



‘Technology serves as a Rorschach over a lifetime, a projective screen for our changing and emotionally charged commitments.’

Sherry Turkle, *The Inner History of Devices* (Mass: MIT Press, 2008: 11)

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THE TEXT IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

REBECCA CHEW

B not alarm'd, Mdm, on recving this lettr, by the aprehnson of its contaning any rptition of those sntimnts, or renewl of those offr, wich were last nite so disgusting 2 u.

JANE AUSTEN (1813), *PRIDE & PREJUDICE*, TRANSLATED INTO TEXTESE BY AUTHOR.

Despite technological changes in communication devices, the social practice of correspondence via the written word remains an intimate and essential part of relationships. Along with email, SMS has replaced other personal modes of correspondence such as postal letters or calling cards. Given that mobile phones are individually owned and often physically near their owners, along with letter writing, SMS shares a discrete and private attribute, despite its public operation.

The mobile telephone has become an important personal accessory, a necessary part of any number of items in a woman's handbag (or Gaspard Yurkievich man-bag) or forming one of only three items in a man's pockets along with his wallet and keys. This popular consumer product can be customised and accessorised, reflecting social status and lifestyle. Within each telephone we build catalogues and archives of personal experience, storing contacts and diary items, special text messages, photos and short videos. These digital mementos form a narrative of our lives.

The written form of SMS corresponds with the written form of the epistolary tradition. We can imagine that the letter used as a narrative device in fictional works by writers such as Jane Austen (1775–1818), would today be replaced by SMS. In Austen's time, letter writing was *the* mode of affordable communication for the leisure classes. As the sheet of writing paper, folded in, served also as the envelope, like a text message there was an economy of space. Letters also doubled as a form of entertainment, often read aloud and discussed, therefore etiquette was required

and countenance was maintained with the exception between intimate friends and family. In Austen's novels such as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, the letter acts as a catalyst; a communication that propels the story along, presenting character information and plot twists. In *Sense and Sensibility* we wait impatiently with Marianne for word from Willoughby and in *Pride and Prejudice* are shocked with Elizabeth at revelations penned by Darcy. Letters also provided a means for characters to demonstrate intimacy and express emotion, as matters of the heart were a key theme of Austen's novels. Likewise, our own personal text messages arouse strong feeling or can be scandalous as conduits of gossip or news. They cause emotional responses upon delivery (or in deficiency) such as laughter over a shared joke, sadness when breaking up or anxiety over the immediacy or delay of a reply. Each text forms part of our broader personal narrative and documents our emotional experiences.

Larissa Hjorth has asked perfect strangers to disclose such intimate moments in *CU*. The personal correspondences of strangers will be shared and re-presented, not for entertainment but to explore the possibilities of what Hjorth calls a 'vernacular of emotions' associated with SMS and its use. Austen nerds will glimpse correspondences where countenance may be lost, convention discarded, conceit displayed and love made (in the Regency England sense) within the innumerable messages especially saved and generously shared.

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REBECCA CHEW IS DEPUTY DIRECTOR AT CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY, MELBOURNE.

A TEXT FROM MY CLEANER

DANIEL MILLER

dan,

ok i wil txt u...

by d way, i wil come on wednesday for the cleaning..

the rate for cleaning is £10/h, it s the rate of tita sally

and even some of my frends...

i am wiling to do it in lesser amount because i

really need the job but she did not reply..

hopefully, god will provide me one of this day with

part time job...

tnx very much...

Maria

Why do I find this text such a poignant token of much of my own recent research? Domestic labour is one of my main research topics. I have just finished a book about au pairs; I undertook this because it was through au pairs that my own children were brought up and I had a colleague who came from the same area in Slovakia that exports many au pairs to London, so we combined for the fieldwork. Currently I am working on the use of new media technologies by Filipino and Caribbean separated families. For me it seemed natural therefore to also find a cleaner from the many Filipina women who are looking for work, especially given the current recession.

Maria is just such a woman. She came relatively recently to London, but as with most such migrants, she took on very considerable debts in order to be able to come. Almost all current migration to London is semi illegal. Maria came with a student

visa officially to study as a care-worker. She has her degree in business studies, but you can't get a visa with that. So she also trained in caregiving and she goes once a week to her school. But most of the time she works in a carehome which is officially part of her school practical training. Recently they cut the hours which makes it very difficult for her to save to pay her debts. So she is desperate for cleaning work. Over the last six months she has only had the day a week she comes to me, and wants to find others. Recently a woman in a street near where I live responded to the advert she put through the door.

The problem was that I pay £10 an hour, which is typical in outer London. But this woman, the first in months to respond, would not agree to pay even £10 and refused to say how much she would pay. Maria didn't know how much to suggest so she didn't get the job. Maria was recommended by one of my informants Tita Sally ('tita' meaning Aunt although they were not really related, they just came from the same area in the Philippines). Maria texts me more often and with longer texts than almost anyone I know. They almost always end with a blessing and unlike English texts are full of polite and personal introductions and endings. Most of my informants spend more on texting than almost any other genre of expenditure. But perhaps for them more than any other group in the world, relationships are constituted by texting, and how often one texts and how much thought has gone into the text is what makes a person. My texts are very short and not very frequent. I still can't manage abbreviated text. I feel ashamed and inadequate every time I send one.

DANIEL MILLER IS A PROFESSOR IN ANTHROPOLOGY AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON.

AND COUNTING

CATHY DAVIDSON

This looks like a posting to my blog. ___

It isn't. _

It is catalogue copy for an exhibition by Australian multimedia artist Larissa Hjorth.

I met Larissa in Tokyo. She was making wonderful photographs of cell phones lovingly decorated by kids.

Keitai in Japanese.

Now she sends me an email. About SMS. Turned into art. ___

I've not seen her show, but she emails that she is using SMS text messages from all over the world.

She is collecting the precious ones, the texts people have saved. _

SMSs people cannot bear to delete. _

To delete. _

To delete.

(I look at the text message, I think it's over, I should delete it now. It's time. I save it. And then it returns again later. A haunting.)

It is time. _

Actually, the "I" caught parenthetically is a fiction. I've never actually saved a text message. Not one. But many years ago, when answering machines were still new media, my best friend called to say goodbye before he fell into a coma with AIDS. I jumped on a plane, flew to NY, sat with other friends at his still bedside, holding his hand. "He needs you to leave so he can pass," a nurse whispered. We left.

The message from Dean stayed saved on my answering machine. _

When I gave the machine away, Dean's parting message went too.

Where did it go?

_The machine. _

The message. _

Memory. _

My friend.

