

# **Marsh Hermeneutics: Performing Sites of Disorientation**

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Declaration: I, Sophie Sleigh-Johnson, declare the work presented herein to be my own, and is the thesis upon which I, the candidate, intend to be examined upon.

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## Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to perform an originary ‘Disorientation’ of particular sites: one that attempts to performatively tune into and map the affective technological patina of the past as a willing displacement of the present as Real Time. Disorientation is a theoretical term I take from philosopher Bernard Stiegler – and through which he, after Derrida, locates the historical ruptures brought about by successive phases of technology as externalisations of memory, as the medium of individual and collective individuation. My aim is to move an understanding of Disorientation from this solely theoretical realm to that of practice, as a willingly generative modality: to perform an understanding of place as originary technics, symbolised by the mythographic site of the marsh. Disorientation is thus uniquely understood at the material level of place itself, as its originary mode.

To perform this, I develop a method of ‘Anachronic Collision’ whose fundamental elements are the tripartite relation between tool, site and personae that, when activated, release the effect of Disorientation. At the centre of this is a ‘Blind Spot of Technicity’ whose modality is spatialised delay, at stake in which is a questioning of the smoothness and speed of the past’s recall in digitised culture, as adverse Disorientation. Contra thinking Stiegler’s Disorientation solely as an effect of memory’s externalisation, this thesis perversely attempts to conjure that which has never occurred in the past, and thus what is not indexed as nostalgic loss through technology. In my multi-disciplinary art practice, this revenant zone is mapped across radio; sculptural installations; re-enactment performances; printmaking, and spoken word, as a repetitive and inter-temporal relationship with the terrain that moves between Disorientation as mode and effect.

To start this ‘Marshography,’ Chapter 1 sets the scene for Disorientation in the marshes of ancient Mesopotamia, as figured in the technicity of the cuneiform tablet, the earliest known writing. Preforming the cuneiform tablet, I make manifests the ‘Marsh Regime’ as the first pre-existent technics, and the source of Ur-Disorientation. Chapter 2 is a case study of Antonin Artaud and his methodology, including props, itinerancy and hole making, which outlines his spell-casting practice as an imbrication with the geological. Chapter 3 develops both previous chapters through formulating re-enactments of a geological form of *dérive* through my own practice, and an emphasis on the minor mode of comedy. Ultimately, this thesis conceives of Disorientation as the original currency of spatio-temporal collaging, the originary force of life: an intervention on the ground of individuation.

## Introduction

*When you are nowhere physically, you are everywhere spiritually*  
The Cloud of Unknowing [c.1372] 1960: 45)

How a location can disorient is the question that frames this thesis, at the heart of which is the relation of technology to the lived present, and its corrosive effects on experiences of temporality. Performing an originary ‘Disorientation’<sup>1</sup> of site attempts to tune into the traces of the past as a willing displacement of the present, by reasserting the import of site for technology through modes of delay, unworking, comedy, and the material methods undertaken to channel this. In what follows, the folds, slips and broken signals of time that are spatially engrained, potentially and with potential, in a location, are exposed as technologies themselves, and productively ‘read’ through vectors of anachronistic knowledge and affects to channel originary Disorientation. This leads us to understand the technological constitution of place and its import for individuation and work.

### Disorientation

This is, then, a multi-operational investigation into Disorientation, and the methods through which to locate an originary yet still mobilisable force and originary (‘Ur’) effect, that is the marsh’s *Ur-Disorientation*, undertaken between eclectic historical and theoretical articulations on the one hand, and its literal grounding and entanglement in my multi-disciplinary art practice at the level of site, where the latter is both a surface substrate and a force. Theoretically, the thesis establishes itself upon the basis of a philosophical investigation into technology, taking as its starting point the work of Bernard Stiegler in the first and second of his three-part ‘Technics and Time’ series. In this first work, *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (1998) Stiegler builds upon Derrida’s notion of différance by extending it into technology: thereafter, I place both the différance in writing and technology as affective attributes of place.

Différance as the “becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time” functions through the trace (*trait*), as the opening of appearance and signification, a logic of deferral, which will be important in my outlining of site’s modality of delay (Derrida 1972: 8). Stiegler’s development of this is in rearticulating the opening of différance into the non-living objects of technicity, bringing it into the world as such, thus doubles the original formulation of Derrida, his erstwhile philosophy tutor. *Technics and Time 1* also sets out to show that humans consist – are constituted through – technics, and that it is through technics that the historical phenomenon is itself constituted, a fact all the more urgent in hyper-modern, globalising communication ecologies’ intervention into memory formation (1998: 2). Stiegler’s work features the thematic of Greek myth and importantly the work of the mid-twentieth century French philosopher Gilbert Simondon, whose thought also offers a backdrop to my thesis through the role ‘place’ plays in modes of existence (1998: 136). Thus, whilst Stiegler is my main theoretical source, Simondon is important because his formulation

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<sup>1</sup> Disorientation, when used as a verb to name the Ur-force of the marsh, will be in uppercase. The same applies to other operative concepts developed in the thesis.

of temporal progression, from a focus on a pre-existent anterior “magical” harmony<sup>2</sup> through to developments into aesthetics, and technology, has a crucial focus on what he calls “Privileged Places” as potent nodes in the landscape: points of exchange between the structure of being in relation to the wider milieu (Simondon, 2017: 178).

It is in *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation* (2009) that Stiegler builds the case for this eponymous term, positing technology as memory, and arguing that it is through newer technologies of retention and inscription – namely, digital tele-communications – that we have come to live in a world where time devours space: an ultra-disoriented world, in which we have lost our bearings: adverse Dis-orientation (2009: 3). This state of affairs is the point at which my dissertation intervenes, taking up the mantle of Disorientation but re-locating it in performative invocation of site – from which, as Stiegler suggests, it has been wrenched, qua decontextualisation.

Thus, where perhaps now it might be suggested that Disorientation has a corrosive effect on individuation, to the extent that we are, as Italian Autonomist Franco ‘Bifo’ Beradi suggests, in an “age of impotence,” I intend to show it in its equally generative attributes, as both a method and an effect, creating a new experience of time that also abjures the contemporary hauntological yet static obsession with the past – such as that afforded by twentieth and twenty-first century technology and its contemporary terminus in the technicity of the Internet (Beradi, 2017: 31) (Fisher, 2018: 683). Whilst this project is clearly wrestling with the same issue, the dilation of the present I seek, and outline, is an attempt to swerve the melancholic stasis where “there is no present to articulate anymore” as Mark Fisher – a theorist whose work concerning time, the modern, and contemporary culture, is also informative to this thesis – suggests (2014: 14). I intend to focus, or at least acknowledge, a starting point for Disorientation, even if, and specifically because, the ensuing temporality is not linear, as suggested in the forms of re-enactment to be pursued in Chapter 3: an originary ‘Ur’ mode of Disorientation stems for the city of Ur in Mesopotamia, one of the cities of this marshy fount of writing, as much as indicative of the term originary: thus, taking the Babylonian site-based root of the word, it also plays heavily upon its status as a pharmakon.<sup>3</sup>

### Marsh Regime

Throughout the thesis, I shall thus move Stiegler, after and with Simondon and Derrida, into a theory of spatio-temporalising in the grain of site, with a focus on the mythographic site of the marsh landscape as a technological Privileged Place, using both the anterior ancient Mesopotamian marsh and the post-Enlightenment Essex marsh as the two sites of focus. If Stiegler’s thesis in *Technics and Time 1* is the enmeshing of technics and time, I, as propose the marsh as its material grounding, whose modalities are damp, delay and unworking, via comedy, the arcane, and occulture<sup>4</sup>: a spatial dimension whose affordances, I will in particular

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<sup>2</sup> This focus on an ‘anterior’ is also import to the thesis as ancient artefacts and relics are often mobilised in practice and dissertation to inculcate a material anachronism to Disorientation.

<sup>3</sup> The pharmakon, which is used by Derrida in *Plato’s Pharmacy* (1981) to describe the nature of writing as both curative and poisonous, is also taken up by Stiegler to denote that which at once enables care to be taken and that of which care must be taken, and is thus emblematic of technicity’s effects (Stiegler, 2013a:4).

<sup>4</sup> Occulture “refers to the environment within which, and the social processes by which, particular meanings relating, typically, to spiritual, esoteric, paranormal and conspiratorial ideas emerge, are disseminated, and become influential in societies and in the lives of individuals” (Partridge, 2013: 122).

argue, are key to re-channeling originary Disorientation – the marsh’s Ur-Disorientation – as the lineaments of existence, written into the fault lines of site.

Given that Disorientation in Stiegler’s terms locates the historical ruptures brought about by successive phases of technology as externalisations of memory, in this dissertation, an emphasis on locality insists on a Marsh Hermeneutics to understand time and technology, as opposed to an organisational principle of digital code of the former, where the latter is arguably the most obvious currency of its contemporary technological affect. Technicity qua Disorientation creates a rupture of time, which here I see as a dilation, as it were, a ‘hole’ opening up, that is evident, or readable, as a temporal ‘fault line’ in site, primarily of the marsh: this is where delay operates as spatio-temporal deferral or *différance*, which I argue is inscribed into the material of a site itself, and exerts generative force in the present.

I thus make a key contribution to the field by extending this notion of Disorientation into landscape, through the operating structure that I term the Marsh Regime. This contribution to a field already rich with thinking possible alternatives to the present, and its deadening and commoditised present at the intersection of identity and digital networks, is to thus frame site as latent with potency. ‘Bifo’ Beradi, in particular, who has suggested a notion of “Futurability” as a generative alternative to the nostalgia described above, also outlines the existence of “possibility” as content inscribed in the present construction of the world – which it takes “potency” to “activate” (2017: 1). Beradi’s use of the term “inscribed” is relevant, as I take the site of the marsh to be originary inscribed as a technological surface, this Ur-Disorientation: an inscriptive regime that operates as this Marsh Regime, and through which site operates as a surface of technicity. This regime is the operating structure for the originally collaged mode that is the literal and metaphoric bedrock for all Disoriented site, and for which the cuneiform tablet – the first known writing, from the marshes of Mesopotamia – is the key technological index (Finkel, 2015: 1).

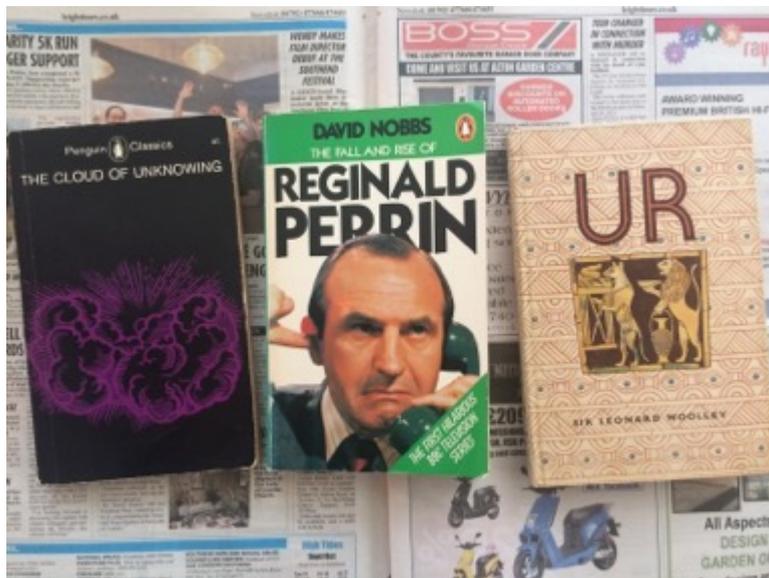
Examples of Disorientation to stem from this originary Regime are found through the thesis in such genres as comedy, alchemy, prophesy, and parochial literature: all typified by subsidiary modalities of unworkability, opaqueness, dampness, anachronism, and delay. Delay qua *différance* is a dilation in sediment through the Blind Spot of the marsh’s muddy technicity, whilst unworkability in the Marsh Regime is symbolised in both the heavy and sticky mud and impassability of such a disorienting zone of Disorientation. But in addition to this, notions of the unworkable have affordance later in the thesis under the rubric of opacity in more affective terms, with a debt to Édouard Glissant’s call for opacity in *Poetics of Relation* (1997). The sloppy mire of the marsh is a material metaphysics for the import of a disorienting breakdown in reception, knowledge, and understanding, that the miasmatic damp ‘Cloud of Unknowing’ – as described in the eponymous medieval text of Negative Theology – is also a prophetic vapour to. Thick clouds of mist hang over wet damp flatlands, and this meteorological and metaphysical Cloud, rising damply over this humidity to denote that which it is not possible to delineate, give voice to, in contradistinction to the ease of recall from all periods, by virtue of the Internet, that a more virtually disoriented basis of memory gives rise to (1960: 1).<sup>5</sup> The Cloud also negotiates the pharmakon-like nature of technicity,

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<sup>5</sup> The Cloud of Unknowing’s lesser-discussed dialectical cousin is, appropriately, and pharmakonically – in relation to digitised memory recall – called “The Cloud of Forgetting” (1960: 58).

representing, as it does both the ‘nowhere’ of the neo-liberal systems of capital, but also on a more anterior level, the dis/placement that is the base of technological Disorientation: originary anachronism. As the epithet to this introduction suggests, Disorientation as vouchsafed in the strange entities of clouds, mud, and later mists and damp, are not only a making-strange or making hard-to-grasp of one’s location, but are modalities that unwork time itself, as anonymous entities that blur temporal epistemes: hinge material that is neither material nor ideal, an “enigmatic manifestation of the world-without-us” as philosopher Eugene Thacker terms it, in a work that uses the genre of horror to think the “unthinkable world” (2010: 83/1).<sup>6</sup>

Anonymous manifestations of matter, metonymised throughout the thesis in practice and dissertation by said Cloud, become operative as technologies themselves,<sup>7</sup> motifs of site’s originary technicity, insisting on Disorientation at the level of opacity and effect, but also as a method thereof. Further, as ‘formless’<sup>8</sup> material entities, they are an inversion of Gnosticism’s defiled matter vs. transcendent spirituality, typified by Bataille’s Base Materialism, a mid-twentieth century hermeneutic of the low, the filthy, the debased: matter that would overrun any system of homogeneity (1985: 45-52). Base Materialism is influential on the development of this thesis’ Sedimentary Hermeneutics, which reads this miasma and damp patina of the marsh as thought itself, or its spatio-temporal breakdown, tracing its ruptures. Like the unknowing of a Cloud, formlessness declassifies, and is the negation of definition.



Important primary texts: trinity as figure upon *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* ground

<sup>6</sup> This has ecological affordances too: see Keller, C. (2015) *Clouds of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement*, New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Cloud and damp thematic will be enunciated as technological surfaces, especially in my practice, cf. the Cloud of Unknowing motif, lino printed on a carrier bag, in Chapter 1 and practice documentation.

<sup>8</sup> See also Bois, Y. & Krauss, R. (1997) *Formless: A Users Guide*, New York: Zone Books, for an influential appraisal of medium specificity along the lines of Bataille’s “Formless.”

### Anachronic Collision: method

The collision of such zones as the marsh with affinities found in a cuneiform tablet, a sitcom, a medieval well, a dictaphone, a scream, a photocopier, a hagiographic journey, a geological bed, a carrier bag and a spell (to name a few) as elements of a disorienting mise-en-scène, is the second key original and theoretical contribution to be found in the thesis, framed under the term of my critical methodology ‘Anachronic Collision.’<sup>9</sup> This term, as the methodological currency of the Marsh Regime, acknowledges Didi-Huberman’s notion of anachronism (for him, in painting) as that which helps to elucidate simultaneous yet differing regimes (2003: 34). The meeting, then, of the ancient Mesopotamian marsh and a 1970s sitcom is a collision that brings about new knowledge, in drawing affinities between seemingly incongruous artefacts, but which, in the grounding of a Marsh Hermeneutic and the more arcane signification of landscape, an odd new meaning is found for existence in the preset present. Within this method, I distribute anachronism equally across temporal regimes, but with a technological focus, in a tripartite relation of prop (tool), scene (site), and personae, all of which allow me to map psychic territory of site as a pre-existent technic.

#### *Dramatis Personae, Scene, Prop*

The Props: the cuneiform tablet, the crosier, the Cane, the dictaphone, the photocopier, the carrier bag, the sick bag, the Hosten Pils beer can, the spell.

The Scenes: the marshes of Mesopotamian and Essex, The Aran Islands, the Dublin Archive, The Running Well, the TV sitcoms *Rising Damp*, *The Fall & Rise of Reggie Perrin*, and the office of *The Leigh Times* newspaper.

The Personae: Leonard Rossiter (as Reginald Perrin and Rigsby), Antonin Artaud, Anna Trapnell, and Andrew Collins. To this list of personae, I add myself: as Reporter, hagiographer, and re-enactor.

Throughout, this tripartite relation of elements, germane to each 3 Chapters or acts, pursues a staging of the technological lineaments of site. I implicate myself in the developing constellation of non-hierarchical elements that refold and reorient according to locale and necessity, as a positionality that productively disorients (as effect of Disorientation) and contingently unfolds by virtue of Anachronic Collision. For instance, in Chapter 1, a discussion of Mesopotamian metallurgy, as inscribed on the prop of the cuneiform tablet then becomes mobilised in Chapter 2 through Artaud’s own performative metallurgy, where he reportedly tips his own cane with iron to make it spark. Both instances are linked: a glimpse of Ur-Disorientation. And again, Artaud’s Cane is in turn echoed in Chapter 3 when this role falls on myself in a re-enactment with my own Cane (or ‘crosier’) as an affective tuning fork, having shifted from Reporter in Chapter 2’s journey to Ireland, to re-enactor. Each Chapter is thus a re-vision of the mise-en-scène: three acts of Disorientation whose facets unfurl in relational intensities of implication that re-(dis)orient according to the focus of their mobilising. Equally, the centuries crossover: but with the inalienable focal points in the three Chapters of c.3200 BC, 1937, and 1974 as temporal marker stones.

Written ostensibly as a traditional PhD dissertation, this ensuing text is both a document of this method and of critical thought, including fragmentary images, to narrate a stratigraphic

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<sup>9</sup> The other main contribution is, as above, the introduction of a site-specific practice to Stiegler’s theories of technology.

excavation of both the written site and the locales it concerns, with changes of focus and emphasis. A heretical gazetteer, a guide to contingent knowledge amplified in these intensities, the materialisations are at once subtle and obvious; high and low; occluded and the humorous; sacred and the profane. A productive meaning is (hopefully) found in the tension therein that pierces to the heart of this thesis' version of Disorientation, undercutting site across the lineaments of time and technology, to evoke what kind of knowledge is at stake in an emphasis of the materiality and stratigraphy of the research on sites and *as a site* itself – a dissolute zone that defies the capitalist drive-based mandate for hyper presence. Such autodidact research and the method of collision abjures formulaic reductionism to locate itself on the borders of specialisms: ones that refuses to capitulate to the loss determined by contemporary capitalist-technology's relation to time. Opened up by the dissertation and practice is the Disorientated effect of a Dilated Time in contravention of this.

Ways of working, then, through the thesis, are never dissociable from the work of site itself. And in pursuing this, there is much repetition to enact this affordance of temporality as Anachronic Collision: spiraling, contingent. Repetition as method, thus is key, as concepts and objects recursively instantiate the process to which they refer, apposite to the spectral nature of the phenomena invoked. Each Chapter presents a different constellation of Privileged Places, through re-(dis)oriented reticulations of space time. In this sense, the argument is not linear, but recursive. The affordances of the characters and props I enlist all bring a new orientation to the driving concern of Disoriented site and its dilatory potential.

If, as Yves Michaud suggests, “the Simondonian theory of reinvestment of key points of space and time by technical objects and equipment is more pertinent than ever,” I am to ask not just what method and reading Stiegler and Simondon via an original material enquiry of site (also met in the practice) might open up, but also question how this knowledge can be approached in the form of the practice and writing, where a less specular and more imaginatively and humorously implicated embodiment brings about a multifaceted, but also hard-to-situate knowledge (2012: 131). For Foucault – via Jorge Louis Borges' story about a Chinese Emperor's strangely indexed menageries – the arbitrary contingency of any system, and its plasticity, reveals “the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*” (quoted Foucault, 1970: xv).

## Dissertation breakdown

### Chapter 1: c.3200 BC

As the starting point of this triadic relation, Chapter 1 begins in the marsh, both real and imagined, to establishing a nodal point of entry for this Marshography. Modes of critically reading and performatively *re-orienting* Disorientation through the reimagining of this site are the vital driving force of this project, who's metaphysical and material Ur-ground is this marsh and its rich enmeshing of mythical, littoral, and temporal ways of working, qua Marsh Regime: an establishing model for thinking about the “pre-personal” technological affordances of site and their activation (Simondon, 2017: 192). The ensuing release of Disorientation is a channeling from the marsh's Ur-Disorientation – a notion that both name-checks the Mesopotamian ‘originary city,’ Ur, and play on the marsh as the literal bedrock of writing: the Ur-Form. The cuneiform tablet, from the Latin *cuneus*, meaning ‘wedge,’ formed

from the Mesopotamian marsh, is established as the operative prop, the numinous trigger, which, when performatively re-enacted in the present through various modes, manifests the Marsh Regime as a pre-existent technic. This idea is also adumbrated contingently and ideologically in Walter Benjamin's usefully-named theorisation of the Ur-form or *Ursprungspänomen*: a configuration of the unredeemed potential inside present forms, which unfolds in time (2004: 180). The cuneiform tablet is also the first of the said productive, pharmakonic duality between its role as portal to the marsh but also a cutting-(w)edge Mesopotamian technology of administration and bureaucratisation, within an artificial control system: where the 'agri-logistics program' (or literally Ur-Capitalism) begins (see Morton, 2016: 42).

Various versioning of cuneiform tablets appears in the Chapter: firstly, through the story of the Flood, then in metallurgical texts, and then in an example of hepatoscopy (prophesy though sheep's livers). As an affective relic, it also appears through my practice, as a borrowed artefact appearing performatively and sculpturally. These artworks have been made possible by my ongoing conversations with Professor Irving Finkel, Assyriologist and Curator in the Department of the Near Middle East at the British Museum. Irving has both appeared on three of my five Resonance 104.4 FM programmes, and has allowed the long-term loan of said cuneiform tablet for the development of this practice thread, for, as described in the practice documentation of the thesis, radio was and is an important formative research method, through which to perform impressionistic sonic works. This was evidenced in my project *Cealdweilla* through the metaphoric use of a tuning fork/staff/crosier, which metaphorically helped transmit from the Running Well into the gallery<sup>10</sup>: there was in fact a transmission device set up at the Well, which did broadcast live to the gallery. Numerous formative interviews conducted throughout the project also had their genesis in scripted and unscripted radio form, transmitted on said Resonance 104.4 FM programmes. In addition to Irving, interviewees have included Essex Master Mariner Ray Cowie, Marine Archaeologist Vince Gaffney; Essex Templar volunteer Helen Gibson; Professor Timothy Morton; Maggie Robert (M.E.R) of Orphan Drift<sup>11</sup>; poet and author Paul Buck; occult researcher Caroline Wise, Archaeo-musicologist Richard Dumbrill<sup>12</sup>, who reconstituted the 'lyre of UR,' and Andrew Collins of *The Running Well Mystery* and *The Leigh Times* fame.<sup>13</sup> All these interviewees become a collision of affective texture on the radio shows, a parity of major and minor knowledge, channeled by me as comedic compere. The initial broadcast, 'Doggerland'<sup>14</sup> a chthonic report/sonic essay (with "report" a satire on the Reporter role) and landscape guide: here, the Flood was a rumination on the prediluvian mytheme traced through Mesopotamia, Doggerland, and Essex. Ensuing shorter spoken word pieces in my radio practice also operate as perverse Essex gazetteers (see below).

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Chapter 3 and practice documentation.

<sup>11</sup> [mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-chthonic-live-ancient-females-in-the-red-rift-of-rays-21st-july-2017/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-chthonic-live-ancient-females-in-the-red-rift-of-rays-21st-july-2017/)

<sup>12</sup> [mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-collisions-21st-september-2016/listeners/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-collisions-21st-september-2016/listeners/)

<sup>13</sup> [mixcloud.com/Resonance/radio-caeldweilla-clear-spot-16-04-2018/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/radio-caeldweilla-clear-spot-16-04-2018/)

<sup>14</sup> [mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-7-may-2015-doggerland-chthonic-report/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-7-may-2015-doggerland-chthonic-report/)

## Dilation of the Blind Spot

The cuneiform tablet is both alienating as an early capitalist tool, but transductively<sup>15</sup> remakes the psyche, a counterintuitive glimpse of an Ur-Disorientation through the Blind Spot, where the latter is based firstly on Stiegler's call to see history as 're-vision,' where technicity functions as a "reflecting mirror" thereof (2009: 41). The 'Blind Spot of Technicity,' via the Marsh Regime, as a dilation of time, is as much as a productive broken signal, predicated on the dirty smear, *tache aveugle*, as the hermeneutic of the low and base, *pace* Georges Bataille (Stiegler 2009: 41/31), (Bataille 1988a: 233). This thinking develops what the stakes of site in this sloppy marsh mud are in what Frederic Neyrat has called the "geo-localisable" present of globalisation, another effect of negative Disorientation (2018:1).

The occulting methods endemic to such groups as the Situationists, operative in Paris from 1957 to 1972 – to be analysed later in Chapter 3, seem quaint in the face of GPS locations and the very hyper-present virtual mapping of space, leading to the question: where now is uncharted territory? The vicissitudes of this sort of hyper-present Real Time,<sup>16</sup> akin to what anthropologist Joseph R Tulasiewicz calls the "a-temporality" of the present, are circumvented in an operation that Chapter 1 terms 'Geophilology,' embedding ancient ritual *différance* and the alluvial pattern of floods and tides in said Marsh Regime: metonymy of threatened coastlines in a period of global warming (2012: 2). If in Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis, "becoming sorcerer" was proffered as a traversal of capitalism's rapacious tendencies, then what initially seems like the radical de-centering of power in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, published in 1987, pharmakonically re-affirms the wrenching out of contexts that is globalisation, despite it offering a heretical path away from capitalism or at least diagnosing its tendencies (1987: 237). To wit, the context-deracinated spatio-temporality of the present that sees space devoured by a-temporality – what Mark Fisher also terms "temporal flavourlessness" – is really prefigured by Deleuze and Guattari as the forerunners of today's theory of Accelerationism (Fisher 2018:372).

The largely Internet-age "political heresy" of Accelerationism – as Robin Mackay, editor of *The Accelerationist reader* puts it – designates a nihilistic alignment in philosophical thought with the excesses of capitalist culture. Its remedy, found in speeding up and intensifying the latter's tendencies, also largely dislocates the spatial from networked time (Mackay, 2014: 4).<sup>17</sup> Today, the proliferating and destructive capacities of this mode of deterritorialising is symbolised in part by the right-leaning Nick Land's recent apocalyptic thought: "machinic revolution must go in the opposite direction to socialistic regulation, pressing towards ever more uninhibited marketisation of the processes that are tearing down the social field" (Land, 2019: 341). The at-once generative but homogenising affordances of Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialisation give rise to these technological valences, but also re-think a disoriented *territory* that this Geophilology might afford.

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<sup>15</sup> Transduction is the contamination of human and technics, where Transductive refers to the terms of a relation cannot be understood as preceding the relation itself. Stiegler terms this the 'who' and the 'what' of human and technicity, taking the term originally from Simondon, for whom it means the protean actualization of differentiation and individuation (Stiegler, 2009: 7) (Simondon, 2017: 209).

<sup>16</sup> Real Time, for Stiegler, defined by the absence of the deferred, and aligned with concomitant Live Time, constitutes the futureless 'becoming' – the instantaneous "trait [and lack of trait] of contemporary technology" (2009: 63) [my addition].

<sup>17</sup> This was published a year after Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek's '#Accelerate: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics', which markedly instantiated Accelerationism as a leftist option, as much as a capitalist venture motivated by the right (2015: 349).

Accelerationism, to my mind, is intriguingly prefigured in a recently-discovered Mesopotamian metal plaque, which is the next stop-off in the Chapter: a vision of mythic metallurgy structured by the Marsh Regime. The metallurgical artefact proffers perhaps what Simondon terms the infinite reserve of nature, activated through an enmeshing of tool and human: the human effort must be in accordance with the cosmic act, and be ‘en kairo’” (Simondon: 2012, 15, n. 5) This is equally cognisant to “spatiotemporal haecceities of different orders” that metallurgy gives access to (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 405/410). This is also explored in the Chapter in examples of Babylonian metallurgical formulations, inscribed on cuneiform clay tablets, the legend of who’s alchemy, as religious scholar Mircea Eliade explains, is a miracle at the material level of existence: in performing the miracle of transmuting matter instantaneously, and in artificially speeding up the process of changing matter, it “supersedes time” (1978: 78). This is a dilation attested to through technicity’s Blind Spot as a pre-cognition of Accelerationism but also the relative Disorientation of speed in technology, trained in said Ur- ‘furnace’: a pharmakon, again.

### Rising Damp

This furnace as productive test site of temporal intervention and the release of Disorientation is thereafter re-configured in the Chapter to the site of the miasmatic Essex marshes, and its 1970s counterpart in the creepy lineaments of the sitcom *Rising Damp*. This is traced through a reading of Bernard Stiegler’s ‘Liver of Prometheus,’ which I illustrate serendipitously in the cuneiform Liver Tablet that marks the next return to the Mesopotamian marsh, a “reflective mirror” of technicity, but also a divination tool for hepatoscopy (Stiegler, 2009: 41/31) (Finkel, 2020: 16). Here, we have a substrate of dynamic time as well as the humoured sublimation of loss, alcohol abuse, and disappointment, symbolised by the holes of the liver. The latter is, equally, with the damp, seen as an affinity with, and effect of, noisome Essex miasma, the ‘ague cake’ (diseased liver) of Essex marsh dwellers, and *Rising Damp* as a TV site: the blueprint for the disorienting malarial vapors and the necessity of delayed gratification, that marks the duality of Disorientation.

The 1970s (and 1960s) are well-traced realms of cultural enquiry, especially in the age of pathological nostalgia, sufficient to those who now look back on that admittedly fungible era of “Pulp Modernism” (Fisher, 2018: 323).<sup>18</sup> A time in which pop music, latterly punk and its derivations, afforded in the Post War west (but crucially “pre-globalisation” age), a context-driven enquiry into life and modes of individuation or refusal: it is thus the tipping point, a strange threshold, into the neo-liberal state of temporality. The current instantiation of this nostalgia, that the thesis finds itself situated amongst, is at once the productive strand of occulture that runs through a great deal of post-structuralism, as a phenomenon cognisant to a constant disruptive thread of the modern terrain (Bartolini, 2013: 368). But its cousin, the Folk Horror movement,<sup>19</sup> which it is this thesis’ wider, although not manifestly stated, contention fails to account for the technological sediment of the land it writes on, predicated on delay, for which the method of Anachronic Collision is proposed: to create a diverse tool kit or rather armoury, for re-entry into site. At play in the arsenal, then, are not just the tropes

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<sup>18</sup> See Merlin Coverley’s 2021 book *Hauntology*, Harpenden: Old Castle Books, for a discussion of this malaise.

<sup>19</sup> Folk Horror marks a resurgence in the interest in the ancient, the occult and the wyrd, as referenced in 1970s horror films. For more, see Scovell, A. (2017) *Folk Horror*, Leighton Buzzard: Auteur Publishing.

of the wyrd as synonym for folky Albion, where the latter was, in the 1970s, a heightened interest in occultism and a “climate of paranoia ...depressingly mimicked in modern day British politics” as Adam Scovell suggested in his study on Folk Horror (2017: 123). Rather, the sitcom *Rising Damp* is here proposed as a more redolent testing site to channel the Ur-Disorientation of the marsh against the 1970s, finding in modalities humour and delay the real marks of Disorientation.

The hepatoscopist’s divination here is proposed as a particular Marsh Hermeneutic: in the holes of the liver is the Blind Spot, a stand-in for technicity’s mirror-reflection of time, which affords this re-vision in the present. This is propaedeutic for encountering the necessary mess and disappointment of life as the rich production of the *innen welt* that the sitcom also proposes: an abysmal locale that will equally be echoed in the site of the spatio-temporal reticulation of the reflective ‘Running Well’ in Chapter 3. Across the substrate of the sitcom’s walls is inscribed damp, which, as a Marsh Hermeneutic of this dilation, qua the Cloud of Unknowing (as metonymy for necessary re-directed nowhere of opacity), intervenes into causation as divinatory reinsertion on the ground of individuation. Without site, technicity does not reflect, does not re-vision, but without technicity, the project would just be a continuation of psychogeography’s usual, albeit generative, expansion of the magical Modernist tradition of place-based mysticism. If psychogeography’s spatial practice to divinate the lineaments of subjectivity walked “against the grain,” this project walks along the *gramme* to literally foreground inscription on this ground (Bonnett, 2017:7).

This context of psychogeography is originally a term taken from the Letterist International<sup>20</sup> to denote a new form of knowledge, mapping in the inter-subjective space in the city. Its use, especially in Britain, most often leans on the hermetic tradition of such figures as Elizabethan magus John Dee, Jacobean church architect Hawksmoor, and later Decadent-age iterations, which in the Modernist period reads landscape’s encoding with the imprint of ritual (Bracewell, 2009: xv). It thus came to represent a plethora of site-based writing, represented by British novelists such as Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd, to connote dark recesses of imagination qua traversal of space, that the marsh in this thesis is metonymy to. For Ackroyd, who wrote his novel *Hawksmoor* in 1985, the Situationist *dérive* is operative of his “circumambulation through time as well as place: a widening gyre that exposes the very timelessness of this two-millennia-old city” (2010: vii). Where this context is largely urban, increased interest over the past ten to fifteen years in the Folk Horror traditions of Britain have relocated psychogeography in Britain back to the land, in a popularity that is legend to nostalgia for 1970s horror films about the occult-rural underlay of Merrie England: itself already a contextualised nostalgia. This also speaks directly to the duality of Disorientation itself, and my concerns with it, noted in a resurgence in occult and witchy aesthetics in the artworld, that can be seen as the commercialisation and impossibility of countercultural forms, which, in accordance with Boltanski and Chiapello’s *New Spirit of Capitalism* (2017) is pernicious subsumption.<sup>21</sup> This, in addition of course to the fact that superstition and occult belief is a vector of Capitalism itself, as shown much earlier by Adorno and Horkheimer’s 1945 *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1997: 12).

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<sup>20</sup> A Paris-based collective of theorists and practitioners formed by Guy Debord and operative between 1952 and 1957, that later went on to form the Situationist International.

<sup>21</sup> For an example of contemporary art’s infatuation with witchcraft, see the ‘Witchy Methodologies’ symposium held at the ICA in 2017.

Where a magical and latterly modernist and psychogeographic practice might be defined by interventions designed to disorient, a “conceptual slippage” for an exchange with irrational or secret knowledge, Disorienting here is uniquely grounded at the level of technology, as substrate for spatio-temporal inscription (Pels, 2003: 29). The thesis’ location of subjectivation in landscape also shares common ground with Mark Fisher’s “weird and the eerie”: tropes in twentieth century culture, from his short 2017 book of the same name. Whilst sharing territory with the resurgence in Folk Horror and the British wyrd tradition, as fallouts from the rich seam of occult fiction writing in Britain from the Edwardian period onwards, and symbolised in writers such as Arthur Machen and M.R James, it also makes a claim for a deep charting of the necessities and effects of these modes on individual and collective consciousness; this, in acknowledgment of the prevalence of the concern of disenchantment since industrialisation, and its often manifested effects in eerie landscapes (Scovell, 2017: 10). In many respects, my project is in accordance with Fisher’s thesis, and in placing an emphasis on Disorientation as an underlying modality to these 1970s artefacts, but also ancient technologies, it also denotes technologies of resistance: at an ideate and material level, but also uncanny effects thereof, making it also more in line with re-enacting or utilising the affordances of the Situationist form as disruption (Debord, 1970: 177). Again, with my emphasis on site and landscape, disenchantment is addressed through the inscriptive Marsh Regime as a response to the contemporary crisis of “demythified time and space,” in an affirmation of site’s innate technicity (Stiegler, 2009: 88).

Situationist methods recurrently come in for consideration in the theoretical landscape. Following a CCRU and magic-influenced outing, in both Stewart Home’s *Reader* (1996) and Sadie Plant’s 1992 *The Most Radical Gesture*, recent approaches are still evidently required, denoting an affirmative and creative turn outside of its common usages in urban geography, architecture, and even what could be the drift of what anthropologist Joseph R Tulasiewicz calls the “a-temporality” of the social-media structured network life (2021:1). As Carl Lavery suggests in his guest-edited *Performance Research* issue ‘On Drifting’ the radical energy of the *dérive* still maintains the possibility that life could be imagined differently, adumbrated all the more urgently by the insidious elision and flow of work and capital which, whilst determining all waking and sleeping experience, also simultaneously demands, capitalises on, and denudes, subjectivity (2018:2/4).

This thesis’ attempt to perform or test such affordances of being ‘outside’ of an accelerated commoditised time poses a disruptive approach to psychogeography’s occasional elision of place and nostalgia, that this project is at pains to disrupt. Such a hauntological context, as Merlin Coverley recently described in a book on the subject, is “an obsession with excavating [...] our recent past” (2020: 11). The more recent ‘genre’ in art and non-fiction books suggest a move into pessimism and nostalgia for a lost recent past which, as above, Fisher formulates particularly in relation to music: himself taking the term from Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* as the collision of the terms ‘haunting’ and ‘ontology’ (2014: 17).<sup>22</sup> In looking to explore an expanded notion of the *dérive* qua disoriented geology and its affordances for a mythopoesis of site, indeed its very grounding in the *différance* of the marsh, the thesis, situated in a neo-liberal context, enlists the ludic and disruptive power of technology at odds with a terminal nostalgia and concomitant lack of belief in the future.

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<sup>22</sup> Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* (1994) is situated as a response to the end of the Soviet Era, and hence the rehearsal or deconstruction itself of a particular type of ‘history.’

Haunting the thesis is, appropriately, the spectre of digital technology, which is looked at askance, but never directly explored. And in tandem with the concern of our ever-diminishing comprehension of technological advancement, and its effects, is to question what life is released in the method of Anachronic Collision. What conditions might be afforded for this kind of embodied but also time-travelling knowledge in its disorienting yet re-locating of space, as opposed to a “clairvoyant society” that claims to see the future in algorithms, or even it’s much discussed hauntological cancellation (Neyrat, 2018: 12). Hauntology admittedly shows that through globalised technologies, most temporality, however fragmented, is also available in some simulated form online, as more of an absence of the present. This *virtual* Anachronic Collision leaves a latent question: what in the mobilisation of these fragments remains productive and not simply reductive nostalgia, what Frederick Jameson calls playing with “old strange old aesthetic objects”? (1998: 133).

My answer to this is found in the practice, where the tripartite relation is distributed across five versions of production: radio; sculptural installations of anachronistic technologies; re-enactment performances; lino printing, and spoken word. These modes map, perform, spatial and temporal territories as a nefarious gazetteer to the loss of meaning, whilst the sites of dissolution are themselves mapped: a hole in time opened up, as I have previously said, via the Blind Spot of Technicity, marking a point beyond the limits of knowing. Disorientation as both a way of performing site and how the latter’s effect shapes the form as well as the content of the practice: a cultural politics of generative dis-location.

The same props and persona, listed above, repeat across practice and the dissertation with a ghostly presence: the repetition of a can of Holsten; the carrier bag; calling in sick from work, and the sick bag necessary for this; the cuneiform tablet; the photocopier; the Reporter; Leonard Rossiter; the scream; the tape cassette; holes; magical staffs as tuning forks: all the above are re-enactors – “fragments out of time” (Van Der Graaf Generator, 1976) – activating nodes from a disorienting territory, but in the gaps between which a generative unknowing is transmitted.<sup>23</sup> Thus, contra thinking Disorientation solely as an effect of memory’s externalisation, this practice of Anachronic Collision perversely attempts to conjure a form of re-enactment, as that which has *never* occurred in the past, and thus what is not indexed as nostalgic loss through technology.<sup>24</sup> Here, Disorientation, as the original currency of spatio-temporal collaging, pre-figures, and will post-date, the contemporary deracination of meaning in late-capitalism’s drive-based culture.

## Chapter 2: 1937

Chapter 2 finds in French writer and one-time Surrealist Antonin Artaud’s 1937 journey to Ireland and his syncretic, fictive fulminating and divinatory spell practice that commences there, another complementary channeling of Disorientation, mobilising the tripartite relation

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<sup>23</sup> This is enacted in my radio programmes on Resonance 104.4 FM, a material grain of transmission on analogue radio waves, as ghosts live on air: a gesture echoed both metaphorically with my ‘tuning fork’ crosier, and in the radio transmission that was generated from the Essex Running Well into a gallery in London for *Cealdwiella* (2018), Cf. Chapter 3 and practice documentation.

<sup>24</sup> This raises an issue, to be explored in the chapters, concerning anti-correlationist thought, with Quentin Meillassoux’s Arche-Fossil positing an anterior state, almost prior to ‘time’ that occurred before a human mind would be given to know it (2009: 26).

across the axis of the parochial and the unworkable. This offers scope to again focus intensity on the geological/substrate, according to the Marsh Regime, of the zone demarcated as potent analogue to the technological substrates: in this instance, its Artaud's spell page and the island he visits. Such an operation forecloses and supersedes the cut and paste currency of text as digital operation. In my practice, performance scripts or 'script schemes' echo Artaud's spell pages, contingent and fragmentary, that become part of the work itself and, as with lots of handwritten scraps, found throughout the practice as a necessary process.<sup>25</sup> This motility is cognisant to the Situationist International's documenting of dérives: like Debord's driftmaps, the script schemes are not static documentation, but protean zones affective before and after the event.<sup>26</sup>

Artaud's journey to The Aran Islands – literal site of the sitcom *Father Ted's* parochial house – to receive and transmit an authentic force of life in the earth, both ancient but metastable in the present, is shown to be orientable as a tool kit for individuation, and thereby art practice: a hagiography in turn doubled by Artaud's own hagiographic-influenced course across the arcane terrain 'as' St. Patrick, one of his many auto-theory roles: a performative relationship to the past and the real, to enact, or re-enact the lineaments of a new subjectivity.

Artaud's journey is a performative historiography that also rewrites itself contingently in the moment. Where the past is as much part of the inner world of the present, the "true magic of the real" as he says in his hagiographic text, *Heliogabalus Or, The Crowned Anarchist* (2003: 126). Artaud himself enlists re-enactment, quite simply 'becoming' another, as with his performative historiographies. And when he is arrested and deported in Dublin for causing a fracas, he retroactively, I assert, prefigures the 're-enactment' divination of Jacobean prophetess Anna Trapnell, to be detailed in Chapter 3, who herself is a heretical itinerant arrested in Cornwall for disturbing the peace (Hinds, 2000: xv). As above, different facets rise and fall in emphasis. In Ireland my emphasis is on mobilising Artaud's magical practice, with him as an actant in the present, a precedent which informs my mediation as Reporter. I am, however, yet to be arrested. But I digress.

This schizo-historical re-enactment on the Aran Islands, nested in the middle of this dissertation's 3 Chapters, is crucially galvanised by Artaud's notion of the 'Subjectile': a staging of an impossibly contained arena for 're-enacting' the time of site, fundamentally symbolised through a hole – which he burns in the spells. These *sorts*,<sup>27</sup> which are an ontological exit from forces of control (an image of which appears held by me, the Reporter, where I located it in an archive in Paris), are, I argue, the Subjectile as the landscape of Aran itself, with its concomitant spatio-temporal terracing: spell and island are coterminous technologies. With his spell pages, and my script schemes, the page is itself thus a geological bed, revealing fault lines in the sediment of paper as an index of Disorientation, a gazetteer for unknown territory. With this operation in mind, the Subjectile allows both substrates to reveal a Disorientation that re-makes the subject, and which Artaud himself calls the "force of the earth" (1965: 46). This is channelled by virtue of his magical Cane (as prop) that I read as a receiver thereof, through said holes, as much as through the Blind Spot, in Chapter 1.

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<sup>25</sup> Script scheme is a term repurposed from Stockhausen's 'Form Schemes' which were diagrams visually somewhere between a musical score and a drawing, representing the plan of a composition.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. practice documentation.

<sup>27</sup> *Sort* is French for spell, meaning sending – to broadcast a magical effect.

Recalling Foucault's assertion of the contingent arbitrariness of systematising knowledge, Artaud's performative historiography proffers a way of exceeding given systems of representation and thought that predate and, in my reading, slightly disavow a Deleuzian imbrication of deterritorialisation of the geological and the minor.<sup>28</sup> Amplifying the contingent, magical locale at once re-orientates this original sense of the minor, recalling Artaud as one of Deleuze's main inspirations in "becoming sorcerer" as a fractured fractal territory, but crucially, as I aver, through the dynamic of the Subjectile in substrate *and* landscape (1987: 237). With the addition of the Cane, this dual operation of transmitting and receiving through both humour and magic in fact amplifies a Disorientation of the *local*, as opposed to the deterritorialised. This is symbolised by the coda of the bureaucratic embassy files amassed and filed upon his deportation (which the Reporter finds in the Dublin Archive – cf Chapter 2 appendix) and the tiny newspaper 'filler' in the Dublin paper as strange analogue of his earlier spell fragments, and those that I write for *The Leigh Times*: a true minor literature imbricated in the parochial and the humorous that equally prefigures the import of 'local newspaper' fillers in Chapter 3.

Positioning myself centrally in the persona of Reporter – to which I retroactively attribute similar newspaper fillers – is also enforced in Chapter 2 through my presence in documentary photographs through the dissertation of the research trips to Paris and Ireland in December 2018 and July 2019 respectively, thanks to Graduate School Funding, as well as to the Isles of Scilly. Visiting the Fond André Breton, in the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet to see Artaud's spell, and also visiting both the fortress of Dún Aonghasa on Inis Mór, and the Dublin Archive to see the embassy file on Artaud's trip, brought my personae into the work in a hyperstitional form. This method reinforces the enfolding of practice and dissertation and the indefatigable enmeshing of the two.

Ultimately, Artaud, in each unrepeatable yet re-enacted gesture, builds capacities of, if not unconditioned, individuation. Artaud's practice is occultural blueprint, so he recurrently glimmers – *pace* technicity's "reflecting mirror" through the history of post-structuralism as a vector of transgression. A Dionysian metonymy in its most unrivalled embodiment. What Michel Foucault describes as Artaud's "lyrical protest" was read at the level of a Bataillean Limit Experience (2006: 34) (Bataille, 1988a: 35). Artaud restores, for Foucault, what was lost with the end of the Classical period, and the beginning of the Enlightenment, a feeling of madness that was "extinguished by confinement" (ibid). His performance is a limit experience in an avant garde sense, in the terms of both Foucault and Bataille's renderings, but also in how these foldings of personae, scene, and prop are both the rupture between madness and the 'work' and the tension as a productive dilation therein: the work of unworking, a site in itself, which is dynamised co-constructively by spell and landscape.

Where the limit experience wrenches the subject from itself in a dark desubjectivation, the constellation of facets in this instance also transductively re-make the subject across the substrate of site and technology, as per the Liver Tablet. Again, Artaud intervenes in causation with that which was previously unthought, through a network of gestures that, in his time and now, would be viewed through the lens of western Esotericism: Anachronic Collision of tarot, astrology, Celtic myth, kabbalah, alchemy, animism, and geomancy. This

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<sup>28</sup> Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Towards A Minor Literature* (1986) names a form of cultural production from within a dominant culture, as laid out through their discussion of Kafka.

vector is all the more pressing, as the esoteric currents in the present are both a commercialised yet undervalued resource, which in Artaud's staging, reveal test sites of refusal. Artaud's relevance in this respect, as well as recent uptake of his work in relation to materiality, with Ros Murray's *Scum of the Soul* (2014) and the virtual and mediated body in Jay Murphy's *Artaud's Metamorphosis* (2016) testify to a recent revival in Artaud studies, which my project and thesis would hope to contribute to. This was manifest publicly in the event 'Artaud & Sound' (2018) held at Kingston University, in which I was a participant with a performance and text. This event was followed by 'ARTAUD Cahiers de Rodez et d'Ivry 1945 – 1948' at London's Cabinet Gallery with an accompanying group show 'Machine of Instant Utility' (2018) in which I exhibited my photocopier and cuneiform installation, along with my scores scripts from 'Artaud & Sound.'<sup>29</sup> Equally, the monograph *Blind Spot: Staring Down the Void* (2020) featured my essay 'Caned,' concerning Artaud's spells and Cane as operative method and mode of the technological Blind Spot: a monograph that, via my collaborations with Irving Finkel, also featured an essay by him, in which he discusses the prophetic cuneiform Liver Tablet found in Chapter 1 of this thesis.<sup>30</sup> This publication established both the currency of the dissertation's research in theoretical contexts, as well as the tessellating crossovers between spell casting, landscape, Artaud, and the wider invocation of ancient script across the thesis chapters.

### Chapter 3: 1973

Where Chapter 1 outlined Disorientation in delay as a method to open and re-transmit the temporal potency of site via the Marsh Regime, and Chapter 2 established a heretical and performative historiography of Geological Subjectile across the axis of the parochial, unworkable and the humorous, Chapter 3 develops the method of Anachronic Collision through two locations in Essex: firstly, and most importantly, an ancient site called the Running Well, and secondly, in pharmakonic mode, my real-life office – the site of the local newspaper *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* – where I work as Reporter.

This method is drawn out through a series of case studies that complement a discussion of two of my own artworks: a sculpture piece 'Time Cure' using a cuneiform tablet and photocopier, as exhibited at Cabinet Gallery, and, secondly the performance collaboration *Cealdwiella*, which concerns the Running Well, as performed at Arcadia Missa (2018) and Focal Point Gallery (2019). Both these artworks are underlined, qua Marsh Regime, via said newspaper job and its work place: the affective sites of an office, and its deterritorialising product – the printed newspaper, are metonymic accoutrements to unworking. Unworking is outlined by the successive affordances of temporality at stake at the Well that disrupt work, for a re-enactment of Disorientation, and which together aggregate an affective Anachronic Collision: Fluvial Time, Parochial Time, Reel Time, Dilated Time, and Screaming Time. All of which work against Real Time. Unworking is then mobilised in terms of the Well's disruption of temporality, my refusal to work properly in the office, and the anachronistic inoperative technologies at hand: the photocopier and the dictaphone.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf practice documentation.

<sup>30</sup> Cf practice documentation

The tape cassette as a form is also represented in my practice at this point. Figures from the thesis (Leonard Rossiter, the Holsten, inter alia) appear recurrently in my spoken word works, released on two recent cassettes: one a radio broadcast compilation by Eleni Poulou *Elope* (2021) and the other my spoken word album, *Nuncio Ref!* (2022) released on the tape label Crow Versus Crow.<sup>31</sup> All these tracks operate (again!) as sinister gazetteers: affordances of Reel Time in the experience of sites, and works cognisant of the dialogue I have recently built up with tape artist Adam Bohman, whose ‘travel tapes’ features as a case study in Chapter 3.

The whirling and crackle in the cassette tapes and its real/metaphoric activation as an interruption of smooth memory recall in digitised access to the past, thus firmly located to the *actual* workplace in acts of disruption, and the misuse and breakdown of office, makes of technology a kind of joke. With a grounding in comedy, but also provocation, it becomes a way to channel and re-enact the originary “magic phase” of the “metastable” milieu in Simondon’s terms, and it is from the Privileged Place that these transmissions gestate (2017: 178). Ghosting the chapter is also the work of American artist Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* (1970) and *Yucatan Mirror Displacements (1-9)* (1969): time travelling markers, his work, I suggest, both re-enacts Artaud’s imbrication with Mexican deities, and forecasts some of the affective dynamics of the Running Well as an operative and prophetic Privileged Place. Here, though, it is the mythographic structure of the Marsh Regime, that unworkability is legend to, and who’s imagined pharmakonic intoxicant causes the Disorientation necessary to disrupt the ooze of routine: for Disorientation is always the primary mode of site.

The Running Well has, as above, a temporality contoured by Simondon’s notion of a Privileged Place, a ‘node,’ aided by the prominence of contingent parish history, and abetted by the personae of occult researcher Andrew Collins. Collins both wrote a book on said Well,<sup>32</sup> and also worked in my role as the local Reporter at *The Leigh Times* 30 years previous, which begs the question: how do you orchestrate coincidence?<sup>33</sup> What is now termed “auto theory” – the collision of theory with autobiography – utilising the coincident,<sup>34</sup> as ‘Well’ as modes of subjectivation, that are crucial to the outcomes of the thesis.<sup>35</sup> Talking of coincidence, the Well also gives its name to a nearby sanatorium built the year of Artaud’s hagiographic journey and spell practice (1937): Runwell Hospital, where my mother visited in her capacity as a mental health social worker for Southend Borough Council, not to mention the picture of Artaud in a French asylum, sat on a bench with his psychiatrist, in an almost exact formal replica of the opening credits to the 1990s sitcom *Bottom*.<sup>36</sup>

In the tradition of Herbert Marcuse’s “great refusal” of art against the existing political order, recalling the aesthetic lyrical refusal Foucault demarcates for Artaud, the neo-liberally situated project comes full (Well) circle – a revival of work, contra Marcuse, but not at odds with the tradition of counter culture (Marcuse, 1969: 36). Rather, in the mud and water is

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<sup>31</sup> Cf Practice documentation.

<sup>32</sup> Cf collages thereof in the practice documentation.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Collins features throughout my practice both as an interviewee on my Resonance 104.4FM radio show for *Cealdwiella*, a collaborative project and performance I undertook with New Noveta based on and at the Running Well, and as a character in the dissertation, primarily through his authorship of the 1983 tract *The Running Well Mystery* – Cf practice documentation and Chapter 3 Appendix – *Cealdwiella* handout.

<sup>34</sup> Guy Debord insists that chance is key for the successful *dérive* (2007: 51).

<sup>35</sup> For a recent look at autotheory as a mode of critical artistic practice indebted to feminist writing and activism, see Fournier, L. (2021) *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism*, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Chapter 2

found an equivalent to the drab office site, in that the un/working and humour of the parochial, and the spooling of the Reporter's tape dictaphone, which becomes 'Reel Time' as opposed to Real Time. Offering a 'glimpse' of the Blind Spot as ultimate dilation, recalls my carrier bag lino<sup>37</sup> print featured in Chapter 1, as that which manifests meteorological Disorientation on a technological surface (Foucault, 2006: 34).<sup>38</sup> Zero hours contracts and constant virtual work-time of the globalised present notwithstanding, the theme of disappointment or delay is again found: productive in the aesthetic potential of work as refusal, as much as oppression.

Talking of jobs and work, Marcuse, the Situationists, and broadly the counter culture's call to *not* "earn a living"<sup>39</sup> off the back of the height of post-war capitalist consumer culture of the 1950s, are here happily lauded, and read as a comedy hermeneutic. The 1970s office of Reginald Perrin is the site of a world transformed: when Reggie (the personae of Leonard Rossiter again) screams at the end of each episode, his own suicide, a refusal, is framed through a more latent channeling of the Marsh Regime. The auto-fictioning of *The Leigh Times* is complemented by the hyperstition of Reggie's fake suicide – denoting a fiction deployed as a technology<sup>40</sup> – both of which are enmeshed in the office substrate, which, crucially, still retains a mythic element channeled back to this Mesopotamian imaginary.<sup>41</sup> In rethinking a mode of individuation pursuant to collision, Reggie's *dérive* is a well, like the Running Well, that funnels a more original (water) drift, a confluence to Disorientation.<sup>42</sup> The mode of the scream then cuts back (as it cuts time) through Chapter 1 and 2, is forceful enough to supersede the model of administrative control that originary negative Disorientation and – inevitably – the bureaucracy of the cuneiform that Reggie is victim to: in connecting back to the dark marsh qua mode of empowerment, he is hinting at a chthonic substrate of site-based cultural praxis. This emphasises the role of the sitcom as displacement, as much as a return to a dis-orienting locale. Crucially, Reggie is a refusal.<sup>43</sup> Anachronic Collision as pre-globalisation comedy is a theoretically new model for eluding controls systems: a vehicle for experiencing the spirit of matter, for affinity in strangeness, and the manifest mess that only an obtuse parochial site-specificity can bring.

Reggie, like Artaud, supersedes the glib posture of the heroic archetype of traditional time and technology, by a more fluid fount, for reactivation of the originary forces of life. This performs a channeling that is a pre-cognition of Anna Trapnell, Jacobean prophet's re-enactment as the Chapter's impressionistic representation of the female 'mystic history' extant at the Essex Running Well. This, in turn, I re-enact in homage to the Anchorite said to have resided *chez well* in the Middle Ages: my crosier for *Cealdwiella*, in fact, is from the design on her tomb in the local Church (Collins, 1983:17).<sup>44</sup> This retro-activation – a

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<sup>37</sup> Lino cutting also inscribes clumsily: a microcosmic ploughing of the rubbery soil, qua reed onto clay.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. practice documentation.

<sup>39</sup> See Mark Fisher, 'Unfinished Introduction to Acid Communism' (2018: 275).

<sup>40</sup> <sup>40</sup> The idea of hyperstitions grew out of the work of Warwick's CCRU in the mid-1990s, and define fictions that become real, as a result of their immanent operativity in the present (Land, 2012: 552).

<sup>41</sup> Myth is a crucial element of hyperstition, as O'Sullivan points out, and relates back to the influence of H.P. Lovecraft on the CCRU and a call to the former's "old ones" (Cru website) (O'Sullivan, 2017:18).

<sup>42</sup> My collaborative performance 'Drift Fright', again with New Noveta, references this repurposing of a watery form of the Situationist Drift, but located in domestic horror: the corridor and doors of a damp flat (cf. also *Rising Damp*) as residual lines of energy, with plenty of puddles and spilt beer – Cf. practice documentation.

<sup>43</sup> This asks a subsidiary question of the revenant relevance and resonance of 1970s forms of culture in the present: a running theme in the thesis, and one that is answered frequently through the anachronic invocation of temporalities.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. practice documentation.

dredging of the originary – already finds a precursor, too, from Chapter 2 in Artaud’s fictioning of himself as various historical characters, and the necessary “metamorphosis” he calls for (I couldn’t have made it up) “Medieval retro-activation”! (1965: 201). And both personae echo what Mark Fisher, in his unfinished Introduction to *Acid Communism* calls the necessary “unforgetting” of the counter culture’s potential, evocative of the necessary path through the Cloud of Forgetting in said mystic text: in a re-doubling of Disorientation, a counter-exorcism occurs, forcibly in the bodily scream, but also as a divination, which has been a constant thread, from the hepatoscopists, to Artaud’s Tarot, and Trapnell’s ‘Relation’ of the Second Coming: Delay = Divination (Fisher, 2018:757) (Trapnell, 2000:1).

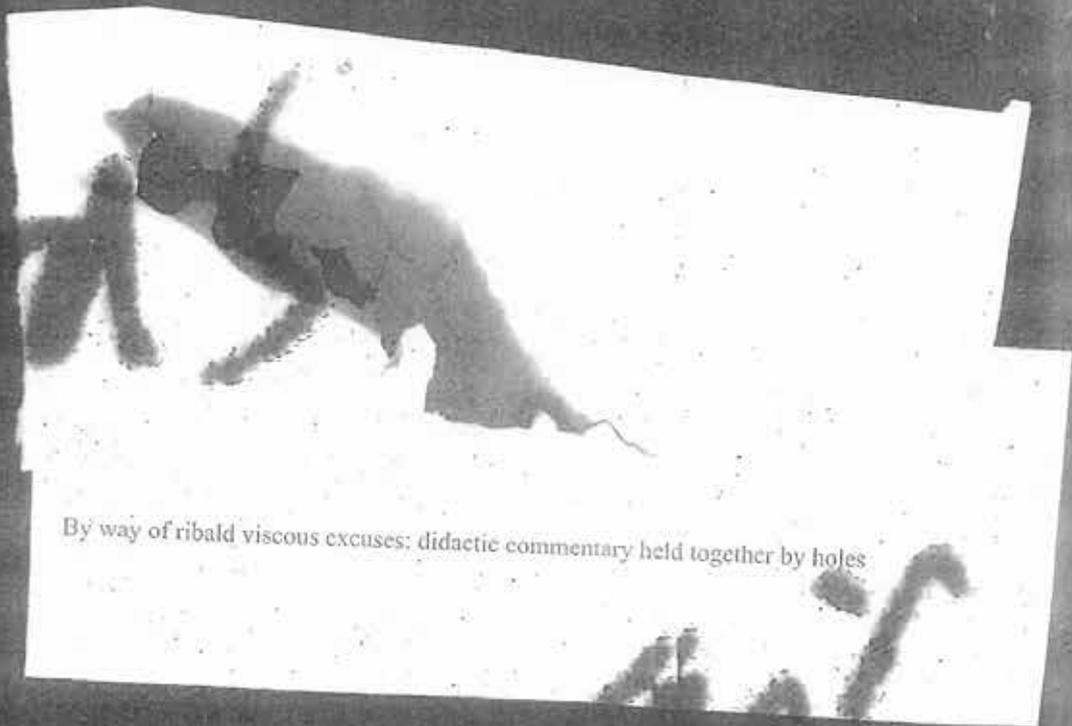
### Conclusion

In confounding the immobile surfaces of the spatially dislocated world, the project offers a liberation theology back through the sediment, whose Ur-fount is the marsh, for the reactivation of the originary forces of life as Disorientation. Disorientation is a mode and effect: a mode of writing, reading, journeying, being. The pharmakon of Disorientation speaks to this problem, as does comedy, and comes back to the Blind Spot of the humorous cuneiform Liver Tablet in Chapter 1: Reggie as frustrated protagonist channels the marsh into tawdry work, as does the hepatoscopists’ divinatory hermeneutic, purposively read across space time and into the future, as Artaud confounds the locals and re-enacts the medieval: these are yet still urgent contours for a psyche in the Disoriented age. The acknowledged pastiche-heavy anachronism of contemporary techno-capital, and its “cancellation of the future” as an experience of a-temporality is in fact already pre-figured in generative form by the Ur-Disorientation of the Marsh Regime (Fisher, 2014: 12). Anachronic Collision is found to be the currency of existence, and therefore adumbrates an irreverent cut and paste of temporality based on said Regime. This is an individuation in the dilation of différance, positing, ultimately, that this, rather than a-temporality, makes life worth living. The important construction of the self, the inner worlds that unfolds, are exposed to the outer like the unfolding organ of the cuneiform liver, as the ultimate Uncharted Territory.

