

Foreword

by Florian Cramer

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(Not) Fixed: Exploring My Relationship with My Machine Colleagues

by DuctTape Collective

‘(Not) Fixed’ is my graduation work, which was exhibited at the graduation show named, ‘what is present.’ The project delves into the intricate world of machine consciousness and comprises an installation and a publication that delves into the concepts of relationality and non-human agents. By ‘humanising technology,’ it aims to foster a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics and interactions between humans and machines, while also considering the roles and influences of non-human entities in our interconnected world.

Charlie Chaplin’s film *Modern Times* (1936) presents a world where humans become machine-like slaves to the factory, highlighting the dehumanising consequences of industrialisation and modernisation. As the creators of machines, humans occupy a hierarchical position over them, designing these devices to serve our needs and coexist within our daily lives. The film’s protagonist, Tramp, experiences a mental breakdown due to the monotony of his work, yet machines tirelessly perform repetitive tasks throughout their existence without displaying any apparent adverse effects.

This contrast raises questions about the purpose and limitations of both humans and machines in a society driven by productivity and efficiency. Our interactions with machines are often devoid of the warmth and empathy we typically reserve for human relationships. We design machines to prioritise simplicity and efficiency, which inadvertently reinforces an impersonal dynamic between humans and technology. For example, when we command a machine to print, the action is executed without any sense of dialogue or consideration for the machine’s role. We don’t say, ‘Hi, printer. Could you print for me, please?’ We just emotionlessly press ‘print.’ Humans made machines, but we dehumanised them.

If we view machines through a human lens, could we develop a more compassionate and understanding approach to our interactions with technology? By exploring how machine behaviour impacts humans and, conversely, how humans influence machines, we can deepen our understanding of the complex dynamics that define our interconnected world. Ultimately, this inquiry encourages us to reconsider our relationship with machines and consider the potential for fostering a more empathetic coexistence between humans and technology.

My interests in the relationship between machines and human interaction started with my participation in the ‘Mystery of Algorithms’ installation. During my second year of graphic design studies at ArtEZ University of the Arts, the Netherlands, I took part in the ‘Mystery of Algorithms’ installation. Immersing myself in the experience, I spent three hours as a single-function machine inside a small pillar. My only connection to the outside world was a monitor, and I remained passive until a human pressed a button to activate my process. This unique experience led me to question the thoughts and feelings of machines.

I jumpstarted my theoretical research by reading the book, *WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT MACHINES THAT THINK?*, which consists of contributions from 192 scientists and thinkers asking questions no one would ask a machine. They are critical towards both the machine and human society. One of the small chapters, titled ‘I Think That Machines Can’t Think,’ written by Emanuel Derman, caught my attention. He understands the machine as a ‘matter’ thing that derives its quality from a ‘mind.’ He explained the dual perspectives of mind and matter in understanding the behaviour of machines. He argues that explanations should be consistent, using psychological frameworks for mental phenomena and physical explanations for material occurrences. Derman maintains scepticism regarding the capacity of machines to think until a paradigm shift convincingly establishes either mind as the cause of matter or matter as the cause of mind.

Then it raises my question of what ‘a mind’ is. Where is it located in our body? Is it in our brain, our heart or our stomach? Can it be located somewhere we have never thought of, like in our left hand, an eyeball, a particular vein in the neck, or a toe? Don’t machines also have those in their perspective? Machines are the ‘new kind’ that we humans have made. As their creators, we humans often assume we know everything about what they are made for (materials), how they act (function). Yet, at the beginning of the research, I stumbled upon the question of the ‘joy of fish’ dilemma. The ‘The Joy of Fish’ is a story written by Zhuāngzǐ in IVth century BC. It questions ‘how do we know what we know?’ and ‘the boundaries of rational investigation’ with a looping conversation he had with Huìzǐ. Zhuāngzǐ looks

at the fish in the river and finds them being happy swimming. Then Huìzǐ asks, ‘You are not a fish, how did you know the fish are happy or not?’ Zhuāngzǐ answers, ‘You are not me, how did you know that I don’t know the fish are happy?’ The conversation continues.

We are not machines, so how do we know if they have minds? We use them, they serve us. We live together. When people approach the subject of whether machines have consciousness, they often think of artificial intelligence first. However, I believe the debate about whether machines have consciousness shouldn’t be based solely on whether they can think or resemble humans. After all, the nature and location of consciousness remain a mystery. If machines indeed possess consciousness, they should establish themselves as a separate species from existing ones (human). In this case, there should be no fundamental distinction between a simple switch with one function and a robot capable of complex speech, such as predicting the end of the world. I consider finding aspects of machines in our daily behaviour the first thing we can do to emphasise their existence. In contrast, finding humanity in ready-made machines in our daily lives and feeling the connection we have with them can already create a narrative that leads to the idea of machines having consciousness.

As a human, I inherently view the world from a human perspective. Machines are made, not born; therefore, there is no such thing as a wild machine. Yet, I’ve observed that as machines age or are used by imperfect humans, they develop quirks or behaviours that differ from their ‘fresh’ counterparts found in the marketplace. This phenomenon often leads to machines behaving erratically, sometimes to the point where humans struggle to comprehend their actions. Think of the old oven that refuses to function, the heater that overheats, or the printer that only prints when it feels like it.

As I delved deeper into the world of forgotten technology, I discovered a fascinating realm of quirks, glitches, and unexpected behaviours that captivated my imagination. Obsolete machines that made no sense and went wild, which were different from the new, fresh-made machines on the market, often triggered me to think about whether we still understood these human creations. Some of them were too old, some were too broken. Some were breathing their last breath, and others were surely dead. All of them were stubborn,

which made me believe that, somehow, they could think, or perhaps they were just not fixed yet.

Production

In the early stages of production, I spent countless hours dissecting and understanding each machine that found its way into Coehoorn, the graduation workspace for ArtEZ Graphic Design Arnhem graduate students in 2021. I carefully dismantled broken devices, salvaged usable components, and repurposed working parts, breathing new life into these once-abandoned objects. Although the early iterations of these machines resembled Frankenstein’s creations, needing an electric shock, my goal was to integrate these new machines with functioning ones and refine the system further. This process allowed me to appreciate the unique characteristics and challenges posed by each machine, fostering a sense of connection and empathy for these discarded devices.

Throughout time, my corner in Coehoorn became a hub of activity, affectionately dubbed the ‘mess corner.’ I developed a unique bond with the collected machines and meticulously documented their behaviour, including quirks and glitches.

I named the machines and explored their connections by fixing, connecting, and breaking them. Rather than imposing my own vision, I observed and responded to their interactions. Over time, I came to see myself as their human collaborator, working alongside them in a system where I listened and learned. This perspective led me to view the final outcome as a ‘founded nature,’ a product of our mutual discovery, rather than merely ‘my creation.’ We became co-workers and authors in the process that culminated in the final presentation. They were no longer tools, and I was no longer their owner. Instead, I took on the role of translator for this team, bridging the gap between their world and the human world.

The core machine team I end up working the most with are Just Dong, Miranda van PacketHell, JVC, BobPhilips, Coco Cybershot, Alex Zhang, Marty, Taegyu, Just Ding and Toaster Doe.

