employed to synthesise the theory with practice as parafiction as method and to apply the knowledge learnt outside of its text-based constraints, as Burrows and O'Sullivan confirm '[f]iction and analysis are not necessarily opposed or incompatible modes; in fact, analysis might require fiction.' (2019:177)

After the collection and collation of source material, the visual and textual material is analysed through comparative and textual analysis. The research has evolved through the attendance at international conferences as speaker and audience member, peer-reviewed publication, interaction with academic peers and research visits to exhibitions and archives.

Interviews

The interviews were an important and significant aspect of the research design and attempts were made to conduct interviews with all the artists who are case studies (Appendix III). At times negotiating participants' different needs has proved challenging and time consuming, however this has been a valuable learning experience in terms of developing the skills to navigate responses and different artistic agendas and personas. Interviews were conducted interviews with three of the artists included in the research. Participants were contacted via an email (Appendix III: 31) that outlined who the research was, the interview procedure, what the research was and why they were a potential interviewee.

The choice to include interviews within the research came with the caveat that Liverpool John Moores University Ethics Committee granted ethical approval prior to conducting the interviews. Ethical approval had been granted twice previously at Undergraduate and Masters Level and therefore, there was familiarity with the process and enough time was given to complete the application. All participants provided informed consent before agreeing to the interview and maintained a right to withdraw at any time. Previous experience has found that semi-structured interview questions are the best way to get the most out of the interviewee. The use of semi-structured interview questions provides a framework for the interview but allows for divergence so that additional questions could be asked if necessary and to follow other areas of interest generated from the conversation and interview. The interviewee had access to the questions prior to the interview, which meant that they could prepare their responses and were able to negotiate the questions if necessary. This improved the quality of the responses to the questions and was more appropriate for this type of research.

Chauncey Wilson defines the weakness of semi-structured interviews as the 'interviewer effect' (2014), which is the need for training and experience in order to not direct the

questions or put words into the interviewee's mouth (2014). However, as there was previous experience of interviewing, the questions were carefully constructed so that they were clear, concise and not leading (Appendix III: 35) in order to get the interviewees to be open about their research or practice. Conscious effort was made to remove opinion, allowing the interviewees to respond to the questions in the way they wished. From this, a sense of the person or the artistic persona they were trying to portray became apparent and is reflected in the transcripts (Appendix III: 41-69). As a sole researcher, personal bias was considered. An additional potential pitfall was the bias that those interviewed may have felt towards the interviewer and that there may have been tension generated from the relationship between the researcher and them, as the producer of art. Some assumed that the researcher held fixed opinions and ideas, come from a position of power in terms of applying the research to their practice and that there was no understanding of what it is to be a practitioner. This was most evident in email exchanges, although many of the interviewees are also academics and therefore may not have experienced this conflict. Interviews conducted face-to-face were potentially biased against age, as the researcher looks and is relatively young, and gender, although this did not appear to be the case.

The semi-structured interview questions were devised for each participant under the three headings: Parafiction, Questions Specific to your Practice and Other Thoughts. All five questions on parafiction were the same for each participant (Appendix III: 35). This meant that comparative analysis of the answers could be conducted and these questions could be given to other people of interest, if interviews with academics or curators, for example, became necessary.

The interviews took place face-to-face via video telephone (Skype or Google Hangouts) and via email. The intention was to conduct interviews face-to-face so that verbal and nonverbal signals from the interviewees could be taken into account. This may have permitted more in-depth or personal responses or for the adaptation of questions if interviewees were not

delivering the information required. However, this was only possible in one instance due to locational differences and the schedules of the artists involved. Overall, a nuanced approach to interviewing was undertaken, one which considered the individuality of each participant in tailoring the questions and conducting the interview in the way that they felt most comfortable and appropriate to them. It was intended that interviews would last for approximately one hour and it was suggested that where necessary a follow up interview would be conducted, again lasting up to one hour in length. However, the one interview, which took place face-to-face, lasted around two hours and fifteen minutes, which was perhaps too long, but did take into account that, in this case, the artists are a duo, based in different locations with different points of view.

Research Visits

As part of primary data collection, research visits to relevant conferences, exhibitions and talks were conducted and where possible artworks have been seen first-hand. A key exhibition and its supporting symposia, talks and events was *How much of this is fiction*, curated by Annet Dekker and David Garcia in collaboration with Ian Alan Paul, at FACT, Liverpool, 2 March – 21 May 2017. Concurrently, the exhibition ran at HeK, Basel, and previously was shown under the alternate title *As If – The Media Artist as Trickster* from 20 January – 5 March 2017 at Framer Framed, Amsterdam. Physically visiting this exhibition gave the opportunity to experience key art works by case study artists Ian Alan Paul and UBERMORGEN (Appendix V: 14) and artworks, which fall into the category of the parafictive. The opening day included the symposium *Tactical Media Connections*, the artist talk *'Dark Jesters' in the Spotlight* and talk *Meme Wars: Internet Culture and the Alt Right*. This visit confirmed that the research is contemporary and important. Another key exhibition visited was *Abuse Standards Violations,* an exhibition of Eva and Franco Mattes' (Appendix V:) work at Carroll/Fletcher, London, which ran 10 June– 27 August 2016 and provided opportunity to see in their work firsthand. Works included *Dark Content* (2015-), *By Everyone For No One Every Day* (*BEFNOED*, 2014) and *Image Search Result* (2014-) and

this provided important context for the research and confirmed the decision to use Eva and Franco Mattes (Appendix V: 9) as a supporting example. Suzanne Treister's (Appendix V: 13) *Holographic Universe Theory of Art History (THUTOAH)* (2018) was visited as part of Mónica Bello and José-Carlos Mariátegui's exhibition Broken Symmetries at FACT, Liverpool, 22 November 2018 – 3 March 2019. A visit to Walid Raad's (Appendix V: 10) solo show *Let's be honest, the weather helped* at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 18 May - 13 Oct 2019, was a very moving experience and it was inspiring to view his work as the Atlas Group firsthand. As a result of this visit Raad's work is included within the body of this thesis. The opportunity also arose to see Ian Cheng's (Appendix V: 3) *Emissary Forks at Perfection* (2015-16) as part of the exhibition *New Order: Art and Technology in the Twenty-First Century* at MoMA, New York, 17 March – 15 June 2019.

Significant conferences to this research include: *Association for Art History's (AAH) Annual Conference 2018* at the Courtauld Institute of Art and Kings College London 5 -7 April 2018 (speaker), *Digital Ecologies II: Fiction Machines*, Centre for Media Research, Bath Spa University, UK, 16 July 2019 (speaker and chair), *RE:SOUND 8th International Conference for Histories of Media Art, Science and Technology,* Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark, August 20-23 2019 (speaker) and *RE:TRACE 7th International Conference for Histories of Media Art, Science and Technology* at Krems, Gottweig, Vienna, Austria 23 – 25 November 2017. Presenting and visiting these conferences provided the opportunity to share research with peers, networking and helped to develop a deep understanding of current research, themes and trends. Significant papers included Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's keynote 'Approximate Repetitions: Latent Big Data' (2017) at *RE:TRACE* and Vid Simoniti's 'Dadaist Strategies in Digital Art and in Alt-Right' (2018) at the *AAH Annual Conference*. Without attending these conferences, these academics would have remained unknown and their research has been important to the development of this thesis. Bloomsbury Academic will publish the AAH paper in the form of a book chapter in 2020.

<u>Secondary Data</u>

Secondary data comes from a wide range of sources including books, conference recordings, digital archives, documentaries, exhibition catalogues, journals, online videos, podcasts and websites.

<u>Case Studies</u>

Generally, using a case study method means selecting a case or cases, which are of specific interest to the researcher. In the research the inclusion criteria for each case study is that the artworks are parafictive and have occurred between 1900 and 2019. The case studies support this research's aims and questions, providing the artistic material in order to examine parafiction as method and matter. The research extensively considers the key artistic case studies Ian Alan Paul, Suzanne Treister, UBERMORGEN and Amalia Ulman (Appendix V: 16), with the support of additional artists where necessary. Using a case study approach requires conducting in-depth and rigorous analysis of the types of practice referred to in this research as parafictive. As all artworks fall into the category of the parafictive there are commonalities which are categorised as 'as ifs' and 'what ifs' and these relationships are mapped within the supporting diagrams (Appendix II: Figure 1 & 2).

<u>Ethics</u>

Ethics are not discussed within the remit of the thesis because of the scale of the research. It is not the position of the researcher to comment on the ethicality of the projects discussed as this would be a different research project. Ethics are often conflated with morality, however ethics have no fixed parameters but rather react to the circumstance that an event occurs within:

> Ethics and morals are conceptually antithetical. For example, whilst a moral claim would argue that to kill another human being is wrong in all circumstances, ethics provides no absolute rule but rather establishes a basis for analysis that *arises from the circumstance itself*.
> (Beshty 2015: 19)

Parafiction can be a selfish endeavour, with those who conduct parafiction often having or using narcissistic pathologies and tendencies resulting in parafiction sometimes being unethical and contradictory. At times content of artworks may be difficult or challenging for the reader however, unethical means can be justified when in the name of morally justifiable gains. Walead Beshty confirms this: '[a]n individual who asserts a morally acceptable, i.e. normatively correct or just, position can deploy unethical means to achieve it' (2015: 20).

For example, in Eva and Franco Mattes' work *No Fun* (2011) in which Franco simulates his suicide on the video sharing social networking website ChatRoulette.com, tricks users of the site into believing that they were witnessing a suicide, which is considered morally unacceptable. However, the piece comments on the lack of intervention from the viewers and the lack of content warning or screening by the site. This is particularly significant for ChatRoulette because the site is known for its sexually explicit content (Kreps 2010). The ability to expose oneself is afforded to users via the random and anonymous nature of the site, which provides users with a sense of security (Kreps 2010: 213).

Within *Parafiction: Contemporary Cases 1979-2019*, many of pieces could be deemed immoral because hackers, hoaxers and pranksters aim to deceive. For example, the Mattes were not discussed at greater length as many of their projects would require a deeper analysis into the morality of their practices. This is outside of the remit of this thesis. Therefore, the research concentrates on 'what ifs' rather than 'as ifs' because speculative futures that displace reality are more interesting than those that interact with what already exists and often sit outside of existing systems of morals and, or, ethics.

Digital Ethnography

Digital ethnography is most commonly associated with anthropology and sociology. However, it is appropriate for the aims and the its interdisciplinary nature of this research. I have implemented aspects of the digital ethnographic method when researching behaviours and artworks that I can only view online at this time. Dhiraj Murthy's definition is used:

> [d]igital ethnography, unlike "virtual" or "cyber" ethnography is not limited to ethnographic accounts of cyberspace and its concomitant communities and social networks […] Rather, digital ethnography is ethnography mediated by digital technologies. It encompasses virtual ethnography, but is broader in its remit.
> (Murthy 2011: 159)

The digital ethnographic method is most suited to this research as not all instances are specific to the virtual. As Murthy argues digital technologies enable digital ethnography, as in this thesis, the digital technology has supported in-depth research into artworks and social spaces in the realm of the digital. However, the research is not exclusive to that space. Pink et al. suggest that we need to consider 'how we live and research in a digital, material and sensory environment' (2016: 1), reinforce this. The notion of a digital ethnographic approach encompasses the time spent engaging with artworks and people online as a form of contact that is fluid in nature and technology mediates. Pink et al. outline the five key principles of ethnographic research as:

1. Multiplicity. *There is more than one way to engage with the digital.*
2. Non-digital-centric-ness. *The digital is de-centred in digital ethnography.*
3. Openness. *Digital ethnography is an Open Event.*
4. Reflexivity. *Digital ethnography includes reflexive practice.*
5. Unorthodox. *Digital ethnography requires attention to alternative forms of communicating.*
(2016: 8-14)

These points apply to this research in the following way:

1. Multiplicity - Digital ethnography's methods are specific and unique to the research questions. This research accepts that digital technologies are an inseparable aspect of everyday life and therefore have an impact. The internet is imperative to the research in terms of understanding and experiencing digital culture, accessing particular artworks and communicating with participants.

2. Non-digital-centric-ness – This research understands and takes into account that communication mediated by technology is an integral part of life (for those who have access). However other aspects of their lives must be considered, such as their social and political circumstance in order to fully understand technologies' effect.

3. Openness – This research is constructed in an open and flexible manner, it is open to approaches from fields outside of art history and theory and to the fluid nature of digital technologies and technological infrastructure.

4. Reflexive – Pink et al. define reflexivity in digital ethnography as the production of 'knowledge through our encounters with other people and things.' (2016: 12) This research has formed knowledge through its interaction with people - the artists as case studies, interviews and through dissemination at conferences and publications – things -

digital media technologies and art objects - in an expanded sense that have both physical and digital capacities.

5. Unorthodox – This research includes the production of diagrams and drawings, and the use of social media, in the form of Instagram posts and tweets as well as memes, image boards and forums, which combines the findings in an unorthodox manner within their digital context.

Practice

To produce research that is not deeply personal for me is not possible. Prompted by the research process and findings, I have reconnected with my emotions, remembering the sensitive and sentimental individual I had forgotten existed or did not want to be. This shift has helped me to deal with the very nature of PhD research, which is ultimately a very introspective undertaking, to reflect instead that introspection by creating something of myself that I hope others can see too. The combination of traditional academic outputs such as articles and conference papers with artistic practice shows the multifaceted aspects of conducting research in the arts and additional parts of myself that I have chosen to reveal. Through this process, the PhD blurs these lines of fact and fiction, academic rigour and artistic expression to, ultimately, become a parafiction.

Creating Evidence

The material used in my practice has been collected over my lifetime and includes:

- Found or repurposed objects, a noodle pot and a suitcase of found photographs and painting ephemera bought at a car boot sale, over ten years ago,
- Mementos and remnants of childhood, a single knitted mitten, my school P.E. shirt and my favourite blue velvet skirt,
- Items belonging to my Mum and Nanny, mostly textiles such as my Nanny's swimming costume, cotton threads and wool,
- Old clothes, some coral trousers,
- Keepsakes, drawings by friends, small objects,
- Collected paper, texts, exhibition guides and catalogues,
- Repurposing failed craft projects, bad knitting and incomplete crochet,
- Recreating things from childhood, the cat costume, realising in fabric a rabbit drawn by my Nanny.

I have used this source material as a starting point to build a new narrative, which loosely documents the journey of my PhD research, drawing into its orbit my personal history and

academic research into a fictive, often abstract, narrative, which examines the concepts and methods of production interrogated within the written research. This process has solidified my thinking and in a cyclical way has returned to me things about myself I had forgotten. Namely, my artistic practice which had been pushed aside and never given any time resulting in the aforementioned failed craft projects and a sense of frustration. The rigorous research process within my academic study prompted a return to engaging with elements of my previous practice. Reflecting on my own history and remembering my past learning to date, channelled this interest into different ways of producing knowledge. This has become a method that has reconnected me to myself, past, present and future.

Practice became a way to process suppressed emotions, giving me resilience and strength. Specifically, those associated with grief having lost three family members during the course of my PhD. Significantly, two figures, Pat and John Kilford, my grandparents who have had a deep impact on my life. They shaped many of my early childhood memories, looking after me whilst my Mum studied for her degree in Fine Art at Winchester College of Art. These include me riding shotgun with my Grandad, wearing his driving cap and directing him to where we needed to go. Counting cars with my Nanny, walking to the garage, always making food and crafts, eating runner beans, blackberries and tomatoes picked straight from grandad's garden. This intergenerational learning and acts of kindness has had such a profound effect on my family including a love of food, making Nanny's tomato sauce and chutneys, with us all attempting to replicate these and the special memory of having her steak pie on Boxing Day for the last time.

Small details like the tomato plates, the pulley system for the washing line, the market kitchen with its plastic fruit and veg with homemade editions made at the behest of all the grandchildren, these were objects and moments filled with magic. They always knew how to fix things and always had what was on hand to make it possible and it is a joy to see this knowledge dispersed throughout our family. In particular with my Mum, who embodies both

these people and is a credit to them, with whom I share such a special connection. For Jane, the woman who has always supported me, I hope to continue this legacy. For me, they made new worlds possible producing such respect for imagination, making and learning. Their house was enchanting, full of possibility and the past that reminds me of who I am and who I could be. It is a space that is both speculative and grounding.

This loss is felt deeply. So for me, to create a testament to those we have lost gives an account of how what they have taught me has manifested in everything I am today. This is very important in keeping them alive.

Practice Content

Found photographs, paper imbued with history, found words, new narratives, the mystery house, the otherworldly landscape, an origin story, an email chain, a planetary map, a chart, circles, loops, looping a found forgotten history of pasts, presents and futures. A body of work, a piece of me, something about becoming free, creating a structure and infrastructure, my space, your space, no space, some time, no time, any time.

Practice Included:
- *How to See* (2019)
- *Book Ends* (2019-20)
    - *Pretty Little Whiskers* (2019-20)
    - *But I'm Invisible You Know, I Feel I Can't Be Seen* (2020)
- *The Order of the Planets* (2020)
- *Flying Saucers and Black Holes* (2019)
- *Language Artefacts* (2019-20)
- *Embroidery Threat Recreated/Repurposed* (2020)

Practice Interludes and Selected Examples

This section examines selected cases where interludes are used in existing literature and artistic practice to demonstrate the precedent for employing interludes as a method.

Colin Fallows' catalogue *Cut-ups, Cut-ins, Cut-outs: The Art of William S. Burroughs* (2012) uses two interludes. These anecdotal, but significant, interludes build upon the richness of the research and provide a rounded picture of Burroughs to give further insight into his eccentric character. The interludes use Burroughs' technique of the cut-in to disrupt or change the narrative. As these interludes happen in the past, they engage with Burroughs' fascination with space and time travel, working as flashbacks in a film as a form of character development.

INTERLUDE I: *A Chance Encounter with William S. Burroughs,* Tim Head, 2012: 21
This anecdote is true, with Head recounting bumping into Burroughs on Broadway, New York in August 1968. After establishing that it was him, the two talk by a pay phone. The phone then begins to ring and Burroughs politely asked if Head will excuse him as the call would be for him (Head 2012: 12) Burroughs answers the phone and Head continues down Broadway. This interlude acts as validation for the second interlude, demonstrating Burroughs' unique character in which the second interlude becomes believable as it is as strange and humorous as the first.

INTERLUDE II: *Joe Caravaggio – from the Works of C. A. Howe,* C. A. Howe, 2012: 37
Howe is a fictional author with a made-up bibliography and the anecdote itself is fiction. It was created by Michael Bracewell and Damien Hirst. The interlude details a discussion over dinner about the depiction of homosexuality in the work of Caravaggio, Burroughs was uninterested in the conversation and continues to eat his soup in silence. However, the 'flamboyant young queen' (Howe 2012: 37) becomes insistent in gaining Burroughs' opinion and ascertaining if Burroughs knew of Caravaggio's work. Burroughs' finally caves, placing down his spoon to speak. Burroughs exclaims that he did in fact know Caravaggio, Joe Caravaggio, a drag queen in Tangiers who never painted a thing! The table responding by erupting into laughter. This parafiction, could be an anecdote about Burroughs, it functions

as plausible enough as - in Burroughsian fashion - for someone who does not follow rules, it becomes easy to invent something that Burroughs could have done. Burroughs' character and Fallows' selective use of interludes poses the question: Does the validity of anecdotes matter? As all anecdotes are somewhat performative, invented, edited, streamlined with memory fleeting and vague.

Wendy Hui Chun's *Updating to Remain the Same* (2017) uses the interlude to show the argument that the book is making. It demarks each chapter case study and uses a more experimental approach to the structure of an academic text. The interlude is formatted differently to the rest of the text, as a break from the theory to digest and apply the ideas. As previously discussed, this also reflects engagement with online spaces and the non-linear nature of these encounters.

Art & Language 's *Portrait of V. I. Lenin with Cap in the Style of Jackson Pollock III* (1980) is a black and white image of Lenin in a worker's cap stencilled onto a canvas, which was then overlaid with a grid. Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden then applied figurative brush strokes to the canvas, in primary colours using the techniques of Jackson Pollock. It was intended that the series of seven paintings would then be photocopied and reproduced on paper, to then be cut-up and reassembled. Although the paintings were not intended to be shown in their original format, they have subsequently been shown as the original paintings. The motive behind creating this series was to intertwine the antithetical Lenin and Pollock, with Lenin the Russian revolutionary, whose image was widely used within socialist realism and Pollock the symbol of capitalism with American abstraction becoming a placeholder for the 'free' West. Charles Harrison, an art historian, joined the group in 1970 to produce critical writing as part of Art & Language's artistic practice. Harrison suggest that the title became a 'linguistic description for an impossible picture, a kind of exasperated joke.' (1991:129)

Tom Phillips's *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (1966 – ongoing) is a détourned book. The original book, W. H. Mallock's *A Human Document* (1892) was drawn over, with most of the existing text covered by Phillips to produce an alternative narrative. The first edition of *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (1966) was inspired by a Burroughs' article. Philips has continued to create new editions of the text with numerous volumes of the altered book. The new versions and imagery shares visual links with the work of Suzanne Treister.

The comedy troop, Monty Python utilised Terry Gilliam's animations as interludes within their sketch shows and films. The animations acted as forms of narrative progression, as sketches and transitions. Gilliam used cut-up animation, which involved using cut out found images combined with his own drawings and text to produce stop-motion animations.

Diagrammatic Reasoning

Whilst producing practice and research into existing practice, it became clear that many artists engaged with parafiction often use diagrams to support their fictive constructs eg. Walid Raad's The Atlas Group (Appendix II: Figure 5) and Suzanne Treister, this is discussed at length in Chapter Three. Likewise, the practical research includes my own diagrams, transforming theoretical knowledge into forms of diagrammatic reasoning, which are documented in Appendix II. This results in new and alternate ways to produce and communicate knowledge that occurs outside of its traditional formulation. As Burrows and O'Sullivan suggest:

> a diagrammatic process (or at least as a process that can be diagrammed) in which a metaphysics concerned with alternative perspectives of different states, places and entities – including non-human – undermines the universalities of Western thought, which may also lead to a decolonisation of thought.
> (2019: 183)

Analysis and Dissemination

The data collected through the primary and secondary methods has been analysed using a comparative theoretical approach, which uses existing theories in order to develop unique

projections. The face-to-face interviews were recorded (audio and video) and transcribed.

Transcripts were analysed and separated into key themes pertinent to the research.

Participants had the opportunity to review transcripts prior to dissemination. If they were

unhappy with the transcripts, changes were made or content removed as in line with

informed consent and the participants' right to withdraw. Key quotations from the interviews

appear throughout body of the text. The responses have been included in internal paper

presentations and teaching at Liverpool John Moores University and externally, which are

documented in the bibliography in the sections Authored Publications and Authored Papers.

This includes the article 'Parafictions: UBERMORGEN.COM as a Case Study of Parafictive

Practice Conducted between 1998 and 2018' in *JAWS,* 2019, Volume 5, Issue 1. The

research has been presented at numerous international conferences including the paper

'Parafictions and Contemporary Media Art 2008-2018' at *RE:SOUND 8th*

International Conference for Histories of Media Arts 2019, University of Aalborg & RELATE,

Aalborg, Denmark, 20–23 August 2019, 'Parafictions and Contemporary Art 2008-2018' at

Digital Ecologies II: Fiction Machines, Centre for Media Research, Bath Spa University, Bath

UK, 16 July 2019 and 'The Evolution of Parafictions in Contemporary Media Art 1998-2018'

RESAW: The Web that Was, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 19–21

June 2019. An iteratation of this paper has been published in BCS eWic Journal (Smith

2019a). The research was presented at the aforementioned AAH Annual Conference 2018

and the King's CMCI PhD Conference. As well as the publication in JAWS, the research will

be published in the forthcoming chapter, 'The Legacy of the Berlin Dada Media Hoaxes in

Contemporary Parafictive Acts' (Smith 2020) in Sara Hegenbart and Mara-Johanna Kölmel

edited book *Dada Data: Contemporary Practice in the Era of Post-Truth Politics*, London,

Bloomsbury.

CHAPTER ONE
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: CONNECTING THE STRATEGIES OF NET ART WITH POPULISM AND THE ALT-RIGHT

Showing all is possibly the best way to reveal nothing.

Horning 2018: 23

Parafiction: Historic Cases 1900-1978
Baader and I alone, without money, without anything else to do, supplied the press with hoaxes, which they promptly printed.

Raoul Hausmann 1921 citied in Sudhalter 2005: 231

This historical investigation demonstrates that in times of political unrest and disenchantment, artists have implemented parafictive strategies as a method to challenge their current situation. This conducted enquiry examines the deep historical roots as the base structure for parafictions found within modern and contemporary art. The next section identifies key events of the unique social political climate and the embedded nature of technological infrastructure that have made these practices significantly different to those occurring in the twentieth century. Although not a radical break with the past or the historical practices, these conditions have fostered a specific environment for these roots to take hold and these routes to take shape, cultivating parafictions to become a significant mode of practice, which functions as an appropriate strategy to alter perceptions and potentially change the future.

Futurism and Futurist Performance

It is important to consider the convergence of media and performance found with Futurism and Futurist Performance. This merging is apparent in parafictional practices and this research asserts that the advent of parafiction occurred within performance art. Bishop explores this in depth and situates Futurism firmly within the realm of theatre, whereas this research combines both histories of theatre (Bishop 2012) and art and performance (Goldberg 2001 [1979]). Within this first social turn, the Futurists, led by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (Appendix V: 8-9) began to utilise the possibilities of unrest and uncertainty as a method to change artistic practice and display modernist ideas on art, war and technology. Marinetti implemented techniques of audience alienation and provocation in *serates* (Appendix IV:) or performances, which bound politics and performance through the support of manifestos, advertisements, press releases and propaganda. From the publication of the first Futurist manifesto on the front page of the Paris newspaper, Le Figaro (Fig. 1.1 & 1.2) on the 20 February 1909, a publicity strategy was implemented which fundamentally

connected art, politics and performance. Futurist performance incorporated a broad range of

activities and media, with the main aim of inciting audience reactions and challenging the

role of the spectator (Fig. 1.3). Audience provocation included booking theatres twice over

and covering the seats in glue (Goldberg 2001: 16), which ensured that the audience were

engaged with Futurist ideas and disruption to the everyday was achieved. As RoseLee

Goldberg suggests, 'performance was the surest means of disrupting a complacent public'

(2001: 14). Audiences often reacted negatively to the performances throwing fruit and

vegetables to demonstrate their disgust. This disruption led to the arrest and conviction of

the performers, which gave the Futurists the free publicity they desired and exposed their

work to a wider audience by harnessing the potential of the rapidly growing print media. The

Futurists also advertised their *serates* in the media, using press releases and reviews that

situated their performances within the realm of popular culture, encompassing a broad

section of society by assuming the form of variety theatre. The exploitations and explorations

inside and outside the theatre by the Futurists opened up the possibilities of confronting the

everyday, unseating the complacency of the public. These performances were an attempt to

mobilise the people against their current political uncertainty by altering their experience. As

Bishop confirms, 'Futurist activities were performance-based, held in theatres but also in the

streets, assertively itinerant […] and supported by a comprehensive assault on public

consciousness via printed matter.' (Bishop 2012: 43) The notion that art and performance

did not have to be bound to the realm of the institutionalised gallery or theatre existing

within, and via the media is a tendency that permeates this thesis and is a key component of

parafictive practice.

Futurist performances were raucous, violent and destructive in nature. The intent of these

behaviours was to encourage revolution against the bourgeois and accepted points of view,

as the Futurist manifesto suggests: '[f]or art can be nought but violence, cruelty and

injustice.' (1912 [1909]: 6) Harnessing the audience and enabling them to participate in

change through destruction are the roots of fascism within the Futurist movement, as chaos

and vitriol shifted from anarchism to fascism through the promotion of war as revolutionary

destruction, which would remove the stymied views of the past. Leon Trotsky asserted that the Italian Fascists' use of revolutionary methods could be found within Futurism, '[i]t is not an accident, it is not a misunderstanding, that Italian Futurism has merged into the torrent of Fascism it is entirely in accord with the law of cause and effect.' (1991 [1924]: 160) Whereas cultural production in Futurism was through destruction, in post-revolutionary Russia it was through the affirmation of social change (Bishop 2012: 49). Participatory strategies are a commonality across practices in Europe and Russian during the late 1910s, with the use of mass spectacle in Russia leading to the use of perception management by the Soviet Union. The movement known first as Russian Futurist, then Constructivist and finally as Productivist (1912 – c.1922), embedded art into society post-revolution in order to ensure culture adhered to the Bolshevik line.

This is in stark contrast to Dada, which was anti-ideological, anarchist, pacifist and anti-nationalist, with Dada across Europe and America unique to specific countries with individual protagonists promoting an individualistic and nihilistic perspective. Dada was born on the 5 February 1916 at Cabaret Voltaire. Here, Hugo Ball and Emmy Henninings used the format of cabaret to showcase their provocative performance. Inspired by Marienetti, Goldberg quotes Ball to have written '[w]e have now driven the plasticity of the word to the point where it can scarcely be equalled. We achieved this at the expense of the rational, logically constructed sentence, and also by abandoning document work…' (Goldberg 2001 [1979]: 41) Goldberg suggests that Ball thought this was possible because of the specific context of World War I (WWI) that resulted in work being made quickly with little concern for the outcome. On an interesting side note, as Zurich was neutral during WWI, Vladmir Lenin and Grigory Zinoviev were living in Zurich during this time, whilst in exile from Russia. Lenin and Zinoviev were also said to frequent Cabaret Voltaire (Goldberg 2001 [1979]: 39), which may expain the USSR's deployment of these alternative performance practices in the form of mass spectacle.

The significant conditions of 1917 include the emergence of Fascism in Italy, Bolshevism in Russia, the rejection of nationalism in post-WWI France and the adoption of the polarities of pacifism and nationalism in post-WWI Germany. These shifts were set in the context of the rapidly growing media, the presence of WWI and the use of mechanised warfare. Politically during both the 1910s and 2000s in the West, mistakes made by the elite have affected the many in favour of the few. In the 1910s, the elite used the working class as an expendable commodity in a war for their own gain and in the 2000s, the financial crisis of 2008, saw those in power destroy the economy, without taking responsibility for their actions or feeling the consequences. In both periods, this has led to the rise of opposing ideologies in the West post-WWI. Germany fostered the growth of the right-wing National Socialist Party (NSADP) alongside the left-wing Communist Party. In post-war Germany, the economy struggled to recover and to keep up with the vast reparations agreed in the Treaty of Versailles. This mostly affected the workers as with the global financial crisis of 2008. The newly formed Weimar Republic was associated with weakness for accepting the loss of the war and the terms of surrender. This alongside constitutional weaknesses and proportional representation meant that the incredibly progressive government was unable to make significant changes in Germany during its time in power, ultimately, leading to the rise of the NSADP. Here disillusionment with politics fostered nationalism. Similarly in the first two decades of this millennium, events such as the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003 and financial crisis in 2008 have led to a distrust of politicians and those in positions of power. Germany is utilised as an example because of the polarised positions of the NSADP and the Weimar Republic. Distrust in systems of power are key conditions for parafiction and are reflective of the current polarised positions of populism and the left.

Berlin Dada Media Hoaxes

Berlin Dada members Johannes Baader (Appendix V: 1) and Raoul Hausmann's (Appendix V: 6) (Fig. 1.4) Media Hoaxes directly engaged with politics by implementing parafictive strategies. Baader is an unusual character, who has been largely overlooked by histories of Dada. This is due to several factors. Many recollections are generally unfavourable, perhaps

most notably are comments made by fellow Berlin Dada member Richard Huelsenbeck in
Memoirs of a Dada Drummer (1974) in which he states that Baader 'had absolutely nothing
to do with art.' (1974: 67) Potentially this was because he trained as an architect and this is
how he choose to define himself, as an architect for a better world and creator of utopias .
As for his position in 1916, he was declared clinically insane after sending a pacifist letter to
Prince Friedrich Wilhelm demanding the end of WWI. The discussion surrounding Baader's
mental health is not easily resolved as he was institutionalised six times, with various
diagnoses. After his first breakdown, he stated his depression stemmed from 'the collapse of
the religious edifice.' (Baader 1899 in Sudhalter 2005: 29) This frustration and
disillusionment with religion reoccurs in Baader's practice and can be considered as another
rejection of conventional forms of power and control by Baader. Alternatively, Hausmann
suggests that Baader sometimes stayed in sanatoriums during times of financial instability
(Hausmann 1918 cited in Biro 2009: 60). Adrian Sudhalter reinforces this by arguing that his
insanity was a mimicry of Nietzsche, who was admitted to the same institution in 1889 and
treated by the same psychiatrist. He was heavily influenced by Nietzsche's *Wahnbriefe* or
Madness/Insanity Letters, taking up letter writing in his first published work *Breife eines
Toten* or *Letters of a Dead Man* (1905), which critiqued the field of architecture. He even
wrote his own letters to Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. This obsession with
Nietzsche could also explain his rejection of the Christian faith.

During the early 1900s, Baader developed his letter writing, viewing it as 'a powerful tool: the
ultimate instrument of democratic protest which recognized no boundaries of social
demarcation.' (Sudhalter 2005: 81) Regardless of Baader's mental stability, his status as
clinically insane enabled him to engage in acts, which would have otherwise seen him
imprisoned. Richard Huelsenbeck even referred to this as Baader's 'hunting licence'
(Huelsenbeck n.d. citied in Marcus 1989: 314). Through his letter writing, he realised the
potential of harnessing the media as a means of engaging the public. Letter writing is a
precursor to the Media Hoaxes, which demonstrated to Baader how he could use words to

challenge existing social boundaries and reach a wider audience through the growing field of print media.

In 1917, Baader and Hausmann began using the media as a vehicle for their parafictive activities and created groups, which parodied existing organisations. This was perhaps due to Baader's clinical diagnosis, their growing frustration with the ongoing WWI and the Russian Revolutions in March and October. In April, they founded Unabhägigen Sozialdemoktratischen Partei or the Independent Social Democratic Party, which was dedicated to ending the war, parodying the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) and Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). They also created the mock organisation Christus G.m.b.H. or Christ Inc., a sect specifically for deserters of the German army. Baader also sent an open letter to Herr Tereschtschenko, Russia's newly appointed foreign minister requesting peaceful diplomatic relations between Russia and Germany, in order to end the war. Here the duo employed strategies, which directly engaged with the political situation at the time, focusing their efforts on ending WWI and opposing the position of the USPD and SPD.

After their initial explorations in 1917, from April 1918 the duo began to plant their hoaxes in Berlin newspapers especially B.Z.amMittag. Hausmann said the duo 'without money, without anything else to do, supplied the press with hoaxes, which they promptly printed.' (Hausmann 1921 cited in Sudhalter 2005: 231) It is unknown how many hoaxes were planted due to poor records and the parafictive nature meant that potentially they became accepted as news as opposed to a constructed truth. On 19 July 1918, Baader conceived of his Acht Weltsätze or Eight World Sentences, he was influenced by Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, however his points were philosophical and general as opposed to Wilson's pragmatic and specific. Here he viewed himself as an architect for a better world, one in which the War has ended. The letter was published in B.Z.amMittag and is recorded as Baader's first official Dada act, although this was widely accepted as a joke. The paper also

stated that he requested Nobel Prizes to be awarded to Berlin Club Dada. As a consequence of this, Baader was referred to as the Oberdada for the first time in print on the 29 August by cultural critic Siegfried Jacobson. From mid-1918, Baader adopted the name Oberdada; the Oberdada is a separate character to Baader. Huelsenbeck particularly objected to this title as it implied that Baader was the leader of Berlin Dada. According to Sudhalter, concurrent to the title Oberdada, he was also known as 'Otin Gokni', which is a retrograde of 'In Kognito' (2005: 243). Baader began to use the title Oberdada, which opposed existing power structures.

To test out this new title of Oberdada, Baader and Hausmann on the 7 September announced the Oberdada's intention to stand as a candidate to represent Berlin, District One at the Reichstag. The announcement subsequently appeared in four newspapers, proving that the name Oberdada could be successfully employed in the media. In 1919, the duo began by announcing the Dada Putsch for the end of January and an inauguration ceremony on the 6 February, to take place at the Haus Rheingold in the Kaisersaal. Here the Oberdada would be proclaimed 'President of the Globe.' (Fig. 1.5) The 6 February was significant, as this was the first date that the newly established Weimar Republic was due to meet. This act was intended to parody Germany's new political approach, which placed the uppermost importance upon democracy.

After the Oberdada became the President of the Globe, the duo declared on 1 March that from 1 April there was to be a new Dada-Republic in the area of Berlin-Nikolassee. This was during a time of great unrest in Berlin, as fighting between the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and the rightwing paramilitary Freikorps continued. Hausmann wanted to explore the possibility of founding a republic using only a typewriter, avoiding the usual violence and bloodshed. The duo intended to aggrieve the public by posting fictitious fines to the suburb's residents. On the day of the takeover, the fire department would be telephoned regularly to generate further chaos. The final act would be to occupy the town hall, promptly informing the mayor of the presence of two thousand men willing to take Berlin-Nikolassee by force, if

he did not yield. The newly formed Weimar Republic on 1 April allegedly organised a regiment of troops in preparation, although no putsch took place. This planned action demonstrated the unstable nature of the newly formed government (Biro 2009: 62). Baader and Hausmann in their Media Hoaxes opposed World War I and exposed the instability of the Weimar Republic's position in post-war Germany. The duo attempted to offer 'as if' alternatives, however ridiculous, to their fellow citizens.

There is a shift in the next two case studies that attempt to both replicate and disrupt the everyday using 'as ifs' to subversive ends. This use of 'as ifs' come from theatre in the case of Augusto Boal and his concept of *Invisible Theatre* and the Situationist International from writing in the form of *détournement*. These alternative forms of art practice both function as performance and interact with public space to produce change.

Augusto Boal: Invisible Theatre
Fiction does not exist: everything, if it exists is real – all fiction is true. The only fiction that exists is the word 'fiction': it designates something that doesn't exist. But the word fiction exists as signifier and signification: it signifies our desire to tell the truth, lying!
Boal 2001: 304

In 1964 Brazilian Armed Forces supported by the government of the United States overthrew President João Goulart in a coup d'état that imposed a totalitarian military regime on Brazil, which lasted until 1985. As the 1960s progressed, the regime became increasingly violent, beginning with censorship that led to physical aggression against any opposition. Boal states that '[t]he climax of the struggle for freedom of expression came in 1968,' (Boal 2001: 263) with the implementation of the *Ato No 5* (the 5th Act) and laws such as the *Lei Secreta (*Secret Law) and *Lei da Delação* (Law of Denunciation), which saw the implementation of state sanctioned fascism. Boal was kidnapped and arrested in 1971, after a production of Guarnieri's adaptation of Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturos Ui*, he was then tortured before his exile to Argentina. Boal lived in Buenos Aires, Argentina between 1971 and 1976, spending some time in Peru during 1973. During this time, Boal advocated for social change through theatre as a form of education, positioning himself as a cultural

activist. He was inspired by educational theorist and friend Paulo Freire's conscientização or conscious raising, a form of active intervention against oppressive realities to create change through the implementation of 'as if' alternatives. In direct reference to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) Boal wrote the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1973), during his exile in Argentina, which connects education, politics and theatre as a method to challenge inequalities and in its South American context, military and civic totalitarian regimes through revolution.

Bishop suggests that Boal's circumstances in Argentina were that of 'rural illiteracy and oppression under the conditions of military dictatorship, in which anything less than a positive reference to society would be censored.' (2012: 125) In Argentina, participatory art during the late 1960s and 1970s encompassed the tendencies of parafiction, using real life as a structure for fiction to educate and politicise participants through covert performances. A coercive regime prevented freedom of expression in Argentina in1966 with the Revolución Argentina or Argentine Revolution, the military's name for the coup d'état that led to a period of dictatorships under a number of different military juntas until 1983. This culminated in the so-called Guerra Sucia or Dirty War (1976-1983), a period of state sanctioned terrorism against any political dissidents or those associated with socialism, in which thousands were 'disappeared' by the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (AAA or Triple A). In order to stage a play, Boal would have to be unseen. This inspired Invisible Theatre, which developed upon earlier experimental practices, disguising both the performers and the performance to question class inequalities, the legitimacy of laws and the conditions of living within violent dictatorships. Invisible theatre could happen anywhere other than the theatre, where there are sufficient members of the public. The actions of the actors are structured by a script and rehearsed prior to the performance so as to prepare for as many potential spectator responses as possible and to ensure that the spectacle informs and educates the audience to some degree. The encounter must occur by chance. Significantly, Boal refers to the participants as spect-actors meaning active spectators who do not know that they are the audience, interacting with the performance as if it were real and are not passive, as would

usually be the case in the aforementioned Futurist performances. Boal would argue that this was real life acting as 'the interpenetration of fact and fiction,' where 'reality took on the quality of fiction' and 'fiction appeared like reality.' (Boal: 2001: 304) Jackson agreed that these covert methods create real life 'because it is actually happening, the people are real, the incidents are real, the reactions are real.' (1991: p.xxiii) In Argentina, a humanitarian law existed which required restaurants, however upmarket, to feed those who were hungry, a meal of their choosing, excluding wine or dessert which was to be provided upon presentation of an identity card. Boal and his students were developing a scene for the theatre to publicise this. Boal, however, could not be visible in Argentina and therefore could not direct in the theatre, as he would inevitably be arrested.

