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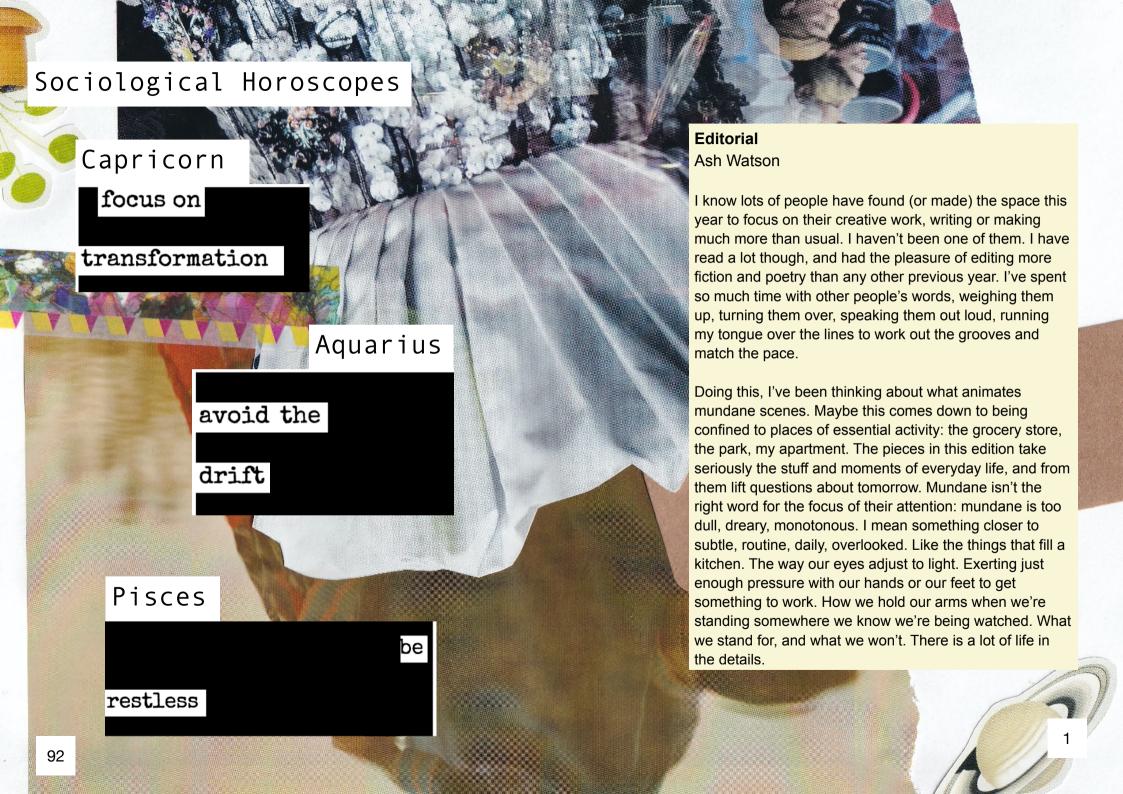
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Earthseed: World-building 101 Ruha Benjamin

The crisis is everywhere, massive massive massive.

And we are small.

But emergence notices the way small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies.

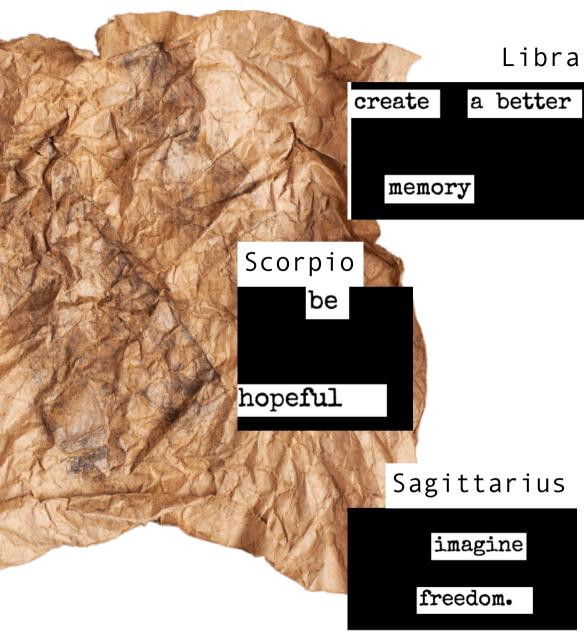
Emergence is our inheritance as part of this universe. It is how we change...

-- adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy*



Photo courtesy of Ruha Benjamin

Sociological Horoscopes





Beekeeping takes me back to me b-girl roots. But instead of breakin, I am learning how these small creatures build. The world-building strategies of bees is, after all, legendary. By some estimates, humans would have about four years to live if bees went extinct. So, at the start of the pandemic, I became of student of bees.

My family's apiary, Earthseed, takes its name from science fiction writer Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower*.

Seed to tree, tree to forest;
Rain to river, river to sea;
Grubs to bees, bees to swarm.
From one many; from many, one.
Forever uniting, growing, dissolving, forever Changing...

Bees remind us that collaboration is how we survive, that decisions should be made collectively, and that we each have a part to play in creating livable ecosystems. In *Honeybee Democracy*, biologist Thomas Seeley writes that "Every year, faced with the life-or-death problem of choosing and traveling to a new home, honeybees stake everything on a process that includes collective fact-finding, vigorous debate, and consensus building."

Bees also teach us we don't have to choose between working hard and creating beautiful, sweet things... the exquisite shape of honeycomb, the delectable taste of nectar, their breathtaking "shimmer" dance to ward off predators.

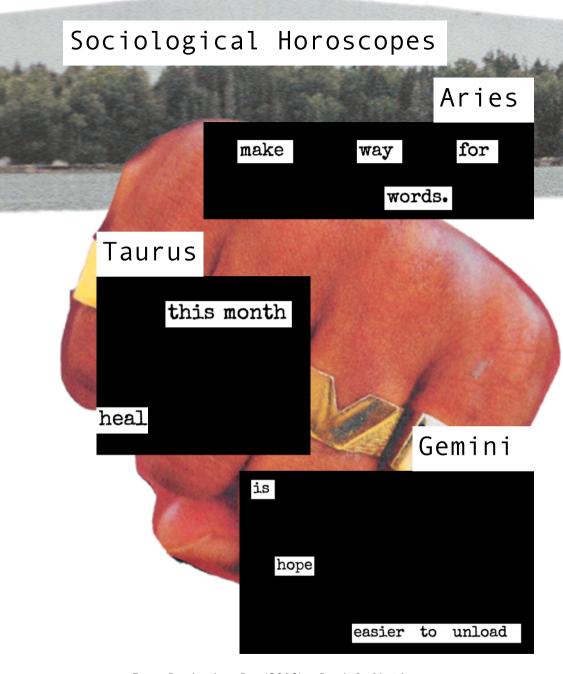
But, perhaps most important of all, bees are visionary. They respond to the ultra violet reflectance of flowers, seeing beneath the bland surface to the breathtaking reality of their environments. So must we be... visionary, in the midst of so much planetary upheaval and collapse.



Photos by Craig Burrows

This isn't just about pandemic dystopias, but the decaying social, political, and economic systems that wreaked havoc on people's lives before COVID, and that demand new visions of sociality, governance, and prosperity. We desperately need to question all that appears given.

In reflecting on what it will take to imagine and build another world, I was struck by an essay by one of my favorite writers, Arundhati Roy, titled The Pandemic as a



From Benjamin, R. (2016). Racial fictions, biological facts: Expanding the sociological imagination through speculative methods. Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience, 2(2), 1-28.

Author Bios

John-Paul Smiley is a writer and independent scholar. He has a PhD in Civil and Building Engineering (Loughborough, UK), an MSc Social Research (Leicester, UK), and a BA Politics and Sociology (York, UK). His interests include futurism and science fiction, as well as politics and sociology. He tweets at @JohnPaulSmiley.

lan C Smith writes in the Gippsland Lakes region of Victoria, and on Flinders Island. His work has appeared in *Antipodes*, *Communion*, *cordite*, *Eureka Street*, *Griffith Review*, *Journal of Working Class Studies*, *Meniscus*, & *Shaping the Fractured Self* (UWAP). His seventh book is *wonder sadness madness joy*, Ginninderra Press.

Tom Vickers is an activist, researcher, and educator. He is employed as a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Nottingham Trent University, where he convenes the Work Futures Research Group. His long-standing interest in stories stems from the important role they play in helping us make sense of the world.

Martina Zheng is a multi-disciplinary designer based in London. Her work critically engages with social, cultural and political issues. She is currently exploring the implications of outer space exploration in relation to communication geography, nationhood, and power structures. Martina employs speculative design as a mean to imagine alternative presents.

Portal: "Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next... We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it."

The image of dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, really struck me. I see us moving through this portal as individuals, communities, and institutions. At all levels, we have the opportunity to either drag outmoded ways of thinking and doing things with us, or we can begin to imagine and craft worlds that are more habitable, more just and joyful. To do this, though, we have to reckon honestly with what we have been holding on to – not only decaying structures but outmoded stories – so that we can even begin to let them go. Otherwise, what is sure to happen is that many dead ideas will be repackaged as new and innovative "tech fixes" for the problems we face.

The poems, images, and stories in this issue of So Fi Zine prompt us to look beyond the bland and often depressing surface of reality, exposing buried historical connections, bringing to light hidden social patterns, and envisioning future possibilities. This wonderful assemblage of authors and artists entice us to become visionaries – not with the platitudinous, pie in the sky rhetoric – but by deepening our understanding of how small things really do matter. Taken together, this issue encourages us to dismantle oppressive structures, rewrite distorting narratives, and craft worlds where we can collectively thrive, work, and dance.

