

MRes: Art: Theory and Philosophy |  
Unit 4: Lost in Transit  
J Maxwell | May 2018

**L st, in transit...**

**(I)**

*What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from.*

T. S. Elliot, *Four Quartets*

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*Meeting a sticky end...*

*My thoughts do not sit still. Anxious, insecure, unstable, they are always on the move, like the threads in which they fly. I try to catch them, but they are always ahead of me – catching me out. Tying me up in knots. I write them down, spit them out, move towards them - but they emerge like beetles, in tangles - sprawling, relentless across the page. Drawn out across a web of words, a spider- brain spins, weaving, always hoping to catch something of itself in its snare. I pluck thoughts off my tongue. I bite my own head off. And still it grows back repeatedly. Two heads now, one body spinning; then three heads, still my body spins. I am lost. A line still hangs, in wait for its turn...*

*'All things change with time, and we change with them.'*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lotar, Holy Roman Emperor (c.840)

## History I<sup>2</sup>

We live in a world of perpetual flux, where change is the only constant. Originally titled ‘Notes in Transit’ this essay hoped to explore something of these circumstances – to touch on some ideas relating to the brief and fleeting nature of a transient existence in a hectic modern world. An impossible task, with no resolvable ‘outcome’ – this essay was conceived ‘on the road’<sup>3</sup> - towards a grave and difficult birth.<sup>4</sup>

As my research continued to persist ‘in transit’ – so too did my ideas about the nature of ‘transit’. Always on the move. Never quite able to ‘arrive’. This ‘trial’<sup>5</sup> kept spinning, and I too, spun with it. Written and re-written, again and again, this essay and its variations on a theme have sprawled beyond the limits of reason.<sup>6</sup> To adopt the opening lines in Jean-Luc Nancy’s book on Kiarostami: *this essay meanders, remains unfinished, and may be impossible to finish... (it results) from a series of chance happenings and shifting projects.*<sup>7</sup>

Originally intended to be an essay ‘On Evidence’<sup>8</sup> – it has slipped into an essay about ‘Life, and Nothing More’ – and nothing less. A series of observations on the nature of change, in a world that refuses to sit still. My ‘notes in transit’ have become ‘lost in transit’ – buried in the rubble of their own making. As both an essay and as a set of observations, it is by no means exhaustive, and by no means finished. Instead, *it*, like the nature of its original subject – continuum – continues to continue (in spite of disaster) in a perpetual state of transit. It persists - relentlessly, impossibly and *hopelessly*, in an effort to work its way through itself towards an unresolvable, infinite never-ending. An assemblage, always lost in transit. Always on its way towards someplace else.

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<sup>2</sup> History has a habit of repeating itself. We will talk more on repetition later, but (as a footnote to the footnote), I am also very conscious of doing the same thing with my essay last year. And the year before that... it seems we are all locked in vicious repetitive circles, of time, history, behavior, working ‘our way through’ – the pattern is to repeat - whether we like it or not. There are more ‘notes’ on this essay – ‘notes on footnotes’, ‘the margins’ and ‘notes on a methodology’ to refer to in the collection of ‘lost notes’. The titles, History I and History II are also intended to mirror the opening pages to Jean-Luc Nancy’s text *On the Evidence of Film*.

<sup>3</sup> As a musician on tour, it seems life itself is always ‘on the road’ – and like the hero’s journey and countless tales before, you return home not to find everything has changed, but that everything is changeable. We are all ‘rolling’ stones – locked in a perpetual state of transit. Even in sleep – we are still always *on our way* - to ‘someplace else’.

<sup>4</sup> *For nine months, this stomach grew – ingesting trains of thought, it grew fat on the idea of change, but refused to stop changing itself. Always turning, this breech baby was born via C-section, this essay had to be cut out. Leaving us both transformed.*

<sup>5</sup> For the word ‘essay’ also originates from the word ‘trial’ (see lost notes and <https://www.etymonline.com/word/essay>)

<sup>6</sup> This is an exaggeration – there is always more – as there is (arguably) *no* beyond.

<sup>7</sup> Nancy, J-L. *The Evidence of Film – Abbas Kiarostami*. Klincksiek (2006) p.8

<sup>8</sup> I am referring to Jean-Luc Nancy’s remarkable text: *On Evidence: Life and Nothing More*. (relating to Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami’s film of the same name) my copy of which is now an appendix and an animation.



*Rodin completely revitalized the very language of sculpture with his passion for the creative act. The ongoing interplay of accidents and chance in his work, his figures fragmented only to be reconstituted through this ingenious “cobbling together,” enabled him to interpolate his work in an endless flow of creation.<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.musee-rodin.fr/en/exhibition/extramural/metamorphoses-rodins-studio> (accessed 03/06/18)

## History II - The Walking Man

Rodin's *The Walking Man* is a hybrid figure with a complicated past; made from an assemblage of re-cast sculptures of *St John the Baptist* and *St John*. Stepping over the turn of the century, this figure was born over time. The origins were conceived in 1878 and three decades later, it (re-)emerged (re-)thought, (re-)considered and (re-)presented - as *The Walking Man* (1907).

Encouraged by sculptor Henry Moore's belief that an artist should "reconsider and rethink" an idea,<sup>10</sup> Rodin took this advice to heart. Always revisiting and reinterpreting previous forms of his work, Rodin's sculptures were always on the move; quite literally metamorphosing from one to the other. Exploring themes of repetition, fragmentation and multiples in his figures and (re-)figurations; the artist was always working his way through a process of thought.

Having made two figures of St John (one *St John the Baptist* and one *St John*) in 1878, Rodin revisited the works (as he often did) to create a new piece from the rubble of the previous forms. Taking the torso from one, and the legs from the other, Rodin recast and enlarged the originals and brought them together to form an assemblage; a lone, headless, armless figure, that was now slightly larger than life. Frozen in a fractured state of perpetual motion, this figure re-thought, and re-assembled - is no longer the figure of *St John the Baptist*, nor is it a figure of *St John*. It is quite literally man, walking. The choice of a more universal title shows Rodin's concern for expressing something essential rather than fortuitous or specific, as in *Saint John the Baptist*.<sup>11</sup> It is, instead, a union of two figures; this 'modern man' is the bastard child of *the Baptist* and *St John* - the works that went before it.<sup>12</sup> Headless, armless and naked, this new figure bears no identity - he is

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.musee-rodin.fr/en/collections/sculptures/walking-man> (accessed 03/06/18)

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

<sup>12</sup> Darwin's theory 'On the Origin of Species' was published in 1859, leaving 'modern man' and the role of religion in a state of flux. No longer the 'sons of God' - Darwin's theory forced modern man to reconsider their position on earth. Stripped of its title and any form of representation - this man, walking - is no longer John the Baptist (a 'child of the lord'). Instead, he is

stripped of the burden of representation. Instead, he strides forward in an anxious state of flux.

The two halves of the body were assembled over time and, gently twisted in their new formation, the torso leans forward and swivels gently to the left of the legs that stride to the right, stepping forward, holding itself up. The two parts meet in the middle, they are joined at the hip, but they do not quite ‘fit’. It is not seamless.<sup>13</sup> This is not an ‘academically correct’ piece. Nor is it anatomically ‘correct’. Slightly disproportionate to one another the two halves are subtly out of kilter, but this ‘barely perceptible inaccuracy of the adjustments’ helps to heighten the impression of movement.

*The Walking Man displays not only Rodin's fascination with partial figures, reminiscent of antique sculptural fragments, but also his interest in the sculptural representation of the human body in sequential motion.*<sup>14</sup>

As a sculptor, Rodin quite literally ‘pushed at the seams’ of the academic tradition of his age. A huge admirer of the Renaissance artists and of Greek sculpture much of which, worn over time, was now in a fragmented state (missing arms, legs, broken vessels...) Rodin’s practice broke away from the hallowed tradition of “full figure” sculptures which were so be-loved by the academy at the time. In contrast to (what is probably) Rodin’s best-known work, *The Thinker* (an image of a philosopher hunched and seated, face on fist in thought<sup>15</sup>), this *Walking Man* is headless and strides into the twentieth century, thinking on his feet.

Headless, armless, and slightly out of joint, this figure, *The Walking Man* (whose evolution straddles the edge of two centuries and is a result of the development of

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the headless, nameless, faceless son of a non-binary union. And as a result, might also be considered a hybrid child of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – maybe this man’s strides were wider and more far reaching than could ever have been considered at the time.  
<sup>13</sup> there is a subtle ‘scar’ joining the two halves together; ‘taking the rough with the smooth,’ the join has been worked over in fresh clay before being cast. Rodin’s thumbprints (the ‘maker’s mark’) are still almost visible.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/198565> (accessed 03/06/18)

<sup>15</sup> Made in 1903, Rodin’s image of the philosopher: *The Thinker* was taken from the seated image of Dante, whom Rodin had originally positioned at the centre of his Gates of Hell. Whilst *The Walking Man* is the hybrid son of two Johns, the thinker is born from ‘the gates of hell’.

two points in time) is an image of modern man; and striding forward, alone; faceless in the midst of it all, he steps into the dark and turns - to face an unknown future.

### History III - Striding towards a new history

*The Walking Man* quite literally moves forward, whilst standing still:

*By showing both feet planted firmly on the ground, the sculptor attempted to record not a realistic depiction of a man walking, but instead the movements at the beginning and at the end of his step, producing the impression of a movement which, in fact, takes several moments to accomplish.<sup>16</sup>*

But the movement does not start or stop with the sculpture. Whilst the sculpture now ‘walks’ in the gallery, its viewers walk around it, mapping out a new movement; a new voyage - tracing a new history - one that’s not arrived yet:

*when sculpture ceases to be monumental in order to become hodological: it is not enough to say that it is a landscape and that it lays out a place or territory. What it lays out are paths—it is itself a voyage. A sculpture follows the paths that give it an outside; it works only with nonclosed curves that divide up and traverse the organic body and has no other memory than that of the material.<sup>17</sup>*

Somewhere in between, the sculpture and its wandering witnesses embark on a wondrous voyage that is both separate and entangled. In a perpetual state of transit, these paths and their passengers draw out and follow the known and unknown paths of their past, present and future.

**This is my walking man.** A body of work - a whole, in two parts. An assemblage at times. Drawn out over time. Bursting at the seams. Section I is my torso. Section II my legs. And lost in transit, we map paths out, drawing lines around one another.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/198565> (accessed 03/06/18)

<sup>17</sup> Deleuze, G. (1997) *What Children Say* (Essays Critical and Clinical). Translated by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco.)

## Lost approach notes on a methodology

*‘There are those who seek, looking to find – even knowing they will almost necessarily find something other than what they searching for. There are others whose research is precisely without an object.’<sup>18</sup>*

Blanchot’s conversations coil around in never ceasing loops that twist and turn, always in search of something, but never quite finding ‘it’ for ‘*to find is to seek in relation to the centre that is, properly speaking, what cannot be found.*’<sup>19</sup> So in research, as in life, in a way, **all we have is the search**; the search for a centre that cannot be found.<sup>20</sup> All we have is the ‘turn’ around.

