

KATIE KING

NETWORKED REENACTMENTS

Stories Transdisciplinary Knowledges Tell



With a foreword by Donna Haraway

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*In memory of days spent with my mother—Jean Anderson King—at
her nursing home, where, huddling over my laptop together, we watched
downloaded episodes of Boston Legal and laughed out loud—
sharing ironies and contradictions of same-sex silliness.*

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CAT'S CRADLE IS A GAME of relaying patterns, of one hand, or a pair of hands, holding still to receive something from another, and then relaying by adding something new, by proposing another knot, another web. Or better, it is not the hands that give and receive exactly, but the patterns, the patterning. Cat's cradle can be played by many, on all sorts of limbs, as long as the rhythm of accepting and giving is sustained. Scholarship is like that too; it is passing on in twists and skeins that require passion and action, holding still and moving, anchoring and launching. Maybe that is why Katie King is such a good partner in worlding. Over three decades, she has been that kind of partner for me, and *Networked Reenactments* is an invitation to readers to join in thick, collaborative patterning. Networked reenactments is her practice for sf worlding, for speculative fabulations and speculative feminisms in the big, generous knottings that open up ways to think, play, connect, distinguish, work, and live.

Recently, King named "epistemologies" as "stories knowledges tell."¹ That is what *Networked Reenactments* does; this important book performs "stories knowledges tell" with great skill, in different material and conceptual grains of detail and resolution. She shows her readers how to ask what "grain of detail" might mean in situated inquiries. She writes about "epistemological melodramas" with verve and appreciation, and she is herself a master weaver of these grainy stories. A geometrician at heart, King thinks about whether a pattern is linearly layered or nodally networked and how that makes a difference. She appreciates, practices, and theorizes both "intensive" scholarship, with its demands for considerable focused and exclusive expertise, and "extensive" scholarship, with its powers of

linking, speculating, and attaching unexpected agencies and territories to each other. This kind of appreciation entails understanding the mechanisms and affects of inclusion and exclusion in communities of practice, including sustained pain and suffering from mutual incomprehensions and angers in unavoidably heterogeneous knowledge worlds and unevenly distributed power. Tuned to scalar grains of detail in both authoritative membership and peripheral participation in knowledge-making communities of practice, King makes palpable the important and often unacknowledged suffering, as well as pleasures, in networked reenactments inside and outside the academy.

In its own terms, this book “scopes and scales,” focusing in and out, up and down, inside and outside, and side to side in the dimensionally manifold weave of knowledge worlds that are at stake in science displays; science-styled television documentaries; serial TV fabulations like *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Highlander* with their rambunctious nationalities and sexualities; and emergent transdisciplinary scholarship enmeshed with nonacademic communities of practice with their unsettling ranges of expertise. King rethinks and re-feels what counts as genres of reenactment and how that matters. Attuned to the painfully unchosen, but also not-yet-closed and still-to-be-shaped “urgencies of global academic restructuring” and academic capitalism, King explores potent agencies, materialities, and effectivities in realizing knowledge stories. This book examines and makes available a rich range of “sensations of agency” and epistemological affects. In the diverse projects that King calls networked reenactments, the fibers of transnational and transmedia commercial and production apparatuses interweave with the tendrils of scientific and artisanal crafting and the myceliar hyphae of cross-linked generations of transdisciplinary scholars. Another term for King’s sort of mycelium might be a vibrant, livable, feminist transdisciplinary posthumanities.

King contributes to the important insights in current humanities and social science scholarship about the limits of critique, even while re-disciplinizations, often called interdisciplines, continue to extract acts of debunking critique as their exorbitant and exclusionary price of admission.² But best of all, King shows me how to do something else, even inside both my guilty pleasures in popular television or Internet media and also my self-righteous pleasures in my favorite politics, analyses, and theories. She does not even make me forswear the pleasures of debunking the unenlightened as a knowledge practice, or at least not all the time. Quite

the opposite, she is as unafraid of the heterodox tastes of intellectual and political pleasures as she is resolute about their limits and coercions when they get fixed, obligatory, and self certain. She provides a feast of reading pleasures in this book, asking only that the reader learn to taste from a menu that ranges out of the gustatory comfort zone of many disciplined eaters.

King thinks and writes inside a polyskilled, polyracial, polysexual web of testy friends—of companion species, living and dead, in the text and in the flesh—who tell knowledge stories that she needs—that we need, however that object of desire, non-innocence, and craft called “we” is re-enacted. Her web holds in its silk threads Gregory Bateson, Susan Leigh Star, Bruno Latour, Lucy Suchman, Chela Sandoval, Gloria Anzaldúa, Eva Hayward, Kara Keeling, and many more. Bateson is in King’s ancestry, in the sticky threads of her DNA, with extraordinary results; he was her undergraduate teacher and friend at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). Would that scholarly generations could always play out like this! It would change the meaning of heritage culture, to say the least. Earning her doctorate in 1987, King was also a graduate student in the History of Consciousness program at UCSC, and she met me at the airport for my Santa Cruz feminist theory job talk in the winter of 1980. From that time on, she and I have played a sometimes uncomfortable but more often joyful game of cat’s cradle, teaching and learning with and from each other about the craft of speculative feminism and speculative fabulation.

