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Introduction

On July 10th, 2018 I watched a live televised speech on Iranian national TV. The speech was impassioned, drawing connections between the current leader of the country and the first Imam of Shia believers. The speaker's sentences were unfinished, his metaphors unclear, and his voice kept trailing off. He jumped from one topic to another, and while the language was scattered, his audience listened with rapt attention to every word, responding with waves of emotion as if on cue. His cadence was rhythmically consistent, his tone authoritative. It was as though the words didn't matter, they were simply fillers; rhyming words, clichéd slogans and statistics.

On July 25th, 2018 I watched Donald Trump give a speech on Iranian national TV. I noticed he changed the angles of his body. He turned slightly to the Left, pause, middle, pause, then right. The people behind him cheered and clapped each time he paused. I recall putting the TV on mute and watching the rest of his performance. Visually, it was similar to conducting a symphonic orchestra. His hands were going up and down and people were clapping, smiling, and nodding their heads at the same time. They knew they were being watched, a group of performers orchestrated by their conductor.

Obama, Carter, Mandela, Putin, Clinton – I've heard the speeches, Hitler, Erdogan – I've watched the rallies, and I've reviewed the Ayatollah Khamenei's sermons. I've observed the blue coloured curtain-backdrop behind the politicians; watched giant speakers hang perilously above the crowd's heads in Istanbul's Yenikapi Square; shuddered at the long red banners flowing like blood at the Nuremberg rallies. Everyone has a flag to wave. I see the connections and I am weaving the threads.

This paper is an examination of the architecture and aesthetics of politics as they relate to the sociological and technological apparatuses[1] that both design and are impacted by the political realm. "The voice"[2] becomes a recurring metaphor for understanding the relationship between different agencies within the socio-political realm. Is a televised political speech merely a media infrastructure for anesthetizing its audience? A device for political theatre? For democracy? Are politics separate from aesthetics? What is the relationship between aesthetics and political theatre, and what role does a political body play on this stage? Does the politician represent political ideology, and if so, what role does the audience play? Are we, the viewers, part of the aesthetic, or are we more than a homogenous vessel for ideology? Can the spectacle be separated from the spectator? How do these definitions shape my idiosyncratic understanding of a televised speech? What is the function of a televised speech versus a public debate within a parliamentary space? Whose voice is represented through a politician's performance?

Originally, my goal was to untangle the questions of socio-political relations while trying to record them in a symbolic form. I was met with constant contradictions, and ultimately came to realize that *entanglement* is fundamental to the connections I've made during this project. It is not enough to merely critique the function or effect of socio-political relations, but rather to make sense of them.

My hypothesis is that political discourse and expression can be understood as theatrical in genre or discipline. I am interested in both the discursive effects of the material and the material effects of the discursive; how the visual presentation of political context – rallies, speeches, sermons - derives its power from theatrical tropes, rooted in historical and language cues that are both literal and allegorical. As I build my research, I will

continue to map connections between these elements. Some questions have been answered, while others remain questions.

I use Karen Barad's diffraction[3] methodology to support the socio-political impossibility of direct language in political-speak. Essentially, it is more effective to use indirect devices, such as storytelling, to make political issues palatable. While looking at the elements of an apparatus - a system at work, a system consisting of interrelated parts - several patterns became apparent to me, threads I was compelled to follow to find connections, the *Gestalt* rather than its individual parts.

In order to understand the connections between different elements of political speech, I examined the history of oration in relation to the aesthetics of political stage. What is the political stage? How is it designed? What forces gather to create an impressive speech? How do these forces shape a whole image for the audience? I interviewed political campaign stage designers, speech writers, and dramaturges. I researched historical images of political stagecraft and the architecture used by politicians for social engineering. Some of the dialogues in this paper are taken from those conversations. I followed the history of poetry and the art of oratory in ancient Greek and Roman cultures to create a trajectory of ancient speech practices.

Looking at the historical images and drawings of ancient Greek and Roman architecture of public spaces led me to consider a narrative tone for my writing that consisted of fiction and reality. There is much evidence to support history as a narrative of the past with roots in our natural desire for storytelling. I used ancient Greek and Roman gods, politicians, and poets to reinforce the idea of past beliefs in our current culture, and the use of these narratives in a modern era through storytelling. The ghostly presence of the past, voices of dead fathers, the heavy-handed use of past heroics are all relevant to this area of study. I am specifically interested in the role of media in the narrativization of history and representation of politics through the lens of technology.

Memoing is often used in literature as a technique for theoretical research and will be used here as part of my methodology. Part of my strategy uses 'abstraction' to further examine context – an empirical centrifuge of sorts[4]. Since the emphasis in my research is on contextually situated meanings, I've created fictional context but have suggested real life scenarios based in history through manufactured images, the use of metaphors, dialogues, and familiar tropes. I intend to extract meaning from the objects available on the political stage while pointing out the relationship between politics and *the Volk*, to make sense of the infrastructure of political power gained through a performative, staged representation.

Fiction as a genre allows me to create familiarity with the reader while allowing her to derive her own meaning. A dialogue/dyadic interaction is the best mode of delivery. Dialogue allows the reader to be an observer, a witness to the conversation who can take sides, a member of the audience as the performance unfolds. In this case, narrative becomes a support structure for focusing the research on interpretation, description, or thematic analysis rather than building theory. Based on the subjective nature of my research, I have chosen to conduct a semiotic, relational reading of political stage or theatre. By recreating or restaging a political space within the lives of these fictional characters, I identify the salient characteristics of political aesthetics. It is important to acknowledge that I do not aim to assign truth values to the examined subjects, but rather examine my own interpretation and contextual reality.