The turns are, in turn, all we have to keep us going. We pass from one to another, over, under, into, out of. Each turn leads us to the next. We slip and slide. But we are not the only ‘ones’ turning: whilst *I* take a turn over here, the *here* is itself taking a turn over *there*. And together, we weave.<sup>21</sup> The search becomes a methodology in itself, turning in and on and around itself, looking to find something to connect, to disconnect – to re-search, in turn, again. It is in the search then, that we both connect and disconnect; that we brush against, but never quite encounter, the ‘thing’ that we are looking for. Having soaked in Nancy’s text ‘On Evidence’ I absorbed it fully, until the text dissolved, and mutated into a text on ‘Life, and Nothing More.’ My ‘failure’ to keep still, and remain focused, (this refusal ‘to pin the essay down’) became the subject of the search. The journey became the search for a subject which did not yet exist. It became infinite series of observations – an assemblage of stills in a film of ceaseless notes, on an essay, on a life, in a world - lost in transit.

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<sup>18</sup> Blanchot, *Infinite Conversations*, p.25

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

<sup>20</sup> That is, until we are truly undone (in which case, the end becomes us and the search is no more. The end becomes an end unto itself.)

<sup>21</sup> Waiting on the platform for the next tube. Stand back from the yellow line. The latest Jack Daniel’s advert: picture an empty barrel. The advert reminds us that the taste is influenced as much by the barrel as what is put into it. ‘there’s as much barrel in our whiskey as whiskey in our barrel.’ – The whiskey is absorbed into the burnt wood (burnt so it can flex and be shaped into a barrel) and the wood in turn flavours the whiskey. The process is symbiotic. Much like being in the world. I absorb the ‘world’ the environments in which I find myself – and in turn, I ‘give something of myself’ back to it. Even if it’s simply the breath I exhale. We ‘turn’ each other. We are both in and of the world and our environment. We shape and are shaped. It’s the same with research. It shapes us, and is in turn, shaped by us. We tune in, tune out, tune off, turn up, turn down, we wiggle our way through and in and towards and around each other.

Lost below

A note on Footnotes  - and in the margins 

Thoughts are not alone; for they rarely run in a single current. Like it or not, you're probably reading this and thinking about something else, your dinner perhaps, or the programme you just saw – or forgot to see – or wanted to see. It's not a 'problem' – it's just the way things are. Simultaneously, we live (increasingly) in an age of 'distractions' – whereby streams of information are flown by us at a rate of knots, continually. We are bombarded with information – images, texts, messages and sounds - all at varying speeds, from all angles, at all times.

Whilst wishing for my writing to remain well intentioned, authentic and focused, I cannot pretend that my thoughts whilst writing do not ever steer off track.<sup>22</sup> *Off course of course (!)* - my footnotes then become a useful tool through which I can play with and channel these distractions – these sometimes tangents, detours. Experiences, memories, associations, these vectors, offshoots, diversions – they are all there, in the margins – at the edge of the page, simmering beneath the lines between the text.

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<sup>22</sup> A note on the 'age of distractions' - no wonder yoga has become a multi-million pound industry (one of the fastest growing industries of recent years, turning over £8,643.8 million last year alone – see <https://www.newstatesman.com/sites/default/files/files/Fastest%20Growing%20Industries.pdf>) ... 'mindfulness' apps are downloaded by the second... (and yet the irony – the 'antidote' to capitalism is itself capitalised.) Why not 'Free yourself' from your thoughts instead and re-connect with **Nature** – the *real* (ity of the) **world**... It seems people (the western world at least) enjoy quite literally *buying* their own 'peace of mind' (or at least an illusion of it).

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## Chapter 1. Lost focus

### Notes on a modern epidemic

We live in a ‘modern world’ with a ‘modern epidemic’. Cases of anxiety, depression and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have never been so high – and nobody (young or old, rich or poor) seems immune.<sup>23</sup> In his paper on Changing Education Paradigms, (2009) Ken Robinson shares an alarming claim tracing the spread of the ‘ADHD’ epidemic across America – and maps out its unprecedented treatment with Ritalin.<sup>24</sup> Unable to ‘sit still’ or concentrate in the classroom – many school students are being diagnosed with the condition and medicated, to ‘control’ their hyper-active behavior and focus their ‘wandering minds’.

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<sup>23</sup> Anxiety and depression are at unprecedented levels worldwide and the numbers are growing. The World Health Organization (WHO) describe it as an epidemic, and report that the period between 1990 and 2013 saw close to a 50% increase in the number of people suffering from one or both of these conditions, with the figure rising to 615 million people – almost 10% of the world’s population. Given that many developing countries have yet to be extensively polled, these figures, while staggering, provide in all likelihood only an indication of the depth of the problem.  
(<https://www.opendemocracy.net/graham-peeble/anxiety-in-age-of-inequality> accessed 27/05/2018)

<sup>24</sup> (see also [https://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_changing\\_education\\_paradigms](https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms) accessed 27/05/2018)



ADHD is a serious condition; however, it is often misdiagnosed. And this misdiagnosis seems to go hand in hand with what might now be considered an oversight – or failure to understand the modern condition. We live in a world of speed – images and information fly at us from all angles at all times and at a rate of knots. And whilst the education system is always trying its hardest to keep up, modern technology seems determined to stay one step ahead. In a world of advertising, additives, iphones and video games, the (often stale) classroom environment is perhaps inevitably boring to many, who are then ‘medicated’ to cope. Children (during their school years – before and after years) are always in a ‘state of curious transit’ - shifting from one growth spurt to the next, from primary to secondary school, to university and beyond, their bodies are always changing, like the environments around them, their minds seeking to learn... and yet for many, their ‘growth’ is being stunted. The ‘future’ quite literally lies with the youth – but in a cruel twist of irony, (intent on ‘governing the ungovernable?’) many are being ‘numbed’ (medicated through school) in the hope that they might ‘sit still’, ‘make the grade’ and ‘*turn out right*’. These children – and the systems they are victim to – are being quite literally lost, in transit.

Something’s out of kilter. Something got lost along the way... For in truth, it seems it is the system,<sup>25</sup> and not the mind, that perhaps needs the most help.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> And by system I am not simply talking about the education system – the healthcare system too it seems is failing us, with global pharmaceuticals profiting from ‘ill health’. According to the American Psychiatric Association, about 5 percent of American children suffer from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), yet the diagnosis is given to some 15 percent of American children, many of whom are placed on powerful drugs with lifelong consequences. This is the central fact of the journalist Alan Schwarz’s book, *ADHD Nation*. (published 2016) Explaining this fact—how it is that perhaps two thirds of the children diagnosed with ADHD do not actually suffer from the disorder—is the book’s central mystery. The result is a damning indictment of the pharmaceutical industry, and an alarming portrait of what is being done to children in the name of mental health. (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/big-pharma-s-manufactured-epidemic-the-misdiagnosis-of-adhd/>)

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Smith draws a very interesting conclusion on the issue in his article: ‘Hyperactive Around the World? The History of ADHD in Global Perspective’ He argues that ‘ADHD tends to be diagnosed in countries where children are seen as means to the end of creating a more competitive, prosperous, and powerful society, rather than as ends in themselves.’ Who benefits from seeing in children this way? Another question worth asking. (see <https://academic.oup.com/shm/article/30/4/767/2919401> for the full article - accessed 27/05/2018)

## Notes on a different school of thought

In 2007, in their attempts to re-design a school for the future, Tezuka architects designed and built a kindergarten in Japan with no walls, in a bid to cultivate and inspire the next generation of ‘modern minds’.

Instead of being ‘shut down’ (medicated and locked in a windowless room) the students at Fuji Kindergarten are free to ‘run wild’. Far removed from the standardized post-World War II white concrete boxes that dot the country,<sup>27</sup> this 750-student, three-year preschool (located in Tachikawa, western Tokyo), is a one-story structure in the shape of a donut where *everything* is movable; leaving its students free to quite literally lose their inhibitions and ‘run loops’ around each other:

*‘The entire school feels like a playground, from the open-air central courtyard to the building’s wide circular roof. Even the interior classroom areas follow an open-school plan where partitions separate sections and all furniture is moveable.’<sup>28</sup>*

The architect, Takaharu says the goal is for “*these children to be stronger and more flexible.*” (ibid) and studies have shown that children at Fuji invent and play six times the number of games that a typical kindergarten student plays; whilst the average Fuji student runs about 5 km each day. (“*And they aren’t even being chased!*” Takaharu jokes.)<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> and with that the western world’s standard model for a classroom

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2014/03/02/issues/thinking-outside-the-usual-white-box/#.Wwsloy\\_Mw6g](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2014/03/02/issues/thinking-outside-the-usual-white-box/#.Wwsloy_Mw6g)

<sup>29</sup> ibid. Interestingly, and encouragingly enough *The Daily Mile* is an initiative set up this year (2018) by Scottish head teacher Elaine Wylie – encouraging schools and its students to participate in a ‘daily mile’ – 15 minutes of daily exercise - walk, skip or run, the aim is to get students moving. It is not a race, and can occur at any time of the day, and the students do not change out of their uniform to participate. Research suggest the initiative is transforming lives – and since the initiative was launched, the idea has spread to more than 3,600 primary schools in 35 different countries. Echoing the initiative seen in the Japanese Kindergarten, the aim of The Daily Mile its founders say ‘is to improve the physical, social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of our children – regardless of age, ability or personal circumstances.’ It is a profoundly simple but effective concept, which any primary or nursery school can implement completely free of charge and without the need for staff training. Its impact can be transformational – improving not only the children’s fitness, but also their concentration levels, mood, behaviour and general wellbeing. (see <https://thedailymile.co.uk/about/> for more information)

In addition to the free flow of movement in the playground, the lack of classroom walls and a ‘noisy’ environment have been shown to *aid* (not inhibit) the concentration of its students,<sup>30</sup> preparing them for the ‘chaos’ of the outside world - whilst the open plan nature of the building also helps (the architects claim) to foster ‘social equality.’<sup>31</sup>

As well as moving ‘walls’, moving ‘bodies’, and moving ‘sound’ the donut shape of the playground is built around three giant (25 meter) living (‘moving’) Zelkova trees, covered in a huge climbable (‘moving’) net which the students are encouraged to play in. In stark contrast to the stiff and sterile, inflexible, closed white walls of the classrooms we have become so accustomed to in a ‘modern education system’ this Fuji Kindergarten is literally teeming with life with active minds and bodies being nourished in a fertile environment.

