

# The Foolscap

Volume IIII



# **THE FOOLSCAP**

VOLUME III

2017

ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE

COACH HOUSE PRINTING

TORONTO

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## *Letter from the Editor*

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Dear Reader,

As consumers of media, overstimulation is easily reached. According to Marshall McLuhan, a result of this overstimulation is the inability to recognize oneself. Thus the goal, as consumers of media, becomes to have a conscious choice over what we so readily consume and how we consume it. We, as readers, must consume media actively and assertively. We must question the media we encounter – its insidiousness, its advantages, as well as its inclusivity.

In such a technologically infused age, the advocacy for apathy in lieu of genuine connections becomes hard to ignore. Media is multifaceted and its implications are two-fold; its accessibility and flexibility must be considered alongside its insidiousness and strength. My goal as this year's editor-in-chief was to incorporate media while still exposing the artist within. Beginning and ending this volume of the Foolscap with a poem was intentional; we must not become entranced and lost within the exploration and advancement of media. We must not forget our creative spirit; the blood of artists runs within us all. Media, when partnered with art, can be a tool of awakening – a way to challenge dominant narratives present in our media revolution. We must turn inward before we can look outward to make changes.

My hope, dear reader, is for us all to expose the artist within, and to break free from McLuhan's narcosis. I hope you find the pieces within as alerting and innovative as I have – that you consume them consciously and reflect upon them thoughtfully.

Victoria Alvarez

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A decorative graphic consisting of numerous small, semi-transparent squares in various shades of gray and black, scattered across the top and left side of the page. A thin black line runs horizontally across the top, and a vertical line runs down the left side, meeting at a corner with a small curved detail.

**missed connection**

Daria Petrovic



even if I spell it out,  
will you understand?

is it all up to me  
to tell you who, what, where, when, why  
how,  
exactly  
the light hit your face last Sunday at 9am?

will it matter?  
because the light I saw  
was not the light you felt  
or the feeling you inhaled  
or the way I tried to tell it

sometimes I think if you close your eyes  
I can write novels on your skin  
and you'll know exactly where  
my fingers turned the page

but each time,  
you put bookmarks in new places and  
pause  
where I never took a breath

we always used to share  
the gritty last sips of your dollar drink  
but I wonder, now,  
if you tasted my lips on the straw

sometimes I think I should write it down  
this story of us

if there is an us  
that will stick to the page  
like glue to your hands

I don't think I'd say it the same  
today  
the way I want to say it  
tomorrow  
the way I tripped over it last night

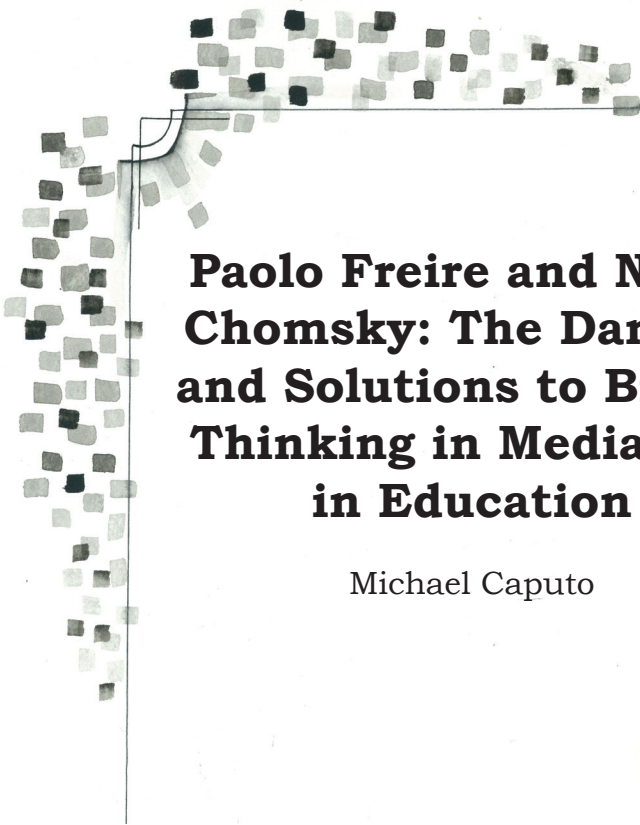
you always tell me my voice sounds different  
over the phone

in the light of the screen  
(does everyone hear it that way?)

the words are running away from me  
again  
getting lost on their way to you

I try to write slowly

maybe in the seconds between minutes  
and in the milliseconds between those  
you'll realize  
this shift has left me hollow  
and I want you here—  
please  
you're the only story I've ever known

A decorative graphic consisting of numerous small, semi-transparent squares in various shades of gray and black, scattered across the top and left side of the page. The squares are arranged in a way that suggests a trail or a path, starting from the top right and moving towards the bottom left. A thin black line runs horizontally across the top of the page, and a vertical line runs down the left side, meeting the horizontal line at a right angle. The squares are scattered around these lines, with a higher concentration near the top right corner.

**Paolo Freire and Noam  
Chomsky: The Dangers  
and Solutions to Binary  
Thinking in Media and  
in Education**

Michael Caputo

In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire discusses a problematic educational system that he refers to as “banking education,” in which “the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (72). For Freire, banking education creates “adaptable, manageable beings” and inhibits students’ ability to develop a “critical consciousness” (73). “Critical consciousness” refers to the ability to think critically and by extension, independently from the oppressors in power in order to recognize the realities of the world (Freire 73–74). Banking education becomes problematic when students are dependent on memorizing and regurgitating information that they fail to think critically about the information, which hinders their ability to achieve Freire’s “critical consciousness.” Noam Chomsky similarly claims that those in power oppress the masses by mediating what is presented to the audience: “the mass media...systematically suppresses evidence of U.S. violence and aggression...and puts [enemies/threats] in a bad light” (Herman & Chomsky xiii). Chomsky’s “Five Filters of Propaganda Model” proposes that large investors, advertising companies, and governments filter news converge to create messages across the media that support their interests in broadcasting and in censoring information to the masses (Herman & Chomsky 2). Chomsky’s fifth filter, “Anti-Communism,” refers to the media depicting “Communism as the ultimate evil... In normal times as well as in periods of Red scares, issues tend to be framed in terms of a dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers” (Herman & Chomsky 29–30). For Chomsky, he uses “Anti-Communism” as a term that refers to the threat of Communist takeover, which threatens American democracy. However, I will use this filter to show that the media does not just portray the subject of “Anti-Communism” in a negative light; rather, the media also portrays marginalized groups in a bad light and this portrayal teaches its audience to label news and ethnic groups as “enemies,” “threats,” or in terms of these false dichotomies.

