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“We Make Things Today For Tomorrow”: Artists’ Publishing for the Future

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Art and Visual Culture

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Abstract

This dissertation is an exploration of artists' book, artists' publishing, distribution, and archival practices from a number of vantages in order to explore the activist possibilities of contemporary arts publishing. The concept of urgent artifacts, developed by publisher Paul Soulellis, reverberates throughout this research. The liveliness of this term is enhanced through applying additional modes of experience: clairvoyance, forensics, thinness, as well as their tricky interplay. In exploring what artists' publishing might require for the present and the immediate future, this research-creation project considers the possibilities that clairvoyance—in particular, the figure of the medium—and archival intuition might offer. Borrowing from the activity of cartomancy, I suggest we lay out the playing cards and publications of Southern Ontario clairvoyant, Vera McNichol, to see what the clairvoyant can tell us about publishing. I also suggest we lay McNichol's cards and self-published volumes alongside a number of other books—artists' books, bookworks—and artistic publishing ventures in order to see how they communicate to the reader and with one another. The following research revisits specific artists' publications from London, Ontario across different times to explore their shared concerns and shared insights. What might these publications tell us about the moments from which they emerged? What do they have to say to one another, and to us, about the present? And what might they augur, or engender, for the future? Amidst the juxtapositions and connections across the bookworks and publishing projects presented in this thesis, there is a recurring signal which takes the form of a consistent sense of urgency. Like the clairvoyant, these works suggest things to avoid and things to overcome. There are possible solutions, both for the present terrain of arts publishing and also for the overarching societal quandaries arts publishers continue to find themselves in. These solutions call out from the past. There are also predictions for the kinds of futures that might start to be generated now, in the immediate present, if certain actions are taken.

Keywords

artists' books, arts publishing, bookworks, production, distribution, artist-run, urgent artifacts, reading, cards, cartomancy, playing cards, clairvoyance, medium, intuition, future, regionalism, London, Ontario, budgets, finances, little magazine, archives, poor images, forensics, true crime, detective, witness, journalist

Summary for Lay Audience

Artists' books, and the ways they are distributed in the world, are often experimental and highly responsive to the immediate present. Artist publishers who are currently active express societal concerns that echo the concerns that were voiced by their predecessors in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. This research considers the clairvoyant quality of artists' publishing, and what the figure of the medium (who also happens to be a publisher) might offer for those artists who are publishing for the present and the future. A focus point within this research is Vera McNichol, a Southern Ontario clairvoyant and publisher, as well as a number of London-based artists' publishing projects. Let's make contact with them to see what they have to say to each other and to us.

Acknowledgments

As is fitting for a research project about artist-run endeavours, this thesis would not have been possible without the collaboration and generosity of many individuals, collectives, and organizations. The image of hands and fingers intertwined appears in this research in a couple of places, and that is the image of this work. This has been a project invested in, and driven by, the ethos of support in all its incarnations. I am so thankful for that support and would not have completed this process without it.

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Premonition: A Warning for the Present; Suggestion: Thinness

In tandem with researching how artist publishers are responding to ongoing crises, I've spent a great deal of time reading about how psychics and conspiracy theorists are wrangling with the present. In thinking through the tricky terrains of prophetic interpretation, pandemic reading relayed backwards, like hindsight, onto research I had been carrying out on arts publishing over the last six years. A specifically pandemic mindset has even elicited a number of new interpretations and (with hindsight, since premonitions move in both directions) illuminated some small presentiments and portents, including throughout this doctoral project's early stages. Within the strange temporality of this 'present'—where time and action feel both paused and accelerated—these minor foresights have not necessarily eased the anxiety that comes with pandemic time. But they have urged useful personal questions that echo the conversations happening in present-day virtual publishing discussions about what publishing needs to be. Specifically, what to do with this research *now*? How to put it to work toward what might come next? How to help foster a better "next" into being?

I am thinking back on a personal, semi-oracular encounter. This was far less articulate(d) than run-of-the-mill psychic warnings of global disease or pestilence, and yet feels much more prescient (bang-on, even). Its prophetic quality only emerged months later, with the tricky benefit of interpretation. In *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*, the artist and publisher James Bridle examines our dangerous fascination with prediction. Bridle is specifically attuned to the predictive capacities offered by technology. In their chapter, "Conspiracy," they recount observing the flight patterns of UK aircraft as they are quietly involved in deporting asylum seekers or carrying out surveillance-gathering missions. Bridle situates these very concrete airspace activities—expulsion, spying, and their corresponding carbon impacts—alongside the suspicions of chemtrail soothsayers. "Something strange is

afoot,” they write: “In the hyper-connected, data-deluged present, schisms emerge in mass perception. We’re all looking at the same skies, but we’re seeing different things.”¹

In “Conspiracy,” Bridle mentions GCHQ Bude in Cornwall, a “government satellite ground station and eavesdropping centre.”² GCHQ Bude is located near one of the first transatlantic undersea cables. Edward Snowden famously reported on its info-gathering operations, codename Tempora (*tempora*, plural of Latin *tempus*, for “time; period”). The Tempora system archives and observes fibre-optic communications, sharing data with the National Security Agency. Thanks to Snowden and others, the frequency with which information is readily compromised is undeniable. The disturbing permanence of the endless flows of day-to-day activity, once considered fleeting, is laid bare. Permeability is the state of our present *tempus*. Snowden calls mass state and private surveillance, dis- and misinformation projects “conspiracy practices.” He explicitly distinguishes these from conspiracy theories, “those malevolent falsehoods that in aggregate can erode civic confidence in the existence of anything certain or verifiable.”³ Conspiracy practices are tangible, “expressed through law and policy, technology, and finance,” but they often vanish behind the curtain of conspiracy theory because they are “too daunting, too threatening, too total.”⁴

GCHQ Bude is named for the nearby coastal town of Bude, which was the final home of artist, publisher, and occultist Pamela Colman Smith. She is most recognized (or underrecognized) as the illustrator of the canonical Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck. In 2019 I had the opportunity to visit the house where she died, impoverished. Her final home is now a pub, so I ordered lunch and sat to take in its beautiful big windows, over-painted doorjambs, and ever-syncoating slot machines. Mid-bite, an electrical socket in the room emitted a snap-bang loud enough to startle everyone into silence. That silence felt notable, and I cannot

¹ James Bridle, *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future* (London; Brooklyn: Verso, 2018), 192. An expanded version of this personal experience was previously described in the essay, “Deception is a co-effect which cannot be neglected,” *SDUK: Tilting* (1) Issue 7 (April 2020), 30-32.

² Wikipedia. 2020. “GCHQ Bude.” Last modified 2 April 2023. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GCHQ_Bude.

³ Edward Snowden, “Conspiracy: Theory and Practice,” published on Snowden’s Substack: *Continuing Ed – With Edward Snowden*, 29 January 2021. https://edwardsnowden.substack.com/p/conspiracy-pt1?utm_source=url.

⁴ Edward Snowden, “Conspiracy: Theory and Practice.”

express why. Perhaps I was a little too steeped in Colman Smith's narrative and footsteps. Perhaps the sea air elicited some minor charge. The event passed with the collective, nervous laughter from all of us gathered in the pub. But the electrical discharge feels more prescient now, in the context of our attenuated and hyper-monitored *tempus*: an oracular hiccup in a network of information-laden, sea-buffed circuitry. With hindsight, that instant resonates as a distinct moment of 'qualia': not-quite-understanding, not-quite-contact, but certainly a kind of sensory awareness.

In 1902, Colman Smith worked with artist Jack Yeats (younger brother of William Butler Yeats) and publisher Elkin Mathews on the production of a limited, serial run of hand-coloured broadsheets of images and verses. The broadsheet for July 1902 includes these words by Colman Smith:

*The cobweb cloak of Time has dropped between the world and me,
The Rainbow ships of memory have drifted out to sea.*⁵

With the uneasy associations of conspiratorial time, or *tempora*, Colman Smith's cloaking verse comes to read quite differently. Yet in a later discussion I had of the event in the pub, and my research project in general, a friend observed that my premise of oracular event sounded "pretty thin." Our ensuing conversation of what thinness might entail led to some ruminations of Marcel Duchamp's *infrathin*.⁶ While not fully formed by the artist (which is important), *infrathin*'s meaning is available to us through Duchamp's notes and brief allusions in interviews: "The possible implying the becoming – the passage from one to the other takes place in the *infra thin*."⁷ Duchamp established the liminality of the concept by insisting on the impossibility of defining it, but it presents as a kind of artistic radar. The *infrathin* quality is accessed through example-evocations—the way a magnifying glass allows different access to a surface, "the warmth of a seat (which has just been left),"

⁵ Jack B. Yeats and Pamela Colman Smith, "A Broad Sheet: July 1902" (London, UK: Elkin Mathews, 1902). See "The Jack B. Yeats Broadsheet Collection," University of Pittsburgh's Digital Research Library, http://www.ieee-iri.org/images.library_subdomain/y/yeats.html.

⁶ I am grateful to artist Neil Wedman for this conversation, and many wonderful conversations.

⁷ Marcel Duchamp, "Infrathin 1-46," in *Notes*, arranged and translated by Paul Matisse (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1983), "Infrathin 1-46."

“Subway gates – The people who go through at the very last moment infra thin,” or a “Spider web – not the web but the webs which look like gray-white cloth.”⁸ A Coleman Smith cobweb cloak drops between the world and me.

Duchamp’s infrathin offers a productive space for engaging with those obscure—and obscuring—cobweb cloaks. Caitlin Murray surmises infrathin within Duchamp’s formation of art as “a gap that represents the difference between intention and realization.”⁹ From this perspective, infrathin is located in the sensory event rather than any subsequent account or explanation, and it is productive precisely for how it both sparks as a moment of qualia while evading narrativization. As Murray observes, “[w]hen the definitive properties of known words fail”—and perhaps they fail in the face of malevolent operations, or fail because a situation is too daunting, too threatening, too total—“there is always the possibility of invention.”¹⁰

Joanne ‘Bob’ Whalley and Lee Miller, in writing through the affective encounters experienced across performer, performance and audience, discuss the relationship between infrathin, the subjective sense experiences of qualia, and “the ‘raw feels’ of interiority.” All are ineffable despite being apprehensible, and all represent “inward-focused processes, which resist comfortable or easy communication.”¹¹ As Whalley and Miller note, those terms also tend to be given a quality of esotericism, even ‘mysticism,’ for their ineffability, and this is often met by scholarly resistance.¹² In that regard, Whalley and Miller cite Daniel C. Dennett’s ongoing work to dismantle qualia as a “philosophical obstacle” too easily granted “special powers.”¹³ Dennett claims qualia to be “an artifact of bad theorizing” because it

⁸ Duchamp, “Infrathin 1-46.”

⁹ Caitlyn Murray, “How to Isolate the Infrathin: Marcel Duchamp, Raymond Roussel and the Infrathin,” *Impossible Objects Marfa*, c.2013, <http://www.impossibleobjectsmarfa.com/isolating-the-infrathin>.

¹⁰ Caitlyn Murray, “How to Isolate the Infrathin.”

¹¹ Joanne ‘Bob’ Whalley and Lee Miller, *Between Us: Audiences, Affect and the In-Between* (London: Palgrave, 2017), 90.

¹² Whalley and Miller, *Between Us*, 90.

¹³ Daniel C. Dennett, *Sweet Dreams: Philosophical Obstacles to a Science of Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 78. Cited in Whalley and Miller, *Between Us*, 90.

leads us to accept a belief or experience for the thing itself rather than for the potential causes—brain signals—of that belief or experience.¹⁴

Dennett specifically draws attention to the figure of the medium: his is “the imagined *MEDium* of consciousness,” the notion of an ineffable but certain and specific ‘self.’ He names this interlocutor as “a user-illusion, a brilliant simplification of the noisy tumult of causation and interaction,” and a “homunculus from the Cartesian Theater.”¹⁵ Dennett would have us do away with the *MEDium*—and with qualia—since, from both a philosophical and operational standpoint, they are unhelpful mental representations. Instead, states Dennett, qualia should be categorized alongside fictional characters like “Sherlock Holmes, the Loch Ness Monster and the Abominable Snowman” because, while “entertaining and instructive,” they are more folklore than philosophy, more fiction than science.¹⁶ Dennett’s directive for undermining both the *MEDium* and its associative qualia: “translating or transforming [brain] signals into neural representations that are well-suited to permit representation-users to extract what they need.”¹⁷ While Dennett’s argument reads sensibly enough, there are at least some instances in which those ineffable individual encounters—those fictions and folklores—are vital in order for one’s *MEDium* to navigate through an otherwise unwieldy experience.¹⁸ Whalley and Miller are invested in parsing affective experience-engagement with live performance. They disagree with Dennett’s dismissal of qualia. They propose that qualia are valuable access points for “[articulating] the intimate,” and provide alternatives to more “discursive strategies.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Daniel C. Dennett, “A History of Qualia,” *Topoi* 39.1 (2017): 5. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-017-9508-2>.

¹⁵ Dennett, “A History of Qualia,” 8. Dennett clarifies: “the brain’s user-illusion of itself, or more accurately, [a] whole manifold of user-illusions for various components of the brain that have various different jobs of discrimination and control to accomplish.”

¹⁶ Dennett, “A History of Qualia,” 9.

¹⁷ Dennett, “A History of Qualia,” 8-9.

¹⁸ The curatorial theme of Quebec’s 2022 Manif d’art biennial—delayed due to pandemic restrictions—is “illusions are real.” Guest curator Steven Matijcio cites “[t]he political punctuation of being and living through the thick of the post-truth era” as a formative construct for the theme. Quoted in Leah Collins, “Illusions are real: Quebec City’s art biennial returns with a nod to the politics of post-truth,” *CBC News – Arts*, 22 February 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/arts/illusions-are-real-quebec-city-s-art-biennial-returns-with-a-nod-to-the-politics-of-post-truth-1.6359996>

¹⁹ Whalley and Miller, *Between Us*, 90.

Operating in parallel with the foregoing dynamic, writer and editor Maria Fusco invokes Sherlock Holmes (so quickly dismissed by Dennett) to develop a formation for art writing that brings a productive meeting of language and the art object into being. Mining the mental workings of Doyle's fictional, troubled detective, Fusco retrieves tactics for side-stepping deductive modes of art historical discourse. Rather than perform "a mere process of critical translation, object to text," Fusco-with-Holmes encourages a reciprocal engagement with the art object through poetics.²⁰ She prompts writing "to elicit, to unlock, to *induce* its essential obscurity with essential obscurity."²¹ Her approach follows upon traditions of European post-structuralist thought, formulated from Blanchot and developed through Barthes, Derrida, Deleuze, and others.

Additional to infrathin (while perhaps manifesting it perfectly) is another Duchampian invention that induces: "it's an artist's book if an artist made it, or if an artist says it is." The quote is attributed to Duchamp by Lucy Lippard.²² This less-than-definitive statement playfully undermines any possibility of concreteness, bestowing the quality of "artist's book" on the esoteric, unspecified and precarious power of the hand—or utterance—of the artist.²³ As will be seen, artist publishers are very concerned with the present, with the future, and with what can (and must) occur now and into then. In either regard, thinly or definitively-non-definitive, it is precisely in the negation of limitations, in the failure of known words—and known worlds—and in communing with "the active state and not the result," that artists' publishing is best situated to operate.²⁴

²⁰ Maria Fusco, "Say Who I Am or A Broad Private Wink," in *Give Up Art: Critical Writings by Maria Fusco*, edited by Jeff Khonsary (Los Angeles; Vancouver: New Documents, 2017), 37.

²¹ Fusco, "Say Who I Am," 37.

²² Lucy Lippard, "Conspicuous Consumption: New Artists' Books," in *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, edited by Joan Lyons (Rochester: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1987; 1985), 53.

²³ Lippard enacts something like an infrathin gesture with her own "negative definition" for the artist's book: "artists' books are best defined as whatever isn't anything else." See "Conspicuous Consumption," 56.

²⁴ Duchamp, "Infrathin 1-46."



Figure 1. Vera Ernst McNichol (1910 – 1995). Photographer unknown. This photograph accompanies the 1974 news story by E. G. Martin, “Fortune-Teller Directs Search Team to Missing Man’s Body in Abandoned Well.” The news clipping is undated, and the outlet is unknown. The accompanying caption for the photo reads: “CARD READER: Mrs. Vera McNichol reveals precise location of victim by reading cards.” A copy of her first autobiographical volume, *Smiling Through Tears*, is also featured on the table. Image courtesy of the Vera McNichol Fonds, Stratford Perth Archives.

A Clairvoyant Publishing Practice

It appears that a significant number of arts publishers are ruminating upon—or calling into being—possible futures for an uncertain, unstable present. As will be seen in Chapter One, many contemporary arts publishers are positioning their activities as necessary interventions on the present—a time not only of social distance but of great political divide and economic

disparity. Like Coleman Smith, they perceive the present as an opaque and cobweb-cloaked moment. In the midst of so much normalized unease and anxiety, I would like to suggest looking to a clairvoyant publisher for advice about publishing for the future. This particular clairvoyant has insight to offer in terms of reaching her readers from a great distance. Her publishing practice and distribution activities provide a useful reference point for contemporary arts publishers whose methods and outputs are directed toward fostering a different world into being.

The narrative of a book about the future that proceeds to engender that future is a familiar one. In Jacek Koprowicz's Polish horror/police procedural, *Medium* (1985), four people are inexplicably drawn to an old villa in 1930s Sopot, newly under Nazi control. All four are compelled to re-enact an affair and triple homicide that took place thirty-six years prior. One of these people, a baffled man named Andrzej Gaszewski, consults the expertise of the parapsychologist Wagner to learn why he has unwittingly brought himself to the coast. Wagner is famous for having written two books: one of "unverifiable prophecies" for famous individuals long dead; one of horoscopes for the living in which dates of death remain hidden in sealed envelopes in Wagner's office. Wagner's telepathic sister advises Gaszewski to not request a reading, as his horoscope chart will include his anticipated day of death. As Wagner interviews Gaszewski, he calculates the unfortunate date ("Today") and promptly conceals the information while insisting Gaszewski flee town. The Polish Inspector Selin, similarly ill-fated, also seeks out Wagner. Their tense exchange speaks as much to his immediate paranormal conundrum as to the greater socio-political crises overtaking Sopot: "Do you believe history may repeat itself?" Selin asks. "Does it matter to you if I believe or not? The worst thing is that I can't help you," Wagner responds. Selin is desperate: "Nothing can stop this?"²⁵ Both Gaszewski and Selin try to escape their unfortunate doublings, but are nevertheless drawn into re-living other men's lives and deaths.

In *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind*, Nicholas Royle considers telepathy to be a useful "metaphor for reading," pinpointing the so-called "second sight" of

²⁵ *Medium*, directed by Jacek Koprowicz (Poland, West Germany: P.P. Film Polski, Regina Ziegler Filmproduktion, 1985), 58:28:00

the literary text.²⁶ Royle states that *Literature is Telepathy*: he describes “the literary text as reading-machine, as reading-effect, that is as always in advance including, foreseeing, its addressee—this would be the telepathic structure—without knowing where it is going, who is speaking or who is listening, and at what distance.”²⁷ Royle is wide-ranging in his coverage of literary works, considering works by Jane Austen, Henry James, Emily Brontë, Shakespeare, Raymond Chandler, George Eliot, T. S. Eliot, and many others. Royle also cites how Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida position critical assessments of literature as texts in themselves, and so critical texts are also considered for their telepathic qualities. For Royle, literature and criticism cannot be considered discrete areas, as both are, from his vantage, “in telepathic correspondence.”²⁸

In reviewing Royle’s work, Marc Redfield highlights the genesis of ‘telepathy’ in nineteenth-century spiritualism despite concurrent “post-Enlightenment discourse.”²⁹ Like Royle, Redfield is intent on illustrating the relevance of the term beyond its “merely occult or psychological interest.”³⁰ A deconstructionist thinker in the lineage of Derrida, Redfield extends telepathy’s etymological functions toward technology, communication, and knowledge. He directs attention to the charged nature of the word, ‘telepathy’:

...it registers the site of numerous communications: between high culture and an emergent “popular” culture; between the occult and nineteenth-century science (particularly, of course, the liminal ‘science’ of psychoanalysis); between Gothic literary traditions and the culturally charged language of ethics, epistemology and politics that, from Shaftesbury to George Eliot (and in many respects to the present day), have been organized under the rubric of sympathy or the “sympathetic imagination.” When one takes into account the fact that telepathy is, furthermore, a figure of communication—of the communication of feeling or ‘felt’ meaning (*pathos*) over distance (*tele*) – it becomes easy to appreciate the term’s critical potential.³¹

²⁶ Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 96.

²⁷ Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*, 26.

²⁸ Royle, *Telepathy and Literature*, 26.

²⁹ Marc Redfield, “The Fictions of Telepathy – Review of Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Blackwell, 1990).” *Surfaces: Acts of the Conference “Rethinking Culture”* Vol 2 (1992): unpaginated, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065246ar>.

³⁰ Redfield, “The Fictions of Telepathy.”

³¹ Redfield, “The Fictions of Telepathy.”

Redfield believes that Royle's study is too wide-ranging to articulate important stakes for both discourse and the consideration, or application, of telepathy to creative production. Redfield believes Royle has missed the "subversive potential" of telepathy as a critical device, and believes this could have been corrected if Royle had better attended to an unfulfilled promise within his study: "an oft-implied but not yet discussed intersection among literature, telepathy, and technology" is never carried out, and Royle "fails to analyze the question of technology" in relation to telepathy.³² From Redfield's vantage, "Telepathy communicates a fantasy of unmediated communication...It promises an escape from the technology of the signifier, but in doing so imports *techne* into the heart of pathos. For whose pathos is it, once tele-pathy has begun? And how would one ever know whether it has begun or not?"³³

Neither Royle nor Redfield consider the position of the publisher—integral to fostering contact between author and reader—in this telepathic communication circuit, marking another missed opportunity to explore telepathy's "subversive potential." Luckily, we have an instance in which a clairvoyant positions herself as author, critic, publisher and distributor. Her life, methods and outputs enable us to formulate the telepathic quality of the publishing act in a very concrete, way. As a self-publishing agent operating outside of mainstream literary channels, this clairvoyant is well positioned to inform strategies of arts publishing. Proponents of the artists' book, like Ulises Carrión and Lucy Lippard, also discuss the problematics of the form's rarified nature (this assessment is considered in more detail in Chapter One). But as Brian Wallis wrote in 1986, "the artist's book – a precious form, produced in relatively small numbers, for a specialized audience and market, and with inefficient means of distribution," is nonetheless "an essentially political genre."³⁴

³² Redfield, "The Fictions of Telepathy."

³³ Redfield, "The Fictions of Telepathy."

³⁴ Brian Wallis, "The Politics of Representation," in *Printed Matter Catalog (1986-1987)*, edited by Jack Bankowsky (New York, Printed Matter: 1986), 10.

Vera Ernst McNichol (1910-1995), bestowed with the formal title as “Canada’s Only Official Clairvoyant,”³⁵ earned international recognition for her extra-sensory talents. McNichol was a trained nurse and midwife turned psychic-self-publisher. In the first volume of her autobiography, *Smiling Through Tears*, she describes her first psychic experience as a young girl, visualizing occurrences before they happened. Her Amish Mennonite father, who feared she was possessed by a devil, would punish her severely. So, McNichol recounts, she visited a Pentecostal minister for guidance. Informed by a religious upbringing, she observed: “I thought of the snake in the Garden of Eden and first couldn’t stand the thought that I had a snake inside me.”³⁶ The Minister charged the young Vera with using her abilities only for good. At the age of twenty-one, McNichol became a nurse at the Listowel Memorial Hospital, and shortly thereafter she also began to read for people professionally.

At the height of her fame, McNichol received numerous daily visitors to her Millbank, Ontario home, and she received thousands of letters annually. It’s estimated that between 1955 and 1988, a quarter of a million people traveled to Millbank to visit her for readings.³⁷ Her in-person and letter-writing patrons sought her assistance in locating missing relatives or cherished possessions, beseeched her for advice on love, marriage and job prospects, and asked for solace from depression. Readings for patrons were typically quite material and specific in nature. For example, she warned people of car accidents, murders, thefts, and health crises. The term ‘patrons’ is used carefully in this context: McNichol, who typically

³⁵ Cited in a news article by Mary Herman, “Clairvoyant Shares Thoughts,” Unknown outlet, 11 October 1978, unpaginated. According to Herman, McNichol was given this title “by Ottawa.” Unfortunately, no outlet name is provided for this clipping, nor have I been able to find any further context for this particular laudatory recognition afforded to McNichol. The article can be found in the press clippings folder for Vera McNichol in the Stratford Perth Archives.

³⁶ Vera Ernst McNichol, *Smiling Through Tears: Autobiography (Life Story), Volume 1*, self-published (Bloomington, Ontario: One M. Printing Company, 1970), 107.

³⁷ McNichol’s popularity is detailed by numerous local news reporters, as well as herself. For example, see Roch Whelan, “The seer, the reporter, the daredevil,” *The Beacon Herald Millennium Edition*, 1 January 2000, B8. An undated, carbon-copied form response that Vera sent to mail correspondents to guide them in how to carry out a distanced card reading begins with the following context: “Dear New Friend, If you could see the piles of mail I received in the past three months, you would understand the delay in answering your letter. In March, [Vera’s husband] John and I counted 18, 983 letters and it rose to 23,000 in April. Besides this, the number of callers increased and cars drew up to our home as early as midnight to be the first in line for morning. By 6:00 a.m. both sides of our street are lined and when I open the door thirty to forty strangers file in as if to a rummage sale.” This form letter is included in McNichol’s personal collection in the Vera McNichol Fonds, Stratford-Perth Archives.

used playing cards, never charged for her clairvoyant services.³⁸ This is likely because it was illegal to accept money for fortune telling at the time. Section 365 of the Criminal Code of Canada, in effect from 1892 until 2018, prohibited the practice of witchcraft, sorcery, fortune telling, as well as benefitting fraudulently from “skill in or knowledge of an occult or crafty science to discover where or in what manner anything that is supposed to have been stolen or lost may be found.”³⁹



Figure 2. “Picnic for Vera McNichol at Listowel.” Photographs by Mike Jordan, 1977, in the *London Free Press* photo archives, courtesy of Western University Archives.

³⁸ McNichol was most famous for her playing card readings, but she also read tea leaves and she devised sets of painted Tarot sticks that seemed to operate in a manner similar to the I Ching.

³⁹ See Canada, “ARCHIVED: Criminal Code - Version of section 365 from 2003-01-01 to 2018-12-12,” modified 20 January 2022, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/section-365-20030101.html>.

In addition to her face-to-face and letter-based readings, McNichol was a prolific creator of published content: her more than thirty self-published volumes include original poetry, Biblical stories and poems with commentary, local histories, accounts of her readings, and her extended autobiographical project.⁴⁰ She was also directly engaged in the distribution of her own works. Visitors could leave donations, and Vera herself requested that instead of payment for her readings “new friends” and correspondents could purchase one of her many books, priced at \$5 each. McNichol also sold her books at numerous public picnics that she organized at Listowel Park through the 1970s and 1980s (see Figure 2). Her publishing and distribution strategies were innately tethered to her clairvoyance yet deftly circumnavigated federal regulations against fortune telling.

The research underpinning this thesis considers whether McNichol’s interconnected clairvoyant and self-publishing practices might offer a generative—while some might argue, potentially dubious—space for artist publishers who are thinking through strategies for both the present moment and the future. Like a number of artists’ publications discussed in this research, McNichol’s publishing practice represents a vantage point that crosses clairvoyance with historiography and forensic modalities. Psychic practice is often seen in intimate proximity to forensic research, and their complicated relationship has perpetuated since the earliest iterations of both. Early nineteenth-century British and Scottish doctors, seeking to establish the historical lineage of the then-burgeoning field of medical jurisprudence, locate its beginnings in the Roman era—specifically, at the instant in which Caesar’s corpse, infamously foretold to him in a soothsayer’s warning, is put on display to the public. Stabbed a recorded twenty-three times, the single mortal blow out of twenty-three is identified by Caesar’s physician, constituting an early forensic assessment.⁴¹

⁴⁰ In 1971, McNichol received a certificate of merit from the International Who’s Who in Poetry (London, England). See “Named as one of the top nine poets in the world,” *Stratford*, 31 January 1972. In 1975, McNichol was nominated as an outstanding woman for the province of Ontario’s International Women’s Year, and was formally recognized in 1976 by Ontario Premier Bill Davis and the Ontario cabinet for her “contribution ... to the province of Ontario.” In 1975, McNichol also received the Award of Contemporary Achievement for the Dictionary of International Biography, based in London, England. See William Marsden, “McNichol Nominated: Premier Davis ‘salutes’ Millbank fortune teller,” *The Beacon Herald*, 27 January 1976.

⁴¹ See J. A. Paris and J. S. M. Fonblanque, *Medical Jurisprudence*, three volumes (London: W. Phillips, 1823); Theodorick Romeyn Beck and John B Beck, *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence* (London: Longman, etc., 1829); John Gordon Smith, “The Claims of Forensic Medicine: Being the Introductory Lecture Delivered in the University of London on Monday, May 11, 1829 (London: John Taylor; University of London, 1829); Anthony

McNichol is best remembered as the psychic whose visions led police to discover the body of farmer Angus Tuer, who was murdered by his brother in 1974. From that case onward, McNichol was frequently in contact with local, provincial, national and international law enforcement regarding such matters. She describes these collaborations in her self-published work *Hold High the Torch of the Law* (Millbank, Ontario: 1977). Despite numerous articles citing law enforcement officials' admission of her abilities,⁴² the relationship between Vera and the police was not always a reciprocal one; a number of news clippings include police enforcement expressing their skepticism, denial, or all-round dislike of her involvement in cases.⁴³ Invoking news clippings introduces a third factor to triangulate the relationship between clairvoyance and facets of the legal system: how popular media portrays them—specifically, how both are described in newspaper coverage. McNichol was frequently covered by newspapers during her lifetime—one Chicago newspaper even threatened to sue her.⁴⁴ She also kept personal scrapbooks of articles, annotating some of these when she believed that they got information wrong. The constellation of forensic activity, clairvoyance, media and popular culture is revisited in a later section of this paper, “Premonitions: Mirrors and Doubles; Suggestion: Reading.”

Todd Thomson, “Lecture, Introductory to the Course of Medical Jurisprudence Delivered in the University of London on Friday, January 7, 1831” (London: John Taylor; University of London, 1831). Among these authors, the Scottish doctor Anthony Todd Thomson further indicates the overlay of religious ceremony onto early forensic medicine, or “Medical Police.” See Thomson, “Lecture: Course of Medical Jurisprudence,” 7. Clairvoyance was also implicated in Roman civic development. As Thompson writes: “whenever they proposed to build a town, or to pitch a camp, the entrails of the sacrifice were inspected by the soothsayer, who determined whether they were propitious.”

⁴² See E. G. Martin, “Fortune-Teller Directs Search Team to Missing Man’s Body in Abandoned Well,” undated news clipping in the Vera McNichol Fonds, Stratford-Perth Archives (possibly *The Enquirer*): Martin cites former police officer Walter Bain, Ontario Police Inspector Denis Alsop, OPP Sgt. Arthur Harrison, and Detective Paul Frise of the Peterborough, Ontario police.

⁴³ McNichol recounts numerous instances of police skepticism and outright hostility in her biographical writing. See also “Mystic Predicts Mitchell Death,” unlabeled news clipping (possibly *The Milverton Sun*), 30 January 1974, in the Vera McNichol Fonds, Stratford-Perth Archives.

⁴⁴ See Keith Schaefer, “Era ends as Vera McNichol’s belongings sold,” 28 June 1988. No outlet name is provided for this clipping. The article can be found in the press clippings folder in the Vera McNichol Fonds, Stratford Perth Archives.

McNichol's life and work remains relatively underrecognized despite her notoriety. Covered by local and national newspapers during her lifetime, and occasionally discussed on local history message boards, she appears as a tangential figure in only two historical accounts. Both of these works include McNichol among a collection of local characters: social historian Joanna Rickert-Hall's recent work, *Waterloo You Never Knew: Life on the Margins*, briefly considers McNichol as one of several psychic mediums operating in and around the Waterloo area.⁴⁵ McNichol also appears in reporter Campbell Cork's *Pig's Ear*, a collection of local lore from the Mount Forest and surrounding area.⁴⁶ The only existing consideration of McNichol from a publishing vantage comes from Stratford author Patti Miller, who in 2013 completed an index of McNichol's five-volume autobiography *Smiling Through Tears*, in great part for friends seeking mention of family members in McNichol's extensive reminiscences.⁴⁷ Miller's index demonstrates McNichol's work as an amateur historian, with her volumes representing a unique database of material: namely, an archive of questions and concerns from countless people seeking clairvoyant insight.

In the context of this research, McNichol can be identified as a significant and unrecognized experimental self-publisher. Indeed, her work as a clairvoyant and her self-publishing output cannot be considered separate and unrelated pursuits. We can count McNichol within the literary and social history genres of female psychics who promoted their practices through print: women like Bessie Williams, Amanda T. Jones, Rosalie Le Grange and Joanna Southcott.⁴⁸ As her clairvoyant and publishing practices are vitally interconnected, one

⁴⁵ Joanna Rickert-Hall, *Waterloo You Never Knew: Life on the Margins* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2019).

⁴⁶ Campbell Cork, *Pig's Ear* (Mount Forest, Ontario: Olds Publishing, 2010).

⁴⁷ Patti Miller, *Smiling Through Tears: Autobiography of Vera Ernst McNichol: An Index* (Stratford: Self-published, 2008). Miller, who began the project to assist a friend seeking mention of his parents and grandparents in McNichol's work, refers to McNichol's multi-volume autobiography as "cumbersome indeed." Yet in an interview with librarian Melanie Kindrachuk, Miller also describes McNichol's *Smiling Through Tears* as "a much more interesting history of our area than dusty civil records." From her perspective, "Vera's books tell of the predictions she made, the people she met and the murders she solved. Published in five volumes and hard to find now as they have been out of print for many years, the index provides those seeking information a more direct route to their family's stories. I have also been told that a manuscript for a sixth book exists. I would very much like to find it and be given permission to print Vera's final work." See Melanie Kindrachuk, "Meet Patti Miller," *Stratford Authors*, 30 October 2012, <https://stratfordauthors.wordpress.com/2012/10/30/meet-patti-miller/>.

⁴⁸ See Florence Marryat (ed.), *The Clairvoyance of Bessie Williams (Mrs. Russell Davies) Related by Herself* (London: Bliss, Sands and Foster, 1893); Elizabeth Lowry, "A Gold Blossom: Practice, Rhetorical Invention, xxvii

meaningful and necessary mode for encountering her archives is to engage with both of those practices holistically.

Laying Out the Cards

When engaged in cartomancy—whether with tarot cards or playing cards—agents are laid out in formation to see how they begin to communicate with one another and with us. I suggest we lay McNichol’s cards alongside her many volumes to see what the clairvoyant can tell us about publishing. I explore the relationship between card deck and book form in greater detail in the section, “Premonition: Mirrors and Doubles.” But what happens when a card reader approaches the deck of another card reader? I also suggest we lay McNichol’s cards and volumes alongside a number of other books—artists’ books, bookworks—and artistic publishing ventures in order to see how they begin to communicate with one another. What might these publications tell us about the moments from which they emerged? What do they have to say to one another, and to us, about the present? And what might they augur, or engender, for the future?

As his famous *Mnemosyne Atlas* demonstrates, Aby Warburg understood that unexpected associations and foresights can emerge from the act of shuffling. Warburg’s final project, unfinished at the time of his death, comprised sixty-three black clothed panels upon which he arranged and rearranged countless black and white images, maps, and manuscript pages. Christopher D. Johnson situates the *Atlas* in relation to earlier Encyclopedic endeavours to comprehensively archive the past. Returning us to Redford and Royle on telepathy, Johnson states that in the *Atlas*’s collapsing of time and space, “Warburg, too, mines a vein of pathos from the impossibility of such ambitions, [but] unlike most of its counterparts, the *Atlas* spurns the *copia* of discourse for a more immanent metonymy of images.”⁴⁹ As Johnson indicates, Warburg’s activity is intended to make contact with “the concrete expression of

and Spirit Control in Amanda Jones’s Psychic Autobiography,” *American Communal Societies Quarterly*, Vol. 9 No. 3 (2015): 180-199; Will Irwin, *The House of Mystery: An Episode in the Career of Rosalie Le Grange, Clairvoyant* (New York: The Century Co., 1910).

⁴⁹ Christopher D. Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor and Aby Warburg’s Atlas of Images* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Cornell University Library, 2012), 65.

‘antiquity’s afterlife,’” not only through the Renaissance period, but also into the twentieth century—with the *Atlas* offering us a “metaphoric archaeology of modernity.”⁵⁰ Vital connections, and even instants of qualia, can emerge in the space of the inexplicable, providing useful suggestions for what might come next.

The proceeding research revisits a number of artists’ publications from the same place—London, Ontario—albeit from different times, in order to explore their shared concerns and shared insights. In approaching these publications, this research also incorporates a great deal of personal anecdotal and circumstantial evidence from the parties involved with each project. In making contact with the publishing methods and outputs under consideration, I also endeavour to encourage those methods and outputs to speak for themselves. At certain moments, forthcoming chapters encourage the histories of these projects to take over. My approach to research gestures toward the act of channeling: where mediums are intermediaries (and not always reliable ones), channelers promise immediate access via a conduit-driven relationship, but this access is rarely the linear and comprehensive access we hope for. Though it entails intimate knowledge of a subject, channeling is often also prone to fragmentation, contradiction, ambiguity, and unease.

Despairing over his fate in *Medium*, Inspector Selin gets drunk with his deputy, who tries to assuage his superior’s irrational fears. “Time is not a filing cabinet, Inspector,” the deputy offers, but Selin is not convinced: “How do you know it’s not? I had never been in that house before, but I know the house by heart. Perhaps we are traveling through time. Perhaps time is a form of space. If there were someone... drink, drink.”⁵¹ The filing cabinet, familiar to an inspector or an archivist, is also a familiar device incorporated into research-based art outputs. The manner in which the filing cabinet collects and order information alphabetically, numerically, or chronologically represents both completeness—or at least the desire for completeness—and fragmentation. When the filing cabinet is at our disposal, certain expectations for reading and research are invoked. We are invited to handle and sift through

⁵⁰ Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor and Aby Warburg’s Atlas of Images*, 12, x.

⁵¹ Koproicz, *Medium*.

documents and materials that have been brought into close physical proximity. We are able to both survey and sample, so long as we uphold the filing cabinet's logic.

In defining the movement of research-based art, Claire Bishop describes an overall "reliance on text and discourse to support an abundance of materials."⁵² Approaching research-based installation art, Bishop details the specificities of "its techniques of display, its accumulation and spatialization of information, its model of research, its construction of a viewing subject, and its relationship to knowledge and truth." Her encounters with this approach are not comfortable ones. In discerning how "the overall structure is additive rather than distilled," she represents the corresponding result often produced in the viewing subject: "Whenever I encounter one of these installations, I start to experience a feeling of mild panic: *How much time is it going to take to wade through this?*"⁵³

Bishop situates this information overload as not only a post-digital outcome, but "a complete inhabitation of digital logic."⁵⁴ She uses familiar descriptors of skimming and sampling as the post-digital activities now required to parse so much information, and a corresponding resistance within artists to "formulate conclusions or provide an easily digestible message."⁵⁵ A post-digital subject has learned to engage with endless flows of information in particular ways. Bishop believes that the works of contemporary research-focused artists demonstrate "an effect of internalizing the apparatus through which their research is increasingly conducted," the apparatus here being digital space.⁵⁶ This significantly upends the logic of the filing cabinet. Earlier, pre-digital movements within research-based art internalized and enacted academic expectations by defining specific questions or concerns and providing specific conclusions. Contemporary research-based art shifts away from this, exhibiting "a

⁵² Claire Bishop, "Information Overload," *Artforum* Vol. 61 No. 8 (April 2023), <https://www.artforum.com/features/claire-bishop-on-the-superabundance-of-research-based-art-252571/>.

⁵³ Bishop, "Information Overload."

⁵⁴ Bishop, "Information Overload."

⁵⁵ Bishop, "Information Overload."

⁵⁶ Bishop, "Information Overload."

line of thinking governed by drift rather than depth, creative inaccuracy rather than expertise, and accessibility rather than the ivory tower.”⁵⁷

Bishop’s commentary turns to what many research-based endeavours leave her “yearning for”:

On the other side of aggregation and fragmentation, I find myself yearning for selection and synthesis—a directed series of connections that go beyond the subjective, contingent, and accumulative. In the strongest examples of research-based art, the viewer is offered a signal rather than noise, an original proposition founded on a clear research question rather than inchoate curiosity. If this sounds like a crypto-academic call to apply traditional research criteria to works of art, then it is, to an extent: Earlier, I differentiated between *search* and *research*, and I unabashedly prefer the latter.⁵⁸

Amidst the juxtapositions and connections across the bookworks and publishing projects presented in this thesis, there is a specific signal that takes the form of a recurring sense of urgency. There are shared warnings. These bookworks suggest things to avoid and things to overcome. There are possible solutions, both for the present terrain of arts publishing and also for the overarching societal quandaries arts publishers continue to find ourselves in. These solutions call out from the past. There are also predictions for the kinds of futures that might start to be generated now, in the immediate present, if certain actions are taken.

While the chapters of this thesis present research-based engagements with materials and subjects, interstitial spaces between thesis chapters lean toward Warburgian shuffling to see what arises from contingency. When engaging with premonitions from the medium—whether the parapsychologist’s horoscope or the clairvoyant’s card deck—there are always associated risks. In the process of research and interpretation, the pursuit to explain can go awry and even lead to misdirection. Savvy mediums keep this in mind and offer their patrons suggestions rather than concrete directives. I have similarly opted to title the interstitial spaces of this thesis as ‘Premonitions,’ with corresponding ‘Suggestions,’ rather than ‘Interpretations.’ ‘Suggestion’ embraces the subjective, contingent, and accumulative qualities listed by Bishop. It provides the latitude for space and thinness. This semantic

⁵⁷ Bishop, “Information Overload.”

⁵⁸ Bishop, “Information Overload.”

choice is not intended to imply a kind of neutrality; as Bishop indicates, “Text is never neutral but is shaped by the mode of its delivery.”⁵⁹ Instead, this choice is a response to urgency, and it leans into the “mild panic” and “yearning” that Bishop describes such an approach might evoke. The medium is usually consulted in times of crisis, panic, and yearning. This present is one of crisis. Let us consult the medium.

⁵⁹ Bishop, “Information Overload.”

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Publishing Urgent Artifacts

This project considers artists' publishing from a constellation of historical, theoretical, and practice-based vantage points. This project was also begun in a very different world, and artists' publishing is infamously responsive. Outlining directives for the "New Art of Making Books" in 1975, artist publisher Ulises Carrión articulates foundational concepts for a medium many consider to be inherently evergreen. Uniquely poetic-and-disciplined, Carrión's aphorisms emphasize the vital liveliness of the art book—an interface that operates "not [as] a case of words, nor a bag of words, nor a bearer of words," but as a collection of concepts and "a sequence of spaces."⁶⁰ What are these spaces? It is left to Carrión's reader to discover. They are potentially the spaces of the page, the spaces between pages, the spaces between letters, the spaces between words, and the spaces around and between words and images. But these spaces also encompass the space between the book and its audience, as well as the thought space of that audience. The art book as Carrión describes it is "a space-time sequence," and this space-time sequence is exuberant, perceptive, and lively.⁶¹

Publishing the Present is an emerging archive project produced collaboratively by Wendy's Subway (a Brooklyn-based non-profit reading room, writing space, and publisher), READ Books, and the Libby Leshgold Gallery at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Its mandate is to collect and archive independent publications produced for this present of interrelated international crises. The project acknowledges itself as an "incomplete document" in order to present a faithful reflection of what it is to "[attest] to

⁶⁰ Ulises Carrión, "The New Art of Making Books," in *Second Thoughts* (Amsterdam: VOID Distributors, 1980), 7. "The New Art of Making Books" has numerous re-issues. It was first published in *Plural Magazine*, No. 41 (1975). The text also appears in *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, edited by Joan Lyons (Rochester: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1987; 1985), 31-43. Throughout this thesis I use Carrión's 1980 amended edition from *Second Thoughts*. See below, the section titled "Dispelling a Fantasy," for more discussion on this. For a listing of early printings of Carrión's essay, see *Quant Aux Livres — On Books*, translated by Thierry Dubois (Geneva: Éditions Héros-Limite, 1997), 206.

⁶¹ Carrión, "The New Art of Making Books," 8. "In the new art every page is different; every page is an individualized element of a structure (the book) wherein it has a particular function to fulfill," 9.

ongoing histories of struggle for justice and the current global crisis.”⁶² The endeavor, even when oriented toward arts publication, admits that it cannot possibly encapsulate the entirety of refractive and complex relations that its enterprise invokes, which are simultaneously entwined and disparate.

Publishing the Present also aims to platform those projects “which [inform] our collective imagination of radically better futures.”⁶³ The project directly opposes what it charts out to be contributing and interwoven factors for our present moment: “crises of capitalism; mass incarceration; police violence; white supremacy; attacks on Black, Indigenous, immigrant, LGTBQIA, and disabled lives; environmental devastation; authoritarianism; housing insecurity and increasing economic precarity; among many other threats to human life and dignity.”⁶⁴ It operates as both an activist and archival gesture, gathering evidence of “our collective imagination of radically better futures.”⁶⁵

In July 2020, in virtual residency at the Libby Leshgold Gallery and READ Books, Publishing the Present’s Rachel Valinsky hosted the virtual discussion, “Artist Publishers, Care, and Social Action.” Artist-publishers Beatrix Pang (Small Tune Press, Zine Coop) and Paul Soulellis (Queer.Archive.Work, Library of the Printed Web)

⁶² From “Info—Publishing the Present,” Publishing the Present (Wendy’s Subway, READ Books, the Libby Leshgold Gallery at Emily Carr University of Art + Design), accessed 7 October 2020, <https://libby.ecuad.ca/publishingthepresent/info/>. Libby Leshgold Gallery recently established a multi-year Summer School for artists’ Publishing, “meant to be a space of reflection and sharing for artist publishers to think about our future and think about our present, and make plans and network, and put our work in a critical context.” This description was provided by Libby Leshgold’s Head of Gallery Publishing, Kay Higgins, in the digital panel, “Artist-Publishers, Care, and Social Action: Beatrix Pang and Paul Soulellis,” Libby Leshgold Gallery, August 2020. <https://vimeo.com/448127807>. Discussants included Kay Higgins, Libby Leshgold Gallery’s Head of Gallery Publications and Editor of ECU Press; Rachel Valinsky, Artistic Director of Wendy’s Subway; Marian Chudnovsky, Digital Initiatives and Education Fellow for Wendy’s Subway; publishers Beatrix Pang and Paul Soulellis.

⁶³ “Info—Publishing the Present,” Publishing the Present.

⁶⁴ “Info—Publishing the Present,” Publishing the Present.

⁶⁵ “Info—Publishing the Present,” Publishing the Present. A parallel activist and archival gesture is seen in the Weserberg Museum’s Artists’ Publications Lab, a digital archive of materials in its Centre for Artists’ Publications. The press release for the 2023 launch of the APL foregrounds artists’ publications as “[o]ften subversive and committed to democratic principles,” and “created with the intention of reaching as many people as possible.” The Centre’s mandate is to “[keep] archives and estates alive and continuously up-to-date.” See “Artists’ Publications Lab – Announcements,” *e-flux*, 27 February 2023. <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/504571/artists-publications-lab/>.

considered how their publishing, distribution, and archival practices intersect with their activism in the face of present public health crises, increasing authoritarianism, racism, and myriad environmental calamities. For example, Hong Kong-based Pang emphasized that their publishing practice reflects and reacts to the dimensions of physical and political space afforded to their particular points of view—Pang’s perspectives being queer, non-binary, activist, and from an agricultural background.⁶⁶

Soulellis’ collaborative publications emphasize what he calls “shared practice” while eschewing linearity and fixed narratives.⁶⁷ For this virtual discussion, he offered a new descriptor for a range of accessible, collaborative, non-precious, and affordable works being produced and distributed at this time: “urgent artifacts.”

Urgent artifacts are the materials we need when gaslighting happens—the receipts, the proof that demonstrates how crisis compounds crisis. A record of the moment with a call-to-action: an instruction or invitation to engage, to provide aid, to push back, to refuse, to resist. ... Urgent artifacts are meaningless without distribution, publics, and circulation, which means that to talk of urgent artifacts is to talk about publishing: spreading information, circulating demands, or simply expressing the moment in public despite the structural failures that are surrounding them.⁶⁸

Soulellis unpacks the activity of urgent artifacts in relation to “distribution, publics, and circulation” in *URGENTCRAFT: A NARRATIVE SYLLABUS IN 19 PARTS*, published in 2021.⁶⁹ The pressing necessity for publishing action, and a corresponding understanding of the simultaneous dangers of publishing activity, is described in the following terms:

⁶⁶ Pang and Soulellis, “Artist-Publishers, Care, and Social Action.”

⁶⁷ Soulellis expanded on these thoughts in an open source syllabus. See Paul Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT: A NARRATIVE SYLLABUS IN 19 PARTS* (Leipzig: Academic of Fine Arts Leipzig; Athens School of Fine Arts, 2021), “9: SHARED PRACTICE.” This syllabus was commissioned by *post documenta: contemporary arts as territorial agencies*. <https://soulellis.com/writing/post-documenta/index.html>

⁶⁸ Pang and Soulellis, “Artist-Publishers, Care, and Social Action.”

⁶⁹ The syllabus opens with a brief definition of the term “urgentcraft,” which Soulellis has been incorporating into his own practice and pedagogy for some time. The syllabus description echoes the language of immediacy from his earlier virtual panel: “As an overarching idea, urgentcraft explores the potential for radical publishing to gather and mobilize people around urgent artifacts and messages. As a syllabus, urgentcraft presents a range of artists, projects, texts, and concepts that foreground those strategies in recent history, as well as in contemporary independent publishing. As an expanding set of principles, urgentcraft identifies anti-racist ways of working in crisis, using art and design to fuel emancipatory projects and the movement towards liberation.” See Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “0 – INTRO.”

Urgent acts of “making public” can mobilize communities and inspire change in real time. In crisis, we see independent artists, community organizers, scholars, and activists collectively engaging with sophisticated modes of publishing to record and communicate in real time, while those in traditional positions of power use those same tools to engineer and control our defining narratives. It’s here that we can locate the enormous paradox of contemporary publishing: its potential to oppress as well as to empower.⁷⁰

Within the parameters of Soulellis’ “making public,” certain ontological distinctions of what these publics are, and what an action of making something public entails, are explored. For example, Soulellis immediately affirms “the community bulletin board” as publishing because it is “a basic and banal example of making public in a physical space.”⁷¹ From Soulellis’ vantage, a speech could be trickier to define as publishing despite the fact that “[i]t’s certainly *making public*,” since the audience of a speech is restricted “only to those who have gathered in time and space to listen.”⁷² However, if this speech is *posted* somewhere, it becomes an event of publishing. The activity of posting, in a physical or virtual environment, is key, since “[p]osting is an essential act of publishing, perhaps the oldest.”⁷³ Soulellis’ formation of contemporary publishing prioritizes the action of distribution. Here, Soulellis cites post-conceptual artist Seth Price’s exploration of “dispersion” (in his self-published essay of the same name) in

⁷⁰ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “0: Intro.”

⁷¹ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “1: Making Public.”

⁷² Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “1: Making Public.”

⁷³ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “3: Posting.” Soulellis gestures to potential root functions of “post,” linking the hazy historical figure of the town crier announcing—and then posting—the news of the day to artists like Jenny Holzer, who posts her Truisms in a variety of public ways and forums. Other publishing-related actions explored by Soulellis include: “**stacking**” (“If something isn’t hanging up or posted on a wall, it’s probably sitting flat, stacked on a horizontal surface somewhere, like at a newsstand, or a bookstore, or an art book fair”); “**dropping**” (a “colonialist tactic . . . to force an act of publishing onto a specific territory,” which has since taken on other meanings related to share and release); the ever-evolving “**feed**” (“The feed is experienced as a never-ending flow of posts. I think this is one of the most significant ways to think about publishing today: the feeds we surround ourselves with, that we’re comforted by, and that we nurture and take care of”) and our present of “non-stop **streaming**” (“the same streaming, always-on platforms that enable us to publish and communicate and entertain and protect and isolate ourselves— are also the same platforms used by capitalism to profit and to persist, and by state institutions to surveil, to minoritize, and to criminalize”).

order to underscore the role/act of distribution within publishing.⁷⁴ In the *act* of distribution, publishing takes on the qualities of “gesture or performance”; for Soulellis, the action of publishing enfolds “acts of performative publishing like live streaming or posting” whereby “the act of accessing the work is an engagement with the gesture of publishing itself.”⁷⁵

From the vantage of urgentcraft, distinctions of audience help clarify whether any publicly-oriented posting is a *publishing* activity. Soulellis is quite nonpartisan in considering the potential object-qualities, or materialities, of the publishing event. He is more interested in the “actions” and impacts of publishing. These relate to both distributing the published “material” into the world (and that material may take many forms) and to the audience interaction that results.⁷⁶ Soulellis unpacks audience reception with Michael Warner’s consideration of publics and counterpublics.⁷⁷ For Warner, “*the* public” is not the same as “*a* public”: the former “is a kind of social totality”; the latter is a specific audience which develops as the result of a performance or event (“a concrete audience, a crowd witnessing itself in visible space”); the latter may also be “the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ See Seth Price, “Dispersion,” self-published, *Distributed History*, 2007; 2002. <http://www.distributedhistory.com/Dispersion2007.comp.pdf>. Price’s essay is also cited by David Maroto and Joanna Zielińska, who collaborate as The Book Lovers, an ongoing research project on artists’ novels. See *Artist Novels: The Book Lovers Publication*, edited by David Maroto and Joanna Zielińska (Berlin: Sternberg Press; Kraków: Cricoteka, 2015).

⁷⁵ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “2: Gestures of Publishing.”

⁷⁶ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “2: Gestures of Publishing.”

⁷⁷ Soulellis’ syllabus cites Michael Warner’s essay, “Publics and Counterpublics (abbreviated version),” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. 88 No. 4 (November 2002): 413-425. This is an abbreviated version of Warner’s book of the same title: *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002; 2005).

⁷⁸ Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics (abbreviated version),” 413; cited in Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “2: Gestures of Publishing.” One example provided by Soulellis is Rhizome’s series, *The Download*, which commissions artists to produce works specifically for downloading to an individual’s personal device. Writes Soulellis: “In *The Download*, the act of publishing is located within the uploading and downloading of the files, the private performance of these files on a viewer’s desktop, and the circulation of those files on the network. Evidence of gestural acts and movements is contained in the language of the project itself: zipping, uploading, downloading, unzipping, expanding, etc.”

Urgent artifacts, as Soulellis describes in Publishing the Present’s virtual panel, are “meaningless” without distribution, circulation, and publics. They are also reliant on “shared practice,” and to unpack what this entails, Soulellis turns to a conversation between Stefano Harney and Fred Moten discussing “the beauty of shared practice over individual role.”⁷⁹ Moten specifically proposes a new focus toward “the shared practice of fulfilling needs together as a kind of wealth—distinguishing and cultivating the wealth of our needs, rather than imagining that it’s possible to eliminate them.”⁸⁰ Soulellis contextualizes this formation of shared practice as antithetical, even radically oppositional, to most functions of “the art and design worlds,” as well as the post-secondary programs that feed into these worlds:

Because of how deeply these values are embedded within our institutions, it sometimes feels like we have no choice but to teach them. ... In our teaching, we prioritize exceptionalism as the most important value inherent in the student’s education, because the extractive practices of the art and design worlds require it. Students learn (and educators teach) that to be successful is to be sovereign and “better than”: a supreme, independent power without any need to depend upon anyone or anything, be it kin, or community, or state—unless it’s for profit.⁸¹

Soulellis enfolds shared practice and urgent artifacts within his own educational sphere of urgentcraft, which is “a constellation of tactics” that can be implemented “to resist oppression-based design ideologies, especially in art and design education.”⁸² But both the recent examples he considers, and numerous historical publishing examples he highlights as possible models, extend beyond the educational institution. Shared practice

⁷⁹ Soulellis is citing from this discussion between Stefano Harney and Fred Moten: “FUC 012 - Fred Moten & Stefano Harney — the university: last words,” FUC YouTube, 9 July 2020. https://www.youtube.com/live/zqWMejD_XU8?feature=share

⁸⁰ Moten, “FUC 012 - Fred Moten & Stefano Harney — the university: last words”; this specific quotation is cited by Soulellis in *URGENTCRAFT*, “9: Shared Practice.”

⁸¹ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “8: Resisting the Smoothness of Design Perfection.”

⁸² Paul Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT* (2019), self-published, <https://soulellis.com/work/urgentcraft/index.html>. Soulellis’ urgentcraft is in specific address to art and design educational institutions. He again draws from Fred Moten and Stefano Harvey’s discussion of the “undercommons,” summarized by Soulellis as: “Use (steal from) the institution when you can (while resisting its values).” See Fred Moten and Stefano Harvey, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe; New York; Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013).

requires a total recalibration, leading Soulellis to (in his own words) “pivot my own practice away from the institution: towards collective work, radical un-learning, the redistribution of resources, and communal care. From *my work* → to *our work*.”⁸³

Shared practice is where urgent artifacts acquire their *urgency*. Soulellis surveys publications produced in 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and a series of interrelated radical social justice movements. These are works “that step away from individual authorship, towards something larger—collective, cooperative works emerging from the shared wealth of needs.”⁸⁴ As described in the virtual panel, and renewed in his syllabus, urgent artifacts take up a forensic quality by serving as a kind of “record” or evidence—here, “[t]he evidence that demonstrates how crisis compounds crisis.”⁸⁵ That evidence may be made public simply to draw attention to an unreasonable situation (for example, “simply expressing the moment in public despite structural failure”).⁸⁶

However, urgent artifacts may enact a form of testimony that simultaneously enfolds a specific solution: “a call-to-action: an instruction or invitation to engage, to provide aid, to push back, to refuse, to resist.”⁸⁷ Urgent artifacts encompass a range of possible outputs,⁸⁸ but Soulellis importantly emphasizes that urgent artifacts are “modest, easily made, and they’re located where the conversations are already happening”; they also use

⁸³ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “9: Shared Practice.”

⁸⁴ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.” Examples cited include the 2020 zine, *Asian American Feminist Antibodies {care in the time of coronavirus}*, published by the Asian American Feminist Collective, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59f87d66914e6b2a2c51b657/t/5e7bbeef7811c16d3a8768eb/1585168132614/AAFCZine3_CareintheTimeofCoronavirus.pdf; the Quarantine Times expanded publication project by Public Media Institute, <https://publicmediainstitute.com/publications/>; a collaboratively written and publicly circulated letter to RISD’s President, Provost, and Board Chairman about “Institutionally racist hiring practices at RISD,” <https://files.cargocollective.com/c788369/Institutionally-racist-hiring-practices-at-RISD.pdf>.

⁸⁵ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.”

⁸⁶ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.”

⁸⁷ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.”

⁸⁸ These outputs can include “protest materials, mutual aid spreadsheets, survival guides, syllabi, online petitions, manifestos, demands, letter-writing, performances, lists of resources, messages worn in public, fliers posted in public, teach-ins, an assembling of poetry, or open access zines.” See Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.”

the same “tools and modalities” used in “everyday publishing,” rather than more rarified and commodified forms.⁸⁹

1.2 Arts Publishing (...the medium is...?)

My practice-led thesis considers what it is to publish, from the standpoint of artistic production, in the present. It outlines a set of propositions regarding what artistic publishing practices entail. In a post-digital environment, these propositions encompass the range of generated outputs (a book, a flyer, a website, a poster, ephemera, a Tweet, an event, etc.). It also recognizes the collaborators and collaborative moves required to bring these outputs into being: stages involving dialogue, research, making, fundraising, editing, and sourcing materials and material expertise. Arts publishing considered from the standpoint of “practice” must also take into account: the relationship between print publishing and digital technologies; the current landscape of public funding for publishers; the DIY, independent, and artist-run ethos that often informs arts publishing; the relational topographies that bring works into being (often lateral rather than hierarchical); the interface between arts publishing, art writing, and editing methodologies; ways of thinking and doing that relate to the distribution, reception, and circulation of works; commonalities, interrelations, oppositions and peculiarities across these aspects.

Circulation is integral to any discussion of publishing. Whether publishing in a limited sphere (small-run editions, publishing under duress), publishing more broadly (large editions, digital editions, viral posts), or working with mixed forms, artists’ distribution strategies extend beyond ensuring a published work simply enters into the supply chain. These strategies often encompass programming to enhance, augment, circulate, complicate, challenge, and expand on materials generated within a published work. Distribution strategies might encompass public readings, critical reading groups, displays and exhibitions, talks and discussions, screenings or workshops. Distribution can be a functional, productive and creative gesture. Additionally, and following from Soulellis,

⁸⁹ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.”

the events of publishing extend forward and backward. A consideration of artists' publishing necessitates corresponding consideration of the archive, its associated values, and the multiple past and future lives that archives enable a published work to have. All these propositions are delivered from the formation of arts publishing as less a linear, unidirectional chain from producer to consumer, publisher to audience, and more a multidirectional, polyvocal and dialogical event. In short, this research asks: What does it mean to practice arts publishing? What is a publishing practice?⁹⁰

In Chapter Two, these same questions are applied in a case study of the short-lived independent London, ON arts publishers, Applegarth Follies. Despite its prolific output, Applegarth Follies (or simply, "The Follies") remains an obscure and understudied aspect of both London art history and arts publishing in Canada. Attending to all aspects of publishing—concept, production, programming, marketing, distribution, and archiving—the Follies also advertised that they were committed to publishing for the future with the mandate: "We Make Things Today For Tomorrow." Applegarth Follies' editors repeatedly articulated conceptual and aesthetic commitments that were multi-directional in nature. They acknowledged the regionalism from which they emerged, and they simultaneously attempted to move beyond regionalism's perceived limitations and fixations. Chapter Two contextualizes the Follies as an urgent artifact of artists' publishing and considers potential topographical and psychic echoes of this work in the present.

My research does not attempt a historical survey of arts publishing. To anchor certain propositions, this project considers how specific artist publishers have responded to particular moments of upheaval with works that augur terrible outcomes and call for necessary actions. Marshall McLuhan's landmark work, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, introduced us to the now famous phrase, "The medium is the

⁹⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Maria Fusco for continually articulating these specific and leading questions in initial research meetings.

message.”⁹¹ McLuhan was handy with puns and double-meanings: message could also be “massage,” “mass age,” or “mess age.”⁹² Similarly, medium could refer to the means by which content is communicated, as well as to an individual who possesses knowledge of the future.⁹³ McLuhan emphasizes the prophetic potential that artists have to detect certain futures. Artists, in his view, are those “in any field, scientific or humanistic, who [grasp] the implications of [their] actions and of new knowledge in [their] own time.”⁹⁴ This particular calibration lends artists a particular access. McLuhan quotes Wyndham Lewis to explain: “The artist is always engaged in writing a detailed history of the future because he is the only person aware of the nature of the present.”⁹⁵ McLuhan offers a corresponding sentiment in his introduction to the second edition of *Understanding Media*:

Art as radar acts as ‘an early alarm system,’ as it were, enabling us to discover social and psychic targets in lots of time to prepare to cope with them. This concept of the arts as prophetic, contrasts with the popular idea of them as mere self-expression. If an art is an ‘early warning system,’ to use the phrase from World War II, when radar was new, art has the utmost relevance not only to media study but to the development of media controls.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Berkeley: Gingko Press, 1964; 1994; 2013).

⁹² See Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).

⁹³ Lewis G. Lapham observes of McLuhan: “he had about him the air of a man who believed that it was the business of prophets to bring prophetic news.” See “The Eternal Now (Introduction to the MIT Press Edition)” in Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1994), ix.

⁹⁴ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 72.

⁹⁵ Quoted in McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 71 – 72. I have not been able to find the origins of this quote from Lewis. Psychologists F. E. Emery and E. L. Trist pay particular attention to McLuhan’s citation of Wyndham Lewis: “McLuhan sees his own method of detecting the future in the present as an application of the analytical techniques of modern art criticism. Just because these methods are esoteric, we cannot afford to ignore them.” See F. E. Emery and E. L. Trist, *Towards A Social Ecology: Contextual Appreciations of the Future in the Present* (London; New York: Plenum Press, 1973), 33.

⁹⁶ McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 16. Art For a detailed discussion of McLuhan’s relationships with Lewis and Pound, and their corresponding influence on McLuhan’s literary and media theories, see Philip Marchand, *Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and The Messenger – A Biography*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998).

What are some of the warnings being offered to us from artist publishers? Chapter Three is given to a case study of the artist publisher Jim Miller, whose work *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal* was made in collaboration with Marjorie Carlyle, also of London, ON. Miller-with-Carlyle plays with particular forensic, journalistic, pop cultural, and historiographic cues and methodologies to demonstrate the slipperiness—and far-reaching consequences—of their impacts. Together, their project upends expectations of history, narrative, and evidence in order to say something about the specific and interwoven crises from which it emerges. It presents as both an urgent artifact and a form of future-forensics, and it charges us to consider the present (and what we might do in it) anew.

The card on true crime in the Premonition: “Cartomancy as Theoretical Framework,” and the case study of *Poison Pen* carried out in Chapter Three, raise a number of considerations of how forensics and aesthetics interact. These sections signal other genres, authors, artists and publishers whose practices signal the evocative operations of established representational domains (sticky mediums): the popularity of detective fiction and the true crime genre, the inescapability of 24-hour mainstream news cycles, and how the troubling and reductive narrative formations of these media align. The materials under consideration reflexively test the parameters of publishing itself, but also recalibrate our attention to aesthetic forms and mediums that have a great deal of cultural currency at present. True crime and detective fiction directly address (and implicate) the reader-viewer as voyeur/accomplice while simultaneously informing complex cultural discourses around violence, identity and gender. As popular genres, true crime and detective fiction have also been critiqued for re-inscribing patriarchal, classist, and racist formations—specifically, those languages used to circumscribe and document specific dynamics at the expense of others (i.e., the dynamics of ‘predator’ and ‘preyed-upon’), while designating actors as either ‘victim,’ ‘perpetrator,’ ‘accomplice,’ or ‘witness.’ True crime and contemporary true crime ‘fandom’ also run the risk of reaffirming societal reliance on a police state and a punitive justice system. The works discussed in relation to Miller’s *Poison Pen* involve both art historical publications and curatorial projects, as well as recent works and practices—all uniquely speaking to our present era of

misinformation and ‘post-truth,’ a time in which personal narratives, beliefs, and emotional realities override facts.⁹⁷

1.3 The Problem of “The Future”

The works and practices under consideration in this project challenge and extend expectations of established representational domains. Many of the works and propositions put forward invoke particular esoteric potentials in order to circumnavigate or upend cultural norms—arcane, cryptic, abstracted or intentionally perplexing methods pose potentials for how we might engage in the world otherwise. But these inscrutable techniques and outputs have also, in some ways, *become* the cultural norm of a conspiratorially-soaked present, and so these works simultaneously evoke very contemporary concerns.