Through this semiotic, relational reading of political theatre I ask, what is the dialectical relationship between form and aesthetic content in political speech and how do they in turn relate to the social structures that they represent? Is a certain engagement and use of aesthetics an apparatus for political power? Do objects used on the political stage function like theatrical props? How are aesthetics the support structures of politics? What is the role of political entertainment in social engineering?[5]

In this paper, as well as in my exhibition, I explore the classical form-content relationship asking, how "medium" is the message?[6] I explore the form of delivery of a political message as the meaning itself. As Duncan Robertson writes in his essay, *Dichotomy of Form and Content,* "The dichotomy of form vs content comes from the classical Latin distinction between VERBA and RES."[7] In the context of speech, for example, form relates to the structure of language while content is a matter of concept represented by words. Content is *what* is said, hence plot, character, setting, thought, argument, or theme. Form is *how* it is said, hence diction, syntax, versification, and imagery. Metaphor, which itself relies heavily on the fictional capacities of language, is the most common means for creating a relatable form for linguistic content. Robertson writes: "The distinction between form and content is harmless until form becomes a container for the content. As if form and content are independent of each other."[8] Keeping this in mind, I do not aim on separating form from content, as they do inform one another.

The musicality of speech (pitch, intonation, etc.), which is an aesthetic element of political language, allows a speaker to persuade and manipulate a crowd by triggering a response with activities such as: pausing for applause, high-pitched cheering, or the tone of well-placed *wooing.* Using the speech as a departure, I explore the delivery of political messaging and aesthetics. Specifically, I focus on political platforms as the carriers of meaning, beyond the actual "content" or "message" they deliver. My work aims to delve deeper into how meaning is as much a function of pitch and intonation as it is the connotative interpretation of the words in the context of political speech and rhetoric. I don't disregard the meaning that the words produce, but I invite the audience to shift its focus to the communicative qualities of form, not as the container for content, but as a parallel mode of delivery. Abstraction and the use of symbolic form, in this case, specifically shift the focus to the "form," or "aesthetics" of the material.

Public speech as *a form* of presenting political thought is also *the form* of presenting political thought. I examine this duality format of public speaking as an infrastructure for political theatre and how it is wielded as an apparatus for power. As Karen Barad writes, "An apparatus is the set of material-discursive practices with which we engage with the world."[9] I juxtapose apparatuses in relation to one another and read one *through* the other to discover how they function to support a larger system. In this instance, political speech is a practice shaped from different apparatuses that help convey a particular message, as well as exhibit a mode of delivery in symbolic form. These devices help shape political theatre and function as cogs in the much larger apparatus of political power and propaganda. Political theatre is constructed from a complex set of systems (or apparatuses) that will ultimately become a fundamental tool to make sense of the political machine.

What is meant by "political theatre"? In her essay, *Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language,* Josette Feral explains theatricality as "a fantastical cognitive operation set in motion either by the observer or the observed."[10] Feral considers theatricality as a virtual, transitional space that is created by a performative act. This transitional space, or *framing,* clears a path, allowing both the spectator and the performing subject to pass from "here" to "elsewhere." In situations where stagecraft is present in the space, the pace becomes a

vehicle of theatricality, regardless of the presence of the actor. Certain relations are perceived by the subject without implicit direction or exposition. It seems that the process of theatricality has to do more with "gaze" than any other characteristic. Provoking the gaze is where the space of belonging to the other rises - the space where fiction can arise. Feral writes: "For Stanislavski, theatricality appears as a kind of distancing from reality, an effect of exaggeration, an intensification of behavior that rings false when juxtaposed with what should be the realistic truth of the stage".[11]

In this process, the masses were constituted and passively absorbed the phenomena rather than attentively observing them. And so, it goes; politics become entertainment, political debates become reality TV shows where the audience's participation functions akin to a laugh track. Leslie Kan, in her article *Spectacle*, suggests that as we approach a "turbulent media landscape," from the Kennedy Assassination to Tiananmen Square to the 9/11 attacks to our current moment mediascape, "the televised spectacle" becomes a desensitizing event rather than an evocative one; spectators are acted upon rather than active participants. Mass media combines a rapidly growing set of images into a singular plane of digital spectacle where sitcoms and celebrity are juxtaposed against war zones and acts of terrorism. Like Guy Debord, Jonathan Crary argues that the televised spectacle constructs a consciousness that functions merely on the basis of the programming, an imported production of televised media and its related socio-economic structures. Kan writes: "For theorists such as Foucault, Crary, Debord, and Baudrillard, the spectacular shifts from its theatrical origins and now carries with it issues of class ideology and modern subjectivity."[12]

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1   Giorgio Agamben, in his book *What is an Apparatus?* defines an "apparatus" as a non-human phenomenon that creates a human subject. This includes anything that in some way has the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings. In short, anything outside of a human that plays a role in forming the human subject. An apparatus refers to a specific manipulation of forces, and a rational intervention in the relation of those forces that pushes them into a particular direction, blocks them, stabilizes or utilizes them. The apparatus is always involved in a play of power, while limited to a certain type knowledge, it at the same time conditions it. See Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus and Other Essays.* (Stanford University Press, 2009), 14-20.

2   Mladen Dolar, in his book *The Voice and Nothing More*, proposes that there are three levels to understanding the voice. The two most common levels are, first, the use of the voice as the vehicle of meaning, and second

as a source of admiration. The third level of understanding is the voice as an object that functions as the lever of thought. He suggests that the voice is a Lacanian object-cause. In his writing, Dolar speaks of "an uncanniness in the gap which enables a machine, by purely mechanical means to produce something

so uniquely human as voice and speech." Then, he imagines a scenario in which the effect frees itself from its "mechanical origin" and starts functioning as a "surplus," as "the ghost in the machine." See Mladen Dolar, *A voice and nothing more.* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 8.

Dolar imagines an effect without a proper cause. This strange property of the voice is one of the focal points he returns to. To him, the voice is not just an external element of speech, but exists independently, having its own life and "haunting it by the possibility of symbolizing it." See Ibid. 106.