For this paper, I will synthesize Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of “banking education” and his notion of developing a “critical consciousness,” with Noam Chomsky’s fifth filter,

“Anti Communism,” to demonstrate that the media indoctrinates false representations of information and inferior groups through false dichotomies; in particular, I argue that the Westernized education system and the media outlets (in general) engender binary thinking: the classroom instills a hierarchy between teachers and students, which ultimately disempowers students from challenging their instructors, teachers impose an imbalanced power dynamic on their students to empower themselves, and the media presents ethnic groups in terms of false dichotomies to establish a false sense of media credibility. In finding a solution, I disagree with Freire’s claim to eliminate the hierarchy between teachers and students in light of the fact that teachers need to be both intensely vigilant and inviting in encouraging students to develop a “critical consciousness.” Instead of completely succumbing to binary thinking as depicted in the media’s portrayal of “Anti-Communism,” I argue that students need to learn how to work with dichotomies with objective teachers as their guides in order to diverge from propaganda bias. In learning how to challenge false dichotomies with a developed “critical consciousness,” students will ultimately achieve a truthful sense of reality, they will challenge classroom and media bias that encourage racial oppression and discrimination, and they will generate independent, divergent thought that deviates from that of the oppressors.

The current education system in most institutions instills binary thinking by simply using the traditional classroom set-up—that is, the set-up where the teacher lectures while the students sit, listen, and memorize the incoming information. The traditional classroom setting demonstrates the hierarchical relationship that exists between teachers and students. Teachers, who dictate the information to students, establish their authority on the basis that they are the providers of information. Students, on the other hand, are naturally inferior to teachers because they must passively accept the information or they could suffer academic repercussions (like low grades) and administrative penalties (like detention). Peter Elbow discusses that “whenever there are polar oppositions, there is dominance—some classic terms are day/night, sun/moon, reason/passion—and of course...male/female. According to this critique, binary thinking almost always usually builds in dominance or privilege” (51). Elbow’s breakdown of “binary think-

ing” helps illustrate that in the relationship between the teacher and the student, the teacher will most likely be the dominant figure in this dichotomy, which justifies Freire’s claim that “the teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students...accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher’s existence” (Freire 72). As Freire claims, teachers are indeed responsible for presenting themselves as opposite to their students. Teachers, however, must conform to establishing this hierarchy because their superiors—usually, the principal and the school board—instil these regulations within school systems. However, teachers ultimately reinforce this power dynamic and indoctrinate students that thinking in terms of these hierarchies—in this case, the hierarchy in which students believe that they are inferior to their teachers—is even effective in categorizing other information that contain binaries. If teachers project this sense of dominance toward their students, then they ultimately disempower their students from challenging the information that they are taught since students must conform to their teachers, who act as their superior, to yield positive results in the classroom. These established hierarchies ultimately empower teachers to have authority over their students while they simultaneously disempower students in challenging the information that they give to them.

In effect, because teachers reinforce these established hierarchies in classrooms, these hierarchies also teach students to passively accept this imbalance of power as the norm when consuming information from their instructors and from the media. In categorizing information in terms of hierarchal structures, students and media consumers begin to subconsciously observe and label other dichotomies with elements of dominance and inferiority, or what Chomsky describes as “Anti-Communism,” where the masses categorize information in terms of extreme dichotomies:

A constant focus on victims of communism helps convince the public enemy of evil and sets the stage for intervention, subversion, support for terrorist states, an endless arms race, and military conflict—all in noble cause. At the same time, the devotion of our leaders and media to

this narrow set of victims raises public self-esteem and patriotism, as it demonstrates the essential humanity of country and people. (Herman & Chomsky xv)

As Chomsky rightly suggests, the leaders and the media present communists as the public enemy in an effort to ostracize them, to label them as inferior or as potential dangers to society, and to turn the general public against them. The teachers' and the media outlets' ability to succeed in depicting these victims of communism as public enemies depends on whether or not students and media consumers passively accept these dichotomous depictions of "us" (in this case, U.S. citizens) and "them" (in this case, Communists) as categories that are reflective of reality. If students and media consumers, for example, believe that all Communists are enemies to Americans (or Western society), then their inability to question the credibility of this generalization indicates that they lack a "critical consciousness" and that they succumb to Freire's "banking education" model. Failure to question the credibility of propaganda sources—particularly politicians, news organizations, and at times, educators—ultimately leads to students accepting these biased, narrow-minded viewpoints as an accurate reflection of reality. These false constructions of reality ultimately blind students and media consumers from recognizing that these dichotomous groupings of people and information are a construct of media propaganda bias. If they continue to consume false information from the media and believe that the information is true without questioning its validity, then students and media consumers will never succeed in developing their "critical consciousness."

Although Communism is not as prevalent of an issue as it was from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, the media, which include politicians and even educators, continue to frame information in terms of dichotomies to heighten the believability of the information and to establish a false sense of credibility (Herman & Chomsky 24–25). As seen with Donald Trump's recent campaign, Trump categorizes groups of people in a dichotomy to instill fear among the masses who passively accept these false dichotomies as believable truths:

[Trump] warned that our "enemies are getting stronger and stronger... and we, as a country,

are getting weaker.” . . . Trump constantly used us-versus-them language to define the others who allegedly pose a threat to us and order. From Mexicans to Muslims, the others, as described by Trump, do not hold our values and are not like us. To Trump and the crowds who follow his lead, he alone recognizes the threat the others pose and he alone possesses the will to neutralize them. (MacWilliams 716–17)

As MacWilliams discusses, Trump’s “us-versus-them” rhetoric purveys fear among the American citizens in singling out racial groups, particularly Mexicans and Muslims, as the main reason for America’s illegal immigration and terrorist issues. Calliou identifies labels as “appear[ing] to be highly significant in the (re)claiming of identity, belonging, place, and voice” (29). For Trump, in presenting racial groups in extreme dichotomies—that is, by labelling Mexicans and Muslims as the “enemies” who are getting stronger while implying that Americans (the non-enemies) are getting weaker—he reinforces Elbow’s earlier observation that there is a sense of dominance in polar oppositions like the one Trump establishes. Trump communicates to the masses that Americans are ultimately superior to Mexicans and Muslims and he adds negative associations in labelling their backgrounds. Because he is a political authority figure, the media—in presenting Trump’s false representations of racial groups—indirectly communicates to its larger audience that labelling people in extreme dichotomies is a socially acceptable form of categorizing and acquiring information. Using binary thinking, both in the classroom and in consuming media, is ultimately problematic because it encourages false representations of inferior groups; by extension, it also encourages racial oppression and it perpetuates a society of ignorance since Trump (and other politicians) treat labelling racial groups in terms of extreme dichotomies as an acceptable form for identifying them.

Indeed, Freire offers a potential solution that encourages students and media consumers to challenge overgeneralized information perpetuated by binary thinking; the solution begins with eliminating the hierarchal relationship between the teacher and the student so that “both are simultaneously teachers and students” (72). In this regard, Freire’s solution solves the issue of students



internalizing their teachers as being their superiors, it promotes the mutual engagement of teachers and students in discovering information, and it eliminates the notion that teachers are superior to their students within these hierarchies. Elbow, however, challenges Freire's solution as he points to the limitations of this "happy medium" applying to teachers (58). In particular, Elbow argues that "compromise or reconciliations is not the answer" and he claims that a "happy medium"—that is, teachers being "only sort of helpful or inviting to students and only sort of vigilant as to whether they do decent work"—is ineffective (58). Elbow claims that if teachers are too inviting, then they are seen as being 'easy teachers' in the case that they praise students for decent work; whereas, if teachers are too vigilant, then they are seen as being 'tough teachers' in the case that they criticize only the wrong answers and discourage student performance (58). Although Freire's solution implies that students can develop a "critical consciousness" through eliminating the teacher and student hierarchy, his solution applies only for teachers in a theoretical sense and it fails to consider the case of insubordinate students. In the case of having 'easy teachers,' students can take advantage of their teachers and treat them as pushovers. Likewise, in the case of having 'vigilant teachers,' students can develop a sense of rebellion against them.

