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Powers of the False:

The Slender Man and Post-Postmodernism

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Abstract

This essay brings recent work surrounding the internet phenomenon of the Slender Man into conversation with emerging work in critical literary theory. Specifically, the Slender Man is considered alongside Jeffrey Nealon's Post-Postmodernism; or, the Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism *(2012), his diagnosis of contemporary cultural logic, and his consideration of Gilles Deleuze's "powers of the false" in art and literature after postmodernism. This essay explores the ways in which the Slender Man phenomenon reifies these powers, and ultimately argues that the Slender Man helps to elucidate Nealon's vision and definition of "post-postmodern" cultural expression.*

Keywords: Slender Man, critical theory, Deleuze, film, postmodernism, capitalism, Nealon

Introduction

By now, most readers recognize the "Slender Man," an urban legend that first originated on internet forums in 2009 and slowly metastasized into popular culture. Fewer, however, may be aware of the frightening amount of real-life violence that has become associated with the figure. In the summer of 2014, in a startling example of cyberspatial activity turning inside-out, two 12-year-old Wisconsin girls stabbed a classmate 19 times, claiming that they were attempting to attract the attention and approval of the Slender Man. Nine days later, a 13-year-old in Ohio stabbed her mother while wearing a white mask and, still later, a Las Vegas couple shot and killed three people, including two police officers, before committing suicide. In one way or another, each of these acts of violence was ultimately traced back to associations with the Slender Man (Tolbert 2015). Reflecting on the cases, media critics Anne Gilbert and Aaron Trammel commented that what began as "horror at play" had mutated into something much different: "An internet meme created with no nefarious purposes, as part of an agenda of leisure and entertainment…turned gruesome, bloody, and nightmarish"(Trammell and Gilbert 2014, 392). Despite beginning its existence as an internet-bound phenomenon, these recent events surrounding the Slender Man have demanded answers from an increasingly wider audience.

The question of how an internet legend with a fully documented online history

could transgress its boundaries in such widespread ways has recently caught the attention of many scholars, resulting in thorough treatments of the case from a number of disciplines. As comprehensive as these accounts are, I believe that there is still more to be said about the Slender Man's relevance in contemporary culture by bringing these studies into conversation with ongoing work in critical literary theory. As a step toward mapping those connections, I here examine the Slender Man phenomenon through the diagnostic lens of Jeffrey Nealon's *Post-Postmodernism: or, the Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (Nealon 2012). Specifically, I will be focusing on Nealon's deployment of Gilles Deleuze's "powers of the false," by which contemporary art and literature swerve around the postmodern work of subversion and critique and instead act as "deployments of force" in their own right. By bringing Nealon's theoretical vocabulary alongside the work that has already been done on the Slender Man, particularly in the field of folkloristics, I want to make the case that Slender Man, as a contemporary legend and as a product of "reverse ostension," (Tolbert 2013) provides an example of the powers of the false at work in the contemporary literary imagination as broadly defined by Nealon, recovering for that imagination "a series of other jobs" beyond the postmodern (Nealon 2012, 165). Given that Nealon's excursus is deeply rooted in Deleuze's work on film, I will also be exploring the ways in which the powers of the false extend into the web-series *Marble Hornets* as one of the most "formative" developments in the Slender Man mythos (Tolbert 2016, 3). Ultimately, I argue for the Slender Man's relevance in validating many of Nealon's pronouncements on contemporary art and culture, and for its potential to help identify and further clarify the sorts of shifts that he characterizes as "post-postmodern."

Defining Post-Postmodernism
Following a multi-work trajectory that explores theory's relevance for the twenty-first century, Nealon's project in *Post-Postmodernism* brings the methodology of Fredric Jameson into contact with Nealon's recent work on Foucault and bio-power (Nealon 2008). In the spirit of Jameson's landmark work, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Nealon attempts to provide what he calls a "hermeneutic of situation" for the new millennium, as well as a revised role for critical theory in exploring that same situation. Nealon begins the project with his own take on Jameson's methodological starting-point: "[O]ne logic, smeared across a bunch of discourses," leading into a "transcoding dialectical demonstration" that "you can't unproblematically say that the logic of one of those things...somehow subverts or resists the logic of the other" (Nealon 2012, 23). Specifically, Nealon insists on re-examining the state of critical theory from within the economic logic of the twenty-first century rather than from within the "linguistic turn" of postmodernism, believing that the logic of the former has come to dominate the latter. Among Nealon's main contentions is that, having failed to keep up with this shift in "cultural dominant," the current tools of literary and cultural criticism are no longer adequate to the objects, phenomena, and dynamics that they purport to diagnose and study. Steeped as they are in the liberationist political logic of a previous generation, such discourses

as "poststructuralist poetics" are liable to blunt the "sinister claims of economic theory," whereas "when one dialectically overcodes the liberated cultural effects of postmodernism with the substantially more dire economic realities that rely on the same concepts, one can no longer assess the cultural effects in quite the same way" (Nealon 2012, 23). Nealon's, then, is a counter-assessment, both of cultural logic after postmodernism, and of the futures of literature and theory from within that logic.

Front and center in Nealon's analysis is the notion of *intensification*, "the (non)site where the logic of the individual subject overlaps with the logic of globalization." (Nealon 2012, 42) By intensification, Nealon not only means the increasing speed, efficiency, and saturation of various systems of power, but also the types of exchanges in which these systems traffic. For example, "One might argue that contemporary [Las] Vegas doesn't primarily produce either goods or services," Nealon says, suggesting instead that Vegas produces the "virtual 'intensities'" described by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: "the thrills of winning, the aches of losing, the awe of the spectacle," in settings where "you don't so much *consume goods* as you *have experiences* where your subjectivity can be intensified, bent, retooled" (Nealon 2012, 27-31). Where the individual subject overlaps with the logic of globalization, then, is the point at which a global economy becomes capable of directly manipulating subjectivity via various intensities. Ironically, reifying such a system also means reifying the sort of pluralism that was at one point the hallmark of postmodern artistic resistance to a politics of the "same." Contrary to a Fordist, cookie-cutter economy which encouraged conformity and sameness, the new socioeconomic logic encourages and commodifies difference in all its forms. As Nealon puts it, "Under an economic logic that is in fact dedicated to the unleashing of multifarious individual desires and floating values, the role of social 'normalization'…needs to be rethought from the ground up" (Nealon 2012, 21). If difference has become complicit in the economic project of normativity, Nealon suggests, then the functions of art and criticism also need to be reconsidered.

A related effect of this capitalist appropriation of postmodern pluralism is that the logics of cultural production have collapsed into the processes of economic production. The implication of this collapse is that previously subversive forms of artistic expression, identified as "postmodern," are now operating within the same capitalist logic that has overcoded them. Nealon's project, as he moves away from economics and towards the humanities, is to examine what all of these changes mean not only for postmodernism, but also for the myriad disciplines touched by these effects, and to answer the question of "what nodes of resistance and/or critique are locatable within such an altered diagnosis of the field itself?" (Nealon 2012, 24). Foremost, Nealon says that this shift in philosophical horizons has universalized our attention to the processes of mediation and interpretation which were the hallmark of postmodern theory. Interpretation and mediation are no longer things to be foregrounded in a subversion of dominant cultural narratives; rather, they are now taken for granted *as* the dominant cultural narrative, leaving the humanities in an odd place after deconstruction:

> One might say that if 'fragmentation'…was the watchword of postmodernism, then, of course, reading follows as postmodernism's linchpin practice, largely through synecdoche: the hermeneutic conundrums of literature…functioned as the *part* that stood in for the *whole* postmodern world of piecing together undecidables. Post-postmodernism, on the other hand, seems to take 'intensification' (an increased spread and penetration) as its paradigmatic ethos, with globalization as its primary practice— all access all the time. (Nealon 2012, 50)

This weakness of institutional obsessions with *meanings* is paradoxically demonstrated by postmodernism's constant performance of readings which only *demonstrate*, or gesture towards, the multiplicity of meaning—a maneuver which our culture no longer requires—without mobilizing or deploying it in any relevant way.

Thus, Nealon argues that a return to a more robust sense of the "literary" involves overcoming what he reads as the postmodern obsession with *meaning* (or lack thereof). To this end, Nealon proposes refocusing on what literature and other cultural products *do* within a given context and how they accomplish their work, rather than approaching literature and other narrative arts myopically from the question of what or how they mean (or don't). Nealon sees this as a rejection of the linguistic turn, disregarding the now-taken-for-granted layers of cultural mediation and instead shifting "from a focus on *understanding* something to a concern with *manipulating* it—from (postmodern) *meaning* to (post-postmodern) *usage*, one might say" (Nealon 2012, 148). Quick to say that this is not a naive return to an essentialist past, Nealon clarifies that this is instead a recognition and acceptance of mutations and evolutions in modes of power.

The implication here is that literature (broadly defined) and its place in the cultural paradigm must shift as well; it cannot be relegated to the role of an "other" outside of cultural forces whose only purpose is the deconstructive work of hollowing out truth claims. It must be rethought as imbricated *within* those forces and capable of telling us something about them more directly. Therefore, literature needs to be reconsidered through what Nealon, again drawing on Deleuze, terms the "powers of the false": "a 'strong' power of the false that lies in its direct ability to create the new, understood specifically as the abnormal or the error—rather than (or at least in addition to) the false's traditional philosophical, 'weak' job of subverting the true" (Nealon 2012, 160). This "error" does not involve the postmodern operation of pointing out inconsistencies in normalizing cultural forces, but rather signals a real epistemological mutation that must be navigated, a challenge to how categories of "true" and "false" are separated out in the first place. In *Cinema 2* (1989) Deleuze himself defines this as an outworking of the Nietzschean legacy, being a powerful artistic demonstration of "truth" as a regime of signs that might yet be navigated otherwise (Deleuze 1989, 133-34). If the work of postmodernism was to undercut and hollow out the canonical and the obligatory, then, Nealon says, the work of post-postmodern art is to demonstrate what else might be done with the "mobile army of metaphors" that is left to us (Nietzsche 1976, 46-7). As Nealon puts it: "One might say that the performative in Deleuze doesn't succeed by failing to be a constative; rather, it succeeds the old-fashioned way—as a direct deployment of force, as a provocation" (Nealon 2012, 160). Here, the privilege is given

to the empirical effects of art's potential to elicit reactions, rather than the success or failure of its constituent speech-acts.

Nealon's primary example of these powers at work is the genre of Conceptual Poetry, specifically the works of experimental poets such as Kenneth Goldsmith and Bruce Andrews. Nealon explores the banality of Goldsmith's collection *The Weather* (a year's worth of transcribed weather reports) hoping to draw attention back to poetry's "monumental" functions, denoting works which are not primarily meant to be read, but rather serve more direct social purposes such as archiving times and places or enshrining memories (Nealon 2012, 144). What interests Nealon about Goldsmith's work is its deliberate refusal to produce new or novel texts. Instead, he gleans the abundance of material and online textual archives and directly manipulates that abundance, recombining it into something else. Additionally, Nealon explores how the "strong" power of the false in Andrews's work might also act as a site of resistance in the post-postmodern moment by seeking out further examples of the "old-fashioned," of artistic forms which "return to poetry a series of other jobs, the functions it had years, even millennia, before poetics became linked inexorably to the question of meaning and its discontents," jobs focused on creative practices and the provocative powers of artistic expression (Nealon 2012, 165).

To sum up Nealon's diagnosis: the increasingly dire economic and social realities of the twenty-first century have made it so that the devices of social critique provided by postmodernism—the slow, the subversive, and the "weak" literary capacity for hollowing out totalizing truth claims—have been deadened by a cultural moment that takes subversion as a given, such that the powers-that-be no longer aim to totalize, but rather to "territorialize" subjects on as many levels as possible (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). If literature, and creative expression more broadly, is to keep up as a relevant cultural force, then it must make a proactive move in its own right to chart new regimes of truth through the powers of the false. In these respects, Nealon's turn towards the "old-fashioned" jobs of fiction and poetry are based on the belief that, before the work of literature became sutured to the question of meaning and its failure, literature was capable of acting as a provocative deployment of force in its own right, one which had the capacity for real social effects.

The terms Nealon uses to discuss literature and its powers of the false lead me directly to my interest in the Slender Man as an object displaying many such powers, and which promises to be useful for clarifying some of the finer points of Nealon's position. The consensus that the Slender Man exists as a contemporary example of a "legend cycle" (Peck 2015; Tolbert 2013) makes it salient for analysis as part of Nealon's claim that the post-postmodern future of literature lies in its resuscitation of "old-fashioned" expressions. My argument proceeds as follows: first, I examine the Slender Man's creation, arguing that the process of "reverse ostension" (Tolbert 2013) strongly reflects the power of the false, which Deleuze identifies in the character of the "forger" (Deleuze 1989). I will then examine the actual social life which the Slender Man has achieved, including the complicated discussion of "belief" that surrounds its mythos, arguing for the Slender Man's capacities as a post-postmodern provocation against

existing regimes of the true rather than as an example of postmodern subversion. Finally, I will continue exploring the Slender Man's powers of the false as they are adapted for the internet-based video series *Marble Hornets* (Delange and Wagner, 2009-2014).[1]

Slender Man and the Powers of the False

Slender Man was first created in 2009 as part of an image-making contest on the internet forum Something Awful. The creator, Eric Knudsen (posting under the username Victor Surge), was inspired by an amalgamation of pop-culture references, psychological tropes, and traditional fairy tales (Chess and Newsom 2015). Following its initial posting, images of the Slender Man proliferated until the creature became a pervasive ghost in internet culture, spreading most commonly via image postings or "creepypasta"—scary stories told in short, easily-copyable text that are quickly disseminated throughout the internet. Despite having an origin in a single user, media scholars Shira Chess and Eric Newsom refer to it as a crowd-sourced entity, a product of internet culture with its narrative bearing an overwhelming number of meanings and trajectories (Chess and Newsom 2015). In some installments, for instance, it stalks young children to kidnap them, or, as in the case of the *Marble Hornets* series, it is implied to stalk these children into adulthood. Sometimes it has limbs like a human, other times it has tentacles; sometimes it kills its victims, other times it merely whisks them away forever; sometimes it brainwashes people into "proxies" to do its work; sometimes it causes disease; sometimes it sets fires; in some cases it disrupts electronic equipment. The Slender Man is anything but schematable.

Chess and Newsom argue that this crowd-sourced, polyvalent nature of the Slender Man, formed around "digital campfires," makes it perhaps the first true folktale of the Internet (Chess and Newsom 2015, 77ff). But folklorists Jeffrey Tolbert and Andrew Peck have argued that the Slender Man represents something more specific, namely that "the figure's backstory deliberately and explicitly mimics the generic conventions typically ascribed to legends" (Tolbert 2013, 2; Peck 2015). Tolbert's definition of a legend, which he takes from Michael Kinsella, is that it is a "communal effort to adapt old customs and beliefs to new situations" by locating the activities of the present and the past along the same historic continuum (Tolbert 2013, 2). Drawing on precedents set by folklorists Bill Ellis and Linda Dégh, Peck suggests that, as a legend, the Slender Man is a "discourse on belief" involving the "communal exploration of social boundaries" which "place[s] events in the group's conception of the real world while also challenging the boundaries of that world" (Peck 2015, 335). So defined, the Slender Man's status as a legend opens it for analysis as an "old-fashioned" function of the narrative and the poetic, which Nealon argues operate through more direct deployments of force than those observed in most contemporary literature.

However, the difference in the Slender Man is that it is not an organically emergent legend, but rather carefully crafted in order to mimic the motifs and patterns of the legend genre. Tolbert defines this as a mutation in the act of "ostension," or the reification of a legend through direct performance and presentation rather than through

narration or representation (Koven 2008, 137).[2] The mutation of this process which Tolbert identifies in the Slender Man is that of "reverse ostension," the act of creating a new iconic figure through the direct manipulation and recombination of existing materials in the folklore genre, "weaving together diverse strands of 'experience' (in the form of personal encounters with the creature, documentary and photographic evidence, etc.) into a more or less coherent body of narratives" (Tolbert 2013, 2-3). In reverse ostension, representation is privileged over direct presentation, insofar as the "experience" of the legend in its various materials comes first, with a narrative logic only emerging later and as the ultimate goal of the project. "By sharing, discussing, and commenting on these artifacts using participatory media," says Peck, "users create legendary narratives and audio/visual 'evidence' that presents researchers with a new kind of digital folk practice…[offering] the opportunity to observe this process of legend creation, negotiation, and circulation from its inception" (Peck 2015, 333-34). Essentially, the process that Peck describes is the reverse-engineering of an urban legend, from the inception of an idea to the creation of evidence supporting its veracity.

This process is similar to what we find in postmodernist fiction, but with several crucial differences. Postmodern fiction has long been recognized for making use of existing narratives and interrupting their cultural power by methodically re-deploying them in subversive ways. Angela Carter's short-story collection *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), for example, is rooted in the assumption that fairytales and folklore exist to install certain normalizing cultural assumptions in their readers and listeners, and the text therefore offers re-tellings of several familiar stories that subvert and hollow out those assumptions (Carter 1979). Carter demonstrates that re-tellings of fairy-tales, such as the Red Riding Hood story, re-inscribe dominant social codes but also remove their foundations, as Lorna Sage describes: "Fairy tale has here a two-faced character…more often than not as a supporting strand in a realist or sentimental bourgeois narrative. But you can tease out the sub-text… Fairy tale relies on repeated motifs, multiple versions and inversions, the hole in the text where the readers insert themselves" (Sage 1998). Nealon, of course, argues that the myopic attention to "versions and inversions" and "holes in the text," part and parcel of postmodernism, represents the "weak" end of literature's power which has become increasingly irrelevant in the twenty-first century. If the Slender Man is to give credence to the idea of post-postmodernism, and literature's ability to keep up with it, then it must demonstrate a different use of the materials that undergird it.

While postmodern strategies such as Carter's identify the totalizing truth-claims of folktales and then hollow-out those claims through retellings, the Slender Man's use of the same materials leads to something markedly different. For one, the deliberate production of the Slender Man using motifs of the legend genre gives it a more precise function than simply that of general folklore (Tolbert 2013, 2).[3] In fact, the process of reverse ostension which created the Slender Man is comparable to the genre of Conceptual Poetry discussed by Nealon. Just as Goldsmith and Andrews directly manipulate pre-existing texts into new forms in order to create their poetry, so the

Slender Man emerged as a similar treatment of existing motifs from folklore, fiction, and popular culture. Tina Marie Boyer lists several of Knudsen's initial inspirations for the character:

> Among them were H.P. Lovecraft, Stephen King, William S. Borroughs, and games such as *Silent Hill* and *Resident Evil*. Slender Man shares the internal psychological struggles, alienation, and fragmentation of the subjects in Borroughs's work, along with Lovecraft's themes of insanity, mind control, and monstrous hybridity on a grand scale—the idea of evil lurking in the shadows with no distinctive features lending itself to multiple new artistic interpretations. (Boyer 2013, 245)

The cobbling together of these initial inspirations led to further, more deliberate attempts to imitate the legend genre through the manipulation of pre-existing materials. Chess likens this process to the use of Open Source software, involving "reuse, modification, sharing of source code, an openness (and transparency) of infrastructure," and a clear attention to usage over meaning which, Nealon says, characterizes the post-postmodern (Chess 2011, 383).

This "Open Source," or re-combinative logic which produced the Slender Man, the use of reverse ostension, and the deliberate intent to mimic the legend genre while re-deploying the Slender Man back into that genre all serve to support the creature as an example of the powers of the false that Nealon describes. Jason Wallin, elucidating Deleuze's original use of the term through the commentaries of Brian Massumi and Jean Baudrillard, refers to these powers as "an encounter between the virtual and the actual" which might be constituted as "a working simulation injected into society," or "evidenced when life does not aim at the representation of reality, but produces real effects through play and artifice" (Wallin 2011, 107-8). Either description may apply to the project behind the Slender Man's origin, and quickly identifies the monster's creators with the filmic character that Deleuze calls the "forger."

Deleuze sets the forger apart from the stereotypical liar by again recalling the Nietzschean move at the heart of the powers of the false: whereas the liar attempts to subvert or distract us from an existent "truth," the forger creates a new regime of truth which calls the previous one into question, himself becoming the "*creator of truth*" in a process that Deleuze himself likens to legend-making (Deleuze 1989, 150-52) The powers of forgery can be observed in the online conversations which led to the Slender Man's development, insofar as the interactive community ultimately arrived at the decision to create a narrative that "people would believe that people believed" (Tolbert 2013, 9). In a most telling example, one user calling themselves "H.P. Shivcraft" went so far as to offer up a personal narrative in which they discovered the story of the Slender Man within an actually existing folkloric text (Tolbert 2013, 9-10). H.P. Shivcraft's account brings multiple threads of the powers of the false together: first, there is the act of reverse ostension which conjures up a narrative precedent for the Slender Man. Second, H.P. Shivcraft acts as a forger by directly manipulating a real-world text and identifying it as an origin for the Slender Man story. Though the user did not actually have any access to the text, nor did they in fact alter it, the act

of locating the Slender Man back within the materials on which it is based still lends the story a further air of authenticity, serving to destabilize the regimes of truth that would easily dismiss it as simply a fantasy.

The work which went into the creation of the Slender Man should also preclude its easy dismissal as nothing more than an act of internet play or leisure; as Tolbert says, the very deliberate nature of the Slender Man's construction means that it "moves beyond its immediate purpose of entertainment to provide an ongoing commentary on what constitutes a particular type of folklore" (Tolbert 2013, 7). Folklore itself, then, is one of the regimes of truth which the Slender Man is designed to question, and one major part of that regime is the status of the monster. Many author-comments on the Something Awful forums and other platforms dedicated to the creation of Slender Man lore involved direct commentary on "conceptions of monsters and the monstrous" (Tolbert 2013, 6). Through the process of reverse ostension, Tolbert argues that the community drew from multiple elements which they individually found frightening in order to produce the Slender Man as an aggregate, "a fearful symbol, a monster that, according to its own emic standards, is frightening in virtually any context" (Tolbert 2013, 17). But what stands out about this reading is that, as an aggregate, the Slender Man also mobilizes its own powers of the false to interrogate the regimes of truth where the monster typically lives. Boyer helps define this regime, arguing that monsters are typically installed by social attitudes and defined by the functions they serve: "The monster can defy, uphold, or break cultural norms, it can serve in a variety of ways, but most often it represents fear, functioning as threshold guardian and prohibitive figure" (Boyer 2013, 240-41). In Deleuzian terms, monsters operate with an entire regime of truth behind them, a set of assumptions about their logic and function.

In his landmark study, *The Philosophy of Horror* (1990), philosopher Noel Carroll argued that the typical trajectory of horror narrative introduced the monster as a disruption of the commonplace which needed to be overcome in order to restore normativity, such that the monster invariably acted as an "agent of the established order" (Carroll 1990, 196). Monsters, then, typically serve to re-inscribe normative beliefs by first disrupting them, by functioning as a "trial" through which the narrative subject passes in order to arrive back at a more powerfully constituted sense of the True (Deleuze 1989, 148). However, by serving as a discourse on beliefs that are undefined and over social boundaries that have not been explicitly laid, the Slender Man ambiguates the traditional social function of the monster: "He is a prohibitive monster, but the cultural boundaries he guards are not clear. Victims do not know when they have violated and crossed them. At times it is enough to have seen the creature to become its victim" (Boyer 2013, 252). Despite being the deliberate aggregate of a number of existing and traditional monstrous tropes, the Slender Man itself emerges without a clear function as part of a traditional horror narrative. As a result, its powers of the false question the entire regime of narrative "truths" which give rise to monsters in the first place. Again, this describes the Slender Man not as subversive, in a postmodern sense, but as doing the stronger work of exploring boundaries that have not yet been

established, and negotiating those sociocultural dimensions which are rapidly and constantly shifting in the Internet age.

