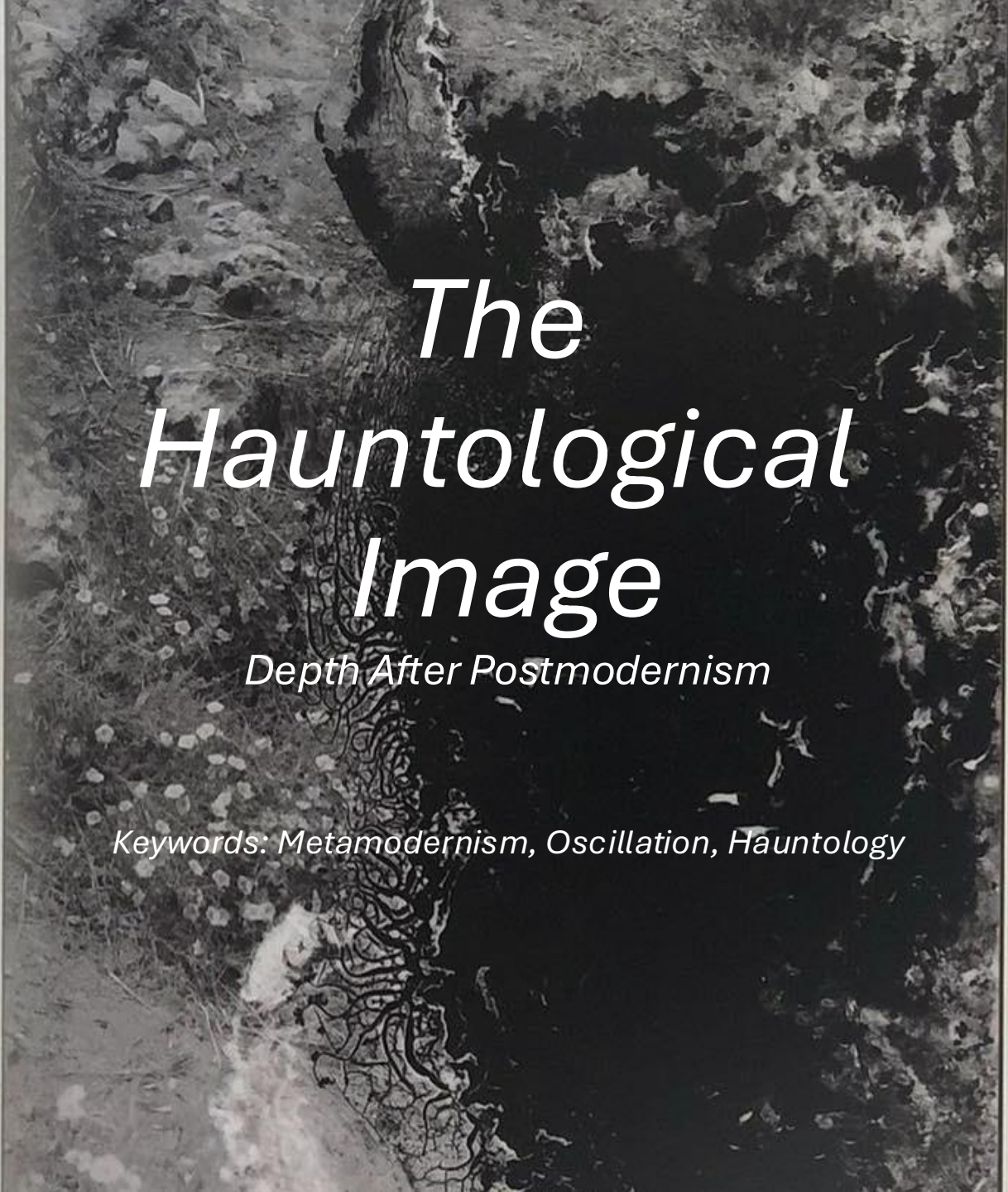




The Hauntological Image

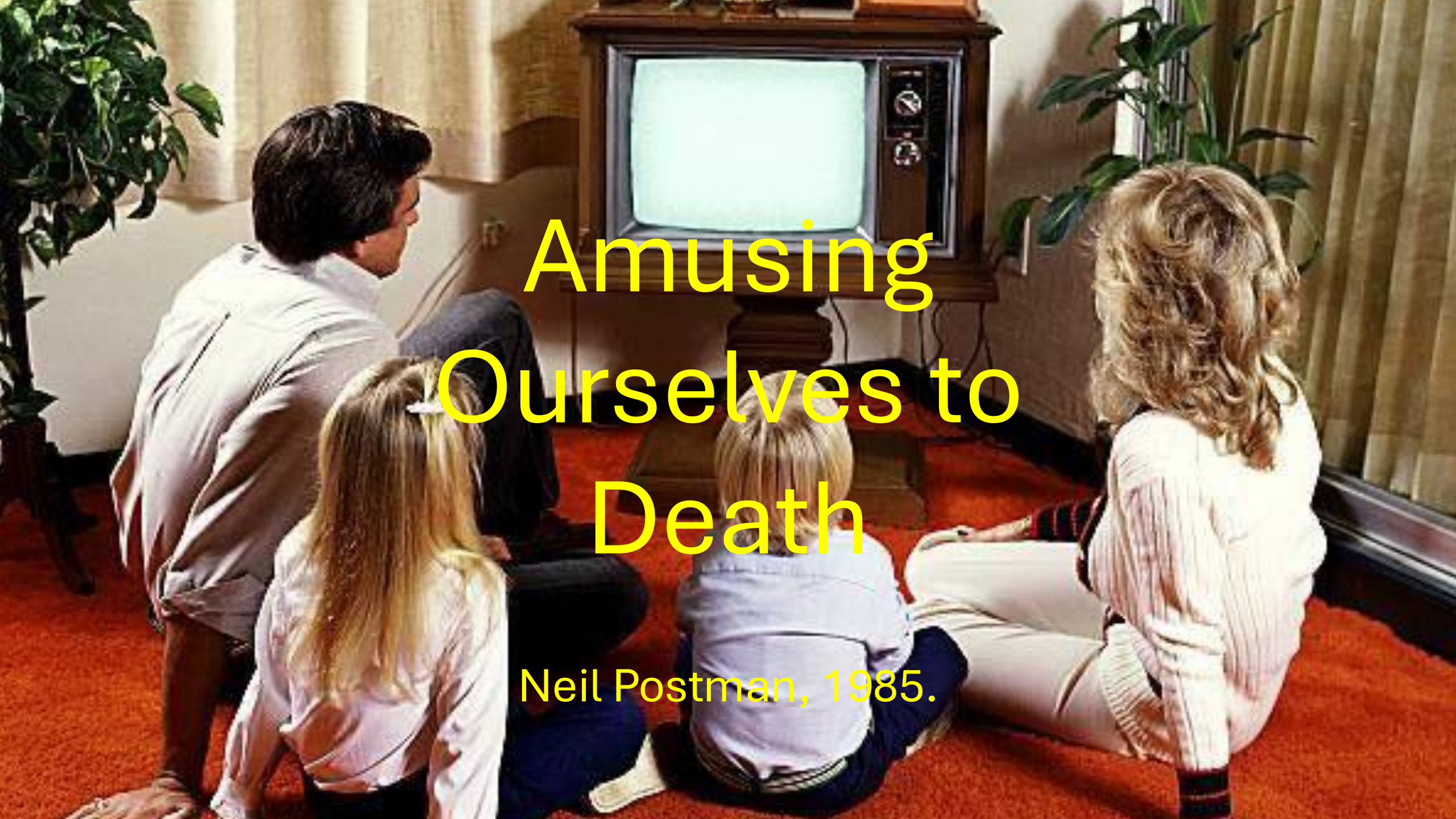
Depth After Postmodernism

Keywords: Metamodernism, Oscillation, Hauntology

THESIS

In an era dominated by consumption, passivity, distraction and comfort, photography has largely become a tool for capturing a ‘present without meaning, stripping the world of depth and reducing it to mere appearance’ (Ritchen)

How can we use the medium of photography differently? How can we deploy methods that break this illusion of thinness to reveal deeper truths about the human experience?

A photograph of a family of four sitting on a red carpeted floor, watching a vintage television set. The father is on the left, leaning forward. The mother is on the right, sitting cross-legged. Two young children are in the center, also watching the TV. The television is a large, dark wood cabinet with a light-colored screen. The room has beige walls and a large potted plant on the left. The text "Amusing Ourselves to Death" is overlaid in yellow, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Amusing Ourselves to Death

Neil Postman, 1985.



The Medium Shapes the Message

Postman argues that different forms of media influence the way information is conveyed and understood.

He contrasts the print-based culture of the 18th and 19th centuries – which encouraged deep, rational debate – with television culture – which prioritises entertainment over substance.

Neil Postman, 1985.



