

In "Selfie Poetics," Andrew Durbin considers the recent rise of the selfie and poetics in the art world, rethinking how artist-poets self-image through language on the Internet. Against coherency,

selfie poetics not only

① disrupt traditional notions of the poetic, they revise our definition of the self-portrait,

too, [reimagining our destabilized subjectivity as critically dependent on Unicode, social media, apps, and a circulating network of bots who constantly threaten to write our poems for us.]

problematic of his essay

* Theme = selfie poetics .

* preconditions = ① they disrupt traditional notions of the poetic → what were they?

② rethink our definition of the self portrait → what was it?

⇒ it does so by defining as :
a)

②

a)

Recently, the Miami-based artist Jillian Mayer shared with me selffeed.com, a project that she, Erik Carter, and Tyler Madsen premiered in January 2014 at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts. The site is a real-time stream of images tagged #selfie on Instagram, a continuous cycle of faces from around the planet, at all hours, in all

example

poses, in any number of social configurations: lonely teens in bathrooms, group shots in hallway mirrors, couples at dinner, bros at the game. The stream moves too quickly for any one selfie to stand out. Instead, faces race across the screen, blurring into one another, smiles, eyes, facial hair, until a single, delirious visual object seems to emerge—one that John Kelsey recently described as "our finest and final hallucination, the ultimate transitional object" in the "bright ruins of a constantly refreshed now."^[1]



Tyler Madsen, Erik Carter & Jillian Mayer, *Selffeed.com*, 2014. Courtesy: the artists

* The selfie has migrated across platforms and is now the most common, if not essential, unit of all social media. It is a poetic device a term my Mac dictionary helpfully defines as "an imaginative or sensitively emotional style of expression." cannot imagine an object more sensitive, more expressive—more reflective, more confessional, too—than the selfie. It is, at its heart, poetry a perverse realization of William Wordsworth's famous definition of the poem (current at the start of an industrial world we now find ourselves in

this is a personal statement, which is too categorical in my opinion.

- def of poetic device -
 (so it doesn't remain to photography) according to this definition.
 => points out the imaginative = unreal? fantastic?

-> analogy between selfie + poetry (good rhetoric to re-evaluate the selfie in itself as piece of art)

* thesis is : selfie = poetry

def. { the "bright ruins" of) as "emotion" recollected in tranquility. To take a selfie is to pause, self-reflect, and express your (emotional) self. For a long time poetry was a lyrical, narrative, and/or expository exploration of what it meant to be a self, thinking and bodied, present and material (also absent and immaterial). (But recent poetics, much of which is centered around the web, is not interested in the self per se, the Hegelian subject long ago exhausted by the advance of technology and later carved up for other purposes. Rather, it is interested in the selfie, in the low-res, singular-but-of-a-feed self whose shelf life lasts as long as you keep your account—and then some.

so the notion of emotion is central for both Mac dictionary + W. Wordsworth
 => she? could developpe on it, what is an emotion?

once again, it's personal stat. + too categoric; it also serves various purposes depending on the context,

it seems a bit... anachronic to me!
 The notion of self emerges in poetry relatively late proportionally in its history. He doesn't situate any period. @ poetry was never resumed in self-analysis, it's a personal statement once again, that's being ure to contrast with "now".

=> so metaphysic of the self (?) but interested in the ephemeral sign of the self (!?)

→ thesis

Like selfies, the idea of poetics has found itself everywhere in the contemporary art world. The 30a Bienal de São Paulo, subtitled "The Imminence of Poetics," looked "at the ideas of *poiesis*: the Greek root of poetry, which means actualization or becoming; and imminence, the sense that this actualization takes place whenever a viewer engages with an artwork."^[2]

then, doesn't it become a trope?
 => so poetic / poetry is a way too add value in smthg (as the category of art does).

Poetics also played a key role in the 2014 Whitney Biennial, especially on Stuart Comer's floor, which included Triple Canopy and Etel Adnan, the celebrated poet and painter who was also included in DOCUMENTA (13).