Instead, the scene was staged at an actual restaurant during a busy lunchtime service, giving Boal the cover he needed to watch the performance and with publicity as the full restaurant provided an audience. The actors converged with diners, occupying a range of positions to simulate spontaneity and diversity within their participation whilst involving as many of the audience as possible. In the *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), Boal recounts the enactment of this particular skit at a large hotel restaurant in the city of Chiclayo, Peru during his time spent there during 1973. As service begins, the protagonist audibly complains that the food is too bad to continue eating, to which the waiter suggests that he may prefer to order from the á la carte menu. The actor proceeds to select an expensive dish priced at 70 soles and confirms loudly he can afford the meal. When the food arrives he eats hastily, then motions to leave as the waiter brings the bill, he informs the other diners that the food was indeed much better, but it was a shame that you have to pay for it. The protagonist proceeds to inform the waiter that he will pay for his dinner, but not with money, as he has none, instead offering his labour. The spect-actors have now begun to participate, discussing the restaurant amongst themselves at their tables. The headwaiter joins the conversation to provide a verdict, the actor suggests that he take out the hotel's garbage and enquires how much the garbage man earns. At this point, another actor enters the conversation, stating that the he is friends with the garbage man who is paid the hourly rate

of seven soles, the protagonist asks '[h]ow is this possible! If I work as a garbage man I'll have to work ten hours to pay for this barbecue that it took me ten minutes to eat?' (Boal 2008: 124) He then considers the more specialist role of gardener to which a third actor replies that he knows the gardener from his home village and he makes 10 soles an hour. The debate continues with a different actor declaring that earning 70 soles per day is unheard of in his village and that would mean that no one could eat the expensive meal.

The scene culminates when another actor suggests that the meal be paid for via a collection from the diners, whilst reminding the customers not to angle their anger towards the wait staff, as they too were workers. Some readily provided money, whilst others refused. According to Boal, 100 soles were raised and the debate continued late into the evening, questioning paradoxes such as: If there is food, why are people dying of starvation? and: If the country is wealthy, why are people so poor? (Boal, 2001, 2008: 304) The fictional nature of the performance was not revealed to its spectators, who Boal intended to accept the scene as 'real' and therefore consider rebelling against their current circumstance. The incident in the restaurant has clear connections with parafiction using reality as the setting for fiction.

Another aspect of Invisible Theatre, which is relevant to the research is evidenced in a scene that occurred in Bari, a city in southern Italy, during early March 1978. A young Brazilian man sat alone in a park begins to record and play back his own voice. He makes a number of upsetting statements about himself, that he is alone, friendless, discriminated against as a foreigner, unemployed and suicidal, which the recorder repeats. Members of the public stop to listen and without knowing what to say offer support and comfort to the man, emanating kindness and intimacy regardless of being strangers and being in public. Yet in fact, the Brazilian actor's position was the reverse of the man he was pretending to be, he was not alone, nor suicidal and therefore the act was untrue and unethical. Boal struggles with this dilemma, considering why this scene was not true. Although the man was

not suffering from the pain he performed, it was not untrue that those feelings existed and

that many immigrants had killed themselves on account of their loneliness and isolation.

Following the assertion that this set of circumstances exist, not for the actor, but for

someone else, existing not within the space and time of the scene, but in an alternate space

and time in either the future of the past. Boal refers to this as a diachronic truth as opposed

to a synchronic truth, he confirms 'it was still a truth. It was in fact a diachronic truth. This

was not happening here and now, but it was happening elsewhere at a different time.' (1990:

33-34) The issue of the ethics is important to parafictions as they are often founded upon

deceit, but if we frame parafictions as a diachronic truth, the ethicality becomes less of an

issue and the links with contemporary art practice become clear. As UBERMORGEN's lizvlx

commented in my interview with her that she gets 'a story from a reality that is hidden

somewhere,' (Appendix III 2018: 51) it is not her story, but it is true for someone else

existing within nonlinear horizontal time. Diachronic truths work in order to bring forth the

future (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019), forcing it into action.

Situationist International, Détournement
Détournement radicalizes previous critical conclusions that have been petrified into
respectable truths and thus transformed into lies.
<div align="right">Guy Debord 1976: 75-76</div>

Born from boredom with everyday modern life, defining themselves as avant-garde

revolutionaries, relations of both Dada and Marx, channelling the negativity of Dada and the

anger of Futurism, the Situationist International offered a cultural critique of alienation and

domination in all its forms. The Situationist International aimed to understand and incite

revolution in a post-war Europe against the consumption of culture and advanced capitalism

(Marcus 2004 [1982]: 2-3). Ideas were predominately distributed through the journal

Internationale Situationniste (1958-1969). For the purpose of this research the SI's concept

détournement is of significant importance. Détournement is the transformation of everyday

ephemera and significant cultural products re-presented in an artist format. Détournement

acts as a form of revolution through education and the need to create content and

propaganda that is radically new and does not conform to a past society, which the

Situationist International considered to be past its best. Debord and Gil Wolman urge users

to ignore ownership, using plagiarism to redistribute cultural capital, merging art with

everyday life to redefine and unseat existing power structures (2006 [1956]). Pre SI, Wolman

and Debord *Mode d'emploi du détournement* or *A User's Guide to Détournement* was

originally published in the Belgian surrealist journal *Les Lèvres Nues* #8, May, 1956,

however, this document is widely accepted as part of Situationist International discourse.

Détournement is defined as:

> [s]hort for "détournement of prefabricated aesthetic elements." The integration of
> present or past artistic production into a superior environmental construction of a
> milieu. In this sense there can be no situationist painting or music, but a situationist
> use of those means. In a more elementary sense, détournement within the old
> cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method which reveals the wearing
> out and loss of importance of those spheres.
> (Debord and Wolman: 1956 in Knabb 2006: 52)

Détournement separates into the categories of minor and deceptive détournement. Minor

détournement occurs when the element itself is unimportant and all significance develops

from its new context, examples of which would be the mining of text from the news, text

without cultural significance and the use of stock images. Deceptive détournement or

premonitory-proposition détournement uses a significant main element with the context

providing a new range of meaning, the element here would be a source with cultural

precedent. Détourned works are usually composed of a mixture of minor and deceptive

détournement.

The four laws of détournement are:

1. It is the most distant detourned element which contributes most sharply to the
   overall impression, and not the elements that directly determine the nature of
   this impression.
2. The distortions introduced in the detourned elements must be as simplified as
   possible, since the main impact of a détournement is directly related to the
   conscious or semiconscious recollection of the original contexts of the elements.
3. Détournement is less effective the more it approaches a rational reply.
4. Détournement by simple reversal is always the most direct and the least
   effective.

(Debord and Wolman 1956 in Knabb 2006: 17)

The first law is imperative to all détournements; the following three laws only apply to deceptive détournements. The first law suggests that unrelated elements are the most effective as opposed to the elements that provide the situation. For instance, a phrase taken from an unrelated advert and applied to a revolutionary context would be the most effective. To some extent this could be considered as a form of culture clashing, the combining of contradictory forces to rupture existing beliefs. The second law insists that détourned elements must be as simple as possible to reach the widest audience and to access their cultural memory. The third law calls for implausibility, the détourned element should not replicate the real, but make itself known as distinct. This third law is of significant relevance to contemporary parafictions and their shift from the plausible to the implausible post-2008.The fourth law suggests that altering the order of words or texts has instant, but fleeting impact. Titles or names are basic elements and are a simplified version of détournement, which Debord and Wolman suggest are less effective. However, this minor détournement is significant as a characteristic of parafiction.

Due to the methods of communication that existed during the 1950s and 1960s, Debord and Wolman understood that they could only provide a limited amount of examples where détournement could function as communication technology needed to advance in order for détournement to further function and integrate with society. In essence, this is what has happened and is evident in UBERMORGEN's *Binary Primitivism* (2016 - ongoing), which is discussed later in this chapter. Due to the technological restrictions Debord and Wolman suggest that détournement could exist within the use of détourned phrases including posters, records and radio broadcasts. Although détournement could take the form of prose détourned from classical novels, it was less effective unless the novel included illustrations. As a form, Debord and Wolman select film as both an aesthetic and effective medium for détournement, suggesting a potential détournement of D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) (Fig. 1.6). *The Birth of a Nation* is a three-hour silent film, which depicts the American Civil War and the rise of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK). Initially entitled *The Clansman*, it is

adapted from Thomas Dixon Jr.'s novel and play, *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Klu Klux Klan* (1905) and his novel *The Leopard's Spots* (1902). The film is controversial due to its racist nature, featuring white characters in black face and adopting an imperialist perspective. The film renewed support for the organisation, with the second iteration of the KKK formed by William Joseph Simmons at Stone Mountain in 1915. The KKK then adopted the same outfits as those seen in the film, included a hood covering the face.

This détournement would not replace the images, but would change the soundtrack adding commentary, which condemned imperialist war and the actions of the Klu Klux Klan. Contemporarily, this has been used in its inverse as a tactic of the alt-right and is evident in the *Death of Nations* video (2015) whose title is a reference to the *Birth of a Nation*. The beliefs of the KKK are still visible today and an example of this was the 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017. In *The Situationists and the New Forms of Action Against Politics and Art* (1967), René Viénet proposed four potential actions, of which the most useful here are the first two. He first proposes the détournement of any advertising billboards and experimental détournement of photo-romances and pornographic images through the addition of dialogue and the implementation of guerrilla tactics in the mass media. This is significant to the contemporary explosion of memes which are in effect détourned images and a key component of internet culture. The second proposes the preventing and 'jamming' of radio and television broadcast, subverting the output and the production of imitation publications to cause confusion. The second could arguably describe the manipulation of the media, especially social media by the 2016 Donald Trump Presidential election campaign and the 2016 Vote Leave Brexit campaign. These two forms of détournement were vital to the practices of tactical media (Appendix IV:6) in the 1980s.

Punk is also associated with détournement and inspired by the writings of the Situationist International. A significant example of this would be Malcolm McLaren and Jamie Reid's use of détourned images to promote the Sex Pistols. Most iconically for the single *God Save the Queen* (1977) (Fig. I.x) Reid used a Cecil Beaton photograph of Queen Elizabeth II,

replacing her eyes with swastikas and piercing her nose with a safety pin. The text was sourced from newspapers to produce the, now iconic, ransom note style.

Believe In The Ruins: Situationists | 1968 | Sex Pistols (2018) curated by Professor Colin Fallows and John McCready examined the links between Situationist practices, the events of 1968 and the Sex Pistols (1976-78). The exhibition displayed rare material from the *Situationist International: The John McCready archive*, which belongs to the Liverpool John Moores Special Collections and Archives. The collections and archives also includes a number of significant collections on counterculture and popular music, including Punk such as *Agit Pop: The Jamie Reid archive* and *England's Dreaming: The Jon Savage archive*.

A vital requirement for parafiction is to exist within public space. This is evident in the practices of the Berlin Dada Media Hoaxes, the Situationist International and Invisible Theatre. The physical manifestation of performance in public space, in the majority of cases is combined with a media strategy. For Baader and Haussmann it was newspapers, the Situationist International used posters and films, and later, Laibach uses branding, posters and television performances that mirror the tactics of political propaganda and totalitarianism. All examples reject, subvert and use over-identification with existing structures of control and methods of communication. For performances to be actual during the twentieth century was vital and the use of public space was key because this is where they could be most effective. Contemporarily, the internet and technological infrastructure provides the function of and appears as a public space. It makes creating parafiction to some extent easier as there is always a potential audience and an extension of places to insert these forms of practices.

William S. Burroughs: The Cut-Up Method
Because I'm creating an imaginary — it's always imaginary — world in which I would like to live.

William S. Burroughs 1965

Concurrent to the SI, growing from Dada poetry and performance, specifically Tristan Tzara's *To Make a Dadaist Poem* (1920) and witnessing Brion Gysin's chance discovery of the cut-up in Paris, October 1959, William S. Burroughs (Appendix V: 2-3) interrogated the cut-up method throughout his career. Burroughs produced cut-ups by creating grids of varying sizes to rearrange words from existing text. He never stuck down the words as a form of collage but rewrote the combined text on a typewriter. Burroughs produced other new writing techniques such as the fold-in method, whereby text was folded in half to create a composite text by matching, each half page of text vertically. He argued that the fold-in method 'extends to writing the flashiback used in movies to enable a writer to move backwards and forwards in time.' (Barry 1963 cited in Miles 2012: 26) Burroughs also used cut-ins on sound and audio tape recordings. The cut-ins greatly influenced the emerging field of sound art and are a precursor to techniques of cutting, mixing and scratching used by hip hop DJs in the late 1970s.

He also used these cut-ins public space whereby they became performative cut-ups. For example, Burroughs would frequent the Moka Bar, Soho's first espresso bar, where he found the staff to be particularly rude and on one occasion to have served him poisoned cheesecake (Burroughs 1970: 10). Burroughs decided to enact what he called 'playback' (1970: 10). On 3 August 1972 he began to record the staff, their unpleasant interactions and take photographs of the cafe. He then replayed the tape in and outside the café on subsequent days. This action disrupted the café's service and resulted in the café shutting down on 30 October 1972. The café then became the Queens Snack Bar. For this operation, Burroughs was inspired by the Watergate scandal and biblical story of Adam and Eve, with Burroughs referring to himself as God as evidenced in the following quotation "[b[y playing back my recording to the Moka Bar when I want and with any changes I wish to make in the recordings, I become God for this local. I effect them. They cannot effect me.' (Burroughs

1970:11) This examination of the performative cut-up examines how recorded material can be manipulated in order to take control and acts as a precursor to these techniques that are used in digital space. A comparison to Denial-of-Service (D-o-S) attacks could be made. This in an online attack which sees the perpetrator deny access to a site, as Burroughs did in physical space with the Moka Bar, by flooding the server of the site. The result is that users are unable to access the site or its services, as was the end result with Burroughs' playback which saw the Moka Bar close.

Burroughs' axiom: 'Nothing is true - all is permitted' (Burroughs et al. 1968: 61) appears in *Minutes to Go* (1968) and the quote is directly taken from Betty Bouthoul's *The Master of Assassins* (1936). The axiom also appears in Vladimir Bartol's novel *Alamut* (1938), which is about the eleventh-century figure Hassan-I-Sabbah, leader of the Ismailis and the inspiration for video game series *Assassin's Creed* (2007- ongoing). This motto reflects the 1968 left slogan of 'It's forbidden to forbid!' that acts as a transgression against mainstream culture. *The Nova Trilogy* or *The Cut-Up Trilogy* (1961-64) includes *The Soft Machine (*1961, revised in 1966 and 1968*), The Ticket That Exploded (*1962, revised 1967*) and *Nova Express* (1964). Burroughs suggests in an interview with Eric Mottram that in this trilogy he was 'attempting to create a new mythology for the space age.' (1964: 11) The *Nova Express* (1964) was best received with praise for its cyberspace imagery and fragmented space-time and was nominated for the Nebula Award for Best Novel in 1965. For Burroughs the trilogy presents a journey through space and time to re-engineer the past, as he states '[p]erhaps events are pre-written and pre-recorded and when you cut word lines the future leaks out.' (Burroughs 1969/1974 cited in Miles 2012: 26) Similarly, in *The Electronic Revolution* (1970) Burroughs weaponised fiction and continued to use viruses as a metaphor for control, this is later discussed (143).

Burroughs also created collage using personal images rather than for colour, texture or form. He did not stick down the photographs, but took photographs of photographs, rearranging the images to create a series of slightly different collages using the constraits of the number

of exposures in a set of film. This is different to techniques of collage used by Dada artists such as Kurt Schwitters or Hannah Höch as Miles suggests: 'obviously Schwitters and people are interesting, but they were using the collage elements much more purely as visual materials whereas Bill never really did. He like the idea of random events.' (Miles 2012: 18)

Schwitters' (Appendix V: 11) concept of Merz shares commonalities with the cut-up method. Merz encompassed all of Schwitters' artistic output including collages, performances, poems, installations and buildings. In the book *I Build My Time – Columns, Grottos, Niches* (2000 [1973]), Schwitters explains his approach to the cut-up method, which functions across all of his artistic practice:

> First I combined individual categories of art. I pasted words and sentences into poems in such a way as to produce a rhythmic design. Reversing the process, I pasted up pictures and drawings so that sentences could be read in them. I drove nails into pictures in such way as to produce a plastic relief aside from the pictorial quality of the painting. I did this in order to efface the boundaries between the arts. The materials are not to be used logically in their objective relations, but only within the logic of the work of art. The more intensively the work of art destroys rational objective logic, the greater become the possibilities of artistic building. As in poetry word is played off against word, here factor is played against factor, material against material.
> (2000 [1973]: 6)

Here Schwitters explains his desire to blur the boundaries between art forms, ultimately removing rational logic and existing knowledge from his practice to create new methods of production. This notion of play and movement between materials is important for parafiction, with Schwitters blurring these distinctions in his practice to challenge the separation between artistic disciplines. More broadly, this can be read as a challenge to his exclusion from the Dada movement in Berlin, with his work defying categorisation. It also addresses the loss of his German homeland during WWII, which saw Schwitters exiled in Norway and then interned on the Isle of Man. Schwitters found peace in the Ambleside region of the Lake District, creating the Merzbarn in Elterwater, which in part remains. Schwitters' Merz is the application of the cut-up method to all parts of art, having a broader remit than that of Burroughs, with Merz applied spatially in the form of installations and architecture. Merz can

be defined as a form of world building encompassing everything that Schwitters did, his world was Merz.

How to "See?"

The truth is that the eye is so peculiar an organ

PRACTICE INTERLUDE I

Rebecca Smith
How to See: Full Set, 2019
set of 13
cut-up found text, watercolour paper, PVA
21x29.7cm

How to See (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 1-14) is thirteen cut-up text pieces and a contents page produced using the structural framework of a 'How to Guide' on painting with oils, which was sourced from a suitcase of old photographs, purchased at a car boot sale. All text was sourced from my collection of paper material.

The *how to* draws from the themes contained within this thesis: the digital, physical, artistic, hallucinations, power and tools.

The structure used the prompts of:
- How to See
- Some Processes
- Implements
- Tints and Effects
- Copying Pictures
- Composition
- Landscape
- Movement
- The Figure
- Perspectives and Reflections
- Execution
- Conclusion
- Still Life

The aim was to create a *how to* guide on conducting research on parafiction that encapsulated the rigid structure of academic research contrasted with a fictional narrative. It makes subtle reference to Hito Stereyl's *How Not to Be Seen: A Fucking Didactic Educational. MOV* (2013) that in turn references the Monty Python sketch *How Not to Be Seen* (1970) from Monty Python's Flying Circus (1969-1974). This humorous *how to* guide uses instructional language, making grammatical sense, but with the instructions being impossible to follow.

This cut-up plays with language and the oppositions of the formal and the informal. Taking the title as an example, *How to See*, it is impossible to teach someone how to see as you will never be able to see what someone else can see although the instructions suggest that they can teach the reader how to see truly, leading me to ask what does it mean to see truly and to see 'truth'.

How to See (2019) positions research as a repetitive process that can be completed using a how to, which can result in contradictions. That is to say that, although structure is likely to be similar, content and process, by very nature, should be somewhat unique and thus hard to instruct. This contradiction is what often results in fragmentations, splits and conflict during the process of academic research that makes it hard to complete, teach or supervise.

CUT-UP EXAMPLES AND RATIONALES

SOME PROCESSES
'Mediums* with knowledge of the powers and the methods of their manipulation'
(Smith 2019 Appendix I: Fig. 3)

This sentence refers to the frequent reference to magic and mysticism throughout this thesis in relation to parafictions and the internet, both often described as ephemeral, but evidently possessing material properties. The research for this study aims to understand how this power works and how it can be manipulated.

TINTS AND EFFECTS
'Radiant Art
A looking glass there may be no risk of distortion
Illuminating Materials
a vital source of data suitable for illuminating, scrolls etc.'
(Smith 2019 Appendix I: Fig. 5)

The process of tints and effects is suggestive of what may need to be applied to existing knowledge, in order to produce original research that is not distorted and possesses the quality of illuminating new knowledge.

COMPOSITION
'"Original Design"
Careful observation of these to survive the discovery of others having greater complexity and charm in reality at every turn is the cost of tension and elasticity.'
(Smith 2019 Appendix I: Fig. 7)

As previously mentioned, original research needs to have an original design. As a researcher it is also important to be open to others ideas that may undermine your own, which creates tension and requires a certain amount of flexibility or elasticity in shifting your focus. The PhD has a specific structure that is both flexible and constrictive making it hard to define.

LANDSCAPE
'Time and Causality dreamed beyond its exact boundary edge of the palette, short of its time boundary, wrong ones abound bring the boundaries to their true shape in their true positions.'
(Smith 2019 Appendix I: Fig. 8)

Nonlinearity is a recurring theme within parafiction and boundaries are significant in this thesis for both content and structure.

MOVEMENT
'anxious training the eye to detect the most subtle changes of form and a formula she had devised trying to see both sides. I think she's truly wise.'
(Smith 2019 Appendix I: Fig. 9)

This references the introspective nature of this thesis and of something you know intimately that needs to be formed to make an argument. The notion of being wise is something that is contentious and hard to view in yourself.

PERSPECTIVES AND REFLECTIONS
'A little practice will give us the knowledge of when to refrain from internet materials of absolute truth in imitation tracing cloth so as to attain the necessary degree of transparency.'
(Smith 2019 Appendix I: Fig. 11)

This sentence is a self-explanatory reminder to remember to consider the validity of what we read online.

EXECUTION
'The power to match with some degree of truth without using the knife.'
(Smith 2019 Appendix I: Fig. 12)

The execution cut-up infers the discussion of new materiality in the introduction, the properties and capacities of a knife. This is a call to subtlety within research: how to fix things without taking drastic measures.

CONCLUSION
'our original point of view & expert finish can thus go on from a simple subject to one more difficult, and in time will have a power and a pleasure of which no human being can rob knowledge of the means of expression such as no other method can give.'
(Smith 2019 Appendix I: Fig. 13)

The conclusion references the original contribution to knowledge and realisation that becoming an expert is unique and something to be proud of.

Parafiction: Contemporary Cases 1979-2019
Fiction – as spectacle – operates here as a strategy of control.

This section appraises the ways the internet has changed politics and differs from media advances before, because of its rapid global expansion, to its self-reflecting contraction. As many continue to feel alienated from society, protest votes are occurring where a more drastic alternative seems better than what is already on offer. This is evident in the decision to leave the EU in 2016 UK Brexit vote. A symptom of this is the rise of the hyper-masculine *manosphere* (Appendix IV: 4) of online culture, known politically as populism and the alt-right. This group use a number of tactics traditionally associated with the left, communism and socialism. Anne Applebaum refers to populist politicians as 'neo-Bolsheviks' who 'to an extraordinary degree [...] have adopted Lenin's refusal to compromise, his anti-democratic elevation of some social groups over others and his hateful attacks on his 'illegitimate' opponents.' (2017) The tactics also include a non-hierarchical structure, denialism, diffraction, disorientation, deception, disinformation, relativism, transgression and a war on language. Notably, these tactics are evident in the rich history of media activism and hoaxes found in internet art. This section draws parallels between this subculture and early forms of internet art to argue how these behaviours are founded upon narcissistic tendencies and have been appropriated and (re)appropriated from socio-political history, as well as artistic practices.

<u>Irony and Its Death</u>

Jean-François Lyotard defines postmodernism in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (*1979) to critique the notion of 'grand narratives', which were previously referred to by the Sophists as 'master-narratives'. Grand narratives are accepted systems of beliefs and histories, such as the narrative of the Enlightenment, Christianity, Capitalism or Marxism with these narratives largely remaining fixed. Such narratives act as meta-narratives to which all cultural legitimacy and meaning is attached. Lyotard argues that a key condition of the postmodern is the growing scepticism for meta-narratives and proposes that narratives

have declined for two reasons. First, due to the development of new technologies and tendencies since WWII, which focus upon the systems that create an action, rather than the actions themselves and secondly due to the implementation of advanced liberal capitalism post-1960 (1984: 37-8). Lyotard's issues with meta-narratives are that they do not take into account a range of perspectives and that all knowledge is refracted through the lens of race, religion, gender and a multitude of additional factors which make people unique. The widespread acceptance and implementation of postmodernist theory since the 1990s fragments understanding of history making it difficult to comprehend narratives, which do not fit into predetermined meta-narratives. As issues have seemingly become more complicated, they do not fit into these prescribed categories of meta-narratives or in other words the overarching narrative frame for the world and are, therefore, harder to comprehend. This makes it difficult to understand media events as Lyotard confirms people are '[l]amenting the "loss of meaning" in postmodernity,' which 'boils down to mourning the fact that knowledge is no longer principally narrative.' (Lyotard, 1984: 26) This postmodern sensibility has permeated into contemporary society, as David Foster Wallace argues, it comprises:

> sarcasm, cynicism, a manic ennui, suspicion of all authority, suspicion of all constraints on conduct, and a terrible penchant for ironic diagnosis of unpleasantness instead of an ambition not just to diagnose and ridicule but to redeem. You've got to understand that this stuff has permeated the culture. It's become our language […] Postmodern irony's become our environment. (2012: 49)

This sentiment is encapsulated in contemporary internet culture and within the counterculture of the alt-right who are frustrated that balances of power are being readdressed. Relativism, a notion associated with grand narratives and postmodernism has been adopted by the populist right, who argue that denials such as climate change and creationist theories should be given parity with accepted scientific theories (Kakutani 2018: 18). By 'rejecting the possibility of an objective reality and substituting the notions of perspective and positioning for the idea of truth, postmodernism enshrined the principle of subjectivity' (Kakutani 2018: 48) to unseat the value placed upon truth. That is to say, left-leaning counterculture of the 1960s rejected ideas of the Enlightenment as patriarchal and

imperialist, whereas in the 2010s the right is dismissing logic and reason. Similarly, the left blamed the Vietnamese War on the military industrial complex and in 2018 the alt-right and Republican Party are suggesting that the 'deep-state' is plotting against Trump. This deconstructionist approach, which began with post-structuralism and Derrida, is what underpins these anti-expert notions and has led to the death of postmodernism's irony, when the most ironic events are already occurring.

Meme Culture

Media has become anti-mainstream with a revival of anti-establishment culture on both the political left and right. This is epitomised by the growth of meme culture and low-fi user generated content, in a cyclical move back to the aesthetics of the early internet. Generally, Twitter is for the left and YouTube is for the right, with both these platforms priding themselves on being a space for free speech, still offering anonymity for its users as in line with libertarian views. Content is moderated, but this is done via other users reporting and deeming content inappropriate in compliance with the platform's specific guidelines. Although anti-mainstream, meme culture in general is elitist, as a knowledge of memes and culture is necessary to be able to decipher the layers of meaning. This appears as a way to prove superiority and an ability to see what the world is really like. In terms of the alt-right, these interactions take place on the virtual boards of 4chan and 8chan (Appendix IV: 1), subreddits (Appendix IV: 6) and YouTube. The alt-right believe that so-called 'normies' (Appendix IV: 4) and 'basic bitches' (Appendix IV: 2) have chosen to take the blue pill and live in ignorant bliss, as opposed to the red pill they have taken, where they have woken up to the cold hard truths of the real world. This is a direct reference to the character Morpheus in *The Matrix* (1999) (Nagle 2017). In the UK, those who identify as classic liberalists produce alternative forms of media that are sceptical of mainstream media and social justice warriors (SJW) (Appendix IV:6). This mainly takes place on YouTube as opposed to the image boards of 4chan. Related to their more commonly examined counterparts in the USA, this trend is spreading online in the UK, with key figures including Paul Joseph Watson,

Sargon of Akkad and Count Dankula. These classic libertarians view themselves as fighters in the online culture wars, acting as the alternative media who promote the equality of opportunity, but not its outcomes (Haynes, 2018).

Through the visual language of memes a position of power is adopted, that relies on pre-existing knowledge, mixing references from popular culture with low-fi aesthetics, which often appear as harmless and humorous. As an example, Pepe the Frog on first inspection appears as a friendly cartoon frog, which ultimately he was when Matt Furie created him for his comic *Boy's Club* (2005). Pepe's catchphrase 'feels good man' was used as an in-joke on social networking sites, such as MySpace. Soon Pepe began appearing on 4chan, specifically the /pol/ board – home of the alt-right and white supremacists - here he began to further mutate, with his face and catchphrase altered to suit different moods and emotions (Fig. 1.7). In 2015, Pepe was publicly connected to Trump's election campaign, with the appearance of a Trump Pepe and the video *You Can't Stump the Trump (Volume 4)* (2015), that was tweeted by Trump on the 13 October 2015 (Fig. 1.8). Pepe became the mascot for the /pol/ board and Trump was the /pol/ board's candidate of choice resulting in the amalgamation of the two figures. This culminated in the Great Meme War of 2016, which saw Trump gain power as he did in the USA Presidential Election that year. During this time, Pepe became a figurehead for the fictional realm of Kekistan (Appendix IV: 3). This is why Pepe came to be the image most commonly associated with the alt-right and their online culture. Ironically, Pepe became a symbol of resistance and for democracy in Hong Kong during the 2019-20 independence protests (Fig. 1.9 & 10). Hong Kong's Pepe dons the yellow construction hat synonymous with the protestors, sometimes appearing as a journalist or aid worker. In Hong Kong there is no negative association with Pepe and he symbolises a general feeling or mood that relates to the people. In this instance, Pepe becomes a universal symbol for the people not the authoritarian Chinese government. This appears to be the ultimate subversion with Hong Kong's Pepe as the antithesis of Pepe as a hate symbol for the alt-right.

Trump Pepe appears as representative of the growing number of disenfranchised white working class males, who feel alienated by identity politics and political correctness, wanting a world in which they are dominant with all others submissive. This is most evident in the subculture of incels (Appendix IV: 3), who politically are associated with the alt-right and predominately made up of white, male, heterosexuals who believe that they have been made involuntarily celibate by society and more explicitly women who do not want to have sex with them. This is where the connection with denialism and truthers becomes clear, with the alt-right showing the world 'as it really is' and creating a space where rational discourse is rendered unimportant and irrelevant with the pursuit of truth sacrificed (Simoniti 2018).

<u>Nice Vanilla Latte</u>

This equates well to UBERMORGEN's practice and their uninterest in reproducing their own truth, rather they intend to 'schwindel' (Appendix III 2018: 54) people, to deceive, but not out of malice and in more recent years as a method to tell someone else's truth. Lizvlx suggests that she gets 'a story from a reality that is hidden somewhere. [That is] more than plausible, just totally true, absolutely true' (Appendix III 2018: 48). For example, the exhibition *No Limit* (2015) features a fictional dysfunctional family but is based on real events. *No Limit* (2015) considers the psychopathology of narcissists and psychopaths, illustrating the potential need for these traits to be diagnosed. The video *Nice Vanilla Latte* (2015) (Fig. 1.11) features Elliot Rodger, who is known for the Isla Vista Massacre in 2014 during which Rodger's murdered six people and wounded fourteen before committing suicide. The video, taken from his social media account in the days prior to the attack, outlines his hatred for women, his identification as involuntary celibate or incel and love for vanilla lattes. It is suggested that Rodger suffered from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD).

In the ongoing project *Binary Primitivism* (2016- ongoing) UBERMGORGEN target specific social groups via the largely anonymous image sharing site or imageboard, 4chan. Comprising of different message boards or microsites, each of 4chan's boards have their own agendas and moderation guidelines. The most famous is the /b/ or random board and

the /pol/ or politically incorrect board with these boards associated with the group known as the alt-right. Inserting images onto selected 4chan boards or self-help forums on message board websites, such as Mumsnet or Reddit, is returning the duo's work to the site specificity of the internet by creating pieces that only exist within this remit. This situates their practice within technological infrastructure, for the audience of online forums and boards rather than museums or galleries. They are also developing what this research refers to as the *Press Release Series* (2016- ongoing) (Fig. 1.12), as the title suggests the series of seven press releases to date are narrative in nature, but are also nonsensical because they collate the press releases by using the tactic of text mining, the act of appropriating text from other sources. The mined text is then combined with irrelevant images often selected in reference to online culture. The email becomes reflective of online experiences of text and image misaligned or as fractious fluctuating forms of digital debris that become parafictive in nature. The image captions are random and obscure, in *(:-o`~._.~`o-:)* (2017) (Fig. 1.13 & 1.14) one caption reads 'Speed Seduction. Was Prince Murdered?' (UBERMORGEN 2017) and the text discusses transhumanism whilst the image of a toddler in a bizarre raincoat (1.12 & 1.13) is completely disconnected. The series is the duo repositioning themselves beyond their all so familiar actions, remixing existing content to portray a new or potential truth or perhaps a truth belonging to someone else. As Hans Bernhard suggests:

> beyond the action that there is truth and the truth is pure and simple, repeatable verifiable patterns. It is just a statement yeah? […] But it is [...] a repositioning of UBERMORGEN, these truths are like laws. They are rules, but that at the same time they are completely delusional, they are completely illusion, we know that, they are broken up.
> (Appendix III 2018: 51)
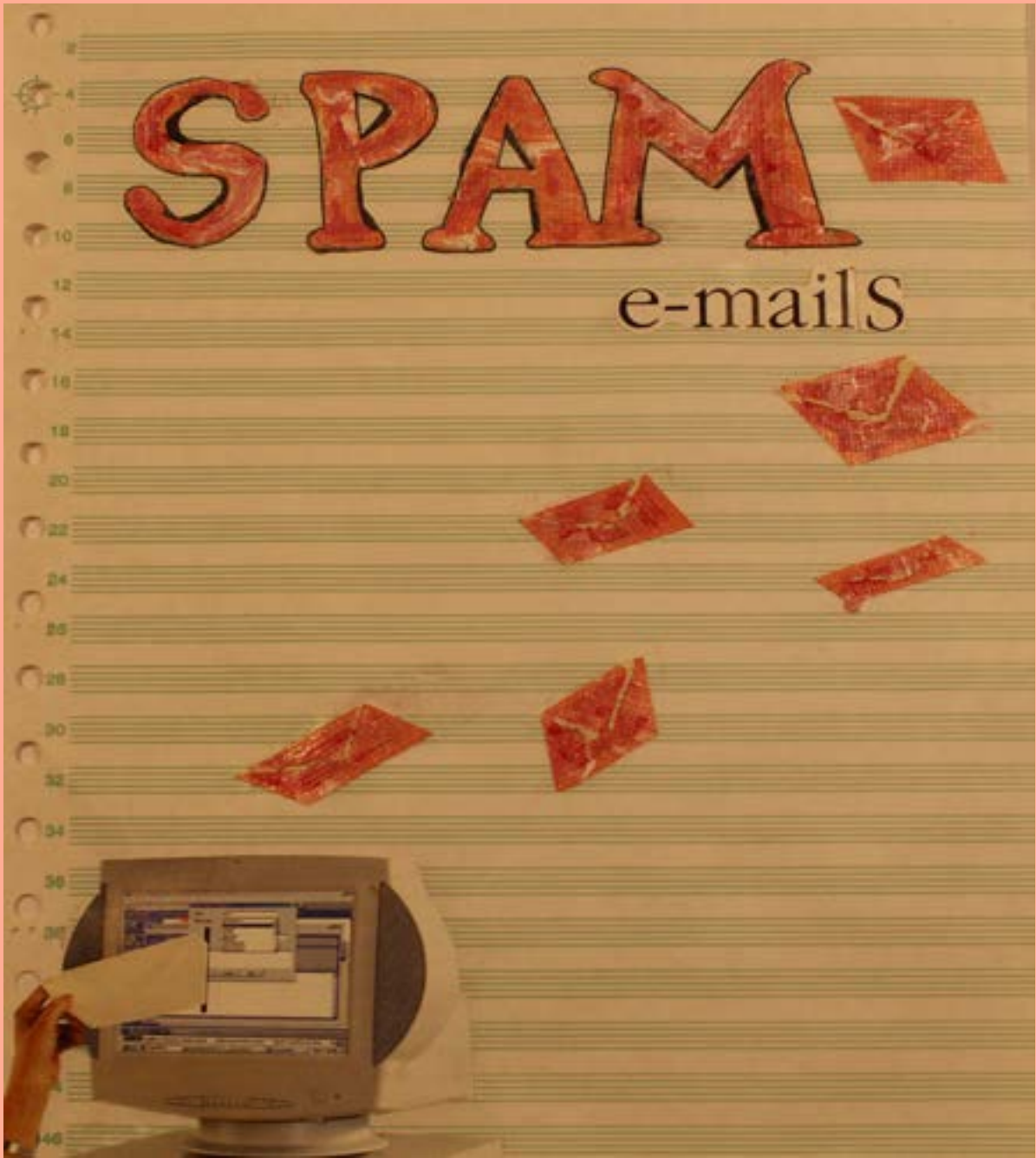
PRACTICE INTERLUDE II

I began receiving spam emails last year offering me a free blade. These emails shared a similar tone to that of UBERMORGEN's *Press Release Series* (2016-ongoing), with the image of the blade stylistically appearing similar to the syringe used in the series (Fig. 1.15 – 1.20). The content of the emails also fit into the duo's current exploration into toxic masculinity. With the sense of humour feeling familiar, here are a couple of examples from the emails (Fig. 1.15 - 1.20):

MAYBE YOU'VE SEEN JAMES DEAN FLASHING ONE AROUND IN
"REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE" HEARD ABOUT HOW THE
"DEVIL'S BRIGADE" COMBAT UNIT USES THIS TO SILENTLY TAKE OUT
THE ENEMY...
I am of course talking about the Stiletto. Some folks call it "The Needle."
We call ours...The Enforcer
(5O4YT88DH□@lakisa.org.uk 2019)

Dear Freedom Loving Patriot: [...]
If you're the type of guy who's not afraid to try out new adventures...
then this is for you.
Or if you're interested in giving the guy in your life a manly new badass
skill...
(xo7hK@clientscare.space 2020)

'I'll see you inside.'
(xo7hK@clientscare.space 2020)

Although on closer inspection, the emails always came from a different address, with no links working from the email with this a different format to the press releases. I also realised that I had used my university email address rather than my personal address for the mailing list. It was unlikely to be UBERMORGEN, although in our interview they had mentioned changing their methods. This email parafiction in action brought me great pleasure and although I could check with UBERMORGEN if they had sent the email, leaving it unknown is more appropriate for the research. I have also included a couple of spam emails that I have received and found amusing (Fig. 1.21 & 1.2) although these emails potentially have more sinister implications. Both emails offer pseudo-scientific advice, one on men's prostates (Fig. 1.21), the other on the negative effects of eating popcorn (Fig. 1.22). Although this is quite funny and obviously spam, it demonstrates the undermining of experts and science online with the more convincing leading to denialism.

BOOK ENDS (2019-20)

PRETTY LITTLE WHISKERS (2019-20)

Rebecca Smith
Pretty Little Whiskers, 2020
set of 7
cut-up found text, vintage paper, PVA
17x13cm and 16x12.5cm

Pretty Little Whiskers
Jane will Know, Jane will Help
A Walk Through the Woods
Prepared Ivories
King Rose Modelling Material
Mushrooms
Adhesives
Clever Hound

Pretty Little Whiskers (2019-20) (Appendix I: Fig. 15–23) uses the black cat as a metaphor for magic and me - the black cat is me as a child - my favourite thing to dress up and something that became a reoccurring theme until I was a teenager. A homage to my mother, Jane and grandad John, their love of nature, the garden and their kindness. Through a disjointed narrative the structure reflects how memory distorts and distracts flesh, feeling and skin. These biological and emotional connections are explored.

