

## Editorial Introduction

### Facing Precarity

Chris Rudge

University of Sydney

But what was interesting was that we all dispersed before the final announcement was made, because we didn't want to hear it, and we didn't want to see it. We all knew it was coming, but we didn't want to see the fanfare, we didn't want to see the ceremony, we certainly, I think, didn't... want to see Trump's face, quite frankly.

*Also sprach* Judith Butler in an interview with David Runciman on *Talking Politics*, a podcast recorded at the University of Cambridge in the immediate wake of Donald J. Trump's election to President-elect.<sup>1</sup> Among her myriad incisive remarks, the final line in the passage above is illuminating—although not because it is incisive. It offers no cool-headed explanation for Trump's ascension (that is something Butler does elsewhere in the interview). Instead, it conveys Butler's desire to avoid facing Trump, an admission as candid as it is non-intellectualised (in the Freudian sense of "intellectualisation"). And it is illuminating precisely because it so straightforward, and acknowledges so openly perhaps what is power's most frightening and

object dimension: its *visual* dimension, and particularly the visual image of its “face.”

It is not the first time Butler has emphasised the affective power of faces. Previously Butler has called on Emmanuel Levinas (often said to be “everything to everyone”) to underscore the importance of the human face. And although Butler recognises that the Levinasian face is “not precisely or exclusively a human face,” this face presents itself in her essay collection of 2004, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, a book written in response to 9/11.<sup>2</sup> The volume undertakes to enact a “cultural transposition” of Levinas’s philosophy of the face so as to bring into focus “a conception of ethics that rests upon an apprehension of the precariousness of life, one that begins with the precarious life of the Other.” In the book’s preface (a word with uncanny valences here), Butler argues that to apprehend or to “view” another’s face—or, better, *the* Other’s face—is to perform a civic duty. It is to act charitably and empathically, to afford a measure of recognition to those who live precarious lives: the marginalised, the destitute, the poverty-stricken. “Certain faces must be admitted into public view,” she writes, “for some keener sense of the value of life, all life, to take hold.”<sup>3</sup> The face then functions as a guarantor—maybe *the* guarantor—of one’s dignity. To “show one’s face” is to petition for care, to ask for empathy. In turn, to apprehend and account for the petitioner’s face is to relent to their supplication. It is to be reminded of the value of “all life.” In such interlocutions as these, the face is foundational.

Alas, many faces are invisible—or, perhaps worse, visible only ever as monstrous. It is a situation with thick ramifications. “Those who remain faceless or whose faces are presented to us as so many symbols of evil,” Butler points out, “authorize us to become senseless before those lives we have eradicated, and whose grievability is indefinitely postponed.” Subject to the familiar systems of racial and class profiling under mediatisation, faces have been reduced to immutable signs. Devoid of potential meanings, their denotations hyperstatic, faces are knowable only by means of a “senseless” optics. They are detectable only as so many synecdoches for other concepts:

race, religion, ethnicity—anything that mitigates the “value” of that human life. A “senseless” reading of faces would thus be one that is “authorized” to dismiss that affective experience, that aleatory flight of feeling, that comes with gazing at a face. It is one that would sooner repudiate all that the Romantics valorised about visualising, about seeing and feeling with nature, than attempt to redevelop such senses and sensibilities. Such a senseless reading would also establish itself with the certitude of positivism, and impose the strictures—“build the walls”—of criteriological, taxonomic thought around a face and its meaning. These are practices of “dysrecognition.”<sup>4</sup> However, to bring this notion into consonance with Butler’s idiom, these dysrecognitions are not just cognitive but performative. Informed as we are by mediatiation, one does not just (or even) *think* “This face is forgettable, that face worth remembering; this face dangerous, that face benign.” Instead, one *performs* these operations: by averting one’s eyes, dispersing from a scene (as Butler’s candid narrative illustrates), moving from one community or neighbourhood to another, and so on.

In the Australian context, there persists an obvious absence from the mediascape of many kinds of other faces. Rarely seen are the faces of those who have sought asylum in Australia, many of them children; they remain stranded in the immigration detention centres of Nauru, Christmas Island, the Kimberley, Villawood, and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Most of the Indigenous peoples who live in parlous conditions in the north of the continent, in a region twice the size of France, where shortages of water persist, such as in the ironically named Utopia (the Urapuntja communities), remain similarly invisible.<sup>6</sup> And the same applies to the many thousands of victims of domestic and family violence across the country (an exception is 2015 Australian of the Year Rosie Batty).<sup>7</sup> The sheer imperceptibility of these faces, of these marginalised groups and the phenomena that torment them, not only allows their “senseless” social exclusion to continue; it also enables their various forms of precarity to amplify and metastasise. That which remains unseen, Michel Foucault attested in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, remains unchallenged and unchanged. And throughout all of his writing, Foucault variously reasserted the view. Only a

disciplinary *optics*, one that would subvert the *sine qua non* of the closed institution by entering it, gazing back at it, and enacting a form of “counterveillance,” could establish the kind of force necessary to bring about meaningful changes in our political and institutional structures.<sup>8</sup> No doubt this is why, as Deleuze observed, *Discipline and Punish* (for one) employs all kinds of “optics and color” to vividly illustrate and supplement Foucault’s many insightful “theatrical analyses” of power and punishment in prisons. For if “speaking is not seeing” (as Deleuze, again, observes, this time quoting from Blanchot), then it falls to the speaker, the writer, to make up for this lack, to compensate for this imagistic void intrinsic in writing. And it falls to them to do so with an intensive form of pictorial adumbration. To cite only one example from Deleuze’s reading, when Foucault prompts the reader to picture the “red on red of the tortured inmates,” the illustration begins to make up for the prisoners’ invisibility. The optics are a counterresponse to the prisoners’ absence, an attempt to repair and redress the prisoners’ textual effacement.<sup>9</sup>

Only months ago, the power of prison optics became conspicuous in Australia. The source, some disturbing footage of an Indigenous minor, Dylan Voller, who had been detained in two juvenile detention centres in Darwin and Alice Springs, appeared in the investigatory documentary “Australia’s Shame,” aired by *Four Corners*.<sup>10</sup> The victim of a series of brutal, abusive beatings by detention centre guards, Voller, then fourteen years old, was stripped naked and assaulted, his trauma writ large on his face and his abuse captured in many long minutes of security recordings. Later, in a different series of visions, photographs captured a different, but equally disturbing scene. Now seventeen years old, Voller was sat in a restraint chair, his arms tied down to the chair’s arms, a black hood covering his face. It was a striking cloak, not just because it both obscured Voller’s head and impaired his vision, but because it also recalled those cloaks that prisoners once wore in the electric chair, or while being publicly hanged, in jurisdictions outside Australia.

