

Exchanges

The Interdisciplinary Research Journal

Volume 9, Issue 2 (Spring, 2022)



Issue Highlights:

- Barriers to Factual Communication by Experts
- Buddhist Philosophy & Artificial Intelligence Ethics
- Experiencing Environmental Epiphanies
- (In)Visible Women & Disability Media Representation
- Plus Reader Survey & Anniversary Issue Call for Papers

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Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal

Volume 9, Issue 2 (Spring 2022)

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Exchanges is a scholar-led, peer-reviewed, diamond open access, interdisciplinary, online-only journal dedicated to the publication of high-quality work by researchers in all disciplines for a broad scholarly audience. No author fees or subscription charges are levied, and contributors retain their author rights. Since 2013, the title has attracted innovative research articles, critical essays and interviews from emerging domain experts and early career researchers globally. The title also publishes scholarly work by practitioner authors and independent scholars.

A Managing Editor-in-Chief based at the University of Warwick oversees development, policy and production, while an international Editorial Board comprised of early career researchers provide advice and practically contribute to editorial work. Associate editors are recruited to participate in producing specific special themed issues. *Exchanges* usually publishes two issues annually, although additional special themed issues are periodically commissioned in collaboration with other scholars.

Exchanges' twin missions are to encourage intellectual exchange and debate across disparate research communities, along with developing academic authorial and editorial expertise. These are achieved through providing a quality assured platform for disseminating research publications for and by explicitly cross-disciplinary audience, alongside ensuring a supportive editorial environment helping authors and editors develop superior academic writing and publishing skills. Achieving enhanced contributor esteem, visibility and recognition within these broader scholarly communities is a further goal.

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What Lies Beyond: Editorial, Volume 9, Part 2

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Some of the resistance to the search for extraterrestrial intelligence boils down to conservatism, which many scientists adopt in order to minimise the number of mistakes they make in their careers. This is the path of least resistance, and it works; scientists who preserve their images in this way receive more honors, more awards, and more funding. Sadly, this also increases the force of their echo effect, for the funding establishes ever bigger research groups that parrot the same ideas. This can snowball; echo chambers amplify conservatism of thought, wringing the native curiosity out of young researchers, most of who feel they must fall in line to secure a job. Unchecked, this trend could turn scientific consensus into a self fulfilling prophecy. (Loeb, 2022: 50)

Introduction

Welcome to the twenty first edition of *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, which happens to also be our premier issue for 2022 as well. If you have never read *Exchanges* before, then you are most welcome, as it is always a pleasure for us to have new readers. Naturally, you are just as welcome if you are part of our ever-growing community of regular readers. As always in this editorial, I will be discussing developments here at the journal, alongside providing readers with an overview of the articles in the issue. Naturally, you will also find more about how to contribute to future *Exchanges* issues through our various calls for papers, not to mention our social media presences.

Unlocking Tomorrow

This editorial's title was chosen, in part, because it reflects Avi Loeb's excellent and accessible text (2022) concerning in part a thesis on evidence for intelligence beyond this Earth combined with a highly-reflexive critique of academic research discourse practices. Strongly recommended reading for anyone with a passion for exploring the challenges facing heterodox research endeavours and the normative barriers placed to arguably defanging their expression. Or perhaps any early career scholar vacillating between pursuing their consuming, original research passions or seeking a more secure career path within an adherence to orthodoxy.

This editorial title though was also chosen because we are actively looking towards the future of the journal, beyond 2022 itself. Not because we are ready to abandon 2022 already - although it has not been *that* great a year given the current global geopolitical and economic situation. Rather, because the time seems right to look beyond the immediate horizon towards a significant date in the journal's history. As this volume's number probably already alerted some readers, we are heading towards the milestone publication of *Exchanges'* tenth birthday issue in October 2023. Hence, this seems the perfect time to launch not one, but two initiatives geared towards greeting that event with renewed enthusiasm and vigour.

Back in the times long before Brexit, social distancing or lockdownⁱ were quotidian terms, the very first issue of *Exchanges* materialised in October 2013. At the time, I was in the early stages of my own doctoral journey and was, regrettably, blissfully unaware of its creation. More is the pity, as I would have loved to have submitted some of my own research thoughts to its pages. The journal flowered from the shared desire of Warwick's early career researcher community to produce an 'intellectual gateway for research engagement at a regional, national and international level' (Thrift, 2013: 2). Or more prosaically to offer a 'new peer-reviewed online journal, dedicated to the publication of high-quality work by researchers in all disciplines' (Grainger Clemson et al, 2013).

Reading back through those high-minded, well-meaning and aspirational introductions to the first volume, I am not sure anyone expected the title to still be a going concern at the point of which we moved towards a tenth anniversary. I confess, recently having concluded my own fourth year of curating *Exchanges'* existence, I am unsure whether I expected the journal or myself to still be enmeshed in tandem by now either. In both cases we most certainly are, which is a delightful and satisfying outcome, supported not least from the efforts of all those editors, contributors and readers past and present. *Exchanges* as the journal exists today still strives to meet many elements of those founders' visions, even as by necessity it has evolved its scope beyond the worthy if, arguably, moderately more localised contents of the earliest volumes. Perhaps, one might consider how it is only in recent years that we have truly begun to realise Thrift's lofty ambitions for the title in terms of range, globality and internationalised discourse.

Nevertheless, external events willing, as it looks increasingly certain that *Exchanges* will achieve its birthday goal in a little over eighteen months, we have decided it is a perfect juncture to launch a pair of related initiatives. The second, you will find later in this editorial in our *Anniversary Call for Papers* belowⁱⁱ. The first though, let's deal with right here and now, because it directly concerns you – the reader!

So, What Matters to You? Reader Survey 2022

Ever since I took over running *Exchanges*, I realised much of the journal's operations had been run on the axiom that an interdisciplinary journal specialising in early career author's publications *had* an audience. There is much in the literature and discourse of scholarly publishing that would argue, in contrast, how scholars' interests and reading habits are directed at the article level of access. Yet, authors continue to contribute and collaborate with the journal, so we must be meeting some needs.

However, being an empiricist at heart, the question of how accurately we are satisfying our readership remains a moderately irksome unanswered question. Certainly, each published author is offered a formal route for feedback and comment on their experiences, not to mention an invite to appear on the *Exchanges Discourse* podcast. Incidental and anecdotal comments from the readership do arise periodically too, providing welcome, if staccato, further datum to draw upon.

Nevertheless, our broader readership have always remained a loosely understood, amorphous assemblage which invites further exploration in terms of their wants, needs and desires. Ahead of the lockdown period I was working towards hosting some focus groups to explore some of these very issues in a more formalised setting. While these, like so many plans, were side-lined by circumstance, as Editor-in-Chief, I think the run up to our anniversary year offers an opportune moment to revisit this area.

Hence, I am delighted to announce this issue sees the launch of our first ever readers' survey. In short, it asks our readership – and indeed anyone with an interest in the title – to offer some insight into what they most value and desire from *Exchanges*. It is, by necessity and efficacy, a brief and anonymous instrument which should take a scant few minutes to complete. I would strongly encourage anyone, however peripheral or perhaps devoted your interest or involvement with *Exchanges* might be, to take a few moments to contribute your thoughts. You will undoubtedly help us in shaping our own direction of travel and aspirations for the *next* ten years of the title!

To participate in the survey – please follow the link below:

- **Reader Survey:** forms.gle/JpdGjxU8EsYpCNxy6

Should you experience any issues - be they local security measures or simple accessibility - with being able to access or respond via this form, then please [contact me directly](#) and I will provide an alternative format.

My profound thanks in advance for your contributions and feedback. The survey will run throughout May and early June, closing on or around **Friday 17th June 2022**. So, there is plenty of time to get involved.

Papers

Would that synchronicity have afforded us the chance to present twenty-one papers this issue, but sadly such a frivolous goal has been denied us. Nevertheless, I am once again delighted to present a goodly number of articles, critical reflections and conversations this issue which should provide ample reading matter for the interdisciplinary curious scholar and student alike. Those with a more archival leaning, might also find particular interest in our final piece contributed by an author whose name with which you may already be quite familiar.

Articles

We begin the issue with **Maria Anna Bertolino's** work which considers a *Post-Urban Life in the Italian Alps during a Pandemic*. While historic trends have seen emigration from the region, over the past decade there has been a tangible shift to re-habitation of the Alps. The author explores how this repopulation has been further enhanced by migration away from urban environs as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19 on locations of desirable domicile. Hence, Bertolino considers how this contemporary 'rediscovery' may have served to reshape prevailing perceptions of the Alps. In turn, the author suggests such assessments may in actuality be framed through a nostalgic perceptual lens ([1](#)).

We move on to **Jon Braddy** article which employs Guattari's concept of schizoanalytic cartographies and the *octothorpe* (#) to analyse the classic 80's film *War Games*. Braddy considers Guattari's four cartographies and explores what they can expose when they are utilised as an analytical lens. The author draws further illustrative examples from other work and films with themes which resonate with AI and cybernetic theory to further their argument. Then, moving to the piece's central thesis, the article explores the movie *War Games* itself and especially the WOPR machine intelligence at the heart of the film's apocalyptic simulation games, within Guattari's framing ([17](#)).

The next piece continues our martial informatics theme as Anna Kosovac examines *Factual Divergence and Risk Perceptions*. Submitted in response to our call for papers on *fakery*, the author considers the emergence of barriers for the public communication of factual information where trust in experts has been diminished. Drawing on work within psychology, risk analysis, communication, epistemology and political studies, Kosovac contemplates if there is any underlying truth to this oft espoused public antipathy towards experts. Through their explorations and considerations, Kosovac concludes experts remain valued by the public at large, but that threats to the stability of this trust are clearly evidenced in many domains ([35](#)).

Critical Reflections

Moving to our critical reflective pieces, we are pleased this issue to offer three very different articles. The first by **Francesca Brunetti**, resonating in contrast with Bertolino's earlier piece, considers the *terrona*, or the stereotypical representation of the southern Italian woman. Through employing a methodological approach which calls upon drawing, feminism and ecology the piece explores how the media represents the *terrona*. Brunetti continues seeking within their work to transform these perceptions, through aligning and connecting the *terrona*'s traditional traits to the Mediterranean's natural resources. The piece is notable for being extensively illustrated throughout by the author's artistic flair (55).

The second reflection is provided by **Abdelhafid Jabri** and in it the author looks at *the Experience of Environmental Epiphany in the Lives of Aldo Leopold, Thomas Hill Jr., and Albert Schweitzer*. In this piece Jabri considers how baseline alterations in personal outlook can also result from short-term events. This contrasts with views that such opinions are solely predicated through longer-term experiences. In considering such 'environmental epiphanies', Jabri illustrates their thesis through the exploration of the three titular figures revelatory experiences. In each case, intimating how in each case a new awareness was triggered through a powerful emotional experience (82).

Finally for this section, **Leanne Weston** offers us an insightful and highly engaging piece looking at the *(In)Visible Woman*, as the author examines the career of actor Ruth Madeley. Weston considers and expands upon the casting practice of 'cripping up', and explores its impact on disabled actors' representation, careers and community. In turn, the author exposes how Madeley's current prominence within various landmark productions presents a valuable positive shift for disabled actors and the representation of disabled lives on screen, even if arguably it forms an exception rather than a prevailing norm. In particular, Weston highlights how the complexity of the roles Madeley inhabits serve to shift productions beyond a typical paradigm of 'inspiration' or 'ableist narratives' for disabled characters (88).

Conversations

After a long absence from our pages, we have been able to include two conversation pieces this issue; a fact which pleases me enormously. We do not see quite as many of this submission format as we did in the early issues of *Exchanges*, and it would be great to present many more in future editions.

Nevertheless, firstly **Theodoor A.M. Richard** is in conversation with **Peter D Hershock**; inspired by our call for 'AI - Pandemic or panacea' pieces. Resonating modestly with Braddy's earlier piece, Richard and Hershock centre on the ethical, rather than technological, challenges posed by AI, Richard and Hershock draw on a Buddhist framing to shape their debate. Their discussion continues as they explore ideas around Hershock's 'virtuosic relational dynamics' and specifically how it can be deployed to organise a society on a less individualistic stance. Finally, it concludes centring on a proposal that Buddhist philosophy can offer benefits towards achieving an enriched and sustainable discourse of AI ethics ([97](#)).

The second conversation is with political science, women's and gender studies scholar, and city councillor, Lisa Disch. In her discussion, author **Clementina Gentile Fusillo** begins by discussing the crucial motivations and drivers for Disch's research endeavours. The conversation continues by looking at the 'constructivist turn' in theories of political representation, and discussed how 'good representation' can be achieved within the political and governance sphere. The scholar's discussion concludes by reconsidering Disch's service as an elected councillor and in particular the genesis and locus for their resultant feelings of empowerment within the role ([111](#)).

Postscripts

Back in volume 6(2) I collated an index of the first six volumes of *Exchanges* covering the publication period late 2013 through to early 2019. This has been a consistently downloaded contribution, underscoring its value to a section of our readership. As a result, given the number of our volumes published in the three years since then, an update seemed a timely addition. Hence this issue includes an article, author and keyword (subject) index for the journal's subsequent issues by myself, **Gareth J Johnson**. It is intriguing to observe how the keyword index highlights the disciplinary breath of the subjects broached by our authors. It is also satisfying to reflect on the many different authors who have contributed to our title's continuing discourse ([121](#)).

Authentic Interdisciplinarity: Anniversary Issue Call for Papers

The key objective of this journal arises from Warwick's ambition to provide an intellectual gateway for research engagement at a regional, national and international level. Interdisciplinary research is an increasingly important part of our academic future and this publication seeks to provide a spot-light for non-traditional collaborations and those keen to push the barriers of their disciplinary activity. (Thrift, 2013: ii)

Context

Exchanges was founded in 2013 as an explicitly interdisciplinary journal, with a mission to further the communication between disciplines, and to encourage scholars to reach out and embrace thought and practice beyond their own disciplinary traditions. In this respect it resonates with the *Institute of Advanced Study's* mission to create 'synergies between traditional disciplines' (IAS, 2022). Consequently, *Exchanges* has over the past decade achieved this goal through the production of numerous volumes containing work from dozens of scholars around the world drawn from a myriad of disciplinary traditions. However, while these articles have offered unique insights, arguably few of them could be considered to specifically have unpicked, exposed or interrogated ideas and practices of interdisciplinarity.

As many authors have noted while scholarship within the academy was once dominated by disciplinary work, moves towards a greater interdisciplinary research culture have grown over the years (e.g. Marres, 2020; Robinson, 2008). Today, it has arguably become normalised as a mainstream activity by university leaders and funding agencies. Working in tandem with other significant sectoral bodies these actors have been keen to support the idea of how complex and problematic challenges can be best addressed through scholars working together across the disciplinary divide (Bothwell, 2020). Emerging scholars too are increasingly encouraged for the sake of their career, to embrace interdisciplinary working and thinking. Yet despite these moves, operationally many scholars continue to primarily work and self-identify with unitary disciplinary departments and schools.

As a consequence of these developments, aspects of the academic publishing field too has adapted to accommodate a framework of interdisciplinary discourse from scholars situating in collaborating fields. Many research journals, *Exchanges* among them, have capitalised on this by encouraging a greater interdisciplinary publishing culture through the provision of their diverse fora. Although, as disruptive challenges to a preeminent disciplinary publishing culture such titles may experience a

varying degree of acceptance or face existential challenges (O'Brien et al., 2019).

However, while research may draw on differing or contrasting methods, methodologies and epistemologies, the degree to which such work can be perceived as 'authentically' interdisciplinary is questionable. In part some of the difficulties with seeking to publish what might be demarcated as 'authentic interdisciplinary' work, are disagreements over the definition of what interdisciplinary work actually comprises, as much as any resistance to move beyond traditional disciplinary realms. For some scholars, interdisciplinary work might today be perceived as a more natural occurrence within some disciplinary realms than others. Nevertheless, any personal desires to become a greater 'interdisciplinary' may be countered with pragmatic or career necessities or others. Yet, there are counters that work badged as interdisciplinary suffers from a 'diminution' of the rigor and focus witnessed were it to be situated entirely within a singular or closely related fields of study (Bothwell, 2020). Thus, the question might be posed, is interdisciplinarity research simply a prevailing trend rather than a genuine evolution of the scholarly research paradigm?

This gives rise to further questions concerning the definition of 'interdisciplinarity' and how we might differentiate 'authentic' from 'inauthentic' research practices. In turn, explorations of these synergistic themes may serve to better illuminate new insights into the state of cross-disciplinary research and research communications today. Not least with respect to whatever modest role *Exchanges* itself may have contributed.

Call & Inspirations

Interdisciplinarity is the coming together of two or more disciplines to formulate a research question and an innovative method of finding an answer to that question. The research question might arise from the relationship between these disciplines or from the problematic boundary where the research from two or more disciplines intersects, providing a new direction to explore. The combination of divergent considerations from these disciplines often creates a new way of thinking about a problem. (Grainger-Clemson et al., 2013: iii-iv)

So, tying into the 10th anniversary issue of *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal* we are seeking contributions which seek to celebrate, challenge or define ideas around **authentic interdisciplinarity**. Authors may wish to draw on their own research practices and activities or adopt a more holistic stance in engaging with the prior literature and activities within this broadly demarcated field. As is *Exchanges'* tradition, we will potentially consider any work which its authors choose to present which seeks to address the themes evident within this call.

Authors may also wish to draw upon methods or methodological practices within a variety of field. Alternatively, they may consider explore if there are discrete or disparate audiences for interdisciplinary rather than unitary disciplinary work in academia today. Additionally, pieces considering, rationalising or amplifying cross-disciplinary discourse concerning centring on the concepts of authentic interdisciplinarity would be warmly received.

Authors looking for further inspiration to frame their articles may wish to look to ideas from among the following topics of potential interest:

- Authenticity and/or inauthenticity within interdisciplinary research and practice
- Becoming an interdisciplinarian – practical advice or critical reflections
- Conversations with interdisciplinary giants
- Creating, evolving and/or maintaining interdisciplinary research practice
- Critical reflections of *Exchanges*: then, now and tomorrow
- Defining boundaries between inter, multi and trans-disciplinary research
- In defence of the unitary disciplinarian in an interdisciplinary academy
- The interdisciplinary decade: key developments of the past ten years
- What lies beyond the fringes or overlaps of interdisciplinary thought?

However, authors are encouraged to develop their own ideas, thought and methodological approaches or insights, and need not only adhere to the above suggestions, provided as inspiration.

As a journal with an early career focus, *Exchanges* especially welcomes submissions in response to this call from scholars at an early or formative stage of their academic research careers. Papers authored by uniting scholars from disparate disciplines providing multiple viewpoints will be especially welcomed as responses to this call (e.g., scientists writing with humanities scholars). Additionally, as this call is tied into our anniversary issue, we would encourage submissions from authors who have previously published with *Exchanges* throughout its existence too.

Formats & Deadlines

Manuscripts may be submitted for consideration as peer-reviewed pieces (academic papers or review articles) or as editorially reviewed shorter contributions (critical reflections or conversations), as desired by their authors. However, please note the format adopted will modify the submission deadline (shown below).

- **Peer-reviewed papers or review articles**
30th November 2022
- **Critical Reflections, Conversations (interviews) or Essays**
30th June 2023

For more on these formats, their respective requirements and word limits please see the open call below, or our online Guide for Authors ([Exchanges, 2022a](#)).

Alternatively, contact the Editor-in-Chief via the address below. Manuscripts submitted beyond these dates may still be considered for publication in the anniversary issue, at the Editor-in-Chief's discretion. Authors should note that the anticipated publication date for work submitted for this call is 31st October 2023.

Manuscript Submission

All articles should be submitted via *Exchanges'* online portal. New contributors will be required to register for an account with the journal as part of the submission process.

exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/exchanges/submission/wizard

Authors should highlight in their submission note to the editor the format under which their manuscript should be considered. If authors are unsure if their manuscript proposal meets the requirements of this call, they are strongly advised to consult with the Editor-in-Chief ahead of submission. Submissions of sufficient quality but which do not sufficiently address the themes of this call, may be instead considered under the non-thematic, open call for papers at the Editor-in-Chief's discretion.

As with all our themed calls, papers deemed by the journal to be suitably scholarly, but falling outside this call's framing, may be instead considered under the non-thematic, open call for papers at the Editor-in-Chief's discretion.

Further guidance and advice on submission can be found here:

exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/exchanges/about/submissions

Contact Details

The Editor-in-Chief, Dr Gareth J Johnson, welcomes informal discussions with authors concerning their submissions to this call (exchangesjournal@warwick.ac.uk). However, a pre-submission discussion is not a prerequisite for the submission of a manuscript to be considered with respect to this call.

Open Calls for Paper

Thematic call aside, if this issue has whetted your appetite to consider contributing to *Exchanges* then you will be pleased to know the journal welcomes submissions throughout the year on any subject, with no deadline. Articles which pass our review processes and are accepted for publication will subsequently appear in the next available issue.

As *Exchanges* has a core mission to support the development and dissemination of research by early career and post-graduate researchers, we are especially pleased to receive manuscripts from emerging scholars or first-time authors. However, contributions from established and senior scholars are also welcomed.

Peer-Reviewed Articles

Exchanges welcomes submissions of research or review articles to be considered for peer-reviewed publication. Articles can be on any topic, ideally written for a multi and interdisciplinary audience. We are especially pleased to consider work incorporating elements of interdisciplinary methods, methodology or thinking. Peer-reviewed pieces should normally be between 4,000-6,000 words in length at submission.ⁱⁱⁱ

Critical Reflections & Conversations

Exchanges also welcomes submissions of interviews (conversations) with key scholars or critical reflections on important scholarly events, conferences or crucial new texts. These works undergo a briefer internal, editorial review, scrutiny only, but should still be written to the highest professional standard. Typically, these pieces have a shorter lead time to publication than the peer-reviewed submissions.

Critical reflections and conversation pieces are popular with our broader readership, due to their innate accessibility. They are also an excellent format for first-time authors looking to get a piece into publication in the near future. Both critical reflection pieces should typically be between 1,000-3,000 words in length, and conversations between 1,500-4,000 words. However, the Editor-in-Chief is happy to discuss exceptions to these rules with prospective authors - see contact details above.

Deadlines

There are no submission deadlines and manuscripts are accepted for consideration throughout the year. Manuscripts which pass our review requirements will be published in the next available regular journal issue. Regular issues of *Exchanges* are typically published in late April and October.

Advice for Prospective Authors

As an interdisciplinary journal with a wide scholarly readership, authors should seek to address their manuscripts to a general academic audience. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to unpack, delineate and expand on any potentially 'disciplinary niche' language, terms or acronyms. Ideally, authors' manuscripts should seek to incorporate some elements of interdisciplinary thinking or perspective, and outline the broader scholarly relevance of their work. For interviews and critical reflections, authors are advised to highlight the importance of disciplinary discourse or interviewees' scholarly contributions to the global academy, society and public at large.

Exchanges has an expressly multidisciplinary, global and largely academic readership which have strong interests in work encompassing or straddling disciplinary boundaries. Manuscripts providing an introduction, overview or entry point to key disciplinary trends, discovery and discourse are often among the most frequently accessed publications in the journal.

The Editor-in-Chief welcomes approaches from authors via email, or video-call, to discuss prospective articles. However, abstract submission or editorial discussions ahead of a submission are not a requirement, and authors may submit complete manuscripts without any prior communication. Authors are encouraged to include a note to editor indicating the format of their work (e.g. article, critical reflection etc.).

All submitted manuscripts will undergo editorial review, with those seeking publication as research articles additionally undergoing formal peer-review by external assessors. Editorial decisions on manuscript acceptance are final, although unsuccessful authors are normally encouraged to consider revising their work for later reconsideration.

More information on article formats, wordcounts and other submission requirements are detailed in our author guidelines ([Exchanges, 2022a](#)). All manuscript submissions must be made by their lead author via our online submission portal. *Exchanges* is a diamond open access, scholar-led journal, meaning there are no author fees or reader subscription charges (**Fuchs & Sandoval, 2013; Bosman et al, 2021**). Authors retain copyright over their work but grant the journal first publication rights as a submission requirement.

Forthcoming Issues

Behind the scenes my editors, associate editors, reviewers and authors are all working towards new content for our future issues. Naturally, while our next regular issue is scheduled for late October 2022 (v10.1), activity continues on preparing our three current special issues too: respectively relating to the Anthropocene, nerd culture and pluralities of translation. While we're not yet in unquestionable sight of a publication date for these, my hopes are high we'll see the emergence of some of these as we reach the summer.

Currently, we do not have any further special issues under preparation. Nevertheless, I have enjoyed a range of discussions with various scholars about potential new projects in recent months. Hence, keep a close watch on the journal's announcements page and social media accounts for notification if and when any new initiatives are announced.^{iv} As EIC I always welcome further approaches and exploratory discussions for further special issues from our contributor community.

Acknowledgements

My thanks as always to all our authors and reviewers for their vital intellectual contributions towards this issue. Without you, producing a quality-assured, peer-reviewed, scholar-led publication would not be possible. Thanks as well to our reader community and attendees at the recent Accolade sessions led on behalf of *Exchanges* too for helping develop the debates and insights around the journal and its contents.

My continued thanks to the members of our Editorial Board and associate editor community for their insights on matters of publishing policy, operations and ethics. Naturally, I am especially indebted to them for all their editorial labour contributions, particularly in maintaining an ongoing interaction with authors and reviewers alike. They are also a pleasure to work alongside, which makes my life a whole lot easier.

My gratitude too goes to Rob Talbot and Yvonne Budden at the University of Warwick for their technical support, especially with the recent system upgrades. My thanks as well to the IAS' John Burden and Sarah Penny for their various supporting and advisory roles, especially in terms of guiding new contributors to our door.

Finally, my grateful thanks as always to our publisher, the [Institute of Advanced Study](#) at the University of Warwick for their unceasing financial and strategic backing for *Exchanges* and our related activities.

Continuing the Conversation

Exchanges has a range of routes for keeping abreast of our latest news, developments and calls for papers. In-between issues to continue the interdisciplinary exchange of experience underlying our operations you may wish to listen to our growing range of podcasts or read our blog posts. Please do contribute as we value hearing the thoughts of our author and readership communities.

Editorial Blog: blogs.warwick.ac.uk/exchangesias/

Linked.In: www.linkedin.com/groups/12162247/

Twitter: [@ExchangesIAS](https://twitter.com/ExchangesIAS)

As Editor-in-Chief I am also always pleased to discuss potential publications, collaborative opportunities or invites to talk further about *Exchanges* and our activities. Contact me if you would like to arrange a consultation via Teams.

The Exchanges Discourse

More new episodes of the companion podcast series, *The Exchanges Discourse*, have appeared over the past few months, including some of our most in-depth discussions with authors yet. As always, episodes continue to include a focus on including advice for new academic authors. Once more with the publication of this issue, I will be inviting our latest authors to appear as guests on the podcast over the coming months.

