

The Efficient Traveller: *Seven Suggestions for Unpacking Martin Jacobson*
By Jacquelyn Davis

As the trite saying goes, it makes no difference where the traveller came from but where they are headed. It's best not to ask the traveller too many questions about their past. Let's skip formalities. Questions like *where are you from?* are not as important as *where are you going?* or *where do you want to go?* Even better questions: *what have you seen?* or *what do you search for?* Some answers need protection, and even if one finds an answer, be it on their own or with the help of others, it is a toss-up whether or not the answer deserves the public eye. Some answers thrive best in the confines of one's mind, for some are shameful or confusing—even boring to those outside of one's self. No one wishes their previous inadequacies on others.

If one knows that they are going on a journey, preparation is needed—affairs must be in order, and one must visualize themselves in their future surroundings. It won't be easy, and even though some tools which one may need for a journey might be available, many won't appear necessary until they prove to be imperative due to a specific moment which shows its face unexpectedly. The experience of traveling alone possesses qualities accessible only to the one traveling; for those who embark on a journey with others, they have each other to confirm experiences. This sense of community must be a relief for some who do not trust their judgment or have a tendency to shy away from askew circumstances which appear only on a solo journey.

The journey to Murcia, Spain is remarkable; it doesn't matter where one comes from—it is impossible to ignore the abundance of fruit trees, healthy bodies, rolling mountains, the Mediterranean's blueness. The place surrounding Martin Jacobson's exhibition seduces its traveller, beckoning the newcomer to stay. This region is both a visual siren and vessel for replenishment. Entering Salas Verónicas, an extension of La Conservera sequestered in Murcia's city center, one encounters Martin Jacobson's installation set aside from the others at La Conservera. The isolation allows opportunity for a heightened intimacy with the artist's creation.

The three-piece installation consists of pieces in conversation based upon the concept of the *mise-en-abyme*, which places the spectator into an abyss by means of *a shield within a shield, a dream within a dream* or in literary terms: *a story within a story* or *a play within a play*. Jacobson expects viewers to partake on a journey founded upon self-reflexivity. Examples of this phenomenon range from the classical to contemporary: *Las Meninas*, 1656 (Diego Velázquez), *Hamlet* (William Shakespeare), *The English Patient* (Michael Ondaatje) and *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (Haruki Murakami).

A small drawing titled *Museum*, 2007 hangs alone from Salas Verónicas' interior inspiring the image which Jacobson has painted onto the church's apse; it is mimicked and reflected at a greater magnitude. Jacobson's mirrored contribution *The Traveller's Guide to the Other Side*, 2011 embodies the literal definition of a mise-en-abyme; the viewer is encouraged to stand alone between two mirrors consisting of rectangular fragments. This geometry introduces The Golden Ratio (i.e. the divine proportion): a mathematical concept proven to be a creative catalyst since the Renaissance for artists and mystics alike. Two mirrors appear before the viewer and provide reflection; the included diptych titled *Mirror Hall*, 2007 alludes to this actual hall of mirrors. Power play is inevitable. What is more alluring: the reproduction of the individual or the carnivalesque mirage of reflections inside reflections? The illusion of being cajoled into a glimmering abyss prevails, yet it is coupled with the presence of the individual's ego. This duality is conflicting; one must decide if the focus is the self or that which exists externally. It seems wise to ask: where is the problem located?

Once a little girl, I regularly skimmed children's books on library shelves. Books such as *Aesop's Fables*, Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, Madeleine L'Engle's *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* and *Choose Your Own Adventure* game books by Edward Packard. I was delighted that choices were given to develop a story as I was reading it; each creation depended upon my free will. Approach Martin Jacobson's work any way you see fit; trust your judgment, but know that it will change over time. You are no singularity, and the world is far from static. Consider my suggestions on how to move forward in this narrative of sorts—where you are both the protagonist and author, the performer and audience. Be what you desire to be. I have learned, both from school and experience, that teachers and those in positions in authority often do not deserve to be.

