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TRUE MIRROR

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The first poem was the title poem. 1
This time Corinne read it aloud, but she still didn't hear it.
She read it through a third time and heard some of it.
She read it through a fourth time, and heard all of it.
It was a poem containing the lines:

Not wasteland, but a great inverted forest
with all foliage underground

As though it might be best to look immediately for shelter,
Corinne had to put the book down.
At any moment the apartment building seemed liable to lose 10
Its balance and topple across Fifth Avenue into Central Park.

She waited.
Gradually the deluge of truth and beauty abated.

Then New Years Eve of 2007 came:
We celebrated it with friends at a party
Where everybody was asked to wear
Exactly what they wore exactly one year before.

But all at once it dawned on me that this
Was the real point, the contrapuntal theme;
Just this: not text, but texture; not the dream 20
But topsy-turvical coincidence,
Not flimsy nonsense, but a web of sense.
Yes! It sufficed that I in life could find
Some kind of link-and-bobolink, some kind
Of correlated pattern in the game,
Plexed artistry, and something of the same
Pleasure in it as they who played it found.

They were made with an idea of seeing
Two realms at once. "Two games, yours and
The verso, an additional waiting to be played 30
In another time, another space."
A mirrored world, an unheralded parallel present.

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It's an odd masterpiece,
A celebration of the River Rouge auto plant,
Which had succeeded the Highland Park factory
As Ford's industrial headquarters,
Painted by a Communist
For the son of a Capitalist
The north and south walls are devoted
To nearly life-size scenes in which 40
The plant's grey gears, belts, racks and workbenches
Surge and swarm like some vast intestinal apparatus.
The workers within might be subsidiary organs
Or might be lunch
As the whole churns to excrete a stream of black Fords.

Five Tyres abandoned and Five Tyres remoulded.
Proof of the fact that a mechanical device can
Reproduce personality
And that Quality is merely
The distribution aspect of Quantity. 50

Journalists have conquered the book form;
Writing is now the tiny affair of the individual;
The customers have changed: television's aren't viewers,
but advertisers; publishing's not potential readers,
but distributors.

The result is rapid turnover,
the regime of the best seller
But there will always be
A parallel circuit, a black market.

Being new is, in fact, often understood as 60
A combination of being different
And being recently-produced.
We call a car a new car if this car is different from other cars,
and at the same time the latest, most recent model.

But to be new is by no means the same as being different.
The new is a difference without difference,
Or a difference beyond difference,
A difference which we are unable to recognise.

For Kierkegaard, therefore,
The only medium for a possible emergence of the new 70
Is the ordinary, the "non-different", the identical --
Not the other, but the same.

--

Around the same time,
He mailed fifty postcards to friends and acquaintances
Showing two Boettis hand in hand, like twin brothers,
Defining and simultaneously nullifying a fictitious symbol,
An opposition that is not negated but transformed.

The 'e' -- the 'and' -- which Boetti placed
Between his Christian name and his given, 80
Indicated the multiplicity within the self,
Was a symbol of the distinction and difference
Between his two personas,
As well as their reciprocity, conjunction and interdependence,
Marking a plus-one as well as a division:
A paradox at his very heart.

It is a matter of outwardly reflecting contact-lenses,
Which blind the one who wears them.
The contact-zone is not a filter:
The reflection is print, the senses are linked up. 90
To upset my own eyes
From the reviews:

What worries many critics most is the fact
That art seems to be alive and well,
Not so much because of them
But in spite of them.

And what do you do?
You just SIT there.

This kind of problem might have been posed by anyone since
Piero della Francesco
And its solution can be precisely foreseen. 100
Anticipated by Joyce's repeated, sardonic reference to
Dublin as Dublin'
A city marinated in narrative, and inescapably bound up with
Narrative's capability for reflection and duplicity.

It's not just a palindrome in a literal sense,
But also a physical one.
You can actually put a mirror in the middle of it
And it still reads the same.

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Every mathematician agrees that
Every mathematician must know some
Set theory. 110
We have proved, in other words, that
 Nothing contains everything.
Or more spectacularly,
 There is no universe

The World As It Is And The World As It Could Be
The World As It Is And The World As It Could Be

Tattarrattat!
A Sun on USA!

Weightless and without energy, 120
Shadows still convey information
But the shadow's location cannot be detected until the light,
Moving at its ponderous relativistic pace, arrives.

