

FIFTH WALL OF FIFTH ESTATE COLLAPSES

PORT AUTHORITY — An everyday euphemism for “The Press,” itself a widely-used yet increasingly semantically-outdated title that refers to news media in general and journalism in particular, *The Fourth Estate* was originally coined as a supplement to Clergy, Nobility, and Commons, respectively the First, Second, and Third Estates in certain parts of Middle-Aged Europe, and generally considered more important than all three; not to be confused with *The Fourth Wall*, an imaginary plane between actors and audience in such as a theatre or soap opera, that has since come to refer more broadly to the gap between fiction and reality often breached by art forms that adopt an authorial distance in which this “wall,” or suspension of disbelief, is “broken” by the work’s reference to its own artifice in order to “alienate” or “estrange” an audience and foster a more critical perception; not to be confused with *The Fifth Estate*, a floating term that refers to certain social groups outside the four traditional “pillars,” such as trade unions, organized crime, or, more recently, the blogosphere and similar realms that consider themselves counter to mainstream media; not to be confused with *The Fifth Wall*, a second-remove boundary of reality separation applied to a performance where a character within one fictional world refers to a previous character played by the same, typically a typecast actor in a totally unrelated fictional world.

“How many members of a certain demographic group does it take to perform a specified task?”

“A finite number: one to perform the task and the remainder to act in a manner stereotypical of the group in question.” (DS)

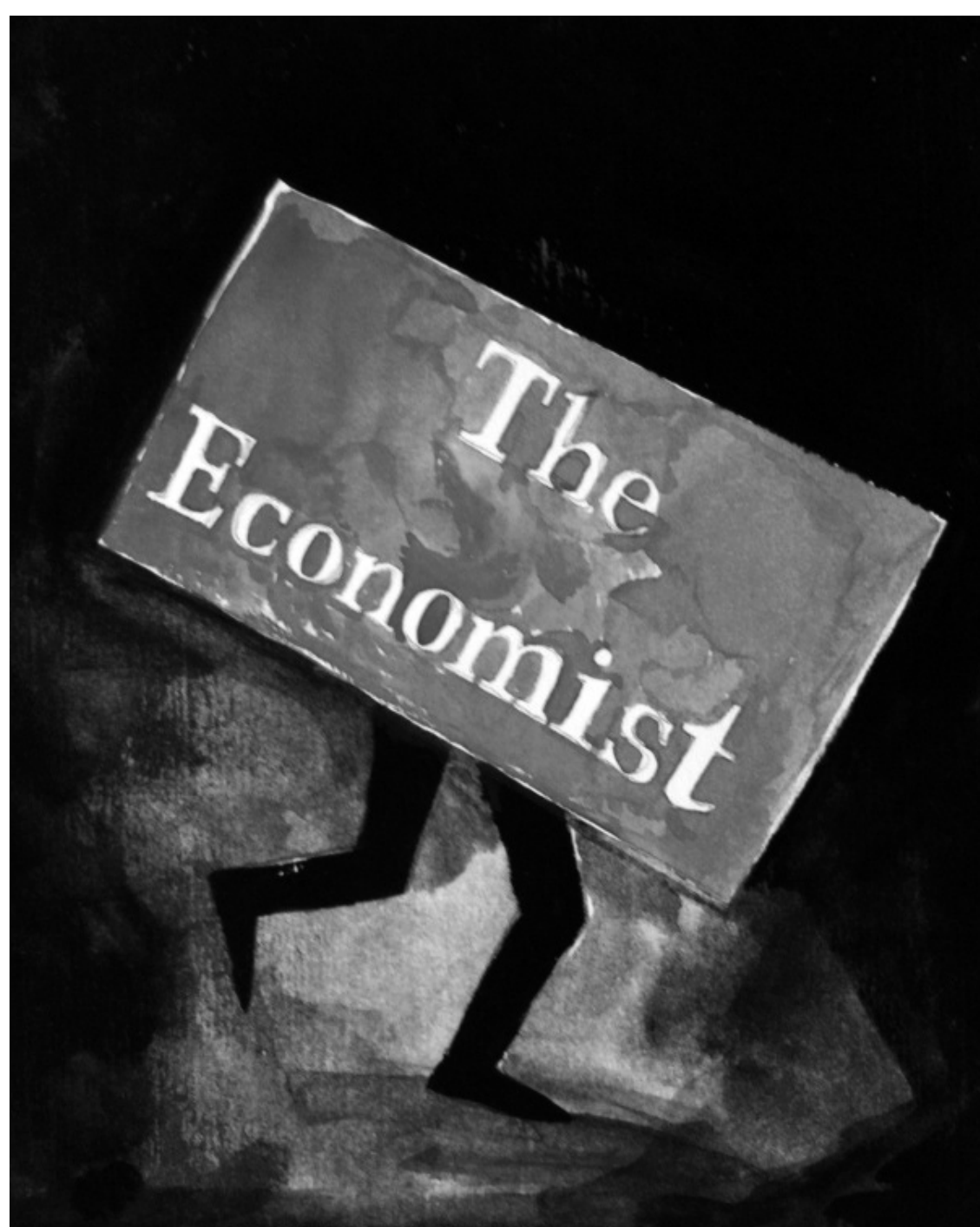
NEW LEGISLATION COMBATS CHICKEN-EGG PROBLEM

LONDON — British literary historian N.N. Feltes has said that “Readers are made by what makes the book.” Meaning, the system that produces a text also produces the readers who read it. In Charles Dickens’s case, that system was serial publication. But, in Dickens’s case, that system was also the nascent industrial revolution, which involved the shift from what Feltes describes as the “petty-commodity production of books,” with books produced in small quantities by artisans, to the “capitalist production of texts,” where books were produced in mass quantities by professional printers and publishers. In a very short time, the book production system went from something like that which produced a homespun quilt to something like that which produced bolts of industrially-woven fabric. While the machines made the fabric cheaper and easier to make, its weavers owned nothing but their labor in making it. And while presses made books cheaper and easier to make, their authors in turn owned nothing but their power to conceive them.

The comparison of writing to weaving is not lost on Feltes, who uses it to recall Marx: “While the condition of early 19th-century writers could never decline to that of their wretched contemporaries, the hand-loom weavers, nevertheless Marx’s comment on the weavers’ predicament in the face of the new relations of industrial production is illuminating.” Marx noticed that workers in a capitalist system are estranged from the work they make. “Since their work is no longer their own, the concept of labor arrives to take its place. This yields, as Marx says, “the conditions of labor and the product of labor.” The book, which was once the work, is now the product; its text, which was also once the book, is now the labor. Its author’s right is not to the product but to his or her individual labor. In one stroke, the “professional author,” and the “commodity text” were born, along with the mass-consuming public to support them.

With the serial, all three were perfected. “Rarely has a literary form been so driven by the dictates of economics,” explains writer Shawn Crawford in his essay “No time to be idle: the serial novel and popular imagination.” And Dickens’s success because the gold standard. Crawford: “Along with his writing talents Dickens possessed an acute business sense that made him a ruthless bargainer. He recognized the power an author could wield if used wisely. He often negotiated royalties of up to 75% of the profits, received [large] advances, and commanded an allowance whenever in the midst of publishing a new work. In addition, he ran or owned other serial magazines during his career and received both a salary as editor and a share of the profits.” Dickens, in other words, was a savvy capitalist as well as a crusading journalist and writer. Along with his compassion for the poverty and exploitation of workers, he possessed a uniquely Victorian attitude for bootstrapping and achievement. “Personal development became something of an obsession for the Victorians,” writes Crawford, “and serials mirrored the belief that personal and cultural progress was gradual, positive, and inevitable.”