And yet, Voller’s face was not the only one to be obscured in the report. Also hidden were the faces of the prison guards who

abused Voller. Yet they were masked differently: not by a cloak, but by a blurred form of digital pixelation, presumably to protect their legal innocence. (They had not, after all, been convicted of any wrongdoing.) And although the pixelation might be thought to have formed a neutral mask for them, what it tends to realise, as Paul Virilio has argued, is another kind of effacement. Here it inscribed in the guards' faces and bodies a new "visibility." This was a salience not mitigated or erased by pixelation, but made even more marked by it, a salience not to be ignored as meaningless but to be more attentively registered. It was a salience "defined by its unreadability."<sup>11</sup> Pixelation, in this case and more generally, fails to retain or protect the humanity of those it purports to obscure. Instead, it brings into even sharper focus the uncanny performances of these faceless bodies. It highlights not just their actions but what are perhaps the most typical effects of effacement: alienation and dehumanisation.

But perhaps equally as disturbing as Voller's mistreatment by these faceless men—and just as unsettling as his own effacement by hood—was Voller's and his fellow detainees' more general absence from the news media before this episode's airing. When images of Voller and the other abuse victims finally appeared, it was "shocking," and repulsive enough to prompt immediate executive intervention. A mere twelve hours after the broadcast, the Prime Minister announced the government's intention to issue a Royal Commission, its task to inquire into and report on the abuses at these prisons.<sup>12</sup>

These events and these considerations are likely to call to memory the sixteenth-century proverb "Out of sight, out of mind." The phrase has long summarised how the absence of visual images not only conditions but constitutes our responses to ideas and events.<sup>13</sup> The corollary, which Butler's critique implies, is that when certain faces appear before us—those of victims of war, of violence, or exclusion—the visual impressions are inspiring, even catalytic. Moved by a great pathos, we can do no other than mourn their traumas or losses in overtures of pity, grief, and anger. A notable illustration of the point is the case of Omran Daqneesh, a five-year-old Syrian boy injured in an Aleppo airstrike, whose face appeared before the world, to be

seen by millions the globe over, on the front pages of the *New York Times*, the *London Times*, and online. Sat at an orange chair, his face covered in blood, his body layered with soot and dust, Daqneesh was promptly described in many accounts as the paradigmatic “symbol of Syrian suffering.”<sup>14</sup> Another example is that of Ayaln Kurdi, the drowned Syrian boy whose body washed ashore on a Turkish beach in late 2015, his death widely commiserated on social media with the hashtag “#KiyiyaVuranInsanlik,” or “humanity washed up ashore.”<sup>15</sup> Multiple images of Kurdi’s lifeless body appeared on the front pages of newspapers and online media, leading one student journalist to attest to such images’ democratic service: “The power to shock is a vital instrument of journalism, and therefore democracy.” They engendered a similar response from Douglas Brinkley, professor of history at Rice University: “once in a while, an image breaks through the noisy, cluttered global culture and hits people in the heart and not the head.”<sup>16</sup> Like the human face, images of suffering sing out, cry out, for our notice, lying before us as like so many forewarnings.

And yet many have placed less faith in the power of photographs, just as many have been sceptical of such images as these, which urge us to reflect on precarious life. Christopher Dickey, for one, sees something of a fetishistic, even erotic, element in the reproduction of catastrophe, that there is “something obscene” in the production of these pictures. “Shall we call it disaster porn?” he asks, before dismissing the idea. That would be “too easy,” he concludes, because classifying these photos as a kind of pornography, even ironically, “lets us compartmentalize the horror, and lets us do what we really want to do with it: forget it about it.”<sup>17</sup> But Dickey’s question is cogent—and his suggestion nothing new. The phrase “disaster porn,” for instance, is usually credited to the novelist Pat Cadigan, who recorded it in his 1991 cyberpunk novel, *Synners*. There, a hacker named Valjean describes her bedroom setup. Her wall, which features a different “screen for every porn channel,” is a glossary of porn categories, ranging from “disaster porn,” through “food porn,” to “tech-fantasy porn.”<sup>18</sup> Porn, we should know by now, is not simply about sex. Inevitably it is also a metonym for masturbation, and, as such, its

associations cut across a wide spectrum. As often as porn is consumed by the modern, independent, sex-positive subject, it is characterised as an unhealthy indulgence, in critical theory, addiction studies, or theology. Perhaps this is why “porn,” when used as a modifying noun, connotes both *jouissance* and paraphilic obsession: its valences remain both positive and negative. The Indigenous journalist Amy McQuire adopted the idiom when she recently criticised the SBS television series *First Contact*, a program in which celebrities make “first contact” with Indigenous Australian culture. McQuire cited the program as an example of “poverty porn and trauma TV.”<sup>19</sup> But if porn can be as varied—and as freighted—as this, and if there is such a thing as precarity porn, what does it mean to consume it?

Theorists of pornography have lately begun to grapple with the genre’s increasing heterogeneity. Porn’s contemporary definitions, we learn, are “explosively expansionary,” its criteria having come “unmoored from artistic basics with stunning alacrity.”<sup>20</sup> But reader response theory might allow us to see how these images of people caught in disasters, those who face precarity whom we call the precariat, might elicit the same affectivities as pornography. Both imageries, one could say, compel viewers to gaze at a rare, taboo, and loaded subject. And yet, being human, or humans, the subject is also intimately familiar. In states of pain, danger, and traumatic injury, the human face is strikingly expressive, perhaps no less so than when it bends in the rapture of sexual excitement. Both faces, we can say, might stimulate the one who apprehends them. And in both kinds of scenes one sees a projection of a subject’s face, one that calls out for special examination, inviting a study of its “face-work.”<sup>21</sup> Projected before us, the face compels us to scrutinise its “micro-movements,” as Deleuze calls them.<sup>22</sup> It asks us to detect its semiotic function, its indexicality, before too long either it or its viewer has nurtured a pathic, erotic, or some other response into being.