Bridle’s *New Dark Age* was published in 2018, just a few months after the first anonymous “Q drop” on the imageboard 4chan claimed knowledge of an imminent, rapture-like event in which high-ranking political figures would be arrested, charged, and executed for pedophilic crimes. QAnon has become a global far-right conspiracy movement, active in Britain, Europe, Japan, and Latin America.⁹⁸ Intersecting with evangelical belief,⁹⁹ white supremacy, the sovereign citizen movement and anti-vax

⁹⁷ “Post-truth” was named the Word of the Year by the Oxford Dictionary in 2016, earning particular cultural capital for its coinage by numerous outlets during the EU referendum in the United Kingdom and the 2016 American presidential election. “Post-truth has gone from being a peripheral term to being a mainstay in political commentary, now often being used by major publications without the need for clarification or definition in their headlines.” See “Word of the Year 2016,” *Oxford Languages*, <https://languages.oup.com/word-of-the-year/2016/>. NHS psychoanalytic psychotherapist Ian Thurston contextualizes the potency of this popular phrase. Allowing that certain aspects of post-truth are productive and even progressive, Thurston also warns that the helpful can become pathological: for instance, when a distorted perspective that offers personal comfort and affirmation becomes the entirety of one’s external reality. Quoted from Ian Thurston’s public lecture, “Everything is Permitted,” The Lit & Phil, Newcastle, 19 January 2019.

⁹⁸ See Frida Ghitis, “Opinion: QAnon is an American invention, but it has become a global plague,” *The Washington Post*, 10 March 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/03/10/qanon-japan-germany-colombia-conspiracy-theories-disinformation/>.

⁹⁹ For contextualizing QAnon as a religious ideology in the vein of a “lived religion,” see Concordia University PhD candidate Marc-André Argentino’s ongoing research into QAnon: “In the Name of the Father, Son, and Q: Why It’s Important to See QAnon as a ‘Hyper-Real’ Religion,” *Religion Dispatches*, 28 May 2020, <https://religiondispatches.org/in-the-name-of-the-father-son-and-q-why-its-important-to-see->

ideology, QAnon is demonstrating an alarming transition from fringe conspiracy theory, to cite Snowden, to mainstream conspiracy practice. On January 6th, 2021 QAnon adherents were infamously imaged among the mob of over two thousand who stormed and infiltrated the Capitol Building in Washington, D. C. QAnon rhetoric is now disseminated at the highest levels of power: most recently it underscores the anti-trans talking points (and dog whistles) of many Republican politicians trying to bolster their fundraising efforts and expand their voter bases.¹⁰⁰

The publishing of QAnon rhetoric enacts Soulellis' urgent artifacts from an inverted perspective. Anonymous "Q drops" and affiliate QAnon posts similarly "step away from individual authorship, towards something larger—collective, cooperative works emerging from the shared wealth of needs."¹⁰¹ Many QAnon adherents, believing the democratic systems surrounding them to be corrupted, seek to expose evidence of nefarious political dealings.¹⁰² QAnon is also perfectly tailored to infiltrate our 24-hour news cycles and social media platforms. Its insidiously convincing quality stems from its quick adaption into unregulated digital spaces, as well as its esoteric-adjacent claims to provide total understanding of numerous ongoing crises.¹⁰³ In the infamous words of the anonymous

qanon-as-a-hyper-real-religion/. In a recent Twitter thread, Argentino contextualizes: "Lived religion is about the framework of meaning that is embedded within any given practice. Meaning making is key to QAnon belief as the conspiracy theories that make up QAnon act as a way to explain what is happening in the world and offer and [sic] easy answer." See Mark-André Argentino (@_MAArgentino), Twitter Post, 12 April 2022, 7:52 AM.

¹⁰⁰ A concrete example of the incorporation of QAnon rhetoric into political discourse was recently exhibited as certain American GOP Senators spent inordinate amounts of time discussing child pornography in confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson. Concurrently to this event, anti-LGBTQ2S+ state legislation targeting educational content was vociferously defended as "anti-grooming" legislation by prominent Florida Republicans. The GOP's recent attacks on trans rights and their turn to "anti-grooming" rhetoric signal an alarming new strategy of adopting language associated with child sexual abuse when targeting trans communities.

¹⁰¹ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, "10: Urgent Artifacts."

¹⁰² Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, "10: Urgent Artifacts."

¹⁰³ Travis View, a reticent QAnon expert and host of the podcast, *QAnon Anonymous*, states, "The real incredible wild stories of powerful people conspiring—that's something that happens naturally. That's history, in fact. But I feel like there's a profound sense of unreality because of the fragmentation of media."

Q, “Nothing is random. Everything has meaning.”¹⁰⁴ Despite many of its prophecies failing to come true, QAnon has generated what Matthew Hannah calls a “temporal master-narrative”: it gives its followers their own program to counteract mass state and private surveillance, dis- and mis-information projects.¹⁰⁵ One of the movement’s most popular rallying cries appears on t-shirts, coffee mugs, bumper stickers and protest signs: “Future proves past.”¹⁰⁶

Henri Bergson addresses the natural desire to foresee the future in his 1889 doctoral thesis, *Time and Free Will*:

What makes hope such an intense pleasure is the fact that the future, which we dispose of to our liking, appears to us at the same time under a multitude of forms, equally attractive and equally possible. Even if the most coveted of these becomes realized, it will be necessary to give up the others, and we shall have lost a great deal. The idea of the future, pregnant with an infinity of possibilities, is thus more fruitful than the future itself, and this is why we find more charm in hope than in possession, in dreams than in reality.¹⁰⁷

People feel disoriented. People don’t know what’s true anymore. People don’t know who to trust. People feel let down by institutions and so they result to these sorts of wild fantasies to explain that sense of unreality.” View was interviewed by Alexander Heffner on the PBS talk show, *The Open Mind*, “The Cult of QAnon,” on 20 April 2020. <https://www.thirteen.org/openmind/media/the-cult-of-qanon/6334/>.

¹⁰⁴ Q Post, ID: KKIrCTB. Mon. 6 Nov. 2017. 17:07:57. No. 148289594.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew Hannah, QAnon and the Information Dark Age,” *First Monday* 26.2 (2021). <https://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v26i2.10868>. See also Marc-André Argentino, “QAnon’s Predictions Haven’t Come True; So How Does the Movement Survive the Failure of Prophecy?” *Religion Dispatches*, 28 October 2020, <https://religiondispatches.org/qanons-predictions-havent-come-true-so-how-does-the-movement-survive-the-failure-of-prophecy/>. On surveillance programs like Codename Tempora, conspiracy theories and conspiracy practices, see the earlier section of this thesis: “Premonition: A Warning for the Present; Suggestion: Thinness.”

¹⁰⁶ Interviewed by the FBI, Capitol riot suspect Doug Jensen acknowledges “disinfo,” but also professes belief in the QAnon element “Project Looking Glass,” a hazy conspiracy that advanced technology allows the anonymous QAnon poster(s) to see into the future. See “United States v. JENSEN,” Case 1L21-cr-00006-TJK Document 69-1, 8 April 2022, 119 - 120. Contributed by Stephen James, California Judicial Branch News Service, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/21582970-douglas-jensen-jan-6-defendant-case-no-121-cr-00006-fbi-interview-jan-8-2021>. Archived by Travis View, Twitter post, 8 April 2022 6:15 PM UTC.

¹⁰⁷ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1910), 10. Bergson was the brother of artist and occultist Moina Mathers.

Hope is a slippery word that does not always account for lived reality, and it is not unilaterally available—or useful—to all individuals or circumstances. Christina Battle asserts in her highly prescient 2019 doctoral dissertation that “hope” is not a helpful device when confronting “the years of oppression, colonialism and racism imposed upon Black, Indigenous, and people of colour.”¹⁰⁸ Battle continues: “Within struggle exists a drive that is difficult to articulate, it is bigger and deeper than ‘hope,’ it is a drive that is rooted in resistance, one that stems from necessity.”¹⁰⁹

Gilles Lipovetsky coined the term “hypermodernity” to define the early aughts. Leading by-products of this era include widespread “anxieties about the future,” as well as a collective incapacity to envision any future at all.¹¹⁰ Within hypermodernity, potential for alternative ‘visioning,’ such as clairvoyance, is stymied by global capitalism, which consistently “reduces the room for maneuver, narrows the leeway of action.”¹¹¹ The hypermodern condition is one that, recognizing the unknown and unknowable, focuses myopically on the present. In place of “the heroic will to create a ‘radiant future,’” Lipovetsky perceives a “managerial activism” at work—busywork activity which leaves the individual too stymied to envision a “confident horizon or grand historical vision,” let alone imagine a different one.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Christina Battle, “Disaster as a Framework for Social Change: Searching for new patterns across plant ecology and online networks” (2019), Doctoral Thesis, Western University Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository, 6828, <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/6828>, 3. Battle’s text was generated before the pandemic, but nonetheless from within the midst of myriad crises: “We are already living within disaster,” 3.

¹⁰⁹ Battle, “Disaster as a Framework for Social Change,” 3.

¹¹⁰ Gilles Lipovetsky with Sébastien Charles, *Hypermodern Times*, translated by Andrew Brown (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005). Writes Lipovetsky: “Anxieties about the future are replacing the mystique of progress. The present is assuming an increasing importance as an effect of the development of financial markets, the electronic techniques of information, individualistic lifestyles, and free time,” 35.

¹¹¹ Gilles Lipovetsky and Mario Vargas Llosa, “Proust is important for everyone,” *Eurozine*, 16 November 2012, <https://www.eurozine.com/proust-is-important-for-everyone/>.

¹¹² Lipovetsky, *Hypermodern Times*, 34. The specific “radiant future” cited here is that of the Italian Futurists.

Lipovetsky's perception intersects with Bridle's, who warns that our reliance on predictive computation leaves us incapable of envisioning—and preparing for—anything truly unexpected. Bridle thinks through a cultural reflexivity toward comforting narratives in times of crisis. Their warning that “something strange is afoot” in our post-digital present is bolstered by their conviction that

[what] was intended to enlighten the world in practice darkens it. The abundance of information and the plurality of worldviews now accessible to us through the internet are not producing a coherent consensus reality, but one riven by fundamentalist insistence on simplistic narratives, conspiracy theories, and post-factual politics.¹¹³

Bridle's “New Dark Age” title is a citation of H. P. Lovecraft, who in 1926 predicted that a society overwhelmed with information might react by retreating into superstition.¹¹⁴ In 1996, Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan voiced parallel concerns that Western culture was reverting to “pseudoscience and superstition.” Sagan and Druyan also echo Lovecraft's warning, but critically augment the blatantly xenophobic Lovecraft's concerns with their astute awareness of nationalist and fundamentalist “habits of thought”:

Where have we heard it before? Whenever our ethnic or national prejudices are aroused, in times of scarcity, during challenges to national self-esteem or nerve, when we agonize about our diminished cosmic place and purpose, or when fanaticism is bubbling up around us – then, habits of thought familiar from ages past reach for the controls.

The candle flame gutters. Its little pool of light trembles. Darkness gathers. The demons begin to stir.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 11.

¹¹⁴ Wrote Lovecraft: “some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.” In “The Call of Cthulhu,” illustrated by Hugh Rankin, *Weird Tales*, February 1928, 159. Quoted in Bridle, *New Dark Age*, 11. A small error in Bridle's citation: Lovecraft originally wrote “Call of Cthulu” in 1926, but it was not published in *Weird Tales* until 1928: see H. P. Lovecraft, *Tales*, edited by Peter Straub (New York: The Library of America, 2005), 823.

¹¹⁵ Carl Sagan with Ann Druyan, *The Demon-Hunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 34. Many thanks to Jared McGregor for bringing this quote to my attention.

With myriad crises compounding upon one another, “[t]his particular moment in time feels acutely disastrous,” writes Christina Battle.¹¹⁶ This present may also represent an important rift in Lipovetsky’s hypermodern time specifically because it demands that we focus on a different future.

At moments of crisis, overt attentiveness to the future is both a familiar and necessary response. Kim Neudorf’s 2023 exhibition *the signs appear as in aspic* references and repurposes cinematic imagery (nostalgic and “horror-adjacent”) as a means to access “queer and trans embodiment.”¹¹⁷ In a present in which trans rights are increasingly under attack, Neudorf draws inspiration and allusions from Daphne Du Maurier’s gothic novel and 1973 film version of *Don’t Look Now* to consider what vision can and cannot reveal. In summarizing *Don’t Look Now*, we have the sense of urgent artifacts reaching backwards to warn and guide us:

The exhibition’s title refers to a failure to notice warnings of future events as left by more psychically connected past selves. These warnings are “not threatening to those who cannot read the signs,” but for those who can, the signs appear as “in aspic.” Relating this premise to their own work and life, Neudorf asks: What is needed to be known and seen as a queer and trans subject, what conditions of visibility are necessary in that being knownness, and what tools—built out of necessity and survival—have been left in the present by a self (or selves) from the past?¹¹⁸

One solution to the problem of the future is a radical approach to friendship. Artist publishers like Soulellis are underscoring the pressing need to collaborate in order to better anticipate, to address the systemically unaddressed, to re-educate—all in the hopes

¹¹⁶ Battle, “Disaster as Framework for Social Change,” 8.

¹¹⁷ Kim Neudorf, *the signs appear as in aspic* (press release), Thames Art Gallery, Chatham Cultural Centre, 16 June – 13 August, 2023. Akimbo. <https://akimbo.ca/listings/kim-neudorf-the-signs-appear-as-in-aspic/>.

¹¹⁸ Didactic text for Kim Neudorf, *the signs appear as in aspic*, Thames Art Gallery, Chatham Cultural Centre, 16 June 2023 – 13 August 2023. It is worth bringing Neudorf’s questions into contact with the work of tarot expert, science fiction author and trans activist Rachel Pollack. Pollack is co-author, with Roz Kearney, of the 1972 text, “Don’t Call Me Mister You Fucking Beast,” published in the Gay Liberation Front newsletter and cited as the first trans rights manifesto. Pollack is cited below in the section, “Cartomancy as Theoretical Framework.” A digital transcript of “Don’t Call Me Mister” can be found at <https://transphilez.netlify.app/articles/dont-call-me-mr/>.

of asserting different outcomes. However, and as Battle indicates, compelled future-gazing is by no means an activity unique to our dire present.¹¹⁹ The language of futurity—indeed, the word itself—has a longstanding presence in academia, digital marketing strategy, wellness culture, and the reorientation of economies and public policy. Citing Lauren Berlant’s “cruel optimism” and the “attachment to compromised conditions of possibility,” Battle suggests that activities of future-gazing might already be jeopardized: “our unrealistic hopes for the future, perhaps tied to our inability to recognize the truth of the world we find ourselves in, has shaped a scenario where it is difficult to progress.”¹²⁰ Future proves past.

But Battle nonetheless sees a way out of this, inviting her reader “to imagine how the future could be—to look past how things are and skip ahead to what is possible.”¹²¹ Arts and cultural institutions are looking specifically toward possible futures that (re)imagine in order to combat interrelated economic, social, political, and environmental turmoil and manifest something otherwise.¹²² Many of these calls acknowledge that expectations for confident horizons and grand historical visions—futures more familiar to Lipovetsky’s hypermodern times—might not, in fact, yield the substantial returns they may have once been thought to promise. Existing political and legal systems are not sufficient, nor can they be sufficient in any imagined future. Indeed, these futures lead us only toward insurmountable nationalism, fundamentalism, and fanaticism. “Positivism,” writes Hito Steyerl, “is thus another name for epistemic privilege.”¹²³ Like Battle, Steyerl urges us

¹¹⁹ Battle, “Disaster as Framework for Social Change,” 3.

¹²⁰ Battle, “Disaster as Framework for Social Change,” 8. Battle quotes Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

¹²¹ Battle, “Disaster as Framework for Social Change,” 1.

¹²² One recent example: York University’s Cross-sections 2021 Graduate Conference & Art Exhibition takes the theme of “Futurities” to “encourage discussions and debates that imagine and envision alternatives to the (or a) contemporary society”: “we hope to engage contributors with thoughts on our present realities and what we project into our futures, but also to reflect on histories and their continuity into a ‘now’. We understand futurities in all its multiplicity and in its most boundary breaking forms, going beyond and actively protesting the hegemonic and dominant systems currently in place.” From a call for papers digitally distributed in November, 2020.

¹²³ Hito Steyerl, “Missing People: Entanglement, Superposition, and Exhumation as Sites of Indeterminacy,” in *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 158.

toward “the unsettling thought that everything could be different ... that the impossible can and indeed will happen.”¹²⁴

Sylviane Agacinski also points us toward avenues for thought that unsettle our comfortable associations with time by complicating its linear tether-line. In *Time Passing: Modernity and Nostalgia*, she demonstrates alternative material formations of time that shift us away from essentialist models to embrace “necessity and chance.”¹²⁵ “Material reality,” writes Agacinski, “introduces a share of uncertainty.”¹²⁶ This uncertainty intersects with previously cited calls from Battle, Soulellis and others: calls to imagine futures that operate outside the constructions and constrictions of the present. But Agacinski is not convinced that fortune-telling is a strategy for parsing this uncertainty: “[w]e can neither predict the future, nor have faith in it, since in any case, things do not happen as we want.”¹²⁷ However, she suggests we might be comforted by how alternative formations of time and space open up perspectives oriented toward the future by (re)introducing us to the “possibility of enduring.”¹²⁸

Agacinski’s generative proposition to embrace uncertainty makes contact with Jacques Derrida’s “possibilization of the impossible.”¹²⁹ This phrase addresses the potential of a new formation for the future, and (as with Soulellis) the means for bringing this future into being is through readdressing friendship—more specifically, “the political problem

¹²⁴ Steyerl, “Missing People,” 158.

¹²⁵ Sylviane Agacinski, *Time Passing: Modernity and Nostalgia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 30.

¹²⁶ Agacinski, *Time Passing*, 30. She continues: “Accidents can always happen and either add to the essential or cause the essential not to be realized. Thus, becoming is not subject to an infallible program, a strict teleology, as the generation of a living being seemed to require. In being separated from itself by time, the evolving being does not always achieve its destination. Subject to generation and corruption, living itself already has a history. Furthermore, this history gives way to the uncertain”

¹²⁷ Agacinski, *Time Passing*, 30.

¹²⁸ Agacinski, *Time Passing*, 10.

¹²⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 1997; 2006), 29. This passage was first encountered, quoted by Derrida in “As If It Were Possible, ‘Within Such Limits,’” in *Paper Machine*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 192.

of friendship.”¹³⁰ Derrida’s notion enwraps the interrelated concerns discussed so far in this chapter: anticipations and envisionings of the future(s), the urgent need to re-route ourselves with others, and collective action. Detective work also makes an appearance, as Derrida develops the possibilization of the impossible in response to a crime: “the crime *against* the possibility of politics ... reducing it to something else and preventing it from being what it should be.”¹³¹ In examining this crime and its clues throughout *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida relies on a productively esoteric language of phantoms, spectres, and conjurations.¹³²

In the aforementioned text, Derrida unpacks both the past and potential future of a singularly fraternal form of friendship—a proscriptive friend/enemy binary that has informed the very structure of civil democracy. He unravels histories of past “aristocracies” and their future trajectories by considering their uneven emphasis on “the masculine model of friendship” and its dominance within the public sphere of politics.¹³³ As he demonstrates, Western democracy’s legacies and future iterations are dangerously exclusive and also maddeningly predictable. Further, writes Derrida, “(this surplus of democracy, this excess of freedom, this reaffirmation of the future) is not, so we suspect, very promising for the community, communication, the rules and maxims of communicational action.”¹³⁴

To rupture the trajectory of fraternal democracy, and to introduce the possibility for democracy of another kind, Derrida posits an impossible event grounded in a politics of

¹³⁰ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 27.

¹³¹ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, ix.

¹³² His publisher describes the project as resulting from his being “haunted” by a phrase attributed to Aristotle: “O my friends, there is no friend.” “Haunting” is taken from the paratext for the English translation of *Politics of Friendship* by Verso.

¹³³ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 255. Democracy, writes Derrida, “is rarely determined in the absence of confraternity or brotherhood,” viii. Importantly, he underscores “the double exclusion of the feminine, the exclusion of friendship between a man and a woman and the exclusion of friendship *between* women,” 290.

¹³⁴ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 40.

radical friendship.¹³⁵ This event has to do with relationality: particular intimate and/or familiar friendships are relegated to private and apolitical space, while professional relationships are relegated to the public space.¹³⁶ In actuality, friendship cannot operate outside of any politics.¹³⁷ Further, Western fraternal friendship involves a formation-reduction of ourselves and others into determined roles as friends or enemies, a binary which requires that we are always prepared for conflict.¹³⁸ Derrida calls for a friendship that embraces vulnerability—“featherweight vulnerability”—and accepts the otherness of the other with love.¹³⁹ The lightness of this vulnerability is manifold: it entails the impossibility of knowing what is to come, and it negates the possibility of “*grounding* anything, above all of grounding a politics,” because it remains situated, in Derrida’s words, “on the virtue of a ‘perhaps.’”¹⁴⁰

Now, the thought of the ‘perhaps’ perhaps engages the only possible thought of the event – of friendship to come and friendship for the future. For to love friendship, it is not enough to know how to bear the other in mourning; one must love the future. And there is no more just category for the future than that of the ‘perhaps’. Such a thought conjoins friendship, the future, and the *perhaps* to open on to the coming of what comes – that is to say, necessarily in the regime of a possible whose possibilization must prevail over the impossible. For a possible that would only be possible (non-impossible), a possible surely and certainly possible, accessible in advance, would be a poor possible, a futureless possible, a possible already *set*

¹³⁵ To unpack this, David Wills considers how Derrida’s discussion of friendship underscores “a problematic of the relation between public and private space.” See David Wills, “Full Dorsal: Derrida’s Politics of Friendship,” *Postmodern Culture* Vol 15.3 (2005), section 2. <http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/issue.505/15.3wills.html>.

¹³⁶ The “secret-private-invisible-illegible-apolitical” is contrasted against, and held alongside, “the manifest-public-testimonial-political,” Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 277.

¹³⁷ “[F]riendship functions across the border separating private from public,” summarizes Wills, and so is always operating politically. See Wills, “Full Dorsal,” 14.

¹³⁸ Writes Derrida: “. . .the aggression whereby *we make an enemy*, whereby we make ourselves our own enemy, is only a reaction. It hides and reveals, at one and the same time, our vulnerability,” *Politics of Friendship*, 281. Derrida continually references the thought of jurist and political theorist Carl Schmitt: “for Schmitt, it is indeed nothing more and nothing less than the political as such which would no longer exist without the figure of the enemy and without the determined possibility of an actual war,” 84.

¹³⁹ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 218. Wills summarizes this as “the opening to a hospitality of radical otherness.” See Wills, “Full Dorsal,” section 7.

¹⁴⁰ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 218.

aside, so to speak, life-assured. This would be a programme or a causality, a development, a process without an event.¹⁴¹

The essential element here is the action—and potential action—of vulnerable friendship. Recalibrating ourselves toward this possibilization requires rerouting ourselves from aforementioned, already constellated narratives of predator/prey, victim/perpetrator, or mourner/mourned (outcomes that are all “accessible in advance” and therefore “poor possibles”).¹⁴² David Wills summarizes Derrida’s project as calling for “friendship ... to be otherwise politicized, and politics otherwise structured in terms of amity.”¹⁴³ Derrida’s proposal requires intentionality and action toward fostering possible futures: “to change the meaning of the word ‘political’ – in other words, one would have to change politics.”¹⁴⁴ His proposal also requires accepting that we are incapable of anticipating the outcome(s) of these changes, and that we instead pursue “the opening of an absolutely undetermined possible.”¹⁴⁵ We are only able to count on the perhaps.¹⁴⁶ Derrida summarizes this impactful caveat as follows: “The possibilization of the impossible must remain at one and the same time as undecidable—and therefore as decisive—as the future itself.”¹⁴⁷

This inaugurating of possible impossibles is, in my view, importantly informative for artist publishers working in the present. The strategies under consideration emphasize inclusion and collaboration in the spirit of radical friendship. Also required are commitments to unmaking specific narratives and corresponding commitments to also unmake specific outcomes (poor possibles). Derrida’s address of a failing democracy,

¹⁴¹ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 29.

¹⁴² Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 29.

¹⁴³ Wills, “Full Dorsal,” section 4. Wills’s essay addresses the non-distinction between living and non-living friendships in Derrida’s project (his essay was written after Derrida’s passing), as well as the non-distinction made between friendship and amorous, or passionate, love.

¹⁴⁴ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 67.

¹⁴⁵ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 67.

¹⁴⁶ Writes Derrida, “let us not be blind to the aporia that all change must endure. It is the aporia of the perhaps, its historical and political aporia,” 67.

¹⁴⁷ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 29.

failing politics, failing friendships, and failing futures is deeply resonant for artist publishers working through this present of crises. Also resonant is his insistence that any possibilization (and its future) must retain some element of “risk.”¹⁴⁸ His and the other modes of thought cited here that emphasize re-routing—importantly, *not* rewriting—histories and their futures are important spaces for researchers. In her formation of a responsible research practice, Heidi Grasswick insists that a mindset (within or without the institution) that attempts to “undo histories” of epistemic injustice is flawed in its approach. Potential arises in moments when an individual or group will recognize distrust in an institution (whether cultural, political, medical), but will collaborate with the aim of producing new knowledges even in the face of that distrust. For this “leap of faith” to work, Grasswick believes there must be a corresponding obligation on the part of institutions to make themselves vulnerable.¹⁴⁹

It is difficult to acknowledge the need for vulnerability and risk and not think back to Agacinzki’s corresponding description of the future’s certain uncertainty, as well as her emphasis on the vitally important and corresponding “possibility of enduring.” Clairvoyance, as we tend to understand it (as extra-sensory awareness of the world, as access to information about the past, present, and future), may seem an unlikely terrain for fostering the impossible futures described here. Yet clairvoyant strategies are engaged by artists, publishers, and researchers in order to open up spaces within existing narratives and histories and—hopefully—cause a shift in their all-too-predictable trajectories.

1.4 Addressing Clairvoyance

Early attempts to define “clairvoyance” often rely on formations of time which can be sufficiently plotted, predicted, and steered toward (or warned against). For example, one 1902 print manual defines clairvoyance as the

¹⁴⁸ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 29: “risk [*l’aléa*], the uncertainty, the unstable certainty, the inassurance of the ‘perhaps.’”

¹⁴⁹ Heidi Grasswick’s “Trust, Science, and Epistemic Injustice,” a lecture given at Western University, 10 February 2017.

wonderful faculty of clear seeing, ... of seeing persons and things at a distance, of seeing things and conditions ordinarily hidden, of seeing even what is termed the supernatural, or that which is not of the material world. ... a power to see conditions and their relation to each other, to see and know the state of those in whom one is interested, ... in perceiving the presence of departed friends, or troubled souls who may need a word of comfort, or instruction to free them from earth conditions or attachments ... clairvoyance is most valuable in revealing the work, life, and powers of the soul, and is that marvelous faculty of seership, which knows both past and future, which perceives and defines spiritual ideas and enables him who possesses it to attain to the super-consciousness of Spirit, and to say on every plane of his being, "I Know."¹⁵⁰

In the words of Hito Steyerl, this formation of clairvoyance requires that space and time be "defined by linear perspective": in a world that is "calculable, navigable, and predictable," clairvoyance represents privileged access to "a view onto a calculable future."¹⁵¹ In the same way we must begin to rethink our formations of "future," as artist publishers are doing by formulating clairvoyant methods that operate outside such a troubled (and troubling) formation.

From an art historical perspective, clairvoyance presents an inductive and collaborative line of inquiry that prioritizes the relational over the sequential. It also offers access to usefully diffractive methodologies. In his introduction to *Lost Envoy: The Tarot Deck of Austin Osman Spare*, Jonathan Allen emphasizes the benefits of addressing academic and curatorial attention toward esoteric and occult philosophies.¹⁵² As an editor, Allen uniquely deploys the productive permeability between these fields. Addressing a rediscovered tarot deck by the British occultist and artist Spare, Allen's project refracts the deck's art historical, creative, and esoteric potentials. Cartomancy, defined by Allen as "the divining or 'reading' of contingent events using randomly selected playing cards,"

¹⁵⁰ Hubert A. Knight, *Three Weeks' Training in Clairvoyance* (Washington, D. C.: Hubert A. Knight / The Brotherhood of the Illuminati, 1902), 3-5.

¹⁵¹ Hito Steyerl, "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective," in *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg; e-flux, 2012), 18.

¹⁵² See Jonathan Allen (editor), *Lost Envoy: The Tarot Deck of Austin Osman Spare* (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2016).

is enacted here as an editorial strategy.¹⁵³ Allen draws specific attention to Spare's unusual approach to designing the card deck:

Most remarkably, [Spare] activated a space that had not previously been considered in the context of cartomancy: the unfixed region formed between cards when two or more are placed contiguously alongside one another. Across these vertical borders Spare wrote, drew and painted freely, as if trying to fix the cards' oracular responses to age-old questions through a miscellany of fractured motifs.¹⁵⁴

Allen's editorial decisions emphasize the productive contiguous terrain described by *Lost Envoy's* contributions: thoughtful facsimile reproductions of Spare's deck appear alongside a variety of text forms commissioned from Phil Baker, Helen Farley, Alan Moore, Kevin O'Neill, Sally O'Reilly, and Gavin Semple, as well as a text by Spare himself. These contributions range from the art historical to the esoteric, and one of the methods employed throughout *Lost Envoy* are more academically sanctioned than others: Farley is an anthropologist and folklorist, and she locates Spare's deck within tarot history; Moore is a ceremonial magician, and he conducts a reading of the Spare deck using the Spare deck. Bringing this variety into close proximity emphasizes the productive permeability across borders, generating countless spaces and points of access for the book (and/or card) reader. Allen's editorial approach is enhanced by the ethos of the publisher, Strange Attractor Press, which "celebrates unpopular culture through books, exhibitions, and events," as well as the design decisions of Jules Estèves.¹⁵⁵

Allen, a practicing magician, is mindful of the difference between studying a card deck and using a card deck. In discussion, he outlines how his own curatorial and artistic practices are grounded in the former: while he maintains a certain amount of distance from Spare's clairvoyant device, for example, clairvoyant methods inform Allen's artistic and curatorial strategies.¹⁵⁶ His editorial decisions in *Lost Envoy* intersect with curatorial modes: not only in his discernment and selection of contributors, but in how he enacts

¹⁵³ Jonathan Allen, "Introduction," in *Lost Envoy*, 16.

¹⁵⁴ Allen, "Introduction," *Lost Envoy*, 20.

¹⁵⁵ See "Notes on Contributors," in *Lost Envoy*, 326-327.

¹⁵⁶ Conversation with Jonathan Allen on 20 September 2018 at the British Library, London, UK.

care for, and attends to the relationality of, each of the outputs within the volume. In her doctoral thesis, “*Curare: to care, to curate. A relational ethic of care in curatorial practice*,” Sibyl Annice Fisher proposes that “a relational concept of care is at the core of curating as a practice of ethic.”¹⁵⁷ She draws on curators Helena Reckitt and Catherine de Zegher to explore relationality through feminist modalities—specifically, “feminist redefinitions of the concept of the ethical as offering political and aesthetic potentiality.”¹⁵⁸ Fisher emphasizes how de Zegher’s work on relationality “had advanced a feminist intervention that positioned relationality in relation to elements of ‘the feminine’ as a symbolic dimension and positional difference in artistic practices relating to the body, to text and language, to change and movement, and to transgression and hybridity.”¹⁵⁹

A certain amount of transgression is useful to any scholarly encounter with esoteric methodologies, even those encounters which maintain distance. However, the productive quality of this transgression is also dependent on the intention and objective of the scholar. Surveying magic scholarship across the sciences and humanities, Randall Steyers discerns dangerous “theoretical magicians” who, seeking to historicize and demystify magic, have themselves demonstrated “potent forms of surreptitious—and often mystifying—power” within their disciplines.¹⁶⁰ In spite of this, Steyers’ locates magic’s potency is in its ability to “dematerialize under the watchful scholarly gaze, only to reappear with ghostly power at the very heart of the modern.”¹⁶¹ While Steyers does not delve deeply into aesthetics, his thoroughly researched historical and theoretical accounts offer insightful disciplinary critique that emphasizes the productive aesthetic and political moves within theories of magic. Curator Pádraic Moore similarly describes histories of

¹⁵⁷ Sibyl Annice Fisher, “*Curare: to care, to curate. A relational ethic of care in curatorial practice*,” PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2013, 11. <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/6867/>.

¹⁵⁸ Fisher, “*Curare: to care, to curate*,” 12.

¹⁵⁹ Fisher, “*Curare: to care, to curate*,” 12.

¹⁶⁰ Randall Steyers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 3.

¹⁶¹ Steyers, *Making Magic*, 18.

modern art's entanglement with the occult as having been kept deliberately underground by academic institutions.¹⁶² Like Allen, Moore aims to readdress intersections of art, esotericism and mysticism to address the influence of esoteric thought on arts practices throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. His curatorial impulse stems from “the belief that visual art enables alternative modes of interaction in a world increasingly led by technological rationality.”¹⁶³

Within this vein, Jennifer Fisher's edited volume *Technologies of Intuition* comprises essays and artists' works that engage different modes of the “extra-sensory sensorium.”¹⁶⁴ Fisher positions such works as “extra-rational means of understanding” that operate in counterpoint to deductive art historical reasoning methods.¹⁶⁵ Importantly, Fisher emphasises the “delicate balance” at play “between clairvoyance and fantasy, foreknowledge and wishful thinking.”¹⁶⁶ To remain ethically and politically attuned to intuitive practice necessitates acknowledging them to be “contradictory and paradoxical,” and requires “the simultaneity of faith and suspicion, openness and scepticism.”¹⁶⁷ This is wonderfully represented in the 2017 experimental novel *Even the Dead Rise Up*, in which Irish artist Francis McKee recalls a contractual statement posted outside a mediumship workshop he is about to attend: “*This demonstration is a form of experiment; no claims are made and results cannot be guaranteed. You are not guaranteed a personal message. You may see or hear things which you have not experienced before.*”¹⁶⁸ This statement operates uniquely as both evocative, esoteric

¹⁶² Pádraic Moore discusses his curatorial trajectory with Jessa Crispin in “The Forgotten Occult History of Art,” Public Intellectual Podcast, October 2017. <https://harkaudio.com/p/public-intellectual-jessa-crispin/the-forgotten-occult-history-of-art-with-padraic-e-moore-jessa-crispin>.

¹⁶³ Quoted from Moore's personal website: <http://www.padraicmoore.com/>, accessed January 2018.

¹⁶⁴ Jennifer Fisher, ed., *Technologies of Intuition* (Toronto; Manitoba: YYZ Books; Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, Display Cult, 2006), 12.

¹⁶⁵ Jennifer Fisher, “Introduction,” *Technologies of Intuition*, 11.

¹⁶⁶ Jennifer Fisher, “Introduction,” *Technologies of Intuition*, 11.

¹⁶⁷ Jennifer Fisher, “Introduction,” *Technologies of Intuition*, 11.

¹⁶⁸ Francis McKee, *Even the Dead Rise Up* (London: Book Works, 2017), 17.

promise as well as necessary disclaimer for clairvoyant methodologies positioned from within art historical scholarship.

In 1999, Jennifer Fisher and Jim Drobnik’s collaborative project, DisplayCult, staged “The Servant Problem” at Eldon House in London, Ontario (then facilitated by Museum London) as part of Jamelie Hassan’s expanded artist-in-residence project, *Trespassers and Captives*.¹⁶⁹ “The Servant Problem” introduced psychic strategy as a means to access “the situation of servanthood as a social phenomenon.”¹⁷⁰ Emphasizing Eldon House’s function as both domestic and museum space, Fisher and Drobnik drew attention to two specific forms of household and institutional servitude—the maid and the security guard—by staging a series of *tableaux vivants* in which they each performed as these “minor characters.”¹⁷¹ To complement this performative channeling, Drobnik and Fisher invited a local psychic to carry out a psychometry reading of the maid’s bedroom. An audio recording of this reading acted as an on-site soundwork, simultaneously proposing a new primary art historical material.

Fisher and Drobnik continue this work in *Psychometry and the Affective Artifact / The Medium in the Museum*. This experimental research project contends that “psychometry as paranormal touch offers an intriguing technology of intuition for reconstituting the affective knowledges resonant in artifacts.”¹⁷² The project is positioned to extend a

¹⁶⁹ See Jim Drobnik and Jennifer Fisher, “The Servant Problem,” *Trespassers & Captives*, edited by Jamelie Hassan (London: London Regional Art and Historical Museums; Eldon House, 2000), 49 – 61.

¹⁷⁰ Jennifer Fisher and Jim Drobnik, “Affecting Heritage: ‘The Servant Problem’ and ‘Museopathy,’” conference paper for “The Artistry of Heritage” delivered at *ACHS 2016 – What does heritage change?* 4 June 2016, *UQAM* Montreal. Abstract: <https://sites.grenadine.uqam.ca/sites/patrimoine/en/ACHS2016/schedule/643/15%2030%C2%A0%C2%A0Affecting%20Heritage:%20%22The%20Servant%20Problem%22%20and%20%22Museopathy%22>

¹⁷¹ Fisher and Drobnik, “Affecting Heritage.”

¹⁷² Jennifer Fisher described this project by email in March 2021: “DisplayCult’s *Psychometry and the Affective Artifact* project involves employing psychics (some of whom have worked with missing person investigations) to recover lost history of unattributed artifacts in museum collections. Professional mediums are invited to read through the portrait or object to determine aspects of the affective contexts of unknown artists: their mood, surroundings, climate, social station, emotional relationships, challenges and talents.” Email dated 23 March 2021. “The Dawn of Aquarius: Art, Intuition and Technology,” -empyre- soft-skinned space listserv (Cornell University), moderated by Renate Ferro and Dr. Arshiya Lokhandwala, co-

traditional art historical approach, which “employs forensic methods to study artifacts of the past,” in order to foster “an expanded art historical epistemology and methodology.”¹⁷³ Fisher and Drobnik invite professional mediums into museum collections to be in contact with unattributed artworks “to determine aspects of the affective contexts of unknown artists.”¹⁷⁴ In the process of exploring what may be accessed from/about artworks and artists through these readings, DisplayCult establishes a valuable archive: events of mediumship taking place within institutional spaces. The objectives of the project are manifold. Both the on-site encounters as well as documentation of these encounters potentially “expand epistemological modalities of ‘knowing’ about artworks beyond forensic art-historical methodologies, archival practices, conservation science, social history and so on.”¹⁷⁵ Rather than present an either/or division between forensic and clairvoyant strategies, DisplayCult leans into the productive overlap of each by working with mediums who have experience with missing persons investigations. Instances in which mediums align in their readings present an additional layer of evidence.

Forensic aesthetics was coined by curator Ralph Rugoff in the 1997 exhibition, *Scene of the Crime*, organized by UCLA at the Armand Hammer Museum. Rugoff identifies the value of this curatorial project in its emphasis on two seemingly paradoxical impulses: a “search for meaning” and a corresponding “goalless activity of speculation and interpretation.”¹⁷⁶ When they converge, the two modes induce an experience of productive suspension. Rugoff’s concept entails a participatory event, centring the viewer

curated by Jennifer Fisher. See also Jennifer Fisher, “Psychometry and the Affective Artifact,” *C Magazine* 106 (Summer 2010), 10-19.

¹⁷³ Fisher, email communication, 23 March 2021, -empyre- soft-skinned space listserv.

¹⁷⁴ Fisher, email communication, 23 March 2021, -empyre- soft-skinned space listserv.

¹⁷⁵ Fisher, email communication, 23 March 2021, -empyre- soft-skinned space listserv.

¹⁷⁶ Ralph Rugoff, “Introduction,” in *Scene of the Crime*, edited by Ralph Rugoff (Los Angeles: UCLA; Hammer Fellows of Contemporary Art, 1997), 18.

“in a process of mental reconstruction.”¹⁷⁷ Works included under his curatorial and aesthetic thematic cross media and genres, but an overarching indicator of a forensic artwork is that crucial aspects remain unseen or ungiven. Inexplicable works, or works that emphasize a fragmentary quality, encourage viewer participation to fill in the blanks, but importantly do not provide the necessary (often grisly) material for habitual narrativation. In that absence, engagement becomes an active exchange in which the viewer is always implicated by “the residue or record of an earlier event on which [the work’s] meaning seems utterly contingent.”¹⁷⁸ Rugoff’s concept will be discussed in relation to Forensic Architecture’s more recent formation of forensic aesthetics and forensic futures in Chapter Three: “Publishing the Present; Publishing for the Future.”

Seemingly at odds, the interrelated complexities and contradictions of forensics and clairvoyance reverberate and elicit new modalities of knowledge. When positioned in relation to arts publishing, their associated frameworks resonate with a set of specific aesthetics, subject matters, and strategies. They also offer compelling strategies for addressing materiality, distribution, and audience engagement. A forensic approach introduces modes and modalities for attempting examination-of: evidence gathering, testimony (from victim, suspect, witness, expert), analysis, re-staging, framing, questioning and cross-examining from legal counsel, testing and re-testing outcomes, filing away for possible appeals. A clairvoyant approach, one of clear seeing, necessary transgression, and fostering impossible futures, offers an intuitive and productively tricky channeling, or communing-with: generating appropriate questions, opening oneself to contact, interpreting signs, seeking confirmation (or perpetuating scepticism). We see the merging of forensics and clairvoyance within Soulellis’ urgent artifacts: a means of publishing for the present, and bringing a more just future into being, by gathering and distributing “[t]he evidence that demonstrates how crisis compounds crisis.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Rugoff, “Introduction,” 18.

¹⁷⁸ Rugoff, ““More than Meets the Eye,” in *Scene of the Crime*, 60.

¹⁷⁹ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.”

In Chapter Three of this thesis, I explore how Jim Miller's *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal* takes advantage of our conceptual and aesthetic expectations for forensic evidence in order to undermine the functions of that evidence when directed by corporate and state powers. Following its initial release and circulation, the strategies employed within *Poison Pen* continued to inform the public and private advocacy work of its subject, Marjorie Carlyle, which further broadened the distribution of their collaborative bookwork. Chapter Two, which takes a close look at the publishing project Applegarth Follies, foregrounds the publishers' keen awareness of their publishing landscape, and their corresponding desire to "make things today for tomorrow."

1.5 Artists' Publishing: Dispelling a Fantasy

Chapter Two's case study of Applegarth Follies focuses a great deal on the challenges associated with artists' publishing, the collective endeavor dedicated to distribution of creative works across communities, and a corresponding desire to reach those communities (and have the communities reach back). In researching legacies of artists' publishing, I unexpectedly encountered a very minor crime of omission related to the historiography of artists' books. While small in scope and lacking in exciting forensic detail, I believe this event is integral to the formation of a particular historical narrative (and notoriety) of artists' books and arts publishing as both more democratic and arguably more revolutionary than other publishing outputs.

For background, institutional discourses frame arts publishing in terms of its alternative, or radical, praxis. Histories of artists' books tend to contextualize their genesis in terms of utopic and subversive moments. Following many contemporary and historical accounts, artists' books of the 1960s and 1970s offered independent, affordable alternatives to inaccessible commercial art markets and rarefied art objects.¹⁸⁰ Artists themselves, as well as their supporters, initially positioned their books in opposition to—or at least, beyond the purview of—critical, commercial, and academic spheres. In recalling the

¹⁸⁰ See Clive Phillpot, "Some Contemporary Artists and Their Books," in *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, 97-132.

genesis of Printed Matter (which began as a publisher of artists' books), Lippard outlines her early definition of the category:

Artist's book meant a book by an artist. I hate it when they are called "artist books" which is ungrammatical and meaningless. My own definition of an artist's book was quite strict: mass produced, relatively cheap, accessible to a broad public, all art and no commentary or preface or anything that wasn't part of the artwork by anyone—artist or critic; the sequential nature made it a single piece (maybe at times a whole "exhibition" but that never appealed to me as much as the holistic view). Hand-made, one-of-a-kind books were something else—often very beautiful, but the kind of "precious objects" I hoped we'd escape.¹⁸¹

In 1977, Lucy Lippard expressed an oft-cited desire "to see artists' books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores, and airports."¹⁸² The desire to insinuate artists' books everywhere—in the grocery store, at the gas station, in newsstands and train station book stalls—was also articulated by Seth Siegelaub, Ed Ruscha, and Clive Phillpot. Siegelaub describes this aspiration as one of "communication with the general public"; acknowledging it as "totally crazy," he emphasizes its importance as "an idea—the idea of the public sphere, the idea of art reaching out to a much broader public than people were accustomed to."¹⁸³

Though not writing from within the discipline of artists' books, Canadian author Jane Rule offers a valuable and tempered counter-perspective on the desire for a mainstream, supermarket audience. Rule makes a comparison between small press—here, independent feminist presses—and mass-market commercial publishers. Producing titles in smaller numbers and with fewer resources, Rule admires how successful small presses maintain distribution by ensuring their catalogues are always available to their valued readership—

¹⁸¹ Lucy Lippard and Julie Ault, "Interview with Lucy R. Lippard on Printed Matter," Printed Matter Inc.: Critical Essays, December 2006. <https://www.printedmatter.org/programs/critical-essays/14-interview-with-lucy-r-lippard-on-printed-matter>.

¹⁸² Lippard, "The Artist's Book Goes Public," 48.

¹⁸³ David Maroto and Seth Siegelaub, "What Happens When the Artwork Becomes A Novel?" in *Artist Novels: The Book Lovers Publication*, edited by David Maroto and Joanna Zielińska (Berlin: Sternberg Press; Kraków: Cricoteka, 2015), 134.

deeply loyal audiences “for whom books are important sources of nourishment.”¹⁸⁴ Rule contrasts this strategy with corporate publishers who operate like supermarkets by approaching “the marketing of books as if they were like food.”¹⁸⁵ Rule’s scenario envisions titles being tossed aside, “stale after six months if they are hardbacks, after six weeks if they are paperbacks.”¹⁸⁶ Only a small percentage of sellable commercial titles can remain in regular production and circulation in the supermarket, whereas the majority of titles are quickly out of print and far less available.

Ironically, the mass-market commercial approach is a significant contributing factor to the market scarcity that results in rarer book titles. Even within her 1977 essay, Lippard perceives certain artists’ books reverting to their rarefied “ancestors” (“surrealism’s literary and romantic heritage”), and she worries that certain artists’ publications have already been subsumed into capitalist structures.¹⁸⁷ Lippard revisits the supermarket scenario less than a decade later in her 1985 essay, “Conspicuous Consumption.” She acknowledges that, even as they represent “part of a significant subcurrent beneath the artworld mainstream,” many artists’ bookworks fall into the trap of being inaccessible and “distinctly luxury items, commodities with dubious exchange value on the current market” that are more indicative of “artistic escapism, elitism, and self-indulgence.”¹⁸⁸ Writing in 1986, Brian Wallis similarly acknowledges that the artist’s book is “a precious form, produced in relatively small numbers, for a specialized audience and market, and with inefficient means of distribution,” but he nonetheless insists that its function is “an

¹⁸⁴ Jane Rule, “For ‘Writer/Publisher Relationships: Feminist and Traditional,’” in *A Hot-Eyed Moderate* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys Limited, 1986), 49.

¹⁸⁵ Jane Rule, “For ‘Writer/Publisher Relationships,’” 49.

¹⁸⁶ Jane Rule, “For ‘Writer/Publisher Relationships,’” 49.

¹⁸⁷ Lucy Lippard, “The Artist’s Book Goes Public,” in *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, 47-48, continues: “The only danger is that, with an expanding audience and an increased popularity with collectors, the artist’s book will fall back into its *edition de luxe* or coffee table origins, as has already happened in the few cases when such books have been co-opted by commercial publishers and transformed into glossy, pricey products.”

¹⁸⁸ Lippard, “Conspicuous Consumption: New Artists’ Books,” in *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, 56.

essentially political genre.”¹⁸⁹ Lippard herself appears to not quite escape the desire for the supermarket audience beyond acknowledging the vision as “fantasy.”¹⁹⁰

Published a couple of years prior to Lippard’s 1985 reappraisal, Carrión’s “Bookworks Revisited” offers a parallel reassessment of the initial, hopeful vision for artists’ books. This text directly addresses his often-cited 1975 collection of aphorisms, “The New Art of Making Books,” as Carrión can survey the burgeoning field of bookworks with the benefits of a few years of hindsight. He perceives a landscape that “doesn’t read smoothly,” but rather “has long silences, persistent misunderstandings, omissions, fake heroes.”¹⁹¹ He also despairs of a critical “unwillingness or incapacity to attack the subject in a serious yet non-academic matter.”¹⁹² The overall atmosphere of the “Bookworks Revisited” essay is one of tempered levity. This attitude carries throughout *Second Thoughts*, the 1980 anthology of Carrión’s work in which it appears. An important component of this collection is an annotated re-issue of “The New Art of Making Books.” Carrión’s annotations to his earlier text are subtle, but they indicate important instances in which he rejects his earlier thinking and modulates an initial overabundance of optimism. For instance, Carrión acknowledges somewhat playfully that, “according to [his own] statement” about the artist’s book constituting an entirely new format for expression and interface between work and reader, “the present book would be boring. Indeed, I think so.”¹⁹³ Carrión’s original desire is for the bookwork to achieve entirely new conceptual forms, operating in ways very unlike a traditional book. Ironically, it is his traditional essay form that garners Carrión so much art historical attention. Carrión also revisits “[giving] too much importance to plagiarism,” and allows: “probably I was

¹⁸⁹ Brian Wallis, “The Politics of Representation,” 10. Wallis’ assertion was also raised in the previous, introductory section of this thesis.

¹⁹⁰ Lippard, “Conspicuous Consumption,” 56.

¹⁹¹ Carrión, “Bookworks Revisited,” in *Second Thoughts* 57.

¹⁹² Carrión, “Bookworks Revisited,” 57.

¹⁹³ Carrión, “The New Art of Making Books,” in *Second Thoughts*, 9.

over enthusiastic about my recent freedom for using other people’s texts.”¹⁹⁴ He acknowledges the popularity of his landmark work five years on, but is nonetheless “[regretful] that the reactions from writers have been so infrequent.”¹⁹⁵

There is an important aside to make concerning the use of ‘artist’s book’ and ‘bookwork’ throughout this thesis, the latter being a term devised by Carrión. Lippard attributes the popularity of the phrase “artist’s book” to the 1973 exhibition by Diane Perry Vanderlip, *Artists Books*, at the Moore College of Art.¹⁹⁶ She voices her disdain for those book objects that are inaccessible luxury items for their rarity and “self-indulgence.” In articulating where she would like to see artist’s books (at supermarket check-outs), Lippard favours those outputs with affordable production and mass-market appeal. In a 1976 print invitation to the exhibition *Newspaper Art; Art Newspapers*, organized at his Amsterdam-based bookshop Other Books and So, Carrión lists that the store is “a space for exhibition and distribution of other books, non books, anti books, pseudo books, quasi books, concrete books, visual books, conceptual books, structural books, project books, statement books, instruction books.”¹⁹⁷ Amaranth Borsuk believes these descriptors are all “suggestive of his vexed relationship with the marketplace.”¹⁹⁸ Carrión’s aversion to more traditional print forms was informed by his insider knowledge of the publishing industry. Acknowledging his earlier career as a published author, Carrión admits: “I am, I think, influenced in the making of books by my literary background. I’m still trying to

¹⁹⁴ Carrión, “The New Art of Making Books,” 18.

¹⁹⁵ Carrión, “The New Art of Making Books,” 7.

¹⁹⁶ See Julie Ault and Lucy Lippard, “Interview with Lucy R. Lippard on Printed Matter,” *Printed Matter*, December 2006, <https://www.printedmatter.org/catalog/tables/41>. See also Diane Perry Vanderlip, Lynn Lester Hershman, John Perreault, *Artists’ Books: Moore College of Art Philadelphia* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, 1973). The Moore College of Art describes Vanderlip’s exhibition as “the first major exhibition of artists’ books in the United States.” See Moore College of Art Website, “History: Past Exhibitions: 1970s,” <https://moore.edu/the-galleries-at-moore/history/past-exhibitions/1970s/>.

¹⁹⁷ This advertisement for Other Books and So is clipped in the artist’s file for Ulises Carrión in the Stedelijk Museum Library, Amsterdam. It is also reproduced in *Ulises Carrión: “We have won! Haven’t we?”* edited by Guy Schraenen (Amsterdam: Museum Fodor, 1992), 20.

¹⁹⁸ Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book* (Cambridge, Mass; London, UK: MIT Press, 2018), 141. Borsuk also quotes the aforementioned advertisement for Other Books and So.

break free of it. On some occasions that works better than others.”¹⁹⁹ Though Carrión was consistent in “[calling] for authors to be more attuned to the book’s materiality and impact on meaning,” he did not exclude the use of terms like ‘artist’s books’ or ‘art books’—terms frequently used by Lippard, Siegelau and their contemporaries.²⁰⁰ Where available, when considering specific works my thesis uses the qualifiers used by their artists. For example, Jim Miller refers to *Poison Pen* as a ‘bookwork.’ However, I also use the terms artist’s book and bookwork interchangeably at times, where it is appropriate. This particular research, while considering the interface and experience of the artist’s book, is less preoccupied with questions of ‘book craft.’²⁰¹

With sobered second thought about artist’s books and bookworks happening in real time in the late 1980s via Lippard, Wallis and Carrión, how did more utopic discourses around artists’ publishing take such firm root, persisting through academic history despite these authors’ almost immediate walk-backs? Returning to the minor crime mentioned at the beginning of this section, I believe an important factor to this history is in how Carrión’s initial version of “New Art” is published far more widely, and receives far more attention, than his annotated revision.²⁰² An important vector for the reach of this initial version of Carrión’s essay is artist Joan Lyons’ landmark and frequently cited *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (published in 1985, reprinted in 1987, and cited thoroughly here).²⁰³ This collection gathers Carrión essay alongside essays by Lippard, Clive Phillpot, Richard Kostelanetz, Susi R. Bloch and others. Lyons reproduces the first version of “The New Art of Making Books” without Carrión’s 1980 annotations, despite citing her source for the text as the later *Second Thoughts* anthology.

¹⁹⁹ Ulises Carrión is quoted in Guy Schraenen, “We Didn’t Think of Winning: An Unstructured Approach. Of Ulises Carrión and his Activities,” in *Ulises Carrión: “We have won! Haven’t we?”* 43.

²⁰⁰ Borsuk, *The Book*, 141.

²⁰¹ I am indebted to Patrick Mahon for drawing my attention to these distinctions.

²⁰² See Juan J. Agius’ listing in Ulises Carrión, *Quant Aux Livres — On Books*, 206-207.

²⁰³ Joan Lyons, editor, *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (Rochester: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985; 1987).

It might not be far-fetched to suggest that Lyons' deliberate intention would have been to maintain the unabashed potency of Carrión's initial idealism as opposed to his later, more sobered tone in the 1980 annotated re-issue of "New Art." However, when asked about this editorial decision, Lyons replied that it was an honest error: "Although I did have a copy of 'Second Thoughts' I could have been working from a Xerox that did not include the notes, perhaps using a text of the piece as Ulises presented it at a book conference at VSW [Visual Studies Workshop] in 1979."²⁰⁴ Regardless of the intention, the error of omission has doubtlessly contributed to the leading narrative idealizing the operations of early artists' book publishing as singularly subversive and counter-cultural. Ironically, Lyons' error enacts Carrión's aforementioned concern, fostering a particular academic history with "long silences, persistent misunderstandings, [and] omissions," and positioning Carrión himself in the role of "fake hero." It is the earlier and unannotated version of Carrión's text that appears in numerous catalogues and retrospective publications. When searching for Carrión's text online, it is the earlier and unannotated version that appears with much higher frequency. Carrión's reassessment of his project, an arguably more urgent artifact, is the more rarified output.

Luckily, recent re-evaluations of these histories do much to temper this misrepresented optimism—or as Anne Moeglin-Delcroix calls it, "mythology"—and correct historical falsehoods from both the production and distribution angles.²⁰⁵ Lippard herself is frank on the subject, framing her original project for artists' books in terms of a failure: "I can't say that the artist's book finally fulfilled my idealistic, populist expectations for it. Even if they had stayed cheap and easily distributed, they remained art, avant-garde art. They were perhaps accessible in terms of form but not of content."²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Lyons continues: "It was probably sloppy scholarship on my part. ... I didn't have an outside editor or even readers. The anthology was pieced together over several years in moments borrowed from my other obligations." Email correspondence with Joan Lyons, 6 April 2019.

²⁰⁵ Anne Moeglin-Delcroix, "Some Preliminary Observations Toward a Study of the Varieties of Artist Publishers in the Sixties and Seventies," translated by Richard Sadleir, in *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, edited by Annette Gilbert (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 46. See also David Maroto and Seth Siegel, "What Happens When the Artwork Becomes a Novel?"

²⁰⁶ Ault, "Interview with Lucy R. Lippard on Printed Matter."

Echoing Lippard's earlier language of the supermarket fantasy and later acknowledgement of its failure, artist David Maroto discusses his *present* wish to reach a popular audience, but openly acknowledges it as "an artist's fantasy," "an imaginary scenario in which your desire is played out."²⁰⁷ Maroto is interested in this specific fantasy because it makes contact with his own research focus, the artist's novel format:

...what I think is that the artist's novel is a revision of that dream ... [T]he artists' books failed because the contents were alienating. But now the [artist novel] contents are not alienating, because it's a novel [and] everybody's trained, since childhood, to understand a novel. ... It appeals to faculties like narrative empathy and that activates identification that you are already naturally equipped with, or imagination, etc. So again, it's a revision of the same fantasy. If this is true, I could put my novel in the book store hoping that instead of buying Stieg Larsson's detective novel that [people] will buy the one next to it, which is mine. But of course it's not exactly a novel; it's an art work in the form of a novel.²⁰⁸

Asked about his decision to publish his artist's novel with the independent arts publisher Mousse Publishing as opposed to a commercial publisher, Maroto acknowledges that this strategy hinders the possibility of accomplishing the artistic bait-and-switch that he describes. The distribution reach of smaller, arts driven publishers do not extend to mass market retailers. Or, in Maroto's own words, the reality is: "if you publish with an art publisher, you will never sell your 'detective novel' in an airport because that's not where these books are sold."²⁰⁹

I suggest what Maroto describes as "fantasy" to also be a kind of missed connection. The target supermarket-shopping public that book artists have long desired descends from a literate working class that developed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This growing readership created a corresponding and specific demand for literature—escapist, adventurous, romantic, violent, and speculative, and most importantly: affordable. In England, the commercial push to meet this market resulted in the repeal of paper duties and cheaper paper manufacturing, as well as inexpensive presses and illustration

²⁰⁷ In conversation with David Maroto, 6 March 2019, Rotterdam.

²⁰⁸ In conversation with David Maroto, 2019.

²⁰⁹ In conversation with David Maroto, 2019.

techniques.²¹⁰ A leading site of distribution was the railway station book stall, which Reginald Hill calls “that nineteenth century marriage between Art and Industry.”²¹¹ W. H. Smith procured the monopoly on British book stalls and stocked them with penny dreadfuls, inexpensive novels and serial publications.²¹² *The Strand Magazine* attracted a significant readership of 300,000 by 1890, due in great part to its multimedia quality: it was one of the first serials to incorporate photography and offered its readership regular “free gifts” (often a print reproduction of a work from the Royal Academy of Art).²¹³ Novelist Wilkie Collins affirmed: “To the penny journals of the present time belong the credit of having discovered a new public.”²¹⁴ In analyzing the labour of bookstall workers, scholar Paul Raphael Rooney refers to them as “cultural conduits.”²¹⁵ It was in *Strand* that Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes short stories found an early audience. By the 1930s, hardboiled detective fiction was a leading genre in Britain and the United States with a highly enthusiastic readership—the same readership dreamed of by Lippard, Siegelau, Maroto, and others.²¹⁶

Is it possible that the desire/fantasy to reach this broader audience—an audience more likely to purchase detective fiction—*reverbs* back onto the artists’ book, or bookwork, forms? This by no means suggests that the genesis of artists’ publishing can be found in murder pulp. But the desire/fantasy for the murder pulp audience (highly circumstantial

²¹⁰ Reginald Hill, “Holmes: The Hamlet of Crime Fiction,” in *Reflections on Crime Writing*, edited by H. R. F. Keating (London: British Broadcasting Company, 1978), 29.

²¹¹ Hill, “Holmes: The Hamlet of Crime Fiction,” 29.

²¹² See Henry Curwen, “W. H. Smith and Son: Railway Literature,” in *A History of Booksellers: The Old and the New* (Cambridge, N. Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2014; 2010; 1874), 433-440.

²¹³ Hill, “Holmes: The Hamlet of Crime Fiction,” 30-31.

²¹⁴ Hill, “Holmes: The Hamlet of Crime Fiction,” 29. Collins himself is attributed with the earliest modern English detective novel, *The Moonstone*. That work and the earlier mystery novel, *The Women in White*, were significantly informed by Collins’ study in law school.

²¹⁵ Paul Raphael Rooney, “Conduits of Culture and ‘Food for the Mind’: W. H. Smith & Son Railway Bookstall Workers and Readers’ Book Purchases, 1870 – 1920,” in *Publishing History* Vol. 26 (2016): 35-57.

²¹⁶ In America, this was helped in no small part due to a cultural climate shaped by prohibition and corresponding political and juridical corruption. See H. R. F. Keating, “American Pulp Magazines,” in *Reflections on Crime Writing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation. 1978), 97.

evidence) offers a useful contextualizing ground for a significant genre of artists' bookworks that inhabit aesthetics and strategies borrowed from detective and mystery fiction. What insights can popular forensic tropes (clues, evidence, testimonies, hunches, accusations), methodologies and strategies, (collaboration, collection, investigation, analysis and interpretation, reconstruction, narration) bring to artists' publishing practices and published outputs? How do particular works perform these forensic strategies (materially, conceptually, in their engagements with the reader experience, in their distribution)? What specific histories and skillsets are usefully transmitted from one sphere to another? What might these acts of transmission contribute to a formation of an artistic publishing practice and its affiliated methods? These questions are picked up in the following Premonition ("Card: true crime"), and in Chapter Three: "Publishing the Present; Publishing for the Future."

Premonition: Cartomancy as Theoretical Framework Suggestion: Divining at Second-Hand

Chapter One has attempted to demonstrate that to compellingly address artists' publishing requires shuffling through—not pinning down—its numerous (occasionally contradictory) pasts and its many potentialities. Enhancing this challenge is the question of how to engage with the myriad possible forms or outputs of artists' publishing. For example, and following Maurice Blanchot, the interface of the book has a particularly charged capacity: it “rolls up time, unrolls time, and contains this unrolling as the continuity of a presence in which present, past, and future become actual.”²¹⁷ For Blanchot, the book is “the *a priori* of knowledge.”²¹⁸ Yet this interface is also liquid, and Blanchot's proposition of “the absent book” provides a means for thinking through the myriad potential outcomes that artists' publishing practices might entail:

Everywhere that there is a system of relations that arranges, a memory that transmits, everywhere that writing gathers in the substance of a mark that reading regards in the light of a meaning (tracing it back to an origin whose sign it is), when emptiness itself belongs to a structure and allows itself to be adjusted, then there is the book: the law of the book.²¹⁹

Given this scope of potentials, I propose ‘reading’ the situation of artists' publishing using a metaphorical card deck of concepts, methods, and moments. To do so positions clairvoyance—activated here through a form of cartomancy—as a line of inquiry that prioritizes the relational over the sequential, and a mode of engagement that encourages further reading and creativity in relation *with* (via Fusco; DisplayCult). Following Karen Barad, cartomancy is also posed as a usefully “diffractive methodology” for “reading insights through one another in attending to and responding to the details and specificities

²¹⁷ Maurice Blanchot, “The Absence of the Book,” *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader*, edited by George Quasha and translated by Lydia Davis, Paul Aster and Robert Lamberton (Barrytown: Station Hill Arts, 1999), 472.

²¹⁸ Maurice Blanchot, “The Absence of the Book,” 473.

²¹⁹ Maurice Blanchot, “The Absence of the Book,” 473.

of relations of difference and how they matter.”²²⁰ This interstitial space enacts the function of the card as a theoretical device. It explores actions associated with card reading (shuffling, arranging, sleight of hand, reading); it also presents figures and actions that might be familiar within a card spread. The intention is to outline a series of ‘cards’ through which the practice of artists’ publishing might be read. A number of cards immediately intersect with the publishing act, and might even perform as concrete directives for a publishing practice; other cards are tangentially associated with publishing through how they represent modes of thought, materiality, or production.

As Jonathan Allen demonstrates, both tarot and playing cards perform as “intermediary” art objects that “temporarily summon alternate worlds.”²²¹ I propose a theoretical framework “indexed on” (in the words of Roland Barthes) cartomancy as a means for constellating tactics and strategies—or, again via Barthes, “tactics without strategies.”²²² Albert S. Lyons distinguishes cartomancy, a “system of prediction that can be taught and learned,” from other modes of prophecy that require particular “spiritual, intuitive talents.”²²³ Tarot expert Rachel Pollack emphasizes the need to think of tarot card

²²⁰ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NY; London, UK: Duke University Press, 2007), 71. I began thinking through the potential of clairvoyance for a presentation in Christof Migone’s graduate studio seminar, LIVE Improvise. Constellating Fusco’s inductive reasoning with Jungian synchronicity and ESP, I challenged seminar members to both attend to, and resist, seemingly meaningful synchronicities and contacts in praxis and day-to-day life. This suggestion was developed for a presentation at the 2016 Conference of the Universities Art Association of Canada (UQÀM, Montréal) as part of Christof Migone’s DEADPANEL. Migone articulated “the potency of a deadpan strategy [residing] in its ability to function as a vehicle for virulent yet understated critique and as a proliferator of tangential lines of interpretation” (panel description). My presentation, “The effect of living [all]wards,” posited that in the present moment (of government-driven remote viewing tactics—clairvoyance that travels—and economic regimes juggling fraud, fantasy and scepticism to disorient with cognitive bias, self-delusion, and wishful thinking), we must move away from a time of card/tea leaf/entrail-as-cheat sheet and towards a clairvoyance that in equal measure clairnunciates. My admittedly utopic suggestion was to develop research strategies in the pursuit of speaking multiplicities into being and willing the production of multilateral futures.

²²¹ Allen, “Introduction,” *Lost Envoy*, 23.

²²² Roland Barthes, quoted in Réda Bensmaïa, *The Barthes Effect: The Essay as Reflective Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xii.

²²³ Albert S. Lyons, *Predicting the Future: An Illustrated Guide and History to the Technique* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 10. Examples encountered in this research undermine the tidiness of Lyons’ division. For example, McNichol was herself both a cartomancer and a clairvoyant for whom intuitions and images would occur in constant overlay with her day-to-day life, whether engaged in a reading or not. One



Figure 3. Unauthored news clipping, “Carrion,” *Volkscrant*, dated 4 July 1970 or 7 April 1970, in the Stedelijk Museum’s artist’s file for Ulises Carrion. Image courtesy of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

Card: sleight of hand. In a 1980 issue of the Dutch newspaper *Volkscrant*, a short article discussing Ulises Carrion’s bookshop and recent publication *Second Thoughts* is accompanied with a series of six nearly serial images: spare line-drawn gatherings of three hands, and sometimes four hands, grip and clasp their fingers together in different formations (see Figure 3).²²⁶ On first look, all six images appear nearly

²²⁶ Unauthored news clipping, “Carrion,” *Volkscrant*, dated 4 July 1970 or 7 April 1970, in the artist’s file for Ulises Carrion in the Stedelijk Museum Library, Amsterdam.

identical. Gradually, the eye begins to discern variations in the angles of the wrists and small differences in finger and knuckle positioning. The accompanying text mentions Carrión's interest in artists' books, stamp art and mail art. We can assume that the six images are examples of different artists' stamps. In conversation, Carrión describes his attraction to stamps in "[trying] as much as I can to use different signs of a non-literary and certainly non-linguistic nature."²²⁷ In this vein, his hands might be simple scribble exercises demonstrating variation, or a light-hearted attempt at a perceptive game. The images don't explicitly direct attention to anything other than themselves and their potential for subtle formal difference. But even in the attempt to follow a non-literary reading, the tightly gripped and intertwined fingers of two, three, maybe four people begin to suggest a variety of meanings: anxiously clasped hands; possessive hands; hands held in friendship; a team of hands in huddle formation; a cacophony of collaborating fingers.

