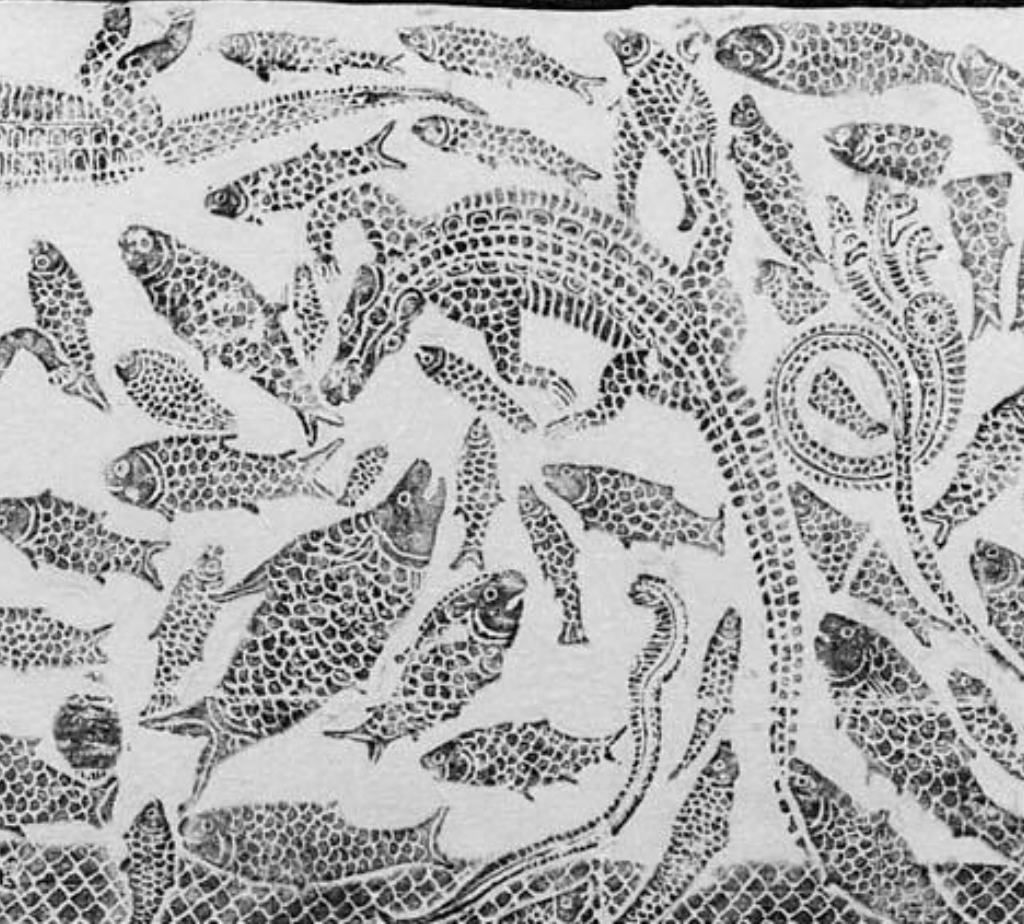# Literature
and
Hyperconnectivity

Timothy Wilcox

TIMOTHY WILCOX

About me

I grew up on the Internet and study English literature.

I hold a PhD in English and taught university courses on the intersection of literature and digital technology for five years.

I have published essays on:
1) The graphic novel *The Surrogates* in *Cyberpunk and Visual Culture*.
2) The influence of British Romantic poet William Wordsworth on interactive fiction 1985-present.

Now I share literary insights on PreCursor Poets, as well as in more short form @PreCursorPoets.

HYPERCONNECTIVITY

The new dilemma for literature

"Hyperconnectivity" describes a contemporary form of networked communication which incorporates:

- Person-to-person
- Person-to-machine
- Machine-to-machine

Traditional literature is structured only around the first relation, but even more complicating is that all three forms of communication can now occur instantaneously and through mobile devices.

This course explores how literature has so far grappled with this great upheaval. Sign up here: https://www.precursorpoets.com/precursor-newsletter/

I call Lisa's office and a machine answers. I call Lisa's home and a machine answers. I have Datacom leave my standard call back sound segment, afraid to leave my live voice on her machine.