Whilst the current education system in the West remains fixated on an end game of ‘results’<sup>32</sup> these Japanese architects are helping to foster an environment where young minds are encouraged to ‘take risks’, to ‘make their own mistakes’ and grow with a healthy body, healthy mind, and healthy attitude towards both ‘risk taking’ and one another.

In bringing the indoors out and the outdoors in, these architects are quite literally paving the way for a future of thinking ‘outside the box’. It is perhaps in this kind of engagement in forward thinking, risk taking (*in repeating the different*) that the

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<sup>30</sup> “Noise is fundamental,” architect Takaharu says. “These days the government is trying to set rules to create perfect acoustic conditions — in those buildings there is no noise and children get nervous. Autistic children start showing symptoms.” He also explains how the body has a “noise-cancellation system” and that hearing noises from multiple sources, such as the class next door, can have a calming effect. (ibid)

<sup>31</sup> “When children are put in a classroom and have boundaries, they develop a hierarchy and caste system — here, there is no need,” Takaharu says. The building has sliding doors that face the courtyard and remain open for two-thirds of the year. (ibid) The building is quite literally ‘borderless, and boundary-less’ harboring a sense of risk and adventure in its students, who like the trees the school is built around, are encouraged to grow.

<sup>32</sup> Students, schools and teachers alike are all ‘graded’ — quite literally - on their ability to ‘pass’ a paper, as a result, very few are encouraged or willing to take ‘risks’ in their work — as their very jobs depend on it. Speaking from experience — having spent 10 years working as an Art teacher in an inner city comprehensive school, it is disheartening to find students crippled with anxiety about ‘making the grade’ — unable and unwilling to take risks — many of them simply want to ‘know the answer’ as they want to (/need to!) make the grade which will ‘take them to the next level’ (of a never-ending cycle of assessment).

future of education lies, not in the ‘factory line’ ‘tradition’ of an education that harbours sedation and *repeats the same*.

In taking down the walls and opening up the classroom to ‘the outside’ this new model of school is quite literally, breaking new grounds in terms of its approach to education. Leading the way - in fostering an enriching learning environment that embraces, (as opposed to inhibits) a world in flux - it is encouraging its students to stand at the edge, run across the middle, climb to the top and explore the ‘in-between’ spaces. Reshaping the future of education (and with that the future of young minds in transit) to embrace a new horizon of boundless possibilities – one which they are prepared for, and not afraid to enter.

In a system that sometimes<sup>33</sup> seems to have lost its way these Japanese architects, and the popularity of initiatives like the ‘mile a day’<sup>34</sup> are perhaps slowly helping to shake up, and awaken a sleepy education system; one which for too long has (arguably) left too many students ‘lost in transit’ – ill prepared and unequipped to face ‘the great outdoors’ and its related challenges.



(Fuji Kindergarten sketch)

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<sup>33</sup> Only in some places – sadly (but unsurprisingly perhaps – and I can say this, I think, as I have been teaching Art in secondary comprehensive education for 10 years now), the UK and US school education system was not even ranked highly enough in the 2016 WEF survey to appear ‘in the charts’ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/11-best-school-systems-in-the-world-a7425391.html>

<sup>34</sup> see footnote 16

## Lost inside

Beyond the walls of education, more walls lie. It seems modern society is actually living most of its 'great wide life' *inside* - contained within homes, office blocks, shopping centres, cinemas, and commuter carriages. Perhaps in reality more of a 'great indoors' than a 'great wide world' we now live in an 'indoor generation' with (according to Velux) modern adults and children alike spending up to 90% of their time indoors. This is having a profoundly damaging effect on both our physical and mental health. Whilst it is sponsored by a skylight company (!) the 'indoor generation' campaign<sup>35</sup> highlights the extent to which modern citizens are actually indoor 'passengers'.

Echoing works like Anthony Gormley's 'Blind Light' (2007) and Rachel Whiteread's oeuvre, much of the 'contemporary world' seems lost inside with doors made of smoke and mirrors, no longer opening out, but closing in, internally, eternally. The exit is not clear. The future's not yet been written.<sup>36</sup>



Anthony Gormley, *Blind Light*, 2007 (Hayward Gallery)



Rachel Whiteread, *Due Porte*, 2016 (Tate Britain)

<sup>35</sup> See - <https://www.velux.com/indoorgeneration>

<sup>36</sup> (but 'obviously' the answer is to purchase a skylight...☺)

## Notes on a modern passenger

In, and beyond the bounds of these walls, we live in a world in flux in a perpetual state of transit. Human *beings* today are, quite literally, always on the move. Not only through rapidly increasing global migration patterns,<sup>37</sup> but through more localised movements too. In their recent series of ‘commuter-sized’ guide books for the philosophical tourist, the publishers Penguin aimed to produce a digestible, transportable (pocketable) and practical set of ideas – or notes - called ‘*Philosophy in Transit*’ - to accompany such a world - ‘on the move’ – and its restless readers on their journey.

In his book ‘*Truth: The Search for Wisdom in a Postmodern Age*’ from the series, John D. Caputo argues that the modern commute has trapped us all in a perpetual state of immobile ‘transit’. And that this position – or rather lack of it – has had a profound influence in shaping (shifting) a post truth, postmodern world. It seems (to many) that postmodernism may have left the idea of universal ‘truth’ a little *lost in translation*.<sup>38</sup>

As machines have made our lives more ‘efficient’ we live in an increasingly sedentary state – sitting on carriages, at desks, at tables, on sofas, in cars, taxis, conferences, we even sit down (or stand still) at sports events. And yet these ‘sedentary’ lives are increasingly mobile – connected – always on the move. We travel further, faster, and more frequently than we’ve ever been able to before. And with the advent of low cost flights – adventures in and to ‘far away lands’ are no longer such long and distant dreams, for travellers on any budget. Closer to home, even our ‘smaller’ movements are mechanised to take us ‘further’ ‘faster’. The Royal Mail is now not so ‘royal’ (the ‘slow coach’ – snail mail for direct deliveries<sup>39</sup> )

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<sup>37</sup> see the most recent UN international migration report here for more details  
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/international-migration-report-2017.html>

<sup>38</sup> For more on this see the LSE forum to access an engaging debate on the subject ‘Is Post Modernism to Blame for our Post Truth World?’ - <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Events/2017/10/20171002t1830vSZT/is-post-modernism-to-blame-for-our-post-truth-world>

<sup>39</sup> Also lost in the post? (Thank you Derrida, we have a parcel for you too...)

And, with a mobile network of postmen in your pocket phone, why *would* you send a postcard when you can send an email, text or whatsapp message directly to your recipient? (and receive a reply in moments.) Why buy a stamp when the internet's free (!) Why go to the library to search for knowledge in books, when you can just Google it - there's a world of information at your fingertips... Right? Just search for the document, the text, the image on line, you'll find it in no time... Need to know how to do something? There's most likely a video tutorial for it on YouTube. Need to get an education? University will now 'come to you.'<sup>40</sup> The wait is quite literally - over. We live in the now (now, now!) and *the heat is on*.<sup>41</sup>

As Heidegger noted, in his essay '*The Question Concerning Technology*' this issue of technology is an unavoidable one. And whilst we should (and perhaps *must*, work with, and not against it) this sense of immediacy, and impatient need for 'efficiency' seems to permeate every aspect of the modern world. Coupled with this, impatient for answers, 'we' (perhaps) forgot to ask questions. It seems many of us are 'well kitted out' but ill equipped to ask why...<sup>42</sup> *Why* we no longer need to grind our coffee beans every morning - just position a cup, press a button and a machine will dispense it all for you from a pod - dispensing you of the 'labour'; *why* your 'no work required' coffee (*free* with any purchase from Waitrose...) will assist you with your 'work' ('the *real* daily grind').<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Many universities - including Harvard - now offer online degrees, open access education is available for all levels of learner - 'home schooling' via skype... But this world of 'school-via-skype' is also a little slippery. Who is your teacher? And are they 'qualified' to 'teach'?

<sup>41</sup> Quite literally. Ever felt how hot your laptop gets, sat on your knee, burning as you write away...? The 'energy' we consume to aid our efficiency is an all-consuming issue. Burning fuel to create electricity to provide the 'heat' - 'the power' - the 'source' - of all our 'conveniences,' we are producing heat as a 'product' whilst the 'by-product' is also heat. Graphs depicting global temperatures are growing increasingly red - global warming is an inescapable (and undeniable) issue affecting us all.

<sup>42</sup> And so as quickly as *truth* spreads its signal down the line, its Chinese-whisper counter partner *lie* does too. The problem is, the two can often look the same. It seems modern society - in many places - does not encourage too much thought, and it turns out, it's (perhaps!) *partly* due to the way we've been taught.

<sup>43</sup> It's the same with 'ready meals' - always at the 'ready' - microwavable, it'll heat up 'in no time' - 2 minutes, £2. Cheap and quick, but at what cost?

Likewise, on the streets, electric skate boards no longer require its users to ‘skate,’ battery powered bikes no longer require the rider to ‘cycle’,<sup>44</sup> driver-less cars no longer need a driver, children no longer need to ‘walk to school’ they can ‘zoom’ or stand on a scooter while their parents patiently push (if it’s not already an electric one...) Hoverboards are no longer the dream of fiction,<sup>45</sup> and from Zimmer frames, mechanical chairs, and beds to electric buggies – modern technology ensures *nobody* – young or old, sick or fit - is left standing still.<sup>46</sup>

But even in motion, we seem to be standing - still. Even when we *are* being ‘active’ - we run on machines, treadmills that take us nowhere, and swim lengths of pools that leave us ending up right where we began with a few strokes in between. We kick and throw, bat and catch balls from one side to the ‘other’ and back again. We ‘ride’ the train, (sitting, standing, holding on) to work, and catch the lift to our desk, we stand on horizontal escalators at the airport and take vertical ones to enter the underground... Our physical movements are now largely powered by external, not internal mechanics – in the ‘modern world’ it seems the walker (increasingly) ‘walks us’ – we no longer drive, but are ‘driven’. Our bodies drift<sup>47</sup> - in a world in flux. And, destination unknown, we do not arrive. Nor are we able to get off. Instead, the modern commute has left us lost at sea, quite literally, lost *in transit*.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Notes on a modern sedentary: My father is hugely overweight. He has a heart of gold but his feet are black with stasis dermatitis (a condition developed through poor circulation) and his ankles are swollen beyond recognition. He lives a torpid lifestyle, but he is always ‘on the go.’ He drives to work to sit at a computer, then drives home, sits on the lawnmower, before taking his ‘electric’ bike out for a ‘ride’ – (no need to ‘cycle’ – he takes a few turns of the pedal and then simply sits on the saddle, the electronic motor kicks in and does the moving for him, powering his body and the machine up and down hill again) – he then returns home to where he started, sits at the table, and then retires to the sofa, where he ‘puts his feet up’ and sits, watching television, (before sitting on the toilet), before lying in bed. He has had two hip replacements; and still, he remains on the move (whilst refusing to budge!) He is active in his inactivity, and yet fails – denies - resists to see that these ‘(in-)actions’ are contributing to his very condition. Some minds, it seems, are as stubborn as the bodies they inhabit.