The Medium Shapes the Message

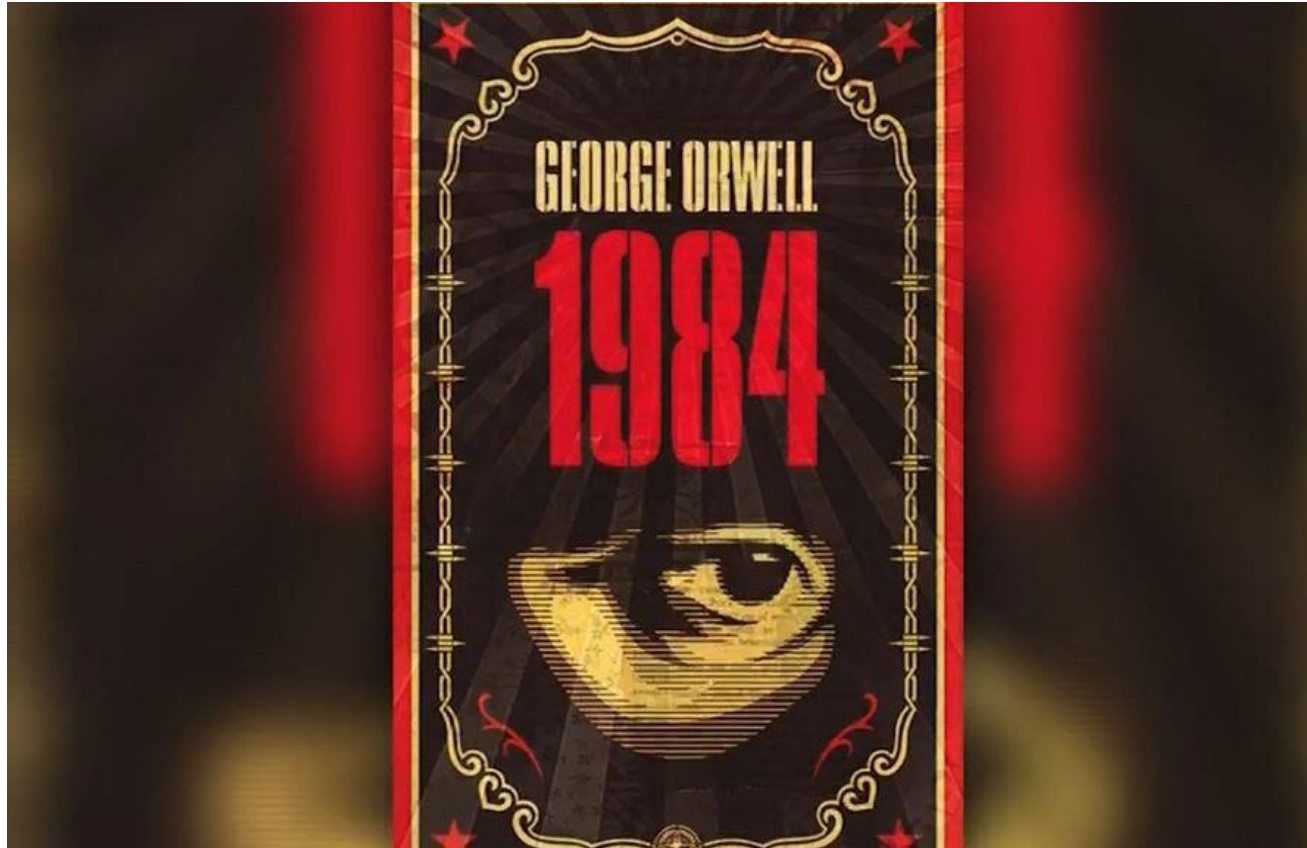
In a print-based society, Postman argued people engaged in complex discussions, while television promotes fragmented, superficial, and emotionally driven communication.

Political debates, news, and even religion are now presented as entertainment, reducing their depth to surface.

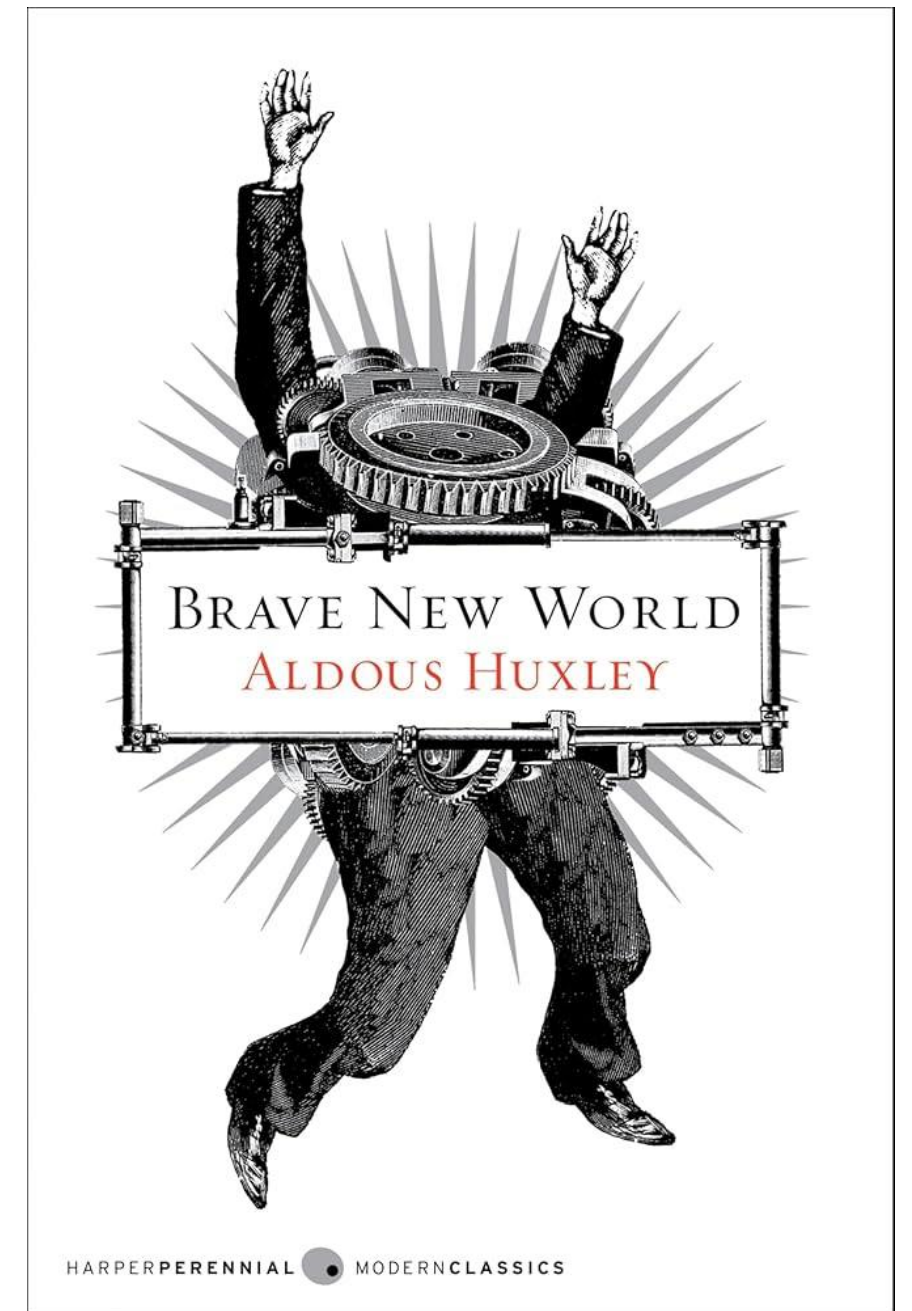
Neil Postman, 1985.

A photograph of a family of four sitting on a red carpeted floor, watching a vintage television. The father is on the left, leaning back, wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The mother is on the right, sitting cross-legged, wearing a white and pink striped sweater and white pants. Two young children, a girl with blonde hair and a boy with blonde hair, are sitting in front of them. The television is a large, dark wood cabinet with a built-in screen, displaying the text "THE SLOW ERASURE OF MEANING FROM OUR LIVES." in red. The room has beige walls, a large potted plant on the left, and a window with sheer curtains on the right.

THE SLOW
ERASURE OF
MEANING FROM
OUR LIVES.



George Orwell, 1984, 1949.



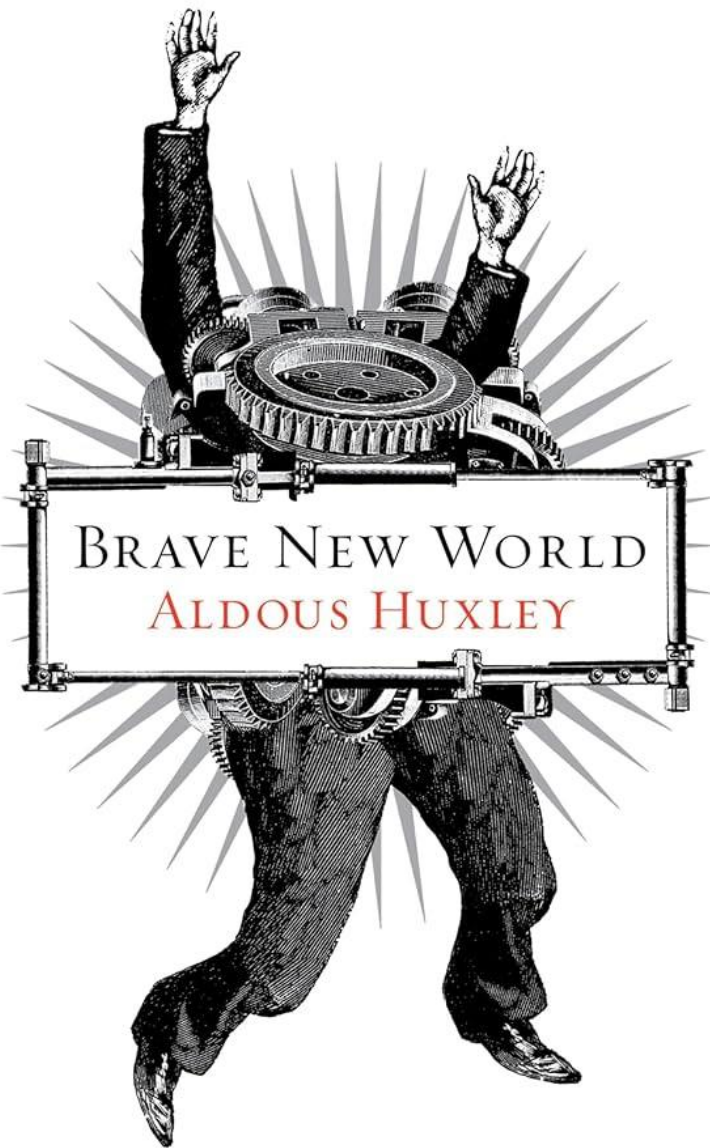
Aldous Huxley, *A Brave New World*, 1932.

