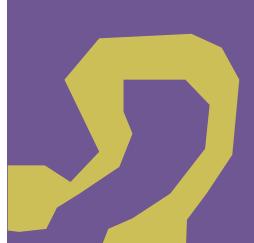
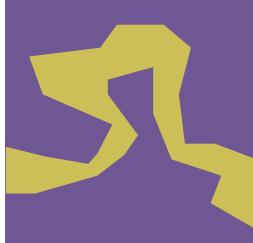
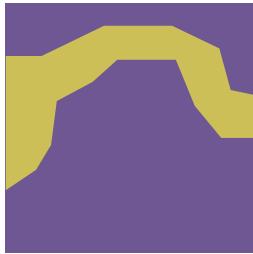
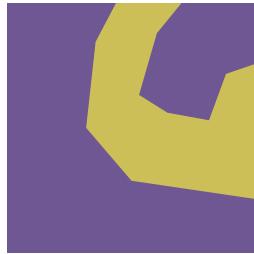


Humane Metrics/ Metrics Noir

Martina
Franzen



Christopher
P. Long



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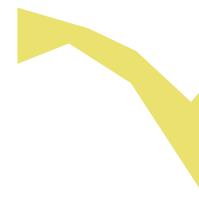
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POST
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Introduction

That Elsevier/RELX group has now rebranded itself as a “global provider of information and analytics,” seems indicative of the way academic publishing is increasingly moving into the highly profitable data analytics market. Here the linking of journals and scholarly social networks to the data underlying them through article level metrics, citation and download figures, usage statistics, ratings and altmetrics, serves as an opportunity to further extract value from the relationalities of scholarly publishing. Connect this to the demand of neoliberal governments for bibliometrics to index and rank scholars and their universities in order to measure impact and excellence, and enable accountability and transparency as part of national research assessment exercises, and it is clear that the logic of calculation and its accompanying mechanisms of surveillance and control is now omnipresent in scholarly publishing—and this includes requirements towards researchers to measure and monitor themselves as “brands.”

The texts in this pamphlet will ask, what are the implications of this state of affairs for scholarship and for the value of expertise and democratic judgement? Is it indeed the case that, as Chris Newfield argues “with indicators ascendant over judgment itself, and tied to complicated, obscure, or proprietary procedures, metrics can pacify the interpretive powers of the public and professionals alike”? Yet the authors of this pamphlet will also explore strategies for pushing back against the metrification of scholarship and publishing.

In her paper “Digital Impact: New Rating Cultures Challenge Academic Science” Martina Franzen looks into the rapid rise of altmetrics in times of a digital economy characterized by ubiquitous reciprocal evaluation practices. Following Paul Wouters and Rodrigo Costas, Franzen characterizes altmetrics as “narcissistic technologies,” which first and foremost measure popularity and the marketing success of an author (and not the quality of her publications). That authors respond to this development by gaming the system, should, Franzen states, “be viewed as a successful adaption to misguided indicators.” What is beyond question is that this constant pursuit of maximum reach and impact will affect the quality of the knowledge produced.

How counterproductive the impact of metrics on academic life *actually is*, is outlined by Christopher Long in his essay “Toxicity, Metrics, and Academic Life.” Drawing on personal experiences of academics as well as on the work of Christie Dotson and Zach Kaiser, Long points out that “higher education has a culture problem that is at once historical, structural, and interpersonal”—and needs to be addressed urgently. To confront the toxic culture of higher education, Long and the HuMetricsHSS Initiative propose a value-based “metric” framework around values such as equity, openness, collegiality, quality, and community, which not only functions as a checkpoint for self-reflection, but also as a starting point for better academic practices and outputs.

The pamphlet concludes—and opens discussion—with Eileen Joy’s “An Instrument for Adoration”: A Mini-Manifesto *Against Metrics for the Humanities* (To Be Elaborated Upon at a Further Date).” In ten theses, Joy not only relentlessly reveals how inappropriate and harmful metrics are for the Humanities, but also resolutely calls for resistance against the tyranny of academic metrification and the Neoliberal University.

meson press

Digital Impact: New Rating Cultures Challenge Academic Science

Martina Franzen

"How satisfied are you with our service? Did the product meet your expectations?" Today, nearly every transaction in the digital economy comes with a request to give evaluative feedback. User or customer views are collected to optimize products or to improve marketing. Aside from ratings on various scales, customers are often asked to give written feedback in the form of reviews, which then may be rated by other customers to create a hierarchy out of the multiplicity of reviews. "Did you find this review helpful?" Positive responses boost the reviewer's calculated reputational rating, helping them climb the ranks of top reviewers, which serves as an incentive to write even more reviews.

One episode of the Netflix series *Black Mirror* unfolds a detailed scenario in which the ubiquitous John Doe rating serves as a new form of social control. The show paints the grim picture of a society based on a system of mutual ratings, in which the individual's only concern in every social interaction is getting as many likes as possible to increase their own reputational score. Ratings are given for every encounter or service. The rating is done by both parties, in real time and available online for all to see. The protagonist, Lacie, provides a great illustration of how the person-centred score governs individual behavior as soon as reaching a high numerical rating is not only motivated by one's narcissistic needs but necessary to obtain a certain socioeconomic status. For ambitious Lacie, a seemingly small difference between 4.2 and 4.5 on the five-point rating scale becomes an insurmountable obstacle on her path towards upward social mobility.

Like the Lacie character in *Black Mirror*, who hires a consultant to give strategic advice on how to raise her reputational rating as quickly as possible (to move into a more luxurious residence), researchers too can take advantage of numerous pieces of advice—some sincere, some cynical—to maximize their own impact rating. One article on the networking site Academia.edu, alluringly entitled "How to Increase Your Papers' Citation and H Index," (Gola, n.d.) has already garnered some 50,000 views. The author's ironic strategic recommendation: drastically increase the number of self-citations to attract

the necessary attention to your work. This short piece, which reveals the ethically questionable publishing practices of an Indonesian physics professor and presumably those of the author's colleagues, illustrates a problem of indicator-based performance assessments heavily discussed in academia: The focus on usage statistics in evaluative practice triggers gaming activities that undermine the meritocratic principle of equal performance assessment based on scientific quality criteria, possibly leading to an erosion of trust.

