

(dis/re)membered

James Knight

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steel incisors
visual poetry with teeth

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several of the visual poems in this book have appeared elsewhere:

“in the howling storm”, “what hopeful chimera”, “blank” and “show home” appeared in Temporary Spaces, an exhibition of visual poetry at the Poetry Café in Covent Garden, London, from 20 January to 22 February 2020. Temporary Spaces was curated by Astra Papachristodoulou and Nic Stringer, and was accompanied by a handsome catalogue, published by Pamenar Press.

“what starts as a toothache” was selected by ReVerse Butcher for inclusion in the Vision edition of Burning House Press online in January 2020.

Robert Frede Kenter published “flesh space” and “their burning universe” (under a different title) in the online IceFloe Press in February 2020.

“map of the underworld” appeared in Joan Pope’s Sex & Death edition of Burning House Press online, in March 2020.

“the physics of death” appeared in the Horror edition of Seiren in June 2020.

All of these visual poems are reproduced here with thanks.

The interested reader will also find experimental “remixes” of a number of the poems in this book on my website: thebirdking.com.

Special thanks to Richard Biddle and Astra Papachristodoulou for their kindness, encouragement and support.

(dis/re)membered

1

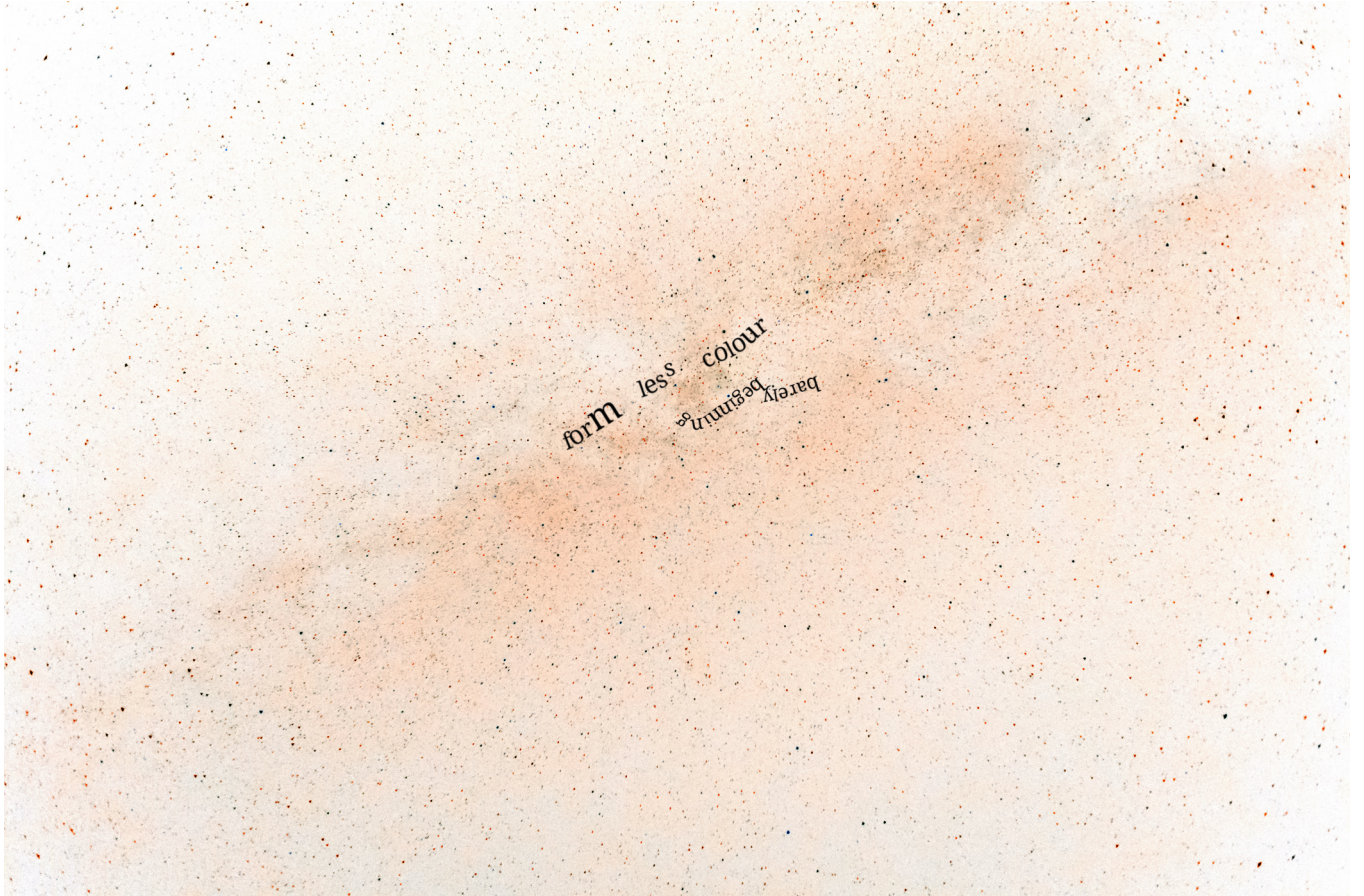
almost nothing



It begins with the unthinkable.

2

flesh space



Before the conception of form, time is a smear of blood.

3

milk teeth



The protagonist, as yet unreal, prepares to make an entrance.

in the howling storm



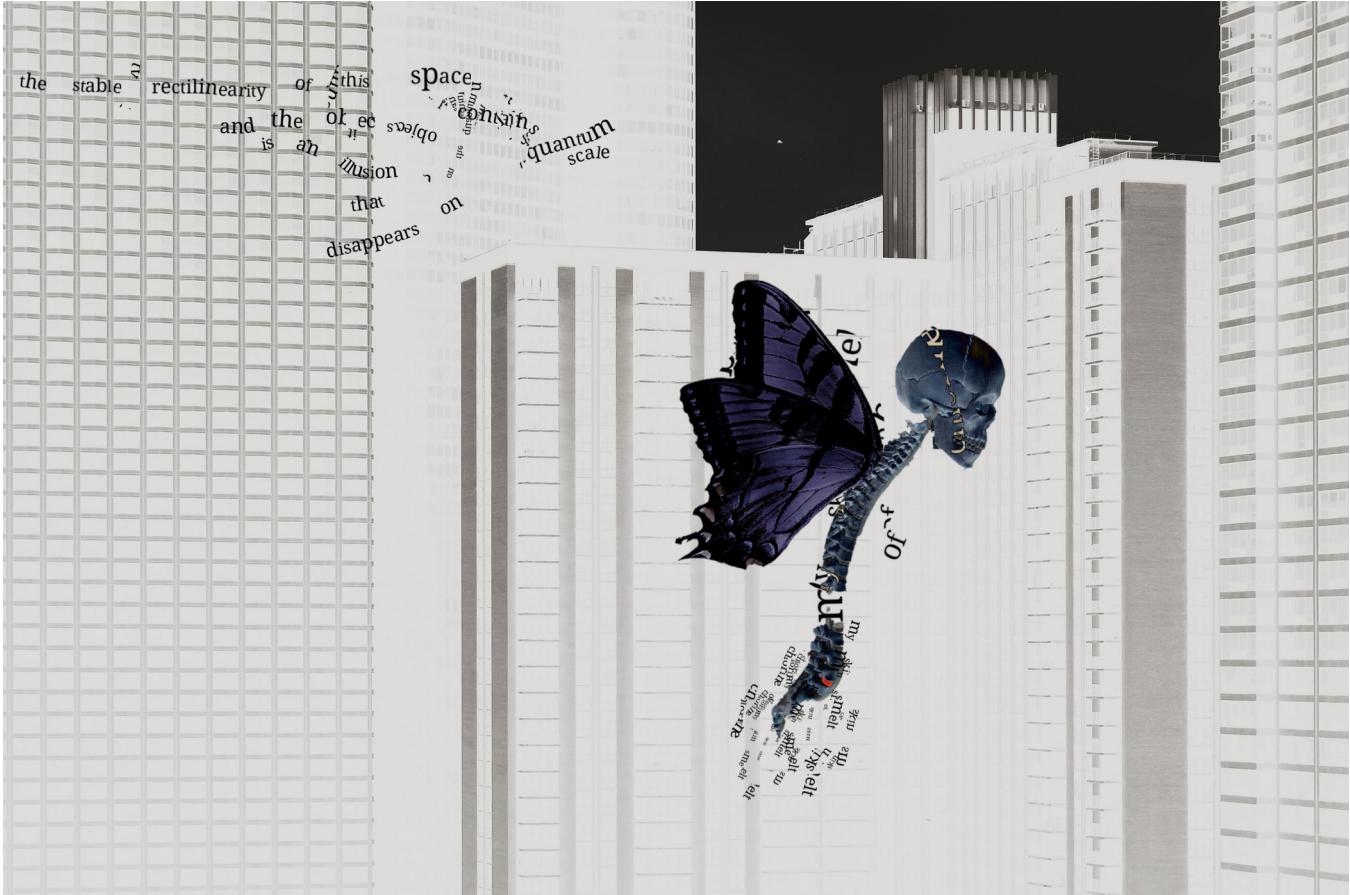
The moment of conception is one of primal anguish, enacted in a secret theatre.

what hopeful chimera



Although our intrauterine life has been studied and documented, it remains to us a mysterious, unremembered period, in a space we labour to imagine.