<sup>45</sup> Growing up, my brothers and I would watch the twins in Thundercats whizz around on their hover boards – and you only need to watch Michael J. Fox go ‘back to the future’ on his hover board to see what is now a reality. (In 2015 a company called Arx Pax invented the ‘Hendo hoverboard’ – imitating the board from the movie - having crowd funded a record amount of money to do so). What was once envisioned as ‘future’ ‘fantasy’ is ‘here and now.’

<sup>46</sup> Murata Manufacturing’s new self-balanced, power-assisted walking frame (for example), will, they claim, ‘help senior citizens maintain mobility without getting tired too quickly’. Using Gyro sensors to detect the stance of the user’s body ‘in order to automatically and pre-emptively adjust itself’ the technology assists its users in their ‘mobility’ by providing extra support to ensure their ‘immobility’ when there’s a risk of the user falling. (see also <https://www.trendhunter.com/trends/murata-manufacturing>)

<sup>47</sup> See also ‘*Body Drift: Butler, Hayles and Haraway*’ a book by Arthur Kroker exploring the relationship between the postmodern and the posthuman.

<sup>48</sup> (More on the modern commute later... for now, step off the train and onto a boat)



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## Chapter 2. Lost at Sea: In search of a new horizon

### Notes in bloom:

Standing on the deck of a ship before dawn, biologist Jeff Bowman was heading back from the North Pole with his team. It was cold outside and the air temperature had just dropped. Suddenly, emerging on the surface of the water around them, tentacles of ice began to grow – dancing like flowers emerging from a frozen sea. These little protrusions of ice, delicate, like snowflakes began sprouting on the water “*like a meadow, spreading off in all directions*” until every available surface was covered in them. They were frost flowers, and they lined the surface of the sea like a blanket of cherry blossom in May.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Between the end of March and early May, thousands of people flock to Japan to watch the ‘sakura snow’ – cherry blossoms fall. In Japan, the tradition of Hanami (or “flower viewing”) is enjoyed by all walks of life – and men, women, children from all sections of society emerge (from all corners of the country) to enjoy their Hanami picnic celebrations under

These frost flowers – tiny ice sculptures in bloom – grow on the border between the sea and air. When the temperature of the air and sea are different, the dry air pulls moisture off ‘little bumps’ – flaws on the surface of the ice – and frost flowers are born.<sup>50</sup> Short-lived, these ‘meadows’ – these natural creations emerge from a flaw, and only appear for a brief moment; but as temperatures rise, their presence on the water is becoming more common – and with that, more interesting. Prized by scientists, these ‘flowers’ are unusual – not just for their extraordinary fleeting beauty – but because they are so incredibly salty.<sup>51</sup> Science would assume that, being so salty (three times the salinity of the sea) these frosted salt flower ‘pickles’ would be lifeless hosts, lost at sea. But when biologists Bowman and his colleagues ‘harvested’ the flowers<sup>52</sup> – they were astonished to find that there were over a million bacteria housed in each single flower.<sup>53</sup> What are they doing there? And where are they going?

Bacteria are normally found everywhere, but not – Bowman states, in such extreme environments. Contrary to expectation, these bacteria seem to have been found thriving within the bloom – in extreme salt, hovering on an icy surface, exposed to colder air than they would be used to in the sea, bathed in sunshine which (Bowman notes,) they don’t see that often and shouldn’t usually like.<sup>54</sup> *What are they doing there?* These peculiar microbes seem a little ‘lost in transit...’

Professor Deming (Bowman’s colleague) believes that as the poles warm, *‘there will be more and more of these meadows, because there will be more and more open sea that*

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blossom filled skies. Hanami is the custom of enjoying the transient beauty of flowers – the short-lived existence of the blossom flower taps into the nation’s long-held cultural appreciation of ‘the beauty of the fleeting nature of life’. The blossoms also quite literally symbolize new beginnings, with the season coinciding with the start of both the financial and academic year. (see more here <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/asia/japan/articles/japan-cherry-blossom-sakura-guide/>)

<sup>50</sup> the dry air pulls moisture out of specks of ice forming in the sea – these bits of ice then ‘vaporize’ and the air around gets humid for a moment. The cold water makes the water vapour heavy – forcing the air to release its excess weight – until crystal by crystal, air turns back into ice, creating delicate ‘feathery tendrils’ that can grow up to two or three inches high, ‘like giant snowflakes’. (<https://www.npr.org/sections/krulwich/2012/12/17/167469845/suddenly-theres-a-meadow-in-the-ocean-with-flowers-everywhere>)

<sup>51</sup> these blossoms suck up the seawater, and concentrate the salt – producing ‘flowers’ that are three times the salinity of the ocean. ‘You could think of them as beautiful pickles’ (Robert Krulwich writes) *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> The scientists ‘harvested’ the frost flowers and let them melt, each flower producing a tiny drop 1-2 millilitres of water.

<sup>53</sup> 1 million bacteria per 1 millilitre of melted frost (!)

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/krulwich/2012/12/17/167469845/suddenly-theres-a-meadow-in-the-ocean-with-flowers-everywhere>

*turns to thin ice in winter*'.<sup>55</sup> If we are going to be seeing more and more of these sea blossom frost meadows blooming, we might want to know more about the extraordinary bacteria they house and what we might learn from their *being* there. Contrary to expectation, life (sometimes) seems to thrive in the margins, in the unseen, and unseeable, in the places we'd least expect, and in the most extreme circumstances, beyond our imagination. The flaws give way to 'new' life. Maybe these microbes aren't so lost after all...

### **Blooming (micro)bodies**

We too live a fleeting and extraordinary existence - and our bodies, like the frost flowers, are also teeming with bacteria; with life that is not 'our own', and which we might not expect to find living there. Both inside and out, on the surface of our skin, inside our mouths, intestines and gut - and hovering in a 'cloud' that hangs around us, scientists have recently made the remarkable discovery that the human body contains more bacterial micro-organisms than human cells.<sup>56</sup> Known as body *flora*, these microbes do not (generally) harm us, but - like the remora, or 'sucker' ('cleaner') fish that attach themselves to larger species and live off their debris,<sup>57</sup> - they help protect us from becoming infected with harmful microbes. Whilst *some* microbes - some bacteria, fungi and viruses - *can* make you ill, the large majority of microbes inhabiting our body are 'healthy' - they aid digestion for example, and the mix of microbes in the gut can affect how well we use and store energy.

It's been suggested that the overuse of anti-biotics (coupled with our modern 'obsession' with 'cleanliness' and 'anti-bacterial' products<sup>58</sup>) is perhaps triggering a

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<sup>55</sup> *ibid*

<sup>56</sup> According to the Microbiology Society, the number of normal bacterial cells that live on the body is in the region of 100 million. This number is 10 times greater than the 10 million cells that make up the human body. (<http://microbiologyonline.org/about-microbiology/microbes-and-the-human-body>)

<sup>57</sup> The remora fish attach themselves to larger species - such as sharks, whales - even boats - and feed off their hosts' debris and parasites. Having attached themselves (harmlessly) to the host they are able to travel to different areas of the ocean without expending any of their own energy. The remora (and other such 'cleaners' get 'free' food, protection and travel and the host is kept clean in exchange. Nature is full of these relationships - one helps the other in a mutually beneficial exchange. In biology, this is sometimes known as mutualism, or interspecific cooperation, where the close and long-term interaction between two organisms forms a symbiosis.

<sup>58</sup> Walking through the supermarket, it appears you're more likely to find antibacterial hand gel (swathes of pocket sized, coloured, sensitive, moisturising, aloe-vera or bubblegum scented gel and wipe options) at the checkout counter than

shift in some people's intestinal flora. Imbalances in the flora in our gut (and the microbes which aid digestion) are affecting the way we digest and store energy from food, and as a result, might be contributing to conditions like obesity and diabetes which are increasingly on the rise.<sup>59</sup>

### **Invisible lives matter**

It seems that in our efforts to counter 'sickness' we may have come a little *lost* (like the ready meal in our digestive systems) in transit. By focusing on 'clean eating' and '*healthy living*' we seem to have also developed a perhaps slightly *unhealthy* obsession with 'cleanliness.' If supermarket checkouts are anything to go by, it seems clean living and healthy living are marketed to go hand in hand – quite literally.<sup>60</sup> But in holding a nut bar in one hand, an antibacterial gel in the other, and harbouring a belly full of antibiotics from food and medication, we might be overlooking the importance of the healthy microbes in our bodies. It seems we may have inadvertently been wiping out the very bacteria keeping us alive and well. It turns out the 'germs' ('aliens' or 'foreign bodies') we seem so afraid of, are actually, what make us *us*; if we can nurture this (our relationship with the invisible the foreign, the nonhuman), then perhaps we might become a little more tolerant of one *another*? Because, like the microbes that inhabit us, *we* inhabit the 'world' - in a constant search for new horizons. Invisible lives matter. We are *all* foreigners drifting in a foreign land.

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chocolate these days. Concerned that sweets sold at supermarket tills were 'fueling an obesity crises' in 2013 a campaign called 'junk free counters' was launched – with the aim of encouraging supermarkets to move tempting 'junk food' from its check outs. Junk food at the counter has been replaced by 'healthy options' and pocket-sized products to quite literally promote 'cleaner living'. Sugar free chewing gum ('to clean and whiten your teeth') sits alongside pocket wet wipes and anti-bacterial hand gel ('to clean your hands'). Modern 'life' seems to align healthy, clean eating with 'sanitary' 'germ free' living.

<sup>59</sup> According to the Global Diabetes Community, the number of obese people in the UK is forecast to rise by 73% over the next 2 decades. The UK currently ranks as the country with the highest level of obesity in Europe, with more than 1 in 4 (28.1%) adults obese and nearly two out of three (63.4%) overweight. Over the next 20 years, the number of obese adults in the country is forecast to soar to 26 million people. According to health experts, such a rise would result in more than a million extra cases of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer. (<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/uk-fat-alert-26-million-will-be-obese-by-2030-2344149.html>) Obesity is also no longer a condition that just affects older people, although the likelihood does increase with age, and increasing numbers of young people have been diagnosed with obesity. Data from Public Health England suggests that nearly a third (31.2%) of children aged 2 to 15 years old are obese. This health crises puts a strain on 'every' body, affecting all 'walks of life' - stretching the healthcare system to its limit.

<sup>60</sup> If we take the extreme proximity of the 'healthy snack' and anti-bacterial hand gels at the supermarket counter as anything to go by.

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### Chapter 3. Lost Matter(s)

In her book ‘Vibrant Matter’ Jane Bennett argues for a new ‘vital’ materialism, urging its readers to reconsider the ‘nature’ of ‘human life’ in terms of its intra-action between the human and non-human in a material world. It seems our notion of ‘what *matter* really matters’ has got a little ‘lost in transit’.

