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Dear Earth: The Three of Me?

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Declaration of Originality

I, ................................................................. 7th May 2017 hereby declare that the thesis here presented is the outcome of the research project undertaken during my candidacy, that I am the sole author, and that I have fully documented the source of ideas, references, quotations and paraphrases attributable to other authors.

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Nancy Lee Veal 27 October 1946 – 14 December 2016
Abstract

Emma Veal: “Dear Earth: The Three of Me?”

This research addresses the question of how to represent the incoherent self. It arises from my own experience of living with manic depression, and my sense of alienation from common rhetorical and figurative devices employed to express the unified self. I argue that the incoherent self can only be represented through the subversion of such devices, positing a novel framework of ‘the three of me’ in opposition to the singular self. The instantiation of this ontology takes the form of an audio visual installation. Dear Earth: The Three of Me? uses randomised algorithms to perform animations of my own eye in a way that defies the coherence of narrative. As a live work it embodies the modalities of ‘the three of me’, resisting any recourse to solipsism. Dear Earth’s most salient contribution to the field of media arts is its modelling of one manifestation of mental illness within an interactive digital work. It is a considered and coherent response to the question of how to represent the incoherent self.
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Introduction

My work takes the form of an interactive installation framed around two performative aspects of Western culture that serve to delineate the concept of the coherent self. Both are performance-based in the sense that they are used to negotiate shared ideals and histories. The first is the ‘life story’, an oral tradition which not only describes the substance of our personal narrative, but also the details of the development of our singular selves. The second is the ‘vernacular portrait photograph’ that has come to signify not just the physical characteristics of its subjects, but their social relationships and status within wider society; that is, the coherence of their selves. In fact, often one genre is employed as a rhetorical device to reinforce the truth of the other. However, I will argue that such models for representation are often unavailable to the incoherent self; she must find a way to subvert their intent in order to convey the fragmentation of her own experience.

This research addresses the question of how to represent the incoherent self. I approach this subject matter from the perspective of someone who has bipolar disorder, or to use my preferred term, manic depression. Employing some simplification, I posit ‘the three of me’ in opposition to the coherence of the unified self. It is within this theoretical framework of the manic, the depressive and the rational that I aim to represent the modalities of this fragmented self.

My research into the incoherence of my own self has raised a number of questions that span several disciplines. In terms of social interaction, how can the absence of a coherent self, a coherent history, engender a sense of disconnection from others? From an ontological perspective, is it possible to see oneself as authentic when the mind runs interference between sensation and perception, thereby disrupting behaviour? What are some of the artistic precedents that explore this disunity of the self? And, perhaps most importantly for this research, how can I as an artist effectively convey this concept of ‘the three of me’ to an audience unacquainted with the concept of the incoherent self?

The ultimate studio response to this question of ‘the three of me’ is a digital artwork titled *Dear Earth: The Three of Me?* It is embedded in the form of an installation
incorporating one-on-one interaction between a single user and the work. The title derives from the irony inherent in the futility of an ‘atheist’s prayer’. For who can an atheist rage against when they realise that their mind is in some way fractured, that there is an ever shifting dissonance between what is experienced and what is perceived? Over decades, these severe oscillations in perception, personality and behaviour have become representative of the ontology that I define as ‘the three of me’. This is, of course, a simplification: other complications are always thrown into the mix. However, it is a useful one. In developing *Dear Earth*, as a model of manic depression, these three entities serve as a counterpoint to the coherence of the narrative of the unified self. Hence, *Dear Earth* is composed of three eyes, three states of mind; icons whose code-driven performance echoes my own loss of faith in *my* self. Through this focus on the modelling of mental illness rather than its expression, the discourse around art therapy is not pertinent to this thesis.

The narrative of the coherent self is an integral aspect of Western society. Within this society, life stories serve to define the individual as a type of person; as a member of a particular group, or conforming to more general expectations of a rational and successful life. Linguist and social researcher Charlotte Linde writes that “in order to exist in the social world with a comfortable sense of being a good, socially proper, and stable person, an individual needs to have a coherent, acceptable, and constantly revised life story.”¹ Life stories, as an oral tradition rooted in discourse, rely on the continuity of the protagonist as a unified self. Without this form of continuity, these units of discourse cannot achieve the coherence that is an essential component of this kind of narrative. In other words, life stories are performed by individuals through the linear form of a spoken narrative, as a way of negotiating the coherence of their lives in the context of the social sphere.

The systematic display of cultural values that are central to the rhetorical performance of the coherent life story are also evident in many examples of vernacular portrait photography. John Tagg, a photography theorist, states that “the portrait is... a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social

Indeed, from its inception, the photographic portrait represented a means to ‘capture’ the essence of a subject in a way that was supposedly unmitigated by the intent of the artist. The popularisation of the ‘family photograph’ during the mid-nineteenth century, with all subjects dressed in their Sunday best and holding their breath was, in large part, due to the apparent cultural honesty of the image. The genre of the photographic portrait as a means to convey social values quickly came to embody what Susan Stewart refers to as the established “system of signification [that] works by means of a rhetoric of significance,” as is also exhibited by the coherent life story.

The rhetorical significance of the life story is paralleled by a visual system of signification that embraces the truth of portrait photography and its ability to portray, within a single image, both individual and social coherence within the strictures of the cultural norms of the time. I have chosen these two forms of representation in opposition to the concept of ‘the three of me’ as both depend on negotiation and performance as a means of signifying the self. Cultural artefacts such as the biography or memoir, on the other hand, lack these aspects of negotiation and performance and are therefore omitted from this discussion. Dear Earth, like the life story and the portrait, is performed in real time for its audience as it negotiates this ontology.

This research engages with critiques of the myth of the unaffected photographic portrait. It soon became apparent that the staging of the photographic portrait was as much due to the expressive aims of the photographer as is the case with any other art form. There always remained, above all else, this crucial question as to the intent of the artist. Even with the deliberate subversion of the coherence of the self, the vagaries of intention became particularly evident in the field of self-portraiture. Before the lenses of their own cameras, artists were able to perform their own images, accentuating aspects of their selves that challenge the contemporary strictures of society. The work of most artists cited in this research falls into this category that Amelia Jones terms as

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“photographic self performance.” This genre is characterised by a focus on gender, race, sexuality, or mental illness, which often require original approaches to the signification of the self.

This subversive aspect of performance in the photographic representation of the self has spawned a genre that dates from the nineteenth century (with the knowingly staged works of the Countess de Castiglione). It continues through to the ontological mutinies of modernism (exemplified by the shattering of self integral to Claude Cahun’s photomontages) and the re-contextualised subject of post-modernism (as evidenced by the self-awareness inherent to Pipilotti Rist’s many roles). In a similar vein, the coherent narrative of the life story has been undermined by the stream of consciousness style of literary performance (a prominent feature of Cahun’s Surrealist texts) that focuses on the modality of the moment and defies classical requirements of context and coherence.

Due to the deliberate subversion of established cultural values through their performances through their own cameras, or through their own words, many of these female artists identified themselves in opposition to the system of signification as personified through what is arguably Western culture’s main protagonist, the white heterosexual male. Susan S. Friedman states how “a white man has the luxury of forgetting his skin colour and sex... Women and minorities, reminded at every turn in the great cultural hall of mirrors of their sex or colour, have no such luxury.” As this thesis asserts, such marginalisation from cultural significance can enable the expression of new models of performance that subvert the accepted strictures of both personal stories and portraiture.

Largely through the subversion of these signifiers of the unified self, Dear Earth: The Three of Me? emerged as a coherent artistic performance of my own incoherence. It has, however, undergone discrete stages of development before its final incarnation as an installation, and was preceded by a number of smaller works that ensured proof of concept in terms of methodology. Dear Earth began as six minutes of video footage, a

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prolonged portrait focussed on my face, initially situating it in the genre of “photographic self performance.” In the next stage the work comprised some seven hundred portraits that constituted extracts of ‘the three of me’ in the form of ‘eye portraits’; metonymic images that varied in both aspects of the gaze and treatment, subverting the classical portrait as they suggested the modalities of the mind. These eye portraits were then worked up into six hundred short sequences of movement, employing both grammatical and semantic concepts of temporality to further elucidate this ontology. For example, the frequency of these movements of the eye were initially based on a standard observable temporality of twelve blinks per minute, then reduced or increased to emphasise the semantic representations of the depressive and the manic respectively.

However, while Dear Earth’s images contain specific elements from the original video, none of its final sequences of movement ever actually happened. It utilises a stochastic model that precludes indexical movement, but at its base level all possible sequences of images have already been determined through the process of frame-based animation. To invert the previous statement, Dear Earth is an animation but only at its most basic level. As it plays out over minutes or hours or days the interaction of its sequences is the result of a set of algorithms that combine constrained randomness and probabilities in a performance that provides mere glimpses of its vast content in any moment. Dear Earth does contain two longer narrative segments but these only occur as the result of viewer interactivity; they are completely separate from the functional aspects of the rest of the work. Layers of the human eye are compiled in Photoshop, through a number of processes including the scanography of found objects and the optimisation of elements contributing to the final images. The latter depends upon the use of tools like the Polygonal Lasso and Clone Stamp to ‘tidy-up’ scanned objects and image adjustments such as Levels and Hue/Saturation to modulate the colour and contrast of each version of the eye. The most fundamental aspect of these eye portraits are the manual pencil drawings that serve to both delineate and inscribe each lid, lash, and brow of the eye. The layered audio components augment the work’s metaphorical imagery by
challenging the coherence of the self with the inchoate words of the manic and the depressive.\textsuperscript{6}

It is important to note here that \textit{Dear Earth} is essentially a work of digital art. This might seem to be a statement of the obvious as all of its components, from the layers that compose each eye portrait to the algorithms responsible for performing the artwork as a whole, are the products of digital processes. However there is a distinction between the two examples above. The eye portraits use digital technology \textit{as a tool} to create traditional (still) images, while the algorithms that underlie \textit{Dear Earth}'s structure situate the final work in the realm of what is generally understood as ‘media art’. Nonetheless, in such an evolving medium the term ‘digital art’ is generally preferred for art that exists of and within the digital space. Even with this caveat a singular definition of an example of media art/digital art is difficult. As Christiane Paul states:

\begin{quote}
It is problematic to claim that all digital artworks can be neatly categorised according to different forms: most of the time, these works contain various elements... and defy a purely formal classification.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

Digital art involving movement, interactivity and sound encompasses a wide range of sub-genres, including installation, animation and algorithmic (or code) art. My own studio practice exhibits aspects of these sub-genres: while \textit{Dear Earth}'s animated and audio content is not generated as a result of code, the overall performance of the installation is.