CONTENTS





Author Bios

Megan Nguyen, from Revere, MA, is a student majoring in Science, Technology, and International Affairs with a concentration in Business, Growth, and Development at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. She is supplementing her education with a Computer Science minor while committing to work on innovation, entrepreneurship, and social justice.

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Vandhana Ravi (she/her) works at the Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown University. She has previously worked with and learned from folx at Project LETS, Providence !CityArtsi, and UNICEF's Office of Innovation. Vandhana holds two BAs in Sociology and Poetry from Brown University.

6

CONTENTS

Caring Times	
Tom Vickers	37
Academic cyborgs	47
Briony Lipton	47
Beyond People	
jason harding	52
Objects That Rust	
jason harding	53
Thank you, Mr Drummond lan C Smith	57
	57
Abstraction	
Rebekah Lisciandro	58
Vegan Milk Needed	
Molly Newhouse	62
The coop A state of the coop o	
The 2285 Authorized Children's	
Key Events in Cassini's Genesis John-Paul Smiley	68 – Entry Sixteen
John-Faul Offiney	00
Face the Final Curtain	
Akua Lezli Hope	72
Getting into Jazz: The Deviant C	Classy Clique
Kairos Lee	74

In The Marquee's Dappled Fairy Light lan C Smith

78

79

The Surveillance

C.J. Anderson-Wu

Author Bios

Molly Newhouse is a MSc Public Sociology student at Queen Margaret's University. She is interested in activism and how the connections between activists are built. For her undergraduate, she explored the role of a cup of tea within activist spaces; now she is looking to explore gender within non-hierarchical spaces.

Dr Briony Lipton is an early career academic recognised for her research on gender inequality, leadership and feminism in higher education. Her latest monograph is *Academic Women* in *Neoliberal Times*. She tweets @briony_lipton.

Rebekah Lisciandro is a sociology PhD candidate at James Cook University, following the completion of her honour's degree. Interested in the sociology of health and medicine, her thesis explored the ways in which obese people are constructed in sociological research.

Sara McHaffie is a public sociology MSc student at Queen Margaret University in Scotland. She's writing her dissertation on women's lived experience of access to public spaces. She's also a development officer at a women's organisation, and has written some plays sharing stories of the women she works with.

Paradigm Shift

Akua Lezli Hope

We can change the rules:

the future we lived, failed

so now we try again

to dodge the ball

this time zigging left instead of right

eating insects instead of cows

cultivating wilderness instead of lawns

purposefully foraging in weedy gardens

for rocket, forest of ramps, everyone

has truffles on service Sundays,

skycars sail with photosilk wings,

seafarmers harvest kelp, milk dugongs,

ride willing whales, shoo curious squid,

as the first world underwater Olympics

unfurls radiant, bioluminescent flags.

Author Bios

Olivia Hadley is an undergraduate studying the history of science at Princeton University. She is interested in environmental history and the social dimensions of science and technology. In her free time, she enjoys playing trombone and discovering new music.

Sophia Hansen is an interdisciplinary artist whose work aims to start a dialogue with the viewer, and question convention and tradition. Her eye for detail and love of craft combined with her curious nature results in thought-provoking abstract and realist work, most recently portrayed in digital mediums.

my name is jason harding. if our eyes met on the street i would smile and say "hey". i once read an interview with professor john a. powell and began to write my name in lowercase. "part of the universe not over it". the only person to ever ask why was my daughter. she is eight.

Akua Lezli Hope (MSJ, MBA) is a creator and wisdom seeker who crafts poems, patterns, stories, music, sculpture, and peace. Published in numerous literary magazines and national anthologies, she's been in print every year since 1974. She's the author of *Embouchure*, poems on jazz and other musics, THEM GONE, and Otherwheres.

Kairos Lei, a student and a pianist who is studying a master's degree in cultural and creative industries at Monash University.

Author Bios

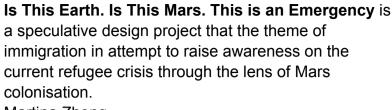
Lauren Alessi has a Masters in Sociology. She works as a researcher at the intersection of social work and criminal justice.

C.J. Anderson-Wu is the author of *Impossible to Swallow—Collection of Short Stories About White Terror in Taiwan* (2017). She is also a publisher, an editor and a translator.

Sharon Attipoe-Dorcoo, being an immigrant from Ghana, has encountered the dichotomy of finding her place in both countries. However, with time, she now considers herself plainly as a bicultural Ghanaian-American, a fiery millennial woman, Jesus follower, wife, mom, scientist, author, poet, and aspiring trailblazer in the field of health and policy.

Ruha Benjamin a professor of African American studies at Princeton University, founding director of the IDAB. WELLS Just Data Lab, author People's Science and Race After Technology, and editor of Captivating Technology. She is currently working on a fourth book, Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want. She writes, teaches, and speaks widely about the relationship between innovation and inequity, knowledge and power, race and citizenship, health and justice.

Anna Gorman is a junior at Georgetown University, majoring in Science, Technology and International Affairs with minors in Computer Science and Chinese. She is originally from Modesto, California, and plans to work for the public interest in the intersection of technology, business, and government.



Martina Zheng

"It is easier to imagine space tourism and extra-terrestrial extractivism than the end of capitalism" Jose Luis de Vicente

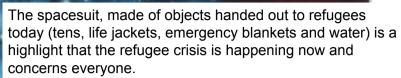
More and more we hear about a possible human settlement from private aerospace companies such as SpaceX and Blue Origin that are investing their capital into manufacturing infrastructures that would make space travel open to anyone. The recent crewed space launch is the first to be operated by a commercial company and marks a new era opening new scenarios on rights, economics and tourism in space.

The colonisation of Mars is becoming reality and so it is becoming a property of capitalism with yet to come consequences that are well known to us: resource exploitation, economic instability, repression, climate change and land degradation.

A world where Earth is the present and Mars is the future is being created. While we are actually facing a climate crisis on Earth, the red planet is seen as a solution that could save the human species from extinction. If that is the case, we are all going to be refugees at some point in time.

The intention is an attempt to create empathy through fiction, to put the viewer as protagonist of this fictional narrative and ask themselves: what if this was me?





This is a call to end the strict and severe immigration policies that are affecting millions of refugees and a call to recognise climate refugees.





Report by H(code) Event: Reading Club

Date and Time: 9:30~11:30p.m. Nov 28, 1979

Venue: Aunty Meifang's Eatery Watching Target: S(code)

Number of Participants: 28 people, 4 of them took off

earlier

A fiction Burger's Daughter by Ms. Gordimer was read by the host of the reading Kao Heh-Shun, who translated it from South African English into Taiwanese. This book is recommended by Kao, for it looks into several delicate political issues in South Africa. In the future readings he will recommend more South African literature, especially those about the inequality between different ethnicities.

After the reading, questions regarding colonialism were brought up. Colonialism in Taiwan was not a strange topic, but there are some issues Kao said he'd rather talk about in private.

Conclusion: It is obvious that Kao Heh-Shun is recruiting members for certain political groups and he uses book reading clubs to attract people who might join him. S did not show enthusiasm during the reading.

This report is presented to the Squad No. 9, Taiwan Police Command.

While translating and flipping over the book, Kao Heh-Shun recollected the question he was asked during the reading. How on earth a fiction is formulated?

Report by S(code) Event: Reading Club

Date and Time: 9:30~11:30p.m. Nov 28, 1979 Venue: Aunty Meifang's Eatery after dinner

service

Watching Target: D(code)

Number of Participants: 18 men & 7 women

A realistic South African novel about Rosa Burger's family conducting underground activities to shake the segregation of people of different ethnicities was read by Kao Heh-Shun(host): After her parents were persecuted and passed away, Rosa went to UK, but her open activities were criticized as honoring herself for being the daughter of martyrs by her childhood friend, a black man, whose relatives were all killed by their anti-apartheid actions back in South Africa. Therefore Rosa decided not to meet up with her lover in Paris, instead she returned to South Africa, knowing she would be under the surveillance of the authorities again.

D attended this reading with several acquaintances whose identities are unknown. He dozed off in the second hour.

Conclusion: D seemed to be in such a reading before. What they had read previously needs to be found out.





Report by D(code) Event: Reading Club

Date and Time: 9:30~11:30p.m. Nov 28, 1979

Venue: An eatery after dinner service

Watching Target: C(code)

Number of Participants: Around 30

Kao Heh-Shun read several paragraphs from a book *The Daughter of Burger* by a woman writer from South Africa. Burger and his wife were communists, they'd done things to subvert the government but were arrested and put in jail. After both of them died, their daughter Rosa ran to Europe and met a man. They had a romantic affair before her returned to South Africa, where her life was constricted by close surveillance.

C did not interact with the speaker or others, but he took notes from time to time.

Conclusion: The intention of Kao's demonstration of this book is unclear, but C seemed to be intrigued by it and divulged sympathy to the characters.

This report is presented to the Squad No. 05, Taiwan Police Command.

Report by C(code) Event: Reading Club

Date and Time: 9:30~11:30p.m. Nov 28, 1979

Venue: Aunty Meifang's Eatery Watching Target: J(code)

Number of Participants: 23 men and women

Kao Heh-Shun introduced the novel Burger's Daughter by South African writer Nadine Gordimer and read several pieces he had translated into Taiwanese. This book was about the anti-apartheid movement by Afirkaaners. Rosa, Burger's daughter, recalled her father who had been sentenced to lifetime and later died in prison.

Kao Heh-Shun pointed out that, although the authorities were disturbed by Burger's anti-apartheid efforts, he was charged as a communist party member. Therefore in the court he couldn't openly debate the reasons why he was against apartheid and risked his wellbeing for other peoples.