3   In her writing, Melanie Sehgal explains Karen Barad's concept of diffraction as "the phenomenon of interference generated by the encounter of waves, be it light, sound, or

water, and within quantum physics, of matter itself." Diffraction, as an optical illusion, for Sehgal, works as both metaphor and methodology in knowledge production, standing in opposition to reflection. If reflection reproduces the same information in an image, diffraction records the patterns that are referencing the history, interaction, reinforcement, difference and interference. See Melanie Sehgal, "Diffractive Propositions: Reading Alfred North Whitehead with Donna Haraway and Karen Barad," Parallax 20, no.3, (2014): 188-201, DOI: 10.1080/13534645.2014.927625.

4   Melanie Birks, Ysanne Chapman, and Karen Francis, in their essay *Memoing in qualitative Research: Probing data and processes* write: "Memoing is often discussed in the literature as a technique employed in grounded theory research, yet there is limited exploration of the value of memo writing in qualitative methodologies generally. Memoing serves to assist the researcher in making conceptual leaps from raw data to those abstractions that explain research phenomena in the context in which it is examined." ... "While guidelines exist to aid in the production and use of memos, memoing remains a flexible strategy wherein the process of construction and nature of content is determined by the preferences and abilities of the researcher and the aims and focus of the specific research study."

See Melanie Birks, Ysanne Chapman, and Karen Francis, "Memoing in Qualitative Research: Probing Data and Processes." *Journal of Research in Nursing* 13, no.1 (2008): 68. doi:10.1177/1744987107081254.

5   According to Christopher Hadgany, "social engineering is the act of manipulating a person to take an action that may or may not be in the "target's" best interest." This can involve obtaining information, gaining access, or getting the target to take certain action. See Christopher Hadnagy, *Social Engineering: The Art of Human Hacking*. 2nd ed. (Indiana: Wiley Publishing, Inc. 2011), 14.

6   Marshall McLuhan, "the Medium is the Message", *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (Toronto: Toronto Education Quarterly, 1964)

7   Duncan Robertson, "The Dichotomy of Form and Content." *College English* 28, no. 4 (1967): 273. doi:10.2307/374579.

8   Ibid. 275.

9   Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs* 28, no. 3 (2003): 801-31. doi:10.1086/345321.

10   Josette Feral and Ronald P. Bermingham. "Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language." *SubStance* 31, no. 2 (2002): 98. https://muse.jhu.edu/.

11   Ibid. 103

For example, Amy M. Clanton writes in her 2011 essay *Religion as Aesthetic Creation: Ritual and Belief in William Butler Yeats and Aleister Crowley*: "Religious representations are collective representations which express collective realities".

She quotes Richard Schechner, saying that all rituals contain behaviors that are removed from their original context and usage, and that these behaviors are simplified and exaggerated - in other words, aestheticized. See Amy M. Clanton, "Religion as Aesthetic Creation: Ritual and Belief in William Butler Yeats and Aleister Crowley" PhD diss., University of South Florida, (2011): 13. https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/3718

12   Leslie Kan, "Spectacle." University of Chicago. Accessed March 3, 2019. http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/spectacle.htm.

PRELUDE

Form *is the shape, visual appearance, or configuration of an object. In a wider sense, the* form *is the way something is or happens.* Form *may also refer to:* Form *(document), a document (printed or electronic) with spaces in which to write or enter data.* Form *(religion), an academic term for prescriptions or norms on religious practice.* Form *(visual art), a three-dimensional geometrical figure; one of the seven elements of art. Musical* form*, a generic type of composition or the structure of a particular piece.* Form *(computer virus), the most common computer virus of the 1990s.* Form *(HTML), a document* form *used on a web page to, typically, submit user data to a server.* FORM *(symbolic manipulation system), a program for symbolic computations. Oracle* Forms*, a Rapid Application Development environment for developing database applications.* XForms*, an XML format for the specification of user interfaces, specifically web forms. First-order reliability method, a semi-probabilistic reliability analysis method devised to evaluate the reliability of a system.* Form *(philosophy), an ideal object which organizes matter.* Form*, object of study of Morphology.* Form *(exercise), a proper way of performing an exercise.* Form*, a backless bench formerly used for seating in dining halls, school rooms and courtrooms. Argument* form*, a.k.a. Logical* form *or Test* form *- replacing the different words, or sentences, that make up the argument with letters, along the lines of algebra; the letters represent logical variables. Intelligible* form*, a substantial* form *as it is apprehended by the intellect. Substantial* form *asserts that ideas organize matter and make it intelligible. Theory of* forms*, asserts that ideas possess the highest and most fundamental kind of reality. Value-*form*, an approach to understanding the origins of commodity trade and the formation of markets. "-*form*", a term used in science to describe large groups, often used in taxonomy.* Form *(botany), a formal taxon at a rank lower than species.*[13]

THE MAN

[Loud feedback noise]

Each   time   the   man   paused,   they   responded.
Obligation.

[Announcement sounding voice from loudspeakers]

   — Ali went to bazaar [Pause]

      [Crowd crying]

   — He saw an old woman standing in a corner [Pause]

      [12039   people   crying]

Men, women, children. Mimicking one another. Obligated to respond, to make noise.

There is always that one man who is watching the ceiling or looking into the camera.

Imagine imagining your own televised representation and seeing yourself from someone else's perspective. What could have possibly made one be present but absent.

Pouring tears to the story that the man never finished.

OPATSEG

[Eyes tightened]

— So dark back here.

— Watch out for the mice.

[Eyes tightened]

— Nah, they only like the wet ones.

— They actually damaged a lot of these bad boys.

— Why do they only eat the flags?

— They don't eat them. They only go after the soaking wet ones. [Searching in a box]

— I was actually going to ask, what's the point of washing flags?

— What's the point of chewing wet flags?

— Your historical research begins here. [Laughing, followed by a hysteric rub on the belly]

[Loud creepy noise]

— They're back. Help me pick this up. We're taking it to the stage.