\textsuperscript{6} See Appendix A: Voices of the Manic and the Depressive.
\textsuperscript{7} Christiane Paul, \textit{Digital Art}, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015), 70.
Chapter Summary

Chapter One

In Chapter One I outline the early research that led to *Dear Earth: The Three of Me?* and contextualise the ideas underlying it in terms of its progress towards an integrated digital artwork, including the considerations involved in expressing what is effectively an alternative framework. The development of the complex visual and functional structures that precede this work will be discussed in light of the digital tools and processes involved, particularly those that provided proof of concept for *Dear Earth’s* methodology. My focus on the ‘eye portraits’ that form the content of the code-driven simulation situates my choice of object for *Dear Earth* as it relates to the iconography of the eye as instantiated through Surrealism. This twentieth century movement employed variously emotionally and intellectually charged parts of the human body to stand in for the whole.

Chapter Two

In Chapter Two I elaborate on the concept of the coherent self as the protagonist of the life story and the vernacular photographic portrait. Drawing on the work of Linde and the system of significance that delineates the traditional portrayal of the photographic self, I expound upon my ontology of ‘the three of me’ in opposition to the coherent self negotiated through these genres. From this perspective I invoke the concept of the fragmented self that is performed at the limits of established forms of representation, most often existing outside the structures of cultural normality. In this context the work of two artists who, like myself, have centred their practice on subversive interpretations of the incoherence of their own selves; Cahun and Jonathan Caouette, are discussed.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three examines the progression of *Dear Earth* from a series of self-portraits to the continuously evolving simulation that embodies the ontological concept of ‘the three of me’. This progression charts the distinction of genre from the use of digital tools through to the creation of the digital art object. In the context of this discussion the animation of William Kentridge elucidates the grammar of movement, while the video
performances of Rist and the works of Bill Viola inform my own use of time as a semantic medium that can manipulate perceptions of modality. I explore the processes of deconstruction and reproduction that exemplify the content of the work; including the rational structure and embedded code that allows Dear Earth to operate, in real time, as a model of this ontology.

Conclusion

I sum up the distinct stages of Dear Earth; from intimate video, to an extensive series of self-portraits that subvert the primacy of the classical, to the audio and animations that exhibit the semantic content of relative perception and temporality, and the code that allows them to simulate the progression of the moods of ‘the three of me’. All these components combine, with the inclusion of viewer interactivity, in a large-scale projected installation that, to paraphrase Rist\(^8\), exists in the sort of reverent space once reserved for the church in Western culture. It is for this reason that I have decided against providing a CD copy of Dear Earth as an appendix to this thesis: the work needs to be experienced in its full context.

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Chapter One

Dear Earth: The Three of Me? is a work of digital art in the form of an interactive installation. Its animations of the human eye are the loci of the work, their movements operating as a metaphor for the shifting modalities of the mind. However, Dear Earth did not emerge in isolation. While it is the singular answer that I am presenting in response to my central framework, ‘the three of me,’ it is by no means the only artwork that I have produced during this course of study. Twenty-five smaller works have contributed to the conceptual, ontological and methodological developments that have shaped this research. The focus in the first part of this chapter is on discussing the works that led to conceptual and methodological proofs of concept; the clear antecedents of Dear Earth.

In my initial proposal, I wanted to explore that moment, that instant, when, as defined by Jean Paul Sartre, “the Other’s look touches me across the world and is not only a transformation of myself but a total metamorphosis of the world.”9 This rather broad topic was presented as a moment of collapse of the internalised subject when summarised, catalogued, and diminished by the gaze of another individual. Arguably, this thesis imbues ‘the Other’ with the power of fixity; a gaze can isolate its object as alien, even monstrous. A major aim of this early proposal was to investigate how:

Artistically, throughout history woman has endlessly appeared as the object, as the spectacle presented for and by the male gaze. Utilising my medium of animated drawings, I am exploring the shift that occurs when woman ceases to be herself and realises that she is the object of a gaze. Does she ‘court’ the gaze, her expressions and gestures embracing her audience, or does she struggle to regain her intrinsic self?10

From the outset my methodology was based around pencil-drawn animations that incorporated scanned or photographic elements, but beyond that these small-scale vignettes bear little resemblance to Dear Earth. Their resolution is 640 by 480 pixels,

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10 Emma Veal, “The world tilts sideways and I am not what I am... I am seen” (MPhil, previous abstract, Australian National University, 2008)
the first was exhibited on an early iPod in 2008), and their short narratives last from one to two minutes. However, when examined as a set of animations that were created over a period of time, there is a consistent progression towards my final work inherent in their sequence. This is a progression that concerns the authenticity of the self, and how it deteriorates over time. Through the development of these vignettes I returned again and again to the question of fixity; the answer was never a singular, coherent self.

I will not go into explicit detail concerning this series of vignettes. To quote Kentridge, who also works on stop-motion narratives based on drawing: “so much of the work comes from this starting point... even if it seems to be entirely dictated by the medium or circumstances, in the end the work will be about who you are.”\footnote{William Kentridge and Angela Breidbach, \textit{William Kentridge thinking aloud: Conversations with Angela Breidbach}, (Köln: Walther König, 2006), 11.} Gradually, the question as to the authenticity of the subject when observed by an ‘Other’ was replaced by the sense of a self in internal conflict. This betrayal of the coherence of my subjects was a theme that I returned to repeatedly.

By the time I filmed the six minute video whose stills form the underlying content of \textit{Dear Earth}, all the techniques exhibited in the final iteration of the work had already been tested. Next I discuss seven works that are the antecedents of \textit{Dear Earth} and...
exemplify these methodologies, employing three distinct ways of approaching animation, interactivity and performance.

I produced four short works, (*Breathe, Scratch, Peel* and *Bow*), that involved using video footage as the basis for my drawn animation. Retaining the same (small) scale and narrative structure as the vignettes, the drawings used in these pieces are based on actual movements, enabling greater precision and realism. Kentridge describes a similar methodological development in his own practice: “What I use a lot now is a little video camera as a kind of sketch book... I can find what the actual grammar of that [movement] is.”

The confidence induced through knowing that one physical movement sequentially followed another was profound: the accuracy and drawing style of my work finally lived up to my own expectations. Ironically, the freeing-up of the strokes of my drawings was a consequence of the restraint and certainty introduced in the *form* of the objects that I portrayed.

![Fig. 2. Emma Veal, Peel](image)

Lacking the appetite for models, I began to film myself. It was my first experimentation with what Jones refers to as “photographic self performance.”

The elaborate minutiae of various ‘simple’ movements soon became apparent. As Walter Benjamin notes: “If we

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12 Ibid: 46.
have a rough idea of how we pick up a cigarette lighter or a spoon, we know little of what actually happens between hand and metal when we do so, not to mention how this will vary according to our current mood. My initial focus when developing these four animations was the movement of the hand; flicking a cigarette, scratching a leg until it bled, removing a label, undoing a bow tied around my neck. Unlike the series of vignettes, the notion of ‘character’ is only implied through the interaction of mobile and immobile body parts. They revolve around repetitive acts of the hand upon the body, suggestive of forms of compulsion, of obsession, that cannot be silenced. Picking and scratching and peeling, these works might initially appear tangential to the concept of ‘the three of me.’ However, they are representative of the behaviours that are tangled up in the moods of the manic and the depressive as they are performed upon the physical body; the scarred body these moods later leave behind. I began to seriously question the framework underlying these animations; as they became more personal, the esoteric subject of my early proposal was being replaced by aspects of me.

Zoomdrag is an interactive piece that juxtaposes the depressive and the manic in the space of a single frame. It was a departure from my vignettes in that there is no

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narrative beyond that formed by the movements of the viewer’s hand. The viewer ‘drags’, via keypad, an image of a magnifying glass across the character’s face to create a simultaneous dissonance between the two moods. On the screen, the manic and the depressive share the same physical space. The reaction I received to this little piece convinced me that enabling the viewer to act on a work and be ‘rewarded’ with consequences of those actions is a powerful form of engagement with digital art. Interactivity later emerged as an integral element of Dear Earth, albeit one formulated in a conceptually distinct way.

The work I exhibited in the ‘Beyond Media Arts’ exhibition of 2009 in the ANU Art School Gallery was called Loss. It describes the loss of the coherence of a self, through the use of short narrative sequences that show the character acknowledging those around her before removing her masks. More significantly, Loss is a live work, in the sense that it is a simple simulation driven by coding. As one narrative sequence ends, another is loaded to seamlessly follow. At times the previous sequence is repeated, at others the entire narrative moves towards or away from a putative end – the probabilities that I inserted into the overall structure described the relative likelihood of these options, but did not proscribe them. These probabilities were formalised as a finite Markov chain. Markov chains are described by Olle Häggström as “a class of random processes exhibiting a certain “memoryless property”...” This “memoryless property” of Markov chains ensures that the future is not in any way contingent on what has happened before. These processes were then translated into a set of simple randomised algorithms; each determined whether an animated sequence would recur, move on to the next sequence, or return to the previous sequence.