I. Keep the Faith

The faith that you know best. Avoid bad faith at all costs on your journey; it has a way of creeping into your slumber, following you on the streets of an unfamiliar city, showing its reflection in the eyes of a one-night stand, appearing at the end of a path that once seemed endless. Bad faith is close friends with the mirage; they break bread together and occasionally breed unwanted children like pretense and greed. But bad faith has nothing to do with religion. It is self-deception and inauthenticity; it is a torturous road for any traveller plagued by it, and with this sickness comes the denial of freedom. Do not confuse a traveller tormented by bad faith with a liar; the liar possesses the truth, but one influenced by bad faith does not know the truth because everything, including the one

plagued, is masked and infinitely so.

Imagine yourself a guest at a masquerade ball. You search for your beloved amongst the crowd, yet you have no recollection of your lover's mask, you do not know if your lover is male or female, and you cannot recall the outline of their figure. You remember nothing except false memories leading to well-constructed illusions. When you tap the shoulder of one who you believe to be your lover, the person turns and immediately, you attempt to remove the mask only to discover another bejeweled mask positioned behind it. With another, as you attempt to remove the mask, you see its shape shift into another mask that you do not fancy. With every attempt to reach for any mask, it morphs into another. You aimlessly glide between these forged characters, unable to relate, a victim of alienation and deceit. Connections are never made at this masquerade ball; each figure is an island in a jinxed archipelago of disappointment. For one in the midst of bad faith, there is no space between the deceived and deceiver; the weary traveller trusts nothing and no one leading to exhaustion, miserly fools, jesters, viciously circuitous cul-de-sacs. One's voyage inspired by Jacobson's *mise-en-abyme* requires closer examination of the meaningful versus meaningless, the fake and phony, of teasers and heartbreaks.

Don't you love farce?
My fault, I fear.
I thought that you'd want what I want—
Sorry, my dear.
But where are the clowns?
There ought to be clowns.
Quick, send in the clowns.

—Stephen Sondheim, "Send in the Clowns" from *A Little Night Music*

Bad faith is more troubling than blind faith because one under the influence of the former lives in a state of ambiguity, denying one self both the freedom and responsibility to act.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge coined the concept of poetic faith: the willing suspension of disbelief for the moment. This type of faith comes when one chooses imagination over reality as it is comprehended, thereby allowing the individual the ability to truly appreciate a work of art. There is an uncanny scene in Terrence Malick's *Thin Red Line* (1998) where the soldier Private Witt decides to become a decoy to save the other soldiers in his unit. This leads him to be surrounded by Japanese soldiers. He is moments away from his death, yet his face appears blissful in this fatalistic scene. Faith comes in many shapes and sizes; perhaps Witt's was the poetic kind, allowing access to his willing suspension of disbelief regarding the fact that he would soon be killed.

II. Dare to Remember, Dare to Forget

I remember after people are gone thinking of things I should have said but didn't.

I remember a very early memory of an older girl in a candy store. The man asked her what she wanted and she picked out several things and then he asked her for her money and she said. "Oh, I don't have any money. You just asked me what I wanted, and I told you." This impressed me to no end.

I remember that it was hard to look at it and hard not to look at it too.

—Joe Brainard, *I Remember*

It's not possible to do both. One must choose. Begin anywhere in life—childhood, adolescence, adulthood—and move in any direction, or jump from memory to memory. Choices may prove to be either a relief or painful. There is a theory that every attempt one makes to erase one's self is a function of shame. By recognizing this idea, can one avoid this feeling?