A Dystopian novel about a future where a totalitarian government controls every aspect of life.

Key themes: Surveillance, censorship, propaganda, media, technology, big brother.

The book is a warning about the dangers of giving too much power to government.





A Dystopian novel about a futuristic society, known as the World State. The World State controls its citizens through advanced technology and conditioning from birth, effectively eliminating individuality and emotion in favor of stability and comfort.

Key themes: Technology, comfort, happiness, pleasure,

The book is about the trade-off between happiness and freedom. Happiness is guaranteed through instant satisfactions for desires such as food, sex, drugs and consumer items, but comes at the expense of freedom and truth.

‘Orwell warned that we will be overcome by an externally imposed oppression. But in Huxley’s vision, no Big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history. As he saw it, people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think.’

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 1985

‘What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one.

Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism.

Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture...’.



‘We are not oppressed by
force but distracted by
amusement.’

Neil Postman, 1985.

A photograph of a man and a woman sitting on a red carpet in a living room, watching television. The man is on the left, wearing a light-colored shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a white sweater. A large red text box is overlaid on the image, containing the text: "Postman warns that a society addicted to entertainment will struggle to engage with meaning (socially and politically) - becoming increasingly passive and democratically weaker." The background shows a wooden cabinet and a potted plant.

Postman warns that a society addicted to entertainment will struggle to engage with meaning (socially and politically) - becoming increasingly passive and democratically weaker.

Neil Postman, 1985.

Part One



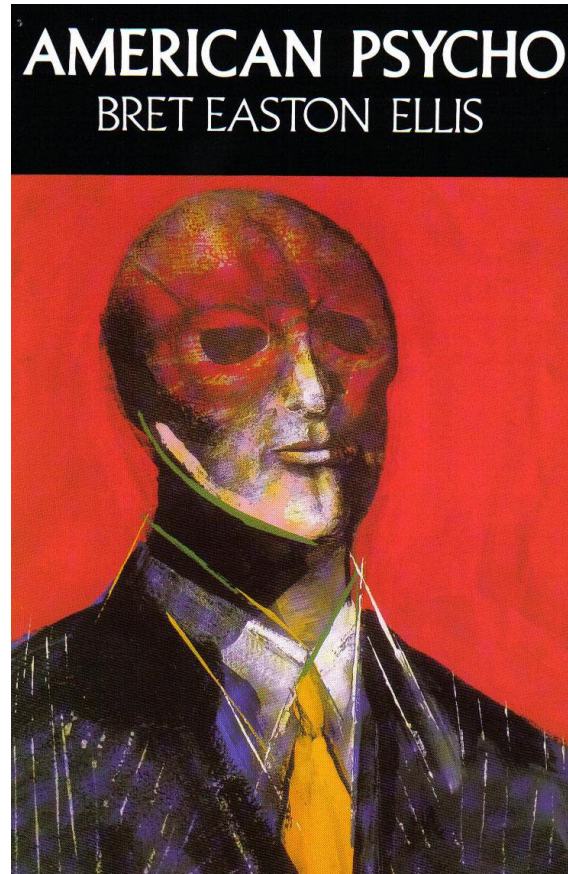
On growing up in the
90's.

(Sensibilities of being an artist)

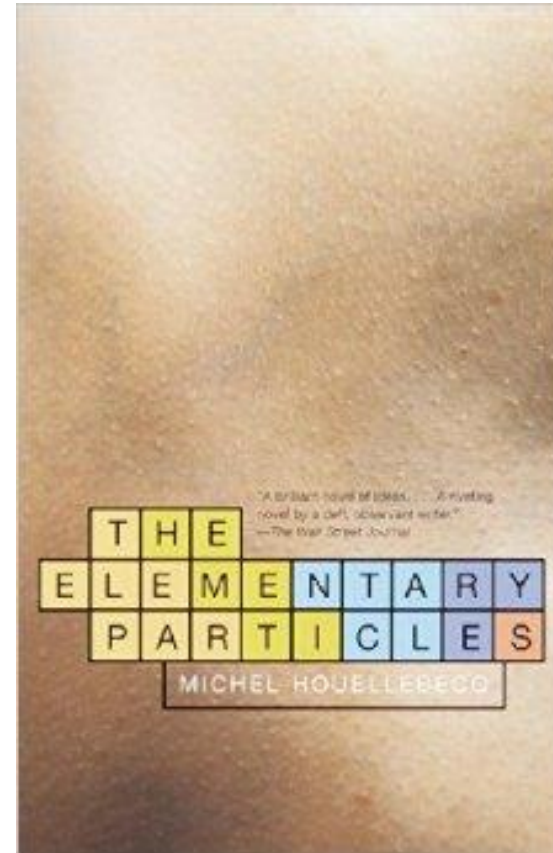
‘I like to complain and
do nothing to make
things better’

Kurt Cobain





A book about toxic masculinity and the emptiness of a world without real connection.

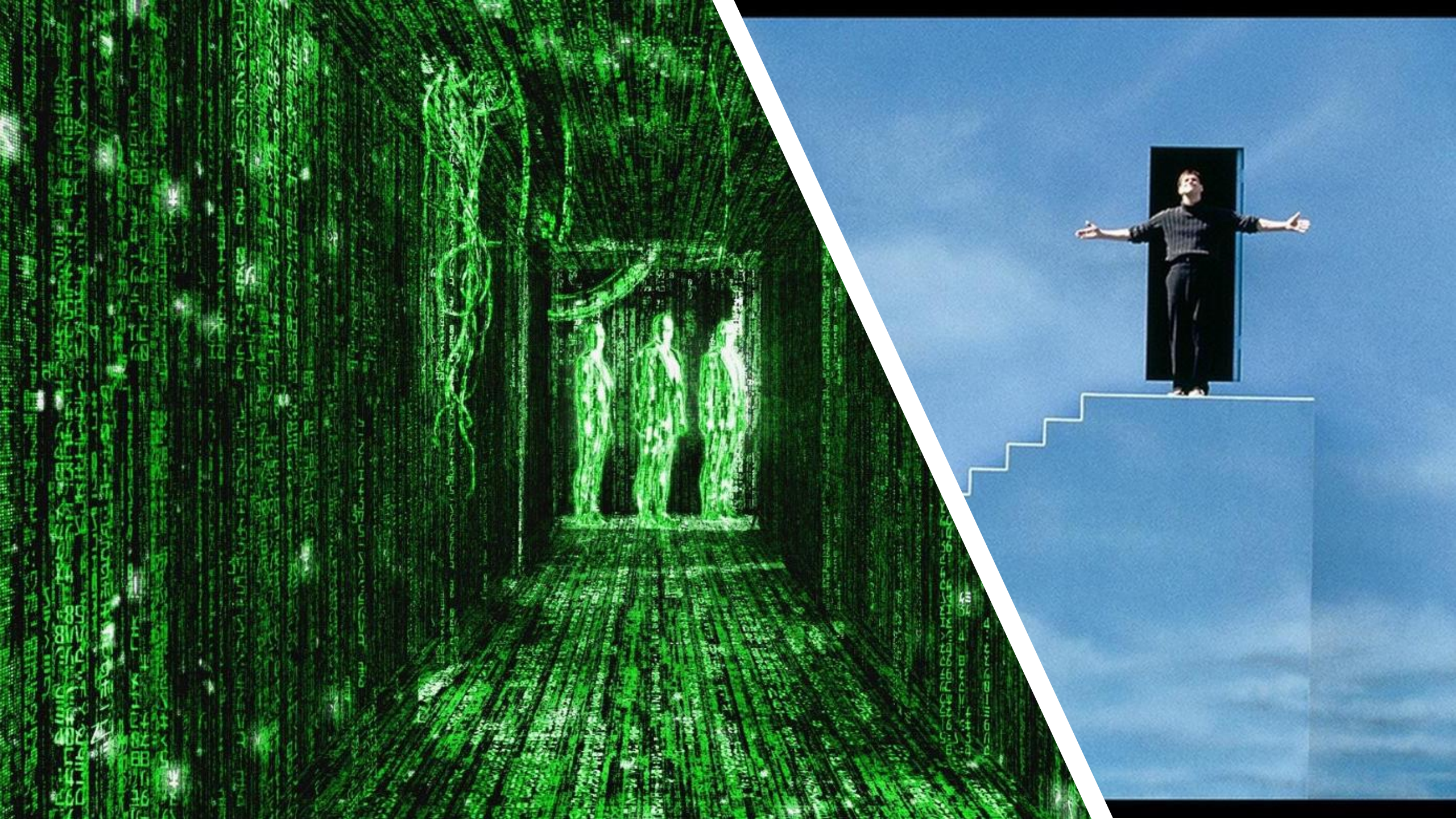


A book about loneliness, isolation and the emptiness of a world without real connection.