The crucial element in coding rather than pre-recording a digital work is that the deliberate structure of the narrative is subverted. Unlike previous works, Loss denied the reliance on a deterministic sequence and, as a consequence, the coherence of the self. While structurally, with its eight fragments of movement Loss proved to be a mock-

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15 See Appendix B: Structure of the Finite Markov Chain for Loss.
17 The importance of the algorithmic components to Dear Earth’s performance will be further elaborated upon in Chapter Three.
up for Dear Earth, which has a vastly greater number of objects. It was the introduction of an entirely new methodology for my work, one that through the interaction between code and structure could emulate the vicissitudes of human moods. In life, one can retrospectively trace the progression of one’s emotional states; randomised algorithms allow the animator to pre-empt changes in state with probabilities rather than certainties. As Cahun puts it: “It’s all about converging lines... Continue to bring these lines to life, each in its own direction: you will correctly call them divergent.” I had taken a small set of narratives and set them free.

I began to feel as though all the pieces were falling into place; aesthetically, structurally, and conceptually. I knew that I had the capacity to combine these methodologies in a powerful representation of the incoherent self. I was also aware that such a work demanded more engagement with my own self, so I framed a close-up of my own face before a HD video camera. The movement during this footage was restricted to my eyes as I allowed my mind to traverse my incoherent past, flashbacks of which are never far away. I wanted to see if the eye, independent of any other expression, could reflect shifts in mood. The sensation of being exposed was far more acute than was the case with the previous video works that I had performed, as I was effectively confronting my own authenticity.

This is Barbara Cleveland (2013), explores the life of Australian performance artist Barbara Cleveland, focussing on themes such as: “the legacies of ephemeral art and feminist histories, the complex status of the performance trace, and questions of authorship and authenticity”. Barbara Cleveland Institute addresses the latter by examining the modalities of her works of the late 1970s and early 1980s and re-enacting them. While these artists are obviously not Cleveland, through performing her movements they emphasise the semantic meaning of the original artist’s work, imbuing it with an authenticity that transcends both time and the individual.

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19 HD refers to High Definition.
The six minute video that I filmed in 2010 was one of the more minimal works that I have produced. To the casual observer it shows is a woman in her late thirties looking around her. For me, however, it represents something very different. During the filming, as I let my mind traverse the decades of ‘the three of me’, I held my head extremely still while letting my eyes subconsciously perform these moods for the camera. It was, to quote Linde, an “experience of consciousness as slippery, shifting from one sense modality to another.” While the camera was on me I felt as if outside of time, alone in a space beyond linguistic representation. With this single take the initial, performative stage of Dear Earth: The Three of Me? was complete.

As I began to review the footage, I was amazed at the complexity of movement in the eye that was central to the work. Benjamin states that “only the camera can show us the optical unconscious” and what I was seeing over that six minutes was like looking through a microscope for the first time and discovering the dance of life operating at the cellular level. It was a new, fascinating world of blinks, shifting irises, mobile brows and a single tear that swelled then fell, making its path down my cheek. The video was, due to

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21 Linde, Life Stories, 121.
22 Benjamin, Mechanical Production, 30.
my forced stillness and its duration, a documentation of the machinations of the eye, bookended by the blinks that ensure its function. After that first viewing I was convinced that it would be the eye, in all its complexity, that would be the locus of the work that I would subsequently make.

Audio visual artist Rist has a long history of “photographic self performance” in her production of video works. In discussing her work Open My Glade, exhibited among the chaos of advertisements, lights and crowds of Times Square, New York (2000), she describes how “viewers saw a woman flattening her face against the screen as if she wanted to break out and come down into the Square... You want to set her free, and with her all the ghosts on the surrounding screens.” Each video ran for approximately one minute, interrupting the flow of commercials beaming down onto the relatively tiny human occupants of Times Square. The obvious force of the work was Rist’s grossly distorted face situated among the plethora of aspirational consumerism, but beyond that subversion of her image was the expression of her eyes.

In Open My Glade it is Rist’s eyes that implore to be set free. Jones identifies “where her eye peers through but is also substantiated by the screen, Rist’s ‘eye’ is also ‘apparatus’

This functional dualism inherent in the image of the eye is a powerful one. For more than any other part of the body, the eye challenges the viewer with an implication of consciousness, of another mind returning the gaze. It also has the greatest capacity of any part of the body for conveying emotion, regardless of its surroundings.

I began to delve into the structure of the video of Dear Earth, dividing the footage into fragments of one to three seconds, then identifying the pertinent frames responsible for blinks, or shifts in expression. These frames, or stills, that I isolated as ‘key’ frames within movement sequences, were rarely contiguous; most frames showed little or no change in aspect. Finally what remained were just a few dozen frames that encapsulated not just the movements but the moods of the original footage. These images formed the basis of the animated content of Dear Earth: The Three of Me?

At frame-level I worked up the appearance of every eye. Each was printed at the scale of approximately three times life size. This enabled a corresponding increase in the detail of both the digital aspects of the face and the drawings that overlaid it. The capacity for

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24 Jones, Self/Image, 212.
both precision and expression in the line and cross-hatching of these drawings was tempered by the requirements of digital animation. Drawing for animation is a very different method of drawing than for individual pieces. It took some time for me to train myself in the particular style and balance between stroke and shade for these drawn eyes. I established a routine, drawing them at the same time each day, in batches of three or four. By managing the conditions in which I approached the drawings, down to postponing the medication that makes my hands tremor slightly, I obtained consistency throughout the set of some eighty images. I don’t know if it was because of, or in spite of, the euphoria that I experienced through the pleasure of making these marks that they finally reflected my own aesthetic.

While the focus of Dear Earth as an animation was always the movements of the eye, the eye was not always alone. My early experiments involved half a face, lips of red and blue, and overlays that mutilated the area around the eye. First I lost the hair that shrouded half the face, then the nose, and the mouth that opened and closed in silence. Later the reptile skin, crushed cosmetics and network of spider-webs disappeared from the space between brow and cheekbone. The brows and lines under the eye were diminished; seen as distractions. All that remained of the video were fragments of the original stills; the iris, pupil and refraction within the eye, and a faint shadowing of skin without.

Fig. 7. Emma Veal, The Unadulterated Eye
This process of the gradual elimination of elements that were superfluous to the meaning of *Dear Earth* took years, not months. Procedurally, it was a matter of stripping back the subject to all that was necessary and sufficient to convey the moods of ‘the three of me.’ In doing so, I realised that these single eyes, deprived of context, could continue to serve as self-portraits; nothing more than these extracts of my image were required to represent my moods and, as a consequence, my mind.

The art movement that entrenched this precedent for a part of the body standing for the whole is Surrealism. Mary Ann Caws describes the strategy as “iconization through separation.” In Western culture the movement’s embrace of psychoanalytical iconography continues to influence contemporary art some eighty years after its inception. While it is beyond the scope in this thesis to delve into the psychoanalytical theory of the time, as an introduction to Surrealism’s use of iconography I wish to discuss two of the movement’s portrayals of the iconic eye. The first is Georges Bissière’s portrait of Marcel Proust in *La Révolution surréaliste* (1925), and the second is a work by René Magritte called *The False Mirror* (1928).

![Fig. 8. Georges Bessière, Marcel Proust](image)

Bissière’s portrait of Proust presents the writer as a single eye upon a large empty page. This rendition truly asserts the eye as recognisably standing for Proust’s mind, with the...

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spire of the Eiffel Tower refracted in his line of sight. It is a beautifully minimalist example of the concept of the Surrealist icon; all that is needed to represent the self, its knowledge and creativity, is an eye. It is a work that resonates strongly with this research, a sensitively portrayed etching that evokes the character of its subject in the way that my drawings gently cradle the vulnerable space of my own eye.

Magritte’s use of the iconography of the eye in *The False Mirror* (1928) clearly had an impact on the iconography of my own work. Caws highlights how it “[raises] the whole problem of seeing and registering and interpreting the passing scene together with that of consciousness. The convergence of seer and seen is complete.” In a single moment it entraps the concepts of the gaze and its object, and the capacity of human consciousness to not only grasp this convergence of realities, but relate to them in an *experiential* way. It is a painting that embodies all aspects of the gaze, including the sense of awareness that accompanies it; an evaluation that requires a deliberate conscious response.

Fig. 9. René Magritte, *The False Mirror*

Having established these proofs of concept as they relate to code, viewer interactivity, and the form of representation for the content of animation, I determined to combine these digital components in a single, much larger work that could embody the

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incoherent self. Then I applied these imaging techniques to the video stills of Dear Earth, centrally the set of drawings of my own eye, merged with the irises, pupils, and refraction extracted from those same stills. There has been a long history in visual art in which the image of the eye is employed to represent the self. Hanneke Grootenboer identifies how: “the eye picture is... a depiction of someone looking at us from a certain point where we, as viewers, are not.”

Through the concept of ‘the three of me’, my use of the iconic eye refers not to a geographical or metaphysical point, but an ontological one.

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Chapter Two

The ontological concept of ‘the three of me,’ derived from my own experience of manic depression, is the central framework of this research. The refinement of the conceptual nature of my inquiries has led to corresponding adjustments in the approach to my art practice. From the time that I filmed the initial video of Dear Earth through to my focus on the iconic eye as a series of self-portraits, I was seeking not just an aesthetic or structural answer to my own incoherence, but a means of situating that concept in opposition to other performance-based cultural entities.