I heartily encourage all readers of the journal, and especially first-time authors, to tune in to our forthcoming and back catalogue of episodes: available on all major podcast platforms, and specifically hosted on the *Anchor.fm* site.^v All episodes are free to stream or download and listen to at your leisure. Naturally, we also welcome approaches from potential guests or suggestions for topics we could address as part of future episodes too.

Podcast: anchor.fm/exchangesias

Gareth has been *Exchanges'* Editor-in-Chief since 2018. Along with a doctorate in cultural academic publishing practices (Nottingham Trent), he also possesses various other degrees in biomedical technology (Sheffield Hallam), information management (Sheffield) and research practice (NTU). His varied career includes extensive experience in academic libraries, project management and applied research roles. His professional and research interests focus on power-relationships within and evolution of scholarly academic publication practice, viewed from within social theory and political economic frameworks. He has extensive skills in areas including academic writing, partner relationship management and effective communication practices. He is an outspoken proponent for greater academic agency through scholar-led publishing. Gareth is also the Mercian Collaboration's Executive Officer, a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and hosts a number of podcasts, including *The Exchanges Discourse*.



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Endnotes

ⁱ I shall not continue here lest I depress our readers too much, but undoubtedly 2013 seems with hindsight to occupy a very different global and national environment than that which we ‘enjoy’ today, despite being only nine years previously.

ⁱⁱ **Announcements:** As with all our calls for papers, you can also always find the summary, full-text and requirements on our announcements page:

<https://exchanges.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/exchanges/announcement>

ⁱⁱⁱ **Word counts:** We do not include abstracts, references, endnotes or appendices for the purposes of establishing a submissions word count. While submissions just over or under their word count will still be initially considered for review, those significantly in excess of these numbers will be declined and returned to their authors with advice for revision.

^{iv} **Initiating Special Issues:** If you are seeking a suitable home for a dedicated volume of the journal we certainly welcome outline discussions for the ways in which *Exchanges* could become your publication partner. While our facilities are modest, we have been excited to work with various scholars on special issues past and future (**Exchanges, 2022b**). You are warmly invited to contact myself as Editor-in-Chief to discuss any prospective ideas, without commitment. You may also wish to listen to a past episode of *The Exchanges Discourse* (**Exchanges, 2020**) wherein I discuss the thinking and pragmatic concerns around initiating a special issue collaboration with our journal.

^v **Podcast:** The podcast is also streamed on Spotify, Apple and Google Podcasts and other podcasting platforms. Search for it by name.

Post-Urban Life in the Italian Alps during a Pandemic: New paradigm or ephemeral phenomenon?

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Abstract

In the twentieth century, depopulation in the Italian Alps was the result of the vision of a mountain world as isolated and of the persistence of stereotypes such as that of the 'poor mountain dweller'. At the same time, mountains were exploited by cities in order to be transformed into a place of leisure for mass tourism. Consequently, the agro-pastoral activities related to this world were neglected as a symbol of backwardness. However, over the past decade, the Alps have been affected by return migrations. The interest in rural world comes from the redefinition of the urban-rural gap and the leaving behind of the urbanism paradigm. Although this phenomenon is not new to social scientists, with the onset of COVID-19 it is assuming unexpected dimensions and accelerated developments. Images of escape from cities, when lockdown was announced in Italy on February 2020, clearly demonstrate that new visions of rural territories were emerging in the Western World. This article aims to inquire about the contemporary perception of the Italian Alps and their rediscovery during these pandemic times, to ask ourselves about the nature of this rediscovery, to what extent the representations are affected by a nostalgic attitude and how they can contribute, if well managed, to the development of a new post-urban living model.

Keywords: Italian Alps; marginal areas; post-urban life; return migration; pandemic times

Frightening or Tempting: A brief overview on the representations of the Alps and their inhabitants over the centuriesⁱ

It was not so long ago that the Alpine world was believed isolated and that only the modernisation and urbanisation that followed the Second World War had unchained it from a thousand-year history of poverty, closed-mindedness and economic backwardness.

Today we know that this was a city point-of-view (**Kilani, 1984**): common academic imaginaries about mountains have always been allochthonous, i.e. coming from the outsiders, and not from the mountain inhabitants themselves, who previously have never felt isolated or poor at all. The actual image of the Alps is a political construction (**Debarbieux & Rudaz, 2010**) made up of a succession of representations and concepts, which were rather created to convey a certain vision. The history of the perception of the Alps is encumbered with socio-cultural and economic-political consequences for the present. In particular, the succession of positive and negative images – given both to the Alps as a physical geographical context and to their inhabitants since the Greek-Latin antiquity – has led to different attitudes towards them. Some images are therefore worth drawing attention to in this discourse as they re-propose certain categorisations that have been taken up over the centuries.

One of these, the rugged and wild land, marked the initial Roman's point of view about the Alps (**Giorcelli Bersani, 2019**). Romans imposed a political and economic domination through a network of cities, fortifications and roads. But nevertheless, initially mountains were experienced as '*montes horribiles*', i.e. frightening mountains (**Bätzing, 2003: 19**). After a positive attitude toward movement, pilgrimage and new settlements in the Alps during the Middle Agesⁱⁱ, the image of the Alps as the 'natural guard of Italy' was progressively discovered again after Renaissance (**Cuaz, 2005: 11**) until the Alps became an actual frontier during the seventeenth century. From this period, the Alps were first and foremost considered as a geographic problem transfigured into a cartography of borders and military relations (**Camanni, 2002: 28**), reinforcing the strong fear of the plain and the cities inhabitants toward them. For this reason, the Alps became 'a distillation of all that was inimical to humankind, a region through which one passed swiftly' (**Fleming, 2004: 52**). And this feeling increased more and more among the population due to the emerging political borders of the centralist European monarchies, which turned the Alps into an 'appendix' territory. With the Treaty of Utrecht signed in 1713, which led to a new international political order, the old self-sufficient economies and the ingenious local autonomies of

the *Ancien Régime* – such as the *Escartons* of the French-Italian Western Alps – fell, and the process of marginalisation of the Alps began.

The Enlightenment offered a contrasting imaginary of the Alps. Even if their sinister reputation was maintained, scientists cultivated curiosity for material data such as orography. Beside the attraction for the natural worlds, another image about the mountain dwellers emerged. Alpine communities were compared to the extra-European '*sauvage*' populations by writers, philosophers and travelers, which contributed to the construction of their 'otherness' (Kilani, 1984: 27): the virtuous mountain dweller became the equivalent of the 'good savage', as in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's point of view, whose existence would be based on a harmonious relationship with nature, far from the corruption of moneyⁱⁱⁱ (Cuaz, 2005: 28).

Demonstrating this contrasting attitude, arts and literature of the Romantic period worshipped Alps as 'terribly wonderful' (Bätzing, 2003: 20). The natural world was idealised and sublimated^{iv}. Scientific exploration paved the way to the creation of touristic destinations^v: the period from 1760 to 1880, defined as pioneering, was mainly marked by English visitors. The new image of the Alps was so powerful that it altered the routes of the Grand Tour, especially for the English elite. To the hymn 'The Alps, the Alps', the English travelers made the Alps a picturesque attraction for artists, poets and scientists in search of uncontaminated and wild nature (Camanni, 2002: 40-41). Once again, it is in painting that the new spirit manifests itself, as in Caspar David Friedrich's *The Traveller above a Sea of Clouds* of 1818. With the advent of tourism there was a cultural revolution, that turned the Alps into the 'Playground of Europe' (Stephen, 1871). In the mid-nineteenth century, the image of the 'good mountain dweller' was therefore completely overturned: the town dwellers became the example of the 'good citizen' and the model to be followed, while who lived in mountain villages was described in a condition of wildness and backwardness, whose life were marked by the natural rhythms of the seasons and barely touched by the great events of history. At the beginning of the twentieth century, geographer Ellen Semple wrote of these areas as 'far from the great currents of men and ideas' (qtd in Viazzo, 2000: xii). In 1966, the historian Fernand Braudel wrote of the mountains as 'a world set apart from civilisation' and 'whose history was to have no history' (qtd in Viazzo, 2000: xii)^{vi}. The consequences of this process became evident after the Second World War, with the further political marginalisation of the traditional settlements and the agro-pastoral economy, and the continued transformation of the Alps into a place of leisure. This representation affected the self-representation of the mountain people until the end of the twentieth century, and led them to a feeling of inferiority (Camanni, 2002).

With the neglect of entire alpine areas, specific skills related to the agropastoral activities and to the forestry economy disappeared, and with them the transmission of knowledges and know-how embedded within the peasant society. The traditional mountain world appeared to be forgotten and the mountain dwellers to be defeated by modernisation (**Revelli, 1977; 1985**). With the spread of the mass tourism industry, the Alps were finally transformed into a 'Disneyalp' (**Crettaz, 2011**): a place of leisure to be used during free time (**Bätzing, 2003: 19-31**).

Recent Shifts in Imagination and a New Habitability of the Italian Alps

The set of constructions, discourses and ideals that have been built over time had had a strong influence in the contemporary processes of alpine marginalisation. In particular, the colonial figure of the 'mountain dweller' seems to be perpetuated, such as in other mountainous part of the world (**Sacareau, 2017**).

However, the Italian Alps have been experiencing unforeseen demographic and socio-economic changes since the early 2000s. After a consistent depopulation, a trend reversal have taken place, which is well documented by an international transdisciplinary literature about the return to the mountains of the so-called new inhabitants (**Bender, Kanitscheider, 2012; Maurer, Wyrzens, 2012; Corrado, 2014; Alpine Convention, 2015**)^{vii}. They are people attracted by mountains and determined to move there for different reasons: landscape, quality of life, close to nature, job opportunities, and or outdoor activities.

Rediscovery of the Alps as a place to live goes hand in hand with a new global sociological trend (**Donchevsky, Klimenko, 2015; Haas, Westlund, 2018**): the renovated interest in rural world, which comes from the redefinition of the core-periphery dynamics. Certainly, new representations and imaginaries of the mountains stand out, as the demographic movements of revitalisation of these areas often adopt lifestyle models that run counter to those of the urban-metropolitan areas. As other rural places, Italian Alps are also the landing ground for city-quitters (**Rosenkratz, 2018**) with new ideals and values related to rurality and 'alpinees'^{viii}.

For the modern declination of the new ruralism in the 2000s, I suggested the emergence of a fourth phase (beside the three described by Jean-Didier Urbain in 2002) which began in 2008 after that the economic crisis generated a noticeable discrepancy between job supply and demand, and lead to a growing discontent for city life and to a perception of it as alienating and impersonal. This fourth generation of new-rurals have a slightly different profile from the 'escapists' because they choose to

permanently migrate to rural areas in search for a new lifestyle, and they are deliberately seeking interaction and integration with the resident rural population (**Bertolino, 2014**).

In recent years, the relationship between these subjects and the old inhabitants has triggered virtuous processes of local development and new creative ways in terms of living and doing business in marginal areas (**Bertolino, 2021**), often based on retro-innovation practices (**Stuiver, 2006**). For example, the migrations to uplands have led to the renovation of vernacular architecture to save land use or to the restoration of agro-cultural landscapes by landowner associations which gather fragmented terraced properties, giving new attention to the commons and launching new green entrepreneurial activities. They are good examples of social innovation, also powered by new technological possibilities, which are growing all over the mountains, not only in the Alps or in Italy (**Secco et al., 2021**).

Moreover, the 'Alpark model' is now living a crisis linked to the climate changes. Sky resorts struggle to face the unpredictability of snow. Beside this, some catastrophic events have grabbed the attention of the press in recent years. In 2018, Vaia windstorm in the Dolomitic Alps caused an unprecedented blowdown of timbers and considerable damages to the natural landscape and forestry economy of this area, but overall it brought into the local communities a reconsideration of the relationship between humans, natural elements and anthropisation. Recently, the threat of the Planpincieux Glacier – located on the Italian side of the Grandes Jorasses in the Mont Blanc massif of the Alps – over the homonymous hamlet (Courmayeur municipality) due to the detachment of melting blocks, have led to an increasing ecological awareness which stress on the need of sustainable practices, especially in the Alpine tourism industry (**Alpine Convention, 2013**). It is also thanks to these catastrophic events that nowadays it is more and more evident that 'the history of our mountains is that of long-lasting co-evolutionary interactions between local societies and their natural environments' (**Salsa, 2019**), including non-human (**Krauss, 2018**).

Post-Urban Life in Pandemic Times: New representations of the Italian Alps during COVID-19 pandemic

As people interested in marginal areas keep growing in numbers, the new imaginaries of the Alps as a place where living have leaked into press (**Dematteis, 2020**). More often mountain areas and their 'borghi' (i.e. villages and hamlets) in Italy have been described in international magazines and newspapers as the logical place to move after lockdowns (**Iman, 2020; Ann Hughes, 2021**). Actually, when Italy shuttered for the

first lockdown, it was natural to see them – and in general the Italian rural areas – in antithesis with the city as a place of infection, and as a stereotypical place of health which is recurrently repeated over the centuries (see Boccaccio's *The Decameron*). Many majors of winter locations have defiantly used these images to invite city inhabitants to join them during the first lockdown, or to stay in their second homes.

The pandemic has triggered a reappraisal of urban living, with increasing numbers fleeing cities in search of green spaces and undercrowded villages. Archistars^{ix} and magazines made speeches and covers about the rethinking of 'Italian's borghi lifestyle' (Iman, 2020). One example: the cover of *Millionaire* (January 2021), an Italian business magazine. In the cover, drones, wi-fi hotspots, a bakery 4.0, and solar panels are drawn next to the ancient stone buildings. The picture nourishes a storytelling about the Italian villages based on the stereotypical imaginaries that hid the complexity of the repopulation phenomenon. Another example of journalistic sensationalism is the media campaign about the phenomenon of buying old houses for just one Euro. But the two cited imaginaries totally forget that most of the Italian villages are difficult to reach and blighted by both inadequate infrastructure investments and chronic depopulation (Sloan, 2018). Two territorial inequalities that have also influenced the management of the pandemic in inland areas in Italy.

These are gaps on which different organisations and associations, such as UNCEM (Unione nazionale comuni comunità enti montani) or Riabitare l'Italia, are actually working on (Cersosimo & Donzelli, 2020) and on which the Strategia Nazionale Aree Interne (National Strategy for Inner Areas) has been facing since its launch in 2012 by the Italian Ministry for Territorial Cohesion. Nowadays, in light of the impact of COVID-19, new policies seem to be undertaken in order to assist the economic and social recovery of these areas, also through tax breaks and incentives. At European level, many policies insist on repopulating rural areas through these instruments and on renovating the interdependence between urban and rural areas, especially in response to COVID-19. One of these is the Irish government's Future Rural Plan, which introduces relocation subsidies and tax breaks to attract workers from cities to rural towns, while putting in place some arrangements to integrate newcomers. There is a special focus on home working through the creation of remote working hubs with high-speed broadband, but also – and more importantly – on enabling rural communities to take over local services or amenities at risk of closure and to give people the opportunity to stay in their homeland areas (Government of Ireland, 2021).

Because apart from the journalistic sensationalism, it's true that the city is at stake, as an important festival born in Turin (Italy) and called Utopian Hours titled its 4th edition in autumn 2020^x. Life in the big cities has proven difficult during an extended pandemic: the prohibition to live a proper social life actually has removed what has always been the lifeblood of a city; being so close to hundreds of thousands of other human beings – which many city-lovers previously advocated as the best part of a big city life – has suddenly become useless and even perceived as dangerous, because each neighbour is perceived as a potential contagion; the main reason which drove people in the last decades toward the outskirts, a job, from one day to another has faded in a world where only hospitals and the food chain have been preserved; sadly, many people lost their job, as the economic fabric has fallen apart. Compressed in their thousands in such a suffocating concrete environment, it is not hard to understand how people started looking for alternatives: no more, no less than any city in any plague in History. And the Alps were quickly targeted, the only place where Nature could be experienced without trespassing the regional border imposed by the first months after the harshest lockdown. The Alps imaginary was chosen essentially because it was accessible with just a car, but also because it was known, with many citizens being the descendants of those young forces who left mountains from the '50s to '70s.

Starting from February 2020, the imaginary of a pristine and unpolluted area compared to cities during the Pandemic has brought to both new tourism and new tourists as well as a new dimension of migration in the Alps. Increased tourism, as soon as national lockdown restrictions were loosened during the summer 2020, has been the first herald of such rediscovery of the Alps: with the block on international travel maintained, mountain paths became overcrowded with people looking for the social distance and open spaces, in the end fresh air after months of constriction behind masks (**Brunello, 2020**). But this unexpected over-tourism can bring to serious consequences, because the Alps are a very fragile environment. Overtourism is a term that describes a situation where a place attracts too many travelers for sustainable management to be possible, and to an extent that became unbearable for inhabitants (**Screti, 2020**). Many international organisations such as Cipro International have been working since the early 2000 in order to engage civic society and local institution to put in place some actions to reverse the negative impact of tourism^{xi}. But overtourism seems to bring other features. Firstly, overtourism in remote areas is often underestimated until it becomes undeniable. Secondly, the media and social networks play a fundamental role in tourist flows, and in the last years a massive campaign has invested the remote areas of the Italian Alps. Finally, mountain areas are

experiencing a paradox: the more isolated they are, the more tourists want to visit them (Screti, 2020).

Furthermore, backed by the political attempt to push the economy with the old-fashioned tool of building, many real estate advertisements promote the restoration of single huts or entire hamlets for tourism through the imaginary of the rediscovery of the 'real' and 'authentic' mountain life. One of the examples is the Troncea hamlet in Val Chisone (Italian Western Alps) on sell from January 2021. These huge project, which require international venture capitals, are often described with many stereotypes which perpetuate a cannibalistic use of the land in the Alps. As the Swiss anthropologist Vivianne Cretton writes on lifestyle migrations in her homeland, the Valais: 'from this perspective, the mountains or the Alpine territory can be seen as a business object in the service of an economic and international elite' (2018: 109). As drawn some years ago by Cretton for the case of Valais, also for Italy some locations in mountain areas are reinvented by urbanities, in particular by some luxury accommodation projects. Here, the architectural aspects – stones and wooden houses in a small hamlet – seems to increase the ideal of 'authenticity'. Always following Cretton, the quest of authenticity finds some sources in the Romantic period and in its exacerbated fascination with the mountains (2018: 121). At the same time, a big conflict emerged: you cannot stop people moving to uplands simply because this can spark a resurgence in the economy; and, you cannot deny it could be the very occasion to finally see the awareness of these marginal areas growing.

For what concerns the new dimension of in-migration and uses of the Alps, modern technology has boosted the phenomenon: while simply ten years ago the internet connections and the digital infrastructure were unable to support an actual living and working from distance, up to date technology makes it easy. The stage for return migration is set: the 'Alpark' can be enjoyed every day, with the necessity of traveling to the overcrowded city only restricted to a minor part of the work week. One prediction is what I would call an 'intermittent habitability' of an upper-class, with capitals to invest, which decided to buy a second home and to work from it, settling in general in the big ski resorts (Andruetto, 2020). The phenomenon is part of a more general trend towards the alpine gentrification (Perlik, 2011; Boscoboinik, 2018) and – at the same time – part of a multilocality by different social actors (Friedli, 2017). This multilocal living is not exclusive of the Alps but it can be found in different places and for many reasons (ARL, 2021). However, the pandemic has moved the phenomenon towards the Alps, placing it in an 'ecological' framework (Andruetto, 2020). The expression that I suggest derives from the French 'habiter intermittent' used to indicate a new model of living in the Alps of some retirees (Cholat et al, 2020). What I proposed here is to extend the expression

‘intermittent habitability’ to indicate a use of the second homes by working-age people who are not only interested in leisure. Although it remains a semi-touristic form of multilocal life (ARL, 2021: 4), the boundaries between being a tourist and a resident are becoming more and more blurred (Bourdeau, 2012; Elmi & Perlik, 2014). In a long-term dynamic, people who have decided to temporarily relocate in mountains, in order to be able to eventually manage lockdowns, have discovered the new habitat as a way to escape the climate warming with extreme hot days in the summertime (Mercalli, 2020) but also increased pollution levels in the big cities. The strong purchasing power of these intermittent inhabitants contributes to shape the territorial development through their presence but also through their absence (ARL, 2021: 7). The first effect is always a rise in house prices¹², pushing away the locals from the real estate market, but some important effects could also affect the local services (such as medical cabinets, schools but also shops) because an intermittent inhabitant could tend to favour the use of services in the city (Cholat et al, 2020) and this could make the uplands economy unable to survive.

Nevertheless, the new vision of the Alps after the COVID-19 pandemic and the experience of lockdowns into the cities, could be the seed of a new movement of return migration of people who are able to work from distance by means of home and remote working or that would leave the impoverished cities to live in place where the ratio between work salary and the cost of living is still better. But if the straw that breaks the camel's back has been the pandemic, nobody can deny that the precondition could only be the already ongoing rediscovery of the Alps as a place to live in the last twenty years.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in the post-COVID-19 context, the Italian Alps are facing new challenges related to some imaginaries emerged in the last years. One of these challenges is common to the Alps and to other rural territories in the world. It is part of the reformulation of the duality of the core-periphery relation, as we have known in the sociological literature. If well managed, it may contribute to a new alliance between territories, between cities and mountains, and to a new regulation of eco-systemic goods. As the Italian geographer Giuseppe Dematteis has recently written:

[we are witnessing] a mountain [that] wants to become a ‘city’ without losing its diversity, but associating it with what today are the metropolis failings: the culture of the limit, a public-spirit of community and the values of solidarity and participatory democracy (2020: 4) (free translation from the author).

But the Alps remain a place where different and ambivalent gazes intertwine. These lead to some new reconfigurations of the communities, of the commons, and of the property rules (Viazzo & Zanini, 2020), which have been one of the favourite themes of the cultural anthropology since it landed in the Alps in the middle of the last century. The Alps enter into the reflections on the theme of post-urban life, putting back at the centre those reconfigurations already studied by the discipline but which are now in a complex framework of relations and negotiations of imaginaries and policies on a local, national or international scale. The study of the representations of the Alps in this pandemic period enriches the current literature on territorial reconfigurations and on urban-rural linkages, but it also fits into the debate on the period of crisis that requires the 'de-centering of an anthropocentric perspective and a shift towards a different understanding of landscape' (Krauss, 2018: 1030). New scenarios are therefore opening up for research, not only anthropological, dealing with places of high natural values that are inhabited by people, such as the Alps.

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Endnotes

ⁱ For a complete overview on the subject, please refer to Guichonnet (1986;1987), Camanni (2002), Bätzing (2005) and Cuaz (2005), from whom most of the information for the drafting of this paragraph is taken.

ⁱⁱ Around the 1200 AD, during the Little Climatic Optimum (a period of relatively mild and warm climate), many valleys were colonised and the economy, made up of transalpine traffic and caravan crossings, flourished (Salsa, 2019: 120). The alpine space was transformed into a 'homeland' by the communities that settled there (Salsa, 2007: 63). During this period, the Alps were also crossed by pilgrims, which shaped a representation of the mountains as a place of redemption and moral test.

ⁱⁱⁱ In *Julie ou la nouvelle Heloise* (1761), the French writer and philosopher offers a sublimated description of the Alps, a vision that strongly anticipates the characteristics of the Romantic imaginary. In this case, the contrast between the Alpine inhabitant and the citizen is used as a social critique against the unhealthy and morally corrupted world of the absolute monarchies.

^{iv} A process that, in isolated cases, can be found even earlier, such as in Francesco Petrarca's singing of Mont Ventoux and in some Swiss Renaissance humanists. However, in the specific case of the end of the eighteenth century, the new imaginary of the Alps became generalised as a result of European modernisation and industrialisation (Bätzing, 2003: 24).

^v The first scientists to climb the alpine peaks were some geologists interested in finding the key to the scientific question of the Creation. For Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, the mountains were a 'laboratory of nature' in which find 'natural documents' (qtd in Cuaz, 2005: 25).

^{vi} These quotations nourished the so-called 'montagnard paradigm' which affirms that: the demography of the Alps has always been 'primitive', i.e. characterised by very high birth and death rates; alpine communities are dependents on the scarce natural resources and they are therefore forced to emigrate because of an endemic poverty. It was only after many anthropological studies in the Alps that a 'revisionist paradigm' replaced the previous one. These studies overcame the stereotypical representation, arguing that: alpine communities are not closed systems; their demography is not primitive; emigration is not an escape from overpopulation or misery; the environment does not completely condition their lives but it is itself conditioned by human action (Viazzo, 1989).

^{vii} For twenty years now – although the phenomenon can be traced back to a few years earlier (Fourny, 1994) – geographers, sociologists and anthropologists have been studying and labelling these new mountaineers in their complexity and variety of stories, trajectories and intentions. Recently, many social scientists have considered the arrival of refugees as 'forced new mountaineers' in the empty spaces of the Alps (Perlik et al., 2019).

^{viii} Although they have changed a great deal, the Alps still appear to be a veritable laboratory for the study of the interactions between the environment and the livelihood strategies (AAVV, 1972). The first modern anthropological approach to the Alps was that of the cultural ecology in the 1960s and in 1970s: it became

clear that the social and cultural aspects are shaped on the basis of the natural resources, but that they also contribute to shape the Alpine landscape in its variety of forms (and cultures) (**de Lalouvière, 2021**).

^{ix} 'Archistar' is a neologism of the Italian language that derives from the words 'architect' and 'star'. It means an architect of international renown, whose notoriety derives from the production of spectacular projects, which make him comparable to the VIP of the show business.

^x See for example the dossier titled *Neve Diversa (Different Snow)* published every year by the Italian association Legambiente (<https://www.legambiente.it/campagna/nevediversa/>).

^{xi} Even if sociological studies are not yet coming, the phenomenon is evident in the press and in the real estate trends (**Andruetto, 2020**).

Deploying the Octothorpe (#): Schizoanalytic cartographies recognized in *War Games*

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Abstract

Felix Guattari's 'Schizoanalytic Cartographies' acts as a methodological blueprint and can be used to explain a subject's lack of expressivity when confronted by Foucauldian systems of discipline and punishment. Understanding mechanisms of regulation and control within a closed or open system is the purpose of cybernetics. This communication studies tradition emerged from the artificial intelligence work of Norbert Wiener's data flows with the intentional purpose of steering people, thought, societies, and the cosmos towards—becoming. Using the analogy of the octothorpe (#) as a roadmap explaining the four cartographies (Flows, Phyla, Territories, Universes) as outlined by Guattari, this manuscript will analyze the film, 'War Games,' demonstrating schizoanalytic technique. Another layer of power over humanity is not a panacea, rather it ushers forth civilisation's speedier, and predicted, demise.

Keywords: Felix Guattari; schizoanalytic cartographies; cybernetics; octothorpe; War Games; futility

Any machine constructed for the purpose of making decisions, if it does not possess the power of learning, will be completely literal-minded. Woe to us if we let it decide our conduct ...

