(a shorter web version of the essay is published by Eurozine here)

"Never get high, on your own supply." (Ten Crack Commandments)—The Other as Distraction: Sartre on Mindfulness (Open University lecture)—"She never felt like she belonged anywhere, except for when she was lying on her bed, pretending to be somewhere else." (Rainbow Rowell)—"This content is not suitable for all advertisers."— "In my head I do everything right." (Lorde)—"15 years ago, the internet was an escape from the real world. Now, the real world is an escape from the internet." (Noah Smith)—Do Not Feed the Platforms (t-shirt)—"My words don't matter and I don't matter, but everyone should listen to me anyway." (Pinterest)—"Stop Liking, Start Licking" (ice cream advertisement)—#ThisIsWhatAnxietyFeelsLike—"Kick that habit, man." (W. Burroughs).

Welcome to the New Normal. Social media is reformatting our interior lives. As platform and individual become inseparable, social networking becomes identical with the 'social' itself. No longer curious what 'the next web' will bring, we chat about what sort of information we're allowed to graze over during meagre days. Former confidence in the seasonality of hypes that come and go have been shattered. Instead, a new realism has set in, as Evgeny Morozov put in a tweet: "1990s tech utopianism posited that networks weaken or replace hierarchies. In reality, networks amplify hierarchies and make them less visible."[1] An amoral stand towards today's intense social media usage, would be, not to deliver a superior judgement and instead delve into the shallow time of lost souls like us. How can one write a phenomenology of asynchronous connections and the cultural effects, formulate a ruthless critique of everything hardwired into the social body of the network, while not looking at what's going on inside? Let's therefore embark on a journey into this third space called the techno-social.

Networks are not quite pleasure domes. Discontent grows around form and causes: from Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 US presidential elections, to founding Facebook president Sean Parker admitting that the site purposely gives users a short trigger, outed as "addiction by design". Parker: "It's a social-validation feedback loop... exactly the kind of thing that a hacker like myself would come up with, because you're exploiting a vulnerability in human psychology."[2] Next is Justin Rosenstein, inventor of the Facebook 'like' button, who compares Snapchat with heroin. Or Leah Pearlman, a member of the same team, admitting that she too has grown disaffected with the 'like' button and similar addictive feedback loops.[3] Or

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take Chamath Palihapitiya, another former FB executive, who claims that social media is tearing society apart, recommending people to "take a hard break."[4]

After reading such stories, who wouldn't feel betrayed? Cynical reason sets in as we realize the tricks being played on us. The screens are not what they seem. Soon after any behavioral targeting is exposed, our biases are confirmed while effects start to wear out, and marketing departments go on the look-out for the next forms of perception management. When will social media move fully onto the stage of world history? Is it never going to end? This leads to the question: what does it mean that we've become aware of such 'organized distraction'? We know we're pulled away, yet continue to be interrupted, that's distraction 2.0.

A similar discontent is felt in my own net criticism filter bubble. What to do once you've realized we are cornered from all sides and must come to terms with this mental submission? What is the role of critique and of alternatives in such a desperate situation of ubiquity? Take the crypto-currency critics who must have felt they lost out on the bitcoin craze, feeling stuck with a bunch of lousy Facebook friends. Depression is a general condition, whether realized or unrealized. Internet, is that all there is? Discontent with the cultural matrix of the 21st century inevitably moves from the 'technology' label to a political economy of society-at-large. Let's put our collective inability to change the internet architecture in the light of the larger 'democracy fatigue' and the rise of populist authoritarianism, as discussed in the 2017 anthology *The Great Regression*.[5]

But also be aware there is a dark side to this understandable gesture. Critical analyses often, unwillingly, end up in moral judgement. Shouldn't we instead ask the uneasy question of why so many were lured into the social media abyss in the first place? Is it perhaps because of the "Disorganization of the Will," Eva Illouz talked about in her study *Why Love Hurts*?[6] The many that defend the usefulness of Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram, at the same time express mixed feelings about the moral policing of CEO Mark Zuckerberg, masking a widely felt inability to make lifetime decisions. That's what Illouz describes as 'cool ambivalence', a new architecture of choice in which rational and emotional considerations blur, causing a crisis of commitment in the choice of partners, a pattern we also see in the social media debate. I want to leave but I can't. There's too much but it's boring. It's useful yet disgusting. If we dare to admit it, our addictions are filled with

an emptiness at the prospect of life unplugged from the stream.