Perhaps the solution is not to eliminate the hierarchy between teachers and students completely, nor is the solution for teachers to be either too inviting or too vigilant; rather, it may require teachers to be an intense combination of both of these dichotomies. Elbow observes that "a few remarkable teachers are extremely tough and inviting at the same time—remarkably welcoming to students yet remarkably discriminating in saying, 'I won't take anything but the best'" (58). In this regard, teachers who are tough in enforcing the development of a "critical consciousness" and who are simultaneously encouraging independent and divergent thought will ultimately help students deviate from Freire's "banking education" model; the teachers will act as guides in teaching students to challenge and question all information, rather than only having teachers work with students as their equals to discover the realities of the world as Freire suggests. If teachers comply to Freire's model in acting as equals to their students, then this

lack of a hierarchy will inevitably invite teachers to supplement their personal biases in exploring information with their students. Because teachers are the providers of information, they “should become real intellectuals who ‘have the obligation to serve and tell the truth about things that are important, things that matter’” (Chomsky 12). Chomsky further argues, “as real intellectuals, teachers need to appropriate a language of critique so as to denounce the hypocrisy, social injustices, and the human misery” (Chomsky 12). In addition to keeping the hierarchy between teachers and students, Chomsky suggests that teachers need to distance their personal biases and implement an objective, critical perspective while they deposit information to students so that students can be aware of the social injustices that exist in the world. Because the media is unable to present an objective, critical perspective of information (as seen with the Donald Trump campaign example), teachers are, therefore, responsible for preventing their students from succumbing to the media’s narrow-minded representations of the world.

Teachers can begin guiding their students to develop a “critical consciousness” by teaching them how to work with binary thinking and hierarchies. Elbow offers three potential options to deal with dichotomies: “[1] Work out a compromise or a dialectic synthesis; that is, find a third term; [2] Affirm both sides of the dichotomy are equally true, necessary, important, or correct; [and 3] Reframe the conflict so there are more than two sides” (54). Reframing dichotomies in this respect challenges students to think critically in finding alternatives, in avoiding hasty generalizations, and in eliminating hierarchies. As Menashy observes, “if not given the opportunity to engage critically with alternative perspectives, closed-mindedness or indoctrination may result” (173–4). It is idealistic to hope that teachers will teach their students to work with binaries according to Elbow’s suggestions, since not all students will have access to teachers who will guide them along this path; however, in the absence of a teacher, students need to find opportunities to think critically in order to achieve Freire’s “critical consciousness.” Chomsky proposes that students take initiative in their education by critiquing the information that they receive:

Chomsky not only urges readers to embrace a language of critique necessary in unveiling obfuscated and ideologically manipulating realities, but...he also embraces a pedagogy of hope whereby 'students are invited to discover for themselves the nature of democracy and its functioning,' whereby students move from their object positions as they become agents of history in the constant quest for the truth. (11–12)

Chomsky, like Freire, encourages students to embrace a language of critique in order to uncover the realities of the world and to discover truths on their terms. And although teachers play a role in providing the information to students, students are ultimately responsible for challenging one-sided viewpoints—whether these viewpoints are from the media or from their instructors—to become active agents in their education. In developing their own “critical consciousness,” students will be able to challenge any sources in their search for truth.

Indeed, binary thinking, in terms of labelling racial groups, encourages racial oppression and discrimination both in the media and in the classroom. Despite these consequences, students who use binary thinking as a method for critical thought, rather than for creating false representations, will ultimately enhance their “critical consciousness” because the use of this method will encourage them to discover alternative viewpoints and teach them to recognize that the existence of both extremes may be necessary in certain contexts. As mentioned, the extremes of having teachers who are both ‘inviting’ and ‘vigilant’ serves to enhance students’ ability to achieve their “critical consciousness” since the teacher guides them to challenge the credibility of information and pushes them to create innovative perspectives that are divergent from the oppressors. To improve teaching and learning, Chomsky recommends that teachers educate students on the social inequalities that exist in the world and he encourages students to become active agents in their education by finding opportunities to refute the biases of the media to ultimately enhance their “critical consciousness.” Even though Paolo Freire suggests that to eliminate the “banking education” model, institutions should create a setting where teachers and students are equals to one another, ultimately there are limitations to his claim since teachers (and the media)

will inevitably impose their biases on students unless teachers encourage their students to challenge them.

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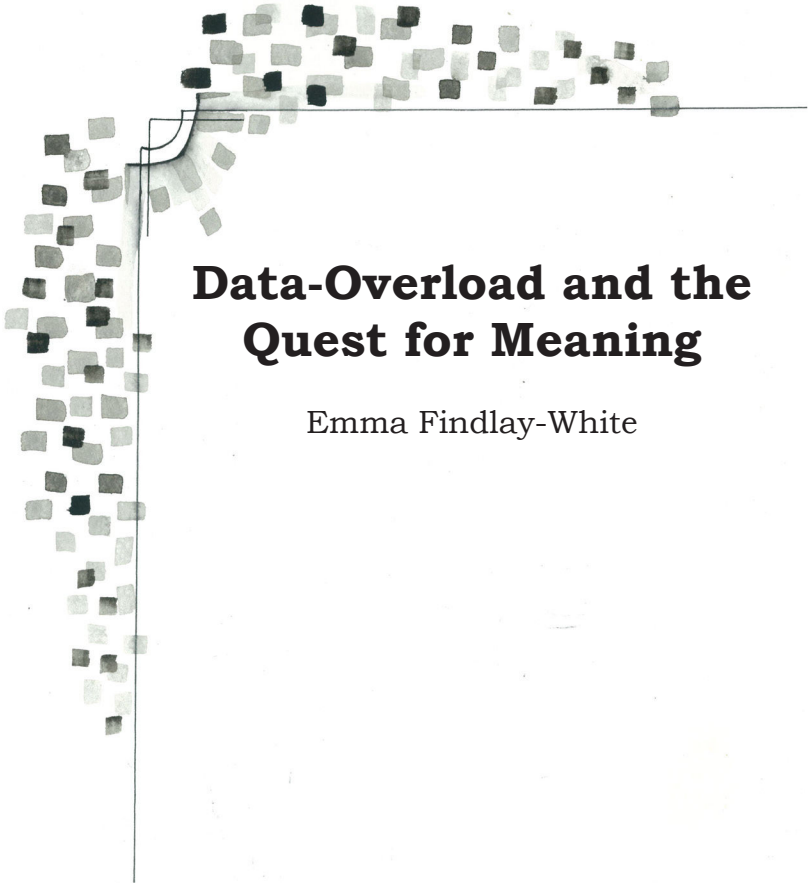
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# **Data-Overload and the Quest for Meaning**

Emma Findlay-White

Media theorist Marshall McLuhan dubbed the 20th century the Information Age. He further noted that mass communication technologies were sharing information and data at an alarming rate, believing it would lead to Information Overload. The term Information Overload came into common parlance with the release of Alvin Toffler's enormously popular book, *Future Shock*, in 1970. It described mass stress from increased industrial development in the 20th century and the disorientation that comes from "overchoice". The Global Village of the 21st century is far beyond what even the visionaries imagined. Back in 2013, the world reached a staggering four zettabytes ( $4^{21}$ ) of digital data and already that figure is obsolete (Blair 2010). With the sheer volume of data now being downloaded and dispersed, society continues to experience information overload at an exponential rate. Nonetheless, there is a distinction to be made between data and information, the step by which humans process data and convert it into information. From the Babel clamour of data, humans have learned to distinguish patterns and from these patterns emerge the final step in the process: wisdom. I seek, I process, I know.