At this point, it is tempting to suggest that the Slender Man's polyvalent meaning simply repeats the postmodern logic, which Nealon says has become obsolete, of drawing attention to the dialectical tension between endless interpretation and interpretation's ultimate failure (Nealon 2012, 142-43). Here, however, I would argue that the Slender Man's multiple possible meanings are not an effect of endless interpretation, but rather a function of the Slender Man's existence as a sort of sign-post, as an archive of and a monument to the disparate elements that went into its creation. Andrea Kitta further explores the Slender Man's polyvalent meaning and, rather than concluding that the monster means many things at once, suggests the inverse: "[H]e does not represent any one thing, but rather fills in for anything frightening, anything that could be watching the individual… Slender Man not only gives us a place to assign value to…unacknowledged common experiences, he is standing there, acknowledging these experiences" (Kitta 2015, 72-73). While Kitta explores the many powers of "perhaps" in the Slender Man, her main concern is not how the Slender Man empowers or frustrates the search for meaning, but rather how it provokes the assignation of meaning through the myriad ways in which it is deployed. For Kitta, as for Nealon, the Slender Man's *meaning* is overcoded by what it can be "*used* to express," giving voice to latent modern anxieties which may as yet have no other articulation (Kitta 2015, 72-73). Far from making meaning on its own, the Slender Man serves as a sort of "hinge or 'torque'" through which it is capable of indexing multiple uses and expressions (Nealon 2012, 165).[4]

Still, some of those expressions—especially violent expressions, even against children—have been inarguably horrific. Similar to Carter's postmodern deployments of the folklore genre, the Slender Man also has a certain social logic embedded within its creation. However, rather than dialectically installing/subverting cultural norms, the Slender Man's social effects are much more provocative. The degree to which the Slender Man is a "discourse on belief" has become a more challenging issue in light of the recent acts of violence that have been traced back to Slender Man, or wherein the Slender Man has been invoked as an explanation. In his analysis, Peck explains that the reverse-ostensive practices which created the Slender Man have ultimately circled back towards ostension, with those familiar with the monster seeking ways to act out the story in real life. While many of these practices are benign, the recent acts of violence have also caused the creative community to backpedal and reassert the fictive nature of the Slender Man and the playful nature of their own activities, a move which appears to be directly at odds with the original intention of making a legend that was believable (Peck 2015, 31). Tolbert suggests a mistranslation between the intentions of the community, who desired their legend to be believable *as a legend*, and the reception of the public, where some have been tempted to believe that the Slender Man is based in fact (Tolbert 2015). In other words, while the Slender Man is created by Deleuzian forgers who are aware of the constructed nature of their "truth," their creation has been received by many who, still operating in a realist paradigm of truth, began to confuse play and reality.

Kitta's analysis of this situation proves especially interesting, as she identifies that there is, in fact, an even larger social regime of truth being pressured by the Slender Man's powers of the false:

> As [David] Hufford (1982) has shown, American society has a "tradition of disbelief"'; while it is traditional to believe in certain things, it is also traditional to *not* believe in certain things. Additionally, individuals regard the experiences of others to be up for questioning, while our own experiences are treated as dogma. (Kitta 2015, 63)

Kitta argues that the Slender Man stories carry a "double stigma" since they are both about the supernatural and based on the internet, two elements which remain suspect in the American "tradition of disbelief." In overcoming that stigma, the creators of the Slender Man worked to root their legend in forms which lent it credibility as an experience, including modeling it on extant legends and fabricating material "evidence." Furthermore, the "empty" nature of the Slender Man which allows it to index multiple expressions has also allowed it to ventriloquize personal experiences and anxieties that are otherwise impossible to articulate, to the point that those experiences feel "real" in retrospect. The result has been that, while not proving the Slender Man as real by any means, the creators still managed to upset the "tradition of disbelief" at a fundamental level. By troubling the existing regime of truth to the point of making certain epistemic slippages possible, the Slender Man became a hinge in how truth and falsehood were separated out, thus becoming "a part of the experience of life in the modern world" (Kitta 2015, 70).

Just as Nealon says the logics of production and consumption have become muddled in contemporary culture, the Slender Man also demonstrates these confusions along traditional lines of belief and disbelief. Between the intensity of the powers that produced it, as well as its status as a hybrid of archive and narrative elements, the Slender Man achieved such momentum that it ultimately escaped its own systems of production in an astounding display of what strong powers of the false may be capable of. The Slender Man emerged as an epistemological challenge working its power by proliferating at such breakneck speed that it even began to collapse the logics of its own production and consumption. It accomplished this through forging strong fictive error, historically grounded and across a decentralized and only loosely-policed authorial community. Chess and Newsom observe:

> During the weeks when the story construction [first] took place...there is a constant slippage between those who are creating (and open sourcing) the conventions of the Slender Man, and the audiences who are consuming it. Because many of those on the forum were both designers and consumers of the mythology that was being constructed the forum contributors and audiences often became terrified by their own tales. (Chess and Newsom 2015, 63)

The Slender Man, then, does not terrify through "weak" postmodern powers of interruption. Rather, it follows the twenty-first century cultural logic of intensification

identified by Nealon and pushes it to its limit, challenging existing regimes of truth to the point at which even its producers become terrified consumers of their own product.

Marble Hornets and Post-Postmodernism

My analysis of the Slender Man's creation history and reception has foregrounded the ways in which it operates through the Deleuzian powers of the false, making it a candidate for what Nealon might call a post-postmodern cultural expression. But though powers of the false may be observable in the figure of the Slender Man itself, there is little to tell us about its actual capacity for *resistance* to the cultural logic which Nealon says has become dominant. However, the Slender Man has not only proliferated through image forums or texts, but also through film. Within these filmic adaptations, we can possibly begin to see ways in which post-postmodern art can further clarify Nealon's cultural diagnosis, and what new modes of resistance or critique might be available.

Though it is far from the only filmic adaptation of the Slender Man mythos, *Marble Hornets* is certainly the most iconic and impactful.[5] Beginning as a spinoff of the Something Awful forum narratives, and emerging only days after the initial posts went live, *Marble Hornets* launched when a student calling himself Jay uploaded the introductory video to his YouTube channel, "MarbleHornets," on 20 June 2009.[6] In "Entry #1," Jay explains that he was given a series of video tapes by his friend Alex shortly before Alex disappeared without a trace. From there, the series progresses in a first-person "found-footage" style as Jay documents his search for Alex while he and other characters attempt to evade an entity known as the Operator—a tall, thin, faceless man styled after the Slender Man—and the human "proxies" which act on its behalf. The series includes 92 videos on the primary YouTube channel, 39 videos in which an antagonistic channel operated by a human proxy, "totheark,"[7] interacts with the content of the primary channel, and 582 Tweets in a real-time Twitter feed.[8] As of this writing, MarbleHornets and totheark share an excess of 100 million views between them.

Marble Hornets capitalizes on processes of intensification and proliferation through its use of multi-media deployment. While the majority of the footage in *Marble Hornets* is presented after events take place, whether the tapes are salvaged or uploaded by characters, timestamps and cross-platform interaction contextualize the videos as playing out in real-time, with audience interaction on the Twitter feed reinforcing this. This cross-platform interaction foregrounds one of the ways in which *Marble Hornets* itself operates in a post-postmodern way, namely through its variations on Deleuze's "time image," which Nealon identifies as a "direct mode of manipulating filmic time." (Nealon 2012, 158) Nealon identifies such modes as post-postmodern because of the ways in which they ostensibly eschew mediation in favor of direct presentation, or privilege use over meaning. Deleuze's take is more specific: the time-image, or the "crystalline regime" of the image, eschews a particular realist regime of truth in which the image traditionally operates. The realist regime arranges objects within a

narrative space, whereas the powers of the false only provoke a story through the direct presentation of images and objects (Deleuze 1989, 139). While Deleuze's notion here is very close to what Tolbert calls "reverse ostension," which is definitive of the Slender Man mythos as a whole, *Marble Hornets* provides the clearest presentation of it. Each entry is short, often presented as a single shot, and when the main channel begins to interact with totheark, the viewer is often forced to interpret codes or make judgments in terms of how to order the entries in a cohesive way. Several times over, the entirety of *Marble Hornets* has been arranged into various playlists which guide new viewers through multiple channels and tweets, but in each case all but the most rudimentary narrative structures are imposed upon the work by third parties after the fact.

Furthermore, the reliance of the Slender Man mythos upon the Deleuzian character of the forger is also subtly foregrounded in *Marble Hornets*. In the most intense expressions of the powers of the false, Deleuze says that forgery (which is to say the act of creation itself) is carried to the "nth power" by "chains of forgers" who reveal that, in contradistinction to the old regime of Truth, all "truthful men" are really "no less false than [the forger]" (Deleuze 1989, 134). *Marble Hornets* brilliantly displays this by presenting a cast of characters that is, in reality, a series of forgers: the character Alex, an aspiring filmmaker, is in the early tapes seen ordering his cast and giving directions. Presenting Alex as director foregrounds him as a creator, and as the cast gets larger we see that all of the characters are connected through their mutual love of acting and creating. The ultimate irony, then, is that despite a documentary style which purports to be an objective recording of real events, *Marble Hornets* is created by a cast of characters who are trained in the production of narratives and the manipulation of narratives into falsehoods: they are actors playing actors, artists playing artists playing victims in a "chain of forgers" which aids in producing a new regime of "truth" in their films.

At this point, it is worth considering what distinguishes *Marble Hornets* from other films in the genre of found-footage horror. Tolbert, for instance, personally attests to the power of fiction to confuse reality which he experienced when first viewing *The Blair Witch Project* (1999).[9] In fact, he cites *Blair Witch,* Orson Welles's *War of the Worlds,* and other works as precedential of *Marble Hornets* and the Slender Man mythos as a whole, presented as they were "in ways that mimicked real media conventions and were therefore *convincing.*" (Tolbert 2015, 38-39) Mikel J. Koven cites *Blair Witch* and the more recent *Paranormal Activity* (2007) as grounds to dissent from the position that Slender Man or *Marble Hornets* bring anything unique to the table (Koven 2015, 105-11). But by following Nealon's lead and shifting the angle of analysis, I hope to demonstrate that *Marble Hornets* differs from these other works in precisely the ways which make it interesting from a post-postmodern perspective.

In his analysis of *Marble Hornets*, Adam Daniel attempts to use the work to give further credence to the "third" and "fourth" screens of media theory, i.e. the cinematic capacities of the smartphone and the tablet—the technologies for which *Marble Hornets* was designed (Daniel 2016). Daniel's analysis goes a long way towards demonstrating

that, just as there is a regime of truth under contention in the Slender Man phenomenon itself, *Marble Hornets* also operates not by hollowing-out a particular regime of truth but by actively contesting it with another set of potentials. In this case, it is the logic of horror cinema itself, which Daniel calls "ocularcentric," that is under pressure, focused as it is on the response of the eye to images, and therefore based around the image of "the monster and what it represents," or, in Carroll's terms, what the monster *means* as the narrative disruption of an *a priori* order of things (Daniel 2016, 5). This regime, Daniel contends, creates a set of formulations and expectations which limit what the horror genre is capable of: "[W]hen the appeal of horror film is constrained to the potentialities of a sharply defined central monster or a narrative drive to know the unknowable, it neglects to consider that horror cinema engages with us at a level that goes beyond cognitive evaluation of potential threat and impurity" (Daniel 2016, 6). Daniel takes *Marble Hornets* as his object of analysis because, in his estimation, the work manages to look for potentialities beyond the ocularcentric while other found-footage films such as *Blair Witch* have only managed to repeat them. By only rarely showcasing its monster and using the camera as something other than an "eye" (e.g. through the use of chest-mounted cameras during running shots), Daniel argues that *Marble Hornets* mines the other experiences of the body for new possibilities in producing believable horror film for a medium and audience that is decidedly removed from traditional cinema: "Through the process of implicating the body of the spectator in a palpable way, cinematic new media such as *Marble Hornets* may have effects that overpower [the] drive to cognitive rationale" (Daniel 2016, 8-9). As a result, *Marble Hornets* offers potentially new artistic approaches which have been occluded by the pervasiveness of traditional filmmaking.

It is precisely on this last point—that of overpowering the logic of traditional cinema—that I believe Nealon's perspective becomes especially useful. The economic preoccupation which runs through *Post-Postmodernism* offers a unique lens through which to view *Marble Hornets* in relation to other works in its genre, and taking this perspective helps to elucidate the ways in which *Marble Hornets* also manages to engage in a certain kind of resistance, giving credence to the sort of analysis that Nealon is trying to promote. Just as Daniel says there is a certain narrative logic which dominates in horror cinema, so too is there an *economic* logic that also dominates those considerations. The cinema remains an industry, supporting and being supported by certain ways of doing things. The success of *The Blair Witch Project*, while still innovative and exciting, remains a success which occurred firmly within the potentialities afforded by the film industry. From this perspective, the decision to release *Marble Hornets* via YouTube (before the platform was itself territorialized by the film and television industries in the forms of ad revenue and YouTube Red) becomes much bolder (Milner 2016).[10] Daniel suggests that this allows the work to pursue potentialities other than those afforded under a specific economic model, freeing it up to deploy the powers of the false: "*Marble Hornets*, as an outlier to the Hollywood system in its independent production and release, is more freely able to transgress the limits of this 'rational' system in favour of images and sounds that are counter or excessive to a 'seamless'

presentation" (Milner 2016, 13). These modes of expression are available to *Marble Hornets* precisely because of its freedom from the artistic/economic expectations which make up the logic of traditional cinema.

This economic logic trickles down from the production of *Marble Hornets* and into the actual specifics of the filming. Daniel points out that the tight budget of the work requires deeper considerations of camera mobility and price, a constraint which "allows for an entirely new world of images"(Milner 2016, 10). Furthermore, the economic realities of the project are also foregrounded in the narrative: several times, we observe Jay or Alex purchasing new equipment such as tapes, SD cards, food, even phones or hotel rooms. Because the Operator is apparently warded off by video and recording technology, filming becomes a ceaseless job for the characters which keeps them perpetually on the move, lest they be tracked down by a monster that they rarely see. *Marble Hornets* does not shy away from the economic reality of such a situation, presenting the enormous amount of resources such a lifestyle requires. Not only this, but in a further deviation from ocularcentric logic, the project of constant filming is actually performed in the hopes that the monster will be warned off and therefore *never* presented on the camera. Compared to *The Blair Witch Project*, which utilizes the logic of the cinema in pursuit of its monster and in pursuit of Truth—what "really" happened—*Marble Hornets* instead presents the very act of recording and uploading as an act of *survival* which runs counter to the ocularcentric; any question of meaning or truth is sublimated by the need to remain alive long enough to upload another entry in a bizarre ritual for avoiding the monster while hoping that anyone watching might be able to help.

The decision for *Marble Hornets* to operate outside the Hollywood production logic also draws new attention to the potentialities of its chosen platform. Just as the traditional cinematic industrial logic is often confounded on YouTube, media critic Ryan Milner also notes that the platform's capacity for both fictitious/farcical content and authentic, personal exposure often leave audiences with a certain ambivalence towards the ways in which media should be received (Milner 2016, 209). This ambivalence inherent in the YouTube platform allowed the creators of *Marble Hornets* to extend the powers of the false already operative in the Slender Man mythos even further, into a territory where they would be further exacerbated. As Daniel argues, the YouTube platform is capable of creating a space of "hyperawareness" of our relationship to technology—suspended in the cinema but heightened through more accessible screens such as the smartphone and the computer—which thus "denies the kind of spectatorial disbelief that is more easily summoned in standard horror genre films."(Daniel 2016, 9) The use of budget, handheld cameras for instance, served a particular function within the world of the *Blair Witch Project*, but one which was still overcoded by the expectations of a cinematic industrial logic. On YouTube, the documentary nature of *Marble Hornets* rubbed shoulders with other "authentic" uses of the same tools and platform, where the camera could still largely be perceived as a recording device presenting unmediated images (Daniel 2016)[11] and where the economic concerns noted above could further contribute to the sense that viewers were

watching amateurs who were acting in earnest. Further, in the careful manipulation of the filmic images themselves through rupture and decay, the creators of *Marble Hornets* not only minimized the actual presentation of the monster but also heightened the sense of ambiguity, and instances of technological failure also lent authenticity to the videos by further distancing them from the seamless (or what Deleuze would call the "organic") image-logic of the cinema. As a result, just as occurred in online forums about the Slender Man, many users came to the *Marble Hornets* videos aware that they were observing a fiction, and yet they could not help but (partially) wonder if what they were seeing was real (Tolbert 2015, 51-52).

In sum, *Marble Hornets* utilizes the powers of the false which are already operative within the Slender Man mythos and extends them through the medium of film. However, *Marble Hornets* does not operate on the same cinematic logic as other works in the found-footage genre, and its alternative approaches to technology, image, and narrative all draw lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) away from a logic which has been territorialized by specific industry concerns. As a result, *Marble Hornets* not only adds to the authenticity of the Slender Man mythos as a whole, it also more locally manages to resist the economic logic that has restricted the artistic potentialities of other films. While not a work of "literature," per se, the artistic strategies of *Marble Hornets* dovetail closely enough with Nealon's work in *Post-Postmodernism* to give further validation to his instincts that future work in the arts and humanities has the capacity to keep up with and respond to contemporary cultural logic—if, of course, they are willing to resist the concerns which currently overcode them and activate new potentialities.

Conclusions

At the end of *Post-Postmodernism*, Nealon argues that "[i]nnovation these days consists of putting existing things together in stark and productive 'new' ways; and the humanities are (or should be) a key laboratory for such a transformed practice of innovation…producing a kind of cartography that can diagnose and respond to the post-postmodern present" (Nealon 2012, 194). It is in this laboratory spirit that I set out to examine the Slender Man phenomenon as a product of a post-postmodern culture. As has been demonstrated, the Slender Man phenomenon, especially as it is remediated through the *Marble Hornets* series, takes on new relevance as a cultural artifact when understood through Nealon's account of post-postmodernism and as a response to contemporary cultural logic. The Slender Man, as one such act of innovation, not only validates Nealon's cultural diagnostic in many ways but it also helps elucidate which art forms might best be able to engage with that logic in the contemporary world.

While the forms and purpose of such engagement and resistance may yet be difficult to predict, the Slender Man's creators themselves provide a major trajectory. While posing a series of questions to members of the original creative community via the SlenderNation web forum, Jeffrey Tolbert asked how important it was that the Slender Man be viable or believable as a legend. In response, a user called Voidmaster

posted:

> So much of our desire for knowledge and experience can be immediately placated by things like the internet these days, that it seems we've finally found the boarders [sic] of the map. That there are only a few remaining dark areas left on the map, all of which are so extremely esoteric and complicated that, to the common man, they might not as well be there at all. … And so without any apparent black spots on the map, we seek to draw our own. (See Tolbert 2013, 14-15)

Voidmaster's comments reflect precisely the sort of attitude that Nealon expresses in *Post-Postmodernism*. Faced with a cultural logic that no longer cares about having the "right" map, preferring instead to have as many maps in as many places as possible, the potential for artistic resistance lies not in critiquing a given map as wrong or as totalizing, but in creating "black spots" where there seemingly are none. This is what Nealon means by deploying the powers of the false: the creation of new spaces which have not yet been territorialized, or the disruption of spaces where only one logic appears to dominate. "Now, as we hover between modern and postmodern worlds," says Boyer—or, to revise her situation, between postmodern and post-postmodern worlds—"we encounter once again the demand for new cartographies" (Boyer 2013, 256). Such is the language with which Voidmaster articulates the Slender Man project, and with which Nealon ends *Post-Postmodernism*, challenging humanistic and social studies to devise new ways of critiquing culture not merely through deconstructively subverting it, but through the more Deleuzian process of mapping, diagnosing, and indicting it. The Slender Man encourages us to think of what art and imagination might yet offer to that process, and demonstrates that sometimes, rather than coming after us and re-inscribing our norms, our monsters may indeed go before us, charting and settling territories of which we are not yet fully aware.

Notes

1   The YouTube channel name has since been updated to "Clear Lakes 44 | Marble Hornets" to denote the continuing projects of the *Marble Hornets* creators and their production company, THAC LLC.

2   Koven himself draws on the work of Linda Dégh for his definition of "ostension," though many of the works cited in this paper defer to Koven's use of the term.

3   Tolbert here cites Lynne McNeill, who notes that the Internet community has "adopted the concept of *memes* to identify what folklorists would call folklore," and that the resulting equivocation has occasionally caused problems in studies where the meaning or genre of folklore under discussion is more precise.

4   "Torque" is a word that Nealon borrows from Bruce Andrews to describe the sorts of operations experienced in Language Poetry: "Andrews speeds up language as a series of creative practices, rather than primarily slows it down and territorializes it on one function, language's meaning (or lack thereof). It's the confrontation of performative or inventive force that you see on every line; in every 'gap' there's not meaning waiting to burst forth

(or not), but a kind of hinge, linkage, movement, intensification—what Andrews calls 'torque.' And this torque returns to poetry a series of other jobs, the functions it had years, even millennia, before poetics became linked inexorably to the question of meaning and its discontents: here, we see poetry function as discourse that's ceremonial, aggressive, passive, communal, seductive, repulsive, humorous, persuasive, insulting, praising, performative, and lots more. But one thing it doesn't do—or even really attempt—is to 'mean' something" (165).

5   Other examples include *EverymanHYBRID* and *TribeTwelve*, both starting as YouTube-based series before expanding to include Twitter, blogging platforms, and geocaching as part of their interactive approach as Alternate Reality Games (See Tolbert 2015, n.15). Notably, *EverymanHYBRID* began to incorporate other urban legends and "creepypasta" ideas into its overall narrative, also sharing a narrative "universe" with *TribeTwelve*, while *Marble Hornets*, in said universe, is considered a fiction.

6   THAC LLC, "Entry #1," *Clear Lakes 44 | Marble Hornets* video, 1:59. 20 June 2009.

7   totheark, YouTube user.

8   @marblehornets, Twitter (website). As with the YouTube channel, the @marblehornets Twitter feed continues to update with a new narrative, *Clear Lakes 44*.

9   See Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez.

10   Milner contrasts the "many-to-many" mode of digital communication to the "one-to-many" gatekeeping model of broadcast and cinematic media (112), while also noting that the distinctions between professional and amateur, commercial and community are "industrial logics" that do not always hold up on platforms such as YouTube (207). See also Wallin's comments on the double-articulation involved in the production of certain media and other artistic logics when different juxtapositions are at work ("Mobilizing Powers of the False," 110).

11   See also Wallin on the ability for differently-articulated uses of technology to open up "escape routes from under the laws of *use-monopoly*" ("Mobilizing Powers of the False," 107, emphasis in the original).

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Coming out of the Gaming Closet:

Engaged Cultural Analysis and the Life-Line as Interview Method and Consciousness-Raiser

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Abstract

This article accounts for and problematizes the process and development with the research tool and method, "the Life-Line", which we used in our project Gaming Moms. Juggling Time, Play and Everyday Life *(Enevold & Hagström 2008a) to involve our informants in the production, outcome and consumption of research beyond merely being respondents to interview-questions. We propose to call the collaborative ethnography which resulted from this work "engaged cultural analysis". The Life-Line was one out of several methods employed in the study, conducted between 2008 and 2012. It combined Feminist Cultural Analysis with Scandinavian Ethnology and Game Studies to study how gaming restructured human lives and roles, and how roles and lives were restructured according to gaming, in everyday family life. We show here, how we used the Life-Line to reconstruct the "gaming lives" of a selection of informants, to illustrate the interweaving of gaming mothers' everyday work, play, and family life. We focused on the everyday digital playing practices of adult female gamers, because digital gaming is traditionally a highly-gendered leisure practice, dominated by male-identified gamers. By studying non-traditional gamers, "gaming moms", the project aimed to nuance the common stereotype of the young male gamer in his bedroom and the stereotyped (non-gaming, often policing) mother, and take a measure of gender equality as regards play, work and time, in everyday life. This article, however, focuses on one of the methods used – the Life-Line. While we discuss the difficulties encountered and the remedial modifications made to our method, we also explain how this process was integral to the female players, who came out of the gaming closet to collaborate with us, realizing that they too* are *gamers. This newfound awareness was a significant goal of the project, and essential for the research to be* engaged, *an engaged cultural analysis; it enabled us to participate in creating a more equal game-cultural landscape accessible to players of all ages and genders.*

Keywords: Engaged cultural analysis, Life-Line, interviews, game studies, ethnology, collaborative ethnography, mothers, gaming moms

Introduction

This article is based on interviews performed in the project *Gaming Moms. Juggling Time, Play and Everyday Life* (Enevold & Hagström 2008a), in which we combined our disciplinary backgrounds in Feminist Cultural Studies and Scandinavian Ethnology to deal with Game Studies. The project was conducted as a

cultural analysis focused on adult women's everyday playing practices, specifically digital games. It aimed at nuancing the stereotype of the gamer, traditionally a male adolescent, and take a measure of gender equality in terms of who gets to spend time on what in families (Enevold & Hagström 2008b, 2009, Enevold 2014, Hagström 2013). Since women and girls traditionally have been viewed, and view themselves, as non-gamers, a stated research goal was consciousness-raising and empowerment of adult female gamers. This article describes in detail how we developed the research tool the Life-Line method, which was collected from Sociologist Karen Davie's studies of the inter-dependence of women, time and work life (1990; 1996). We have capitalized Life-Line to specify that we have developed this method further. We wanted to use the Life-Line in order to understand the interrelations of time, play, and women's everyday lives, and to get a visual overview of our informants' gaming lives. Our methodological development became both a new research tool *and* a research result. It led both researchers and informants to new discoveries about gamer identities; most importantly, it led to a realization among the informants that they too were gamers.