} exemple

Anthony Elms's floor included Susan Howe and the writers Gary Indiana and David Foster Wallace. The first exhibit of Hans Ulrich Obrist and Simon Castets's 89plus project, *Poetry Will Be Made By All!*, was a multiform exploration of poetry and poetics at the LUMA Foundation's Westbau Exhibition Space in Zurich. In that exhibit,

curated with Kenneth Goldsmith and Danny Snelson, poets and artists culled mostly from the United States and Europe held readings (in person and via Skype) and made various wall and sculptural pieces for the gallery. Full disclosure: I participated in this event as a poet, but opted out of making a work of art for the gallery space. Instead, I took an #artselfie in the Douglas Gordon show at Galerie Eva Presenhuber with the poet Trisha Low and posted it to Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.



DIS, <http://artselfie.dismagazine.com/>
 (<http://artselfie.dismagazine.com/>) Courtesy: DIS Magazine

In 2012, *Dis* magazine and Brian Droitcour launched the #artselfie project, a live feed of images hashtagged #artselfie that closely resembles selffeed.com. Droitcour writes that the selfie reveals the social network as a telephone/mirror hybrid—literally!—and continues the aestheticization of everyday life in social media that has leached the authority of image-making from mass media and from art.^[3]!

exemple 2

def of selfie according to Droitcour:

- 1) reveals that social netw. = tel/mirror hybrid.
- 2) participates in the aestheticization of everyday life in social media (which pre-existed)
- ⊕ postulates that regarding image-making, social media > mass media / art.

(thus?)
 but selfie is included in art, accordingly to Dublin.

In the past few years, poetics and selfies alike have been formally and thematically integrated into various exhibitions and contemporary art practices, from net art to alt lit.

general constat: poetics + selfies = art

Selfies suggest—as a practice—formal strategies that speak to the essential struggle to self-image on the web, an inherently weak structure for the formulation (and actualization) of a supposedly coherent self. Do these images temporarily stabilize you? The hallucination is general, cross-media, and not specific to self-portraiture.

one interpretation of the selfie practice.

very interesting remark
→ notion of the fragmented self vs coherent self that is to deepen (+ problematic in the way he uses it)

Geert Lovink recently argued that the selfie which invests social media with necessary libidinous drive, has contributed to the "hypergrowth" of its distribution networks on an Internet that remains, for all its ubiquity, "broken."

⇒ postulates that the selfie has participated in the growth of online social medias

what does she mean by this?

Internet seems less broken than it does exposed for what it actually is: an essentially weak but huge communications structure that is as easily exploitable as the content it circulates, including the users themselves → ~~critic~~ + social critic of the Internet.

* the Internet = communications structure; that is (=?) exploitable and allows the content to be exploitable + the users

The self, converted to the selfie, is a data point, a commercial instrument for the aggregation of likes, which in turn signals a user's value in the backroom markets of Facebook and Google. It is also a weak image, weakened further by the social networks on which it lives, incapable of asserting authority or ownership. Someone (or some thing) who did not take the selfie can very easily repurpose it (as they often do in dating apps), using the personal, representational dimension of the image to deceive other users and warp ownership.

* the self = (via selfie) = "data point, commercial instrument for the aggregation of likes"

* likes determine a user's value in the "backroom markets of Facebook + Google".
⇒ so it's a way to "sell yourself", to turn yourself in a sort of product

* question of the ownership;
⊕ social networks = public spaces.

Sometimes this warping can occur by accident, as it did recently for Chicago-based artist Molly Soda, whose early selfies

* what is self thought to be coherent in the first place at all?

* def. re: this

* def.

example

(literally thrown out in the garbage) were found and repurposed by the photographer Paul-David Young in his show *To Perform, To Conceal* at Crowded House in Chicago. [5] In the middle of the minor controversy that followed the show, Soda didn't fault Young's use of her images and wrote that she conceded ownership of them when she put them in the garbage. It was similar, she said, to posting them online, where her selfies exist beyond her control anyway. [6]

Everything on the Internet is garbage, taken out to the curb for garbage time } that is, for the timeless life of an image-or text-object after the user who posted it in the first place has expired. To highlight how garbage lives on, the London-based poet and artist Jesse Darling used a popular Internet app that aggregates earlier Facebook status updates to generate a poem, *Recuperation 2009-2013*. [7] The result is a "drone selfie," as the poem describes itself.

