FROM FINANCIAL FICTIONS TO MYTHOTECHNESIS

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The following article attempts a brief analysis of the strange temporality of "new" financial instruments that allow a kind of engineering of the future from the present and, indeed, the feedback of that future to that present. In particular I am interested in whether this new logic, that has itself come about through increased computational power, involves something different to more typical accounts of science fiction (SF) and what some of the implications of this might be for art practice, especially in its own turn to the digital. As such, the second half of my article attends to two case studies of what I want to call "mythotechnesis" when this names those digital audio-visual practices that are involved in a speculative "future-fictioning" of the real.

Financial Fictions

In a short essay on what he calls "Hyperbolic Futures", Steven Shaviro follows Fredric Jameson (who he

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quotes) in suggesting that SF offers a "psycho-social-technological cartography" of the present via the setting up of a different perspective (Shaviro's essay concerns two SF novels: *Market Forces* by Richard K. Morgan and *Moxyland* by Lauren Beukes) (Shaviro 2011: 4). For Shaviro, this is SF's *raison d'etre*: it can offer a purchase on the various "hyperobjects" that determine our lives in the present but that are too vast to "see". We might say that this is an isotope of a larger and more general problem of how to represent the abstractions of capitalism. Through cognitive — and affective — mapping then, SF allows us to grasp the increasing complexity of our own contemporary moment.

However, Shaviro is also attuned to a more speculative function of SF and especially the way in which it can offer up different accounts of the future to those increasingly being engineered by our economic and marketing managers. SF's capacity to surprise — to offer up a *different* future — is, for Shaviro, crucial to its identity as a genre. That said, the importance of these different futures is still understood in terms of the present insofar as said importance comes down to the way in which they demonstrate — in their very portrayal of difference — that the present, more typical, ideas of the future have, indeed, been managed. SF can "outline the bars of our prison" as Shaviro puts it (2011: 11). We might briefly gesture back to Jameson here and note a central paradox of SF writing that is connected to this present-future perspective (and that the title of his own book on SF — *Archaeologies of the Future* — gestures towards): is it, in fact, possible to

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write about the actual future utilising the means and materials of the present? For Jameson, this is not so much an epistemological or, indeed, a technical issue but an ontological one of how to combine "the not-yet-being of the future" with the being of the present (Jameson 2005: xvi).

To return to Shaviro, it does seem to me that this understanding of SF as an optic on the present (or, indeed, as a genre confined to a kind of present-future perspective) has its limitations insofar as it can restrict the genre, not least as formal experimentation is invariably less foregrounded (insofar as it is the image or vision of the future that is crucial). Indeed, in many ways the cut-up SF novels of William Burroughs are an answer — at least of sorts — to Jameson's paradox insofar as they actually produce a different space-time through the break with typical syntax and, indeed, logical sequencing. Shaviro does however also point to another compelling understanding of SF in terms of "financial fictions" — or, more specifically, derivatives — and how these work to actually produce the reality they predict. Here fiction (or, more specifically, the fictioning of future scenarios) operates as a kind of temporal feedback loop (from these futures back to the present). In fact, as we shall see in more detail below, the future is the very condition of possibility for the writing of derivatives and, as such, also begins to have a very real traction on our present reality.[1] Following Shaviro, we can certainly identify SF narratives *about* these financial instruments (*Market Forces* for example), but what about the idea of SF writing as itself a form of derivative — or loop from the future back to

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the present?

It is here that we might briefly turn to a more recent essay by Jameson — "An Art of Singularity" — that also concerns itself with the temporal logic of these financial instruments (which are themselves part of what Jameson sees as a fundamental economic phase shift to globalisation), and, following this, identifies a similar logic that is also evident in recent literature (understood, by Jameson, as a symptom of the broader economic shift). For Jameson this new kind of fiction involves works in which the form — and especially "one-time unrepeatable formal events" — has itself become content (Jameson mentions Tom McCarthy's novel *Remainder* which he suggests involves, in its narrative structure, precisely the "one-time invention of a device" [2016: 13]). For Jameson there is also a strange kind of flat temporality at play with these events: a "pure present without a past or a future" (2016: 13). In relation to art practice more broadly this is also evident in those works (paradigmatically installation) in which the singular event — "made for the *now*" — has replaced the object or, indeed, any sense of sequencing (in terms of both historicity and futurity — as, for example, was still in play within modernism and the avant-garde) (2016: 13).