— I need to vomit.

— Let's get you out of here.

— Don't forget to bring. [Bleeeeaghhhh]

— Perfect.

NOW

— We've had this conversation before, haven't we?

— But what is the solution?

— You are still functioning, no?

— Yes, but they are everywhere I look.

— We all see those, your concern is unnecessary, the concern itself is more the problem.

— Does that happen to you as well?

— Constantly pulling out connections, searches for semiotics beneath semiotics, levels of meaning beyond the messenger's intent or the recipient's awareness.

— But everything, everywhere, all the time!!

— Everything, everywhere, all the time.

[A whisper into your ears]

One of the wonderful things about rhythm is that when you're
involved with a rhythm you take on a beat other than your own.[14]

Jon Favreau[15]

YENIKAPI SQUARE

— How's the weather up there?

— Pardon?
[He takes off his left earbud]

[Screaming out loud]

— How is the weather up there?

— Oh! Haha

— He seems shorter than I expected.

— Expected?

— On TV he looks taller and more handsome.

— Yeah with all the makeup and the camera angles.

[Screaming]

— Can you hear him? People are too loud!

— Yeah, I'm listening to him with a few seconds delay on my phone.

— What is he saying?

— Something about taxes and housing.

— Important something!

— Sorry, one sec.

[People chanting][16]

— HO LY SHIT, HO LY SHIT!

— HO LY SHIT, HO LY SHIT!

— Did he say he would lower the taxes?

— I missed that...

— HO LY SHIT, HO LY SHIT!

— HO LY SHIT, HO LY SHIT!

— HO LY SHIT, HO LY SHIT!

— HO LY SHIT, HO LY SHIT!

THE WHITE HOUSE

[Looking at a magazine]

— Some stories are timeless.

[Rubbing two wooden hangers against each other]

— All stories happened in the past.

— That's not true.

— Give me an example.

— Story of the man who saved the world.

— That is in the past: SAVED the world! Past tense.

— Story of the man who will save the world?

[BOOM!]

— What was that?

— Still past. If the story is written, then it is about the past.

— What if it predicts the future?

[Hanging one hanger off the other hanger]

— You will only know if it becomes the past.

[Holding the magazine up]

— One little known spirit is the unidentified 15-year old boy called the Thing that greatly frightened the Taft domestic staff in 1911. President Taft's military aide, Major Archibald Butt, wrote to his sister Clara: "The ghost, it seems, is a young boy about fourteen or fifteen years old . . . They say that the first knowledge one has of the presence of the Thing is a slight pressure on the shoulder, as if someone were leaning over your shoulder to see what you might be doing." President Taft ordered Butt to tell the White House staff that the first member to repeat stories about the Thing would be fired.[17]

— Ghost stories bore me.

[Wide eyes, no blinking]

[Reads from the magazine]

— Abraham Lincoln appears in the Lincoln Bedroom and Yellow Oval Room. First Lady Grace Coolidge, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands claim to have seen Lincoln.[18]

— Have you seen my dance shoes mama?

— I didn't know you dance.

— I don't.

— What happened to the Greeks?

— To the Greeks?

— Yes. you don't seem to care about the news.

— Revolution?

— Worse.

[News Reporter on TV]

...A group of leading historians held a press conference Monday at the National Geographic Society to announce they had "entirely fabricated" ancient Greece, a culture long thought to be the intellectual basis of Western civilization.[19]

— NICE!!

[TV sound]

...Frustrated by the gap in the record and finding archaeologists to be "not much help at all," they took the problem to colleagues who were then scrambling to find a way to explain where things such as astronomy, cartography, and democracy had come from.

..."Honestly, we never meant for things to go this far, we were young and trying to advance our careers, so we just started making things up: Homer, Aristotle, Socrates, Hippocrates, the lever and fulcrum, rhetoric, ethics, all the different kinds of columns—everything."

ORPHEUS

— If the language of romance can be performed on the same level as the language of politics, and satisfaction relies on the performances that don't go beyond covering the lack of substance, what it tells about love is that it might be merely a linguistic exchange, or no more than a gestural act.

[Pointing with the right hand]

— It's to your right.

— You might sound right in your analogy, but I confess that there is no substance in this statement itself but a good adaptation of political rhetoric. Speaking without saying anything.

— What a landscape...

— Back to our previous point, heroes come in all shapes and sizes! Those with grand gestures are more memorable.

— As opposed to ...?

— Those with no grand gestures.

— Ah I see.

[Slower steps]

— What lies beneath the meaning of these heroes' names...

[Cuts him off]

— Is the evilest of all games.

— Not untrue I guess.

— So, tell me more about heroes with no grand gestures.

Donald J. Trump ✔
@realDonaldTrump

Catch and Release is an obsolete term. It is now Catch and Detain. Illegal Immigrants trying to come into the U.S.A., often proudly flying the flag of their nation as they ask for U.S. Asylum, will be detained or turned away. Dems must approve Border Security & Wall NOW!

2:55 PM — 18 Nov 2018

Donald J. Trump ✔
@realDonaldTrump

It is our sacred duty to support America's Service Members every single day they wear the uniform – and every day after when they return home as Veterans. Together we will HONOR those who defend us, we will CHERISH those who protect us, and we will celebrate the amazing heroes...

3:34 PM — 15 Nov 2018

Donald J. Trump ✔
@realDonaldTrump

The inner workings of the Mueller investigation are a total mess. They have found no collusion and have gone absolutely nuts. They are screaming and shouting at people, horribly threatening them to come up with the answers they want. They are a disgrace to our Nation and don't...

7:14 AM — 15 Nov 2018

Donald J. Trump ✔
@realDonaldTrump

Isn't it ironic that large Caravans of people are marching to our border wanting U.S.A. asylum because they are fearful of being in their country - yet they are proudly waving....

