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MARCUS YEE

## WHY THIS WORLD

Marcus Yee

### 1 ARCHAEOLOGIES

One copy of the *A Universal History of the Destruction of Books: From Ancient Sumer to Modern Iraq* is a withdrawn copy from the Winchester Public Library; call number: 098.109 BAE. It has 354 pages and it weighs 399.72 grams. The first page is loose and the source of paper is unknown. *Because, The, Night* is a bookshop of 50 books. 56% of the selection of books in the bookshop are written by female authors. Another copy of *A Universal History* has "WITHDRAWN" stamped on its first red page, previously owned by San Antonio Public Library. "A librarian who has to open books several times per day, the risk seems to be at highest level and comparable with active smoking", from *Pay Attention to Books' Deadly Dust: Relationship of Lung Cancer and Heart Attack to Library Books' Dust*. Written in blue ink on a copy of *W or The Memory of Childhood*:

June 5, 1990

My Dearest Brother Alan:

It would not be right to say you will enjoy this book per se, but you will learn from it.

It is such an important topic to read about and learn from and about. I wish you strength as you learn more and read through this pages. I love you alan—we are so lucky, the memories of our childhood are what they are.

Stephanie

The status of the paper book, an obsolescent media, is comparable to that of painting after the invention of photography. Between page 130 and 131 of *Written on the Body*, a flyer-turned-bookmark from Goodwill: "THANK YOU FOR SHOPPING WITH US"; "Thus she was here and here. THE SCAPULA OR SHOULDER BLADE. THE SCAPULA IS A FLAT TRIANGULAR SHAPED...". SKU/ Listing ID: 1M5FFL0007K8; Title: Gilgi (Neversink); Comments: Well kept copy, spine intact, unmarked text, light cover wear good interior. At the outer edge of the Gutenberg Galaxy, the book is thus reborn as a neo-modernist object—an exploded, scattered volume. A dog ear on Page 51 of W.G. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn*, condition: used—acceptable. The book as thing, as assembly of relations, is brought to focus through its actualisation in divergent *forms of performance*. A book can be performed by reading it individually, discussing it collectively, or tearing it apart and painting on the cover. Heman Chong posted on the following his Facebook Wall on 30th January 2017:

I'm building an independent second hand bookshop that distributes books (both fiction and non-fiction) that touches on fascism, totalitarianism, authority, atrocities, etc (you get the idea).

The post received 31 comments and 11 shares. The original owner of a copy of *To The Lighthouse*, Karen A. Dolwyddelan has written on page 61: "lighthouse = hope". Shipping Method: STANDARD; Description: 1990 - Paperback - Used - Acceptable - - - Shows substantial self-eat which may include some chips and tears on dust jacket (if present) and some yellowing of the first few pages. May contain old price stickers, or their residue,

inscriptions or dedications from previous owners in first few pages and remain marks. [...] Hall Street's No-Worry guarantee lets you buy with confidence. The microscope, the telescope, are extensions of eyes; the telephone an extension of his voice; then we have plow and the sword, extensions of his arm. But the book is something else: the book is an extension of memory and imagination. The following lines were highlighted in yellow in *The Catch and Other War Stories*:

"And you'll die, I suppose?"

"Yes I shall die. What's wrong with that?" ok:

Aitie—  
good reading

xoxoxoxo—  
Anaie  
29.98

1. Adapting to [illegible]
3. Commitment to family  
Unity  
Perseverance through tragedy
2. General Suffering  
New Experiences

A scrawling in black marker on the first page of *The Bluest Eye*. "When they got back to the hotel, Norton told..." Page 134 and 135 of 2666 is stuck together. Another copy of 2666, from Sherborne Memorial Library (2998 River Road PO Box 73 Millington, VT), is stamped with "DISCARD", three times. Since 2003, Heman Chong



has made one sculptural object every year in his series *Stacks*. Chong wants to *write the work*, not write *about* the work. These pieces are *all title*, consisting as they do of stacks of books from the artist's personal collection, whose titles form short poems, like the following:

Everyday Life in the Modern World

What is the artist's role today?