Good Will. Ripe for thrifting. _

Hjorth takes the leavings of new media and honors them. AfterImage and AfterLife of texting. Terse affect, silent soundings. LOL. ___

Wikipedia tells us that SMS stands for Short Message Service. _

It is a "communications protocol allowing the interchange of short text messages

between mobile telephone devices." ___

What is the protocol (long or short) of deletion? ___

SMS is "the most widely used data application on the planet, with 2.4 billion active users, or 74% of all mobile phone subscribers sending and receiving text messages on their phones." ___

And sometimes, we learn from Larissa Hjorth, saving.

Hjorth asks SMS'ers around the world to paint a verbal, visual, or textual picture of the feelings and emotions of the textings they salvage and hoard. ___

She makes a snapshot of their work. ___

And a video of the snapshots. ___

Multimedias of joy, love, loss, remembrance, celebration, memorial, commemoration, passing on, transforming.

Mobile.

Un-moved.

160 characters or less. ___

Repurposed. ___

Like this blog posting. ___

Repurposed. ___

And counting.

WWW.HASTAC.ORG/NODE/1890

CATHY DAVIDSON IS THE RUTH F. DEVARNEY PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AND JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN HUMANITIES INSTITUTE PROFESSOR OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AT DUKE UNIVERSITY. SHE IS ALSO CO-FOUNDER OF HASTAC (WWW.HASTAC.ORG) AND CO-DIRECTOR OF HASTAC/MACARTHUR FOUNDATION DIGITAL MEDIA AND LEARNING COMPETITION (WWW.DMLCOMPETITION.NET).

T W E E T O M E S

GILES LANE

“Tweetomes” : some epithets on practices of pithy exchange.

#tweetome Pervasive technologies have now nosed beyond fantasy into an increasing everyday reality

#tweetome Their nudges and irruptions frequently fragment and interpolate into the continuity of being suggested by individual consciousness

#tweetome Through intimate gestures we map and make sense of the social tapestries which make up the warp and weft of our daily lives

#tweetome Through confessions and disclosures we interweave these social tapestries with those of others with whom we share our environments

#tweetome Our hands construct the tangible souvenirs that bridge our material existence with the ephemeral world of data and communications

#tweetome We inhabit our environments much as we tell stories, endlessly constructing and reconstructing our everyday narratives

#tweetome These practices of inhabitation are much like recipes, each time mutating to suit the preferences of the cook

#tweetome Each small change transforms a story or a recipe or a mode of being from becoming stale with repeated use

#tweetome In sharing these moments we attain agency and authorship, a sense of value greater than the instruments of exchange

#tweetome And in praxis and participation we construct personal agency, our identity and citizenship, independent of the State

#tweetome Being mobile shifts our perceptions of space and territory, our horizons are no longer defined or limited by nationhood

#tweetome Our mediated whisperings are like a social glue, binding us together by tracing the elusive paths of knowing and sharing

#tweetome They provide us with the means to inhabit the places we feel most connected to asynchronously and discontinuously

#tweetome Through them we can puncture the skein of material reality to perceive and encrust other layers of experience and possibility

#tweetome In the immanent world of data we can occupy places by proxy: building our own imaginary (and yet real) architectures

#tweetome The fabric of place becomes a canvas for the design of new conduits for navigating social and spatial experience

#tweetome Transcending normative behaviours governing public places as we communicate beyond the physical limits of space

#tweetome Making our own trajectories to side-step how planners and architects shape and constrain our movement

#tweetome The city, the street, the field, the garden become a kind of conversation structured ever more by emotions, touch and language

#tweetome The granularity of our communities becomes reflected in the augmentations we make through digital and mobile interactions

#tweetome The fluidity of the relationships we map is tested by the attention we pay to their emergent patterns and realignments

#tweetome We become seduced by the possibilities of gathering informal knowledges that previously slipped like sand through our fingers

#tweetome Valuing traditional and social knowledges that have been allowed to evaporate as their owners and contexts vanish

#tweetome Co-creating social practices that encourage action, agency and authorship of both digital and material landscapes

#tweetome Increasing our capabilities as actors, agents, authors and architects of our own cultures and communities

#tweetome Creating new reciprocities of trust between people, place and things

#tweetome Innovating from the margins through the centre and beyond

#tweetome Creating intrinsic value in our transactions that hover like mist without having to be materialised

#tweetome Creating interpretations that shadow those of authorities without necessarily overturning them in violent revolution

#tweetome Being cooperative, co-creative, organic, sharing values, accreting knowledges, experiences and focused on people, not systems

#tweetome “Tweetomes” : some epithets on practices of pithy exchange for Larissa Hjorth’s project *CU: the presents of co-presence*

LONDON, FEBRUARY 2009

GILES LANE IS CO-DIRECTOR OF PROBOSCIS WITH ALICE ANGUS.
PROBOSCIS.ORG.UK

THE SECRETY OF INTIMACY

HEATHER A. HORST

Throughout the world we see people becoming enmeshed with a world that, while mediated by a mobile phone, is experienced as embodied and co-present. While society may lament the shift in the modes and measures of sociality and the value of polite conversation while waiting at the bus stop, walking down the street, sitting on public transport and other public spaces, the intimacy of the tactile and visual nature of thumb cultures become evident in the smirk which may appear in the corner of a young woman's lips as she reads a text message from her lover, the sparkle in a teenager's eyes as they hold in the laughter after reading a joke and the gradual shift of one's body closer and closer to their mobile phone.

For individuals not privy to these interactions, the inability of others to decipher meaning enhances the sense of connectivity and intimacy. A person next to you may shift their eyes to try to catch what is so engrossing about the device—they may even glimpse a few letters or images. Yet, a single message is very often only a small piece of a set of conversations and interactions which bridge time, place and device and, in turn, obscures interpretation by those who are not key participants in this ongoing dialogue. Indeed, much of what emerges in the course of an SMS conversation will, over time, become a secret language between a micro-community of best friends, lovers, co-workers and others for whom some event or interest is shared. In many ways, the language of SMS is one of the most accessible forms of communication. In contrast to the sort of intimate forms of communication romanticised in films, literature and popular culture – think of the love letters between Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett (Browning), Nick Bantock's *Griffin and Sabine* trilogy and Laura Ahearn's study of Nepali women and men using love letters in courtship (Ahearn 2001), SMS opens up the possibilities of initiating and engaging in sustained and "private" conversations between intimates. Rather than a formulaic message from sender to receiver, SMS messages are intentionally

interactive. Through this interaction, each participant becomes part of the creation of a small community of practice wherein shared meanings are continually, created, interpreted and reinterpreted through these micro-encounters.