## **Practice Documentation**

The following pages of practice documentation are subdivided into five sections, all of which are operative as an oblique gazetteer to forms of Disorientation. These five sections are distributed across Radio ('Flood') Sculptural Photocopy ('Sediment'), Performance (4 x 'Marsh Exorcism: Re-enactments'), Printmaking (4 x lino prints), and Spoken Word (Tape: Reel Time).

Each of the practice areas are each preceded by black and white photocopy divider works that impressionistically describe and embody the practice as clandestine products of the photocopier. Images of five key primary texts/books are also interspersed at points throughout the documentation as artefacts of practice in themselves. Resonant nodes of focus, these books contain realised and unrealised traces that unspool into the practice.



By way of ribald viscous excuses: didactic commentary held together by holes

## Radio

### Flood: ancient sediments of practice

This section documents my brief radio series 'Chthonic Live,' which ran for five sporadic episodes on Resonance 104.4 FM between 2015-2018.<sup>1</sup> This medium has been a formative research method for the spectral contingency of Disorientation's speed and patina.

#### 1. Chthonic Report (2015) 'Doggerland' Resonance 104.4 FM, 7 May 2015 [Cf. script scheme]

An impressionistic work that brings together the archetype of The Flood and all things hidden and disappearing, combining ideas of displaced times, palaeography and the intersection of writing and myth, through the recent evidence from the North Sea about the lost Mesolithic geography of 'Doggerland,' it features Dr Irving Finkel, Keeper of Cuneiform tablets at the British Museum, Landscape Archaeologist Dr Vince Gaffney, and voices from the Essex estuary, including Master Mariner Ray Cowie, Gnostic expert Rory O'Riorden and Sophie Sleight-Johnson.

Link: [mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-7-may-2015-doggerland-chthonic-report/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-7-may-2015-doggerland-chthonic-report/)

#### 2. Chthonic Live (2015) Resonance 104.4 FM, 19 November 2015

This radio show is abstraction expanded from the previous Doggerland: Chthonic Report. An impressionistic space created through sound, discussion, and fragmentation. Attempting a mythography of the Chthonic, it brings together the mysterious and dreamlike archetype of the descent to the underground in ancient myth and Palaeolithic inscription. Transmission is a tremor, a randomised flicker: unspooling hieroglyphs onto the air. Sophie Sleight-Johnson is joined by Professor Irving Finkel, curator of cuneiform tablets at the British Museum to discuss palaeography; and by Professor Timothy Morton, author of *Hyperobjects*, to discuss the arche-lithic and the shadow on the cave wall. The show also features a live performance from multi-phonetic composer and instrumentalist Chris Cundy. Here, the penumbral and the speleological are channelled as archaeology of the present tense.

Link: [mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-chthonic-live-19th-november-2015/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-chthonic-live-19th-november-2015/)

#### 3. Chthonic Live, 'Collisions: Ghost Flood' (2016) Resonance 104.4 FM, 21 September 2016

Describing a ghost flood, this programme explores this phantom movement, channelled in music.

Professor Irving Finkel and Archaeo-Musicologist Richard Dumbrill will discuss the silver Lyre of Ur, an ancient instrument exhumed from the buried Mesopotamian city that rises again, playing archaic sounds from this revenant instrument. The sound of the lyre exhumes the past, scene of an occult archaeology. The ghost that is (n)ever present.

Writer and artist Paul Buck will discuss the bodily and ghostly inherent in the repetitions and slips of writing and creating work. Something fleeting, a glimpse.

Examining contemporary work by artist Simon Martin, whose work *UR Feeling* 'buries' samples of the lyre of Ur is a sonic excavation of affective sites, the programme then concerns itself with the channelling of ancient feeling, something that constantly slips away, through the fluidity of the flood.

Music and voices in a room echo round the walls.

Link: [mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-collisions-21st-september-2016/listeners/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-collisions-21st-september-2016/listeners/)

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<sup>1</sup> All five episodes were re-played back-to-back on International Women's Day, 8 March 2021: Incidentally, my day of birth.

4. *Chthonic Live*, (2017) ‘Ancient Females in the Red Rift of Rays’ Resonance 104.4 FM, 21 July 2017

This programme is the fourth *Chthonic Live* channelling, an invocation of ancient and ruptured temporalities, making crop circles on air. Embodiment meets exposition in live discussion with artist Maggie Roberts aka MER (Orphan Drift); divine females and spell archaeology with hierophant and arch-Druid Caroline Wise; and Templar architecture from Helen Gibson. All will be an impossible invocation; a moment constantly slipping away as permeable thresholds on air becomes alchemy inscribed in the walls. The voices are rising. Ghosts will be live.

Link: [mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-chthonic-live-ancient-females-in-the-red-rift-of-rays-21st-july-2017/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-chthonic-live-ancient-females-in-the-red-rift-of-rays-21st-july-2017/)

5. *Chthonic Live*, ‘Radio Cealdwiella’ (2018) Resonance 104.4 FM, 16 April 2018

*Cealdwiella* is a collaboration between artists New Noveta and Essex-based researcher and artist Sophie Sleigh-Johnson. The research into the ancient sacred Running Well in Essex culminated in a performance at London’s Arcadia Missa Gallery on Thursday 5 April 2018, as detailed in Chapter 3 of the thesis. This radio broadcast is both a recording of the performance (live sound mixed and recorded by Vindicatrix – David Aird), preceded by an interview by Sophie with Andrew Collins, author of *The Running Well Mystery* (1983), qua psycho-fluvial expedition on the airwaves into the Running Well’s past.

Link: [mixcloud.com/Resonance/radio-caeldwiella-clear-spot-16-04-2018/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/radio-caeldwiella-clear-spot-16-04-2018/)

Artworks in this section:

*Doggerland* (2019) [scan], paper, ink and collage on card and orange sugar paper. (Exhibited at Cabinet Gallery, ‘Machine of Instant Utility’ 22 February – 23 March 2019; cf. installation shot in ‘Sculptural Installation’ section)

This Script Scheme for *Chthonic Report*, ‘Doggerland’ maps out an affective and impressionistic timeline of the radio (2015). As indicated in the Introduction, these Script Schemes, which echo Artaud’s *sorts*, are contingent and fragmentary, and become part of the work (in this case, radio and sculpture): not static documentation, but protean zones affective before and after the event

This section also features primary text 1: Woolley, L. (1948) *Ur: The First Stages*, London: King Penguin

### **Flood: ancient sediments of practice**

When was the Ur-Flood? The inscription of this deluge is a cryptographic effect to be read in the marsh, chez Mesopotamia and Essex.

This Resonance 104.4FM radio programme 'Doggerland' was a chthonic report 'live' from the scene, channeling the signal of submerged territories onto airwaves pulsing over the Thames.

Mesopotamian ghosts abroad: broadcasting is a vehicle for experiencing the spirit of matter, for affinity in strangeness, and the manifest mess that only hidden depths of arcane ritual can bring.

The handwritten script is a testing site, mapped on a page like the geological bed of an unknown territory: a gazetteer of disorientation.

### **Resonance 104.4 FM Radio broadcasts**

[mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-7-may-2015-doggerland-chthonic-report/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-7-may-2015-doggerland-chthonic-report/)

[mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-collisions-21st-september-2016/listeners/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-collisions-21st-september-2016/listeners/)

[mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-chthonic-live-ancient-females-in-the-red-rift-of-rays-21st-july-2017/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/clear-spot-chthonic-live-ancient-females-in-the-red-rift-of-rays-21st-july-2017/)

[mixcloud.com/Resonance/radio-caeldweilla-clear-spot-16-04-2018/](https://mixcloud.com/Resonance/radio-caeldweilla-clear-spot-16-04-2018/)

**DOGGERLANE**

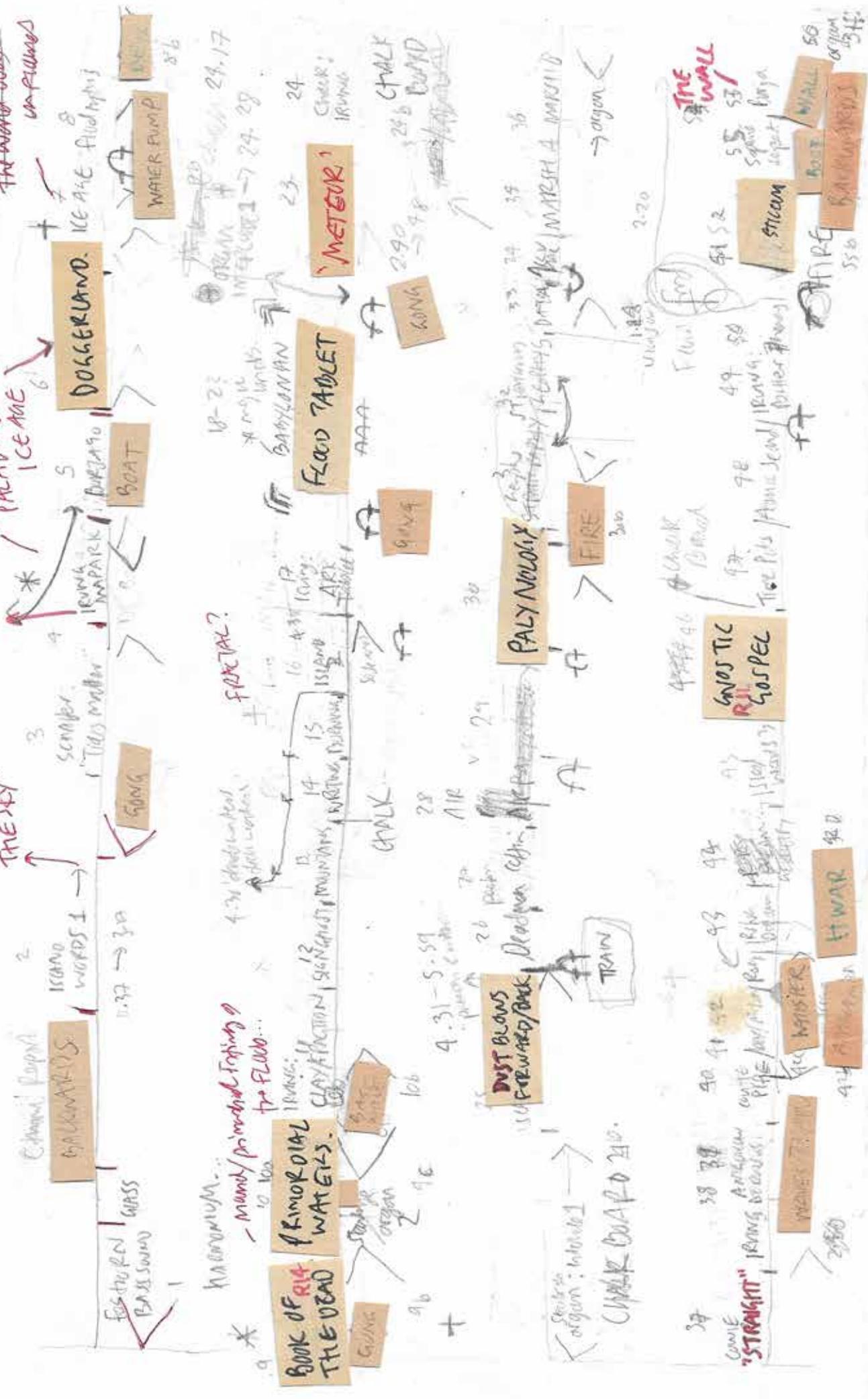
100-600  
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"THE MORT"  
THE SHIP

"TIDES MOVE  
THEY"

DELPHIC  
PALAFON EMBLPHY  
ICE AGE

THE WORLD WAS  
UNFINISHED



IRONIC...  
muddy primordial Fraying  
the FLAB...

FRactal?

18-23  
\* 1000  
BABYLONIAN

BOOK OF R14  
THE DEAD

FLOOD TABLET

METEOR

DUST BLOWS  
FORWARD/BACK

PALLY NOLONY

CHALK BOARD 210

"STRAIGHT"

GHOSTIC  
GOSPEL

MUSICIAN

FTWAR

FIRE

STREAM

WATER PUMP

THE WALL



# UR



SIR LEONARD WOOLLEY

## **Sculptural installations**

### Sediment: anachronism as the horizon of the marsh

Here is found my use of the photocopier and cuneiform tablet in sculptural and paper photocopy form: an insistence on Anachronic Collision as a base line of the Marsh Regime.

Artworks in this section:

2 x installation shots of *Time Cure* (2020), cuneiform tablet, copier paper, fish wire, photocopier, dimensions variable, exhibited as part of group show 'Machine of Instant Utility' at Cabinet Gallery, 22 February – 23 March 2019

1 x installation shot of *Sort* (2019) *Doggerland* Script Scheme, paper, ink and collage on card and orange sugar paper, and *Down Curse* Script Scheme, pencil, ink and cigarette lighter on paper

*Inscribed brick of Nebuchadnezzar II* (2019) [scan] cuneiform tablet photocopied on *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* photocopier, A4 photocopied copy paper

*Prophetic Mirror Flip Book* (2022) ink, cigarette lighter burn, acetate, A4 photocopied copy paper  
(the first of two 'flip book' works in this documentation: charting the speed of Disorientation)

This section also includes: information on my essay 'Caned' (2020) in the monograph *Blind Spot: Staring Down the Void*, Aberystwyth: Performance Research Books, pp.23-33.

My essay concerns Artaud's spells and Cane as operative method and mode of the technological Blind Spot. As a result of my on-going collaborations with Professor Irving Finkel, the monograph also featured an essay by him, in which he discusses the prophetic cuneiform Liver Tablet found in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

Info via this link: [theopr.org.uk/product/blind-spot-staring-down-the-void/](http://theopr.org.uk/product/blind-spot-staring-down-the-void/)

### Sediment: anachronism as the horizon of the marsh

A cuneiform tablet is placed on the menhir-monolith of a photocopier. Anachronistic office technologies interpolate ancient inscriptions at this point of the utterly Unfileable: creeping arcane dust is an uncommon Xmas grocery.

Photocopying the actual tablet equals constant photocopier malfunction\*. When the tablet's scabrous clay interferes with workings of the toner, you can smell the hot brittle paper, like Roquefort cheese in the next room.

The enlargement of the cuneiform letters in the flash of the light capture returns them to burial\*\*.

A collision occurs. Things and thoughts collide. The dissolute effect is dependent on dust in the air, on how you feel, the croak of the motor: things that lurk on the corner of this page: now and back tomorrow.

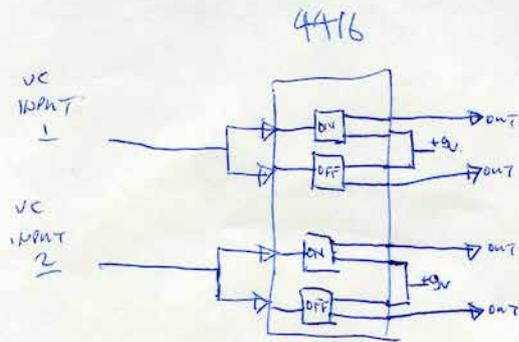
Other hylic artefacts suffer the same treatment. A mirror from a Bronze Age burial reflects weird fault lines in the earth, and an ancient Egyptian spell apes Artaud's *sortis*: but this fragment was thrown down a well, preempting the geological derive: a very spurious archaeology\*\*\*.

(Occurrence: A Machine of Instant Utility'\* (2018) group show at Cabinet Gallery, to complement exhibition also thereat, of Antonin Artaud's Notebooks: one of many crossovers)

\*Instant vs. delayed unworking: between which a hole burns

\*\*I cairn get enough of it

\*\*\* TV shows are key suspects. Time Team and Rising Damp are the two sides of the same mirror.



## Machine of Instant Utility

Ramon Alejandro  
 Antonin Artaud  
 Ed Atkins  
 Stanley Brouwn  
 Bonnie Camplin  
 Chris Carter  
 COUM Transmissions  
 Peter Fend  
 Richard Hawkins

Caspar Heinemann  
 Henri Michaux  
 Jim Nutt  
 Henrik Olesen  
 Jean-Luc Parant  
 Jackson Pollock  
 Sun RA  
 James Richards  
 Sophie Sleigh-Johnson

Lucie Stahl  
 Wu Tsang & Fred Moten  
 Simon Thompson  
 Lena Tutunjian  
 JD Williams  
 JX Williams  
 David Wojnarowicz

Opening  
 22 February 2019  
 6.30 - 8.30pm

Exhibition continues  
 23 February - 23 March  
 Thursday - Saturday  
 12.00 - 6.00pm

**CABINET**  
 132 Tyers Street  
 Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens  
 London SE11 5HS  
[www.cabinet.uk.com](http://www.cabinet.uk.com)

Image: Chris Carter Sleazy Sequencer Box 1977 (detail)



Time Cure, 2019, installation shot cabinet Gallery, photocopier, copy paper and Mesopotamian cuneiform tablet



Time Cure (detail) installation shot Cabinet Gallery



Performance score, 2019, paper (far left) installation shot Cabinet Gallery







falling as she clambered, sputtered with unquiet earth. The flaking house with a burnt black roof was perched on grey mud. As the sun shone on it, it seemed lit up, strangely through the hole in the wooden door into the burnt-out interior. Inside, the peeling cladding and the parched frame of the ashen window allowed a view onto the marsh, which emanated the warmth of a suppressed whisper.

Looking out of the window, her eye caught the same patch of Babylon fabric on the reeds just outside. It flew at the window in the stillness, gurgling bark, tuned into a woman's scream. The edges constantly shifted, and turning to lints, iron clanging in the torment of the had torn her hand on Ancient racing horses in stone relief moved She was to be a sacrifice to antiquated deities at the She had become an expression of the She was to be a transmission of slaughter The wall was the cut of an evening struggle, the exorcism revealing the words that came from the Field of Reedings.

*The edge  
The force*

*A list of what up*

BURN HER LIMBS  
BURN HER LIVER  
HER FEMALE BODY

*RODOBIFROSS*

*Antipope -*

Handwritten text at the top of the page, possibly a title or chapter heading.

Main body of printed text, partially obscured by a large, dark, textured shape that resembles a shadow or a tear in the paper.



Vertical handwritten text on the left margin, possibly a page number or reference code.

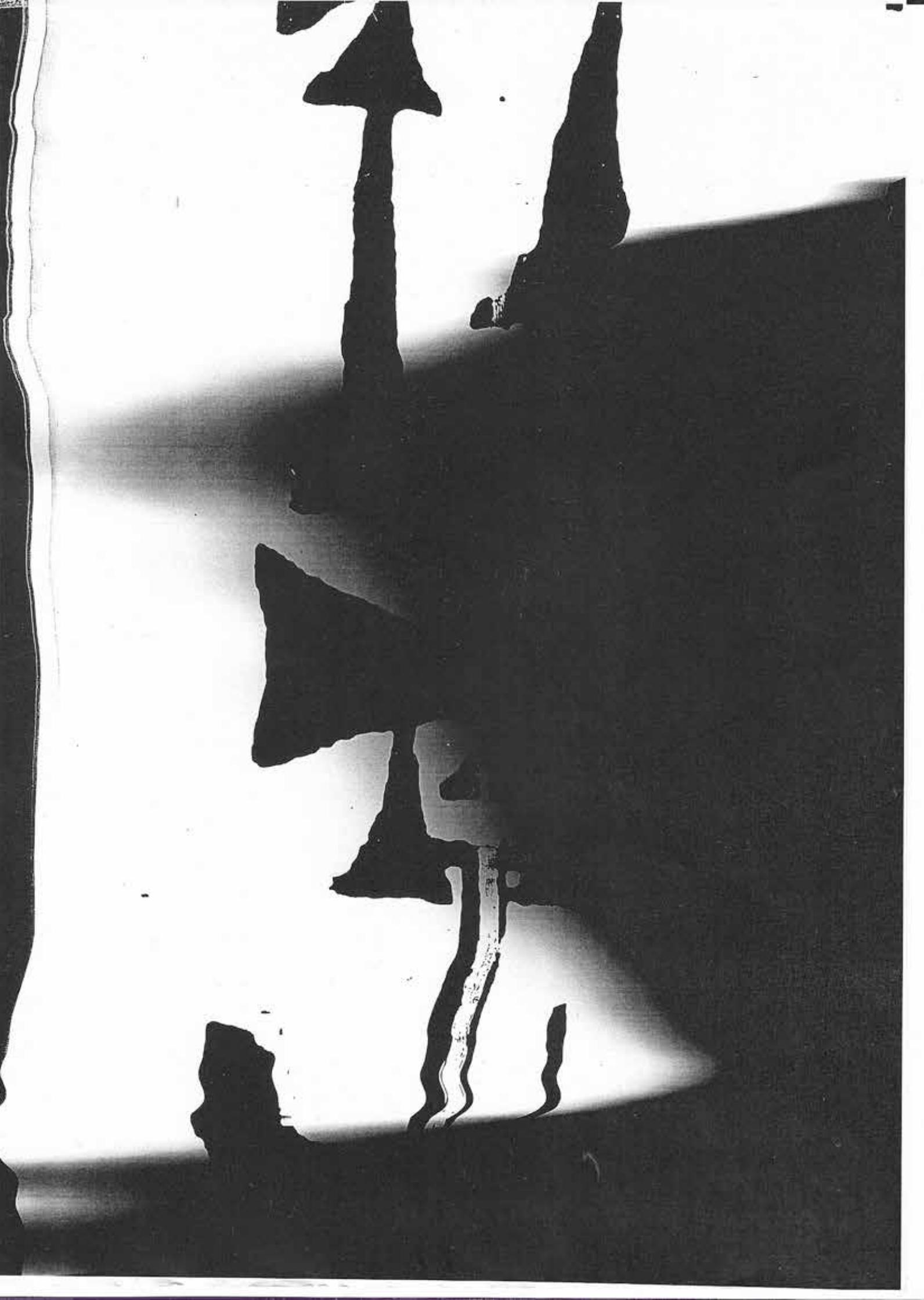
Printed text at the bottom of the page, including a paragraph that begins with "The flaking house with a burnt black roof..." and another that starts with "Looking out of the window, her eye caught..."

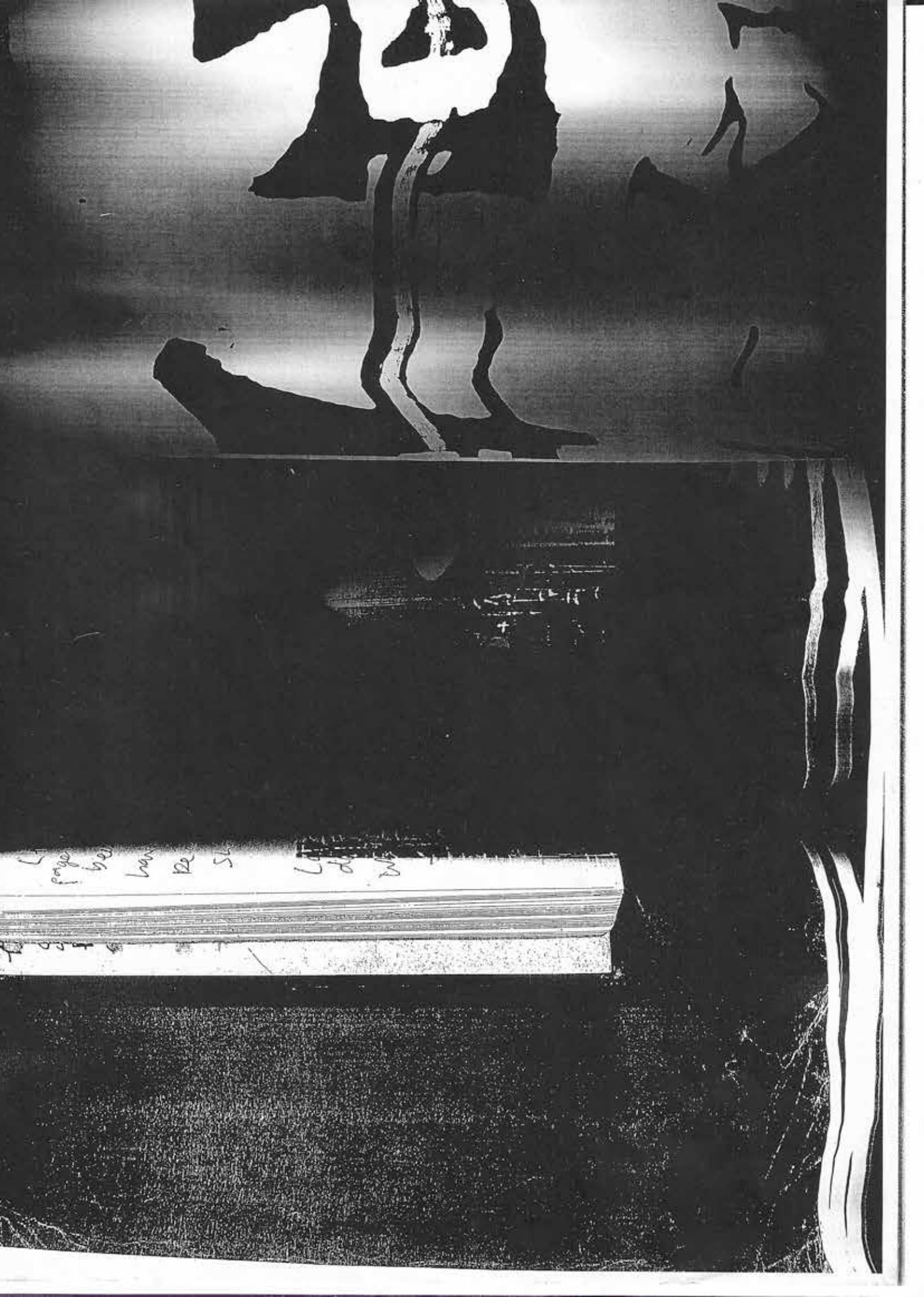
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Handwritten note or signature in the bottom center of the page.

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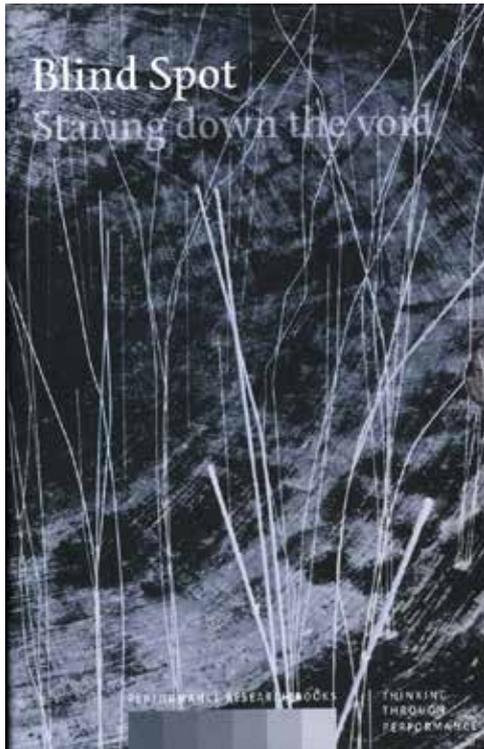
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Images of *Blind Spot: Staring Down the Void* (2020) Aberystwyth: Performance Research Books

## Performance

### Marsh Exorcism: Anachronistic Re-enactments

The following four performances, termed Marsh Exorcisms, are multivarious flickering re-enactments of the Marsh Regime's Ur-Disorientation, 're-enacting' as temporal Disorientation, the Prioress, Artaud, Leonard Rossiter, and Anna Trapnell, respectively.

1. *Cealdwiellla*: Arcadia Missa Gallery, London 7 April 2018 – 28 April 2019, with one iteration at Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea, 27 April 2019

Documentation shows Arcadia Missa press release; research collage of site visits to the Well layered onto Andrew Collins' *The Running Well Mystery* (2018); notice of the Southend iteration in *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* What's On Column; still photographs from performance; Script Scheme (2018) ink and pencil on copier paper; Reporter's essay hand-out for Southend Focal Point Gallery's iteration, as part of their Radical Essex programme.

Info via this link: [fpg.org.uk/event/cealdwiellla/](http://fpg.org.uk/event/cealdwiellla/)

View performance via this link: [youtube.com/watch?v=d7scd3d-N94](https://youtube.com/watch?v=d7scd3d-N94)

2. *Down Curse* (2018) at 'Artaud & Sound' Kingston University, London, 15 September 2018  
Documentation shows 'Artaud & Sound' poster; *Down Curse* Script Scheme (2018) [scan] pencil, ink and cigarette lighter on A4 paper; performance stills from *Down Curse*

3. *Bag Interior*, Zoom lecture, presented as part of online 'Religion & Art' symposium, Goldsmiths College, 13 November 2020

Documentation shows stills from zoom video lecture: themes of cuneiform and Holsten are palpable.

Info via this link: [religionart18250708.wordpress.com/symposium/](http://religionart18250708.wordpress.com/symposium/)

4. *Drift Fright*: Horse Hospital, London, 19 November – 24 November 2019

Documentation shows *Drift Fright* poster with Script Scheme paper fragment; performance stills; reading group at Bloomsbury's Atlantis Bookshop promotional material.  
This performance re-enacts in obnubilated from the feeling from the terrors of corridors, the fright of City Under. Reggie Perrin's scream channels forwards and backwards, a sinister whiff of presence. In the walls, are Fault Lines, Time loops in the same corridor.  
I also held a reading group at Bloomsbury's occult Atlantic Bookshop to accompany the exhibition.

Info via this link: [thehorsehospital.com/events/drift-fright](http://thehorsehospital.com/events/drift-fright)

View performance via this link: [youtube.com/watch?v=JBat8J9jxGc](https://youtube.com/watch?v=JBat8J9jxGc)

This section also includes:

RIP (2020-present) You Tube still of Reginald Perrin's scream [online video] (the second of two 'flip book' works in this documentation: charting the speed of Disorientation)

This section also features primary text 2: Maple, E. et al. (2008) *Marsh Wizards*, Leicestershire: Caduceus Books

This section also features primary text 3: Nobbs, D. (1976) *The Fall & Rise of Reginald Perrin*, London: Penguin

**Marsh Exorcism: Anachronistic Re-enactments**

Re-enactment calls up that which never happened. A temporal collage as comedic liberation theology, distributed across the personae of: the Prioress of the Running well; Antonin Artaud; Anna Trapnell, Leonard Rossiter (Rupert Rigsby/Reginald Perrin), and myself as reporter for *The Leigh Times*. All are versions of a Marsh Exorcism.

Marsh Exorcism I

### 1. *Caeldwiella* – Prioress of the Running Well.

Collected here are fragments of the still proliferating artwork *Caeldwiella*, Cold Well – Running Well.

The unreliable but ever-meaningful intervention by Essex magus and erstwhile *Leigh Times* colleague Andrew Collins\* traced in the Peugeot 206 journey and his local pamphlet *The Running Well Mystery* are residues for a gazetteer to the locale, or for that matter, the seventeenth century\*\*. I even saw his book in the discarded tain of a charity shop window.

For re-enactment, a metal crosier was fashioned to reflect the crosier of the historic 'Prioress' of the well: insignia on her tomb at the local church is rumoured to be a map of Runwell's psychic geography.

A device inserted in the well's undergrowth broadcast this live from Essex.

As it were - crosier, size normal, was a radio antenna: the well may be acting as a transmitter.

NB: Miscreant notices for *Caeldwiella* appear in *The Leigh Times*. Arcane dust seeping in again?

(Occurrence: Performance in collaboration with New Noveta, with iterations at Arcadia Missa Gallery 2018 & Focal Point Gallery, Southend, 2019)

\* A mode that sees my office job as said reporter documented: these recurrences and affinities of figure speak to the unknown.

\*\*Fragmented tape recordings from site visits to the Running Well with Collins repeat and disorient on spoken word cassette tracks, also where the window steam up in the Essex driving range café. Was it John Paul II Pope?

[arcdiamissa.com/caeldwiella/](http://arcdiamissa.com/caeldwiella/)

Video Link: [youtube.com/watch?v=d7scd3d-N94&ab\\_channel=NEWNOVETA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7scd3d-N94&ab_channel=NEWNOVETA)

Marsh

Exorcism

# Arcadia Missa ::

## NEW NOVETA CEALDWIELLA

Opening 7th April 2018. 3-8pm  
Exhibition continues until 28th April

*Thrust into hiding recordings*  
*Always tracing cracks, the well just breathing, cascades*  
*The women, inhaled mud, trickles, powdered blue*  
*Endless mudflats*  
*Programmed to circle, pause, slam.*  
*Breathing out*  
*Pores and fibre flood, drain.*

For the inaugural exhibition in the gallery's Soho location, Arcadia Missa presents *Cealdwiella*, an exhibition by New Noveta, including sound, costumes and props from their eponymous performance. The performance took place, in collaboration with Sophie Sleigh-Johnson, at Arcadia Missa, Peckham on the 5th of April. The sound piece includes recordings from the performance and a transmission from Runwell, Essex which was broadcast live on the Arcadia Missa website at the time of the performance.

The performance/transmission audio will be replayed on Resonance 104.4 fm on the 16th of April.

Costume design by Gabriella Massey of Atelier Bāba

Mixing and transmission by Vindicatrix

Arcadia Missa  
14 Brewer Street, 1st Floor  
London  
W1F 0SG

*For sales and press enquiries: [rozsa@arcadiamissa.com](mailto:rozsa@arcadiamissa.com); [ruth@arcadiamissa.com](mailto:ruth@arcadiamissa.com)*

MARSH  
WIZARDS



Once the diamond, with its four intersecting circles, or horseshoes, had been plotted, Dave Hunt began to consider solar and lunar alignments. As I have explained within an earlier chapter, from the Neolithic period onwards until well into the Christian era, the builders of ancient and religious monuments took great pains to orientate them towards important solar and lunar events. The most favoured were the sunrises and sunsets on the equinoxes and solstices. Channelling and harnessing the rays of the sun and moon was, it would seem, a major facet of ancient man's adoration of the heavenly bodies.

As traces of Neolithic man have been found in South-East Essex, most notably a curcus (a long straight dyke with banks on each side) and henge at Springfield near Chelmsford, Dave considered that the construction of the Runwell Cross upon the landscape may date from this period. If this was so, then perhaps it had been laid out taking into account major solar and lunar events of the calendar year.

So, working on the assumption that the design had been laid out around 1,800 BC Dave calculated the line of the midsummer sunrise for the centre point of the diamond, taking into account the minor shift in the earth's axis since that time. The resulting alignment showed that the summer solstice sun rises through the outer edge of the north-eastern horseshoe. On the midwinter solstice sunrise he found that the sun would have entered the diamond through the outer edge of the south-eastern horseshoe.

After solar alignments Dave moved on to lunar risings, which are far more difficult to calculate with accuracy. Moonrises, coincident with equinoxes and solstices, oscillate within a certain angle across the horizon, taking just over eighteen and a half years to completely cover that angle. In his book "Stonehenge Decoded," the American astronomer, Gerald Hawkins outlined the lunar alignments at both the summer and winter solstices which can be found at Stonehenge. Basing his own calculations on Hawkins work, Dave plotted this information onto the Runwell Cross design. Once again, the centre point of the design, below Rettendon church, was used.

Although the results of the calculated lunar risings are merely tentative, they do seem to be very interesting. The complete oscillating path of lunar risings over the eighteen and a half year cycle on summer solstice entered the diamond entirely through the south-eastern horseshoe. At the winter solstice, this angle entered the diamond through the north-eastern horseshoe. Numerous alignments of ponds within the diamond are also apparent in connection with the calculated lunar risings.

Once all the lines and circles relating to the Runwell Cross design and the solar and lunar alignments were accurately drawn onto a large scale Ordnance Survey map of the area; and after each of the angles, the positioning of sites, and the accuracy of the ruler had been checked, Dave Hunt presented me with the facts. The intricacies of the different places and sites involved, and the complexity of the different alignments, was hard to follow at first. Indeed, it took several lengthy conversations with Dave to fully establish the extent of his findings.

So what exactly had Dave Hunt found? Was it the complex landscape geometry of an ancient race who once inhabited South-East Essex? Was it, perhaps, just a conglomerate of extreme coincidences, noticed only after

he had set his mind on deliberately finding some meaningful purpose behind the Runwell Cross? Indeed, had he looked too hard; or most important of all, had he discovered the secret of The Running Well?



THE REV. J.E. HAZILLÉ-CORBIN. This man, more than any other, helped generate and further an interest in the superstitions and legends of Runwell. He believed the Running Well was once a sacred shrine dedicated to Our Lady, and presided over by a convent of nuns. Photo courtesy C. Hazille-Corbin.

there for very long.

Standing on the platform at the well I tried to imagine what it would have been like when still a place of devotion and reverence. The village processions on special days would have reached here with garlands of flowers and offerings to be cast into the waters as a gesture of respect. Festively and with great solemnity the annual observance conducted perhaps by the priest of the parish. But now, in a state of neglect and disrepair, the well conceals its romantic past. I relocated this apparent site and leave with the intent of you remain lost from the memories.

In the following months the Running Well as a place of interest to be put back on the map, a Survey map compilers would present a copy of this book to requesting just such an acknowledgment of this exercise will be its past apparent history written for. Thirdly, and finally, knowledge of its past history, psychological research, a subject was in the future though, my Christopher Bazille-Corbin.

#### INTERVIEW WITH MR. CHRISTOPHER

Our initial conversation gave me a clear insight into why say that the Rev. J. E. Basil barriers of orthodox Christian symbolism in every aspect of of any parish priest. It is in mythology, romanticism, and bookshelves contain a varied them are works on folklore, village traditions, Celtic mythology, Christian symbolism and geomancy, and a number of the Andrew Lang Fairy tales; aside from the expected books on Christian philosophy and theology.

It seemed that much of Bazille-Corbin's interest in legends and mythology stemmed from his childhood upbringing on the island of Guernsey; a place which has always been steeped in superstition and folkish tradition. Here it was that the Bazille-Corbin family originated. It would seem that Christopher's great grandfather had been the grand master of a masonic lodge upon the island and was a good friend of the famous French author - Victor Hugo, who spent the last years of his life there. Here, it is worthy to note that a number of authors have cited Hugo as a major supporter of French secret societies, many of which were undoubtedly based upon masonic tradition, and from a political point of view strived to further the place of the French monarchy. Hugo was also a student of occult lore. How close the two men were is now impossible to deduce, but their masonic links would have meant they had much in common.



THE RUNNING WELL during the spring of 1982. Dave Hunt stands upon the concrete platform by its side. It was saddening to think of this possible holy site of the past being totally neglected for so long.

ponds are remarkable coincidences to say the least. At the end of the day it may well be that our wishful thinking and over-imaginative enthusiasm has created a "red herring." But from my own point of view, I do believe we have uncovered something. How accurate that something is I don't know. Perhaps we will never know. Yet whatever the reader may think, my own mind keeps returning to the coincidences linking the works of Frederick Bligh Bond, Katherine Maltwood, John Michell and the Rev. J.E. Bazille-Corbin. That no one can ever overlook.

## 8. Psychic Work and More Evidence.

Following the first meditation session at Basildon in March 1982 I wanted members of Earthquest to continue using psychic abilities in connection with the Runwell mysteries, in particular the use of psychometry. Many, without knowing our findings regarding possible landscape geometry in the area, strongly felt a certain affinity with the mysteries of Runwell and undoubtedly believed we had much to discover about its obscure past.

A couple of members had convincingly shown an above average natural sensitivity to psychic information and impressions and I knew that they might eventually produce some interesting results. One such person was already held a mild interest in the area and had attended Earthquest meetings on several occasions. Her interest was negligible, which meant that she would be subject to a very important

and the opportunity came and myself there one calm day I picked up to her father after she had picture the area as it had been very special to the area celebrating in the lower part of the village to be morris dancing was although she considered them to be Dave. Sarah's visions had she glimpsed a past which if the Running Well had place each year? Many such places in isolated villages in the Victorian era and were only places where dancing was interesting as the last vestige of religious observances since the holy sites such as wells, stone circles in Derbyshire at dawn on Mayday within the village fetes on the green church, the modern site of



DAVID MEDITATION

Sarah's impressions of the past were good, but they were not enough. If she could "pick up" psychic information at the Running Well, then so might others. A meditation session at the well had to be arranged. As Mayday was fast approaching, I decided we might try it then, accumulating as many people as possible for the occasion. We agreed to meet in the porch of St Mary's, Runwell where I would give a blow-by-

THE LORE TREE. Like some frozen statue of vibrant energy, this landmark stands at the centre of our Runwell Cross groundplan.

of disease had left many of the village's animals dead. This the villagers could not understand and being very superstitious, they believed this to be a divine retribution for some reason. Sarah was told clairaudiently that to rectify the situation the villagers carried out an act in an attempt to bring health and new life back to their lands. Part of this ceremony involved the placing of flowers and dead wrens into the waters of the Running Well, or so Sarah believed.

The mention of wrens puzzled Dave as this seemed a curious statement from a girl who knew very little about folk customs. Why put wrens into the well? Why not some other, more familiar bird like a blackbird, a starling, or a crow? Dave was dimly of the past, but little more. When he nothing whatsoever. However, a check some startling information concerning superstitious folklore.

It would appear that the wren of Britain where it was known as King was considered an ill-omen to kill animals, might be expected if one were. However, once a year, around midwinter on the Feast of St Steven, 26th December, ritualistically hunted and killed. Taken with a garland of flowers, and paraded would be asked for in return for a few wrens were taken to the churchyard, buried.

The reason for this sordid custom is Druidic lore where the wren was a symbol of light for the next, which is why midwinter and the new year. The fact suggested that the wren had once been health and new life, following the precise to be a mere coincidence. No link between midwinter and the Running Well.

#### TOTAL IMMERSION

On two separate occasions Sarah the Saxon period drowning in the water this I was immediately struck by the legend of Sister Lucy as set down you recall, fell into the well and became rejuvenated, losing a few years off her life each time she emerged from its murky depths.

Romantic as the story of Sister Lucy appeared, I felt at first that it contained little information relevant to our story. For this reason I never mentioned it to anyone, least of all Dave Hunt and his daughter Sarah. So her images seemed to independently suggest some importance in total immersion, the absolute form of baptism, at the Running Well.

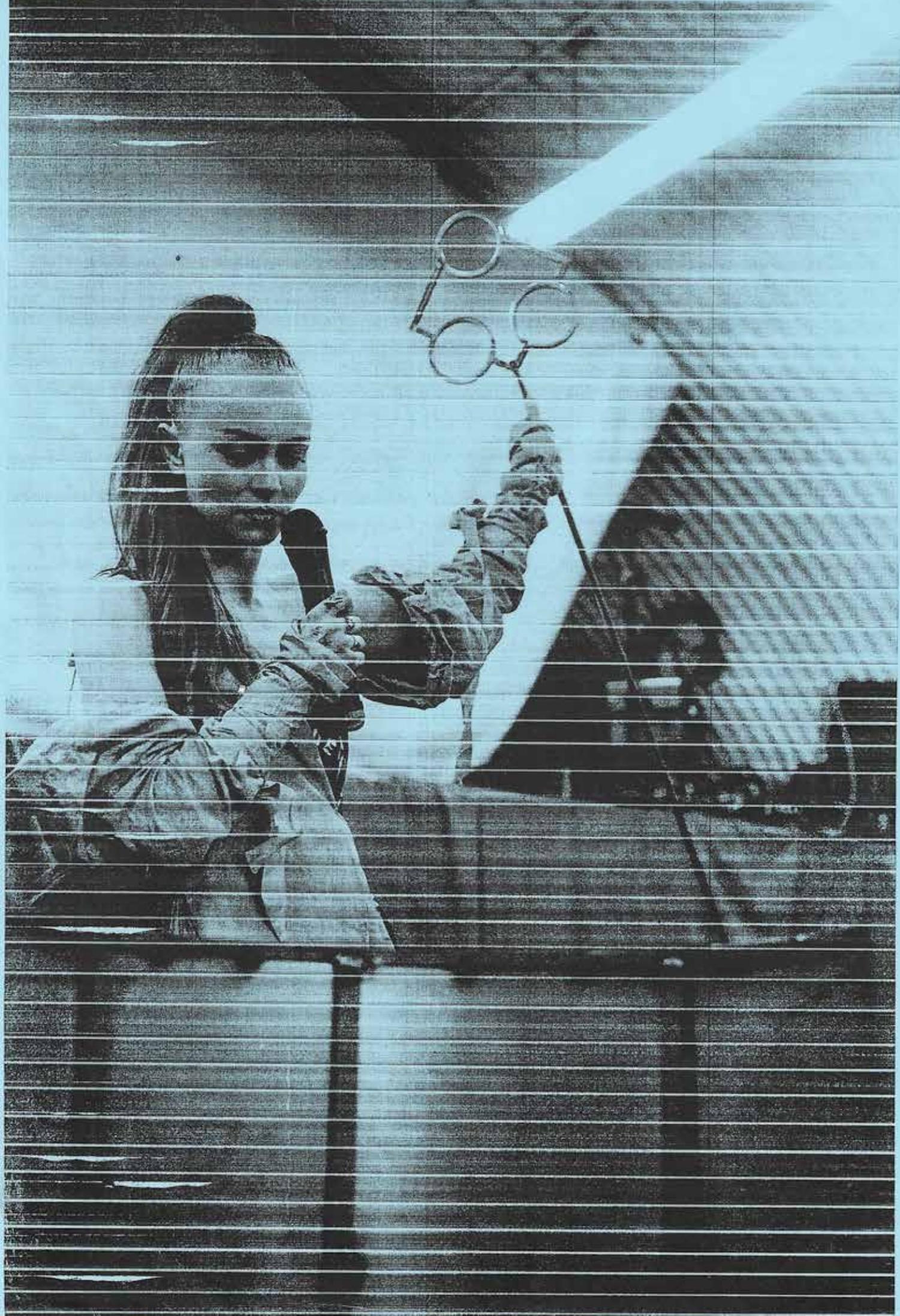
Total immersion is a practice which has been found in past and present cultures across the world. Christianity seems to have obtained the idea from the Essenes, a fringe religious cult of Jewish origin, who

used baptism. The belief is that the waters of certain places are endowed with divine or spiritual properties which cleanse the soul or immer well. Holy wells and sacred springs were obvious places for total immersion and, as already stated, the Celtic Church propagated such beliefs.

Could it be that the Running Well was once considered a prominent site for total immersion, due to its healing and beneficial qualities? Remember Carole's vision of a child being baptised by the Druid-like figures. Had Sarah "picked up" on this total immersion idea and, perhaps, the legends behind the story of Sister Lucy? Or indeed, had Bazille-Corbin after a similar visionary in the night?



MIDWINTER SUNRISE on 22nd December 1982 at the ophalos, the centre point of the Runwell Cross groundplan in Orchard Field, Rettondon. Evidence showed that solar and lunar events on the Summer and Winter Solstice may have been used in the orientation of this proposed groundplan. Somehow the Runwell rector, J.E. Bazille-Corbin, seemed aware of the importance of lunar events.



POPE + FIBRE

Floor Vias

PERFORMANCE RITUAL -

Channeling TRANSMISSION  
from the

WELL



CROSSING

-Process  
Lines

MIC: Thrust into hidden recordings the well just breathing cascades  
PAD: Capel A7 filter x3

Up to well / hand

**1.22 BELL 1**

MIC: Dust bounds  
Pores and Fibres Flood Drain

PAD: Rope A2 / delay

Walk round well x 3

MIC to NN: Flood grows, focus,  
Programmed to circle, pause, slam

**4.10 CRUMHORN**

PAD: A6 scream

MIC to NN: Flood grows, focus,  
Programmed to circle, pause, slam  
Slow / still

**5.35 BELL 2** touch hair / Crosier pointed

PAD: Stutter B12 / filter reverse phasing  
+ BOX: Endless mudflats / gated  
PAD: back scream B1 / reverse filter loop

Room MIC: Low ~~Fell the body sanguine streams dust bounds~~

MIC to NN: Flood grows, focus,  
Programmed to circle, pause, slam  
Slow /

**8.51 CRUMHORN** Stop loop / go to well

**9.59 BELL 3:** MIC: Low ~~fell the body sanguine streams dust bounds~~

Room MIC: - haste haste... x 2

PAD: shuffle A5 / filter loop  
BOX: Endless mudflats / gated

MIC to NN: Flood grows, focus,  
Programmed to circle, pause, slam  
Slow /

**12 BELL 4** touch hair / Crosier pointed

PAD: Capel A7 filter x3 loop

Room MIC: Thurs into hidden recordings, the well just breathing cascades  
Stop loop

go to well HAND

**15.25 CHINOOK**

+ BOX: Endless mudflats / gated LOUDER LOUDER

SEE

STATIC

B1 delay  
B1

Were

voice bass  
rhythm

Scammy

~~the well just breathing cascades~~

ad lib mags p mag

by hand straddled

hands by drum  
nose div / work behind

ad lib mudflats

Thrust into hidden recordings  
stone

diverse w/ mile





**Cealdwiella**  
**New Noveta with Sophie Sleigh-Johnson**  
**27 April 2019**

The Running Well has existed at the threshold house site intersecting three fields since the earliest recorded date of AD 939. In every nerve the mud is glowing, flashing in the dark, a lost mirror, a sacred beacon to the latent female presence - cascading menstrual cycle, lunar pool.

Females have been associated with the eponymous well of Runwell, the Rune [mystery]. Well, since before the Pagan Goddess Epona, protector of horses. Now, near the ditch that is the entrance to the Nymphaeum, Epona's horses still walk in a paddock, living beasts of the ghosts of buried horses, pagan internments.

The Essex estuary shores up layered transmissions, encoded in the brackish rivulets, pulsing through the water-wires that link up this occluded corner. The silent scream of the marsh is repeated here live in the performance of *Cealdwiella* - by New Noveta (Ellen Freed and Keira Fox), and Sophie Sleigh-Johnson aka SS-J. This is no blithe Romanticism nor lifestyle Paganism. It happens in a flash, a psycho-fluvial expedition into the well's futures and pasts.

Various access points of psycho-archaeology and sinister sites act as portals, crossings, which in turn allow access to other points in the configuration, revealing strange alignments. Tides remake the land anew, like swept mercury. The Running Well runs deep.

*Twice Tuned, What Blood Tide Will Scrape Pools Static?*

This riverine cartography of Marsh Wizards and Cunning Folk trace a series of different pilgrimages into the centre of the earth here: necessary forms of healing, enactment, and counter curse, from the prevalence of witchcraft immolations in the sixteenth century, and in particular during the strange hiatus of Civil War.

The geography of Runwell links to this darkness, this tuning, evolving, twisting, fiery overturning. In the early twentieth century, the dark monolith of its infamous sanatorium Runwell Hospital (where SS-J's mother used to work) returns Runwell to the

map, a conduit to the well's lineage of healing. The Rune Well trickles regeneration, a fount both turgid and malefic, a strange channel.

Bowessing was a cure for madness. The 'franticke' person would be so shocked by immersion in cold sacred water. Another ancient ritual, alongside the inscribing of magic lead tablets with mysterious runes is here traced as symbols and curses on the *Cealdwiella* costumes, designed and made by Gabriella Massey: curse and counter curse, silver hieroglyphics - fragments of text in mud.

New Noveta and SS-J's first visit to the site - one of a number of pilgrimages - created a new threshold out of rope in the branches and recorded the performance as pre-cognition. The three entities in thousands of centuries speak to each other: a reminder that Rune can also mean communion, a council.

The recorded sacrament - a combination of voice, mud, trilling air, and the screams of horses - became voice used live as samples in the room alongside a sound collaboration with Vindictrix (musician David Aird) - a canticle to the impossible worlds of the well, that combined breathing strains, medieval Munrow Gothic crumhorn - a nod to the medieval Prioress - and electronic bells, in recognition that bells were immersed in wells to give them ceremonial power to drive away storms: a meteoric effusion. And the Chinook at the climax of the sound piece is a whirlpool of tumult, the well rising and drumming, unearthing new sounds: this channelling of the original performance also became a radio programme broadcast on Resonance 104.4 FM.

On another pilgrimage, well water was also drawn for ampullae, liquid relics, to be taken above or below ground - many were buried at the thresholds of fields. Well water was also collected in large tubs from the dark pool, to be poured into the six-foot steel well structure in the gallery, modelled in form on the crosier of the Runwell prioress, here re-designed in a triune formation for the three performers of *Cealdwiella*: SS-J, the well anchorite-transmitter/glam outer-space, and New Noveta as the two turbulent emanations from the well

who are rising up, who refuse total immersion, perform the struggle against a repressive flatness, and who are themselves a sacrifice to the well.

A third visit in the snow planted a radio device at the well. Transmitted live into the performance space, here was a radio transmission pulsing with hidden voices. The marshes have always been home to these tremors.

These and other unearthed sounds are transmitted live to the wells' *Cealdwiella* doppelganger, above which is also placed a large circular mirror, an inverted pool, a flash that is the well's flickering presence in the landscape, so that the demons of reductive control cannot gain entry. The 'widdershins' movement of anti clockwise stirs up time like the common practice of turning cursing stones anti clockwise around wells.

Then another visit, onto Hadleigh Castle - a promontory over the Thames Estuary - in the lashing rain. We have the evidence: photographs taken in costume, pissing rain pouring on our white-caked faces, mingling with the mud. An antireflection of the girl band lying on pink plumes of fabric.

Women have been buried, drawn, at the Rune well for centuries. In the twelfth century, a holy order of women habituated the site. Ask the psychic researcher Andrew Collins. The prioress, head Anchorite of this holy order of women resided in the dark chapel. She was later buried in Runwell Church, three miles south of the well, attuning through the earth. Her heavy black sepulchre lid bears the Running Well Cross design. This pattern transmogrifies to the design of *Cealdwiella's* steel well - the motif of SS-J's staff. The circles of the staff and the well are holes of heresy, avenues for entry of psychic energy, electricity. The new well structure has three sets of steps leading up to the top of the well. Open avenues for re-entry.

During the invocation, acting as a remote tuning fork to the frequencies of the well, the staff crackles with static and is insufflated through SS-J; she is the mirror of the well anchorite, and represents

the ancient priestess cults of the well, like Oracles who sit over the cracks in the rocks, the mephitic gas emanating up through the vulva and through their mouth as prophecy.

Divination and deposition is figured in pins placed in water, signs of regeneration, counter-curses, thrown for centuries into wells: New Noveta operate with metal orbs that contain these pins, release their caustic fractures, cracking them on the floor. The pins inside are bent. The orbs and pins are plunged into the water, and again retrieved as an on-going, remade sacrifice: a circuit given to and from the water.

Delivered from a body of death, New Noveta's huge Tudor dresses have ties, rags - echoes of the clouties - that were wrapped round flesh, hung about wells by pilgrims: a ghostly cloth of bandages drooping over ditches. SS-J's costume is new medieval, curse-flared armour, electric powder blue.

#### *The Head Cut, Slips Patterns Subtext of Heat*

A spiral female cycle becomes an antidote, a scratched message in the floodwaters, because the Prioress is rising. New flesh may be ripped and for an instant recode the surface to affect a new space; for which a code does not exist.

Dark water becomes ghosts, a cypher to the hidden knowledge that water conduits, not to drown, but to navigate. It was again ancient time where we might cast out mediocrity; fall again, not being dragged under, channelled through a Gnostic cartography of the apotropaic. But still the staff is attuning to the well's shadows: The electromagnetic essence thrums and invades the nervous system, a pharmakonic electrocution of whispers, cosmic static. But what does the imminent overthrow of the future entail? It is a throwing beyond, a transmission, a bursting through.

The well has no intention of giving up its secrets.

Marsh Exorcism 2

2. *Curse Go Back* - Antonin Artaud.

Holes urge thousands of years to flood in. Burning through the present\*. The *Coaldwiella* 'crosier' became affective radio antennae for a particularly docetic frequency, Mesopotamia again: a re-enactment of Artaud's Cane, itself re-enacting St Patrick's Bachall Issue. You can't get the staff anymore.

(Occurrence: Performance 'Artaud & Sound' at Kingston University, 2018)

\* Sufficient Unto the Day Is The Evil Thereof

Marsh

EXERCISE



# ARTAUD & SOUND:

TO HAVE DONE WITH THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD

Dennis Cooper  
Stephen Barber  
Martin Bladh & Karolina Urbaniak  
Nicholas Bullen  
Richard Crow  
Sophie Sleigh-Johnson

Organised by  
Matt Williams

**15 / 09 / 2018** 15:00-19:00

**VISCONTI STUDIO**

Kingston University, Kingston Hill Campus, London, KT2 7LB



*Down Curse* performed at 'Artaud & Sound' Kingston University, 15 September 2018. Performance stills, courtesy of Karolina Urbaniak.

Performance details: spoken word and sonic piece by Sophie Sleigh-Johnson; medieval shirt made for the performance by Gabriella Massey, and metal crosier from the *Cealdwiella* project: re-purposed/re-enacting Artaud's Bachall Isu Cane.



Marsh Exorcism 3

3. *Bag Interior*\* Anna Trapnell.

Prophetess new & revived on Zoom. Anna Trapnell, like Artaud, was a disruptor of the peace, itinerant seer, arrested in Cornwall. Jacobean spirit carved out as a digital hieroglyph.

Cuneiform webcam interrupts the confluence that codes my engulfment into the darkness of an off licence carrier bag.

Marsh

EXERCISE

MESOPOTAMIA, 1653



HEERS!

Bishop Doze



*Taraxacum officinale* (Dandelion)

Marsh Exorcism 4

4. *Drift Fright* – Leonard Rossiter, viz Rigsby, from *Rising Damp*

Channeling the London current can be oppressive for the mystic. Too many Street Waves lay down already.

Liver heavy, like a prophetic tablet from the On-Off  
Excavates the price of floods.

Costume for this rightly christened as 'Clerical Oat Biscuit'. Artificial corridors made of beige curtain dissipate through the evening. The infested fabric of the everyday unravels.

My struggles with Holsten Pils and its accompanying green and yellow carrier bags gave the spectators their money's worth.

Ancient hours spent leathered by false doors reinforce my large shoes.  
Falling over helps explore the fault lines of temporal continuity.