For quite some time, scientists in particular have been arguing over the extent to which qualitative characteristics may be translated into quantitative measures in a meaningful way. In addition to the classic instrument for qualitative assessments (i.e. the peer review system), the introduction of New Public Management at higher education institutions has added quantitative indicators, for instance when it comes to allocating grant money.

As evaluation research has shown a while ago, any kind of output control using quantitative indicators is accompanied by a neglect of content (Osterloh 2010). One-dimensional indicators may cause trade-offs in the system (Espeland and Sauder 2007). Marshall W. Meyer and Vipin Gupta (1994) speak of a "performance paradox" if indicators can no longer be used to distinguish strong performance from poor performance. When it comes to citation-based indicators in science such as the h-index or the Journal Impact Factor, "gaming the system" takes place on various levels: It concerns authors, editors, and publishers. The means to sanction ethically questionable publishing or citation practices are limited, as we all know.

Digitalization adds a new dimension to the focus on impact rates in science: The neologism *altmetrics* was coined to refer to methods for measuring a wide spectrum of web reactions to publications. The concept is fueled by the impetus to democratize science by creating an open and fairer system of performance assessment. That, in any case, was the thrust of the 2010 altmetrics manifesto (Priem et al. 2010), which served as the discursive cornerstone for further socio-technical development.

Altmetrics incorporate the full spectrum of research outputs such as journal articles, books, datasets, blog posts, and slide sets, as well as the multiple ways in which these outputs are used below the citation level (e.g. bookmarks, downloads, views). Unlike journal- or author-level metrics, altmetrics are an article- or rather an output-level rating tool. Instead of considering only the citation statistics of a set of source journals, such as those listed in Web of Science or Scopus, web-based measures refer to a repertory of sources that can be expanded to include all kinds of sources. If we take the service provider Altmetric.com as an example, the range of defined sources for the automatic measuring of impact includes social networks such as Facebook, microblogging services such as Twitter, video platforms such as YouTube, as well as international and national media outlets. However, Altmetric.com—a portfolio company of Digital Science, a subsidiary of MacMillan Publishers Ltd.—is best known for its attention score. Based on an undisclosed algorithm, the Altmetric score is displayed in the form of so-called badges. One of the most popular badges is the Altmetric donut: a ring whose coloring offers information about the type of achieved impact, that is, about sources (blue for Twitter, red for newspapers, and so forth). A nice technical gadget, one might think, but irrelevant for science. The proponents of altmetrics, who are found in parts of academia, the IT sector, libraries, and scientific publishing houses, think differently. They want altmetrics to become the catalyst in revamping the academic reputation system. But how are Tweets or Facebook likes supposed to tell us anything about scientific quality or relevance?

Even as this decisive question in terms of methodology remains unanswered, the comprehensive implementation of altmetrics tools in digital publication infrastructures continues. Large international publishers such as Elsevier, Wiley, or Springer, as well as the top journals *Science* and *Nature* have already integrated them into their portfolio. The social network ResearchGate also uses altmetrics based on the collected publication data and the personalized usage statistics—the one difference being that ResearchGate additionally provides a person-centred score. This score puts researchers in relation to one another. Transparency is created by showing ResearchGate members

and all their readers the exact calculation of the percentile into which the individual score falls. The score is cumulative but subject to minor and sometimes confusing ups and even downs. Users receive weekly statistics detailing the usage of their own and other people's contributions. To keep users motivated, ResearchGate transplanted a classic feature of the gaming sector into scientific communications: announcing users' entry into a new level, based here on achieving a certain threshold of citations or clicks or a top position in the institutional ranking. As in digital gaming environments, ResearchGate too provides users with tips on how to raise their individual score, such as: "Boost your stats by adding more research."

By means of such incentive systems, the digital platforms ResearchGate and Academia.edu gradually collect more and more data of all kinds. Big data, therefore, is the foundation of their business model, the outlines of which have so far been blurry at best. In 2016, Academia.edu, the US counterpart of the German start-up ResearchGate, introduced a premium account option for an annual membership fee of 99 US dollars. As far as content is concerned, there is still hardly any difference between the premium feature and the freemium account—the only difference is that premium members have access to a detailed overview of how each of their contributions is used, including user or reader characteristics, listed by person or aggregated by institutions, countries, and so forth.

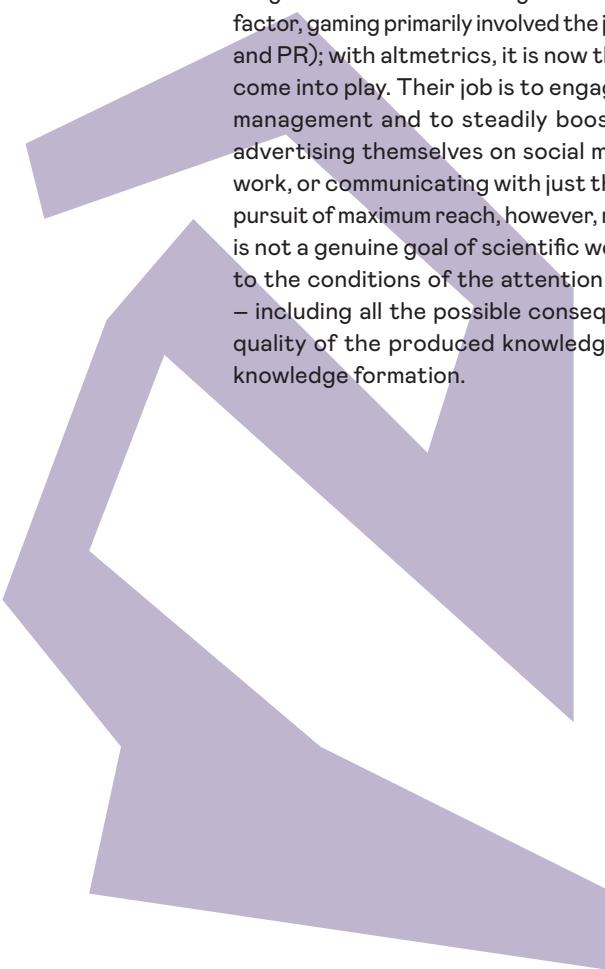
Formerly, digital platforms focused on rating scientists as authors; now, scientists are also measured as readers with regard to their individual usage patterns. It seems doubtful that paywalls can be established in scientific communications, given the strength of the open science movement. But the offer to learn more about who reads your publications meets the genuine needs of researchers, who—unlike literary authors—cannot turn to book sales to get an idea of their publications' reach. Whereas traditional citation measures only showed the tip of the iceberg, altmetrics now show the full scope of how research output is used beyond formal citations in scientific journals, making that usage the basis on which scientists are rated. This approach satisfies the narcissistic needs of researchers and possibly offers extra

informational value for institutional research evaluation. The key question, however—what do altmetrics actually measure—remains unanswered.