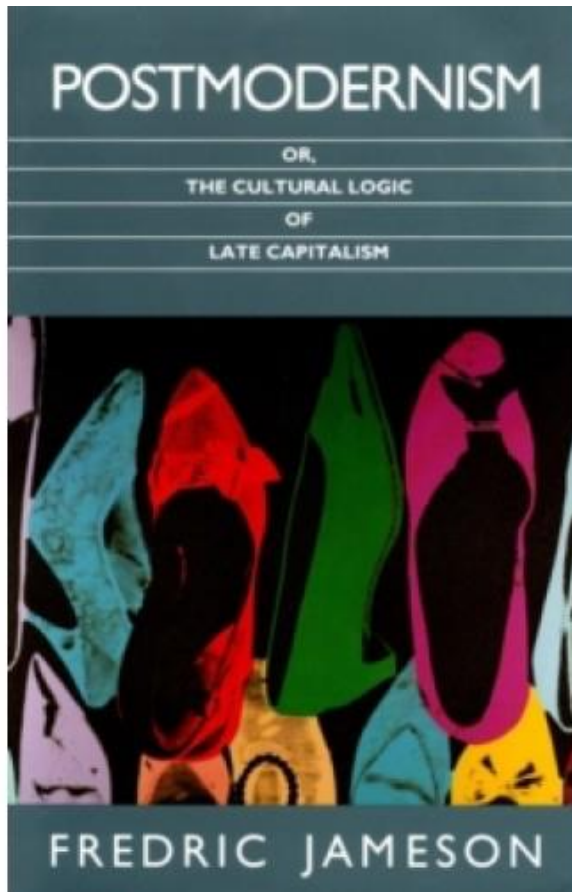


The sensibilities of the previous cultural
influence can be categorised as
‘Postmodern’.

Postmodern 'sensitivity'

irony, sarcasm, desperation, pessimism, apathy,
deconstruction, nihilism, cynicism, distrust, and pastiche.

Deconstruction



... what we need is a new vocabulary. The languages that have been useful in talking about culture and politics in the past don't seem adequate to this historical moment.

(Jameson on postmodernism quoted in Stephanson 1988, 12-13).

WHAT DOES THE POST- POSTMODERN CONDITION LOOK LIKE?

A shift/ desire for more...

Changes in our Social, Political, Ecological Contexts



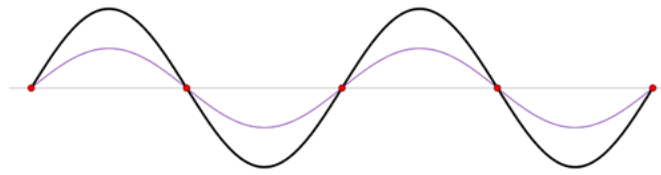
new generations of artists are increasingly abandoning the aesthetic methods of creating work founded on deconstruction, irony and pastiche in favour of ethical notions of reconstruction and myth.

These trends and tendencies can **no longer be explained in terms of the postmodern.**

Metamodernism

Pessimism/ Irony

Hope/ Sincerity





Album

i,i

Bon Iver • 2019 • 13 songs, 39 min 41 sec



List

#	Title	Plays	
---	-------	-------	--

1	Yi Bon Iver	8,979,848	0:31
---	----------------	-----------	------

2	iMi Bon Iver	24,197,401	3:16
---	-----------------	------------	------

3	We Bon Iver	14,552,088	2:22
---	----------------	------------	------

4	Holyfields, Bon Iver	14,637,279	3:07
---	-------------------------	------------	------

5	Hey, Ma Bon Iver	119,957,595	3:36
---	---------------------	-------------	------



Album

Because the Internet

Childish Gambino • 2013 • 19 songs, 58 min 1 sec



List

#	Title	Plays	
---	-------	-------	--

1	The Library - Intro Childish Gambino	12,541	0:04
---	---	--------	------

2	I.Crawl Childish Gambino	71,680,529	3:29
---	------------------------------------	------------	------

3	II. Worldstar Childish Gambino	64,672,348	4:04
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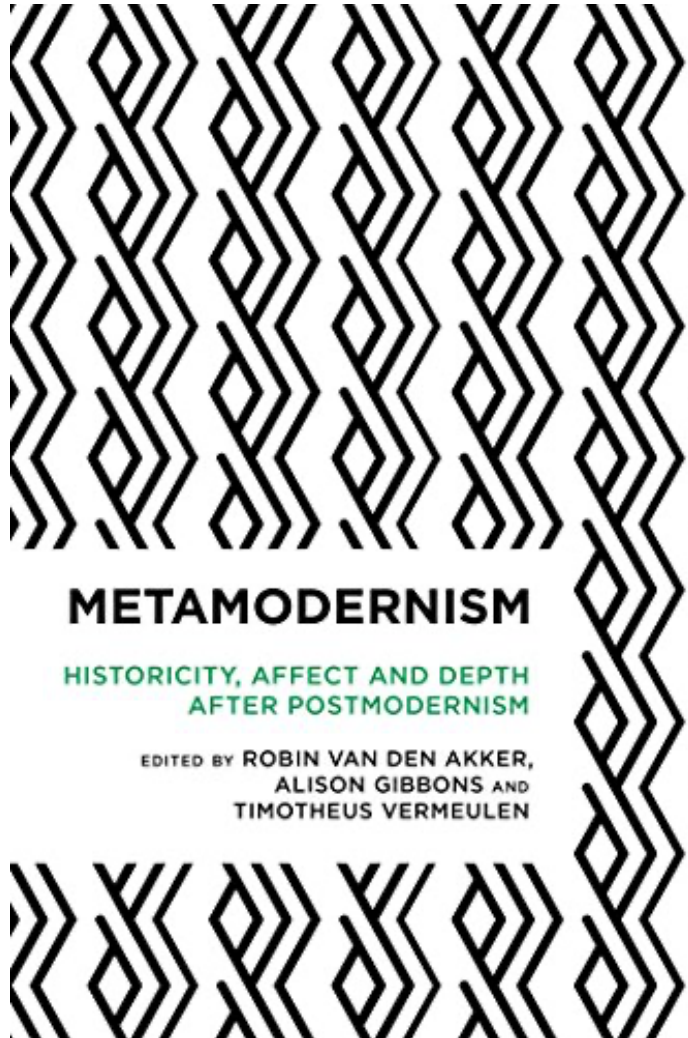
4	Dial Up Childish Gambino	24,792,726	0:44
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5	I. The Worst Guys Childish Gambino, Chan...	141,917,704	3:39
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ME TOO ♀♀







... metamodernism oscillates between the modern and postmodern... between a modern **enthusiasm** and a postmodern **irony**, between **hope** and **melancholy**, between **naivety** and **knowingness**, **empathy** and **apathy**, **unity** and **pluralism**, **totality** and **fragmentation**, **purity** and **ambiguity**. Indeed, by oscillating to and fro... the metamodern negotiates between the modern and the postmodern. One should be careful not to think of this oscillation as a balance however; rather, it is a pendulum swinging between 2,3,5, 10, innumerable poles.

Van Den Akker & Vermeulen, *Metamodernism: Historicism, Affect and Depth After Postmodernism* 2010

THESIS STRUCTURE

Introduction: Overview of context

PART ONE: Framework – Metamodern sensibility (oscillation)

PART TWO: Hauntology – the concept I deploy to ‘break the illusion of presence’