In order to contextualise this concept of ‘the three of me’ I needed to provide examples of particular systems of signification, common to Western culture, that are inaccessible for those who share conditions such as my own. Firstly, I chose to define the discourse unit known as the life story in opposition to the question of my fragmented self, as its requirement of coherence is not compatible with the history of my own life. Secondly, I identified the vernacular photographic portrait as a means of situating the coherent subject in relation to contemporary cultural norms; a form of fixity that remains outside of my own experience. Both constructs share a common performative aspect: often one is employed as a rhetorical device to reinforce the other. However, it is through the subversion of such genres that alternate expressions of the incoherent self can be realised. As examples I will discuss the work of two artists who have used a range of media in pursuit of aims similar to my own – Cahun and Caouette.

The features of the life story have long been of interest to the field of discourse analysis. The study of discourse is integral to both the fields of linguistics and sociology, albeit approached from two distinct perspectives. In linguistics the focus on discourse has been largely structural, considering the spoken narrative at the level of the sentence and its components. On the other hand, sociological research into discourse analysis has been more aligned with the functional aspects of the interaction between speakers, such as the methods by which individuals collaborate in creating meaningful conversation. Linguist and social researcher Linde approaches the life story from a point of view that encompasses both elements – the structural and functional – positing the
discourse unit as “the unit directly above the sentence.”

Therefore her thesis, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*, concerns the narrative as it is performed in the context of social interaction, with a particular emphasis on the life story as a means of elucidating a structurally and thematically coherent personal history to others. She defines this performative aspect of our culture in this sense:

> Life stories express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way. They are also one very important means by which we communicate this sense of self and negotiate it with others.\(^29\)

The element of negotiation through real time interaction distances the life story from the genre of biography, although literary theory has also challenged concepts of coherence. It is this aspect of performance that is central to the theoretical framework of this research.

The life story is not a static entity. As a unit of discourse it is continuously updated and reflected upon. It is through this reflection that the speaker must step outside of their life as a participant and create a single actor, a protagonist, who embodies herself. Then it becomes possible to structure a narrative around the development of that self, one in which the protagonist has made conscious decisions and effort to reach the point at which she finds herself today; preferably in conjunction with her ability to project that narrative reliably into the future. Thus life stories emerge from an internal dialogue: they are made and remade as narratives that reflect an individual’s apprehension of their own self in the context of the past, present and a predictable future.

To some extent this element of reflection and revision is also dependent on the audience: discourse units are distinct from written texts in that their context is *negotiation* with other/s. However, what must remain consistent in the explication of any life story is the link between both the stable central protagonist and the progressive narrative that describes and informs their lives. Linde determines that; "a life story is not merely a collection of events that happened in some unknown or irrelevant order."\(^30\)

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\(^29\) Ibid: 3.

\(^30\) Ibid: 13.
Lacking both the singular protagonist and its corresponding coherent narrative, I can only comprehend my own life story in pieces, as it has been erratically populated by ‘the three of me.’

The female Surrealist Cahun has been described by Laurie J. Monahan as “[taking] her own subjectivity as the means of revealing the impossibility of fixing the self; her text and images speak of its dissolution, fragmentation, and transformations.”31 I cannot imagine that she would concede to being described as what Linde refers to as the “proper or comfortable self”5 of the life story or the vernacular portrait, as she revelled in exploring the fragmentation of herself through her writing, photography and montage. Born in 1894 as Lucy Schwob, her androgynous name was one of her earliest creations. I wish to focus at this point on her performance-based texts as they contrast with the linear narrative of the coherent life story and have come to influence the audio components of Dear Earth: The Three of Me?

Comprised of fragments themselves, these works were first published in a book called *Aveux non avenus*, in 1930. Translated by Susan de Muth, my own copy was printed in English in 2007 with the title *Disavowals (or Cancelled Confessions)*. Cahun’s writing is a masterwork of incoherence, subverting the cogent narrative structure of the life story. Her free-form expression and stream of consciousness style are in line with the performance-based texts of her Surrealist contemporaries such as André Breton and Louis Aragon, but Cahun’s subject matter differs in the way it repeatedly turns inward to the explication of the disunity of her self, as can be seen in the extracts below:

> I had spent my solitary hours disguising my soul. The masks were so perfect that when their paths crossed in the grand square of my consciousness, they didn’t recognise each other... I explored the worst possible instincts; I welcomed young monsters into myself and nurtured them.32

While both extracts speak to the incoherence of the self, my interpretation of these passages is as representative of two extremes. In the above section Cahun exults in the

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multiplicity of the self with the glorious abandonment of the manic for whom every experience is thrilling, no matter how deviant. In contrast, below she speaks to the unbearable and crushing weight of depression and its associated sense of deep loss, to which the only solution is some form of denial.

With the least effort I can distinguish three cowards within. One forsakes me, or the other two, or all three at the same time: ‘I don’t know.’ ‘I don’t want any of it.’ ‘I’m ill.’ I even evade my own evasion: ‘Too late. – Tomorrow.’ And go back to sleep.\(^{33}\)

As these distinctive texts show this sense of disunity is not just reflected in her metaphorical language but in the different performative styles of the language itself. There is clear a stylistic distinction between the two quotations above: her manipulation of relative temporality augments the modal distinction between the two pieces.

Cahun’s writings resound powerfully with my own thesis of ‘the three of me’: they have inspired the inclusion of the incoherent voices of the audio component of *Dear Earth*. Her style is suggestive of the performance of an internal dialogue in which she exposes the vagaries of a fragmented self that will not conform to the rhetorical requirements of narrative or fixity.

The texts employed for the representation of the incoherent self in my own work echo this juxtaposition of disparate moods and temporality. They are my own words, but there is a gulf between these two texts of twenty years; the gulf between the moods they represent is perhaps larger. The first body of writing was written during a sustained period of mania, while the second documents the ineffective methods used to try and counteract the inexorable pull of depression. The performance of this component takes the form of whispers, acting like an internal dialogue that is *almost* audible. From the left channel comes the depressive’s attempts at defying the inexorable pull of that state through obsessive repetition, while from the right the manic’s irrational and narcissistic creativity takes flight. Temporal distinctions between the two voices are severe, building on such subversive distortion as are evident in Cahun’s own writings. Technically, the collision of these voices draws on John Cage’s experiments with sound-scapes of the spoken word.

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\(^{33}\) Ibid: 80.
The other performative device that I have identified as inaccessible to the incoherent self is the vernacular photographic portrait. Since photographic technology’s commercialisation, it has emerged as the visual correlate of the coherent life story. As early as 1936 Benjamin described how the photographic medium was responsible for the widespread embrace of the portrait as simulacrum and commodity: “in allowing the reproduction to come closer to whatever situation the person apprehending it is in, it actualizes what is reproduced.”34 However, beyond the photographic portrait’s status as a memento, as a means of ‘re-performing’ the past of the object, its status as a descriptor of putative reality has effected genuine shifts in the portrayal of the self.

Stewart notes that “as genres approach “realism,” their organization of information must clearly resemble the organization of information in everyday life.”35 As the life story, reiterated again and again, consolidates the coherence of its protagonist by means of “the conventions for oral discourse,”36 so the information conveyed through the accessible realism of the reproduced portrait entrenches the identity of its object. It serves to situate the individual at a point in her life, with great attention paid to organising the presentation of that individual in terms of the cultural values of the time. The context of the life story is the seemingly inexorable progression of the protagonist through life, while the context of the reproduced portrait similarly includes signifiers of profession, relationships, status, even (acceptable) passions. Louis Marin examines the meaning of the term portrait itself, stating how “the ‘pro-trait’ is what is put forward, pro-duced, extracted or abstracted from the individual portrayed.”37 Following this analogy the vernacular photographic portrait is historically symptomatic, like the life story, of a coherent performance designed to appeal to the contemporaneous social ideals of others. These range from ideals of beauty and personal style, to providing the emblems of degrees of prosperity and integral familial relationships. Almost without exception, these portraits display their subjects at their best; rarely do they document confusion, incoherence or failure. From the significance of the photo album in twentieth

34 Benjamin, Mechanical Production, 7.
36 Ibid: 25.
century Western society, to the self-performance that has emerged as a ubiquitous feature of social media in the twenty-first century, vernacular portraits further serve to establish coherent narratives of the self. These require little in the way of verbal explication, but can be performed as a life, with one image sequentially following another.

Cahun challenged many of the ideals of the vernacular portrait, including those of sexuality, gender and beauty. Monahan argues that “Cahun’s work revels in the ambiguities afforded by the fluidity of “womanliness”; it was precisely through this indistinct subject position that the coherence of the self was most vulnerable, and therein lay the revolutionary potential of subjectivity itself.” But beyond the masks and costumes Cahun often challenged the coherence of the self within the image. *What Do You Want From Me?* (1928) depicts her shaven-headed in duplicate, sharing a single body although her two selves are clearly in dispute. There is no possibility for resolution between these aspects of herself; they are trapped in a pose that denies dialogue or negotiation.

![Image](image.png)

**Fig. 10. Claude Cahun, What Do You Want From Me?**

Her more complex photomontages explode her body into parts, mostly eyes and hands. They challenge and caress and point, driving the movement within these works. Each contains at least one instance of her own eye, an eye unmistakable from her earlier self-

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38 Monahan, *Radical Transformations*, 130.
portraits. Contained within those eyes are refractions that stretch out beyond the frame. In *Untitled* (1928) her face is reflected in an oversized and disembodied eye, upside down. This collapse of the eye of the montage and self within its refraction calls into question the reality of the image as contained within the frame, and establishes a similarly conflicted dialogue between who is looking in and who is looking out. Every body part, every facet of *Untitled* rejects cohesion, fixity, as she directs the gaze to feminine elements of the body within the work while her face, made masculine, peers in.