The dominant research approach in bibliometrics (i.e. conducting empirical studies comparing citation rates and altmetrics of all kinds) does not help much in this case. To be sure, citation may be theoretically conceived of as a form of social recognition of scientific achievement. But trying to identify differences in scientific quality based on the sheer number of citations leads to a short circuit between impact (i.e. popularity) and quality. Based on my own work on the medialization of science (Franzen 2011, 2015), I propose a different assumption: First and foremost, altmetrics—like citation rates—signal popularity. High impact rates may in fact coincide with scientific quality, but they may also result from news factors such as entertainment, scandals, or celebrity. The explanatory power of altmetrics (and citation rates) may thus be reduced primarily to measuring marketing success. Marketing success—in the sense of achieving high impact rates—can indeed be an indicator of special scientific quality, but the political sensitivity or currency of an issue, the prominence of the author, or simply well-placed advertising are equally conducive to high impact.

One good example to illustrate the argument that scientific ratings may conflict with news ratings when it comes to measuring impact is the annual ranking of the top 100 articles per Altmetric score. In 2016, the number one article appeared in the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Its author, however, is not a medical researcher, as one might expect, but the then President of the United States of America, Barack Obama himself, writing about US healthcare reform (Altmetric, n.d.). It is obvious that the honor of getting the highest Altmetric score has little to do with criteria of scientific relevance. Against this background, it is even more surprising that altmetrics have hardly been questioned in the scientific community.

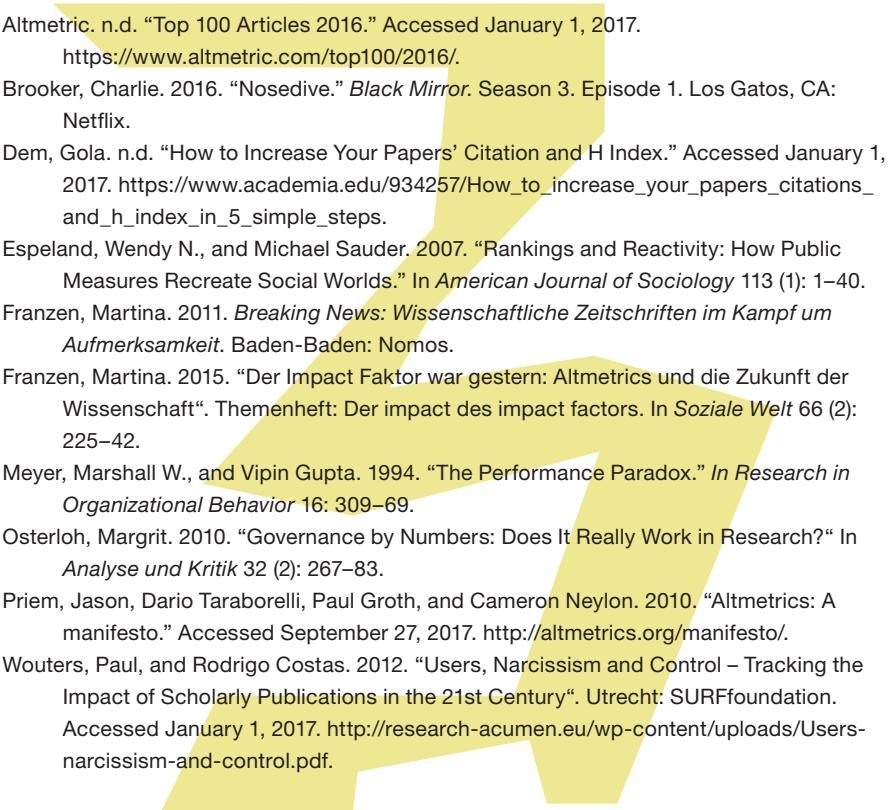
Paul Wouters and Rodrigo Costas (2012) have referred to the altmetrics concept as a "narcissistic technology." This presumably also explains its rapid rise. The question is: Will



it continue to enjoy this immense popularity once it mutates into an actual “monitoring technology”? Although altmetrics have not yet been officially introduced as an evaluation tool into institutional performance assessments, their implementation, for instance for measuring societal impact, seems only a matter of time. But any kind of performance assessment is bound to trigger a behavioral response and is not without consequences for the system. The kind of reactivity criticized as “gaming the system” may also be viewed as a successful adaptation to misguided indicators. The game is an old one: With the impact factor, gaming primarily involved the journals (via editorial choices and PR); with altmetrics, it is now the authors themselves who come into play. Their job is to engage in successful reputation management and to steadily boost their own click rates by advertising themselves on social media, rating other people’s work, or communicating with just the right target groups. The pursuit of maximum reach, however, requires different means and is not a genuine goal of scientific work. Rather, it is a response to the conditions of the attention economy in the digital age – including all the possible consequences with regard to the quality of the produced knowledge in the overall process of knowledge formation.

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Toxicity, Metrics, and Academic Life

Christopher
P. Long

In an interview on the blog of the American Philosophical Association, Michaela McSweeney gives voice to a graduate school experience that is all too common.¹

I had an awful time in grad school, for a lot of different reasons: I was incredibly insecure, but also incredibly angry at other people who covered up their insecurity with bravado; I constantly thought about dropping out and doing something that mattered more—I was horrified by how crappy people were to one another, and how unfair everything was.... (Cleary 2018)

This culture of crappiness is too often characteristic of graduate education across a spectrum of disciplines, and worse, it is symptomatic of a broader toxicity that shapes academic life.