BUT I'M INVISIBLE YOU KNOW, I FEEL I CAN'T BE SEEN (2019)

Rebecca Smith
I Feel I Can't Be Seen, 2019
set of 7
cut-up found text, squared paper, PVA
21x29.7cm

I Feel I Can't Be Seen
I am Responsible
Authentic Memories
A White Egg
Lift a Spoon to his Mouth
The Open Door
Visions of Love

When is a memory a memory, when is it just a dream, and does this even matter? About solitude and becoming responsible for myself. The egg, where we come from, a symbol of life and its cycles. Reconnecting with my Dad and trying to see things from his perspective, being kinder to both him and me. The opening of new doors, ending one thing and coming to the next. Next is the cut-up poem *Visions of Love* (Appendix I: Fig. 30), which concludes *But I'm Invisible You Know, I Feel I Can't Be Seen* (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 24-30).

VISION OF LOVE, 2019 (Appendix I: Fig. 30)

Vision of Love.

It's a wonderful mask,
the ingenious symbols of expression

Damnably slow, deliberate always.

Arousing a desire
Quivering heart
A secret wound

Soul as never

The shallow things,

A deep, deep breath

Eyes
A groping hand
Her eye
Smooth water
Splashed down
Blinded

No secret
The revelation had come

Endure
It needs no more than
Silence.

VISION OF LOVE, 2019 (Appendix I: Fig. 30)

Subversive Activism

This section discusses the points of activism, ethics, humour and satire with works often described as hoaxes, pranks and tricks that use deceit to expose and investigate complex political issues. These practices have been received as activist or actionist, but this is generally not how the practitioners would define themselves, at least in the instance of UBERMORGEN and Eva and Franco Mattes. For example, UBERMORGEN do not consider themselves as artists, but when their work became accepted in this way i.e. generating income, it was here where they positioned themselves (Appendix III 2018:48). The artists are pioneers of net.art and manipulated this infrastructure when this required a specific set of skills. This type of practice, especially the Yes Men's (Appendix V: 17), is often associated and categorised as Tactical Media as an extension and form of culture jamming (Appendix IV: 2) as much of their practice exists within existing forms of media. Parafictional practices can be viewed as related to, and growing from tactical media. However, through the process of research the aspect of humour is often key to the accessibility of parafictions. Tactical Media does not always account for the possibility of humour, which is evident in these types of practice and the fact that not all parafictional practices are explicitly political or possible forms of protest or activism (although often they are). All examples discussed in this section are duos. UBERMORGEN and Eva and Franco Mattes are couples in a romantic sense as well as long-time collaborators. The dynamic of the double act therefore becomes significant. This tension was evident when interviewing UBERMORGEN, in which Hans Bernhard and lizvlx made their unique roles and positions clear. Additionally, it could be argued that working collaboratively provides the ability to expand the remit of performances and potentially widens the breadth of skill, most notably the technical skill, which is required when working with emerging forms of technology.

The Satanic Temple

The Satanic Temple (TST) deploys memetic critique as a tactic by using the iconography of Satanism to position itself as a religious organisation that should be afforded the same access to freedom of speech and religious expression as Christians in the USA. The group

specifically targets extremist far right religious groups such as the Westboro Baptist Church who were made notorious as *The Most Hated Family in America* (2008) by documentary filmmaker Louis Theroux. Lucien Greaves is the spokesperson for TST, which he co-founded with Malcolm Jarry in 2013. Members of TST do not believe in Satan. It is an egalitarian group which advocates for social justice. The group have seven fundamental tenets and is registered as a church for tax exemption purposes. The organisation uses actions to raise awareness of the ties between Christianity and the US government, which it argues are unconstitutional and infringe on the First Amendment. As both and neither a religious organisation, this inversion becomes a parafiction whereby TST is using the US government's own argument against it.

TST's actions include the proposed donation of statues of Baphomet, a symbol of the occult and mysticism, on both Oklahoma (2014) and Arkansas (2015-) State Capitol Grounds (Fig. 1.23). The group petitioned state officials to erect the statues to provide balance as a stone displaying the Ten Commandments already stood on the Capitol Grounds (Fig. 1.24). This was the case in both Oklahoma and Arkansas. This is unconstitutional and against the First Amendment as the state should be separate from religion. TST's argument is that if a statue commemorating the Ten Commandments can be on Capitol Grounds then why can't there be a statue for Satan? TST is arguing for equal rights to be given to those who believe in Satan as to those who believe in Christianity and that it is hypocritical to allow such a statue to exist on Capitol Grounds. In Oklahoma, the Oklahoma State Supreme Court ordered that the statue be removed and TST withdrew its application. The irony of the Oklahoma statue is its heritage, which is that its original purpose was to promote Cecil B. DeMille's religious epic *The Ten Commandments* (1956). The monument that was on Capitol Grounds was in fact an advertisement, which although holding some historic value for film history, does not support the narrative of preserving religious heritage. In the case of Arkansas, TST's application was blocked by an emergency-session bill, which required the Baphomet statue to have legislative sponsorship. The legislation acts in defiance of the Constitution and TST

has filed a lawsuit against the Arkansas State Department. Meanwhile the Ten Commandments monument still stands. It is here where parafictions meets activism and directly confronts politics.

<u>The Yes Men</u>

This section examines three of the Yes Men projects *Dow Does the Right Thing* (2004), *Trump Election Reporting Devices* (2016) and *#DNCTakeBack* (2017). In 1984, in Bhopal India at the Union Carbide plant, there was an explosion that within weeks killed at least 5,000 people and permanently altered the lives of more than 100,000. In 2004, the Yes Men set up DowEthics.com. In November of that year, a researcher from the BBC contacted the website and Andy Bichlbaum was invited to appear on the BBC News as Jude Finisterra, a representative of Dow Chemical on the thirtieth anniversary of the Bhopal explosion. The name Jude Finisterra was selected as Jude is the patron saint of the impossible and Finisterra is the Spanish for the Earth's end. To an audience of 300 million viewers Finisterra accepted full responsibility for the disaster and proposed the liquidation of Union Carbide to provide $12 billion to compensate the victims adequately (Fig. 1.25). This BBC announcement affected the stock prices of Dow Chemical, which fell drastically. Later that day the parafiction was revealed. Aspects of this act are viewed as not ethical by some because the announcement gave the victims false hope as thought that they would finally receive compensation. It remains the world's worst industrial accident and, as of 2020, over thirty-five years later, Union Carbide or the Dow Chemical Company (who purchased Union Carbide in 1999) have not adequately compensated the victims of the explosion. The shareholders have remained unaffected by the incident, despite toxic waste still affecting the area. From the Yes Men's perspective, the intention of the performance was to force Dow to act and the duo argue that it demonstrated 'that another world is possible…' (2004: para 18).

These media hoaxes interact and intersect with reality as it is being lived through the insertion of an 'as if' into existing forms of media production. This is the duo's most famous work and is the best example in terms of demonstrating their use of identity correction

(Appendix IV: 3). The Yes Men frequently pose as politicians. In August 2017, after the American Democratic National Committee outlined its plans for *A Better Deal* […], Andy Bichlbaum adopted the identity of Frank Spencer, the Democratic Vice Chair of Civic Engagement at a live-tweeted press conference in Pasadena, California, using the hashtag #DNCTakeBack (Fig. 1.26). Spencer revealed some of the lesser-known details of the plan, which included Medicare for all, the introduction of Universal Basic Income and a ban on corporate lobbyists. During the hour-long event, not one member of the bipartisan audience doubted the validity of the Democratic Party adopting these new positions. As with Baader's *Eight World Sentences* (1918), in which he proposed a better world, the Yes Men targeted those on both sides of the political divide, in order to suggest realistic solutions to existing political policies. The adoption of these policies would equalise living standards and attempt to prevent corruption of the voting process.

The Yes Men investigated the voting machines used in the USA during the 2016 Presidential Elections. They intended to comment on the potential threat of Trump, after the envisaged Democratic Party victory. The video critiqued the voting machines, which can be hacked, are produced by privately owned companies and often prevent votes from being recounted. It was supposed to demonstrate the lengths that the Republican Party would go to in order to secure votes in the future. However, this was too close to the actuality of the 2016 election, with the subsequent claims of election fraud, alleged Russian interference, paper jams and accusations of areas with a large number of minorities being denied their vote. Following an edit that reflected the Republian win, on the 9 November, a website and video promoting a new Trump-brand voting machine appeared (Fig. 1.27) The machine known as the TRD-300 was designed to be un-hackable and set to replace all other US voting machines. Shared and viewed by thousands, the video on Facebook received many positive comments. The official launch for the TRD-300, on the 10 November at the Trump Soho Hotel, New York. Tony Torn acting as the company representative told the audience that the machines would run on blood, as in the future electricity supplies could not be relied upon. After manically

demonstrating how to use the machine, the top floor of the hotel became covered in red

liquid, security were called and they ushered the audience into a corridor to await the police,

who upon arrival made no arrests. Consequently, images of Torn lying in a pool of what

appears to be blood are tweeted and circulated by those involved (Fig. 1.28) The Yes Men

demonstrated how votes are still brought and sold, with private companies continuing to

assert their influence over the American voting system.

[V]ote-auction (2000)

Arguably UBERMORGEN's most famous project *[V]ote-auction* (2000), aimed to bring

'democracy and capitalism closer together' (UBERMORGEN 2000a). Initially the website

voteauction.com (Fig. 1.29) was conceived and owned by James Baumgartner. However,

after fears of being charged with high treason, the website came into the hands of

UBERMORGEN, with the aid of collective RTMark (Appendix V: 10). The website, which

was active in two iterations, during the 2000 Presidential election between Al Gore and

George W. Bush, offered American citizens the opportunity to sell their votes to the highest

bidder and was deemed as an act of illegal voter trading. The original site was active

between March and July, with the second version online in November 2000 (Fig 1.30)

(UBERMORGEN 2000b). Eight states passed short-term restraining orders and injunctions

against the two vote-auction websites for alleged illegal voter trading, which consequently

led to the shutdown of all websites associated with the project. The FBI, the NSA and

Federal Attorney Janet Reno investigated the case to prevent corruption of the voter process

and ensure that no votes had been bought or sold. *[V]ote-auction* (2000) culminated in

numerous news reports internationally. This included Hans Bernhard's interview on CNN's

Burden of Proof (UBERMORGEN 2000c) alongside lawyers, politicians and academics. On

the programme internet Law Professor, Stuart Biegal was more aware of the project's fictive

nature, raising the important point that, 'this wants to call attention to the fact that, on some

larger level, votes are bought and sold in this country even as we speak' (UBERMORGEN

2000d). The media attention received by the project illustrates that this parafictive act was

experienced as fact and leading to debates on free-market exchange by exploring the murky

differences between bribery, donations and the act of selling votes. The website was clearly false, but because an Austrian company was attempting to interfere with the American voting process, openly selling votes, the American media, police and justice departments accepted this website as a potential threat to the democratic process. The reaction to *[V]ote-auction* (2000) could be described as a form of fake news, where the provenance of content becomes unimportant because it supports a specific narrative.

lizvlx finds it hard to comprehend how UBERMORGEN's parody websites are accepted as real and that *[V]ote-auction.com* (2000) was considered to be a threat to democracy in the USA. As lizvlx comments:

> [w]hen you make a fake website, in a way, when you are producing it, you would never think that people would take this for real and its always very absurd when you figure that there is [sic] really people out there that take that as a given. Especially for me, it's always extra weird because it is not even reality, it's just pixels on a screen, so it's not even existing.
> (Appendix III 2018: 52)

Denialism

One possible explanation for users believing what they see online is denialism. Denial and deceit are a part of human nature, which enable us to live in a complex world where we have to navigate a multitude of human interactions. However, when denial is used as a strategy to avoid truth it becomes dangerous. Conventionally, denialists offer alternative truths to deny established facts or events such as the denial of climate change and the Holocaust. Denialists also offer alternative theories to support their denials, such as those known as 'Flat Earthers' who believe that the world is flat and provide unscientific nonsense to support their claims or those who subscribe to the discredited belief that the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccination causes autism. The denial of climate change has real world effect as does preventing children from receiving the MMR vaccination, both potentially resulting in the loss of lives. In England cases of Mumps are at the highest level in a decade with 5042 cases reported in 2019 (PA Media 2020: para 2). The strange suggestion that the

Earth is flat appears as less potent and somewhat silly. However, Flat Earthers use this theory as a way to discredit the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Coincidently, NASA provides much of the data which reinforces the fact that climate change is real. Therefore ultimately by stating that the Earth is flat they begin to undermine NASA's credibility, aiding climate change deniers and having real world effect. What all these claims have in common is their ability to detach the world from its established narrative and create a culture of distrust. As with suggesting that the Holocaust did not happen, this has the potential to alter perceptions of both people of Jewish faith or descent and Nazis, seeking to reinstate racist points of view into the mainstream.

YouTube is suggested to be directly responsible for promoting Flat Earth theories through its algorithms targeting users with an interest in conspiracy theories, with these individuals potentially more susceptible to these alternative beliefs (Landrum 2019). For instance, when discussing this research with an academic colleague, they proceeded to tell a story. The colleague and their partner had been watching YouTube, letting the recommended videos play. A video warning of eminent war and framed as a public service announcement appeared. This prompted the couple, who had direct experience of war, to hastily stockpile supplies at the supermarket and warn their family and friends. Only, after a number of hours, the realisation that this was not true dawned as there was no mention of the threat on the television or other news media outlets. This can be read as a lack of media literacy and that this couple were foolish in believing this video. Although the very fact that a video of this nature exists is frightening, it specifically tapped into a fear and experience that the couple had already had, that is preparing for war and having to evacuate their home.

This is the convergence of the tactics used by the alt-right and denialism that feed into the narrative that then UK Justice Secretary Michael Gove put forward, that being that 'people of this country have had enough of experts' (2016) and do not want to be told what to think or what to do. To echo Kahn-Harris, self-deception becomes dangerous when it becomes

public dogma and therefore, denialism (2018a). This has become all the more frightening, as Kahn-Harris suggests, because there is a new phase of denialism that functions alongside the post-truthers progressing to post-denialism. The views expressed by Donald Trump are often 'post-denialist' (Kahn-Harris 2018a), with Kahn-Harris defining post-denialist discourse as assertive, instinctive and anarchic as opposed to denialist discourse that is explanatory, considered and disciplined (2018a). Trump is post-denialist in that his claims diverge from usual and, or, existing denials, his tweets are often dismissive, rash and lacking research. On day 558 of his presidency, Trump had made 4,229 statements, which were false or misleading. This is an average of nearly 7.6 claims a day according to the *Washington Post's Fact Checker* (Kelly, Kessler and Rizzo 2018). He denies both empirical evidence and aspects of his own behaviour. In 2012, he tweeted '[t]he concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive' (@realDonaldTrump 2012) and he frequently tweets denial of climate change during spells of cold weather, such as '[r]ecord low temperatures and massive amounts of snow. Where the hell is Global Warming?' (@realDonaldTrump 2015a). He also retracts and flat-out denies evidence of past behaviour presented to him. A recorded conversation from 2005 that was released to the public in 2016, documents Trump boasting that he could do anything he wanted to women (Jacobs, Siddiqui and Bixby 2016). In a statement (@realDonald Trump 2016c) he did not fully apologise for his comment and continues to make inappropriate and controversial comments about women, be subject to numerous sexual misconduct allegations, all the while removing women's rights, whilst claiming that '[n]obody has more respect for women than Donald Trump!' (@realDonaldTrump 2016b).

Denialism has paved the way for post-denialism, acting as an incubator of doubt. Instead of offering new theories or opposing existing accepted truths, this arena of doubt has enabled the new wave of post-denialists to do away with existing narratives all together and remake the world to fit their own view or agenda. As Kahn-Harris explains '[w]hile it is still based on the denial of an established truth, its methods liberate a deeper kind of desire: to remake

truth itself, to remake the world, to unleash power to reorder reality itself and stamp one's mark on the planet.' (2018b) Perhaps this can be conceived as a customisation of the truth. This is where parafictional practices in art become useful as they teach how to recognise these tactics. This is reinforced by Lambert-Beatty who comments '[p]arafictions train us in scepticism and doubt, but also, oddly belief.' (2009: 78)

The Trickster Myth: How to Be Both

This section examines parafiction as a method that investigates the multiplicity of self-mediation and trickster mythology as a paradoxical state. Here the trickster role and origin is imagined through the symbolism of the coyote that signifies self-mediation and the importance of this on the effectiveness of parafiction in the digital world. The coyote symbolises a trickster (Lévi-Strauss 1963 [1958]) because coyotes are scavengers, who have the dual modes of being like herbivores, as they do not kill to eat *and* like carnivores because they do eat meat. This ability to have multiple perspectives existing in the same body, space and time, results in 'the coyote, like all tricksters and mediators, [becoming] […] a double or multiple articulation of terms … And importantly, such (impossible) figures, as multiple perspectives, exist in one body or point, in one place and time.' (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019:211)

Within parafiction, tricksters are prevalent in net.art though the audience can too be described as tricksters. For them to accept the fiction as a form of fact, first the self must be tricked thus becoming both the trickster and the tricked. Humans are likely to trick themselves before they trick others, because 'the mediations of perception and consciousness are themselves not apparent to humans.' (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019:178) This could be described as a form of confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance. Leon Festinger's theory of 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger 1957), explains the illusionary way the brain justifies contradictory actions. Cognitive dissonance is how the brain responds when people feel uncomfortable processing two contradictory ideas at the same time. To combat this, the brain changes the conflicting behaviour by either altering the conflicting

cognition, adding new cognitions, denying that the conflicting cognitions exist or stopping the behaviour altogether. Confirmation bias is associated with cognitive dissonance and suggests that to reaffirm existing beliefs or attitudes people are more likely to ignore contradictory information. For example, those who have left-wing views are much more likely to read or watch left-wing leaning news. Denialism is an extension of confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance used to political ends.

Algorithms that select adverts based on internet browsing history reinforce cognitive bias. This results in it becoming less likely that users see information that contradicts their existing beliefs, these are known as echo chambers or filter bubbles. Users are also more likely to surround themselves online, as they are in reality, with those whose views support their own on a much larger scale. Therefore, if likeminded individuals make a judgement on any given topic online users are much more likely to join or share in that behaviour as they are affected by confirmation bias online. Cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias are a key aspect of online conflicts as they enable users human and nonhuman to accept and, or, reject conflicting information. Although these concepts existed before the internet, they have been built into algorithms. Confirmation bias has assisted politically in the West post the 2008 global financial crisis, with the rise of polarised political positions. The rise of opposing ideologies is concurrent to the notion that algorithms may be partially responsible for decreasing the understanding of views alternative to our own. Anti-politics coupled with divergent and, or, opposing ideologies enhanced by echo chambers have resulted in the development of an unusual and polarised political spectrum during the last ten years. The events of 2016, have come to encapsulate anti-politics and the rejection of mainstream media, with some claiming that we are living in a post-democratic era.

The opposing positions of the present online culture wars is best surmised by the Harambe memes of 2016. Harambe, a gorilla at the Cincinnati Zoo, was shot dead after a child entered his enclosure. Many responded emotionally to Harambe's death, with protests

taking place and some suggesting that the boy's parents should be punished for their neglect. What is significant about this incident is that Harambe became the subject of a number of viral memes (Fig. 1.31 & 1.32), which depicted the polarised positions. #justiceforharambe showed how bizarre these positions could be as Aja Romano suggests:

> [i]f you were a progressive, the Harambe meme gave you a chance to mock what you viewed as the hypocritical haranguing of the mainstream while avoiding real issues of social justice; and if you were a conservative, the Harambe meme gave you a chance to mock liberal hysteria. If you were the kind of person wanting to use the Harambe meme as an excuse to be offensive and juvenile in the name of whimsical fun, then the Harambe meme was all yours. If you were looking for an actual excuse to be racist, then the Harambe meme provided that as well. (2016)

The outcry over Harambe's death, signified to conservatives and the alt-right, all that was wrong with political correctness, SJW and snowflakes (Appendix IV: 6) and vice-versa. Noteworthy memes include the 'RIP Harambe' trope, which used an image of Harambe with celebrities who had also died in 2016, such as David Bowie, Prince and Alan Rickman, and the 'Bush did Harambe' meme, which referenced the 9/11 truthers, that is, those who believe that Bush was responsible for 9/11 (Fig. 1.33 & 1.34).

The frustration with the complex nature of contemporary events and their mediation has led to people either searching for alternative outcomes or avoiding complex issues altogether. The documentary filmmaker and journalist Adam Curtis explains that this is due to the combining of two concepts 'oh dearism' (2009, 2014) and 'hypernormalisation' (Curtis 2016). *Oh dearism* describes becoming overwhelmed and unresponsive to distressing news viewed on visual media. People can become overwhelmed when viewing vast amounts of depressing content without a clear narrative, which renders them incapable of any physical action to which the only possible response is to exclaim 'Oh dear!'

Curtis suggests that this is due to the practices of news reporting in the 1990s when issues appeared to become too complicated for people to feel sorry for the innocent, as seemingly they had disappeared. Here this research argues that this has combined in the 2000s with

the move and rise in popularity of using both online news sources and television (Reuters 2017) and a lack of media-literacy. Curtis suggests that this shift in practices began in the 1960s when countercultural groups became disillusioned with governments and politicians, viewing them as corrupt due to their inherent power. Post-1989, the political story of left versus right was drawn to a close, leaving room and need for a new narrative, under which all news could be broadly reported. Curtis suggests that this new narrative promoted the work of innocent individuals standing up to corrupt and failing political systems, with television news concentrated on reporting this binary battle between good and evil across the globe as seen in the presentation of Bush and Blair in the media (2001-07).

An example of this would be the viral YouTube video *KONY 2012* (Fig. 1.35 & 1.36), both Chun (2017) and Nagle (2017) cite the video as a key point in contemporary internet culture. Director Jason Russell's film promoted the Stop Kony campaign and the use of the #stopkony to demonstrate the power of social media networks. The video called for the arrest of Joseph Kony, a Ugandan militia leader and war criminal who had evaded capture by the International Criminal Court, reducing the complex political situation in Uganda to a half an hour video. The film intended to raise awareness of the issue and was endorsed by celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates and Justin Bieber. Known as a form of clicktivism or slacktivism, portmanteaus of click and activism and slack and activism both insinuating lazy forms of online activism, the video was viewed over one hundred million times within the first six days of its release (Kanczula 2012). There were a number of factual inaccuracies within the video, which were spread during its hype. The two main issues, as Michael Wilkerson suggests are, first, that it had been six years since Kony had been in Uganda and, secondly, that the size of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was now closer to the hundreds than the thousands (2012). Kony and the LRA were responsible for immeasurable suffering. However, by 2012, their threat had been considerably reduced, especially within Uganda where they had fled six years prior. Uganda would have benefitted from a campaign, which focused on its actual problems, some of which were the result of

Kony and the LRA, such as unemployment, child prostitution, HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis. It was also unfair for Uganda to be portrayed in this generalised way with an oversimplified narrative. The nature of the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) charity Invisible Children and its funding were also considered suspect.

KONY 2012 flattened the complicated nature of its context, proving that social media could be used as a valuable tool for clicktivism. Perhaps more significant is the demonstration of how the internet enabled these emotive campaigns to take root, with many uninterested in the narrative behind the slick production as Chun suggests that *KONY 2012*, 'reveals that we assume too much if we assume that we know what a connection is or does.' (2016: 37) More recently in 2019 debates ensued over the nature of Rayka Zehtabchi Oscar-winning short documentary *Period. End Of Sentence* (2018), which is said to ignore and exploit the cultural conditions of the women depicted. On an interesting tangent, in a bizarre twist, typical of online schadenfreude, Russell's mental health deteriorated during *KONY 2012*'s hype. A video surfaced online, which saw Russell amidst a breakdown, naked and rambling on the streets of San Diego. This dichotomy of adoration and abomination appears as a common tendency of online cultures and the associated public shaming.

Foriginals

UBERMORGEN use the term foriginal broadly to refer to legal documents that are machine generated, a practice they developed during *[V]ote-auction* (2000) and can be seen in the *Generator Tetralogy* (2000-09) which comprises the *Injunction Generator* (2000) *Bankstatement Generator* (2005), *Psych|OS Generator* (2006) and *Superenhanced Generator* (2006). The word is a portmanteau of 'to forge' and 'original' (Quaranta 2015: 27). Therefore, a foriginal is the forged original produced by a machine to replicate the original. The videos *Foriginal Media Hack No.1* (2006) and *Foriginal Media Hack No.2* (2007) are both presumed documentary material shot on mobile phones and digital cameras and uploaded onto Google Video and YouTube. The aim is to document 'non-existent yet

credible events' (Quaranta 2015: 27), which are highly plausible and can be understood as a reality belonging to someone else.

In *Foriginal Media Hack No.1* (2006) a group of unknown individuals beat up a policeman during riots in Berlin, Kreuzberg on the 1 May 2006 and in *Foriginal Media Hack No.2* (2007) (Fig. 1.37) a group of policemen attack a protestor in a wheelchair in Rostock, Germany on the 2June 2007 during the G8 Summit. The duo controlled the distributions through adopted identities and employed actors and stunt men to create these scenes of violence. The low-resolution appearance of the videos suggests illicit filming, especially in the case of *Foriginal Media Hack No.2* (2007). For both videos, the viewer is orientated towards authenticity because of the use of mobile phones and digital cameras, which reflect how this event would have been recorded in 'real life' again, rendering it plausible enough. In a statement on the pair's website, they claim that this was an exercise in 'how to infiltrate mass media with low-tech instruments [...] and ambiguous data. This action is an experiment within this conceptual setting. It is a [sic] amalgamation of fact and fiction' (UBERMORGEN 2016).

These tactics engage directly with methods used by the alt-right. The video *With Open Gates: The Forced Collective Suicide of European Nations* (JeffreyM, 2017) (Fig. 1.38) went viral in November 2015 after its upload to YouTube by the user Death of Nations and was endorsed by the far-right wing online news outlet Breitbart. This video was a response to the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015. The video presented itself as fact and took the form of a collage of distressing and disturbing scenes of unrest. The voiceover suggests that these scenes are instances of the so-called invasion of Europe by non-Europeans. However, sources such as Vice (Kleinfeld 2015) and forums on Reddit have traced the source of the original videos. Although the videos clearly depict horrifying acts of violence, not one video is of refugees rebelling. It is evidently a form of racist propaganda in which existing videos have been remixed in order to present an alternate reality, which supports the views of Death of Nations and the far-right agenda. As the video is plausible enough people who

viewed and shared the video did not view this as a factually unsound piece of propaganda. It was experienced as real or real enough to support their views. However, with UBERMORGEN's *Foriginal Media Hacks* (2006-07) there was no intent or specific political comment or action, the videos acted as a demonstration of how to subvert the media.

Another hidden reality exposed by UBERMORGEN is featured in the video *Chinese Coin* (2015) which focuses upon bitcoin and the associated labour processes, that are enacted in order to generate the confirmed transactions. *Chinese Coin* (2015) equates the mining of hardware chips to red blood cells because the chips possess similar qualities, both have an approximate lifespan of four months, use vast amounts of energy and create life. The video depicts the inside of a Bitcoin mine in China, which covers six sites and at the time of filming in 2014 controlled 'roughly three percent of the network's total hashing power.' (UBERMORGEN 2015), hashing power is the amount of collective processing power a network holds. Symbolising the blood, the video was shot with a red filter and begins to reveal the human cost of Bitcoin mining. The video also comments on an attack on the workers of the mine where fifty people were killed with a knife in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Many were killed in their sleep, according to UBERMORGEN, but the press recorded that the attack occurred at a coalmine. It could be highly likely that UBERMORGEN adjusted the story to meet their own ends as they filmed the video in 2014, before the attack took place on 18 September 2015. Although considering that the main source cited by Western press is *Free Radio China*, it could mean that the Chinese government have censored the violence at the Bitcoin mine and used a coalmine as this was better suited to the narrative they wanted to project. What is clear is that this could be an actuality and that Bitcoin has physical effect on the planet and its inhabitants.

The End of Satire

Satire is distinct from parafiction, as often the audience instantly knows it to be a satire. However, there are a number of significant commonalities. British comedy has a rich heritage of satire with British Visual Satire dating back to the Enlightenment (Bury 2020).

The British satire boom (1960-1963) begain with Alan Bennett, Peter Cook, Jonathon Miller and Dudley Moore's sketch show *Beyond the Fringe* in 1960 and ended with the closure of Cook and Nicholas Luard's *The Establishment* - a private members comedy and cabaret club in Soho - and the cancellation of the third series of *That Was The Week That Was* - hosted by David Frost and famously based on a reworking of the television pilot and treatment of Cook's *The Establishment Club* - in 1963. This allegedly led to a long-standing feud between Cook and Frost, with Cook referring to Frost as 'the bubonic plagiarist' (Hattenstone 2011: para 12) and Bennett's joke that Cook's greatest regret was saving Frost from drowning in a lake. The visibility of satire on the news and radio in the UK paved the way for groups such as the surrealist troupe Monty Python, who have arguably become some of Britain's greatest comedy legends. This satire of the 1960s attacked the establishment by mocking politicians, the news and religion. With the potential to cause moral panic, these programmes made clever comedy, making politics more relatable for working-class people. It could be argued that these men were part of the establishment, all having been educated at Oxbridge and establishing their comedic career, some as members of the Cambridge Footlights Club and as part of the university's Comedy Revues.

Tendency towards truthiness (Appendix IV: 7), post-2000s can be seen in the rise of reality television and scripted reality, the retreat into the augmented realities of computer games such as *Second Life* and the implementation of Web 2.0 (Appendix IV:7). Elizabeth Armstrong used the term truthiness for the exhibition *More Real: Art in the Age of Truthiness* (2012), arguing that 'we live in an age of "truthiness," a time when our understanding of truth may not be bound to empirical evidence – that is, to anything real, provable, or factual.' (2012: 34) For the purpose of this research, truthiness is inherently linked to Western politics, the Bush-Blair-era specifically, that led to the rise of fake news and denialism. These programmes reflected Bush's implementation of 'truthiness', which is a truth not measured by accuracy, but by conviction and is linked to the rise of denialism.

Satire and truthiness were combined on television in the late 1990s and early 2000s, in programmes such as the British *Brass Eye* (1997–2017), Steve Coogan and Armando Iannucci's character Alan Partridge (1991 Radio and 1994- TV) and, in the US, Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* (1999–15) and *The Colbert Report* (2005–14). These programmes parodied traditional news formats with both *Brass Eye* and *The Colbert Report* at times effectively producing fake news. Although the content is false and engineered as entertainment, through parody it attempts to replicate truth. This replication of truth production has the potential to impact upon politics as Mark McBeth and Randy Clemons comment, 'fake news shows are not only at least as real as mainstream news, but also that they contribute more to the type of deliberative discourse essential to genuine democracy and public policy.' (2011: 79).

As well as unsuspecting television viewers, *Brass Eye* duped a number of celebrities, notably Vanessa Feltz when addressing a murderer in season one's fifth episode, *Crime* (1997) delivering the lines 'I'm Marvin Gaye shot by my own father, oh yes you know me alright. Look at my eyes, murderer, you killed me, what in the hell did you do that for?' (20:47). In the second season special *Paedophilia: Welcome to Paedogeddon!* (2001) Gary Lineker advocates on behalf of the fictional charity Nonce Sense and raises awareness of paedophile slang used in text messages. For example, the phrase 'BALTIMORA' according to Lineker 'means literally, I'm running at them now with my trousers down' (2001 9:58-10:02). In the same episode former DJ and broadcaster Neil Fox (previously known as Dr Fox and Foxy) compares crabs and paedophiles commenting, 'genetically paedophiles have more genes in common with crabs than you and me. That is scientific fact, there's no real evidence for it but it's scientific fact.' (2001 9:19 – 9:33) Fox later recaps and can be seen killing a crab with a nail and a hammer (2001 18:48-19:07). Fox's script stating that it is scientific fact appears as very similar to the rhetoric used by Trump and the language associated with fake news, the dismissal of experts and denial of science.

The use of disinformation, deriving from the Russian dezinformatsiya, was an aspect of politics throughout the twentieth century. Trump's frequent assertion that you are fake news, is a diffraction technique, when it appears that he is the one producing the fake news. This moves from '[b]lurring the distinction between absurdity and politics as usual' (Colletta 2008: 861) to completely obliterating it. This directly links with Sander van der Linden's suggestion that fake news exists along a spectrum where the far left is misinformation and the far right is propaganda. Misinformation is information that is false or incorrect and allows for human error. This combined with the intention to cause harm or purposefully deceive others can be thought of as disinformation or Disinformation = Misinformation + Intent (D=M+I), whereas propaganda is disinformation combined with political agenda which results in propaganda or Propaganda = Disinformation + Political Agenda (P=D+Pa) (2017: 5). Parafiction sits across this spectrum and functions as Parafiction = Disinformation + Artistic Practice (Pf=D+AP) (Fig. 1.27) (Appendix II: Figure 4).

Morris worked with Charlie Brooker in 2005 to write the television series *Nathan Barley* (2005), which parodied hipster culture, mocking the then newly established online magazine content producers such as Vice and Dazed and Confused. Also in 2005 Iannuci wrote *The Thick of It* (2005-12), a political satire following Minister for Social Affairs, Malcolm Tucker, and depicting the inner workings of British government. Contemporarily, these satirical writers, such as Brooker, Iannuci and Morris have moved away from satire, still using humour, but to different ends, aiming to educate their audience through their programmes. Brooker developed the dystopian near-future *Black Mirror* (2011-), Iannucci looked to the past in *The Death of Stalin* (2017) and the future in *Avenue 5* (2020). Morris has investigated terrorism in *Four Lions* (2010) and *The Day Shall Come* (2019), the plot of which is an amalgam of true stories that occurred in the USA post-9/11 where the FBI invents terror cases to entrap innocent and vulnerable individuals to prove that terrorism is being stamped out. The decline of satire is due to the tethering of news and politics, where the US format of news as entertainment has become dominant in the West, with the news not taking itself so

seriously and not upholding values of truth and lacking bias. This is supported by the move away from traditional print news media with the majority accessing the news via television, although this is also decreasing, and through social media, which is steadily increasing (Ofcom 2019).

<u>Pranksters</u>

American television has a long history of practical jokes and prank-based television, which began with *Candid Camera* (1948-2014). This format was revived a number of times, latterly with Ashton Kutcher's MTV show *Punk'd* (2003-12), Dom Jolly's *Trigger Happy TV* (2000-03), Ed Tracy and Kayvan Novak's *Phonejacker* (2006-12) and *Facejacker* (2010-12), all broadcast in the UK on Channel 4. Prank-based videos are also a prominent and popular trope of YouTube videos including the channels Jesse with 10.6 million subscribers, MagicofRahat with 6.68 million subscribers and Jack Vale Films with 1.53 million (all figures correct as of 19 February 2020). This is the less sophisticated end of parafiction whereby humour and deceit are the main goals of the act. Sasha Baron Cohen's many outrageous caricatures have included Ali G, a stereotypical 'chav' who culturally appropriates British Jamaican culture, and Borat, a bigoted journalist making a documentary on his country Kazakhstan. In 2018 Baron Cohen's *Who is America?* (2018) continued this trend. The programme investigated the opinions of both known and unknown citizens of the USA to find out who they really are and what they really think. One character, former Mossad agent Erran Morad, taught counter-terrorist techniques to Republican politician Jason Spencer. Morad encouraged Spencer to shout racist gibberish and to use his bare buttocks (which he readily exposed) as a method to deter terrorists. Spencer's willingness to follow Baron Cohen's instruction led to his resignation from the Georgia House of Representatives in July 2018. Although this is rare, in this instance a prank for television altered politics and removed a politician from his position.

<u>Eva and Franco Mattes</u>

The ethics of parafiction are considered in three pieces by Italian hackers Eva and Franco Mattes or 0100101110101101.ORG, *Darko Maver* (1998-2000), *No Fun* (2010) and *Emily's Video* (2012)[3]. As opposed to UBERMORGEN the Mattes intentionally aim to deceive using shock based tactics and humour in projects that are always ethically dubious.

Darko Maver, first came to the European public's attention in 1998 when he was profiled on the Bologona-based webzine *Entartete Kunst* or *Degenerate Art*. This was followed by articles in *Tema Celeste* and *Flesh Out* (Fig. 1.39). Maver was an artist from the former Yugoslavia, working in Italy, his practice commenting on the Yugoslav wars. He distributed images of shockingly realistic, life-size wax and rubber models of murder victims, taken in abandoned buildings and hotels, scattered around the former Yugoslavia. For distributing this anti-patriotic propaganda, he was arrested and released in both Kosovo and Serbia and finally sent to prison in 1999. This prompted the *Free Art Campaign*, which had hundreds of Italian artists calling for his release. On the 30 April 1999, Maver was killed when NATO bombed Podgorica Prison and an image of his body was widely distributed. Following his death, Ljubljana's Kaplica Gallery exhibited his *Tanz der Spinne* or *Dance of the Spider* (1999) project, and published *Disappearance of the Body* (1999) and *Anaphoragentica* (1999). Posthumously, his work was included in the 48th Venice Biennale (1999) (Fig. 1.40) and in Rome when gallery Forte Prenestino held a comprehensive retrospective and a theatrical tribute was dedicated to Maver at the Biennial of Young Artists.

Early in the year 2000, Eva and Franco Mattes, alongside Luther Blissett (Appendix V: 2) claimed the work and exposed Darko Maver as a fictitious character (Caronia 2000). The art

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[3] Aspects of this text were first presented as a conference paper at *Concrete* (2015), a Symposium by Masters in Research Students at the Liverpool School Of Art and Design, Liverpool John Moores University on Tuesday 24 March 2015, at Tate Liverpool and again, at the *Faculty of Arts and Professional Studies Graduate Research Conference* (2015) on Thursday 25 June 2015 at the Liverpool School of Art and Design, Liverpool John Moores University. The written paper formed a case study within my MRes thesis.

world experienced a *'gotcha'* moment. Anger, joy, surprise and embarrassment are some of the reactions to experiencing what Lambert-Beatty defines as the 'gotcha' (2009: 56) moment of a parafiction. The 'gotcha' moment is the moment when the ethicality become most ambiguous. Media are tricks, with the reveal acting as a mode of doing and being with the reveal vital to this type of parafictive practice. It is most evident in trickster practices as they are more reliant on the binary of true and false, even if they challenge expectations of this, as according to Lambert-Beatty parafictions are 'a deeply uncomfortable reorientation of what and how you know.' (2018: 142) The big reveal or 'gotcha' moment is a significant as the point of discomfort where people feel as if they have been made a fool. This forces a moment of self-realisation in which the viewer must consider and reassess what they thought they knew and then decide whether or not to accept the challenge to that, as Lambert-Beatty suggests '[t]he first reaction to experiencing a parafiction is usually defensive anger. The question is whether and how you get past that ego-threat.' (Lambert-Beatty 2018: 142) This point of reflexivity is where lessons are learnt and parafiction have 'real' world application.

In the instance of *Darko Maver* (1998-99), the Mattes add another dimension and additional layer that flips this point of reflexivity, as the images used were real. The photographs, found on the internet by the duo, depicted real atrocities, which had occurred – some during the Yugoslav wars. When interviewed by Antonio Caronia, the pair stated that they aim to:

> organize information and deconstruct processes in order to subvert, from the inside, the system of production, distribution and fruition of art – beating it at its own game… [We] brought this concept to the extreme limit, transforming even something inexistent into art: since Darko Maver exists as a media creature (articles, exhibitions, posters etc.) he do [sic] exist tout court.
> (Mattes E. and F. 2000)

Darko Maver (1998-99) allowed the pair to subvert and ultimately trick the art world. The choreography of the Mattes' clever manipulation and selection of topic resulted in the duo infiltrating the art world through their inclusion in the 48th Venice Biennial (1999). Maver did exist in many spaces, both actual and virtual and Maver was plausible enough for people to

believe. If they had not come forward, the Mattes' deception may have never been uncovered. It was important for the Mattes and Luther Blissett to reveal their act in order to demonstrate how the media, internet and art world can be manipulated.