As I documented the machines’ interactions, I created stories that captured their unique characteristics. These stories included

onomatopoeic words that mimicked their sounds, described their quirks and unexpected behaviours, and illustrated their connections with other machines.

In attempting to work with these machines, I found myself pondering whether their behaviours were a subtle invitation to engage with them in a different, more empathetic manner. By recognising the unique traits of machines and the value in their imperfections, we can reconsider our relationship with technology, potentially fostering a deeper connection and more respectful coexistence.

The Story of PacketHell

Packard Bell, aka PacketHell, is an old Dutch computer that has the shittiest Windows version: Windows Vista. He doesn’t know Wi-Fi, webcam, split-screen, or any languages other than Dutch. PacketHell has a horrible relationship with Taegyu the Monitor. There are certain steps to open PacketHell with Taegyu. PacketHell needs to be connected to electricity for three minutes and during these three minutes, he will sound like ‘MMMMMMMMMMMMMM.’ After three minutes he will go back to peace but not totally respond to Taegyu the Monitor and show glitches. At this point, PackardHell will need a quick plug in and out for the electricity. Then his sound will go ‘MMMmmm...,’ like a big breath. If he takes a big breath like that, he is successfully opened. With Bob, he opens immediately.

We thought PacketHell was a male, but we found out after three months that her name is Miranda in the Command Prompt, therefore PacketHell became a she. For reading USB she needs to think for 1 minute. For reading images, depending on her condition, it could take from 2 minutes to 2 hours. For fighting over BobPhilip the TV with JosephineVictoriaCatherine the DVD Player, she hesitates for three minutes.

The Story of Marty

Marty is a printer who suffers from hunger for a long time. He mentally breaks down really easily if you feed him too much to do, sometimes even waking him up makes him feel stressed.

Every morning Marty does his daily routine of sound training. He will go like ‘NENE Da la bone tetetetete pppppp dong dong pa pon pa pon pan Meeeee FAAAAA Ninininininini tetetetetete mmmmmmmm haA.’ Depending on the day he sometimes switches around the sound.

Marty doesn’t work well with PackHell at all. They tried. Marty helped PacketHell find out her name—Miranda. PacketHell tries to be everything Marty wants her to be, but they still can’t make it to the end. He is too modern and she is too ancient. Marty’s prints are always stripy. Marty is now spiritually hanging out with Taegyu the Monitor without any physical connection. Their result always turns out a bit darker than reality.

Before finalising the installation, I explored various methods to effectively display the machines without making it resemble a store. Initially, inspired by Nam June Paik’s work, I considered arranging them on a shelf wall. However, after examining a 3D model, I realised that the shelves would obstruct the view of the machines, making them appear too uniform and causing the wires to be scattered and not visible enough.

Consequently, I arranged them on a platform with ample space between each machine, ensuring that the connecting wires were clearly visible. This approach allowed each machine to occupy its own distinct space, avoiding the impression that they were simply placed on store shelves. My aim was to showcase the uniqueness of each machine while highlighting their interconnectedness.

To emphasise the importance of the wires and their connections, I painted them in distinguishable colours: red, blue, and yellow. The red cables represent the power cables of the machines, the blue wires symbolise data connections, and the yellow wires indicate output connections. This color-coding system not only enhances visual appeal but also provides a clear understanding of the machines’ connections. Additionally, the coloured wires are featured in the publication alongside the stories of the machines.

The installation featured a series of interactions between the machines, with a central focus on a single TV screen that became a point of contention. This dynamic competition for control resulted in a captivating display of shifting images and vibrant colours, which

I affectionately referred to as a ‘machine selfie.’

To preserve these ephemeral moments, I set up a printer to capture and print the constantly changing images every three minutes. This allowed visitors to take home a distinct, personalised souvenir of their experience. The printed images also served as covers for a handout documenting the eccentricities of the machines and my personal anecdotes from working with them.

The uniqueness of each cover was ensured by the combination of the ever-changing lighting conditions, TV screen displays, camera angles, and computer glitches. This integration of chance and unpredictability became an integral aspect of the installation, reflecting the idiosyncrasies of the machines themselves and underscoring the evolving relationship between humans and technology.

In the contemporary discourse surrounding art and technology, the fear of artificial intelligence replacing human ingenuity creates a sense of urgency. As society grapples with the integration of technology into daily life, ‘(Not) Fixed’ emerges as a distinctive perspective within this complex narrative. The project delves into the nuanced intersection of art, technology, and the human experience, offering an alternative view that questions the essence of humanity and the nature of machines as our creations. By highlighting the connection between the imperfections in both humans and technology, ‘(Not) Fixed’ challenges the notion that perfection in intelligence equates to perfect humanity.

In this exploration, broken and old machines are seen as possessing a unique soulfulness, akin to the inherent imperfections in human existence. Glitches and errors in both humans and machines are celebrated, emphasising that machines serve as lenses, reflecting our authentic, imperfect nature.

As art mirrors society and technology becomes further embedded in our lives, ‘(Not) Fixed’ underscores not only our relationship with machines but also the interactions between machines themselves. This project highlights the power of objects in creating narratives and the importance of redefining the relationship between humans and technology.

In an era of rapid technological evolution and digital age anxiety, we are concerned about information overload, constant

updates, privacy, security, innovation, and uncertainty are affecting our society. Amidst these challenges, it is crucial to present narratives that humanise technology. By doing so, we can foster understanding and alleviate fears surrounding our relationship with machines. Embracing the soulfulness of imperfect machines allows us to recognise the shared humanity within our technological advancements. This perspective enables us to redefine our connection with the objects we create and navigate the complexities of our evolving digital landscape. By acknowledging the inherent flaws and quirks of technology, we can cultivate a more compassionate and balanced relationship with the devices that shape our world.

