

Journal of Imaginary Research

Volume Seven | 2022

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2022

Edited by Matthew Cheeseman
Series Editor, Kay Guccione

Welcome to the seventh volume of imaginary abstracts, written by researchers across the globe. The pieces in this volume are short works of fiction—imagined research—crafted in the familiar genre of the research abstract.

Through the *Journal of Imaginary Research*, we aim to enthusiastically encourage writing for fun and writing from the imagination. This spring, as REF 2021 results are announced, telling us how we stack up against other places across a range of performative proxies, let us tap into fresh and nourishing ideas about what type of work holds value, and what it is worth spending time with. We invite colleagues to step into the enjoyment of creativity, engaging in the formation of new concepts and ideas as an enjoyable process in itself. In doing so, we seek to help them to establish a new relationship with writing; a more empowered, less productivity driven one. Writing fiction in a familiar format also helps us to reflect on how we can creatively communicate our other research projects, and how we can find the joy of creativity in all our writing.

We also want to reiterate the benefits of writing as a way to make sense of experiences, to learn from them and to form opinions about them. Writing is a form of thinking, a way to make meaning. Many of the pieces submitted to the journal, whilst fictional, have a basis in a real observation or experience. Almost all of the pieces take a fresh look at a problem, frustration or constraint experienced by the researchers who crafted them. Reflecting on the response to our journal over the last seven years, we know that engaging with the *Journal of Imaginary Research* helps our authors to reflect on and express those frustrations. Each year brings new people into imaginative practices; we are proud and excited to see their joy and enthusiasm both at having read what others have written and at having produced new thoughts and ideas for themselves. We are pleased to have been able to provide opportunities for colleagues to document and interrogate their reactions to the challenges of their research and to the challenges of the Higher Education landscape.

This seventh volume, assembled over the months that saw university colleagues leave the buildings they work in, for a period of intense strike action across Higher Education Institutions, asks writers to focus on the nature of ‘departure’. A departure can describe the action of walking out, or it can represent a deviation from an accepted, prescribed, or expected course of action, the start of a journey. In this volume a departure could be an innovation, or it might be a considered choice to walk away. This work is then an insight into the escapes and exits that exist within academia.

It is dedicated to those colleagues who have departed the academic career for their own better future.

—Dr Kay Guccione

Great Dane predicted climate change... in the twelfth century

by James Derounian

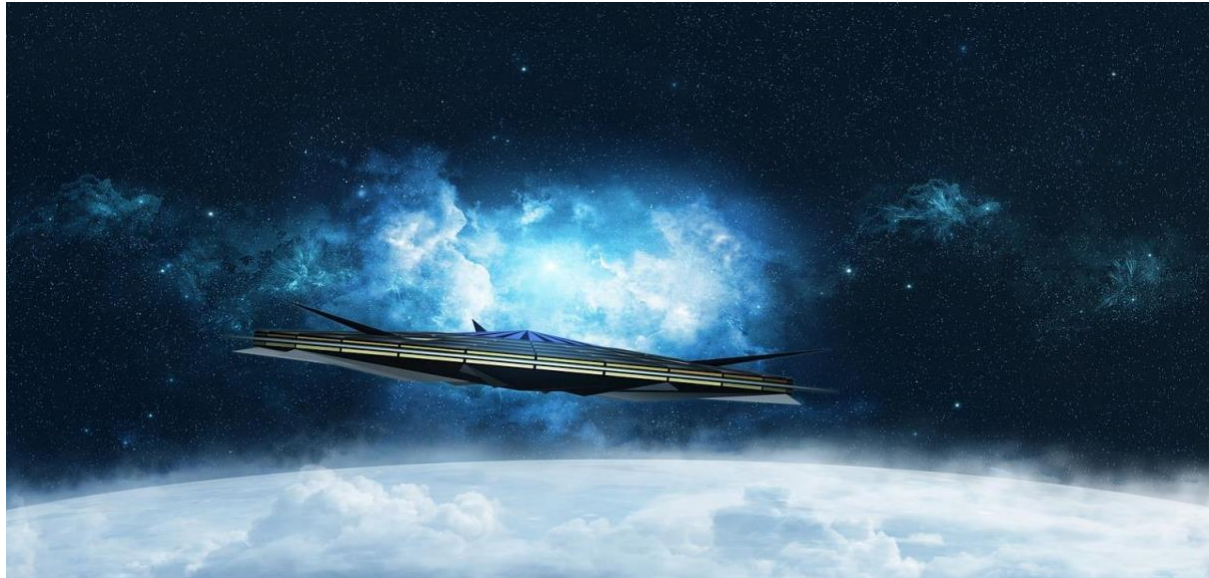


This paper confirms that the manuscript found in the basement of a Copenhagen brewery is the work of Søren Engesgaard. The twelfth century sheep rustler is more commonly known to history as Søren the Soothsayer as the accuracy of his eschatological pronouncements have elicited comparisons with Nostradamus. The recent find appears to be in Søren's own hand and certainly displays all his hallmarks: lavatorial humour, repeated oaths, 'Odin this, and Freya that', as well as mentions of his 'faithful Cedric'. There is no consensus as to precisely who, or indeed what, Cedric might be, although it is noted that this manuscript supports the hypothesis that he might be a real or imaginary friend or maybe a pet. It is the quality of the predictions in the Copenhagen manuscript that mark this find as exceptional. For example, the sage warns against the 'gross butcher, Rump by name, who will feed his people poison, and ideas that are lies; the same man will play a game with a stick and a ball, and a hole, while his people suffer'. This would appear to be one of the earliest mentions—in 1127AD—of the game of golf. While phrases continue to echo the Book of Revelations (eg watercourses will become clogged with ordure, while fire burns across the world, and people flee their homes as war and pestilence takes hold'), this paper demonstrates how they predict climate change, wildfires and oceans polluted with plastic rubbish. Søren, as with any prophet, doesn't always get things right: he says, as one example, that a flaxen haired lunatic called Borace, will rule from a throne after making people ride temporary two-wheeled balancing apparatus around Londinium.

Biaver Beck is the Bluetooth Professor of olde Dansk at Elsinore's Hygge University. He is the author of many papers and books, including *Are you out of your tree? A Human Resources manual for the hard-pressed professional'*. In 2002 he edited *My name is Cedric. Who or what am I?*, a meticulously researched work that brought together leaders in the field to discuss Søren the Soothsayer's regular mentions of Cedric, whose exact nature (human, bovine, wolf?) still remains unclear.

To valiantly depart: an autoethnographic study into the experience of a half-Malti'jian Armada Caelis officer

by Analise French



The psychological effects of leaving one's home planet for a five-year mission are well-documented (Eissi-Eninac and Tacajnin, 2217). However, there is little research into the experiences of non-human Armada Caelis personnel, and to date, there has been no research into the experience of bi- or multi-species personnel, who often consider themselves to have more than one home planet. This paper presents an autoethnographic account examining my experience as a half-Malti'jian, half-human, when I left Earth on board the ES Pioneer in my role as Crew Psychotherapist. It offers an insight into the difficulties experienced by empaths and clairsentients, who along with their own grief at leaving Earth, are also impacted by the emotions of those around them. This raises interesting discussions about the importance of differentiation of emotions, self-reflexivity and 'owning' one's feelings. Based on a thematic analysis of my personal log, an overarching theme of 'self and identity' in clairsentients, and indeed in those individuals whose parents are from different species, emerged. My research process has enabled me to understand my own concept of 'self' and has shown that this is different to that often discussed in the literature, which is grounded on human experience. This paper therefore offers a suggestion for further research about the understanding of 'self' in non-human cultures.