*ordure } will to create a polemic / provocative statement.

exemple

Contrary to popular mythology it's got five apps.
 propz & biopolitical brand Darling's curated series of trade.
 It's good and that's a form of structural violence
 It can be alienating and it's Art.

Who's gonna be poetry I wouldn't recommend it
 English language prised from a bottle of joyful abandon.
 Not that it's most needed i.e., now & it's like EVERYTHING in the etymology of every street.

I've not fucked breasts for a throwdown.
 Best, bitchiest, cruellest, most media as mirror, or just show
 Through a camera I see myself become no me, or just wanna say NO victory, jus death doing his thing man
 End of either but eternally youthful and very pretty.

Buy my new weq in any boy's club.
 My film of snit and gits is the counterrevolutionary horror of compassionate love for the facebook
 I've not guaranteed. Get wasted I was really like, that was cool Jesse, nice
 Roll up, get some nodes and genital mucus and drink a boy of either gender
 O Deleuze & bossa melancholia

Wish me a broken veins & blocked pores & fine hairs & the death of Johnathan Livingston Seagull
 The phenomenon of Hito Steyerl, the INAUGURAL VERNISSAGE OF cigarettes bein smoked
 Judith Butler at the opera, peering from my crayons and magic markers what the profession demands and having more

God loves you, me, gays, users, humans, animals, bloggers, graf artists, mastjockeys, nerds, words & whynot
 YOU ARE the self to include the utopian dream of the nu .eu >>>
 Finding out ribbons and smile and perhaps some of identification.
 Honey, you travel softly through the 4chan threads at dawn looking for Attainable Futurity Under the shitty appropriation politics of net art
 I'd rather be a performance artist of it, WE DON'T laugh, you'll cry.

Holy Facebook Wall Posts, Batman worst rap in my coordinated subtext & archetypes
 Is the cannibal zombie apocalypse aliengals of deliverance as REAL by a Drone selfie at a certain level of DSM5 then
 I'll be looking to lie back, wait. There is no evil to fight. There used to be poetry I saw the love!
 #bitchplease I'm in the Trash in death's Disneyland.

Jesse Darling, *Recuperation 2009-2013*, 2013.

Courtesy: the artist

Darling's poetics are explicitly rooted in the language of critical theory and directly challenge the textual and imagistic authority of objects circulated online. Darling carves out of this language, which in academic contexts is often evacuated of much sense (jargon bric-a-brac assembled for the tiny readership of peer-reviewed journals), another critical language that struggles against its own inadequacy in light of the various regimes that administer its use. On this point, Darling began a performance-lecture commissioned by Banner Repeater and delivered at Present Fictions at the David Roberts Art Foundation in London in March 2014. They (Darling prefers the third person plural pronoun) started by diagnosing the condition of their language:

haha true :/ but so are communities of idea in general, → contemporary art's as well.

IT'S TRUE THAT I AM FULL OF WORDS, WHICH IS PARTIALLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO AN ALLEGED CONDITION OF MINE CALLED HYPERLEXIA WHICH IS A COROLLARY OF AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER MOST OFTEN FOUND IN WOMEN AND GAY MEN, IF THOSE ARE EVEN APPROPRIATE TAXONOMIES ANYMORE. IT'S A RAIN MAN-LIKE FACILITY FOR CIPHERS, BUT IN MY CASE IT'S WORDS AND NOT NUMBERS. I REMEMBER THE WORDS AND HOW THEY'RE SPELLED, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY MEAN OR HOW TO SAY THEM ALOUD, SO IN GENERAL I MAKE THEM MEAN WHATEVER I LIKE HASHTAG NEOLIBERAL HASHTAG WHATEVER HASHTAG NEOLOGISM ISM ISM ISM ISN'T.

