

Formation through Forms Paul Boardman Jr., '2025

Inspired by the creative-critical literary style of such works as *House of Leaves* and *Infinite Jest*, and considering the theme of technology's impact upon an individual's creative process, especially as regards the digital potential to stimulate and to stratify, yet also to alienate and to restrict personal systems of thought; *Formation through Forms*, initially proposed as a collection of short stories, poetry, and interactive webpages, has taken on a life of its own in the development process to become a layered narrative work that grows gradually to explore a "media studies of the self."

In what may be considered a heady "*black mirror*" style, various "meta" experiences of the ego and of the abstracted psyche are revealed and explored through a sustained use of technology as literary device that both expands the story's content and encroaches upon the format's structure itself. Disassociation as a means of social-escapism, the varying poetics of one's internal monologue and what these patterns may imply regarding mental habits, along with other abstract forms of self-perception, are all explored conceptually, through the writing itself, and literally, through the reader's (and user's) own interactions with the multimedia project. Poetry begins to interrupt the overarching-story narrator's self-insulating mental monologuing, and interactive webpages serve as "empathetic visions" that the narrator comes to receive. Such boundary breaks of form and of content (and of perspective, as literary *devices* fragment and complicate our narrator's own mind), directly implement, for the reader, an experience of the work's less obvious digital-mental metaphors. It is an experimental work; in that it hopes to evidence a new literary theory and style.

As I, the author, have recently undergone a drastic change in my own habits with technology, in what I would consider to be a transition towards device-asceticism from a form of device-addiction, the ideas that support *Formation through Forms* arose organically, and are part of the product of a very gradual and deliberate psychic investigation and reinvigoration. Much as the story's external narrator often is, I often was very much trapped within my own head, and supported in the being so introvertedly inclined by my own draining (though seemingly fulfilling) relationship with technology. My attention span was virtually nil, or at least my enjoyment of any attention span that lasted longer than a switch between devices was virtually nil, and so a project like *Formation through Forms* would never have seemed remotely possible to a previous *me*. Now, the writing that I have done in this project is a desirable, truly fulfilling sort of act that I hope is clear to its readers to have come from a genuine and happily prolonged state of being; from a *state-of-the-art* with a much healthier (and significantly reduced, being much more deliberate) association with the virtual and hypermodern technology that the term has grown to imply.

Also underlying the writing of this work is the careful study of various journal articles and publications that deal with the aesthetics of technology. These include Michael Betancourt's "The Aura of the Digital;" Gianluca Consoli's "The Emergence of the Modern Mind: An Evolutionary Perspective on Aesthetic Experience;" and Robert Hassan's "Digital Alienization."

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