

ONLINE BODIES

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How To Crash Into The Future

by

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AN INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE BODIES

This thesis consists of two parts; three manifestos with an introduction and an online [blog](#)¹. They go together equally and reinforce each other. The blog is more the “research” part and the manifestos function more as the “conclusion”, but they relate to each other in a non-linear fashion.

Why the online body?

The online body is the matter that fills the liminal space between the actual and the virtual. It's the thing that can give an image to *potential*. The online body is a video game character, the online body is the Youtube algorithm, the online body is non-linear, the online body is the categories on Pornhub, the online body is desire on the internet, the online body is a catboy, the online body is non-binary, the online body is simulated, the online body is molded, it is manufactured and altered, it is morphed and formed, shopped and sold. It is both virtual (online) and material (body).

One of the online bodies I look at in my research is a collection of artists that are often categorized as *Hyperpop*, a genre (although the artists involved often reject genre altogether, so perhaps it is better to say a body of music) that is quintessentially online. *Hyperpop* finds its origin in hyperonline bodies like [nightcore](#), experimental cloutrap (from SoundCloud) and [PC music](#) (the label). The production of this music is often done online through file-sharing by people who do not live or work in the same place. I look at these music artists for strategic inspiration. The strategies I look for are directed both at the process of art production itself and the potential impact of the art to create a new world. The process of creating explosive art is fundamentally linked to (or might even be the same as) the process of creating a future beyond capital. I want to say right at the beginning: the online body is

¹ <https://www.onlinebodies.net/>

currently just as much part of capital as most other things. However, the online body *can* show us a way to a desirable future, it is the bridge between the virtual (where the future is found) and the material (where it becomes a body).

Why a blog?

The online blog is public, accessible, free, transparent, leveled (so not put on a heightened platform like a magazine) and both hyper-linked and [hyperlinked](#).

A few reasons why I think it is important to use the blog as a form:

1. In my wish to write explosively and horizontally it is essential to [link](#) other web pages. It allows you to rip text out of its printed isolation and produce a context that shows the necessary lines of connection. The blog allows references to be on equal footing with the newly produced text and mapped in a direct way, instead of being faint traces that, realistically, no one will look at.
2. A blog fits the subject matter. Hyperpop and online bodies are produced/produce online and they will lose some of their potential (virtual) when printed (actual). It allows me to show the online body directly and let it speak for itself in all its fluxibility (flexible and streaming like a flux) instead of having to be copied and stuck in the undead representation of a print.
3. A blog allows me to edit the text indefinitely as to never admit to a final truth. There is an ongoing conversation with readers online, spread over different platforms. I am not saving everything for a final submission moment to then never look at it again. It is a form of commitment to the project.
4. It is an homage to the late Mark Fisher. His blog, K-Punk, formed the starting point of the research for this project. For elaboration, consult the [introductory blog post](#)².

Why manifestos?

With the manifesto I try to keep the baby and throw out the bathwater. Many manifestos have historically served as a collection of imperatives and have dictated ways of living and producing, ushering in (or accompanying) a break in the flow of the political/artistic/economic status quo. The bathwater I throw out is the appeal to a singular and total definition of a new world. The baby I would like to keep, and it is a baby with a strong will to power, is the manifesto's ability to break flows (or deterritorialize). That is why, for this thesis, I wrote multiple unfinished manifestos that relate horizontally, with a potential of looking down the horizon of manifestos to come. That means they are neither monological, nor dialectical. Rather they embody Deleuze and Guattari's inclusive disjunction: we have either this manifesto, or that one, or that one, or... or... or... or... or...

² <https://www.onlinebodies.net/post/introduction-my-mark-fisher-moment>

To manifest desirable artistic strategies into the actual, I cannot get stuck in the impotent liminal space of research, doubt, and nuance. This does not mean I cannot use research, doubt, and nuance, but I will not let them occupy the room of production. Doubt becomes a problem if you are looking for a final answer, so the final shall be abolished and everything will be deliberately temporary. The manifestos I write will dictate the room of production but only in unison. I will not allow a manifesto to be alone with me in the same room, that is very dangerous, singular ideas are predatory. Rather, they are placed in multiple connected, doorless rooms with poor sound insulation - like guests in a cramped hostel, the texts will drip their fluids on each other.