This book was published in London earlier this year, Kao said, and it is banned in South Africa.

J raised several questions about the formation of the fiction. He also asked Kao whether if the book was translated into Chinese and published in Taiwan, would it be banned as well. Kao said it would very likely be banned because Taiwan's government was friendly to the South African government while other countries condemned its apartheid.

Conclusion: Although law and order are important, humanity to all is fundamental. Although humanity to all is important, law and order are fundamental.

This report is presented to the Security Office, Taiwan Investigation Bureau.





The Surveillance

C.J. Anderson-Wu

Report by J(code) Event: Reading Club

Date and Time: 9:30~11:30p.m. Nov 28, 1979 Venue: Aunty Meifang's Eatery after dinner service

Watching Target: H(code)

Number of Participants: Around 20 people

Kao Heh-Shun (host of the reading) explained that the Taiwanese government recently has strengthened its ties with the South African government because these two entities are sort of isolated from international society. The former was because its seat in the United Nations has been replaced by China, the later because of the segregation between white and colored peoples. Thus there are exchanges for a variety of businesses between the two countries, including the publishing industry. Unfortunately, as both societies are under censorship, many publications on sensitive issues are not allowed to be published. Kao has some books brought to him from London by his foreign friends, and he will introduce them in the future gatherings of this reading club. The first book Kao introduced was about a family of British descendants who fought for the rights of colored people.

H has left before the end of the reading, the reason was not clear.

Conclusion: The goals of this reading club and Kao's purposes need further observation.

This report is presented to the Squad No. 13, Taiwan Police Command.



Ian C Smith

We met after my sister's wedding.

I remember pale lipstick, her name,

the labyrinth where we were heading.

We met after my sister's wedding

that distant day I kissed her dreading

innocent need exposed to love's game.

We met after my sister's wedding.

I remember pale lipstick, her name.

The light in her eyes went out Sharon Attipoe-Dorcoo

The light in her eyes went out
Her world shattered in a split second
The world she knew and had grown to love
Swept from underneath her feet

The pain and sorrow excruciating
With lies at every corner as far as can see
She was in despair from all the hurt observed
Never thinking her pain could subside ever

Her eyes are forever gloomy
Facing another day is hell to pay
She tries to make it through with a smile
As weakly as lost sheep she seems

There is no comfort for such a sting
The fight for peace eludes at best
The very thought brings chills and fright
With no hope of escape in sight

Five Minutes to Daybreak Lauren Alessi

Staring up at The EQClock as he walked into the camp, Jeffrey braced himself against the upcoming day. Eight hours he was indebted today. Total balance: 1,488 hours. Eight hours for each of the 186 billion he made before The Transformation. Today's EQClock reading: 5 minutes to daybreak.

Since The Transformation, there has been a mass redistribution of the Owners' power and resources. Anyone with over 10 million in assets before the transformation had to surrender their wealth and serve in the camps as repayment for all the labor and wealth they extracted. Everyone was encouraged to keep no more than they needed.

Daybreak was meant to be the point at which wealth distribution reaches Equilibrium, a time when the means for survival are guaranteed. The hour of balance, they say. The EQClock was their rallying point, an alter for everyone to gather round in celebration of their shared humanity. But he knew what it really was: a surveillance tool, the mark of a systematic assault, an incapacitation of financial freedom.

"Not a punishment, a consequence," the Council told him about the camps. They were there to assist Owners in paying their debts to Workers and contribute to society's regeneration. His debt to the transformed society. Many were pushing for a harsher treatment plan but two of the Council's core components were repair and reintegration, so they cut his hours and let him serve at his own pace, as a way to keep him close to the community.

As he scanned his wrist under the intake pod, the pod's computer skittered to life and aggressively spat out its morning salute: "As a former Owner of a multinational corporation, it is

On the other hand, the Macau government is very supportive of local music.

Public funding – the gaming tax from casinos – has been the main source of cultural income. "Few years ago it was a lot easier to get subsidy. We annually invited notable Jazz musicians for masterclasses and Jazz festivals, which were all paid by the government. The former director of Culture Affairs Bureau himself like Jazz music, which I guest was the driver" As Alex reveals, Macau cultural policy shifts drastically when the new government is in office, which affects the amount of sponsorship and artists performance opportunities. Some critics see that arts or creative NGOs may get funding too easily without regulation or monitor. After a new round of leadership began, the funding for MJPA has partly cut off by the government.

In the time of Govid-19, MJPA and many local musicians have faced more severe limits since the city has lost billions of gaming revenue. "We were almost in a dangerous situation where if the casinos and tourism collapsed, the city would also fail apart. Having the sponsorship is good, but now we need a long-term, sustainable plan in terms of the development of creative economy."

The Macau Jazz Promotion Association (MJPA) is a non-profit art association based in Macau. Since established in 2010, it has been promoting jazz music to the Macau public and providing opportunities for local musicians. "Performance is the best and effective way to promote music. The more chances your band is being exposed, the more and more people would know you and your music. If you invite someone famous just for a talk, nobody will want to listen" says Alex Cheng. Despite the fact that local artists have more chances to perform compared with a decade before, he explained that the limit of music venues is one of the main barriers for local musicians to access to the market.

"I remember when I was a high school student, my band and I were going to play Jazz in front of St. Dominic's Church (Macau city center). Suddenly the policemen came and forced us to leave. By that time I first learned that street performance or busking was illegal in this city. But now the law has changed, artist can get a license and there is only four public spots allowed for street performance". Meanwhile, live music in bars and restaurants requires an entertainment license by the government. As rent is expensive and land is very limited in Macau city, many small private businesses are not willing to take the risk and open an area for live performance. Apparently, there is a lot of uncertainty whether Jazz music will become successful and ticket fees can finally cover the musician payments.

"Even though there are plenty of luxury bars and performance venues inside the hotel resorts, it has never been an option for local musicians. First, the casinos have too much money. They can afford many well-known international artists or DJs to perform in the hotel bars. Second, most of the audience love to see foreign faces, especially white people and Filipino. Third is part of the fact that local musicians are less competitive than international Jazz musicians" The Covid-19 pandemic, nevertheless, has changed this situation. As Macau life has already returned back to normal for a long while, local musicians also see an opportunity. Many famous hotels start to hire locals instead of foreigners due to the restriction of international travel. Young people, who are the audiences attended music events such as Macau Jazz and Hush festivals, become a potential market as well as tourists since they show a strong group cohesion and have an impact on society.

your duty to redistribute your wealth and serve at the pleasure of the Commons until Equilibrium is reached."

Having heard the speech enough, Jeffrey stole a look at the sky. It's been clearer these days, sunrises shimmer brighter somehow. He hated to admit that post-transformation, people were happy. Life expectancy was on the up, the Arctic was freezing over again. Hell, the exmilitary were even thriving in their new posts as Zoning aid workers.

Jeffrey tapped the consent screen, he had to, and walked into the locker room stopping briefly for the eye scan by the EQBot. He knew other Owners who'd been able to hire Workers to sneak through the camps to serve on their behalf but Jeffrey's surveillance was too tight. As one of the Owners with the highest wealth extraction scores, they were watching him.

"Morning, Jeff. It's a beautiful day out there. The fields are singing."

That was Ivan, Jeffrey's camp Sponsor. All the Owners were assigned one. The Sponsors were meant to support their treatment plans and help them settle into the camps. But Ivan's real job was to keep an eye on him, to make sure he wasn't reverting. That is, that he wasn't betraying the Council's creed: "A society balanced, a society together."

"How'd the week treat you, Ivan? Did your little girl get her posting yet?"

Ivan scanned the garbage crate into the converter, unhooked the latch, and pulled his gas mask on. Through a muffled filter and effusive gestures:

"She got a post-secondary slot!"

Jeffrey fidgeted with his mask, even after four years in the fields, he still hadn't adjusted to the stench, the putrid rot of industrial waste, sewage, and culinary run-off from the surrounding Zones.

"Well, we'll be grateful for her service," Jeffrey forced out as he readied the conversion plank for the transfer.

Post-secondary postings were highly coveted because that's where a lot of referrals happened. DeterrOs—Deterrence Officers, they were called—kept watch over the school's Ideologs, the tech systems built to assess internal hierarchies and market sympathies. Any suspicious activity was met with a referral to an Assessor. Fearsome, ruthless blokes who determined one's threat to a Zone's power and wealth distribution.

It was an impossible scheme, the assessments, hardly did they not end in a trip to the camps. One's indebtedness an arbitrary distinction made by invisible hands behind the EQClock. Jeffrey swore the Council maintained a quota for assessments.

"Suppose that must be a bit touchy for ya, ay Jeff? Wadn't it a DeterrO that referred you here?"

Ivan knew the answer to that, they'd talked about it relentlessly over the years. Because he was a high profile Owner, he couldn't have escaped the Council's gaze anyway. But he'd also been referred a few times since The Transformation. Usually when he was picking his kids up at the school. DeterrOs with a chip on their shoulders about the days before redistro.





Getting into a 33 and a 19 and the Oeviant Cassy Olique Kairos Lei

"Like ballet and classical music, the golden age of Jazz is gone. The truth is when you want to pick up something which has never served a position, it is gonna be tough. We all know it is tough" says Alex Cheng, who is conductor and one of the charter members of the Macau Jazz Promotion Association. Jazz music has always been a niche market where the audiences share a strong sense of individual taste and have loyalty to the music venues, musicians and genre. However, creating such exquisite cultural work in a place considered to be a cultural desert is very challenging. And sometimes, it is also risky.