Because these practices, and the words, cues and codes which construct this secret language, are created by these participants, SMS may challenge and even subvert the hegemony of the grammar systems and rules that preside over communication in more formal contexts. Whilst new patterns and rules emerge through the habituated practices of two individuals, the importance of continual interaction and the broader freedom from the constraints of external rules often has the dual effect of freeing communication from the constraints of words and language that often fail to fully represent feelings and emotions, such as love and friendship. The process of sending an SMS which objectively may possess little in the way of content when examined in and of itself may more aptly resemble the emotions of love, friendship and connectedness, feelings that are embodied, engrossing, secret, shared and, in a word, intimate.

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HEATHER A. HORST IS A SENIOR RESEARCHER AT HUMANITIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE.

OW AN AH UNWRITTEN OO HISTORY GA MA OF MA SMS

DARREN TOFTS

There's a strange and beguiling alchemy in making one sense do the work of another. Aleck knew this and set about making it his life's work. How to invest the visual silence of a moving mouth with utterance? This labour was no small comfort for a loved one who could not hear. At a young age the boy displayed an intuitive understanding of the malleability of the senses, reveling in convincing voice tricks a ventriloquist would take a life time to master. With its striking visual economy of sound appearing from an unseen source, mimicry was the catalyst for an emerging life of scientific invention devoted to remixing the senses.

Early experiments with automata were promising. With his older brother Melville, Aleck constructed a dummy head capable of making rudimentary sounds through an artificial throat and larynx. It was animated and endowed with breath, as if by Psyche herself, through a bellows. An incipient practitioner of stop motion animation, Aleck's deft adjustment of the prosthetic mouth perfected a lip-syncing so persuasive that he became the toast of the local society who came to hear his mechanical man speak. The single word issued from its mouth, 'Mama', conjured, with not inconsiderable sentiment, the image of the deeply personal inspiration for his pursuit of the sound of silence.

Aleck's interest in the technics of synaesthesia pushed him to even more ingenious experiments with live subjects. The family's beloved Skye terrier, Trouve, proved more malleable than his speaking automaton. Having taught the dog to make a continuous growling sound on request, he was able to deftly manipulate its lips and vocal cords in order to make it speak. The dog's most celebrated utterance, 'Ow ah oo ga ma ma' was translated to the delight of all as 'How are you grandma?'

But Aleck's primary goal was to simulate the sound of speech visually. Pursuing his interest in visual acoustics, he set about developing and refining technological solutions to the hardships of the deaf in an otherwise unsympathetic age. Having already prefigured the likes of Nick Park, Aleck's fascination with the malleability of speech established him as the ur-inventor of hip-hop slang. The sonic mishearing of 'How are you grandma?' to 'Who's yo mamma?' from the mouth of a dog is not as remote as it may seem. Aleck's experiments in acoustics and the idea of transmitting speech at a distance via electric waves gained momentum in the scientific community. In April 1871 he set out on a promotional East Coast tour of the Boston School for Deaf Mutes, the American Asylum for Deaf-mutes in Hartford and the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton. Like Grandmaster Flash introducing turntablism to the New York projects in the Bronx more than a century later, his idea of the 'visible speech system' was enthusiastically adopted by the instructors at these schools, who themselves became avid proponents of Aleck's message of finding a new use for things. He was also way ahead of other contemporary abbreviators of text and sound, sticking from an early age with the tag 'Aleck' instead of the venerable seven syllable iambic name to which he was born, Alexander Graham Bell.

To commemorate Aleck's death in August 1922 all the telephones in the United States 'stilled their ringing for a silent minute in tribute to the man whose yearning to communicate made them possible'. To honour DJ Aleck's ongoing legacy in the age of co-presence and mediated immediacy, the 2nd of August should be marked with a minute's abstinence from SMS use. The silence of SMS always comes at a cost, of course, in the cacophony of ring tones and alerts that presage those private instances of textual introspection we can't seem to live without. But just imagine it. The silence would be palpable on trains, in cafes, on the street and in schools and lecture theatres throughout the country; a momentary hiatus from the acoustic ecology of fun fart and heavy puking sounds, jizz in my pants themes and other fanfares of the silent intimacies we crave with our legion of unseen communicators.

DARREN TOFTS IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS AT SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY, MELBOURNE.

NOTE:

THE MAJORITY OF BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION TO DO WITH ALECK'S LIFE IN THIS TEXT WAS UNASHAMEDLY DERIVED, UNEDITED, FROM WIKIPEDIA, TO UNDERLINE THAT SOCIAL NETWORK'S RELIANCE ON UNATTRIBUTED AND UNDIFFERENTIATED VOICES.

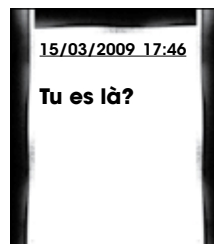
absence, silence, presence

CHRISTIAN LICOPPE

An old couple enjoying an evening at home. Two intimate friends watching a TV program. Two mechanics working together to repair a car in a garage. Being there together. Bits of talk interspersed with long bouts of silence. Insignificant lulls. 'Continuous states of incipient talk'. Basking in the glowing presence of the other. Pauses, heavy with the sense of getting old there together. Silence as the murmurs of presence.

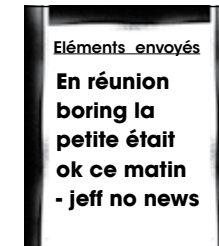
A mother or father working abroad, separated from her/his young children. Two best friends from school living in two different cities. Workers and migrants moving from one place to another. Mobility. Absence. Exile. Loneliness. Getting old apart. Missing lost ones. Longings to be waited out. Silence as *fatum*. Silence laden with absence.

Communication technologies. Connectedness. Ceaseless connectedness. 'Continuous states of mediated incipient talk', from a distance. Pauses that run the risk of becoming glaring lapses, pregnant with stillborn talk. An absence of chitchat which speaks volumes. Silence which signals growing distance, cries the loss of intimacy. Violent pauses, hard-edged absences, stony silences.



ARE YOU THERE?

Ceaseless flows of small messages to conjure absence forever. Not gifts to be returned. Nor news. Tiny freewheeling contributions that nurture and caress. Reasserting a sense of intimacy and bonding. Being cajoled back into presence. Getting old together apart. Connected presence.

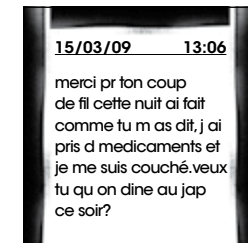


IN A BORING MEETING THE LITTLE ONE WAS OK
THIS MORNING — JEFF NO NEWS

Streams of gatherings. Commenting upon encounters, evoking past encounters, announcing and planning future encounters ... Entanglements. Jumping from one medium to another, face to face, landline phones and mobile phones, email and instant messaging, voicemails and SMS. Generalised and continuous conversations. Fluxes and laminations.



