



VII. Epilogue



LIAR LYRE

LEILA PEACOCK

[enter our PROTAGONIST, descending
from a ladder made of human tongues]

Truth be told, it's not a lie if you believe it. Now that's a lie to live by in this reign of error. And as the truth as we know it sinks slowly beneath the waves like an ill-fated cruise ship, weighed down by an army of determinedly swing-dancing pensioners, the rest of us should be thinking of new ways to stay afloat.

As a species, it would seem we are currently suffering the consequences of our terrible misconceptions about what we know and how we know it. Knowledge is confused with information, opinion with wisdom, illusory superiority is confused with competence. The Internet remembers everything, but in a solid mass, it feels like licking an iceberg to quench your thirst, or using a lightbulb to brush your teeth: a useful thing, but not quite what you needed at the time. We cherry-pick our black boxes, arguments built on emotive examples and self-serving biases. We lie according to fixed conventions and call it truth, cosseted in intersubjective

Competence
□ 49-50, 58, 69, 235

structures that make us feel at home in our own delusions. The angrier you are, the more likely you are to overestimate your intelligence, but it is so hard not to feel angry about everything. We swarm together in communities of mutual outrage, people who labor under misconceptions similar to our own, bolstering each others' fallacies in the debasing search for vindication. Just look at our baffling inability to learn from our own bloody histories. The present keeps gifting us horrors that we seem perpetually surprised to receive. Why, thank you.

Truth, one of the last moral conceits inherited from that overstarched patriarchy of the nineteenth century, itself an age of historical certainties that were founded on the subjugation of other voices. By any stretch the truth is an outdated standard, and yet it keeps returning like some atavistic bout of indigestion. Why do we put all our rats on one sinking ship? Each rat should have its own tiny ship with its own tiny jet ski for evacuation purposes.

Humans are fiction-brewing animals, we explore our beliefs through fiction and metaphor, and yet we also naturally narrativize our own experiences in the way we remember them. Our brains shield us from the chaos of existence by making stories out of ourselves. We work hard to hold at bay the feeling of cognitive dissonance, a mental discomfort in our own contradictions. We achieve a psychological consistency by applying meanings to situations where there was none, bridging the gap between expectation and randomness with imaginary machinations. We can only apprehend the world partially; the rest we make up.

This is in no way new, though we could benefit from reminding ourselves that we are foremost inventors, and our relationship with the world is constructed from a network of complex fictions. In his work *The New Science*, published in 1725, the philosopher-poet Giambattista Vico lays out his vision of human understanding as one that is primarily poetic in nature. He writes about the role played by the human imagination in understanding the world, which he conceives of as a form of "poetic metaphysics." For Vico, our understanding of ourselves is dependent on our recognition of a "poetic truth" evident in the belief systems of early societies. For Vico, human culture is an accumulation of rituals and belief structures that are



☒ 320

Fiction

☐ 88, 162-163,
182-183, 255

Animal

☐ 32, 72, 90, 174-175,
202 ☒ 266-268

Contradiction

☐ 63, 70, 139, 194,
204, 221

trace manifestations of previous generations of thought. Proof of knowledge is not found in the external world but in the "mind of him who mediates it [...] for when man understands he extends his mind and takes in the things, but when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming into them."¹

Live your truth. A phrase most often used by that unholy trinity: recovering addicts, self-help gurus, and personal trainers. It's good advice if you can get beyond all those ersatz highs, empowering quotes, and spiritual six-packs. What they mean of course is "invent your truth." It's a paradox, but a useful one. It repurposes the truth as something that emanates from the inside out, as opposed to top down. But it comes from this new language of digital narcissism where life is a journey/rollercoaster/highway toward ultimate self-fulfillment—delivering an enthusiastic monologue into your selfie stick as you accidentally walk off a cliff backwards.

The term *self-fulfilling prophecy* was coined in 1948 by sociologist Robert K. Merton, who begins his paper by quoting the Thomas theorem: "If you define a situation as real then that situation can be real in its consequences." This is both an alternative definition of history and the mechanism that turns science fiction into oracle. One of Voltaire's famous statements is that "if God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him," a perfect conceit because God does not exist and we have invented him. We can, and should, invent gods because it seems that in the absence of anything sensibly god-like, some people have chosen to be their own gods, evident in the messianic mania of some of our most dangerous leaders. Seems strange that we have to rescue ourselves simultaneously from self-help and demagoguery, wellness and willful abuse of power.