*Vital materialism better captures an “alien” quality of our own flesh, and in so doing reminds humans of the very radical character of the (fractious) kinship between the human and the nonhuman. My ‘own’ body is material, and yet this vital materiality is not fully or exclusively human. My flesh is populated and constituted by different swarms of foreigners... The ‘it’s’ out-number the ‘me’s’. In a world of vibrant matter, it is thus not enough to say we are “embodied”. We are, rather, an array of bodies, many different kinds of them in a nested set of microbiomes (112-113).*

Our bodies are made up of 10 times more microbial DNA than human DNA;<sup>61</sup> making us, quite literally, ‘more than’ human. And yet it seems through our dominance

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<sup>61</sup> Not only are there ten times more microbial the human cells in our bodies, the ‘gene pool’ provided by microbes is almost beyond comprehension. In 2007, NIH launched the Human Microbiome Project to study microbes in and on the body. Since then, researchers from almost 80 institutions published a landmark series of reports. They found that more than 10,000 different species occupy the human body. The microbiome actually provides more genes that contribute to human survival

perhaps - and determination to ‘master’ (‘to identify’, ‘to cleanse’ to ‘make pure’ - to ‘be master of’) both our bodies and the socio-economic-systems around us, we (modern, Western society) may well be inadvertently causing more harm than good.

It seems the arguments in Mary Douglas’ *Purity and Danger* are perhaps as relevant today, as they were when they were first published in 1966. In her essay, Douglas, an anthropologist, asks the reader to (re-)consider the nature of ‘dirt’ as ‘matter out of place’ and identifies the concern for ‘purity’ as a key theme at the heart of every society. Matter, it seems, is always on the move – but so too are our scientific and cultural perceptions of what ‘matter matters’. Whilst great cultural shifts have been made over the last century\* (we – arguably - live in a ‘smaller’ more understanding and tolerant world than ever), an alarming rise in Nationalism, ‘social cleansing’ and concerns about shifting / tightening border controls in a post-Brexit UK and Trump-led America, continue to heighten an already existing awareness that ‘foreign matter’ still matters, sadly, to some. And for some, it still matters where ‘foreign matter moves’.

### **Moving matter (s)**

Catherine Malabou, writing on Heidegger and change remarks: “*Being is revealed to be nothing - but its mutability.*” ‘To be’ is therefore ‘to be changeable’.

In his recent book ‘*Shapeshifters: On Medicine and Human Change*’ – Dr and author Gavin Francis notes that to be alive is to be in a perpetual state of change: growing, healing learning, aging. But, to echo Nancy once again, these changes are perhaps *necessary* as their continuity is enabled by a discontinuity. Each moment of change presents both an essential ‘end’ and a possible ‘beginning’.

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than the human genome itself (8 million vs. 22,000). Humans need bacteria and their genes more than most of us thought. (see also <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2012/11/your-microbes-you>)

<sup>62</sup> Take the recent Royal wedding as an example. Black lives do not only just ‘matter’ – they can also (finally) become British royals... Some systems are changing, slowly. At least.



Just as the neurons in our brain and the cells in our bodies are always shifting (repeating - dying, repairing renewing themselves) the matter (microbes, solids, liquids) within our bodies are also always on the move, passing in and out and through. With this ‘flux’ (this constantly shifting ‘self’) comes an ever-evolving understanding of our position within the world – of ‘life’ (and with that ‘truth’) ‘as we know it’.

‘Every action has an effect’ – if we are going to try to understand the constantly changing systems around us – from the economic to the ecological – and the way our actions impact upon them, we perhaps also need to be open and willing to understand the changing systems *within* us, both physically and culturally.<sup>63</sup>

If a new awareness and understanding of the microbes in our bodies can teach us anything, it’s perhaps that change quite literally starts from within... In re-assessing what we consider to be ‘foreign’ – and taking a closer look at what we might have considered to be ‘invisible’ (and therefore ‘insignificant’) or ‘dirty’ (and therefore ‘unclean’) maybe then we might be able to make small shifts towards a deeper, more compassionate understanding of our own – and ‘others’ presence the world: as strangers in a strange and constantly shifting world.<sup>64</sup>

Sometimes, as in the case of C.Diff patients,<sup>65</sup> it’s the things we (both culturally and physically) thought would harm us that actually ends up curing us.

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<sup>63</sup> Notes on a Catholic example: Three decades ago, Ireland was a very different place. Divorce was illegal, as was same-sex marriage. Abortion, already illegal in practice, was constitutionally banned in a 1983 referendum -- known as the Eighth Amendment. On Saturday Ireland emphatically voted to repeal that constitutional amendment in a referendum, paving the way for legalized abortion. "If you look at 1983, when the anti-abortion clause was put into the constitution, to now, the change is just extraordinary," said Irish Times columnist Fintan O'Toole.

<sup>64</sup> Ovid's *Metamorphoses* closes with a declaration of the fraternity of life – and a passionate plea to treat all human beings with compassion. In accepting (and embracing or by sometimes simply acknowledging) changes within our own lives, we are more likely to be accepting of – and compassionate towards - change in ‘others’ – as, in truth, we are all strangers to ourselves.

<sup>65</sup> Notes on a c diff patient: *C. difficile* is a rare and debilitating infection of the gut. Whilst extreme cases can be fatal, it leaves its sufferers with a range of long term sometimes debilitating symptoms – including cramps, fatigue and fever – which are often very easily misdiagnosed. Whilst its symptoms are often treated with anti-biotics, the root of the c.diff infection is largely *caused* by anti-biotics – leaving both its doctors and patients in a long and enduring battle for diagnosis and cure. Our ‘microbial flora’ is as unique as we are, and its. As a result, its sufferers (like many sufferers of MS and endometriosis) often endure years of pain and frustration at the ‘margins’ of this ‘invisible’ disease. The most effective cure for C.Diff has been found to be through fecal transplant. In restoring the right amount of ‘germs’ back into the gut – its healthy microbes are encouraged to return and the intestinal flora bloom once more. (for more on c.diff see <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/c-difficile/symptoms-causes/syc-20351691>)

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## Chapter 4. Lost sight – an invisible world

Quite literally out of sight - there is ‘more’ to life, it seems, than meets the eye. If we want to foster a healthier relationship with the visible, then perhaps we also need to consider our relationship with the invisible.

1. *“Understanding an invisible World: microbes have been ignored because they haven’t been understood and because they are invisible to our eyes. This lack of understanding has allowed decades of poor relationships with these microscopic beings. Our modus operandi was to kill them, rather than synchronize with them. The debate over the microbiome will rage on, as the fear of the invisible and little understood will drive the masses in the short-term.”*<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> <http://bigthink.com/amped/humans-10-human-and-90-bacterial>

Some things we can see, some things we can sense, some things we can discover and some things remain a mystery. But one thing seems certain – that extraordinary moments can and do often exist in the margins, the places we overlook, the places we cannot see and the places we least expect. And sometimes, as with the case of microbes and bacteria, mental health and the unconscious – these invisible worlds are teeming with more life than we'd expect or ever thought possible.

Going underground, both Darwin and Jane Bennett sing the praises of an unsung hero – the earthworm in this respect. Burrowing beneath the surface of all things, the earthworm's work is unseen. And yet – like spores of mycelium, rhizomes or microbes which work their way in and through and under everything, the humble earthworm's work is vital in shaping 'new grounds' to harbour life in. But these new grounds emerge from 'an invisible' world. A worm's work is never *done*.<sup>67</sup> Never ending, these grounds – and the lives within them are always on the move. Constantly shifting, mutating, evolving, working their way through.

This state of constant social, physical and psychological transformation is perhaps – one of the most ancient, resonant and important themes in literature and art – in his *Metamorphoses*, written over two thousand years ago, the latin poet Ovid depicted nature and mankind as a '*seething maelstrom*' where '*all matter, animate and inanimate, was caught up in cycles of change*':<sup>68</sup> Ovid writes: '*like pliant wax, which, stamped with new designs, does not remain as it was or keep the same shape... everything is in a state of flux, and comes into being as a transient appearance.*' This 'transient appearance', often only presents itself as in 'invisible world' – one that comes and goes – is hard to catch, and sometimes even harder to see.

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<sup>67</sup> As Nietzsche reminds us in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* "You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm."

<sup>68</sup> See Gavin Francis' book – '*Shapeshifters On Medicine and Human Change*' p3.

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## Chapter 5. Lost sense(s)

Echoing Ovid, David Hume similarly observed in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) “*We are nothing but a bundle or collection of different sensations...and are in a perpetual flux and movement.*”<sup>69</sup> The world and everything in it is in a constant state of flux - shifting, on an axis that is always turning, in a galaxy that ceases to cease expanding, and in the brevity of existence, life’s fleeting, momentary appearance, has a tendency at times - understandably - to slip right under our noses - to go by unnoticed. All we are left with, is a ‘sense’ of things changing.

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<sup>69</sup> See appendix - <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/h/hume/david/treatise-of-human-nature/B1.4.6.html>

## Lost driver(s)

Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* offers an insightful account into the relationship between modern man and technology in relation to 'the body.'

*"Late twentieth-century machines (she writes) have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body; self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert".*<sup>70</sup>

## Driven by the unconscious

Whilst we are always on the move – we are also 'frighteningly inert'. Freud's notion of the unconscious alerted us of the need to recognise the unrecognisable; that - like passengers on a train - our thoughts are often driven at an alarming speed - controlled by forces we are largely unaware of. Invisible, the unconscious does not occupy a 'place' in the brain, instead it positions us. As the primary source of human behaviour,<sup>71</sup> our unconscious mind is the driving force behind many of the decisions, judgements, thoughts and actions we make. In relation to the unconscious – our conscious minds are 'frighteningly inert'. To use Freud's analogy, the visible, conscious 'knowable' mind is simply the 'tip of the iceberg' – the depths of the unconscious plunge so deep into the unknown (and unknowable) that science is still trying to get to grips with it – and maybe never will.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Donna Haraway, "A *Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York; Routledge, 1991. p.152

<sup>71</sup> McLeod, S. A. (2015). Unconscious mind. Retrieved from [www.simplypsychology.org/unconscious-mind.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/unconscious-mind.html)

<sup>72</sup> It seems ironic perhaps, or timely, that as global warming continues to melt the few remaining ice caps we have left – Freud's analogy for the unconscious has become even more fitting. There are arguments to suggest that rather than less, the unconscious mind (the submerged part of the iceberg – the part we cannot see and do not have access to) actually drives *more* in our minds (and bodies) than we'd previously thought. As the icebergs are sinking, so too is the 'graspable' 'tangible' part of our awareness: '*Whilst empirical research in psychology has revealed the limits of the Freudian theory of the unconscious mind, and the modern notion of an 'adaptive unconscious' (Wilson, 2004) is not the same as the psychoanalytic one. Indeed, Freud (1915) has underestimated the importance of the unconscious, and in terms of the iceberg analogy there is a much larger portion of the mind under the water. The mind operates most efficiently by relegating a significant degree of high level, sophisticated processing to the unconscious.*' (<https://www.simplypsychology.org/unconscious-mind.html> accessed 29/05/2018) - see also for an interesting report on the bodily (as well as mental) functions of the unconscious: <http://bigthink.com/philip-perry/your-identity-is-almost-entirely-based-on-unconscious-brain-processes>

Our feelings, motives and decisions are largely influenced by past experiences, often housed (like invisible footnotes to the essay before) in the unconscious. Sometimes scary, overwhelming and too painful to acknowledge, Freud believed the unconscious was a repository for the primitive impulses that needed to be repressed, or ‘kept at bay’ – too frightening to confront, these urges, memories or impulses are ‘held down’ in the unconscious so as not to rupture, or unsettle the conscious self.<sup>73</sup> The goal of psychoanalysis then, is to ‘wake us up’ – to make the unconscious a little more ‘conscious’; to highlight our thoughts and our behaviour, making the invisible a little more ‘visible’ – a little more understandable perhaps.