'T WAS TOUGH I'LL TELLYA



THANKS FOR YOUR PHONE CALL TONIGHT. I DID
WHAT YOU TOLD ME, I TOOK SOME PILLS AND I WENT
TO BED. WANNA GO TO THE JAPANESE RESTAURANT
TONIGHT?

Everywhere and nowhere. The dilution of togetherness. Dispersion. Unavailability. Multi-tasking. Simultaneous conversations with swarms of others. Multiple soundtracks and heteroglossia. Connected ghosts, scattered selves and dissociated personae. The withering of attention, strengthening of awareness. Being less than there, being beyond being there.

CHRISTIAN LICOPPE IS PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AT TELECOM
PARISTECH, PARIS.

**“19.13.19.”
(OR “SECRET MESSAGE SERVICE”)**

FEE PLUMLEY

I moved around a lot as a child. I was always the new girl, always the stranger in their midst, always felt like I shouldn't really be there and was often bullied accordingly. On the upside, I was never quite so under the control of peer pressure—what was de rigueur in one school was irrelevant in another—and so I often found myself observing each school's common practice rather than being swept up in it all.

What was especially commonplace across all schools, all youth communities, was this sense of 'the gang'—the cool gangs, the geek gangs, the sports gangs; safety in numbers. These gangs represented themselves through their personal identity branding (haircuts and additions to or subversions from uniforms) and their communications infrastructure.

Tiny scraps of notepaper, roughly torn from schoolbooks and often using some kind of poor encryption system (1=A, 2=B, etc.) were handed around classrooms from 'pssst' hand to 'pssst' hand. The status of the person selected to pass these treasure chests was almost as important as their recipient or sender; a classroom class system all of it's own. That the messages generally contained such gems as 'I'll phone you tonight at 7.30pm, make sure no one else is around coz I have something to tell you!' was unimportant. The infrastructure of control had been asserted... and didn't we all know it.

As the new girl I often found alternative friendships in other years or other classes—the non-conformists sticking together in isolation. Our notes became a statement of solidarity, a way to laugh off the aggression from those-on-high; 'Have you seen Claire's hair today? What does she think she looks like?!'. Our notes were not coded because we had nothing to hide, we were already targets so how

much worse could it get? Our notes were written with care, often full of doodles to while away the boring drone of the lesson (which for me had often been delivered much better by another teacher in a distant school), then passed with care and love from the sender's palm to the recipients palm in the hallways between lessons, or stroked through fingertips in the lunch queue.

The power of those messages often turned a day of desperation into a day of laughter and irreverence. I'll never forget them—indeed I still have some of them—and I will never forget those people who exchanged with me, even if we don't speak any more today. I was a great letter writer as a child, it was the only way to keep in touch with those rare friends I had made in a six month to a year placement somewhere that I would never see again. But it was those notes, those tiny fragments of nonsense thoughts, moments of shared internal power between the powerless, which has built the confidence I depend on now.

These days I watch with despair as people complain about the way digital technologies have created a barrier in communication. 'It's so easy these days, those little IM (Instant Messenger), SMS or tweeted fragments mean nothing', they say. Really? I mean REALLY? Well those little fragments saved me then and they save me now, it's just that these days I carry all of them with me in my pocket and they will never get wet or lost or worn out. I can read them time and time again and I can be sure that I love and am loved. What more can a lost little girl, always the stranger, always the new girl, ask for?

FEE PLUMLEY IS AN EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND MOBILE CREATIVITY SPECIALIST WHO CO-FOUNDED THE-PHONE-BOOK LIMITED, RECENTLY MOVED FROM THE UK TO ADELAIDE AND IS JUST NOW BECOMING THE NEW GIRL ALL OVER AGAIN, THIS TIME IN SYDNEY.

I AM STILL ALIVE —
SMS AS SIGN OF LIFE

MAMI KATAOKA

Through developments of SMS and mobile email (*keitai meiru* in Japan), styles of communication and language have become simpler. Even for some of the artists who never really answer emails, SMS has been the best way to communicate with them—at the very least to confirm that they are *alive*. Simplification and abbreviation of language is often very common in these kinds of short messages and these features have undoubtedly influenced new languages such as KY-go (KY language). KY-go, used predominantly by Japanese teenagers, is a combination of initial letters of Romanised Japanese words. The phenomenon is spearheaded by the abbreviation of KY, *Kuuki Yomenai*, meaning someone who is not capable of reading the ambience of a situation or insensitive to social nuances. As Japanese language is not shared or used in any other geographical or political territories the difference is further exasperated by the fact that Japan has developed its own mobile telephone technologies that are incompatible with systems abroad. It is through this technological isolation that such languages as KY have grown—further embellishing a sense of locality, vernacular and community.

Keeping this peculiar situation in mind, it is still interesting that variations of SMS or mobile email vernacular can be observed within all language around the world. In the end, it seems to be all about an active manifestation for one's existence in the outer world through the minimalism of language.

Eminent conceptual artist On Kawara (1933-) started his renowned *Today* series—otherwise known as “date paintings”—to evoke our notion of time, place and existence from 1966 onwards. In this series he paints emotionless white lettering

of the date that the painting was executed against a monochrome background. In another series, *I GOT UP* (1968-1979), Kawara sent postcards to his acquaintances with the stamped sentence *I GOT UP* at such and such time.

In his series *I AM STILL ALIVE* (1970-) Kawara sends this short message through a telegraph. Again Kawara's style has the most minimal expression of his personal emotions—phatic actions informing recipients of the postcard and telegraph that the artist, somewhere, *is* still alive. In the 1970s the telegraph must have been the most immediate method for Kawara to let others know that he existed within a minimalist gesture. Whether the media be a telegraph, postcard, fax, email or SMS it is a sign of life for both senders and recipients of messages. In this way, Kawara's *I AM STILL ALIVE* is the ultimate, most minimal and essential message fundamental to communication. Whatever the time we live, with whatever the technology or language we use, we perpetually feel the need to reconfirm that we are, with more or less gestures, *STILL ALIVE...* to both ourselves and others.

MAMI KATAOKA IS SENIOR CURATOR AT MORI ART MUSEUM, TOKYO, AND ALSO INTERNATIONAL CURATOR AT HAYWARD GALLERY, LONDON.

H A H A H A S M S

AMPARO LASEN

21-01-2009 10:15

Hahaha, would be delighted to meet you and your incoherence, but I'm behind on my work and leaving to Barcelona, hahaha. When I'll be back...