These reflections on the faces of precarity and pornography are doubtless provocative, perhaps even scandalous. But they only barely suggest the photographer’s collusion in the portrayal of disaster, and only allude to the way in which a photographer might aid and abet the

exhibition of tragedy. It is a role that Susan Sontag criticised in her *On Photography*, some three decades ago:

... the act of photographing is more than passive observing. Like sexual voyeurism, it is a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging whatever is going on to keep happening. To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged... to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing.<sup>23</sup>

Sontag's view, as widely noted, shares something with that of Roland Barthes. In the essay "Shock-Photos," Barthes remarks that "photographs exhibited to shock us have no effect at all." The problem for Barthes is that the photographer of the shocking photograph "has too generously substituted himself for us," where "too generously," of course, means too selfishly. The photographer has stolen from us the privilege of determining the photograph's meaning by ourselves.<sup>24</sup> In this way the work is more prescription than description, its meaning (for there can be only one, so narrow is its creator's motive) too fixed, in fact overdetermined, to begin with. But if the photograph exhibited to shock is to be dismissed—for its voyeurism, its complicity in the subject's suffering, or for its overdetermination—what is there to condemn in the case of the unmediated sensory image? What can be criticised about the real-life image, about the face that presents itself directly before our eyes, a living thing, the subject of our vision?

Central to Sontag's and Barthes's criticisms of photography is that photographers exert an excessive degree of control over what their viewers see, as well as what their subject can say. This is why, for Barthes, news media photographs are so much more shocking than artistic ones. The former's "naturalness," he writes, compels "the spectator to a violent interrogation," one that is unencumbered by the imposing, "demiurgic presence" of the photographer.<sup>25</sup> But what could be any *less* encumbered than real life, than our minds and bodies, the oldest technologies we have under our control, as they directly encounter the face of precarious life? With this question we are

compelled to draw a distinction between the photographed face and that of a real-life human in our midst, between the mediated face and that which we see “on the ground.” It is also to evoke a Cartesian formulation of optics, focused on different ways of seeing—embodied versus non-corporeal, mental versus organic.

So what does it mean, in this context, to shun a face—to avert one’s eyes as a new face appears, but to meet the face of another? What does it mean to become the master of one’s own “facial recognition” apparatus, to acknowledge the value of one face while ignoring that of another? And what does it mean to lose control of this same apparatus, to discover that our cognitive bearings have become so disoriented that we “forget” a face that we know—or *should* know? Of course, forgetting and repressing are not the same, just as looking and overlooking (which is to say selectively ignoring, choosing to “not see”) are different. Different degrees of consciousness contour and constitute each category. But is the impulse or *trieb* that leads one, such as Butler, to ignore or avoid the abject image of power, to avoid seeing the face of someone like Trump, the same as that which leads one to avoid encountering the face of a war-injured infant, to overlook this face of utter *powerlessness*?

Butler suggests that to avoid a face is to deny to its owner the palliation of one’s grief. In averting our eyes, we “indefinitely postpone” the other’s “grievability.” The claim is unsurprising if one understands the function of grief as political resistance, as Butler herself understands it in *Antigone’s Claim* (2000), her book-length study of Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus and Oedipus’s mother, Jocasta. Recalling Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick’s description of “reparative reading,” Butler’s study of Antigone reveals how this figure’s grief is really a means of restitution and reparation. To mourn an “unspeakable” loss, we discover, is to challenge the structures that both organise and authorise public grief itself.<sup>26</sup> Antigone’s grief for her brother Polyneices is proscribed under her uncle Creon’s law—it is “explicitly prohibited by edict.” So, in grieving and burying her brother, Antigone directly and willfully arrogates the laws and norms of Thebes. To be sure, it is in an act of political defiance, but it is so much more than this too, especially

when one accounts for the dubious genealogical and kinship lineages that structure the authority of that polis. And though yet she grieves for Polyneices, Antigone does not grieve for her other brothers, one of whom is also her father, Oedipus. Rather, Antigone's grief for them, as Butler notes, "remains unspoken," just as silent as her grief for her fiancé, Haemon (Creon's son), who suicides at the end of Sophocles's drama, following Antigone's own suicide.<sup>27</sup> Selectively distributed, Antigone's grief thus allows her to reassert authority in circumstances where the "violent forgetting of primary kin" would ordinarily signal, in Butler's words, the "inauguration of symbolic masculine authority." For if Antigone's quiet sequestration into domesticity would signify her acquiescence to the patrilineal order, then her outpouring of grief, her admission of her brother into the class of the "grievable," and her willingness to defy Creon by asserting her family's burial rights, constitutes a seditious rejection of this patriarchal state, a sedition driven not only by Antigone's vehement defence of kinship relations, but by her mission to reconfigure the alliances and coalitions one is able to forge within the polis.<sup>28</sup> What is more, we could also view Antigone's grief process in terms of different ways of facing precarity. Using my rough schema, Antigone's selective grieving amounts to a selective encounter with a range of faces, her insistence on grieving for and burying Polyneices another way of viewing his face.

Of course, only a very blurry line could distinguish what has been forgotten from what has been repressed. Has Antigone forgotten her other brothers, or has she repressed them? Butler proposes that Antigone's grief for Polyneices might be a condensation of her grief for all her kin. Her grief for one is her grief for all, a singular, cathectic way of expressing the sweep of kinship feelings she has otherwise resisted. Antigone has not forgotten about those other brothers, has not mislaid their faces; nor has she discharged the emotional energy associated with their deaths. She has channeled all of it into the "singularity of her brother," producing what is for Butler a "suspect" conflation.<sup>29</sup> But perhaps even more suspect than this transposition are its oedipal elements, as Patricia J. Johnson points out. In an essay titled "Women's Third Face," she writes that Antigone is "unable

or unwilling to make the socially-requisite transition away from her oedipal attachment [first to her father, and then to her brother] through exogamic marriage.”<sup>30</sup> Having already lost her father, her first love object, Antigone grieves instead for Polyneices, transferring what is quite literally her oedipal desire for her father to her brother, and thence mourning his loss as if it were that of her father, which is to say that of a lover.

This reading has broader implications for the processes of empathy. It suggests that one’s ability to recognise another’s suffering—or, as I am describing it (following Butler), to apprehend a face—may require one to be moved by some erotic or libidinal *trieb*. It is an implication already suggested by the voyeuristic and narcissistic drives which Sontag and Barthes impute to the shock photographer. Empathy, notably, has often been regarded as foundationally narcissistic, as something that is always already invested with what Freud called “sexual overvaluation.”<sup>31</sup> And as Hilary Davis writes, “We may think that when we empathize we see and feel through the eyes of the other, but in fact what we are doing is reducing the Otherness to what can be misrecognized as their sameness to our imagined Selves.”<sup>32</sup> And so empathy has always been a metaphoric leap, one that seems hardly possible. The prefix “em,” from the Greek for “in,” has always required us to think of empathy as a process through which we put another’s suffering—their pathos—“in” to our own bodies and minds. But then again, even Freud offers a qualification to the proposition that empathy requires narcissism, identifying nothing less than love as the balancing rule between selfish desire and selflessness. “When someone is completely in love,” Freud writes, “altruism converges with [the] libidinal object cathexis.” Love, then, can allow for the harmonious and sustainable confluence of sexual desire and empathy.