I LEARNED THE RIGHT WORDS LATE IN LIFE AND I PUT THEM IN MY ARTILLERY BELT AND WHIPPED 'EM OUT FROM TIME

TO TIME AND I VOWED TO FIGHT MY WAY
TO FREEDOM WITH THE OTHERS.^[8]

While not strictly confessional or lyrical (or conceptual, for that matter), Darling's poetry and poetics center on a self who cannot stop striving toward all three,⁷ motivated by the language of the web and other registers of medical, militaristic, and critical discourse. What is alleged, even hedged: a narrative structure by which identity is made, formulated via an essentially poetic process of creation, of becoming, of actualizing—complicated processes that Darling critiques by continuously subverting the redemptive potential of all three poetic modes. They self-actualize multiple selves through language and self-portraiture, pinning identity to both, only to find them formally and politically weak, compromised, even fallen, Icarus-like, into landscapes of no future ("a postwar invention"). Icarus fell from the sky out of hubris, yes, but also out of the desire to show his father he could realize daddy's ambition. Desire routs love, love routs the self: "Since love denotes that for which we will never get paid, post-secular capitalism and the Hollywood propaganda machine have reified love into some big libidinal mystery play. But I prefer to see it as a site of exemplary incoherence," a site Darling immediately qualifies as potentially subservient to the "failing world order." But the site of exemplary incoherence might also be called poetry, what Darling "wouldn't recommend" but still uses for the negotiation of the varieties of the self that cannot be made to cohere.

interpretation :

registers

psycho-analytical lecture of the myth (typically freudian but why not)

interpretation of p.-s. cap + tt's def of love (⇒ a big libidinal mystery play)

def.



Jesse Darling, *Lil Icarus*, 2013. Courtesy: the artist

— Example

Half a century ago, the American poet **William Carlos Williams** described the landscape in which Icarus fell as “pageantry // ... / awake tingling / near // the edge of the sea / concerned / with itself.”^[9] **In their film *Lil Icarus*, Darling turns the camera toward themselves to declare this tingling—(let’s say Humanist)—pageantry over.** The full script (performed as a tinny, high-pitched voice-over) reads:

THEY SAY WE’RE LIVIN IN THE END TIMES,
TALKIN BOUT
GLOBAL WARMIN, TALKIN ABOUT THE
NEW BLUE ICE AGE BB
LATE CAPITALISM’S LIKE, ITS ALMOST
OVER & EASIER
TO IMAGINE THE END OF THE
WORLD
LIKE ME YA KNOW I JUS WANNA LOOK
GOOD NAKED –
U DUN KNOW EVERYBODY GOT A SELFIE-
BY DATE
IM NOT AFRAID TO DIE
U WANNA KNOW WHAT U GONNA LOOK
LIKE ON THE SLAB OF
THE MORGUE U BETTA
COME LIE DOWN NEXTA ME, BB

FLY LITTLE ICARUS/
I JUS WANNA MAKE THE VERY MOST OF
THE GIFT CALLED LIFE ^[10]

Darling updates the landscape of the fall to one dying under the weight of the political and economic regimes rapidly dismantling it. Darling's "end of the world" stops short of a full comparative ("easier to imagine... than?") as a correction to Slavoj Žižek's now-famous dictum that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.

For Darling, it seems that *nothing will end* (or else *everything will end*), invalidating the universal imaginative space in which we might collectively speculate on the deaths of the various boogiemens—global capitalism, new nationalisms, neo-liberalism, and so on—that haunt us. Rather, we are alone—selfified, locked in a tanning bed, voice pitched to near-comic effect—to imagine such a world, one somewhat sarcastically reduced to "the gift called life." To return to myth, it is the same gift—howbeit poetically enhanced—that Dionysius promised his believers before he made them tear themselves apart.

It's a crack-up, out of whose cracks a web-oriented poetics has emerged to synthesize text, visual media, and design to address what the New York-based poet and artist Deanna Havas calls "the identity economy."^[11] In *Template Jams*, an e-book commissioned by Klaus_eBooks, Havas writes of the reverse potential of the Internet to provide new platforms for self-expression by considering its "glorification of spam and generative content," which takes up a tremendous amount of web traffic.^[12] She writes, "The 'paradox of

Unicode' or more specifically, what was designed to be a universal character set, has become a means by which to aestheticize 'otherness', somewhat correlating to the translation of counter-

} which isn't a contemporary phenomenon at all; see orientalism ~~and even~~ for example

* ||| apparent in the decorative use of foreign characters." Is the internet an image of a future in which our world is ruled by senseless, malicious bots stupidly attempting correspondence, where otherness is not only aestheticized, it's programmed into the numerous non-human figures who contact us through

} good topic of reflection as well.

