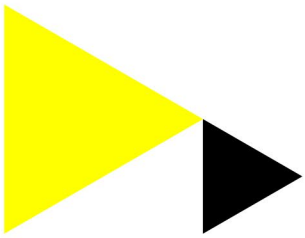
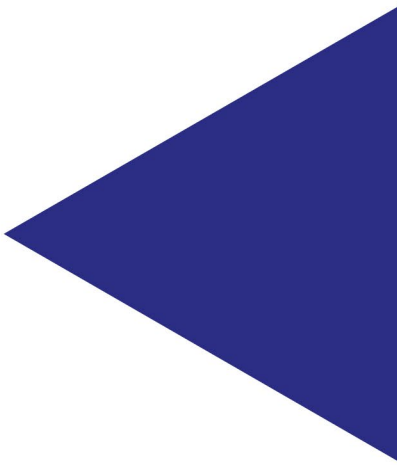
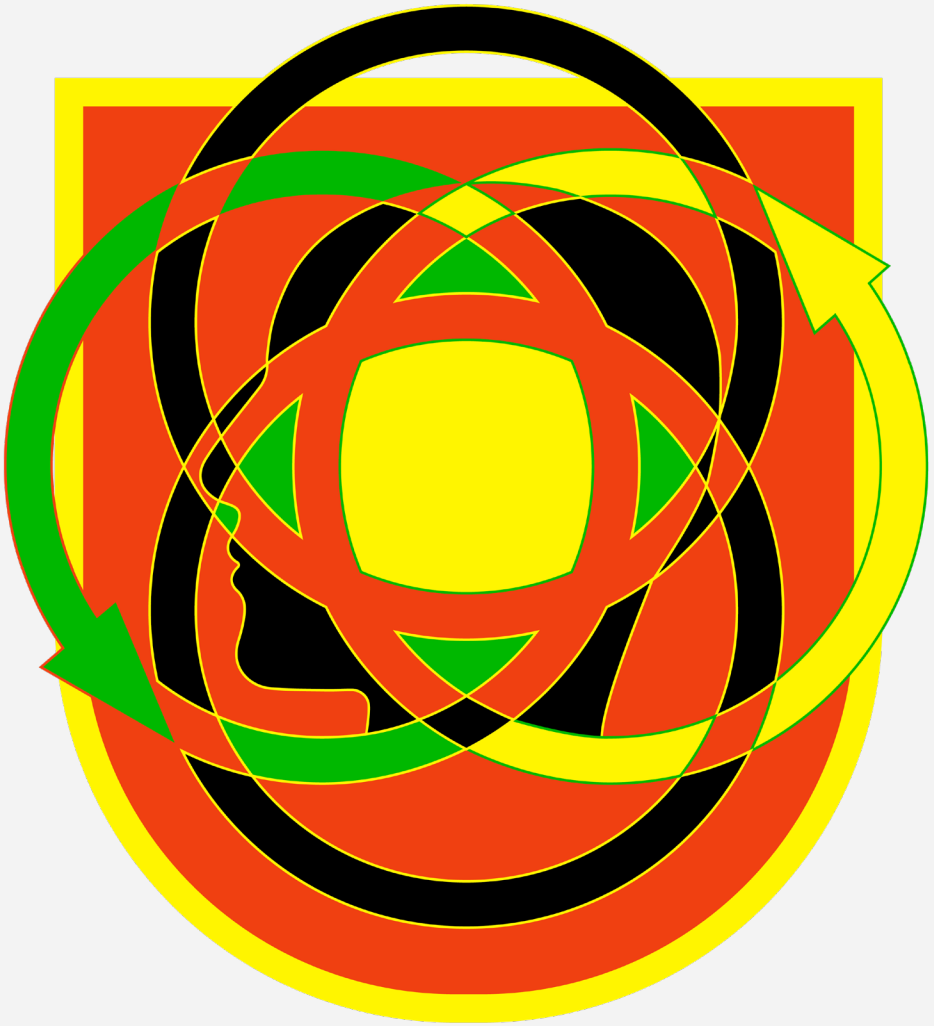
README.first – Essays on film and technology / Essays over film en technologie







README.first

Essays on film and technology

Institute of Network Cultures and Plokta

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FOREWORD

README.first is a collection of mini-essays, published in the run up to the Plokta filmfestival. We've asked writers, researchers, theorists, artists, programmers, and others to pick an online video that functions as a stepping stone for their thought and practice and to comment shortly on why they find the video so significant, funny, or outright disturbing. The resulting reflections speak about Silicon Valley obsessions, our mediated social lives, the impact of technology on centuries old games, and more.