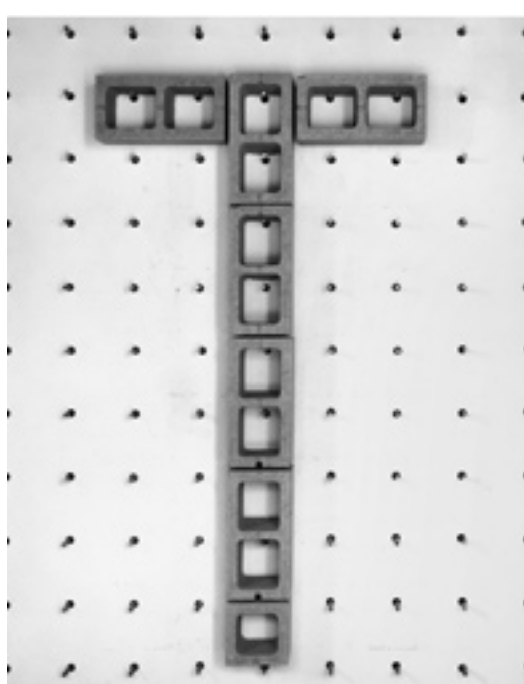
Piracy, then, was not progress: it was rampant, adverse to cultural interests, and, eventually, criminal. It was also a byproduct of industrial capitalism: before Gutenberg, the amount of time required to copy a text in any sizable quantity was comparable to the amount of time required to produce the origi-



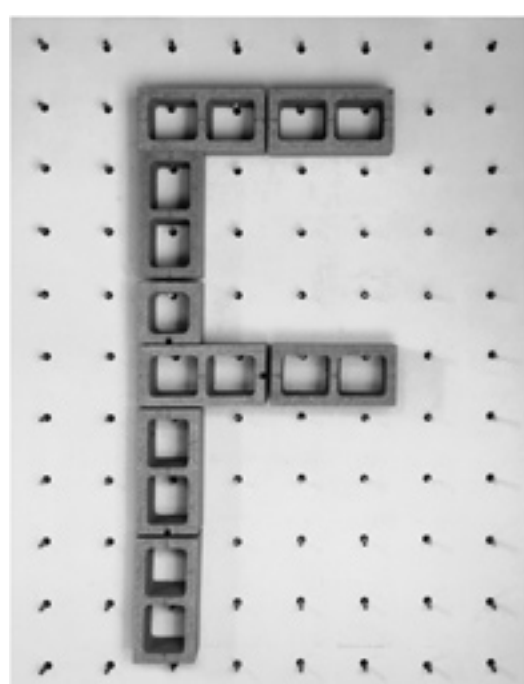
Danna Vajda, *The Economist* (2009)

CLASSIC PYRAMID INVERTED

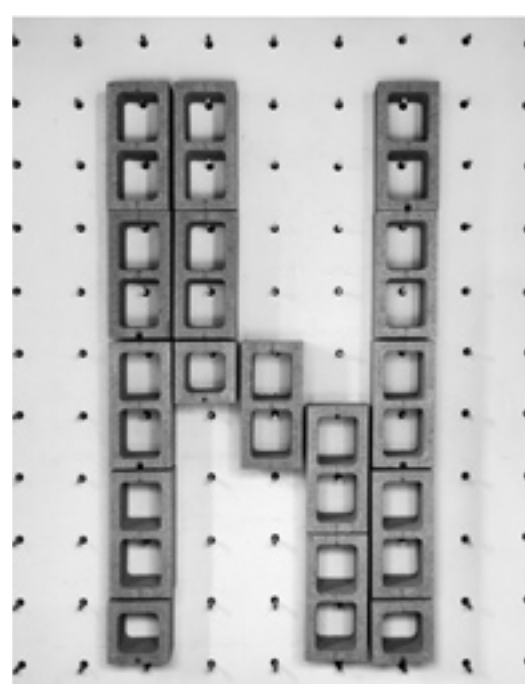
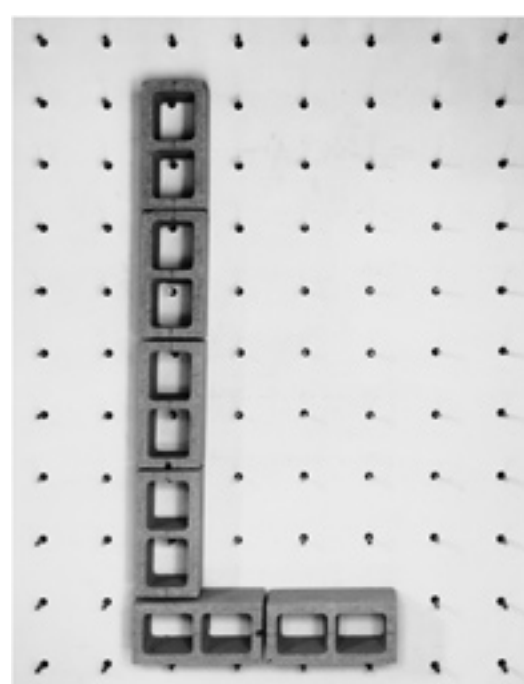
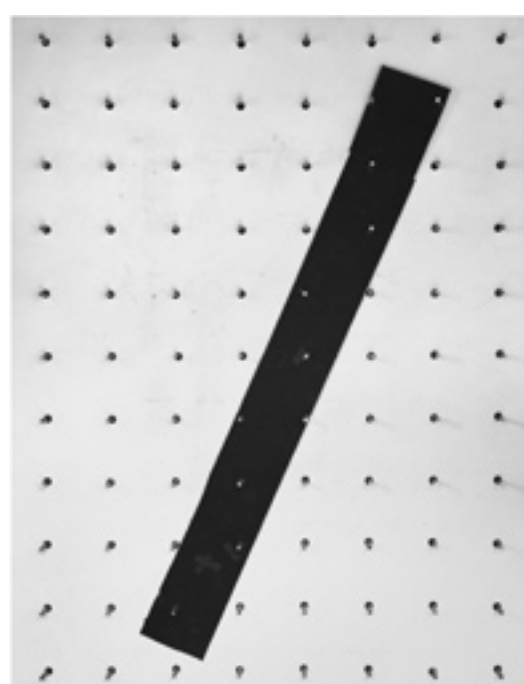
Undergirding any news item in any medium is a skeleton of facts. The visible outside might be a glassy feature treatment, a cantilevered opinion piece, or — bringing the bizarre to this metaphor — the classic inverted pyramid. (This term refers to the age-old hard-news presentation that perches the



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DExTER SINISTER



Lost Astronaut by Alicia Framis (2009). Instructions by Marina Abramovic. Photo by Nacho Alegre. Courtesy of the artist and Performa

nal. Once copies are easier to make, however, more of them get made, and this has an effect: more books mean more readers from one generation to the next, most of whom want cheaper and cheaper books.

But piracy and copyright are a chicken-and-egg problem. Which came first? Because in order to restrict piracy, as copyright does, you must first have pirates to restrict. But in order to have pirates, you must first believe that some have a right to copy a work and others (namely, pirates) do not. In a way, one creates the other: piracy creates copyright and copyright creates pirates. In another, perhaps more accurate way, a disruptive technology, the printing press, created them both.

Twenty-five years after the publishing of René Descartes’s *Discourse on Method* had signaled the start of the Enlightenment, the Licensing Act of 1662 required printers in good legal standing to notify a trade association called the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, or Stationers’ Company, of their intent to set up a printing press. Once they had, the Act legislated the printing of “seditious treasonable and unlicensed Bookes and Pamphlets” by requiring licensed printers to deposit copies of their printed materials with the Stationers’ Company for review. Printers who did not conform to these rules were subject to fines and potential imprisonment. Though the Licensing Act of 1662 laid made censorship by the government easier and more centralized, it also established certain types of printing as legitimate and other types as illegitimate. The Stationers’ Company had an official monopoly on the copying of text.