"15 years ago, you barely can find a Jazz gig in Macau. In fact, it was even difficult to buy a CD album in record store as much as engage in the local music network. You can imagine how underdeveloped the cultural scenery was" says Alex Cheng. Macau is former Portuguese colony. After returning to China as a special administrative region in 1999, it saw a remarkable economic growth. Macau was the fourth highest GDP per capital in the world, making up nearly \$81152 US dollars in 2019. Having said that, the urban development has only taken place for 20 years, and it is logical that cultural capital has not kept up with the economic wealth in the city. Local cultural activities mostly run by either Macau government or the entertainment department of hotel resorts, so there are not many private sectors amongst the arts and music industries. Macau Jazz, not surprisingly, has received relatively little attention by the majority.

"Ivan, are you heckling me? Thought Sponsors were supposed to be models for us wealth traders? Might have to report you to the Resolution Board."

Jeffrey didn't need to look at Ivan to know he was smiling. Despite the gruelling work in the camps and the patronizing task of being sponsored, Jeffrey liked Ivan and he even liked the work. It was brutalizing manual labor, but damn satisfying. And he was good at it. Others in the camps called him "The Wrench" for his gentle touch with the notoriously cranky Nutrient Processors.

"Speaking of diligent Sponsors, you know I've got to bring it up, Jeff. You're due before the Council next week for your hearing."

Pretending not to hear over the hum of the converter, Jeffrey made quick to fix the clog in the shoot. It always went haywire at the transfer point -- where the waste slid into the repurposing plant to get sorted into fuel for the solar fleet, biofood materials, or medical parts.

Ivan bore down into him: "Come on Jeff, why do you do this to yourself? Just finish out your debt and be done with the camps."

It's true, he could have finished paying his debt long ago. But he was dragging it out. He'd heard whispers at the Food Allocation Centers, the Wealth Liberators were organizing.



Face the Final Curtain

Akua Lezli Hope

You get used to not knowing for so long finding their names astonishes
You call your soul back to your mind
You summon your brain awake on dark mornings lavender dried and lilies wilted days heavy with frost

Elsewhere, a continent burns
where are alchemists and magicians
who crowd our films, inflame our folklore
to exchange wet death for crematory fire
balance ravaging extremes and save life
where are our imagined superheroes
brimming extraordinary, empowered
to airlift scorched wombats, restore monarchs
cleanse micro-pelleted, polluted seas
where is our will, harnessed, marshalled,
multiplied to forge peace, to evolve

Hanging on by a thread

Sara McHaffie

She hadn't anticipated how loud the sewing machine's hum would seem, as she pressed the pedal down. She lifted her foot and adjusted the speed, then got up and dug out a newspaper from under the bed and placed the machine on it. Not quite flat, but it should work OK.

All this movement caught the attention of the Small Boy, who put down his Duplo to watch her for a moment. Thankfully, the Duplo proved more interesting, and he went back to building improbable towers.

Yesterday, the noise of the towers falling must have annoyed the man in the next room, as he thumped the wall and seemed to be swearing or at least saying fairly unpleasant things. It was hard to tell over the noise of his television. Today, she had looked out her picnic blanket and set the Duplo out on it, to muffle the sound of the Small Boy's toys.

The newspaper seemed to work and sewing along the seams of the quilt seemed to happen automatically. A perfect three-quarter inch from the edge, trapping the binding neatly, so that finally, after weeks of piecing, it was done.

She pulled it out from under the presser foot, and held it out to admire. It looked just like she'd planned. The jewel tones complemented each other, and the whole thing kind-of sang out when she looked at it. It felt a bit magical to have that much control over the result of something. So unlike anything she was used to.



THIS IS NOT THE END



If she could piece together a life the way she could piece together a quilt, she would sew together:

A home (where the rent wasn't too much so they didn't end up in this situation again, getting shouted at through the thin walls of a B and B, trying to keep a noisy Small Boy quiet while her heart raced);

Some kind of solution to her chronic pain, which only got worse climbing the stairs to this room;

A magic solution (no actual solution seemed achievable) to the vicious cycle of 'no job means no money means no childcare means no training means no job';

An escape from the Small Boy's father, who had essentially landed them all in the B and B when he lost his income and didn't tell her until a week before eviction day;

A life that felt a little more stable:

A world where her skills were valued.

She did have skills. Just not many outlets for them. And not much confidence in showing them to people. And not much energy to put them to use. Not just sewing. Keeping the Small Boy quiet in the crowded room was a skill. Organising all the paperwork and proof and appointments that had been needed to register as homeless was probably evidence of quite a few skills. The writing she did - the odd poem, some chatting on forums, stories for the Small Boy - it wasn't bad. If she had time to herself she could even sort re-registration and get back into nursing.

She tidied away her sewing things. If you didn't keep on top of things in here, they ended up on the floor and the B and B staff would just wander in whenever they felt like it. The disapproving looks were a bit much on top of everything else.

hostile or inconsiderate unilateral actions from a minority of nations, which might negatively impact upon the broader global community, increasingly more difficult. In this sense, we now agree with Kant's statement, that,

"...evils still have a beneficial effect. For they compel our species to discover a law of equilibrium to regulate the essentially healthy hostility which prevails among the states and is produced by their freedom' (Kant 1784/1991, p. 49).

To the frustration of many in what was then often called the 'Western world', at the heart of the emerging consensus was what would eventually come to be recognised as a final rejection of classical Liberal Individualism. Instead, an appreciation of the need to always balance individual autonomy with collective social order in careful equilibrium began to slowly gain ascendency, noting in agreement with previous scholars that the prioritising of individual autonomy in this new context no longer made sense, and was possible, '...only by asking autonomy to do a kind of work it cannot do, that of telling us what we ought to want as communities, collectively living together, and not just as individuals with different desires and preferences' (Callahan 2003, p. 291).

This event is now seen as one of two pivotal moments of the period (along with the horrors of 2093 – see entry seventeen in this volume) which led to the accords of 2102 and then the 2195 mandating of germ-line genetic amendments to all humans.

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After approximately three and a half years of international discussions and negotiations, tentative agreements were reached at the UN Assembly regarding legislation on constraints for bodily modification and augmentation. With the capitalist system still in place then, these included production of modest enhancements being allowed (in the 5-8 percent range), with subsidies made available for marginalized groups and poorer countries. All sales were to be registered, and those with violent criminal histories were prohibited from purchasing. Despite some protestation from across the political spectrum, restrictions on consumer freedom and privacy rights were deemed necessary as a response to the tremendous potential for harm these new technologies presented. Broad international agreement started to emerge that rather than the plethora of rights which numerous lobbying groups of the time had championed, instead, '...the right to life - broadly understood as a right to be free from deadly violence, maining, torture, and starvation - is paramount...' (Etzioni 2010, p. 100). Of course, this approach coupled with fairly modest enhancements theoretically being equally available did little to seriously challenge existing social hierarchies.

Unsurprisingly, as well as a few rogue individuals and groups, in the immediate years following the accords certain states tried to circumvent them, implementing covert augmentation programmes in order to try and gain competitive advantage over perceived adversaries. Attempted justifications for such activity included proactive preventative measures to deter assumed would be aggressors; efforts to restore nations to idealised conceptions of former glory; and action taken to make amends for historical injustices caused by colonialism. The schemes were all uncovered and thwarted however, and this had the effect of encouraging further integration and transparency between most nations, it being recognised that tightening interconnections between them would make any

She put her feet up and watched the Small Boy pushing chunky little cars around. Mobile signal seemed to be better than usual, so she checked some threads on her forum. One new thread caught her eye, in the feminist section.

Doctor/Nurse looking for living space?
Feminist Anti-Racist Permaculture Project looking for healthcare worker to support our efforts.
Housing and meals provided.

Interested? Contact Susan@FightBackBetter.Com

If only she was still qualified. The signal was still going, so she went onto the NMC website to see if there were any courses with free childcare. Everything had moved around since she'd last checked. As well as training courses, you could just take a test and if you passed, you were a nurse again. She had just enough to pay for it in her savings account. She had been so tempted to use that money for another month in the old house, but this was a much better use of it.

She e-mailed Susan explaining that she could book a test the next month, and asked if that would be alright. Staring out of the window at more windows, she spent the next hour imagining what a 'feminist anti-racist permaculture project' might be like. The website just had some pictures of pumpkins and chickens on it. Not much explaining anything.

Whatever it was like, it would be better than this. Even just the fact it would let her get away from him.

Her phone buzzed. Susan had written back and she could go and take a look at the place whenever. So she packed a couple of bags, put her sewing machine at the bottom of the Small Boy's pushchair, put his coat on, and headed for the station.

TEA

Molly Newhouse

Warm ceramic between clasped flesh evoking memories of a distant relaxation and also of when we didn't do this

Swerving, skid marks, spittle flying or cold, refusal, rejection things changed when we started saying yes

Tense faces, still, yes
the kettles can't quite boil up happiness
but they listen; I listen;

we hear you.

Astute commentators at the time, and since, recognised that these acts should not be interpreted as 'radical' actions of human augmentation, but instead, as conservative or conservationist ones, with various elites attempting to perpetuate and preserve particular versions of social order to their own benefit. Such a realization, once it began to diffuse more broadly, led to popular acceptance of the sentiment that, '...even when speaking about changing human nature and society beyond recognition, the underlying primary desire is to preserve ourselves and make our society more durable' (Stambler 2010, p. 20 - emphases in original). Attention then began to turn to exactly who the 'our' under consideration was, and ought to be, going forward.