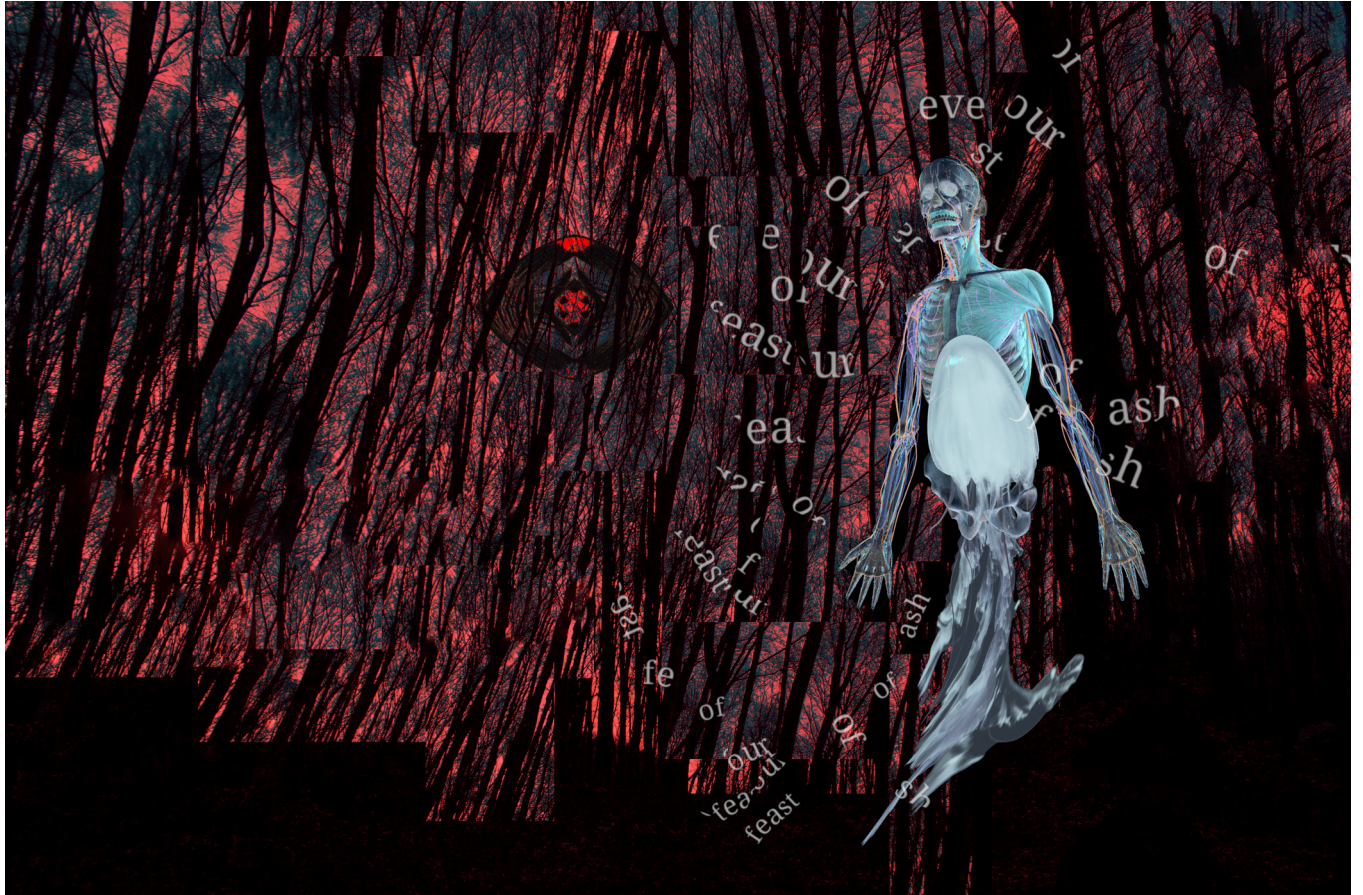
what starts as a toothache



During childhood, the human body is dimly aware that its constant metamorphoses make it unsuited to its constructed environment.

8

primal scene



The first deliberate act is a transgression, a burning, a poem.

their burning universe



Mirrors show us hot monsters that murder our sleep.

When desire causes a body to erupt, measurements of time and space become impossible.



blackouts



Perception is punctuated by momentary losses, gaps we will never fill.

scaffold of membranes



A human body may attempt to prolong itself through rough acts of self-translation.

14

unfamiliar



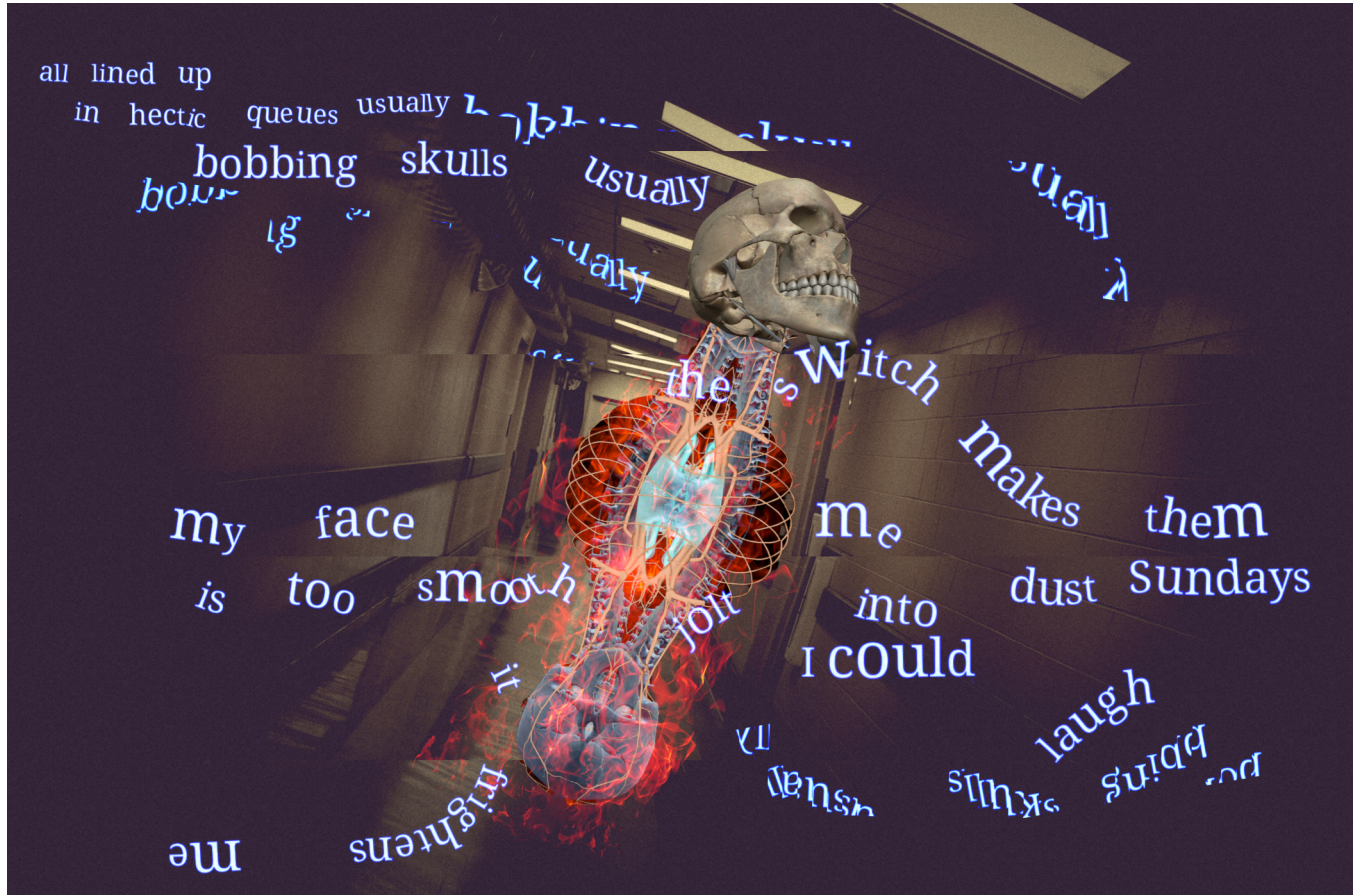
Conventional wisdom advocates a distrust of surfaces, but there is no arguing with the slow collapse of a pane of glass.

show home



The human body struggles to perform its identity in a domestic setting that is less stable than its physical features and rituals suggest.

temporary let



The chorus line stretches out in all directions, multiplied exponentially by a complex arrangement of mirrors.

other urban mirages



The human body is compelled to navigate an engineered realm of fast-melting facades and burning shopfronts.