![Fig. 11. Claude Cahun, *Untitled*](image)

Cahun clearly embraced both the ethos and iconography of mainstream Surrealism with such images, while still insisting that these works be about the fragmentation of her self. Whitney Chadwick identifies how:

> Women surrealists often astutely wove self-awareness into images of identity as... a series of performances that leave the subject frayed around the edges, fragmented... into complex narratives that simultaneously project and internalise the fragmented self, reproduce and resist dominant discourses.³⁹

It is this awareness of self performance that separates Cahun’s work from that of her male contemporaries. She is not using the movement’s iconography to speak of the

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disunity of the self in an abstracted way: it is always Cahun who performs and subverts fragments of Cahun.

My own series of self-portraits share common features with many of Cahun’s photomontages. Beyond the obvious comparison that both share the loci of our own eyes, the eyes of Dear Earth: The Three of Me? are, strictly speaking, montages themselves. The techniques we employ are separated by almost ninety years – digital tools provide the capacity to layer different media in a way that produces images of greater subtlety and complexity. This can be seen in the method that allows the drawn elements of the eye to darken these apertures, while still exposing the detail beneath. However, Dear Earth’s eyes fully betray their origins in photomontage when the inlays that subvert their perceptive function are included.

My subversion of the iconic self-portraits of Dear Earth does not involve distortions of the images themselves; as in Cahun’s work they are true to reality in form despite their distortions of scale. As Stewart defines it; “exaggeration is not possible without correspondence and relativity.” Therefore the part of the body made icon must adhere to the image that we hold in our minds of it. Deviations from human scale require that the eye, as it is presented to the viewer as a metonym, retains its ratio between width and height, and that the overall contours and signifying details are preserved, even while functional and rational aspects of the work are distorted beyond reason.

Magritte’s False Mirror, gigantic in size, testifies to the necessity for relative scale when challenging the concept of the eye as merely an organ of sight. In the case of the eyes of Dear Earth, this distortion takes the form of inlays, inserted like invasive contact lenses between the fragile body of the eye and its lashes. An image of a human eye denies the rational and the classical once its functional aspect is compromised. Each inlay sublimates the lexicon of Surrealism to subvert the humanity, and hence the internal coherence, of the manic and the depressive eyes portrayed. In doing so they also raise doubts as to the perceptive capacity of these mutilated eyes; questioning not just if they can see, but how they see. They represent the conflicted ontology surrounding these aspects of myself. There are twelve of these distortions that

40 Stewart, On Longing, 128.
can mitigate the function of the eye: produced through the techniques of photography, scanography and digital imaging they exist on a sliding scale from merely disrupting the eyes’ appearance to completely erasing any semblance of consciousness. Examples of these inlays are derived from coral, shells and seaweed that distort the eye while retaining a sense of sight, to more severe interventions such as blood and blisters that further alienate the eye from its function. Finally, there is the set of inlays that I refer to as the ‘zombie eyes’. Based on the unconscious orbs of their namesake, these three inlays mine the remarkably homogeneous eyes of the zombies of popular culture to cultivate an absence of the functional; eyes without any pretence of conscious experience at all.\footnote{For discussion of philosophical zombies from which this concept was derived see David J. Chalmers, \textit{The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory}, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1996.}

\begin{center}
Fig. 12. Emma Veal, \textit{Inlays Part One}
\end{center}

\textit{Dear Earth’s} set of inlays, placed \textit{within} the eyes of the manic and the depressive, subvert their function as organs of sight. They also contribute to stripping these portraits of their classical coherence, imposing alien elements into the images that reject rational explanations. From an ontological perspective, the inlays operate as confronting metaphors for the interference between sensation and perception that is a prominent feature of mental illness.
The life story and the vernacular photographic portrait are historically linked to conventions that insist upon their relevance as coherent narratives. Stewart states how the life story “whose repetition is seen as a cumulative one, is in fact the progress of the genre, the refinement of notions of character, incident, action, and scene in relation to changing cultural values.”42 By extension, the photographic portrait and the life story, as narrative elements, are negotiated not only in the context of social strictures but through the evolution of the genre itself. It is only through the subversion of such accepted genres that art, challenging the coherence of the self, can take place.

Caouette took a subversive approach in developing his feature-length film *Tarnation* (2003). He assembled footage from his own past in a kind of video montage, mining his mother’s past and his own in conjunction with their (belatedly) shared present. It was premiered on the QuickTime section of the Apple website, as an exemplar of the emergent iMovie software, and went on to be screened widely in art cinemas. As a digital work, it is a frenetic collage of numerous moving image formats as they have evolved over the last forty years, from Super 843 to DV44.

![Image of Jonathan Caouette](image)

Fig. 13. Jonathan Caouette, *Tarnation*

The initial subject of *Tarnation* is the disintegration of Caouette’s damaged mother, and its repercussions for his own life. After falling from the roof of the family home aged twelve, Renée LeBlanc underwent electro-shock therapy. Over four years she had to undergo several ‘treatments’ a week. As her world becomes darker an overlay of text

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43 Eastman Kodak released Super 8 as a motion picture film and home movie format in 1965. It improved upon previous 8mm formats and enabled the magnetic recording of sound.
44 DV is a format for storing digital video.
states that, following one of these interventions, “she would walk outside and feel as though the sun would make her evaporate.” With the conclusion of the film the devastating statement is made that there was nothing wrong with her mind before the treatments began.

*Tarnation* is also a self-portrait in which Caouette mercilessly depicts his life from the age of eleven, when he first situated himself before the camera. He describes the concept in this way: “I conceived the film as a new way of looking at documentary, as though it were imitating my thought process, giving the audience the experience of seeing what it was like to be inside my head.” Clearly, Caouette’s intent for developing *Tarnation* resonates strongly with the aims of this research, employing both modal voices and “photographic self performance” to achieve his ends. Our common ground lies in the way in which we have both mined our own experience towards an aim of presenting the incoherent self.

My motivation for the development of *Dear Earth: The Three of Me?* is not dissimilar from that of the two artists cited in this chapter. Cahun and Caouette have used the genres of fragmented voices and “photographic self performance” to document their sense of alienation from the comfortable certainty of social constructs such as the coherent life story. There is an innate terror inherent in being unable to situate oneself in terms of a singular narrative. The concept of ‘the three of me’ is another alternative answer to this question of how to represent the incoherent self.

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Chapter Three

The main feature of Dear Earth: The Three of Me? is its movement; collectively the eyes’ movement serves to augment not just the disparities between ‘the three of me,’ but the implication of them standing in place for the ontology of the incoherent self. Once movement is included the eyes have the capacity to turn outwards to the viewer and away again. Engagement with the audience is central to the work’s performance, as is its denial. Grootenboer identifies how “the battle with the gaze turns out to be a battle with the self... the subject of looking transforms into the object of sight even as, all the while, the gaze as the irreducible quality of the subject turns into an object.”47 The movements of Dear Earth effect this transformation on multiple levels. The interaction between the three eyes emerges as a battle for subjectivity, while their ever-evolving performance surprises the viewer by sporadically returning her gaze, hence imperilling, in that moment, her own subjectivity.

This transformative aspect of movement, to trap the viewer in a novel ontology through the shifting gaze, extends beyond its previous incarnations as a six-minute piece of “photographic self performance” and a series of self-portraits. As discussed in Chapter One, the process of isolating the self-portraits pertinent to individual aspects of the eye was one of deconstruction. They were extracted from the fabric of the original video and then, through a range of techniques, worked up into fifty-six images of the eye. However, it was only when these images were reconstructed as sequences of movement that their iconography, as both apertures of sight and metonyms for the fragmented self, could challenge notions of subjectivity. These eyes represent the set unadulterated by inlays or relative temporality; while less than one percent of the total, they form the underlying basis for all the movements of the work.

While we might feel that we have a general understanding of the movements of our own bodies, the actual translation of those impressions into convincing animation is elusive. We may be aware that a limb will transition through a number of phases between a starting and an end point, or have gazed into a mirror and noted the minimal movements of our eyes. However, generally speaking we have a fundamental ignorance

47 Grootenboer, Treasuring the Gaze, 71.
of how we move: the details of virtually all movement are either subconscious or retained for only a short period of time. Either way, how we move is something of an enigma, both practically and ideologically. Stewart states that “the problems in imagining the body are symptomatic of the problems in imagining the self as place, object, and agent at once.” Each of these vantage points is arrived at from a different perspective; arguably the three can only coalesce in the moment of the making of the self-portrait, in this case through the instantiation of the original video. All else relies on retrospective analysis informed by documented concepts of temporality, movement and sequence.

Furthermore, sequences of movement (over periods of less than one-third of a second), are generally impenetrable to the human consciousness. Our minds are not the kind of storage devices that can replay each ‘key’ frame relevant to a particular sequence. Kentridge’s description of a “grammar” of individual movements is a particularly apt one when it comes to discussing animation. To film a particular movement (say, the flicking of a cigarette), entails a structure where one element necessarily follows another in order to make sense of that movement. These elements are not wholly deterministic, but movements of the hands, for example, require a tighter narrative structure than the eyes of Dear Earth.