Practically speaking, the manifestos lay out different approaches to the production of cinema, none of them are true nor final, they are all temporary, imperfect and unapologetic. It is easy, and maybe even good, to disagree with my manifestos, but hopefully they will set something in motion. The manifestos are an expression of *moving on* from the state of mourning over lost futures (referencing the Mark Fisher issue) that served as a starting point of this thesis. The form of the manifesto allows me to use maximum power, go into sixth gear, go fast and hard, while I disassociate from any final destination.

What do they share?

Both my blog posts and manifestos are short, fast and like shallow water. They do not elaborate, dive deep or feign expertise. They enable, for me, the horizontal mode of production (that I also try to implement in my film); their profoundness can be found in the far reaching horizon, not in the deep growing root. They are textual parallels of Hyperpop in their ability and desire to be fast, intense and imperfect.

ACCELERATION AND ARTIFICE

This text goes together with two blog posts
[Accelerated Leisure](#)³ & [Remix, reference and rhizome](#)⁴

Speed and acceleration are touchy subjects (with imagining the future in mind). For all their radical potential, they can just as easily be used to accelerate the current tendencies of capitalism into its hellish conclusions. Speed has the risk of becoming competitive (which one is faster, the winner takes all), fueling war machines. That being said, as laid out in my *Accelerated Leisure* text, speed can offer great help in the speculative (without resorting to prediction) fiction of imagining a future beyond capitalism. Something I addressed in the *Remix, reference and rhizome* text is these artists' ability to nimbly shift and turn when confronted with rigid framing. As Laura Les (from 100 geecs) says, "once you can lock down specific elements of what makes something 'it' then it's time to move on and do something else"⁵. Shifting, turning or changing direction⁵ should also be considered acceleration (Velocity (speed) = magnitude + direction. A change in either is acceleration).

We want to produce a new world through art and create art through a new world. Speed and acceleration seem so helpful as an artistic strategy because we can't just *move*. Where would we move to? There is no *outside*. There is no deserted island on which you can establish your communist utopia, we have to work with what's in front of us. The power of acceleration lies in its ability to deterritorialize (both by means and goal) faster or in a different direction than capital can reterritorialize, while still using capital's magnitude, working from the inside. Deleuze and Guattari say:

"It should therefore be said that one can never go far enough in the direction of deterritorialization: you haven't seen anything yet— an irreversible process. And when we consider what there is of a profoundly artificial nature in the perverted reterritorializations, but also in the psychotic reterritorializations of the hospital, or even the familial neurotic

³ <https://www.onlinebodies.net/post/accelerated-leisure>

⁴ <https://www.onlinebodies.net/post/remix-reference-and-rhizome>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/10/arts/music/hyperpop-spotify.html>

reterritorializations, we cry out, "More perversion! More artifice!"—to a point where the earth becomes so artificial that the movement of deterritorialization creates necessity and by itself a new earth."⁶

Paul Virillio describes the visual impact of speed as the warping of a tree from the windows of a high-speed train⁷; the tree is made into an artifice by its interaction with speed. The online body is most affected by this, the speed of datatransfer, the acceleration of images warps all the online bodies to never have one *real* original. The online body is artifice with a lot of perverted tendencies. This is well expressed in the music video of Death Grips' [I've Seen Footage](#), an intense acceleration of images and sound, addressing the everyday [hyperflow](#) of visual data.

My video on simulation (where I work with a simulated voice and 3D sculpted digital images) started from a Baudrillard point of view, being initially inspired by his book *The Perfect Crime*⁸. More recently I have turned to the strategy expressed in the above quote by Deleuze and Guattari. I now embrace the artifice, or even double down on it, I admit to desiring the virtual. It is an acknowledgement of working from the inside. We should work with artifice and perversion but steer it into the direction of a desirable future, one where we approach the internal speed of the sun of constant [nuclear chaos](#) (the strongest form of becoming). One beautiful thing about the production process of filmmaking is its grandeur. The expansive collaborative nature of cinema allows projects to transcend me as a filmmaker and go faster and bigger than I will ever be capable of. The film becomes the sun that my flesh can melt into.