Dopamine is the metaphor of our age. The neurotransmitter stands for the accelerated up-cycles in our mood, before we come crashing down. The flux on social media varies from outbursts of expectation to long periods of numbness. Social mobility is marked by similar swings. Good and bad fortune stumble across each other. Life goes its way, until you suddenly find yourself in an 'extortion' trap, your device high-jacked by ransomware.

We move from intense experiences of collective work satisfaction, if we are at all lucky, to long periods of job uncertainty, filled with boredom. Our interconnected life is a story of growth spurts, followed by long periods of stagnation in which staying connected no longer serves any purpose. Let's call it social hoovering: we're sucked back in, motivated by suggestive improvements of conditions that never materialize. Social media architectures lock us in, legitimated by the network effect that everyone is in on it, at least we assume they must be. The certainty, still felt a decade ago, that users behave like swarms, freely moving together from one platform to the next, has been proven wrong. Departure seems persistently futile. We have to know the whereabouts of our ex, the event calendars and social conflicts of old or new tribes. One may unfriend, unsubscribe, log off or block individual harassers, but the tricks that get you back into the system ultimately prevail. Blocking and deleting is considered an act of love for oneself, hooked otherwise. The suggestion to leave social media altogether is beyond our imagination.

Our unease with 'the social' starts to hurt. Lately, life seems overwhelming. We go silent yet return before long. The fact that there's no exit or escape leads to anxiety, burn-out or depression. In his *Small Philosophy of Digital Abstinence*, Dutch writer Hans Schnitzler reports about the liberating withdrawal symptoms his students at the Amsterdam Bildung Academy experience when they discover the magic experience of walking through the park without having to take Instagram snapshots.[7] At the same time we hear a growing chagrin with such New Age 'school of life' responses to digital overload. Internet critics give voice to the outrage over the instrumental use of behavioral science, aimed at manipulating the user, only to realize that their concerns end up as 'digital detox' recommendations in self-mastery courses. Nothing much happens after the Alcohol Anonymous-style confessions of MyDistraction. Should one be satisfied with a 10% reduction of time spent on devices? How long does it take until the effect has

worn off?

Are you also longing for that calming feeling of being swaddled to get rid of that restlessness? Well-meant self-help advice becomes part of the problem as it merely mirrors the avalanche of applications aimed to create "a better version of you."[8] Instead, we should find ways to politicize the situation. A 'platform capitalism' approach should, first of all, shy away from any solution based on the addiction metaphor: the online billions are not sick and I'm not a patient either.[9] The problem is not our lack of will power but our collective inability to enforce change.

We face a return of the high-lo distinction in society with an offline elite that has delegated its online presence to their personal assistants, in contrast with the frantic 99% that can no longer survive without 24/7 access, struggling with long commutes, multiple jobs and social pressures, juggling complex sexual relationships, friends and relatives with noise on all channels. Another regressive tendency is the 'televisual turn' of the Web experience due to the rise of online video inside all platforms, the remediation of classic TV channels on internet devices and the rise of services such as Netflix. A Reddit *Shower Thought* put it this way: "Surfing the web has become like watching TV back in the day, just flicking through a handful of websites looking for something new on."[10] Social media as the new TV is part of a long-term erosion of the once celebrated participatory culture, a move from interactivity to interpassivity.[11] This world is massive but empty. What's left are the visible traces of a collective outrage of those that do comment. We read what the trolls have to say, and swipe away the verbal filth in anger.

