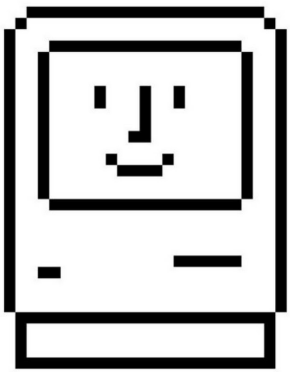
I Scared My Computer



At the time of writing the UK has just set a new record for the two consecutively hottest days in February which has sparked equal amounts of delight and concern...

I Scared My Computer

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Although the hot weather is probably not, or at least only in part an effect of the increase in the atmosphere's overall temperature, the concerns are real and justified. Hang fire disasters and solutions on ice. The trigger has been pulled and while we wait to see when the projectile of our dreams and aspirations will (back)fire, we root around for a mobilizing narrative with the potential of bringing us together, even on some basic level, around caring for our immediate and future livelihoods. With recent environmentalist projects taking a turn away from preservation towards construction in acknowledgement of our

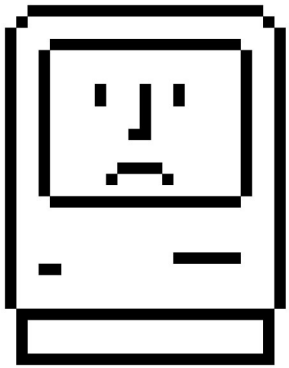
already-constructed images of nature and the natural, there is a need for thinking creatively about the terms of this construction without grabbing for the myopic universalisms of the past. If modernity's ignorance and optimism brought us into this sticky mess then information and complexity don't quite seem to be unsticking us. Questions about the environment we inhabit become mirrors held up to humanity; fields for battles fought over definitions of humanness and ethical concerns whose complexities and intensities are multiplying by a factor equal to the number of emerging technologies proposing to

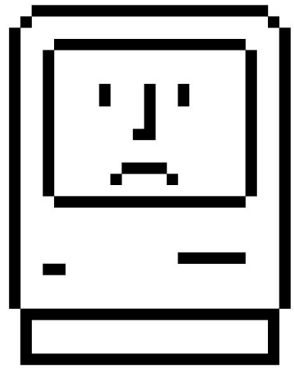
solve the problems we are facing. Questions of identity have become inextricably entangled with questions of environment. Is it the best *idea*, the 'how do we preserve?' or its *origin*; the 'who is (p)reserving what and for whom?' that we should be referring to as our first navigational instrument? The line of questioning in the present exhibition of artworks and texts highlights the importance of continually interrogating our nature/culture constructions, be they assemblages of plants, words, hardwares or softwares.

The following four texts are written by researchers (staff and students) from the Royal College of Art in response to a double article by Iranian Philosopher Reza Negarestani, published in e-flux in 2014: "The Labor of the Inhuman, Part I: Human" and "The Labor of the Inhuman, Part II: The Inhuman" and has been produced in the context of an exhibition of current RCA PhD students' work taking place during 'Know Your Home'-week and as part of the Students' Unions' ongoing *SU Research Series* whose purpose is to create opportunities for researchers to present their work and strengthen the research community by creating connections with

other communities within and outside of the RCA. This year, the *SU Research Series* focuses on questions around Class, Sustainability and Self-care.

The exhibition which, following an open-call, has been curated in conjunction with this publication is organised in collaboration with The Westworks, the Royal College of Art and the RCA Students' Union, and presented in one of the yet unoccupied shopfront spaces of White City Place; neighbour to the RCA's temporary campus building in White City. On the last pages you will find a list of the artists and their works, which they have generously brought to the exhibition.





The Upper Ontology of the World

by Eleanor Dare *eleanor.dare@rca.ac.uk*

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Who or what gets to be counted as human? This paper is a response to the questions raised by the idea of inhumanism, in particular, two papers in the e-flux Journal, editions #52 and #53, by the philosopher Reza Negaretsani, respectively, The Labor of the Inhuman, Part I (Negarestani, 2014) and Part II: The Inhuman (Negarestani, 2014a). In Part I, Negarestani addresses the paradox of orienting ourselves between the cultural tropes of humanism and anti-humanism, of operating via 'consensus or dissensus' (Negarestani, 2014). In Part 2, Negarestani elaborates the commitment to a discursive inhumanism, one which requires rational agency to allow for the emergence of the human, albeit a speculative rationality which has the potential, (for Negarestani at least) to undergo a form of assimilation to an artificial, *general intelligence*, in which we 'only become rational agents once we acknowledge or develop a certain intervening attitude toward norms that renders them binding' (Negarestani, 2014a).

Negrestani describes an augmented rationality which inhabits 'the "area of maximum risk" — not risk to humanity per se, but to commitments which have not yet been updated, because they conform to a portrait of human that has not been revised' (Negarestani, 2014a). The obvious question we are left with is whether the division between the human and the non-human is sustainable, and in asking this question, do we naturalise an ontology which always foregrounds humanism, even if it is filtered through an anti-humanist lens? For Reza Negaretsani, inhumanism is a constructivist strategy to counter the infinite regress of the humanism-anti-humanism binary, in 2014, he wrote: 'Inhumanism is exactly the activation of the revisionary program of reason against the self-portrait of humanity' (Negaretsani, 2014a). But it is imperative to remember that who gets to count as human has always been ideological, likewise the form of logic invoked by rational discourse is also always political, implicated with a colonial continuum. 185 years since the abolition of slavery in the UK, the stability (or otherwise) of our ontological status as homo-sapiens, is still contingent, and arguably an issue of ever more palpable cultural and political urgency, with rising nationalisms and far-right politics, the question of who gets to count as human, agential and 'rational' has not gone away.