Protest

Intimacy.

There is a 2.8 x 2.5 cm stain with brown edges on one copy of *The Sirens of Titans*. Labels from Ridgefield Library on *Why This World: A Biography of Clarice Lispector* is cancelled over with black marker. One copy of *A Train of Powder* covered in a plastic bag, which reads:

WARNING

Keep this bag away from babies and children.  
Do not use in cribs, beds, carriages or playpens.  
The thin film may cling to nose and mouth and  
prevent breathing.

2 SEEING/BLINDNESS

Public libraries open from 10:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. The average bookshop opening hours is 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. *Because, The, Night* is open from 10:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. over two weekends in November 2017. The Straits Times, 20 August, 2014. Singapore among cities in the world with least hours of sleep:

Study. The Straits Times, 7 May, 2016. Scientists warn of 'global sleep crisis' due to social pressures, with Singapore having lowest average amount. It is currently estimated that 15% to 20% of all workers are engaged in night or shift work in most industrialised countries. The typical night shift hours for call-center workers in India range from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. or 8 p.m. to 4 a.m., accommodating to the time difference between the United States and India. Most call-center workers tend to be middle-class women, seen as "more hardworking, patient, attentive, and loyal; as less aggressive; and as having better interpersonal skills than men."

The spectacle expresses nothing more than society's wish for sleep.

Other industries requiring round-the-clock coverage include: casino, customer service, death care, emergency response systems, flight test, funeral service, health care, hospitality, logistics, manufacturing, military, public utilities, retail, semiconductor, telecommunications, transportation and security.

#### 17. No Sleeping in the library.

Born at Sacy, France, in 1734, Restif was the son of a rich landowner, educated by Jansenites at Bicêtre, and trained as a typographer and printer in Dijon. Restif was the eighteenth-century ancestor of the contemporary blogger, working in a medium of direct publication without editors in which the act of writing itself becomes public. In the late 1990s a Russian/European consortium announced plans to build and launch into orbit satellites that would reflect sunlight back to earth. His tales of the city and literary selfies circulated around Europe almost as fast as tweets. Reasoning that it could reduce energy

costs for electric lighting, the company's slogan pitched its services as "daylight all night long".

If they speak, it is to say that they don't have any night of their own because night belongs to those who order the labors of the day.

They speak to win the night of their desires: not their night, the "brutalizing night of sleep" the joiner Gauny sees approaching, but *our* night, the kingdom of shadows and appearances reserved for those who can stay awake instead of sleeping. Restif is the boatman not only of the condition of the urban nightwalker. On the frontispiece of *Les Nuits de Paris*, he is represented as a man walking at night with an owl on his head. The sculptural installation *After Hours* are reminiscent of small retail businesses found in shopping centers and night markets, where stands and merchandise are draped over with fabric. The *agencement* of the human and the owl produces also a new aesthetic agent: the city-night spectator.

Being modern means becoming owl: experimenting the city at night, seeing within darkness. For Restif there are two cities that coexist in the same geography: a visible city exists during the day giving way to the invisible that glows during nighttime.

Insomnia is a sleep disorder that includes trouble falling sleep, staying asleep, or waking too early, resulting in day time impairment. It is a common problem, usually occurring along with other diseases or emotional stress (comorbid insomnia).

*Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep!*

Met with fierce opposition, the satellite project never took off. One particular instance in the contemporary



imaginary of a world in permanent illusion, inseparable from the non-stop operation of global exchange and circulation. INTRODUCTION. In the early 1980s, as the sleep medicine movement was just gathering steam, there was perhaps no rallying cry as popular as "insomnia is a symptom, not a disorder." It can also exist without other medical or mental health causes (primary insomnia).