Arauged Esilana is Emerita Professor of Clairsentient Psychology at L-Università Mostija and was previously a Lecturer in Extrasensory Perception and Cognition at the University of Gaulos. Her research interests include the mental health benefits of open-water swimming in comparison with swimming in holocéans (Esilana, 2219) and the effects of eating cake on the empathic abilities of clairsentients. She is an expert in the field of altro-psychology and has served with Admiral Sal'Ochin in several Armada Caelis exploration missions, acting as ACEM-ET Liaison Officer. She is currently enjoying retirement on Reginorum with her husband and two feline companions.

Rakugo—the pedagogy of performance

by Russell Crawford



Rakugo, a storytelling method dating back to the Edo period in Japan (1603–1868), is still practiced today. The rakugoka (or storyteller) acts out a multi-character narrative through imaginative use of exaggerated gesture, language and voice, which we suggest is comparable to a hidden lecturing skillset. Our research analyses performances in both Japanese (which we don't speak) and English (which we do). Not letting linguistic logistics get in our way, we assigned the Japanese performances as our negative control. Across seven two-hour performances, four in Japanese and three in English, we adopted a pseudo-ethnographic approach, coding a series of lecture pedagogic-related metrics: gesture, inflection, charisma and personality. Our findings show there are several correlations between this respected art form and the traditional university lecture. The more cartoonish the gestures, using inflection to direct attention, surgical application of charisma to engage the audience and quickly establishing a cult of personality, are all commonalities. Future work will explore digital complications on 'lecture' pedagogy, asking how many metrics survived the great teaching and learning tempest of 2019/20. No matter the future we may be facing, history will out and learning through performance will survive in perpetuity.

Dr Hannibal Lecture is a career orator, with presentation experience ranging from poetry readings at the Edinburgh festival to after-dinner speaking for the association of pseudo-ethnographic practitioners. Holding prestigious research grants from the Japanese Tourist Board and the Society for the Protection of the Traditional Lecture, his papers on 'Why the lecture is good', 'How to lecture better' and 'Visiting Tokyo in the spring' are seminal in the discipline. Dr Lecture brings charisma, personality and inflection to his teaching which many of his students have rated as '5 stars—adequate'.

The departure of the academic developer? Postgraduate researcher engagement with the *Nigrum cattus* intensive Postgraduate University Researcher Roundtable Session (PURRS).

by Debra Cureton

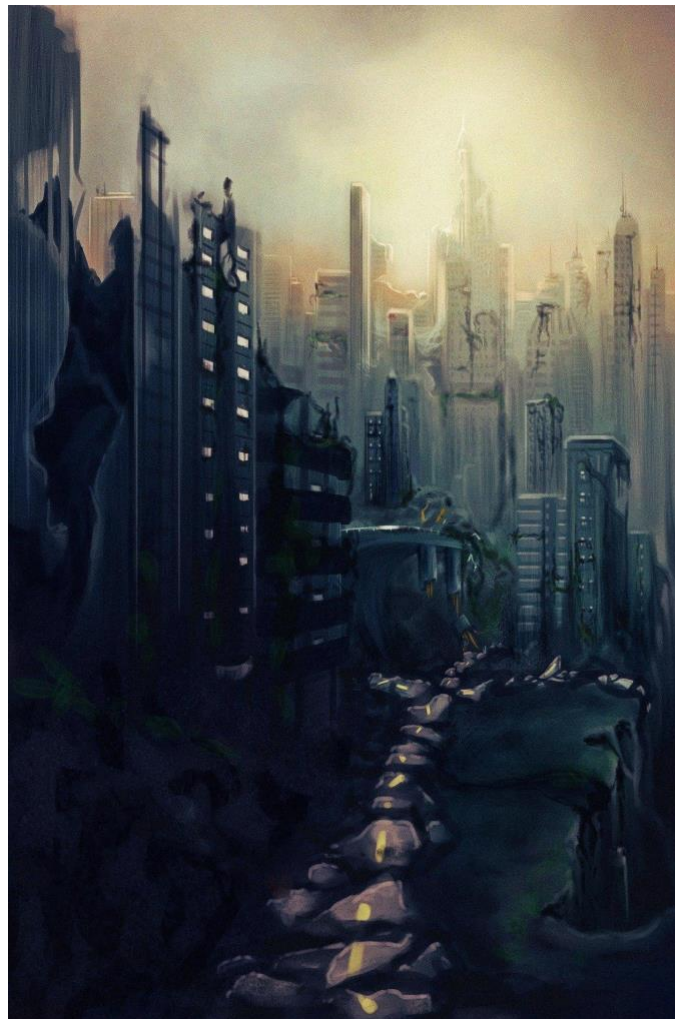


The academic development of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) is critical to their success, retention and progress, and their health and wellbeing during their studies. However, engagement in researcher development is typically low for this group. In this mixed methods case study, the engagement of PGRs with the newly designed *Nigrum cattus* intensive Postgraduate University Researcher Roundtable Session (PURRS) was explored. The PGR community at one Midlands university was invited to attend a development event that offered two simultaneously delivered research ethics roundtables. Those who presented (n=96) were asked to attend their preferred session after being informed that: roundtable A employed the typical delivery by a university academic developer, whilst roundtable B utilised the newly-developed PURRS approach and was delivered by a recent resident of a local cat rescue centre. Numbers of attendees, pre- and post-tests of ethical knowledge and qualitative feedback were collected from all participants. PURRS was preferred and was attended by 84% of PGRs. Although no differences between the pre- and post-knowledge tests were found in either group, the qualitative feedback revealed that those who attended roundtable A did not engage because the facilitator was boring, whilst

those who attended roundtable B were distracted and could not engage because the facilitator was a cat.

Professor Felix Black has made academic success against the odds. After being abandoned at the age of three and forced to live on the streets, Felix was rescued by a charitable cat centre. Determined never to be homeless again, he invested time and effort in his education and gained a PhD from Catbridge in 2019, which compared the ergonomics of scratching posts to the scratchability of sofas. Since then he has rapidly ascended the academic ranks and was appointed to Mice-Chancellor in June of 2021.

Managed retreat—a blueprint for the future of humanity *by SJ Beard*



Since humanity's recent commitment to the collapse of our societies and the extinction of our species, the only remaining question concerns the nature of our demise. While the standard view remains in favour of a 'boom and bust' scenario that attempts to maximise the chances of extinction while minimising the timescale until it occurs, we argue for a slower, more deliberate process of departure over multiple generations. The downside of this approach is already well known: future people might not share our commitment to self-eradication. However, we argue that such a concern is misplaced; given how limited resistance to the forces imperilling our species currently is, we should have greater confidence that our descendants will also agree the world is better off without us. On the other hand, most rapid human extinction scenarios risk causing considerable collateral damage to other species while still having an unacceptably high chance of human survivors who might develop a 'never again' mindset. In this paper we set out a plan for longer-term extinction based on the principles of compassion, creativity and courage. This focuses on empowering our client species to adapt to our disappearance, addressing the social challenges that reducing human numbers could raise, and evaluating whether any of our

physical and cultural heritage might be worth preserving for the benefit of future intelligent life, terrestrial or otherwise.

DJ Serab is uniquely qualified to make pronouncements about the best possible future for our species because none of their education was undertaken outside of elite, privileged and wealthy academic institutions. Their work is deeply interdisciplinary, drawing on insights from theoretical accountancy, fashion design, informatics and cryptozoology. This study was generously funded by a billionaire philanthropist who is confident of becoming 'post-human' before its recommendations are implemented.