It's quite easy to conjure
A faster-than-light shadow
(Or in theory, at least):
Build a great klieg light,
A superstrong version
Of the ones at the Academy Awards.
Now paste a piece of black paper 130
Onto the klieg's glass
So there's a shadow in the middle of the beam.
Like the signal that summons Batman
We will mount our light in space and
Broadcast the Bat-call to the cosmos.

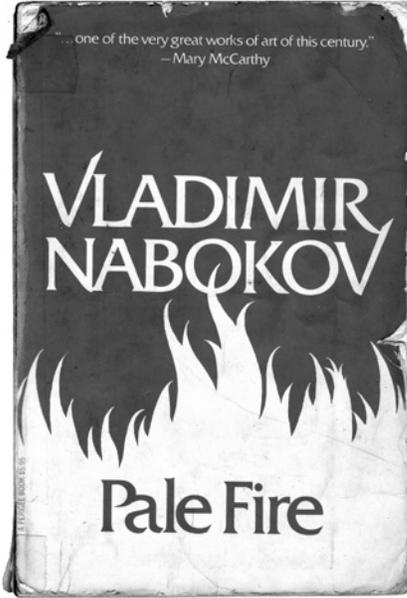
And from the inside, too, I'd duplicate
Myself, my lamp, an apple on a plate:
Uncurtaining the night, I'd let dark glass
Hang all the furniture above the grass, 140
And how delightful when a fall of snow
Covered my glimpse of lawn and reached up so
As to make chair and bed exactly stand
Upon that snow, out in that crystal land!

LINES 1–13 : J.D. Salinger, “The Inverted Forest”, *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, 1947

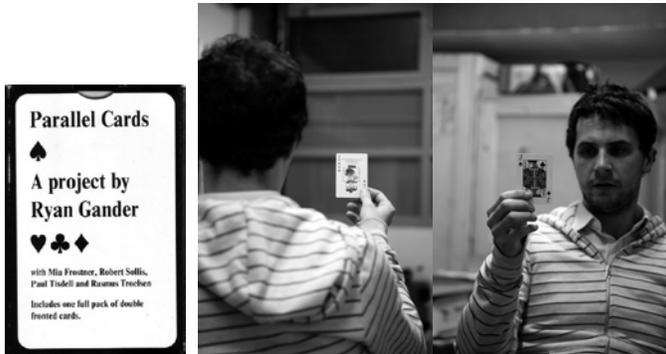
МНІЦІЕА

LINES 14–17 : Email from Raimundas Malašauskas, Friday June 15, 2007

LINES 18–27 : Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*, 1962



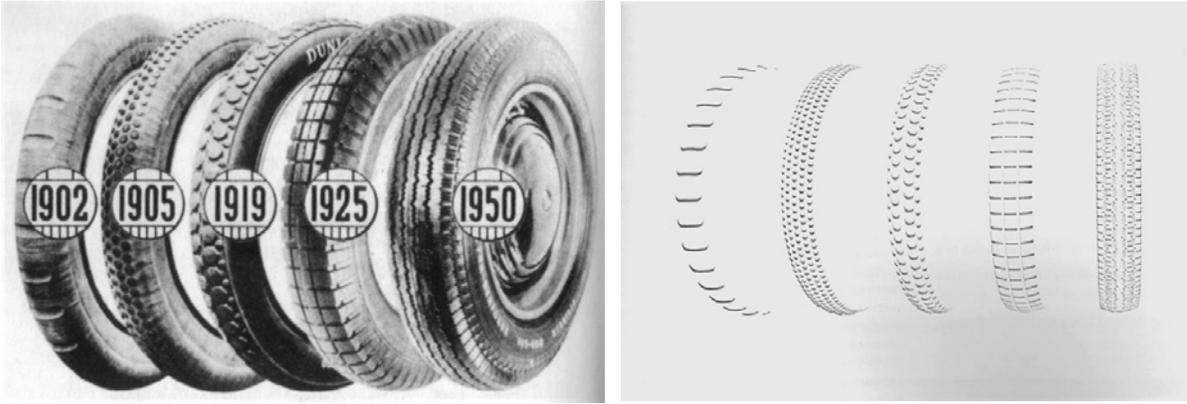
LINES 28–32 : Ryan Gander, *Parallel Cards*, 2006