Having sold a work to the Company, an author relinquished any claim to it in perpetuity. When the Statute of Anne passed in 1709, things changed. First, the idea of a “copyright” was expanded from narrowly applying to the Company to broadly applying to the public. Second, and critically, the monopoly on a work resided now with the author of a text rather than his printer. Third, that monopoly was now finite: 21 years for books in print, 14 for books not yet published, with an option for 14 more as an entitlement to prospective authors by a society hungry for new texts. With the Statute of Anne, as Feltes has observed, “For the first time in statutory law there came to exist a property right in the text itself and that right was alienable,” meaning it could be transferred from one person to another. He continues, “If the publisher is to profit, he must be able to acquire from the author an exclusive right — and so the author must be able to grant it.” For writers like Daniel Defoe, Alexander Pope, and Isaac Newton, all of whom published works soon after the Statute had passed, this meant that getting

a text printed no longer meant relinquishing their legal claim to it. But for writers like Jonathan Swift, the future was more ambiguous. The Statute protected England, Scotland, and Wales, but it did not extend to Swift in Ireland or to the British Colonies in North America. In both places, pirates flourished. (RG)

EXCEPTION THAT PROVES RULE, WRONG

Scientific Method considered via *The Meaning of It All: Thoughts of a Citizen-Scientist* by physicist Richard Feynman:

DEFINE THE QUESTION — The rate of development of science is not the rate at which you make observations alone but, much more important, the rate at which you create new things to test.

GATHER INFORMATION & RESOURCES — Science is a method of finding things out. This method is based on the principle that observation is the judge of whether something is so or not. All other aspects and characteristics of science can be understood directly when we understand that observation is the ultimate and final judge of the truth of an idea.

FORM HYPOTHESES — But if a thing is not scientific, if it cannot be subjected to the test of observation, this does not mean that it is dead, or wrong, or stupid. We are not trying to argue that science is somehow good and other things are somehow not good. Science takes all those things that can be analyzed by observation, and thus the things called science are found out. But there are some things left out, for which the method does not work. This does not mean that those things are unimportant. They are, in fact, in many ways the most important.

PERFORM EXPERIMENT & COLLECT DATA — “The exception proves that the rule is wrong.” That is the principle of science. If there is an exception to any rule, and it can be proved by observation, that rule is wrong. . . . The scientist tries to find more exceptions and to determine the characteristics of the exceptions, a process that is continually exciting as it develops. He does not try to avoid showing that the rules are wrong; there is progress and excitement in the exact opposite. He tries to prove himself wrong as quickly as possible.

ANALYZE DATA — It turns out that the tiny effects that turn up always require the most revolutionary modifications of ideas.

INTERPRET DATA & DRAW CONCLUSIONS TO SERVE AS STARTING POINTS FOR NEW HYPOTHESES — It is necessary and true that all of the things we say in science, all of the conclusions, are uncertain, because they are only conclusions. They are guesses as to what is going to happen, and you cannot know what will happen, because you have not made the most complete experiments.

PUBLISH RESULTS — Scientists, therefore, are used to dealing with doubt and uncertainty. All scientific knowledge is uncertain. This experience with doubt and uncertainty is important. I believe that it is of very great value, and one that extends beyond the sciences. I have to believe that to solve any problem that has never been solved before, you have to leave the door to the unknown ajar. You have to permit the possibility that you do not have it exactly right. Otherwise, if you have made up your mind already, you might not solve it. (AK)



A Reconsideration of the Newspaper Industry in 5 Easy Allusions (2): Which is the bigger monster? The one in front or the one coming up from behind?

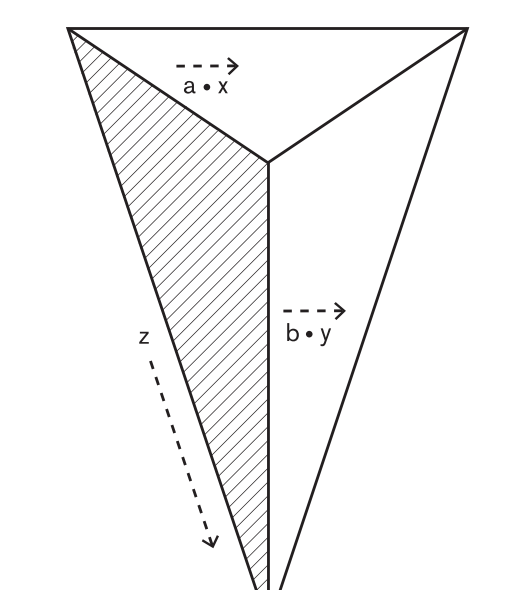
weightiest details at the top of the story, with increasingly less important details in the subsequent paragraphs.) The facts are the basis of the story, and through judicious combination of accumulated facts, the reporter adds dimension to a story.

In the mathematical field of linear algebra, three words from the last sentence are terms of art: *basis*, *combination*, and *dimension* (strictly speaking, it’s really *linear combination*, but if you’re the sort of person reading this paper, you’ll probably grant me the latitude). All three apply to the discussion of vector spaces. A vector space is a set of mathematical objects — call two of them x and y — where for any x and y , $x + y$ is also in the vector space, and for any real number a , $a \cdot x$ is also in the vector space. The objects can be anything — numbers, vectors, matrices. It could be cheese if you could define addition and multiplication over cheese rigorously. A familiar example is the vectors described by coordinate pairs, like (a, b) , in a two-dimensional plane.

A linear combination is a sum of several vectors, each of which is multiplied by a real number. So, take a real number a and multiply it by the vector x , making $a \cdot x$. Lather, rinse, repeat for something like $a \cdot x + b \cdot y$. Now suppose you’re playing a linear-combination game with Darryl Difficult, who asks you to pick the real numbers in your linear combination so that it calculates out to the vector z . A basis is a set of vectors that you can use in your linear combination to supply Darryl with any z he can come up with. With the simple linear combination above, $x = (1, 0)$ and $y = (0, 1)$ are a basis in the two-dimensional plane; if Darryl wants $z = (a, b)$, you give him the numbers a and b . $(1, 0)$ and $(2, 0)$ are not a basis. If Darryl wants $(1, 1)$, you can’t get there from here. The dimension of a vector space is the number of elements in the space’s basis — 2 for a two-dimensional plane and 3 for 3-D.

Now, take these concepts back to the formula stated in the last sentence of the first paragraph, and plug and chug. A reporter collects facts and forms a basis to a story. When she writes the story up, she chooses some way to combine these facts, maybe scaling up fact x by putting it in the lead or scaling down fact y . The number of facts in the story gives it dimension — the more facts, the more depth the story takes on.

Writers of editorials or second-day analysis often work from the breaking-news stories produced by the on-the-ground reporters, re-embodying them into their own news waters, adding a new slant or bringing a few days’ stories together. But in the vector space of news, the new vectors these second-day writers produce do not increase the dimension of the space. Combine as many vectors of



Sarah Gephart

the form $(a, b, 0)$ and $(c, d, 0)$ as you like; you’ll never get $(0, 0, 1)$. Only the addition of new facts to the pool of reporting adds to the story.

(This is not to devalue day-after work. The numbers carry no judgment. If $(a, b, 0)$ and $(c, d, 0)$ are day-one work and $(e, f, 0)$ is day-two work, how could anyone say $(0, 0, 1)$ is better?)

A hungrily expanding public record swallows up the facts shoveling in by the truckload from the global media hordes. The dimension of the public record is mammoth — billions? trillions? — but it is still less than the dimension of all reportable facts. Some burglaries make the news; some don’t. Many deaths prompt obituaries; some will remain forever John Doe.

As journalists are laid off, the gap between the public record and all reportable facts grows. Fewer people collecting facts means fewer facts collected; the dimension of the public record expands more slowly. As it approaches infinity, layoffs mean the inevitable, permanent loss of dimension. Stopping the film, slicing off all but the painting’s edge, or squashing the sculpture flat. (GM)

How Media Masters Reality #3

HOW TELEVISION STOPPED DELIVERING PEOPLE AND PEOPLE STARTED DELIVERING TELEVISION

TIVOLI, NY — Today’s installment of *How Media Masters Reality* begins with two quotations. Situated at opposite ends of a media revolution, both describe the medium of TV as a feedback loop, but with apparently different ideas of how that loop works. I will suggest that these perspectives have more in common than we might at first suppose.