Treat Jacobson's works as a doorway into your inscapes. Loosen up; relax. Memories come and go on their own accord, and some will overpower others. Much like one mask covering another: remove layers and dig deeper. If you wish for a constant, choose only one of Jacobson's works ignoring the rest. It is not only the memory that is important but *why* the memory has acquired significance. Like Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*: the madeleine cake, his mother, sensory and spatial experiences that remain entrenched in his mind and magnified with exhaustive devotion, learn to use your zoom lens. Do not be afraid of close-ups or pulling yourself out of the frame when it gets uncomfortable. Proust began his narrative journey much like Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*: with a great mental collapse of time and space—a fall into the rabbit hole. Proust expressed:

I could not even be sure at first who I was; I had only the most rudimentary sense of existence, such as may lurk and flicker in the depths of an animal's consciousness; I was more destitute than the cave-dweller; but then the memory—not yet of the place in which I was, but of various other places where I had lived and might now very possibly be—would come like a rope let down from heaven to draw me up out of the abyss of not-being, from which I could never have escaped by myself ...¹

Stand between Jacobson's two grandiose mirrors facing one another like rivals in a duel. Do not shy away from the sunken eyeholes on the oversized fossil of the Stegodon; this now extinct creature roamed Jacobson's fictional museum space similar to the one you now occupy but has been transformed in the second image of the diptych *Mirror Hall*, 2007 into bone remnants similar to the ones you now see before you displayed. Notice that what you view is also where you stand. *Memento mori*. You have the key; find the right door. Alice tried many doors before finding the one that opened for her. You will be no different.

¹ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time: Swann's Way* (New York, NY: Random House, 1992), 4-5.

What is more enticing for some than remembering is forgetting, hence the fascination with the *tabula rasa* or blank slate. Civilization chases the new even if the *absolute* new proves impossible; the world has tricked itself into chasing the mirage of the new for centuries. *Caveat*: with erasure comes the burden of loneliness and isolation. When ties are cut, accustom yourself to an askew stoicism stemming from this newfound virtue. But your ability to experience joy may increase—you will no longer compare yourself to yourself as you once were in the past or to others. You will see the world and yourself as you are *now* but with less comparative reference points as you follow through. Forgetting leads to self-love, yet narcissism easily becomes indifference or illness.

Is it a relief to consider the process of forgetting like one who engages with a palimpsest? Is your life a tablet to be wiped clean—again and again? There is the chance that previous memories or eras could still be subtly imprinted into the palimpsest, despite feverish attempts to remove all traces of a former self. There are pros and cons of such residue; the occasional relapse may surface if one chooses to forget using the same palimpsest. Nightmares and haunting delusions are offshoots, as are daydreams and fragmented fantasies. Be prepared to face consequences either way.

The film *Nothing Personal* (2009) directed by Urszula Antoniak, the protagonist Anne played by the stunning Lotte Verbeek teaches a lesson. The film's plot is circular in that Anne begins alone and ends alone. In the film's beginning, Anne attempts to erase herself by giving away her possessions and severing herself from her middle class existence after a mysterious happening which is never relayed; she consciously chooses an alternative life of a detached nomad. But despite attempts to remain disconnected from others, she finds another similar to herself living a hermetic life on an island she coincidentally discovers during her wanderings: a sagely man named Martin. She covets Martin's life of solitude, and they make arrangements with one another: (1) Anne will work for Martin for food and shelter, as long as (2) nothing personal is disclosed between them. The first pact is easy enough, but the second agreement disintegrates as they begin to form a platonic intimacy which slowly becomes romantic. Despite Anne's attempts to live a clean life devoid of the personal, she instead has found solace: a version of herself in another which she can accept.

At some point, Martin dies. Anne realizes that she is again attached, that her life has again entered the realm of the personal. Before Martin's death, he gave his house on the island to Anne, but again, she uproots herself, abandons the island and cleans the slate. In a momentous scene, Anne finds herself nude in bed with Martin's corpse covered in white sheets, engulfed in the purity of his death. Earlier in the film, Anne writhed alone in this

same bed of white like a wild animal marking territory—foreshadowing that her feelings were changing. The lesson: any attempt to clean the slate, to forget one's self is impermanent. One always builds new memories and reference points which require even more complex methods to destroy. To choose to forget is a continual battle, where newly formed memories and connections can be the enemy and tormentor of the idealized self.