But the opposite might also be true for the resolution of what might be called pathic conflicts, such as oedipal conflicts. To be brought to an end, such attachments may call for a denial of love. They may need us to forget, that is, both the altruistic and sexual impulses that converge to form what we call love. While putatively a “bad female,” Antigone’s grief for Polyneices ironically affords her the wherewithal

to do precisely this. By burying her brother, she can express her altruism while also forgetting her oedipal (read incestuous) love for him. Ironically, it is precisely this kind of resolution that Creon's edict, although implicitly, also seeks to bring about. Unlike the many examples of "normal" women in the play (many feminist critics have identified Ismene, Antigone's sister, or Argia, Polyneice's wife, as the normative foils to Antigone), Antigone is not bound by the exogamous mores of the State, regulated as they are by sanction or taboo (or, as in this case, an edict).<sup>33</sup> Instead, she nurtures what Isabelle Torrance calls this "at least obsessive, if not incestuous" relationship with Polyneices, an affiliation characterised by that confluence of altruistic and libidinal forces just mentioned.<sup>34</sup> If Antigone cannot bear to show obedience before Creon's symbolic edict, it is because the laws of the polis cannot substitute for, and thus cannot themselves resolve, her proscribed desires for Polyneices. Only her mode of grieving, her sprinkling of a light veil of dust over her brother's cadaver—an act that is at once a burial and not a burial, at once a recognition of Polyneices's face and an effacement of the same—can substitute for and thus resolve her taboo feelings. It is a ritual that all at once allows Antigone to forget her unconscious desire to revive her brother—and to forget him—but also to embrace this loss. It is, in Derrida's words, the final "dissociation that causes [and allows] the organic to return to the inorganic."<sup>35</sup> To forget, then, is to dissociate. It is to cause or to allow what lives now to wither.

But the causes of forgetting are ampler still. In some cases, face forgetting is a pathological problem, its symptoms grouped under the nosological category prosopagnosia. This is a disorder marked enough to repudiate and exhaust even the most determined of psychoanalytic interpretations. Those who find themselves diagnosed with prosopagnosia, often called face blindness, exhibit an impaired ability to recognise all human faces, detecting neither their closest friends' faces nor their own face in a mirror. More frequently, face forgetting, as with Freudian slips, is conceived of not as a pathological but a normative feature of the human predicament, where to make cognitive errors ("to err") is constitutive.<sup>36</sup>

In his 1898 essay “The Psychical Mechanism of Forgetfulness,” Freud reported an episode in which he mislaid not the face but the name of the famous Italian artist Luca Signorelli. Indeed, Freud remembered both the artist’s paintings and his face vividly.<sup>37</sup> Volunteering his analysis some years later, in his twelfth seminar of 1965, Jacques Lacan suggested that Freud had identified himself with Signorelli. Thus, the “sudden illumination” of Signorelli’s face—an illumination “given to the very image of the one whose name is lost”—signified “that which in language can only be expressed by the lack.”<sup>38</sup> If we now imagine transposing this episode’s elements to our everyday experience of perceiving a face, it becomes possible to propose an experimental psychic process. The assumption is that to truly behold and recognise a face, to imbue its image with a “sudden illumination,” is to temporarily forget the owner’s proper name, and to forget all those associations that occur as we perceive the face. The reasoning is analogical: just as Freud’s temporary forgetfulness coincides with a rich memory of the artist’s works and face, throwing focus on their humanness, so might focusing on a person’s face allow us to briefly forget their name, and instead to throw focus on their work and humanness. We might look upon that person whose name we forget as if seeing their face for the first time. In this moment, all of the corresponding “proper” features coincident with their name disappear, suddenly absent from our minds. The theory is that having become so disoriented, our senses newly deprived both of the subject’s name and its associations, we might find ourselves better able to register only that subject’s humanness.

To remember or forget, of course, requires us to have learnt something in the first place, a memory which we may retrieve or mislay. The same is true of repression, which, as Adrian Johnston observes, “requires some minimal, concrete experiential content which it can exclude from consciousness.”<sup>39</sup> But this amnesia or forgetfulness associated with repression, this excluding of content from consciousness, must surely be triggered by a protective or defensive mechanism. It reflects our unconscious or subconscious yearning to fend off threats, a trait that is as hard-wired in humans as any other.

But since threats are often predictable, and may be made subject to cognitive and metacognitive analysis, they might also be *consciously* avoided, resisted even before they are immediately apprehended. A concrete example is this: before a threatening image may even come into one's view, one may take the pre-emptive, conscious decision to avert one's eyes. In this way, the subject can sidestep any coming to realisation of the "imagined" or "predicted" vision, altogether circumventing the threat. Cognitive psychologists have confirmed the principle in gaze avoiders. Gaze avoidance, they agree, may "function as an attempt to avoid signs of social threat."<sup>40</sup> And it is precisely this kind of conscious response that we encounter when Butler takes the decision to disperse before the all but inevitable announcement of Trump's ascension to President-elect, a decision to exclude certain yet-to-be realised content from the mind.

But what exactly causes one to avoid retrieving memories, and whether we agree with Freud's repressive hypothesis, seem less important questions now, in this era of machine learning and automation, than they were in the heyday of psychoanalysis.<sup>41</sup> Facebook uses applied machine learning to teach computers sophisticated object detection, for instance. The capability is impressively demonstrated when one uploads a photo to the website and discovers that Facebook has correctly and automatically identified, or "tagged," those whose faces appear in the photos.<sup>42</sup> We do not wonder *why* Facebook (or the machine that processes Facebook's code) proceeds to recognise or "recall" the names of the people who appear in the images. That would be silly. And questions along the lines of "Could Facebook elect *not* to tag the photo?" are hardly worth posing. For we know the answers. All that really matters in this equation is that Facebook's code is permitted to run without any interruption—that the program is not derailed or corrupted. But in this example, we also see one way in which facial recognition can be a cold and unfeeling procedure. Facial recognition is often less a virtue borne of empathy or social sensitivity (much less a hermeneutical deduction) than it is the effect of sheer catalepsy, a product of the programming and the data-processing power of the modern computer.