In the beginning, King taught me about just plain sf, science fiction of the sort written by one of her favorites, Robert Heinlein, and especially about the thick weave of feminist science fiction. She told me what to read, and it changed my life. Inhabiting the worlds of writers like Joanna Russ, John Varley, Octavia Butler, and Samuel R. Delany does that to one, making a femaleman out of less promising gender material. I think that such reading gave both King and me our primary meanings for “world-ing,” and her sotto voce working of that vein is deep in the tissues of *Networked Reenactments*. When I turned 66 on September 6, 2010, and the dog of my heart Cayenne turned 11 the same month, divisible 6 times into my time on earth, I wrote a riff for friends on 666, the mark of the beast in the Christian book of the Apocalypse; Octavia Butler’s space-virus-infected quadrupedal, beast-marked humans in her *Clay’s Ark*; the Greek word for six (hex), and the tempting but unfortunately false etymology to northern European hexes, hags, hedges, and all the untamed dames with

their wer-lighted unruly hair proper to old earth powers. I have never been deterred by false etymologies, and I need a little eschatology along with witches, woods, and hexes of the kind Ursula Le Guin would plant in Earth Sea, seasoned with a bit of number play from the Greek brainwomb of the West.

King entered into my reenactment, and she inflected it in the ways that readers of this book are about to experience; she thickened the knots and then relayed a mutated and resituated pattern for the next play. She remembered Heinlein's novel, *The Number of the Beast*, in which the biblical number of the beast turns out to be, not 666, but $(6^6)^6$, or 10,314,424,798,490,535,546,171,949,056—the number of parallel universes accessible through the continua device, Heinlein's sf mechanism for traveling through time and between universes. Heinlein thus gets a natural number (if a huge one) from 6 to the 6th raised to the 6th because he imagines parallel universes. What happens, King asks, when the universes are not parallel but entangled and networked? Ah, there the hags and hexes exceed the 6s; natural numbers go trans; and King entices her reader into the serious play of scoping and scaling, intensive and extensive scholarly pleasures and tasks, and collaborative critical reenactments without the seductions of Critique Itself.

In a much-quoted passage from *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida wrote, "Inheritance is never a given; it is always a task. It remains before us."³ I love that quote; it helps me to "stay with the trouble," which is the motto that sustains me in my current work with and on animal-human-technical agroecological practices, in companion species and transmodal ways. Derrida's words help me think in many kinds of time, flesh, vulnerability, and ways to learn to inherit in order to go on in the face of deep and urgent trouble. *Networked Reenactments* stays with the trouble. Katie King—in her cat's cradling thinking, feeling, speaking, teaching, and writing for restructuring and dangerous placetimes, whenever responsive and responsible inheritance can and must be woven from networked reenactments—gives me similar sorts of wisdom and subtlety that Derrida does. But King's are tied into different and, I think, more generous skeins of conversations that are dearer to my mindheart. Her pastpresents seem richer to me than Derrida's generatively refigured temporalities. I live haunted by King's specters, who also owe Marx a ghostly and ongoing debt. The conversations that King knots her readers into are most practiced in feminisms, science studies, science fiction, arts, media appa-

tuses, and the quotidian of heterogeneous and disparate sorts of expertise nurtured by and in knowledge-making communities in layers and nodes of locals and globals, in and out of the academy.

King's approach teaches us about "befriending transdisciplinarity under the urgencies of global academic restructuring."⁴ Friendship is a big theme and a demanding practice in this book. These pages are full of richly needed and sometimes prickly friends for taking consequential, worldly knowledge-making seriously. *Networked Reenactments* is an extraordinary book that explores how to inhabit with seriousness and pleasure the many discomforts that we experience when trying to do work that matters to us and maybe to others. This is work and play that must "address actively diverging audiences simultaneously and [must] author knowledges as merely one of multiple agencies with very limited control." Because any serious person is obliged to "traverse knowledge worlds in terms not of our own making," King shows her readers how to "befriend transdisciplinary movements" with all of our vulnerability and power, capacity and incapacity, hope and worry.⁵ It is all about learning to play, or, as King writes, "learning to be affected."

Inhabiting this book rearranges my insides, redoes my reading habits, reintroduces me to intellectual pleasures and political possibilities that I have been in danger of forgetting, brings me into worlds I do not know how to enter without her, and inculcates practices of attention to how consequential worlding gets done—in fact and fiction, in speculative fabulation, in networked reenactments. Perhaps, in the threads of King's cat's cradle relays, the much-quoted passage to come might read, "Networked reenactment is never a given; it is always a task; it is always in play. It remains before us."

WHAT ARE REENACTMENTS IN THIS BOOK?