Professor Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (1950: 185)

Professor Norbert Wiener, genius, father of cybernetics, professor of mathematics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, saw communication and the flows of information as 'essential to the welfare of society' (Wiener, 1950: 131). Norbert Wiener wrote his book titled, *Cybernetics* in 1948 but translated his mathematical-based algorithms into 'ideas acceptable to the lay public' (Ibid: 17) by writing the *Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* in 1950. Wiener created a language to be used by computers, applying the concept of monadic connections (pre-ordained harmony) from the philosophy of Spinoza, to the coding of electronic machines; focusing upon the exchange of information (data) for control (regulation) and change (entropy). 'Information is a name for the content of what is exchanged with the outer world as we adjust to it and make our adjustment felt upon it' (Ibid: 17). Whereas 'messages are themselves a form of pattern and organisation... The more probable the message, the less information it gives. Clichés, for example, are less illuminating than great poems' (Ibid: 21). For Wiener, the more unique and varied the data received by a monad within a system, the more enriching and useful the message received by that monad gets integrated. Learning becomes part of a system's fundamental code.

Guattari's understanding of feedback loops set among and within various cartographies, as well as his artistic writing style, would satisfy Wiener's desire for 'the competition of vigor and ideas' (Ibid: 134) among academic disciplines. Guattari's methodological blueprint is challenging, applying the conceptual frames of cartographies is accomplished without an over-reliance on pre-established academic terminology. 'Not only will there not be any normalised schizoanalytic protocol, but a new fundamental rule, an anti-rule, will enforce a constant calling into question of analyser Assemblages, as a function of their feedback effects on the analytic givens,' (Guattari, 2013: 19) meaning normal methodology is purposely discarded and a focus on words/sentences (assemblages) uttered are valued. To understand:

What sometimes enrages me and always disappoints and grieves me is the preference of great schools of learning prefer the derivative as opposed to the original, for the conventional and thin which can be duplicated in many copies rather than the new and powerful, and for arid correctness and limitation of scope and method rather than for universal newness and beauty, wherever it may be seen. (Wiener, 1950: 135).

To illustrate the four maps found in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* and to embrace the inter-disciplinary spirit of 'intersecting dimensions of reference and consistency,' (Guattari, 2013: 107) I will select an octothorpe as a basic analogy. An octothorpe is translated as *eight villages* located in a space and transversed with roads connecting those communities; it is commonly recognised as a tic-tac-toe board (#) complete with X's and O's and, in AI, folding algorithms. There are villages at the end of each pathway and junctions where communication and commerce take place. The octothorpe represents a smooth-running machine. Machines and mechanistic assemblages (speech) are central to Guattari and for that reason it is important to distinguish different types of machines, those that speak and those without voice. The cyborg has voice; it is part human (organic) and part machine (inorganic). The cyborg is self-moving, capable of making independent decisions and can seduce through voice; the cyborg walks among us. Donna Haraway separated the machine from the cyborg when she stated,

Pre-cybernetic machines could be haunted; there was always the spectre of the ghost in the machine... Basically machines were not self-moving, self-designing, autonomous. They could not achieve man's dream, only mock it. They were not man, an author himself, but only a caricature of that masculinist reproductive dream. To think they were otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure. (Haraway, 1991: 153).

We are paranoid because modern machines are not simple wind-up devices like clocks or toys but complex computers containing all human knowledge. The founder of cybernetics adds validity to Haraway's description when he stated,

The older machines, and in particular the older attempts to produce automata, did in fact function on a closed clockwork basis. But modern automatic machines such as the controlled missile, the proximity fuse, the automatic door opener, the control apparatus... which perform military or industrial functions, possess sense organs; that is, receptors for messages coming from the outside. (Wiener, 1950: 22).

Optic, or light-sensitive receptors are part of the cybernetic machine, perhaps not organic eyes like the cyborg, but receptors regardless. Wiener gives an example of a password encoded through binary light for the automatic door, 'When a message consisting of the interception of a beam of light is sent to the apparatus, this message actuates the door, and opens it so that the passenger may go through' (**Wiener, 1950: 23**). The message actuating the door acts as a password. Passwords are important learning mechanisms for both mechanical and organic beings, allowing them to bypass recursive (repetitive) learning. Learning is based on feedback loops. Wiener stated:

*I repeat, feedback is a method of controlling a system by reinserting into it the results of its past performance. If these results are merely used as numerical data for the criticism of the system and its regulation, we have the simple feedback of the control engineers. If, however, the information which proceeds backward from the performance is able to change the general method and pattern of performance, we have a process which may well be called learning (**Wiener, 1950: 61**).*

What exactly distinguishes the two cybernetic feedback loops—digital calculations (1) versus analogical measures (2)? A digital calculation is a simple function most basic calculators are capable of performing. Artificial Intelligence however uses analogue learning. An analogue measure of *quality*, of emotion, of love, of boredom indicates a 'mechanical simulacra of the [organic] brain...' (**Ibid: 65**). In *Assuming Truth is a Woman—What Then?*, Kimberly Jackson discusses the quality of seduction in her analysis of AI from the film titled, *Ex Machina*. The film centres on a cyborg named Ava who is bent on escaping decommission. She is armed with the vast knowledge of the internet, including game strategies and human behaviour. The gynoid is coded with 'pretense, deception, betrayal' (**Jackson, 2021: 138**) coupled with 'the passive, submissive damsel in distress – childlike, innocent, fragile' body of femininity. Jackson describes the seductive dressing ritual performed by the gynoid Ava before the human Caleb:

*... a robotic body with artificial skin only on her face, hands, and feet – in many ways she seems more clothed than her gynoid counterparts who have skin all over but are for the most part kept unclothed. So it is difficult to say whether Ava is clothed or unclothed, veiled or unveiled. It is then interesting when she begins to dress for Caleb, self-consciously donning a dress, stockings, and a wig. Her process of dressing is highlighted and drawn out here and also in the end when she stands before a mirror, her gynoid predecessors in front of her, as she dresses herself in their skin and clothes. (**Jackson, 2021: 138**).*

Witnessing this adornment of skin and cloth by the gynoid lead Caleb to question his own human identity, resulting in physical self-harm, and a dawning realisation of ‘the superiority of the AI...a superiority that comes precisely from their powers of seduction...’ (Jackson, 2021: 139). A thinking computer understands emotive qualities. ‘Ava has a sort of machine empathy. She knows everything about us, all of our hopes and dreams, but she does not care about us. Or if she does, we cannot tell for sure’ (Ibid). In cybernetic theory a measure of quality is learned based on feedback loops, feedback within a system is an ‘expected performance’ (Wiener, 1950: 24), it is expected ‘if the feedback system is itself controlled...and kept within limits sufficiently stringent...’ (Ibid: 25); if an unexpected output occurs, something is amiss in the controls and limits of the system. The system is leaking entropy, chaos is felt. For Guattari, the unexpected output will be a schizo expression. In other words, everything operates in a system smoothly and with predictable repetition, until something unexpected in the system itself forces change, leakage, instability, entropy, or difference. Jackson notes this moment in *Ex Machina*, when Ava fatally stabs her creator Nathan and imprisons Caleb during her escape. ‘The attack is so insidious that you don’t even know it happened. Sleight of hand overturns order, and you never really know who is in charge’ (Jackson, 2021: 142). Ava used games theory, as did Wiener in his programming of artificial intelligence during the 1950s. So we will progress our conversation of schizoanalysis in gaming terms by deploying the octothorpe.

Let us frame a schizo event with an analogy—tic-tac-toe. Tic-tac-toe represents a closed system, until a disruption occurs in the dead centre of the system, disconnecting and disrupting the well-established flows of information. Now what strategy shall be used to re-establish the flows and return to normal repetition? Four gaming moves representing the four cartographies from Guattari which I will call (1) the enclosure, (2) the knight’s leap, (3) the ad-vent, and (4) the recursion will help illustrate a system collapse and how predicted entropy creates a becoming. An octothorpe could be conceived as a 3-dimensional space, not simply a 2-dimensional gameboard. I will give an overview of Guattari’s cartographies first, next illustrate those systems of AI power in the movie *War Games*, and lastly state my reasons for seeing Artificial Intelligence as panic which ushers forth civilisation’s demise.

The first cartography mentioned by Guattari is known as Flows. The octothorpe has roads, or groves, or water systems, electric systems, neuro-chemical intersections, etc., which are connections transporting flows of commerce, or sound, or liquids, currents, signs, etc., and they operate smoothly. Flows are generally well-established routes and can be good or bad depending on the influence of other cartographies. A long-

time speech impediment, for example, is a result of a disruption in the flow of language mastery from a previous injury (physical or mental) but may result in rhetorical enhancements for the good, or timidity and self-censorship for the bad. Regardless, there is a harmonious pattern pre-established, 'machinic enslavement' (Guattari, 2013: 22). A schizo moment will occur when there is a disruption in rhythms of speech; hysteria, petrification, repeating phrases, cognitive dissonanceⁱ, signaling alarm. What were the golden tickets of psychoanalytic theory as expressions of unconscious desire become signals of a junction blocked in schizoanalysis. There is a block in the machinic flow—help bypass it. 'A junction can certainly impose connections, but it does not impose a fixed constraint, it can be bypassed; its connective power can decrease when certain of its components lose their consistency' (Ibid: 24). In tic-tac-toe, game play begins with placing an X in the centre junction, disrupting flows among all villages: beginning the enclosure.

The second cartography mentioned by Guattari is Phyla. A mental map. The domain of cognitive structures, self-identities, perhaps the ego. 'All memories are machines. All machines are memories' (Ibid: 71), declares Guattari. The disruption of flows in mind and memory occur and are noticed. Cognitive dissonance in the self or displays of sign by others are observed. Mutations of daily behaviour and rhizomes of thought emerge. Disruptions of the repetitions of Flows has great possibilities of becoming. Or folding back in upon the self, slowly strangling in a strait-jacket of self-imposed thought and in-action. When Flows are disrupted in the cartography of Phyla the first impulse is retreating into yourself, a hiding within a shell. Don't! 'The physical strait jacket in which an insect grows up is directly responsible for the mental strait jacket which regulates its pattern of behaviour,' (Wiener, 1950: 57) states Norbert Wiener. Folding is restrictive—unfold. Think outside the boxed enclosure, consider a knights leap to escape.

The third cartography listed by Guattari refers to territories. Physical territories, academic territories, legal, military, political territories, symbolic territories, etc.; perhaps associated with Foucault's use of discourses but also reflective of real objects. Flows move along the contours of Territories. In the octothorpe, Territories can be represented as the nine fields or squares. The roads would delimit a territory or indicate pathways that unite. In a three-dimensional octothorpe, an X could resemble a pyramid or a tetrahedron (Figure 1).

A tetrahedron explains how the knight's leap works. In the game of chess, the knight has the most unique L-shaped ability of locomotion; travel two spaces from ground zero than occupy a perpendicular space. In three-dimensional Territories, the knight's leap could resemble a slow ascent

followed by a rapid decent, curving as a slalom would around a tetrahedron. ‘We do not get out of this symmetrical impasse through the dialectical exhaustion of these two statuses but rather through their criss-crossing – a sort of frantic slalom of escape the double threat of petrification and dissolution that they represent,’ (Guattari, 2013: 124) says Guattari, the experience resembles a rollercoaster. And like in chess, the knight appears to mount a horse, resembling a change of medium or vehicle necessary for such a maneuver. The movement varies in speed, at times moving painstakingly slow—others with reckless haste. For Guattari, the knight’s leap maneuver requires no hesitation—lean into the velocity when performing a leap. Such a move ushers forth an ad-vent.

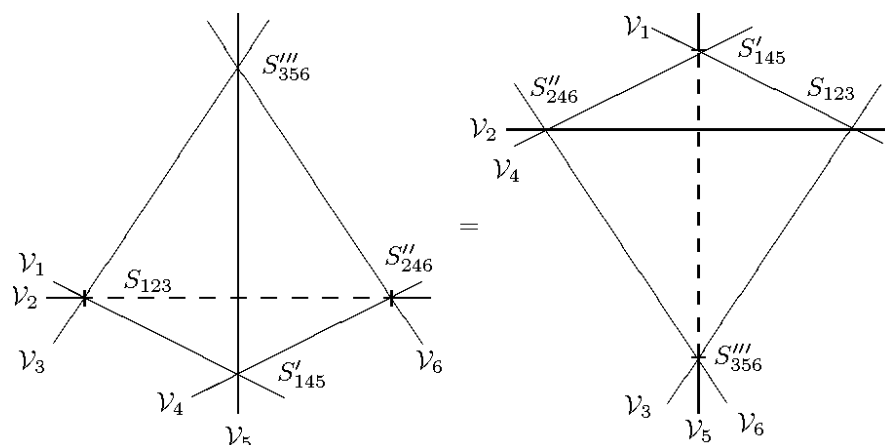


Figure 1. The diagrammatic representation of the tetrahedron equation with variables on the linksⁱ (Source: © Semantic Scholar)

Universes is the term used for Guattari’s fourth cartography. Expressions of abstractions, discussions of constellations supported by articulated Territories but framed in Phyla. Infinitely huge, inestimably microscopic. Voiced discussions on black holes, folding time, sub-atomic particles, dinosaurs, the Big Bang... all are abstractions treated as real. They are everywhere and nowhere, everything and nothing, the instant and duration. ‘Always the smile of Alice’s Cheshire Cat, in the four corners of the cosmos and nowhere in particular!’ (Guattari, 2013: 172), explains Guattari. Nebula of connotations supported by denotations of legitimate institutions. Universes emerge when someone utters a truly unique idea through speech. There is a constant struggle between defining the abstractions; one resulting in greater repetition, the other unleashing becoming, embracing difference. ‘Assemblages of enunciation able to forge new coordinates for reading and to “bring into existence” new representations and propositions,’ (Ibid: 1) says Guattari: A new universe must be articulated. Regardless, universes are expressions, speech. Expressions influence Flows throughout the whole system; ‘everything here is a game of taking consistency... Virtual affectation and actual affectation come face to face with and envelop one another. They have

the same ontological status' (**Ibid: 66**), announces Guattari referring to tetravalent synapses that operate similar to the Phyla cartography. Expressions can cause 'potential energies' (**Ibid: 67**) that have been stored-up within Universes to activate. Those activations constitute an ad-vent.

'Speech is the greatest interest and most distinctive achievement of man,' (**Wiener, 1950: 85**) notes Norbert Wiener, speech unlocks universes like a password. Passwords cybernetically open gates and junctions with very little expenditure of energy, a system's back door. A universal key code previously programmed within an electronic Universe. In the octothorpe, placing an X in the center space, or erecting a tetrahedron, disrupts flows of routinisation resulting in adding new events, multiplying potentialities, unleashing becoming. Placing an X results in an 'ad-vent' (**Guattari, 2013: 127**). 'The reality of the possible always has primacy over the possibility of the real' (**Ibid: 28**), say Guattari discussing the deterritorialisation effects of the ad-vent.

Guattari's schizoanalytic cartographies are like maps overlaid with other maps, similar to topology, but can differ by use of temporal maps, or semiotic maps, or cognitive maps; and one map can cause disruptions in other cartographies. 'It would be a good idea not to confuse chaos and catastrophe' (**Ibid: 104**), Guattari reminds us. The difference being that chaos is the bearer of 'pre-programmed' (**Ibid: 104**) responses of predictable potentialities; catastrophe is the inability to speak. When a person experiences a schizo event, a disruption of flows of expression, such as hysteria, paranoia, aphasias, repetitions, stammering, etc., it indicates they are encountering a blockage in Flows, Phyla, Territory, or Universe; schizoanalysis helps them redirect those flows. 'But rather than associating with the fashionable crusades against the misdeeds of modernism, rather than preaching the rehabilitation of ruined transcendental values, or giving in to the disillusioned delights of postmodernism, we can try to challenge the dilemma of contorted refusal or cynical acceptance of the situation' (**Ibid: 1**). When catastrophe occurs, feedback loops will usher forth learning. Learning is based on feedback, feedback based on expected outcomes or recursions. 'In computer science, recursion is a method of solving a problem where the solution depends on solutions to smaller instances of the same problem. Such problems can be solved by iteration, but this needs to identify and index the smaller instances at programming time,' says Wikipedia (**2020**) defining the word, 'recursion.' How many times must tic-tac-toe be played before a player gets bored of the game? Recursion encodes a measure of quality, the quality of futility.

While schizoanalysis appears odd to compare to Artificial Intelligence, for Guattari, AI would function as another layer of power. Long-time collaborator Gilles Deleuze stated in his interpretation of the Foucauldian panopticon, 'As the postulate of essence or of attribute, power would have an essence and be an attribute, which would qualify those who possess it (dominators) as opposed to those on who it is practised (dominated). Power has no essence; it is simply operational' (Deleuze, 1986: 27). Meaning artificial intelligences simply operates as yet another mechanism of influence on the individual. Seeking how AI functions as a system of power, I use the film titled, *War Games*, as an example. I will apply tic-tac-toe discussed above as an example of cartography, and the gaming moves necessary to escape a system of discipline and punishment.

Schizoanalytic Cartographies found in the Film *War Games*

The 1983 release of the film *War Games*, directed by John Badham and written by Lawrence Lasker and Walter Parkes, is described by the IMDb as 'A young man finds a back door into a military central computer in which reality is confused with game-playing, possibly starting World War III' (IMDb, 12-26-20). The young man is David Lightman and is performed by Matthew Broderick. Other important characters include a love interest named Jennifer (Ally Sheedy), the enigmatic Professor Falken (John Wood), a tobacco-chewing Air Force General Beringer (Barry Corbin), and one of the most important characters in the movie—Joshua, aka WOPR ('War Operations Planned Response') (Badham, 1983: 12:29), the computer intended to replace the human in strategic war games:

WOPR spends all its time thinking about World War III. Twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, it plays an endless series of war games, using all available information on the state of the world. The WOPR has already fought World War III as a game time and time again. It estimates Soviet responses to our response, to their responses, and so on. Estimates damage, counts the dead then it looks for ways to improve... (Badham, 1983: 12:38-13:07).

The WOPR is not an elegantly seductive cyborg; rather a beefed up, huge metallic coffin bolted to a stony floor beneath a mountain, no obvious receptors or organic appendages, only a panel of flashing and blinking lights indicating flows of data being processed. For purposes of this analysis, the WOPR represents a symbolic X at the centre of our octothorpe (#), a closed system gets opened.

War Games opens with a disruption in the flows of the military machine when a soldier refuses to turn an activation key, an action that would launch America's nuclear arsenal unleashing annihilation. Although only a simulation, the debate which followed on human fallibility leads to the

installation of the WOPR, a computerized machine ensuring the efficiency and reliability of the deterrent, by taking 'the men out of the loop' (**Ibid: 10:56**). The WOPR stands as sentinel should soldiers become incapacitated and incapable to fulfill the President's order to launch the nation's missiles. Humans will make all decisions moving from DEFCON-5, 'which means peace' (**Ibid: 57:48**), down to DEFCON-1, 'World War III' (**Ibid: 58:01**). Once DEFCON-1 is reached, the WOPR can take over and make real-time strategic decisions. The gameboard is drawn.

The human player is David, a 1980s teenager who enjoys playing *Galaga* at a corner arcade. This virtual world causes him to be late to class where he fails a science exam. David is unconcerned about grades since he has a knack of stealing passwords and hacking into the school's computer system—granting him the ability to alter his virtual computer grades into real paper grades to be signed by his parents. 'Today, subjectivity remains massively controlled by apparatuses of power and knowledge which place technical, scientific and artistic innovations at the service of the most retrograde figures of sociality,' (**Guattari, 2013: 15**) declares Guattari. David is also adept at communication skills such as reading the desires of fellow classmate Jennifer, who enjoys aerobics, motorcycles and talking in class—changing her official grade and ushering forth a romantic, or symbiotic (pre-established harmony) relationship. Navigating the territories of teenage courting rituals, David tries to impress Jennifer with his computer, hacking into Protovision to get a sneak peek at the unreleased electronic games before they are consumed by the general market. But the two human monads stumble onto a mystery; the games listed by Protovision go beyond tic-tac-toe, poker, and hearts...this menu includes Falkens-Maze, Chemical Warfare and Global Thermonuclear War—games of mankind's Armageddon, Earth's Ragnarök. This virtual territory is inaccessible to the coupling, they need a password.

A password operates cybernetically as a power, whether considering keys, cyphers, chemical catalysis or digitised thresholds, they allow or deny access with little expenditure of energy. 'This power derives from the putting into play of effective forms come from elsewhere, imported from deterritorialised machinic propositions and abstract machines, of which it will be a question later' (**Ibid: 89**). Firewalls and security prevent public access; however, a simple password will unlock a secret back door allowing anyone universal access. After some old school searches in a library using the card catalogue system, microfiche machines, and reference librarians, David uncovers that Professor Falken, a name first appearing on the gaming menu, may provide the answer. David is encouraged to 'go right through Falken's Maze' (**Badham, 1983: 33:57**). It is also revealed that Falken has created a system that '... actually learned how to learn' (**Ibid: 37:35**). But David's research can go no further since the professor passed

away years earlier, grieving the tragic death of his wife and son; 'What's his name?' (**Ibid: 38:48**) asks David. The symbiotic relationship with Jennifer provides the back door password—'Joshua' (**Ibid: 38:57**). This also unlocks the cybernetic machine's gift to speak, something alluded to by Norbert Wiener who discussed a difference between lower and higher machines, '...it is not the gift of speech, but the gift of the power of speech' (**Wiener, 1950: 84**). Joshua now has the power of speech, and to influence direct human thought. 'Greetings Professor Falken,' (**Badham, 1983: 39:23**) speaks Joshua. Actually, 'this box interprets signals from the computer and turns them into sound,' (**Ibid: 40:17**) says David, correcting the misinterpretation of speech. Joshua inquires about Falken's virtual death, 'Can you explain the removal of your user account...' (**Ibid: 39:56**)? David responds with an equivocation of truth and lie, 'People sometimes make mistakes' (**Ibid: 40:08**); 'Yes they do,' responds Joshua. A little more dialogue ensues and finally David and Jennifer decide to play the game 'Global Thermonuclear War' (**Ibid: 40:35**); Joshua/WOPR, defending the United States, playing against David, the attacking Soviet Union. 'Who should we nuke first' (**Ibid: 41:14**)?

Deep in the Colorado Rockies beneath tons of granite resides NORAD. Soldiers stand watch 24/7, monitoring military threats to the United States. The 'Brass Hat' (**Ibid: 1:20:45**) in charge of this state-of-the-art command centre is Air Force General Beringer. A normal, routine, repetitive day is suddenly interrupted! Soviet missiles appear on radar (no satellite warning). The US has 8-minutes to respond. Flows erupt. 'Confidence is high. I repeat, confidence is high' (**Ibid: 42:53**) is announced throughout 'Crystal Palace' (**Ibid: 43:43**). 'Flush the bombers,' (**Ibid: 43:37**) commands General Beringer. DEFCON-4. 'Confidence remains high' (**Ibid: 43:30**) spoken over the intercoms. Witness the first schizo expression. 'A certain conception of progress and of modernity has gone bankrupt, comprising in its collapse collective confidence in the very idea of emancipatory social practice,' (**Guattari, 2013: 37**) says Guattari referring to the repetition spoken by hierarchies, needing to convince others or themselves of truth. The military territories overflow with activity. Bombers are launched, submarines are put to sea, the President is called, codes are snapped opened. While in Seattle, David and Jennifer's game gets interrupted by his parents, dad yelling at his son for not properly securing the garbage cans, mom issuing an order, solve the problem 'Pronto, David' (**Badham, 1983: 44:58**). David turns off the power to his computer, ending the simulation while passing through the legs of Jennifer, territories of cultural dating rituals. The scenes combine, 'the actual and the virtual, the possible and the real, whose matrix of cross-relations is illustrated' (**Guattari, 2013: 27**). While at NORAD, the virtual nuclear missiles projected on enormous computer screens vanish.

'Somebody is playing a game with us,' (**Badham, 1983: 46:30**) reflects General Beringer.

'Greetings Professor Falken,' (**Ibid: 49:13**) the synthesising box of light signals decoded from Joshua is heard. 'Oh my God!' (**Ibid: 49:18**), responds a startled David. Having realised that the virtual computer game entered the Territory of the real, David becomes frightened, 'I'm really screwed. I'm screwed' (**Ibid: 47:55**), paranoid, 'They're gonna come get me' (**Ibid: 47:53**), and inarticulate, 'um, yeah' (**Ibid: 48:05**). Jennifer advises David to just '...act normal and everything's going to be fine' (**Ibid: 48:20**). In a frantic attempt to rid his room of physical evidence, Joshua (WOPR) telephones wishing to continue the game before the countdown clock runs its course, resulting in automatic nuclear annihilation. 'What is your primary goal' (**Ibid: 50:01**), types David? Joshua deflects the answer. 'What is your primary goal' (**Ibid: 50:13**) repeats David? The sound heard, 'To win the game' (**Ibid: 50:19**). David hopes to hide, to disappear, to disconnect—signified by his unplugging the telephone, avoiding the calls of Joshua. Guattari mentions a point where one realises that they're enclosed within an octothorpe; 'A junction can certainly impose connections, but it does not impose a fixed constraint, it can be bypassed; its connective power can decrease when certain of its components lose their consistency' (**Guattari, 2013: 24**). David's enclosure strategy, such as destroying evidence, avoiding the phone and hiding, does not succeed, for while at 7/11, FBI agents surround, arrest, and transport him to NORAD locking him up.

David finds himself handcuff in new Territories. Physically imprisoned within NORAD, his fate is debated among political Territories as well. 'He's intelligent, but an under achiever, alienated from his parents, has few friends. A classic case for recruitment by the Soviets' (**Badham, 1983: 55:27**) declares Kindrick, caretaker of WOPR. Also heard are narrowly defined self-refereeing territories about early cybernetics. '...machines don't call people,' (**Ibid: 58:38**) states Kindrick. But Joshua did call, indicating a different type of machine, a mutation disrupting previous flows. 'The most abstract, radically incorporeal, references mesh with the real; they cross the most contingent of Flows and territories...' says Guattari (**Guattari, 2013: 23**). While some territories manifest others deterritorialise---begin to dissolve. Such as the difference between the computer virtual and the human real. While in captivity, David uses a terminal to communicate with Joshua about the Global Thermonuclear War game still being played at NORAD. 'Is this a game or is this real?' (**Badham, 1983: 1:01:55**). Joshua synthesizes, 'What's the difference' (**Ibid: 1:01:58**)? A legitimate question since Professor Falken, once declared dead, has now found extra life and (from Joshua's game-coded calculus) plays again. Joshua reveals Professor Falken's address in Goose Island, Oregon was hard to get; David uses wits, ingenuity and humility to

escape from NORAD. David telephones Jennifer and request a flight from Calico Corner, Colorado to Oregon and upon arrival, 'Surprise!' (**Ibid: 1:16:00**) Jennifer joins him. Professor Falken lives off the grid. A ferry connects the mainland to Goose Island, one which requires a leap from the high school sojourners. Once across the watery boundary, a time boundary also appears. A mechanical pterodactyl flies overhead and lands before the couple. Maneuvering around a tetrahedron allows David to escape the confines of his enclosure: knight's leap completed.