He laughs in his writing when he feels awkward; a communication pattern recognised now that he no longer sends texts.

08-01-2009 17:59

It's cold? I'm in the canaries in the beach, hahaha. Don't hold it against me, hahaha...

When we talk about our mobiles, sometimes it seems that the phone is like Godot in Beckett's play. The one who will make something happen, the one who brings the opportunity that would break the daily routine. The job, the project, the party, the date, the invitation, the loving words, the event.

29-12-2008 18:14

At half past seven in Sol. Bring aspirin or give me a massage, hahaha. Worn out kisses (will prepare the appeal tonight)

Thus, when we forget our mobiles at home, we feel lost and anxious. Wondering who will have phoned. Worrying about the potentiality of a missed opportunity, perhaps a possible wonderful conversation with a long lost friend.

22-12-2009 01:03

Scared? Hahaha. No, just 600km far away... Though on the 29th I'll be in Madrid, if then... Before, winter comes...

And then, the empty screen, the mobile silence, the unwanted calls, the unrequited texts and the routine calls and SMSs.

29-10-2008 21:42

Hahaha! Don't turn us on? What optimism, hahaha. At half past two in sol. Meanwhile be naughty and go get them...

In Beckett's work we are not distracted by any plot—we're continuously reminded that we are reading a book or watching a play at the theatre. Nothing happens that could distance us from the situation.

05-07-2008 12:01

Hahaha! It's patience! I'm in Ibiza till Friday... If then you wish to share table, tablecloth and sheets...

Regardless of our intentions and our longing for distractions, events and happy unexpected encounters, most of the time our mobile phones just remind us of the banality of our daily life, of the repetitive and meaningless weave of our everyday.

26-06-2008 18:50

Hahaha! To take French leave is not my style, so I'll look for you next week when I'll be back in Madrid. Meanwhile kisses from Ibiza.

In his case, the 'Hahaha texts' are often in response to comically defiant SMS in which his bad mobile manners have been called into question.

21-05-2008 14:52

If I tell you that last night I loved myself thinking of you, are you upset? Hahaha, kisses that are having a drink in the Ramblas... So, Mediterranean kisses then.

SMS messages provide a record, keeping the trace of everyday moments in text, in image. They help to build microevents and moments. They stand out from routine—providing evidence in our narratives of self we tell and show others.

13-05-2008 12:05

Hahaha!, No, don't stop giving books but if you manage to find me an assistant to do my job... Or if tomorrow you sign up for lunch.

SMS messages record and keep traces of fleeting moments, unique words, and emotional bursts in both text and image. They render these moments and emotions into a series of repetitions—revisited words, pictures and texts seen and read again and again. Memories inscribed in our cells. Made, kept and deleted.

03-05-2008 20:03

Hahaha, Sorry, I'm still in Valencia. Just back to the civilisation from the deepest of the Albufera. Reeds and mud kisses.

AMPARO LASEN IS PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY AT UNIVERSITY COMPLUTENSE OF MADRID.

CU

LARISSA HJORTH

Technology serves as a Rorschach over a lifetime, a projective screen for our changing and emotionally charged commitments (Turkle 2008: 11).

Gifts without presence: The poetics of co-present intimacy

CU endeavours to connect the history of SMS (Short Messaging Service) as a tool for the deaf with its capacity as an integral component in the making of everyday stories, intimacy and emerging imaging communities. On the one hand, we read what appear to be generic text messages, but through the stories of the user, we gain insight into the *context* informing the *content*. On the other hand, we see the rise of the vernacular globally—what Jean Burgess has called ‘vernacular creativity’ (2008)—whereby emerging forms of expression, etiquette and emotional terrains are being explored, negotiated and fostered. These SMS are like a fleeting Rorschach, emotional snapshots between moments. As Daniel Miller and Heather Horst lucidly note in their ethnography on Jamaican cell phones, ‘what one has to study are not things or people but processes’ (2006: 7).

In this way, SMS can be viewed as one of the key micro UCC (User Created Content) practices—demonstrating new modes of media creativity, literacy and labour in the twenty-first century. Whilst it is a precursor to Web 2.0 and the heralding of ‘participatory media’ (Jenkins 2006), in many contexts and countries, SMS remains the dominant application in the maintenance of self, expression, relationships and communities. *CU* provides some snapshots of moments of vernacular creativity and emotional disclosure—stories that are both new and enduring, generic and individual.

CU presents a collation of numerous SMS sourced from all around the world. I asked individuals to forward an SMS—either sent or received—that they had kept

because it was significant. I then asked them to paint a verbal, textual or visual picture of the feelings and emotions they associated with that SMS. My interpretation of these shared offerings form the basis of the works in this exhibition: a snapshot of content and context surrounding the SMS. This is an attempt to illustrate some of the complex emotions involved beyond the generic, clichéd, ironic and often frustrating emoticons. ☺

iLife: It’s complicated

In an age of Web 2.0, UCC, mobile media and SNS (social networking systems), the persistence of one mobile phone application has continued to grow unabated—SMS. In Tokyo, the ubiquity of *keitai* (mobile) practices has seen the rise in the phenomenon of what Sadie Plant called the ‘*oya yubi sedai*’ (thumb generation) (Plant 2002: n.p.); so much so that the *keitai* ringtone industry is booming with yearly revenues surpassing that of karaoke sales (Okada 2005: 55). Moreover, the rise of mobile media in Tokyo has become synonymous with the female consumer as exemplified by the high-school girl pager in the 1990s in which high-school girls appropriated the salaryman’s (*oyaji*) technology as their own, which was then followed by the *keitai* IT revolution (Matsuda 2005: 35). China, with over 429.7 billion SMSs sent in 2006 (Qiu 2009: forthcoming), is entering what has been defined as ‘the age of the thumb’ (*muzhi shi dai*) (Bell 2005: 68). From the downfall of President Estrada in the Philippines, the rise of netizens in Korea around the election of President Roh, to the deployment of SMS as artforms in the UK and Australia, SMS has continued to shape, and be shaped by, the technocultures in which it resides.

Despite the rise of new media technologies within everyday life (yes, there is an iLife program), the particular asynchronous and limited functions of SMS continue to be a significant, integral and poetic part of the contemporary intimacies and arising emotional vernaculars. If creativity thrives on limitations then, in the case of English SMS, it is 160 characters worth. In some cases its popularity is due to price, but in many instances it’s because SMS has such specific visual, textual, haptic and aural economies that makes it so meaningful. The dynamics of SMS has proffered the emergence and emphasis upon the phonetic and haptic—from parkours circumnavigating new pathways of urban spaces to the haptic games of Nintendo wii and iPhone; a phenomenon whereby there is no question that the ocular-centricism of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century wanderer, the *flâneur*, has been replaced by the informational city’s *phoneur* (Luke 2005).