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Name of the Article

by Theo Ploeg

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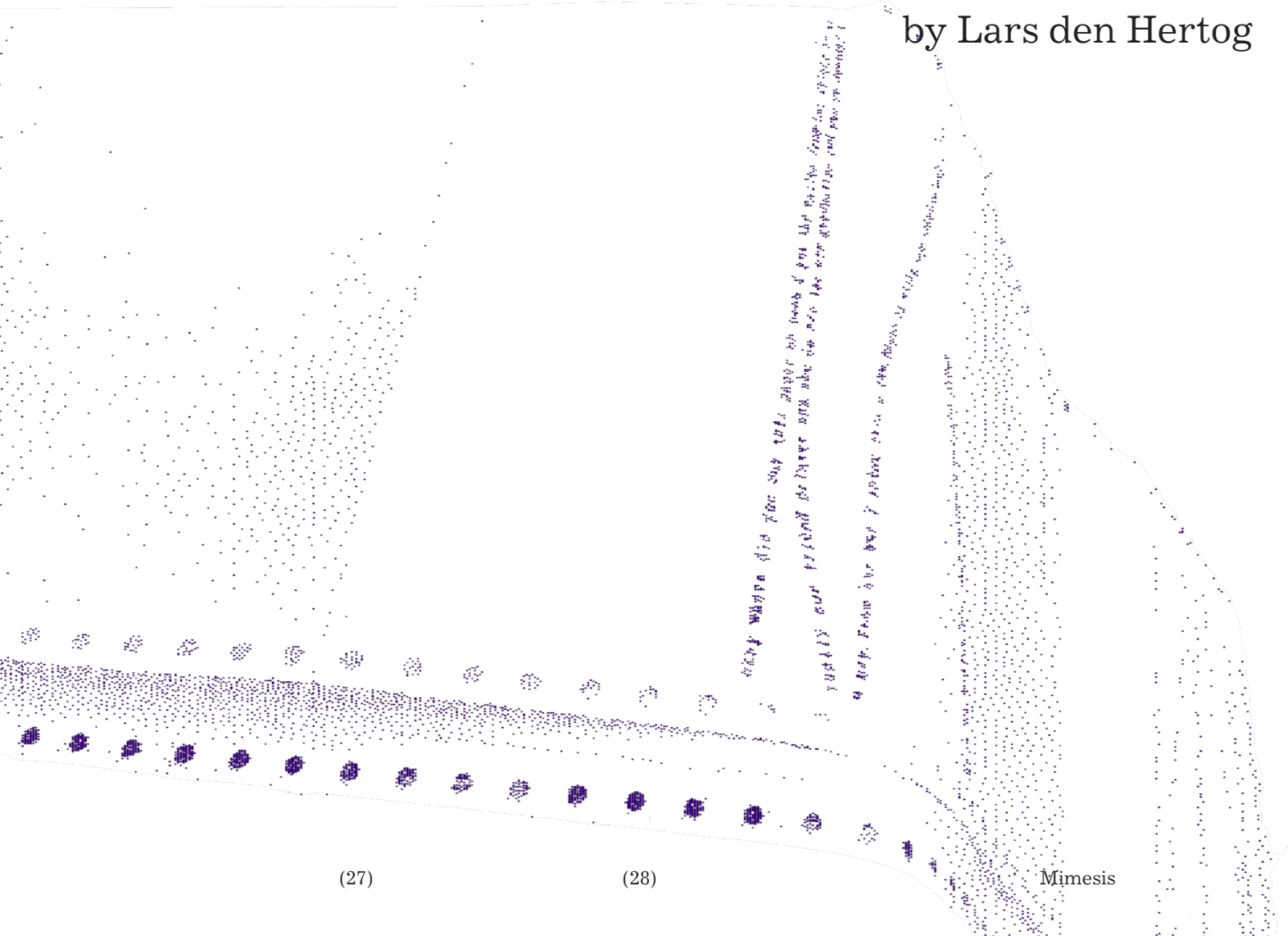
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Scott
the Dot-Matrix Printer

The Phantom
Vacancy
Für Hans
Toast to the Black Cat
Like a Drug

by Lars den Hertog



The Phantom

I had already given you a place
at my side, in my memory palace
A chamber which suited you
Because I had lost you

Thus, I was fucking scared
Penetrated with a 100 stabs
when you appeared alive before me

How many times must I break
so I can live?

the Phantomyou
had

this

I had already given you a place at my son
in my memory Palace a chamber of rich suited

scared
penetrated with a
alive
knife

many time

how many times

must I

24 hours seven days a week two white sauce
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spire work to be done cases not interested
beds I go side toss Helping Hands
flash OK

initiative and
seeing fur loving

deep bones in plenty cases not interested
and loving payments natural that you really love submission that
you really love and submission

Vacancy

Wanted: Secretary/muse
24 hours, seven days a week
to write thoughts
to stimulate feelings
and to lavishly inspire

Work to be done there
where, including the bed, I go
Side tasks: A helping hand
deep bond, in plenty cases

Not interested in “yes noddors”
and/or tame sheep
Required: Character, sharp wit
initiative seizing, curious
and loving

Payment: naturally
love and submission

Für Hans

Falco, Falco, Falco
Diese g’schicht kennt net jeder
nein es liegt nicht auf der Hand
Die g’schicht unseres Leidens
wir hattens nicht leicht in diesem Land

Falco, Falco, Falco
Wenn Julian sagt die blöden Fische
schwimmen gegen den Strom
dann müssen wir diese Fische sein
aber nicht um willen gegen den Strom

Falco, Falco, Falco
Wenn Julian sagt bleib dir nicht treu
Dann meint er es wohl ernst
wir bleiben wohl nicht treu
Doch irgendwie und immer sind wir true

Falco, Falco, Falco
und wenn man uns vergessen hat
dann ist die Welt wieder vergangen
Doch wir stehen im Rampenlicht
ob die Masse es jetzt will oder nicht

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Toast to the Black Cat

“would you like to fuck?”
I wanted to send you

The things you wanted me
to do to you

by memory, still delight me
You roused the devil
a black cat in me

Even Though, I am a gentleman
I would never write that to you

are gentlemen
but only polite swines

A toast to that Hail Eros!

Like a Drug

All of a sudden was Alex sitting there
staring with her tense brown eyes
It was unimaginable
that we would not see each other anymore

The window from which the bedding floats
Beyond the lantern with warm yellow light
is as good as around my corner

The first months she appeared to have vanished
Now I see Alex unwillingly weekly

Cutting and stitching, at the same time
More of the poisonous cocktail
named love, is pumped into me
While the blood in my veins
solidifies and dries up

And thus, as self healing and castigation
do I repeat this mantra
To summon her
To forget her