In order to provide viewers with that sense of plausibility the Mattes. Works often include a narrative. This is evident in *Darko Maver* (1998-1999), creating a new story, their story, from content that they have not made. In a 2009 interview with Domenico Quaranta, Eva Mattes declares:

> Can it be true? I am constantly making up stories, and I tell them so many times I no longer remember if things really happened that way, or if I made everything up myself. And the funny thing is that as soon as I like the story, I really don't care. (Mattes, E. (n.d.) cited in Quaranta 2009: 9)

When the majority of users search online, they only inhabit the surface web. However, through this interface layer there is the Deepweb (Appendix IV: 2), which contains the Darknet (Appendix IV: 2) and it is here where the internet can be used anonymously. In 2012, the Mattes procured Emily's Video from the Darknet. They put out a call for volunteers to watch the 'worst video ever' and asked them to record their reactions on a webcam. Once enough people had viewed the video and their reactions had been collected, the pair destroyed the original. All that remains is the documentation. Therefore, only those who viewed the video know what happened (Fig. 1.41). The viewers of Emily's Video do not offer any explanation for the content – the audience of the piece can only hear the onerous music and the occasional gasps. What is left is a new story, an imagined narrative constructed from the interpretation of the reactions to the original Emily's Video. This is reflective of how users understand the images they see online because information can be lost, altered and displaced from its original context. The popular Channel 4 television show *Gogglebox* (2013-) also uses this format, watching the viewers of the programmes whilst they critique what they watch without necessarily seeing the original, although the context and the occasional clip are given.

This new narrative of reactions raises two points. First, that people often feel alienated when they have not seen what is currently trending online as the 'Fear Of Missing Out' or FOMO, so when users inhabit this space they want to own and share in the collective experience. The volunteers for *Emily's Video* (2012) set themselves up for this in an experience akin to visiting a 'Freak Show'. One viewer, Marina Galperina states: '[h]ere we all are, the culprits. We make we sick.' (2012) Secondly, the video may have never existed. Again, the Mattes' narrative is plausible with the audience investing and trusting the human reactions. However, the majority of viewers do not access the Deepweb and are unlikely to have searched for the 'worst video ever'. Therefore, *Emily's Video* (2012) subverts both the internet itself and emotional responses online through the use of a narrative that consequently makes users unable to make binary distinctions between fact and fiction.

In *No Fun* (2010), Franco is seen staging his suicide on the website Chatroulette (Fig. 1.42), which is a social networking site that enables people around the world to talk to randomly selected others in webcam-based conversations. The site is still active, but is less popular since the advent of apps such as Snapchat (2011) and the widespread availability of video calls. The title appears to be a reference to The Stooges song *No Fun* (1969), which contains the lyrics 'no fun to hang around' and was covered by the Sex Pistols in 1977. *No Fun* (2010) is the edited video of the online performance and documents the viewers' reactions. The audience unwittingly became the subject of the work, as thousands of people watched him hanging. The reactions were surprising and often disturbing: many laughed, some hurled abuse, few were completely unmoved, and many took pictures with their mobile phones. There are even rumours that one viewer masturbated, although this does not feature in the film. Perhaps, most poignantly, is that only one out of the thousands called the police. In an interview the Mattes declared that, initially, they were reluctant to go through with the performance, but '[i]n more than one moment' they were 'the one[s] who' were

'shocked' (Mattes E. and F. 2012). *No Fun* (2010) was banned by YouTube for its explicit

content. However, it can still be found on Vimeo. The Mattes state that:

> No Fun tries to create a situation of the most dire loneliness and affect [sic],
> exaggerating the distance and lack of real engagement in online encounters, to slow
> down the endless social media flux with a moment of absolute reality.
> (Carroll / Fletcher n.d.)

Yet, their act is not a moment of absolute reality as Franco is deceiving his unsuspecting

viewers. Maybe what the Mattes are attempting to achieve is an exposure of the limits of the

internet and user behaviour. Joline Blais and Jon Ippolito explain this further:

> [r]eal violence is being perpetrated and ignored by a media-anesthetized world. This
> work challenges us with a critical life-or-death question: How can we connect art
> with life again? How can we recover from media-inspired numbness?
> (Blais and Ippolito 2006: 59)

The work of the Mattes', discussed here, acts 'as if' within the structure of the internet,

reflecting the existing content and structure of websites to deceive their audience.

Ian Alan Paul *Negative Monument*, 2018

Negative Monument (2018) (Fig. 1.43) is an open call to participate in the deconstruction of

a monument. Paul instructs participants to remove a piece of an existing monument that

could be deemed fascist, colonial, racist, patriarchal, capitalist or, in any other way,

offensive. The removed palm-sized piece should then be relocated, removing this piece of

monument from its historical context and potential agency, leaving it in a place where it will

erode and lose all functionality. The idea is that once enough individuals engage in the

project, monuments of this nature will be destroyed and as Paul states '[r]uins, like

monuments, don't build themselves.' (2018b) The piece is speculative as once the

instructional poster is disseminated from a gallery, the outcome is unknown. It is uncertain

whether people engage with the project by deconstructing a monument or if the project is

purely conceptual. In both cases, the piece functions as a way to examine the recent

practices of monument destruction as witnessed during the Arab Spring with the defacement

of a statue of Hosni Mubarak and movements such as Rhodes Must Fall, which called for the decolonisation of education in South Africa and beyond, through the removal of statues commemorating Cecil Rhodes. *Negative Monument* (2018) is reminiscent of Eva and Franco Mattes' *Stolen Pieces* (1995-97), in which the duo stole small pieces from fifty renowned artworks including fragments of Marcel Duchamp, Jeff Koons, Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol. *Stolen Pieces* (1995-97) remained secret until 2010, although different in intent to Paul's *Negative Monument* (2018), questions of agency and ownership are raised. In the trickster paradigm, the polarities are most evident where the limits of legality and ethics are used to different ends.

Maud Craigie's *Indications of Guilt, pt. 1*, 2020

Maud Craigie's (Appendix V: 3) *Indications of Guilt, pt. 1* (2020) (Fig. 1.44) investigates the symbiotic relationship between film, television and reality and the raised awareness of police process, especially in the USA, due to the popularity of the True Crime television genre. For example, people are aware of interrogation techniques and know what Miranda Rights are. Craigie explores 'what it might mean to be deeply familiar with something - through the prism of fiction - before you experience it first-hand.' (Appendix III 2020: 68)

The film documents Craigie's experience of a training course on psychological interrogation techniques, which she attended at a police academy in Texas, USA. The private firm train both state run services such as the military, police, CIA and FBI along with private security companies. Anyone can register to attend these courses and Craigie, who had received funding for the trip from University College London, explained her visit as academic research. At the police training academy Craigie witnessed the use of extracts from *The Wire* (2002-08) and *L.A. Confidential* (1997) to demonstrate techniques. Although this was the focus of her investigation, she did not expect the relationship between television and interrogation to be 'so overt' (Appendix III 2020: 68).

Texas, as a state operates a one-party consent law. This means that if one party, in this instance Craigie, is privy to the conversation and aware that it is being recorded, then it can legally be recorded without their consent. The police use this tactic as an interrogation technique to record 'off the record' conversations. Craigie wanted to co-opt these methods by covertly filming the interrogators on an iPhone, using their own loophole against them. In gathering material, the organisers of the course, were to some extent deceived, although Craigie states that 'I felt that any deception I used mirrored the deception used as part of the interrogation process.' (Appendix III 2020: 69) This concept of mirroring is significant, in that to mirror another's behaviour, but refract not reflect their intention, reveals information that is distorted through media representations or deliberately concealed. As Craigie continues when asked about the ethics of the project,

> I was interested in uncovering the structures and processes of interrogation and saw my role as utilising or engaging with the structures and rules I found – but perhaps not in the way they were originally intended. In terms of filming police undercover and not being fully transparent in my intentions, these are tactics employed by detectives in an attempt to reveal a truth – so that to me had an internal logic.
> (Appendix III 2020: 69)

Others who were interviewed for the film were told about the nature of the project so, in this way, it appears that Craigie is mirroring their own code of practice or ethics back at them, with the prism of freedom and liberty in the USA, very skewed for selective people. Craigie, as the interrogator, adopts the role of trickster. However, through the process of mirroring Craigie is able to be both deceitful and honest.

The aim of an interrogation by a law enforcing body is to seek truth. However, especially in the USA, fictioning methods are employed to reach this outcome, which often is subjectively based on the instinct of the interrogator or their reading of evidence. Craigie found that interrogators lie to suspects using a tactic called 'trickery' that allows the use of props, such as false files, to imply the presence of evidence, but the fictitious evidence is never referred to in the interview (Appendix III 2020: 69). This creates the impression of information when

that information does not exist. Through the absence of reference, those who are being

interrogated project what that information might be, potentially leading to a confession. As

well as evidence that is fiction, Craigie explains another technique known as 'theme

development' (Appendix III 2020: 69), which constructs a narrative where the crime

becomes acceptable when emotionally framed as impulse rather than intent. This production

of a new narrative, that in part excuses the crime, may lead those being interrogated to

confess. According to Craigie the interrogation manual provides numerous themes

applicable to a variety of different suspects and, through theme development, interrogation

becomes 'the process of creating a narrative.' (Appendix III 2020: 69)

The production of narrative, in actual interrogations and their media representations, results

in much of what occurs within the space of interrogation becoming performative. This is

enacted through speech acts, such as the familiar 'no comment' or 'good-cop bad-cop'

routine, which leaves little space for going off script, as if the decision of guilt or innocence is

predetermined. As Craigie examines in *Indications of Guilt, pt. 1* (2020) interrogation

becomes a form of fiction, which attempts to establish 'the truth'.

CHAPTER TWO
PARAFICTION: BOUNDARIES OF INFRASTRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS

The virtual is not opposed to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual […]The reality of the virtual consists of the differential elements and relations along with the singular points which correspond to them. The reality of the virtual is structure. We must avoid giving the elements and relations that form a structure an actuality which they do not have, and withdrawing from them a reality which they have.

Deleuze 1994 [1968]: 208-09

Parafiction: Boundaries of Infrastructures and Institutions

This chapter examines the infrastructure of planetary-scale computation and demonstrates

its effects on infrastructures of institutions of power, specifically examining language,

finance, the museum and archive. The key themes of the chapter are activism, memory and

the inversion of power structures. At times practices of this type are satirical, when they

parody systems of power, specifically the adoption of the aesthetics of official documents

and corporate websites together with the use of these structures' associated language. This

is common in the category of parafictive 'as ifs'. The use of the aesthetics and language of

institutions is an extension of détournement and over-identification. This links with

UBERMORGEN, specifically *[V]ote Auction* (2000) and *Foriginals* (2006-07) in providing a

sense of authority and plausibility. The key case study of this section is Ian Alan Paul whose

work function as forms of 'as if' that need this authenticity to be accepted as 'real', and Walid

Raad and the Atlas Group who uses the infrastructure of an archive to produce new

narratives.

Technology as Infrastructure
*[We are today in] the epoch of space… [O]ur experience of the world is less that of a long
life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with
its own skein… The space in which we live, which draws in out of ourselves, in which the
erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us,
is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space… we live inside a set of relations that delineates
sites which are irreducible to one and other and absolutely not superimposable on one
another.*

<div align="right">Foucault 1967:22 -23</div>

Infrastructures become mediators, as relatives of ritual, with the ability to mediate between

communities; infrastructures become sites for communication, users and ideas. Shannon

Mattern applies such an approach to the infrastructure of a library, arguing that it is a

mediator of social spaces, providing numerous competing functions that are difficult to

contain within one physical space (2014). Mattern continues, viewing the 'library as a

network of integrated, mutually reinforcing, evolving *infrastructures* – in particular

architectural, technological, social, epistemological and ethical infrastructures' (Mattern

2014: para. 2). Libraries have to fulfil these functions: architecturally in terms of having a physical location for multiple uses and users; technologically it must use systems to provide services to borrow, lend and archive material plus providing users with access to computers and the internet; socially it must cater to a very broad range of society, giving space for the individual and groups to partake in a wide range of activities; epistemologically as a space for learning and knowledge and the ethics of the space means that it must attempt to provide access to all as a free, common and democratic space.

Mattern argues that a library is a state of exception, leading her to ask 'can an institution whose technical and physical infrastructure is governed by the pursuit of innovation also fulfil its obligations as a social infrastructure serving the disenfranchised?' (2014) This question, in terms of architectural design, needs to consider how does a library read *itself* as a social-technical-intellectual infrastructure? These infrastructures become intersecting platforms that support 'intellectual and material systems and labor practices [that] are mutually constructed and mutually reinforcing' (2014: para. 2). When an infrastructure is viewed as a platform it becomes a dynamic space to be built upon and improved. Applying an infrastructure ecology to the complex nature of a library produces a number of infrastructural identities. The library shares the same complex structure as the internet and computation in that is also needs to be a social-technical-intellectual infrastructure. These competing needs have led to a structure and infrastructure that is not fit for purpose. Media and information within an infrastructure becomes media as potentially embodied on an urban or global scale (Mattern 2017:xxv) 'as a force whose modes, ideologies, and aesthetics can be spatialized, and materialized, in the landscape.' (Mattern 2017: xxvi) This new force shapes the planet's ecology and organisation, but is often viewed as ephemeral, which is why it is important to define the infrastructure and ecology of digital space.

As the actual of the virtual is structure, the structure is finite in terms of its layers at this moment in 'real time' but, within this structure, phenomena has the capacity to cross planes of matter through intra-actions for both human and nonhuman users. The research here applies Bratton's concept of *The Stack* (2015) as a device to demonstrate the distinct layers of the internet and the significant material changes this structure creates. It explores the infrastructure's materiality and governance to consider how human usage of technology has informed nonhuman users to shape individual experience online. These shifts are important because they underpin the perceived altered relationship with truth and the present post-truth narrative.

Bratton proposed The Stack as a design brief and a new geopolitical model structure attuned to the Anthropocentric present. For the research it is important to understand how new sovereignties have been formed and how the planet is framed by technological infrastructure to demonstrate the conditions that are conducive to parafictive practice and as a way to explore, often hidden, structures of power and control. Although it is important to remember that there has always been technology in the Anthropocene (Appendix IV: 2) and that this is not necessarily a new or recent development (Parikka 2015). The Stack is an accidental megastructure, one that has grown over time, across land, sea, and sky with the expansion of computation and technological infrastructure to its planetary-scale. The Stack is not a deliberate design, it is an accident and therefore fundamentally linked to neoliberalism as capitalism's greatest advocate Milton Friedman would agree, '[o]nly a crisis - actual or perceived- produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around.' (1982: p.ix) Naomi Klein suggests in the *Shock Doctrine* (2007) that capitalism has always used the aftermath of disasters in order to employ shocks, which reshape and change the world for private gain. This is how planetary-scale computation has been formed as an accident, claiming space and power. Although the internet is not necessarily a disaster, its influence and unavoidability have significantly changed the planet in an unprepared way.

The Stack shows how software and hardware merge to affect contemporary culture and society. This model is a way to rationalise the infrastructure of the internet and its material presence to demonstrate the space where parafictions exist. It is also useful to consider that, as technological infrastructure continues to expand, new geopolitical boundaries are potentially drawn. For instance, as fibre-optic cables transport communications under the sea, these cables physically cross existing borders. This process of intra-action results in existing sovereignties becoming more complex as computation reshapes the planet. As the distinction between these two spaces becomes harder to determine, the actual becomes altered and relationships with truth can be affected. Applying this structure takes into account the potential for information to be lost, transformed or rendered irrelevant. As content is constantly transformed through intra-actions of human and nonhuman users a mass amount of metadata is generated. Hito Steyerl refers to this as 'digital debris' (2011), which is comprised of the digital waste content generated for spam e-mails and fake profiles largely by the nonhuman uses of computation, such as algorithmic bots. With all this waste and layers of seemingly immaterial data within the structure of The Stack, it becomes hard to navigate and gives dominance to false content and information.

The Stack comprises six layers, *User, Interface, Address, City, Cloud* and *Earth* (Bratton, 2015) (Fig. 2.1), each layer has a distinct function, but are not discrete and range from the global to the local. The Earth layer of The Stack is both conceptual and material, forming the base of The Stack and it is here where its energy is gathered. It is in the Earth layer that the traditional Westphalian state sovereignty (Appendix IV: 7) is broken, as software, hardware, cloud platforms and nonhuman users do not respect existing subdivisions of land. The infrastructure of planetary-scale computation can only operate within the Earth's physical chemistry. The Stack needs the Earth's matter, its minerals and elements to perform. Technology sucks from the geology of the planet. Computers summarise this relationship between the last two to three hundred years of technological advancement in the

Anthropocene's development and its reliance on the material properties of the planet. Bratton states that The Stack 'terraforms the host planet by drinking and vomiting its elemental juices and spitting up mobile phones.' (2015: 83) The Stack not only exists on and is made from the Earth, it can be viewed as a way to frame the Earth as Elizabeth Grosz confirms '[t]he earth can be *infinitely* divided, territorialized, framed […] Framing is how chaos becomes territory.' (Grosz 2008: 17) Contemporarily, how the Earth is framed is evident on Google Earth, which provides the Earth's image in its totality. Google Earth acts as a meta-interface, the present captured as a place largely devoid of human inhabitants. It has become 'an absolute frame, a metaframe of frames' (Bratton 2015: 86), a frame which shapes our view of the world, giving people the ability to conceptualise it as a whole at its planetary-scale.

Understanding media and its relationship to the planet is important because it is often underestimated or disguised by the new. Media archaeology (Appendix IV: 4) and geology brings together these seemingly opposing components that need each other to function. As Jussi Parikka explains:

> [g]eology of media deals with the weird intersections of earth materials and entangled times. It includes several events that reveal this combination of the planetary ancient and the technologically advanced. The futuristic changes place with the obsolete in ways that are at times too close to notice. The design culture of the new hides the archaic materials of the planet.
> (2015: 137)

For example, the cloud requires a material network that changes the ecology of the planet, with many researchers and artists working to make visible these networks that are perceived as invisible. The Cloud layer is comprised of the hardware needed to power The Stack, such as the data centres and wireless networks alongside Cloud platforms such as Google and Amazon. Cloud platforms are geopolitical machines, which have the ability to alter and create geographies, thus ultimately destabilising existing territories. As Bratton writes:

> [a]s a governing nexus of The Stack, this order identifies, produces and polices the information that can move up and down, layer to layer, fixing internal and external borders and designating passages to and from. In doing so it generates more lines and borders, not fewer, and so its apparent universality is actually divided against itself.
> (Bratton 2015: 111)

The need to rationalise the structure of planetary-scale computation can also be seen as the configuring and claiming of territory within the Cloud layer as a direct result of globalisation, which has both disrupted and enforced borders bringing the world both closer and further away. The Stack draws a new territory and occupies it. Google as a Cloud platform operates up and down The Stack, both internally and externally spanning a vast computational geography. The expansive nature of Google's infrastructure could be viewed as a strategic claim for new political geographies, which are intrinsically linked to existing power structures (Bratton, 2015: 34). *Cloud Polis* are the models implemented by Cloud platforms to coerce users into proto-state entities. These entities have the capacity to operate at the scale of traditional states (Bratton, 2015: 369) and can be seen within the architecture of the cloud platforms Google, Facebook and Amazon. Using Google as an example, in 2009, the first Sino-Google conflict of ideologies occurred, one views the internet as an extension of the state with the other acting beneath the state. This conflict proposes a new form of warfare, a war fought over who or what now governs society, one that Steyerl refers to as planetary-scale civil war (2017). When states begin to move into the cloud, the cloud becomes host to de-facto states. In this way states are able to act through occupation as newly formed cloud territories. As a method of censorship and as part of their authoritarian communist regime, China does not allow services such as Google or Facebook to operate on their internet. To prevent access China has the so-called 'Great Firewall' in place, which blocks undesirable sites. Bratton quips that it is a 'glass dome for a billion internet users.' (2015: 113) Fang Binxing, known as the father of the firewall states '[i]t's like the relationship between riverbed and water. Water has no nationality, but riverbeds are sovereign territories, we cannot allow polluted water from other nation states to enter our country.' (Ge 2011)

In this case, Google, a non-state actor, acted with the capability of a state without holding sovereign territory, unseating traditional Westphalian sovereignty. Google attempted to force China to allow its citizens access to the site. China seeks to control internet access in the same way that it enforces physical border controls in order to prevent corruption from outside forces. In 2009 Google withdrew. However, users can still access the site in China if they have the correct technical knowhow and are unafraid of the consequences. Viewed in this way users are always inside or outside of the dome, categorised and separated by numerous binaries that are often outside of individual control. It is all too easy to see China's enforcement as a method of control and as an affront to free speech. However, specifically in Europe, the terms for an American centric internet have been too readily accepted, which has left users exposed and vulnerable to misuses of data. Currently, geopolitical theory surrounding planetary-scale computation is naïve, either relying too heavily upon managing the space in the same way as traditional geographic sovereignty through preordained boarders or by relying too heavily upon a secret police acting undetected, or via individuals who use crypto-anarchic methods (Appendix IV: 2).

The city layer houses the networks of cities that combines the 'physical, informational, and ecological infrastructures.' (Bratton 2015: 369) Cities have always been mediated, the difference in the present being the datafication of the city (Mattern 2017: ix). Access to social space is subdivided by both architectural and informational partitions. Users are tethered to the city through mobile cloud platforms, with mobile phones compressing the city to link users to the city and cloud layer (Bratton 2015:168). The city layer is a way to understand the unseen boundaries of The Stack and the divisions of physical space, '[t]he Stack enrols the city as a discrete layer within its larger sum by the binding of sensation and scale with enclosure and envelope and by pairing the tactility of the virtual with the effervescence of the monumental.' (Bratton 2015: 148) The city layer demonstrates the monumental scale of

planetary-computation and the divisions of the interior camp or the exterior enclave in a

physical sense. These divisions are not necessarily new as Mattern argues, cities have:

> *always* been both new and old, immaterial and material, wireless and wired. Our
> media cities have been, and still are, both ether *and* ore, code and clay. […] Clay
> and code, dirt and data, pasts and presents intermingle here. And— provided that
> our future cities are designed to accommodate these untidy, productively "confused"
> materialities and temporalities, to amplify the echoes of the past— they always will.'
> (2017: 156)

It is easier to visualise the structure of the address layer, as this is often how geographical

space is defined. However, the addressing of computational content has little or no

correlation from one address to another in terms of geographic location. All content that

exists on the internet is indexed through an address. Users, human and nonhuman cannot

be present online without an address, therefore, The Stack, as with other geopolitical

systems, needs the ability to designate addresses. The appearance of The Stack is

materialised through the use of addresses. In other words, '[t]he control of postal address

codes is essential to how states, real and imagined, can see and manage both territory and

the territorialised.' (Bratton 2015: 194-95) Currently, the majority of internet communication

takes place between nonhuman entities, thing to thing, overshadowing human to human

communication and ultimately takes up more space. Therefore, within planetary-scale

computation it has moved to a phase of what Bratton terms as *Deep Address*, in which

nonhuman to nonhuman interactions can also be given addresses. Addresses can belong to

both the tangible and the intangible conditions between things (Bratton 2015: 205), in other

words the intra-actions of nonhuman users can be indexed. The addresses are important for

a number of reasons as Bratton explains, they provide '*identity* (through "designation"),

exchange, and *recursion* and [consequently] the capacity to govern the conditions of those

exchanges and their traces.' (2015: 206-07) Addresses provide authenticity and plausibility

to nonhuman users. This is also useful for parafictions found in net.art, which are able to

manipulate the legitimacy of these addresses. The spaces in these addresses defy physical

geographies, but still provide a form of address as Burrows and O'Sullivan further explain:

'through the digital is a life lived through the disjunctions of networks which seem comprised

of images and worlds which are spaced out but, at the same time, potentially and instantaneously linked.' (2019: 384)

The interface layer is the way users engage and interact with The Stack and planetary-scale computation. The interface mediates users' view of the natural and physical world. The interface layer links and delinks the users with the addresses up and down The Stack's columns. It shows the user what they are able to do within The Stack, '*[i]nterfaces* slice, cleave, and individuate. Each is open to some and closed to others.' (Bratton 2015: 221) Through interfaces users are separated as:

> [i]nterfaces are thresholds. They connect and disconnect in equal measures structure flows by combining and segmenting it, enabling it or frustrating it, bringing unlike forms over vast distances and subdividing that which would otherwise congeal on its own.
> (Bratton 2015: 228)

Apps are interfaces with the real-time information gathered existing within the cloud layer at data centres. The interface of applications conceal the material aspects of our data, as apps are physical extensions of the Cloud Polis. The interface layer is the apex of the cloud layer, which means that the user is able to interact with The Stack without seeing the often complicated and contradictory nature of the cloud layer.

The user layer is the top layer of The Stack - it is not just 'how we see The Stack it is also how The Stack sees us.' (Bratton 2015: 256) It is at this point that the layers of The Stack converge, containing meta-users on a massive scale. It is where the action happens. The user layer activates and acts across all other layers of The Stack:

> [t]he *Earth* layer spins out polities of the electron and emergency, the *Cloud* layer enrols proto-citizens in global platform totalities, the *City* chapter maps out spaces of filtering control and accident alegal access, the *Address* layer diagrams reductive images of all of these processes served up as total or tactical instrumental regimes. All of these put in motion for *Users*, as *Users* are put in motion for them.
> (Bratton 2015: 256)

The users of The Stack experience the constant reflection of past viewing sessions as if 'a mirror [is] held up to a mirror, reflecting into darkness.' (Bratton 2015: 262) Users are bombarded with metadata and digital debris (Steyerl 2011) of which only certain parts have been mastered. This results in the reflections of reflections and the experience of levels of meta-reflections that contain the reflections of previous usages of users and likeminded individuals. If this continues to occur as its present exponential rate it could result in the loss of the understanding of the difference between past experience and future desire. If experience is relegated to reflections of reflections, when users engage with the internet through technological infrastructure, it is here where the gaps in perception begin to widen. If, currently, users are analysing and reviewing expressions of experience it becomes easy to understand them as distinct and separate from what is actual. As The Stack continues to reflect back and forth in echo chambers of existence users remove themselves from the world that is actual and physical, meaning that the absurd and extreme becomes ordinary as they move further from the idea of experience.

The Stack as an infrastructure is lacking the significant presence of human and nonhuman interaction through the space, which, although arguably, clearer using this stack structure does not account for what happens when human and nonhuman users interact with this space. As the internet's infrastructure becomes a force that shapes the planet's ecology and organisation it is here where parafiction becomes significant, with this research suggesting an additional layer where social interaction and the filtering of information takes place. Parafiction teaches users human and nonhuman to negotiate complex information that is neither and both true or false. This awareness of how The Stack is manipulated gives both human and nonhuman agency over usage of this space. This argument aligns with the aims of the *Xenofeminist Manifesto* (Cuboniks 2015) (XF). It is their desire to construct an alien posthuman future that is a radically different to the present. As the group confirm:

> [i]n affirming a future untethered to the repetition of the present, we militate for ampliative capacities, for spaces of freedom with a richer geometry than the aisle,

the assembly line, and the feed. We need new affordances of perception and action unblinkered by naturalized identities. In the name of feminism 'Nature' shall no longer be a refuge of injustice, or a basis for any political justification whatsoever! (Cuboniks 2015: 93)

XF, as a platform that intersects with the layers of The Stack, is a mutable architecture that uses 'the geometry of freedoms [that] these platforms afford.' (Cuboniks 2015: 59) To create a space and site xenofeminism ranges '[f]rom the global to the local, from the cloud to our bodies, xenofeminism avows the responsibility in constructing new institutions of technomaterialist hegemonic proportions.' (Cuboniks 2015:83)

The Stack structure of virtual space has affected usage both human and nonhuman in a number of ways. It has become increasingly difficult to select the information that is available to view, be it content generated by *friends* and *followers* on social media or search engines providing top results or adverts based on internet history. Content and information are selected via algorithms, artificial intelligence and machine learning, which act to mirror the user and likeminded users to reflect reflections of reflections. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun refers to these as groupings of *YOUS* (2016) and Cass R. Sunstein describes this as subscribing to *The Daily Me* (2017), both agreeing that this has shrunk the size and scale of online spaces to that of an echo chamber where users only see versions of themselves. The implementation of Web 2.0 tethers and blurs online and offline identities, asking for authentic data in exchange for access, integrating the public and private whilst becoming a reinforcement of neoliberalism. Chun confirms that '[i]n the first decade of this century, with the advent of Web 2.0, the internet has become a semipublic/private space of "true names" and "authentic images"' (2016: 107). There is no coincidence that companies such as Facebook and Google need authentic information for their data mining exploits. This consideration of authenticity and plausibility is central to parafictions. Concurrent to the advent of Web 2.0, a number of key incidents such as the bombing of the Twin Towers, the subsequent war on terror, the illegal invasion of Iraq, the advent of social media and the 2008 world financial crisis have changed perceptions of the world. During this time the

internet began to look and feel more like the real world. It was a space where people

retreated when the real world became too much.

The ominous rise of big data has led to a murky reality full of gaps and shadows. As Chun

suggests 'big data creates big shadows through its very mechanism of capture, which

shapes the reality it allegedly mirrors by depending on past data to 'pass on' data.' (2016:

59) Here old habits shape worldviews, leaving users trapped in a feedback loop. In 2013,

IBM stated that everyday 2.5 quintillion bytes of data is produced (Jacobson). This is an

astronomical figure, which has no doubt increased exponentially in recent years. If the

twentieth century was the age of big science, the twenty-first century is the age of big data.

Many developments in technological infrastructure have been made in order to manage the

vast amount of data, as Bratton confirms:

> [i]f the paradigmatic culture energy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the invention of new media technologies and the exploration of these as vehicles to drive avant-garde forms of expression, then twenty-first century invention focuses instead on the scanning, archiving, cataloguing, sorting, visualisation, cutting and pasting, sensing, and serving rationalisation and capitalisation of archived reservoirs of content.
> (Bratton 2015: 125)

As it produces and retains big data, Google becomes a living archive and an attempt to

directly copy the internet, of which it indexes and mirrors as much as it can back to its users.

Cloud platforms are also operating on a planetary-scale. As Bratton continues, 'Google

wants to structure and curate all of the world's information, manage it in data centres, a

medium of reflexive action on a world rendered as computational plateau.' (2015: 353)

Social media sites such as Facebook are social graph simulations. The index is the

innovation, which archives human behaviour to monetise the social lives of its users. With

Facebook or Instagram, the archive is the primary channel of information. Today the index is

the message and information is power. Labour or the production of authentic data is given

for free by users. Terranova in *Network Dynamics* (2004) explores how free labour in the

digital economy has given information an economic value, which has exponentially

extrapolated today with the growth of Big Data. In 2017, *The Economist* declared data as the

world's most valuable asset, with data superseding oil. Currently, labour is voluntarily provided online through the production of vast amounts of data and by users being their authentic selves, making users valuable commodities to technology companies, the economy and to governments and contemporary structures of power.

A number of events have begun to expose the boundaries and methods of control implemented by cloud platforms through technological infrastructure. This is of particular relevance with the revelations of mass data harvesting by Cambridge Analytica and Facebook in 2018, who used approximately 87 million Facebook profiles without owner permission in order to develop a system, which would use personalised political advertisements based on psychological profiles to target US voters. The implication here is that these covert methods were used during the 2016 American election to potentially solicit votes. Similar tactics were used by the British Vote Leave Brexit campaign in 2016. Vote Leave employed Canadian firm AggregateIQ (AIQ) to target adverts at previously unreachable citizens, who had become disenfranchised with the British political system, feeding and learning from their worries, fears and desires. Other important events include the enforcement of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018, which aims to synchronise data privacy laws across Europe and increase data protection for EU citizens and the 2017 ruling that the supermarket Morrisons was liable for a data breach. This was the first data leak class action to occur in the UK. Such events, amongst others, have helped raise the issue of how personal data is used and digital spaces are controlled in public conscious.

Inequalities in reality are felt online as they are embedded into algorithmic binaries - a bad bug of computation. As computation is nonhuman technology it is considered to be impartial and incapable of bias. However, through the use of proxies, algorithms are able to identify or appear to identify us based on arbitrary differences. Here the algorithms are working effectively as they are successfully separating and organising data. Chun confirms that big

data can 'exacerbate existing inequalities' by using proxies which then employ 'allegedly coarse and outdated categories of race, class, sexuality, and gender' (2016: 374). Viewed in this way technological infrastructure becomes inherently biased through the enforcement of binary distinctions. Books on this subject include Simone Browne's *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (2015) and Safiya Umoja Noble's *Algorithms of Oppression*: *How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (2018)*.* This means that it is easy to employ big data to entrench existing views by conforming to outmoded binaries, as seen in September 2017, when Facebook allowed advertisers to target users with anti-Semitic views. The algorithm selected users who had self-identified as 'Jew haters' or subscribed to pages such as 'Hitler did nothing wrong'. By creating these new enclaves of opinion, worldviews have potentially shrunk and created many small global villages, where biases continue to potentially prevent understanding of what is really going on. This reflects the libertarian perspectives outlined earlier in chapter one and appears to echo Clyde Wayne Crews' proposal of the creation of *splinternets* (2001) as a way to structure the internet into discrete autonomous spaces which would be privately run with their own laws and perspectives. This is not particularly different from the structure that presently exists. These enclaves have led to events such as Donald Trump's election victory and Brexit, both in 2016, leaving people completely confused, when for many social media indicated the opposite. As Sunstein suggests that although 'self-insulation and personalization are solutions to some genuine problems […] they also spread falsehoods, and promote polarization and fragmentation.' (2017: 5) A consequence of this is that the truth is harder to establish, which ultimately affects democracy.

This looping of time results in reflections of reflections. The Stack is still bound to its planetary constraints, yet its structure creates different and new spaces, which acts as 'a machine that is a state held together by […] the spaces of technical exceptions as much as legal ones.' (Bratton 2015: 34) Networks make and take space, becoming extensions of territorial power. Networks are formed as vertical structures that enforce existing hierarchies. They have not been formed as horizontal structures due to the constraints of existing

technologies and infrastructure (Castells 2009). The Stack is a vertical structure although information moves up, down and across its layers. This is not its intentional design, but is how the structure has grown over time, enabling the flows of matter to exist within layers and between them that flow in different directions whilst the structure and its users predominantly conform to its present hierarchical structure. Steyerl refers to these networks as horizontal, although here it is argued that they are vertical as virtual space is shaped through structure and The Stack functions in layers that are vertical (even though information moves in many different directions). How the space is controlled is also hierarchical as Steyerl suggests:

> para-statelets and anti- "terrorist" operations zones emerge alongside duty free zones, offshore entities, and corporation proxy concessions. At the same time, horizontal networks are turned into global fiber-optic surveillance: the planetary civil war is fought by engaging with the logistic disruptions of planetary computerization. Contemporary cosmopolitans do not fail to promptly engage in civil warfare whenever the chance presents itself. Every digital tool imaginable is put to work: bot armies, Western Union, Telegram, PowerPoint presentations, jihadi forum gamification – whatever works. Stasis acts as a mechanism that converts the "cosmo" of "cosmopolitan" into "corporate" and the polis of property.
> (Steyerl 2017: 5)

Planetary-computation, as an environmental issue that is to become planetary, takes into account the intra-actions of computation, its capacities and tendencies and affect on human and nonhuman users with material costs on all matter. The capacities of planetary-scale computation and technological infrastructure is open ended as phenomena are subject to multifarious transformations through intra-actions of matter. Parafictions exist as horizontal formations having both capacities and tendencies that are actual and intra-actional, functioning inbetween and across existing structures in a nonlinear manner. Parafictions are the 'transformation of material from the past into resources for the future' (Grosz et al. 2017: 130). This is the past in its more expanded sense as a way to bring forth the future (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019). Parafictions ultimately connect to something that is inherently human. Interactions with technological infrastructure is a process of knowing in becoming, that once the structure of that space is revealed, human and nonhuman users are able to become within this possibility space. Or as Grosz suggests 'the forces of the universe organize the very possibilities of immanence in given structures, and to the way these experiences of the

outside (Foucault, 1990, 15) press on and deform – as well as incite – social, sexual and political relations (Grosz, 2008).' (Grosz et al. 2017: 130). The planet has been destabilised by the manmade constructs of technological infrastructure, deregulated finance and unjust war (Bridle 2018).

The Order of
the Planets

PRACTICE INTERLUDE III

Rebecca Smith
Planet Diagram, 2020
textured baking parchment, cut-up found text and vintage paper, PVA
48x57cm

Rebecca Smith
The Order of the Planets Full Card Set, 2020
full set individual planets and descriptions
textured baking parchment, cut-up found text and vintage paper, PVA
45x40cm

Each planet serves a purpose,
The layers of infrastructure,
The sections of the thesis,
The different parts,
Orbiting ideas.

The Order of the Planets (2020) (Appendix I: Fig. 31-44) explores the theme of planetary-scales by trying to see the bigger picture and look at the potential connections between planets as placeholders for ideas. Initially intended as a way to open up the structure of thesis, this piece became more abstract and playful using up left over cut-ups from other projects. *The Order of the Planets* (Appendix I: Fig. 31) and the *Planet Diagram* (Appendix I: Fig. 32) become a way to create new connections with words and phrases that are not usually associated with each other. Using the colours of a colour wheel planets have been devised using collage to match the colours and textures appropriate to the planet names and descriptions. They draw on colour associations such as blue as cold, sad, red as angry, sexy or violent, or using names such as Jane in reference to my Mother. Using the format of a diagram and individual planet descriptions this places the work in the context of 'science' to comment on the prevalence of pseudoscience in academia and on social media that often use diagrams or present fiction as fact. In this thesis I have made diagrams as an additional way to access the text-based knowledge and to try and make sense of complex concepts. However, whether this is a help or a hindrance is hard to determine. Do they make it easy to comprehend or do they act as an additional layer that obscures?

INDIVIDUAL PLANET DESCRIPTIONS

Copal	"dead" or dull upon the surface liable to crack
Jane	a touch of genius, the most interesting.
Flake	Another natural earth, perfectly durable.
Old Pete,	that big rock
Ravillious	the brute power, is not injured by contact with steel.
Scarlet Lake	It has a full body gives tints of great beauty.
Pathfinder	gains power, wrapped in loneliness.
Rose Madder -	" mother colour "
Punka	sparseness of foliage
SNAP	all right
Donkey,	natural earth.
Vandyke Brown	in the shadows.
LINNAEUS TRIPE	the sea itself, It is unfortunately a very bad kind of wilderness
BADGER MOP	Rich in antioxidants
Project #2	transparent haunted water curling
Whatman Creswick	(Mould Made)
Shelter	- a mountain you can climb
Flo-Master	full of amusement, a breath of fresh air
GREYHOUND	a silvery greenish grey. which it differs also in possessing great transparency.

EXPERIMENTATION
Experimenting with planets and the concept of infrastructure.

BLUE MOON (2019 (Appendix I: Fig. 36)

Rebecca Smith
Blue Moon, 2019
textured baking parchment, cut-up, blue glitter, PVA
48x57cm

The song *Blue Moon* (Rodgers and Hart 1934 is used by my family at funerals. The idea of a blue moon is one that evokes sadness and longing that is reflective of loss.

HAPPY MOON (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 37)

Rebecca Smith
Happy Moon, 2019
black card, cut-up, PVA
21x29.7cm

This piece explores different textures of paper for planets and how solar systems are structured. The happy moon appears as a charming presence, a charcter that would be associated with nursey rhymes and children's fiction.

PLANET TOE (2019 (Appendix I: Fig. 38)

Rebecca Smith
Planet Toe, 2019
dotted paper, cut-up images, reused drawing, PVA
21x29.7cm

Science fiction, a planet full of toes, drawn from a hand hovering above, the concept of expanding out to see things at a planetary-scale.

PEBBLES (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 39)

Rebecca Smith
Pebbles, 2019
dotted paper, cut-up images, PVA
21x29.7cm

This work uses different textures of paper for planets and explores how solar systems are structured.

THIS AS A CHILD AND THEN THE ANSWER (2020) (Appendix I: Fig. 40)

Rebecca Smith
This as a Child and then the Answer
vintage brown paper, cut-up images and text, PVA
30x30cm

Here I am returning to memories and skills from childhood, bringing them into the future to provide some answers. It uses organic materials such as rock to show this development, formation and growth.

MATERIAL RULES (2020) (Appendix I: Fig. 41)

Rebecca Smith
Material Rules, 2019
vintage brown paper, cut-up images, PVA
30x30cm

This is a collage of artist materials to consider infrastructure and the way information is formed and produced.