Whereas Freud viewed the unconscious as a single entity, psychology now understands the mind to comprise a collection of modules that has evolved over time and operate outside of consciousness.<sup>74</sup> And so, like a microbial cloud, ocean current, melting ice-cap or driverless commuter train, the unconscious is not static, but a shifting, fleeting, dynamic force that is always on the move. Like fault lines that run underground affecting earthquakes, the unconscious runs through us; it influences, and affects us, simmers under and boils over, it smolders and erupts. It keeps us on our toes.

### **Driven to analysis - an impossible (t)ask**

As an attempt to ‘rationalise’ the irrational, or to process the unprocessable, psychoanalysis sets itself an impossible task. The irrational is – by its very nature irrational; always on the move, shifting, changing, unpredictable. A continual ‘working through,’ the ‘process’ never ends as there is no finishing point. The process of psychoanalysis will always be - like the unconscious, like the patient, like the world itself - in a continual state of flux – drifting, changing, repeating, working through – and lost. Perhaps. In a perpetual state of transit.

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<sup>73</sup> while Freud believed that primitive urges remained unconscious to protect individuals from experiencing anxiety, the modern view of the adaptive unconscious is that most information processing resides outside of consciousness for reasons of efficiency, rather than repression (Wilson, 2004). *ibid*

<sup>74</sup> *ibid*



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## Lost dream(s) an uphill struggle



In 1948 Grete Stern, a German Jew living in transit in Buenos Aires, began working on a series of weekly commissions for the popular women's magazine *Idilio* where the publishers employed her to illustrate the dreams of their readers in a section (a weekly column) entitled “Psychoanalysis will help you.” As a photographer (also recently married and divorced from photographer, Copolla - who made abstract cityscapes) Grete Stern believed the medium had to have “a social function” so used the *Idilio* commission as an opportunity to develop her work into a collection of powerful and provocative photomontages. Over a three-year period with the magazine, Stern produced around 150 dream images, now known collectively as *Los Sueños* (the dreams). With the aid of her daughter and friends (who she used as models), Stern juxtaposed photographs of women with stock, ready-made and found images of objects and landscapes. Ensuring the proportions were ‘out of kilter’ she notes she intentionally created surreally distorted images to “give the effect of insecurity.” Quite literally employing paper, scissors and stone (in the example of the image above) the technique perfectly complimented the somewhat

cutting-edge<sup>75</sup> nature of the subject matter she was depicting – enabling the artist to play with the uncanny themes recurring in the reader’s dreams.

Grete Stern’s audience did not have to go to the gallery to see her work – the images, published in the magazine, were viewed in the comfort of the reader’s own homes – on the couch perhaps? Stern’s photomontages – images of nightmares, frustrations, desires, anxieties, the unimaginable and the unspeakable – spoke to a generation of women who did not yet recognize their place in society (Simone De Beauvoir was still working on it...<sup>76</sup>) whose domestic predicaments were playfully and powerfully depicted in her work. Intent on breaking the image of misogyny out of its frame, and highlight the common sense of ‘entrapment’ and anxiety felt by the magazine’s female readers, Grete Stern’s images were bold – hard hitting and fast paced (often depicting modern modes of transportation, and produced at a rate of one per week).

To Stern, however, the ‘superficial world’ of the *‘Idilio’* was not so ideal perhaps, after all. Whilst the intent of the column was to ‘soothe a riled female id’, Stern’s images helped provoke their audience. And by satirizing rife misogyny (and subverting her assignment in the process) – she encouraged her viewers to ‘wake up’ from the ‘domestic dream world’ – a glossy coated vision of male dominance that contemporary society and ‘authority’ had ‘normalised’ (and perhaps even ‘romanticised’). The *New Yorker* notes:

*An arrestingly creepy feature of many images is the discord between a dreamer’s impassive expression and her predicament: she is literally not awake to its horror. Nor was the society she lived in.*<sup>77</sup>

A passionate advocate for women’s rights – Stern was herself a rebel and an ‘outsider’ – a divorcee at forty-four, and mother of two young children, her

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<sup>75</sup> Lacan gave his first report on the ‘Mirror Phase’ in 1936, and the ideas of Freud and Jung were still relatively new...

<sup>76</sup> *The Second Sex* – Simone De Beauvoir’s treatise on the oppression of women – was published in 1949.

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/12/19/grete-sterns-rediscovered-dreams> (24/05/2018)

photomontages (known now as the Sueños) spoke not just to the reader's dreams, but perhaps pointed also to the agony of her own (somewhat impossibly) isolating situation – and her dreams to escape.<sup>78</sup> Recalling the tale of Sisyphus (who, was condemned eternally, to roll a rock up hill, only for it to continually roll back down as it neared the top) – Stern's depiction of the image (featured) replaces the doomed king with the image of a domestic housewife. Satirizing the weight and scale of domestic labour the image highlights the relentless nature of household chores 'inflicted' on women isolated within the home. Domestic tasks are a relentless chore, and Stern places herself alongside the image of 'woman' in this seemingly futile uphill struggle for recognition.

Fifteen years after Stern had left the magazine, Italian writer and activist Silvia Federici wrote her now famous treatise: "Wages Against Housework." Published in 1974 – the opening lines, echoing the themes of domestic isolation within Stern's *Los Sueños*, declare:

*They say it is love. We say it is unwaged work.  
They call it frigidity. We call it absenteeism.  
Every miscarriage is a work accident [...]  
More smiles? More money. Nothing will be so powerful in destroying the healing virtues of a smile. Neuroses, suicides, desexualization: occupational diseases of the housewife.*<sup>79</sup>

Whilst Stern's original prints were 'lost in transit' (probably destroyed by the magazine) her Sueños quite literally stole the show at a recent exhibition of her works at MOMA.<sup>80</sup> Stern died in 1999 but she died having achieved her aim perhaps – to embed a "social function" into her work. The striking popularity of Stern's Sueños overshadowed Copolla's cityscapes. Offering a 'cure' perhaps – or recognition of at least – Stern's images made public and visible the 'occupational diseases of the housewife'.

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<sup>78</sup> Stern's father died when she was six, her mother (a Jew) committed suicide in 1933 following the rise of anti-semitism in Germany; her son also killed himself (aged 25) and her daughter fled Argentina, going into exile during a period of state terrorism known as "the dirty war."

<sup>79</sup> <https://caringlabor.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/federici-wages-against-housework.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> In 2015, MOMA put on a shared retrospective of Stern's work alongside her former husband, Copolla's

On the exhibition, *The New Yorker* reported:

*It was as if an urgent message had washed up on a foreign shore, sent by women, long adrift, whose dreams had come back to haunt us.*<sup>81</sup>

While the struggle for many marginalized groups is still very real,<sup>82</sup> the last half a century has changed beyond recognition for most. Sisyphus' rock may well *always* be in transit. But at least *this* (Western) cityscape in 2018, is no longer run by men **alone**. Cultural shifts, like geographical, physical and psychological ones, can be slow and arduous to achieve, but the premise of Psychoanalysis has always been that it was never going to be a quick fix. A 'slow burning' approach (for many - for whom the process of analysis can take years, decades even) - maybe, 60 years on, Stern's dream finally came true. Perhaps the magazine's declaration that "Psychoanalysis will help you" wasn't such a fantasy after all.



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<sup>81</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/12/19/grete-sterns-rediscovered-dreams> (24/05/2018)

<sup>82</sup> You only need to open today's paper to read about the Irish referendum regarding their discriminative laws on abortion, or go to youtube and watch Childish Gambino's 'This is America' (by Donald Glover) to witness the plight of America's still very current, very brutal race issue, or look at – and listen to Donald Trump (!), read about Harvey Weinstein's imminent surrender to the police following years of abusing his position in power to face sexual misconduct charges. Sexism, racism, and misogyny are still rife in many parts of the world, but equal rights campaigners have fought long and hard – and continue to keep rolling that rock up hill - to close the gap in on discrimination and injustice.

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## Chapter 6 Lost Passengers

Returning to the commuter carriage, this modern predisposition to always be on the move, in transit - is echoed in the way we give and receive information - which is, in turn reflected by our thought patterns, in our human behavior.<sup>83</sup> This position (or rather, lack of it, Caputo argues) has quite literally become a state of 'mind' for the modern world - as a reflection of a post-modern world - we, like our thoughts, like our migrating migrant, 'drifting' bodies, like our multiple modes of transportation, like the mass of information we give and receive from all over - are (like this text) always moving. And, always 'on the move', it's this shift that has perhaps precipitated a crisis in our understanding and interpretation of what 'Truth' really is.<sup>84</sup> Who and what do you 'trust' when there are multiple shifting sources - and when the information you receive is always on the move to and from a multitude of places, spaces, people and 'faceless' streams of data. How do you trust anything or anyone, when Truth itself is always shifting? Where does truth 'stand' in a ground that is always on the move? And how does one make a stand,

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<sup>83</sup> Always on the move - my thoughts never stop. Instead, they are always on the run, running through my mind. I keep writing, to work my way through them - to try and position myself in my thoughts - but they continue to drift and slip and snare me in their tangle.

<sup>84</sup> As has been explored through ideas relating to plasticity and neuroplasticity - through philosophers and neuroscientists alike, the (as in all, and *any*) 'state of mind' is not fixed. [...] Nor can it be 'fixed' and nor is it necessarily 'broken'.

when ‘one’ is always locked in a state of perpetual, immobile transit? This need to ‘position’ the self (and everything else for that matter) in order to understand, claim or trust it, comes up against a slippery struggle in a postmodern world, where, it could be argued there are no longer any ‘positions’ for *anyone* or *anything*. And when this predicament affects *everyone* and *everything*.