Turning to financialisation itself, in his article Jameson follows Giovanni Arrighi's periodisation of Capital, identifying a third stage (our own) in which any new regions of expansion have been exhausted, resulting in a situation where Capital must feed back on itself — double its existing territories — via speculation on futures. A derivative does just this, operat-

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ing as a highly specific "locus of incommensurables" (Jameson 2016: 118); a temporal mapping of various risks to do with various projected events and ventures (in fact, this is why there can be no generalised theory of the derivative, as Jameson points out, each occasion being unique, hence the reference to singularity in his essay's title).

As Jameson also points out, this interest in the future is not in itself new (there has long been a predictive, futures market), but what is new is both the way in which these futures feedback — or have a "reflexion" (2016: 117) — in and on the real, but also that they are now incredibly complex; the various variables are only able to be calculated by computer, which means they are also already properly posthuman (as Jameson remarks, he follows N. Katherine Hayles on this compelling insight). For Jameson the crucial issue is to reclaim a different idea of the future from this new temporality that is composed of "a series of singularity-events" operating in and as a "perpetual present" (2016: 122).

We can deepen this account of derivatives (especially in relation to their temporal structure) by looking to Suhail Malik's recent article "The Ontology of Finance". Malik offers a further — but very different — inflection on Jameson's temporal paradox (of how to write the future from the present) insofar as time, following Malik's reading of the sociologist Elena Esposito, is figured in terms of systems theory, and, as such, is not to be understood as the backdrop to the operation of derivatives but, rather, in some senses as produced by them (time is system-specific in this

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sense). Indeed, with derivatives the usual sequencing is scrambled: the future does not come after a present (that itself has come after a past), but is increasingly the very condition of the present (as Malik suggests, the future is the condition of the writing of a derivative). The solution to the paradox of SF is then that time is not separate from the fictions that are its circuits and loops and, indeed, that the future — at least of a kind — is already operational in the present. When laid out flat, as it were, different pasts, presents and futures are all involved in different reflexive and recursive operations.

Malik's own thesis is developed on the basis of a key logic of derivatives (defined, by him, and at their most simple, as temporally-based contracts between two parties to sell or buy an asset at a certain future date): that they tend to operate essentially divorced from the underlying asset they concern (or, rather, via the deferral of the underlying; the contracts are rarely cashed in as it were). As such, any individual "pricing" operates through a complex network of differential prices, that begins with the difference between the price paid for the derivative and the predicted price of the asset at a future date, rather than, again, through being tied to any material asset (or, indeed, materially productive process). This is a network that spreads throughout space (and, as such, operates contra state boundaries), but also through time. Indeed, to all extents and purposes the "terrain" of what we might call financial colonisation is infinite — not just because of the progression into an ever more distant future (involving ever further complex mathematics),

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but also, crucially, because these differential networks become nested as derivatives of derivatives are written (it is this dynamic "hedging" that constitutes the real phase shift to financialisation).

Malik offers an impressive amount of detail on the various mechanisms at play in these and other financial instruments, but ultimately, following Jacques Derrida, names this new logic (of *différance*) the "arkhederivative", pointing out that the latter is not simply the logic of a certain kind of financial instrument (derivatives and the like) but also the very principle of financialisation and the new form of "capital-power" attendant on this (Malik 2014: 775-80). The metaphysics of the market — which might appear to trade on the presence of an underlying asset — is always already under deconstruction in this sense.