⁶ Anti-Oedipus (1972/1983), Deleuze and Guattari. 10th ed. University of Minnesota Press: p.321

⁷ Paul Virillio. Art, speed and cinematic energy: <https://youtu.be/3ePesDKjac0>

⁸ Baudrillard describes the *perfect crime* as the murder of "the real", we now rather have a mediated "real time". The crime does not seem to have left a trace, hence the *perfect crime*. I have not read the whole book. Once I encountered Steven Shaviro's text ["Returning to the Scene of the Perfect Crime, Or, How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Virtual"](#), I decided to give up on Baudrillard.

Manifesto #412290: cinematic acceleration and artifice

When we talk about acceleration in film, we need to address the speed of production and the velocity images can carry in themselves. The magnitude of images is often talked about, but we cannot ignore (change in) direction either. We direct our magnitude in the angle of a new world.

Multiple ways to achieve acceleration in film:

- Use fast editing and don't pause just to make a scene more comprehensible, that's when capital catches up. Embrace not being able to follow everything that happens, instead focus on the cinematic field of intensities.
- Pre-production should be used as research, not as creating a prophecy. The research should give you the material to be nimble during production and change your project "on the fly". Produce everything in as short a time period as possible.
- Writing text around the film should not be confused with filmmaking, a script is not scripture. The text can help identify directions, but the magnitude should be found in the production of images and sound themselves.
- Don't rely on intuition (lived experience is lived capital), rather look down the lines of potentiality, focus on the tendencies of our images and sound.
- Look at music for a lesson about rhythm and intensity. Make films like a musician. Perform the filmmaking.
- Even though the production of cinema often resembles that of military organization (including its hierarchy and sophisticated technology), we should reject the war machine, but steal its intensity and fast-moving machines.
- Speed up images and sounds with editing software.
- Embrace fiction to conjure up images and sounds of the future. Here traditional filmmaking techniques like set-building, elaborate costumes, make-up, big lighting set-ups, layered sound design and complex camera approaches can be used alongside images of online bodies.
- Lines that were traditionally drawn between A and B should be drawn from A to *n*. This applies to linear storytelling or to symbolic representation. We should change the direction of the line between symbol to image from a singular to a multiple. There is no "whole" symbol or "complete" image.
- Warp/distort images to make them into artifice.
- Show the becoming of artifice, of simulacra. Upon the anti-foundation of the artifice and simulacra we can build a new world.
- Compress your images and sounds so their data can be transferred quickly. This creates a *poor* image, described by Hito Steyerl as "a copy in motion. Its quality is bad, its resolution substandard. As it accelerates, it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image, a preview, a thumbnail, an errant idea, an itinerant image distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections, compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed, as well as copied and pasted into other channels of distribution."⁹
- Use *poor* images found anywhere (for example, rip something from youtube).

⁹ [In defense of the Poor Image](#) (2009), Steyerl

- Something like this one by Bresson: “Don’t have the soul of an executant (of my own projects). Find, for each shot, a new pungency over and above what I had imagined. Invention (re-invention) on the spot.”¹⁰
- NOT this one by Bresson (just like he didn’t follow it): “No music as accompaniment, support or reinforcement. No music at all.”¹¹
- Let our collaborators surprise us, no one has a veto.
- Use the culture of spectacle that our current sounds and images participate in, and double-down on their artifice (example: Pornography -> deepfake it). Make the spectacle double-down on itself.
- Since there is no outside, ram into the wall of the inside until it breaks.
- Make references to break outside the containment of a singular image, this will allow the image to be present in multiple places at once, reaching warp speed.
- Make sure there is always too much going on within the image and sound. A film should never make complete sense.

¹⁰ [Notes on Cinematography](#) (1975), Bresson.

¹¹ [Notes on Cinematography](#) (1975), Bresson.

IT IS FUN TO STEAL

This text is accompanied by a [blog post](#)¹² (including the comments at the bottom).