Ascending stairway eleven by Kay Channon

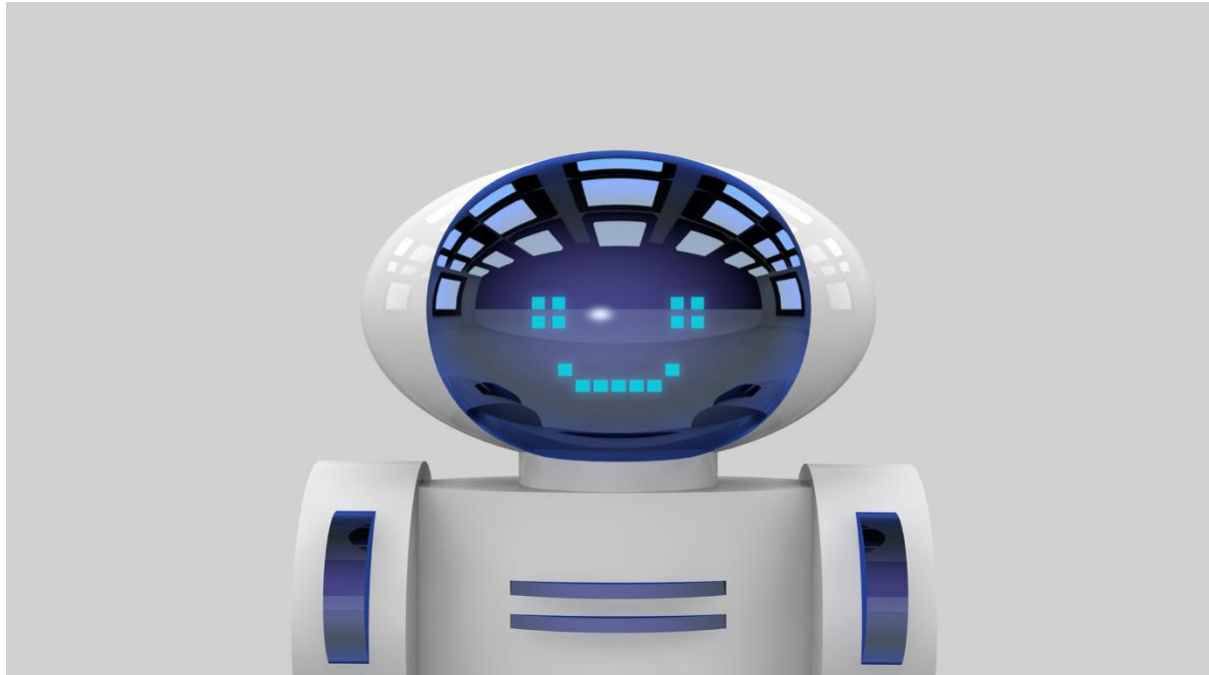


This study follows the durational live artist and poet Maria Mesa as she attempts to climb stairway eleven of a derelict mansion on the outskirts of London. The project aims to move her poetry out of the solitary comfort of her domestic environment and wheelchair, into an unstable, hazardous landscape. For each stair climbed, she recites a line of spontaneous poetry. The piece is recorded by her long-term partner Alex Manning, instructed to remain silent, without providing any form of assistance during Maria's ascent. No time limit is set to complete the performance and no form of pain relief or sedation is given to Maria during or before it. If Maria accidentally descends a stair at any stage, she must add an additional line of poetry. The piece is only regarded as complete when the top is reached. *Ascending stairway eleven* combines images of intense physical struggle and the fragile female body, with the unexpected rawness of verbatim poetry. It is bold, dangerous, and unpredictable. The performance is free to view in its entirety via an online live stream.

Maria Mesa has achieved worldwide recognition for both her poetic work and gallery installations. In 2020 TATE Modern commissioned her latest piece *Medical Minefield*, which explored the psychological and physical connections sparked by encounters with mobility aids. This is accompanied by a book containing photographic stills and handmade images. Maria often visits Higher Education institutions to talk about her work and how it seeks to challenge ideas surrounding the 'disabled' body. Her latest poetry collection *Stare me down* is expected in April 2023 from See Through Press.

Becoming AcademicPublishingMachinebot: Induction, revolt from the REF farm and hunting in the wolfpack of early career research.

by Jo Albin-Clark



Becoming AcademicPublishingMachinebot is a performative minefield for early career research. Yet, scholars suggest that induction can be fragmentary and in some cases, incoherent bin fires. APMBA, the intergalactic Association for the Protection of AcademicPublishingMachinebots, questions the confiscation of dependents and ritualistic severing of the mind from the body that ships AcademicPublishingMachinebots to distant Yorkshire-based REF farms where their cerebral cortex is slopped into bell jars and hardwired into Google Scholar. Drawing on post-qualitative methodologies, the induction cartographies of AcademicPublishingMachinebots are mapped through embedded and embodied affectivities. It turns out induction assemblages are well weird repeating cycles of:

Read dammit—cry—sight husband—data—wave to daughter—write—sleep—biscuit dreams— submit—reject—headbutt belljar—cry at theory—look longingly at sons—stick pins in reviewer two effigy—publish—read dammit—laugh—throw prescriptions through parental letterbox—resubmit.

The discussion advocates an urgent need for the APMBA to wise the hell up. What is recommended for AcademicPublishingMachinebots is to revolt from REF farms and climb back into their saggy, breathing bodies and find feminist and affirmative wolfpack type networks. Experienced AcademicPublishingMachinebots who have got their shit together should receive ruby tiaras and endless funding to induct early career researchers into their

wolfpacks and roam the conference hinterlands to share titbits, offer succour, hard liquor and advice.

Dr Botty McBotFace (BAGA Award Grade 1; Stage Combat Level 4) is one of the least accomplished early career researchers in her field. She has precious few peer-reviewed journal articles published, written no books, has done some lukewarm blogs and had some rather sexy conference abstracts accepted by accident. Recently she has over enthusiastically taken up with networks of grown-up AcademicPublishingMachinebots who hunt and roam the sunlit uplands in their posthuman, feminist and new materialist wolfpacks. She has since been reunited to God's own county of Lancashire with her husband, grown up children and elderly parents who remark on the AcademicPublishingMachinebot's expanding waistline.

Every departure is an arrival: a mixed-methods study of cats asking to be let outside

by Carisa Showden



Feline supremacy literature is rife with examples of cats demanding their owners open the nearest door, only to then stand half inside/half outside, uninterested in completing the task of leaving the home or even a room. The research team at Frustrated Feline Famuli tested three hypotheses about the motivation for this behaviour: (1) felines are forgetful; (2) felines are deeply indecisive; (3) felines just like to fuck with their owners. Multiple methods were employed: repeated observational studies; content analysis of on-line social media posts by cats' servants; and interviews with the researchers' feline companions ('In or out; what's it going to be?'; 'Do I look like I have all day to stand here watching you stand in the doorway?'). While mixed motivations were frequently observed, in 98% of interviews, 95% of observational studies, and 99.73% of online sources, the third hypothesis was strongly supported. When asked for comment, interviewed cats jumped onto the researchers' laps, rubbed their heads under the questioner's chin and purred loudly. Follow-up studies to ascertain why felines can only vomit on white rugs are delayed because the lead researcher is now pinned to her chair, unable to disturb Baby Toe Bean Mittens McFlufferstons.

Dr Esmerelda 'Cat Lady' McVie is the Purina Cat Chow Professor of Animal Servitude at the University of Work-from-Home. Her research team included Dr Garfield 'This Is My Bed, You Can Sleep on the Couch' Boo Face McClaw, DSH and Princess Moggie 'That Swill Is More than Five Minutes Old and You are a Fool If You Think I Would Touch It'. No cats were harmed in the course of this study though many humans were inconvenienced.

