

# Introduction to Numbers by Paint & Fictoanalysis

by Edith Lyre

## i. Introduction to Numbers by Paint

What does it mean to say nothing? Whatever else, that the remark will be eternal. Everything in this thesis turns on the question of what matters and what does not, within art, and which words matter and which do not, within literature in particular. This turning — around that question — becomes a spiral, an orbital movement toward a core. We call this core the ‘haecceitic minimum’ or the ‘haecceitic maximum.’ Its object is aesthetic, that is to say, it is what matters within art. In this inquisitive movement we gesture toward Californian philosopher Graham Harman, who in

2012 asked us, ‘Why not try shortening [*Moby Dick*] to various degrees in order to discover the point at which it ceases to sound like *Moby Dick*? Why not imagine it lengthened even further?’ That ‘point at which it ceases’ is our haecceitic minimum and haecceitic maximum. That is the core we turn around, toward which we spiral and orbit.

We discovered, not long ago, two artefacts which, we strongly suspect, possess the same core. These are a charlatanical ‘novel’ by Andy Warhol, called *a* and published in 1968, and the 1072nd line of a play by the ancient playwright Aeschylus, called ‘Agamemnon’ and first performed in 458 BC. The line reads: οτοτοτοι πόποι δα, or in Latin, *otototoi popoi da*. Starting with Warhol’s book: *a* is 451 pages of white noise; it is two twelve-hour transcriptions of Manhattan-life as heard from a tape-recorder in Warhol’s hand. The transcriptions are filled with misspellings, unintelligible word-fragments, and clear typewriter-errors. *Otototoi popoi da* behaves the same way. Those syllables are not absent of meaning. Aeschylus has placed them in the mouth of Princess Cassandra of Troy, the legendary Prophetess, whose utterance of them precedes the annunciation of her ultimate and final prophecy, foretelling Agamemnon’s and her own immediate deaths, as well, thereafter, as the subsequent reign and usurpation of Aegisthus. But, the words *otototoi popoi da* are infinitely fungible; their meaning is survivable into an hardly-at-all limited combination of other letters and other words. The merit in these particular sounds, syllables, etc. is their metric precision; they match the scansion of the adjacent lines. (We are trusting Anne Carson when we say that (*Float*, “Cassandra Float Can”).) The sounds, then (as the beginnings of a prophecy Cassandra cannot overcome (cursed to see the future, but never to be believed)), may be called empty, and thereby are left open to a nonfinite set of projections. Under them, try projecting, lies the unintelligible whole of the future Cassandra doesn’t even try to prophesy — can’t imagine enunciating. Stylised nothing, always in good taste; its prophecy always perfect. *Ototoi popoi da*, begins Cassandra.

‘Rattle, gurgle, clink, tinkle,’ begins Warhol’s *a*. Graham Harman, in the same breath as above, asks us to ask ‘how some [artworks] withstand the earthquakes of the centuries much better than others.’ If earthquakes and centuries are to be taken as a fair divining rod, in our pursuit of a

core, then the question becomes why neither of these two sentences will probably ever be lost, not (mind the pun) so far as the foreseeable future extends. How did the scream *οτοτοτοι πόποι δα* survive in such exact rendition, to be heard 2,500 years later, borne by nothing but its context, i.e. the play it's from? What about the 451 pages of empty words and exchangeable syllables that comprise *a*, that one long scream — what purity is there in these letter-sequences, just as they were first rendered, that guarantees they will be/should be rendered just-so, with just-such errors, again and again?

From Harman's exhortation, we have built a method of critical analysis that might address and answer all of these questions. It is called *fictoanalysis*. Charged with shortening and lengthening, divining haecceitic minima and haecceitic maxima, the method's device is the spiral compression or spiral expansion of its investigative object, and here, in the thesis, its product is the expansion of *otototoi popoi da* and the compression of *a* until the two artefacts' cores are discovered to be the *same* core. One creative output is given which identifies, contains, and gestures toward the unitary core shared by both, called *Agamemnon*. Fictoanalysis is proffered as the ideal method for interpreting what we have called *superficial territories*, of which *a* and the 1072nd line of 'Agamemnon' are examples. Myths in general deserve immediate comparison with post-abstract impressionist artworks, in how we receive them, but especially, in how we fail to receive them. How fictoanalysis can help us overcome such failures of reception, how it will function and how it has functioned in its precedents, and at last what aesthetic horizons are made visible by it (or, indeed, returned to memory by it), are the charge of this thesis, which in its complete composition is called *Numbers by Paint*.