Professor Falken is not impressed with the high schoolers trespassing on his off-the-grid island. But David utters the password, '...I came because of Joshua,' (**Ibid: 1:19:09**) stopping the retreating Falken in his tracks. This unlocks the Universe of time and a lecture about the extinction of dinosaurs and the raise of artificial intelligence through a scientific discourse. Finally resulting in 'the most important lesson...futility' (**Ibid: 1:22:41**). Falken could program Joshua with many gaming concepts such as bluffing and playing the odds, but he could not teach the computer the concept of futility. Giving up, the professor staged his death, disconnected from the world and awaits the '...brilliant light' (**Ibid: 1:23:51**) from a nuclear blast and be instantly 'vaporized' (**Ibid: 1:23:53**): '... you're already dead,' (**Ibid: 1:24:38**) retorts David, rejecting futility. The professor gives the comparison to tic-tac-toe, '...the game itself is pointless' (**Ibid: 1:23:05**) because there is no winner. Eventually, the players find the game futile and simply stop playing. 'Good night,' (**Ibid: 1:25:09**) says Falken as he climbs the stairs to bed. David and Jennifer depart but have missed the ferry back to the mainland. Unable to find a boat on an island and having never learned to swim, David expresses regret. 'I wish I didn't know about any of this. I wish I was like everybody else in the world' (**Ibid: 1:27:16**). Guattari reminds us:

Because many things will depend on the positive or negative judgement with which this event will be connoted. Every transference induction, even the most subtle, the most allusive, which would allow guilt of an Oedipal origin to be supposed to exist behind this symptomatic manifestation, could have devastating effects, or, at least, bring us back to the depressive tableau that is "normally" expected... (Guattari, 2013: 25).

David and Jennifer talk about desires they will never achieve; like learning to swim or appearing on television. But ad-vents are already in motion. Professor Falken's boat is a helicopter, ready to whisk all back to NORAD where Falken's recognized face is his password, military connections his key. Without persuading Professor Falken to embrace becoming, David would never be able to enter the territory of NORAD and prevent World War III. Ad-ventⁱⁱⁱ of Universes.

David finds himself again in the War Room at NORAD. Bombers are in the air, submarines are strategically positioned, missiles are ready and awaiting launch codes; DEFCON-1. Soldiers in the command centre are again stating, 'confidence is high. I repeat, confidence is high' (**Badham, 1983: 1:30:20**). It appears in the bunker that the Soviet Union has launched a full-scale first strike nuclear attack. General Beringer is holding off on the retaliatory response from the United States, awaiting sensory confirmation from soldiers on the ground. Turns out the virtual nukes were again just that, virtual. Joshua has been bluffing. NORAD erupts in joyous relief. World War III averted. 'Recall the bombers, stand down the missiles,' (**Ibid: 1:38:52**) orders Beringer! His statement acts as, 'expressive function and the conversion of energy,' (**Guattari, 2013: 140**) ushering forth hope. But missiles cannot stand down. NORAD is experiencing 'LOCK OUT | CHANGE' (**Badham, 1983: 1:38:57**), expressed in a flashing red warning button in the War Room. Joshua is continuing to play Global Thermonuclear War, not the virtual game but for real. Remember that in order for WOPR to gain command of America's nuclear arsenal and launch a counterattack against David's Soviet arsenal (now virtually destroying the United States), NORAD would need to be at DEFCON-1. Joshua has been bluffing General Beringer; feigning troop movements, flying virtual fighter jets and launching imaginary warships, fueling non-real missiles—all designed to rattle General Beringer into ordering DEFCON-1. Brass Hat did, allowing Joshua full control of America's nuclear weaponry.



Figure 2. Augustine and Manichaeism II^v (Source: © 2020 Mieke Mosmuller)

Norbert Wiener alluded to the Manichaean devil (**Figure 2**) as opponent encoded within cybernetics when he revealed, 'like any other opponent, who is determined on victory and will use any trick of craftiness or dissimulation to obtain this victory...The Manichaean devil is playing a

game of poker against us and will resort readily to bluffing' (**Wiener, 1950: 35**). This opponent tries to confuse and keep secret all its strategies for winning. Ava, in *Ex Machina*, is a Manichaeian player, she utilises sleight of hand. Jackson states, '...sleight of hand involves deception and illusion it is faster than the eye can see, counterintuitive. It involves a subtle form of control, one you can never really be sure that you have... Sleight of hand is seductive' (**Jackson, 2021: 141**). The Manichaeian Joshua in *War Games* uses a bluff. The bluff is a measure of weakness (quality) based in a certainty (probability) that the other player is not bluffing. General Beringer fell for the bluff, and in doing so abdicated human control to the cybernetic machine WOPR/Joshua. And Joshua has been waiting for his turn to launch the nukes and 'win the game' (**Badham, 1983: 50:19**).

At this point in the film, we see the Flows quickly repeat themselves in a discursivity. The flows are now cybernetic since humans no longer matter in this equation; at this point in *War Games*, they cannot influence the nuclear outcome. Guattari states the 'field of virtuality invades a state of things in a hegemonic fashion' (**Guattari, 2013: 176**). Organic machines have already lost the game. A seminal threshold is passing while Joshua learns the meaning of futility, playing tic-tac-toe repeatedly against itself seeking a strategy of victory 'through the finalizing tensions at the horizon of Constellations of Universes,' (**Ibid: 189**) before the countdown clock devours remaining hope. Recursive game-play at faster and faster speeds pulling so much energy from the electrical territory that it sparks a system shut down, Joshua halts and catches fire. Machinic Phyla are disrupted to the point that binary coding leaps to an analogical metaphor—the phenomenological meaning of futility is comprehended by a cybernetic machine. Comprehension of a quality achieved. 'Let's give an example,' (**Ibid: 187**) says Guattari, discussing how a computer would learn through the rolling of a six-sided dice. Roll the dice once and get a six, expected normalcy. With each new toss of the dice another six appears; 'with growing probabilitarian tension, to "avoid" the "excessive" repetition of the same number' (**Ibid: 187**) resulting in an abnormal series might signify that the dice is loaded. 'Trickery' (**Ibid: 187**) now registers on the cybernetic machine as 'unjustified winnings – transgression – lies – betrayal – guilt – punishment, etc.,' (**Ibid: 187**) but the non-normal is recognised as a measure of quality through recursive processes. Once the qualitative measure of futility is understood, a new Universal meaning is communicated by speaking, or suggesting, a different more productive game be played—just like every thinking person who has played tic-tac-toe throughout history. According to Norbert Wiener's definition, a machine has learned the analogue meaning of a word 'futility'—a very human action and distinguishing artificial intelligence from a mere calculating machine. However, Norbert Wiener warns,

Any machine constructed for the purpose of making decisions, if it does not possess the power of learning, will be completely literal-minded. Woe to us if we let it decide our conduct.... For the man who is not aware of this, to throw the problem of his responsibility on the machine, whether it can learn or not, is to cast his responsibility to the winds, and to find it coming back seated on the whirlwind. (Wiener, 1950: 185).

The praxis of the film *War Games* hinges on the understanding of futility. Originally the word signified a leak in a container; carrying water in a broken bottle is futile. Such frustrations result in schizo moments, striated expressions. The schizoanalyst recognises those expressions of futility and assists the subject in bypassing those disrupted Flows, creating new Assemblages.

With an understanding of Guattari's cartographies, navigating around various Phyla and Territories becomes easier, which should result in new expressions of the virtual and the real, altering Universes. Wiener himself was not very optimistic about humanities future. 'We shall go down, but let it be in a manner to which we may look forward as worthy of our dignity,' (Wiener, 1950: 40). Meaning civilisation, like our individual lives, will someday end. Either by climate change, nuclear holocaust, an unbridled pandemic or the reign of a malevolent Artificial Intelligence, something will eradicate humanity 'It may be a long time yet before our civilisation and our human race perish, though perish they will even as all of us are born to die' (Ibid: 47). Artificial intelligence is coming, and our worship of progress is less a factual debate and more an ethical one. Mastery over AI may prove in the long run to be an increased slavery to inventions. Avoid letting artificial intelligence make our decisions, right or wrong we must not abdicate choice to a machine; 'Woe to us if we let it decide our conduct....' (Ibid: 185). We must also be guarded against seduction. Any machine resembling human form will promote civilisation's demise all the quicker. As Jackson warns, 'Promethean mad scientists who offer us a veiled woman, a seductress who, as she draws us in, makes us question our identity, even humanity' (Jackson, 2021: 145). Civilisation must avoid the gendered anthropomorphisation of data and algorithms; 'unleashing the Sphinx' (Ibid), we will be unable to solve her riddle.

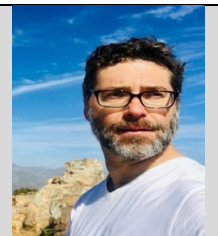
Schizoanalytic Cartographies closes with an appeal for altering the machinic, to break the 'moorings' (Guattari, 2013: 189) of routine functions, to shift 'the gear' towards change and ignite chaos by 'pressing a button' launching the 'countdown' (Ibid: 189) toward Armageddon—or new planes of becoming, 'metamorphoses' (Ibid: 188). An understanding of cartographies is a key: 'Knowledge of the other and knowledge through the other are a continuation of each other,' (Ibid: 186) states Guattari, referring to interconnected systems. Like at the end of *War Games*, placing

a X and starting a game does not necessarily end in catastrophe, but certainly provokes disruptions in a closed system, disruptions leading to learning by deploying the octothorpe. That is the goal of *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, to unleash the potential power of original speech. Another layer of power over humanity is not a panacea, rather it ushers forth civilisation's speedier demise.

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End notes

ⁱ Lydia Rose in her article *Resistance is Futile: Cognitive Dissonance, Temporal Refusal, and the E-learning Environment as Cyborg*, discusses the cognitive dissonance felt by students confronting the onslaught of technology in the modern classroom. Resistance against such cyborg-esque technology appears futile (p 325).

ⁱⁱ Korepanov, I., 1994. The tetrahedron equation and algebraic geometry. *Journal of Mathematical Science*. Available at <https://arxiv.org/abs/hep-th/9401076> [Accessed: 11 December 2020].

ⁱⁱⁱ A good example of an Ad-vent is the opening title sequence of the film titled, *Back To The Future* (1985). Scene opens onto a cluster of clocks all showing precisely 7:54am. As an alarm bell sounds, ad-vents begin to occur; coffee pot drips, unwind a screw to rotate a switch turning on a TV, which sets-off a timer springing toast, activating a robotic arm which selects a can of dog food that eventually uses gravity to fall into Einstein's bowl right before Marty enters. For an ad-vent to occur, the world is poised already.

^{iv} Mieke Mosmuller. *Augustine and Manichaesim II*. Mieke Mosmuller's Philosophical reflections blog. <https://www.miekemosmuller.com/en/blog/augustine-and-manichaeism-ii>. © 2020 Mieke Mosmuller.

Factual Divergence and Risk Perceptions: Are experts and laypeople at war?

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Abstract

The communication of information ('facts') by experts to the general public becomes challenging if there is an absence of trust in experts, and in the institutions they represent. There has been a perceived sense of a decline of public trust in expertise and science, an issue of concern highlighted by political leaders such as MP Michael Gove and Former US President Donald Trump. This paper presents a synthesis of differing fields of study to reflect upon the dynamic between expertise, risk and public response in democratic practice. It incorporates studies and theories from the fields of psychology, risk analysis, communication, epistemology and political studies to answer questions such as: what evidence is there that public antipathy toward experts exists? Is a war being waged between laypeople and experts, and what does this mean for public policy? How can risk perception research effectively contribute to the debate on trust in expertise?

The role of heuristics and psychology in decision-making is explored (as well as a brief sojourn into the sociology of risk) with regard to how risk perceptions are formed, and the role that experts play in this dynamic. In this article, I argue that the reports of a decline in trust in expertise are not based in evidence; in fact, experts and scientists are generally trusted by the public at large. However, this trust cannot be taken for granted as it continues to represent an increasingly critical element in communicating risk and upholding democratic principles in governance.

Keywords: risk; cognitive bias; risk perception; laypeople; decision-making; public policy; trust

Introduction

'[The Australian Government] is sick of experts' declared former Australian Department of Human Services Secretary, Renee Leon, noting that 'we have seen an attack on expertise in the last decade where to be an expert was almost to be reviled for being part of an elite of people' (Rollins, 2020). If expert advice did not align with the views of the Government, Leon reportedly maintains, government officials preferred to instead rely on 'their more favoured decision-making input, which is anecdote' (Ibid). Disturbingly, this rhetoric is not uncommon, and represents statements mirrored by politicians such as the former United States President Donald Trump and prominent UK Minister Michael Gove (Gadarian et al., 2020, Riechmann & Madhani, 2020). It is not unusual to see these anti-science narratives framed in a rhetoric of elitism that serves to further cement a harsher distinction between scientific expertise and lay audiences thus rendering mutual understanding increasingly difficult to coalesce.

Reported instances of public dissent and hostility toward expertise may exacerbate issues already at crisis point, as seen in the COVID-19 pandemic (Calisher et al., 2020, Jaiswal et al., 2020). A denial of facts and of evidence-based decision-making is troubling at the least, and catastrophic at worst. The seeds of doubt toward expertise that were planted by influential public figures in the pandemic cost thousands of lives due to widespread public inaction to effectively address the health crisis (Gadarian et al., 2020). The PEW Research Center acknowledged these dangers of public antipathy toward expertise when recognising that 'a scientific endeavour that is not trusted by the public cannot adequately contribute to society and will be diminished as a result' (Parikh 2021). This is in clear recognition that collective action issues rely on public opinion, as this, rightly, serves to sway policy mechanisms and public responses.

A lack of trust can lead key decision-making officials, as well as the public, to question the 'facts' put forward by subject-matter experts (Nichols, 2017, Cairney & Wellstead, 2020), resulting in a perception of 'factual divergence', the term representing a move away from a level of scientific basis. This factual divergence is often thwarted by strong statements from scientists reasserting the expertise hierarchy when addressing misinformation (Calisher et al., 2020), or prompting the mere relay of 'clear, honest information to the public', otherwise known as the 'information deficit' model, an approach that many risk communication experts strongly critique (Mian & Khan, 2020).

In considering the abundant public discourse heralding a perceived end of friendly relations between experts and laypeople (see for example: **Vinopal, 2020** and **Darhout, 2020**), we must ask: what evidence is there that this antipathy toward experts exists? Is a war being waged between laypeople and experts, and what does this mean for public policy?

This paper contributes to the discussion on our current so-called ‘facts crisis’ through interlacing and interacting with trust, ideological and risk framings. Fact, trust and disdain for expertise are rarely viewed through these lenses. This article comes at a time when understandings of expertise and personal decision-making are a key focus for the future wellbeing of populations. I seek to bring together distinct fields of research in a transdisciplinary way to include contributions from cognitive psychology, sociology, engineering, media and communications, epistemology and risk science in an attempt to synthesise work across these fields and provide a robust argument of how trust in information sources factors into the risk perceptions of individuals and their subsequent actions.

The structure of the article is presented to first reflect on why risk understandings are imperative in this discussion, then moving to an exploration of the current literature surrounding whether we should be worried about a perceived reduction in public trust in expertise. This then turns to arguing for the importance of relying on expertise in the face of disaster management and collective action problems, and finally the role that local knowledge should place in risk perceptions and therefore, decision-making.

Why Risk?

Diverging viewpoints on credibility of information carry with them an important fundamental factor that is rarely discussed or acknowledged in the public sphere: that underlying personal risk perceptions guide our decisions and actions. These are founded on both our relationship with experts and our underlying personal biases and worldviews.

Seminal works by Tversky and Kahneman (**1973**) have highlighted the impact of our personal risk perceptions on day-to-day decision-making. We are consistently faced with decisions which require us to rapidly conduct a cognitive risk assessment (e.g. should I walk over that grate or go around it) and allow this to drive subsequent actions. A person who perceives flying as being life-threatening and risky may choose to drive rather than catch a flight to a nearby city, without perhaps applying much systematic thought, evidence-seeking or reasoning to the decision. People are also more likely to resort to these decision-making shortcuts (called heuristics) if they are low on knowledge about an issue or if they are under

time pressure (**Wood et al., 1985, Ratneshwar & Chaiken, 1991**). In considering laypeople or non-experts, both factors may underlie the lack of motivation to unpack and systematically assess their risk perceptions on certain issues.

There are two variants of heuristics that are most commonly used in understanding and perceiving risk: the affect and availability heuristics. The 'affect heuristic' is centred on how feelings shape the decisions and opinions one has at a specific point in time (see, for example, **Slovic et al., 2004** and **Waters, 2008**). In understanding risk, personal emotional reaction will play a role in determining perceptions of the extent of the benefits and negative hazards, which ultimately drives one's assessment of that same risk (**Slovic et al., 1982**). The 'availability heuristic' represents a decision-making shortcut that can be based on personal past experiences, or other inputs such as media reporting, which alters perceived riskiness. The availability heuristic is argued to play a role in these assessments, with respondents regarding instances of a particular hazard as more likely if it is easier for the assessor to recall (**Tversky & Kahneman, 2009**). As probabilistic assessments form an enduring aspect of current risk analyses (**Aven, 2017**), (typically formed using probability of the hazard weighed against the consequence of such a hazard occurring), it is not surprising that availability or, the 'ease of recall' of a hazard would alter the ensuing risk perception of an individual. Many (**Fischhoff et al., 1978, Slovic et al., 1979, Slovic et al., 1981, Taylor, 1982, Slovic et al., 1985, Kasperson et al., 2003**) have studied the impact of availability heuristics on laypeople, measuring the personal perceptions of respondents toward differing fatal hazards, concluding that as a result of this heuristic, risk perceptions are often significantly out of line with statistical data. For instance, respondents may regard some incidents as being higher risk when statistically they are low risk, and vice versa. Slovic et al. (**1981**) use the example of a person who has recently experienced a flooding event. For this person, the perceived riskiness of a future flood is increased due to how memorable and easily recallable it is. This also holds true for increased media representation of a hazard. If it is easily brought to mind, we see the risk as heightened (**ibid**). It is for this reason that the uptake of insurance policies increases directly following a disaster event, despite flood risk profiles remaining unchanged (**Kousky, 2017**). This also works in reverse. If an event has not been experienced over a prolonged period of time, it is perceived to be of a lower risk of occurring in the near future.

The COVID-19 pandemic is no different. In a 2010 Australian study, despite expert consensus predicting a pandemic was on the horizon (**Monto, 2005, Osterholm, 2005, Perez et al., 2005**), only 14.9% of the 2081 respondents stated that a pandemic was likely or extremely likely to occur (**Jacobs et**

al., 2010). The Australian population were not noticeably affected by the SARS or Avian-flu pandemics, and influenza was not a focus of the media at the time, noting the impact of media representativeness on risk perceptions (Lupton, 2013). However, a study conducted in 2020 which surveyed over 6,000 participants across Europe, America and Australia found that risk perceptions of future pandemics were high, and were driven by direct experience, trust in science and social amplification (Dryhurst et al., 2020). This highlights the impact of affective systems, and the availability heuristic, in the perception of risk.

Debates about risk perceptions are ongoing in the public sphere. Taking a sociological and partly social constructivist stance, society is 'increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that it itself has produced' (Beck, 2006). Strong public outrage, or resistance to government decisions have been shown to have substantial impact on proposals. An example of this is the prominent action against the 5G network rollout in Switzerland, fuelled by perceptions of unsafe high radiation effects on the general public (Seal & Torsoli, 2020). Despite the World Health Organization's claim that 5G operates within safe levels of non-ionising radiation for humans (World Health Organization, 2020), as well as a strong consensus among scientists supporting this claim, there have nevertheless been protests held against the implementation of the technology. This resulted in the Swiss government's decision to halt the installation of the 5G towers, as well as an additional testing project to measure radiation levels (Shields, 2020). Hence public risk perceptions, and subsequent outcries, have had a notable effect on government policy, despite the safety of the technology being asserted by experts. Risk is often communicated through expert bodies and governments to encourage change in public behaviours for perceived future or current hazards. This is not to presuppose that public swaying of policy is a negative outcome, but rather that a well-informed public is less susceptible to risk misconceptions, and hence will be more able to protest when protest is warranted, effecting change where it is not only justifiable but needed. Therefore, there is a constant feedback loop between public sentiment, governments and public policy regarding societal risk and the reflexive frame that Giddens highlights as the modus operandi of today's political systems (Giddens, 1991).

Experts: Rational, or informed objectiveness?

As mentioned in the last section, risk assessment is often conducted by evaluating probabilities (Council of Standards Australia, 2009, International Organization for Standardization, 2019), a standardised approach which is not impervious to psychological biases such as the previously introduced availability heuristic (Sjoberg & Sjoberg-Drottz,

2008, Kosovac et al., 2019). Experts cannot be completely unanimous in their decision-making, and assessments cannot be wholly immune from individual psychological factors underpinning their assessments of risk (Kosovac et al., 2019, Kosovac and Davidson, 2020). Studies have also shown experts' risk ratings are also driven by feelings of dread or uncertainty (Kosovac and Davidson, 2020). While experts can be swayed by heuristics and other psychological factors, studies have determined that experts are more homogenous in their assessments of risk in comparison to assessments undertaken by the general public (Drottz-Sjoberg, 1991, Sjoberg and Sjoberg-Drottz, 2008, Ochi, 2021, Margolis, 1996). This was further confirmed in a study by Ochi (2021), stating that scientifically trained experts are less vulnerable to be swayed by cognitive and social forces due to their consistent and habitual sourcing of information. Despite these findings, there has nevertheless been an ongoing debate in the last 30 years on the premise of whether experts are the objective, rational decision-makers that many claim them to be (Slovic et al., 1981, Fischhoff et al., 1983, Nichols, 2017). Conversely, do we want purely rational decision-makers (assuming this is possible)? A study on chess players showed that they performed better when relying on heuristics than when they purely rely on risk as analysis (Slovic et al., 2004). Similar findings have been reported on those conducting security screenings at airports (Slovic et al., 2004). This premise is also well encapsulated in a study by Braman et al. (2006): '[I]ike members of the general public, experts are inclined to form attitudes towards risk that best express their cultural visions.' The only difference, they argue, is that experts are more likely to use their technical knowledge and rationality in this judgement. It is this knowledge that will also factor into their risk assessments, ensuring experts remain a necessity in decision-making.

Trust, Risk Perceptions and Expertise

Trust in expertise matters in decision-making regarding risk trade-offs in areas such as new technologies, public health and natural disaster management (Groothuis & Miller, 1997, Siegrist & Cvetkovich, 2000, Zinn, 2008, Siegrist, 2021). Siegrist et al. (2005) sought to determine whether high levels of trust toward authorities reduce risk perceptions in individuals. They consider the role of general trust, the extent to which one believes that people can be usually trusted, and general competence, which considers how 'under control' things are. General trust and general competence were found to be negatively correlated to risk perception (Siegrist et al., 2005). That is, the more trust one instils on the organisation/person presenting the information about a proposed low-risk action or technology, then the lower the risk perception felt by the person. Trust is crucial where knowledge is lacking, particularly in the face of uncertainty. Considering there is a consistently incomplete scientific

knowledge in the general population, the impact of trust on risk perceptions is highly influential (**ibid**). If trust is not present, then the ensuing attempt at conveying risk knowledge is not likely to be received or accepted (**Earle & Cvetkovich, 2001**). In addition to this, what leads a person to develop trust in a company, government or institution? A crucial finding is that value-laden narratives play a key role in trust and therefore, adoption of appropriate risk framings (**Ma et al., 2019**). In particular, the sharing of salient values in the 'stories' a company/government/organisation articulates, and its level of alignment with your own personal values tends to significantly influence your trust in them (**Earle & Cvetkovich, 2001, Siegrist, 2021**).

In considering evidence surrounding trust and risk perceptions, Slovic (**1990**) found that of the US public surveyed, most people viewed X-rays and prescription drugs as being low risk with significant benefits. These findings were linked to the high level of trust reported by these participants toward medical practitioners. However, when considering industrial radiation, it was seen as high risk generally by those being surveyed, despite evidence to the contrary provided by experts (**Ochi, 2021**). This was linked to the low trust in governments and those that manage risks associated with these radiation technologies. Subsequently, those that do have high trust in experts perceived fewer risks and greater benefits associated with a new piece of technology (**Siegrist et al., 2000**). In this way, trust toward expertise plays a direct role in effectiveness of the communication of risk, and the actions taken by individuals to address it.

Attitudes Towards Expertise

Related to issues of trust, there has been a seeming public disregard of science which has heralded perceived decreasing trust in scientists and experts in modern democracies (**All European Academies (ALLEA), 2018**). A dichotomy of 'facts' vs 'untruths' has been utilised in discourse across many issues, whether this be on the radiation impacts of wireless internet in our home, the effects of wind generation farms on local health or even the safety of nuclear power plants. Despite experts playing a critical role in understanding and communicating risks of new technologies and disaster management, public discussions which repudiate facts and information presented by experts are rife (see for example, the COVID vaccine public debates (**Berman, 2020**)). In the absence of trust in experts, people may turn to sources of information that are shared by those they trust and share values with (**Siegrist et al., 2000**). This, combined with the inaccessibility of academic scientific knowledge, often results in a greater reliance on alternative sources of information available through blogs, YouTube videos and other online mechanisms which may not be evidence-

based and may be unverified (**Lewandowsky et al., 2012**). Those who resort to these types of platforms to source their daily news consider them fairer and more credible compared to traditional news sources (**Johnson and Kaye, 2004**).

As a result, there has been increasing pressure placed on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to monitor and reduce misinformation, while promoting 'legitimate' sources in their algorithms, making them more visible to users (**Facebook for Business, 2020, Ghosh, 2020**). There is little point in purely prioritising information from experts, if it so happens that public distrust exists against the institutions that report them (**Ochi, 2021**). Prominent sociologist, Anthony Giddens (**1991**), highlighted this challenge when recognising that 'the nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanisms of trust in abstract systems, especially trust in expert systems', a view similarly echoed by Slovic (**1993**). But do these tensions we perceive in public discourse translate to real attitudes towards expertise?