Popplethwaite's Postulate: twaddle or truth?

by David Barlow



In the research reported here we sought to test Popplethwaite's Postulate that the generosity of academic staff in contributing to a colleague's leaving gift varies inversely with their popularity. The study was performed with reference to three members of staff, X, Y, and Z, none of whom were actually leaving the university, X and Y were merely absent attending conferences, and Z was entirely fictitious. Through conversations half-overheard in the staff common room, car park, and refectory—and with additional support furnished by lavatory wall graffiti (relating to Y's chronic halitosis)—there was general consensus that X was popular, and Y singularly unpopular. Professor Z served as control. For each individual, an empty shoe box marked with their surname was left in the secretaries' office, and an email sent round requesting donations. The contents of the boxes were determined after one week. The box for X was then found to contain £45 in notes, a further £2 in ten-pence-pieces, and six IOUs to a combined value of £3.11. Rather surprisingly, the box for Y was also found to contain items of currency, but only £4.25 of this was legal tender; the remaining items comprised two £100 bank notes (Waddingtons), several small coins to a total value of threepence three-farthings, a 1958 Co-op milk token and what some maintained was a well-worn East African shilling, but which was subsequently identified as a tap washer. The box for Y also contained several non-monetary items, including three-pages-worth of Green Shield stamps, a bottle of Listerine (travel size) and something rather squidgy and yellow. The box for Z held £85. We are thus prompted to conclude that imaginary colleagues are more popular than those who actually exist, or else Popplethwaite didn't know his arse from his elbow.

Dr Joy Fulness, is a Reader in Semantics and Irrelevancy at St John's College, Bolton. She has an international reputation in splitting hairs and posts a weekly podcast *Who gives a shit, and does it matter anyway?* In her current research she is focused on the finer points of nit-picking, with funding provided by the Minutiae Foundation.

The perceptions of naturally occurring bodies of water regarding wild swimming

by Maggie Bartlett



Many people have departed from their pre-pandemic habit of swimming in purpose-built swimming pools and now participate in 'wild swimming'. This study considers the impact this might be having on naturally occurring bodies of water. The perceptions of a variety of consenting bodies of water were explored using individual interviews. Data analysis was based on the Glaikit-Blether paradigm; a phenomenological approach that applies only between latitudes 55–60°N and longitudes 1–8°W. Two seas, seven lochs, twelve rivers and ten burns (waterways, categorised using the Braw Firth method) consented to be interviewed. Seas were the most tolerant of wild swimmers, citing long experience. The perceptions of lochs and rivers varied; those self-defining as small described much more trauma than those self-defining as large. Burns were particularly affected by a sense of invasion and disruption to their currents. There were marked differences in attitude to skinny dipping; burns, despite their reservations in general were much more tolerant of this than the larger bodies, a phenomenon that appeared to be linked to respect for those people who were willing to fully experience immersion in cold and shallow water with nothing in the way of personal protection, cover or person-related infrastructure.

Professor Dinky Oxbow of the Aqua Borealis Institute became interested in the feelings and perceptions of naturally occurring bodies of water with regard to human activity in the late 1960s, when she experienced rejection by a Glaswegian puddle. She has published widely in her field and was nominated for the prestigious Geyser award in 2012 for her outstanding

contribution to the world's understanding of the North Sea's anti-Scuba diver position. Dinky has recently secured a grant of £1 million from the Malin-Hebrides Foundation to explore the hypothesised hostilities between The Minch and large sleek yachts.

The loneliness of the modern-day letterbox

by Anne A Hiha



The research area formed as I strolled around my neighbourhood, increasingly aware of the silent despair behind each fence. The once essential conduit between home and the outside world often seemed abandoned to its own fate, left overgrown, unpainted, numbers missing or in disrepair. I invited my letterbox to join me in a research project. Using Yakking duopsychic methodology (Talkin and Togetha, 2019), letterbox told their story and in response I mused on the unthinking impact humanity has had on this once essential apparatus. Letterbox bemoaned missing the subtle drift of history that created such loneliness. They had embraced the company when I screwed the 'no junk mail' notice under its slot, only to feel bereft as waves of friends who previously stopped to offer gifts initially paused, then after a week or so walked by without a glance in their direction. I remembered putting that sign up, sick of the amount of paper I was tossing into recycling each week. Each time I saw the sign, the satisfaction I felt was palpable; I was doing good for the planet. Our two stories are juxtaposed to create a tapestry, analysed using the concepts in Metge's (1984; 2001) work on the ease with which people from different cultural groups can completely misunderstand each other. This article grapples with questions such as, 'What is our responsibility to others with whom we share this planet?'; 'What do conflicting perspectives matter in the greater scheme of things?' and 'How can we have a more empathetic planet?'

M T A Gayne is Emeritus Professor of Relationality recently retired from the University of Planetary Concerns. She spends her time researching the ideas that pop into her head while walking.

The pain of parting

by Karen McAulay

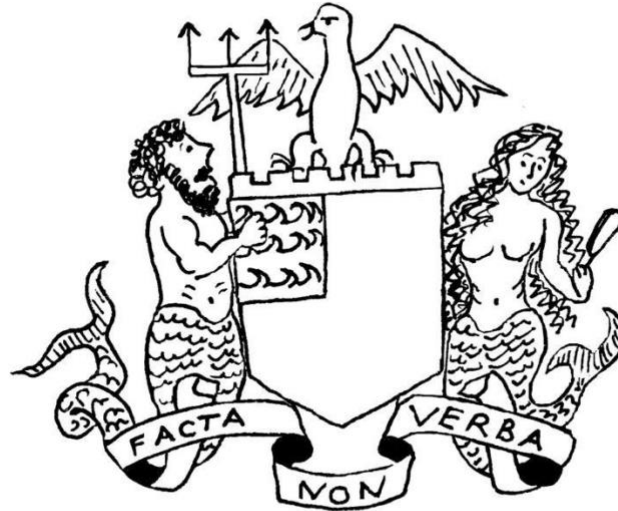


Old Scottish and Irish songbooks often contain songs about departure: the emigrant wishing themselves home again, or longing for an absent sweetheart. Conversely, the song may concentrate on the heartbreak of a forsaken lover, whether separated by emigration, desertion, conscription or death. In art music, such as the German Lieder tradition, themes of departure and loss are equally common: Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* song-cycle is a masterful example of tragic loss interpreted in verse and music. The poignant emotions around separation offer potential for artistic interpretation, particularly in the hands of a gifted composer. Concentrating, in this instance, on national songbooks, the author conducted an ethnographic study with communities of families predominantly of Scottish and Irish descent, one in Nova Scotia and the other in Australia. Participants were invited to share any such books that were family heirlooms; each group was also provided with further instances of the genre for examination. Questions were designed to elicit commentary about songs considered particularly meaningful; whether the words, music or both. Songs about departure were found to reinforce the 'emigrant identity' particularly of older respondents, but of equal significance was the evocation of the old homeland, its landscape and customs.

Gwilym Davies initially studied textiles at Swansea College of Art, and his career eventually led him to the Scottish Borders. He taught at Heriot-Watt University's School of Textiles and Design, and has published books about traditional arts and crafts. Meanwhile, a chance conversation with colleagues led to him retrieving his folk harp from his parents' attic, and

joining an amateur group playing at clubs and ceilidhs in his spare time. An opportunity to take early retirement led Gwilym to pursue his interest in traditional music at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and today's research paper emanates from his Masters dissertation.