## Fictoanalysis

### A method of critical analysis

Questions such as ‘what’s it like to be a bat?’ or ‘what’s it like to be human?’ pivot on a subliminal adverb, that is to say ‘consciously’: ‘what’s it like to be *consciously* human?’ Thus, it may strike as nonsensical to ask: ‘what’s it like to be a book?’ or ‘a poem?’ or ‘a film?’ But, to react to such artefacts as subjectivities, even if unconscious, and to analyse these artefacts behaviourally, as possessing *real interiors*, makes possible new thresholds of compressed creativity and critical analysis. To react as such entails — at least, it recommends for — a critical-analytical method to be coined ‘fictoanalysis.’ Combining ‘fiction’ in the Latin sense of *fictus*/fabrication and ‘analysis’ as a permissive shorthand of ‘psychoanalysis,’ per a broad church that includes schizoanalysis as schizoanalytic psychoanalysis, the method is *not* ekphrastic: I say, to put a hard, early limit on the claim that it *is* pretty ekphrastic. It generates the same kind of feedback loop we are familiar with in ekphrasis theory: *the commentary is the art is the commentary is the art is the commentary* etc. in a loop-structure that is not cyclical but spiral, because it is not collapsive but meliorative/progressive. Superficially, it *can look* relatively straightforward and, on a level of practice, it is: The ficonalyst encounters an artefact, she analyses it, she considers the implications of her analysis, she creatively manifests the implications and asserts that these manifestations extend from and are organic to the artefact i.e. *are more of the same artefact*, and then she encounters the artefact again and analyses it again. That is what fictoanalysis *can be*, at its simplest. These characterisations, however, of the analytical loop and the step-by-step recipe are useful lies. Instead, fictoanalysis need not be so orderly. Really, it can happen all at once, and whether one plans one’s own research as such,

whether one assigns an order to one's research or not, ontologically, it is expected it *will* happen all at once at the site of the fictoanalyst's subjective relationship with the artefact. To demonstrate the methodology of fictoanalysis and apologise its efficacy, I will move, shortly, to a comparison with the 'object-oriented method' described by Professor Graham Harman of SCI-Arc. (that is, the Southern California Institute of Architecture), a method of criticism defined by direct creative interaction with one's critical object. To follow, an argument for the special potentials of fictoanalysis will be made, with comparative reference to Warhol's novel *a* and his *Brillo Box* art series, describing how its method may extract unexpected depth from the aesthetically superficial. From there, three examples of fictoanalysis are given, as I define them. One is Christa Wolf's collection *Cassandra and Four Essays*, the next a Twitter-poem by Raphael Bob-Waksberg that should display the fictoanalytical structure in rapid and accessible motion, while the last is a set of critical-analytical and creative-analytical excerpts from my thesis, titled *Agamemnon*. Before establishing literary precedent for the use of fictoanalysis — noting that, formerly, its analysts were only subjectively plural — the distinction between artefact and text will be covered, and the importance of the fictoanalysand's, i.e the analytical subject's, consideration as artefact and *not text* will be outlined. At last, to deliver that literary precedent, two artefacts, one mostly filmic, the other mostly visual, will be exemplified to show the already-established efficacy of fictoanalysis, where it has been undertaken as a subjectively plural project, i.e. by multiple critics, analysts, artists, actors, contributing in unintentional cooperation toward the fulfilment of a shared aesthetic recognition. Fictoanalysis is shown as a means toward surprising oneself, following and fulfilling aesthetic trajectories, purposefully *actualising* the unexpected and the marginal. It is a means, in all, to bear witness to what you've already seen but do not know you've seen. An articulation of unspoken/unspeakable memory.

