

WATSON IMAP MANIFESTO

**PREPARED FOR PROFESSOR ANNE BALSAMO, DECEMBER 15TH, 2008
ALL CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AND RECONSIDERATION AS
THE AUTHOR SEES FIT OVER THE COURSE OF HIS DOCTORAL STUD-
IES UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF SUNDRY MINDS, MOODS AND MANIAS
ALL CONTENTS BY J. B. WATSON UNLESS OTHERWISE ATTRIBUTED**

NAME: JEFFREY BRIAN WATSON

HEIGHT: 6'2"

WEIGHT: 230 lbs

EYES: Blueish

DOB: 26 MARCH 1973 (FOOTHILLS GENERAL HOSPITAL, CALGARY, ALBERTA, CANADA...the room where I was born had been painted the day before. My mother, cautious parent from the first, complained about the fumes. She refused to take any pain medication. My father took photographs of me within minutes of my birth. My great aunt supplied the newborn me with a stuffed sock monkey I would later name Bruce and which presently sits on my desk near my computer. Calgary was a small town in 1973, with just over 50,000 inhabitants. The city is now home to more than 1,000,000 shivering Canadians, many of them transplanted Newfoundlanders. I grew up near the city center. My father, a geologist, would walk to work every day. My sister arrived a few years after me. We drove up to Edmonton to pick her up from the adoption agency. I remember looking at her and holding her tiny hand in the back seat as we drove home along icy Highway 2. The recession of the late 70s and early 80s proved to be a boom time for Calgary. My sister and I were lucky enough to end up at an experimental school where we were exposed to yoga, Dungeons and Dragons and computers at an early age. I cheered for the Calgary Flames through the Gretzky era until they finally beat the high-flying Oilers and then won the Cup in Montreal, the only team in NHL history to ever take Lord Stanley's Mug from the Habs at home. The ed-hippies who ran the experimental school had us do things like design communes and write plays for assignments. Some of us think they might have subjected us to mind-altering chemicals as well. The school ultimately closed down and I went to a British-style private school for grades 9 through 12. There I learned Latin and descended into a reclusive novel-reading, notebook-filling, punk-rock playing, cigarette-smoking lifestyle that persisted well into my 30s. I wrote poetry and earned an english degree. I fell in love, had my heart broken, went to film school, got married and divorced, discovered the joy of EA Sports' series of NHL video games, and wrote screenplays as I bounced around from Montreal to Vancouver and finally to Toronto. Then I heard about IMAP.)

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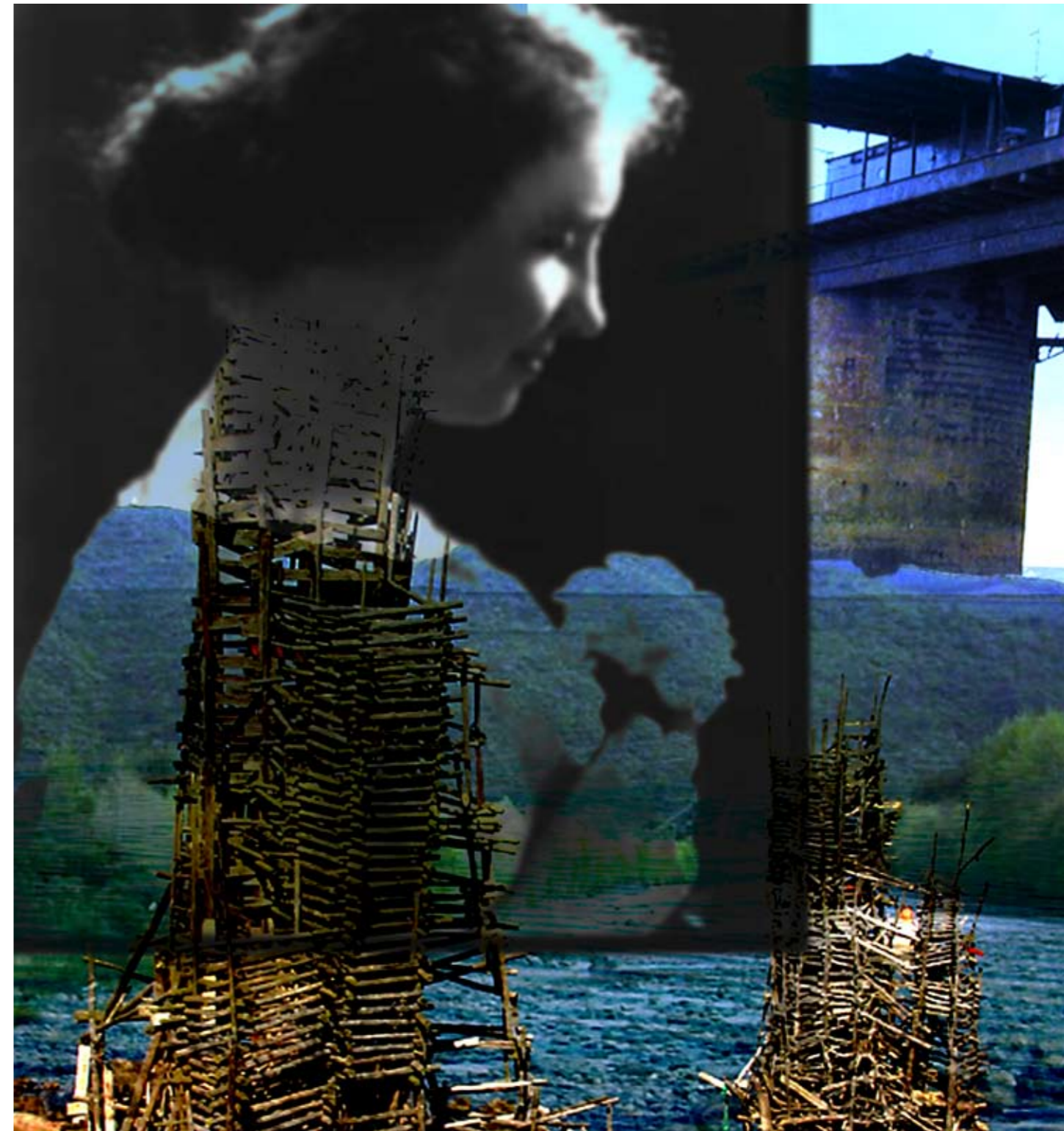
6d 6f 74 65 64 65 76

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PREFACE

All of existence: consider time from the very beginning until the moment of your birth. What of that do you recall? Hundreds of millions of lifespans and you were simply not-there; now – here! Thinking of this, you ask, ‘How can I consider my days as anything but precious?’ And yet—And yet you must acknowledge also that for some, and quite possibly someday for you (or already, or once-upon-a-time), there is pain and horror and loss so intense that life is drained of all that is precious and time seems a cruel and merciless master. The only fixity in this existence is that of the momentary, the transient point-on-a-line, the motion in one direction or another on this axis or that, nearer to beauty or farther, this quantum of love and that measure of hate, a shifting proximity to fear of one thing or the awareness of a desire for another—and all of it, all of it, can change on a dime. How do we respond to this curious existence? ‘Seize the precious moments,’ one voice suggests. And then another cautions: ‘Take care in what you do.’ This second voice reasons that life is only worth living so long as pain and horror can be relegated to transient, impermanent passages, so long as the preponderance of one’s time is spent in the presence of the Precious and the Lovely and the Potential. This voice addresses the dynamism and unpredictability of Consequence. ‘Yes,’ it continues, ‘seize the precious moments, but do so knowing that by acting you will bring about Change and that Change has a mind of its own.’ This voice, Reason, must be acknowledged, and sometimes even given the Floor. But you are the Chair of this Council. Never forget that.