In this article, we have coined the term "engaged cultural analysis" to emphasize that ours is not yet another cultural analytical investigation *of* a phenomenon, but an engagement *with* one. We add this qualification to our feminist focus, because in our view, naming a study "feminist" does not automatically mean it is "engaged", that is, it does not necessarily contribute to, or reach the participants during or after the project. Nor does a feminist study always require collaboration from its informants in any other way than their answering of questions. We return to the concept of "engaged" below where we situate our study as related to feminist action research and again towards the end of the article, engaged and public anthropology.

Equality, Gender and Gaming
The research project combined ethnology (ethnographic methods and the everyday perspective) with game studies (concepts and content from game-specific research) and feminist cultural studies (impetus to reveal and remove inequality, language and representation). It was guided by a cultural analytical perspective, focusing on practices and power relations, as we investigated the everyday gaming of mothers particularly in relation to time and leisure management in family life. As mentioned, looking at the gendered practices of gameplay, the ultimate aim of the research project was to take measure of gender equality in everyday life and if possible, highlight inequalities and nuance gamer stereotypes. We wanted to study how gaming restructured human lives and roles, and how roles and lives were restructured according to gaming, in everyday family life.

The project, which was initiated in 2008 and concluded in 2012, included roughly 80 informants who were all gaming mothers. An explicit goal was to investigate an aspect of the considerably gendered practice of *gaming*, a phenomenon with major economic and socio-cultural impact. An important aim was to look beyond gamer stereotypes, at non-traditional gamers. Back when we first started, little research had been done on female gamers or families and gaming; most concerned girls (Cassell

& Jenkins 1998; Schott & Horrell 2000, Jenson & de Castell 2008) or women under 25 (Kerr 2003). Since then, new research has emerged (e.g. Thornham 2011, Eklund 2012, Quandt & Kröger 2014, Boudreau & Consalvo 2014, Shaw 2014), but research on adult women was at the time very sparse (see e.g. Royse et al. 2007; Thornham 2008,) and there was none centering on mothers. We chose to focus on mothers because they were culturally, socially and symbolically situated as "traditional" figures and, in popular culture, perceived as *non-gamers* (Enevold & Hagström 2008b).

Nevertheless, there were indications when the project was launched that the player demographic was considerably more diverse in age and gender than was evident in the media. For example, a study made by the *Pew Internet & American Life Project* showed that 99% of boys and 94% of girls play video games (Lenhart et al. 2008). *Svenskarna och internet 2008* (Findahl 2008), a yearly report produced by World Internet Institute in collaboration with .SE [foundation for internet infrastructure], reported that 30% of the Swedish population play online games; 40% were men and 34% were women. However, in the player segment aged 45 and over women outnumbered men (Findahl 2008, 35-36). These numbers did not seem to be reflected in media where the young male player still dominated the scene as the "normal" gamer. Other gamers tended to either disappear from public discourse, appear as anomalies (Enevold & Hagström 2008b, 2009), or present as averse to gaming in general.

At the beginning of the project in 2008, and during the gradual mainstreaming of gaming over the next few years (Enevold 2014), the advent of Wii consoles, the Nintendo DS, several musical games (to name a few important game developments), appeared to change the cultural landscape of gaming and make it more heterogeneous, in terms of age and gender. But the media image of the male gamer as norm still seemed to prevail. In 2011, three years into the project, a striking example of the representation of the mother as a non-player averse to gaming, was found in the promotional campaign launching *Dead Space 2,* a game characterized as a science fiction survival horror video game (Electronic Arts 2011a). Short videos of middle-aged women horrified by scenes from the game were published on YouTube and Electronic Arts' website and with the words "Critics love it but your mom will hate *Dead Space 2*. See real moms' reactions to watching clips to the upcoming game" (Electronic Arts 2011b).

Another three years down the road and the gaming landscape still appeared in need of role models and rights for female players to be represented and to be active agents in game culture. The outrage in 2014 against Anita Sarkeesian, a feminist media critic and blogger, and her Kickstarter project to fund a series of videos about female stereotypes and misogyny in videogames (Kickstarter 2012), demonstrated that much remained to be done in order to make game culture a more equally accessible domain. If that was not enough, the ensuing #gamergate and renewed harassment campaign, including rape and death threats, against Sarkeesian and other females in the game industry (Rawlinson & Kelion 2014, Frank 2014) was convincing evidence that more gender equality was, and still is, needed. In light of the invisibility of women, on the one hand, and the chastising of women in game cultures, on the other, we have always felt that it was imperative that our project be an *engaged* cultural analysis into game

culture, to serve the greater goal of creating a more equal gaming landscape in practice and in contemporary popular culture. Our study was also marked as feminist, because of its focus; it was necessary to do more research on the relation specifically between games and gender. Moreover, as Dána-Ain Davis and Christa Craven assert, it is critical that feminist ethnographers "in the wake of neoliberalism, where human rights and social justice have increasingly been subordinated to proliferating 'consumer choices' and ideals of market justice, reassert the central feminist connections among theory, method and practice" (Davis & Craven, 2011, 190).

Feminist Methodology, Game Studies and the Life-Line

As a project with a declared feminist focus, contributing to equality work, the choices of method needed to reflect this intention. A feminist methodology, as Colleen Reid points out, commonly "include focusing on gender and inequality and using qualitative methods to analyze women's experience" (Reid 2004, 4). Referring to Francesca Cancian (1992), Reid also comments on how "few studies [however] adopt the more radical methods of including an action component" (Reid 2004, 4). Action research is a "family of related approaches that integrate theory and action with a goal of addressing important organizational, community, and social issues together with those who experience them" (Reid & Gilberg, 2014). We incorporated an element of action research in our project as we translated this as increasing in practice the engagement among, and raising the consciousness of, our informants. To address this goal methodologically, we decided to organize so called "Pizza parties", that is, focus groups inspired by Sherry Turkle's research into digital cultures (1995), to create a forum for exchange between female gamers.

The project mixed several different methods and, as Jennifer Greene states, this can be done to allow for the "mind-set" of several research traditions to enrich the approach and interpretations (2007). Method development was also declared a central tenet in the initial project plan. The project's ambition to use a "multi-method approach and the significance of self-reflexive ethnography are described further in the article, "Mothers, Play and Everyday Life. Ethnology Meets Game Studies" (Enevold & Hagström, 2009). Methods listed were interviews; blog feedback; participant observation in two forms: a) observation during play and b) playing together with informants, in game-studies terms called "a gaming interview" (Schott and Horrell 2000); self-documentation in the form of a written or filmed diary; discourse analysis of on-line forums, news media and game magazines. In addition, the need for so called playing research (Aarseth 2003) was emphasized for us to be able to more closely know the games the informants played and talked about, the different genres and hardware requirements. In the end, some of the above-listed methods were excluded while others were added, for example an online questionnaire. We also developed the "Life-Line interview method", which proved to be significant to fulfill the goal of consciousness-raising and including an element of action research. In what follows, we discuss the introduction, development and modification of this method.

Before we go on, we want to contextualize our choice of a multi-method approach

briefly and offer a short explanation of the situatedness of game studies in relation to methods. Whereas qualitative work is taken for granted in ethnology, folklore studies and anthropology, it has been more of a novelty in the young field of game studies. Games as a research topic is challenging, as its field is inherently multidisciplinary (in the sense that many disciplines take on games) and interdisciplinary, as researchers often combine strands from various disciplines, such as computer science and media studies, in order to understand games. The field is also continuously changing and growing. As a developing area similar to internet studies, it is always in need of, and should call for, theoretical and methodological self-reflection and revision (see e.g. Williams 2005; Markham & Baym 2009). Digital ethnography, for example, becomes a particularly relevant method as socio-cultural worlds and interactions become increasingly digitalized (Hine 2000, Markham 2013, Pink 2015). The past decade's increased focus on players in game studies and online worlds has nevertheless brought ethnography to the heart of its expanding research field (Boellstorff 2006; Taylor 2006, 2012; Lammes 2007; Thornham 2011; Stenberg 2011; Eklund 2012; Hjorth and Richardson 2014, Shaw 2014), but only recently have methods been made a prioritized topic of its workshops, special journal editions, and books (Copier & Taylor 2008; De Paoli & Teli 2011; Boellstorff et al. 2012; Lankoski & Björk 2015). To contribute to the methodological development of the field, we firmly anchored the study to a variety of methods and research practices based in ethnology and ethnography. A significant method in our strategy for collecting empirical data was interviewing. Among ourselves we have worked a lot with interviews, in our own as well as other researchers' projects – from designing schemes for semi-directive interviews, carrying them out, to transcribing, and analyzing them. In ethnology, folklore studies and anthropology, life-historical studies have a long tradition (see e.g. Marander-Eklund & Östman 2011; Tigerstedt 1992; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989; Crapanzano 1984). But, as far as we know, such studies are seldom or never combined with a Life-Line tool. By adding our Life-Line method to life-historical interviewing, the interactive component was enhanced, as it required active cognitive and physical participation of the interviewed participant.

Modifying the Life-Line Method

The Life-Line method that we added and which we modified according to the needs of our own study, was originally collected from Swedish[1] sociologist Karen Davies' studies. The life-line (as described by Davies and thus not capitalized here), is a feminist approach, a method to "adequately capture women's lives" (1996, 579). Together with Johanna Esseveld, Davies used the life-line in studies of women's unemployment to find, visualize, and explain how work and family practices were tied together over time (Davies & Esseveld, 1989). In everyday family life, time management and use are essential. At best, the life-line method visualizes the inter-connectedness of the juggling of everyday activities with women's social positions and the different phases in their life cycle. Davies and Esseveld showed that the reason why many women are less successful on the labor market or work half-time is gendered; it is conditioned by their role as primary caregivers. Other social research shows the life-line used

as a tool to describe and analyze women's lives as complex interlinking processes (Bjerén & Elgqvist-Saltzman 1994; Nilsen 1992). The life-line approach does not only occur in sociological research, but it also builds on a long tradition of working with biographical trajectories. It appears in a variety of disciplines under different names (Bjerén 1994), for example the ethnological and folkloristic fields—mainly as life-histories. Similar terms for showing processual and interlinking patterns include "the time-space trajectory" (Hägerstrand 1963), "the life history calendar" (Freedman et al. 1988), "life course" (Porter 1991; Brannen & Nilsen 2011), or "life-story," which Patrick Hiller (2011) uses in combination with "multi-layered chronologies." Other ways of extracting life-stories are that of Johanna Uotinen (2010), who uses herself and autoethnography to study technology-related gendered everyday practices, and Felicity Henwood, Helen Kennedy and Nod Miller (2001), who collected women's autobiographical accounts of their everyday encounters with technology to show how these intersected with for example gender, class, ethnicity and generation.

We decided to try out the life-line method as practiced by Davies and Esseveld (Davies 1990; 1996, Davies & Esseveld 1985; 1989) to be able to contextualize computer-game playing mothers' life-long experience in terms of teasing out and constructing what we call their *gaming lives*, as Davies and Esseveld employed a similar emphasis on gender and time use in their studies. It seemed adequate for charting the interweaving of women's gaming habits, choice of games and everyday life situations.

Studying gaming entails problematizing not only space but also time because *gaming takes time* and competes with other daily activities (Enevold 2014, Hagström 2013). Balancing work, play, and family life involves managing time. People and activities compete over time. Davies (1996) concluded that women tend to work in gender-specific ways that involve multi-tasking and responsibilities that are not always measurable. The Life-Line is a tool intended for visualizing this interweaving of activities. As Davies wanted to show, typical women's "duties," such as nurturing and caregiving, do not start and stop at certain times; they overlap with other activities. This pattern of multi-tasking was found in everyday life both on a daily basis and over an extended period of time (Davies 1996). As researchers, it is important not to assume that differences in experiencing and using time always are gendered; however, our research (and that of Davies and Esseveld) showed that it was necessary to think of the juggling of everyday activities in terms of gender-specific time management, in order to understand the mechanics and interdependence of time and gender practices in everyday family life (Enevold 2014; Hagström 2013).

In the *Gaming Mom* project (2008), as we indicated before, we studied gaming mothers' everyday lives, and we were particularly interested in domestic environmental factors defining the gaming mother and her playing practices. We chose to do semi-structured face-to-face interviews in the informant's home. We completed 16 face-to-face interviews and 12 email interviews with mothers aged 22-59, who gamed on a regular basis, in households of varying composition. To begin with, a set of questions was designed to obtain the most basic information: *Who are they? What do they play? Where, when, and how do they play? When do they find time; how much do they play?*

What, if any, conflicts arise, and how are they solved? In addition to capturing a long-term perspective, the aim was to illuminate how different significant events in the informants' lives were intertwined. We were interested in how technology influenced the choice of playing habits, how changes in the organization of domestic life, for example childbirths and marriage, and in work situations influenced leisure practices and labor division in the family.

The interviews were meant to capture how time was managed in the family in relation to the women's game-playing practices, both here and now and throughout their life, in other words, reconstructing their gaming lives. We imagined that the informants' stories of specific events would provide enough information for us to be able to construct a Life-Line with relative ease if supplemented with clarifying questions from the interviewer about when they took place; for instance, when they acquired their first computer, or which games they played after having children. We envisioned the family constellation and situation appearing clearly and in detail from this process. But this proved much more complicated than anticipated.

Cecilia's Life-Line

The first game playing mother, whose Life-Line was to be drawn up, was Cecilia. She was a 46-year-old mother of two who told us that she used to be an avid player "but no longer played as much". Hers was one of three interviews that were carried out as a pilot study several months before we received funding for the *Gaming Moms* research project. This meant there was neither time nor resources enough to transcribe the interviews or chart life-lines based on the interviews right after they were performed. Sitting down with the transcriptions after more than a year, it was obvious that constructing a Life-Line based only on the text was not possible. Nor did it seem appropriate to revisit Cecilia who had not been prepared for our returning to her for follow-up questions or complementary information, the way later informants were. To go back after a long time-period is not without complications; a life-history interview involves elaborate preparation, execution, and processing, and for practical as well as emotional reasons it cannot be extended indefinitely over time. Since we had not prepared her for it, to go back and ask Cecilia to account for when she bought her Nintendo 64 and specify which year she and her husband were divorced and to reflect on when exactly she used to visit video-game expos did not seem right. However, these were the kinds of facts that were missing in the transcribed interview that made it impossible to create a complete life-line. Then, why were so many vital parts missing?

Naturally, we were aware that an informant in an interview situation does not arrange her story chronologically. Informants often forget and get facts mixed up and even avoid certain questions. Looking back, we understand how unrealistic it was to expect to obtain a complete overview of a life-history in one interview. To realize the gaps and make *ad-hoc* adjustments, that is, immediately asking the correct complementary questions that would yield the missing information seems, in retrospect, impossible. Cecilia had moved back and forth over time, a movement

which the reading of the transcript made obvious that the interviewer did not catch. On some occasions, no question had been asked regarding the point of time in history something had occurred. For instance, there was no follow-up question regarding the exact time our informant was "on a holiday in Cyprus with a friend and spent all her money playing Pacman." Later in the same interview the question "so, this was before the kids?" *was* asked, but it was too vague and left inadequate information.

Eventually, we had to admit that it was not possible to construct a useful Life-Line on the basis of the interview text. In other words, we could not see exactly how and when gaming practices and life-events were interconnected in significant ways. The methodological procedure and purpose had to be revised. How to modify the method? Was it even practical to use the Life-Line in this context? Would it assist us in answering our research question? Would it help us with our goal to understand the interviewed mothers' gaming-lives? After some thinking, we were still convinced the Life-Line would help us, and decided to try anew. This time, we changed things around; the Life-Line was made the departure-point of the interview. Consequently, the informant was from the very beginning informed that the purpose of her interview would be to draw a life-line. The interview was not recorded and no elaborate interview scheme was followed, but the basic research questions listed above were included. The person participating in this methodological experiment was a woman named Alice, a 44-year-old mother of two. To this interview, we brought Cecilia's incomplete Life-Line as an example for our next informant (See Figure 1, p. 28).

Alice's Life-Line
The interview was started by drawing a line on a piece of paper: on the left side the year of Alice's birth was written and, on the right, the current year. Alice and the interviewer then decided which events should be placed on the time line and where. These were of two kinds: 1) significant events in her life, including when she dropped out of high school, the years her children were born and various employment periods; 2) game related activities. She identified which games she played and when, how and when she got her first computer and her broadband connection.

The discussion oscillated between "now" and "then," and the paper was soon filled with years and facts on games, jobs and educations. Some of these were easy for Alice to remember, whereas others were more inaccessible and she had to think long and hard about it. It is not easy to remember whether a temporary job ended in 1989 or 1990, or recalling the titles of the games you played twenty-five years ago. Despite the detailed discussion and focused effort to order everything chronologically it soon became evident that this was not enough; it was too challenging to follow the jumps and leaps of human memory. As Alice talked about a certain game she would suddenly associate it with a certain game console, which, in turn, made her remember a certain workplace. Cecilia's Life-Line "in-the-making" triggered even more memories; dates had continuously to be adjusted and the corrections and question marks flooded the paper (See Figure 2, p. 30).

Drafting the Life-Line together with Alice took about an hour. At this stage in the
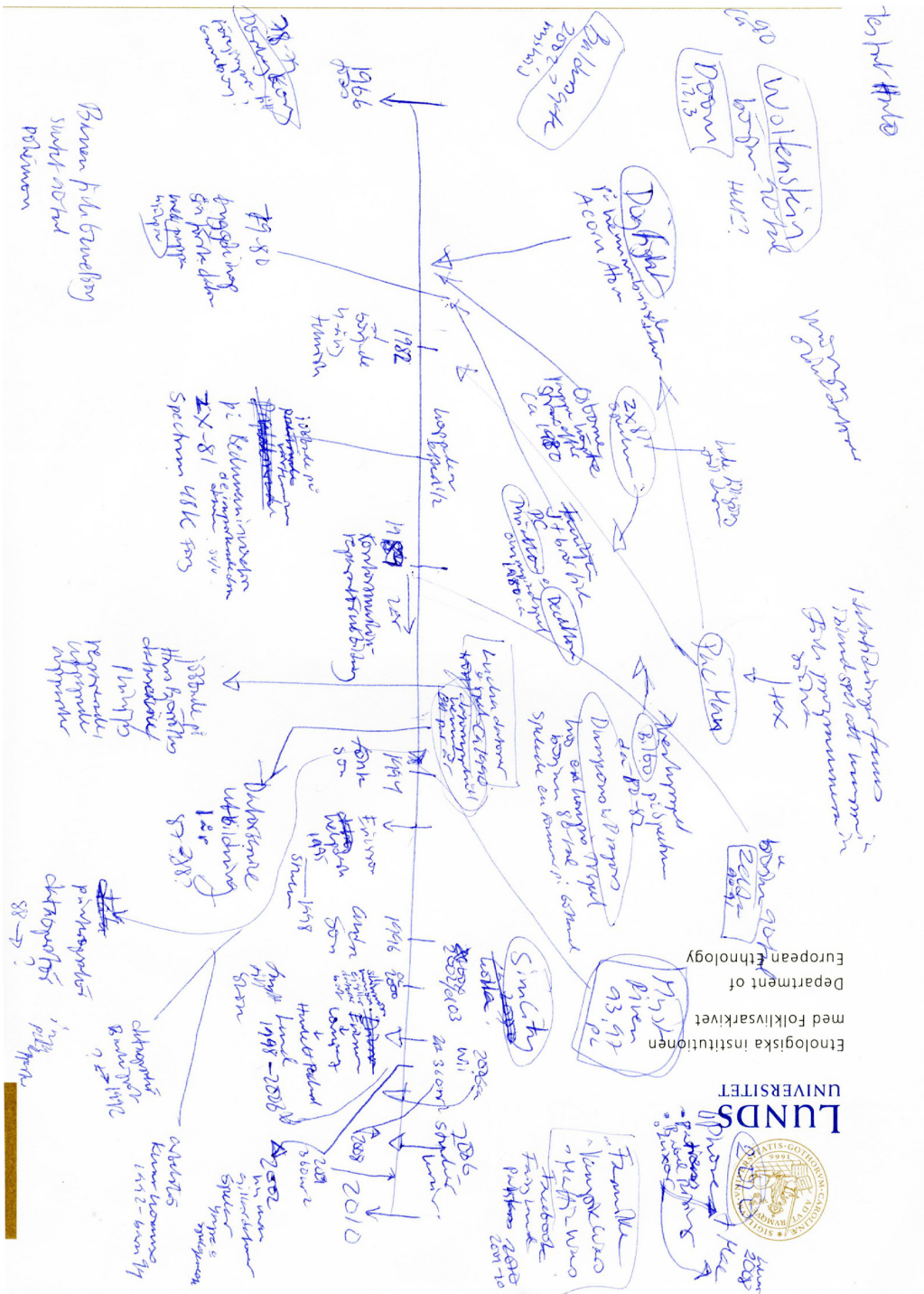
Figure 1. Cecilia's Life-Line Draft

process we concluded that the result was far from satisfactory. The Life-Line was still incomplete with too many missing facts, but we settled for a preliminary version and decided to modify the method even further by adding another session. This worked well since Alice was very keen on continuing to unfold her life as a gamer.

One week passed, during which we transformed the messy scribbles into a clearly legible chart, and Alice obtained additional information on various events from formal documents like diplomas and certificates. While making the chart legible, additional questions arose and misunderstandings were discovered, and, if possible, rectified. Alice also continued to remember more significant events and games than during the initial interview. We then met anew and filled in as many cracks as we possibly could and discussed remaining gaps. Alice then brought her Life-Line home for a final adjustment and her partner also helped out.

When everyone agreed the Life-Line was now as complete as it could get, a digital version was produced (See Figure 3, p. 31). We met one last time to perform an interview that was recorded. The Life-Line was placed on the table between us and worked as illustration and inspiration to clarify and exemplify questions as well as answers. This interview followed the same pattern as the other semi-structured interviews performed in the study with the difference being that there was now a Life-Line to relate to. The interview was subsequently transcribed and added to the project database.

Several unforeseen problems were thus encountered during the interview process; problems which may even be called failures. But, dealing with these "failures" improved our method considerably. As Karen Nairn, Anne Smith & Jenny Munro (2005) have illustrated, "failures" or mistakes made along the way are useful to discuss, as are "challenges" (Shah 2006) and other "negative features of the research process and outcomes" (Fallon & Brown 2002). After the vital modifications brought about by the first two interviews, a third Life-Line was constructed for Susanne (See Figure 4, p. 32), a 42-year-old mother of two, which proved that the approach worked well. As we had begun to notice, it turned out to produce some unforeseen but welcome consequences.

