

# Conspiracies are Things

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In an attempt to note the rhythms of our present, we tend to craft meaning as bubbles of historical and personal interpretation. Provisional stories positioned, like us, in a sequence of time, particular and exceptional, common and futile. We humans emerge as the result of a stream of ambition of millions of cells. A presence in the future colliding with a past. Defined by this continuum, we produce ourselves while embedded in our environment. We are what we *relate*. A reciprocity guarantees exchange, a pattern of communication, where we are other-things and they are other-us. A play perhaps, a game structured around joy and sadness, pleasure and pain, fluctuations of the self as states of matter. But then, a receding moment, where this process of making and unmaking is disrupted, and we are less and less participants of this mash. And we become camouflaged in the clothes we wear, in the liquids we drink, in the networks in which we engage. Disappearing, we leave other-things to speak for us—a withdrawal, reducing us to minimum expression, lacking influence on our surroundings.

Julian Assange has been at the Ecuadorian embassy in London since June, 2012. Last October, his internet connection was cut off to prevent his (further) influence on the US elections. In retaliation, Anonymous, NewWorldHackers and other groups launched a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) cyber attack against Domain Name System (DNS), a provider of services to major websites like Airbnb, Paypal, Spotify, Twitter, and Amazon. This stands as the largest cyber attack in history and was carried out using Mirai, an open-source malware that infects and remotely controls the Internet of Things. Once infected these devices target websites and servers causing them to collapse and disrupt the internet. Fittingly, Mirai means “the future” in Japanese.

A person reclines on a chair, sofa, or bed. Her fingers slide gently on a screen. The steady connection to internet provides a constant glow in the darkness of the room. Piles of empty food containers, cans and bottles, random objects imbued with memories of varying intensity, clothing and hygiene products, perhaps a cactus growing in a small pot. This scenery of life is quite typical for an individual inhabiting private space within the larger urban realm. The mass-produced props that express a massively reproduced subjectivity, surrogates of desires and frustrations, prescription and illegal drugs, a flux of online content, a chain of seductive entities eagerly connecting with our hopes and imaginations. As a person navigates the techno-sphere, multiple layers of reference emerge and fade away through processes that lure the senses with convulsing textures and shapes. We anticipate the potentials of objects, like hyperlinks to other situations, we determine our actions based on previous experiences which provide expectations longing to be satisfied.

An error in the fabrication of the lithium-ion batteries of the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 cause the positive and negative electrodes to collide. As the battery swells and heats during its normal usage, the resulting friction sparks a combustion, internally burning the smartphone and releasing a toxic smoke.

We live surrounded by appliances that participate in cycles of violence. Extraction and exploitation define a production system, a troubled ecology, where smartphones become time bombs disclosing their status as the final products of mining, low wages, global trade, and waste. Our lives are dependent on daily consumption of natural and human resources. We are situated on the top of the planetary food chain. *We are the violence we've been afraid of.* Anxiety—not regularity—defines our relationality in the techno-sphere. Our domestic appliances are engaged in cyber warfare without us even noticing. Intelligence agencies, state and non-state powers fight an invisible war over data control. The world emerges as a strange place, unprecedented. From climate to democracy, from economic growth to intimate relations, the predictability of patterns has been altered.

The broken patterns of reciprocity produce a strange world in a condensed state of uncertainty. The individual becomes the recipient and the excuse for an economic process that devastates the planet—one whose capacity to act has been reduced, whose identity is shaped by fragile relations, left with the body as the ultimate frontier of personal sovereignty. This body, at the mercy of market fluctuations and constituted as an accumulation of products, becomes ethereal, receding, imperceptible. “When human beings are capable of fulfilling all their potentialities, then, by that very token, they enter a world that expels them.” With this sentence, Jean Baudrillard expresses the state of disappearance in which we live. The

paradoxical certitude of a technical world that, in its quest to fulfill its programmed design, no longer has a need for humans. Moreover, the human capacity to inter-act declines and evaporates. Baudrillard's *Why Hasn't Everything Already Disappeared?* was completed shortly before his death in March 2007. Reading it now, ten years later, one senses the uncanny. Besides discussing how computer generated image-making killed the referent, Baudrillard positions humans in chain of dissolution. As the digital image is produced beyond any connection, there is no possible representation of the world. This state of photographic vision as detached, articulates our experience of globalization, a symptomatic change from a vision of the world as a collection of disposable assets to a world wiped out as a result of its "extreme singularity." The condition of the world is as much as a condition of the human, "where any distinction between the true and the false would have disappeared." Baudrillard identifies an "empty consciousness—all things radiating out from a subjectivity without object; each monad, each molecule caught in the toils of a definitive narcissism, a perpetual image-playback. This is the subjectivity for an end of the world from which the subject as such has disappeared, no longer having anything left to grapple with." This signals the end of the world, as the end of touching, of grasping and knowing what is really happening. While we wrestle, we are in contact with the other in search for a reaction that will shake (and confirm) our dimmed existence. A new globalization emerges from the neoliberal cocoon, one shaped by the disruptions of Brexit, Trump, and the rise of extreme-right governments across continents. The culmination of anxieties around the fear of disappearing, confused with the unilateral being with homogenized sensibilities. "When all critical thinking has disappeared, radicalism passes into things."

In a text from 2006, Julian Assange defined conspiracies as cognitive devices. "Conspiracies take information about the world in which they operate, pass through the conspirators and then act on the result." A conspiracy is a way of acting in the world, a means to affect the environment, undermining or promoting a particular vision, a specific regime. When *Conspiracies Are Things*, relations are filled with suspicion, materials transmit a troubled and networked history, and partial information is given in fragments, replicated and dispersed, with the intention to distort any computation. And we are left uneasy, with ourselves, with our environments. And all that there is, is a drifting planet in a dark sky.