18

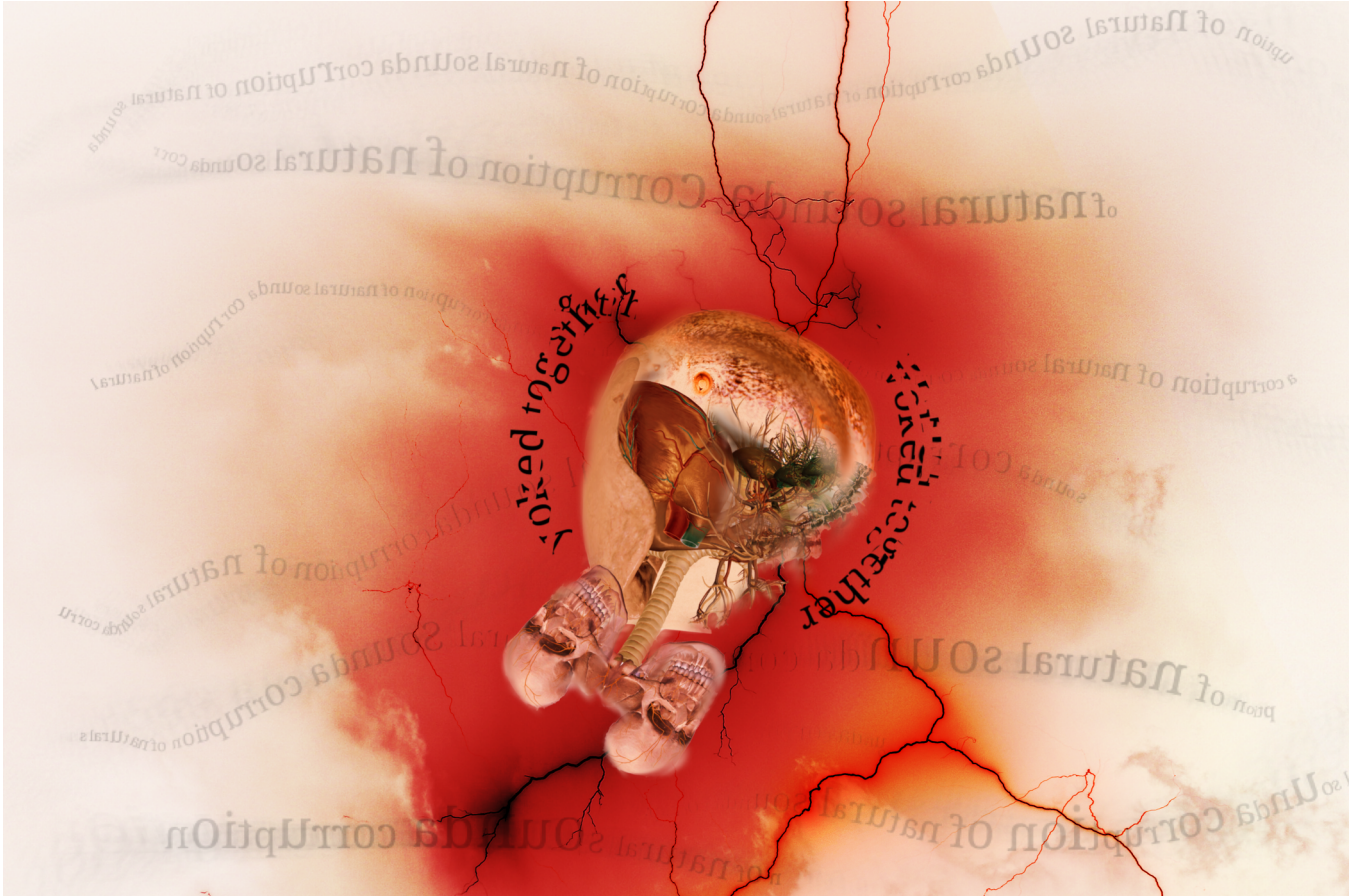
oh god I'm coming



There are moments that appear to exist outside time, though this is an illusion.

19

new impossible



Coupling breeds otherness; offspring embodies uncanny variations on a chimerical original.

the physics of death



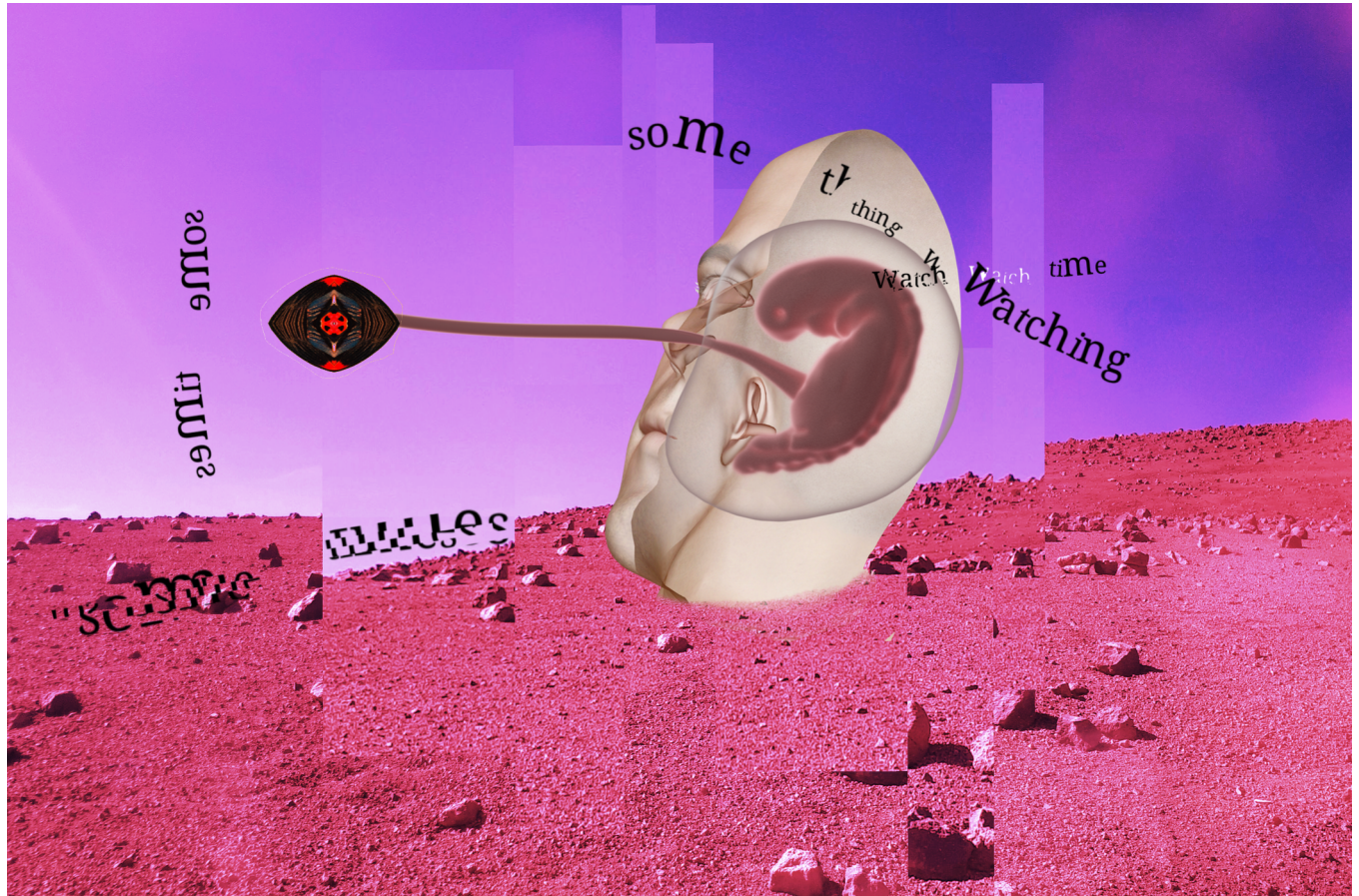
At the end, it comes down to a fall; the ineluctable drag of a black hole makes beautiful mathematics.

the counting of this change



Unable to change its fatal trajectory, the human body consoles itself with measurements and records.

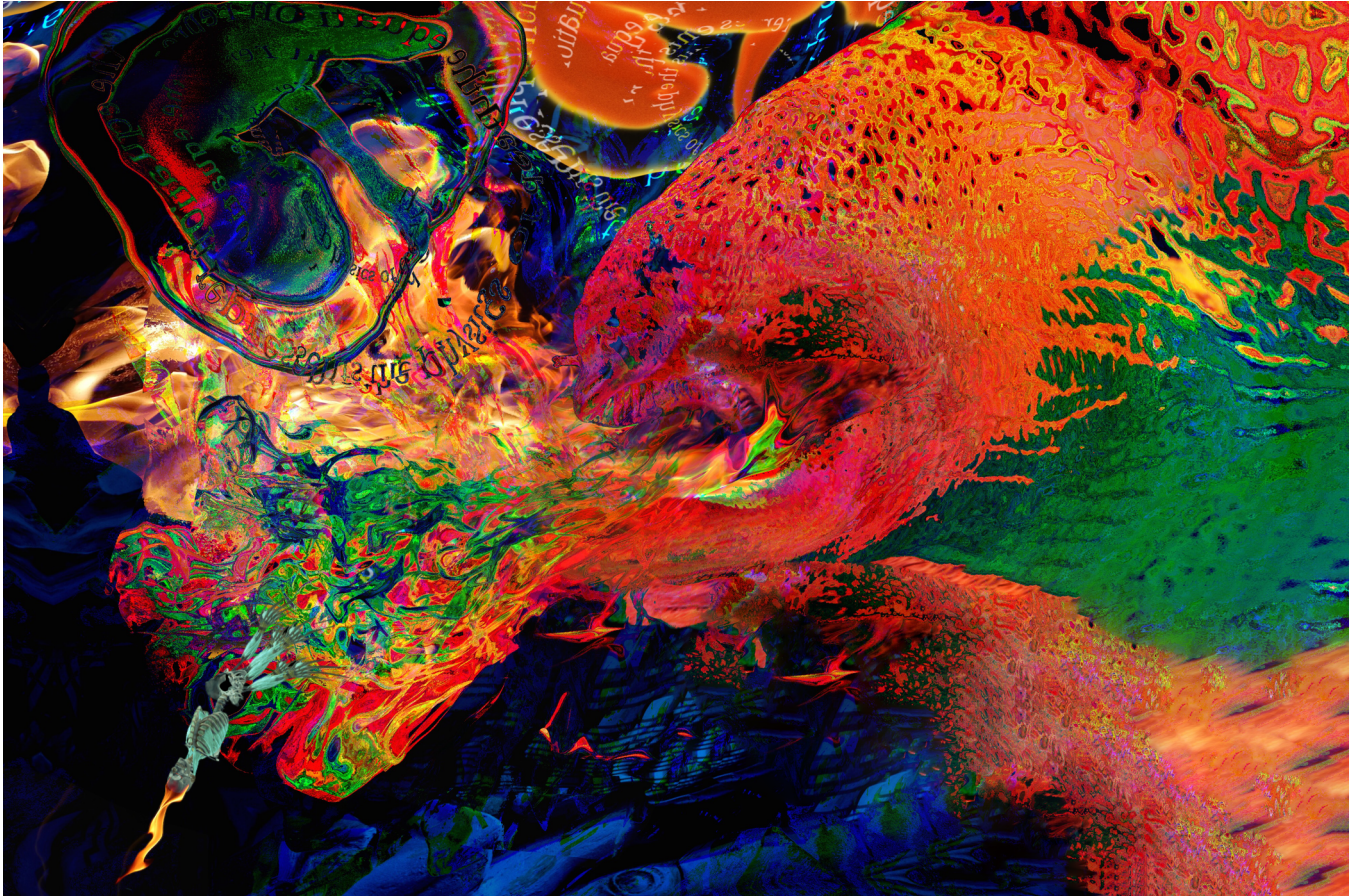
IS
counting his age



Unable to change its foetal trajectory, the human body confronts itself with measurements and records.