So often it seems that the language fails us when it comes to defining the shadowy interstices between well-established ideas like truth and lies, leaving them wide open to abuses. "Fight the violence of lies with the clenched fist of truth!" as one NRA promotion video brays, and the response can only be to fight the violence of truth with the clenched fist of honest fictions.

Empowerment

☐ 32, 67, 138, 150-
151, 156-157, 205,
222, 226 ☒ 273-274



☒ 273



☒ 322

Fiction

☐ 88, 162-163,
182-183, 254

A lie is defined as having two parts: the fabrication of a falsehood and the deliberate withholding of the truth. It seems, then, we are missing terms for the fabrication of a falsehood in order to better represent the truth, or the deliberate withholding of parts of the truth in order to better represent things as they are. Werner Herzog has spoken about his idea of the “ecstatic truth,” in part a defense of the scenes in his documentaries that have been stage-managed in order to get at something bigger and deeper because the facts only offer the shallowest version of the true story he wanted to tell.

We need an army of wordsmiths. Consider John Milton, the seventeenth-century English poet most famous for the epic poem *Paradise Lost*, who is credited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* with adding more new words to the English language than any other known person: alphabetical, boasted, chewing, cheat, civilizing, complacency, cooking, criticize, depravity, dialectics, disfigure, dismissive, echoing, ejected, enjoyable, exhilarating, exploding, extravagance, fragrance, freak, homogenous, hymn, inconsistency, infuriate, inspired, intoxicating, miscommunication, poetics, preoccupying, ramp, satanic, sensuous, stigmatizing, stunning, surrounding, twilight, unaccountable, unadventurous, undesirable, unhealthy, and zealously. He also invented many new words that never took hold, or have since become obsolete, but whose strangeness to our ear gives a more accurate sense of his sheer inventiveness with the language. *Intervolve* means to wind around each other; *displode* is to drive out with violence; to *tonguefence* is to argue; *imbrute* to become bestial or degraded; *irrevoluble* is an endless revolution; *swinked* to be overworked; *unliquored*, sober; *volumist*, author; *sphere-born*, human.

We make sense, sense is crafted, and common sense is not prevailing, we need a new Miltonic alchemy. Reification, that process of making something real and concrete, needs to be actuated with a new poetic optimism. One of Jean Cocteau’s great aphorisms is “the poet is a liar who always tells the truth.” Be the water and not the boat. Where are those myth-made truths that defy history, that can strike so much deeper and can play a note that so many more can hear simultaneously. We need new lies we can believe in.

Virgil has an extraordinary depiction of RUMOUR, embodied as a monster in book 4 of *The Aeneid*: “Of all the ills there are, Rumour is the swiftest. She thrives on



☒ 294

Monster
☐ 194, 236, 256
☒ 294

movement and gathers strength as she goes [...] a huge and horrible monster, and under every feather of her body, strange to tell, there lies an eye that never sleeps, a mouth and a tongue that are never silent and an ear always pricked. By night she flies between earth and sky, squawking through the darkness. By day she keeps watch, perched on the fear of great cities, holding fast to her lies and distortions as often as she tells the truth.”²

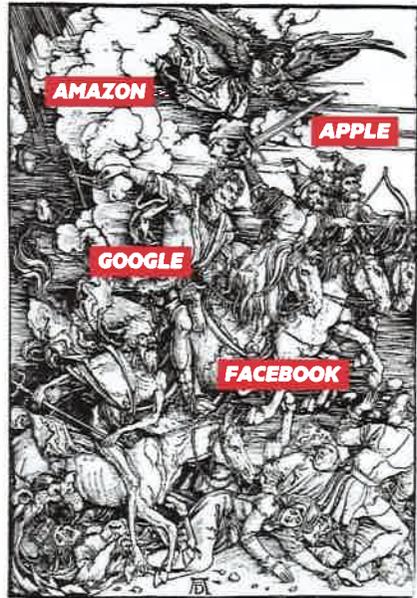
This monster seems very familiar. Who, then, to pit against it in a death match of cosmic proportions? How to embody the honest lie, the truthful fabrication, the oracular sci-fi hero ... the NOBLE LIAR, a shape-shifting winged ouroboros, it swims through dark waters, accompanied by a fleet of rats. It is illuminated by a light from an unknown source that glows as it swims. It leaps out of the deep to suffocate its enemies by winding around their throats; some it taxidermies into new creatures, others it devours and then disgorges in the form of new words, all the while singing with a voice of a thousand tongues, imploring humanity to “invent the lies you hope to live by, or drown” ...