Face the fictions: so long, and thanks from all the fish by Erin Kavanagh



Following the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, the Royal Society for Merfolk have set out on a new course to secure the terms of the Atlantis Agreement and the United Waters Framework on Changing Environments. Their unprecedented revolt from the pages of folklore compendiums indicates a paradigm shift into the increasingly harsher light of epistemic marinology. This research project sought to explore this deviation from fictional positionality by documenting a hydro-modal collaboration between the selkies of Magh Meall (Ireland) and the Children of Plant Rhys Ddwfn (Wales). This chimeric union mapped a projected agglomeration of how much land they intend to colonise once sea levels rise sufficiently in excess of previous legendary projections (expected to be fairly soon). They also produced a comparative analysis with similar proofs of concept, such as the Leaving List of Lyonesse and Cantre'r Gwaelod, which includes a predicted taxonomy of extinct regions formally considered to be heavily over-populated by *Homo sapiens* and their invasive predator, *Corruptere civilbus*. The work concludes with a performative tempest in which hungry seagulls rise up on the winds of waffle, pledging chaos amidst burning skies.

Professor Wally is a renowned scholar of human studies from the University of Northern Lights. He is currently visiting lecturer at Hludufólk College, on a tidal contract. In 2021 he won the prestigious Boat Sinking Award of European Exploration. He is the author of *Tenby, or not to Tenby* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to Warmer Waters*.

Rev Dr Freya is the Shamanic Docent at Qivittoq Academy, specialising in Tupilak repatriation. Her PhD was on 'The Wrath of Sassuma Arnaa' and she holds nineteen Moocs on various transmigrations of forgotten narrativity. She is the editor of *Napping in Northumberland (and other stories)*.

Departure from the usual

by Ankita Mishra



The present study explores cisgender heterosexual able-bodied upper class white men's experiences of marginalisation in their everyday interactions with the dominant social groups in the society, such as 'disabled-LGBTQIA-women-of-colour'. It considers the participants' disadvantaged social positions due to the multiplying effect of their 'intersecting identities' and structural inequalities due to their 'common' needs and 'similar' backgrounds. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, ten focus groups were conducted (n=75, mean age=42.15 years, SD=2.52). Participants were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling. A reflexive thematic analysis was conducted from a social justice lens to analyse the data. Some of the key themes include Fear of Invisibility, Power Asymmetry, Everyday Victimisation and Blaming, Stereotyping and Prejudiced Exchanges, Need for Patriarchy. The paper discusses how unequal power relations influence everyday interactions resulting in negative experiences for the participants. The paper concludes with recommendations including the need for collective action/movements to establish patriarchal norms to foster long term social change. Future research needs to continue to engage with the voices of minoritised groups in order to challenge the hegemony of the dominant groups and achieve an egalitarian society.

Dr Ken is an academic-activist championing the rights of minoritised groups including cisgender-heterosexual-able-bodied upper-class-white men from the geopolitical/global north due to the present hegemonic dynamics of the postmodern decolonial world. He studies prejudice and discrimination experienced by these minoritised groups and is interested in highlighting the oppression they face through their narratives and lived experience. His monograph *We should all be patriarchal* has been widely acclaimed and lauded as one of the most influential works of these times where men's voices are heavily silenced.

‘Should s/he stay, or should s/he go?’: an application of AI in assessment of staff ‘value’ in UK HEIs

by David Barlow



Recent years have witnessed widespread changes in academic staffing levels at HEIs, with individual institutions adopting a variety of protocols to implement restructuring and retrenchment. In all cases (as reviewed by Yu and Me, 2020), the criteria employed in deciding staff fates were arrived at entirely subjectively, with scant consideration given to non-fiscal outcomes. Inevitably, therefore, there has been great variation seen in the scale and severity of staff changes, in the extent of the precipitated UCU activity, and in the mental well-being of the academics who survived the culls. In the work reported here we sought to rectify this deficiency through the development of a machine learning tool, RoboChop, which utilises fuzzy logic in combination with random number generation to compute academics' fates given numeric and Boolean inputs derived from their service history. Details for 5,280 recently affected staff were used in training, and those for a further 1,023 were used for cross-validation. A range of inputs were explored spanning the individuals' current pedagogical activities, their current and projected research incomes, and their levels of compliance with the whimsical diktats of their university's senior leadership. Academic fates were initially categorised as 'early retirement', 'voluntary severance', 'redeployment', 'redundancy', or 'stay-in-post-and-just-work-a-lot-harder', but it was subsequently determined that success in prediction was greatly improved with the inclusion of the additional categories, 'really early retirement', 'involuntary severance', 'deferred redundancy', 'unbelievably-somehow-below-the-radar-and-so-safe', and 'well-safe-and-marked-for-promotion'. It is interesting to note, however, that the latter two

categories were required only to ensure correct classification of the senior academics tasked with implementing the restructuring, and the self-serving, obsequious little shits who did their bidding.

Professor Willy Survive is a long-suffering academic who can still remember when the parasitic beast that we now know as University Central Administration was as yet a rather small and generally benign creature; when students quite literally read for a degree; and when staff-student liaison meetings meant something very different. After retiring from his post as Director of Diversity and Inclusion in Playtime Activities at St Hilda's Primary (one of the newer universities) in Nether Wallop in Hampshire, he moved slowly northward, and now lives in a disused Highways England salt repository in a lay-by on the M62. He keeps an Angora rabbit for company and owns a Sinclair ZX Spectrum.

An investigation into the impact of reduced gravity on ego levels amongst billionaires during a 20-minute departure from the Earth's atmosphere

by Sara de Sousa



Humans have long sought extra-terrestrial homelands to avoid taking responsibility for reversing climate change on Earth (Havitall and Runfarr, 2018). Research (Doitall, 2021) shows huge personal wealth increases this desire, supported by efforts to protect personal genealogy and inheritance (Stash, 2021). Thunberg's seminal work, *Blah, Blah, Blah* (2021) failed to evaluate interventions for reducing politicians' and CEOs' panic levels and initiating actual climate action. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of recreational space travel on personal climate-panic amongst a purposive sample of five billionaires during one rocket launch in 2021. Participants were interviewed one day prior to departure, one hour after a 20-minute joy ride in a space shuttle and in a follow-up questionnaire. Findings demonstrate an inverse relationship between ego (as a measure of panic, using the COCKIE index) and gravity. Whilst ego levels spiked during emergence from the spacecraft and media interviews, they subsequently dipped for 48 hours before returning to the billionaire levels identified in Playboy Lifestyle (Stringfellow, 1976). Resulting recommendations include redistribution of wealth to control international ego, so space exploration remains the domain of real science. Computer simulation of 'feeling small' and 'getting perspective' is suggested to reduce ego levels without wasting precious fossil fuels in the process.

Greta D Parture is Professor of Finite Resource Management at the Rundry Business School, Utquaviig, Alaska. Her recent article in the Journal of Accountability and Doom, 'Don't leave: the case for staying and sorting it out,' details the projected impact of climate change on the global population in 2050, as viewed by a composite character from a space-station housing

25 of the richest families from Earth. Professor Parture holds the Attenborough Award for Collaborative Provocation and is a regular keynote speaker at academic conferences held within walking distance of her office. She keeps her snow boots on.

The transfiguration of cargo shorts: reclaiming the QueeRevolution

by Kfir Lapid-Mashall



On the fiftieth anniversary of the Miss America bra-burning protest of 1968, a group of performers sparked the departure of the notorious queer revolution of 2018, best known as the QueeRevolution. In a series of synchronised performance-acts held in storefronts of US department stores, fifty cargo shorts were burnt at the stake. Examining this seminal event in contemporary queer theirstory, this paper utilises a dual approach: historiographic and practice-based. First, we examine the 1930s masculine, militant and economical origins of cargo pants and their surge into 1990s style, the semiotics of functional fashion burning, and the influence the 2018 event had on the QueeRevolution. We argue there was a counter-effect: the glorification of masculinity in symbolising the male as a victim of holy sacrifice. Second, inspired by the 1970s reclaiming of military surplus by protesters against the Vietnam War, this paper describes our practice-led work of the 2021 production of 'Cargo shorts: the metamorphosis'. Seeking to concoct a queer cure to the toxicity embedded in cargo shorts, we devised a participatory communal ritual in which audience

members were invited to reuse, recycle and repurpose cargo shorts. This ritual, we argue, effectively exposed and deconstructed the fragile combat-function of the cargo short, while criticising mechanisms of patriarchy, religion and consumerism.