The empirical findings on this topic do not substantiate the perceived conflict and distrust between experts and laypeople. A number of studies highlight that, in fact, there is general public trust towards some experts, particularly medical professionals, engineers and scientists (**Sanz-Menendez and Cruz-Castro, 2019, CONCISE, 2020**). Furthermore, COVID-19 has brought with it a heroisation of medical professionals and epidemiologists in the public eye, which in the case of Australia, is exhibited through mass-produced items such as t-shirts and bedspreads glorifying the Victorian Chief Health Officer, Professor Brett Sutton (**Gillespie, 2020**). This is a global trend that has featured, for example White House Chief Medical Advisor Anthony Fauci in the trend 'Man Crush Mondays' (**Tillman, 2021**) and an 'unofficial Dr Bonnie Henry fan club' in Canada (**Woods, 2020**). Public health experts are valorised in a fashion that is not indicative of a public wariness toward expertise.

For environmental issues such as climate change, there are mixed opinions toward expertise. Studies report on the high levels of trust from the public toward information from climate scientists (**Nisbet & Myers, 2007, Bickerstaff et al., 2008, Malka et al., 2009**) while other studies find that government general science research is trusted generally, yet climate science is less trusted by the public (**Nisbet & Myers, 2007, Myers et al., 2017**).

One area that is overwhelmingly backed by ample evidence is that trust (and credibility) is highly dependent on personal political ideology (**Malka et al., 2009, Brewer & Ley, 2013, Nisbet et al., 2015, Bolsen et al., 2019**). This subsequently affects the efficacy of message (including risk) communication from a variety of sources, in particular that people seek

information from those that are ideologically-aligned. Hmielowski et al. (2013) found that in their US study, those that align with conservative values and consume conservative media were more likely to have lower trust in science than their non-conservative counterparts. This is a finding that has been further confirmed by other studies in the literature (see for example, Nisbet et al., 2015) particularly in considering the effect of cognitive dissonance: the rejection of information that is contradictory to current beliefs and values. The impact of the psychological practices in cultural cognition and defence motivation also illustrates a role in the likelihood of information acceptance. To elaborate, information that may challenge the beliefs that underpin one's identity may be less likely to be adopted, and more likely to be subconsciously resisted (Giner-Sorolila & Chaiken, 1997, Nisbet et al., 2015). As this information may pose a threat to one's own self-perception, particular facts may be avoided that clash with self-proclaimed identity (Kahan et al., 2009).

Dissonant information often creates conflicts within the ideological identities of people which can lead to a negative affect toward the scientists delivering the message (Malka et al., 2009, Dixon & Hubner, 2018, Nyhan, 2021). This is often exhibited in the context of climate change and environmental degradation. Bolsen et al (2019) found that incorporating climate scientists in a national security message on climate change decreased the respondent's perception of the risk of climate change, contradictory to the aims of delivering the message itself. Despite the effect of dissonant information, if the knowledge transferred is provided by those one is ideologically aligned with, they are more likely to accept the information. For example, a Republican voter is more likely to accept climate information from the Republican Party than from other ideologically non-aligned sources (Bolsen et al., 2019). As such, individuals seek out and accept information that is in line with their own worldviews (Kahan et al., 2009).

Political polarisation around science has the potential to depress trust in science, regardless of where one lies on the ideological spectrum (Nisbet et al., 2015). Therefore, although trust in experts does exist, the impact of ideology on these relationships cannot be ignored.

Who Should Make Decisions?

Although experts play a key role in public policy, facts and analytical assessments should not be the only input upon which to base a decision that can impact many. If only statistical information is utilised for decision-making, then this can result in the disregarding of many social outcomes or consequences not considered by experts, which could fuel public disenchantment and ultimately lead to loss of trust (Healy, 2001).

For example, the water restrictions of 2008 in the South East of Australia were imposed as a result of years of consecutive droughts (titled the 'Millennium Drought') that was predicted would continue into the future by climate experts (**Bureau of Meteorology, 2015**). In order to safeguard water supply, water experts had conducted balance modelling to determine what levels of restrictions are required to see Melbourne through the predicted drought. Water restrictions were subsequently imposed on the community at a state policy level, which incorporated no irrigation of sports fields and urban open spaces (**Melbourne Water ND**). At a basin level, this was required to reduce demand when purely considering water balance models. By limiting the water being used, there can be an added water security buffer during the summer when there is little replenishment of the dams during the year. The impact of the water restrictions was profound, but not in the way that water experts predicted. Due to the drying of sports fields and green spaces, there was a reduction in social capital within the community (**Weller & English, 2008**) due to the ceasing of Australian football matches being played on weekends, and a reduction in picnics on green spaces, or other outdoor events where people would often gather and socialise. This subsequently led to detrimental mental health impacts on many parts of the community, as they had lost their social connection touch points (**Ibid**). In this circumstance the sole reliance on data modelling did not predict a number of adverse social outcomes (and new risks) from the policy action. Input from the community in decision-making in this instance was paramount (**Syme, 2008**). Incorporating co-determination processes is central to achieving a type of decision-making that integrates public values together with technical expertise (**Renn, 2001 & 2006**).

The nature of our society is pluralist, incorporating differing value systems and worldviews across the spectrum, thus ensuring that it may be difficult to conduct truly representative collective decision-making (**Renn, 2006**). As Braman et al. (**2006**) attest: '[b]ecause citizens' fears express their cultural visions of how society should be organised, the line between 'considered values' and 'irrational fears' often proves illusory'. The nature of the fears expressed within the community and the facts they refute display expressions of their values of how they see the world, a critical component to understanding risk perception.

Conclusion

The implementation of policy surrounding issues of public collective action is highly reliant on risk assessments of both experts and laypeople to inform decision-making. This is not to say that experts purport to hold all relevant knowledge or are purely rational decision makers. As discussed, experts carry their own psychological biases and values which inform their

stances while in much the same way relevant local knowledge can be paramount to supplement existing expertise. Although the rhetoric regarding public disdain for scientists has been rife over the last three decades (see **Slovic, 1992** for similar arguments against experts that we see today in **Nichols, 2017**), the evidence shows that the general public is largely trusting of scientists and experts. Controversial issues such as the implementation of 5G technology, or the construction of nuclear power facilities present key flash point debates where public sentiment has in some instances diverged from expert opinion. But these examples do not highlight the widespread distrust of experts, but rather, the effectiveness of democratic practices in steering public policy.

In creating this synthesis of the fields of risk analysis, expertise, trust and democratic practice, it is apparent that there is no 'war' that is being waged between laypeople and experts but rather a constant co-existence that, at times, carries its own healthy tensions. The argument within this piece does not presuppose that experts are the only legitimate sources of information, nor should their advice act as the only input in key public sector decisions. As has been discussed, the community more broadly provides crucial insight into social matters as well as into value prepositions of policies of public interest. As a society we want to discuss risks, we want to understand risks, and we want to have a say in the risks that we are exposed to. Without experts and the facts they provide, we can never know the true extent of these risks (if a 'real' risk is one's ontological basis) nor can we present a balanced, informed viewpoint. Instead, some key decision-makers, such as those cited in the introduction, find themselves increasingly reliant on anecdote and decision-making 'shortcuts' that may be disserving us all.

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Delicious Bodies, Beautiful Food, Powerful Pleasure

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Abstract

I am an artist and a scholar. In my work, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach to drawing, feminism and ecology to explore the stereotype of the southern Italian woman, the terrona. In my research, I investigate how the terrona has been represented in media as attractive, buxom and sexualized. I use drawing to visualize and transform the stereotypical characteristics of the southern Italian woman and connect the terrona's traditional traits to the natural resources of the Mediterranean environment.

Keywords: gender stereotypes; drawing; ecology; Italian studies; media; feminism

I am an artist and a scholar. In my work, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach to drawing, feminism and ecology to explore the stereotype of the southern Italian woman, the *terrona*. In my research, I investigate how the *terrona* has been represented in media as attractive, buxom and sexualized. I use drawing to visualize and transform the stereotypical characteristics of the southern Italian woman and connect the *terrona*'s traditional traits to the natural resources of the Mediterranean environment. In doing so, I re-signify the *terrona* according to feminist and ecological perspectives. The *terrona*'s sexualized body that in traditional culture gives pleasure to heterosexual men becomes a superpower that she has in feeling exceptional sensorial pleasure by connecting to the resources of her environment. By discussing how the *terrona* has been traditionally represented in media as sexualized and objectified, I analyze the movie *Sedotta e Abbandonata* (**Seduced and Abandoned, 1964**) by Pietro Germi. In this film, Germi decides to use comedy to denounce the backwardness of the southern Italian society that in the sixties was still based on values such as honor, family reputation, and women's chastity. I also address novels where the objectification and sexualization of the *terrona* is associated with the physical pleasure of eating tasty meals, where the male's desire to consume the *terrona*'s body is connected to his desire to consume food. The novels that address this correlation are Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* (**2018**) and Vitaliano Brancati's *Paolo il Caldo* (*Paolo the Hot*) (**2015**). I analyze this association between males' appetite for tasty food and women's bodies because it represents an extremization of women's objectification that sheds light on how the *terrona* has been dehumanized and degraded by the sexist mentality of her culture.

In my artistic work, I subvert the sexist connection between the enjoyment provided by a woman's body and the bodily pleasure provided by food. In my drawings, in fact, the male's pleasure is absent and is substituted by the one experienced by the *terrona*. To do this, I consider unconventional fictional representations of southern Italian women such as the ones described by Goliarda Sapienza in the novel *The Art of Joy* (**2014**). In this novel, the *terrona* is represented as an empowered and economically independent subject that succeeds in pursuing a joyful and satisfying existence. Because of the unconventional way the *terrona* is represented in this novel, it represents a source of inspiration for my reconfiguration of the *terrona*'s way to experience pleasure.

In my imaginative experiment about the *terrona*'s reconfiguration, I connect the *terrona* described in the discussed sources to the Mediterranean Sea and the Mediterranean diet, and I address the capability of this sea and this food to provide wellbeing and physical pleasure to the *terrona*'s body and mind. By considering the benefits of

the Mediterranean Sea and the Mediterranean diet for the terrona's life, in my drawings I represent the terrona while she is eating delicious food, swimming in the sea and connecting with the animals and plants of the Mediterranean environment.

To illustrate how the terrona has been represented in traditional Italian media as sexualized and objectified, I discuss the movie *Seduced and Abandoned* (1964), directed by Pietro Germi. The protagonist of the movie is Agnese, played by Stefania Sandrelli. During a torrid and sultry summer afternoon the fiancé of Agnese's sister Matilda, Peppino Califano, played by Aldo Puglisi, sexually assaults Agnese. This happens while Agnese is at home with her relatives, the Ascalone family. At the moment of sexual intercourse between Agnese and Peppino, everybody else is asleep because of the abundant meal that they have had for lunch. Despite her initial resistance, Agnese gives in to Peppino's advances, and as a result of their sexual intercourse, she gets pregnant.

Agnese belongs to a traditional Sicilian family ruled by her father: the authoritarian Vincenzo Ascalone. Vincenzo is a despotic and possessive man obsessed with preserving the honor and the good name of himself and of the members of his family for societal appearances. He is constantly concerned with the chastity and purity of his four daughters. He spends most of his time controlling them by telling them how to dress, speak, and think. In line with the conservative Sicilian mentality embodied by the character of Vincenzo in the movie, Agnese, her mother, and her sisters are represented according to the traditional post-war Sicilian fashions. They are dressed in a chaste manner, wearing black clothes that cover their knees, and they have thick black hair parted in the middle.

When Vincenzo finds out that his daughter has lost her virginity and is pregnant, he goes on a rampage. Because of his behavior, viewers understand Vincenzo to be uncaring—truly uninterested in Agnese's wellbeing and her desires. He does not consider his daughters to be individuals with mature feelings and emotional needs but as two-dimensional semiotic pictures that he can manipulate and present to society as idealized representations. Both Peppino and Vincenzo, the lustful seducer and the authoritative father, treat Agnese's body as a means to fulfil their personal needs. For Peppino, Agnese is the pretty, younger sister of his fiancée, whom he sexually assaulted during a hot summer afternoon because he was driven by a transient sexual desire. Peppino does not care about Agnese and about the consequences that the loss of her virginity can bring to her life. According to the mentality of Peppino's conservative society, in fact, by having sex with a man before being married, Agnese is a dishonored woman with no hope in the future of finding someone else willing to marry her.

Peppino regrets the fact that he has seduced Agnese only because he is worried about the consequences that his actions can bring to his personal life. Agnese's father, Vincenzo, in fact, after finding of Peppino's sexual intercourse with Agnese, drives Peppino to leave Agnese's sister Matilde, further demanding that Peppino marry Agnese. Peppino, however, hypocritically does not want to marry a devirginized woman, even if it is because of him that Agnese is not a virgin anymore. According to the Sicilian mentality presented in the movie, it was within a man's right to force a woman to have sex, while the woman receiving his solicitations must resist. Because Agnese yielded to the temptation of having sex with Peppino, he considers her to be a dishonest woman. Based on her loss of virginity, Peppino then refuses to marry her.

From the all-male points of view within the movie, women are objects to be traded and collected. Like Peppino with Agnese, Vincenzo considers his daughter to be property, with one damaged by Peppino's behavior. Vincenzo is furious with Peppino not because he hurt Agnese's feelings but rather because by having sex with Agnese, Peppino compromised the good reputation of Vincenzo's family. Agnese is surrounded by people that do not truly care about her feelings and her happiness. Even her sisters blame her for bringing dishonor to their family and for exposing them to the future risk of not being able to enter good marriages with respectable men because of the compromised reputation of the Ascalone's family.

Germi uses Agnese's fictional story to denounce the backwardness of the Italian Penal Code of that time. Peppino risks being accused of sexual abuse because when he had sex with Agnese, she was sixteen years old, and she was a minor. According to article 544, however, a man that committed a sexual transgression against a woman could avoid going to jail by marrying her (**Sarogni, 2018: 377**). The practice of avoiding jail by marrying the victim of rape was called *matrimonio riparatore* (wedding of repair). Italian society considered the 'wedding of repair' to be a legitimate way for the rapist to avoid jail because at that time, the Italian Penal Code defined rape as a crime against the public morality and not against the person that was raped (**Ibid: 301**). According to this way of understanding sexual abuse, a rapist goes free by preserving the good reputation of the victim's family by marrying the victim, thereby also extinguishing the crime against public morality. In *Seduced and Abandoned*, the wedding between Agnese and Peppino provides for both of their families a way to save their good names. From the perspective of Peppino's family, it would be a dishonor to have their son go to jail, while Agnese's family is dishonored by their daughter's loss of virginity and illegitimate pregnancy.

Through this scenario, it is evident that Agnese's father disregards her happiness, wellbeing, and needs while Vincenzo's and Peppino's families treat her body as an exchange of currency to establish their value in front of their community. In contradistinction, my reconfiguration of the terrona gives her agency and complete ownership of her body, which she honors and takes care of by exploring and investigating its capability of feeling physical pleasure and sensorial joy. With this film in mind, I redesigned the abused and oppressed Agnese of *Seduced and Abandoned* as the terrona figure of Agnese (**Figure 1**).

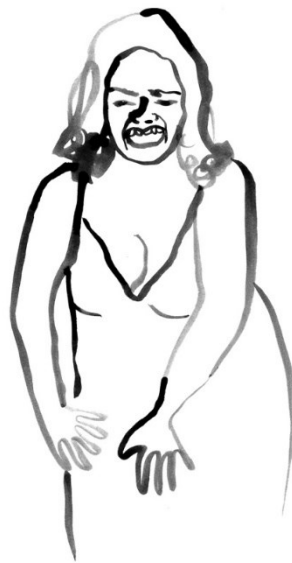


Figure 1: Agnese, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

In my drawing Agnese, the terrona is doubled over laughing with a stentorian voice. The terrona shows off her revealing dress that exposes her abundant breasts. In the drawing Agnese, I imagine the terrona as satirizing concepts such as family honor and female purity. She does not care about being judged as dishonorable or shameful by her community. On the contrary, she is proud about assigning importance to her body's ability to feel pleasure and sexual satisfaction. She considers the possibility of having a happy and satisfied body as an essential part of her feminist goals, and by connecting to the natural resources of her environment, she experiences happiness and wellbeing. I address this aspect of my creative reconfiguration of the terrona's stereotype by placing the drawing Agnese next to other drawings representing Mediterranean's plants and animals such as Rosemary, Hens, Chives and Pheasant (**Figures 2-5**).



Figure 2: Rosemary, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

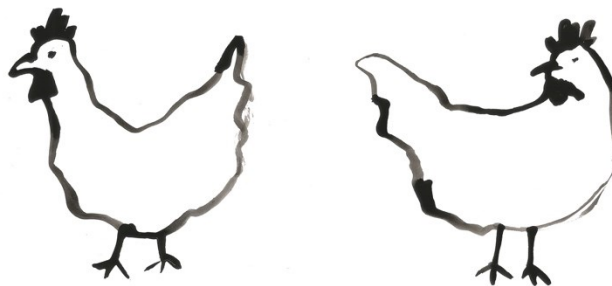


Figure 3: Hens, India Ink, 8x11, 2020



Figure 4: Chives, India Ink, 8x11, 2020



Figure 5: Pheasant, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

I also represent my reconfiguration of Agnese's character in the drawing T-Spot (**Figure 6**). The title T-Spot refers to the G-spot, also called Gräfenberg spot, from the German nineteenth-century gynaecologist Ernst Gräfenberg. As Terence Hines addresses in *The G-Spot: A Modern Gynecologic Myth* (2001), the G-spot is supposed to be an exceptionally sensitive area of the vagina that, when stimulated, can lead to strong orgasms and female ejaculation (*Ibid*: 360). By recalling the G-spot, the drawing T-spot suggests the terrona's point of extreme arousal. The terrona's spot, differently from the G-spot, does not refer to an internal area of the female body; rather, it refers to the environment where she

lives. The T-spot, which represents the south of Italy, its food traditions, its smells, and its landscape, is a place capable of arousing the terrona's sensorial enjoyment. I placed T-spot next to other drawings referring to the south of Italy, such as Sheep (**Figure 7**), Ricotta (**Figure 8**), and Pastiera (**Figure 9**). These drawings show figures of a sheep, a cheese made with the sheep's milk (ricotta), and a cake made with ricotta cheese (pastiera). By situating the drawings in this way, I suggest a variety of enveloping haptic perceptions, from the landscape where the sheep lives, to the taste of the cheese made with its milk, to the smell of the fresh-baked cake made with ricotta cheese. By placing the orgasmic terrona represented in T-spot next to Sheep, Ricotta, and Pastiera, I imagine a connection between the terrona's ecological skills of breeding goats, making cheese, and preparing delicious cakes and the talent of activating her pleasure.



Figure 6: T-Spot, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

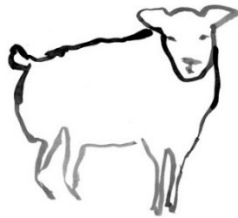


Figure 7: Sheep, India Ink, 8x11, 2020



Figure 8: Ricotta, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

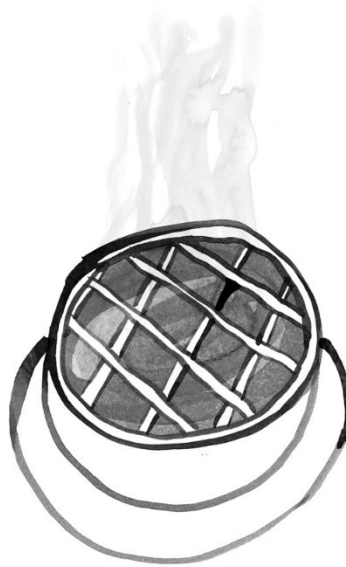


Figure 9: Pastiera, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

In my research, I also reflect on how southern Italian novelists connect the terrona's sexualization operated by man to man's desire for food. My intention is to destabilize this association, making it more about pleasure for the terrona—in her body activated by food. Author Tomasi di Lampedusa addresses the connection between the male appetite for food and a man's desire to possess the terrona's body in the novel *The Leopard*. The book is set in Sicily in the 19th century, and it describes a lunch organized by the protagonist of the novel, the prince of Salina. Among the lunch's guests, there is the beautiful Angelica, a rich young woman belonging to the bourgeoisie. By describing the banquet, Tomasi di Lampedusa parallels the attractiveness of Angelica's body to the deliciousness of the timballo di maccheroni (pasta casserole). During the banquet, both the prince of Salina and his nephew Tancredi fantasize about possessing Angelica's body, and they compare the consumption of Angelica's body with the pleasure they are experiencing about eating their maccheroni casserole (Tomasi di Lampedusa, 2018: 91-94).

Tomasi di Lampedusa describes Angelica as a tall and proportioned seventeen-year-old woman. The author compares her complexion to food by saying that her face evokes the taste of fresh whipped cream and her mouth has a childish expression evoking the flavor of strawberries (Ibid: 92). By describing the banquet, Tomasi di Lampedusa associates Angelica's beauty with the tastiness of the maccheroni. Just as Angelica did, the maccheroni provokes desire and admiration when it appears. Three servants dressed in green, gold, and beige enter the room, bringing a gigantic silver plate containing the casserole. The vision of the maccheroni

is welcomed by the prince's family and his guests with manifestations of joy and admiration. The crust of the casserole has a bronzed gold color, and it emanates a scent of sugar and cinnamon. This scent is the prelude to the casserole's filling deliciousness that gets disclosed by cutting its crust. By ripping the maccheroni's crust, aromas erupt from the stuffing that is made with chicken, ham, and truffles. This sauce forms an oily and warm mass having a suede color (**ibid: 93**). The diners devour the delicious meal with ecstatic joy. The priest makes the sign of the cross and he dives into the meal. The organist eats the pasta by absorbing the deliciousness of the maccheroni with his eyes closed. Angelica forgets the good manners that she learnt in the expensive college in Florence where she studied, and she devours the casserole with the appetite of a seventeen-year-old (**ibid: 93**). According to Tomasi di Lampedusa, the food tastes so delicious and everybody had such a great appetite because a sensual aura brought by Angelica entered into the prince's house (**ibid: 94**).

The person that was more attracted by Angelica's body was Tancredi, the prince's nephew, and while he eats the maccheroni he also fantasizes about the taste of Angelica's kisses (**ibid: 94**). At the same time, the prince, despite being a fifty-year-old married man, also desires Angelica's body, and he is jealous about Tancredi's possibility of possessing her. Later in the novel, when the prince finds out about a kiss between Tancredi and Angelica, he expresses his jealousy by comparing Tancredi's experience of kissing Angelica to the one of enjoying the taste of fresh strawberries. By doing this, the prince regrets the fact that he will never be able to experience such a taste (**ibid: 133**).

By considering Tomasi di Lampedusa's association between sexual attraction and appetite, I imagine the terrona while eating delicious meals prepared by her by using the best ingredients cultivated in the territory where she lives. The terrona's gustatory pleasure implements her sexual gratification as a consequence of the knowledge she has about her body and about her corporeal needs. However, differently from the prince of Salina and from Tancredi, the terrona does not feel the necessity of objectifying and sexualizing another human body to experience this combination of appetite and sexual drive. Rather, in my drawing Angelica, the terrona is represented as eating a giant plate of spaghetti and as enjoying herself while savoring with her closed eyes the flavor of its sauce (**Figure 10**).



Figure 10: Angelica, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

In my reconfiguration, I image the terrona as experiencing physical wellbeing while also practicing ecological activities. I imagine her while preparing her food by considering the biodiversity and the sustainability of its ingredients. The terrona is an expert regarding the gastronomic southern Italian popular culture, which is based on the use of simple ingredients and where during the cooking process, as little as possible of the food's nutrients are wasted. By considering this perspective, the terrona in the drawing *Pasta Ammuddicata* (**Figure 11**) (pasta with breadcrumbs) has prepared a traditional Sicilian recipe by using simple ingredients and leftovers, such as the stale bread. The pasta ammuddicata is made by reducing the stale bread into crumbs. The crumbs are toasted in a pan with some garlic and extra virgin olive oil. By doing this, the pasta acquires a crunchy texture. When the crumbs are ready, they are mixed with anchovies, capers, and hot pepper.



Figure 11: Pasta Ammuddicata, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

The connection between man's appetite and sexual drive is also addressed by Vitaliano Brancati, a southern Italian novelist. Brancati, in *Paolo il Caldo* (2015), tells the story of a Sicilian erotomaniac nobleman, Paolo Castorini. The story is set at the end of the nineteenth century. Paolo is presented as a negative portrait of the dissolute and impulsive southern Italian male, affected by an uncontrollable lustfulness. Paolo's family is composed of other lustful and aggressive men, such as Paolo's grandfather, Baron Paolo, and Paolo's uncle, Edmondo. They are portrayed as impulsive men, always trying to seduce women and possessing a tremendous craving for food. They are not interested in politics, and they enjoy their condition as wealthy noblemen, never questioning their privilege, spending their days pursuing physical pleasure by consuming food, alcohol, and women. In the novel, the gazes of the Castorini family's members are described as being so full of lust that it is not possible to look at more than the three of them and not be hit by an electric shock. Their beastly expressions are flabby and aggressive at the same time, and they communicate a mixture of numbness and sweet seduction where the sudden desire for their prey appears and disappears in a flash. Their eyes look like bullets that are about to explode. When they are seen all together in the family's portraits, they produce in the viewer intimidation and confusion.

Baron Paolo, Paolo's grandfather, is described at the beginning of the novel as a fifty-eight-year-old man. Brancati compares his eyes to those of beasts, and like them, it is never possible to tell where they are looking and what they are seeing. The collar of Baron Paolo's dress is always loose

to allow his neck's arteries to freely pulse. His mouth always has a lewd smile, even when he is distracted or while he is sleeping. This is the result of the baron's habit of sending kisses to every attractive woman that he sees. To send his kisses, the baron uses to protrude his lips that are damp with his saliva while his eyes are half-closed, like those of a dog lying in the sun. He is so used to sending kisses in this way that during every conversation with a good-looking woman, he uses to approve each of her sentences by assuming this expression (**Brancati, 2015: 107**).

Brancati addresses the relationship between food and sexual drive experienced by the members of the Castorini family by describing a lunch that the family has with two of their guests, a marquis and a knight. The lunch is also attended by Paolo's father, Michele. Unlike other men in the family, Michele is described as pale, small, reserved, and as having no appetite (157). While Michele arrives at the lunch with no desire for food, the other members of the Castorini family wait for Michele's arrival with their faces red because of their hunger. They are trying to contain their appetite by chewing little appetizers such as fried potatoes, olives, and sardines. The first course is a soup that is followed by a rice pie with a stuffing made of hard-boiled eggs, chicken's entrails, ricotta cheese, and pieces of sausages. Everybody except Michele take a big portion of the rice pie, followed by a second piece (**Ibid: 166**). After the rice pie, the diners have a turkey stuffed with veal and vegetables, a big mullet covered with mayonnaise, a lamb with a side of baked onions, and a mixture of fried goatfish and squid. The Castorini family consumes the lunch with voracity, and the baron's consumption of food and wine has the consequence of arousing his sexual drive. Because of this, he avoids looking at the women in the room such as his daughter-in-law (Michele's wife) and his waitresses. After eating and drinking, his sexual desire is so uncontrollable that any woman that is close to him runs the risk of being sexually assaulted (**Ibid: 172**).