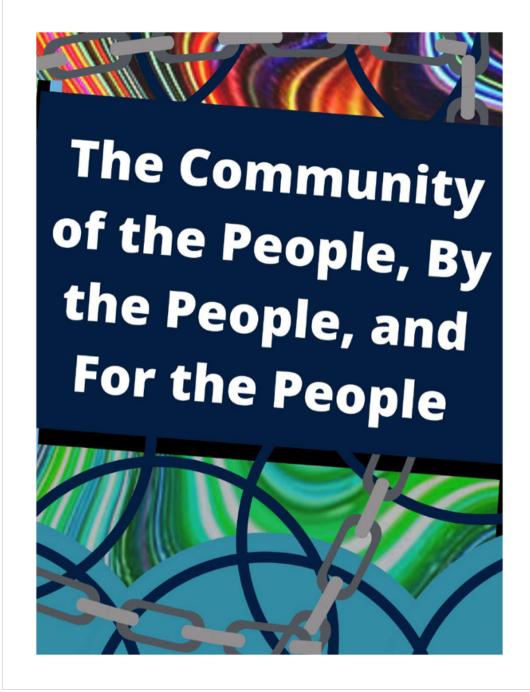
In the aftermath, politicians began to grapple with how best to proceed with these burgeoning technologies, recognising as Benjamin had previously noted, that, '...forms of social stratification, and their intersection with science and technology, are inextricably connected' (Benjamin 2016, p. 51). A few countries outright banned the use (itself a means of preserving particular configurations of order), with harsh punishments including the death penalty meted out. The majority of countries, however, recognised the potential of such technologies to not only ameliorate suffering caused by varieties of illness and disease, but also to enhance human flourishing. In many, public opinion was sought out, often in the form of crude surveys and focus groups, and never with full equity, but attempts were mostly sincere and helped to gauge general attitudes.

The 2285 Authorized Children's Encyclopaedia of Key Events in Cassini's Genesis – Entry Sixteen John-Paul Smiley

At number sixteen in our entries of those events considered key to the emergence of our off-world colony at Cassini is The Universities Admissions 'Enhancement' Scandal on Earth of 2064-2069. An international criminal syndicate made hundreds of millions of dollars over the course of five years selling unlicensed genetic enhancement technologies to affluent parents for their children. This was done in order to covertly increase the chance of their child's admission to what were then prestigious institutions, and took the form of both mental and physical enhancements.

The more popular of these technologies were discrete implants which boosted working memory, power output, and cardiovascular endurance performance by approximately 18 percent. More powerful implants were becoming available, but these were not only considerably more expensive but also less discrete, and so risked drawing unwanted attention. But approximate boosts of 18 percent proved sufficient to ensure that wealthy students had added advantage, resulting in further perpetuating the already existing inequalities of the time. Most of the 'Ivy League' were implicated, along with Oxford and Cambridge and several elite universities across Asia and Latin America.

The affair was characterized by a particularly blatant form of systemic racism in some countries, for example the United States of America, where the majority of those guilty were wealthy White parents using their means to buy further advantage (an antecedent of which is clear in the 2019 university admissions bribery scandal). In other, more ethnically homogeneous countries, the elites were united more by combinations of religious and/or class affiliations.



the people's department of

LOVE + BELONGING

the department of Love and Belonging is a people-powered mutual-aid network that provides community services that are liberated from the systems that our ancestors have dismantled.

our work centers



current projects

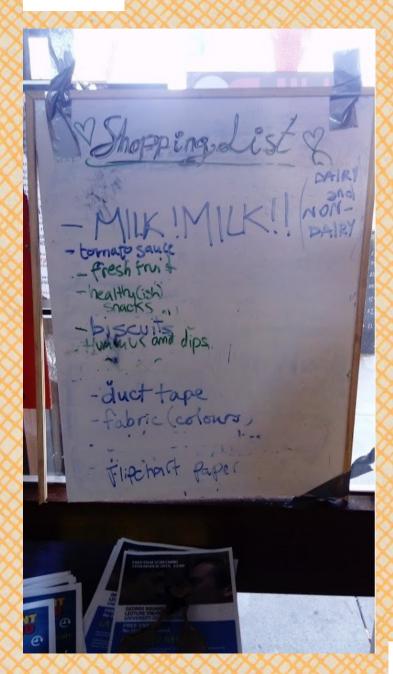


communitybased abolition

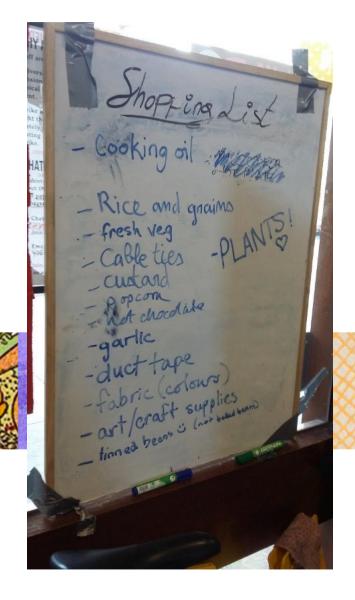


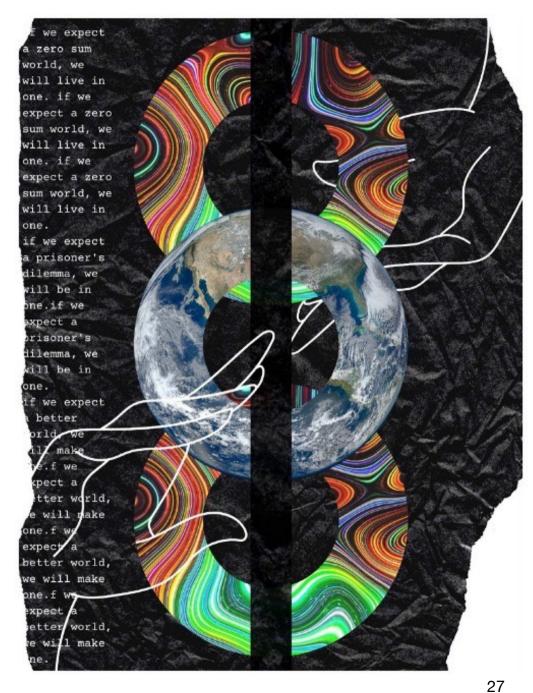
anti zero sum community development

29/03/2018



25/03/2018

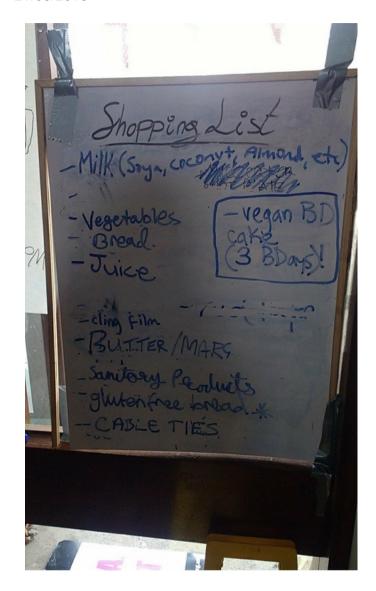




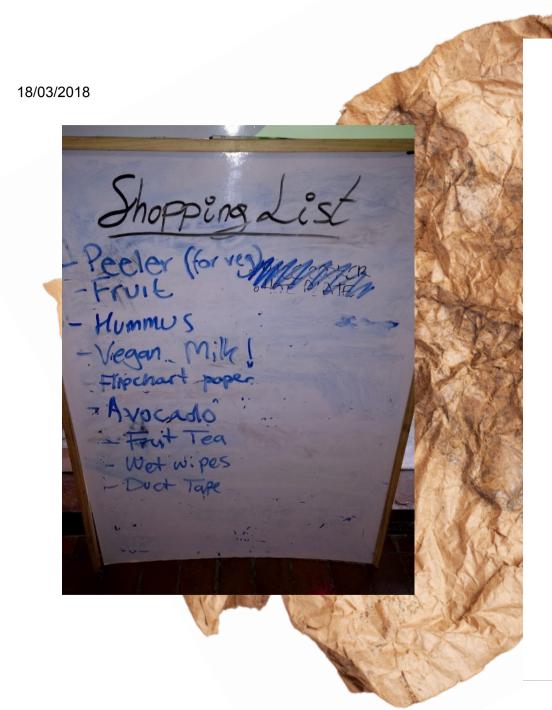
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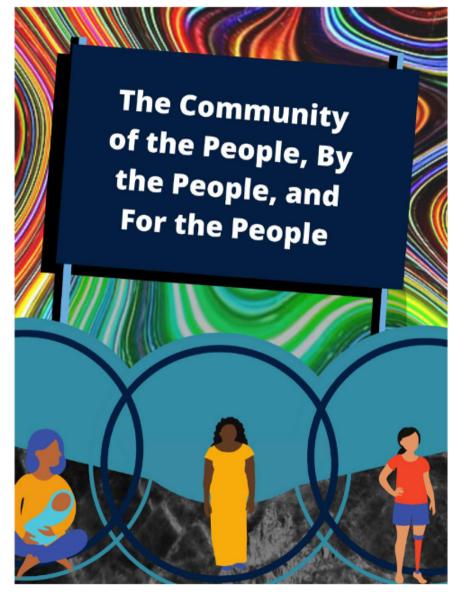


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28 65





Losing Focus A speculative future for the Muse headband* Olivia Hadley

Ross sighed as he strapped his Intensive Focus Band around his temples and trudged to his front door.