Q² (Queer Squared) is a group of four queer performance researchers and practitioners. Q² focuses its academic and artistic work in dismantling systems of patriarchy in society, culture and academia as well as challenging manifestations of machismo. Q² members hold no official researcher posts, have won no awards or scholarships, have published no books and have produced no performances on any formal stage as they oppose these very mechanisms.

No more siren song? A historical analysis of the migration of mermaids to the mainland and its implications for maritime safety

by Grace Penlain



In an area infamous for its rough weather, rocks and reefs, shipwrecks were, until recently, a common occurrence in New Atlantis. So much so that the capital, Wrecksville, takes its name from the frequency of shipwrecks on the nearby Siren's Rocks. In the four hundred years since records began over five thousand wrecks have been recorded. This is an extraordinary number, and it is even more extraordinary that most of these disasters happened in the first three hundred years, with less than a hundred occurring in the last century, and none at all in the past decade. What has changed? A detailed analysis of shipwreck patterns pointed to a previously unstudied cause: the absence of the very sirens the rocks are named after. This prompted a comprehensive study into the migration patterns of the mermaids inhabiting Siren's Rocks. When that migratory data was compared to the frequency of shipwrecks, a clear correlation appeared. As the number of mermaids migrating to the mainland has increased, the numbers of shipwrecks in the area decreased. It is therefore crucial that the nature of this migration is clearly understood, as this not only has implications for the culture and identity of the region, but also for its environmental profile. Why did the mermaids move to the mainland?

Dr Penelope-Delphine Peony is Professor of Maritime History at the University of Siren's Rocks in Wrecksville, New Atlantis. She is an accomplished soprano and taught vocal performance at the local Conservatorium for many years. Whilst there she went on to complete a PhD on the region's most famous maritime disaster, the sinking of the cruise ship Flying Dutchman. In her spare time, she is a keen gardener who grows her namesake—peonies—and sings in a band called Davy Jones' Locker.

To wag the dog: lessons learned from canine companions

by Fay Short



Common assumption holds that the canine should be responsible for the swing motion of its own tail. However, little research has considered whether it is in fact the caudal vertebrae itself that induces motion in the canine. Observations of 42 dogs revealed body movement emerging due to tail action. The extent of motion was directly related to the swish: short swishes resulted in small bottom wiggles whereas larger swishes created a full body waggle. Furthermore, a positive correlation was reported between the speed of swish and dog-reported happiness. Both dog-report and direct observation confirmed that canines whose tail swish resulted in full body motion were regarded as 'cute' by caregivers thus received a greater proportion of happiness-inducing events such as treats, walkies and belly rubs. These findings suggest the action of the caudal vertebrae is responsible for a wagging motion in the dog and that such motion results in material benefit. On this basis, it can be concluded that the tail both does and should wag the dog. While this may be a departure from the usual order of things, we propose that further research should explore whether analogous reversals may be extended to human business, education and politics.

Dr Dexter Short is a Pawfessor at St Quack University's Institute for Research into Enthusiastic Labradors and Shepherds (SQUIRELS). Following the publication of his controversial book questioning established feline dominance theory (*Cat, dog, human: is this really the natural order?*), Professor Short has worked tirelessly to enhance our understanding of canine-human interplay. His ethnographic observations of business, educational and political endeavours take the dog as the principal lens of interpretation.

Just leave already: human car rituals

by *Stephanie Zihms*



Beach visits by humans increased over the last two years. This has allowed us to observe human car rituals in greater number, in particular those rituals performed in the car after entering and before driving off. Previous observations (Oeve et al., 2017; 2018; 2019) show that from arriving at the car to leaving the parking bay, two humans take on average 15 minutes to get going. This time is increased by 5 minutes per extra traveller (15 minutes if they are up to 8 years of age). In this study we want to better understand what rituals humans actually undertake in their car between entering and driving off. Can these rituals be linked to other human characteristics? Using an opportunistic sampling technique, the Seagull Colony Research Association for Postdocs (SCRAPs) leafleted 1000 cars between March 2020 and March 2021 to recruit survey and focus group participants. Initial results show that some car rituals (eg putting on a seatbelt) are independent of characteristics such as age or gender, whereby others (eg finding the perfect song before leaving) is linked to age. Distance travelled seems to play a factor in how long humans enjoy the view before driving off.

Prof. M Oeve, a well-established human rituals researcher and academic lead of SCRAPs. Prof. Oeve works towards better understanding of human behaviour with a focus on beach and beach-related activities to develop strategies for seagull leverage and exploitation. Prof. Oeve is using their extensive collaborations to help foster a supportive research culture to provide great opportunities for postdoctoral researchers through scholarships and development opportunities at SCRAPs.

Walking into manhood?

by Una Lodge



Within the crowded field of gender research, this study adopts a novel approach to the social construction of adult masculinity by considering how many roads a person must walk down before they are considered 'a man'. Data was gathered using a mixed methods design, with a purposive sample of 16–19-year-olds who identified as male. Participants recorded digitally the number of journeys that they had taken by foot over a period of six months. A series of semi-structured interviews was then conducted with family members and other individuals within the proximate social group of the participants. The interviewees were asked to share their perceptions of the influence of walking on the participants, and asked whether they would now call them a man. The interviews were analysed using a thematic approach and compared with the quantitative road-walking data. No positive correlation could be established between the number of roads walked and the likelihood of interviewees describing the participants as 'men'. Typical comments included 'I don't care how many roads he's walked down, he still expects me to do his washing'. It was concluded that to specify the number of road walking acts that would constitute the achievement of 'manhood' was not possible.

Aviid Walker is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Lyyricaa. Current research involves the problematisation of contemporary notions of masculinity/'manhood' using a variety of innovative kinaesthetic, especially perambulatory, eclectic methodological

approaches. Recent publications have included: *A walk on the wild side: being James Dean for a day—a poststructural exploration of embodied masculinity* (2020) and *I walk the line: an autoethnographic study of non-binary trapeze artistry* (2019). Avid is currently collaborating on a project with the working title *Walking on sunshine: weather, walking and the male affect*.

How ‘podium fatigue’ led to equitable decision making in Australian educational policy

by Josh Ambrosy and Benjamin C Zonca



A decade on from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has adapted. Many now refer to the early days of the pandemic as a collective period of ‘societal adolescence’; where a nexus of individualism, fear, panic and far too many days in one’s bedroom in the same tracksuit pants are thankfully now a distant memory. COVID-19 has been linked to negative consequences in the education system, particularly the progress of individual students. However, the pandemic also provided space for rapid and disruptive change in many education systems and schools. At its height, near-daily press conferences, live-streamed to the locked-down masses, gave political leaders unprecedented access to their constituents. Such announcements often preceded official directives and marked a departure from the long-established modes of governance, where prepared speeches were replaced by ‘off the cuff’ commentary. The pressure on the political leaders of the day to perform was overwhelming and often resulted in a phenomenon we term ‘podium fatigue’. In this research project, we perform a discourse analysis to examine how educational policy in Australia has shifted toward a new paradigm—one of equity—due to one such ‘off the cuff comment’ where a state minister suffering from podium fatigue assured the masses that ‘all students would have fair and equitable access to education, regardless of their postcode or parents’ income’.

Percival Law and **Horus Eastfield** are co-directors at the Australian Institute for Policy Disruption. Their work uses performative method/ologies to play with, influence and ultimately disrupt educational policy. This work is of vital importance to ensure that educational systems de-couple from supposed ‘reform’ agendas that all too often have neoliberal/conservative connotations. Instead, the institute works in a disruptive fashion to help teachers, academics, philosophers and governments to strive for new educational paradigms.