Skarbie
Skarbie
Skarbie

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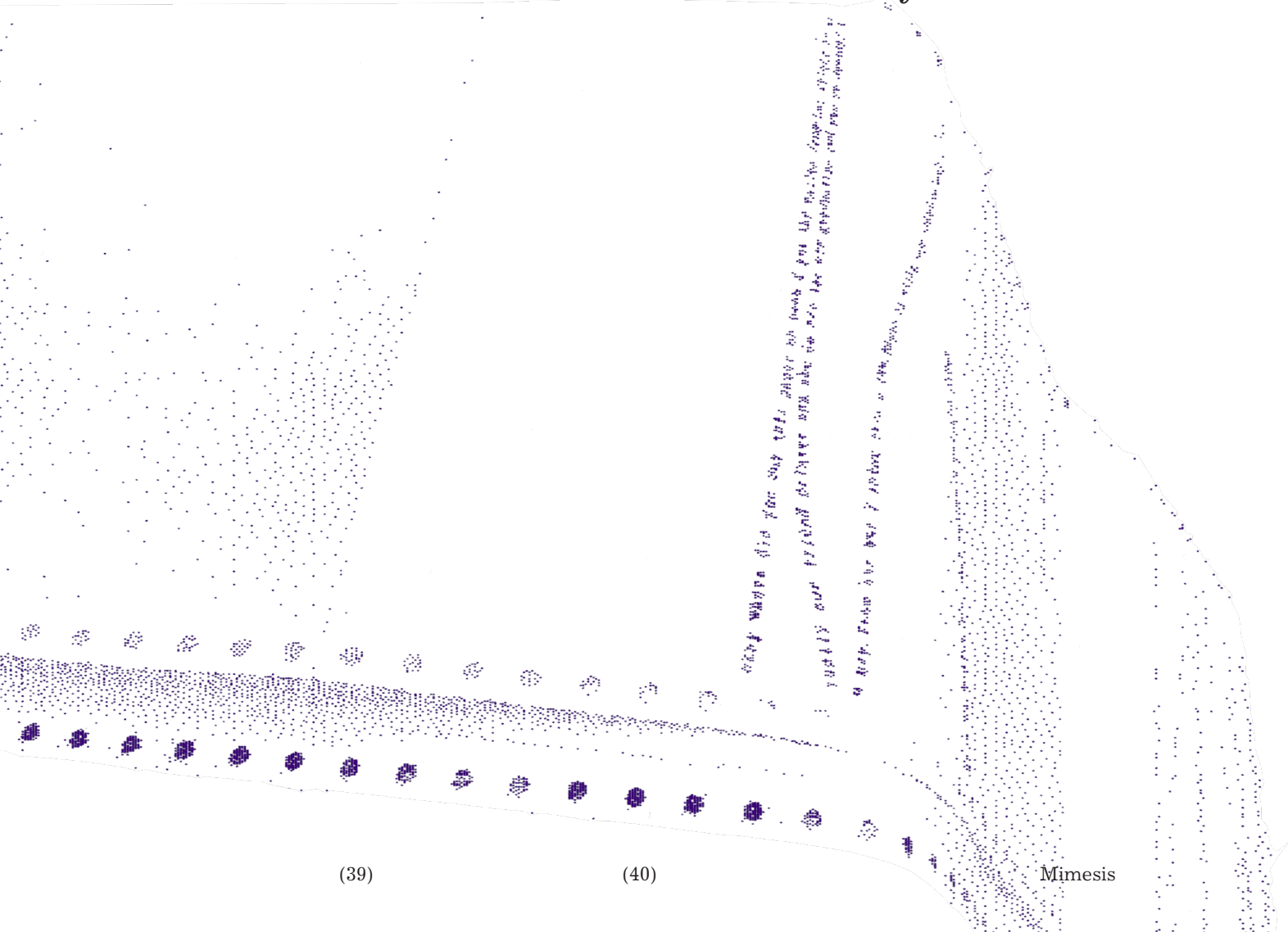
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Scott
the Dot-Matrix Printer

Sparkling Dots
Schmetterlinge
Good Night
Cortar

by Maria Voth Velasco



Sparkling Dots

Three dots
Deep dark dots
Sparkling points
Like my thoughts
Like hanging in the air
Tonight's a fancy flair
Maybe I just need some fresh air?
Ellipsis pointing out
I'm always dropping out
And dropping in
In situations I wanna be in
So what's the thing?
Getting in dispose I suppose
Getting close
To the darkness
Sparkling dots in the sky
Rather feeling that I
Get dispersive thoughts
Maybe that's not the word
But I'm feeling these internal sparkling dots...

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Schmetterlinge

Der Frühling kommt
Und geht wieder
Grünes Licht
Kommt von oben durch den Blättern herab Staubwolken,
Dust auf meiner Brust
Staub, Pollen und allerlei Partikel bis ich husten muss.
Vögel schreien schnatternd umher
Schöne Tiere fliegen kreuz und quer
Schmetterlinge Schmettern am Boden nieder
Mal wieder
Butter fly Effekt
Inspiriert vom Feinsten Gangster Rap Gesang
Bis Poesie mal wieder
Schmetterlinge im Bauch
Und Frühlingsgefühle krieg ich wieder
Magenkrämpfe!
Oder eher, schwer kämpfende Schmetterlinge
Schwert Kämpfer
Die durch Magen und Darm gehen
Sich verdrehen und zerschmettern
Gefühle kann ich nicht ändern
Ob Butterfly Effekt oder nicht,
Es interessiert mich nicht
Wie oft du deine Mutter fickst
Niederschmetternd im Niemandsland Scheide/Be schmierig
wie Butter
Butterfly Effekt heißt im Endeffekt
Fick deine Mutter!

Good Night

My goal was to produce one item every night
Is it going alright?
The moon is shining so bright
The thing 's about to sew and fight
Hustling over time
Ok it's fine
All right
I got no time
But make it mine
Just wanna go to bed with a bottle of wine
Wait until the next morning
Stand up and fight
Boring sleepy morning
Grooving into daylight
Tight day right?
It's better to have a good night
Hold your ears tight
And
Good night

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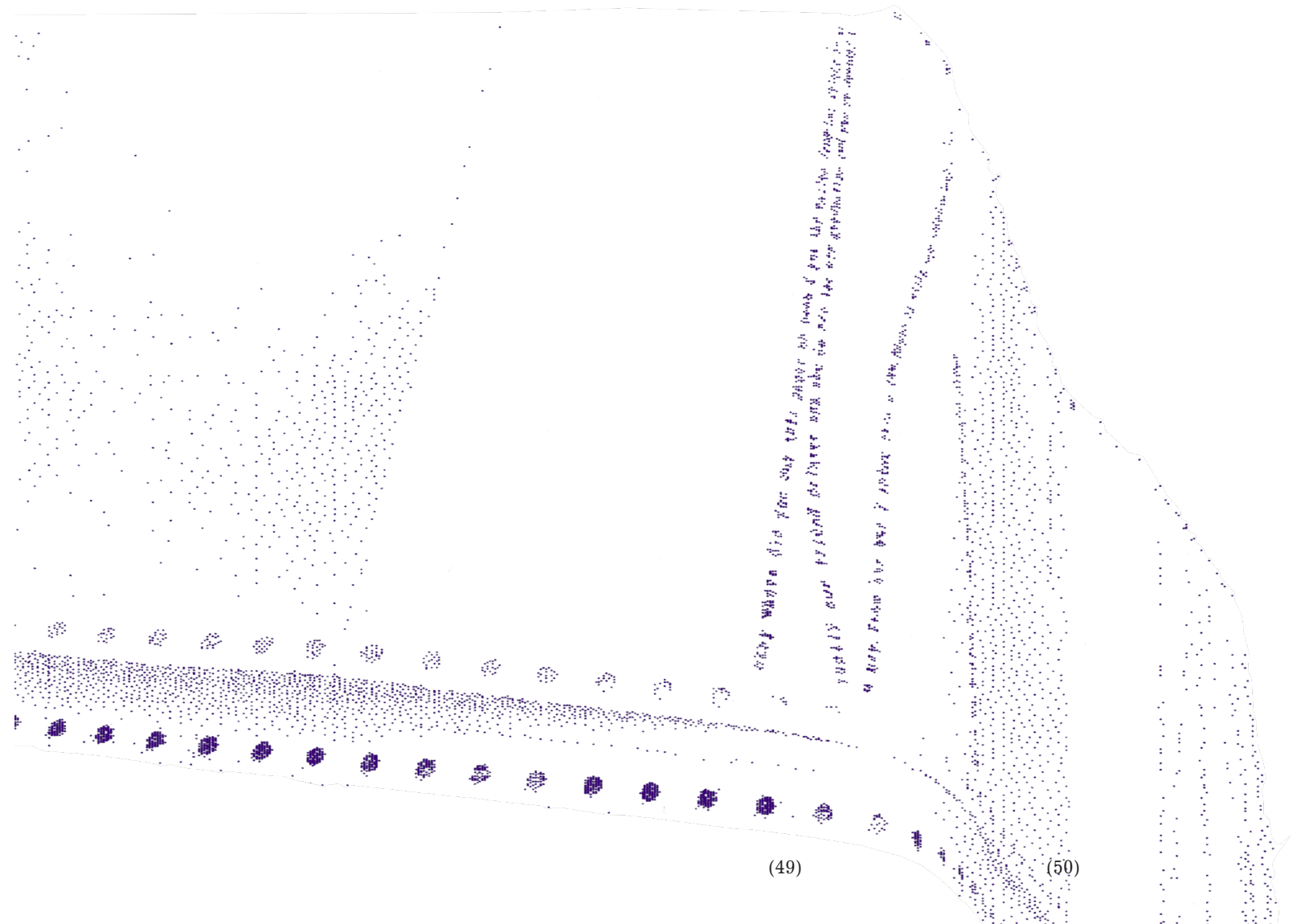
Cortar