Obstacles and Unforeseen Consequences

To return to the intentions of our research project—to study how gaming restructured human lives and roles, and how roles and lives were restructured according to gaming, in everyday family life—we went ahead with our plan and carried out interviews but, as it turned out, with an insufficiently clear idea of what drawing life-lines entailed, and, as described, the execution phase did not deliver what we had envisioned. For example, merely introducing visual aids neither resulted in a crystal-clear life story, nor did it force the obstacle of the unorganized recounting of human memories. It was obvious that the Life-Line worked better as an interview-tool that assists in organizing and filling in the gaps than a way to analyze the outcome of the interview or efficiently presenting the result. As Davies puts it:
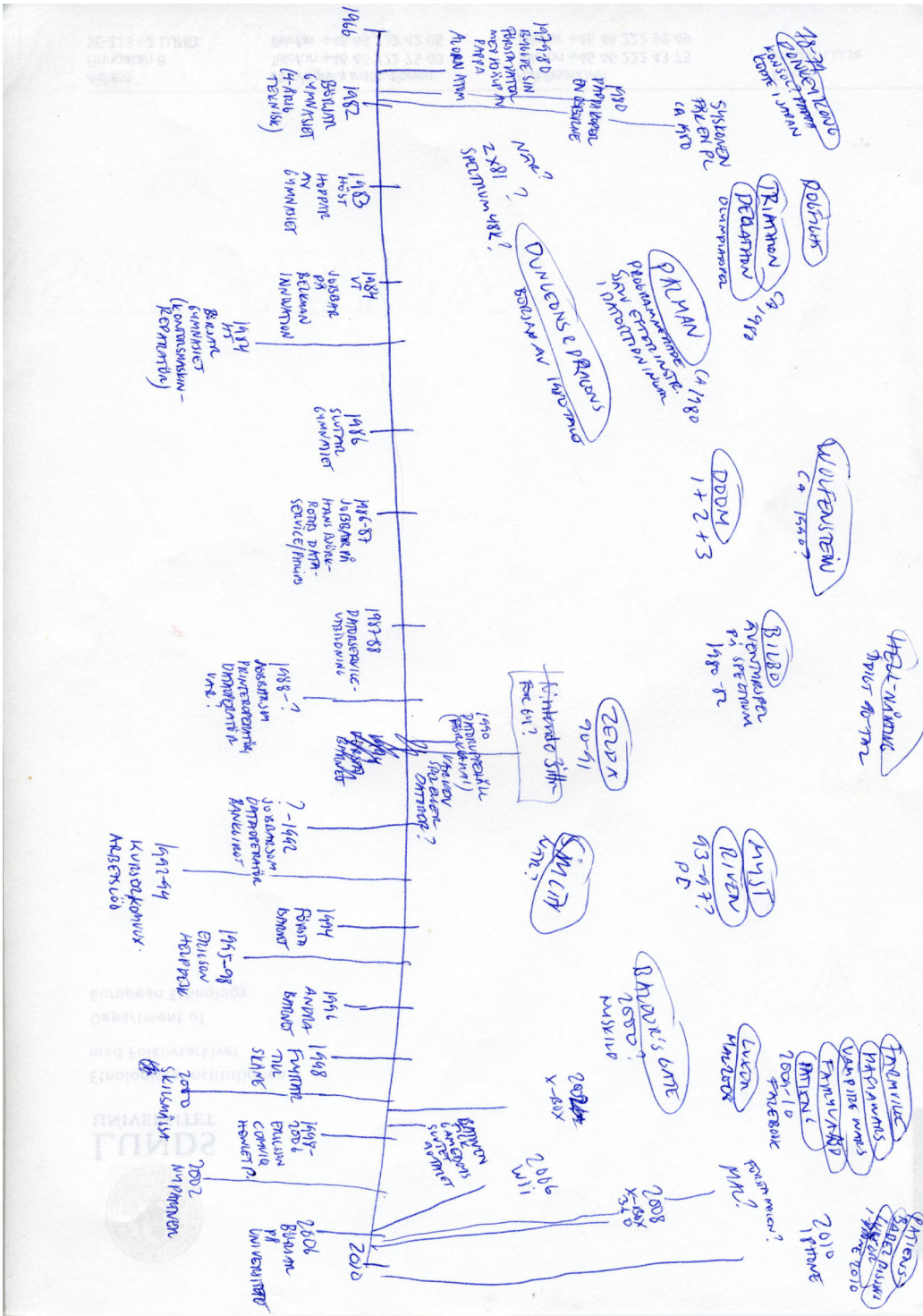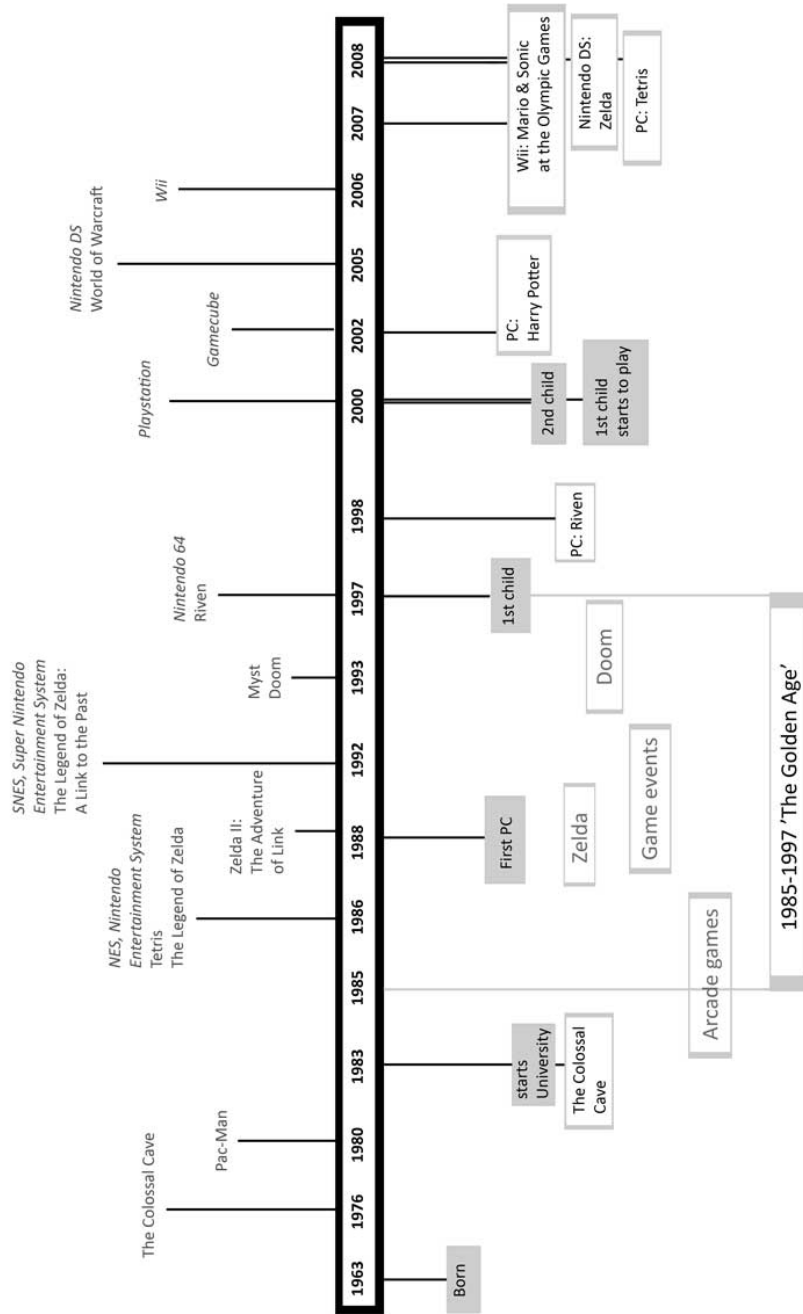
Figure 2. Alice's Life-Line Draft

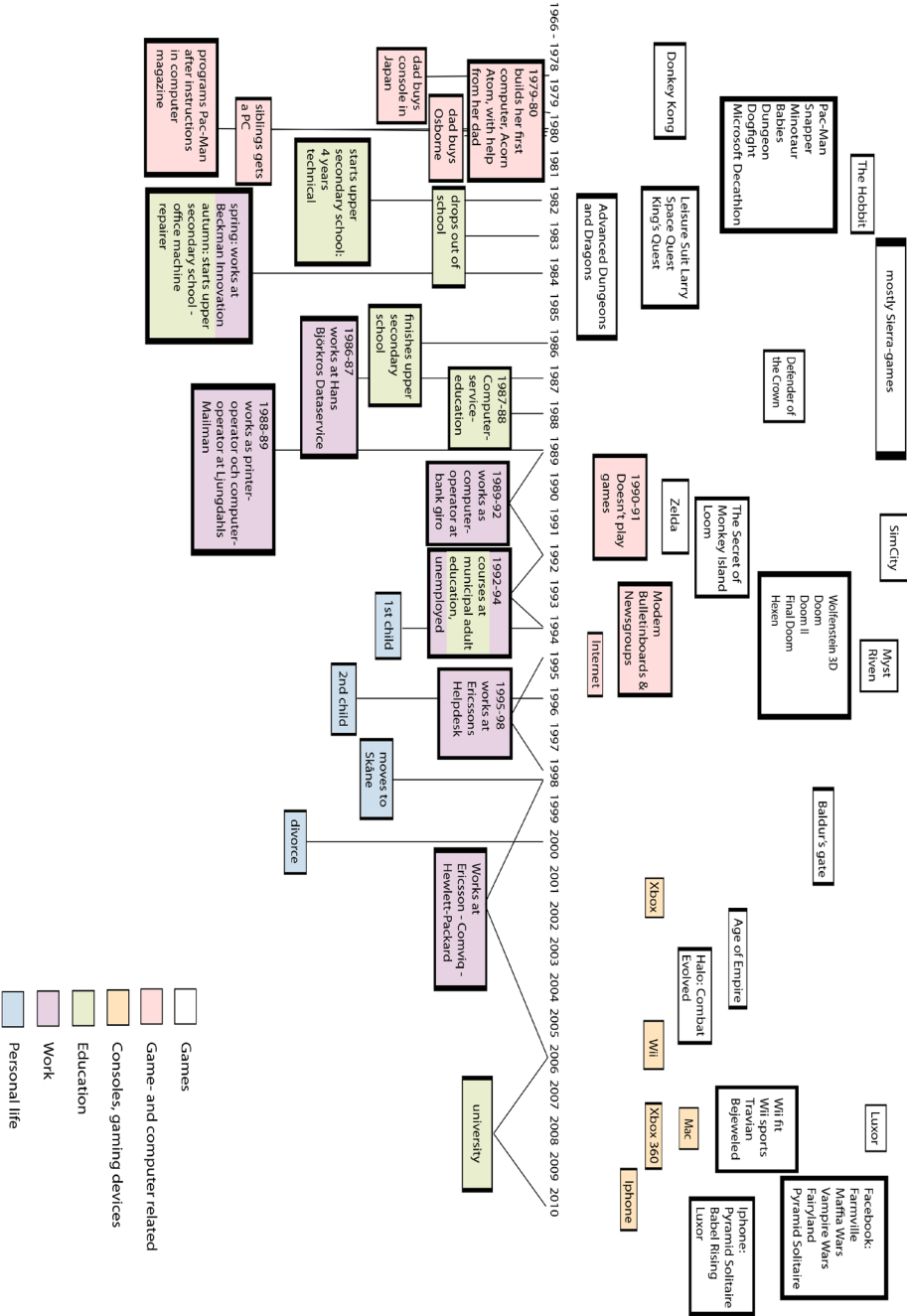Figure 3. Alice's Digitalized Life-Line

Figure 4. Susanne's Life-Line

> The life-line provides the analytical possibility of moving between the individual and the larger societal structure and of showing certain connections, but the complex relations or the embeddedness in social relations that provide an understanding of complex interconnections are not captured. . . . By using the life-line we are freezing processes at different points in time and thereby applying a static analysis. There is the risk of overemphasizing events without getting at the deep structures or processes that lie behind. It cannot explain the unintended outcomes of intended actions or explain subjective meanings. (Davies 1996, 586)

This static analysis is neither helped by the human propensity to interpret events on a historical axis "in terms of causality . . . [which] is highly problematic within a hermeneutic framework" (Davies, 1996, 586). We thus conclude that life-lines cannot stand alone. Davies used the Life-Line method in a qualitative study of women and unemployment together with Esseveld in the 1980s (see e.g. Davies & Esseveld, 1985; 1989). As Davies points out, the analysis work was carried out in "parallel with and following data collection" and "life-lines were constructed for each of the 40 women," but the women were never shown the Life-Line, nor were they asked to fill it in (1996, 580).

In Gunilla Bjerén and Inga Elgqvist-Saltzman's examination of gender and education in Scandinavia (1994), the informants filled out and commented on their life-lines. Although Julia Brannen and Ann Nilsen's comparative study of working parents' relationship to parenthood in seven countries states that the research teams "completed life-lines for each informant" (2011, 609), we cannot conclude whether their participants collaborated in the construction of their own life-lines. However, we lean towards the interpretation that they were not present when the researchers drew them up, which means that our studies differ on this point. In our study, it became evident that the Life-Line had to be created *together* with the informant.

This method required a lot of input, not only from the informant but also her family and friends; this will obviously not work in situations or projects where time is scarce for informant and/or interviewer. In these cases, it becomes difficult to answer the research question, which concerns *how the informant's gaming life interplays with her family and life situation at various points in time*. In sum, the Life-Line helped create "order and understanding in what may appear to be chaos" (Davies, 1996, 586) and, similar to Davies, we found that it worked well, perhaps best, as a tool for remembering. However, we discovered that it also did something else.

The Life-Line as Consciousness-Raiser

The difficulties encountered in composing Alice's Life-Line paved the way for a close scrutiny of the method and for revising the properties that we unconsciously had ascribed to it. What the Life-Line as a tool of remembering and inspiration thus did well, was help us achieve other goals, which in the research plan was projected to be accomplished by way of another method: focus groups. The idea behind our focus group interviews was to use the common interest among informants in gaming to allow for a joint interest to gather round (Jowett & O'Toole 2006) and thereby create a

safer space for participants to speak their mind (Kitzinger 1994). Taking the cue from Sherry Turkle's equivalent of focus-groups, the "pizza-party" (1995), a light-hearted and comfortable environment was to be created for the participants in the gaming lab that we had set up at our department. It was furnished as a living room with a couch and a coffee table and it had a Wii and a PlayStation gaming console with two big flat-screen TVs.

The intention with the focus groups was twofold: a) to open the floor for opinions, experiences and views that interviews might not produce and b) to bring women together to create potential networks, which is a long-standing empowering strategy for equality work and consciousness-raising. Due to time constraints, we never organized any focus groups, but the significant goal of consciousness raising was nevertheless reached. The Life-Line method allowed Alice to catch a glimpse of Cecilia's gaming life and reminded Alice that she was part of a bigger context and not the only gaming mother in the world. The same happened for Susanne; she got the opportunity to look at two life-lines, which enhanced her awareness of her own gaming history and its role as a very significant practice in her everyday life.

Over the course of our project, an underlying sense of being an "odd" mother *and* gamer had repeatedly come up in interviews. Readers' responses to articles on the project in, for example the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* (Rehnberg 2009) and the union journal *Kommunalarbetaren* (Alstermark 2010), confirmed what we perceived as women's view of themselves as being alone with their interest. Their responses conveyed that our study, *Gaming Moms. Juggling Time, Play and Everyday Life,* gave voice to their experience and served as inspiration for them to "come out of the gaming closet" (Enevold, Hagström, and Aarseth 2008), even volunteer to participate in the project. This was exactly what we had hoped to accomplish since to nuance the gamer stereotype and empower women were significant goals of the project. The Life-Line interview process seemed to do just that.

Another aspect of consciousness-raising that the Life-Line was involved in creating was the realization of the interviewee that she had been using computers and played games for a much longer time than she had previously recognized. Joanna Sheridan, Kerry Chamberlain & Ann Dupuis (2011) use timelines in a similar way as we used the Life-Line to provide a visual memory aid to stimulate conversation with their interviewees. They write:

> The systematic agglomeration of data onto the timeline allows participants to contemplate the life (re)presented, to gain insights into their experiences, to explore dimensions of continuity and change in their lives and often to see things from new perspectives. In so doing, participants can effectively become researchers of their own lives. (Sheridan, Chamberlain & Dupuis 2011, 565-566)

Tracing their gaming history back in time, they suddenly understood the extent of their interest, and became conscious of the fact that they were, indeed, "gamers." The tendency *not* to identify as gamer is a common characteristic of both young and adult

women (Enevold 2014; Enevold & Hagström 2008b; Jenson & de Castell 2008, Winn & Heeter 2009) and something our project has sought to shed light on and contribute to changing, in an effort to level out the playing field, making it accessible to all players.

Engaged Cultural Analysis
In cultural analytical research, whether based in anthropology, ethnology or cultural studies, it is a truism that the researcher influences the informants, particularly in interviews. Ethnologist Markus Idvall calls the ethnographic interview a "cultural laboratory practice" (Idvall 2005) in which the questions posed and how, when, and where the interview takes place shape the situation and relation between researcher and participants, as well as the research analysis. This mutual influence is widely recognized. In our "laboratory work" with gaming mothers, we also needed to recognize the significance of the *co-laboratory* part, in order to reach our goal of consciousness-raising. Explicitly feminist research, as distinct to general gender research, works to link theory to practice, and emphasizes bilateral social engagement. Let us hasten to add that the research topic naturally delimits the possibilities of such engagement, and as many methodological discussions will reveal, a researcher's engagement is not always recommended and does not always happen. But, as Gary Ferraro and Susan Andreatta phrase it: "there is little or no attempt in feminist anthropology to assume a value-neutral position: it is aimed at consciousness-raising and empowerment of women" (2009, 84).

Since the 1960s and 1970s, questions of self-reflexivity and engagement have been important issues and an engaged anthropology is emerging (Wolf, 1996; Low & Engle Merry 2010). Then what is engagement? Anthropologists and ethnologist alike speak of engagement in terms of extending the use of ethnography to a public beyond the research community, engaging informants in, for example, "collaborative ethnography" (Lassiter 2005) and "multi-targeted ethnography" (O'Dell & Willim 2015), and as "participatory audiences" (Pink 2011). In *Engaged Anthropology: Views from Scandinavia*, the editors Tone Bringa and Synnøve Bendixsen (2016) survey the terms of "engaged" and "public anthropology" and find that they are defined in many ways. These range from insights from anthropology being taken outside of academia, collaborative or participatory research, "sharing and supporting" while doing field work (Low & Engle Merry 2010), to advocacy and activism. Moreover, the editors state, the term "development anthropology", which often is used interchangeably with "applied anthropology", has a strong position in Scandinavian anthropology (Bringa & Bendixsen 2016).

In Scandinavian ethnology and folklore studies, gender, labor division and social organization are, as a rule, taken into consideration, and the addition in Sweden of applied cultural analysis to the curriculum of the Ethnology Department at Lund University in 2008 has certainly increased the export of cultural analysis beyond the University into organizations and industry (Master Programme in Applied Cultural Analysis, 2017). Still, we want to stress that more engagement is needed. Similar to proponents of engaged and applied anthropology, we find it imperative that feminist

cultural analytical research, whether based in anthropology, ethnology, or cultural studies, be aware of, and actively select, issues of important social relevance and also dare to operate with an explicit feminist *engaged* perspective to actively involving and affecting informants and/or lay-persons.

Conclusion

As accounted for above, the article on our research project in the newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* (Rehnberg 2009) attracted mothers out of their gaming closets, generating awareness of not being alone; blogging mothers, both in Sweden and abroad, embedded in other networks, of mothers and gamers, contacted us, thus connecting even more women, and helped spread both the call for informants and the results of the study. This, in addition to the Life-Line interviews, which produced many "aha-moments," have made it clear that some of our most significant research results exist in these particular moments and in realizations among the women who are our main informants. We observe that our engagement with the informants and the informants' increased engagement and awareness, make up our most concrete, and possibly our most valuable, research results.

We have called our approach *engaged cultural analysis*, drawing upon, on the one hand, engaged anthropology and feminist research traditions relying on ethnographic fieldwork, and on the other, collaborative ethnography, adding to it an action component. Our analysis included problematizing and developing the Life-Line method, used in our research project to reconstruct adult female players' *gaming lives*. Fine-tuning the method, researchers and informants were led to new discoveries about gamer identities, which also met a significant goal of the research project: to raise the consciousness among the interviewed female players that they too *are* gamers – a vital recognition in the struggle for access to, and visibility in, contemporary gaming culture.

Notes

1   Karen Davies (1958-2006) was born in the UK, but most of her academic life was lived in Sweden. Her research mainly concerned women's studies, specifically women's relationships to work, unemployment and time. She helped found the *Swedish Journal of Women's Studies* and contributed to the first gender study center in Sweden.

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Response

Defining the Female Gamer

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When it comes to both design-ing and playing video and electronic games, women and girls have long suffered a dual disadvan-tage. In the first place, girls are often told from a young age that electronic games are simply not something in which they should be interested. The toy industry in general is still permeated with a large gender divide, with so-called pink and blue aisles a staple for many retailers, despite a recent push toward inclusivity. Unless directly geared toward girls, as in the case of franchises like *Cooking Mama* and *Animal Crossing*, video games nearly always wind up on the blue side of the chasm, mainly due to intense marketing campaigns that specifically target boys and young men. This marketing is so per-vasive that girls often feel challenged just for existing in a gaming space. The sec-ond disadvantage facing women comes in the acquisitions of the skills needed to break into the gaming industry, espe-cially as designers and coders, which are gained with a STEM-related educational background that remains unwelcoming to female students. It comes as no surprise, then, that when a third barrier is added, that of motherhood, the difficulties of considering oneself a gamer—or as part of gaming culture as a whole—become even steeper.

These barriers to entering the gaming industry, both as players and designers, should not be so steep, especially since women have long played central roles in the development of both computer elec-tronics and gaming. I have had the plea-sure of heavily researching the history of women in technology for The Strong's Women in Games Initiative, which con-sists of collecting, exhibiting, and inter-preting a comprehensive collection of artifacts and archival materials chroni-cling female contributions to the indus-try. One can look back as far as the 19th century, when Ada Lovelace became the first computer programmer through her work with Charles Babbage on his Ana-lytical Engine. The 1950s saw Admiral Grace Hopper create the first computer language compiler, the A-0 system, and assist in the development of the early high-level programming language CO-BOL. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Kath-erine Johnson, known as the "Human Computer," played key roles in NASA's early installation of digital electronic computers, and her calculations were essential to the success of the first space flights, including those of John Glenn and the Apollo 11. On the gaming side, Carol Shaw's work at Atari and Activision in the 1970s and 1980s led her to become the first woman to design and program games for a major publishing company, including the best-selling shooter *River Raid*. Roberta Williams co-founded Sierra On-Line in 1979 and launched the graphi-cal adventure genre with groundbreaking games such as *Mystery House* and *King's Quest*. Women exercised particular influ-ence over the development of educational computer games, including Mabel Addis and her 1965 *Sumerian Game* (possibly the first use of a computer game in a class-room setting), and Ann McCormick and

Leslie Grimm, co-founders of The Learning Company in 1980, whose games like *Rocky's Boots* and *Reader Rabbit* launched the educational computer sector of the industry.

Despite these and many other contributions to technology and gaming fields, women and girls are still regulated to the sidelines when it comes to video gaming. According to the Entertainment Software Association, 45% of gamers in the United States identify as female (ESA, 2018), yet the International Game Developers Association reports that a mere 21% of game designers are women (IGDA, 2018). The latter number may be explained by a lack of women majoring in STEM fields, and of those that do, an estimated 48% will either switch majors or drop out before graduating (Hepler 2017, 55). Women who do find themselves successful in the gaming industry are too often subjected to harassment and scorn, occasionally leading to explosions such as Gamergate, when developers like Zoë Quinn and Brianna Wu received rape and death threats after being accused of having unethical relationships with game journalists and pointing out the sexist representations of women so prominent in the gaming industry (Quinn, 2017). Even being a female player has its risks, as men will often deride them through voice and video chat, demanding they prove their so-called "geek cred." And in their article, Jessica Enevold and Charlotte Hagström bring yet another difficulty to the gaming table by focusing on a very specific subset of gaming women: Mothers.

Throughout history, mothers have found themselves held to impossible standards. They have been idolized as the givers of life and the perfection of the female form, overflowing with selfless love for their children. But when a woman fails to meet this idealized vision, she is scorned and ridiculed. Even now, mothers are judged for the smallest of details relating to their children. Are you a working mom or a stay-at-home mom? Do you send your child to daycare or leave them with family? Will you feed using bottle or breast? While out, do you use a stroller or carry your baby in a wrap? The questions are relentless, and any deviation from this mythical, idealized version of femininity is attacked. What, then, happens to mothers who not only long for the ever-elusive gift of "free time," but also dare to do so in the perceived male-dominated sphere of gaming?

According to the ESA, 67% of parents play video games with their children on a weekly basis (ESA, 2018). This statistic does not account for how many of those parents are male or female, but marketing certainly skews in favor of the father or male figure being dominant in electronic play. It should come as no surprise, then, that Enevold and Hagström so often discovered during their research that many of the women they interviewed did not even identify themselves as gamers. The question of what defines a gamer has nearly as many answers as what defines a mother, but it is all too common for that definition to be far more restrictive than it should. Self-identified "hard-core gamers" often focus on first-person shooters or massively-multiplayer online role-playing games, dedicating hours upon hours to their games every week. Social and app-based games, which traditionally appeal to women, are viewed as "not real games." But what about the mother who finds herself with a spare 10 minutes and

simply wants to relax with a match three game like *Bejeweled*, or a puzzle game like *Worlds With Friends*? Is she any less of a gamer than the mother who spends a free night playing *Call of Duty* or *World of Warcraft* after her kids are in bed? The answer is obviously no, though society and marketing may try to say otherwise. Surely the definition of "gamer" has room for both styles of play.

In the conclusion of "Coming out of the Gaming Closet," Enevold and Hagström noted that their study successfully increased awareness amongst gaming mothers that they were not alone in their interests, and that, no matter how and what games they played, they *were* gamers, and they deserved to be identified as such. Despite gendered marketing of games, stereotypes of what a "real gamer" should be, and societal pressure for women to prioritize motherhood above all else, women can and should find a life balance that includes all the facets they wish, including a career, a family, and a video game hobby. Even seeing one woman embrace the title of gamer could positively impact the future of a young girl who wants to join the gaming industry but fears rejection and isolation. Thus, by being true to herself, a gaming mother may not only improve her own life, but those of the women around her.