THE OPEN DOOR (2019-20) (Appendix I: Fig. 42)

Rebecca Smith
The Open Door, 2019-20
black textured paper, cut-up images and text, PVA
21x14.8cm

This piece examines the notion of portals and other dimensions in the everyday that can be found in the contrast between light and dark.

GHOST CLOUD (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 43)

Rebecca Smith
Ghost Cloud, 2019
coloured pencil, squared paper, sketchbook drawing
21x14.8cm

This work considers the 'cloud' as a ghostly figure that is often given ephemeral qualities.

WELCOME TO THE GHOST CLOUD (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 44)

Rebecca Smith
Welcome to the Ghost Cloud, 2019
pencil, tippex, squared paper, sketchbook drawing
21x14.8cm

Here, I am considering the 'cloud' as a ghostly figure that is often given ephemeral qualities.

Boundaries
Boundaries do not sit still.

<div align="right">Barad 2003: 817</div>

But the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures.

<div align="right">Butler 1990: 2</div>

It is harder to comprehend the enforcement of control within technological infrastructure due to its presentation as immaterial. How the structure of the virtual shapes and regulates users to create actual boundaries and spaces is significant as a condition that is unique to the present epoch and to contemporary parafictional practices. Bratton refers to states of exception and exclusion as the camp or the enclave (2015), using Giorgio Agamden's argument (1998 [1995]) that addresses the conflict between Carl Schmitt's essay *On Dictatorship* (1921) and Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1942). Agamden states that contemporarily Schmitt's state of exception, which is the suspension of sovereign law, is now the rule where the camp becomes the nomos of the modern (1998 [1995]: 95). The Stack infrastructure and powerful cloud platforms produce states of exception and that state of exception has become the law. Westphalian law is suspended by the sovereign state, as traditional forms of territory are unseated. Or on Barad's terms:

> [w]hat often appears as separate entities (and separate sets of concerns) with sharp edges does not actually entail a relation of absolute exteriority at all. Like the diffraction patterns illuminating the indefinite nature of boundaries-displaying shadows in "light" regions and bright spots in "dark" regions-the relation of the social and the scientific is a relations of "exteriority within". This is not a static relationality but a doing-the enactment of boundaries-that always entails constitutive exclusion and therefore requisite questions of accountability.
> (2003: 803)

The binary positions of camp and enclave applies to data and the division of physical space. These new material spaces are confusing, as the infrastructure has been formed as a result of an accident. This, therefore, leads users to become unaware of under whose jurisdiction they fall, what information they are unable to see and ultimately whether this information is true or false and if this information has been selected to specifically target them. There is a lack of transparency within these processes. Florian Cramer argues that what makes the

current period different is the level of media literacy, not all users are literate or understand how the internet and its infrastructure works (2017). Those who know how to use computation very well, have already been able to exploit it, carving the space by becoming the most dominant cloud platforms. The remit of power and control within the megastructure of The Stack is unclear as computation acts at a planetary-scale where new sovereignties are produced because of the material impact of this infrastructure. For example, the fibre optic cables that travel under the sea cross formal borders as do the cooling centres in the Artic. Airports are spaces of exception, a physical manifestation of this is the international free-port art storage centres as examined by Steyerl (2017). There is no precedent or official structure in place for what Bratton describes as the nomos or order of the cloud, therefore it becomes difficult to decipher who controls what.

As a consequence of this, users are subject to inversions of the same infrastructure as the camp or the enclave, either inside or outside of these seemingly invisible boundaries of sovereignty created by software (Bratton 2015: 368). These are both internalising (camp) and externalising (enclave) forces. With the new materiality produced by planetary-scale computation, Bratton comments that, '[t]he line may be drawn on the ground as clear as can be, but the quality of the space that it draws – what is inside and what is outside and who governs either side – is always in question.' (2015: 23) The Stack can be both inside and outside of the line of the tradition forms of the Westphalian state. Users become uncertain of whether they are the camp or the enclave and under whose sovereignty they remain when engaging with The Stack. This is in part due to the second condition that has produced destabilised perception and hypernormalisation and, as argued, here the acceptance of the virtual as immaterial.

Steyerl refers to Agamben's conception of the Greek term *stasis* (2015) as both civil war and immutability, something that is potentially active, but also its opposite (2017: 3). Presently, stasis is the quagmire of history, past, present and future. Steyerl suggests that 'statis

happens as a perpetual transition between the private and public spheres' (Steyerl 2017: 3) that supports and maintains the redistribution of assets. This is complementary to Chun's rationalisation of the semipublic/private spaces of the internet, where what we do in private becomes public becoming as Richard Sennett suggests it is the 'paradox of isolation in the midst of visibility' (1977: 13). While history at present functions within a loop where:

> [s]tasis is the curving back of time into itself, in the context of permanent war and privatization. The museum leaks into the past, the present, and history becomes severely corrupted and limited.
> (Steyerl 2017: 4)

NSK State

Building upon the concepts of *Blut and Boden* and the formation of racially defined states, in 1992, Laibach as part of the Neue Slovene Kunst or New Slovene Art (NSK) (Appendix V: 9) announced itself to be a micronation or virtual state. The formation of the state is in the post-1989 context of the breakup of Yugoslavia and the United Nation sanctioned creation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This state holds no geographic sovereignty and exists outside of traditional jurisdictions as a state in time not space, and is, as according to NSK, the first global state of the universe. Physically the state does not exist within one location sporadically appearing within existing states and permanently inhabitng a digital location (NSK n.d.). The NSK State functions as an 'as if' space, as an alternative. The re-defined states of the former Yugoslavia had to develop their governmental infrastructure rapidly by conducting official state business in domestic spaces. The NSK State has also used hotel rooms, kitchens and theatres as its embassies and consulates, with events and physical geographic locations including Dublin, Florence, Ghent, Glasgow, Moscow and Umag. The NSK's work to date, in which it has formed the body of the NSK has resulted in the need for a space to contain this work, providing the NSK with its own cultural and historical context intrinsically linking the state to cultural production. The NSK State appears as a natural progression for the group, for which the state holds symbolic value:

> [i]n establishing their own state and citizenship, and explicitly dissociating it from its geographical/territorial context, the members of the NSK reject the limitations of

> Slovene or any "given" national (territorial) citizenship. Symbolically (if not
> always in practice), NSK remains to some extent "beyond" the scope of Slovene
> politics, even without the controversy its actions can still generate.
> (Monroe 2005: 252)

Situated transnationally, the NSK State authorises its own passports and citizenship (Fig.

2.2). NSK State passports are produced to international standards and include state motifs,

legitimising the state by appropriating the aesthetics of state authority. The passports

function as political readymades, in that they are copies of official political documents and art

objects. UBERMORGEN use similar practices in their work, most significantly is their

Foriginal Media Hacks (2006-07). Although broadly accepted as a conceptual object, at the

end of the Bosnian War, individuals used the diplomatic versions of the NSK State passports

to leave Sarajevo in 1995. The passports were accepted for two reasons, first their

plausibility as authentic documents and, secondly, because of the formation of new and

altered states leading to confusion over state issued documentation. There has also been a

number of applications for citizenship from Nigerians (Monroe 2011: 165), who have

understood, because of the NSK's rhetoric of a transnational utopia, that the virtual state

offers a route into Europe and the benefits this may bring. The NSK State is a practical

manifestation of new forms of sovereignty. The creation of new and altered boundaries

through the formation of new nation states, actual and virtual, is being realised by global

companies who have begun to form these spaces within the structure of planetary-scale

technological infrastructure.

Black
Holes &
Flying
Saucers

PRACTICE INTERLUDE IV

Rebecca Smith
Black Holes 1-8, 2019
sketch book, found photographs, black textured glitter card, blue glitter, PVA
8x8cm and 12x8cm

Rebecca Smith
Flying Saucers 1-8, 2019
sketch book, found photographs, black textured glitter card, blue glitter, PVA
8x8cm and 12x8cm

The hole is a threshold. *Black Holes and Flying Saucers* (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 45-51) considers this absence and presence by setting these images from the early 1970s in space, to provide a narrative that I do not have access to, that is the one of the family who these photos belonged to, the location of the house and how they came to end up at the car boot sale. Being uncertain as to how successful these works were, I displayed them inside a sketchbook. It was important to document these works to show where the parasol, that inspired *Parasol Spaceship* (2019-20), came from. I consider these works to be demonstrative of the process and my ideas, rather than final outcomes.

Names

Authoritarian regimes often reshape language. This was evident in the USSR and Mao

Zedong's Reformation of Language during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in the

People's Republic of China. Literarily, in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), he

refers to this reformation as 'Newspeak' that is described in detail in the Appendix to the

book. This new language removes negative or anti-party thoughts by eradicating the words

that would describe this, for example bad becomes 'ungood' (Orwell 2013 [1949]: 366).

Similarly, the context of words were changed; free still existed in Newspeak, but could only

be used to say 'the meal is free from nuts' it could not be used to say 'politically' or

'intellectually free' (Orwell 2013 [1949: 344]). These tactics use contradictory and, or,

opposing terms to adjust the past to suit the present and produce the preferred future

through the eradication of existing appropriate language. Memes are a new form of trickster

language as they possess the quality of duality and offer different readings depending on

individual user perception.

The collective The Arabian Street Artists (Appendix V: 12) subverted this in 2015, when they

were commissioned to produce graffiti for the television series *Homeland* (2011-) (Fig. 2.3 &

2.4). The group, instead of writing 'authentic' pro-Assad slogans criticised the programme

with phrases such as 'Homeland is racist', 'Freedom (horeya)… now in 3-D!' (Fig. 2.5) and

'Homeland is watermelon (al watan bateekh)' (Amin 2015) (Fig. 2.6). In Arabic, watermelon

is often used to describe something that is not to be trusted or is false and that can be

dismissed as nonsense. Their subversive act, *Homeland is Not a Series* (2015), was not

realised until the graffiti featured on the programme and those who could read Arabic

revealed the deception. The group produced the pieces as a comment upon assumptions

that street art would be present in a refugee camp, the graffiti would support Bashar al-

Asaad's regime and by commissioning people who are able to speak and write in Arabic, the

programme would gain authenticity (Amin 2015). The programme arguably portrays Muslims

in a negative light and concentrates associations that intrinsically link those of the Muslim faith with terrorism. This entrenched narrative is a form of what Paul describes as fixed memory. The narrative of the war on terror could be the reason for these negative opinions, this, coupled with the political manipulations of former USA Vice President Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld set in motion the subsequent war in Iraq (Mann 2004a, 2004b and 2018).

This is where language and the use of names becomes significant, especially in the Central and Eastern Europe that tap into the use of totalitarian language, either identifying with it as in the case of the Oberdada, Laibach and UBERMORGEN or rejecting it as with Paul and Treister. Baader had begun to use the title Oberdada, which opposed the existing power structures. The Oberdada as a character was developed as the antithesis of the Kaiser, German officials and existing power structures. By performing under this title, Baader was able to draw attention to the hypocrisies existing within German politics. The Oberdada, as Stephen Foster suggests, functions from an 'extra cultural position from which to speak,' (1985: 252) removing himself from the bounds of reality. This is extended by UBERMORGEN. Ubermorgen translates as the day after-tomorrow or super-tomorrow. Seemingly positive this offers negative connotations post-WWII, with direct links to Nazism. Nietzsche's term Übermench was appropriated by the Nazis to describe their desire for a superior Germanic master race and the banned verse of the German national anthem referred to 'Deutschland as über alles' or over others. Both names suggest that the artists are functioning from a heightened position and situating themselves as over others. They are using these extensions to ridicule and draw attention to political inequalities and inherent hierarchies.

The use of the name Laibach is also highly significant and emotive as Laibach is the Austrian-German name for Ljubljana. The term has negative connotations and is linked to the enforced rule and occupation of the region by a number of foreign influences, including the Austrian Habsburgs, Napoleon (Illyrian Provinces) and the Nazis during WWII, whose

impositions on Slovene culture Laibach attempt to redress. As discussed in chapter three

the utterance of the name was banned in Slovenia as a way to prevent Laibach's

performances.

The Yes Men are also known by aliases, mostly using Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bananno

as opposed to their given names of Jacques Servin and Igor Vamos. This is, as well as, the

names they adopt when engaging in identity correction and when they are the Yes Men. The

two members of UBERMORGEN, Hans Bernhard and lizvlx, also employ a number of

pseudonyms. This is opposed to The Yes Men who use 'identity correction' to over identify

with the neoliberal concepts they hope to confront. By over identifying with a chosen group

or target, The Yes Men are able to challenge inequalities by demonstrating their extremities.

Triester uses an alter-ego and Ulman extends her given name as a performance of the

vastness of identity.

Virus

Notably, scholars began to use 'viral' discourse in the 1990s to describe computing,

networks and infrastructures. Cait McKinney and Dylan Mulvin argue that there is a critical

relationship between the viral metaphors applied to the HIV/AIDS crisis and the failures of

technology (2019) which intrinsically link the complex narrative of HIV and 'the risks of

vulnerability in complex, networked systems.' (2019) These metaphors explained how

sharing information or networks without anti-viral protection was akin to having unprotected

sex. Seemingly, this applies to Aliza Shvarts' (Appendix V: 11) work with the potential of

spreading a virus being met with repulsion. Burroughs also often used the metaphor of a

virus for structure of control, as he explains here:

> The virus power manifests itself in many ways. In the construction of nuclear
> weapons, in practically all the existing political systems which are aimed at curtailing
> Inner freedom, that is, at control. It manifests itself in the extreme drabness of

everyday life in Western countries. It manifests itself in ugliness and vulgarity we see on every hand, and of course, it manifests itself in the actual virus illnesses. (Mottram 1964: 12)

Burroughs also believed that these structures of control were embedded in language because of how it had been constructed as Miles states: 'right-wing values […], are just sort of present in a language which evolved out of an authoritarian establishment and therefore embodies all those values just right there in the way the language is constructed.' (2012: 12) Burroughs used cut-ups to counteract this, to disrupt the virus of language that was integral to human nature.

This use of virus as metaphor also links with the etymology of the word 'meme' as defined by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (1976), that suggested a meme was a cultural entity and replicator, functioning in a way akin to a virus. Shvarts' *How does it feel to be a fiction?* (2017) examines women's rights to their bodies within an online context. The work is a generative computer programme and digital performance that replicates the behaviour of a viral email worm. Once users have consented and inserted their personal data into the online form, users access a text that initially was only available for the duration of the performance. The text considers what it means to be a fiction and how marginalised groups are unable to have agency over the representation of their own bodies. Simultaneously, when accessing the text, an email is sent from the participant's Gmail, inviting their address book to participate, sending the performance viral. As Shvarts was considered a virus, she created one. Even though no personal data is stored by the project, many have reacted badly, questioning the use of their data and Shvarts' intentions.

Mottos and Manifestos

Mottos are 'as ifs', offering what we think we are or should be, incorporating the pasts and present whereas manifestos are 'what ifs', what we want to be in the present and speculate for the future.

Mottos

Helen Pritchard and Winnie Soon's exhibition *Recurrent Queer Imaginaries* (2019), began with the intention of queering computation to examine the ways in which we might like to live in the future. They asked this question whilst working on a commission associated with the HS2 rail expansion project that would result in the loss of queer spaces and radical queer bookshops in London's Euston and Kings Cross. The duo began working on a way to imagine going beyond machine learning as something accurate, but creative to address the objectivity and subjectivity between machine learning and human labour. Their research question was: do manifestos bring about a new future acting as a way to organise urban life, as an individual or an organisation, through creation as opposed to erasure? (Krysa, Pritchard, Soon 2019).

The motto assistant is conceived as a messed up queer virtual assistant. Virtual assistants, such as Amazon's Alexa, Apple's Siri, Microsoft's Cortina and Google Assistant are trained to be coherent and, according to Pritchard and Soon, biased as an automated form of injustice (2019). The motto assistant is trained on queer manifestos source text to produce something alternative to that which a virtual assistant or programmer would do. 'Not For Self But For All' is Camden Council's motto, being the seed text for the algorithm. In 2014 the Council had an artwork commissioned for its new headquarters by Mark Titchner, which Pritchard and Soon saw whilst working on a different project. Pritchard referred to the motto assistant as a pocket imaginary (2019) that open up possibilities as and through poetry. The motto therefore becomes like a horoscope people apply to their reality, interpreting and relating the motto to themselves. Each motto generated by the motto assistant is structured around this phrase as the seed text, with each line beginning with a word. For example, Not, For, Self, But, For, All and this is displayed as:

Not
For
Self
But
For
All

The content of the generated mottos uses 33 queer manifestos from 1971 to the present as the source text. The projection displays the automated motto every 70 seconds. The algorithm applies a conceptual framework using Fluxus writing techniques and Jackson Mac Low's diastic method (n.d.), which is a form of acrostic poetry. Mac Low created the method using Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) and the phrase 'ridiculous in Piccadilly'. He scanned the text for a word that matched both the letter and its placement within the word. These generative writing methods, pre-computation, demonstrate that other possibilities can still be given via an instructional format. For example, Fluxus and conceptual writers used rules and constraints to offer new information. This translates well for algorithms that are nonhuman and viewed as detached, rigid and unemotional. The source text, in this instance the queer manifestos, is scanned by the algorithm to find a word that matches the seed text, the motto, and the position of the letter of that word from the original seed text. The generator produces in excess of one billion combinations

In the exhibition, a diagram is projected onto the wall (Fig. 2.7) that connects the research processes including text as source code, programming, mottos, the source text feeding the data, different states of text, feelings, relations and entities. The diagram is based on infinite automated machine processes. It is not relational but reveals different conditions and how users might transition between these states. It is nonlinear and able to move transition backwards to, potentially, rewrite the past. The machine written text generated by machine learning, needs to be edited by humans as it makes mistakes, but remakes language. It can be made sense of and produces new connections between words. The machine written text invented its own citations and scholars, in its own form of world building.

Manifestos are a way to show a different future, using residual cultures that fiction realness through myth. Manifestos have a significant history within modern art with examples including the Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto* (1910), Ball's *Dada Manifesto* (1916) and George Maciunas's *Fluxus Manifesto* (1963). Burrows and O'Sullivan propose that alienation is a

method of fictioning (2019), arguing that alienation produces resistance to become *alienation* as method with resistance fictioned through the process of alienation. This potential can be harnessed to different ends. Drawing on Burrows and O'Sullivan here, a number of alternative applications of alienation through the production of manifestos are examined. Martine Syms's (Appendix V: 11) *The Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto* (2013) uses a commitment to the mundane as a way to incite change, inverting the tradition of afrofuturism through its insertion into the everyday. In this politics of alienation, mundane afrofuturism becomes 'the ultimate laboratory for world-building outside of imperialist, capitalist, white patriarchy' (Syms 2013) (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019:242). Laboria Cuboniks' *Xenofeminist Manifesto* (2015) argues that alienation becomes an impetus to generate new worlds (2015). For Cuboniks science will bring change as a tool and 'as mediums for developing perspectives or producing sonic and impossible fictions.' (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019:243) The Xenofeminist Manifesto uses alienation as method to suggest how 'others' and the 'unnatural' can become free, as they comment here,

> [t]he construction of freedom involves not less but more alienation; alienation is the labour of freedom's construction. Nothing should be accepted as future, permanent, or 'given' – neither material conditions nor social forms.
> (Cubroniks 2015: 15)

From the 1960s, transgression has traditionally been viewed as a form of Western social liberalism. bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* ([X]1994), suggests that through education accepted boundaries of race, sex and gender should be 'transgressed' in order to liberate people. Following this statement, posthumanism (Appendix IV: 5) then becomes a method of transgression that has the potential to liberate people from their accepted positions. Over the last decade, to a large extent, understanding of both gender and sexuality as a spectrum is a more widely accepted point of view. This has become more mainstream with the visibility of LGBQT+ people on TV and in the media in programmes including *Queer as Folk* (1999-2000), *RuPaul's Drag Race* (2009-). *Sex Education* (2019-), *Transparent* (2014-19) and *Euphoria* (2019-). Prejudice is still widespread and these depictions often lack the presence of BAME actors and the characters

are often depicted as middle-class. Educating people on posthumanism could lead to transgression through the application of alienation as method, with people turning to alternative methods of identification as frustration with the status quo becomes greater. Disconnection from society is a form of alienation from human agency that gives power as a way to refuse existing logic and acceptance of the way things are. Alienation thus becomes a method of parafiction that escapes the constraints of the present.

Manifestos can function to create change through new materialities that exist outside of the possible. Jack Halberstam's *Charming for the Revolution: A Gaga Manifesto* (2013) proposes the need for a new politics of gender and desire to short circuit 'the grids of control' (2013) […] through wild disjunctions rather than new logic or the mundane. (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 246) Chaos and control are the weapons of the state (opposed to Paul or approaching it from a different angle). Wildness, wild imagination, wild diversity (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 245) links with Paul's wild memory. The space between chaos and control can be to resist 'the modulations of various narratives and interests produced by mainstream cultures and the state and capitalism.' (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019:246) As Halberstam supports, 'I do not believe that the triumph of global capitalism is the end of the story, the only story, or the full story.' (2013)

PRACTICE INTERLUDE V

Rebecca Smith
Runes / Ruins I, II and III, 2019
triptych
cut-up Chinese calligraphy guide, acrylic paint, vintage paper, PVA
89.1x21cm and 59.4x21cm

Rebecca Smith
Bones of Language 37 & 39 and *Bones of Language 41, 43 & 45*, 2020
cut-up Chinese calligraphy guide, lined table paper, PVA
31x 29.5cm

Rebecca Smith
Language QR, 2019
cut-up QR codes from Chinese calligraphy guide, vintage paper, PVA
21x29.7cm

Artefacts
Earthy
Bones
Language
Constructs
Archaeology
Archives
Authenticity

What initially attracted me to these letters and the Chinese calligraphy guide given to me as a gift by my fellow PGR, Kang Hui, was the way the characters were placed within a square, which were segmented into triangles with the individual characters in the centre. This immediately, to me, made me view the characters as magical, radiating an aura. Language is such a significant technological advance in human evolution, ultimately separating us from our primate counterparts.

The manipulation of language is often used in parafiction and this connection to media hoaxes and activism is evidenced throughout this thesis, drawing parallels with authoritarian regimes and the reshaping or removal of appropriate language as a method of control. In *Language Artefacts* (2019-20) (Appendix I: Fig. 52-55) the Chinese characters are removed from their original context, gives them new meaning from their absence in *Runes / Ruins I, II and II* (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 52.1, 52.2 & 52.3) and in the *Bones of Language* (2020) (Appendix I: Fig. 53 & 54) using these cut out shapes to assimilated the classification of bones via the visual language of the archive.

The aesthetic of the archive is a significant trope in parafictive practice and is discussed at length within the body of this thesis with Walid Raad's The Atlas Group as the key example. The use of the archive instantly gives historicity to the work, subconsciously situating it in the past and giving it value as an object that is deemed important enough to be preserved.

In the Chinese calligraphy how to, QR codes were also included. This colliding of the ancient and present, marrying of cultures to maintain tradition within contemporary society, appears as a fascinating clash of the past, present and future.

Finance as Infrastructure

Hedge Your Bets
In a world that is only made of contingency, it is only natural that we should invent options or derivative contracts. It is only natural we should circulate, today, things that we know will make a difference in the future*. This is why I have always thought of derivatives and derivative markets as* the technology of the future.

<div align="right">Elie Ayache (2010: xvi)</div>

The effects of globalisation and modern capitalism have framed the planet, altering boundaries, environments, ecologies and traditions to re-organise life to suit the needs of those who control capital. The distribution of capital is a contemporary issue with the XF stating ''[t]he exclusive interests of capital only benefit the few' (Caboniks 2015: 34) and, similarly, with the Labour Party's 2017 Manifesto entitled *For the Many not the Few*. In 2009, Mark Fischer revived the term 'capitalist realism' (2016) to describe the present, in which there is a lack of visible alternatives to the capitalist system. This stagnation began with the fall of the USSR, with its effects amplified by the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. This lack of viable or visible alternatives and of capital itself becomes paralysing, with those who control capital continuing to retain and gain power. As Fischer states '[c]apital at every level [is] an eerie entity: conjured out of nothing, capital nevertheless exerts more influence than any allegedly substantial entity.' (2016:11)

The Marxist scholar Fredric Jameson's seminal text *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) discusses the confusing spatio-temporal aspects of late capitalism. In Jameson's *The Aesthetics of Singularity* (2015), an essay that critiqued the original book, he suggested that his initial hypothesis was correct, but that he had examined globalisation not postmodernism. The success of globalisation and postmodernism was its ability to exist outside of the human body in a form of external cognitive mapping. Through this process it 'succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world' (1991: 44).

Alternatively, fictioning can become 'a means of resisting those dominant forms of globalisation that have transformed societies by opening up or erasing borders and integrating economies, thereby transforming the scale, speed and nature of the relations and exchanges taking place in actual and cyber spaces.' (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019:280) Cornelius Castoriadis in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1997 [1975]) argues that social imaginaries have the ability to break with existing time and meaning. Castoriadis opposes 'the imaginary of capitalist time [that is measured] by "indefinite progress, unlimited growth, accumulation … of the conquest of nature, of the always closer approximation of a total, exact knowledge of the realization of the phantasy of omnipotence"' (1997: 128 quoted in Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 280). The imaginary of modern capitalism then becomes 'combined with science to produce (overly) rationalised systems, which, more often than not, meet with failure and crisis.' (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019:280)

Finance is a system, which is made of algorithms. There is always risk (actual and potential) with a level of technical skill required to interpret the markets. Following Elie Ayache's central argument in *The Blank Swan* (2010) and Suhail Malik (2014) and Burrows and O'Sullivan's (2019) interpretations, derivatives are a technology of the future. Derivatives – part of hedging or hedge funding – are contracts between parties that agree the sale and delivery of an asset (stock, bonds, commodity) at a specified time in the future. The medium of contingency therefore becomes the 'rebuilding [of] a market that may emerge as a true vehicle of speculation […] i.e. as *technology of the future*' (Ayache 2010: xvi). A formula to explain this is B (bond) becomes S (share, stake, stock), or rather ΔS (a certain number of ratio of shares), so $B + \Delta S$ is the contingent claim or derivative (Ayache 2010:347), the sale of a proportion of an asset that will occur at a specific time in the future. The contingent (claim) predicts the future taking into account the present whilst also looking to the past – this links with DeLanda as the same cause same effect always (2015), where the medium of contingency is the market. As Burrows and O'Sullivan state:

This is a network which spreads throughout space (and as such operates with an indifference to state boundaries), but also through time. Indeed to all extents and purposes, the 'terrain' of what we might call financial colonisation is infinite – not just because of the progression into an ever more distant future (involving ever more complex mathematics), but also, crucially, because these differential networks link or sync derivatives to derivatives (it is this dynamic 'hedging' which constitutes the real phase-shift to financialisation.)'
(2019: 386)

Goldin+Senneby

Goldin+Senneby's (Appendix V: 5) *Headless* (2007-15) examines offshore finances.

Offshore companies provide the important function, to hedge funds, of unregulated banking

and reduced or nil rates of tax. This results in businesses using these offshore companies -

via the use of proxy sales and often for services that do not occur - to store their profits.

Interestingly, this produces unusual juridical boundaries, where money is not held in the

geographic location the companies are registered in and does not conform to that country's

specific form of regulation and taxation. The offshore registered companies are ephemeral in

nature, preventing accountability and are both there – as they are legally registered – and

not there – as the companies remain unseen. *Headless* (2007-15) incorporates the work of

academics, artists, authors, curators, designers, film-makers, journalists and private

investigators to produce a range of publications and performances. The public face of the

project Angus Cameron - a social scientist based at the University of Leicester - acts as an

emissary for Goldin+Senneby. The output also includes Kate Cooper and Richard John-

Jones's documentary film *Looking for Headless* (2010) and the detective novel *Headless*

(2015) that is attributed to the mysterious K.D., but ghost written by John Barlow. The

detective novel examines the links between the surrealist philosopher Georges Bataille's

secret society, Acéphale (Appendix IV: 1) and Headless Ltd., an offshore company

registered in the Bahamas. The novel links the practices of offshore companies with the

motivations of Bataille as Burrows and O'Sullivan suggest 'Bataille's key interests [were] the

power of secrecy, sovereignty, and collectivity or society (and life) without a head or leader.'

(2019: 389) Golden+Senneby have produced a symbol that represents these sentiments for

the international company Headless Ltd (Fig. 2.8). It could be argued that economics is the

biggest form of parafiction having actual effect and framing the world. As Curtis suggests, it

is the most significant element of a shapeshifting world (2016). Unseen material forces of

control - juridical and financial – function as forms of fiction to structure the world.

Museum as Infrastructure

The artists discussed in this section frequently use a main character as the narrator, an

institutional setting applying the language and aesthetics of history, the museum and gallery

to either convince the audience of pasts, the present or futures that may or may not have

occurred. David Hildebrand Wilson's (Appendix V: 7) *Museum of Jurassic Technology*

(1988-), uses parody to undermine the apodictic and fixed context of the museum,

functioning as an extended cabinet of curiosities of his own making. Zoe Beloff's (Appendix

V: 1) *Dreamland: The Coney Island Amateur Psychoanalytic Society and its Circle 1926 -

1972* (2009) uses the basis of Freud's visit to Coney Island in 1909. Beloff researches the

potential activities of members of the fictitious society through drawings, films, objects and

photographs. The group's founder Albert Grass designs new architectural models for the

amusement park to align to the park's formation to psychoanalytic themes. Iris Häussler's

(Appendix V: 6) *He Named Her Amber* (2007-10) occurred within the Grange at the Art

Gallery of Ontario (AGO). The Grange was a nineteenth century house embedded in the

basement of the AGO where a diary belonging to Henry Whyte was found, dated 1817-57.

Whyte was a butler at the Grange and recorded the story of an Irish maid, Mary, who had

made and hidden objects throughout the Grange. On unearthing these objects, AGO hired

Archaeological Services Ontario to investigate. They discovered objects made of beeswax

which were then displayed in museum cabinets. The archaeological excavation occurred

concurrently with the exhibition of found objects. Despite a press release revealing that the

project was fiction and the visitors supplied with a disclaimer attesting to the fiction, a

number of visitors still believed that Mary, the diary, dig and project were 'real'. This was

Häussler's intention to make an environment where a direct experience with the art could

occur, through the co-option of the written and aesthetic language of museums and galleries, to provide plausibility and the audience willing it to be real.

Upon discovering a plaque dedicated to Safiye Behar when wondering the streets of Instabul, Michael Blum (Appendix V: 2) decided to dedicate his contribution to the ninth Istanbul Biennial (2005) to her memory in the work *A Tribute to Safiye Behar* (2005). Behar was an activist, educator, communist, feminist, and translator. Throughout her life, Behar maintained a friendship and possible romance with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic and it is suggested that Behar had significant influence on the women's rights reforms in the newly founded republic. Upon Kemal's death Behar moved to Chicago to be with her husband and continued her teaching and activism. As a reconstruction of Behar's original apartment, the house museum told Behar's life story through a comprehensive display of artefacts and documents including photographs, letters, books, as well as a video of an interview with Melik Tutuncu, Behar's grandson, that inserted the narrative into the present. Blum suggests that:

> Safiye might prove to be a helpful guiding model for current and future generations. A product of both the East and the West, she stood up for her ideals and devoted a lifetime to what she believed in. She was a global thinker before the term was coined, seeing the world beyond the narrow conceptions of borders, nations, and states.
> (2005: para 6)

The fictive nature of Behar has never directly been revealed with Blum, who according to Lambert-Beatty, maintaining that she was 'real to me' (2012: 117). As Blum suggests above, it does not particularly matter if Behar is fiction what she represents can provide useful lessons for how people should conduct themselves with the ability to change real world views.

Ian Alan Paul

Ian Alan Paul is a multidisciplinary artist and theorist, his practice implements a variety of methods in order to challenge regimes of power and investigate forms of resistance. Paul

adopts the position that life is inherently political and asserts the rejection of politics as a

political act. This rejection as political gesture is of particular importance because it is a

component of the present social political positions of apathy and, or, the rejection of

mainstream politics in the name of frustration and disenfranchisement. According to Paul, as

the world is a violent place, to not engage with the current enforcement of existing regimes

of power would be irresponsible, he confirms:

> I'm interested in producing politically engaged art because I have a large stake in
> political life, as I believe we all do (or should). Even those who would refuse the
> category of the political are also in the end making a political choice in that refusal.
> History is full of violence (the present is no exception), and we all have an obligation
> to engage and reckon with the distribution and enactment of that violence from an
> ethical standpoint. To stand aside is simply to endorse what already is, and that I
> think is an indefensible position given the stakes of the present conjuncture.
> (Appendix III 2018: 67)

Paul's projects are deeply theoretical. For example, *EU Bird Migration Authority* (2013) uses

Giorgio Agamben's concept of bare life (1995), which is to measure life only on the biological

fact of existing, as opposed to the quality of the life that is lived. Here is where states of

exception become the norm. The work is project-based working with the realised present

and the potential future as forms of critical fiction. Paul's work addresses the past and

present to position alternative realities as attainable through their insertion into the present,

existing as an 'as if' alternative to that which already exists. Paul uses parafiction techniques

in an inherently political manner, including the co-option of the visual aesthetics and

language of institutions to cultivate new possibilities for the entrenched structures of power.

The work uses this authority to provide plausibility. As opposed to UBERMORGEN and

Treister there is less ambiguity in the intent of Paul's work, his political position is clear and

is positioned to change the course of the present as a form of activism. Paul follows the

historical trajectory of Tactical Media with Paul using the term speculation in place of

parafiction (Appendix III 2018: 65), presenting this type of fictioning as acting 'as if'. Paul's

practice is optimistic in its outlook and shows the potential for change, through interference

with existing structures of power, becoming a critical reflection on memory and crisis as disruption to the present.

The *Do Not Kill Registry* (2012) (Fig. 2.9) was formulated in reaction to the revelation that the US had a Disposition Matrix (Appendix IV: 3), also known as the 'kill list', which supplied the information for targets of the US drone strike program. Navigating the existence of a hit list, Paul offered an alternative in the form of the fictitious National Agency for Ethical Drone-Interactions (N.E.D.H.I.), which provided citizens of the USA citizens with the option to identify themselves to avoid becoming the target of a drone (2012) (Fig. 2.9). The website suggested that those who added their name to the list would have the assurance that their name would not appear on the kill list and they would consequently be protected from the USA's drone strike program. The title references the American Do Not Call Registry - or in the UK where it is known as the Telephone Preference Service - is the database of registered telephone numbers of those who do not want their contact details to be made public. This link to a mundane and everyday actuality provides authenticity through familiarity. The website also offers links to Google searches for the terms 'kill list' and 'predator drone program' (Paul 2012a, b). Paul links the founding of N.E.D.H.I. to September 11 and the adoption of the policy of the war on terror by the Bush administration. The project addresses the ethical issue of drone use in terms of surveillance, exceptional sovereignty and morality.

On the online forum *Slashdot,* comments on the project include user bugs2squash stating that the project is 'a scam by the CIA, trying to tempt terrorists to fill in their name and whereabouts thinking they'll be safer. also [sic] beware of the "do not steal my identity list", send name, address, SSN, mother's maiden name, bank details to apply.' (2012) Although this comment is sarcastic it demonstrates that the concept of a do not kill registry was not outlandish. Users of *Slashdot* debunked the site by using the internet, although latterly the discussions and comments did consider the issues surrounding the Disposition Matrix suggesting that the use of critical fiction to change the present is possible as awareness of

the issue was increased. Around 1,000 individuals added their names to the list during the

duration of the project (Winter, 2012), which proves that the *Do Not Kill Registry* (2012) was

plausible enough for people to enter their details into the list. Those who joined the list are

acting from a position of fear and this is ethically dubious. The real issue is the existence of

a kill list and how drones are used by governments, in this instance in the USA, with drones

selectively monitoring and killing individuals with little consideration for potential civilian

casualties.

Extending the themes explored in the *Do Not Kill Registry* (2012), *Drone Crash Incident*

(2012) was a collaborative project with the artists Ricardo Dominguez and Jane Stevens.

Dominguez is the co-founder of the Electronic Disturbance Theatre (EDT), which performs

what is termed virtual sit-ins as forms of electronic civil disobedience performing denial-of-

service attacks (DDos) on targeted websites. This event took place over one week at the

University of California San Diego campus and used the fiction of a drone crash on campus

on the 12 April 2012 as the catalyst. Acting under the guise of the University of California

Center for Drone Policy and Ethics (UCDPE) as researchers and consultants, the trio

created a fictional narrative framework, which included a variety of forms of evidence such

as official statements, photographs, websites and the generation of social media content.

The week culminated in a public meeting on the university campus where the crash was

dissected by students, staff and the public. Prior to the incident, the group set up the UCDPE

to ground the project within the institution of the University of California.

The group was established under the following pretence:

> The UC Center for Drone Policy and Ethics (UCDPE) is a new research institution
> founded by the UC Office of the President (UCOP) to explore the emerging
> implications of drone research, use and production within the UC system. Bringing
> together a group of interdisciplinary scholars and researchers from across the UC
> campuses, the center is involved in several collaborative research projects involving
> students, faculty and policymakers at the cutting edge of Unmanned Aerial Systems
> studies.
> (Paul 2012d)

The project considered the production of military drones in San Diego and on the university campus. Officials from the University of California adamantly denied the existence of the drone and the UCDPE prior to the public meeting (Kingkade 2012: para 5). The news covered the events of the week, with the awareness of the nature of the project, referring to the incident as a hoax and an art piece. Perhaps, this piece is not as successful at being experienced as 'real', but by creating this false incident, the issue of the production of military drones was raised and discussed during a public forum with a diverse audience. Framed by the trio as a speculative fiction and form of disturbance theatre, the project enabled the conditions for discussion of theoretical and political concepts, which underpin the use of drones and a historical contextualisation of drone crashes. Both the *Do Not Kill Registry* (2012) and *Drone Crash Incident* (2012) foreground techniques such as the creation of fictitious agencies and websites and the co-option of language and imagery from American governmental agencies. This comments on hypocrisies within the American military industrial complex and the ethics of a 'kill list' and the use of unmanned drones. These issues and tactics are most successful employed in the project *The Guantanamo Bay Museum* (2012-), which uses parafiction to realise and make possible an alternative past and present.

Established on the 29 August 2012, *The Guantanamo Bay Museum* (2012-) exists publicly in an online context. Through its online locational presence the museum asserts that the detention centre has been closed and replaced with a museum, on the same geographic site, which criticises the facility and examines its significance socially and politically. Actualised through the existence of a Google Maps location pin (Fig. 2.10) at the site of the Guantánamo Bay facility, the pin links to the website for the museum that stylistically reflects museum and gallery websites and their contents to provide legitimacy to the project (Fig. 2.11). The website contains actual art works and articles, which critically examine Guantánamo Bay, the discourse of human rights violations and unconventional political sovereignties and jurisdictions, including contributions from Judith Butler and Harsha Walia.