(Plank'sche Wahrscheinlichkeit),

- Möglichkeiten (des so definierten

Komplexions)

... durch definiert, dass angegeben wird,

Komplexionen). Die Zahl der Komplexionen

... (28)

... minimalen Gebiets erhält man das

Zustandes und daraus nach dem

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... eilung der Moleküle unter die

... ch unabhängige behandelt ist,

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT: The author is cogniscent of his fallibility and fragility and susceptibility-to-influence and desire for social reward and public praise, perhaps more now than at any other point in his life. And yet at the same time the author realizes that an endless recursive indulgence-in-reflexivity is fundamentally a kind of narcissism and must be resisted, no matter how tempting the peculiar logic of self-deconstruction may seem. As a kind of cure for this disease, I have imposed upon myself, with the assistance of Professor Anne Balsamo, the task of creating a "manifesto" describing my intentions, aims and perspectives vis-a-vis my role as a theorist-practitioner both within and beyond the academy. As such, this document will assume the pose of a definitive balls-to-the-wall intertextual statement of purpose and call-to-action, a hyperbolic expression of artistic philosophy of the sort that might be nailed to signposts and mailed to moustachioed co-conspirators in collage-laden manila envelopes. The reader is thus advised to view everything contained herein with grain-of-salt suspicion (and perhaps even concern).

CONTRARY OPINION: The above-written text is symptomatic of the selfsame neurotic tendency the author identifies as being the adversary he seeks to slay. The author's Observing Ego wishes to reassure the reader that the "Six Points" outlined in the following pages are in fact the deep-seated beliefs of said author, and while it is true that these beliefs are subject to further evolution, specification and development over the coming months and years, the core elements of the author's approach to artistic and philosophical ideation are well-developed and will remain fundamental to his continuing practice absent unforeseen catastrophic events (e.g., brain damage, dramatic revelation of psychosis, religious conversion, &c). The author's Observing Ego is able to make this declaration on the basis of the First Point of the author's "Six Points," namely, "Everything is Triage;" an analysis of subsequent points and an internal review of the transitions between what on paper may appear as somewhat impressionistic concepts (but what, from this OE's insider POV, compose what is at base really quite a logical and step-by-step kind of argumentation) has revealed an intrinsic connection-back-to-the-origin (ie, the notion that "everything is triage;" see "Point The First") that can only really exist if an artist/thinking-person has more or less sorted out the basic elements of his approach to perception and expression and, in the end, morality. Viz:

WATSON - IMAP - MANIFESTO

**SIX
POINTS**

// 1. Everything is triage // 2. Technology is a deal with the devil and we are already in Hell // 3. The future is non-profit // 4. Provisional living provides best // 5. Story encompasses all // 6. Art is a light //

OTSEFINAM - PAMI - MOSTAW

**XIX
POINTS**

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Point The First

Everything is triage

This is an emergency.

How did we get here? Where are we going? None of us can pretend to know. Time and being are incomprehensible. No matter how fine-grained our imaging systems may become, the great mysteries of our existence will always elude us. This is the baseline of anxiety for all humans. Even in the absence of environmental, economic and social stressors, living this life requires an enormous amount of courage. And for most of us, contemplating these fundamental questions about our origins and fate are viewed as "luxuries." Bills need to be paid, friends and family need to be cared for, complex social arrangements must be navigated, and so on--

Every car on the highway is occupied. Every building in the city is densely packed with fear, desire, grief and joy. If all of that was gone and there were only two or three of us left, trapped, say, on some alien planet, would we not huddle together and work for our mutual survival? How does the line get drawn, then? Is it merely numbers that turn families into clans and clans into factions and so on down the line, separating us not only from each other but also from the basic facts of our existence? Perhaps this division is only transitory, the effect of competing stories told to while away the time and wash away the terror in a flood of certainty. Let it be our task to do the work to identify and break down these divisions and increase the potential for collective action in the spirit of mutual aid.

Wikipedia defines triage as: "... a process of prioritizing patients based on the severity of their condition. This facilitates the ability to treat as many patients as possible when resources are insufficient for all to be treated immediately. The term comes from the French verb *trier*, meaning to separate, sort, sift or select. There are two types of triage: simple and advanced. The outcome may result in determining the order and priority of emergency treatment, the order and priority of emergency transport, or the transport destination for the patient, based upon the special needs of the patient or the balancing of patient distribution in a mass-casualty setting... It is important to note that triage has multiple meanings. The term may also refer to the allocation of space on a priority basis for patients arriving at the emergency department..."



At its most primitive, those responsible for the removal of the wounded from a battlefield or their care afterwards have always divided victims into three basic categories:

- 1) Those who are likely to live, regardless of what care they receive;
- 2) Those who are likely to die, regardless of what care they receive;
- 3) Those for whom immediate care might make a positive difference in outcome.

(wikipedia)

TRIAGE

INSPIRATION: DARREN O'DONNELL

Darren O'Donnell is a performance artist based in Toronto. I met Darren about two years ago under the aegis of a screen-writing project. The screenplay never went anywhere, but I kept in touch with Darren and continue to follow his work. The reader can check out his website at www.mammalian.ca.

Darren's book, *Social Acupuncture*, traces his evolution from traditional theatre practitioner (playwright, performer) to activist/curator of participation and civic involvement. "The world is a collapsing shit factory," he writes in the book's introduction. "War is total and people are being murdered and tortured in our name every day. Real political engagement is boring and labour intensive, and it involves too much fluorescent light. Activism is hard work, but, honestly, its impenetrably Byzantine internecine weirdness is particularly preposterous in a sector that's trying to build a movement."

Building on this critique of by-the-numbers activism, the book goes on to question the role of the artist in the context of a troubled and confused world, quickly arriving at the conclusion that serious and frequent engagement with the forces of social division is a moral imperative we ignore at our own peril. But how best to do this, in light of the many cultural and economic obstacles that stand between intention and execution? Darren prescribes a practice of what he calls "acupuncture on the body of the Social," which he both describes in the book and demonstrates through the work of his performance company, Mammalian Diving Reflex.

The core idea of social acupuncture is that a practical artistic engagement with the structures and institutions of civil society can expand the boundaries of community and expose new affordances to its members. Using existing platforms for interaction and shared experience (rather than creating new technologies or mounting shows within the rarified environment



of a local arts or theatre scene) is a highly economical and streamlined means of tapping into social networks that might otherwise not interface with the "art world" proper.

Darren's "aesthetic of civic engagement" dovetails with my own interests in participatory culture and what Nicolas Bourriaud calls "relational aesthetics." The potentiality of the present moment lies not in perception but in communication, for the true power of the Network is not in its technic, but its ethos: the realization that civic space belongs to and can be accessed by us all is a transformative idea whose articulation is the peculiar province of the Artist.

Here's a thumbnail description of Darren's practice from the Mammalian Diving Reflex website:

Our Social Acupuncture wing houses ongoing work that induces encounters between strangers, blurs the line between art and life, and proves the generosity of the social sphere. We devise methods to increase our stock of social capital, bridging gaps between people who may not ordinarily have any reason to form relationships. Simultaneous to its impact in the community, it functions as a laboratory of sorts for the performance work of the company, inspiring new techniques and approaches, as can be seen in the development of Diplomatic Immunities.

In our Social Acupuncture work, we are exploring an aesthetic of civic engagement: the artistic use of the institutions of civil society - of community centres, schools, senior's centres, sports clubs, the media and public spaces. **Civic engagement as an aesthetic uses the consensual participation of these institutions as material to create work that, seen from most angles, appears to be mostly not art, or even intervention, but that takes modest glances at simple power dynamics and, for a moment, provides a glimpse of other possibilities.** (www.mammalian.ca)

Point The Second

Technology is a deal with the devil and we are already in Hell

Consider the orangutan, or the dolphin, or the rat.