One of the unintended consequences of social media usage is the growing reluctance to have direct verbal exchanges. In his blog-posting, "I hate telephones", James Fisher complains about the dysfunctionality of call centers and labels all 'synchronous' telecommunication inefficient: "Asynchronous textual communication is how everyone communicates remotely now. It's here to stay."[12] According to Fisher, killing the telephone is a big market. This is part of a silent revolution. There's no rage against the telephone, the most effective way to sabotage the medium is to not take calls anymore. During a visit to a vocational media college in Amsterdam, I was told that the school had recently introduced a 'communication' class for digital natives after firms had complained that the interns were incapable of talking on the phone in order to speak to clients.

In line with Sherry Turkle's findings,[13] the course trains the students how to conduct a conversation on the phone and in real life.

During a dialogue, be it on the phone or sitting next to each other in a café, we take the 'hermeneutics' route and spread out the conversation. That's the art of interpretation, when we indulge in the exegesis of a situation, posting or episode. It's an expansive semiotic landscape where meaning is not tied to commitment. Instead, it's all about decision avoidance, probes into the world of the possible. We're getting lost in time while we ask, explain, interrupt and wonder, guessing the meaning of the hesitations and body gestures of our partner. This extensive experience is the opposite of the compression technique, made visible in the condensed form of the meme. These visual messages compress complex issues in one image, adding an ironic layer, with the explicit aim to duplicate and propagate the message that can be grasped in a split second, before we swipe them away and quickly move on to the next posting. Memes beg to be liked and make distraction visible, as in the case of the Distracted Boyfriend meme.[14]

"Please approach me, astonish me." No matter how perfect the technology, smooth and fast exchanges remain the exception as we bump into the harsh reality of the Other. At the point where a text message is sent to someone there is an expectation to receive one back. This wait, also known as 'texpectation', is the long and painful experience of anticipating a text message. The electronic ghost of the other haunts us, until it finally appears on the screen.[15] "Every time my phone vibrates, I hope it's you." As Roland Barthes notices, "to make someone wait is the constant prerogative of all power." It is always me. "The other one never waits. Sometimes I want to play the part of the one who doesn't wait; I try to busy myself elsewhere, to arrive late; but I always lose at this game. Whatever I do, I find myself there, with nothing to do, punctual, even ahead of time. The lover's fatal identity is precisely this: I am the one who waits."[16] After the excitement, during the dark days, social media no longer fills the void. During the loveless days one feels flat, like a failure, with little emotion. Some get angry easily, with social anxiety on the rise. When mood stabilizers no longer work, and you no longer get dressed during the day, you know you've been hoovered.

Swiping fingers assist to move the mind elsewhere. Checking the smart phone is the present way of day dreaming. Unaware of our brief absence, we enjoy the feeling of being remotely present. You remember what it's like to feel. While checking status updates we're wandering off in our mind, the

movement is reversed and, without notice, the Other enters our world. Getting our phones out for short triggers, the anxiety doesn't go away. Like day dreaming, social media visits can be described as "a short-term detachment from one's immediate surroundings during which a person's contact with reality is blurred."[17] The second part of this Wikipedia definition however doesn't fit. Do we pretend to be somewhere else when we quickly swipe through messages in the elevator? Quick social media scans may be an escape from the present reality but can we say that it is done to withdraw into a fantasy? Hardly. We glance through the updates and incoming message, much like the reason of day dreaming, to erase boredom.

Should we, with Sigmund Freud, look at social media use as an expression of the repressed instincts? Or rather read social media as flows of digital signs coming from dispersed tribe members? Is the psyche in need to reassemble close social ties with the aim to restore a sense of kinship in an age of thinly spread-out networks? Social media revives the lost tribe. We re-assemble those close to us, on our devices. Can we describe the online version of the social as a secondary revision (Freud), a form of processing of all the complex processes in our busy everyday lives? What we would gain with this is that we could overcome what Nathan Jurgenson described as 'digital dualism': the real and virtual are not separate spheres but a highly integrated, hybrid experience. Could we read the extensive social media usage in cafes, on the street, in trains, in the kitchen and in bed, as an altered form of consciousness, this time fed by the outside world? A definition of social media as 'alertness of the elsewhere' or even 'techno-telepathy' certainly runs counter to widespread calls for more bodily and spiritual presence, leading to a less-distracted brain that is able to concentrate longer, and better.