Aside from the resurgence of racist populisms which deny the humanity and equality of all people, the ontology of humanism is also threatened, it would seem, by emerging forms of materiality, by the putative breakdown of separations between computers and humans, between, for example, communication networks and the spaces we inhabit, by the proposed accordance of 'human' rights to artificially intelligent entities, or, by the longstand-

ing fact that corporations in America, 'enjoy many of the same rights as American citizens. Both, for instance, are entitled to the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion.' (Winkler, 2018). Indeed, the Fourteenth Amendment of 1868, which was intended to protect the rights of former slaves, was often invoked to protect the rights of big business:

> *Between 1868, when the amendment was ratified, and 1912, the Supreme Court would rule on 28 cases involving the rights of African Americans and an astonishing 312 cases on the rights of corporations. (Winkler, 2018).*

In 2017, Saudi Arabia granted a robot citizenship, to 'promote Saudi Arabia as a place to develop artificial intelligence – and, presumably, allow it to become a full citizen. But many pointed out that those same rights aren't afforded to many humans in the country.' (Griffin, 2017). Yampolskiy (2018) reminds us there is loophole in US law by which potentially 'anyone can confer legal personhood on a computer system, by putting it in control of a limited liability corporation in the U.S. If that maneuver is upheld in courts, artificial intelligence systems would be able to own property, sue, hire lawyers and enjoy freedom of speech and other protections under the law.' (Yampolskiy, 2018).

Despite the accordance of human rights to robots and potentially polluting corporations, the catastrophic warming of the Earth threatens the future of all life and objects supported by it, meaning that we are *in it together*, regardless of our ontological or social status. One might argue, in light

of constructs such as the *Anthropocene*, that our ontology is inextricably entangled with our environment. But writers such as Todd and Davies remind us that the Anthropocene is a deceptive term, occluding an inextricable link between the warming of the planet and centuries of colonial domination, in which the:

> *extension and enactment of colonial logic systematically erases difference, by way of genocide and forced integration and through projects of climate change that imply the radical transformation of the biosphere. Universalist ideas and ideals are embedded in the colonial project as it was enacted through a brutal system of imposing "the right" way of living. In actively shaping the territories where colonizers invaded, they refused to see what was in front of them; instead forcing a landscape, climate, flora, and fauna into an idealized version of the world modelled on sameness and replication of the homeland. (Davies and Todd, 2017)*

For Negarestani a constantly dialogic relationship to the human and the inhuman is how 'reason' emerges, it is a 'landscape of navigation rather than an *a priori* access to explicit norms. The capacity to engage discursive practices is what functionally distinguishes sapience from sentience '(Negaretsani, 2014). However, Neagrestani's rational discourse appears to have a lineage which goes back to Aristotle, to the Eurocentric framing of what counts as knowledge, a vector which flows from Aristotle to Boolean Logic. Dixon (2017) reminds us of the lineage of modern computing, in which:

> *Boole's goal was to do for Aristotelean logic what*

Descartes had done for Euclidean geometry: free it from the limits of human intuition by giving it a precise algebraic notation. To give a simple example, when Aristotle wrote:

All men are mortal.

Boole replaced the words "men" and "mortal" with variables, and the logical words "all" and "are" with arithmetical operators:

$x = x * y$

Which could be interpreted as "Everything in the set x is also in the set y."
(Dixon, 2017).

To be clear, Aristotle's reduction of human knowledge to axiomatic statements is the logic from which modern symbolic logic and computation stems from. Aristotle derived the rest of his logical system (Dixon, 2017) from the following axioms:

- *An object is what it is (Law of Identity)*
- *No statement can be both true and false (Law of Non-contradiction)*
- *Every statement is either true or false (Law of the Excluded Middle)*

For many non-European epistemic traditions, the reduction of reason to language and abstraction is irreconcilable with 'the relatedness of land and flesh' (Davies and Todd, 2017), irreconcilable with the concept of *Place-Thought:*

the non-distinctive space where place and thought were never separated because they never could or can be separated. Place-Thought is based upon the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts (Watts, 21, 2013).

For Todd and Davies 'Industrialized capitalism might make us forget our entwined relations and dependency on this body of the Earth, but we are surrounded by rich traditions and many people that have not forgotten this vital lesson' (Todd and Davies, 2017). The theme of humanness, whether it be Non-European, Post-human, Trans-human or Inhuman, appears to be the question of our time, it is, of course, always contentious, a filter for our most pressing concerns, a crucible for a continuum which encompasses right-wing technological determinisms and techno-feminist futures with myriad genders and races, but it is always, in Negarestani's terms, a discursive space, in which sapience might emerge. The capacity for sentience and sapience is deeply implicated with the materiality and sustainability of our ecosystems, but it is also implicated with cognition and computation and with the materiality, or otherwise, of the digital, in an era in which we are confronted by deep-fakes, increasing efforts to automate insights into human activity, to mechanise language and action, to reduce everything to number via the pervasive metrics of Big Data. In this context, is there any more value to be gained by defining ourselves as distinct from the rest of everything – to separate ourselves from the Upper Ontology of the World (Norvig and Russell, 2003)?