Plokta showcases film as a frame of socio-technological themes and discussions. With these essays we want to broaden the scope to one of the most significant developments in visual culture of the past decades: the rise of online video. At the Institute of Network Cultures (INC), online video has been a research topic already since 2007, in a continuous project named Video Vortex. Together, Plokta and INC, hope to stimulate reflections before, during and after the festival on what the moving image has to say to us.

The essays were published in the weeks leading up to the festival and are now collected in this bilingual downloadable publication. We hope you enjoy coming back to these texts and videos, as they whisper softly. . . *readme.*

PS: You can open the videos by clicking on the thumbnails.

Miriam Rasch, Institute of Network Cultures

Jurian Strik, Plokta

A DESTRUCTIVE GAME

HANS SCHNITZLER

We are witnessing an historic economic mutation, according to Shoshana Zuboff in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism.* Where capitalism had originally generated profits through concrete products and services, and then focused on profiting from speculation, it is now directed principally on profit maximization through the exploitation of behaviour – including *future* behaviour.

This new form of profit-making thrives under a regime that has mastered the art of attention-seeking, a constellation that in economic terms is also understood as scarcity and therefore labelled the 'attention economy'.

A consumer is namely a consciousness with desires. If you can identify these desires, it becomes easy to predict future purchasing or decision-making behaviour, and where necessary to influence and modify it. Breaking into this tightly-knit field of interpersonal dealings and relationships is therefore the most important aspect of the game that the desire-catchers are playing with us.

Data and algorithms, the lubricants that keep the wheels of the internet industry turning, are increasingly able to peer inside the heads of civilians and consumers and to predict, and potentially adjust, their activities. The only precondition is that these heads allow themselves to be linked to the digital machinery that can analyze and exploit personal data – whether or not it fits into 280 characters or less.

This is why Silicon Valley calls in the help of advisors like Nir Eyal, Stanford University lecturer and author of the tech industry's bible *Hooked*, who identified the tactics that would keep data-humans glued to their devices. Advanced attention strategies and regular dopamine injections keep the infantrymen of the digital age on permanent stand-by, or until they get Twitteritis.

The fact that we are dealing with an all-out war was confirmed by the CEO and founder of Netflix, Reed Hastings, who at an unguarded moment let slip that his greatest enemy was the human need for sleep. A sleeping person is the nightmare of the average attention dealer.

So the expansionism of the Silicon *Reich* depends on the successful annexation of our attention. To this end a data-delirium-befuddled supreme command at the western edge of the United Sates has embarked on an information and communication apocalypse that is rendering the data-human literally dumbstruck. Everything comes at a price, and the cost of the invasion of our attention domain is described in military circles as 'collateral damage': widespread attention destruction.

The battle for our attention is no trivial issue. Attention is a vulnerable human resource that can also become depleted. In this sense the attention crisis can be compared to the environmental crisis; just as clean air lets us breathe, pure attention lets us think and feel. In fact attention stands for love, commitment and involvement.

So allowing our attention to be commodified is not just a very intimate issue, but also a destructive game – just as destructive as the game that Carmen and Don José play in the Bizet opera.

INSECURE HAPPINESS AND SECURE DESIGN IN *LITTLE JOE*

EMMA VAN MEYEREN

What would happen if a plant could be genetically modified so that it could make people happy? Would it overthrow the antidepressant industry? Who would make the plant, and how would it work? Jessica Hausner's new film *Little Joe* asks and answers some of these questions.

When plant breeder Alice Woodard is pushed a bit too hard to have her happy plant Little Joe ready in time for mass distribution, a series of odd events makes her aware of the possible unwanted effects the plant might have. 'Little Joe changes the people he infects,' the voice-over of the trailer says in a sinister tone.

What stands out immediately is the film's Wes Anderson twist on minimalist futurist aesthetics. Alice is either dressed in a soft green unwrinkled lab coat or a pastel pink seamless jacket. The lab is transparent but not necessarily bright, dressed in soft tones and red lights. Although the plants grow in a greenhouse, the rest of the lab is seemingly without edges or corners. And the plant itself? Its deep red enhances the otherwise soft color palette perfectly. It gives just the spark of liveliness the film needs to seem real enough, but not quite too real.