In his book, appropriately named *What is Information?* (2014), media ecologist Robert Logan defines key terms such as data, information, knowledge and wisdom in modern terms and uses these definitions to build on complex concepts such as Information Overload. Data is defined as "the pure and simple facts without any particular structure or organization, the basic atoms of information" with information being "structured data, which adds meaning to the data and gives it context and significance" (Logan 44). In other words, data are the basic facts and signs in and of the world that need to be recognized contextually in order to be given social/biological significance; that is, in order to become information. According to Logan, there are three kinds of information that impact the human condition: genetic information coded in our DNA, the perceptual information that we process with our senses, and the conceptual information that we process with our minds. Data from

the external world can only become information once it has been processed by human cognition and given context and meaning. Thus, what Toffler was referring to as Information Overload is, in fact, data overload. Faced with an excess of data, humans instinctively structure them into recognizable patterns called learning. McLuhan noticed the aforementioned in the 1960's when he said, "faced with [data] overload, we have no alternative but pattern-recognition" (McLuhan and Gordon 132).

Nor is pattern recognition limited to this technological age. Humans have always found ways to codify data into generally recognizable patterns. As a result of migration, early groups of hominids had to find ways to understand each other, so they linked sensual perceptions and abstract concepts to form a common method of communication: language. This process of pattern recognition is called semiosis – "the production and comprehension of signs" (Danesi 19). In order for a bit of data to be recognized as a sign with meaning and significance, "one must (1) be able to differentiate it from other signs; and (2) know how its component parts fit together" (Danesi 53). One of the key components of semiosis is associative structure. Linguist and semiotician Marcel Danesi defines associative structure as "a type of linkage made by inferring a commonality in meaning among seemingly disparate concepts" (Danesi 57).

George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson argue that associative structure is fundamental to human understanding because it combines concrete and abstract concepts to form "signs" that represent images, feelings or ideas that are recognizable and reusable by a group of people with shared experiences (Danesi 58). This corresponds with Logan's separation of information into two types: perceptual and conceptual. According to Logan, the act of pattern recognition is an in-built, natural defence to overloaded senses and has been used throughout millennia as a driving force for technological and cultural development in human species. In a reverse cause and effect scenario, data overload prompts humankind to develop tools to extend their processing abilities, which then finds new data that needs to be

processed at a higher rate (Logan to be published in a collection edited by Wolfgang...2016). Danesi argues that knowledge is signed information (Danesi 28); Logan suggests that information is contextualized data. Regardless, humans are constantly creating and discovering new data and as such are constantly creating and discovering new ways of processing data into information. The challenge becomes transferring and sharing ever-increasing amounts of information without losing context or meaning.

As a means of preserving information through the ages, literacy and numeracy were developed as a codification of language and symbols into a recognizable alphabet. Ruth Hubbard claims, “Without words to objectify and categorize our sensations and place them in relation to one another, we cannot evolve a tradition of what is real in the world” (Danesi 59). Through the proliferation of communication technologies such as scrolls and codices, colloquially known as books, society found itself overlaid with physical collections of information to the point where it was inconceivable for a single individual to read it all. The information revolution of the Gutenberg printing press caused another restructuring of written information and took learning out of the hands of people who could afford it and distributed it to the masses. In the 18th century, editor of a French encyclopaedia, Denis Diderot, exclaimed:

As long as the centuries continue to unfold, the number of books will grow continually, and one can predict that a time will come when it will be almost as difficult to learn anything from books as from the direct study of the whole universe. It will be almost as convenient to search for some bit of truth concealed in nature as it will be to find it hidden away in an immense multitude of bound volumes. (Diderot 1755)

Once books became the primary tool for disseminating information, the question then became how to differentiate information from misinformation. Readers continued to turn to books as a source of meaning in relation to themselves and the world around them, but there was



no method to control the content or the quality of what they were reading. Lewis Mumford bemoaned the effects of a world overladen with useless books, warning that without “self-imposed restraints [...] the over production of books will bring about a state of intellectual enervation and depletion hardly to be distinguished from massive ignorance” (Gleick 404).

This idea of information overload in the form of stories has been satirized by Jean-Louis Borges’ “Library of Babel”, in which all the true, relevant facts and languages of the world are stacked amongst gibberish, with no way to distinguish the wheat from the chaff; there is no way to create meaning from this chaos. Borges’s library, often referred to as a universe, contains the sum of all knowledge, or *omnem summam scientiam*, enshrined in an enormous expanse of hexagonal rooms. Much like the number pi, which contains an infinite stream of numbers, the library contains the meaning of life, if only one knew how to unlock its secrets.

According to Logan, no information can be discovered in the library of Babel because the meanings attached to the data are useless if facts are set against nonsense with no distinguishing characteristics: “Chaos or random numbers contain no information because there is no difference or distinction in one part of the stream of numbers as opposed to another part of the stream because of the lack of organization” (Logan 36). Clearly, having every piece of information available does not provide infinite wisdom. Therefore, data is not information and information is not knowledge. Only “restraints” on data and information can ward off overload and provide a method by which people can assimilate to the world meaningfully.

There has always been an innate imperative in humankind to create order and structure from the seeming chaos of the universe. American writer Henry Miller (1891-1980) claims that the “world has not to be put in order; the world is order incarnate. It is for us to put ourselves in unison with this order” (Danesi 53). Faced with data overload, scholars and librarians of the Print Age devised methods of organizing and cataloguing

books, scrolls, and bits of data. This made it easier to turn data into information. In response to the proliferation of written material, cataloguing techniques and index cards were developed to guide people through the data. Lexicography blossomed as a discipline and encyclopaedias were distributed as authorities and guides to help people distinguish fact from fiction and sense from nonsense. By structuring the data according to meaning, association, alphabet or code, such as library index cards, people could more easily visualize the pathway to data in order to transform it into information. The technological transformation engendered by the World Wide Web in the late 20th century has rendered the reference library obsolete as a tool of data gathering. Digitalized hyperlinks are available to all with access to smartphones and computers, which completely revolutionized the retrieval of data and simplified its access, supercharging the rate at which general knowledge is rendered and individual learning can be achieved (Logan 2010).