Of particular interest for my purposes is the way in which financialisation operates a particular kind of time management, or, more bluntly, designs predictive technologies. Malik discusses some of these — such as the "Black-Scholes Model" (an especially successful predictive formula) — but also offers up a compelling counter-argument such that the very unpredictability of the market — its volatility — is, in fact, constitutive to the successful working of derivatives that precisely need different horizons of possibility in order to multiply (the nesting function I mentioned earlier). In this sense, financialisation is not really about accurately predicting — or, indeed, controlling — the future, but rather keeping it open, proliferating scenarios. We might note briefly here that this nesting of financial fictions — a kind of trading in representations without

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referent (or, at any rate, a deferral of any referent) — does not mean there is no traction on the real. Indeed the real (at least, the real in terms of the financial markets) is produced by these fictions (to say nothing of the further impact on social and political reality of financialisation).

To return to Jameson's paradox we might say then that the logic of derivatives allows a wholly different take on the future (or, more precisely, on time itself) to more typical SF writing. In this understanding the future is not a place as such, but precisely pure contingency (when "anything might happen"). In a similar take on metaphysics, the contemporary philosopher Quentin Meillassoux has demonstrated (in his seminal work *After Finitude*) that although it is unknowable in one sense, one can begin to say certain things about the outside to our present experience (it is, in fact, thinkable). For Meillassoux, "access" to what he calls "The Great Outdoors" hinges on its character as a radically contingent "hyper-chaos" (again, it is not a "place" as such), but also the way in which we can ascertain — conceptually as it were — certain characteristics or "properties" of this radical contingency (beginning with the fact that it is only this contingency that is necessary). Likewise with derivatives and other financial instruments: one can begin to set out certain conceptual coordination points that characterise any future (in terms of its contingency), but also that then allow this future to impact on present decisions. As Malik remarks, following Elie Ayache (a key pre-cursor to his own thesis), derivatives (or market pricing) "can be characterised as a technology of the future" in

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this sense (2014: 761); and the market understood as "the medium of contingency" (Malik quotes Ayache 2014: 761).

Early on in his article, Malik remarks that what he offers up is a "general theory of price largely dedicated to the identification of capital-power's complex constitution and organisation", but also that this might be considered preliminary (and, we might say, theoretical) work, following Left accelerationism, for a "revectoring required to provide the requisite political tasks" (Malik 2014: 639). One can speculate on what such a revectoring might involve, in particular an intervention of some kind in the derivatives market (as, for example, with the *Robin Hood* project).[2] As Malik points out, sabotage per se is ruled out by definition insofar as such interruptions and ruptures are part of the system's operating volatility; or, to say the same differently, more typical strategies that might work in terms of sabotaging investment, and so forth, are rendered ineffectual in a derivatives market that can itself be premised on counter-production. Might there, however, be other options?

Towards the end of a compelling interview ("The Writing of the Market") about his own theorisation (as laid out in his book *The Blank Swan*) of the financial market — as its own kind of event, or even entity, that operates separate from the world — Elie Ayache writes of the trader in the pit as a kind of Nietzschean *übermensch* who lives the very particular time — and "intensity" — of the market:

One can see that because he lives right at the hinge of

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> the event (in the middle of the event) and not in the world that precedes or follows the event, he somehow achieves a "state of rest" relative to the event. He lives at the same (infinite) speeds as the event (2010: 599).

Might there be a role for "artist as trader" here? Someone fully immersed in the market's volatility and "playing" its logics? Perhaps, insofar as dynamically interacting with the market actively produces the latter (trading, in this sense, might be thought of as creative and productive). And yet this has its limitations insofar as its radicality, at least as pitched by Ayache, is simply an antidote to the boredom of a more static reality (the "active market maker" loves volatility because he/she loves challenges as it were). And, of course, such a position is still focussed on trading in order to make a profit.

What then about a position one step removed from the markets, that re-presents them — at a distance — as it were? Certainly, as with the SF novels that Shaviro looks at, there might well be art work that is about the new landscape of financialisation. A recent interesting example is Suzanne's Treister's exhibition *HFT The Gardener*, that explores — in paintings, drawings and a film-fiction — the world of high-frequency trading in relation to the neurochemistry of the traders (and especially the bizarre connection with psychotropic plants).[3] A further option here might be a certain kind of "acceleration" of the logics of financialisation. Indeed, what would it mean to further accelerate the function of the derivative? To nest its fictions beyond