7:43 PM — 16 Nov 2018

Donald J. Trump ✔
@realDonaldTrump

....care how many lives the ruin. These are Angry People, including the highly conflicted Bob Mueller, who worked for Obama for 8 years. They won't even look at all of the bad acts and crimes on the other side. A TOTAL WITCH HUNT LIKE NO OTHER IN AMERICAN HISTORY!

7:32 AM — 15 Nov 2018

Donald J. Trump ✔
@realDonaldTrump

....their country's flag. Can this be possible? Yes, because it is all a BIG CON, and the American taxpayer is paying for it!

7:43 PM — 16 Nov 2018

A PIECEFUL AFTERNOON

[Sound of vegetable chopping]

— What are you making?

— Oh! You're up!

— The vegetable smell woke me up.

— I bet you like it. Did you have a good nap?

[While chewing on a raw carrot, with a full mouth]

— It felt so real. There was a huge field, with metal floors, as if the earth was made of metal. The sky was a velvety royal blue. I could see the roundness of the earth! Epic vibes.

— You are epic vibes [Followed by a weird smile and wink]

— You were there too.

— Were we walking on metal ground as we made out?

[Looking out the window]

— It was full moon and we could hear the wolves. We were wearing bells around our necks.

— We were?

— Yes! Everyone was!

— So many bellwethers.

— What?

[Chewing on a raw carrot]
[Vegetable frying noise]

CICERO

[Pointing to the parenthesis that surround the word APPLAUSE on the third line of the page]
[Smile]

— Some "never before…" statements…   [Eyes tightened]

— More epic that way.   [Wink with open mouth]   You be the conductor.

— And you composer?

— The composer and the conductor weren't always separate as you know them today! The fame of the conductor as the "true interpreter of the composer" relies on the death of the composer.[20]

[A bitter smile]

— We should do something about that.

— [Mimics pointing a gun to his own head] [Both laugh]

— I like the conductor metaphor, but there are some holes.

— Holes?

— Musicians accept the supremacy of the conductor.

— Dictate [arratchuouh]… ship.

— Bless you.

— Democratic constitutions within the philharmonic orchestras are now a thing.

— Might as well take the stick with me.

— You don't need a conductor stick. You need…

— A… [Atchuouh]

— Bless you!

NUREMBERG

— Can you walk a bit slower?   [Fast breathing] hey!

— You want to get stuck or you want to have some fried chicken? [Walking fast, long steps]

— I don't eat meat!!   [Loudly]

— What?

[Crowd chanting: HO LY SHIT, HO LY SHIT, HO LY SHIT]

— This way! Oh sorry, excuse me... sorry mam... excuse me...   [Passing through people]

— Who would you rather be: a hero in a book, or a hero on TV   [Shouting out loud]

— I don't know what your definition of a hero is, but I assume a hero in a book can become a hero on TV with more dignity.

— Why can't heroes on TV beco...

— Hold on to my hand!!   [Pause]

— There it is. The red one.

[Slam! car door]

— Uh! That was nuts.

— Never underestimate the power of stupid people in large groups.

— Hmmm... Basic!

— It's written on that guy's T-shirt!

[Changing radio station noise]

PROBES

[Hands locked behind the head, a long sigh]

— Today is a day I do nothin !!

— Can you pass me the remote?

— There are housekeeper robots now. Soon they will be cheap enough to own one.

— I look forward to a daily foot massage routine then.

— Those already exist. Dream big! We already have virtual banking advisers and military assistants.

[Chuckle] [Reaches for the remote control]

— Soon there will be social robots able to stand in for humans in elderly care or education.

— I want robots to represent me! [Changing TV channels, points with the head to the TV] Don't you wish this guy was a programmable robot? He'd go the mass for you…

— Social robots! Capable of emotional, affective, and empathic exchanges with humans. But there are synthetic ethics…

[Eyes tightened, nose lifted]

— What does it say on your shirt? Demons…?

— Democracy Hacked!

— LOL!

PERICLES

[Talking on the phone]

— Well, those are the parentheses that surrounded the word applause in JFK's 1963 speech at the Dallas Trade Mart, which he never gave.

[Silence]

— No, he did not change his mind. He was assassinated!

[Silence]

— Yes correct! This is one of the many speeches that are claimed to be "the speech". But I am convinced.

[Silence] [Playing with the curly telephone cable]

— Yes... [Pause] yes exactly. Those parentheses are...

[Silence]

— Yes. They are the bullets.

[Searching in a stack of papers] [Paper noise]

— No.... Yes, firearm type of bullets.   [Crunched lips, shaking legs]

— Oh ok. I have it.

[Reading from a piece of paper]

— In a world of complex and continuing problems, in a world full of frustrations and irritations, America's leadership must be guided by the lights of learning and reason, or else those who confuse rhetoric with reality, and the plausible with possible, will gain the popular ascendancy with their seemingly swift and simple solutions to every world problem.