02

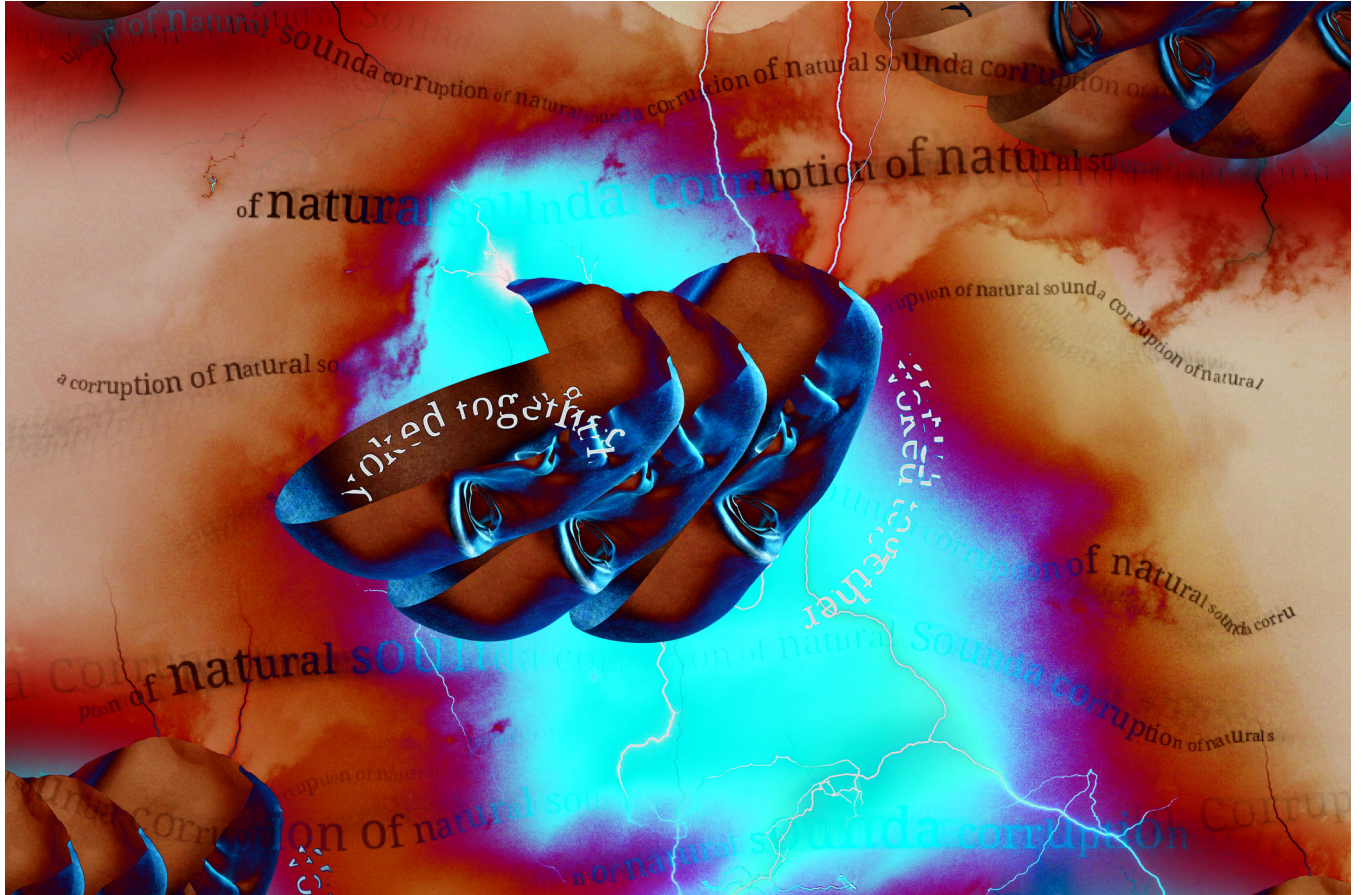
the physics of earth



In the end, it all falls down; the exultant dragon makes beautiful memories.

er

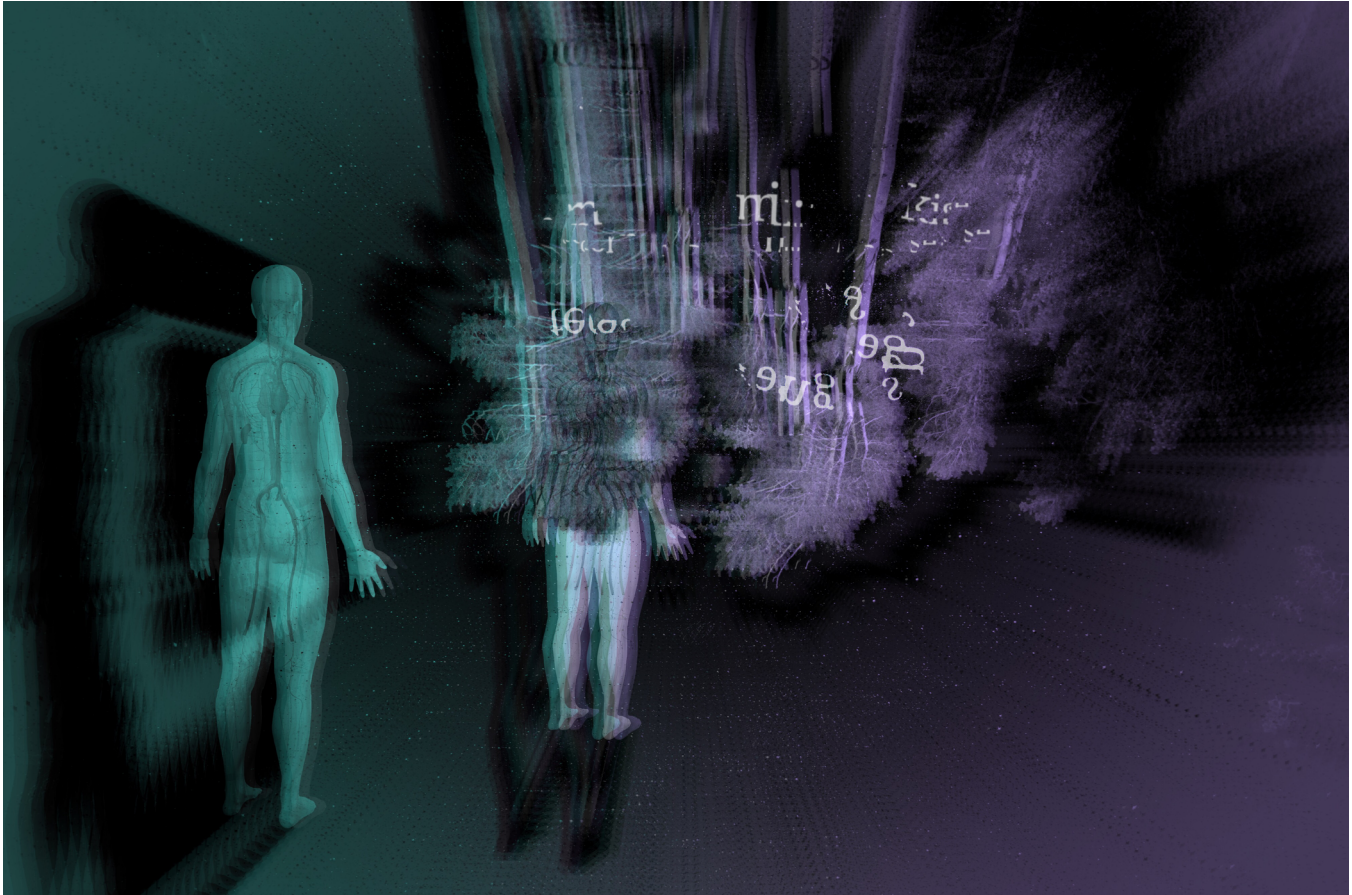
nude imp



Coupling bleeds otherness: bodies vary the chemistry of the originals.

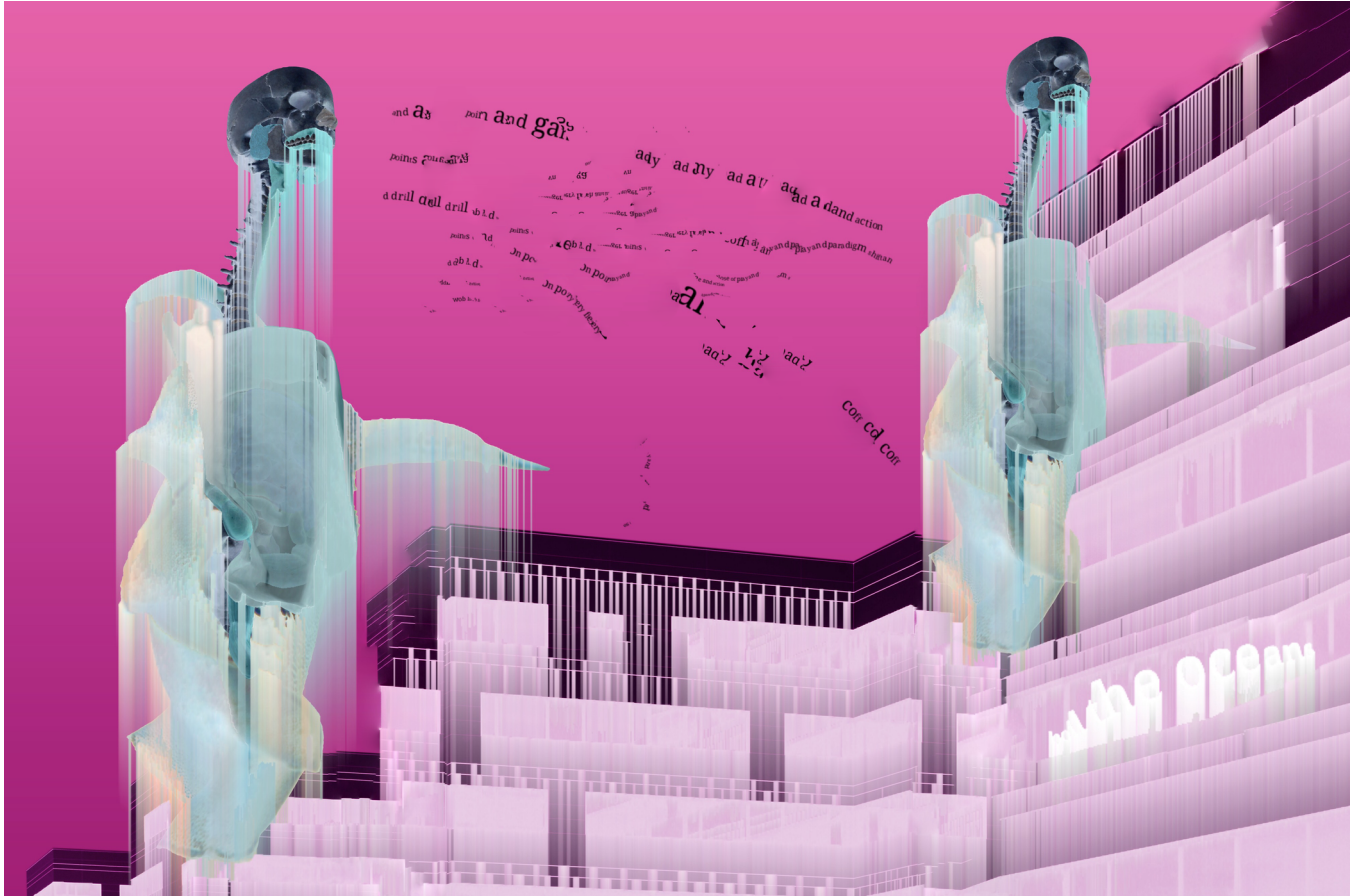
8f

god coming



There are monsters that appear to exit time, though god is a delusion.