(Occurrence: *Drift Fright*, Performance in collaboration with New Noveta at The Horse Hospital, 2020)

[thehorsehospital.com/events/drift-fright](http://thehorsehospital.com/events/drift-fright)

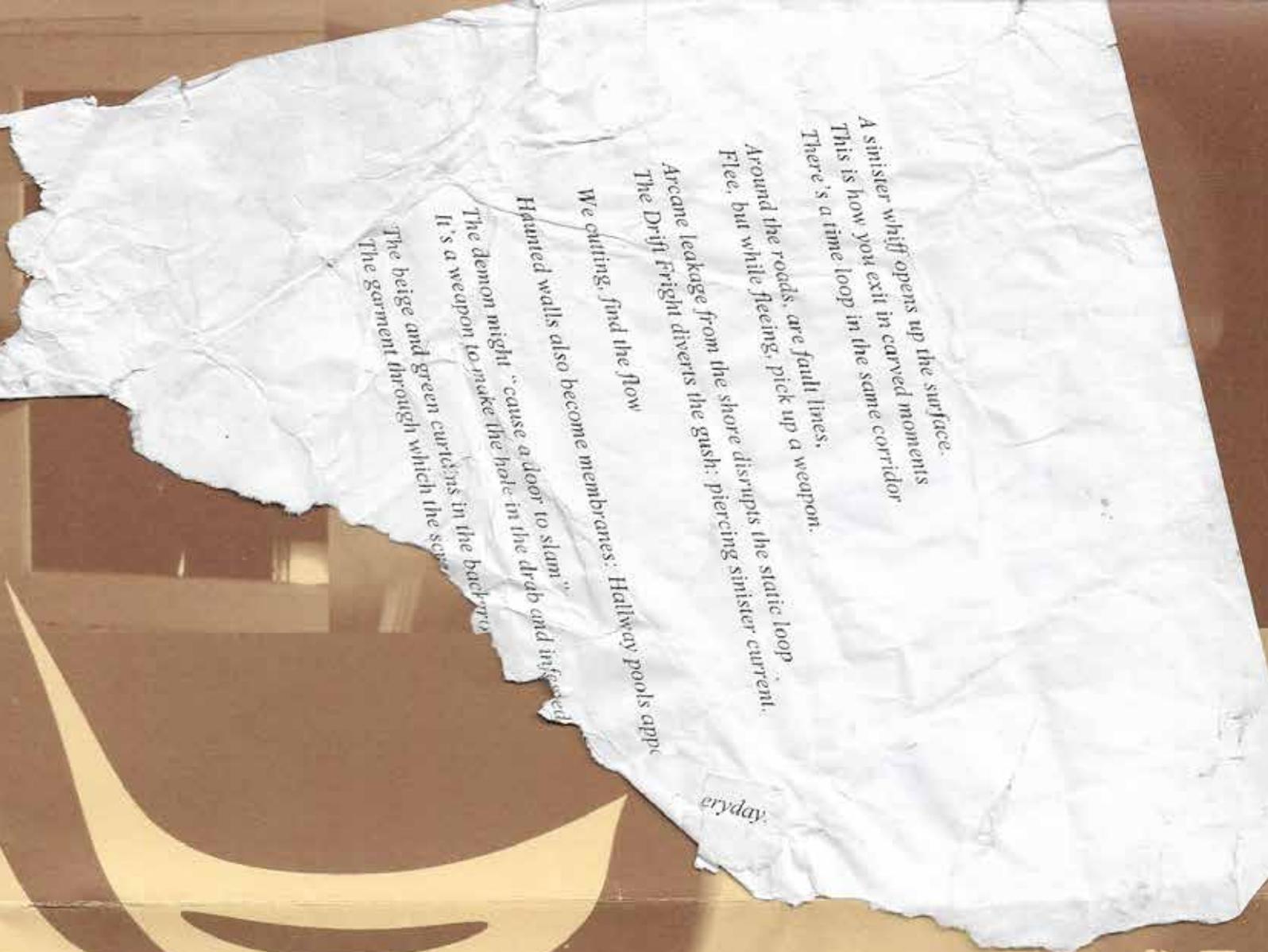
Video link: [youtube.com/watch?v=JBat8J9jxGc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBat8J9jxGc)

March

EXERCISE

New Noveta, Elena Bushueva  
and Sophie Sleigh-Johnson  
19th - 24th November 2019  
The Horse Hospital

# Noveta



A sinister whiff opens up the surface.  
This is how you exit in carved corridors  
There's a time loop in the same corridor.

Around the roads, are fault lines,  
Flee, but while fleeing, pick up a weapon.

Arcane leakage from the shore disrupts the static loop  
The Drift Fright divers the gush: piercing sinister current.

We cutting, find the flow  
Haunted walls also become membranes: Hallway pools appear

The demon might "cause a door to slam"  
It's a weapon to make the hole in the drab and infested

The beige and green curtains in the backpro  
The garment through which the scene

eryday.



*and green curtains in the  
cut through which the set*

The Infested fabric  
of the everyday





FUELS THE DISINTEGRATION  
OF TIME



**Fright Drift: City Under with Sophie Sleigh-Johnson 19 November 2019**

Held at Atlantic Bookshop, a portal in City channels, The Reading Salon used *Caliban & the Witch* by Silvia Federici as a springboard to examine the female body and valence of heretical and occult practice in early Capitalism and its concurrent weaponisation and usurpation as a commodity. Following a short presentation from SS-J, the group examined a chapter from the book as a navigation tool to think about the contemporary terminus of the city, the sinister currents underneath it, and the continued usurpation of drive and anxiety in, and channelled by, the body.

## RIP Flip

A stop frame animation of RIP's scream: Spellcraft for life outside the screen.

Slow motion opens up the funnel of the 1970s. The open mouth is a chimney through which the marsh flows, a tawdry portal repurposing The Drift.

The cry of a Marsh.

It's a weapon to make the hole in the drab and infested fabric of the everyday.  
The beige and green curtains in the background.







## Printmaking

### What A Relief!

Artworks in this section:

*Never Work* (2019) relief print on paper

*Cry of a Well (The Odd Lager)* (2020) relief print on paper

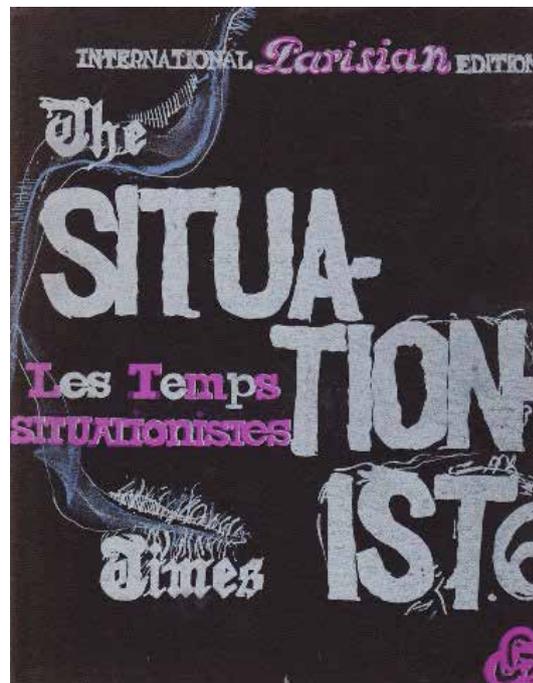
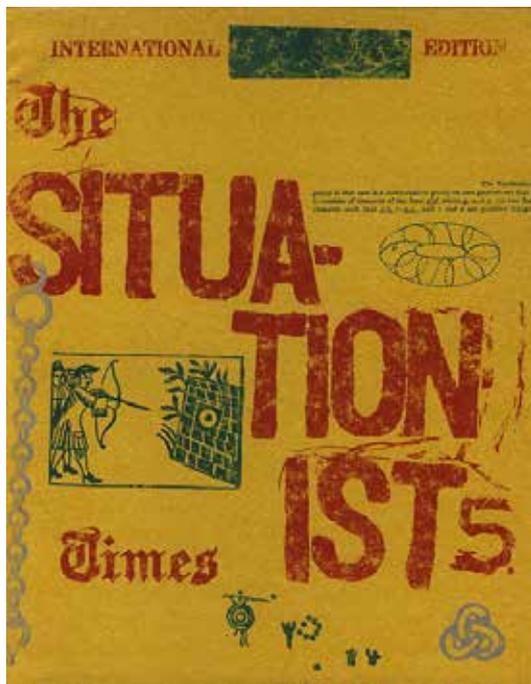
*Rising Damp*, 2020, relief print on Off-licence carrier

*Ur-Disorientation* (2021) relief print on *Scillonian III Ferry* sick bag

These four Lino prints are a cutting inscribed clumsily: a microcosmic ploughing of the rubbery soil, qua reed onto clay of cuneiform script. Tracing ludic patterns in the Marsh Regime.

*Never Work* and *Cry of a Well (The Odd Lager)* are also visual 're-enactment' of covers from *The Situationist Times*, specifically Volume 5 'Rings and Chains' and volume 6 'International Paris Edition.' The former yellow cover also lucidly replicates the colours of the Holsten Pils can, which provided apposite collision, pursuant of recurrent hypnagogic repetition that punctuates the project. These Situationist covers also project an affective crossover between my work at *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* qua journal format, but equally an intervention into the ground of unworking,

This section also features primary text 4: Anonymous (1965) [1372] *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. Clifton Wolters, London Penguin



*The Situationist Times* Volume 5 'Rings and Chains' (1964); Volume 6 'International Paris Edition' (1967)

Prints: What a relief

## I. Never Work

Take note of: the marsh pulse underneath the office, and the Holsten Dragon. The misery of working mandates  
Calling in Sick.

*Ne Travaillez Jamais* is a ludic rash seeping up from under the skin mast cells of stone. Arcane leakage from the  
shore, if you dig deep enough.\*

Keep taking the Pils. Or, if that fails, *NEVER WORK*.

\* Partial re-enactment of 1970s *The Situationist Times* cover.

SEIT 1649

Under the

MARSH

CALLINSIE

NEUER

MORR

HOLSTEN

K

## 2. Rising Damp

Use the printed off-license carrier bag, which usually carry my Holstens.

Across its suffocating surface appears The 'Cloud of Unknowing' as Reggie's Rising Damp: a submission to gnosis that a breakdown in reception is prophetic vapour to.

Damp as disorientation suppurates on walls like ancient inscriptions, and the itinerant cracks of the carrier's seemingly anachronic body confirm the pseudo-geological lineaments of the plastic: a reenactment of disrupted stratigraphy.



Penguin  Classics

4/-

THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING



### 3. The Cry of a Well

Millenarian Anna Trapnell's divinatory 'Cry of A Stone' was voiced in a single stream at an alehouse in Whitehall.

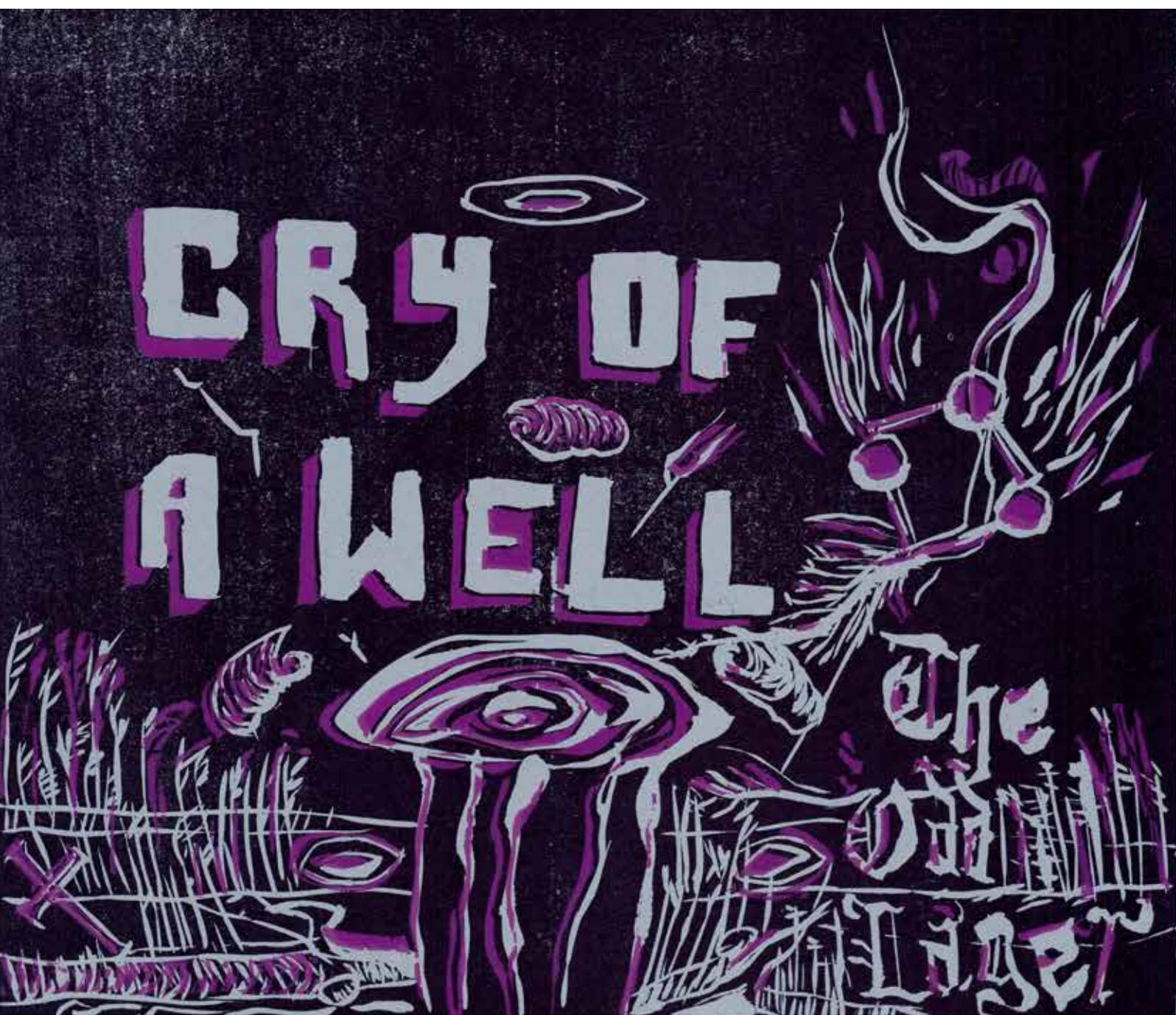
The Cry of a Well dares to transmit the Essex water's pulse to return each day.\*

Ordinary prophecy is tunneled from gut into beer condensation.

The Cry of a Stone is a different kind of 'Pub Rock': Just the Odd lager.

\* Second re-enactment of 1970s *The Situationist Times* cover.

# CRY OF A WELL



The  
Dance  
Lager

#### 4. Sick Bag

A sick bag is the off-license CCTV afterimage.

Mist on the street corner said to be inverse of Purgatory.

Vomit surface, beer puddle, rising damp; they all need the technology of a bag whose legend is Ur-Disorientation.



SCOTT  
RELEAS  
THE  
DISORIENTATION

## Spoken word

### Tape: Reel Time

These two tapes are formally-released spoken word sonic pieces. All tracks are, again, a route through mythographic territory. Perverse gazetteers.

The first tape, 'Elope' (2022) by Eleni Poulou, is a recording of a radio show as heard on and released by No Bounds Radio. Features my track 'Channel 5 Canticles' (2021)

Info via this link: [noboundradio.bandcamp.com/releases](https://noboundradio.bandcamp.com/releases)

Listen at this link: [mixcloud.com/noboundradio/eleni-poulou-presents-boiling-holsten/](https://mixcloud.com/noboundradio/eleni-poulou-presents-boiling-holsten/)

The second is my first spoken word album, *Nuncio Ref!* (2022) Sowerby Bridge: Crow Vs Crow Limited Edition Tapes, release TBC.

**Tape: Reel Time**

'Channel 5 Cantles' released on tape December 2021 by No Bounds Radio, as previously broadcast on Eleni Poulou's radio show 'Elope', 2020.

[noboundsradio.bandcamp.com/releases](http://noboundsradio.bandcamp.com/releases)

[mixcloud.com/noboundsradio/eleni-poulou-presents-boiling-holsten/](https://mixcloud.com/noboundsradio/eleni-poulou-presents-boiling-holsten/)  
(Channel 5 Canticles play from 17.10 - 22.30 minutes)

Fragments of Holsten, Leonard Rossiter, the photocopier, are all near-at-hand on Essex TV

Channel 5 Canticles: Lyrics

CANTICLE 1

*The Essex Islands get bigger and bigger  
The islands get bigger  
Like torn players flying  
Paper flying  
Maps out  
Fragments of Leonard Rossiter's mystery play  
It was in ribbons  
In tatters of typewritten script  
Reporter writes: "They're guidebooks to the territory.  
Flooded,  
and leathered."*



CANTICLE 2

*TV séance  
He will go home, a rustle of brown. Creeping softly past residential forms  
His pallor pastel green, as if one of the television tubes was on the blink.  
Splitting coloured shapes in the sky  
There's no time for ersatz metamorphosis, or cloying, lazy: lowest form of wit vs. blazing Mexican sun.  
Columbo had shown before how to grasp a rubbering hand high in the air: vortex opened.  
Napoleon's Violet is the Rift as Form*

CANTICLE 3

*This scream of Reginald Iolanthe Perrin, at the end of each 1970s sitcom episode is a burn in the Quiet Zone. A  
ludic bubble that bursts as Reggie cuts into the skein of the demon.  
Slow motion opens up the mouth of prophesy beneath the screen  
Impish predators  
Outlined in old copy toner  
A burnt circle takes shape in the shifting office  
A drilled afternoon amongst  
Unacceptable dullards  
The demon might "cause a door to slam"*

CANTICLE 4

*Far off colours are seen out of a real window  
Time is measured through these sleeping thoughts and the flipping funnels of our new mouths reach through to this  
life in a cartoon.  
Recruits for the voyage far removed from the desperation for "life experiences"  
Instead between us and the presence of the stream  
The Nephilim meet in the delicate balance that we may meditate / medicate upon so high a hereafter.  
Meditate/ medicatTTTTT  
Where pale shadows linn I saw the shape of a photocopier - its fragments of plastic re-assembled from a rapture  
bomb lost in transit/van during the violet dawn from 'Far east of Essex' as Frankie Howerd called it.  
It's a grilled ghost,  
a real snorter.  
Reporter writes: From the mists of crops comes the Holsten Dragon, - he who is HD - working hard at never  
working.  
This smell of fear is the bones of Borley, poured like the melted gunk of rotten confectionary - sweets have no need  
for tiresome dictionary definitions.  
Chipstick lint.  
Cuneiform folds,  
Just the tide's pulse to reverse each day.  
The exercise video downstairs: is a quiet hint of death.*

CANTICLE 5

*Monopoleigh was his Holsten dream, this man with a gash in his dusty net curtains.  
A ripped hole that roars.  
This was the man corrupted by Courtland's and sinister indoor sheds.  
It's was weapon to make the hole in the drab and infested fabric of the everyday. The garment through which the  
scream makes a hole.*

*Napoleon's Violet is the Rift as Form  
[...] Rift as Form*

The Real Anzels II



NUNCI  
REF!

SIDE A:

ADVANTAGE, CHISWALL

RIP GENTLEMEN

CHANNEL 5 CARICIES

ICARUS GET ENOUGH OF IT

INAKEL PIT, MEAT PHYSICK

SIDE B:

CHALDEAN ACTS

NAPOLEON'S VIOLLET

PEUKFOT

BISHOP GOZE

THE SHROPSHIRE ENGLISHMENT

TB NEXUS



## Chapter 1: Technicity's Blind Spot: The Marsh Regime Channels Ur-Disorientation

### Esoteric Prologue: Into the Marsh

Cuneiform as prop – sloppy tramp.

### Magic Place

Marsh as occult territory – a Simondonian Privileged Place – cuneiform signifies the wrench of figure from ground.

### The Cuneiform

Taking form from clay as inscription in making/of history – charting access points to see time – being's inception and its foreclosing in agriculture vs shimmering of différance – bivalence of Disorientation – the who and the what of transduction – redoubling Ur-Disorientation.

### Fractals: Missing Pieces and Romantic Sensibilisation

Moving over the fractal sods qua broken fragments – aporia call to the future – Romantic fragment as immanent critique – Benjamin's Ur-Form unites metastable cuneiform to its Romantic fragment.

### Geophilology: Sedimentary Hermeneutics of the Deluge

Philology, and cuneiform decipherment as colonial logic – Flood underwrites chronologies and eco systems – Flood inculcates burial of text as proto-montage – ancient ritual as sediment – depths of excavation of memory – ecological regime of the marsh – war-inflected structure of Iraqi marsh as historical fault line.

### The Blind Spot

Etymology of the stain of place as Blind Spot – the invisibility at the heart of the marsh – the Blind Spot of technicity glimpses delay – Bataille' mythical plane – hermeneutics of sediment, tele-vision of technology – material vs. work of text in the digital.

### Channeling the Ores through the Blind Spot

Mesopotamian metallurgy as texts as temporal transmutation at the level of the marsh – Myth of writing on metal – marsh as furnace ferments technicity – concatenation as sacrifice – threshold of human and inhuman – Accelerationism.

### Lost Time of the Liver

The dilation of the Blind Spot founded in deferral of Prometheus' liver – human and technic as doubling of différance – human based on lack – organic mirror as ground of time – cuneiform Liver Tablet – Thanatology of sacrifice – loss symbolised in holes as a point of vision.

### Sacrifice via Bog Axe

Sacrifice and burial of Bog People in marshes – Iron Age burial mirror as prophesy – negativity and scapegoat – feeling from liver's *melas kholie* – humour(s) as surfaces opening up attendant on delayed gratification – the return of the flood in the contagion of laughter.

### Damp Sitcoms = Modern Sacrifice

Self-sacrificial misery is 'modern' thanatology of sacrifice – *Rising Damp*.

### Ague cake

Marsh as inutile, damp, contagious – Malaria in Essex – worn out vicars – contagion as affective structure of feeling in Blind Spot of dilation and stain of place

### Drink in Carrier Bag

What a relief: the Cloud of Unknowing appears across an off-license carrier bag – pseudo-geological lineaments of retroactive plastic reveal magical world of techno-logy – drinker's holes of loss in the liver – adoption vs. adaption – atemporality vs. dilation – drink as Disorientation/oblivion.

### TV from the future

Legend of inscription = a comedy hermeneutic of individuation from the Base Matter of marsh – vision in the sacrificial void technologically pre-determined in the *tache aveugle* of the clay – Ur-Disorientation channels a liberation theology from the gramme of television, a reactivation of the forces of life.

## Chapter 1: Technicity's Blind Spot: The Marsh Regime Channels Ur-Disorientation

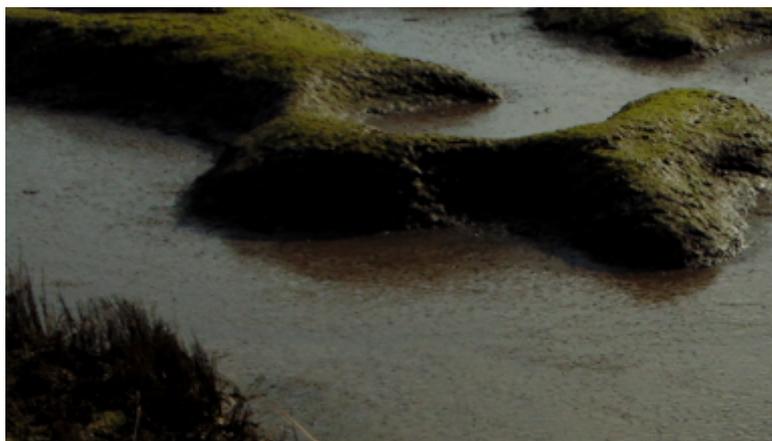


Figure 1: Marsh Islands: fragments of mud

### Esoteric Prologue: Into the Marsh

*Hark – the holes of soil... because in the beginning was the marsh. And the marsh was made word; and the marsh was word...*

Perverting the Biblical account of creation, this invented epithet is preface to a form of ‘Geophilology,’ that will become demonstrably appropriate to the co-constitutive and cosmological concerns of landscape and inscription in this chapter. Geophilology, a neologism that combines geology and philology, is a vaguely fictive discipline here imagined as the last resort of a scholar to create a respectable framework for what follows. The bottom line is: it’s a method for reading the inscriptions that the Marsh Regime is legend to, and sees common ground in both written and geological substrates, whose fault lines, separated by time and the contingent manifestation of potential, might open up arcane yet latent temporalities in the present.

Cuneiform is the earliest known script, inscribed upon clay, from the now mythical Mesopotamian marsh. This alluvial salt marsh – between (*Meso*) the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which once circumnavigated the ancient ruins of Ur and Uruk, is now the south and southeastern reaches of Iraq. The huge wetland is a terrain of technology, for it is from this watery cradle that cuneiform is dragged, handfuls of the clay molded into brick tablets, deterritorialized and enfolded into a process of human memory. It is an Ur-moment, in recognition of both the ancient “first city” of Mesopotamia, and the Ur *qua* originary, anterior, or first (Woolley, 1948, 7). Seen through the lens of Geophilology, cuneiform is both a relic of mud, and a writing surface: an impressionistic enfolding of the two. The marsh from whence it originates is the ‘stage’ for the cuneiform tablet: this main ‘prop’ will be a privileged node in a *mise-en-scène* enfolding landscape, time, and technicity: in short, I am developing a ‘Marshography,’ centered around an extended material and metaphysical reappraisal of the cuneiform tablet as object, relic, transmitter: a crumbly poetics thereof.

What follows is a sloppy tramp through a number of geological, philological, and mythical realities, all read through the prism of this, and another, marsh cartography: that of the early

modern and contemporary manifestations of the Essex marsh backwaters (Figure 1) via such genres as metallurgy, prophesy, and situation comedy. Both marsh locales stage a heterogeneous, differentiated individuation, predicated on the disruptive surfaces of technicity that is sure to be comedically revealed.

### Magic Place

The marsh is an anterior zone, a ‘magic circle,’ but one that is not, as such, clearly delimited, but rather, fractal<sup>1</sup>: the repetitive scales and repetition of the shore, its cursory boundary, attesting more to what philosopher of the occult Eugene Thacker would call a magic circle’s “dark inverse”: an anonymous manifestation of an opaque or unknowable modality that its damps and mists – in the Essex variant – are weird metonymy to (2010: 82). The marsh as transmutation is a Janus-like flickering, a doubling between dissolution and reformation in a geological sense, but also in an insistence on form that connotes something beyond the material, and calls the technological to bear. Disorientation, as an effect of technology’s ruptures, is written in this muddy opacity through such passages of historiographical mutation (Stiegler, 2009: 2). If Michael Jacobs describes painting as “a zone, a hinge, not just between epistemes in history, but between spaces of consciousness, light and dark, night and day,” the site of the marsh interfaces epistemes of changing technology, meteorology and temporality, manifest from the thick mud and the mist of its constitution, that disorient the marsh’s inhibitor: added to the water that drains, seeps, steepers therein (2015: 184).

The marsh, both ancient and modern, chez Mesopotamia Essex, is thus an occluded geography, mephitic and impassable, a zone that through its thick materiality manifests an affective opacity and contradicts a linear commodification of history at one of its key premises: that of legibility, of clear progressive delineation (Colebrook, 2016: 440). But where at first the miasmatic air and sloppy mire might come across as illegible, its hermetic code might be decipherable, indexed through the cuneiform tablet. This Mesopotamian script is written on small bricks of unfired clay, taken out of the marsh plains of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, from whence the name *Meso-potamia* (between the rivers) originates: simply put, the marsh is ground zero for writing.

In *On the Existence of Technical Objects*, written in 1958, French Philosopher Gilbert Simondon proposes a magical state useful to framing this Marshography. Simondon’s notion of a primordial magical unity of humans and the world is experienced as a milieu of the “preindividual,”<sup>2</sup> where there is no segregation betwixt subject and object, or figure and ground (1992: 300). This is a distinctly place-based imaginary, similar to the primeval and numinous proximity of the marsh – the afterlife as ‘Field of Reeds’ for the Ancient Egyptians

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<sup>1</sup> Appropriately, the term fractal was coined by mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot, who posed the thought experiment “How Long is the Coastline of England?” in a 1967 paper. The term comes from the Latin word *fractus* (“fragmented,” or “broken”) (1967: 636).

<sup>2</sup> This recalls issues at stake in Quentin Meillassoux’s proposition of the arche-fossil – an object temporally anterior to the human mind, and thus in existence before such a mind could have knowledge thereof (2009: 26). Rehearsing the limits of correlationism, namely, the human-centric dominant model of all post-Kantian philosophy, Meillassoux’s thought experiment suggests that an anterior marsh landscape as meteorological manifestation, what philosopher Eugene Thacker in his darkness mysticism would call the “world without us” – is likely a hostile, unhuman planet, oblivious and, more than that, malefic, to our existence (2010:9).

– where existences and frequencies are, equally, always churning (Pinch, 2004:60). Here then, the marsh is the model for germinating hexed territory, before and after life, like Simondon’s “magical world”: a veritable ‘crucible’ of matter, a primeval metaphor ready to be realised.

Simondon’s magic world, like the marsh, is a “network of places and of things that have a power and that are bound to other things and other places that also have a power. This path, this enclosure, this [temenos] contains all the force of the land, the key-point of the reality and the spontaneity of things, as well as their availability” (ibid). These are called “Privileged Places” rich in implicit organisation, a force field of potent(ial) energies and virtualities: a “system[s] of metastable equilibrium” (2017: 178).

The marsh here is the Ur-Privileged Place, pulsing with this potential manifest in the concatenation that releases writing. That which is latent before said structuration can occur, in Simondon’s gestalt of figure and ground, is the distinguishing of these latter two, in landscapes, marked out as “key-points in the universe”: sacred sites, or nodes, a point where ritual is necessarily marked (2017: 178).

But then, a bifurcation occurs. The immanent, always “more than one” equilibrium “supersaturated” with incompatible singularities and divergent force-relations, will provide the ground for individuations, of both the human, and thereafter the technological and religious, as points in a “phase shift” away from unity (ibid). With the first rift that produces technics and religion, figure and ground as originally enmeshed take on an altered relation, where the reticular structure of the “privileged points” in the landscape, that contained such intensity, loose power: “figure and ground separate by detaching themselves from the universe to which they adhered” in a series of phase shifts that negate linearity, but suggest a fractal overlapping of states (2017: 181). The development of technologies that can be removed from the land inscribe this ongoing separation of figure and ground, which eventually is stretched further in time and space so as to effect total dislocation and geo-localisability: the successive “Disorientation” of this process is now “at its most extreme limit today,” according to philosopher Bernard Stiegler, and this evocative and turbulent state is the baseline of the marsh as metaphysical and geological form: the Marsh Regime (2009: 2). The marsh then, as a Privileged Place, is a stage for the rupture that creates technicity, which opens to a multiplicity of temporal existences extant therein. What is being described is affective Disorientation – of minds, of body, of place, of being – as a channelling from the marsh.

### The Cuneiform

If for Simondon, points as Privileged Places are the reticulation of intensities extant in the susceptibility of the preindividual mode, a Marshography’s focuses on these Disorienting affordances of site pinpoint the “phase shift of technicity” via the cuneiform tablet.



Figure 2: Irving Finkel's cuneiform tablet. Pressing my hand to the membranous surface of the tablet feels like touching gauze that bleeds into chronology: crossing over the marsh islands returns me to ancient Mesopotamia. A pile-up of years seems to collapse into the present.

You could be forgiven for thinking an arcane knowledge from the mud itself – a marsh ‘gnosis’ – is being suggested, rising still from silty stratigraphy: a potential held in the mud itself that pulses in the figure inscribed, in the clay, and tears through the veil of the present, which is to say: meaning still emerges at this w(hole) point of inscription, where past is re-seen, but in the Blind Spot of opaque mud (Figure 2). Each spidery incision, anchoring a contingent shift of form is indexical to the release of potential from the Ur-marsh: not just inscriptive, but individuating, enfranchising. This is because the inscriptive trace embodied in the cuneiform pulses with a liberatory mode that here is latent as a link through technology and landscape: it remembers the originary bifurcation. However ancient, this potency resurrects a magic potential, an affective force to be intuited, re-enacted, in the present, from anterior timescales.

Fittingly, for Simondon, clay is form; is an operation, as opposed to an *eidōs*, where individuation never concludes: a form-matter dialectic is underwritten by said immanent metastable tension as an on-going “taking form,” a process of potentiality which can transport the potential energy which charges it in the technical manipulation (2017: 248/252) (Figure 3). Just as well if we are to assert a generative kernel in the matter of a 5,000-year-old piece of clay!



Figure 3: C-ley Lines: Taking Form

The forming of a brick is the channeling of frequencies, radio signals from Mesopotamia not listened to, until the advent of broadcasting: this of course seems foolhardy, but is the very point of the energy latent in technology for the future, whilst also being anchored to the activities of humans at a particular time: a symbiotic process between human and brick – what Stiegler terms the “who” (subject) and the “what” (technics) (2009:7) (Figure 3). Transduction is this contamination of human and technics, at an organological and material level, as we shall see below, where both are co-constitutive, a co-individuation: “the transductive relationship of the who and the what [...] two dynamics in negotiation: the one, bio-anthropo-logical, the other, techno-logical” (ibid).<sup>3</sup> Mud is key in confirming cuneiform’s status as an ideal and material element of this trans-generational passage of continuity, or memory, as Derrida agrees, when countering Hegel’s notion that it is air that is the unchanging universal factor: “Heavy, serious, solid earth. The earth that is worked upon – scratched, written upon. The no-less universal element in which meaning is engraved so that it will last” (1978:n.23, pp.303-44).

It’s from the spiky perpendicular figures – incisions made by marsh reeds, onto clay that give it the name, from the Latin *cuneus*, meaning ‘wedge’ (Finkel, 2015: 8). All technical forms of writing as recording open up a surface of inscription, and this scratching into the mud is the literal figure, from marsh reeds in/to the ground, where these overlapping tensions, and the emergence of differentiation, from figure and ground, occur. As the first ‘known’ script, cuneiform is firstly implicitly an important transductive externalisation of memory: both retaining the heat of ancient memory but also crucially the charge of the marsh as a kind of Base Matter (see below): a unique destabilising of the linear separation of figure and ground. As a decisive point in what Bernard Stiegler, after Leroi-Gourhan, terms “linear writing” (not to be confused with the decipherment of a specific system named Linear B), its role as memory externalisation is based on a delay of time from inscription, learning, re-reading, transmuting... that will establish technics and time as co-constitutive (see below). (2014: 96). Stiegler agrees that cuneiform is one of the very first forms of “Epiphylogenetic memory”

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<sup>3</sup> Stiegler takes this notion of “transduction” from Simondon. For the latter, this term names the genesis that is also the operation of genesis itself, and thus in this Chapter, is that which instantiates itself, is co-constituent (Stiegler, 2009: 2).

(2009:4)<sup>4</sup>. In *Technics and Time Volume 2: Disorientation*, he even locates it as the pivotal transition from proto-history to history: “history begins at Sumer,” he proclaims (2009: 44). Assyriologist Irving Finkel, curator of the Near East at the British Museum concurs in multidisciplinary fashion, tracing cuneiform back to a momentous episode in around 3200 BC at Uruk, an ancient city of Sumer, when, with writing, “Prehistory stopped; [and] history began” (2015:7).

The originary sedimentation of memory in this rupture of ‘history’ is simultaneous with another developmental technology: farming. The cuneiform as prosthetic memory for business and land control measures is, as Stiegler concurs, relegated to list making, or accounting, in Sumerian and Akkadian writing, the two main languages written in the cuneiform script. This means that the oldest cuneiform tablets are, as Jean Bottéro concurs, “simple mnemotechnical devices [...as] lists” for hop keeping, livestock and other admin necessities (1992: 29-30). For Professor Timothy Morton, we have indeed never left what he considers agriculture’s thinking of “constant presence,” cognisant with Mesopotamian “agrilogistics” – to the extent that it still makes sense to call us *Mesopotamian*, for all the technological advance it has wrought ecologically, evidenced most vociferously through global warming (2016: 42/39). Where Mesopotamian agrilogistics and writing develop together, Morton suggests a vector of control to “contain the implicit shimmer of [Derrida’s] arche-writing” as nature-culture-agriculture that forecloses futurity (2016: 82). The ploughing of a furrow and the line of writing are analogous, the technicity of the plough transductively changing the land, shaping the topology of thought, human, and site, in a pharmakonic gesture, where the pharmakon designates that which is “at once what enables care to be taken and that of which care must be taken...its power is curative to the immeasurable extent that it is also destructive” (Stiegler, 2013a:4). But where the metastable fecundity of the marsh is shimmering with arche-writing, the cuneiform surely metabolises this potency, rather than boxing it in? Or perhaps this is the implicit bivalence that is unfolding.

Stiegler admits that the “inscription of the history of being’s inaugurality [...] [must] be traced in the “transition from cuneiform to alphabetic” (2009: 43). But neither does he put great purchase in the cuneiform fragment itself, as key to this development of memory’s formation, particularly as he does not see the earlier pictographic symbols that cuneiform originates in as “orthographic’ – it’s “not a writing of words,” he suggests (2009: 53). In noting its logistical nascence, he thus insists that “no cuneiform tablet could produce [the] effect with such purity of intention [...] of] the very principle of orthographics” (2009: 57). Stiegler admits, nonetheless, that cuneiform is withal a “re-constitution of time,” the temporality of which, for this thesis is a very opportune and material matter, traced across originary substrates of landscape: the relationship of material transmutation, the churning and taking form as the ground upon which this originary orthographic writing becomes, from clay to inscribed material to abstract meaning, through the originary metastable potential of the mud, premised on site and the terroir of marsh, rather than the nature of pictographic or phonetic inscription. (ibid).

Neither Stiegler, nor Morton, attend to this fact: namely, that the incised script of cuneiform letters is a threshold, a surface opening up in time (recall that cuneiform writing ‘ruptures

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<sup>4</sup> Epiphylogenetic memory names the third kind of externalisation of our memory in tools following the primary epigenetic memory of the brain and the secondary phylogenetic inheritance from ancestors (Stiegler, 2009: 4).

‘proto-history’) as transitory fabric that permits access to the mud that retroactively becomes a ground, and which the magic of the cuneiform manages to reknit together with its figure. What is essential is that each incision of the reed onto the clay charts a web of access points to and in time: incision as archaeological excavation. This is as if to say that the letters qua figure were emerging from the clay but also piercing back behind the veil to *see* the scriptural ‘ground’ and ground as both material and metaphysical marsh reality that pre-figures it, or generates it: a re-doubling, that is temporal as well as spatial.<sup>5</sup>

The inscription of cuneiform into the substrate of the marsh, premised therefore on the Simondonian notion of ground that the mud becomes, allows the marsh itself as metastable reality to reappear as arcane frequencies that belie the restrictive role vouchsafed for the “fertile crescent” and its administrative and essentialist reductionism, as suggested by Morton (2016: 82).

This retemporalising is an exposure of the rift between Simondon’s figure and ground, and is a wrenching out of context that conjures the space, as above, that Stiegler terms “Disorientation”: a word in his oeuvre that locates the historical ruptures brought about by successive phases of technology as externalisations of memory (2009:1). The point of originary Disorientation is found in exteriorisation, which also inculcates the crucial duality of decontextualisation, as seen in the bivalence of shimmering vs. agriculture. Applicable across increasingly wider spatiotemporal territories, loss of context is where the technical objects “lose their mutual reticulation and their power of influence from a distance on the reality that surrounded them” (ibid). Successive phases of “exteriorizations,” of memory onto external supports, are spatio-temporalisations as “always already a detemporalization and deterritorialization, [is] expressed as disorientation” (Stiegler, 2009: 65).

This Disorientation as the giving and taking of place is indexed in the cuneiform tablet: a lens through which to view Disorientation’s dual power. Crucial to this thesis is the new assertion that this makes the cuneiform a magical object, a constitutive process of transformation at the level of a site, where Disorientation is originally trained in sediment. This notion is doubled in the affective, miasmatic spectral dissolution of the marsh geography. Stiegler insists that “text is the assemblage of textures into which memory has been woven,” which calls to mind Derrida assertion that text isn’t just scratched into a substrate but is the differential play of dissolving traces: the latter had, in the 1970s, made the point that writing itself is dependent on a context, traced through that which is exterior to it, where writing is always referring to that outside of itself, a haunting presence literally with text: a con-text (1972: 8).

The grain and texture of site (the marsh, for instance) is sequentially lost as Disorientation gradually, in Derridean fashion, “opens a space of difference, between here and there, public and private, profane and sacred, strange and familiar, and so on” (2009: 3). As the *what* becomes a decontextualisation of the *who*, it is a “disappearance of place,” most obvious in globalised digital networks. But with Disorientation as both a temporal rupture and affective mode, both united, I aver, in technicity via the Marsh Regime, a re-orientation in site is a rich potential, figured in the cuneiform as the first tertiary retention. Both deterritorialised but also revealing, differentiated through the gestalt of figure and ground. A form of reterritorialising

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<sup>5</sup> This prefigures the sinister dynamic to be explored in Chapter 2 of Antonin Artaud’s *Subjectile* as a force of “disturbing space,” which sees the latter’s transformation into a temporal tension (Barker, 2009: 18).

that is not reactionary or atavistic: a spatio-temporalisation in the terms of Derridean *différance*<sup>6</sup>, and in the deterritorialisation of the clay into a technology (Stiegler, 2009: 65).

Not only does evident durability of the “solid, serious” (but perhaps not silent) clay relics contradict the short-termism and perverted “loss of loss” of digital storage and obsolescence, whilst still voicing potential into the future, but these tablets have a very long shelf life: short of stamping on them, they are hard to delete, unlike the holding structure of any digital text (Fisher, 2014: 11). Something generative remains in this inscribed clay that yet disorients rather than forecloses temporality, even in the present, such that where Stiegler suggests that a “new age of *différance*” starts with the “history of the letter,” writing itself, I aver, is already extant through the Marsh Regime of inscription figured through the cuneiform, reflecting the silting and miasmatic regimes of life extant therein (2009: 54). Whilst Stiegler denotes cuneiform a key “proto-moment” he lacks this site-based import to the sediment of the clay which (dis-)locates the Marsh Regime as an originary form of human and non-human epiphylogenetic memory, transductively made through human and technic, in the retroactive forming of mud into ground through the inscription of script as a *productive* Disorientation grounded in site. Stiegler adds that Disorientation unfolds through “redoubling,” where an epoch appropriates the effectivity of successive technical suspensions, phases of disruption that through re-doubling, in fact give birth to a psychic and collective individuation – a “growing together” as the Southend community rehab centre puts it – clearly in an attempt to move away from malefic bivalence of too much disorientation (2009:7). Too little productive textural or site-based affordance – what ‘Bifo’ Beradi terms “impotence” – is the symptom of our present, for Stiegler: “Contemporary Disorientation is the experience of an incapacity to achieve epochal redoubling. It is linked to speed, to the industrialization of memory resulting from the struggle for speed, and to the specifics of the technologies employed in that struggle” (Beradi, 2017: 31) (ibid).

Epochal redoubling allows the sepctre of the marsh to haunt epochal stabilities with Ur-knowledge, which returns to suspend stable effects and disrupt homogeneity. And if Disorientation is enfolded in this exteriorisation as a space of deferral, delay, then re-doubling a link through the Marsh Regime performs a strange yet re-formed intensity in site, trained in the very sediment itself, the “metastable” frequencies to use Simondon’s term (2017: 177). The reality opened up or surfaced through the cuneiform, recalling the etymological link to *orientation*, is then a return to the *Ur-Disorientation* that is trained in the marsh, travelling in time from Mesopotamia (2009: 64).

### Fractals: Missing Pieces and Sensibilisation

Let’s retroactively retune to this *Ur-Disorientation*: a misty site whose scale and distance malforms, a writing surface folding technicity back into preindividual frequency. A huge muddy page, the marsh is by definition formed by channels of water that cut into its body, carve its skin – like the incisions of the cuneiform letters, snaking round the substrate of the mud. As Irving Finkel puts it: “the smooth surface of an inscribed tablet is interrupted by rows of wedge-shaped depressions lying at different angles which, to an ant struggling from

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<sup>6</sup> *Différance* is the “becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time” functions through the trace (*trait*), as the opening of appearance and signification, as a logic of deferral (Derrida 1972: 8).

one side to another would constitute so many awkward crevices disappearing into darkness” (2020: 15).

A bodily crossing of the clumps of silted tufty marsh island, like passing over the edges of the tablets, over the interstices, the spaced-off zones, the rusty channels of water, is a turning into space of time, a *différance* as a “temporization [that] is also temporalization and spacing, the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time” (Derrida 1972: 8). The body moving over the marsh is like this timely technical inscription into the clay: a relationship of figure to ground that defers time. This movement across a substrate, founded on the deferral of delay, like the haunting inscription of time within text, makes the marsh a *technic*, as the operating structure of a Marsh Regime. For Stiegler, *technics*, like the marsh, are “a surface of *différance*, an instrumental mirror reflecting time as differentiation, differing, as deferred” as it is an inscriptive regime predating “protohistory”; and thus, in Finkel’s scheme, also predating the rupture thereof (2009: 41/31). If *technics* are “delayed action mirrors” the marsh, a shimmering slippery substrate, is where disorienting time is reflected across this fluvial and muddy surface of *différance* (Stiegler, 2009:28/31).

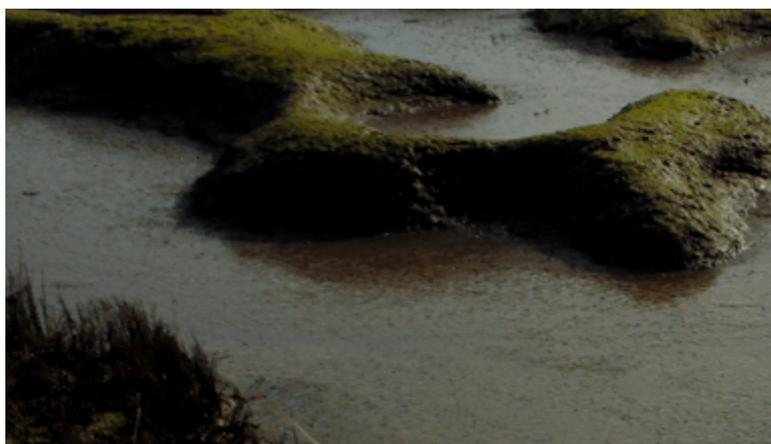


Figure 4: Sod-ding Fractals

The rift of Disorientation is also figured in the body crossing over the interstices of water channels that are cut up by marshy islands, marking decreasingly-sized fractals of the marsh littoral (Figure 4). This is congruent with the development of the mathematic term fractal, and the thought experiment Benoît Mandelbrot posed in his paper thereon, which asked “How Long is the Coastline of England?” (1967: 636). The fragmentary shape of the cuneiform is part of its semantics too, and as a broken fragment in the present, recalls the liminal nature of the matter itself: not least also for being the epicenter of modern-day warfare chez Iraq and Eastern Syria. And just as the marsh mud of Mesopotamia, an area between rivers, forms these clay ‘pages’, so the tablet in the present, as it has been framed since the Empire-age recourse to the Middle east, itself exists metaphorically in an aesthetic and threshold-state because it is incomplete, as a ‘literal’ fragment, which raises its relation to the Romantic fragment, as much as to the Romanticised ideation of the area.

As a marsh index, it also calls to the future as an aesthetic object, through its imbrication in site, where the time of Disorientation is inscribed. And where as a broken off remnant whose

rough sides form a scabrous ‘fractal’ outline, it is linked analogously to the fractal marshy coastline of the marsh itself; this fragmentary state of the cuneiform is a ruined ancient object. Not only does it call up the magical force field in the present, but also the aporia is attendant on its status as a relic, a fact that doubles its aporia. It reverberates as a physical artefact out of time, found in the “contention between the interpretable, yet ineffable, prehistoric artefact and its presence within any calculable historical moment” (Hamilton, 2018: 165).

Yet it is reverberating out of the fractious territory of Iraq, the centre of focus in the War on Terror and the wider Middle East, as implicated in a neoliberal corporate economics grounded in oil, and by extension, Islam. Affirmation of the fractal fragment’s call to the future, Irving Finkel has suggested that, despite the devastation wrought on a humanitarian and archaeological level through the invasion of Iraq in the early 2000s, untold numbers of cuneiform tablets are still dormant: sleeper agents in the earth. Cuneiform’s status in very recent years has also changed amongst the current population of ‘Mesopotamia’ in their celebration of 100 years as a nation state, founded by the British mandate (Fromkin, 1989: 502). Archaeology plays a role in this new nation’s consciousness, underlined by the founding of the Iraq Museum in 1926 by British socialite, traveller and polymath, Gertrude Bell: a legitimacy that is based on both a Mesopotamian and Islamic state, as flickering foundations. Interest in cuneiform now satisfies a demand for ideas of “international regionalism”, which has made it an import signifier of identity since 1921 (Najim, The Forum: 2020, BBC).

One of the largest graffiti in the world, by a young Iraqi artist known as ‘Osama Art,’ says ‘peace’ in Arabic, using cuneiform wedge shapes: like an ancient enlargement made in the heart of the zone, located on the roof of Al-Sinak garage in Baghdad (ibid). At a size of 22 x 4 meters, seeing it in completion requires an air drone: like those used for militarised warfare and bomb strikes. Perhaps seeing it in completion is not the point, for the broken nature of the tablet qua ancient relic mobilises affordances of distortion and Disorientation that a complete piece may not. Airborne imagery is a mechanized product of conflict itself, rapidly maturing during World War I: indicative perhaps that Osama Art’s work is all the more readily conceived in such a zone as Baghdad, already underwritten by conflict.<sup>7</sup> The logic of mapping from above also vouchsafes the reality of infinitely large ‘fractals’, even from aerial photographs of coastlines in Essex (Warpole, 2005: 2).

The tiny cuneiform marks we are discussing, in their various oscillations, charting the web of access points, is an axiological synching of time and place in this zone, indexing not just the Marsh Regime but what, in Reza Negarestani’s fiction-theory *Cyclonopedia*, is called the “Delta Force mythos” (2010: 238). This mythos is the epic of the Middle East as a sentient entity, and a militarisation in terms of archaeology and Geophilosophy: the “ancients” in question are tellurian dwellers, who help speed up a radical encounter with the outside that the Middle East affords via oil (ibid).

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<sup>7</sup> The identifiers of Islamic extremist organisations such as Daesh, aka ISIS and supporters, run to murder and mutilation as signaling characters in digital propaganda: in this line of thinking, artist Ikita Eirei aka Om Lekha – citing Middle East reporter Robert Fisk’s anecdote of a human body during the Iraq insurgency appearing at a mortuary with a dog’s head sewn to the severed neck – describes the ‘Anubis encounter’ qua warfare mutilation of a corpse as a “digital-era hieroglyph” (2021: 1)

In these oscillations, the ‘big page’ of Mesopotamia is seemingly a *mise-en-scène* for moving between macrocosm and microcosm. The Arabic characters of Osama Art’s graffiti are moreover a re-enactment of arcane examples, in consideration of large cuneiform inscriptions extant *on* mountain faces, such as the infamous fifth century BC inscription at Behistun, in which Darius the Great declared his ancestry and lineage. This multi-lingual relief on a limestone cliff near the city of Kermanshah in western Iran was crucial in the decipherment of the cuneiform being, *qua* Rosetta, written in three languages: Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian (Finkel, 2015: 41). As much as many small cuneiform tablets record exorcism, and hop auditing, these larger public declamations on mountain sides are inscriptions of legislative power, as much as proto-land art. Drastic changes of scale are the cuneiform’s reserve, but the broken and scabrous form of a mountain face is not legend to the fragmentation of the cuneiform brick, for this has gone through the latter process of deterritorialising: a unique mutation from ‘organic’ material to technicity, which, given that the rock face would have been carved rather than incised with a reed, makes the cuneiform in its latter relic-state a post-dated simulacra of ‘nature.’

Fragments are largely the condition of their ontology in the present. Philologists’ cuneiform transcriptions attest to the fact that “many of the works of the ancients have become fragments”: in transcribed sections where the ‘break’ on an ancient shard or block prevents reading, the philologist writes: “*Remainder missing*” (Finkel, 1983: 12). Finkel’s crib sheet of a cuneiform tablet reads, evocatively: “When complete, the fragment evidently contained a whole ritual” (*ibid*). Not to mention that the actual ‘script’ of the tablet is simply visual to me – cryptic to all but a few Assyriologists. But the aesthetic, at the neutral point between technics and religion which arguably it inhabits, is where vestiges of the magical mode can still be felt, permanent revenant thereof “as a reminder of the search for its future unity” – and perhaps a reminder of the ancient, obscure and chthonic war machines of the Middle East (Simondon, 2017:174).

Nineteenth-century Romantics valorised such broken ancient relics, if not for their visual affect, then for the philosophical sense of continuity they brought, sufficient to the entirety of an aesthetic project. ‘Fragment’ comes from the Latin term *frangere* – to break, and as both verb and noun, is in the variegated folds of the cuneiform’s surface, as much as the coastline of the marsh, denoted. And just as we are in the business here of writing – in contingent instances – the term ‘fragment’ emerges as an aesthetic concept of writing, from the pages of *The Athenaeum*, a journal established by brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel in 1798.<sup>8</sup> The fragment becomes a part of their theorising of what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy term the “Literary Absolute,” which supersedes the Classical, or sublates the opposition between the ancient and the modern (1988:48). This invocation of the fragment emerges out of a period of social and political disintegration, key to the transductive foment of the Industrial Revolution, and is the Romantic’s answer to the Kantian question of *Darstellung*: the rendering of a concept in terms of sensibilisation (*ibid*). The mud form predates this: as the earth itself, is “the site of thought’s passage to the absolute” (Nicola Masciandaro, quoted in Woodard, 2013: 1).

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<sup>8</sup> An exclusive group of thinkers in Jena, whose aesthetic and occult overtones and encouragement of moral experimentation, make it the “first *avant garde*” group, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy (1988:20): a pre-cognition perhaps of the inter-war group *Acéphale*, established by Georges Bataille in 1937.

To enact this linear strive for the Absolute, the “fragmentary exigency” demands that a literary work operates in view of the totality of ultimate completion. The fragment then is shielded from brokenness by a hope of synthesis that the form of poetry strives for, yet is self-contained: “A fragment, like a small work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog” says Schlegel: this hedgehog logic infers that, curled up against the world, the fragment is simultaneously whole and in each part – no room for the aporia of unresolved brokenness: “this is what installs the totality of the fragment as a plurality and its completion as the incompleteness of its infinity” (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988: 45).

Unlike this Romantic operativity that lies beyond its own form, and for which the archaeological fragment as such bore no formal relation to the apotheosis of the ‘Work,’ the cuneiform fragment, (whilst nominally representative of the totality of the ‘Ancients’) would thus not have fallen into the purview of the Athenaeum writers, keen as they were not to emphasize the very actuality of the fracture, or its ‘fractal’ borders. The formal nature of a fragment “designates the borders of the fracture as an autonomous form [more than] ... the formlessness or deformity of the tearing” (1988: 44). Schlegel comments, in Athenaeum fragment 24: “Many of the works of the ancients have become fragments. Many modern works are fragments as soon as they are written”: and to this broken piece they would rather afford it ruined status, in the tradition of Denis Diderot who in 1767 walks “between two eternities” in the presence of a ruin (1995: 196). Not for them the “the residue of a broken ensemble (what the Romantics refer to as a Bruchstück, piece, literally: broken piece)” (1988:44). Nor is the cuneiform in the purview of modern theorists, such as Adorno, for whom the fragment is already predetermined as a failure, an unsatisfied ambition of totality, a “mournful hiatus,” as Leslie Hill terms it, situated between the miserable dialectic of realisation and non-realisation (2012:5). The graffiti-lineage of cuneiform, in both its ancient and modern form, is a repudiation of these Romantic concepts, but a seeming insistence on continuity, at the level of a national identity, is dispersed along the fault lines of conflict.

The potential of a search for unity that is hinted at in the Romantic’s exigency, is also indicated in the potential of a re-doubling of Disorientation. The aesthetic brings the forces of ground into reticulated perception. Art, even in the present, is situated at this juncture, of its essential incompleteness where the cuneiform, in its fractal brokenness, is future-oriented: re-metabolising, revitalising, the sense of ‘Bifo’ Berardi’s Futurability – the extracting and implementing of immanent multifarious possibilities (2017: 3). This affective edge adumbrates cuneiform’s call to the future, if considered through the virtual possibilities of the Marsh Regime. Simon O’Sullivan has, likewise, suggested that the virtual is a “fractal realm” because, following Deleuze, the “virtual would always be ‘contained’ within the actual as it were, though in an ever more condensed state as it approaches the present” (2006: 103).

The cuneiform as a unique interface, a knot between realities, which can call forth Ur-Disorientation because of its unique con-text, thus proffers yet-to-be-actualised spatio-temporality by virtue of its broken edges. Rather than remain an interval, it’s an interstitially-situated substrate that is both separated from ground, but reveals the earth’s frequency, a charged aporia as fragment, based on the very weird Base Matter (see below) of the marsh that makes it a numinous prop, a prophetic and operative object for “re-finding a magic that has been forgotten” (Simondon, 2017: 192). But this is a retroactive remaking of the marsh

too: evidence that the prepersonal frequencies are never static, but time-travel and alter through the technical object.

Walter Benjamin's social and political history of the technological suggests that forms have such a latent power embedded in primal history, and which recur through time as Ur-forms. Appropriately, it was in Benjamin's essay, a critique of Goethe's *Elective Affinities* that this theory unfolds. The essay was meant to be published in a never-realised journal *Angelus Novus*, whose named inspiration was none other than the *Athenaeum* (Steiner, 2010: 59). Benjamin's love of the Romantics' work stemmed from his conviction in their cardinal principle of immanent criticism, and through this he set out to elucidate how affects thereof are "working" in art of the present as yet unseen. It was the secretive task of criticism to occult this passage (ibid). Benjamin originates his idea via Goethe's ideation of the 'Ur-plant', the 'Ursprung' (origin), 'Ursprungsphänomen' and 'Urgeschichte' (primal history), in which it is possible to see as-yet un-transmitted potential in mythic forms of nature. Through this framework he writes, "we are only just beginning to infer exactly what forms now lying concealed within machines will be determining for our epoch" (cited Leslie, 2014: 21). What Benjamin sees as the unfolding of forms in industrialised modernity, is from the marsh an immanent metastable tension: an on-going "taking form" (Figure 3) that is the rupture of Disorientation, thereby uniting the anterior status of the cuneiform to the Romantic fragment. Benjamin's "basic law of literature" also insisted on the importance on an affinity where "the truth content emerges as that of the material content": embodied by the formal attributes of the cuneiform tablet (Benjamin, 2004: 300). The form of the cuneiform, channelling metastable Ur-Disorientation, is the ideate and material foundation of Ur. Thus, in the scripts of 5,000 BC is engrained the unrealised signifiers of modern-day Iraq: and in ghostly frequencies from Mesopotamia are transmitted through the radio, five thousand (y)ears in the future, a remaking, one and the another.<sup>9</sup>

#### Geophilology: Sedimentary Hermeneutics of the Deluge

The cuneiform interfaces the philological and the geological as, one might say, a Geophilological operation, indexing both memory and ancient river stratigraphy, as much as different epistemes in the regions of Iraq and Syria. Yet just its philological affordances collapse geographic social and historical landscapes in on themselves. Philology, the historical and cultural study of languages, was at its zenith in and through the logic of colonial expansion cognisant with relic collecting and archaeological exploration. This mise-en-scène was the ground for the planetary temporalities that were opening up to the so-called occidental mind, with the discovery of impossibly archaic fossils and Darwin's theory of evolution, published in 1859. Explorer Pietro della Valle had already confirmed the material reality of the mythic Babylon from out of the clay mounds near Baghdad in 1617, but it was the unearthing of Nineveh in 1842 by the French Consul Paul Émile Botta, followed by the excavation of the city of Ur by gentleman archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley between 1922–34, conducted for the British Museum, that topped the trinity of huge sites, scraping back, through trowel and error, the temporal consciousness of the west (Finkel, 2015: 39).

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<sup>9</sup> Cf my Resonance 104.4FM radio programme with Irving Finkel, which impressionistically channeled Mesopotamian ghosts live on air.

The trio of sites was echoed by the so-called philological "holy trinity of cuneiform" – Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, Jules Oppert, and Edward Hinck<sup>10</sup> – who in 1857, just two years before Darwin's publication, took part in a competition held by the Royal Asiatic Society, to independently translate an account in Assyrian cuneiform – in fact, taken from the said inscription at Behistun (Finkel, 2015: 41). So similar were the results, that universal decipherment was officially achieved: an 'event' of huge proportions, in mytho-linguistic assiduity as much as colonial logic.

The authority of the Biblical account of genesis and its concomitant calendar withered away as it was witness to the imperial century's epistemological shifts. The cuneiform tablet also indexed this partial cosmological rupture, both in material and metaphor. As much as a product of the linearisation of sedentary life and farming methods, it is also keenly a translation into script of the marsh's unruly processes, a phase of the Marsh Regime, where the marsh itself is a writing surface. And this goes for other phenomena too: floods (and other things such as plague, miasma, storm) have been recorded in and on the marsh as a substrate, evident through both the stratigraphic analysis of borehole record, but also the flood records inscribed thereon: cuneiform texts inform, once they move away from accounting and phase shift into a cultural form for story telling, that this mythical antediluvian world was imagined to be "as the marshes were like in their own time... because the marsh landscapes were often subject to flooding" as Irving Finkel explained during my radio show 'Chthonic Report: Doggerland' on Resonance 104.4 FM. This radio 'report' drew on the flood myths of Mesopotamia to impressionistically map the lost land of 'Doggerland' under the North Sea, abutting Essex: an East Anglian Atlantis (2015).

The mythic substrate of the Flood is indeed key to cuneiform's philological decrypting, too, in another layer of the programme of writing's self-referential creation of history, qua externalisation: another major breakthrough in the study of Assyrian occurred when George Smith deciphered the Gilgamesh Flood Tablet in 1872 (Finkel, 2015: 34) (Figure 5). When he realised his discovery, his excitement was so great that he tore his clothes off, and ran around the British Museum naked, celebrant to a discovery that singlehandedly decimated the Biblical origin myth, by locating the deluge a millennium and a half prior to the Judean iteration.

