

Journal of Imaginary Research

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Edited by Matthew Cheeseman

Series Editor, Kay Guccione

This collection of academic fantasies was produced during WriteFest 2015, the University of Sheffield's first festival of research writing, part of international Academic Writing Month. It was written by PhD and postdoctoral researchers, all attendees of a workshop devised by Dr Matthew Cheeseman and myself. By following a series of timed exercises we wrote through and beyond our disciplinary conventions, reimagining academic writing via a series of creative approaches. In doing so we thought about how the enjoyment of writing as a process could change how researchers engaged with their work. The result is this collection of imaginary abstracts and equally imaginary researcher biographies. All of them are drawn from images supplied by attendees, which were distributed randomly and used as inspiration. The energy of that workshop has been captured in this pamphlet, and in the subsequent work of those who found a new delight in putting pen (or fingers) to paper (or keyboard).

—**Dr Kay Guccione**

Damaged nerve dreams

by Sandrine Soubes

Working with neurobiologists, stem cell scientists and patients suffering from nerve damage, we explore the obscure world of nerve formation, regeneration and rehabilitation. Our interdisciplinary project has developed new approaches to reinvent neural cell regeneration. The scientists in the team learned to ignore their rational impulses and harness a psychosocial patient–physician imaginary to form a new scientific paradigm. By working closely with patients, the scientific team encouraged them to dream about the lives of their nerves, to imagine what happens in the Petri dish when stem cell scientists are producing new nerves and to fantasise about their bodies when new nerves were implanted. The creative process in these discussions was captured through an ethnographic approach, followed by a visual analysis and interpretation. Using a combination of technical images, participants' reactions, emotions and interpretations, we have produced a series of art pieces for further commentary and reflection. They represent both the scientific creative process initiated in these discussions and healing process for patients coming to term with generative nerve damage.

Dr Francine James is a social biologist constructivist artist working with individuals suffering from disabilities linked to nerve damages. Francine works very closely with individuals to explore ways of constructing meanings around life with disability, reimagining a world of broken and missing axons: 'Imagine living with two dead arms, two floppy body parts dangling on the side of your body, killed from the radiation that helped cure your cancer. The high energy beams annihilated the mad replicating cancer cells as well as the elegant nerves that had allowed your upper body limbs to embrace, scratch, tickle and cook. Imagine being 15 and not being able to go on your bike, sitting in your wheelchair because one day you climbed a bit too high on your garden tree and came tumbling down because this branch was more of a twig.'

Preferences and predispositions towards cutlery

by Jo Birch

Taking Didderman's (1991) notion of runcibility as a theoretical lens, this paper boldly asserts that an individual's preferences towards cutlery are centred around predispositions towards cutlery qualities: perceived flexibility (Carey 1977), weight and aesthetics. We outline a somewhat dreary historical backdrop against which our work paints a more nuanced and colourful picture of personal cutlery use. When previous work by Sammers and Sammers (1979) (which focused upon detailed understandings of metal types and finishes) is read alongside more recent writings about 20th Century Scandinavian cutlery (Østergaard 1994; Nilsen and Juhl 2007) it indicates that silverware use is largely a matter of family diktat and tableware fashion. The rise of adaptability theory in relation to everyday objects (Bacon 1999) has opened up considerations of cutlery to be: object of familiarity, of ritual, yet also object of adaptable self. Our empirical study enabled participants (6–72 years) to self-report silverware use at key life stages (Flatly 1983). Research methods involved consented interrogation of participant journals and photographs followed by 64 individual interviews, filming and focussed ethnography (White 2002) within 22 Heritage settings across Britain. Of particular note is the study's finding that the spoon holds totemic status for the under 20s and over 60s.

Prof Jeremy Brakespear. Salisbury 1954. Educated Winchester Grammar School for Boys; BSc Bristol; PhD Oxon. Professor Brakespear, born with an unusual irregularity of the palate, began his career as metallurgist then design engineer, working chiefly on cutlery improvement and innovation. He is well known for his collaborations with eminent medical sociologist Professor Peter Entwistle, who together garnered prestigious Utensils Council awards, 2007, 2009. Professor Brakespear is editor of the scholarly journal *Sociologies of Silverware*; he is advisor to the curator of the Cutlery Archives, Sheffield. His forthcoming book is *Futures of Adaptive Cutlery* (London, Routledge).