As a first-generation college student, Jackie Rhodes, to borrow the story of another scholar, was concerned that an academic life might not be for her. Drawn in by the texture of human stories, Rhodes sought a community of caring colleagues that eluded her until, as a student of Evelyn Ashton-Jones at the University of Mississippi, she found a community of scholars of college composition and communication. She writes:

People knew each other, they were approachable, they had lives and students and desires and dreams. The people in my new and hoped-for home were *real*, a pantheon of scholars who simultaneously wrote incredible work, taught first-year composition, and had lives and failures and successes much like mine. The accessibility of these people's lives and their attachment to their work was my greatest epiphany; I knew that I, too, could do such things, that I could *make my work matter* without giving up my humanity. (Rhodes 2017, 147–48)

Rhodes found a community that would affirm the person she most wanted to be and support her attempts to make her work matter in the world. That this path and community appeared to her as an epiphany rather than a standard expectation of entering into an academic life is powerful testimony to how corrosive the culture of higher education has become. McSweeney amplifies this in a heart-breaking account of the advice she received in graduate school:

I got a lot of advice when I was in graduate school...that, given who I am, basically amounted to 'don't be yourself': present yourself this way or that way; don't always offer your honest opinion of something; don't wear this outfit; compromise; suck it up; work with person X who is morally problematic; don't complain about this injustice, etc. (Cleary 2018)

Somehow an academic life has devolved into a profession that requires us to forget ourselves. And lest we think this is a new phenomenon, listen to John Jay Chapman, who wrote already in 1910 of the culture of silence that continues to pervade the academy:

The average professor in an American college will look on an act of injustice done to a brother professor ... with the same unconcern as the rabbit who is not attacked watches the ferret pursue his brother up and down through the warren to predestinate and horrible death. ... The non-attacked rabbit would, of course, become a suspect and a marked man the moment he lifted up his voice in defence of rabbit-rights." (Chapman 1910, 7)

However antiquated Chapman's gendered mode of speaking is, his account of a "professorial ethics" of self-interested silence remains germane. How often have we professors failed to speak up for a colleague and instead cowered to protect our own rabbit selves as the ferret culture took hold and grew in our academic communities, be it a department, a committee, or a peer review process? Too often it seems that to enter into an academic life requires us to relinquish the values for which we care most deeply. How might we, with McSweeney and Rhodes, do justice to our best selves and to our colleagues so we might make our work matter without giving up our humanity?

One path leading in the right direction is that traversed by the work of philosopher Kristie Dotson. In her article, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing," Dotson traces the pernicious effects of various oppressive practices of silencing to which we must be attuned if we are to begin to redress the toxic culture of academic life (2011). Emphasizing that genuine communication requires reciprocity between a speaker and an audience, Dotson focuses on the ways oppressed groups are silenced when giving testimony. She defines epistemic violence in testimony as "a refusal, intentional or unintentional, of an audience to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange owing to pernicious ignorance." She goes on to clarify that "pernicious ignorance should

be understood to refer to any reliable ignorance that, in a given context, harms another person" (Dotson 2011, 238). In this article, she is particularly interested in how pernicious ignorance contributes to harmful practices of silencing.

The two forms of testimonial oppression on which Dotson focuses are pervasive in contemporary academic life. The first, testimonial quieting, "occurs when an audience fails to identify a speaker as a knower" (Dotson 2011, 242). Drawing on the work of Patricia Hill Collins, Dotson emphasizes the manner in which women of color are routinely precluded from being perceived as knowers. Although this sort of testimonial quieting occurs inside and outside of the academy, its pernicious effect is amplified within the academy due to the value academic life places precisely on being recognized as a knower.

The second form of testimonial oppression to which Dotson points is testimonial smothering. For Dotson, "testimonial smothering, ultimately, is the truncating of one's own testimony in order to insure that the testimony contains only content for which one's audience demonstrates testimonial competence" (2011, 244). This form of silencing is, as Dotson notes, a form of "coerced silencing," which, she goes on to say, involves "some sort of capitulation or self-silencing on the part of the speaker" (2011, 244). This self-silencing is due to a very real concern about the social and/or material harm that might result from speaking out.

The example Chapman gives of self-silencing from more than a century ago points to an all too common instance of bullying in which bystander colleagues fail to speak up out of fear for their own well-being. Poignant as his example may be, Chapman was writing in an era of white male academic homogeneity. The self-silencing to which Dotson's analysis of epistemic violence points uncovers the deeper and more insidious collusion embedded in systems of inequity and institutional racism that requires more structural and sustainable strategies of redress. In fact, the two forms of silencing to which Dotson points dovetail in the academy to deleterious effect. Testimonial quieting on a grand structural scale marginalizes scholars pursuing work in domains

outside of the traditional canon; and testimonial smothering is rife in contexts in which those evaluating the quality of scholarship are incompetent due to a lack of understanding of new and emerging domains of knowledge.

This regressive structure of epistemic violence is exacerbated by the increased reliance on metrics as supposedly neutral proxies for evaluating the quality and impact of scholarship. The drive toward standard measures reinforces privileged ways of knowing and stunts the growth of emerging modes of more holistic scholarship. As Zach Kaiser puts it,

scholarly metrics, such as those used by Google Scholar, incentivize clickbait scholarship, create reductive ideas about what avenues of research should be pursued within a given discipline, or conceal potentially transformative scholarship because of its unpopularity. (2018)

In a provocative attempt to imagine the implications of our ever-increasing reliance on scholarly metrics, Kaiser created a prototype of a stock-market-like ticker designed to track at a granular level and in real time the scholarly activity of faculty. The video entitled, *Our Program*, imagines a future, not too distant—perhaps in some ways already here—in which all activities of the faculty are measured in real time and displayed through a ticker of evaluative academic metrics installed outside of each faculty member’s office (2016). Kaiser’s portrayal of how the ubiquity of such measuring perverts relationships between members of the faculty and our connection with our scholarship suggests the distorting effect of our ever increasing reliance on metrics which have, as Christopher Newfield and Heather Steffen have suggested, an “aversion to the *interpretive* processes through which the complexities of everyday experiences are assessed” (Newfield and Steffen 2017).

The power of Kaiser’s thought experiment lies in the way it encourages us to recognize how a reliance on metrics distorts the network of human interconnections that shape the scholarship we produce. There is here a flattening of the texture of the scholarly record to ensure that only that which is computationally legible counts as academically legitimate.

What the stories of McSweeney, Rhodes, and Chapman suggest and the work of Dotson and Kaiser clarify is that higher education has a culture problem that is at once historical, structural, and interpersonal. Its symptoms can be discerned in violences large and small from rampant sexual abuse to salary inequity, from outright bullying to corrosive microaggressions that distort the ways we interact with one another, and from caustic structures of peer review to epistemic oppression that

privileges regressive traditions and disciplines over emerging intersectional and transdisciplinary approaches.