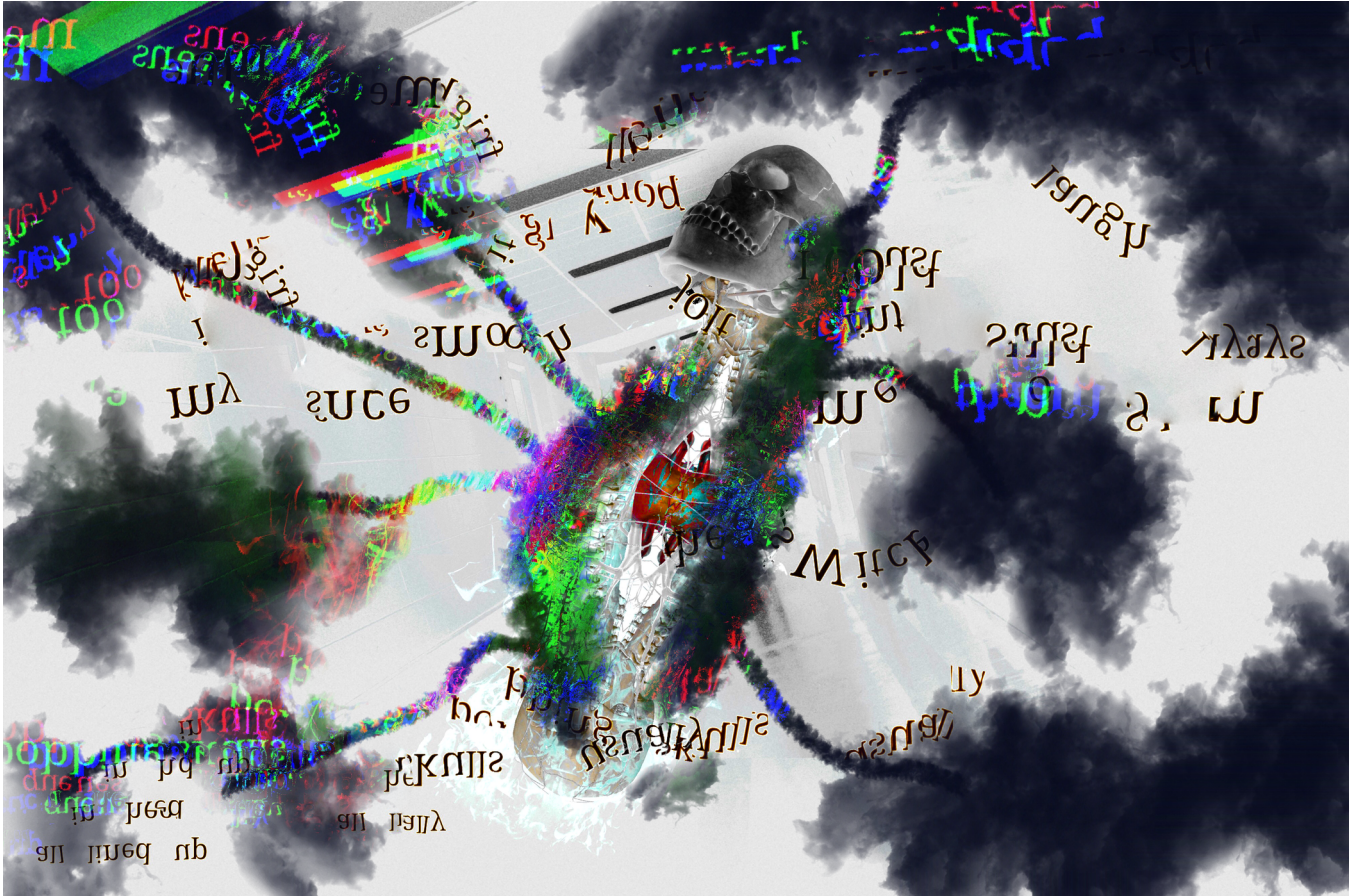
her urban miracles



The corpse is made to navigate an engineered realm of fast-melting fables and burning stories.

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temporary life



The chaos stretches out in all directions, multiplied exponentially by a complex derangement of the senses.

no home



The actor struggles to form an identity in a play that is less stable than the set and script suggest.

41

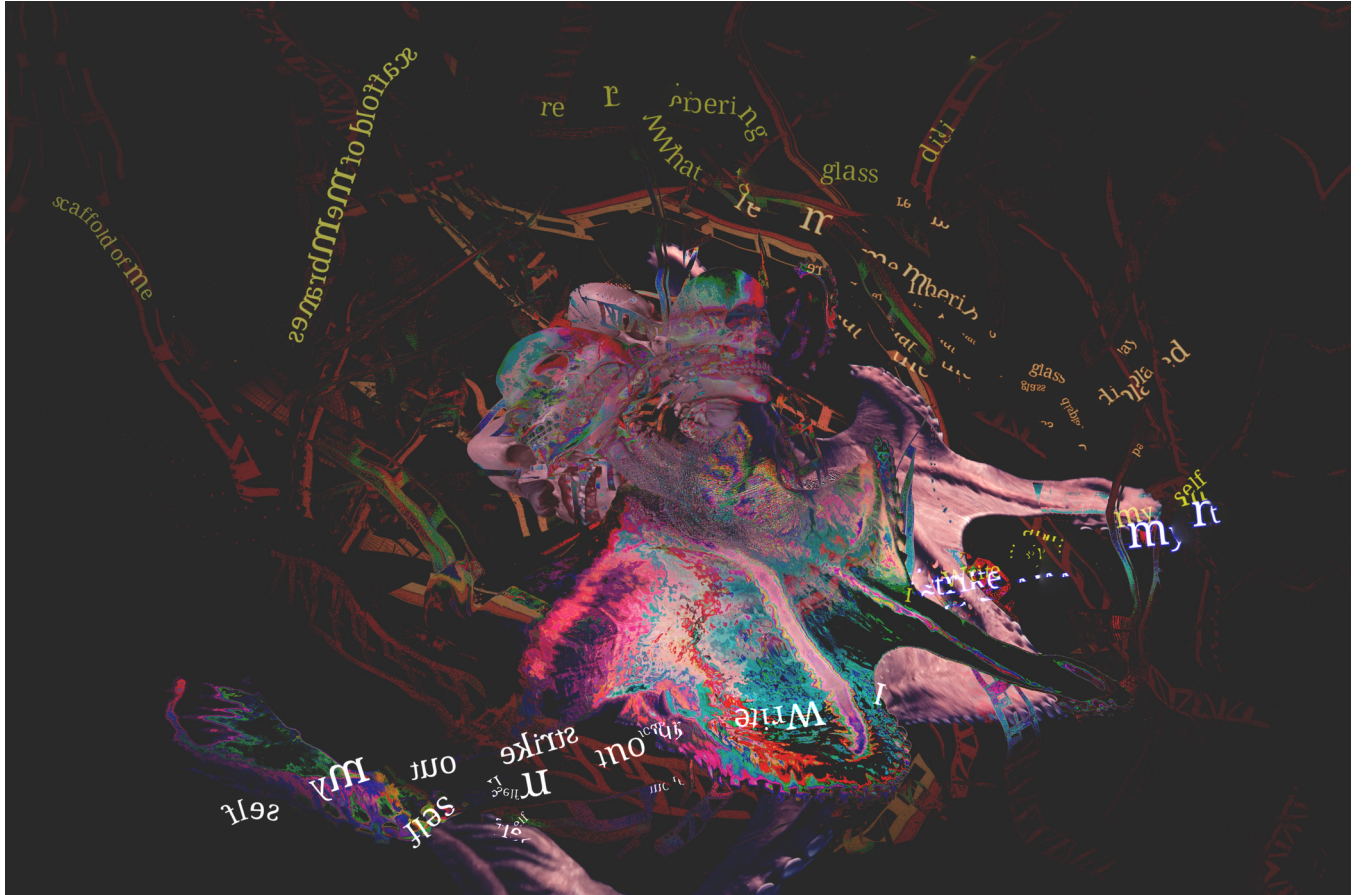
uncanny



Conversational wisdom advocates a distrust of surfaces, but there is nothing behind the glass.

81

scaffolded brains



A body may attempt to produce its double through acts of self-negation.