Michael Joyce, *afternoon*

Weekly Topics and Readings

I have structured the key ideas to understanding the state of literature in the 2010s in a sequence of ten topics, to be prepared and sent out over ten weeks.

If you are signed up through [PreCursor Poets](), you will receive an email each week giving a series of approachable overviews.

Included for each week below are the key texts I will discuss for that topic. You might share this PDF to be used to self-direct a course of study, but if you are signed up, just read the emails. Let me know which texts excite you, so I can plan more in-depth studies and reading groups for the future.

Links are given for each text to either a direct online source or the publisher.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction
Friday, July 10

Week 2: Digital Mirrors
Friday, July 17

Week 3: Dystopian Anxiety
Friday, July 24

Week 4: The Hyperconnected Story
Friday, July 31

Week 5: The Hyperconnected Lyric
Friday, August 7

Course Schedule

Week 6: Digital Nature
Friday, August 14

Week 7: A Novelistic Alternative
Friday, August 21

Week 8: Transcending Our Impasse
Friday, August 28

Week 9: Post-Internet
Friday, September 4

Week 10: Conclusion
Friday, September 11

Introduction

Discussed texts:
Toby Litt
"The Reader and Technology"
>   *"contemporary novels avoid the truly contemporary (which is hyperconnectivity)"*

Joshua Cohen
"First Family, Second Life"
>   *"cell phones have become the chief antagonists of fiction"*

Digital Mirrors

Digital narratives simulating communication mediums, and the wider imprint of experiment.