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Fictoanalysis shares influences with the ‘object-oriented method’ posited by Graham Harman in *The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer* (2012). Graham Harman writes: ‘Instead of just writing about *Moby Dick*, why not try shortening it to various degrees in order to discover the point at which it ceases to sound like *Moby Dick*? Why not imagine it lengthened even further, or told by a third-person narrator rather than Ishmael, or involving a cruise in the opposite direction around the globe?’ (202). In commentary on Harman’s critical exhortation, Rebekah Sheldon (*Form / Matter / Chora*) differentiates a text’s ‘accidental qualia’ and its ‘molten interior’ (Loc. 4470) by defining the ‘molten interior’ as that part of a text which allows it to, borrowing Harman’s words, ‘withstand the earthquakes of the centuries’ (*ibid.*) and the ‘accidental qualia’ as those parts, plural, ‘that prove irrelevant to its essential haecceity’ (*ibid.*). Personally, what interests most is Sheldon’s felt-need to identify the accidental as *necessarily exterior*, as necessarily extra-haecceitic. Pertinently, however, what inspires comparative reflection is the notion of a *Moby Dickness* that may be smaller than *Moby Dick* and that may, also, withstand expansion into an artefact *greater than Moby Dick*. One focus of my thesis is the reconsideration of text as artefact, asking where/what the artefact is after it has undergone mass-production, i.e. after it has ‘withstood the earthquakes of the centuries’ (as in the case of “Agamemnon” by Aeschylus, but in this way, suitably comparable to Andy Warhol’s mass-produced novel, *a*). If, as Harman urges, we were to shorten “Agamemnon” to various degrees until nothing remained but Line 1072, ‘otototoi popoi da,’ would it keep its *Agamemnonness*? I mean it’s shy on context, but these days, really, who arrives at *The Oresteia* not already knowing what happens? In those syllables, Cassandra foretells Agamemnon’s and her own murder, Clytemnestra’s guilt, and the subsequent reign of Aegisthus. That ubiquity of pre-established context that, for example, makes fresh readings of *Romeo and Juliet* or fresh viewings of *Casablanca* implausible owes to centuries of mass-production, the annual reprinting of the context surrounding *otototoi popoi da* for two millennia, until the least intelligible, most accidental line within

the text absorbs the meanings of every other line. Graham Harman does not ask this but, I think, would not mind this ‘further lengthening’ of his questions, to ask: Once isolated, can we re-expand *Agamemnon* from nothing but *otototoi popoi da*? Can we isolate the molten interior at its minimum, then in pulsatile fashion re-expand it to new maximums? My creative thesis, titled *Agamemnon*, explores this potential. The play is reduced to its haecceitic minimum — line 1072 — and rebuilt from that position. An immediate advantage of this method is an accelerated facility in asking, as before, ‘where/what the artefact is after it has undergone mass-production.’ Like roots pushing into and filling subterranean cavities, the fictoanalyst’s prejudices, i.e. her actions as an epistemic agent/moment of encounter between the text and its artefactual extension as well as between the artefact and its aesthetic context, suggest growths and entanglements and, creatively in this way, identify limbs of the artefact that are *already there*. It is at this point these limbs become operable to criticism, which criticism, in the fictoanalytical mode, will be required to justify and renew meaningful extensions. Thus is instigated the fictoanalytic feedback cycle, which cycle defines the method.

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Often, creative sources are encountered that by themselves may impress *something*, but *by themselves* do not aesthetically or narratively potentialise anything usable, except maybe a four-line poem or the sub-paragraph of another essay. *Otototoi popoi da* is one such instance, and so, too, is Warhol’s *a*. Understandably, readers of *a* have generally missed the point, searching the novel’s pages for the aesthetic interior, for *a*’s *a*-ness, whereas *a* is in fact one of those texts whose *molten interior* exceeds itself/is greater than itself. Though its text may provoke creative and critical productions, so too might a walk down the street or, per *a*’s example, a day spent with an unfamiliar group of