III. Become a Hunter

Before the hunt, take inventory of what and who you love most. Focus on only three objects of your affection so as to not be overwhelmed. Determine which ones you believe are most suitable to bring with you; your travel companions should be able to weather the distance—they should be loyal, accustomed to blood and never cease to amaze you. Before choosing, question your ability to recognize authenticity, and reconsider your decision making process. Martin Heidegger proposed two states: (1) *authenticity*, a mode of being of those who seek to understand their existence and freedom to recognize possibilities related to a situation, and (2) *inauthenticity*, where the individual is paralyzed by familiarity and the belief that they already understand everything. On one side of this spectrum exists *dasein* or 'thrownness' into world of contingency (i.e. the general mode of human beings); on the other: the genuine. Jean-Paul Sartre believed that the constant movement towards authenticity is necessary but that authenticity is future-oriented and unattainable. For Sartre, to claim true authenticity is actually a sign of inauthenticity, since it is based upon the arrogant assumption that one has attained authenticity's essence.

I took these three “objects” with me on my journey: *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov, Nirvana's *Incesticide* and the sensation of wearing driver's gloves while gripping the steering wheel. Place yourself directly into Jacobson's *Red Forest*, 2011 landscape. Accustom your eyes to the colors and textures that you are not used to seeing in the distant sky, the leaves, the bark of tall tree looking down on you. Catch your reflection in the nearby stream before trekking deeper into his forest. It is useful to know yourself—or at least to feel comfortable with what you are.

In midway of the journey of our life
I found myself within a darkling wood,
Because the rightful pathway had been lost.
—Dante, *The Divine Comedy*—Pt. 1 Inferno—Canto I—(1-3)

Sit on a nearby rock until you feel ready to move forward. Then: proceed to determine what it is that you seek to find. Will your hunt be strenuous and time-consuming or quick and painless? How will you recognize your prey? When does a simple look become the gaze of recognition? Because of the complex schism between the 'I' and the 'Other,' some

get lost in the space in between. Many find themselves relying on tactics such as questions, games, tests, hurdles or expectations to move either closer or farther away from the 'Other.' The hunt is yet another game which has always existed.

Emmanuel Levinas believed that our subjectivity is formed in and through our subjected-ness to the 'Other,' from our experience of the encounter with the 'Other'—without recognizing the 'Other,' we cannot possess the idea of infinity. When he spoke of infinity, he was referring to the *good* kind. Strive to be a good hunter. Do not hunt for something which you already possess; do not kill for sport nor from hubris. Niccolò Machiavelli believed: “If inhuman cruelty and animal cunning are verified by reality to be necessary to successful human life, then clearly what passes for human virtue in the minds of most people is false.”² Perhaps, Levinas approached the concept of infinity similar to how Heidegger and Sartre approached authenticity: an ethereal idea and quest which cannot and should not be actualized. If ever actualized, one relapses into the mundane existence of facticity that many strive to escape. The hunt, for some, proves more important than the reward of finding one's prey.

In Andrei Tarkovsky's science fiction classic *Stalker* (1979), a lone guide takes two individuals, a writer and professor, into a forbidden area referred to as *the Zone*, which is a place where usual laws known in the real world do not apply. Inside *the Zone* exists *the Room*, where one's secret desires can be realized. The problem lies in the fact that many wishes are not consciously known to most who harbor them, and *the Room* does not discriminate. It grants wishes which are unconsciously held as well. The men in *Stalker* never enter *the Room* once they find it for fear that their true wishes should never be fulfilled. It is suggested that all hunters approach their prey with similar caution. What is real should sometimes remain real, and the same applies to the unreal. Perversion and danger stem from the simulacrum. The authentic may lose its aura; the inauthentic may be plagued by shock. But don't be thrown for a loop. Jean Baudrillard was confident that the simulacrum becomes 'the real thing' or the hyperreal in its own right. Remember: *this is your hunt*. Not mine. Not Baudrillard's.