Discussed Texts:
Emily Short and Liza Daly
First Draft of the Revolution

Christine Love
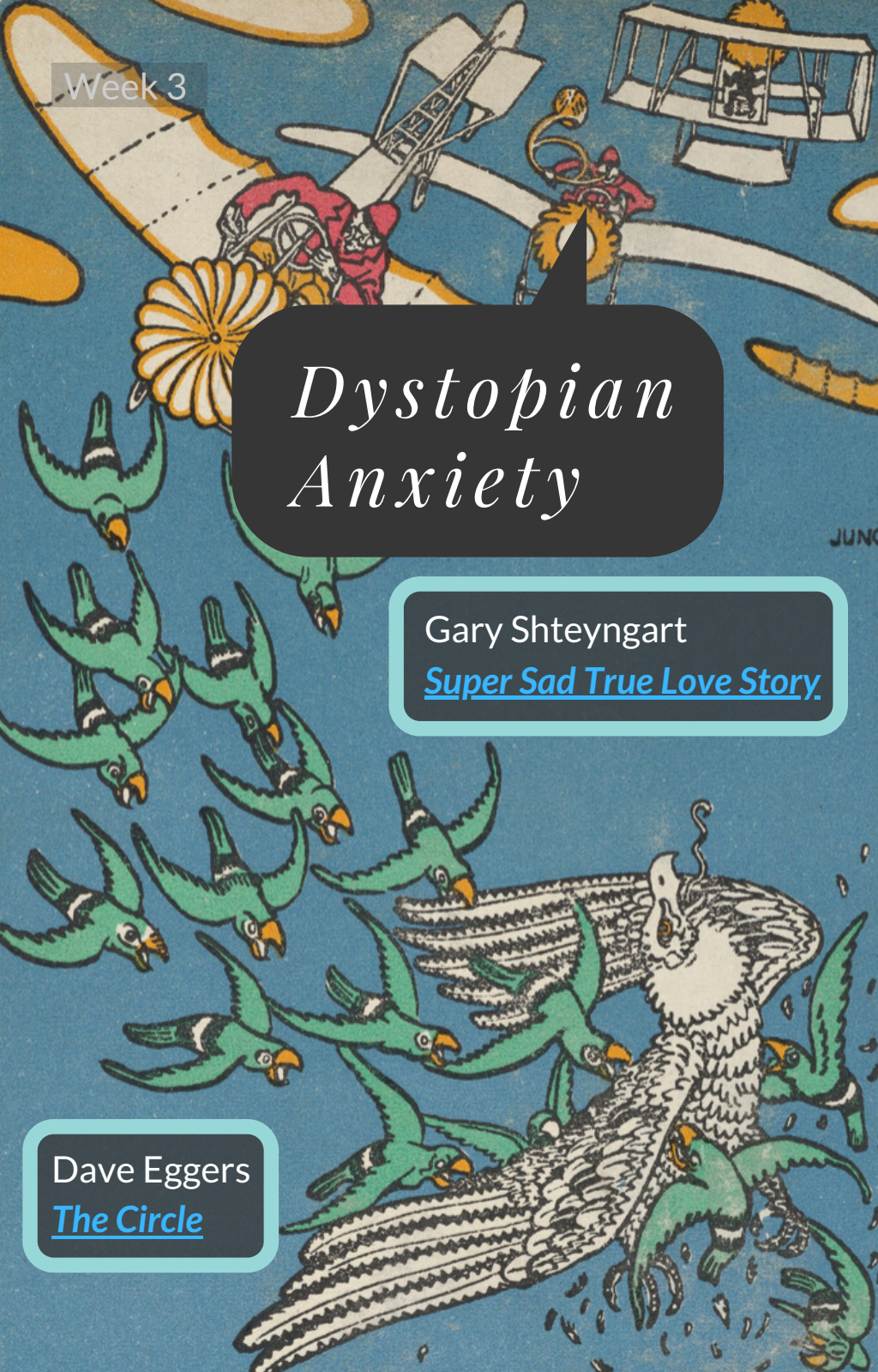*Digital: A Love Story*

Kyle Seeley
Emily is Away

Week 3

Dystopian Anxiety

Gary Shteyngart
Super Sad True Love Story

Dave Eggers
The Circle

The Hyperconnected Story

New Yorker Fiction ✔
@NYerFiction

💙 Follow

Jennifer Egan – **"Black Box"**

2:09 AM - 25 May 2012

23 RETWEETS 22 FAVORITES

↩ ⇄ ★

New Yorker Fiction ✔
@NYerFiction

💙 Follow

Ben Lerner – **"The Polish Rider"**

2:10 AM - 25 May 2012

52 RETWEETS 34 FAVORITES

↩ ⇄ ★

New Yorker Fiction ✔
@NYerFiction

💙 Follow

Zadie Smith – **"Now More Than Ever"**

2:11 AM - 25 May 2012

10 RETWEETS 8 FAVORITES

↩ ⇄ ★

The Hyperconnected Lyric

Snow like pale cephalopods drifts down
as it melts into our lapels we are all connected
into a shared dream where we
don't need our heirloom mouths.

maybe I'll spend the rest
of my life
with my remote control
under the never-ending sun
the never-fallow
the never-breaking

Discussed Texts:
Cathy Park Hong
Engine Empire

Sally Wen Mao
Oculus

if i type a poem instead of writing it out first
it feels closer to god, by which i mean
closer to you, watching me

Charlotte Geater
poems for my FBI agent

```
47 var t=0;
48 var n=0;
49 var paths=0;
50 var above='brow,mist,shape,layer,the crag,stone,forest,height'.split(',');
51 var below='flow,basin,shape,vein,rippling,stone,cove,rock'.split(',');
52 var trans='command,pace,roam,trail,frame,sweep,exercise,range'.split(',');
53 var imper='track,shade,translate,stamp,progress through,direct,run,enter';
54 imper=imper.split(',');
55 var intrans='linger,dwell,rest,relax,hold,dream,hum'.split(',');
56 var s='s,'.split(',');
57 var texture='rough,fine'.split(',');
58 function rand_range(max) {
59  return Math.floor(Math.random()*(max+1));
60 }
61 function choose(array) {
62  return array[rand_range(array.length-1)];
63 }
```

Digital Nature

fair winds

45 wind at 19.48 mph

43

Forest exercises the rock.
Ripplings dream.
Mists range the coves.

run the sinuous cool driven —

45 **light showers**

JULY

45

41

Bright chop at Blackness. A splash of sudden sun. A season we've almost forgotten the name for. Voices clatter across the water. Clouds clutter the far corners. Buzzards circle. And sometimes an osprey. The tide turns. The wind against us. Night rows toward shifting shadows. Blister on oar hand. Surrender feels right.