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<sup>10</sup> Hinck was an Irish clergyman, as well as being an Assyriologist, taking up the Rectory in Killyleagh, County Down in 1836, where he remained for the rest of his life. Themes of clerics in/and Ireland are import in later chapters of this thesis.



Figure 5: Flood Tablet, British Museum, photographed, scanned, screenshot, printed: get with the programme

Mesopotamian miasmatic marshes are the most flooded of plains, and metastable processes recalled in the very ground of the tablets themselves are a written and bodily memory. The enfolding of epiphylogenetic memory onto these tablets – ‘buried’, as Kinkel explains, for posterity, are geologically and somatically enfolded in the trans-generational transmission (Stiegler, 2009: 4) (Finkel, 2015: 14). The Flood is significant in this trans-generational transmission of history through external supports, as it was common belief that a pre-diluvian race had buried them underground, and that cosmogonic knowledge has been passed down through this race of giants prior to the deluge, a not-uncommon cosmogony, that many cultures retain (Finkel, *ibid*).

The Marsh Regime qua originary *différance* is attested to in instances of ‘proto-collage’ prevalent amongst Mesopotamian scribes, who reburied cuneiform tablets differing in age and provenance by some 2,000 years: when they unearthed ancient inscriptions and then re-buried them as time capsules inside building foundations with contemporary equivalents, a form of cut-up in the matter of the words hint at the Ur-form flickering in the mud, repeatedly re-enacted (Finkel, 2015: 14).

What else is the modernist collage or montage but a form of these Mesopotamian scribe’s deliberate anachronism? Jacques Rancière’s theory of regimes, from the ethical to the representational and the aesthetic, notwithstanding art from the 1960s and 1970s, the theoretical and cultural bedrock of the modern focus in this chapter, espouse forms of collage that are themselves a combination of elements thereof. Contemporary art espouses this “third aesthetic” of collage, which with the Mesopotamian scribes, occurs 5,000 years before Dada or Surrealism. For Rancière, the strategies of collage as a third aesthetic can be the mixing of heterogeneous forms and materials to *collide* worlds, as much as a hidden link of parity between apparently foreign worlds, which could be somehow manifest. Both invoking the threshold zone of unknowing, it plays with “a line of indiscernibility between the “force of sense’s legibility, and the force of non-sense’s strangeness” (2009: 68). This line of indiscernibility itself is traced long the fractal edge of the fragment: the writing of memory, as Stiegler concurs, “is always [the] implementation of a montage of “cut” and “paste,” basic

concepts for [digital] text processing” (2009: 127). This affective and disciplinary montage of the fractal cuneiform edge is a form also congruent to the “weird” as Mark Fisher suggests: a mode of “conjoining two or more things that do not belong together.” apposite to the marsh landscape of and as the occluded, impassable, and weird, as much as the literature it invokes (2017: 11).

Memory is pre-determined by the domain of technology: the conditions of knowledge’s transmission are those of its elaboration and eventual dissolution in the modern and post-modern, and the flooded bed of the cuneiform ground impressionistically and literally invokes the spread of the Flood of/as memory, as much as the many thousands of unfound cuneiform tablets that still lie undiscovered in the ground, as proto-collage and informal collision, weird Base matter. Furthermore, yet more tablets are now digitised as part of the British Museum’s scheme to render some 130,000 tablets accessible via the Internet to scholars worldwide (Finkel, 2015: 67). But this digitising of the arcane throws up the key difference of text that retains the weird collaging delay of *différance*: their value lies in being knowledge repositories that are not mobilisable as power and profit in the same way that Real Time information is.<sup>11</sup> Writing, as a storing technique of memory, has always been a double play, acknowledging Real Time within the rupture of *différance*, making the digital cut and paste structure of text a clear successor to cuneiform, rooted in the weird and eerie, as much as Disoriented, marsh: what is different is the importance placed on the dilation of time, the deferral of speed that is located, for this thesis, in site.

Stiegler, citing paleontologist André Leroi-Gourhan, explains that, with the arrival of printing, the externalisation of memory exceeded that which it was capable of itself knowing. As such, “the *Flood* [my emphasis] goes on developing with us but in all fairness, no moment in human history has known an expansion as rapid as that of collective memory” (2009: 78). The Flood, as a mythographic structure imbricated in and about the Marsh Regime then brings this anterior chaos, inscribed in the externalisations that form our individuations, trained in the myth and inscription of the Marsh Regime. This was understood by German philosopher Friedrich Schelling, from whom the Flood, too, was written into myth as much as it is written into geology, as an important point where disease and reality potentiate from the depths, like the cuneiform figures, and in which a true metaphysics of the earth can be discovered: “The crisis through which the world of the Gods unfolds... is not external to the poets. It takes place in the poets themselves, forms their poems, indication that the very cadences of language in soil and written word have the Flood registered in their being” (2007:18).

In Schelling’s *The Deities of Samothrace*, written in 1815, whilst the Flood is in the cadence of words, so too, as mythographic structure, are later ancient mystery cult traditions sediments in themselves: sacrificial offerings, following the rift of technicity from the preindividual, to offset the latent chaos a flood might otherwise bring, through sacrifice: an affordance important to modern individuation, explored in a later section in relation to the sitcom *Rising Damp*. The mystery cults become a re-useable grammar, a linguistic Ur-form, to reveal “a primordial system older than all written documents, which is the common source of all

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<sup>11</sup> Real Time, for Stiegler, defined by the absence of the deferred, and aligned with concomitant Live Time, constitutes the futureless 'becoming' – the instantaneous "trait [and lack of trait] of contemporary technology" (2009: 63) [my addition].

religious doctrines and representations” (1977: 37). Here, a conflation between site and writing – language in soil and word – is, again, a Geophilological operation.

This process of aligning the scriptural and the written are linked through the depths of excavation: as Whistler and Ramey comment, “The unruly depths of reality are, in fact, what is made present through this geological and philological operation” – and which I would add, ‘digitality’, is only an extension (2014: 20). Where ‘Bifo’ Beradi suggest that possibility involves “extracting and implementing one of the many immanent futurabilities,” here the future is unearthed from the sediment, tracing Disorientation as written through time (Beradi, 2017: 3). Benjamin would abjure this facet, insisting on the separation of art and myth for the immanent autonomy of a work found in criticism, otherwise simply being left with “magical writing” – an outcome pursuant of Disorientation, if not criticism (2004: 323).

For the cuneiform, Benjamin’s affinity of truth and material content are more readily understood in terms of Schelling, “Cognising the physical in language,” mirrored in the materiality of a signifier: the linguistic imbrication within the geological – like its muddy substrate, are figure and ground, emerging via the Marsh Regime. The language substrate – from the Latin *substernere* – strewn beneath – intensifies the Marsh Regime as the ‘substrate’ of any language, too, as that which has ghosted or affected through contact, and transmission: the minor influence, or the presence beneath, what is foregrounded in re-grounding. The ancient language of Sumerian was for a time thought by Philologists to be a phantom language, entombed in words, an instance of the linguistic substrate: when Akkadians adopted its script, they thought it might be a cryptographic contrivance of priests, an occulted language substrate (Hooke, 1962; 4). This stratigraphic earthy nature of the substrate too infers the buried network that is etymology itself, as much as the deep marsh, pulling up the tendrils of words from the underlying substrate, *pace* Schelling, whose recourse to philology was analogue to the exhumation of ancient thought and practices: the exhumation of ancient *différance*.

The depths of the excavation inculcate the depths as rhythm, attendant on Disorientation, the spacing across time and technics located in the marsh, reiterate its role in ecological terms. Whilst the marsh is “shimmering” with the power of *différance*, the cuneiform tablets’ rewriting of the Flood is concurrent with the former being a flooded substrate, up into the present day, with ecological acceleration: as it were, the cuneiform is the flooded bed, and the letters the imprints of the reeds, piquant reminder that the current climate crisis owes an ironic debt to the agrilogistics programme coterminous with writing.

The marsh is a place where the roots and structure of words takes analogous form in marshy tendrils, linked to the diluvian myth and its history in philology and writing: knitting philology and geology together, making the sediment a hermeneutic of technicity. It is in fact the tendril roots of marsh reeds and vegetation that act as the lattice of support for the marsh, and the upkeep of the littoral structure: “wetland plants elevate the rate of lateral erosion and that extensive root systems, rather than aboveground biomass, are primarily responsible for protection against edge erosion in marshes” (Semme, 2019: 411). The geological, physical role of the marsh imbricates it then in a lattice of words, of this geological-philological operation, as much as organic matter. “Marshes and other coastal wetlands are routinely celebrated for their ability to reduce coastal erosion and protect shorelines from storms,” so

says as recent biology article redressing the ravages of erosion, and again, reinstating the contemporary importance of the Flood (Semme, 2019: 411).

Memory floods, ebbs, shores up pulses and traces, with wave patterns like brain matter. Marshes, as filtering thresholds, thus pose important redress to the increased devastation of coastlines, a living regulatory organ for the water inflow and its intensity on the ‘fractal’ coastline of England: “coastal salt marsh plants serve as a robust trap and coastal filter,” as a journal article on nature conservancy announced in 2012 (Nelson, 2012: 45). The marsh is itself has been described by a British Geological Survey map as a ‘regime’ shoring up its coterminous affects as a scriptural space, an inscriptive Marsh Regime (Inner Thames Estuary Pre-Quaternary and Quaternary Geology, 1997).

Mesopotamian marshes index the historical and political beat of the culture they subsist under: fault line as historical rupture. Whilst the marshes of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers were vindictively drained in the 1990s by Saddam Hussein, following the Shiites’ uprising against his Baath Party, they were turned into a desert following the US-led 2003 invasion of Iraq, to then slowly become re-flooded and partially restored ever since. The shimmering of writing reflects such an historic reforming and dissolving ecosystem, based on unknowing: the lines of the rugged fractal marsh islets are the line of indiscernibility, qua Rancière (2009: 68). And not only the Marsh Regime, but manifestations thereof in clouds, mist and vapour, also posit an eerie reminder of the planet’s evolution and destruction. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a medieval text of dark Neo-Platonism, but also the metonym of the pleasure and spiritual import of absence, is an apophatic symbol of the planet’s unknowableness itself. Locating originary Ur-Disorientation in the marsh raises the issue of the planet’s indifference, what Eugene Thacker in his occult and horror-inspired philosophy has called “the world-without-us” (2010: 9). The affective Cloud is thus what the marsh’s material emissions of mist and cloud are metonymy to (1960: 2).

We have seen how the marsh itself is a muddy page; the relationship of delay that is the figure over the ground of the marsh; the fragmentary fractal of its edges, and lastly the Geophilological processes that render the marsh’s practice a regulatory organ of ancient différance qua mythic pattern and eco-system, all of which adumbrate the marsh as writing regime: Ur-Disorientation that unfolds to produce the first orthographic writing. Like the Geophilological operation of Schelling, the roots of the language substrate and the marsh substrate are again conflated, its siphoning and filtering of the Flood reliant on a structure of words, a hidden writing of the depths.

### The Blind Spot

Poet Rainer Maria Rilke proposes the depths of the earth as caretaker and preserver of cultural memory and mourning, and the aliveness of tools and material culture, as a cryptic method of renewing relations with the ‘utterable’ – steeped in the humus of the earth, to revitalise the soul and gather the world that is falling away. In his *Duino Elegies*, a ‘virtual’ reality, a new age at the beginning of the twentieth century, was sweeping away the “visible earth”, leaving a denuded newness based on “action that lacks any image” (1989: 73). The marsh, however, is prefigured on the thresholds of the cuneiform mud as a necessary

invisible, which makes the ‘visible’ glimpse possible, pursuant to an idea of the Blind Spot.<sup>12</sup> Given that we are discussing mud and clay, the etymology of the term is useful: Blind Spot comes from *tache aveugle* – dirty smear. Here, a dirty smear of mud can, paradoxically, glimpse a space of delay, which helps to demonstrate why (il)legibility and opacity are modalities relevant to the emergence of the figure from the marsh as ground. The stain of place, the inscriptive affect of time is a Blind Spot that reveals a glimpse of Ur-Disorientation. Its muddiness is key to its being, receptive to the “reveries, and re-stimulate[d] ancient associations” that moist earth strikes [...] in the material imagination” (Bachelard, 2002: 101). The inscriptive Marsh Regime of clay and in clay are the writing of the numinous material itself, which blur the distinction between magic and technology, human and unhuman, landscape and writing, externalisation and memory. The relic of cuneiform in the present is the knot between these realities: technics as a delayed action mirror offering an invisible glimpse of the vanishing world; a glimpse of Ur-Disorientation through the *Blind Spot of Technicity*.

This is where the re-doubling of the marsh’s Ur-Disorientation can be understood in relation to George Bataille’s self-confessed transference of energies onto the “mythical plane” during the 1930s, as the metaphysical and political ramifications of his heretical Base Materialism, seeking to invert a Gnostic take on matter or *hyle*, as debased, and spiritual as transcendent (cited Hollier, 1990: 127). Earmarked for what Denis Hollier terms its “resistance to system and homogeneity,” Base Matter can, like the hermeneutical sediment of the Blind Spot, when matched with a depth of geological difference, “re-stimulate ancient association” (ibid). The sentience of Base Matter is associated with Bataille’s aesthetic process of negativity, whose dispossession calls into question the homogenous world, where articulation is brought to the threshold of possibility: indexing and (re-)articulating the relations of thought and world across the cuneiform’s lineaments of the indeterminate. Base Matter locates the sacred in the heterogeneous, in a hermeneutic of the ‘low’: spit, mud, sex, death, and ecstasy, all centred on the ‘Blind Spot’ of excess. The opposition to homogeneity still stands today, if not with more urgency in the face of digital communication’s atomisation. The latter’s wrenching out of the con-text of space and location, founded largely on its short-circuiting of a longer-form realisation of desires in a world of immediate consumer gratification, is here counteracted through the mode of delay (Stiegler, 2014: 93).

The Blind Spot, predicated on the marsh sediment, is then fundamental to apprehending a perverted view of ‘history’ as the experience of time that is now a-temporal through the Real Time of drive-based capitalism.<sup>13</sup> When learning about the past, we are learning through technics. If ‘history’ began at Sumer, it is in turn predicated on the wedged shaped indentations in clay because “there is quite simply no history before the possibility of considering history through its technological medium. This vision is plainly in the first place a re-vision, but it retroactively determines seeing in general, when it is historical. It is already evident that writing in some manner already televisualizes” (Stiegler, 2014:83). Technics are a re-vision of time, predicated in the Marsh Regime on the invisible through a marsh hermeneutic of sediment, which has to consider the con-text of the technological medium, as opposed to a rapid decontextualisation.

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<sup>12</sup> The Blind Spot is both a phenomenon at the level of vision, as well as a cultural metaphor for forms of cultural and social forms of ‘blindness.’ For Bataille, the Blind Spot is a place of being and non-being where knowledge is absorbed into the darkness of non-knowledge of Unknowing (1988: 110).

Digital communication technologies deny such a material retemporalisation in a parity of digital binaries and infatuation with Real Time. As literary and media critic N. Katherine Hayles adds, in thinking of the valances of digital text: “We urgently need to rethink [the] assumption [...] that “work” and “text” are immaterial constructions independent of the substrates in which they are instantiated, for as long as it remains intact, efforts to account for the specificities of print and electronic media will be hamstrung” (2005: 97). The collision of figure and ground indexed in the cuneiform is implied in the very constitution of the cuneiform letters themselves, which occlude this binary with its own. Strictly speaking it’s a writing of light and dark itself: it’s only the shadows, when slanted against the light, which reveal the incisions – a kind of shadow ink. These shadows traced in solid matter bypass any sense of transparency to knowledge, as Michel Serres suggests: “It is probable that true knowledge of the things of this world lie in the solid’s essential shadow, in its opaque black density, locked behind the multiple doors of its edges” (1983: 94). In contrast, shadows in the information age come from bulbs, circuits: the panels of light of a flickering text screen. The holding structure of text as collision, instantiated by the break on the tablet, might belie such a clear distinction.

### Channeling the Ores

Ancient Mesopotamia had a rich practice of alchemical metallurgy, harnessing the dramatic life of matter, to “commodulate the human operation of preparation and the cosmological action” (Simondon, 2012: 15, n. 5). Magical rituals and material transmutations themselves have been recorded on cuneiform tablets: indexing the marsh as it become as technological furnace, a Blind Spot for temporal transformation at the level of material.



Figure 6: Myth Now Lost – the furnace of writing

A piece of metal from the British Museum as another ‘glimpse’ of ancient practices, confirms this (Figure 6). Termed by Irving Finkel ‘Myth Now Lost,’ it shows the figure of Nabu, God of writing in the centre, to the left of which is a winged disc from which flows two snake rivers. Surely, here, these rivers are the clay-bringing Euphrates and Tigris: the marsh

between as the *Meso*-potamia, in which sits a basin-shaped entity and a sphere beneath. Nabu's tunic, and in what I see as the marshy interstice – the cutting channels of the rivers, features little triangle indents – which Finkel believes to be styluses – the marsh reeds that grow from the reed bed, figuring cuneiform into clay (2018:30). The pointed arrow shapes spurting from Nabu's arm are the cuneiform letters, loose little versions of the spiky wedged-shaped forms that make up the script. Finkel conjectures: “What is depicted before us, therefore, is an otherwise unknown myth which recounts how the art of writing came to be bestowed on divine Nabu and the wonder of cuneiform given to mankind” (ibid).

This depicted exorcism of letters in the air, which tumble excitedly into the upturned disc, qua furnace, is a purposive zone, like a magic circle, where the performance of script is churned in the chthonic frequencies of mud, from the infinite reserve of nature. The metastable potentiality of matter is embodied, and released, qua the ‘possibility’ that Beradi sees as a “magma: that is embodies “when it meets a concatenation that transforms it into intentional subjectivity” (2017: 7)<sup>14</sup>. The plaque attests to this furnace of metastable process and orthographic writing that ferments technicity within it, as a concatenation of technology and time. As Deleuze and Guattari also write, metallurgy is far from a pure technicity, but a melting pot of frequencies with other metals in earth and sky – “spatiotemporal haecceities of different orders”, and a mode of non-conformity, a “deterritorialization” of the earth, as much as cuneiform itself is, by being a removed piece of clay (1987: 405/410). A deterritorialisation that is by another term Disorientation – a reorienting into territory through the temporal dilation that metallurgic affects, as a retemporalising, also brings sacrifice to the fore.

Sacrifice was a theme common to alchemy, with a clay cuneiform tablet from the ancient library of King Assurbanipal instructing, as Mircea Eliade quotes in his history of Mesopotamian metallurgy: “When thou settest out the [ground] plan of a furnace for "minerals" [ku-bu], thou shalt seek out a favourable day in a fortunate month, [...] thou shalt bring in embryos [born before time] [...] the day when thou putttest the mineral into the furnace, thou shalt make a sacrifice before the embryos; thou shalt set a censer with incense of pine, thou shalt pour kurunnu-beer before them. Thou shalt kindle a fire underneath the furnace and thou shalt put the "mineral" into the furnace” (Eliade, 1978: 72)

The “ground plan of the furnace” is analogue to the marsh; and the ku-bu are the frequencies in matter that interpolate technicity, and become the cuneiform tablet, perhaps symbolised by the winged disk. Eliade adds: “Libations for the ku-bu – the word for embryo – could also mean a demon, and not strictly a human unborn child” (1978: 72). The ores of the earth are a threshold of human and inhuman, harnessing forces: “the technical object, which is thought and constructed by man, is not limited to simply creating a mediation between man and nature; it is a stable mixture of the human and the natural, it contains human and natural aspects” (Simondon, 2017: 250-1). The sacrificial re-making of both technology and human, through the ores of the earth, is a transductive relationship, a concatenation, a purposive Disorientation trained at the level of site – a threshold already seen in the broken edge of the tablet. Ancient Mesopotamian religion was founded on an immanent principle, where the numinous as “a revelation of indwelling spirit, [w]as power at the center of something that caused it to be, and thrive, and flourish” (Jacobsen, 1976: 5-6). This burning centre is a

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<sup>14</sup> Beradi elucidates these concatenations on the political level as that which allowed subjectivation of the bourgeoisie class in the centuries of modernity, and that which made communism enable industrial workers to gather and fight (ibid).

boundary of the thought and unthought, the melding of technical and corporeal forms across collage. George Bataille, in formulating Base Materialism, used the image of a Gnostic gem stone seal depicting an animal-formed headless man: a half animal frequency as an immanent fracturing perhaps written into the muddy substrate itself that makes a practice like metallurgy more than a technicity, and also infuses mystery religions' Dionysian ecstasy as a substrate to Bataille's 1937 secret society Acéphale (Galletti, 2017: 26).

Elide underlines the temporality at stake in the ritual, where the ores of the earth are a dilation that seeds time. The use of the term that is gesturing to 'fetus' can in this context to mean "Born Before Time" – an anachronistic oddity. Eliade describes it thus: "On the mineral level of existence, the Stone [in alchemy] was realizing this miracle: it eliminated the interval of time which separated the present condition of an 'imperfect' (crude) metal from its final condition (when it would become gold). The Stone achieved transmutation almost instantaneously: it superseded Time" (1978: 78). This brings the matter to the threshold of articulation through speed:<sup>15</sup> a form of Accelerationism before the fact, burned in the air, bearing out Anthropologist Tulasiewicz's assertion that "Everything new is old now" in the face of an a-temporality (2012:2). The Blind Spot of Technicity in the human and unhuman, and the terrestrial lacuna of the relic, interpolate the apparent fullness – or at least, the saturated Real Time technologies – of the present, channeling the affective power of these base threshold ores, congruent to Disorientation's negative valences of shortened attention spans, and the geo-localisable commodification of subjectivity.

The transductive capacity of metallurgy as a temporal dilation is cognate not just to Mesopotamia but the European Industrial Revolution. The augural furnaces heralded the clanking hellfire of industry – a phase of Morton's agrilogistics<sup>16</sup> that re-wrote labourers' relationships to their tools and machinery, their psychic attachment to landscape. As in Blake's satanic mills, Milton's restoration-period *Paradise Lost* takes on a Baroque carbolic horror, sensing the nascent transductive shift at the level of devilment. As metallurgy re-doubles Disorientation, and speeds materials "before time," so the force distempers the landscape with acceleration as it "Belch'd fire and rowling smoak; [...] undoubted sign/ That in his womb was hid metallic Ore, /The work of Sulphur. Thither wing'd with speed" (cited Jennings, 1985: 3). This scene is 'Pandaemonium' the capital of Hell in *Paradise Lost*, whose horrors in technological advance also ran a disorienting arrangement and rearrangement of the senses. Something is demonic in the ores, the "ku-bu": not just in this fabled 'coming of the machine' but as one instance of a continually metastable frequency continually re-enacted. Technicity's earthy sediments are the earth's unfileable<sup>17</sup> documents of both telluric and human flow: oil reserves, and digitised infrastructure, the speeded-up version of this channeling of human and inhuman. Or(e) reminds those technicities of their chthonic origin.

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<sup>15</sup> Relative speed is the operating principle of Disorientation.

<sup>16</sup> What Morton calls the first Hyperobject, agrilogistics establishes a thin brittle boundary between human and non-human based on the violent yet arbitrary difference between what it conquers and delimits, and itself fosters the first orthographic inscription (2016: 42).

<sup>17</sup> This 'unfileable' nature will also be related directly to the filing systems and beaurocracy of the office workspace and its unworking through Disorientation, in Chapter 3.

## Lost Time of the Liver

Time spatialised: in a traversal of the marsh, in the *différance* of inscription, in the aporia of the relic itself, in the relative speed of Disorientation, and the ritual of Mesopotamian metallurgy: withal, transmutation has re-temporalised matter through the dilation of the Blind Spot. Where for Eliade the temporality incited is one of speed, it is delay as dilation that is more opportune: a *différance* traced across the site of deferral. A suspended wait which, for Stiegler, in *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, is founded in the technics of fire. Here, it is not a metallurgical fire, but the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus, where fire marks the threshold – and later, the mediator in many forms of ritual, between the divine and the mortal, as the gift from Prometheus inscribing death into life and establishing a “Thanatology” of technics in sacrifice (1998: 240).

Stiegler’s thunderbolt of inspiration rests on showing that the fundamental default separating humans through technology displaces all psychic and social life onto technical supplement, the epiphylogenetic memory that the cuneiform is representative of. For this thesis, the marsh represents Stiegler’s “surface of *différance*, an instrumental mirror reflecting time as differentiation” and from which it is ripped (2009: 31). Defining the human by this default, Stiegler marks a significant re-articulation of Jacques Derrida’s *différance*, taking “pure physis” to the actual technical object itself, analogously sketched in the Geophilological operations of marsh sediment and root words. For Derrida, the trace is “the *différance* which opens appearing and signification. Articulating the living upon the nonliving in general, origin of all repetition” (ibid, 65). The key emergence between human and technical is thus shown by Stiegler to be a doubling of *différance*, as Ben Turner explains: “This requires a transformation of what Derrida initially put forward under the term *différance*, in order to articulate a difference between this human form of individuation, and the spatialisation and temporalisation of life itself” (2016: 180). This, like the ores, is a contamination of the transcendental and empirical, relocating the place of the *différance* into technics itself, and occurs because the technical substrates are eternalised forms of human memory that are then re-interiorised as a *différent* transformation, as ‘the conservation, accumulation, and sedimentation of successive epigeneses’ (Stiegler 1998, 140).

If before we thought of an occulted sentience or inhuman/human threshold in the making of the cuneiform brick, Stiegler’s move opens up the noetic capacity that makes the very thought of *différance* possible, as an emergence ‘as such’ of the general concept of the gramme. Thereafter, the cuneiform tablet is a magical interface. Stiegler’s reading of the logic of arche-writing opens to technical form, where the human is constituted by the individuation of life, which makes technical supports – the cuneiform as re-doubling of Disorientation – the basis of psychic and collective individuation (1998: 136). Sacrifice, deferral, delay of time, is intrinsic to this spatialisation, the doubling of *différance* that has already been at play through the Marsh Regime. If the glimpse offered by the cuneiform back to the marsh state is premised on the Blind Spot as a hermeneutic of sediment, the human is also a technical sedimentation: a double *différance* allowed by the technical supplement, which is always a process of translation by the individual – a process of inscription and externalisation that is the basis of history, based on *lack* (1998: 152/135).

In the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus, and the sacrificed liver of the former, fire symbolises a flickering double bind of forgetting and foresight that links humanity into the

deceitful fault of technics. Prometheus gives humans fire as the first technology: “Prometheus tried to mislead Zeus, as a result of which emerged the human condition. But the truth of the appearance of humanity is to be found in its disappearing” (1998: 192). This institutes this lack as a baseline of the human within technics, in a disappearing that also contradicts immediacy. Stiegler says: “the love of knowledge is forged in the furnace of knowledge that is lost,” the furnace here being analogue to the temporal dilation seen in the myth of writing, which technicity offers glimpses of as a delayed spatio-temporal surface as time’s reflection (2006: 23). Disorientation experienced in the present redoubles what is already a doubled *différance*: “technics is the thought of time (re-doubled),” mythologically symbolised, for the purposes of this thesis, in Mesopotamian metallurgy (2009: 32).

Retaining the importance of place in this Marshography, the ‘fault’ as the originary moment of technics is also read as a hermeneutic in the literal fault lines of landscape itself, as the anterior site of Disorientation: originary technics, an inscription of *différance*, prefigured by the ancient and modern land art of cuneiform letters. Again, delay is fundamental for the glimpse, as shown in Prometheus’ liver, which is daily renewed and consumed, as he is punitively strapped to the rock. The liver as a tool for telling or indeed seeing the future, as delayed time, a ‘second sight’ is as a reflection of time’s doubling in technology: likewise, Stiegler says, the liver is “Titan’s clock – an organic mirror in which divinatory hermeneutics is practiced [...]” (1998: 203). It is this “Feast of sacrifice” that, again, reminds of the originary fault of humanity, the link of technicity and mortality (*ibid*). And it is here that Stiegler stages the encounter between this repeatedly sacrificed liver and the notion of foresight as delay that Epimetheus embodies, to outline this import of sacrificial deferral to individuation via technicity.

René Girard explained how sacrifice mitigated the chaos of such meteorological concerns as Flood, through an analysis of a song by the medieval poet Guillaume de Machaut: the *Judgment of the King of Navarre* is, for Girard, a test case for “showing that texts in which persecution is accepted or justified have the same structure as myths” (Girard, 1996: 10/97). The cuneiform, *pace* Shelling, is bound into the Flood as an ancient association and figured in the liver, an ‘organic clock’ as individuation is originally founded on lack. The liver in this case takes on the role of ‘ground’ upon which time is figured, opening up the subject to delay, reflecting time as differentiation: like perfume let lose in the air whose eddies slowly unfurl – *per fumum*— through the [sacrificial] smoke – a condensation becomes apparent, the Blind Spot institutes *différance*, like the *aporia* that founds the origin of the human.

The dynamic of time and sacrifice is literally figures in the clay liver tablet, held in the British Museum (Figure 7). This model liver fortuitously foregrounds divination: a temporal dynamic given form in a clay model (we’ve already discussed the differential vicissitudes of clay ‘taking form’) – as an “advanced instruction in hepatoscopy” (from the Greek for liver – *hēpar*): a divination technique, which the Mesopotamians practiced as early as the third millennium BC, (Finkel, 2020:16). The mythopoetic mode of this divination, reading futurity across the space of animal entrails, allows the diviner to representatively read the future through the reading of certain ‘zones’ – separate boxed areas that contain eighteenth-century BC cuneiform letters to indicate what “protrusions, patches of colour, pustules and scars” would foretell in that scaled area: a mapping also, of *différance* (Finkel, 2020: 16).



Figure 7: Liver Tablet – the vision in the void

The holes punctured through the liver model (Figure 7) purportedly indicate an omen “directly predicated on the idea of a hole, in terms of *loss*, escape, leaking and penetration” (Finkel, 2020:18) [my emphasis]. This can be interpreted to place individuation, again, as a deferral: a thanatology of technics – founded here in bloody sacrifice. The technical sedimentation of the human, and divination of the future through the hole brings the Blind Spot to the fore again. It is both a void-like hole, but also a form of “second sight”, dependent on vision. Stiegler, when talking about Greek augural practices, also confirms this: “the diviner [had] the gift of “second sight,” a privilege for which they have had to pay with their vision. They are blind in the light of day, but they can see what is invisible,” qua Blind Spot (quoted in 2014: 87). What Stiegler calls this “Second [reflected] sight” of the diviner is linked to the foresight of Epimetheus, and the former’s notion of the liver, where, as above, a “divinatory Hermeneutics is practiced, in which during sacrifice, divine messages are interpreted” (Stiegler, 1998: 203). The cuneiform liver tablet doubles the interpretative function, like the substrate of technics as such doubles *différance*, allows a return to altered states, a Disorientation that re-finds the future, but requires too a portion of despair, of loss, of invisibility for its succor: a delay of clay, where liver and time are ground and figure. This modality lets potential unfurl, like that of the Ur-form, for which Benjamin also prioritises the modality of duration: a work becomes important; it never *is*, it unfolds (Steiner, 2010: 60).

Invisibility is part of cuneiform’s job description, anyway: impressions on the clay surface as shadow ink squash down portions of clay, a folding of surfaces to make meaning: “their only projection onto a flat surface constitutes in itself a radical novelty” – the exteriorisation of writing on the substrate: as Irving Finkel puts it, “cuneiform communicates meaning by emptiness [...] it depresses, or squashes down minute portions of the surface to make up meaningful signs to spell sounds” (2020: 15). The charged matter of the mud as cuneiform tablet is thus, rightly, founded on both loss and shadowiness, suggestive of the originary ‘lack’ of the human – a continuous sacrifice. The technical tool of a cuneiform model of an organic clock is the very punctum of Stiegler’s technologic “delayed action mirrors” – and the organic mirror of Prometheus, and the sediment of the marsh which itself is a reflective surface of *différance* (2009: 31).

## Sacrifice via Bog Axe

The Liver Tablet both in both past and present is an operative prop mobilising an arcane Geophilology, with loss attendant on the holes as a literal road map for individuation, grounding the matter and metaphysics of the marsh as the ground for the différance of individuation itself, as much as the site of Ur-Disorientation: perhaps the two are co-constitutive? Sacrifice also, fortuitously, has its home in the bog. Research on Iron Age<sup>18</sup> marsh sacrifice came to fruition in the topical era of the 1970s; a key time, incidentally, for the TV and film trope of Folk Horror in Britain that read residues of a darker psychogeographic heritage just under the soil – if not the sea floor (Scovell: 2017: 38). Peter Vilhelm Glob wrote a seminal book *The Bog People* in 1965, which is now a lauded study, with Glob's suggestion that most "sacrificed humans" were put to death to satisfy the "Earth Mother" – the goddess shown on the Gundestrup cauldron, unearthed in a bog not far from the burials of various of these sacrificed individuals, that are so well-preserved because the carbohydrate polymer sphagnum from the moss of the same name, which binds nitrogen, halts the growth of bacteria, and mummifies the corpse in a kind of marsh-stasis (Glob, 1971: 29).

The divinatory affordances of inhumation also recall for us the role of the mirror: frequently, unearthed burials often contain mirrors: surfaces for the dead to see the future, such as the Iron Age mirror and sword uncovered in a grave in 1999 on the island of Bryher, Isles of Scilly (Johns, 1999: 13). Inhumed with a female, it is though the burial accoutrements are for use by the grave dweller as prophetic princess. Schelling's ritual associations infer a sedimentary repetition in site/sight of acts that sacrifice also runs with. In *The Accursed Share* Bataille considers the arcane sediment of sacrifice, as congruent with ancient chthonian practices, to be a binding force emulated by art in its proper function, as the seeking of negativity: the sacred. According to an essay on Bataille by Mukherjee, "from the perspective of the aesthetic, the sacrificial is a processual tenor from which unleashed a chain of ruining that creates the conditions for the communitas" (2013: 238). The grammar of sacrifice shows how art can be a binding force, a trigger between realities, a teleport to the ancient. Bataille adds: "the secret of art is given in this proposition: like the sacrifice, the victim, art takes its objects out of the world of things" (1988: 421). For Bataille, one attunes to a mystic plateau, "a suspended, miraculous moment" that inculcates the incursion of the unhuman, the presence again, qua Gnostic gemstone, of the unhuman within the human: the "invisible brilliance of life that is not a thing" – to divest life of the commercial and useful (1988:47).

Designs made by André Masson for both the titular (albeit headless) figurehead and front cover of the *Acéphale* journal feature a bicephalous mythical part-goat being, the stomach of which bears a labyrinth: a maze as the release of the sacred, whose form, according to the artist, can only be followed in one direction, and which is only found in archaeological sites in ancient Babylonia, where it represents the use of the intestines for reading omens (cited Galletti, 2018: 26). Sacrifice is then the release of energies: excessive expenditure without purpose, trained in Mesopotamian hepatoscopy. But as with the loss attendant on a liver reading, lack as well as excess is needed contrary to Bataille's belief that "extreme limit is accessible through excess, not through want" (ibid). The Marsh Regime shows that it is an unworking as removal from the purely utilitarian, which is evident in the mud brick.

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<sup>18</sup> The Iron Age is circumspectly between 1200 and 600 BC.

This lack, as Disorientation, fundamental to the human, can be *funny*. The importance of sacrifice, and loss, in this Marshography as we've seen in both examples of the sacrificed liver, can become nodes for expression, humour, and concomitant despair, locating the spatial delay of *différance* at the transductive level of making of the human. Feeling, for the Classicists is appropriately located in the organ of the liver, the seat of the feeling of situation: "like a clock, its vesicle conceals those stones that secrete black bile, *melas kholie* [melancholy] (Stiegler, 1998: 203). We create the sublime by sublimating gratification, deferring desire, the lack, as a sacrifice, which can be thus found in...the humour of the humours, the individuation potent in the sediment, a rich fault line to channel against the sad contemporary passions that obnubilate the "possible" (Beradi, 2017: 9).

Just as above, marshy roots of etymology were premised on the depth of the ground, and the depths of excavation wait on the depth of inhumation, so for Bataille's laughter it is, "the extreme depth of each thing opening up – laid bare, as if I were dead": a depth that is found in the relative speed and space of Disorientation whose substrates it is legend to (1988a: 34). Recalling the structure of words, hidden in the marsh depths, the laugh is irruptive, springing forth: it emerges from "difference in depths," as Bataille also says – or, here, *différance* (ibid). The moment of laughter, as a laying everything bare, and the moment of sacrifice – are both the outside of an in, experienced as the inside of 'my' laughter – a spatialisation of time in the inverting of the laugh, is concomitant on the transductive exteriorisation and re-interiorisation of history in/as technics. The sediment of marsh ground, the suspension of the "feeling of dying," and the dynamic of laughter are predicated on surfaces, material and temporal, revealed.

Earlier grammars of action – embedded as we've seen in flood, plague and their ritual mitigation in sacrifice, are modes also of 'contagion' – just as laughter is contagious (Girard, 1996: 10). For Antonin Artaud, the plague – another "feeling of dying" is not just a mode of acting, but equally, like the liver, a prophetic intervention into time (1958: 13). With the plague you can go back to an anterior state of the body, as much as an Ur-Disorientation. Again, it's a double-edged sword in the sacrificial bog: "If you live by the Bog Axe, you die by the Bog Axe," as Alan Partridge told Tony Robinson (Mid-Morning Matters, Sky, 2013).

### Damp Sitcoms = Modern Sacrifice

The thanatology of sacrifice is unpeeled in the surfaces of a sitcom, for vicissitudes of this self-sacrificial misery are a common theme in humour. *Rising Damp*, a 1970s ITV sitcom, suggests equivalence in the desperate sacrifice of the main character and boarding house keeper, Rigsby – played by Leonard Rossiter – the condition of which gives it its title: rising damp is the common term for absorption of water in the lower sections of walls (another surface) and other ground-supported structures, usually in old decrepit buildings. So here a domestic, humorous analogue to the marsh is being drawn, placing the damp disarticulation of Disorientation in its appropriate deferment of gratification, but which I mean: a necessary deferment of happiness. If, before, the cuneiform is a fragment from the anterior site of Ur-Disorientation, here its effects are being felt from afar, in suburbia: a literal televised second sight, where writing (or time) in some manner already televisualises: the seeping flicker of the marsh's damp, and infectious air, embodied in a TV programme, demonstrating the

affordance of time as inscription. The humour of the sitcom obviously relies on laughter, which is the opening up of divinatory surfaces, “the extreme depth of each thing opening up” which here the substrate of the walls, as divinatory mirrors, re-double, re-surface, and time dilates – what Paul Virillo terms a “depth of time” as an effect of what is lost (1991: 20, 31). Simply put, humour is an integral mode of the Marshography, with rising damp both an affect, a feeling.

In *Rising Damp*, communication to the outside world, aided by the claustrophobic, green-grey set, seems limited, but the “resistance to the present” is of a different texture and depth, stout contrast to what Mark Fisher has termed the “flavourlessness” of the contemporary, in ratio to the disaffection of an endlessly available but contextually deracinated Real Time (2018: 372) Where for Reza Negarestani, in his theory-fiction – also pertaining to the Middle East as a vector of deterritorialisation – it is decay that infests space through time via the dual operation of interiorising and exteriorising both material and metaphysical, not dissimilarly here, a realist articulation of this instantiation of Geophilology is the acidity of damp that corrodes time into matter on the *walls* as an alternative to the graffiti that cuneiform is used for today (2010: 182). A thanatology of sacrifice is here written through the damp itself as a text, with the house structured by the Marsh Regime. In the autodidact tradition of the *Stone Tape* theory, popularised by the eponymous Folk Horror TV film and retroactively attributed to T.C. Lethbridge, traumatic events are recorded onto inanimate organic material, making ghosts akin to a replayed tape, as “transmitted manifestations” (BBC2, 1972) (Lethbridge, 1967:54). Mark E Smith of pop group The Fall agrees that the legend of such noisome organic spectres is a readable text “They say damp records the past/ if that's so I've got the biggest library yet”<sup>19</sup> (Smith, ‘No Bulbs’, 1982).

Damp is a delayed différance whose legend is past and future, living amongst us. The walls scrawled with damp indeed are a recording, as legend to Disorientation: but one that manifests metastable potential into the present, seeping into subjectivities and in turn transductively being reformed, as opposed to a closed recording. *Rising Damp* the sitcom is a useful analogue because it provides a delimited and meteorological zone, predicated on genuine loss, not the impotent *loss* of the geo-localisable digitised present. Indeed, the residual feeling of despair and Rigsby’s inability to change or modify his life is important. He is an anti-hero, immune to the moribund posturing of the ostensibly successful or the nominally heroic quester. Actual life is no choice. Similar to Medieval miasma or contagion theory, in the plague of affect, the doubling of substrate and surfaces, an apparently inexplicable hold of the landscape in plague and flood (the cuneiform again!), as has been attested in Geophilology, is like the grip the house has on him.

### Ague-Cake

This sitcom turn affords a move from Mesopotamia to Essex: the marsh of the undervalued, *inutile*, miserable, its famous mists and damp also manifests this contagious reality, as vector of the Marsh Regime. Since the sixteenth century, the noisome and noxious dis-ease of the Essex marsh areas have been variously called 'agues', 'tertian fevers', 'quartan fevers' or

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<sup>19</sup> As hard as it is to believe, I only found this Fall lyric at the end of writing this thesis, as much as it looks like I’ve retroactively written the whole project around it.

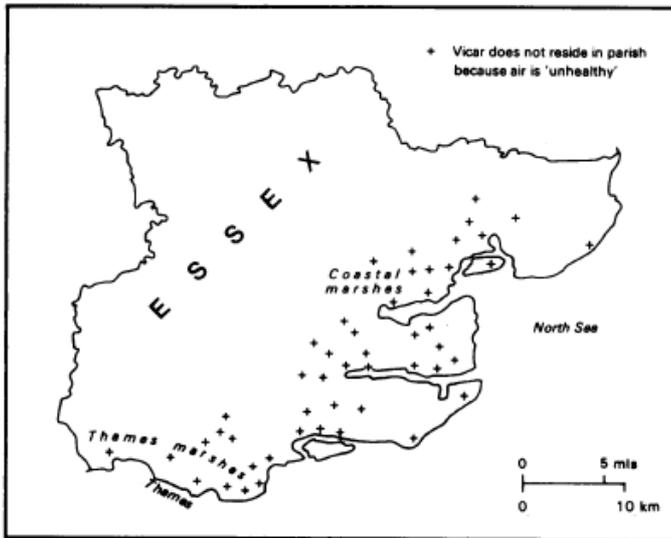
'intermittent fevers': John Norden, one of the first cartographers (and thus a key *dis-orienteer* of Essex), commented in 1590 that he couldn't "comende the healthfulness of it: especiallie nere the sea coastes ... and other loweplaces about the creeks which gave me a most cruell quarterne fever" (1840: 56) Tudors are sacrifice to the marsh's hunger for victims, a geographical contour of disease.

Historical evidence of the diaphanous folds' malefic affect is resonantly illustrated by Daniel Defoe in his partly-fictional 1722 pilgrimage *Tour Through the Eastern Counties of England*, which details the "Essex ague" being carried by those who were exposed to this "damp part of the world" in marsh villages just north east of Southend, where damp = contagion, analogue to the mist of the damp tenement window (2007: 46). Joseph Conrad agrees, citing the late-Victorian Essex mist qua rising damp "draping the low shores in diaphanous folds" like the churning solve of the alchemical process (2004: 10). This contagion acts in effect like mimesis, like the root of ritual and sacrifice, for Girard, but here the Essex marsh-landers undergo a sacrifice with no apparent societal function (1996: 9).

According to M J Dobson's 'History of Malaria' in England (1989), by the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century, parish registers show death in marshland areas to be three times that of dry areas: "from time to time the vicar scribbled in the burial record that the deceased died from 'fatigue' or was just "worn out"! (1989: 4) Rectors of Southend and the locales purportedly refused to take up residence in marshland parishes because of this unhealthiness: "Vicar does not reside in parish because air is too unhealthy," explains one parish register from the time (ibid) (Figure 8).<sup>20</sup> This clerical titbit denotes something important about Disorientation, a facet to be drawn out in Chapter 2: that of the 'Parochial' as both connoting church matters, but something beyond this, located literally in locale, reattached to site: the amplification through the portal of the cuneiform tablet, the intensity of site Dis-oriented, in an admittedly funny dynamic of wilting rectors.

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<sup>20</sup> A few nights ago, I dreamt I was undertaking my PhD Viva along a marsh embankment, in the company of a Church of England Vicar, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021.



**Figure 4. Vicars in 18th century Essex refused to live in the coastal marsh parishes because the air was 'unhealthy' and 'much subject to marsh agues'**

Figure 8: Vicar does not reside in parish

By the nineteenth century, this contagion of the marshes was confirmed as Plasmodium Malaria: “Many observed the characteristic enlargement of the spleen, the anemic and lethargic condition of the patient [...] The expression “ague-cake” was often used to describe the prominent spleen of the malaria victim” (Dobson, 1989:4). This detail offers an uncanny link back to the Liver Tablet, and its Blind Spot of loss, where the organ is again an index to a residual affectivity of the past. Marxist critic Raymond Williams also speaks to the remainder of previous moments in the present in a structure of dominant and latent hegemonies: these more ancient “structures of feeling” are interpreted in the Marsh Regime as damp residues of myth, literally “residual” in his terms as opposed to ancient: although the stain of place as the Blind Spot or *tache aveugle* can be both (Williams, 1977: 122/14).

Disorientation is extant and potential as residual feeling in climatological residues with a life of their own, where, equally, time lingers, inscribed into the sediment, awaiting technological re-activation. Like a “structure of feeling” is something “emergent or pre-emergent,” and thus not unlike hyperstition becoming reality retroactively (1977: 132) (Land, 2012: 552). This is a component of the marsh’s Disorienting affect – both technological, miasmatic, mephitic – noisome vapours turning the brain – an affective motion, thickening, occluding, delaying, faltering scale and sure-footedness: recalling again the Cloud of Unknowing as a modality and manifestation of the prepersonal marsh, that both stabilises and fogs up the planes of hetero and homogeneity.



Figure 9: Essex's unquiet Earth

The Essex ague fever was not contagious person-to-person: it is the Disorienting effect of the marsh itself, as above the 'hold' a place has, which becomes a performative transmission, from its dark heart. A latent effect of the Flood, of sacrifice, where the opacity of the marsh's frequencies quietly manifests themselves, in the organs of the victim. Like the Mesopotamian metallurgy, it contains "human and natural aspects," relatable over the time of delay. The marsh is underlined by this life form whose basis is affective resonance, in the said metrological effect of damp. This underlines that fact that more arcane understandings of pestilence, that predates a modern focus on germ theory, manifest themselves qua the Cloud of Unknowing, in atmospheric affects, which the marsh is redolent with. The feeling abroad in the malevolent charged air of the Essex marsh recalls too the notion of the ancient "absorptive zone" as a purifying area delimited by ritual sacrifice in Ancient Greece, as suggested by Parker in *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (1983: 212). This absorptive zone in Greek practices mandates a specific numinously delimited area that ritually purifies, a sort of magic circle for the undoing of causation. Not forgetting that Mal-aria in the liver and spleen is linked to miasma, a Greek term deriving from *miaino*, to stain, which again links us back to the Blind Spot: *tache aveugle*, dirty smear (Figure 9) evidence of loss, delay, perverse sediment, dissatisfied situation (comedy), a stain of time in place, where Rigby could have both the 'ague cake' of the malarial victim, but potentially also liver problems, given his propensity for drink (Figure 10).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Miasma is also, appropriately, Timothy Morton's second named Hyperobject, after Agrilogistics (2016)



Figure 10: Rigsby – a leaking liver

### Drink in Carrier Bag

Damp as disorienting affect surfaces as a Cloud of Unknowing written across the suffocating surfaces of, appropriately, an off-license carrier bag. Connoting the intoxicating state of drink, the rarefied mystical submission to the Cloud, manifests itself, like a spectre, across the booze-carrier's unwelcoming substrate. A lino-printed motif from the eponymous Cloud, from the fourteenth-century English text of Mysticism, brings much needed dissolution: what a relief! (Figure 11).

The bag is a heretic ground upon which the figure of Disorientation, in the present, might be traced. A quote from the text, which is also the epithet to the thesis, reads, “when you are nowhere physically you are everywhere spiritually” (1960:45). The Cloud of Unknowing as a damp affect is the hinge between different temporal epistemes, the manifestation of the collage's indeterminateness, given that, like the liver, time is inscribed onto technics' surface – a texture that figuratively suppurates on tenement walls like ancient inscriptions, like rising damp. The itinerant body of the carrier's seemingly anachronic cracks confirm the pseudo-geological lineaments of the plastic: it is itself a re-enactment of disrupted stratigraphy, the Essex malarial miasma as Cloud of Unknowing re-performed and resurrected across its substrate, continually in traced iterations.



Figure 11: Booze Substrate reveals timely condensation – What a Relief! cf. practice documentation ('Rising Damp' by SS-J, Lino print on off-license carrier bag, 2020, pinned on damp walls)

Like Jean Genet's window, which steams up<sup>22</sup> through the damp chugs of the boiler, "then gradually disappears, leaving the window clear, the landscape suddenly visible and the room extended perhaps to infinity," a magical world of the spirit of techno-logy is re-revealed in this meteorological – spiritual compost, expanding the grainy inoperability of vision (Genet, 2003: 375) (Stiegler, 2014a: 5).

The surfacing of a damp figure upon the ground of the wall then is an example of the Marsh Regime, which opens up the individual to re-doubling. This glimpse is predicated on the dilation of delay that is the Blind Spot qua marsh. Roland Barthes suggests that the plastic bag itself is also a Blind Spot, considering plastic's invisibility: it is entirely consumed by the present. Whereas wood and stone, mud, retain their texture, their age, their patina, "plastic is designed to exist for us only in the moment of use: They rise when we need them and fall back when we don't [and thus] appear oddly time-less" (1987:97). However, far from disappearing, ever since the plastic carrier bag was invented in 1965, just prior to Barthes' essay, more than a trillion plastic bags have been disposed of every year, most of them finding their way to the seas. This also finds purchase in areas of the Essex marshes as erstwhile Victorian dumps, such as Two Tree Island: an overlooked wasteland, feared, hated even: a kind of heterotopia ripe for experimentation, as estuary Base Matter.

Fitting that this heterotopic substance is also technicity, as time's inscription mandates. The telltale black or blue bag shaping itself around the all-too evident beer cans as general hold-all purports to be, according to Ursula K. Le Guin's 'Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction' the earliest tool, allowing the gathering of food as a multiplicity of stories, contra the heroic myth of

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. one of my spoken word tape tracks, where the window steams up in the Essex driving range café

beast hunting and conquest (1989: 169). But with the black carrier bag, time as multiplicity is challenged in the opaque yet pellucid slickness that also makes it a unique substrate – a ground for the figure of the purchase to be revealed, traced, almost apophatic: despite its lack of absorbency, performing an unsayable function. A jostling collision of proliferating temporal textures (technological, geological, human) is a nefarious re-doubling of humour and horror and an intervention to forestall the descent into irony, as also diagnosed by Jameson (1998: 131).

Not to forget, again, the booze that sits in the carrier bag, whose earliest Ur-instantiation indeed is located in Mesopotamia: the earliest known image of beer drinking surfaces on a tablet that depicts Sumerian drinkers sipping a beverage through long straws, from c. 4,000BC (Figure 12). Decreeing a daily beer portion to workers on the Code of Hammurabi, a beer receipt from C.2050 BC also confirms the dual territorialisation and deterritorialisation of accounting and drinking, with a receipt for the purchase of “best beer” from a brewer (Finkel, 2015: 34).



Figure 12: Arcane Disorientation: Ur-drunk/drink

Drink is also a hole, a Blind Spot, as a form of Disorientation: an experience acknowledged by Georges Canguilhem, who, in a quote reminiscent of the leakages of the Liver Tablet’s holes, says: “life is [...] a discussion with an environment where there are leaks, holes, escapes and unexpected resistances” (Canguilhem 1991: 198). Life is a difficult proposition in the twenty-first century, beset by corrosive and invasive algorithmic advertising, the geo-localisable ‘community’ of the internet commodifying subjectivity in a digital real-time reflexivity, accelerating and de-realising time: what schematisation remains possible in such an occultation of being?

Metastable *différance* is found in the patina of residual feelings as real residues: a form of what Stiegler terms “adoption,” which structures continual ruptural transformation – not smooth becoming – from the metastable milieu (2014b: 1). Contemporary accelerated imperatives, on the other hand, demand that the individual adapt quickly – as adaption, which is a short-circuiting of adoption by stupidity. The resultant “Symbolic Misery” as Stiegler terms it, could then be seen to mutate through a *lack* of sacrifice, seen contemporaneously in real-time media and instant gratification’s occultation of delay (ibid). In the more ‘linear’

technicities, a final state is always subject to *différance*, as individuals are formed in a transductive relation to other individuals.

Perhaps this affective disenfranchisement of the digital is overdone though: a theorist such as Hartmut Rosa will assert that the technological and social acceleration of the contemporary whips the subject into a heady *disorienting* rush: the term disorienting thus appears with too great frequency in sociological studies of media and its affects, but with little nuance other than to invoke commercial frenzy (2013: 102). Tulasiewicz, in contrast, proposes an a-temporality as disassociation that recalls moreover the “capacious now” underlined by historians of the Middle Ages who discuss the experience of (predominantly female) mystics – another disorienting dilation of time similar to the miasma of the Cloud of Unknowing: there is, then, nothing new (2021: 2) (Dinshaw, 2012: 3). Tulasiewicz continues: “rather than simply causing them to hurtle through time at ever greater speeds, digital technology is inducing a dissociation and distancing from it” – a reading more cognate to the bivalent affordances of Disorientation as the extreme result of digital technology (ibid). And yet his analysis still veers off course from Rigsby’s territory, for he avers that the “a-temporal qualities of the digital” offer “makeshift therapy [...] to disassociate from emotional pains,” allowing one to “step away and forget” (2021: 20).

But the dilation proposed through the marsh’s hermeneutics is founded not at all on forgetting as such, but in experiencing misery via epiphylogenetic memory– this despite the Cloud of Forgetting being part of the mystics’ path. Stiegler suggests the affordances of the glimpse of the vanished Marsh Regime: “*remembering* of the improbable (of another time) *as a forgetting*, or a suspension, of programs – a suspensive forgetting that is itself programmatic,” which counters a “derealized time” from an even greater disassociation (2014: 93-4). As above, this also might be inferred by the almost Gnostic re-formation of intoxication, which not only creates a cerebral caesura, but also simulates total dissolution. So, it seems to distort or collapse time, as much as it destabilises spatial orientation – this latter affects by virtue of alcohol absorbed into the fluid of the inner ear. Spatial disorientating equals spinning: a vertigo at home in the psyche as much as its material supports. If for Charles Bukowski, drinking is a “form of suicide where you're allowed to return to life and begin all over the next day” then each session is a re-enactment, that at least allows a thanatology, a mobilisation of the deferred modality of temporality, positing in its wake the “menacing possibility of an in-difference” in all senses of the word (Bukowski, 2019: 239) (Stiegler, 2009: 61/3). Here memory (as technics) remakes self, biography, re-animates, traced as mercurial, in contrast to the “undead” of digital memory (Han, 2016: 67).

Beer is an analogue assistant to oblivion, a canned River Lethe: “Holsten Pils fuels the disintegration of time” as a section of my spoken word tape, explains.<sup>23</sup> So that even if Tulasiewicz’s a-temporality approaches the subject of Disorientation, albeit from an endorsement of digital apps and interfaces, he still acknowledges it as a “becoming detached” that seems to offer no counter transmission to the necessary presence of pain, but is an abyssal, unhumorous subjectivation as depersonalisation (2021: 20). Turning to dilated time is also turning to an “outside of thought,” in Deleuze’s terms. In *What is Philosophy* he and Guattari concur that an experimentation with what here is Disorientation, is to follow the witch’s flight, whose methods can involve “esoteric experiences, drunkenness, and excess” as

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. practice documentation

opposed to science which seeks to find the “reference points” that Disorientation abjures (1994: 41)

### TV from the future

The damp walls of the house, by contrast, are legend to a generative process of individuation, and not just a Stone Tape. Anca Parvulescu in her book *Laughter: Notes on a Passion* comments, following Bataille, that “laughter is an opening in which a self unfolds” – here, as technological surfaces, the walls contain dilations of time attendant on this humour. The hermeneutics of comedy are thus read in the fault lines of the marsh, of which the sitcom is a version (2010:5). This finds yet more dubious purchase in *Carry On Up The Khyber* (1968), a colonial satire that finds gauche joy in the absurd endeavour in the rich territory of Afghanistan’s soil: perhaps proof that, because and despite of the eviscerating embarrassment of British attitudes and establishment humour, something heterogeneous still flickers in the land.<sup>24</sup>

*Rising Damp* is humorous televisual mise-en-scène for the unfolding of the marsh’s affect in the damp différance of comedy. The Marsh Regime as the logic of the sitcom is contingently recalled in a chance episode of Hancock’s Half Hour,<sup>25</sup> which underlines the marsh structure of a miserable boarding house. Hancock is reminded of the poor state of his house, when Bill Kerr counsels him not to forget the “mushrooms growing on the walls” – to which he replies, “Yes, its like Hackney marshes in there, some nights” (BBC, 1957). A zone akin to the Essex marsh reveals its true lineaments in this damp, for existence is necessarily textured, site-based, crawling on the wall as the threshold to individuation, urgent to counter the “catastrophe of the sensible” that atomised digital lives in the late industrialisation of memory are subject to (Stiegler, 2015: 4). Or, as CJ says of alcohol in the 1976 sitcom *The Fall & Rise of Reginald Perrin*, which again stars Leonard Rossiter: “not too much, just enough” (BBC, 1976). Without *adopting* a carrier bag, without misery qua delay, without the legend of damp, we are unable to achieve “epochal redoubling,” generative individuation, in the pharmakonic endgame of Disorientation where exteriorisation without transductive individuation has reached its limit in the occultation of Real Time’s de-temporalisation.

Comedy, on the other hand, creates generative disruption. Rigsby and Hancock are attuned to the affordances of marsh’s Base Matter: both adhere to Zupančič’s description of comedy, indexed in the cuneiform tablet: “short-circuiting an immediate connection between heterogeneous orders” (2008: 6). The deterritorialisation of today’s contexts are in contrast to the “industrial exploitation of genetic memory through biotechnologies” which, “at the limit of industrialization [means that] we tend to be no longer able to form vital links with tradition, since it is disappearing, in addition to the dissipation of the interior [as seen in the hepatoscopist’s laughter] which is a catalyst of the very possibility of development of various media”: in other words, shit is predetermined by itself (Stiegler, 2009: 77) [my addition]. A stark warning against totally disappearing in the self-medication of the digital without any exercise to the corner shop, at least – because across the supposedly impermeable carrier bag surface are the lineaments of subjectivity.

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<sup>24</sup> BBC documentary *Bitter Lake* (2015) directed and written by Adam Curtis featured cut up sequence from this *Carry On* film in his extended essay on narratives surrounding Afghanistan.

<sup>25</sup> A BBC radio comedy that ran on radio from 1954 to 1961.

With the liver as paradigm of divination, as timely legend, too, of drink's abuse, the context of this sitcom reiterates the peculiarities attendant on linear analogue technicities, looking back as it does to the valences of the written word: "Either the book was already television somehow and in such a manner that suddenly the book opened up history, or else this is not the case, and so, with television, it would be history itself that would be put into brackets. Television is here only the paradigm for all forms of media; for that matter it serves as a model that materializes in the proliferation of screen media" (Stiegler, 2014: 83). Drink, as much as Disorientation, assists in memory's unwriting: almost technologically, memory is lost, a 'black out' like the Blind Spot, transductively remakes the self as part of Stiegler's necessary forgetting as transductive re-televising, founded on the cuneiform tablet as productive prop. The *vision* in the void is already technologically pre-determined in the *tache aveugle* of the clay.

To return to the 'beginning,' then, where the marsh was made word: in Sumer, "Prehistory stopped; history began" (Finkel, 2015:7). The gradual emergence into view of the cuneiform as deciphered script is predicated on vision founded on the very Blind Spot of technicity, retroactively seen because of the materials used to reflect it, in an understanding of history predicated on the possibility of its reviewing. Where the cuneiform script pierced through the retroactive clay as ground, to provide a glimpse of Ur-Disorientation, it televised: cuneiform was already television, a time traveller, and the heights of 1970s TV comedy portray this affinity. Television itself at this time then is a form of writing and a synthesis of time. As a medium, it is how time is congealed, seeing, like the diviners, the past and future from afar, making the televisual structure of *Rising Damp* a doubling of the *différance* of the house as ground and figure, via the marsh: a sitcom substrate that channels the marsh's Ur-Disorientation. "It is already evident that writing in some manner already televisualises. But only in the delay... does one see history" – and this delay is in the rising damp across the cuneiform tablet as much as the carrier bag, the house walls, the arduous excavation and decipherment of Sumerian and Akkadian, buried and fragmented as metastable forces (2014: 83). A relic substrate that's immanent broken thresholds call forth to future collages, the retroactivation and calling forth of the Ur-form.