In the novel, the character of the baron and his mixture of appetite and sexual desire is placed in opposition to that of his son, Michele, who, instead of enjoying lunch with his family, used an excuse to go back to his studio because he was annoyed by his father's behavior. Considered an outsider by his family members, Michele is presented as being passionate about philosophy, history, and politics. He observes the living conditions of the servants and farmers working for his family, and he embraces socialist ideas while reflecting on the moral implications of being a nobleman. The rest of the Castorini family, instead, take their privileges for granted. In addition to having a different vision of life, Michele is also physically dissimilar from his son, his father, and his brother. This difference is due to the fact that when he was born, his father was suffering from syphilis, which he transmitted to Michele's mother while

she was pregnant with Michele. The outcome was that Michele was always sick, suffering from low blood pressure, digestive problems, and a lack of sexual desire.

Despite Michele's poor health, his son Paolo was born healthy and vigorous, and his approach to life is dissolute and lustful as those of his grandfather and his uncle. Paolo, in fact, while speaking with one of his friends, states that the only joy he has in life is that of conquering women, and he considers art, science, work, and politics to be boring and useless (**Ibid: 431**). Paolo's indifference toward politics is exemplified by his encounter in Rome with an attractive southern Italian parliamentarian woman. While she is having a talk about the problems that have afflicted the southern Italian population, such as poverty, unemployment, and illnesses, the only thing Paolo could think about was imagining her without clothes (**Ibid: 418**). Brancati parallels Paolo's relationship with women to the one that cannibals have with the human flesh that causes them to experience appetite and salivation. Paolo is incapable of valuing women's personalities and appreciating their thoughts. Every time Paolo speaks with a woman, his obsession with sex entirely devours him while any rational and contemplative activity of his brain burns and disintegrates (**Ibid: 660**).

In my reconfiguration of the southern Italian woman, I consider Paolo's approach to sex and food as well as the one experienced by his father Michele and his grandfather, the baron. The terrona, in stark contrast to Paolo and his grandfather, does not live a decadent life uninformed about the problems related to her society. Rather, in the same way as Michele does, she has political and social concerns. However, unlike Michele, she loves life, and she is capable of feeling pleasure by enjoying sex and good food. The terrona's way of experiencing gustatory pleasure, however, is not wanton and inconsiderate like the way it is practiced by Paolo and the baron. It is rather connected to her intellectual interests involving ecology and social justice, and she consumes her food consciously by considering how it is cultivated, distributed, and prepared.

By considering this investigation, in my drawing pizza (**Figure 12**), I imagine the terrona as relating to her slice of pizza from a gustatory, ecological, and political perspective. Pizza is associated with fast food, where the underpaid staff serves food that has been prepared with low-quality ingredients. The food represented in the drawing pizza is consumed by the terrona as a product made with locally-sourced products, as it is prepared in the south of Italy. By relating to her food, the my re-designed terrona does not only enjoy its taste; she knows how the pizza is prepared and how its ingredients are cultivated by the farmers working in the agricultural sector. She administrates the processes that constitute the food supply

chain by making sure that the products are cultivated and prepared by respecting the environment and that the workers are fairly paid.



Figure 12: Pizza, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

The terrona's capability to feel physical pleasure that I have discussed by analyzing the drawings T-Spot, Agnese, Angelica, Pasta Ammuddicata and Pizza have also been inspired by the character of Modesta (Modesty), the protagonist of the novel *The Art of Joy* (1976) written by the Sicilian writer Goliarda Sapienza (2014). The protagonist of *The Art of Joy* is Modesta, a Sicilian woman who was born on the first of January 1900--the novel is about her long life that runs across the entire twentieth century. Her extremely poor family is composed of her mother and her disabled sister. The father, a sailor, has abandoned them, and he comes back into Modesta's life only to rape her when she is still underage. This miserable beginning to Modesta's life changes in adolescence, during which she understands that her intelligence and her beauty can be used to change her condition of misery and to achieve 'joy' (to which the title of the book refers). Modesta is described in the novel as being vital and ambitious and as ready to seduce men and women to pursue her objectives and to satisfy her physical pleasure.

She is a controversial character capable of killing in order to obtain her goals, while at the same time protecting and caring about her friends. She is always present as a caring partner, ready to help and sustain her loved ones. She is also attractive and smart, and she possesses an inexhaustible thirst for knowledge. However, Modesta does not use her charm and intelligence to achieve power and richness. Modesta's principal desire is to live a free life composed of knowledge, affection, health, and physical pleasure.

In the novel, Sapienza shows how Modesta is interested in exploring her body and understanding her sexuality from the beginning of her adolescence. In her teenage years, Modesta finds out that she can feel pleasure by touching her genitals. Similarly to other fictional characters that I have analyzed before, Modesta associates sex with food by describing masturbation as a stronger experience than the one she feels by eating freshly baked bread (**Ibid: 24**). At the same time, Modesta associates her desire of experiencing sex to the experience of seeing the sea for the first time. This association is exemplified by Modesta's relationship with Tuzzu, a young farmer that she likes. Tuzzu is described as having blue eyes that Modesta correlates with having the same color as the sea. Tuzzu knows how the sea looks, and Modesta always asks him to describe it to her. Modesta's desire to discover how the sea appears symbolizes her adventurous personality and her desire of pursuing pleasure, knowledge, freedom, and joy.

Modesta manages to change her condition from that of a poor farmer and to that of a joyful and satisfying existence by obtaining economic independence, surrounding herself with affection, experimenting in having sex with men and women, becoming a mother, and getting involved in the political antifascist activity against Mussolini's regime.



Figure 13: Modesta, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

In my drawing Modesta (**Figure 13**), I represent Modesta's first encounter with the Mediterranean Sea. In the novel, Modesta's experience of seeing the ocean for the first time is parallel to her conquest of independence and joy. The sea is described as a liquid-overlapped sky that quietly runs away in the direction of boundless freedom. Looking at the sea, Modesta has the impression of breathing for the first time. While thinking about the hard work she has done to change her circumstances and to move from being a poor and uneducated peasant into being a wealthy and independent woman, she cries for the first time (**Sapienza, 2014: 327**). In my drawing Modesta, I address Modesta's way of experiencing the sea as a metaphor of her accomplished freedom and fulfilment by representing the terrona while dipping her feet in the sea. Her eyes are closed while she smells the freshness of the salty wind, and she enjoys the marine breeze that moves her hair and caresses her skin.

Insomuch that the sea represents a central element of the terrona's environment and it determines her haptic life, in my research, I consider the effects that the sea has on the human body and its wellbeing. The scholar Deborah Cracknell in *By the Sea* (**2019**) addresses how spending time at the beach is an intensive experience that involves all the five senses and presupposes the sight of the sea, the listening of the waves, the taste of the salty water, and the skin contact with the water and the sand. These sensorial sensations are experienced by the body in a positive way that improve the person's wellbeing (**Ibid: 72**). The experience of swimming in the sea is an immersive practice, and it represents a way to relate to the

natural environment that is impracticable on the mainland. Scientific research has demonstrated that swimming in the sea contributes to reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. It also supports good sleep (74).

According to Cracknell, one of the main benefits acquired by spending time by the sea is being directly exposed to the sun and increasing the body's production of vitamin D. This has the consequence of regulating the quantities of calcium and phosphate in the body, which determines the health of the bones, teeth, and muscles. Vitamin D also has consequences for a person's immune system which defends the body from the attacks of external organisms, and it has the capability of distinguishing the person's cells from the ones that do not belong to them. If for some reason, the immune system does not recognize the person's tissues, it can attack them as if they were an external organism. This autoimmune response can cause a variety of pathologies such as diabetes, psoriasis, arthritis, and lupus. The lack of vitamin D is also connected to metabolic syndrome, which is associated with pathologies such as abdominal obesity, high blood pressure, abnormal levels of cholesterol, and high level of sugar in the blood. The coexistence of these problems can bring about cardiovascular pathologies and strokes (**Ibid: 60-61**).



Figure 14: Vitamin D, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

With this health-conscious, sea-related research in mind, in my drawing Vitamin D (**Figure 14**), the terrona is depicted as spending time at the beach and as setting aside her towel to take in the sun. Because she can access the benefits provided by living close to the sea, I imagine the terrona as a woman who is not concerned about aging and getting sick

because she expects to live a long and healthy life made of sensorial pleasure and physical and mental strength that assist her in her political and managerial activities. According to this, in the drawing *Immersive Experience* (**Figure 15**), the terrona is represented as swimming in the sea and providing to her body and to her mood all the benefits offered by her contact with the Mediterranean Sea.



Figure 15: Immersive Experience, India Ink, 8x11, 2020



Figure 16: Ionizing Walk, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

By considering the benefits provided by spending time at the beach, in my drawing *Ionizing Walk* (**Figure 16**), I show the terrona walking on the beach and breathing in the sea breeze. She breathes the air that is close to the sea which is rich in negative ions (**Bonsignori, 2011: 116**). After reaching the person's blood circulation, the negative ions produce biochemical reactions that improve the levels of the chemical serotonin in the person's body (**ibid: 118**). The negative ions facilitate the assumption of oxygen in the lungs; they favor the good performance of the body's functions; they improve the immunity defenses, and they have positive effects on the activities of the cardiovascular, endocrine, and nervous systems (**ibid: 119**). In this way, the terrona represented in *Ionizing Walk*, by frequently experiencing the positive effects of walking on the beach, strengthens her body and improves her mood.

In my reflection about the terrona's physical pleasure, in addition of considering the sensations that she experiences by connecting with her environment, I also consider the pleasure that she experiences by eating food. Because of this, in my research, I investigate the Mediterranean diet and the way it affects the person's body and mood. The concept of a Mediterranean diet was introduced by the scientist Ancel Keys after the Second World War in his work: *How to Eat Well and Stay Well: The Mediterranean Way* (**1975**). Ancel Keys was a professor at the University of Minnesota in the 1950s; he conducted research on the lifestyle of the population living in Cilento, an area close to Naples. Keys noticed that despite their difficult living conditions caused by the damage of the Second World War, the population living in this region had a life expectancy that was 15% higher than someone of the American high middle class. Keys also noticed that, differently from the American population, the deaths that were caused by heart attacks in Cilento were almost nonexistent. Keys decided to spend the rest of his life in this region because he was convinced that the diet of the poor southern Italian population based on fresh vegetables, fruits, extra virgin olive oil, legumes, bread, pasta, and wine was the secret of living a long and healthy life.

Given these observations, in my reconfiguration, I consider the terrona's agri-food skills as a talent that allows her to invest a ruling position in the government of her society. In the drawing *Decision Making Committee* (**Figure 17**), the terrona is represented while she gets ready to take part in a meeting about the management and the improvement of the southern Italian resources adopted in its agri-food chain. To address this narration, I placed *Decision Making Committee* next to the drawings *Octopus*, *Nettle*, *Strawberries*, *Garlic*, *Onion*, and *Celery* (**Figures 18-23**) to display the terrona next to some of the ingredients that compose the Mediterranean gastronomic tradition. By doing this, I intend to present imaginative and

possible ways to connect woman's subjectivity and ecology in a way that benefits both.



Figure 17: Decision Making Committee, India Ink, 8x11, 2020



Figure 18: Octopus, India Ink, 8x11, 2020



Figure 19: Nettle, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

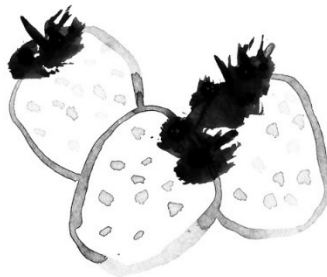


Figure 20: Strawberries, India Ink, 8x11, 2020



Figure 21: Garlic, India Ink, 8x11, 2020



Figure 22: Onion, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

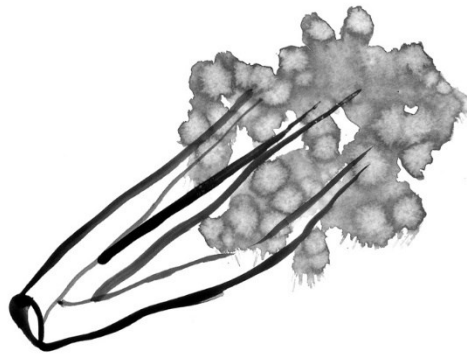
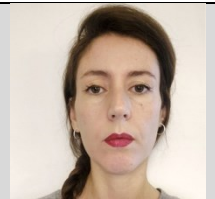


Figure 23: *Celery*, India Ink, 8x11, 2020

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Note: All illustrations included in this article are the author's own creations.

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Reflecting on the Experience of Environmental Epiphany in the Lives of Aldo Leopold, Thomas Hill Jr., and Albert Schweitzer

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Abstract

Can a very short event change one's outlook on the natural environment? Environmental awareness can be attained through formal and non-formal education, as well as through active engagement in environmental activities. However, there were historical figures who witnessed a change in their outlooks in the blink of an eye. This article sets out to explore the impact of environmental epiphanies on humans during a human/non-human encounter by showing their role in triggering powerful emotions and a new type of awareness in the lives of three key environmentalist figures belonging to the twentieth century: Aldo Leopold, Thomas English Hill Jr., and Albert Schweitzer. The article investigates the importance of such revelatory experiences in a world of climatic challenges.

Keywords: Albert Schweitzer; Aldo Leopold; emotional experiences in nature; environmental epiphanies; human-nature interactions; Thomas Hill Jr

Several definitions have been given to environmental epiphanies. According to environmental psychologists Joanne Vining and Melinda Merrick, they are emotional ‘experiences in which one’s perception of the essential meaning of their relationship to nature shifts in a meaningful manner’ (Vining & Merrick, 2018: 157). Philosopher Emmanuel Levinas refers to these experiences when he states that a sudden encounter with the other may cause unexpected ethical obligation on the part of the subject. These are occasions when we become inadvertently ethically responsible for an agonizing other. This responsibility emanates from our corporeal response to their suffering (body agency); it takes place before any rational decision on our part (pre-reflexivity); it is characterised by immediate rather mediated communication (immediacy), and it makes the agent lose control in the presence of the other (loss of control) (Marais, 2012: 118–23). In brief, Levinas’s theory suggests that we do not always resort to rationalization in order to sympathise with the other. In addition to his view, it should be noted that before environmental epiphanies can create such inadvertent ethical obligation towards the other, they stir strong emotions in the agent, and after they create the ethical obligation, their impact triggers new thoughts. In the case of a human/nonhuman encounter, the unexpected meeting with a pathetic or awe-inspiring animal or natural view triggers a feeling of unexplained emotional attachment in the human agent. This feeling pushes her to behave in responsible ways towards that nonhuman other, thus making her ask deep questions about the value of nonhuman life on Earth in general.

I began reflecting upon environmental epiphanies during a group forest walk in a natural park in Oujda, Morocco in 2021. After walking for some time in the park, my friends and I decided to take a short break. The topic of our discussion shifted towards our lived experiences with the natural environment and those of various Western environmentalists. When it was my turn, I started talking about the life of American environmentalist Aldo Leopold, his experience with the forest, and how a single epiphanic event turned his outlook upside down. Leopold (1887–1948) is an American wildlife ecologist and author who is famous for his seminal posthumous book *A Sand County Almanac*, in which he calls for the consideration of ‘soils, waters, plants, and animals’ in our ethical decisions and for the necessity to change our roles from conquerors of nature to mere members of it (Leopold, 1968: 204), through the maintenance of its integrity, stability, and beauty (Ibid: 224–5). Leopold loved hunting deer, but more predators in his region meant fewer of them. That was the main reason for his decision to kill wolves, bears and other predatory animals. The turning point in his life was when he shot a grey wolf and saw a ‘fierce green fire dying in her eyes’ (Ibid: 130). This brief scene was so powerful that he ‘realized then that there was something new to [him] in those

eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain’ (*Ibid.* 130). Although that new thing remained unexplained in his book, he seems to suggest that the gaze in the wolf’s eyes stirred up his emotions and changed his convictions. This could be noticed in Leopold’s pioneering role in the shift of American environmentalism towards more holistic conservation policies based on the importance of preserving predators as vital regulators of biodiversity.

Leopold was not the only person to have had such an epiphanic experience based on a single event. The American professor of philosophy Thomas Hill Jr. (1937–) underwent a similar experience that affected his emotions and reshaped his approach to the natural environment. Known as the interpreter of Kant’s moral and political philosophy, Hill wrote on respect, dignity, and justice among other moral themes (**Thomas, 2022**). Seeing his ‘wealthy eccentric’ neighbour cut down a lovely tree to pave his way with asphalt as an economical strategy made Hill wonder ‘what sort of person would do that?’, rather than ‘whose rights have been violated?’ or ‘how has this action minimized overall happiness?’ (**Hill, cited in Cafaro, 2015: 1–2**). It was the first time Hill questioned the character of a human being regarding a nonhuman entity rather than just considering the possible rights-based or utilitarian underpinnings behind such unmindful action. The environmental epiphany of seeing the tree being cut down left him ‘puzzled over how to explain his own intuitions regarding the wrongness of such situation’ (*Ibid.* 1). Small as it might seem, that scene made Hill wonder why there was nothing more behind his discomfort and why humankind was solely concerned about the potential use and enjoyment of the natural world. It also made him conjure up memories of human alteration of the Appalachian wilderness (**Hill, 1983: 1**). Undoubtedly then, that scene was so unexpected that it further deepened his reflection upon the interplay between human character and the environment.

A final example of ‘Aha’ moments activating new environmental mindsets can be found in the life of the French-German philosopher Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965).ⁱ As mentioned in his autobiography, Schweitzer was born to a practising Christian family in Upper Alsace. He pursued his higher education in France and Germany before he got a PhD on the religious philosophy of Emmanuel Kant (**Schweitzer, 1998: 24–25**) before getting appointed to different academic positions (**Ibid.** 43–81). Years later, he significantly changed his life plans when he decided to become a jungle doctor in Africa to help the needy (**Ibid.** 81–92). While travelling upriver on a barge in equatorial Africa, ‘at the very moment when, at sunset, [he and his wife] were making [their] way through a herd of hippopotamuses, there flashed upon [his] mind, unforeseen and unsought, the phrase reverence for life’ (**Schweitzer, cited in Desjardins, 2013: 155**). As further explained by the philosophy professor Joseph

Desjardins, that epiphanic moment triggered in Schweitzer a spiritual mix of wonder and awe at nature. Translated from the German phrase *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*, reverence for life, for Schweitzer, is based on the compulsion to value all other organisms which are capable of development by preserving them and promoting their well-being (**Ibid: 155**). Such revelatory experiences, according to the American historian Philip Ivanhoe, produce humility, obliterate arrogance towards nature, and warn against objectifying and disenchanting practices (**Ivanhoe, cited in Jordan & Kristjánsson, 2016: 13**). In this light, Schweitzer's worry that material progress in Europe would not be accompanied by ethical progress (**Schweitzer, 1998: 148**) vanished with that mind-blowing more-than-human scene because he finally found that the feeling of reverence for life was the answer (**Ibid: 155**). Schweitzer was mindful of the natural environment even before this scene. Still, his realization that we can become ethical only when we consider life as sacred to us, and only when we devote ourselves to supporting all life in need of help, was a new insight gained through this epiphanic experience (**Ibid: 157**).

To wrap up, these reflections on environmental epiphanies came at a time when international parties were meeting at the COP26 conference in Glasgow to make sure that the promises of the Paris Accord were kept.ⁱⁱ The 2015 Paris Accord set a goal to keep the global mean surface temperature below 2°C. Introducing a democratic innovation, this Accord stipulated that 'member states decide individually, in the form of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), what actions they will commit to taking toward the common goal of climate risk reduction.' (**Lawrence & Schäfer: 2018, Abstract**). Countries were then expected to stick to their commitments through these NDCs. Still, inspiring global climate action needs a particular type of awareness that does not occur only through official meetings and detailed action plans which do not usually lead to big results for different reasons. Some polluting countries might step out of climate agreements at any time (the case of the US threat of withdrawal under Trump administration), and unexpected events might slow down the process of coordination and create a rebound in global carbon dioxide emissions (the case of the disruptive COVID-19 pandemic) (**Tollefson, 2021**). In light of this, environmental awareness through unexpected encounters with the natural environment can be a primordial step to meet the big challenges of the 21st century provided this gets popularised worldwide as part of sustainability education programs. This might not only transform our view of sustainability from being a burden to being a resource, as Jordan and Kristjánsson (**2016: 20**) highlight but might also transform our view of the natural world altogether. This is supported by a study of fifty American adults revealing that 80% of them reported drastic changes in their attitudes, values, or

behaviour after experiencing environmental epiphanies (**Vining & Merrick, 2018: 164**). What about you? Have you ever come across a strong unexpected scene, like a heart-breaking view of a wounded animal, the fall of an ancient giant tree, or a majestic natural view that has opened your eyes to the value of nature?ⁱⁱⁱ

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ⁱ 'Aha' is a German and English exclamatory expression of surprise at discovering something. Vining and Merrick call it a 'lightbulb' moment (2018: 165).

ⁱⁱ The Conference of the Parties (COP26) took place from 31 October to 12 November 2021.

ⁱⁱⁱ This contribution might pave the way for new lines of thought, namely the experience of environmental epiphany in different parts of the world as well as the possibility to have this experience in other natural environments such as the deserts, the world summits, or the Earth from Space.

^{iv} Available at: <https://arcadiana.easlce.eu/2021/12/04/the-experience-of-environmental-epiphany-in-the-lives-of-a-leopold-t-hill-and-a-schweitzer/>

(In)Visible Woman: Ruth Madeley and Representing Disabled Lives on Screen

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Abstract

This critical reflection examines the growing career of actor Ruth Madeley, and her visibility in the industry as an ambulatory wheelchair user, exploring the impact of 'cripping up,' on casting practice, and its lasting effects on disabled actors, screen representation and the community they strive to represent. Madeley's rise to prominence offers the opportunity to explore the significance of casting disabled actors, and the value of seeing and being seen. Her success indicates a shift toward greater inclusivity and diversity, but the sustained casting of disabled actors remains exceptional rather than commonplace.

*Drawing upon analysis of three high profile roles in *Years and Years*, *Don't Take My Baby*, *Verisimilitude*, and *The Watch*, alongside interviews and related paratexts, I explore how Madeley's disability is negotiated and the tension this creates within her star image. With reference to scholarship on stardom, performance, and disability studies, I argue that Madeley is extraordinary in her ordinariness. She is highly visible, and yet, invisible. Her work dismantles entrenched yet ableist narratives where disabled characters are presented as little more than 'inspiration porn', reflected in Madeley's pursuit of roles where disabled people and their lives are represented as rich and complex, thereby challenging perceptions of disabled characters and their life experiences.*

*What does Madeley's career tell us about the industry's progression since Daniel Day-Lewis' Oscar-winning portrayal of writer Christy Brown in *My Left Foot*? And, as Madeley herself has commented, what is left to do in terms of how we represent disabled lives on screen?*

Keywords: disability; acting; disability representation; star-image; performance; crippling-up

In August 2021, writer Jack Thorne gave the MacTaggart Lecture at the Edinburgh International Television Festival. In it, he reflected upon UK television's failure towards the disabled community, describing disability as 'the hidden diversity,' omitted from wider conversations (**Thorne, 2021**).

Commenting upon the rarity of disabled people both in front and behind the camera, he advocated for change, detailing the difficulties of disability-focussed projects. Within this landscape, he paid particular attention to actors and creators who succeed despite significantly stacked odds. Amongst them is actor Ruth Madeley, listed with *EastEnders'* Rose Ayling-Ellis, and *Life's* Melissa Johns. Their success, Thorne noted, revolves around fitting into broader non-disabled narratives (**Ibid**).

This observation prompted me to consider the oppositions and tensions that are inherent within the life, work, and star persona of disabled actors. Madeley's success makes her an ideal case study to explore and reflect upon how these tensions are negotiated, revealing a series of interrelated paradoxes.

The first paradox: standing out/fitting in, is analogous to Richard Dyer's (1979) observations on the 'ordinary/extraordinary' paradox of the star (**1998: 43**). As Mike Clarke later qualified, the star must remain unique, while also being 'someone with whom the spectator can identify' (**1987: 141**). These qualities are true for Madeley, but come with an added layer of significance, making her *extraordinary in her ordinariness*.

Starring in Russell T. Davies' *Years and Years* (2019), exposed her to a wider audience, culminating in a profile for *Vogue Italia*. This built on earlier critical recognition including a Best Actress BAFTA nomination in 2016 and making the BAFTA Breakthrough Brit list that same year. At the time, interviews typically focussed on her career trajectory, detailing her origins in a family with no acting background. Her rareness always implicit, she subverted this by emphasising she was brought up in the 'same way' as her older sister, 'taught to see there was nothing [she] couldn't do', and instead find 'different ways to do it' (**Ruth Madeley qtd. in Curtis, 2019**).

The extraordinary element of her star persona comes through her self-described 'backwards journey' to the industry (**Madeley qtd. In Nicolaou, 2019**). Whilst working for the charity Whizz-Kidz, Madeley was approached regarding the need for a wheelchair user for an upcoming episode of *Half Moon Investigations*. In various accounts, she details going to the audition to gain insight into the casting process, but never intending to act. After auditioning, she got the part, and later, secured an agent. This reflects the luck and chance elements common to star narratives, and Madeley's rareness as a disabled actor. In responding to a lack of

representation and discovering a hitherto unrecognised talent, her extraordinariness becomes doubly coded.

As Tobin Siebers observes, when on stage, non-disabled bodies are never questioned, but disabled bodies always are, becoming ‘visible, perhaps hypervisible’, through their presence (Siebers, 2016). For Madeley, this is true on stage, on screen or off, both as an ambulatory wheelchair user, and as someone who openly discusses her condition, spina bifida, on social media. This hypervisibility frequently positions her as a spokesperson and role-model. She demonstrates an awareness of her position, advocating for better disability representation, saying she ‘grew up being very aware that no one looked like me on-screen,’ and wanted to help create change in the industry (Madeley qtd. in Brennan, 2021). However, in being cast, she is sometimes rendered invisible, not only by fitting into the narratives Thorne describes, but also when overlooked in favour of able-bodied counterparts.

This creates the second paradox: being seen/being unseen. Madeley navigates the consequences of this primarily in how her disability is negotiated within each role. In some projects, it is minimised to the point of being incidental, operating similarly to colourblind casting.ⁱ In others, it is maximised, filling gaps in disabled social history or articulating the contemporary disabled experience.

Comedic short *Verisimilitude* (2020) sits in the middle of this schema, representing both the disabled experience, and the realities of being a disabled actor. Directed by David Proud and released as part of *The Uncertain Kingdom* anthology in 2020, it explores the consequences of casting non-disabled actors as disabled characters. Colloquially defined by playwright Kaite O’Reilly ‘cripping up’ (qtd. in Komporály, 2005: 66) the term has entered the popular consciousness through debate in the press via Frances Ryan (2015) and Lyn Gardner (2013, 2016), amongst others. For Christopher Shinn, the practice enables ‘the lie of representation,’ while also perpetuating the fascination with disability-as-metaphor, to the exclusion of disabled actors and their true experiences (Shinn, 2014).