Admit the envy: others have rewarding experiences from which you are absent. That's the Fear of Missing Out, resulting in a constant desire for engagement with others and the world. This jealous feeling is the shadow side of the desire to be the tribe, at the party, breast-to-breast. They dance and drink, while you're out there, on your own. There is also another aspect: the online voyeurism, the cold, detached form of peer-to-peer surveillance culture that carefully avoids direct interaction. Online we watch, and are being watched. Overwhelmed by a false sense of familiarity with the Other, we're quickly bored and feel the urge to move on. While still aware of our historical duty to contribute, upload and comment, the reality is a different one. We've transgressed back to news outlets and professional influencers:

only a few know how to turn attention to their advantage.

When applications are no longer new, they turn into a habit. This is the moment when geeks, activists and artists vanish from the scene and their place is taken over by parents, psychologists, data analysts and marketing experts. In *Updating to Remain the Same*, Wendy Chun argues that "media matter most when they seem not to matter at all, that is, when they have moved from the new to the habitual."[18] Chun describes habits as strange, contradictory things, both inflexible and creative. Habit enables stability in a universe in which change is fundamental. Its repetitive nature is not seen as something bad. "Habit, unlike instinct, is learned, cultivated: it is evidence of culture in the strongest of the world."[19] According to Chun, habit is such a timely approach as "neoliberalism emphasizes empowerment and volunteerism."[20] Its policy of privatization destroys the private sphere, resulting in internet users being turned inside out, framed as private subjects exposed in public.

Call it what you want, 'habitual media' capitalize on the wish for anti-experience, sharing information within one's own filter bubble (which Chun describes with the term 'homophily'). Decoupled from its radically Other newness factor, social media upholds the desire for something different. This also plays out on the interpersonal level. In his *Anaesthetic Ideology* essay, Mark Greif notes a crisis in experience: "Experience becomes piercing, grating, intrusive. It is no longer a prize, though it is the goal everyone else seeks. It is a scourge. All you wish for is some means to reduce the feeling."[21] We start to feel detached as friends get emotionally over-demanding and value our own defense mechanism as rather positive. Once we no longer care, and the melodrama is gone, we give it a glance, like it and a split second later swipe on. Social anxiety wears out and flattens out into a mood of indifference in which the world still glides, but with a quality of numbness. When the world is emptied out of meaning we're more than ready to delegate experiences to friends. No hard feelings. As distance grows, jealousy dissipates into the background.

Dutch technology critic Tijmen Schep created a website to further investigate the term 'social cooling' that tries to capture the long-term effects of living inside a reputation economy. Cooling describes the simple observation that if you are being watched, you change your behaviour. "People are starting to realize that their 'digital reputation' could limit their opportunities."[22] This leads to a culture of conformity, risk aversion and

social rigidity. Resistance against this logic will actively have to seek decommissioning of the algorithms and criminalize data gathering. Only if data analysis services are no longer available will there be a chance of collectively 'forgetting' these cultural techniques and their dreadful long-term consequences. His conclusion: "Data is not the new gold, it is the new oil, and it is damaging the social environment." A recent Data Prevention Manifesto argues along similar lines: it's not enough to 'protect privacy' through regulation. Both data production and capture need to be prevented in the first place. For Tijmen Schep privacy means the right to be imperfect. We need to design freedom that actively undermines the technological pressures to lead a predictable life. If this is not happening, we might find ourselves living under a regime of social credit. Welcome to Minority Report Society, one in which deviancy prevention has already been internalized.