The sinister metrics of Cambridge Analytica and Facebook have arguably made objects of us all (even those who do not access the internet). To paraphrase the artist Katherine Behar, the psychometric mechanisms of AI make our personalities into objects, into data points and ideological constructs which are separable from our bodies, from our situatedness (Behar, 2018).

In the huge, canonical text, 'Artificial Intelligence, a Modern Approach' (Norvig and Russell, 2003) there is a diagram which purports to represent everything we can know. It is satisfyingly plain, lacking in ambivalence or noisy indecision. The title of the diagram is 'The Upper Ontology of the World', at the top of the diagram is, *Anything*, which branches into *Generalized Events* and *Abstract Objects*, both these branches hold further sub-categories, such as *Places* and *Numbers*, *Things* and *Stuff*. The ontology offers a God's eye view, one which Haraway might term a 'God-trick' a view from above' (Haraway, 1988) *the view from nowhere*. Though Norvig and Russell's book has served as the mainstay for many Computer-Science courses concerned with AI, the authors are wisely cautious about the limitations of such an ontology, they do not go as far as to identity the colonial nature of ontological hierarchies, or, indeed the epistemicidal injustices which such knowledge systems have served. But it is important to also note that Humans are not at the apex of Norvig and Russell's diagram, they are at the bottom, beneath *Animals*, *Agents* and *Things*, but they are categorically not the same as *numbers*, *sets*, *sentences* or *measures*. For Norvig and Russell, unlike Cambridge Analytica, Humans cannot be representational objects.

Despite the enormity and thoroughness of Norvig and Russell's text, it does not currently address the issue of colonialism, but at the time of writing (February 2019), there is an ever growing movement towards recognising the impact of colonialism, in particular acknowledging how data itself colonises and ontologises, towards addressing the cognitive injustice (Visvanathan, 1997) which arises from the dominance of Western regimes of knowledge and Western appropriation of, for example, mathematics and philosophy; There is also a growing movement to address the damage wrought by a Western relegation of the body – that which is uncontrollable, messy and inconvenient, wild, female, black male or brown - into something which is unrelated to reason and enlightenment. As Nina Power (2017) writes:

> *Historically, and not only historically, however, vast swathes of humanity have, for reasons of prejudice, acquisition, and other violent motives, been excluded from this image of the bearer of reason.*

Authors such as Boaventura de Sousa (2018), Noble (2018), Eubanks (2018) and O'Neil (2017) and movements such as *Data4Blacklives*, critique the idealisation of Western rationality (or, more accurately, that of the *Global North*) in particular, the idea of a rationality which is transcendental, God-like in its neutrality. The decolonial movement necessitates a critique of humanism, and is, one

might argue, more prescient than Negarestani's Inhumanism. Ali (2016) writes how:

> *the modernity which colonialism engendered persists, albeit transformed under the condition of postmodernity, which has meant the persistence of certain 'sedimented' colonial ways of knowing and being – that is, colonial epistemology and ontology – based on systems of categorisation, classification and taxonomisation and the ways that these are manifested in practices, artefacts and technologies (Ali, 2016).*

Humanism emanates from a Western notion of rationality which excluded not only the body as a site of knowledge, but women, black, and working-class people, as well as those who were criminalized for their sexuality. The project of decolonialization necessitates an 'intellectual inquiry concerned with engaging this legacy from a 'critical' perspective, contesting colonial domination from the vantage point of formerly colonised peoples' (Ali, 2016).

The term *Inhumanism* originates from the poet and environmentalist, John Robinson Jeffers, (1887-1962) whose work resonates with environmental concerns, with the need to flatten the ontological hierarchy which always places the human at its apex, indeed, in the poem *Carmel Point*, Jeffers writes:

> *We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;*
> *We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident*
> *As the rock and ocean that we were made from.*
> *(1995)*

Is such creative articulation. still a solely human trait, can we even speak of such exclusive traits without resorting to the solipsism John Robinson Jeffers warns us of? For Negarestani, 'inhumanism registers itself as a demand for construction, to define what it means to be human by treating human as a constructible hypothesis, a space of navigation and intervention' (Negarestani, 2014).

The value of inhumanism is that it provides scope for a discourse which prevents us from becoming ensnared in the idea *there is no alternative*, it has the capacity to stop us falling into a state of despair, in which the 'rubric of liberal freedom causes a terminal deficit of real alternatives, establishing for thought and action the axiom that there is indeed no alternative' (2014).

The lack of an alternative to Capitalism is the theme of Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* (2010). Fisher wrote of a 'reflexive impotence' (Fisher, 2010, 21) in the face of Capitalism's apparent inevitability. But where does such resignation take us in these parlous times, what can we hold onto as a counter to the rapacious business ontology which dominates every facet of our lives? For Negarestani 'Sociopolitical philosophies seeking to safeguard the dignity of humanity against the onslaught of politico-economic leviathans end up joining them from the other side' (2014).

In Negarestani's terms, 'antihumanism is revealed to be in the same theological boat that it is so determined to set on fire' (2014), the reactive

orientation of antihumanism, creates 'a fog of liberty that suffocates any universalist ambition and hinders the methodological collaboration required to define and achieve a common task for breaking out of the current planetary morass.' (2014) And yet, the objection to humanism is hardly theological for those who are concerned with cognitive injustice, with the vital decolonising project which de Sousa Santos' s book title embodies: *The End of the Cognitive Empire* (2018).