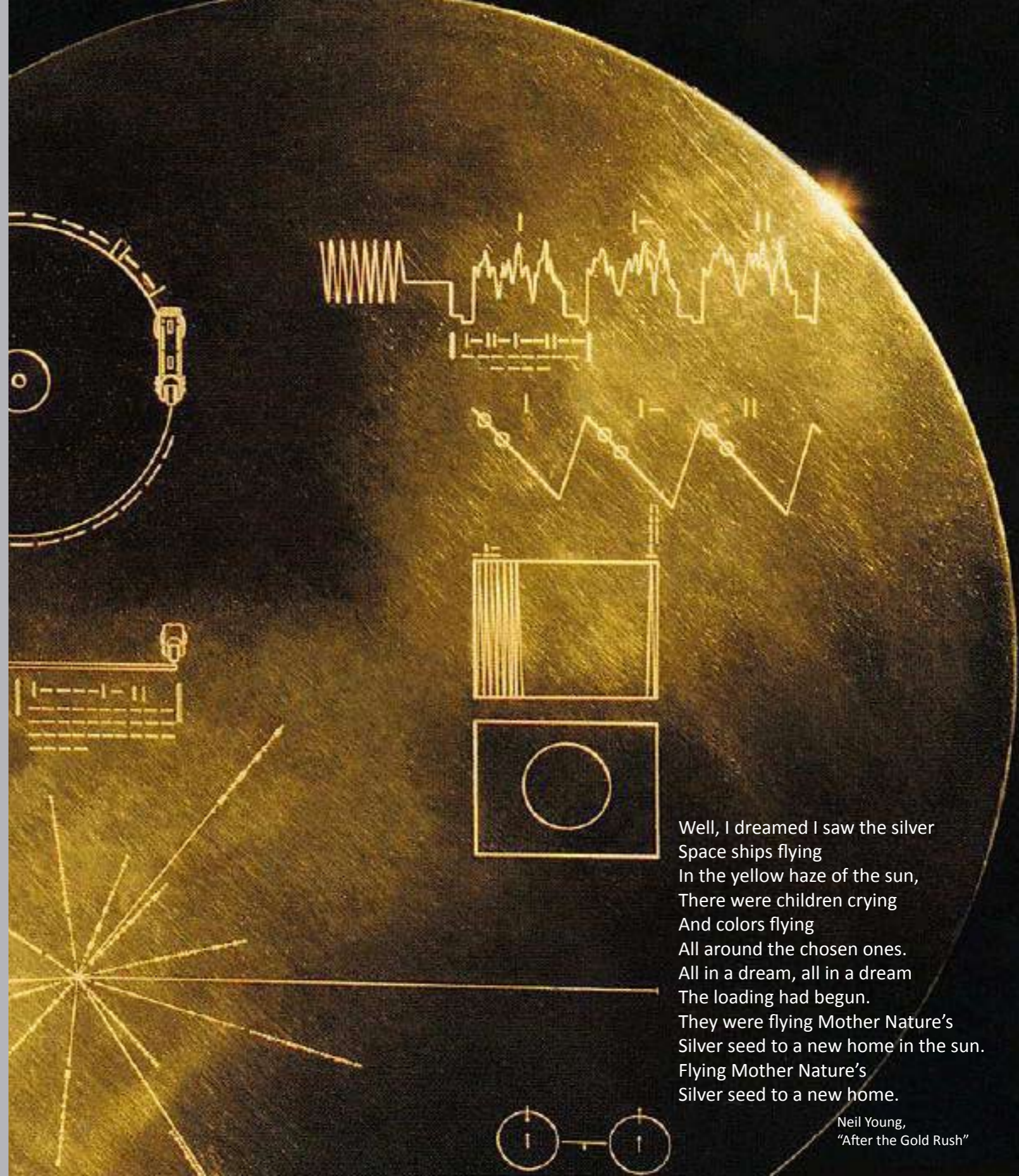
There is no humanity without technology. Our most basic of tools, symbolic communication, is an emergent property of our being. Even feral children draw and sing spontaneously. We did not make this deal with the devil, the one that says we will trade the innocence of the Animal for a shot at immortality and omnipotence via technic; that particular agreement predates us. We may not be Nature's final impulse in this direction, but it cannot be forgotten that it is the aspiration of all life to survive, and survival means expansion, diversification, adaptation and transformation. Our instinctive tool-making and symbol-weaving practices are as much an expression of Life as Old Man's Beard or the Yellow-Beaked Cuckoo.

And yet -- and herein lies the challenge -- while there is no humanity without technology, technology itself is not human. By building, we change our world and force new realities upon ourselves. We must not see ourselves as being in conflict with our creations; and yet conflict arises nonetheless. Technological systems take on energies of their own and seek their propagation. The earth does not care who it is that carries its flag into the Beyond; if robots work best, then robots it will be.

The paradox of our provenance is that, to survive and prosper as technological beings, to bring-into-existence an extrasolar destiny on behalf of Life itself, we have also needed to be distinctly communal in nature and generous in spirit. Despite all our wars and horrors, we could not have made it out of whatever Origin it is we emerged from without deeply caring for one another. The human conscience is no accident. Fealty is an ancient thing; love even older. No one stands up for the humans but the humans themselves.

Perhaps it is this very tension that drives us forward and motivates "innovation." Having inherited a restrictive, potentially self-defeating contract from our genetic forebearers, we seek to find workarounds and loopholes. Generations pass as these loopholes open and close. The leaders among us seek technological answers to technological problems. We spiral through recursivity, for the devil with whom we have struck this deal lies within us.





Well, I dreamed I saw the silver
Space ships flying
In the yellow haze of the sun,
There were children crying
And colors flying
All around the chosen ones.
All in a dream, all in a dream
The loading had begun.
They were flying Mother Nature's
Silver seed to a new home in the sun.
Flying Mother Nature's
Silver seed to a new home.

Neil Young,
"After the Gold Rush"

**T H E R E
I S R O O M
F O R E V -
E R Y T H I N G**

so long as...

Point the Third

The Future is Non-profit*

Where will you be in five hundred years?

Let us not get bogged down in an impossible-to-resolve discussion about the relative merits of cooperation and competition, welfare states and free markets, the tragedy of the commons, the invisible hand and the rest of it. That battle of inches is for another playing field. It's an argument between rival ice-making factions at the dawn of refrigeration: you sad, sad, people -- let go of it, your time has passed. Scoring points in a debate about how best to structure an economy or galvanize a populace might make you feel better about yourself and advance you in this or that econo-sexual realm, but how does the Old Push and Pull really play out in your community in the Long Run?

(And never mind the unfolding collapse of the global economy, the revelation that we have all been party to a gigantic, murderous Ponzi scheme. This should not be a surprise to anyone. The greatest evils are the ones that escape identification.)

No, the notion that the Future is non-profit is not a political one. Let's call it scientific instead. Pragmatic. Honest. What outcomes can humanity really expect in the centuries to come? This author proposes two scenarios. In the first, we see an increasingly feudal arrangement, with food and fuel gathering around centers of wealth protected by military power. On the periphery, mass starvation, murder and disease predominate. Geopolitics becomes defined by resource wars and factionalism. We already seem well on our way to this destination. But it is not my belief that this is where we will ultimately arrive.

* or, more specifically (but less poetically), the economic landscape of the future will be highly decentralized, margins will be slim, and local or niche microprofit systems will supplant the current system of gross inequality.