To extend this analogy to the grammar of the English language – in its most simple transitive form the sentence only requires a noun (or more specifically noun phrase, but for this example I will use proper nouns), followed by a verb followed by another noun: ‘Chloe saw Bob’. This structure also permits both the accumulation and nesting of such components: ‘Chloe saw Bob [and Lucy [with Claude]].’ Using a digital camera to, as Kentridge describes it, “find what the actual grammar” of a movement is divines the underlying rules of that movement, while still allowing the animator to edit on the basis of the level of descriptiveness, or complexity, that she wishes to include in her work. The movements of the eyes of Dear Earth range widely in their complexity, while still conforming to a grammar analogous to the examples above.

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49 William Kentridge and Angela Breidbach, William Kentridge thinking aloud, 46.
However, it should be stated here that the individual sequences of animation are not merely copies of the movement that played out in the video. Once the grammar that informs the structures of the movements of the eye has been identified, the ensuing process involves creating coherence from individual video frames that may or may not have a contiguous relationship with each other. These video stills are often fractured from their original context but later united through the detail and means of their production, specifically the consistency of the iris and surroundings, and the drawings that substantiate the brows, lashes, and the enigmatic curves of the eyes’ interior. Through the control of my animator’s hand and the similarity of their visual aspects they emerge as abstracted moments in time. Distilled again and again, they no longer represent six minutes of my life, but the content of a larger performance.

In its most basic form, *Dear Earth* contains sixty-three distinct movements of just over forty seconds in duration – think of the number of narrative segments present in its methodological antecedent *Loss* and square it. Theoretically, any of these movements can follow another, as each begins with the same image of the closed eye. Visually, this gives the impression that the eye ‘blinks’ at the time each new movement replaces another onscreen. The artifice of these blinks that last less than one-third of a second enables a structural coherence; not only do they (potentially) connect all of the movements seamlessly with each other, but they underpin the manipulation driven by the code embedded in the structure of *Dear Earth*. Be it at the level of the individual sequence of movement (see example below), or that of the non-indexical sequence of the work itself, *nothing in Dear Earth: The Three of Me?* has ever actually happened.

In the context of this discussion of the grammar of movement I introduce two very different video works: Rist’s *I’m Not the Girl Who Misses Much* (1986), and Viola’s *Quintet of the Astonished* (2000). As videos, both these works rely heavily on sequential movement that is necessarily dependent on the form of a recognisable grammatical
structure – there is no question as to the inherent reality of the characters’ movements. Unlike animations, they necessarily rely on a truth in representation that emerges from the link between the video and the work of art; a causal link between the initial performance and the final presentation.

Fig. 15. Pipilotti Rist, *I’m Not the Girl Who Misses Much*

The distinction between *I’m Not the Girl Who Misses Much* and *Quintet of the Astonished* lies in the way that they have been edited to convey unique impressions. Rist’s *Girl* exhibits jagged and frenetic movements, highlighted by an increasingly high-pitched soundtrack, while Viola’s excruciatingly gentle and internally isolated *Quintet* owes much to the slowness of its movement. Obviously the clash between these videos is one of temporality – *I’m Not the Girl Who Misses Much* has been edited so that its movements still make sense despite their exaggerated speed, while *Quintet of the Astonished* exhibits exaggerated movement on another scale; displayed at approximately one tenth of the speed it was recorded, it appears almost as a moment frozen in time. Both works challenge not the reality of what we see, but our perceptions of time. Stewart suggests that the exaggeration of time can affect the reading of a narrative (she is discussing the written narrative here but I think that the same can be said of the viewer of a work of video or animation): “In the detail of action we see narrative triumph over everyday temporality, forcing the reader to participate in the
speed of the narrative.” Both Rist’s Girl and Viola’s Quintet draw the viewer into their own subversions of “everyday temporality.”

If the grammar of movement is taken to inform the transitions in form and space over time, then, pursuing this analogy further, the temporality of a work contributes to its semantic content through its abstraction from what is perceived to be reality. Benjamin identifies how “the close-up expands space as the slow-motion sequence dilates movement.” The inverse of this statement certainly applies in terms of both aspect and temporality. The exaggeration central to the two examples above represent extremes of editing and interpretation; in semantic terms all they have in common is that they are video, albeit video exaggerated to the point that it denies the absolute concept of “everyday temporality”. However, I feel that they serve to highlight the profound semantic impacts that manipulations in the temporality of a work based on movement can engender.

The eyes of the central protagonist of Dear Earth: The Three of Me? conform to “everyday temporality.” Their movements are based around a frequency of movement observable from the original video, using sequences that most closely follow the structures present in the footage. Hence, the ‘stable’ actor of ‘the three of me,’ through its movements, models both the grammar and semantics of reality most closely. To its left the depressed eye moves with half its frequency, while on the right the manic eye operates at twice its speed. The establishment of this relative temporality marks a clear

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50 Stewart, On Longing, 132.
51 Benjamin, Mechanical Production, 29.
semantic distinction across the three eyes, augmented by the distinctions in the grammar of their movements. Those of the manic eye are complex, verging on incoherence, while the movements of its depressed counterpart are simplified and attenuated. Yet as our apprehension of the grammar of movement is, compared with that afforded by the video camera, quite limited, the impact of these eyes standing for ‘the three of me’ lies in their relative temporality. Hence it is the eyes’ interaction with each other, merging and diverging both grammatically and semantically, that provides the work with its underlying meaning as a performance of the incoherent self.

Fig.17. Emma Veal, Dear Earth: The Three of Me?

This interaction lies at the heart of this model of manic depression. With this condition the act of seeing attributed to the aspects of the incoherent self is only relevant in the context of perception – while ‘the three of me’ may inhabit the same experiential self, they do not inhabit the same perceptual self. In other words, the manic or depressive that have at times inhabited this body does not sense the world any differently from the self that is typing these words out now. However, their perception of that world, the way in which they respond to sensory input, is distinct to the degree that they each have a separate modality, and as a result, set of behaviours. Undeniably the three eyes of Dear Earth represent aspects of the same individual; in shape and scale and adherence to detail they are identical. However, their distinct movements and distressed
appearances are designed to shatter this coherence, reflecting the vagaries of their capacities for perception.

In Chapter Two I discussed how each eye is, in a sense, a self-portrait. Even taking into account the unique inlays as they appear as integrated parts in still images of Dear Earth’s eyes, for the most part this holds true. In the tradition of the photomontages of Cahun each printed eye remains a self portrait. All contain recognisable photographic elements of my own eye: I can print them all out, and each can stand alone as a moment in time as a drawing or a photograph might, and the constraints on the detail of each eye mark every eye as mine. But from the moment that I began to animate these eyes in ways that differed from the sequential truth of the original video footage, something changed in the way I regarded these fragments of my self.

When asked, Rist said “I don’t want viewers to see my works as self-portraits.”\(^{52}\) Like Rist, I do not see Dear Earth: The Three of Me? as a self-portrait, even as I concede that the images of the eyes that make up its underlying content probably are. Should I choose to actually print out every variation and paper the walls of a gallery I feel that the result would present a mass of my own eyes gazing back at me, but the animated eyes in their short narrative sequences of movement are not me. I am not entirely sure why I should make this distinction, but since I began work on Dear Earth as a code-driven animation, also like Rist I have referred to my character as ‘she’. Perhaps the answer lies in the means of production; both works depend on a performance that, through the processes of editing, of deconstruction and reconstitution, the ‘she’ of Dear Earth is so far removed from the ‘me’ of the raw footage that I can no longer make that conceptual leap between the two. And like Rist, I also attribute a novel sense of agency to the character upon the screen. The way in which a work of art is construed affects its relationship to the original object; hence I was indubitably the subject of the original video, but became the object of the work as a whole. I think that Stewart articulates this dichotomy of the self and other succinctly when she writes how: “in the former mode of production, the subject is performer or agent of tradition; in the second mode of production, the subject is performed, constituted by the operation of the device.”\(^{53}\)

\(^{52}\) Christine Ross, “Fantasy and Distraction,” 217.

\(^{53}\) Stewart, On Longing, 12.
the case of my own work, however, the device is not merely a digital tool; *Dear Earth* is performed by code that is designed to create a tension between organisation and randomness\textsuperscript{54}, inserted into levels of its structure.

Varvara Guljajeva and Mar Canet’s work *Wishing Wall* (2014) reflects this tension between organisation and randomness. They ask the question: “what if you could say your [innermost] wish out loud and have it magically released into the world for people to see?”\textsuperscript{55} Through the use of code\textsuperscript{56} and multiple processors *Wishing Wall* turns the spoken word into butterflies of hues that reflect the sentiment of each wish. The audience can interact with them to see the words briefly metamorphose from these images. The butterflies swarm across the wall in increasing numbers, creating a beautifully minimalist live performance.

*Dear Earth: The Three of Me*? is also a live performance, representative of innermost thoughts, that is driven by code. However, while *Wishing Wall* is an entirely computer-generated artwork, the code within *Dear Earth* serves as a solution to the problem of the coherent narrative. Its content is stored as a frame-based work built in Flash. The work runs as a stand-alone projector generated from the main file. The other one hundred and twenty files that contribute to the running of *Dear Earth* are loaded dynamically into and out of the projector in real time. This software allows not only for animations constructed from images, as is the case with the movements that form the work’s figurative content, but also coded elements written in a language similar to JavaScript, called ActionScript. In this case the code enables communication across the five levels of the work’s structure. The base level of *Dear Earth* is where 644 content files are stored, and the level above co-ordinates the relative temporality of the movements across the three eyes. In the third level both coded processes controlling the display of content operate at different ends of a timeline, informing the display of the entire work (including audio) in the next level. The top level where interactivity operates via the action of a single user is called the projector.