Lost in the moment of creation which has been recorded

by Camilla Allen

This paper addresses the intellectual space created when abstract academia, the dreamtime and a photograph of the painter Jackson Pollock collide. By using academic buzz words and combining them with the smash-up of yearning/identification/continuity/temporality created by the action of looking, an understanding of why the image made the researcher run to the woods is gained. Key research objectives were made and include: enquiry into the spaces of the canvas; questioning methodological approaches to foot placement; theories relating to the paint on his shoes and under his nails, both known and unknown; the comparative importance of his arm to the strength in his leg. The researcher went on to get lost in the thought of his breathing, his thinking. Lost in the moment of creation which has been recorded; the paint in flight through the air, the droplets hanging. The energy exerted and made evident upon the canvas through the coagulating colours on the canvas. No major findings were evident but a clear causality—a correlation—can be made between the research undertaken and the researcher's sudden sylvan departure and makes a strong case for further enquiry in this area. Key words: dreamtime, canvas, academia, abstraction, thought, buzz words.

It's hard to write a biography as an academic when the imaginary research project demands reconnecting with a neglected love of art, of making, of drawing and of painting. I write this text whilst making tiny steps into an unfamiliar world, away from the known landscape of pencil shavings and water marks. My newly trained brain swims with words which are now contradicted by the memories of process and being. The memories speak of a different realm: a quiet time, a different speed of thought, of understanding and of connection. I must be careful. This is the biography of a woman who ran away to the woods.

What a bunch of babies!

by Matthew Cheeseman

What A Bunch Of Babies! is a work of abstract criticism, written in an overlapping, non-linear fashion that meticulously avoids making ‘naïve empirical arguments’ in favour of a textual practice of reconnaissance. The object of surveillance is not clear as the text sweeps over a series of commonplace nativities, marked and celebrated in verse, and yet occurring on a level the prose can only pass over in favour of descriptions of paper stock, its whiteness and smooth texture. In so doing a series of disfigured portraits are slowly inscribed into the surface of the book (and are included as an appendix in this second edition). It is believed that 75 of these photographs are of researchers who worked at the University of Sheffield, whilst 25 seem to be pilots. Wysing’s erasure of expression, identity and race is glossed over as the applied paint is likened to the fluid page, with words acting like birth-canal or vaginal bacteria, smearing newborns with a protective film against the gaze of the reader. At times a complicated satire on nationhood, bombing campaigns and education, higher and otherwise, Wysing ends movingly with a seemingly simple account of his own childhood, ‘my own naïvety’.

Dr JA Wysing (1977–2031) worked as an independent scholar within the University of Sheffield. After gaining his PhD on humour and nationalism he taught at the Sheffield Centre for State Power for a brief period before its closure. He became notorious for continuing to ‘work there’, occasionally attending staff meetings in the Engineering Group that went on to use the premises. His death was prompted by the later discovery (in a wall cavity in what was his office) of 100 photographs of people with their faces painted white. It was only after his father published Wysing’s later writing on ‘naïvety/nativity’ that the potential significance of these images was suggested.

Some problematic aspects of green subjectivity

by Martin Elms

This article takes as its starting point the pioneering work of the late Professor Septimus A. Usages on political psychosis amongst the Lichen city states of the Tabit orbital of Throght. Usages drew parallels between Lichenist politics and the primitive and violent politics of the early Terran 21st century (circa –900 FU). However, Twigg is highly critical of Usages' patronising tone and his frequent references to 'our green leafy friends' and their alleged tendency to be 'stuck in the mud in a cultural sense'. (S)he also accuses him of verging on plantophobia in his criticism of certain strains of Gaia theology particularly in its fundamentalist Extreme Photosynthesis forms. Instead Twigg branches out into a theoretical approach that links, on the one hand, the problematic aspects of green subjectivity with postcolonial anthropoidal 'plantism' and, on the other, the frustrations of static rootedness. To support her(is) theory Twigg points to the initial confusions and exploitation by humanoids on encountering the Fragaria Ananassa civilisation on the planet Partic in the Stellar Deltic of Plonge where genocide was only averted by a shortage of fresh cream. Her(his) theory is also supported by the Fragaria's tendency to suffer from severe neurosis, at times verging on bi-polarity, engendered by their frustrating radicant condition of both rootedness and movement. (S)he concludes with an interesting 'chicken and egg' analogy related to 'rootedness' and 'fruitedness'.