Rather, I propose a second possibility. In this scenario, neofeudalism continues to emerge in the manner suggested above, but finds that it is incompatible with the fruits of its own endeavor. Militarism made the Internet, and the Prodigal disapproves of the Parent. The great instrument of power, namely the withholding and transfer of Capital, has always depended on its lieutenant, the Minister of Information. And loose lips sink ships. In this new age, lies are easier to tell, but secrets harder to keep. The mendacious will be exposed. Calumny will fold back upon itself. And as the crowds huddling around the castles dwindle in number -- some slipping out and into the Wastes beyond, others losing life and limb to incursions from without -- the blame will fall squarely on the Center.

This is the Long View, and we must recognize that it is not in our nature to act in the interests of descendants ten generations hence. Let it be said that, despite his own interests in Extreme Posterity and Vavilovian Seed Banks and Millenium Clocks, this author is not advocating a multi-century strategy-of-living. Indeed, quite the opposite. We are tactical beings. We work best when we work provisionally (see "Point the Fourth"). It will be a while yet before this cycle of Exploitation, Privation, Revelation and Revolution (EPRR) radiates through the totality of our experience. But right now, we can observe it playing out in the Inner Circles. And we can Act, and in our action, maybe, just maybe, lay the groundwork for generations to come.



ESSAY: THE FILM INDUSTRY

I come to academia via the film industry. For the past few years, I've sensed that things are about to change in that business in a big way. I'm certainly not alone in that feeling. The changes I see afoot, and the way they are already playing out, represent a small pre-echo of the larger EPRR cycles I posit as inevitable consequences of the trend toward neofeudalism. The media industry is a natural canary-in-the-coal mine: its products are largely virtual and informational in nature, and therefore immediately subject to the changes wrought by network culture. Future iterations of this cycle, and analogous disruptions in the nature of the production and distribution of goods, will inevitably be increasingly material in nature. Imagine, for example, the revolution in artisanal untracable assault weapon manufacture that will accompany the development of rapid-prototyping fabrication technologies (eg 3D printers, particularly self-replicating machine part replicators such as the infant RepRap project, and so on).

The following is an abridged version of an essay I wrote about my sense of the where film production and distribution is heading. It is presented here as an exemplar of EPRR in action:

The past decade has been a time during which the media industry - from indie record labels to film studios and beyond - has gradually recognized that the old model for producing, promoting and distributing media is coming to an end.

The main reason for this anticipated sea-change is the simple fact that distributors and major media conglomerates no longer hold all the cards. Pricey television ads are increasingly difficult to justify when a free

viral video on YouTube, Google Video or any number of other zero-cost online services can attract 10,000,000 eager viewers - and potential customers.

Consumers - especially those in the critical 18-35 demographic - no longer get the majority of their media through television or magazines; rather, it is the social realm of the Internet -- weblogs, social networking platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and MySpace, forwarded emails and so on

-- that now shapes the media landscape and informs consumer behavior.

For producers, this reality means that it is easier and cheaper than ever before to target and engage audiences. Furthermore, thanks to advances in software and hardware technology, it is now possible to create films, books, records and other media products for a tiny fraction of the traditional price. These and other technological changes are fundamentally shifting the balance of power in the media industry.

For traditional media companies who depend on the status quo, the changes wrought by new technologies are a source of panic.

But for those with vision, there is the growing sense that a new era of opportunity is dawning.

Traditional film production ventures concentrate resources on producing a single film and marketing it to distributors through mail-outs, "film markets" and festival appearances. This approach worked well under the older economic regimes of the 1980s and 1990s because, at that time, it was the distributors who truly controlled the selection of films that filmgoers had to choose from. In 1990, if a film wasn't picked up for distribution, no one heard about it, and it disappeared into obscurity, leaving behind little more than debt and wasted time. It thus became imperative for indie producers to focus their energies on ensuring that distributors knew about their film and received it well. Further, the obvious risk inherent in this kind of endeavor was exacerbated by the fact that once a film was acquired by a distributor, it

was entirely up to the distribution company to market the film. Distributors, dealing with tight margins and a large volume of product, would market films based on how they fit into their overall corporate agenda, which didn't always mesh with the ideal way in which the film deserved -- or needed -- to be marketed. It was therefore only through the rare confluence of exceptional talent, effective producer-to-distributor promotional strategies, creative negotiation and well-managed marketing by the distributor that films would succeed in the marketplace. Staggering failure rates amongst indie productions thus became an accepted part of the business.

At present, the majority of independent producers continue to approach the task of putting together film projects in much the same manner as they did in the 1990s. But increasingly, there is an industry-wide recognition that everything is about to change. Bit by bit, producers have found ways to capitalize on the unprecedented market conditions created by a networked world.

USING NEW MEDIA TO BUILD AUDIENCES

The first steps were clumsy, literal -- and often extremely lucrative. A frequently-cited example is *The Blair Witch Project*, a film that used rudimentary viral marketing techniques on the Internet to generate massive word-of-mouth buzz, attracting major studio interest in a \$60,000 movie shot with non-actors on consumer-grade video cameras, and helping to turn the project into a \$250 million international smash hit. Throughout the 2000s, major media players have increasingly deployed community-based online viral marketing schemes to drive audiences to-

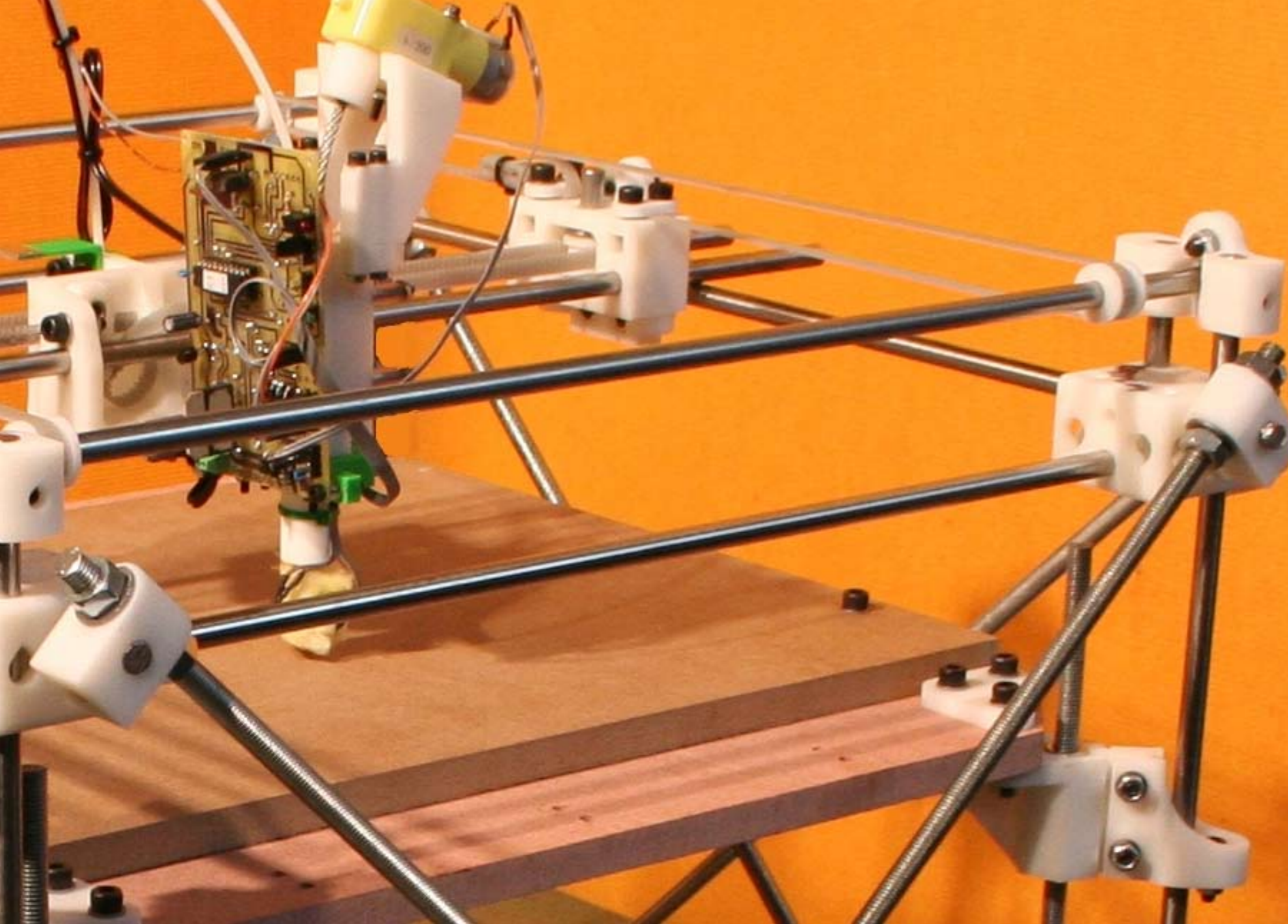
ward their products. Steven Spielberg, for example, used an Alternate Reality Game to build anticipation for the release of his film *AI* in 2000. This ARG was so successful that it permanently established 42 Entertainment, the company that designed the game, as the "gold standard" in the nascent cross-media entertainment business (42 has subsequently built ARGs and other cross-media experiences for companies such as Microsoft, Universal Studios, and McDonald's). More recently, indie producers such as those behind the Internet hit, "Four Eyed Monsters," have further leveraged the power of viral marketing and Internet-based social networking to not only build an audience but to also self-distribute their films, completely eschewing the traditional apparatus of film distribution and exhibition. In the process, they have not only made money on their initial investment (as a result of "cutting out the middle man" and creating a degree of vertical integration), but, perhaps even more importantly, have created a credible, highly-networked media brand that will enable them to continue to grow their audience and increase sales numbers in the future.