In David Lodge's (2008) recent novel, *Deaf Sentence*, we meet Desmond Bates, a Professor in Linguistics (specialising in phonetics) who finds himself going deaf. As Bates notes, he has suddenly become estranged from his work, his passion, and his life. He thinks of Mozart going deaf. *But he is no Mozart*. He finds himself perpetually mishearing and misunderstanding things, continuously oscillating between embarrassment and confusion. Unlike someone going blind that has overt signifiers—such as dark glasses and a walking stick—deafness is silent (albeit a hearing aid often covered by hair). The deaf sentence is analogous to contemporary work/life practices. The deaf sentence is a death sentence—to be divorced from all that once gave meaning. And yet, just on the edge of despondency, Bates begins to learn lip reading only to discover a whole new world of phonetics for the deaf. Death sounds like deaf only to the hearing.

SMS is an example of the deaf sentence resuscitated, claimed by the masses. What does this persistence of an application deployed by the deaf community tell us about SMS? Is this an analogy for the sound of silence that is present-day affective vernaculars and digital storytelling? What pictures are these ephemeral, subjective, arbitrary, contingent messages and gestures of intimacy painting of contemporary life? As Ken Wissoker (2008) notes, the current proclivity towards 'participatory media' (Jenkins 2006) and the associated emotional, social and creative labour could be summated by a Facebook relationship status category—'it's complicated'. Complication just got copyrighted.

Sounds of Silence: New textual snapshots

Once we rid the infectious beat of the Simon and Garfunkel song (and *The Graduate* reference), we could say that SMS makes so much 'sense' in everyday life because, not in despite, of its genealogy as an application for the deaf. That is, in a complicated, frenetic world in which urban spaces are a cacophony of electronic buzzes and ringtones, the sound of silence is a precious moment. SMS's textual economy affords a sound of silence—to explore emerging emotional vernaculars in a non-threatening, non-f2f context. In this sound of silence, a lover will tell a secret they could never say f2f, best friends will share a co-present belly laugh, a daughter will send a greeting to her mum, a joke will be sent to a wrong number, a teenage girl will be unceremoniously dumped in a Kierkegaard action, a plea will go unanswered. This rise of SMS was also accommodated by silent codes of etiquette, conventions and traditions—new forms of social coding, capital and labour. This

dilemma and need to 'write right' saw SMS manuals being made in locations such as Hong Kong. Extending upon gift-giving rituals, SMS play into existing forms of exchange and power. But they also have the possibility for subversion—just as the rise and persistence of SMS highlights. Who would have guessed? Definitely not the telecommunications industry. SMS indeed represented one of the early forms of participatory culture and user agency before the rhetoric of Web 2.0 creativity and collaboration fully took hold.

The history of the rise of mobile applications such as SMS has also been observed as the genealogy of surprising uptakes (Goggin 2004; Hjorth 2003). Unlike domestic landline telephones, which were fixed to the domestic sphere and thus reinforced gendered spatial division and reproductive (unpaid, domestic) labour (Fortunati 2002, 2009; Massey 1995), the mobile phone saw the 'domestic' going out into the public sphere, thereby partially breaking down the various gendered divisions of public / private, intimate / anonymous and paid / unpaid labour. However, rather than this resulting in the erosion of gender divisions, notions of social and reproductive labour become increasingly precarious and exploited. In the case of developing contexts such as the Philippines, domestic landline usage was never the norm; thus the mobile phone stepped in to facilitate the dominant economy of the country—Filipino women working abroad. In his ethnographies of Filipino life, Raul Pertierra notes that the mobile phone provides many vehicles for self-expression. These forms of expression play across various levels—individual, social and cultural. Practices such as SMS can 'express social inequalities' (Pertierra 2006: 100) concurrent to creating 'an amplification of inner subjectivity' (Pertierra 2006: 101).

These 'amplifications' are particularly apparent in the case of SMS and new forms of women's writing. For example, in Tokyo, mobile phone novels (called *keitai shōsetsu* in Japanese) have become big multi-million dollar business predominantly powered for, and by women. This 'new' media has a strong interconnection with older media—successful *keitai shōsetsu* are adapted in film and *manga*. Practices such as mobile novels are not only big business in markets such as Tokyo, they can also be viewed as extensions of literary devices such as letter writing within women's fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Nineteenth-century women novelists like Jane Austen deployed their equivalent of contemporary vernacular media (letter writing) to highlighted interwoven conventions around intimacy and gender. For instance, if Austen were to be writing her juvenilia, such as *Love and Freindship* today, she would undoubtedly choose the equivalent

medium, SMS, to express the contemporary modes of intimacy, etiquette and co-presence. Indeed, the epistolary method favoured by many nineteenth-century female writers can be paralleled with the contemporary mobile novelist—both discourses have attracted similar types of female writers and audiences and the familiar criticism about the “demise” of “high” literature.

Contemporary forms of letters of love and friendship / freindship (sic) take various media—some fleeting in an electronic moment, some more etched into hard copy mementoes. One of the key literary functions of Austen was the role the letters—as both a sign of the vernacular and class as well as the uncovering and displaying of intimate unspoken feelings—played within her stories. For example, in her novels matters of the heart came in the form of letters. They demonstrated persuasion, pride and prejudice, and sense and sensibility. Today, they could be the fleeting moment of SMS.

iPhones: From imagined to imaging communities

SMS, more than other everyday media, highlights the remediated nature of new media. Mobile media rehearses older forms of intimacy as it expands and enables new forms of what it means to be intimate. SMS extends epistolary traditions of mediated intimacy, translation, phoner techniques, emerging emotional and affective vernaculars etc. SMS is indicative of the emergence of ‘produser’ (Bruns 2005) and ‘imaging communities’. By ‘imaging’ I refer to all the mobile media UCC practices that can take the form of the visual, textual, aural and haptic modes of expression. From text messages to camera phone images, these practices of imaging communities reflect forms of intimacy, labour and creativity which provide ways for configuring, and intervening, the region’s ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983).

Rather than the Asia-Pacific being a sum of what Benedict Anderson (1983) calls ‘imagined communities’—that is, nations formed through the birth and rise of printing press and print media—SMS (as part of networked mobile media) is best conceptualised as a series of ongoing, micro ‘imaging communities’ that can span visual, textual and aural forms. Moreover, contrary to Anderson’s imagined communities that saw the rise of the nation lead to the demise of the local and vernacular, ‘imaging communities’ further amplify the local and the colloquial. In the case of ‘imaging communities’, each community shares, stores and saves their media in diverse ways reflecting localised gift-giving rituals and

practices. These ‘imaging communities’ are indicative of emerging forms of gendered labour and intimacy.