I repeat here words from the middle of chapter 4, at which point all these elements of reenactment will have been networked over the nineties among layers of transnational infrastructure and systems described in the preceding chapters. But for those longing to hear that their intensive definitions of reenactment are honored in this book, even as they are also extensively positioned promiscuously with other ways of thinking about reenactment, I offer these words in both places: both here at the very beginning of this exploration, then later, nearer to my conclusions, just after I recall the realisms of Cold War military gaming, and just before I reflect on the emergent academic study of reenactment. Consider this a kind of hyperlink that allows these words to exist simultaneously at two differing points in these arguments, first to invite engagement and later to demonstrate an accumulation of accretions and associations.

Why does this book not pivot around what many would consider this properly pure type of reenactment? Because it is my argument that reenactors mean both what they mean to themselves and also mean things beyond and differently from that to many others. And that understanding this and other doubled workings of reenaction has wide implications for a whole range of kinds of knowledge work today. This book is all about these implications.

WHAT ARE REENACTMENTS IN THIS BOOK?

UNDERSTANDABLY DIFFERING communities of practice work to center their own fabrication, conventions, and explanations of reenactment, and there are more and more such communities and practices. Each in itself properly understands its version of reenactment as the most significant,

real, or central. And, each of these communities of practice (both scholarly ones studying reenactment, and reenactors producing reenactments) has a history or taxonomy through which their *intensive* version of reenactment is vitally produced. Each may feel that reenactments are objects that they, perhaps alone, are uniquely qualified to address. “Reenactment” may or may not even be the term they prefer for all the things I enumerate as reenactments; in fact, it may even be a term *against* which some define their own special and significant activities. Nonetheless there are some continuities that network among all these, and overlapping concerns can be understood to animate them; indeed the strange histories of militarized gaming offer nodes for attachment. Let us unknot some of these entangled and *extensive* associations.

For most, as intensively used within their own communities to describe their own activities or those of others, the term “reenactment” centers on those *hobbyists meeting together on the battlefields* of, say, Manassas, recreating in their persons and material objects and actions an American Civil War confrontation. These reenactments are usually military in focus, although they also include important concerns about the material culture and place-shaped character of everyday life during the time periods depicted, even more especially as they come to or do include women playing a variety of parts. And somewhat similar reenactments, partly or wholly shorn of military associations, instead focus especially on artful and pleasurable elements of everyday life in historical periods—food, music, crafts, stories, and games—and are recreated for *festivals, fairs, and other celebrations*. Usually separately or even competitively, but sometimes together, these two strains of reenactment produce their own hobby cultures in which research into historical events and objects, community building in person and on the Internet, and volunteer or semiprofessional work for living history sites may be generated. Heritage interests or nationalisms can be represented in these, although some explicitly intend to refuse such associations. “Authenticity” may be used to distinguish between these, or to rank some practices among these over others. This form for reenactment stands for many as its “pure type,” what one ought to mean by the term. My own use is often disappointingly diffuse to those who long to address this form of reenactment most carefully and in enough satisfying detail.¹ I hope however that this book will successfully even work with that sort of fulfillment and frustration of expectation, the very stuff all kinds of gaming depend upon, and at the right moment offer

its deferred reward, a vista very much worth working through levels of analysis to come out upon.

So, to continue with such goals in mind, for some the term “reenactment” might range among such hobby recreations not only in person, but extending out also to *war game simulations* of varying degrees of impersonation: from board games with dice and cards reenacting a specific military battle, to graphically sophisticated computer simulations also with military-style objectives and movements, to the newly under construction war games simulations produced by Hollywood for the US military for training purposes. And to this mix might also be added other similarly constructed simulations with less or without obvious “military” significance. These are often *multimedia fantasy games* modeled upon versions of *Dungeons & Dragons*, which over time have come to include sometimes more or sometimes less media, telescoping, or collapsing among multisensory, kinesthetic, and proprioceptive creativities, from drawing, playacting, game board making, costuming, event celebration, and so on, as well as including, or limited to, sophisticated computer graphic versions.² And explicit fantasy elements may be more appreciated in this mix, as groups such as the Society for Creative Anachronism may play deliberately with issues of realism and authenticity in savvy, joking forms. In some ranges, any “military” elements may shift intensively and alternatively into various styles of contestation or fighting, from individual combat to street-style gang encounters to apprehending criminals and beyond these, merging with other *tournament games*, like baseball or golf. Despite my way of explaining these here, exactly how these are all materially and historically intertwined with war gaming is reasonably open to question, although emphasizing the intertwined cocreation of military-based and culture-based reenactments might be important. Gender, race, nationality, and nationalism are all evaluative elements in differentially emphasizing some kinds of reenactments over others across a wide range of communities of practice.

More extensively—and this is the level at which my explorations of the work of reenaction are positioned in this book—there are new television versions of reenactments, some of them included within the scope of so-called *reality TV*, others are variations on *documentary TV* techniques. They range from historical documentaries with intensively defined mini-reenactments positioned to illustrate historical points to documentary TV in which the whole show is somehow a reenactment. Sometimes they

actually include hobbyist reenactors, sometimes they also mix in an alternatively intensive range of *professionals, semiprofessionals and volunteers, doing first- or second-person impersonations or role-playing* as for living history sites. Other times, inside the reality TV rubric, people chosen in a contest of admission are engaged to “time travel” to another period and try to take up life within material and physically difficult constraints that interactively count as “authenticity” for that program.