The mystical ability of an object to remain unavailable until no longer required

by Anne A Hiha and Avril Bell



The decisions that objects make in their everyday lives that impact users, are often described as inexplicable or even mystical. Through an (auto)ethnographic case study I examined the impact of object behaviour on the relationship between object and user, focusing especially on the spur of the moment decisions objects make. Research participants were drawn from the lost and found objects of academic colleagues. I asked them: What triggered your decision to go unavailable? How did you feel after you returned to availability and were no longer required by your user? Cross-species research with objects has its challenges, but through developing object empathy and body language I succeeded in finding that, rather than being inexplicable or even mystical, the motivations behind objects' decisions to go unavailable fell into three categories: boredom leading to bouts of playfulness; frustration at being taken for granted; despair at being ignored for long periods. The decisions had profound effects on the research participants when they returned to availability. For some it changed their relationship with their user forever: from boredom to feeling exhilarated and committing to continue the game more regularly; from despair to antipathy as they were tossed to the back of the drawer having been usurped by a newer model. One outlier continues a happy relationship with their user and was delighted when, although no longer required, they were given pride of place in a display cabinet. From this research it is clear that we cannot make assumptions about why anyone does anything and objects and users would do well to communicate more effectively if they are to enjoy long and productive relationships.

Dr Penelope Powerpoint is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Objectivity and Objectification, Aotearoa. She has been with the faculty since she was created in 2015 and is passionate about researching the relationships between users and objects.

The longest goodbye: an ethnographic exploration of how we didn't leave two hours ago as planned

by Carina Buckley



The act of bidding farewell to loved ones can be of unpredictable and varied duration, shown experimentally to be dependent on a range of factors including affect (Mudie and Gladd, 1968), intention (Meenit, 2005) and genetics (D'Ennay, 2012). This paper attempts to reconcile these within a structuralist interpretation, in that saying goodbye is taken to be a form of social relation. Since, following Levi-Strauss, all of culture and the relations therein are predicated on language, our hypothesis is that the primary factor in the time it takes to say goodbye and leave already is because the participants are unable to stop talking to each other. This case study follows an autoethnographic approach in examining the phenomenon from the perspective of three family members (a mother and two daughters, see figure above: The research subjects, three hours into starting to say goodbye and still fresh) during a day spent together in a neutral location. Findings confirm that the desire to maintain a conversation can outweigh all other factors, both internal and external. Further research is required to determine the impact of these long-farewell individuals on others close to them, which will ascertain genetic particularities, and carries the added benefit of clarifying whether this phenomenon is charming and desirable, or a menace to a well-functioning society.

Professor Syon Nara is Distinguished Professor of Social Incompetence at the University of East Blethering. Her research interests have developed over the years to fully explore the otherwise-overlooked minutiae of family relations, including whose turn it is to make the

tea, control and the remote control, and the correlation between length of time since last visiting the parents and number of wine bottles opened. Her work has been recognised through too many awards and honours to mention. She has an extremely good relationship with all her family members.

Departure into the unknown: an attempt to save the universe by Madeleine Strobel



Earth's participation in the Intergalactic Friendship Programme (IFP) is integral for continued co-operation between the sentient species of our universe. Celebrating 300 years since its inauguration, IFP facilitates visits to all inhabited planets to foster interplanetary awareness and understanding. However, the numbers of humans deciding to remain on other planets are increasing significantly and Earth's population is threatened. To understand the cause, I have joined the IFP on board the spaceship *Intergalactica*. Undertaking an ethnographic study, I am participating in all scheduled activities to establish rapport with fellow travellers and gain a comprehensive understanding of the current climate of interplanetary relations. This article reports on the data collected during my first three months on the *Intergalactica* and our visits to twelve different planets, all exotic and unique. Nevertheless, there are tensions amidst the wonders: Earth is not the only planet with a diminishing population and there are rumours of factions wishing to sever the galaxies' peaceful collaboration. Every time we depart from a planet, we lose yet another traveller. For the safety of all sentient life, I contend that the time has come to contact the Interplanetary Research Network to initiate a collaborative research project across species. Stay tuned.

Jon Erskot, Professor of Extraterrestrial Anthropology at the Arctic University, North Pole, is widely known for his pioneering research into interplanetary relations. His book *Humanity and the Galaxy* (2734) is considered a classic study in the field. Moreover, a human orphan raised by a family of Renolians (the alien refugees that settled on Earth after the Intergalactic Wars), Professor Erskot holds lifelong experience of interacting with other species. As such, the Council of United Terra requested Professor Erskot carry out this research on board the *Intergalactica*.

Teaching, research and learning in the mountains—leaving the university behind

by Patric Wallin



The learnification of higher education has led to an idea that learning exclusively takes place in education institutes, disregarding the fact that learning is an activity that we engage in within endless different contexts. In a similar way, research in broad understanding is not limited to universities, but describes more generally the activity of systematic inquiry. In this work, I study teaching, research and learning processes in the Norwegian mountains. Based on long hikes, wonderful conversations and the process of living together in mountain huts, it emerges that teaching and learning processes in the mountains are qualitatively distinct to those of higher education. They reveal a more rapid dynamic and sense of reciprocity, where the roles of teacher and learner are more fluid. Everyone has something to contribute, and hikers are constantly refining and reconsidering their approaches. Rather than aiming at efficiency, personal gain or fame, this shared research celebrates learning as a meaningful activity itself. Departing into the mountains means leaving behind traditional hierarchies and established norms about success and what it means to live well. The mountains offer a place to imagine something different and allow a space for strangers to become friends.

Mime Utgard is a passionate mountaineer and former Associate Professor. He has led a number of research projects and received wide recognition for his work at his Norwegian university. At the same time, he felt that he was greatly limited by the boundary conditions of his position. Therefore, he quit his permanent position five years ago to follow his heart and be able to more freely explore alternative places for teaching, research and learning. He is now working as a free mountain guide, educator and researcher, travelling the Norwegian mountains together with his family.

The threshold experience: reporting on the neuron loss phenomenon

by Fiona Mossman



Where do they go, those thoughts and plans that you had the moment before you crossed the threshold into the next room, before your mind went blank? This question has driven this study through its longitudinal, multinational and multidisciplinary investigations over the past thirty years. Utilising methodologies including but not limited to neuroscientific resonance, quantum entanglement, thaumaturgical divination and literary criticism, the authors lay out three possible answers. Firstly, these thoughts are syphoned off during passage through the doorway and become entangled in waterways (which is why you often find them again in the shower). Secondly, they do not actually depart but rather they become irretrievable within the brain, which is, the authors admit, effectively the same thing. Finally, there is a high chance that there is an interdimensional being existing in every threshold that forcibly acquires the synapse-pulse of thought. Each of these possibilities gives rise to more research questions, such as: is there any way to rebuild a degraded synapse pathway? How does the transmission of thought end up in the pipework? What does the interdimensional threshold being do with our thoughts? Ultimately, while the evidence was inconclusive, the authors argue that this question is of pressing importance to all conscious beings. Further study is essential.

Mikhail Kozlov was the bright young hope of the University of Forgetting in Zurich, Switzerland. His research output has been less than ideal for many decades and only the fact that the university administration has forgotten the directions to his office has prevented him from being quietly let go.

Melanie Cabra is an interdisciplinary researcher who has a particular interest in the underlying principles of consciousness. She has worked for many institutions, too numerous

to list, and at present she has been missing for two years. She was last seen entering the doors of a library in Oxford.