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Spatiotemporal Management of Stand-Up Performance:
Narration and Gestures

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Abstract

Providing an in-depth reading of an introductory routine by English stand-up comic Josie Long off of her comedy special Trying is Good *(2008), this paper is concerned with the interrelations between verbal narration and co-temporal gestures in stand-up comedy as embodied verbal art and semiotic interaction. In particular, the paper outlines a conceptual framework of narrative orientations with which to highlight how gestures and movement participate in juxtaposing and mediating various conceptual spaces and narrative perspectives to precise communicative and artistic effect. In the process, it attends in detail to how perceptions, affects, and evaluations of immediacy and authentic self-presence are semiotically construed in a markedly mediated and reflexive context of stand-up comedy.*

Keywords: stand-up comedy, performance, narration, gestures, indexicality, immediacy

Two constants seen in narrative studies relate to the spatial and temporal aspects of narrative events. In invoking narrated storyworlds and making sense of experiences more or less separated from the present moment of narration, narrators, by necessity, coordinate multiplicities of both spatial and temporal dimensions—here and there, now and then. Accordingly, an apparent requisite of a competent narrator is the ability to successfully manage the relations and communicate movements between various spatiotemporal frames (Haviland 2004, 15)—not to speak of competence in cultural and generic knowledge, linguistic skills, etc. While true for narration in all communicative media, the said problem has to be formulated anew with a keen eye on varying modes and contexts; for instance, by taking into account the constraints and affordances of co-present oral performance in which the storyworlds invoked are frequently drawn into the immediate here-and-now through the visual signposts of gesture and movement.

My intention is to transport aspects of this problem onto the study of stand-up comedy, a contemporary form of oral performance characterized by its twin emphases on 1) *immediacy* of being together in place and time by way of direct interaction, and 2) *authentic self-presence* of performers who "play themselves". Although stand-up originally emerged in the Anglo-American popular cultures of the mid-20th century, it is currently gaining ground in most parts of the world, including parts of Asia

and Africa. Elusive as an object of definitive criteria (see Brodie 2014), the genre can be characterized as a type of performance in which the (primary) aim of the solo performer lies in cultivating personal (or rather *persona*-derived) relatability by making her audience laugh. Indeed, most stand-up comics would emphasize that successful stand-up requires that something "connects", resonates, and relates across performer and audience, where this "something" can be designated as equally affective and moral as it is epistemic and cognitive. In the main, such intersubjective connections and affective resonances are achieved through various forms of metonymic exemplification or allegorization of personal experience, whether through conversational narrative, topical anecdote, small talk, diatribe, etc. In this regard, stand-up centers on the crafting and fashioning of oneself into a unique personality who is also widely relatable; that is, into an *individual type character* (Lindfors 2016; also 2017a; 2017b; forthcoming).

To highlight stand-up comedy as exclusively verbal art is, however, largely inadequate. We are, after all, speaking of a genre of embodied performance of self-presentation in which the bodily and visual co-presence of performers and audiences is paramount. Indeed, in a questionnaire organized for my dissertation (in possession of the author), the Finnish stand-up comic Joni Koivuniemi posits that the best comics "know how to *breathe* funny", suggesting furthermore that breathing can be even more important for stand-up comics than "material" itself. However, while certainly taken up as an object of academic interest within the past few decades (some recent monographs including Brodie 2014; Krefting 2014; Quirk 2015; Thomas 2015), closer work on stand-up performances from the perspective of embodied semiotic interaction still requires attention.

Drawing for the most part from linguistic anthropology, narrative and gesture studies, as well as my own disciplinary territory, performance-bent folklore studies, this article will aim at shedding light on the areas of interest outlined above. It will do this by developing a methodological framework adaptable for the study of stand-up interaction through the double-lens of narration and gestures—and for any co-present embodied interaction verging toward conversational narrative for that matter. I will argue that an adequate take on the narrative and spatiotemporal management of stand-up comedy is accomplished only via recourse to the semiotic modalities of gesture, bodily presence, and movement (see also Enfield 2009). It is in large part through visual signposts such as gestures, posture, and choreographic movement that comics manage their stage space and interaction, convey viewpoints into the storyworlds narrated, and so on—all the while enhancing the expressive impact of their narratives (Caracciolo 2014).

In particular, the article lays out a conceptual framework with which to highlight how gestures and movement participate in juxtaposing and mediating conceptual spaces and narrative perspectives in oral performance to precise communicative and artistic effect. While the general observation of creative play between perspectives, contexts, and frames as a central technique and aesthetic of stand-up comedy certainly resurfaces time and again in the literature dealing with this genre (e.g. Glick 2007; Brodie 2014; Lindfors 2016; 2017b; forthcoming; Keisalo 2016; 2018), this article

demonstrates that a careful look at the interplay between verbal and non-verbal sign modalities provides an analytically sophisticated entrance into the same terrain.

The empirical section of the article, then, attempts a detailed application of this framework through an analysis of a sequence adopted from the full-length stand-up special *Trying is Good* (2008) by Josie Long. Long is a contemporary English comic working within the "alternative" strand of stand-up comedy, which is an integrative (as well as highly oppositional) category that subsumes various "indie" forms of the genre that are seen (or promoted by the advertisers and comics themselves) as deviating from mainstream norms of stand-up. The alternative qualities of her comedy are perhaps best illustrated by the fact that, in the present show *Trying is Good*, her props include hand-drawn diagrams on a big notebook, photos of various people and objects projected onto an onstage screen, a poster of the 14th Dalai Llama Tenzin Gyatso, and her own painted belly (on this particular bit, see also Quirk 2015, 30–35). Thematically, she uses much of her stage time discussing her craft, her ideas and insecurities about comedy, about performing, and about herself—on seemingly stagnant self-reflection rather than on emanating a sense of pushing the show steadily forward with successive, clear-cut gags and routines. Further still, her performance style is poignantly conversational and structurally loose even by the standards of stand-up, meaning that she constantly engages with her audience one way or another—e.g. by rewarding "big laughers" and people "with a nice face" in the audience with satsumas—launches unexpectedly into brief narrative enactments, jumps whimsically from topic to another; basically, she digresses without end. One could say that she does not orient so much toward resolution or closure (in the form of set-ups leading to punchlines, most obviously), or plot for that matter. Indeed, one could describe her performance aesthetics through "anti-narrative digression" (see Frederick 2011), which, of course, only elevates her general sense of enthusiasm and spontaneity.

As also implicated by the above sketch of Long's style, the problematic of embodied narrative world-building is highly compelling with regard stand-up as a genre that constitutively plays with the porous boundaries of its form. Stand-up is strikingly characterized by its seemingly unmediated interactional form, where (prototypically speaking) the nodes of the author, narrator, and character are conflated onto a visibly present performer in the here-and-now (Peterson 1997; see also Genette 1980). As known, however, stand-up routines are typically scripted and (at least) mentally choreographed, honed in successions of previous performances. More broadly, stand-up performances are mediated and framed by the spatial and temporal boundaries and the textual and participatory organization of the event—whether taking place on a raised platform or in the corner of a bar (see Brodie 2014). Roughly put, 1) the spatial organization of participation that accords the performer her autonomy in the spotlights, 2) the continuous, extended holding of the floor afforded by electric amplification, as well as 3) temporal delimitation, are all material–discursive practices that participate in keying the event as a recognizable type of performance (Bauman 2012; Barad 2003).

Importantly, while explicitly marked by the infamous Western ideals labeled by

Jacques Derrida (1976; also Nakassis 2018, 286; Taylor 1989) as "metaphysics of presence" and "desire for immediacy," stand-up also trades on their playful reappropriation and manipulation. Indeed, I suggest a fundamental trope of the genre can be identified in the playful thematization and reappropriation of precisely such self-mediation, where stand-up comics *talk about themselves talking about themselves*. How are perceptions, affects, and evaluations of immediacy and self-presence semiotically construed, then, in a markedly mediated and reflexive context such as stand-up comedy? And how does this all play out in interactional, narrative, and gestural detail?

Spatiotemporal Aspects of Narration and Gestures in Oral Performance

Stand-up shows commonly start from the shared interactional space of direct second-person contact, in the form of generic greetings, unsurprisingly. Although relatively open from the outset, alternative worlds begin to emerge the moment that comics opt for narrative speech genres: the shared interactional space becomes layered with separate storyworlds.[1] Even though subject to endless redefinition, narratives are here elementarily understood as representational artifacts that provide "cues to imagine a set of existents (characters, objects, and places) arranged in a temporal sequence of events and actions" (Caracciolo 2014, 23). These artifacts can be imaginary and fictitious, or nonfictional and subject to falsification. In practice, the relationship between the narrated storyworlds and the interactional event of narration is seen as reciprocal and two-directional. On the one hand, the recipients of narratives are oriented or even transported to the events in the diegetic storyworld, insofar as it is true that narration, in its general impression of transparency, "is designed so as to effect inattention to itself" (Young 1987, 17). On the other hand, storyworlds are, by necessity, influenced by the interactional context in which their narration is embedded—the level conventionally labeled extradiegetic insofar as it is logically exterior to the diegetic storyworld. This implies that narratives are not at all immune to the physical, social, cultural, and historical contexts in which we produce them, but on the contrary, are highly porous at every instance of interaction (see Latour 2005, 199–204). Moreover, implications are often more or less explicitly drawn from narrated storyworlds so as to explain or contrast the event and act of narration. For instance, the temporally anterior experiencing-I in prototypical narratives of personal experience typically leaks into the ongoing event of narration because of the iconic quality between identities in the two spatiotemporal frames. Such might be the case when one has to give an account of one's morally suspect past deeds, making it difficult for the narrating-I—the person giving the account in the present—to fully disclaim its relations to the temporally distinct experiencing-I in the storyworld (Young 1987, 156; also Butler 2005).

These spatiotemporal aspects of narration are usefully captured by David Herman's (2013, 109; cf. Briggs 1988; Seizer 1997, 69) distinction between what he terms endophoric and exophoric strategies for narrative world-building. He borrows the two contrasting terms from linguistics in which exophora and endophora denote references to the speech event and the textual construction itself. Accordingly, exophoric narration is understood as orienting to the ongoing narrating event, so that

the narrated storyworld (e.g. the temporally distant experiencing-I) is presented in a mutually reciprocal relationship with features of the environment (e.g. the narrating-I) in which the current communicative interaction is taking place (Herman 2013, 109; also Lindfors 2017b). The events in the storyworld are thus "contextually anchored" to a higher degree vis-à-vis the ongoing narrating event, which is not to say that the two events would have to be *normatively* aligned with each other. In this regard, one of the central questions relates to whether the narrated and the narrating events support or rather contrast each other, inscribe similar or rather dissimilar discursive and social norms (also Seizer 1997, 83). Such anchoring is located on the metanarrative level, that I here understand as including comments on the narrated events themselves as well as on the present narrative process (cf. Cassell and McNeill 2004). Coincidentally, focus on the metanarrative level also often corresponds with those moments when the stand-up comic speaks as *herself*, in the *here-and-now*.

By contrast, following the endophoric strategy, the listeners are transported into the storyworld distinct from the current communicative surroundings. The narrative event is thus entextualized to a higher degree; for instance, James M. Wilce (2009b) explains that there might be a particular coherence to the cross-modal patterning of gesture, movement, and verbal narration that is repeatable across shifting contexts. This issue, then, is of particular interest with respect to stand-up comedy that is structured around an emulation of spontaneous conversation while simultaneously reiterating (often highly finalized) texts across socially, spatially, and temporally distinct or distant performance events (see also Lindfors 2016).

Ultimately, of course, the audience must be understood as attending *both* to the events in the narrated storyworld, *and* the act of narration itself. Correspondingly, the narrator has a triple-focus on the storyworld, the act of narration, as well as on her co-present (or technologically mediated and merely virtual) audiences and surroundings—perhaps foregrounding one or the other depending on aesthetic, pragmatic, and other aims. The relations between these levels are mediated and managed by narrators verbally, but also in large measure by gestures accompanying speech (Haviland 2004, 201).

Indeed, the primary purpose for this introduction into the notions of exophoric and endophoric narration is to convey a sense of the framework that will appear subsequently. I understand Herman's axis of exophoric/endophoric narration as a heuristic tool that can be deployed in merely orienting our analytic interests. In particular, it needs to be supplemented by related and more specific analytic terms, which are provided in what follows from the field of gesture studies and linguistic anthropology.

Gestures in Stand-Up Performances
There exists a tradition in Western cultural history for associating persuasive rhetoric with proficient gestural language. Similarly, as a "communication ecology" (Kendon 1997, 120) stand-up comedy favors foregrounded gestures in interaction, presumably also adapting to variable physical and social settings, e.g. in large-scale stadium gigs. For

example, theatrical use of pictorially oriented depictive gestures and visual movement are common practices within the genre, not least in part due to the minimal set up of stand-up, in which the "stage is marked most by its unmarked quality" (Seizer 2011, 215; cf. Hall, Goldstein and Ingram 2016, 74). It is an integral aspect of any analysis of stand-up to pay attention to the (implications of the) measure that different stand-up comics appropriate "gestural spaces" for themselves, i.e. personal spaces in their execution of gesturing (see Sweetser and Sizemore 2008). How does gestural excess (wherever the thresholds of such "excess" are perceived as being located for different people) and the performance of large gestural spaces, or the inverse tactics for that matter, map onto different performance orientations and styles, comedic aesthetics and comic personas, as well as identity categories enacted by and attributed onto various comics?

I am here drawing from work in linguistic anthropology (from John Haviland, in particular) and gesture studies (from David McNeill, in particular), where gestures, and especially those of the "pointing" variety (to be defined below), are reckoned amongst the devices that reflect and interactively constitute representations of the spaces speakers inhabit, know, and talk about (Haviland 2000, 47). The category of gestures that these disciplines generally adopt refers broadly to those bodily actions that are "regarded as part of a person's willing expression" (Kendon 2000, 49). The four types of gestures often distinguished are constituted by 1) iconic and 2) metaphoric gestures, 3) rhythmic "beats", and 4) deictic gestures or "points" (e.g. Cassell and McNeill 2004). Whereas *iconic* gestures resemble and thus depict their objects—as when Donald Trump deploys his trademark "pistol hand gesture" to fire contestants in the reality-TV game show *The Apprentice* (as well as metaphorically and comically during his presidential campaign, see Hall, Goldstein and Ingram 2016) —*metaphoric* gestures depict abstract ideas in concrete, visual forms. A typical metaphorical gesture would reproduce a mental representation, such as an affect of anger in the form of a physical object, a clenched fist for example.[2] Rhythmic "*beats*," for their part, are constituted by minimalistic hand movements and generally employed for underlining the relevance of concurrent discourse with respect to larger narrative or discourse-pragmatic purpose (*ibid*.).

An especially revealing typological class of gestures is established by deictic gestures, sometimes termed "*points*". According to Kita (2003, 1), prototypical deictic gesture is a "communicative body movement that projects a vector from a body part," indicating a certain direction, location, or a target object. While obviously also bound to the immediate physical and communicative environment, deictic gestures are often used to refer to objects located in multiple sets of space-time coordinates characteristic of narrative events.[3] That is, while objectively empty—like the paradigmatic stand-up stage comprising of a microphone, a chair, a refreshment—the gesture space of the narrator can be filled by various discourse entities (Cassell and McNeill 2004, 119–120). Such imaginary and unreal discourse entities might also come to carry very real effects—or what narratologists would refer to as "metaleptic" boundary crossings across narrative levels—in interlocutors' perception and short-term memory, even more

so if they are gesturally visualized for extended periods of time. During a bit revolving around "fancy dress parties," for instance, Josie Long enacts a narrative episode in which she, as a person dressed up as "Marie Antoinette," orders two drinks at a party. Having finished the "transaction" with an imagined salesperson, she lays down the two imagined glasses on a table. Finally, after explaining how the "imaginary drinks" are now "fine" resting on the table, she suddenly hits the "glasses" off the table in the direction of audience members, causing some of the front row members to flinch as if the glasses were actually spilled and crashed, or better yet, rocketing towards them (at around 33:00 into the show on the DVD).

The conceptual spaces to which deictic gestures refer can, then, include 1) the local gesture space in which the communication unfolds (in this case, the stand-up venue and stage), 2) the narrated storyworld constructed discursively by the narrator, 3) the interactional space consisting of the respective positions of the present interlocutors (the performer and her audience), and 4) the narrated interactional space, which is a combination of the latter two, for instance consisting of imaginary interlocutors in the storyworld (Haviland 1993; Herman 2013). Each of these spaces are relevant in stand-up, for not only do comics regularly invoke narrated storyworlds (2) populated with characters in interaction (4) and draw these worlds in local gesture spaces (1), they are simultaneously expected to orient toward their immediate interlocutors (3), the audience. Empirically, the analyst's primary task is to identify the gesture spaces actualized and coordinated by various gestures, and more specifically to determine the scope, the reach, and the details of their projections (Haviland 2000, 18).

Not only do gestures implicate different conceptual spaces actualized in narrative activity, they also mark and mediate movements between these spaces. In this regard, Herman (2013, 288–290) separates movements or "transpositions" between, and laminations of two or more distinct spaces or coordinate systems. Whereas a transposition marks a shift between conceptual spaces (and thus of deictic centers), a proper *mediation* of separate ontological levels is provided by laminations. Laminations take place when a deictic pointing gesture is used "to project one gesture space into another, creating a layering or blending of spaces calibrated in different ways with the current communicative event" (ibid.). In laminations, a local deictic gesture that is anchored in the gesture space associated with the here-and-now—that is a local (1) or interactional (3) space in the typology provided above—gets superimposed on a narrative or metanarrative deictic. Such an instance occurs when the comic-as-narrator points at an invisible object situated in the narrated storyworld while objectively gesturing towards a spot on stage, in her immediate physical surrounding. On a preliminary theoretical level, then, laminations should be most interesting in terms of the ideals and affects of immediacy and self-presence in stand-up, for they participate in bringing the stand-up narratives *alive* in the here-and-now.

To finally address the issue of narrative viewpoints (i.e. focalization) conveyed by gestures, I will borrow from McNeill (2005, 34) who distinguishes between the two basic alternatives as 1) observer viewpoints, and 2) character viewpoints. Observer viewpoints, where the narrator postures as onlooker, lay out the conceptual spaces in

front of the performer as a kind of a screen on which the action takes place. Character viewpoint, by contrast, is conveyed through mimetic gestures that are iconic of certain aspects of a character (typically of her hands) and the performer is accordingly situated *inside* the conceptual space or storyworld (also Cassell and McNeill 2004, 120–121). The precise dichotomy is ultimately complicated by the fact that while gestures might convey the perspective of a character situated amidst the events in the storyworld, the perspective conveyed by verbal narration might simultaneously represent an outside observer's viewpoint. The result is, again, yet another type of lamination or combination of separate conceptual and ontological spaces that is especially effective in bringing together events and experiences from a multiplicty of spatiotemporal dimensions.

It should also be noted that gestures and actions from both character and observer viewpoint are typically executed in a way that simultaneously "respects the needs and enlists the co-operation of its audience", as is true for all narration, including certain experimental literature and performance art that, while perhaps not *respecting* the needs of audiences per se, precisely plays with their expectations (Jahn 2007, 94). In a live situation, this entails the use of stage space so that most audience members can see what is happening, feel engaged with the performer, and so on.

At the Swimming Hall with Josie Long

The following excerpt is captured from Josie Long's full-length stand-up special *Trying is Good* (2008), as previously mentioned. The sequence reproduced in the transcript is situated in the beginning of the performance, in the context of Long introducing her audience to the incipient show. It relates a realistically inflected story of Long's second-hand experience at the gym, which, we learn, becomes broadly iconic, or "allegorical" (Shuman 2005), of her performance on the whole. At the end of the narrative (and during various points in the show) we hear how "this is a show about effort," presumably about how "trying is good". The narrative sequence is thus framed at the outset as inherently reflecting the proverbial title of the show, as a thematic *mise en abyme* of sorts.[4]

Symptomatic of the tendencies of stand-ups for arguing through exemplification, the narrative sequence is organically embedded in conversation and appropriated in the mode of explicatory or exemplifying discourse (see Noyes 2016; Højer and Bandak 2015; Bennett 1986). The outcome could be described as a replaying conversational narrative, characterized by high degree of detail, imitative enactments, as well as prominent evaluative cues by the narrator. Gülich and Quasthoff (1986, 226) describe replaying conversational narrative as an intrinsically intimate mode of narration, suitable for an "involving" and thus exophoric narrative strategy, to revisit Herman's (2013) terminology.

At the start of the bit, Long explains how she wrote her show *Trying is Good* for Edinburgh Festival, the latter being a one-month event in which "you do a show every night". The day she originally came to Edinburgh for the said festival, we hear, she decided to join a gym. After all, her physical "figure doesn't maintain itself", as she

jokingly explains, thus thematically framing the incipient narrative as dealing with body issues.

(1)   a) I went to, the… I was waiting in the Letter center, for them to fill up my membership card
                          [a horizontal line segment with index finger and thumb of left hand][5]

         b) and I was waiting in their office
            [holds left hand in front of her, fingers extended downward]

         c) which is in this gallery, that looked down on a swimming pool
                          [slides the open left palm forward downwards]
                              [the slide ends in a circular horizontal motion of left palm]

What she noticed down at the swimming pool were children playing:

(2)   a) what they've got, was they've constructed a kids' play scheme
            [looks downwards to the left, left palm open in the air]
                                    [rotates left hand, rhythmically to the words]

         b) and what it was, was a sort of floating, obstacle course
                          [bends downward to the left, rotates left hand]

         c) going from one side of the pool to the other
            [walks to left, simultaneously marking sections in the air with left hand]

         d) made up of all these interconnected, inflatable rafts
            [turns over to the right, gesturally tracing the contours of separate objects]

         e) and on each one… there was a different thing, like a palm tree, or a crab, or a slide, and…
                                    [raises straight up, left hand extended
                                    upward at the elbow, then crouches
                                    downwards, walks to the right]

         f) there were lots of, very little children, very tentatively, trying to navigate their way across it
            [addresses the audience by eye gaze]
                                    [starts moving slowly to the left, left hand feeling the way]

         g) and then at the side of the pool, there was a man
            [walks over to the left side of the stage]

         h) whose job it was… was to stand there
            [advances slightly to right, looking alternatively at the "pool" on the right and the audience]

    i) WITH A POWERFUL HOSE
      [swiftly raises her left hand as if holding a hose in front of her, looking to the right]

    j) just picking 'em off!
      [moves the imaginary hose to-and-fro as if to direct the spray of water, quickly
       addresses the audience by eye gaze]

    k) getting rid of the weak!
      [addresses the audience by direct eye contact]

It will be beneficial to differentiate between the operative narrative levels of the sequence at once (see Pier 2014). First, we have the extradiegetic level, on which the flesh-and-blood producer of discourse—Josie Long as herself, as the present narrating-I recounting a story from her past—is performing in front of other people. This level is founded by the shared interactional space occupied, quite intimately it seems based on the video recording, by both the performer and her audience. Second, the diegetic level is constituted by the narrated storyworld, in this case located in more or less recent past of the narrator herself, i.e. at the time she was preparing the show for Edinburgh Festival, in Edinburgh. The diegetic level is mediated for us by Long as the experiencing-I, from whose perspective the unfolding chain of events is introduced ("I was waiting…"). The viewpoint is thus anchored to a specific character in a localized position in the storyworld, even though this character will not *physically* involve herself in the events of the storyworld. In any case, as we will see, this neutral anchoring gets disturbed in various strategic ways during the performance, bringing into relief the engaged and involving character of the genre.

    The sequence starts off with what can be described as an orientation of the audience to the spatial surroundings of the storyworld. Long's gestures accompanying her narration (1a–1c) help the retrieval of these spatial coordinates. Primarily, the forwardly outstretched hand with downward extended fingers depicts interiority, the office space (1b), and the iconic gesture demonstrating a downward slide gives us a rough idea of the spatial relations between the office and the swimming pool situated diagonally at its side, as scenery of sorts. The recurrent dual-perspective of the performance is actually already apparent in this brief combination of iconic gesture and narration, insofar as it mixes the perspectives of 1) an experiencing-I in the storyworld, and of 2) the narrator as an outside observer, and thus able to reify the situation. That is, the downward slide gesture demonstrates Long's own (visual) viewpoint from inside the office, while her simultaneous verbal *description* as a narrator relates these spatial aspects from an outside perspective (1c).

    The spatial coordinates inside the swimming hall are elaborated further as Long carefully delineates the focal physical objects and actors in the storyworld, the obstacle course comprising of interconnected inflatable rafts and populated by children. The narration opts for a sequentially scanned scene, in which surroundings, entities, actors, and actions are introduced in linear fashion. She accomplishes this by three sideways

transitions from right to left and back, during which she 1) lays out the rough segments of the obstacle course (transition to the left), 2) depicts individual rafts by gesturally tracing their outer shapes (transition to the right), and finally 3) populates the obstacle course by mimicking children's movements on it (another transition to the left).[6] These gestures are all creatively entailing: they bring fresh aspects of context into relief by pointing to entities that are "baptismally" introduced into the storyworld (Silverstein 1976). Gestures from inside the storyworld—as here—are all predominantly iconic in nature; for instance, as Long depicts the shape of a palm tree by resembling its form with her posture and upwardly outstretched arm.[7]

Insofar as the entities comprising of the obstacle course are presented through iconic gestures at a very close range, the initially medial narrative distance simultaneously moves in at a proximal distance. The degree of detail accorded to the floating obstacle course is thus in somewhat contrastive relation to the medium-scope representation of the events at the outset. However, while the performer's gestures and movements which trace the shapes of physical objects imply an insider's perspective situated in the middle of the events, her simultaneous verbal narration reproduces the more distanced impression of viewing the events from an outside observer's perspective – from the office.