Now, more than ever, on the brink of apparent global disaster, it is imperative to challenge the dominance of Eurocentric thought over myriad other knowledges; the moment is overdue for oppressed social groups, for those who were never counted as human by humanism or enlightenment epistemology, to represent the world as their own, in their own terms. Rationality could be framed as a humanist construct, if we define it as Boolean logic, even acknowledging the scope of mathematics as a global practice, we must ask ourselves if, by evoking a constructivist methodology, a kind of Aristotelian dialogue with our ontology, Negretsani is constricting us to a specifically humanist reason, one which has historically excluded the colonised and other-wise marginalised, those not deemed rational enough to be granted a vote: historically the black, female, working-class and queer; if so, we must revert to the question which opened this paper, albeit in a slightly different form – who or *what* gets to count as inhuman?

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Parrot Echoes

by Elizabeth Atkinson *elizabeth.atkinson@network.rca.ac.uk*

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In Reza Negarestani's rationalist inhumanist thought, the Iranian philosopher invokes Michel Foucault's tautologically enduring image: "the self-portrait of man will be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea." For Negarestani, Foucault's concept of humanity as unstable, transitory, and even fragile, not grounded in any fundamental anthropocentric and empirical truths, reflects his own philosophical thought. Rationalist inhumanism is a "*universal* wave that erases the self-portrait of man drawn in the sand [⋯] by removing supposed evident characteristics and preserving certain invariances." [1] In this process of revision "more subtle portraits [are sketched] with so few canonical traits that one should ask whether it is worthwhile or useful to call what is left behind human at all." [2] Negarestani challenges traditional humanist thought, which self-identifies the exceptionality of humankind based on its possession of rationality (amongst other traits), and instead suggests reason to be an autonomous product of the natural world. Humanity is identified as a space of (re)construction and active revision, navigation and intervention, rather than an established, *a priori* concept.[3]

'Man' is in fact in the hands of reason itself, a self-cultivated, self-determined and autonomous program, *"over which human has no hold."* [4] Subject to the constant sweeping revision of reason, 'Man' becomes nothing but a set of functions that can all be recognised in diverse material substrates and divergent forms of life – including humans, animals, aliens and machines, explains Peter Wolfendale.[5] Negarestani's inhumanism rejects traditional features of humanism grounded in biology, psychology and the cultural history of *Homo sapiens*. Rationality is instead "an abstract protocol that has been functionally implemented by the techno-linguistic infrastructure of human culture." [6] Negarestani distinguishes between human *sapience* and animal *sentience*, and in so doing places humanity upon a continuum with the rest of nature but marked out as

[1] Reza Negarestani, 'The Labor of the Inhuman, Part I: Human' *e-flux*, #52, (February 2014), available: https://www.e-flux.com/journal/52/59920/the-labor-of-the-inhuman-part-i-human/, accessed 14/02/19.

[2] Reza Negarestani, 'The Labor of the Inhuman, Part II: InHuman' *e-flux*, #53, (March 2014), available: https://www.e-flux.com/journal/53/59893/the-labor-of-the-inhuman-part-ii-the-inhuman/, accessed 14/02/19.

[3] Negarestani, 'Part I'

[4] Negarestani, 'Part II'

[5] Peter Wolfendale, 'Rationalist Inhumanism (Dictionary Entry)', available on *Academia.edu*, https://www.academia.edu/26697819/Rationalist_Inhumanism_Dictionary_Entry_, accessed 14/02/19.

[6] *Ibid.*

different. Humanity is able to acknowledge rational and social norms and engage in discursive practices, unlike animals who remain bound by natural laws. Human beings are afforded "techno-agency and objective knowledge" as well as sophisticated representational concepts that develop into collective discursive practices. They therefore "are 'better' able to achieve certain ends than most natural, causal, processes" explains Steve Klee.[7] Rationality at once grants humans a solidarity with nature but also "makes room for and works across difference."[8] Through sapience and the resultant ability to conceptually classify the world through language, establishing shared knowledge structures, humanity is awarded a capacity for collective action and responsibility towards sentient nature.

The Great Silence

I turn now to *The Great Silence* (2014), a three-channel video work by the artist duo Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla.[9] The artists collaborated with American sci-fi writer Ted Chiang who wrote a subtitle script for this work. The film focuses on the Rio Abajo rainforest in Esperanza, on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, and its inhabitants; the Arecibo observatory and the critically endangered *Amazona vittata* parrots. The viewer is positioned between three large screens, frames moving between indiscernible details of the telescope, mysteries of the rainforest floor, and close ups of the parrots themselves. This hybrid narrative juxtaposes our natural neighbours against our technological creations. Through the parrot's script we learn the threat humanity poses to their survival; we see Arecibo encroaching upon their habitat and we hear the telescope drowning out their song. Between and amidst these sounds and representations, humanity itself is erased, never present nor given any voice or direct agency. Instead humans are severed from the worlds on screen, unable to act as they observe their technological tool slowly invading the natural world, appearing to act autonomously, even threateningly.