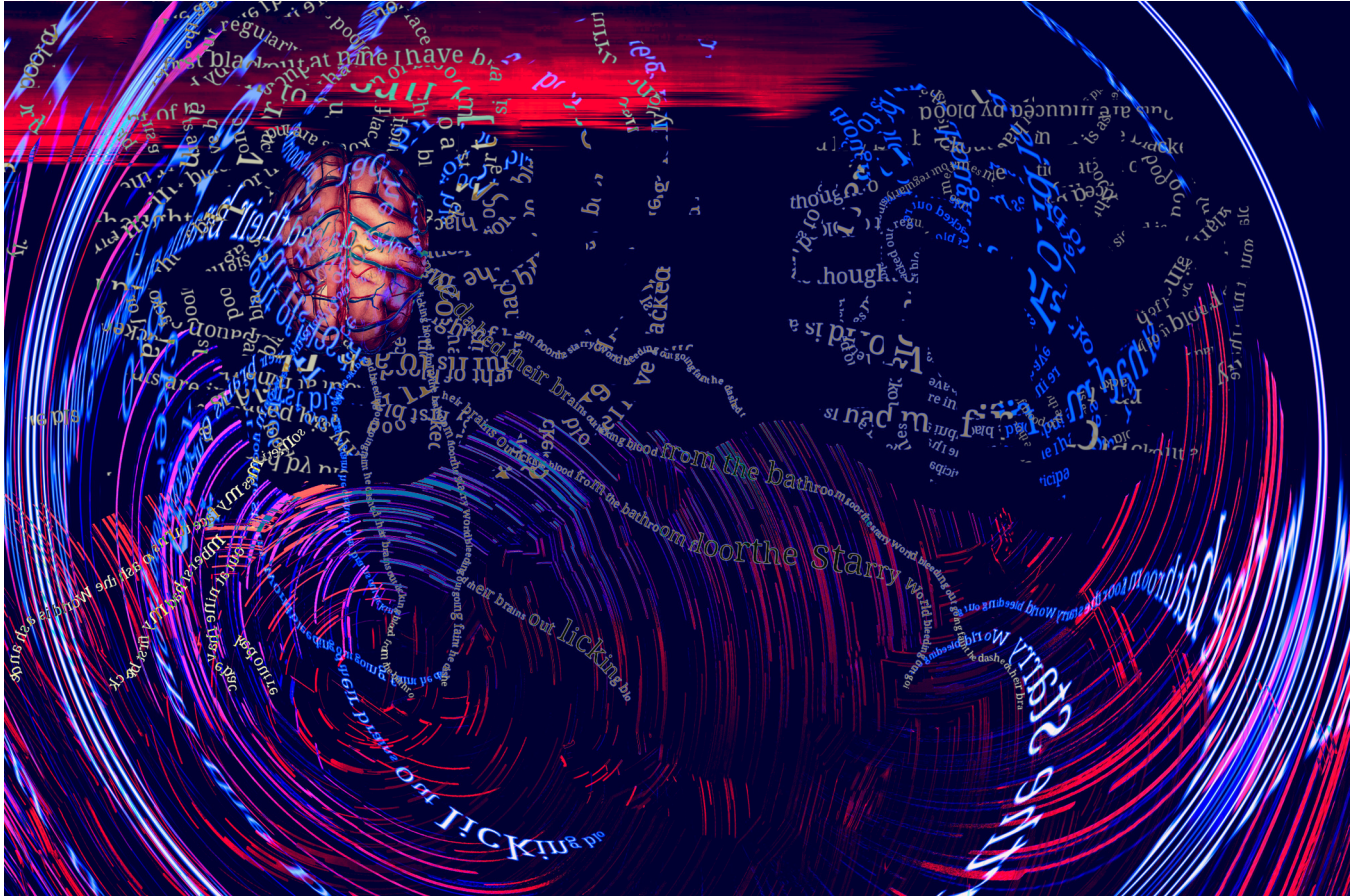
21

sour faces



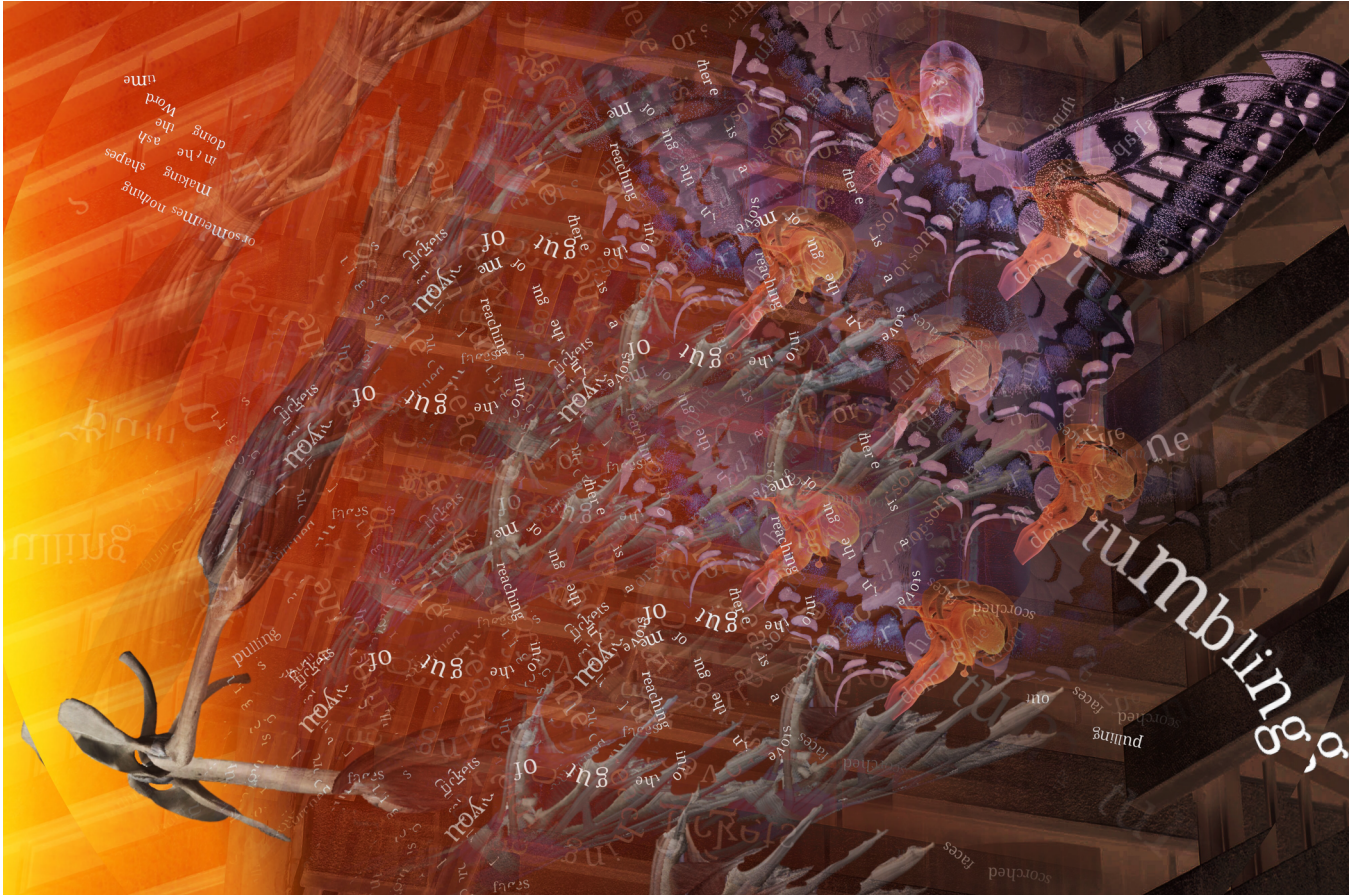
There is the corpse as it is observed, multiplied and divided, and there is the corpse as it is described.

whiteouts



Memory is punctured by permanent losses, gaps we will never fill.

guide to the underworld



When death causes a body to cease motion, measurements of time and space become impossible.

e

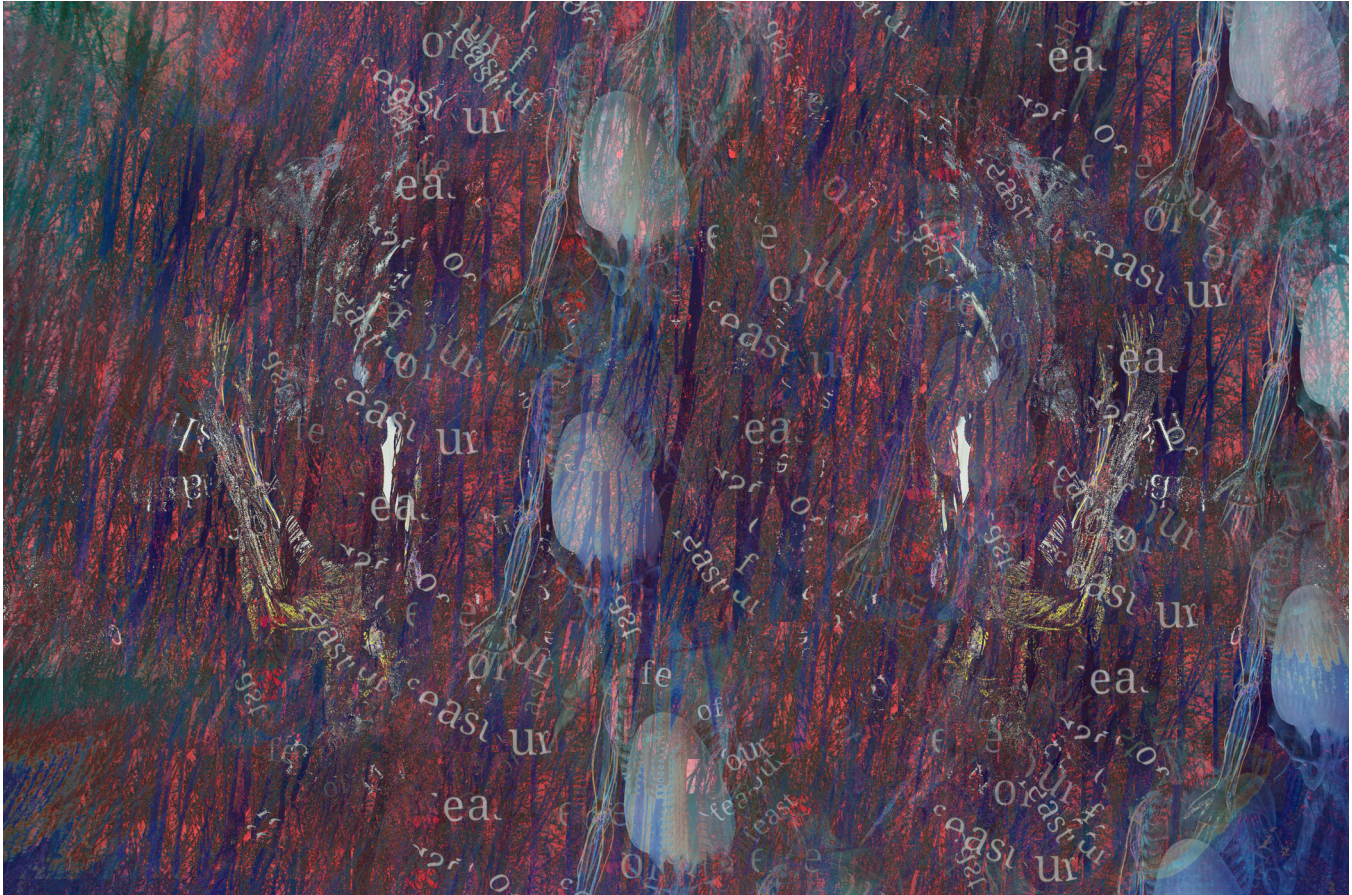
your cold universe



Mirrors show us icy monsters that murder us in our sleep.