Attraction to the non-literary and non-linguistic led Carrión to employ elements ("materials, objects, processes and people") for their formal qualities within his publishing projects: "The final result is only partially determined in advance ... It is a game without fixed rules, and with no winners or losers."²²⁸ In this present time of conspiracy theories and conspiracy practices, contextualizing the fraught relations between winners and losers, left and right, seen and unseen, natural and supernatural (and our collective inability to distinguish which is which), a series of formally similar photographs present as useful stage-setting devices for this diffractive research endeavour. They also perform as a Rorschach test for discerning and deciding the kinds of moves that could be useful for this present (and perhaps for this thesis). These images, which make such close visual contact with Carrión's 1980 stamps, constitute Plate IX from Camille Flammarion's 1907 text, *Mysterious Psychic Forces: An Account of the Author's Investigations in Psychical Research, Together with Those of Other European Savants*. Plate IX is captioned: "METHOD USED BY EUSAPIA TO

²²⁷ Schraenen, "We have won! Haven't we?" 47.

²²⁸ Schraenen, "We have won! Haven't we?" 69.

SURREPTITIOUSLY FREE HER HAND” (see Figure 4).²²⁹ A copy of *Mysterious Psychic Forces* can be found at the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle, one of the oldest independent libraries in Britain. Flammarion’s book is shelved among esotericism and parapsychology. Histories of witchcraft, tomes on spiritualism, poltergeist activities, and studies of extrasensory perception are catalogued between continental theory, located to the left, and psychoanalysis, to the right. The book’s placement demonstrates the perpetual, meaningful proximity of systems and methodologies that are often expected to hold distance from one another. Nearby Flammarion is a battered copy of Bergson’s *Time and Free Will*. Somewhere between 1948 and the present, according to loan stamps, a reader underlined specific Bergsonian fragments on potential futures: “we shall have lost a great deal... the future, pregnant with an infinity of possibilities.”²³⁰ Infinite *tempora*.

²²⁹ Plate IX is inserted between pages 206 and 207 of Camille Flammarion’s *Mysterious Psychic Forces: An Account of the Author’s Investigations in Psychical Research, Together with Those of Other European Savants* (London: Small, Maynard and Co, 1907). An expanded version of my engagement with these photographs appears in the essay, “Deception is a co-effect which cannot be neglected.”

²³⁰ Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 10.

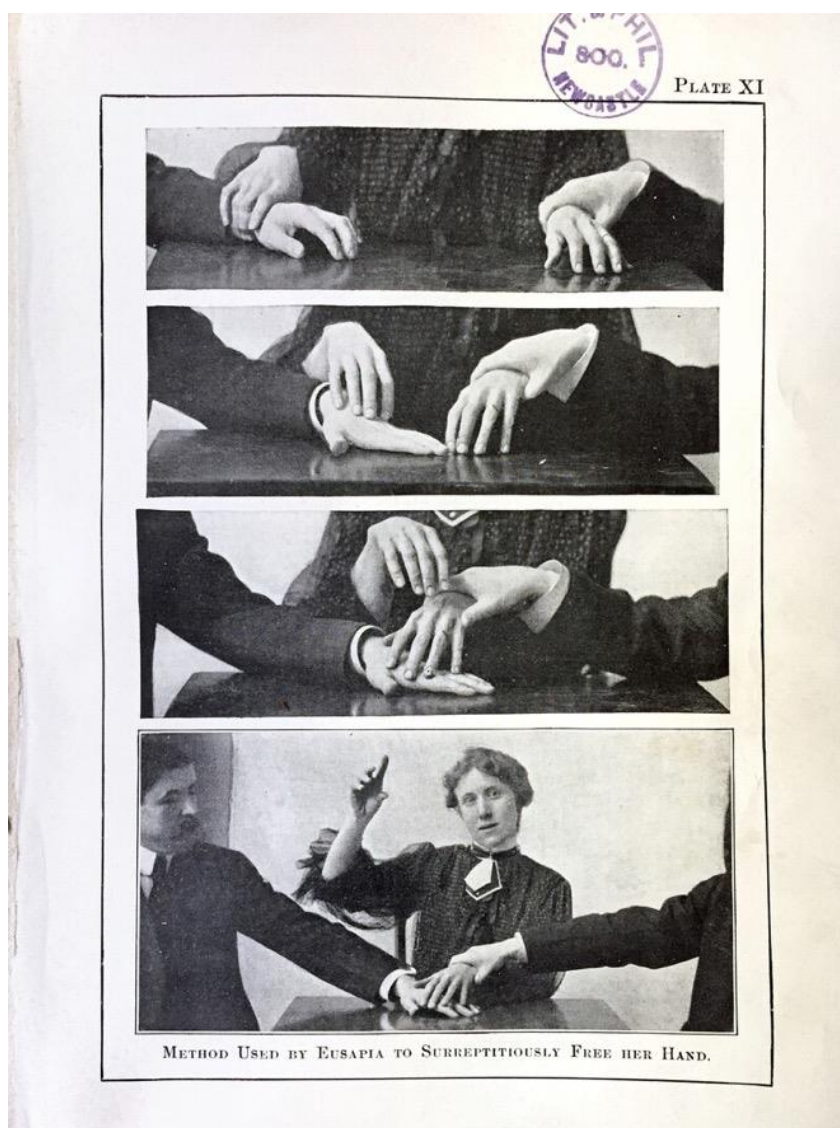


Figure 4. Plate IX in Camille Flammarion, *Mysterious Psychic Forces: An Account of the Author's Investigations in Psychological Research, Together with Those of Other European Savants*, (London: Small, Maynard and Co, 1907). Image courtesy of the Lit & Phil Library, Newcastle.

Flammarion's Plate IX is a series of four well-lit photographs of the medium, EUSAPIA, tulle-sleeved and seated between two jacketed figures at a small table. Three of the photos are cropped close-ups of everyone's hands, in sequence. First frame: EUSAPIA holds Examiner 1's wrist with her right hand, Examiner 2 holds EUSAPIA's left. Second frame: EUSAPIA's grip on Examiner 1 loosens so her fingers can slide-nudge his hand

toward her left, still captive. Third frame: EUSAPIA's freed hand hovers over a tender three-way hold; her captive left hand performs double duty—splayed fingers hold Examiner 1's hand in place while her wrist is still gripped by Examiner 2. The fourth and final photograph is larger, an accented “ta-da!” that pulls back to show Examiner 1 (a mustached Flammarion), EUSAPIA, and the jacketed arm of Examiner 2 (still mostly out of frame). EUSAPIA's freed right hand is held up, her fingers positioned part-ways between a pinch and an oratorical gesture of wonder. She smiles placidly but directly into the camera as Flammarion beholds the configuration of hands on the table as if to express, “There: Trickery!” The jacketed arm of Examiner 2 once again grips EUSAPIA's wrist tightly.

Returning to Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* after his death, his friend and colleague David Wills examines another resonant image of carefully (and intentionally) choreographed movement. Wills alleviates the reader's desire to ‘pin down’ Derrida's project by honing in on Derrida's repeated image of “turning”—the willful “turning of one's back, less in a movement of abandonment than in a form of exposure or vulnerability.”²³¹ The image of the turn encourages a readerly openness to myriad (diffractive) interpretations: “short of a thesis, there is a type of choreography to be drawn out of the relations between politics and friendship in Derrida's discussion, a series of turns that articulate a complicated figural or figurative set of gestures.”²³² The particular turn is here both deeply political (Derrida renounces Carl Schmitt's friend-enemy dichotomy) and deeply personal (for Wills, an existing “distinction between love and friendship also comes under examination” in this movement toward “exposure or vulnerability”).²³³ Wills describes Derrida's deconstructive project in terms of “a twist or turn, even a torsion, without for all that being an impossible contortion.”²³⁴ Here, he invokes another image—another sleight of hand—“a great card player, deliberately

²³¹ Wills, “Full Dorsal: Derrida's Politics of Friendship,” Section 00.

²³² Wills, “Full Dorsal: Derrida's Politics of Friendship,” section 6

²³³ Wills, “Full Dorsal: Derrida's Politics of Friendship,” section 15.

²³⁴ Wills, “Full Dorsal: Derrida's Politics of Friendship,” section 16.

[feigning] to take, one omega for another”—and challenges us to be alright with the trick: since no amount of “philological fundamentalism” can “efface the incredible fortune of a brilliant invention.”²³⁵ Such a movement is a demonstration: generative work can always be made to do more than intended (or expected). What literary (and literal) feelings arise from so many hands gripping together?

Card: the medium. Alongside illustrating it so, Flammarion describes Eusapia’s surreptitious technique:

*The figures shown in Plate IX represent four successive positions of the medium’s hands and those of the sitters. They show how, owing to the darkness and to a skillful combined series of movements, she can induce the sitter on the right to believe that he still feels the right hand of the medium on his own, while he really feels her left hand, which is firmly held by the sitter on the left. This right hand of hers, being then free, is able to produce such effects as are within its reach.*²³⁶

Once free, the medium’s hand is used to rap, slap, and raise tables, touch other sitters, pluck industrious hairs, waft air through harmonicas, and rattle objects. We are effectively induced. This substitution is one of many examples of the medium’s sleight-y hands. In the context of this research, Flammarion’s images represent a useful if somewhat heavy-handed (apologies) meeting of a number of conflicting but interrelated viewpoints. Investigator and medium-apparent enact an epistemological and methodological zoetrope: they animate a tense, symbiotic encounter between scientific investigation and more esoteric methods. Flammarion’s entire project is evidence-focused and very much forensic in nature. His crisp photographs perform as crime-scene reconstructions; throughout *Mysterious Psychic Forces* Flammarion brightens his investigative lights in various sitting rooms, even as Eusapia repeatedly asks for them to be dimmed; he measures, weighs, interrogates actions and objects. But Flammarion also remains a believer in at least some of Eusapia’s powers. His goal is to investigate, catalogue, recreate, and thereby dismiss psychic fraud, but he also sincerely seeks to find and endorse what is genuine.

²³⁵ Wills, “Full Dorsal: Derrida’s Politics of Friendship,” section 21.

²³⁶ Flammarion, *Mysterious Psychic Forces*, 205.

But more trickery is revealed! The photographed woman demonstrating the hand substitution is herself a substitution—a forensic/stage assistant. Other images in Flammarion’s book undermine the swap: another image plate reproduces a plaster cast of the auricular imprint that Eusapia’s face makes in a putty cake, reportedly without physical contact. This miraculous cameo, better than any thumbprint, is compared against a striking photograph of Eusapia in profile. Her arms are swallowed in heavy fabric and her chest swathed in a dowager’s lace collar. In both images, we see that the real Eusapia is older and far more stern than the EUSAPIA of Flammarion’s staged photographs. There is no mention of who Flammarion’s younger hand-model is, or why the need for this particular decision when the real Eusapia is so gamely prominent elsewhere. This other Eusapia could be Flammarion’s wife, a student, or a fellow psychic enthusiast/skeptic seeking to demonstrate/debunk the practice. Perhaps it is another medium, conceding to reveal a trick of the trade (see “*Card: Divining at Second-Hand,*” below). In any case, images meant to demonstrate a dexterous and indiscernible ruse are caught, red-handed, in a bit of a double standard.

Something like Edwin Sachs’ popular 1885 *Sleight of Hand: Practical Manual of Legerdemain for Amateurs & Others* may have been on Flammarion’s radar.²³⁷ His photographs effect a similar guidebook quality to Sachs’ step-by-step diagrams in their clarity and poise, and the stark white background in the first three of Flammarion’s images emphasizes a similarly serious and scientific objectivity to Sachs’ illustrations. But the longer we look, the more Flammarion’s set-up collapses in that final “ta-da!” moment. The crisp background is revealed to be a sheet tacked up behind the trio, suddenly too small to fill the photograph’s frame. What we’re viewing in Flammarion’s photographs is a forensic restaging of an event that knowingly confounds any investigative capacity, but we have great reason to keep our hands and eyes on all the mediums. At this stage, no “medium” is easily pinned down—most especially now, but also looking as far back as the 16th century when the word began to reference not only a

²³⁷ Edwin Sachs, *Sleight of Hand: Practical Manual of Legerdemain for Amateurs & Others* (London, UK: L. Upcott Gill, 1885).

middle-position, but also a substance, agent, or channel by which something is transmitted.²³⁸ The veracity of the medium remains a productively open question.

In looking at Flammarion's photographs, it is difficult to imagine that Eusapia's famous hand substitution was ever successful in practice. But the medium can cut a particularly evocative and convincing figure—particularly when we find ourselves in uncertainty, desperate and in the dark. The medium can offer us hope, and even answers to our questions. But this dissertation is less interested in ways to divine answers about the future and more interested in what the precarious nature, methods, and potentials of divining might offer to artist publishers (now thinking about the future) for this specific present.

Card: Walter Benjamin's roulette wheel. Benjamin offers numerous criticisms, formulations and explorations of prophecy and fortune telling throughout his writings, attending to both ancient divinatory practices as well as the modern fortune-telling methods (like card and palm reading).²³⁹ In "On the Concept of History," Benjamin unpacks a compulsion to think of time in dangerously oversimplified terms:

Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal nexus among various moments in history. But no state of affairs having casual significance is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. The historian who proceeds from this consideration ceases to tell the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. He grasps the constellation into which his own era has entered, along with a very specific earlier one. Thus, he establishes a conception of the present as now-time shot through with splinters of messianic time.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Merriam-Webster, s.v. "medium," accessed August 15, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/medium#h1>.

²³⁹ See, for example Walter Benjamin, "On Astrology," in *Selected Writings Volume 2, Part 2: 1931-1934*, translated by Rodney Livingstone et al., edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA; London, UK: Belknap Press, 1999), 684-685, and "On the Mimetic Faculty" in the same volume, 720-722; *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA; London, UK: Belknap Press, 1999); *The Storyteller*, edited by Sam Dolbear, Esterh Leslie and Sebastian Truskolaski (Brooklyn: Verso, 2016).

²⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings Volume 4: 1938-1940*, translated by Rodney Livingstone et al., edited by Howard Eiland, Michael W. Jennings, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA; London, UK: Belknap Press, 2003), 397.

The compounding crises of a modern compulsion to move (and gaze) only forward is invoked in Benjamin's famous description of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, his "angel of history":

His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before *us*, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is *this* storm.²⁴¹

Susan Buck-Morss observes that, via this image, "a construction of history that looks backward, rather than forward, at the destruction of material nature as it *has actually taken* place, provides dialectical contrast to the futurist myth of historical progress (which can only be sustained by forgetting what has happened)."²⁴²

For Benjamin, modern divinatory pursuits are weak mimetic shadows of earlier modes of prophecy (the reading of entrails, runes, stars, etc.).²⁴³ Eric Downing reveals numerous instances in which Benjamin states his scepticism-suspicion of divinatory practices that purport to predict a future of sequential time, believing these feed on a misdirected societal desire for progress and happiness. Downing relates this "distaste" to Benjamin's corresponding aversion to "the phantasmagoria of commodity culture."²⁴⁴ Nonetheless, Benjamin describes the capacity for "telepathic" encounters with/through things in relation to the immanent potentials of reading, detailing various instances of reading (or tapping into) the future through divinatory practice, graphology, and gambling. Benjamin describes a capacity for intra-connectedness (to cite Karen Barad) via what Downing

²⁴¹ Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 392.

²⁴² Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 95.

²⁴³ See Benjamin, "On Astrology," 684.

²⁴⁴ See Eric Downing, "Divining Benjamin: Reading Fate, Graphology, Gambling," *MLN* 126 (2011): 561-580.

²⁴⁴ Downing, "Divining Benjamin," 563. Downing also directs us to Benjamin's observations of the tactical outlawing of Jewish divinatory practices by the state, briefly noted in "On the Concept of History."

calls a “porous boundary” between the subject, the external world, and an “unseen world” of signs.²⁴⁵ Downing continues: “It is this well-nigh ontological connection to everything—to what Benjamin also calls bare life—that allows the clairvoyant to connect the subject’s fate to cards, hand-lines or planets, sign-things that, simply by making the connection, make it visible—connect it.”²⁴⁶ The ability of reading in anticipation of future outcomes (as in gambling) is a bodily experiencing—it requires a “telepathic/sympathetic” contact with materials (card deck, roulette table and ball), which induces a becoming-aware of all winning possibilities.²⁴⁷ Downing suggests that these divinatory formations are interrelated with other of Benjamin’s writings that relate consciousness, the body and trauma. Important linkages also exist between how Benjamin formulates divination and gambling in particular relation to their attraction to/assault on the psyche.²⁴⁸

Card: divining at second-hand. An innate divinatory skill for some, dowsing can also be learned. In its inaugural 1965 publication, *Practical Dowsing: A Symposium*, The British Society of Dowsters outlines “certain well-established phenomena,” one of these being “Divining at Second-Hand”: “when a dowser standing on a fixed spot experiences the reactions of another dowser as he traverses an area in which dowsing objectives exist.”²⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that the success of the second dowser, in this scenario, relies on experiencing the *reactions* of a previous dowser rather than the dowsing objective itself. This chain of sympathetic contact, in which medium

²⁴⁵ Eric Downing, “Divining Benjamin,” 565.

²⁴⁶ Eric Downing, “Divining Benjamin,” 565.

²⁴⁷ Eric Downing, “Divining Benjamin,” 576.

²⁴⁸ See Richard Wolin, “Benjamin’s Materialist Theory of Experience,” *Theory and Society* Vol. 11 No. 1 (January 1982), 17-42; Peter Fenves, “Tragedy and Prophecy in Benjamin’s *Origin of the German Mourning Play*,” in *Benjamin’s Ghosts: Interventions in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*, edited by Gerhard Richter (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 237–59; Michael A. Rosenthal, “Benjamin’s Wager on Modernity: Gambling and the *Arcades Project*,” in *The Germanic Review* Vol. 87 No. 3 (July 2012): 261-278.

²⁴⁹ A. H. Bell, “Introduction,” *Practical Dowsing: A Symposium* (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd, 1965), 11-12.

influences medium, presents a model for how the individual *MEDium* (see Chapter One on Daniel C. Dennett) might think about gleaning knowledge, even methods, from the clairvoyant.²⁵⁰ Like Derrida's turn, the movement-image of dowsing is an evocative one for a present in which both the left and right become increasingly polarized in their ideological foundations. Whether by pendulum or rod, dowsing requires swinging in both directions in order to locate a target.

In *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Susan Buck-Morss presents us with a Benjamin who is, himself, a kind of "reader" of futures. Among his complex system of alphabetized research annotations, Benjamin includes a grouping of evocative key words and categories that assist him in navigating through his expansive reading. Among them are categories "K. Dream City and Dream House, Dreams of the Future, Anthropological Nihilism, Jung" and "V. Conspiracies, *Compagnonnage*."²⁵¹ Buck-Morss examines how Benjamin positions the political stakes of 1920s Naples and Moscow in terms of the future. Evocatively, if we align with Buck-Morss' description, Benjamin "reads" each city as one would read a card spread. For Buck-Morss, this activity is:

hardly noticeable to the reader, [yet] an experiment is underway, how images, gathered by a person walking the streets of a city, can be interpreted against the grain of idealist literary style. The images are not subjective impressions, but objective expressions. The phenomena—buildings, human gestures, spatial arrangements—are "read" as a language in which a historically transient truth (and the truth of historical transiency) is expressed concretely, and the city's social formation becomes legible within perceived experience.²⁵²

Buck-Morss compares Benjamin's description of these two cities experiencing great transitions in parallel: Naples in a pre-capitalist state, and Moscow embracing socialism.

²⁵⁰ Bell's divining emerges from folk practices that have become undeniably tied to resource extraction. For a contemporary recontextualization of dowsing in relation to resource extraction and femicide, see artist and dowser Alana Bartol's exhibition, *Process of Remediation: Art, Relationships, Nature* (and a corresponding essay of the same title by Josephine Mills), Dunlop Art Gallery, 9 October 2021 – 9 January 2022, <https://dunloplearning.ca/exhibitions/alana-bartol-exhibition>.

²⁵¹ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 51.

²⁵² Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 27.

The weighted and “profaned” monuments of Naples are refracted in the political tourist tchotchkes for sale in Moscow, and in both places “the ambivalence of these images is evidence that it makes a difference which class rules—and that the future is not thereby guaranteed.”²⁵³ Yet for Benjamin, according to Buck-Morss, “all social antagonisms dissolve in the fairy tale that *progrés* is the prospect of the very near future.”²⁵⁴ Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin’s translation of Benjamin’s passage offers a small but notable variation on this passage which subtly implies a capacity to direct future outcomes: “All social antinomies dissolve in the fairyland which *le progrès* projects for the near future.”²⁵⁵

Card: research creation methods and [anticipatory]

strategies. This doctoral project is prefaced on the acceptance of art as a form of research-creation.²⁵⁶ In “A Future History,” artist researcher Michael Schwab envisions the formation and report of a future Commission Regarding the Credibility of Artistic Research, established by the G15 forum in 2017.²⁵⁷ In a 2024 *Report Regarding the Credibility of Artistic Research*, the future Commission will describe its “epistemological

²⁵³ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 28. In other sections of *The Dialectics of Seeing*, events like the Paris Exposition demonstrate, in Benjamin’s words, “profound faith in the future,” which is “the common religion of modern times, a fertile cult,” 89.

²⁵⁴ Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 91, quoting Benjamin from *Arcades V*, p.716 (U4a, 1).

²⁵⁵ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA; London, UK: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 578.

²⁵⁶ For fulsome considerations of post-secondary programs in art practice, see James Elkins’s edited collection: *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctorate Degree in Studio Art*, 2nd edition (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2009; 2014); Corina Caduff, Fiona Siegenthaler, Tan Wälchh (editors), *Art and Artistic Research* (Zurich: Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess AG, 2010). See also Ute Meta Bauer, Florian Dombois, Claudia Mareis, and Michael Schwab (editors), *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research* (London, UK: Koenig Books, 2012); Michael Schwab (editor), *Experimental Systems: Future Knowledge in Artistic Research* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013); Janneke Wesseling (editor), *See it Again, Say it Again: The Artist as Researcher* (Valiz; Amsterdam: Antennae, 2011); Brad Buckley and John Conomos (editors), *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: The Artist, the PhD, and the Academy* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 2009).

²⁵⁷ Michael Schwab, “A Future History,” in *Social Medium: Artists Writing, 2000 – 2015* (edited by Jennifer Liese (Brooklyn: Paper Monument, 2016), 309–311. “A Future History” is excerpted from Schwab’s essay, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place,” in *Intellectual Birdhouse: Artistic Practice as Research*, 229–248.

impossibility”: due to its having “no essence, identity, or purpose,” the Commission “[finds] no evidence that artistic research has any epistemological significance.”²⁵⁸ Further, in interviewing more than 1,300 artists, the Commission will summarize “that a large majority [of artists] (namely 82 percent) were either ‘aware’ or ‘very aware’ of the impossibility of ‘artistic research’ at the same time as believing this impossibility to be the driving factor of their work.”²⁵⁹ Appendix A to the *Report* will state:

Despite its epistemological impossibility, “artistic research” as it is carried out today radically challenges the concepts of knowledge upon which our public order is based. It attempts to create pockets in which this order is suspended, and claims that in such suspension lies not only the future of artistic research but also the future of our society. Although far from being contagious, artistic research has to be considered virulent and revolutionary.²⁶⁰

In parsing the institutional conceptions of “arts research,” and making productive contact with the idea of possible outcomes, philosopher Mark Johnson underscores the importance of artistic production as an activity of knowledge. He proposes that “the value of an artwork lies in the ways it shows the meaning of experience and imaginatively explores how the world is and might be – primarily in a qualitative fashion.”²⁶¹ Artistic practice is therefore an embodied address that encourages us toward new and anticipatory strategies for action. Further, arts practice offers the capacity to, in the words of Emily Eliza Scott, “[bridge] disparate disciplines as well as academic and non-academic, art and

²⁵⁸ Schwab, “A Future History,” 310.

²⁵⁹ Schwab, “A Future History,” 311.

²⁶⁰ Schwab, “A Future History,” 311. The use of “contagious” and “virulent” in this future Appendix A has additional new meaning in our present, and offers a productive new image of thought for two charged words.

²⁶¹ Mark Johnson, “Embodied Knowing Through Art,” in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, edited by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 141–151. Johnson frames his engagement with the thinking of John Dewey. As Johnson relates, Dewey emphasizes “knowing as an activity of thought in the service of constructive change in the quality and character of our experiences,” 146. Johnson reiterates this function by insisting that “art can be just as much a form of inquiry as is mathematics or the empirical sciences,” 149.

non-art arenas.”²⁶² Pertaining to this project, arts research specifically offers expanded latitudes for thinking toward possible futures.²⁶³

This thesis fulfills requirements for completion of the adapted project-based stream offered by the Department of Visual Arts. The research is tested and expanded through a series of publication-focused projects, discussed in the final section of this paper: “Premonition: Dog in Swimming Pool; Suggestion: Archival Intuition.” The production of collaborative artists’ publications, their distribution, and associated public events are positioned as both research methods and research outputs. Where research outputs are generally focused toward the dissemination of discovered data, research methods imply ongoing strategies for collecting information and carrying out experimentation. I apply the descriptor “performative” to the methods implemented here. “Performative” cites a discussion with David Maroto about his practice-based doctoral program, which involved commissioning the production of an artist’s novel as a research method.²⁶⁴ Maroto’s ongoing research is resonant terrain for this doctoral project. Artists’ publishing demonstrates simultaneously lively *and* decelerative qualities. Maroto locates the decelerative qualities of artists’ novels in how they intervene in institutional exhibition spaces—spaces prioritize art experiences that can be consumed quickly. Artists’ publishing is often discussed in terms of its potential for lo-fi, accessible, and therefore accelerated movement. As Maria Fusco indicates, artists’ publishing also operates on the

²⁶² Emily Eliza Scott, “Artists’ Platforms for New Ecologies,” *Third Text*, Vol 27 (2013). <http://www.thirdtext.org/artists-platforms-for-new-ecologies-arc>.

²⁶³ For examples, see: Emily Keenlyside, “‘What We need to Future Ourselves For’: Professional Learning Among Freelance Gallery Educators in Scotland Through the First Wave of the Coronavirus Pandemic,” *Museum Education* 46.4 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2021.1982195>, which looks to freelance gallery practices for potential institutional models that can navigate “intersecting pandemics”; Kathryn Yusoff and Jennifer Gabrys, “Climate Change and the Imagination,” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews – Climate Change*, 2.4 (2011): 516-534, which incorporates “the modalities of climate futures” to develop “adaptive strategies”; Rasa Šmite and Lev Manovich, *Data Drift: Archiving Media and Data Art in the 21st Century* (Riga, Latvia: RIXC, The Centre for New Media Culture, 2015), an anticipatory address of web archaeology published in partnership with the *Renewable Futures* conference (2015).

²⁶⁴ My conversation with Maroto took place in Rotterdam, 26 March 2019. Maroto is one half of *The Book Lovers*, an ongoing research project on artists’ novels with Joanna Zielińska. See *Artist Novels: The Book Lovers Publication*, edited by David Maroto and Joanna Zielińska (Berlin: Sternberg Press; Kraków: Cricoteka, 2015).

basis of “deceleration, ... dictated by and [owing] its efficiency to the shared responsibilities of its contributors, its editors and its publisher.”²⁶⁵

Card: the literary curator: Alongside artists’ publications, the research methods involved in this project include: assessment of artists’ publishing forms and case studies of artists’ publications; dialogues, conversations and interviews; workshops; curation of artists’ publications into interactive exhibitions; archival research and interventions; editing as practice; publishing as practice; distribution as a mode of research creation. Throughout this project, there are intersections and overlaps of publishing, editing, and curating. Hanna Kuusela’s recent formation of “the literary curator,” an emerging figure within the publishing sphere, provides a valuable focus for considering the stakes of these constellations. For Kuusela, the literary curator is less a “fixed and essentialized identity” and more “a dimension of action, a perspective, or a function” that introduces curatorial strategies into a literary field.²⁶⁶ She writes:

*literary curators are actors who mainly mediate, distribute, (re)present, publish, or exhibit in new contexts texts that have been produced by people other than themselves and who thereby create literary phenomena in the public. A literary curator takes over and fulfills many of the functions and tasks of the traditional publisher or editor in selecting, distributing, and promoting texts. In so doing, s/he puts weight on the act and moment of publishing, of making a text public, and highlights its constitutive role in the production of meanings.*²⁶⁷

As Kuusela stipulates, literary curatorial activity can be carried out on works that have already been produced by others (other authors, editors, or publishers). An important precursor for the literary curator strangely missing from Kuusela’s description is found in the theoretical and political formations of the artist publisher as described by Ulises

²⁶⁵ Maria Fusco, “Notes on three happy hypocrites,” in *Again, A Time Machine: from distribution to archive*, edited by Gavin Overall and Jane Rolo (London: Book Works, 2012), 146.

²⁶⁶ Hanna Kuusela, “Publisher, Promoter, and Genius: The Rise of Curatorial Ethos in Contemporary Literature,” in *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, 119-120. Though emphasizing literary scholarship, the disciplinary identity of Kuusela’s literary curator is flexible: the mode of working she outlines may be taken up by a writer just as easily as by a visual artist. This malleability in terms of identity is emphasized throughout Gilbert’s edited volume.

²⁶⁷ Kuusela, “Publisher, Promoter, and Genius, 119.

Carrión. For Carrión, the production of bookworks—of any artist’s publication—encompasses an array of “cultural strategies” requiring the bookwork artist to also be publisher, promoter, distributor, curator, archivist, mail correspondent, shopkeeper, etc.²⁶⁸ When brought into contact with Kuusela’s description of a curatorial activity that “takes over,” ethical questions of function—whether in promotion, distribution, intellectual property, even ownership—must be addressed. Kuusela herself identifies a potential dilemma, or conflict, for authors whose works are subsumed by a curator’s impulse: “the praxis of curating is also, or above all, an act of reterritorialization, i.e. an act of designing a new power.”²⁶⁹ Beyond signposting this difficulty, however, Kuusela does not offer concrete suggestions for navigating it.

Assessing artists’ books in the midst of their “second wind” in 1977, Lucy Lippard is adamant that the medium “reflects no outside opinions and thus permits artists to circumvent the commercial gallery system as well as to avoid misrepresentation by critics and other middlepeople.”²⁷⁰ But as Maria Fusco queries, “Who owns this knowledge once it has been published?”²⁷¹ Engaging with ontological questions of what artists’ publishing and distribution currently entail, including in relation to curation, my project foregrounds the impossibility of outlining one singular *publishing practice*. Instead, a limitless series of pliable, overlapping, and potentially tense praxes are proposed.²⁷² Nonetheless, and with Kuusela’s literary curator in mind, the methods employed here foreground collaboration within these activities: in the research of them, in editing, in publishing, in distribution, and in curating. In other words, these methods are directed as

²⁶⁸ See Carrión, “Personal Worlds or Cultural Strategies?” in *Second Thoughts* (Amsterdam: Void Distributors, 1980), 51-55.

²⁶⁹ Kuusela, “Publisher, Promoter, and Genius,” 142.

²⁷⁰ Lippard, “The Artist’s Book Goes Public,” 45.

²⁷¹ Maria Fusco, “Notes on three happy hypocrites,” 142. Additionally, see Fusco on the critical gesture, “new limber analytical topologies,” and the “attempt to dis-author,” in “Middleword Two: The Critic as Gesture or John Malkovitch’s middle name is Gavin,” in *The Creative Critic: Writing as/about Practice*, edited by Katja Hilevaara and Emily Orley (London; New York: Routledge, 2018), 208.

²⁷² For publishing as a praxis, see Nick Thurston, “Publishing as a praxis of conceptualist reading performances,” *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 6.3 (2013): 421-429.

methods of care, relationality, and support rather than power (or genius), wherever possible.

Card: support. The word ‘support’ has become integral to my ongoing collaborative work, so much so that it is the name of a collaborative space of which I am a part. Support was founded in London, Ontario in 2017 by Liza Eurich, Graham Macaulay, Tegan Moore, and myself. As of 2023, it is a project space operating between London, ON and Montréal with Eurich, Moore and I. Support’s mandate is its definition: Support v. hold up, carry, prop up, keep up, reinforce; give assistance to, give comfort to, care for, suggest the truth of, advocate, to keep going: n. a thing bearing the weight of another thing; material assistance, maintenance, upkeep, sustenance.²⁷³ Part of Support’s project is to publish a small booklet with each exhibition called *Materials*. These publications are less didactic accompaniments to exhibitions and more invitations to collaborating artists to share their research, process materials, and references. At the time of writing, there are 19 Support projects and corresponding volumes of *Materials*. An important antecedent that informs the foregrounding of this approach to support is artist-run culture, particularly in how it emphasizes locality and localizing.

Card: regionalism. To ground and situate discourses of artists’ publishing, Chapter Two considers the desires, designs, and intentions (some accomplished, others left unfinished) of the London-based publisher Applegarth Follies (c. 1973 – 1975). Its outputs, including its experimental and collaborative approaches to arts and letters, have yet to receive proper scholarly attention. Chapter Three operates as a case study of Jim Miller’s incisive and self-published bookwork, *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal* (1990), which presents a pairing of separate but critically related and harrowing conflicts between Kellogg’s and one of its London, Ontario employees over the course of two decades. Prior to the publication of *Poison Pen*, Miller’s work was

²⁷³ See Liza Eurich, Graham Macaulay, Tegan Moore and Ruth Skinner, “SUPPORT: About,” <http://supportsupport.ca/about.html>.

initially incarnated as a series of exhibitions at Forest City Gallery and A Space, two prominent artist-run centres.

The decision to ground each chapter of this dissertation in a local perspective acknowledges how the Follies' editors emphasized "the importance of the region to the activities that take place there,"²⁷⁴ and a corresponding responsibility of attending to immediate histories at hand. From the art historical perspective, London is often recognized for two notable origins: as the birthplace of nineteenth-century painter Paul Peel, and as the epicentre of London Regionalism. Peel was well-travelled and among the first Canadian painters to receive international attention for his academic style. Half a century later, London Regionalism unabashedly refuted the notion that artists must move to centres like Toronto or New York for meaningful careers. Living in London through the duration of this graduate program has offered many opportunities to explore London's history, as well as work with and learn from established and emerging artists and arts spaces. As a result, my research approach integrates artistic creation, artist-run activity and arts administration, with attention consistently drawn toward community-building.²⁷⁵

As Nancy Poole thoroughly details in *The Art of London: 1830 – 1980*, "artist-run" culture was established in the city long before the 1960s.²⁷⁶ But a specific quality of artist-run culture was fostered during the 1960s and 1970s, at the height of London Regionalism, when a series of artists projects developed in direct opposition to London's Public Library and Art Museum. By remaining in, and focusing on, their immediate

²⁷⁴ Jill Robinson (then jill jamieson), Maclean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, "A Message from Joshua," *Applegarth's Folly* No.2 (1975), 6.

²⁷⁵ For an in-depth consideration of arts policy in Canada, including the contributions of artist-run culture to the manifestation and formation of arts policy, see Clive Robertson, *Policy Matters: Administrations of Art and Culture* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006), particularly Chapter 1, "Artist-run Culture: Locating a History of the Present," 1–25.

²⁷⁶ Locals, professional artists relocated from England, and itinerant artists (thanks to the Great Western Railway) operated within numerous arts associations, clubs, and arts classes from the city's incorporation in 1855. Prior to the First World War, creative communities orbited the Western Fair and the Women's Art Club. Between the Wars, London artists rallied for a city art gallery, receiving the London Library and Art Museum (1940) and the McIntosh Memorial Gallery (1942). Enthusiasm for decorative and craft arts were fostered by London's Sculptor's Guild and Potter's Guild, with the Potter's Guild still operating today. See Nancy Poole, *The Art of London: 1830 – 1980* (London, ON: McIntosh Gallery, 2017).

locales, a vibrant arts community informed the development of artist-run culture throughout the country. Christopher Régimbal describes how London Regionalism gave rise to “new cooperative structures ... [giving] form to a type of collectivism particular to London.”²⁷⁷ The movement simultaneously informed the development of artist-run culture and activism throughout the country. As Régimbal indicates, the particular character of London Regionalism shifted the national ecosystem of artist-driven culture and “contributed significantly to a reordering of the institutional landscape.”²⁷⁸ The success of alternative artist-run spaces like Region Gallery, 20/20 Gallery, Trajectory Gallery, Forest City Gallery and the Embassy Cultural House informed the governance models of other parallel spaces in the country.²⁷⁹

The Regionalist movement prioritized the creation of spaces and opportunities for artists to practice, exhibit, and converse with one another both locally and with artists from further afield. As the editors of the London-focused *Applegarth Follies* would profess, Regionalism was not without its exclusions and hierarchies (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two: “An Account of Applegarth Follies...”). It often overshadows London’s remarkable and diverse histories of artistic production, community-driven craft, arts organizing, and arts education. Similarly, names like Paul Peel, F. M. Bell-Smith, Patterson Ewan, Greg Curnoe, and Jack Chambers tend to dominate London’s narrative in Canada’s imagination. London is a community uniquely aware of, even haunted by, its own legacies. Yet the momentum that the Regionalist movement fostered within artist-run and DIY culture is still palpable. Pertinent to this dissertation is how London arts spaces—both those associated with Regionalism and otherwise—fostered prolific arts publishing endeavours, including James Reaney’s Alpha Centre and *Alphabet Magazine*,

²⁷⁷ Christopher Régimbal, “Institutions of Regionalism: Artist Collectivism in London, Ontario, 1960-1990,” *Fillip* 19 (Spring 2014). <https://fillip.ca/content/institutions-of-regionalism>.

²⁷⁸ Régimbal, “Institutions of Regionalism.”

²⁷⁹ See AA Bronson, René Blouin, Peggy Gale, and Glenn Lewis, eds., *From Sea to Shining Sea* (The Power Plant, Toronto, 1987); Barry Lord, “What London, Ontario Has That Everywhere Else Needs,” *Art in America* 57 (May 1969): 103-105; Poole, Chapter 9: “London Artists in the 1960s,” 179-201, Chapter 11: “The Gallery Versus the Library Board,” 239-258, and Chapter 12: “The Struggle for the New Gallery Continues,” 259-275 in *The Art of London: 1830 – 1980*.

20 Cents Magazine, Greg Curnoe's *Region* magazine, and the Embassy Cultural House *Tabloid*.²⁸⁰ Numerous parallel arts publishers operating in close physical and chronological proximity include the Follies, Ergo Productions, Pendas Productions, *HeartWar*, *adz magazine* and many early London fanzines like *Media 5*, *Fart Bunk*, and *What Wave*.²⁸¹ These publications manifest uniquely local lenses onto, and perspectives of, the region's arts and cultural scenes, and they established and maintained strong local and mail distribution networks.

Card: poetic reporting. George Bataille's *Inner Experience* presents modes for encounter outside of historicist knowledge formations, and his writing on victimhood, fortune, intensities, risk and sacrifice are necessary constellation points. "Critique of Dogmatic Servitude (And of Mysticism)" advocates for a "tenuous" line of "poetic apprehension," as it allows us to "appropriate that which surpasses us, and, without grasping it as a real possession, at least link it to ourselves, to what we have already touched."²⁸² His notion of formlessness is taken up by Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, who develop precursors, patterns, vocabularies and outputs that can meet these archives: "base materialism," "horizontality," "pulse," "entropy."²⁸³ Extending from formlessness, artist Jean-Paul Kelly cites Truman Capote's narrative non-fiction *In Cold Blood* as an example of "true stories told through poetic reporting."²⁸⁴ This reference

²⁸⁰ Forest City Gallery continues to publish, including its anthology series, *DIGEST* (see <https://www.forestcitygallery.com/digest>). During the COVID pandemic, ECH renewed operations as a virtual artists' community, including print and digital exhibition catalogues and the return of its *Tabloid* (<https://www.embassyculturalhouse.ca>).

²⁸¹ See Brian Lambert, "Zines," in *Graphic Underground: London 1977-1990* (London, ON: McIntosh Gallery, 2013), 179-220. See also Jason Dickson and Tom Baynes, *Michael Bidner: Raw* (London, ON: McIntosh Gallery; Halifax, N.S.: Saint Mary's University Art Gallery, 2018).

²⁸² George Bataille, *Inner Experience*, translated by Stuart Kendall (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), 11.

²⁸³ Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997).

²⁸⁴ Jean-Paul Kelly and Kelly Jazvac in discussion following Kelly's artist talk, "Art and the Ecology of Things," Art Now! speaker series, Western University, 26 October 2017.

point is in mind when he considers how much information to give the audience, and the corresponding “generosity” that is involved in choosing to “keep things untethered.”²⁸⁵

Curator Vicky Moufawad-Paul offers similar interests in the curation of her 2012 exhibition, *A Refusal of Images*. Enfolding Sontag’s writing on photographic violence, Moufawad-Paul positions works by Adam Broomberg + Oliver Chanarin and Rehab Nazzal to examine how mobile devices have changed perceptions of violence as it unfolds. The exhibition counters the immediacy of digital recordings with abstracted imagery of conflict from Afghanistan and Palestine. Unintentional “moments of abstraction,” writes Moufawad-Paul, are importantly informative as representational documentations: “they tell us about being blocked and they tell us about power in that moment. These kinds of abstract images communicate something that might circumvent a system of images that are often trapped in meaning and over-determined by our viewing habits.”²⁸⁶ Like Kelly, Moufawad-Paul cites a curatorial investment in leaving materials open for reinterpretation so new connections have the possibility to emerge. This strategy counters imagery of violence that is more readily trapped in meaning. Taken together, Kelly’s approach to poetic reporting disrupts “the illusion of consensus” (Sontag’s phrase) with what Moufawad-Paul calls “a détournement of the ways that we often see.”²⁸⁷

Card: (re)enactment. Enactment and “acting out” are therapeutic methods from psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Enactment may occur at a number of levels: an analyst may enact a previous experience rather than recount it verbally; an analyst (or therapist) may begin to “unwittingly intertwine personal issues into symbolic interactions with the

²⁸⁵ Jean-Paul Kelly, “Art and the Ecology of Things.”

²⁸⁶ As an example, Moufawad-Paul offers “the shaking camera aimed at the backs of others while the videographer flees from a tear gas attack.” See Vicky Moufawad-Paul, exhibition text for *The Refusal of Images* (Toronto: ASpace Gallery, 2012). Archived on Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin’s website, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56e1e3e24d088e6834d4fbf4/t/591c2b7b44024368be650d5c/1495018367045/ARTICLE+25+-+A+Refusal+Of+Images.pdf>.

²⁸⁷ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, NY: Picador; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 3; Moufawad-Paul, exhibition text for *Refusal of Images*. The détournement here cites the subverting strategies developed by the Letterist International, adopted and developed by the Situationist International.

patient,” leading to possibilities for assisting the analysand in working through an aspect; an analyst may, in a couples therapy situation, “recreate areas of conflict” to facilitate growth.²⁸⁸ “Acting out” refers to the behavior employed by an analysand when “[resisting] both memory recovery and transference.”²⁸⁹ Eric C. Bettelheim summarizes Freud and Josef Breuer’s development of the terms:

Historically a clear distinction between speech (talking) and behavior (acting), both symptomatic and occasional, was fundamental to psychotherapeutic theory and practice. The perceived efficacy of obtaining relief from psychic distress by the recovery and verbalization of unconscious or forgotten (repressed) material based on real, traumatic, often sexualized, events and its integration into an explicit personal narrative, was the foundation of psychoanalysis.²⁹⁰

Bettelheim explores the often misunderstood nature of both terms within psychoanalytic work, due in great part to Freud’s own shifting away from them toward “intra-psychic activity and phantasy.”²⁹¹

Ulises Carrión’s bookwork, *The Muxlows*, resonates with many of the cards presented here, but the book’s (re)enactment of a series of lives and deaths is its most potent feature. This slim volume was produced in 1978. As Carrión’s epigraph details: “‘The Muxlows’ is the history of an English family from Yorkshire. I found it in 1972, in the city of Leeds, in the last pages of a badly damaged bible.”²⁹² Carrión expands on his decision to work with this found material in conversation, emphasizing the work’s simultaneous collapsing and expansion of time:

²⁸⁸ “enactment,” American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology, 2019, <https://dictionary.apa.org/enactment>.

²⁸⁹ Eric C. Bettelheim, “Acting out and enactment: An effort at clarity,” *Neuropsychoanalysis* Vol. 24 No. 1 (2022): 71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15294145.2022.2053190>.

²⁹⁰ Bettelheim, “Acting out and enactment,” 71. Bettelheim cites Freud’s 1896 “The Aetiology of Hysteria,” his 1914 essay “On the history of the psychoanalytic movement,” and his 1893-95 essay co-authored with Breuer, “Studies on Hysteria.”

²⁹¹ Bettelheim, “Acting out and enactment,” 71.

²⁹² Ulises Carrión, *The Muxlows* (Dusseldorf: Verlag Galerie Leaman, 1978), unpaginated.

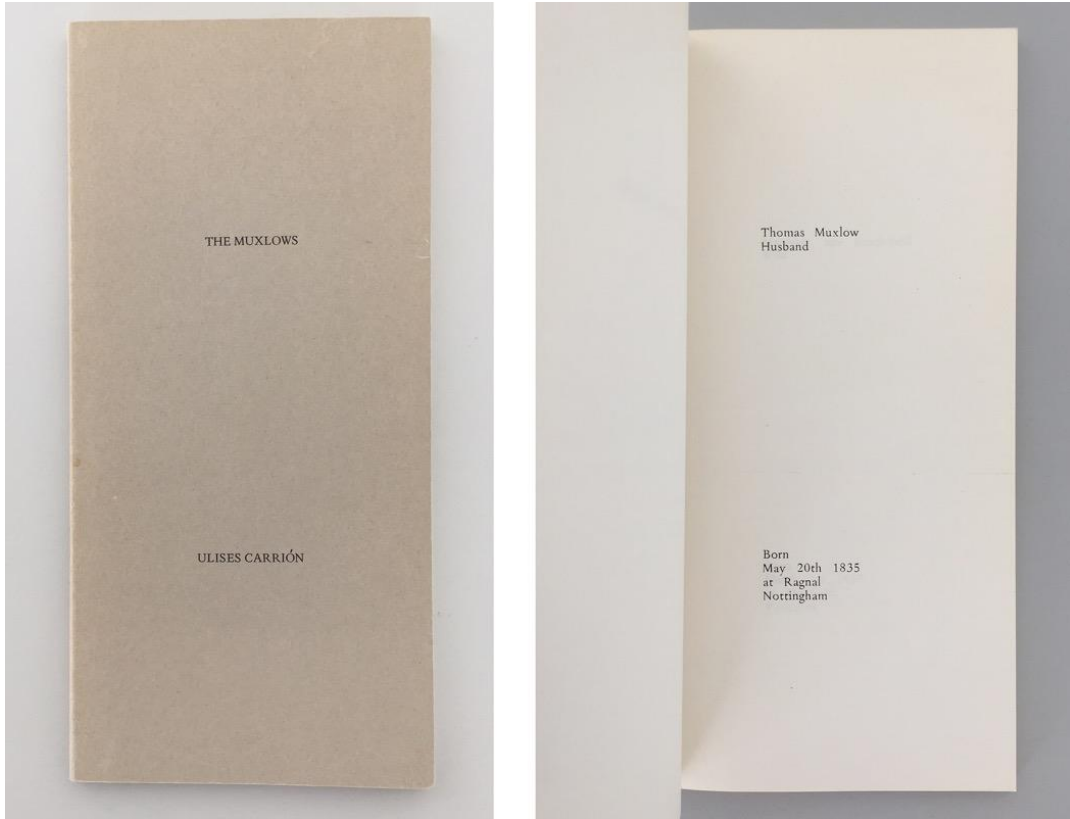


Figure 5. Ulises Carrión, *The Muxlows* (Dusseldorf: Verlag Galerie Leaman, 1978), unpaginated. Image courtesy of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

It attracted me because of its concise, sequential structure. The list of names, dates and places, divided in 5 sections: Parents, Children, Marriages, Deaths and Other Events, does not lend itself to lyricism. However, when one reads names, dates and places one after another, these become interchangeable: individuality, space and time, united in one single flow of words, one single flow of sounds.²⁹³

The sections of the bookwork are divided into “Parents Names,” “Childrens Names,” “Marriages,” “Deaths,” “Other Family Events,” and “Addenda.” The era of this familial genealogy spans from 1835, when Thomas Muxlow is born, to 1960, when Elsie Barton dies. Where the sections “Parents Names,” “Childrens Names,” “Marriages” and “Deaths” are comprehensive in their listing of births and deaths, the section “Other

²⁹³ Schraenen, *Ulises Carrión: “We have won! Haven’t we?”* 45.

Family Events” presents incomplete information—it is assumed that those partial genealogical notes are scribbled into the Bible but never completed: Muxlow members with only birth or death names, or names given with brief notes of affiliation (“George Thomas, son of Elsie Barton, born May 29th 1902”). In Carrión’s work, individual family members are given their own pages, and every page in the book is either blank or quite sparse in detail, listing only names, associated dates, and locations (see Figure 5). A large negative space lingers between an individual’s name and the date and location of their birth, marriage, or death. As the reader thumbs through the pages and their sequential events, this negative space refuses to enact all the life that we would expect such a book to provide. In this deft artistic and editorial decision, Carrión works with the evidence he has been given. In laying out this evidence across numerous and sparse pages, he activates it differently: it both emphasizes and withholds all that is entailed in a family’s lived history. The withholding of so many details is both an enactment of that evidence and also a refusal of enactment. *The Muxlows* effects a poetic abstraction of the family’s many lives and deaths, provoking an unexpected affective access for the book’s reader.

Abstraction and propulsion are central to French philosopher and art historian Georges Didi-Huberman’s extensive work on the photographic image, as well as Didi-Huberman’s explorations of Aby Warburg’s *Mneomysyne Atlas*. Didi-Huberman’s exhibitions (*Atlas*, followed by *New Ghost Stories* with photo-based artist Arno Gisinger) address “the ghostly destinies of images” and their multiple future lives.²⁹⁴ Warburg’s *Atlas*, and Didi-Huberman and Gisinger’s *Atlas* projects, operate not unlike the card deck, with myriad outcomes for inducing endless interpretation. Both are participatory zones for perpetual (re)enactment and “recomposition”—prompts to emphasize the “experience [of] our present through the combined movements, the montages of our memories (gestures we make toward the past) and those of our desires (gestures we make toward the future).”²⁹⁵ Anticipating the concerns of Kelly and Moufawad-Paul, Didi-

²⁹⁴ Quotations from the exhibition description for Georges Didi-Huberman and Arno Gisinger, *Nouvelles histoires de fantômes [New Ghosts Stories]*, February – September 2014, provided on the website for the Palais de Tokyo: <http://www.palaisdetokyo.com/en/event/georges-didi-huberman-and-arno-gisinger>.

²⁹⁵ Didi-Huberman and Gisinger, *New Ghost Stories*.

Huberman's *Confronting Images* performs a disciplinary critique of art histories that de-emphasize the "underside" of representation in order to prioritize transparency, legibility, and rationality.²⁹⁶

Card: constellation. Informing Didi-Huberman and Gisinger's project is Benjamin's notion of the constellation. Discussed in Benjamin's "Epistemo-Critical Prologue," the constellation is a related and resonant idea-image that emphasizes movement and malleability as opposed to fixed narrative forms. Benjamin addresses the potency of constellation as a concept as follows: "Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars. ... Ideas are timeless constellations."²⁹⁷ As Kristina Mendicino writes, Benjamin's "Epistemo-Critical Prologue" represents "a fundamental break with the truth claims of the empirical sciences as well as those of any system of philosophy ... that would be based on conscious cognition."²⁹⁸ Amy Freier's doctoral dissertation, "Exhibiting Human Rights; Making the Means of Dignity Visible," proposes that Benjamin's constellation is a potent conceptual strategy for making human dignity visible through curation. Freier cites Benjamin's "cognate and nascent heuristic of constellation" as a means for developing a relational theorization of dignity. She presents Benjamin's aforementioned comparison, "ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars," as a prompt/challenge for de-emphasizing singular formations and for prioritizing relationally rather than sequentially in curatorial display.²⁹⁹

Card: resuscitation. Offering a useful formation for suspension, multidisciplinary collective Slavs and Tartars describe the act of collecting, constellating

²⁹⁶ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 112.

²⁹⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Epistemo-Critical Prologue," in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, translated by John Osborne (London, UK; New York, NY: Verso, 1998; 2003), 34.

²⁹⁸ Kristina Mendicino, "Before Truth: Walter Benjamin's 'Epistemo-Critical Prologue,'" in *Qui Parle* Vol. 26 No. 1 (2017), 19.

²⁹⁹ Amy Freier, "Exhibiting Human Rights; Making the Means of Dignity Visible" (2018), Doctoral Thesis, Western University Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository: 5486. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/5485/>. Freier discussed constellation in the public doctoral defense, Western University, 16 May 2018.

and reading out-of-print materials as both a political and future-thinking strategy of “revisitation” and “resuscitation”; in the words of Slavs and Tartars, this kind of resuscitation involves “putting one’s lips onto the subject matter, onto history, onto language, and breathing in and out of it,” and in the process pulling something from the ether back into the corporeal realm.³⁰⁰ This intimate embrace side-steps a sensual dynamic: “putting one’s lips onto another’s to revive him/her is different from placing one’s lips on someone else’s romantically, as in a kiss. It’s just as important to disrespect your sources as it is to respect them.”³⁰¹

Is it possible to resuscitate what was never present in the first place? In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff of the Vancouver-based artist-run centre Artspeak shared that they were spending time in their Archive and Special Collection Library in order to organize and re-assess “[how] our citational choices, methodological approaches, and the systems we employ work to uphold particular histories and practices while obscuring others.”³⁰² They invoke a “constellatory approach,” but are also wary of “[indulging] the impulse to recuperate what is not present or that which remains quiet within the archive.”³⁰³ Instead, the readers suggest that non-responsive or non-existing elements can “function as placeholders, or as a blueprint for different frameworks of support.”³⁰⁴

Card: sitting in state with the dead. Steyerl writes through a series of ethical and ontological questions involved when addressing the potentially dead. She presents new potentials for thinking through evidence related to trauma—that evidence may be images, bodies, spaces, texts, or memories. Steyerl unpacks what and who are impacted by evidence, and how evidence can be engaged and experienced with care. In

³⁰⁰ Slavs and Tartars quoted in Deena Chalabi, “Interview with Slavs and Tartars,” *Stages #1: Future City, Liverpool Biennial*. Accessed 25 November 2017. <http://www.biennial.com/journal/issue-1/interview-with-slavs-and-tatars->.

³⁰¹ Slavs and Tartars quoted in Deena Chalabi, “Interview with Slavs and Tartars.”

³⁰² “Summer in the Stacks,” Artspeak (press release), 8 July 2021. <https://artspeak.ca/summer-in-the-stacks/>

³⁰³ “Summer in the Stacks.”

³⁰⁴ “Summer in the Stacks.”

framing the encounter with missing people in relation to Schrödinger's cat, a thought experiment/image illustrating the quantum state of indeterminacy, Steyerl extends Barad's intra-activity and Fusco's inductive approach to art objects ("Say Who I Am / Or A Broad Private Wink"). For Steyerl, the fate of the cat demonstrates the power of observation (an "active procedure") to, literally, say what a thing is (alive or dead), creating a dilemma on the part of the observer.³⁰⁵ Steyerl uses cat-as-metaphor to examine "the state of missing itself": while the observer is caught between "the urge to both move on and keep hope alive," the missing person is located in "a paradoxical superposition" that undermines familiar conceptual tools.³⁰⁶ The political stakes of superposition are seen at play in jurisdictional loopholes that, without quantifiable evidence, keep potential victims, family members, and alleged perpetrators in "legal deadlock."³⁰⁷

Steyerl offers new avenues for thinking through authorized and unauthorized observance, the act of uncovering bodies, and the afterlives of unidentified remains (bodily and image-based). She poetically articulates a desire for a state of superposition in which a missing person is still "not potentially, but actually. Paradoxically alive," and "a state beyond any statehood."³⁰⁸ An array of poor images (photographs, destroyed negatives, scans, bone fragments) express their potencies in their conditions of disintegration. Poor images are evocative entry points for undermining institutional forensic evidence. Further, Steyerl enjambes theories of witnessing with materialist approaches to history.

As Agacinski notes, Benjamin also combined his passions for images, history and poetic thought into a methodology that propelled "[travel] between the world of the living and

³⁰⁵ Steyerl, "Missing People," 140.

³⁰⁶ Steyerl, "Missing People," 140.

³⁰⁷ Steyerl, "Missing People," 141.

³⁰⁸ Steyerl, "Missing People," 153. "In which we could hear their voices, touch their breathing skin. In which they would be living things outside the registers of identity, pure language, and the utter overwhelming of senses; things superimposing on ourselves as things. ... we would no longer be separate entities but things locked in indeterminate interaction—material extimacy, or matter in embrace."

the world of the dead.”³⁰⁹ Poor images can be parsed with—and complicated by—Blanchot’s discussion of the indexical and affective power of the image as (un)decaying cadaver³¹⁰ and Deleuze-Spinoza’s discussion of two matricides to discern-differentiate between an act, the image of an act, and the intention of an act.³¹¹ These formations collapse subject-object relations in varied ways—and not altogether comfortably—but they jointly emphasise the necessity to, in the words of Barad, attend to our “accountability to marks on bodies, and responsibility to the entanglements of which we are a part.”³¹²

Card: trauma. When working with materials related, or even constellating, trauma (particularly the traumas of others), acknowledging and addressing the potential to do harm is of utmost theoretical and ethical significance. During the panel discussion of “Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet: Contemporary Art,” artist Gita Hashemi and curator Wanda Nanibush discussed working with traumatic histories.³¹³ Agreeing that recitation is not enough (as it risks repeating or re-enacting the initial wound), they mutually suggested that productive encounters are those that engage people in embodied ways to release trauma and foster processes of healing. Nanibush suggested that trauma itself could be considered a source of knowledge—“a process of knowledge making in a different form”—as the notion encourages a conceptual shift in conversations away from reflex-apology.³¹⁴ Nanibush also offered a valent point about the timely stakes involved when

³⁰⁹ Agacinski, *Time Passing*, 52.

³¹⁰ Maurice Blanchot, “Two Versions of the Imaginary,” in *The Space of Literature*, translated by Ann Smock (Lincoln, UK: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 254-263.

³¹¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, translated by Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 35-36.

³¹² Karen Barad, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, “‘Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers’: Interview with Karen Barad,” *New materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, 2012. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/ohp.11515701.0001.001>.

³¹³ Jamelie Hassan, Gita Hashemi, Mani Mazinani, Wanda Nanibush, Venetia Porter, Jovanna Scorsone, Swapnaa Tamhane, Rinaldo Walcott, Symposium: “Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet: Contemporary Art,” Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, ON, 5 March 2017.

³¹⁴ Hassan et al., “Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet: Contemporary Art.”

engaging traumatic knowledge: “the present is also always the future, the notion of what is not picked up, and all the possible futures. This means there is a need-obligation for artists, curators, institutions to pick up productive aspects of the past that can result in liberated futures.”³¹⁵

Card: reading. In *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Deleuze opens Spinoza’s philosophy to new relations with ethics, imagination, creativity, ecology, the written text and its transmissions. In introducing the book, translator Robert Hurley proposes that poetry offers the most meaningful engagement with *Spinoza*—here, as a strategy enacted-improvised on the part of the reader. Hurley suggests an “attitude” of reading “like the way one attends to poetry”: “one doesn’t have to follow every proposition, make every connection—the intuitive or affective reading may be more practical anyway.”³¹⁶ Much scholarship on artists’ books builds—directly or indirectly—on Marshall McLuhan’s positioning the medium (text, book, website, card deck) as a networked technology that shapes our psyche and informs how we perceive our being-in-the-world. McLuhan cites Leibnitz’s seventeenth-century discomfort towards increasing and unwieldy quantities of printed books and their “indefinite multitude of authors”; yet in spite of this, Leibnitz suggests that a good work (if fleetingly popular) might “have the effect of a useful conversation, not simply pleasing and keeping the idle out of mischief but helping to shape the mind and language.”³¹⁷ McLuhan contextualizes, indicating that in this moment the book form had not yet merged with larger engines of culture, which operated primarily on oral discourse and teaching. Via Leibnitz, the book’s potential is described in terms of a lively experience, mutually enacted between reader and work.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ Hassan et al., “Rebel, Jester, Mystic, Poet: Contemporary Art.”

³¹⁶ Robert Hurley, “Introduction,” Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, translated by Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988), iii.

³¹⁷ Writes McLuhan, “the illusion of segregation of knowledge had become possible by the isolation of the visual sense by means of alphabet and typography. ... This illusion may have been a good or a bad thing. But there can only be disaster arising from unawareness of the causalities and effects inherent in our own technologies,” in *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 254.

³¹⁸ McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, 254.

Carrión's aphorisms for the bookwork intersect with McLuhan here. The bookwork is "not a case of words, nor a bag of words, nor a bearer of words," but a collection of concepts devised with intention by an artist, and "a sequence of spaces" to be encountered and enacted by/with/through the reader.³¹⁹ McLuhan's formation of medium-shaping-message is potentially reflexive.³²⁰ Or, in the words of Fusco "the reader shapes the writing."³²¹ This logic follows Roland Barthes' 1967 "The Death of the Author," and Foucault's 1969 "What is an Author?"³²² Both texts address the ideological functions, formations and limitations of the author figure in relation to work and reader. Foucault identifies the productive potential of a modernist rift "where the writing subject endlessly disappears," and—through a series of questions—simultaneously gestures towards vacuums left by both the death of the author and the transcendental, seemingly unified yet "equally problematic nature of the word 'work.'"³²³ Foucault suggests that authorless formations can similarly "arrest the possibility of genuine change."³²⁴ Though he is never mentioned by name, it is difficult to not insert Barthes (his life, death, and the trajectory of his posthumous outputs) into Foucault's discussion of the author figure. Following Fusco following McLuhan, Carrión, Barthes, Foucault and others, the productive and mutual nature of art writing requires a "catoptric approach of being reader and writer at the same time."³²⁵ Barad similarly emphasises reading and writing to be intra-active "ethical practices" and advocates, here via diffractive movements, for a "commitment to reading with care."³²⁶

³¹⁹ Carrión, "The New Art of Making Books," 7.

³²⁰ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz quoted in *Gutenberg Galaxy* 254.

³²¹ Fusco, "Say Who I Am," 145.

³²² Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," originally published in the experimental art magazine *Aspen* no.5—6, 1967. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Donald Preziosi, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 299-314.

³²³ Foucault, "What is an Author?" 302-303. Foucault's concept of *écriture* here indicates "writing as absence," or a failing kind of not-writing-writing.

³²⁴ Foucault, "What is an Author?" 301-302.

³²⁵ Fusco, "Say Who I Am or A Broad Private Wink," 43.

³²⁶ Barad, Dolphijn and van der Tuin, "Matter feels."

Card: the detective. “Care” can signify a detective-like attention to details. Deleuze writes of philosophy as “a very particular species of detective novel, in part a kind of science fiction,” whose concepts must themselves “encounter,” “intervene,” and shift in relation to their “local situations.”³²⁷ Surviving outlines indicate Benjamin’s own interest in—and intention to attempt—crime fiction.³²⁸ Fusco’s inductive mode of reasoning is founded on a relation with art that is primarily riddle-based, and she references Sherlock Holmes’ atypical approach to an investigative faculty which “[reasons] backwards.”³²⁹ Fusco values the question rather than the answer, lauds the necessity of “dispersive excursion” to write an object, but nonetheless demands alertness, tact, explication, sophistication, and detail in the production of a “full understanding.”³³⁰ Such a writing practice simultaneously enacts “metacritical” considerations of how/what/why writing about art is expected to perform, even as it reacts-responds to work.³³¹ But detective fiction presents as a creative interface, not an agenda (i.e., “good guy gets bad guy”). These multi-tasking practices present particularly potent potentials within institutional discourses where, as Barad asserts, “critique” operates less as a “deconstructive practice” and more a “destructive practice meant to dismiss, to turn aside, to put someone or something down—another scholar, another feminist, a discipline, an approach, et cetera.”³³²

³²⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, translated by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xx.

³²⁸ Sam Dolbear, Esther Leslie and Sebastian Truskolaski, “Introduction: Walter Benjamin and the Magnetic Play of Words,” in Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller*, xxiii.

³²⁹ Fusco, “Say Who I Am,” 75.

³³⁰ Fusco, “Say Who I Am,” 78, 75. “Full understanding” elicits a different experience than “complete understanding.”

³³¹ Maria Fusco, “How Hard It Is To Die: Towards Artists’ Novels,” in *Give Up Art* (Los Angeles; Vancouver: New Documents, 2017). 17.

³³² Barad’s full quote: “I am not interested in critique. In my opinion, critique is over-rated, over-emphasized, and over-utilized, to the detriment of feminism. . . . Critique is all too often not a deconstructive practice, that is, a practice of reading for the constitutive exclusions of those ideas we can not do without, but a destructive practice meant to dismiss, to turn aside, to put someone or something down—another scholar, another feminist, a discipline, an approach, et cetera,” in Barad, Dolphijn and van der Tuin “Matter feels,” 2012.

Card: forms and functions. Chapter One provides a brief discussion on ‘artist’s books’ and ‘bookworks’ as categories. “[A]rtists’ books are best defined as whatever isn’t anything else. . . . maybe artists’ books are a state of mind,” writes Lucy Lippard.³³³ Clive Phillpot takes a more concrete approach:

It is possible to take a purist view of the books authored or designed by artists, and, out of the welter of so-called artists’ books, to separate out such bookworks (artworks depended upon the structure of the book) from book objects (art objects which allude to the form of the book) and those books which just happen to be by artists and do not differ fundamentally from books by writers, scientists, gardeners, or philosophers. These distinctions will be useful if borne in mind, since many artists’ books are far from being artworks.³³⁴

First published in 1985, Phillpot’s attention to categorization remains valuable. He revisits these categories more conclusively in his 1998 work, *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists Books*.³³⁵ In 2003, invited to organize the exhibition *Outside of a Dog: Paperbacks and Other Books by Artists*, Phillpot reflects on “my obsession with categorization—or more generously, my obsession with understanding.”³³⁶ These categorizations do not necessarily foreground the reader experience, however. And despite, in 2003, professing his own knowledge base was becoming increasingly more historical than current,³³⁷ Phillpot’s established categorizations do not necessarily attend to questions of production, distribution or archive. Phillpot himself acknowledges this. He sets out in his 2003 exhibition project “to overcome the limitations of my own

³³³ Lippard, “Conspicuous Consumption: New Artists’ Books,” 56.

³³⁴ Clive Phillpot, “Some Contemporary Artists and their Books,” 106.

³³⁵ Cornelia Lauf and Clive Phillpot, *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists’ Books* (New York, NY: Distributed Art Publishers, 1998). In this collection, the categorization of “artists’ books” encompasses: “magazine issues and magazine works; assemblings and anthologies; writings, dairies, statements and manifestoes; visual poetry and wordworks; scores; documentation; reproductions and sketchbooks; albums and inventories; graphic works; comic books; illustrated books; page art, pageworks and mail art; and book art and bookworks,” 38.

³³⁶ Clive Phillpot, “Bookworks, Mongrels, Etcetera,” in *Outside of a Dog: Paperbacks and Other Books by Artists* (Newcastle: Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, 2003), 3. In this essay, Phillpot returns to his 1998 categories (provided in the previous note) and considers that “‘book art and bookworks’ might best be left out of this array.”