[exit PROTAGONIST stage left,
pursued by good intentions]



☒ 294

Monster
☐ 194, 236, 257
☒ 294



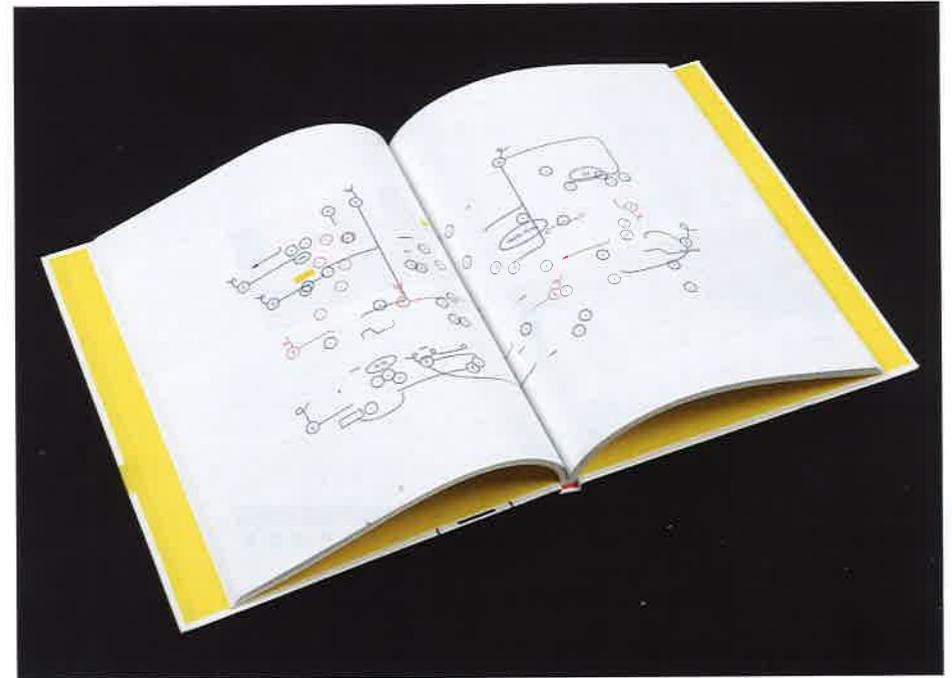
Instagram/museumgestaltung, #museum fürgestaltung#toniareal#emuseum#collection #klausstaeck#poster#postercollection #facebook#amazon#apple#google#albrecht dürer#justice#design



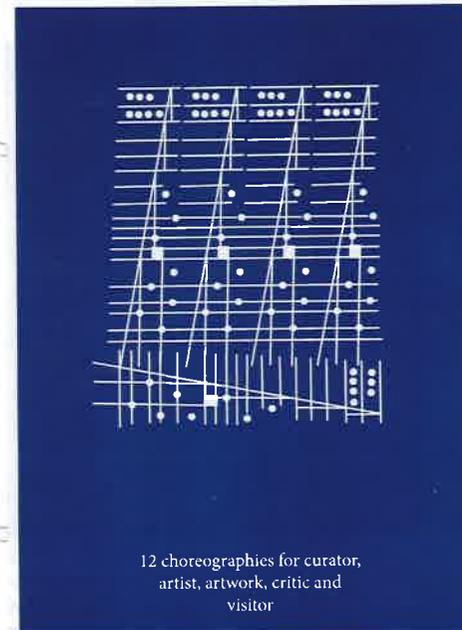
Rumour Painted Full of Tongues
http://ehakesneare-gesellschaft.de



Skvader
<https://klyker.com/taxidermists-who-suck/>



Charles Gute, *Revisions and Queries: Works on Paper*, The Ice Plant, Los Angeles 2008



12 choreographies for curator, artist, artwork, critic and visitor

Tim Hollander, *12 Choreographies for Curator*. Artist. Artwork.