Chiang's script acts as a translating device, functioning as a form of interspecies translation for a fable told from the parrot's perspective. The parrot chronicles humankind's determined quest to find intelligent life beyond planet Earth. She reflects on the paradox that as humans so eagerly extend their eyes and ears into space, the parrots (and other intelligent species) they live with here on Earth, face extinction and the subsequent disappearance of their own languages, rituals and traditions. The parrot considers the capacity for vocal learning she shares with humans, specifically referencing Alex the parrot and comparing the contact calls of humanity (echoed through Arecibo) and her own kind.[10] Drawing attention to avian intelligence, their proven capacities to grasp abstract concepts, as well as human speech, the film exemplifies shared faculties,

[7] Steve Klee, 'Inhumanist Art and the Decolonisation of Nature', *Antennae*, Issue 44, (Summer 2018), pp.4-19, p.7.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] The video is available to watch on *Youtube*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8yy-tY7eXDc, accessed 21/01/19.

beliefs, myths and aspirations between humans and parrots. Although this remains fictional, what we see is an alienation of our man-made technology and an empathy for species normally othered.

In the ability of language to reach across time and space, beyond the field of vision and outside of earshot, *The Great Silence* provides the voice of the parrot a longevity and meaning that endures outside of the film. Read as subtitles by the viewer, the parrot's voice echoes in their own head, sounding out throughout the film, enduring across the moving frames regardless of what is shown on screen. Boundaries traditionally separating humans from all other life on Earth are contradicted as capacities believed 'proper' to humans are seen and heard in another species, a parrot no longer silenced as she speaks within the human viewer. Both 'the human' and 'the animal' identities are placed at risk in *the Great Silence*, united in their apparent precarity, vulnerability and fragility – their capacity for revision. The artwork becomes a hybrid construction, juxtaposing nature, culture and technology, human tools and our supposed innate capacity for language with animals and other 'intelligent' life. Boundaries are confused, washed away, revised and redrawn.

[10] Alex the Parrot was the exceptional research subject of American scientist Irene Pepperberg. He died in 2007 having mastered the vocabulary of hundreds of English labels for objects, colours, and shapes. He could look at a tray holding an array of objects of various colours and materials and say how many there were of a certain type. He could use numbers to answer questions about addition and had a knowledge of abstract concepts including a zero-like concept and sounded out new words the way a child does: "N-U-T". "Until Alex, we thought we were alone in our use of words, or almost alone." Jennifer Ackermann, *The Genius of Birds*, (Corsair: London, 2017), p.2.

Chiang's text contradicts the images we see, describing Arecibo as at once a listener and a speaker, an ear and a mouth extending across the universe in search of contact. But all that can in fact be heard are its deafening mechanical cries, all that can in fact be seen are incomprehensible technological facets and its violent encroachment upon the natural world. It is the parrot, not the human prosthesis, who is awarded a face and the capacity to look back, inciting a response and degrees of respect, empathy and shared understanding. Boundaries between humans and animals are erupted as this parrot not only returns our gaze but speaks within and to us in our own language.[11] The fundamental anthropocentric concepts of humanism hold no ground here, erased like a face drawn in the sand on the sea shore. The artwork reminds its viewers of the impending isolation that humans face, finding nothing but a great silence in the universe out there, but also here on planet Earth, our home that we once shared with so many other voices.

Rational agency and the activation of the viewer

> *Animal studies seeks to challenge the nothingness to which humanism has consigned animals – the very nothingness that humanist exceptionalism has in fact produced in driving species after species to extinction as if they do not matter, as if 'man' were*

[11] Phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas denied animals the right to human response due to their supposed lack of a face.

truly an island, perpetually drawing his own face on a lonesome shipwrecked shore.[12]

In *The Great Silence* the parrot is able to signify as an individual in herself, given a face but also an enduring voice that invites consideration and response. This signification is despairingly made as the parrot in fact considers the impending end to her species. In their chapter 'Extinction' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Animal Studies* (2018), Matthew Chrulew and Rick de Vos emphasise the importance of extinctions but also "the new ways of understanding the world that extinction produces."[13] In our current moment of ecological collapse, arrogantly named the Anthropocene, humans are unequally united "as a destructive geological force, who then give themselves the same right to 'save' the future" and the elimination of animal life only becomes alarming when considered in relation to our own survival.[14] Extinction is publicised as statistical data, losses happening somewhere over there, some humans making futile last-ditch attempts to preserve the most beloved of our furry friends or others asserting convictions about geo-engineering and our scientific mastery over nature. It is instead necessary to recognise the fundamental importance of each and every extinction,

[12] Matthew Chrulew and Rick de Vos, 'Extinction', eds. Lynn Turner, Undine Sellback and Ron Broglio, *The Edinburgh Companion to Animal Studies*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp.181-197, p.194.

[13] Chrulew and de Vos, p.187

[14] Claire Colebrook, 'Fragility', eds. Lynn Turner, Undine Sellback and Ron Broglio, *The Edinburgh Companion to Animal Studies*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp. 247-261, p.253.

of each and every singular animal that has been lost for ever, and how we will attend to that loss and its reverberating impact upon the world (not just our own). Chrulew and de Vos return us to Foucault's image, only now 'man' is stranded alone on an island. Their image materialises the very real risk that the parrot suggests, that perhaps one day 'man' may be left in a world eerily silenced, the only voices to be heard those of his own making.

Allora and Calzadilla grant a unicity and singularity to the parrot, whilst making incredibly poignant the risk of her entire species' extinction. In so doing, *The Great Silence* presents both the devastating consequences of human rational agency as well as suggesting the capabilities and capacities for changing the natural course of things that comes with our tenuous hold onto reason. In line with Negasterani's rationalist inhumanism, the artists suggest at the hybrid construction of humanity not grounded in fundamental truths nor concepts. They emphasise how human intelligence, so focussed out there into space or on our own artificial technologies, overlooks other kinds of intelligence right here on Earth. It is this human intelligence that should lead us to recognise the fallacy and paradox of this – it would be *inhumane* to ignore animal suffering.[15] The awe-inspiring shots of Arecibo remind human viewers of what they are capable whilst the enduring look of the parrot and her family remind us of what we need to do as humans.