Similarly nonhuman procedures have arisen in the case of reading and lexicography. For instance, the grammarian Bryan Garner recently extolled the virtues Google Books's Ngram viewer, an automated online application that allows linguists and scholars to better understand the history and morphological evolution of a given word or phrase.<sup>43</sup> Enter a word and specify a time period in the web application's text fields, and it will crawl for hits within Google Books's prolific corpus, producing a line graph that charts the word's publication frequency.<sup>44</sup> Scanning a wealth of "data" derived from a massive repository of more than five million digitised books, the tool searches over 360 billion English words to find its results, scouring a database that Google Books began amassing in 2004.<sup>45</sup> In 2011, one study found that Google's collection of books had become so gargantuan that it could not actually be "read by a human." And if one were hubristic enough to attempt reading only the database's English-language entries, this task alone would take some 80 years (provided one neither ate nor slept, and had selected only about eleven years' worth of the database's books).<sup>46</sup>

Broken down into its parts, the Ngram viewer, like Facebook's automated face detection software, is a combinatorial of digitisation, optical technology, fast computer processing power, and big data. Taken in sum, the Ngram viewer constitutes something of a superhuman reader—a strict machine that deploys an analytical mode of reading far exceeding human potential. And yet, it cannot be denied that the apparent "reader" of these works remains utterly nonhuman. Offering little more than a quantitative analysis of the words, it is no more alive (and perhaps even less so) than "Number Five," the speed-reading robot in John Badham's schlocky science fiction film, *Short Circuit*. (The film is a precursor to Steven Spielberg's *A.I.* and an obvious antecedent of older stories of the cyborg genre, such as *Pinochio* and *Frankenstein*.)

Of course, the posthuman or cyborgian thematic, with its tertiary fixation on the *humanness* of many automation processes, probably reached its height through the 1980s to early 2000s, when Donna Haraway's influential essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto" and, later, such

critical monographs as N. Katherine Hayles's *My Mother Was a Computer* (2005) were published.<sup>47</sup> For the title of the latter work, Hayles borrowed this striking phrase from the scholar Anne Balsamo. It served not only to remind readers of a time in the early twentieth century when women working as data processors had been known as “computers,” but illustrated “the panoply of issues raised by the relation of Homo Sapiens to Robo sapiens, humans to intelligent machines.”<sup>48</sup> In the decade or so between Hayles's book and the present, this panoply of issues has only deepened and intensified. Now, an ever increasing number of automated machines seems to ricochet only as so many prognostications about the demise of manual, which is to say human, labour. Hence the familiar caution in the opening line of Peter Frase's 2015 book, *Four Futures*: “Two specters are haunting Earth in the twenty-first century: the specters of ecological catastrophe and automation.”<sup>49</sup> And for humanist academics in the twenty-first century (as well as for scientists), the precarious future of knowledge work—and of knowledge itself—is particularly spectral.<sup>50</sup> Writes Michael Burawoy:

Information technology has transformed the labour process so as to make the sale of labour power ever more precarious... [but] at the same time, knowledge is itself subject to commodification, as its production and dissemination is increasingly organized for the needs of those who can buy it, notwithstanding its open dissemination.<sup>51</sup>

Moves toward open access (OA) models of publishing notwithstanding, indications of growing concern for authorship rights in the precarious academic and higher education contexts—environments increasingly threatened by privatisation and casualisation—appear all around us.<sup>52</sup> In the last two years, petitions requesting better author rights and fairer copyright terms were lodged by editorial staff at two prestigious journals, *Cognition* and *Lingua*, both published by Elsevier.<sup>53</sup> One need not undertake a formal political-economic analysis to perceive the for-profit basis of the contemporary publishing model. With a view to

monetise research publications through exorbitant subscription fees, and to limit rates of compensation to authors, the model is clearly the product of so many business-minded CEOs.

But if Google Books distinguishes itself from such publishing companies as Elsevier—perhaps because, as is often said, it does something to help “democratise knowledge”—it could still be criticised for different reasons. For instance, the advent of Google Books has led to the automation of reading, helping to valorise, particularly through its Ngram Viewer, the *quantification* of words and phrases, but doing little to enhance any serious assessment of their quality. Still, the ways in which the Ngram viewer has begun and has yet to reshape our work in the humanities may be seen in more positive lights too. Google Books is a tool that may be readily assimilated into our scholarly modes, and in that way be humanised. It is worth remembering, after all, that humans, not machines, must always be recruited to interpret the data; for as Derrida indicated, it is not the pharmakon that in fact kills or cures, but the talisman’s misuse by the user.<sup>54</sup>

Only last month, Jennifer Howard made a similar point when she warned of the pitfalls of automation paranoia and instead argued for refocused attention on the ways in which humans more commonly use data for their own ill-begotten gains. “It would be a disaster to let this decade spiral into a tech-enriched replay of the 1930s,” she wrote. “Fear technology if you must, but fear the people who control it more.”<sup>55</sup> But at the same time as we fear these malevolents who exploit technology for selfish reasons, we should recall the many who put technology to its best public uses, should remember in particular the many social scientists, anthropologists, evolutionary theorists, linguists, and psychologists who have already used Google’s Ngram viewer to invent and advance a nuanced modality involving the quantitative analysis of culture, or, as they have called it, the study of “culturomics.”<sup>56</sup> Seen in this light, the Ngram viewer is not just an apt allegory for the “precarity” of our humanistic mode of reading, but a useful tool for gauging the linguistic development of cultural ideas.