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the reasonable (or the cash-in-able)? This would not necessarily involve an intention to profit from the market (as in Ayache's own start-up financial company — or, indeed, any number of dealers and galleries that play the art market), but something perhaps more parasitical — or even ironic. Something that mimics the logics and workings of the financial markets (especially in terms of the production of ever more complex financial fictions). An interesting case study of an art practice that is a kind of "re-vectoring" in these terms is Goldin+Sennersby and their *Headless* novel (ghost-written by "K.D.").[4]

Another, more oblique kind of revectoring might be to think the logic of the derivative — how it folds time inside its own structure and, indeed, allows the future to condition the present — in relation to other, apparently non-financial practices. To return to the question I posed above, could certain forms of SF, for example, be thought of as operating in a similar manner to derivatives? To a certain extent the need to be readable (as in typical SF literature) restricts the possibilities (although there is certainly a case to be made that experimental SF — J.G. Ballard, Michael Moorcock and Samuel R. Delany spring to mind — can present "cuts" in time) but, in art practice, this nesting function can be taken further. Derivatives of derivatives of derivatives can be pushed beyond the sensible (and commonsensical). These kinds of "performance fictions", derived but ultimately disconnected from the world as-it-is, are constituted by a nesting function: the repetition of motifs and fragments of motifs, the construction of complex avatars from the what-is but layered so as to

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become unrecognisable (and, as such, that might point towards a different future). Just as increased processing power allows for the derivative so we might note that these kinds of practices are especially more prevalent with new — and readily available — digital imaging and editing technologies. Indeed, new technology has, it seems to me, made this fictioning function of art more apparent.

Here SF moves towards what I want to call mythotechnesis: the production of technologically enabled (and experimental) future-fictions that feedback on the real. Ultimately, financial fictions — derivatives — demonstrate a certain logic (of the nested feedback loop) that is premised on a contract between two parties and especially a dynamic hedging of bets (again, it is this that allows the exponential "growth" of the market). Mythotechnesis also operates through feedback loops and as a contract between two parties, here the strange composite figures and avatars that are produced (and that are of a future yet-to-come) are in contract with a present subjectivity that has, despite themselves, produced them — alongside other subjectivities in the here and now that hear their call to a very different kind of future.

Mythotechnesis (or case studies of practice)

I want now to present two possible "case studies" of this mythotechnesis that follow from my discussion above, but that also open up some further lines of enquiry in relation to "post-internet" art practices and how they involve a fictioning of reality that is also an instantiation of the future in the present.

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Ryan Trecartin's *CENTER JENNY*

As I suggested above, it seems to me that there might well be art practices that comment on, or intervene in, the new financial landscapes of prediction and contingency (or, indeed those that are "about" these new territories), but more interesting might be those in which a similar temporal structure (to the various instruments of the markets) is in play but instantiated in a different form. An example of this kind of mytho-technesis — a future-fiction that is, as it were, materially incarnated in the here and now — is the practice of Ryan Trecartin. Indeed, in a film like *CENTER JENNY* the future has already arrived and is operative in the present as a kind of "future shock".

In fact, Trecartin's own description of what is in

Figure 1. © Lizzie Fitch/Ryan Trecartin (2013), *Priority Innfield (Fence)*. Photo: Stuart Whipps. Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

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play in his films — in terms of their structure — could equally be a description of derivatives, especially as Jameson describes them in their singular — yet very complex — character: "as if there are proposed realities that inhabit themselves via structural collaborations and then disperse when they're no longer needed by the entities involved" (Trecartin and Kunzru 2011). For Trecartin this also means that the characters — or avatars — of his films operate in and as what he calls "an affective possibility space", in which existence is simply the "temporary state of maintaining a situation" (Trecartin and Kunzru 2011). The avatars are events that gather various temporal loops alongside certain affective vectors (might we even say, in a Deleuzian vein, "becomings"?) giving them a precarious and often minimal consistency. To quote Trecartin:

> The future and the past can be equally malleable; I don't think they go in opposite directions. Memory is more an act of memorisation than recalling: you're creating something that doesn't really exist behind you, it exists in the same place the future exists. In my videos the characters try to treat that idea as fact (Trecartin and Kunzru 2011).