Just as there have been a variety of factors over a very long period of time that have contributed to the toxic culture we have created in higher education, so too will some redress be found only through coordinated, intentional, and holistic interventions across the full spectrum of the scholarly and pedagogical practices we undertake. If, however, these interventions are not performatively consistent—that is, if they do not enact the values for which they advocate—they will relapse into pervasive cynicism and distrust.

One such strategic intervention involves the attempt to rethink metrics from a values perspective in order to empower scholars to tell more textured stories about the impact of their work as they chart a pathway to intellectual leadership in their areas of study.² This shift in focus from what can be measured to what we most value has animated the HuMetricsHSS initiative from its inception in the Fall of 2016 when Nicky Agate, Rebecca Kennison, Simone Sacchi, Stacy Konkiel, Jason Rhody, and I first met at the Triangle Scholarly Communication Institute in Chapel Hill, NC. As we walked the grounds together, we began talking about how we might reverse engineer academic metrics by beginning not with what could be measured, but rather with the values through which scholarship might be capable of deepening our relationships with one another and our understanding of the world.

This way of framing the initiative marks a twofold reversal of current practice, designed to counteract the corrosive culture of quantification that has taken root across higher education. The first is to enact a shift from metrics to values so we can ensure that we are measuring what we value rather than valuing only what can be measured. The second reversal, however, involves a shift from organizationally oriented standards of scholarship that privilege the rankings of institutions over the academic aspirations and intellectual development of scholars and their communities.

In articulating this second reversal, we have emphasized the importance of the telling of textured stories, for such stories enable us to identify pathways of intellectual leadership through which we might do work that matters in a world that so urgently needs it. In her article, “Mapping a Mentoring Roadmap and Developing a Supportive Network for Strategic Career Advancement,” Beronda Montgomery outlines an approach to impactful mentoring that “focuses deeply on personal growth as one recognizes and considers the whole person, and also seeks to support an individual’s values-based personal advancement in a specific domain” (2017, 3). In emphasizing the importance of developing dense networks of reciprocal mentoring that enable individual scholars to advance toward personally defined career aspirations, Montgomery also recognizes the value of more traditional mentoring structures through which senior scholars nurture the success of their junior colleagues in the institutional contexts in which they find themselves (2017, 1–2). Her approach, thus, at once develops the infrastructure for scholars to chart a pathway to intellectual leadership in their areas of scholarship and recognizes the ways these individual pathways, when woven intentionally into the life of an institution, can enrich the work and deepen the impact of both.

Here the turn to a values-based “metrics” framework, when combined with a commitment to performative consistency, could be one catalyst for the broad cultural change higher education so urgently requires. The turn to values empowers us to hold ourselves accountable to our core commitments to one another. This became clear to the HuMetricsHSS team during those early discussions at the TriangleSCI—and has animated our conversations ever since—as we sought to articulate the values we wanted our work together to embody. The workshop led to the development of a preliminary framework of five values: equity, openness, collegiality, quality, and community.

HUMANITIES VALUES



Nurturing fulfilling scholarly lives

1 EQUITY

Inclusivity | Public Good | Social Justice | Equitable Access | Accessibility

2 OPENNESS

Learning from Failure | Transparency | Open Source | Open Process | Candor | Accountability

3 COLLEGIALITY

Ethical Imagination | Kindness | Generosity | Empathy | Self Care | Respect

4 QUALITY

Replication | Soundness | Pushing Boundaries | Creativity | Originality | Advancing Knowledge | Intentionality | Reproducibility

5 COMMUNITY

Engagement | Network | Holistic | Attunement | Leadership | Preservation



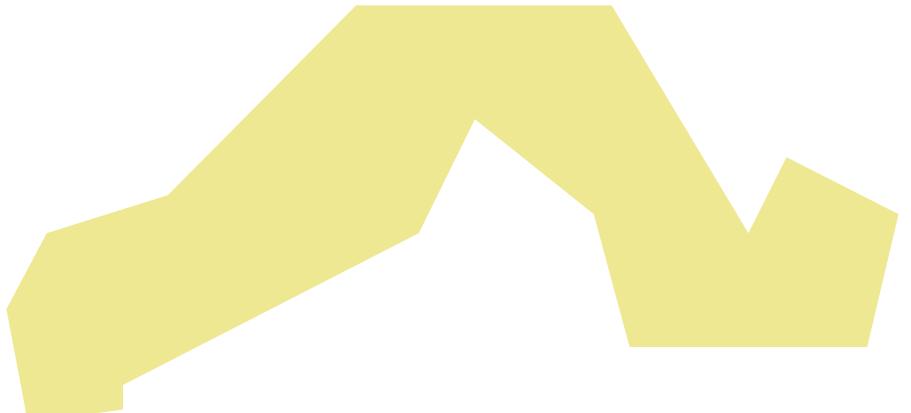
What we learned, however, in the process of articulating the values we wanted our work to embody is the transformative power of the practice of reflecting on the values to which we are committed. Nicky Agate has emphasized that the preliminary framework serves as “a checkpoint of sorts . . . a reminder to double-check before I speak, write, agree, organize . . .” (2017). As a checkpoint, the framework requires us to reflect upon how we are embodying the values for which we stand. Jason Rhody puts it this way: “The framework is meant to encourage moments of reflection in the creation of a scholarly object or in



the performance of a scholarly practice, considering questions not only of audience and purpose, but of the values that drive the work" (Rhody 2017).

However, in tracing the path from values to practices to products, we also came to better understand the importance of traversing the path in reverse by identifying indicators of the presence of our values in the products of our work.

Consider the syllabus, for example. As Stacy Konkiel describes in writing about the second workshop of the HuMetricsHSS project, we "explored the value of a syllabus from two angles: as a scholarly work in and of itself (e.g., What can the selection of text and assignments tell us about the state of a discipline?), and as an indicator of the impact of other scholarly works (e.g., If a work is included in a syllabus, what does that mean for the author of the work?)" (Konkiel 2018). Taking the syllabus as an object of scholarship, we might discern in the selection of texts a commitment to equity, in the structure of assignments a commitment to collegiality, and in the accessibility of materials a commitment to openness. Taking the syllabus as an indicator of impact, scholars whose work appears there might point to the range of institutions and academic levels at which their work is being taught to suggest the scope, reach, and quality of their scholarship; they might see in the network of other scholars with whom they appear an indication of their ability to build and nurture a wide community of scholarship. Thus, the syllabus might become the site of a more textured story about collegiality, community, equity, quality, and openness. It might, indeed, empower scholars like McSweeney, Rhodes, Dotson, and Kaiser to tell textured stories about what makes their work most meaningful.