In the video *Television Delivers People* (1973) artist Richard Serra makes the bold statement: “You are the product of TV. We are delivered to the advertiser who is the customer.”

This statement came at a time when any number of artistic and critical projects suggested alternatives to the mainstream media described by Serra, ranging from Michael Shambberg’s seminal book *Guerrilla Television* (1971) to initiatives that combined the collectivist ideals of the 1960s with the potentially democratizing (new) technologies of video, closed-circuit TV, and cable. The new breed of art-artivists included media collectives such as iTVTV (Top Value Television), Raindance, Radical Software, Videofreak, and Ant Farm. These TV Guerrillas helped provide the conditions that make the current media feedback loop of self-performance possible.

The second, and more recent, perspective comes from a statement made by Chris Short, the head of Interactive Media at Endemol U.K., the producers of the reality TV franchise *Big Brother*. In 2002, Short was happy to report: “We’re creating a virtuous circle that excites the interactive audience about what’s going on in the house, drives them toward the TV program, the TV program will drive them to the Internet, the Internet to the other ways they can get information, and the other ways back to the TV.” Both Serra and Short understand the TV audience, for better or worse, as a *performative commodity*. In both cases, the audience performs as an agent in the production. The more recent case differs from the earlier, however, because the actions of the audience directly determine the actions within the *mise en scene*, or template, of the non-scripted TV show. In the *Big Brother* formulation, an array of media outside the TV show itself provides the support structure that allows the TV show to air.

Back in 1972, the TV audiences described by Serra were distracted by scripted entertainment or by information (news and quiz shows for instance) while advertisers smuggled messages into their consciousness. The

tactics like going out to the suburbs with video cameras and taping commuters. The playback could be in people’s homes through their normal TV sets. The result might be that businessmen would see how wasted they look from buying the suburban myth.”

For both Ant Farm and Shambberg, the subject ready for change is the corporation man — the individual conditioned by the commodity-centered media to accept his hollow existence and throw in his lot with the commodity. This is the endpoint of spectacular media: the message (the advertisement) stops when it hits the consciousness of the consumer, who, intoxicated by the spirit of bad faith, will go forth and buy stuff. Both Ant Farm and Shambberg understood that to break the hold of monopoly it was necessary to include the viewer in the feedback loop of production — to make the viewer visible to themselves, and thus create a shift in the economic logic of the media. The understanding of TV as a feedback mechanism that could reform an individual’s behavior had already been appreciated and demonstrated by social psychologist Stanley Milgram, who conducted the infamous “Obedience to Authority” experiment in 1963. Milgram was greatly influenced by Allen Funt’s *Candid Camera* — the TV format perhaps closest to that of present day shows.

When John Lennon and Yoko Ono staged *Bed In for Peace* (1969), Lennon described the act as an “advert for peace.” This carries with it the assumption that the TV has the power to influence directly, that it’s a “radical software” so powerful that anything — even peace itself — could be repackaged as a commodity. In this way peace found its natural equivalence with the commodity status of the pop star.

So how do we explain the schizophrenia of a radicalism that mistrusted technology and a radicalism that looked to technology for the solution? Evad Turner’s book *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* talks about two distinct trends that emerged during the 1960s which can be broadly categorized as the New Left and the Counterculture. The New Left emerged from the civil rights and anti-war movements. This group understood the world as driven by the material realities of class, race, and labor. The second group, the Counterculture, emerged from a heady blend of beatnik literature and cybernetics which understood individuals and systems (including ecological systems) as comprising networks that exchanged information with others. In this scheme the media could be understood as a *media-ecology*, the evolution of which could be redirected. LSD experimenters understood the drug as a technology of the self, a form of software that could change the program of a group or individual.

The underlying philosophy of the *network* was also a major inspiration for the 700,000 individuals who set up alternative communities throughout the U.S. between 1967 and 1971. By the early 1970s, cybernetic ideas had become axiomatic amongst the media-activists who had grown up through the counterculture of the 1960s. The Portapak camera and video represented new tools to extend the scale of human potential, just as every other new technology had done before. As Ant Farm put it, riffing on media theorist Marshall McLuhan’s idea of the Global Village: “ALL I WANT TO DO IS EXPAND MY MIND THINK IN TERMS OF AN AGE-SHARING GLOBAL FEELING SCALES EXPANDING TO A GLOBAL NETWORK / VILLAGE MCCLUHAN’S MESSAGE. MEDICUM RARE. HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE THE LAG IN OUTLOOK AND CONSCIOUSNESS TO WHIPLASH FITTING THINKING/IDEAS TO TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES?”

Shambberg, in *Guerrilla Television*, made the radical distinction between a materialist left and a cybernetically-inclined left, saying: “True cybernetic guerrilla warfare means re-creating ones.” Timothy Leary, championing the new technology of mind-expanding drugs, stated: “[People should] drop out, find their own center, turn on, and above all avoid mass movements, mass leadership, mass followers.” And this imperative for the individual to re-program him or herself, rather than the masses to revolt, reaches its technocratic extreme with Buckminster Fuller’s assertion that “revolution by design” will mean “politics will become obsolete.”

During the 1960s and 70s, media critique grounded in Marxism tended to emphasize the alienation engendered by the mass media — the distance between the viewer and the shining world of the commodity. As the French radicals of the Situationist International put it, “Reality, the culminating point of the spectacle’s offensive escapes from all concrete usage, from all real communication, behind the shop window of an inaccessible spectacle.”

In the U.S., by contrast, a network of activists, architects, artists, and critics experi-



Portapak camera (1968)

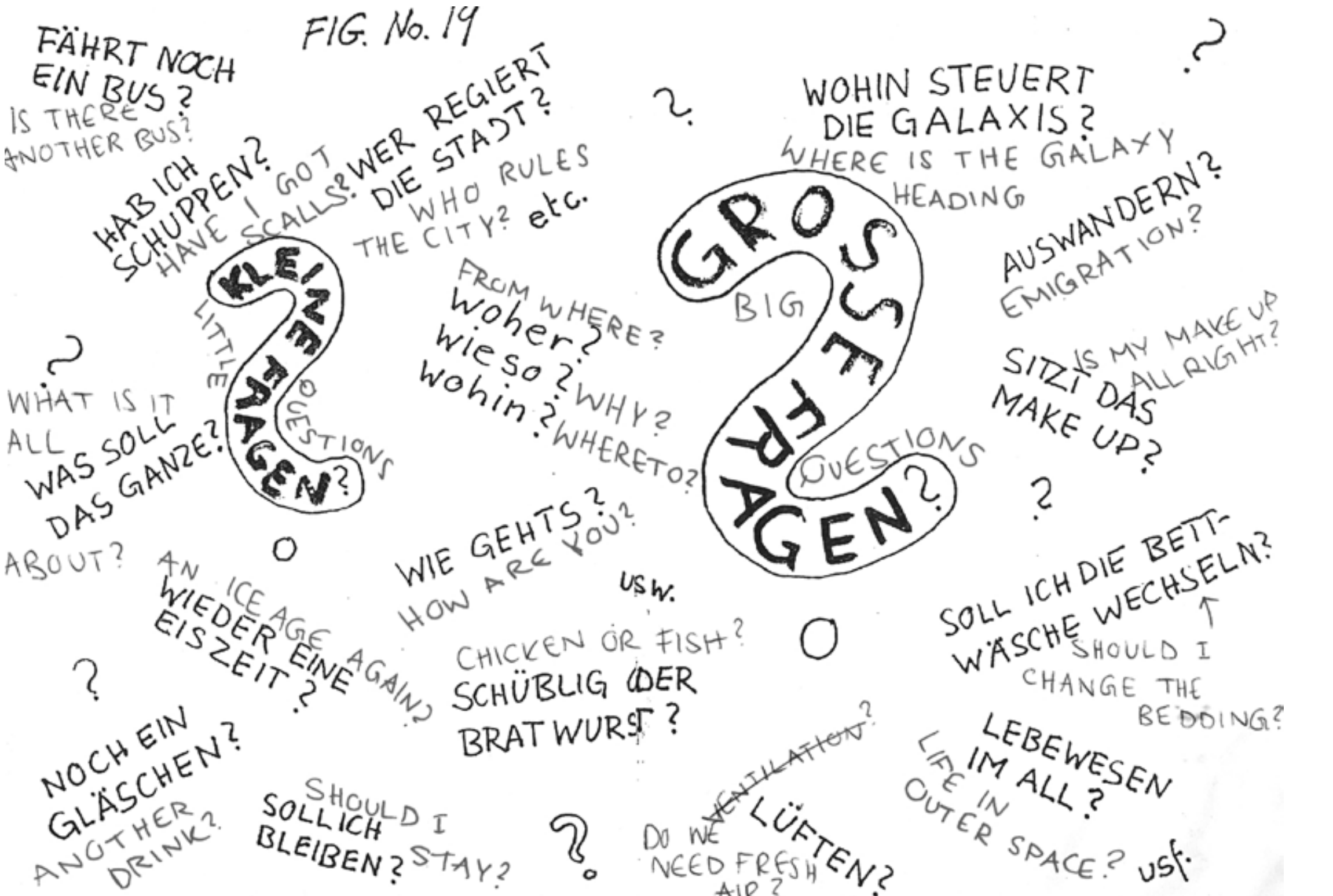
In other words, they called for the rise of the participant — the self-performing subject in an economy where visibility itself becomes a commodity.