*He, like the world, his ready visit pays*

Insomnia, *pace* Emmanuel Levinas, is a way of imagining the extreme difficulty of individual responsibility in the face of the catastrophes of our era. The ubiquitous visibility of useless violence and human suffering is a glare that ought to thoroughly disturb any complacency, that ought to preclude the restful unmindfulness of sleep. It is a refusal to overlook the horror and and injustice that pervade the world. Long-standing (chronic) insomnia can lead to daytime consequences such as fatigue or sleepiness, difficulty with thinking and mood impairments, which can interfere with performance at school and work.

*Where fortune smiles;*

The work *Sleepers* (2017) is a still image of a man sleeping under daylight in public, the image is frozen on a tablet screen. Sleep is one of the few remaining experiences, knowingly or not, we abandon ourselves to the care of others. The sleeper inhabits a world in common, a shared enactment of withdrawal from the calamitous nullity and waste of 24/7 praxis. Whereas the bourgeois *flâneur* experiences the joys and



resentments of the new urban space as merchandise, the human-owl feels the city as sexual prey under his feet. The pornographer is the sexual cartographer of the underworld, drawing a map of the modern city with sweat and sperm.

Loren Thompson, CONTRIBUTOR.

*I write about national security, especially its business dimensions.*

Perplexed as to why he would have gone to the trouble bringing a stool to prop his head on when surely he could have just rested it on the edge of the bench, I looked closer as I passed. In Iraq and Afghanistan, US teams conduct night assaults on villages and settlements with the overt aim of target assassination, armed with drones, logistical satellite intelligence from Gorgon Stare, outfitted with advanced night-vision equipment, drones and arriving without warning in low-noise stealth helicopters. In the middle of the bench was a metal divider, designed for the express purpose of making it impossible for someone to recline in full. Public sleeping is a technique of necessity for those who can be at home only in their bodies.

The calculated ruination of nighttime itself.

In this setting, for the very poor home is anywhere you can sleep. And sleep is in fact the sole form of public being. Sleeping bodies are to be found everywhere in Bombay and indeed at all times. People walk over sleeping bodies as they cross streets and as they go into apartments, movie theatres, restaurants and offices. Increment 2 of Gorgon Stare provides a four-fold increase in the area of coverage—to 64 square kilometres—and a two-fold improvement in imagery resolution. This was accomplished in part by moving

the infrared (night) cameras to current on the second pod and equipping the day time sensor's pod turret with nearly 200 electro-optical cameras that digitally integrate their images. The sleeping body (which is almost always the labouring or the indignant body) in its public, vulnerable, and inactive form is the most contained form of the spectral house.

*the wretched he forsakes*

It is enough that he traverses the city at his usual pace, talking to himself, only a little louder than usual. Making a spectacle of oneself is setting the trap in which his good conscience as a worker: "The democrat traverses the city, talking to himself. The sentences of his monologue capture the curiosity of passers-by. Each one grasps some truth in it. Without stopping, he touches the wound of their existence that impoverishes the master's interest... at these remarks tossed into the air, the crowd surrounds the revolutionary, who without addressing himself to anyone, seems to be haranguing a multitude." The wind blows where it wills, and surely some building-trade workers will be found who will hear and understand the description of the cellular hell. There is little chance of success with the masons, of course; they do not permit themselves to be distracted from their work, and they often return home to their lodgings in gangs.

*(Disclosure: Several members of the Gorgon Stare industry team including prime contractor Sierra Nevada contribute to my think tank; some are consulting clients)*

But a joiner, a locksmith, perhaps, and the flame will be lit.

### 3 SUMMER OF HATE

Once upon a time, a child was born into wealth and wanted for nothing, but he was possessed by bottomless, endless, grating, grasping wanting, and wanted more, and got it, and more after and always more.

There are 24 independent and/or secondhand bookstores and 27 public libraries in Singapore. Since 2012, artist Heman Chong has made seven libraries and bookshops, including *LEM1* (2012), *Bibliotheek (Library)* (2014), *Book Swap!* (2016), *LEM2* (2016) *Legal Bookshop (Shanghai)* (2016), the *Library of Unread Books* (2016), *Because The, Night* (2017). 39 out of the 50 books in *Because The, Night* are available for lending in public libraries. That bookselling went on in the market is a fact, as the writer of comedies Eupolis of Athens (ca. 445-411 BCE) notes: "I wandered around the market, garlic onions, incense and aromas, and the place where books are sold." On *Legal Bookshop (Shanghai)*: "Commercial aspirations aside, the model of a bookstore is for Chong not only indicative of forms of exchange, circulation and redistribution, but of merging attributes of limitlessness within clearly defined notions of space and time".