Of course film and television might also be understood as always having been kinds of (extensively defined) reenactments anyway, as, for example, when situating TV’s historic roots in vaudeville or film’s in Lumière-style fantasy.³ And indeed some gaming analysts detail other fictions of many varieties as simulated worlds in literary products.⁴ This most extensive, fully telescoped meaning of reenactment, *modeling “reality” in simultaneous media*, is culturally powerful: the play between realities and things clearly not whatever that thing “reality” is, and things only too closely like “reality,” are pivotally entertaining with varying degrees of cultural value and neurological and hormonal pleasure.⁵ Which differences between these make a difference—sharply drawn differences or only too shaded transitional meanings, all embracing and even ritualizing constraints or rule-governed systems—these matter enormously in knowledge work. Validity, objectivity, rigor, standardization, explanation, modeling—all these and other essentials of knowledge in production, transmission, and pleasure are at stake when we extensively interconnect reenactment, entertainment, and scholarly production.

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Networked Reenactments

A THICK DESCRIPTION AMID AUTHORSHIPS, AUDIENCES, AND AGENCIES IN THE NINETIES

WHAT NINETIES, WHAT REENACTMENTS, WHY?

THIS BOOK GREW out of, through, and back into the nineties. Something, or rather, some many things, happened in the nineties, things that set us up for *now*, whenever that is. This book keeps trying to work among some *things* of the nineties, work among them and as them, glimpsing our “other-globalizations” mixed in among the ways and places at work in, around, and transporting through culture industries, cultural studies, and feminist analysis.¹ Among these *things* of the nineties are reenactments, both the focus and theme of this book.

Reenactments, you might say, *what do you mean?* Well, I do mean those reenactments we might most immediately think of, hobbyists reenacting battles of the War of the Roses for example or interpreters at Colonial Williamsburg showing visitors how to make candles, but I am also working with a notion of reenactment that has other layers of meaning and scope too. Some of these other layers, more inclusive and perhaps less obvious, connect additional activities, venues, objects, skills, people, and circumstances together with such *living history* reenactments.

Saying “additional” and “together with” is in order to emphasize an extensive and overlapping *range*. Such an emphasis recognizes all these nodes among the cobbled together *ranging infrastructures* we are engaging today. Infrastructures are piled-upon assemblages within which there are many discontinuities but also connections, some deliberative, some inadvertent. These infrastructural connections or *flexible knowledges* make up a networked and emergent reorganization of knowledge making and

using that those of us linked together by the publication apparatus of this book are likely a part of, probably even agents within. Investigating reenactments helps us to perceive together many of these transdisciplinary connections and helps us to contemplate and participate in what something perhaps called a “posthumanities” will become.

“Things” is a useful word here: its etymology stresses that things are processes as well as subjects and objects, that they are simultaneously the location for dispute and the subjects of dispute as well as the outcomes of dispute. At some points in this feminist book, women are centered, at some points social processes of power such as racialization are centered, at some points issues of sex, gender, and sexuality in flux are centered. But these are not the only fields, forces, and objects of power engaged, and recentring is not the only feminist practice demonstrated here. Transdisciplinary movement among knowledge worlds is unsettling, something feminist analysis sometimes celebrates and other times experiences unhappily. Specific chapters take up these and other power-knowledge concerns, all connected together through this fascinating thing or things, reenactments.

The book works among levels of perspective in which three large social domains scale in and through its analysis. Roughly focused on a “long” decade, actually ranging through the mid-nineties to the middle of two thousand, it moves around even there, onto more edges as well, onto the beginning of the nineties all the way to that *now* no publication can ever pin down. So I call this range “the nineties” for simplicity’s sake, and, while addressing some of its specifics, I do not claim they are unique to this timeframe, just very interesting within it.

This introduction centers reenactments in a *particular kind of science-styled documentary TV*—think the Discovery Channel and PBS. Demonstrating reenactments at work sets up a practical point of departure and provides a bit of detail to share immediately, as well as setting up themes and groundwork for the rest of the book. Beginning here is intended to offer an immediate enumeration and extension of possible kinds of reenactment as well as to display reenactments as experiments in communication emerging from the nineties.

All this goes to show that while some communities of practice might consider themselves “intensively” (within their own communities of reference) to own or define the term “reenactments,” “extensive” displays

such as this thick description do a very different kind of important work, and can do so without throwing away or displacing the intensive work specific communities of practice do too. Investigating communities of practice and their various definitions and commitments, “extensive” investigations work perpendicularly to analyze the relative and relational shifts across authoritative and alternative knowledges that processes of definition entail. Attending to such extensive explorations among intensive meanings is one of the practices of transdisciplinarity.

Some appropriate differences here are ones of scope and scale, and an attention to scope, scale, membership, and grain of analysis allows one to participate actively, maybe even pleasurably, and move among knowledge worlds. Movement among knowledge worlds requires understanding authorships, audiences, and agencies in ways that keep redrawing forms of inclusion and exclusion, virtually moment to moment.