The aesthetic depiction of the Future™ has changed throughout the history of film. The 80s had neon, the 90s had concrete. As one writer points out, even multicultural street life once was part of the aesthetic palette of futurism. Although these choices might look like they are made independently of the plot, aesthetics are driving factors of the feeling a movie conveys. In the case of Sci-Fi, they reveal dominant attitudes about the future. Neon could express exciting and curious attitudes towards the future. Concrete's timeless and placeless qualities could express a sense of a new beginning, while its harshness and greyness also convey a more grim and skeptical feeling.

Bright, light, seamless, and curved shapes like the buildings and clothing in *Little Joe* generally portray an optimistic view of the future. It is the look of human control over the mess and instability of nature. *Little Joe* feels like it's filmed in the Apple version of a greenhouse. Just like the Apple store, it is calm because there is order. The two are linked, they almost become interchangeable. The problem of a design that becomes interchangeable with a feeling is that it tends to be a way to trick you. In the case of Apple, the point of the trick is obvious: you have to be persuaded to buy their new expensive products.

This begs the question what persuasion *Little Joe* is doing. It certainly isn't portraying a naive or optimistic narrative about true human happiness through modified plants. The whole plot is actually set up to question this, making perhaps the most classic of all Sci-Fi questions central to the film: is this new technology serving us or are we serving *Little Joe*? In this case the combination of soft aesthetics and a sinister plot enable the "hypnotizingly eerie" qualities the movie is praised for. The plot makes the initial calm and soft hues and forms suspicious, thus enabling a critical view of the possibilities of technical solutions to human problems around things like happiness, reproduction, labor, motherhood and mental health. The conversation between the aesthetics and the plot of *Little Joe* both reveals and conceals aspects of these questions, making it a good starting point for further conversations.

BEN GROSSER'S ORDER OF MAGNITUDE

GEERT LOVINK

The video cut-up piece *Order of Magnitude* features Mark Zuckerberg's obsession with growth. Instead of taking the traditional critical approach, Ben Grosser magnifies particular words that return in each and every one of his sentences: 'MORE', billion, trillion, etc. Ben Grosser: 'Covering the earliest days of Facebook in 2004 up through Zuckerberg's compelled appearances before the US Congress in 2018, I viewed every one of these recordings and used them to build a supercut drawn from three of Mark's most favoured words: more, grow, and his every utterance of a metric such as two million or one billion.'

Inside the exploding galaxy of Facebook there are no limits of growth. After a few minutes the viewer gets exhausted and is ready to swipe the video away, stand up and walk out: the exact opposite response to what we experience when we're on Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp. The emptiness of this guy is simply disgusting.

Despite the feelgood motivations of digital detox apps and courses, the messy reality is that we want to spend more time on social media. We all desperately want to grow, collect more friends and followers, views, clicks, and likes. Then why do we respond in such a paradoxical way to 'moreism' when we see it in this artwork? We're urged to no longer think in terms of millions: we are billions and write trillions of messages. There are always more

images, more data. It all sounds so childish; the little tyrant who wants more and more. Still, the baby face of this eternal teenager, the infantile entrepreneur, has got something cute and innocent. Could this naïve guy do any harm? He just wants more, fair enough.

Already in the 1970s growth had become problematic, and in this day and age of climate urgency it's looking straight out antique. Still, we can't seem to shake it off. Until recently, excessive, quick forms of expansion were understood as 'inflation' (remember the German inflation after World War I). In our age, however, more can never be less. We're all children of the Big Bang Theory and are taught to accept that exponential expansion of the social media universe is subjected to the laws of physics.

'Remember, your first billion is the hardest.' The venture capital dogma to grow fast, at all cost, has wiped out precious network ecologies. The violence of this military Blitzkrieg strategy is what we hear in the excited-agitated voice of Mr. Zuckerberg. *Order of Magnitude* gives face to the Silicon Valley strategy of hypergrowth and its aim to gain a monopoly position by outgrowing other modes of communication as fast as possible, using Peter Thiel's adagio that 'competitive markets destroy profits.' While the established Western elites still preach 'competition', this obsessive 47.15 minutes compilation brutally pushes aside all naïve and moderate concepts.

Will our exhaustion one day flip into refusal? When will this inflationary epoch ever come to a close and burst all bubbles? Do we really need more critique, more therapy, more alternatives? No, not again!

IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

FIEP VAN BODEGOM

Even Google couldn't help me here, but I seem to remember that Rudy Kousbroek – a car enthusiast – once wrote an essay in which he claimed that most people, when asked to imagine the cross-section of a car, would see nothing more than a kind of sponge, a featureless plane. They have no idea what the underlying mechanics look like; how an oil-based fuel is turned into forward motion. They have no idea how this large-as-life object, one they depend on every day, actually works. This could also be a rather apt description of my own relationship with my computer, and with 'the internet'.

In a discussion of some recent studies on the now-ubiquitous internet and the effect it is having on people, Patricia de Vries writes in *De Nederlandse Boekengids* about the false dichotomy drawn between the 'real' and the 'virtual' worlds: 'This vision leaves no room to problematize the internet as a part of the complex, messy socio-technical tangle in which we live, invested by such factors as geographical location, capital and work, politics and economics, but also by smaller quantities, such as you and I – and all the expectations, ideas, desires and aspirations of these players. Even more significantly, we are all too willing to ascribe our fears to something that lies outside ourselves, and which is therefore beyond our reach.'

"Well...this is the beginning of the end. Nobody's safe any more."

In her notebook Simone Weil wrote: 'A very beautiful woman who looks at her reflection in the mirror may very well believe that the image is herself. An ugly woman knows it is not.' One might suppose that beauty was redundant in a virtual world; after all, it has no function there – no biological function, at any rate. Nevertheless, we seem to be developing ever more ways to present human figures in new forms of 'artificial' perfection. The poor bodies in the real world are then put through painful and expensive contortions so as to measure up to their virtual counterparts.

"*No, you're not the only one thinking you're tripping out. They morphed his face. You're welcome*."

Over Christmas dinner my uncle related how he had Googled something or other and found a clip of an interview at which I had also been at the table, as the moderator. Yes, said my aunt, you looked so relaxed! You crossed your legs, settled into your seat. So relaxed. I don't know whether this is paranoia or delusions of grandeur – both, perhaps – but the first thing I thought was: Oh, no! If there's enough image material of me online, then anyone with a deep-fake program – now a tool for programmers and the digitally literate, but soon not much harder to use than an Instagram filter – could have me say anything. ANYTHING.

"*I'm sky high right now and and this was a bad decision to watch*."

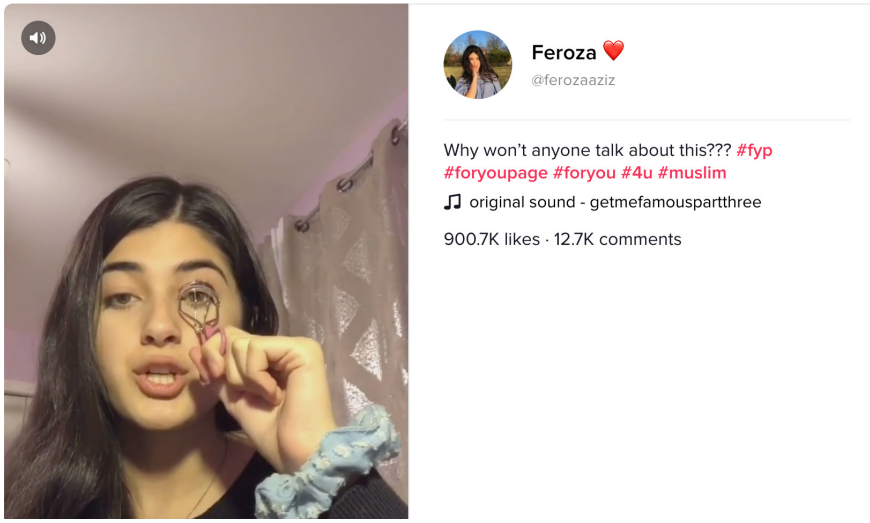
In the Santi Quattro Coronati, a basilica in Rome, a series of 13th-century frescos depict the purported conversion and baptism of the Roman Emperor Constantine. The emperor, stricken with leprosy, is miraculously cured by Pope Sylvester. In return for this cure, Constantine then bestows authority over large swathes of his empire to the church leaders. A few centuries later, the document describing this Donation turned out to be a 7th-century forgery (which had nevertheless served the Popes extremely well). What always strikes me about these frescos is how successful propaganda can look so silly. Diseased, but in full imperial regalia, Constantine lies awkwardly in bed, his eyes closed, his brows furrowed in resignation. Red spots have been painted onto his face and arms with great care and unnatural regularity.

"*This technology will be used for evil purposes. Wait till the 2020 elections*."