IV. Kill, Kill, Kill, Murder, Murder, Murder

You lose yourself, you reappear
You suddenly find you got nothing to fear
Alone you stand with nobody near
When a trembling distant voice, unclear
Startles your sleeping ears to hear
That somebody thinks they really found you

² Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), xxxv-xxxvi.

A question in your nerves is lit
Yet you know there is no answer fit
To satisfy, insure you not to quit
To keep it in your mind and not forget
That it is not he or she or them or it
That you belong to

—Bob Dylan, “It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)”

A hunter should be prepared to kill. If you are of the newer generations, this is your responsibility if you accept the role. Familiarize yourself with already-existing canons, then seize the jugular at an unexpected moment. Your tactics may be sloppy at first, but over time, you will hone them. Be on the lookout for apathy, complacency, nepotism and absolutism—these traits tend to be chummy with older generations. If you do not like an idea, a piece of art or yourself: instigate an alternative. Jacobson's *guide to the other side* has blank pages reserved for you to take notes. Comfortable stereotypes, established cultural dictations and unreasonable expectations will be obstacles along the way. Jacques Derrida remarks:

The absolutes of duty and of responsibility presume that one denounce, refute, and transcend, at the same time, all duty, all responsibility, and every human law. It calls for a betrayal of everything that manifests itself within the order of universal generality, and everything that manifests itself in general, the very order and essence of manifestation; namely, the essence itself, the essence in general to the extent that it is inseparable from presence and from manifestation.³

In the film *Dogtooth* (2009) directed by Giorgos Lanthimos, the elder daughter smashes out her dogtooth standing in front of the bathroom sink during the film's climax; this self-mutilating action is metaphor for her brutal awakening, and it is a step towards usurping her confinement. She and her siblings have been brainwashed by her parents into thinking that no world exists outside of their shielded compound. There are moments when the hunter and the hunted are one and the same. The hunter's psyche (the ego, Id and super-ego) is one of the most difficult creatures to kill.

V. Construct a Rule or Constraint

The world's like an endless
four-dimensional
Game of Go.

—Gary Snyder, “Riprap”

There is an ongoing debate as to whether or not certain rules are necessary or are simply an abuse of power. Rules are meant to keep society functioning at a basic level but are also the foundation of fictive worlds and new games. Pay attention to the origins of influence and power. From Confucianism to Machiavellianism to Marxism to Democracy, the nexus of power has shifted and been manipulated, stretched and teased into what

³ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 66.

someone somewhere wanted society to be or not be: power in the hands of a king or queen versus an elected parliament versus an oligarchy versus the masses versus any combination of these. Dear traveller, rule maker, game player: where is your power, where do you want it to be, what shape should it take?

Language is considered more of a game to some than others; the relationship between language and art appears boundless. By definition, constraint is the basic element in Oulipian practice, where artists adhere to a strict and clearly definable rule, method, procedure, or structure that generates every work.⁴ The constraint is not an imposition, but rather: a support, an aid to invention, an enjoyment of form (and art is a question of form) and liberation from the tyranny of the message. Oulipian co-founder Raymond Queneau stated that Oulipians are rats who construct the labyrinth from which they plan to escape. For any of Jacobson's pieces, consider using the rhetorical device *ekphrasis*: respond and describe one of Jacobson's works such as *Arrival*, 2011 or *Departure*, 2011 using another medium. The rich, blue night sky of *Arrival* highlights a jungle scene with twisting branches where one imagines aggressive pythons might hide. *Departure* is bathed in seductive red with a full moon in focus; the panorama's mythical fertility is unavoidable.