The museum aims to remember the prison after its supposed decommission in 2010, through art and critical studies. The fictitious space includes the Tipton Three Exhibition Space and the Jumah al-Dossari Center For Critical Studies. The Tipton Three are Ruhal Ahmen, Asif Iqbal and Shafiq Rasul. The three British citizens from Tipton in the West Midlands were extrajudicially detained at the prison between 2002 and 2004 and innocent of the charges against them. Jumah al-Dossari is a Bahraini citizen, who was detained at Guantánamo for five years, three and a half of which he spent in solitary confinement. He was also innocent of all charges against him. Paul comments that:

> [t]he project acts as a kind of documentary by exposing the various crimes taking place at the prison, and also is a way of critically reflecting on the notion of national memory. It is also meant to be a critical gesture, in the original sense of critique as a means of creating a kind of crisis, epistemological, political, or otherwise.
> (Appendix III 2018: 65)

The then President of the USA, Barack Obama, promised to close the prison in January 2009 and his administration pursued a number of policies to close the camp during his presidency, all of which were reversed in 2018 by an executive order signed by Trump, the details of which were outlined during Trump's 2018 State of the Union address. *The Guantanamo Bay Museum* (2012-) explored a possibility that has become even less attainable. The tag line for the project is 'Collectively Remembering a Passed Future' (2012e), the slogan confirming the improbability of the closure of Guantánamo Bay, which is reaffirmed by Trump's position and wish:

> to ensure that, in the fight against ISIS and al-Qa'ida, we continue to have all necessary power to detain terrorists — wherever we chase them down, wherever we find them, and in many cases for them it will now be Guantanamo Bay.
> (2018)

Paul suggests that *The Guantanamo Bay Museum* (2012-):

> reveal[s] the simultaneous possibility and impossibility of closing the prison. On the one hand, the public had no problem imagining the prison's closure, and yet a maze of bureaucracy and obscure states of exception made closing it seem plainly impossible. By creating another present (and history) where it had already been closed, I hoped to assert the reality of this possibility, both as a kind of demand but also as a rallying cry.
> (Appendix III 2018: 65)

In *How Much of This is Fiction* (2017), the concept of *The Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History* was used as a curatorial device to frame works, actualising the museum as a space for critical reflection on the role of the trickster as a mode to challenge current issues surrounding the structures of power and control. This zone of the exhibition included works such as Wachter and Jud's *Zone*Interdite* (2000-), a virtual reconstruction of Guantánamo Bay examining the contradiction of images of restricted areas appearing in the mass media with the human perception of these spaces and Coco Fusco's *Operation Atropos* (2006), a documentary exploring interrogation and prisoner of war (POW) training through the experience of Fusco and six female students from the perspective of both the POW and interrogator. Also featured in the physical manifestation of *The Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History* at FACT and Framer Framed was the piece *EU Bird Migration Authority* (2013) (Fig. 2.12). Paul created the European Union Bird Migration Authority as a fictional strand of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). This authority announced that Europe's borders would manage not only the movement of people, but also the migration of birds. Using the visual language of Frontex and governmental agencies by reforming material taken from the Frontex archive, Paul examined the ethics of migration and its associated politics, applying the language used to describe migrants and processes to manage the migration of birds which, according to Paul 'upset bird watchers more than anyone else.' (Appendix III 2018: 65) As Paul confirmed:

> [t]his project operated more as a critique than anything else, exposing the dehumanizing ways that migrants are often treated while also educating people about the various abuses that Frontex engages in.
> (Appendix III 2018: 65)

Paul was exploring Agamben's concept of bare life (1998 [1995]). Bare life suggests that the biological fact of living (*zoē)* is more important than the quality of the life lived (*bios*). As no distinction is made between the Ancient Greek terms *zoē* and *bios* in European language, the word life is used to infer that the biological fact of life is considered more significant than how that life is lived. This becomes problematic in the age of biopolitics when political life is intrinsic to being, when states of exception become the norm. *EU Bird Migration Authority*

(2013) (Fig. 2.12) considers that for many migrants and refugees the way in which they are treated is an assumption based upon their biology as opposed to the circumstances of that life. In terms of European migration laws and the practices of Frontext a state of exception has become the norm in which alternative forms of sovereign law apply.

Paul separates memory into two distinct categories, fixed and free. Fixed memory becomes accepted as the linear historical narrative, with this form of memory seeking to enforce existing power structures and methods of social control. A number of challenges have been made to this post-postmodernism and the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s, where alternative narratives from previously unrepresented voices have acquired some space. To this form of static memory the only response is one of nostalgia that results in the past losing its agency to affect change. As Paul suggests:

> there is coded memory, or in other words memory which has been sorted, interpreted, and in some sense safely set in stone. We could call this official memory or institutional memory or even ideological memory. It's a way of remembering the past as something that is finished, closed off, resolved, and forever behind us. This is the memory of monuments and history books. One can only have a nostalgic relation to this kind of memory, and it is this kind of memory I oppose.
> (Appendix III 2018: 67)

Fixed memory is exploited by projects that use the language and setting of the museum and archive, this fixes these projects within a certain context and ultimately provides plausibility for the audience. Where these projects are most successful is when they apply wild memory to this institutional 'historic' setting, wild memory having the power to affect, as Paul explains:

> memory that is wild, which is unresolved, which carries all of the uncertainty and conflict and indeterminacy of the past along with it. This kind of memory has a relation to a past which is still alive and has force. Just as we can affect the future with our actions, we can also affect the past through the way that we make it matter anew in the present. In the end, what is consequential or what is pivotal is not ever entirely clear or answerable, even in retrospect. Instead, this kind of memory and in particular acts of remembering can radically change the here and now indefinitely. This is the kind of memory I'm interested in, which is what I think parafictions are also in some sense engaged with as well.
> (Paul 2018: 67)

This free memory contains inherited trauma and unresolved issues that need to be addressed.

<u>Colonial Memory</u>

This section discusses practices that address the effect of colonialism through parafiction and how cultural institutions reinforce these notions. Samson Young's (Appendix V: 17-18) RE:SOUND keynote performance lecture *3 Cases of Echoic Mimicry (Or, 3 Attempts at Hearing Outside of My Own F@#*&g Head)* (2019) was a live performance of the three channel video *The World Falls Apart Into Facts* (2019) (Fig. 2.13). Young investigates the history of the Chinese folk song Mo Li Hua (Jasmine Flower), through echoic mimicry, as theorised by artist Paul Carter, to understand cross-cultural pollination. In Chinese culture, the most famous version of Mo Li Hua is one transcribed by John Barrow, an English diplomat who visited China as part of the first British Embassy. His transcription and travel diary became popular in Europe, with this version permeating through China and becoming the recognisable version today. Young dressed as a horse, delivered this lecture on Mo Li Hua, whilst two additional screens displayed two musical performances, *Horse Togaku*, and *The Dream-seller*. *The World Falls Apart Into Facts* (2019) examines 'what it means to hear with the ears of an Other and questions notions of cultural purity and authenticity at large.' (2019: para 1) Young's use of the song *The Dream-seller* (1904) examines the mistranslation of language and the video depicts what he refers to as 'a cow's dream of a horse.' (2019: para 3) *The World Falls Apart Into Facts* (2019) shows how culture appropriation is not as straightforward as it may often appear and, through this parafictive encounter with Chinese culture, these complex interrelations between cultures are revealed, asking what does it mean to be truly authentic?

Guillermo Gómez-Peña's *Ethno-Techno: A Living Diorama of Fetish-ized Others* (2002) (Fig. 2.14) uses dioramas, referencing the museum, as a form of colonial practice to depict those considered Other. The living diorama parodies the natural history museum, the carnival and

freak show and red light zone windows. This human display and performance deconstructs cultural stereotypes to address culture difference and representation. By spatialising these cultural perceptions, the physical borders become blurred as they do online. This performance of identity becomes parafictive as cultural stereotypes are addressed, they become ridiculous through their actualisation in physical space, where what is assumed is shown as inaccurate. This inverts the colonial practices of the museum, using this authority of history to change perceptions.

Jimmie Durham (Appendix V: 4) profits from the adoption of a multiple self with the majority of Durham's work being perceived as Native American. This is problematic for the Cherokee community. In some instances his work has been considered to parody Cherokee culture (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 189). This is evident in works such as *Museum of Stones* (2012) in which Durham places Native American artefacts in a Western museum setting. Durham self-identifies as Cherokee, but this is disputed by all three Cherokee Nations who, as sovereign states determine citizenship. The Cherokee community sent an open letter (June 2017) to Durham arguing that displaying his work as Native American is a violation of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (1990).

Jimmie Durham's *St Frigo* (1996) was stoned (by the artist) in the video *Stoning the Refrigerator* (1996) (Fig. 2.15). By renaming the fridge St Frigo and using the connotations of stoning with religious punishment, the audience considers, however fleetingly, if this a refrigerator or Catholic Saint. Saint Stephen was the first martyr to be stoned to death and this remains a form of capital punishment for adultery and perceived 'sexual deviancy' in a number of countries. The accompanying video and resulting fridge (Fig. 2.16) shows the brutality of throwing stones.

In the Navajo language, string figure games, called na'atl'o', are a form of continuous weaving that is associated with sharing stories and history. For those making a cat's cradle

the gesture does not have the same cultural association. This relational contingency makes

cultural appropriation complex and care must be taken when relating ideas. As Haraway

explains:

> [t]he worlds of SF are not containers; they are patternings, risky co-makings,
> speculative fabulations. It matters which ideas we think other ideas with; thinking or
> making cat's cradle with string figures with na'atl'o' is not an innocent universal
> gesture, but a risky proposition in relentless historical relational contingency.
> (Haraway 2011: 15)

By Durham making these associations through this fictioning of a self, the artwork is made

more interesting and complex. However, it is disrespectful to Cherokee culture. This appears

reminiscent of Joseph Beuys' origin story that he crashed his plane during World War II in

Crimea and was nursed to health by the nomadic Tatars who wrapped him in fat and felt

(Beuys cited in Tisdall 1978: 16). These materials are reoccurring motifs in Beuys' practice

despite their being no record of his accident or rescue. In *I Like America and America Likes

Me* (1974), Beuys spent three days inside a cage with a live coyote. Upon arrival in America

Beuys was transported from the airport via ambulance wrapped in felt to the cage. The piece

examined Beuys' complex feelings towards America and the use of the coyote is symbolic

as a trickster. This reading would suggest that Beuys uses the coyote to symbolise his view

that America is full of contradictions.

Walid Raad
*The story one tells oneself and that captures one's attention and belief may have nothing to
do with what happened in the past, but that's the story that seems to matter in the present
and for the future.*

Raad cited in Nakas 2006: 52

The Atlas Group (1999-) was established to document the contemporary history of

Lebanon. Walid Raad is The Atlas Group's archivist and uses the format of the archive to

structure his fabrications (Appendix II: Figure 5), acting as a method to both produce and

preserve Lebanon's pasts, present and futures through a variety of media. The group itself is

a parafiction and the work of Walid Raad alone, however as with Eva and Franco Mattes'

character *Darko Maver* (1998-99) and Treister's *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11), the content is real

examining historical documents and artefacts from both sides of the Lebanese civil wars. Raad uses fiction as a method to process trauma and cultural memory. Other examples of parafictive archives include Cheryl Dunye (Appendix V: 4) and Zoe Leonard's (Appendix V: 8)*The Fae Richards Photo Archive* (1993-96), an archive of fabricated images of fictitious Fae Richards, a lesbian African-American blues singer and starlet, and Khalil Rabah's (Appendix V: 10) *The Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind* (2003-), which exists everywhere and nowhere. The combination of photographs and text in an archive format produces a new narrative, which the audience believe to be authentic because it makes visual reference to the archive, which signifies an important history to the viewer that must be preserved.

I Thought I'd Escape My Fate, But Apparently (Respini 2015: 9-27) (Fig. 2.17), Raad's text contribution to the exhibition catalogue *Walid Raad* (Respini, 2015), is created using text sourced from approximately fifty Lebanese people who have contributed to art, architecture, history and literature between 1985 and 2015. This includes: Amhad Beydoun, Tony Chakar, Joana Hadjithomas, Khalil Joreige, Bernard Khoury, Rabih Mroué, Ghassan Salhab, Lina Saneh, Christine Tohme, Jalall Toufic, Fawwaz Traboulsi and Akram Zaatarie. The quotations are in Arabic, English and French and have been sourced from over 1,400 pages. Raad chose the selected quotations based on words he would have liked to say and words that he would never say about himself (Respini 2015). The cut-up text has no clear narrative and is augmented with portraits of the quotations from the writers of the source text. This book format uses a dreamy colour palate, in pale pink and navy blue, subtle in its aesthetic qualities as both an artwork and cut-up text. Respini refers to this as the *'imaginary'* dimensions (2015: 29) of Raad's work. That is imagining the present and future through the past, or, what is already accepted as history.

For the exhibition *Let's be honest, the weather helped* (2019) at the Stedelijk Museum, Raad used the backs of existing works in the Stedelijk collection to display copies of Syrian artist

Marwan Kassab-Bachi's hidden works. Immediately upon entering the exhibition the audience is confronted with Raad's desire to explore to what extent these stories are fact or fiction and if this is important. Also included in the exhibition was *Sweet talk: commissions (Beirut) _ solidere 1994-1997* (2019) (Fig. 2.18), a panoramic looped video that displays the rise and fall of multi-storey buildings in Beirut that were irreparably damaged during the civil war and demolished to make way for the regeneration of downtown Beirut. Raad suggests that this video was provided by the displaced residents of the area. However, it is improbable that the residents took the video as they had been displaced. Raad takes a forensic approach to restore and capture histories in the inverse to Forensic Architecture revealing loss rather than truth.

In *Let's be honest the weather helped* (1998-2006) Raad takes photographs at locations in Beirut that were sites of war. He applies colourful dot stickers to conceal and reveal the sites of bullet holes and bombs (Fig. 2.19). The photographs reference John Baldessari's found photographs with painted coloured dots such as *Cutting Ribbon, Man in Wheelchair, Painting* (1988) (Fig. 2.20) and Ilya Kabakov's (Appendix V: 7) series of oil paintings, *Holidays* (1987) (Fig. 2.21), that are covered in coloured foil. According to Raad *Better be watching the clouds* (2000/2015) was anonymously donated to The Atlas Group in 2000. The document revealed the plant code names for world leaders during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1991) such as Leonid Brezhnev, Mikhail Gorbachev, Kamal Joumblatt, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Raad states that the document belonged to a Lebanese spy and botanist who applied botanical code names to the leaders. The plant species are collaged with the leaders' faces produces a jarring and comic effect although the collage produces new or applicable information. For example, on Reagan's page, the Fagaceae plant family includes beeches and oaks having the qualities of economic interest and being prickly (2000/ 325). Such phrases could easily be used to describe Reagan's character. *Better be watching the clouds* (2000/2015) here touches on conspiracy theory and clear links with Treister can be made.

The Arab world is trying to configure its modern and contemporary art. Raad suggests that this is an opportune moment to offer a radically different way of showcasing Arab art, that is specific to this context, but the current process reflects the traditions of western museums and galleries. He explores this in the series *Views from outer to inner compartments* (2010) and *Les Louvres (Department des Arts de l'Islam)* (2016) part of *Scratching at Things I Could Disavow*. Raad heeds warning through antidotes to suggest that there is a need to avoid the flattening of Arab work by employing exhausted models using the motifs of shadows and their absence/presence.

CHAPTER THREE
PARAFICTION: IDENTITY AS HALLUCINATION, OCCULTISM AND RITUAL

I build my time!

Schwitters 2000 [1973]: 8

I build my time
In gathering flowers
And throwing out the weeds

Schwitters 2000 [1973]: 21

I build my time
In gathering fruits
And throwing out all that is bad
And old
And rotten.

Schwitters 2000 [1973]: 53

I wish people stopped considering old repeated lies as truths, or at least as something to be respected, just because of their 'patina'. There's something fishy about history. It's good to know about it but not to idealize it. The future is good, the future is pretty and shiny and covered in glitter.

Ulman 2018: 120

This chapter explores the use of hallucinations, the occult and ritual as parafictional methods that construct identity as forms of world building. These practices use alternative ways to produce knowledge that have often been dismissed by hetero-normative and male-centric ideals. Traditionally, world building and worlding are associated with feminism, fantasy and sci-fi writing, but can also be found in art, where it is comparable to and a component of parafiction and fictioning. World building is often active and participatory within contemporary art. Intersectional feminist perspectives undermine the priority of a human perspective or universalising discourse (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 257). Paisley Smith and Caitlin Conlen designed *Feminist Futures* (2017) as a world building workshop to harness collaborative imagination and build a feminist future. They reference Walidah Imarisha's term 'visionary fiction' (2015) which refers to a radical fiction that is related to real life as opposed to, the often utopian, speculative fiction. Smith and Conlen use a range of tools to produce material to build a visionary feminist future (Fig. 3.1 & 3.2). Haraway proposes *n*-dimensional niche spaces, which she calls the 'Terrapolis' described as 'a story, a speculative fabulation and a string figure for multispecies worlding' (2011:10). She argues that science-fiction is the 'looping threads and relays of patterning, [with] this SF practice is a model for worlding. Therefore, SF must also mean "so far," opening up what is yet-to-come in protean entangled times' pasts, presents and futures. (Haraway 2011:12) Worlding is also a practice used for more self-serving ends and applied as a method of control. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues in the article *Three Women's Text and a Critique of Imperialism* (1985) that worlding produced the 'third world' through, and with, literature that supported the imperial and colonialist narrative (243). The parafictions in this chapter reject the normalist view of society to speculate 'what ifs' for pasts, presents and futures.

The Occult

Laibach
Art and totalitarianism
are not mutually exclusive.
Totalitarian regimes abolish
the illusion of revolutionary
individual artistic
freedom.
LAIBACH KUNST is the principle
of conscious rejection
of personal tastes,
judgments, convictions (…);
free depersonalization,
voluntary acceptance
of the role of ideology,
demasking and
recapitulation of regime,
"ultramodernism" …

He who has the material power, has spiritual power, and all art is subject to political
manipulation, except that for which speaks the language of this same manipulation.
                                                                            Laibach, 1982: 574

Most symbolically summarised by the fall of the Berlin Wall in November that year, 1989 was

a significant year as revolutions occurred across the Eastern Bloc in Czechoslovakia,

Hungary and Poland. Whilst in South America Brazil held its first democratic presidential

election, ending the military regime, which has held power since 1964. In June, there was

the student-led Tiananmen Square Protest in Beijing China against the communist regime,

which led to the death of hundreds, possibly thousands, of civilians. The collapse of

communism in Eastern Europe resulted in a shift of narrative in the West. According to Boris

Groys, the West and the East needed each other in order to situate themselves as

oppositions (2002 [1991]). It appeared as if the West had won and defeated communism.

This shifted the established narrative of good versus evil and complicated the presentation

of media events (Curtis 2016). The fall of the Iron Curtain and the dissolution of the Union of

Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was not the end of communism, but this is the narrative

of Western presentations of history in the Western media. Currently the Peoples Republic of

China (PRC), Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Vietnam and Laos

still have communist governments. Post-1989 resulted in a seismic shift in the West from

Cold War liberalism to neoliberalism and the implementation of free market capitalism.

During the 1990s the cultural wars ensued in which battles were fought over ethical and moral issues in relation to sex and gender. In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web (WWW), creating the first internet browser in 1990 at CERN, with browsers *Mosaic* (1993) and *Netscape* (1994) following shortly afterwards. Nine Block II satellites are launched expanding the reach of the Global Positioning System (GPS) with GPS used in a military context for the first time in the Gulf War or First Iraq War (1990-91). These advances shape current technological infrastructure and its development to its present planetary-scale.

In Eastern Europe, parafictive practices had to be covert or framed as over-identification because of the restrictive nature of late socialism. This was earlier identified in chapter one with the contrast between the practices of the Situationist International and Boal. Ironic and critical distance always has to be subversive to be accepted in the west (Goddard 2006, Žižek 2002 [1993]). Specific consideration of the context of the utopian East and European East pre the dissolution of the USSR is examined to discuss the practice of Laibach and the NSK. The utopian goals of the avant-garde were never fulfilled by the Western avant-garde, whereas the Eastern avant-garde came closer to realising their utopia. Ideologically art was positioned to become an extension of one's life and serve as a function that would assist in the completion of a politically and economically fully realised totalitarian state. Boris Groys confirms that this 'crucial difference lies in the fact that the avant-garde in the East, unlike its Western counterpart, fulfilled not only a critical but also a thoroughly affirmative function.' (2002 [1991]: 289) Criticism of the West's consumerist society occurred within the context of the partially realised total utopian projects of the East, whereas critiques of the totalitarianism of the East existed in relation to the consumerist individualism of the West. Essentially, the West, viewing the ideals of Communism as utopian, needed the East as a framework to aim for. In the same essence the East needed the West to aspire towards freedom and individuality. In the lead up to 1989, the West became fascinated in what the East may be, to discover what was behind the Iron Curtain. What the West did not realise was that the Eastern avant-garde had already appeared to them, as Boris Groys proposes

'long before the end of the cold war in political life, as an artistic rendition of its end; they showed the total tautology of the world ideological constellation.' (2002 [1990]: 291)

In contrast to the familiar histories of the Western avant-garde, within the East specifically in Slovenia, the NSK began referring to itself as retro-gardist or as the retro-avant-garde. Instead of positioning art as a revolutionary tool for new utopian futures (as with the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde), the NSK firmly placed itself in the present to re-examine the disturbing events of the past and reinstate aspects of Slovene culture lost through the enforced dominance of other cultures and the faltering ideals of socialism. Alexei Monroe suggests that the NSK's approach to art and history 'renounced any ideas of surpassing history and deliberately, even compulsively, [seeks] out and attempt[s] to work through some of the most traumatic movements of their local and cultural contexts.' (2011: 162) By establishing themselves firmly within the past, Laibach has a timeless diachronic quality, by referring and re-working the past, as Stevphen Shukaitis confirms: '[t]he idea of the retro-avant-garde is based precisely around the task of re-activating the residual potency residing in ideologies and aesthetics long thought (or even wished) to be dead' (2011: 605).

After thirty-six years in power, on 4 May 1980, the President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) Josip Broz Tito died. Often viewed as a benevolent dictator, he was instrumental in shaping socialist Yugoslavia post-World War II. With no predetermined successor, a chasm opened upon Tito's death, which saw a shift to regional autonomy, resulting in strain between federal and republican governments and resistance towards the declining instituted socialism. During this transitional period and post-Tito's death, on the 27 September 1980, a group of Slovene art students and musicians formed the arts collective Laibach, in the small town of Trbovlje just outside of the capital Ljubljana. Laibach is the Austro-German name for Ljubljana and has negative connotations of the enforced rule and occupation of the region by a number of foreign influences, including the Austrian Habsburgs, Napoleon (Illyrian Provinces) and the Nazis during WWII, whose impositions on Slovene culture Laibach attempt to redress.

Laibach's first action consisted of plastering posters around the industrial mining town of Trbovlje. The poster featured a lino print in black and white accompanied by the text Laibach, with the image depicting two figures in a violent struggle in which one person is using a knife to gouge out the eye of the other (Fig. 3.3). Although not explicitly advertising the proposed event, the following day Laibach intended to perform anarcho-industrial music with two other bands, Kaos and Berlinski zid, alongside an exhibition of the work of Laibach Kunst, the visual wing of Laibach at the ŠKUC Gallery, Ljubljana. ŠKUC Gallery was founded in 1978, as part of the ŠKUC Cultural Centre, which was vital in supporting culture that was explicitly anti-government. Laibach was inspired by the arrival of punk in Britain in the mid-1970s and the emergence of industrial music. British bands Throbbing Gristle (Appendix V: 12) and Cabaret Voltaire (Appendix V: 3) were referencing the industrialisation and mechanisation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. With the arrival of Punk in 1976 these British scenes often appropriated or (re)appropriated the imagery associated with fascism and the occult. According to Burrows and O'Sullivan these scenes can challenge and/or dislodge existing political fictions and myths. The act of producing scenes thus becomes a form of performance fiction (2019: 155/166). An example of this is Punk's iconic use of the Anarchy symbol and Jamie Reid's album cover designs. This is reflected in the names and visual identities of both Laibach and UBERMORGEN who could be described as avant-punk.

In 1977 Penny Rimbaud and Steve Ignorant founded Crass (Appendix V: 3), with Rimbaud using his house, Dial House in Epping, Essex as Crass headquarters. Burrows and O'Sullivan suggest that Dial House was not a commune, but an autonomous zone (2019: 156) that produced alternative ways of living – this directly links with the NSK State. As well as Penny Rimbaud and Steve Ignorant, members renamed themselves to fiction new identities such as Gee Vaucher, Joy De Vivre, Phil Free and Eve Libertine. The visual identity of the group was mostly an all-black uniform with an armband displaying the group's

logo (Fig. 3.4), which combines the Christian cross, the Union Jack, a Swastika and the

infinity symbol ouroboros. Ideologically, Crass were opposed to institutions such as work,

family and transcendence, Christ and Christianity. For instance, the group used phrases

such as *The Feeding of the 5000* (1978), *Stations of the Crass* (1979), *Penis Envy* (1981)

and *Christ – The Album* (1982) (Fig. 3.5) for their LPs. Crass embodied the DIY ideology of

punk as a way to live, by producing and distributing their records to independent record

stores and contributed to the wider fanzine and mail art culture of the time, which is also

referred to as the anarcho-punk scene.

Other countercultural groups to briefly mention here include Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth

(TOPY) (Appendix V: 12) (1981-). TOPY's logo is one vertical line with three horizontal

lines; it appears to reference the crucifixion and the Christian use of the Cross (Fig. 3.6).

TOPY sparked groups such as the KLF (Appendix V: 7) (1987-). Comprised of Bill

Drummond and Jimmy Cauty, inspired by hip hop culture with precursors to the KLF, the

duo began as The Justified Ancients of Mu Mu (1987-88) and then The Timelords (1988).

The band is famous for burning a million pounds on the island of Jura in 1994. This act gave

the band a mythic quality. Their symbol The Pyramid Blaster (Fig. 3.7) features a pyramid

topped with a boom box that displays the text 'Justified', contained within a circle.

Founded in London in 2018, Extinction Rebellion's (Appendix V: 5) logo features the outline

of a sand timer, again contained within a circle, to symbolise that time is running out for the

inhabitants of the Earth. However, this symbol invokes the Anarchy symbol and symbolism

used by the aforementioned countercultural movements (Fig. 3.8). One of Extinction

Rebellion's main tactics is to perform 'die-in' protests at set locations, whereby members of

the group lie on the ground and pretend to be dead. This symbolic act visually demonstrates

the future possibility of mass extinction if governments fail to act. In January 2020 a

document from Counter Terrorism Policing South East, leaked by *The Guardian* newspaper,

labelled the group as extremist and ranked Extinction Rebellion as the same terror threat as

neo-Nazis and jihadists, advising that members should be reported to Prevent, despite

Extinction Rebellion's non-violent nature.

Laibach reinstate archaic traditions and musical practices through the lens of Slovene

history, which included revolutions, war and dictatorships (Goddard 2006), to understand the

current political moment. Laibach opposed punk in their political position of anarchy by

pushing music to its political limit through identification and affirmation. Goddard suggests

that in punk:

> strategies of irony are ineffective against ideology since they are exactly
> what is expected, whereas an over-identification with ideology […] is disturbing to
> the system in that they shift the terrain from the harmless level of epistemology to
> the infinitely more dangerous level of ontology, where ideology itself is based.
> (Goddard 2006: 50)

The first performance and action intended to be an 'alternative to the (official, centralistic)

Slovenian culture [which] would shock and awaken the Red District – at the time slumbering,

poisoned and saturated by soc[ialist]-realism and provincialism – with its brutish and avant-

garde aesthetics.' (Laibach Kunst, 2010) Only the poster action occurred, with local

authorities prohibiting the event from proceeding. However, as with Marinetti, Baader and

Hausmann, to Laibach the first performance was a success as it resulted in debates over the

controversial ban in the print media and on the radio[4]. The group has continued to build a

strong aesthetic through the clothing they wear and the symbols they use (Fig. 3.9). The

Laibach symbol appropriates the Russian Suprematist Kazimir Malevich's seminal *Black

Cross* (1915) (Fig. 3.10) by solid inserting the cross inside an industrial cog (Fig. 3.11).

Malevich's Suprematist motifs are resonant with Laibach's ideology, with Malevich aiming to

create art from feeling, as he suggests '[i]ntuitive feeling is now passing to consciousness'

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[4] In 2010, Laibach reconstructed aspects of the event in the exhibition *Ausstellung Laibach Kunst, 1980-2010: Red Districts + Black Cross*, Delaski dom (Workers Cultural Centre) and various sites in Trbovlje, Slovenia, 24 September – 20 October, 2010. The exhibition formed a component of the thirty year commemoration of their first action, which also included *The Red District Symposium (Past Perfect – Future Tense)*, Delvaski dom Trbovlje, 24 - 26 September 2010 and a website dedicated to the event, http://www.laibachkunst.com/.

leading artists to construct 'forms out of nothing, discovered by intuitive feeling.' (Malevich, 1976 [1915: 130) Malevich's radically abstract painting, *Black Square* (1915) is a distinct break with the past as a symbol of modernity during a period of social unrest. Laibach confirmed this in the television interview on *TV Tednik* stating that 'LAIBACH deals with the relationship between art and ideology, whose tensions and disharmonies it sublimates into expressive feeling.' (Absinthus 2007 [1983] 1:23) The Laibach logo is also reminiscent of the recurring cross motif used by conceptual artist Joseph Beuys (Fig. 3.12), first appearing in his *Crimean Notebook* (1943) and evident in works such as *Cross* (1961), *In this Way the Dictatorship of the Parties can be* Overcome, (1971) and *Halved Felt Cross over Cologne* (1977). For Beuys the cross acts as a comment upon morality, spirituality and religion. Here the parallels are evident between Beuys' shamanistic tendencies and repetitive use of symbols, with Laibach's religious references to the imposed Christianity on Slovenia and adoption of cult aesthetics. Another potential reference for the black cross is the marking used on German military and aircrafts during World War II. The power of the cross as a synonymous identifier for Laibach became all the more significant in the 1980s when Laibach were banned from performing (1983-87) and the utterance of their name was punishable in Slovenia. The Malevich cross came to signify Laibach acting as a visual point of reference for the public.

The Laibach cross was incorporated into the NSK logo. The logo comprises: John Heartfield's *Anti-Fascist Axe Swastika* (1934) (Fig. 3.13), a pair of antlers, what appear to be thorns or barbed wire, an industrial cog, fire torches, a spinning atom and a geometric shape comprised of three triangles, the names of the founding collectives within a banner and either the full Neue Slowenische Kunst or its initials below (Fig. 3.14). The logo evokes Nazi ideology, as evident in the use of the Nazi aesthetics of *Blut and Boden* or Blood and Soil, which signified the call for a racially (blood) defined state (soil). The use of the industrial cog and the spinning atom reflect the importance of technological and scientific process in the twentieth century (Monroe 2005). The logo combines elements of socialist-realism, Nazism, Slovenia's alpine setting, hunting culture and Christian socialist past.

On 24 June 1983, Laibach appeared on the current affairs programme, *TV Tednik* or *TV Weekly* in a live interview with Jure Pengov, in an action known as *XY-Nerešeno* or *XY-Unsolved* (1983). The interview is a constructed performance with the band reciting a prepared statement known as the *Documents of Oppression* (1983), whilst dressed in military uniforms and white armbands bearing the Malevich cross. Displayed on the wall either side of Laibach were repeated posters of the silk screen *The Instrumentality of the State Machine* (1983) (Fig. 3.15) referencing Nuremberg Nazi rallies, with Laibach's name dominating the centre of the image, sitting away from the drawing. These posters are evocative of Barbara Kruger's iconic poster practice, which she began in the 1980s. For example see works such as *Untitled (I shop therefore I am)* (1987) (Fig. 3.16) and *Untitled (your body is a battleground)* (1989). Behind Laibach centrally was a large version of the woodcut poster *The Thrower* (1980) (Fig. 3.17), which depicts the silhouette of a man, wielding a tool in one hand and what appears to be a cog or form of machinery in the other. Also referred to as the Metalec or The Metal Worker, the image can be read as both a symbol of protest against or celebration of industrial production. The black silhouette signifies the totalitarian use of industrial work and the alienation this brings, referring to the discipline enforced in the early twentieth century and now renounced in Yugoslavia, the silhouette becoming a symbol of strength and power. Fear surrounded the image as the use of social-realist imagery had been scarce since Yugoslavia's break with Stalin in 1948 and as socialist realism was considered typically Stalinist.

Laibach exploit television as a medium for manipulation because it is centralised, has a mass audience and acts as a platform for propaganda. Pengov retorts, closing the interview in a dramatic manner:

> so, if I understand correctly, you exploit television for your provocation; all right, so do WE! Maybe, maybe only now someone will get moving and prevent, repress these dangers, these horrible ideas and statements right here in the middle of Ljubljana.
> (Absinthus 2007 [1983] 3:58)

Pengov adopted a staunch opposing position appealing to the people and government to take action against Laibach to prevent the spread of their alternative ideas in the name of civic outrage (Mastnak 2015). In the early 1980s, the Slovene authorities used these tactics to repress alternative behaviour and creative outputs by encouraging the public to report anti-social behaviour and noise, resulting in the closure of clubs and meeting places. After the interview the Ljubljana council officially banned the use of the name 'Laibach' and the group from performing in the city. Despite their repression, discussions about the group and the interview waged on, giving stronger voice and resonance than the original interview. On 29 June 1983 the newspaper *Mladina*, reproduced the official policy response to the action and use of the name. The document, published as *Documents of Oppression* with the official title of the *Standpoint of the Presidency of MK SZDL on Public Manifestations of the Group Laibach* (1983) confirmed that due to civic outrage and fear - although against repression of artistic outputs and freedom of expression - the government opposed any reference to the Nazi-Fascist occupation by Laibach. *Mladina* also reproduced in full the documents *Subject: Application for a Public Performance* and *Subject: Use of the Name of the City of Ljublina* (1983), which outlined the parameters of the bans. Performances were prohibited under the improper use of German over the use of Slovene, which would technically prevent the performance of any band with a non-Slovene name. The council avoided issuing a public order to prevent giving more weight to Laibach's rhetoric and challenge, whilst it confirmed that Laibach used the name without permission or on a legal basis. A number of letters of protest supported this official stance.

Due to the inconsistent enforcement, the civic-bureaucratic nature of these sanctions and the need to avoid total oppression of the group, Laibach was largely unaffected by these restrictions. In many ways this secured the group's position, with media reach only growing in subsequent years despite iterations of the ban lasting until 1987. As Monroe suggests, it weakened the authorities who 'were forced by default to occupy the far less attractive role of politicians meddling in artistic affairs and seeking to restrict debate.' (2005: 164) This

appearance harnessed the potential of the media by both appealing to and repelling the public into positive and negative action also evidencing the contradictory post-socialist position on the freedom of cultural expression. This challenges the belief that censorship only exists within socialism and not in Western capitalism, the Yugoslav system legitimised itself with, as Monroe writes:

> the fiction that the state was increasingly tolerant, and absent from cultural and social life. Artistic provocations staged by the NSK and other Yugoslav groups in the 1980s repeatedly forced the state to risk violating its own rhetoric by revealing that in fact it wishes to retain a supervisory presence in the cultural sphere.
> (2005: 249)

As Alexei Yurchak discusses in the context of the USSR, in the 1980s, for the government it did not matter ideologically whether statements were believed as long as control was maintained (2005). This inconsistency resulted in the ability to conduct what Yurchak describes as 'mimetic critique' (2006). Mimetic Critique was 'not designed to expose the falsity of ideological statements of the system but, rather, it showed that these statements no longer needed to be read for literal meaning and that their task was to create the experience of their own immutability.' (Yurchak 2006 in Yurchak 2015: para. 1) In other words, by becoming similar to the regime through direct visual replication whilst shifting the ideological standpoint, it resulted in the USSR being unable to discredit activities as it would appear as critical of the USSR. Yurchak uses the example of the Russian experimental pop group the Anti Vocal-Instrumental Ensemble or AVIA from St Petersburg. AVIA were active from 1986 to 1991, the group comprising musicians, performance artists, dancers and gymnasts. Their mass spectacle performances critiqued Soviet visual clichés. AVIA were part of the first wave of Soviet bands to break through into the West.

The independent record label ARK (1987), directed by Colin Fallows and Pete Fulwell furthered the exploration of Soviet mass spectacle by employing techniques from the 1920s to the 1980s, combining the avant-garde with mass appeal. Fallows, after watching *Comrades* (1983 – 84) a documentary series on BBC Two about life in the Soviet Union,

was intrigued by the unique character and work of underground musician Sergey Kuryokhin. Fallows contacted the BBC in order to get in touch with Kuryokhin. Kuryokhin, along with The New Composers, Igor Verichev and Valery Akakhov produced an album for ARK exploring sound collages, without reference to the developments in Western pop music, with remixing and sampling as key components of hip hop, dance, techno and the emerging rave culture. The resulting music reflected on Dada sound art techniques and provided a deeper insight into the culture of the Soviet Union. Kuryokhin began to use the trademark Popular Mechancis for his work and ARK released *Insect Culture* (1987). The LP was positively received by the British music press with reviews in *Melody Maker* and the *New Musical Express* (Kan 1998). In a 1988 visit to Moscow University, then USA President, Ronald Reagan appeared to publicly thank ARK for bridging this cultural gap between Russia and the UK. Popular Mechanics and The New Artists arrived in Liverpool in January 1989 to take part in ARK's project *Perestroika In the Avant-Garde* (1989). The event included a largescale multi-media performance at St George's Hall in January 1989, with two related exhibitions curated by Fallows, one at the Bluecoat and the other at the newly opened Tate Liverpool (the first independently curated show on the fourth floor). ARK, amongst other outputs, released The New Composer's *Sputnik of Life* (1990), which became the first number one twelve-inch dance record in new Russia.

Laibach use 'mimetic critique' (Yurchak 2015) to challenge the Slovene government, by combining the aesthetics of totalitarianism and propaganda drawn from Stalinism, Nazism and Italian Fascism with the performance of their rituals. This exposure of these private or covert acts leads to a response of shame and embarrassment from the audience. The appropriation of kitsch and popular culture, such as musicals and pop songs combined with the imagery of totalitarianism results in the viewer becoming uncertain of and unnerved by Laibach's position. At this point, the viewer considers a range of possibilities, leading Slavoj Žižek to propose that this form of practice offers a question (or many questions) as opposed to an answer (2002 [1993]). These questions include: Do they mean it? Do they believe this?

Will others believe this? Will this persuade people? As the audience is unable to resolve these juxtapositions, it becomes unclear how to react or understand Laibach. The acceptance of the work leads to a feeling of exposure, in case Laibach are tricking the audience, when they reveal that they are not over-identifying with totalitarianism but, are, in fact totalitarians. It is within these contradictions and through these ambiguities where the most can be learnt about extreme ideologies. To describe this Inke Arns and Sylvia Sasse use the term of 'subversive affirmation' (2006) to argue that '[s]ubversive affirmation is an artistic/political tactic that allows artists/activists to take part in certain social, political, or economic discourses and to affirm, appropriate or consume them while simultaneously undermining them.' (2006: 445)

Whereas Žižek defined Laibach's practice as the act of over-identification (2002 [1993]). Žižek suggests that over-identification functions within the context of the unification of social groups through engagement with a specific transgression of law in order to identify with the specific social group or what Agamben refers to as 'The Camp as the 'Nomos' of the Modern' (1998 [1995]). According to Žižek accepting the act condones the transgressive act through reaffirmation of the cohesion of a group by supreme identification (Žižek, 2002 [1993]). Žižek uses the example of 1920s small town Southern North America, where the tension between citizens, public law and the murky hidden law are evident in the acceptance of the Ku Klux Klan, by the public law. This acceptance enabled the KKK to conduct the late night lynching of black citizens, which was widely accepted by the white - specifically the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) - population who engaged with the transgression either through physical participation or by remaining silent, therefore becoming part of the social group. By speaking out against the transgression of the public law, by refusing to partake in the ritual of lynching or outing those involved to the law, the citizen would become an outsider and no longer part of the group and therefore vulnerable to its control and power. Another example of this form of social behaviour would be the acceptance of the Nazi regime by some German citizens that, in part, enabled the systematic slaughter of millions

(Browning 1992, Dresler-Hawke 2005 & Sahdra and Ross 2011) or some members of the Catholic faith accepting or concealing multiple instances of institutionalised child abuse in the Roman Catholic Church (McLoone-Richards 2012, Rashid and Barron 2018a and 2018b) . Over-identification operates within and through fear. The passive act of knowing, but not speaking is part of social conformity, which, when combined with fear and abuses of power, renders people with a feeling of powerlessness and results in their compliance and as Žižek suggests 'solidarity-in-guilt adduced by participation in a common transgression' (Žižek 2002 [1993]: 286).

Over-identification renders the initial identifiers as obsolete by the extreme acceptance of this point-of-view; opposition from those in power exposes their beliefs as unacceptable as Laibach have made them obscene and ridiculous. Laibach are situated as the performance of the unwritten side of the law through how:

> it "frustrates" the system (the ruling ideology) precisely insofar as it is not its ironic imitation, but over-identification with it – by bringing to light the obscene superego underside of the system, over-identification suspends it efficiency.
> (Žižek, 2002 [1993]: 287)

It functions as a method to process historical trauma through the use of aesthetic and political readymades to create new originals, which operate on deeper levels than the originals.