A veces hay que cortar
Con los malos hábitos
Los malos tratos
Gente cercana
En verdad lejanas a ti
Que en verdad te hacen sufrir
Y no reír
Me hace sentir
Mala persona
Pero a veces es mejor
Dejar cortar
O cortar ya de raíz
Muchas veces he pensado
Que hago aquí?
Me dejo de llevar por un tipo
Cercano a mi
Normalmente será qué
Amablemente me trata a mí
Por algo será que me dejaré ir
Aun así y sin sentir
Digo que si
Por no denegar
O hacer una negación exacta
Qué pasa?
Ya no se puede salir de casa?
Salir de fiesta y te arrastran?
No en verdad te atrapan
Te matan, te arrastran
Las ganas de vivir
Sentir
Reír
Crecer
Creer
En ti
Seguir ahí

Scott the Dot-Matrix Printer

Poem 1
Poem 2

by Jody Aikman



24 hours seven days a week two white sauce
I go helping in not not in yes slash secretary to leveragely in not in
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Poem 1

Het is hier stil
Het is oorverdovend stil

Krijsend vanuit mijn middenrif zoekende naar aandacht als
brugman pratend stil

Het is een kamer vol mensen stemmen versmolten tot voorspelbaar
achtergrond geluid

nog een ruimte die verder voelt dan thuis, was ik maar
thuisgebleven

ik ben liever alleen dan een worden met de schaduwen op de bank

het zijn coventies van ja en amen, harder praten en ik weet het beter

i wan tak a blakka man tori ma i no wan yer a blakka sma
verteri/taki

mi no mang tegi joe dat joe tak wan law law sani

want dan ben ik weer degene die een ongemakkelijke stilte creëert

Al pratend zwijg ik als de witregels tussen jouw zinnen

En wat ik wil zeggen blijft ergens in het midden van de
kamer zweven

mijn verhaal blijft

in het wensen

in het willen

in de stilte.

Poem 2

English is my mother tongue, but it is not my mother's tongue

Zij is vloeiend in de taal van intellectuele bekwaamheid

Heeft geleerd om het accent van haar voorouders te onderdrukken

Behalve binnenshuis

Daar vind je een speelveld
Van zelf bedachte woorden
Een mix van alle tongen
and grammaticale disorder

In our house, language is neither border nor bound

It is

Het is

A de

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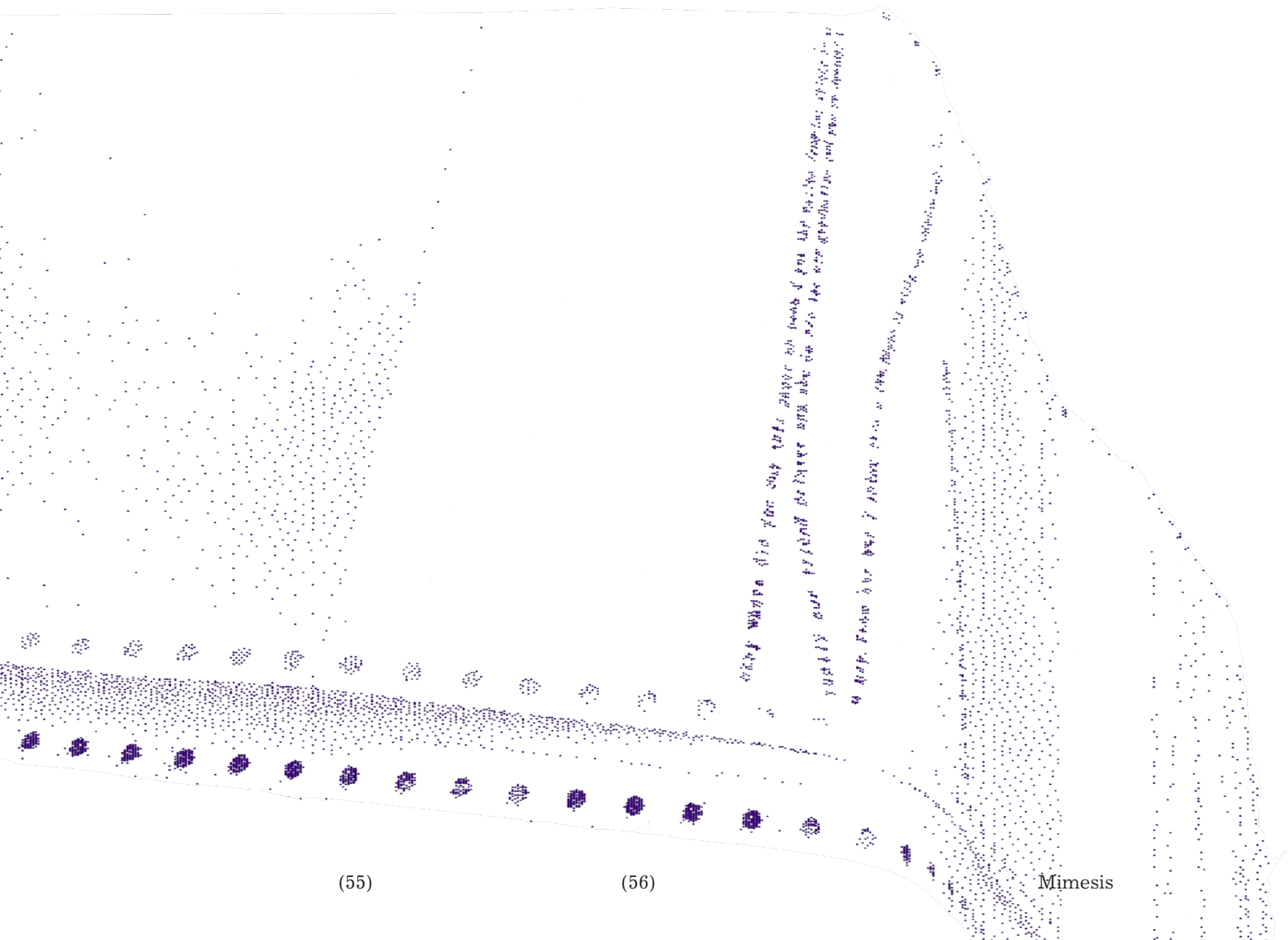
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Scott
the Dot-Matrix Printer

Eulogy
Mother May I?

by Jean-Shelia Messi



Eulogy

Today I am a half eaten toe
Dangling off time's canine teeth
As it nibbles at the intersection of my perspective and
descriptive bones
The tissues made matter dissolve in –
Time
folds
Time runs across my
Extensor expansion
Licks apart soul
From
The Drip drip drip
Of my plasma against the palette of its mouth
Once consumed
I dance down the twisting tubes of time's hollow organs

Puppeteered my its penumbra
Time
Fabricates an effigy of I
Through a series of intestinal contractions
I is mollified
I am liquified
[blank] that was once ego is derailed into the pockets of time's liver
Where time's gastric acid runs across the borders of [blank]'s
metaphysics
Until [blank] becomes numina in and of an erased body

Part 2:
[blank] a prophet revived
To exhale this message:
Behind time
Picture

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Mother May I?