\textsuperscript{54} Tim Brook, conversation with the author, August 23 2010.
\textsuperscript{56} *Wishing Wall* employs Tree.js.
There are three fundamental processes that drive the performance of *Dear Earth: The Three of Me?* as a work of media art. Two of these are called at the start and the end of the discreet timelines where the three eyes are constituted as a single entity. In this level, all possible combinations of animated movements, including inlays and audio, are realised as frame-based objects with timelines of six-hundred and forty frames (or 20.6 seconds). In the final frame a recursive algorithm determines the ‘state’ of the next sequence to be loaded; this refers to the state of the inlays and audio components associated with each animated fragment. The values that indicate the probabilities of a certain state are based on a structure similar to that used for *Loss*, discussed in Chapter One. Following is a segment of the finite Markov chain of *Dear Earth*, involving the default eye, inlays of the coral and thunder egg, and audio components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Default</th>
<th>Coral</th>
<th>Thunder</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Audio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default (no inlays)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thunder Egg Inlay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Inlays (above)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

Each algorithm determines the likelihood of a stable state, or one of two changes in state, but they do not prescribe which of the three outcomes will occur. Their occurrence depends on a simple function responsible for the random generation of a number from zero to nine (inclusive). Below is an example of one of the set of randomised algorithms employed to effect a change in state upon reaching frame 640 of one set of animations. This example reflects the values of the state which displays the coral inlay (depressive eye and audio) and the thunder egg inlay (manic eye and audio) exhibited in the extract of the Markov chain above:

```javascript
//Code attached to last frame of Display7_3. Steady state in this example is Coral inlay (left eye and channel) and Thunder Egg inlay (right eye and channel). Variations of this algorithm are repeated for one of 19 possible states every 20.6sec.

onClipEvent (load) {
  function randRange(min:Number, max:Number):Number {
    var randomNum:Number = Math.floor(Math.random() * (max - min + 1)) + min;
    return randomNum;
  }
```
for (var i = 0; i < 1; i++) {
    var n:Number = randRange(0, 9);
    trace (n);
}

The 'n' generated by the function determines which frame (described with an 'alpha-numeric') the level above will stop at, and in turn which state the three eyes will be in for the subsequent 20.6sec.

if (n < 4){
    this._parent._parent.gotoAndStop ("D7");
}

"D7" represents a change in state: the Coral inlay is no longer visible but the Thunder Egg remains. Audio only plays Manic voices (right channel).

else if (n > 6){
    this._parent._parent.gotoAndStop ("D3");
}

"D3" also represents a change in state: the Coral inlay is visible but the Thunder Egg is not. Audio only plays Depressive voices (left channel).

else if (n = 4 || 5 || 6){
    this._parent._parent.gotoAndStop ("D7_3");
}

"D7_3" reflects a steady state: both inlays and audio channels are retained.

Hence, when the first frame in the next object is loaded its state, in terms of the appearance of the three eyes and the presence or absence of the voices of the manic and the depressive, has already been determined. In that initial frame a random function selects which movement of the central, 'stable' eye will be attached to that object. As this involves a distinct process from that of the algorithm described above, even if Dear Earth maintains a steady state over several iterations the form of the movement loaded will differ. Simultaneously, the temporal variations that are modified for the manic and the depressed eyes are put into place, completing the performance of the relative temporality of these three aspects of the incoherent self. The use of two independent coded processes ensures that the visual content of the work evolves every 20.6 seconds.
Canberra artist Mitchell Whitelaw describes the strength of art employing algorithms as “its ability to explore complex, dynamic systems, and the potential of those systems in turn to address real (lived) complex dynamics.”

Dear Earth, as a simulation of the modalities of manic depression, is constituted through the code described. As it weaves together its inlays, sound and relative temporal movements it emerges as a model of the ontology of the incoherent self, intended to embody ‘the three of me’ in the same space and time.

The third process is viewer interactivity. A cordless mouse situated next to the headphones for audio is labelled ‘Fix Me?’ This choice of a simple mouse click is reflective of the bureaucratic carelessness with which episodes of mental illness are often treated by health institutions. When pressed, the discordant movement and appearance of the eyes is replaced with longer narrative segments. As the central eye looks on, the eyes of the manic and depressed eyes are stitched shut. Once the bright blue stitches fall away, the eyes remain synchronised with each other for two minutes. After that time, the simulation is reloaded and the performance of ‘the three of me’ begins anew, enabling the work to continue to perform itself indefinitely. The interaction of the single user may ‘fix’ but it cannot heal.

Fig. 18. Emma Veal, Dear Earth: The Three of Me? Interactive Narrative

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58 Tested informally with colleagues and advisors
No actors are present to sew or cut the stitches, nor wipe away the tears. Like Kentridge,⁵⁹ I prefer to display these actions as the results of an unseen hand, thus mitigating the violence of them while retaining the impact of the actions themselves.

Fig. 19. William Kentridge, *Nandi with Constellation*

However, the presence of these narratives as interactive elements within a wider and escalating structure of the disintegration of the coherent self serve to emphasise the cyclical nature of manic depression. Medicated to the point of pragmatism, I can look on this fragmentation of the self from a distance that allows me to step outside of this cycle, and produce an installation that draws on my moods without resorting to the solipsism of art therapy. *Dear Earth* is an abstraction extrapolated from my own experience that models rather than describes ‘the three of me.’

*Dear Earth: The Three of Me?* is projected large-scale into a darkened space of the gallery. On approach it gives the impression of entering a reverent environment; the eyes in their three alcoves provide the only light as they dwarf the viewer. On one level, the choice of a triptych is an ironic one, as ‘madness’ has been historically persecuted by the church in the name of witchcraft or demonic possession. To hold ‘the three of me’ up as object of worship blasphemes hundreds of years of societal norms. On another level *Dear Earth* alludes to my own experience, as encapsulated by Rist, of the way “the

museum often takes the place of churches and what they offered in the past: it is a space where you can try to find your presence... just being there.”

Within the environment of *Dear Earth* a bench or ‘pew’ is placed before the projection at the distance most conducive to viewing the work. I aspired to create a similar environment to that of Viola’s *The Quintet of the Unseen* at Blain|Southern in London, (above), thereby in Jones’ words establishing a space “in relation to which the viewer is immersed rather positioned as disembodied gaze.” From that vantage point *within* the installation, the viewer of *Dear Earth* has the capacity to act upon the performance around her. By ‘fixing’ the incoherence of the self that models the ontology of ‘the three of me,’ she sets in chain a process that damages before it repairs, then reverts again to the ever-evolving dance of the manic, the depressive, and a third perspective resembling me.

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60 Christine Ross, “Fantasy and Distraction,” 217.
Conclusion

Over the past few years the manic and the depressive that, together with my more rational aspect, comprise ‘the three of me’, have been more subdued. I do not believe that I could have developed this theoretical framework from within that storm of disrupted perception. And while the isolation of ‘the three of me’ has proved to be a way into better understanding what it means to be manic depressive, *Dear Earth* is far removed from an exercise in art therapy. As my focus honed in on the character of my mental illness as a manifestation of the incoherent self, the work itself has been, repeatedly and mercilessly, abstracted from a literal representation of this condition. This is why I do not consider the final work a self-portrait; it has been abstracted to the point of constituting an ontological model. *Dear Earth’s* most salient contribution to the field of media art arts is its representation of one manifestation of mental illness, manic depression, within an interactive digital work. To confine it to the medium of animation is to ignore the way it embodies rather than describes the vagaries of these three modalities. After all, the purpose of this research is not to document my experience but to represent the incoherent self.

In order to refine my central framework I sought to posit selected traditional performative genres of Western culture that are inaccessible to the incoherent self. The life story and the vernacular photographic portrait both serve to situate the individual in terms of the societal norms of the time. Essential to these genres is the ability to step outside the self and create a singular actor, or protagonist, who represents that individual’s “pro-trait[s]” in the context of a reliable, even inevitable, history. The sharing of the life story and the vernacular portrait through the meaningful events of the protagonist’s development over the years then becomes a method of not just communicating a coherent narrative, but signifying social connections and status. As Linde notes “coherence is both a social demand and an internal, psychological demand.” The coherence of the self is central to the life story and the vernacular photographic portrait; indeed, as rhetorical elements one is often used to further evidence the truth of the other.

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I admit that expressing the incoherent self poses more difficulties, particularly as the access to such common rhetorical devices is not possible. However, there clearly are precedents for artists subverting genres such as the life story and the vernacular photographic portrait towards the aim of representing the incoherence of the self.

Dear Earth: The Three of Me? has achieved this aim, performing a simulation of the central framework’s fluctuations through the use of coding, digital imaging, drawing, animation and the spoken word in such a way that the viewer can appreciate the dissonance between ‘the three of me’ as they appear juxtaposed within the installation. It is not pre-recorded, nor does it require my intervention as it runs in real time. Dear Earth takes hundreds of images, interwoven in a large network of relative movements and metaphorical fluctuations, and with the application of intersecting finite Markov chains in the form of algorithms, sets them free to play out indefinitely as an instantiation of an incoherent ontology.

However, the work underwent a few incarnations as it approached its final form as a simulation. The process began with the initial video, a six minute act of “photographic self performance”⁶⁴ that delved into my sub-linguistic experience and exposed the minutiae of the movements of the eye. Hence, even this early work functioned on two distinct levels; as an intensely personal self-portrait and a documentation of the way the eye moved, from one fraction of a second to the next. Benjamin wrote that “it will count among the revolutionary functions of film that it renders the artistic and scientific uses of photography, which beforehand generally diverged, recognizably identical.”⁶⁵ Eighty years later it was these two features of my six minute film that converged in such a way as to inspire both the concept and methodology of Dear Earth.