For Timo Kopomaa (2000), today’s mobile media can be seen as an extension of nineteenth and twentieth-century mobile media such as the wristwatch. Technologies such as mobile media recreate earlier co-present practices and interstitials of intimacy; As mentioned earlier, SMS re-enacts nineteenth-century letter writing traditions (Hjorth 2005). As Esther Milne (2004) observes, new forms of telepresence such as email can be linked to previous practices of co-present intimacy such as visiting cards. For Lynn Jamieson, part of the problem in discussing contemporary forms of intimacy is that it often assumes the western, heteronormative and face-to-face model as a given precept (1999). Rather, the intimate co-presence enacted by mobile technologies should be viewed as part of a lineage of technologies of propinquity (Milne 2004; Hjorth 2005, 2009). The re-orientation of intimacy as part of broader shifts towards a blurring between public and private spaces is exemplified by confessions and disclosures of private matters through various forms of mobile performativity of intimate strangers (Plant 2002). Once associated with a sense of the private, practices of intimacy have increasingly become public.

As Lauren Berlant observes, intimacy has taken on new geographies and forms of mobility, most notably as a kind of ‘publicness’ (1998: 281) that is epitomised by the mobile phone (Fortunati 2002: 48). SMS both play into this phenomenon as well as providing one of the few private platforms for emotional disclosures. Unlike SNS and the ‘its complicated’ public performativity of intimacy, SMS and its sound of silence vernacular still provides teenagers those secret moments akin to exchanging a love letter. For Maria Margaroni and Effie Yiannopoulou (2005), the ‘intimate turn’ in the humanities sees a reassessment of the value of emotions and localised and contingent forms of intimacy that are part of contemporary global mobility (geographic, technological, economic, people). It is a reinvestment of place and locality in the face of emerging forms of mobility. Indeed, through enduring practices such as SMS we can see the emerging forms of social, affective and emotional labour that have played a part in shifting work / life patterns. SMS can also take us into someone’s emotional world and its translation to another. But just how public has intimacy gone? In the case of SMS, early boundaries between public / private, intimacy / politics, male / female categories are both sustained as they are subverted. Sense and sensibility?

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C U

S M S /

I M A G E

**GIVEN THAT ONE
OF THE SILENT HISTORIES OF
SMS WAS ITS USAGE BY
THE DEAF COMMUNITY, C U
TRIES TO EXPLORE THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SMS
MESSAGES WE SEND AND RECEIVE
AND THE EMOTIONAL IMAGES THEY LEAVE.**

**PEOPLE GAVE ME AN SMS
ALONG WITH EXPLAINING
THEIR EMOTIONAL RESPONSE.**

I THEN MADE IMAGES OF THESE EMOTIONS.

L O S S



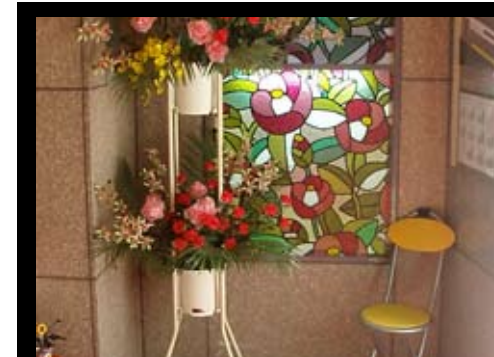
Promise me
you'll be
there at the
end if i go
first. X

DECEPTION



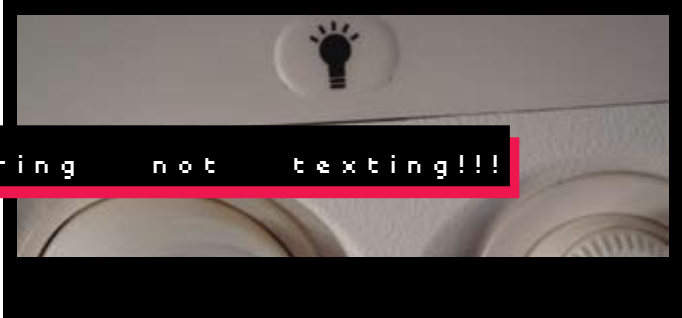
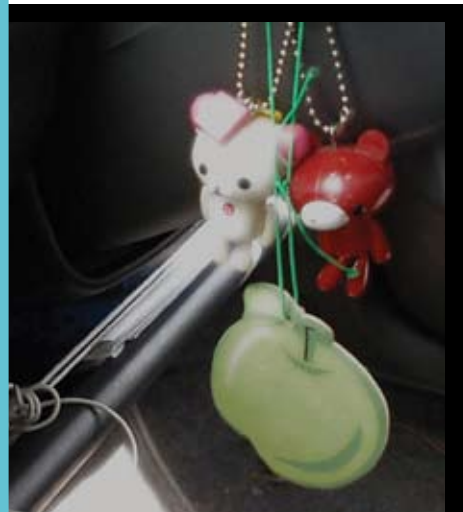
I
want
2
CU.

LOVE & FRIEND SHIP



You don't need to 'read' my message in any way. There is nothing 'wrong' with me cos i don't want 2 do dinner. It's just what it is. Nothing more, nothing less.

BTW.
Kitty reminded me about the pack we made, age 70 house full of cats.
x



GIFTS OF CO_PRESENCE

Instinct!?
Dont follow
it anymore, pls.
Be nice to yrself,
not superstitious.
Hope u dont
regret it,
xox