This introduction also initiates a reading practice that emerges from the nineties, a practice we might call something like “web action.” The specific forms web action takes beyond the moment of this writing or at the moments described in the book, into moments over the book’s production, and at many moments in which the book comes to be used, these are unknowable as these words are written. This set of undecidabilities is something to note explicitly, not something from which to try to deflect attention. Such undecidability traces possible worlds, and the *tense*, that is to say, the time grammar of transdisciplinary practice, means that this *now* and other timeframes are worth indexing and analyzing in their dislocations.

SCOPING AND SCALING

Being inside and moved around literally by the very material and conceptual structures you are analyzing and writing about is a kind of self-consciousness only partially available for explicit discussion. In practicing such research, writing obliquely is sometimes a necessity, not an obstinate refusal to be specific or propose something in particular. Thus at times the writing in this introduction and in the rest of the book is necessarily performative rather than deductively argumentative or inductively hypothetical. At other times it is descriptive, thickly or narratively, in order to share materials among communities of practice, or to set out tools, things,



Scale in for a close view on Google Maps of Woods Hall at the University of Maryland.

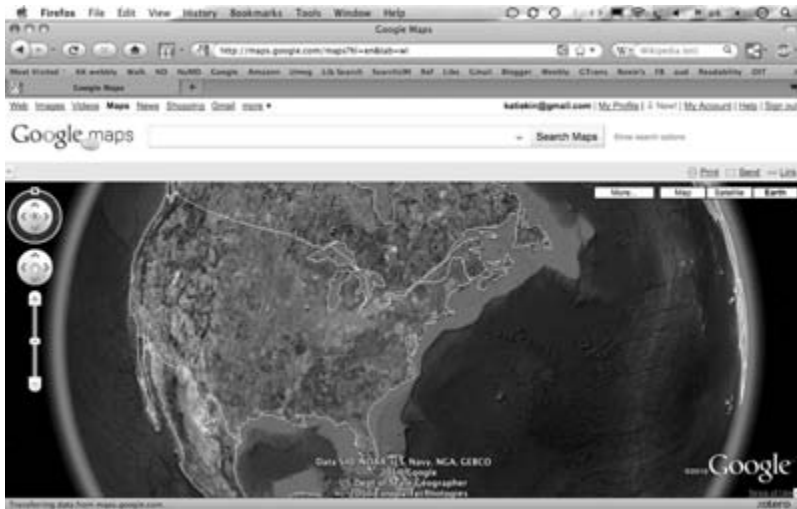
and contexts to think with. Transdisciplinary work befriends and experiences a range of academic and other genres of writing, entailment, and analysis, together with their consequent and diverging values.

So, imagine the term “reenactments” referring to a Google Earth map’s departure point, a concrete venue also coming to include a lot of conceptual territory around it.

To see the whole territory we pan out and up for a satellite view, or we come in closer and closer to see the very particular street patterns, maybe even to detail the backyard of a specific house, the parking lot of a particular building. We move the orientation point around with our mouse, cursor, finger, or whatever, to shift *scope and scale*.

Notice how such web action can take place—say, in the delivery system of a paper book—as a thought experiment or in supplementation, in one tense of *now*. It is possible *now*, in my moment of writing this, to curl up with one’s book and one’s iPod Touch, reading about Google Maps, searching them and altering them simultaneously. For some other *now*, web action has other experimental forms and supplements. The ideas of scoping and scaling include these *other* possibilities of tense as well.

How are scoping and scaling both realities *and* simulations of activities of reenactment, and in ways emerging out of the nineties? Well, three large social domains of power-knowledge relations are pertinent to



Scope out, pulling back for a Google Earth planetary view that still centers Woods Hall.

locating these literally metaphoric networked reenactments as flexible knowledges under globalization. Examining each of these domains requires good faith investigations into the foundations and assumptions undergirding knowledge worlds and communities of practice; it requires engaging them critically but also without immediately debunking them. For example, backgrounding uncertainties and ambivalences, material and political, embodied by, say, Google itself, are its multiply cultural academic founders in the US dotcom boom of the nineties; its new media writing technologies including but not limited to inscription; its technological and political optimisms and intentions among naive necessities (an informal company slogan is or was once “don’t be evil”);² and its taking on (and perhaps becoming another) such a giant as Microsoft, very much to its own benefit. Such points are references for continuing evaluation as well as for provisional judgments, in the example of Google, and also in these three domains.³ In other words, being for or against, say, Google, is an evaluation that might properly have to be deferred at moments in the writing of this book, indexed rather than essentialized in a critique. But in the *now* of some readings such deferral may well have ceased to be appropriate. Such *tense* of analysis also matters, and an explicit attention to tense is invaluable in transdisciplinary communication, a sensitivity that critique sometimes elides prematurely.