THE BULLET

```
     ()
    ()()
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MERITOCRACY

— The powerful are not only privileged but blessed in God's eyes.

— God didn't give good people wealth and power, nor did he condemn those who lacked those things.

[In an intense epic tone]

— In the city of men, this fraudulent society, where money can never accurately track virtue, true justice has no existence.

[Beard touching]

— Complete lack of moralism, snobbery!

— Dangerous to think life is perfect.

— This is the end of the individual mandate!

— Yes, so I was saying...

— Yes, the era of political correctness?

— Is over. The entire premise of democracy is that our backgrounds matter less than in what we share. Our commitment to our common humanity and ability to think beyond our own personal biases and willingness, to put aside tribal loyalties and walk in somebody else's shoes!

[Cheering and applause]
[Shouting from far]

— The game is about to start gentlemen!!!

[Staring out the window]

— Well, I was so angry you know? I was kind of barking like a dog!

— Being a dog is kind of a pleasure. Especially a German Shepherd.

— Yeah, I used to want to be one, but I am more in into being a wolf these days.

— Although I am torn between being a dog or a stone.

— What would you be if you were to be anything else?

— A stone.

— What kind of stone?

— Any kind. Any useful kind.

— Marble? Granite? limestone? Ony...

— An average stone.

— Yeah, I like average. I want to be a stone! maybe a stone that a child picks and plays skipping with! I slip above water for a few times, and then I can experience being underwater.

— Only if they are good at skipping. They might throw you not so far, and straight to the water.

— I said the ideal version!   [Rolls her eyes]

— I'm ok with being an expensive one, one that someone gets to enjoy, however they want.

— Nah! I want to be a stone that is thrown at the police when they are blocking the way of the people. I want to be of use. I want to assist!

— You want to be a stone that breaks things.   [Playing with an empty beer bottle]

— I want to be a stone that becomes useful.

— You can sit there and wait to be picked up by a glass company, you can turn into glass and another stone can break you. I can be that stone.

— I want to be a stone that has no use.

— Sure. Me too. Like most stones in the world.

— Everything is used in some way these days. I want to be not even visible.

— Hold this for a sec.   [Hands her an empty bottle of beer]

Chapter II

Apparatus
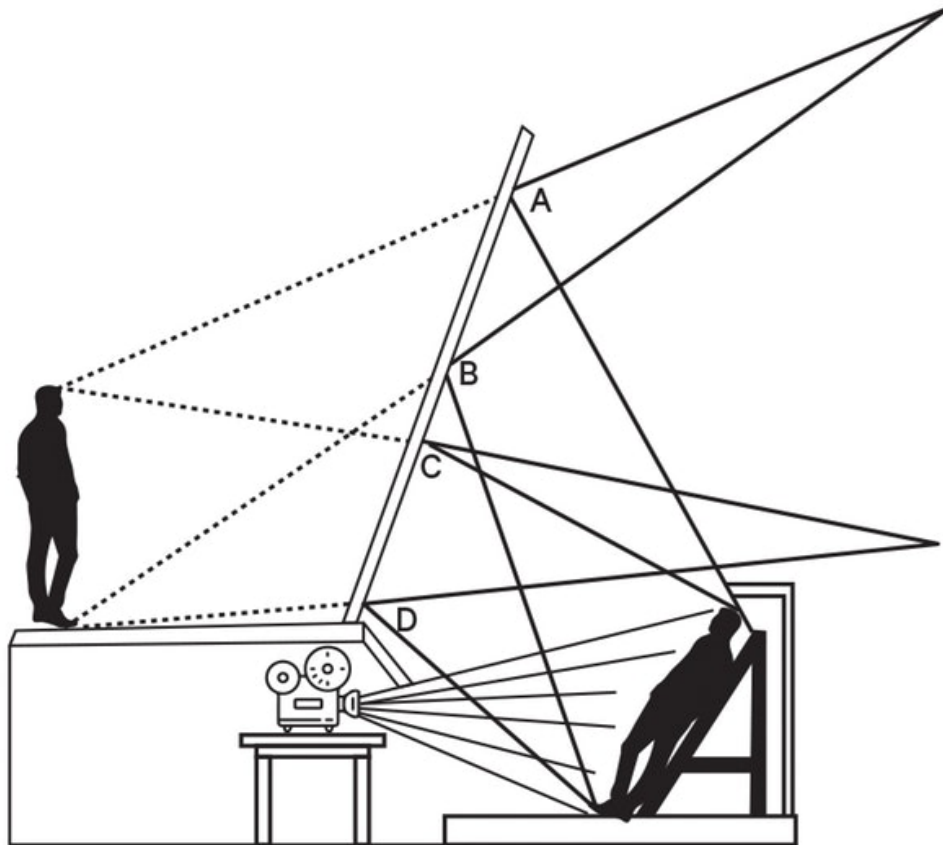
I O I

[Everyone is looking down at a smart phone]

— Absolute value of zero?

— Hm … Absolute value describes the distance of a number on the number line from 0 without considering which direction from zero the number lies.

— So it means zero. [Pause] It means nothing.

— Or means we aren't going anywhere.

— It's "laugh out loud" for sure. Stop the conspiracy BS!

— But Anonymous announced it is a real thing and not a political prank.

— It's a campaign logo.

— It is a stickman giving hands up. Don't shoot!

— You see that in one circle between two straight lines?

— Have you not seen that emoji?

— You might be right, thinking of the slogan now.

— It's a one zero one. Maybe a date? Or time? Some hint to a bomb explosion somewhere?

— What are you doing?

— Googling iPhone emojis.

— Emojipedia! "The female version of the 🙆 *Face with OK Gesture* emoji. Currently identical in appearance to the non-gendered base emoji. The *Woman Gesturing OK* emoji is a sequence of the 🙆 *Face with OK Gesture* and ♀ *Female Sign* emojis. These are combined using a zero-width joiner between each character and display as a single emoji on supported platforms.

— You are good at seeing creepy shit everywhere.

— Yea I saw a Buddha hidden in my mom's bathroom curtain pattern when I was taking a shit the other day!

— You guys! I typed the I O I in google and the first thing that comes up is:

...the story behind the middle political party: Left-Right political spectrum under construction.

VOMITORIUM

[Sound of flickering lights]

— Dammit, I can only find my way when the lights come on for a second.

— Watch the mice!

— We don't need to watch the mice anymore! That is past history.

— They have been seen again and we have to keep them out!

— We need five handles and three toppers.

— Why three?

— I don't know man! I'm looking at this list.

— But why don't they match? Maybe it is a typo!

— I do what I'm told to do.

— This is why we are washing them again!!

[Bubble noise]

— We are washing them because they are changing them to blue.

— You know why?!

— I don't care!

— Because blue...

— I can't hear you through the mask.

[Shouting louder]

— I SAID BECAUSE BLUE...

— Shit!

— WHAT?

— I dropped my earphones in there.

— Perfect !! You are an idiot and you cannot hear me say it.

AUTOCRACY

— There are two types of power. The evil genius, and the one who rises against him.

— That is an oversimplification!

— Interpretation is over simplification. Period.

— The powerful that rises against the evil genius is not merely interested in power, but interested in helping...

— The Fürer also wanted to help mankind.