Do not shy away from game structures already at your disposal to tweak, such as *Chess*, *Role-Playing* and *Solitaire*. Investigate Game Theory: a mathematical approach where you determine your success based upon the decisions of other participants. Are you traveling alone, or are you bringing others along? How many players accompany you? What is your strategy when playing with Jacobson's works? Are there winners or losers? Is there a zero-sum dynamic? It is sometimes best to choose the wild card so as to not let it choose you.

In *Secretary* (2002), a film based on Mary Gaitskill's short story, a young secretary and her boss (played by Maggie Gyllenhaal and James Spader respectively) create a series of sadomasochistic games of mutual consent. As the plot unfolds, one observes how they begin to find it difficult to keep their games in the realm of play and to justify continuing, for their games threaten to become their reality as they become more involved and a significant function of their lives. If one chooses to create a game or rule, a few words of advice: players should not get attached to the game, or if they choose the game over reality, they should be prepared to devote themselves to the game so as to win. Because: *nobody knows you when you're down and out*.

4 Eds. Mathews & Brotchie, *Oulipo Compendium* (Los Angeles, CA: Make Now Press, 2005), 277 & 286.

VI. Create a Crisis

Consider your encounter with Jacobson's work synonymous with a political revolution, existential crisis or protest for change. Many travellers find this suggestion too closely associated with the body, too sensory—you may be wounded. It is difficult to take a stand if one does not feel a heightened emotion or detect an aura meant to be transformative. Protest with good intentions, and attempt to transform any anxiety of misrecognition into constructive energy. A crisis leads to the mayhem of structures which have impeded your ability to feel. Consider the words of an Anarchist prince:

Life is vigorous, fertile, rich in sensation only on condition of answering to this feeling of the ideal. Act *against* this feeling, and you will feel your life bent back on itself. It is no longer at one, it loses its vigor. Be untrue often to your ideal and you will end by paralyzing your will, your active energy. Soon you will no longer regain the vigor, the spontaneity of decision you formerly knew.⁵

Or a contemporary American philosopher doubting even her own position, believing that philosophers and prophets (the latter being the ones protesting) will be at odds with another and, at best, uneasy allies:

No philosopher's work can prove that the conditions for the worth of philosophizing are satisfied in the world, and to the extent all the work of philosophy is built on what Kant would call a "practical postulate," a faith in a kind of goodness that is not empirically verifiable.⁶

A philosopher's job is not to confront but rather to construct or dissect theories and arguments which are often removed from the urgency of life—from a *real* circumstance or event. There are times when a traveller must act; this action often stems from the traveller's dissatisfaction with an unsavory experience or suffering for nought. Philosophers are guilty of self-preservation: keeping their ivory tower to themselves. One's desire to be loved, opting to conform to societal standards, to remain polite in a crumbling world can cloud one's ability to confront the unworthy or destroy the obsolete.

In the cult classic *Fight Club* (1999), the nameless protagonist played by Edward Norton waltzes into his boss's office with a proposal: to keep him on payroll in exchange for never telling what he knows about the company's immoral business practices. After his boss refuses to accommodate him and accuses him of insanity, the protagonist proceeds stage a violent one-way assault between himself and his boss. The boss never harms the protagonist; every blow comes from the protagonist. Rather than sitting at his desk all day, the protagonist wishes to redirect his energies to support Project Mayhem, or the organization that Fight Club becomes. This constructed battle is one of many to fulfill his ambitions. A revolution which instigates change often requires skill, cunning and

5 Peter Kropotkin, *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), 112.

6 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 241.

premeditation. Ironically, more successful protests are strategically planned.