I have looked at stealing in multiple ways during my research and practice. What I identified in Dorian Electra's work is a type of appropriation that operates in [joyful passions](#), hence; stealing. This is opposed to the [sad passions](#) of reclaiming, or the art-historical notion of appropriation. Dorian Electra is mostly stealing a narrative. They freely use sounds and sound profiles (genres and styles) made available through the broken window of gestural theft. In the case of my film I also take stealing literally: when I deepfake porn, I do not pay the exploitative production company behind the [BLACKED](#) series nor do I ask for permission. I pirate those images and edit them how I see fit, without any regard for the rights (read commodification) associated with those images. I do, however, ask permission from my equal collaborator (read comrade) to use his face and music for that same video. I don't just want to steal aimlessly, how fun that might be, it is very clear to me that I want to steal from the aggregate that needs to be redistributed. Not only should we devalue the image sacrilegiously, we also have to actively redistribute images for them to be used for our future visual landscape. I strongly call upon visual artist and essayist Hito Steyerl's text [In Defense of the Poor Image](#)¹³. Steyerl lays out a way how the compressed, shared, linked, *poor* image can show a visual communist potential. I highly recommend reading her text as it is an extraordinary spot on the horizon of the online body.

The online body often already knows how to steal, or rather many online bodies were not created from the flesh of law that shapes theft. What I call stealing is for the online body [self-evident](#), it becomes them as if it was in their [nature](#). Stealing becomes more relevant the more rigid the laws are, and in cinema and pop music the laws are often strict. The strategies I try to explore implement the fluid characteristics of the online body into cinema (similar to how online bodies have already made a connection with pop music), in this case via stealing.

¹² <https://www.onlinebodies.net/post/its-fun-to-steal>

¹³ <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>

Manifesto #213957: It is fun to steal

It is fun to steal, but for cinema it is not only fun, it is necessary. We need to steal to escape the undead grasp of cinema's own tradition and become decommodified. We should identify who to steal from and how to execute theft. A few approaches:

1. Ignore copyright. Copyright hides under the thin veneer of protecting the artist and their production process, yet it has mostly served capital. It is an example where capital puts a restriction on itself to justify capitalism, restricting the flows of art to only lead to the already established aggregate of capital. The bigger the aggregate, the less impact copyright has on them when they transgress those laws (the aggregate can afford lawyers). When a film production company or studio is big enough, they can practically do whatever they want. The harm copyright does to the total web of creativity far outweighs the small benefits it might have in some cases for artists. In the end copyright protects and reinforces art as commodities and grossly rids its radical potential.
2. Respectfully decline the European form of copyright ("auteursrecht", in Dutch), even when slightly better in practice, it still views art as a commodifiable object. It is but a band-aid on the fissure of capitalist ontology.
3. When watching something on a computer or phone: use screen-capture. Work on "screenshotting hard", comparable to cumming really hard, screenshot with a similar gusto.
4. Stealing should be used as an attack on authorship, but beware, we cannot justify the law of authorship by its transgression, so this version of stealing should be done carelessly, with a blasé attitude, and always stemming from *joyful passions* - playfully pretending like the law of authorship didn't exist in the first place. Authorship pretentiously tries to make the communist process of producing cinema individual, singular, molar, total, focussed on one body, disregarding the endless bodies on all axes of cinema (the body of crew, the body of inspiration, the body of story, the body of audience...). If the production process is actually (forcefully) individual/teleological (read authoritarian), the product should be discarded anyway.
5. Steal ideas, or at least remove them from the hands that want to separate them from the flux. When you fish for ideas, be sure to throw them back in the flux. They die in the hands of the singular.
6. Steal from genre-film, steal those effective and impactful intensities but leave the rigid expectations behind.
7. Steal to acknowledge that we cannot produce in isolation. Faced with no outside, we resort to stealing as the most effective way to redistribute the inside. What would happen if we steal the foundations of the inside and display them joyfully as collective loot?
8. Don't fall for the deceptive ending of Disney's *Robin Hood* - there is no "good king". We steal until there is nothing left to steal.

This is an incomplete list. The path forward is simple: we must steal as much as we can.