Ironies aside, one such cultural idea the Ngram viewer allows us to explore is that of “precarity” itself. If I enter that word into the

Ngram viewer's text fields, along with, say, the years 1800 and 2016, then the application will produce a graph revealing a 0.0000011019 percent increase in the published usages of that word between 1954 (the year of the first recorded usage) and 2008 (the current last available year). As infinitesimal as this figure appears, the graph also indicates a notable upswing from 1960 onward, and another even more dramatic upswing from 2000 and onward. These results, of course, are unsurprising. Like many coinages in the grammar of sociology, the word "precarity" caught on amid a post-World War II explosion in the social sciences more generally. As modern technocratic societies advanced, and education levels increased, so grew the scale and conspicuousness of economic inequality. By 2012, Rob Horning would note the word's most popular usage—as a shorthand for capitalism's unwanted side-effects:

The word precarity is becoming increasingly fashionable as a way of describing the effects of neoliberal policy. The concept expresses the sense that the state has broken its ideological promise (what Polanyi posited in *The Great Transformation*) to ameliorate the misery capitalism necessarily generates.<sup>57</sup>

Coemergent with the idea of precarity in the latter half of the twentieth century, Horning reminds us, was neoliberalism. The latter is a term that describes both the plans hatched by America's "ruling circles" to avoid severe recessions in the late 1970s, and the continuation of those policies in various forms in the subsequent years to the present.<sup>58</sup> Sometimes regarded as an "overblown notion," or a "'mythical enemy' conjured up by the left," neoliberalism—like precarity—is a nebulous, sometimes faceless, phenomenon, pervasive and yet difficult to recognise.<sup>59</sup>

As well as identifying neoliberalism as a central cause of precarity, scholars have variously defined neoliberal policy by its obverse. Neoliberalism stands against "Keynsian macroeconomic management and the welfare state and the associated social domain," writes Mitchell Dean.<sup>60</sup> These remarks suggest the overarching neoliberal

fantasy not to regulate the economy as a whole but to manage the market narrowly—and, even then, only where extremes or crises appear. Neoliberalism, of course, is not quite so “neo” as its name suggests—and not only because it is now some forty years old. As long ago as the 1970s, in his lectures on biopolitics, Foucault suggested the ways in which neoliberalism was, even then, “no more than the reactivation of old, second-hand economic theories,” and its axioms “just a way of establishing strictly market relations in society.”<sup>61</sup> What was new, however, was the facelessness of this revived attempt to bring about an all-encompassing market economy. As Foucault wrote, this project was now “all the more profound for being insidious and hidden beneath the *appearances* of neo-liberalism.”<sup>62</sup> Yet despite the senility of its broadest aims, neoliberalism brought new mechanisms to the task of achieving its goals. It involved an unprecedented unbridling of credit loans to Americans, and it inaugurated a systematic dismantling of labour power. This in turn enabled the rise of globalisation and capital migration to China, dramatically increased financialisation, and reified fiscal imbalances between global states during the mid-1970s.<sup>63</sup> That all of this led to instability and increased inequities is not, at least in hindsight, a big surprise. Free of such “countervailing pressures” as wars or disasters, capitalist economies, as Martin Jacques recently observed (citing Thomas Piketty), “naturally gravitate towards increasing inequality.”<sup>64</sup>

But if we explain precarity only as an effect of neoliberalism, we produce only an incomplete definition, one that will never face up to precarity’s moral challenges, its ethical complexities. And if the Ngram viewer has turned us to this oversimple direction, it is perhaps because it is, as I have already suggested, a defective reading tool. It is worth noting, for instance, that my earlier search for “precarity” returned at least one “false positive”: an apparent and curious early use of the word “precarity” indicated in 1954. This datum, however, is not verified or accompanied by any source at all. What is this bump in the graph, then? we ask. The anomaly is perhaps explained by an early English usage of the word in 1952, which is verified elsewhere as almost certainly the first usage in English.<sup>65</sup> It appeared in an article

published in the *Catholic Worker* in which the writer Dorothy Day quotes from a letter written by “saintly priest” Léonce Crenier. In the excerpt, Crenier makes clear his view that precarity is a virtue. Indeed, he seems to lament the *loss* of precarity in modern society:

Nowadays communities are good, I am sure, but they are mistaken about poverty. They accept, admit on principle, poverty, but everything must be good and strong. Buildings must be fireproof. Here in our monastery we want precarity in everything except the church. These last days our refectory was near collapsing. We have put several supplementary beams in place and thus it will last maybe two or three years more. Someday it will fall on our heads and that will be funny. Precarity enables us better to help the poor.<sup>66</sup>

A differently styled valorisation of precarity appears in Levinas’s *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, a book first published in French in 1961, then in an English translation in 1969. (As further evidence of its unreliability, the Ngram viewer indicates that the word precarity did not appear in the English translation of Levinas’s volume until 1979, some ten years after its original English appearance.) In the 1969 translation, Levinas’s words are rendered as follows:

In affirming that the human will is not heroic we have not declared for human cowardice, but have indicated the precarity of courage, always on the verge of its own failure by reason of the essential mortality of the will, which in its exercise betrays itself.<sup>67</sup>

For Levinas, the human will is always already in a precarious state, ever teetering on an unsteady edge, “on this moving limit between inviolability and degeneration.”<sup>68</sup> And, after all, is precarity not best defined by this state of “dis-courage”—this condition of limbo between peak optimism and failure, between trauma and relief, which one no less than assures when they risk loss and defy hopelessness?

A fine allegory for this point recently appeared on Facebook, when Sydney poet Toby Fitch shared the following composition:

being a precariat sitting outside at a table not a desk at sydney  
uni piggybacking the wifi to mark papers for western sydney  
uni editing such and such emailing peopling invoicing kind of  
keeping an eye on poetry tweets and the news neither of which  
are news wishing i was writing a poem watching the cops roll by  
on mountain bikes writing all my clauses as passively as possible

Fitch's self-identification as "a precariat" is amply explained: he performs casual academic labour in a temporary space, and, luckily, he has found himself able to "piggyback" a wi-fi connection to assist him; and yet—and this is the crux—none of these amenities, including his work, is available to him as a rule. Similarly, as he reads poetry and news reports, Fitch detects that neither of these texts is fresh and, in the case of the news that is "not news," that it may be "fake news." Not without irony, then, Fitch's implication is that one must possess a degree of courage to flourish in these circumstances—or, in a more moderate reading, that such circumstances, in their informality, their unsettling transitoriness, reveal to one the very "precarity of courage." And yet, it is in a response to Fitch's composition—in a line uttered by one of his Facebook friends—that we can see further still one of the contemporary paradoxes of precarity. "The sad thing is," the respondent wrote, "[the] non precariats are envious of your precarity." As ludic as it is wry, the quip captures something of the pervasiveness of precarity in contemporary society. If, as I have argued, precarity is a term from the sociological grammar, one that denotes the insecure state of the poor and low-wage population, then precarity also now alludes to an instability of the spirit, one that may no more infect those who embrace an avocation—the teacher, nurse, or poet—than it haunts the "non precariat"—the manager, administrator, the executive.