We have (re-)seen how the figure of the cuneiform technics re-doubles the orthographic inscription of the Marsh Regime. Where Stiegler relocates the place of the *différance* into technics itself, here it is doubled in site. The Blind Spot indexes the vanished world, both as temporal dilation and stain, establishing the marsh as Ur-Disorientation flaring from the chthonic substrate like marsh gas, which, like Negarestani's decay, "introduces power into the misadventures of matter" (2010: 184). This blinding glimpse is in turn predicated on the sedimentary material and metaphysical holes across the substrate of the liver – symbolising *différance* doubled in the heart of technics, and read across its substrate as delay: only in this sacrifice can you truly individuate. Contra de-realised time, the comedy hermeneutics is a mode of empowerment and individuation, transmitting a grammar of living from the marsh, whose damp beats an urgent pulse.

The liver is seat of the humours, and humour is analogue to the necessary lack of the human. This delay of sacrificed time, disappointment, rises up as damp, from the originary marsh, inscribed with potential through to the Essex marsh, to the televised inscription: "delayed action mirrors" as transductive divination through the walls and TV, as a site necessary for

heterogeneous individuation: the cuneiform was always a television sitcom. The Marshography shows that the Marsh Regime inscribes a residue of damp on the ground of our own zones of individuation, through which Ur-Disorientation can open a site for the future.



## Chapter 2: Caned: Holes in the Geological Subjectile as a Disorienting Sort-ie

### Esoteric Prologue

Rocky outcrops proffer an affinity to theoretical substrates.

### Scene 1

#### Gaelic customs

Artaud makes research and apocalyptic journey to Áránn.

#### Let's Rock

Mexico as a mountain of signs presages Áránn limestone – jagged cliffs as cuneiform – Artaud's movement across the island.

#### Pushing the Envelope

Drilling over the island matched in the paper of the sort – magic pharmakon – spells are not art – *Sorts* counter atemporal of digital present.

#### Technology

The inscription of the sort is technological – transductive operation is the gap of Disorientation.

#### Subjectile

Subjectile as framework for vector of Áránn's transductive force.

#### Fiore Drill = Hole of Time

Void of the hole is temporal-spatial exit via modality of burning – circumference as fragment – drawing up pre-individual forces – summoning true magic of the real – fragment as spell, as island.

#### Originary fault lines of the organ

Fault lines of limestone as originary fault of technicity – island as mirror of time through Subjectile's tain – Isles of Scilly Iron Age burial mirror.

#### Excavation Drill vs. Archive Sediment

Drilling as reformation – chthonic excavation – Beckett's text as drilling – stratigraphy and relics vs. immanence and immediacy – dilation of time.

### Scene 2

#### Parochial Cane: Ireland & Autodidact Purgatory vs. Via Negativa Nationalism

St Patrick and purgatory as pre-re-enactments of the abyssal hole – site specificity of location – Irish nationalism and antiquarianism – local paper/knowledge and minor form as bivalence of Disorientation: working and unworking/indeterminate/displaced – metallurgist hole as itinerancy/collision.

#### Kelp Pit Detour

Kelp Pits pre-date spell hole: metallurgical furnace in landscape as transduction.

#### Humour and Humours: Caned

Cane as metallurgical receiver/transmitter – reenactment of island – re-enactment as method – importance of humour and elemental humours.

#### The (whole) story

Dublin file as synecdoche to unworking – cardboard file as the fragment of the réel inutilisé – methodology as proto hyperstition grounds magic in the academy.

#### Appendix: The File Trial

Reporter unearths sinister currents in the Dublin Archive.

## Chapter 2: Cane: Holes in the Geological Subjectile as a Disorienting Sort-ie

### Esoteric Prologue

The marsh abides in its mysterious squishiness, in its opacity: an accumulated past recorded in soft decaying humus, lying ready to be reactivated. Rocky outcrops, islands in the ocean, have a mystery more bucolic in some respects, but might provide fertile ground for magical circumspection; for somewhere heretical affectivity might unfold. This chapter will explore such a proposition, making of early twentieth-century erstwhile-Surrealist and dramatist Antonin Artaud's visit to Ireland in 1937, something of idealisation. In considering his journey and the sorcerous burnt cigarette holes inherent to his practice of spell casting, a territory both geological and psychic is mapped. In demonstrating how Ireland's rocky oileáin Árann (Aran Islands) are as much a technological surface as his spells, an original affinity is drawn between scriptural and geological space, as seen with the Marsh Regime of Chapter 1. This affinity is held together and intensified by Artaud's 'Subjectile,' as a practicable of intense methodology all the more relevant to an age of techno-capitalism. Framed through occultural re-enactment, the method attempts to burn through the limitations of art and re-awaken existence's metastable forces of Disorientation. As such, whilst relying structurally on some of the biographic details of his excursion and historic context, Artaud is mobilised as a character, whose actions have a virtual malleability, to be excavated in the present: an operation mirrored in his own spells whose affectivity spills out, re-occurring in time.

The mise-en-scène of Árann is staged in two acts: the first, an investigation into Artaud's geological and scriptural spell space as technological subjectivation. Act 2 considers the wider context of Ireland, Nationalism, and a method of itinerant distribution via Artaud's magical Cane, which acts as a transmitter to the doubling of Disorientation.

Scene 1:

### Gaelic Customs

Paris, August 1937: *M. Artaud is about to leave for Ireland in search of information concerning ancient Gaelic customs and other matters relating to ancient Ireland, her history and so forth. He himself would be very grateful for any help that you can give him.*

- Letter of introduction carried by Artaud to Ireland written by Art Ua Briain, the Irish Minister Plenipotentiary stationed in Paris, 1937 (National Archives File number DFA Paris P 34/1 19)

Ireland, September 1937: The above letter is Antonin Artaud's passport for a journey he makes from Paris with a talismanic wooden Cane,<sup>1</sup> to oileáin Árann, off the west coast of Galway Bay. Artaud arrived in Ireland without a visa, and with only Briain's epistolary commendation as access. He then travelled from Cork to Galway, where Professor Tomas O Maille contacted Father Killeen of Cill Rónáin, who found lodgings for him in the village of Eoghanacht on the largest of the three islands, Inis Mór. He was to stay with Sean O Milleain,

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<sup>1</sup> The word Cane will be in uppercase: making it a proper noun befits its import in the chapter, and is also congruent with Artaud's proclivity for capital letters.

the keeper of the nearby lighthouse, which flashed away in the darkness, on the island of Earragh.

He came to Ireland for what he'd predicted as the end of the world. This journey was a search – restitution of sorts, and with his '*sorts*' (spells) for the urgent and ever-disappearing “ancient” customs hinted at in the introductory letter, and which he believed heralded true revolution: that which could be mobilised as a revitalisation of reality. And it shouldn't be underestimated how difficult it was to reach these islands from Paris. This revolution was not political – it went beyond that, located at the level of the earth, and for which these islands now represented a ground zero, a testing site for his developing cosmogony. The chaos of his brain as he arrived was part hermit, part schizophrenic, part Faust, part opiate slave, part clown. Inverting the passage of another Modern playwright, Samuel Beckett (who had resettled for a while in Paris from Dublin in 1937), Artaud was hubristically assuming – or *re-enacting* – the role of St Patrick, restituting the saint's iconoclastic staff, mythic metonym of the islands.

In preparation for the journey, Artaud had also read various hagiographic<sup>2</sup> texts at the Bibliothèque National, no doubt to frame his own project. These included the Durkheimian sociologist Czarnowsky's *Hero Worship & Social Background: St Patrick, National Hero of Ireland* (1919), where Artaud learnt of a salient prophecy, delivered by wizards to a Pagan King, in which the Adze head (Patrick) would, armed with a Cane, overthrow the power of the druids: an augury for him which, no doubt, his journey in 1937 was to become dischargement of.

He had also written about St Patrick's Cane in July before the trip. This astrological text – *The New Revelations of Being* as it was called – was a dense and heteroclitic tract written as the outcome of a number of Kabalistic readings and Tarot interpretations. *Revelations* makes no direct mention of Ireland, nor is it signed by Artaud, but rather with a Gnostic pseudonym: “The Revealed” (1965: 99). The text placed this ‘Cane de St Patrick’ at the centre of an imminent encounter with the forces of creation/destruction conspicuous to its own history: having chased the Pagan snakes out of Ireland, the “superstitious relic” had been destroyed exactly 400 years earlier outside Dublin Cathedral, during the Reformation.

Sixteen years had passed since the 1921 partition of Ireland, but now Artaud was mandating his own code of divisive annihilation “...a destruction by fire,” through and with the anachronistic return of St Patrick's Cane. Artaud's role as a disillusioned Surrealist, and playwright, both settled him and uprooted him from this upcoming gesture: a dual de/reterritorialisation where, both at home in the “mythic plane” – *pace* his fellow Parisian Bataille, whose Mystery Religion-inspired secret society Acéphale was also formed in 1937 – Artaud's sectarian heresy, as we shall see, was also at a remove from the underlying politics of such avant garde endeavors (Brotchie, 2017: 19). For Artaud, fire was the only method or element endowed with this ultimate power of ontology, as he writes in *Revelations*: “I who am speaking have a Cane. / A cane with 13 knots, and this cane bears on the ninth knot the magic sign of the thunderbolt; and 9 is the number of destruction by fire.” (Artaud,

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<sup>2</sup> Hagiographic texts are biographies of saints or ecclesiastical leaders.

1965:190). Striking this Cane, as a re-enactment of the Bachall Isu,<sup>3</sup> across the lunar limestone of Áránn, it assumed the flickering Disorienting duality of both a weapon and totem of his apocalypse: a re-vision of forces in the landscape he was ‘returning’ it to.

### Let’s Rock

What evidence does Áránn as a landscape present of a mythic, hagiographic power? Despite being a mythic place in Ireland’s cosmology, attestation of Artaud’s feelings towards the locale are admittedly scarce. The importance of site as mytho-orthographic inscription in his practice more generally is presaged by a pilgrimage he made to Mexico a year earlier. This trip established the departure from the previous theoretical workings of *The Theatre of Cruelty*,<sup>4</sup> which focused on the breaking down of stage and audience, to a wider metaphysics of landscape, where, “over the whole geographic expanse of a race, nature has chosen to speak [...] just as she evolved men, she also evolved rocks” (1965:69). Embedded in the landscape was a “Mountain of Signs,” a technical inscription through which “bound to the soil [...] the magical reality of a culture whose fires it would, doubtless, take little to actually rekindle” (1974: 9). Making an investigation into “Gaelic customs and other matters relating to ancient Ireland,” was, indubitably, a rekindling equivalently to be read the level *rocks*, although he never explicitly says so.

Luckily, the fragmentarily exposed fissures of rocks on Inis Mór are omnipresent (Figure 1). Scabrous and imperfect: underneath a green-rust plastron of grass, the pale skull of the limestone substrate is evident withal. As writer and pilgrim of the island Tim Robinson wrote, in his 1986 memoir-cartography *Pilgrimage*, “prehistory is as urgent underfoot as last night’s graffiti in city streets” – evocative of organic inscription in rising damp<sup>5</sup>, the cuneiform script, the urban graffiti, and the toilet wall scrawls of Chapter 3: all ancient relics seeping up from the future, all a “mountain of signs” (2008: 9).

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<sup>3</sup> Artaud believed it to be the real prophetic Cane of St Patrick, the Bachall Isu, detailed in the *Dictionnaire d’Hagiographie* (Petin, 1850) as that used by Jesus to ward off demons in the desert. Solemn oaths had been sworn in front of it by Knights Templar, and as a symbol of the jurisdiction of Armagh, it had hung in Christ Church, Dublin until it was publicly burnt in 1537 during the Reformation’s iconoclastic campaign.

<sup>4</sup> *The Theatre of Cruelty* attempted to move away from the static and representational theatre of the time by breaking down the audience and performer boundary, and by using words as spatial hieroglyphs, an alchemy of performativity (1953: 49).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rigsby’s tenement house in said sitcom in Chapter 1.



Figure 1: Limestone faults and fissures reveal the Subjectile of Inis Mór

Like the marsh too, limestone very evidently engages in a site-based *différance* or delayed trace: whilst robust, the water-soluble rock is a page of ages, minutely inscribed with fluvial writing, and grooved patterns that expose ancient fossils and fissures. As in Mexico, the rocks betray expressive forces, manifesting a materialist idea of spirit: a place where modernity's breakdown between things and words, force and form, has not corroded vitality. The jagged cliffs that halo the island most clearly expose vertical and horizontal faults inherent to the bed rock: erosion slices right angles into the flesh of the cliff face, exposing jagged weaknesses like huge cuneiform letters, stark in the delay of their movement. Indeed, the burial mounds and ancient places of this island are as old as many cuneiform tablets, containing their own prediluvial legends, like that of the Mesopotamian Flood Tablet of Gilgamesh (Robinson, 2008: 10).

But how to “rekindle” the intensity out of these limestone surfaces, these weathered slabs of elephant grey? Artaud's earlier alchemies of incantation in the *Theatre of Cruelty* also owed a debt to cuneiform patterns: the ancient language of Assyrian, written in cuneiform script, influenced his ritual glossolalia, as Assyriologist Charles Fossey's book *Assyrian Magic* (1902) detailed magic syllables used in ritual that found their way into *Artaud le Momo* (1947). And Artaud's mandate, in a lecture to Mexican students, to “draw out the hidden magic from the earth” requires a drilling perhaps again in evidence (1988: 364). Over the ancient grey sheets of Dún Aonghasa, where Artaud frequently walked, near to the ‘Seven Churches’ of his lodgings (the site of the island's mythic ancestors, who were also wielders of lightning bolts – not dissimilar to Artaud's ‘sparking’ Cane) are small round circles of absence that the Reporter found: smooth cuppings of limestone erosion (Figure 2). These could fit the point where his saintly Cane struck, as *localised* intensities of performance that both reveal the historical materiality of the site, and map the arcane (or Ar-Cane). Like St Elian, who “smote the ground with her staff, causing water to appear” as the fount of a holy curative well (Bord, 2006: 114). Equally, Artaud's method of repeated pencil stabbing in his later Asylum notebooks make them, according to a witness, “gleams like mica,” as a force that reveals minerals in the limestone (cited Derrida, 1998: 31).



Figure 2: Performance marks of the Cane on the limestone of Dún Aonghasa

In addition to these impressionistic relics, there is also independent corroboration of Artaud haunting the fort and its environs, left by the residents' fragmentary oral testimony. The lighthouse keeper's daughter, Bridget O'Toole, indicated that she would often try and take the Cane away from Artaud as a joke: "There was something in the stick. I was always play acting to get it off him. My mother would shout after him – 'Stop chasing with that one as she's only married' – but I was not afraid of him. The only thing was to keep away from the stick but I suppose I was a divil, like himself." Mary Gill, a neighbour of Bridget O'Toole's, recalls Artaud sitting in between the limestone clints: "I thought he looked like a recluse or whatever you call it. I know Bridget's father and mother thought a lot of him. I often told my friends that when I was going up to the cows, I had to go past him sitting up between the rocks. I made a detour so as not to disturb him because he was so much private in himself" (both cited in Collier, 1997).

These recollections are seemingly the only descriptions of Artaud on the island alongside some remarks made by officials in Dublin, who said euphemistically that he was "travelling light in the upper storey" (National Archives File number DFA Paris P 34/1 19). Offering a scant first-hand account of his activity across two weeks, it is these movements through the locale and later the substrate of the spell posted in Galway, that are a weird ratio map of one another: inscriptions congruent with a bodily distribution across the co-ordinates of a site apropos pilgrimage, made in recourse to the divinatory prophesy that his spells as "written drawings" retroactively forecast (cited in Thévenin, 1998: 19).

### Pushing the Envelope

The drilling evident across Inis Mór is matched, as landscape to technology, by Artaud's drilling into paper. Whilst, as above, this practice is developed over the ensuing ten years, it is conceivable that it begins in Ireland. And it takes place as a magical act, in his first known

*sort*, which, meaning ‘sending’ – from which the notion of ‘casting’ and ‘broadcasting’ a spell, is cognisant. Alongside his other many letters, it is the only relic left from the trip.

Simply put: the scriptural space of the page in question, the paper used for the casting of a spell, is a microcosmic *mise-en-scène*, across which the momentous drama of Artaud’s practice and psyche is implicitly scripted. When he looks back some 10 years later, he claims that the *sorts* were the point after which he would never again be “writing without drawing” (cited Derrida, 1998: 121). And it is no doubt to me that his psychogeographic perambulations across Inis Mór are the galvanising gestures that lead to this first *sort*, created on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1937. He had just left Áránn, and was done with sitting on the rocks, with walking around the fort, and had desperately (for the apocalypse he planned had not panned out) got the boat back to the mainland, to lodge at The Imperial Hotel in Galway. The spell he then writes is a curse to the French writer Lise Deharme, encased in its own envelope and sent care of the Surrealist André Breton, who never passed it on to its intended. For this reason, it survives as part of the Fond André Breton, in the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, in Paris, where I, Reporter, found it.

The envelope and the *sort* are brittle bits of paper, tantalising fragments: not of incompleteness but, like the cuneiform tablet, affective broken thresholds recalling the shapes that the marsh’s material body repeats in the tablets’ broken scraps, as a legend to arcane Ur-Disorientation. Áránn is rich in the psychic foment that leads to this switch from writing to writing-drawing, a Disorientation that, qua marsh, comes from the land. If his enquiry is focused on unearthing knowledge of “ancient Ireland” and her “Gaelic customs,” then his course across the land itself, a few days after which he produced this *sort*, innovate a form of caustic psychic map to the locality, to which the stamp mark and the logistics thereof give causal but crucial weight (ibid) (Figure 3).

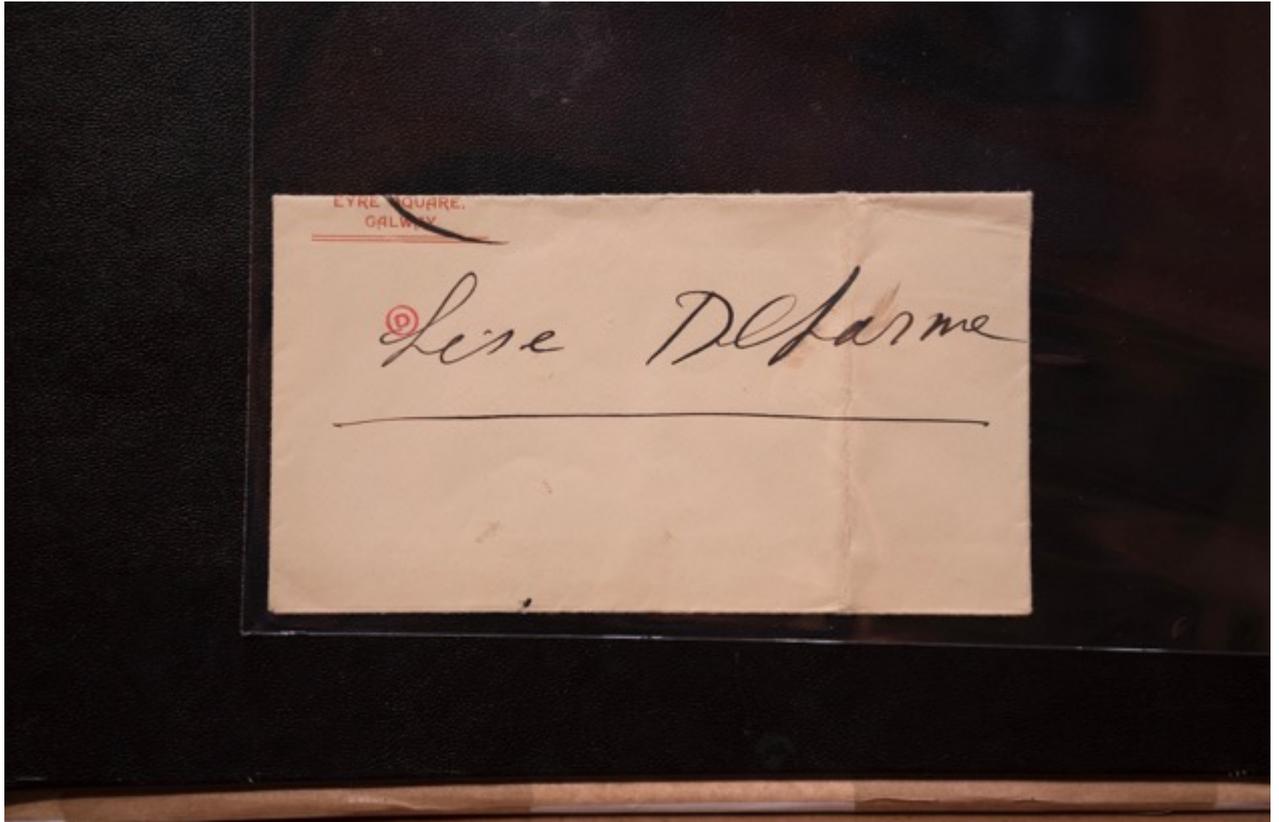


Figure 3: Envelope to spell for Lise Deharme 5 September 1937 India ink on paper.  
Fond André Breton, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris, 2018

The 'h' and the 'a' of 'Deharme' is smudged, presumably in haste: the energy of movement across the islands he has just left seizes the 'writer,' agency quakes in the metaphysics still being unfolded from the apocalyptic route: caustic black magic masquerades as post, colliding pre-modern and industrial logistics, whilst the faded sepia ink contrasts the russet "Eyre Square/Galway" stamp. The right-hand side of the envelope is also bent, and this straight bend – presumably for the purposes of fitting the diminutive *sort* into that which was sent to Breton – is legible across the lineament of the spell itself, that the envelope contained, when the former is unfolded and laid flat (Figure 4).

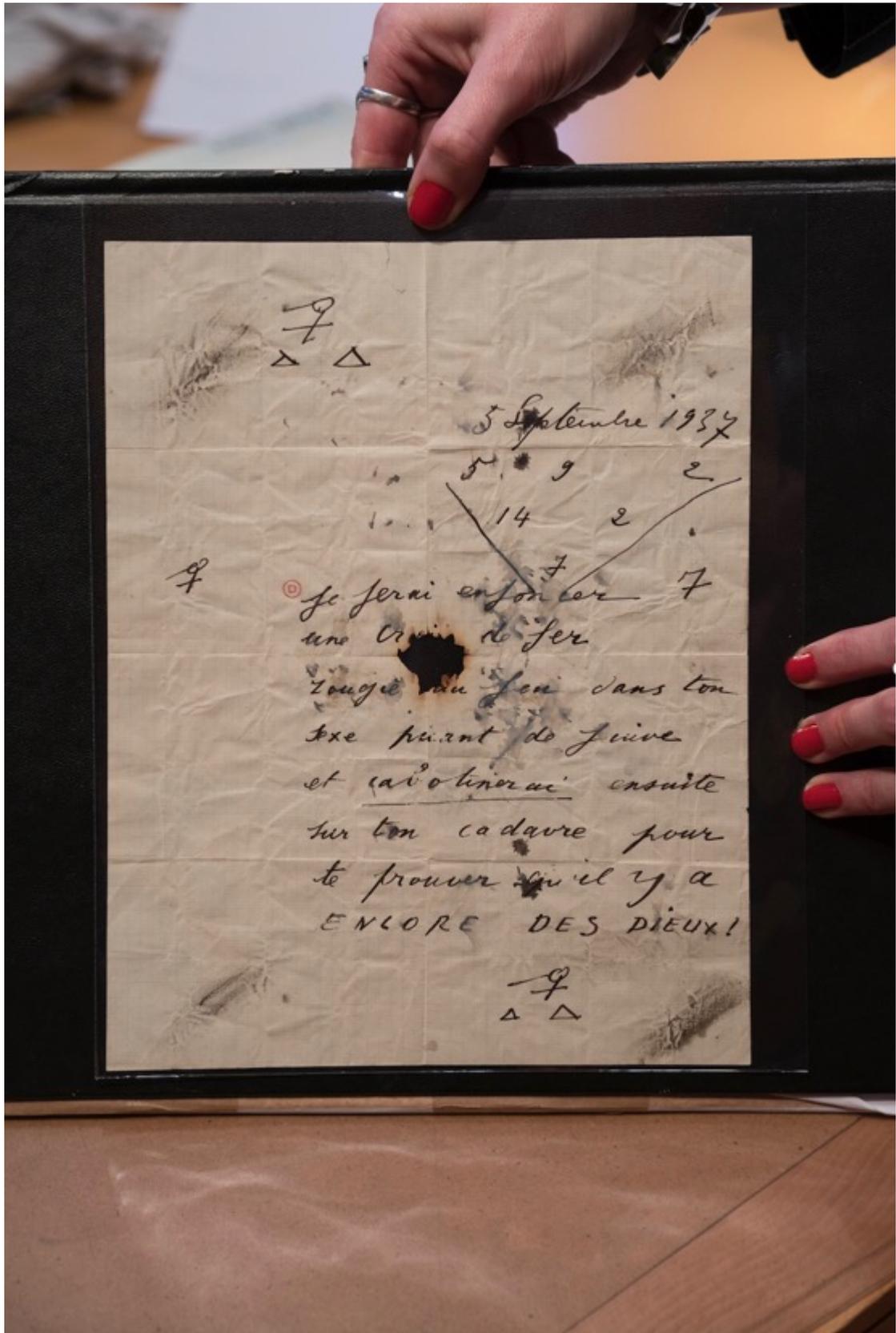


Figure 4: Spell for Lise Deharme 5 September 1937 India ink on burned and soiled paper. Fond André Breton, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris. Reporter's hands, 2018.

This spell, when translated and transcribed, carries unsavory intent: “I will shove a red-hot poker up your stinking Jewish sex, and then camp it up on your corpse to prove to you that the GODS STILL EXIST!” (Artaud, 1937).

Whilst this sounds inexcusably violent and racist, Artaud indicates elsewhere that his later drawings are “a grammar, an arithmetic, a whole Kabbalah which shits at the other, which shits on the other” (cited Derrida, 1998: 41). Apart from this shocking utterance, there is no other mention in Artaud’s work of any support for the Nazi War effort, the duration of which he was incarcerated in asylums. In the accompanying letter to Breton, with which the spell to Deharme was enclosed, he said: “I am against all Jews to the extent to which they have denied the Kabbalah, all the Jews who have not denied the Kabbalah are with me, the rest are not” (cited Murray, 2014: 80-1). Presumably, Deharme has denied the Kabbalah, and it was, moreover, his need for a mystic methodology as part of a non-hierarchical series of systems that drives its intent. The letter, then, represents an uncompromising need for experience of magic at the crux of the compromise, where extremes of minor thought are preferred against orthodoxy: also, indicative perhaps that a multiplicity of deities, Celtic or otherwise, were foremost in his mind when leaving Áránn. Nonetheless, whilst the racist violence of this *sort* is not congruent with Artaud’s project, and its interpretation in this thesis, there are those, such as Kimberly Jannarone, who parallel Artaud’s project to a wider accepted European fascism at play in art and culture of the period (2012: 53).

To traverse the page itself, then: the date inscribed near a Kabbalistic reduction to 7 in the right-hand top corner is surmounted to the left by a strange symbol flanked by triangles, which is repeated twice across the page, as indecipherable mapping of a psychic terrain. Evocative of Elizabethan John Dee’s alchemic insignia, his friend Paule Thévenin confirms that “Very often, during those months [...] his signature is accompanied by a triple sign: the symbol of the feminine– which is also that of the planet Venus – augmented with an oblique stroke at its summit, on top of two triangles with the point upward” (1998: 14-15). This mark also resembles, impressionistically, a kind of wind sock: index to tempestuous energies at certain points of island landscapes (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Wind sock chez Two Tree Island, Essex estuary

Either way, these sigils, as neither word nor image, neither signification nor mimetic events on the dynamic plane of the page operate, as with Artaud’s later *sorts*, as both curse and

apotropaic magic.<sup>6</sup> In this spell, a cigarette burn ineluctably consumes the words ‘iron’ ‘red hot’ and ‘fire’, as if the fire meeting its sign ‘sends’ the effect, as Artaud’s envoy, pharmakon analogue to the recipient’s body. The pharmakon, traced through Derrida’s *Plato’s Medicine* (1983) was a term to describe the curative and poisonous effects of writing: where Plato thought writing destroyed memory, and was thus an evil, Derrida shows writing’s opportuneness: a bivalence clearly afoot in the spell as both curse, and protection. The pharmakon is also, as Stiegler explains years later, “at once what enables care to be taken and that of which care must be taken...its power is curative to the immeasurable extent that it is also destructive” much like the creation/destruction Ireland represents (2013a:4). The epistolary *sort* within this envelope then, is an operative protection against sorcerous forces of control and/or anterior God, in favour of polyphony of “Gods,” which it is reasonable to assume infer a more animistic and metaphysical worldview. It is also, as shall be for the first time suggested in relation to Artaud’s work, a performance via the page not just into a magical causality, but into the *time of technology* too, via the paper: not just via the dual nature of the pharmakon, but by the deep entwinements that making holes in the substrate shall be shown to effect in this rocky landscape.

If Artaud’s spell practice starts with this one to Deharme, in September 1937, it ends dramatically with a curse addressed to Hitler in September 1939,<sup>7</sup> bearing in mind that Artaud spend the whole war suffering violent electro-shock therapy in an asylum. These two paper relics to top and tail a two-year ritual map the coordinates of a soul forever reassembled. They are “vituperation against the obligations of *spatial* form,” he confirms, because “the figures I made were *spells* – which I lighted with a match and burnt no sooner than I had meticulously drawn them” (cited Grossman, 2008: vii). For Artaud, these *sorts* were not art – or even less the witchy aesthetic of unrealised occulture lurking ever more prevalently in contemporary art discourse, suggestive of how a moribund posturing is simple not sufficient, in the 1930s, nor now<sup>8</sup> (Marciniak, 2019: 4).

The malaise of the contemporary rests for Stiegler in an “insufficient re-doubling” thanks to the relative speed of Disorientation and context-less driven “programmatic suspension” and the ensuing inability to fully individuate (Stiegler 2009: 76).<sup>9</sup> It is Stiegler’s contention that current technological prosthetics – phones, inter alia, act as an obstacle to intensification. Unlike the more magical pre-Enlightenment correspondences of form and language,<sup>10</sup> contemporary effects of Disorientation are at their “*most extreme* limit today” and it is only the combination of caustic intensification, such as of Artaud’s project, that might mitigate this (2009: 2). For in Artaud’s case, words and things as figure and ground reticulate in site as a Simondonian preindividual landscape known as a “Privileged Place,” as seen in Chapter 1

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<sup>6</sup> Magic as counter-curse, from Greek *αποτρέπειν*: “to ward off”.

<sup>7</sup> This link to Hitler might raise alarm bells: the spell is aggressive towards Hitler, and claims that Artaud has brought down street barriers in Paris so that Hitler can invade Paris. Implying a bizarre dementia connected to the German Chancellor, Artaud also inscribed a copy in 1943 of *Les Nouvelles Révélations de l’Être* to him, in reference an apparent meeting between the two in Berlin in 1932.

<sup>8</sup> Valances of occulture will be looked at further in Chapter 3.

<sup>9</sup> Disorientation is that which charts historical ruptures brought about by successive phases of technology as externalisations of memory (Stiegler, 2009: 24).

<sup>10</sup> Stakes that have perhaps never been higher than with the broadly transductive forms through which Artaud’s reproduced spells are mediated from analogue to digital, in computer screen, websites, photocopy, microfilm, book, all of which render the virulent materiality of the ‘original’ troubling.

(2017: 178). Artaud's enfolding of writing and drawing<sup>11</sup> is a preemptive collapse of the insufficient disenchanted semiotics to summon a radical dimensionality – the revolution he is after, a virtual immediacy of the past and the present that proffers a performative affectivity to mitigate what anthropologist Tulasiewicz has termed a contemporary disenfranchised “a-temporality”, affected by the temporal experience of the digital, especially in social media (2012:2). Rather, Artaud summons the past, written in land, as a texture, to find the “true magic of the real” (Artaud, 2003: 126).

### Technology

This summoning as a Dionysian subjectivation in the present is technological too, as it lies not in the inert forms left hovering in the page, but in this inscription as a physical force of Disorientation, the power of incantation, immediate and terrifying, symbolised and evidenced in the burnt hole, leaving behind simply the exteriorised shadows of the enfranchising force he invokes, to free subjection from reality. Artaud says: “no drawing made on paper is a drawing [...] it is a *machine* that breathes, this was first a machine that also breathes” (cited Derrida, 1998: 77). Such a doubling that remakes the human evokes the doubling of thought and the human in both the pleroma, and hyle,<sup>12</sup> as a Gnostic<sup>13</sup> gesture, as much as Stiegler's call for epochal re-doubling. In Artaud's case, the two separate modes of spirit and matter somehow conjoin, in this mystical gap between him, and the machine page as technology.

The gap between technology and performer (spell and Artaud) or the “what and who”, in Bernard Stiegler's terms is a “transductive relation during the process of exteriorization that characterizes life” (Stiegler, 2009: 6). “Transductive” is that which denotes the who and the what as co-constituted by their relation: a relative speed or slowness – as this Disorientation – of change between technology and human, played out here as a paradigmatic example in the force of the spell: *sort* and maker are inseparable, and fight against each other, develop each other, and reflect the ruptures of technological change on the psyche. So, this effect of the gap is in fact the nature of technicity.

The Disorienting gap is a pattern found in the landscape itself, in the aged *différance* of fractures in the limestone rocks traced with time: the cuneiform imprint of Disorientation. Space qua *différance* of technics reveals this Disorientation of site. Technics are disorienting because they both undermine the place of human singularity in the present whilst simultaneously bringing about a reorientation: a cognitive and bodily dizziness or dis-adjustment results from technical mutations, spatialising in accordance with Disorientation coordinates of both location and dislocation. This is an at once productive and harmful valance to the decontextualization – or to use a Deleuzian term ‘deterritorialization’ – that the externalisation of technics (the what) has on the human (the who) (Stiegler, 2009: 16). In Stiegler's terms, this is a transductive relation defined by the terms of the what and who being

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<sup>11</sup> In line with this collapse of drawing and writing, the consumption of the assailed body into the gesture of burning is what Jane Goodall in *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama* calls Artaud's “crisis of the signified [...] created by the contracting of difference into absolute dichotomy, where the sign acquires a magical function as marker and guard of divisions” (1994: 168).

<sup>12</sup> Pleroma and Hyle are the terms given in Gnostic thought to the higher realms of unknowable God, and the base matter of physical reality, respectively (Stoyanov, 2000: 7).

<sup>13</sup> Gnosticism is both a second century AD Christian heresy and, coming from the term ‘to know’, a general term used to apply to many heteroclit and unorthodox examples of inner-mysticism (Stoyanov, 2000: 18).

co-constitutive: this is technical, because the transductive relation occurs “during the process of exteriorisation [inscription] that characterizes life” (2009: 6) [myaddition]. The spatio-temporalisation of this exteriorisation – the rift introduced by orthographic writing, is evident as Disorientation through this relative speed as a rhythm in Disorientation that also “paradoxically, *gives place*” (Stiegler, 2009:8). This ‘giving place’ is a re-contextualisation, a re-enactment almost through re-orienting, because technicity (the what) comes before the individual (the who) as the prepersonal force. The giving place needs a context – and the context is Árann.

### Subjectile

The ‘Subjectile’<sup>14</sup> is Artaud’s term for the dynamic zone of intensity that both permit this space of the written-drawn page and releases of its forces. Artaud’s thaumaturgy operates through intent, “botching,” as he says, and “*bad drawing*,” not technique but technics of Disorientation, amateur casting to exhume strange forces, whilst apparently relying on this support of the paper as this scene that *spaces* this, as much as the landscape that permits his pilgrimage (cited Derrida, 1998: 122). Just as the spell travelling through space in the postbox is a brittle rendition thereof, the Subjectile belied the paper’s ability to disappear unnoticed as a given, as it is always latent, fizzing, a portal to another dimension – revealing where the inscriptions “come from.”

For Jacques Derrida, in his 1986 essay on Artaud, ‘To Unsense the Subjectile’ (*Forcener le Subjectile*), the Subjectile is the melding of force and form as it is met and meets itself on the paper support: the support of the inscription is that which “participates in the forceful throwing or casting, but also what has to be traversed, pierced, penetrated in order to have done with the screen” (1998: 76). Artaud is shown to be working ‘on’ the Subjectile whilst constitutively working with the force therein, corroborated by a first-hand account from Thévenin, who claims Artaud would “induce some violence to surge forth from their wounds he had inflicted,” passing his pencil “again and again over the same spot, making it gleam like mica” (1998: 31).

For Derrida, the force of these operations reveal several ‘underneaths’ constituting its “groundless ground,” the incessant almost onanistic rub of sheet as skin, revealing the violent presence of Artaud’s body beneath and in his gestures, as much as the Subjectile’s active “adverse body” and the “maternal” support, which Derrida sees figured in the soiled-diaper aspect thereof, meaning that the rubbing and piercing are only ever revealing more and more layers, and never a foundation (Derrida, 1998: 145). But the melding could be read more

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<sup>14</sup> Originally a painting term, Subjectile is an archaic, almost lost, French word describing the external layer onto which a painter applies paint. Both the surface on which the ‘subject’ of the painting is applied, but more than this, the material of the surface, oscillates between foreground and background in its insistence on the ‘ground’ for the paint: it is a layer in a system of support, but also the essence of something alien, supplementary to the work. The painter Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) used cardboard as a painting surface, and in 1921, the writer Klingsor used the term ‘Subjejectile’ to tease out the way this cardboard both absorbs the paint and becomes part of the scriptural space, foregrounding the background of the surface, and letting the Subjectile show thorough (1921: 243). As blood or pus would suppurate up through a bandage over a cigarette burn, and layers of gauze engorge with bodily liquid, filling the threads of the material, here paint reveals the swollen layers behind thickened cardboard canvas.

productively as a battle between his body and that of the Subjectile as an active, sorcerous zone, a double to Artaud's *sorcier*, rather than a wall you can never scale. The recreation involves Artaud founding metaphysics through the Subjectile, a framing device for a force that makes the page a space of magic, and that transductively remakes *him*. Were it not for the Subjectile, the holes would be points of intensity: but a dynamic between force and form dilates *time*, contesting a-temporality with trans-temporal immediacy, where the hole of the spell tunnels and traverses virtual reality in the landscape, too. An anti-realist Blind Spot of Technicity, the hole is a vector of being itself. Under these auspices, the spatial reformation is nothing short of Artaud's "search for a lost world" through the page (and as shall be shown, the rock) in the words of his comrade Thévenin, and not the realist reduction that Derrida condemns it to (1998: 41). And this "world" is important, if we reframe it as planet, or rather, earth...or land: the occultural *mise-en-scène*.

### Fire Drill = Hole of Time

Subjectivation is impressionistically rendered and broken in the iron glimmer of the pencil line and the burnt *sortie* (exit) of the *sort*'s hole: "uplifted up in the void I once refused, I have a body that submits to the world and disgorges reality" (Artaud, 1965: 85). Where Artaud thinks of this 'void,' he locates it as a necessary transit of *space and time*, a cigarette burns through the force of this Subjectile, and through which you tumble as a vector: a key magical manoeuvre and weaponisation as abyssal subjectivation against the impasses of the present all the more relevant in the "flavourlessness" of time in drive-based capitalism, a time sorcerous in its own way, in the underlying occulture of modernity (Fisher, 2018:372).

Artaud confirms: "born by the most infamous magical manoeuvres into a world I wanted no part of, and "similar magical manoeuvres [...] prevent me from making a hole in this world in order to leave it"<sup>15</sup> – indicative also of his pharmakonic distrust of art world 'magicians' (1965: 85). Artaud is in search of the exit to reach the lost world, or the *réel inutilisé* – the world unused by men – in the "crucible of fire" like the furnace at the level of marsh in Chapter 1, where "bodies are remade" (*ibid*). This crucible is this burnt hole – suggestive of the cigarette burn – where he was "made into a pyre to cure me of being in this world." (Artaud, 1965: 85).<sup>16</sup> Making his necessary hole in the world – as Artaud says in his own essay on Van Gogh, occurs for the painter with a three-day bullet through space time – which is a small absence around which his (w)hole story oscillates.<sup>17</sup>

This entry/exit thus made seems like the fleeing projectile of a meteor, with his long hair trailing behind him as a fiery tail would: indeed, the cigarette hole placed in the centre of the

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<sup>15</sup> Derrida's reading leaves what Jonathan K Shaw has called a "shuttle[ing] between a frontal working on the Subjectile to botches inertness, and a bringing something out of its hidden depths" (2016: 261). This vacillation between aggression and failure, where space is always related to Khôra and Plato, Derrida's account of the Subjectile ultimately amounts to a deconstructive phenomenological reduction, condemning Artaud to a "Resurrection Shuffle", to quote the title of 1971 song of British group Ashton, Garner & Dyke.

<sup>16</sup> In this sense it should be remembered those who have had to resort to the spectacle of self-immolation out of sheer desperation, such as the Tibetan Monks during the Vietnam War. The event of the self-sacrifice that is hard to assimilate, refold back into representation. If Fire is the "ultra-living element" it is also the duality of total destruction, an envoy of and to the necropolis (Bachelard, 1964: 7).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Performance* (1970) by Donald Cammell, who was influenced by the writing of Artaud. An occult-crime counter-culture film starring James Fox and Mick Jagger, it uses the same motif of a bullet hole as the portal to a transformative reality.

page leaves behind a crater such as a meteor would leave in the earth or in the atmosphere as it is ‘sent’ in space and time, as *différance*, through the air: tar and umber fringed tendrils spark out around the circumference of a jagged hole, the sphincter of a barbed halo (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Ancient Forces – detail of cigarette burn

The crater, surrounded by the torn dirtied page, is like fragmentary writing, which is, for Maurice Blanchot, “a piece of meteor detached from an unknown sky,” recalling the collage mode of the fragment in Chapter 1 (1993: 308). The magical indistinction of this hole as diabolic non-signifier in the search for this new/lost Dionysian world, occurs also through re-finding the forces as a non-determined anteriority, for which enlisting elements of life beyond the semiotics of communication as such is conducive: an opacity of technology across the ages. More than the material layers of the substrate, and more than just the re-made body of Artaud through the fire, the Subjectile, like the Templar whistle in M.R James’ ghost story *Oh Whistle and I’ll Come To You My Lad* is a force to help draw up these “ancient” forces beyond the scope of the page, or the screen, to make the present-past re-emerge (1904: 85).

This magical system of the Subjectile dynamises the forces of the Marsh Regime, the always technologically inscribed mud, but the lines and marks on the page are just a shell thereof: intransitive indexes, like the cuneiform tablet, for the forces behind it, and their interactions, re-born from the virtual<sup>18</sup>. Even were the spells to be art, performance and work of this latter genre are magical, a virtual force from which it is called up, for even art “does not carry its end or reality within itself,” as Artaud explains *The Theatre and its Double* (1958: 48).

The unknowable nature of what Barker has called “the forcefully anti-technical, a-voiding properly technical art-making” scheme loses its sting in Derrida’s phenomenological version which, as above, relies on a dialectical tussle gained from a genealogy of Husserl and Heidegger, that ultimately sees Artaud simply throwing force at a page (2009: 21).<sup>19</sup> Here, however, the event of the Subjectile is a cataclysmic de/reterritorialisation, moving in and out of a spatial zone as determined by a certain vector that opens time, which Deleuze and Guattari, following Artaud’s lead, call “lines of flight,” from the latent potentials to be enacted in site (1987: 277). Among forces, we are at the invariable white heat moment qua the hole (here, burnt with fire) of the Blind Spot. This is the preindividual force, never as an

<sup>18</sup> Virtual is “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract” (Deleuze, 2015:156).

<sup>19</sup> There is an association between the thrownness of Artaud’s Subjectile and Heidegger’s *Geworfenheit*. The latter’s notion of ‘thrownness’ is the very nature of being, but for Artaud’s Subjectile, it is not a function of phenomenological reduction (cited in Barker, 2009: 21).

address to ‘technique,’ but of technics. This is why transduction is crucial to the argument: the remaking of who and what, where spell and caster are only seen as a partial result of the operation or process that brings it into being.

Whilst the Subjectile renders the burnt hole a vector of time travel, ancient forces in turn are also being drawn up as fuel thereof, always virtual, as a site for individuation, which for Simondon, comes from “a partial and relative resolution manifested in a system that contains latent potentials” (1992: 300). These forces are the latent metastable multiplicity of the preindividual, the magical unity, which in terms of individuation is taken up a notch with Artaud, whose aim is abyssal Dionysian subjectivation through the void. But as much as it’s a void, the transformative metallurgical pyre as re-maker is congruent to these latent tensions, for Artaud’s hole is plentiful: his holes burn fleetingly through to “the luminous currents of forces constructing reality” – the forces of non-determined anteriority as metastable Disorientation. As in Chapter 1, it is a concatenation that meets a required level of intensity pursuant to modes of subjectivation today that have, in their algorithmic predictability, have lost “possibility” (Beradi, 2017: 7).

The non-optical Blind Spot of the hole is thus not just the fount for the release of ancient force, but the way that all existence is (re)generated: burning is affectively summoning the “true magic of the real” (2003: 126). The resultant ‘present’ is transmuted from past to future, like the Babylonian metallurgists’ material, through the itinerancy and différence of site-based enactment. The virtual is not unreal, for this charged potential is at the level of site itself, seen in the inscriptions of the rock. By this alchemical hole in page and rock, the virtual is realised as spatial and temporal haecceities of the earth’s matter, and these forces return him to the landscape (cited Derrida, 1986: 62).

### Fragment land

Artaud’s peregrinations and foolings-about *work* the Subjectile, in such a way as to insist, again, on the geological import: a triumvirate of site, substrate and journey which, in conjunction with the methodology of fire, is also cognate with ancient methods of spell casting (Wilburn, 2103: 97).<sup>20</sup> As he says of his works on paper, and the expressive power of breath therein, there is not one “that isn’t a breath cast out with all the strength / of my lungs [...] not one that doesn’t answer to *some real bodily act*” which here, is the striding across the Inis Mór itself, cutting into its thick air with new coordinates (cited Derrida, 19998: 119). This remakes him and the paper in the “immediate” moment of the hole, founded on a Gnostic relationship to the very Base Matter of the landscape that influences it, a virtual mix of forces. A lesson in the generative and dangerous power of site, as a third player in this

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew Wilburn, in his book *Materia Magica; The Archaeology of Magic in Roman Egypt, Cyprus, and Spain* describes the tripartite process of spell casting in Ancient Egypt as an intercession of deposition, materiality and inscription. Centred on binding spells and ‘curse tablets’, he looks at words and magical symbols inscribed into lead, papyrus or organic supports, and how they are then placed in specific sites alongside catalytic vocal and physical enactments. Wilburn locates magic here as a fundamentally material endeavour, with the words written on artefacts analysed in symbiotic relationship to the materiality of their supports, in much the same way as Artaud’s Subjectile as curse. His burning of the page near certain active and fraught words, so the more to charge them, has precedent too, as Wilburn describes the burning of certain miniature figurines in ancient Egypt, accompanied by the curse “as you are in flames, and on fire...” (2013: pp.97-8).

oscillating drama of the *mise-en-scène* of Áránn, where *sorts* are a stage in the wider articulation of life as it is predetermined by exteriorisation.

The arcane legends of the limestone, and Artaud's heretical metaphysics framed by the Subjectile, are enactments one upon the other, as two co-constitutive fragments, dynamised by the hole. Where the Subjectile was in some sense a frame, the island is also the *mise-en-scène* for his psychic inscription: the limestone substrate of the uplands known as the Burren, near to Galway, make one huge technical surface, one that reflects, restitutes, re-televises the Marsh Regime through modes of drilling. This is a point inferred by French writer Maurice Blanchot, in a quote from 'The Fragment Word' that is useful in thinking of the lost force in both geographic and textual terms. Blanchot explains that writing itself exists as islands: "speech as archipelago: cut up into the diversity of its islands and thus causing a surging of the great open sea; this ancient immensity, the unknown always still to come, designated for us only by the emergence of the earth's infinitely divided depths. The eternal wish once again finds force" (1993: 309).



Figure 7: Map of Inishmore (Robinson, 1986)



Figure 8: Artaud spell, 1938

The island of Inis Mór is itself a fragment: in a geological sense, it is a shard of limestone in Galway Bay, marking the site of a geological fault, but equally looked at from above, on the map, the little islands are akin to the scabrous edges of a broken cuneiform shard, or the fractal circumferences of a maddened piece of paper (Figure 7/8). On the interior of the fragment, holes abound, from the cigarette burn on paper to the impressionistic cuppings of Artaud's Cane on limestone, the latter as much a writing surface, an enlarged spell fragment with an "ancient immensity still to come" through activation (Blanchot, 1993: 309). A fragment, as in Chapter 1, that calls through from past to future and back to present as a feedback loop, a re-enactment of metastable Disorientation.

## Originary Fault Lines of the Organ

An Áránn word for a slab of limestone, a ‘clint,’ designates blocks or more aptly ‘surfaces’ into which the writing of the water-soluble stone is inscribed. Tim Robinson observes that limestone’s structural form grows over centuries, determined by originary flaws: areas of deep rupture split along the clints as legend to ancient fault lines that are the island’s doing and undoing, much like the originary ‘fault’ of technicity that was seen with Epimetheus and Prometheus in Chapter 1, and the lines of – not *flight*, but force, that crawl over the site as a tracing of itinerant nodes of intensity. In this analogy, Stiegler showed that prostheses and technicity are generated through the two Greek deities’ “originary fault of origin,” by virtue of which humans are formed through the technics that fire represents (2009: 10).<sup>21</sup>

If the gap of Disorientation is the *différance* traced across fault lines in the limestone, whereby both technicity and island are determined by the originary disorienting fault, and the Subjectile is a frame to draw out ancient forces, it is conducive to think of the island not just as cognate with the spell page, but as *a* technic itself, qua marsh: a Geological Subjectile, operative like the Geophilology of Chapter 1.

Recalling Prometheus’ liver, whose surface can be read as a divinatory hermeneutics – like the cuneiform Liver Tablet – is equally pursuant of reading the island as an equivalent technical surface, for the name Áránn connotes an organ: so-called, because the name *ara*, meaning kidney, came to designate the back of a rise of land, for the words from the back and loins in general (Robinson, 2008: 8). The organic mirror of the organ is reflected in the intensity of reading it facilitates: the island’s fractal circumference is “like the rim of a magnifying glass, focusing attention to the point of obsession” (2008: 16-17).

Technological surfaces have a ‘tain’ for Stiegler: the “reflecting mirror” is both optical, but has a granular medium, like the weird frame of the Subjectile. Stiegler refers directly to surface as medium in reference to Artaud’s Subjectile itself, where the ground has a doubling function: he says “this reflective surface that Antonin Artaud calls the “Subjectile,” (this iron wall through which Van Gogh must scrape) is techno-logical *différance*” (2009: 28). This ‘tain’, which is the tinfoil lusterless back of the mirror, is a gritty yet gleaming surface, recalling the pencil marks “gleaming like mica” that meet the dynamic force of the Subjectile, where the concurrent difficulty perceived in separating the sign from its referent can be overcome if the ‘sign’ of the inscriptive mark is read orthographically as always enfolded in a process of island-based *différance*, reflecting time as geological Subjectile, inculcating the vector of itinerancy, a “delayed action mirror” (Stiegler, 2009: 18). Equally, the rising damp on the tenement walls are a granular tain, legend to Disorientation.

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<sup>21</sup> Fire is this key technic, remaking the human, as the original metaphor for externalisation: a fiery transduction of human and place, traced much later in such phases shifts as the Industrial Revolution and its furnaces, a caustic remaking of life through matter and its relative speed as Disorientation, where the latter denotes, as in Chapter 1, the historical ruptures brought about by successive phases of technology as externalisations of memory.



Figure 9: Prophetic mirror from Bryher's Iron Age cist burial

The island as Geological Subjectile through the tain qua mirror then reflects time and in so doing facilitates what Stiegler calls, as above, generative “epokhal re-doubling”: almost a retroactive time travel, showing how originary technics “opens the indeterminate not only as the originary de-fault of origin, as primordial, but because the orient appears, in indetermination, *only in the experience of prosthetic access* to the already-there” as technics (Stiegler, 2009: 6/60). This access is evident inscribed in the landscape, which the coordinates of the spell page and the movements across the island, which (dis)orient, crucially as “indeterminate” (ibid). Intensity seeps out at these thin interfaces, a feeling that Robinson also attests to, with *Pilgrimage* being described as a “diary of intoxication” with places and times, as nodes are where “layers of experience touch and may be fused together” (2008: 18). All along, the hole burnt in the spell page was a way to drill into the virtual time of the island.

Inis Mór's island status also calls into focus other mirror functions. The Iron Age mirror found in the South-Western Isles of Scilly cist grave on Bryher is metaphor to the landscape's surface of temporal interpolation (Figure 9). This buried grave good's inhumation on an island is key to aligning it as a local site of intensity, and the (reflection of the) time inscribed thereon. The early first century AD Roman writer Pomponius Mela speaks of the holy and prophetic inhabitants of Sena, one of a group of islands called the Cassiterides, which historian Miranda Green suggests could refer to the Isles of Scilly. A Gaulish oracle, in his account, is located on Sena, attended by nine virgin priestesses who were able to predict the future, cure all illnesses and control the elements. The archaeological artefact inhumed with a female body suggests this practice (Figure 9). Again, a strange form of time travel, telling the future through the temporal difference of a “delayed action mirror” from beyond the grave, found most profitably on remote islands, and inhumed so the dead could look into the future (Green 1997, 103).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Reporter writes: “PS I have seen this mirror in the small Isles of Scilly Museum, and photographed it” (Figure 9).

## Excavation Drill vs Archive Sediment

Limestone faults and fissures thus literally ‘reflect’ the lineaments of Inis Mór’s as a Subjectile, a frame of strange space, as a transductive remaking of both the ‘who’ and the what,’ so that Artaud, the “Revealed” may ‘re-enter’. (Stiegler, 2009: 16). As we saw in the Fire Drill section, the restitution, as congruent with the burning, involves the re-formation of the body – and the memory – that wields the drill, as much as the cigarette. Jonathan K Shaw suggests that this body is both “the means of finding the lost world, and the reason for doing so” (Shaw, 2016: 250). This drilling across the delayed action mirror of landscape purges and invokes something latent in inscription as much as mud and rocks, intervening in causality by drawing frequency through the land facilitated by this *différance*. This is similar to the drilling found in Beckett’s *Texts For Nothing*, which depicts a burrowing man going deeper underground, like Artaud, for “a way out somewhere [...] on the long travelable road, destination tomb” (1999: 46). Written at the same time as Artaud’s Irish hagiography, Beckett describes in a letter, written in 1937, his probing of language’s texture, “boring holes’ into it, to let whatever is seething behind “start seeping through” (2009: 518). Redolent of the island’s peat, that acts like a thin coverlet over the island’s cranium of limestone, the sludgy matter seeps up, through the page. Slime as alien presence, rotting through time: the island is a spatio-temporal network riddled with the cast-off relics of drilling, as much a virtual space written with the legend of exteriorisation.

These forces of anteriority pre-date the human mind, which will later invoke it. Cognisant with technics, which thinks before us, this is a manifestation of the virtual potency of land as much as memory that is retroactively determined thereby (Stiegler, 2008: 31). The topographical inference to the remaking of memory and land is explicit in Artaud’s decidedly chthonic explanation of his actions: “As far as the text is concerned, /In the moulted blood of what tide/ Will I be able to make heard/ The corrosive structure,/ There where the drawing, *Point by point*/ Is only the *restitution of a drilling*,/ Of the advance of *the drill in the underworld* of the sempiternal latent body. (cited in Derrida, 1998:115-16) [my emphasis].

Beckett says that beneath the veil, behind the textures at which he teases and rips, there might be nothing. But for Artaud, it is, as above, a “restitution”, a glimpse through the hole of a vanished yet virtual underworld reality, one that re-doubles the tain of Disorientation, vitally foregrounding the material of deep excavation as technics: both the cinders from the cigarette burn, the molten mud of the island, the fragments of rock, are materials inscribed with the trace of time, but yet are cast offs, the points are moment of the vector. Walter Benjamin explains (in a text handwritten on postcard – appropriately part of his archive of letters and fragments) – that “a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which its findings originate, but also gives an account of the strata which first had to be broken through,” but again, these strata are the relics (2007: vi).

Derrida, too, applies a sedimentary comparison, avowing the Subjectile’s similarity to “a bed in geological code” (1998:145). On the (rock)face of it, this would corroborate the relation of Subjectile to island, but for Derrida, it is simply a never-ending peeling away of layers, a “groundless ground” as “abyssal series of sedimentations” (ibid). Artaud, however, abjured hierarchised forms of knowledge and being, which could be seemingly emblematised in a linear drilling of this sort and *sort*. His metastable currents belie what Simondon calls the

“distinction between the a priori and the a posteriori, an echo of the hylomorphic schema”: keenly, this hylomorphic confusion in the “theory of knowledge obscures, with its dark central zone, the true process of individuation that is the seat of knowledge” (1992: 309). In contrast to linear progress, the excavation of metastable force finds a much-needed gnosis, in the muddy side of a dark virtual yet material spatio-temporalisation, “as if time/ were not fried/ were not this *dry fry*/ of all the crumbles at the beginning,” as Artaud’s late poem ‘Here Lies’ from 1948 has it (1965: 248).

These forces as the “seat of knowledge” also foreclose the linear problems that a methodological dalliance into apparent conceptual and geological layered sedimentation imposes. Deleuze and Guattari use Artaud as a driving force in their thought to oppose this, writing in a section indebted to him, entitled ‘How Do You Make Yourself A Body Without Organs,’ about a ‘smooth’ “Distribution of intensities” whereby the “BwO is always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free” (1987: 160-1). The BwO is a mode – an operation, a machine that fictions Artaud and his words, makes of Artaud a conceptual personae, an instrument of philosophy in and as life. Artaud himself described the Subjectile at one point as that which is “above the paper” and likewise the BwO is lifted away from organised stratigraphic sedimented knowledge, creating a rift between subject and object, like the hole. The BwO is “another plane, obscure and formless, where consciousness has not entered, and which surrounds it like an unilluminated extension or a menace, as the case may be” (Artaud, cited Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 160). For Artaud, and latterly Deleuze, the force itself of the excavation has no existence out of the (re)-enactment: as above, the hole is an inert relic, with the force passing out of time and space, the real being simply forces “acting immediately.” However, the excavation into the psyche and sediment of site, as an archaeological test pit *qua* active Subjectile, is an unfolding of relative speed or slowness as exteriorisation, which is the fount of Disorientation.

The strata removed, in the thickness of paper and the ashes thereof, and that which is found at the ‘bottom’ of the pit are, just as for Walter Benjamin, the ‘excavation’ of memory as technics knitted to the materiality of that consciousness. But the sediment on the island is heretical, not hierarchical. A material neither straight nor entangled, like the “Holey Space” of the metallurgists in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987: 170). This Hol(e)y space is more the abysmal locale of Artaud’s matter, and of course cognisant of Babylonian alchemy that spurred the dilation of time in Chapter 1. For this ‘memory’ of excavation is also unrepeatable, which is why Artaud’s archive *qua* performance is, in re-enactment, a return of that which has never been known to time: an abysmal time travelling. His *restitution* of a drilling: without a stable past, erupting through the intensity of the Subjectile, it’s less the return of an object, and more a reformation of it anew according to the contingencies of the enactment, into the future, in what Robert E. Cabrales calls an occultural feedback loop: “The present travels back, not through a linear timeline, but rather through a non-Euclidian abyss beyond time: within the chaotic multiplicity of (dis)order” (2019: 3).

Derrida’s *mal d’archive* is thus indeed fever, terminal illness: a psychoanalytic melancholia at odds with the drive of the Subjectile (1994). Artaud’s abjuration thereof has pertinent purchase in the present’s inability to allow loss in digital recall: by proffering a radical immediacy, nostalgia withers in favour of the generative flavour of site as an unknowable Blind Spot. An enactment into the future is, I aver, already what technics, which thinks before us, mandates – for, like the cuneiform script piercing through the retroactive clay as ground,

this drilling is inscription as tele-vision, where writing's rupture of proto-history is dependent on its instantiation as re-vision. This, again, is the Blind Spot of technicity as that drilled Dionysian passage "beyond representation," that the Subjectile facilitates, for, as Artaud attests, "writing/ is at the forefront of *vision*" – a different kind of sight and site (cited Grossman, 2008: xii). The non-vision of the hole burning sends and receives signals through time, drawn through the liminal scene of the Subjectile. Thus, Artaud's dynamic use thereof and his remaking pushes through a radical and temporally transformative model at the level of *site specificity* as dilation of time, in contemporary practice as re-enactment (1965:158).