DO NOT MAKE SENSE

This text is accompanied by two blog posts
[Kanye Skin, Kanye Masks](#)¹⁴ & [Arca and the Cyborg](#)¹⁵

We should not make sense. This way we can toy with the claws of capital because we can become non-commodifiable. However, when not making sense, we run the risk of being cryptic, vague and obfuscating. This is the tightrope we must walk. While there is immense power in polemic ambivalence, incomprehensible mixing of elements, and performatively not making sense, when not executed correctly it collapses on itself and becomes the absolute most worthless collection of undead scraps: vague art. Vague art is easily commodified as an *experience*, it does not offer any danger (there is nothing for capital to be scared of, because there is nothing at all). Many art institutions scramble to manufacture some urgency for fundamentally dull art and end up only delivering the dead-end of subjective experience. Incomprehensible mixed flows, however, are too hot for capital to touch. What does capital do with Kanye's lyric "[put my fist in her like a civil rights sign](#)"? There is nothing I loathe more than vagueness - it is like a cloud of weariness befuddling any impactful discourse. Vagueness is the Xanax of artistic strategies. We have to first identify the flows before we can meaningfully [decode](#) them¹⁶. Decoding for the sake of decoding is masturbating without ever getting an orgasm. This is another reason I look with so much gusto at pop music; pop artists are often excellent at recognizing dominant flows (of desire) and sonic territories. They identify the flows and therefore hold the power to decode, even when they often don't. Something doesn't have to make sense but it should make sensory. Vagueness has the light touch of a ghost, but we should pack some machinic punch.

¹⁴ <https://www.onlinebodies.net/post/kanye-skin-kanye-masks>

¹⁵ <https://www.onlinebodies.net/post/arca-and-the-cyb0rg>

¹⁶ About revolutionary decoding Deleuze and Guattari say in *Anti-Oedipus*: "And that is indeed what undermines capitalism: where will the revolution come from, and in what form within the exploited masses? It is like death—where, when? It will be a decoded flow, a deterritorialized flow that runs too far and cuts too sharply, thereby escaping from the axiomatic of capitalism."

How does Kanye not make sense?

Confronted with the rigid capital/state ontology of identity, subjectivity and faciality, we should gladly [lose face](#). Kanye achieves this in two ways. The first loss of face is through the decoding of language around blackness by fundamentally denying final interpretation (what could possibly be the final interpretation of [Blood On The Leaves](#)? Or [I'm In It](#)? Or [Ultralight Beam](#)?). Kanye produces inimitable music and politics - does he really have frameable politics? How do you definitely describe Kanye's discography? I call upon Fred Moten's text [Black and Nothingness \(Mysticism in the Flesh\)](#) for this one:

"What would it be, deeper still, what is it, to think from no standpoint; to think outside the desire for a standpoint? What emerges in the desire that constitutes a certain proximity to that thought is not (just) that blackness is ontologically prior to the logistic and regulative power that is supposed to have brought it into existence but that blackness is prior to ontology; or, in a slight variation of what Chandler would say, blackness is the anoriginal displacement of ontology, that it is ontology's anti- and ante-foundation, ontology's underground, the irreparable disturbance of ontology's time and space."¹⁷

The second loss of face is Kanye's terrible reputation, amongst fans and haters alike. Kanye invents a new [mask](#) every year, yet he manages to [lose](#) his face every time. I call upon Bresson in Kanye's defense:

"Laugh at a bad reputation. Fear a good one that you could not sustain."¹⁸

Any other examples?

A good example of a text that breaks flows but uses their magnitude, one that walks the tightrope between vagueness and deterritorialization is Bataille's [Solar Anus](#). The solar anus is an image that, by itself, already manages to break a flow in a strong way (from biggest god-like orb to most human-like circle). I will use it in my film. Perhaps a more contemporary example would be Travis Scott with his opening track [Pornography](#) from his debut album [Rodeo](#):

"Nine light years away, just outside of the Kepler solar system
We find ourselves consumed and utterly mesmerized
With a story of a young rebel against the system
Refusing to conform or comply to the ways of authority

¹⁷ This text by Fred Moten serves as an excellent example of what I am trying to describe. The text is difficult and dense, with exploding lines of reference every paragraph. It does not always make direct sense, but it is razor sharp when looked at in detail. The text also uses language for rhythm and melody, when you are a bit lost in the web of references, the text becomes a song. Fred Moten uses the ante-logical use of language just as much as the epistemological.