³³⁷ “My knowledge was getting stranded in time,” writes Phillpot in “Bookworks, Mongrels, Etcetera,” 1.

geography and experience, and incorporate other perspectives on the broad field of artist books.”³³⁸ These perspectives include “those representatives of the larger ecology of artist books ... publishers, booksellers, artists, collectors, and others with overlapping roles.”³³⁹

Considering the forms and functions of artists’ books or bookworks requires engaging theorists, art historians, artists, distributors and designers, bookshop keepers, librarians and archivists, and readers who focus on the operations of the book.³⁴⁰ Blanchot insists on the book as “still to be read, still to be written, always already written always already paralyzed by reading, ... the condition for every possibility of reading and writing.”³⁴¹ In *remembered rapture: the writer at work*, bell hooks writes to the totality of a book’s lifecycle.³⁴² hooks disassembles the politics and ethics of representation at play in mainstream publishing. Writing from both inside and outside the academy, she follows these two mutual trajectories: their inherence at the earliest moments of writing; their reciprocal impacts on hooks herself, whose outputs are academic, polemical, poetic and lyrical; their impacts on the audience; their counter-activities, which occur beyond any expectations of the writer or publisher.

Blanchot, uttering Mallarmé, addresses the “insane game of writing” by considering its function *with* the book.³⁴³ Citing Mallarmé’s rupturing of the book form, Blanchot

³³⁸ Phillipot, “Bookworks, Mongrels, Etcetera,” unpaginated.

³³⁹ Phillipot, “Bookworks, Mongrels, Etcetera,” unpaginated. It is worth noting that while *collectors* of artists’ books are listed among Phillipot’s collaborators, the general reader audience never quite gets a mention. Perhaps this is meant to be a given. Phillipot’s exhibition title references the Groucho Marx quote, “Outside of a dog a book is a man’s best friend. Inside of a dog it’s too dark to read,” and the exhibition publication includes a reproduction of Laurence Weiner’s *Catalogue #814*, which reads: “Written on the wind & read in the summer & read in the fall & read in the winter & read in the spring.”

³⁴⁰ Including (but not limited to) Maurice Blanchot, Ulises Carrión, Lucy Lippard, Joan Lyons, and Clive Phillipot, Joanna Drucker, Amaranth Borsuk, Sarah Greenough, Patricia Di Bellow and Shamoon Zamir, Gwen Allen, Sophie Calle, Roderick Cave, Rob Perrée, Richard Hollis, Slavs and Tartars, Ruth Ewan, Bruce Barber, Jutta Koether and Victor Burgin.

³⁴¹ Blanchot, “Absence,” 471.

³⁴² bell hooks, *remembered rapture: the writer at work* (New York: Holt, 1999).

³⁴³ Blanchot, “Absence,” 473.

suggests that writing via book enacts a transformation within writing itself. Initially an “operation,” writing becomes “worklessness set loose”: “writing is the absence of the work as it *produces itself* through the work and throughout the work.”³⁴⁴ This riddlic encounter echoes Carrión’s later aphorism of the interplay between words and book form, with the book more than a ‘bearer’ of words or a ‘bag’ of words. Blanchot positions (propositions) the book to be both conduit and void. And to be successful in this enterprise requires enabling the book to “detach itself, disengage itself as it scatters.”³⁴⁵ It is in the relation/confrontation—between the book’s initially perceived role as pseudonymous space (for carrying the author’s knowledge beyond the author) and its becoming-anonymous (via poetic expression)—that Blanchot identifies the potential for the book to foster “a center that is always off center.”³⁴⁶

Card: publishing. Maria Fusco writes: “Publishing, as this pressing desire to experiment in public may, if it is agile, cause disarray of discipline through a willingness to accept messiness as method.”³⁴⁷ There is a sureness in this publishing methodology, most especially because it always entails further working. Editor Annette Gilbert’s *Publishing as Artistic Practice* immediately fractures its title’s singular proposition into numerous potential aspects. This is immediately justified: any answer is not as simple as an artist ‘doing publishing,’ as this immediately delimits the conversation into a yes/no question. Gilbert offers a strong, openly incomplete project statement: “‘publishing as artistic practice’ spans a complete field of practices marked by countless patterns, interdependencies, and nested hierarchies,” and these will similarly correspond to/with countless questions on presence, time(liness), circulation, and agility.³⁴⁸ In bringing different vantages to bear on this subject (literary studies, publishing studies, art history,

³⁴⁴ Blanchot, “Absence,” 474.

³⁴⁵ Blanchot, “Absence,” 474.

³⁴⁶ Blanchot, “Absence,” 480.

³⁴⁷ Fusco, “Notes on three happy hypocrites,” 146.

³⁴⁸ Annette Gilbert, “Publishing as Artistic Practice,” in *Publishing as Artistic Practice*, edited by Annette Gilbert, translated by Shane Anderson (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 13.

art production, theories of readership, network theory), emphasis is directed to the productive spaces between/around disciplines and the porous spaces between artistic, editorial, curatorial, and publishing practices. Gilbert's collection also addresses the (after)life of work: in consideration of distribution and circulation methods towards the creation of publics and networks, both traditional and subversive modes of distribution are seen to be less oppositional than one might assume.

Card: plagiarism, misattribution, collaboration. Included among Carrión's original aphorisms is the belief that, "[p]lagiarism is the starting point of the creative activity in the new art."³⁴⁹ He updates this sentiment in the reissue of his text with the following marginal note: "It seems to me now that I'm giving here too much importance to plagiarism. The assertion sounds too dramatic as well. Probably I was over enthusiastic about my recent freedom for using other people's texts."³⁵⁰ It takes three sets of hands to carry out Eusapia's impressive sleight of hand. It takes three or four hands to account for Carrión's evocative stamped finger and knuckle constellations. In texts like "The New Art of Making Books," he voices the necessity for artists to take direct roles in the conceptualization and implementation of their projects—from thought into output, and further into paratext, distribution, associated programming, and discourse.³⁵¹ Questions of authorship and unacknowledged collaboration arise here, however, and they echo Carrión's own reassessment and critique of how he articulated his earlier, utopic project. Guy Schraenen recalls that Carrión himself would direct others in how to produce the visuals for his bookworks, stating: "He limited himself to giving strict instructions on a conceptual level. And because he viewed the concept as fundamental to

³⁴⁹ Carrión, "The New Art of Making Books," 18."

³⁵⁰ Carrión, "The New Art of Making Books," 18.

³⁵¹ In a 1981 interview, Carrión emphasizes the distinction between book and artist's book: "A traditional book is made by different people. One man is responsible for the entire production of an artist's book: for the content, for the form, for everything." This interview, *Van Boek tot Kunstenaarsboek*, 1981, is translated and reproduced in Schraenen, *Ulises Carrión: "We have won! Haven't we?"* 23.

the work he often omitted all mention of its producer.”³⁵² For Schraenen, the collaboration with these other artists accounts for the diversity across Carrión’s outputs. According to Schraenen, only Carrión’s name would appear on the works, if any name at all. Indeed, most of the bookworks by Carrion that I’ve encountered display his name prominently, as do many edited volumes and exhibition ephemera that he created in collaboration with others: *Sonnets* (1972); *amor, la palabra* (1973); *conjugations, love stories* (1973); *Looking For Poetry* (1973; 1996); *Tell me what sort of wallpaper your room has and I will tell you who you are* (1973; 1995); *Box Boxing Boxers* (1978); *The Muxlows* (1978); “Anonymous Quotations” (1979); *Cres: In Alphabetical Order* (1979); *Mirror Box* (1979); *T.V. Tonight Video* (1987); *Exclusive Groups* (1991); *Syllogisms* (1991).

Truman Capote’s landmark work *In Cold Blood* quotes Larry Hendricks, an English teacher, hopeful author and informer for Capote: “Most of my ideas for stories, I get them out of newspapers—you know?”³⁵³ Hendricks is a minor character orbiting the now infamous site of the Cutter family murder; he is also a fortuitous eyewitness who, familiar with the tropes of reportage, provides Capote with meticulous details that contribute toward his narrative’s foundation. *In Cold Blood* is lauded for its three-tiered story-telling, attending to victims, perpetrators, and the community who must witness and wrangle with the aftermath of a violent event. In the words of Andrew Hussey, Capote famously represents the entirety of the event “as a work of art rather than mere reportage.”³⁵⁴ A complex chain of communication, the Hendricks-Capote dynamic offers an unprecedented kind of plagiarism/misattribution/collaboration: an eye witness (Hendricks) informed by years of reading other eye witness reports (newspapers) informs an author (Capote), who enacts and expands the position of reporter in order to create a

³⁵² “Ulises Carrión’s oeuvre displays little visual unity of style because he generally entrusted its production to other people.” See Schraenen, *Ulises Carrión: “We have won! Haven’t we?”* 45.

³⁵³ Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965; 1993), 61.

³⁵⁴ Andrew Hussey, “Written in cold blood,” *New Statesman* Vol. 149 No. 5507 (2020): 47.

non-fiction novel (art) that becomes one of the most notable, and emulated, true-crime works.³⁵⁵

Card: lacuna. Jean-Paul Kelly considered Capote’s *In Cold Blood* when he weighed how much information to give the audience in his own photographic series, *Rags*. In the aftermath of the 2004 Madrid train bombings, sheets were held up by first responders to protect victims’ bodies from being imaged by photographers. *Rags* uses the sheet as a visual prompt, suspended by one or two hands and taking up the bulk of the image plane. The series addresses how the documentarian might ethically record traumatic moments in modes that are also politically and aesthetically effective. For Kelly, the sheet “blocks our view of the grotesque scene and respects the rights of the dead, but it also creates something that cannot be seen—a blank spot.”³⁵⁶ He describes this lacuna—and how it prohibits the capacity to image a scene of disaster—as “the real site of the trauma.”³⁵⁷ From the viewer’s vantage, Kelly is invested in a corresponding “generosity,” which manifests in his decision to “keep things untethered.”³⁵⁸

“Lacuna” is mentioned a number of times in a conversation between Eyal Weizman of Forensic Architecture, Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin. It appears numerous times in relation to the operations of state violence: they note the “structured, built-in lacuna” that exists within “the field of the visible,” and this enables “the loss of the figure, or the human” as such violent state operations are carried out; they also highlight “the lacunae

³⁵⁵ See Andrew Hussey, “Written in cold blood”; See also Shulamit Almog, “Representations of Law and the Nonfiction Novel: Capote’s *In Cold Blood* Revisited,” *International Journal for the Semeiotics of Law / Revue internationale de sémiotique juridique* Vol. 25 No. 3 (2012): 355-368; Courtney Baker, “The Grift of Death?: The Ethics of Murder Narratives,” *Parallax* Vol. 22 No. 1 (2016): 51-65; David S. Caudill, “Legal Fictions: David S. Caudill discusses *In Cold Blood*, the new Capote movies and their significance for legal ethics,” *Meanjin* Vol. 66 No. 3 (2007): 23, <https://meanjin.com.au/essays/legal-fictions/>; Peter Alan Lefevre, “Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* As Nonfiction Novel: A Reevaluation,” California State University, Long Beach, 1999. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 230797915.

³⁵⁶ Jean-Paul Kelly and Sarah Robayo Sheridan, “Jean-Paul Kelly’s *Rags* and *Shutters* series, both 2010: From an email interview with Sarah Robayo Sheridan, curator Mercer Union (Toronto).” On Kelly’s personal website: <http://www.jeanpaulkelly.com/>

³⁵⁷ Kelly and Robayo, “Email interview.”

³⁵⁸ Kelly and Robayo, “Email interview.”

in satellite surveillance,” a conspiracy practice that offsets its own insidious quality by underemphasizing the individuals who are targeted by surveillance.³⁵⁹ The lacuna is also recalibrated and incorporated into research methods employed by Forensic Architecture. It appears in their lexicon in relation to an entry for “Archaeology of the Present,” which quotes Gilles Deleuze to emphasize the power of the image:

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE PRESENT: “It is as if, speech having withdrawn from image to become founding act, the images for its part, raised the foundations of space, the ‘strata,’ those silent powers of before or after speech, before or after man. This visual image becomes *archaeological, stratigraphic, tectonic*. Not that we are taken back to prehistory (there is an archeology of the present), but to the deserted layers of our time which bury our phantoms; to the lacunae layers which we juxtaposed according to variable orientations and connections.” (Gilles Deleuze)³⁶⁰

The vast indexical potency of photography drives its institutional co-optation, but its myriad evidential and forensic qualities also provide avenues for resisting such co-optation. Ariella Azoulay considers the relationship between photograph, subject and spectator as one of political action, potential agency, and resistance. She believes conversations around photography have been directed, via Susan Sontag, towards a “grammar of the object.”³⁶¹ Her concept of the civil contract of photography is a “renegotiation” of the spectator, who is demanded to earn “the dialogical responsibility that comes with any civil contract worthy of the name.”³⁶² Encompassing important discussions of witnessing, violence, statelessness, power, political potential and photographic meaning, Azoulay’s approach to photographic use requires some parsing

³⁵⁹ Eyal Weizman, Heather Davis, Etienne Turpin, “Matters of Calculation: The Evidence of the Anthropocene,” in *Architecture in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Design, Deep Time, Science and Philosophy*, edited by Eyal Weizman (Michigan: University of Michigan Library, 2013). <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/12527215.0001.001/1:9/--architecture-in-the-anthropocene-encounters-among-design?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

³⁶⁰ Forensic Architecture and Shela Sheikh (eds.), *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin; London: Sternberg Press; Forensic Architecture, 2014), 743. The book is quoting Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II, The Time Image* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 234-5.

³⁶¹ Ariella Azoulay, “The Family of Man: A Visual Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” in *The Human Snapshot*, edited by Thomas Keenan and Tirdad Zolghadr (Feldmeilen; Annandale-on-Hudson; Berlin: LUMA Foundation; Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College; Sternberg Press, 2013), 16.

³⁶² Azoulay, “The Family of Man,” 16.

for its strict delineations of “agency.” We can return to Kelly, who cites Sontag’s belief that the documentary photographer establishes an “unearned relationship” of familiarity between their subject and the viewer.³⁶³ *Rags* shatters this idea, carrying out a refraction of the unearned relationships that are so often established in the wake of traumatic events and their subsequent images: between victim and perpetrator, between first responder and victim, between victim and photographer, between victim and photograph of victim, between observer and photograph of victim, between observer and imagined image of victim, and so on.

Card: true crime (extended). In *The Red Parts: Autobiography of a Trial*, Maggie Nelson writes through her own witnessing of the trial of her aunt Jane’s murderer. As a work of autotheory, Nelson interweaves this event, the decades of emotional unevenness and intergenerational trauma that followed Jane’s death, and her own reading of theory and philosophy. Nelson cites psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott on recovery: “Cure only comes if the patient reaches to the original state of breakdown, Winnicott wrote. Reaches *to*, not reaches: a crucial distinction. I have no idea how anyone makes it.”³⁶⁴ *The Red Parts* is a kind of sequel to Nelson’s earlier work *Jane: A Murder*, in which she contests with the life and unsolved murder of her aunt in 1969 (a few years before Nelson was born).³⁶⁵ *Jane* recounts how this trauma impacts Nelson’s family and Nelson’s own identity. She blends poetry, prose, philosophy, excerpts from Jane’s diaries, newspaper clippings and quotations from well-known true crime books.

Both *Jane* and *The Red Parts* are aware of their own functions within the paradigm of true crime—Nelson both works and wrestles with both the expectations of the genre and a deeply personal event by opening both to broader meditations on identity, girlhood, violence, grief and narrative. Her personal wrangling is frequently situated within the uncanny and atemporal experience of jurisdictional time—a system which attempts to

³⁶³ Kelly, “Art and the Ecology of Things.”

³⁶⁴ Maggie Nelson, *The Red Parts: Autobiography of a Trial* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2007), 88.

³⁶⁵ Maggie Nelson, *Jane: A Murder* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Soft Skull Press, 2005).

narrate, codify, and resolve trauma with institutional and moral justice. Nelson systematically addresses and exposes the philosophical dictums that have informed justice, literature, theory and psychology, true crime and even self-help, revealing their everyday deficiency. Quoting Bataille in *The Red Parts*, Nelson surmises: “*In essence, the domain of eroticism is the domain of violence, of violation ... I doubt if he had in mind a sweaty old white guy in suburban Michigan churning up [sedatives] to knock out and then sexually abuse his exchange student.*”³⁶⁶ As the book progresses, it is apparent that Nelson’s family can have no true “closure,” regardless of the trial’s outcome.

Nelson’s paired works embrace the impossibility of accessing someone through the act of writing. Nelson considers the impacts that writing *Jane* has had on her, her family, public perception of her Aunt’s murder, and even the subsequent police investigation throughout *The Red Parts*. She moves herself through the quiet uncanniness of living with “circumstances that would always remain unknown, unknowable.”³⁶⁷ Writing through a responsibility/compulsion to witness and record the trial of her aunt’s murderer, Nelson crafts an ambiguous overlay of meditations on grief, news media and television drama, fact and fiction, reality and representation, gut feelings, misdirection, obsession, and shame. She enacts valuable questions of language, writing, reading, and autobiography.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Nelson, *The Red Parts*, 140.

³⁶⁷ Nelson, *The Red Parts*, 81.

³⁶⁸ In the attempt to encompass the irrevocable shifts that death causes the ego, Nelson’s work makes contact with Barthes’ *Mourning Diary*. Written in the wake of his mother’s death, the diary maintains the fragmented and notational structure it was originally written in. This is due in great part to the editing and annotation of Nathalie Léger and the translation of Barthes’ long-time collaborator Richard Howard—who are themselves working on material following the death of its author. Léger writes in the book’s introduction: “The reader is presented not with a book completed by its author, but the hypothesis of a book desired by him, which contributes to the elaboration of his œuvre and, as such, illuminates it” (ii). Addressing its form, Dwight Garner notes that *Mourning Diary* “feels like a first draft: it has repetitions, ambiguous passages and even (as Barthes admits) emotional banalities.” Garner’s assessment is not a criticism, and he emphasizes that “this book’s unvarnished quality is the source of its wrecking cumulative power.” He also emphasizes that the apparent centre of the work, Henriette Barthes, is a sleight of hand. Garner observes that “[i]t is hardly a portrait of his mother, about whom we learn little,” and is instead “a work of vigorous ego. What is revealed in the act of writing through a death? “Who knows?” Barthes writes on October 27, 1977, in the days immediately following his mother’s death, “Maybe something valuable in these notes?” Roland Barthes, *Mourning Diary: October 26, 1977-September 15, 1979*, edited and translated by Nathalie Léger and Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010). Dwight Garner,

The Red Parts offers an alternative to, and intervention on, both crime reporting and the operations of the true crime genre. Reporter Janet Malcolm's landmark work *The Journalist and the Murderer* both comments on and operates within this genre. Considering the popular schools of "New Journalism and the nonfiction novel," Malcolm begins with the insistence that all journalistic encounters with their subjects are already ethically compromised.³⁶⁹ She describes a parasitic relationship between the journalist and the subject, likening "the consenting subject of a piece of nonfiction writing" to "the credulous widow who wakes up one day to find the charming young man and all her savings gone."³⁷⁰ For Malcolm, there can be no ethical relationship in this dynamic. She extends this assessment to scathingly categorize the ways that journalists "justify their treachery": "The more pompous talk about freedom of speech and 'the public's right to know'; the least talented talk about Art; the seemliest murmur about earning a living."³⁷¹

Malcolm's book examines the interaction between nonfiction true crime author Joe McGinnis and convicted murderer Jeffrey R. MacDonald as McGinnis researched and wrote his bestseller, the 1983 book *Fatal Vision*. She paints a portrait of a parasitic McGinnis dubiously luring the newly imprisoned MacDonald into his confidence in order to gain the access needed to write a bestseller. From Malcolm's perspective, McGinnis repeatedly professes his belief in MacDonald's innocence to MacDonald, while simultaneously selling his publisher a book that will present MacDonald as a cruel and sadistic murderer. McGinnis has set himself up for a difficult task, as MacDonald offers

"Wallowing in Grief Over Maman," *The New York Times*, 14 October 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/15/books/15book.html>.

³⁶⁹ Janet Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer* (London, UK: Grant Publications, 1983; 1990; 1997), 71. The first sentence of Malcolm's work, frequently quoted, reads, "Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible," 3.

³⁷⁰ Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, 3.

³⁷¹ Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, 3.

no evidence of the sensational sociopathic traits that McGinnis describes. Malcolm holds these scandalous details be a fiction concocted by McGinnis to sell his book.

“MacDonald’s uninterestingness,” in Malcolm’s words, is a poor subject for a successful crime thriller.³⁷² Her case study considers the inevitable and harmful dynamic between reporter and subject, writ large. She quotes from Philip Roth’s experimental fiction, *The Counterlife*, in which its narrator novelist observes that “[p]eople don’t turn themselves over to writers as full-blown literary characters—generally they give you very little to go on and, after the impact of the initial impression, are barely any help at all.”³⁷³ The necessity of the journalist to create full characters of their subject entails a potent ethical dilemma.

The Journalist and the Murderer was first serialized in *The New Yorker* in 1989, before its publication as a complete manuscript in 1990. In the Afterward of her book, Malcolm’s initial assessment of the problematized relationship between author and subject reverberates backwards onto her own reportage work. MacDonald eventually sues McGuinness for fraud, claiming McGuinness had promised to write a book professing his innocence. Malcolm reflects on this juridical dynamic by considering her own libel suit brought against her by an earlier subject, psychoanalyst Jeffrey Masson. Masson is the focus of Malcolm’s serialized articles and 1984 book, *In the Freud Archives*. A former director of the Sigmund Freud Archives, Masson was fired from his position after “he became disillusioned with Freud’s theories and advanced his own theories about Freud.”³⁷⁴ Masson accused Malcolm of intentionally misquoting him from a series of interviews, and called these misquotes—Malcolm’s imagined, or fictionalized, evidence—defamatory. While the litigation was decided in Malcolm’s favour (the Court assessed that Malcolm’s alterations did not constitute “a material change in meaning”),

³⁷² Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, 71.

³⁷³ Philip Roth, *The Counterlife*, first published by New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1986. Quoted in Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, 71.

³⁷⁴ Judith Haydel, “Masson v. *New Yorker Magazine* (1991),” *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*, Middle Tennessee State University, 2009, <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/562/masson-v-new-yorker-magazine>.

Judith Ann Haydel noted in her review of the litigation that “the issue of how far a journalist can go in deliberately altering a speaker’s words under the concept of narrative journalism without running afoul of the First Amendment remains controversial.”³⁷⁵

It is noteworthy that Malcolm herself introduces this situation by referring to Mason as “the main character of my book.”³⁷⁶ The permeable lines of Malcolm as journalist, narrator and part-time subject triangulates with McGuinness as journalist, narrator and subject, as well as with MacDonald and Masson as subjects and narrators in their own rights. All lines and boundaries here begin to blur. Malcolm views an essential dilation between literature and reportage, fiction and nonfiction. She suggests that the categorial separation between them is less concrete than we imagine—a series of complexities that are, in her own personal situation, further heightened by the machinations of the legal system.

Being sued by a person who inhabits the pages of a book you have written is not, after all, the same as being sued by someone who exists only in life. You know your adversary more intimately than you know most merely real people—not only because you have had occasion to study him more closely than one studies the people one does not write about, but because you have put a great deal of yourself into him. ‘*Madame Bovary, c’est moi,*’ Flaubert said of his famous character. The characters of nonfiction, no less than those of fiction, derive from the writer’s most idiosyncratic desires and deepest anxieties; they are what the writer wishes he was and worries that he is. *Masson, c’est moi.*³⁷⁷

Malcolm’s work reveals a zone where reported fact and fiction become too intertwined to unravel. They also reveal a troubling formation/distinction between “merely real people” and “character in my book.” Reportage, informed by narrative desire and its operations, inflates or distends fact for the writer’s (and publisher’s, and reader’s) own machinations.

Not unlike her work with/about(ish) Masson, Malcolm’s reportage of the McGinnis and MacDonald dynamic came under scrutiny for deliberate omissions and egregious errors.

³⁷⁵ Hydel, “*Masson v. New Yorker Magazine* (1991),” with a quote from Justice Anthony M. Kennedy.

³⁷⁶ Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, 148.

³⁷⁷ Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, 148.

Yet the premise of her study has irrevocably shaped how popular media perceives both the crime journalist and the desiring impulses that drive true crime authors. In thinking through true crime's tenuous and potentially re-traumatising potentials, *Globe and Mail* reporter Jana Pruden cites the ethical back-and-forth between Malcom and her subject, McGinnis, as a formative influence on her own two decades in crime journalism.³⁷⁸ Pruden repeatedly observes that the genre's tropes and expectations are so engrained in public consciousness that her sources often (consciously and unconsciously) play into particular dynamics. The journalist is often a first-hand witness to these responses, as well as to instances of institutional abuse or neglect, and must take these factors into consideration.

Pruden is among a body of investigative journalists who are intent on shifting focus and narrative framing of traumatic events in the public discourse. They seek to redirect attention away from crime reportage and true crime's eroticisms and violences (to follow Nelson following Bataille) and towards revealing systemic social, political and judicial failures. Throughout an extended interview with Canadaland's Omar Mouallem, Pruden nods to the influence of popular genre works that are "quick and dirty," and contrasts them with works that, in her view, project a particular aspect of responsible story telling: Norman Mailer's *The Executioner's Song*, works by David Grann and Skip Hollandsworth, and Tanya Talaga's *Seven Fallen Feathers: Racism, Death and Hard Truths in a Northern City*.³⁷⁹ For example, Anishinaabe journalist Talaga's *Seven Fallen Feathers* addresses the unsolved deaths of seven Indigenous youths in Thunder Bay. Talaga foregrounds the lives of each of the youths and their families. Their deaths are contextualized within an immediate environment of systemic social and educational neglect, as well as the longstanding legacies of the residential school system.³⁸⁰ Talaga's primary aim is to honour the seven high school students themselves, and seek out

³⁷⁸ Omar Mouallem and Jana Pruden, "The Misery Beat," Canadaland, 19 March 2018. <http://www.canadalandshow.com/podcast/the-misery-beat/>.

³⁷⁹ Omar Mouallem and Jana Pruden, "The Misery Beat."

³⁸⁰ Tanya Talaga, *Seven Fallen Feathers: Racism, Death and Hard Truths in a Northern City* (Toronto: Anansi, 2017).

solutions to systemic injustices that are, in her own words, “community-led” and “community-driven.”³⁸¹

In particular hands, Pruden believes true crime offers “the absolute extremes of human drama: the greatest—and by 'greatest' I mean largest, most profound—experiences that people can have in life.”³⁸² Media critic Omar Mouallem coined the phrase “slow crime reporting” to describe Pruden’s work.³⁸³ The prioritizing of slowness is at odds with the appetites of/for popular true crime, and enables there to be possibilities for mutual respect (for victims and victims’ families, as well as for accused and convicted). Slowness also opposes media machines that prioritize 24-hour news cycles while holding crime reporting in a secondary, seedier position to “more comfortable and respectable work.”³⁸⁴ Investigative journalists intent on shifting focus and narrative framing of traumatic events can redirect attention towards social, political and judicial failures. Nelson, Pruden, and Talaga operate within a network of alternatives to crime reporting that incorporate slowness, re-direction, literary and institutional critique. These ulterior moves are augmented in poetically driven works like Nelson’s, which collapse narrative structures, embracing ambiguity and experimental writing and image forms.

Further extending from these complexities, Michael Arntfield explores where narrative fiction has become so ingrained in the cultural imaginary as to relay onto juridical procedure and forensic method. His 2016 work, *Forensic Gothic: Criminal Investigative Procedure in Victorian Horror and Mystery*, opens with the anecdote that the forensic pioneer Edmond Locard’s one “required reading” for burgeoning students was Conan Doyle’s 1887 novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, in which Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson make

³⁸¹ H. G. Watson, “Why Tanya Talaga wrote *Seven Fallen Feathers*,” JSource, 22 September 2017, Accessed 21 March 2018.

³⁸² Omar Mouallem and Jana Pruden, “The Misery Beat.”

³⁸³ Omar Mouallem and Jana Pruden, “The Misery Beat.”

³⁸⁴ Omar Mouallem and Jana Pruden, “The Misery Beat.”

their first appearance.³⁸⁵ Inspired by the events of Doyle’s famous novel, Locard developed what is now known as Locard’s Exchange Principle—the belief that any criminal act will leave some trace behind. Arntfield calls Locard’s Exchange Principle “the maxim that would change the course of investigative expertise and the collection of evidence for time immemorial—a proposition that would help lay the foundation for what are now nearly universal adequacy standards across all criminal investigations and forensic practices.”³⁸⁶ He continues:

“Locard’s Principle,” as it is popularly known (Saferstein 2013, 8), prevails as the veritable gold standard of crime scene procedure and the collection and cataloguing of evidence and has served as both the evidentiary and Cartesian prime meridian from which innumerable other forms of forensic expertise—bloodstain patterning, collision reconstruction, ballistic matching—all stem. The principle at its core holds that where two objects come in contact in space and time, properties belonging to each of them will inevitably and irreversibly be exchanged. It is this exchange and the ensuing transfer of evidence which, properly recovered and identified, will bear “mute witness” as Locard describes. Thus, when a crime scene, perhaps like the vacant house depicted in *A Study in Scarlet*, is attended by police today, a series of events predictably unfolds which is now generally consistent across the Western world and which, via Locard’s Principle, returns us to Holmes’s amateur but tremendously influential methods first depicted in 1887.³⁸⁷

Arntfield considers Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes narratives, Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables*, Dickens’ *Bleak House*, Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Stoker’s *Dracula*, Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and other famous literary works to map relationships between narrative fiction and forensic fact. His compelling position is that the conventions and modes developed within these literary works “are now reflected in the precise movements of actual criminal investigators today.”³⁸⁸ In one instance, he proposes that Stoker’s *Dracula* introduced the public to the figure of the

³⁸⁵ Michael Arntfield, *Forensic Gothic: Criminal Investigative Procedure in Victorian Horror and Mystery* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1.

³⁸⁶ Arntfield, *Forensic Gothic*, 5.

³⁸⁷ Arntfield, *Forensic Gothic*, 5. Arntfield here cites Richard Saferstein, *Forensic Science: From the Crime Scene to the Crime Lab*, 2nd Edition (New York: Pearson, 2013), 8.

³⁸⁸ Arntfield, *Forensic Gothic*, 6.

“certifiable subject matter expert,” or expert witness, in the character of Professor Abraham Van Helsing.³⁸⁹

Arntfield’s project endeavours “to return criminology to its narrative origins.”³⁹⁰ He perceives an existing restriction to limiting the discipline of criminology to be only “a convenient adjunct of sociology,” and views methodological potential in a new discipline which he terms “literary criminology”: “a new (or perhaps renewed) paradigm for the study of the criminal mind, criminal investigation, and the confluence of criminals, victims, and the criminal justice system that builds on—rather than rejects—other disciplines and their respective methodologies.”³⁹¹ The prospect of escaping both methodological and disciplinary constraints to establish something “new” or “renewed” is an exciting one. Yet the constrictions and habits of any discipline—whether criminology, forensics, narrative fiction, or the perennial genre of true crime—are formidable.

Arntfield’s research is arguably interwoven with familiar aesthetic tropes of popular true crime: the hardened and troubled detective, the endangered or ruined female, the harrowing witness testimony, and the soulless perpetrator waiting to be apprehended. His 2015 true crime book, *Murder City*, examines the southern Ontario region from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. Arntfield positions London as the “serial killer capital of Canada.”³⁹² *Murder City*’s foundation is the personal archive of the late OPP Detective, Dennis Alsop. Arntfield, a former detective, interweaves research and testimony from Alsop’s documents with his own retelling of abductions and murders from an omniscient narrator position. Alsop’s archive, described by Arntfield as a “basement book of the dead,” is

³⁸⁹ Arntfield, *Forensic Gothic*, 110. This quotation is from Chapter 6 of Arntfield’s study, “*Dracula*: Criminal Paraphilia and Expert Witnesses.” Arntfield also introduces the notion that *Dracula* “is remarkably bold in terms of its being one of the first mass market publications to challenge Victorian sensibilities and introduce—if not by name then by description—the link between violence and criminal paraphilia,” the expression of sexual desires associated with dangerous behaviour. To return to Nelson’s autotheoretical encounter with Bataille, true crime is a zone in which “the domain of eroticism is the domain of violence, of violation.”

³⁹⁰ Arntfield, *Forensic Gothic*, 223.

³⁹¹ Arntfield, *Forensic Gothic*, 223.

³⁹² Paratext for Michael Arntfield, *Murder City: The Untold Story of Canada’s Serial Killer Capital, 1959-1984*. (Victoria, BC: FriesenPress, 2015).

likened to both an epistolary novel and a “time capsule” bringing Alsop and Arntfield together.³⁹³ *Murder City* enacts a hybrid (auto)biography of Alsop-Arntfield’s professional careers, with Arntfield carrying out a kind of automatic writing.³⁹⁴

In addition to *Murder City*, Arntfield has produced publications and projects addressing criminology, cold case research, and true crime. These range from the academic (books and articles, university student societies, databases, and corporate think tanks) to outputs grounded in entertainment (popular trade press books, several television series and performative workshops).³⁹⁵ A more recent output of Arntfield’s literary criminology discipline is the 2020 *Gothic Forensics* documentary series. Arntfield has partnered with London-based filmmaker Steve MacLeod, and the first episode of their docuseries is titled *Dracula: Sex Crimes & Expert Witness*. The trailer indicates the work will be a contemporary reimagining of the Dracula narrative “through the lens of criminology” in order to re-approach the expert witness figure.³⁹⁶ The visuals and trailer for Arntfield and MacLeod’s docuseries reproduce very familiar horror, thriller and true crime imagery: a swinging lightbulb in a dim room, multiple women sleeping unassumingly in their beds or walking alone while looking nervously over their shoulders, blue-tinged morgues, a

³⁹³ Arntfield, *Murder City*, 16.

³⁹⁴ “The box and its book of the dead unites Dennis and me across time and space as two men mutually consumed with the search for truth. I would be lying if I said that inheriting the box was not something of a cross to bear—one half curse, one half blessing. Knowledge is power, they say, but at the same time ignorance is also bliss. I guess you can’t have it both ways,” Arntfield, *Murder City*, 17.

³⁹⁵ In 2018, Arntfield offered a “Corporate Cold Case Training Program,” advertised with the tagline, “Building Your Workplace Through Detective Work.” The workshop’s leading question was, “What can a simulated cold case investigation tell you about your employees – and yourself?” Arntfield’s workshop offered an alternative to Escape Rooms for “both private and public sector innovators,” in which participants collaborated to solve real cold cases as a team building exercise. Possible workshop genres included “Unsolved: A Conventional Whodunnit Cold Case from the Past (Beginner/Novice)”, “Unidentified: A Jane/John Doe Body with a Name and Personal Story to be Discovered (Beginner/Novice)”, “Sudden Jeopardy: An Un-solved Case Goes From Cold to Red Hot Overnight; It’s Now a Race Against Time With an Assailant on the Loose (Intermediate),” and “Choose Your Own Investigation: Customized Cases & Outcomes for Specialized Groups (Advanced/Experienced).” See Michael Arntfield, “Cold Cases as Corporate Training,” Michael Arntfield | CRIMINOLOGIST, retrieved 13 March, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200426065117/http://coldcasecorporatetraining.mystrikingly.com>.

³⁹⁶ Steve MacLeod and Michael Arntfield, *Gothic Forensics - Dracula: Sex Crimes & Expert Witnesses (CINEMATIC TRAILER 2020)*, News Knowledge Media Inc. YouTube channel, 15 August 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIpCFqJ2T58>.

possessed child beneath a cross, a close-up of a hand wielding a bloody bat—all orchestrated to a spooky soundtrack of Satie’s *Gnossienne No.1* played on a music box. As with its predecessors, there is a clear entertainment factor at work in this facet of the literary criminology approach.

Criminology—even a literary criminology—cannot escape its own restricted and problematic echo chambers that easily. Nelson’s *Jane* and *The Red Parts*, which push to recalibrate the authorial experience, the reader experience, and the functions of the true crime genre with autotheoretical approaches, more closely reach “a new (or perhaps renewed) paradigm ... that builds on—rather than rejects—other disciplines and their respective methodologies.”³⁹⁷

Card: victim. “Victim Support,” a public advocacy concept fostered by social welfare reformer Margery Fry through the 1950s, was streamlined through the 1970s and burgeoned in the 1980s with a focus on “empowerment of individuals as ‘active citizens’” who could self-advocate in addition to receiving government support.³⁹⁸ Victimology encompasses the entirety of theoretical and statistical data on environments, personalities, interactions and outcomes that lead to and/or result from a crime being perpetrated against an individual or group.³⁹⁹ François Laruelle’s notion of a non-standard aesthetics offers a means for discerning both where victimology fails and where one might move instead. In parallel with “standard” aesthetic thought, victimology relies on the notion of sufficient data and sufficient philosophy—“sufficient” here entailing a dominant position (in relation to art, or in relation to victimhood). Laruelle proposes a counter-concept of photo-fiction and photographic thinking that demands “aesthetic

³⁹⁷ Arntfield, *Forensic Gothic*, 223.

³⁹⁸ Lorraine Wolhuter, Neil Olley and David Denham William, *Victimology: Victimisation and Victims’ Rights* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge-Cavendish, 2009), 1-2.

³⁹⁹ See Wolhuter, Olley and Denham William, *Victimology*, for histories and developments in victimology, juridical policies and practices. See also G. Doerner and Steven P. Lab, *Victimology* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2021).

insurrection.”⁴⁰⁰ In opposition to aesthetic thought modelled on fixed philosophical frameworks, non-standard aesthetics operate on the basis of “under-determination”: “vectors,” or “onto-vectorialization,” replace fixed categories or concepts, shifting aesthetics towards becoming-active and inducing an “artistic fiction” to enact a “reciprocal liberation of art and thought.”⁴⁰¹ Laurelle’s attention to non-standard, “pure and abstract thought” presents useful opportunities for counter- and meta-critique (both for aesthetics and for disciplines like victimology), refracting seemingly established parameters in necessary ways.⁴⁰²

Card: witness. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub address “crises of witnessing” in relation to psychoanalysis, literature, and art history.⁴⁰³ Citing their backgrounds in comparative literature and clinical studies, they emphasize a methodology of liveliness and unknowing that moves away from representational modes of knowledge. Their collaborative work, *Testimony*, considers our response when encountering “the shock of the unintelligible” and the subsequent drive toward interpreting the event.⁴⁰⁴ The authors begin by foregrounding those “questions that we do not know, that we do not yet possess as questions, but which nonetheless compellingly address us” in the wake of such instants.⁴⁰⁵ Their chapter studies consider texts, films and artworks produced after (and so “consequent to”) the Second World War.⁴⁰⁶ They identify the incalculable traumas from this event to be both “omnipresent” and “actively evolving.”⁴⁰⁷ Their framework

⁴⁰⁰ François Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction, a Non-Standard Aesthetics*, translated by Drew S. Burk (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press; Uivocal Publishing, 2012), 61. I am indebted to John Vanderheide for this connection.

⁴⁰¹ Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction*, 1-2.

⁴⁰² Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction*, 2.

⁴⁰³ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁴⁰⁴ Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, xx.

⁴⁰⁵ Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, xiii.

⁴⁰⁶ Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, xiv.

⁴⁰⁷ Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, xiv.

enacts mutually interdependent “contextualization of the text” and “textualization of the context”—a “shuttle movement” for opening up avenues to consider the production of work, the contexts in which work is produced, and how each informs and enacts upon the other.⁴⁰⁸ Through considerations of speech acts, secrets and confessions, Felman and Laub emphasize the need for theories of testimony that offset methodological habits which prioritize a fixing of experience.

Card: expert. Particular frameworks promise insight into a subject’s essence—historical, psychological, emotional, physical—via their photographed image. Robert Akeret’s 1973 *Photoanalysis* offers techniques for “hunting psychological treasures” via the image—reading what we can see in “smiles, hands, groupings, poses, [and] distances between people.”⁴⁰⁹ Akeret uses psychoanalysis, advertising, art history, medicine and criminology to develop a system of signifiers that may be applied to an array of photographic imagery: family albums or press photographs, portraits and snapshots of celebrities and politicians. In reconsidering Akeret’s book, Sarah Knelman emphasises its potential for carrying out an important self-diagnosis. Its “paradox,” she suggests, “is its own myopia,” which simultaneously highlights our corresponding impulse to see/read pictures (and guidebooks about pictures) in highly personalized terms: “if nothing else, it reminds us that we cannot separate our own fears and desires from what we choose to see.”⁴¹⁰ Or, citing Eudora Welty on William Eggleston’s *The Democratic Forest*: “this book’s our portrait. We must see that. We should be prepared to see the portrait as a candid one, taken in a flash of inspired insight, at the psychological moment.”⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁸ Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, xv.

⁴⁰⁹ Robert U. Akeret, *Photoanalysis: How to Interpret the Hidden Psychological Meaning of Personal and Public Photographs*, edited by Thomas Humber (New York: Peter H. Wyden, Inc., 1973), 9.

⁴¹⁰ Sarah Knelman, “The how-to manual for reading a photograph,” *Aperture* 226 (Spring 2017): 7.

⁴¹¹ Eudora Welty, “Introduction” in William Eggleston’s *The Democratic Forest* (New York et al: Doubleday, 1989), 14. Performing its own sliperiness, my copy of *Photoanalysis* has undergone a partial disappearing act. The book jacket is a neutral beige, on which the title printed in two colours: “Photo” in black and “analysis” in vibrant red. Decades of sun have drained the red pigment, so the spine now only relays the word “Photo.”

In *Faking Death*, Penny Cousineau-Levine applies psychoanalysis to demonstrate a distinctly “Canadian collective unconsciousness.”⁴¹² Cousineau-Levine conceptualizes two distinctly Canadian zones of reality—the “here and elsewhere”—as the photographic and psychic space where identity and meaning are made. While an insightful engagement with how a broad section of Canadian artists image their spaces and themselves, her work must be parsed for its necessary generality—as any work that aims for a “putative” Canadian identity, or a single “characteristic vision” in Canadian photography, would.⁴¹³ Martha Langford’s *Scissors, Paper, Stone* offers a valuable counterpoint to Cousineau-Levine’s text. Also focused on Canadian photo-based art, Langford’s interdisciplinary study enfolds different formations of memory (false memories, imagined memories, visual memory, observer memory, flashbulb memory, and Freud’s screen memory). She applies the titular game as a poetic technique for approaching representation in the murky terrains of imagination and forgetting. Pivoting attention from the artist and towards the encounter, Langford grounds her work in “spectatorial complicity.”⁴¹⁴ Her methodology engages the photograph less in terms of its objecthood, and more as a site for propelling/introspecting the viewer: “memory cannot be inscribed in a still photograph, it can only be felt as a mode of consciousness vying with the merely visible for mental ascendance, *for attention*. Moved by this force that the photograph has activated, the spectator moves into memory.”⁴¹⁵ Langford’s approach leans further away from the object than Fusco’s inductive method, implying less of a mutual encounter and something closer to a Rorschach test—a navigation of psychic space via the art object.

Catherine Clément’s *The Weary Sons of Freud* offers an evocative contradistinction to approaches that apply psychoanalytical theories to aesthetic analyses. An analysand herself, Clément scathingly addresses the practice, or compulsion, of applying diluted

⁴¹² Penny Cousineau-Levine, *Faking Death: Canadian Art Photography and the Canadian Imagination* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 7.

⁴¹³ Cousineau-Levine, *Faking Death*, 10.

⁴¹⁴ Martha Langford *Scissors, Paper, Stone: Expressions of Memory in Contemporary Photographic Art*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 9.

⁴¹⁵ Martha Langford *Scissors, Paper, Stone*, 9.

psychoanalytic thought to therapy, as well as to artistic and theoretical production. She confronts this weakened psychology with ethical, social and political demands, carried out in affective and potentially angry writing. Yet her anger reads differently from “destructive” and exclusionary modes of critique, denounced by Barad (see *Card: the detective*, above). Clément is committed to moving psychoanalysis away from its compulsive malfunctionings and towards productive modes for meaningful operation. Two case studies illustrate the inhibitive power of “economic rules and ideological assumptions” which dictate access to psychoanalytic training to a select few: in one case study emphasizing psychoanalysis’ perpetuation of systemic disparities (and tendencies toward over-looking), Clément demands to know why an insightful cleaning woman is not an acceptable candidate for psychoanalytic training.⁴¹⁶ Using metaphors of vampirism, witchcraft, hysteria and sorcery, and interweaving feminist critique with personal asides and self-analyses, she insists on a return to the source—Freud—with a fresh translation and a willingness to “rethink everything.”⁴¹⁷

Card: time. Juridical approaches to time are frequently critiqued for their insufficiency, and even harm, in relation to the interests of victims and justice. In the introduction to *Stealing Time: Migration, Temporalities and State Violence*, editors Monish Bhatia and Victoria Canning explore the fraught juridical administration of time in the interests of the state:

Time is history and it is the future, something we have watched over or wait to unfold. By all accounts, time in the every day is a simplistic notion that perhaps few of us stop to focus on. That is, until time becomes our ally or our enemy, something that we can control or lose all autonomy over. ... as decolonial scholars have addressed, [constructions of time by social scientists, physical scientists and theorists] may not draw us to understanding how certain forms of time are

⁴¹⁶ Catherine Clément, *The Weary Sons of Freud*, translated by Nicole Ball (London; Brooklyn Verso, 2015), 6.

⁴¹⁷ Clément, *The Weary Sons of Freud*, 82.

perforated by globalised inequalities, exclusions and racialized forms of injustice.⁴¹⁸

Judicial reform movements that center decolonial and victim-focused approaches underscore the necessity of thinking time differently.⁴¹⁹ In a recent and landmark legal settlement between the family of Henrietta Lacks and Thermo Fisher Scientific, a normative approach to juridical time was upended in order to assert the ongoing agency of Lacks. Lacks, a Black woman whose cancerous cervical cells were harvested without consent for medical research purposes from the then-segregated Johns Hopkins Hospital, died in 1951. Prior to her death, her cells fostered the immortal HeLa cell line, which continue to be incorporated into numerous scientific research studies. Johns Hopkins has acknowledged their mistreatment of Lacks in terms of medical consent, and has granted Lacks' family members an active role in deciding the use of their relative's cellular material.⁴²⁰ Lacks' family has sought financial compensation from the American medical supplier Thermo Fisher Scientific for the commercial sale of HeLa cells. In July 2023, Lacks' relatives settled with Thermo Fisher, which failed in arguing that the case should be dismissed under the statute of limitations. As reported by BBC News:

...lawyers for the Lacks family said that the limitation had not been reached because the cells are still being replicated.

"We believe that every time they regenerate or profit off of Henrietta Lacks' genetic materials [that it] starts the statute of limitations to accrue again," [civil rights lawyer Ben] Crump had argued.

⁴¹⁸ Monish Bhatia and Victoria Canning, "Contested Temporalities, Time and State Violence" in *Stealing Time: Migration, Temporalities and State Violence*, edited by Monish Bhatia and Victoria Canning (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), xv.

⁴¹⁹ For an accounting of how "narrative has emerged in the literature on sense- and meaning-making in the aftermath of trauma and grief," and how this focus disrupts standardized formations of time, see Antony Pemberton, Eva Mulder and Paula G. M. Aarten, "Stories of Injustice: Towards a Narrative Victimology," in *European Journal of Criminology* Vol. 16. No. 4 (2019): 393. The authors quote M. L. Crossley, "Narrative Psychology, Trauma and the Study of Self/Identity," in *Theory & Psychology* 10: 527–546: "our routine 'lived' sense of time and identity is one of implicit connection and coherence. This sense is severely disrupted in the face of trauma, which demonstrates a devastating capacity to 'unmake the world,'" quoted on 396.

⁴²⁰ Jo Ann Day, "The Legacy of Henrietta Lacks: Upholding the Highest Bioethical Standards," *Johns Hopkins Medicine*, undated, <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/henrietta-lacks/upholding-the-highest-bioethical-standards/>.

"Not only were the HeLa cells derived from Henrietta Lacks, the HeLa cells are Henrietta Lacks," he said.⁴²¹

The case was settled on what would have been Lacks' 103rd birthday.

⁴²¹ Max Matza, "Henrietta Lacks: Family of black woman whose cells were taken settle case," BBC News: US & Canada, 1 August 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-66376758>.

Chapter 2

2 An Account of Applegarth Follies and Other Mishaps; or, Regionalisms, Their Little Publishers, and Modest Critiques

2.1 Introduction: What London, Ontario has...

Artist-run culture encompasses the institutions, collectives, spaces, and programs that are organized and operated by artists for the support of artists. Terms like ‘precarity’ and ‘low-budget’ are familiar descriptors within artist-run endeavours, which can feel at times evergreen with various limiting factors related to resources, revenue, and burn-out. These terms can be pejorative, but they can also be emancipatory qualifiers for artist organizers. London, ON punk, artist and prolific zine-maker, or ‘zinester,’ Charles “Chaz” Vincent recalls his personal experience publishing in London through the 1980s, emphasizing the venture’s “law of diminishing returns” in terms of money, time, and emotional strife.⁴²² Vincent’s forbearers from the 1960s, editors of and contributors to the independent London arts publications *Alphabet*, *Region* and *20 Cents Magazine*, would also frankly discuss publishing challenges: low funds, low enthusiasm, little time, and differences of opinions. But those publishers and contributors, both in the 1960s or the 1980s, also professed the importance of producing printed matter in order to showcase and discuss their works with one another and the wider world. In the pre-digital era, independent publishing represented a vital social space for London artists to openly communicate, critique, celebrate and complain about their scenes.

There is a noteworthy gap in scholarship on London arts publishing of the early and mid 1970s. One rare resource is Skot Deeming’s “Searching for London: A History of the Small Town Zine Scene,” a valuable (albeit brief) survey of independent publishers in the

⁴²² See Charles Vincent, “*Mind Theatre*” in *Graphic Underground: London 1977-1990*, edited by Brian Lambert (London, ON: McIntosh Gallery, 2013), 202.

city that spans from 1947 to 2000.⁴²³ The absence of scholarly attention on this period of London publishing is all the more evident when we consider longstanding scholarly attention paid to Regionalist-affiliated outlets like *20 Cents*, as well as a surge in recent attention on underground and independent zine publishing in London during the *late* 1970s through the 1980s.⁴²⁴

The specific interest of this chapter is the publishing venture Applegarth Follies, which ran in the early 1970s, and for as long as *20 Cents* (five years). Applegarth Follies produced a significant output that has yet to receive its due attention. It operated at a vital juncture in London's publishing history, following the collapse of *20 Cents Magazine* and just prior to a vibrant burst of activity from the city's punk scene. Yet apart from Deeming's text, very little attention has been paid to Applegarth Follies. This thesis chapter attempts to map the activities of the Follies, and to contextualize its vital outputs in relation to gathered historical and anecdotal evidence from a number of Follies members, collaborators, and their audiences.

As will be seen, the map is an evocative image for the Follies editors, who modify its topographical function to assert a conceptual and chronological mapping of publishing activities in the region. Fittingly, Applegarth Follies demonstrates a number of important intersections across time, physical space, and conceptual space. Attuned to their forebears, Follies editors responded directly to London Regionalism and its rich legacy of arts outlets. Further, its ethos and outputs intersect with more recent publishing endeavours produced in and about London. This chapter explores how Applegarth Follies projects, and a series of projects within their immediate orbit, represent vibrant and urgent artifacts of publishing (see Chapter One, particularly the section "Publishing

⁴²³ Skot Deeming, "Searching for London: A History of the Small Town Zine Scene," *Broken Pencil* Issue 13 (Summer 2000), 17–22.

⁴²⁴ An important recent contribution to the history of London conceptual and punk art publishing in the 1970s and 1980s is Jason Dickson and Tom Baynes, *Michael Bidner: Raw*. This exhibition and its associated catalogue surveys Bidner's significant body of work, including mail art, xerography, printmaking, and magazine publishing, and it establishes his importance to the gay and punk art scenes. See also Brian Lambert's wonderful exhibition catalogue of punk and underground zines, posters and ephemera: *Graphic Underground: London 1977-1990*. Important independent publishing ventures *Alphabet*, *20 Cents* and *Brick* are briefly profiled in Brown and Dickson's *London: 150 Cultural Moments*.

Urgent Artifacts,” on this concept from publisher Paul Soulellis). Many Follies’ projects remain as evocative and socially astute in the present as they were at the time of their initial publication and distribution.

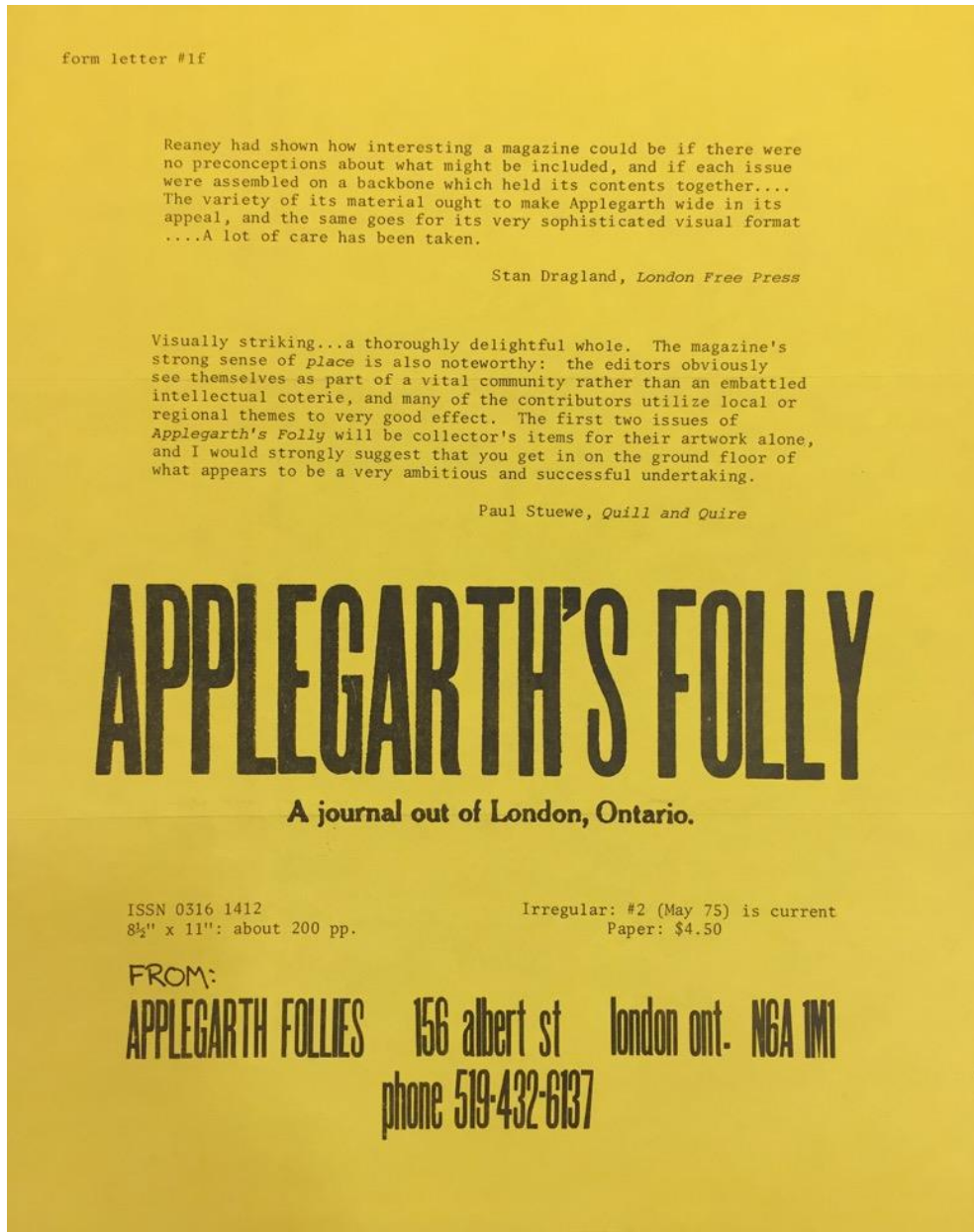


Figure 6. Undated promotional poster for *Applegarth's Folly* titled “form letter #1f,” in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5519, Art File 2. Image courtesy of Western University Archives.

2.2 Arts Publishing in London, Ontario between 1960-1977: An Overview

Poet and playwright James Reaney began *Alphabet: A Semiannual Devoted to the Iconography of the Imagination* in 1960. This arts and letters publication focused on the shape and form of language. Interested in modern and experimental writing forms, the magazine featured poetry, stories, art, essays, and reviews. Its contributors included Margaret Atwood, bpNichol, Al Purdy, Joy Kogawa, Jay Macpherson and Colleen Thibauddau, with Reaney editing and setting the type for each issue.⁴²⁵ *Region* and *20 Cents* are familiar titles within the history of London Regionalism. Intermittently published by Greg Curnoe between 1960 and 1991, *Region* was directly affiliated with the short-lived Region Gallery. Early issues of this magazine featured the works of London cultural heavyweights like Reaney and artist Murray Favro, who performed alongside Curnoe in the Nihilist Spasm Band. *Region's* community overlapped with the sizable editorial board and contributors listing for *20 Cents Magazine*. *20 Cents* began as a collaborative venture by Robin Carey Askew, Hugh McIntyre, Tony Penikett, Art Pratten and Victor Hoar in 1966 (McIntyre and Pratten were also members of the Nihilist Spasm Band). Curnoe was a frequent columnist *and* subject. *20 Cents* Contributors also included Favro, Reaney, John Boyle, Jack Chambers, Pat Dewdney, Roy McDonald, Michael Ondaatje, Tony Urquhart and Bernice Vincent. Editorial control of *20 Cents* was eventually handed to Robert and Linda McKenzie in 1969, who were siblings, and the magazine eventually folded in 1970. Reaney's *Alphabet* ended its ten-year run the following year.

At that time, a decade after Curnoe published his first issue of *Region*, London artists were beginning to look back on Regionalism's already significant history to decide how to locate themselves within it. Curator Pierre Théberge's National Gallery Exhibition, *The Heart of London*, had toured the country (including to London's Regional Art

⁴²⁵ See Vanessa Brown and Jason Dickson, "James Reaney Buys a Printing Press," *London: 150 Cultural Moments* (Windsor, Ontario: Biblioasis, 2017), 113.

Gallery in 1968).⁴²⁶ Though a broadly conservative city, London’s vibrant arts scenes of that period were propelled by alternative art and performance spaces that offered opportunities beyond those available through the London Public Library and Art Museum: following after Region Gallery, 20/20 Gallery and the Alpha Centre in the 1960s were Trajectory Gallery, Polyglot Gallery and Forest City Gallery in the early 1970s. Two new fine art programs had recently been established; one at the University of Western Ontario and the other at Fanshawe College (with a number of the London Regionalists on their teaching rosters). At that point, there were also numerous print shops and recording studios available to artists and musicians, and no shortage of studio spaces to generate collaboration. Local and independent publishing outputs continued to provide necessary platforms for Londoners to connect with each other and audiences further afield, and they also introduced content from beyond the region into the city. These publications created, fostered and affirmed numerous communities—arts, literary, punk, feminist, and queer.

Applegarth Follies, or simply “The Follies,” formally began in 1973 with Jill Robinson (then jill jamieson), Maclean (Mac) Jamieson and Hilary Neary (then Hilary Bates) as editors, and Michael Niederman as printer.⁴²⁷ After publishing a successful first issue of its little magazine, *Applegarth’s Folly*—and subsequently receiving “a flood of manuscripts” in response—the editors and Niederman expanded their mandate to include the production of experimental books.⁴²⁸ Even before its first publication, the Follies shared in a significant local legacy: through the initiative of Neary, they acquired James Reaney’s vertical platen Chandler and Price letterpress, which was used to publish the

⁴²⁶ Nancy Geddes Poole, “London Artists in the 1960s,” in *The Art of London*, 197.

⁴²⁷ On a Spring 1975 poster advertising forthcoming titles, Maclean Jamieson is named as Follies publisher, Jill Robinson as Follies editor, and Michael Niederman as Follies printer. Hilary Neary appears as co-editor (with Robinson, Jamieson and Niederman) of *Folly* #2. See Robinson, Jill (then jill jamieson), Maclean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, with Mike Niederman, “Spring 1975 Publications of Applegarth Follies,” in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5519, Art File 2, Western University Archives. Neary provides further context for her role: “We all began with great enthusiasm and many ideas, but I shortly thereafter moved to St. John’s to a position in the Memorial University Library, leaving Mac and Jill to launch the whole thing, and when I eventually returned to London, marriage, work and eventually children put Applegarth far down my list.” Email correspondence, 25 August 2019.

⁴²⁸ Email correspondence with Mike Niederman, 2 June 2022.

first issue of *Alphabet*.⁴²⁹ So astutely calibrated to London publishing lore, the Follies proceeded to produce an impressive output of works in its brief lifespan. This included two issues of *Applegarth's Folly*, collections of poetry, prose, an anthology by local comics artists, an ingenious historical calendar, print ephemera, and the first issue of *Brick: a journal of reviews*, collections.⁴³⁰ The Follies' printed outputs were relatively affordable despite their being of high quality. In a savvy business strategy, the first issue of *Applegarth's Folly* cost only \$2.00 despite being a skillfully printed and colourful 120 pages in length. The second issue also had a particularly low cover price of \$4.50.⁴³¹ These prices didn't cover production costs, but the editors were also using the journal "as a form of advertising for their books and as a testing ground for the popularity of authors."⁴³² An Applegarth Follies flyer advertised its capacity to produce prints in "all media" and "graphic multiples of any type."⁴³³ Keenly interested in fine art publication,

⁴²⁹ Neary had worked with Reaney as a Western student and learned to typeset on his Alphabet Press in 1967 as the printer and secretary of the Summer Theatre program, and she temporarily took on the design of *Alphabet* when Reaney took a sabbatical in Victoria. Printing of *Alphabet* was eventually shifted from London to the University of Toronto Press (email correspondence with Neary, 20 July 2022). Neary discusses the history of Reaney's Alphabet Press for Museum London curators Mike Baker and Kevin Zacher, including her purchase of it and other Alpha Center equipment from Reaney in 1971. The Alphabet Press briefly "had a life on Albert Street," the Follies' first location. Around 1975, Neary gifted the press to the Bibliographical Press at Western, where it operated as part of Jim Devereaux's Belial Press, housed within the Department of English and located in the basement of University College. Belial Press had been operating with a smaller Chandler & Price machine, and Reaney's larger Chandler & Price became integral to teaching students about "the transmission of text." See Hilary Neary, Mike Baker, Kevin Zacher, and Andrew Meyer, "Interview with Mrs. Hilary Neary," 17 March 2002, Museum London material culture files. Following the end of the Follies, publisher and literary critic Stan Dragland used Reaney's 12 pt. Baskerville type to set the text for the first Brick/Nairn publication: Colleen Thibaudeau's chapbook, *Ten Letters*. A poet and short story author, Thibaudeau was also married to Reaney. As Dragland recalls, "There was plenty of literary interconnection in London back then." See Stan Dragland and Mac Jamieson, "Remembering Applegarth Follies," in *Brick: A Literary Journal* Vol.89 (May 2012), <https://brickmag.com/remembering-applegarth-follies/>.

⁴³⁰ London poet, author, local character and self-described "professional conversationalist" Roy McDonald describes the literary and cultural impact and influence of the Follies numerous times in his memoir, *Living: A London Journal* (London, ON: Ergo Productions, 1978).

⁴³¹ "Low" might be debatable, as minimum wage in Ontario in 1974 was \$2/hour, \$2.25 starting in October. This was pointed out to me by Niederman in email correspondence, 2 June 2022.

⁴³² Bill Jory, "Raw material easy to find but not financial support," in *The London Free Press*, 6 September 1975, 51.

⁴³³ Robinson, Jill (then jill jamieson), Maclean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, with Mike Niederman, untitled and undated distribution letter, in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5519, Art File 2, Western University Archives.

the Follies produced reproductions and portfolios of original prints, including a limited run collection of 50 collages from the Polyglot Gallery. The Follies also programmed an array of events (readings, performances, and music shows) and ran two printshop spaces: the first at 156 Albert Street and the second, larger space at 144 York Street. In addition to their “over-the-counter” retail spaces, the Follies also touted a mailing list “[including] every major library in North America, and hundreds of stores and galleries on this continent and in Europe,” which enabled access to a broad wholesale distribution network for its potential collaborators.⁴³⁴

Applegarth Follies was an important early platform for such authors and artists as Robert Kroetsch, Herman Goodden, John Tyndall and Michael Hannay, Les Arnold, and Don McKay.⁴³⁵ Issue No. 2 of *Applegarth's Folly* included a significant and lively literary reviews section edited by Stan Dragland. Its success, and Dragland's enthusiasm, resulted in the Follies publishing the first stand-alone issue of *Brick: a journal of reviews* in 1977, with the intent to publish the journal “approximately three times yearly.”⁴³⁶ Dividing literary reviews from *Applegarth's Folly* and into the standalone *Brick* was a tactical strategy, enabling *Folly* to take a more artistic approach in its content.⁴³⁷ *Brick* was named for the white bricks so prominent in London architecture. Niederman's design of *Brick's* opening twin editorials by Dragland (“What is *Brick*?” and “Why Call It *Brick*?”) artfully intersperse “bricks” of Dragland's writing with lengthy quotational “bricks” from Christopher Dewdney, Margaret Avison, Alice Munro, Leonard Cohen, Rainer Maria Rilke, and others.

⁴³⁴ Despite this advertising campaign, Niederman clarifies that the “retail outlet” aspect could not reasonably be called a storefront space: “The Albert St. shop was in a side room in a former garage at the rear of the property back of the former Kingsmill house. The Richmond St. location was similarly out of the way at the back of the building.” Email correspondence, 2 June 2022.

⁴³⁵ Stan Dragland credits Applegarth Follies for publishing Robert Kroetsch's longform experimental poem, *The Ledger*, at a time when no one else would. See Dragland and Jamieson, “Remembering Applegarth Follies.”

⁴³⁶ Robinson, Jill (then jill jamieson), Maclean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, with Mike Niederman and Stan Dragland, promotional flyer: “Why is Brick,” in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5520, File: Book Layouts - Brick. Western University Archives.

⁴³⁷ Deeming, “Searching for London,” 20.

The brick is a running visual and conceptual theme from *Brick* No. 1. A photograph of a brick wall is integrated into the cover design, and an early *Brick* logo appears on the back cover and promotional material: a sideways B made of brick to effect the appearance of twin archways. Dragland describes “[taking] a dislike to those bricks, which seemed to weather so dirty. ... I wasn’t really taking to London either.”⁴³⁸ He credits James Reaney’s love of local history and ability to “really live any place where you live” for helping him to see London’s white bricks—and the city itself—afew.⁴³⁹ Dragland recounts accompanying Reaney on trips to the nearby, infamous Donnelly family homestead, and Reaney gifting him a photograph of the brick wall of Lucan’s Orange Hall. Lucan is a particular evocative sight in local history, as its residents suppressed or denied the 1880 killings of the Irish Catholic Donnelly family for years. *Brick* No. 1 is dedicated to Reaney. Dragland transposes the playwright’s capacity to “look closely, look hard” to the act of studying a brick wall in close-up. He likens this seeing—an intuitive experiencing far beyond simple observational attention—to reviewing:

You start to see the colours that disappear in the distance, pastels: green, pink, red, orange, brown. You notice the different textures: new brick, weathered brick, crumbling brick, painted brick, painted and peeling brick, arched windows bricked in, iron braces bracing brick. ... When you begin to notice the differences then you can move back and see that whole walls of what you used to call white brick, and dislike, are individual in colour mix and texture. The term doesn’t mean the same any more; the city is not quite the same place.⁴⁴⁰

Dragland’s editorial account is summarized with his chosen quote from Rilke (which appears in all issues of *Brick*): “Works of art are of an infinite loneliness and with nothing to be so little appreciated as with criticism. Only love can grasp and hold and fairly judge them.” Jean McKay was editing a second issue of *Brick* when the Follies folded in 1977. Following its sudden end (discussed in more detail below), Dragland and McKay initiated Brick/Nairn press, which eventually became Brick Books. They salvaged a

⁴³⁸ Stan Dragland, “Why Call it *Brick*?” in *Brick* No. 1 (1977): 6-7.