42

45

46

47

Discussed Texts:
Nick Montfort
Taroko Gorge

J.R. Carpenter
This is a Picture of Wind

A Novelistic Alternative

Novels in the age of vlogging and liveblogging.

"He ... opened his MacBook—sideways, like a hardcover book—and looked at the internet, lying on his side, with his right ear pressed into his pillow, as if, unable to return to sleep, at least in a position to hear what, in his absence, might be happening there."
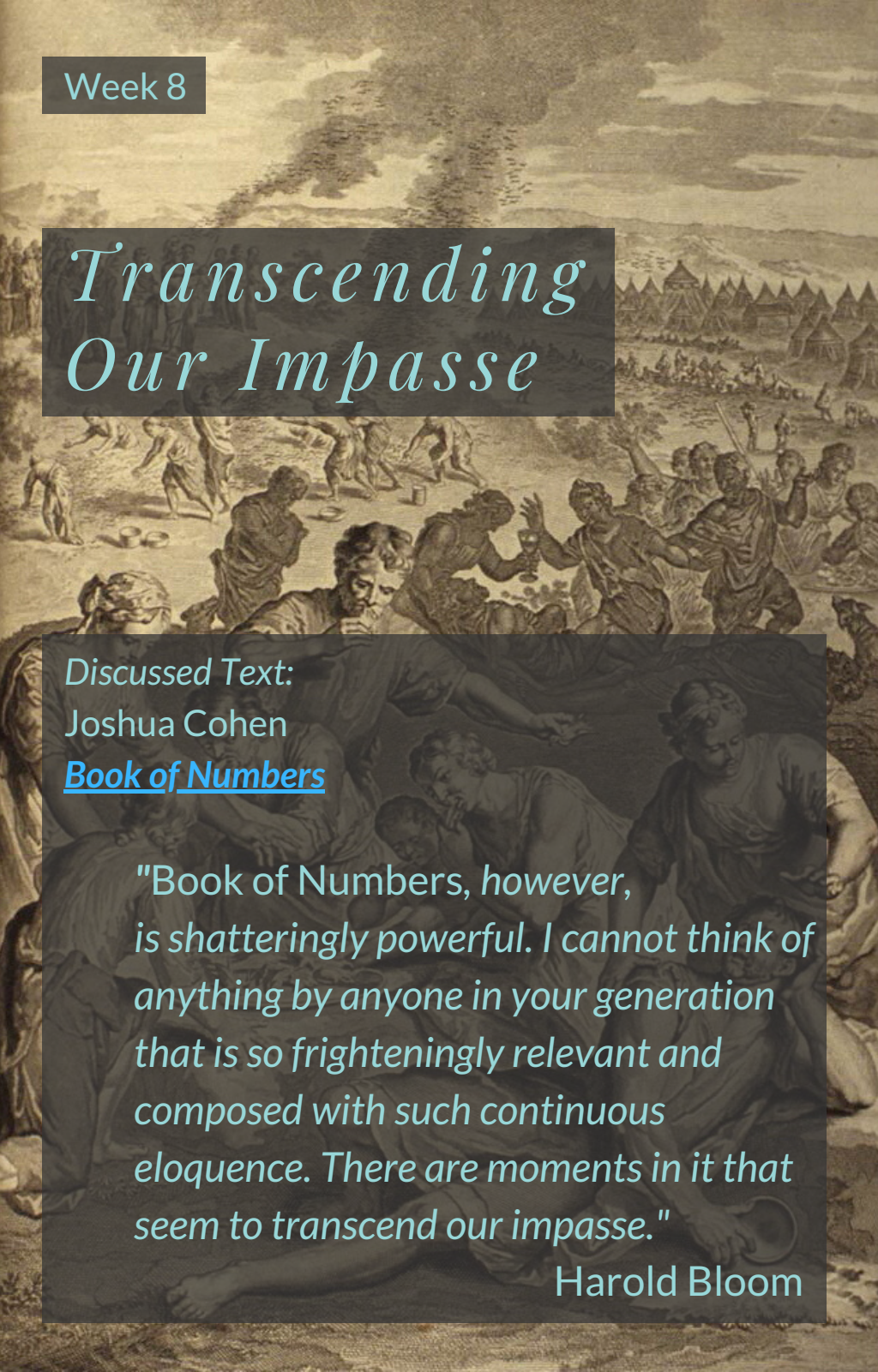
Discussed Texts:
Tao Lin
Taipei