Dr Verdant Twigg is Senior Lecturer in Plant Psychology at the University of the Eastern Quadrant of Betises (hyperspatially active but notionally located on or around the planet Boolhucks: Galactic reference SQ-V2/12-BKS-EQF). Dr Twigg's doctoral thesis was on The Psychological Consequences of Nomadic Wanderings Amongst Rooted Sentience (FU 2017). (S)he has since written numerous articles including 'Heterochrony in plant based civilisations' (FU 2021), and the well-received 'Rhizonic subjectivities amongst itinerant Dahlias on the Orbitals of Ooze' (FU 2023). Dr Twigg was awarded The Parc Ultimate Nebulae Award in 2030 for her work amongst dyslexic seedlings in the Craters of Corn.

7cbgbUhd`UWa YbhUbXj cW]gYX`U [\hYf]b· kcf_d`UWlhdkg Vm?Umj i WJcbY

The sensation of reading a humorous typo in the workplace can be likened to being the subject of a prank. It can be intense and deep, drawing on physical (Hardy & Laurel, 1942), cognitive (Marx, 1946) and emotional (Wood, 1991) roots. An estimated 66% loss of annual joy results from spellchecking software. Gross estimates of the economic impact of buzz-kill technology are worrying and offices are now seeking new ways to engage people in shooting coffee out of their noses (Birds, 1987). According to expansive intercultural research conducted on elves, gnomes, and dwarves from mining communities, it is exceptionally well documented that happy people do actually experience significant increases in workplace engagement, effort, striving, and productivity (Grimm, 1825). This study defines the precise likelihood of any given work typo in causing an audible laugh and brings into focus the consonant as a key factor. In experimental conditions the actual LOL-momentum a workplace typo causes is detected by an experimental rig in which two colleagues in fencing gear prod each other whilst typing on a smart phone behind their back one handed with their thumb (Jobs, 2012). We demonstrate a powerful correlation between changes in consonant placement (Rawle, 1991) and laugh out loud laughter, creating indices of audibility for the top 100 typos. This may have enhanced productivity implications across sectors for employees who have been very busty this week, those in University Faulties, and for anyone trying to sick up a poster.

Dr Nea O'Liberal is a senior academic in Workplace Banter and Backchat. She is most renowned for developing a preference-based quality-of-LOL measure for use in typo evaluation. This measure was quickly adopted throughout the sector and is now used globally to aid workforce sniggering. She is the lead researcher on the groundbreaking Surprise Surprise project for which she was awarded a £500,000 Cilla Black Research Fellowship. A recent breakthrough deals with defining the causal factors behind that thing when you're chatting about what Big Dave said to Jacko at the weekend and then it turned out your boss was behind you all the time.

Time difference between objects and their reflections

by Irina Vázquez Villaseñor

Images on mirrors were long thought to be the result of light being reflected on a glass surface. Images of unanimated objects confirmed this theory for years. We have shown that when analysing the reflection of living organisms in motion, there is a slight delay (of nanoseconds) in the displacement of the image from one place to another. This suggested that the image that we see in the mirror is not merely the reflection of light, but indicates an unknown domain that exists in form and place parallel to ours, but delayed in time. With this in mind, a special recording device has been designed to detect the time difference between 'real' objects and mirror images. We are observing changes in the physical form of the image, such as colour tonalities and wrinkles in fabrics, among other features. For this, we analyse different images from male and female individuals of different ages, performing tasks that involve simple movements. Preliminary results show that the time delay is constant between individuals, regardless of the type of movement; nonetheless, further investigation needs to be done before reaching any firm conclusion.