⁴³⁹ Dragland, “Why Call it *Brick*?” 6-7.

⁴⁴⁰ Dragland, “Why Call it *Brick*?” 7.

number of in-situ Applegarth projects along with *Brick*, which continues in the present as the internationally lauded biannual magazine *Brick: A Literary Journal*.⁴⁴¹

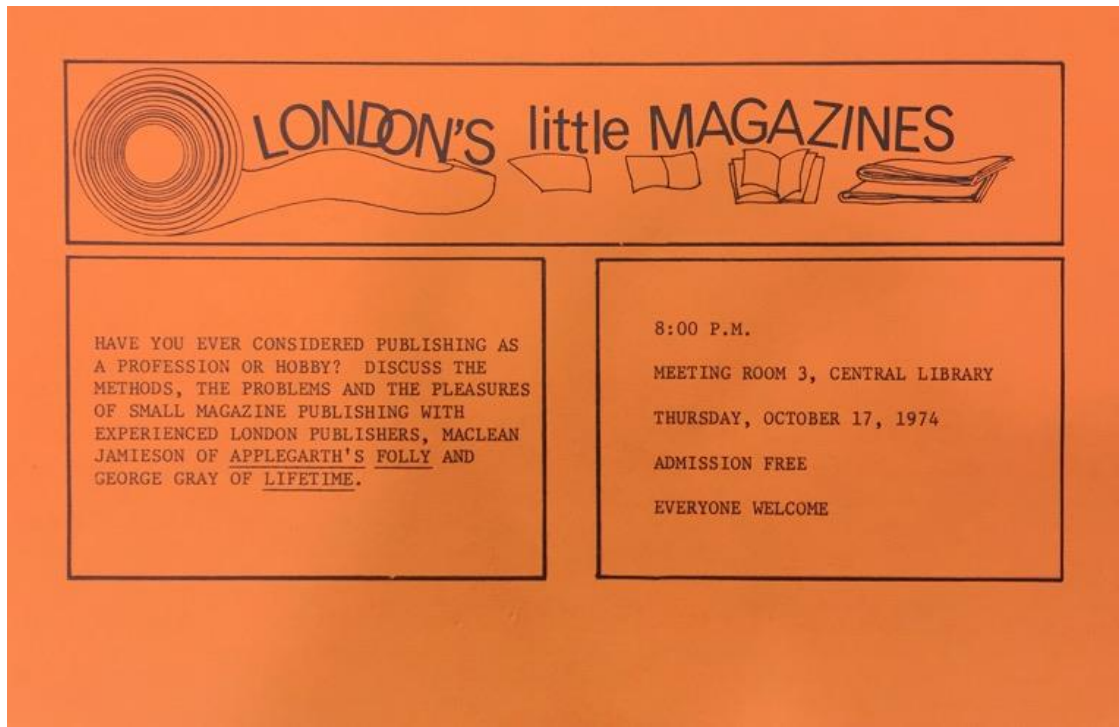


Figure 7. A poster advertisement for a public talk titled “London’s Little Magazines,” dated for 17 October 1974 at London’s Central Library. The public is invited to “Discuss the methods, the problems and the pleasures of small magazine publishing.” The two feature speakers are Maclean Jamieson of *Applegarth’s Folly* and George Gray of *Lifetime*. In the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5520. Image courtesy of Western University Archives.

⁴⁴¹ Dragland and Jamieson, “Remembering Applegarth Follies.” These essays were jointly published shortly after the death of Jamieson. Jamieson’s posthumous contribution is a previous and unrelated essay: the text does not go into detail about the Follies, and there is no discussion of its downfall. Instead, Jamieson recounts a correspondence with poet Margaret Avison while she was Writer in Residence at Western University. No insights from Niederman, Robinson or Neary are included in either essay.

2.3 *Applegarth's Folly*: Little Magazine of Regional Dreams

Following the preceding overview, let us trip back in time by a few steps. “Your estimate of any little magazine,” wrote Margaret Atwood for *Alphabet*, “will depend on what you think little magazines should be doing. Should they simply exist as open-ended receptacles for the work of whatever writers happen along, or should they be publishing the writers of a city or region? Should they be actively fostering a poetic or political ideology?”⁴⁴² From its very beginnings, *Applegarth Follies* was rooted in a regional perspective and, following Atwood, the editors leaned into *both* poetic and political ideologies. The byline for its 1975 catalogue indicated that the publisher was “dedicated to the realization of regional dreams.”⁴⁴³ The *Follies* took its name from Joshua Applegarth, the first recorded settler to London Township. Misjudging the planting of his hemp crop, Applegarth succumbed to financial ruin and left the region (this was his “folly,” in the minds of the editors).⁴⁴⁴ The first issue of the *Follies*’ own “little magazine,” *Applegarth's Folly*, begins with personalized editorials from Robinson, Jamieson and Neary, as well as Joshua Applegarth himself (cited as “the alter ego” of Robinson, Jamieson, and Neary).⁴⁴⁵ These editorials were followed by historian Daniel J. Brock’s essay, “Joshua Applegarth: An Example of Failure on Upper Canada’s Western Front.” The by-line for the first issue of *Applegarth's Folly* is simply, “A journal out of London, Ontario,” and the masthead includes the winking sub-title, “This Time: Apple Dumplings.” These are accompanied by a quote from the English poet and essayist

⁴⁴² Margaret Atwood, “Some Old, some New, some Boring, some Blew, and some Picture Books” in *Alphabet* No. 17 (December 1966): 61. Atwood believes that “all are useful functions.”

⁴⁴³ Robinson, Jill (then jill jamieson), Maclean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, with Mike Niederman, *1975 Catalogue for Applegarth Follies* (London: Applegarth Follies, 1975).

⁴⁴⁴ Historian Daniel J. Brock also notes that “the first town meeting of London, at which he was elected town clerk, was also held in Applegarth’s home.” See Daniel J. Brock, “Joshua Applegarth: An Example of Failure on Upper Canada’s Western Front,” *Applegarth's Folly* No. 1 (1973): 20. Brock has recently expanded this article in *The London and Middlesex Historian*, Vol. 29 (2021): 18-35. I am indebted to Neary for sharing this resource.

⁴⁴⁵ Jill Robinson (then jill jamieson), Maclean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, with Mike Niederman, “Acknowledgements,” *Applegarth's Folly* No. 1 (1973): 115.

Charles Lamb—“A man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple dumplings”—and an illustration of the Follies’ bitten apple logo.⁴⁴⁶

The Applegarth Follies’ editors cite London as being a productive working environment due to its “slow-paced lifestyle, which allows a person ‘to take one’s time deciding what one wants to do.’”⁴⁴⁷ But the creative and political atmospheres of London are by no means slow-paced at this time. “When I think back on the London scene of the sixties,” writes curator Pierre Théberge, “what strikes me most is how all the artists there were proud of where they lived and of the institutions they had created and ran.”⁴⁴⁸ In his visits to London through the 1960s and 1970s, Théberg witnessed shifts in the local scene—“Some artists left for Toronto or New York; others came to take their place”—but also attests to continuity in “the levels of energy” over those two decades.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁶ Masthead, *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 1 (1973): 1. The Follies’ apple logo was designed by David Maguire: a simple line drawing of an apple with a bite taken out of it. See “Acknowledgements,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 1 (1973): 115. The apple would sometimes house the sentence: “another fine product from applegarth follies” in a heavyset Garamond font. In other instances, the apple would house a product number for a title, indicating that the publishers considered their published outputs in immediate relation with one another. A mock-up for the cover of Don McKay’s *Long Sault* (1975) apple logo indicates number 8. Les Arnold and Rosemary Devries’ *Harry Paints the Wind* (1975) is number 10. See the Michael Niederman Fonds, Boxes 5519 and 5520, Western University Archives, scattered through numerous files.

⁴⁴⁷ Jill Robinson quoted in Bill Jory, “Raw material easy to find but not financial support,” 51.

⁴⁴⁸ Pierre Théberge, “London Recaptured,” *Canadian Literature* No. 152/153 (1997), 165.

⁴⁴⁹ Théberge, “London Recaptured,” 65.

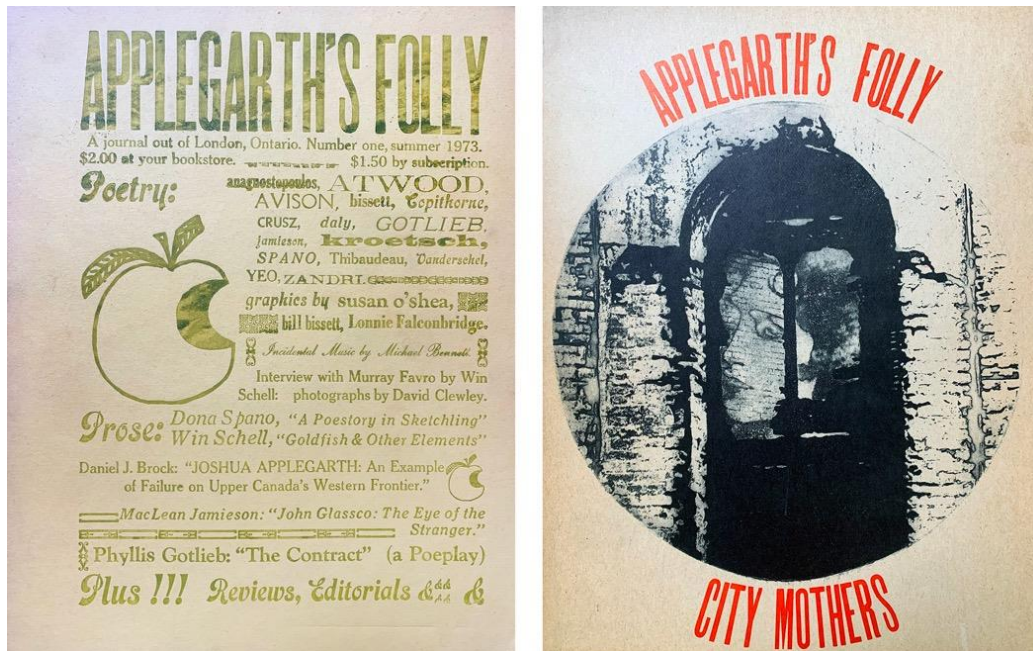


Figure 8. Covers of *Applegarth's Folly* No. 1 (1973), and *Applegarth's Folly* No. 2, "City Mothers" (1975). Image courtesy of Michael Niederman.

The first issue of *Folly* acknowledges "two great pioneers of regional theory: Greg Curnoe + James Reaney, who broke a lot of the trail we hope to pull our wagons over."⁴⁵⁰ *Alphabet's* influence is cited repeatedly in *Folly* No. 1 and 2, including its being "a solid foundation on which to build," and also as "the best little magazine to ever come out of Canada."⁴⁵¹ Curnoe's experimental *Region* magazine, published intermittently between 1961 and 1990 with contributions from his circle, would doubtlessly have been on the editors' minds. The "conversation pit" that was *20 Cents Magazine* (and featured Curnoe in numerous appearances) would also have been quite familiar to the Follies' editors.⁴⁵² Follies publications reflect an editorial investment in the region and the vibrant London Regionalism movement. They also indicate a deep-rooted awareness of the land and a strong political investment in how they feature local events and individuals both

⁴⁵⁰ Robinson et al., "Acknowledgements," 115.

⁴⁵¹ Robinson et al., "Acknowledgements," 115.

⁴⁵² Robert McKenzie, "20 Cents Editorial," *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 3 No. 9 (November 1969), 3.

within the arts and cultural sector and beyond. *Folly* No. 2 exclaims: “we need regional mysteries, speculative fictions, and adventures such as the old pulp magazines used to provide: something for everyone, including the creative artists of this country.”⁴⁵³

Yet this regional investment is also not a “fixation” of Applegarth Follies. This is contextualized by Robinson in *Folly* No. 1, who describes “[working] through something in order to get beyond it.”⁴⁵⁴ The editors collectively repeat this language in *Folly* No. 2: “you have to be clear about what you are before you can get beyond it.”⁴⁵⁵ Neary acknowledges the uniqueness of London as a site with “a sense of place to it, a consciousness of self which not all other towns, cities which we have known possess.”⁴⁵⁶ She is also frank in acknowledging a less romanticized version of the city—as well as those “fine people who have bitterly shaken off the dust of London from their feet, never to return.”⁴⁵⁷ Neary’s editorial ends by explaining that, even though the Follies’ “main purpose is an inquiry into a sense of place,” its editors nonetheless assert that “[t]he various ways in which ‘regional dreams’ and the ‘various logos of London Ontario’ can be investigated are endless.”⁴⁵⁸

To explain their perspectives on regionalism, the Follies editors offer the following: “we view most good literature as strongly regional in character, whether it can be traced to a region in Brazil, a valley in south Germany, an area of Japan.”⁴⁵⁹ Editorials and acknowledgements in *Folly* No. 1 detail the editors’ intersecting poetic and political

⁴⁵³ Jill Robinson (then jill jamieson), Maclean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, “A Message from Joshua,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 2 (1975): 6.

⁴⁵⁴ Jill Robinson (then jill jamieson), “Editorial: jill,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 1 (1973): 5.

⁴⁵⁵ Robinson et al., “A Message from Joshua,” 6.

⁴⁵⁶ Hilary Neary (then Hilary Bates), “Editorial: Hilary,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 1 (1973): 8.

⁴⁵⁷ Neary, “Editorial: Hilary,” 8.

⁴⁵⁸ Neary, “Editorial: Hilary,” 8.

⁴⁵⁹ Jill Robinson (then jill jamieson), Maclean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, with Mike Niederman, “form letter #6: for reviewers,” undated, in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5520, File: Book Layouts – A’s *Folly*.

ideologies—what they desire to produce and what they are striving to avoid. For example, the glowing acknowledgement of Reaney and *Alphabet*'s influence includes the caveat: “we are much too opinionated to call ourselves disciples, but we reached many of the same conclusions albeit independently.”⁴⁶⁰ *Folly* No. 2 acquiesces that, while “we are all products of our time,” the editors’ value their artistic contemporaries “in the exact same way that our dreams are important”: specifically, “[t]hey take us out of ourselves; they find what is present in ourselves. And in that visionary knowledge is the beginning of growth. For individuals, for a region, for this country.”⁴⁶¹

Responding to other regionalist publishing ventures, the *Follies* stipulates that it won’t “deal in the kind of nepotism little magazines are always being accused of: everyone inside the pages having incestuous relations with one another.”⁴⁶² Offering an endorsement of *Applegarth’s Folly*, *Quill and Quire*’s Paul Stuewe observes the publication’s “strong sense of *place*,” while also intuiting that “the editors obviously see themselves as part of a vital community rather than an embattled intellectual coterie” (see Figure 6).⁴⁶³ Jill Robinson professes that the *Follies* leans away from “english departments [which] have a certain vested interest” in upholding “the good bad dichotomy,” and “[leans] always instead to non-evaluative judgements, Bergson and his concept that there are no wrong ideas. we prefer meaning and instinct to analysis.”⁴⁶⁴ Robinson cites Atwood’s aforementioned *Alphabet* essay for a “delightful phrase” describing the overabundance of “greyish collections of goodish writing” in the

⁴⁶⁰ Robinson et al., “Acknowledgements,” 115.

⁴⁶¹ Robinson et al., “A Message from Joshua,” 6.

⁴⁶² Jill Robinson (then jill jamieson), Maclean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, “Editorial: Applegarth,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 1 (1973): 3. *20 Cents*, for example, tended to publish contributions from, and review exhibitions by, artists within the close circle of its editors.

⁴⁶³ Paul Stuewe, quoted on an undated promotional poster for *Applegarth’s Folly* titled “form letter #1f,” in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5519, Art File 2, Western University Archives.

⁴⁶⁴ Jill Robinson (then jill jamieson), “Editorial: jill,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 1 (1973), 4. It is worth reminding that *Alphabet* had ties to Western University’s English Department through James Reaney, who was a professor there.

Canadian arts scene—an outcome the Follies is determined to avoid.⁴⁶⁵ One concrete strategy the editors used in their attempt to escape being pigeonholed as London Regionalists: cast a particularly wide net. They articulate an explicit desire to publish a broad array of works “in (e.g.) the fields of philosophy, music, and drama,”⁴⁶⁶ and they emphasize their interest in both local and international works when soliciting literary reviews.⁴⁶⁷ The Follies’ influences encompass a broad array of figures—continental philosophers and American perceptual researchers are discussed alongside locals who contribute to the sociocultural and historical life of the region. Outputs of the Follies are remarked upon in a local news profile for combining “bits of history, poetry, music, photography – snippets and pieces of everything.”⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ Robinson, “Editorial: jill,” 4. Atwood also contributed the poem “Paradigm #3” to this first issue of *Applegarth’s Folly*, 104.

⁴⁶⁶ *1975 Catalogue for Applegarth Follies*, 1.

⁴⁶⁷ See Robinson et al., Applegarth’s Folly “form letter #6: for reviewers.”

⁴⁶⁸ Bill Jory, “Raw material easy to find but not financial support,” 51.

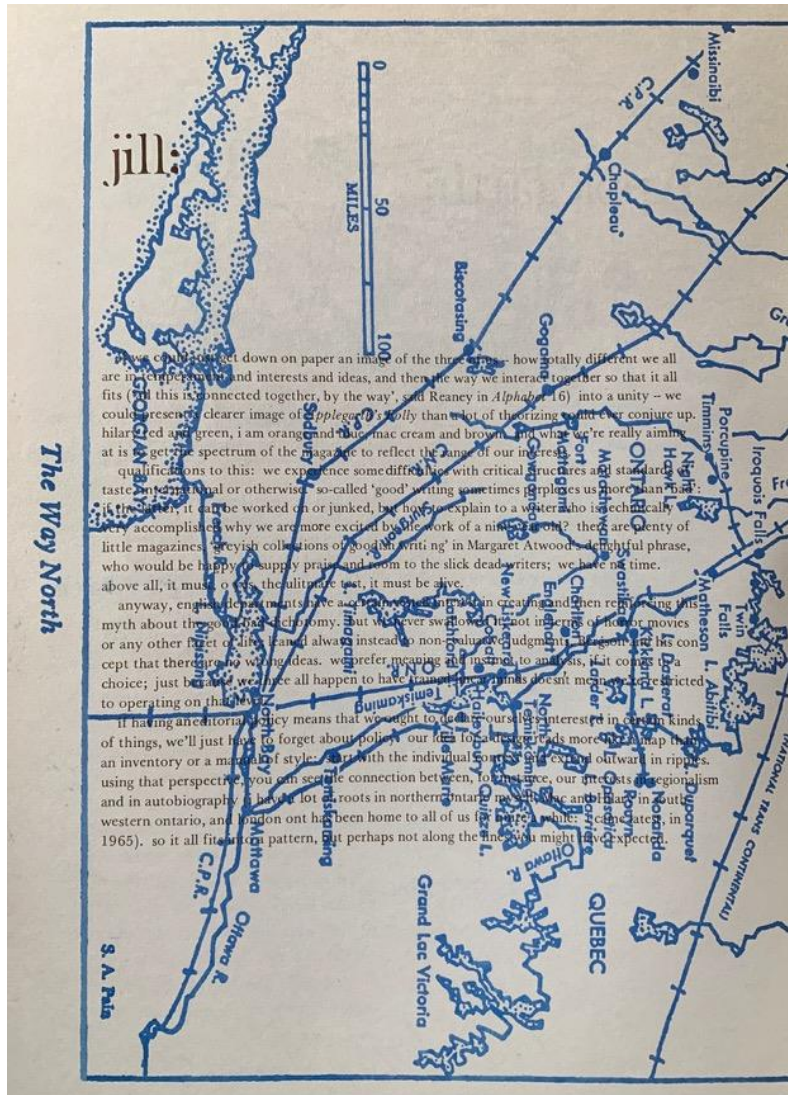


Figure 9. A page from Jill Robinson's (then jill jamieson's) "Editorial: jill," in *Applegarth's Folly* No. 1 (1975): 5. Image courtesy of Jill Robinson.

2.4 Maps

Whether the editors are embracing it or pushing against its confines, the concept of region is quite visually present throughout the Follies' publications. The more affordable print duplicating systems of the *20 Cents* era were poor at reproducing tonality in images, and so publications of that time were quite text-heavy. Experimental approaches to the printed page were facilitated by the Follies having access to both Reaney's letterpress and

its own offset litho press (a used Multilith model 1250) in their Albert Street space.⁴⁶⁹ Follies' outputs blend varied types, calligraphics (often Niederman's looped cursive or Robinson's print), historical and original illustrations, collage and off-angle approaches to the typical grid design. In Brock's *Folly* No. 1 essay on Joshua Applegarth, historical illustrations and hand-drawn doodles unexpectedly appear across margins and within footnotes. Fragments of regional and national maps are interspersed throughout the two issues of *Applegarth's Folly*, blown up and spilling off the printed page to serve less as functional accompaniments and more as conceptual enhancements.

Mapping is a recurring motif throughout *Applegarth's Folly* No. 1, and it is a recurring motif throughout London artistic output writ large. Prior to working with the Follies, Neary recalls being "profoundly affected" by an *Alphabet* article by Perth historian James Anderson, titled "Here a Line, There a Line," which details "the impact of lines on the Southwestern Ontario landscape."⁴⁷⁰ Despite how the Follies distance themselves from London Regionalism, Curnoe's attention to mapping comes to mind here—particularly his 1972 ink drawing, *Map of North America*. Reproduced in numerous iterations,

⁴⁶⁹ This equipment wasn't available from the very beginning of the Follies. Neary purchased the Alphabet Press from Reaney in the early 1970s, and at this time the press had already been disassembled and moved from its Talbot Street location. Neary recalls it not being reassembled by Niederman in the Albert Street location until 1975. The Follies initially renamed Reaney's Alphabet Press to the Baccalieu letterpress. In a 1975 catalogue for Follies publications, the Baccalieu is cited as the press used by Neary to print Robert Kroetsch's *The Ledger* (see *1975 Catalogue for Applegarth Follies*). In actuality, the letterpress was used to produce the original proofs for *Ledger*, but these proofs were then copied on the Follies' offset duplicator. Niederman recalls: "Proofs were pulled from each set chase, negatives made of the proofs, aluminum plates burned from the negs, then the book was printed on the Multilith model 1250 offset duplicator. ... We didn't have enough chases to hold the whole book's type at once, and inking up, then cleaning the press every time a page was set would have been ridiculous" (recounted in email correspondence with Niederman, 2 June 2022). Neary gifted the Alphabet Press to the University of Western Ontario's English Department in 1975 or 1976. With Jim Devereaux's permission, Neary used the Beliel Press in University College to print the cover of the first issue of *Folly* in 1973 (shared in personal correspondence with Neary, 20 July 2022, and stated in "Acknowledgements" for that issue). The rest of *Folly* No. 1 was printed with Wayne Cox (a cousin of Mac Jamieson's) at Cox Press in Ingersoll. Niederman recalls making negatives and then traveling to Ingersoll on multiple evenings, where he made plates and used the Cox Press duplicator after business hours. This is noted in the masthead for *Folly* No. 1, and "Long-suffering Wayne Cox" is named in the issue's acknowledgements. See Robinson et al., "Acknowledgements," 115. The Follies procured a second Ryobi offset duplicator, which was supplied "new to us with the wrong size water roller supplied, which caused plenty of problems," and a lesser-used Vandercook proof press. Email correspondences with Mike Niederman, 17 April 2022; 2 June 2022.

⁴⁷⁰ See Neary, Baker, Zacher and Meyer, "Interview with Mrs. Hilary Neary."

Curnoe’s map continually excised the United States from the continent.⁴⁷¹ *Folly* No. 2 includes a memory map by Mayor Jane Bigelow of her bicycle route through London. In an accompanying caption, the editors describe how “[t]hese highly localized patterns of interaction are important for the indication they give of her perception of the environment. Her concept of the neighbourhood she inhabits is contained in the contents of her various perceptual spaces.”⁴⁷² Interestingly, Bigelow’s map is visually and conceptually resonant with contemporary works by London/New York artist Jason McLean. McLean uses complex memory and mental mapping (as well as zines and visual diaries) to explore personal, subjective history alongside London history—particularly its art and cultural history.⁴⁷³ This and further intersections between Follies endeavours and contemporary London projects are discussed below.

Mapping features heavily throughout Jamieson and Robinson’s editorial explanations of the Follies’ mandate. In *Folly* No.1, Jamieson declares that “[n]ew regions are to be mapped and new directions are to be charted in old worlds.”⁴⁷⁴ A romantic attachment to

⁴⁷¹ In referencing Curnoe’s own wide-ranging and international influences, Judith Rodger suggests that he may have been referencing the anonymous 1929 Surrealist map of the world, which similarly extracted the United States. See Judith Rodger, *Greg Curnoe: Life & Work* (Toronto: Arts Canada Institute, 2016), 34.

⁴⁷² Winston G. Schell, “Jane Bigelow and Lucy Cole Down: A Study in Political Polarities in London, Ontario.” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 2 (1975): 66. The editors’ note then directs the reader to learn more about the “meaning and measure” of mental maps from the 1974 text *Mental Maps* by Peter Gould and Rodney White.

⁴⁷³ McLean discusses the “performative element” of these works: “when I start talking about it and pulling out the details. It’s like you’re going on a walk through the drawing, in some ways. ... It’s like a daily log in some ways.” See Jason McLean, Adam Caplan, Mallory Brown and Sammy Orlowski, “Museum London Stories: Jason McLean.” London, ON: Museum London, 2021. [8:17] <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=602480330823913>. See also David Liss, Sarah Milroy and Christine Walde, *Jason McLean: If You Could Read My Mind* (London, ON: McIntosh Gallery, 2015). McLean’s 2019 mental map, *The Maple Moose Forever*, was included in the Museum London exhibition, *From Remote Stars: Buckmaster Fuller, London, and Speculative Futures*, co-curated by Kirsty Robertson and Sarah E. K. Smith, March 5 – May 15, 2022. Representations of *20 Cents Magazine*, *Region*, and *20/20* Gallery appear in the upper left corner of McLean’s work. The accompanying curatorial statement for *From Remote Stars* states that “[a]s a part of his visit to London, Fuller was commissioned to produce a report titled ‘London of the Future.’ The report was either never written or was lost to time.” Robertson and Smith take advantage of the missing report to invite a range of artists to make contact with aspects of Fuller’s research and contribute visions of alternative future outcomes. See *From Remote Stars* (project website), <https://remotestars.ca/>.

⁴⁷⁴ Maclean Jamieson, “Editorial: mac,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 1 (1973), 7.

“old worlds” will ring as potentially problematic to a present-day reader. Similarly, Jamieson’s interest in the narratives of “early explorations of Canada” insinuates a nostalgic perspective on the “discoveries” that played a central role in countless violences committed against the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.⁴⁷⁵ Yet what is being proposed by the Follies editors is not a colonially-driven exploration and mapping of space. In the words of Jamieson, they are attempting “neo-cosmography.”⁴⁷⁶ This new (or renewed) approach to representation addresses the past—in fact, re-enacts the past through emphasizing the existence of multiple pasts, each with reverberant and overlapping expansions. The goal is to bring new presents and potentialities into being. Jamieson is poetic in addressing the harms and ongoing fallacies of past exploratory activities, here represented as the “monsters and dragons” on a map’s periphery, but he also insists on their inclusion in any activity that claims a true allegiance to “the total picture”:

...like most ‘neo’s’ [neocosmography] is capable of absorbing what is good from past varieties and avoiding what it can of the errors. ...

Both the physical interiors and the mental interiors of the region will be charted. The eye of the observer will note, describe, and report, hopefully not only with an attention to excellence but also with an attention to detail, in order that the total picture may be presented: perhaps even tales of monsters and dragons. Great care will be taken to chart the connections with the larger region and the greater universe. In a way then this enterprise can be compared to that circle whose centre is every where and whose circumference is nowhere. Only when the particular origins are explored to the fullest extent possible can the description lay claim to any universality. And so from this centre here we start out on the investigation of the infinite range of directions possible intending as well to effect a trade with those other ‘heres’ where the centre finds itself.⁴⁷⁷

Robinson’s editorial echoes Jamieson’s sentiment in emphasizing myriad and necessary overlays: “our idea for a design reads more like a map than an inventory or a manual of

⁴⁷⁵ Jamieson, “Editorial: mac,” 7.

⁴⁷⁶ Jamieson, “Editorial: mac,” 7.

⁴⁷⁷ Jamieson, “Editorial: mac,” 6.

style: start with the individual context and extend outward in ripples. ... it all fits into a pattern, but perhaps not along the lines you might have expected.”⁴⁷⁸

To accentuate this attention to mapping, blue-toned map graphics are superimposed over top each of the four *Folly* No. 1 editorials: three editorials are penned by Robinson, Jamieson and Neary, and a fourth editorial is collaboratively written by all three as “Applegarth.” The map graphics are of London, river systems from the region, Samuel de Champlain’s *Carte de la Nouvelle France*, and the regions between Lakes Huron and Erie (see Figure 9). These maps would be inscribed on the psyches of anyone invested in the locales of Southwestern Ontario. The experimental approach to overlaying dark blue maps onto the dark brown text gestures toward this psychic inscription, and causes a significant challenge for the reader. Demanding close viewing and intense concentration, the reader’s eyes struggle to stay on a line of text but are continually drawn instead along coastlines, river paths, and railway tracks. Robinson describes the editors’ shared insistence that “*Folly* ought to be as interesting visually as intellectually”; she decries how much printed material is “so painful to look at” as “people don’t hardly try to *use* the form, much less push it.”⁴⁷⁹ Her observation becomes a self-reflexive commentary for the editorial pages of *Folly*, which indeed push print form (and reader engagement) to particular limits. Given her accompanying critique of a “culture labelled post-literate and supra-linear,” one has the distinct feeling that the challenge of criss-crossing conceptual lines was intentionally designed. It was, however, reportedly more a case of the editors testing out experimental printing approaches in real time.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ Robinson, “Editorial: jill,” 4.

⁴⁷⁹ Robinson, “Editorial: jill,” 5.

⁴⁸⁰ Writes Neary: “After receiving your email, I consulted my own copy of the first issue of *Applegarth's Folly*, and regretted that the map superimposed on the text made it somewhat a challenge for my now aged eyes to read the printed words with ease. We did not think of such things in those days.” Email correspondence with Neary, 25 August 2019.

In a promotional endorsement of *The Follies*, Stan Dragland emphasizes “its very sophisticated visual format” alongside “the variety” in the publisher’s outputs.⁴⁸¹ The Follies’ conceptual interests and aesthetic approaches exist in one-to-one relation with one another. Reviews of *Harry Paints the Wind* by Les Arnold and Rosemary Devries (1975) focus on the vital interaction between text, image, design and the reader’s enactments of the whole. *Harry Paints the Wind* is the story of a seven-year-old artist discovering his own artistic spirit—and the complicated nature of artistic expression writ large—in his repeated attempts to image the unseeable. Jean Sansum notes how “the pictures are an intriguing melange of images; children enjoy picking out the elements mentioned in the story.”⁴⁸² A solicited review from Rhonda Wettlaufer likens Arnold’s writing to Dylan Thomas, encouraging that the story be read aloud:

The text is strong, simple and effective, full of pictures and feelings and impressions. . . . The illustrations, a collection of richly textured ink and crayon drawings, help to delineate the flowing quality of the prose. They are free-wheeling and fantastic, yet whole within the confines of the narrative. The illustrator’s choice of black and white also leaves details indefinite and in this way allows the reader to take his part in the creative process.⁴⁸³

Mary Rubio, a contributor to *Quill and Quire*, echoes that “the black and white illustrations by Devries are well-tailored to the text,” which itself “combines vivid, realistic details with an unusually poetic language.”⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸¹ Stan Dragland, quoted on an undated *Applegarth’s Folly* promotional flyer, archived in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5519, Art File 2, Western University Archives. Stan Dragland is associated with the *London Free Press* on this poster.

⁴⁸² Jean Sansum, quoted on an undated promotional flyer for *Harry Paints the Wind*, archived in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5520, File: Book Layouts – *Harry Paints the Wind*, Western University Archives.

⁴⁸³ Rhonda Wettlaufer’s review is reproduced on the same undated promotional flyer for *Harry Paints the Wind*.

⁴⁸⁴ Mary Rubio of *Quill and Quire* is also quoted on the undated promotional flyer for *Harry Paints the Wind*.

2.5 “We Make Things Today For Tomorrow”: Interpretation 1 – Temporal Care

While the Follies’ editors place much visual emphasis on region, space and movement, they take an expansive and less representational position on time and temporality. Follies print ephemera advertises: “We Make Things Today For Tomorrow.”⁴⁸⁵ There are a number of ways to interpret this slogan. One interpretation is that the publishers are producing works in order to help foster a specific “tomorrow” into being. For example, Daniel J. Brock’s impressively researched *Historical Calendar of London for the Sesquicentennial Year* (1976) both emphasizes and evades linear time towards such a collapse and contact: each day on the calendar collects noteworthy and banal historical events spanning across two centuries, and the result is a dilation of time that gives prominence to region, or space.⁴⁸⁶ Similarly, when reading the two issues of *Applegarth’s Folly*, one distinctly experiences an intentional unravelling of time. “there are levels and levels to our labyrinths,” writes Robinson, who continues:

we deal with combinations and counterpoint as well as with reductions. knowing ourselves, and the world around us, we can always get further on. master geomancers even journey through the time-lines in an infinity of universes. reality, after all, is an open-ended concept.

... so too we talk sometimes in terms of continuity and synthesis, the past moving inside us, but not often. we don’t really much like tending ourselves to being labelled and jarred. myths may be fascinating, but they’re no fun to be caught in.⁴⁸⁷

In one such temporal and counter-mythical gesture, *Folly* interviewer Winston G. Schell brings Mayor Jane Bigelow’s political career into immediate contact with Lucy Cole Down, an early twentieth-century would-be politician. Schell juxtaposes Bigelow’s interview with historical accounts and personal reminiscences from Cole Down’s family.

⁴⁸⁵ See undated promotional flyer in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5519, Art File 2, Western University Archives.

⁴⁸⁶ In the *London Free Press* profile, the Follies anticipate producing yearly historical calendars as well as quarterly almanacs. See Bill Jory, “Raw material easy to find but not financial support,” 51. See also a mock-up of an unpublished calendar in the Michael Niederman Fonds, Box 5520, File: Book Layouts – London Historical Calendar, 1977, Western University Archives.

⁴⁸⁷ Robinson, “Editorial: jill,” 5.

Cole Down was a frequent but unsuccessful labour candidate who contributed her public efforts to seniors, veterans, families and the unhoused. In parallel with Bigelow's cycling as a means to understand the city, Cole Down was a self-professed walking enthusiast. No direct line of relation exists between Bigelow and Cole Down, yet Schell emphasizes a resonance between them in order to illuminate a larger observation about the city of London that spans generations: "Both Jane and Lucy certainly tried to get as close as they could to this city ... And in the end, the involvement of both women illustrates some of the possibilities and pitfalls inherent in the motto of the Corporation of the City of London: 'Through Labour and Perseverance.'"⁴⁸⁸

Reading Follies publications, one is indeed struck by the immediacy and currency of their local concerns. Schell's observations about the "potentials and pitfalls" of London, a mid-sized city in close proximity to both the American border and one of Canada's biggest urban centres, intersect with the Follies editors' observations about the push-and-pull of living and creating in such a historically charged, complex, and challenging city. These remain going concerns of London's local arts community in the present, and the effect is the collapsing of time and an ongoing conversation between Follies outputs and contemporary London artists. For example, Jason McLean's 2011 self-published zine, *Not Bad For London*, interweaves historical and contemporary moments of artistic production and corporate manufacturing in the city to suggest unexpected connections between them.⁴⁸⁹ A 2011 group exhibition curated by Jennie Kraehling at Michael Gibson Gallery borrowed this title to feature works by McLean and his contemporaries. Echoing the Follies editors, Kraehling's exhibition text describes how all the artists are aware of London's regional precursors, "acknowledge this past, but [forge] ahead, creating their own identity and relevance":

Living and working as an artist in London can sometimes have its challenges. We are situated between the dynamics of Toronto and Detroit, in a city where Greg Curnoe, Paterson Ewen and Jack Chambers became national icons.

⁴⁸⁸ Schell, "Jane Bigelow and Lucy Cole Down," 73.

⁴⁸⁹ Jason McLean, *Not Bad For London* (New York; London, ON: self-published, 2011).

Perhaps, then, it is the history, and the fact that London is a challenging place to live, that so many artists have chosen to work and stay.⁴⁹⁰

Londoner Alayna Hryclik, who operates as the lifestyle brand soft flirt, builds her historical and personal understandings of London into her outputs: punk apparel emblemized in her recognizable cursive. Her popular slogan “It’s Not You, It’s London” inspired the “It’s Not You It’s London Awards,” a series of heartfelt and humorous community recognitions handed out during the 2023 Winter Spectacular Music Festival. Hryclik reflected on the “It’s Not You It’s London” awards in a February 2023 social media post, referring to a conversation with London author and bookseller Jason Dickson:

jason dickson quoted something really profound that has stuck with me all weekend when we were planning our it’s not you it’s london awards — i’m paraphrasing badly but “art is everything that doesn’t need to exist” and aren’t we so lucky to be surrounded by people who want to create this magic. art only happens because of people making it, community happens because of a willingness to do more and to bring people together.

I know we joke a lot about it’s not you it’s london but the truth is I wouldn’t trade my life in this city or the people I get to work with for anything.⁴⁹¹

Hryclik’s slogan is both tongue-in-cheek and heartfelt, openly acknowledging the numerous pitfalls of living in this particular city, while continuing to celebrate all who remain and persevere despite how difficult the city might make itself for artists and creatives.

London-based graphic designer James Kingsley operates The Localist, “a weekly newsletter celebrating the people and experiences that make London, Ontario home.”⁴⁹²

⁴⁹⁰ Jennie Kraehling, “*Not Bad For London*: Marc Bell, James Kirkpatrick, Amy Lockhart, Jason McLean, Jamie Q, Peter Thompson, Billy Bert Young,” Michael Gibson Gallery, 4 November – 26 November, 2011, <https://www.gibsongallery.com/exhibitions/not-bad-for-london/>.

⁴⁹¹ Alayna Hryclik (@softflirt), “jason dickson quoted something really profound that has stuck with me all weekend ...,” Instagram post, 21 February 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/Co8RVmkL2Ya/?img_index=4.

⁴⁹² James Kingsley, “About: You ❤️ London. We ❤️ Lists,” The Localist, undated, <https://thelocalist.substack.com/about>.

Some of Kingsley’s design outputs will resonate with anyone who has grown up outside of a major urban centre, like his “My Hometown Sucks” apparel.⁴⁹³ Kingsley’s work frequently draws attention to local concerns, and a number of his designs are so London-specific as to be enigmatic to anyone beyond the city. Specific designs capture the love/hate relationship that locals have had with London across generations. Self-effacing apparel reads “Halfway between Toronto & Detroit,” about which Kingsley writes: “If you’re from London, chances are you’ve situated the city ‘halfway between Toronto and Detroit’ when explaining where—exactly’ish—you’re from. Our hope is this shirt will make that conversation easier than ever next time.”⁴⁹⁴ In his online store, Banana Kingdom-branded apparel is geared toward those Londoners who are familiar with the banana graffiti scattered across the biking path of Baldwin Flats near Western University.⁴⁹⁵ Former Follies editor and present-day historian Hilary Neary is interviewed in a CBC London article in relation to how neighbourhood names in the city have changed over time. She recalls that the name “Banana Kingdom” appeared in graffiti in the mid 1980s.⁴⁹⁶ Kingsley’s design was released in response to the graffiti’s ongoing erasure by City staff despite its beloved status within a segment of the community.⁴⁹⁷

Anyone living in London in the present will recognize the name Farhi, of Farhi Holdings Corporation, which appears ubiquitously on buildings throughout the city and on tractor trailers in farming fields orbiting the city limits. Protesting the ever-increasing acquisition

⁴⁹³ James Kingsley, “My Hometown Sucks – Tee,” JamesKingsley.ca, <https://jameskingsley.squarespace.com/store/my-hometown-sucks-tee>.

⁴⁹⁴ James Kingsley, “Halfway between Toronto & Detroit,” JamesKingsley.ca, <https://jameskingsley.squarespace.com/store/halfway-between-toronto-detroit-unisex-t-shirt-white-on-black>.

⁴⁹⁵ James Kingsley, “Banana Kingdom” T-Shirt, JamesKingsley.ca, <https://jameskingsley.squarespace.com/store/banana-kingdom-unisex-t-shirt-modern-fit>.

⁴⁹⁶ Colin Butler, “Has London’s so-called ‘Banana Kingdom’ been painted over by ‘joyless bureaucrats?’” CBC London, 19 June 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/london-ontario-banana-kingdom-1.5616207>.

⁴⁹⁷ The long-running and beloved banana graffiti has been called “essentially a work of street art on the Thames Valley Parkway.” See Butler, “Has London’s so-called ‘Banana Kingdom’ ...?”

of properties in London and the surrounding region by the real estate developer, Kingsley released a social media post with the word “VACANT” pantomiming the recognizable Trajan capitals and gradated gold colour scheme used in the Farhi logo. Kingsley paired this with a map of the city showing all Farhi properties that remain vacant in the midst of a housing crisis.⁴⁹⁸ When London’s City Planning Committee approved Farhi Holdings’ request for one of their downtown properties to remain a parking lot despite an earlier commitment to develop it, Kingsley published a mock-up for a “NO PARKING” sign in the Trajan/Farhi font. It is, in Kingsley’s words, a “sarcastic/exhausted/easy response to try and get the conversation started” regarding Farhi’s continued benefit from inadequate municipal bylaws.⁴⁹⁹ Kingsley’s recent take on the popular Spirit Halloween costume meme is “Vacant Building,” a Farhi logo costume which includes “empty promises, deteriorating heritage features, signage, favourable by-laws, bonus signage.”⁵⁰⁰ A more recent social media post imagines the Farhi logo emblazoned across the Banana Kingdom path. Responding to a city that will erase a decades-long activity of street art while abiding a real estate tycoon to stamp his own name over countless properties (including numerous heritage properties), Kingsley’s caption mockingly reports on “Farhi’s recent purchase of the naming rights to the (former) Banana Kingdom.”⁵⁰¹

Hryclik’s and Kingsley’s designs, whether as t-shirts, caps, totes, stickers, or meme-able social media posts, enact the function of Paul Soulellis’ urgent artifacts, acts of “making public” through publishing “to record and communicate in real time.” A crowd-sourced t-

⁴⁹⁸ James Kingsley (@jameskingsley), “Not sayin’ / Just sayin’ . #KeepLondonBoring #GetDTL #LdnOnt #holdingout,” Instagram post, 18 November 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B5BtaXyHceB/>.

⁴⁹⁹ James Kingsley (@jameskingsley), “Despite efforts to keep this account Farhi-Free® for more than a few months ...,” Instagram post, 23 June 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQeiB5inlXd/>.

⁵⁰⁰ James Kingsley (@jameskingsley), “Last-minute #ldnont costume idea 🤖,” Instagram post, 30 October 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CkV8-G_uKa8/. See also Andrew Lupton, “Committee approves Farhi request to continue operating downtown parking lot,” CBC London, 22 June 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/committee-approves-farhi-request-to-continue-operating-downtown-parking-lot-1.6075155>.

⁵⁰¹ James Kingsley (@jameskingsley), “📱 The Localist No. 157 hit inboxes earlier this morning with some developing #ldnont stories...,” Instagram Post, 1 April 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cbz7wbruEeH/>.

shirt design by Hryclik often referred to as “lost loves of london” depicts an array of illustrated headstones with the names of now-defunct local arts and music venues, restaurants, and beloved hangouts. Of the design, Hryclik focuses on the personal sentiment of lost spaces rather than a political critique of the factors contributing to the loss of so many venues.⁵⁰² In its pantomime of an existing corporate presence, Kingsley’s activism more immediately demonstrates Soulellis’ description of two conflicting potentials of publishing: the publishing methods used by “those in traditional positions of power” in order to “engineer and control our defining narratives,” and the activist-artistic mode of protest and empowerment.⁵⁰³ As artists, designers and publishers, both Hryclik and Kingsley engage with critique through pathos and playfulness, echoing earlier generations of London artist publishers who used incisive humour to signal critical issues within their surroundings.

⁵⁰² Hryclik writes, “I chose what felt like my favourite nostalgic places & some crowd faves that were suggested. it’s not an exhaustive list but meant to spark a memory and I hope a laugh too.” Alayna Hryclik (@softflirt), “📌 lost loves of london 📌,” Instagram post, 21 September 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cix2pQnu7Lw/?img_index=1.

⁵⁰³ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “0: Intro.”

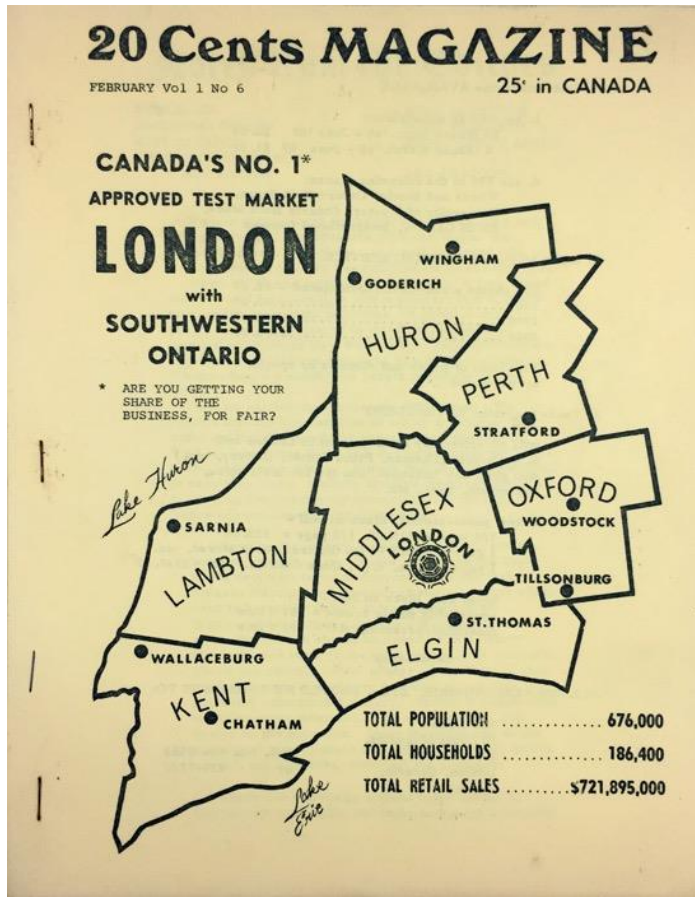


Figure 10. Cover of *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 1 No. 6 (February 1967). Image courtesy of the McIntosh Gallery Curatorial Study Centre's Print Media Collection.

2.6 “We Make Things Today For Tomorrow”: Interpretation 2 – Test Market

A more obvious interpretation of “We Make Things Today For Tomorrow” is that the editors of Applegarth Follies are aiming toward producing ‘sellable’ works (perhaps ‘timeless’ works) that will remain resonant long into the future. From this angle, when we consider how historically, politically and culturally literate the publishers are, there’s playfulness and even a perverse humour in the parroting of such an obvious corporate-sounding slogan. The humour is made more apparent when we consider the artistic

activities of the Follies' forebears, who cheekily criticized the city's overtly imperial leanings and its standing as a popular commercial test market.

In a 1969 profile of London for *Art in America*, Barry Lord situates the city as a "home of insurance and trust companies and the province's Conservative premier," but also the site of "one of Canada's four major art scenes."⁵⁰⁴ Lord profiles the works of Curnoe, Chambers, Margot Ariss, John Boyle, Murray Favro, Robert Fones, Ron Martin, Kim Ondaatje, Larry Russell, Guérite Féra Steinbacher, Tony Urquhart, and Ed Zelenak. From his findings, London is "younger than Montreal, livelier than Toronto, vying with Vancouver in variety and sheer quantity of output, [and] in many ways the most important of the four."⁵⁰⁵ As the city excelled in its white-collar sectors, London artists were taking awards and accolades in national and international exhibitions.⁵⁰⁶ Even as they were excelling on national and international stages, London artists were very deliberately attempting to set themselves apart. Lord perceives them as collectively "plugged into the world but conscious of the necessity to produce their own work out of their own experiences," leading him to claim that, "What London has that everywhere else needs is an understanding that provincialism in art today is a false problem."⁵⁰⁷ For Lord, London artists are "indelibly Canadian, and perhaps among the first global villagers."⁵⁰⁸

In 1963, Curnoe and his colleagues established the Nihilist Party of Canada. In the words of Judith Rodger, it was "a party with no platform and no candidates."⁵⁰⁹ Curnoe and

⁵⁰⁴ Barry Lord, "What London, Ontario Has," 103.

⁵⁰⁵ Barry Lord, "What London, Ontario Has," 103.

⁵⁰⁶ Lord cites Londoner involvement in Toronto's Canadian Artists '68 at the AGO, the 1968 Edinburgh Festival, and Canadian representation at Sao Paulo's 1969 Biennial. See Lord, "What London, Ontario Has," 103. See also Garry Mainprize, "The National Gallery of Canada: A Hundred Years of Exhibitions—List and Index," *RACAR: revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 11.1/2 (1984), 55.

⁵⁰⁷ Lord, "What London, Ontario Has," 105.

⁵⁰⁸ Lord, "What London, Ontario Has," 105. 5

⁵⁰⁹ Rodger, *Greg Curnoe: Life & Work*, 45. Members of the Nihilist Spasm Band have included John Boyle, John Clement, Bill Exley, Murray Favro, Archie Leitch, Hugh McIntyre, Aya Onishi and Art Pratten.

many of the artists within his orbit were highly informed by Dadaism and its associated absurdities. To return to Soulellis, the Nihilist Party enacted the publishing methods used by the traditionally powerful in order to initiate an activist-artistic mode of protest and empowerment. The Party both advertised and were profiled frequently in *20 Cents Magazine*, using the visual language of political print lobbying and rallies. Curnoe in particular developed an anti-American attitude, with Greg Hill observing that the artist's "nationalism was supported by his regionalism, which was in turn built upon his localism."⁵¹⁰ In one so-called "paid political announcement" on the back cover of the March 1970 issue, a Nihilist Party ad encourages the reader to "STOP the american takeover of Canada" ("Stop Pollution, Stop Killing, Stop Exploitation"). The solution? "Get off your Butt – Do Something! THINK NEGATIVELY."⁵¹¹

Rodger contextualizes the Nihilist Party as "a pretext for socializing and having fun," but the artists were also astute political commentators and advocates working in a conservative region of Ontario.⁵¹² The Nihilist Party was followed by the formation of the Nihilist Spasm Band (NSB) in 1965. The moniker of "Nihilist" was not chosen lightly, and many of the cohort continue to enact the descriptor in their performances and outputs.⁵¹³ Opening their landmark 1968 *No Record* album, the lyrics of NSB's "Destroy the Nations" feature Art Pratten railing:

Destroy the nations!

Destroy America!

England is dead!

Destroy America!

⁵¹⁰ Greg Hill, "I Am Greg (Hill That Is)," *Open Letter*, No.5 (Summer 2002) "We Are Not Greg Curnoe": 49. Hill is quoted in Judith Rodger, *Greg Curnoe: Life & Work*, 7.

⁵¹¹ "It is time to say NO!" Nihilist Part of Canada advertisement, *20 Cents Magazine*, Vol. 3 No. 3 (March 1970), back cover.

⁵¹² Rodger, *Greg Curnoe: Life & Work*, 45.

⁵¹³ Living members of the Nihilist Spasm Band continue to practice in Forest City Gallery every Monday evening, which has been a nearly five-decades-long tradition.

AHHHH!

AHHHMERICA!

AHHH!

AHHH-HAAA!

SHHHHHIIIT on Canada!

SHHHHHIIIT on America!

Destroy the nations!⁵¹⁴

“Destroy the Nations” is a howl against imperial servitude and corporate greed. In such close proximity to the American border, in a city forever aping the topography and titles of an older London, Ontario Londoners have long been aware of the city’s second-fiddle position. Both issues of *Applegarth’s Folly* are rich in contributions that address the psychic repressions and repercussions of a mid-sized Canadian urban landscape.

Margaret Atwood’s contributed poem, “Paradigm #3,” ends with the observation: “In this place it is still 1940 / and it always will be.”⁵¹⁵ In the same volume, Phyllis Gotlieb’s one-act play, “The Contract,” opens with a cast of always-awake committee members, “police, medical, military, political,” discussing whether business is bad (“remains to be seen”).⁵¹⁶ *Folly* No. 2, titled “City Mothers,” is dedicated to Jeannette Corbiere Lavell and features a photograph of her and her infant.⁵¹⁷ An Anishinaabe community worker who challenged The Indian Act’s structurally racist policy of Enfranchisement, Corbiere Lavell advocated for the reinstatement of First Nations women and children who were stripped of their status. Both issues of *Folly* are in direct conversation with its precursor,

⁵¹⁴ “Destroy the Nations,” The Nihilist Spasm Band (Hugh McIntyre, Art Pratten, Archie Leitch, Murray Favro, John Clement, William A. Exley, J. B. Boyle, Greg Curnoe), *No Record* (1968), produced by Jack Boswell and Bill Bessey, The Allied Record Corporation, vinyl. For its 50th Anniversary, Forest City Gallery reproduced the Nihilist Spasm Band’s *No Music* button: NSB created the “No Music” pin for the 2003 No Music Festival. The design is by artist and NSB member John Boyle. “No Music” follows in the trajectory of NSB’s *No Record*.

⁵¹⁵ Margaret Atwood, “Paradigm #3,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 1 (1973): 104.

⁵¹⁶ Phyllis Gotlieb, “The Contract,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 1 (1973): 31.

⁵¹⁷ Robinson, Jill (then jill jamieson), MacLean Jamieson and Hilary Neary, with Mike Niederman, “This issue is dedicated to...” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 2 (1975), 5.

20 Cents: just a few years prior, a 1967 cover graphic depicts a crown hovering over an elaborately crested logo for the Canada Council for the Arts, with the words “Our Sacred Cow” in calligraphic script.⁵¹⁸ Applegarth Follies will renew this particular tension just five years later (see the section, “Financial Woes,” below). Another 1967 cover displays a map of Southwestern Ontario, outlining its regions and population density while wryly touting its notoriety as “Canada’s No. 1 Approved Test Market” (see Figure 10).⁵¹⁹

The purpose of test marketing, explained by Madhav N. Segal and J. S. Johar, is to develop localized experience with a product, evaluate potential issues with the product, and gain a comprehensive understanding of that product—all its positives and negatives—before incurring large-scale expense in advertising and distributing it on a national scale.⁵²⁰ But beyond the novelty of experiencing new (and often temporary) commercial products, does a city benefit from its test market status? Following artistic responses—whether the more recent urgent artifacts of Hryclik or Kingsley, or the howling denouncements of the Nihilist Spasm Band—one gathers that London’s commercial exploits do little to benefit its local community and culture in the long-term. As Hryclik’s “lost loves of london” work indicates, creative venues die with shocking frequency in the city. Kingsley’s work visually demonstrates that London’s real estate market is designed to benefit an elite few. Intentionally or not, the Follies editors named their entire project in honour of London’s historic first test market exploit: Joshua Applegarth’s misguided attempt at hemp farming and his subsequent financial ruin.

In immediate proximity with *20 Cents*, the Follies, and James Kingsley’s contemporary outputs, and directing the affect of nihilism toward astute social commentary, Londoner Ryan Cassidy creates work under the artistic moniker Test Market. Test Market briefly operated as a downtown gallery and studio space in 2022, and it continues to run as an online outlet. One of the items sold by Test Market is Cassidy’s own t-shirt design, which

⁵¹⁸ *20 Cents* Vol. 2 No. 1 (September 1967).

⁵¹⁹ See *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 1 No. 6 (February 1967).

⁵²⁰ See Madhav N. Segal and J. S. Johar, “On Improving the Effectiveness of Test Marketing Decisions,” *European Journal of Marketing* Vol. 26 No. 4 (1992): 21-33.

combines an illustration of Mr. Monopoly with the words “FVCK FARHI” in the recognizable Trajan/Farhi font. Cassidy explains the action on a 2022 reddit post on r/londonontario, writing: “My intention is to have a conversation with the Farhi company about their negative impact on the city, and what can be done to address it.”⁵²¹ Harkening back to Soulellis’ insistence that urgent artifacts are “the materials we need when gaslighting happens—the receipts, the proof that demonstrates how crisis compounds crisis,”⁵²² Cassidy contextualizes “the cumulative effect of Farhi’s parasitic business model,” including its immediate reverberations on heritage sites, local independent business, homelessness and the opioid crisis. Cassidy explains the urgent impetus and purpose of his project from his position as an artist newly returned to the region:

When I last lived in London 20 years ago, none of this Farhi stuff was here. I'm not being nostalgic, cosplaying punk rock, or shouting at clouds. I feel since London, Ontario is a recognized "Test Market" town, what happens here mirrors what is happening in the rest of Canada in a lot of ways, especially as it relates to the domination of the real estate market by corporate (often foreign) interests like this. Last time I checked, 10% of our country's GDP is real estate.

Over the past few weeks of selling shirts and giving gallery tours I've spoken with Regular Folk, Police Officers, Students, Business Owners, Tradespeople, Street Kids, and even a Politician or two, and nobody understands why this is happening, but everyone agrees: Farhi is a problem that needs to be addressed 15 years ago. VACANCY TAX NOW is the only thing that makes sense to me, but I'm not a city planner, just a pissed-off Artist doing what he can to bring attention to a very real problem.⁵²³

Cassidy claims in the post that he received warning of “a C&D [cease and desist letter] or a lawsuit in the coming days,” but he continues to produce and sell the t-shirt.⁵²⁴ Test Market’s downtown space closed in 2023, but it remains operational as an online store.⁵²⁵

⁵²¹ Ryan Cassidy (TrinkeTron), “Hi. I am Ryan, the guy selling the shirts in the picture ...” Reddit comment, 6 October 2022, https://www.reddit.com/r/londonontario/comments/xwlemc/i_dont_know_which_of_the_two_business_owners_have/.

⁵²² Pang and Soulellis, “Artist-Publishers, Care, and Social Action.”

⁵²³ Cassidy (TrinkeTron), “Hi, I’m Ryan...” Reddit comment.

⁵²⁴ Cassidy (TrinkeTron), “Hi, I’m Ryan...” Reddit comment.

⁵²⁵ See Ryan Cassidy, TEST MARKET (website), <https://testmarket-ldn.square.site/>.

In being an above-average “mid-sized, multi-ethnic, and very, very ordinary” composite, London has long been a prime location for market-testing.⁵²⁶ In touting the slogan, “We Make Things Today For Tomorrow,” are the Follies editors suggesting that art is among these lucrative products? The goal of the test market recalls Lippard’s much-quoted desire/fantasy for a mass market audience, “to see artists’ books ensconced in supermarkets, drugstores, and airports”⁵²⁷ (see Chapter One). But as Jane Rule indicates, mass market appeal benefits only a select few. Rule believes that corporate publishers who adopt the ethos, for example—those who approach “the marketing of books as if they were like food”—contribute to a commercial and creative economy that is conservative and circumspect: titles are considered “stale after six months if they are hardbacks, after six weeks if they are paperbacks.”⁵²⁸ Even in a test market scenario, only a small cache of commercially viable titles remain in regular production and circulation; the majority of commercial titles are quickly out of print and far less available. Ironically, this mass consumer approach contributes to the market scarcity that results in those rarer, harder-to-find titles, contributing to the “distinctly luxury” aura that many artists’ books possess—often before they even hit the shelf.⁵²⁹ For Lippard, even as they represent “part of a significant subcurrent beneath the artworld mainstream,” many artists’ bookworks fall into the trap of being inaccessible and “distinctly luxury items, commodities with dubious exchange value on the current market,” and more indicative of “artistic escapism, elitism, and self-indulgence” than creative expression.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁶ Nicholas D’Ascanio, “This City is the Most Average Place in All of Canada,” *Reader’s Digest*, 31 August 2021, <https://www.readersdigest.ca/travel/canada/most-average-place-in-canada/>.

⁵²⁷ Lippard, “The Artist’s Book Goes Public,” 48.

⁵²⁸ Jane Rule, “For ‘Writer/Publisher Relationships,’” 49.

⁵²⁹ Lippard, “Conspicuous Consumption: New Artists’ Books,” 161. This aspect is also discussed in Chapter One of this thesis.

⁵³⁰ Lippard, “Conspicuous Consumption: New Artists’ Books,” in *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, 56.

2.7 A Brief Aside for Maternal Readings

Applegarth's Folly No. 2, titled "City Mothers" is inspired by the title of a poem submission from Dona Spano. The issue includes art and illustrations, poetry, prose, Dragland's reviews section, and the aforementioned interview with Mayor Jane Bigelow, who speaks frankly about her experiences as a woman in municipal politics. Following the dedication to Corbiere Lavell, Spano's "City Mothers" poem opens *Applegarth's Folly* No. 2. The work evokes, in the author's own words, "a drizzleday dream, and how it becomes startlingly real. And also how city moms give so much, getting nothing in return."⁵³¹ Barry Lord's profile of London, published just a few years earlier, offers a great many details of the city's male artists, and far briefer allusions to Margot Ariss, Kim Ondaatje, and Guérite Féra Steinbacher. Lord offhandedly acknowledges that in London, "increased chauvinism is to be expected."⁵³²

Spano's city mothers offers an alternative perspective on London's founding history, which is normally far too and "e'er praisely of its Fathers," or paternal figures, at the expense of other local heroes.⁵³³ The poem acknowledges both the day-to-day, overlooked denizens of the city and underappreciated historic forebears who contributed to London with their absences. For Spano, sex is not a factor for motherhood. She recounts Nathaniel Yerex, the first child of settlers born in London, who "might have mothered well our town" but instead moved to the United States.⁵³⁴ Blacksmith Cornelius Burleigh, the first man hung in London, remains in Spano's words "commendably maternal" in death: "his skull was sent around the world, and then

⁵³¹ Dona Spano, "City Mothers," *Applegarth's Folly* No. 2 (1975): 8-9.

⁵³² Lord, "What London, Ontario Has," 105. This statement feels out of place, but might be explained by a personal anecdote from a female artist who was working at the time. She claims Lord was initially discouraged from visiting her studio by a male artist, who dismissed her as "a Sunday painter." It was the intervention of another male colleague, who convinced Lord to visit her studio, which led to her being profiled in his article.

⁵³³ Spano, "City Mothers," 9.

⁵³⁴ Spano, "City Mothers," 8.

displayed at Eldon.”⁵³⁵ Spano calls these absent-yet-present figures “the ghosts of upright Londontown.”⁵³⁶ Like Applegarth himself, all residents are test market London products in their own way.

Importantly, Spano provides a horoscope chart for both the Follies and its *Folly*, based on “delivery time of the first copy being used as the equivalent of a baby’s first drawing of breath.”⁵³⁷ Citing a dictionary definition of astrology, she emphasizes that its function is not, in fact, divinatory: “There is none of this ‘divination’ stuff in astrology; there is no ‘foreseeing’ or ‘foretelling.’ Just explanation of the planets at specific points in space and time.”⁵³⁸ From a hindsight perspective, however, it is impossible to not read for cosmic predictions that might explain the eventual trajectory and end of the Follies. In keeping with her poem, Spano notes the publication’s “dual, and literary, Gemini personality,” and its “truly motherly set of emotions” owing to its Cancer moon.⁵³⁹ Relevant to an arts publisher’s potential for performance is the following advice:

Each planet means something in each sign; for example, Mars in Leo (which *Applegarth’s Folly* has) gives the ability to excel in artistic enterprises that require pushiness, presumptuousness, and originality. Mars in Leo will win with magnificence or lose with infamy, but it will rarely fade into mediocrity. ... Uranus in Libra in the first house means that the *Folly* will seek Truth and Justice and Beauty in strange ways. ... the Sun in Gemini in the ninth house supersedes the coldness of Saturn [in Cancer] and gives a fun-loving, adventurous feeling about things; when the *Folly* is in a quandary as to whether to proceed newly or recede oldly, it must definitely proceed; the energies are much better that way.⁵⁴⁰

This reading aligns with the editors’ own expressed desires to move their publications forward and into tomorrow. Spano does, however, indicate the potential for business

⁵³⁵ Spano, “City Mothers,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 2 (1975): 9.

⁵³⁶ Spano, “City Mothers,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 2 (1975): 8.

⁵³⁷ Dona Spano, “Applegarth’s Horoscope,” *Applegarth’s Folly* No. 2 (1975): 33.

⁵³⁸ Spano, “Applegarth’s Horoscope,” 33.

⁵³⁹ Spano, “Applegarth’s Horoscope,” 33.

⁵⁴⁰ Spano, “Applegarth’s Horoscope,” 33-35.

issues on the horizon: alongside the charged potential of the venture and its well-balanced cohort, “The chart shows a lot of problems.”⁵⁴¹ Spano is optimistic: “she just might make it. All it will take is lots of initiative, sensitivity and imagination.” The presence of Cancer in the Folly’s tenth house informs Spano “that women will be deeply involved in the business success” of the venture (she gives a collegial shout-out to editors Robinson and Neary), but she also sees “a great deal of sensitivity and very few raw business tactics.”⁵⁴² As will be seen, the elements of “pushiness” and maternal care are quite present to a point, until external obligations, financial woes and interpersonal conflicts enact Spano’s prediction of many problems.

2.8 Publications of Influence

When both the making and distributing of a work are part-and-parcel of an artistic practice, is there a possibility for bypassing some of the aforementioned pitfalls of mass consumer marketing? Following Soulellis, some of the urgency of “urgent artifacts” stems from the increasing availability of methods for circulation—of “making public in a physical space.”⁵⁴³ These methods are ever-expanding in their means and scope: “the community bulletin board” is both at the local library and also on reddit; the gallery shop is the bricks-and-mortar where an artist speak face-to-face with “Regular Folk, Police Officers, Students, Business Owners, Tradespeople, Street Kids, and even a Politician or two,” and also the online store attached to their social media profile.⁵⁴⁴

But urgent artifacts are not strictly a product of the present. Considering their influences, a joint editorial by Follies editors Robinson, Jamieson and Neary in *Folly* No. 2 references publishing scholar S. H. Steinberg’s observations on the seventeenth century, the “era of the great printer scholars”: “the central feature of this period was that ‘the functions of the type founder, printer, publisher, editor, and bookseller are little

⁵⁴¹ Spano, “Applegarth’s Horoscope,” 35.

⁵⁴² Spano, “Applegarth’s Horoscope,” 35.

⁵⁴³ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “1: Making Public.”

⁵⁴⁴ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “1: Making Public.”

differentiated; the same man or the same firm usually combines all or most of these crafts and professions.”⁵⁴⁵ Steinberg’s observation applies to both independent publishing and contemporary artists’ publishing writ large, in which all facets—conceptualization and creation, printing, advertising and, of course, distribution—are enfolded into a singular ethos, or a *practice*, of publishing.

And yet—and aligning with their aforementioned tendency for collapsing time—the Follies are as equally interested in contemporary models as they are in historical precursors, with Robinson, Jamieson and Neary drawing from literary publications, and Follies designer Niederman assertively working in an anti-establishment manner in his interests and outputs. Collectively, the Follies’ conceptual and aesthetic approaches owe just as much to pulp magazines and fanzine culture as they do to Reaney and his circles. The editors express particular interest in how fanzines make contact with readers (a relationship that could nonetheless manifest as a somewhat insular bond of heightened fandom). They also appreciate the ways fanzines encourage overlaps of pop culture, visual arts, literature, performance, music, and diaristic writing.