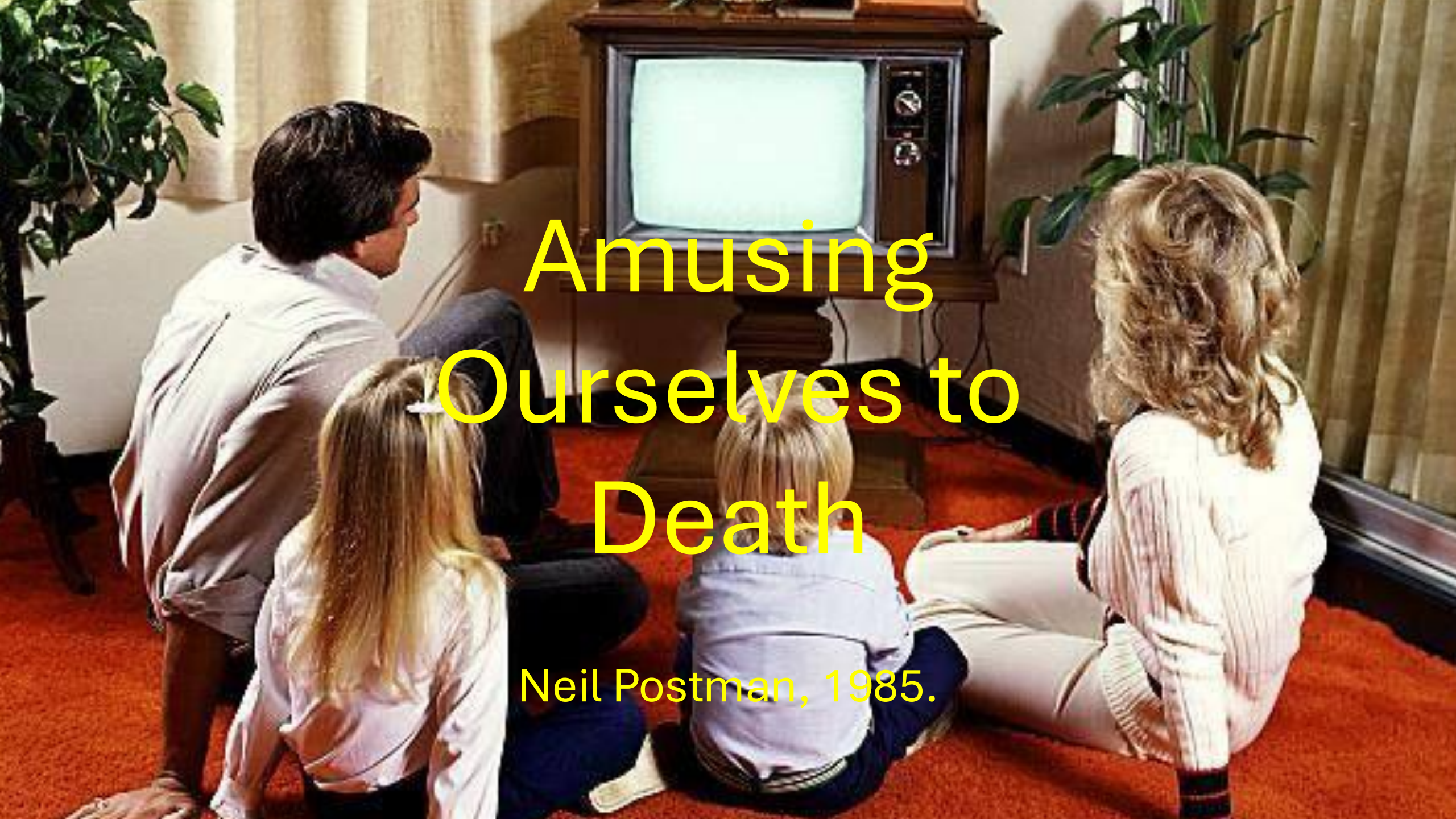
PART THREE: Practice

Conclusion: Findings

PART 2.

Hauntology

Disrupting the illusion of 'on-going presence'

A photograph of a family of four sitting on a red carpeted floor, watching a vintage television set. The father is on the left, leaning forward. The mother is on the right, sitting cross-legged. Two young children are in the center, also watching the TV. The television is a large, dark wood cabinet with a light-colored screen. The room has beige walls and a large potted plant on the left. The text "Amusing Ourselves to Death" is overlaid in large yellow letters across the center of the image.

Amusing Ourselves to Death

Neil Postman, 1985.



Both Metamodernism and Hauntology deal with
postmodernisms perceived exhaustion

The forgetting of the photograph's ghostly or spectral character, of its relation to a death that survives itself, corresponds to what Walter Benjamin refers to as “the decline of photography.”

Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light*, 1997

A KEEN BISH CARTON

LEWIS & CLARK
CREAM CRACKERS

CRISP AND CREAMY

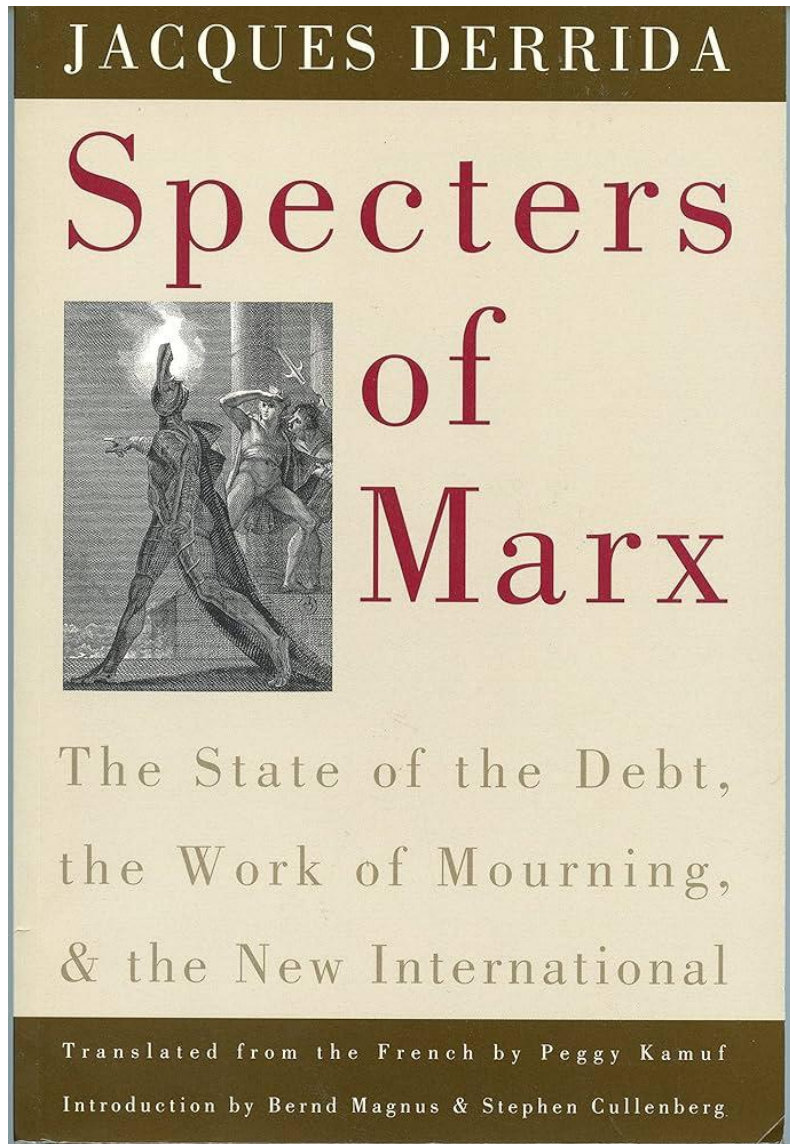




‘Temporal disjuncture’ can be
contextualized through Jacques
Derrida and Mark Fishers concept
Hauntology.

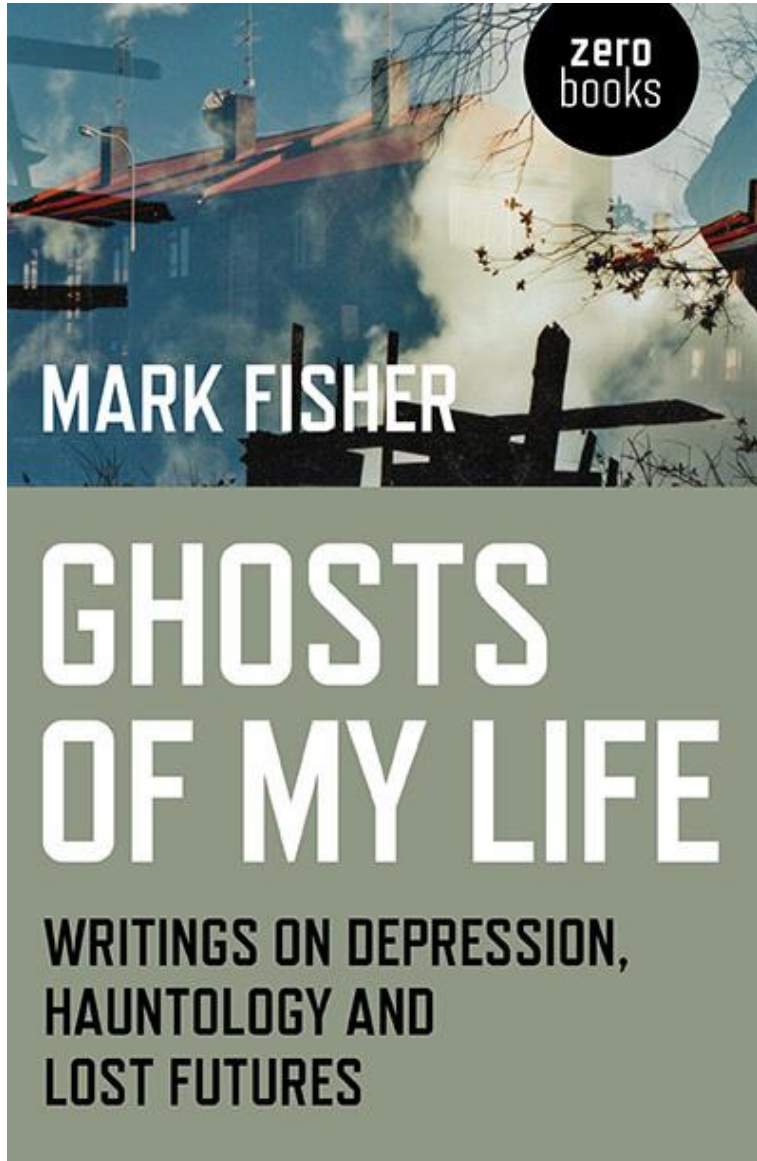


What is Hauntology?



Hauntology is a philosophical concept introduced by Jacques Derrida in his 1993 book *Spectres of Marx*. The term is a play on *ontology* (the study of being) and *haunting* suggesting that existence is always ghostly – never fully present, always shaped by what has come before and what is yet to come.

Derrida's hauntology refers to the way the past and future haunt the present. Key to Derrida's concept is that hauntology challenges the idea that time is linear and that the past is simply gone. Instead, history (personal and collective) are full of spectral traces.



Drawing on Derrida's use of the term, Fisher applied it to music, film and cultural theory, arguing that contemporary culture is haunted by aesthetics and promises of the past, particularly the utopian visions of the 20th century that never came to fruition.