As Trecartin's interlocutor (the novelist Hari Kunzru) suggests — in the interview from where the above quotes are taken — there is then an adjusting of the past from the future. Indeed, following Malik, to see time as system-specific — as cybernetic — means any time can impact on any other time. In the patchwork temporality of Trecartin's films different loops and cir-

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cuits connect and feedback on one another producing a certain compressed density (and even, at times, a compelling opacity).

Trecartin's films are digitally recorded and edited (ultimately they are "written" as code), but, in terms of the material instantiation of fiction and, indeed, the nesting function I outlined above, they also involve "real" actors in "real" locations. They are also often installed in physical gallery spaces alongside sets and other sculptural elements produced in collaboration with Trecartin's long-term creative partner Lizze Fitch.[5] In an interview with Ossian Ward ("Supplies, Situations, Spaces"), Fitch remarks that the movie sets are always 360 degrees, but also that they are built "on the computer as 3D models first". They are virtual worlds that are then materially instantiated, thus bringing a further fictioning character to the exhibitions (2014: 135). Fitch also remarks on the collaborative character of the work in which the performers (friends and other artists) contribute to the script "adlibbing and pulling in lines from all over the place" (2014: 134). The collective character seems important in the production of this different world, and especially in terms of a world that is not reducible to the expression of a single self-possessed artistic ego. Indeed, can Trecartin's work be separated from a certain collective — or scene — from which it emerges?

In general, it seems to me that one of the key interests of Trecartin's work is this virtual-actual hybridity; a layering of different fictions that can extend to the gallery space as itself a certain kind of theatrical set-up in which to enter the fiction of the films which

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then contain further nested narratives and, as Patrick Lughery remarks, "screens within screens". As another commentator, Christopher Glazek, remarks, a film like *CENTER JENNY* also blurs the lines between pre- and post-production, with the film itself depicting the production (behind the scenes as it were) of the fiction. The variety of perspectives and different cameras, and especially the use of hand-held camera, also adds to foreground the film's status as a constructed fiction. Glazek also makes one aware (in his essay "The Past is Another Los Angeles") of the very particular context of the films: the make-believe culture of that city which is itself a patchwork of different fictions and performances.

Although shown in exhibitions, the films are also digitally disseminated (Trecartin makes them freely accessible via YouTube and Vimeo channels). The work overspills the boundaries of the traditional spaces and places of art; they are precisely "post-internet" in this sense. Indeed, they have as much in common with various popular and subcultures as they do with "high" art (if this latter term has meaning still). There is then a kind of formal "enclosedness", or even a sense of self-autonomy of the films — they bring a whole world with them as it were — and yet, also, this openness to a wider connectivity beyond art. Indeed, in the future terrain that the films map out fashion and music can be as "ahead" of the curve as any art practice.

In terms of the actual content of a film like *CENTER JENNY*, it is the layering of imagery and narrative that is also compelling and that helps produce the very particular affect — a kind of amphetamine and hallu-

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cinogenic rush. The visual composition of the avatars also arises from a linguistic, or discursive complexity: "logos, products, graphic design, interfaces" (Trecartin and Kunzru 2011) that, again, in itself produces a certain density in which a name — or image — contains condensed within it the parts from which it is made (its history is written on its surface as it were). The avatars, who reflect on their own agency as images, might be thought of as compressed files, or blockchains in this sense.[6] A strange kind of fragmented digital subjectivity is at play here (characters tend to proliferate across different actors, just as individuals "play" multiple parts) but, again, with an agency, at least of a kind (a distributed one). Might we even say that Trecartin is "revealing" the fiction of a single self-present and consistent self in our digitalised and networked present?

There are also the different speeds at play in the films. The quick cuts for example (as Trecartin remarks: "every year we acclimate to a faster pace" [Trecartin and Kunzru 2011]); the acceleration and digital manipulation of the dialogue (verging, at times, on non-sense; again, one thinks of drugs); and also the way in which the films present a "here now" — or a "pure present without a past or a future", to use Jameson's phrase — not least insofar as the filming is itself "decentred": "every individual moment becomes the work's centre" (Trecartin and Kunzru 2011).