Cyberspace looks remarkably similar to the chaos of Borges' library, but with infinite parameters, "whose centers are everywhere and margins are nowhere" (Levinson 7). Every technological revolution results in chaos from which inevitably follows the human imperative to carve order from this chaos. The sheer availability of digitalized data has resulted in a proliferation of programmers determined to tame this data through algorithms and identifiable learning tools. Hashtags and other metadata labels are now used to categorize data on social media and other broadcasting technologies, connecting people around the world by context and content. The visual icon of the number sign (#) is then used to connect disparate concepts. Hypertools, such as hashtags, hyperlinks and other visual icons help organize the infinite expanse of online data by connecting people to the content they seek.

Semiosis, the process by which we make meaning out of signs and symbols, is a natural built-in human defense against data overload. As James Gleick aptly argues, "Meaningless disorder is to be challenged, not

feared” (Gleick 419). It is the alchemy by which we turn base metal into gold. The possibility of data overload in the technological age has led to revolutionary ideas and techniques for structuring the world around us, including methods of selecting, summarizing, sorting and storing data for future generations to use and unpack. The more data in the world, the more ingenious ways of coping are developed. “Today,” McLuhan claims, “...we have extended our central nervous systems in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned” (McLuhan 1962). While McLuhan believed that this would develop into a technological collective consciousness, there is a distinction to be made between a general awareness and wisdom. Using technological tools to organize and structure data is only the first step. As always, individuals must continue to be the arbiters of their own learning and understanding. While the paths may change and the tools become ever more sophisticated, understanding the self and its place in the universe has always been the ultimate goal of learning.

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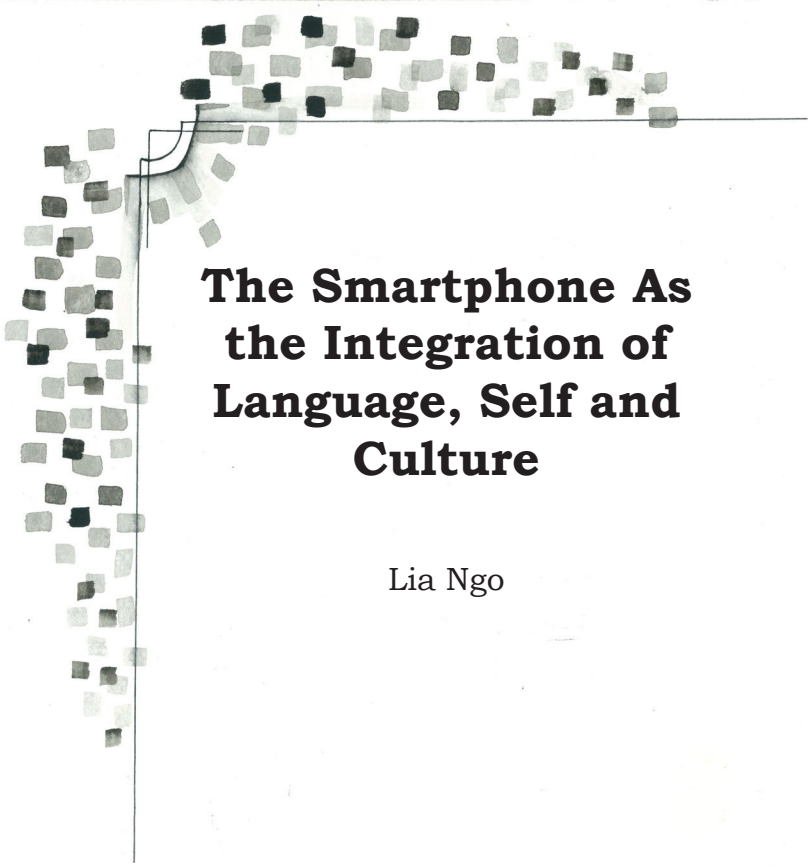
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**The Smartphone As  
the Integration of  
Language, Self and  
Culture**

Lia Ngo

In today's world of fast-paced information exchange and technological advancements, there is one object that may come to mind which has dramatically transformed people's lives and their relationships to the world. It has become a significant symbol of the current generation because of its impact. The smartphone has rendered itself as a sort of cultural object because of how it represents prominent features and characteristics of present culture. The increase of speed and quality in which information is sent and received has largely shaped human interaction and communication. The smartphone has not only absorbed the functions of communication via phone and text, but it also provides mass connections, as it allows access to the Internet and social media. Furthermore, the wide variety of apps that can be downloaded on to the phone range from: keeping track of exercise and diet, virtual games, or taking photos. Due to its multi-functionality, the smartphone is an extremely useful and flexible tool that has seamlessly integrated itself into many technologically developed societies. Its use is apparent and emphasized in certain demographics, particularly within youth demographics. According to recent data, the iPhone has taken up 64% of the adult market, and 84% of adults aged between 18-24 own a smartphone device (Kemp 2011, 1). The attractive features of the smartphone have promoted its widespread use, but what are its effects on these populations? Smartphones are not only gadgets that assist people in various aspects of their life, but have become powerful mediums with the ability to change people, as they become ingrained in the users' daily lives and routines. Smartphones have changed perceptions and relationships with people largely because language and mediators have such an influencing effect. However, upon closer examination, the values of a capitalistic and individualistic culture also engender and reinforce the dependency on the smartphone as a constant means of interaction and communication.

The smartphone's capacity to exchange information relies on the basis of language and the written word. The smartphone encapsulates both orality and

literacy, as many of the functions embedded include speech (such as phone or voice recognition) and text. However, it is evident that the writing component, or text, has overshadowed orality concerning smartphone usage. Phone calls for casual conversations have drastically diminished in this generation, while texting has become the main form of casual communication. It is argued that “the art (or technique) of writing will soon disappear” and “we may revert to oral composition” because of technologies that are adept to voice simulation (Delaney 2011, 124), but research has shown that literacy has increased because of technology. It has also been hypothesized that text-speak may threaten reading and writing skills; however, in various studies, there have been positive correlations between texting and literacy skills (Kemp 2011). The implications may go deeper than the surface; although increased literacy among youth is beneficial, there may be underlying effects. Speaking, or orality, has an ‘agnostic quality,’ meaning that there is an interaction between speaker and hearer. This interaction has a social and unifying dimension to it, whereas “writing and reading are solitary activities [...] Writing distances and objectifies. It is writing that fosters the notion that words are merely labels hung onto things” (Delaney 2011, 123). The smartphone creates a paradox – although it increases information exchange and connectivity, the result is a decrease in face-to-face or verbal contact, in turn causing distance and isolation. Culture has lost this sense of direct and intimate contact, as technology has broadened the possibilities for immediate connections all over the world. Although communication is technically increased, it is a different form of communication than what orality offers. The result of this has overarching effects on society that extend further than simply writing in place of speaking.

As smartphones dominate the markets and our lives, it is important to explore how and why they have made such a significant impact on our culture. Language is a large component of the smartphone. Both language and technology are forms of communication, and both involve writing or text. Writing “moves speech from

the oral-aural to a new sensory world [...] it transforms speech and thought as well” and “in other words, it has transformed human consciousness” (Delaney 2011, 123). From this perspective, it can be seen why this element of the smartphone can manipulate the mind and change the sense of self. According to McLuhan, “the medium is the message because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action” and thus, the medium becomes “an extension of the self” (1964, 9). It is no coincidence that the ‘iPhone’ is named as if it is a phone manifested from the self; incorporating the ‘I’ exhibits that the phone is made specifically personalized for the individual. The smartphone offers mechanisms that radically shape and transform how individuals live their lives through a wide selection of apps. On a deeper level, the smartphone also alters how we perceive and judge the world. If “perception is not direct but always mediated” and “language (and culture) is what mediates between us and the world or ‘reality’” then this mediation is emphasized when our realities are distorted through both technology and the written word.