Fisher explores **how** hauntology manifests in music, photography and film.

Fisher's *Metaphysics of Crackle* (2013), identifies an aesthetic of "hiss, white noise, clicks and crackles, re-introduced and overlapped onto the transparency of the modern digital medium as phonographic remnants, unsettling the very distinction between surface and depth, between background and foreground, bringing forth temporal disjuncture's in the listening experience."

Note: Something is revealed about the medium's technical process through *hauntology* – unusual in contemporary mediums – as they are so often hidden from sight and sound.

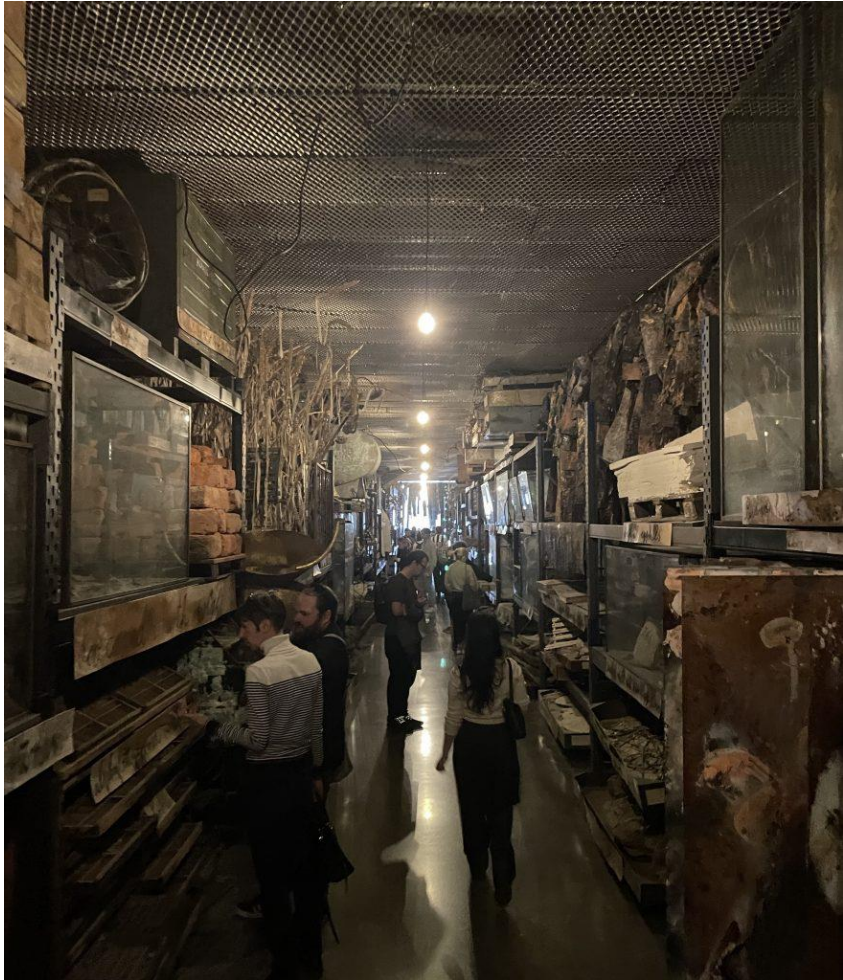
Hauntology Playlist

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/713rtIQ89HyK3Vb2TkOK5E?si=1a44f354a87c4cf7>





Gerhard Richter



Anselm Kiefer



Maya Rochat



Daisuke Yokota



Sideways

69. Memento Mori



Radio 4, *Sideways*, Episode 69: *Memento Mori* , 2025

PART 3.

THEORY/CONCEPT

INTO PRACTICE

Disrupting the illusion of 'on-going presence'