people. To analyse *a*: a novel as a structured text, i.e. to attempt a deconstruction of its devices, is — to labour on an analogy already made in Part 1 — as misguided an errand as sawing open one of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* in the hopes of finding soap pads (see next page). Our object of criticism is an *artefact*, and should be studied as such. A more utile name for the artwork might be '*a by Andy Warhol by Andy Warhol*.' Reflect on Warhol's language about *a* and its creation-process, such that he claims not to have written a book, but routinely, to have 'done a book.' In fact he says he was '*trying to do a book*' (95 *Philosophy*, emphasis added). That the artwork presents an object first and a novel second, of course, makes trouble for the literary critic, or any writer who would respond to Warhol as a source. There is, Baudrillard will shortly tell us when we refer to his book, *Screened Out*, a nothingness at the heart of the Warholian image, of the Warholian object — *and the rules rarely permit us to make something out of nothing*. But, rarely is not never. In my old proposal, I worried that to address Warhol's and Cassandra's nothingnesses as resolvable, 'as questions with answers,' might 'in some meaningful ways be a contradiction; a lot of object-referential words,' I wrote, 'would have to be used. There would be meaning everywhere. The emptiness would fill up, and disappear. Better to watch for the indescribable, then again and again just say, Look. It's doing it again.' These moments at which indescribables emerge from emptinesses are arrestable *and* adaptable. Perhaps inspired by the recklessness of my old proposal, I attempt a reckless analogy: If the critic watches the water's mirror-surface until a herring shoots free and dies in her lap, she may get out her notepad, write 'herring, 780 grams, appeared 22:04 Hours,' then, maybe after a photograph, penning a line or two in ode to miracles, she may throw it back — *or*, she can cruelly hook its lip and initiate a process of melioration, seizing the occurrence of the indescribable and contributing secondary manifests, i.e. use it as bait to accelerate these emergences. Elsewhere, in my second, renewed proposal, I wrote in conflict with Félix Guattari: 'his mystification is called 'mythologisation,' to which I object. I cannot associate mythology with enchantments or magic; it is precisely the least mystical or poetised art-form in-itself, and exactly the job of enchanters, mystics, and poets to eviscerate, expand, and reconstitute mythology.' This, too, is the task of the



fictoanalyst, with respect to mythology and with respect to the alienating artefacts of pop art and pop-modernism. The fictoanalytical method admits (re)constructive cycles that may arrest the *small* and re- apprehend it, again and again, until the microscopic interior is macroscoped and made analytically utile — made available for yet-further extension and adaptation.

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Three examples will be given to demonstrate this analytical route to creative emergence, this mentioned point in the fictoanalytical cycle. First, one produced by Christa Wolf in *Cassandra and Four Essays*, second a twitter-poem from the creator of *Bojack Horseman*, Raphael Bob-Waksberg, and lastly, a structural gloss of my thesis. Wolf defends a theory of the Homeric Helen as a propagandistic lie, as a person who, no longer in the custody of either Greece or Troy, endures only as a figurehead.

The Hittite Aphrodite-Astarte may have entered into the myth of Helen, one of whose variants states that Helen never came to Troy ... the ancient Oriental Helen fled to Egypt, perhaps ‘abducted’ by Paris, who, according to one tradition, was at first made a captive by King Proteus and then sent back to Troy. Meanwhile, he, Proteus, the King of Egypt, kept the beautiful Helen, and so the struggle for Troy was fought for an illusion: a figure invented by poets. (Loc. 3475-86)

From these insights, Wolf adapts the Trojan myth to give, at the pivot of *Cassandra*, the kōanic, aphoristic refrain: ‘There is no Helen’ (102) or ‘*Es gibt keine Helena.*’ To attempt my own loyal but, therefore, necessarily awkward translation: “Why,” asks Wolf’s Cassandra of her brother, Paris, “do you speak so coldly of your warm wife?” ... ‘My warm wife? Come to, Sister. She doesn’t exist’