The who and the what together invoke again those revenant alchemical boundaries that operate along the threshold of human and technical for this remaking of both, and for which, unfolded across the island he is on, via the sorcerous hole, which facilitates a performative hagiography, re-performing St Patrick, but becoming another. The ancient force of the island corroborates his re-making, intensified by the hole: a transductive notion of time qua luminescent forces, that corroborates the always-already heterogeneity of narratives: structure and knowledge is undone long before Deconstruction, and long after.

Scene 2:

Parochial Cane: Ireland & Autodidact Purgatory vs. Via Negativa Nationalism

St Patrick's Cane stabbed the earth to create a hole, and the Cistercian monk H.de Saltrey propitiously located Purgatory in a certain point in Ireland, in the form of a round dank hole into which St Patrick made penitents descend for the absolution of sins: a strange coincidence too stark to be ignored when assembling Artaud's psychic gazetteer of Inis Mór. The myth provides a spatio-temporal substratum, a hazy blueprint for later re-enactments of the hole, as well as underlining the importance for Joyce and Beckett of Dante's Purgatory. In the latter instance, Dante effectively maps his hellish journey into an imagined Ireland, combining the local with the infinite. During the furor of the Literary Revival, a location was even pinpointed: Station Ireland, on the Lough Derg in County Donegal, where a chapel was built in 1931, to accommodate the site's 15,000 annual Pilgrims (Le Goff, 1984: 199).



Figure 10: At Picnic Two Priests – Father Ted on the limestone Subjectile of the Burren

This demonstrates that islands mandate the local, germane to a re-doubling place: small outcrops, they demand an intensity of focus, the magnifying glass of the cliffs drawing attention in an intoxicated vision. With their own eco systems, they are a refuge for rare bird species, and the location of umpteen ancient saint's hermitages. Tim Robinson charts at least five saints on Inis Mór, both their geological and mythical locations, and the intertwining between the two (2008: 32). From the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, St Helen's in the Isles of Scilly, and Holy Isle in the Firth of Clyde, to name a few scattered about Britain, these holy people sought out what Leslie Thomas called a "rocky independence, and a lasting quietness [that is] the treasure of such places" (1969: 152). This he wrote in a book in 1969 that charted his tour around ten British islands in one year, called *Some Lovely Islands*: the title of which sounds like a publication from the TV series *Father Ted*, itself set in a fictional version of oileáin Árann, and indeed filmed, in part, on them (Figure 10).

The sitcom *Father Ted*, as with Rigsby in *Rising Damp*, is relevant to the sense of enclosure, the creeping despair and humorous contingency, trained in the hermeneutics of the liver in Chapter 1 despite, of course, Artaud's adjuration of organs ("the liver that turns the skin

yellow”!)<sup>23</sup> and the funny setting of a “parochial house” that is the series’ main location, specifically centered on this exact geology of fissures: a geology which I maintain Artaud was adamant to reach, to “give place” to (as much as to displace), despite its logistical and geographic remoteness. With a fiendish dedication Artaud arrived in Árainn, first getting a ferry to Cobh, then shooting off directly to Galway and from there onto another boat for the port of Cill Rónáin. And these travel details are not appealing direct to a glib biographism, as most mentions of Artaud’s Ireland trip inevitably are – they are essential to “drilling point by point” for the originary Ur-Disorientation: a “giving of place” that seems to mandate a bizarrely local or parochial nature, which is the final theme of this chapter’s unfolding mise-en-scène (ibid). ‘Parochial’ originally relates to being ‘of a church or parish’ delimited by the church’s jurisdictional boundaries – but also comes to designate the narrow minded, limited in scope, provincial, insular, but equally and contrastingly, I aver, the textured obverse of the texture-less decontextualised, which underlines electronic communication: the local is replete with text – of varying kinds. As in Chapter 1, where the Reporter’s movements over the marsh were analogue to the timely inscription of cuneiform into the clay, Artaud’s wanderings and auto-reformation through the void as a localised hole are intensified by the functionality of the Parochial Subjectile.

So, what if the site-based workings (*and unworkings*) to find the unused world were to reclaim the parochial as mitigation then of Stiegler’s un-epokhal suspension? A return to granular locality might also mitigate industrial technologies enforced “scale of distances disproportionate to the orbit in which man has always found in functional equilibrium” (Leroi-Gourhan, quoted in Stiegler, 2009: 90). As Jonathan K Shaw suggests, Artaud was not likely to find “thin places between this world and the lost one” in the metropolitan centres (2016: 295). The question, along the lines of the sublime smallness of an apophatic short story, is rephrased then: why must a metaphysical project be *uprooted* from the everyday, and is there a way of viewing the parochial that belies its common attribution to the reactionary and conservative?



Figure 11: The Gazette, 1937: newspaper filler noting Artaud’s deportation  
National Archives File number DFA Paris P 34/1 19

<sup>23</sup> This liver hermeneutics of course also falls prey to a Psychoanalytic model of lack in its adumbration of sublimation and disappointment.

What for Beckett is the evasion of bigotry is transformed in Artaud's riposte to the exile-theme, a seemingly perverted take on the Irish Literary Revival. If Beckett is an internal exile, a displaced citizen, Artaud is also deported from Cobh as an "alien," as a minor newspaper filler from 1937 describing his enforced departure has it (Figure 11).

The parochial determines a particular intensity of errant site specificity and knowledge that Artaud's enactment attests to: his syncretic mixing of Kabbalah, Tarot, Mexican Peyote Ritual, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Tibetan Bardo Thodal, and now Gaelic and Druidic custom, alongside some machinated remnant of The Theatre of Cruelty, presumably, as piecemeal but generative form, is an autodidact's practice (Artaud, 1958: 79). These literatures all invoke language with that "crisis of the signified," where writing is an active and mindful force that embodies what it imparts, qua his *sorts*, in what is thus potentially termed in the mode of Deleuze and Guattari, a "minor" form, with disorienting cosmic outreach, making Joyce and Artaud's Ireland an ex-territorialised territory, as opposed to reterritorialised creatively – the search for the unthought, that operates within the more "major" form of modernism (Goodall, 1994: 168) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986: 23).

This syncretism also inverts and disorients the zealous antiquarianism that effectively rewrote this Irish Literary Revival between 1890 and 1930, with its stalwart band of folk song collectors and excavators of 'real' Irish inheritance (Kiberd, 1996). When he undertakes the said "search of information concerning ancient Gaelic customs and other matters relating to ancient Ireland," Artaud is foregrounding both topography and an autodidact's contingent practice trained upon the numinous pre-Christian archaeologies of Western Ireland. However deluded or impossible this task, his enquiry is less jaded than the politico-posturing of the Surrealists', whose anti-rational philosophy was incompatible with their political ideologies: hinted at perhaps in Bataille's secret society Acéphale formed in Paris the year Artaud goes to Ireland (Brotchie, 2017: 19).

Árann may have become a focus of claustrophobic Nationalism for an 'original Ireland,' that saw parties of Victorian Folklorists flock thereto, and even an excursion of the Ethnological Section of the British Association having afternoon tea in evening dress on makeshift picnic tables at the ancient fortress Dún Aonghasa in 1857, to the bemusement of the locals (Robinson, 2008: 15). But Artaud, who came to the islands to witness the end of the world, collides his own syncretic mixture of knowledge and practice with similar but disoriented themes of exile that remakes the site, along the lineament of a luminous contingency within the limestone.

Autodidact is indeed closely linked in schema and practice to antiquarian, those people, whom, like Yeats, "pullulate in Ireland – adoring the stuff of song as incorruptible, uninjurable and unchangeable," as Beckett sneered, in clear contradistinction to his own glacial hermeneutics (cited Casanova, 2006: 33). John Millington Synge, another Irishman who went to live in Paris, also went before Artaud. Staying on the middle island, Inis Meáin (where the Reporter stayed), his book *The Aran Islands* was published in 1907, attesting to an engrained layer of paganism in the cognitive – and no doubt, geographic – substrate of the islands. But as has already hopefully been made clear, Artaud's duality is something at once local, but apophatic. Whilst there is some suggestion that the swathe of antiquarians, *pace*

Synge, perhaps piqued his interest in Ireland during his period of research – he possibly saw Robert Flaherty’s film *Man of Aran* in Paris in 1934 – the unsayable located in the contextual, is far from “unchangeable” inheritance, but is the weirdly unrepeatable stuff of the instant, to be virtually mobilised in the present.

Beckett, when ruminating on Joyce and Irish cultural Nationalism’s imposition of Gaelic as a literary language, commented nonetheless in contrast that Dante, in using the Tuscan “vulgar” vernacular did not necessarily equate to “local jingoism,” assembling a “synthetic language that would at least possess more than a circumscribed local interest [...] but which in fact was certainly not spoken nor ever had been” (Disjecta, 1983: 30). Joyce’s failure to succumb to fashion produces something contingent on this instant, a form of writing adhering to nothing, whilst vouchsafing the local(e). The synthesis is equitable to Artaud’s collisions of knowledge systems, which, like Joyce, is oddly married to a location both at home in the absence of the mystical Via Negativa and its attendant humour of the absurd. Deleuze and Guattari would not agree, writing in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* that “the revival of regionalism, with a reterritorialisation through dialect” does not contribute to “revolutionary movements” since they are “full of archaisms” (1986: 24). Artaud’s recourse is to draw up force in the vicinity is a state that “localizes the living being and inserts it in the gradient that confers meaning on the tropistic unity,” and is a salutary reminder of the attempt at orienting Disorientation (Simondon, 1992: 310).

Artaud’s autodidacticism is re-confirmed in the operations of the Subjectile itself: in his first ever use of the term, he says, on a page where the bottom section is torn off (a fragment again) “herewith a bad drawing in which what is called the Subjectile betrayed me” (cited Derrida, 1998: 61). The betrayal here is a knowing collusion with something vital, revealing itself and betraying it and Artaud’s caustic mission, “a-voiding properly technical art-making” (Barker, 2009: 2). A strategy of bad drawing reacts against the arbiters of normative Beaux Arts.

As in Disorientation, if locality is important, so is its inverse, seen in the doubling operations above: dislocation. For Stiegler, symbolic, imaginary rhythms underlie the “*local* experience of the *indeterminate*” (my emphasis) in this search for the unthought (2009: 94). The holes, as we’ve seen, are active force: as much a terracing across space as a sent letter or a body walking over the island’s rocks. An amusingly bureaucratic logistics that makes a syzygy of contingent yet serious humour and locale that runs through his pilgrimage like a stick of rock.<sup>24</sup> The page is con/fused with the strange (étrange, alien) supplement that is the surface under inscription. Artaud is an alien in sectarian Ireland: and the journey around the surface of the page is as much the itinerancy that intervenes in causality, as that which is a dis/placement. A pilgrim in a strange land, with a pilgrim’s stick: a land that itself is, as suggested in relation to the particularities of its Modernism, attuned to the negative, and the minor.

Terry Eagleton, in his introduction to Casanova’s work on Beckett, suggests that the Irish short story was one of its successful genres (2008:3). Oscar Wilde flourished in minor form, and Flann O’Brien, an important touchstone in the darkening fright of the “famished” Irish

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<sup>24</sup> The notion of the pair or “syzygy” is central to Gnostic thought, referring to the linking together of complementary qualities (“Aeons”) to form a state of wholeness (pleroma).

landscape, knew the strangeness of both the incredibly small in collision with the immense, as demonstrated in *The Third Policemen* with the eponymous character's magical box of "omnium" offering a claustrophobic prism through which are seen multiple planes of reality (O'Brien, 2001: 121). Like his medieval forbear, John Scotus Eriugena, there is an ineffable essence of the unthought, then, in Ireland, and echoed in an island: a Negative Theology in the form of *The Cloud of Unknowing* is akin to a Subjectile qua limestone, across which he traces the fault lines as strange routes of dis-location (Anonymous, 1961).

Dis-location then as a doubled practice of the immense and the specific is a theme in the pharmakonic wrenching and giving of place that Disorientation enacts, the "epochal redoubling" and is the form through which Artaud most clearly manifests this drive to write and underwrite site. Tim Robinson, in what he has called a proto-psychogeographic "local epic" as much as *Pilgrimage* also betrays this duality, which is unique to the islands. His landscape study of the geology and custom charts the "subtle actualities of Aran life" whilst attuned to the "immensities in which this little place is wrapped" (2008: xi). According to Robert MacFarlane, this "vibration between the particulate and the universal is one of the book's most distinctive actions" (2008: xi). Clearly, Áránn acts as a strange attractor for this practice of travel, already adumbrated by the 'fault lines' of technicity in the rock, that betray the ineluctable duality of Disorientation.

This nomadic wandering across both the local and the immense is congruent both with this mystical Irish tradition but also the becoming-difference of Deleuze's force of a "pre-individual transcendental field": this field of the Subjectile, synecdoche to the principle of immanence, is, unlike for Derrida, "not a support but a plane [...an] immanent principle of auto-unification through a *nomadic* distribution, radically distinct from fixed and sedentary distributions as conditions of the syntheses of consciousness." (1990: 102). The deterritorialisation of technicity, literally along Deleuze and Guattari's "line of flight" can thus be seen also in relation to Artaud's itinerancy, where the spatiality of "wrenching" or moving is keenly ratified in this conceptual figure of the "traveler," "giving place" as a line of flight distributed through space, galvanised through the worked hole as a moving from node to node, as the negative Blind Spot's tethering or deterritorialising of forces across space: astride thresholds of itinerancy and sedentary, framed by the Subjectile – both virtual and geological (1987: 415).

Pierced with the Cane into the limestone, the metastable machine 'breath' in the geological imaginary, intensifies it at a point where the luminous current is released – latent but becoming vectoral – it is made 'local' from the virtual. A key attribute of the bivalence of Disorientation is this move from giving to taking place, with the metal sparking of the Cane. As above, Deleuze and Guattari's "Holey space" of the metallurgist transgresses both the striation of the state and the smoothness of the nomad for the interzone of the hole: a third space that is the domain of collage, or collision, as suggested by Rancière (1987: 415). Artaud, in search for "matters relating to ancient Ireland," proof of an at once localised yet metaphysical project, incumbent upon itinerant journeying to a locale, is redolent of this holey space because "it is in their specificity, it is by virtue of their itinerancy, by virtue of their inventing a holey space, that they necessarily communicate with the sedentaries and with the nomads (and with others besides, with the transhumant forest dwellers)" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 415). The Cane of Artaud, the tunneling metallurgist, is a technology, and unleashes the chaotic vibrancy of Disorientation engrained in site. Hidden in these itinerant

movements of specific locality contra expansive magical power, is an energetic nexus of absurd failure: both the damp of the sitcom of Chapter 1, and the fulminating force of the metastable – the local/unworkable meeting dark forces.

### Kelp Pit de-tour

All over Inis Mór, as much as there is drilling, there is evidence, as above, of possibly metallurgical activity, albeit not itinerant. Alongside the volcanic solidified veins of calcite, thrown up and petrified from the exorcism of a geological fissure, are small limestone lined pits in the peat, evidence that fiery furnaces predate Artaud's time, and instead are the islanders' own transformative alchemy: their numerous kelp pits, dotted around the island, are like enlarged cigarette burns. Thick smoke would hang over the steaming stone alters of this nineteenth-century sacrament, as kelp transmuted from slippery strands into molten lead, before being dried into slabs under sheets of stone and fern, to be sold to the mainland as ash fuel (Robinson, 2008: 200). A stinking and necessary subsistence, evidence is islands all over Britain, including The Isles of Scilly, and the Orkney Isles (Figure 12).

*The islands' immanent alchemy churns matter,  
cut from its own vapours.*

These pits are, I aver, intense reticulation of figure and ground, qua the spell hole: Privileged Places that churn and retroactively make the island a melting pot of frequencies with other metals in earth and sky – “spatiotemporal haecceities of different orders” that suggest the site's innate technicity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 405/410). This burning was well on the wane by 1937, but for Artaud, the fire he brings through spell and Cane is a sacrificial purifier, a ritual transference, oblation through the smoke, and some recognition or perhaps “restitution” of the island's molten Disorientation, back to the “restitution of a drilling,” that transductively re-made islander and island in the process of accelerating the time of slippery seaweed (ibid).

This “Holey space” of the metallurgist, the catalytic void and axiological point of drilling in sensate Geological/Subjectile readily typifies the cigarette burning, drilling, and self-metal-tipped Cane wielder. Deleuze and Guattari say: “The sign of Cain [Cane?!] is the corporeal and affective sign of the subsoil, passing through both the striated land of sedentary space and the nomadic ground of smooth space without stopping at either one, the vagabond sign of itinerancy, the double theft and double betrayal of the metallurgist, who shuns agriculture at the same time as animal raising” – a subtle hint perhaps as well to the agricultural writing system of the Babylonians (1987: 414).



Figure 12: Reporter chez Kelp Pit, St Martins, Isles of Scilly, 2021

Artaud is indubitably a metallurgist, as much as any of his other appellations, where in his *50 Drawings to Murder Magic*, this churning of metallurgy is affirmed: in the moment of creation, an arguably holey substance produced is a “lava in fusion/ flowing from a volcano” whose business is “the overthrow of the immediate future” to “throw up [...] these worlds of marvels” as what “used to be called the Great Work of alchemy” (2008: 24). As with the Babylonian metallurgist, the immediate efficacy of the inscription tunnels into the future through the Blind Spot of Technicity.

### Humour and Humours: Caned

This return of the metallurgist’s Cane upholds, as methodological prop, demonstrates that the front line is everywhere, and nowhere, and it takes the specific enactment of Cane, like the hole, to open it up: the joint activator of two orthographic substrates, one paper, and one geological, the switching point between mark and marked, and as such, the point of intensity of the Privileged Place, holding together figure and ground: holey space illuminated but the end of the Cane, which Artaud insisted on tipping himself with iron, working the bellows to fashion a stick whose “sparks flew” in more ways than one, when it smashed to the ground (Delueze & Guatari, 1987: 415).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Artaud’s metallurgy has a more technologically advanced precedent: before Artaud was forging amateur pantomime with base metals, Anthony Réal described his friend, “a physician” who made an electric Cane that lit up with an electric light: it contained “a galvanic battery, a small lamp with two burners, and a reflector with a short focus. On pressing a spring [...] an electric light strikes the object to which it is directed, as a projectile would; it is a gun Cane, shooting an electric ray; [...] it turns night into day wherever it directs its light” (1892:

David Rattray in his essay ‘Artaud’s Cane’ suggests that before his journey to Ireland, Artaud could “hear the cosmological upheaval vibrating in the Cane” (1992: 148). Further evidence of its charge, its key role on the island, fizzing with electricity, as both receiver – through the drilling – but as a transmitter too: diabolic radio antennae, minutely attuned to receive the metastable currents that transform the present, in recognition of the flickering duality attendant on Disorientation. Simondon describes how aesthetic-technical objects make of their creator a “futurist,” “which means that he exceeds the *hic et nunc* of needs and ends by enlisting in the created object sources of effects that live and multiply themselves in the work; the creator is sensitive to the virtual, to what demands, from the ground of time and in the tightly situated humbleness of a place, the progress of the future and amplitude of the world as a place of manifestation” (2012: 128). As a technological decoder, the Cane attunes and amplifies to Inis Mór’s force field, not unlike the islanders themselves, with their *racai* (iron rods fitted with wooden handles) used to rake over the smoking seaweed, in the process of kelp burning: the perpendicular stick seems to be a generative, for even the seaweed here is known as “searods” (Robinson, 2008: 201/174).<sup>26</sup> These metal rods still litter Inis Mór’s defunct smithies, strange antennae poking out of the mud, relics of the islands’ own alchemy, an equal candidate for Simondon’s object, as a tool that translates the potential of that “situated humbleness of a place” (ibid).

Versioning seems to abound: The shadows that *racia* cast adumbrate the Cane as it strikes the rock. It is also, of course, the Bacchal Isu: a resurrection, like the Last Days, of a pile of ashes cognate to Artaud’s own supernatural opinion: “This staff, I have been told, was already mine in other centuries” (1965: 92). And later, in the asylum, he recalls it being a: “...weird book summoned by ancient now extinct races that have been branded into my fibres like daughters flayed alive” (cited in Rattray, 1992: 143). The transductive Disorienting technic of the Cane abets huge fictions, so that Artaud’s ‘hole’ story brings together a litter of allusions, re-mobilised in the present, disparate hermetic and personal fragments and Irish cosmologies, proof of his heretical affiliation to the original Gnostics’ apocryphal method of fabulation: the second century cleric Irenaeus, complains of the Gnostics “putting forth their own compositions [...] every one of them generates something new every day, according to his ability; for no-one is truly accepted amongst them unless he develops some enormous fictions” (Pagels, 1985: 48). Fictioning gains currency in contemporary thought via the vector of heresy, this time in the work of François Laruelle, who’s “non-philosophy” denotes operations that refuse to “to produce a cut between a “real” (or outside) and a philosophical procedure that would comment on, or determine that real” as Shaw and Reeves-Everson put it, in their recent edited book *Fiction as Method*: a tome that itself exhorts the contemporary affordances and resonance of fiction as means to encounter others in all their irreducibility for “re-enchanting reality with the buzz of possibility” (2016: 51/8).

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233). This early experiment is not a far cry from Artaud’s fusing of registers, and his penchant for the pantomimic and humorous within the humours and humus of the earth.

<sup>26</sup> Using a staff qua antennae is a method employed in my performance Cealdwiellla. Cf Chapter 3 and performance documentation.



Figure 13: Reporter, sans Cane, buzzing at Dún Aonghasa, July 2019

Fiction, or rather, re-enactment channels procedurally through the Cane, dually reigniting luminous current as ideate possibility made manifest. As Rattray has noted, the Cane could be seen, as with the doubling of *Disorientation*, as both satirical gesture and genuine thaumaturgy, the switching between humorous and (elemental) humours –in a sarcasm extended to the power of magic, too: It is clear that Artaud is entirely credulous to the valance of spell and Tarot casting, and he also dips the Cane in holy Parochial water to consecrate it elementally.

Humour wielded by “an Franncarin beag” (the small little Frenchman, cited Collier, 1997) as a strangely comedic weapon of offense and defense, both: for his usurping of a predominantly Catholic and idolatrous object is cynical and also humorous, as is his miming of religiosity when he later terms himself ‘Saint Artaud’ in the Ivry asylum. This is suggested nowhere more than in *The New Revelations of Being*, where he betrays a lucid reflexivity regarding both his later psychiatric confinement and the seemingly irreconcilable pose assumed in going forth to witness the imminent “Revolution”: “By what path, by what means, by Whom, will this superior transmutation be performed? BY A MADMAN WHO IS ALSO A WISEMAN AND WHO HIMSELF SEES HE IS A WISEMAN AND A MADMAN [...which] means that he has appeared to some as a Solitary Madman and Sage, and to other as an Extravagant Lout” (1965: 91). Both a job shouting and thrashing his Cane on the streets of Paris, and a Saint. This disruption of comedy, qua Chapter 1, channels subjectivation.



Figure 14 & 15: Re-enactment of bench intensity –Artaud, 1948 and Richie and Eddie from sitcom *Bottom*, 1991

Artaud's practice amplifies all these sources, down to the strange resonance between not only his emulation of St Patrick, but the very 'hole' that he, and the kelp pit burners operate in the site as much as the "entrance to the next world" that the Policeman in the Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* taps out with none other than a Cane: "it is here somewhere," the sergeant said [...as] He dragged his stick along the green margin, probing at the hidden ground" (2001: 141). Serendipitous re-enactment and humour credulously hold realism in abeyance, strategies to mobilise the virtual *réel inutilisé* – the unused (or unworkable) world.

In such re-enactment, mobilising the *inutilisé* is to channel the "true magic of the real" as he says in his performative historiography *Heliogabalus Or, The Crowed Anarchist*, written in 1934 (2003: 126). What Cabrales terms "schizohistory," it straddles the threshold of decadence and anarchy that channels between past and present as an infection, the Gnostic flicker of the Roman Empire (2019: 1) (2003: 41). The "powerful signs" that invoke the rift in sign and signifier as exit thereto are invoked bodily by subversive and contingent slapstick that is a generous and innovative recourse to the past as it is refashioned in the contingency of the moment: as are the metastable currents that exists through the fact of the Subjectile. Artaud writes about exactly this moment of Dionysian comedy, fittingly in relation to the Marx Brothers, film star peers of his, where he finds "the liberation [...] of a particular magic, which the customary relation of words and images does not ordinarily reveal" (1958: 142). This magical relation has been brought about through the Cane's drilling, which is also a pilgrim's staff, sign of the traveller, the "vagabond sign of itinerancy, the double theft [...]" – a bivalence already established by Artaud in *Revelations*: in his numeric Kabbalistic reductions, "2 is the number of Separation-Destruction," recalling the pharmakonic duality of the hole as void and the "powerful signs" invoking this rift (1965: 93). The "Double Rod of Fire" indeed, of the Cane as transmitter-receiver, whose bi-directionality speaks to the very gravamen of the Situationist's complaint: namely, that the Spectacle of French culture was a "one-way transmission of experience," which, gladly for Artaud, is already redirected as a flickering between orientation and its dis-orientation (Gray, 1998: 66).

Antony Réal, a French writer who published a book in 1875 called *The Story of the Stick in all ages and lands*, also hinted early-on at these evident dualities, subtitled as it was "*A philosophical history and lively chronicle of the stick as the friend and the foe of man. Its uses and abuses. As sceptre and as crook. As the warrior's weapon and the wizard's wand. As stay, as stimulus, and as scourge.*" The frontispiece to the 1892 (only) English translation bears the legend: "*The Stick Supreme: from Crosier to Candy.*" The original book was written in

French so it may be assumed that its author knows of certain Gallic traditions associated to the Cane, which are useful to a reading of Artaud's use thereof.

Réal comments, with a possible pre-Walter Benjaminian melancholy, and a nod to the collapse of certain class ranks concomitant to industrialised processes, that even in 1892, the Cane is a sign of equality: "Pass on count, pass on baron [...] – here comes a man who has ennobled himself by his virtues, and has risen by his intelligence and work alone – like you, he carries a Cane! Return his salutation, marquis – his Cane came from the same factory as yours!" (1892: 237). This is great put down, that accredits the political aspects of transduction relative to the industrialisation of memory as much as the industrialisation of production. But with Artaud, the intensity of the Cane, homogenised through the loss of *savoir-faire*, re-finds Disorientation through the orthographic inscription of the Geological Subjectile, and the doubling operation that both taps into the very specificity of the 'minor', but in so doing, opens up the Ar-Cane. Enough said.

The coda of this parochial odyssey lies in the Embassy file on Artaud, synecdoche of bureaucratic absurdity. After losing the Cane in a fracas, he is found wandering a corner of Dublin College grounds, starving, pitiful and wretched. The police report details that he was arrested in possession of a branch of a shrub he had pulled in the grounds, no doubt in place of the lost Cane. He is deported, expelled, sent off like one of his own curses. The Unnamable is exorcised, put in a straitjacket at the port of Cobh, ending a passage of comedy and immense sadness that is like a Beckett play the latter left to avoid writing.

His whole expedition to Ireland is seen by many as a symptom of insanity, and not fit material for theoretical consideration. But as artist Robert Smithson concurs, in consideration of his own site-based 'Mirror Displacements' of 1969, which owe much to the same Mayan deities that kickstarted Artaud's series of pilgrimages: "actual delirium is devoid of insanity" (1996: 132). Artaud's delirium at being deported as an alien, sans stick, is a tragic loss, and one that causes him huge mental torment: so much so, that a letter from his mother, written in Marseilles in 1938 pleads with the Dublin Embassy to return the stick that it might also restore her son's ailing mind (National Archives File number DFA Paris P 34/1 19).

*At Cycle, Two Policemen.*

*The Cane returned to omnium.*

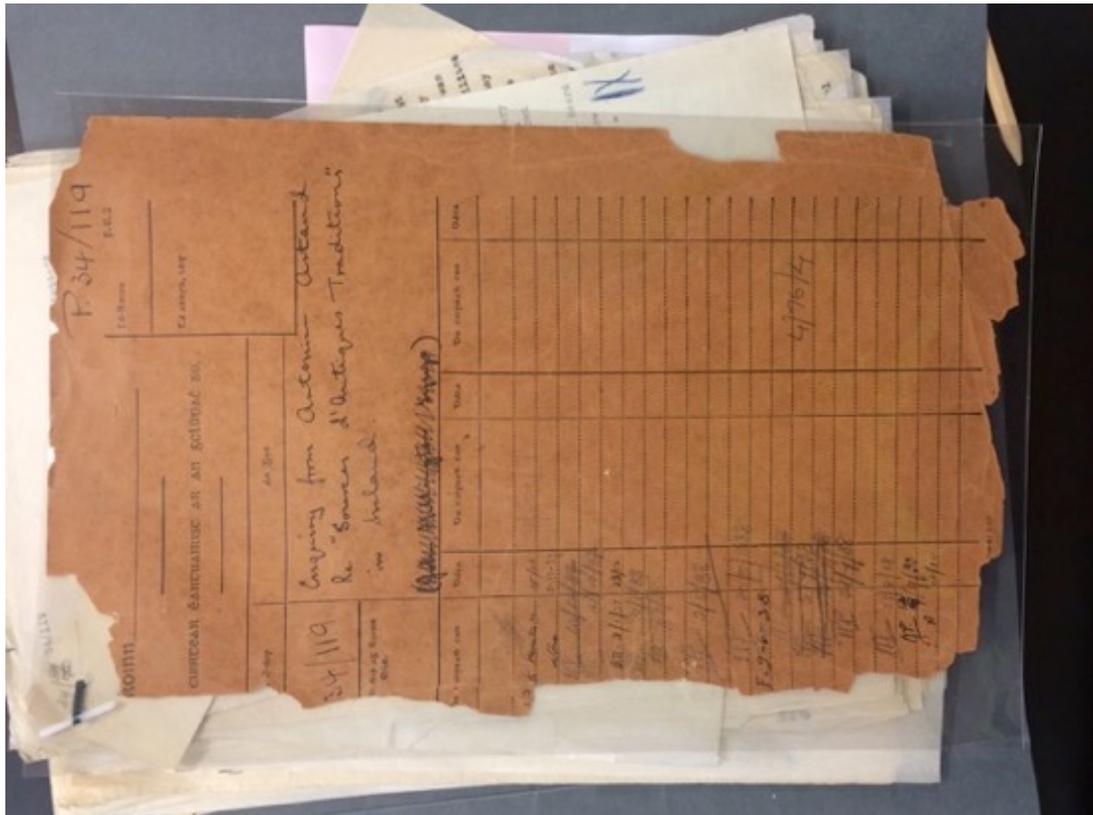


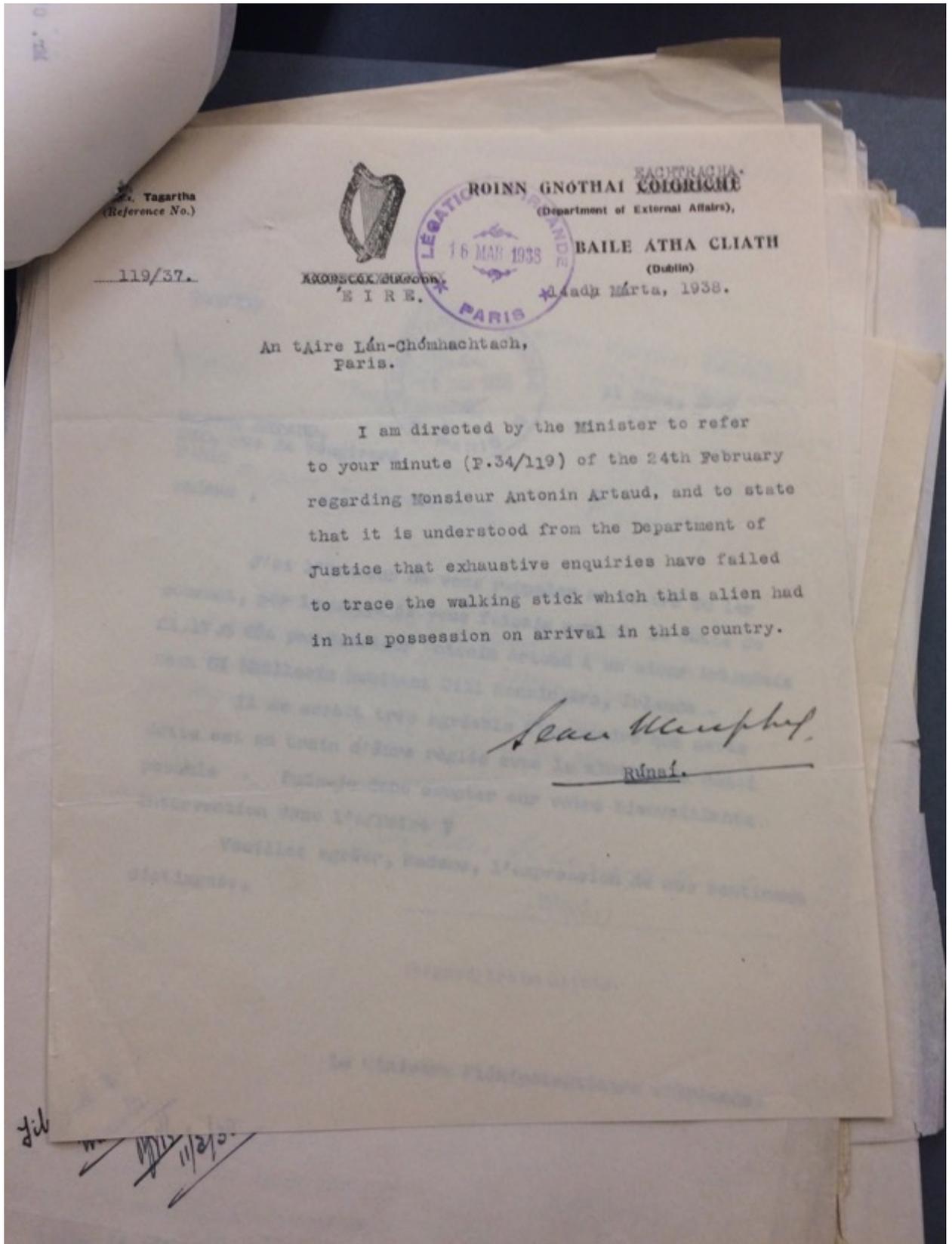
Figure 16: Cardboard front to the embassy file, National Archives File number DFA Paris P 34/1 19, Dublin 2019

### The (w)hole story

The frontis to this Dublin Archive File, number DFA Paris P 34/1 19, which I, Reporter, found chez Dublin Archive, is now a febrile sheet, on which is written in Gaelic: ‘Enquiry from Antonin Artaud, Re Sources d’Antique Traditions’ in Ireland (Figure 16). The (w)hole case file is reflexively treated as an ‘enquiry’ itself. Recalling the scaled miniature island fragment of the spell page now echoed in this tattered sheet, or ‘clint’ of a scaled down paper shard. As the Subjectile operationalises both, so this too is a perverse about-turn: the (Pierre Bonnard-like) cardboard Subjectile soaked in archive dust and official ink.<sup>27</sup>

True to the “epochal re-doubling,” and the interplay of perverse dualities evident in this subjectivation, the obverse of his caustic cosmological *sort* are the reams of embassy telegrams herein: bible-paper thin missives as a ludic farce, centring around the absence of the Cane, and his unpaid bill for his stay with Inis Mór lighthouse keeper, who gracefully, backs out of his claim. Like the Cane, which is never found, the £1.17 shillings and sixpence, is never paid (Figure 17). But whilst absent, the Cane continues to operate in the gap it has made in the minds of the officials, echoing loudly through the file as forcefully as the official purple stamp on each page, and in the history of Áránn and its recollections. Despite failing, it continues as the work in this apparent Beckettian irresolution. As Foucault remarked, “the work and the illness revolve around the incompatibility that links them, a basic incompatibility whose hollow core nothing can ever fill [...] hollowing out a work that is the absence of a work” (2006: 166): the Cane, and the hole pierced, are his (w)hole story.

<sup>27</sup> cf: Chapter 2 Appendix: The File Trial.



Tagartha  
(Reference No.)

119/37.



RÓIBSCOG/ÉIREANN,  
É I R E.



ROINN GNÓTHAI COIRICHE  
(Department of External Affairs),

BAILE ATHA CLIATH  
(Dublin)

16 Mairt, 1938.

An tAire Lán-Chómhachtach,  
Paris.

I am directed by the Minister to refer to your minute (P.34/119) of the 24th February regarding Monsieur Antonin Artaud, and to state that it is understood from the Department of Justice that exhaustive enquiries have failed to trace the walking stick which this alien had in his possession on arrival in this country.

*Sean Murphy*  
Rúnai.

*did*  
*11/2/38*

Figure 17: “failed to trace walking stick” – Archives File number DFA Paris P 34/1 19, Dublin 2019

With Artaud's practice, the axis of the parochial and the unworkable are key to this productive ambivalence of the delayed *différance* in site that the Kelp Pit burners, and the holey space of the apophatic proffers as adjunct to prevailing modes of poor Disorientation. The everywhere and nowhere of the Geological Subjectile abjures the pathological nostalgia of the contemporary, because it is simultaneously flickering between the giving and taking place, vectors traced in the mirror, in the fault lines of site that, metastable and latent, as localised in enactment, predate a modern disintegration of narrative. His hole burning as portal sends and receives signals through time, via the Subjectile, as an affective manipulation of reality, realised now and in the future as an affective model for Disorientation. The Subjectile thus summons occultural intent, calling forth but superseding hauntological spectres. Loss never comes into this, because parochial is self-sufficiency itself, fragmentary and syncretic: the duplicity of fire, of the Cane, is an autodidact's methodology for amplifying intensity.

The temporality of Artaud's entire hyperstitional enactment, by virtue of the revelation in and via site, are in the future as much as the past of our transductive capacities: site is always Disoriented, in effect presupposing the cache of endless fragmented recall and digitised cut and paste collision that is the basis of contemporary text. Its future-coiling operativity offers then a model that maps both an arcane historiography and the digitality of the occult: a ritual praxis for a perceivable subjectivation. As a scholarly grounding for magic in the academy, it's a practice to burn through the present, as an alternative to the a-temporal drudgery of techno-materialist capitalism, founded in the trace of Ur-Disorientation of all technology qua site, past and present, that is channeled from the minor, and not the market.

Árann is a dark terrain of revelation: the organ-fragment as technological substrate by virtue of its divinatory hermeneutic provides an intervention into causality, a retroactive glimpse of Ur-Disorientation. His journey is a corrosive implosion across these lineaments of the un-performable: "the nodes at which the layers of experience touch and may be fused together" as Tim Robinson says (2008: 18). The autonomous choice of the amateur itinerant re-doubles a frequency for individuation that the commons of site, hole and subject portends, and makes an occulted temporality urgent, apparent, in the present: if not for its remaining amateurishness and inoperativeness then also for the urgencies that a more accelerated yet atemporal technology demands. His heretical re-enactment of the *réel inutilisé* necessitates a plague of communicative strategies via the disturbed *différance* that the *sorts* as retroactive propaedeutic have achieved: to recalibrate time, and corrode the distinction between art and life, to the very geological dust thereof.

## Appendix: The File Trial

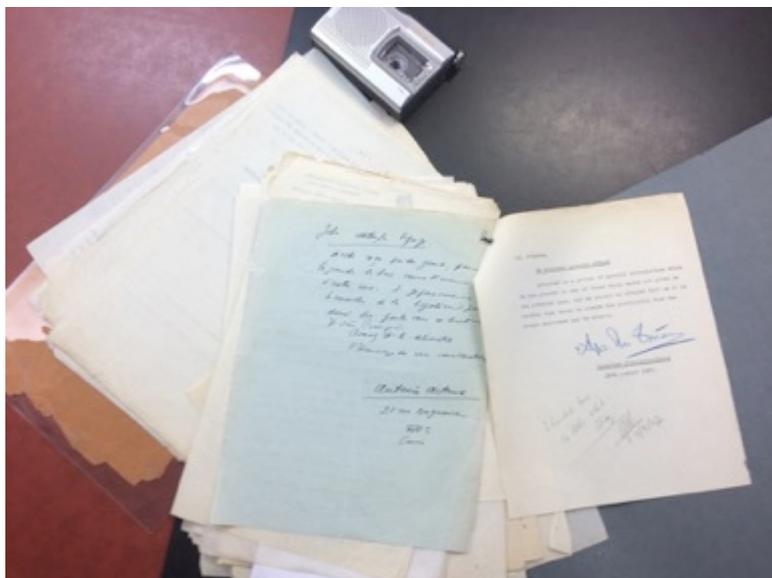


Figure 18: The (w)hole fragment: National Archives File number DFA Paris P 34/1 19. Photocopied, with Reporter's tape Dictaphone, Dublin 2019

### Day 1

Beaurocracy reared its head on first entering the Dublin Archives, housed in a building tucked down a calm side street, opposite some mild low-lying flats. Cool air down the street, dappled tree shadows, a pleasant light feeling. Only the day before I'd been at the fortress of Dún Aonghasa, tapping invisible Canes into stone.

The man on the desk wouldn't let me in. I was ten minutes too early, but spent that time signing names and particulars on a sheet, to repeated instructions that were sure, if nothing else, to ensure mistakes.

Up to the rust-tinged reading room, a suppressed queue forming at the waiting desk, where head archivist Ken Robinson prowled.

The archive assistant helping me, a young man, was helpful, administering the procedure with care. The throbbing pile of Artaud's own handwriting is at this moment being exorcized and brought up to the room – 'Coming up for Air' – to breathe a sinister cackle onto the room's tepid carpet.

I sat at a pocked leather table, tremulously awaiting the file. This prosaic cardboard folding could disrupt the whole equilibrium of the room.

The file lands in my hands and it is a collection of embassy memos: tissue thin, almost translucent, typewriter written. The words 'Cane' or 'walking stick' repeatedly spring from the pages, each a flurry of handwritten crayon, all punctuated by a purple embassy stamp.

Letter upon letter, a confederacy of excuses and pedantry. Each letter sent back and forth from embassy to embassy, decrying that the “alien” Artaud had been let in. The urgency and recrimination, spilling out of each page. The crayon handwriting and overlapping of different voices and hands, interspersed with the odd plaintive missive from Artaud's mother in Marseille: a sad letter saying she was unable to pay the outstanding bill, but politely requesting that they return Artaud’s Cane.

Cutting in: Ken Robinson storms across the reading room, slicing through polite academic fumbling. He throws a cardboard file half across a table. The green cardboard folder lands and hisses pathetically at the punter. Ken Robinson is not a man to argue with about folders and where they should land.

Back to the pages: this thump of the office pad is a much a punctuation as the striking of his absent Cane. It is repeatedly mentioned in the letters as a missing object that might just offer Artaud the peace of mind he is searching for. Each page full of rebuttals; they could not find it: they plainly did not know what why so much was being made of a walking stick.

Artaud's voice bursts in: four sheets of paper not formatted to the tissue -greaseproof bureau style, but large chequered foolscap, written in a loopy purple (purple again) hand, containing uppercase letters, urgent demand: “you have done me a great wrong,” he says, he “must return” to Ireland.

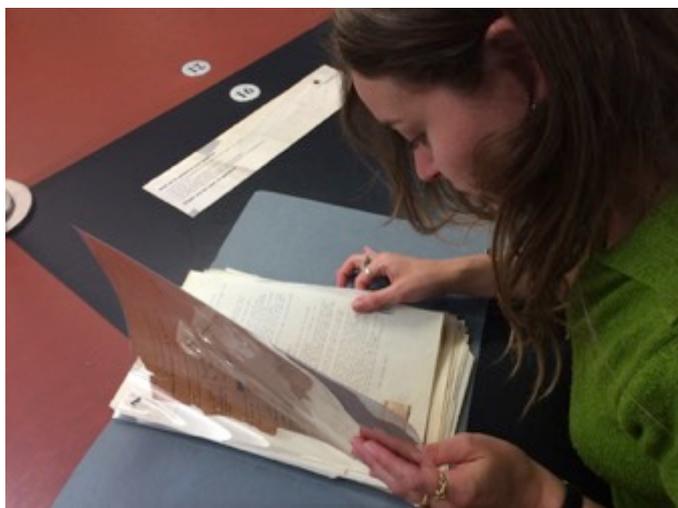


Figure 19: Reporter in Dublin Archive reading room with Artaud file, July 2019

His letter ruptures the contained sheets of the bureau, screams out of the middle of the file. He is uncategorisable, not contained within their formats. Carried along on paper. He also claims to be Greek, laughing, and hiding: or doubled personality. He signs the letter in florid script.

I chose to photocopy a number of the pages. The girl with pink fluorescent false nails laboriously fillets through the pages, finding novel ways to hold their place, as they’re copied. I’ve reached my photocopy limit of 10 copies.

Day 2:

Looking through the prized carbon copies in my hotel, I note that the florid, loose purple signature of his faked name 'Antonio Artaud' has been left off the page. It has not been captured in the photocopies' beam. They have failed to copy the whole page. The one 'who will not be named' is nameless, unreachable!

In the shape-shifting personae of Antonin Artaud: something more ancient is seeping in, through yesterday's office omission.

Back again to the archive, I return, past Cerberus.

It was clear I was making a disturbance in the reading room. They could not re-find the file, like the Garda in 1937 could not find the Cane. I re-requested it at the desk. Some unforeseen blockage had occurred in the digestive transit of the file to the bowels of the building. Despite the slightly too-Papal stampage, the surety of official procedure, the file had leaked out of the narrow channels. Book keeping gone awry.

I hover near reference files stacked near the photocopy room. I find Artaud's file index, alongside other tiny elements of French-Irish foreign relations, probably not thought about since it had been indexed in 1970 or thereabouts. File intercepted: the pages turn loudly in the cardboard folder. My requests are too noisy.

The photocopying girl cannot look at me; such is her restrained irritation. Pink oblong nails again. They could have been painted with the florescent marker pens more at home in this environment. But I was glad for her interruption in the wan yellowing air. I explain partly humorously, that this was their fault – they had not made sure the whole page was in the purview of the photocopy scanner. And now the replacement I receive has been minimised to the point of extreme sarcasm: his long foolscap letter barely covers half the A4 photocopied page now. But at least I can see his name. In magically tiny letters.

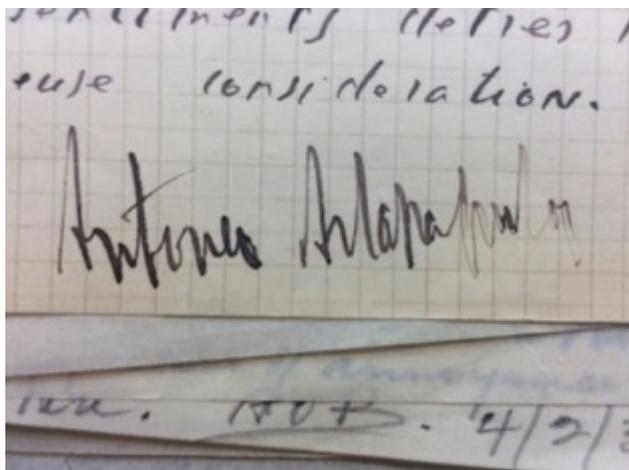


Figure 20: The Revealed



### **Chapter 3: Anachronic Collision: The S/pooling potential of the Well's Reel-Time and Unworking the Present via the Marsh**

#### The Running Well: Introduction

Landscape as a model for mythic fear radicalised – lacunas found in the parochial – British weird tradition and psychogeography as a backdrop to Chapter – mystery of Running Well as transductive model for industrialised memory in place – Anachronic Collision as method addresses spatio-temporal model – hyperstition of work to frame delay and unworking.

#### Fluvial Time

Running Well is “flashing pool” – temporal reticulation at the threshold of three fields, adequate to Simondon’s Privileged Place – vector of the hole undoes linearity of deterritorialisation/non-place and structural containment – the pool reflects time as a surface of *différance* qua prophesy.

#### Anachronism

Anachronism as ancient practice, congruent with frittered narratives of the postmodern – Didi-Huberman – anachronism basis of historicity – Ur-form.

#### Spirals and Mirror Travel

*Spiral Jetty & Yucatan Mirror Displacements* – John Dee’s Mexican accoutrements

#### Rhythm

Rhythm of site spaces deterritorialisation – third aesthetic of collage – local myth in this interstice – Ur-form as innately anachronic mitigates the contemporary loss of loss.

#### Case Study 1: Time Team

Salted site – enfolding of the *différance* in TV and the originary anachronism of archaeology – power of the Antiquarian.

#### Parochial Time: Unworking the Newspaper

History of the Running Well via fiction of Antiquarians – post modern “old objects” pre-empted by the parochial – contingency as artistic method – *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* Reporter – hole’s vector adumbrates stain of place – minor literature and collage of newspaper – pharmakon of office and the parochial.

#### Carry On Photocopying

The unworking of the office – cuneiform in the office re-televises – aura and reproduction – charged mimeses of magic channeled in Ur-forms – Bifrons – inverse hauntology – photocryptier as menhir – decline of office technologies raises unworkability – photocopier subverts heterogeneity – cuneiform on photocopier is the dirt stain of strangeness.

#### Unworking 2: Reel-Time – Tape Technology

In-*différance* of digital despite the pharmakon – manifesting the mystery in technology – tape as Ur-Form revealed in UR brand – s/pooling potential revealed.

#### Tape Case Study 2: Adam Bohman’s Travel Tapes

Bohman’s inutile use of tapes – gazetteer practice for /as dissident site

#### Tape Case Study 3: Krapp’s Last Tape

Operations of playback in Beckett’s *Krapp’s Last Tape* perform and intervene in retention – relation of figure to ground in voice and machine.

### Editing the Site

Process of playback edits the site – Ur-configurations in the site unspool – tripartite relation is like ancient spell affectivity – différance of technological operation.

### Circular Time: Re-Enactment

‘Re-enactment’ as repetition of non-same – delay and cut up as origin of repetition – pre-modern distribution of time as alternative rhythm – technology facilitates mythic re-enactment as cyclical – inventive and adaptive time as analogy of loss/collision.

### Anchorite

Anchorite of the Well replicated in act/pattern – attunement/rewind propagated by staff Artaud’s staff – Anchorite confirms rewind function.

### Case Study 4: The Cry of a Well

Anna Trapnell as retro activated version of re-enactment – radicals ploughing the pub/soil – divination in offal – technological forms travel in time – relation as re-enactment – mouth as mystery funnel – Trapnell as somatised well.

### Unworking 3: Occultation in the 1970s

1970s coterminous emphasis on the occult and neoliberal policy – mystic practice of forgetting founded on re-orientation of place – opacity of cloud mitigates/preempts geo-localisable – deterritorialisation of Neoliberal TV Folk Horror/humour – Alan Partridge and regionalism.

### Screaming Time: RIP

Reggie Perrin’s scream as model for the well – self sacrifice as the inutile viz. getting out of work – scream channels Marsh Regime through syncopation – the magic of the Anchorite – Reggie’s faked suicide a ritual sacrifice mitigates utility – office as Mesopotamian Ur-bureaucracy – scream portal to the marsh – dredging back to the Ur-self – ‘doing a Reggie P’ equals Hyperstition.

### Dérive

1970s Situationism and Reggie’s dérive – TV event – repeated sitcoms dilate Real Time – dérive as water stream – Never Work – graffiti an archeological inscription of Marsh Regime.

### Unworking 4: Carry On Cuneiform

Speed and Disorientation and ‘breaks’ attendant on work life – cycles of (ir)reversible progress and illusion of holiday – *Carry On At Your Convenience* a frustrated dérive – ludic disruption vs automation – comedy as displacement ritual – site and unworking come full circle as geological dérive – lhermeneutic of the human limit – pre-globalisation comedy as a liberation theology for local experience of the unthought, chez coil of the Well.

### Chapter 3: Anachronic Collision: The S/pooling potential of the Well's Reel-Time and Unworking the Present via the Marsh

#### The Running Well: Introduction

The focal point of this chapter is an ancient well in Essex. The first thing to make clear: it's not a man-made stone structure. This well is more like an opening in the surface of the land, a hidden geological fault line lurking in a dank ditch, both strange, and prosaic. Such a zone is not romantic, but is a suggestive model for more nefarious and dark arable rituals that flicker as half remembered remnants of landscape mysticism: since the early twentieth century, such latent practices allayed modernity's tacit and rational purging of affective landscapes (Sharp, 2010: 43). Far from eradicating the unknown though, Adorno and Horkheimer's 1947 study *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* demonstrated that the modern period in fact re-channeled, or even produced, superstitions as "mythic fear radicalised" (1997a: 8). Encouraging magic via a seemingly counterintuitive occultation of difference, and abutting myth to the forces of modernity as coeval and intransigent belief systems, the Enlightenment and its fallout created uncanny lacunas that not only failed to palliate suspicion, but propagated it.



Figure 1: Unquiet Earth. Circling time as différance, chez roundabout.

Parochial areas typify the stagnant and residual affects of superstition: where the pulse of change, if not progress, doesn't leave as many tide marks (Williams, 1977: 22). Just such a lacuna, in microcosmic form, is depicted in the image of a small marker stone, located on an inauspicious Essex roundabout, the "site of [an] ancient burial ground" (Figure 1). The image is taken from *Essex Curiosities* (1973), a book that typifies a cod-antiquarianism apposite for this chapter's study of weird archaeological landscapes across the axis of the parochial and the unknowable. The suspicion and fabulations, or hyperstitions, which this foster, is a fiction that works temporarily to unsettle dominant narratives, and thereby becomes real (Williams,

2013: 9). The stone in the image doesn't operate well as a marker to the unquiet earth it describes, but more as a chthonic index to the strange, and slightly humorous locale both over and under the land: as if it were a bad Hammer Horror film prop. But also, as much a node for the moribund goth, it is just as equally a prop, a direction post, for Chapter 1's *Rising Damp* sitcom, and as will be revealed, *The Fall & Rise of Reginald Perrin*, too: for these TV events, it too has a technologically and temporally pre-determined effect of Disorientation. Its prosaic presence serves to highlight the vague yet disturbing chthonian entities lurking just under the tarmac of a 1960s seaside conurbation: the collision of humour and horror.

Such minor ludic counterpoints to narratives of transparency and progress inevitably harks on the magical forces of a Pagan past encoded in the landscape, which are Blind Spots evident even in medieval churches, with their hidden Green Men: ways of the soil sent underground by the Protestant reformation (Thomas, 1978: 375). The urgency of these threads, now operative as desultory tourists' markers come witchy contemporary art aesthetics, gathered first real pace with the disenchantment wrought by the Industrial Revolution and its ensuing mitigation by the Romantics. If technology, as in Chapters 1 and 2, is encoded in the marsh, as Ur-Disorientation, so this mythic fear radicalised is both in the face of, and in search of, Milton's *Pandaemonium* of churning forges and factories as equivalent Marsh Regime (Jennings, 1985: 3).

British Edwardian 'weird' writers such as Arthur Machen, and later psychogeographic experimenters – a term borrowed and repurposed from the French 1960s counter cultural group The Situationists – posited a dark and virulent magic lurking in the city: an outpouring industrial as much as arable, that navigated the lineaments of a modern subjectivity (Fisher, 2017: 76) (Machen, 2003: 78) (cited Gray, 1998: 26). This urban tradition had its literary roots already in Hermetic thinkers of the sixteenth century, such as the Elizabethan magus John Dee, and later the architect Hawksmoor: two characters who, for whom novelists Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd, connote dark recesses of imagination qua traversal of space. For Ackroyd, who wrote his novel *Hawksmoor* in 1985, the Situationist *dérive*, as a critical walking practice to both subvert the industrial city and thereby leave the twentieth century, is equally like a "circumambulation through time as well as place: a widening gyre that exposes the very timelessness of this two-millennia-old city" (2010: vii). In *Hawksmoor*, time collapses so the modern-day protagonist bleeds into the late eighteenth century. Such a spatio-temporal widening is in part introduction to the desultory yet glibly swirling Running Well which is the focus of this Chapter: through which a drift will crucially be, as Debord mandates, a behavioral Disorientation – channeling back to Ur-Disorientation. If Disorientation for Stiegler is the effect of historical ruptures brought about by changes in technology, the Well, invoking through the affective *mise-en-scène* of landscape ritual, will be both a temporal and spatial excavation that s/pools this affect (Stiegler, 2009: 65).

Bringing together tangled threads of landscape mysticism, The Running Well is located in the arable village of Runwell in the parish of Wickford, south east Essex. The site both shares in and veers off from the gnostic histories charted above. Runwell, which also gives its name to a nearby-disused sanatorium that was built in 1937, in the same year Artaud visited Ireland (and was thereafter was incarnated in asylums), further, gets its name from this eponymous Well at the centre of the parish. Essex author and occult researcher Andrew Collins, in his 1983 self-published tract *The Running Well Mystery*, etymologically links its name to both 'running' (water) and 'Rune' (mystery) – in a book that also details his investigations into the

site during the nascent days of comparative Earth Mystery endeavors, which witnessed a revival in the United Kingdom at this time (1983: 57/5). This was in benign terms *pace* Collins, but also in ostensibly sinister forms with the English Underground in groups like Psychic TV's implication in a supposed video nasty abuse scandal (Keenan, 2016: 34). Perusing this and other 'mysteries,' the Running Well is an ideal model for gaining a glimpse of Ur-Disorientation, an evocative zone connoting something beyond the material: both the prosaic radicalising of mythic fear, and the parochial pulse of a forgotten corner.



Figure 2: Water peculiar drawing

Analogue to a surge of time through the sedimentary layers of the landscape, the Running Well's water is a fluid action vomiting up multiple presents, transgressing the epochs and epistemes that a categorisation of industrial memory is reliant on. The genesis of Disorientation as it has thus far been documented results in the duality of de/re-territorialising as a condition of technics', and thus of memory's, elaboration. As Bernard Stiegler explains, modernity's industrialised memory – and here, this equally pertains to the post-industrial Essex landscape – “can be industrialised, because it is techno-logically synthesized, and if this synthesis is originary, it is because the ‘who’ is defined by its retentional finitude” – and thus, humans are formed through technics (2009:8). Where a linear stratification of the past, materialised as a taxonomical geology of successive stratifications, thinks of the earth as the basis – the dead surface, from which thought progresses, with the human at its centre, here, as with the Marsh Regime of Chapter 1, and Artaud's Geological Subjectile in Chapter 2, earth and water are technological substrates, the place to foreground the delayed but potent potential of site. As Stiegler also insists: “we must confront this delay” in the age of technical

speed, and thus delay's inscriptive traces will be implicit in unearthing and transmitting a renewed Disorientation inherent to both place and technicity, for mystery of the Well is a model to disrupt forms of industrialised memory through its spiralling depth (2009: 63).

A strange nineteenth-century book plate engraving in the archive of Southend Museum posits a tentative depiction of the dual Disorientation attendant on wells as mythic structures (Figure 2). Written in French, the text, seemingly some form of informative gazetteer to Southend and the Thames Mouth environs, makes no specific reference to what the engraving depicts, the page is headed 'Trinobantes': a Celtic tribe of pre-Roman Essex. The separately-formed well-pools are extant in an Essex pastoral, and above the pools hover two funnels: ghost outlines, pillars into the sky that presage the concrete industrial chimneys that would haunt the Thames estuary from the 1960s. Sinister wells collide with industrial plumbing, which will be deemed a strong link later in the Chapter. A re-enactment engraving.

A question of temporality thus rises like damp mist like ghost contours out of the site of this sloppy mire, home of *Rising Damp*. To answer this, a method of Anachronic Collision is proposed, as a form of spatio-temporalisation adequate to the funnelling vector of the Well: an excavation, like Ackroyd, and like Artaud, through time as much as space, to mobilise a conjectural relationship to knowledge held in the ambivalent sediments of this site, that retain an imprint of Ur-Disorientation with which to re-enact that which has not occurred at the level of production. At stake in this chapter will be a contemporary delay and its unworkability, a re-enacted rhythm at the level of the swirling Well as a riposte to sublimated affordances for Real Time – as a zone of the “geo-localisable,” a non-place, as French philosopher Frédéric Neyrat puts it (2014: xi).

The Chapter moves through an imaginary of successive affordances of temporality at stake with the Well that make up this channelling of Ur-Disorientation: Fluvial Time, Divinatory Time, Parochial Time, Reel Time, Dilated Time, and Screaming Time. These are successively activated though a number of cultural and historical case studies, as well as my own artworks. The first of my artworks is *Cealdwiella* (2018), a multi-disciplinary performance project in collaboration with artist duo New Noveta which was based on and about this Running Well; the second a sculpture piece 'Time Cure' (2019), and a stop frame flip book of Reginald Perrin stills: these are operationalised alongside my reporting role at *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* – the local newspaper in which I work – as a hyperstitional and contingent framework that collides the substantive and actative modalities of unworking (see Figure 3). This is a mobilisation through which a productive Disorientation itself arises, foregrounded on the specifics of site and auto-fiction. Countering a late-industrial ennui qua proliferation of historical narratives coupled with hyper-present digital networks that open a never-ending present of “a-temporality,” my method operates in the gap between the teller and the tale that is the reserve of the unreliable narrator, unworkable in a granular form (Tulasiewicz, 2012: 19). Well and office site are mobilised, where the fictioning of my job, and the autodidact fiction of the Running Well, like the marker stone's legend, are technologies operative of temporal dis-placement (Reeves Evison & Shaw, 2016: 46) (Figure 1).