A cultural shift takes place when people rely too heavily on their mobile device in social settings because their perceptions and relationships with people change. The more dependency that is built upon the smartphone, the more negative the consequences. For example, in a study done by Lapierre and Lewis (2016), researchers examined the connection between smartphone dependency and relational health. The results found that participants’ smartphone dependency was significantly linked to relationship uncertainty, whereas partners’ perceived smartphone dependency was linked to less relationship satisfaction. The medium of the smartphone has become such a huge aspect of the self that a partner feels as though he/she needs to compete for devotion and attention. Furthermore, it seems as though technology may be contributing to a greater risk of loneliness. It has been shown that Internet usage is associated with less family communication, smaller social circles, more depressive symptoms and greater



feelings of loneliness (Hidaka 2012, 210). Therefore, despite seemingly increased connectedness and literacy, the smartphone can cause significant changes in social relationships and communication, which are often negative in nature.

It is not to say technology and smartphones have not made extremely advantageous and positive adjustments to Western lifestyles and culture. In fact, the globalization and accessibility of information that technology provides has led to revolutionary discoveries and insight. However, it is necessary to take a closer look and investigate other effects being caused, thus knowing the power the smartphone holds over perception and consciousness. Rising levels of loneliness and depression have followed the technological age, resulting in the abandonment of certain forms of communication and interaction. However, it may be important to consider the directionality of the effects of technology. Instead of a culture adapting in accordance to certain inventions, such as the smartphone, perhaps the smartphone is the byproduct of a culture's values. Considering the capitalistic, individualistic and neoliberalist culture that has informed many of society's core values, the smartphone's popularity and prevalence can be understood. Society is shifting away from intrinsic values of social relationships, community and competence; instead, extrinsic goals of money, status and appearance take precedence (Hidaka 2012, 210). The smartphone encapsulates these extrinsic goals, while trying to maintain the illusion of satisfying intrinsic goals as well. The capitalist culture that obsesses over commercialization may have produced a technology that represents the commodification of social relationships, communication and interaction. Although it may seem that technology has made us increasingly isolated and distanced, due to the switch from orality to literacy, the root of the problem appears to be the culture itself that shapes much of our decisions, lifestyles, expectations and beliefs. Culture fosters expectations of having needs met by the consumption of commercial goods, which is why people develop dependencies on smartphones – their need for

social interaction and communication becomes primary. Although this dependency may be helpful and convenient, it cannot fully provide the fulfillment of intrinsic needs. Failing to realize the consequences of smartphone dependency may cause people to fall into depression or loneliness, as evidenced by increasing reports of isolation and distancing in the world. These trends and worldviews do not occur in a linear cause-and-effect fashion, but are caused by the interplay between many different processes and elements. The influence of culture on technology, and the influence of technology on culture, work in a cyclical way in which they both reinforce each other. It is noteworthy to understand that the smartphone, and the culture it exists in, have both radically restructured concepts and methods of communication and interaction.

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**Temporary Consumerist  
Cities: The Myth of the  
Modern Music Festival**

Jacob Dalfen-Brown

## **Introduction: Temporary Consumerist Cities**

In Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, he depicts Western society as being controlled by "a social relation among people, mediated by images" - or what he calls "the spectacle" (Debord, 1994, p. 9). Debord claims that the middle and lower class is controlled by the consumerist-led mass media. Through the watching, listening and experiencing of this mass culture they are no longer able to make their own choices. As he states, "the individual's gestures are no longer his own; they are the gestures of someone else who represents them to him" (Debord, 1994, p.15). Debord offers "détournement," or rerouting, as one way that we can be broken from the spectacle. In this theory, pieces and fragments from the mass culture can be remade into new counter-culture art to gain the spectator's attention and draw them away from the spectacle.

Major music festivals like Wayhome and Coachella present themselves as forms of détournement from the spectacle. These festivals claim they bring music and art together in a way that allows for escape from mass culture. For example, the Canadian festival Wayhome states on their website that, "Life was different before the internet. Probably better. Everything is social-in-your-face-all-the-time connected now. I can't shake the feeling that I'm missing something" (Festival Information, 2015). This suggests that Wayhome is a chance to get away from the mediated world. Yet within the festival itself, multiple advertisements urge attendees to use social media to capture the moment. While some music and art festivals are able to create a détournement from the mass culture, major music festivals like Wayhome and Coachella have themselves become distributors of the mass culture they appear to renounce. These festivals create an illusion of freedom from mass culture, while in fact, they are a system: controlled, organized and scheduled to create constant stimulation for their participants. New styles of major music festivals are in direct contrast from the famous Woodstock in terms of their concentration on structure and their dependence on corporations for sponsorship. Despite the illusions of freedom that Wayhome and

Coachella create, in reality they are temporary consumerist cities that are reflective of the culture and society in the permanent cities their crowds come from.

### **Restricted Temporality of the Music Festival**

Coachella and other similar major music festivals advertise that they allow for extended personal freedom. In Coachella's promotional videos they show the attendees, most of whom appear to be in their 20's or 30's, riding inflatable dinosaurs and shooting a toy bow and arrow (Slavin, 2014) – activities most people would never do in their day-to-day lives. However, this fantasy of freedom that Coachella advertises is made unattainable the moment a strict structure is created for the events within it. Gotham's article *Theorizing Urban Spectacles* discusses the festivals of New Orleans where he states that: "Today, all spectacles are produced and organized to occupy precisely the length of clock time given for them and to end on time, regardless of the desires of the participants. By reifying clock time, modern spectacles are the antithesis of spontaneity, creativity and originality" (Gotham, 2005, p. 234). In this quote, Gotham discusses the definitive beginning and ending of a festival as the "clock time" that is restrictive to the freedom and creativity of the audience. With festivals like Wayhome and Coachella, schedules are used extensively whether it be the allotted set times each band receives or the hours when showers are open to the audience. This strict order of events creates a temporality in which, despite the illusion of counter-culture freedom, it actually presents real restrictions on the creative and personal freedoms an audience can experience.