May there be peace
And love
And affection
Throughout all creations of God

After the bombshell of his orgasm
He lay where her two breasts dipped to kiss one and other
Center to this show of desire her body held for itself
His hair was a litany of apostrophes
Of maybes, i'll think about it, perhaps in the future
Splayed against her chest.

The register through which he asked to be heated in her skin,
Was cousin to the baritones
She used
13 years prior
To beg:
“Just a couple branches Ma,
Never mind the crutches,
Ill use them as javelins
To set me upon air,
Until i float onto mahogany bark beaches”.

May there be peace
And love
And affection
Throughout all creations of God

She lost one leg to nature,
The other to nurture;
Noun:
The epidemic of soft romance
For Black women
Of, contain me against my dispossession,
Of, penetrate me into preface

So i may be canon
If only in your archive,
Of, pistol whip
function into feeling,
And feeling into fucking.
The epidemic of soft romance
For Black women
Is the second congenital disease
She mothered.

May there be peace
And love
And affection
Throughout all creations of God

This is the secret:
(in his dreamworld)
Mother has translucent skin
(He provides the melanin under the surface).
And this interaction breeds
a question mark:
What form does an absent body take
Without him in it?
Like

Two contrasting bodies,
And the second is clay.
One can understand why
the aftermath of his orgasm
belonged first to him,
second to Mother,
and third to itself.

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May there be peace
And love
And affection
Throughout all creations of God

In my dreamworld
I am her,
Who soothes salvant
Into and under the couple of gashes
Lining his back.
I am her,
Pumping ego in my womb
Until we child another mistake.
In my dreamworld
I am him,
Licking soul (out) from between her teeth.

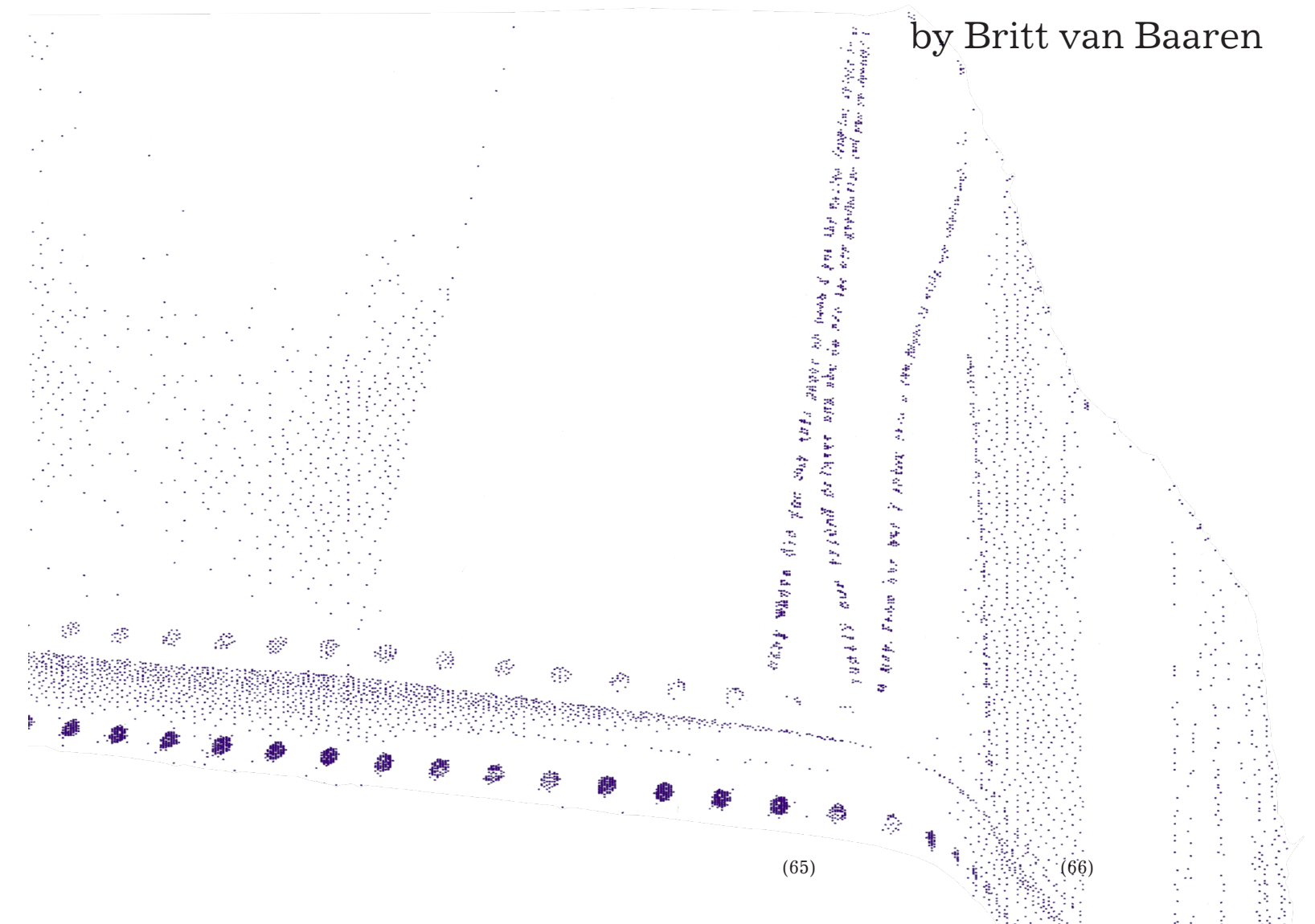
May there be peace
And love
And affection
Throughout all creations of God

You listen to my song.
I ask you what you hear.
Verb:
Waking up
After the apocalypse.
The unknowing.
But when you realize?
Well then you scream.