[15] Colebrook, p.248

It is here that Negasterani's concept of reason, an autonomous space of renegotiation, revision and navigation, becomes vital. Only through reason have humans been able to engage in discursive practices, facilitate collective action and understand the world objectively. The parrot's speech echoed in the viewer's own head resonates, sparking a degree of agency, the capacity to suggest and to bring about solutions. Only in this way can a motivator for action be established. Instead of the dogmatic voices of scientists or the alarmist news of the tabloids, Allora and Calzadilla allow a creature directly affected by humans to retell to them what they already know, and in the process remind them of the powers and astounding capabilities that reason affords *Homo sapiens*. Through this reminder, the power of reason, able to "open up new frontiers of action and understanding through various modes of construction and practices", revised and renegotiated to address the realities of nonhuman *with* human worlds made visible on screen. Now humanity might begin to try to solve the problems its anthropocentrism has for so long been causing the natural world, having been reminded at once of its powers for unimaginable devastation and astounding creation.

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XENOBOLLOX

by Kyle Zeto *studioarkhive.com*

Kyle Zeto (or Zeno) is a visual artist and technician who writes & rants occasionally.

Accelerationism and the clothing brand American Apparel have much in common. An opening gambit comparing a philosophical experiment with a defunct fashion brand? If you can say 'cloud feudalism' with a straight face, then don't bother reading on. Both AA and XLR8Rism were initially greeted with a rose tinted curiosity escalating into impenetrable acclaim and some time later a cosmically poetic rapid decline and toxification, resulting in general abandonment. The neon hoodies so beloved of the musical garbage moment that was 'nu-rave' haunt the low res digital photographs of foundation course student halls parties, when the tiny beanies could not contain the anime style hair of what male tragedy would 10 years later attempt to curate exhibitions on technology and surveillance. The ethical production of the unbranded AA clothes and the sex positivity of the ad campaigns were a potent and seductive mix, much like the fabulous idea of accelerationism which suggested that the most productive way of going beyond capitalism is not protest or reform but a lysergic full-throttle advancement of capitalism. Chief proponents of this school were Srnicek and Williams, yet they've now abandoned the label of this waning star. AA's brand fell into disrepute after continued allegations of workplace sexual harassment by the CEO, a Terry Richardson type scumbag.

Accelerationism incidentally was also a gift to the right wing neo-reactionaries, looking for a seductive framework to hang their nihilist, fascistic ideologies from. Any 'ism' that fetishises technology and the inhuman but avoids dealing with Marxist dialectics is never going to end well. Were the garment factories of American Apparel really as ethical as they claimed? Was it OK to like HP Lovecraft in the age of surveillance capitalism because that's kind of like an eldritch horror and ok don't mind the fact yr necro-chthonic boi was a huge racist?

We can't talk about racism and accelerationism without talking about the jester of the dark cathedral, the reclusive corpse reanimated by its own gaseous reactions, the overheated space cadet turned racist, the humourless Rick & Morty e-flux reader, whose name is this, Nick Land. He wasn't always racist, as even the spectre of his academic credibility is gleaned from being in the CCRU (think of Forensic Architecture but instead of investigative research with rendering and simulations it was more about watching endless loops of Tetsuo Iron Man and going to industrial noise raves) with the late great Mark Fisher. But what made Nick Land racist? The same thing that prompted Mark to write his inaccurately frustrated yet popular (for the wrong reasons) text "Exiting the Vampire's Castle"? Hey hey it happens to us all, in the art academia complex, our windows to the world only memes and youtube videos between the airbnb, the uber, the gallery and the airport. Invested so heavily in our theoretical gambits, criticism might as well be a steel toe-capped worker boot on our teeny tiny typing fingers. It is

with great skepticism that I see Reza Negarestani and 'hyperstition' touted as an updating to dialectics. For whom is this dialectic for? The para-academic networkers who advocate a third position in politics, some strasserite red/brown zero books garbage fire? Hyper radical world salad, as well as art made in explicit relation to the world after the 2008 financial crisis, realises itself as a commodity. Embrace the contradictions and conflicts of interest! It doesn't matter that Reza, an acolyte of Nick Land, ignores his Islamophobia and talk of the Anglosphere (this can be seen in Reza's old blog 'Hyperstition' - a collapsed writing 'project' between him, Mark Fisher and Nick Land). It's an academic circus strategy: import heretic materials, provocate but do not alienate, muddle them with inchoate leftist intellectuals, retain credibility. That way you can stand for the cryptofash but declare yourself a socialist or something.

Tech friendly capitalist positive chases oligarch money. Installs mates in positions of art academia and publishing. Disenfranchise genuine Marxist ideas. Poison the well of any group critical of you. Can't quite figure out what was wrong with LD50. Fedorawave. Vaporneckbread. Disconnect NRx from the alt-right, disconnect Nick Land from fascism. There is no public, only beef on social media. If there was socialism then there would be no ultra powerful museum curator god and that would be truly awful.