THESIS STRUCTURE

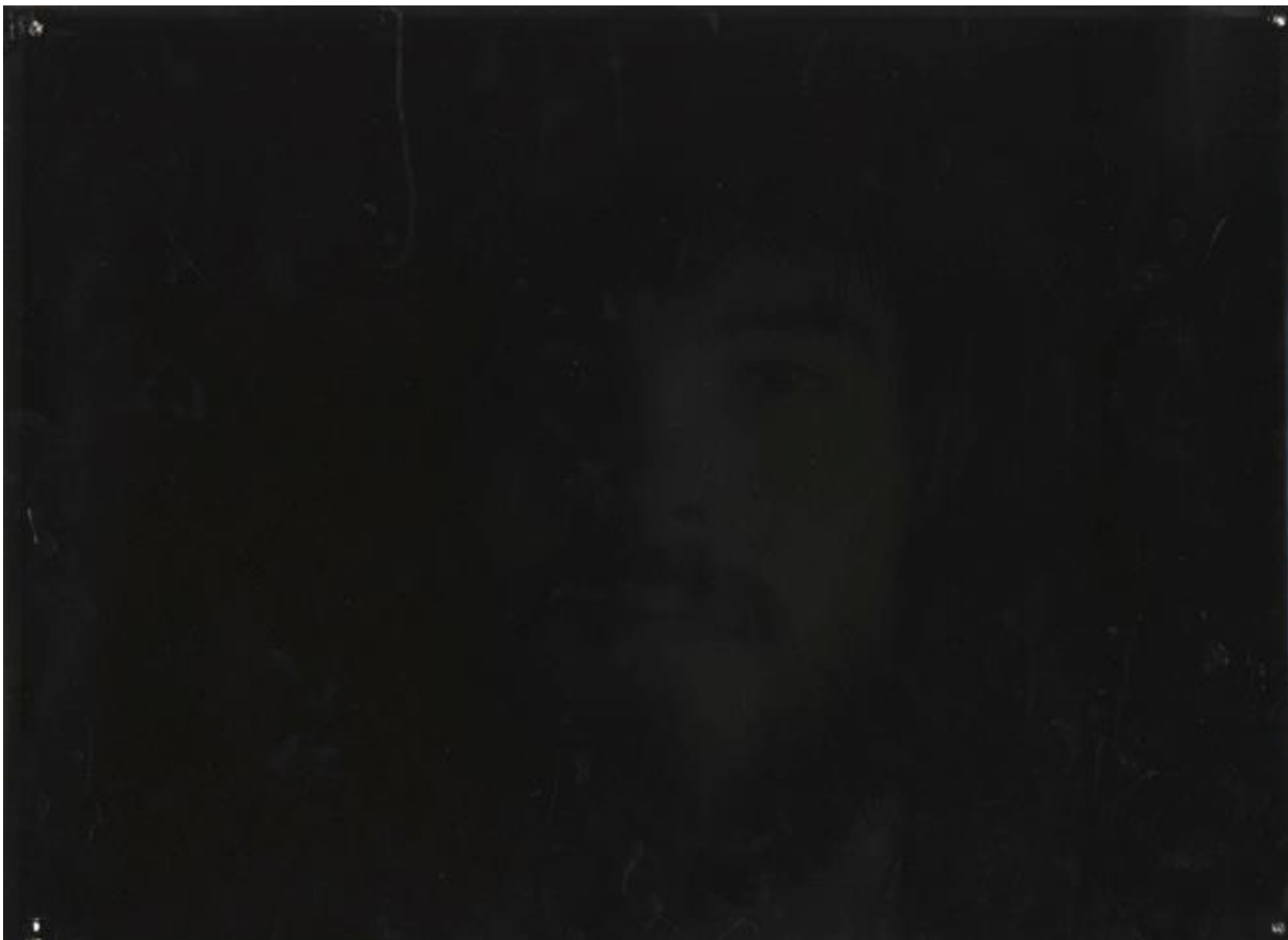
Introduction: Overview of context

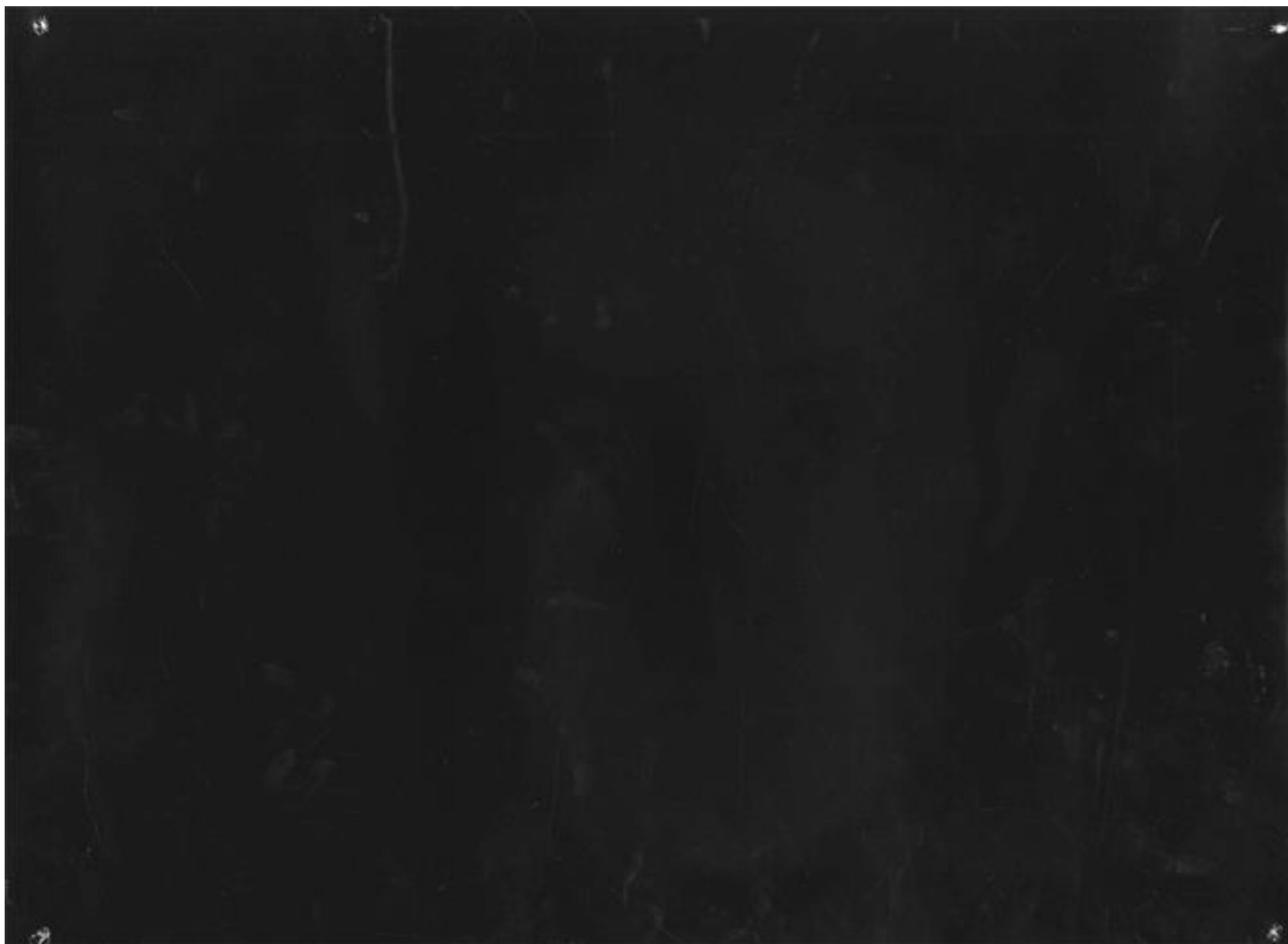
PART ONE: Framework – Metamodern sensibility (**oscillation**)

PART TWO: Hauntology – the concept I deploy to ‘break the illusion of presence’ (**through oscillation**).

PART THREE: Practice (**the practice of oscillation**)

Conclusion: Findings





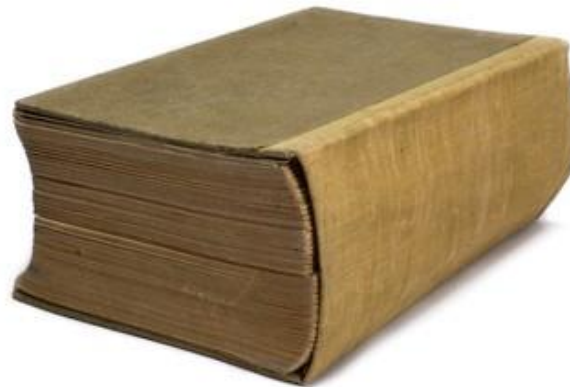




Latent Frequencies (2011-2013)

“An Account of a Method of Copying Paintings upon Glass,
and of Making Profiles, by the Agency of Light upon Nitrate of
Silver, with observations by Humphrey Davy. Invented by T.
Wedgwood”

1802



Latent Frequencies

Ryan L. Moule



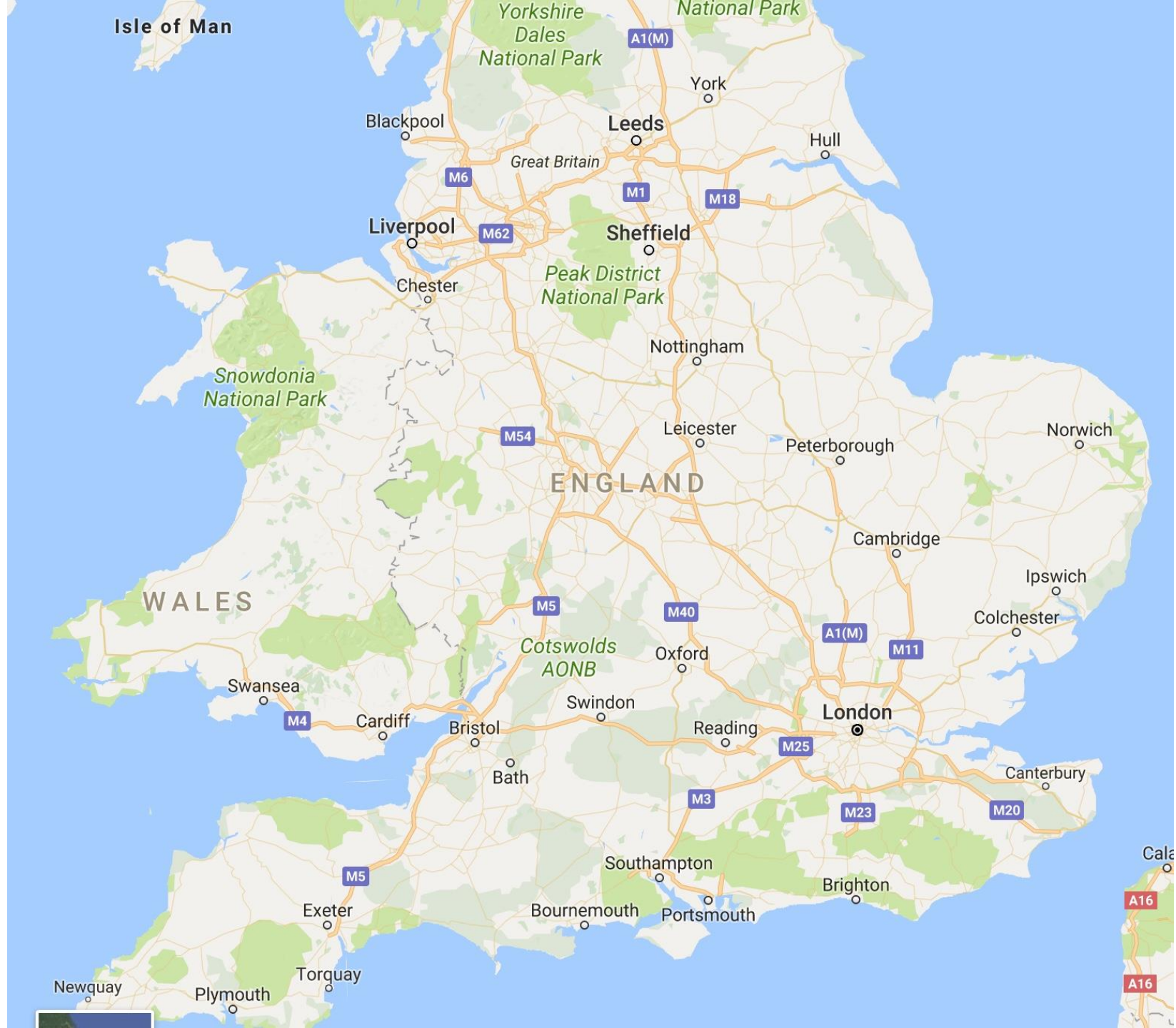
Ten 'chemically unfixed' silver gelatine handprints

Essay by Richard Page

Designed | Produced by Book Works, London

Supported by Ffotogallery

2014



Vessels & Vestiges

(2015 -)



Mission Gallery, Swansea.





Flowers Gallery, London.







Copeland Gallery, London.