Remember *Her*? In this 2013 film the male mid-life crisis character falls in love with his female AI called Samantha. What's shocking is not the presumed computational brilliance of the female artificial character, or the lucidity of having phone sex with robots, but the introvert conformity that comes with a mass uptake of personal AI friendships. Once the mass attention has turned inward and has become routine, why bother with one's appearance? This is not quite the trend we see in social media culture. The film is a both a moral warning of narcissistic solitude and a comforting 'soulful' story about machines that assist us in the difficult passage from one relationship to the next. What's striking are the uniform, clumsy, geeky clothes everyone is wearing. Jonze, the film director, says: "Have you ever worn high-waist pants? When we were doing wardrobe fittings, I tried them on, and I was like, 'Oh, these feel good!' They feel kinda like you're being hugged." Sleek, timeless 1940s fashion make us feel familiar, and comfortable. "When you add things that aren't of this era, you wind up noticing them and it becomes really distracting," the costume designer of the film admits. Everyone carries large clumsy bags. In *Her*'s retro-future scenario we've conformed to a uniform life and shied away from diversity. Similar to today's social media use, we can't say the subjects of *Her* are absent-minded. The 'artificial interiority' they inhabit, being structurally inattentive to outer things, shields off contact with the outside, much like the innocent *Hello Kitty* dresses that have been dominating the streets of metropolitan Asia for decades. Their positive commitment gives *Her* the dystopian taste.

In her book *Distributed Attention, a Media History of Distraction* German

media theorist Petra Loeffler provides us with a relevant shift of perspective in this context.[23] Going back to the writings of Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Krakauer, she shows that distraction was once seen as a right that was claimed by the early labour movement. Repetitive factory work had to be compensated with entertainment. The demand for leisure time was supported by technologies such as the panorama, the world exhibition, the kaleidoscope, stereoscope and cinema, a metropolitan culture embodied in the figure of the gawker. Due to the rise of media technologies after World War II, this attitude slowly changed and the phase of 'disorientation' (Bernard Stiegler) set in. As we've disconnected distraction from entertainment we can no longer see the smart phone as a necessary toy in the reproduction of the labour force.[24] At what cost? Instead of policing digital daydreaming, we should bet on the horse called boredom. At some point, Silicon Valley will lose its war on attention and its add-driven economy will make the inevitable slide. We're not there yet. Their strategies of behavioural fine-tuning and surprise still work.

Fascinating Facebook. Loeffler's move back in time could help free ourselves from the morals that surround the distraction discourse and ask what exactly is pulling us deeper and deeper into these networks. As Roland Barthes did to photography, let's investigate what the 'punctum' is in social media. How would you identify and then analyse the striking element that hurts and attracts you, stands out, that rare detail your eye is searching for? It's the possibility of freedom and liberation from orchestrated stimulation, the unlikely information that will take us outside of our routine. The irony here is that this relentless search results in a contradictory sense of repetition. What we desire is the next wave of disruptions while feeling unable to disrupt our own behaviour. As addiction "programs its continued use by blocking our ability to envisage alternatives" (Gerard Moore), we're locked into a situation that makes it impossible to 'disrupt the disruptors'.

As the discontent with the distraction discourse spreads, there's a growing revolt against the suggestion that it's all our own problem. Take Catherine Labiran, who no longer wants self-care being synonymous with pampering, recognizing that she "grew tired of conversations about self-care being solely linked to some form of meditation."[25] According to Dutch media philosopher Miriam Rasch, with whom I have the privilege to work with at the Institute of Network Cultures, digital detox therapy only fights the symptoms. "It overlooks the causes of perpetual distraction, loss of concentration and burn-outs. Going out into the woods without a phone to

get relieved of stress will not help you in the long run. It's like the carrot in front of the donkey's nose: something that keeps you going, supposedly out of free will, while it's in fact a function of what Byung-Chul Han calls psycho-politics, the next step after Foucault's bio-politics. It means the psyche is in itself subjected to control mechanisms, which according to Han follows neoliberal rules. The push towards self-discipline, of which digital detoxing is an example, is one of many strategies of the market to enter the psyche in order to increase efficiency, productivity, and profit." According to Rasch, distraction is the first step in this process. "Once distraction has grown so disproportionately that we start to protest against it, detoxing and other disciplinary strategies are proposed as a second step, all the while helping corporations make more money."

Miriam Rasch is not willing to give up on the internet. "Apart from the negative 'symptoms' it still offers a lot of benefits such as pleasure, friendship, courtship, knowledge and work. We need a new way of coping with distraction, one that befits the 'post-digital' age. One that acknowledges that the internet is not going to go away—and we don't want it to, either. I demand a strategy that doesn't just turn away from the benefits and turns inwards into meditation and mindfulness but confronts the post-digital condition heads on, sucks it in, wallows around in it, and still thrives."