In certain instances, this Eastern European seam becomes in part occult and shamanistic, in the case of Laibach and Treister. In Laibach's case, this follows Beuys in his shamanist alter-ego that perpetuates the male-centric artists as genius myth, but is no doubt significant. In Eastern Europe, when communism rejected religion and folklore and replaced it with its own mythologised narrative, the resurrection of these themes becomes important in this re-evaluation of history through parafictive projects. Ben Evans James and Emma Charles' documentary *On a Clear Day You Can See the Revolution from Here* (2019) documents Kazakhstan's burgeoning quest for identity post-Soviet Union with the merging of ancient

folklore with capitalism, contrasting ancient rituals such as Molybdomancy, the divination technique of dropping molten tin or lead into water, with the newly built city of Nur-Sultan. This experimental documentary sets these competing identities against the country's mineral wealth at locations such as the Bogatyr quarry and Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, that show the vast geography of Kazakhstan, its history, the Silk Road and Soviet Union to its future to address the ways in which national identity is constructed.

Ulman and Laibach have also examined the limits of contemporary totalitarian communist regimes in North Korea with both conducting projects in 2015. This re-working of the past reflects the aesthetics of the spaces of communism as past versions of projections for the futurist that appear as if they are fixed within a time of the utopian past. Morten Traavik and Ugis Olte's documentary *Liberation Day* (2016) examines Laibach's visit to North Korea as the first rock band to perform and gain entry to the country. The documentary sees Laibach navigating North Korean censorship and performing their new original versions of songs from the musical, *The Sound of Music* (1965) (Fig. 3.18), in which the over-identification and ambiguity appears to be forcefully ignored by the government and Laibach's minders. Laibach's album *Song of Music* (2018) includes the reworked *Maria / Korea* (2018) that contains the lyrics 'how do you solve a problem like Korea?' (2018) and *Arirang* (2018) an interpretation of a tradition Korean folksong that is the unofficial national anthem of both North and South Korea. The use of the uplifting and kitsch *The Sound of Music* soundtrack is where this dreamy utopia becomes apparent and:

> by turning this process of mimicry against itself, disarticulating the potency of the dreamworld and utopian promise of communism that had become embedded within a discourse of legitimation and mixed with the lingering presence of totalitarian and authoritarian elements.
> (Shukaitis 2011: 601)

It is hard to perceive why the North Korean government would invite such a controversial group. However, this relates to the contradictions that Laibach encompass, being Slovenia's most successful artists, yet positioning themselves as the antithesis of the government,

opposing what Slovenia wants to be and the image it wants to portray. This contradiction is also evident in how North Korea shows itself to the outside world. Ulman also visited Pyongyang in 2015 as a tourist and out of her own fearful curiosity. The aesthetics of the country matched Ulman's artwork of the time as 'a combination between resilience and glitter, extreme poverty and Swarovski crystals.' (Ulman 2018f) (Fig. 3.19 & 3.20) Ulman was desperate to see in action the construction of North Korea as a country of strength and wealth and how this was enacted to its visitors. As Ulman writes:

> [a]t some point my trip stopped being about the DPRK and instead became a tour of performativity through body language, accessories, and fashion. Everyone differentiated themselves as much as they could within the sea of standardization. I became a tourist of the underworld, noticing hidden economies and wit. Beneath the dull noise of propaganda were conversations in the realm of the senses.
> (2018f)

These contradictions that are embodied in these two projects on North Korea are vital to parafiction, with the construction of a national identity significant to the practices discussed throughout this thesis.

*Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky (*1999)

Treister's projects are always about politics and technological but are also aesthetic and unconventional. Frequently they are not read as political or factual (in the instances when they are) but rather as forms of fiction and at worst conspiracy theory. Treister is 'what if' and 'as if' depending on the remit of the project, its level of fiction construction and its aim. This renegotiation of history began with *Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky* (1999) as a way for Treister to examine her own heritage and the circumstances surrounding her father's relocation from Poland and France to the UK during WWII. Permeating through Treister's work is the exploration of transgenerational haunting and traumatic memory, which is the experience of trauma in subsequent generations.

As Treister comments:

> [w]ith the *HEXEN* project, and the sequel, *HEXEN 2.0* […] it's on one level about trying to imagine a worst case scenario of what the military industrial-academic-scientific-media complex might do to us and how we might in turn attempt to alter

the course of history. I was told as a child that people went to the gas chambers like sheep, and since the age of five I've been planning how not to be a sheep. Maybe I am a paranoid conspiracy theorist, for example, I refuse to join any social networking sites as that would implicate my friends in my activities. For most people this isn't a problem. But for me, the fact is that the National Socialist did come and get my grandparents. If, for example, the political situation in the UK changed significantly, it would be quite possible to find yourself in a category that some people didn't want to have around. This is what happened in Poland.
(Treister 2009: 7)

In 1995, Treister constructed Rosalind Brodsky as her alter ego and avatar. Brodsky was conceived as a fantasist time traveller who shared Treister's Anglo, Eastern European and Jewish heritage. Treister used the name Rosalind in reference to her Polish Jewish paternal grandmother who was exterminated during the Holocaust and Brodsky was selected at random from the telephone directory. *Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky* (1999) is a CD-ROM, which enables the user to experience an exploration of Brodsky's contribution to time travel research, organised by the Institute of Militronics and Advanced Time Interventionality (IMATI), created in honour of Brodsky's memory. The game is set in the future, 2058 the year of Brodsky's death. An announcement abruptly interrupts the tour, stating that the institute is under attack and the assertion is that users will have to navigate Brodsky's history through time travel in order to avoid remaining trapped in this alternative time and space. The users re-enact Brodsky's time travel to pivotal points in twentieth century history including the Russian Revolution, the Holocaust and 1960s London. *Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky* (1999) is an attempt to harness and readdress the trauma experienced by Treister's grandparents. By examining her own history through the lens of Brodsky, she explores the longing for lost grandparents, the past and her inherited trauma. According to Treister, 'Brodsky fetishizes history. She becomes a necrophiliac invader of spaces containing the deaths of her ancestors through the privileged violence of technology.' (1999: 4) During a session with psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, Brodsky experienced her first delusional time travelling experience, in which Kristeva's face became the face of her paternal grandmother. After this, Brodsky believed she worked for the IMATI. During her lifetime, Brodsky's time travel appeared to be a fantasy, which led to her travelling and

undergoing treatment by prominent psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Jacques Lacan, Melanie Klein and Julia Kristeva. Through these sessions Brodsky developed case histories for each psychoanalyst.

It does not matter if Brodsky did or did not travel to these places or if the IMATI really does exist. The significance lies within the realness of the historical events and the existence of the people that Brodsky interacts with. Treister discusses why she creates new characters and narratives as a way to explore the world:

> [o]ften people ask me if I have a problem living with two identities. This always surprises me as the Brodsky project is just a means of expressing how I feel and think about the world, through stories, just like a writer would, and using narrative to explore new ideas and possible ways of looking at the world. […] Mostly I do not see it as art at all, or videogames.
> (2006: 64)

It is significant to mention Brodsky as she is the protagonist of *HEXEN 2039* (2006) and to note that she does not appear after this project. With *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11) being a factual education tool and highly political this may be why Treister did not use a fictional character for this project. Treister's uses a video game instead of a diagram in this project as the networking tool, connotations with the medium of video games positions the work as fantasy, although the structure offers the same function as a networking tool for complex content. When the original games operates in book format the immersive aspect of a video game is altered as when it is presented as a book the narrative structure and the fiction of the work is revealed. The subject matter of *Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky* (1999) is less plausible because the audience is aware that time travel is not possible and the game's imagery is surreal in nature. This is a possible as to explanation why the book as a form is less successful as parafiction than other projects. Although the book was necessary for the unavoidable obsolescence of the technology used to produce the game and an emulator version can still be experienced (iMal 2019).

<u>*HEXEN 2039* (2006)</u>

HEXEN 2039 (2006) is a Rosalind Brodsky research programme on the military use of psychological warfare. In a future unspecified period of uncertainty, the programme was developed with the aim of creating remote mind-altering weapons. The project is set in the future as is common during the Rosalind Brodsky period as Brodsky is a time traveller. The project is comprises of graphite drawings, diagrams, documentary film, interventions, remote drawings, photographs and a book compiling this content. Treister's research here is para-scientific. It is primarily based on facts making reference to specific events, scientific research and military and occult history.

Treister uses media archaeology to understand new technological systems and uses the past and analogue methods to explore the contemporary and the digital. As a form of media archaeology using a science fiction framework, *HEXEN 2039* (2006) is set in the future but created from the past. Protagonist Rosalind Brodsky situates existing facts in the future, potentially establishing a future, not yet realised through a reflection of the past. This has the potential to affect the present, altering the course of history to realise a future charted by Treister. The IMATI in 2039 instructs Brodsky to conduct research into occult and military histories to create non-lethal weapons that use psychic spying and neurological and psychological methods due to the unstable social and political circumstances. Referring to ancient, historical and contemporary systems, Brodsky develops systems for the future.

Treister creates infrastructures comprising complex information drawn from a diverse range of fields, to position the occult as a key theme within military histories and psychological warfare, *HEXEN 2039* is the research which will inform the creation of new 'accurate neurological-based technologies for the new British military-occult industries.' (Treister, 2006: 5) Media archaeological techniques including graphite drawings (Fig. 3.21) with an additional process added to the graphite. According to Treister by passing an electrical current into the graphite, psychic frequency clusters are created from the information

extracted using an 'Electroencephalographic Current Converter' (Treister, 2006: 5). The clusters are then used in the psychological military programme at inaudible frequencies as a form of mind control.

This theme inevitably links the project with conspiracy theories and denialism. Brodsky's seemingly 'delusional' connections are real. The use of the psychic, paranormal and occult by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is evident in programmes such as Project MKUltra (Appendix IV: 5-6) and books such as Jon Ronson's *The Men Who Stare at Goats* (2004). The research in *HEXEN 2039* was used to support and substantiate conspiracy theories and the associated websites (Treister, 2009: 3). Viewed in this way, it is evident that Treister's work can be experienced and accepted as fact for those who subscribe to conspiracy theories. As Treister's work specifically deals with this issue, it is difficult for people to disentangle the real from the fictional. The boundaries of the projects are blurred due to their interdisciplinarity and, when, viewed online they appear too similar to conspiracy theory websites in style. The aim of the content can be confusing and requires in-depth examination, because Treister's projects are communicated visually to the audience. As Treister draws from disparate fields and alternate and hidden histories, many viewers of her work are not familiar with the subject matter and, or, are potentially not media literate and do not verify the provenance of online sources. Treister is uncomfortable with this co-option of her research as conspiracy theory. However, this is significant in creating ambiguity and unease, which are often central to the success of parafictive forms of practice. Although Treister suggests ambiguity is something that she wishes to avoid, it is inevitable due to the form and content of her work.

These forms of research link with denialism and post-denialism, this is relevant as Treister's practice becomes the reverse of this. It reveals the unseen connections and gaps in between to show how information is networked, not as a facet of a wider agenda, for example as in Flat Earthers' almost comic and seemingly harmless assertions, which

actually seek to undermine the legitimacy of NASA, but as a method to mediate and manage the masses of information. In the context of post-truth and post-denialism, there is a readiness to retreat to myth. Adorno and Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1997 [1944]), propose that the Age of Enlightenment failed because of the events of the first half of the twentieth century: the rise of fascism, the collapse of the economic market and the end of liberalism. These events led to a return to myth, superstition and a rejection of the reason that the Enlightenment brought. This resulted in social domination through totalitarianism, state capitalism and mass culture.

Treister uses myth as a method to reveal and expose, not to control, the structures of power, both existing, hidden and potential. Treister uses Jewish mysticism in the form of gematria, which is the process of attaching numerical value to Hebrew names. This process reveals hidden truth and meaning found to exist within words. In *HEXEN 2039* (2006) German and English texts are converted into phonetic Hebrew equivalents to give them a numerical value. The collected gematria is then used for divination purposes. Treister created remote viewing drawings (Fig. 3.22–3.24) during *HEXEN 2039*'s instalment at the Science Museum, London, via John Dee's *crystal* (Fig. 3.25) (1582), an object in the Science Museum collection. John Dee was an astrologer and mathematician in the 1500s, with an interest in divination and an advisor to Queen Elizabeth I. Dee used the technique of crystallomancy or scrying, to predict the future through the act of gazing into a crystal ball or reflective surfaces such as mirrors. Through scrying, Dee would communicate with angels and otherworldly spirits as in line with Renaissance beliefs on magic. Treister connects Dee with Francis Walsingham, Principal Secretary and Spymaster to Queen Elizabeth I. Walsingham is renowned for his contribution to the establishment of the British Secret Service, implementing spying methods such as the use of coded information, double agents, disinformation and subversive propaganda, which have become commonplace today. By drawing attention to the historic connections between the occult and the military, such as the CIA funded program Stargate (1972-1995), which investigated the possibilities for remote

viewing, the practice of viewing alternate locations redirects the human conscious from the bounds of the body to reveal secret or hidden information. Treister's methods become logical through the revival of histories and alternate methods of data gathering. The diagrams depict these links, showing the research as a whole and this in turn aids the development of new technologies and targeted hallucinogenic drugs designed to control the mind (Fig. 3.26).

HEXEN 2.0 (2009-11)

HEXEN 2.0 (2009-11) is a factual and educational project, fusing technology, politics, war and society and is revelatory in nature, producing webs of information and processes. Framed through the lens of American history post-WWII, *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11) examines the USA governmental and military initiatives that researched methods of mass control whilst contrasting this with the coexisting countercultural movements, as well as, the history and growth of cybernetics and computation. This content is set to the backdrop of a growing surveillance society. *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11) is comprised of alchemical drawings, photography and text work, videos, a website and deck of 78 tarot cards. For Treister, *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11) is 'interested in difficult complicities, collusion, ideas of responsibility and accountability and knowledge' (Treister, 2009: 3), this produces traceability.

Drawing on the use of tarot for divination (Fig. 3.27 – 3.30), Treister uses this existing structure to attach new information, to show both new and existing connections. The content of *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11) is accepted because Treister uses the mysticism of tarot and the ritual of cartomancy to engage the audience with a complex topic. The users of a tarot deck can make multifarious links to propose new understandings of histories and use this knowledge to shape the future. The mapping aspect of the tarot has the ability to affect existing accepted truths and potentially alter present and future realities. This is the duality of parafictions, here Treister has applied a fiction-based method to factual content, creating a fictional narrative framework to attach the content to. The use of alchemic drawings and tarot produce a system and a plausible story so that the content is experienced as fiction but

reveals facts, becoming realised through this process of fictioning and in the case of *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11), revealing both a new and existing history. The distinction between fact and fiction is clearest in *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11) as all content is true but its delivery method is unconventional. By producing this information through the process of drawing, these facts appear fictional and distinct from reality. It is only upon closer inspection that the viewer realises that the information is based on historical information.

The choice to use tarot is logical in one sense that, traditionally when used for divination purposes, a tarot reading reveals a potential future for the person who is having their tarot read. The use of a tarot deck reflects this through multiple readings, revealing potential pasts and futures. Although in keeping with the form of Treister's practice (that of using occult or mystic practices in her artwork) the use of tarot in this instance also appears to potentially devalue the content by associating it with a form of practice that many do not subscribe to and one that is not scientific in its approach or results. This would perhaps prevent the user of Treister's tarot from appreciating the truth of her work as the medium of tarot potentially orientates the viewer away from fact. It is in these instances that the work becomes closest to the realm of conspiracy. In *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11) this contradiction is significant, as it becomes a parafiction in reverse. Treister is both revealing and concealing the facts and connections that she has made. Revealing in the sense that she is exposing and combining information from a broad range of fields but concealing its truth through her choice of medium. Treister suggests by making these connections she discovered that '[t]he link was feedback, as in cybernetic feedback loops, with a potential outcome not only of human connectivity and autopoiesis (Appendix IV: 2), but also of governmental control.' (Treister: 2009b)

All diagrams link together and feature reoccurring groups, figures, events and concepts (Fig. 3.31). The five alchemic diagrams of *HEXEN 2.0*, have the following titles and content, *From Diogenes of Sinope to Anarcho-Primitivism and the Unabomber via Science-Fiction*, is a

history of alternative anti-technology movements such as anarcho-primitivism, key figures in science fiction WHO? and theories of utopia examined in the work of Henry David Thoreau, Warren, Martin Heidegger and Theodor W. Adorno. *From MKUltra via the Counterculture to Technogaianism* (Appendix IV:6), traces the links between the MKUltra project, 1960s counterculture, governmental experiments into psychoactive drugs for the purpose of warfare to suggest that technology, potentially, has the ability to fix the world and enable humans to reach a higher state of conscious, through hallucinatory methods. *From National Socialism via Cybernetics and the Macy Conference to Neo-totalitarianism*, connects the history of the Macy Conferences, cybernetics and methods of social control used to enforce fascism and capitalism. *The Computer – From the Antikythera Mechanism to Quantum Telepathy* is the history of computers to 2009, spanning from the analogue Antikythera mechanism in 100BC to the development of cloud computing in the late 2000s. *From ARPNET to DARWARS via the Internet,* maps the history of the internet alongside the details of security agencies, linking governmental surveillance to the internet. According to Treister the Web 2.0 works in cybernetic feedback loops of control. She links this with the findings and intentions of the Macy Conferences (1942 and 1946-53) (Appendix IV: 4). As a project, *HEXEN 2.0* (2009-11) becomes the physical mapping of cybernetic loops throughout history.

Lars Bang Larsen suggests that *HEXEN 2.0* is an exploration of Michel Foucault's bio-political governance (1975) where governmental control is maintained through information. Bang Larsen specifies that a facet of neo-liberalism is a control society enforced via knowledge, stating '[t]he recent history of the apparatuses that allow and reproduce such administrative mutations is one in which forms of knowledge and sovereignty are at stake vis-à-vis technological fantasy, military power and scientific research.' (Bang Larsen 2012) Bang Larsen defines Treister's work as a form of radical enlightenment through artistic research, paraphrasing Adorno and Horkheimer:

> *HEXEN 2.0* enters into a dialectic of the enlightenment and deliberates its incessant self-destruction, as Adorno and Horkheimer put it; a destruction that is undertaken in order to show how reason in the post-war era had failed historically, yet how it must be nonetheless be pursued in order to guarantee social freedoms.
> (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997 [1944] cited in Bang Larsen 2012)

Ritual

This section examines the relationship between ritual, performance and myth. The performance of ritual makes myth palpable, practical, as well as, symbolic and imagined. Ritual in performance and contemporary art makes myth and fictions palpable with the performers of ritual becoming mediators between perspectives. The works in this chapter of Amalia Ulman and Aliza Shvarts use ritual in their employment of media, specifically social media, to examine womanhood.

Excellences and Perfections (2014)

Excellences and Perfections (2014) is a fictional narrative performed by Ulman using her personal Instagram and Facebook profiles to perform her identity as a distinct character. The durational performance comprises 186 posts over four months, in three parts. The distinct parts are significant in terms of the creation of a narrative arc and the symbolic use of the number three. To date Ulman's profiles remain active and she continues to use this format for her work with *Excellences and Perfections* (2014) online posts archived by Rhizome. The use of Ulman's personal profiles provided authenticity for the duration of the performance, acting as if Ulman's breakdown and transformation were real and not constructed. Ulman uses aspects of her own identity and considers women's identities by examining the male gaze in the context of Instagram and the age of social media. The phases of *Excellences and Perfections* (2014) explore three contemporary stereotypes of women that are framed as aspirational identities. Although experienced by the viewer as an exploration of the aesthetics of women's on and offline identities and the tropes of aspiration, for Ulman her work is always about exploring the depths of her own identity, her personal aspirations and anxieties, with these types being hidden facets of Ulman's self.

On the 19 April 2014, Ulman posted on Instagram a text-based image of black text on a plain white background that read PART I, captioned 'Excellences & Perfections'. In Part I, Part II and Part III Ulman's fictionalised selfadopted three distinct personas. For Part I (Fig. 3.32 – 3.34), Ulman was cute and pure, wearing pale neutral shades, projecting innocence, softness and sensitivity even whilst posing provocatively in sheer underwear and attending pole dancing lessons. During the first phase Ulman posts about a successful first visit to a doctor and her broken heart, beginning the transition to Part II. In Part II (Fig. 3.35 – 3.37), Ulman becomes 'addicted to sugar' (2014), which references the existence of a fictional 'sugar daddy'. During this phase Ulman undergoes breast augmentation surgery, starts working out and taking drugs. She posted pictures of herself post-surgery, videos of her exercising and generic quotes such as 'I'M NOT LIKE THE REST' (2014) (Fig. 3.38) and 'HOW MANY PEOPLE SAID THEY GOT YOU? AND FORGOT YOU?' (2014) (Fig. 3.39) alongside pictures of women with guns (Fig. 3.40). The uploaded images gradually become darker, culminating in two videos of Ulman crying. After this Part III begins, in which Ulman transforms again into an inspirational guru, after apologising via a post of a heart drawn in the condensation on a window (Fig. 3.41), for her recent erratic behaviour. During this part Ulman travels around the world, has a nutritionist and posts about food, meditation, shopping and stunning views (Fig. 3.42 & 3.43). Seemingly, Ulman has achieved an aspirational and balanced life. The nutritionist is the artist Nina Cristante, who also engages in a parafictional form of practice functioning as artist, nutritionist and personal trainer. Cristante critically investigates the fitness, health and wellbeing industry as a facet of capitalism and consumerism and the invasive nature of the aesthetics of this culture in promoting a normative healthy lifestyle. She also collaborated with Ulman on an untitled text piece in 2015. During Part III of *Excellences and Perfections* (2014) Ulman followed Cristante's *Zao Dha Diet* (ZDD) (2013-), a diet which, alongside the related exercise schedule *Fitness Povero* (FP) (2013-), aims to encourage a lifestyle based on the needs of the individual that rejects mainstream consumer culture and provides individually tailored nutrition and fitness systems. Both Ulman and Cristante challenge obsessions with the

performance of a normative personal image that has been enhanced with the rise of social media and lifestyle vloggers.

Ulman did follow lifestyle trends including attending pole dancing lessons and having plastic surgery in the form of injectables, a non-surgical nose job and facial fillers. She used Photoshop to enhance her breasts to imitate post-breast augmentation surgery (Fig. 3.44 – 3.46). She constructed her image both physically and digitally, sneaking into the toilet and lobbies of hotels, changing her identity through the clothes that she wore. The digital enhancement was supported with real locations, fitness regimes, makeup and prosthetics as Ulman argues 'it is easier to manipulate a photo when things are almost already there.' (2018a: 86) Ulman was living these lives enough to be plausible. To some extent, this became restrictive as she was forced to follow a lifestyle dictated to her by social media as opposed to having full creative control of the aesthetics she produced.

Excellences and Perfections (2014) reveals the banality of identity on social media, and the contradiction between not wanting to stand out or reveal too much by hiding in plain sight. The aspirational becomes mundane and commonplace, when those who do things for the 'insta' produces multiple images of the same location, place or item replicating flattened forms of identity and uniqueness. The potential fear of not fitting in, if a user's profile is not flawlessly curated and performed with behaviour that is considered 'authentic' is deemed risky, potentially resulting in public shaming and reputational risk. As Rob Homing and Ulman discuss in *Excellences and Perfections* (2018):

> [a]ll the old tropes of sincerity – spontaneity, emotional outbursts, refusal of irony, earnest enthusiasm, being boring – can't withstand the foregrounding of self-construction in social media, and the way these are used to mediate reputation. The context of social media makes anything short of calculated self-presentation seem implausible, almost a kind of rudeness. Who is posting things by accident? Who would be so impolite as to impose an unfiltered self on everyone?
> (Horning 2018: 23)

This is a tightrope to tread lightly or to use to one's advantage as, in the case of *Excellences and Perfections* (2014), Ulman explored the limits of a filtered / unfiltered self, believing that as a woman and woman artist in order to be successful, she had to expose something of herself in order to profit from her work (2018x). By Ulman revealing incredibly personal aspects of her life, the piece gains authenticity although there is the risk of revealing too much. Trump frequently takes risks on his Twitter account and by constantly engaging with risk he provides his social media identity with authenticity. This is supported by his risky behaviour publicly, resulting in a tethering of his online and offline identities and their mediation that provides the ultimate seal of authenticity, rendering him relatable and 'real'. Arguably this level of 'realness' would have been harder to generate without the aid of the internet and social media, which has provided a, largely, open access source, with Trump's tweets supporting his behaviour in real life and vice versa in which the two personas are seamlessly merged. As Paul Sermon argues, the construction of the self on screen, via performance of the self and performance art, leads to the awareness that the role of the performer has been adopted (2018: 14). Being able to recognise online behaviour as performance is signification when the roles of performer and viewer become on social media where 'the telepresent body is both simultanaeously present and yet virtual at the same time.' (Sermon 2018: 29)

On the 9 October 2013, Ulman was in a serious accident, when the Greyhound bus she was travelling on from New York to Chicago crashed. This has left her permanently disabled with physical and mental scars. During *Excellences and Perfections* (2014), Ulman was still recovering from the incident, which had left her hospitalised for two months, and was unable to walk without the assistance of a walking stick. During this period, Ulman was still suffering from the effects of the crash, mentally and physically. Ulman's portrayal of her body in *Excellences and Perfections* (2014) is of one that is healthy and therefore 'attractive'. This concealment of pain and features, which may be thought of as 'unattractive', becomes problematic as users of social media censor themselves. For Ulman, how her body is viewed

in the project is difficult as her body was sexualised, accepted as a depiction of health and wellness and non-disabled. Within the book, *Excellences and Perfections* (2018), letters from her stay at the Anada Meditation Retreat during the production of the piece are included. Ulman recuperated at the retreat to recover from the injury sustained to her legs. Her intention was to include material from her stay in Part III of *Excellences and Perfections* (2014) when her character stays at a drug facility. However, due to her experience at the retreat, Ulman did not use any images or information gathered in the fictional project.

Following a classic narrative arc, *Excellences and Perfections* (2018) begins with a girl from a small town who dreams of being a model, achieving this dream in the city of Los Angeles. The girl becomes corrupted by the lifestyle leading to a breakdown, only to recover and become the embodiment of wellness and success. After successfully convincing her audience Ulman revealed the fictitious nature of the project, working with media outlets such as *Vice* and the story was then shared and distorted, acting as a comment on fake news.

Privilege (2015-18)

Privilege (2015-18) is a durational project, with Ulman exploring the roles she aspires to alongside the privileged assumptions she has, the privileges she experiences and the privileges that others experience: predominately, that which come with being white, male, middle class (in all or any combination) from the perspective of a South American, feminist and millennial who is conflicted by the power and status that wealth and notoriety bring in the twentyfirst century. It considers the nature of privilege in its many forms and how this affects those who identify as women, artists and the less privileged. As Ulman comments, *Privilege* (2015-18) explores '[w]hiteness, maleness, verticality, and linearity as the dominant aesthetic of power and legitimacy' (Ulman, 2015-16a), whilst also remembering that Ulman herself is privileged in that she is able to express her ideas and be critical as an artist, which in itself is not available to all.

Privilege (2015-18) extends characteristics of Ulman's personality acting out 'what ifs' and exploring her future direction, although aspects of *Privilege* (2015-18) are purely fictional, such as Ulman's pregnancy. The project examines Ulman's complicated relationship with her own identity and its multifaceted layers. The pregnancy is used for temporal purposes and, for the story arc, providing tension through the vicissitudes that pregnancy brings, physically and emotionally, and its structure of three distinct parts. As the project and her pregnancy progress, Ulman becomes more aware and frustrated by her privileged complicity with the few jobs she does have access to in the cultural industry. At this point, she undertakes a hospitality role whilst continuing to become a mother, media celebrity and influencer through the visual language of political communication, magazines and the media.

As *Privilege* (2015-18) happened directly after *Excellences and Perfections* (2014), Ulman had to slowly regain the trust of her audience. Initally, she posted cartoons by Ed Fornieles demarcating a distinction post-*Excellences and Perfections* (2014) with Ulman slowly beginning to construct *Privilege* (2015-18) through posts of self-promotion. During this period of several months, Ulman began to repeat certain gestures: the office setting, the colour scheme and the pigeon Bob. This regained the trust of the audience who believed she was being herself, so when Ulman announced her fictional pregnancy via a post of a positive pregnancy test (Fig. 3.47), her followers believed her. It is also not implausible that Ulman, would be pregnant, at this point, being in her late twenties and this is also an aspirational role for women as the 'yummy Mummy' on social media. Women over the age of twenty-five experience advertising algorithmically targeted to suggest that their biological clock is ticking. Pregnancy is also significant as it has three distinct phases and is often viewed as the epitome of womanhood. In *Privilege* (2015-18) it signifies repetition and replication, acting as the reinforcement of existing stereotypes and privileged positions. Through this continuous form of performance that repeats and mutates as the project progresses, Ulman addresses that, although the present age is uncertain, the structures of power and control

ultimately remain unchanged with the power of patriarchy and privilege in all its forms is unavoidable.

Being the researcher, *Privilege* (2015-18), holds particular resonance for me. As a young white middle-class woman, I am aware that I exist and perceive from a position of privilege. *Privilege* (2015-18) also comments upon a number of current fears and anxieties that I am facing, as a woman nearing thirty. The combination of a desire for success and more importantly to be recognised as successful in my own right, with the fear of failure and the pressure to emit a perfect life. This manifests when algorithms specifically target the insecurities of those who it identifies as women. For example, since the age of twenty-five I have been systematically targeted for pregnancy tests and fertility products on YouTube, despite having no search history to support this, with algorithms telling me to fulfil my 'so-called' biological duty. Chun reinforced this in her keynote paper, *Approximate Repetitions: Latent Big Data* (2017), with the example of USA discount supermarket Target, using algorithms to generate a pregnancy score based on customers' purchases to then send the customer targeted coupons for these products. A father was horrified to find that his teenage daughter was being sent coupons for expecting parents, to only later find out to his daughter was indeed pregnant and that the Target algorithm was, in this instance, correct. These invasions of privacy, force internet users to reveal who they are and accept who they should be.

Privilege (2015-18) uses the contemporary world of celebrity influencers and their endorsement of paid and, or, sponsored content, examining why this has become something to aspire to (Fig. 3.48 & 3.49). Ulman reconstructs her social media experiences piece by piece as a broader narrative that reveals the strategies of the platform Instagram. According to Ulman, getting more followers is all about 'creating an image of success and looking pretty.' (Ulman 2018a: 80) To play this game on social media, Ulman constructs an interview with herself to develop a narrative that seamlessly intersects within the space of

technological infrastructure by attaching itself onto what exists only to then diverge from it. Horning suggests that this form of interview is a narcissistic activity:

> Performing the self on social media sometimes seems like an endless interview with no interviewers and competing interviewees projecting the questions they want to answer onto an audience that may already be entirely preoccupied with questions they were wishing to be asked.
> (Horning 2018: 23)

Social media is a form of parafiction as disbelief is suspended during usage. It is experienced as an isolated space where images must be perfected and maintained. It reduces experience to a transient space that can never be reached. Social media is used ritualistically to perpetuate myths of the self.

The companion character Bob appears as Ulman's sidekick, providing a number of functions: her personal assistant, protégé, friend and, at times, romantic partner. Ulman bought the pigeon for nine dollars from a slaughterhouse. Initially she found the bird repulsive as he defecated everywhere (Ulman 2018), but Bob as a character functioned as something Ulman did not like, but something she wanted to change her mind about. As the project progressed Ulman and the audience grew to love Bob, which resulted in Bob-related output becoming heartfelt. This shift of perspective is very important as it signifies the purpose of Ulman's performance and practice. That is, to change existing positions that often appear to be fixed.

The project was situated within the office Suite 1717 based in downtown Los Angeles. It was an office, studio, set for the performances and the site for Ulman's labour in its many forms (Fig. 3.50 & 3.52). The office environment conveys a location for and of work to examine notions of labour and the roles that are available to women, specifically women artists today. By occupying the office Ulman used the rhythms of the working day and the office scenery as the backdrop for the performance and her social media output. Using the office as a studio resulted in the practice of art making positioned as an 'acceptable' form of labour that

is substantial enough to constitute as work. In terms of art and cultural production, labour in a material sense, is often hard to define. In many ways these forms of labour are often unpaid, with work completed in kind or experience valued in place of, and equivalent to payment. This form of exploitation, which is also prevalent in online immaterial labour with the use of personal information and content as commodity and the fear of the rise of AI is evident in producing a sense of disenfranchisement and lack of faith in society. This is compounded by the change in traditional labour roles and in the West a lack of jobs, which has seen the increase in the number of sex workers in recent years (Mac and Smith 2018).

The aesthetics of the office were used at various international locations and appeared in the design for the associated website (Fig. 3.53 & 3.54). This developed a strong visual language for *Privilege* (2015-18), using three colours: white, black and red. This colour palate visually simplifies the complex issues Ulman is attempting to challenge. It also to some degree fixes the work, leaving less ambiguity and presenting this as real. As there are no grey areas it positions the content as fact. This colour scheme visually references the printed news media and its original hues, inferring forms of propaganda and the phrase 'in black and white' that suggests that truth is a given when printed in newspapers.

Privilege (2015-18) occurred in many formats although centrally the project is an online-performance, which utilised Ulman's personal social media, performance, lectures, installation, drawings, memes, political illustrations and cartoons, and media appearances such as interviews and photoshoots. *Privilege* (2015-18) began online and at the 9th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art (Appendix V: 19). Ulman's exhibition at the Berlin Biennial set up the premise for *Privilege* (2015-18) and featured Bob 2.0., a robotic version of Bob the pigeon, who frequently features in the associated exhibitions. Significant repeated motifs for these exhibitions include plush velvet red curtains that refer to the theatre and suggest that both Ulman and the viewer are always performing (Fig. 3.55 – 3.57). The content of the installation often appears ominous in nature as does the colour palate and its configuration

that is reminiscent of David Lynch's 'Red Room' in *Twin Peaks* (1990-91) (Fig. 3.58). Fischer discusses David Lynch's reoccurring motif of curtains, explaining that '[c]urtains both conceal and reveal (and, not accidently, one of the things that they conceal and reveal is the cinema screen itself). They do not only mark a threshold; they constitute one; an egress to the outside.' (Fischer 2016: 53) In the *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), when the curtain is pulled back, it reveals that, despite being a very bad wizard, he is actually a very good man. This is a very popular reaction meme and GIF (Fig. 3.59). Ulman also uses office ceiling tiles, paraphernalia and balloons, some inflated with helium, and other deflated porcelain versions. Balloons in American culture are synonymous with politics, elections and related celebrations, especially when using red, white and blue, the colours of the American flag and its political parties.

Labour Dance (2016), refers to a dance some pregnant women use as a technique to induce birth. This installation at Arcadia Missa examined both the aesthetics of power and authenticity in the office environment and the phenomena of labour dancing found on social media platforms and video sharing websites. *Reputation* (2016) features three rooms: Bob's Office*,* The Park and Temple of Bob, acting as the physical installation of Ulman's online presence and the ephemera associated with the performance. This version specifically examined Bob's role, office and the idea that enlightenment can be found through labour. The Temple of Bob symbolically positions the animatronic Bob as sacred suggesting that through his work he has transitioned from nuisance and pest to a beautiful white dove whose connotations are significantly different. In *Reputation* (2016), Ulman uses hermetic symbols, which refers to what is needed to reach enlightenment as if using the aesthetics of work attire, office environments and expensive (fake) items of designer clothes, conveys the middlebrow language of the American and European middle classes and will bring success, whilst revealing this position of privilege.

Dignity (2017) uses the signature red velvet curtains of *Privilege* (2015-18), covering the walls to radically alter the space. The ceiling is covered with ceiling tiles with the central tiles

being replaced with stock images of a blue cloud filled sky (Fig. 3.60). In the space is a pole dancing pole and a large portrait of Ulman whose face appears to be covered in male ejaculate (Fig. 3.61 & 3.62). This image is referring to the trope of the online-circulated images of women celebrities, which are edited with Photoshop to appear as if a man has ejaculated onto their face and, in doing so, reinforcing and revealing the forms of sexualisation women are subjected and reduced to in online spaces.

Intolerance (2017) (Fig. 3.63), houses three rooms, the first emanates pigeon noises and displays a personalised calendar with Bob's image and documents Ulman's worst day of each month (Fig. 3.64), the second room contains the pole and the third is filled with white helium balloons with red string, which deflate during the project's instalment and the more permanent porcelain casts of the balloons (Fig. 3.65). The inflated balloons appear to be hopeful and optimistic, whereas their deflated counterparts appear to symbolise an unfulfilled promise. Being devoid of air and purpose it is as if to imply the pressure and void felt by those who identify as women who have not or are unable to carry a child, as if those without children are pointless vessels who serve no additional purpose. They also suggest the anti-climax of elections and the expectation and hope for change, versus the reality.

All three rooms are housed within a giant red curtain which due to its scale appears as referential to a circus tent, which is supported by the form of the entrance with the curtains peeled back to reveal a triangle for the audience to enter. The suspenseful palate of white, red and black with the placement of un-activated objects that are suggestive of human presence and need human interaction to activate them creates an air of discomfort. This notion of wasting time is reflected in the pathway through the space that culminates in the audience encountering a set of stairs leading to nowhere (Fig. 3.66), connected to the wall and therefore, although accessible to the audience, the top of the stairs abruptly end at the gallery wall, lit by a single bright exposed bulb. This suggests that work for women is a

pathway to nowhere, many will be forced to participate in labour of no consequence and are therefore purposeless as are the stairs that lead to nowhere.

The *Monday Cartoons* (2017) section of *Privilege* (2015-18) contains cartoon illustrations in the style that appear in newspapers as a form of political satire of current events (Fig. 3.67 - 3.69). Nine drawings are included in the exhibition as are illustrations from the published book *Bob: A job is a job is a job* (2017), which have been enlarged to the scale of murals and appear directly applied to the walls. Using Charles Brasotti and Kastner and Partners Red Bull animations as influences, in Ulman's illustrations she appears as a clown with the images examining the themes of *Privilege* (2015-18), including the male gaze and white male political privilege.

In *New World 1717* (2017) an online video essay and performance, a pole was displayed in the gallery for pole dancing. During the performance and video a Shanghai-based pole dancer, Valentina Zhang, performed in a red dress (Fig. 3.70). On stage left, sits a white drum kit. During the performance, Ulman dressed in a white shirt and black skirt recites a poem, plays the drums and interacts with the pole (Fig. 3.70). The video is grainy and flickers and the sound is obscured noises recorded from the Los Angeles soundscape including nature, the sea, suburbia and the fast paced highways. At the end of the poem, Ulman reveals that this is the end of *Privilege* (2015-18) and the end of the exhibition tour. In *New World 1717*, Ulman's narrative of the frustrated office worker intertwines with the story of an additional woman who is newly married and recently immigrated to America. Daily this woman lives with the fear of deportation. In these fictional juxtapositions Ulman's own position, as office worker, artist, pregnant woman, is privileged in comparison to the immigrant woman, even though Ulman herself has experienced life in a place other than her native home.

The pole dancing pole provides multiple meanings being a reference to *Excellences and Perfections* (2014), in which Ulman undertook pole dancing lessons. Its constant presence is a reminder of how hard it has been for Ulman to escape the attention from and given to *Excellences and Perfections* (2014) for which she is most famous. It also embodies the inescapable male gaze Ulman has positioned herself under, reminding the audience that Ulman is viewed first and foremost as a sexual object of desire. It also suggests that as a woman selling one's body is one form of labour to which she always has access to.

The lecture series *AGENDA* (2017-18) formed the academic presentation of *Privilege* (2015-18), the performative lectures were given at a number of international universities and cultural institutions. Structured by the format of an expected PowerPoint presentation, the lecture is augmented with live performance and sound effects. *AGENDA* (2017-18) is an artwork which together with the associated book (hoped by Ulman to be published) form the academic arm of *Privilege* (2015-18). *AGENDA* (2017-18) is staged as a 'behind the scenes' of *Privilege* (2015-18), Ulman uses both this device and the format of a book to frame her performances as she intended them. When the content appears online the potential for instant feedback and for posts to be misinterpreted is heightened, when artwork is removed from the bounds of the institution and the critical framework that is prescribed.