¹⁸ [Notes on Cinematography](#) (1975), Bresson.

He chose the mood of "Fuck this shit"
At that moment, the one known as Jacques turned to Scott
Chose to jump off his mama porch leading the stampede of lost souls
In the middle of their metamorphosis, not quite through with their journey
Ain't made it to wherever the fuck they gon' be in life
But wherever it is, it's better than here, so fuck you, and fuck this"

Scott both opens lines of flight to different solar (anus) systems, but also acknowledges the inside of the material reality of "his mama porch". The song then continues.

"No monogamy, ménage with me
Pornography surrounding me
You get high with me, you come down with me
That's all I need in my fantasy"

No monogamy! Away with the singular! Get rid of your face! Reject [subjectivity](#)! In Travis Scott's case (but not only in his case), the logical conclusion of rejecting monogamy becomes pornography, an artifice. That is, however, a starting point for a flow of desire to be decoded into something fitting of a new world (perhaps one that is, figuratively, nine light years away). The online body, the song by Travis Scott and Bataille's *Solar Anus* have a certain potential in common. All three of them find a powerful fusion between the fantasy/virtual/online/fiction and the material/physical/tangible. This fusion, comparable to the nuclear fusion that makes up the sun, is what can constitute an art of becoming. It is a [fusion](#) that often does not make [sense](#), but in its relationship to the material manages to avoid drowning in vagueness.

But also Arca right?

Not making sense should always stem from MORE not from less. Post-human artist Arca does not render gender "meaningless" to then leave a void, she rather invents *n* genders. She *transforms*. She embraces the harsh anti-subjectivity of Harraway's [cyborg](#) and, just like her late contemporary [SOPHIE](#), gets rid of her face. Deleuze and Guattari's present non-human sexuality and its involvement in a *schizo-revolution* as this:

"Anthropomorphic molar representation culminates in the very thing that founds it, the ideology of lack. The molecular unconscious, on the contrary, knows nothing of castration, because partial objects lack nothing and form free multiplicities as such; because the multiple breaks never cease producing flows, instead of repressing them, cutting them at a single stroke—the only break capable of exhausting them; because the syntheses constitute local and nonspecific connections, inclusive disjunctions, nomadic conjunctions: everywhere a microscopic transsexuality, resulting in the woman containing as many men as the man, and the man as many women, all capable of entering— men with women, women with men—into relations of production of desire that overturn the statistical order of the sexes. Making love is not just

becoming as one, or even two, but becoming as a hundred thousand. Desiring-machines or the nonhuman sex: not one or even two sexes, but n sexes. Schizoanalysis is the variable analysis of the n sexes in a subject, beyond the anthropomorphic representation that society imposes on this subject, and with which it represents its own sexuality. The schizoanalytic slogan of the desiring-revolution will be first of all: to each its own sexes."¹⁹

Arca confronts state ontology by producing too much to define. She [releases four albums simultaneously](#), all with the necessary [kiCk](#). No vagueness found there. Rather Arca mixes flows to make them explode, an explosion that by sheer multitude is difficult to catch.

What about the online body?

The online body rarely makes sense either, although it constantly makes [sensory](#). The flows of online bodies can operate on a similar plane as the flows of capital, who by themselves also do not make sense. It is only the restrictions and boundaries that capital places on itself (a.k.a. capitalism) that then requires the making of sense, to justify its aggregates. The online body does not necessitate the aggregate (although in combination with capital it does often lead to aggregation) and it happily breaks flows.

¹⁹ Anti-Oedipus (1972/1983), Deleuze and Guattari. 10th ed. University of Minnesota Press: p.295/296

Manifesto #5744900203948488844330: BE(cum) inside and indiscernible

1. Don't make sense, make sensory
2. Don't elaborate
3. Lose face
4. Don't be vague
- 5.