I'm not trying to say that there's nothing new under the sun. On the contrary: just as orchids and insects co-evolve, we humans evolve along with the technology we invent - even if most of its anthropoid users haven't the faintest idea how it actually works.

POWERPLAY TO THE PEOPLE

LILIAN STOLK



On the face of it TikTok looks like a platform for meaningless content: silly dances, stupid tricks and bored teenagers. But behind this superficiality there's all sorts of stuff going on. For instance, you get a peek into thousands of bedrooms all over the world, and it is one of the few places where you get to see content from outside your own filter bubble. And there are TikToks that do, in fact, raise important issues. My own favourite is a video by the Afghan-American teen Feroza Aziz from New Jersey, a video which went viral at the end of November 2019. Aziz used the popular online video genre of 'beauty tutorial' not to explain how to make smokey eyes or perfect curls, but as a cover for a serious message. While confidently curling her eyelashes she asks her viewers to give some thought to the Uighurs in China, a discriminated Muslim minority. Over a million Uighurs are detained in 're-education camps' whose existence has long been denied by the Chinese government.

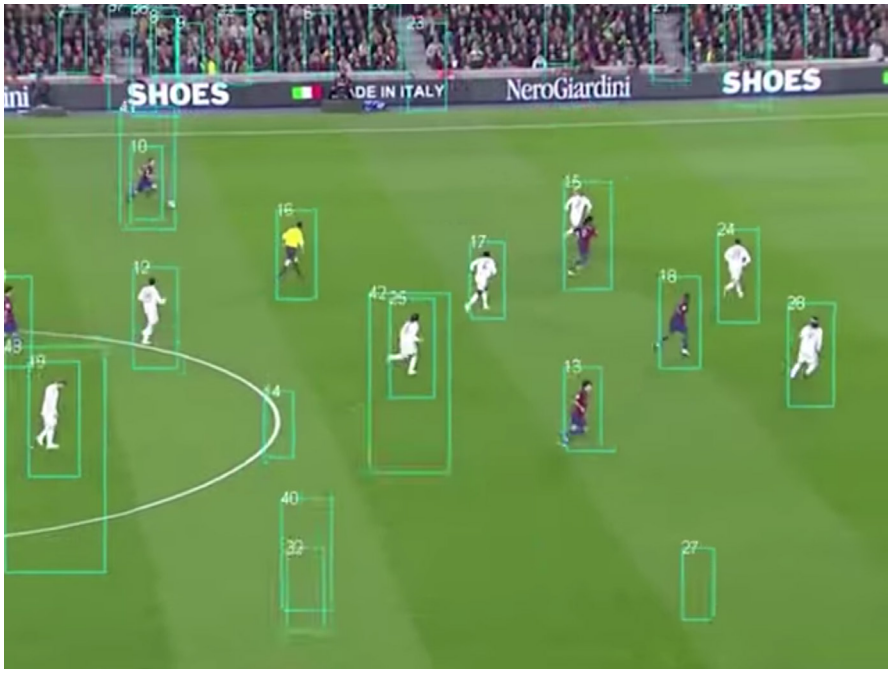
This beauty tutorial demonstrates why TikTok is both a worrying and a fascinating phenomenon. The popular video platform quickly became a serious player in the social media landscape, and is currently the largest platform not belonging to Facebook. A significant difference from Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat is that TikTok comes from China. For years we have given our data to companies with American owners: men with dollar signs in their eyes, sure, but who at least come from a culture with more or less the

same norms and values. We could, and still can, call them to account from time to time. But how does that work if we give our filmed lives to China? China treats ideas like freedom and privacy very differently. Their social credit system and internet censorship of Western websites are clear examples of this. Against this Chinese background TikTok struggles openly with its new position as a global platform. TikTok blocked Aziz' video soon after she had posted it, then denied it, and later gave a grudging apology, for fear of losing the sympathy of Western users.