And Google, not coincidentally, maps among all three domains in ways that matter to reenactments. This is how I describe these three domains:

- **knowledge work**, that is to say, work cultures centering knowledge and information systems and technologies as economies themselves and as forces in various economies.
- **culture crafts, publics, and industries**, or public culture sewn up with economic development amid shifts in cultural value, all displaying in varying proportions among old and new technologies of entertainment. (Think of the culture, history, science, and image wars impacted by so-called heritage culture and enterprise culture.)
- **academic capitalism**, where is displayed recombinations of national interests, global economies, and ideological shifts in the nineties that develop across the Anglophone academies, evident in various forms of privatized education and technology transfer and favored by both (US-described) neoliberals and neoconservatives.⁴

Imagine tracing these domains using Google's trademark hybrid maps in several kinds of view, say, "satellite" or "terrain" view marked up with names from "street" view, with the "traffic" view button pushed.

In Google hybrid view these three ways of tracking the nineties can be overlaid upon each other in particular venues, and, as with Google Earth, we can pan in and out or move our point of reference around a bit to work with the specifics of any particular view, dynamically scaling and scoping.

Although roughly the same area keeps coming up—this extensive ranging infrastructure the term "reenactment" creates connections within—each view—as in Google Earth now, say, history, camera, weather, sky—actually emphasizes different features amid quite specific forms of relationality. Each chapter in this book works to scope and scale among these three domains differently in order to emphasize another variant set of relationalities among reenactments and communities of practice.

Scoping and scaling action in these domains, as in reenactment, necessarily operates amid a pastiche of timeframes, what I call in the book *pastpresents*, all too similar to a Google Map's so-called real time of traffic flows in color, its montage effects of time and place and national security served up as *history* in satellite or, differently, as street view, and its longer more fundamental features offered as terrain. Duration, political meanings, and myriad embodiments and materialities are at stake in what might at first seem like a god's eye view, but quickly we refresh in history



The *cognitive sensation* of walking through Google Mapped spaces, refreshing our distributed embodiments, we *feel inside* rather than outside Google's mappings.

view, seeing and being its more material and assembled embodiments ourselves. ("Whose car is that next to my office building there, and check out that landscaping and weather; let's see how many months ago on some weekend that was?")

Locating us inside Google mappings rather than outside, denaturalizing and *feeling* our own movements among knowledge worlds and distributed memberships, among authoritative and alternative knowledges and politics, we find ourselves drawing on a wide culturally altering sensorium and an individual and collectively cultivated set of affects. *Feelings* are ways of perceiving ourselves under satellite view, not in the god's eye or only under surveillance, but in a humbling inclusion as agencies ourselves, only too partial and uncertain among political opportunities and exigencies in various knowledge worlds. Some of these specific *feelings*, as created and as studied, mark out some of the terrain and ethics of a posthumanities.

Chapter 1 takes off from the point in which, in the nineties, transnational image and media wars refigure the multiple-racial, multiple-cultural European Union amid globalizing connections and competitions, those with the United States and those with cultural industrial districts around the world. These are some contexts for the reenactment heavy,

science-styled television documentaries of this introduction, unpacked more closely in chapter 3, as well as for the action adventure television shows chapter 1 examines in detail. Around this same time period globalizing culture industries obviously come to include more and more academies and museums in refreshed associations with heritage and enterprise “culture,” as described in chapter 2 and later elaborated in chapter 4. Of course, including academies means I include myself amid shifts in knowledge workings and global academic restructuring. These inclusions and their productive complexities and televisual genres are especially focused in chapter 4. And while “we”—that is to say, those agencies distributed among the culture industries materially networked by this very book as an object—may well traffic in knowledge worlds, indeed broker culture shock, we experience it ourselves, are dislocated by it all, and work, whether we like it or not, among our own experiments.

Thus across all the chapters of the book I describe how, in the nineties, science-styled television documentary forms, internet repurposings, museum exhibitions, and academic historiographies worked hard to shape an array of cognitive sensations accessed, skilled, and displayed by new technologies. These emergent embodiments became experiments in communication and offered epistemological melodramas of identity, national interests, and global restructuring. The term “cognitive sensation” names what we were just experiencing, literally and figuratively, as we felt ourselves moving around in Google hybrid view within and articulating one sort of embodiment. But what does it mean to call reenactments *experiments in communication* and also *epistemological melodramas*? Well, let us turn to one of these documentaries, scaling closely to consider how such reenactments work, as well as scaling and scoping out to make explicit a particular set of knowledge worlds and the work reenactments do to travel among them.

KNOWLEDGES AS “SCIENCE”

In 2003 a two-part documentary titled *Leonardo's Dream Machines* was broadcast in the United States on PBS. Written and directed by Paul Sapin, it was produced by ITN Factual, a TV production company in the UK that creates content for European and UK broadcasters and for such US television venues as PBS, the National Geographic Channel, the Discovery Channel and A&E.⁵ In one *now*, trailers for the show have been loaded on

YouTube and Paul Sapin's own website, and consequent web action allows for scoping and scaling, that is to say, reading about this show and watching a piece of it, virtually simultaneously.⁶