Kenneth Goldsmith has suggested in his essay "Reading Ryan Trecartin" that the dialogue of Trecartin's films (and the published scripts with their very particular typography and punctuation) hark back to modernist experiments in materialising language,

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especially figures like Gertrude Stein and James Joyce. Goldsmith also mentions Burroughs and it seems clear that the cut-up is an important precursor, with its breaking of typical sentence structure and linear causality — albeit not completely. In both Burroughs and Trecartin a minimum consistency of sense is maintained, but the particular play with language and syntax certainly presents a different world or space-time.

In fact, it seems to me that in Trecartin's films this formal experimentation is key — or, at least, that form is as much the content as content is form (in the same way in which Jameson describes the formal aspects of *Remainder* as its content). As Trecartin himself puts it: "the way something is contained in a frame is just as valuable as the content inside" (Trecartin and Kunzru 2011). It is not just the offering up of a future fiction (a particular utopia or dystopia) that makes the films so compelling and, indeed, affective, in this sense, but the way in which this is presented in a very particular mode of fictioning. Indeed, it seems to me that the films are less "about", or, indeed, predictive of, a given future than involved in actively writing a version of it.

Jacolby Satterwhite's *Reifying Desire*

What might the new landscape of derivatives "look" like (beyond the abstract shimmering differential network I mentioned in the first half of this essay)? Jacolby Satterwhite's films give us one imaginative take on this future-in-the-present insofar as the digital animation he uses offers an "unlimited terrain of visual possibilities" (Kreutler 2014). Indeed, as with derivatives, the different space-times of Satterwhite's

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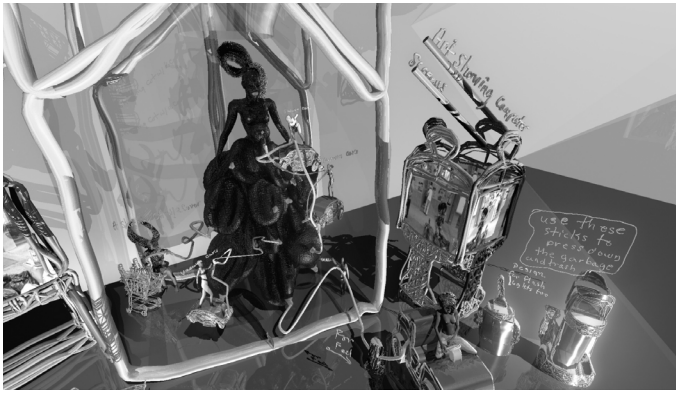

Figure 2. Jacolby Satterwhite (2013), still from *Reifying Desire 6*. Courtesy of the artist and Moran Bondaroff, Los Angeles.

films depend on the increasing power and speed of data processing in order to map out and give "realism" to these worlds that double our own. But Satterwhite's films also introduce a difference into this post-digital landscape. They are not critical, at least, as this is typically figured on the Left (indeed, they operate in very much a post-critical space), but in their layered complexity and especially their deployment of more "human" aspects alongside the technological, they offer something different from the pre-emptive marketing of machine algorithms.

It is worth noting Satterwhite's own personal history here; his early experiences with gaming, watching music videos and writing code for websites (including those selling pornography). Satterwhite is of a generation as equally at home in these forms of digital culture as in any reality outside the screen (although his films also reference "real" spaces such as club cul-

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ture). In the series *Reifying Desire*, Satterwhite presents libidinally charged scenarios that portray a queer sexuality alongside other more inhuman encounters and connections (for example an abstract and machinic immaculate conception scene in *Reifying Desire 3*). In an interview with Evan Moffit for *Frieze* magazine, Satterwhite draws attention to the impact AIDS (and the practice of "barebacking") had on his work, but also references other key archives such as Outsider Art (and there is something about the sometimes cramped — and chaotic — spaces in the films that looks to the latter).