(79, my translation from *Kassandra: Erzählung*). Wolf's Cassandra proceeds to protect this secret, despite a continued advocacy for an end to the war, asking herself, 'When I shrieked, why did I shriek: 'We are lost!''? Why not: 'Trojans, there is no Helen!''? I knew why not, I knew even then. ... I, the seeress, was owned by the palace' (102, *Cassandra*). Thus Wolf restitches the revelation into the Trojan narrative, affording Cassandra a complicity in the war's perpetuation that, both, elides her authority and, by re-agentialising her, justifies and apologises Cassandra's protagonism, her narrative-centrality. In this we see the critical-analytical method of fictoanalysis as well as its outcomes for creative discovery: e.g. to say 'there is no Helen' makes sense, and the situation of the narrative within Cassandra's voice, also, thanks to Wolf's critical interventions, is supported as an effective means of account. The second example, Raphael Bob-Waksberg's twitter-poem about Marge Simpson, I will quote in full:

### **Does Marge have friends?**

(a poem in fifteen tweets)

Who are Marge's friends? Is Helen Lovejoy a friend? Sarah Wiggum? Agnes Skinner?

To whom does Marge spill her secrets over coffee on cold days? Who laughs at Marge's jokes? Who knows Marge, truly and well?

Who tells Marge to leave the brute, knowing she won't? "You don't have to stay. You deserve so much more."

Who, on a morning walk, sees a tall blue bush, texts a photo to Marge, "this made me think of you"? Surely not Lenny, or Kirk or Luann.

Did Marge mourn for Maude Flanders? Late nights, at the kitchen table, staring at her own hands. Is she haunted still by her absence?

Does she see in her late neighbor a cautionary tale? Seldom-remembered, semi-anonymous Maude — could this fate too befall Marge?

Perhaps, once at a summer barbecue, when both were still alive, Maude grabbed Marge's hand under the table and held tight.

What prompted this sudden connection, this sudden expression of— what was it, warmth?

The two weren't close— acquaintances, sure, had they ever even hugged?

And yet here they were, holding hands, silently, secretly, while their children shrieked and their husbands grilled the hot dogs.

One night, Marge couldn't sleep, the linens, hung to dry in the yard, flapping in the wind with unprecedented accent.

Marge wandered into the night, a fleck of yellow in a blanket of white stars, and she felt, as she often did, alone. Marge felt the sharp grass on her feet, the breeze on her face. Over the fence she saw Maude, pale as a sheet, her eyes wet with tears.

Marge looked to her— “Maude?” and Maude shook her head.

And Maude whispered this: “It's not the calm before the storm that frightens me. It's the calm that follows.”

[The poem ends with a gif of the 20th Century Fox-banner, which plays at the beginning of every episode of *The Simpsons*, in stylised low-resolution.]

That this poem is, also, a work of criticism is apparent. Observe how the critical and the poetically fictional blend together, how in that way they occur ‘all at once,’ such that Bob-Waksberg's

fictoanalysis, Marge, grows into a space she already occupies. Bob-Waksberg guides with critical questions, then leads intuitively to a ‘perhaps, once,’ then to ‘here they were.’ He analyses and builds and (in no particular order) the analyses and the constructions inform each other. In this starkly political, potentially feminist example, we can observe how this type of feedback cycle can also subvert the ethico-aesthetic trajectories of the source. Comparable with Harold Bloom’s *clinamen*, in that it shares *clinamen*’s departure-point but, unlike *clinamen*, does not swerve or reorient the artefact, fictoanalysis, instead, fulfils the source’s already-there aesthetic trajectory. (Not to alienate Bloom fans: this method might still be described against his revisionary ratios, as a hybrid, perhaps, of *tessera* in content and *daemonization* in form.) As with nonfictional criticism, which may express ethical or political censure toward a subject without interfering with that subject’s stable being, detailing only the flaws that are already-there, so fictoanalysis can censure its subject without destabilising it — fulfilling horror when it is there, or fulfilling a representation of moral or aesthetic failure when that is there, and, in this way, the method exacts subversion by means of cooperation. Bob-Waksberg’s poem shows that means and that exaction. Onto to the third example: the following excerpt shows the cycles’ interflow and simultaneity:

Cassandra first spoke to Andy Warhol in 1956 when, visiting Florence, he was inspired by the great artists of the Renaissance to use assistants. ‘In order to pass their painting off as an “original” the Renaissance painters themselves only had to paint the most important parts of a painting, such as the face of a Madonna, while they left the rest of the fresco or picture to their assistants’ (26 Honnef). The painting *Cassandra foretells the Trojans their fate, and is not hearkened to* by Bernard Picart, shows this effect well: simple ruler-lines create the middle-distance and city- background, Troy’s wall arcing in formulaic Fibonacciism, a distracted, listless tracing of the means and the ratio, while, at the foreground, the faces pop, the neck-sinews are finely shadowed, the backs strain with muscular detail. Through the telephone of the Renaissance, through Florence, birthplace

of Florence Nightingale (author of *Cassandra*), Andy Warhol would hear Cassandra's scream/prophecy and that scream, the sufficient essence of it, resistant across millennia, would instruct his cynical faith in production lines, teach him to trust in the power of glossolalia, the saying of *nothings*. As what's it mean to say nothing? Whatever else, that the remark will be eternal.

At Florence in 1956, Cassandra taught Warhol how to get into Eternity, that is, how to get into Elysium.

1960s Manhattan and the Heroic Age collide through a mutual current, an access to a territory of nothingness through a consonance of empty errata, fallen, in the momentum of surrounding signifiers, into production lines spanning and thereby adjoining millennia. That Cassandra's glossalalic utterance, i.e. *otototoi popoi da*, describes the emotional contours of a prophetic vision, especially a vision that includes her death and *it stands to reason* subsequent resurrection in Elysium/the eternal afterlife, recommends for the erratum's extension toward the future. From its witness, so devises the thesis, Warhol discovered the potential of errata to stir that same *holy terror* that followed him, that struck Cassandra at this and every moment of remembered future; to advise an empathy for her condition of trauma in reverse (which condition he believed he shared). Warhol activated errata as an intentional device, usable toward the instillment of terror, and the thesis attaches this achievement to its oldest literary precedent in the production of Line 1072 of *Aeschylus*. This attachment shows the fictoanalytical revisitation of creativity as a means to discovery. All three examples, Wolf, Bob-Wakserg, and the thesis show the critical analyses which re-inform fictoanalysis' fictional outputs.

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Fictoanalysis' objects are first and foremost artefacts, rather than texts, films, or events. This is, perhaps, the main reason I articulate fictoanalysis as *analysis*, rather than as criticism. Compare Bob-Waksberg's poem and Wolf's novel: *Does Marge have friends?* and *Cassandra*. Structurally, these texts carry better semblance to Freud's *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* than to, say, T.S. Eliot's *Hamlet and His Problems* or fictional criticisms e.g. Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*. They each interrogate a personhood and the voices and the psychic extensions thereof. As Marge does Bob-Waksberg's, Cassandra becomes Wolf's *analysand*, or, why not, *fictoanalysand*. Wolf analyses Cassandra and, through that analysis, constructs and extends Cassandra, then, upon the fictoanalysand's new construction and new extension, she renews the analysis ad nauseam, until the fictoanalyst is exhausted and/ or content to abandon the work. But, the analysand need not be a *person*. Neither of mine are. To extend a shout or utterance, necessarily, requires the extension of a voice. Hence, the fictoanalysis follows/constructs Warhols and Cassandras as creative extensions, respectively, of *a* and *otototoi popoi da*. Here, the distinction is that the artefact may be/usually will be *less than* or *greater than* the *text*, as to say, the document's syntactic content.

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We may reflect on the method (also, in doing so, defend the method) as an acceleration and compression of an extant method or, as the word 'method' suggests intentionality, an extant *process*. This next remark gets a bit metaphysical: If we invest the plural to the discrete, take more than one author and critic and observe their exchange as internal, as *self-reflective*, we find an abundance of fictoanalysts already working. Take the left-field example of Rick Deckard, whose negotiable personhood becomes the molten interior of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Blade Runner*