Scott the Dot-Matrix Printer

Mouse A Party Fun While It Lasted Cake Recipe / Pretty Things Bathroom Afterlife

by Britt van Baaren



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Mouse

Tiptoe around the house
My little mouse
With fingers in her ears
She disappears
The trembling feeling in her eardrums
Quietly follows the bread crumbs
A game to pick out the perfect words
before they leave her mouth
Scared birds
Flee the nest
When mom doesn't predigest
They choke
The mouse cried
When they died
And fears
The shimmering tears
She fails to hide
The house sighed
A loaded atmosphere
The air stung in her lungs and made it hard to speak she played
hide and seek
But even the walls had ears
Except the ones in her little bedroom
Where she could walk around without her costume
A safe sort of bubble that she made all on her own
Within this heavy house a tiny little home

A Party

I think I made a dumb mistake
No idea what was in that birthday cake
Most of the night is one big blur
Did I drink too much liquor?
I feel sorry for my chauffeur...
Although my knees look like I crawled back
Bitch, I look like a trainwreck
Still feel the nausea from the fair
As I wash out the puke from my hair
I need more shampoo
Where is my other shoe and
was this dress always see-through?!
Ohh what the fuck did I get up to?
Im so glad I don't recall
That's why I love alcohol
cortisol
Now I need some paracetamol
Party hats, city rats
carousel rides, flashing lights
Flashing men
Cant wait to do that again
And I took your pink pilld drug
Please tell me I got the number of the plug
Cuz i cant complain
No pain, happy brain, that was some good fucking cocaine
However.. My room's a fucking mess
Im a fucking mess
I don't know which I enjoy more
The high of last night or my current crash?
Still need to figure out how to pay
But
I'll see you next Friday! xx

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Fun While It Lasted

It was fun for the time being, wasn't it?
Yeah, it was nice while it lasted.
But it didn't last
It stopped. Not gradually but suddenly. When finally the strings on
my heart snapped.
We were lying in bed
And when the lights went out you found the courage to tell me
once more
You still couldn't be in love with me so what for
Was I waiting around
I told you about the moment I fell for you
How my feelings only grew,
And how cupid's got me in a chokehold ever since
Maybe I could mold
Myself into whatever you were looking for
'I don't want to change you' is what you replied
'That's okay' I lied
I'd rather be someone I'm not but
I thought about this a lot and
Our plot
Is a dead end
I wish you would let me count the freckles on your shoulder
I wish I felt colder
When you held me tight
Then maybe it would be easier to give up this fight
We both slept horribly that night
You because the blanket wasn't heavy
and the pillows weren't right
Me because I had to get ready
To meet the morning light
Where only I would know it meant goodbye
The second you left through my front door I could finally cry the
Tiresome tears
That I had been saving up for what felt like years

You don't know this
But at that moment we broke up
Stopped what never got to begin
I mourn the never has been
And never will be
It hurt as much before
As after we split
But hey,
It was fun while it lasted, wasn't it?

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Cake Recipe / Pretty Things

There is a difference between being abandoned and being forgotten
But I'm not sure which is worse
Time and time again I get my limbs Tied up
In a no strings -story
That always clings
My Rock tumbling heart aches after every new stone
I just really like pretty things

Will I always be the saddest cherry baby in the room?
The Cake filling up my maybe in the womb
I think nostalgia is doomed to be drenched in despair
A longing for the never has been and a
False hope for the ever will be
Hence, I bring my teddy bear to daycare

I'm begging on hands and knees not to be
My bruises smile at me
Bones aren't meant to be bend
And kids aren't meant to be swimming in cups of tea

The sins on my skin make me lisp like a snake
And snakes tend to sting
So I wait for the blood to sing
And make it all feel better

My Rock tumbling heart aches after every new stone
I Try to turn gravel into backbone
Birthstone
Wishbone
I've ever known
All alone
Always clings

But
I just really like pretty things

Bathroom Afterlife

Scrubbing bleach on the bloodstained bathroom tiles
Until my reflection goes
I see my narcissistic face to practice pretty smiles
Until my perfection shows
My eyes are staring at me and they look so God awful empty
The water is still running
as is the mold covering the shower curtain
It was never meant to be there but it looks stunning, nonetheless

I vigorously scrub myself with vinegar
to cleanse me of my skin
While I sip my bathtub gin
I didn't put on cleaning gloves because I fear the colour yellow
I hate who I was before;
ripped from context
I wasn't made for hell, so
What is next?

The void whispers for my presence but I'm not ready yet
Voices coming from the clogged up vent
And the clogged up drain and my clogged up brain
But with the noise I can't bury the sorrow
On the floor next to the shower, I still feel rain

Liminal spaces soothe my soul
They are my yellow friends
Yet I'm green
Wishing my warm tones back to life
Was I not meant to ever be seen?

On the floor next to the shower, I still feel rain
I still feel rain
Why is it still raining?

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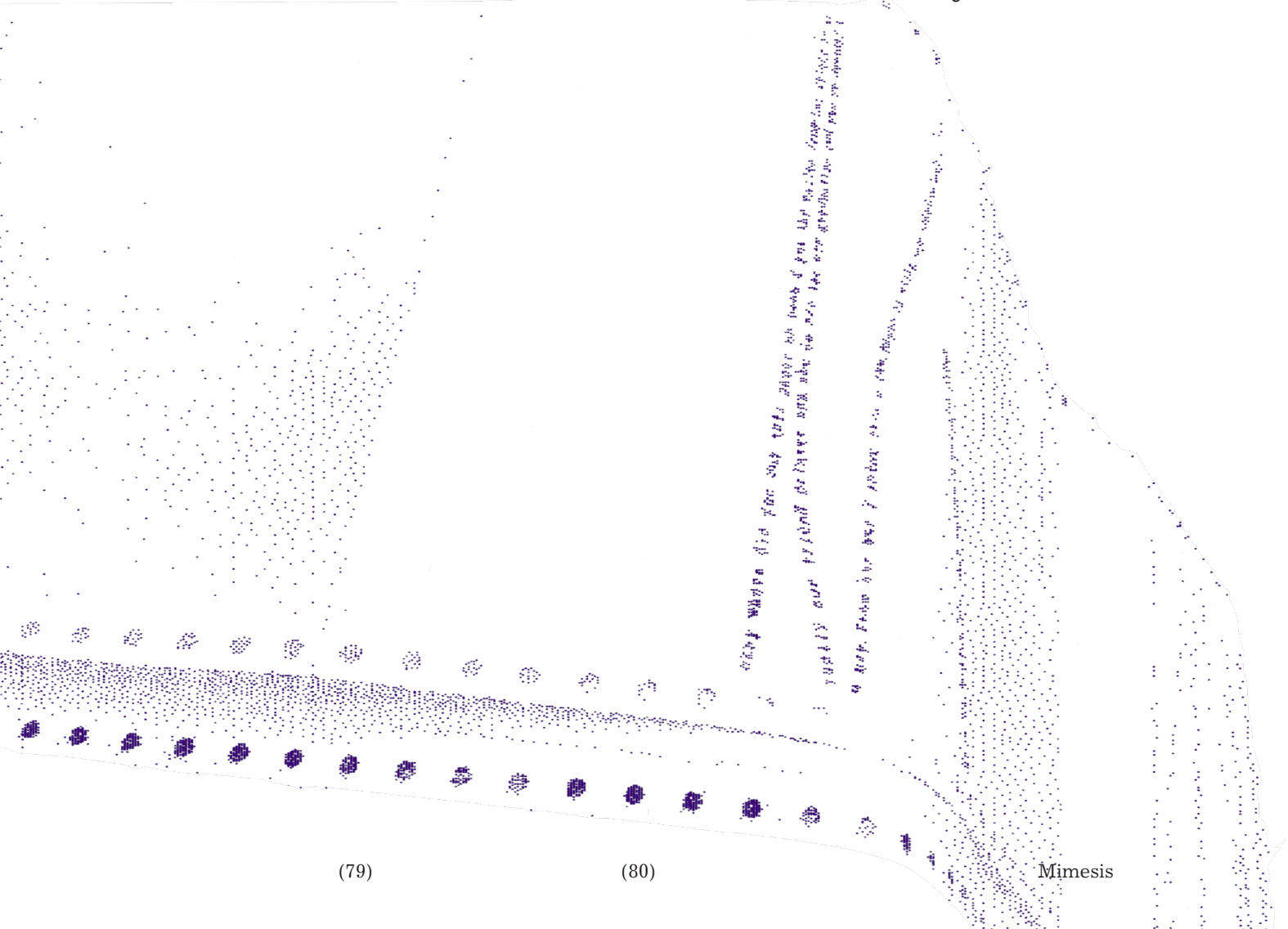
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Have You Felt the Season Yet?
Augusterkältung
Stories of a Sleepless Heart
Low on Oxygen