The child became the most powerful man in the world, or at least occupied the real estate occupied by a series of those men, had run a family business and then starred in an unreality show based on he fiction that he was a stately emperor of enterprise, rather than a buffoon barging along anywhere, and each was a hall of mirrors made to flatter his sense of self, the self that was his one edifice he kept raising higher and higher and never abandoned.



26 September 2017

Trump says Puerto Rico in trouble after hurricane,  
debt 'must be dealt with'

Environment / Sixth mass extinction of wildlife  
also threatens global food supplies

Philippine presidential guard shot dead but no foul play:  
security chief

Vietnam's harsh summer / State launches  
largest crackdown on dissidents in years

Neuroscience / Nerve implant 'restores consciousness'  
to man in vegetative state

Erdogan warns of armed action over Iraqi Kurdistan vote  
G.O.P. Senator Rejects Health Bill,  
Virtually Sealing Its Fate

Former Macau gangland boss enters into multibillion-  
dollar casino cryptocurrency deal

Fleeing Rohingya fighters accept suffering an exile  
in exchange for world's attentions

Animal-Rights Activists Force Guggenheim  
to Adjust Exhibit

Qatar-Gulf crisis: All the latest updates

China disrupts WhatsApp ahead of  
Communist Party meeting

SCDF, NEA investigating 'strong burning smell'  
in many parts of Singapore

Cowboys, Cardinals link arms amid anthem protests

Sri Lanka / Man arrested for trying to smuggle 1kg of gold  
in his rectum

Doctor on trial for helping HIV-positive boyfriend  
deceive MOM

North Korea / Foreign minister says Trump has  
declared war on country



An infamous online troll and fake news writer was found dead in his Arizona home, authorities said on Tuesday. In July 2014, the National Library Board (NLB) announced to pulp three children's books following complains, of which *And Tango Makes Three*, a children's book about a male penguin couple was at the center of heated debate. This decision was supported by information minister Yaacob Ibrahim. Never has our future been more unpredictable, never have we depended so much on political forces that cannot be trusted to follow the rules of common sense and self-interest —forces that look like sheer insanity, if judged by the standards of other centuries.

The erudite Julius Pollux called those bookstalls *bibliotheke*.

26 September 1687—The Parthenon in Athens is partially destroyed by the bombing from Venetian forces led by Morosini who are besieging the Ottoman Turks stationed in Athens.

26 September 1905—Albert Einstein publishes his first paper on the special theory of relativity.

The following are books from the bookstore available only for reference at public libraries in Singapore: *The Gulag Archipelago* and *A Universal History of the Destruction of Books: From Ancient Sumer to Modern-day Iraq*. By the end of July 2014, two books were transferred to the adult section and the book *Who's In My Family* has been pulped. The following are books from the bookstore that are not available in public libraries in Singapore: *Elizabeth Costello*, *Woman on the Edge of Time*, *Archaeologies of the Future*, *The Catch*, *Torpor*, *Aliens* and

*Anorexia, Summer of Hate, Gilgi and A Train of Powder.* On 23 August 2017, the Facebook page Let's Stand Together shared the Straits Times article, "Library Consultative Panel supports move by NLB to remove controversial book series", writing:

Sometimes, threats and signs of self-radicalisation can be hidden in plain sight. Thanks to an alert reader, a book series was removed from the library because of controversial content! We're safer when we look out for one another.

- 26 September 1942 — The Holocaust: August Frank, a higher official of the SS concentration camp administration department, issues a memorandum containing a great deal of operational detail in how Jews should be "evacuated".