The Photographers Gallery, London



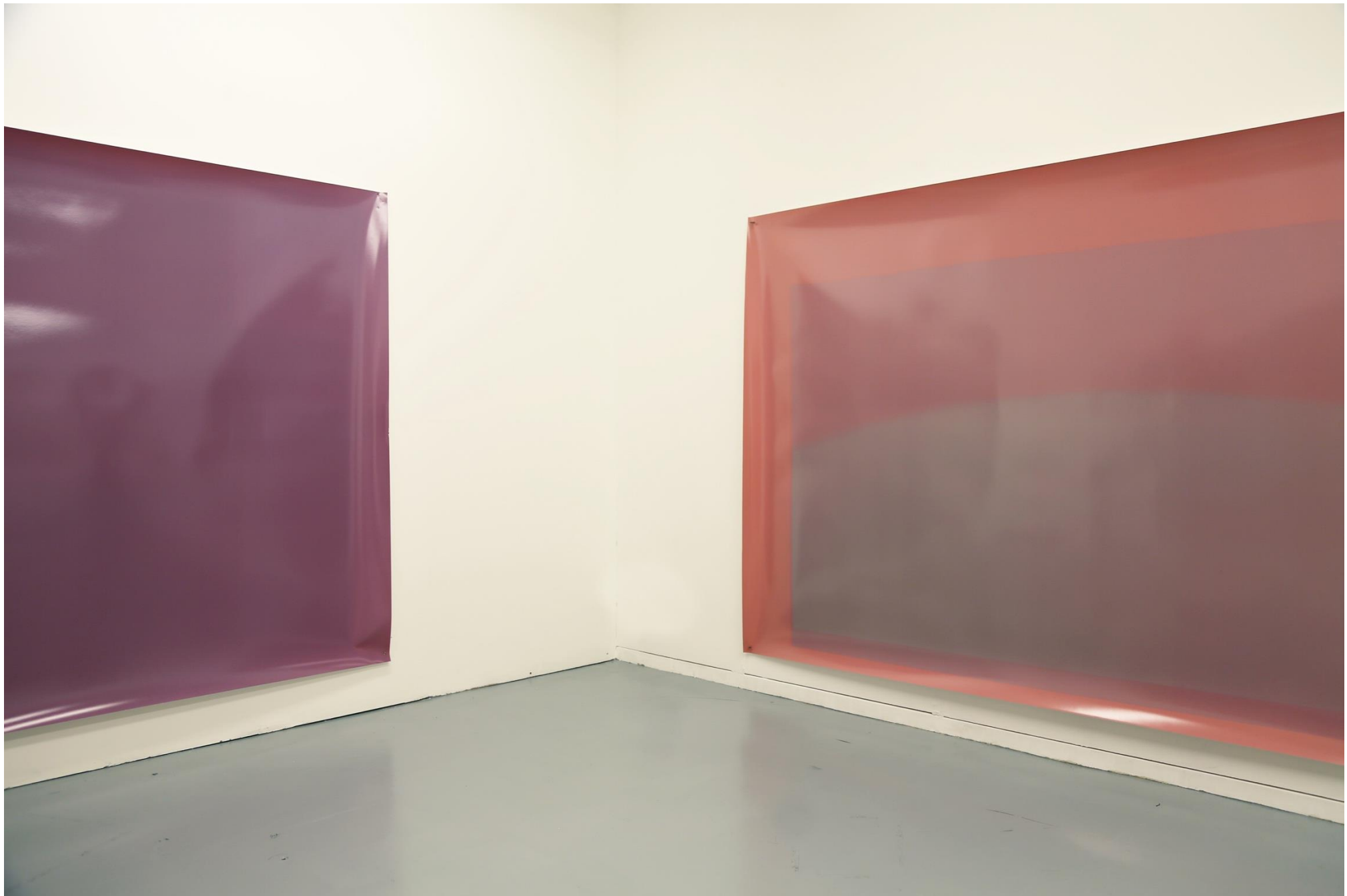
Materia Gallery, Rome



September Project







Objects to Place in a Tomb

2022 -













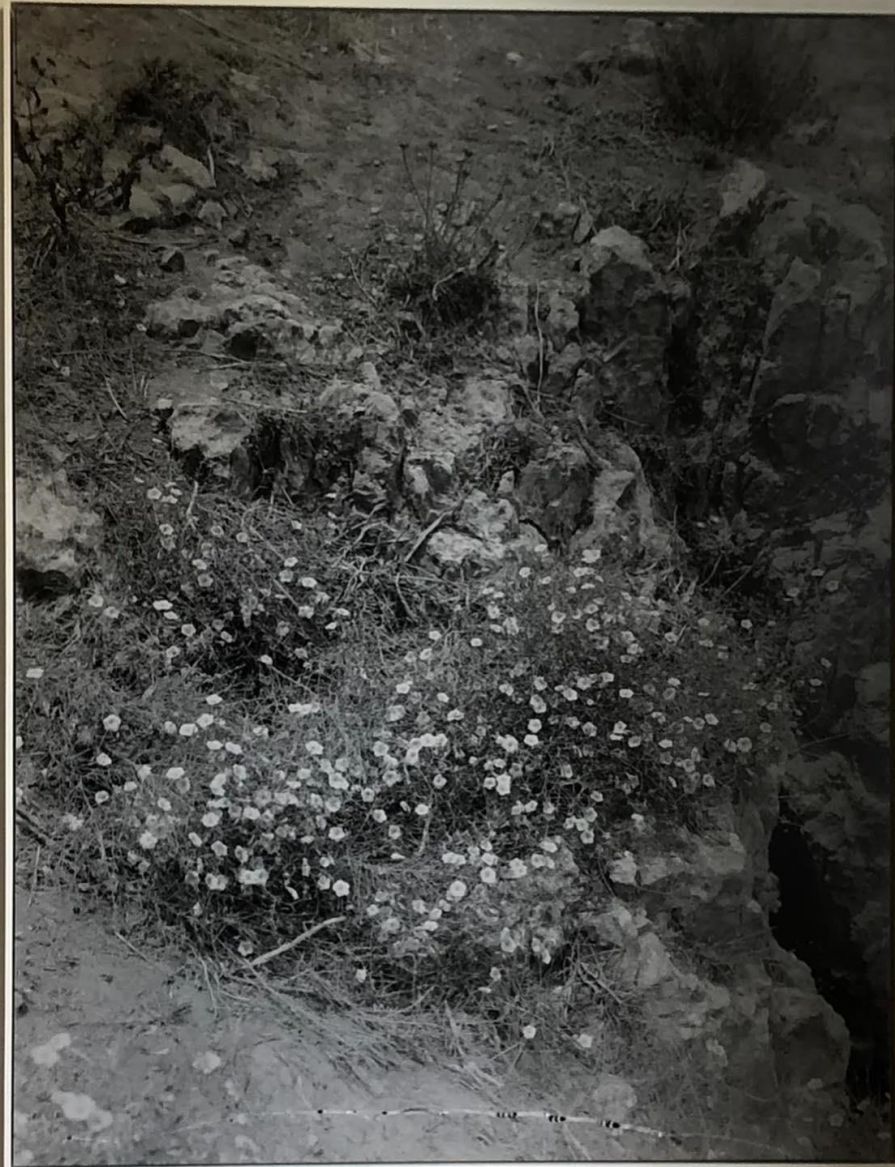
























The Cloud & its Shadow
2023 -

WINTER 2023

source

SOURCE / ISSN 1369-2224



THINKING THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

#113 / £8

FEATURES

Josh Allen on Doc Phot at 50 (p.6) Alejandro León Cannock Imagines a Better World with Photography (p.14) Claire Anscomb asks Can AI Images and Photographs Be Imaginative? (p.20) • Nigel Hutchings talks to Chloé Morrison about being a Kirlian Photographer (p.26)

COLUMNS

Joseph McBrinn (p.12)
Orla Fitzpatrick (p.18)
Colin Pantall (p.82)
Kite Marsh (p.86)

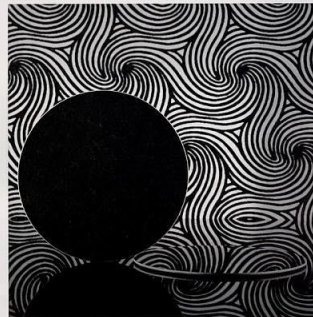
IMAGINATION



Ryan L. Moule (p.30)



Justin Partyka (p.50)



Sarah Jones (p.40)

EXHIBITIONS

Re/Sisters • Hiroshi Sugimoto • Contemporary African Photography • Daido Moriyama • Ailbhe Ni Bhriain

BOOKS

Felipe Romero Beltrán • Samuel Gratacap • Oliver Chanarin • Arthur Tress • Mark Ruwedel *and more*



RYAN L. MOULE

The Cloud and its Shadow

I see rooms, conspicuously empty, paper peeling from the walls. I see writing fading on a blackboard. I see faces, their gazes trailing out of frame. I see figures staring upwards. I see fingers pointing. I see doorways and windows I can't see through. I see shadows, glances, handprints.

Index. A marker of presence that frames an absence, bracketing this flickering simultaneity. *Not here, it says – perhaps was here – but now elsewhere, hidden, lost.* To talk about index means to talk about contact, invisibility, and imagination; the friction between experience and time, the weird fact that we can think about things we can't see, filling in the gaps.

Photography's at-root indexicality is well established. But what happens to these ideas when we're no longer dealing with the actual impression of light on matter but pixelated code, infinitely repeatable, mediated in the dark of a machine? Held, moreover, not in tangible objects but the everyday otherworld of virtual? Ryan L. Moule's *The Cloud and its Shadow* refracts around the implications of index, folding the progress of the photography uncannily back on itself, to pause, to grasp,

I'm watching gloved hands holding a piece of glass, tipping it side to side, letting the light fill it from different angles. It's 5 x 4, intimate, about the size of a phone, or a fossil, or something from a family album. It's clouded with white and grey shapes, and there are hints of an image that's not quite decipherable. That childhood game comes back to me: looking up at the sky, trying to see faces, figures, signs in the weather, before they're lost to its perpetual movement.

The hands slide a black sheet behind the plate, and the image appears. It was always there, part of the glass's texture, but now it has acquired the shadows necessary for visibility. It's the face of a man, eyes closed. At first I think: marble. Then I think I recognise what's covering his head as a sleeping bag. So, alive? Asleep, then? Or something more permanent? There's no contest. It's suspended. On Moule's Instagram page, I press play, and I see again.

An Ambrotype is unique and fragile, that, in effect, carries a positive image viewed in front of a black background onto the dark. But en route to being caught in the object, it is first refracted from a movie screen, then a digital copy, and finally a video screen. In a sense, the algorithm

new world

From disconnected sources, Mouth draws correspondences. Bright hands on a keyboard, a microphone at his own images. A constellation of the silence of his own images. A constellation of music. A score of relations. A constellation of something quietly and quietly.

Elsewhere, something different happens. A blur like a sound fading out. Is this an explosion, a ball, an abandoned? Is this sleep? What is it? falling? Children juxtaposed with the white. Mould's chemical process. Mould's chemical process. Mould's chemical process.

Moulie's chemical process is that become part of the image. If I es, I can't help reading those as bodies, smoke filling rooms, walls coming ing a building. The white of smoke burn through the image. Some of the The photograph as a photograph.

dark, pointing to
Cloud computing
deities, eternity, the eternally
and immortal. The promise is to
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average user can hope to
far away we can hope to
age computer. The





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