If, as Eileen Joy writes, "there is almost no act of anti-institutionality that does not also aim at a reform of the institution, and therefore also represents some sort of investment in, and even *love* for that institution" (Joy 2014, 13), then this love is not unconditional, but dependent upon the institution's willingness and ability to put the core values that shape its mission into practice. For universities that must mean nurturing the success of scholars and students as we create a meaningful life in a world made more just by the impact of our work.

¹ I am grateful for the generous formative feedback Rebecca Kennison provided for this essay. She practices the “peer engagement” approach for which she so eloquently advocates (Kennison 2016).

² Bill Hart-Davidson uses the formulation “pathways to intellectual leadership” in reflecting on his own promotion to full professor (2017).

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'An Instrument for Adoration': A Mini-Manifesto *Against Metrics* for the Humanities (To Be Elaborated Upon at a Further Date)

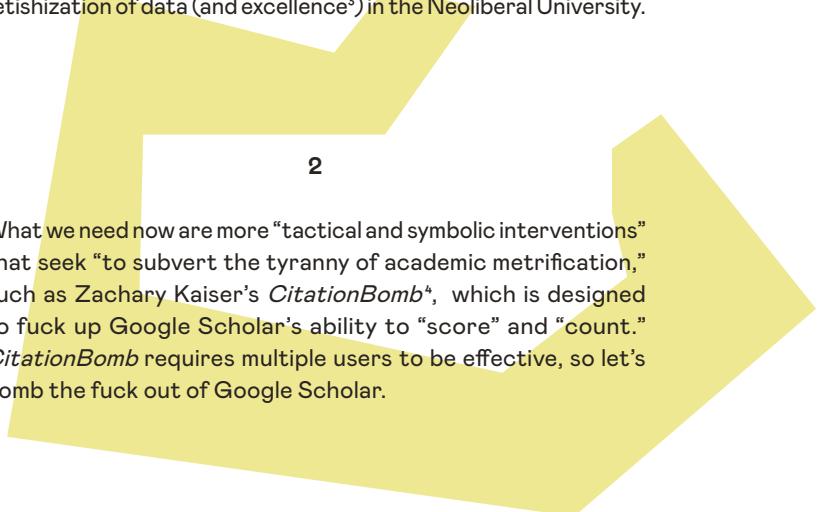
Eileen A.
Joy



*In a high performance culture,
we are the avant-garde but we
are also the job-slaves.¹*

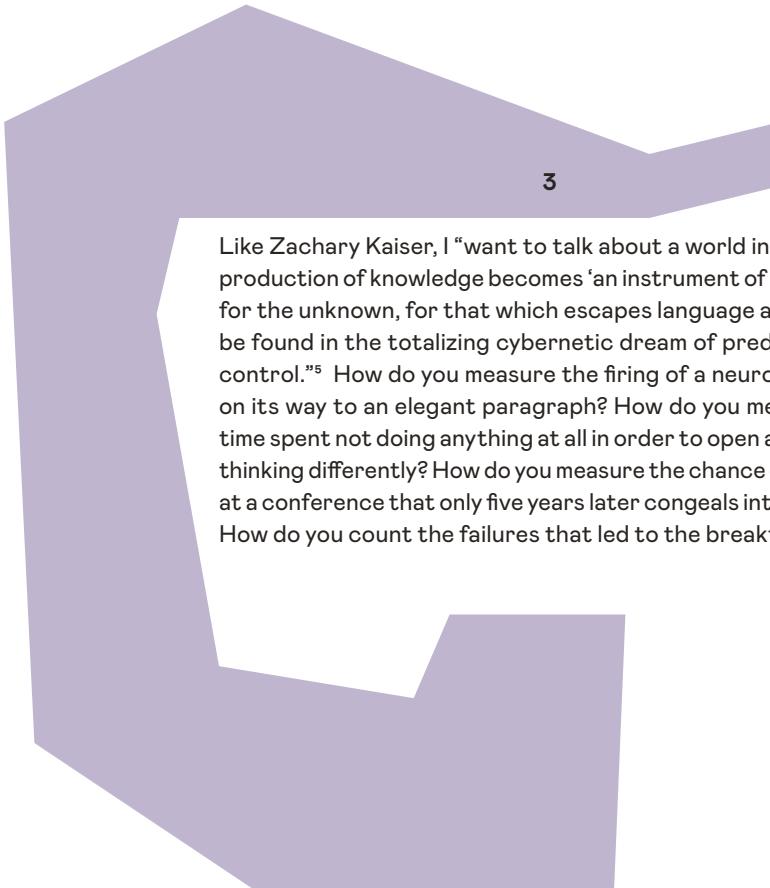
1

Regarding the notion of a “humane” or “humanistic” metrics for scholarship produced in the Humanities, we don’t need more “humane indicators of excellence”² for measuring the “impact” of work in the Humanities; we need to reject metrics, period. We need to fight, with every tool and techne at our disposal, the fetishization of data (and excellence³) in the Neoliberal University.



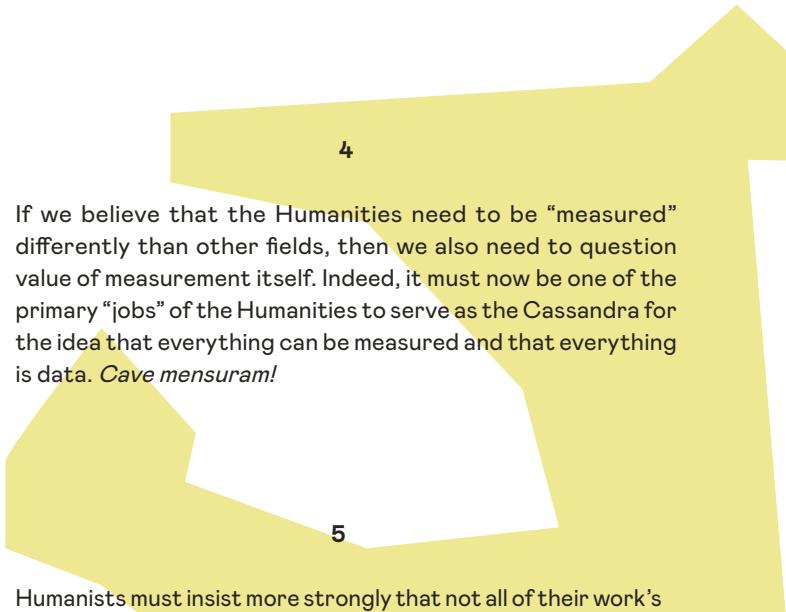
2

What we need now are more “tactical and symbolic interventions” that seek “to subvert the tyranny of academic metrification,” such as Zachary Kaiser’s *CitationBomb*, which is designed to fuck up Google Scholar’s ability to “score” and “count.” *CitationBomb* requires multiple users to be effective, so let’s bomb the fuck out of Google Scholar.