Blocking her original post, incidentally, had little point. Funnily enough this is because of how TikTok itself is built. The app was designed around the meme principle. Every video has music, and this sound fragment challenges TikTokkers to do a dance, a trick, or a performance. Other TikTokkers then make their own version. For instance, the opening line "Walk a mile in these Louboutins" from Iggy Azelia's number *Walk* has given rise to a hype in which users tie bizarre objects to their feet, from candlesticks to oven gloves, and try to walk with them. These short videos are not just shown to friends, but can be seen by every TikTokker, and this means that such 'challenges' can go viral incredibly quickly. This is exactly what happened to Aziz' video. On YouTube her video would have stood alone. As soon as content moderators realized that they'd let her video slip through the net, it would have been taken down. But on TikTok a video is like the first falling domino. After Aziz came dozens of other TikTokkers who used supposed beauty tutorials to call attention to Uighurs. Because the challenge spreads like a virus, is it hard for content moderators to eradicate them completely. We know that on online platforms, where much of our social life now takes place, we are constantly being watched by the Big Tech companies behind the platforms. The TikTok mechanism is interesting because it offers its users a way to push back. *Power to the people!*

FOOTBALL TECHNOLOGY

SANNEKE HUISMAN



Football and technology: at first sight, two things that couldn't be further apart. In *The Ball, The Field, The Arena*, a video essay, the artist Florian van Zandwijk proves us wrong. He looks at the world's most popular sport from a social-science perspective and depicts it through the lens of culture and technology. He starts from the premise of the book *Homo Ludens* (1938) by the Dutch cultural theorist Johan Huizinga, namely that play is both a primary and a necessary condition for the creation of culture. Van Zandwijk tests this thesis using football, and gives Huizinga contemporary currency by focusing on the most recent developments in the field of technology and media.

The almost 20-minute video essay on the intertwining of football, culture and technology is formed entirely of found footage. Three chapters give the work its title: the ball, the field, and the arena. In a whirlwind of fragments taken from television, social media, video games and advertisements we see how sooner or later everyone – whether in politics, professional life, or their free time – is confronted with football: from street kids to stars, from robots

to world leaders. We see Trump and Putin using a football to put on a toe-curling display of affected fraternization. We see the influence of FIFA, a commercial video game which generations of children have played. We see how digital technology has become part of the physical vocabulary of the referee: if he wants to watch an instant video replay of a possible foul, he signals the outline of a screen with his fingers. Football has devoted an extraordinarily important role to mass media and technology. It is no coincidence that these are also hot topics in art and media art, where culture and technology also influence one another – and where politics is never far away.

Lastly, the soundtrack of *The Ball, The Field, The Arena* is as uplifting as it is agonizing. The first few seconds of the UEFA Champions League theme tune – *Zadok the Priest* by

Georg Friedrich Händel, arranged by Tony Britten – are spun out over the entire length of the work; a sustained crescendo holds the viewer in its grip. Watching the work in a cinema becomes a collective experience, just like a football match. The insistence of the music creates a tension you could cut with a knife. As a spectator you might actually want to leave, but you soon realize: *We're in this together*. And whether you're there or not, the result is inescapable. At the end of the film the camera zooms out: the final shot. The ball is part of the field, the field is part of the arena, the arena is part of the city, the country, the continent, the world. The world is a football. Football is the world.

A POST-NOSTALGIC ROAD TRIP

THEO PLOEG

A pale blue sky is bisected by a windscreen wiper. The camera is shaky; it jerks to the right, then to the left. The driver stares ahead stoically, ignoring the camera. On the back seat a friendly bearded face smiles, showing his teeth. The image flickers and jitters with colourful glitches. For a few seconds. Then the blue sky returns. And the windscreen wipers. The camera zooms in on the dirt and cracks in the windscreen.

We are watching a road trip, filmed in 1991. Somewhere towards the end of the four-minute video we see the film-maker. Like the others he has a bushy beard and wears formal clothing, including a broad-brimmed black hat. A member of an orthodox religion, perhaps? Is the building in the video's last shots the final destination of the trip? A makeshift house of worship, lost between the wide fields and woods of the countryside in – yes, where? Russia?

These are questions you ask yourself only if you start thinking about what you've just seen. Most of the time I never ask myself this about EELF videos.

EELF's YouTube channel combines 1990s amateur video with recently released music. The music has the leading role. In early 2017, the Lithuanian Andrius started uploading his favourites: just-discovered electronic dance music that harked back to the earliest days of the genre. He found suitable still images to go with the music. It was a success; his followers grew to a few hundred. In mid-2017 Andrius switched to video. First he combined lo-fi house with film scenes. It was fun, but something was missing. The combination had to be something other than just a gimmick. Sound and image had to support one another, had to lead to something unique. It all came together when he started using found VHS material from YouTube. New lo-fi house with amateur video clips from the 1990s were a perfect fit.

Today EELF has a catalogue of about 800 of these combinations, the channel has more than 100,000 subscribers, and Andrius spends two hours a day making new uploads.