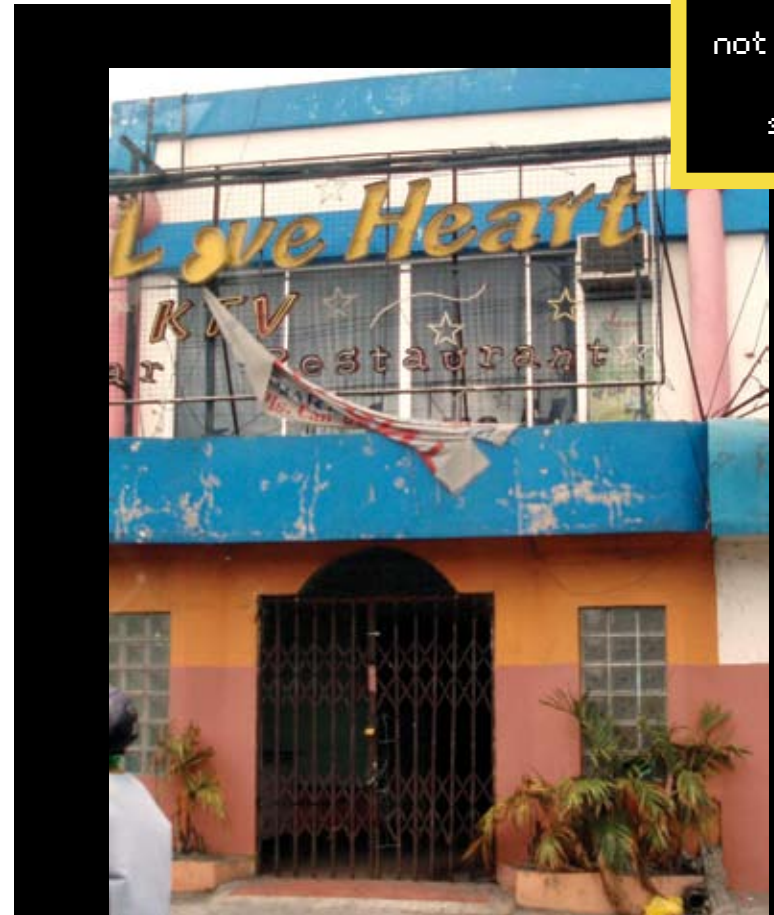


I'm never
there when i
should be, but
i do think of
you
every day..
xx




Uh, končno nasel čas.
Dolski ata ima Taro.
Mere impozante. 4300 g,
57cm. Bodoca olimpijska
prvačinja ali pa nova
Marija Sapova. Festa v
ponedel jeK. Kraj dogajan
se neznan.

SENSE & SENSIBILITY



C'mon ur
not adora
svitak.

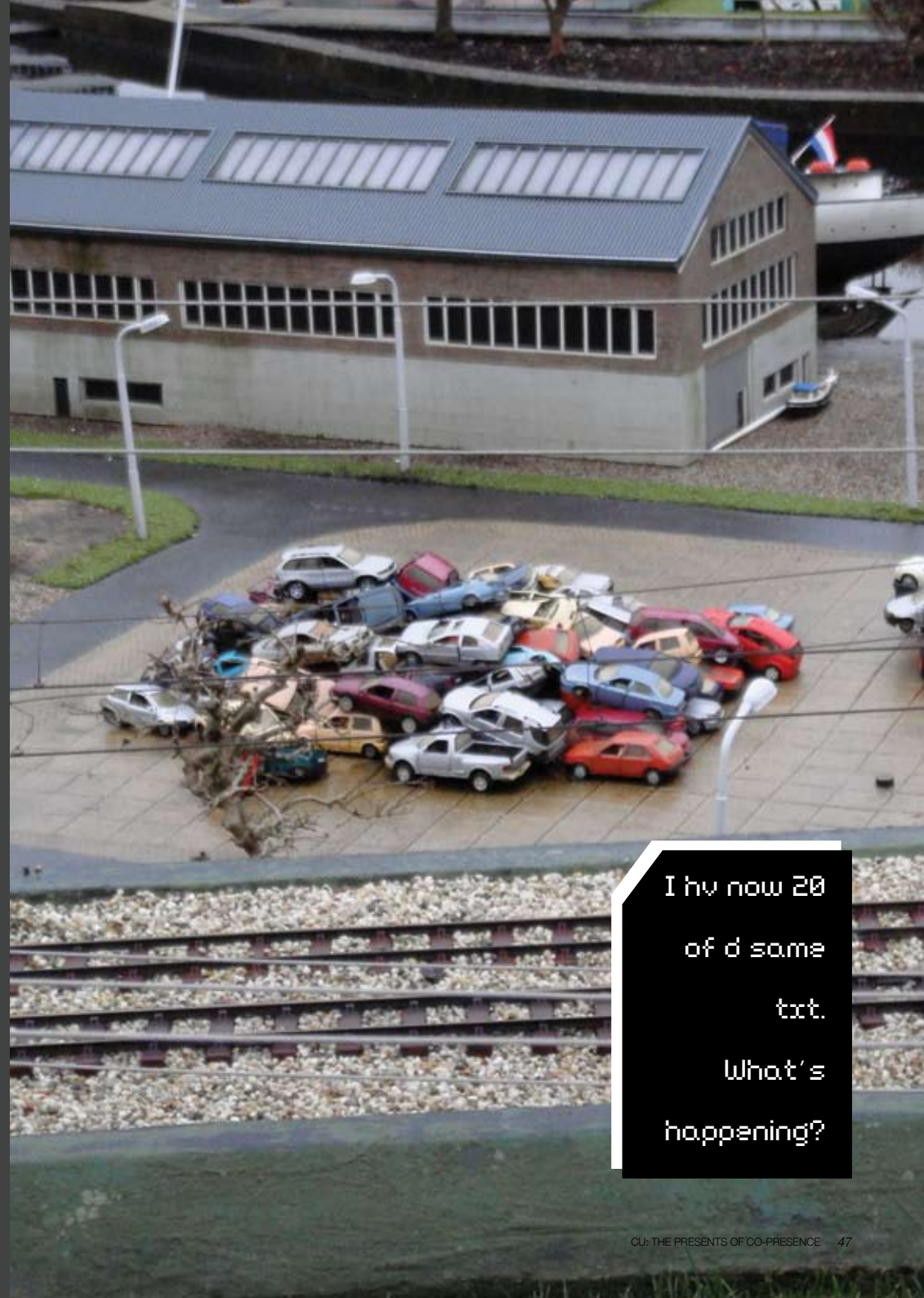
W A I T I N G
4
IMMEDIACY



ありがとう！これからもアドバイスをよろしくお願いします。
だんだんエネルギーが上がってきました。
よけいな事は気にしないようにします！
色々すみませんでした。
小説読んだり映画見て帰るといいよ。ワイン一杯飲んで寝るといいんでない？
そうしますね。過緊張しているね。
では行ってきます！

DEAF

_ SENTENCE



I hv now 20
of d some
txt.
What's
happening?

~~WRONG~~ ~~NUMBERS~~

hi this is jos mum robert
mother in law robert kids
grandmother get the
message i was going to
stay out of it but not now
robert tells you
something and tells us
somthing else this is
only the start
gloves are on
welcome to our family
because your nightmare
has just begun





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CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

404 GEORGE STREET FITZROY VIC 3065

T +613 9417 1549

E INFO@CCP.ORG.AU

WWW.CCP.ORG.AU

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VICTORIA**



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