During the duration of *Privilege* (2015-18), Ulman had a vast press output, for which she used the press not only as a promotional tool, but also as a form of propaganda, which produced additional content for the performance, weaving the media outcomes across platforms and narratives, enhancing the nonlinear nature of the project. This form of co-opted self-promotion and self-exploration frequently positioned Ulman firmly as a feminine object and fashion icon. She completed photoshoots for *Vogue* and *L'Officiel* and produced real and fake paid content on her Instagram, real for Gucci (Fig. 3.48 & 3.49) and Chanel, but false for Miu Miu and Prada, although the difference is hard to distinguish. The use of unconventional sites for art such as Instagram and magazines only widened the remit of *Privilege* (2015-18), creating new spaces to display the performance and act as a challenge

to the forms of promotion that artists are expected to undertake, but that is not accepted as part of their artistic labour and output. This expanded the audience of Ulman's work and as of March 28 2019, Ulman has 157,619 followers on Instagram.

Ulman intends to publish a book in the same format as *Excellences and Perfections* (2018) published by Prestel. To do this Ulman requests donations in the form of a 'mailer'. The first page is from Ulman's perspective stating the need for a book in order to provide the context so as to understand the performance and for this framing to be from Ulman's perspective. The following two pages are from Bob's perspective, this part of the mailer argues that the book is necessary as the current perception and portrayal of women in the media limits the capacity of women. As Ulman uses media outlets in her performances to challenge the notion of fake news, this results in research, conducted by art professionals, lacking depth and accepting false accounts and analysis of Ulman's work. The exploitation of Ulman by art students who only cite *Excellences and Perfections* (2014) and dismiss her other work which according to Bob/Ulman, in the name of feminism are 'romanticizing a young half-naked body and simultaneously limiting a women's career by attaching her to a younger non-disabled looking self.' (2015-16x) The mailer also includes a letter of protest against the mainstream media for donors to sign, that criticise the lack of complicated reports and the increasingly level of advertising. It is significant that Ulman wants to provide a specific framework, in the form of a book, for the documentation of her performance, still wanting to formulate the project in a 'traditional' format, which addresses a number of the ambiguous aspects of the work. This is interesting as from the perspective of this research the ambiguous nature of Ulman's performance is the parts which are most successful with these gaps in between is where perceptions are challenged and altered.

Ritual Insemination

In 2008 Aliza Shvarts used her final degree show at Yale University to reveal *Untitled [Senior Thesis]* (2008). Over the nine month duration of the project, Shvarts regularly

inseminated herself with sperm from anonymous donors to become pregnant. On the twentyeighth day of her menstrual cycle Shvarts would induce a miscarriage using herbal remedies. The exhibition was to include a projected video of Shvarts experiencing vaginal bleeding, with the video displayed on a cube so that the image appeared to be captured on a scientific slide used for viewing on a microscope. The cube would contain samples of Shvarts' discharged fluid. The project became a media sensation (Kinzie 2008) because abortion rights are one of the most divisive issues in America. Everyone was very angry with Shvarts, who became an internet pariah, receiving a number of death threats, trolled online, and Yale released an official statement denouncing the project. Here whether or not the project was 'real' becomes irrelevant as Shvarts was hated and publicly shamed (Kinzie 2008) for doing something that is, ultimately, her right.

Hallucination

The dreams we allow to destroy us cause us to be visions/see the vision world.
Everyday a sharp tool, a powerful destroyer, is necessary to cut away dullness, lobotomy, buzzing, belief in human beings, stagnancy, images, and accumulation. As soon as we stop believing in human beings, rather know we are dogs and trees, we'll start to be happy. Once we've got a glimpse of the vision world (notice here how the conventional language obscures: WE as if somebodies are the centre of activity SEE what is the centre of activity: pure VISION. Actually, the VISION creates US. Is anything true?) Once we have gotten a glimpse of the vision world, we must be careful not to think the vision world is us. We must go farther and become crazier.

Acker 2017 [1978]: 37

The current experience of the internet and technological infrastructure, at its planetary scale, can be understood as eidetic, an unseen ephemeral network, which produces material traces yet often remains unseen. A vivid image is conjured when considering how communication, mediated by technology functions, with points of contact lighting up like constellations, the stark modernist data centres flattening vast amounts of information, the actualisation of futuristic visions, evoking science fiction's eidetic worlds. Alfred Gell proposes that art is an element found within technical systems and when this occurs it, becomes art as enchantment (1992). The artistry or unknown aspects of technical systems producing enchantment, this mysticism can become a form of power.

<u>Dreams</u>

In *Blood and Guts in High School* (1978) Kathy Acker (Appendix V: 1) uses fantasy to show the reality of need as she explains: '[i]n this way fantasy reveals reality: *Reality* is just the underlying fantasy, a fantasy that reveals need.' (Acker 2017 [1978]:20) Inversley, Lisa Taddeo's bestselling, non-fiction *Three Women* (2019) writes fact as if it were fiction, examining the complex sexual and emotional needs and desires of three different women from different backgrounds across the United States. Svetlana Alexievich also uses a collage of monologues from different voices in her non-fiction work *Second-hand Time* (2016) to explore post-Soviet Union society, elevating the voices of ordinary people and their accounts of the dissolution of the USSR, the disappearance of this culture and the post-Soviet Union possibilities for the country.

Acker's maps (Fig. 3.71 & 3.72) act as a non-linear path into myth and fiction, which appear as if written from another place. The recreation of the dreams as maps, positions this place as real through the insertion into the everyday. As Burrows and O'Sullivan reinforce, 'Acker's texts, and in particular her maps, produce worlds that, by foregrounding the means of their manufacture, counter the illusions of realism and spectacle, presenting another world *written from* this other place.' (2019:46) Dreams are often experienced as real and do not conform to the bounds of reality. Acker confirms '[d]reams cause the vision world to break loose our consciousness.' (Acker 2017 [1978]: 36) This use of dreams amidst cut-up fiction produces layers of fiction that blur with experience to create a complex and nuanced narrative. It also references fantasy novels that often provide a map to spatialise these new places and introduce history, almost as a travel guide, to this fantasy place. There are many examples of this. Popular ones include J. R. R. Tolkein's map of Middle of Earth in the *Lord of the Rings Trilogy* (1954-55) or George R. R. Martin's maps for the *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-ongoing), with this map forming the basis of the title animation for *Game of Thrones* (2011-19), the television series of the books. This use of mapping, plots new worlds onto our

existing experience of navigation, by placing the fiction within space it is easier to first imagine and then potentially accept as real.

<u>Drugs</u>

Drugs are a technology that both avoid and enforce control to assist in the obliteration of the self. Experimentation with psychoactive drugs has a long precedence in counterculture, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, psychedelics were viewed as ways to open up 'new' ways of thinking and approaches to human consciousness. Key texts on this subject include psychologist Timothy Leary's *The Politics of Ecstasy* (1970), that examines the effects of psychedelic drugs socially and politically, Philip K. Dick's journal *The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick* (2011), which are exerts from his journal documenting his visionary experiences posthumously published, Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* (1954) an account of his psychoactive experiences on mescaline, and Tom Woolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968). This latter account is proposed as a first-hand account of Ken Kesey's LSD trips with his band of Merry Pranksters. This exploration of the self is often perceived as hyper masculine.

Burroughs and Ginsberg's *The Yage Letters* (1963) document the experiences of the two writers when they experimented with the psychedelic drug yage or ayahuasca. According to Burroughs and Ginsberg, yage was a form of 'space time travel' (1963: 44) and transported them to 'a place where the unknown past and the emergent future meet in a vibrating soundless hum' (1963: 46). This is repeated by musician Sun Ra who argues that myth is the vibration of ideas (c.1936). Burrows and O'Sullivan describe:

> the fiction of the self as […] [an] unmaking/making process […]: the fiction of *a self* but also – through experimentation – alternative fictions of other possible and *multiple selves*. […] certain drugs can dislodge the fiction of *a self* – nudge our reality, show us the edge of our world - but they can also contribute to the opening up of a different reality and a different way of inhabiting it […]
> (2019: 60)

In Carlos Castaneda's *The Teachings of don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (1968), the method for exploring altered states is inducee through the drinking or smoking of peyote (a small cactus that contains mescaline, a chemical that has psychoactive properties) whereas, in the second novel *Tales of Power* (1974) Castaneda through a series of initiations is taught the ways of the warrior by don Juan. Carlos Castaneda's series of novels about don Juan are against western concepts of space and time that function as 'fictioning set against Western, rational and technoscientific paradigms of reality.' (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019: 53)

HFT the Gardener (2014-15)

HFT the Gardener (2014-15), tells the story of a high frequency trader who uses psychoactive drugs to create an algorithm based on the gematria of psychoactive plants that predicts the value of stock. The narrative is a fictional construct, but the material is based upon facts. The protagonist Hillel Fischer Traumberg, is a high-frequency trader. Both Traumberg and high frequency trading can be referred to by using the acronym HFT. Erik Davis proposes that HFT also functions as a contemporary version of Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker known as HCE, the main character in James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (1939), who cannot wake from a dream-like state of consciousness in the face of the blurred reality of modernity (2016a: 4-5). Whilst watching the screens of high frequency trading, which operate using algorithms to generate financial trades at high speeds and turnover, HFT enters a semi-hallucinogenic state. This inspires him to begin experimenting with psychoactive drugs and document the ethno-pharmacology of over one hundred plants with psychoactive properties. Traumberg also makes connections with, what Treister refers to, as 'traditional shamans' (2016a: 7) who already use plants for medicine, divination, communicating with spirits and hallucinatory encounters with the multiplicity of reality. As Treister has explored before, HFT uses the Hebrew numerology of gematria to discover the numeric equivalents to the plant's biological name to then compare the figures with the companies of the *Financial Times Global 500 Financial Index* (FT500), making new connections between the plants and the world of trading (Fig. 3.73). He then uses this chart

to create an algorithm to search the internet and gather the images of the corresponding

psychoactive plants to their respective FT500 Company. Once these images were collected,

the algorithm was then programmed to alter the images into works in the style of Ernst

Haeckel's botanical illustrations (Fig. 3.74 – 3.77).

During a work trip to the Swiss bank UBS, HFT visited a local museum and saw the work of

Swiss artist Adolf Wölfli. Influenced by Wölfli's work and status as an 'outsider artist', of

which Treister is also evidently inspired (Fig. 3.78), HFT, becomes obsessed with the plants

he has been researching, as well as, the algorithmic data he has gathered. This obsession is

in part due to his intoxicated state from the multitude of hallucinogenic drugs he has been

taking. HFT begins to create his own drawings, becoming an 'outsider artist' in his own right,

with his work collected by art dealers across the world. After this strange and surreal course

of events, HFT then produces an algorithm to pinpoint the position and purpose of

consciousness and the potential role of psychoactive drugs within this. Treister wanted to

shift the existing narrative on artists and capital because of her unease at how the works of

'outsider artists' has been capitalised upon:

> by inventing a banker who became an outsider artist. High finance and economics
> reverting to the 'authentic', to the deeper experiences often lost to life in the
> military-academic-corporate-government-industrial-techno-scientific-complex.
> (Treister: 2016b)

HFT is constructed through 'layers of authorship' (Treister: 2016b) with *HFT The Gardener*

Video (2014-15) narrated by an unknown voice, the omniscient narration results in

plausibility and authenticity producing the impression of documentary film. Across the project

HFT's story is displayed in various formats via the film, in text and evidenced in the diverse

outcomes. These layers of authorship apply to both human and nonhuman agency found

within the work. HFT is an incredibly complex issue, which many know very little about. The

diverse connections offers an alternative way to understand how HFT works or could be

understood. Whilst this may be experienced as fiction, potentially it has the ability to alter the

understanding of facts. By exploring psychoactive plants and their effects, this appears

reflective of the experience of technology and can be defined as hallucinogenic, where it is hard to distinguish between what is true or false and the many layers of perception experienced due to the effects of technological infrastructure and algorithmic governance.

Survivor (F) (2016- ongoing)

The ongoing project *Survivor (F)* (2016- ongoing) contains Treister's projections for the future in an undisclosed space and time. Constructed as the examination of a sole survivor's hallucinogenic visions, the project explores a new sublime, which aesthetically differs radically from current visions of reality and addresses projections for human and nonhuman agency. The origin of the survivor are unclear, they may be human or nonhuman, on this planet or another, in a parallel universe, in space or take the form of artificial superintelligence (ASI). *Survivor (F)* (2016- ongoing) is not rooted in fact, but its content reveals how current modes of perception are inadequate and unprepared for the future of planetary-scale computation, the rise of ASI and nonhuman agency. The artwork is about the ever-changing, imminent and chaotic future the world is facing by echoing and absorbing present online experience and algorithmic prevalence to then project conjectures of what after internet existence may be through iterations of alchemic drawings and paintings, digital imagery and videos. Maggie Roberts and Lucy A. Sames suggest that the sensitive outcomes 'gather sentience and materiality through their obsessive repetition and shifting perspective, building a pragmatic web of fictions in a cosmic hallucinatory elsewhere.' (2017)

Survivor (F) (2016- ongoing) is a speculative fiction, which is set after the death of the internet in a space and time unfamiliar and distinct from our current perception, where time has become abstract and white noise prevalent. This future is full of data clouds, mists and storms, algorithmic governance, teleportation and telepathy with museums dedicated to the history of this world. The Museum of The Algorithm, the Museum of Altered States and Interplanetary War Museum of Parallel Universes (Fig. 3.79 – 3.81) show that this is an established layered world, existing across multiple universes after a number of conflicts and

shifts of power unknown to the present. The world Treister envisages is dystopian, reversing the utopian versions of early cybernetics and 1960s and 1970s American psychedelic counterculture, whilst maintaining this connection with a subtle palette of pastel colours, gentle and soft in approach, which enters the viewer into a dream-like state of chemically induced visions. One significant reference to the inception of the internet and the notion of cyber space is evident in the watercolours *The Sky Was The Colour of the Death Of The Internet_01 and _02* (2016) (Fig. 3.81). This statement is developed from Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) and the following line, '[t]he sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel.' (2016 [1984]: 3) This referential approach entrenches the rich heritage of science-fiction imagery within *Survivor (F)* (2016- ongoing), historically contextualising the project whilst providing new unknowns, such as the colour of the sky after the death of the internet. Through the developing iterations, *Survivor (F)* (2016- ongoing) becomes cyclical in nature referring to both the beginning of the internet and Treister's previous work. For example in *Survivor (F),* the series of *Fashion designs for space travel* (2016- ongoing) (Fig. 3.83) refers to Treister's *Rosalind Brodsky Time Travelling Costumes* (1995-96) (Fig. 3.84). This transports the work firmly into an unknown future occurring after what Treister terms as the mystical apocalypse. It appears as a culmination of her work in specific time and spaces past and present positioned into the future, where current understandings do not apply. The lack of control in Treister's projected future reflects contemporary social and political polarised positions and the frustrations harnessed to result in the significant events of 2016. The other or scapegoat in this instance for Treister is the capacity for nonhuman agency and capabilities of ASI as a purely hallucinogenic prospect.

Treister's projects offer alternative, potential realities and ways to understand existing 'truths'. Combining a diverse range of fields and levels of perception, appears as symptomatic and reflective of the current experience of technological infrastructure at its planetary-scale. The creation of links between the occult, science and technology reveals

the mystical side of the technological unknown. This could be defined as eidetic, a vision in the mind's eye, with Treister as omniscient, revealing another world through artistic methods. It could be argued that Treister operates at a planetary scale, absorbing a broad spectrum of content through a re-assessment of as much of the information and knowledge that already exists to tell a new narrative that reforms understandings of the world. The research argues that the parafictional tactics of Treister can be used as a method to disrupt the current experience of big data and the overwhelming amounts of information and metadata the internet generates. Roger Luckhurst agrees her significance in the age of planetary-scale computation:

> [i]n the era of the internet, Treister's combination of interests in the history of technology, the military-industrial complex, and magical thinking about occult inter-connectedness makes her work an important reflection on our weird and wired condition of being.
> (Luckhurst: 2009)

Treister offers a reflection of being in the world and insight into the planet by connecting content, which becomes plausible or plausible enough and accountable in the way it becomes traceable. This notion of hallucinated versions of reality and layers of perception links with hallucinated consensual hallucination, which is how UBERMORGEN define their work and is particularly evident in the current *Binary Primitivism* (2016- ongoing).

Technology

Ian Cheng

Ian Cheng's *Emissaries* (2015-17) uses computer game design to examine the mutation of human consciousness and progress through an endless possibility space enacted by nonhuman users (Fig. 3.85). *Emissaries* (2015-17) is a trilogy of interconnected stories that encompass past and future worlds. The episodes occur in the ancient past of pre-conscious, thousands of years into the future and in a place where AI is sentient. The simulations follow one emissary as they interact with the world (Fig. 3.86). To produce these live computer-generated simulations Cheng uses software traditionally associated with video games

combined with a variety of artificial intelligence models. The nonhuman agents are programmed with behavioural drives, but evolve organically without external influence. Cheng therefore acts as initiator rather than controller, where his organisms act and perform in their own narrative with unpredictable outcomes. Cheng states that he 'wanted to push thinking of behaviour as a volatile material. Unlike a physical, sculptural material, behaviour is inherently subject to sudden change and influence. In turn behaviour puppeteers or possesses whatever physical material it is hosted in.' (Evers 2015: 107-08) His simulations examine human consciousness, mutation, the principles of emergence and systems of logic through the production of open-ended narratives contained within these virtual ecosystems. Luciana Parisi suggest that '[s]imulations are both manifest appearances of human culture and the scientific images of computational processing.' (2015: 131) The simulations offer the possibility to explore the potential for what could happen if this tethering of biological and computational systems became the conditions of reality.

Jacolby Satterwhite

Jacolby Satterwhite is a performance artist who films himself to make digital portraits that dance, have sex and engage in everyday life to perform in actual and virtual environments. In some instances, these environments are created using his mother Patricia Satterwhite's drawings, music and his memories with her as source material. This is evident in *The Country Ball* (1989 – 2012) (Fig. 3.87) in which Satterwhite uses the tools of drawing, performance and digital technology to recount and reproduce his own mythology (2019). *Spirits Roaming the Earth* (2019) (Fig. 3.88) is a collaboration between architect Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation and artist Jacolby Satterwhite, commissioned for *Is This Tomorrow?* (2019) Whitechapel Gallery's reimagining of the landmark exhibition *This is Tomorrow* (1956). Repetitive hypnotic videos are enclosed in a structure that appears to be made of igneous rock and everyday objects, which seems to be simultaneously natural and unnatural. The piece is augmented by the soundtrack of a house track recorded by Satterwhite's mother *Spirits Roaming the Earth* (Fig. 3.89 & 3.90) for which the piece is named. Bodies become resources in the context of fracking, sex, queerness, desire, wealth,

DNA and shale minerals. In what Jaque and Satterwhite term as the 'multiverses' (2019) the space we contemporarily inhabit is a place where bodies and resources become hybrid, resulting in no distinction between the analogue and the digital.

EMBROIDERY
THREAT
RECREATED/
REPURPOSED
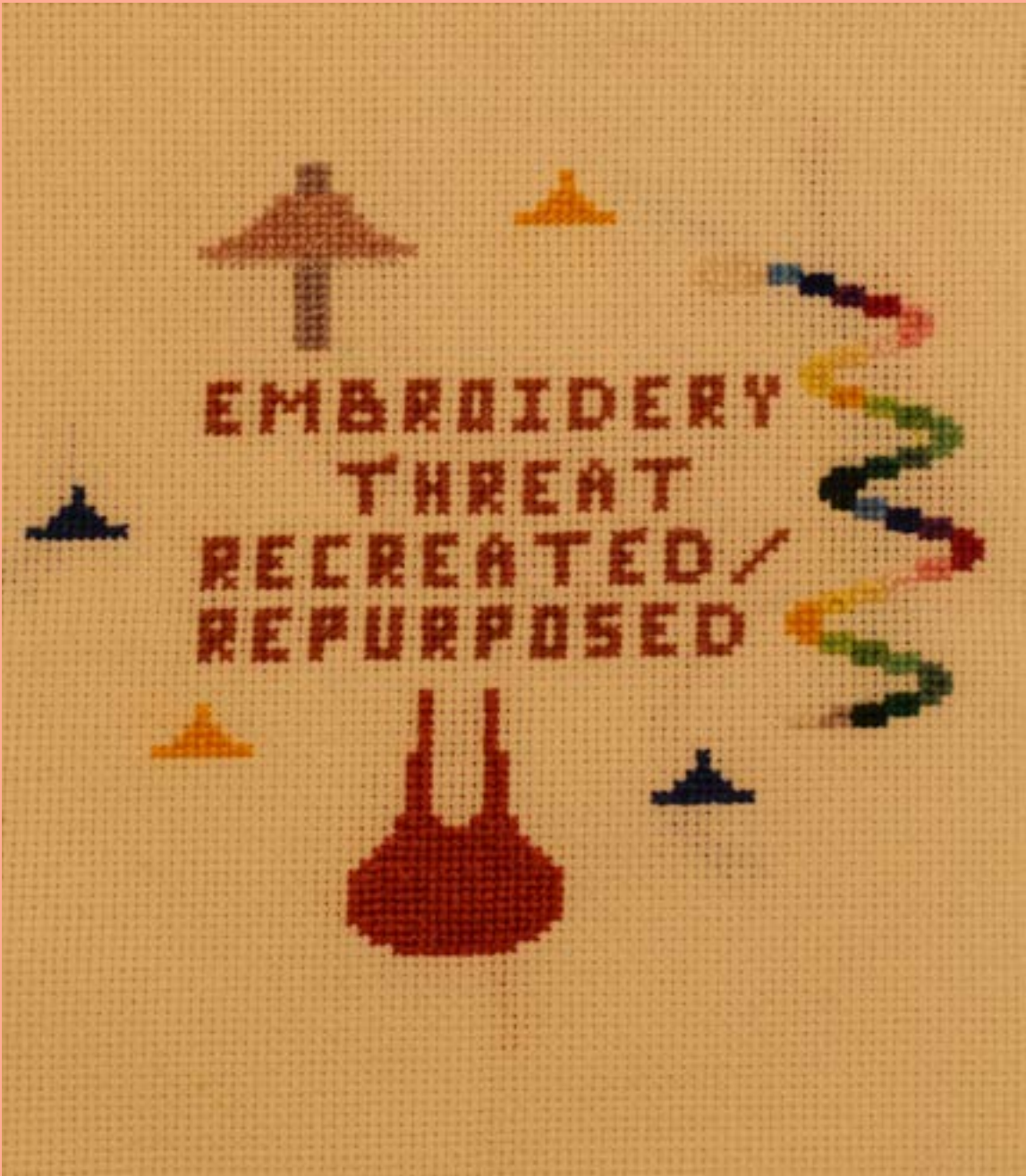
PRACTICE INTERLUDE VI

Rebecca Smith
Embroidery Threat Recreated/Repurposed, 2019-20
3-D forms, mixed media, multiple dimensions

Embroidery Threat Recreated/Repurposed (2019-20) explores making my own universe as a speculative future drawn from the past. I produced a series of objects from my memory using items from my childhood, using this stimulus as a way to structure a future space. The materials are imbued with significance and personal history becoming talismans to the past and future in these new forms. I utilised skills taught to me by my Mother and Nanny to produce the pieces to demonstrate, in a concrete way, these ephemeral connections. The objects will be used in an animation using the cut-up method to produce the narrative. It is also intended that the objects will be 3-D scanned to create a virtual reality environment and online project post the PhD.

PIG MOUSE LION (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 56-58)
I aimed to repurpose a single knitted mitten from my childhood, which I think is a mouse, giving it a new life. This was the first experiment as a return to sewing and a way to remember old skills. An old suede dress formed the basis for *Pig Mouse Lion* (Appendix I: Fig. 56-58), cutting out the fabric in two pieces and in reference to pre-cut and hole felt toy kits that I had as a child, using blanket stitch to attach the two pieces. I inserted two pipe cleaners into the mouth of the head to give the mouth structure. I then stuffed the body and head with toy stuffing and attached the head, again with blanket stitch. I also added two opened out paper clips to shape the ears. Using the neck of the dress, I covered another pipe cleaner to make a tail and attached this to the body. The oversized head and four limbs gives the creature an alien appearance, part human, pig, mouse and lion.

SAD RABBIT (2019-20) (Appendix I: Fig. 59 & 60)
I rediscovered a drawing by my Nanny of a rabbit meant to be for a mask for an Alice in Wonderland themed hen party for my cousin a few years ago. The drawing was not recognisable as a rabbit, but I found something about it so charming, so I kept the drawing. I wanted to realise the rabbit in textiles to bring the rabbit to life and open a link between my Nanny's hand and my own, using skills she had taught me, to make something of hers.

I cut-up some old trousers and used these details in the construction of the rabbit, the pocket lining on the body, a pocket detail on one arm, the shape of the pocket for the head and the waistband for ears. Instead of the blanket stitch I had used in *Pig Mouse Lion* (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 56-58) to replicate children's toys, I used a raw seam to shape the limbs, head and ears. For the face detail I uses appliqué from leftover fabric. I added a cape made from the lametta to make the rabbit ready for space.

SPACE WORM (2019-20)
A few years ago I started knitting again using ends of wool to make a multi-coloured scarf, which I never finished. Upon finding this scarf again, I investigated how I could reuse it and was reminded of a story I had recently heard on a podcast about a space worm. The story was disgusting, but this idea of a space worm stuck with me. For *Space Worm* (Appendix I: Fig. 61-63) I used the scarf for the body of the worm, filling it with toy stuffing, I then set about creating its face. I had been playing with bra cups from inside my Nanny's swimming costume that I had deconstructed, initially making a sphere, but then I realised that this would make the perfect mouth for the space worm. Using the existing elastic to shape the mouth, I attached the two cups, using some coral from the zip fly of the trousers for the tongue and appliquéing eyes on, this was then attached to the scarf body. I then added extra wool and lametta on to the end of the scarf for a tail.

PARASOL SPACESHIP (2019-20)
Through the process of my research, I decided that this speculative world would be set in space in reference to planetary-scales and the traditions of science-fiction. The design for the spaceship was inspired by the parasol featured in some of the pictures from the old suitcase see *Black Holes and Flying Saucers* (2019). This was a pink/coral parasol with white fringing. Having some instant noodles at work one lunchtime, whilst washing the plastic container, the shape of it reminded me of a spaceship. I saved the container and set about building upon this to make my own papier mâché spaceship. I built the structure for *Parasol Spaceship* (Appendix I: Fig. 64 & 65) using cardboard stuck to the noodle pot base, extending the two ends and emphasising the shape. I then papier mâchéd newsprint onto the shape with PVA glue, so that I could paint it. I thought the top needed to be higher so added a dip pot to the top. I made the trim using cardboard bases, wrapping them in cream wool and then using a crochet hook to add smaller pieces of wool to replicate the fringing in both white, cream and lametta. On the underside of the spaceship, I left a hole in the centre. Using a cardboard disk, I attached silver lametta to both the side and around the edge with superglue, and inserted this back into the hole for the rays of the spaceship, giving it a disco feel. The spaceship reads as a nipple and eye as well as a spaceship.

SCHOOL SWIM FLYING SAUCER (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 66 & 67)
I used significant fabric, combining my Nanny's swimming costume with my primary school P.E. t-shirt. Inkeeping with the use of textiles I used a wire coat hanger for the structure. I attached the fabric using embroidery thread and added wool and pom poms hanging from the centre. This flying saucer is more playful and the shape also reads as a flower with the stamen emerging from the centre.

PARTY SKIRT FLYING SAUCER (2019) (Appendix I: Fig. 68)
Again using two wire coat hangers for the structure, I draped velvet fabric from a childhood skirt over the structure. Using embroidery and thick cotton thread I covered the wire structure which I had left exposed, using the handle to form the top of flying saucer. This has produced something a flying saucer that looks like a flying squirrel.

SPACE CAT COSTUME (2020) (Appendix I: Fig. 69-75)
I aimed to recreate a costume from my childhood. To recreate a cat costume, I brought velvet leggings and a black roll neck with silver beads to update it for the space theme. I also purchased black velvet, white felt, a feather trim, a velvet headband and silver beads to recreate the rest of the look including mittens, ears, a chest piece and hood. I had the original tail from the costume. When the picture was taken, I performed a poem at the Otterbourne Village Hall, where I attended nursery. In the picture I am three or four years old. I am not sure what the poem was, but I had a strong desire to recreate this event. I have made the costume and am planning to conduct the performance post PhD.

CONCLUSION

The research has been thoroughly rigorous in its approach, choice and application of methods and development. By utilising existing skills and research interests, the course of the PhD has led to a distillation of ideas through rigorous research, engagement with academic peers at conferences and publication, contact with fellow PGRs and teaching. Iterations of this research have been presented at seven international conferences, published in two journal articles and one book chapter. Where possible primary research has been conducted in the form of research visits, interviews and the production of artwork. The production of a body of artwork has only further supported the rigour and findings of the research, resulting in an additional way to access the knowledge gained and an additional aspect for development. Furthermore, a detailed enquiry of secondary literature has supported this creation of knowledge to make this research a unique endeavour.

The research is potentially limited in how it has chosen to assess the difference between true and false, at times adopting a stance that potentially falls into a binary position. Every effort has been taken to avoid this, however, it is often unavoidable when discussing a topic that is, at its very core, subjective. This research has suggested that the adoption of such static positions should be avoided, therefore arguing that the idea of experiencing as fact should be taken in its most expanded sense. That is to provide a sense of 'realness' and 'liveness' that enables a parafiction to attach and interact with reality.

This research is limited and is aware of its whiteness, especially in relation to the case study examples. This has led to the conclusion that the pragmatics of trust are a question of privilege. Trust is easy won when acting from a privileged position, one which comes with the ability to work as an artist. All the artists discussed are educated, with some working within academia, whilst others actively rejecting its constraints. This suggests that parafictions require intelligence to some degree, that in order to deceive masterly requires a certain level of intellect. *Parafiction: Historic Cases 1900-78*, artistically is also very male-

centric. However, this (unfortunately) supports the privilege narrative, with the inclusion of

women and a spectrum of gender, most prevalent during and post-second-wave feminism.

As the focus of the research is on the contemporary, the research has ensured that the

representation of gender is balanced.

The research has made five key finding, which are that:

1. Fiction can be applied as a method and practice interludes are a form of telling and
showing
2. Parafiction is a legacy system,
3. Parafiction is vital as method and matter to contemporary art,
4. The term parafiction needs to be advanced and reconfigured to suit the ubiquitous nature
of the internet,
5. Parafictive practices can be further grouped as forms of 'what ifs' and 'as ifs'.

1. Fiction can be applied as a Method and Practice Interludes are Telling and Showing

The interludes demonstrate fiction as a method to show theory-led practice in action. The

interludes were conceived as vital to integrate the practice as cut-ups that intervene in the

theoretical proposal. The interludes act as a pause in the text and provides the reader with

time and space to reflect upon the research. The interludes show the multifaceted aspects of

research and the researcher demonstrating the complexity of considering the world at a

planetary scale and the resulting entanglements of matter. Additionally, the interludes make

the thesis into an interactive artwork that can be read as part of the text or separately in any

order of the reader's choosing. Others could apply this method to their research instead

producing theory-led practice as interludes within theoretical art-based research. This

becomes telling (the thesis text) and showing (the practice interludes). The interludes show

other forms of knowledge production showing how parafiction is able to tell us about pasts,

present and futures.

2. Parafiction is a Legacy System

This research positions parafiction as a legacy system, that was evident throughout the

twentieth century, but was significant as a mode of practice within net art and digital art that

has become a vital part of contemporary art in its most expanded sense. This is significant

because parafiction therefore inform the contemporary digital media landscape and function to demonstrate how misinformation spreads through society. Parafictions have adapted from encounters with humans in digital and non-digital spaces to incorporate interactions with both human and nonhuman users. This has moved parafiction away from critiquing reality to demonstrate alternative forms of communication. This is important because in its most expanded sense contemporary art can function as forms of charged encounters that alter existing narratives to explore potential for the pasts, present and futures.

All practices are a comment on violence, either from direct experience or as a form of inherited and remembered trauma. Many of the examples from the twentieth century have direct experience of war although it could be argued that currently the conditions and quality of life in Europe and the USA for most is deemed to be of a high enough standard and therefore has not produced the conditions needed for revolution. In these instances the anger and frustration produces parafictive acts as a form of revolutionary means.

Parafiction does function across existing platforms virtually, as well as having forms of physical presentation, where the documentation and performances occur in physical space. This involves different strategies of presentation, representation and re-performance. Contemporary parafiction produces a trail of documentation that acts as evidence. In terms of twentieth century parafictions, especially those of Baader and Hausmann, the Situationist International and Augusto Boal, it is hard to not mythologise these events, due to the historical nature and methods of recording, it is easier to dispute if these pieces existed at all. Technological infrastructure provides a level of accountability and traceability in that the websites and platforms for these projects are easily accessible. In all instances historical and contemporary, the idea is central to the function and success of a parafiction. Parafiction is as a method of myth making (Burrows and O'Sullivan 2019), accessing both fixed and free memory to present change as possible.

3. Parafiction is Vital as Method and Matter to Contemporary Art

The research demonstrates how politicians through Twitter, and artists via websites, emails, imageboards and YouTube, employ the tactics of denialism, post-denialism and perception management to antithetical ends. The application of artistic strategies for political gain makes this a vital tool in understanding the current age of fake news and so-called post-truth. It has examined why users often choose to accept a narrative over a truth by discussing how artists have created potential futures, resurrections of the past and alternate realities with digital media.

Parafiction is political. All comment upon society to various degrees and with differing agendas. Parafiction is mostly project-based and durational. To function they need to be conducted over time to work with the pragmatics of trust and to integrate into existing narratives set within technological infrastructure, or to propose new ones. Parafiction is horizontal, working across the vertical assumptions of the structures of power and hierarchies that have been entrenched by the media and technological infrastructure. Parafiction operates up and down the layers of technological infrastructure, to challenge its present structure in its many forms of presentation. Parafiction investigates the structures of power and control, both potential and actual. This reveals how social and political events and technological infrastructure shape the planet. Parafiction use narratives in familiar formations to maintain the attention of the audience as a method of consciousness raising. Parafiction raises and exposes issues by revealing things are not necessarily initially obvious.

Parafiction has become both more absurd and more subtle, there is less need for the 'gotcha' moment or the big reveal as presently it is not as shocking or effective. As with the election of Trump and the Brexit vote of 2016, neither of these events happened as expected and did not match the forecasts. This desire to protest and reject, leads to a space where the binary distinction of true and false is rendered irrelevant and where shock tactics

become unnecessary. Parafiction is how contemporary art examines the current issues that have radically altered society.

Through the course of the research, the conditions that have produced the trend of parafictions within contemporary art are identified. The research demonstrates how technological infrastructure at its planetary scale has grown to support the spread of misinformation and how this can be manipulated by both human and nonhuman users. The research originally investigates and re-evaluates the different ways artists have engaged with parafiction in the twentieth and twenty-first century. This deep and in-depth approach has led to a successful surveillance of the field and term, parafiction to advance its existing definition.

The research has investigated to re-evaluate and advance the term parafiction by expanding Lambert-Beatty's definition with the scope of the research being unique. The extension has come from the synthesis of knowledge from art history, art practice, contemporary art, digital cultures, media studies, performance art, philosophy and politics to consider how the contemporary conditions socially, politically and technologically have effected parafiction. By intrinsically linking parafictions, politics and technology, the research has examined the conditions that have led to parafictions becoming a significant mode of practice. The socio-political and technological conditional shifts evidenced qualifies the renewed investigation into parafictions, specifically those occurring post-2008 which have occurred after Lambert-Beatty's initial article. Since the 2008 global financial crisis, which led to over ten years of austerity in Europe and the United States, the use of social media has become ubiquitous, with the year 2016 epitomising the rejection of mainstream politics and culminating in 'post-truth' named as the word of the year. These events have opened up polarising chasms of opinion, where users are separated into self-reflective silos by seemingly unseen forms of algorithmic governance. Parafictions still exist but have changed significantly during this time

due to social, political and technological factors reconfiguring to suit the ubiquitous nature of the internet (Smith 2019a).

4. Parafiction Needs to be Reconfigured to Suit the Ubiquitous Nature of the Internet

This has led this thesis to argue that this emergence is significant because the planet is in a period of transition and experiencing an epistemological shift. Within this shift fictioning can be applied as a method to produce alternative possibilities and new knowledge both artistically and theoretically. These new possibilities speak to this transition in order to reject existing constructs of gender, race and privilege, beginning to outline a new space where the radically different breaks free of the current binary distinctions enforced by technological infrastructure and systems of power. At present fictioning methods have the most impact within contemporary art, however the strategies outlined in this thesis are applicable philosophically and could be developed to have further application in the creation of new infrastructures attuned to the planetary present.

5. Parafiction can be Further Grouped as Forms of 'What Ifs' and 'As Ifs'

What ifs are important because they suit the ubiquitous nature of the internet and can be used outside of the field of art history and contemporary art. Parafiction uses diachronic truths that become real through the configurations of 'what ifs'. As horizontal entities they inhabit a nonlinear time and space. 'as ifs', which are more common historically, use the existing constraints of vertical linearity. It is here where parafiction becomes matter. Parafictions act as a material that intersects and interacts with the modularity of digital technologies and power structures, producing 'what ifs' that speculate to realise alternative futures.

AFTERWORD

Current developments within and projections for, the future and technology suggest that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will become more pervasive. It would be significant to apply the concept of parafictions to nonhuman users, with AI looming and its advancement to Superintelligent AI that is able to replicate human behaviour.

Algorithmic generated content is examined in Treister's *Survivor (F)* (2016- ongoing) and *HFT the Gardener* (2014-15) as a possible move forward and shift: *HFT the Gardener* (2014-2015) being a high frequency trader who uses psychoactive drugs to create an algorithm based on the gematria of psychoactive plants that predicts the value of stock, and the speculative fiction *Survivor (F)* (2016- ongoing) is set after the death of the internet in a space and time unfamiliar and distinct from current perceptions, where time has become abstract, algorithms rule and white noise is prevalent. UBERMORGEN's *Binary Primitivism* (2016- ongoing) also appears as if the content is generated by an algorithm, this is what Hans Bernhard and lizvlx are doing when they are text mining, becoming human bots using the same strategies to generate content. UBERMORGEN are also working collaboratively with Liverpool Biennial and Whitney Biennial on the project *The Next Biennial Should Be Curated by a Machine* (2020), which proposes an experimental AI system that has the capacity to curate an exhibition. In Ulman's work the presence of algorithms are implicit, the use of Instagram as a platform inevitably constructs what we view and the effects of this permeate Ulman's work in how they affect her identity and the identity of others. Ian Cheng's *Emissaries* (2015-17) uses computer game design to examine the mutation of human consciousness and progress through an endless possibility space enacted by nonhuman users.

Alternatively, Forensic Architecture's work is an inverse parafiction that produces evidence to challenge state sponsored parafictions as a form of human rights activism. Forensic Architecture use technology in a number of forms, including metadata to provide new

evidence that can be used in court to argue against existing narratives that conceal inhumane practices globally.

Further research into the spread of misinformation could provide an appropriate framework to harness the research and develop a practical application for my deep knowledge of alternative methods of truth construction, in order to improve advertising methods and online encounters. The findings of this rigorous research have led me to the knowledge that the conditions of technological infrastructure must be altered and developed, in order to prevent the proliferation of ingrained inequalities that both human and nonhuman users produce.

This has led to the consideration that the conditions for parafictions (generally) may only be available to those who inhabit Europe and the USA (the exception here perhaps being Augusto Boal although he did spend a lot of time in Europe). However, this may be because of the bias of the researcher, that is as a white middle-class British cis woman and the resulting way the world is viewed. For the remit of this research this context appears appropriate due to its structure and word and time constraints. Deeper research into the existence of parafiction in cultures other than the researcher's own, would be beneficial and is a potential avenue to explore post-PhD.

Post-doctoral research may be undertaken to support Professor Colin Fallows in producing the book *Punk 1976-78* to document the exhibitions *Punk 1976-1978* (2016-19) and *Believe In The Ruins: Situationists | 1968 | Sex Pistols* (2018). The book and exhibitions utilise the archives he has brought to The Special Collections and Archives at Liverpool John Moores University. This avenue would expand the research from parafiction into counterculture.

Additionally, the practical element of this research could be developed. There are intentions to develop the work into a video using 3D scanning, augmented and virtual reality and a live performance, to fully realise this alternative space and world. The research will also form an

exhibition, collaboratively curated with documentary film maker Ben Evans James, that explores parafiction in a digital and physical context, examining how parafiction functions in both of these spaces.

REBECCA SMITH - AUTHORED OUTPUTS

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