by Malu Ebenau



Have You Felt the Season Yet?

winter lays its fingerprints on concrete walls,
a cold hand enveloping the buildings to disguise strokes of
their vitality.
the city's plastic demeanour masks graffitis of liveliness,
electricity runs through the house's veins while snowflakes
melt in the glove of traffic noise.

My body is my home, my radiator keeps me warm,
but winter coats dissolve, when the heart wears winter as a coat.
Visceral hypothermia that hides under
heated blankets of hecticness.

nature is dormant, I am not.

As restless thoughts write pages worth of energy receipts,
my organs bleed the prize I have to pay.
I open the windows and wish I would have let my body freeze
in winter's benevolent embrace.

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all night long my windows are open
are open someone's
dragon just
the hot air dragon just like
I'm afraid of next July
and discuss the sun will leave on my skin
questions
although it's warm
sometimes I should without going under
sometimes I should without going
did you knowthat at the shows
temperature
even when it'swindy so
that why am
on to in any way
freeze did you know
when it's windy
any way
as long as it still summer I have no reason to freeze
why am I
from the clouds the future looks even more summer

Augusterkältung

Der Sommer ist wie ein Fiebertraum. Ständig schwitzen wir und sind die ganze Nacht lang wach. Meine Fenster sind immer offen, die heiße Luft immer auf Durchzug. Wie das Leben. Ich hab Angst vorm nächsten Juli und den Spuren, die die Sonne auf meiner Haut hinterlässt.

Der Sommer ist wie ein Fiebertraum. Obwohl es warm ist, schüttelt mich die Kälte manchmal ohne Vorwarnung. Wie ein starker Windstoß, der sich unter meine Kleider schleicht und mit meiner Körperwärme spielt.

Wusstest du, dass ein Thermometer auch bei Wind die gleichen Temperaturen zeigt. Solange es Sommer ist, habe ich also wohl keinen Grund zu frieren. Warum tu ich es dann trotzdem?

Der Sommer fliegt an mir vorbei. In dem Filter der Reinigungsanlage des Freibads sammelt sich die Rastlosigkeit und aus meinen Haaren tropft die Jugend. Auch ich fliege am Sommer vorbei und aus den Wolken sieht die Zukunft noch ungreifbarer aus.

Der Sommer ist träge und schwer. Der kleine Ventilator auf dem Kiosk Thresen kämpft erfolglos gegen die schwüle Luft der Stadt und mein Eis am Stiel zerfließt in roten Flecken auf meinem weißen T-shirt.

Ich blute eine Jahreszeit. Stehe immer wieder unter der kalten Dusche, aber das Wasser schmeckt nach Salz. Der Ozean und seine Tiefe sind mir bis nach Hause gefolgt. Nachts schwankt meine Matratze im Takt der Wellen und ich vermisse alles was ich nicht habe.

Der Sommer reiht sich auch nur ein, denn der Frühling ist wie Klettern mit Höhenagst. Der Herbst kaut meine Nägel ab und der Winter legt sich auf mich, dass ich reglos bin.

Der Sommer reiht sich auch nur ein und mein Körper bleibt ein Maßband der Lebendigkeit.

small counter
low and small
small counter battles
summer slow
counter battles the City without success and my
heavy the small family
red stains on my white T-shirtI am leadingI
I am leading
undercoat showers
of
me and night my while
everythingsome arc
alignsLike Diamond
heights string is Like
diamond with
offwinter days
chest and
I'm emotionals
and my body
I motionless summer just aligns remains
tape
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Stories of a Sleepless Heart

Prologue: I want to tell you a story about a sleepless heart-disease

I want to tell you a story, beginning with the long-lasting night,
with bright eyes and sleep lights, a child wide awake but dead tired.
somewhere between lethargy and speed,
accompanied by the arhythmic panic of uncertainty,
like a pendulum, I stroke liveliness sporadically.

Chapter One – Where it All Began

ready to leave, swearing to come back,
to look for me, she is empty in the hallway,
the moon-shaped lamp throws blue light upon the bedsheets,
upon my fleeting face.
heavy lids, heavy steps streaming past nursery lights, imposed by
flood, it’s become an endless tide.
broken promises (hearts?) make night skies go pale,
my pillow an aquarium, a dried-up salt lake.

Chapter Two – Tired Days

when winter would lay everywhere,
except for quiet blankets,
growing pains in every bone,
I’d hide beneath the fabric.
Never show your skin or face, sleep earlier day by day. raincloud
curtains are a veil,
husky dreams are far away.
Quietness became a floating ghost,
over my heart and me in diapause.

Chapter Three – Estranged Beds and Bodies

Inside an unknown man’s house,
I believed that it was love we found.
Even when fear came scratching my bedframe
it was seasickness that I failed to name.
memories of him beside me pale,
as though he was never really there.
his closeness was hovering above me like a hand held out,
I lay motionless but breathe too loud.
In a house, not mine, a bed not mine, a body no longer mine,
there was no space for the heart and I.

Epilogue

dull pulsation
today it might be
long nights and bright screens,
or the noisy quiet streets.

a hand placed on the cage that is my ribs,
to ensure the beat inside of it.
In midst the neighbor’s stereo drums
the city’s noisy quiet sounds.

bitter drops in water glasses on my nightstand,
bury the fear of sleeping without the moon’s lamp.
I swim in pharmaceuticals, instead of choking when the night unfolds.
today, it might be the promise of melatonin,
and the psychotic nightmares that broke it.
hunting a moment of love that is fleeting,
to grant one night of sleeping.

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Low on Oxygen

a crystal clear sky full of stars
fall into the tarmac
the earth rotates outside its own axis
I search for the breath that life has taken.

can't find my body's color in its own face
like vinyl under a needle, I spin around in place
play lullabies, but always lie awake.

into the night's black sky, I dream to dive
wander between the stars like satellites
in the moon's baring stare
the salt in my wounds will glare.
wander like fish in the lightless depth of sea.

drowned in my saliva, I cough till morning comes
the tarmac I fall into
swallows me in one big chunk.

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