Applegarth’s Folly is never explicitly called a fanzine by its editors—they opt instead for “little magazine” (see Figure 7)—but they do express admiration for the format.⁵⁴⁶ The descriptor “artist’s magazine” is also never mentioned, nor is “bookwork” or “artist’s book.” As discussed in Chapter One, “bookwork” and “artist’s book” entered common circulation in the mid-1970s, with numerous distinctions and overlaps. Similar distinctions and overlaps are at work in the situation of “little magazine” and “fanzine,” and this research project is open to the productive fluidity at play across these terms and qualifiers. The question of what constitutes a “fanzine,” or “zine” is a good example of this fluidity. By the mid-1970s, London was enjoying a vibrant independent publishing

⁵⁴⁵ Robinson et al., “A Message from Joshua,” 6. Steinberg’s quote comes from S. H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing* (Mineola, N. Y.: Dover Publications, 2017; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), 117.

⁵⁴⁶ Niederman alerted me to this “zine” neologism. He writes: “Fanzine was what we called them if they dealt with pop culture genres, and in the case of ‘serious’ literary anthologies - little magazines. Jill was familiar with the science fiction fanzine culture, me with comics and music fanzines.” Email correspondence with Niederman, 2 June 2022.

culture, with important precursors like *Folio* (1947 – 1968), *Alphabet*, *Region*, and *20 Cents*. Skot Deeming identifies *Folio*, “a modest literary journal” produced by the English Department at the University of Western Ontario, as an important platform for emerging writers; he also identifies *Folio* as the city’s first “zine-like” publication.⁵⁴⁷

Deeming’s categorization of *Folio* may seem a little perplexing: the term “zine” as a later abbreviation of “fanzine” wasn’t in use until the 1980s. More importantly, Deeming rightfully indicates that *Folio* was financed by the University of Western Ontario to service mainly University authors (both Robinson and Neary had contributed to several issues), while fanzines are considered an independent operation. But Deeming attributes a “zine-like” quality to the pluckiness of *Folio*’s editorial staff, which rotated every few years, and he allows: “in truth, [Folio] wasn’t technically a zine as it was put out by the University. But its contents were certainly varied and vivacious enough to be considered zine like.”⁵⁴⁸ Deeming also categorizes *Region*, *20 Cents*, and *Applegarth’s Folly* as zines, using the specific categorizers of “litzines” and “artzines.”⁵⁴⁹ Contemplating the nature and “feeling” of fanzines, Robinson’s editorial in *Folly* No. 2 describes them as “the product of a single mind (or two minds but with a single thought).”⁵⁵⁰ This unique quality is what enables fanzines to communicate “a very strong impression of the person & personality of its maker(s).”⁵⁵¹ Robinson’s fascination makes sense given the editors’ aforementioned interest in mapping the intricacies of both physical and mental spaces. Deeming’s encompassing of such London publications from the 1940s through to the 1970s under the “zine” category, despite their geneeses, similarly emphasizes that personal psychic connection that the works engender, as well as their timeless, perennial quality.

⁵⁴⁷ Deeming, “Searching for London,” 17. *Folio* published the first short story by Alice Munro (then Alice Laidlaw) in 1950, titled “The Dimensions of a Shadow.” See Brown and Dickson, *London: 150 Cultural Moments*, 93. Brown and Dickson call Munro “a true regionalist,” and outline the geographic demarcations of the “Munro Tract”: “the land bounded by Lake Erie, Lake Huron, London, and Goderich.”

⁵⁴⁸ Deeming, “Searching for London,” 17.

⁵⁴⁹ Deeming, “Searching for London,” 17.

⁵⁵⁰ Robinson, “Editorial: jill,” 7.

⁵⁵¹ Robinson, “Editorial: jill,” 7.

Mike Niederman was the Follies' lead printer.⁵⁵² His name never appears in relation to an editorial role: he never pens an editorial for *Folly* as Jamieson, Robinson and Bates do, nor is he affiliated with the collaborative "Joshua Applegarth" alter ego. In *Brick* No. 1, Dragland describes him as "[liking] a challenge," and quips: "There's a myth about him that he hates words; I think it's only fair to say he likes you better if you say it with pictures."⁵⁵³ A self-proclaimed "compulsive buyer, reader and collector of all kinds of print media," Niederman closely followed underground press, fanzine culture and underground comix both locally and abroad.⁵⁵⁴ He also collected (and "absorbed") issues of *20 Cents*.⁵⁵⁵ Working at local print shops allowed him to become familiar with letterpress printing and offset printing. Where letterpress was a slow process that demanded patience, Niederman recalls offset printing as "the opposite of slow and painstaking ... [and] a very flexible, fun printing method when paired with a paper platemaker."⁵⁵⁶

Niederman would run personal offset print jobs before work or over his lunch break, and his career as a printer-publisher extended well beyond his involvement with the Follies. He printed for numerous London artists and arts collectives, and his work on publications included promotional flyers for Michael Bidner (who ran the conceptual *adz magazine*) as well as the fanzines *Mind Theatre* (Chris Gehman, Glenn Grant, Steven MacDonald, Sean Ryan, Andrea Thompson, and Charles Vincent), *Stammer* (Steve MacDonald), *Girl Cult* (Joan Brennan), and *The Livin' End* (Jan Maxwell). As Brian Lambert recounts, during the late 1970s (and concurrent with the end of the Follies):

Mike Niederman was an important conduit for channeling the creation, production, and distribution of zine culture in London. His training as a pressman, his familiarity with the underground art community, and his unequalled generosity

⁵⁵² Niederman does not call himself an artist, stating instead that he considers his work "more of an amateur's approach to a craft." Email correspondence, 2 June 2022.

⁵⁵³ Stan Dragland, "Why is *Brick*?" in *Brick* No. 1 (1977), 4.

⁵⁵⁴ See Mike Niederman, "*HeartWar*" in *Graphic Underground: London 1977-1990*, 194.

⁵⁵⁵ Email correspondence with Mike Niederman, 2 June 2022.

⁵⁵⁶ Email correspondence with Mike Niederman, 2 June 2022.

made him a key contributor to the creation of this fertile staging ground. While a mentor and facilitator for many of the zine work published in London, Niederman's own works are some of the most memorable.⁵⁵⁷

Niederman's own imprint and publication, *HeartWar*, platformed numerous emerging London artists. Through it, he honed a countercultural punk and homocore aesthetic into dense, strikingly printed collections that reflect the same high quality of production seen in his work with Applegarth Follies.

Zines of the era were often collaged together, hand-written, or some combination of both. This resulted in outputs that were less concerned with adhering to convention (whether in formatting, spelling or grammar) and more adept at experimenting with the direct expression of ideas and opinions. For example, London fanzines like *Media 5* (Bill Paul, Doug Rogers) and *Fart Bunk* (Mark Emery, Al Pickard) emulated traditional print forms like newspapers and magazines, but they also integrated graphics and humour in daring ways. Visually, Follies publications exude a particular preciseness not generally attributed to quicker, off-the-cuff fanzine aesthetics. Follies' drafts and dummies were formatted by collaging carefully measured titles, typewritten paragraphs, illustrations, and page numbers onto graph paper. Niederman's archive includes tedious experimentations with enlarging and reducing type sizes alongside handwritten paragraphs that would have been reproduced in photo offset.⁵⁵⁸ In reviewing four decades of London zines, Deeming emphasizes that *Applegarth's Folly* "is probably the most well crafted zine I have ever seen, the layout is superb, tight, and eye-catching; appropriate for the content, which is not only important to the history of London arts, but to the Canadian literary world as well."⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁷ From the Editor's note by Brian Lambert accompanying Mike Niederman's "*HeartWar*" essay, 198.

⁵⁵⁸ See the Michael Niederman Fonds, Western Archives.

⁵⁵⁹ Deeming, "Searching for London," 20. Deeming also notes the shift in design and print approaches for *Brick* following the collapse of the Follies. Niederman completed the layout and printing of *Brick* No.s 1 and 2, which retained his identifiable style (draft material for *Brick* is in the Niederman Fonds): "Early issues of *Brick* were slightly more academic than *Folly*, as *Brick* concentrated on reviews and criticism of literary works. Nonetheless the layout made up for some of the more stand-offish content: vibrant design and collages featuring fifties style romance comic book art made the earlier issues of *Brick* a real treat. Like *Folly*, just flipping through the pages was a feast of multicoloured images and text (call it literary eye

The editors' (and Niederman's) adherence to fanzine culture was not limited to accessing—and even at times emulating—the aesthetic. Fanzines were also important avenues for social contact and uncensored expression, and they invited interaction from their readership. The Follies' editors emphasized their distaste for a culture of exclusion present in other Canadian outlets. "If there's something you're looking for that you miss finding here," urges Applegarth in *Folly* No. 1, "ask yourself why you haven't submitted to us yet."⁵⁶⁰ Like the "legal gray area" of the telephone pole—subjected to endless rounds of postering for local performances, missing pets, business ads and garage sales—zines and fanzines offer a free and vital space to exhibit and experiment with a variety of material.⁵⁶¹ Alongside their open submissions, the Follies editors discuss their distribution plan "to try to get the magazine out in front of people," insisting that "it ought to be accessible, not esoteric."⁵⁶²

2.9 Mimicry-into-dependence: Financial Woes

Written at a moment nearly contemporaneous with the rise and quick dissolution of the Follies, Clive Phillpot's essay, "Some Contemporary Artists and their Books," outlines how artists' publications often intentionally "mimic" other print forms in order to accomplish specific "purposes."⁵⁶³ For Phillpot, this mimicry is initiated as an intentional gesture of appropriation. Yet he also indicates a possible by-product of the approach: "a publication which does not seem to be dependent upon the inherent structure of the book has, in fact, become dependent upon a particular book form by just

candy)." After a couple of issues, Dragland moved *Brick* from London to Ilderton, Ontario and then Toronto, where it evolved the more familiar magazine format of its present incarnation.

⁵⁶⁰ "Editorial: Applegarth," *Applegarth's Folly* No. 1 (1973), 3.

⁵⁶¹ "Legal gray area" is a descriptor from Charles Vincent, in conversation on 30 August 2019, London, ON.

⁵⁶² "Editorial: Applegarth," *Applegarth's Folly* No. 1 (1973), 3

⁵⁶³ Phillpot, "Some Contemporary Artists and their Books," 106.

such mimicry.”⁵⁶⁴ This dissolution—from mimicry into dependence—appears to be at play with the Follies: so admiring of the independence of underground fanzine culture, the Follies publishers were adamant that their own project would remain as independent as possible. Fanzines were generally not eligible for government grants; artists often financed their own publications and relied on purchases and subscriptions, or they spent valuable time sourcing advertising partners to raise funds. The first editors of *20 Cents Magazine* openly celebrated receiving a Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) Grant in 1967 “for the express purpose of keeping us alive.”⁵⁶⁵ Conversely, Applegarth Follies vehemently decried government funding. In *Folly* No. 2, the editors jointly claim such funding works “against [the] basic purpose of the creative impulse” by “deliberately directing the creative life in this country” towards designed obsolescence.”⁵⁶⁶

By accepting government funding, the Follies’ editors insist that a necessarily symbiotic relationship between artist and audience is undermined. In this dynamic, an artist succeeds by producing work that enriches the audience, leading that audience to financially support the artist to continue making successful and engaging work. The Follies’ editors insist that to receive public funding creates a scenario whereby “the artists and their audience never communicate, never even meet, and so there is no understanding on either side.”⁵⁶⁷ The CCA’s granting system is, in their view, a bureaucratic tangle of “straight business loans” in disguise: “surprisingly few artists ever seem desirous of making these logical implications clear to themselves. Free publishing in Canada has been prevented, and not promoted, by this grant/welfare art syndrome.”⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ Phillpot, “Some Contemporary Artists and their Books,” 106.

⁵⁶⁵ Robin Carey Askew, High McIntyre, Tony Penikett, Art Pratten, Victor Hoar, “Notes from the Editors,” *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 2, No. 1 (September 1967), 1. This grant is detailed in a later issue: “A Canada Council grant of \$700 was used for the purchase of a duplicating machine (regrettably not the best available for the money), and a collator.” See Robert C. McKenzie, “What Ever Became of *20 Cents*?” *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 3 Nos. 1 – 2 (April 1969), 4. The financial challenges of *20 Cents Magazine* are discussed in detail below.

⁵⁶⁶ Robinson et al., “A Message from Joshua,” 6.

⁵⁶⁷ Robinson et al., “A Message from Joshua,” 6.

⁵⁶⁸ Robinson et al., “A Message from Joshua,” 6.

Folly No. 1's masthead tersely states that the journal is "[p]ublished without assistance."⁵⁶⁹ The masthead for *Brick* No. 1 states that the journal is "[p]ublished gratefully without the assistance of any agency of any government."⁵⁷⁰ "No one is pulling the strings we dance to," proclaim the *Follies*' editors in 1975.⁵⁷¹ Taking this stance meant that Applegarth *Follies* would be reliant on the financial support of its community through purchases, subscriptions, and other avenues of financial and moral support. In the same year, their fiscal precarity was the focus of a *London Free Press* profile by Bill Jory titled "Raw material easy to find but not financial support." Jamieson, Robinson, and Niederman (Neary is not present) are described as "[t]hree Londoners trying to make their living in the book publishing business," where "financial backing is scarce."⁵⁷² They express their frustration that "book publishing is not taken seriously as a viable business in Canada," and is instead "looked upon as a cultural institution."⁵⁷³ Jory quotes Jamieson and Robinson's accounts of attempting to secure bank business loans or financing: denied repeatedly, they are advised to look to government cultural subsidies instead. Here, Jamieson offers more specificity on his criticism of the federal granting system, couching it in terms of limits on spontaneity and press freedoms: "In order to get a grant to write, you have to be backed by a publisher. ... This means we're committed in advance. It takes away the freedom to publish and makes us a Queen's printer."⁵⁷⁴ Jamieson acknowledges that publishers' costs might be covered in this scenario, but he is adamant that there are dangerous repercussions on the quality of the works being produced with this support. The granting system doesn't take book buyers (or any business aspect) into account, and Jamieson adamantly expresses his preference for taking a risk in order to publish works that he believes will sell on their merits. Jamieson insists that, through programs like the Canada Council for the Arts, "government

⁵⁶⁹ Masthead, *Applegarth's Folly* No. 1 (1973), 2.

⁵⁷⁰ *Brick: a journal of reviews* No. 1 (1977), 1.

⁵⁷¹ Robinson et al., "A Message from Joshua," 6.

⁵⁷² Jory, "Raw material easy to find but not financial support," 51.

⁵⁷³ Jory, "Raw material easy to find but not financial support," 51.

⁵⁷⁴ Jory, "Raw material easy to find but not financial support," 51.

officials are deliberately directing the creative life in this country into long-range planned patterns.”⁵⁷⁵

The Follies’ refusal of government support makes important contact with a number of concurrent artist-run projects in the city at that time. Another group of Londoners were taking a different tack in working toward financial viability for artists: Jack Chambers, with Kim Ondaatje and Tony Urquhart, founded Canadian Artists’ Representation (CAR), eventually Canadian Artists’ Representation/le Front des artistes canadiens (CARFAC), in 1967. Inspired by 20/20 Gallery’s commitment to paying artist fees, the non-profit corporation established the basis for fair recognition of artists’ copyright as well as a national fee schedule for artistic labour, exhibition and reproduction of works.⁵⁷⁶ It was expected that public galleries and museums would abide by this fee schedule, and artists were empowered toward self-advocacy and collectivity.⁵⁷⁷ By 1975, taking a cue from CARFAC’s minimum copyright fee schedule, the Canada Council had made it a requirement that public arts galleries applying for program assistance grants pay fees to Canadian artists.⁵⁷⁸

The artist-run Embassy Cultural House (ECH), established in 1983 in the Embassy Hotel, aligned more closely with the Follies’ mandate of independence. ECH founders included one of the founders of Forest City Gallery, Jamelie Hassan, and long-time FCG member Ron Benner, who had become less interested in the formal operations of an artist-run

⁵⁷⁵ Bill Jory, ““Raw material easy to find but not financial support,” 51.

⁵⁷⁶ See Mark A. Cheetham, *Jack Chambers: Life & Work* (Toronto: Arts Canada Institute, 2013).

⁵⁷⁷ See Nancy Geddes Poole, “London Artists in the 1960s,” 179-201.

⁵⁷⁸ See “CARFAC History,” Canadian Artists’ Representation/le Front des artistes canadiens, <https://www.carfac.ca/about/carfac-history/>. Echoing previously raised concerns of insularity within London Regionalism and CanLit scenes, Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge describe the “relatively conservative” quality of CARFAC in its first decades and the “internal struggles” that arose in the late-1970s, into the 1980s. Says Beveridge: “One point of contention was Canadian nationalism, which is partly what CARFAC was founded on. You had to be a Canadian citizen to join at that time. There was a divide between those members arguing for a closed shop and those saying, ‘You have to allow landed immigrants in.’ The organization was split over that.” See Greig de Peuter and Nicole Cohen, “The Art of Collective Bargaining: An Interview with Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* Vol. 40 No. 2 (2015): 336.

centre accountable to its provincial and federal funders. Hassan and Benner founded the ECH with musician Eric Stach in order to create “a project that also fed the desire to be culturally and politically engaged, and that embraced cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural practices in all forms ... to be unapologetically political in the process.”⁵⁷⁹ Like the Follies—and in contrast to other artist-run spaces that were reliant on public funders—the Embassy maintained an operational budget “intentionally outside of the system funded by the arts councils.”⁵⁸⁰ In outlining the ECH’s chronology, curator Robert McKaskell’ explains that, “[a]lthough initially [national and provincial arts council] funds were awarded with few restrictions, by the 1980s the Councils began to require that galleries submit their schedule of exhibitions a year in advance to be judged by a jury of peers.”⁵⁸¹ Artists Jamelie Hassan and Ron Benner, with musician Eric Stach, initiated the ECH as, in Hassan’s words, “a space that was non-aligned, open to spontaneous action, and free of the bureaucratic strangle-hold often associated with spaces totally dependent on government grants.”⁵⁸² These words echo the concerns of Jamieson voiced eight years prior.

Self-advocacy and collectivity inform the joint editorial piece in *Folly* No. 2, which optimistically foresees a community that will support an exciting publishing venture (and a publisher that would ultimately continue to produce despite all financial odds). Knowing that this is the last of only two issues that will ultimately be produced, the editorial exhibits a remarkable blend of confidence and pathos:

We believe strongly in the importance of the region to the activities that take place there; we are sure that the community (and we are all members of a community here) needs to become much more and not less involved with its own art and history and sense of place. And the involvement we are speaking of as necessary includes, among many other aspects, some kind of commitment, perhaps a

⁵⁷⁹ Robert McKaskell, “A Chronology of the Embassy Cultural House,” in *The Embassy Cultural House, 1983 to 1990*, edited by Michal Baker, Robert McKaskell, and Rebecca Diederichs (London, ON: Museum London, 2012), 13.

⁵⁸⁰ Brown and Dickson, “The Embassy Cultural House Opens,” *London: 150 Cultural Moments*, 164-165.

⁵⁸¹ McKaskell, “A Chronology of the Embassy Cultural House,” 13.

⁵⁸² McKaskell, “A Chronology of the Embassy Cultural House,” 13.

subscription or some contribution of time or vision. Applegarth will always manage to keep going somehow; but the essence of the journal *Applegarth's Folly* is that enough of the people it was created for care enough to contribute what they can to make it work.⁵⁸³

In spite of the foregoing, diminishing returns remains a recurring theme for London's arts publishers across the decades. Five years prior to *Folly* No. 2's striking final editorial, the editor of *20 Cents Magazine* encountered radio silence after making a similar call for audience support, and nearly ended the magazine because of the financial and emotional strife that resulted.⁵⁸⁴ The following aside is intended to focus on the earlier and parallel fiscal struggles of *20 Cents*. This situation helps to contextualize London's unique publishing landscape and also demonstrates the eerily cyclical, repetitive trajectory for London arts publishers through the 1960s, 1970s, and into the 1980s.⁵⁸⁵

2.10 *20 Cents*: What is it Worth?

Published between 1966 and 1970, *20 Cents* was less focused on printing creative works, and more interested in “[serving] as a means for creative people to share their views.”⁵⁸⁶ It reported on the creative happenings in the city: gallery meetings and events, interpersonal dialogues and skirmishes, exhibition reviews (both thoughtful and snarky), and noteworthy community moments. *20 Cents* was a considerable operation in practice: in addition to its founding editors—Carey Askew, McIntyre, Penikett, Pratten, and Hoar—the magazine was typed and copied by Janice Davidson and Marian Rowley. In his profile of London's zine history, Skot Deeming locates the value of *20 Cents* in how

⁵⁸³ Robinson et al., “A Message from Joshua,” 6.

⁵⁸⁴ See Robert C. McKenzie, untitled call for support, *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 4 No. 1 (January 1970): 20.

⁵⁸⁵ Charles Vincent recounts how similar financial and interpersonal struggles reverberated throughout his co-published venture, *Mind Theatre*, through the 1980s. See Charles Vincent, “*Mind Theatre*” 201-202.

⁵⁸⁶ McKenzie, untitled call for support, 20. In an obituary for *20 Cents* co-founding editor Hugh McIntyre, curator Ben Portis describes the publication as ““one of the first ‘zines, a forum not only for the essays and rants, drawings and doodles of notable London artists and their friends, but an early venue for such future distinguished authors and poets as Michael Ondaatje and Denis Tourbin.”” Ben Portis quoted in Sandra Martin, “HUGH McINTYRE, MAKER OF ‘NOISE’ MUSIC: 1936-2004,” for *The Globe and Mail*, 24 December 2004. Archived on 25 December 2004 by Daniel X. O’Neil, *Derivative Works: The Personal Website De Dxo*, http://www.derivativeworks.com/2004/12/hugh_mcintyre_w.html.

it “chronicled the emergence and range of the London art boom,” and he emphasizes that “without it a lot of the underground happenings in this city would have been lost.”⁵⁸⁷ Over the course of its five-year run, *20 Cents* faced financial collapse, changed hands, recovered and renewed itself, and faced financial ruin again. *20 Cents* battled fiscal precarity from its beginnings in 1966, even after it received a CCA grant in 1967 (the editors quipped that the \$700 represented a “generous boost to our bank account”).⁵⁸⁸ Askew et al. openly admit to—and joke about—the struggle of independent publishing throughout their editorials: in one, they solicit “further contributions” in the form of uncompensated texts, volunteer hours, and donation funds, while acknowledging they are “without any ‘hope’” of receiving anything.⁵⁸⁹

Siblings Robert and Linda McKenzie took over editorial control of *20 Cents* in 1969, trimming down operations significantly. Robert took on the role of Editor and Publisher, and Linda was Managing Editor and, according to Robert, *20 Cents*’ lead typist and copier.⁵⁹⁰ In the summer of 1969, Robert McKenzie used the term “anti-profit” to describe both the publication’s endeavour and its perpetual challenge.⁵⁹¹ Under both editorial eras, creating and distributing *20 Cents* translated into countless collective hours of soliciting material, editing contributions, typing, copying, collating, stapling, distributing copies to local stores or by mail, and managing the administrative aspects of advertising and subscriptions.⁵⁹² Yet according to Robert McKenzie, the departure of the

⁵⁸⁷ Deeming, “Searching for London,” 19.

⁵⁸⁸ Carey Askew et al., “Notes from the Editors,” 1.

⁵⁸⁹ Carey Askew et al., “Notes from the Editors,” 1.

⁵⁹⁰ McIntyre, Pratten, and Penikett remained on the *20 Cents* masthead as Editors Emeritus.

⁵⁹¹ Robert C. McKenzie, “*20 Cents* Editorial,” *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 3 No. 4 (Summer 1969): 4. McKenzie’s use of “anti-profit” inspired the title of my 2019 McIntosh Gallery exhibition, *Anti-Profit: Independent Publishing in London*.

⁵⁹² The previously cited editorial by Askew et al. jokingly advertises for the following positions: “Collator-In-Chief, Chief Assistant Stapler, and Lord High Mail Boy.” The positions were lauded for having “absolutely no red tape. No pay either but we will have a splendiferous banquet” (the editors suggested that they would organize “a real great annual banquet some day soon” for all local contributors). The editors also proudly committed to the magazine’s pulpy, crude appearance instead of attempting a glossier magazine aesthetic. A polished look would have required much more reliance on advertising. See Carey Askew, McIntyre, Penikett, Pratten and Hoar, “Notes from the Editors,” 1. Dave and Rena O’Halloran

first editors was less related to the financial pressures of running a creative venture and more to lapsing artistic interest. He writes that the previous editors “felt constrained by the tedious routine” of running a publication, and they “itched to get on to new endeavours of a more creative nature, and leave the magazine as a going concern to be carried on by technicians rather than artists.”⁵⁹³ No further explanation is offered in terms of why McKenzie chooses to professionally identify—as a *technician* rather than an artist—but the sentiment connects with Niederman’s later reticence to identify himself as an artist (Niederman instead likens himself to an “amateur” approaching the work a craft).

McKenzie’s first editorial in 1969, “What Ever Became of *20 Cents*?” explains a lapse in publication during the changes to the masthead, while assuring readers that *20 Cents* remains soluble:

While sales have never been overwhelming, a workable distribution network was established, and circulation climbed to five or six hundred copies per issue. ... Finances were no worse than ever. Printing equipment and distribution facilities remained unchanged. Demand was healthy, and increasing steadily as the magazine, and the ‘London scene’ itself, gained wider attention. Contributors, though never paid or even reimbursed for expenses, remained faithful and inspired as ever.⁵⁹⁴

20 Cents’ new masthead advertised: “Yearly subscriptions \$2.50; gifts of additional money most welcome.”⁵⁹⁵ In the January 1970 issue, McKenzie included a reader

described working in the mid-1980s as co-editors of the London-based punk publication *What Wave*, recruiting friends to come and help collate, assemble, and staple the photocopied pages. They jokingly called this ritual “the zombie shuffle” (In conversation with Dave and Rena O’Halloran, 31 August 2019, London, ON). Artist Joan Brennan similarly joked about neighbours being confused by the sight of her and Mike Niederman circling their kitchen table hundreds of times as they collated and stapled copies of their publications (Joan Brennan and Mike Niederman in conversation, August 2019 in Byron, ON). I incorporated this experiential activity into the *Anti-Profit* exhibition as a participatory action for visitors to edit, organize and collate their own exhibition booklets.

⁵⁹³ McKenzie, “What Ever Became of *20 Cents*?” 4.

⁵⁹⁴ McKenzie, “What Ever Became of *20 Cents*?” 4.

⁵⁹⁵ Masthead, *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 3, Nos. 1 – 2 (August 1969).

feedback form and a renewed call for subscriptions.⁵⁹⁶ He reports in the February issue that not a single reply had been received, followed by the embittered comment: “I guess nobody really gives a shit, one way or the other.”⁵⁹⁷ McKenzie insinuates that it would be the last issue of *20 Cents*.

In the March issue, however, a more optimistic McKenzie recounts that, “since writing that, I have discovered it isn’t really true that nobody gives a shit. In the past week, many people have come forward with offers of assistance, both financial and otherwise.”⁵⁹⁸ McKenzie expresses that he is determined to make “the business aspect of our operation” work by ensuring the publication “be made to break even” (this is a notable revision of the narrative from just a few months prior that states the magazine is fiscally sound).⁵⁹⁹ He also indicates that its previous pause—the pause between the change of editors—had nearly been the end of *20 Cents*. McKenzie makes a plea and inserts a direct warning to his community—“and we are all members of a community here,” to quote Joshua Applegarth—that “somebody has to help, and that somebody is you. If you don’t do it, it won’t get done. And *20 Cents* will fold. Again. Forever.”⁶⁰⁰ Despite McKenzie’s renewed and hopeful outlook, in a fate foreshadowing the end of Applegarth Follies, *20 Cents* would not last through the year.

⁵⁹⁶ The feedback from solicited readers to complete the sentence: “Dear Sir: This is what I think of your magazine: ...” See *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 4 No. 1 (January 1970), 20. Subscription renewal forms were also sent out in haste to ensure no lapses or gaps in subscription payments. These same renewal forms invited subscribers to consider gift subscriptions for friends and family, or for “‘Expatriate Londoners’, away at school or transferred by their employer (no one would leave London voluntarily).” See Robert C. McKenzie, “*20 Cents Magazine*: Dear Subscribers” form (loose), tucked inside *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 3 No. 9 (November 1969), in the McIntosh Gallery Curatorial Study Centre’s Print Media Collection.

⁵⁹⁷ See Robert C. McKenzie, “*20 Cents* Editorial,” *20 Cents Magazine* Vol. 4 No. 2 (February 1970): 4.

⁵⁹⁸ McKenzie identifies reader Jim Daunt’s offer to help prepare financial books “to see that business matters are looked after, and most important, to curb the wilder excesses of the editor’s imagination so that the magazine’s meagre resources may be husbanded wisely.” McKenzie describes “trying to raise the cost of the next issue by means of ten dollar loans from friends of *20 Cents*. You will probably be approached by someone with his hand out. If you care, please give what you can.” Robert C. McKenzie, “*20 Cents* Editorial,” *20 Cents Magazine*, Vol. 3 No. 3 (March 1970): 4-5.

⁵⁹⁹ McKenzie, “*20 Cents* Editorial,” Vol. 3 No. 3 (March 1970), 5.

⁶⁰⁰ McKenzie, “*20 Cents* Editorial,” Vol. 3 No. 3 (March 1970), 5.

Applegarth Follies folded in 1977 with a number of projects left unfinished. More recently, Dragland is noted to recall the end of the imprint owing to its “descending into chaos,” for reasons both financial and interpersonal.⁶⁰¹ While Dragland is tactful in avoiding explicit discussion of interpersonal conflicts, he surmises that “the purchase of printing equipment and the rental of premises was never offset by income.”⁶⁰² Dragland alludes to a fall-out when he opted to salvage *Brick* from the dying publisher: a final and “bitter argument” with the Follies’ editors (less Neary) and Niederman in which Dragland lobbies for the publishers to pursue Canada Council funding. Dragland summarizes the end of Applegarth Follies—its credo to refuse government subsidies—as the result of “a brave Jamieson idealism that turned out to be impossible to sustain.”⁶⁰³ The fate of *20 Cents*, which experienced some success with government funding, attests that public subsidies are by no means a safeguard. And so the personal and interpersonal temperatures of the Follies editors and their collaborators must also be taken into account. Dragland, for instance, describes his own growing “disenchantment” with Jamieson as a colleague and collaborator.⁶⁰⁴ With no statement or announcement by the Follies editors from that period, we look to personal anecdotes, oral histories, and a corresponding trajectory from a parallel publishing venture in order to understand the practical challenges that likely delimited this prolific and expansively thinking arts output.

2.11 “A Tradition, a Legacy?” Or an Event, a Haunting, and a Vision?

In his own assessment of some of the history being unravelled here, Skot Deeming marvels that London, a fairly conservative [test market] city, consistently produces vibrant artistic content in spite of so many challenges. He tracks how earlier literary publications like *Alphabet* and *Region* fostered “a tradition, a legacy,” and suggests that

⁶⁰¹ See Dragland and Jamieson, “Remembering Applegarth Follies.”

⁶⁰² Dragland and Jamieson, “Remembering Applegarth Follies.”

⁶⁰³ Dragland and Jamieson, “Remembering Applegarth Follies.”

⁶⁰⁴ Dragland and Jamieson, “Remembering Applegarth Follies.”

“London seems to be big on tradition, one zine following the other, then another.”⁶⁰⁵

Deeming’s passionate assessment of London zines evolves from his own zine practice, and he locates his publications alongside this linear trajectory. Deeming accounts himself as part of a larger London publishing history and ethos. He insists that the outputs of London arts publishers “are more than just passing fancy, they are cultural documents for future generations to look back on.”⁶⁰⁶

At a quick glance, the legacies of London’s arts publishers appears nearly circular. A perpetual *déjà vu* of financial precarity, perseverance, burnout, and renewed optimism recur time and time again. These cycles include careful negotiation of interpersonal relationships, continual push-pull of creative production and business acumen, appreciation (love) of the artists that came before, and a corresponding desire to produce anew and *in spite of* earlier legacies. For the Follies, tradition and legacy—particularly local regionalist traditions and legacies—represent both a welcomed influence as well as a challenge. London Regionalism’s concerns, characters and insular qualities are to be recognized, embraced and overcome. How would the Follies editors have responded to being themselves charted within this legacy mapping of their position in London arts history?

Speaking as a small arts publisher myself, I experience a very present—even prescient— affective response when reading the Follies editors’ sentiments and reading their appeals for community support. In the spirit of the Follies’ own neocosmography, I want to suggest a subtle and necessary recalibration to Deeming’s archival gaze and correspondingly linear formation of London publishing. Instead of a uni-directional line from past to present—seemingly, a foundation upon which *Alphabet*, *20 Cents* and Applegarth Follies appears as layers of a mantle, upon which other publishers and publications continue to accrue—I prefer to view the spatial, temporal, and mental explorations and outputs of the Follies and their cohort as rippling outwards and

⁶⁰⁵ Deeming, “Searching for London,” 22.

⁶⁰⁶ Deeming, “Searching for London,” 22.

overlaying one another. Rather than capturing particular moments in time, their works continue to evoke vital and lively resonances. What I propose as a formulation is less a linear, unidirectional chain from producer to consumer, publisher to audience or output to archive, and more a refracted, multidirectional, dialogical and polyvocal event of arts publishing. Deeming himself makes contact with this collapsing of past-present-future London when he describes the nature of the city's creative community in terms of a haunting: "are we unconsciously connecting to some element of London's past, a time when this small city was home to artists and publishers on the cutting edge of independent artistic creation in this country?"⁶⁰⁷

Artists Mack Ludlow and Dylan Macaulay also pick up on this notion of haunting, but theirs is not the familiar and depressing image of a ghost town. Instead, they show how absence and haunting can be a productive element for an artist. The two write of their experience growing up in London. They describe attending the lauded Beal art program (in the shadow of artists like Curnoe, Chambers, Hassan, Favro and others), and of seeing the Nihilist Spasm Band perform at the Forest City Gallery. "Regionalism wasn't discussed explicitly," they write, "but its values were made clear by the constant reminder that at one point in time this had been a site of artistic importance."⁶⁰⁸ What Macaulay and Ludlow articulate is not a history or legacy, but rather a living "presence" that ruptures divisions of past and present, and offers productive material for fostering a brighter future: "Ultimately," they state, "the ghost of regionalism offers insight and comfort through its reminder of the impermanence of people and places, and offers us a vision of a future through its reminder of our past."⁶⁰⁹ The haunted and stilted mid-sized city has been recalibrated by its artists as something that remains lively and communicative. As Ludlow and Macaulay, Deeming, *20 Cents*, the London Regionalists and their Nihilist Party of Canada, the Follies, Jason McLean and his cohort, Alayna

⁶⁰⁷ Deeming, "Searching for London," 17.

⁶⁰⁸ Mack Ludlow and Dylan Macaulay, "Time Passing Knowing People," *Digest Vol: 1 (2012 – 2016)* (London, ON: Forest City Gallery, 2016), 55.

⁶⁰⁹ Ludlow and Macaulay, "Time Passing Knowing People," 55.

Hryclik, James Kingsley and Ryan Cassidy (among so many others) demonstrate, London remains a home to artists working at odds with it. In the past, present and future, artist publishers in London live and work in strange tandem with artist publishers who are no longer present. But, in the words of the Follies' editors, *we are all members of a community here*.

In his artist's book, *Blue Book no. 8*, the eighth volume of a rubber-stamped series begun in 1961 and continued through to *no. 8's* publication in 1989, Curnoe revisits his previous ledger-based published works. *Blue Book no. 8* is an accounting of all the things Curnoe believes he is not: "I am not a Cayuga, Huron, Oneida, ..."; "I am not a Saskatchewaner, Albertan, British Columbian, ..."; "I am not an exhibitionist, imperialist, expectorant, ..."⁶¹⁰ In an afterward to the work, Christopher Dewdney writes: "Greg's innate nihilism, always simmering below the surface, reappears in this book as the almost incantatory preface to each page on this list of otherness."⁶¹¹ Curnoe might incant, but he also claims he is not "a ... medium"; and later, "not psychic."⁶¹² His work nonetheless takes us into our own incantatory reckoning with who we are, in our present state. *Blue Book no. 8* also raises the question of who we want to be.

Curnoe might not agree with the overall position of this research project, but he also never disavows himself as part of a community. He never disavows himself as a Londoner, an artist, or publisher. He also never disavows himself as a cartographer, a time traveler, or ghost. As we incant with Curnoe, we think of who we are, and we think of who we might be. And as publishers, always, "We Make Things Today For Tomorrow."

⁶¹⁰ Greg Curnoe, *Blue Book no. 8* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1989), 3, 17, 57.

⁶¹¹ Christopher Dewdney, "Reference and Self: The Limits of Subjectivity," in Greg Curnoe, *Blue Book no. 8*, 179.

⁶¹² Curnoe, *Blue Book no. 8*, 71, 133.

Premonition: Mirrors and Doubles Suggestion: Reading

In 1984, Vera McNichol shifted her clairvoyant practice from her kitchen table to the back room of the Crystal Restaurant and Dining Lounge in Milverton, about ten kilometers from her home in Millbank. To alert her potential clients to the move, McNichol posted two signs at her home, one in the back window and one in the front door.⁶¹³ Four years after that, in 1988, McNichol and her husband moved into a retirement home in nearby Brunner. A local news article reported on a community auction organized to sell off the majority of the McNichols' belongings.⁶¹⁴ Reporter Keith Schaefer interviewed individuals from the crowd—"mainly friends and other local residents"—about the event. Vera's sister, Audrey Kyntze, is quoted as approving of the change of scenery for the couple, and Schaefer describes the house as follows: "The wallpaper at the McNichol's house was darkened by decades' worth of smoke from the wood stove on it, and each room had only one light. It had an eerie atmosphere for someone who had never seen anything like that before."⁶¹⁵

One year later, the property on which the McNichol's house resided was sold. To save the eerie house from inevitable demolition, Londoner Ron Nuhn bought the building and moved it to a lot directly across the street from its original location. A news photograph by Al Bossence depicts the construction of the home's new foundation in the foreground; the McNichol's two-story house is seen in the background of the image, awaiting its own change of scenery.⁶¹⁶ In her autobiography, McNichol recounts a childhood awareness

⁶¹³ Anne Kelley, "Millbank soothsayer relocates operations," 4 April 1984. Unfortunately, no outlet name is provided for this clipping. The article can be found in the press clippings folder, in the Vera McNichol Fonds, Stratford Perth Archives. The move meant that McNichol's long-suffering husband, John McNichol, would be able to enjoy privacy through the week after enduring thousands of visitors each year. It also meant that Vera would be able to be reached by telephone for the first time, as the McNichol home didn't have a phone line of its own.

⁶¹⁴ Keith Schaefer, "Era ends as Vera McNichol's belongings sold."

⁶¹⁵ Schaefer, "Era ends as Vera McNichol's belongings sold."

⁶¹⁶ Al Bossence, "Psychic's home's on the move," 6 May 1989. No outlet name is provided for this clipping. The article can be found in the press clippings folder, in the Vera McNichol Fonds, Stratford

that the 1847 Millbank home, owned by a family relation, would one day be her own. Did McNichol ever foresee the purchase and literal flipping—or mirroring—of her home during her tenure there? In the third volume of *Smiling Through Tears*, subtitled *Across Our Kitchen Table*, McNichol includes a short entry titled “The House Does Not Matter.” McNichol reflects on her earthly possessions, including “the old house I live in.” Recalling Schaefer’s description, the house is presented as a point of contention: “Some folk remark about the friendly atmosphere inside, and say they feel right at home. Others say, ‘We did not come all the way from Toronto to see your house, Vera.’”⁶¹⁷ McNichol follows this account with a poem written “while thinking about our earthly house.” The poem meditates on the parable image of the Book of Life, one which allows us to open its pages and re-experience specific moments from the past. The poem also crafts a familiar metaphor: the tasks completed during life are a deposit, a gathering of materials toward the final home in which we will reside in the future.

This Old Clay House

When I’m through with this
 clay house of mine,
 And no more bright lights
 through its windows shine,
 Just box it up
 and lay it away,
 With other clay houses
 of yesterday.

Dear friends of mine,
 please try if you can
 To forget the wrongs I’ve done
 since I began,

Perth Archives. McNichol’s home remains in its current second home in the present, with some external additions. See also Diane Sewell, “An ‘old crooked house’ with a mystical past,” *The Globe and Mail*, 30 November 2007, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/an-old-crooked-house-with-a-mystical-past/article1090248/>.

⁶¹⁷ Vera McNichol, *Smiling Through Tears, Volume 3: Across Our Kitchen Table* (Millbank, ON: Self-published, 1971), 313.

Bury them deep
 and out of your sight,
 Knowing I tried to do
 what was right.

I know when we come
 to the end
 It is too late to mend
 a poorly built house
 So to you who are building,
 look over mine
 And make corrections
 while there is time.

Look at my house,
 but let no tears be shed,
 It is like any clay house,
 when the tenant has fled,
 I have lived in this house
 many days all alone,
 Waiting my call
 to my heavenly home.

When our life's cycle on earth
 is complete,
 We have dear one's
 we're anxious to meet.
 So we open the book
 and check up the past,
 Anxieties are over;
 this is the last.

Each item is checked,
 each page is clean,
 We carry our passport
 to the Builder Supreme.
 He has promised
 when this house is spent
 There'll be one all ready
 with the timber I sent.

If the material is poor,
 it will be my loss
 The time is used
 that we send across.
 So be sure the material

you send above,
Is straight grained timber
of brotherly love.⁶¹⁸

In a wonderful (can we call it ‘unexpected’?) outcome, any reader aware of the fate of McNichol’s “Old Clay House” is invited to interpret the clairvoyant’s poem as a kind of premonition for the future “boxing up and laying away” of the building in 1989. If we were to sit at the kitchen table of the McNichol home in the present, we would be looking across that table at McNichol, in the past and seated at her own kitchen table, considering her future home and the person who might reside there.



Figure 11. Card decks from the clairvoyant Vera McNichol arranged in a display vitrine. From “Snake in My Mouth” *Items and Correspondences from Vera McNichol*, curated by Ruth Skinner, D. B. Weldon Library, Western University, 2016. Materials from the Vera McNichol Fonds, courtesy of the Stratford-Perth Archives.

⁶¹⁸ McNichol, *Smiling Through Tears*, Volume 3, 314-315.

The Card Reader

An earlier premonition in this thesis discusses playing card cartomancy—the reading of playing cards to understand the past, present and future. *‘Snake in My Mouth’: Items and Correspondences from Vera McNichol* was a small experiment that I organized in order to approach the exhibition in terms of a playing card spread. The exhibition took place at the D.B. Weldon Library at Western University in 2016. It engaged the card decks, correspondence and personal ephemera of the titular Southern Ontario clairvoyant, which are all part of the Vera McNichol Fonds at the Stratford-Perth Archives, as well as a number of her publications.⁶¹⁹ The exhibition also presented a series of representational challenges, and so the playing card spread became a valuable convention to both embrace and trouble these challenges—not only in terms of the placement of materials, but also in attempting to activate the materials in ways they were used to being enacted. With the card spread as a starting point, exhibition methods also referenced automatic writing, forensic research and witness statements, and A. H. Bell’s prospect of diving at second-hand.

The first curatorial challenge was incompleteness. The Stratford-Perth archives acquired a very partial collection of McNichol’s materials: letters and card charts from patrons, card decks (some worn, some new), a series of drawings by friend Patsy Jarvis covered in foil, an autograph book, scrap books, a few self-help booklets on marital relations, a blank answer sheet for a multiple-choice test and a blank astronomy test, and hand-drawn grocer signs advertising Eno fruit salts, Maple Leaf mincemeat, and farm house cream pies. More intimate objects are also in the collection: a quilt, a decorative sign encouraging patience, a pair of shoes and a pair of slippers, a couple of well-used ashtrays, a clutch, a basket, a crocheted bag, and a keychain.⁶²⁰ These materials take up

⁶¹⁹ Ruth Skinner, “*Snake in My Mouth*”: *Items and Correspondences from Vera McNichol*, April 15 – 29, 2016, D.B. Weldon Library, Western University. The title borrows from McNichol’s aforementioned of her power as the snake in the Garden of Eden. See McNichol, *Smiling Through Tears, Volume 1*, 107.

⁶²⁰ Encountering McNichol’s archive for the first time, it was personally gratifying to encounter the keychain, which brandished a happy-looking Newfoundland dog.

four filing boxes and constitute a significantly partial collection.⁶²¹ Further to this, many of the letters in the collection are relatively recent and have identifying information. Some of the questions asked of McNichol's patrons are fairly ubiquitous, but others are quite harrowing and personal in nature. It was important to safeguard the identities of the letter writers, while allowing for a way to explore their material.

The obscurity of McNichol's archive is made more indeterminate by McNichol herself—her deeply felt Protestant beliefs, her close ties to law enforcement, her personal publishing career and her local notoriety all refract through and inform her readings and her archive. McNichol was astutely aware of her own fame, keeping annotated scrapbooks of news clippings about her activities. Her attention to self-promotion is criticized in one unfortunate incident: London, ON resident Jean Tower commissioned McNichol to help find her daughter, Christy Jean Tower, in 1983. According to Tower, a self-professed skeptic, McNichol assured her that her daughter was alive and could be found in Texas, where she had recently begun work as a cocktail waitress. Tower covered McNichol's expenses on a 12-day trip to Texas, but later complained to a reporter of McNichol's priorities: "Mrs. Tower said everywhere they went, McNichol was always trying to promote the book she had written. 'She was telling them all about her books and showing her price list,' she said. 'She was more interested in meeting famous people and making a name for herself.'" Christy Jean Tower's body was discovered in Texas two months after her disappearance.⁶²²

Attending to the history of playing card reading provides an alternative and valuable contextual understanding for working with an archive such as this. McNichol typically used two decks of playing cards in each of her readings: one to describe the past and one to foretell the future. If carrying out a reading in person, she'd lay out the cards herself. If corresponding by mail, she'd provide the individual with instructions: "shuffle 52 cards

⁶²¹ Schaefer's article indicates that Archivist James Anderson purchased what he was able at McNichol's 1998 auction, but because of great local interest in Vera her materials were broadly dispersed. Eva Debus, cited as a close friend of McNichol's, purchased "about half of Vera's diaries, and her school graduation certificates." See Schaefer, "Era ends as Vera McNichol's belongings sold."

⁶²² "Millbank psychic erred, girl was slain in Texas," *Beacon Herald*, 26 April 1983.

while making a wish; lay them out in ten rows of 5 cards each, and two cards left over in the eleventh row. Put down your questions and mail the layout to me.”⁶²³ We don’t have an exact account of her approach to card reading, though we know from her autobiographical writing that her readings were augmented by her innate clairvoyant capacities (McNichol would see things, hear things, feel things, and intuit things beyond what she saw in a card spread). We also know that McNichol’s Protestant beliefs and her card-reading were not at odds. She includes an aphoristic account of a soldier about to be punished for playing cards in church in Volume III of *Smiling Through Tears*. The soldier offers the Provo Marshall a lengthy monologue of how, since he was not able to carry a Bible on his march, the card deck offers an alternative avenue into his faith: ““when I look at the ace in my deck of cards it reminds me that there is but one God. The deuce tells me that the Bible is divided into two parts – the Old and the New Testaments. When I see the [three] I think of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and when I look at the four, I think of the four great evangelists, who preached the Gospel,”” and so on.⁶²⁴ Throughout McNichol’s books, we have scattered descriptions about her using cards to represent individuals. Similar to the above anecdote, one card might indicate a dark-haired man, another a blond-haired woman. These correspondences track with popular cartomancy manuals that were in circulation at the time.

Modern playing card reading and Tarot developed from European card decks that were used for games and gambling through the 14th through the 16th-centuries. Toward the late 17th century, certain card decks (like the Marseilles Tarot) were given occult significance by Antoine Court and others, who positioned them as ancient storehouses of esoteric knowledge harkening back to ancient Egypt.⁶²⁵ There are card-reading approaches that

⁶²³ Vera Ernst McNichol, “Dear New Friend” undated carbon copy form response.

⁶²⁴ McNichol, *Smiling Through Tears*, Volume 3, 38.

⁶²⁵ For more recent accounts of playing card cartomancy history and methods, see Emily E. Auger, *Cartomancy and Tarot in Film: 1940 – 2010* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2016); Alessandro Bellenghi, *Cartomancy* (London, UK: Ebury Press, 1985, 1988); Michael Dummet and Sylvia Mann. *The Game of Tarot: From Ferrara to Salt Lake City* (London, UK: Duckworth, 1980), which focuses on Tarot reading histories and practices but offers a useful account of playing card fortune telling; Joanne Leslie, *The Playing Card Workbook: A Contemporary Manual of Cartomancy* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1988); Austin Osman Spare, *Two Tracts on Cartomancy*, edited by Gavin Semple

vector Tarot reading practices onto a standard card deck. Using playing cards like one would the Minor Arcana, for example, you can sub in spades, clubs, hearts, and diamonds as swords, wands, cups and pentacles, respectively. But playing card reading also developed as its own form of divinatory card reading, separate from Tarot card reading both functionally and commercially. Playing cards were familiar, they were financially accessible, and they didn't have the additional Major Arcana cards to interpret. Card reading handbooks of the early twentieth centuries touted playing card reading as relatively straightforward to learn.⁶²⁶ Interpretations were generally quite material in nature and concerned with the day-to-day activities of life.

In his 1864 *Book of Days*, Robert Chambers distinguishes English modes of divining with playing cards from continental practices. Providing an overview of what each separate card is meant to mean, Chambers also outlines the narrative function of the card deck: separate cards are “merely the alphabet of the art: the letters, as it were, of the sentences formed by the various combinations of the cards.”⁶²⁷ The 1889 *Handbook of Cartomancy* imbues playing cards with that same “ancient lore” that Tarot users sought to establish. As a handbook it emphasizes that card reading can be learned, and that divinatory objects are tools to encourage, assist, and augment the existing intuitive qualities of the

(London, UK: Fulgur Limited, 1997); Chita St. Lawrence, *It's All in the Cards: Fortune Telling Using Standard Playing Cards* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 1999). A popular book on fortune telling with cards that, while entertaining, takes significant historical liberties, is Nerys Dee, *Fortune-Telling by Playing Cards: A New Guide to the Ancient Art of Cartomancy* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1982).

⁶²⁶ See Edward Samuel Taylor, *The History of Playing Cards: With Anecdotes of Their Use in Conjuring, Fortune-Telling and Card-Sharping* (London, UK: John Camden Hotten, 1865); Grand Orient (Sapiens dominabitur astris), *A Handbook of Cartomancy: Fortune Telling and Occult Divination* (London, UK: George Redway, 1889), with subsequent editions of the *Handbook* published by William Rider and Son, Limited into the early 1900s.

⁶²⁷ “The Folklore of Playing Cards,” (February 21) in Robert Chambers, *The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities in Connection with the Calendar, Including Anecdote, Biography, & History, Curiosities of Literature and Oddities of Human Life and Character*, Volume 1 (London, UK; Edinburgh: W. & S. Chambers, 1864; 1879), 294.

individual: “they are simply aids to elicit clairvoyance, and to cast the Seer for the time being into a biologized condition.”⁶²⁸

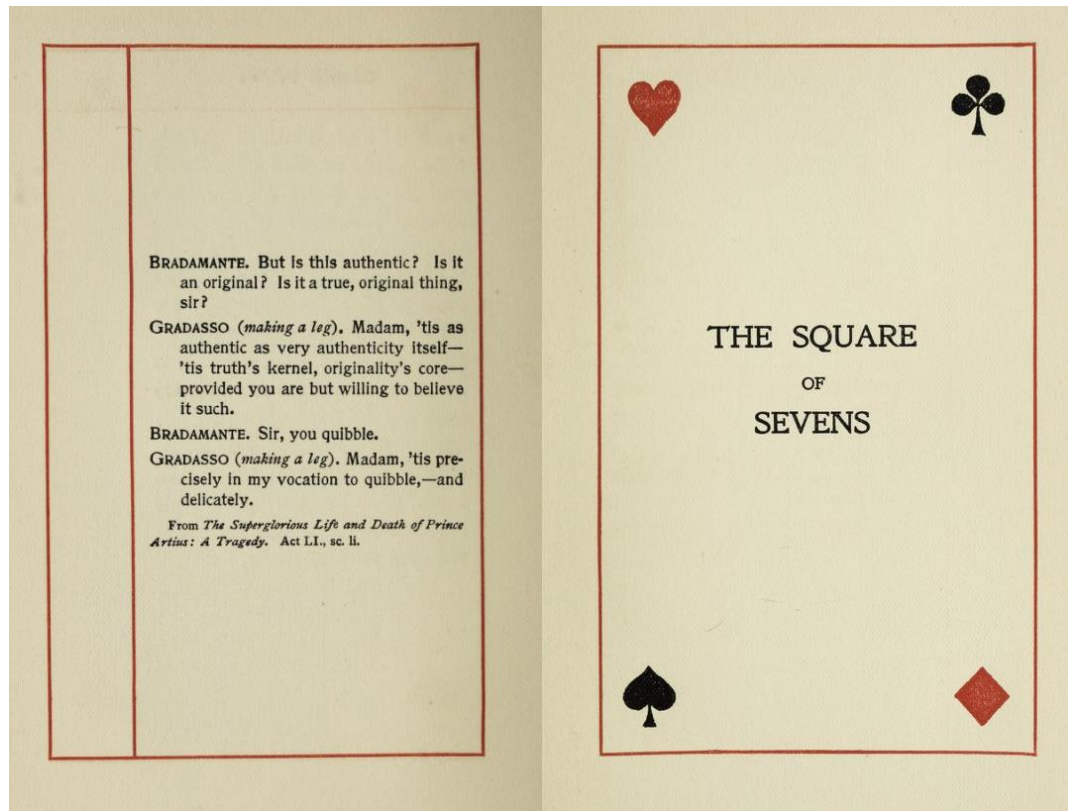


Figure 12. Robert Antrobus, *The Square of Sevens: An Authoritative System of Cartomancy*. With a prefatory notice by E. Irenaeus Stevenson (London, England: Harper & Brothers; George Redway, 1896; 1900).

Published by George Redway in 1896, *The Square of Sevens* presents as a reprint of Robert Antrobus’s eighteenth-century treatise “The Square of Sevens, and the Parallelogram.”⁶²⁹ It is a gorgeous publication but also a charming hoax that satirizes

⁶²⁸ Grand Orient, *A Handbook of Cartomancy*, vi. This is more complicated than Albert S. Lyons’ distinction of card reading as a “system of prediction that can be taught and learned,” unlike other prophetic methods requiring “spiritual, intuitive talents. See Lyons, *Predicting the Future*, 10.

⁶²⁹ Robert Antrobus, *The Square of Sevens: An Authoritative System of Cartomancy*. With a prefatory notice by E. Irenaeus Stevenson (London, England: Harper & Brothers; George Redway, 1896; 1900).

playing card handbooks of the period. Throughout the book, a great deal of narrative mystique is offered on the source of this particular card-reading method. Yet keen readers will note that various epigraphs relate to lying, truth and falsehood. For example, there's an extended quotation about "quibbling" from Act LI., sc. li [Act 51, scene 2] of *The Superglorious Life and Death of Prince Artius: A Tragedy*, a play that doesn't exist.⁶³⁰ As Tarot scholar Mary K. Greer has pointed out, the citation is a kind of onomatopoeia to read as "actually silly" (see Figure 12).⁶³¹ Stevenson is generally accepted to be Edward Ireaneous Prime-Stevenson, an American author, journalist and critic. What's particularly exciting about this publication is that Stevenson's hoax is quite effective. The Square of Sevens method is reprinted in later handbooks on divination as a means to assert their own esoteric lineage—and this happens a number of times across different handbooks, with authors borrowing (or stealing) from one another. For example, an extended passage from *The Square of Sevens* appears in the 1923 book *Your Fate and the Cards* by Ivan Forbes. Forbes claims the method has never been published before, summarizes Prime-Stevenson's satirical mythology, and proceeds to quote full passages from Prime-Stevenson's work as truth. Whether this enthusiasm was earnest or financially motivated is unknown.⁶³²

⁶³⁰ Antrobus, *The Square of Sevens*, xxvi.

⁶³¹ Mary K. Greer, "A Hoax Revealed: Update on "The Square of Sevens," Mary K. Greer's Tarot Blog, 3 April 2008, <https://marykgreer.com/2008/04/03/a-hoax-revealed-update-on-the-square-of-sevens/>.

⁶³² Ivan Forbes, *Your Fate and the Cards* (London, UK: Hutchinson & Co., 1923). An advertisement for Forbes' book appears in the novel *Ocean Tramps*, with the publication described as "A new and comprehensive treatise on 'How to Interpret the Cards,' conceived on lines greatly in advance of all similar publications." In the advertising appendix "Hutchinson's Important New Books," page 12, which appears at the end of H. de Vere Stacpoole, *Ocean Tramps* (London, UK: Hutchinson & Co., 1924).



Figure 13. “The Cup of Knowledge,” produced by Aynsley (England), 1924. Corresponding booklet: Willis MacNichol [William Nicholson and Samuel MacNarama], *Cup of Knowledge: A Key to the Mysteries of Divination* (London, England: J. & B. Dodsworth), 1924. Image courtesy of the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic.

Adjacent to the history of playing card cartomancy is the development of fortune telling teacups, specifically cups that combine tea leaf reading (tasseomancy) with playing card reading. Fortune telling teacups were a popular commercial item in the early twentiethth century, professing to make two independently complicated divinatory skills easier by combining them into one activity. “The Cup of Knowledge” (produced by Aynsley, England in 1924) was, according to writer catherine yronwode, a commercial hit with numerous incarnations (see Figure 13).⁶³³ The accompanying booklet for the cup

⁶³³ See catherine yronwode’s Wiki, The Mystic Tea Room, last modified on 8 September 2017—specifically the category listing for “Cup of Knowledge,” https://mystictearoom.com/wiki/Category:Cup_of_Knowledge.

emphasized the simplicity of its technique.⁶³⁴ Demonstrating the triangulation of clairvoyance, forensic study and the popular press, the cup claims that “Forthcoming public events are frequently revealed. ... public news is usually foretold.”⁶³⁵ The Cup of Knowledge presents as a hybrid divinatory and domestic object that links itself directly to popular news media: it addresses people’s relationships with their media landscapes, while presenting as a means to navigate this mass of information. That user also becomes a proto-producer of information in their own right. The booklet’s author(s) profess that, “Just as one newspaper man may write up the story of some happening in a brighter and better way than a rival journalist, so will one person—with the proper faculty developed—make more out of the meanings in the Cup of Knowledge than others.”⁶³⁶

Thinking through the potential of divinatory tools to make sense of information, as well as the interactions between clairvoyance and publishing and forensics, an early strategy I attempted for working with the Vera McNichol archives was to approach the book itself—in this case, one of Vera’s books—in terms of a card deck. This draws in part on Maurice Blanchot’s expression of the book as “the *a priori* of knowledge.” Blanchot writes: “We would know nothing if there did not always exist in advance the impersonal memory of the book and, more importantly, the prior inclination to write and read contained in every book and affirming itself only in the book.”⁶³⁷ Blanchot implies a kind of preternatural experience in the reading act, and it opens up possibilities to think through numerous interacting interfaces: here, the card spread and the book form.

In 2015, prior to the “*Snake in my Mouth*” exhibition, I attempted to work with McNichol’s archive in this way. I contributed a participatory piece to *Euro Spa*, a pop-up Exhibition in Toronto organized by Nicole Clouston and Quintin Teszeri. As McNichol

⁶³⁴ “The Cup of Knowledge,” produced by Aynsley (England), 1924, and the corresponding booklet by Willis MacNichol, *Cup of Knowledge: A Key to the Mysteries of Divination* (London, UK: J. & B. Dodsworth, 1924). The authorial name “Willis MacNichol” is a blending of the authors William Nicholson and Samuel MacNarama. It feels pertinent to point out the homophone between MacNichol and McNichol.

⁶³⁵ MacNichol, *Cup of Knowledge*, 31.

⁶³⁶ MacNichol, *Cup of Knowledge*, 26.

⁶³⁷ Blanchot, “The Absence of the Book,” 472.

used two card spreads for her readings, this work set two copies of volume one of *Smiling Through Tears* on a table. Nearby hung a framed news clipping about McNichol. It invited the viewer to pick up each of the books (one for past, one for future), and find a line that would serve as a useful ‘reading.’ The piece engaged with rhapsodomancy, the divinatory practice of opening a book at random with a question in mind and letting the eye fall on a line which would act as a response for that question. Swapping out two card decks for two identical copies of the autobiography played with the tension between whether the divinatory tools (here, the books) have their own power, or whether it is the individual’s own intuitive skill that makes sense of the information that they’re given. The gesture of swapping out the two identical card decks McNichol would have used with two (identical) autobiographies that she wrote and published is a performed sleight-of-hand to suggest the potential of the card deck as book, and vice versa. This move also signals Jonathan Allen’s description of cards as “narrative-generating devices capable of both reifying fiction and fictionalising fact.”⁶³⁸ In this sense, with every ‘shuffle,’ or page turn, modes of interpretation are reconfigured, new relationships and contingencies emerge. This initial work opened up some ideas: card reading represents an intra-active and potentially infrathin mode of investigation. In its impossible representational breadth, it brings past, present and future histories and potentials into contact while offering no singular or fixed outcome.

In a 1985 guide and history for card reading, Alessandro Bellenghi raises the question: what use is it to try to understand the functioning of an esoteric device?⁶³⁹ This relays with Allen’s personal experience (and suggestion) to avoid *using* the cards toward their divinatory purpose. Instead, Allen uses the Spare deck as an object of study and a focus for his curatorial and art practice.⁶⁴⁰ Discerning a method to Vera McNichol’s clairvoyance is not central to what’s at stake in this research project. It is more helpful to

⁶³⁸ Jonathan Allen, “Introduction,” *Lost Envoy*, 22.

⁶³⁹ Bellenghi, *Cartomancy*, 7.

⁶⁴⁰ Conversation with Jonathan Allen, 20 September 2018 at the British Library, London, UK.

follow Allen’s suggestion that the cards are a means to an end. They are, as Chambers said in 1864, “the alphabet of the art”; or, to follow Grand Orient’s 1889 *Handbook*:

they are but what the alphabet is to the printed book; a little attention and practice, however, will soon enable the learner to form these mystic letters into words, and words into phrases—in other language, to assemble these cards together, and read the events, past and to come, which their symbols pretend to reveal.⁶⁴¹

Or, MacNichol repeating (nearly mirroring, possibly stealing) this sentiment for *The Cup of Knowledge* in 1924:

they are but what the alphabet is to the printed book; a little attention and practice, however, will soon enable the learner to form these mystic letters into words, and words into phrases: the other language, to assemble these cards together, and read the events, past and to come, their pictured faces reveal.⁶⁴²

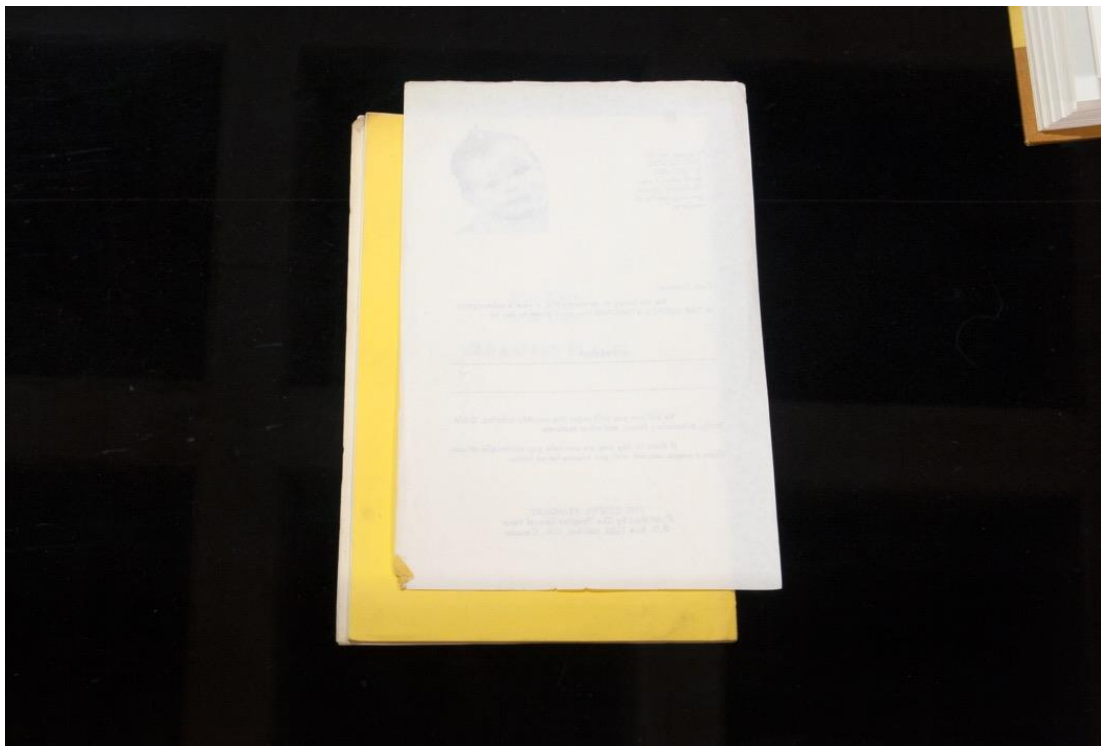


Figure 14. Print ephemera from the Vera McNichol fonds displayed both face up and face down. In “Snake in My Mouth” *Items and Correspondences from Vera*

⁶⁴¹ Grand Orient, *A Handbook of Cartomancy*, 82.

⁶⁴² MacNichol, *Cup of Knowledge*, 29.

***McNichol*, curated by Ruth Skinner, D. B. Weldon Library, Western University, 2016. Materials from the Vera McNichol Fonds, courtesy of the Stratford-Perth Archives.**

“Can we learn to hold more than one answer in our minds?”

In *‘Snake in My Mouth,’* letters, books, drawings, news clippings, card decks and personal ephemera were brought into proximal contact. Beyond a summary description of McNichol’s life and work, no accompanying didactic information was provided to indicate the outcome of any of her readings for clients. No suggestion or interpretation was made regarding the impact that her personal materials, such as her own personal belongings, would have had on her readings. A selection of card decks was positioned in a grid to emulate McNichol’s preferred card spread and to visually suggest the impossible combinations of answers that might result from a single spread (see Figure 11). The positioning of cards in card games was also referenced: materials were presented both face up and face down, and certain materials could only be viewed obliquely (see Figure 14). Other materials, like the wonderfully inscrutable drawings by Patsy Jarvis, were presented entirely as themselves: viewers were left to wonder about the connection between the subject matter of Jarvis’ drawings—a woman’s face, a bird on a branch, a desiccated tree reflected in a lake, a wintry landscape, a bonneted Victorian woman—their relationship to McNichol, and the use of the aluminum foil as either a practical protective covering or arcane device.

Working with McNichol’s materials and stories, and their associated tensions, it felt important that I restrain from making value judgements, or assessments, of their—and McNichol’s—veracity one way or the other. Instead, I considered the strategy of laying out her materials as one might lay out a deck of cards for a reading. This tactic was in keeping with Claire Bishop’s description of research-based art: an additive research and curatorial technique that prioritizes a maximum of materials and texts, considers their “techniques of display” and the “accumulation and spatialization of information,” while

also abstaining from concrete conclusions or statements.⁶⁴³ In the situation of ‘*Snake In my Mouth*,’ I also avoided textual didactics that might supply useful context for materials. Instead, the Weldon vitrines were filled with McNichol’s personal belongings, a selection of her publications, and a series of personal correspondences.