Professor Irina Vazquez is one of a group of experts in the field of Parallel Domains. She has worked in the composition of images behind mirrors since she finished her degree in Oxford. She then got her PhD in 2000 with the analysis of single movements in these images, which led to the discovery of potential mirror worlds. Her research team is now focused on providing evidence of differences between real objects and their mirror images that could support the notion of a parallel world.

Uses of boot polish in pursuit of the good life

by Rachel Denley-Bowers

Professor Needle has studied the bars that line the shores of Guanabara Bay with the intent of capturing the essence of the good life. Although he did indeed find an increase in his own levels of happiness when in close proximity to the sea—and within the shoreline bars in particular—he was for a long time unable to construct a theory of happiness or fulfilment. In 1998 he approached a trumpeter from a local samba band and asked him about his own philosophy of happiness. The man replied with one word, ‘Biki’. After years of exuberant searching, Needle found this to be slang for boot polish. He has spent the subsequent seventeen years attempting to replicate the trumpeter’s results in the field of good living in different South American cities, experimenting with different brands of boot polish. He has been unable to replicate the trumpeter’s findings, but he has published many well-received papers on the subject of availability of Oxfords in the Atacama.

Prof Archy Needle is Chair of the Institute of Living Well at the University of New Orleans. He was found as a baby, wrapped in silk, in the alleyway behind the Purple Orchid Jazz Club in Paris, France. After a series of marvellous, mysterious and somewhat unbelievable events he eventually married the famous German cat burglar Margo Malory, and—when not engaged in research—they remain at large in the swamps of Louisiana. Although his exact whereabouts are not known, every six months a child in a cloth cap drops off a linen-wrapped research paper on the doors to the Dean’s office.

Handles, hooks and weapons

by Raudah Danila

The utility of single bamboo sticks are quite limited: we can use them as wooden handles, hooks or weapons. On the other hand, what benefits can we obtain from a number of bamboo sticks? The answer is amazing, they can be used as a building material for houses, forming both the floor and also the walls. We can build a steady raft by tying a number of bamboo sticks together. If combined with other materials, bamboo can be processed into a variety of furniture designs. Bamboo can also be used to make handicrafts that have their own commercial value. And what a wonder to see a thin slice of bamboo form a beautiful and useful structure when plaited together! Inevitably, in many aspect of our life, we always gain more if we work together rather than by our own. Husband and wife work hand in hand to build a harmonious family. Teachers and students work together to form an outstanding school. Employers and workers work as a team to yield profit for a successful business. A leader and citizen support each other to bring prosperity and justice to the nation. I must say 'teamwork' is the magic word behind all these sticks of bamboo.

Dayyan Ako received an MA in Intercultural Communication from Osaka University in Japan and is enrolled in a PhD program in Hongik University in Seoul, South Korea. His research area is intercultural communication, diverse team and business leadership. He provides workshops and consultation on training individuals to work effectively in teams and organizations with cultural diversity. He is certified in Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) and is interested in bringing NLP techniques and tools to his coaching. Dayyan has co-authored training guides on how to practice and implement NLP, has his own column in an online newspaper and is frequently invited as guest speaker at motivational conferences.

RKR and ship integrity in the event of a Thiotimline induced rip

by Anita Kenny

This paper extends on previous work by exploring the synthesisation of RKR and ensuring the continuation of its abilities to support time dilation and transformation. The paper also reports on the live trials currently taking place in the Outer Limits (Stevens, 1963) which indicate that the stability of the compound may be suspect and may be causing dimensional disturbances. To address this instability it is suggested that all vessels regularly using resublimated *Thiotimline* (Asimov, 1948) skins should also carry small explosive devices and be prepared to detonate in the event of a leech from the time vortices. This will ensure the destruction of the vessel and prevent a rip in the fabric of time.

Dr River Song (Moffatt, 2008) is a citizen of the galaxy and a recognised stranger in a strange land currently working on the colours of space. She is best known for her work on extending the endochronic properties of resublimated *Thiotimline* and her development of the psychihaliogenic properties of the shrub *Rosacea karlsbadensis rugo*. Doctor Song's other research interests include the investigation of the ecological and botanical factors apparent in the genetic mutation of the sub species *Draconem albus* on the (once) Forbidden Planet (Wilcox, 1956).

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