This issue of *Philament*, our twenty-second, embraces a range of poets, as well as writers, essayists, and reviewers. Adam Hulbert's

study of Joan Lindsay's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* draws attention to the many sonic figurations in Lindsay's novel, offering a fresh reading of the precarious fates of the protagonists in this "preeminent antipodean weird tale." Blythe Worthy's study of Rachel Kushner's 2013 novel *The Flamethrowers* offers a timely problematisation of contemporary identity politics, illuminating new ways in which the novel "exposes feminism's distinctive markings of precarity." And Aleksandr Andreas Wansbrough's essay on Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* allows us to see the film's prologue as an example of avant-garde video art. Critics will have already perceived the way in which *Melancholia* allegorises Earth's cosmic precarity, revealing this planet's vulnerability in a universe filled with other celestial bodies, all of them potential collision threats. However, Wansbrough's essay also shows us how von Trier's film makes genre and aesthetic categories equally precarious—elements ever threatening to collide. The issue's short stories—Angelina Koseva's "The Red Room" and Sian Pain's "Wildcat"—offer intensive glimpses at precarious milieus in the contemporary cityscape, while varied works of poetry, by Philip Porter, Mona Zahra Attamimi, and Dimitra Harvey, chart their slightly more abstract courses toward this issue's theme. As always, it is hoped that this issue encourages more scholarship on its theme, and prompts postgraduates in particular to submit to *Philament's* future issues.

#### Notes

1. See David Runciman and Catherine Carr (producers), "Judith Butler," *Talking Politics*, 17 November, 2016, <http://www.acast.com/talkingpolitics/judithbutler/>.

2. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso Books, 2004). On the "Levinas Effect," see C. Fred Alford, "Levinas and Political Theory," *Political Theory* 32, no. 2 (2004): 146.

3. Butler, *Precarious Life*, xviii.

4. It was perhaps science fiction writer Philip K. Dick who coined the term "dysrecognition" in his 1981 essay "My Definition of Science Fiction," a short paper in which he described science fiction's role as shocking its readers out of their everyday preconceptions. Catherine S. Ramírez has seen in Dick's formulation a connection with Freud: "conventions of dysrecognition and estrangement resemble the Freudian

concept of the uncanny,” she writes, with its power to “denaturalize and relativize.” See Ramírez, “Cyborg Feminism: The Science Fiction of Octavia E. Butler and Gloria Anzaldúa,” in Mary Flanagan and Austin Booth, eds., *Reload: Rethinking Women + Cyberculture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 377–78 and 385. For more on dysrecognition, also see my “The Shock of Dysrecognition: Biopolitical Subjects and Drugs in Dick’s Science Fiction,” in Alexander Dunst and Stefan Schlenz, eds. *The World According to Philip K. Dick* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 30–47.

5. At the time of writing, 22 December, 2016, there are nine immigration detention centres listed on the relevant government webpage. (This does not include offshore centres.) See “Detention Facilities Locations,” <https://www.border.gov.au/about/immigration-detention-in-australia/locations>.

6. Although on the surprisingly resilient health of the 700-strong population in this community, and a set of proposed reasons for this surprising discovery, see Heather Anderson and Emma Kowal, “Culture, History, and Health in an Australian Aboriginal Community: The Case of Utopia,” *Medical Anthropology: Cross-Cultural Studies in Health and Illness* 31, no. 5 (2012): 438–57.

7. On the invisibility of domestic violence and its victims in colonial and contemporary Australia, particularly in relation to court processes, see Sarah Ailwood, Patricia Easteal, and Jessica Kennedy, “Law’s Indifference to Women’s Experience of Violence: Colonial and Contemporary Australia,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 35 (2012): 85–86.

8. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977). On counterveillance, see Michael Welch, “Counterveillance: How Foucault and the Groupe d’Information sur les Prisons Reversed the Optics,” *Theoretical Criminology* 15, no. 4 (2011): 301–13.

9. See Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 23–24.

10. “Australia’s Shame,” *Four Corners*, first broadcast 25 July 2016 by the ABC, written by Caro Meldrum-Hanna and Elise Worthington, and produced by Mary Fallon and Sally Neighbour. For the episode’s transcript, see <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2016/07/25/4504895.htm>.

11. Sophie Fuggle, “Pixelated Flesh,” *Cultural Politics* 11, no. 2 (2015): 228.

12. See Michael Brissendon, “PM Announces Royal Commission to be Held into Abuse at NT Youth Detention Centre,” *AM, ABC News*, 26 July, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2016/s4507341.htm>.

13. One of the earliest printed usages of the phrase occurs in John Heywood, *Woorkes: A Dialogue Conteyning Prouerbes and Epigrammes* (London: Thomas Powell, 1562).

14. Robert Mackey, “Brutal Images of Syrian Boy Drowned Off Turkey Must be Seen, Activists Say,” *New York Times*, 2 September, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/03/world/middleeast/brutal-images-of-syrian-boy-drowned-off-turkey-must-be-seen-activists-say.html>.

15. See Anne Barnard, “An Injured Child, Symbol of Syrian Suffering,” *New York Times*, 29 August, 2016, 1.

16. See Haydn Furness, “Ethical Journalism and the Refugee Crisis,” *Organewsm*, <http://organewsm.com/foundations-ethical-journalism-refugee-crisis/>; and Douglas Brinkley, quoted in Karen Miller Pensiero, “Aylan Jurdi and the Photos that Change

## 24 Philament 22: Precarity

History,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 September, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/aylan-kurdi-and-the-photos-that-change-history-1442002594>.

17. Christopher Dickey, “You Might As Well Ignore #KiyiyaVuranInsanlik and the Photos of Dead Refugee Kids,” <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/08/31/you-might-as-well-ignore-photos-of-dead-refugee-babies-on-africa-s-shores.html>

18. Pat Cadigan, *Synners* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2001), 140; also see Timothy Recuber, “Disaster Porn!,” *Contexts* 12, no. 2 (2013): 29.

19. Amy McQuire, “First Contact: Poverty Porn And Trauma TV, With Bonus Celebrities,” *New Matilda*, 30 November, 2016, <https://newmatilda.com/2016/11/30/first-contact-poverty-porn-trauma-tv-bonus-celebrities/>

20. David Andrews, “Toward a More Valid Definition of ‘Pornography,’” *Popular Culture* 45, no. 3 (2012): 465.

21. On “face-work,” a term used by Erving Goffman, see “Faking it: Comment on Face-work in Pornography,” *The American Journal of Semiotics* 6, no. 4 (1989): 153–75.

22. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 87.

23. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 12.

24. Roland Barthes, “Shock-Photos,” in *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 71–73.

25. *Ibid.*, 73.

26. Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 79.