3

Like Zachary Kaiser, I “want to talk about a world in which the production of knowledge becomes ‘an instrument of adoration’ for the unknown, for that which escapes language and cannot be found in the totalizing cybernetic dream of prediction and control.”⁵ How do you measure the firing of a neuron synapse on its way to an elegant paragraph? How do you measure the time spent not doing anything at all in order to open a space for thinking differently? How do you measure the chance encounter at a conference that only five years later congeals into a thesis? How do you count the failures that led to the breakthrough?

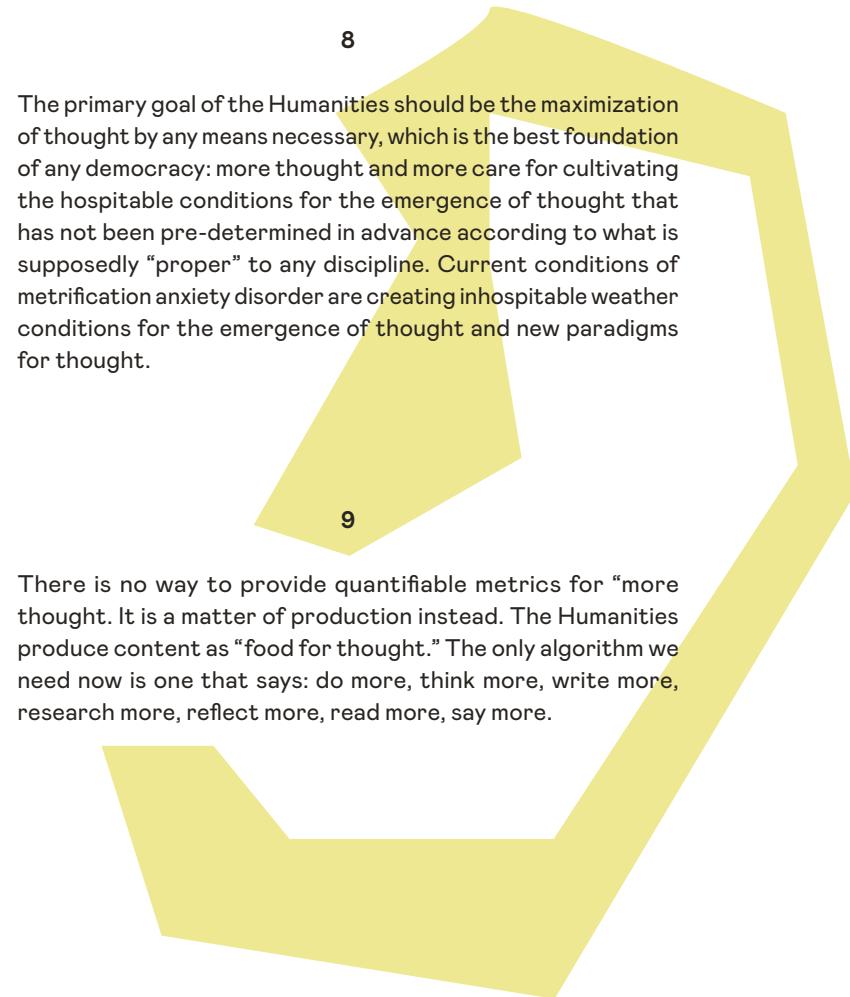
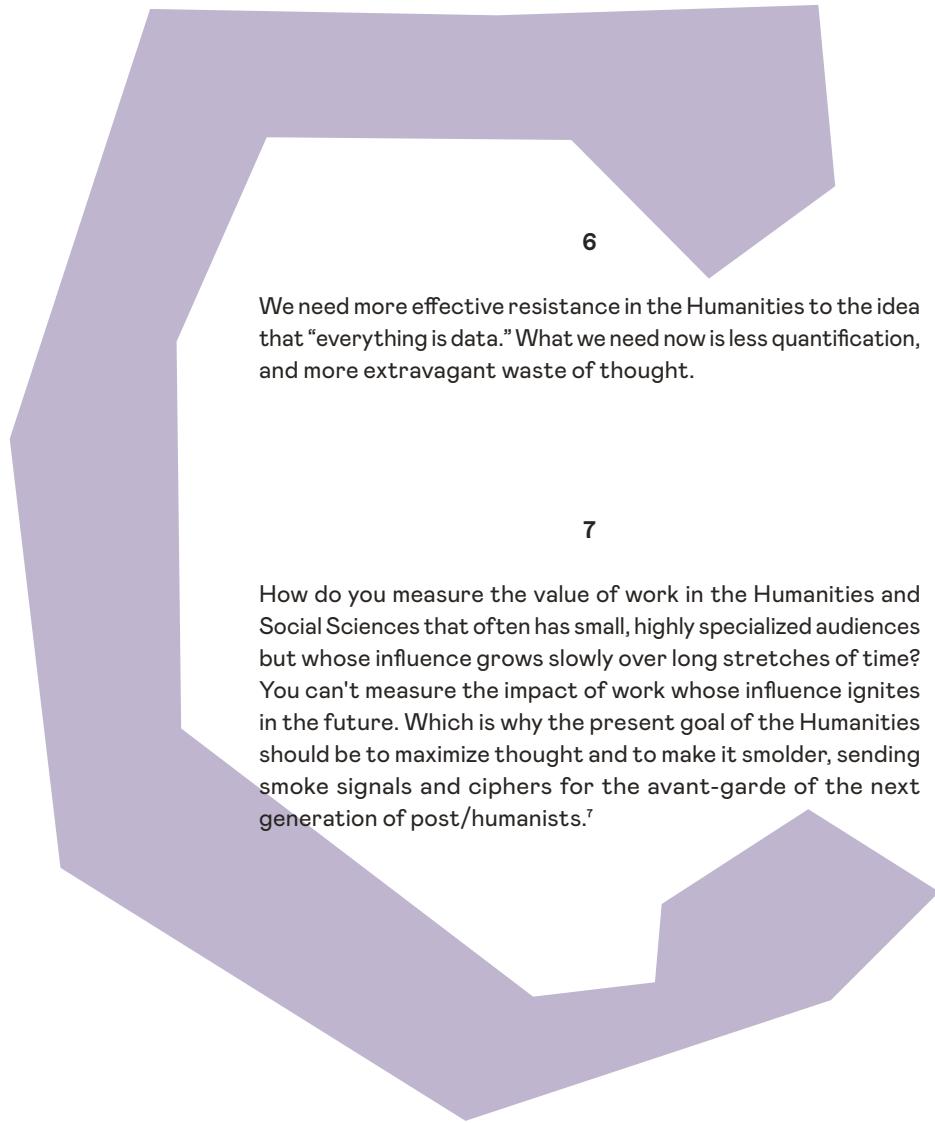