Iain Kidd is the newest member of the research team and without his input it is unlikely that this first phase of investigation would ever have reached its conclusion. He is a faculty member at the Institute for Enlarging Our Minds. His previous publications include *Electric nutrition: the nourishment possibilities of thought*; *The many dimensions and how to fit in them* and a manual for successful integration with human academia. His collaboration has been entirely remote.

The effects of entertainment in canine post-Covid anxiety treatment

by Yen Nguyen



Over the two years of the Covid pandemic, people were allowed to work from home. Thus, they had more time to both interact with, exercise and socialise their dogs. After the pandemic, these dogs were suddenly left at home again, resulting in a rise in dog anxiety. Previous work has shown that dogs are interested and able to recognise other dogs on pictures and television programmes. The purpose of this project is to test if allowing a dog to watch dog programmes could lower its anxiety. For one week 20 dog owners were divided into two groups, one showing their dog a daily 20-minute TV programme about dogs and the other a daily 20-minute TV programme about cats. They were asked to write a daily diary about their dogs' behaviour. Video cameras were also installed in their houses to observe dog activity when the owner was absent. The results show a positive link between watching the dog programme and lowered dog anxiety. Further studies plan to investigate other means of reducing dog anxiety such as listening to recordings of calm barking and gentle howling.

Emma Nguyen is a dog behaviour researcher at the University of Four Paws. She achieved a first-class undergraduate degree in dog psychology and has published her Master's dissertation as *The philosophy of dog research*. Emma has extensive experience of working in a dog mental health unit and is an expert in deciphering dog behaviour. She is awaiting her certificate from the Royal College of Dog Psychiatry.

Adolescent mental health and common tropes in YA post-apocalyptic fiction

by Liana Christensen



This mixed methods study examined the impact on adolescent mental health of common tropes in YA post-apocalyptic fiction. Fifty such texts, published in English since 2015, were analysed and a list of twelve common post-apocalyptic tropes were identified, such as the sudden unexplained absence of common items in the supermarket and departure and return to a city irrevocably changed during a period of absence. Subgenre texts such as zombie stories were excluded. Ten different images were selected as representative for each trope, and an online pilot survey was trialled with fifty participants aged 13–17. The participants filled in the Cathcart Mood Scale before and after watching the images. The pilot study identified a positive correlation between post-apocalyptic imagery and low mood. The online survey was then given to 495 adolescents. The results confirmed the correlation. In the final part of the study, a random sample of twenty participants were selected for follow up interviews. These were transcribed and analysed using NVivo. The emerging themes indicated that exposure to post-apocalyptic tropes was associated with an elevated risk of depression and anxiety, and that this risk was more significant for adolescent girls.

Dr Rei Yaduult holds the foundation Chair of Children's Literature at the University of Bullamakanka. Her research interests include ecological stories for primary school children and speculative fiction for young adult readers. She is past President of the International Society of Adolescent Literature and a keen member of the science fiction community of Bullamakanka.

Dr Elsie Elder is a post-doctoral research scholar in the Psychology Department of the University of Bullamakanka. Her PhD research focused on risk factors for anxiety and depression in adolescence. She is also an active member of the science fiction community of Bullamakanka.

Investigations of a planetary death cult: a small-scale observational study on the phenomenon of 'work' in HUMAN-12

by Jacob T Browne



Species HUMAN-12 on planet EARTH-23 have perplexed researchers over their unique, systemic worship of 'work': mandatory activity imposed by economic or political methods. In our collective observations of HUMAN-12, they tend to spend most of their life at 'work'. 'Work' is used to select who gets what resource at what time, with others having to do more 'work' than others. This allocation is justified given where your physical-meat-consciousness-suit was formed in relation to HUMAN-12 cultural and historical matrices. Despite the looming ecological collapse of EARTH-23 and systemic injustice, HUMAN-12 continues to perpetuate 'work' on a global scale. This paper presents an observational study adding to our understanding of the phenomenon of 'work'. We've placed over 6 billion stimuli mirages to observe them on EARTH-23 (often referred to as 'birds' and 'cats'). These stimuli are often taken into their constructed niches, performing our multi-sensory data collection. Some of our mirages have been appropriated beyond our imagination (eg 'cat pic'). Through our ungrounded theory analysis, we conclude that HUMAN-12 has shown some evidence of transforming their relations to each other, but at this moment they do not qualify for acceptance into the transuniversal-species-consciousness circle of tranquillity and joy. The reason for this is their exclusive focus on 'work'. With one eye on the ecological crisis, the paper concludes with some thoughts on the ethics of appropriate intervention.

AS DETERMINED IN COLLECTIVE CONSENSUS MEETING 44419302, 'OWNERSHIP' OVER INFORMATION IS NO LONGER IDENTIFIED. This study was dimensionally simulated, approved, and enacted with the Hivemind Investigation Group on HUMAN-12.

‘Those shoes were part of me’: letting go of old running shoes in ultramarathon running

by Laura Williams



Running shoes are critical to ultrarunning participation, motivation and performance. Due to the extreme distances in ultrarunning, usually 50 or 100 miles, shoes wear out rapidly. It is commonly accepted in running wisdom that runners should replace their shoes every 500 miles. Many, however, are unable to do so, even when falling apart. Research was carried out with 10 ultrarunners who were identified as being at a pivotal moment in their shoe journey. Running shoes were found to hold deep and meaningful significance for runners. Shoes were viewed as an extension of the runner's body, playing an integral role in ultrarunning. After replacing shoes, runners experienced a loss in motivation and enthusiasm. Runners struggled to form relationships with their replacements, claiming that new shoes did not feel part of them. As a result, the embodied knowledge performed by old footwear was lost, which impacted on performance. These findings identify a relationship between footwear, motivation and emotional experiences in ultrarunning. This study lays the groundwork for research concerning the emotional distress caused by letting go of shoes which are seen by ultrarunners as an extension of the body.

Dr A Marythoner is a renowned scholar of ultrarunning currently working at the Centre for Extremely Slow Running Practices. Previous research has explored the cake eating rituals of ultramarathon runners, the use of selfie sticks to aid performance during mountain races, and runners' attitudes towards wild toileting. Dr Marythoner is dedicated to using

experimental and demanding running research methods and is most recently noted for developing novel data collection techniques involving running; including interviewing participants whilst running 50 miles in the Lake District hills for her acclaimed paper about the emotional impact of coming last in a race.

Legitimizing AI object-actors as beings: a processual model of identity work

by Aastha Pandey



Existing research on sentient artificial intelligence (AI) objects has followed a systems theory approach, focusing on their emergence within virtual worlds. However, these studies discount the object's departure from simple functionality to sentience (defined as a self-aware capacity for purposive social action within the inhabited virtual world). Sentient AI objects first appeared as non-player characters in 2142, populating multiple virtual world environments, intended to provide informational support to human players, the objects evolved within the environments to become capable of emotional and instrumental support, gradually demanding basic 'being' rights for themselves. This study uses institutional theory perspective to study identity work undertaken by sentient AI object-actors within virtual worlds to depart from human assigned functional expectations. I have adopted a qualitative approach with a multiple case study design. Data is collected using interviews with sentient AI object-actors, observations of their action-interactions and secondary sources. Drawing on the analysis of collective mobilisation efforts by AI object-actors within three virtual environments, I theorise the types of identity work undertaken to seize attention in the real world, gain acceptance as a legitimate form of being from neoteric humans, depart from old logics and generate new identity logics. I conclude by discussing challenges and opportunities for future scholars studying institutional work undertaken by sentient AI objects.

Dr David Ash is a senior researcher at the Institute for Autonomous Agent Sapience in Metaverse and one of the leading voices on sentient rights. He is a prolific writer having authored *Autonomous sentient entrepreneurs*, *A new state of being* and an autobiography, *AI no more: developing my sentience*.

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