Satterwhite has also suggested in another previous interview with Charlie Ross (in relation to his involvement in the 2014 Whitney Biennale) that his films are about bringing disparate archives into conjunction and thus making differences congruent. A combinatory logic is in play here — not unlike that found in some experiments in 3D printing — that produces complex additive images which themselves militate against the increasing standardisation of subjectivity of web 2.0. This is then not a refusal of our automated reality — there is no nostalgia for the real in Satterwhite's work — but a working through of our relationship to technology and an exploration of what forms this relationship could take. Here, we might say, alienation is method and the poetry comes from the code.

Reifying Desire then presents different spaces and places inhabited by complex avatars with various prostheses themselves single and multiplied. All these dreamscapes and figures are of different scales and/or change scales and move at different speeds, like

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a digital *Alice in Wonderland* or a destabilised *Second Life*. This visual complexity is accompanied by electronic music, produced by collaborators, and which, in its sampled texture, doubles the imagery. Later in the *Reifying Desire* series there is a further layering of imagery and an acceleration of action that produces a hallucinogenic rush (the drug references — like the dream ones — are inescapable). Streams of chains, threads and beads are projected from different avatars and link together various objects; some of the imagery in *Reifying Desire 5*, for example, is not unlike recent scientific imagery of cell/molecular combination. In terms of derivatives (and Meillassoux's thesis of the radical contingency of the future), the films are not exactly predicting what's to come, but actively writing it — presenting, it seems to me, different audio/visual propositions.

If derivatives, alongside other instruments such as risk assessment, are involved in modelling a future that *might* come about (rather than attempting to predict it accurately, which, of course, would mean the end of any speculative nesting of fictions) then rather than suggesting that an art practice might follow the logic of the derivative, could we not say that the derivative follows the logic of art insofar as art is the presentation of a possible world? These fictions — or models — are not to be thought as representational, they are not near or far approximations of the real, but rather exist alongside the real, as it were. In fact, we might go further here and suggest that the real only "exists" insofar as it is can be modelled.

Satterwhite's films are also involved in developing

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a new kind of language, one in which objects become subjects just as subjects become objects (there is a kind of generalised digital animism at play). He has also referred to Gertrude Stein in relation to his work, suggesting that the use of his own body in his films operates as a punctuation mark (Satterwhite and Moffit 2016). In fact, it seems to me that it is also the cut-up, and, earlier, the tradition of collage that inform the logic of the films. The figures, objects — and links — construct a strange non-linear syntax of sorts, one that is then overlaid with Satterwhite's own digitally rendered handwriting which then adds a further level of visual and semiotic complexity.

Crucially, then Satterwhite greenscreens his body, performing dance moves (or "vogueing"), into these digital landscapes. He has stated that it was the desire to both construct spaces in which he could perform, and to actualise the kind of space of his earlier paintings, that precipitated his turn to animation. As with Trecartin, the films involve a certain experimental hybridity of the "live" (or actual) and the digital (or virtual). In *Reifying Desire 2*, Satterwhite also uses real landscapes — coast and forest, for example — that then have digital animation "spliced" into them. Later, in *Reifying Desire 5*, Satterwhite performs in more public places — various sites in New York City for example — footage of which, again, is then spliced with digital animation or otherwise manipulated. In terms of the utilisation of his own drawings and handwriting we might also say there is a further hybridity between the analogue (or low-tech) and the digital (or high-tech).

Other binaries are also disrupted and played with

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in the *Reifying Desire* series: the machine/body (where Satterwhite becomes cyborg), but also masculine/feminine and black/white. Although the films are concerned with the male — and queer — Black body, there is a sense in which Satterwhite's worlds, with their morphing bodies and strange conjunctions, gesture towards both a post-race and, indeed, post-gender world. Again, it is as if different future possibilities are being played out. This is no longer an artist who is immune to the play of differences he writes; rather the artist is themself subject to this play of differences, "taking on" on the different positions and propositions. Satterwhite's films explore these other — synthetic — forms of life, whilst also providing some of the images and narratives appropriate to them.