Indeed, access to audiences and credibility among them have always been the cornerstones upon which trusted media brands are built. Traditionally, gaining access to audiences was the more expensive proposition: print, television and radio advertising was typically the only means of promoting media products, and accordingly required huge outlays of capital to effectively saturate the marketplace. Independent producers needed to partner with larger distributors or studios in order to promote their products, and credibility was primarily derived from the fact that

a studio or distributor had deemed it worthy to take a chance on the project with which they were partnering.

RAPID CHANGE

In recent times, however, things have changed, first in the recording industry and increasingly in the film and television market. For example, for years now, it has been possible for new recording artists to break through into the popular consciousness -- and consequently sell CDs and book lucrative performance tours -- with little more than a (free) MySpace page and a Facebook profile (also free). In the recording industry, Web 2.0 social networking technologies have indisputably put the power directly into the hands of artists and consumers, effectively cutting out the middle man of the record company or corporate label. The "Long Tail" of the Internet attention economy has enabled consumers to easily identify and acquire the media products they are looking for, while similarly enabling producers to cheaply promote their products to the niches that are most likely to purchase them. In a few short years, finding a way to connect media products with audiences has become so simple and streamlined that the entire traditional apparatus of media marketing has begun to collapse.



Have you heard the parable about the Razor's Edge? The gist of it is that in life, moving toward any objective is like walking on a path the width of a razor, with cliffs plunging down on either side. It takes courage and heart to stay on that path. It takes calm. It takes faith that it is truly leading somewhere. And it takes a concerted effort of all your wits and skill and balance to maintain those states and keep yourself from falling off. So it's a strange combination of courage and care, leap-of-faith and calculation, fixity and release that gets you through. This is what I mean by provisional living. Set yourself on the path, but don't let the walking hypnotize you.

Point the Fourth

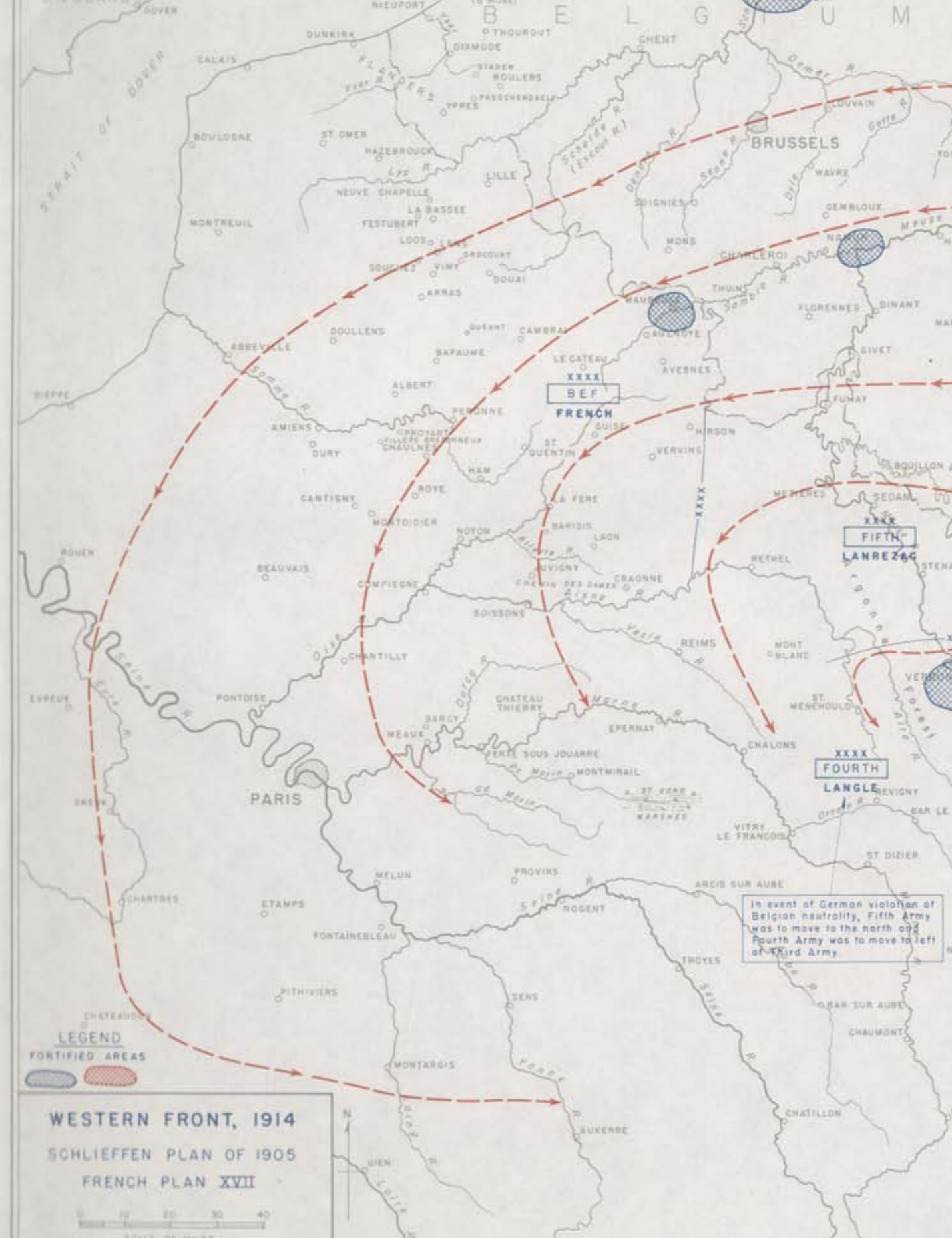
Provisional Living Provides Best

The larger the plan, the more replete it is with errors.