Fugitive Voices

(excerpt from the forthcoming chapter, with Al Cameron, 'Fugitive Sound: Towards a Geopolitics of Frequency', for *The Handbook of Sound Art*, eds Holger Schulze & Sanne Krogh Groth, Bloomsbury Press, 2019)

by Eleni Ikoniadou (with edits by Al Cameron)

Dr Eleni Ikoniadou is a senior tutor in the School of Communication at the Royal College of Art. Ikoniadou specialises in digital art and critical theory, drawing on contemporary sonic, technocultural, alternative futurisms. Her latest monograph is The Rhythmic Event, Art, Media, and the Sonic (The MIT Press, 2014), she is co-editor of the Media Philosophy series (Rowman & Littlefield International), and member of the international art research cell AUDINT.

"It can be said that the university merely put up with the arrival of 'newcomers', for whom university knowledge is not their just due, but rather an adventure to an unknown land — first: the arrival of girls, next: youth from less privileged classes, and then: immigrants," tell us Isabelle Stengers and Vinciane Despret in their book Women Who Make a Fuss (2014: 4thh). The authors draw on Virginia Woolf's (1938) advice to her sisters, against jumping to join the grand procession of educated men, their fathers and brothers, by merely following their methods and repeating their words. For, she argues, it is 'an indisputable fact that "we" — meaning by "we" a whole made up of body, brain and spirit, influenced by memory and tradition—must still differ in some essential respects from "you," whose body, brain and spirit have been so differently trained...Though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes.' If twentieth century art and science alike were characterised by a widespread antihumanism, it is only most recently that non-normative practices and collectives have begun to infiltrate the ranks of academia. Ideas of losing the self through practices of becoming other and multiplicity have for decades influenced those seeking alternatives to a knowledge culture founded in the European cogito; a stable subject, long called 'Man', capable of mastering the world of objects and savages. But Woolf's 'different eyes' have taken longer to come to prominence, impelled not only by the critique of knowledge and rationality, but by the wider failure of Western universalism and the (re)emergence of a complex identity politics across mainstream contemporary culture. Under these conditions, as Woolf tells her brothers, it is a matter of 'remaining outside your society,' and instead 'finding new words and creating new methods.'

Study is not, and has never been, the preserve of academics and institutions. Perhaps today it is no longer even done at universities; in the thrall of 'the new standard' keenly adopted, without struggle, by the 'converted colleagues' (Stengers and Despret, 2014) of neoliberalised Higher Education. Under these conditions, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney argue that the "only possible relationship to the University is a criminal one. It cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can." (2013: 26). By contrast

they describe study as "what you do with other people. It's talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice...The point of calling it "study" is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present." (2013: 110)

In the inaugural Mark Fisher memorial lecture at Goldsmiths University in January 2018, Kodwo Eshun summoned a multiplicity of the disaffected: all those "who find themselves at odds with their subject, in a struggle with their discipline, unable to reconcile themselves to their existence; those whose dissatisfaction and disaffection and discontent and anger and despair overwhelms them, exceeds them; and find themselves seeking means and methods for nominating themselves to become parts of movements and scenes that exist somewhere between seminars and subcultures, study groups and hangouts, reading groups, drawn together by the impulse to fashion a vocabulary by a target and a yearning, by an imperative, quoting Fred Moten, 'to consent not to be a single being'." [1]

It is not merely a matter of widening participation in the self-critique of official forms and institutions by admitting the other (sex, class, race). Rather, study must itself become fugitive, evading the categories,

[1] 'To consent not to be a single being' is a quote that Eshun draws from Fred Moten and his Duke University book trilogy *Black and Blur* (2017), *The Universal Machine* (2018), *Stolen Life* (2018), a phrase originally quoted by Edouard Glissant.

structures, institutions and orders of the 'State.' It must operate 'on the ground, under it, in the break' (as Moten says) in order to reactivate the question of the human from the standpoint of dispossession, the marginalised, those who resist categorisation. Fugitivity, for Moten and Harney (2013), is not only a mode of escape, exit or exodus, but what it means to think of being as separate from settling; a being that is always in motion. For Saidiya Hartman (2019), fugitivity is about reducing certain imposed narratives of becoming a subject with specific social trajectory, through a divergence, a wandering, 'waywardness' as she calls it, 'the art of making life in the context of extreme deprivation, dispossession and assault'.

The dispossessed are those who have been denied selfhood, perspective, citizenship, home; those whose own thought is unwanted yet necessary, disloyal, subversive, fugitive, queer; those for whom Western definitions of the human and the rational do not apply. To be sure, they are the many not the few, so how can the immeasurable masses— the 'ante-normative' (ante- instead of anti- signifying that which comes before not after the normative), who are numerous, loud, tumultuous, creative— be so vulnerable to 'a single source', who doesn't dance, who has no skin, who can't be seen or heard? (Moten, 2018)

Fugitive thinking that attaches itself to the refuge of the collective mass is dedicated to unknowing and unlearning, to disturbing the silence and professionalism of the rational subject and to

'making it dark'. Fugitivity is not concerned with exiting the cave as it can only occur in darkness, loudness, anonymity: in the safe spaces of the nightclub with no-judgement, no-harassment, no-photos policy; in the free words and worlds by anonymous, pseudonymous, alias voices disowning copyright; in the zones of exclusion at the periphery of the metropolis, where the rooftops and basements become the means of production of emergent culture; in the artists' spaces, raves, recording studios, pirate radio stations, zines, community centres, where experimental practices and collectivities are tested, where bodies congregate, new affects, visibilities and audibilities are produced, new subjectivities synthesised.