Having thus established the locations of the focal objects and actors, jointly in the virtual narrated space and on the immediate physical stage, Long repositions herself to the left of the stage (2g–2h). Reaching a suitable spot while verbally introducing for us the main protagonist of her story (2g), she turns around and looks to the right from her new location, presumably at the said rafts in the storyworld. Importantly, two cardinal spots are now established on the stage: 1) on the right, an obstacle course populated by children, and 2) on the left, corresponding to the side of the pool in the storyworld, a man with the hose, the villain of the story as is to be correctly guessed. These acts can be termed interactional "placings," referring to gestural or corporeal enactments of putting an "object in a position within an interactive space," thus establishing a new focus space (Kendon 1997). That is, it is now possible for the interlocutors, sharing a place and a moment, to subsequently orient to these physical spots as indexical markers in the narrated storyworld. Moreover, associated as these spots are with the main figures of the narrative, they are also accorded strong moral valences.

Insofar as Long's largely kinesic performance has now brought the spatial and the agential context of the storyworld into relief, she now has enough discursive and imaginary "material"—i.e. spatially locatable discourse entities in the short-term memories of both herself and her audience—to start further supplying this context with actions and other narrative events. In other words, the balance on the semiotically presupposing/entailing axis is beginning to move over to the presupposing side.

The action of spraying water is swiftly introduced onto the scene by Long's adoption of an outstretched arm. The features of the hosing man are characterized primarily by non-verbal cues, so that Long's iconic gestures and posture enact, display, and demonstrate what is only implicitly conveyed through verbal means: the fact that the hose was held by the man in one hand, the hand extended in front of him,

oriented toward the children. Gestures thus allow the interlocutors to infer both the location of the target of the hose and the relative height difference between the two parties (cf. Liddell 1998, 295). In a word, not only do gestures visualize that which is verbally communicated, but make the expression more precise—or, whereas speech seems to convey action, gestures convey the manner or mode of action (Kendon 2000, 51; McNeill 2005, 26).[8] Further still, mimetic gestures such as bodily impersonations are by definition metonymic reductions (Mittelberg and Waugh 2014): they selectively deconstruct their referents into parts (that come to stand for wholes), all the while purportedly capturing some essential truths of the same target objects. Such operations, highly popular amongst comics, draw their performative and ritual efficacy from the binary logic of a widespread language ideology according to which embodied or gestural signs are understood as speaking their "own truth beyond the ephemerality of words" (Hall, Goldstein and Ingram 2016, 82–86; see also Dolar 2017).

Gestural demonstration is concurrent with Long's scant verbal description of the man. The amplified, even jubilant, shout which names the man's tool (2i) can be regarded as the first properly evaluative cue by Long-the-narrator, compromising the presumed transparency of the narrative event and the narrated storyworld. The perception must have struck the experiencing-Long in the storyworld forcibly, and she replays this effect for the current audience by raising her voice. In this regard, Wilce (2009a, 68, 101; Merleau-Ponty 1964, 89) has cautioned against rigid distinctions between verbal and non-verbal communication, insofar as there also exist *verbal gestures*, such as interjections and other modulations of voice, pitch, etc.

In short, Long's evaluation here is more closely connected to her status as narrator than the otherwise neutral expository discourse (see also Herman 2013, 175). In this regard, the portrayal of the man can be designated as an instance of illustrated narration (Liddell 1998, 309–310), in which the narrator's discourse is simultaneously complimented by gestural signs from the perspective of a character in the storyworld. That is, gestures of the performer (directing the hose, the posture) are situated in the (grounded blend of the) storyworld, while the verbal narration is situated in the storyworld only partially. Only her hands and body are part of the storyworld space, while her head and eye gaze addressing the audience are not.

The ambiguity of the configuration is brought into relief by the fact that the verbal lines (2j, 2k) are simultaneously issued *as if* from the character's point of view. Two linguistic features can be mentioned that reduce the distance from the storyworld and invoke the character's subjectivity: 1) the construction of the sentences as simple-clause units that use active, transitive verbs (Cassell and McNeill 2004, 124), and 2) the foregrounded voicing contrast that indexes an American English accent – markedly distinct with respect to Long's standard voice. Both the linguistic features and accompanying gestures thus suggest that the brief verbal lines would represent the man's perspective, even though delivered by the narrator. Most prominently, the last line in the excerpt (2k) constitutes an attribution of intention, projected onto and refracted from the man's perspective as an intentional mindset, as something he presumably might have malevolently intended while hosing the children.

Importantly, Long's sporadic eye contact with the audience explicitly signals her recognition that she is, indeed, performing in front of an audience. Symptomatically, the eye contact is situated at the end of the narrative sequence (2k), thus resuming the focus to the shared interactional space (see also Sidnell 2006, 382; Thompson and Suzuki 2014). By involving her audience, Long aligns herself with them while foregrounding her double role as both demonstrator of actions in the storyworld and subjective narrator of the events (see Clark and Gerrig 1990). In the subtly ironic layering of points of view, the narrator's perspective, here occupying the moral high ground, contains and contrasts the character's perspective as the target of her irony (see also Cassell and McNeill 2004, 125–126). By grounding her argumentative point within the narrated storyworld and by inviting her audience to draw their own conclusions from the (partly) enacted sequence, the implications of such drama are also rendered relatively inaccessible to challenge (Hill and Zepeda 1992, 212).

To capture this mixture of several perspectives, we might refer to Herman's (2013, 185) notion of distributed focalization, which designates a "network of viewpoints, with emergent cognitive properties that cannot be reduced to those associated with any one position or node". In other words, the shifts of viewpoint cannot be construed as sequential or as simply additive, but concurrent in the sense of allowing separate positions to contrast each other syncronically (cf. Fauconnier and Turner 2002). Both gestural and verbal cues thus afford the construal of the events as ultimately focalized from the triple viewpoint of Long the experiencing-I *and* the hosing man *and* Long the narrating-I. However, the nodes are not equal but hierarchical, for distributed focalization also entails diffusely distributed responsibility and power (cf. Hill and Zepeda 1992). In short, two of these nodes function as foregrounded texts—i.e. Long the experiencing-I and the hosing man—while one of them functions as their dominating *context*: Long the narrating-I, or in other words, Long *as herself* in the present moment with her co-present audience (cf. Keisalo 2018).

As a brief metanarrative aside (3a), Long repositions herself to the center of the stage and addresses her audience directly:

(3)   a) which is one thing until you realize: that's his job
            [addresses the audience directly, moves to the center]
                                        [points to left, to the spot of where the man was
                                        standing]

        b) like at dinner parties, people might go, "Oh, I'm sorry, you, what do you do for a
        living?"
                            [turns over to the left, index finger pointing to the left]

        c) "Me, oh, I hose children off a floating assault course. That's what I do."
            [index finger turns and points at herself, turns to the front and walk slightly to left]
                                [fingers stroking her chest]
                                        [looks to right]

d) "How long have I've been doing it? – 25 years, I'm the best in the business."
   [addresses the audience, then turns over to right again]

e) "Why do you do that?"
   [moves slightly to right and turns over to left]

f) "(…) ..to upset them – I don't know. I don't enjoy my work!" (Scottish accent)
   [looks ponderous, turns to right again, fingers stroking her chest]
                                    [briefly addresses the audience, then turns over to right]

g) but the thing is, he was, REALLY enjoying it
   [normal voice, addresses the audience directly]
                              [open palm at the side of her face, clenches it into a fist]

h) like… and he was focusing pretty much, all of his energy, on one boy
   [walks over to left to the spot where she was hosing before, left hand resumes the
    hosing position, outstretched to right, slightly downward]

i) and the boy that he was chosen was a proper tubby, like a properly obese boy
   [walks quickly over to right again, left hand opens up to her front]
                                                    [left hand open palm in
                                                     front of her, feeling her outer
                                                     contours]

j) and what he was trying to do was to get on, and stay on, an inflatable slide, right?
   [open palm, fingers outstretched downward, rhythmically moves up and down]

k) and he had this absolute look of abject terror on his face
   [squints her eyes, open palm raised to the side of her face]
                                                    (audience reaction: "awww…")

l) like, at that minute he'd been let down by the entire adult world, and he would
never forget
   [left hand flat in front of her]   [index finger and
                                                              thumb touching]

m) it was now just a countdown till he got a big gun collection, that's all that it was
   [fingers flat, pointing upward, makes a line segment in the air in front of her]

n) and I was really feeling for him, 'cause I was an obese child and if I'm honest I'm
   somewhere in the ballpark at the moment
   [takes a step back, left open palm touches her chest]

o) so, I was like… (voice reduces into a whisper)
   [clenched fist, slightly crouching and bending forward, as if rooting for the boy]

p) and he… he looked like at that minute he'd realized something about life, and what he'd realized was:
  [takes a few steps forward, left hand in front of her as if holding something]

q) whenever you have a nice thing in this life, like a nice inflatable slide
  [left hand stretched downward in front of her, open palm facing the audience]

r) there'll always be some prick, in a polo shirt, wanting to sluice you off of it
  [turns and points to left, addressing the audience, then walks over to left]
                    [reaches the spot of the hosing man, turns to right
                    and resumes the hosing hand position, while briefly
                    addressing the audience by eye gaze]

To start from beginning, the forward movement (3a), through which Long indicates a shift in narrative orientation, could be construed as a metaphorical gesture, as far as it reveals the performer's conceptualization of the storyworld as a 'container', as a delimited spatial zone on the physical stage from which it would be possible to "step out" in a very concrete fashion (also 3p). Along with the shift from the level of storyworld to the metanarrative level, it is also possible to observe a shift from iconic to deictic gestures. Picking on the realization of the man's profession, Long points at the spot where she was standing a second ago with the imaginary hose in her hand. In particular, the pointing gesture directed at her right laminates two conceptual frames: the gesture points to her previous location on the physical stage, while at the same time referring to the course of action accomplished by the man in the temporally and spatially distant storyworld.

Introduced with a hasty preamble ("people might go"), what follows this moment is a stand-up trope *par excellence*. Rightful authorities of what Walter Benjamin (2006, 142) termed the "mimetic faculty", stand-up comics excel in "instant characters", defined by stand-up scholar Oliver Double (2014) as enactments and impersonations of people, animals, or objects, and often semiotically marked by shifts in vocal inflection, intonation, and posture. That is to say, we are suddenly at an imaginary dinner party in which the hosing man is being addressed by a fellow interlocutor, Long-the-character (the second token of this particular type, this time in an imaginary frame). The refocusing of the referential space is accomplished both verbally and by differentially valued pointing gestures. First, Long's characterization of the man derives from a linguistic mixture of a recognizably "upper-class" register and stereotypically Scottish dialect. For indeed, we hear his voice for the first time, although fully as an invention of Long herself. Second, the same metanarrative pointing gesture that we witnessed a moment earlier (3a) is suddenly transformed into a narrative interactional gesture (3b).

Instant characters in stand-up comedy constitute fundamental shifts in footing (Goffman 1981), in that the status of the speaker becomes foregrounded as a figure or an animator of (other's) discourse.[9] From the perspective of performance dynamics, such shifts implicitly highlight the dual-nature of stand-up comedy as simultaneous self-

presentation and self-*representation* where performers variously (re)figure themselves as both subject and object. In other words, in enacting narratives, the status of stand-up comics as objects for others' uptake and immersion is briefly emphasized.[10] However, such objectification is here buffered by the fact that instant characters are reflexively calibrated as laminating and embedding at least two perspectives into each other. In short, this dramatic form is inherently ironic in that it contains the actions it depicts in an embedding frame of narration. Here, the satirical irony targets the ethical constitution of the man (see also Lindfors 2017a) who takes pleasure and pride in his job description of "hosing children off a floating assault course" (cf. Lee 2004, 118). Importantly, this satire is only sharpened by distributed focalization that foregrounds the experiences and intentions of the character while simultaneously containing them.

The spatial and bodily orientations of the interlocutors are communicated to the audience by Long's physical movement and alternating turns to the left and right. Interestingly, Long-as-the-man also registers her audience by directly addressing them by eye gaze in a manner of (metaleptically) breaking from the imaginary frame onto the actual surroundings (3c, 3d, 3f). The dialogue is ultimately and abruptly cut short by Long-the-narrator swiftly commenting on the self-description of the instant character. Three conceptual and spatiotemporal frames can be seen as intertwined at this moment (3g): 1) the narrating-I in the extradiegetic world denounces what 2) the instant character says in the imaginary frame, while simultaneously the narrator is referring to 3) the temporally anterior, factual event of the diegetic storyworld (in the swimming hall). Long thus indirectly foregrounds and lambasts the man's complacency in the primary storyworld by enacting this complacency in a separate imaginary frame and, finally, by commenting on this imaginary statement as a narrator.

The imaginary frame is soon pierced and the focus returned to the primary storyworld by Long's repositioning of herself in the second cardinal spot on stage and by resuming the act of hosing with an outstretched left hand (3h).[11] At this point, however, another protagonist is introduced onto the scene: a boy on the raft, in a helpless position of being hosed by the man, on the spot where the performer had earlier established the location of the floating obstacle course. The focalization is sequentially alternated between the two very much voiceless characters so as to dramatize the confrontation between an inept boy and a grown man who enacts mindless subservience to an institutional order ("the boy that he was trying to", "and what *he* was trying to do was get on"). The boy's physical features as an obese child are displayed in a sympathetic manner, his anguished mindset brought home by Long's elaborate gestures and an evocative description of "absolute look of abject terror" on his face. This depiction also receives the strongest reaction of affection from audience members ("awww…", 3k), indicating heightened involvement in the scene (Tannen 2007; also Hill and Zepeda 1992, 220–221). In particular, compassion is explicitly performed by an act of adequation (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 383–385) in which Long juxtaposes her own past experience of being an obese child with the boy's ordeal (3n).

I would read the sequence as a ironically bittersweet dramatization of the pleasure of an un-self-aware privileged subject in relation to his subordinated counterpart, the younger boy, where the older man entertains himself by constraining the endeavours of the boy (and by implication, the space of the swimming hall) for his physical markedness. Interestingly, performance theorist Rachel Lee (2004, 123) has juxtaposed this sort of "practice of surrounding [and controlling] the marked body" with the role of the audience in the stand-up setting, in the sense that the audience surrounds the performer and controls the performance event by legitimizing and enabling its procession by ritualized evaluative response—laughter. The juxtaposition is here rendered even more plausible given that the sequence was set up with reference to Long's own struggles with her body weight, thus mapping Long herself as a potentially analogic counterpart for the boy.

While most of the gestures we have identified can be described as idiosyncratic, this sequence is also characterized by gestures regimented by social convention. The clenched fist (3o) is a standard metaphorical gesture for an intensified affect (here, for empathy) by way of portraying physical tension. Similarly, touching one's chest with an open palm (3n) is a conventionalized gesture signaling affective, personal involvement. These gestures, both situated on the metanarrative level, thus bear both semantic and *metapragmatic* functions, as far as they "serve as markers of the speaker's attitude toward what he is saying" (Kendon 2000, 56). However, none of the metanarrative comments in the sequence foreground metafictional aspects of narration—storytelling as artifice—but rather enhance its realist appeal (Nünning 2004). We believe the story to have happened as told.

In particular, Long dramatizes the affective disillusionment of the boy—his intentional mindset at this particular moment—in the form of two brief micro-narratives (3l–3m; 3p–3r). The second micro-narrative is also enacted in the form of another instance of illustrated narration, in which gestures deliver us the perspectives of both the boy and the man. Separate conceptual spaces are again laminated onto each other as we bear witness to the "prick" in the storyworld through visual modality while simultaneously grasping this *text* through its *context*, i.e. Long-the-narrator, performing as herself for and with her co-present audience. In this regard, texts tell us as much about their contexts as about themselves.

The narrative whole comes to an end in a somewhat more positive fashion:

(4)   a) but, luckily for him, right, he was that big, that…
           [walks to the right to the position of the boy, starts to repeatedly stroke her side
            with the backside of the open right palm]

        b) all the water was doing, was just kind of bruising him
           [continues stroking her side with an open palm]

        c) making him look momentarily slimmer on one side

Long describes how the man lost interest in spraying the boy and how a look came over the latter's face as if thinking to himself: "Today I've won a victory! …of sorts." He has maintained his position on the raft, and the power dynamic is switched, even if somewhat ironically, over to the boy's side. Long closes the sequence on a reflectively explicatory note, with a coda that resumes the full circle of the narrative sequence back to where it started:

(5)   a) and I thought that is a great start for the show, umm…
         [walk to center stage, open hand pointing at the spot where the boy would be]

        b) because this is a show about effort
         [addresses the audience from the center stage, hand rhythmically marking the accentuations]

        c) and it's a show about how much I love people who put in the effort
         [points downwards to right, to the spot where the boy would be]

        d) regardless of how misplaced that effort is
         [glances over to right where the boy would have been]

The fourth excerpt, in which the boy's physical features are positively reappropriated, is of interest in that here, Long subjects her own physical body as the surface on which her gestures are directed and performed (see also Haviland 2004, 206). The body of the obese boy, situated amidst the events recounted, is thus transposed onto her corporeal self, while the concurrent verbal track continues to describe the events from the perspective of an outside observer. Only the performer's torso and her repetitively moving hand that iconically depicts the spray of water become part of the (grounded blend of the) storyworld, while her head, gaze, and verbal narration do not. The temporal coordination of the separate spaces and the separate signals invites the desired, correct interpretation. (Cf. Liddell 1998, 296.)

In a narratively satisfying manner (if a bit morally dubiously for the same reason), the reflective coda sees the performer explicitly contextualizing and aligning her show with the spatially and temporally distant event in the swimming hall for the second time. Gesturally, the coda marks a shift to deictic gestures and beats, both situated on the metanarrative level. During the final lamination in which Long describes her love for "people who put in the effort", she looks slightly downwards to her left and points with her left hand to the spot where presumably the boy would be located or rather meant to be imagined. The deictic gestures and her gaze at the boy are again indexically presupposing of the contextual field, because the narrated storyworld is by now familiar and taken for granted by interlocutors in the new speech context.

Importantly, the narrated universe is not resumed. Rather, the performer draws an indexical inference out of this ephemerally constituted and now objectified *mise en abyme* onto the ongoing performance event. In particular, she explicates how the resilient or stoic attitude and affect of the boy—which, it should be recalled, is narrator's

selective attribution—bears an analogical relation to what the incipient show, already in full speed in the here-and-now, should ideally convey. The function of the boy in the performance is thus revealed to act as an iconic metonymical index—directly pointing in the current context by way of essentialized resemblance—for an abstract idea. Not only is the gesturally impersonated boy metonymically reduced to a representation of valiant stoicism and (misplaced) "effort," but the abstract idea and affect of effort is indexically mobilized by this selective representation in order to invoke and drive home a moral code suitable for the performer herself. In a word, the boy's personal experience is shared as an allegory that Long, and her audience, can appropriate as an inspiration (Shuman 2005; also Noyes 2016).

This final lamination forms a blend between the shared interactional space and a metanarrative deictic referring to the narrative as a whole: we are collectively witnessing her story as it has now been completed. Stories-as-wholes are typically contained as objects by metaphoric gestures such as "in" a cupped hand (also Cassell and McNeill 2004, 130). In an analogical fashion, it is the flexible use of the stage space, including placings of certain focal objects within the interactional space, which allows the performer to reduce the proposed "essence" of the narrative to a character in the story, to which deictic gestural reference is then made.

In an indirectly modest fashion, Long's incipient show is now contextualized and framed by an event that transcends the boundaries of the current performance event (see Bauman 2012, 108). In particular, the show is analogically paralleled by an everyday encounter in a public space in which a subordinated agent has been struggling for his personal space. Interactional events are never hermetically sealed nor have an intrinsic scale, as Latour (2005, 199–204) reminds us with copious illustrations; however, it is also up to the performers and narrators to decide what kinds of shades of interdiscursivity or spatiotemporally distant domains and activities they want to articulate with given events (cf. Lempert 2013, 379). Indeed, the practice of such creative articulation is a craft unto itself, within stand-up but also beyond.

Conclusion: The Trajectory of Becoming-Character
Stand-up comedy might be strikingly verbal but it is also equally gestural and visual. To be certain, Josie Long's personal style of performance can be described a fairly *expressive* to begin with (in relation to some other more verbally oriented comics). Indeed, it is interesting to take note of the fact that her routine above recounts an event and an action sequence she merely *saw* from a distance as an outsider—meaning that what she saw were primarily *visual gestures* and *movement*—and then reconstructed in intricate verbal *and* gestural detail so as to grant these actions an exemplary or allegorical status. In particular, none of the main characters in the story are voiced as themselves (if anything, they are parodied), but are certainly attributed with various (moral) qualities and intentions.

In this regard, gestures, movement, bodily orientation, and facial expression form an essential part of what would be called the *expressive* and *experiential* qualities of narratives. Marco Caracciolo (2014, 36) argues how in order for us to consider the

experience of stories, how they elicit emotional responses, engage the imagination, and transport us to (imaginary) places, we need a conceptual transposition from representation to expression. Narratives in various transmedial environments have several expressive devices at their disposal through which they produce experiential responses in recipients despite the fact that in linguistically mediated contexts, representation and expression are often closely bound up. Discursive qualities such as high level of (visual) detail, mimetic techniques such as direct reported speech, focalization inside the storyworld, or evaluative cues of the narrator certainly rank high in enhancing audience's involvement in narratives (Caracciolo 2014; Tannen 2007), but so do gesture, movement, and other embodied sensory modalities. In a semiotic sense, we could rephrase Caracciolo's experientiality by saying that as a form of Peircean Secondness, gestures and embodied movement *impress upon* receivers as an unmediated force or "brute action" to be reckoned with (cit. in Wilce 2009a, 101–102).

In this article, I charted how gesture and movement participate in juxtaposing, superimposing, and laminating various conceptual spaces and narrative perspectives with regard another to precise communicative effect, foregrounding other spaces and perspectives while steering attention away from others (cf. Haviland 2004, 210). As Cassell and McNeill (2004, 124) point out, shifts between spaces and perspectives are rarely just "random wobblings but apparently motivated movements to and from the narrative line to encode the degree of centrality of the event at each moment". In particular, close-ups delivered from the character viewpoint are typically coordinated with events that are the causes (the hosing) and effects (the boy's victory) in the chain of events leading to the finale of the storyline.

In this regard, there is an apparent *textual* quality to the embodied actions of the performer. This means that there is a particular coherence to the patterning of gesture and movement that is potentially repeatable and even portable across shifting contexts, just as there is for the concurrent verbal signal (Wilce 2009b, 32–35). Moreover, such high degree of textuality in both verbal and non-verbal modalities can be regarded as symptomatic also with respect to the scripted and intensely repetitive character of stand-up comedy, given that what we have been analyzing is a sequence from the very beginning of the show, its seemingly casual if largely iconic introduction so to speak.

Insofar as many stand-ups rely heavily on reductive gestural depictions of the characters, settings, and objects, their performances are often laden with iconic, depictive gestures and embodied impersonations. In this regard, my analysis also warrants Cassell and McNeill's (2004) suggestion that the diegetic storyworld level is characteristically accompanied by iconic gestures depicting objects, posture and hand movement, facial expression, etc. Metaphoric gestures, for their part, primarily participate in metanarrative discourse conveying (narrator's) evaluations, summaries, and other pragmatic functions. Deictic gestures are likewise typically metanarrative and didactic in nature; they bring spatial relations into relief, mark transpositions between and laminations of the storyworld and the shared interactional space, as well as organize the interactional space in both the storyworld as well on the extradiegetic level.[12] An important distinction is that during implementation of diegetic character

viewpoints, deictic gestures often shift to the character's *origo*, along with the general refocusing of the referential space.

In particular, it is a staple feature of stand-up that the comic as a narrator of herself and her performance moves back and forth between 1) narration performed "as themselves" in the shared interactional space with an audience, 2) illustrated narration (Liddell 1998) that combines both (meta)narration and simultaneous gestures enacted from a character viewpoint in chosen storyworlds, and 3) brief enactments of narratives or so-called instant characters (Double 2014) that are often situated in hypothetical or completely imaginary spatiotemporal frames. I suggest calling this gradient continuum as the *trajectory of becoming-character* in stand-up comedy (I have borrowed the notion of "becoming-character" from Nozawa 2013). Whereas one end of this continuum is constituted by the stand-up "performing as herself", the other end can be said as leaning toward generally more mediated forms of self-presentation (toward something that I would rather refer to as "animation of voice"). On this other end, stand-up comics evoke before us situations populated by characters, figures, and social types—some of them biographically identifiable and anthropomorphic, others non-human or even abstract concepts—or otherwise foreground aspects of their own stage personae *as personae*. This continuum then serves as a heuristic tool for exploring aspects of stand-up on a scale from (mimetic) embodiment to relatively more mediated forms of personation and impersonation.