Telescope through time. Imagine the weather in a week, a month. Consider the known unknowns and the unknown unknowns (for what discussion of strategy and tactics would be complete without a reference to D.R.?). It is our tendency to personalize things, and therefore unsurprising that we should ascribe the shifts in fortune of nations and corporations and crime syndicates to the careful planning of their overlords. But, as any historian will tell you, the story of warfare or capital or conspiracy is less about the grand plans that succeed than it is about those that fail. Whatever may be said about the victors of History and the way that it has been written, it is always the Opportunists that win the day.

Hubris is one of our oldest themes. Words lose their meaning the more you try to use them to bend the world to your will. Envision the best future possible, but do not worship it or it will destroy you. This is the true meaning of the old admonishment against idolotry. As soon as an objective ceases to be provisional, it becomes dangerous. Have your aims and see them through, but keep your wits about you.

Facing page: map depicting two competing and complementary strategies from the First World War: Germany's "Schlieffen Plan," a grand pre-emptive mobilization of forces, designed by the German War Academy in 1905 to take the initiative away from supposed Pan-Slavic Encirclement (France being Russia's key Western ally); and the French counter-plan, "Plan XVII," a large-scale mobilization of troops and materiel to the border zones which was designed to stave off a repeat of the late 19th Century German incursions into Alsace-Lorraine. The tragedy of the Great War was that each of these plans was intended to be a defensive manoeuvre, with strict timing benchmarks related to railway schedules governing the escalation of the response. By activating the first stage of the Schlieffen Plan in reaction to the assassination in Sarajevo, Germany forced France to activate Plan XVII, which in turn pressed Germany deeper into its mobilization, setting off a cascading series of events. The strict timetables specified in the Schlieffen plan demanded that Germany respond to Plan XVII by pre-emptively invading Belgium, which then drew in Great Britain and led to all-out war. Ironically, then, a series of strategies and treaties designed to prevent a military catastrophe were precisely the mechanisms by which one unfolded. The effects of this disastrous failure of design are felt to this day.





CASE STUDY: **Fordlândia***

The following text (excerpted from an article by Alan Bellows) describes Henry Ford's ill-fated attempt to impose his assembly-line ideology upon a completely alien set of problems. Believing his strategy to be sound in whatever the circumstance, Ford neglected to pay attention to the tactical realities of the situation.

"[In the] late 1920s, the infamous automobile tycoon Henry Ford set out to break the back of [the Brazilian rubber] monopoly. His hundreds of thousands of new cars needed millions of tires, which were very expensive to produce when buying raw materials from the established rubber lords. To that end, he established Fordlândia, a tiny piece of America which was transplanted into the Amazon rain forest for a single purpose: to create the largest rubber plantation on the planet. Though enormously ambitious, the project was ultimately a fantastic failure.

Scores of Ford employees were relocated to the site, and over the first few months an American-as-apple-pie community sprung up from what was once a jungle wilderness. It included a power plant, a modern hospital, a library, a golf course, a hotel, and rows of white clapboard houses with wicker patio furniture. As the town's population grew, all manner of businesses followed, including tailors, shops, bakeries, butcher shops, restaurants, and shoemakers. It grew into a thriving community with Model T Fords frequenting the neatly paved streets...

Outside of the residential area, long rows of freshly-planted saplings soon dotted the landscape. Ford chose not to employ any botanists in the development of Fordlândia's rubber tree fields, instead relying on the cleverness of company engineers. Having no prior knowledge of rubber-raising, the engineers made their best guess, and planted about two hundred trees per acre despite the fact that there were only about seven wild rubber trees per acre in the Amazon jungle. The plantations of East Asia were packed with flourishing trees, so it seemed reasonable to assume that the trees' native land would be just as accommodating.

Henry Ford's miniature America in the jungle attracted a slew of workers. Local laborers were offered a wage of thirty-seven cents a day to work on the fields of Fordlândia, which was about double the normal rate for that line of work. But Ford's effort to transplant America—what he called "the healthy lifestyle"—was not limited to American buildings, but also included mandatory "American" lifestyle and values. The plantation's cafeterias were self-serve, which was not the local custom, and they provided only American fare such as hamburgers. Workers had to live in American-style houses, and they were each assigned a number which they had to wear on a badge—the cost of which was deducted from their first paycheck. Brazilian laborers were also required to attend squeaky-clean American festivities on weekends, such as poetry readings, square-dancing, and

English-language sing-alongs. Workers' discontent grew as the unproductive months passed. Brazilian workers—accustomed to working before sunrise and after sunset to avoid the heat of the day—were forced to work proper "American" nine-to-five shifts under the hot Amazon sun, using Ford's assembly-line philosophies. And malaria became a serious problem due to the hilly terrain's tendency to pool water, providing the perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes.

In 1945, Ford retired from the rubbering trade, having lost over \$20 million in Brazil without ever having set foot there. A company press release announced the abandonment of Belterra with a bland epitaph: "Our war experience has taught us that synthetic rubber is superior to natural rubber for certain of our products." The Ford Motor Company sold the land back to the Brazilian government for \$250,000—a token sum.

The solid structures of Fordlândia and Belterra were left largely empty for the decades following the towns' demise."

Source: Alan Bellows, *Damn Interesting*

Source: Alan Bellows, *Damn Interesting*

Source: Alan Bellows, *Damn Interesting*

Source: Alan Bellows, *Damn Interesting*



Point The Fifth

Story Encompasses All

Story is the most potent technology in existence.

Stories move fast and weigh nothing. But beware: they can shred rainforests. For a story is what an army tells itself as it sharpens its machetes.

"This is what we're going to do. This is why. This is what will happen."

Stories motivate. All kinds of darkness and light.

All of it -- all of us.

{being}

IN THIS TENSION, REVELATION:

No light without dark, pain without joy, truth without falsehood...

{meaning}

THERE AREN'T ENOUGH WORDS...

...to explain how you got here, how you "youed" and what that means and what that feels like. To say what we mean when we talk about Reason or Time or Love. To express a loss in all its dimensions. To explain why we made a decision or why we are about to try something new...

...AND YET WE WILL TRY:

Because that is our way. We cannot be silent. We hope that through words we may conquer words; through our doings in this world, transcend it; through our slicing and dicing of reality, perceive it in its wholeness. We take comfort in the notion that all this is no mere fool's errand, but rather a great one--

{matter}

The role of the storyteller, by way of example:

“Feel like packing it in?” he asks. Before you can answer, he supplies the response -- or, rather, deflects the question. “No, wait. Come here. Listen. See. Shh -- and pay attention. Here, and here, and here are others, some like you, some not, some maybe a little more similar that you’d like to admit. All more like you than a stone or a baboon. You have to confess that at least that much is true. And the mystery. The mystery they inhabit is very much your mystery. Our mystery. They must live and die. There are things they will never understand that you, too, will never understand. Most things, you’ll have to concede. No, please, make that concession now, as we begin. I invite you to agree with me if only such that we may proceed to the next spot. That spot. Over there. The place where I draw an analogy and you say, ‘Yes, yes, I see what you’re saying now,’ because the analogy I’m going to draw is about your eyes and you’ve

heard that the eyes are the windows of the soul. We’ll leave that mystery aside for now, the one about the soul. Stick with me. The analogy, remember. The analogy is this: when we look, our eyes are flooded with light, all the light in the universe that happens our way, every distantly-originated x-ray, billions of photons from sources near and far, and yes, I know you may well have heard this one, but wait, because this is just a stepping stone and when this analogy is over we will move onto another and I promise you something in the end, so be patient and now agree with me that yes, your eyes filter through all this light and display to us only a tiny fraction because it is through reduction and abstraction that the world becomes comprehensible to us, because to see it all at once would be overload, would require to some extent how BE all at once to process -- and here I am here I am

to imagine a painting of all the paintings in the world and how such a representation is an impossible paradox because it would have to include itself, and from there, as they say, it’s turtles all the way down. The point being, by way of analogy, and yes I can sense your impatience now but i’m trying to slow things down for us, take things step by step, lay it out as plainly as I can, and the point -- the point is that there are limits -- to understanding, perception, life -- and that these limits are necessary. And yes, they terrify and confound and bring us anguish, but wait -- listen -- shh--

The role of the reader, by way of example:



THE STORY is a sort of delinquency in reserve, maintained, but not itself displaced and consistent...with an order that is firmly established but flexible enough to allow the proliferation of this challenging mobility that does not respect places, is alternately playful and threatening, and extends from the microbe-like forms of everyday narration to the carnivalesque celebrations of earlier days. (M. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*)

This section on Story is a good place for me to take a moment to directly address some of my research and production aims, sans the usual academic blah-blah-blah and the many provisos and references and keywords that typically accompany “artist’s statements.”