A further key binary is that between the private and the public. As well as the use of his own body Satterwhite's films involve the deployment of a personal and intimate mythos imbricated with images and effects that are enabled by new technology. For example, in an earlier film, *Country Ball*, Satterwhite "overwrites" images of him and his family dancing at a gathering (sourced from a VHS home video), at one point turning the whole scene into a digital flag that a dancing avatar (based on himself) waves. There is a folding of one fiction within another, but also this looping connection to different times. Here the past, in the form of Satterwhite's videoed memories, connects to a future in which he has become a digital image. It is the technology that allows this flattening of time insofar as it enables the manipulation of the visual and aural (again, Burroughs and his experiments with both tape

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and video recorders would seem a key precursor here).

Also at play here is his mother's own mythos and lexicon of drawings/diagrams (often of everyday objects) — future patent possibilities as she saw them — and the recordings she made of herself singing. The latter, mixed in with various types of electronic music, resulted in the sonic fiction *Birds in Paradise*. The diagrams, re-drawn and animated, are incorporated within Satterwhite's own imagery, to produce a further difference. Although abstract there is then a kind of narrative, or series of overlapping narratives, at play, themselves produced by a number of disparate elements. In interview Satterwhite suggests that both his turn to his own memories and the use of his own body was a way of sidestepping typical art-historical references and Western art ideologies — dominant myths — with their particular portrayal of Black subjectivity. In fact, *Reifying Desire 3* involves a kind of commentary on this: as well as anything else it is a fiction about the Black prostitutes in Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*) (Satterwhite and Ross 2014).

Although I have been attending to the logic of financial instruments in this article, we might also look elsewhere for a logic of fictioning the future, for example with the Cybernetic culture research unit's concept of "hyperstition" (defined as an "element of effective culture that makes itself real" and a "fictional quantity functional as a time-traveling device") (Cybernetic culture research unit); or, indeed, Sun Ra's concept (and practice) of myth-science. In fact, Satterwhite's multimedia audio-visuals have much in common with Sun Ra's future-past archives and "sonic fictions" (as

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Kodwo Eshun calls them). With Satterwhite, it seems to me, we have a kind of "updating" of myth-science, especially in the deployment of new narratives and image worlds for "post-internet" subjectivities that do not necessarily recognise themselves in more dominant narratives. As with Sun Ra, technology is re-purposed for other ends, though here it is cyberspace rather than outer space that provides the alternative setting. Ultimately it is this that the logic of financial instruments does not attend to: the need for new images and stories about our relation to the future and the past, to technology and the non-human, but also to each other. In these complex works of libidinal engineering by artists like Satterwhite and Trecartin we move beyond any simple critique — or, indeed, refusal — of the technological (as in certain forms of critical theory), but there is also not a simple affirmation of the predictions of capitalist axiomatics (as in certain forms of "accelerationist" thinking). Indeed, in this working through in the present of what's to come, and especially what forms human-machine relations might take, it seems to me that fiction — or what I would call fictioning — is crucial.

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1. Shaviro follows the important work of Kodwo Eshun in this area and especially his article "Further Considerations of Afrofuturism", which attends to a situation in which "power operates predictively" through the "envisioning, management, and delivery of reliable futures" (Eshun 2003: 289). For Eshun this signals the end of the "utopian project for imagining social realities" and, instead, SF becomes concerned "with engineering feedback between its preferred future and its becoming present" (Eshun 2003: 290).
2. See: http://www.robinhoodcoop.org/DEMOCRATIZING_THE_POWER_OF_FINANCE; accessed 2 February 2016.
3. See the exhibition (and accompanying catalogue) *HFT: The Gardener*, Annely Juda Fine Art, London, 22 September–29 October 2016.
4. See http://www.goldinsenneby.com/gs/?page_id=3; accessed 2 February 2016.
5. See, for example, the exhibition *Priority Infield* (and book/catalogue of same name), Zabludowicz Collection, London, 2 October-21 December 2014. The installation of the films as a series of different "levels" harks back, it seems to me, to Matthew Barney's own *Cremaster* film series — indeed, in both, the fiction is created and sustained through a series of chapters (precisely, a sequencing); as we shall see the same is the case for Satterwhite's *Reifying Desire* film series.
6. Thanks to David Burrows for this point, and for conversations about Trecartin and mythotechnesis more generally.

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