### Too many passages?

*Yet the indefinite lacks nothing; above all, it does not lack determination. It is the determination of a becoming, its characteristic power, the power of an impersonal that is not generality but singularity at its highest point.<sup>85</sup>*

The contemporary world is a pluralistic one. Modern technology – transport and information systems – ensure that we connect – and remain connected to one another, at all times. But this constant, incessant need – or demand even - for ‘connection’ leaves us vulnerable and insecure, it exposes us to others, while others are exposed to us. Whilst this is an exciting, enriching, enabling experience (the world is a diverse and pluriform place – *‘resulting in ideas about open ended rainbow cultures rather than monochromatic pure ones’*) it is simultaneously stifling. Constricted by our own ‘freedom’ of movement. We (like this essay) are overwhelmed, quite literally drowning in possibilities, options and information.

Kant’s notion of ‘cosmopolitanism’ has come to life – we are citizens of the cosmos, of the world. And yet as the world ‘gets smaller’ the literal need for energy (needed to maintain this ‘interconnectedness’ in all areas) is getting bigger. The need for ‘power’ continues to grow, whilst in the ground natural sources of ‘power’ are running out. As fossil fuels are burnt and not able to be replaced, the hunger of the (mostly Western) world seems to continue to increase, forcing industrialisation to stretch the seams of the countries it inhabits and break new grounds in order to continue to fuel the fire of capitalism.<sup>86</sup> Industrialisation continues to harvest the

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<sup>85</sup> Deleuze, G. (1997) *What Children Say* (Essays Critical and Clinical). Translated by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco.)

<sup>86</sup> For capitalism – quite literally – cannot ‘run’ without ‘power’.



ground, the sea, the air, (of its own and ‘others’ lands), in order to keep things heated. And no ‘space’ seems ‘off limit’ to their harvest. The wider capitalism spreads, it seems, the smaller *the ground* becomes.<sup>87</sup> Modern ‘man’ is both a citizen ‘of the world’, and a citizen of ‘nowhere’ (in a perpetual state of transit) it seems.

Whilst freedom of movement has been made more possible (transport systems quite literally enabling increased movement between spaces and places) this ‘freedom’ it seems also comes at a price. As the bounds of power and control shift so do its people – and migrants, refugees, tourists and travellers become passengers in a system they do not always necessarily want to be part of – nor are they *necessarily* aware of. Throughout history, the need to ‘claim ground’ and ‘position nation states’ has resulted in conflict, because it seems the need to ‘belong’ somewhere and to something – is at once uniting and dividing. The same might be said of ‘Power’ – or ‘Truth’ – in religious terms.

As a response, a reaction to this increasingly boundary-less ‘lack of borders’ ‘world’ it seems we are simultaneously bearing witness to an alarming rise in nationalism. Brexit and Donald Trump’s ‘wall’ aim to divide – to quite literally ‘provide’ division. Increased boarder control, stricter immigration policies. ‘*You can - come, you can’t - go...*’<sup>88</sup> A desire to ‘send the Windrush’ generation ‘home’... These discussions – actions – reactions all seem to be part of a need to ‘maintain’ control over the distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ ‘one’ and ‘other.’ Identity politics are alive and kicking – there seems to be an almost insatiable need (particularly in the Western world), to associate, to belong, to ‘identify’. But this urge to ‘call’ (to name, to ‘represent’) is at once liberating for some, and terrifyingly

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<sup>87</sup> As the population increases – physical space becomes more and more limited, and adding more ‘fuel to the fire’ the strain of an ever-expanding population makes further demands on already rapidly depleted earthly resources. The earth is quite literally, under strain.

<sup>88</sup> My brother, a barrister specializing in human rights and immigration defense, depended largely on legal aid to work - most of his clients were vulnerable and in need. An alarming ‘sign of the times’ perhaps, since legal aid has been cut, the focus of his work has shifted from immigration to emigration. It too fraught with vulnerable cases – of human ‘beings’ out of place, displaced, disassociated, cut off, removed, isolated in a sometimes society that does not always recognize *them* (the displaced) as citizens, when *they* are *themselves* ‘citizens of the world.’ One way or another, it seems the vulnerable are always left in transit – always on the outside of whatever ‘side’ there was – and often with no safe place to sleep.

divisive for others.<sup>89</sup> One way or another, it seems the vulnerable – the ‘unnamable,’ ‘uncontainable’ are always left in transit – in the ‘margins’ - with no safe place to sleep. *Always on the outside of whatever ‘side’ there was* – Bob Dylan’s song ‘Joey’<sup>90</sup> seems to address and remind us of what is perhaps one of the biggest problems confronting citizens of a pluralistic world. Dylan reminds us of what perhaps – still is – and always may be - *the issue: ‘no one ever knew for sure where they were really at.’*

And if we don’t know *for sure* – then we are left in reasonable doubt. If we don’t know where we are, we don’t know where we’re not. Or where we’re at. We’re left with no position to stand in. On. Or at. We’re left trapped, in no position to move. And in no position to break out of the movement. We are left in transit. Waiting for the next frost flowers to bloom.

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<sup>89</sup> As Judith Butler notes in her work on gender, the need to identify and recognise non-binary genders is

<sup>90</sup> which tells the story about the life and death of outlaw “crazy” Joe Gallo

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## Chapter 7: Lost in repetition

In his book *Hermeneutics: Facts and Interpretation in the Age of Information*, Caputo re-visits Derrida, offering up new grounds (or a clearer explanation at least) exploring the role(s) of repetition in interpretation in a postmodern world.

Claiming that just as there are two faces of Hermes, there are (at least) two kinds of hermeneutics – safety-first hermeneutics (- the repetition of the same,), and risky hermeneutics (- the repetition of the different), Caputo argues that this (these two faces) *is a central tenet of postmodern hermeneutics*.<sup>91</sup>

With two kinds of hermeneutics, comes two kinds of repetition, and (at least) two kinds of interpretation:

- 1) Safety-first hermeneutics (the repetition of the same). This kind of repetition aims at imitating the first. In repeating the original, it (respectfully) doubles it up. Repeating (and therefore reinforcing) what has already been said, it is the process of learning through imitation. (Like a child learning to repeat back what the teacher has just said). This kind of repetition, Caputo claims, *repeats backwards* as its aim is always to return – to go back - to the original production. Originality is outlawed as the original always exists. To stray from the original would be to make a mistake, and would be considered a flaw. The ‘mistake’ in this repetition would be to do something different.
- 2) Risky hermeneutics (the repetition of the different). This second kind of repetition *repeats forwards* (and not back). Instead of seeking to return to its original, it seeks to move away from its original, it is turned towards the future – always trying to produce something new. This kind of repetition is for the innovator, improviser, or composer, and (like a child building on – or providing a variation on - what the teacher has just said) – it moves the

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<sup>91</sup> Caputo, J.D (2018) *Hermeneutics: Facts and Interpretation in the Age of Information*. p.131

original forward. Always trying to break in, break out, break through the original. The ‘mistake’ in this repetition would be to do something the same.

Caputo uses the example of a musician to explain: safety-first ‘repeating the same’ - the musician repeats what has already been written, they do not vary from the text or score. There are ‘right notes’ and ‘wrong notes’ they do as they are told. Guarding themselves against any possible variation, or deviation, they repeat the same, for the ‘fault’ would be to repeat the different.

Risky ‘repeating the different’ is the composer the musician who plonks away at the piano ‘looking for the right note’ there are no wrong notes, as the text has not been written yet they have not ‘found’ what they are looking for. Always looking for something new they expose themselves to what they cannot see coming, where the beginning has no idea of the end. They repeat the different, for the ‘fault’ would be to repeat the same.

History, akin with human behaviour, repeats in the same way. It either moves in on itself (repeating the same) or away from itself (repeating the different). As Yve Lomax remarks on history’s lines of flight:

*History never goes in just one direction, a single line from which points can be plotted, the one after following on from the one before – the ancient, the modern, post-modern. There is no overall uniform linearity. The lines go in many different directions of which not all can be known at once. (Writing the Image)*

### **Lost praise**

If we are to consider Caputo’s reflections on repetition, we might be able to align it with something of the thought (a difficult thought) in Jean-Luc Nancy’s text, *On Evidence: Life and Nothing More*. In praise of repetition it is precisely *through* repetition, Caputo argues, that the possibility for (re-)interpretation emerges as an intervention. Caputo argues that:

*‘A repetition arises from the underlying truth that this play (he is citing the example of Hamlet) bears across generations, which keeps getting replayed and re-enacted in changing times and for ever-changing audiences.’<sup>92</sup>*

This is why, he elaborates, ‘truth’ is always on the go:

*‘It cannot be confined to a final and fixed form; it is self-transforming, in constant transit – a feature of which we are made acutely conscious by contemporary systems of transportation and information technology.’<sup>93</sup>*

Just as mutations arise through a flaw in the repetition of a cell – it might also be considered that repetitions (when actions are replayed, over and over again) create necessary space for (re-)interpretation.<sup>94</sup> Re-interpretation keeps the repetition alive and keeps *truth* animated. Instead of ‘losing ground’ repetitions enable flaws to emerge over time. And it is through the emergence of flaws that the ‘flaw’ becomes visible. In rupturing the monotony of repetition – flaws make visible what was, (prior to the rupture) invisible; they make seen the unseen. These flaws shifts – or as Caputo prefers to call them: re-interpretations - enable the repetitions to evolve, to continue ‘continuing’ ‘continuously’. Offering a new and *constructive* approach to (or ‘interpretation of’, at least) de-construction, and insight on the postmodern world (a product – arguably – of Derrida). Or, to put it another way - as Jean-Luc Nancy might say – the discontinuities (are essential, as they) both enable *and ensure* the continuity of life’s very continuum.

Truth, it seems, is like ‘us’ – like the bodies we inhabit and the microbes which inhabit us, like the nature of the unconscious, or – like water or energy.<sup>95</sup> Always on the move, ceaseless in its ability to adapt, but fundamentally changeless.

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<sup>92</sup> Caputo, J. D (2013) *Truth* Penguin Global. p. 51

<sup>93</sup> *ibid*

<sup>94</sup> If as Caputo argues, repetition enables re-interpretation, we might then consider the nature of repetition as something that simultaneously drives itself forwards, whilst remaining still, in a ‘fixed’ state of ‘being’. The same must be said then, of ‘truth’ as a narrative in a postmodern world.

<sup>95</sup> It seems to me that - just as water in all its disguised faces is still fundamentally H<sub>2</sub>O – (it departs from the same, and returns to the same, in all its repetitions) or energy, (it too, departing from the same, and returning to the same, in all its

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repetitions) – truth, however it is channelled, it cannot be destroyed – only changed. And in truth, (through its changes), will always then be lost in transit. On its way to somewhere else.