Would it be possible to politicize our own distraction, Miriam Rasch asks. "We should stop being pursued by things distracting you. What in the world calls my attention? Listen to what's pleasing your ear. I'd stress the 'my' in 'my attention'. Don't let yourself getting hooked by anything that's fishing for attention. Become aware of attention: it's what media companies seek, and by seeking it, they destroy it. I don't care if it's online or offline—the two are hardly distinguishable—I care if I care, and I care about many things."

Michael Dieter (Warwick) disagrees and warns that it's too easy to condemn digital detox retreats as just a neoliberal ruse. Echoing Peter Sloterdijk's *You Have to Change your Life* he claims that "reactions to even temporary disconnection are often quite extreme. The retreat at least highlights a need for collective practices and changing the environment of use; I'm not sure we should trust our individual interests to fight distraction alone. Why not approach things with a more experimental mindset? We're not good at recognizing the potential impurity of such exercises. In this respect, indeed, the post-digital might be a useful concept. Pure detox is a risky endeavor, as medical experts claim: it can strengthen the impulses or habits that we aim

to get rid of. Hybrid media experiences, diversified interdisciplinary forms of training and more-than-digital methods are some paths forward, along with a willingness to experience crisis as moments of clarity."[26]

The global elite is in two minds about the 'distraction epidemic', a confusion with profound implications for educational standards and pedagogic approaches. The rulers demand digital skills sets and deep reading abilities at the same time, dreaming about totalitarian measures to get there. It is not in their interest to bring the hollow user to life. We're not just talking about doubts rationalized as ethical issues; the attention issue goes to the core of how the global economy is being shaped. On the one hand, one research after the other tries to make the point that considerable productivity gains will be made once there's no longer access to social media during work hours. On the other, a growing amount of businesses benefit precisely from the blurring boundaries between work and private life, being available 24/7, on precarious conditions that make permanent access prerequisite, and going offline a potentially dangerous affair. To put it in the terms of Stiegler: the app that hooks us, will also set us free.[27] Should the earlier 'access for all' demand simply be responded with the 'right to disconnection'? Can we move beyond this dichotomy?[28] Existing social media lack hubris, style and enigma. It's their petty, sleazy, behind-our-back mentality that needs to be attacked. In order to overcome inevitable offline romanticism, we could ask: what's vital information for us,[29] how can it reach us regardless, through various filters, and to what extent do we accept built-in delays? Can vital information 'air-gap' and arrive us, even when we're no longer present on the networks?[30] How can we organize our social life in such a way? Offline or online, what counts is how we escape from a calculated life, together. It was fun while it lasted, but now we're moving on.

(Thanks to Miriam Rasch, Michael Dieter, Caroline Nevejan, Franco Berardi, Ned Rossiter, Andreas Kallfelz and Ed Graham)

[1] Twitter, July 11, 2017.

[2] https://www.axios.com/sean-parker-unloads-on-facebook-2508036343.html.

[3] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/05/smartphone-addiction-silicon-valley-dystopia.

[4] https://www.theverge.com/2017/12/11/16761016/former-facebook-exec-ripping-apart-society.

[5] Heinrich Geiselberger, *The Great Regression*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2017 (original in German, published by Suhrkamp Verlag, 2017). The term democracy fatigue is the title of the opening essay by Arjun Appadurai. The term *great regression* refers to the growing income disparity in the West since the 1980s (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Regression). The anthology was an initiative by Suhrkamp editor Heinrich Geiselberg, intending to come up with an international response to Donald Trump, Brexit and the rise of right-wing populism in Europe. The book was translated into 14 languages (http://www.thegreatregression.eu/).

[6] Eva Illouz, *Why Love Hurts*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2012, p. 90.

[7] Hans Schnitzler. *Kleine filosofie van de digitale onthouding*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam, 2017.

[8] Title of a "technology fair" in Seoul: http://www.artsonje.org/en/abetterversionofyou/.