VII. Become an Inbetweener

At a certain point the word “between” disappears.
First the quotation marks disappear.
—Aaron Kunin, *Secret Architecture*

Is it possible to simultaneously expect nothing and everything from the same voyage? When one expects nothing, each gesture and nuance appears to be a gift. With expectations too high, the fall is great when reality proves far from the ideal. It is possible to engage in both modes during the same journey—to switch gears and feel the engine respond. The space between forces in opposition, between energies which may or may not compliment one another, is both attractive and befuddling. Guy Debord of the Situationists coined the concept of locomotion without a goal, or *dérive*, granting the individual both space and time to encounter the amazing so as to warm up to the marvelous without pretense. There are no conclusions for an inbetweener; there is no means to a specific end. Walter Benjamin encouraged the curious and creative to take a solitary stroll outside any conventional milieu—to embrace the *flâneur* within, to see what happens on its own.

When does space prove more important than the one who encounters space? How does one overcome the distance between the one who sees and that which is seen? To see or to be seen? A journey or an exhibition? To watch or to participate? Choices, much like conclusions, can be disenchanting. Insight is often overrated; it can lead to misdirected dogmatism and hierarchical traps. Jacobson's work exists in a real space based upon the viewer's value of sensory immediacy. Create a relationship with the space which supports Jacobson's installation, but use an indirect method of your own design. Isolated pieces in-and-of-themselves versus codependent pieces conversing with one another in a self-contained locale contrasting Jacobson's Scandinavian origins. An inbetweener will be more apt to appreciate Jacobson's approach on both micro- and macro- levels: in Sweden, Spain, The United States, ad nauseam.

Art, whatever else it may be, is exclusively political. What is called for is the *analysis of formal and cultural limits* (and not one or the other) within which art exists and struggles. These limits are many and of different intensities. Although the prevailing ideology and the associated artists try in every way to *camouflage* them, and although it is too early—the conditions are not met—to blow them up, the time has come to *unveil* them.⁷

The inbetweener understands the significance of the mask and sympathizes with the chameleon's nature. The inbetweener identifies lines of demarcation but only to dodge

7 Daniel Buren, “Critical Limits” (1970), in *Five Texts* (New York: John Weber Gallery, 1974), 38.

their influence. The inbetweener moves between art and life with grace and discretion because, above all, the inbetweener strives to harmoniously exist in both yet is misunderstood by those who choose sides. The inbetweener tricks and serves no one; assumptions and absolutisms are fodder.

In Harmony Korine's *Trash Humpers* (2009), a weirdo collective of drifters in Nashville, Tennessee have created an underworld which harbors their eccentricities. They embody the essence of the inbetweener, and they discover ways to find bliss even in the most destitute of scenarios. Their lives border on ritualistic, and their diversions possess no clear logic or endpoint. These outcasts improvise silly ditties, drag plastic baby dolls from behind BMX bikes, eat pancakes with dish soap, and above all: they hump trash. Their actions appear meaningless, but to them, they reside in an alternative kingdom meaningful and accessible only to them. These pariahs appear to be nihilists, yet paradoxically, they keep the faith, for valuelessness proves dangerous—even to those who do not hold conventional values on high. These shiftless characters cruise on suburban streets of their small town; the driver obliges his cohorts with an ad hoc description of their existence:

I can smell the pain of all of these people living in here. I can smell how all of these people are just trapped in their lives: their day-to-day lives. They don't see much. Sometimes, they get lost in it. Other times, they just feel lost. I can feel their pain. Like coming from these trees and these houses. I can feel that pain, and it hurts me to think that I live such a balanced life. All of these people going to work, going to pray on Sundays, with their children. I don't quite understand why anyone would choose to live that way. That's a stupid way to live. That's a stupid, stupid, stupid way to live. See, what people don't understand is that we choose to live like free, free, free people. You know, we choose to live like the people should live. I don't follow no rules on Sunday. I don't eat no pies on Monday. I don't play no games on Tuesday. I don't cry myself to sleep on Wednesday. It's all just, I don't know, *one long game*, I guess you could call it.

Notes

Seven is a lucky number—considered by some to be divine. Those who embrace both art and life have a winning advantage. Learn to wonder, believe, question, reject, accept, build and destroy. Be a drifter, hunter, prince, player, prophet, flâneur or trickster. This is your space to take notes.