## Lost in a quake, in the *Curve*

It is no perhaps no co-incidence that in times of turmoil, *Change* seems to become a consistent theme in the creative arts. The Barbican is currently hosting a series of events under the theme ‘*The Art of Change*’ celebrating revolution, difference and the power of Art to not only reflect change, but to impact and make a change.

*“At a time of significant national and global uncertainty, our 2018 season explores how artists respond to, reflect and potentially effect change in the social and political landscape.”*<sup>96</sup>

Appropriately enough, Yto Barrada – the artist currently commissioned to take over the ‘Curve’ (itself an ‘unresolved’ bend, that intercepts – providing a passage ‘through’ the ground floor space of the Barbican) has also drawn on the theme of an earthquake in her multi-media piece ‘Agadir.’ In 1960 (four years before the release of Bob Dylan’s ‘*Times are Changin*’ – and three decades prior to the earthquake we see Kiarostami reflect on in Iran) a huge earthquake shook Agadir,

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<sup>96</sup> *The Art of Change* presents bold artistic responses to vital global issues including feminism, climate change and human rights, while providing a platform for voices currently underrepresented in the arts (<https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/series/the-art-of-change>)



leaving the Moroccan city in ruins. How does a city – and its people – address reinventing itself after such a trauma?<sup>97</sup> Having been commissioned by the government to visit the city and consider the devastation and reformation of the city after the quake – Moroccan writer Mohammed Khair-Eddine went against his orders, and instead, moved by the events he saw, wrote a surreal hybrid novel-play called *Agadir* (1967). Having discovered the text was not available in English, the artist (Yto Barrada) decided to begin by translating the piece as a starting point for her multi-linear, multi-media commission for the Curve.

The text is one of many voices – with a king, a cook, a psychic, a parrot and a trade unionist all battling it out to offer their opinions on how best to reform the ‘structures governing their lives.’<sup>97</sup> Barrada extends the multi-lingual, cross-cultural ‘voices’ in the text and inserts them into the physical space of the curve, using film, sound installation and actors to recreate the ‘scenes’ - but we are always on the move – the characters from the text, like the actors and the audience in the Curve are always shifting. These figures are always passing through – on their way to and from the ruins of somewhere – out from the ‘ruins of the past’ moments gone by - towards the exit and unknown moments in the ‘future.’ Sometimes, in passing through, the experience of the journey can be transformational.

As the saying goes: ‘change starts from within’ so we are reminded of these artists’, writers’ and film makers’, deeply personal responses to the environment(s) around them.\* For the Artist, it seems, art and life are entwined. There is no telling (often) where one begins and the other ends. They are entangled. The two feed off, and interact with one another. And yet - the ultimate contradiction (perhaps) is that in doing so – in ‘being’ so - they become both independent of and dependent to – or from – one

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<sup>97</sup> (barbican.org.uk)

<sup>98</sup> In these three examples alone, Yto Barrada is a Moroccan artist – whose Barbican commission ‘weaves together personal narratives and political ideals to create a complex portrait of a city and its people in a state of transition’ (<https://www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/2018/event/yto-barrada-agadir>) Bob Dylan is an American singer-songwriter who is best known for his never ending narratives entangling the personal with the political and Abbas Kiarostami – the Iranian film maker whose work is known for its encounters with the real. (*Life and Nothing More* is a semi-fiction – based on actual events and the film maker’s own quest with his son to find the child actors from Koker).

another. There is no one without the other. They are each other's joy and each other's mourning. And yet, both remain, separate and entwined. They feed each other and inform each other as they intra-act, engaging in a dance. The text without a reader is passive. It becomes active through its engagement of the reader in its being read. And maybe reading becomes active in being written on...

### Lost in the margins

*There are books in which the footnotes, or the comments scrawled by some reader's hand in the margin, are more interesting than the text. The world is one of those books.*

- George Santayana, *Realms of Being*.

My copy of Jean-Luc Nancy's essay '*On Evidence: On Life and Nothing More*' is very well travelled. Well worn, well read, well written on. Stained with coffee and soft at the edges. It came 'on the road' with me when we went on tour in November and has stayed by my side ever since – a travel buddy, a companion. The original has perhaps now become something more interesting than the essay I never quite turned my notes into. The original has become *more* than the text – it's become *life*; it's opened out, moved away from the start. It's had breakfast in the winter sun on a rooftop in Spain, it's sat with me in late night bars, and kept me company at lunch. It's seen me laugh and cry, and has overheard too many conversations. Nine months and 2000 miles later, it is still in transit. Perhaps I just didn't want to let go of it. I never quite wanted to pin it down. For to pin it down would be to put it down, quite literally. And give it up. Maybe, I'm just not ready to let go of that thought yet. It's attached, along with an animation of it in the appendix. And so, we repeat the chorus:

*this essay meanders, remains unfinished, and may be impossible to finish... (it results) from a series of chance happenings and shifting projects.*<sup>99</sup>

In the song called *life*, and nothing more.

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<sup>99</sup> Nancy, J-L. *The Evidence of Film – Abbas Kiarostami*. Klincksiek (2006) p.8

## Conclusion:

In a world dominated by political turmoil, and a future dangling in the grip of a climate-changing climate, in a cosmos born from chaos – sprung from imperfection and leading ever rapidly towards uncertainty, what can we *ever* really hope to conclude? Other than: the ‘end’ of *this* chapter will be the start of something else (and that it is...)

To return to Karen Barad, if all beginnings are entangled from the start, all endings must then be too... these loose ends, loose beginnings... are all *slow thoughts – always under way, fraying a path so that the path itself becomes a thought*<sup>100</sup>, lost in transit. All we can do is hope to meet them halfway - somewhere along the way. Like the re-assembled torso and legs of Rodin’s *Walking Man*, transformation does not occur without a seam.<sup>101</sup> The seam leaves a scar as a reminder of what was once – and what is now perhaps possible.

Existence – to return to Nancy’s text – ‘*resists the indifference of life-and-death, it lives beyond mechanical “life”, it is always its own mourning, and its own joy*<sup>102</sup>

Existence, simultaneously and continually: repeats-the-same, and repeats-the-different; it moves away from itself and returns back to it, it numbs and stimulates, nurtures and destroys, it creeps into every crack, and passes through catastrophe; it is its own mourning, and its own joy - and like this, it continues, and discontinues – continuously – like *The Walking Man* - ‘all the way to the end.’ “*And (so) Life Goes On....*” in all its breakages and re-assemblages; the transformations continue (to be lost in transit).

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<sup>100</sup> Nancy, J-L. *On Evidence: Life and Nothing More* Winter 1999 Discourse 21.1 p86

<sup>101</sup> there is a subtle ‘scar’ joining the two halves together; ‘taking the rough with the smooth,’ the join has been worked over in fresh clay before being cast. Rodin’s thumbprints (the ‘maker’s mark’) are still almost visible.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid*

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## Acknowledgements

No cell exists on its own. Every particle is a part of, in relation to, something else. This project then, is nothing but a piece, a part, a particle... It would not have been possible were it not for the projects that came before it. Or for the conversations I've had with, and in, and around it. It would not have been possible had I not been a musician 'on tour' with my adopted family – or had I not been informed of, or influenced by Kiraostami's work (thank you Christopher Kul-Want). It would not have been the same if I hadn't have read '*On Evidence: Life and Nothing More*' by Jean-Luc Nancy over twenty times; or if I hadn't have continued to write on, and all over, my copy of the essay with each reading...<sup>103</sup> This project would not have been possible were it not for the changing weather (from Winter to Spring), or the shifting desk spaces and non-desk spaces it's occupied over time. It would not have been possible without my iphone – which I used to research Rhizomes and Sun Ra - whilst I sat watching the landscape change in transit through the tour van window. Which I used as a frame - to film footage of and through windows, and as pen and paper to take notes, noting thoughts in the *notes* section. This project would not have been possible had I not a compulsion to always be writing, to be taking note – working my way through, observing my observations wherever I went, be it on the move, or in those rare moments of calm. I owe a lot of my way of thinking – observing – being in the world, to my weekly dose of psychoanalysis – which (thanks to continued low cost CFAR treatment) has walked alongside me for five years now and has helped me to keep on keeping on, navigating my way through these constant, shifting constellations of doubt.

We would not be here were it for Yve Lomax (thank you Karl Baker) writing the image (for she too has searched for a point of certainty, and found it missing: '*I could never have found it. But still I searched. I journeyed.*'<sup>104</sup>) and I wouldn't be drawing your attention to the invisible forms (footnotes, margins etc) within this essay, were it not for Kevin Jackson making a point of them being a point<sup>105</sup> (again, thank you Karl). We wouldn't be here were it not for thoughts on Malabou on Heidegger and change, or Malabou on Freud on the Pleasure Principle (thank you Dean). Nor would this project have been possible if it

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<sup>103</sup> See appendix. We've come so far now that the essay on this essay has almost been written out of this essay now. Still, its traces remain in the dust.

<sup>104</sup> p39. Lomax – Writing the Image.

<sup>105</sup> See 'Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities'

weren't for Dr Daniel Rubenstein's seminar series on 'The Art of Questioning' and his explanations and our joint investigations into rhizomatic ways of thinking. *Nothing* would have been possible without Deleuze. We wouldn't be here if it weren't for the wit and courage and sensitivity of poet Hera Lindsay Bird and artist Sophie Calle (whose film 'No Sex Last Night' also traces another brilliantly personal road trip): these characters, these co-authors and participants, witnesses, guides, and passengers are all voyagers, venturing into the unknown. Exploring the spaces in between - the real and the imaginary.

*A real voyage, by itself, lacks the force necessary to be reflected in the imagination; the imaginary voyage, by itself, does not have the force, as Proust says, to be verified in the real. This is why the imaginary and the real must be, rather, like two juxtaposable or superimposable parts of a single trajectory, two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another, a mobile mirror. – Deleuze – (What Children Say)*

**We wouldn't have got here, had I *known* where I was going.** We would not have got to this *point* (a point still in transit) were it not for the drafts, and signposts, directions and or lack of them; for the tutors and tutorials, diversions, distractions and failures that led us here... but we most certainly wouldn't have got here if I was afraid of making mistakes... Because, in essence, making mistakes, taking unexpected detours - is almost what this project has become about. This body of work has become the journey. A voyage into the unknown. Into the missing. Into the lost. It's become about creative practice – about the unpredictable, about the certainty of *uncertainty*, the process of taking a turn, and working your way through the hurdles that life presents; it's *become* 'Life and Nothing More' – my observations on life, and a film, entwined. It's become about the absolute constancy of change, and about resilience and growth. It's become about persistence. And a continued will to keep on persisting. To persevere. Regardless. Essays have been written in, and written out of this text on the move – which started before it was begun, and will continue to carry on long beyond its 'end' – still lost. In fragments. An assemblage. In transit. Had the film resolved, we might have too – but this story's not over yet. The narrative's not yet been told:

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