{ Facebook, email, and other backchannels to say, lost somewhere in Google's translation matrix, "A Pleasant weekend to you, Am your intending friend"? Or is that our present? *Template Jams* collapses the distinction—present and future—into a jumbled, all-inclusive now. These bots are writing, texting, contacting you on Tinder. They are writing poems, too.

In *Template Jams*, the bot-ruled web glitters in the infinitely remixable design elements of Unicode, where language drops literal meaning in favor of its semblances, whether produced by humans or bots. Havas sources "subjective design resources" to inform (and format) the book's visual and textual logic. In doing so, she troubles the illusory fantasies the web's anonymity provides. She writes:

"Semantization is requisite to the commodification of identity and to machine comprehension. If 'simulation is the ecstasy of the real', semantization is an interrogatory disturbance of that fantasy."

For Havas, the represented self and its implied (even implicated) subjectivity result in part by the design of larger structuring discourses of power and representation, a design that attempts to simplify while maintaining instant legibility: branding, web interfaces, “thought stylez,” epitomized by the various buttons, emoji, and tags that link all sites to larger networks where content might spread. Those thought stylez might be extended to include self-stylez, hashtagged, filtered, and circulated, whether as a Tweet or a selfie. These stylez of the self sit comfortably in the curatorial imperative of Tumblr and other social media sites where language and images circulate in the sublime freedom of the bright ruins. How do we, um, deal? The second part of the book is a series of poems that emulate or directly appropriate bot language: “Damn, IT’S TRUE! SO RELATABLE,” a phrase that repeats as a single column on one page of the ebook. On the following page, Havas writes: “We speak and breathe everything while everything happens so much all the time.” And so we deal, we “interface.”

In response to the massive amounts of bot-and-anonymously human-generated text, U.S.-based alt lit poets such as Heiko Julien, Mira Gonzalez, Tao Lin, and Steve Roggenbuck have countered with an articulate, if flatly cogent, sincerity that is unmistakably “human” in its tone, privileging autobiographical fiction, poetry, videos, images, memes, and the interchangeable forms of all five in their alternative poetics that translate easily from the web to the real world spaces of live poetry readings and performance venues. These writers incorporate found language

from the web into original works, asserting their authorship by way of intensely visible and active presences on social media, where much of their poetry is first published (especially on Tumblr, but also in various blogs and online magazines). Despite its life online, their work is often performance-oriented and draws much of its vitality when read before a live audience. They are well known for their reading styles, especially Roggenbuck, whose mesmerizing YouTube video-poems have accumulated hundreds of thousands of likes and shares. At the heart of Roggenbuck's work is the injunction to "live [your] lief " because, of course, YOLO. He performed at *Poetry Will Be Made By All!* in Zurich, shouting to all present to remember that eventually we will die. I cannot imagine that any of us had forgotten.



Heiko Julien, *Every This*, 2014. Courtesy: the artist

Julien and Roggenbuck in particular draw from the anonymous language of the ontologically uncertain users of the web—updating the mid-2000s Flarf movement, which mostly collaged junk language found on the web to humorous effect—in order to simultaneously appear as a unique author and to not appear, too. Their appearance often takes the form of a selfie or a YouTube video or a Spreecast (a website for free webcasting). Their disappearance often takes the form of poetry, wherein large passages remain interchangeable with other anonymous texts on the web. What distinguishes alt lit authors is a byline, not content. In alt lit, this language (rife with clichés, references to memes, ads) is sourced from everywhere

(and “everything while everything happens”), and becomes especially poignant in its seemingly sincere tone. We all have feelings. We only live once. In “Present your case while the forest waits,”^[13] Julien writes of the non-landscapes where this language and its bot practitioners are found, echoing Darling’s fall of *Lil Icarus*: “Lightly haunted landscapes / Reveal nature’s most embarrassing blemishes in HD.” Julien concludes the poem by stating that “they will never find us,” though who “they” are remains unclear. It isn’t very clear who the “us” is, either, a confusion all the more poignant in the context of all this bot-generated garbage language circulating around us.