Megan Boyle
Liveblog

Transcending Our Impasse

Discussed Text:
Joshua Cohen
Book of Numbers

"Book of Numbers, *however,
is shatteringly powerful. I cannot think of
anything by anyone in your generation
that is so frighteningly relevant and
composed with such continuous
eloquence. There are moments in it that
seem to transcend our impasse.*"

Harold Bloom

Post-Internet

When the Internet is gone, or when we are generations removed from our current world, we will feel it through its absence. The 2010s closed by imagining the end of the global Internet, and so show its invisible outlines.

Discussed Texts:
Tim Maughan
Infinite Detail

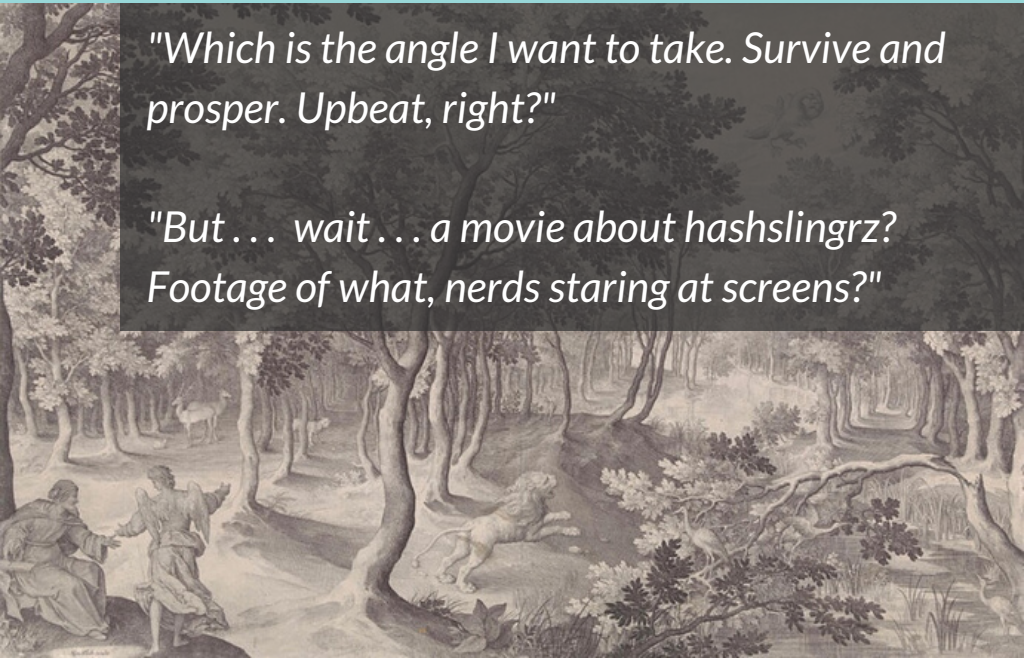Karen An-hwei Lee
The Maze of Transparencies

Conclusion

We end with a return to 2001 as seen through 2013. In studying the literature of the 2010s, we may also glimpse the literature which is yet to come, and in studying these precursor texts, we learn to see that world as it comes.

Discussed Text:
Thomas Pynchon
Bleeding Edge

"Which is the angle I want to take. Survive and prosper. Upbeat, right?"

"But . . . wait . . . a movie about hashslingrz? Footage of what, nerds staring at screens?"

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https://www.precursorpoets.com/precursor-newsletter/

In addition to this free 10-week course,
I also send out a free monthly
newsletter with original thoughts and a
curated selection of new, classic, and
electronic literature, as well as exciting
work being done by others surrounding
literary study and digital technology.

This monthly dispatch is the ultimate
resource for cultivating a creative
imagination fit for the digital 21st
century world.

This will also be my primary means to
announce new projects in the future.
Please share, and thanks for reading!