[9] An example from the arts world would be the London exhibit at Furtherfield, We're All Addicts Now: https://www.furtherfield.org/events/are-we-all-addicts-now/.

[10]https://www.reddit.com/r/Showerthoughts/comments/7dki8w/surfing_the_web_has_become_like_watching_tv_back/.

[11] I am using interpassivity here in a media technological sense, slightly different from Robert Pfaller who defined the term as "delegated enjoyment" and "flight from pleasure". In my definition, interpassivity expresses the dialectical move backwards towards 'e-regression', after the visual turn of the Web. In chronological terms the algo-recommendation mode of viewing, browsing and swiping, encapsulated inside the social media ecology, can be seen as successor of the post-war passive consumption of limited channels, followed by engaged watching during the age of cable and satellite TV (as theorized by cultural studies) and the interactivity empowerment of the user during the 1990s (the new media age). See: Robert Pfaller, On the Pleasure Principle in Culture, *Illusions Without Owners, Verso Books*, London/New York, 2014, p. 18.

[12] https://jameshfisher.com/2017/11/08/i-hate-telephones.

[13] Sherry Turkle, *Reclaiming Conversation, The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, Penguin Press, London/New York, 2015.

[14] http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/distracted-boyfriend.

[15] See also the related topic of 'read receipts': https://www.dailydot.com/irl/swipe-this-read-receipts/.

[16] Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, Penguin, London, 1990, p. 87.

[17] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daydream.

[18] Wendy Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 2017, p. 1.

[19] Idem, p. 6.

[20] Idem, p. 12.

[21] Mark Greif, *Against Everything, On Dishonest Times*, Verso Books, London/New York, 2016, p. 225.

[22] https://www.socialcooling.com/.

[23] Petra Löffler*, Verteilte Aufmerksamkeit, Eine Mediengeschichte der Zerstreuung*, Diaphanes, Zürich-Berlin, 2014. A summary of the book and interview with the author I made, in English, can be found here: https://necsus-ejms.org/the-aesthetics-of-dispersed-attention-an-interview-with-german-media-theorist-petra-loffler/.

[24] Rob Horning: "Distraction is no longer a relief from tedium but its metronome." https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/ordinary-boredom/.

[25] http://www.forharriet.com/2017/09/self-care-after-incense-burns-out.html.

[26] Email exchange, December 12, 2017.

[27] As Gerald Moore put it: "The same drug that, when consumed in a toxic

environment, further mires us in toxicity, can in different circumstances enable us to project visions for environmental transformation. And it follows that the key for therapy, surely, is to build *pharmaka* that facilitate, rather than inhibit, the construction of alternatives." Quoted from: http://pharmakon.fr/wordpress/on-the-pharmacology-of-the-dopamine-system -fetish-and-sacrifice-in-an-%e2%80%98addictogenic-society%e2%80%99- gerald-moore/.

[28] See interview with Pepita Hesselberth: http://blogs.cim.warwick.ac.uk/outofdata/2017/06/01/on-disconnection/.

[29] The term vital information has been defined in the context of the Amsterdam Zero-Positive Ball (1990) and was further elaborated by City of Amsterdam Chief Science Officer, Caroline Nevejan: "By 'vital' I mean information that supports an individual in his or her specific circumstance. (..) For information to be vital, it has to touch upon our natural presence physically or socially. Mediated presence, which generates vital information, will also ultimately have this effect, (..) it is information that matters from the perspective of the receiver." Caroline Nevejan, Presence and the Design of Trust (University of Amsterdam PhD), 2007, p. 174-176. URL: http://www.being-here.net/page/375/vital-information.

[30] Caroline Nevejan wrote to me: "The other day I was not told a person in our neighborhood had passed away. It had been announced on Facebook, which I do not check, so I missed the funeral. I would have wanted to know, someone could have phoned me. Yet, when confronted with the choice to engage with Facebook and its siblings, I made the choice to not engage and accept that I will miss things. If ever I need the social networks to get my vital information, I will engage. The longer I can postpone the better; I accept the collateral damage that is caused by my non-participation." (email, December 11, 2017).