Where they have burned books, they will end in burning human beings.

—Heinrich Heine, *Almawnsor*, 1821

Every book burned enlightens the world.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays: First Series*, 1841

#### List of book-burning incidents

Antiquity: Epicurus's book (in Paphlagonia), Chinese philosophy books (by Emperor Qin Shi Huang and anti-Qin rebels), Library of Antioch (by Jovian). Middle Ages: Archives of Ctesiphon (during Arab conquest), Japanese books and manuscripts (during power struggle at Imperial court), repeated destruction of Alexandria libraries. Early Modern Period (from 1492 to 1650): Luther's Bible translation (by German Catholics), Arabic

books and archives in Oran (by Spanish conquerors), *The Historie of Italie* (in England). Early modern period (from 1650 until the turn of the 19th century): Hobbes books (at Oxford University), books that offended Qianlong Emperor, Swedish National Archives. Industrial Revolution period: Early edition of "Dubliners" (by publisher), Libraries in Confederate cities (during Sherman's March to the Sea), library of the Louvre (during suppression of the Paris Commune). In 1999, I went to Sarajevo with an investigating team and saw the ruins of the National Library situated in the old town hall known as Vijećnica. Prior to its deliberate firebombing, it housed 1.5 million volumes, including over 100,000 manuscripts.

There I met a beautiful poet who said to me, "Each destroyed book is a passport to hell".

World War I and antebellum era: Irish National Archives (in Civil War); Jewish, anti-Nazi and "degenerate" books (by the Nazis); works of Goethe, Shaw and Freud (by Metaxas dictatorship in Greece. World War II: Various libraries in Warsaw, Poland (during World War II), books in German libraries (by World War II Allied Bomber planes, Chinese libraries (by World War II Japanese troops). Paul Horner, who penned debunked articles about Bill Murray running for president and President Obama opening a Muslim museum, was discovered unresponsive in his bed on Sept 19. Cold War era and 1990s: Comic book burnings, 1948; religious, anti-communist and genealogy books (in the Cultural Revolution), book burning caused by Viet Cong in South Vietnam. 21st Century: Harry Potter books (in various American cities), 2010-11 Florida Qur'an burning and related burnings, climate change book at San Jose State University.



26 September 1950—United Nations troops recapture Seoul from North Korea forces

The fire lasted into the next day. In the end there's no one else in the world, because when you are not willing to hear how others feel, what others need, when you do not care, you are not willing to acknowledge other's existence. The sun was obscured by the smoke of books, and all over the city sheets of burned paper, fragile pages of grey ash, floated down like a dirty black snow. Catching a page you could feel its heat, and for a moment read a fragment of text in a strange kind of black and grey negative, until, as the heat dissipated, the page melted to dust in your hand. That's how it's lonely at the top. This book has been written against a background of both reckless optimism and reckless despair.

26 September 1996—A Garuda Indonesia Airbus A300 crashes near Medan, Indonesia, airport, killing 234

During the 2016 presidential election, Horner created a list of websites that appeared to be legitimate news sites to spread false information. One article that claimed protestors that disrupted Trump rallies were paid \$3,500 went viral on the internet and fueled endless rumors about the alleged conspiracy. Even the experience of the materially and sensually given world depends upon my being in contact with other men, upon our *common sense*

25 September 2009 —Typhoon Ketsana hits the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand, causing 700 fatalities.



which regulates and controls all other senses and without which each of us would be enclosed in his own particularity of sense data which in themselves are unreliable and treacherous. Only because we have common sense, that is only because not one man, but men in the plural inhabit the earth can we trust our immediate sensual experience.

26 September 2014—A mass kidnapping occurs in Iguana, Mexico.

Another notable fake news item claimed Horner was a Secret Service agent who penned a book revealing President Obama to be a gay Muslim. Loneliness is not solitude. Solitude requires being alone whereas loneliness shows itself most sharply in the company of others. In solitude, in other words, I am "by myself," together with my self, and therefore two-in-one, whereas in loneliness I am actually one, deserted by all others.