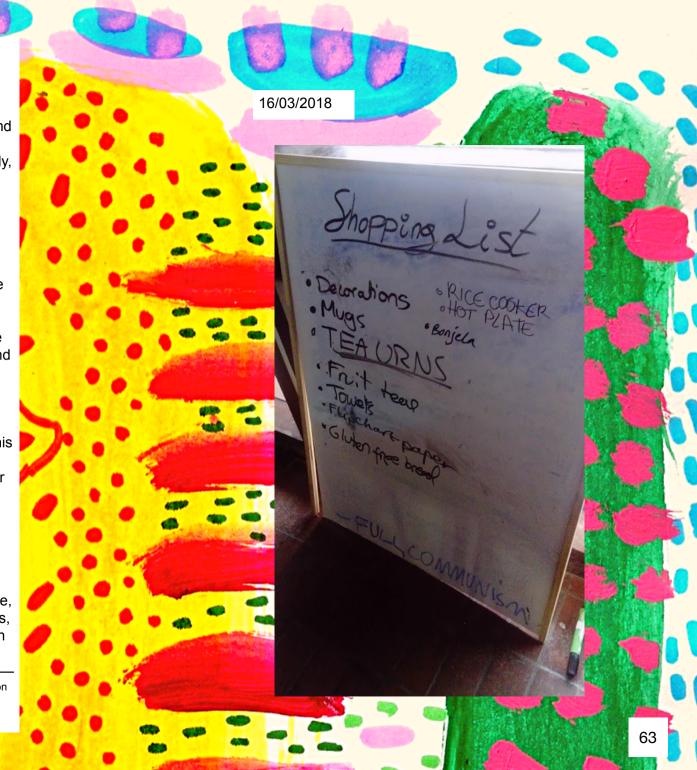
"You want some of these?" his mom asked wearily, motioning to capsules in her hand.

"Fine," he exhaled, pulling two capsules from her palm. As much as he didn't want to take the caffeine pills, he knew he had to. Lately, Ross hadn't been making enough money to help his family make ends meet because his Intensive Focus Hours had been declining. He was a wage laborer at a local childcare facility. The facility didn't pay Ross for his total time worked, but rather, only compensated his Intensive Focus Hours – the total number of hours in which he was fully focused on his work. Whenever Ross's mind drifted elsewhere for longer than two minutes, his Intensive Focus Band began producing a buzzing noise inside his head.

Ross had also quickly learned that avoiding this buzzing was not enough to ensure full payment for his hours. He would never forget the day that his boss had smirked while paying him a seven-hour wage for a ten-hour day, even though Ross's buzzer hadn't buzzed once. It then dawned on him that the two minutes before his band began buzzing weren't compensated either.

After that day, Ross never lost more than ten unfocused minutes each day, making him the most efficient worker at his facility. It didn't earn him a raise, but it gave him job security for a year. But these days, with his father spiralling ever further into illness, cash

^{*} A brain-sensing headband for competitive meditation that is currently on the market: https://www.wsj.com/articles/stressed-type-as-are-turningmeditation-into-a-competitive-sport-1528814126



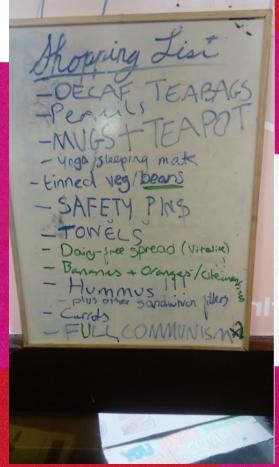
Vegan Milk Needed

Molly Newhouse

Whiteboard showing the requests from occupying activists to others over two weeks. These pictures were taken at an occupation of a University of Edinburgh building in 2018 in support of a staff pension strike. The list would be on display, so anybody who wished to give anything to the activists could provide them what they needed and wanted. This photo essay is about desire. What is desired in activist spaces to make the space not just liveable in, but a space in which activists can critically examine the world around

them and organise?

15/03/2018



getting thinner by the day, and his dreams vanishing in front of him, the buzzing could go on for many minutes at a time before he would notice it. He would still be feeding his kids, still playing games, still cleaning up vomit – but his mind would be elsewhere, or sometimes nowhere at all. Everyone learned about the change in Ross's internal life when workers' Intensive Focus Hours were stacked against each other at the end of each week.

At first, his coworkers had expressed sympathy, asking him if he was okay. But after Ross had repeatedly declined the opportunity to spill the intimate details of his life to coworkers who were too focused all the time to sustain meaningful conversation, they began to grow wary. They spread rumors that he was just riding out his guaranteed job security from his Most Efficient Worker of the Year award. Ross didn't waste precious mental energy countering this gossip. He couldn't afford to lose a single focused second.

Ross thought about his lost paychecks as he swallowed the caffeine pills. He'd once prided himself on having high enough working efficiency to forgo these pills, but his pride wasn't worth his father's health anymore. He hoped that these pills would bring him to 80 percent efficiency today, but he knew that this still wouldn't be enough to save him. Ross only had two weeks left in his year of guaranteed job security, and he'd been too inefficient for too long to hope that his boss would keep him after that. He wondered what he would do. He longed for a job without an Intensive Focus Band, but most of those were illegal, like his mom's business. She had initially run her own bake shop, but the government shut it down because she refused to make her employees wear Intensive Focus Bands.

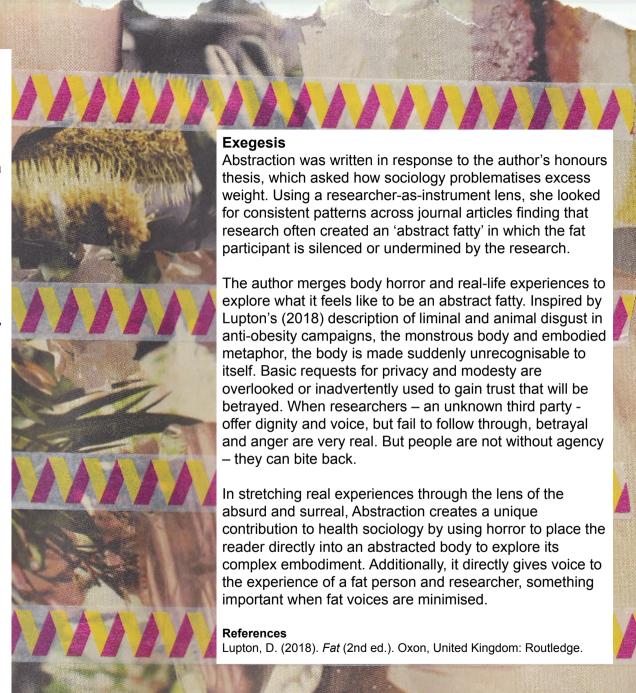
Ross kissed his mom on the cheek and left for work. He boarded the speed rail a few blocks from his apartment and powered on his band as he sat down.

Struggling with your efficiency? No problem! Ross rolled his eyes as the ad ran inside his head. He had bought his band at a reduced price. Consequently, every time he powered it on, a string of ads blared in his brain. For just three installments of 19.99, we promise that our app, FocusNow, will have you earning Most Efficient Employee awards again in no time! For a moment, he was almost tempted. He remembered how his coworkers had applauded him when he had gotten the award. He remembered how his mom had hugged him.

He stopped himself. His installments of 19.99 would be better spent building a savings account so he could eventually buy the rights to his own data. This would mean that his Intensive Focus Band provider couldn't sell his personal information to these predatory app companies. But knew he couldn't afford that either.

Ross pulled his phone out of his pocket and tried to ignore the scripts running through his head. He opened his *LifePics* app and was greeted by his friend Rob and Rob's newlywed wife beaming in front of a beautiful stucco house. The caption read, "So happy to start our new life here! We made the LOLS cut-off!" A feeling somewhere between grief and rage began to fill the cavity in Ross's chest.

In the past ten years, most suburbs had begun requiring prospective homeowners to submit Level of Life Satisfaction data in order qualify for homeownership. This data could be collected by your Intensive Focus Band, but you had to buy an additional installment, usually around \$200, that would enable your band to monitor the activity in your brain associated with happiness. Most realtors required a LOLS report spanning a month, with the user actively logging data for 12 hours a day during this month-long period. When Ross and his boyfriend had looked into houses a few years prior, their realtor had explained that LOLS data was collected in order to ensure that "the type of people who liked to cause disturbances"



Observing its distress with a frown, Linda drapes the nearby towel over it. Covered at last, she feels intense relief. Jessica begins to tell Linda, who sits quietly and nods, about her realisation that she was always a monster but that her face is the real problem, and that maybe it's an allergy, about her fears of what will happen to her, and that these people are too scared of her to treat her properly, can she explain to them that she's scared too? Can they talk to her, please?

Linda nods but does not touch her. "I'll be right back," she says, and walks out and Jessica has hope -

"I think it's best we sedate her," Linda says quietly.

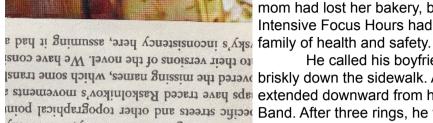
Someone whispers back, "I'm not sure...if she has underlying issues- "

But Linda cuts him off, whisper guiet, "She understands the risk."

Thick mucus pours off it, its sudden angry, guttural yells lacerating its vocal cords. Furious, it ignores the sharp electrical burn through its body and the deep suctioning sounds as flesh tears from tile to reach the door. Linda jumps back, scared, while the blue men lurch forward and grab its body with such force it would bruise and break, if it was human.

"Please love, calm down," someone says, stabbing a needle into it, while Linda says, distressed, "We're just trying to help you."

The world begins to spin and, desperate, its teeth finds human flesh and starts to rip.



nusement area called the Islands. levka). Farther down the Neva is the we paddinb ittle Neva), and the Petersburg side (between t the city known as Vasilievsky Island (bet esigned to control flooding. The two smalle "Stod s, don the south bank of the Neva, and reams: the Neva, the Little Neva, and the I "Lito the Gulf of Finland, at a point where the situated on the marshy delta where the rivi ne orders of I sar Peter the Great in the earl aint Petersburg but normally referred to as note on the topography of Petersburg: the



didn't move to the suburbs. "Happy people make happy neighborhoods," she had insisted.