The structured schedule of music festivals like Coachella subtly pushes crowds in certain directions at different points during the day, similar to the style of crowd control employed by Disneyland organizers. As Avila states in his article *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Film Noir, Disneyland, and the Cold War (Sub)Urban Imaginary*: "The park's designers sought to maximize control over the movement of the crowd through the meticulous organization of space" (Avila, 2004, p. 13). While Disneyland's use of space helps to control crowds, for major

music festivals it is the management of time rather than space that is most effective. The use of schedules enables festivals like Coachella to keep crowds where they want them, when they want them. Crowd control allows for increased security, but it also allows for the strategic positioning of advertisements and installations. This type of temporal crowd control is not dissimilar to what we see in major North American cities. It is an extreme version of what is seen every day through the scheduling of transit and the laws around liquor sales. By ensuring that their inhabitants can only use public transportation and buy alcohol during certain times of the day, cities can control when and where people are and companies can make informed decisions about where advertisements should be placed. This is how we get places like Yonge and Dundas Square in Toronto. It is paradoxically known as a privately operated public space and is a perfect example of how well this structuring of the city can work to create consumerist environments. A nearby subway station, the proximity to Ryerson University and the surrounding apartments make Yonge and Dundas Square one of the busiest intersections in Canada. Corporations know this and cover the entire square in bright sensory stimulating billboards and video-screens; however, these corporations also need to be assured their property will not be destroyed or vandalized. The city can assure them the large crowds of the day will not still be there at night by shutting down the nearby liquor stores and subway station at early hours. This strict structuring of time allows for the consumerist culture of Yonge and Dundas Square to exist. Wayhome and Coachella also use these techniques but bring them to a more extreme level, structuring every single part of their audience's day. In this way, Wayhome and Coachella are extreme examples of the type of temporal structuring that goes on everyday in permanent cities like Toronto.

### **Sensory Overload Machine**

Coachella and other similar festivals keep close tabs on audience movement with extensive, structured schedules. They have even taken steps to keep closer watch

with the emergence of wristband tickets that have GPS capabilities. As previously mentioned, this is partially to maintain a high level of security. Further, by knowing where and when crowds move throughout the day, installations and advertisements can be positioned to ensure that their audience is experiencing the maximum amount of sensory stimulation at all times. This sensory stimulation creates a subconscious feeling within the audience that is similar to Eco's view of hyperreality. In Eco's essay *Travels in Hyperreality*, he states that the philosophy of wax museums is "giving you the reproduction so you will no longer feel any need for the original" (Eco, 1990, p. 19). He also discusses how these museums "are loud and aggressive," and "announce themselves from the distance with glowing signs, shafts of light in the dark sky. The moment you enter you are alerted that you are about to have one of the most thrilling experiences of your life" (Eco, 1990, p. 12-13). Although Eco is discussing wax museums, his analysis can also relate to music festivals like Coachella. Upon entering the festival, you are greeted with fireworks sponsored by Coca Cola, Ferris wheels branded by Nike, and other, equally branded, sensory overloads. The crowd is transported into the temporary consumerist city that is Coachella. The audience no longer wants the reality that is home, they only want Coachella's reproduction of it.

Similar to Debord's theory of the spectacle, the continuous stream of mass media being consumed at these festivals leaves little room for independent thought. If permanent cities contain periods of monotony and boredom, like driving home from work or washing the dishes, these aspects are removed and replaced with constant excitement in Coachella and Wayhome. The "spectacle" is never broken within these festivals. This is similar to what we are seeing in permanent cities with the increased usage of mobile technologies like smartphones. No longer are the rides home spent in thought; now that time is spent watching Netflix or playing a game on your phone. As mass culture takes over more of our personal time, the permanent city continues to resemble the temporary consumerist cities of Coachella and Wayhome.

## **Then Vs Now**

Coachella and Wayhome are not only attempting to recreate the reality of the city, but also the ideal that was Woodstock. The hippy style of clothing is mimicked, and the key phrases of “Peace and Love” are everywhere. Despite this goal to imitate Woodstock, Coachella and Wayhome are different in major ways. Current major music festivals can be seen as instruments of “mass manipulation.” In Adorno and Horkheimer’s essay *The Culture Industry*, they argue that mass culture, defined as “culture industry”, is used to manipulate and control how masses feel and act. They state that “the more strongly the culture industry entrenches itself, the more it can do as it chooses with the needs of consumers - producing, controlling, disciplining them” (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2013, p.22). This is a fitting description for festivals like Coachella and Wayhome. Through the use of controlled scheduling and strategically positioned sensory stimulants, these festivals are able to manipulate the feelings and actions of their consumers. In this way, festivals can assure their sponsors maximum efficiency of their advertisements.

In contrast to the “mass manipulation” of Coachella or Wayhome, Woodstock can be seen as a festival that empowered the masses. In this case, mass culture gives the community a vehicle to rebel against the elite. This is an idea that is used very often when it comes to media like hip-hop. In the chapter *All Aboard the Night Train*, Rose discusses how hip hop has empowered the lower class in New York. She states that “hip hop gives voice to the tensions and contradictions in the public urban landscape during a period of substantial transformation in New York and attempts to seize the shifting urban terrain to make it work on behalf of the dispossessed” (Rose, 1994, p. 22). Though she is discussing hip-hop culture in the 80’s, it also fits the description of the hippy culture of the 60’s: a group of young people who were creating a culture to fight against their feelings of disempowerment. Unlike the temporary consumerist city of current major music festivals, Woodstock was a temporary city that functioned with very little money being spent. Due



to Woodstock's counter-culture ideals, sponsorship was almost nonexistent. The scheduling and "clock time" that rules modern festivals was not nearly as prevalent. Large groups stayed in the area after the festival was over and many people didn't attend any of the musical events at all. As stated in a *New York Times* article from 1969, one of the attendees "never made it to the concert. [She] never heard any music at all" (Lelyveld and Kaufman, 1969, p.30). This woman's decision to not go to the concert reflects the differences in Woodstock from modern music festivals. Instead of the extreme consumerism of modern festivals, Woodstock offered an alternative to the scheduled temporality of the working world. Woodstock can be viewed as a *detournement* from the spectacle, while Coachella and Wayhome create temporary consumerist cities that accentuate the spectacle.

### **Conclusion**

The society that Woodstock took place in was very different than that of today. This is reflected through the stark differences in how Coachella and Wayhome schedule their festivals compared to Woodstock. Both Coachella and Wayhome use a strict system of schedules and organization to constantly stimulate the audience's senses with mass media, while Woodstock had a much more *laissez-faire* style that involved free entry and a stage for members of the audience to perform on. Coachella and Wayhome have become temporary consumerist cities that reflect the society they come from. In the 1960s, Times Square was considered one of the most dangerous places in New York (Tannenbaum, 2010), and Yonge and Dundas was just another street corner in Toronto. These cities were still consumerist hubs but today's system of organization and scheduling had not yet taken effect. In today's North American city, the structure works to distribute as much mass culture as possible. The city works with strict schedules and new technologies to ensure citizens are never broken from 'the spectacle'. Through this strict organization, permanent cities such as New York and Toronto begin to resemble the temporary consumerist cities of Wayhome and Coachella.