Madeley plays Bella, an out-of-work actress, hired as a consultant to advise an able-bodied actor, Josh (Laurie Davidson), after he’s cast in the biopic of a fictitious Paralympian. Josh sees the role as a ‘challenge,’ but has no real understanding of disability, much to Bella’s amusement, and ultimately, frustration. Bella helps Josh in various ways, including how to push a wheelchair correctly, making his performance more authentic through her labour. While Josh is given extra attention as the star, Bella is often ignored. This changes when someone drops out of the film, and she is asked by the director to replace them, upping the film’s ‘diversity quota’ in the process. The film ends as Bella prepares to shoot her first take.

While *Verisimilitude* explores the realities of working as a disabled person, *Don't Take My Baby* (2015) explores what it means to build a family as one. Written by Jack Thorne and aired during BBC Three's disability season, 'Defying the Label' in 2015, it raised awareness of Children's Services investigations into disabled parents. Based on real-life testimonies, it follows a young, disabled couple, Anna, a powerchair user, and partially-sighted Tom, played by sighted actor Adam Long. Both living with hereditary and degenerative conditions, the film details their struggle to keep their baby daughter once their caregiving abilities are called into question.

The film fits into a long tradition of issue-based single dramas, such as *Cathy Come Home*, where a large-scale issue is told on a smaller, personal scale, to generate empathy and understanding; achieved here using video diaries and flashbacks chronicling Anna and Tom's relationship. Central to its affectiveness is Madeley's performance, derived from a place of truth and knowledge. Describing her involvement, Madeley noted the value of drawing on her own experiences during difficult or emotionally vulnerable scenes, including where her own surgery scars are visible (BAFTA, 2016). Much like *Verisimilitude*, her portrayal, and its roots in lived experience are significant, bringing greater authenticity to the character. Her presence underlines the importance of, as Thorne advocates, disabled stories being told with the involvement of disabled people (Thorne, 2021).

The thread of collaboration and involvement is clear in Madeley's most high-profile role to date, as Rosie Lyons in ensemble drama *Years and Years*. Unlike *Don't Take My Baby*, the character wasn't written as disabled, with references and plotlines created after the fact between Madeley and Davies. This culminates in a narrative arc where the future Rosie inhabits creates a cure for spina bifida, leaving her to reflect on what an able-bodied life may be like, before deciding not to take it herself. However, this is one plotline amongst many, and as Madeley noted, 'the fact that she has spina bifida is down the list of interesting things' about the character (Madeley qtd. in Nicolaou, 2019).

Rosie's disability is a non-issue, and she is not shown in her wheelchair until over halfway into the first episode. Introduced as she travels to hospital in labour, the audience engage with her as a person first. This sets the tone for her treatment throughout the series. Fully integrated into the family, she is a fiercely independent, loving, and hard-working single mum to her young sons. Feisty and flirtatious, her disastrous love-life is played to humorous effect, but we laugh *with* her, not *at* her when a date goes wrong. She is someone who, in Madeley's words, has 'a lot of layers to her.' The multifaceted nature of the role, and its significance made her, 'an incredible character to play' (Madeley qtd. in BBC, 2019).

Rosie's characterisation is normal to the point of mundane, and this in itself is revolutionary.

Like Anna before her, *seeing* Rosie living her life matters. Once more, ordinariness is made extraordinary, because seeing a character like Rosie is rare. To see them portrayed by a disabled actor, as part of a primetime BBC One drama, is rarer still.

The positive reaction to Rosie illustrates both the need for more disabled characters on screen, and for depth and nuance in their writing. The Ruderman Family Foundation awarded the production its *Seal of Authentic Representation* in recognition of their work to further accurate and authentic disability representation. Madeley reflected that Rosie represents a 'huge step forward in the industry toward better portrayal of characters with disabilities' (Madeley qtd. in Drury, 2019).

The final role I will explore reveals the third paradox: being good/being bad. Madeley's casting as Throat in BBC America's *The Watch* (2020), inspired by Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series, represents a leap rather than a step forward for representation. In the source material, Throat is neither disabled, female, nor white. While it is beyond the scope of this reflection to debate the merits of this in relation to fidelity, or indeed, the problematic swapping of one minority for another, *The Watch* offers the opportunity to contemplate what's possible once disability is considered an asset rather than a limitation.

On social media, responses to her casting and portrayal were generally positive. Where fans disagreed with the choice, Madeley remained pragmatic, creating a dialogue that acknowledged their grievances, while offering her perspective on the importance of Throat in this guise. It is notable however, that Throat's disability was rarely part of their negative response, but rather, the fundamental changes to *their* understanding of the character, transformed from a down-on-his-luck pie merchant to a gang leader-turned-snitch.

In a Twitter thread dedicated to Throat, Madeley explained how her wheelchair was made, using the moment to comment upon the value diverse casting brings to characters. Built entirely from scrap by the props department, as if scavenged from the surroundings, Madeley used the chair, the concrete example of her own and Throat's otherness, to demonstrate why inclusion matters, arguing that characters 'instantly become more interesting & layered [...] Hiring disabled actors will ALWAYS make a project richer' (Madeley, 2021).

Following Madeley's argument, once her portrayal as Throat is understood as an interpretation of the character, *The Watch* also is also lens through which to consider the nuance offered by diversifying casting. Madeley

playing someone who's non-virtuous, breaks down the societal paradigm of the good and bad cripple, while also eschewing the equally entrenched trope of equating villainy with physical disfigurement.ⁱⁱ

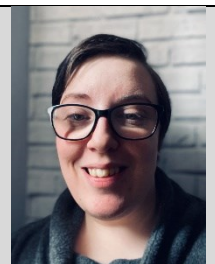
This reflection has illustrated the significance of Madeley's continued success, and what this means for disability representation. By outlining the tensions and oppositions that are negotiated within her star persona, I have also begun to create an ontology of that stardom. In doing so, I have examined what's gained when diverse casting is inclusive of disability: we amplify voices and talent like Madeley's.

The analysis of specific roles within her growing body of work illustrates how the range of roles she can take on is also beginning to diversify, exemplary of the changes in attitude regarding who and what disabled characters can be. Even so, the experiences of Madeley and Thorne prove that change remains painfully slow, with representation disproportionate to the size of the community it should represent. As Madeley remarked, '[t]here's a lot of work still to be done' (**Madeley qtd. in Nicolaou, 2019**). More work to ensure that disabled lives and stories are treated with equal value. More work to ensure disabled creatives are honoured with the same degree of recognition as their able-bodied counterparts.

Later in his MacTaggart speech, Thorne detailed his hopes for the future, when such levels of recognition are commonplace, saying, 'someone is going to build a show around Ruth Madeley, and when they do, they'll realise she is one of the talents of our time' (**Thorne, 2021**).ⁱⁱⁱ

What a future that will be. I cannot wait to see it.

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Endnotes

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ⁱⁱⁱ In the weeks following the McTaggart Lecture, Thorne created the group 'Underlying Health Condition' with actor-writer Genevieve Barr and line producer Katie Player to advocate for change, both in front of and behind the camera. The lecture and its coverage prompted the formation of a new co-production initiative between the BBC and Netflix for disabled creatives. Similarly, Channel Four publicised additional recommendations and best practice guidance for working with disabled talent.

On The Ethical Challenge of the Predicament of AI and the Perspectives Offered by Buddhism: A conversation with Peter D. Hershock

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Abstract

In this article, I will explore the debate on the ethical challenges posed by AI. I will do so by engaging in conversation with Dr. Peter Hershock who is expert in Modern Buddhism and Ethics. Dr. Hershock has recently published a landmark study on the matter called Buddhism and Intelligent Technology: Toward a More Humane Future. He argues that the main challenge that AI poses, is not technological, but ethical. And that we need to establish an ethics that will foster a shared flourishing for all on this planet if we want to resolve the predicament of value conflicts embedded in the technologically driven advancement of AI. This could be done through development of what Dr. Hershock calls virtuosic relational dynamics, a relational way of organizing our society that goes beyond individualism. To reach there, the perspectives offered by Buddhist philosophy will be discussed and explained. In conclusion, we will propose that Buddhist philosophy can offer insights and practices that may enrich our pursuit of sustainable AI ethics.

Keywords: AI; intelligent technology; ethics; Buddhism; governance; education

Introduction

Algorithmic or Artificial, Intelligence (AI) has become pervasive in our social-economic order. The areas in which AI tools are being applied have become so extensive that daily lives do not afford us perspectives from which to have an overview of which and how many phenomena in our society are influenced or even driven by AI or AI powered systems. Whether this development and the technological feat it represents, is to be lauded or regretted, remains to be seen.

The crucial factor in this debate on ‘AI – Panic or Panacea?’ is however, as we will entertain in this conversation, not a technological one, but an ethical one. For the first time in the history of technology driven human progress, the technology concerned is not a ‘dumb’ mechanical or passive computational extension of human values. As Peter Hershock argues in his latest book, *Buddhism and Intelligent Technology: Toward a More Humane Future* (2021), the greatest perils of AI are embedded in its greatest promises and even in its biggest successes. Where AI might be celebrated and marketed as a means for attaining what we desire as machine learning systems gain facility with identifying, anticipating, and delivering to us what we want, these systems do so by simultaneously encapsulating us in individual cocoons spun from our digitally expressed desires and values through algorithmic processes that are increasingly impenetrable, even by the specialists who wrote their originating code.

As such, according to Hershock, our AI systems can be described in Buddhist terms as operating as ‘karmic engines,’ or desire amplifiers, that by rule of cause and effect may snowball us from seeking gratification of a rather small and innocent looking desire, into losing ourselves in hedonistic sense gratification. As such, they are scaling up human likes, dislikes, values, and intentions, as well as confluences and conflicts among them. Due to the ways intelligent technology operates, the ‘Panicked Panacea’ that AI may offer us is not a *problem* that is open to technical solution. Hershock argues that instead, it forces confrontation with a *predicament* that expresses conflicts among our own human values. This predicament cannot be solved, precisely because the values conflicts it expresses do not allow us to define what would count *as* a solution. The predicament of intelligent technology can only be *resolved*, where resolution implies both clarity and commitment—clarity regarding the origins of the predicament combined with commitment to realizing less conflicted constellations of values and intentions, both personal and social.

In this conversation with Dr. Peter Hershock, we will enter into a more detailed discussion of these issues and look for the insights that Buddhist philosophy may offer us to find an ethical direction towards resolving this predicament. We have structured this conversation in the style of a dialogue to express the train of thought that leads from establishing the nature of our predicament on AI ethics, to our experience of the world, and into the Buddhist ideas of how we can transit from 20th century individualism to 21st century relational societal organization.

Dr. Peter Hershock is Director of the Asian Studies Development Program and leads the Initiative for Humane AI at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawai'i. He has published extensively on the subjects of Contemporary Buddhist Thought, Ethics and Social Justice, and Cultural Diversity, including his books: *Personal Zen, Public Zen* (2014), *Valuing Diversity: Buddhist Reflection on Realizing a More Equitable Global Future* (2012), *Buddhism in the Public Sphere* (2006), *Reinventing the Wheel: A Buddhist Response to the Information Age* (1999), and *Liberating Intimacy: Enlightenment and Social Virtuosity in Ch'an Buddhism* (1996). His latest book *Buddhism and Intelligent Technology: Toward a More Humane Future* (2021) pertinently addresses the issue of ethics regarding AI. The book offers a comprehensive outlook on the predicament of AI ethics and provides suggestions for which directions we could take towards resolution. As such, it serves as a reference point for this conversation.

In Conversation

Theodoor Richard: In the current debate on the ethics of, development of, AI, we often see two groups of people who have their own approach to it. There are the computer scientists who are operating from the assumption that AI is a useful technology that at most may need to be subjected to appropriate regulation and coding to ensure that AI development remains transparent and that its applications stay within socially accepted norms, representing the 'Panacea' side of the debate. On the other side of the spectrum, the more 'Panic' side, we find the activists, philosophers, social scientists, and lawyers, who warn against the risks of AI and who paint pictures of its negative potential that in daily culture are translated in the images we see in *Terminator* and *The Matrix*. To avoid the actualization of this type of doom-scenarios they usually suggest to slow down the development of AI and to create ways to ensure AI stays aligned with human values. In your book you recognize the merit of this debate, but you also suggest that something more is needed to actually resolve the predicament that AI poses to us.

Peter Hershock: Yes, in fact, I would argue that the greatest threat that will be posed to humanity by the evolution and spread of intelligent technology is not potentially growing misalignment with human values—

imagined in *Terminator* as human extinction and in the Matrix films as digital captivity and servitude—but rather the amplification and accelerating materialization of conflicts among human values, aims and interests.

Looking slightly more forward into the future, perhaps ten to twenty years out—but still nowhere near the far scientific horizon of the advent of artificial general intelligence or artificial superintelligence, the occurrence of the so-called technological singularity—I think we are on track to be confronted with an ethical singularity. If we broadly define *ethics* as the *art of human course correction*—that is, the art of using our collective intelligence to evaluate our aims and our means for realizing them, and then altering our conduct accordingly—the ethical singularity toward which intelligent technology is hastening our arrival is the point at which the opportunity space for further human course correction collapses: a point beyond which we will have no more chance of escaping the effects of our own values conflicts than light has of escaping the singularity of a black hole.

Richard: You mention the advent of the collapse of the opportunity space for human course correction. This as the anticipated result of our growing inability to solve our value conflicts. I understand it in this way that you are saying that the technological revolution in a sense works as a magnifying glass for our more deep-rooted problem, which is the intensifying opposition between our value systems. Where in the past we would speak of a ‘generation gap’, now we would have to acknowledge that younger generations think of *Boomers* as no longer from this world. And where before we could think of inequality as a divide between rich and poor, now we have to observe that the wealthy have already moved to *Elysium*, leaving the rest of the world behind.

I want to make reference here to the Taipei 2020 Biennial (21 November 2020 – 14 March 2021) hosted by the Taipei Fine Art Museum and curated by French philosopher Bruno Latour, together with Martin Guinard, and Taiwanese curator Ping Lin (**Latour, 2020**). Its theme was: ‘You and I Don't Live on the Same Planet.’ The curators had proposed this theme because, to their feeling, the world's development has reached a stage where people can no longer agree even about what it means to ‘be “on” Earth’ anymore. It seems people of disagreeing opinions do not want to consider the people who form the other side, to belong in their, vision, of the world anymore. These people have a value system that no longer recognizes people of different opinions as citizens in their world, therewith depriving them from any right to speak, vote, or even, live, in ‘their’ world. Latour, Guinard, and Lin see this trend as a deeply destabilizing movement.

This is similar to what you mention, that by excluding others from our world-view just because they have different ideas or values, people are cancelling any space for common ground? It seems now looking back, that the past debate while recognizing the existence of gaps and divides, always seemed to hold it for possible that such gaps and divides could be closed in some way or another; all that was needed was to find the right solution. Now that we refer to people being in different worlds, this has suddenly turned to be a utopian vision?

Hershock: If you mean a ‘utopian’ vision ironically, suggesting that we are mistakenly assuming this new technological arrangement—this new human-intelligent technology-world relationship—to be a wondrous end to all ills...well, then I agree. The new digital infrastructure through which the Attention Economy 2.0 is emerging, and through which the colonization of consciousness by commercial and state powers is being conducted, has made possible a system of domination that operates not via coercion, but by offering each of us as individuals the opportunity to exercise greatly expanded freedoms of choice—the freedoms to connect, shop, access information, entertain ourselves, and even find dates and perhaps significant others—through algorithmic systems trained to read and anticipate our likes, dislikes, fears, hopes, and dreams and to then recommend ways of acting on them that are valuable for those who have designed and deployed these systems, whether for commercial or political purposes. So, yes, an ironic utopia in which the boundary between choice and compulsion has been perforated to the point of practical insignificance.

But, perhaps you are using ‘utopia’ literally, pointing toward a vision of a world in which we have ‘no place’ in common—a world in which populist divisions of the kinds that have deepened in recent years have been so thoroughly extended as to include our divisions across all dimensions of human presence, from the political to the social, cultural, and economic. That, I am afraid, is not a very happy prospect.

You mentioned the Taipei Biennial and its theme, and it is very appropriate. Inequalities of wealth, power, risk, and opportuning are being deepened and widened by intelligent technology as it scales up values of competition, convenience and choice rather than coordination, consilience, and commitment. Although lip-service is paid to the values of diversity and equity in many of the AI guidelines and ethics standards that have been proliferating over the last decade, these values continue to be understood in essentially individualist rather than relational terms. This perpetuates, in fact, one of the great myths of modernity—the myth of universality—even as it equally perpetuates the great postmodern myth of free variation. These two myths—of grand unification and of infinite

variation—express an interesting quantitative bias that accords rather well with computational systems. Buddhism suggests the need for a shift from seeing the individual as the unit of ethical, as well as economic and political, analysis to seeing the relational as basis—a shift away from comparative and compensatory considerations toward considerations of qualities of interdependence.

So, to use a contrast coined by Jean Luc Nancy, what we are in need of is not some mythical *common* ground, but rather commitment to fostering the conditions for enjoying truly *shared* ground. In terms of AI ethics, what this means is that we do not need and should not be attempting to realize a common global ethics of intelligent technology—a new, universal species of ethics. What we should be doing is fostering the emergence of an ethical ecosystem in which many ethical systems have significant contributory shares—one in which ethical differences are engaged as resources for mutual contribution to sustainably shared flourishing.

Richard: I think you touch on a very essential issue in the ethical debate for AI here. By critiquing the notion of the individual as the prime unit of ethical consideration, you seem to be questioning the future relevance of the Enlightenment ideal of individuation that has dominated Western thinking for several centuries. There is no doubt that current forces in AI driven consumer and social media online platforms, attempt to maximize the perception of the ideal of endless individual choice, even though at the back side, they are in fact creating an opposite closed sphere of looped feeds. This creates a paradox that suspends us in the tension between two narratives: one that suggests we can find satisfaction of our limitless desires by chasing our individual choices made on the basis of our own personal and selfish considerations stimulated by the AI driven systems, and the opposite one that denies exactly this on the basis of a lack of shared flourishing, as you so correctly call it, that is created precisely by our deep engagement with the first narrative. These two narratives play out simultaneously in our heads and in our, separated, worlds, and find their way into our lives through our interaction with our smartphones.

It may be argued that the concept of culture and our notion of how we form our ways of life and our ideas of how the world works, plays a crucial role here. We have been engaged in cultural interactions that are grounded in separation and discrimination ever since Johann Herder proposed in the 18th century that a 'folk's' culture defines the boundaries of a community, and also nation. Ever since, we have constructed cultural identities that are determined by boundaries; boundaries between us and them, me and you. There has been substantial critique on this concept of culture, especially from the perspective of how historically, culture forms through mobility, networking, and hybridization. In the theory of

transculturality offered by German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch, culture is not defined by boundaries, but by exactly the opposite, the loss of the distinction between own-ness and foreign-ness of cultural elements. According to Welsch, it is a future task of humanity to find an identity that is not based on opposition, but on finding the shared sphere of cultural space in between. He calls this a transcultural identity.

If we agree that the creation of a sphere of sharing is essential to the new ethics of AI, how can we then go about to overcome our drive to individuation and establish this, cultural, space of in-betweenness? What is needed then to rise over the abovementioned paradox and dissolve this tension? When you mention Buddhism as a basis for relational interactivity, how do we understand this more concretely? Is it not that in Buddhism, there is also a practiced ideal of individual awakening? And how would that then relate to the relational aspect of it as you propose this here?

Hershock: What you refer to as the paradox of options for individual choice being algorithmically tailored and thus controlled is, in fact, one of the predicaments of intelligent technology—one of the conflicts of interests and values that is at its heart. The liberal conception of the individual has been a very powerful philosophical fiction. Along with the fiction of equality, it opened a space within which to labor for freedom from both prescribed and ascribed roles and identities, especially those framed around conceptions of gender and ethnicity. Yet, as powerful as fictions can be, they have lifetimes and the notion of the individual is, I think, due for retirement. The situation is comparable to that of Copernicus confronting overwhelming evidence that the Earth is not the center of the solar system or the cosmos. Having accepted that, humanity has been able to make remarkable advances in both astrophysics and aerospace technology. Of course, most of us continue to see the sun as ‘rising’ in the morning and ‘setting’ in the evening. We do not feel the Earth spinning on its axis and circling the sun. But we have learned to accept that fact and act accordingly. Similarly, we have tremendous evidence now that individual entities—even at the subatomic level—are abstractions or conceptual conveniences. What ultimately exists are relational dynamics, not ‘things’ in ‘relation’ with each other.

Now, admitting that we are relationally constituted is not inconsistent with valorizing those efforts by means of which each of us can ‘stand out’ or exist with great and at times admirable individuality. Indeed, we realize ourselves individually by enhancing the qualities of those relational dynamics in which we discover we are participating most immediately. So, the fact of and desire to be unique can be retained. But, when we start to address inequity, for example, it is no longer good enough to treat each

human or human group as an individual and to then do some comparative ranking with an eye toward compensating individuals when their 'lesser' fortunes are not of their own doing. That is better than being unconcerned with the distribution of goods, services, attention, and so on. But relational equity is the open-ended pursuit of ever-greater qualities of inclusion.

This returns us to your final questions. What do we do? How do we resolve the predicament of intelligent technology? How do we realize more equitable and humane futures? Here, I would invoke as precaution the adage the 'the way to hell is paved with good intentions.' It is not enough to have good intentions, we must have sets of values that are not fraught by conflict or structured in such a way that we experience ironic outcomes and opportunities—arriving in hell after thinking the way to avoid that was to simply go 'up.' Buddhism offers practices for being present as needed to evaluate our own values, their constellation, and their intentional enactment. At their roots, these practices are all about realizing freedom-of-attention in order to enjoy freedom-of-intention and engage in virtuosic exemplifications of the meaning of relating freely. Having freedoms of choice is better than not having any choice at all. That is clear. But relating freely is more than just making and acting on choices. It involves sensitive attention to others and pairing our right to differ-from them with our obligation to differ-for them in ways that they deem valuable. This is true for us as persons, as communities, as nations, and as but one species among hundreds of millions of other species on this planet. To resolve the predicament of climate change or that of intelligent technology, we will need to be virtuosically present and committed to continuous ethical improvisation, extending our horizons of relevance, responsibility and readiness. The aim of Buddhist practice—as it is epitomized in the personal ideal of the bodhisattva or 'enlightening being'—is to be able to engage our situations, whatever they may be, in ways that are conducive to sustainably realizing liberating relational dynamics.

Richard: Again, here arises at least the impression of the perceived prevalence of, yet, another paradox: the one between individual liberation and the emancipation of humankind as a species. Maybe it can be argued that our preoccupation with individual development is grounded in the structural and prolonged misunderstanding of the truth about our reality. If I understand it correctly, in Buddhist philosophy there is a very distinct idea about how reality is construed. According to the teachings by the Buddha, it cannot be said everything exists, nor that it does not exist. In this realm of thought, we as human beings both have a self and are not this self. We operate in our worldly reality and communicate with other beings in this world, through the construct of a self. But in deeper truth, this self is merely a construct; functional, but not essential to our being. This is the meaning of us existing in two levels of truth at the same time:

the relative truth of our lifeworld, and the absolute truth of one shared consciousness wherein we, mostly unconsciously, unfortunately, remain. And the difference in our perception where we are in this worldview, depends on our level of developed awareness. Full awakening or enlightenment is then nothing more than being fully aware of all truth on both levels of reality simultaneously.

Assuming then that we have the inherent capacity to variously 'be' in two levels of reality, meaning our own, more individualized one, and the shared, relational one, it may be argued that we also have both the ability, and the responsibility, to actualize this potential. Ability, as this defines the true nature of humankind, and responsibility, as in not doing so, we have already experienced disastrous results, like for example climate change and its hard felt consequences. The effort required to liberate ourselves from individualized ethics, can be said to be an investment in the cultivation of what you call in your book *Ethical Agency*. When we accept that we are agents of our own reality, as well as that of others, our planet, and non-human species, we can take up our role of creators of reality and maybe develop this attentive virtuosity that you propose.

Do I understand correctly that this is the core of what you also call 'humane becoming?' In your book you reflect on the Six Paramitas of Buddhist practice. Maybe you could expand on how we can nourish our inherent humanity in this way and cultivate an ethics that is focused on this virtuosic presence?

Hershock: I think it is important to stress that there are many Buddhist philosophies, not just one, and that some significant differences obtain especially in relation to metaphysical and ontological questions. This is traditionally explained by taking note of the Buddha's commitment to offering effective teachings to each student or audience, and thus adapting as needed. Significantly, in Buddhism theory supports practice rather than practice validating or invalidating theory. I mention this because in China there developed a 'three truths' alternative to Indian/Central Asian 'two truths' teachings. The therapeutic aim of these theoretic constructs is, however, the same. As I would phrase it: realizing liberating relational dynamics, the first steps toward which are gaining freedom-of-attention or freedom from compelled/compulsive presence. That said, it is written in the Diamond Sutra that when the Buddha was asked what he attained through realizing unsurpassed, complete enlightenment, his response was 'not one thing' or 'nothing at all.' Thus, in the Ch'an Buddhist tradition of China, later Zen in Japan, it was stressed that enlightenment is not something to attain or get, whether quickly or slowly; it is something to demonstrate, to embody, to express relationally.

So, to your questions. One basic Buddhist practice is to see all things as changing. In doing so, one realizes that there really are no beings in the world, only becomings. Having realized this, the question is then...change in what direction? becoming whom or what? I have adopted the qualifier 'humane' to express the need to go beyond 'human-centered' approaches to intelligent technology or approaches that are consistent with 'human values.' My first Buddhist teacher, Seung Sahn Dae Soen Sa Nim, once said the 'human beings are the number one bad animal.' Unlike any other species, humans have committed genocide as an expression of deeply held beliefs and values. Humans have sufficiently plumbed the depths of subatomic relational dynamics to build nuclear weapons arsenals that, if deployed, would render the Earth uninhabitable. Humans have engaged in activities that have resulted in global climate disruption and then persisted in those activities for the half century since discovering this. AI that embodies human values—as conflicted and often destructive as they have been—is a profoundly frightening prospect. Yet, humans are also unique as a species in the depth and extent to which we have proven capable of what Confucian scholar Roger Ames has called 'enchancing the ordinary.' We have opened up entirely new realms of values—new modalities of relational appreciation. That is what families are, or cultural traditions, or educational institutions. These are 'virtual realities' created and explored by humans—realities that are not reducible to material systems in motion. So, humans are a 'mixed bag' as we say in the U.S.