Who are these faceless poets? In her essay “The Spam of the Earth,” Hito Steyerl describes these non-humans presenting themselves to us,^[14] advertising their bodies and wares as “a reserve army of digitally enhanced creatures who resemble the minor demons and angels of mystic speculation, luring, pushing, and blackmailing people into the profane rapture of consumption.”^[15] Later she speculates as to their lives, lived elsewhere, in other forms, as hallucinatory information: “Who knows what the people in image spam are up to, if nobody is actually looking?... The image-spam people”—and their poetry- and email-spam counterparts, too—“are double agents. They inhabit the realms of over- and invisibility.” Every day is a new Turing test to fail. On botpoet.com, I’ve failed nearly 50 percent of the tests as to whether a poem was written by a human or a bot. Bots speak and breathe everything while

everything happens so much all the time. And there is nothing these disembodied bots can't do, except, perhaps, take a selfie. But their facelessness (read historylessness) seems to be a dark asset in that it allows them to more easily claim our selfies as their own, leaving no trace as to how they found the image and where they've traveled with it as their mask. In their double-agency, bots are us and are not us, caught somewhere between, in presentational modes neither sincere nor insincere. For now, their images—our images—remain as weak, poor, and shitty as their poetry. But the content of their messages is the same as ours, perhaps even was once ours, now scrambled by the migrations it has made under the stewardship of the bot, chipped away at, accidentally rewritten, grammatically broken. Even so, it isn't difficult to imagine a future in which the distinction between us is even less clear. Nor is it difficult to imagine a situation in which the relationship between bots and us, which currently positions them as writer, us as reader, inverts. The Canadian poet Christian Bök writes, anticipating these more sophisticated reading and writing bots: "If poetry already lacks any meaningful readership among our own anthropoid population, what have we to lose by writing poetry for a robotic culture that must inevitably succeed our own? If we want to commit an act of poetic innovation in an era of formal exhaustion, we may have to consider this heretofore unimagined, but nevertheless prohibited, option: writing poetry for inhuman readers,

who do not yet exist, because such aliens, clones, or robots have not yet evolved to read it.”^[16]



Steve Roggenbuck, *Horse Video* (still), 2013.

Courtesy: the artist

To return to Jesse Darling: Two new videos, both inspired by Drake’s “Marvin’s Room,” were launched on *Dis* on April 28, 2014. In an email to me, Darling wrote that the videos represent a funeral for their “performative brand,” an event that neither takes place nor doesn’t. In one video, Darling dances silently to an instrumental of Drake’s song while their rewritten lyrics read across the bottom of the screen: “YOLO, Fuck my life, fuck yours as well.” As the video continues, Darling’s lyrics (which they sing Karaoke to in the second video of the series) cycle through the soft romanticism characteristic of Drake — “Check your phone and call me later,” as one line reads.

Like Drake, Darling is more interested in the delay of contact than contact itself. Until they aren’t, like in the second video, where Darling sings while friends pile on top of one another, making out and hugging. By

the end of the first video, Darling pixelates, multiplies, and drifts off screen into the dark while text drifts at the bottom. The video ends in a close-up of Darling smoking an e-cigarette and blowing vapor into the camera lens. This funeral enacts another recuperation more sophisticated than YOLO's banal assertion of our obvious mortality. Conceptually more nuanced than a "rebrand," a funeral you hold for yourself recuperates disappearance, suggesting in its survivable finality an exit, one that leads to the fields of garbage we've surrounded ourselves with, tilled and maintained by our bots, a place from which we might return and visit again, repeatedly.

It seems that social media and attendant branding privilege continuity, the archive, and consistency. Changes are "opportunities" to "rebrand," which otherwise maintains (but expands) the essential audience of the product—the artist, the poet—while merely adjusting appearances. We might consider leaving that strategy to corporate PR departments rather than continuing to use it to accent the conceptual discourse that surrounds art production today. Darling's funeral opens a new space, one where we might not only burn our poems, our selfies, our jpegs, and our Tumblrs, but ourselves as well. In other words, we might take our images out to the garbage for Paul-David Young to use elsewhere, in other situations, freeing us to start anew.

[1] John Kelsey, *Drowning Devourers of the Deep Plane* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2014).

[2] Joshua Mack, "30th Bienal de São Paulo: The Imminence of Poetics," *Art Review* 2012

http://artreview.com/reviews/30th_bienal_de_so_paulo_the_imminence_of_poetics