In the July 1968 supplement of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, Ant Farm published “Cowboy Nomad” in which they cast themselves as cybernetic, cowboy prophets of the future technological revolution: “YET THERE ARE COWBOY NOMADS TODAY, LIVING IN ANOTHER LIFE STYLE AND WAITING FOR ELECTRONIC MEDIA, THAT EVERYONE KNOWS IS DOING IT, TO BLOW THE MINDS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS AMERICAN SUBURBANITE. WHILE THEY WAIT, THE COWBOY NOMADS (OUTLAWS) SMOKE LOCO WEED AROUND ELECTRIC CAMPFILES.”

Michael Shambberg, in *Guerrilla Television* (1971), wrote about how the feedback technology of TV might be used to break the stronghold that networks and their advertisers held over the minds of viewers back in the early 1970s: “[strategies] might include

mented with a different understanding of the medium of TV. Freed from the stranglehold of the networks and accessed by the people, TV could become a technology that could make reality, not just mirror it. Art media groups such as Ant Farm and Radical Software tested the possibilities of a medium that would indeed produce a participating network, which would collapse the difference between performer and producer, but what could not easily be foreseen was how the feedback loop of TV could make the commodity and the commodity-performer the same thing. In the feedback loop of non-scripted TV shows, the contestant and the prize are equivalent; the figure and ground that defined the old mass media is now replaced by a constant oscillation between producer and consumer.

“EVENTUALLY WE WILL ABANDON PHYSICAL MOVEMENT FOR TELEPHIC/ CYBERNETIC MOVEMENT (TELEVISION) AND OUR NETWORK WILL ADAPT TO THE CHANGE.” (*Ant Farm, Truck Stop Fantasy One*, 1971) (SR)



© Peter Fischli / David Weiss, courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery, New York

Wild Time in Florida

GLASGOW — It kicked off when the March hare pointed out that “you should say what you mean.” Alice replied, “I do, at least — at least I mean what I say — that’s the same thing, you know.”

This exchange still resonates through the arcane world of crossword compilers. One of the first of the breed, Torquemada, delighted in torturing solvers with unorthodox clues. After his demise a fellow compiler, Afrit, cited *The Book of the Crossword* and said matters, stating “I need not mean what I say, but I must say what I mean.” Of course, *The Book of the Crossword*, authoritative though it may have sounded, was only a fiction invented by Afrit who was worried that another Torquemada might emerge with rogue clues (one did — Aracuria, named after the monkey-puzzle, and he continues to create delicious mayhem). For a while, however, Afrit’s dictum created order and this was reinforced when the compiler Ximenes laid down his rules on the principles of “square dealing” in *The Art of the Crossword Puzzle* (1966). Yet another compiler, Azed, helpfully summarized these principles, identifying three crucial elements:

1. a precise definition
2. a fair subsidiary indication
3. nothing else

With a little less clarity, Alfred Jarry had already noted in *Les Minutes de Sable Memorial* (1894) that a text ought “to suggest and not to state, creating a crossroads of the all the words in the highway of sentences.”

That’s a potent statement when applied to crosswords. They lie at the heart of a newspaper, a crossroads of words in the midst of columns, classifieds, headlines, and obituaries. Despite Afrit, Ximenes, and Azed, the rules that dictate their form are continually broken (never more so than by Aracuria), while both clues and solutions to cryptic puzzles push the boundaries of sense far beyond the rational. The crossroads has always been a place to summon the devil. In blues mythology it is the place where Robert Johnson went to sell his soul in return for supernatural skills. In a newspaper, the crossword is a crossroads where the voodoo breeds disarray, the devil takes language apart and shows us how to build alternative worlds with its components.

Alfred Jarry describes something akin to this in his outline of “Pataphysics: “Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments.”

“[I] is the science of that which is superinduced upon metaphysics, whether within or beyond the latter’s limitations, extending as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond physics.

“Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions, and this will explain the universe supplementary to this one: or, less ambitiously, will describe a universe which can be — and perhaps should be — envisaged in place of the traditional one, since the laws that are supposed to have been discovered in the traditional universe are also correlations of exceptions, albeit more frequent ones, but in any case accidental data which, reduced to the status of unexceptional exceptions, possess no longer even the virtue of originality.”

This is dubious magic and all the more seductive for that. Rufus, the most prolific crossword compiler today, likens the process of creating a crossword to that of the stage illusionist. It is essentially an act of “misdirection.” Rufus, who used to appear in nightclubs under the name El Squidolo, has long been a member of the Magic Circle (he is also the first to discover “Britney Spears” in “Presbyterians”).

The only way to solve these quasi-quantum linguistic dilemmas is to fracture language along spatial principles. Hugh Stephenson, author of *Secrets of the Setters*, explains:

“It also seems that the mind has much more difficulty reading a word that is written vertically than one that is written horizontally. If, therefore, you have some letters in the grid for a Down clue, jot them horizontally in the margin on a another bit of paper. Most people find it hard to see that

R
R
E
E
T
A

might lead to ORCHESTRA, but much easier to see that _ R _ E _ T _ A is heading in that direction.”

This weird physics of the mind goes further: “In particular, many people find it helpful to write out the letters that are candidates for an anagram in a circle backwards with one letter in the middle:

O
R
C
H
E
S
T
R
A

The mind’s eye is now much more ready to see that the letters also spell CARTHORSE.”

Perhaps headline writers travel in such exotic dimensions. That may excuse “Drinks Get Nine Months in Violin Case,” or “Man Struck by Lightning Faces Battery Charge,” or “Typhoon Rips through Cemetery: Hundreds Dead” all of which read more like cryptic clues than news headlines.

This open field of letters inverts the ur-

ban order of the newspaper. It is at heart dyslexic, turning alphabets into ciphers, queering the pitch for writers. Adrian Bell, an anthologist of crosswords, argues that this visual dimension is key to the cruciverbalist’s art: “The setter’s mind is more like a cinema than a reservoir. It is a sort of continuous performance of surrealist (though rigorously pertinent) imagery, related only by the interlockings and juxtapositions of orthography.”

Even Afrit, keeper of the flame, feels able to defend a cryptic compiler in the following terms: “He may attempt to mislead by employing a form of words which can be taken in more than one way, and it is your fault if you take it the wrong way but it is his fault if you cannot logically take it the right way.”