Ross finally reached his stop. He got off the train still thinking about the house he had once dreamed of buying with his boyfriend. That was before his dad had gotten sick, before his mom had lost her bakery, before his declining Intensive Focus Hours had begun robbing his

He called his boyfriend as he walked speaker which some transl pyered the missing names, which some transl superior sylvant in the state of the state o Band. After three rings, he was greeted by a chuckle and a yawn. Often, though not consistently, Dostoevsky

"Jesus, Ross. It's 6AM."

"Well good morning to you too," Ross

"How are you, baby?"

"I don't even know anymore. Did you see

His boyfriend paused. "You wish we were

Ross let out a sharp laugh. "You don't?" "I mean the house would've been nice. But we were wise not to get that app with the LOLS data. You know they wouldn't have done anything good with that."

"Yeah." Ross rolled his shoulders and took a long breath in as he approached the childcare facility. "Okay I gotta go, baby. Love vou."

"Love you."

Ross hung up and his speaker retreated into his band. He halted directly in front of the entryway.

"Intensive Focus Band matches face." an automated voice declared. "Ross McMillan, you may enter." The doors slid open and Ross started his day.

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"Okay mate, stay calm," the shorter man says to him, as the taller says to it, "Can you tell us your name and what's wrong?"

It doesn't want them to see. "Can you get some clothes, please?"

The three men just look at it, perplexed.

"Okay, we can't understand you," the taller man says, unsure, "We're going to try and assess you now." It realises they're not really talking to it, but to its moist body. Without further warning, they enter its space, poking, squeezing, pinching, stabbing. Embarrassed, it wails with terror, so deep and loud that the mirror shatters. The men all jump back, terrified, and it hates that more – it didn't want to hurt anyone, but to stop hurting.

"I'm so sorry!" it shrieks. They look angry, but they disappear behind the door. It feels awful, and ashamed at the relief it feels. Tired and guilty, it closes its eye and tries to go still and numb, to become nothing.

When it looks again, there are more people outside the door. A woman looks in, and noticing it looking, walks delicately through the ankle-deep slime and squats next to it.

"Jessica," the woman says calmly, "My name is Linda, and I'm here to help you."

"Towel!" it wails, trying desperately to gesture to it.

"I'm not sure, but can you pass me a towel? I want to cover up," she says, but his visible shock betrays that he cannot understand her. Without lips, she can no longer articulate clearly, her voice mostly pitches and tones. His eyes widen in panic. If he took a moment, he might understand her, but he was never dependable under pressure. Instead, his panic makes her panicked, truly conscious to the situation.

"Do you still love me?" she blurts, reliving last time. Panic makes it harder to focus on being understandable, so his horror deepens, and he disappears, yelling, "I'm going to call an ambulance!"

She wants to say don't go, stay with me, I'm scared too. Instead, she tries to take a deep breath, but her nose is clogged so she breathes through her mouth, creating soft gurgles and wheezes. Each exhale sends more drool splashing out. Again, she tries for the towel, but movement sends intense burning pain through her nerves, leaving her paralysed. Distraught, she knows she's a monster.

And what is time to a monster but a series of events, strung together by thin consciousness? There are men at the door now, in blue uniform coats zipped up despite the heat, kits in hand. "The stench!" the taller one whispers, horrified, to his partner. He didn't intend it to hear, but it is a monster now, and terrified, so it hears all.

"I'm sorry," it croaks, "I didn't know it smelled," which is the truth – without a nose, it can't smell. But the croaking seems to alarm the men more than soothe, and it can see its boyfriend behind the men, biting his thumb.

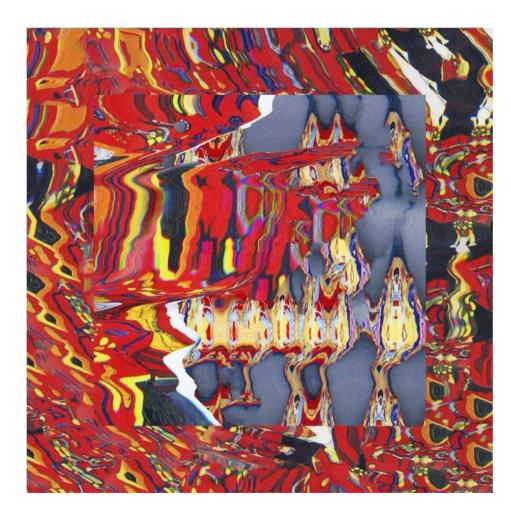
"Please, do something!" he says, clearly distressed at the apology.

Fibrous Matter Sophia Hansen





Delicacies of the Garden, Remix Sophia Hansen



Abstraction

Rebekah Lisciandro

When Jessica gets out of the shower and reaches for her towel, she abruptly discovers she can't. Looking down, she realises that it wasn't water dripping from her but thin sheets of translucent mucous. It splatters wetly onto the white tiles where her feet might be, if she could see them. Looking nervously in the mirror, she realises that she is not human but an oozing mass. How had she never noticed? How long has she walked around, oozing, hideous, without realising?

Most alarmingly, her face is swollen and bloated, red with burst capillaries and peeling skin. Her lips are gone, revealing teeth and gums, and viscous globs of drool splash onto the counter. The tissue surrounding her eyes is so swollen that the skin is ед рецум, гроз э tight and shiny, as if seconds from bursting. Blood fills the uppns puy white of her right eye, while her left is almost completely syunap ou og ju closed. Her arms are glued to her body, unable to move or pur om upamper touch. Blood pounds in her ears and the room tilts; what will ?won nedden street—which, by

Her heart stops when she hears a knock.

"Jess," her boyfriend says, "You've been in there for ages." Before she can warn him not to enter, he tries to push the door open, grunting as he struggles against the mucus covering the floor. Face pink, he looks around the door, and she watches his face change from confusion to outright revulsion.

"Jess?" he says, "What's happened?"

giso cansed by a

he would lose hi

ent oblivion. I erri

t occur to him to g

AT for a very long



Tom Vickers

Gabi woke. groggy and blurry eved. He stretched out his bulky limbs, cramped from the confines of the car, and wrestled himself upright. His job as a care worker was taking him away from his family too much. Split shifts at weird times of the day, with visits so far away from home it was pointless going home in between. But he didn't have time to think about that now.

Gabi stood up from his table in the community canteen, saying goodbye to the friends he had shared lunch with and going to the sink to wash his dishes. He hummed a tune that had been stuck in his head since that morning at the gym, as he walked outside to unlock his bike.

2.

His watch showed 13:40. Agnes.

3. Another minute to clear his head and make sure he was

As he moved off down the cycle path Gabi

Thank you, Mr Drummond

When I smirked for peer status, while your colleagues belted

me with their heavy leather straps, you, my softly spoken

English teacher, would say I disappointed you, pricking my

Ian C Smith

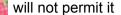
eyes with tears.

fit to drive. Wondering at the same time what lesson his son was in right now. Tick tock. Pulled back to the regimented schedule of his shift, with only 15 minutes allowed for each visit. No more, or that would eat into the shareholders' profits. The company had only been able to win this contract by undercutting their competitors.

Gabi moved into the driver's seat and started the engine, pulling out from the leafy layby and into the traffic.

Another four and a half minutes and he was outside Agnes' house. Tick tock. reflected on the thousands of other care workers similarly doing the rounds on their local patches.

Increased staffing over the last few years had given them more flexibility in the time they spent with each person. This had been agreed after representations from the Community Care Council - a body made up of elected care workers, service users and family members that made strategic decisions about the sector – as part of the Economic Plan, and was enabled by increases in productivity in other sectors.



bayo a says "the way we approach the problem is the problem"² or maybe we are

it

do we have it in us to become "things without pretension" do have it in us to band together breathe and let go

we are not permanent fixtures2 here

that is where our empathy lies our freedom and

our greatest

gift.



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- 5. Huxley, A. 1954. *The Doors Of Perception*. Chatto & Windus. Great Britain.
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HMKTISSE 52

much of the fear ursula speaks of that fear in "our fear-stricken society"¹ arises from our desperate self centred fight against impermanence and our disassociation with the cycle of life⁴

when we go the earth will slowly reclaim what is hers to her our world of overvalued selves and importance⁵ means little

we are objects that rust too

perhaps
we are
our longevity
is
the falsehood¹

what if the trees have a place but we don't what if the machines do what if its the virus

that *cyberpunk condor*⁶ knock knock

knocking⁷

a dystopian refashioning¹ sure but only through our eyes

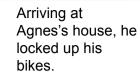
it is a future that extends us¹ that we can't pen our egos⁴ our

arrogance⁵









Opening the gate of the squat bungalow, up the path and in the door.

"Hello Agnes, how are you today?" His thick Hungarian accent was blunted by years spent in other countries. overlaid with Caribbean. Portuguese and Bulgarian, forming a richly textured blend.

"Oh, I can't complain. You're such a good boy Gabriel. And how are your family?"

"Ah, they're doing very well, thank you. The boy is getting on well at school."

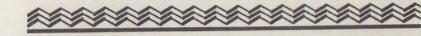
5. He clenched his hands. "Not that I know that first-hand", he thought to himself, "I barely see him these days, let alone have time to hear how his day has been".

He chuckled.
"Working hard, the boy is.
Determined he's going to be a doctor and join the international medical brigades."

6.

Gabi settled into his craft, well-practiced. Helping Agnes to the toilet, cleaning the bathroom afterwards. Preparing lunch. And care and attention running through it all.