Notes

1   No doubt, one can imagine scenes in which the comic narrates her own actions whilst simultaneously performing them. In this case, it would be debatable whether a narrated storyworld, or indeed a story, would have been produced. In fact, folklorist and anthropologist Tok Thompson (2010, 399) has distinguished between narratives and stories precisely thus, defining a "story" as implying "a narrative referring to a time *other than its own*." Now, while I will not spend time discussing Thompson's terminological binary per se (which he proposes as the evolutionary watershed between hominid and non-hominid communication: humans tell stories, animals do not, even though they might narrate), his problematic of temporal coordination related to narration is what also concerns me here.

2   However, as Parrill and Sweetser (2004, 216; also Young 2011) point out, gestural metaphor can only exist by being layered upon foundational iconicity, meaning that gestures rarely manifest as "pure" types. Rather, the four categories are preferably understood as concurrent dimensions of gestural communication.

3   In cognitive studies, a person's mental representation of their immediate surroundings, such as the physical stage and the stand-up venue for a comic, is labeled the Real Space. The Real Space is called a *grounded* mental space because it is immediate, and can be deictically referred to by pointing gestures (as well as by verbal deictic reference, of course). Grounded blends, on the other hand, result from the blending of elements from a mental, conceptual space with elements of one's immediate physical environment. As Liddell notes, they often incorporate the conceptual scene (setting and time) from a non-grounded space and project that onto the current physical setting, the Real Space. (Liddell 1998, 290–291.) Narratives recounted on-site are prototypical grounded blends, but various grounded blends can also be invoked off-site.

4   *Mise en abyme* is understood as a mirroring technique or a condensation device, in which an "inner mirror" is said to reflect the complete work of art by replication. This "mirroring" part typically functions as a "hermeneutical key", which highlights essential aspects of the whole: its object can be either 1) the theme, 2) the process, or 3) the code of the work (Dällenbach 1989). A more operative and narratologically suitable account of the device is provided by Mieke Bal (1978, 123), who designates *mise en abyme* as a sign that refers to "an essential or prominent aspect of the text, narration or story", which it signifies by resemblance, i.e. by similarity or difference, once or repeatedly. *Mise en abyme* is thus essentially iconic by nature.

5   I have visually synchronized the gestural descriptions with the verbal track by locating the respective starting points of verbal and gestural signs at corresponding places in relation to each other.

6   Throughout the analysis, the coordinates of the 'left' and 'right' refer to the audience's viewpoint, not to the performer's bodily orientation or visual perspective, unless specifically noted otherwise.

7   It is also possible to observe how gestures are typically prepared in advance of their correlation with words. When introducing the triad of objects consisting of "a palm tree, or a crab, or a slide", Long simultaneously positions herself at corresponding sequential spatial spots, so that the pronunciation of the nouns is precisely synchronized with the gestures.

8   Also obscured in my transcription is the gesturally conveyed information regarding the man's facial expression as well as his unexcited or reluctant posture, (presumably) functioning as negative metonymic reductions of his personality traits.

9   Instant characters thus correspond with what sociolinguist Deborah Tannen (2007) has conceptualized as constructed dialogue. In contrast with illustrated narration (Liddell 1998) that we saw earlier, in constructed dialogue both gestures and verbal signs are projected through the characters being portrayed. Constructed dialogue is an especially efficient involvement strategy because of its immediacy and its "ability to portray action and dialogue as if it were occurring in the telling time", while also forcing the hearers to participate in the sense making.

10 Folklorists might be more familiar with analytically separating presentation and representation through the concept of *ostension*, but this notion does not translate well from legend studies, where it is typically applied (see e.g. Ellis 1989), onto staged oral performance.

11 It is possible to note here that while reference is characteristically anchored in the speech event by verbal indexicals (pronouns, tense, demonstratives), it is possible for deictic gestures and bodily orientation to replace these verbal signposts altogether (Haviland 2000, 18).

12 It also appears a generic feature of stand-up comedy that distinct spots on the physical stage are creatively operationalized as indexical icons of aspects of narrated storyworlds. On stage it is possible for the narrator to visually portray the spatial relations of characters and objects in the storyworld. Consequently, movements across such spots on the physical stage can be designated as a crucial component of (embodied) metanarration insofar as these repositionings illustrate the spatial relations of objects in the storyworld.

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Responses

"I don't enjoy my work":
A Response to Lindfors

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Antti Lindfors makes a significant contribution not only to stand-up scholarship but to the folkloristic study of performance in his piece, "Spatiotemporal Management of Stand-Up Performances: Narration and Gestures." Stand-up comedy begins in the verbal art-as-play contexts of small group, ludic interaction: small talk, bullshitting, talking shit, *skitsprat* (Bauman 1972; Mukerji 1979; Bell 1978; Klein 2006). Within those vernacular frames, one of the participants will often take (or be given) temporary focus and become the 'performer,' and will subsequently control the flow of talk by meeting the operative expectations of verbal fluency and topical relevance. The professionalization of stand-up comedy brings that form of small talk (vernacular bullshit) to a larger group context, and the stand-up comedian's success is contingent in recognizing the operative expectations in group's different from his or her own.

Fortunately for the comedian, there are also expectations for the genre "stand-up comedy" that include a certain eclecticism, and mechanics of the stand-up comedy industry, such as an introduction by an established interlocutor, that serve to frame that eclecticism, so that the stage transforms into an area where two socioculturally distinguishable sets of expectations are negotiated and—if only lasting for the duration of the performance—a syncretic set emerges.[1] All of this is to say

that, taking provisos about the differences of professional and vernacular bullshit into consideration, Lindfors' analysis of gesture in stand-up comedy can provide further insight into the use of gesture in vernacular verbal art. I am endeavoring, however, to keep it to a study of stand-up, and I am limiting myself to a few areas of contemplation.

Lindfors makes the observation that stand-up is a "genre of embodied performance of self-presentation in which the bodily and visual co-presence of performers and audiences is paramount" (p. 46). I agree with this position, and also affirm that "Stand-up comedy is the only mass-mediated cultural performance activity whose normative consumable product is a recording of a live event" (Brodie 2014, 34). The Josie Long performance under analysis is such an example. But we should also remember that it is a *recording* that culminated after significant touring and a month at the Edinburgh Festival, filmed at The Comedy Box in Bristol, using three cameras (Long 2008). The home viewing audience is experiencing the same created storyworld as the audience at The Comedy Box, not from the more-or-less fixed viewpoint at the venue, but through a sequence of camera shots taken from different angles framing Long at different magnifications: close-up; medium; full-body.

For example, the sequence Lindfors has labelled 2 f) through k) begins with a back of house shot where the audience is in silhouette at the bottom half of the screen and where Long is visible from the waist up. She walks to the left and then, after "tentatively," the screen cuts to a three-quarter shot positioned at the left so that she is now walking towards

the viewer. At g) the back of house shot returns, and halfway through h), after "whose job it was," a close-up from a similar angle. Finally, at j), the camera returns to the back of house shot. As viewers we have a grammar for cinematography and editing; we can therefore easily read the performance as one continuous thing and will not be thrown by a change in perspective. The six gestural moments are accentuated by five different shots comprising three perspectives, and the viewer's attention is drawn towards different movements without losing the sense of continuity.

Whereas filmmakers can employ editing to mask just as much as to accentuate—whether because an ever-panning camera would eventually bring attention to itself, or when two or more performances are selectively edited into one—what is finally presented on the DVD is taken as a good faith effort at representing and mediating the quintessentially live, intimate, and homeostatic performance at The Comedy Box. Mediated comedy performances are how audiences receive most comedy: certainly, they are what scholars have as texts for exegesis, save for what they can document themselves, and they are what stand-up comedians study when developing their craft, as is attested in almost every comedian's biography or memoir. The intersection of live performances and their mediation invokes Philip Auslander's discussion of "liveness" (1999); how stand-up comedy was not merely popularized but also shaped by its means of mediation—the television variety show, the LP, the cable television special, the home video, the streaming special, etc.—to the point where we must question the argument of live perform-

ance being any more "authentic" than the mediated.

Despite the normalcy of mediation in performances, there is still work to be done regarding the editing of stand-up comedy. The emphasis on a raw performance being captured without artifice is given lie to by performances that expressly address that conceit, such as Chris Rock's *Kill the Messenger* (2006, dir. Marty Callner), which weaves together performances in New York, London, and Johannesburg; Chelsea Peretti's *One of the Greats* (2014, dir. Lance Bangs) where Peretti can be seen in the audience during reaction shots (and whose presence throws off the Peretti onstage); and Tony Hinchcliffe's *One Shot* (2016, dir. Ben Wolfinsohn) which, as the title suggests, was done in one continuous take. The only concerted attention given to comedy cinematography is Alison Kibler (1999) on the framing of audience reaction shots on *An Evening at the Improv*, which further emphasises liveness by underscoring (perhaps disingenuously, as Kibler suggests) the presence of a responsive audience with their express visual representation on the screen.

Reflecting further on Lindfors, two further areas for inquiry on the use of gesture emerge. First, when Long, or any comedian, is gesticulating, who is it for? Irrespective of whether the performance is being recorded or not, does the grammar of stand-up gesture—informed by and often intending multi-camera recording and the possibility of always being framed at the optimal angle—irrevocably condition the repertoire of gestures? How does the comedian balance movement for camera vs. movement for an audience? There is perhaps an emancipatory ele-

ment in play, that something parallel to how a microphone, allowing for a voice in its natural register, changed comedy from snappy one-liners to something more reminiscent of vernacular bullshit; so too did the audience's collective familiarity with the form encourage the expectation of the comedian's "natural" use of gestures, even when their employ is of little communicative benefit to the people co-present. Multi-camera video-projection in large-scale (and, increasingly, in medium-scale) venues further this naturalism. Eighty years ago, Konstantin Stanislavsky noted how "life on the stage is shown in small compass, as in the lens of a camera. People look at it with opera glasses, the way they examine a miniature with a magnifying glass" (2003 [1936], 117), so the intrusion of technology into the mediated space is nothing new; it is just in different form.

The second area is perhaps the inverse: how *necessary* is any gesture? As much as it adds to the performance, Long's embodiment is not integral to understanding her narrative. As an experiment bordering perilously close to fieldwork, I asked a colleague to listen to the routine (with the screen of my laptop turned from her), providing her only with the information that it was a British female stand-up comedian named Josie Long, not even letting on that it was a video clip. She laughed at the introduction of the man with the hose (2i) and at "best in the business" (3d), winced sympathetically at the boy in abject terror (3k), and had the smile of recognizing the narrative resolution of misplaced effort (5d). My rather blunt follow-up of "did that make sense / did you understand that?" was answered honestly but with some confusion, until

I explained Lindfors' project. Stand-up comedy is something she listens to and watches often and, although unfamiliar with Long specifically, she is conversant with the expectations of the form.

As a professional stand-up comedian, Long would not only have experience being filmed, but also of being only recorded with audio: her performances need to work independent of her being seen. Long appears frequently on podcasts, on terrestrial and digital radio, and on other audio media, and her performances need to work in those elements. Moreover, much like what was said above with respect to film, stand-up comedy itself has been mediated through audio recordings and the form has adapted to that mediation. The inclusion of the co-present audience's reactions are additional elements for the recording's interpretation by a listener, and so there may be reactions that indicate that something physical is going on that is facilitating the co-present audience's appreciation but must be taken on trust by the listener—Rumsfeldian known unknowns of funny business—but it is the verbal art that takes center stage. I raise this as another asterisk for the distinctions between stand-up and vernacular bullshit: the former has been informed by mediation since its inception and we must be cautious about a direct transposition of our insights from our studies of the one to our studies of the other.

We should also be cautious about the onus of honesty we place on the shoulders of the stand-up comedian. For most of the routine, Long-the-narrating-I is "reporting" something from the diegetic world of Long-the-experiencing-I. She places it at the beginning of the show because "it's a show about how much I love

people who put in the effort regardless of how misplaced that effort is" (sequence 5 c) and d)). It segues from the very straight-forward descriptions of the show's origin and what an Edinburgh Festival show involves, and her evocation through word and gesture of the particular setting combines with her given rationale for being there. Even her subjective interpretations of the events—when she speaks of the man's clear enjoyment of the spraying at 3g), or when she interprets the large boy's face as at best a pyrrhic victory (in an untranscribed section between sequences 4 and 5)—are based on Long-the-experiencing-I having been present to them. It is experience honestly and artfully rendered and interpreted: as such, it verges on ethnography, or what I call "vernacular ethnography:"

> The comedian in his or her vernacular ethnography is not subject to the same constraints and set of expectations as the academic ethnographer: he or she is subject, however, to a parallel set of expectations, that of ongoing relevance to the audience. "Verisimilitude" is the order of the day: the account is expressly subjective but implies a recognizable truthfulness therein. The comedian is judged relevant by the audience in part by the accuracy of the worldview presented: it needs to be credible. Even though they are trying for laughter, comedians often honestly render representations of a particular moment and place in time. (Brodie 2014, 143)

Not all stand-up comedy centers around "real" experiences, as flights of fancy and pure fabrication are all part of the comedian's art. But these flights and fabrications tend to be grounded in some semblance of a real experience. Long makes claims to the veracity of her account, that it is an actual event being reported honestly yet artfully, including the mundane details of the membership card being filled out and the shapes of the play structure, that are not there as concepts to inspire laughter, but as recognizable and relatable motifs of a shared quotidian world. A stage is set for the actions of the man with the hose and the reactions of the boy on the slide, actions emerging from everyday experience that are storyworthy. As she relates the experience she interprets the characters' emotional states, even inventing internal monologues. Yet these interpretations are based upon her experience of their embodied selves, which she communicates to her audience through physical mimesis.

Sequence 3 b) through f) is distinct from the rest of the routine as it is entirely imagined: "We are suddenly at a dinner party in which the hosing man is being addressed by a fellow interlocutor" (Lindfors, p. 59). As much as the scene at the pool may have been polished to make for an increasingly compelling narrative, we are meant to believe that the story-world and ontological reality are coterminous: at least, we accept the conceit because we are willingly in a play frame that builds on conceits being accepted. But for the hypothetical dinner party, at which Long was not present, we are now hearing and seeing a conversation between two characters—one of whom is only brought into existence as an "instant character," acting as Long's surrogate to ask the man his motivations—that also serves to provide the theme for the following hour of her performance: "I love people who put in the effort regardless of how misplaced that effort is" (Long 5c-d).

This imagined conversation also involves an imagined gesture: Lindfors describes it as "fingers stroking her chest" but it could equally be framed as "polishing/buffing nails on her lapel," a stock gesture indicating satisfaction with a job well done (p. 57).[2] The gesture encapsulates so much of her overall point: energy and effort expended at doing something well, even if that something is of questionable merit: when pressed, he reassures the instant character "I don't enjoy my job!" and his accent switches from a "recognizably 'upper-class'" register [to] stereotypically Scottish" (Lindfors, p. 59).

I am captivated by this moment, and grateful that Lindfors' questions about gesture gravitated my attention thereto. Long made something up, creating a scenario that she cannot justify, but the audience is quite comfortable with the intrusion of fabrication into the proto-ethnographic because, unlike the folklorist and ethnographer, honesty is at the service of the narrative. It is a sterling example of how much we must refrain from timeworn clichés about the stand-up comedian as some form of inveterate truth-teller. Whatever ethnography, sociology, psychology, political science the stand-up comedian brings to performance is ever at the service of performance, and we should remember such when we see efforts at "explaining away" stand-up comedy's value.

Notes

1. This is of course an oversimplification as it treats the audience as a homogenous unity, and the conceit of communitas within the ludic sphere of the comedy performance is not only sociologically false but undermines performance strategies wherein conflicting interpretations of the comedian's speech act by different members of the same audience are actively pursued.

2. Both folklorists and students of stand-up comedy might recognize the gesture from Gershon Legman's version of "The Aristocrats" in his *Rationale of the Dirty Joke*: "Agent, thunderstruck: 'What kind of act do you call that?' Vaudevillian, polishing his nails on his lapel: 'We call it—The Aristocrats'" (1975, 987).

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Navigating Realities

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Acts of narration animate two realities, the storyworld and the performance occasion. When the narrator is present in the flesh, this animation is both verbal and gestural. As the story unfolds, the reality the story creates flares up intermittently into the space of the storytelling. The agents of these flare-ups are gestures. In David McNeill's terminology, iconic gestures represent characters, acts, objects, and spaces in the storyworld and deictic gestures point these out. At the same time, metaphoric gestures give concrete representation to abstract effects like ideas, emotions, dialogue, or narrative discourse as if they were characters, acts, objects, and spaces, which deictic gestures again point out (1992: 12-14). In his exquisitely controlled analysis, Antti Lindfors details this animation in Josie Long's stand-up comedy performance. My undertaking here is to bring out how Lindfors' study unfolds into multiple realities, split selves, alternative perspectives, perceptual modalities, and narrative anchors in story performances. An instance of this unfolding: when at the end of opening the narrative episode, Long steps out of the virtual space of the storyworld and closes it off behind her, she transforms it, as Lindfors writes, from an iconic storyworld into a metaphorical "storyworld as 'container'" (p. 59). Here, Long interpolates the most moving instance of metaphoricity in her performance. Though she has dismantled the storyworld space, a trace of the boy

clinging to the raft remains as "an iconic metonymical index… for an abstract idea:" "valiant stoicism and (misplaced) 'effort'" (p. 63). The boy has become an allegorical figure in a tale that has become a parable. The parable raises "trying," the declared theme of Long's show, from the individual to the universal, surely one of the key devices of stand-up comedy in which the comedian is at once a singular quirky individual and Everyman.

Iconic gestures either materialize the storyworld around the body of the gesturer who is inside it or they materialize the storyworld outside her body inside the gesture space in front of her. The gesture space takes the shape of an oblong suspended in front of the body within which the person typically gestures (McNeill 1992: 86). If the storyrealm encloses the gesturer, she takes what Justine Cassell and McNeill call *character viewpoint*; if the gesturer encloses the storyrealm in the gesture space, she takes what they call the *observer viewpoint* (2004: 120-121). Long alternates between these perspectives on the storyworld over the course of her performance. As the "observer" in the swimming hall in the storyworld Long is, *pace* Lindfors (p. 62), perceiving and narrating events from a character's viewpoint, even though that character is herself and she is looking at something in her reality. The effect of the gesturer's proximity to the storyworld from this internal perspective is not precisely a "close-up," as Lindfors puts it (p. 64). The gestures do not depict detached inspections of phenomena as if they were pulled in under a microscope but tactile-kinaesthetic engagements with spaces and objects made forceful by proximity. From the character viewpoint, the audience is implicitly in-

side the storyworld along with the character so that members can recoil from the virtual glasses flying at them when one of Long's characters knocks them off the table (p. 51). Character viewpoint solicits the engagement the observer viewpoint restrains.

From the observer viewpoint, the audience is implicitly outside the storyworld along with the narrator, looking into a miniature reality she holds before her and about which she speaks rather than within which she acts. When Long extracts herself from the storyrealm as a character to turn back to it as an observer, she conjures up the rafts as a series of bumps she moves her hand over inside the gesture space. "[T]racing the shapes of the floating obstacle course" is neither an "insider's perspective" nor an "outside observer's perspective—from the office" (p. 55). Both gesturer and audience take the observer viewpoint, from which Long invites her fellow observers to participate in her humorous irony about the situation she discloses. When she becomes a character again, it is no longer herself but the guy who is plying the hose to pick off the children. The moment before, she had been demonstrating the storyworld for her audience from outside it; her perspective aligns with theirs, seeing in from without. Now their perspectives diverge; they see each other from within. But the ironic detachment she has constructed from the observer viewpoint now overlays the character's exultant cruelty to create the juxtaposition of conflicting affects that is again, as Lindfors recognizes (See p. 56), one of the hallmarks of humor.

Gestures do not *visualize* the storyworld for the audience, as Lindfors writes (p. 46); they *corporealize* aspects the spa-

tial reality of the storyworld in a way that makes it perceptible to their perceivers visually but it is not a visualization. Making a gesture is rarely like drawing a picture (though it can be); it is more like materializing a virtual reality by either being, handling, or moving through its space. Audiences do not just see storyworlds, they feel them. They enter into the storyworld as or alongside its characters; they attend to the storyworld along with its narrator. The spaces, acts, and objects in these realities tug at their attention, their senses, and their emotions. It is not that they imagine or envision the storyworld while perceiving and feeling the actual world. The virtual solicits them just as the actual does. Both realities flit into and out of the audience's attention at their own whim or the storyteller's direction. As William James writes, "Each world *whilst it is attended to* is real after its own fashion; only the reality lapses with the attention" (1890/1918: 293). This is as true of the real as of the imaginary. In the gesture, the body enters into a relationship with virtual presences.

The performer's job is to conduct her audience between realities. By turns, she draws them into a storyworld that opens up around her body and theirs and then draws them out of the storyworld that closes itself off into a into a separate space either contained in the gesture space in front of the narrator's body or suspended in one of the spaces around her. This neat alternation is complicated by the possibility of operating one reality verbally while operating the other gesturally, operating both realities gesturally at the same time, alternating between realities in the gestural system but not the verbal or the reverse. This complexity is the heart of

Lindfors' analysis. Initially, for instance, Long turns the audience's attention to the swimming pool by gesturing downward and to her left as the character who is herself in the storyworld perceived it. Keeping her gaze deictically on the pool, she relinquishes her iconic representation of herself inside the storyworld to represent the kids' "play scheme" metaphorically as an object she holds in her hand. Then she returns to iconic representation of the swimming hall but from outside the storyworld by representing the obstacle course as a series of bumps contained in miniature in the gesture space in front of her body. The same actual space can be colonized by different virtual spaces, each fleetingly materialized before her, beside her, or around her. When Long marks off the rafts in the pool while walking to her left and then her right, for instance, it is not clear whether she is walking along the edge of the pool inside the storyworld or walking along the edge of the storyworld the pool is in. Is she blurring boundaries or juggling multiple frames? Is there a difference between fuzziness and complexity?

The gesturer's body is itself split among realities, parts of it sustaining aspects of the storyworld as other parts of it sustain aspects of the performance situation. The narrator can embody different characters in the storyworld, including herself as a character, even as she is bodily present to her own act of narration. At the culmination of the opening episode, when Long steps forward into the body of the character in the storyworld who wields the hose, she alternates between looking at the pool on her right as the character and the audience in front of her as the narrator. As she turns and swings

the hose to her right to squirt the kids, she glances over her shoulder at the audience as if inviting them to look *at* as well as *with* her as she says, "Just picking 'em off." When she says, "Getting rid of the weak," she holds the audience's gaze while orienting her body and the hose to the kids in the pool, making the audience complicit in her appraisal of what is going on. A performer can orient to spaces of the storyworld and the objects in it, orient her audience to storyworld spaces, and orient to her audience and the space she is in with them.

How does anybody keep track of all this? Lindfors's study brings out three possibilities: temporal persistence, deictic anchors, and gaze engagement.

The virtual bodies, acts, objects, and spaces gestures conjure up have a brief perceptual afterlife so that the performer can, for a time, refer to them deictically. This is so even though the actual space the virtual space colonizes has been colonized by other virtual spaces in the course of the performance. The virtual cocktail party, for instance, takes over the space occupied by the virtual swimming hall. When she returns to the swimming hall story, Josie Long can still point to the place where the boy clung to his raft despite the interpolation into that space of the two people talking to each other at the party. This temporal persistence is one of the ways the performer directs the audience's attention to one reality or another without either she or her audience losing track of where they are.

Deictic gestures are anchored at one end in the body from which they issue and at the other in the object to which they point. Long's initial flurry of deictics or deictic-iconic blends at once orient

from the character's body in the story-world space and orient the audience to the storyworld. They are—and this is, I think, what Lindfors is after—shifters of sorts. Their object might be in the actual space around the gesturer, in the virtual space of the storyworld, or in a blended space that laminates a virtual space onto an actual space (p. 55). When she talks about the man's job, Long points to an actual spot to her left on stage, which is the virtual spot where the man stood with his hose and becomes the virtual spot where the man stands at the dinner party, into which Long moves her own body to become the man talking about himself at the dinner party, and to whom she now points by pointing at herself.

Gaze direction acts as a virtual deictic that points to the aspect of either the storyworld or the performance occasion to which the gesturer directs her own and the audience's attention. It arcs from its anchor in her body to its virtual or actual object, orienting to it as either character or observer. In either instance, the deictic arc hooks together the gesturer's body and an actual or virtual space as the focal reality. When the performer's gaze engages with the audience's, their mutually held gaze is anchored in both bodies, recentering space around the pair as co-anchors of a shared focal reality. These anchoring gestures can hold across shifting spaces just as stabilized spaces can hold across shifting gestures.