It might not be entirely coincidental that the cryptic crossword flourishes most keenly in the English language. The metaphor of the crossroads seems made for English which has absorbed words from approximately 350 other languages, spread throughout the world and, under the pressure of politics, economics and empire, has begun to wipe out other tongues. And, like a virus, crosswords devour the sense that surrounds them in newspapers, rearguarding it in goblets of absurdity. The cryptic clue is the true code of the intelligence. It depends on the ever-shifting, adaptive nature of language that is restless, insatiable, and positively feral. (FM) ■

No Values

ORANGE COUNTY — In 1981 I got a lot of key vocabulary words from punk rock records, basic words but weighty terms: apathy, hypocrite, society, poseur. A pubescent self-and class-consciousness took root with the help of Black Flag’s *No Values*, and the lesser-known *Home Is Where* by a band named Middle Class. I skipped school to read 1982 (only three years ‘til the nightmare is realized?) and I hated the rich, although I hadn’t met any yet. In 1991, I was signing loan papers to get into art school where I finally met the rich, and I didn’t hate them so much as simply want to be more like them. Now the century has turned, and in light of my recent reading expedition, the last two decades have been constantly in the back of my mind, frustratingly hovering on the precipice of dialectical climax.

During a routine time-killing spree, I spotted *The Managers: Corporate Life in America* (1979) in a pile of discarded books, outside a library. Not just any library, but a library in an art school, and not just any art school, but the art school that has me \$75,000 in debt of a bill which allows me to be simultaneously very like and very unlike the rich. In any case, I picked up *The Managers*, along with the similarly obsolete *Managers* (1991). While a perusal of the latter did not manage to pique my interest, mere seconds into the former had me practically reading aloud to passersby. (I get like that.) My eventual and total immersion in this book felt vaguely like a double feature of *The Stepford Wives* (1975) and *Over the Edge* (1979), two films suggesting that white middle class paradise is actually a barbarous wasteland. Only it was sociology, not cinema.

The sociological study was based on almost a hundred in-depth interviews with managers and their wives, from a corporation suitably named Global Products, Incorporated. Diane Rothbard Margolis argues that these managers were a class of people created by the corporation that did not “enjoy the benefits that came with success and affluence.” They had “the price of admission into the middle class,” yet their lifestyles were distinctly different from the more established middle class comprised of independent businessmen and professionals. Confining her research to one locale, she studied both managers and town committee mem-

bers in the same town, and saw a clear distinction between the two. Basically, what it came down to was the distinction between the Gesellschaft (society) and Gemeinschaft (community), or “world-users” versus “world-makers”: guess who was attracted to the strong community characteristics of a Gemeinschaft, yet rarely got involved in the social responsibilities that were responsible for creating it? Guess who the world-users were? That’s right, the managers of Global Products, Inc. The findings of the study seem, at this point, to be truisms at the heart of every advanced consumer’s internal iron-distancing mechanism. So I may as well confess that this book was so interesting to me because my mother was a manager in a big corporation. That should explain my confused class-consciousness. Probably most of the people I’ve been calling “rich” are actually middle class too. The managers in her study, she claims, exhibited indifference, held no values deeply, as opposed to the other non-managerial middle class who were world-makers and value cherrishers. “Values” was a big word for my mother. In the ‘80s, she wasn’t so happy with my preface “values” with “no”; in the ‘90s, once I began prefaceing it with “reevaluation of all,” we finally got to know each other. That’s when I learned what she was doing in management. She told me that in the early ‘70s there was a dramatic shift in business values once people started pouring in from MBA programs. Apparently, she and a few of her colleagues, knowing full well that corporations were giant super-human citizens, felt compelled to attempt to build a “soul” into them. In doing so, she was up against a gaggle of careerists and finally, a corporation that wasn’t interested in becoming spiritually animated. But forget about that if you can, because it’s time to move on to the next phase of the reading expedition after which it’ll be high time to put at least one middle-class value on the table.

In *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (1989), Barbara Ehrenreich admits “it is easy to conclude [...] that the professional middle class has no place in social change [if it is] too driven by its own ambitions, too compromised by its own elite status, and too removed from those whose sufferings cry out most loudly for redress.” Her book follows the middle class from the ‘50s to the ‘80s and could probably be very helpful to anyone who would like to fine-tune his or her class consciousness. One middle-class value she pointed out is the elusive “freedom to direct one’s own work according to inner principles.” What exactly does this mean? I was at a party recently and began talking with a couple of people, one of whom I knew was making a ton of money producing TV commercials. The other one was a former “production assistant” in the same business, who had decided to search out different work, because the hours were entirely too consuming. “I just had to quit doing that because there are much better things I could be doing with my time,” she said. “LIKE WHAT?” blurted out the successful one, and then before she could answer he added, loudly, “and don’t say spending time with your cat!” The ex-production assistant and I quickly jumped to the defense of doing something so nothing, and then things got tense.

Inevitably the conversation begged the integrity question: art versus advertising. “The professionalism and academicism of art supported by the upper classes had the effect of estranging it from the common people. The result was an immoral art, an art that had forgotten its social obligations!” Was this my successful former artist friend talking? Well, actually it’s Tolstoy, but my friend was pretending to move in that direction, albeit with a twist. “Not only is spending time with cats a ridiculous waste of time, loving a pet is utterly delusional, and furthermore the domestication of animals is wrong! Listen cat lady, don’t tell me making car commercials isn’t

Would be translated:
 “The blablablab, which has nursed the blabs of blabs, calls upon you for the blab blab which you, in whom flows blab blood, will not fail, and which will blab echo down the blabs of blab.”

If, however, a political leader says:
 “Every adult in the geographical area called Germany will receive not more than two loaves of bread per week for the next six months.”

There is little possibility of communication failure. There is not a blab in a carload of such talk.

In this, we can readily agree with Mr. Chase, but he does not by any means single out Aryan blab; most of his horrible examples are drawn from much nearer home. The speeches of our own politicians lend themselves admirably to semantic deflation. Substitute the “Mother Country” or the “British Commonwealth of Nations” for the “Aryan Fatherland” and you get exactly the same result.

As no reasonable person could be expected to risk his life in the defense (blab) of the great blab blab of our priceless blab; or to defeat the emotional-adjectival blab blab blab of any other blab, the adoption of the semantic discipline would seem very desirable in the cause of peace (blab of blab).

Naturally, in this business of replacing emotional and abstract terms by “blabs” it is easy to go too far. Abstract terms are necessary for communication amongst all men of greater mental development than savages, but the abstract terms must have “referents” in experience and observation; they must not be products of mere cerebration and fervor. They must be capable of definition in terms of the how, the when, and the where. For the ins and outs of this, which Mr. Chase makes entertaining, his book should be read. It is a sportive, and pleasantly light and jaunty treatment of a subject which has, it appears, received much heavier treatment by Count Alfred Korzybski in *Science and Society* and by I.A. Richards in *The Meaning of Meaning*.

The danger of going too far with the “blab” business is exemplified by my personal reaction to the title of this last named work. To me it just means “The blab of blab,” and semantic discipline or no semantic discipline it would take a lot of moral “suasion” to make me read it. The book may be an excellent one, but the title puts me off. I am not at all sure that my native intelligence has not led me towards a better way of dealing with vague generalizations and abstract verbiage, than the semantic discipline. I tend not to read such stuff at all, and this, I cannot help

feeling, is much better than wading through tiresome rubbish patiently replacing all the meaningless terms by “blabs.” Certainly it is much less trouble. I have applied my technique with outstanding success to BBC talks and “news.” By selling my wireless set I have not only raised the level of intellectual honesty and purity of speech in my home, but I have got a few pounds in cash, and shall save ten shillings a year on the license.