— He was a sick, hurt man with complex psychological issues!

— You know what is oversimplification? Psychoanalyzing Hitler is oversimplification!

STONE

[Walking in a long alley] [Sound echoes, as if coming out of a horn speaker]

— You're a sleaze ball.

— What does that even mean? We can do it! Look at those idiots.

— Says the man who's wearing a shirt that says "Rape" under Bill Clinton's face on it.

— I respect the value of disinformation.

— Hold onto it.

— The only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about.

— Vigor!

[Beethoven's Symphony no. 9 is echoing in the hallway]

— See, morality, is a synonym for weakness. I believe in winning. I believe in doing whatever is necessary of win. Democracy is the process of appealing to the majority.

[Approaching a crowd]

[Manic conductor hand moves] [Shouting]

Politics is only concerned with images!

[Shouting]

Louder !!!

— It all lies in interpretation of Plato's Republic. Our interpretations are different. See. Islamic societies also interpret the Quran differently. Vagueness is the mother of freedom. It gives options for interpretation.

— Vagueness is the father of Jesus!

— You're evil!   [Laughter]

— Do you think voters, non-sophisticates, make a difference between politics and entertainment? Politics is show business for ugly people.

PHEME

[Darkness, flickering TV light]

[TV sound]

[Sports reporter tone]

...Messi! A smooth tackle and...

[Click!]

[Politician speech tone]

...Seven years ago... [Pause]

[Click!]

[Interview tone]

News Feed *would prioritize meaningful interaction over passive consumption of low-quality content, demoting things like clickbait headlines and false news, even though people often click on those links at a high rate.*

[Pause, thinking, looking down, stare at the interviewer]

We want to make sure that our products are not just fun but are good for people ... good for the world.

PROMPTER

[A person wearing all green is holding cue cards, standing behind the camera]

[Monotonous, serious, and extremely fast]

2018 report:

> In January Facebook hired Nathaniel Gleicher, the former director for cybersecurity policy on President Obama's National Security Council, to counter "information operations."

[The green person throws away a cue card]

> In March, Zuckerberg pledged "dramatically [to reduce] the amount of data that developers have access to, so that apps and developers can't do what Kogan did" in providing data to Cambridge Analytica.

[The green person throws away a cue card]

> Also, in March, Facebook announced that it would "try to make privacy settings clearer by creating a central hub where users can examine the data they are sharing" with third-party developers.

[The green person throws away a cue card]

> In January 2020 Zuckerberg refused to speak about his attendance in an Alt-Right cocktail party held at the House of …

[The green person throws away a cue card]

PARLIAMENT

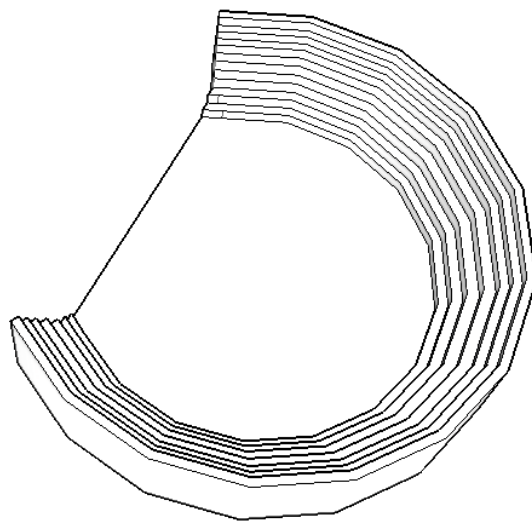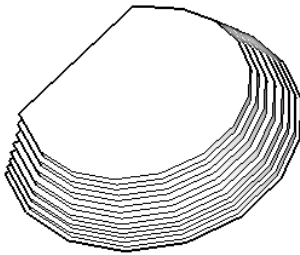A stage is an upside-down amphitheater

A stage is an inverted amphitheater

A stage is an inside-out amphitheater

A stage is an inside-out amphitheater

A stage is an inverted amphitheater

A stage is an upside-down amphitheater[22]

CATHARSIS[23]

[Giving a backrub]

— You know what scares me to death?

— Wolves

— Papa !!   [Eyes rolling, slower massage]

— Clowns?

— No! I have a perfect image of the most terrifying thing that I can ever experience

— Hmm...   [Eyes closed, a radio placed between legs, playing with the long metal antenna]

— Imagine the most unfamiliar sound papa! Something you have never heard in your life. It is sublime and intense. You can't locate whether if it is coming from outside or from your head. But you hear it. It brings all the fear in the world to you. Can you

— I cannot!

[White noise] [Classical music] [White noise] [Hitler speech]

— *...is a shameful spectacle to see how the whole democratic world is oozing sympathy for the poor tormented Jewish people but remains hard-hearted an obdurate when it comes to helping them which is surely, in view of its attitude, an obvious duty. The arguments that are brought up as an excuse for not helping them actually speak for us Germans and Italians. For this is what they say...* [24]

[White noise]

SEMICIRCLE
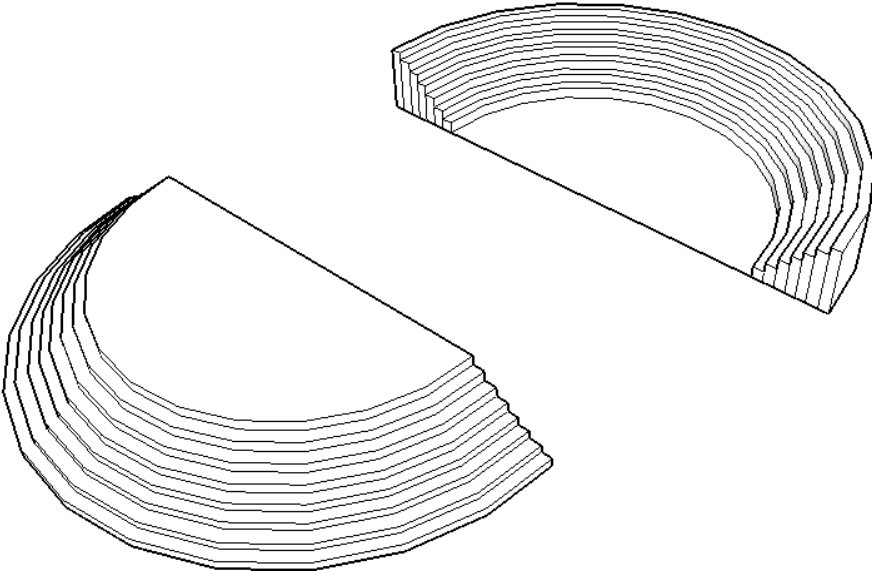
FULLCIRCLE

To shape a circle

The other half

Needs to be

The same

The same

Needs to be

The other half

To shape a circle

13 These definitions of form are collected from the Wikipedia page on "form." Wikipedia, as an everchanging platform of shared knowledge and collectively created information carries the ghostly presence of individuals who constantly shape it. It is an organic site based on collective consciousness and shared experience.

In the essay *Models for Understanding Collective Intelligence on Wikipedia,* Randall M. Livingstone argues that Wikipedia is an online example of collective intelligence, which is a major factor in shaping not only our knowledge of current time (where we rely on digital information), but also in shaping our digital human collectivity. According to Livingstone, this virtual knowledge space is both a product and process in which it empowers its community to practice and explore cultural potentials embedded in its collectivism. See Randall M. Livingstone, "Models for Understanding Collective Intelligence on Wikipedia", *Social Science Computer Review* 34, no. 4 (August 2016): 497. doi:10.1177/0894439315591136.