The system is programmed for failure. Arendt does not say that all mass movements are totalitarian; to take seriously President Trump's claim to be the mouthpiece of a movement is not to claim that he is a totalitarian leader or that he is leading a totalitarian movement. He has not mobilized terror, concentration camps, arbitrary arrests, a secret police, and a party apparatus that rises above the state — all of which were essential parts of Arendt's description of totalitarianism in power.

*Quoting out of context is still perfectly legal.* Common sense insists that we not abandon reality and imagine that the United States is experiencing totalitarianism. And what she called 'the banality of evil' was the the inability to hear another voice, the inability to have a dialogue either with oneself or the imagination to have

a dialogue with the world, the moral world." Was this Prison America?

Imposed silence, a landscape in ruins.

This sort of silence is the exact opposite of what Buddhists assume in order to listen deeper to the cosmos. It's not just imposed silence; it's also imposed deafness. All thinking, strictly speaking, is done in solitude and is a dialogue between me and myself; but this dialogue of the two-in-one does not lose contact with the world of my fellow-men because they are represented in the self with whom I lead the dialogue of thought.

For the confirmation of my identity I depend entirely on other people;

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*88.2% of the words in this essay are not the author's own.*

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
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This book by Marcus Yee accompanies 'Because, the Night', a non-profit, second-hand bookshop produced by artist Heman Chong and presented by TheatreWorks (Singapore) that will inhabit 72-13 for six nights in November 2017. It is open between 10 pm to 4 am; a space built for people who can't sleep at night, a temporary home for insomniacs. A list of 50 books culled from a series of informal conversations (touching on inequality, racism, homophobia, overpopulation, forced migration, exploitation of labor, overconsumption, climate change, etc) with friends and strangers on Facebook will be available. They are : 2666 by Roberto Bolaño / Never let me go by Kazuo Ishiguro / The Sirens of Titan by Kurt Vonnegut / The Road by Cormac McCarthy / W, or the Memory of Children by Georges Perec / Seeing by José Saramago / Blindness by José Saramago / The Savage Detectives by Roberto Bolaño / The Rings of Saturn by W.G. Sebald / The Dispossessed by Ursula K. Le Guin / Written on the Body by Jeanette Winterson / The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood / The Origins of Totalitarianism by Hannah Arendt / Men Explain Things to Me by Rebecca Solnit / A Universal History of the Destruction of Books: From Ancient Sumer to Modern-day Iraq by Fernando Baez / Wanderlust by Rebecca Solnit / The Man in the High Castle by Philip K. Dick / The Encyclopedia of Early Earth by Isabel Greenberg / One Hundred Nights of Hero by Isabel Greenberg / Foe by J.M. Coetzee / Elizabeth Costello by J.M. Coetzee / Under the Skin by Michel Faber / Why This World : A Biography of Clarice Lispector by Benjamin Moser / The Hour of the Star by Clarice Lispector / The Golden Notebook by Doris Lessing / The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison / Woman at Point Zero by Nawal El Saadawi / Woman on the Edge of Time by Marge Piercy / Archaeologies of the Future by Frederic Jameson / The Atrocity Exhibition by J.G. Ballard / The Female Man by Joanna Russ / The Catch by Kenzaburō Ōe / The Woman in the Dunes by Kōbō Abe / Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit by Jeanette Winterson / Women Without Men: A Novel of Modern Iran by Shahrnush Parsipur / Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf / To the Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf / Island of a Thousand Mirrors by Nayomi Munaweera / The Good Terrorist by Doris Lessing / I love Dick by Chris Kraus / Aliens and Anorexia by Chris Kraus / Torpor by Chris Kraus / Summer of Hate by Chris Kraus / Gilgi by Iringard Keun / A Train of Powder by Rebecca West / The Gulag Archipelago by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn / V For Vendetta by Alan Moore / The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle by Haruki Murakami / The Last Thing He Wanted by Joan Didion / A Field Guide to Getting Lost by Rebecca Solnit ISBN—978-981-11-5511-6

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