Challenged with how to present the letters from McNichol’s archive, I reached out to friends (some artists, some not) for assistance. Stratford-Perth had provided excellent 1:1 colour copies of the correspondences, so I shared these with collaborators and requested that individuals spend time reading and reproducing their letters. Identifying information had to be changed, but participants were encouraged to try to emulate the spirit of the letter both in tone and appearance. The exhibition vitrines displayed a mix of replica letters and excerpts of colour copies positioned so as to obscure any identifying information (see Figure 15). The activity of copying the letters led to some conversation about automatic drawing, or psychography. One artist expressed feeling a deep emotional reaction while replicating her letter: she felt a close connection to the letter’s author, and a strong concern for the author’s own well-being. Another artist found herself searching online for information about the individual who had written their letter—a particularly harrowing account in which the author discusses a suspected matricide. This collaborator felt compelled to know more about the outcome.

An earlier premonition in this paper cites A. H. Bell’s introduction to dowsing methods, including the proposition of “divining at second-hand”: a situation in which a dowser “experiences the reactions of another dowser” while traversing a site, instead of experiencing the dowsing objective itself.⁶⁴⁴ Artist Alana Bartol’s essay for *BlackFlash Magazine*, titled “How to Dowse (or a primer on asking better questions),” provides a useful parallel conversation related to divinatory tools and practices. Bartol describes how “dowsers seek answers and direction through the movements of tools and

⁶⁴³ Claire Bishop, “Information Overload.” Bishop’s concept is discussed elsewhere in this thesis, under “Premonition: A Warning for the Present...,” in the section “Laying Out the Cards.”

⁶⁴⁴ A. H. Bell, “Introduction,” 11.

materials.”⁶⁴⁵ She notes how folk practices of dowsing, or “water-witching,” have become undeniably tied to resource extraction.⁶⁴⁶ Bartol recounts how practicing dowsing led to her “[becoming] less concerned with answers and more curious about questions.”⁶⁴⁷ She extends this personal experience by ruminating on broader modes of experience and lines of inquiry that dowsing encourages: “I saw how dowsing could allow conflicts, desires, and systems to come into view and, maybe most importantly, how it could act as a tool for reciprocity, questioning, and movement, a tool for attuning ourselves differently to our environments, energies, the earth, the elements, our more-than-human kin, and each other.”⁶⁴⁸

From her position as an artist and water-witch, Bartol perceives how dowsing prioritizes how we ask questions and how we interpret information. She incorporates her explorations into a series of projects addressing orphan wells in Alberta, including the Orphan Well Adoption Agency (OWAA). Albeit a fictional non-profit, OWAA draws attention to caretaking as an ongoing responsibility to the land and its resources. By approaching dowsing in terms of a metaphor, Bartol has directed an experience of qualia toward meaningful outcomes for the land. Reflecting on her research and her projects, I realize that “*Snake in My Mouth*” was perhaps too ephemeral in its curatorial objectives.

⁶⁴⁵ Alana Bartol, “How to Dowse (or a primer on asking better questions),” *BlackFlash Magazine*, 12 October 2022, <https://blackflash.ca/expanded/how-to-dowse>.

⁶⁴⁶ Bartol writes: “As a white settler, understanding my relationship to my dowsing abilities has been part of my ongoing work to develop a connection to a family lineage and ancestry. To me, this history is inseparable from the ongoing violent colonization on Turtle Island. Dowsing, like my family, is tied to white settler colonialism. It has been used in parts of Europe since the 15th century for finding water and as a tool for prospectors searching for mineral ores such as gold, copper, and silver, as well as coal. [...] Through this work, I reflect on how I, along with other white settler Canadians, am implicated in systems of oppression—organized around white settler colonialism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism—intertwined with environmental degradation, Indigenous dispossession, and ongoing colonial violence,” in “How to Dowse.”

⁶⁴⁷ Bartol, “How to Dowse.”

⁶⁴⁸ Bartol, “How to Dowse.”

With hindsight, I recognize that it required more guidance in terms of how it prompted engagement and interaction, as well as in how it fostered lines of contact and inquiry. In the attempt to avoid over-articulating or over-prescribing McNichol's archival materials, the project also may have under-articulated its purpose. The likely result was that a visitor to the exhibition would feel genuinely curious about the materials therein, but unable to catch hold of any of these fragments in a meaningful way. To cite Bartol, the project may have been too enigmatic for its own good:

The enigmatic answers of oracles and clairvoyants are never straightforward but an entangled web of possibilities and interpretations. How can dowsing teach us to embrace uncertainty in ourselves? Can we learn to hold more than one answer in our minds? And what happens in our bodies when we do? Is dowsing reciprocal? What are the complexities of asking questions—particularly yes/no ones? How specific or general should they be? What are the questions we want to ask, and why? How do you receive the answers? Where do they lead? Are there consequences for you, for others, and for the earth?⁶⁴⁹

Nonetheless, I understand that it is possible to direct an enigmatic experience toward meaning-making. Bartol draws concrete attention to how to ask questions, the desires behind those questions, and the outcomes of asking them in the ways that we do. These concerns refract throughout McNichol's personal cache of letters and drawn card spreads: correspondences that are filled with a range of questions asked in myriad ways, and equally filled with the desire *to know*.

⁶⁴⁹ Bartol, "How to Dowse."

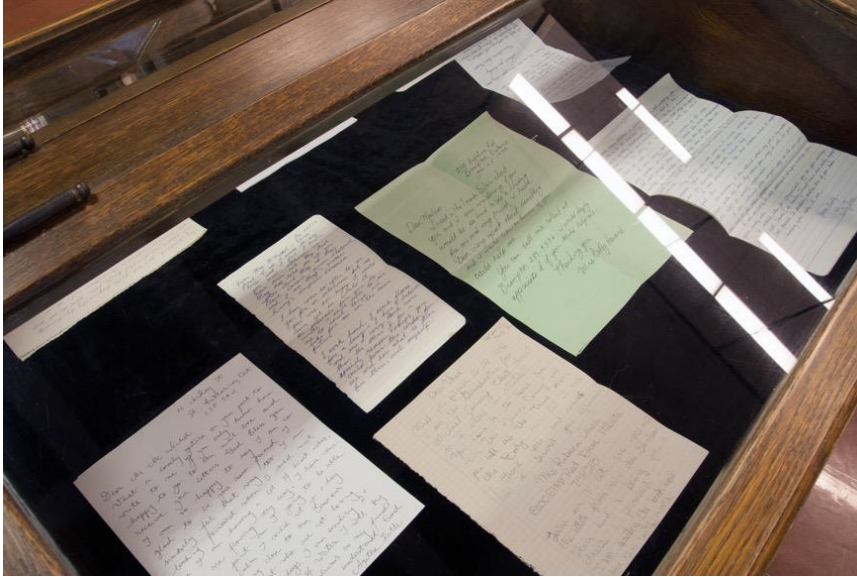


Figure 15. Reproduction letters and reproduced letters. “Snake in My Mouth” Items and Correspondences from Vera McNichol, curated by Ruth Skinner, D. B. Weldon Library, Western University, 2016. Materials courtesy of the Vera McNichol Fonds, the Stratford-Perth Archives. Reproduced letters courtesy of friends.

As I think through alternative encounters with McNichol’s materials, I think back on the striking one-to-one impacts that my invited collaborators had when reading and writing through individual letters. I wonder if there is contact which might be made, once again, with my earlier project of rhapsodomancy, doubling, and sleight-of-hand. Blanchot’s attention to the always “prior inclination to write and read contained in every book and affirming itself only in the book” suggests that the archive of this clairvoyant publisher could best be (re)enacted and (re)engaged through the book. I pick up one of McNichol’s volumes and open it to the following:

On reading the man’s cards I asked the same question, “Do you wish to be alone?” The man insisted, “This is my wife.” I asked him, “Whom do you think you are kidding?” With this I reached for the guest book, which lay across the table to the right of the man. Before I could get it, he grabbed it. I simply said, “This is enough evidence to convict you.”

As I read on in the cards I could see this man with his back to a group, while he faced a man in a box. Immediately, witness box came into my mind and I could see the man was taken back by my remark, also by what followed. At the moment I did not realize I was addressing a criminal lawyer, but as soon as the couple left it dawned on me, since I recognized the name. The lady's name as I suspected was not the same as his. Now he was the one in the witness box.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁵⁰ Vera McNichol, *Smiling Through Tears, Volume 3*, 365-366.

Chapter 3

3 Publishing the Present; Publishing for the Future⁶⁵¹

But why, then, this persistent, pathological paddling in guts & blood? Why this intense, invariable, I-am-the-man insistence upon personal vengeance in a culture where revenge is disgraceful, the taking of the law into one's own hands a crime? Why must it be murder, murder, murder, murder?⁶⁵²

+ + +

The Daughter. [To THE LAWYER.] Can that be true?

The Lawyer. On the whole, yes.

The Daughter. You mean to say that every man at some time has deserved to go to prison?

The Lawyer. Yes.

The Daughter. You, too?

The Lawyer. Yes.⁶⁵³

Violent Encounters

In his 1921 essay, “Critique of Violence,” Walter Benjamin describes a particular, insidious power dynamic between citizen and state legal power. He examines how violence (here, state violence) is proclaimed justifiable when operating in accordance with the law—itself a function of the state, with a vested interest in upholding the power

⁶⁵¹ The title of this chapter borrows its title from Publishing the Present (Wendy’s Subway, READ Books, the Libby Leshgold Gallery at Emily Carr University of Art + Design), accessed 7 October 2020, <https://libby.ecuad.ca/publishingthepresent/>.

⁶⁵² Gershon Legman, *Love & Death: A Study in Censorship* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1949;1963), 10

⁶⁵³ August Strindberg, *The Dream Play*, translated by Edwin Björkman, in *Contemporary Drama: 15 Plays*, edited by E. Bradlee Watson and Benfield Pressey (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1959), 119-120.

of the state.⁶⁵⁴ Ten years later, in describing an encounter with the photographs of Eugène Atget, Benjamin details the results of this maleficent jurisprudence: “Not for nothing have Atget’s shots been compared with those of a crime scene. But is not every spot of our cities a crime scene? Every passer-by a perpetrator?”⁶⁵⁵ In a 1934 address at the Institute for the Study of Fascism titled “The Author as Producer,” Benjamin cites Bertolt Brecht’s Epic Theatre for, importantly, “interrupting the plot.”⁶⁵⁶ Benjamin demands consideration of the role of the author within revolutionary struggle, and emphasizes their capacity to shift the balance of power. Importantly, he extends this function to “certain other producers” (which might include the photographer, the musician, the press, the publisher).⁶⁵⁷ His formations provide a productive terrain for exploring the potential activist functions of contemporary arts publishing.

Marit Paasche and Judy Radul’s edited collection *A Thousand Eyes: Media Technology, Law and Aesthetics* tracks the intersections of art and the law, specifically their corresponding and contradictory expectations for the functions of representation. Paasche and Radul cite Kafka when explaining the initial impetus for their research: an acceptance that “the very quality of our reality carries a legal dimension.”⁶⁵⁸ Small-press publisher and cultural critic Gershon Legman experienced first-hand the impacts of juridical power on production, and this informed his assessment of the landscape of literary publishing writ large. His 1949 essay collection *Love & Death: A Study in Censorship* emphasizes the dire stakes of a state power that controls the circulation of art, and the corresponding influence of that power on the cultural imaginary. The essays that

⁶⁵⁴ Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (New York, New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 277–300.

⁶⁵⁵ Walter Benjamin, “Small History of Photography,” in Walter Benjamin, *On Photography*, edited and translated by Esther Leslie (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 93.

⁶⁵⁶ Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Vol. 2, Part 2: 1931–1934*, translated by Rodney Livingston et al. (Cambridge, MA; London, UK: Belknap Press, 1999), 778.

⁶⁵⁷ Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” 776.

⁶⁵⁸ Marita Paasche and Judy Radul, “Preface,” *A Thousand Eyes: Media Technology, Law and Aesthetics* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011), 31.

make up *Love & Death* were first serialized in *Neurotica*, a short-lived but impactful avant-garde magazine for which Legman served as an author, editor, and distributor (1948 – 1951).⁶⁵⁹ Contributors to *Neurotica* included Allen Ginsberg, John Clellon Holmes, Judith Malina, and Marshall McLuhan. *Love & Death* tracks, from Legman’s perspective, the logical conclusion of a longstanding cultural development: 18th-century “Puritan censorship” of art and literature has culminated in the total redaction of sex in the modern era, resulting in a corresponding fixation/reliance on violence and murder.⁶⁶⁰ Or, in Legman’s clipped phrase: “Sex being forbidden, violence took its place.”⁶⁶¹

As a publisher and distributor of erotic material, Legman is concerned with how popular pulp fiction lauds simplistic narratives of interpersonal and state violence, even as that same state operates to censor and eliminate so-called ‘vulgar’ publishers. For Legman, the stakes are two-fold. First: “bad art drives out good.”⁶⁶² He sees this operating at the levels of cultural production and circulation, which cycle back onto one another. From a production standpoint, pulp murder mysteries perpetuate thinly-veiled substitutions for sexual violation, the result of mass cultural and sexual frustration. From the circulation standpoint, censorship and obscenity laws myopically fixated on sex and sensuality. This results in literary works given the ‘freedom’ to be exceedingly violent but specifically sexless. Auguring an extreme outcome of this imbalance, Legman warns that in a murder-fixated society, any number of potential crises (economic, political, religious) will propel the symbolic violence inherent within the population toward dangerous action. This modern cultural and moral crisis is most visible in the popularity of violent comic strips for children and “entirely sexless” murder mysteries for adults, in which the reader finds “only sadism and pleasure in death.”⁶⁶³ Legman is interested in

⁶⁵⁹ *Love & Death* comprises four of Legman’s essays, “Institutionalized Lynch,” “Not for Children,” “Avatars of the Bitch” and “Open Season on Women,” compiled and published under the *Neurotica* masthead.

⁶⁶⁰ Legman, *Love & Death*, 10.

⁶⁶¹ Legman, *Love & Death*, 10.

⁶⁶² Legman, *Love & Death*, 8.

⁶⁶³ Legman, *Love & Death*, 11.

psychoanalysis and psychopathology. He perceives popular depictions of physical violence as thinly-veiled substitutions for sexual violation or the result of significant sexual frustration.

Legman's particular passion for this subject can be attributed to the trajectory of his own career and his investment in literary erotica, both of which explain the emotional fortitude of the essays that make up *Love & Death*. Prior to his own publishing career, Legman assisted the artist and obstetrician Robert Latou Dickinson; he was a research assistant and book acquirer for Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Institute; he worked for the antiquarian and erotic bookstore of publisher Jacob Brussel.⁶⁶⁴ Legman's early scholarly research focused on eroticism and taboo within folklore. In addition to writing and editing for *Neurotica*, he facilitated its distribution by post. This led to his being charged with the distribution of obscene materials by the United States Postal Office, and prompted a move to Europe to avoid court proceedings.⁶⁶⁵

In *Love & Death*, Legman profiles the important cultural impact of a series of Supreme Court cases and appeals in the 1940s. New York bookdealer Murray Winters battled a number of obscenity charges for possessing (with intent to distribute) salacious crime magazines.⁶⁶⁶ Winters's printed materials, it was argued, fell under the following description of Penal Law, article 106, section 1141, subdivision 2: "any book, pamphlet, magazine, newspaper or other printed paper devoted to the publication, and principally made up of criminal news, police reports, or accounts of criminal deeds, or pictures, or

⁶⁶⁴ For biographical information on Legman, see: Susan G. Davis, *Dirty Jokes and Bawdy Songs: The Uncensored Life of Gershon Legman* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019); Nina Attwood and Barry Reay, "Amateur Sexology: Gershon Legman and US Sexual History," in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* Vol 30.1 (2021): 1-22.

⁶⁶⁵ See Susan Davis, "Eros Meets Civilization: Gershon Legman Confronts the Post Office," in *Serpents in the Garden: Liasons with Culture & Sex*, edited by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair (Petrolia, CA; Oakland, CA: CounterPunch; AK Press, 2004), 253-269.

⁶⁶⁶ Legman, *Love & Death*, 46. For Winters' cases, see: *People v. Winters*, 268 A.D. 30 (N.Y. App. Div. 1944); *People v. Winters*, 294 N.Y. 545 (N.Y. 1945); *Winters v. New York*, 333 U.S. 507 (1948). Legman also notes the 1884 strike-down of The New York Penal Law, § 1141(2): a law that previously controlled the dissemination of obscene materials to minors and "made literary 'bloodshed' at least as bad as sex," 18.

stories of deeds of bloodshed, lust or crime.”⁶⁶⁷ Winters’ defence argued for free speech. The prosecution for *Winters v. New York*, 333 U.S. 507 (1948) attempted to prove that his materials could be considered propaganda for its capacity to promote violent action. Propaganda, unlike press freedoms or literature, could be censored. In his ruling, Justice Stanley F. Reed acknowledged “the importance of the exercise of a state’s police power to minimize all incentives to crime, particularly in the field of sanguinary or salacious publications with their stimulation of juvenile delinquency.”⁶⁶⁸ Judge Reed determined “[t]he line between the informing and the entertaining is too elusive,” and so did not endorse removing Winters’ “constitutional protection for a free press.”⁶⁶⁹ He concluded: “Though we can see nothing of any possible value to society in these magazines, they are as much entitled to the protection of free speech as the best of literature. . . . They are equally subject to control if they are lewd, indecent, obscene or profane.”⁶⁷⁰ Winters’ cases resulted in the overruling of these particular obscenity laws on the grounds that their language was too vague to be upheld.

Writing in the immediate aftermath, Legman tersely foreshadows the trickle-down effect of the Supreme Court’s decision on literary censorship: “sex in literature is worse than murder. The publisher of a novel in which intercourse is described goes to jail. The publisher of pocket reprints – seventy or more percent murder – make a million dollars.”⁶⁷¹ For Legman, this refocusing of American obscenity laws squarely on sexual acts would potentially induce a myopic fixation on the part of publishing house censors. He warns that: “we are faced in our culture by the insurmountable schizophrenic

⁶⁶⁷ *People v. Winters*, 294 N.Y. 545. N.Y. 19 July 1945.

⁶⁶⁸ *Winters v. New York*, 333 U.S. 507 (1948).

⁶⁶⁹ *Winters v. New York*, 333 U.S. 507 (1948).

⁶⁷⁰ *Winters v. New York*, 333 U.S. 507 (1948). See also John R. Vile, “Winters v. New York (1948),” *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*, 2009, <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/424/winters-v-new-york>.

⁶⁷¹ Legman, *Love & Death*, 46. “Murder is a crime. Describing murder is not. Sex is not a crime. Describing sex is. Why? The penalty for murder is death, or lifelong imprisonment – the penalty for writing about it: fortune and lifelong fame. The penalty for fornication is . . . there is no actual penalty – the penalty for describing it in print: jail and lifelong disgrace. Why this absurd contradiction? Is the creation of life really more reprehensible than its destruction?” 94.

contradiction that sex, which is legal in fact, is a crime on paper, while murder – a crime in fact – is, on paper, the best seller of all time.”⁶⁷² Such censorship, and the corresponding popularity of murder fiction, has dire impacts on literary style and the cultural imaginary from a variety of angles. First, Legman views a deteriorating reading public unconsciously internalizing American censorship: “The men & women in the street carry it around with them in their heads. *They* are the censor, and to the degree that the law mirrors their wonted censorship, the law can be enforced and will be obeyed.”⁶⁷³ Further, a significant proportion of readers (one third, by Legman’s measure) are interested in the machinations of state power only in terms of its entertainment factor (the murder mystery and “newspaper accounts – voyeurism at second hand – of courtroom trials and executions”).⁶⁷⁴ All other critical faculties and passions are numbed, enabling state power to easily encroach onto society.

...what are the reader’s motives? He has none. He is quite calm. His interest in law & order is infinitesimal – so much so, that he enthroned the murder-book as our prime literary fare (one third of all fiction printed) in the midst of the illegal, nation-wide whiskey-jag of the 1920’s. ... He is unprejudiced. He has no personal grudge. He will kill anybody. He kills for pleasure.⁶⁷⁵

The numbed reader is also, simultaneously, yearning to be the detective figure. Borrowing from psychoanalysis, Legman calls this trope the “detective-superman” and the “supra-legal avenger.”⁶⁷⁶ Through the detective character, the reader has permission to consume every detail of a salacious crime, identify with the perpetrator long enough to both enjoy his crime and outsmart him, and summarily humiliate and punish that perpetrator on behalf of society. Finally, the murder *mystery* is, from Legman’s

⁶⁷² Legman, *Love & Death*, 18.

⁶⁷³ Legman, *Love & Death*, 20.

⁶⁷⁴ Legman, *Love & Death*, 17.

⁶⁷⁵ Legman, *Love & Death*, 17.

⁶⁷⁶ Legman, *Love & Death*, 12-13. An interesting aspect of projection occurs in Legman’s consideration of the function and popularity of the detective character. The readerly experience he describes is reminiscent of the clairvoyant function of projection, sometimes called as remote viewing, which allows the clairvoyant to see, hear, taste, smell, feel through the eyes/ears/mouth/hands/body of another. Legman believes the “projectibility-coefficient” is “the measure of the length and financial success of the series.”

perspective, itself a fiction. He points to the commercial failure of mystery works that require deep thinking, and contrasts these with the popularity of cheap ‘whodunnits.’ Legman insists that “[t]he puzzle element, the cleverness of writers or audience, the word ‘mystery’ itself – all are simply frauds”—“[t]he murder-reading public is not hungry for style” so much as it is “thirsty for blood.”⁶⁷⁷

A final concern is put forward by Legman, and it is one that echoes in contemporary critiques of the genre of true crime from cultural and legal scholars, as well as victim advocates. Popular crime fiction’s victim trope-character has intersected with the “synthetic murderer” figure to the point that both essentially become “non-humans.”⁶⁷⁸ Even worse, Legman perceives fictional murderer characters to be *more* compelling—or at the very least, have more presence—than their victims. In pulp murder fiction, victims are seldom depicted with any concern, sympathy, or even interest beyond their function to the plot (unless the narrative takes pains to indicate how deserving they were of their fate). Legman perceives a reading audience that prefers to see a *second* round of violence occur at the novel’s denouement: “the murder-mystery reader wants blood, death, and lynching. But not the blood of the ‘victim,’ ... The murder-mystery reader wants the murderer’s blood.”⁶⁷⁹

In surveying the literary landscape, Legman examines (and occasionally eviscerates) a series of authors as murder-mystery forebears and apologists. Edgar Allen Poe’s short story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” is often cited as a prototype of crime fiction, and its conventions reverberate through the genre. The narrative contains a number of particularly grisly details of the eviscerated bodies of two women. Legman notes: “This is

⁶⁷⁷ Legman, *Love & Death*, 22.

⁶⁷⁸ Legman, *Love & Death*, 12. For more recent perspectives on the impact true crime works have on and for victims, see Joseph Earp, “Where are the victims? The ethics of true crime,” The Ethics Centre, 9 February 2023, <https://ethics.org.au/where-are-the-victims-the-ethics-of-true-crime/>; Sarah Maetche, “Victims deserve support and a voice in true crime stories,” Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre, 17 January 2023, <https://casasc.ca/victims-deserve-support-and-a-voice-in-true-crime-stories/>; Louise Watts, “Revisiting the Yorkshire Ripper Murders: Interrogating Gender Violence, Sex Work, and Justice,” *Feminist Criminology* Vol. 12 No. 1 (2017): 3-21, <https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.1177/155708511560296>.

⁶⁷⁹ Legman, *Love & Death*, 17.

legal. This is printable. This is classic. But would it be legal, would it be printable, would it be classic if, instead of the details of murder and death, Poe had substituted with equal artistic precision the details of that act out of which life emerges?"⁶⁸⁰ He refers to E. M. Wrong, editor of the popular 1926 anthology *Crime and Detection*, as the "first serious apologist" for the murder mystery art form.⁶⁸¹ He takes Canadian humourist Stephen Leacock to task for describing his personal pleasure for murder mysteries in the midst of World War II.⁶⁸² Bertrand Russell is criticized for his "nincompoop suggestion" that reading about murder might engender a more peaceful culture and do away with war altogether.⁶⁸³ South African journalist William Bolitho, who authored *Murder for Profit* (1926), is acknowledged by Legman for penning a valuable detailed depiction of a murder trial (Bolitho calls these "corporate killing").⁶⁸⁴ Bolitho's account unfortunately also became an influential conceptual and aesthetic blueprint for countless crime fiction authors.

Forensic Aesthetics: What's Left of the Typewriter?

Many of the aesthetics, tropes, and functions of crime fiction that Legman detested in the 1940s remain familiar in facets of contemporary true crime fiction. As will be seen, true crime's popularity within mainstream entertainment likewise effects real time consequences: shaping public consciousness while influencing judicial policy and corresponding systems of evidence gathering, surveillance and control. In advancing a "forensic aesthetic" fifty years after Legman's *Love & Death*, curator Ralph Rugoff signals a subterranean cultural inflection, driven by psychological and historical cultural legacies and moving across media, movements and genres. Describing the curatorial impetus for a forensic aesthetic, he identifies a genre of works that demonstrate a shared

⁶⁸⁰ Legman, *Love & Death*, 11

⁶⁸¹ Legman, *Love & Death*, 15.

⁶⁸² Legman, *Love & Death*, 15.

⁶⁸³ Legman, *Love & Death*, 23.

⁶⁸⁴ Legman, *Love & Death*, 17, quoting William Bolitho, *Murder for Profit* (New York: Time Reading Program, 1926; 1954/26), 3.

“forensic approach” in how they “address the art object as if it were a kind of evidence” and “emphasize the viewer’s role as investigator while underscoring the clue-like and contingent status of the art object.”⁶⁸⁵ This concept is applied in Rugoff’s 1997 exhibition, *Scene of the Crime*, organized by UCLA at the Armand Hammer Museum. Rugoff identifies that the specific value of this curatorial project is in its emphasis on two leading impulses: a “search for meaning,” and a corresponding yet “goalless activity of speculation and interpretation” which makes landing on meaning a less likely venture.⁶⁸⁶ When they converge, these two impulses induce an experience of productive suspension.

Rugoff diverts from Legman in his belief that the mainstream popularity of forensic science has less to do with narrativized depictions and more to do with televised and mediated accounts of real-world events.⁶⁸⁷ The word “forensic” operates throughout Rugoff’s project as a catch-all phrase that triangulates a series of gazes, or positions: the gaze of the obsessive detective/investigator, the fetishizing gaze, and a numbed and ahistorical gaze.⁶⁸⁸ With an attention to a specific “aesthetic of aftermath, as a place where the action has already occurred,” Rugoff’s exhibition and concept are intended to be participatory events, centring the viewer “in a process of mental reconstruction.”⁶⁸⁹ In this way, forensic aesthetics is poised “to shed light on a type of looking that seems characteristic of the present moment.”⁶⁹⁰ Works included under his curatorial and aesthetic thematic cross media and genres, but an overarching indicator of a forensic artwork is that crucial aspects must remain unseen or ungiven. In that absence, viewing becomes an active exchange in which the viewer is always implicated by “the residue or

⁶⁸⁵ Rugoff, “Introduction,” 17-18.

⁶⁸⁶ Rugoff, “Introduction,” 18.

⁶⁸⁷ Writing in the late 1990s, at the dawn of the 24-hour news cycle, Rugoff’s examples are the Oklahoma City Bombing, the trial of O. J. Simpson, and the disaster of TWA Flight 800, 18.

⁶⁸⁸ Peter Wollen, “Vectors of Melancholy,” in *Scene of the Crime*, edited by Ralph Rugoff (Los Angeles: UCLA; Hammer Fellows of Contemporary Art, 1997), 24.

⁶⁸⁹ Rugoff, “Introduction,” 18, 17.

⁶⁹⁰ Rugoff, “Introduction,” 20.

record of an earlier event on which [the work's] meaning seems utterly contingent."⁶⁹¹ Rugoff's concept is very much confined to the realm of contemporary art. His eye is trained on forensic (or forensic-adjacent) photography, "deteriorated architecture, and the banalization of melodrama."⁶⁹² He is also interested in specifically West Coast (California) artists like Ed Ruscha, Lewis Balz, Sharon Lockhart, Mike Kelley, and Sam Durant.

How does forensic aesthetics relay with Legman's earlier criticism of the appeal of crime novels—namely, that they give the numbed reader permission to consume salacious details and enact a series of psychological frustrations by proxy? Reaction to *Scene of the Crime* immediately drew comparisons with the (in)famous and controversial exhibition *Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s*, curated in 1992 by Paul Schimmel at the Museum of Contemporary Art in LA. Schimmel's *Helter Skelter* borrowed its name from the Beatles' 1968 song of the same name, as well as the 1974 bestseller *Helter Skelter: The True Story of The Manson Murders* by Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry. The two exhibitions shared a number of the same works. Schimmel's exhibition cites its title from Bugliosi's work.⁶⁹³ Anticipating the same comparison, Peter Wollen contributes an essay to the catalogue for *Scene of the Crime* to delineate where the two projects diverge: where *Helter Skelter* was manic, *Scene of the Crime* engenders cooler reactions. "The scene of the crime is a fertile site for fantasy—morbid, fetishistic, and obsessive," Wollen writes.⁶⁹⁴ In seeking to puzzle through it, reformulate the initial event and "restore meaning to a scene of traumatic chaos," the effect is to "[ward] off the underlying sense of panic brought about by violent and transgressive acts."⁶⁹⁵ Like Legman, Wollen acknowledges the longstanding and "fetishistic attraction of the crime scene" and the

⁶⁹¹ Rugoff, "More than Meets the Eye," 60.

⁶⁹² Peter Wollen, "Vectors of Melancholy," 24.

⁶⁹³ See Paul Schimmel, Catherine Gudis, Norman M. Klein, and Lane Relyea, *Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992); Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1975).

⁶⁹⁴ Wollen, "Vectors of Melancholy," 24.

⁶⁹⁵ Wollen, "Vectors of Melancholy," 24.

“sadomasochistic enjoyment” of the onlooker.⁶⁹⁶ Compellingly endorsing an aspect of Legman’s concerns, Wollen emphasizes “the mesmerizing anxiety produced by contact with the abject and the uncanny, ... which is insistently fascinating, which suspends time and freezes the spectator into immobility yet, in the final analysis, remains safely removed from reality.”⁶⁹⁷

But unlike Legman, Wollen sees forensic aesthetics inserting an important wrench into how a viewer encounters trauma, and this wrench is thrown at the narrative tropes and operations that have become associated with true crime. Wollen believes that Rugoff has curated an exhibition of works that are so inexplicable as to “[leach] away the significance of narrative point of view and subjectivity,” a major component in how we come to understand the crime scene.⁶⁹⁸ The constellation of works in *Scene of the Crime* demonstrates “an aesthetic blankness, an art of vacancy.”⁶⁹⁹ This complicates four familiar “canonical structures,” or “subject positions” relating to the scene of a crime: the detective, the criminal, the victim, and the onlooker:

The detective sees the crime scene as a place of opportunity, the site of obsessive curiosity, observation, and interpretation. The criminal sees the crime scene as a place of ritual transgression, the site of manic enjoyment and accomplishment of evil. The victim, dead, sees nothing. The victim is blind. (Perhaps the victim is still there, inert, lifeless, hacked to pieces, stuffed in a trunk.) The onlooker sees the scene as a place of transient spectacle, the site of morbid fantasy and distracting shock.⁷⁰⁰

Inexplicable works, or works that emphasize a fragmentary quality, encourage viewer participation to ‘fill in the blanks,’ but importantly do not provide the necessary (often grisly) material for habitual or reflexive storytelling. According to Wollen, the viewer is able to arrive at this new vantage thanks to the constellation of a number of historical

⁶⁹⁶ Wollen, “Vectors of Melancholy,” 24.

⁶⁹⁷ Wollen, “Vectors of Melancholy,” 24.

⁶⁹⁸ Wollen, “Vectors of Melancholy,” 26.

⁶⁹⁹ Wollen, “Vectors of Melancholy,” 32.

⁷⁰⁰ Wollen, “Vectors of Melancholy,” 26.

precursors. He cites the “negative aura” of Atget’s photographs as encountered by Benjamin and the surrealists, Weegee’s unique combination of *schadenfreude* and aesthetic concern, the shift from modernism towards conceptual and minimalist art, and the genealogical and aesthetic functions that link forensic photography to aspects of conceptual art.⁷⁰¹

Artist publisher Ed Ruscha’s *Royal Road Test*, produced in 1967 with Mason Williams and Patrick Blackwell, is included in *Scene of the Crime*. As a conceptual artwork, *Royal Road Test* emphasizes and plays with the expected operations of photography. In his catalogue essay, Wollen refers to an earlier essay by curator Rugoff, titled “Forensic Photography.” This essay appeared in Rugoff’s earlier book, *Circus Americanus*, which provides a subversive, alternative avenue into American landscape and culture. Wollen’s summary lends important curatorial insight into Rugoff’s formation of “forensic aesthetic,” while also summarizing a series of concerns often levied against true crime approaches that appropriate and elevate forensic science:

...by striving to be impersonal, forensic photography takes on the quality of a ritual act. At the same time it often has the uncanny effect of seeming to bring the dead back to life; because photography necessarily freezes time, it effaced the boundary between life (activity) and death (stasis). The ritual quality of forensic photography is given an added power by the ritual characteristics of the crime scene itself. Carefully delimited by police tape, the crime scene appears to us as hallowed ground. Detectives and criminalists and photographers pad around it like priests, carefully preserving the purity of the site as they execute their grim liturgical duties, photographing, measuring, gathering. The forensic look is a celebrant’s look.⁷⁰²

One of the more humorous works in *Scene of the Crime*, *Royal Road Test* is a coil-bound book that methodically (and indeed, straight-facedly) catalogues and collects the evidence of a specific event—throwing a Royal Model “X” typewriter out of a speeding

⁷⁰¹ In reviewing the exhibition, Michael Darling notes the contributions of “[th]e often enigmatic, fragmentary, and/or resigned quality of Conceptualism” to Rugoff’s project. See Michael Darling, “Review: *Scene of the Crime*,” *Frieze* Issue 38 (01 January 1998), <https://www.frieze.com/article/scene-crime-0>.

⁷⁰² Wollen, “Vectors of Melancholy,” 24-25. Wollen is summarizing Ralph Rugoff, *Circus Americanus* (London, UK: Verso, 1995).

car—in the language of both a consumer crash-test report and a crime scene. The book presents as the corresponding file for a dispassionate and objective experiment, but the mechanics of this output are immediately signalled and inverted by an inexplicable and excessively ornate epigraph: “It was too directly bound to its own anguish to be anything other than a cry of negation; carrying within itself, the seeds of its own destruction.”⁷⁰³ ‘Straight’ black and white images and accompanying captions demonstrate and describe the typewriter, the car in detail (a 1963 Buick Le Sabre) including the “Window from which test was made,” the Driver (Ruscha, holding car keys), the Thrower (Williams), the Test Area (the California desert), the Photographer (Blackwell), and the subsequent “scene of strewn wreckage.”⁷⁰⁴ One photograph with helpful accompanying marker illustrations indicates the distance between the furthest points of the typewriter, followed by more than twenty photos of details of the typewriter components strewn across the test area, “photographed as found.” Terse captions playfully emulate the language of police reports: “Edward Ruscha’s (left) left hand being examined by Mason Williams’ (right) right hand over what’s left of the typewriter. right?”⁷⁰⁵ This artists’ book operates as both record of the event and, as bookwork, the event itself.

In reviewing the exhibition, Michael Darling locates the value of Rugoff’s forensic aesthetics in how it challenges a viewer, by “adopting the stance of a criminologist,” to “immediately transform unforthcoming, even mute works into alluring storytellers.”⁷⁰⁶ Darling acknowledges that a lot of work must be done by the viewer for this experience to result in any real “payoff,” and not everyone will be up to the task.⁷⁰⁷ Rugoff’s concerns are also specific to the realm of aesthetics and entertainment. Unlike Legman, Rugoff doesn’t appear to be invested in addressing structures of state power that traditionally inform, and are informed by, juridical operations. Nonetheless, in its

⁷⁰³ Mason Williams, Edward Ruscha and Patrick Blackwell, *Royal Road Test* (Los Angeles: self-published, 1990; 1971; 1969; 1967), unpaginated.

⁷⁰⁴ Williams, Ruscha and Blackwell, *Royal Road Test*.

⁷⁰⁵ Williams, Ruscha and Blackwell, *Royal Road Test*.

⁷⁰⁶ Darling, “Review: *Scene of the Crime*.”

⁷⁰⁷ Darling, “Review: *Scene of the Crime*.”

centring of the viewer, forensic aesthetics is a valuable precursor for parallel work currently carried out by the interdisciplinary research group and human rights organization Forensic Architecture (FA), which similarly emphasizes the necessity of viewer interaction and engagement.

“[W]orking across the disciplinary boundaries of art, activism, architecture and investigation journalism,” FA develops new evidentiary modalities to collaboratively investigate, re-enact, and name instances of state violence and human rights violations.⁷⁰⁸ Their multidirectional address interrogates, communicates and advocates on behalf of individuals and their families, as well as in the wake of large-scale disasters.⁷⁰⁹ FA’s 2020 report on the 2011 killing by Mark Duggan by the Metropolitan Police in Tottenham, north London was commissioned by the Duggans’ family lawyers. FA incorporated data mining, 3D modeling and photogrammetry, and virtual reality reconstruction.⁷¹⁰ The official police narrative that claimed Duggan had been holding a gun when he was fatally shot was challenged by FA as improbable, using evidence from the scene and multiple re-enactments. FA’s research resulted in numerous exhibition outputs, public presentations and press releases, and an interactive feature with *The Guardian*. When the Independent Office for Police Conduct declined to reopen the case, FA continued to advocate on behalf of the Duggan family.⁷¹¹

⁷⁰⁸ From the exhibition text for *Terror Contagion*, an exhibition by Forensic Architecture with film director Laura Poitras at the Musée d’art contemporain (MAC) Montréal, 12 January – 18 April, 2022. See the MAC’s exhibition website, <https://macm.org/en/exhibitions/terror-contagion/>.

⁷⁰⁹ Forensic Architecture’s website organizes their investigations by category (to date: “air strikes,” “at sea,” “borders,” “chemical attacks,” “detention,” “disappearance,” “environmental violence,” “fire,” “forensic oceanography,” “heritage,” “land rights,” “migrations,” and “police violence”), methodology (currently FA lists more than twenty methodologies, including 3D modeling, data mining, machine learning, pattern analysis, and remote sensing), and location (FA investigations currently span more than thirty countries). See <https://forensic-architecture.org/>.

⁷¹⁰ See Forensic Architecture, “The Killing of Mark Duggan,” 9 June 2020, <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-killing-of-mark-duggan>.

⁷¹¹ See Forensic Architecture, “Press Release: Concerning the IOPC’s refusal to re-open the IPCC investigation into the killing of Mark Duggan,” 28 May 2021, <https://content.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/4.-FA-Response-to-IOPC.pdf>.

FA develops their investigations around a particular lexicon, laid out in their 2014 text, *Forensis: The Architectures of Public Truth*. The Latin word *forensis* refers to both “the forum” and “the court,” and *Forensis* details its application to legal matters dating from Cicero, through the middle ages, and into seventeenth century England.⁷¹² FA’s definition of “forensic aesthetics” is a total recalibration and expansion when compared with Rugoff’s earlier aesthetic concept:

Forensic science has signified a shift in the communicative capacity and agency of things. This material approach is evident through the ubiquitous role technologies now play in determining contemporary ways of seeing and knowing. Today’s legal and political decisions are often based upon the capacity to read and present DNA samples, 3D scans, nanotechnology, and the enhanced vision of electromagnetic microscopes and satellite surveillance, which extends from the topography of the seabed to the remnants of destroyed or bombed-out buildings. This is not just science, but rhetoric carrying considerable geopolitical, socioeconomic, environmental, scientific, and cultural implications. Forensic aesthetics is thus the mode of appearance of things in forums—the gestures, techniques, and technologies of demonstration, methods of theatricality, narrative, and dramatization; image enhancements and technologies of projection; the creation and demolition of reputation, credibility, and competence.⁷¹³

Both Rugoff and FA underscore how specific aesthetics and modalities of forensic science—the operations of which are intended to quantitatively prove guilt or innocence—incur subterranean cultural inflections. Where Rugoff indicates a participatory capacity engendered by the inexplicable—one that bypasses more familiar narrative modes—FA reroutes the participatory encounter to discern and interrogate architectures of power. To return to Paasche and Radul, both Rugoff’s concept and FA’s activism operate with the understanding that “the very quality of our reality carries a legal dimension,” and they create possibilities for critiquing the systems that uphold that dimension.

FA refers to a citizens’ counter forensics at work in their installations, emphasizing visitor activism that extends beyond the walls of the art gallery and museum. Their

⁷¹² See Forensic Architecture and Shela Sheikh, *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, 746.

⁷¹³ Forensic Architecture and Sheikh, *Forensis*, 745-746.

lexicon also includes “forensic imagination” and “forensic futures.” Forensic imagination reconnects with aesthetic concerns, addressing how artworks (and other “nonscientific materials”) have the capacity for “offering a counter-testimonial to the historical narratives into which they had previously been written.”⁷¹⁴ Forensic futures signal the potential of documentary forms and practices to intervene on archives. Traditionally associated with the past, forensic futures are archival, anticipatory, and activist in how they “produce future-oriented archives capable of anticipating incoming events.”⁷¹⁵ They buttress activities that must react in real time, “on the ground,” by developing “an archive that may be called upon to testify in the future.”⁷¹⁶ The remainder of this chapter argues that such an archive is at work in Jim Miller’s bookwork *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal*, produced in meaningful collaboration with Marjorie Carlyle of London, ON.

⁷¹⁴ “Contrary to scientific conceptions of forensics as the means of uncovering the unequivocal truth of what transpired, the term forensic imagination is predicated upon enlarging the field of enunciation through the creative retrieval and mobilization of affects. Rather than a search for empirical truths, its objectives are oriented towards an expansion of the object’s or artifact’s expressive potential.” See *Forensis*, 746.

⁷¹⁵ Forensic Architecture and Sheikh, *Forensis*, 746.

⁷¹⁶ Forensic Architecture and Sheikh, *Forensis*, 746.

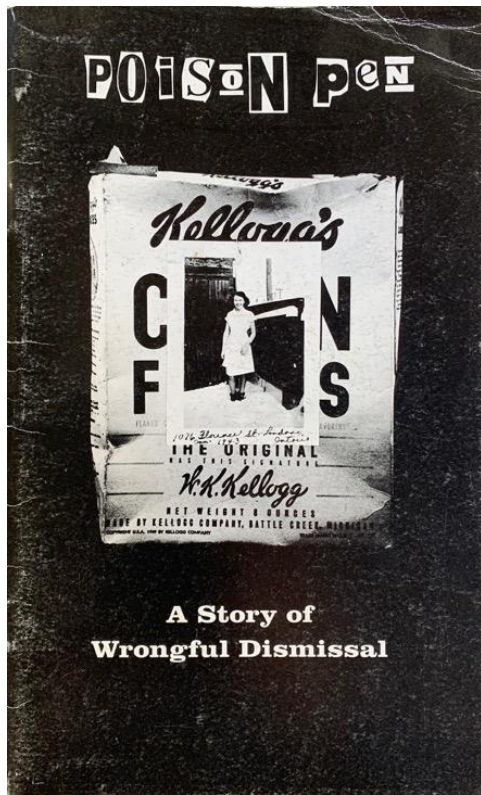


Figure 16. Jim Miller, *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal* (London, UK: Camerawork Gallery and Darkroom, 1990). Image courtesy of the author.

Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal

As discussed earlier in this thesis, journalist Janet Malcolm’s view is that “the least talented [journalists] talk about Art” when excusing their ethical mismanagement of a subject (See “Premonition: Cartomancy as Theoretical Framework...Card: true crime”).⁷¹⁷ How does the dynamic between subject and investigator compare with the dynamic between subject and artist—or more specifically, artist-as-investigator? Jim Miller’s self-published 1990 bookwork, *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal*, approaches a renewed paradigm of literary criminology. *Poison Pen* recounts a long-standing conflict between Londoner Marjorie Carlyle and her employer, the London-

⁷¹⁷ Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, 3.

based Kellogg's factory. In 1974, Carlyle, a mother of two and longstanding Kellogg's employee, was accused of writing poison pen letters to her manager (an accusation that Carlyle vehemently denied for the remainder of her life). Miller's bookwork deftly interweaves Carlyle's transcribed recollection of the events with family photographs and ephemera, Kellogg's advertisements, handwriting, legal documents, and large-format photographs of Carlyle's home. Through deliberate editing and selection, Miller chooses archival ads that emphasize patriarchal expectations of gender dynamics, domestic responsibilities and beauty standards. He also subverts Kellogg's seemingly hospitable imagery to illicit anxieties of being watched and analyzed. *Poison Pen's* visual confluence of testimony, advertising and personal archive effectively reveals Carlyle as a defendant on trial twice: for the charge of writing the letters, as well as for being an aging wife and working-class mother. The bookwork carries out an uncanny collapsing of time to demonstrate a remarkably uneven—yet all too familiar—power dynamic between employer and employee, and it resonates strongly in the present moment.

The front cover of *Poison Pen* overlays a family photograph of a young Carlyle onto a battered box of Kellogg's Corn Flakes. The box is suspended in a black void, as is all of the material throughout the black-and-white bookwork. This aesthetic approach heightens the evidential quality of Miller's gathered materials: the fragments are presented seemingly as they are, uncaptioned. Returning to Rugoff's forensic aesthetics, the reader becomes a kind of criminologist, encouraged to fill in the blanks and make connections across word and image. The materials are accompanied by Miller's introduction and Carlyle's transcribed statement. It is worth noting that the particular Kellogg's box on *Poison Pen's* cover was lent to Miller by Carole Condé and Karl Beveridge. It was a prop box used in their photo series, *Oshawa - A History of Local 222, United Auto Workers of America, CLC 1982-1983*, which is a 56-piece photo montage history of the Oshawa's union between 1937 into the mid 1980s.⁷¹⁸ Miller had recently completed a studio program at NSCAD, from which he developed "a sort of critical vantage point on popular

⁷¹⁸ In conversation with Jim Miller, 11 February 2022, Zoom.

corporate culture” as well as an “[attraction] to work that was engaged in the world we live in, not art for art's sake.”⁷¹⁹

The first line of *Poison Pen* is a hand-written statement from W. K. Kellogg: “I’ll invest my money in people.”⁷²⁰ This first page of *Poison Pen* summarizes Carlyle’s life and strife with Kellogg’s, and the reader is immediately made to realize the hollowness of the magnate’s sentiment in the present. We are informed that Carlyle, an employee of thirty years, was accused of writing poison pen letters to her scheduling manager and eventually dismissed from her job. Miller-as-narrator informs us that eight years after her titular “wrongful dismissal,” the company is “undergoing a plant expansion” and “[hopes] to include Marjorie’s property as part of their parking lot.”⁷²¹ Carlyle lived much of her life in close proximity to the factory. She and her parents moved into the family home on Eva Street, within three blocks of Kellogg’s in 1943 when Carlyle was eighteen. Carlyle took a job with Kellogg’s in this same year, when women were more frequently being hired due to the War effort. Following the War’s end, Carlyle recounts losing this job “as soon as the men came back.” In her own words:

“[The men] had no loss of seniority. After the war there was also this rule you (women) couldn’t work if you got married. I was out of work for two months when Dick and I got married in ’46. Then I heard that Kellogg’s changed the rule because

⁷¹⁹ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷²⁰ Jim Miller, *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal* (London, UK: Camerawork Gallery and Darkroom, 1990), unpaginated. In a documentation reference list for the Poison Pen installation, Miller notes W. K. Kellogg’s belief that “the flake could reverse the effects of original sin.” See Jim Miller, “*Poison Pen*: Documentation Reference List,” undated, in the collection of the Art Bank. W.K. Kellogg is cited as the ‘mastermind’ behind the brand’s successful marketing campaigns. His brother, John Harvey Kellogg, was shown to have been more of a “theological modernist”; Brian C. Wilson recounts John Harvey Kellogg’s humour toward the concept of “original sin” being a product of poor digestion. See Terry Gross, “How the ‘Battling’ Kellogg Brothers Revolutionized American Breakfast,” *Fresh Air*: NPR, 8 August 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/08/08/542145177/how-the-battling-kellogg-brothers-revolutionized-american-breakfast>. See also Brian C. Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

⁷²¹ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

efficiency was going down with all the women leaving. I went back and was hired right away.”⁷²²

Miller juxtaposes Carlyle’s interview with a found archival image of three children posing outside a home, standing in a large cardboard Kellogg’s box.⁷²³ In the years before unionizing, Carlyle found herself frequently overworked by her employer: ““Kellogg’s would ask you to work a lot of overtime, but there was no time and a half, no benefits that way.””⁷²⁴ This demand was exacerbated by Carlyle’s close proximity, and she would frequently receive calls asking ““if I wouldn’t mind going home and coming back again for the three to eleven shift,”” or even more stridently: ““I was that close that they’d come over to the house and ask me, do I want to go into work? So I’d go.””⁷²⁵ In her words, the eventual unionization of Kellogg’s plant employees led to a sea change in worker conditions.

After leaving work to have a child, Carlyle is forced back to Kellogg’s in 1953 when her husband’s employer, General Steel Works, closes down. Miller combines this transcription with an aerial shot of factories and an advertisement in which Kellogg’s mascots Snap, Crackle and Pop whisper to a blushing bride, “Psst. ... He’ll like ‘em!” Carlyle explains that she initially ““just wanted to work long enough to buy a dryer,”” but she remains at the factory and, in 1963, shifts to a non-unionized office position.⁷²⁶ Much of her work revolves around properly scheduling packaging employees so as to avoid union grievances. An image of workers on a Kellogg’s factory floor and an advertisement promising “Packaging with a Purpose” appear opposite pages from a child’s workbook describing a school visit to the Kellogg’s factory. A child’s handwriting describes how many women and how many men she sees on the factory floor. These are followed by

⁷²² Miller, *Poison Pen*. Note that all block quotations in this chapter are themselves in quotations. This is because nearly all of the text in *Poison Pen* is reproduced in quotations, indicating Carlyle’s transcribed words.

⁷²³ Miller, “Documentation Reference List,” Art Bank.

⁷²⁴ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

⁷²⁵ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

⁷²⁶ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

Norman Rockwell’s famous 1950s illustrations for Kellogg’s describing “little pink and white girls” (like Corn Flakes, these little girls are “dainty, yet hearty; fresh, but friendly”) and freckled young boys.⁷²⁷



Figure 17. Page spread from Miller’s *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal*. Image courtesy of the author.

An evocative two-page spread of a Kellogg’s ad interrupts Carlyle’s transcript: a woman’s manicured hand and a man’s tight fist reach into the frame of a box of Corn Flakes to spread apart the leaves of a corn cob (see Figure 17). The impact of this spread is reverberative: it emphasizes the deeply gendered and suggestive nature of vintage Kellogg’s ads, an integral part of North America’s cultural consciousness, and it also reverberates onto Carlyle’s discussion of the strain her job begins to put on her marriage.

⁷²⁷ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

This editorial suggestiveness on Miller's part becomes suffocating as the bookwork progresses, effectively evoking in the reader the same unrealistic pressures and challenges that Carlyle faced on a day-to-day basis. Miller chose specific imagery from a selection of Kellogg's "wedding and war ads" from the 1940s and the 1980s.⁷²⁸

On March 10, 1974, Carlyle is summoned by her personnel manager and brought before two detectives, who state they believe she is the author of a series of lewd poison pen letters addressed to her manager. Carlyle describes the letters, and we are provided with a clear sense of the inspiration for Miller's aesthetic approach:

"The poison pen letters—they looked like ransom notes—were made from a 'Working Together at Kellogg's' book; you know, '*What Kellogg's stood for was what you stood for at Kellogg's – to give them the best.*' Someone had rearranged the Working Together book. They had taken out these little pictures of men working – they had put these pictures of men sexually overtop of pictures of women – men at work. I let them know I never could have thought of this."⁷²⁹

What follows, if Carlyle is to be believed, is a litany of either police ineptitude or malpractice. In addition to declaring her guilty before any investigation begins, the detectives take her home to search her house and interrogate her ("I said, 'be my guest, my house is filthy – I'm taking next week off to do my house cleaning'").⁷³⁰ More deliberate Kellogg's imagery share the page space with this scene: one shows a woman gazing suggestively across a diner counter at a cowboy, and another shows a young girl shoving her face into a box of Corn Flakes. A few days later, police show up at Carlyle's door but she refuses to see them without her lawyer. When she and her lawyer go to the police station, the detectives inform her "they'd sent samples to Forensic to get fingerprints and compare handwriting. Forensic said the handwriting on the envelope was similar, but they couldn't say whether or not it was mine."⁷³¹ The implied legitimacy of "Forensic" is simultaneously de-amplified by the simplified manner in which it is touted

⁷²⁸ Miller, "Documentation Reference List," Art Bank.

⁷²⁹ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

⁷³⁰ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

⁷³¹ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

as an objective and official decree. Alongside this information, to amplify the unjust situation Carlyle is experiencing, Miller has positioned negative black-and-white illustrations on the pages' black background of Tony the Tiger peering through binoculars, holding a pencil and a letter addressed to him, and staring out at the viewer from a frame.

The investigation described in *Poison Pen* drags on; Carlyle's reputation and working relationships are shattered, she is summarily demoted, and her family is put under severe social and financial pressure. Carlyle recalls several family arguments meant to force her to capitulate to both law officials and her employer. A personal photograph of a younger Carlyle with three other female employees is inset alongside a 1930s advertisement for All-Bran.⁷³² The ad has a significant amount of copy to masquerade as an illustrated news column. The "article" promotes the product's health benefits (namely: regularity), with pseudo-scientific sentiments about how a "poorly balanced diet" will lead to a woman losing her "charm and vivacity."⁷³³ In the ad's illustration, two women whisper to each other as they watch a third skulk ahead of them, and the byline challenges the female viewer to wonder: "...what do they say behind your back?" (see Figure 19).⁷³⁴ Carlyle's memories of fighting with her husband about the accusations are accompanied by imagery that emphasizes marital harmony and discord: one All Bran add shows a glamorous couple with the tagline, "It keeps more than kisses to KEEP A MAN happy!"; a second cereal ad shows a wife being chastised by both her husband and son for serving the "same old breakfast," the son bizarrely emphasizing, "I don't blame Dad".⁷³⁵

Carlyle eventually walks off her job. When she is forced to request her position back in 1976, her employer demands she provide a medical referral which involves rounds of

⁷³² Miller, "Documentation Reference List," Art Bank.

⁷³³ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

⁷³⁴ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

⁷³⁵ Miller, *Poison Pen*; Miller, "Documentation Reference List," Art Bank.

invasive psychiatric assessment at Victoria Hospital. In both humorous and devastating detail, Carlyle shares:

“‘[Doctor Max] had already asked me about my sex life and I had told him that it had changed for the worse because I hated what I was going through. I told him that I had turned against everybody and everything ... I told him I’d turned against chocolate cake too. This last visit he asked me one more time. He said, *‘I really can’t understand the change in your sex life from when you were first married and now.’* I asked him, *‘If you bought a car 25 years ago, would you expect the same performance out of that car now as you did then?’* He smiled, but kept a straight face and said, *‘There’s nothing too much wrong with you; you can go back to work.’* That same day I got a letter from Kellogg’s saying they had to let me go. They had terminated me even before anyone had heard from Dr. Max.”⁷³⁶

Carlyle’s termination fuels her co-workers’ speculations that she is guilty of the initial poison pen letters. The significant psychological effect that this has on Carlyle is very obvious in her dialogue:

“...I couldn’t take anybody to court and sue them, that was my feeling. I don’t feel you gain anything. It’s my character, my reputation, my dignity that I’m fighting for – if there’s no money in it that’s OK - I wouldn’t want to have it all, I just wanted to have my name cleared.

...I didn’t have any money to fight any further anyway. It was my choice, but I was in the position that I didn’t want to upset my husband. He was very angry with the whole situation and I couldn’t ask him for any more money to fight it. I sort of had to walk around on eggshells. The kid’s [sic] were upset; Lynne felt that if I kept on fighting I was going to be hurt. Jill, at the time, just didn’t want to hear anything about it. And I knew that my friends knew that I didn’t do it, but it’s just that they’d say: ‘Why don’t you forget about it?’ I couldn’t forget about it.”⁷³⁷

This termination is initially filed as a sick leave, allowing Carlyle to briefly collect pension from the company.

⁷³⁶ Miller, *Poison Pen*. In later news coverage of Carlyle’s story and Miller’s exhibition, Carlyle extends this story to claim that, following Dr. Max’s assessment, a Kellogg’s company doctor diagnosed her with nervous anxiety after speaking to her for only twenty minutes. See Mark Skeffington, “Woman fights to clear her name,” *The London Alternative* Vol. 1 No. 4 (27 November 1987): 1.

⁷³⁷ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

Carlyle files a settlement dispute with Kellogg's for her wrongful dismissal in Ontario's Supreme Court in 1977. She wins this settlement: a one-time payment of \$3,000 for her dismissal, outstanding wages and vacation pay (totalling \$1,134.50). Miller includes pages from the settlement and Carlyle's retirement plan. In order to receive the final payout of \$4,134.50, Carlyle is forced to sign a release agreement with Kellogg's that she will "hereby remise, release, and forever discharge Kellogg Salada Canada Ltd., its successors and assigns, of and from all actions causes of action, claims and demands of every nature or kind arising out of or in any way related to or connected with my employment."⁷³⁸ Despite all the reader has witnessed via her testimony so far, Carlyle remains optimistic regarding the release agreement: "I figured they were a great company and that they would find out that I didn't do it."⁷³⁹ Preparing to seek new employment, she asks for a letter of reference. Her former employer's response is that she should "forget about it all and try to carry your life on in dignity."⁷⁴⁰ Carlyle realizes that, despite the settlement payment, her reputation remains tarnished. When she is finally able to obtain a reference letter for three decades of employment, some four years later, it is a cursory form letter than merely states that she was at one time an employee of the company.

⁷³⁸ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

⁷³⁹ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

⁷⁴⁰ Miller, *Poison Pen*.



Figure 18. Spread from Miller’s *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal*. Large format photograph by Vid Ingelevics from the kitchen of Marjorie Carlyle. Kellogg’s Factory can be seen through the window. Image courtesy of the author.

3.1 “I’ll invest my money in people”

Carlyle details the anguish of having to see the factory “every time I open my curtains at home,” and this sentiment is amplified by numerous large format interior photographs of Kellogg’s looming outside of each of Carlyle’s windows (see Figure 18).⁷⁴¹ When Kellogg’s expands its parking lots, she and her neighbours are forced to complain about company cameras being trained on their homes. This claim is accompanied by an image of the company’s surveillance cameras. We learn that neighbours around the factory have been approached by Kellogg’s to sell their homes, Carlyle and her husband included.

⁷⁴¹ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

Carlyle initially makes an intentionally high offer to dissuade them; this works temporarily, yet in spite of Kellogg's refusal to purchase her home she discovers that "our property had been rezoned for future use as a parking lot."⁷⁴² It is a losing battle, and Carlyle eventually agrees to sell her home following the death of her husband. It is demolished to build an additional parking lot for the factory. Miller, who had in fact recently stayed in the home, recalls hearing the news in the late stages of the *Poison Pen* exhibition, and he acted quickly to include this final chapter in the installation.⁷⁴³

Miller first encountered Marjorie Carlyle through her daughter, Jill (then Jill Carlyle, now Jill Lucas). They met while both were working seasonally at Canada's Wonderland, and Miller gradually learned bits and pieces about Carlyle's experience from small talk with Lucas over lunch breaks. As Miller became more fascinated by Carlyle's poison pen ordeal, he recalls

[starting] to research Kellogg's advertising. My suspicions were verified as I did more research on the advertising, that there were these stories that Kellogg's was creating in its branding and advertising that ran counter, or had this great counterpoint, to Jill's mom's story. And I must admit, early on I was thinking more out of an artist's mind than somebody who's also working in a company and experiencing what happens behind the facade.⁷⁴⁴

Miller met with Carlyle to express his interest in creating work about her story, and Carlyle was enthusiastic about that story finding an audience. Carlyle's husband had recently died and she had moved into an apartment but kept her furnished home near the factory. Intrigued by the house, Miller offered to rent it for a time in order to interview Carlyle, research, and create work about the experience. Initially envisioning a site-specific installation, Miller realized the project would require a larger published output. He had his friend Vid Ingelevics document the house in 4x5 photographs. Most of the

⁷⁴² Miller, *Poison Pen*.

⁷⁴³ In Miller's words, "[the sale] was just something that came about close to the exhibition opening, or it may have happened after the exhibition, and then became part of the book work. I remember that it was 'late breaking news' for the project at some point." In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022. Images of the installation in the Art Bank archive indeed show photographs of Carlyle's demolished home.

⁷⁴⁴ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

images are interior views outward through various windows of the home, and two are external photographs toward the factory made from the south-east corner of Carlyle's property. In each photograph, Kellogg's dominates the view. The straight approach to Ingelevics' black and white images lends them a forensic quality—they give the impression of crime scene photographs that catalogue and preserve the aftermath of an event. But here, the crime and its suspect have been inverted by Carlyle's testimony: the real perpetrator of harm is Kellogg's, clearly visible and dominating each of the window views of Carlyle's home at all hours of the day. When asked about the inclusion of the images, Miller recalls, "What I really wanted was for the viewer to feel like they're occupying her space and privy to her thoughts as the story unfolds."⁷⁴⁵

Janet Malcolm's examination (and demonstration) of the problematized dynamic between journalist and subject presented a situation in which the journalist leans into narrative fiction in order to create a more complete subject for both herself and her reader. With *Poison Pen*, we do not see Miller attempting to create a full character in Carlyle, or a complete context around her ordeal. Miller does not operate as a journalist, but he positions himself as a researcher and an investigator. The first incarnation of *Poison Pen* was, in Miller's words, an "investigative exhibition" shown at A Space Gallery in Toronto in the winter of 1986.⁷⁴⁶ The installation combined Carlyle's words and photographs, selected advertisements, and Ingelevics' photographs into "three large photographic murals."⁷⁴⁷ Miller consulted Carlyle on the inclusion of her recorded interviews. He had the murals printed by the Toronto-based Madison Photo Murals to lend them a billboard-like quality; Ingelevics' interior photos were printed in large scale, "positioning viewers as if they were in [Carlyle's] space."⁷⁴⁸ Also included with the mural installation was a wall-mounted display case which contained cereal display boxes

⁷⁴⁵ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁴⁶ Miller, "Documentation Reference List," Art Bank.

⁷⁴⁷ Miller, "Documentation Reference List," Art Bank.

⁷⁴⁸ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

brandishing Rockwell's illustrations and the original grade school project, "A Visit to Kellogg's," produced by Carlyle's daughter, Jill Lucas.⁷⁴⁹

As in the bookwork, Miller's aesthetic approach to image editing for the exhibition is restrained: images and texts are enlarged and cropped but otherwise given little additional editing. A kind of forensic 'objectivity' is implied in Miller's reproducing of the 'facts' of Carlyle's situation, but the facts are also intentionally partial. Miller is nonetheless devastating in how he constellates specific advertising imagery to enact, echo, and emphasize Carlyle's dialogue. The installation, which was eventually acquired by the Art Bank, is described by Miller as "[approaching] documentary practice in several ways":

Combining my skeptical interest in popular corporate culture, and my fascination with the way we represent our personal experience, it relates the story of one woman – Marjorie Carlyle, and her dealings with the Kellogg's company from 1942 to 1987. Set in the east end of London Ontario, the narrative moves from a predictable unfolding of Marjorie's working life, through to the ironic drama of her dismissal and Kellogg's demolition of her home to build a parking lot. She emerges from her difficulties with a sense of personal history and an awareness of her own power. Parallel to her story are the manufactured narratives of Kellogg's advertising and company literary from across several decades. These neighbouring narratives, Carlyle's and Kellogg's, conjure views of North American life that are at once intimately related, and at the very same time very hard to reconcile.⁷⁵⁰

Miller's description indicates that he has his own motives for the production of this work that extend beyond Carlyle—namely, bringing corporate culture writ large to task for its casual disposal of people. But Miller's and Carlyle's individual motives are, in their fragmented forms, able to coincide, resonate, and amplify one another.

Carlyle herself appeared only once at the very beginning of the exhibition (she appears three times in the later bookwork), but her testimony is the foundation of Miller's installation. Miller recalls a number of Londoners, including Ron Benner and Jamelie Hassan, enjoying the Toronto exhibition. While the London Regional Art Gallery

⁷⁴⁹ Miller, "Documentation Reference List," Art Bank.

⁷⁵⁰ Miller, "Documentation Reference List," Art Bank. Miller credits Ron Benner and Jamelie Hassan with encouraging Art Bank to acquire the works, in conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

expressed interest in showing *Poison Pen* locally, this never came to pass. Miller believes that this was due to “a sensitivity, seeing as Kellogg's was such a significant industry in London that they didn't want to tread on the toes of potential philanthropy.”⁷⁵¹ Instead, *Poison Pen* was exhibited at the Forest City Gallery at 231 Dundas Street, in the city's downtown, in 1987. Benner, Hassan and Carlyle spread word about the project to both arts communities and the general public. Carlyle, her daughter Jill Lucas and Jill's husband visited the exhibition on its opening night. Enough interest was garnered that Miller remembers “a lineup down the street to get into the show.”⁷⁵² Miller describes the London exhibition of *Poison Pen* as “an exhilarating moment. I wasn't showing it in situ, as had originally been my thinking, and that was fine. But I was showing it in proximity, in the community, not a huge distance from where the house was and where the company remained.”⁷⁵³ Miller even suspects that representatives from Kellogg's viewed the exhibition in both Toronto and London. The only formal response about the exhibition from Kellogg's came from Sandra Kidd, the general legal counsel at the company's head office in Rexdale. Asked about Carlyle's ongoing public pursuit to clear her name, Kidd states that she “isn't afraid that the *Poison Pen* exhibit will give Kellogg's a bad name, since she says Kellogg's is a big, reputable company.”⁷⁵⁴

The London exhibition constituted an activist action on the parts of both Miller and Carlyle, and it is Carlyle who is perceptibly more front-and-centre than the artist. Local bi-weekly *The London Alternative* ran a cover story by Mark Skefflington about Carlyle and the exhibition, titled “Woman fights to clear her name.” The story features a photograph of Carlyle standing beside a poster for the show.⁷⁵⁵ She is again given the opportunity to explain her perspective and her desire for a formal apology from Kellogg's and the London Police. In a public forum, she insists that she's ““guilty without being

⁷⁵¹ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁵² In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁵³ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁵⁴ Skefflington, “Woman fights to clear her name,” 1, 7.

⁷⁵⁵ Skefflington, “Woman fights to clear her name,” 1, 7.

given the opportunity to prove my innocence ... And it's just not right. I've had to live with it every day of my life since. ... I just want my name cleared, whether it comes from the police department or from Kellogg's."⁷⁵⁶ Carlyle explains that she is without the financial capacity to hire a lawyer who would pursue the case in the public sphere on her behalf.⁷⁵⁷ Skefflington asks lawyer Ron Dickie, who helped Carlyle attain her 1977 settlement, why he didn't take her case to the press. Dickie responds that "he isn't the type of lawyer who likes going to the press for publicity," and claims, rather paternalistically, that he wanted Carlyle to avoid being further embarrassed by media attention on her situation.⁷⁵⁸ Carlyle insists that Miller's exhibition is empowering and "makes me feel like there's a weight taken off my shoulders."⁷⁵⁹ Living in Ingersoll following the sale and destruction of her home, Carlyle continues to pursue clearing her reputation through numerous letters to Kellogg's, the Ombudsman, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, as well as through letters to politicians and CBC's *The Fifth Estate*. Because Carlyle signed the 1977 settlement and release, the Kellogg's Company claimed no further obligation.⁷⁶⁰

Skefflington's coverage of Carlyle's story and Miller's London exhibition includes mentioning that Carlyle was working on her own book about her experience, tentatively titled *Snap, Crackle and Pop: The Lion's Out of Her Cage*.⁷⁶¹ This book never came into being. However, following its London showing, *Poison Pen* exhibited at Plug In in Winnipeg and Anna Leonowens Gallery in Halifax in 1988, and then toured in the UK

⁷⁵⁶ Skefflington, "Woman fights to clear her name," 1.