Finding the perfect combination is a delicate operation. *Late Nite* by the Toronto DJ GiveUp, released on 3 February, is the soundtrack for this road trip. No, wait: the images of the trip form a visual frame for the fragile, melancholic house music. Andrius's tagline is 'EELF is creating nostalgia', but that's not how I see his work. Yes, the music he curates flirts conspicuously with a musically more interesting past, and the videos he selects are also of another age. But when the two are superimposed something new arises, something I would rather describe as an alternative reality. There are elements that make us think of the past. The naïve, simple drum patterns of *Late Nite*, for instance. The old women on the roadside waving exuberantly at the camera. The clumsy zooming in and out, and the jerky camerawork. Together these images call up emotions we might call 'post-nostalgic': they make us aware that we can approach things today in a more open, conscious and naïve way without losing ourselves in the past or the future.

EELF is showing us a new pop culture that doesn't fight the *status quo* but creates a different world. YouTube is full of channels like this, and they all deserve my attention, but for the time being my hands are full with EELF: I've still got several hundred music videos to go.

HBO GO - AWKWARD FAMILY VIEWING

DAN HASSLER-FOREST

For the past twenty years, we have been told that ours is a true Golden Age of Television. HBO was the first company to realize that the production of prestigious TV programs for the cultural elite could be just as profitable as broadcast media aimed at the traditional mainstream audience. With the slogan 'It's not TV, it's HBO,' audiences learned to watch serialized television narratives in a different way: not as a casual distraction that occupied a central place in a living room, but as a valuable and complex medium that deserved to be studied, debated, analyzed, and watched with our full attention.

For the generation that has come of age in the Facebook- and Google-dominated age of platform capitalism, this perception of television has become second nature. And as this advertisement illustrates so vividly, many older viewers still labor under the misapprehension that television programming is meant to support social interactions. But the joke, of course, is that they are hopelessly old-fashioned in their understanding of this medium's function: their children are the ones who 'get it' in their obvious irritation over their parents' inappropriate attempts at small talk.

But while countless digital subscription channels offer us an endless proliferation of just this kind of Quality TV, we may wonder at what cost we have made this transition from mainstream media to hyper-individualized flows of media content. For while commercial network television was far from ideal as a vessel for debate and critique, it did at least

anchor us within a shared sense of reality – both in the social space of our living rooms and in work environments where interactions were facilitated by a common knowledge of popular culture.

Digitization and media convergence have transformed the role of mainstream media from the production of consensus to one designed to maximize and aggravate existing forms of social, cultural, and economic division. As a rapidly-growing number of streaming platforms compete for viewers with disposable income, those without the means to pay for Disney+, Amazon Prime, Hulu, Apple TV+, and Netflix are consigned to more cheaply-produced genres such as reality TV, talent competitions, and the never-ending parade of high-concept game shows. Perhaps not coincidentally, these more widely accessible 'free' forms of TV programming also sell us a worldview grounded in hardcore social Darwinism: a rat race in which the 'losers' fall by the wayside, while the rare class of 'winners' are rewarded with excessive material wealth, social status, and celebrity.

It is a sad form of irony indeed that a technology that was expected by so many to liberate us from the tyrannical power of commercial media has mostly worsened the problems it was supposed to solve. More than ever before, a small handful of global corporations rule over our media landscape. We pay for their services either with sizable subscription fees or by giving them our personal data for free – or, most commonly, both. The fact that the cultural elite now gets more enjoyment from watching TV feels like cold comfort in such a bleakly dystopian media life.

LANGUAGE IS A FAILED TECHNOLOGY

DAPHNÉ DUPONT-NIVET

I have a confession to make: Google co-authors my emails. Not all of them, rest assured, but certainly a decent amount. If you have received a slightly formal, what some might call boring, email from me lately, the chances are high that Google had its say. For a year or so now, whenever I set off to write a sentence along the lines of 'thank you for your message' or 'all the best', Gmail is quick to suggest a plausible ending. And I? I tap my right arrow and let it happen. It knows its shit. It saves time. Authenticity is a myth, anyway.

***

In the 2015 silent video *Language is a Failed Technology* by the Norwegian artist Toril Johannessen, two wooden spindle tops discuss the nature of language. Is language inherent to human nature? A skill we all possess innately, forming the basis for how human life is organized? Or is it the opposite: a technology? An instrument that humans created in order to communicate, something we shaped and structured to make human interactions more seamless – or less complicated, at least?