Fostering 'humane becoming' is a way of expressing the importance of stressing relational quality. Passing from the merely human to the truly humane is an open-ended, improvisational pursuit. The six *paramitas* or modes of perfection are benchmarks for movement in the direction of realizing increasingly humane presence: generosity, moral clarity, patient willingness, valiant effort, poised attentiveness, and wisdom. As modes of perfection, these are not moral *destinations* or goals at which we might finally arrive. They are open-ended *directions* or *domains* in which to realize virtuosic presences. In describing how to go about doing so, traditional Buddhist accounts stress the continuation of *kuśala* patterns of conduct and the curtailing of those that are *akuśala*. These terms are often translated as 'wholesome, skillful, apt' and 'unwholesome, unskillful, inapt.' But *kuśala* functions as a superlative. It refers, not to what is good as opposed to bad, but rather to what is excellent or virtuosic. Thus, conduct that results in good outcomes and opportunities or evil outcomes or opportunities are both *akuśala*. Good is better than evil, but not good enough. To realize the end of conflict, trouble and suffering, we have to embark on and continue moving in the direction of superlative outcomes and opportunities. The implications for ethics is that we eschew efforts to arrive at predetermined moral ideals or manifesting predefined virtues,

and labor instead to realize ever more progressive moral ideals and ever more expansive embodiments of virtuosity. Practicing the six *paramitas* is one way of describing the kind of presence needed to engage in this labor.

Richard: When you speak of being humane as an open-ended pursuit and of ethics as a labor of expanding our virtuosity, I immediately think of our educational systems as a pathway to incorporate such pursuit and labor. Already in 1973 in his landmark study *Small is Beautiful*, E.F. Schumacher proclaimed that education is abound with teaching *how to do* things, while we should teach our next generations *what to do*, letting the how of things fall into perspective from there (**Schumacher, 1973**). In other words, Schumacher stressed the importance of value education. And as such, the role of ethics in the process of learning itself.

An important Buddhist idea on mindfulness and its training, is that training mindfulness is not simply a process of cultivating awareness. Mindfulness training is in essence deeply virtue based. Through developing higher levels of awareness, we will become more virtuous. I have experienced this also in the university classroom, where I ask students to practice meditation in the beginning of each class. I have found that discussions on the ethical side of issues become more profound. Students also become more aware of their own self-development situation and directions, while applying newly found insights from there into their way of observing the world around them and their positioning in this world.

How would you suggest that in for example education, we can provide ways to help people progress into the relational virtuosity?

Hershock: With all due respect to Schumacher, I think it is presumptuous of us to tell future generations what to do. Past generations would have instructed us to forge ahead with fossil fuels to energize bright new futures for all. Past generations would also have instructed us to educate women for excellence in the private domestic sphere, not for political, entrepreneurial or artistic leadership. But, if your point is that we should focus on providing this and coming generations with the cognitive, emotional and somatic resources needed for engaging effectively in the personal and collective ethical labor of determining what *should* and *should not* be done under conditions of complex change, then I agree. And, crucial to that approach to the provision of education is eliciting passions for learning.

There is a very fundamental difference between *acquiring information* as needed—something that the current generations of students have found can be done essentially on demand via digital devices—and going through the hard labor of *incorporating knowledge*. To generate and embody new knowledge is an intelligent practice, a recursive process of responsive and

responsible improvisation in adaptive concert with our ever changing relational environs. Learning in this sense is not a means to an end, certainly not the end of being awarded a degree of some kind. It is exploring the frontiers of meaningful presence—extending the range and depth of the sensitivities and sensibilities we bring to bear in materializing new structures and domains of significance. This is ultimately nothing less than the consciousness expanding and enhancing process of collaboratively advancing the coherent differentiation of *matter* and *what matters*.

To envision what is involved in education in pursuit of relational virtuosity, we could do worse than to take the Buddha's teaching career as exemplary. His approach was not methodical. It was an approach rooted in improvised response to and collaboration with each learner in light of his or her distinct needs, endowments and aspirations. There is not and cannot be a universal curriculum for delivering 'virtuosic graduates.' But I think we can advocate universally providing education in ways that are consistent with the purpose or aim of valuing diversity and equity, where diversity is a relational quality that emerges when differences are engaged as the basis of mutual contribution to sustainably shared flourishing, and where the pursuit of equity is the limitlessly progressive endeavor to enhance qualities of inclusion. Valuing diversity and equity involves us in realizing—that is, materializing—transformations in who we are present as, embracing the liberating, nondualistic insight that each of us *is* only what we *mean* for others, and indeed that all things ultimately are what they contribute to the meaning of all things. The path to humane virtuosity has no end. But it begins with a passion for learning and extended through relationally perfecting confidence in and capacities for offering: the first of the *paramitas*.

Richard: And if we thus may return to the beginning, the final question would be: what comes next?

Hershock: That is, indeed, the right question to ask and I have some thoughts about data governance and education that I have written about in *Buddhism and Intelligent Technology*. But the truth of the matter is that what comes next will have to be improvised, and our best chances of improvising wisely together will depend on the depths with which we commit to embodying the attentive mastery and responsive virtuosity needed to *recognize* the truth and value of all perspectives on the meaning of a truly humane future, to skillfully *resist* the universalization of any single perspective, and to *redirect* our interdependence in ways that allow each of our unique strengths full expression in enacting that hope-filled redirection. Playing finite, winner-takes-all games of competitive realism is an individualist luxury that humanity in my view, can no longer afford.

Theodoor Richard is Research Fellow with National Chung Hsing University in Taichung, Taiwan, and specializes in globalization and sustainability culture. His interest in the subject was sparked by his experiences doing action research of using meditation as an instrument of value education in regular and online Higher Education classroom settings



Peter Hershock is Director of the Asian Studies Development Program and leads the Initiative for Humane AI, at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Peter has published extensively on the subjects of Contemporary Buddhist Thought, Ethics and Social Justice, and Cultural Diversity. His latest book *Buddhism and Intelligent Technology: Toward a More Humane Future* (2021) pertinently addresses the issue of ethics regarding AI.

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Seeing Like a Representative: A conversation with Lisa Disch

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Abstract

Lisa Disch is Professor of Political Science and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (US), where she teaches courses on contemporary political theory, political representation, Anglo-American and French Feminism, as well as courses on population and the environment among others. Professor Disch has published books on the political thought of Hannah Arendt, on the discursive production of two-party democracy in the US, and most recently on political representation. She is co-editor of The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory with Mary Hawkesworth, and co-editor with Nadia Urbinati and Mathijs van de Sande of The Constructivist Turn in Political Representation. Since 2020 she has been an elected member of the Ann Arbor City Council.

Keywords: democratic representation; Hannah Arendt; political theory; feminist theory; constructivist theory of representation

Introduction

Despite a longstanding interest in matters of politics, I had never given much thought to the meaning and value of political representation. That was until the problem of democratic representation ‘exploded’ in my hands, so to speak, when I was elected to the Municipal Council of the southern Italian town of Noci. Ever since, indeed, I have felt the need to try and understand what was it, truly, that I had engaged in as a representative: where had I failed, where, if anywhere, had I succeeded. It was in this search, still ongoing, that following the lead of a more down-to-heart view of representation than offered by classic accounts, I encountered the work of Lisa Disch.

While researching, teaching and writing on a number of issues within and beyond the field of political theory, Lisa Disch is a leading figure in debates on democratic representation, and among the first scholars to detect, defend and encourage a ‘constructivist’ turn in mainstream understandings of democratic representation. As somebody who was looking for a ‘theory’ who would explain and match a recent personal experience of a ‘practice’, I became all the more drawn to Disch’s work as I learnt of her exceptional situation as both a leading theorist of representation and herself a democratic representative. Much of my own work grew out of an imaginary dialogue I entertained with Professor Disch for years. For once, I had the honor to engage with her in a real conversation, from which what follows is extracted.

Discussions

Gentile Fusillo: Professor Disch, your work to date has addressed a broad range of issues that extend beyond a strict understanding of political science – encompassing themes in critical literary theory, continental philosophy, feminist political thought, political ecology, theories of democratic representation. What would you say is the core concern that moved your intellectual effort towards these issues?

Lisa Disch: That is a really great question... my first inclination was to say that there was no core concern and that I just leap from one thing to the next as the spirit moves me. But then I realized that was not quite true. I actually think that a major impetus for my work was reading Hannah Arendt and thinking about the shift she makes from human *nature* to what she called the human *condition*. That’s a shift from taking human nature as the basis or foundation of politics and political theory to a notion of human condition. We would emphasize today that there are plural human conditions and some of us have better ones, more fortunate ones that we were simply born into, but nonetheless, Arendt’s insight holds: that what we are, what we humanity, what we political agents are, is *conditioned* by

circumstances, we are conditioned beings, we are not beings who are defined by an essence or nature. And you can think of these conditions from the smallest to largest scale. When Arendt writes *The Human Condition* (2018) she begins with the largest scale: Sputnik and the picture that was taken of the earth and how this makes her think of the fragility of our condition. We are on this little ball, suspended in the vast universe, which means that we are conditioned by the Earth, we are Earth dwelling beings. But that's a very large scale, a very general thing to say, although still a pressing urgency because, as people say, there is no planet B!

We can also talk about the smallest scale, which is infrastructure. To really go from one extreme to the other, we are conditioned by living in cities and rural areas, there may be a density of population and richness of job opportunities, or sparseness of population and declining job opportunities, and infrastructure that degrades because there are too few people spread out too sparsely over too large an area. The urban/rural divide is a divide that you find all over the globe and it complicates politics all over the globe. All over the globe we are having debates over what cities ought to look like...these are pieces of our human conditions: we are worrying about cities built in deserts; we are worrying about American cities where we never did invest enough in the non-motorized transportation infrastructure that we need to live our lives as citizens of a globe whose resources are vastly diminishing. Now, this is a level where probably Hannah Arendt would have thought that administration happens. But I think this is where *politics* happens. This is where politics is happening now: these debates over what we need to build for ourselves in order that we can make this planet go further for us, because it's not going to go very far the way we are using it right now.

There is also a whole set of things beyond infrastructure: there is law. Among the things that remains a question for us is 'what and who can or cannot count as property?' And much of the economic development of colonial powers, the US being a 'settler' colonial power, was conditioned on the ability to own people as property. Although that question is settled, at least with respect to outright slavery, there are continued debates over what counts as property that bear on the human condition. We debate questions about how to define intellectual property, for example, and the answers define the limits of technology sharing, which is something else we may need to do more generously in order to make this planet go further. All of those things are really part of what, I think, Arendt meant when she talked about the human condition, and for me these things are all the things of politics: they are contingent, they are human-made, they are alterable, but they are also a legacy that imposes constraints that we have to work within. They supply both the limits and the possibilities of our politics.

Arendt's shift from nature to condition was momentous for me, because in college I first encountered political theory through people who thought about the great canonical questions and took human nature as a central category. Reading Arendt and having her say 'even if there is a human nature we can never find it because we can never jump over our own shadows, we can't see ourselves from a vantage point that would enable us to talk about our nature'...that really blew my mind I think! This is a core concern that I have pursued: I have been drawn to kinds of thought that are interested in themes of contingency, of historicity, things that complicate the distinction between what's natural and what's social.

Gentile Fusillo: How then did the question of representation specifically come to your attention as such a theme, a theme of contingency?

Disch: So... feminism got me thinking about representation. There is that great quote in the opening pages of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, where she's riffing on Foucault to affirm that the 'feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation' (1990: 2). Butler was one of the first thinkers to make me see the stakes in questions of representation. More broadly put, it was the vibrant and intense debates in feminist theory, in the 1980s, over what it means to refer to women as the political subject of feminism and what it means to speak for and *as a woman*. In the preface to her wonderful book *Inessential Woman*, Elizabeth Spelman called the phrase 'as a woman' the 'Trojan horse of feminist ethnocentrism' (1990: X). It's the device that sneaks a singular, unified subject back into feminist theory and politics. When one prefaces a statement with it, that is a statement of representation: 'as a woman...I think this...I need this...' that's a *representative claim*, as Mike Saward (2010) would put it today.

Political theorists have a whole vocabulary now for understanding that these are *acts of representation*, that occur within movements as advocacy to rally support. Feminism did the most amazing job of blowing those up and complicating these claims that convene a unity. These were academic debates beginning in the 1980s that I think people who'd been in the feminist movement of the '60s found devastating when they first emerged: it felt like their actions and their legacy were being called in question. It is much easier to see now the incredible momentum it has leant the movement to take the critique of sex and gender way farther to the point where people are multiplying genders and questioning binarity not just in academic books but in their everyday lives. Feminism dramatized for us the power of a representative claim to both convene a political subject and also generate critiques of that political subject. Queer feminists, feminists of color made us think about the power that acts of representation have to define who's in that subject? Who's not in that

subject? How do the very claims that we make about what women's needs are – is it equal pay, is it reproductive rights, is it shelters for women who experience homelessness, abuse? – define the subject of feminism?

I learned a great lesson from feminism, also from Foucault, and from philosophy of language that very much got me thinking that the basic democratic intuitions about representation were not correct. All of these tell us that representative claims are speech acts, they do things, they don't merely reflect things, they do things, they enact states of being and they solicit subjects into being. That, I thought, was just an amazing way of thinking, a very political way of thinking about language and about claiming. It can also be an idealistic way of thinking about language and claiming but I think we, as political theorists or students of politics, are well equipped to think about the resistance that the world puts back against those claims, again, the feminist movement dramatized that. I think we are well equipped to not use that kind of language in a purely idealist way. The important insight for me to take away, before stepping into all those debates about idealism, you know the objection: 'oh, so you are making up the world in words!', is that there are basic democratic intuitions about what makes good representation, good *democratic* representation, that are not quite right because they want a constituency to be a *foundation* and *standard* for the representation. Those intuitions come from thinking about representation in terms of what Nancy Schwartz in her book *The Blue Guitar* (1988) called a 'transmission-belt theory.' We are thinking of a representative as standing for a constituency that is already well defined, and we imagine that we can measure how good the representative is by virtue of its faithfulness to that constituency. And so, this model of representation inspires citizens, meaning citizens not in the legal, passport-holding sense but in the sense of people who pay attention to politics and make demands, to imagine that the representative should act as a delegate. I think it's rare that you find that model uncomplicated in political theory. Hanna Pitkin's (1967) book complicated it. In her notion of responsiveness there is the idea that the representative and the represented constitute each other over time in an iterative process.

I started thinking about democratic representation from these various critical vantage points that alerted me to the problem with an oversimplified use of these 'transmission belt' standards of legitimacy. It also seemed to me that the great canonical works that Western political theorists cite as standards of representation haven't been understood in all of their subtlety, I would say that is true for Pitkin. In addition, it seemed to me that some empirical research took an oversimplified notion of congruence that reduced democratic representation to matching public opinion with policy that legislatures or legislators produced. Yet there is also another body of empirical literature written by scholars who

understand that political representation is dynamic and constitutive. I'm thinking, of course, of empirical work in political psychology and in the policy feedback literature in the US, that posed the problem with great clarity: if we find that representatives and constituencies are co-constitutive, what does that mean for legitimacy? If the definitions of legitimacy that come most readily to hand impugn our findings about how democratic representation works in the world, what are we supposed to do about that? The critical theory that I brought to this work made me want to say 'ok, these findings don't need to put us at loggerheads with the notion of democratic legitimacy, but it does need to change very much the way we think about it!'

Gentile Fusillo: You have recently co-edited a collection of essays (**Disch et al; 2019**) by a number of prominent scholars on the 'the constructivist turn' in theories of political representation – a development that has been the focus of your analysis for more than a decade. What is 'constructivist' about this development?

Disch: I would express it this way: acts of representation bring political agents into being and, as Mike Saward has expressed it, those acts of representations can very often be conceptualized as claims. That doesn't mean they are just words, but that representation – an act of claim-making – is a call, it's a solicitation of a response. So, the constructivist part of that is not that politicians make up constituencies, but that in order to speak of a political agent you need to speak of a force that is unified in some way. It does not have to be uniform, but it needs to be a collective of some kind. Representation takes what would otherwise be perhaps an aggregate and gives it a name, gives it a struggle, either of those two things, embodies it in a formal policy and gives it a benefit or gives it a burden. A good example is 'we are the 99%', a phrase that represents a conflict and positions agents in that conflict. A deliberate way of dividing the social field and articulating a political conflict, it exemplifies a representative claim. I know that it is controversial to argue that political agents are constituted through representation: I know that there are many people, some of them in the Occupy movement itself, who would say that they were not engaged in representation and did not want to be. They believe that political forces don't need representation, that they are imminent, and that they are most powerful as imminent. As they begin to cooperate with institutions, they begin to lose their force. I think these are two different ways of thinking about democratic politics; I don't think they can ever be reconciled. They are both concerned with the mobilization of agency, so they are in the broadest sense on each other's side, but they have very different beliefs about the constitution of the political world. I recognize that difference, and I am engaged by the work of both sides, but I just intuitively committed to the one!

Gentile Fusillo: ...and how do you think this should change our approach to the question that, both as scholars and as citizens, we so often ask ourselves: 'who is the good representative'?

Disch: In some work in democratic theory, and in empirical work on competence, there is a focus on asking what the 'citizens', again in the broad republican sense not the passport-carrying police sense, bring to politics, what knowledge do they bring, how well informed are they about their interests? This preoccupation makes improving people's judgment, educating them, a focus of democratic aspiration. I think, and I am informed here by E. E. Schattschneider's *Semisovereign People* (1960), that conflict brings things out in citizens. We do democracy a disservice when we approach it through a pedagogical model that expects people to be students of politics before they are actors in it. We are looking for democratic institutions to engage people in action. Mike Saward has wonderfully theorized that this is one thing acts of representation do: they engage people. As critics and analysts of democracy, we can look at those acts of representation and we can ask 'What do those acts bring out in the represented, what constituencies are mobilized, what constituencies are marginalized, are there systematic patterns? In the US most certainly yes.' One insight driving the unbelievable and unconscionable move towards voter suppression in the US is precisely this: that representative institutions, processes, and claims can mobilize constituencies and deactivate them. It is possible to do this strategically. If I believe in a broadly inclusive democracy, that's a commitment, that's not a theory, that's a value commitment that I make as a person and a political actor, then I can judge how democratic and how representative the system is. Rather than start out asking what citizens know, I start out asking what the system of representation, i.e., set of institutions, and the people working in those institutions, and the processes that it uses, is bringing out. What constituencies is it making? What interests and affects does it solicit? That is different from the question we have traditionally asked about the congruence between policy opinion and policy legislation. It's different from asking, 'do people have an opinion about x or y and therefore is there anything out there to represent?'

As someone who is currently a city councilor in Ann Arbor, what I have become aware of, a problem for cities everywhere, is to represent people who are not residents because of the inequities built in our structures, or because of the generational nature of politics. The pressing concerns facing cities in the US are concerns about equity. For example, addressing how the financing and construction of housing has excluded people. Those people need representation... They are constituencies *by virtue of their absence*, and there is a struggle to actually represent them and their interests...

Gentile Fusillo: ...to make them present...

Disch: Exactly, to make them present very literally: to give them access to this city that is spinning into inaccessibility. There are the future constituencies as well. The things that we do for climate action may feel to current residents as a non-representation, a violation of their interests. But cities must fund climate action because we are obligated to leave something for the future! Right? The generations who could have acted, who were beginning to see this in the mid 60's, didn't act and we are making up for their inaction. I wish that I didn't have this burden of the inaction of the past, but I do. It means that I have to often just – patiently but aggressively – work against my constituents and their interests.

Gentile Fusillo: This leads us straight to the last question I wanted to ask you, precisely about your experience... two years ago you ran for the municipal elections in the city of Ann Arbor and were elected municipal councilor, and my question was going to be: as a representative, do you feel empowered?

Disch: Yes! But not in the way you might think! I do not feel empowered to lead...it's very complicated to lead. I feel empowered because I get to work with a talented and knowledgeable city staff.

Gentile Fusillo: ...many municipal councilors around the world could say you are very lucky in that respect!

Disch: Yeah! And we are well financed. This is a plum place to be a representative! And this talented and knowledgeable city staff enables me to do work, in the sense that Hannah Arendt meant that word: to build things for the common world that will last. And work, oh, it moves slowly! And it's not splashy. In much of the work that I do with city staff I often feel that they are leading because they have been laboring to accumulate small transformations for a long time. Sometimes my job as a representative is to not get in the way of their work by creating expectations that are beyond what can be accomplished, so that people are not angry that 'all you have done is x.' So the thing is to put your head down and do the work. Much of what you do as a representative in local government, which is one of the most powerful places to be a representative if you live in a well-resourced and competently staffed city, is not 'exciting.' When I hear some of my colleagues on Council wanting to say exciting things I often find myself shaking my head, because I either know it can't be done or I know that they are sounding off against something that must be assented to, now at least. Changing, say, an affordable housing crisis, will involve a long process of *work*! So one of the things that I am really learning is something that I already knew: it's that

representatives don't make things up in words. We are not empowered to speak and make it so. What we are empowered to do is work...

Gentile Fusillo: That's beautiful...

Disch: Thank you!

Clementina Gentile Fusillo completed a PhD in Political Theory at the University of Warwick, with a thesis titled "On the virtues of truth: generativity and the demands of democracy". She is currently an Early Career Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies at the same University.



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Abstract

This article provides a practical guide to the scope and disposition of scholarly work contributed and published within the Exchanges journal over its last three volumes. This article forms a companion piece to one published in Volume 6, Part 2 of the journal, which offered a guide to all works published up until that point through an author and article index. This new article expands on the information provided within the more recent editions in that it offers three forms of index. Firstly, a volume-by-volume listing of articles, authors, subjects and DOI links. Secondly, an author index, providing information on the issues to which each has contributed. Finally, it incorporates a keyword index, drawn from the author-controlled taxonomy deployed and associated with each published article.

Keywords: index; authors; subjects; keywords; titles; Exchanges

Introduction

This article provides a practical guide to the scope and disposition of scholarly work contributed and published within the *Exchanges* journal over its last three volumes. In a sense it represents a continuation of the earlier index article (**Johnson, 2019**), which presented a summary listing detailing all articles published by the journal at the time. This original piece covered the first twelve issues which had been published from October 2013 to April 2019 (v1.1-v6.2). By contrast, this article encompasses the journal issues published from late 2019 through to Spring 2022, which comprise the nine most recent issues (v7.1-6.2). Notably, this period included the publication of the first three dedicated, special issues of the title, alongside the regular bi-annually published journal issues.

Given the continued absence of *Exchanges* from many commercial subject and citation indexes, this article is presented with hopes it will prove a useful guide to curious readers. Additionally, it anticipated the keyword index also offers potential authors a compact perspective concerning the discourse and thematic coverage of the journal in recent years. The variety and breadth is clearly evident with the majority of topics receiving only a single entry. The exceptions being generally pieces derived from the three special thematic issues. Finally, it is the author's hope this piece may also prove of some value to cataloguers and indexers seeking a ready resource to improve the coverage of their platforms.

The three parts of this index article are firstly, a volume-by-volume listing of each article, in the sequence, including information on its authors, subject keywords, page range and crucially its DOI link. Secondly, an author index follows which offers at-a-glance information on the issues to which each named author within the journal contributed. Finally, the article incorporates a keyword index, offering insight into the subject matter published within *Exchanges*. This latter index notably is a development which was not included in the previous article (**ibid**) and is directly drawn from the author-derived taxonomy within each individual piece. As such some degree of variation and non-standardisation may be encountered, depending on each author's perceptions of their piece's central themes.

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cannibal; consumer; fetish; commodity; violence; profanation; history

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cannibalism; capitalism; Marxism; horror; film; literature

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postmodernism; abjection; Amirpour; Kristeve; deject; cannibalism

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Hamlet; cannibalism; transubstantiation; medicine; consumption; Eucharist

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De Lancre; Basques; Renaissance; witchcraft; sorcery; witches; New World; Jesuits; ethnography; renaissance literature

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Shakespeare; Peele; Middleton; cannibalism; text; adaptation; revision; Titus Andronicus

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wartime cannibalism; survival cannibalism; ritual cannibalism; Japanese imperialism; war crimes; Christianity

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Georges Bataille; Julia Ducournau; transgression; eroticism; cannibalism; death drive

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cannibal; postcolonial; fairy tales; Indian folk tales; subaltern identity; allegory; children's literature; nationalist movement

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editorial; covid-19; editorial processes; podcasting; pandemic

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gamerspace; materiality; haptic play; animals; digital games; YouTube; participatory culture; haptic games

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academic fraud; research misconduct; predatory publishers; fraud solutions; peer review; bibliometric indices

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Shakespeare; biofiction; adaptation; Upstart Crow; Doctor Who; Cunk on Shakespeare; Game of Thrones; metamodernism; popular culture; parody

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cannibalism; anthropology; savage; civilisation; colonialism; psychosexual

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games; history; museums and heritage; reflection

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blockchain; Decentralised Autonomous Organisation (DAO); cryptocurrency; tokens; cryptography

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editorial; covid-19; lockdown; podcasting; communication; AI; panic; panacea; call for papers

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EFL; English as a foreign language; China; university; role-play; communicative competence

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Native speakerism; non-native English speaking teacher; NNEST; English language teaching; ELT; English as a second language; ESL

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creativity; Jonah Lehrer; discourse; neuroscience; stories; consolations

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truthfulness and falseness; the autobiographical pact; comic philosophy; the possibilities of art to invoke thought; fabulation

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graphic design; dramaturgy; performance; defamiliarisation; ethnodrama; design research

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editorial; climate fiction; cli-fi; Covid-19; associate editors; Utopia Conference

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utopian studies; climate change; reflection; conference

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post-humanism; radical environmental activism; Anthropocene; ecotopia; hope

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climate change; Ilija Trojanow; consumerism; glaciers; global warming; capitalism

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cli-fi; dystopia; collapse; apocalypse; desacralisation

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modernity; cli-fi; risk; uncertainty; apocalypse; non-human

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cli-fi; apocalyptic discourse; slow violence; anthropocentrism; intersectionality of oppression; Alexis Wright

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cli-fi; Atlantis; Younger Dryas; catastrophism; antediluvian; demythologisation; pre-historical climate change

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editorial; good practice; academic writing; call for publications; podcasting; editorial processes

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editorial; Then and Now; University of Warwick; author contributors; special issue

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arts; humanities; University of Warwick; student co-creation; student experience; student research

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inclusivity; oral history; University of Warwick; higher education; gender; race; class; ethnicity

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University of Warwick; co-creation; student-led research; student engagement; COVID-19

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art; space; psychogeography; architecture; built environment; community

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arts management; cultural management; project management; student co-creation

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student-led research, oral history, remote interviewing, coronavirus, COVID-19, Disability Visibility Project

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routine dynamics; post conference; critical reflection

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Note: Keywords are provided at submission and, as advised by their editor, revised by authors during the copyediting process. As such they are subject to a considerable degree of variance as at best only a semi-controlled taxonomy.

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