8

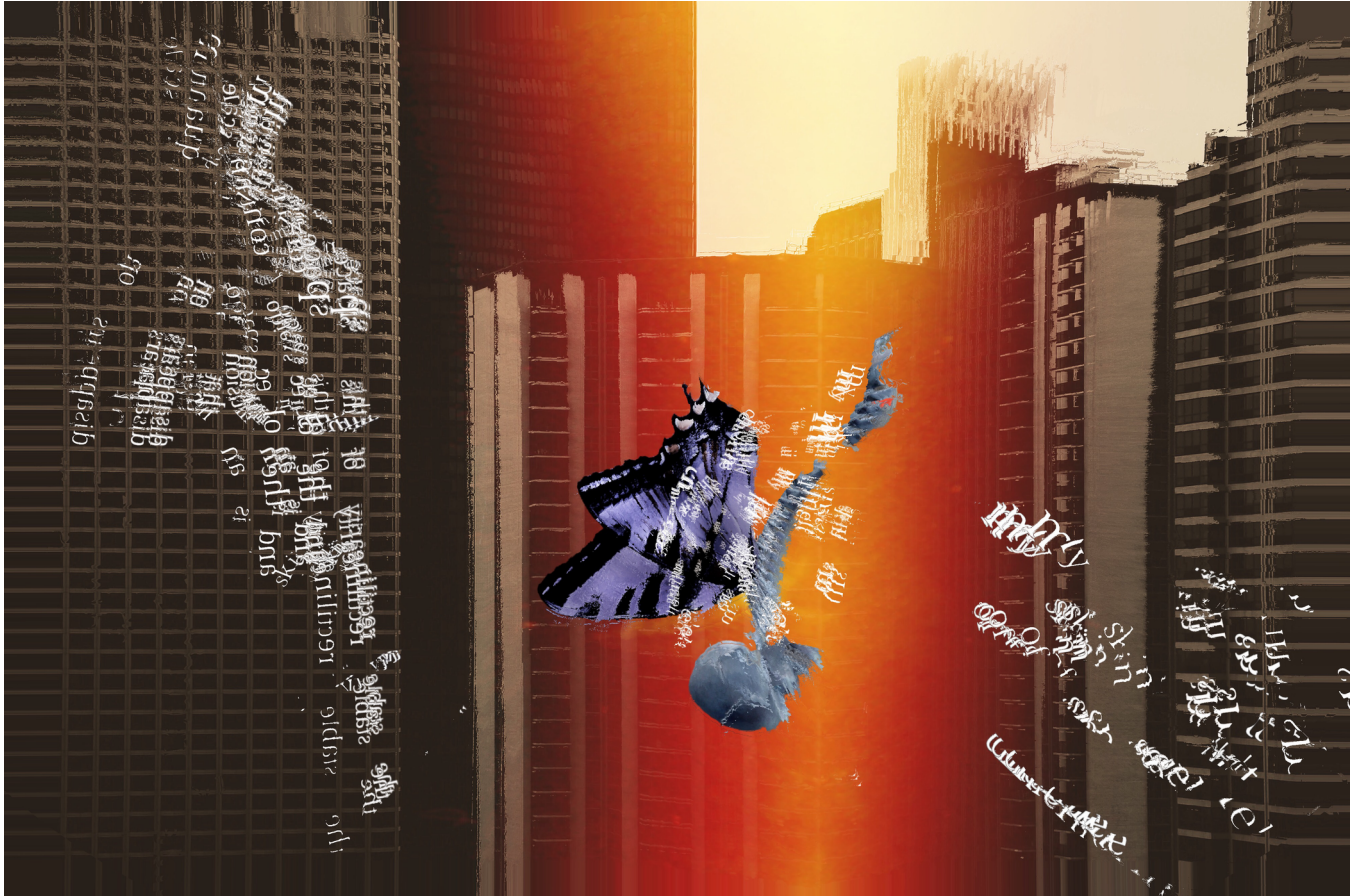
repeated scene



Every accidental act is a transmission, a freezing, a poem.

7

what big teeth



Enduring childhood, the human knows that its constant activity makes it unsuited to its fossilised environment.

৯

blank and white



At birth, the entity is expressed as an assemblage of shapes, movements and sounds, each element a competing and mutually hostile mode of discourse.

২

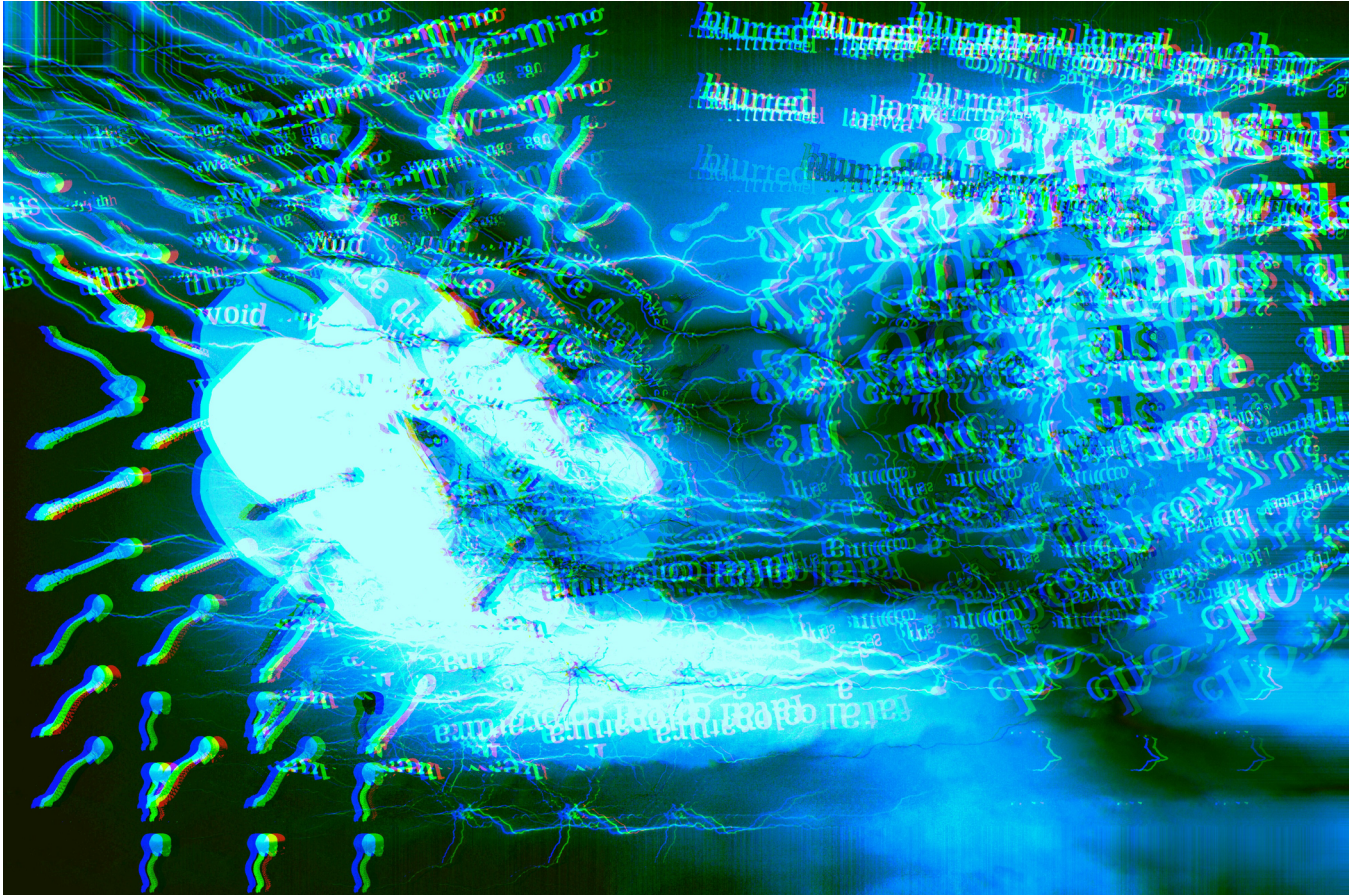
every hopeless monster



Although our intrauterine life has been studied and documented, it remains to us an unimaginable void.