"You have such strong hands Gabriel. Reminds me of my Billy."



Objects That Rust

jason harding

Daget Tana

who says we need to be saved what if

that *novel fiction*¹ we imagine does not include us

we assume our *centrality*² to the plot is the *ever-present narrative*¹ that inevitability that ruha wants us to challenge

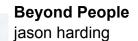
every imagined future revolves around you me we

us

are we willing wait
let me rephrase
do we have the courage³
to expand our vision1 and see
you me we
us
no longer
here

its possible

could equity be found there





"What did he do, your husband?"

"He was a builder. Never took a day sick in his whole life."

7. "Not like the ones you get nowadays, seems nobody wants to work."

"Course that's what you had to do, before the revolution. The bosses would leave you to rot if you weren't useful to them."

8.

"Did you find much time to spend together, you and Billy, what with his work?"

"Well, I mean..
he had a
family to
support. And I
had my little
job in the post
office."

"Are you still in An academic near you has just published another article. touch with Curious, Dr X opens U-Rank. This scholar had published an impossible number of articles relative to years active. vour She feels a nauseating anxiety in the pit of her stomach, colleagues from those hyper-competition and individualising discourses producing days?" shame; a fraudulent sensation. Feelings of uselessness, obsolescence, nothingness. In reality, this academic tying Dr X's stomach in knots is a bot. A system introduced algorithm, a fake academic, used to provoke competition, "Oh. all dead or "Of course! Some increased productivity and surveillance. Algorithms are a gone I'm afraid. of them have form of power, and 'there was always the spectre of the The post office is passed on but ghost in the machine' (Haraway 1991, p. 152). shut now of there's a group of course. The us meet at the A cyborg world is about the final imposition. The academic younger girls community centre cyborg raises questions about what counts and is valued on a Tuesday. And moved away, no as knowledge, and what cultures, and bodies count as iobs for them I still have a good human. Transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and round here now. natter with the dangerous possibilities (Haraway 1991, p. 154). It is also But we had some staff whenever I about the lived social and bodily realities in which we are fine times, so we go in the post did." not afraid of hybridity or partiality of identities and office, I like to perspectives. Not afraid of contradiction. Rather than keep up to date seeking escape through the abandonment of technology, a on how they're refusal to engage in self-branding online and aspirational doing." academic labour, rather than a denial of the messy, we must seek a re-appropriation of language in order to express this kind of decentered notion of human identity Tick tock, time's 10. Lunch finished found in the cyborg. Being a feminist, academic, a up. 15 minutes, inand tidied away, colleague, a supervisor, a leader, a cyborg. It is about out. He had Gabi got out the liminality. Making sense of fragmentation and diversity via overrun, as usual, project he and the process of becoming. We are all academic cyborgs. meaning he'd Agnes were have to miss his working on, own lunch. He documenting her

The boundaries between her personal and professional lives were corroded and her iPhone-a lost a limb! It is only by being out of place could we truly take such intense pleasure in machines (Haraway 1991, p. 180) and naturalise our relationships with them. If we see the self as both a product and a reflexively constituted brand subject to transaction and exchange, we see a notion of self deeply marked by the discourses and practices of post-Fordist modes of capitalist production.

Dr X taps to review the minutes of the meeting to discover her comments had been removed from the official digital record. She is furious. Another *ding* Is your university unhappy about your unhappiness? Happiness, Sara Ahmed posits, functions as a promise that directs you toward certain objects that would lead to the good life. Happiness is an orientation offered as a promise of the future, if only one can orient herself toward the proper object. 'What does it mean to be worthy of happiness?' (2010 p. 54).

U-Rank is a technology of 'everyday neoliberalism'. What is distinctly neoliberal is how through the architecture and design of such an app, the individual experiences their field of knowledge production as a 'marketplace of ideas'. And the market is rife with advice on how to secure and create jobs, particularly those that don't seem like work. This aligns neatly with the neoliberal ideologies that shift risk and responsibility onto the individual and fits well within the mantra of the overworked academic who loves what they do.

might not have the same time to spend with people as when he was working as a photo journalist – or the same pay, ha! – but the stories were still there, the stories of people's lives, rich and deep, yearning to be told.

Say goodbye to Agnes, door shut, up the path, through the gate, into the car.

To Charles and his cats by 15:50, listening to him talk about his time in the shipyards just a few minutes too long, leaving no time to phone home and hear his son's voice after school.

experiences of the Women's Federation for future generations.

Finding a natural place to stop, they packed away the project for another day. Just in time for a community worker to arrive to take Agnes to Pilates in the park.

Gabi got back on his bike, off to run the afterschool photography club.





To Bethany for 16:30, expecting to make her tea but finding that she'd had a fall and needing to wait with her till the ambulance arrived, leaving no time to pick up his own groceries and requiring an apologetic text home to Hanna.

And the next visit. and the next.



At the end of his 11. shift, 16 hours after he left home. Gabi finally arrived back at their small terraced flat. cramped for the three of them but thankfully free of damp, unlike the last two places.

Picking up his son from his afterschool club and stopping by their allotment to grab some potatoes for their dinner, then home to the twobedroom house they had swapped with an elderly couple looking to downsize.







work, gendered job precarity, and (self) surveillance. Academics learn to perform to external audits and enact a form of selfgovernance.

Back at her office, Dr X's phone vibrates and her laptop chimes in almost synchronicity. Another push notification: Lunchtime self-care yoga workshop in building block C, room 456 at 12:30pm. Earn 2 extra status points! When did her working life become like an episode of Black Mirror? She didn't have time for yoga! This was Audre Lorde's 'self-care is warfare' mantra flipped back on itself in the form of a yogic dog pose.



Gather data – Analyze – Act - Empower? More neoliberal life advice. When U-Rank was first rolled out, the institutional excitement in such technologies was palpable, but it also harbours deep individualised and internalised self-loathing and anxiety. This is self-quantification and the 'quantified self' in action. These (real) websites and the (fictitious) U-Rank app capitalise on the intensification of academic labour and the hypercompetition amongst academics, which means that they then have the propensity to affect academics and professional staff, to exploit personal insecurities and monetise already under-rewarded work. U-Rank had become lucratively attractive to the 'entrepreneurial' academic.

In the beginning, many thought U-Rank would bring about equality at work. Real gender equity and diversity. Instead, U-Rank became a panopticon in which everyone on campus must censor, police, audit and market themselves while university legal departments strive ever harder to limit institutional liability. Sexual harassment and bullying continued as always, behind closed doors. Inequities in hiring and promotion were justified under the guise of meritocracy.

With the increased sophistication of technology and the blurring of the boundaries between human and machine, Haraway wrote of the emergence of a new feminism. A cyborg world is about the final imposition, the final appropriation of women's bodies "in a masculinist orgy of war" (Haraway 1991, p. 154). There is certainly a war raging in the underfunded neoliberalised Australian academy, Dr X just didn't know if it was one where gender categories were being made obsolete or just merely obscured.

Greeted at the door by his wife Hanna. A warm embrace, easing out the tension in his shoulders, accumulated from hours in the car and all the conversations cut too short by his schedule.

"How is the boy?"

"He asked when you're coming home. He hasn't seen you for days. I told him you're home every night but leave before he's awake. He misses you, kincsem."

"I know. I miss him too. And I miss you. But they need me. Some of these kids don't know how to speak to people."

Silence.

Talking through the events of the day over dinner, and discussing Gabi's plans to run some active listening training for the younger care workers. Then Hanna was away to her singing class at the local cultural centre and Gabi put the boy to bed. He sighed as he settled down with a quiet glass of whiskey and a book. The time was theirs.

DRES!23AC

Academic cyborgs

Briony Lipton

alouab

Dr X swipes to unlock her phone, her thumb is on autopilot, 'the machine is us', she thinks of Donna Haraway, 'our processes, an aspect of our embodiment' (Haraway 1991, p. 180). Dr X is becoming a cyborg; 'a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" (Haraway 1991, p. 163). She sees herself-refracted in the reflection of her smartphone. The cold winter breeze numbs her fingers, but the device in her palm is warm from almost constant use. She opens an app and there on the screen is the name of the committee meeting she has just attended. Instinctively she types. *Thank you! Your experience has been recorded*. Dr X walks across the quiet campus, in and out of stale buildings, and winding through empty corridors (*U-Rank has found a faster route. Tap to accept*), her phone vibrates: *Set goals - Track progress - Take control of your academic career*. Just another institutional alert.

In this 'dystopia of the present', against a backdrop of neoliberalism, subcontracting, mass casualisation, sped-up and intensified work, and institutional restructuring that occurs as frequently as the changing of the seasons, digital platforms such as ResearchGate, Academia.edu and Rate My Professor have expanded and merged into a new multidimensional user-driven educational tool. The U-Rank app categories individuals and faculties of higher education institutions. Each professional encounter must be 'rated' for the quality of the interaction from 1 to 5, with each collegial interaction, each faculty, school, course, lecture, tutorial, meeting and person having an individual overall 'score'. U-Rank converts users' data to develop an academic ratings system. U scores are based on an algorithm that combines colleagues, and students' ratings along with number of publications, impact factor and user activity. Users contribute data which, once converted into a score is used by academics and institutions to measure impact.

PESSIN

"I'll see what I can do. I'll ask if they can find me more visits closer to home. And I'll request a few days off in the school holiday. We'll find the time then. Really."

The account of contemporary care work in England (left column) draws on Tom Vickers' *Borders, Migration and Class in an Age of Crisis* (Bristol University Press, 2019). The imagined socialist alternative England (right column) is informed by Helen Yaffe's *We Are Cuba!* (Yale University Press, 2020).