Silently yet vehemently they argue. I imagine them to be shouting at the top of their voices, until they suspend their dispute: 'Let's perform.' They spin on and on, communication without words, language without sound.

***

Let's not forget that words have sounds, Ursula Le Guin stressed in the 1976 introduction to her genre-bending science-fiction novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*. 'A sentence or paragraph is like a chord or harmonic sequence in music: its meaning may be more clearly understood by the attentive ear, even though it is read in silence, than by the attentive intellect.'

I now take this to imply (but how can I be sure?) that communication envelops more than just the meaning of our statements, the definitions of our words. What we say surpasses its intended consequences. Words have sounds, sensations, aesthetic value. They create connections that are unspeakable, like honeybees dancing for each other in order not to starve.

Or like two spindle tops, spinning in sync, until they slow down, wiggle, wobble, and fall.

***

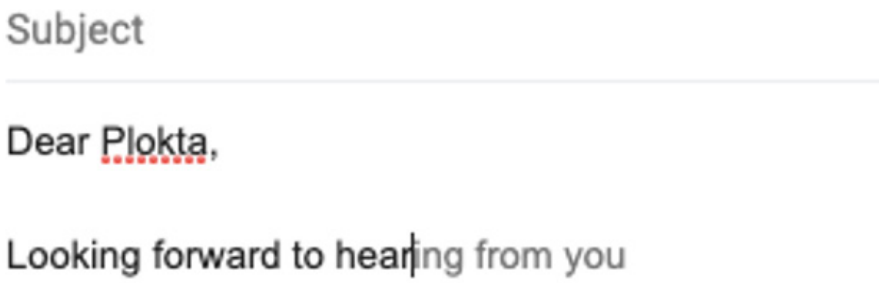
'I like the sound of you dreaming, I like how it sounds in my ear.' This song has been stuck in my head lately. *Electric Lines*, by Joe Goddard. It goes like this: 'Everyone's updating their hardware, plugging in their new gear, upgrading to all-new components, replacing the things from last year. Every time I hear something special, its replacement is something I fear. It's only a working in progress, only a stopgap idea. The tools that we used to create them, they're no longer welcome 'round here. (...) In this world you've created, there are sounds I'll always hold dear.'

***

There are languages that could never be spoken aloud. Ursula Le Guin created one in her famous novel and called it *mindspeech*. In mindspeech one's subconscious addresses someone else's inner being directly. In mindspeech it is impossible to lie; no excuses. In mindspeech you share your deepest truths – those you weren't even aware of yourself.

Yet this apotheosis of flawness communication can only be used voluntarily – and is a bitch to master. Some people never even acquire the basics. 'Mothers mindspeak to their unborn babies. I don't know what the babies answer. But most of us have to be taught, as if it were a foreign language. Or rather as if it were our native language, but learned very late.'

Trust, I have come to realize, is a hard-fought skill, only mastered with the right devices.


Subject
Dear Plokta,
Looking forward to hearing from you

BIOGRAPHIES

Fiep van Bodegom edits the literary magazine De Gids, writes regularly on literature, and has published essays, translations and prose.

Daphné Dupont-Nivet is an Amsterdam-based investigative journalist and researcher. She writes about various topics, including (precarious) labor markets, the environment, and the politics of technology.

Dan Hassler-Forest works as Assistant Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at Utrecht University. He has published books and articles on superhero movies, comics, transmedia storytelling, adaptation studies, critical theory, and zombies.

Sanneke Huisman is media art writer and curator.

Geert Lovink is a Dutch media theorist, internet critic, and founder of the Institute of Network Cultures at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.

Emma van Meyeren is a writer and DJ based in Amsterdam. Her writing has appeared on Vice.com, Glamcult and De Groene Amsterdammer.

Theo Ploeg is a design and media sociologist. He tells stories about possible futures and is co-founder of Speculative Futures Amsterdam.

Hans Schnitzler is a philosopher, columnist and the author of *Het digitale proletariaat* (2015) and *Kleine filosofie van de digitale onthouding* (2017).

Lilian Stolk is director of The Hmm, a platform for internet cultures, and emoji expert. She cares about understanding the internet and has a special focus on internet languages and the rise of image-based communication. She published *Het zonderwoorden-boek* (2018) about her research on emoji and launched the app Emoji Voter (2019) to democratize emoji. She is also a public speaker, writer and events programmer.

README.first,
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