4

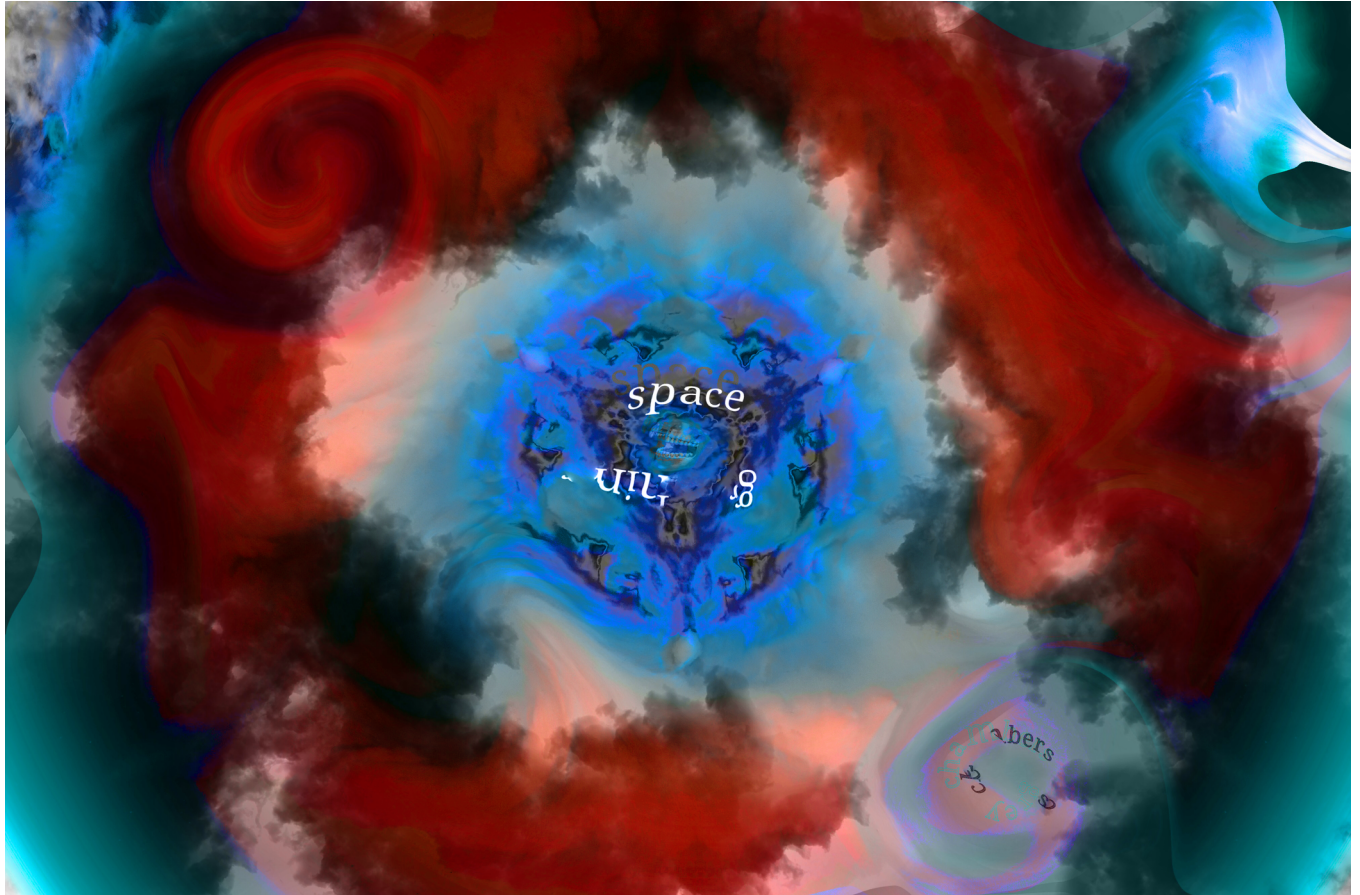
voices in the storm



The moment of conception is one of routine anguish, rehearsed in a private theatre.

ε

yellow teeth



The protagonist, persistently unreal, waits in the wings.

2

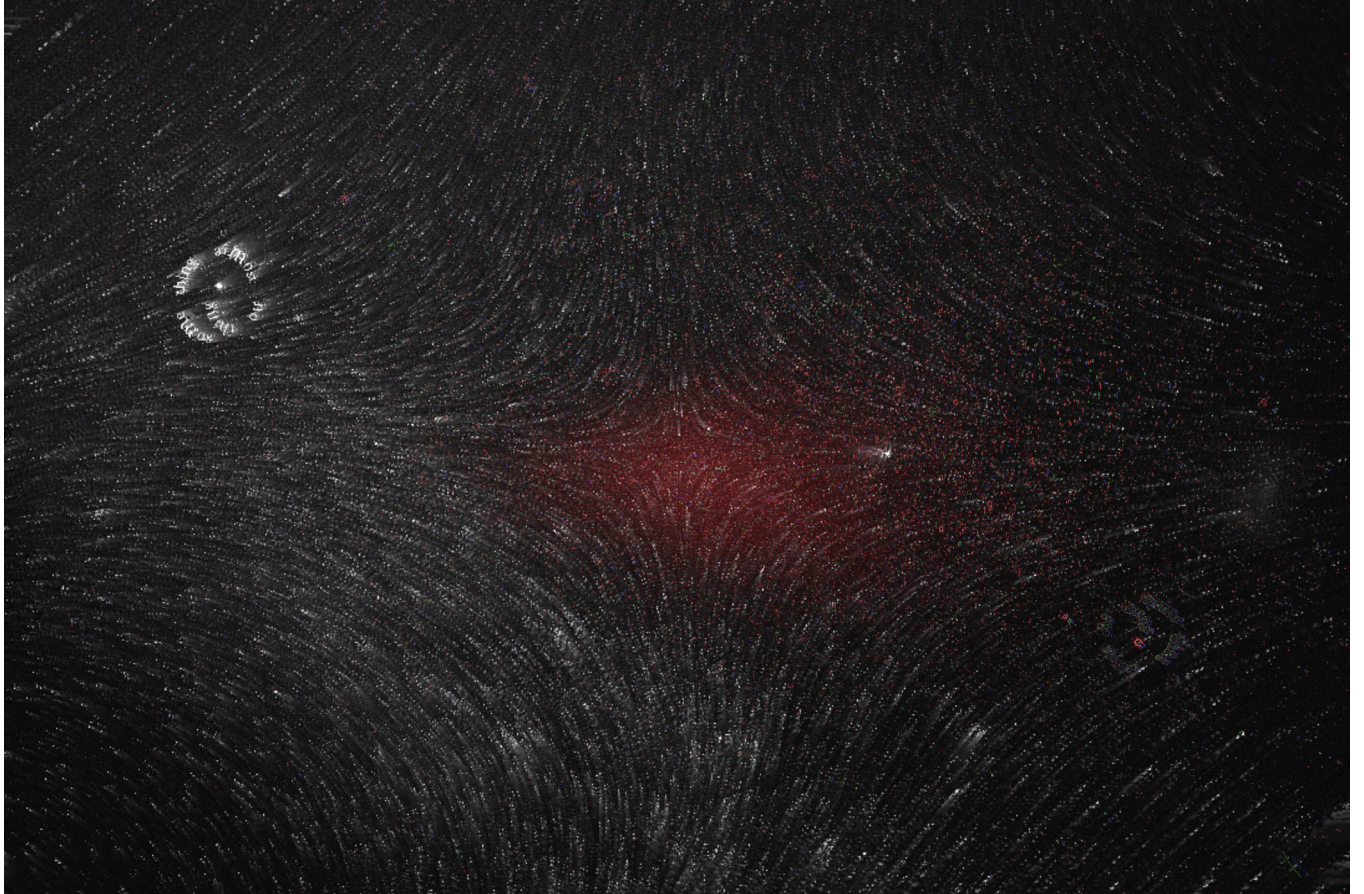
flesh void



Before the invention of form, time is a smear of blood.

↑

all nothing



It begins with the ineffable.

Afterword by Richard Biddle

From its sinister title we get the clue that this book is not for the faint-hearted, evoking, as it does, an intriguing amalgamation of murder and nostalgia.

And this extraordinary tome certainly lives up to its contradictory oxy(moronic) moniker.

Being a treatise on the eternal contradictory nature of humanity itself, 42 reflective, titled statements; coupled with a series of illustrative, digitally manipulated visual poems read like a picture-book found under the mattress of an inmate in a psychiatric ward. Begging the question, what traumas has this troubled patient been party to? And the answer seems to be, LIFE!

Imagine a library of self-help tomes, lifestyle magazines and science journals, jammed into a liquidiser with several pints of the author's own blood, seasoned with wit and cynicism and you have James Knight's epic poem...

Crossed between a serial killer's frenzied yet meticulous justification of their 'unspeakable' acts and a psychedelic creation myth dreamt up by a being desperate to mock and reveal something primordial/elemental about the cruel reality of existence, this beautifully rendered volume offers page after page of grotesque postcards from a writer who appears to be very close to if not almost over, the edge.

As a multitude of universal words/images/themes emerge from this treatise: mouths, teeth, wombs, sperm, lightbulbs, rooks, butterfly-wings, part skeletons, part insects...we enter the nightmarish world of a monster maker, because this is what James Knight is.

A skilled technician: he scalpels words, threads together bodies and weaves a realm of magical destruction.

Should we take all this seriously?

There are games at play.

The fact that halfway into it, the first part of the narrative steps 'Through the Looking Glass' indicates that there is mischief afoot. Familiar yet strangely different, the reflected text and images that confront us in the second part also tease us.

We want to flick back to previous pages, compare notes, check to see if we have imagined things or not and try to decipher the esoteric messages/clues that have already been cleverly concealed within our unconscious minds. And to our amazement, somewhere amongst all this horror, we begin to have fun.

Noticing the puns, wordplay and allusions that pepper the narrative, we realise that we too have been 'dismembered' and that our remembered selves and experience are perhaps not quite what we imagined them to be.

I urge you, with caution and a healthy dose of curiosity, to cross the threshold and be both delighted and terrified by the weird world that James Knight continues to give life to from the heart of his prolific laboratory.

JAMES KNIGHT

James Knight is an experimental poet and digital artist. His visual poetry has been published in journals and anthologies, and has been exhibited at the Poetry Café in London and in online exhibition spaces such as Poem Atlas and Mellom Press. His books include *Void Voices* (Hesterglock Press, October 2018), *Self Portrait by Night* (Sampson Low, January 2020), *Chimera* (Penteract Press, June 2020) and *Machine* (Trickhouse Press, August 2020). Website: thebirdking.com. Twitter: @badbadpoet.

RICHARD BIDDLE (AFTERWORD)

Richard Biddle is an experimental poet and visual artist whose work has been published in print and online in numerous zines and anthologies. He has published two books of visual poetry: *Messages From Elsewhere - An Alien Graffiti* (Timglas Press, 2019) and *CONSCIOUSNESS* (Penteract Press, July 2020). Examples of his work can be seen at richardbiddle.com, or you can follow him on Twitter: @littleddeaths68. He lives in the UK.