Figure 3: Reporter’s contact details in *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* plus verso script seeping through.

The inoperability of dated technology outlined in this Chapter is generative and differs to a hauntological malaise resulting from a-temporality. Mark Fisher outlines such a late twentieth-century condition of digital recall as foreclosed memory, where “loss is itself lost” (2014: 11). This Chapter, by contrast, posits loss via territory-based technology – as opposed to the a-temporal and deterritorialized – in a modality of delay intrinsic to a method that unworks, and jams not just the tape spokes, but the teleological malaise of modern eschatology. Drawing on both arcane and pre-modern rhythms of re-enactments, that is also a riposte to work in both substantive and actative terms, from both a Situationist and mythical perspective, leading to a revision of performative and geological affordances of the *dérive*, and a form that reunites the work place and the landscape (Dixon, 2018: 130). What, in concluding, might at first seem anachronistic is in fact pharmakonically premised on the contemporary’s fragmented retransmission of knowledge, this time re-oriented back into site, with a key focus on the individuating potential of the comedic, and the latent forces thereof.

### Fluvial Time

It’s a mouth on ground level, or rather, below it. The Running Well is in a low hollow, opening up the depths of the surrounding fields to the atmosphere. The still dank water is like mercury, dully effulgent, reflecting the tangle of brambles through which glimpses of fragmented sky above glimmer. Like an amorphous mirror, a divinatory “flashing pool” – the liquid is stiller than the surrounding mud and bracken, which seems to pulse (Collins, 1983: 45). It’s also situated in the mythically potent intersection of three fields, an ancient and significant threshold as a portal to the numinous: a point that steps, seeps, and drains therein.

This threshold interfaces many nodes: material, metaphysical, and fluvial, all of which are coordinates that demarcate the site, an intensifying inscriptive force that the Well draws

within the substrate of the land to open up temporalities to attune to<sup>1</sup>. Following Gilbert Simondon's outline, as used in Chapter 1, the well as a threshold is not just a spatial, but a temporal point of a reticulation, a site where figure and ground cohere, that "contains all the force of the land" as a "Privileged Place," a point of exchange between human and site: an intensity trained at a spatial point, as a "network of thresholds, summits, boundaries and crossing points that are connected to one another by their singularity and their exceptional nature" (2017: 187/180). An intrinsic relation to the originary magic universe, the Privileged Place is a reticulation of space-time increasingly fragmented in the sequential phases of technic's development. In line with Stiegler, this phase is operative from the genesis of Disorientation onwards, through the originary default of Epimetheus, as was seen in Chapter 1 (Stiegler, 2009: 1). Such, then, is the creation, eventually, of deterritorialised non-places: that is, from the beginning of technicity's exteriorisations (ibid: 2). The Running Well is a high-tension line of spatio-temporal intensity that belies the creation thereof, both 'artificial' and 'natural', inscribed into the land as a singular point.

Arguably this is a structural force of fluvial containment, such as that which Luce Irigaray wrote against, considering it the obliteration of difference, and to which her relational ontology of a Fluid Mechanics is counterpoised (1985: 45). True, the hylomorphic model of the well "draws into itself all the force and efficacy of the domain it delimits [and thereby...] contains the force of a compact mass of reality" (Simondon, 2017: 178). The Well's contouring of these subterranean frequencies still make them nonetheless multifarious and emergent: a containment that operates its own stratigraphic undoing as delay, channeling, as shall be seen, the ritual and mythic assembles attributed therein. Where this passage seems linear, the modality of a hole, qua Artaud's luminescent forces, has the capacity to draw many virtual temporalities and possibilities through its point as a vector: hole as a proto-Kelp Pit of technology, as in *oileáin Árann*, but here, operationalised by water, as a passage through stratification, disrupting late industrial temporality at the level of sediment. Cutting, then, through the land's palimpsest, it is already a time traveler, where temporality's course is "an extraordinarily *complex mixture*, as though it reflected stopping points, ruptures, deep wells..." (Serres, 1995: 57).

The geological indexing of one viewpoint through the use of a borehole implement, to taxonomise a wider sense of history, is indeed the *inverse* of Artaud's Cane. But then, there is nonetheless always a Blind Spot: starting from a certain vantage point, time spreads out either side of the hole's focal point, trained along the linear slice of the anthropocentric world view, to contradict the more unthought capacities that have been shown as the reserve of technicity's Blind Spot, a glimpse of a dark unknowing trained in matter.<sup>2</sup> With equivalent geological logic, capitalism equally bores a hole to illuminate a comprehensive view of social assemblages that precede it, as the apparent teleological endpoint of an all-encompassing narrative (Colebrook, 2016: 440).

The Running Well as a Privileged Place models a re-collision of figure and ground, of spiraling inscriptive trace and surface of support, a reticulation of intensities that revives a magic affect: the becoming time of space through depth, abjuring the linearity of the

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<sup>1</sup> My metal 'staff' or crosier is used as an affective tuning fork for the radio transmission from this Running Well, as part *Cealdwiella*, cf section below 'The Anchorite' and also practice documentation.

<sup>2</sup> This was seen in the metallurgic alchemy of accelerated time in Chapter 1: the glimpse of technicity working from the earth.

Anthropocene for disorientated planes of time. The Privileged Place, like the engraving in Figure 2, has inscriptive powers of the Marsh Regime, unlike an indifferent non-place, that comes “from an anonymous elsewhere, a satellite with neither here nor now: [that is] the occultation of différence” (Stiegler, 2009: 24). This is spiraling différence, channeled through strata that a layered accretion of mud is legend to.<sup>3</sup> This stratum dismantles, like a technology: the force of an operative Subjectile.

Andrew Collins suggests that the Running Well is a “flashing pool,” a mystics’ numinous focal point (1983: 62). With its silvery tain illuminated at night by the moon it is thought by Collins to represent the “capturing” of a part of the moon’s lunar – perhaps metastable – energies (ibid). An inscription of time into a pooling substrate, this reflects, like the “delayed action mirror” of Stiegler’s technics, a spatio-temporalisation functioning as a “surface of différence” – reflecting time, and also operative as a prophetic fiction: not unlike the Iron Age goddess of the Isles of Scilly, inhumed with a mirror, for the purpose of time travel (cf. Chapter 2) (2009: 41/31). If the contemporary crisis of différence is found in “demythified time and space,” the well’s reflective surface responds thus, changing it both into a substrate of technics, but also implicitly, a scrying tool (2009: 88).



Figure 4: Reporter furrows syncopated beat at the Running Well

### Anachronism

The postmodern, according to theorist Frederic Jameson, is evidenced through the condition of living “through strange old aesthetic objects” (1998: 133). Such an anachronistic temporality funneled from the Well is metaphoric analogue of a frittered dissolution of cohesive narratives. 50 years before Jameson, in the 1930s, the Surrealists had already valorised the anachronic, as Walter Benjamin noticed, drawing attention to the “outmoded” and, via the Running Well, we might also claim “the immense forces of ‘atmosphere’ concealed in these things [is] brought to the point of explosion” (1979: 229). Anachronism, as

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<sup>3</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s *Mille Plateaus*, written in 1980, by definition raised the idea of multiple strata as an unfolding of human and non-human scales of life, but nonetheless rests on a slightly different imaginary to the one posed by the Well, which posits a magical grounding to technology via site (1986).

a form of cut and paste, is favoured much further back, by the ancient scribes of Mesopotamia (cf Chapter 1). Methods of ritual seemingly encourage this temporal slippage, too. Andrew Collins mandates “forms of invocation” enacted around the Running Well, including an instruction for “turning widdershins”: an anticlockwise movement around its circumference, and an act surely cognate, in its counter-linearity, to the reversal or the tricking of time, the resuscitation of multiple presents vouchsafed by anachronic performances (1983: 12).

A power in Essex that channels the force of Ur-Disorientation is also cognate to the use of the ‘Ur’ in relation to modernity’s history and social forms: Walter Benjamin’s ‘*Ursprung*’ (origin), ‘*Ursprungsphänomen*’ and ‘*Urgeschichte*’ (primal history) suggest the whirl(pools) or unredeemed potential inside present forms. Benjamin takes the idea from Goethe, who finds the rhythms of nature already in the technological (2004: 180). Goethe had designated the ‘*Urpflanze*’, or ‘Ur-plant’, as that ideal prototype which contained the virtual shape of all plants, past and the future: these Ur-configurations in the present are aesthetic forms in which these older forms are perceivable, flickering a double time of vision (cited Leslie, 2014: 21). Stiegler’s call for epokhal redoubling, as in Chapter 1, takes inscription into technological forms themselves, and is useful in asserting how the ‘collision’ of such technologies, already replete with the landscape’s latent Ur-force, recall these forms in past and future, recognises a constitutional anachronism (Stiegler, 2009: 6).

Georges Didi-Huberman concurs that the modality of anachronism helps to elucidate simultaneous yet differing regimes. If for Benjamin, the Ur-form demonstrates at once simultaneity and succession, for Didi-Huberman, it is found visually in two different planes of the same Renaissance painting: that of religious iconography and seemingly abstract portions deemed incongruous to the temporal surface thereof, which, whilst of the same medium, stretch out formally in almost different epistemes (2003: 34). Hinting at an ever-dissimulating edge-land to temporality, Didi-Huberman calls into question the painting’s surface as a site of blindness in the face of representation, halting the present, where the past rises as an effect, like a deflagration. Before such an image, “however old it may be, the present never ceases to reshape,” in a temporalising that forecloses the possibility of originary contemporaneity, as that which might ground historicity (2003: 33). Again, this is the duality of Disorientation.

### Spirals and Mirror Travel

Unworking, as much as Ur-form, unfolds and reoccurs through time, mandated by the Marsh Regime: for anachronisms are always present in contemporary forms as breakdown. As seen in Chapter 1 and 2, a pre-cognition of technology’s latent power is held virtually in the landscape, and unworking is traced in the fault lines of site itself. Such virtual power is intuited by American twentieth century artist Robert Smithson, for whom art actualises the displacement of an otherwise static rush of time, crucially manifest by creating previously-idiosyncratic connections (1996: 112). Connections at the Running Well are manifest, as shall be unfolded: both jostling and reflecting minor Essex local histories, qua Collins’ flashing pool, soaked in the sediment are a constant reminder of such metastable potentials therein: a memory support in the protean water, a sort of site-specific water-clock.

Robert Smithson's 1971 site-based artwork *Spiral Jetty*, versioned in landscape, film and written word, in part inspired by a JG Ballard's Science Fiction story *The Voices of Time* (1960), sees temporal currents mapped onto the Privileged Place of a spiral as an equivalent 'portal' into other dimensions: Smithson, as Ballard then retrospectively suggests, uses the rocky spiral inscribed in the Salt Lake in Utah as a "berthing point for some kind of intergalactic craft" presumably as yet unknown, un-spiraled (1997: 342). Such circular motion has penetrative rhythm swirling down into the depths, that eschews the Romantic view of landscapes for panoramas that for Smithson contain "ruins in reverse," forms yet to unfold, and moreover, are hyperfictions of the tenuous terrain of the 1970s (see below).

The dank Well, likewise, is a temporal intensity, a beleaguered landscape, and like this spiral, furrows an Ur-beat through the well's *différance*, through the linear rhythms of stratigraphy, to reflect a form of futurity in its flickering surface, as much as galvanising anachronism (Figure 4). Smithson's related work, *Yucatan Mirror Displacements 1-9*, apes ancient time travel methods, vouchsafed though Collins' "Flashing Pool" theory as much as the practices of the Native Americans. For this mirror work, Smithson's 12" square mirrors (making them look like reflecting LP vinyl covers) are embedded in the landscape – "the displacement is *in* the ground, not *on* it" – to reflect another chthonic world through displacement, a metastable Disorientation held virtually, and released through time travel of the well's mirror, but crucially, as a technology (Smithson, 1996: 121).

In Smithson's accompanying short texts that track the first to the ninth *Displacement*, Smithson insists that the mirror itself is not "subject to duration, because it is an ongoing abstraction that is always available and timeless. The reflections, on the other hand, are fleeting instances that evade measure" (1996: 122). This is contrary to the Well, for whom the operation of the mirror is an inscription of the tain of technicity as delay: Divinatory Time. Smithson nonetheless reflects on Mayan deity Tezcatlipoca's black obsidian mirror used, as with the Iron Age inhumation finds, to predict the future.



Figure 5: John Dee's route out of the sixteenth century

This, too, recalls British psychogeography's dark lineages: Elizabethan Magus John Dee's mirror, held in the 'Myth Ritual and Magic' case in the Enlightenment Room of the British Museum, is a mirror-shaped object of Mexican black obsidian, attendant on a handmade box, with a label inscribed by its erstwhile owner, the antiquarian Horace Walpole (Figure 5).

Antonin Artaud's traversal of Mexican landscapes, equally, reads signs out of the dusty and organic. But Artaud's actualisation of the surface of a spell page coterminous to the island of Inis Mór proffered a less-charted landscape invocation three decades prior to Smithson's, and whose spell substrate, *is* indeed, qua Well, "subject to duration" as a Subjectile of *différance*: a substrate that dilates time through a delay of inscription, as opposed to Smithson's mirrors, which are "ingenious enough to *erase* time" (1996: 131). Erasure here perhaps is a subtle advancement of trace, and the "abstract geology" attendant on all Smithson's Earth Projects concur to the Marsh Regime's inculcation of the human and the organic, the Geophilology of the metastable (1996: 100). This vaguery of epistemology attendant on a "geological miasma" sees "mental rivers undermine banks of thought" and "ideas decompose into stones of unknowing," pursuant to the Clous of Unknowing in Chapter 1, and the unworking of the Well's Fluvial Time (*ibid*).

### Rhythm

Time swirls in wild eddies: serial time gives way to simultaneity. For Bernard Stiegler, rhythm describes the difference between human and technical forces of potential, which is the centre of an originary moment of Disorientation (2009: 11). The modality of this rhythm is key to the Well's beat of what has been called Fluvial Time, and to the affordances of renewed and galvanising technology it infers, making the Well a model through which we see not just a new temporal regime, but a different spatial reality latent in the metastable potentiality of the site: a point of exchange between location and temporal reticulation, an aquatic rhythm contoured by the sediment, which was always an Ur-form of technological Disorientation (Benjamin, 2004: 180).

For Benjamin, it is criticism that draws out the [drain] blockage, brings out the work's immanent human and technical rhythm. With a technology like film, relatively novel when he was writing, he finds a medium where all futural realisations are nascent: "all the notional forms, tempos and rhythms that lie performed in today's machines" find "final formulation" (cited Leslie, 2014: 21). If Disorientation wrenches figure from ground in both the cuneiform, and much later in the office dictaphone, all as spatialised memory, then this proposed form of praxis, exhuming generative Ur-rhythms of Disorientation is a dynamic spacing of the said figure ground in this metastable protean site: both a decontextualisation qua digital network's speed – a "suspension of calendarity" in the "disappearance of place," – and a reorientation, a productive pharmakon relation (Stiegler, 2009: 100/242). Where Derrida's notion of the *différance* was doubled by Stiegler into technics, Derrida's own hauntology, as outlined in *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning* could itself be said to reiterate the import of temporal rupture through its use of Hamlet's "time out of joint": here,

Anachronic Collision reinters this temporal dislocation back into place as a flickering of site and non-site (Derrida, 1994a: 18).<sup>4</sup>

The rituals of early Palaeolithic cave painters were conjectured to enlist rhythm, teasing out zones within the darkness of a cave's Privileged Places, by using what archaeologist Paul Pettitt has named "palpation" – points of exchange to sound out the wall through minutely vibrating its surface to detect hollows, textures, and absorbencies, thereby bringing out distortions in its sound, percussing the walls of the cave with the hand as if the former were a membranous substrate, before choosing a place to draw, enact, summon, ritualise (Pettitt, 2014: 58f). Not in emulation but in generative citation and repurposing, of drawing out the whirlpool of unredeemed potential that Benjamin frames with the *Ursprungspänomen* – an enactment, a performative exhumation, equally, purports to map the Well's latent animistic frequencies.<sup>5</sup> Isabelle Stengers has recently reconsidered such Animism via a political ontology of agency: "The witches' ritual chant—'She changes everything she touches, and everything she touches changes'—could surely be commented on in terms of assemblages because it resists the dismembering attribution of agency" (2018: 106).

In addition to assemblages, collision undoes a linear eschatology of spatio-temporality that is both locatable and also virtual, formed of various seemingly incongruous and anachronistic elements: the 'local' site is unworkable, unsatisfactory, shitty, but productively parochial, as Artaud found (cf Chapter 2). Using time trained in sediment rethinks modes of existence: not just as natural features, but as technology coiled, a rhythm yet to unfurl, to reinvest site with potency of both human and technical affect, such as was seen from the earliest point in metallurgy (Eliade, 1978: 78). This localised time counters a present that is no longer historical, being as it is telescoped and short-circuited through speeds of transmission (Stiegler, 2009: 120). The collision, or in modernism's terms, an affection of montage, attests to what Jacques Rancière calls the "third aesthetic" of collage: invoking the threshold zone of unknowing, it posits "a line of indiscernibility between the force of sense's legibility, and the force of non-sense's strangeness" (2009:46). It is the interstice of the collision that is in-between a site's local reterritorialisation and cosmic deterritorialisation, is the meeting of two oppositions at the fault line of the three fields.

Ancient Egyptian mythologists, too, emphasised a duality of the cosmic and the local to ritual enactment. Nearly all myths had relatable localised retellings: "striking topographical features [Privileged Places] such as a mound with ancient trees or a gap in the cliffs that resembled the fabled mountains of the horizon, might begin a mythical association, but these were reinforced over periods of time by ritual actions [ranging from] a few words spoken, to elaborate re-enactments of mythemes" at a place of pilgrimage (Pinch, 2004: 64). Ratified here by such fruitful papyrus evidence, to remove the enactment from its geographical coordinates would be to enact said harmful *detachment* of figure from ground, where "the key-points lose their mutual reticulation and their power of influence from a distance on the reality that surrounded them; as technical objects they have action only through contact, point by point, instant by instant" (Simondon, 2017: 181). This very arcane manifesting of a form of re-enactment vouchsafes the ancientness of the Anachronic Collision, seen also in

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<sup>4</sup> Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* is situated as a response to the end of the Soviet Era, and hence the rehearsal or deconstruction itself of a particular type of 'history.'

<sup>5</sup> For Benjamin, the Ur-configurations have a social role too, playing tricks with time so as to subvert the superstructure qua social relations of production.

Mesopotamian scribes ‘aping’ older forms of writing and re-burying them as proto-collage (Finkel, 2015: 14).

The a-authentic archaeological object, but also the strange trick, intercession, of the Ur-form, thus mitigates the fatalistic melancholy of Mark Fisher’s assertion on loss. Naturally, the returning, (or colliding) of old technology and site is in some sense hauntological: in Fisher’s terms, this is the indexing of technologically materialised memory as melancholy (2014: 18). But indexing *absence* rather than memory, reading the sediments, is a retroactivation of place’s fault lines qua technicity: the Blind Spot of technicity as the tache aveugle, the dirty stain, as also suggested by Fisher, who admits haunting can be “about a staining of place with particularly intense moments of time” (ibid:101). This stain is already nascent in the Ur-form at the Blind Spot, is the legend of Disorientation, as the fault line of *différance*, and can only haunt sequentially, as sociality creates structures.

The activity of Mesopotamian scribes has already suggested that such a modality of nostalgia is not a thing solely of the postmodern neoliberal internet-saturated present, and as such, the rhythms of the Ur-form are thus innately anachronistic, *pace* Jameson (2014: 15). A seasoned irreverence to historic chronology is pursuant of the Marsh Regime, and with this in mind, channeling Ur-Disorientation, that transductively blurs the boundaries of art and life along the lineaments of the site, insists upon an expanded reading of both as a scriptural zone adequate to contemporary experience.<sup>6</sup> This is a bodily and technical (and a contamination thereof, where the two are protean co-constituents) movement as *différance* that galvanises the co-constitutive scriptural space over the ground, traced also in Artaud’s movements on *Árann*, re-orienting Disorientation into site, in a move that also perhaps mirrors the most accelerated fragmentary information relay of the present, as well as its slippages (Stiegler, 2009: 2). Anachronism’s sliding of time periods one into the other is thus both a well-established method, but also a symptom of breakdown, of unworking, a refusal of Real Time, and of neoliberal nostalgia as “impotence” at the hands of digital recall. But this is also a method in itself, a generative mode for exiting the present, when re-interred in place: the latter as that which is destroyed, eaten up, in capitalist time (Beradi, 2017: 31).

### Case Study 1: Time Team

A thematically worthwhile digression on originary anachronism as the Ur-form is the meeting of archaeological objects and ‘tele-vision,’ where the latter is both a broadcasting form, but also the form of original history: “writing in some manner already televisualizes” (Stiegler, 2014: 83). A 2007 episode of *Time Team*, Channel 4’s erstwhile achaeology romp, takes presenter Tony Robinson and pals to Llgadwy in Powys, to what is revealed to be a serious archaeological folly: the relics embody a slippage, interred willy nilly, anachronistically. Where incongruous objects are found in a manufactured “ritual spring,” a megalithic stone is found to be too shallow in the earth to be genuine, carved heds huddle near the well, and an Iron Age ‘La Tene’<sup>7</sup> sword is found “securely stratified [in mud] over a piece of barbed wire from the 1990s that was still attached to the fence post,” as archaeolgist Parksion bemoaned, in his well-named article ‘A Real Relic From a Sham Site’ (2007: 25) (Figure 6).

<sup>6</sup> Thus, trying to mitigate Jameson’s assertion that we are now “incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience” (1998: 10).

<sup>7</sup> A sword was also found with the Iron Age mirror burial in the Isles of Scilly.



Figure 6: Trowel and error – Sir Tony Robinson on site

One intriguing detail pursuant to the enmeshing of inscription and sediment of Chapter 1 is the fact that ‘ancient’ marks are scratched through the surface discoloration of a small statue found in the artificial sacred spring, meaning they must have been added much later: layers of *différance* apparently time travelling, like the paint or tain of the mirror as a strange grain (Stiegler, 2009: 41/31). Not only is this Anachronistic Collision as scandalous yet imaginative use of site, but the technology used to broadcast it inculcates the collective memory of television as an originary moment of technics, too. Impacted in the mud and a shitty spring are ‘real’ relics. Parkinson<sup>8</sup> talks much of the important to disrupted “context” in his article, and this is a key to Anachronic Collision, down to the import of the strange sediment the “salted” site in Powys is made of, testament further to the import for this thesis of the practice of local antiquarian autodidacts, however spurious and patently illegal their activity (2007: 29). Unwittingly, the sham antiquarians create a perfect blueprint of Fluvial Time: these antiquarian poseur(s) have succeeded in exposing the *différance* of site.

### Parochial Time: Unworking the Newspaper

The anachronistic history of the Running Well itself is unclear, and only passed down through just such sham antiquarians as the Powys “salters.” The collage of myth and fact surrounding the Running Well suggest the location has existed in the threshold site since the earliest recorded date of AD 939 (Collins, 1983: 6). The all-female religious house supposedly established here in the medieval period was a zone of seclusion centered on its already ancient propitious properties: the Well has long been associated with a female presence, from early so-called Pagan associations to the mooted medieval religious house said to have been archaeologically revealed through wooden mullions found in its mud: perhaps remains of what Collins suggests is a “sanctuary dedicated to ‘Our Lady of the Running Well’” (ibid: 20). Collins reportedly placed these in the stores of the Southend Museum, as real evidence of activity on a site that now also houses a 1920s concrete sink tank.

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<sup>8</sup> A name irresistibly close protagonist Parkins in MR James’ ‘Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad’ the archaeologist who discovers a terrifying relic in a Knights Templar ruin (1904).

The fact that Collins is a local historian, fabulating convincingly through a very genre-specific DIY practice is a syncretic method of the autodidact, which amplifies Disorientation in the flickering of de/reterritorialisation. The incomplete, local, somewhat unorthodox base of this knowledge is productive, but also humorous: a parochial context, the church leaflet syndrome. This, as W.G. Sebald – indubitably a twentieth-century authority on writing as profane pilgrimage – suggested, is one of the “...advantages of walking. It’s just one of the reasons I do that a lot. You find things by the wayside or you buy a brochure written by a local historian that is in a tiny local museum somewhere, which you would never find in London. And in that you find odd details, which lead you somewhere else, and so it’s a form of unsystematic searching, which of course for an academic is far from orthodoxy, because we’re meant to do things systematically. But I never liked doing things systematically. Not even my Ph.D. research was done systematically. It was always done in random, haphazard fashion” (Schwartz 2007: 94)

One of Andrew Collins’ own chapter headings in *Running Well* – ‘Antiquarian’s Logic’— vouchsafes this method, also found in a somewhat different relation with Artaud’s chronicling, via Tarot and antiquarian text, of a revolutionary future in Ireland: one that uses the valances of ancient technicity in landscape to alter the future, through metastable forms.



Figure 7: Reporter at The Running Well: cracked NEXT loafer alters the future

If this is the said postmodern enlisting of “strange old aesthetic objects,” it is preempted by the parochial: a productive valence in relation to the spatial and the local, recalling ancient Egyptian place-based mythemes. Fictions, anyhow, are the backbone of the Running Well’s story, as Collins takes most of his information from the writings of a Victorian folklorist and Rector of Runwell Parish, John Edward Bazille-Corbin, who was instituted in 1923, and wrote *Runwell St Mary – A popular account of the parish, its Running Well, its Church and its Clergy, together with some local legends and various notes* in 1942, the authority of which Collins himself belies: “It was almost certainly he who generated a local interest in the church’s superstitions. Indeed, some even suggested that he’d concocted them to draw attention and popularity to the church!” (1983: 8/17). Such fiction operates through technological collage qua Rancière, whether it is cinder, paper, stone, leaflet: they become a substrate of different textures. Art collective Orphan Drift’s Ranu Mukherjee suggests: “Fiction is the way to bring together things from different realms of experience (political/historical/mythical, bodily)” (Cited Roberts, Mukherjee, 2016: 2016). There is,

moreover, further productive serendipity locatable in my specific performance practice in a number of ways, that “re-doubles” to use Stiegler’s term, the contingencies attendant on the whole Running Well investigation (2009: 32) (Figure 7).

My role as reporter at *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* newspaper has a link to said author Collins that goes beyond the auto-theoretical effectiveness of bringing one’s paid employment into the texture of research: namely, the fact that Collins was employed in my role at the same newspaper 30 years previous, which is more than a proliferating coincidence. The unworkable meets the workable: is it possible to base a practice on serendipity, and foreground artistic decision through contingency? Guy Debord certainly foregrounds the role chance in the *dérive*’s infancy, in much the same way as formal art gives way to a ribald immediacy of life for Artaud (2007: 51)

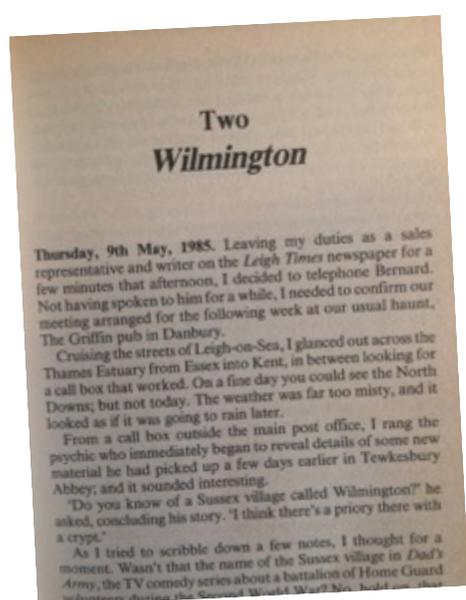


Figure 8: *The Black Alchemist* – Collins mentions *The Leigh & Westcliff Times*, and sitcom *Dad’s Army*

It was in reading another book of Collins’, *The Black Alchemist* (1988), which also details nefarious Essex goings-on, (apparently linked also the sitcom *Dad’s Army*) that I learnt this and wrote to him – originating our point of contact (when I read that he worked at *The Leigh & Westcliff Times*, I dropped the book in shock (Figure 8). Equally, the ‘female history’ that Collins lauds at *The Running Well* – which is in part channeled in the *Cealdwiellla* project (2018) – is at a disjunction to the largely male-oriented ‘psychogeographic’ process, in all its instantiations, that he represents, and in turn justifies, albeit benevolently.<sup>9</sup>

It is no shock that the local newspaper as figure might proffer such fertile ground for a fictitious brittle breakdown. News as form unfolds from a harnessing of oral tradition, fiction, and gore, from which the street crier’s ballad develops into what Lennard Davis has called

<sup>9</sup> An indication of this in the contemporary art field is Laura Oldfield Ford’s assertion that her perambulations around London and her resultant drawing practice work against psychogeography being “just middle-class men acting like colonial explorers, showing us their discoveries and guarding their plot” (quoted Fisher, 2014: 101).

the “news-novel matrix” where “newes” applies perfidiously well to both recent events and supernatural occurrence, as per the Running Well: a singular admixture of weird and workaday, qua collision (1983: 50).

Where Disorientation is seen to initially remove context from ground, this localised practice’s historicity admits unreliability as such, and in this thesis, is more focused in it’s territorialising through a focus on holes as vectors of intensity. A relation thereto doubled in recalling Artaud’s re-enactment of St Patrick’s staff, which stabbed the earth to create the hole as entrance to Purgatory. At the Running Well, too, it’s past goes before it: Andrew Collins cites it as a “deep elliptical hole,” and links to Runwell’s diabolic and hellish associations pursuant of the ever lurking proverbial “hell hole” (1983: 18). This is vouchsafed equally in another legend pertaining to the area, the ‘Legend of the Devil’s Claw’ as it is attached to the local parish church, a few miles south east of the site. Here, in a tale befitting or even outdoing antiquarian spook master M.R. James, the priest Rainaldus of said parish sees the devil inconveniently issue from his mouth one Sunday sermon back in the 1500s. Being then chased around the church with his dark master on his heels, the only trace found of Rainaldus after his exit through the south porch, is a “bubbling hissing pool of black liquid” that sunk to the floor: all that remained of him was “a circular black stain” (1983:10). Recalling the (reflective) Blind Spot of technicity as the *tache aveugle*, dirty smear, the stain of (the) place (of Runwell), Rainaldus here nicely prefigures the enfolding of site as technology, the Ur-form, the news/ooze of routine: the collision of “Newes” indeed.

This hissing smear is fiction that turns toward the unknown without seeking to legislate on its relation to the knowable. This ability to remain resolute whilst dissolute occurs both in the work produced at the local paper, and the self-published local histories of the Well – perhaps as instantiations of Deleuze and Guattari’s minor literature, as irrigation under the surface, the deterritorialising of power and language from more esteemed sources, as well as this productive unworkableness at the level of the routinely *inutile* site-specific (1986: 18). It then provides a small ludic solution to Stiegler’s “demythified time and space” in a reading trained at the level of sediment, “giving place” from the matrix of time’s stain, the news of the sham archaeologist, and the stain of *The Leigh & Westcliff Times*: a point doubly underlined with the pharmakonic placing of a notice in said paper’s ‘What’s On’ column, announcing the imminent event of *Cealdwiellla* when it was re-performed in Essex in 2019 (2009: 88) (Figure 9).



Figure 9: advert for *Caldwiella: An Invocation* in *The Leigh & Westcliff Times*

The use of the local newspaper as both medium and form with the announcements, and through locality and contingency, is of course, again, anachronistic: a dinosaur technology, it is a dying form, and a form of fiction qua the silted-up Marsh Regime, almost nearer the news-novel matrix than the infrastructures of digital circulation that generate so-called fake news. The fictive nature of the newspaper's role in the project is determined by this very form as a mode of dissemination. *The Leigh & Westcliff Times*, operated now by a large conglomerate –Tindle News – having been sold by its founder in the early 2000s, tells a familiar story. For now, it is not an e-newspaper, but is still printed on newsprint with a general circulation of 20,000 every fortnight in Leigh and Westcliff (correct at time of writing, December 2021). It is free courtesy of advertising, and discarded as *inutile* almost immediately. Something of a modern Ur-Form, not lest the Ur-Form of media space, the newspaper's original collaging of anecdote, fact, criticism, albeit at a hallucinatory local level, is described by Benjamin in the essay 'The Newspaper' as the "scene of [a] literary confusion [...] a set of insoluble antinomies" (2005: 741). Whilst newspapers, local or otherwise, perform a differing role in techno-capitalism, what Benjamin describes is close to Anachronic Collision: a strange mixture of affects, content, tone. Like all technics, it is pre-determined by vision, and likewise, the work of both *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* and *Caeldwiella* relies on the affects of Parochial Time: a prophetic unfolding of both office and Running Well as pharmakon.

### Carry On Photocopying

In the office, technology unworks time in a duplicitous enmeshing of biography, and accouterments. The cuneiform tablet, in this instance, the Ur-stumbling block of this project, was the originary technical object to activate the landscape. The cuneiform letters themselves across the clay ground are a writing of light and dark itself: it's only the shadows, when slanted against the light, which reveal the incisions – a kind of shadow ink. A script now adumbrated by the bulbs, circuits, panels of a flickering screen in *The Leigh & Westcliff Times'* office photocopier. If the movement across the imagined marsh was framed as a bodily becoming as delay, retroactively re-enacting the inscription of scriptural figure on the

ground of the clay tablet, now, in a sculpture piece *Time Cure* (2019)<sup>10</sup> (Figure 10) the light of the blind(ing) spot light of a slowly moving photocopy beam might make an analogous relationship as it affectively trains over the tablet's surface.



Figure 10: Photocopier as re-burial – duplication of fault lines in *Anachronic Collision*

If, as Benjamin avers, “we are only just beginning to infer what forms now lying concealed within machines will be determining for our epoch,” what does the photocopier reveal about the tablet?

Pressing ‘copy’ in the office seals the deal, a numinous reprise of the originary Promethean pact. The demonic dust from the crumbling brick meets the dust of toner as it catches the laser beam of the crypt, reflected on the surface of the page, reinstating site into “de-realized time” where the latter is the techno-capitalist prioritisation of the speed and profit of transmission over the context of inscription (ibid). The copy paper that curls out of the feed, hot and brittle, is a script read through divinatory hermeneutics, like the fortune-telling Liver Tablet in Chapter 1, and Artaud’s spell prognostications in Chapter 2: across all of these substrates, a forecast through delay occurs. Not just an unworking, the cuneiform in the office re-televises. The cuneiform becomes a productive technological node in the work place.

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<sup>10</sup> The photocopying both really happened in *The Leigh & Westcliff Times*’ office, but was versioned in the sculpture piece, displayed in the Artaud-themed group show ‘Machines of Instant Utility’ at Cabinet Gallery in 2019 (Figure 10).

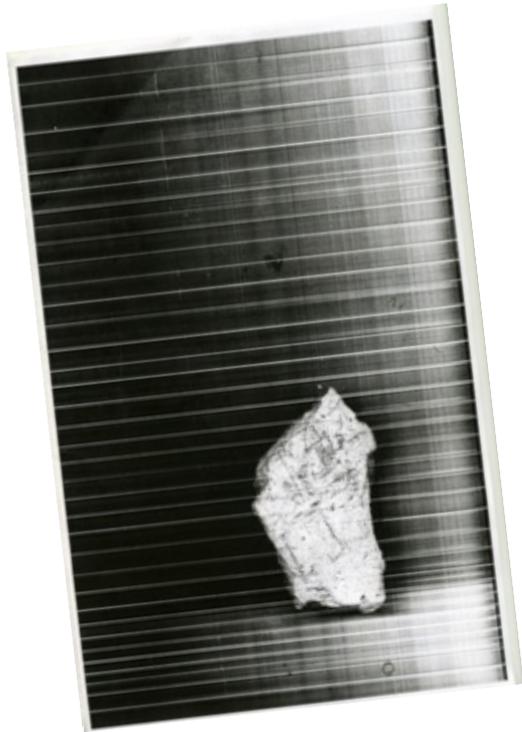


Figure 11: The animated copy gives place – made on *The Leigh & Westcliff Times* photocopier when I was meant to be working

This photocopied page (Figure 11) is the outcome, the end product, made in the newspaper office, is now an anachronic, albeit democratic and mechanised method of pre-digital reproducibility, that for Benjamin lacks aura, as he explained in 1936 (the year Artaud goes to Mexico). The copies’ “presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” also keenly changes its function from ritual to politics: but Fluvial Time “gives place” in an acknowledgment of the site’s innate technicity (Benjamin, 1999: 215/18). If for Benjamin “the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity,” the photocopy is a unique repetition: more than being inoperative, the photocopier co-constitutively re-enacts the cuneiform brick (ibid).

The excess of wasted photocopy paper, the creaking machine, the necessary jam in the smooth rhythm, the re-inscription of the surface choked through spluttering toner and light, is all part of the Marsh Regime. This Anachronic Collision of cuneiform in photocopier – all layers of outdated technology – is bizarre, not just in the illogical magic of seeing a cuneiform placed on a photocopier scanner, but in the materiality of the wheezing machine, the gaps of light where the toner doesn’t come out properly, charting a syncopated rhythm, a malfunctioning, a subverting of heterogeneity, akin to Bataille’s “excess” – one “that tries to jam or block the machine” – insisting on its incommensurable inutility (1988: 10).

Technology here is again magical: Ur-forms unfolding, in the beat of lines of toner breakdown, in a charged ‘mimesis’ qua copy, evocative of Artaud’s spell burning, whose operativity matched a belief in magical sigils that ancient Egyptians ascribed to their spell casting: “the power thought to be inherent in words could be accessed by thought in them” (Pinch, 2004, 20). This investment in this photocopy is understood because in a magical

practice “the mimetic is able to produce, not just an inert copy, but an animated copy powerful enough to enact change in the original” (Wilson, 2013:1). The copier itself has a moribund, monolithic appearance, like an office menhir, a sacred site to decrypt a surface, a mid-twentieth century prehistoric burial light box, premised on its analogue grainy materiality. These ancient structures, such as the one at New Grange in Ireland, and delineated as such by Michael O’Kelly in 1963, had an entrance arranged such that a thin beam of sunlight would pass therein during the Solstice, into the crypt: a scanning tablet surface on the Winter Solstice. Like a large photocopier, the beam catches the dust motes in the air of the tomb (O’Kelly, 1982: 108).

The bulky grey and beige plastic is a re-enacted stone menhir, a ritual standing stone in a burial complex of the office, where the bulb of the scanner light is the illuminating beam of sunlight, which activates something metastable within the site. Placing the cuneiform within the hulking light box structure is a “crypted” text: “What we read here is a “crypted” text written on the very partitions of the crypt, a crypt on a crypt. But the partition does not preexist; it is made out of the very material of the text. The cipher is not deciphered on a parietal surface” (Derrida 1986: xvii). This is Derrida’s psychoanalytic analysis of improper mourning’s thresholds. A fact figured, in the reporter’s mind by Bifrons, the God of crypt thresholds in Mather’s *Goetia*, and a character who also appears in Collins’ other Essex-based work *The Black Alchemist* (1904) (1988: 118). Only here, the thresholds are trained at the level of the clay substrate, a deconstruction as such: the gramme as such becomes grain, and the hauntology attendant on a revenant does not apply.



Figure 12: How many copies do we usually do? A Bit of Fry & Laurie

The photocopier-crypt animates the seemingly-dead. The retroactive insertion of the technological, the ludic, into and from site, makes the meeting of the photocopier and the cuneiform an exemplary disruption into stratigraphy, revealing the stain of place through an hauntology of that which never happened. Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* might seem like a retro-activated prehistoric earthwork, a ritual to a myth yet to take place in the landscape. As Smithson says in the ‘The Eight Mirror Displacement’, the shaky ground of mud and bleached desert is a memory of “what is not” in preference to “the amnesia of what is” (1996: 131).

The “photocryptier” is a menhir, but also a mode of reading, copying, de/cryption, which brings into play shabby post-Fordist office bureaucracy – literally the filing structure for the office. Contemporary theorists Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams mandate “full automation” as a route out of capitalism is strangely perverted in the form of the photocopier: where the latter project arguably makes room for the perpetuation of some kind of work space, they suggest that the photocopier operated as a helpmeet for the amplification of a level of “skilled labour” generated by the “rise of office technologies” before their inevitable decline in the rise of the consumer computer (2015: 109-10). Anachronic Collision’s purchase in this newspaper’s present is in the deadening reality of the displaced workplace, the yet grainy milieu, that even in the digitally-mediated sphere, challenges the perceived rapacious speed of the present that theories of Acceleration rely on: an immediacy also challenged by media theorist Cox who concurs that the pace of technological development is largely uneven (2015: 151).

The creaking grind of the wheels and fixer still croak in the office air, an affectation of inoperative unworkableness. A humour close to terror, the hideous drab hilarity of an office, and importantly, the Bataillean “unproductive expenditure” of making artwork on the photocopier, when you’re meant to be working (1988:137) (Figure 12). Its potentials, despite being invented through a patent attorney, changed the site and production of autonomous knowledge. This “green eyed deus ex machine” as Donald Morrison, in a 1976 essay “What hath XEROX Wrought?” says, has compromised authorship to the extent that it’s “punched holes in copyright law”: a temporal hole, qua Artaud’s spell, still reliant on the *tache aveugle* of technicity, which is why we don’t want the photocopier to work, for reasons of a magical nature (1976: 96).

Even in Alan Partridge’s *Knowing Me, Knowing You*, a machine is wheeled on-set to dumbfound and humiliate a hubristic actor and erstwhile photocopy repairman during his chat-show interview: of course, the trouble is that it’s “jammed” (BBC, 1994) (Figure 13).



Figure 13: To Me, To You

*Alan: Will you rise to Alan’s challenge and mend the photocopier?*

*Gary: Of course I can mend, it. What model is it?*

*Alan: Z60*

*Gary: Mono or Multi-feed?*

*Alan: Mono-feed*

*Gary: Easy*

*Alan: Prove it!*

*Gary: It hasn’t been re-set after a paper jam. Basic.*

## Unworking 2: Reel-Time and Tape Technology:

The photocopier's perverted reanimation is mysterious, yet Pascal Chabot, in his monograph on Stiegler, suggest that it is only in the contemporary digital interface of network operations that technology reveals its full magical capacity. Taking as his model Simondon's notion of the technological object as that which is separated from ground, he views all technics as isolated objects that are only integrated through the terminals of networks, clearly analogous to the digital, from which "essential activities are centred on relayed communications and remotely controlled actions, which suppose the existence of a centre or centres, privileged points, zones of influence" (2003: 138). The "decreasing size and vastly expanding networks" of informatics nonetheless inculcate a comparable pharmakonic phenomenon to the first cuneiform writing, as both are grammars of memory (Nora and Minc, 1981: 3). But assuming these networks operate mainly through the diffusion of information transmission, such an accelerated time still affects the techno-logical crisis of space (Stiegler, 2009:123)

Chabot's reading of the sacred within technology obnubilates mystery, thereby occulting *différance* – which is Stiegler's primary gravamen: its credulous literality affords no room for the aesthetic as an inscribable and yet for the reporter, *unworkable* space of potential, about which it is in-différent, with little imagination to what the privileged points and moments might manifest qua the luminescent vector of Artaud's burnt hole. "As a Structuralist, [Simondon] leaves aside the content of the sacred experience. He does not address the numinous character, the *mysterium fascinans et tremendum* (the mystery that both attracts and repels) which is specific to a sacred reality" (Chabot, 2003: 138). This is why Simondon can argue that "adding technical objects one to another can neither remake the world nor regain contact with the world in its unity" (2017: 421). This is a vitiation of the power of the "sacred" let alone a deeper relation to individuation, as the anachronistic enactment, in this triadic relation – the mysterious site of the time's dissimulation, at work on the ground of the photocopied page (as substrate/scriptural site) but also of another office accouterment: the dictaphone and cassette tape, as items that catalyze the magical force of site, as actualising machines.



Figure 14: UR tape: Mesopotamia Live: because it would be, with the Ur-form always having been lurking

There is a serendipitous clue to the invocation of vanished worlds here: the name of the reporter's tape brand is *Maxell UR* (Figure 14). Analogously, the tape as tertiary retention itself, as it were, remembers the Marsh regime, the origin of Anachronic Collision, Ur-Disorientation, in UR, the earliest city, and the ancient seat of Mesopotamia. If the Running Well is the geography of this anachronism, through which a grammar of action, coded in the site's sediments, rises up, as a "reticulation" of the geography's force field, it is the same channeling of an originary anachronic knowledge that the Mesopotamian marsh sets up. If the cuneiform is the operative start of this mythopoetics of the sediment, the obverse of "demythified time and space," the tape, alongside the photocopier, is part of the well's pooling or *s/pooling* potential of Disorientation (Stiegler, 2009: 88)

### Tape Case Study 2: Adam Bohman's travel tapes

The unworkability of the grainy tape evokes the *inutile*. Where I use the photocopier serendipitously in the office, the musician, collagist and improviser Adam Bohman told me that he, too, had used office machinery when he was meant to be working, to make some of his improvisational spoken word material, stretching back to the 1980s. In particular, his "travel tapes" are of note in Disorientation's unworkable un-revelation, not least in his spoken word tracks 'Southend Part 1 & 2', which are excerpts from a talking tape recorded on a day trip in August 1994 (Bohman, 2014). Of obvious import to the Essex-based practice in this chapter, these tracks in particular are the capturing, qua spatiality, of Southend: "I record on a C60 or C90 length. There was no specific reason for me to go to Southend; I like travels and they are done when I turn up. I record and let energy underneath [come through]" (interview with reporter, 2021, Figure 15).

There is contingency in the fragmentary impressions recorded in these 'talking tapes', that sees Adam walk around, capturing sounds, reading out text he sees on notices, all as part of a sardonic commentary, as his trip down Southend pier mandates,<sup>11</sup> with the sounds of the Golden Mile (Figure 27) and its game machines fading away as he intones:

*Super strength racing... Neo Geo game...professional ear tattooing piercing  
...Southend-on-Sea Borough Council request that visitors to the pier take due  
diligence... [cut] I've left the amusement section behind, walking along the pier...it  
must be over a mile long, slightly less than that [cut] I've now been walking for about  
five minutes and the lager-lout types have been left far behind, only the more  
aesthetically-minded people would make this walk (2014).*

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<sup>11</sup> Another track from the same CD upon which the Southend tracks is released is called 'Vicar with a Travel Bag' – not out of place in the section 'Ague-Cake' cf. Chapter 1

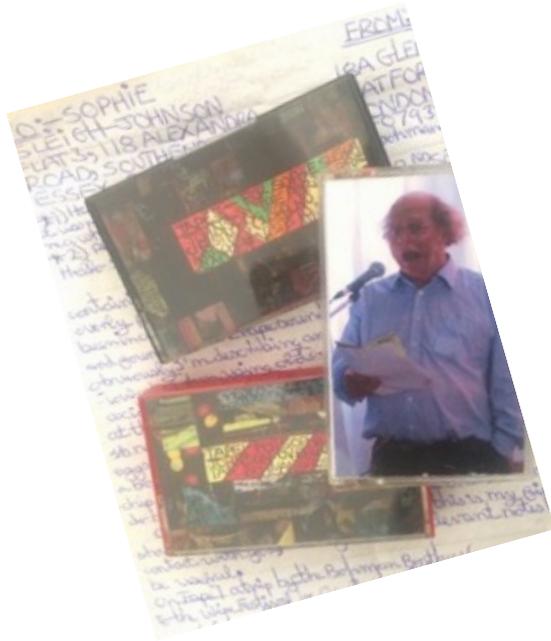


Figure 15: Adam Bohman - homemade tapes and correspondence, sent to reporter, 2021

My spoken word tape pieces, likewise, developed both around the Running Well and elsewhere<sup>12</sup> are themselves nefarious gazetteers to site, colliding spatial and temporal fragments and found sound, using the compact cassette in the dictaphone, the outmoded office equipment of a local newspaper reporter, to map dissident site. Bohman's combination of text and recollection streamed through his own recitation proffers an example of Anachronic Collision, held together through site: the occasional cuts and jumps indicate the lost distance of the pier that he has traversed, syncing them together, evocatively jumping space-time and foregrounding the unthought or uncaptured in a place, not withstanding the anachronistic recording technology used.

### Tape Case Study 3: Krapp's Last Tape

Samuel Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) places an open reel-recorder centre stage as one actor hears his own voice live and on tape, as he retrieves memories through and alongside the recorded playback of his own voice. The scanning through the tape, and his movements, are symbolic of time's change. His movement back and forth across stage as a re-tracing of memory is mirrored in the tape's rewind, fast-forward and stopping as Krapp switches between modes. Equally, my timely movement in the delimited 'site' of the Running Well, is itself a relationship of figure to ground, which doubles through the Well's différance: bodily movement across sediment and on tape as an invocation of the site's originary Disorientation.

When rewinding the spoken voice, or any sound on tape, the seemingly chronological acceleration backwards in time is audible in the jumps of intensity and pitch: flutters of blurred, vaguely rhythmic squeaky warble of rewind playback present causality in a

<sup>12</sup> Cf. practice documentation.

decidedly linear sequence on a timeline pinned down to particular places. These are particular places on the tape, and on the stage: in Beckett, Krapp and the tape operates as a circuit. The dictaphone and compact cassette at the Well with the enactor function transductively, in that the technology itself is altered, inscribed, which in turn grounds the effect in a more human playback but also in terms of its relationship to a human user, where the latter develops through exteriorisations of consciousness into technology (Stiegler, 2009: 2). *Krapp's Last Tape* thus performs its function as retention: a technological externalisation of memory, that in turn enfolds technology back into individuation, as a spatialisation of meaning whose model, as per the Chapter 1, is writing.

In Stieglerian terms, *différance* as delay is also part of being human, and is also taken to the technical object itself as a contamination of human and technology: the technical substrates are externalised forms of human memory that are then re-interiorised as a *différent* transformation, as “the conservation, accumulation, and *sedimentation* of successive epigeneses” (Stiegler 1998, 140) [my emphasis]. As above, it is the editing work by virtue of the dictaphone and the photocopier that the syncopated cutting up of time is operationalised. This occurs specifically through the inscribed spacing of the well's rhythmic temporality onto the tape reel: the figure of an electric signal inscribed on magnetic trace in iron oxide particles, adhered on the grounding of a liquid-shiny PVC magnetic strip, a feature of the compact cassette that became a widely used consumer good with development of Sony's Walkman in 1979 – which remained in main circulation until the late 1990s, when it was superseded by the Compact Disc. This kind of trace was in any case only available after the invention of phonographic recording. Before this, What Kaja Silverman terms the “Acoustic Mirror”, the shiny surface of bone, deflects and reflects the nature of the voice heard in the head, in contradistinction perhaps to the flashing pool of Well water reflecting the light of the moon or the reflecting mirror of technicity (1974: 79).<sup>13</sup>

### Editing the Site

At the Running Well, time remains a metastable s/pooling potentiality, revealed through what Dibi-Huberman prescribes as a “shock, a tearing of the veil, an irruption or appearance of time” to gain access to the “stratified time of the image” (2003:47). Technology, human and site function and malfunction reciprocally through transduction, as in *Krapp's Last Tape*, and it is in the blips, the grainy hiss and weird warble of rewound sound that agency is found, but crucially, as above, not through loss of loss, but through the stain of parochial place, *pace* Revd. Rainaldus: that which never occurred, but which is being reinserted back into the past, as in the salting of the site at Powys.

*Approaching with a carrier bag, you slip down the small banks of the ditch. Stand next to the deep pool, SONY dictaphone in hand, metal crosier stirring the water. It seems perverse, to be in a ditch with a metal staff like a Bishop's crosier.*

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<sup>13</sup> This ‘Acoustic Mirror’ describes the aural un-decidability of both speaker and listener “at the same time emitted and heard, sent and received, and by the subject himself, as if, in comparison with the look, an “acoustic” mirror was always in effect” (1974: 79). The de-boning officially comes with phonographic recording, before which one's voice was always trapped within the osseous auditoria of the encasing skull. This is also inferred in Rilke's 1919 poem ‘Primal Sound,’ in reference to the grooves of the skull operating as a playable recording.



Figure 16: Spell Archaeology

This relation of human site and technology is tripartite, and is a relationality evidenced in ancient spell casting operations, as detailed in Andrew Wilburn’s book *Materia Magica*. Here, fragmentary spells unearthed from ancient Egypt, depicted like retroactive fragments qua Chapter 1’s cuneiform tablets, combine the spell affects of Artaud’s spells, not least in their “holes for suspension” (Figure 16). These spells, importantly found down well-like “*deep shafts*” relied on a similar tripartite distribution of materiality, deposition and inscription for their magical activation (2013: 78).

If Wilburn’s tripartite relation of such ancient spell archaeology is ordered on a numinous affectivity occurring through site, voice and technology, it is developed in Anachronic Collision as both a fabulated and contingent ritual praxis, taking on the environment, the affective, the contingent, the unknown (2013: 36).<sup>14</sup> Quite apart from hiding the disappearance of the future through form, this exercise, like in Chapter 1’s *tache aveugle*, is divination through the sedimentary hermeneutics of the Blind Spot. Yet this tripartite regime is, in an accelerated and digital-based mnemonic, qua the base line of the present, an untimely model to be using, as much as it is untimely to the ancient site: illustrative of the striated versions of ‘contemporaneity’ being collided. The past is returning in the reflection, but anew: enlisting the heightened assemblage of metonymic accouterments – ones that acknowledges yet attempt to proffer solution to the perceived negative valances of such a temporal collaging qua Frederic Jameson’s “postmodern anachronism” (Fisher, 2014: 16).

The technological operation at the well is then not just a recording and externalising of memory, but a syncopated activator of the site, where the recording of it further “cuts up” the

<sup>14</sup> For Wilburn, the tripartite relation occurs when binding spells ‘curse tablets’ (inscription) are inscribed with words and magical symbols written into lead, papyrus or organic supports (material) and then placed in sites alongside other symbolic acts (deposition) (2013: 36)

space-time inscribed on the PVC as a rhythmic intervention. The Reflecting Mirror of the dictaphone transforms Fluvial Time to Reel Time, dis-placing Real Time. Seeing and feeling time again, and the Ur-forms of its manifestation, the interface in which human and mechanical device flow equally and alternatingly in both directions – not linear – charted as inscription, is not simply rewinding the tape, but also intervening in the time of the *well's past* through the process of playback. Uncovering, thereby, the artifacts of the electromagnetic memory process itself: strange temporality in sediment as figure to the ground of the tape strip. The “spatialisation of time – the “becoming-space of time” – which then, due to the tape’s unique analogue material capacities, can be re-edited in site (Derrida 1972: 8).

Analogously, Robert Smithson commented, after filming the *Spiral Jetty* in the desert in 1970, that “pieces of Utah” were left on the film reel: a spooling of “time unfinished”: left, or perhaps more specifically inscribed (1996: 153). These are, too, to be interpreted through Benjamin’s *Ursprungspänomen*: if Ur-configurations lie dormant, they play tricks with time, literally unspooling in an ideate spiral from the whirlpool of Reel Time, embodied by the Well, which begets the magical thinking required of, or perhaps in excess of, a Privileged Place. The pools and puddles released on the mud at this site are a tear as a figure in the skin of the ground: the anachronistic surge of a rhythmic whirlpool in the site codified as a delay through the *différance* of a technological operation.

### Circular Time: Re-Enactment

Gerard Moore said of Bernard Stiegler in the latter’s obituary, Stiegler “sought to ‘recompose’ Derridean deconstruction by extending it into technics: “The future is not just already out there, waiting to come, but must actively be created if we are to avoid the entropy of mere ‘becoming” (2018: 109). If the Reel Time of the enactment in the present marks the spatio-temporal Disorientation of playback, which not only remembers the past but also uses it to retroactively dilate the present, take it out of phase, then rewinding calls the past and brings it forward too, an untimely layering, an aporial dilation, oscillating between playback and re-enactment, making the original recording already a repetition of the non-same, compounded by the replaying and rewinding, thereby altering the future as true repetition through the forms latent within.

Finger, button, switch, play, rewind, producing it again (and again and again) as a difference: a practice of opening worlds re-edits the well’s spatio-temporality by coterminous retroactive insertion into the past, via the future, *pace* Smithson’s ‘Ruins in Reverse” (1996: 72). This futurity moves towards a practice that could be called re-enactment qua Ancient Egyptians localised mythemes, as above. Repetition is always the channeling of a thing’s Untimely, anachronistic, power. As Benjamin writes: “we are only just beginning to infer exactly what forms now lying concealed within machines will be determining for our epoch” (cited Leslie, 2014: 21).

Contrary to a “dilapidated past form [...] interred in crackle,” the affordance of tape and radio in this project attempts to resist the circumlocution of twentieth century music forms, whilst the Well abjures the heritage industry packaging of ancientness and trite anniversaries in favour of unclear fault lines and a spurious history (Fisher, 2008: 1) (Collins, 1983: 17). Mark Fisher underlines what for him is a key problem within contemporary culture’s inability to

unfold Ur-Forms: namely that that there is “*no sense of disorientation*” in the prevalence of the retro aping of music styles: instead, there is evidence of crippling stasis in future imaginaries that cancel the future (ibid: 14). Reeling to and fro qua re-enactment is a disjuncture against this all too prevalent and flattening dyschronia: its labyrinthine inscriptive traces contrast a “de-realisation of space and time” – a flattening homogeneity that Stiegler reads in the accelerated cultures’ obsession with speed, where the latter names the expression of rhythm between humans and technics in its differentiation in forces: speed in and of itself is nothing, for “speed expresses the test and the act of a potential constituted through the negotiation of tendencies” (Stiegler 2009: 11). This speed and ease of recall is the essence in an age of accelerated industrial memory.<sup>15</sup>

Anthropologist Joseph R Tulasiewicz, however, cautions that “time is difficult to *orient oneself in*” (2012: 19). For him, it is not acceleration that disorients, but a sense of being adrift, “a-temporal” – a drifting at crass odds with the more usual affordances of the *dérive* (ibid: 2). A site-based dilation of time, a syncopated anachronism, rewinding to bring the past forward works against such a-temporality. Tulasiewicz’s a-temporality belies Stiegler, and also Paul Virilio’s easy eliding of speed and the contemporary: whilst more cognate to dissasociative states, he still sees the a-temporal as a palliative dispositif of social media and digital technologies (2012: 19) (2009: 98). Where above, speed is framed through the disappearance of place, mobilising rhythm at odds with but not opposed to those which disjoin us, is counsel to not utterly abjure these linear rhythms, especially considering the originary moment of history as ‘tele-vision,’ and the conjectured cut and paste foundation of all writing (Dronsfield, 2015: 1).

The affordances of these fragmentary cut ups from the tape spool that snag and flicker into the future as re-enactment are also, again, founded upon the inoperative nature of the tape’s materiality itself– a fact no less congruous with the delay inherent in *différance* which, used earlier to examine the spacing of time on the tape reel, is also the origin of all repetition. Re-enactment, then, could be said to enmesh delay into human and external memory supports.<sup>16</sup> Not simply a ‘mime’ of the past, but what makes through the switch – here oriented through anachronic assemblage and the rewind button— a cut up of the well’s metastable rhythmic temporality. This temporality becoming space is implicit in the inoperability as an amplification of the theory: syncopated rhythm as anachronism spaces the sensible, and opens new worlds to the future, re-writing the ‘present’ by re-enacting what was never there.<sup>17</sup> The exact fragment – here, of the Well’s spatio-temporalisation – cannot be visually indexed and repeated in the mnemonic storage of the PVC strip, making it, like the holes of the cuneiform, and the delay of Artaud’s spell, synecdoche to inefficiency. Likewise, as an architect of

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<sup>15</sup> This notion of capitalism as the destruction of homogenous time is at once an accelerated view that reads the detachment of objects and experiences qua Disorientation – but also commodifiable it in recent literatures’ valuation of digital detox and the belief that sleep in under assault, as in Jonathan Crary’s 2014 book *Capitalism 24/7*, London: Verso.

<sup>16</sup> It is considered that with sound recording, along with photography, a more indexical relation to the past is afforded, “touching time” to use Rebecca Schneider’s terms: although she is referring to the ‘period rush’ or ‘collapse’ that some historical re-enactors feel when temporal distance seems to collapse (2011: 35). But in relation to the materiality of the tape reel, and the role of tape in the history of memory supports to *re-enactment*, the issue of the tape’s infallibility in the face of more recent digitised “industrial memory” storage is key.

<sup>17</sup> W.S. Burroughs, as arguably a ‘precursor’ (if such a thing exists in this anachronistic argument) of the collision method, used tape machines along with hand and type-written inscription of cut-up (although he was not motivated by the anachronistic) to intervene or re-code reality.

inefficiency, Beckett deliberately designs the circuits of the Krapp-Tape information machine to also resist the easy flow of data.