14 According to William McNeill, synchronous action and imitation are two methodologies used for social bonding and prosocial behavior in childhood and adulthood. An important factor in human musicality and gravity towards rituals is our ability to imitate and create a high-fidelity copy of the physical and vocal actions of others. See William McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: dance and drill in human history,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 19.

15 Jon Favreau was Director of Speech Writing for Barack Obama until 2013.

16 Amy M. Clanton quotes from Robert Bocock's book, *Ritual in Industrial Society,* to define ritual as "the symbolic use of bodily movement and gesture in a social situation to express and articulate meaning." Specifically, intentionality is part of the aesthetic experience. Similarly, epic poetry in the ancient world took advantage of rhythmically heightened speech and the use of musicality in language, rituals and religious ceremonies. This poetic approach to dialogue has roots in epic poetry and stylized theatrical traditions. See Amy M. Clanton, "Religion as Aesthetic Creation: Ritual and Belief in William Butler Yeats and Aleister Crowley" PhD diss., University of South Florida, (2011): 77. https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/3718.

17 See "White House Ghost Stories." https://www.whitehousehistory.org/press-room/press-fact-sheets/white-house-ghost-stories.

18 Inspired by Sigmund Freud's writings, Andrew Gallix, in his article *Hauntology: A Not-so-new Critical Manifestation*, recognizes that society is founded on a hauntological basis: "the voice of the dead father."

Hauntology lies beneath all forms of representation. Works of art are ghostly, poetry becomes haunted, rhetoric is a corpse. At the core of hauntology is the *return* of something. The hauntological presence that lies within our current technology is uncanny. A speech generated by artificial intelligence, brings back the rhetoric of the dead politicians: nothing but a world of ghostly presences. See Andrew Gallix, *Hauntology: A Not-so-new Critical Manifestation*. (The Guardian: 2011), https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2011/jun/17/hauntology-critical.

19 See Onion News article: "Historians Admit to Inventing Ancient Greeks." 2010. https://www.theonion.com/historians-admit-to-inventing-ancient-greeks-1819571808.

20 In his article *On the Rise of the Cult of the Maestro*, Danold Sassoon traces the relationship between the conductor and the dead composers in music, as well as the works of dead playwrights to the producer of their works as their posthumous interpreter. He argues that presenting the work of a dead composer is a living embodiment of a departed genius, and even living composers willingly allow the supremacy of the conductor. This phenomenon is known as the "cult of the conductor". Although there are slight variations, some of these attributes are seen in the relationship of the politician and his speechwriter. See Donald Sassoon, on the Rise of the Cult of the Maestro. (The Guardian,2006),   https://www.theguardian.com/music/2006/sep/08/classicalmusicandopera

21 The title refers to the homonymic quality of the words *stone* and *dog* in Persian.

22 Dario Gamboni, in his essay *Composing the Body Politic*, cites Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, who explains that European jurists in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries started to use the term "representation" for the personification of public life. They believed that a community is not a real person, but rather a represented one. Through this fiction of representation, a community is then personified, not in a metaphoric sense of the word, but in the sense that images and inanimate objects could represent abstractions. See "Composing the Body Politic", *Making things public: atmospheres of democracy,* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005), 162.

23 Aristotle in his Poetics emphasizes that a proper setting of "dramatic elements" evokes a certain emotional response from the audience. He suggests that in tragedy, which he calls the "finest form", drama must "arouse fear and pity". Aristotle's catharsis is not perfectly defined in his poetics, although a common interpretation is "the purification of emotions through drama", which can be interpreted as the spectacle becoming an affective force on the spectator. See Aristotle, Poetics, trans. S. H. Butcher, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), 639.

24 Part of a 1942 speech by Adolf Hitler from document no. 59 in See Arad, Yitzhak, Israel Gutman, and Abraham Margaliot, *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union,* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, Anti-Defamation League and Ktav Pub, 1981), 739.

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