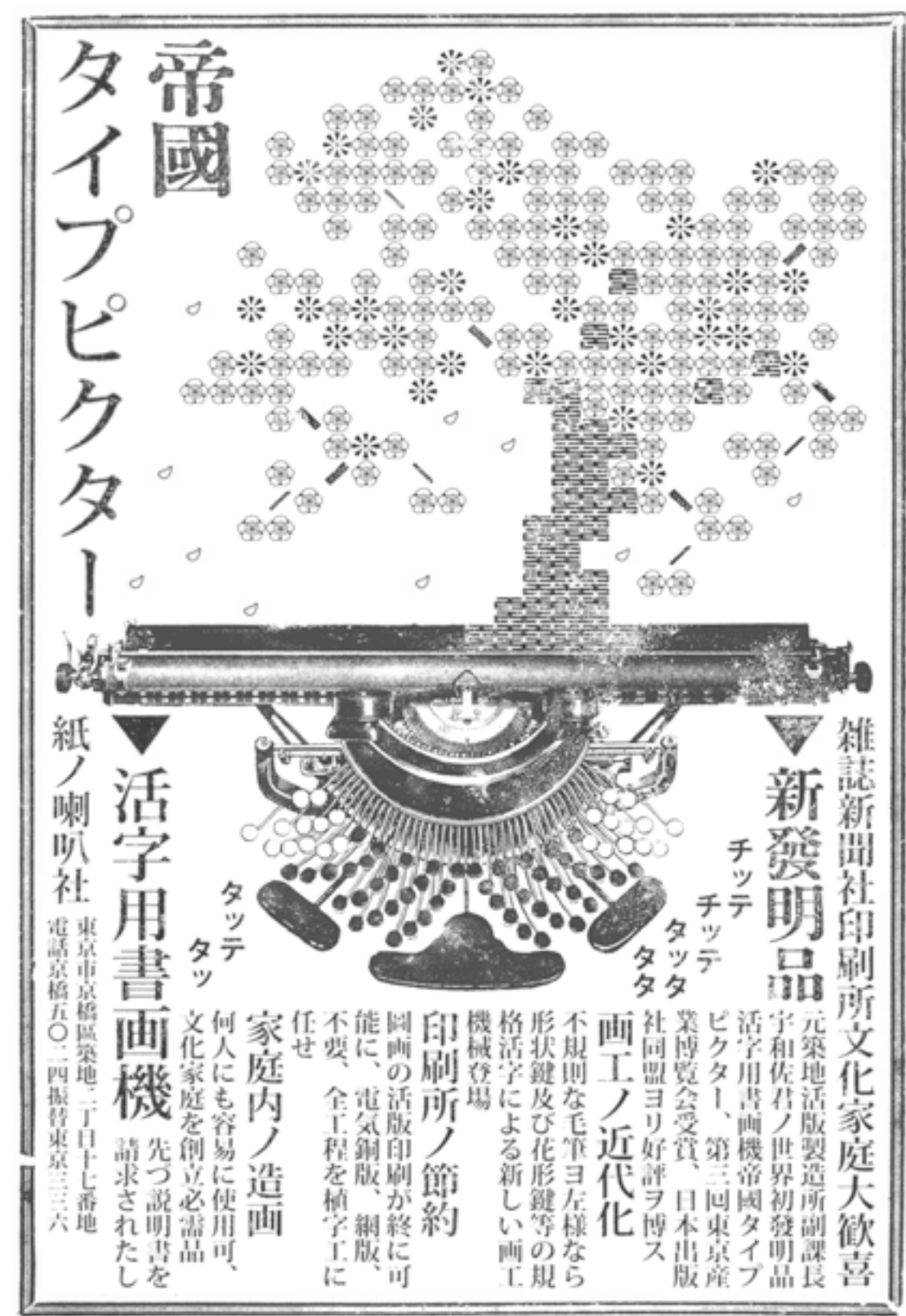
But I do not share Mr. Chase’s conviction that the principal function of words is to convey meanings. He does not seem to realize that different sorts of people emit different sorts of blab and that therefore the study of blab is important in the diagnosis of personality. By their blab shall ye know them. My own technique here is never to listen to anybody’s blab long enough to get tired, but to take samples of it by listening carefully for short periods. Then I go away and savour it in silence. I find this tells me much more about people than the cut of their clothes or the lines of their features, and blab-sampling is indeed one of my favorite recreations. I would not live in a world that had been semantically purged of blab.

Yesterday evening, for example, I bought a publication from a bookstall, which is blab from start to finish. It is called *Rising Tide* and it is full of photographs of young men and women with uplifted expressions and permanent smiles, who have got “God Control” by “having a quiet time” (with God) in much the same way as the British workman mikes off now and then for two puffs and a spit. I am grateful to the Oxford Group for “God Control.” It must be very nearly the ultimate blank of all semantic blanks, but it makes me want to live. While the human manager contains hundreds of thousands of people ready to sop up “God Control” and go about with uplifted expressions, I don’t want to die. I ain’t seen nothing yet. And when Sir Samuel Hoare talks about “The Good Companionship of British Democracy,” I can’t help smiling inanely and feeling jumpy.

No! I am not going to subscribe to any movement for purging public utterances of semantic blanks. But there is one measure of reform I would propose. Experience is slowly teaching me that all utterances are really meaningless except in reference to the persons who make them. I used to imagine, for example, in looking through the pages of print in *The New English Weekly*, that all the different pieces in it were the product of some equal human mind, functioning in various repositories, but all contributing to one whole in some abstract and perfect world of mind and spirit. I no longer see it that way: when I happen to know the writer of a particular piece I say “Oh, he’s saying that, is he? Now that tells me a little more about him.” And when I don’t know the writer, I at once begin to conjure up some imagination of what he must look like from the evidence of what he says; and I am more prone to guessing how he gets on with his wife than to weighing his words on fiscal reform in Transputania, however important that topic may be. It all makes a microscopic addition to my minute understanding of the infinitely wonderful human race. But I protest that I get too little help. An article, or story, by an uncaught young man of twenty-five may be published next to the work of a comfortably prosperous, or much-married, man of forty, and these essential clues to the interpretation of the writing are not given.

For my part the adoption of a semantic discipline in the usage of words, à la Mr. Chase, may remain a matter of personal taste. There will always be people who write decently and people who write badly. The latter will always predominate, and the letting loose of a new jargon about “semanticity” and “referents” will never make blabbers write good English. The reform I propose is that every published bit, lick, or morsel of writing should bear under it, in an appropriate office, the following essential information concerning its author: (a) Sex, (b) Age, (c) Annual income from all sources, (d) What sources, (e) Married or otherwise, (f) Weight in stones, and (g) Height in inches. There is a lot of other information, of course, that I should like to have, but the provision of this simple data would do for a start. Given them, the worst blab would be of interest. If anybody wants to know what it matters about the weight of an author, I would explain that I’ve never yet met a fat man who talked like a thin one. (ECL) ■

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trans: *THE IMPERIAL TYPEPICTER: REJOICE! MAGAZINE AND NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS, PRINT SHOPS, AND CULTURED HOUSEHOLDS. A NEW INVENTION. Invented by former vice-manager at the Tsukiji Type Foundry, Mister Uwsa. The world’s first typographic drawing machine. Third Tokyo Industrial Exposition Prize Recipient. High Praise from the Japan Publishers League. MODERNIZING PICTURE CRAFT. Farewell to the irregularities of the brush. Introducing a picture machine using form keys, pattern keys, and other standardized type. ECONOMIZING THE PRINT SHOP. The letterpress printing of images is at last possible. Electrotone and half-tone screen processing are no longer necessary. The entire printing process is put in the hands of the compositor. MAKE PICTURES AT HOME. Easy operation for anyone. A welcome addition to the cultured household.*