⁷⁵⁷ Skefflington, "Woman fights to clear her name," 7.

⁷⁵⁸ Skefflington, "Woman fights to clear her name," 7.

⁷⁵⁹ Skefflington, "Woman fights to clear her name," 7.

⁷⁶⁰ Skefflington provides a full response from Kellogg's general counsel, Sandra Kidd: "[Carlyle] said she had no further grudge against us when she signed that release. And that's why I have no intention of getting into a reopening of the file now. ... she chose not to raise [her concerns] at that time... Obviously, she's turned out to be unhappy with that decision, but the fact remains that she had the opportunity then, and we're just not in a position where we're going to go back and rehash something that's ten years old. ... If she's been feeling hurt for 10 years, I don't think there's anything anybody can do to take that hurt away." See "Woman fights to clear her name," 1, 7.

⁷⁶¹ Skefflington, "Woman fights to clear her name," 7.

with its first stop at Camerawork Gallery and Darkroom in London in 1990. It was at Camerawork that Miller's *Poison Pen* bookwork developed, resulting from "a great convergence of interests to create something that would go with the tour."⁷⁶² Camera Work was beginning to phase out its publication operations, and Miller therefore had the latitude to take the lead on the bookwork's design.⁷⁶³ The *Poison Pen* exhibition ended with images taken by both Carlyle and Ingelevics: Carlyle's personal photos show neighbours' houses in mid-demolition in 1976 and 1982.⁷⁶⁴ A single photo by Ingelevics shows the parking lot where Carlyle's and her neighbours' houses once stood.

⁷⁶² In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁶³ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁶⁴ Miller, "Documentation Reference List."

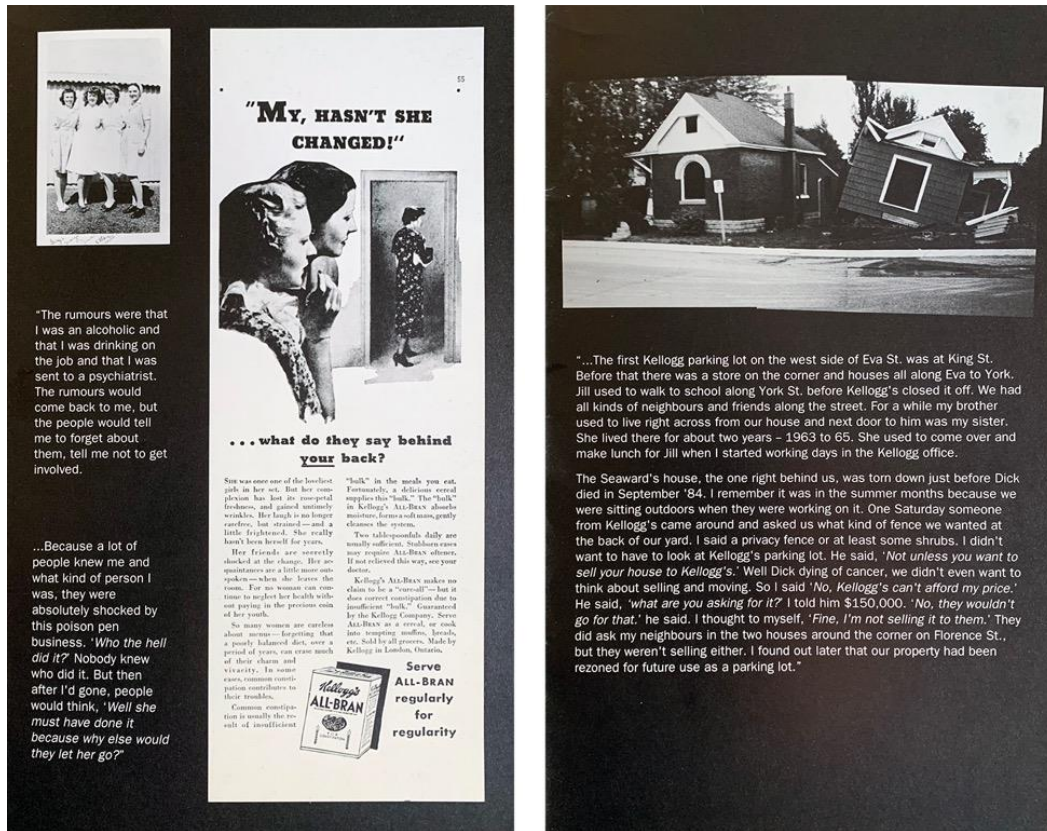


Figure 19. Pages from Miller's *Poison Pen: A Story of Wrongful Dismissal*. Left: the interplay between Carlyle's transcribed story, a personal photograph showing a young Carlyle as a Kellogg's factory worker, and a vintage Kellogg's advertisement. Right: Pages from mages taken by Carlyle of neighbours' homes being torn down in order to expand the Kellogg's parking lot. Image courtesy of the author.

Widowed at the time of the bookwork's production, Carlyle explains that she has agreed to the sale, stating: "I left the house because I couldn't take looking out the window any more and seeing Kellogg's. There was nobody else left on Eva Street. It was time for me to move on and make a new life for myself."⁷⁶⁵ Carlyle's house is purchased and destroyed in 1987. Her own evidentiary images combine with Miller's and Ingelevics'

⁷⁶⁵ Miller, *Poison Pen*.

evidence (see Figure 19). But the bookwork accomplishes something that the exhibition could not: the final two spreads of the book are Ingelevics' large format photographs, both taken outside and from the east side of Carlyle's property, looking north towards the factory. In the first spread, Carlyle's home takes up the left side of the image. In the second spread, the home has been replaced with a parking lot. Thanks to the operations of the page spreads, the reader is immediately able to move through time from the same vantage to see the final expansion of the factory, literally, in through Carlyle's windows. At the time of the second photograph, the lot is mostly empty. This last image includes a kind of future evidence of Kellogg's corporate malpractice.

Miller acknowledges that, in retrospect, he didn't put the same effort into distributing the *Poison Pen* bookwork that he did with his later published projects. Miller states that, despite being "a high point of my own work and involvement," one which "maybe solidified a path for future work and involvements," the reach of *Poison Pen* was limited.⁷⁶⁶ Acknowledgement of the work is infrequent and "very occasional," though often from colleagues and artists who report admiring it very much.⁷⁶⁷ Miller contrasts the distribution activity of *Poison Pen* with his efforts to promote a series of popular satirical calendars, the *Calendar of Harrisees*, which he began in 1998 with his partner, filmmaker Roz Owen. Miller and Owen's work addressed the many missteps of Mike Harris' conservative government.⁷⁶⁸ Miller states that he felt more comfortable promoting the activist calendar project, "which felt like an important community and

⁷⁶⁶ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022. Miller became involved with the Independent Artists Union around the same time as *Poison Pen*, and has worked on numerous projects centering on work and trade unions. Miller and Roz Owen have worked frequently with artists Carol Condé and Karl Beveridge, including the 2013 documentary "Portrait of Resistance: The Art & Activism of Carole Condé & Karl Beveridge - Educational Video Set," 2013. [1:12:00], <https://vtape.org/video?vi=8414>. During COVID lockdown, Miller collaborated with Condé and Beveridge on the short digital video, "VIRULENCE: by Carole Condé + Karl Beveridge + Jim Miller," 2020, <https://vimeo.com/481360415/>.

⁷⁶⁷ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁶⁸ Interviewed about the project, Owen explains that "It came out of just a passion to have a voice about politics and just seeing what was happening in this province. ... Satire is really great. You can say all sorts of things and get away with all sorts of outrageous comments and have some fun at the same time." In Jim Coyle, "Mike Harris, your brush with fate is ready," *Toronto Star*, 18 December 2003: D2.

political circumstance that needed to be addressed.”⁷⁶⁹ Contrasting the circulation of the two projects, Miller describes how:

...we put huge effort into getting that out, contacting newspapers and magazines, different kinds of ways to amplify the existence of these activist calendars. ... we were sending the calendars to bookstores, packaging them up and sending them off to people, sending them to teachers' unions or other unions. It was Ontario focus, so it was all over the province. I did not put that kind of effort into *Poison Pen*. ... there's so many individual stories of how book works get out. But I know what I did. It was a period of transition, because I did this exhibition and it succeeded in getting publicity at most of the places where it showed. Certainly in the UK, the publicity drew attention to the show, which then would help draw attention to the bookwork. Camera Work made publications themselves, and this was around the period where they were ending that, but I think people still looked to that operation for interesting printed pieces that dealt with photography—more interesting photography rather than traditional photography. I felt like I was putting the book in good hands in these different locations.⁷⁷⁰

From Miller's vantage, the exhibition and bookwork operated in tandem with one another following the *Poison Pen's* publication in 1990, each promoting and enhancing the other. Further, the project sparked national interest, exhibiting across the country and at multiple sites in the United Kingdom. However, *Poison Pen's* reach was limited, in Miller's view, to be “more of a gallery work,” where the *Calendar of Harrisees* found a popular audience beyond the gallery.⁷⁷¹ Miller also views the act of amplifying the *Calendar* as a different operation for a different kind of output from an exhibition or accompanying bookwork: “it was part of the strategy of [*Calendar*] to create informative publicity about the work, which really ended up amplifying not the work, but the commentary on the issues that we were speaking about.”⁷⁷²

Miller acknowledges that the popularity of *Poison Pen* had a great deal to do with the one-to-one relationship that people experienced in response to Carlyle's story. Miller's father viewed the exhibition in Toronto, and Miller recalls his response, feeling “really

⁷⁶⁹ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁷⁰ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁷¹ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁷² In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

good and gratifying”: “he said, ‘I didn't know you could make art about just an ordinary person like this.’ In his mind, art was about grander things, or things that you couldn't understand, or whatever. . . . it was my intent as well to take somebody's life that isn't typically, in many people's minds, the focus of what art is about.”⁷⁷³ This one-to-one sympathetic contact was significantly enhanced by Carlyle’s own determination to promote her story in the public eye, and these efforts continued long after *Poison Pen* exhibited.

As much as Carlyle played a role in the amplification of *Poison Pen*, her efforts were also amplified by both the momentum and aesthetics of Miller’s traveling exhibition. In 2001, Carlyle produced a different book from the *Snap, Crackle and Pop* title she had originally imagined publishing: this was a self-published hardcover produced only in a few copies for her immediate family. Titled *Thanks Dad*, it recounts Carlyle’s father’s biography as well as her own life.⁷⁷⁴ The title page shows a photograph of Carlyle’s parents, Elizabeth and Edward Howard, taken just before their move to Eva Street. *Thanks Dad* borrows aesthetic cues from Miller’s *Poison Pen* bookwork, including the positioning of its title photo and a large and abrasive (almost ransom-letter like) title font. Despite being a family narrative, Carlyle’s strife with Kellogg’s takes up a great deal of space in the book. In its early pages, Carlyle reproduced the exhibition postcard for *Poison Pen*’s Forest City Gallery exhibition, which is accompanied by the caption “My story.”⁷⁷⁵ Later, Carlyle recounts her interaction with the two police detectives and with the psychologist Dr. Max in more detail. In this personally distributed account, Carlyle claims that detectives surveilled her house and bugged her telephone for three weeks prior to their initial confrontation about the poison pen letters. In the summer of 2001, and in response to her ongoing letter-writing campaigns, Carlyle is visited by a detective who agrees to take her statement. He claims that neither of the original detectives (by then deceased) made a formal record or file about Carlyle, but he informs Carlyle that her

⁷⁷³ In conversation with Miller, 11 February 2022.

⁷⁷⁴ Marjorie Elizabeth (Howard) Carlyle, *Thanks Dad* (London, ON: self-published, 2001).

⁷⁷⁵ Carlyle, *Thanks Dad*, iv.

name does appear in one of the detective's log books on the date of her initial interrogation.⁷⁷⁶

Carlyle continued to write letters on her own behalf for the rest of her life. Family records include copies of letters Carlyle sent to the CEO of Kellogg's Canada, dated 2010, and letters to the Chief of London Police in 2012 and 2013. These later letters include mention of Carlyle's plight as well as the plight of other individuals (Carlyle kept news clippings about others' conflicts with Kellogg's). The 2013 letter includes a signed sticky notation from Carlyle which reads: "My fight for justice still continues. This is the last letter sent. I'll never give up!"⁷⁷⁷ Marjorie Carlyle died in 2018. Carlyle's daughter, Jill Lucas, recalls the injustice of her mother's situation, particularly around the small settlement with Kellogg's in 1977. States Lucas, who was a teenager at the time of the original accusation, "I get why she made mistakes because she was on her own, and she didn't know what she was doing. She wasn't making good decisions because nobody was by her."⁷⁷⁸ Lucas also acknowledges the pressure that the conflict with Kellogg's put on the whole family. In adulthood, before meeting Miller at Canada's Wonderland and conversing with him about her Mother's ordeal, Lucas had the opportunity to apologize to her mother: "I remember saying to her, you know, I'm sorry I wasn't there for you. I didn't know how to help you. And I got tired of hearing about it."⁷⁷⁹

Forensic Architecture's lexicon includes the term "counter-forensics," and assigns it two possible definitions. The first refers to Locard's aforementioned principle that all crime leaves a trace. This counter-forensics obstructs the collection of such traces (anything from data to dust, weaponry, bodies, and even entire crime scenes) "to frustrate or prevent in advance the forensic-scientific investigation of physical or digital objects."⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁶ Carlyle, *Thanks Dad*, 37-38.

⁷⁷⁷ Marjorie Carlyle, from personal documents of the Lucas family, dated 12 April 2013.

⁷⁷⁸ In conversation with Jill Lucas, 7 March 2023, London, Ontario.

⁷⁷⁹ In conversation with Jill Lucas, 7 March 2023.

⁷⁸⁰ Forensic Architecture and Sheikh, *Forensis*, 743.

This first definition implies nefarious action, as when a state power eliminates all evidence of its maleficence. The second definition for counter-forensics is attributed to Allan Sekula, and it refers to the appropriation and implementation of official techniques for evidence gathering by human rights activists, “in order to challenge oppressive regimes or respond to their aftermath.”⁷⁸¹ This second kind of counter-forensics is at work throughout *Poison Pen*: as Miller with Carlyle gathers as much evidence and testimony as possible, and as Carlyle continues to testify and advocate following the exhibition and book publication.

3.2 Forensic Futures: Urgent Artifacts, Sticky Activism, and Poor Images

Kellogg’s began operations in London in 1907, and it established the present-day factory building in 1924.⁷⁸² Over its tenure, Kellogg’s was a major food processor and employer in the province. The company also significantly altered the neighbourhood in its immediate orbit. Beginning in the 1960s, Kellogg’s began to purchase surrounding properties to expand its operations. As we witness in *Poison Pen*, this expansion involved demolishing homes and installing parking lots. The expansion also involved renaming Eva Street, the street on which Carlyle lived, to Kellogg Lane.⁷⁸³ Forty years later, in 2013, and citing a drop in product sales, Kellogg’s announced the immediate closure of its London factory. This closure represented a sudden loss of over 500 local jobs. In the same press release, the company announced it would be expanding operations in Rayong, Thailand.⁷⁸⁴ A significant portion of the community felt abandoned by the shut-down and frustrated by similar closures of factories owned by Heinz, Ford, Sterling and others.⁷⁸⁵ Londoner Tony Couture organized a petition to return Kellogg Lane to its original name,

⁷⁸¹ Forensic Architecture and Sheikh, *Forensis*, 743.

⁷⁸² Hank Daniszweski, “Make cereal giant’s street name toast,” *The London Free Press*, 26 February 2014, <https://lfpres.com/2014/02/26/make-cereal-giants-street-name-toast>.

⁷⁸³ Daniszweski, “Make cereal giant’s street name toast.”

⁷⁸⁴ “Kellogg to close London cereal factory next year,” CBC News, 10 December 2013, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/kellogg-to-close-london-cereal-factory-next-year-1.2458080>.

⁷⁸⁵ “Kellogg to close London cereal factory next year,” CBC News.

explaining: “I don’t want their corporate label on my publicly-owned street. ... This is a goodwill gesture we are asking the city to do for the worker-citizens.”⁷⁸⁶ Local Ward 4 Counsellor Stephen Orser acknowledged the campaign, calling it a “symbolic gesture” from the community.⁷⁸⁷ In 2015, Stephane Gaudette of Timmins discovered a handwritten message on his bag of Frosted Flakes. The note, written in marker by three Kellogg’s employees, identified his bag as the last to come off the line at the London factory. Along with their signatures, the three employees signed off with the number of years they had been employed: 24 years, 29 years, and 28 years. When asked if he opened the bag, Gaudette responded, “I had toast instead.”⁷⁸⁸

Looking at the final spread of Miller’s *Poison Pen*, in which the parking lot that replaced Marjorie Carlyle’s home is shown mostly empty, a kind of future evidence is potentially presented that prophesizes the eventual withdraw of Kellogg’s from the community it first re-named and repurposed. But is it reasonable to say that this specific bookwork makes contact with the future, or that it presents an ‘uncanny collapsing of time’? As Michael Barkun writes, conspiratorial thinking—whether toward the nihilistic or the aspirational—operates on the basis of a paranoid sense that all is connected, everything happens for a reason, and nothing is as it seems.⁷⁸⁹ Are all these elements instead simply

⁷⁸⁶ Couture is interviewed in Daniszweski, “Make cereal giant’s street name toast.” The Change.org petition, garnered 604 signatures. See Tony Couture, “Rename Kelloggs Lane back to Eva Street. (The original name),” Change.org, started 17 February 2014, <https://www.change.org/p/city-of-london-ontario-canada-rename-kelloggs-lane-back-to-eva-street-the-original-name>.

⁷⁸⁷ Orser is interviewed in Daniszweski, “Make cereal giant’s street name toast.”

⁷⁸⁸ “Timmins dad finds cereal box message from factory workers,” *As It Happens*, CBC Radio, 4 March 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-tuesday-edition-1.2980129/timmins-dad-finds-cereal-box-message-from-factory-workers-1.2981481>. The Kellogg’s building complex was recently purchased and has been repurposed as 100 Kellogg Lane, branded as “Canada’s Largest Entertainment Complex.” The former factory now contains a 170,000 square foot indoor family entertainment centre, craft brewery and distillery, regular immer-sive art exhibitions and competitions, retail and office spaces.

⁷⁸⁹ Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

the natural outcome of systems of ‘free exchange’ and late stage capitalism? “We make things today for tomorrow,” write the editors of Applegarth Follies. Miller and Carlyle’s work is indeed prescient of the present day. Following Forensic Architecture, we see a future-forensics at work in this archive of material, warning us of what’s to come.

Carlyle’s inability to escape her employer even in her own home prophesizes the uneven dynamics of work and home life felt by so many in the present day, irrevocably altered by COVID isolation and the seemingly convenient and safe option to ‘work from home.’ Carlyle and her neighbours’ complaints of company surveillance foreshadows increasing employee surveillance, as well as corporate surveillance and data collection in the interests of ‘doing better business.’⁷⁹⁰

Poison Pen—whether as exhibition, bookwork, news interview, personal letter writing campaign, or family history, is also an urgent artifact. Noting the shared production, amplification and distribution of the work by both Miller and Carlyle, the outputs of *Poison Pen* land squarely within Paul Soulellis’ concept: it is a work “that [steps] away from individual authorship, towards something larger—collective, cooperative works emerging from the shared wealth of needs.”⁷⁹¹ As has been discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, urgent artifacts take up a forensic or counter-forensic quality by serving as a kind of “record” or evidence—here, “[t]he evidence that demonstrates how crisis compounds crisis.”⁷⁹² There is also an accrual and augmentation factor taking place between the modes of production of both Miller and Carlyle: each of these modes dilate and propel one another, furthering the capacities of the project to reach an audience.

⁷⁹⁰ For information on recent Ontario legislation addressing how employers must disclose their electronic monitoring systems, see Nisha Patel, “Is your boss tracking you while you work? Some Canadians are about to find out,” CBC News, 11 October 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canadians-workers-employers-tracking-1.6612228>. Recalling Chapter One’s consideration of conspiracy practices (a term from Edward Snowden), recent whistleblowing and reporting by tech outlets like The Verge have uncovered that intelligence agencies are as interested in collected digital data as employers and marketplaces. See Wes Davis, “US spy agencies are buying the same surveillance data advertisers crave,” The Verge, 14 June 2023, <https://www.theverge.com/2023/6/14/23759585/odni-spy-report-surveillance-data-location-tracking>.

⁷⁹¹ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.”

⁷⁹² Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.”

How do urgent artifacts induce action? With the idea of accrual and expansion in mind, Soulellis' urgent artifacts can be directed to a more recent example of the formation of a public—here, an “affective counterpublic” that developed from the distribution and circulation of physical and digital protest artifacts, as explored by Jinsook Kim in “Sticky Activism: The Gangnam Station Murder Case and New Feminist Practices against Misogyny and Femicide.”⁷⁹³ Kim details powerful public reaction following the murder of a young woman in a Gangnam subway station in Seoul, Korea, in 2016. In news media, the event was initially contextualized as an unfortunate but random attack. However, online discourse quickly pushed back against this narrative to situate the event within a systemic issue of cultural misogyny in the country.⁷⁹⁴ A Twitter account named for the date and time of the attack, @0517am1, called for an active intervention at the subway station with the message: “Let’s leave a chrysanthemum flower [a symbol of mourning in South Korea] and Post-it notes at Gangnam Station Exit 10. It is now society’s turn to provide an explanation for the violence and murders committed against women.”⁷⁹⁵ What began as a place for the public to leave flowers and messages of condolences became an active site of protest. More than a thousand sticky notes were posted at the subway station’s exit number 10, and these sticky notes contained, in the words of Kim, “messages of sadness and anger and calls for change.”⁷⁹⁶

Kim names this specific event as “sticky note activism,” drawing on scholarly consideration of “stickiness” by Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green.⁷⁹⁷ The

⁷⁹³ Jinsook Kim, “Sticky Activism: The Gangnam Station Murder Case and New Feminist Practices against Misogyny and Femicide,” *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, Vol 60.4 (Summer 2021): 37–60.

⁷⁹⁴ In a press interview explaining the powerful public outcry that followed the murder and its coverage, Professor Lee Na-Young of Chung-Ang University described how the attack was re-contextualized as “a symbolic example of what happens in a misogynistic society.” Quoted in Park Su-ji, Park Soo-jin and Lee Jae-uk, “Gangnam murderer says he killed ‘because women have always ignored me,’” *Hankyoreh*, 20 May 2016. https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/744756.html.

⁷⁹⁵ Quoted, with additional context, in Kim, “Sticky Activism,” 38.

⁷⁹⁶ Kim, “Sticky Activism,” 38.

⁷⁹⁷ Via Jenkins, Ford and Green, “‘stickiness’ refers to the capacity of media to attract and hold individuals’ attention and engagement, often in contrast to the concept of ‘spreadability.’” Quoted in Kim, “Sticky Activism,” 42. See Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, “Introduction: Why Media Spreads,” in

affective capacities of this stickiness relays with earlier descriptions of qualia, infrathin and “the ‘raw feels’ of interiority,” as discussed by Whalley and Miller via Duchamp (see “Premonition: A Warning for the Present; Suggestion: Thinness”). The sticky notes facilitated individuals’ making-contact-with both the violence inflicted on another as well as their own experiences of misogyny. They encouraged responsive expression, protest and action.⁷⁹⁸ In a January 2021 public talk on her research, Kim describes how this activist event of publishing “facilitated the mobilization of women’s affect, including grief, rage, fear, and guilt, disrupted and challenged the dominant narratives about the killing, and provided an alternative discourse of femicide.”⁷⁹⁹ Summarizing her interviews with protestors, Kim details how interviewees “indicated their affect in the social terms through emotions such as sorrow and anger,” but also describe less articulatable “bodily encounters, affective intensities, and resonances.”⁸⁰⁰

Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 1-46.

⁷⁹⁸ Kim states: “The Gangnam station murder case contributed to the formation of affective counterpublics by inspiring the production and circulation of a counter-discourse against a dominant patriarchal frame around femicide. At the same time, the case also contributed to the formation of feminist publics, in that it fostered the development of a collective sense of feminist identity based on shared experiences of gender-based violence and continued to fuel coordinated action opposing such violence. Such affective deliberation has been afforded and facilitated by social media; in particular, the aforementioned hashtag #saranamatda has played an important role in expressing, collecting, and making visible women’s shared vulnerability and in mediating and connecting online and offline activism.” Quoted in “Sticky Activism,” 51.

⁷⁹⁹ See “Dr. Jinsook Kiim - Sticky Activism: The Gangnam Station Murder Case and New Feminist Practices Against Misogyny and Femicide” (registration page), York University’s Korean Office for Research and Education, 22 January 2021. <https://kore.info.yorku.ca/event/sticky-activism-the-gangnam-station-murder-case-and-new-feminist-practices-against-misogyny-and-femicide/>.

⁸⁰⁰ Kim provides a number of responses that individuals had to visiting the site of the murder: one interviewee describes how “her body literally trembled, and she felt a ‘hot and intense explosion, catharsis and unity’ as if in the grips of ‘a religious ritual,’ feelings that cannot easily be captured in words. Likewise, on the Twitter account of the Gangnam Station Exit 10, one woman wrote that ‘[e]ach post sounded like a scream to me. I could hear their voices.’ Such experiences demonstrate that, as much as such affect circulates and moves through bodies and objects, it can be sticky in terms of uniting bodies with particular objects.” See Kim, “Sticky Activism,” 50.

Kim situates the sticky notes within Eun-Sung Kim's concept of "protest artifacts" which, at numerous instances in South Korean social history beginning in the 1980s, "[heightened] the emotional and sensory impacts" of a protest event while also "shaping the space and culture in which protests unfold."⁸⁰¹ These particular protest artifacts become "sticky" due to how they circulate online: through the active "attention to and participation [of]" publics.⁸⁰² Writes Kim:

... sticky notes have from the start connected the materiality of the paper on which they are written and the physical spaces that they occupy with the digital spaces in which they are widely shared. In this sense, sticky note activism also differs from typical mechanisms of digital activism, such as hashtag activism, which mobilizes social justice issues and networked activities mainly in digital spaces.⁸⁰³

Even in a pre-digital landscape, *Poison Pen* engenders stickiness: in the propulsion of the exhibition across the country and beyond, in corresponding local media coverage, in the bookwork and the reflexive boost to the installation that results, and in bolstering Carlyle's own activist actions through her mail correspondence and the archiving of her familial history. Decades after *Poison Pen*, a kind of sticky protest activism also began to accrue around the last bag of cereal produced in London's Kellogg's factory. Images of the bag circulated on social media, some linking to the *London Free Press* story reporting on the event. One Londoner began a campaign to retrieve a discarded street name. On Twitter and Facebook, other Londoners expressed their frustration, rage and grief with the sudden announcement of the closure (these can be found by searching the hashtags #Kelloggs and #ldnont). Many posts compared the closure to other corporate employers vacating the province. Calls for boycotts and action were circulated, as were contextualizing observations. Lawyer Ali Chahbar warned on Twitter that "#Kelloggs is

⁸⁰¹ Kim, "Sticky Activism," 43. For "protest artifact," Kim is citing Eun-Sung Kim, "The Material Culture of Korean Social Movements," *Journal of Material Culture* 22, no. 2 (2017): 194–215.

⁸⁰² Kim, "Sticky Activism," 42.

⁸⁰³ Kim, "Sticky Activism," 43-44.

merely the latest casualty in a devastating theme that's emerging. Rules of engagement changing & we're losing. #LdnOnt.”⁸⁰⁴

To return to Soulellis, I would argue that the sticky protest artifacts are also urgent artifacts. Their accessibility, distribution, circulation, and the corresponding calls to action that result qualify them as vital moments of publishing: they are “artifacts that step away from individual authorship, towards something larger,” and “the materials we need when gaslighting happens.”⁸⁰⁵ The images of the Gangnam sticky notes circulating online were amplified with the use of specific hashtags, such as #yeoseonghyeomoe_matseoya_hamnida (“we need to oppose misogyny”), #urineun_yeongyeoldoelsurok_ganghada (“the more we connect the stronger we are”), and #stop_misogyny.⁸⁰⁶ As Kim details, the affective public response to both the event itself and seeing/circulating the sticky messages of grief, anger, and empathy fostered both a “feminist public” and a specific “counterpublic,” and these publics generated “a counter-discourse against a dominant patriarchal frame around femicide.”⁸⁰⁷

In encompassing the conditions of distribution and circulation, urgent artifacts also show certain intersections with Hito Steyerl’s “poor images.” Poor images proclaim the present state of visual culture writ large. They are, to borrow digital terms, lossy and low resolution.⁸⁰⁸ Reduced in size, no longer rarefied or high-definition, poor images are more efficiently “uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and reedited.”⁸⁰⁹ Though their visual fidelity may be compromised, poor images are important evidentiary objects

⁸⁰⁴ Ali Chahbar (@AliChahbar), “#Kelloggs is merely the latest casualty in a devastating theme that's emerging. Rules of engagement changing & we're losing. #LdnOnt,” Twitter, 11 December 2013, 11:08 AM EST, <https://twitter.com/AliChahbar/status/410803283385909248>.

⁸⁰⁵ Soulellis, *URGENTCRAFT*, “10: Urgent Artifacts.”

⁸⁰⁶ Kim, “Sticky Activism,” 48.

⁸⁰⁷ Kim, “Sticky Activism,” 51.

⁸⁰⁸ Referring to image compression, lossy images are those that are more easily shared because of their smaller file size and lower resolution. Lossy images discard information with every save and transfer (such as JPEGs), and this information cannot be recovered. Lossless image files compress and retain all their information, often making them much larger in resolution and size and therefore harder to circulate.

⁸⁰⁹ Hito Steyerl, “In Defence of the Poor Image,” 32.

of corresponding degradation and momentum. Certain poor images, according to Steyerl, take on a vibrant evidentiary power that testifies to/against the conditions of their making: “their poverty is not a lack, but an additional layer of information, which is not about content but form.”⁸¹⁰ As a kind of forensic evidence, poor images demonstrate “a snapshot of the affective condition of the crowd, its neurosis, paranoia, and fear, as well as its craving for intensity, fun, and distraction.”⁸¹¹ Miller’s editing of archival advertisements into *Poison Pen* is a production and circulation of poor (yet revealing) consumerist imagery, meant to be impactful but also disposable, fleeting. His attention amplifies quality as evidence, signalling a series of sociocultural conditions of lack. In Steyerl’s words, poor images are also themselves the victims of double-violence: “wrecked by the violence of history,” their additionally “violent dislocation, transferrals, and displacement” perform meta-commentary on capitalism’s hyperreal, high-speed present.⁸¹²

A poor image’s compounding deterioration offers both a greater capacity for thinness and circulation, as well as a kind of alchemical potential. As Steyerl writes, poor images can become something else, something more akin to qualia; their degradation makes them less image-object and more “abstraction”—“a visual idea in its very becoming.”⁸¹³ She articulates their specific power for testimony as follows, and her description echoes the productive capacity of the partial and inexplicable, as articulated by Rugoff and Wollen:

[A poor image] cannot give a comprehensive account of the situation it is supposed to represent. But if whatever it tries to show is obscured, the conditions of its own visibility are plainly visible: it is a subaltern and indeterminate object, excluded from legitimate discourse, from becoming fact, subject to disavowal, indifference, and repression.⁸¹⁴

⁸¹⁰ Steyerl, “In Defence of the Poor Image,” 32.

⁸¹¹ Steyerl, “In Defence of the Poor Image,” 41. Steyerl continues: “The condition of the images speaks not only of countless transfers and reformattings, but also of the countless people who cared enough about them to convert them over and over again, to add subtitles, reedit, or upload them.”

⁸¹² Hito Steyerl, “Missing People,” 156; Steyerl, “In Defence of the Poor Image,” 32.

⁸¹³ Steyerl, “In Defence of the Poor Image,” 32.

⁸¹⁴ Steyerl, “Missing People,” 156.

The Gramscian quality of Steyerl's poor images represents a contemporary refraction of Walter Benjamin's aura. It also elicits a strong comradery with Soulellis' urgent artifacts. The urgency here speaks to both a socio-political urgency—the *necessity* for defensive maneuvers when reality itself is under attack—as well as a tenacity for circulation and a determination for perseverance. From a semantic vantage, the phrase “urgent artifacts” expresses deeply political evidentiary stakes. It also grafts a specifically poetic, potentially esoteric, quality onto the artifact—the document remains lively, invites us, communes with us, directs us or, at the least, prompts us toward action. Artifacts are traces; *urgent* artifacts trace both the present and the past in search of understanding in order to project that understanding forward: into the present and into possible futures. Like Soulellis' urgent artifacts, poor images entail forensic futures: they account for present contexts by presenting “the receipts, the proof” of any number of ongoing and fraudulent socio-political injustices. Circulating these receipts—re-staging and testifying against the crime—is, from Soulellis' vantage, a call to action.

“You have only to read Jorge Luis Borges,” Ulises Carrión writes, “a man who *knows* about books, in order to realize that books aren't necessarily a panacea, that they are instead a monstrous phenomenon, menacing man's identity and the coherence of his world.”⁸¹⁵ For Carrión, artists' bookworks are not passive actors or neutral carriers for a text. Strangely, Carrión describes a mortal lifespan for the bookwork: an organic process that eventually sees the corpse of the bookwork laid to rest in the cemetery of the library, archive, or museum.⁸¹⁶ The linear lifespan articulated by Carrión is productively complicated when brought into consideration with urgent artifacts, future-forensics, sticky activism and poor images. Things become even more urgent when we consider the possibility of making contact with the dead.

⁸¹⁵ Ulises Carrión, “Bookworks Revisited,” 65.

⁸¹⁶ See Ulises Carrión, *From Bookworks to Mailworks* (Budapest: Fiala Művészek Klubja, 1978); Ulises Carrión, *Personal Worlds or Cultural Strategies?* edited by Martha Hellion (Madrid; Coyoacán: Turner, 2003).

With urgent artifacts and forensic futures in mind, Soulellis, Beatrix Pang's and Rachel Valinsky's recent panel conversations for "Publishing the Present" addressed the role of the publishing archive, particularly how distribution and archiving must be honed together to not only forecast possible futures but also actively participate in bringing those futures into being. To accomplish this, our archives must shift away from familiar institutional models and toward, in the words of Soulellis, the "porous": "something more slippery, more flexible, maybe more stretchable, where narratives are less fixed, where access is something that feels open and alive (but also safe)."⁸¹⁷ Soulellis' description seems to align with thinness. The archive's institutionalized role is populated by a specific forensic language—"words like artifact, evidence, document, and record."⁸¹⁸ Counteracting the lapses and gaps in this institutional history requires the creation of spaces—potentially thin spaces—for forensic futures, and for encountering and absorbing its stories. Soulellis cites "[w]ayward stories (after Saidiya Hartman), stories of failure (after Jack Halberstam), queer and trans stories, Black stories, Indigenous stories, POC stories, disabled stories, immigrant stories."⁸¹⁹ These are stories we don't normally have access to, stories that don't resolve, "stories that are typically erased completely from mainstream narratives."⁸²⁰ Soulellis productively asks, "What would an archive devoted to these kinds of voices look like?"⁸²¹ Miller's account with Carlyle, in her own words, feels like such a story.

⁸¹⁷ Pang and Soulellis, "Artist-Publishers, Care, and Social Action." I found my copy of *Poison Pen* by accident when browsing through Art Metropole's previous Dundas Street location.

⁸¹⁸ Pang and Soulellis, "Artist-Publishers, Care, and Social Action."

⁸¹⁹ Pang and Soulellis, "Artist-Publishers, Care, and Social Action."

⁸²⁰ Pang and Soulellis, "Artist-Publishers, Care, and Social Action."

⁸²¹ Pang and Soulellis, "Artist-Publishers, Care, and Social Action."

Premonition: dog in swimming pool Suggestion: Archival Intuition

Mrs. McNichol sells her books at her home in Millbank. “I don’t give them to a seller because I tried that with my first book and they told me, ‘Oh, Mrs. McNichol we couldn’t possibly handle your book because you’re not well enough known.’ I do it myself now—wheel your own wheelbarrow, kid—that’s what I always say.”⁸²²

Edna Press

I established the independent imprint Edna Press in 2017 to bring artists, writers, and researchers together to collaborate on a variety of print outputs and programming. This platform creates spaces for generative discourse and experimentation. In the past, these spaces have evolved as open forums, conferences, research and reading groups, public programs for adults and children, collaborative curatorial and artistic projects, artist-run project spaces, and, of course, book publications. The venture is named for my grandmother, Edna Cutler, née Vallis, of Belleoram, a small community on the shore of Fortune Bay in Newfoundland. As a namesake Edna evokes the interwoven scepticism and acceptance of uncanny events that are part and parcel of outport folklore. For example, Edna Cutler once told me that she didn’t believe in psychics, but then immediately discussed several instances where she herself dreamed of peoples’ deaths before they happened:

The visual prompt for Edna’s logo is the Zener card deck developed by perceptual psychologist Karl Zener and parapsychologist J.B. Rhine in the 1930s. The deck of 25 cards, designed to measure extrasensory perception, were made up of five symbols: a Greek cross, a hollow square/rectangle, a hollow circle, three wavy lines, and a hollow five-pointed star. Edna’s aesthetic also parrots a 1935 letter from Rhine to Upton Sinclair inquiring about the psychic abilities of his then-wife, Mary Craig Sinclair. Rhine’s correspondence (on Duke University letterhead) included a deck of cards and a request

⁸²² See “Named as one of the top nine poets in the world,” Stratford, 31 January 1972, in the Vera McNichol Fonds, Stratford-Perth Archives.

that Mrs. Sinclair try them out “if there is ever a time in the next hundred years for a little playful testing.” From a particular angle, this self-effacing sentiment foreshadows the criticisms volleyed against the deck’s overall effectiveness. The bold Zener symbols could often be seen through the back of the card, reflected in researchers’ eyes or glasses, or easily guessed due to poor shuffling or subtle cues from body language. Nodding to this, Edna Press’ logo includes Zener symbols which are embossed into print material so their debossed impressions can be seen on the reverse.

The first bookwork which was both produced by, and brought into being, Edna Press was *dog in swimming pool* (2018), which uses methods of (re)construction, (re)sequencing, conversation, transcription, writing and collaborative editing.⁸²³ In July 1977, press photographer Mike Jordan submitted a roll of negatives of a dog in a backyard swimming pool in London, Ontario. I first encountered these images when I was researching photographs of Vera McNichol from the *London Free Press* archives—Jordan had taken photos of McNichol and her book display at one of her picnic gatherings (see Figure 2). The finding aid, or the descriptive index, for the *London Free Press* archive of photo negatives is fairly rudimentary: shelves of binders collect daily call sheets, and each sheet lists a brief line summation for each of the images that ran in that day’s paper, as well as the name of the photographer. The only unifying quality across images is the specific day on which they were published, so reading through finding aid pages can elicit a specifically affective experience. Indirectly yet inherently related, the poetic resonance of the descriptions evokes the desire to see-induce connections and causalities where rationality would insist none exists: Cherry pickers, lady painting on ladder, Ayton murder scene, gals take welding course, Picnic for Vera McNichol at Listowel, tennis instructor without pupils, Donna Veldboom found slain in 25 Orchard Street, Fire scene at 15 Stanley Street, old folks singalong, Frog in mouth of snake, St. Thomas OPP dispatcher Mary Ellen Davis sunbathing, street flooding after rain, painters on strike at beal, Girl cutting grass in hot weather, Heroin bust at seniors fun & fitness clubs. As

⁸²³ Mike Jordan, Kelly Jazvac, Kim Ondaatje, Lena Suksi, *dog in swimming pool*, edited by Ruth Skinner (London: Edna Press, 2018).

Larry Hendrick shares with Truman Capote: ““Most of my ideas for stories, I get them out of newspapers—you know?””⁸²⁴

I was interested in seeing the images of the dog in a swimming pool, so pulled both the negative sleeves and the paper in which two of the images originally ran in 1977 as a lifestyle feature on that year’s unseasonably hot summer. *dog in swimming pool* reproduces all twenty-two of Jordan’s images, taken at 79 Weston Street.⁸²⁵ The images show a white shepherd doggy-paddling in an above-ground circular pool. Following the sequence of images, the dog attempts to escape the pool at least once. In a couple of images, the dog is positioned on the pool ladder, surrounded by its assumed family. The dog then appears sitting on a floating mat, staring into the camera. The last image on the roll is likely an accidental shot of the backyard fence at an extreme angle, as though the photographer has dropped his hand while releasing the shutter.

⁸²⁴ Capote, *In Cold Blood*, 61.

⁸²⁵ Edna is also the name of a small street here in London: Edna Street. Following the publication of *dog in swimming pool*, which reproduces and responds to photographs taken in the backyard of a house on Weston Street, friend and future Edna Press collaborator Faith Patrick pointed out that Edna Street and Weston Street are so close to one another that they nearly touch.

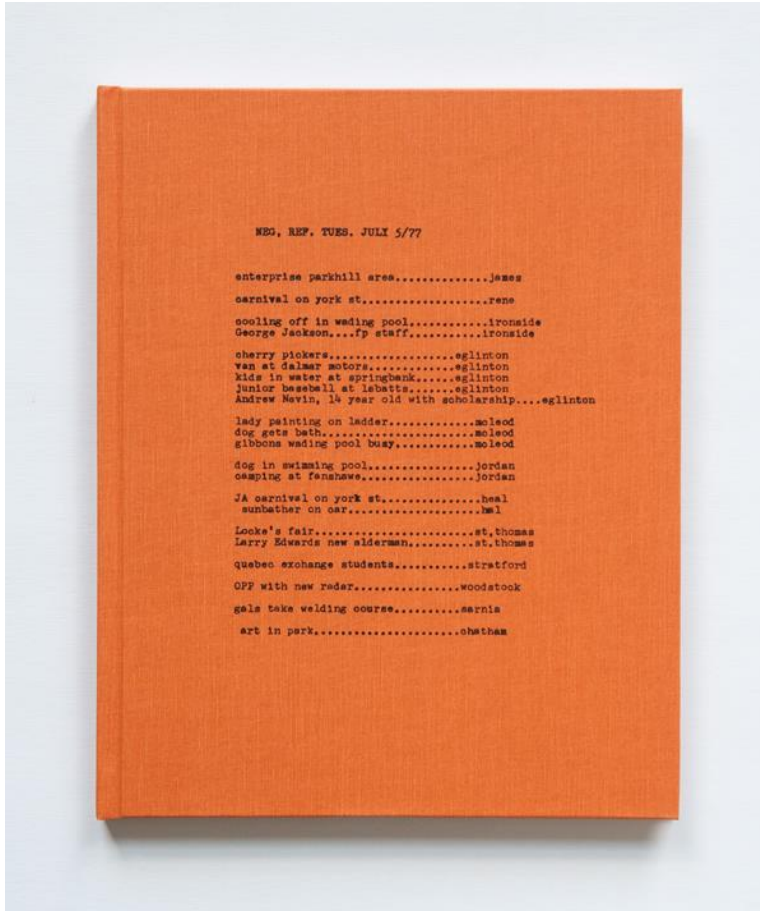


Figure 20. Cover of Mike Jordan, Kelly Jazvac, Kim Ondaatje, and Lena Suksi, *dog in swimming pool*, edited by Ruth Skinner (London, ON: Edna Press, 2018). The cover reproduces the describing finding aid for the *London Free Press* photo archives, negatives that ran in the paper on 5 July 1977. Finding aid in the *London Free Press* photo archives, courtesy of Western University Archives.

The *LFP* finding aid for the day Jordan's images ran is reproduced in black on the book's bright orange cover, which replicates the same orange colour of the envelope in which the negatives are stored. The endpapers are bright turquoise to elicit the chlorine of the pool that we cannot experience in the black and white photographs. Jordan's images are accompanied by commissioned texts by London-affiliated artists Kelly Jazvac, Kim Ondaatje, and Lena Suksi. The book's simple layout pays playful homage to photographic narratives of the 1960s and 1970s, while engaging a previously hidden

moment in London history. The project also plays with the relationship between photographs and captions. *dog in swimming pool* intervenes on an existing archive by opening its evocative objects up to further ambiguity and wonder, as the texts demonstrate surprising instances of continuity that reverberate new themes and concerns onto Jordon's photographs.

The parameters of the commissioned texts were left open to each author. Kelly Jazvac wrote a short and playful observation of her dog, Wendel, being shown the images of the other dog. Kelly's hope is that her dog will exhibit some kind of awareness or interest in the images, and she charts Wendel's reactions in detail (Wendel does not exhibit characteristics of great interest). Lena Suksi's poem attempts to express suburban alienation through a self-conscious projection onto a dog "and his experience as the celebrity guy quite literally out of his element (on water) as well as the company of his species."⁸²⁶ Kim Ondaatje's contribution is a fragmented interview, transcribed from conversations we had over the course of two days about the photographs, her life in London, and her career as an artist and arts advocate, dog breeder, farmer, and environmentalist. Kim also carries out a brief behavioural assessment of the Weston Street scene, stating the dog is likely trying to escape the pool due to the chlorine. She expresses empathy for the dog—not only because she is a former breeder, but because the white shepherd reminds her of her own black shepherd, Mya.

dog in swimming pool had a public launch in London at Carl Louie Gallery, an artist-run space operated by Zoë Mpeletzikas and Adam Revington from their house on Elias Street. Lena Suksi read their poem. A short video taken at Kim Ondaatje's Blue Roof Farm played on a monitor (the video work shows scenes from Kim's home set to audio of her discussing her unfulfilled efforts toward establishing a Canadian Artists' Pension Program). Toward the end of the evening, Zoë and Adam's dogs were let in and wandered throughout the home and gallery in which they lived.

⁸²⁶ "Another outsider parallel I was thinking through is how while on one hand that space the photographer captured is the kind of stereotype boomer banality that any Londoner would recognize, it's as jarring as the elevation of the dog is in the long history of that land we occupy. I hope some of this came across," from an email correspondence with Lena Suksi, 25 March 2018.

In the same spirit of encouraging refractions and reverberations through the material, artists Graeme Arnfield (London, UK), Taylor Doyle (London, ON/UK), Rosie Roberts (Glasgow, UK), Josh Thorpe (Glasgow, UK), and a leading UK-based Senior Behavioural Investigative Adviser were invited to read and respond to *dog in swimming pool* in ways that relate to their own research practices. The public reading event "Inside of a dog it's too dark to read" took place at Good Press (Glasgow) on April 15th, 2019. My initial invitation to the group framed the event as a collaborative and additive process rather than a descriptive one, interested in using moments of output like Jordan's photographs, and Kim and Kelly and Lena's texts, to generate new knowledge. Instead of "read this book and talk about it," contributors were asked to "respond to this book in some way that relays with your own research and/or practice." This was positioned as an open event of "reading, pretending you read the reading, reading the reading, and not reading the room."⁸²⁷ The activity was encouraged by my UK-based supervisor Maria Fusco, who challenged me to think of a way to "test the methods of the publication against themselves."

The title for the event came from Groucho Marx: "Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read." This quote was also the namesake for the 2003 exhibition, "Outside of a Dog: Paperbacks & Other Books By Artists," guest curated by Clive Phillpot for Baltic, The Centre for Contemporary Art. An alternative title, adapted from Ulises Carrión's "The New Art of Making Books" would have been "How to succeed in making a [dog] that is not my [dog], nor his [dog], but everybody's [dog], i.e. nobody's [dog]?" Research and discussion topics ranged across dogs, companionship, Marxism, arts economies, accessibility and emotional labour within artistic education, forensic interpretation of a possible 'crime scene,' and publishing for communities. For example, following Ondaatje's suggestion that some maleficence was at work, the Senior Behavioural Investigative Adviser provided an exceptionally

⁸²⁷ From the initial email invitation to "Inside of a Dog's" participants, 6 April 2019.

wonderful reading of Jordon's images from the vantage of someone familiar with crime scenes.⁸²⁸

How do I discuss the initial encounter with Jordan's photographs that instigated the development of *dog in swimming pool*, and simultaneously instigated Edna Press as an ongoing (albeit occasional) publishing venture? In describing the engine of his multidisciplinary practice, artist and musician Matt Marble refers to "archival intuition." When asked to define this, he responds that it relates to "the two-fold nature of my life work":

This concerns a "looking within" (*intueri*) "origins" (*arkhé*), via an inner archive and an outer archive. The outer archive is one of material documents, cultural and historical phenomena, analytical mind. The inner archive is one of psychic documents, symbolic and archetypal phenomena, intuitive mind. The former concerns the excavation of neglected visionaries in the cultural subconscious of American history. The latter concerns the transcendence of both history and self through inspiratory methods and theosophical philosophy.⁸²⁹

Marble's practice entails spending a great deal of time in archives. His approach when exploring and navigating materials entails, in his own words, "no specific aim other than scouring for a spark of the numinous in history, an air of mystery regarding an unknown individual's name, a neglected piece of music, or a biographical anecdote."⁸³⁰ Though Marble's directive is free-form in approach, the intention behind these explorations of chance and affective encounter have specifically concrete stakes. Marble is a paramusicologist, and he is aware of the institutional resistance to his scholarly field. Like Jonathan Allen, Randal Steyers, and other researchers cited throughout this paper, Marble describes his research as "culturally marginalized due to a cultural normalization of xenophobia and bigotry, as well as some justifiable confusion."⁸³¹ His practice entails a necessary merging of the inexplicable and the concrete: a resulting "intuitive experience

⁸²⁸ This Advisor is one of only four in the UK and they are highly regarded. They requested to remain anonymous for the purposes of this research project.

⁸²⁹ Matt Marble, email correspondence, 12 April 2023.

⁸³⁰ Marble, email correspondence, 23 April 2023.

⁸³¹ Marble, email correspondence, 23 April 2023.

yields to analytical scrutiny to repair history and contemporary delusions regarding metaphysical superficialities.”⁸³²

Archival intuition resonates as an accurate descriptor for the initial explorations that led to the encounter with Jordan’s photographs. It also encompasses the experience of suspended time spent with the images after the fact of this initial encounter. In simple terms, while researching information about Vera McNichol, I read “dog in swimming pool” on the descriptive finding aid and I desired to see and spend time with those particular images. Upon seeing those images, I was indeed struck by all that they had to offer. I also wanted to share the images with others in order to find out what *they* thought the images might offer, from their own vantages and in their own creative languages. Because I have a background in photography and photo books, that interface immediately landed as the best possible scenario for hosting those interactions. But following the production of this more familiar output (the photo book), I have been challenged to think of the distribution and programming of that output more expansively, thanks to feedback from Fusco and from other arts publishers.

Marble’s concept and its corresponding stakes resonates with a multitude of concepts presented throughout this dissertation—qualia, infrathin, urgent artifacts, sticky activism, and forensic futures. But at the very core of all these, for me personally, are his descriptions of the “inner archive,” “symbolic and archetypal phenomena,” and the “intuitive mind.” Edna Press began as a project that was interested in how we experience and ‘read’ for all of those things. Edna Press, from both a publisher and audience perspective, is about the individual being open to an engagement with materials and all that they have to offer; being interested in how our life’s trajectories lead us to read for, or notice, specific things; being attentive to small aesthetic cues and decisions that modulate that engagement in productive ways (with a sensible dusting of paranormal pathos).

⁸³² Marble, email correspondence, 23 April 2023.



Figure 21. "Vera McNichol – Millbank clairvoyant." Negative scans of photographs by Sanderson, 1983, in the *London Free Press* photo archives, courtesy of Western University Archives.

Convivial Listening and the Forms Our Speaking Takes:

Though this project focuses on publishing, corresponding outputs that result from the activity of publishing have been manifold. As discussed in an earlier premonition, these outputs can, from another vantage, operate as methods for further production. Even before these outputs/methods arise, particular relationships with colleagues and collaborators are established. I want to end this thesis by considering the attitudes of some of these interactions, as well as some of the methods and outputs that resulted.

Over the course of my doctoral program, I've engaged in conversations, interviews, publications, exhibitions and programs with many individuals whose varied practices make them, at different turns, artists, writers, readers, researchers, publishers and distributors. These exchanges have represented events of publishing, and all have been archived and circulated in varying ways, including within this dissertation. As early proponents of the bookwork have discussed (Carrión, Lippard, Phillpot), artist publishers have the latitude for experimentation and play with regards to conceptual, editorial and

aesthetic treatments. When applied to recorded exchanges, these editorial treatments can be usefully enfolded within processes of publishing and circulation.⁸³³ Numerous independent and arts publishers, for example, are increasingly engaging with the chapbook form, popular for both its literary and artistic histories and potentials. The speed at which a chapbook can be produced and distributed, and the chapbook's relative accessibility—from both the producer and consumer perspective, as well as for how the medium contains, packages and delivers singular instances of content—make it an excellent interface for engaging continuous, lively, and open-ended discourse.⁸³⁴ Experimental formats reflect awareness of and attention to the materiality of conversation, the interplays and velocities of varied forms of language, and editorial processes—all while promoting continual lines of questioning, production, response, questioning, production, etc.⁸³⁵

As when we sit across from another over cards at the kitchen table, the incorporation of conversation into a reading creates space for myriad forms of knowledge sharing: these conversations encompass discursive rigor as well as liveliness, exchange, reflexivity, and open-endedness. Though more formal in tone, panel discussions and dialogues encourage

⁸³³ See the five-chapbook series by Toronto-based feminist exploratory working group EMILIA-AMALIA: “a partial record of the conversations, texts, images and output,” which addresses (in chapbook order, but out of chronological session order): *Chapbook 1 - Session 2: Affidamento/Entrustment*; *Chapbook 2 – Session 1: Translation/Annotation*; *Chapbook 3 – Session VII: How to Ask a Question*; *Chapbook 4 – Session VIII: Questioning Through Writing*; *Chapbook V – Syllabus/Workbook* (Toronto: EMILIA-AMALIA, 2019). The group regularly met “to examine and employ practices of citation, annotation, questioning, interviewing and autobiography as strategies for activating feminist art, writing and research,” *Chapbook 1 - Session 2: Affidamento/Entrustment* (Toronto: EMILIA-AMALIA, 2019), 7. See also *The Halifax Conference*, transcribed and adapted by artist Craig Leonard, edited by Jeff Khonsary (Los Angeles: New Documents, 2019): this publication presents a new transcription of the 1970 conference held at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, organized by Seth Siegelau. Writes Leonard: “Because no specific topic of discussion has been imposed on the conference, the reason for each artist attending the conference is the total reason for the conference.” In addition to its important archival function, Leonard’s transcription melds formal qualities of screenplay and stage play, opening up new possibilities for how we might engage with this landmark gathering.

⁸³⁴ The unique effectiveness of the chapbook form was initially brought to my attention by Joy James.

⁸³⁵ For example, *Dialecty* is a series of six chapbook publications edited by Maria Fusco and published by Book Works and The Common Guild in 2018. The series “considers the uses of vernacular forms to explore how dialect words, grammar and syntax challenge and improve traditional orthodoxies of critical writing.” Invited authors include: Harry Josephine Giles and Martin O’Leary, Robert Herbert McClean, Helen Nisbet, Lisa Robertson, Natasha Soobramanien and Luke Williams, and Adam Pendleton.

all parties involved to be, at different moments, both the engaged speaker and the convivial (sometimes) listener. “Convivial listener” is borrowed from a conversation between Glasgow-based author and artist Rosie Roberts and London, Ontario-based artist, writer and performer Misha Bower. I cannot recall which of the two first coined (or referenced) the phrase, which is fitting given the context of their short-lived project. I invited both to collaborate on an Edna Press publication under the Split Folio series.

Split Folio commissions London-based authors and artists to collaborate with artists and authors from outside London toward works that uniquely integrate text and image. Initially, this format was developed in order to access municipal funding (which required at least some parties to be London residents). We quickly discovered that correspondence by distance could be both a built-in challenge and potential for the project. For Split Folio works, collaborators are encouraged to take the lead on how their correspondences play out, as well as the material that results from that interaction. The series’ title irreverently co-opts business language, with ‘split folio’ traditionally referring to the splitting of expenses by an employee while traveling: the employer reimburses lodging and meals, but incidental expenses that make business travel tolerable (mini-bar purchases, in-room movies, long-distance phone calls) must be made on the employee’s time.



Figure 22. Sarah Munro and Faith Patrick. *Black Box: The Objectless Perception Game (Split Folio #1)*, edited by Ruth Skinner (London, ON: Edna Press, 2000).

Leaning into the aforementioned aesthetics of Edna Press, *Split Folio #1* is a collaborative card deck by Sarah Munro and Faith Patrick titled *Black Box: The Objectless Perception Game*. *Black Box* is a creative visualization deck of ten playing cards, intended for all ages. Sarah and Faith were interested in the potential of visualization to reduce stress, increase focus, and foster inspiration and creativity. *Black Box* uses language patterns and visualization prompts taken from the field of hypnosis. The players—one reading poetic descriptions created by Faith in response to Sarah’s collage works, the other(s) visualizing and drawing what they perceive—are encouraged to light a candle, dim the lights, lay back, and allow the descriptive inductions to guide visualization journeys. The launch of *Black Box* took place at Support Project Space in London. Faith read from her texts and invited Kim Neudorf and Kevin Andrew Heslop to read other visualizations. The audience participated in a series of group visualizations and collaborative drawing sessions. In the lower level of support, Sarah’s collages were animated and projected to slowly dissolve one into the next.

Split Folio #2 is a photo and essay collection by Jeff Downer and Justas Patkauskas, titled *A Study in Mundane Being*, released in 2020. Over the course of many months of email correspondence around the project, Jeff, Justas and I discussed possibilities for incorporating aspects of their exchange within, or appended to, the publication. Questions of how and why this material might be a useful inclusion shaped the publication itself, summarized in the associated paratext that we wrote together. On its surface, the paratext performs as though it would prefer to defer from convivial listening, (and any discussion whatsoever), but the resulting project is meant to undermine this performance. The paratext for Split Folio #2 reads:

This project is a case of a photographer and a writer trying very hard not to talk to each other. Dialogue is overrated - most people either speak at or past one another. We wanted to be honest about that and to speak past each other productively. To that end we introduced a recording and censoring device: *Under Western Eyes* by Joseph Conrad, a novel about the futility of communication. The novel's characters share languages but miss out on common meaning, walk the same streets while living in different worlds. Yet their lives are not tragic. There is a sense of autonomy in their non-alignment.

A joint artistic venture must be a missed encounter, or it risks subjugating one medium to the other. At the very least we wanted to avoid the conceit implicit in commentary. But we couldn't just babble. So what to do about the violence of discourse? Speech always requires a losing side. At last we decided to deface somebody's else's text rather than ours, for which there is no better candidate than an author so famous we could never harm them. To hell with you, Joseph Conrad.

In the end, *Under Western Eyes* became like a street we both shared: two strangers with their own styles, habits, and preoccupations who have come to recognize each other on their separate ways along a serene boulevard. This book is a travelogue of what we found there.⁸³⁶

Justas and Jeff's project was completed in February 2020 just as the COVID-19 pandemic had begun to rage through Spain, where Justas lived. Though we discussed the possibility of a virtual launch event, all three of us agreed to forego a launch in the wake of the many small- and large-scale personal upheavals caused by COVID-19. For their unfinished Split Folio project, Rosie Roberts and Misha Barton worked toward a

⁸³⁶ See Jeff Downer and Justas Patkauskas, *A Study of Mundane Being*, edited by Ruth Skinner (London: Edna Press, 2020).

performative script/poem that constellated around call-and-response, utterance and repetition, motherhood, COVID lockdown, and tennis reruns. Though the project never culminated in a finished publication, the conversations and materials generated remain in motion in explicit and less explicit ways.

Dialogues draw attention to the performance of, and interplay between, the parties involved. An interview establishes a particular relationship with dynamics, desires, and tensions specific to that relationship. Further, and to speak to our more socially distanced present, exchanges are structured in particular ways depending on whether they occur in person, over phone/video, or in dilated time by email. If done voice-to-voice or face-to-face, there is a corresponding decision as to whether to send questions or conversation topics in advance and how to transcribe what took place.⁸³⁷ These decisions involve consideration of both the participants and the future reader/listener of the exchange: how to approach editing and amending, what additional context is required (if any), how to enframe the exchange while being thoughtful of what such an action does to the exchange.⁸³⁸

A number of Edna Press (and Edna Press adjacent) projects have involved the transcription of conversations, such as my extended conversations with Kim Ondaatje for

⁸³⁷ From an editing perspective, the 2012 “interview which became a conversation” between Jane Rolo and James Brook, Gavin Everall, Karen Di Franco and Paul Sammut, titled “Where do you see Book Works Beginning?” addresses some of these aspects nicely. The print output includes usually unincluded “lines” that shape, moderate, and carry along an in-person exchange: “...is that the first question?” “...No, I’ve written it down. Shall I read it out loud? I only have one, as I wanted just a conversation. ...that was just a prompt. I know we’re never going to answer that. Shall I just read it out?” (7) Also faithfully included are a number of “starts” (signaled in the form of breaks and subheadings) that emphasize the activity of discussion. See Jane Rolo, James Brook, Gavin Everall, Karen Di Franco and Paul Sammut. “Where do you see Book Works Beginning?” In *Again, A Time Machine: from distribution to archive*, edited by Gavin Everall and Jane Rolo, 7-33. London: Book Works, 2012.

⁸³⁸ The above example of the “interview which became a conversation” between Rolo, Brook, Everall, Di Franco and Sammut similarly provides a useful model for approaching these editorial questions around transcription. Footnote annotations devised after the event of conversation provide the reader with useful context, allowing the conversation itself to flow. The conversation ends, literally, on a question about distribution. In a deft editing decision, the corresponding final footnote describes how the resulting discussion became “side-tracked” (30). In allowing the event to diverge from a formal interview format there is a simultaneous demonstration of the “repercussions that are unknown, which is similar to the function that publishing, distribution and the archive has for us.” See Rolo et al., “Where do you see Book Works Beginning?”

dog in swimming pool. Discussion with artist Gayle Meikle informed my thinking through possibilities for carrying out conversation, dialogue, and/or interview, as well as the various practical, conceptual, and ethical functions involved in their transcriptions. Meikle's practice prioritizes forms of production that continually spur on further production, such as the ongoing, collaborative polyphonic essay she creates with artist Alexandra Ross.⁸³⁹ Methods put forward by Maria Fusco in "Populating Her Sparseness: Writing Gonda" have also been useful in conceptualizing writing through/with transcription and its possible outcomes, specifically Fusco's methods of Extraction, Transcription and Compression.⁸⁴⁰ For Fusco, what might result, the potential "polyvocality" that emerges from specific writing acts—writing with/through transcription, for example—is a capacity to express and "[make] sense as a linear, yet open-ended, line of enquiry."⁸⁴¹

The potential for conversation, dialogue and interview to be rigorous and collaborative research methods, carried out relationally and with care, is made evident. In many conversations, interviews and dialogues carried out over the course of my thesis research and Edna Press projects, the other parties have collaboratively proofed, edited, augmented and amended transcriptions. Various benefits and tensions result from attending to transcription in this way. Mutual and/or collaborative editing allows discussants to correct mistakes (their own, or mistakes of transcription). Collaborative editing also provides opportunities for collaborators, or co-correspondents, to enact strategies for keeping conversation untethered, suspended, and unspecified.

⁸³⁹ See Alexandra Ross, Gayle Meikle and Laura Leuzzi, "A Polyphonic Essay On Memory" (conference abstract), University of Dundee, 9 November 2017, <https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/publications/a-polyphonic-essay-on-memory>. Another generous editorial decision is found in a transcribed email exchange between Lynne Tillman and Stewart Home in the edited volume, *Put About*. The dialogue includes date and time stamps, giving the reader a sense of the temporal expanse of their conversation and the overall context within which the conversation occurred. See Lynne Tillman and Stewart Home, "Flatterers Must be Shunned," in *Put About: A Critical Anthology on Independent Publishing*, edited by Maria Fusco with Ian Hunt (London: Book Works, 2004), 65-80.

⁸⁴⁰ Maria Fusco, "Populating Her Sparseness: Writing Gonda," in *Give Up Art*, edited by Jeff Khonsary (Los Angeles; Vancouver: New Documents, 2017), 60-61. Fusco capitalizes these activities.

⁸⁴¹ Fusco, "Populating Her Sparseness," 61.



Figure 23. Figure 10. Installation view of *Anti-Profit: Independent Publishing in London*, curated by Ruth Skinner, McIntosh Gallery, 14 September – 26 October, 2019. This image shows the interactive publication-making stations.

[Around] our Kitchen Table

Anti-Profit: Independent Publishing in London was an exhibition organized at McIntosh Gallery in 2019. This exhibition was presented in tandem with the traveling exhibition, *Publishing Against the Grain*, presented by Independent Curators International (ICI), which explored the wide range of arts publishing and criticism at that moment.⁸⁴² *Anti-Profit* was intended as a local complement to *Publishing Against the Grain*'s

⁸⁴² See the press release for McIntosh Gallery: “Anti-profit: Independent Publishing in London | Publishing Against the Grain,” Akimbo Listings, September 2019. <https://akimbo.ca/listings/anti-profit-independent-publishing-in-london-publishing-against-the-grain/>.

international scope: it surveyed independent arts publishing in London from the 1960s and into the present. This exhibition incorporated numerous conversations with London publishers both past and present—many of which appear in this thesis research—and it bridged separate but related archives of arts publishing to bring materials (back) into immediate contact with one another. I am grateful to Joan Brennan, Mike Niederman, Hilary Neary, Jill Robinson, Brian Lambert, Charles Vincent, and Dave and Rena O’Halloran for their time and conversation as I explored this topic. During many of these conversations, I was also invited to explore personal archives of printed matter and glean resonant moments, images, and phrases. These encounters—small moments of intuitive evidence—were incorporated into a graphic display that enwrapped the circumference of the gallery space.

Also in conversation, Dave and Rena O’Halloran described working in the mid-1980s as co-editors of the London-based punk publication *What Wave*. They recounted how they recruited friends to come and help collate, assemble, and staple the photocopied pages of their zine. They jokingly called this ritual “the zombie shuffle.”⁸⁴³ In a similar anecdote, Mike Niederman and Joan Brennan laughed about downstairs neighbours being confused by the sounds of their endlessly circling around their kitchen table as they collated and stapled copies of their publications.⁸⁴⁴ I didn’t connect them at the time, but I was also reading about McNichol’s countless card readings at her own kitchen table. Constellating around a table felt, intuitively, like an engaging and fitting motion to introduce into the publishing exhibition—readily populated by display cases and didactics. I incorporated this movement into the *Anti-Profit* exhibition so the visitor could have hands-on access to this embodied activity of publishing. Instead of a pre-made catalogue, gallery visitors were invited to produce their own personalized exhibition booklet by carrying out the ‘zombie shuffle’ assembly processes themselves, using lo-fi xeroxed pages from an array of historic and contemporary publications. Between then and now, I have encountered these booklets at surprising moments: at art book fairs, on personal bookshelves, and

⁸⁴³ Dave and Rena O’Halloran in conversation with the author, 31 August 2019, London, ON.

⁸⁴⁴ Joan Brennan and Mike Niederman in conversation with the author, August 2019, Byron, ON.

loosely constellated on studio and office walls. It makes me smile to see them, because these urgent artifacts are continuing to speak to us.

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Related Work Experience	<p>Sessional Instructor, Western University, Department of Visual Arts; School for Advanced Studies in the Arts & Humanities (2018-2024)</p> <p>Sessional Instructor, Lakehead University, Department of Visual Arts (2022-2023)</p> <p>Teaching Assistant, Western University, Department of Visual Arts; School for Advanced Studies in the Arts & Humanities (2013-2019)</p>

Publications:

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