and *Blade Runner 2049*. Between the novel and the first movie, Phillip K Dick agonises a while upon *what humanness is*. No doubt Ridley Scott notices, when in criticism of himself, in *Man, Android, and Machine*, Dick asks readers to ‘recall Maslow's remarks that if nature didn't like us it would have executed us long ago -- here read Infinite Noösphere for nature. ... We humans, the warm-faced and tender, with thoughtful eyes — we are perhaps the true machines’ (1975). No doubt he, too, notices Darko Suvin’s hilarious near miss when Suvin criticises Dick as such: ‘there are... outright failures, such as *Do Androids Dream of Electric* with its underlying confusion between androids as wronged lower class and as inhuman menace’ (1975). Wisely thus, Ridley Scott recentralises this *underlying confusion* as ‘the point.’ He, to paraphrase Jean Baudrillard on Warhol, reintroduces confusion into the heart of the image. Here, the methodic similarity to fictoanalysis is apparent: Dick, Suvin, Scott, and Dick again, as self-reflective critic, are Rick Deckard’s fictoanalyst, discrete and singular, who himself is a fictive critical-analytical response to René Descartes. Fictoanalysis simply asks one to effect this process by oneself, actively, as method. Baudrillard’s exact and continued quote runs thus: ‘Warhol truly is a 'zero', in the sense that he reintroduces nothingness into the heart of the image. He turns nullity and insignificance into an event which he transforms into a fatal strategy of the image’ (‘The Art Conspiracy’, *Screened Out*). Not in the same passage, but in the same collection (the first article in which collection is *AIDS: Virulence or Prophylaxis?* followed by *We Are All Transsexuals Now*), Baudrillard articulates Serbia’s emerging independence as the ‘symbolic castration of the Western war machine’ (Loc. 943), going on to cite Nietzsche’s ‘last men.’ It’s a ride. The article which develops to a meditation on Warhol, called *The Art Conspiracy*, opens with:

In porn, there is no longer any room for desire. After the orgy and the liberation of all desires, we have moved into the transsexual, in the sense of a transparency of sex, into signs and images which obliterate the whole secret, the ambiguity of sex. Transsexual in

the sense that sex now has nothing to do with the illusion of desire, but relates solely to the hyperreality of the image. (Loc. 2439)

React by asking how many, and which, critics and creatives were involved in the occurrence of the image overleaf. Baudrillard's involvement is apparent. Obviously, there's the artist herself, Caroline Coon, editor for the organisation *Cunst*, that is *Cunst*, not *Kunst*. There's Warhol, whose cylinder of empty signifiers has been cut open, to show an extended emptiness within. Or something. Warhol's centrality, thus, brings forward Valerie Solanas's and his relation (oh, there's also Solanas), and thus the director of *I Shot Andy Warhol* (1996), Mary Harron, is in there too, which film is based off *The Letters and Diaries of Candy Darling* (1992) by Jeremiah Newton and as such we should include, but not limit to, Candy Darling as well. Coon's decision to focus the World Trade Center, which, at the time of Solanas's attempted murder of Andy Warhol, was as yet only at the very beginnings of construction does confuse matters, but its functionality as time-signature does dare one to include the hijackers of American Airlines 11 and United Airlines 175, without whose ethico-aesthetic interventions the symbol would not define the historical period. A lot of critics have the opinion that Warhol's art began to decline after this event, and as such, the event describes a crux in his biography, such that representations thereof, creative and critical-analytical reflections thereon, do draw from, when they draw from May 31 1968 (the day Warhol was shot), something like the *molten interior* of his biography. Baudrillard's 'nothingness at the heart of the image,' the 'fatal nullity' he assigns to Warhol gets, as a Baudrillardian lens would have it, fair representation in Coon's *Valerie Solanas*. He is thoroughly erased in an other. Coon probably would not agree with me, and would probably resent my rethinking a portrait of Solanas as a portrait of Warhol, but, in Coon's emptying of already empty symbols, a symbolic or anti-symbolic striving is made, here, toward the fulfilment of Warhol's obsession: i.e. 'I realized that existence itself is nothing and I felt better. But I'm still obsessed with the idea of looking into the mirror and seeing no one, nothing.' Warhol's absence is redoubled in the cut-open can, redoubled in his symbolic reduction



to a moment of castration. Coon's *Valerie Solanas* has a persuasive claim toward the fulfilment of one Warholian obsession/artistic project: the production of presence-as- absence/absence-as-presence. In the painting, Warhol's absence is profoundly present. Reiterating what was argued by the example of Rick Deckard/René Descartes, the fictoanalytical method may interpose critical interjections within its own creativity, generate creativity from its own critical analysis, and do so in one feat, one artwork, one artefact, enabling the fictoanalyst to be the American Airlines 11 and United Airlines 175 hijackers, to be Candy Darling, Jeremiah Newton, Mary Harron, Valerie Solanas, Andy Warhol, and Jean Baudrillard all by themselves and, as such, expedite the unexpected, indeed bring about the unexpected *from within oneself*. To the fictoanalyst's work, plurality is of singular importance.