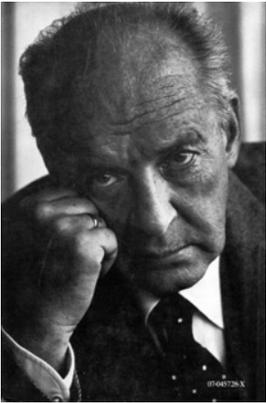
LINES 33–45 : Rebecca Solnit, “Detroit Arcadia”, *Harper’s Magazine*, June 2007



LINE 46 : Richard Hamilton, *Five Tyres abandoned, 1964, Five Tyres remoulded, 1971*



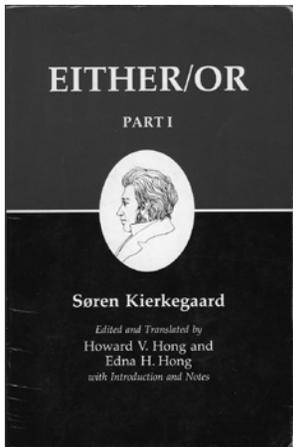
LINES 47–50 : Vladimir Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, 1947



LINES 51–59 : Gilles Deleuze, "L'abécédaire", 1988

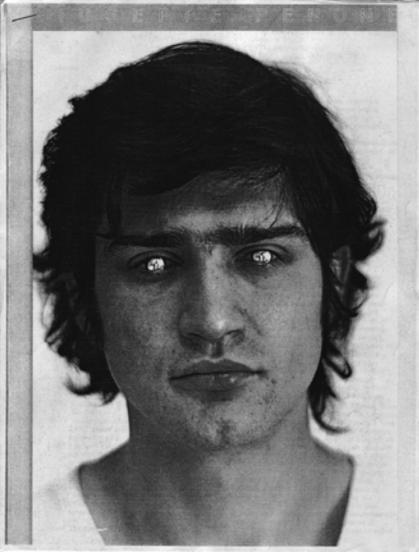


LINES 60–72 : Boris Groys paraphrasing Søren Kierkegaard, *On The New*, 2002



LINES 73–85 : Bettina Funcke, "Urgency", Continuous Project #8, 2007

LINES 86–90 : Giuseppe Penone, "To Upset My Own Eyes", *Exhibition catalog for Trees Eyes Hairs Walls Vases*, 1970



LINE 91 : Paul R. Halmos, *Naive Set Theory*, 1960

LINES 92–95 : Alex Klein, "Critical Responses to the 2002 Whitney Biennial", *The Blow Up*, 2002



LINES 96–97 : Michael Bracewell, "A Prose Kinema, Some notes for Pale Carnage", Arnolfini, Bristol, 2007



LINES 98–100 : Richard Hamilton, *Collected Words*, 1982



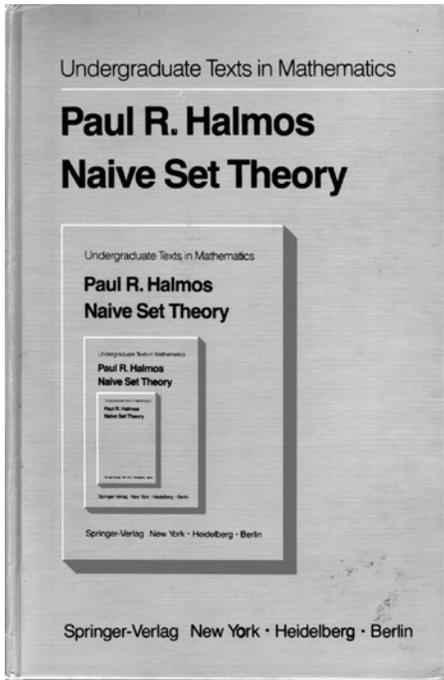
LINES 101–104 : William J. Mitchell, “Electronic Dublin”, *Archis* 2, 2002



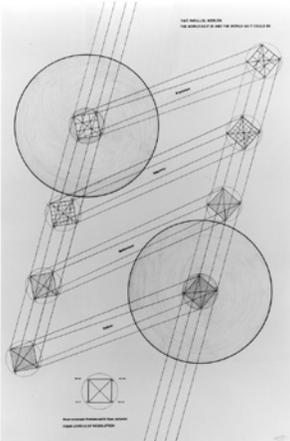
LINES 105–108 : Ryan Gander, “Little Bastard”, *Dot Dot Dot* 12, 2006