Allow me to put it plainly: I am interested in new forms of Fiction, and by Fiction, I mean storytelling, sublimely-truthful lies, the province of the novel, the narrative film, theatre and the rest of it. On some level, then, I am curious about the future of reading, wherein “reading” is defined as the process of engaging with and co-creating the world of a text.

My conviction is that the future of this rather basic human behavior does not lie (solely) in the development of new devices or distribution/exhibition systems, but rather in an expanding *mindset* that embraces new technologies as they come and layers upon them the irreducible components of Story.

Call this approach what you will. Henry Jenkins calls it (or something like it) “Transmedia Storytelling.” Others suggest that the interactivity inherent in distributing story across multiple media forms qualifies the approach as a kind of play, hence “Alternate Reality Games.” Neologisms abound. The key idea is that my work takes place at the intersection of storytelling, play and public space, and that it leverages and exploits existing technologies rather than seeking to create new ones.

TOUCHSTONE: ALTERNATE REALITY GAMES

Alternate Reality Games (ARGs) are a relatively new form of narrative game-play – the earliest incarnations of the genre date to the late 1990s and early 2000s – that use the real world and all its myriad communications modalities as the surface upon which to layer story and interaction. As a spatially- and temporally-distributed storytelling form, ARGs deploy narrative across a wide range of expressive media, including physical spaces and artifacts, websites, game worlds, books and graphic novels, music, television and movies, online video, rumors, cell phone content and live performances. For the player-participants of an ARG, apprehending the story and the mechanics of the game is an active investigative or archaeological task, a process of uncovering mysteries and sifting through answers in an effort to find the right questions. As such, playing an ARG is fundamentally distinct from traditional game or story forms in which a “magic circle” of play or spectatorship ceremonially defines the boundaries between the fictional and the real. In an ARG, the line between “in-game” and “out-of-game” is intentionally blurred. Jane McGonigal, a leading researcher in the field, describes this approach as the “this is not a game” (TINAG) aesthetic. When this aesthetic is adhered to with

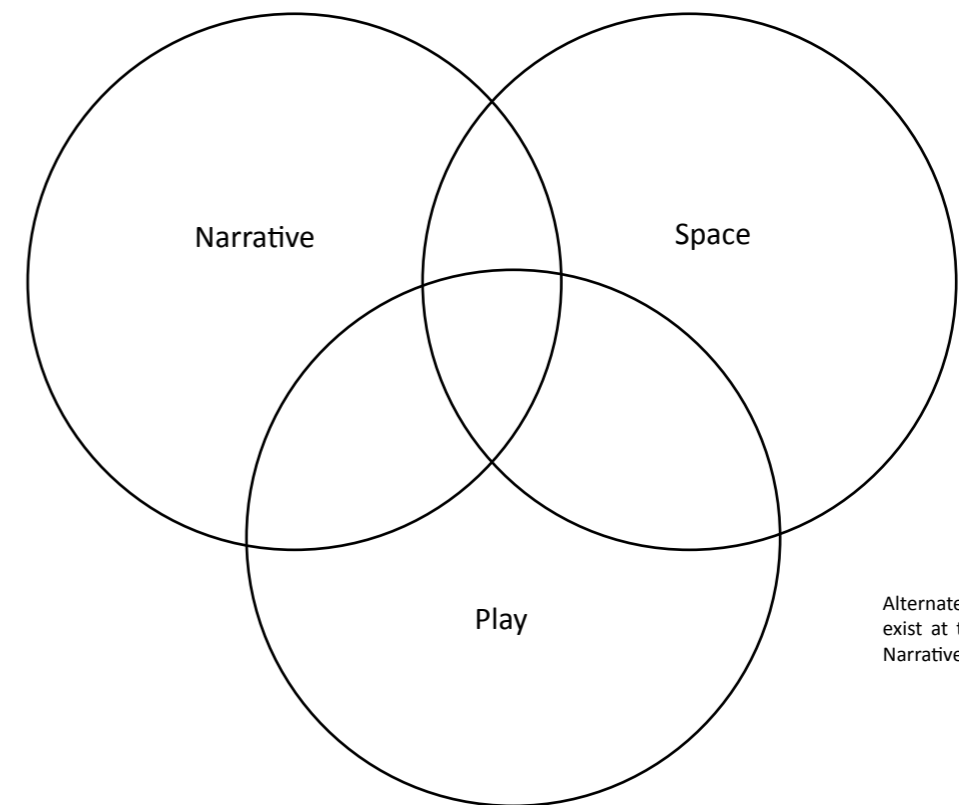
a modicum of discipline, the ARG as a story medium becomes more akin to hoax-making than novel-writing (although, it should be said, an ARG could conceivably deploy a novel as a component of its overall storytelling strategy): like a good hoax, a successful ARG will conceal itself beneath layers of compelling real-world information. Players of ARGs thus often begin playing the game before they even know that a game is afoot. In the apotheosis of this form, by the time players realize that there is an intelligence guiding their investigations into the mysteries that have inexplicably infiltrated their lives, their desire to uncover the truth of the matter becomes irresistible, and players will pursue the mystery to the end of the line, oftentimes sharing their insights and solving game problems collectively via self-organized online interactions.

To date, the peculiar affordances of the ARG have been exploited primarily by media corporations such as Microsoft, Dreamworks and Sony Pictures in order to launch viral marketing campaigns for other products. For example, one of the most successful ARGs in recent memory began with a mysterious bee-keeping website that came to the attention of participants via a brief flash of text at the end of a movie

trailer. A great deal of Internet buzz ensued as interested parties began to investigate the website and its provenance, revealing a strange series of what initially appeared to be distress signals from some kind of trapped or kidnapped individual. Increasingly large groups of players began working collectively online to solve the mystery, and as things got weirder and weirder, word-of-mouth drew more and more participants into the world of the story. In the end, this project, known as “ilovebees”, turned out to be a promotional initiative for the launch of Microsoft’s Halo 2.

While the origins and historical applications of the ARG are rooted in viral marketing, more recent iterations employing

the TINAG aesthetic have sought to create so-called “self-monetizing” ARGs. For example, 42 Entertainment, the studio that produced *ilovebees* and several other seminal ARGs, recently partnered with a small press to publish *Cathy’s Book*, a book for young adults purporting to be the private diary of a missing teenage girl. By framing this publication with an invitation to readers to help locate the missing teenager, the designers were able to simultaneously steer their audience toward multiple story assets exterior to the book itself (e.g. websites mentioned in the book, phone lines accessible via numbers scrawled in the “diary’s” margins, and so on), offset the production costs of writing and producing the project as a whole, and draw new readers



Alternate Reality Games exist at the intersection of Narrative, Space and Play.

to discover (and purchase) the book itself via the creation of an online following. The book sold well, debuting at #7 on the New York Times Best Seller list for Children's Books, and the online community continues to be active.