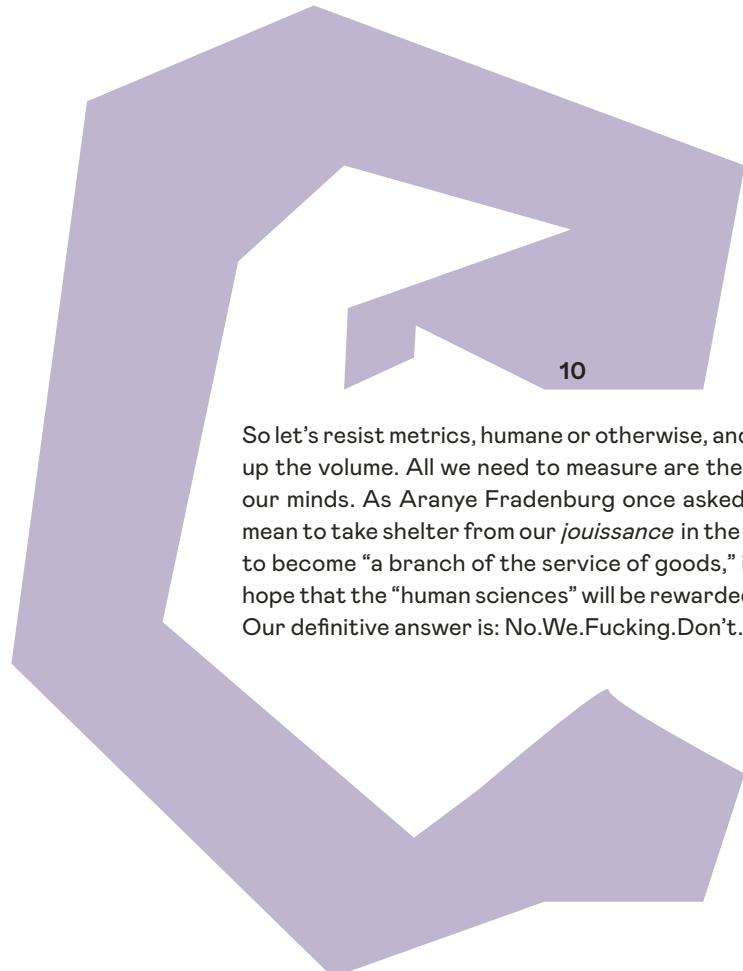
4

If we believe that the Humanities need to be “measured” differently than other fields, then we also need to question value of measurement itself. Indeed, it must now be one of the primary “jobs” of the Humanities to serve as the Cassandra for the idea that everything can be measured and that everything is data. *Cave mensuram!*

5

Humanists must insist more strongly that not all of their work’s “impact” can or should be “calculated” for the purposes of quantitative capture. In the Humanities, at the very least, we must reject mathematics and statistics as tools for evaluating our work. The Neoliberal University insists that all existence is fundamentally computational. Humanists are not information processors. What we do is, we fuck up information. We make it leak and we insist that there is no such thing as neutral or agnostic information.⁶





So let's resist metrics, humane or otherwise, and instead, pump up the volume. All we need to measure are the decibels. With our minds. As Aranye Fradenburg once asked, "Do we really mean to take shelter from our *jouissance* in the order of utility, to become "a branch of the service of goods," in the mistaken hope that the "human sciences" will be rewarded for doing so?⁸ Our definitive answer is: No.We.Fucking.Don't.

¹ Jan Verwoert, *Exhaustion and Exuberance: Ways to Defy the Pressure to Perform*, exhibition pamphlet, "Sheffield 08: Yes, No, and Other Options" (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Contemporary Art Forum, 2008), 90.

² "About HuMetricsHSS," *HuMetricsHSS: Humane Metrics Initiative*, <https://humetricshss.org/about-2/>.

³ Samuel Moore, Cameron Neylon, Martin Paul Eve, Daniel O'Donnell, and Damian Pattinson, "Excellence R Us: University Research and the Fetishisation of Excellence," *figshare*, 2016, https://figshare.com/articles/Excellence_R_Us_University_Research_and_the_Fetishisation_of_Excellence/3413821. As an act of resistance to the centralization of data, I refuse to include the DOI number in this citation. A copy of "Excellence R Us" has been inscribed on a cuneiform tablet and has been moved to an undisclosed location in case of emergency.

⁴ Zachary Kaiser, *CitationBomb*, <http://cultureindustry.club/citations/>.

⁵ Zachary Kaiser, "Citation Bombing: Tactical and Symbolic Subversion of Academic Metrification," *Art Journal*, April 12, 2018, <http://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=9844>.

⁶ Safiya Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: NYU Press, 2018).

⁷ Eileen A. Joy and Christine Neufeld, "A Confession of Faith: Notes Toward a New Humanism," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 161–90.

⁸ L.O. Aranye Fradenburg, "Group Time, Catastrophe, Periodicity," in *Time and the Literary*, eds. Karen Newman, Jay Clayton, and Marianne Hirsch (New York: Routledge, 2002), 211–38.