To operate from the para-academic realm of Fugitive Voices, is to attempt to locate a theory and practice of culture on the run from the imposition of normative and sovereign operations. Yet, this is necessarily a double flight: to flee from the dominant, the imposed, 'the academy of misery' (Moten and Harney, 2013), is simultaneously to flee from oneself. "Escape from some notion of freedom, of having achieved" (Moten, 2015). Escape from the habit of being a single being, a body, somebody, owning things, owning other bodies. It is a matter of tracing the forces working underneath and against the neoliberal and patriarchal outlawing of noise, cacophony and disorder, seeking to amplify them. Following these assemblages, subcultures, great unions, as "a way of turning one's face violently towards the present" (Eshun, 2018), we find ourselves amidst the gleeful upheaval of incessant rhythms, psychedelic pandemonium, unapologetic tumultuousness, what constitutes sites of joy. Joy, after Moten and Harney (2013), is a fundamental hallmark of the experience of underrepresentation, of unreality, of the undercommons, and the only way to protect it is by practising it. ' 'One has to inhabit the crazy, nonsensical, ranting language of the other. Inhabit and even cultivate this absence" (ibid: 7).

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Contributing Artists

Be Andr

The Hair of a Crying Artist (2019)
Oil on canvas, 125 cm x 200 cm

Be Andr (1978, Oslo, Norway) is an artist that lives and works in London, UK. Andr studied Fine Art at The Florence Academy of Art, Italy, the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL and currently doing his PhD at Royal College of Art. He has exhibited internationally most recently with exhibitions at La Posta Foundation, Spain; Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Israel; CCA Andratx Art Centre, Spain; Post Box Gallery, London; Scaramouche, NYC and Sexauer, Berlin.

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Karen Bosy

Water Drawing (2018)
Video on two monitors (4min 56sec)

Karen Bosey is an artist and researcher based in London, UK. Her documentarist (diarist) site exploration work, using dispersal as a technique, draws on experience with moving image, still photography, zines, drawing, lithography, sound and born-digital artwork. Currently a PhD candidate at the Royal College of Art, Bosey is developing a project exploring daydreaming, intimacy and the experience of using satellite (GPS) technology in relation to site-based and landscape-based dispersal.

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Seungjo Jeong

Interface V, 2018
Acrylic on linen, 66 x 66 (cm)

Seungjo Jeong was born in South Korea, where he worked as a software engineer before he decided to change his career to art. He began the journey at the SAIC in Chicago, juggling with painting, photography and animation. He then received a MA in Painting from the RCA, where he is now completing a Ph.D. in Arts and Humanities.

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Anna Nazo

Fractal Lymph, 2019
Video (15 min.)

Performance for Data Loam exhibition, Angewandte Innovation Laboratory, Vienna, Austria. 25th February 2019. An exhibition in cooperation with the University of Applied Arts Vienna, the Royal College of Art in London, RIAT Vienna and the Master Programme Arts & Science. Data Loam is a PEEK project supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and has also been made possible by the generous support of the AIL - Angewandte Innovation Laboratory.

feel, 2.1000.6235.5235, 2019
Live performance. Duration: 15 min.
14th March, 6.30pm, 7.30pm, 8.30pm

Anna Nazo is a performance artist and PhD Researcher working at the intersection of art, science, philosophy and computing technologies, with particular focus on brainwaves CGI, AI poetry, drones and new materialities. Within live digital-physical performance Anna' s work addresses questions of artificial or ana-radical forms of intelligence and liveness.

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Gareth Proskourine-Barnett

Conc(re)te, 2019
Digital print onto carpet (128cm x 128cm), 3D printed concrete fragment, looped video on Raspberry Pi

Gareth Proskourine-Barnett is an artist, researcher and educator. His current research adopts an essayistic approach (combining film, text and performance) alongside archaeological and archival methods to challenge the historic and social narratives around Brutalism. Past projects have been exhibited at museums and galleries across the UK, as well as in Denmark, Russia, India and Thailand.

www.g-p-b.net | www.concrete.rip | instagram: @tombstone_press

Adam J B Walker

Our Skins Are Porous Too (2019)
Online artwork and curatorial project incorporating works by Timothy Cape, Naomi Ellis, Olga Fedorova, Alessandra Ferrini, Eliot Jones, Bogdan Moroz, Shir Raz & Name Surname.

Adam J B Walker's artworks are fragmented constellations of engagement with the public sphere, sometimes coalescing into contingent counter-narratives to the presumed way of being within contemporary late capitalism. Working principally with text as both form and concept in its broadest sense, he seeks to critique, subvert and undermine dominant conceptions of the body-identity-affect relationship.

www.adamjbwalker.co.uk | twitter: @adamjbwalker

Frances Young

Please Review The Setting (2019)
2-channel HD Video (for 2 monitors), dimensions variable, looped, colour / b&w, silent.

Frances Young is a UK-based artist who has been working with moving image for around fifteen years. She has exhibited and screened work nationally and internationally, and is currently a research student at the Royal College of Art (London), undertaking a practice-based PhD in Fine Art. Her work is in the collections of David Roberts Art Foundation (London, UK); Gemeentemuseum, Helmond (Netherlands); University of the Arts London (UK); and private collections in the UK and USA.

vimeo.com/francesyoung | rca.ac.uk/students/frances-young | francesyoungmovingimages.wordpress.com