In addition to revealing more about the potential uses of the ARG for both viral marketing and self-monetization, a significant goal of my practice will be to explore the capacity of ambient story and game play to create and shape communities of player-participants within the constraints of institutional space. Questions to be addressed include: can ARGs and other kinds of layered or ambient story/game systems help to foster a sense of community and camaraderie in work and study environments? Does the presence of a continuously-unfolding mystery "accelerate serendipity" by bringing like-minded individuals into physical and virtual association in order to solve the mysteries with which they have been

confronted? How can an ARG stimulate the production and sharing of media by its participants? More broadly, can highly-mediated approaches to play and narrative that involve the deep and tangled integration of story-telling, story-consuming, and even story-producing, into the fabric of everyday life produce emotional and social effects of similar character to those produced by the novel or the narrative cinema? Addressing these questions through the development of ARGs and ARG-like "layered reality" fictions will provide key practical insights into the creation and management of such projects, while also revealing new data regarding the intersection between structured social play and networked computational systems. It is my belief that an inquiry into the nature of this intersection is essential as we enter an age of ubiquitous information technology wherein the respective agencies of authors, crowds and machines promise to collide in productive and unpredictable ways.

And yes, this is my boilerplate "intro to ARGs" text, in case you've seen it before...





Point the Sixth

Art is a Light

You know it's true.

Appendix: 1

Preliminary Reading List

Critical Theory

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Walton, Kendall L. *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On The Foundations of the Representation Arts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Emergence

Campbell, Jeremy. *Grammatical Man*

Game Design & Game Studies

Aarseth, Espen. *Genre Trouble*.
Aarseth, Espen. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Axelrod, Robert. *Evolving New Strategies: The Evolution of Strategies in the Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma*.

Bjork, Staffan and Jussi Holopainen. *Patterns in Game Design*. Hingham, Massachusetts: Charles River Press, 2005.

Callois, Roger. *Man, Play and Games*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1962.

Frasca, Gonzalo. *Ludologists love stories, too: notes from a debate that never took place*.

Frasca, Gonzalo. *Ludology Meets Narratology: Similitude and differences between (video)games and narrative*.

Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens*. Beacon Press, 1971.

Juul, Jesper. *Half Real: Video Games Between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006.

McGonigal, Jane. *SuperGaming: Ubiquitous Play and Performance for Massively Scaled Community*.

Salen, Katie and Zimmerman, Eric. *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*.

Identity

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Rochberg-Halton, Eugene. *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*.

McCracken, Grant. *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods*.

McCracken, Grant. *Plenitude*.

Simmel, George. *How is society possible?* in D.N. Levine (ed) *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*.

Immersion

Bolter, Jay David and Crusin, Richard. *Remediation*.

Falk, Jennica; Davenport, Glorianna. *Live Role-Playing Games: Implications for Pervasive Gaming*.

McGonigal, Jane. *A Real Little Game: The Performance of Belief in Pervasive Play*.

McGonigal, Jane. *'This Is Not a Game': Immersive Aesthetics and Collective Play*.

Network Culture

Boyd, Danah. *Friendster and publicly articulated social networks*.

Brecht, Bertolt. *"The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication."* *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed. and trans. John Willett. London: Methuen, 1964.

Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

Levy, Pierre. *Becoming Virtual*.

Liu, Hugo; Maes, Pattie; Davenport, Glorianna. *Unraveling the Taste Fabric of Social Networks*.

Mitchell, William. *Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.

Shirky, Clay. *"Communities, Audiences, and Scale"*.

and response by A.K.M. Adam Wark, McKenzie. *A Hacker Manifesto*.

Wark, McKenzie. *GAM3R 7H30RY*.

Play and Performance

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Post-Production*.

Debord, Guy. *"Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play."* Trans. Reuben Keehan. *Internationale Situationniste #1*. June 1958. <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/play.html>

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Trans. Ken Knabb. Oakland: AK Press, 2005.

Debord, Guy, Constant, Asger Jorn, Helmut Sturm, and Maurice Wyck-aert. *"Situationist Manifesto."* Trans. Fabian Thompsett. *Internationale Situationniste #4*. June 1960. <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/manifesto.html>

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community & Communication in Modern Art*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004)

Nye, Jeff. *Be Real. Play Nice*.

Public Space

Bharucha, Rustom. *The Limits of the Beyond: Contemporary Art Practice, Intervention and Collaboration in Public Spaces*. in *Third Text*, Volume 21, Issue 4 July 2007, 397-416.

Ubicomp

Bleecker, Julian. *A Manifesto for Networked Objects -- Cohabiting with Pigeons, Arphids and Aibos in the Internet of Things*.

Mitchell, William J., *Me++*. *The Cyborg Self and the Networked City*.

Maes, Pattie et al. *Ambient Semantics and Reach Media*.

Sterling, Bruce. *"The Internet of Things."* Keynote lecture for the 2006 Emerging Technologies Conference. San Diego: 6-9 March 2006.

Appendix: 2

A fake dream

TWO KINDS

It was the autumn. All my dreams seem to take place in the autumn. I was with Bill M. in the park across from the house in Roxboro. We were walking. Bill was dying; his skin was yellow and dense with age-spots. He told me again about diving into a barrel, how he did that for a living long ago, and I got the sense he'd forgotten that he'd told me that many times before. After a time, we sat down on a bench and I started telling him about my thoughts about writers and writing. When I awoke from the dream, I tried to record what I had said. It came out all flowery and grandiose:

Among the many kinds of people, there are the Writers. Of these, I suspect that there are two basic kinds. First is the writer who Sees but does not Feel. For this writer, language is a means to an end, a way of making sense of the world. To this writer, the world is chaotic and meaningless; human beings seem fundamentally disconnected from one another, and all the passions appear illusory and hollow. Writing – making sense – becomes a weapon against loneliness and confusion, a companion, a tool for inhering meaning. What it is that wounded this kind of writer so grievously varies from case to case, but almost always they will die from their wounds. And yet the desperation underlying their motive to write can produce works of lasting beauty.

The second kind of writer can also produce works of lasting beauty, albeit for rather different reasons. This writer Feels but cannot See. That which separates being from being, life from life, self from other and so on is hidden from this writer's view, for theirs is a perception awash in a cloudy sea of emotion. All being is one, fluid and ever-churning. The sadness of the other is the sadness of the self, and this writer writes not to ease their own pain (for that would be impossible in the presence of so much suffering), but rather as a kind of weeping or singing, an instinctive reflex closer perhaps to breathing than to thinking.

Neither writer can know which kind they truly are. The dangerous equation of truth and beauty prevents this from happening. But both are equally enchanted by the magic of language. They are powerless to its charms.

In the dream, Bill stared out at his old house as I trailed off. A moment passed wherein I wondered if he had even been listening. I thought, maybe he's just too old now. But then he dipped in his pocket for his snuff box and snickered to himself as he dipped his little silver spoon into the yellow tobacco and shakily retrieved a small scoop-full. 'You're so full of shit, kid,' he said, raising the spoon to his nose. 'But I love you all the same.'

Written by Jeffrey Brian Watson December 12-16, 2008, enveloped in personal and professional uncertainty, ensconced in an entirely too-purple apartment, enmeshed in an assortment of confusing and contradictory impulses vis-a-vis love and relationships, enchanted as always by music and movies and toys, enheartened by the pure joy of knowing that key members of his peer group and the totality of his immediate family are on this day as safe and happy as can be expected and seemingly healthy in the ways that matter, engulfed in a warm salty rush of new ideas, enriched and ensnackled by ennui, enswathed in Bounce-fresh laundry items and bedclothes, and enrolled in the incomparable iMAP program (and here he pauses to note that the lower-case "i" is his only real beef with the program, as it seems rather unmotivated and violates the internal logic of the acronym). Prepared for the fascinating (and quite obviously patient and open-minded) Professor Anne Balsamo.

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