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In all, fictoanalysis fulfils/should fulfil Graham Harman's exhortation for an object-oriented method of critical analysis. As Rebekah Sheldon relates it, Harman urges a critical response that discovers texts' and artworks' haecceitic minimums/'molten interiors,' and determines *what/where they are* thereby. Fictoanalysis, evidenced by the method's application to Warhol's art and, in particular, his novel, demonstrates an efficacy for locating and creatively adapting/extending these haecceitic minimums, developing superficial or 'shallow' sources to original extremes, i.e. macroscoping the microscopic in art and criticism. Examples of critical-analytical responses that undertake to accomplish such discoveries include *Cassandra and Four Essays* by Christa Wolf [slide], *Does Marge Have Friends?* by Raphael Bob-Waksberg [slide], and my creative-component's, *Agamemnon*'s, reflection on/of the first play of *The Oresteia*. *Cassandra* provides a straightforward account of a research-based creative expansion, and importantly, an expansion that is distinct from

revision (consider that references to *The Iliad* premise the same's action as 'essential reading'). Bob-Waksberg's poem shows the means by which fictoanalysis' reluctance toward revision nevertheless permits subversion, its means thereto being productive non-interference/subversion-by-extension. Lastly, the example from my *Agamemnon* delivers a key characterisation of one aforementioned fictoanalytical process, which mention bears repeating:

Like roots pushing into and filling subterranean cavities, the fictoanalyst's prejudices, i.e. her actions as an epistemic agent/moment of encounter between the text and its artefactual extension as well as between the artefact and its aesthetic context, suggest growths and entanglements and, creatively in this way, identify limbs of the artefact that are *already there*.

To revisit a refrain beaten, tarred, and side-lit with rumble-strips, i.e. an old postmodern refrain: to hold two (or more) contradictory notions at once and accept them both/to incorporate psychological conflicts produces narrational entanglements. Of course, these narrational entanglements are appropriate. Any epic which entails certain mythoreligious realities, but whose legend persists through eras in which that same mythoreligious backing is debated and revised will, inevitably, carry entanglements, will be forced gradually to submerge itself beneath the surface of contradiction-intolerance: get stuck irrevocably in a contradiction-tolerant universe. Thus *Agamemnon* expands its legend, the legend of "Agamemnon" Line 1072, into the same, asserting the moment of submersion to be the publication of Hesiod's *Theogony* and, as such, its example shows the psychocultural extensions that fictoanalysis possibilises: extensions, to say it again, into the *already-there*. It becomes important, here, to restate the fictoanalytical subject is an *analysand*, i.e. an artefact invested in a psychocultural context *and* produced by that context. As a rule, the analysand's relationship to any text will be such that it is either *greater than* or *less than*, reflecting that Cassandra is greater than "Agamemnon" and *otototoi popoi da* is less than "Agamemnon". We do not lack precedent, in advocating fictoanalysis' functionality. Dissecting and re-suturing some broad generational and multi-generational reflections on certain creative analysands, e.g. Rick

Deckard-as-René Descartes, Warhol-as-The Nothingness Himself, we can show the process's action and efficacy as a longitudinal group-project, agential but accidental. In fictoanalysis, this project is only compressed. That does not mean the fictoanalyst must hurry. By all means, do it as a group-project, do it longitudinally, but the variable of intention should enact an organic compression of the process. But fictoanalysis does more than give us the means to write quickly or *more quickly*. It opens aesthetic portals, through which readers too, *even lowly readers*, may encounter the unexpected and do so *on purpose*. In a sense, to end on a reckless tangent, the fictoanalyst's hope is to install a cubist mosaic to her audience's lens, discovering for them the already-there-potentials, plural, of the discrete artefact.