Initially, in developing the images that would constitute the content of Dear Earth, I followed the precedent that I had set with four smaller works whose focus was animation. Yet, even as video stills, the details of the eye continued to captivate. Eventually I settled on the inclusion of the iris, the pupil and the refraction within it as the photographic elements to be combined with my 2B pencil drawings of the lashes, brows, and lines that marked the eyes’ aperture. Other aspects from the footage were

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⁶⁴ Jones, Self/Image, 40.
⁶⁵ Benjamin, Mechanical Reproduction, 29.
progressively discarded as distractions, until I had a core group of fifty-six portraits of my own eye.

Through my foray into digital photomontage I had achieved a set of self-portraits that, to quote Caws were “iconized through separation.”66 This metonymic use of a part of the body that is representative of the self was a salient feature of Surrealism in general, but Cahun’s work in particular. For Cahun, the use of such iconography was not merely an esoteric exercise in psychoanalytical theory, but an exploration into how those theories related to her personally. She embraced her multiplicity through the variations in mood and texture of her writing and employed the iconic eye definitely as a means of expressing the incoherence of her own self in her photomontages. Katy Kline states how, in Cahun’s book Disavowals, “the photomontages provide visual counterpoints to the erratic, confused, and confusing rhythm of the text that so convincingly communicates the incoherence of reality.”67 The inverse could be said of my own practice; in Dear Earth the incoherent, whispering voices of the manic and the depressive provide the sonic augmentation to the performance of ‘the three of me’ as represented by the potent iconography of the human eye. Simultaneously identifiable as portrait of the object and possessor of the gaze, the iconic eye inherits the implied subjectivity of the moods behind.

My own framework of ‘the three of me’ required further manipulations of that inherited subjectivity. To represent the manic and the depressive I invented a sliding scale of subjectivity that cast doubt on the perception of their eyes. Through the use of inlays inserted into the fragile aperture of the eye the number of self-portraits swelled to several hundred; each inlay distanced the eye from its function, subverting the perceptual capacities of the modalities represented.

As is the case with Cahun’s photomontages, this vast array of portraits retained the status of images of myself despite questions as to their function. It was only with the addition of movement that they began to deviate from the truth of their representation. None of the sequences of movement in Dear Earth: The Three of Me? ever actually

happened. These six hundred fragments of some twenty seconds in length might have been based on sections of footage, but were reconstituted in such a way as to nullify their connection to that intimate six minute film. They originally followed the grammatical structure of the video, but did not adhere to its content. On a semantic level these movements diverged into three streams of relative temporality; one for each of the aspects of my central framework. The deviant appearances of the eyes of the manic and the depressive were augmented by their unique frequencies of movement.

I turned to code as a means of disrupting the coherence of narrative. *Dear Earth’s* evolving aspects of an ontological model that was to be a *performance* of my concept in real time could not operate through any other methodology. Were I to create a deterministic recording of the work it would emerge as a solipsistic presentation of the way in which I *recalled* these interactions, not a model of how they might evolve. I wanted the work to embody, in Whitelaw’s terms, “the dynamics of a process played out in a model world – a construction of entities and relations.”68 I established relationships between entities that constituted states of perception (using the set of inlays and audio components as the indicators of particular states) through probabilities; quite simply these probabilities hinted at a static state, a shift forwards in state or a shift to the previous state. In combination with the random function that loaded a particular movement and its temporal variants simultaneously, these alternations in state combined to produce a model of the moods of ‘the three of me.’ My simplified ontology could then perform itself indefinitely, or until the viewer tried to ‘fix’ her. And the answer to this fix? It is always temporary, and while it might repair it cannot heal.

This research provides one complete and authentic answer to the question of how to represent the incoherent self through the theoretical ontology of ‘the three of me.’ Constituted as an installation that models these moods as aspects of the same fragmented self in real time, *Dear Earth* is a coherent and logical response to my own incoherence. Through its use of methodologies it embraces many areas of digital art, while still featuring manual pencil drawings that humanise its iconography, and in turn, its performance. Its complexity is deceptive; only a tiny fraction of the stages and states and sounds of the work are present in any given moment. Hence it rewards the viewer

68Whitelaw, “Model/Metonym,” 44.
who devotes both time and consideration to this novel ontology. For not only does Dear Earth represent the incoherent self, but through the stochastic modelling of manic depression it suggests a means to embody other alternative theoretical frameworks through digital art. Incorporating the use of digital tools and technologies, I have established a methodology of combining the disparate visual and sonic elements of a concept in a process-driven work that I have created but do not control. Every time that I experience Dear Earth: The Three of Me? it is, as for any viewer, anew.
Appendix A

Voices of the Manic and the Depressive


1. trapped between the curtains and the sand and a stirring a burning and the molten rumbling rupturing volcanos in dark places

   and the WANTING WANTING WANTING! I WANT YOU! I WANT YOU SO BAD! I WANT YOU GONE! BEGONE! or either way I don’t mind...

   cock and cunt and blind deaf dumb consummation cocoons and curses and I still don’t mind.

   the hardness and the smoulder a spurtlng heady flame drowned by the breath of a curtain settling on just another day.

2. it’s that sludge of madness seeping thru that slides into a mere cold sweat toxic and taunting

   and slips away leaving you spared and suffocating and choking on the sickly sweet air of sanity

   give me drowning drench my limbs give me pain a bloating of the lungs give me torrid and aching lust

   but please please anything but nothing at all

3. texture

   sharp jarring toxic rust

   no

   panic full stop

   layers of stinging agony

   sensual joy

   and the haze of dragging moments unremembered

   please
the fear of continuum ad infinitum
of the horrific absence of change
fuck
add it up
anguish versus bliss
an ambivalent equation weighted with
endless time spent starched and sterile
slaughtered hopelessly
add it up
horrendous or exalted
add it up
the moments minutes lives
that pass like gravity like
cloth collapsing silently to the floor.

4. the fucking sucking wrenching of vitals long black hours racing burning
contemplation of a heart on a pole is it mine?

whisky whisky pass the fucking scotch and aren’t I beautiful say it again speak
there’s this fire last night...

the saviour came to call tonight he’s five inches shorter nevermind fucking hot
must be hell hell hell hell

I love you god I love you but I never want to see your face again...

never mind pass the fucking scotch as I spontaneously combust oh fuck one one
two one two three four f –

one two three four five six seven eight nine ten.

5. here we have a few prime examples of meanderings as products of varying
stages (or plateaus) of intoxication.
intoxication resulting from, in the first instance, a satisfaction and fulfilment of desires both psychological and physical

and secondarily from the incapacity to summarily accept the consummation of the aforementioned desires

and hence the inability to become recumbent in the realm of indulgent complacency

6. just bored and pissed once more purity has fled but it doesn’t hurt at all in fact everything has fled but it doesn’t warrant a twitch or flinch or anything just bored with myself

and pissed out of weakness and absence of imagination and missing...you

introspectivity is a disease

what is the cure?

not much of a moon tonight

not much light

7. the facets, no the passions, of my being are manifestations of distinct, often conflicting, but always fanatical religions.

I am my own religions

all –

the strident and the pure drive for thought and creativity free from blemishes or association, and independence of mind and subjugation of flesh.

the blissful abandonment of essences and desires to exterior forces over which no control could ever be legitimately exercised.

agonised strength, or adored weakness.

aah.

a compromise is not apparently possible.

contentment is not conducive to itself, only to tainted complacency and, it follows, happiness as a state cannot survive a moment.

aah!

for the silencing of everything that is not the highest essence of my SELF!
but these manifestations continue to battle as weakness entreats an insidious and devastating and appealing assault, which may not be overcome without considerable cost to both sides.

I am my own religions.

I am in direct opposition to my self, and the victorless war marches on.

8. it’s not that you cannot express happiness, but more a question of the absence of a need to. ecstasy is easy – it possesses an element of ache, of agony, that forces its depiction.

and as for agony itself, screaming bleeding agony – it is violently retched onto the paper, acidly burning into the page.

still my own religions
but blurred
smudged
at the extremities
the only burr
love
slaughtering angst
slaying agony
and
softly smothering that
ache

9. subterfuge!

self via self
I am screeching
I am scared
my own religions
thwart me and
I stumble
shrunk
shrunk...
shrunk.

Depressive Texts – (written 2010) edited 15 October 2015

1. One two three. Breathe. One two. One two three. One two. One two three. I don’t know how to be. One two three. One two three. Breathe. Breathe. One two. One two. Help me. One two three. One two three.

2. One two three four five six seven...Shut Up...eight nine ten eleven...Shut Up...twelve thirteen...Shut Up...fourteen fifteen sixteen seventeen eighteen nineteen...Shut Up...Twenty one two three...Shut Up...four five six seven eight nine.

3. One two three. Don’t. One two. Don’t. One two three. One two. One two three. Don’t. One two three. One two three. Don’t hurt. One two. One two. Don’t hurt me. One two three. One two three. One two.

4. One two. I. One two three. I don’t. One two three four five. I don’t know. One two three four five six seven...I don’t know how... One two three four five six seven eight nine ten eleven...I don’t know how to be... One two three four five six seven eight nine ten eleven twelve thirteen...

5. One two three four five. Lost. One two. Five plus two equals seven. Lost. One two three four five. I am. One two three four five six seven. Lost. Seven plus five plus seven equals nine-teen. Lost to me.

Appendix B


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>00</th>
<th>1a</th>
<th>1b</th>
<th>2a</th>
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</table>

* Each alpha-numeric variation refers to a unique narrative segment of approximately 28 seconds.

^ Values are assigned, (out of ten), to represent the probability of stasis, or of one or two particular changes in state.
Bibliography


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Fig. 1. *Opabinia*, 2008. Digital animation, dimensions variable. Stills: the author.

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