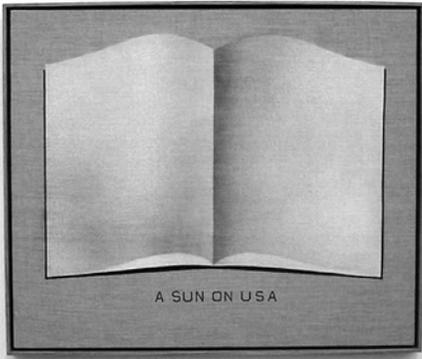
LINES 109–115 : Paul R. Halmos, *Naive Set Theory*, 1960



LINES 116–117 : Stephan Willats, *The World As It Is And The World As It Could Be*, 2006



LINE 118: James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 1922
 LINE 119: Ed Ruscha, *A Sun on USA*, 2002



LINES 120–135: Margaret Wertheim, “The Shadow Goes”, *New York Times Op-Ed*, Wednesday June 20, 2007

The Shadow Goes

By Margaret Wertheim

LOS ANGELES
 ON Thursday, on the summer solstice, the Sun will celebrate the year's lazy months by resting on the horizon. The word solstice derives from the Latin "sol" (sun) and "stare" (to stand still). The day marks the sun's highest point in the sky, the moment when our shadows stretch to their shortest length of the year. How strange to think that these mundane friends, our ever-present companions, can actually go faster than the sun's rays.

I remarked on this recently to my husband as we sat on the porch with our shadows pooling by our chairs. Nothing can go faster than light, he replied, expressing what is surely the most widely known law of physics, ingrained into us by a thousand "News" programs.

That is the point, I explained: Nothing can go faster than light. A shadow isn't a thing. It's a non-thing. It's the absence of light.

Special relativity dictates that we cannot move anything more quickly than the particles of light known as photons, but no law says you can't do nothing faster than light. Physicists have known this for a long time, even if they generally do not mention it on PBS documentaries.

My husband looked troubled, as did my sister and some friends I repeated with the story that explains how one way to arrive at "near" light-faster-than-light travel is supposed to be a science-fiction fantasy. Isn't it?

They are right about the travel. According to relativity, no physical substance can exceed the speed of light because it would take infinite energy to accelerate anything to such a velocity.

Yet the laws of physics pertain only to that which is. That which isn't is not bound by relativity's restraint. From the point of view of relativity, a shadow (having no mass) is a non-thing, an existential void.

It's quite easy to conjure up a faster-than-light shadow, at least in theory. Build a great klieg light, a superstrong version of the ones set up at the Academy Awards. Now paste a piece of black paper onto the klieg's glass so there is a shadow in the middle of the beam, like the signal used to summon Batman. And we're done.

Margaret Wertheim, the director of the Institute for Figuring, a science and mathematics education organization, is writing a book on physics and the imagination.

The shade cast by the solstice can go faster than light.

My sister leapt to the heart of this apparent paradox: "Why isn't the light itself traveling faster than the speed of light?" but it is also rotating in space? Actually, no. The bulbs that produce the light are spinning, but the light particles leave the source at 180,000 miles a second, the vaunted "speed of light." Once emitted, the photons continue to travel at this speed directly away from the source. Literally nothing is transferred. Our shadow bat can go 10 times the speed of light or 100 times faster without breaking any of physics' sacred rules.

to produce a detectable shadow thousands of miles out in space. Still, the theory is sound.

The anthropologist Mary Douglas noted that all systems of categorizing break down somewhere, unable to incorporate certain forms. By standing beyond relativity's injunction, shadows suggest the limits of all classification schemes, a tension that even modern science cannot completely resolve.

In the terms recognized by relativity, shadows are non-things. Yet before the invention of clocks, shadows were the most important means for telling time. Weightless and without energy, shadows can nonetheless convey information — though they cannot, despite our klieg king, be used for faster-than-light communication. That's because the shadow's location cannot be detected until the light, moving at its ponderous relativistic pace, arrives.

"Here there be monsters," said the medieval maps, signaling the limits of reason's reach. As a map of being, physics is flanked by the monsters of non-being whose outlines we glimpse in the paradoxes of quantum mechanics and in the zooming arc of a shadow bat going faster than light.

In Christian theology we are told, "God is that which nothing is greater than." The scientific corollary might be, "Light is that which nothing is faster than" — a statement true both in spirit and fact.

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Money Talks The columnist responds to readers' complaints, praise and questions on his recent column: nytimes.com/krugman.
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LINES 136–143: Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*, 1962