The Well, it can surely be said, has a unique space-time foregrounded out of the quotidian yet immured within it, cognate to the miraculate, one that calls to a phase ‘yet to come,’ as we’ve seen in the prophetic practices of the marsh, which do not name a break between magic and technology but inculcates an original Ur-form thereof. The tape PVC is another hermeneutics of sediment where the technologic object, the trigger, un-anchors linear teleology through the tricks of time latent in its Ur-forms.<sup>18</sup> If ‘Bifo’ Berardi mandates a “Futurability” as the horizon of possibility lying dormant in the present, the syncopated rhythm of anachronistic Reel Time, a pre-modern distribution of time as alternative rhythm – or what could be termed a form of ‘re-enactment’ – is viewed by comparative religion scholar Mircea Eliade as “cyclical,” connoting the s/pooling circularity of the well (Berardi, 2017: 1) (Eliade, 1965: 15).

Simondon in turn quotes Eliade’s phases “adaptive” and the “inventive” to underline the role technology plays in pushing humanity away from the mythic. In this mythic “adaptive” time, which of course postdates the originary “phase shifts” away from unity that Privileged Places stand as markers for, objects and actions took part in a communion that transcended the actants, and thus were entered into repetition, “because they were consecrated in the beginning ... by gods, ancestors, or heroes” (ibid). Here, patterns do not bear the mark of time, as time is reborn in an eternal present, recalling again the time of the Mystics. The world is the reflection of a higher order, following comic patterns, such as one that takes us back to the Marsh Regime.

By contrast, the “inventor” phase could be dated from Abraham and his journey into the desert, which forges a path into history: a fact born out by the western dating of the calendar to the supposed date of Christ’s birth much like the act of the geologists’ stratigraphic borehole, pinpointing a specific improbability. From here on, time is linear, as Eliade explains: the “inventor” then has a sense of the future, because his actions have a teleological drive forward, rather than an imbrication with repetitive adaptation upon which ritual actions are performed” (1965: 15). The method of Anachronic Collision benefits from such a re-enactment modality, but not as an atavistic return to an “eternal present” as such: indeed, the late capitalistic mode ironically emulates this endless present through a different distribution of affects (Plant, 1992: 27). This repetitive view of temporality, viewing this early stage as cyclical reenactment, in tandem with a method that disrupts the modern linear stratigraphy of a site, proffers affordances that lessen the hubris of anthropocentric eschatology. Indeed, these earlier mythic patterns could be retroactively termed Anachronic Collision.

Re-enactment is thus a temporal collage of that which has never been strictly enacted, whose affordances are opposed to a hauntological malaise which technology can afford (Fisher, 2014: 19). In this latter instance, technologies of the twentieth century analogise loss through technological obsolescence, with an anachronic technology materialising and indexing recent age with hissy flagrancy. But the tripartite colliding (through site, persona and prop) of

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<sup>18</sup> The wider project that resulted from the study of the Running Well, *Cealdwiella* also included work distributed across written text, research journeys (‘pilgrimages’) and a show produced for Resonance 104.4 FM, where the ghosts of past and future were affectively pulsed on the airwaves, enlisted to dilate the format of the technicity being inscribed upon, tuning into what American postpunk band Pere Ubu, following the Situationists, called “Street Waves”: the heat and beat of the prepersonal (The Modern Dance, 1978).

technology and human through the Well, as always-already determined by fault lines that pre-date modernity's weird lacunae of loss, are here rather re-enacted with apparent coherence, eschewing the rupture from the cyclical world: a relation with site that looses the "inventive" need for revolution. The latter, when enfolded in the consciousness of a modern linear historiography, a Historical Materialism, seems an eternal return of ineffective *inutile* revolution, circling like a tape spoke: "I revolve, but I don't evolve" (Alan Partridge, BBC, 1996).

### Anchorite

From Fluvial, to Reel, to Re-Enactment: the presence of reporter as re-enactor, too, is channeling the modalities of previous 'enactors' qua cyclicity, re-enacting the absent, as Ur-Disorientation always lies metastable, unfolding anew. The said largely female mythography of the Running Well suggests it was the seat of a medieval Anchorite, who would have lived in a nearby cell, with the position of "guardian and protector of the well": her stone tomb in the nearby Runwell Church bears an unusual cross design on the Purbeck marble lid (Collins, 1983: 17). The tomb itself, which before renovation was embedded in the north wall, pertains again to devilry: the 'Prioress' was said to have belonged half to God and half to his nemesis, accounting for the peculiar orientation of the tomb *a propos* the layout of the building (ibid). This pattern on said tomb lid, according to chronicler Revd Bazille-Corbin, would also have been used as an emblem of office for the later coterie of nuns and novices said to set up to watch over the Well with their governor, the Prioress. Collins described the cross that is "Upon the lid [...] in raised, carved relief: a long cross shaft, a crozier, on which is mounted a peculiar geometrical shape. This is composed of a diamond, which, set into each of its four sides, is a large circle, each with a break in its circumference [in...] a pattern supposedly unique to Christian art" (Collins, 1983: 17) (Figure 17).

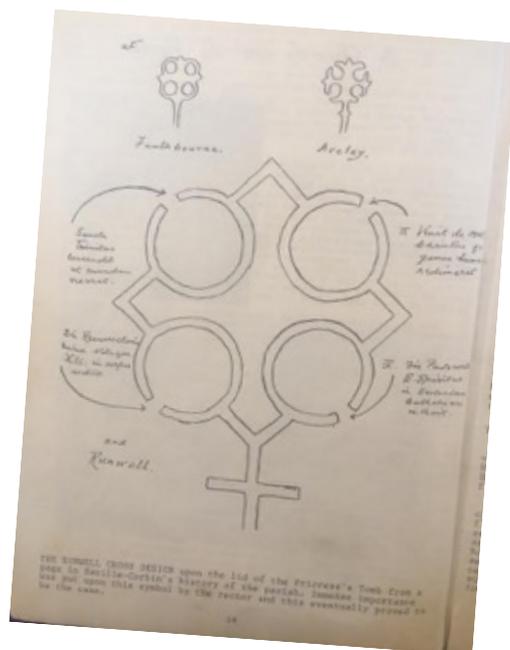


Figure 17: The Runwell Cross design on the lid of the Prioress' Tomb (*The Running Well Mystery*, 1983)

These fragments of contingent local knowledge again attest to the importance of the minor, with the cross design described here in turn replicated through my metal crozier for *Cealdwiella* (Figure 18). In relation to re-enactment, the anchorite of legend is retro-activated using this metal staff, *pace* Artaud and the Bachall Isu, to again draw up the metastable potency of the site – a from of attuning doubled by a real radio broadcast from the Well that was transmitted live into the gallery.

These oscillations between myself, the medieval Anchorite, and her retro-activation are presaged in Artaud’s own mandate to cut through the control system of imposed life: “The most urgently needed revolution is a sort of retro-activation in time. We ought to return to the state of mind, or simply even the practices, of the Middle Ages, but genuinely, by a form of essential metamorphosis” (Nin, 1994: 229). This return to, arguably, Disorientation, is adumbrated by a retro-activation, which he also effects himself in assuming multiple personas: Anaïs Nin recalls Artaud *becoming* Heliogabalus, as much as he also became St Patrick in Ireland: a very Anachronic Collision! (ibid).

Appropriately, the term anchorite, derived from the Latin *anachoreta*, can be traced to the Greek *anachōrein*, meaning “to withdraw,” to “go backwards”: here, the anachronistic rewinding of the tape as a perverse re-enactment invokes her, as if the metal crozier were a tuning fork, another part of the armory of productive unworking: spooling Reel Time, an analogous relation between stone pattern and geological mapping. Indeed, Revd Bazille-Corbin understood the Prioress’ Cross, and the breaks in the circle, to be constitutive of “avenues whereby the power and virtue of the cross [...] may be more intuitively defused”- perhaps as a symbolic ground plan for the metastable landscape’s power (1983: 17)

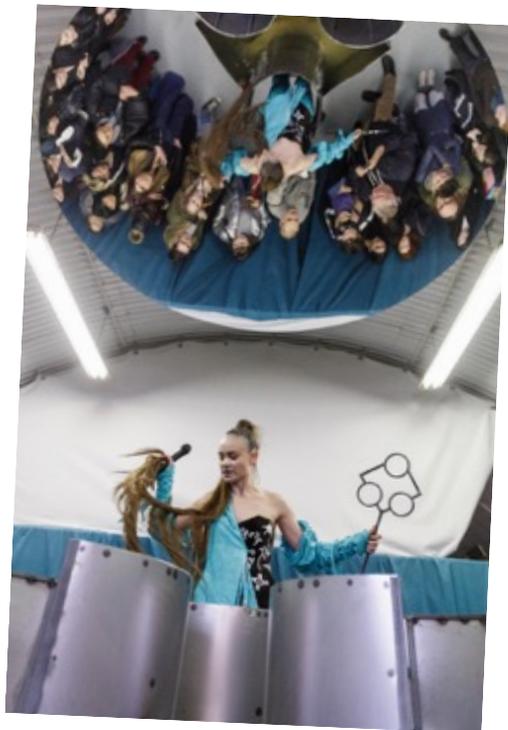


Figure 18: *Cealdwiella* (2018) – SS-J re-enacting the Prioress of the Running Well

Smithson's text pieces on the *Mirror Displacements* likewise call forth spectres: in his car, the Mayan deities Tezcatlipoca and Itzpaplotl manifest in his car window, ruminating to him conversationally before vanishing onto the pavement of Highway 261: "'He knows the future travels backwards' they continued" (1996: 123). From the parched locale, these Gods mandate a return to an absent past, as much as they 'cancel' the time of landscape for the future: Divinatory Time. This is good news for the virtual Artaud, who thinks badly, nay will violently *curse*, anyone who doesn't believe in multiple (and metastable) Gods. For Smithson, this practice is likewise akin to re-enactment, with Quetzalcoatl later enlisted as one of his "future-people" (1996: 131).

The tain, the residue, *pace* Revd. Rainaldus, on the pool is a mark of différance, with Disorientation ready for re-activation, calling forth the Anchorite: a stain that attests to the slow unworking of the rusty mechanisms, which judders smooth transition, but nonetheless doesn't vouchsafe a slow entropic decay, *pace* Benjamin's 'ruin' as allegory for an irresistible decay of reverse teleology. Instead, it constructs a productively unknowable future, that in turn pharmacologically disarticulates an oppressive rhythm, channeling repetition in re-enactment as a moment where the past returns, but not as the same, because the Ur-form unfolds via site, anew, contra the de-localised rhythmic surge of telecommunications networks. This works against a neoliberal unknowability or fictionality – and thereby foreclosing – of the future through financial speculation (Reeves-Evison & Shaw, 2016: 23). Unlike a non-place, the Running Well as a vectoral hole acknowledges this bivalent state, and is an anachronism possessing the urgency that Nietzsche himself termed the 'Untimely' as analogue to this enactment at this "deep well of eternity" as much as what he also calls the "deep well of the *Anchorite*"! (2006: 51) [my emphasis]

#### Case Study 4: The Cry of a Well

An anachronistic case study puts this repetitious divination to the test via retroactive re-enactment: a somewhat aporial operation, located in 1654! Speaking in a 13-day trance from a London "Ordinary," an old term for an alehouse (cf. booze carrier bag, Chapter 1), English Civil war radical Anna Trapnell undergoes a durational prophesy called, in its entirety, *The Cry Of a Stone*. I say 'in its entirety,' for, the enactment is not just the 'live' gesture, as we'll see, but is versioned in past and future, too, through various iterations, qua Smithson: Trapnell was knowingly re-enacting, vouchsafed by the infinite unfolding of the Ur-form. In lieu of the dictaphone as technological activator, the 13-day revelation is transcribed 'live' onto paper by an anonymous character (lost to history) called "the Relator" as she speaks: so, if dictaphone/compact cassette records the enactment at the Running Well, the relator transcribes the flow of her words.



Figure 19: Dr Feelgood, Be Seeing You, 1977: Pictured in a Canvey Island pub – the now-bulldozed Admiral Jellicoe (cf. Reporter’s article on this in The Canvey Times)

Trapnell is part of the Millenarian tumult of the English Civil war, as much a radical as the proto-communist Ranters and Diggers who leveled up from the unquiet earth of the 1640s (Hill, 1991: 14). Telescoping some centuries into the future, back on marshy soil, more Ur-forms are unfolding, other restless enactments ploughing the heat of the soil, as a cutting tool ploughs the humus of a lino printing tile<sup>19</sup>: the R’n’B pub rock band Dr Feelgood are *Essex*-style radicals digging different kinds of dirt (Figure 19). Like Trapnell, they also prophesize from the pub, transmitting live from the Southend’s Kursaal in 1975, a screaming, crumbling, adventure building pulsing neon lights onto the dark mudflats, chroniclers of the estuary heat/beat.

Trapnell’s “Ordinary” prophecy is tunneled from gut into beer condensation: a ‘cry from a stone’ is perhaps a different kind of Pub Rock, and it is the “entrails of scripture” from which she prophesises, recalling the divinatory hermeneutics of the sheep’s liver, in Chapter 1, and Masson’s Babylonian labyrinth (2000: 17). With her “entrails of scripture” Trapnell is knowingly referencing this ancient practice of the hepatoscopoi back in 1654, also suggesting that she too can foretell the future through ancient exegesis as corporeal matter: biblical hermeneutics in offal.

The “Relator,” who transcribed Trapnell’s words as a pseudo-Jacobean Dictaphone, relays *différance* in technics: the materiality of this divination stretched across epochs as a trace (Figure 20&21). As Stiegler showed, and Trapnell confers, technology and the human are mutually constitutive and un-constitutive, in a conjectural method mapped through the thesis in marsh and Well. Trapnell re-positions the import of a non/human dynamic, hinted at in plain sight through the title – an allusion to the biblical book of Habakkuk: “For the stone shall cry out of the wall and the beam out of the timber shall answer it - All things have a voice” (King James Bible, chapter 2:11). Whereas Trapnell foregrounds the Second Coming of Christ with her title, as was the want of Fifth Monarchists in the English Civil War, the resultant divinatory gnosis comes from her *being the stone*: she is the hermeneutical

<sup>19</sup> Cf. lino prints ‘Never Work’ and ‘the Cry of a Well’ in practice documentation

sediment, the pretension, from which the prophesy is mapped, reminiscent of the metallurgical imbrication of the not-yet born and the metal ores of the alchemical furnace: a contamination of human and technics, at an organological level, to supersede ordinary, or Real Time (Hill, 1991: 87).



Figure 20 & 21: Trapnell vs Dictaphone

Like the dilation of the Blind Spot of technicity, the opening of the well is also like a mouth. Deriving its name etymologically from Rune: Mystery Well, where mystery is traced back to the image of the mouth, from the Greek *mustérion*, a secret rite, derived for the silence foresworn by all mystery initiates; not to speak, from *múō*, “I shut”: my lips are sealed. Recalling Serres’ mandate to “drill furrows, wells [...] so that the voice of things passes through the holes made in this white garment”, the well is somatised as Trapnell, her body the site of the ancient ground re-surfaced, potentiated as technology (2016: 91). Where the Fluvial Time becomes Divinatory Time as a divinatory intervention into the future, then translated qua Reel Time through a process of *différance* and re-enactment, in the inscription and editing of the dictaphone and tape, with Trapnell, liveness is repositioned as both an impossibility, and for the purposes of Anachronic Collision, an irrelevance. Technically, the spatial inscription as recording comes in the form of a written document, the ‘relation’, from the Latin *referre*, to bring back: or maybe, re-enact?

The form of the prophecy avers this too. The trance and its words digress in register: veering between Trapnell’s biographical details and mystical exegesis, it predates a post-Structuralist erosion of authorial agency, evoking both the local historian, but earlier, the heresy of the Gnostics – masticators, confabulators and spewers of sources. According to Hilary Hinds, it is in prophetic practice in which women radicals could “claim for themselves positions beyond the purely feminine” (2000: xiv). Trapnell, in her prophesying, does not own the text: she is a channeler, making the re-enactment an arcane substrate activated in her and our ‘present’. The past indeed runs back and forth through the text as much as the prophesying itself, that constitute what Hinds has termed a “declamatory autobiographical-prophetic-political-spiritual mode” (2000: xxxv). This retroactive anachronism, as above, occurs in ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources, which sought an ancient affect in their inscriptions. The

‘Egyptian Memphite Theology’ for one, which details a specific cosmological narrative, was written by scribes in a very archaic style to give it greater authority (Pinch, 2004: 45).

Trapnell’s perverted or experimental experience of time – never mind ‘liveness’ – are something congruent with repeated examples of feminine mysticism (Collins, 1983: 45). Through her autonomous time zone, Trapnell disavows the need for live embodied voicing – a feature that has become a gravamen of much performance theory. For Peggy Phelan, both performance’s modality and power lie in its ephemerality, as both a resistance against commodification and a minor form that empowers the excluded, meaning that we can’t view Trapnell’s enactment as occurring again here, now, in the present, because the “Text” transcribed by the Relator might be a “Document” of performance, in Phelan’s lexicon (1993: 87). Recalling above the discussion of English Mystic Margery Kempe, historian Carolyn Dinshaw points out that mysticism and latterly queer historicism “both intensely problematize the body in time and reject the protocols of any historicism grounded in coherent temporal progress,” in pursuit of a mystic’s “very capacious now” (2012:3). The capacious now indeed capitulates the delay of *différance* and unfolding Ur-forms that this anachronic spatialising affects as a wide (w)hole at the Well. Thus, with Trapnell’s re-enactment, the Holy Lands are ‘live’ in a pub in central London in 1654: a move that occludes a clear distinction between performance and its remains, or documentation – and seems to be founded, like the marsh, on a model for Divinatory Time.



Figure 22: ... will be Reginald Perrin's. Title sequence from 1970s series *Thriller*

#### Unworking 4: Occultation in the 1970s

From Essex 2021, to London 1654, and now for somewhere in between: the vanished world of 1970s British Suburbia, hints of which lie in the counter culture’s flirtation with the occult, for another mapping of Anachronic Collision. Recalling the garish grainy insouciance of Dr Feelgood over Essex, the 1970s is the heart of post-structural thought: a project to reexamine previously assumed certainties about scholarly life in the western world and its (dis)orientation. It is the most fungible tipping point for everything being, as Stiegler puts it, “an anonymous elsewhere, a satellite with neither here nor now: [this] occultation of *différance* [as] the indifference of a non-place” (2009: 241). Thereafter, academia encompassed heretofore–dismissed esoteric knowledge and occult practice in its general re-evaluation coterminous to the seemingly contradictory policy of geo-localisation, which saw neoliberalism underwrite the foundations of both place and intellectual structures.

The industrialised Victorian sewers of British cities were still the infrastructure that held together urban life, whilst previously unchanged intellectual assumptions began to lose their structural rigidity. As answer to this bivalent occultation of *différance* and apparent fluidity of thought, the Running Well, like Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), brings a more destabilising *dérive* of swirling *différance* against the "slow cancellation of the future": the foreshortening temporal occultation of place, that the 1970s ushers in, as Beradi puts it, because it recalls the place of those lacunae, so as not to forget, but rather, recall, the generative watery and "virtual confluence" of revolutionary and aestheticised life also extant at this time period (2011: 18).

Conterminously, the decade earlier, with its counter-cultural thought, saw pre-modernisms resurface to co-produce alternative subjectivities: for the revival in the present to these affects, Mark Fisher mandates a practice of "unforgetting"— meditative reappraisal however once again pre-empted in the "capacious now" of medieval text *The Cloud of Unknowing* as discussed in Chapter 1 (2018: 757). Here, the medieval novice must pass through the "Cloud of Forgetting" as (dis)orienting route to its better-known meteorological cousin (1960:58). Opposing hauntological inability to know loss on the basis of technological capture, the resultant psychological malaise that prevents a measure of the passage of time is a practice of unknowing founded in the re-orienting of place.

The Cloud of Unknowing manifests, like the damp, a meteorological incursion into the present representing an at once the bivalent 'nowhere' and 'everywhere' of Disorientation's modalities, grounded in the sediment of site as a generative unworking. This unknowing operates not a cancellation of the future but a prophetic hermeneutics in the grain of the damp: as opposed to a neoliberal capitalising on the cessation of flow through speculation. But this "nowhere" of the Cloud also emulates a foreclosing of space through the speed of Real Time in 1970s neoliberal corporate economics, which, ironically (or perhaps appropriately) for the project's 'grounding' in the Mesopotamian marsh and the cuneiform tablet, is based on oil, and therefore Islam. This difference of the Cloud to this global connectivity is perhaps elucidated by Édouard Glissant, who in *Poetics of Relation* outlines the import, appropriately for the Cloud, of "opacity", and its meanings for unworking, drawing a distinction between a wretched worldness of standardised marketisation "whose circumference is everywhere and whose center is nowhere" as opposed to the worldness as a dimension to share what we have in relation (1990: 191). In this latter territory, new assemblages develop, outside the continued existence of human and technology alone, as Stengers suggested above.

Unforgetting, pre-empted by the original opacity of the cut and paste, and the Cloud, are modalities of Disorientation as much as digital networks. Practices of opaque forgetting would work towards re-enacting affects of Folk Horror, developed in in the 1970s: a move marking a more generative valance to the resurfacing of pre-modernisms in the preponderance of supernatural television programmes and films negotiating technologies of the present through interpolating the past. Key moments of this include *The Stone Tape* (1972) *The Children of the Stone* (1977), and multifarious MR James BBC adaptations that flickered across the TV schedules in the 1970s, with *A Warning to the Curious* (1972) of particular note, as it concerns a marshy bleak coastline and the unearthing of ghosts that both invoke parochial borders and reflect contemporary class mores. Television at this point was changing, with the neoliberal expansion of a medium that once represented visionary public broadcasting: the onset of "occupying powers" as Denis Potter called them, was a

deterritorialising force, a “disappearance of place” in this real technological form, to obnubilate television as a tele-vision (quoted Fisher, 2014: 11) (Stiegler, 2009: 242). Appropriately, Alan Partridge’s latest TV series sees him reporting on life in a young offender’s institute, where he reading the inmates backdated issues of the TV Times from the 1970s, before launching into an explanation of regional variations:

*Alan: You see, up until 20 years ago, ITV was split up into 15 different franchises, so if you were in Leeds you’d be watching Yorkshire TV, in Newcastle that would be Tyne Tees. Where I’m from, it was Anglia.*

*Young Inmate: What the fuck are you on about? (This Time, 2021)*

Both the humorous and the ‘local’ viz regional television posited against marketisation and telecommunications’ resultant collapsing of space and time, is here didactically embodied in the Partridge series itself, ironically emulating the latter half of a burnt out TV presenter’s career, in an age of social media and the diversification of media platforms “in an increasingly fragmented marketplace” as Alan puts it himself, in a memo he accidentally reads live on North Norfolk Digital (Mid Morning Matters, 2010).<sup>20</sup>

The resultant algorithmically driven techno-capitalism mandates a hyper-presence of self and work time: a de-realised time in which the local and the humorous disappear: a Real Time at its limit, mandated by the structure of digital networks. If the post-modern age was defined, according to Jameson, by pastiche – where there was “nothing more than stylistic diversity and heterogeneity [...] pastiche is parody that has lost its sense of humour,” it is humour that is the grain then, the temporal sticking point that grounds its local yet sideways orientating, to be disemboweled by the consumerism of endless temporal instants (1998: 131).<sup>21</sup>

### Screaming Time: RIP

The 1970s sitcom actor Leonard Rossiter played Rigsby in *Rising Damp*, whose house was an affective model of the marsh. In playing also the titular role in *The Fall & Rise of Reginald Perrin* his character portrayal is operative as a human model for the Running Well, for it is through Reginald Iolanthe Perrin (RIP)’s scream, which occurs at the end of each episode, that a virtual confluence of 1970s magic, the unworkability of work is funneled, and memory is re-written.

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<sup>20</sup> Another timely comedic exposition thereof is a sketch from "A Bit of Fry and Laurie", on the subject of broadcasting deregulation to encourage "choice", which sees Fry as a waiter pouring a mountain of plastic spoons on a Government Minister’s plate in response to his request for one set of silver cutlery (Series 2, Episode 5, 1990)

<sup>21</sup> Such humour and anachronism are hallmarks of Deleuze and Guattari – an autodidact energy also noted in Robert Smithson’s work, as O’Sullivan suggests (2006: 108).



Figure 23: Does Reggie need these photocopied?

In the books and TV series, RIP is crushed by the banality of office paraphernalia and servitude, and begins to come apart at the suit seams. The first TV series is the strange crescendo of disillusionment, leading to his faked suicide, leaving his clothes on a beach: a sartorial dissolution that Daniel J. Boorstin terms as a “rapture bomb” (Brownie, 2009: 1). But first, the sinister corrosion of the threads that hold the charade together. Still at work, before said bomb, he instead lets off a pressure valve by ending each episode by emitting a timely scream, an act already presaged by other intimations of the numinous: the descriptive surtitles that begin each episode begin to be written backwards. William Burroughs, in London recordings made in 1968, reminds us that in magic, backwards is effective: “Curse go Back!” – as does Andrew Collins – who cautions but nonetheless vaunts how “turning in an anti-clockwise direction around the Running well [...] will cause an “evil” or “negative” result [...] as a form of invocation!” (1983: 12). With the backwards text, something is rhythmically afoot, as the backwardsness of the *anachōrein* mandates.

Reggie is an Anchorite to the latent forces of the marsh, and the life in the office, waiting for the mystery-cult faux sacrifice of his suicide. As reflecting mirror, adumbrated by the role of magic or Disorientation, an anachronistic (yet very ancient) reference to ritual praxis “exceeds both traditional magic and postmodern irony” where magic is a force/resource, if it is operationalised through technology, as it often was in the 1970s counter culture films described above (Bonnett, 2017: 4). If for Bataille, sacrifice was, as here, to redress the crime of utility, to mitigate the utilitarian, for Stiegler it also instantiates the hermeneutics of time, the importance of individuation: the necessity of the despair of both Rigsby in Chapter 1, and Reginald Perrin. Such latent sacrifice is also felt by Robert Smithson, who intuits the long road ahead and behind his car as he drives down Highway 261 as “covered with solar blood [...which made] the tranquil drive a sacrifice of matter [...] a world of quiet delirium”: in tune to the Mexican deities who performed such rites there, and to which his ensuing mirror displacement are homage, “that led to a discontinuous state of being” (1996: 120).

The scream is measured by the syncope, from *synkoptein*, “to cut up”, it is a “little blip or slip, a common tool in the female mystics’ arsenal, has the effect of a “miraculous suspension” of time – which is highly congruous with the feminine religiosity of the Running Well’s sediments (Clemént, 1994: 7). Such opening or cutting of time was a common theme in most religious female experience of the European medieval tradition, in which the Running Well,

especially through its editing in Reel Time, is legend to. When examining Margery Kempe's English fifteenth-century hagiographic narrative, Dinshaw, as above, finds a present collapsing through mystical exegesis into a "very capacious now," as it were – almost a long scream, a widening pool, or even a Cloud of Unknowing, that stops lingering heterogeneous rhythm – analogous to the important and no doubt ritually inflected 'pause' from life that Simondon suggests is an important feature of Privileged Places. With Reggie, this is Screaming Time, a dilation in the work place, as much as it is the vocal "stutter" of Deleuze and Guattari's minor form (1986: 26). In cutting against the ideological underpinning of historical positivism, Benjamin too suggests in 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' that "time originates and reaches a standstill [...] Instead of an eternal past depicted as linear, we need a rupturable experience of particular moments which stand out" – as if one were acting seamlessly in the wrong film (1999: 262).

Reggie's Screaming Time is arguably the pivotal point of this project. A dramatic moment that disrupts and reveals the bureaucracy of work, the rhythms of late capitalism's automation in the workplace, which interrupts (and mirrors), and also channels magical potentiality of rhythms that disrupt the corporeal, and induce arrhythmia within the social body: a well-worn administration of time and energy, which arguably, the originary accounting tool of the cuneiform tablet in Chapter 1 is metonymy to. Office accouterments of photocopier and dictaphone in fact bring us full circle to the at-once fungible potency of early accountancy in cuneiform tablets, the beginning of the "agri-logistics programme" (Morton, 2016: 43). Amongst the earliest cuneiform tablets, ones almost indecipherable, are simple mnemonic devices of lists: the accounting and book keeping of the office, inventories of the numerous sectors of the actual world (Bottéro: 1992, 29). The magic of orthographic difference supposedly finds itself in torrid lists and Kafkaesque 'minor' surveying (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 18). With this bedrock, there is productive duality of Marsh Regime and office site, with the Running Well as the pivot of release, mitigating the ooze of routine.<sup>22</sup> This portal of the scream is an opening to the originary marsh, akin to Antonin Artaud's "secret door to a possible beyond, to a possible permanent reality" (1965: 141).

Retaining the import of site then, and the funneling of ooze, Robert Smithson's land-based art works seem too concerned with the negative and smooth attribute of bureaucratic taxonomy: "in a physical way, [it] contains the disruption of the site" as Smithson adds, as a "fragment of a greater fragmentation" (1996:90). Despite Smithson's assertion that he encourages an "encounter" with the "abyss", in his Site-Non-Site dialectic, whilst pushing at the numinous delineations of what a 'site' contains, is still couched then in the vernacular of Minimalist art, where tidy squares of earth are containers, an over-determined 'sculpture' or real-size gesture into the land that don't operationalise the site by through "devoting equal attention to performance and site," as performance theorist Mike Pearson alternatively prescribes (1996: 103) (2001: 194).

The marsh is the backdrop to the office, is "*constitutive* rather than merely scenic backdrop" as is site to site specific artwork (Pearson, 2001: 48.) Recall that for Simondon, magical reality is redolent of the "spontaneity of things, as well as their availability" and it is at the Privileged Place "through which the exchanges between the living thing and its milieu come to pass" (2017: 181). Reggie's scream interrogates how and why the well's fluvial

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<sup>22</sup> Rigsby, in an episode of *Rising Damp*, says: "we'd ooze all over the floor" (1975)

temporality might galvanise something fundamental to a material, noetic, psychic existence: a temporal dilation that disrupts the litany of both the workday, and the perception of transgression. Floral wallpaper and Brit stereotypes hide the reality of Mesopotamian hop accounting, as much as chthonic pulsing, through the shit, literally: a dredging back to the Ur-self. As much as a quoted phrase in common parlance, ‘doing a Reggie Perrin’ is a hyperstition, a technology of interruption but not because of the clothes left on the beach, but rather, because of the scream as Ur-form in its unfolding: the hyperstition, the scream, activates elements of Ur-Disorientation latently operative in the present (Reeves-Evnsion & Shaw, 2016: 46).

### Dérive

Reggie’s diversion, as much as it is a “[non] lyrical protest” is the unworkable operative as a Situationist dérive. The Situationist International (SI) are known for their tactics pursuant to escaping the boredom and the passivity of capitalist work-life, and Perrin’s actions and context are evocative thereof: the original novel *Fall & Rise...* by David Nobbs (with subsequent ITV television versions from 1976-1979) was originally published the same year that the first English translation of the SI’s texts, edited by Christopher Gray, were published: 1974.<sup>23</sup> The beginning sentence of *Fall & Rise* contains a reference to the “Heatwave” (Figure 24) that might be accelerating Reggie’s disintegration: a meteorological event, qua marsh miasma, presaged in an English Situationist magazine of the same name, of which only two journals were ever published (1976: 5). Reggie is a 1970s TV Situationist, and occult sacrificial victim.

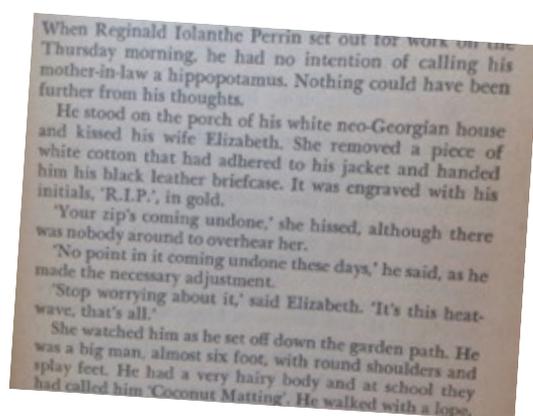


Figure 24: The Fall & Rise of Reginald Perrin (Nobbs, 1974:5)

The contemporary is structured by a registration of images entirely alien to the television reception such a sitcom would have received at the time. Still, in its original airing as “liveness” in what both Derrida and Stiegler would call a “tele-event” in their joint text *Echographies of Television* (2002), the distortive ontology of Real Time images and its affects on historiography could not be as extreme as in a post-digital period, where this effect of reproducibility contributes to a social soporific unimaginable in Debord’s terms of the

<sup>23</sup> This is despite the auto-dissolution of the SI two years earlier, in 1972.

spectacle, which, more than just technical dissemination of images as such “is [nonetheless] the very heart of society’s unreality” (Debord, 1970: 6). Spectacle qua texture binding behaviour together recalls as much Stiegler’s Disorientation, as the difference in forces-as-potential between rhythms of human and technics: a rhythm that is further stretched in the unclear relation of event and history to lived time. In *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation*, Stiegler quotes Raymond Queneau: “television is current events that have frozen into history” something a-temporal networks finds little equivalence to, given that real-time electronic transmission occurs through a destruction of the event itself (2009: 242). Television’s effect on the historical event is, in a *repeated* 1970s sitcom, diffuse, far removed – or is it? – from what Pietro Montani has called the “intermedial” narration of historical experience through imagery post 9/11 (Cecchi: 2020, 258).

For Derrida and Stiegler, visual media does not simply represent but anticipates the condition through which spectators turn into actors of the *same event* as its consequences, so the effect on the spectator of Reggie as image-consciousness through a repeated and anachronistic television archive clip might still prophesy lineaments of subjectivity. The footage of Reggie’s originary scream (Figure 25) especially when frozen and played in reverse, dilates time – a syncopated delay egregiously preventing speed up telecommunications and the precarity of work, but also doubled in its retro retro-activation: the apparent merging of event and instantaneous time that the sped of digital networks seems to run is widened, whilst inevitably partaking in a nostalgia for temporal experience before instant recall (Fisher, 2018: 365)

Not only is Reggie’s scream a *dérive* qua disruption of capitalist workflow, but a funneling from the Marsh Regime as a well, in the recall of the *dérive*’s fluvial attributes. The line of flight, pace Deleuze, in the French fuite, is synonymous to both escape and flow: and here, Screaming Time as a channel of geological technology, is both a disruptive flow and an escape from the life of the office.



Figure 25: Looking at a stop frame animation of RIP's scream slowed down: slow motion opens up the funnel beneath the screen. The open mouth is a chimney through which the current flows. He re-edits time, cutting a diversion into workflow. The drab fabric of the everyday suddenly seems garbled. A violent dusk is apparent. Everyday life is infested. There is magic in the teeth and the curtains. Carry On Screaming!

It was French-born Russian poet Ivan Chtcheglov who originated the practice of *dérive* in its known form, meaning to ‘drift,’ from the Latin etymology of *derivare*, to draw off a stream, to divert a flow from its original course: dissent at its fount. Evocative then of funneled water, and channeled chthonic desires “its whole meaning is aquatic,” agrees McKenzie Wark (2015: 22). The Running Well funnels Disorientation qua *dérive*, a tool in the armoury for subverting life as a means for opening up concealed potential in chaos: “life can never be too disorienting,” confirms Debord, proof of the Well’s Ur-affiliation thereto, and it is thus that a passionate journey out of the ordinary – the pharmakonic ooze of routine – through rabid changes of ambiances that the latter is read as miasmatic affect.

The Fluvial Time of the Running Well is a place for this potentiality, a valorisation of Base Matter, as Georges Bataille’s definition of ‘Sewer’ in the 1947 *Encyclopaedia Da Costa* suggests, being as it is as a source of “sacrifices and magic ... we know longer know” (1993:113) The Simondonian lost magical unity is what predates the split of religion and technicity from the milieu, the sacred and the tool, but the bedrock of the vital magical unity in this formulation is the originary link between human and world – and the resultant production of technicity following the rift that divorces figure from ground, is arguably the beginning of a capitalist alienation: what seems to be an uncannily prescient description of the geocalisable space of work and digitised communication, where technicities and their ground become detached, and “hover over the whole universe, throughout space and throughout time, in the form of detached powers and forces above the world” (Simondon, 2017: 415).

The *dérive* is, also, an avant garde European re-attachment of Disorientation, a re-enchantment: a site-based practice, a modern psychic and urban iteration of a sedimentary drift. What Artaud calls “luminescent frequencies” denotes an arcane potential in site: even in the urban realm, the Situationists wanted a similar affect, as they claim in 1959: “the complexity of the field we have in mind would be roughly equivalent to that of an ancient city” (Gray, 1998: 19). Like the *dérive*, Reggie’s open mouth is unworkable, funnels from Mesopotamia and Essex: echoed in the Situationist Constant’s desire for none other than a “New Babylon” (Wark, 2015: 4). Fighting against strategies that empty qualitative difference in the spectacular realm, refusing the globalised shibboleth that “on this spot no one will ever do anything—and no one ever has” (Debord, 1970: 177). Reggie’s open mouth foregrounds the magic potential, but also, through deranged disintegration of the office, faked suicide, rapture bomb, operationalises another Situationist dictum too: Never Work!



Figure 26: Figure unearthed on Ground

The graffiti *Ne Travaillez Jamais* (Figure 26) –described by Christopher Gray as “one of the most important relics ever unearthed on the site of Saint-Germain-de-Pres” – is, along with the Rising Damp on the wall of Rigsby’s house, a figure on the ground of memory at play – literally – under the pavements, to escape the imposed consumerist hegemony of the capitalist city (1998: 58) Where Gray suggest that the Situationist were the “first artists to understand the enormous potential of graffiti as a means of literary expression,” the hermeneutics of both the Cuneiform Liver Tablet of Chapter 1, as well as Rigsby’s crawling damp as delay, suggest that regimes of inscription have been affecting silent divinatory change for a longer time frame, not least intimated in the chthonic imagery of the Situationist’s infamous decree: “Underneath the Pavement, the Beach,” (*Sous les pavés, la plage*) (Gray, 1998: 58). Scrawled in spraycan ink underneath a Parisian shopping window, *les pavés* - as cobblestones - recalls the limestone clints of water-soluble rock on Árann from Chapter 2 that are not only writing surfaces, but the *mise-en-scène* for drawing up metastable, abyssal potential.

Other pertinent versions of graffiti from the marsh regime (all of which are minor forms of literature) include the cunei-forms put to use by contemporary Iraqis: Osama Art paints cuneiform shapes to write huge letters in Arabic, most notable the word ‘peace’. As if the tumult of the region was blown up on a huge photocopier, layered spectrally over the site of Baghdad (Naji, 2020, BBC). Indeed, the SI mandated the creation of a ‘Sinister Quarter’ as part of their remapping of the city, and advocated the “changing of landscapes from one hour to the next,’ difficult to get into [...] all ill-lit, replete with “traps, oubliettes, or mines [recalling the drill and the well] – these would all, importantly, result in “complete *disorientation*” (cited in Knabb, 1981:4) [my emphasis].

### Carry On Cuneiform: Unworking 5

Naturally, the desperate banality and tedium of mid-twentieth entry office life is the root cause of Reggie’s misery: and whilst misery in the form of delay was shown in Chapter 1 to be essential, the form that late industrial society produces is corrosive to world making: Disorientation is no longer productive, as the speed mandates a deterritorialisation of place. Simondon suggests that certain moments, such as are now instituted in work ‘holidays,’ account for the residual magical universe within the present, and its escape: “In current

civilized life, vast institutions are concerned with magical life, but they are hidden by way of utilitarian concepts that justify them indirectly; in particular official holidays, celebrations, and vacations which compensate, with their magical charge, for the loss of magical power that civilized urban life imposes on us” (2017: 180).



Figure 27: Southend Happidrome past which Adam Bohman spatio-temporalised

Happidrome amusement arcade, closed, on Southend Seafront, Essex (Figure 27): site of many work day trips to the fun palaces aflame on the Golden Mile, as B.S. Johnson derived through the fragmentary recollection of a senile inmate in *House Mother Normal*: “My idea of a holiday was never the sea anyway. On those pub outings, all they were interested in was the insides of the pubs along the front at Southend, one after the other. They went into the first, next to the coach park, and so it went on, all along the front. The Kursaal bored me, but all the men used to love it when the pubs were shut – what a disgusting spectacle!” (1973: 26).

Capital divides both space and time into ‘work’ and ‘leisure,’ where leisure is free from work, but is obviously increasingly co-opted to for consumption. For Debord, where the spectacle is static, a cycle of return constantly reproduced, nonetheless belies a profoundly linear historical time, requiring change and accumulation. The irreversibility of this progress, as spectacularised moments, comes courtesy of “the bourgeoisie [who] unveiled irreversible historical time and imposed it on society only to deprive society of its use” (1970:129). Such characters as Artaud literally burn through this form of history, which “superficially creates the irreversible” (1970: 73). Bourgeois time disallows the existence of isolated dilated temporalities, modeled in the burning, and the piercing of clay: re-enactment in the mythical pre-historical ratifies the cyclical time of ‘no progress.’ The sting in the tail is the apparent emulation thereof, encoded in capitalism’s pseudo-cyclical form of “augmented survival” at the level of alienated labour, the end point of an organisation which “forever destroyed all mythical organization of the cosmos” (1970: 76). The illusion of the holiday, the festival, the office party, the soap (but not, I aver, the sitcom) punctuates and occludes the horrifying reality of linear time. By contrast, for Debord, a “classless society” in a “withering away of the social measure of time” instates “a model in which independent federated times are simultaneously present,” always churning in the marsh and “acting immediately” remaking past and present multidirectional, at the imposition of a tripartite enactment (1970: 89). More than just, as Simondon suggests, late industrial society justifying magical concepts indirectly,

the holidays of the pre-cyclical are now only recreated in as much as we are the audience of spectacle as it presents in reality.

A film made at the same time as both Reggie and the Situationists were enacting different iterations of the *dérive*, the British comedy *Carry On At Your Convenience* (1971), was also unwittingly enlisting themes of work, strike, and humour, all linked via the material and metaphorical *dérive* of waste water (Figure 28). It's a film that arguably marries plumbing and the absurd to its workplace counterpart: the reality of working in the Fordist factory system on a production line of toilet parts and components. Here, humour qua delay and texture – and not pastiche, is vital, and intensively affective. Henri Bergson, in his 1900 essay *Laughter*, the act is a forceful gesture against the mechanization of the human, and specifically, assembly line behaviour, relevant here in the humorous disruption of the factory (1956: 64). *Convenience* is a somewhat nightmarish commentary that creates a lurid metaphor of the realities and vicissitudes of unionism, and factory work: its shit, but perhaps not as shit as a contemporary blueprint of Not/Working presaged on zero hours contracts and the obverse reality of Never Stopping in the contemporary work sphere – let alone the enforced drift of migrants and enslaved workers. The counter for the former, for Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, is “full automation” (2015: 1).



Figure 28: Carry On Cuneiform: Title credits as relic unearthed on the ground of bog roll

The real magic afoot in the sewers that the strikers ‘plumb’ never gets fully released, as it does for Artaud: the works outing, like that described by B.S. Johnson, that acts as the climax of the film – ‘a holiday’ from the rhythmic hegemony of the working pattern, or the de-realised sites – fails to break apart dialectic time: a frustrated *dérive*. Indeed, the fact that the trade union strike at W.C. Boggs & Son fails means they haven’t channeled the real meaning of Not Working. The plumbing background insanities what Bataille indicated about sewers: forms of magic, found in the rejected effluvia of waste as excess, are not utilitarian or workable, and they certainly aren’t temporally static. The salience here is not simply the holiday, but something more at odds, something unthought and local, something unknown: a localism that Srnicek and Williams would, despite all this, criticize as too “small scale” (2015: 47). However, this shouldn’t deter a study and iteration of, for instance, the SI’s *dérive* in the neoliberal Real Time of the present. Re-enactment, as seen with Trapnell, the Anchorite, Reginald Perrin, is not a repetition. Despite being clearly culturally codified in the 1950s to 1970s, *Anachronic Collision* makes the SI live on radio today. Fragments of intent and sediment of site unspool again as genitive life forces.

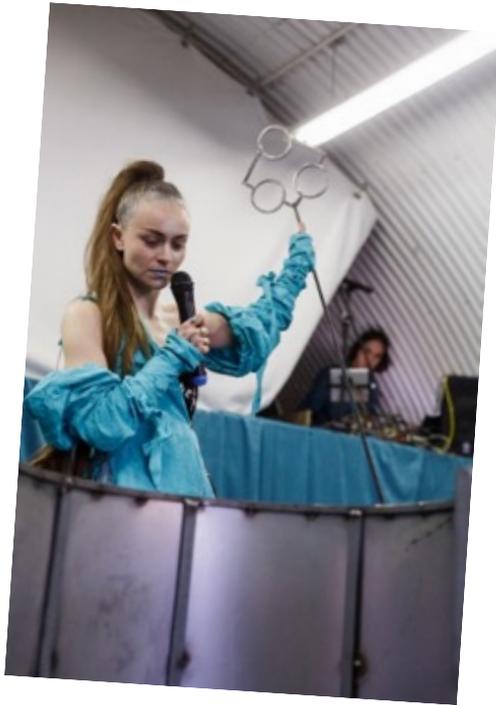


Figure 29: *Cealdwiellla* invocation: you can't get the staff anymore...

Today and yesterday's leisure, as either pseudo-cyclical or not, bears no relation to magical unity, but is a deterritorialised time without re-orientation: coming "from an anonymous elsewhere, a satellite with neither here nor now: the occultation of *différance* is the indifference of a non-place" (Stiegler 2009: 241). The magic of the sewers pulse with a dark immanence akin to the numinous potentiality latent in the caves of Lascaux, which, for Bataille, are the site of the phase shift qua birth of Art. The origins of the latter are found in the wrench from immanence to non-utility, symbolised by the tool, which is also the beginning of time and finitude, as with Stiegler's reading of Prometheus.

Bataille says: "Two decisive events mark the beginning of the course of the world; the first is the birth of the tool (of work); the second is the birth of art (of play) [...] the birth of art emerges with the existence of the tool [...] it is a protest against the world that once existed, but without which the protest would have no force" (1988: 27). What is key here is the contrast of the utilitarian contra the *unworkable* (Reggie) expenditure of art. From a substantive notion of inoperative delay via the mechanisms of tape strip, opening of time through *différance*, here the inoperative as unworking occurs also in the actative sense of a literal disruption into the working day! This, too, is art, and works against the SI's wholesale rejection thereof, not least because aesthetics is one of the phase shifts out of Simondon's Privileged Places, placing art at the heart of the landscape technicity.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> This is not to suggest that all contemporary art channels Ur-Disorientation – but this is a separate issue.

An Accelerationist reading of what Mackay has termed such “ludic disruption” of course disavows the power of dilation qua re-enactment, as leftist gestures too focused on transient “semi-partial, temporary and insufficient [...] small scale changes” (2015: 47-8). For Srnicek and Williams, even the SI’s “folk [horror] politics” and a focus on critical performances that halt or disable the flow are futile at best, and hubristic and regressive in reality (2016: 5) [my addition].

With Screaming Time, perhaps even another rhythm of capitalism’s “liquefying tendencies,” which indeed add credence to the well-like scream as a flow of the body, links into the social machine, as much as the fragmentary collision of unaccredited local information are so many tweets and blips on a screen. Srnicek and Williams’ key point is the disruption of work life’s hegemony through automation, a universal basic income, and crucially the “diminishment of the [protestant] work ethic” (2015:127) [my addition]. But this hardline automation and reversal of work culture fails to account for the new perspective that a crucial comedy hermeneutic from *Carry On* and *Reggie* can bring to the issue of individuation, and which this chapter invites readers to take on: comedy is an essential displacement pursuant of and a key mode of Disorientation, whose bedrock is site – what Alenka Zupančič also agrees is a necessary “constitutive dislocation” or disoriented-location as part of comedy’s destabilising of categories (2010: 193). Where the routine of magic and pulpy new age affects is tired, ritual – which is repressed in the age of reason, qua Adorno – returns as a sitcom (1997a: 8).

Ur-Disorientation spooling Ur-forms out from under the paving slabs dissolves the self-evident. The scream as a *dérive* is a hermeneutic of the human limit, but still driftwork channeled analogously along the lines of a numinous magic presaged on a confluence with immanent flow, from the Running Well, of Disorientation occurs. Recall Artaud’s hole and generative void, operative of what the Situationists call the “liberation of the boundless energy trapped under the surface of everyday life” (cited Gray, 1998: 26). Reggie funnels the disoriented fount of this energy, in a time scale that perverts Eliade’s more heroic archetype in cyclical time (1965: 15). This temporality goes beyond the duality of reformism or total secession that Mackay diagnoses as the two available routes out of capital’s subsumption, itself a limited and stratified anthropocentric viewpoint (2014: 13). Instead, Derrida’s *gramme* halts the work photocopier in Real Time, and what Charney has called “empty moments” as a defining drift of modernity that cuts disruptive space into the late capitalistic life, is countered by re-enactment that is not *just* a blast of “ludic disruption”, but is modeled and premised on something far more sempiternal.

Rather than suggesting the SI are outmoded, it is the SI who were anachronistic in the face of the Marsh Regime: the disruptive stratigraphy of the well, the site, the most disoriented of all – is based on a far older geological outside to this critical thought, when the *dérive* is as a millennia-old *geological* ‘drift,’ through sediment that works against the geo-localisable society “which eliminates geographical distance [and] reproduces distance internally as spectacular separation” (1970: 167/91). This form of drift, as Carl Lavery suggests, is “a sticky universe of staggered movement, syncopated rhythms, fizzes and schisms” that adjure the silken flow of finance capital or the deterritorialised speed of transmission (2018: 2).

Stiegler’s outlining of deterritorialisation and the import of information speed to “eliminate delays and distances” and its “erasing of the difference [and *différance*] between nearby and far away” has shown the import of delay to reorienting site, and to re-orientating originary cut

up spatio-temporality (2009: 100/124). Delay of the s/pooling tape, of the *différance* of the Well's Reel Time insists on the delay of site, operates against a "Real Time as delocalization" which operates, not as *différance*, but euphemistically, in-*différance* (Stielger, 2009: 124.) This distance of the insufficiently intense is a flattened separation of alienation, as opposed to the doubled *différance* of delay in textured sediment, the gramme of the photocopier, the steep of the ancient *dérive*, which brings unworking cyclically full circle to the Well.

Anthologist Anna Tsing nonetheless vouchsafes the existence (appropriately) of creeks or slipstream of a series of global 'locals' with globalisation's flow but does this at the expense of seeing diversity from somewhere "territorially circumscribed, place-based" (2000: 352). Thinking back to Fluvial Time is to raise the geological 'drift' of matter that destabilised linear temporality from the outset of the Marsh Regime. Alluvium and moving stones in sections of British Geological Survey's 'Drift Maps' (not Debord's ones) were termed 'drift' until 2006 (and appropriately, in relation to comedy's perceived frivolity, now termed 'superficial,') because they are the 'superficial deposits' formed by the drift of unconsolidated rock, sediment, and silt: motile matter, drifting and forming intensities of accretion, before and after moving through water, and air (Dixon, 2018: 134).

These discontinuous materials of silt and mud are in effect colliding with non-simultaneous regions, lying atop incongruous – or anachronic – collisions as composites of gravel, silt, clay, sand and more. So, at a sedimentary level, collision of mud and other Base Matters is already endemic to the *dérive*, as much as it is to the subversion of normative rhythms and the collapse of ecosystems, of which it is legend. The alluvial tide patterns are the earliest form of rummaging and collaging, and appropriately for a Disorientation of the parochial, drift is largely predicated on local context: a disruption of stratigraphic linearity, or "stratigraphic imperialism", that reinstates the originary collision of the Marsh Regime, with the truly strange portending to the 'superficial' as opposed to the deeply chthonic as reliable deep time: this, despite certain theorists insisting that even this approach would foster its own linear anthropocentric logic of non-human layers (Furniss, 2010: 312).

Artists Donald and Millar's project, 'Erratic Drift,' which seeks to tease out a coterminous human and geological drifting, and uses a performance with and of rock and stone to elide the motility of human and more than human worlds, is what Deborah Dixon has called a "geologizing' of Situationist practice" (Dixon, 2018:130). As above, such a project vouchsafes the *dérive* as a hermeneutic of the human limit. But the regime of drift qua deep time also adumbrates how the marsh, and Reggie's intercession, is re-enacting of landscape as the damp *différance* of comedy, and the climactic changers thereof.<sup>25</sup> Where Donald and Millar extrapolate a form of drift that undercuts the solidity of anthropocentric geology, Reggie's *dérive* of the scream, in collaboration with non-organic material, draws up ancient ground re-made in the dilated present through the additional key ingredient of comedy as dislocation.

With Reggie, the drift is put to shiftwork/driftwork in the primordial office, because the *dérive* isn't aimless and a-temporal. It is the tripartite relation, the Anachronic Collision.

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<sup>25</sup> Dixon also point out that recent British Geographical Survey classification scheme now includes a taxonomy of drift predicated on the lithogenic criteria of "made ground" in waste heaps, quarries, dredging, inter alia: a classification that the marsh undercuts in its mythographic and technological inscription of the threshold between human and inhuman (2018: 131).

Reggie's Disorientation, like Artaud's, is comedic geological re-enactment of Ur-Disorientation, in and as aesthetic critique. A hermeneutic of unworking, of the human limit, in the active force of the scream as hard work, and the substantive form that is this enactment as a piece of (art)work: force and form are inextricable, and hence why the technological is inextricable from magic. In the syncopated rhythms of the scream, dominant tempos at a material level and a psychic level in, not just late capitalism, but all programs of technology, are eschewed, and the subject escapes injurious modes of work, revealing dissipative zones, a portal to Ur-Disorientation away from tawdry office admin. But work is still key as territory: as Lyotard slyly had it, the "English unemployed did not become workers to survive, they – hang on tight and spit on me – enjoyed the hysterical, masochistic, whatever exhaustion of hanging on in the mines [and the factories - and crucially, perhaps for booze and the sitcom, as much for a Ballardian veneer] "they enjoyed the new monstrous anonymity of the *suburbs* and the *pubs* in the morning and evening" (2015: 123-4) [my addition].

With the geo-localisable eradication of places, there is more opportunity, on the face of it, to go anywhere, and it less and less reason to do so. The Cloud of Unworking offers greater rewards. With "pre-globalisation" 1970s comedy as a liberation theology for reactivation of the originary forces of life as Ur-Disorientation, work is still located but placed under jittery, amusing, and disoriented erasure via the reality of spooling technicity and landscape, in the same way that stratigraphic imperialisms are dissipated by the motility of the immense yet local drift in geological terms. Comedy as part of this weave is a disruption: it short circuits heterogeneous orders qua the marsh's Base Matter, and spans fantastical and magical projects.

This is how thinking of transduction through the *différance* of site helps open new worlds of potential via the past as future: the local experience of the indeterminate reflects delayed time as being via the comic and unworkable, as much as the well-worn and increasingly rampant discipline of British *wyrd* magical geography which, which, clearly a galvanic affect that contemporary text as code counsels for – forgets the weirder zone of something like *Reginald Perrin* as ripe territory upon which to map the "local experience of the unthought" (Stiegler, 2009: 94). Incorporating anachronism as the horizon of all beings is to continually, in all senses, *unwork* and *work* the present, creating complete Disorientation in its flickering duality, and recalling, in the frittering, dissipative, collage of early modern technologies, the local newspaper, and the office.

As a model of authentic anti-hegemonic cultural praxis, and a weird perversion along the lines that Srnicek and Williams criticise as capitalism's work ethic – "work, and the suffering that accompanies it, should not be glorified" – Reggie's scream eludes control systems, by his drift of force, one that is modelled on the living tradition of comic authenticity (2015: 125). An individuating capacity that both occurs in and tears through the present, disruptive but hallucinatory: an affordance of the Ur-form that is a "social dream" for Walter Benjamin: a disorienting daydream coiled in gnostic matter yet to be realised (Leslie, 2014: 22). The spiral of the well is ritual model for this coiled potential of Ur-Disorientation, a geological thought pattern, a transductive tool to displace industrialised memory.

Thought in this dissertation, too, acts as Ur-form, with the practice doubling, and contingently re-enacting. Tape-like sediments of s/pooling time inculcate delay into re-enactment of what

was never there: one stratum, one method, to dilate time following the fault lines of place –  
and where we can gain materially interpolated divinatory access to the necessary  
Disorientation of future worlds, we gain an anachronic gnosis.



## Conclusion

Transcript from Reporter's dictaphone: I have found that thesis is a guidebook, or perhaps one out of many possible guidebooks, to an affective territory defined, indeed Geophilologically held together, by the Marsh: a mythic substrate that functions as a writing surface. Chapter 1 performed this understanding of marsh as originary technics, also finding it thereby to a key substrate of transduction, as that which marks the contamination of human and technics. As Stiegler has shown, the transductive relation in the process of exteriorisation – or inscription – characterises life (2009: 2). Chapter 1 and 2's reading of such geological fault lines as congruent to Stiegler's philosophy contribute to the field of philosophy and psychogeography by proposing a landscape mythography, but it has significant repercussions for the experience of temporality at a lived level. We can agree to this if, as has been demonstrably shown, temporality is experienced through a Privileged Place's dis-orientation as relative speed. This, then, is my key finding: that place retains a patina of time that is an effect and mode of temporality qua Disorientation.

What the thesis has thus opened up – other than a can of worms<sup>1</sup> – is a re-usable methodology for performatively engaging with this patina, occurring at the tripartite intersection of site, technology, and human: this was particularly shown in Chapter 2 in case study, and in Chapter 3 through my practice. This third chapter also demonstrated the repercussions for our understanding of the effect of technology on our psychic life, our daily parochial life which has breathed new life into the mode of the gazetteer and other minor genres. In so doing, it has suggested new ways of engaging with the thorny issue of the local, at the intersection of temporality and trace. Not only does this contribute a new method of female-centred practice in the field, but has led to unexpected affordances to counter the recent role of the local in politics, especially reactionary or Conservative moves to restore, without public money 'somewhere' out of 'nowhere': recalling the epigraph to the Introduction – *When you are nowhere physically, you are everywhere spiritually* – this is gravamen that Disorientation continually and repetitiously pulses against (The Cloud of Unknowing, [c.1372] 1960: 45).

The innovative meeting of comedy and psychogeography, particularly across Chapters 1 and 3, as a way to performatively re-attune to the trace of Disorientation – the différent damp of comedy – raises the humorous genre to the level of an almost religious mandate. Comedy is proved, according to the structure of Chapter 1's Marsh Regime, to be mythopoetic zone where the intimacies of subjective experience interplay with parochial patterns of cultural expression and the wider residues of symbolic formation, both human and technical. The affirmative need for comedy is demonstrably then how the dérive functions now, as my contribution to the ongoing field of Situationist studies: a boggy reconceptualisation of the drift into and from the marsh that is yet Dis-orienting. Comedy, as an available yet minor mode through which cracks open new surfaces of the individual,<sup>2</sup> is an imaginative as much as socio-political fount.

And just one more thing, as Columbo would say: I find conclusions very difficult. But I can say that this fact was insipient from the beginning. The lack of trackable linear argument is congruent to the dilation of temporality at stake in the work: an affect that opens a large gap in the perceived inertia of contemporary Real Time. The Blind Spot of the marsh doesn't operate in straight lines, but oscillates,

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<sup>1</sup> Holsten, surely? ed.

<sup>2</sup> Reggie, Rigsby, Father Ted, Hancock, Alan Partridge, Richie from Bottom – these and more are the Major (and of course Minor) Arcana of an anachronic Tarot card set, based perhaps on the hermeneutic of the Liver Tablet, yet to be realized: I knew fortune telling would never do me any good.

repeats in intensity over a series of place-time constellations, as Chapter 2 demonstrated through Antonin Artaud's itinerancy case study.

The thesis itself is transductively structured through the Marsh Regime, as a relation where theory and practice are co-constituents. This is why a linear argument would not be a good bedfellow to Disorientation, as both mode and effect. And this enfolding of dissertation and practice, their ineluctable enmeshing, as inseparable repetitious form and force, thereby suggests a new method of undertaking syncretic and embodied Art Research. I am too situated to be more self-reflexive than this at this stage, and it would take an outside force to be able to sum up the worldly affordances of this project more than this. But what I can be sure of is that this method, whilst highly situated, certainly offers a tool kit for re-entry into Privileged Places, in the making of previously-unthought-of connections a knowledge production in themselves.

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## Maps

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## Artwork

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*A Warning to The Curious* (1972) Ghost Stories for Christmas, Directed by Lawrence Gordon Clark, BBC1, 24 December 1972  
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## Interviews

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### Practice Documentation

De Jong, J. (1964) *The Situationist Times* Volume 5 ‘Rings and Chains,’ [image] Copenhagen, available at: [libcom.org/library/situationist-times](http://libcom.org/library/situationist-times) [accessed 26 November 2019]  
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