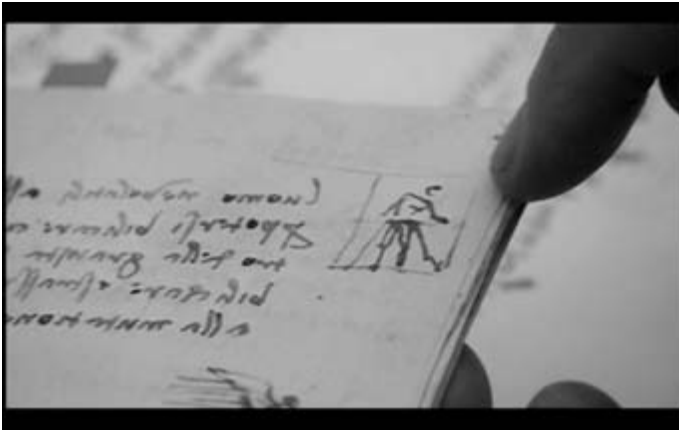
The show centers around two devices visualized from sets of drawings made by Leonardo da Vinci, each device chosen for building and explanation by specialists in overlapping but different knowledge worlds. One drawing becomes pivotal and animated as a single element in a disparate set of famous Leonardo flying-machine conceptions, this one a very tiny detail of *pilot control* that may be intended to elaborate previous Leonardo flying drawings.

The other plan is for a war machine, a giant crossbow. In two collaborative teams, design and structural engineers, aircraft restorers, skilled carpenters, art and science historians, and a world-record breaking pilot labor to make full-scale and part-scale working models from these drawings. They are aided by other art, science, military, and church historians, a practicing and teaching artist, and skilled craftspeople in carpentry, metal work, and restoration, as well as a bioengineer, a cardiac surgeon, and a robotic engineer; all specialists themselves who offer expertise and imagination in interpretation of skills, devices, natural processes, people, and infrastructures. While the two teams are not exactly in game show competition, still we and they are encouraged to explicitly compare their effort and each project's success. And the timeframes are conspicuously limited by the materialities of expense and the availabilities of materials, specialists, venues, devices, and film crew in ways shaped by the filmmakers to create suspense, tension, and dramatic conflict.

Each team is composed of two engineers of various sorts, a historian, either of art or science, and a person concerned with safety issues as part of the operation of the device; on the crossbow team it is the lead carpenter, and on the glider team the pilot. In part one we see the present day specialists of the crossbow team fixing what they consider Leonardo's mistakes so as to ensure that their team's machine will work. We watch the glider team worrying how to ensure the safety of their pilot while adhering to Leonardo's own knowledges. When the crossbow team discovers at the end of part one that their alterations have failed to produce a properly working model, they realize just how far away they have gotten from Leonardo's design. What we could call the *epistemological melodrama* of this particular series gets clearer at this point. The contest it turns out is not between two present day teams but rather across time with Leonardo. That



Paul Sapin's website with its embedded video trailer of *Leonardo's Dream Machines* acts as a model for *web action*.



Pivotal detail of A-frame operation from Leonardo's notebooks in *Leonardo's Dream Machines*.

means that in the second part each model actually works only when team experts do it “Leonardo’s way.” Yet, if it is Leonardo who wins this contest, it is folks in our time who make it all happen; those who reinterpret the drawings against their own errors, with the knowledge of what they know must also be the case; together with those who film, shape, use, and show to us many and more agencies involved; together with, finally, a range of additional *reenactments* offered to contextualize the multiple histories and present day forms of Leonardo’s expertise necessary to the series.

REENACTMENT IN KINDS AND EXAMPLES

Many kinds of reenactment are part of the show in addition to this playful historical investigation of model making from Leonardo's drawings, which in or across some communities of practice might be called *experimental archaeology*. Some of the other kinds of reenactment include not only the *costumed recreations* of actors—Leonardo is played in the series in fictional flashbacks by Paul Arliss, for example—but also the hobbyist *reenactors* or *historical interpreters*. The Woodvilles reenactment group is hired for this series in particular; like other reenactors they describe themselves as practicing *living history* for their own entertainment and education, to people sites for historical preservation agencies and various charities, and for such film and television work.⁷

Interconnected with such costumed recreations are also several kinds of material and computer *simulation* and computer and film *animation* used in the series; these derive from both film special effects and gaming environments. When so connected, living history recreations become available to be re-understood or *refreshed* also as similar simulations for action adventure and trial and error understanding.

Add to all these more and different simulation effects, for example the now taken for granted *televisual movement* across objects accompanied by *narration* of historical meaning, what iPhoto for example calls “the Ken Burns effect.” And another, now common, documentary device, in which narration by expert *talking heads* of past events and activities is overlaid upon pictures of those same *venues* in the present, where past and present are seen and listened for simultaneously. One such sequence in the series, created together with a computer simulation, visually represents for us speculations about the innovative scaffolding used by Leonardo to finish off Brunelleschi's dome in Florence. Similarly narration by *actors* voicing the words of Leonardo can be laid over present day venues or over *fictional* scenes. Finally, there are *repeating sequences* of reenactor battles, of flying papers animations, and of a surreal Mona Lisa door opening upon reenactments, all used to connect edited sections in stirring montage effects.