Affiliating gestures with words increases the possibilities for laminating realities exponentially. Lindfors' study brilliantly captures the sheer complexity required to navigate them. Its deep question is how we are moved by our movement within and among realities.

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Reviews

Heritage Keywords: Rhetoric and Redescription in Cultural Heritage. Edited by Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels and Trinidad Rico. Boulder: The University Press of Colorado, 2015. Pp. xx + 292.

The editors of *Heritage Keywords: Rhetoric and Redescription in Cultural Heritage* argue that because culture and language are always changing, so must the ways we communicate about our culture and history. Scholars must constantly re-examine how we use language and develop those findings to create practical ways of dealing with heritage work today. Reexamining heritage keywords provides a "healthy system of checks-and-balances" to make sure the definition of what is or is not considered heritage remains up-to-date. Likewise, rhetoric and the study of it plays an important role in "deliberative democracy." That is to say that rhetoric serves as a theoretical orientation designed to complement and enhance the quality of established democratic practices (12). Their fundamental purpose behind reevaluating terms is to acknowledge and listen to more perspectives as well as urge scholars of heritage studies to operate locally instead of the current trend of increasing institutionalization.

The main goal of the book is to fuse rhetoric with heritage, social, political, and economic practices, in order to advocate for positive change. Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels and Trinidad Rico, the editors, have chosen sixteen phrases in heritage studies that have been oversimplified by scholars and which also highlight where this positive change can occur. The editors define cultural heritage as an object, site, building, landscape, or cultural practice that holds historic significance which deserves proper preservation. Their goal is to reexamine the sixteen keywords in cultural heritage studies to analyze the function of those words and redefine how we talk about heritage. After a brief introduction, each chapter analyzes one of the sixteen keywords. How we study heritage and the words assigned to it provide a vessel for contemporary engagement that needs to include more consideration for multiple perspectives.

Divided neatly into clear sections, each chapter problematizes the words that other scholars oversimplified. In chronological order, the words include authenticity, civil society, cultural diversity, cultural property, democratization, difficult heritage, equity, heritage at risk, heritage discourse, intangible heritage, memory, natural heritage, place, rights, and sustainability. Each author(s) demonstrate the hypercomplexity of how the word came into use, its function, and the future implications of using that word. Each section gives context to the selected word including the formation of the word's meaning, how that meaning has changed, and how the word may continue to change. Scholars in the fields of cultural or heritage studies, public archaeology, cultural policy or resource management, or historic preservation would benefit from this book.

The best practices to safeguard cultural heritage has increasingly been institutionalized with the greatest success occurring on the national level. Because of this, Samuels and Rico argue that since heritage itself can be persuasive, that the rhetoric we employ, which also holds the power to persuade, needs to be specific

and accurately reflect the intention of the author. This strategy holds most true in areas such as social justice, public sentiment, international communities, and cultural site of larger significance. Additionally, the editors look at the rhetoric of heritage which emphasizes codification and the institutionalization of heritage. Rhetoric is their focus because it exposes the creative capabilities of cultural heritage. Ultimately, the volume challenges and critiques the established key heritage phrases to show their potential for change to reshape social relations.

Hoping to inspire institutional changes, each chapter problematizes global approaches by suggesting that participation on heritage operates best on a local level. However, they want all levels of heritage to be included in the mix so deliberate practices with international contexts in mind can generate the greatest impact. More so, studying the overarching levels lend the study of mass messaging and policy that push scholars to adjust their language but not necessarily cause the words to disappear. Rather, deliberate word choices matter and should reflect more ways of seeing. For example, Sigrid Van der Auwera examines the phrase 'civil society' in chapter two. She expresses the need to bring more attention to grass roots attempts at power and mobility within heritage because it has been taken for granted. To bring more democratization to the average person, we need more NGOs, or non-governmental organizations, to provide the bottom-up effects of local communities. Similarly in chapter 10, Malcolm Cooper reviews institutional change by the implementation of policy in 'heritage discourse.' Grassroots efforts, or the public opinion, needs

to influence policy to reflect the 'spirit' of the social conditions. More contributions to the field of cultural heritage including heritage policies needs to occur on the local level, semi-free from governmental influence.

Some look at vocabulary in order to redescribe and rearrange words in a different light so more perspectives can enter the scholarly the public domains. For example, the first word, 'authenticity,' presents several paradoxes due to the taken-for-granted nature and the conflicting perspectives on what may be considered "authentic." Anna Karlstöm presents the plurality and multivocality indicative of this word because what some might deem heritage may not be interpreted the same way by others. An egalitarian approach to value all forms of heritage should take precedence as well as the acknowledgement of both material and immaterial, such as performance heritage. Rhetoric can help with community by hearing the concerns from various groups to bridge the divide through dialog. They want to strengthen heritage engagement, not split the global and local into opposing binaries in which scholars of the past few decades have been doing. More and more often, state and federal governments all around the globe seize control of how heritage studies operates to preserve and teach culture. Samuels and Rico challenge this view point to push for more local control over heritage preservation or at least for the local and national to coexist in mutual consideration. The face-to-face interaction of the local paired with the broad global discussions foster engagement from a plethora of diverse perspectives.

The volume speaks to the empty us-

age of some heritage keywords which prevents the inspiration and acceptance of new meanings apart from the hegemony. By questioning and decommissioning specific rhetorical terms, the conversation surrounding cultural heritage terms will fluidly remain in constant conversation which best reflects what the culture is trying to explain. This fluidity does not come naturally to the field of heritage, that is why it must be promoted. The "right" word may never be found. Take for instance Joshua Samuels' analysis of 'difficult heritage' in chapter seven. He argues the phrase 'difficult heritage' brings to light important conversations necessary for understanding word choices such as Italian Fascism in the Sicilian countryside. The meaning both assigned and attached to words demonstrate the importance of clear communication involving the violence, embarrassment, or trauma associated with challenging or undesirable past events. When 'dealing' with difficult heritage, various perspectives must be taken into consideration to ensure productive dialogue. We must constantly search for the most appropriate can inclusive term that fits an idea for that time period. Through tracking transformation of heritage, more equitable and inclusive research programs can develop. No single direction can come to fruition; instead, all directions through the counter-hegemonic approach.

The rights of the people are also important when studying cultural heritage and rhetoric. Included in this are 'equity', cultural property', and 'rights'. In chapter 15, one of the editors, Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels, argues heritage 'rights' include alternative social imaginaries that demonstrate the capabilities of many histori-

cal versions of realities. Instead of one, monolithic reality, heritage sites should include many imaginative capabilities that expand human rights while also redescribing the study and management of cultural heritage. Alexander A. Bauer beautifully discusses the rights of 'cultural property' in chapter 5. The struggle between 'national retention' and 'cultural internationalism' governs policy and how we engage with cultural material. Ultimately, collaboration through long-term loans and other shared stewardship agreements will change the notion of 'property' into shared heritage. 'Equity,' Jeffrey Adam's concentration for chapter 8, conducts a comparative analysis of sustainable tourism and their impact through an international lens. Tourism, Adam's asserts, narrows the gap between income disparities; however, tourism can sometimes worsen social inequalities. To encourage less developed countries to maintain heritage sites, small steps must be taken such as basic management programs that represent more concrete goals.

Finally, the book addresses heritage studies meshed with environmentalism. Robert Preucel and Regis Pecos survey 'place' in chapter 14 by examining the juxtaposition of heritage as place and dominate heritage vocabularies. They conduct a case study of the Cochiti Pueblo in response to the building of the Cochiti Dam to bring attention to the importance of place identity to a culture. Similarly, Melissa F. Baird warns us of the word 'nature' in chapter 13 for 'natural heritage' erases voices from the past. Just as power resides with those who write history, the rhetoric of nature similarly must be pushed past the bina-

ry of nature versus culture. Instead, the two concepts must be fused together to ensure the sustainability of our environment as well as the dedication to counter-hegemonic heritage studies. Finally, the last chapter by Paul J. Lane draws attention to the concept of 'sustainability.' East Africa's pastoral communities sell tropes of sustainability that reflect their ability to respond to and shape the direction of change while simultaneously maintaining their tradition. He ends with a call to action for pastoralists and conservationists to create new rhetoric of sustainability based on ideas of adaptive change and cultural flexibility.

Our vocabulary, or the language that we use, help guide us through interpretation. In this way, we see, analyze and experience culture and therefore act as a mobilizer. By way of illustration, Klaus Zehbe writes that experts and expert communities set the standards for language used to describe our heritage surrounding the phrase 'Intangible Heritage' in chapter eleven. To turn the study of heritage into a "vortex of intersecting, inherently incomplete, mutable relationships on various levels" requires more communication that generates new social vocabularies (194). The sixteen "binding words" do not represent a complete collection; instead, the selection symbolize mechanisms of change. The study of rhetoric including new terminology can stimulate alternative ways to interpret culture. For example, Cecilia Rodéhn, chapter 6 and 'democratization,' focuses on scholarly literature to warn against the constant flux of heritage without stopping to measure the achievement from past initiatives. Researchers need to cognizantly write about democratization

in a way that actively creates heritage. By recognizing the power of heritage scholarship surrounding democratization, we can influence one another as well as policies, speeches, and others' professional work which is a commendable goal. All the terms are contingent on the changing context of concepts. None are frozen in isolated impermeability.

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Dodgerland: Decadent Los Angeles and the 1977-78 Dodgers. By Michael Fallon. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. Pp. xii + 454, prologue afterword, notes, bibliography, index.

The Los Angeles Dodgers have long been the IBM of Major League Baseball (MLB). A tradition-bound franchise, the Dodgers reputation for organizational excellence is burnished by multiple world championships, a national following by fans, and a sense of progressivism evidenced by their signing of the first African-American player, Jackie Robinson. Michael Fallon, an arts and culture writer with an affinity for Los Angeles, juxtaposes the mystique of the Dodgers against a time of turbulent societal change in his book *Dodgerland: Decadent Los Angeles and the 1977-78 Dodgers.* The premise of Fallon's well-researched work is that the Dodgers played for more than World Series titles in back-to-back seasons. The team played to enhance the magical image of Los Angeles. An image the Dodgers came to embody over the previous twenty years.

The book is divided into two distinct sections. The first deals with the 1977 season and the Dodgers' return to the top of the National League. The second covers the 1978 season in which the Dodgers struggle to return to the World Series. Fallon focuses his narrative on the lives of four men named Tom: the author's grandfather Tom Fallon, the recently departed author/social critic Tom Wolfe, former Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley, and former Dodgers manager Tom Lasorda. This method allows Fallon to successfully intersperse tales of the cultural zeitgeist of greater Los Angles and

America (Wolfe and Bradley) with tales of the Dodgers' exploits (Lasorda and Fallon the elder).

Wolfe gave rise to the perception that Los Angeles was the epicenter of hedonism and self-centeredness in his famous 1976 article "Me Decade" (287-289). As the headquarters of both *Playboy* and the dubious self-help system est, Los Angeles lost much of the perception of purity it enjoyed in the 1950s when Disney and MGM embodied the ideal of the wish fulfillment factory. Fallon's thorough reading of Wolfe's work helps to describe the national perception of the city which Tom Bradley sought to change during his mayoral tenure (1973-1993). Bradley inherited a high crime rate, economic troubles and a police department with a reputation for corruption and brutality. Fallon provides a litany of Bradley's accomplishments during the "Me Decade:" his reduction of the juvenile crime rate through the creation of several intervention programs, the economic package which created new business districts throughout the city, and his reformation of the police department's hierarchy (244-250). Bradley's work culminates in a successful bid for the 1984 Summer Olympics which announced a renaissance of Los Angeles as the cultural capital of the nation.

Fallon's chronicle of the Dodgers role in the revival of Los Angeles is more nebulous. Fallon attempts to paint Lasorda as a man who differentiated the team from other MLB clubs of the time by resurrecting the "Dodger Way," a family atmosphere built on the baseball foundations of promoting from within, playing an unselfish team game, and sending players and staffers into the community

as charitable ambassadors (111). While not all teams have an operating ethos of promoting from within or putting team ahead of star players, Fallon overlooks the fact that many baseball teams act as ambassadors to their communities, especially during times of economic turmoil. This topic was covered quite well by Dan Epstein in his books on 1970s baseball, *Big Hair and Plastic Grass* (2010) and *Stars and Strikes* (2014). These books especially touch on how teams from the Industrial North such as Pittsburgh and Cincinnati brought together communities being torn apart by deindustrialization. While Fallon's personal recollections of his grandfather's struggles to build a hardware business in the economically depressed LA of the 1970s is compelling, the tie-in between the Dodgers and the recovery is tangential at best. True, the Dodgers claim on the spirit of the city was always strong. The team enjoyed strong attendance despite some on-field struggles and a souring economy. Fallon's grandfather looked to the Dodgers as a spirit-lifter, looking forward to an evening game after a hard day's work (19). Lasorda coining the term "Dodger Blue" to modernize the team's traditionalist ways in reaching out to fans no doubt helped this cause (229). These facts, however, do not make the Dodgers as unique as Fallon may hope.

The book is at its best when focused on cultural and political events. This is not a surprise given Fallon's background as an expert on American art and culture. His choice of Tom Wolfe as guide is inspired and will benefit in a morbid way from the icons recent passing. Fallon's profiles of Bradley, Lasorda, and his own grandfather also humanize the men and brings their stories into a singular orbit. One criticism is that the book is incomplete, almost revisionist, baseball history. Granting Fallon understanding that it is difficult to write dispassionately about one's childhood team, there are still some glaring oversights of relevant history. Absent from the hagiographic accounts of the Dodgers façade of professionalism and class is the messy story of their move from Brooklyn. Walter O'Malley moved his team from a devoted fan base to make a windfall profit, devastating emotionally and financially the borough he left behind. Secondly, the building of the opulent Dodger Stadium required the forced relocation of Mexican-American residents from Chavez Ravine. No mention of either event makes the cut in Fallon's book and one cannot help but wonder if the oversights are intentional or based on a lack of baseball knowledge.

Despite some misses, Fallon's book connects well with the topic. Scholars of American culture will be well served by the connection of Tom Wolfe to the American Pastime. The prestigious writer covered many topics, but his connection to baseball, including a tryout with the New York Giants, is not as well known as his seminal works. The profiles of Bradley and Lasorda give the modern audience an opportunity to familiarize themselves with two notable contributors to political and cultural history. Finally, Fallon's loving treatment of his grandfather's relation to the team is akin to *Field of Dreams*. Ironically, baseball historians may be puzzled by Fallon's incomplete history of the Dodgers in Los Angeles preceding 1977/1978, but there is still much to enjoy. After all, three for four is an excellent day at the plate.

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Words of Re-enchantment: Writings on Storytelling, Myth, and Ecological Desire. By Anthony Nanson. Stroud, England: Awen Publications, 2011. Pp. xii + 189, forward, introduction, bibliography, acknowledgements, index.

Storyteller Anthony Nanson put together a delightful book that centers on the convergence of performance and the way humanity perceives the natural world. It would be wrong to assume that each of the twenty-five short, previously published essays discuss this union when in reality Nanson takes on three separate matters sequentially through the book: the importance of myth, the act of storytelling, and the *ecobardic* theory that emerges from sharp storytelling shrewdness. Nanson's concern is with those stories that arouse desire in the reader/listener and how that desire can be directed toward greater awareness of environmental issues. This is the "ecobardic approach," a new way of relaying information through the creative arts that maintains "the global ecological crisis through which we're now living challenges postmodernism's refusal to judge the worth of art in other than monetary terms" (92). In other words, it is imperative that the artist uses her platform to transmit important information, so that audiences are inspired to reconnect with the natural world, and ultimately to make changes for the benefit of the environment. While somewhat convoluted, Nanson's purpose is made clear by the end of the book, though the journey there is not always direct.

The first section, "Myth," illustrates the many ways that nature is incorporated into traditional European stories like the Arcadian landscape or the legend of King Arthur. Nanson also uses this section to elucidate the basic components of a successful story. The second part of the book, "Storytelling," consists of a series of articles on the pitfalls and advantages of the performing experience. While containing stimulating insights into this artistic genre, part two seems a bit sprawling as Nanson incorporates personal narrative with reviews of other storytelling performances. It is admirable that he chooses to blend different types of writing in the book in order to illustrate the versatility of storytelling, challenging the reader to move beyond her conventional understanding of the category. Yet, the reader desires to find a home in the stories presented but remains floating above the scenario or fully outside of the experience. This is the opposite effect that a storyteller wants to have on his audience. Narrative cohesion is crucial for the reader or listener, though Nanson would argue that the overarching premise—an ecological awareness—is what ties the text together. This is true. Nonetheless, the reader must remind herself periodically that this theme weaves its way through the text. It is not always obvious.

However meandering, the first two sections prepare the reader for the culminating theory, "Ecobardic," where the essays are a little more academic and ideas fully formed. Even if the reader feels out of her element prior to reaching this final segment, what was once ambiguous becomes clear. The term comes from the *Ecobardic Manifesto*, formed by the Fire Springs storytelling group, of which Nanson is a founding member. Their aim is for a practical use of the arts, beyond

the all too common assumption that the arts are strictly for *pleasure*, to show that storytelling—in its many forms—can bridge the gap between scientific evidence and interpretation of it by the general population. He writes that the manifesto "speaks to the coming paradigm: one in which postmodern respect for diversity is coupled with responsiveness to the critically strained relationship between human beings and the ecosystem we inhabit" (95). This proclamation is on point. For two decades scholars pointed to an idea shift that moves beyond postmodernism. One of the first to point this out was David Foster Wallace in the early 1990s. One particular contemporary school of thought considers the twenty-first century to be fixed in an assortment of modernist sincerity and postmodern irony, dubbed the "metamodern." While Nanson may not be a follower of strict metamodern concepts, he certainly rejects postmodern sardonicism, but gathers postmodern antiessentialism and incorporates a new sincerity in describing the human relationship to the natural world.

Nanson reveals that interpretation is more than knowing what the experts show, it includes an assessment and assimilation of this information into intimate forms. Storytelling can compress the divide and translate key issues into warm and inspiring language for nonscientists. It becomes evident that essays from parts one and two, like "Telling Other People's Stories" and "Storytelling as Catalyst of Tolerance and Transformation," point the reader to the final ecobardic concept, but "The Benefits of Amateur Storytelling" and "What does Accreditation Mean?" do not. Yet, for the

storyteller, and potential storyteller, these more practical articles may be helpful.

This book is written for scholars of folklore and storytellers alike, and most certainly the environmental scholar will find the text useful as well. Each group will find valuable information on the creative arts to broaden their interdisciplinary skills, specifically related to the humanities and sociological study. It is a sourcebook for those who wish to increase their applied *and* creative proficiencies, as Nanson illustrates the ways that storytelling can open an audience and enhance scholarly work. He, along with the Fire Springs members, wants to encourage an attitude change in the environmental humanities and creative arts. The push to unite the ivory tower with the general public is becoming a greater concern for many scholars, particularly for those who focus on issues of climate change. The purpose is very similar to that of environmental scholar Andrew J. Hoffman's new book *How Culture Shapes the Climate Change Debate* (Stanford, 2015). At a time when the majority of participants in western culture have their faces turned town to their smart devices seeking an endless source of entertainment, storytelling may seem outdated. Yet, Nanson makes a strong case for the subculture and the methodology of utilizing storytelling for environmental ends. He writes, "The arts can help us orientate ourselves in time and space: to understand the geography we inhabit and the history that brought us where we are, to comprehend what's happening here and now, and to contemplate the possibilities of where we may be heading" (95-96). Getting non-academics outside of the proverbial ivory tower to care about the

scholar's work is one of the greatest challenges in the twenty-first century. Communication must be clear when seeking policy change or widespread acceptance that will affect the lives of non-academics. Nanson argues that the fundamental nature of storytelling can make this happen.

The most significant negative critique of this book rests only in the layout. If the reader wishes to determine when and where a certain essay was first printed, in order to gain a sense of chronology, there is a continual flipping back and forth between the body of the text and the acknowledgements section. This can be tedious, though it is not a major problem. The benefits greatly outweigh this publishing glitch. Nanson's prose is accessible and the reader who is open to new ways of approaching environmental studies will find this text useful. The philosophies supporting the ecobardic theory could perhaps change how the academic approaches her work in hopes of reaching a broader public.

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Dressing for the Culture Wars: Style & the Politics of Self-Presentation in the 1960s & 1970s. By Betty Luther Hillman. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015.
Pp ix + 252, illustrations, introduction, notes, bibliography, index.

In *Dressing for the Culture Wars: Style & the Politics of Self-Presentation in the 1960s & 1970s*, Betty Luther Hillman opens an area of investigation that has been neglected by many scholars in the fields of political activism and cultural conflicts: fashion. This book gives a glimpse into the changing styles of self-presentation that shaped the politics, culture, and social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, while illustrating how culture and dress contributed to the conflict and turbulence of these decades. For those interested in the culture wars and the counter culture of these decades, this manuscript highlights changing style, self-presentation, and their political implications. In six concise, tight, well-organized chapters, Hillman employs a fashion lens to explore the political uses of popular hair and dress styles by participants in that era's culture wars.

Hillman makes the case that beards, jeans, afros, colorful clothing, etc. became subversions against American sexism, racism, imperialism, materialism, and conformism. These cultural tactics were able to unite many of these social movements and Hillman successfully shows readers how self-fashioning became a central symbol during the political conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s. While other scholarly texts allude to the importance of cultural, social, and political movements of this time period, this is the first text to do so seriously through the lens of

fashion and style as the main focus. Other scholars, such as George Cotkin, delve into the cultural history of the same time period, but through a consumer culture lens. Hillman, on the other hand, engages with a population that rejected consumerist practices. In this way, she brings a fresh aesthetic to old cultural and political studies, forging her way through the politics of style.

This 2015 text includes full photographic illustrations and extensive notes and bibliography sections. Hillman uses primary sources like grassroots newspapers, magazine articles, advertisements, periodicals, court papers and cases, photographs, and memoirs to fill her chapters with true accounts and examples, which help accomplish her purpose of demonstrating that fashion influenced the politics of the time. This fresh perspective into culture and politics gives us yet another lens to view these events of the 1960s and 1970s.

This is a true feat of archival dedication and a huge undertaking for any scholar. Her extensive use of archival sources makes Hillman's book appealing to scholars and casual readers alike. Coupled with this archival information, fourteen illustrations are placed strategically throughout the text to enhance the reader's experience. For example, in the chapter on hair styles, the picture captioned "A construction worker attacked a longhaired antiwar protestor during the 'hardhat riot' on May 8, 1970" does more than any words can do to show readers how the public felt threatened by long-hair hippie styles (33).

The chapters move chronologically and thematically by social movement, i.e. Black Power, the New Left, Women's and Gay Liberation. The book begins with a discussion of the media's focus on the cultural changes in dress and hairstyles among white, middle-class American youths in 1964 (i.e. Beatle-mania). Hillman argues that hair and clothing trends in the second half of the decade blurred gender, sex, and class boundaries. Hillman then moves on to how styles of self-fashioning became political tools for social movements, such as the Black Power movement. This chapter argues that the self-fashioning styles of leftist social activists, such as the natural "Afro" hairstyles and African-inspired unisex clothing, advanced their political goals. These fashion choices also inspired conservative backlash against them. In the following two chapters, Hillman focuses on self-presentation in the feminist and gay liberation movements, arguing that dress and self-presentation as political tactic within the feminist and gay liberation movements. Women ditched their short hair and brassieres in favor of long hair, unshaved legs and underarms, and no makeup as a sign of their feminism. Lesbian feminists took this one step further, shedding their traditional stereotypical feminine dress and gender presentation. Chapter five goes on to explore the growing ubiquity of unisex styles in the 1970s. Hillman tracks the changing media reactions to this trend and explores how unisex fashion choices were often explained in economic, rather than political, terms. Lastly, in chapter six, Hillman discusses continued anxieties (post 1960s) over self-presentation as seen in court cases challenging workplace restrictions on dress and grooming styles. She highlights how men and women begin to challenge restrictions of long hair,

facial hair, Afros, miniskirts, and pant-suits. In the epilogue, Hillman continues to ask important questions about culture, politics, and social movements, such as whether the social movements of the 1960s would have been strengthened or weakened if clothing and hairstyles had not been introduced into their politics. Questions like this one underscore the potential for further research into fashion and politics.

At the core of this book, Hillman makes it clear that self-presentation is a powerful symbol of change and what is means to be American, something that will be at the core of conversations for decades to come. This book raises important questions about style (hair, dress, self-presentation) as a central symbol of political conflict and urges readers to continue the conversation to the current cultural climate. Hillman's compilation is an impressive archival undertaking that produced an in-depth look at cultural and political movements through style and self-presentation. Her research positions fashion as a key site of radical political change. This well-organized text opens up new avenues of research that will prove useful to historians and social and cultural activists alike.

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