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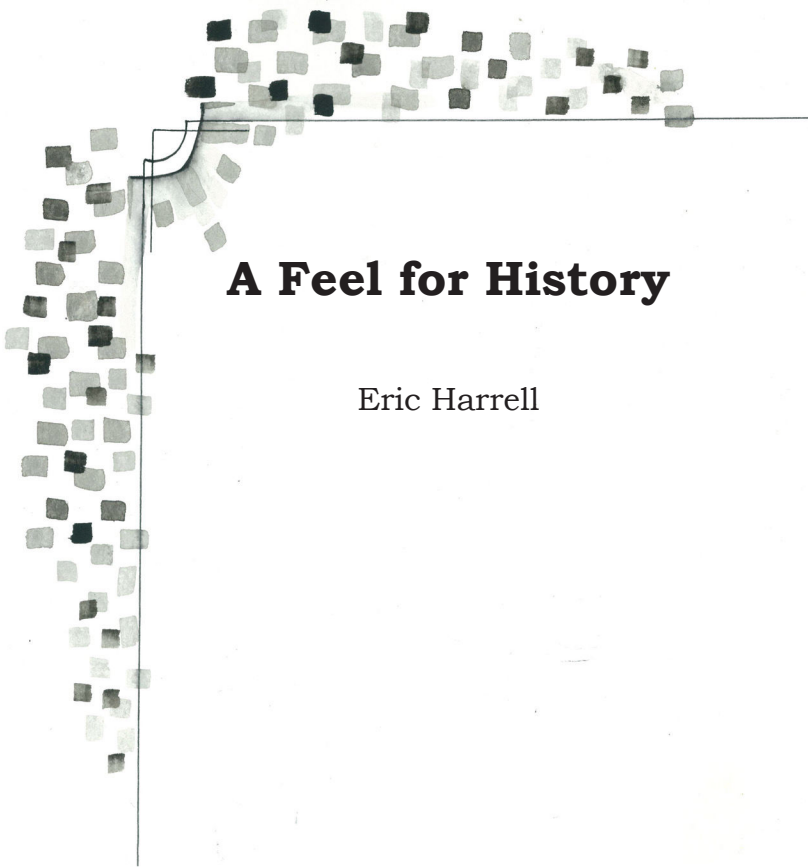
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# **A Feel for History**

Eric Harrell

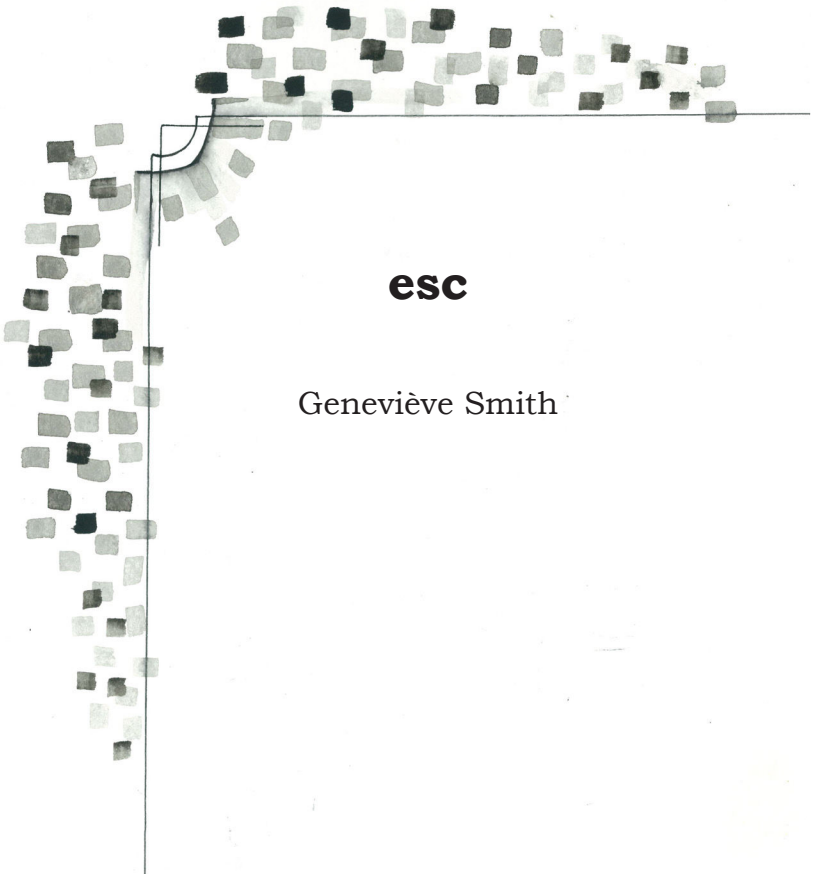
Grooves around the notches of the wrinkled belt feel the best. A series of them hang from the bars in her walk-in closet. They are never worn. They occupy the space unconditionally, functioning as dividers between office wear, sweaters, and pants. The belts were her father's. The memories of her childhood impressed into her through their whip and snap. It's a different time from then; a book in the corner for the evening has replaced the harsh sting. She's stepped into the closet looking for something exciting to wear. Though she should get ready for her evening class, an exhausting feat after a morning of work, the belts steal her attention. Feeling them delivers a tactile memory of twisting her wrist. Minutes of working a knife into the polished leather to make a hole. Just two more, it should go through. Staying up for the secret task, knowing it would never be asked of her. The nicks still rough enough to feel through the callouses of her thumb. Like little notes to herself through time. The nostalgia makes her think of the number of her parent's house. It's a different time from then; her father has long since passed.

Her parents were rich in spirit. They named her with a sound in mind. Cadence, after "the feeling of prose", according to her other father. He was a Professor of English, this one. Loved reading aloud his essays as much as he enjoyed debating educational budgets with the city counselors years later. This father lived on the stage of Elliot-Clarke and his memorized lines of Agrippa. Cadence was the revolution to his literary existence, a girl who'd grow ephemerally – and exponentially if he had any say. Strange that Cadence would connect to them best through touch. The fading memory of their faces marks the passage of time like an expiry date. The exact tone of their voice droning ever down a hallway until it

became a murmur around the corner – hardly a language she recognized at all. She glances at the belts again, feels the old leather. A rub too harsh. A nail snagged. A piece of leather chips off into her other palm. Momentarily, she remembers the other times this has happened. Handling the belt changes it every time and it's now as if she's palming a piece of her past.

It's a brisk walk down the rows of manuscripts. Each vent nipping through the sweater she'd settled with – kind of like the winters in her twenties without central heating. The class is quietly examining the University's relics. The lesson more practical, a "hands-on approach". Cadence likes these times the best in her week. She runs her finger over the spines, slipping on the velum, and dragging across the dry cloth. The contents don't interest her much. Even though she knows they are what people really prize.

Her knuckle catches a notch in the metal wardrobe. The name catches her eye. She bargains with a classmate for space. Lays the book on the foam table and carefully wafts a page over. The language is aloof, the page heavily stained, but its history is palpable – it's accessible at the touch.



**esc**

Geneviève Smith

books in a box  
under plastic blankets  
we too are sick  
watching rapists run  
in Technicolor  
worried but  
Orville eases the pain:  
Microwaves of anxiety.

Law&Order  
fades to black  
onscreen and off  
somehow we  
come to feel safe  
behind the magnets  
electric fences  
plasmas and pixels

planting mēkhanikos  
iron  
magnolias blooming  
above charging cables rooted  
in the filth we repost

our profiled faces blank  
our profiled pages bloodied  
with the sacrificial  
offerings of who  
we carve out  
as ourselves  
in the ether  
nothing more than  
compostless compositions

while  
papers printed  
with words unseen

unfelt  
are tied down with wax string  
and left to the rain to decipher-  
tick tap drag  
tethered online  
to a new Mother  
board  
bored  
we weep for the days  
before we

Shifted





# *With Content By*

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