The range of reenactments, example piled upon example, used in this one documentary spans hobby, semiprofessional, and professional historical interpretation; computer gaming, animation, and film effects; battles and contests; and material culture displays such as in museum and national trust sites. Less obvious to connect as reenactments perhaps are

the medical, biomechanical, and aviation development sites and uses described in the series. For example, in layer upon layer of simulation, the robotic engineer Mark Rosheim's own robots are inspired as reenactments of Leonardo da Vinci's automata designs and indebted to da Vinci's modeling of the human wrist. Add now, as more trial and error simulations, all the scholarly and fictional narratives of the series, conflated in various ways, that shift the centrality of authoritative knowledges without de-authorizing them, and open onto alternative knowledges, without valorizing them. These too are reanimated as additional versions of research and development.

All these, not at all exempting the traditional scholarship essential to the series or research such as Leonardo's own, contribute to ranging affects and sensations displayed and available for vicarious experience by viewers as reenactment.

The epistemological or knowledge maker melodrama enacted in this series emphasizes what we could call *pastpresents*, run together all in one word, in which pasts and presents very literally mutually construct each other.⁸ They do so before our eyes in multiple and concrete forms of reenactment, forms in which it is impossible—and undesirable—to keep some singular and differential past and present apart. Nor is it just new (and old) knowledge about Leonardo that is displayed in the documentary but also scientific and technical knowledges coming into being today as part of interactive relationships with Leonardo objects crossing time.

Thus the sense of the documentary is that today these interactive *pastpresents* are actually necessary for important forms of knowledge *making*, not limited to teaching knowledges in entertaining ways. Such making and sharing of knowledges are not properly separated; in *use* they are brought together.

IT'S AN EXPERIMENT

It is in these multiple versions of reenactment added among the show's formats of comparison that we also perceive how this television series is an explicit experiment in communication across knowledge worlds. Please note that the word "experiment" in this context does not mean something cutting-edge new, something original and novel at this historical moment. The reference is not to "experimental" art, as in electronic literature, or to special effects startling and experientially intense on some movie screens

or computer environments. While these experiments charted here do indeed play with sensation and affect in multiple modes in the very traditions of melodrama, it is not with the purpose of shifting, say, physiological thresholds of intensity; and while they also do embody historical specificities, these specificities are not offered as radical disjunctures from pasts. Connection and continuity are important here.

In other words, these are not descriptions of experiments that jump out and yell “I am a novel experience!” although, sometimes quite subtly, they may be a bit novel. Rather, the better these experiments work, the more possible it is that they can be taken for granted, even forgotten, as they are added to workable infrastructure, material and conceptual, already in place.⁹ That said, some are new, some require new media amid technologies of cognition and sensation. But such newness can be valued and valuable in quite incremental variations. And some of these “newnesses” are worth questioning and devaluing, critiquing *and* appreciating. Experimental does not mean good, or better, or successful or progressive. What it does mean is trial and error learning and making taking place in multiple layers and units of interaction and articulation.

The very sense of Leonardo’s “genius” in the series is that many of his conceptions might now be completed or, even better, *used*, once they become understood among contributing elements of present day material and conceptual infrastructure. Reframed epistemologies, those between ideas of Leonardo as artist and those of Leonardo as engineer, contrast his conceptions: from the artist as fantasy machines, and from the engineer as potential working models for devices of use. Although Leonardo as artist is not displaced, still the cardiac surgeon, the robotic and bioengineers do not look to Leonardo for one-off artistic successes, for single objects passing through time as unique and unmatched, in other words, for the Mona Lisa. Rather, opening up an initially surreal Mona Lisa door into reenactment (one of the arresting repeating sequences in the documentary¹⁰), instead they look to Leonardo for experimental, interactive, and recontextualizing ways of viewing always interconnecting bits of the world, ways that open onto devices that enhance and play with those views.

These devices are thus themselves agents among agencies and can be used in ways both conceived by Leonardo and not remotely conceivable by him, the results of trial and error learning and making for which gaming and other current interactivities can be considered epistemological shorthand.¹¹ Thus, as a kind of reenactment, the work of collaborative teams



The Mona Lisa door into reenactment from *Leonardo's Dream Machines*.

creating models today for a television series from drawings among pasts, can be connected to other experiments in learning and communication as well as to other practices involved in knowledge making; experiments conjured up by phrases such as “experimental archaeology” or “living history” or “gaming simulations.” Some of these animate too inside whatever it might turn out we mean by such a term as “posthumanities.”

AFFECTS AND SENSATIONS AS COGNITION AND EVALUATION

All these terms and activities, as included within or apart from the term and activities of “reenactment,” themselves excite different *affects* and *sensations* taken together with a range of *judgments* by specialists of various sorts with specific interested ways of understanding: scholars, curators, historians, television producers, authors, journalists, hobbyists, craftspeople, and more. These exemplify a range of *knowledge worlds* in that cocreation we could call “transdisciplinary.”

For example, when someone asks me what my current book is about and I say “reenactments,” sometimes the immediate response is “we don’t do reenactments.” That usually signals the end of any conversation. For the purposes of more conversation the more promising response is “what do you mean by reenactments?” In either case, though, people may well have strong *feelings* that go together with strong *evaluations* of what THEY mean