27. *Ibid.* Also see David S. Gutterman and Sara L. Rushing, “Sovereignty and Suffering: Towards an Ethics of Grief in a Post-9/11 World,” in *Judith Butler’s Precarious Politics: Critical Encounters*, eds. Terrell Carver and Samuel A. Chambers (London: Routledge, 2008); David W. McIvor, “Bringing Ourselves to Grief: Judith Butler and the Politics of Mourning,” *Political Theory* 40, no. 4 (2012): 411.

28. Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, 4.

29. *Ibid.*, 80.

30. Patricia J. Johnson, “Woman’s Third Face: A Psycho/Social Reconsideration of Sophocles’ *Antigone*,” *Arethusa* 30, no. 3 (1997): 384.

31. Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures to Psycho-analysis*, trans. James Strachey (1919; repr. London: W. W. Norton, 1919), 417–18.

32. Quoted in Lisa K. Taylor, “Reading Desire: From Empathy to Estrangement, from Enlightenment to Implication,” *Intercultural Education* 18, no. 4 (2007): 300; Hilary E. Davis, “Ethical Possibilities in Feminist Readings of Nafisi’s Memoir,” *Canadian Association for Women’s Studies in Education*, 28 May, London, Ontario, Canada.

33. Notably, Butler calls Antigone “not quite a queer heroine.” See Butler, *Antigone’s Claim*, 72.

34. Isabelle Torrance, “Antigone and her Brother: What Sort of Special Relationship?” in *Interrogating Antigone in Postmodern Philosophy and Criticism*, eds. S. E. Wilmer and Audrone Zukauskaitė (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 248.

35. On the problematic and suggestive aspects of this burial/non-burial, see Carol Jacobs, “Dusting Antigone,” *MLN* 111, no. 5 (1996): 901; for Derrida’s reading, see *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 144E.

36. Max Van Menen, "Professional Practice and 'Doing' Phenomenology," in *Handbook of Phenomenology and Medicine*, ed. S. Kay Toombs (London: Kluwer, 2001), 467.
37. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 3, trans. James Strachey (1962; repr. London: Vintage, 2001), 287–98.
38. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Crucial Problems for Psychoanalysis 1964-1965* (Book XII), trans. Cormac Gallagher (Eastbourne: Antony Rowe, 2002), 6.1.65 (IV 16). Also see Adrian Johnston, "Sextimacy—Freud, Mortality, and a Reconsideration of the Role of Sexuality in Psychoanalysis," in Jens De Vleminck and Eran Dorfman, eds., *Sexuality and Psychoanalysis: Philosophical Criticisms* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 48.
39. Johnston, "Sextimacy," 42.
40. See Julia K. Langer and Thomas L. Rodebaugh, "Social Anxiety and Gaze Avoidance: Averting Gaze but not Anxiety," *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 37, no. 6 (2013): 1110.
41. On ways in which technology has already reformulated the "hard problem" of conciousness, see, for example, Michael Graziano, "Build-a-Brain," *Aeon*, 10 July, 2015, <https://aeon.co/essays/can-we-make-consciousness-into-an-engineering-problem>.
42. See Mike Schroepfer, "Accelerating Innovation and Powering new Experiences with AI," *newsroom* (Facebook), 8 November, 2016, <http://newsroom.fb.com/news/2016/11/accelerating-innovation-and-powering-new-experiences-with-ai/>.
43. See Bryan Garner, *The Chicago Guide to Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 225–27.
44. For a concise discussion of the historical background to the Ngram viewer, see Michael Pettit, "Historical Time in the Age of Big Data: Cultural Psychology, Historical Change, and the Google Books Ngram Viewer," *History of Psychology* 19, no. 2 (2016): 141–53.
45. Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books," *Science* 331, no. 6014 (2011): 176.
46. Ibid.
47. First published as Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism for the 1980s," *Socialist Review* 80, no. 15 (1985): 65–107.
48. N. Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1.
49. See Peter Frase, *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2016).
50. On the automation of scientific "knowledge work," see Gauri Naika and Sanika S. Bhideb, "Will The Future of Knowledge Work Automation Transform Personalized Medicine?" *Applied & Translational Genomics* 3, no. 1 (2014): 50–53.
51. Michael Burawoy, "Facing an Unequal World," *Current Sociology* 63, no. 1 (2015): 19.
52. See, for instance, Christopher Kelty, "Beyond Copyright and Technology: What Open Access Can Tell Us about Precarity, Authority, Innovation, and Automation in the University Today," *Cultural Anthropology* 29, no.2 (2014): 203–15.
53. The petitions made many requests, including lower article-processing charges and more favourable copyright terms for authors. See Jane Hu, "Academics Want You to Read Their Work for Free," *The Atlantic*, 26 January, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic>.

com/science/archive/2016/01/elsevier-academic-publishing-petition/427059/.

54. Jacques Derrida, "Pharmakon," in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (1971; repr. New York: Continuum, 1981), 95–116.

55. Jennifer Howard, "Internet of Stings," *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 November, 2016, <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/internet-of-stings/>.

56. See Michel et al., "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books," 176.

57. Rob Horning, "Precarity and 'Affective Resistance,'" 14 February, 2012, *The New Inquiry*, <http://thenewinquiry.com/blogs/marginal-utility/precarity-and-affective-resistance/>. Also see Tony Smith, "A Category Mistake in Piketty," *Critical Sociology* 41, no. 2 (2014): 407.

58. See Mitchell Dean, "Rethinking Neoliberalism," *Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 2 (2014): 151–54.

59. *Ibid.*, 151.

60. *Ibid.*

61. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978–79*, ed. Michael Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 130, emphasis mine.

62. *Ibid.*

63. This historical summary is based on Tony Smith's more detailed overview, which appears in his essay "A Category Mistake in Piketty" (previously cited), 407.

64. See Martin Jacques, "The Death of Neoliberalism and the Crisis in Western Politics," *The Guardian*, 21 August, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2016/aug/21/death-of-neoliberalism-crisis-in-western-politics>.

65. See, for instance, J.N. Nielson, "The Existential Precarity of Civilization," *Grand Strategy: The View from Oregon*, 2 November, 2014, <https://geopoliticraticus.wordpress.com/2014/11/02/the-existential-precarity-of-civilization/>.

66. See Andrew Herod and Rob Lambert, eds., *Neoliberal Capitalism and Precarious Work: Ethnographies of Accommodation and Resistance* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016),

67. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alfonso Lingis (London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and Duquesne University Press, 1969), 236.

68. *Ibid.*, 237.