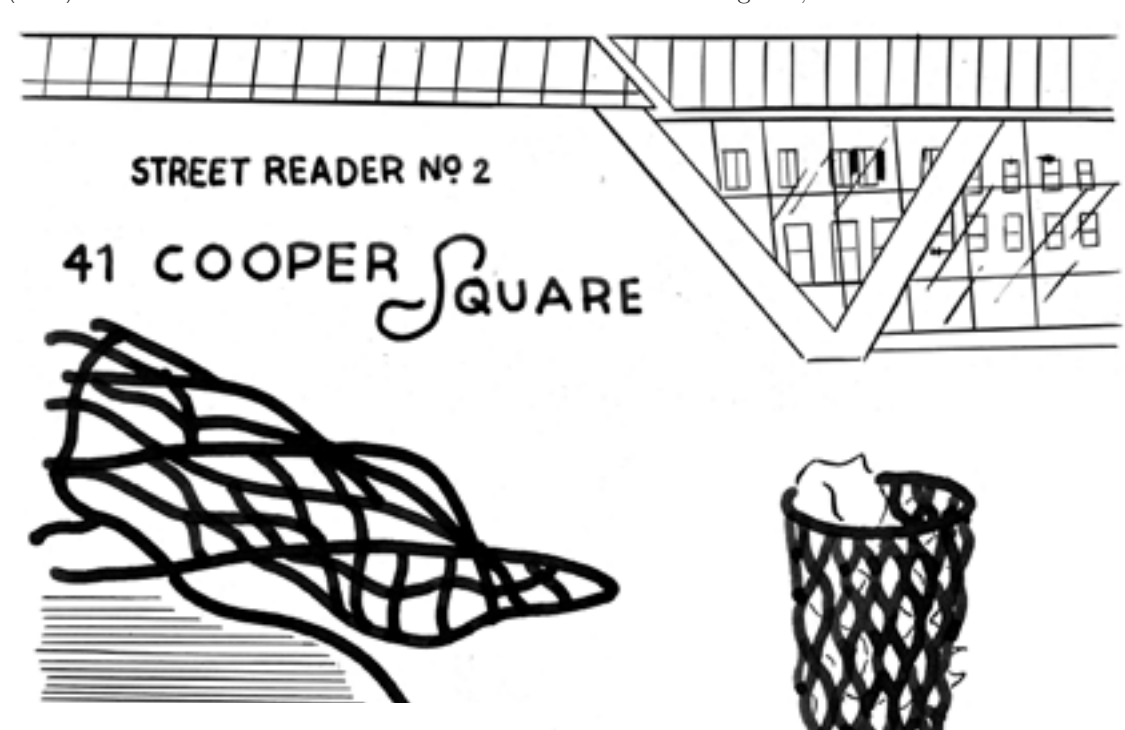
Imperial Typepictor

LOS ANGELES — Exact dates are unknown. Nonetheless, it is probable that history’s lone typewriting machine, the Japanese-born and marketed Imperial Typepictor, inhabited the 1910s. After all, its sole print advertisement speaks in the graphic idiom of that pivotal Japanese decade. Its copy, orderly and Ming-faced, bears the stolidness of Meiji. Whereas small Gothic type, sitting just below the keyboard, sounding the chitter chatter of its operation, beckons TAISHŪ with its buoyant modernism. At top, a type-drawn cherry tree narrates what skill with the machine, once blossomed, might achieve. Beneath it, at center, root of this artistic spring, is the Typepictor itself. It is in essence a retrofitted typewriter. No extant machine is known. But from the small archive of drawings made with the device, a basic understanding can be had of its workings.

A typewriting is segmental. It is made of discrete graphic units. Usually, individual units stand side by side, spaced. This, the default tracking of the Typepictor, is not in all cases observed. Occasionally, units are contiguous; at times, even overlapping. Dots, dashes, hooks, carets, circles, spirals, triangles, squares, rectangles, and diagonals, as well as units of repeating pattern. This was the Typepictor’s type set. It aimed to provide the basic building blocks for rendering form, mass, and surface texture in the creation of images. An upper and lower case is evident. Some forms come in varying orientation. Some in both fill and outline. I count one-hundred-and-eighteen different individual typographic units. As with the typewriter, each would have been cast upon the head of a hammer, with upper and lower case paired on one, making fifty or sixty-old type sorts organized in the machine’s housing. This array necessitated many more keys than the alphabet had letters, so a doubled keyboard was devised. It can be seen, fulsome and spiny, in the ad.

Most units of the Typepictor’s type set are geometric, derived from the morphological economy of mechanical reproduction. On the other hand, some are calligraphic, indicating devotion to formal conventions of the ink-loaded brush. Unsurprising, then, that dominant amongst available typewriting samples are landscapes of East Asian inspiration. All of those known appear in the pages of a pamphlet, designed as a graphic and aesthetic tutorial for the novice type-draftsman. Here too, continental forces are manifest, for the model book is modeled in no small part on that continuing standard for aspiring amateurs of the brush, the late seventeenth-century *Mustard Seed Garden Manual*. How so? First, with its dragon peaks, withstanding pines, and shimmering inland seas. Second, by telling you not just how to draw, but also who it was that made that “how” a should. It names forefathers and upholds precedent, even while its text, its examples, and the plain fact of its existence, insist on embracing modernity. And third, with its atomism: its reduction of form to discrete and indivisible graphic elements. The *Mustard Seed Manual* rested upon a related principle, particularly in its lessons on rocks, flowers, and foliage. Form is cataloged in typologies of shape and stroke. Picturing, in turn, is taught as the combination and variation of these types. The Typepictor makes of these practical suggestions material preconditions. Types are set in a finite type set, making possible the most perfect reiterations.

Most Typepictor units are not, in themselves, free morphemes. Meaning comes only in combination with others. In this, typewriting is like frehand drawing. It is progressive, moving from atom to molecule, from graphic mark to grapheme. In such a scheme, the instantaneous creation of a semantically meaningful unit is not possible — printing changes things. With it, marking and meaning can be made co-temporal. For sorts and plates et cetera store not just parts but wholes. With them, free morphemes can be printed with a single pressing, a single stamping, or a single stroke, as is the case with some of the keys of the Typepictor. But a handful of its type units are morphemically complete. A drawing apparatus with landscape and still life in its genes, flower blossoms included.



Tamara Shoplin

Others offered greater polysemy: patterns, based largely on classifying textile prints, but easily reappropriated for use in rendering other sorts of textured things, including, but not limited to, stucco, wicker, wire mesh, sand, raked gravel, drizzling rain, pounding rain, falling snow, rippling water, falling water, rushing water, wood grain, tree bark, slicked hair, tonsled hair, the body fur of forest animals and Europeans, pubes, fuzz, and stubble. And so on and on, especially for the advanced user of the machine who had mastered the arts of typographic stacking and overlapping.

A fragment of lore circulates regarding the inventor of this combination, but its details are obviously embellished, making it the stuff more of the *raconteur* than the historian. His name was Uwsa Masato. Despite regular penury, he was an extravagant man. He dressed himself in European cotton fineries, pressed sharp and punctuated with a lacy pink cravat. The breast pocket of his suit jacket nested an English timepiece, which he never used, but would often remove and inspect — through a monocled squint — in a public performance of civilization. He wore a moustache in the Bismarckian style and took to eating beef when his coffers allowed. But beneath this outer display of westernization, he wrapped his loins with a fudoshi made of the finest Japanese silk (whitest striped in richest manner). He was a man of superlatives in every direction.

Uwsa had collected a large number of typewriting machines. Though committing most to research, he cannibalized a few for a peculiar sartorial indulgence. He fancied his fingers with a set of self-fashioned rings, the keys of a Western typewriter extracted from the machine and bent around the phalanges of the second through fifth digits of his right hand, such that each knuckle was crowned with alphabetic type. Miniaturized embodiments of the Western world’s industrial deflation of the word, he wore them as a sort of souvenir of conquest over alien encroachment into native aesthetic common sense — Japan still went to give up manuscript. An ironic statement, of course, for few advocated type as he had. His jewelry served also a martial purpose: a mean drunk prone to early morning fistfights, Uwsa could stamp the face of his foe with a puzzle. Upon sobering, the beaten would find typed upon his brow a syntagm of scale that spelled in Roman alphabet a telltale infinitive: *kaku*, Japanese for both “to write” and “to draw.” The lower and upper case of a letter being cast on each key, the mark would read double — *KAKU* and *kaku* — leaving the punched to ponder a rich combination of semiotic relations through the haze of lingering shochu. (RH) ■



“In both places, pirates flourished.” <http://themoncmog.blet.nytimes.com/author/nick-curry>

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Maskhead set in Strike Alphabet courtesy Shannon Ebner.

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