The Epistemology of Ullapoolism: Making Mischief from within Contemporary Book Cultures

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes Ullapoolism, a post-data, activist, autoethnographic epistemology for contemporary book culture studies. It begins by addressing the challenges of contemporaneity and multidisciplinarity in researching the creation, circulation and use of books. We identify a rigidity that limits existing theoretical frameworks for the study of book cultures, and a paucity in existing research modes—including those from literary sociology, the digital humanities and cultural analytics—that collect, count and model book cultures. Our alternative epistemology, Ullapoolism, draws on two modes of action developed by the Situationist International—*détournements*, mischievous re-inscriptions of existing cultural artefacts; and *dérives*, active drifts through space attuned to emotion—and addresses potential predicaments including recuperation and entanglement. The situated knowledge produced through this epistemology has practical applications. Fields are not neutral, and as mischief-making activists, we use creative critique and playful experimentalism to oppose structural inequity. Ullapoolism therefore offers a future program for both cultural analysis and scholarly activism.

Keywords:

Ullapoolism, Situationist International, book cultures, autoethnographic epistemology, scholarly activism, publishing studies

Written descriptions can be no more than passwords to this great game.

Guy Debord

In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun.

Mary Poppins[1]

This article, formerly known to us as "Cities and Butterflies," or, sometimes, "Butterflies and Cities," developed through a series of questions about the creation and use of books—practices that we broadly term book cultures—written on large post-it notes affixed to the wall of an Airbnb in Melbourne. The questions articulated both our frustrations with the current state of research and possible next steps, moving from "what" to "what if" in order to consider the possibilities of an activist, mischievous autoethnographic epistemology for contemporary book culture studies.

Our aim is to tackle a particular challenge that we have encountered throughout our research to date on twentieth and twenty-first century book cultures: a rigidity within existing theoretical frameworks that needs to be overcome in order to develop a future program for both cultural analysis and scholarly activism. We intend this article to be active, to be interventionist, to be post-data (in the sense of not limited by data), and to create new bookish situations.

And so we invite you to begin by tuning in to the sensory experience of reading this article. Notice the glow of the screen or texture of the paper, the symbols and the white spaces. Tune into the salon in Richmond, Melbourne, Australia, The World, where the article began, the walls papered with giant, multi-coloured post-it notes, our passwords to this game. Do you have a drink to hand? Are you ready for the job that will be done?

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A conflux of two factors complicates the object of contemporary book cultures research. The first of these is the "nowness" of contemporaneity, into which swirl the implications of active intervention and industry engagement, as well as the question of scope: when did the contemporary start, when does it become the past, and what might be our role in affecting its futures? The second factor is multidisciplinarity, in which numerous scholars from literary studies, book history, information science, sociology, cultural and media studies and so on jostle to define their sense of the territory and determine the conceptual frameworks and methodologies which should be brought to the field. Despite this multidisciplinary jostling, we argue that scholarly debate about contemporary book cultures has become stuck at a limited number of epistemological approaches. As our collaborative research has ventured further into creative and interventionist modes, these inquiries have become more urgent to us. How are we, as researchers of contemporary book cultures, connected to disciplines and to institutions? What data should we seek, and what are the limitations of data? What utopias and dystopias might we imagine, what do we destroy and build; which situations do we critique, and which might we construct?

To respond to the urgency of this inquiry, our article advances "Ullapoolism," a new epistemology for contemporary book culture studies which develops a conceptual and activist art practice approach.[2] The approach is inspired by a partial reactivation of the work of the Situationist International (SI), whose Marxist opposition to commodity capitalism and the "spectacle" which renders everyday people as passive consumers (Debord, "Society"), was a contributory force to the revolutionary protests of May 1968. The situationists were committed to the "construction of situations, that is to say, the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality" (Debord "Report" 38). Two of the SI's key modes for achieving such situations have developed afterlives in activism and academia: the *détournement*, a parodic rewriting of images and texts that has influenced practices such as culture-jamming; and the *dérive*, a practice of actively drifting through urban environments and responding to the emotions they inspire, now often associated with psychogeography.

We propose the use of these two means of intervention in contemporary book culture studies, updating and reworking them for the twenty-first century by being attentive to the ways in which they lend themselves to recuperation by dominant groups, by infusing them with feminist concerns, and by adding a spoonful of Mary Poppins to enhance playful

creativity. The collective, activist, engaged modes of the situationists provide resources for our new epistemology of contemporary book culture studies, producing a mode of research that can significantly advance both scholarship and book cultures.

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But why research books and book cultures? Books, after all, are just one kind of media product, and scholars regularly call for books to be considered within and alongside other media.[3] Yet books, we maintain, also warrant specific attention, for reasons including their longevity and historically layered resonances, and their capacity to carry and disseminate ideas (Coser et al 363). Books are repositories of knowledge that carry significant symbolic weight: each book is evidence of a desire to collect and preserve information. Seen this way, there is a fit between books themselves and the role of the academic researcher, who also seeks to contribute to knowledge; often, in humanities research, through an academic monograph (see Butchard et al). As readers ourselves, we acknowledge the rich, complex history of books and are excited by their potential to be dynamically active in contemporary culture. As humanities academics, we value the book and we derive value from it; but to prevent too cosy an alignment, we should also interrogate and where necessary overhaul our relation to books. There is potential in the breakdown of the synergy between books and humanities researchers, as academics honour their mission to take knowledge *out* of books and to the public—to the streets, the exhibitions, the festivals, the beach.

Books are a bit slippery. It is hard to determine where they start and end, so that a task as apparently simple as counting books is confounding. Books proliferate like weeds as production costs drop and digital publication platforms burgeon; as formats multiply (hardcover, paperback, e-book, audiobook) and blur the lines between media; and as more texts from earlier historical periods are recovered and digitized. Or perhaps, since many books offer only small variations on generic themes, there are really just seven (Booker); as they link to one another intertextually, perhaps there is only one Ur-book? Books can be grouped (by genre or market sector, by language group or geographical provenance), but each one is individually significant, from the popular bestseller that travels widely to the esoteric book taken up by a smaller, focused taste-culture. Books contain words and ideas, but just as interesting are the words and behaviours in which books are embedded; the acts of judgement, sharing, re-making and more. The range of people and organisations who interact with books—publishers, readers, schools, librarians, reviewers, technology companies, academics and so on—form not only part of the object but also the audience and potential beneficiaries for research into contemporary book cultures. Our

epistemological enquiry is therefore engaged with the many facets of the borders (and therefore, the definition) of book cultures: who and what is inside, who and what is outside.

Book history scholarship recognises that books are complex commercial *and* cultural objects: sold like tins of beans, but also marketed and read as portals to pleasurable, sustaining acts of imagination (Squires "Novelistic"). The study of book history offers scholars ways to articulate the book as more than a capitalist commodity, and thereby move beyond Adorno and Horkheimer's theorisation of the culture industry as mass deception; the production of standardised goods and services that render their consumers passive (2006 [1944]).[4] Books, and the practices and behaviours that surround them, open up significant questions about the interplay of art and society. Book cultures are affected by powerful centralised institutions—national capital cities, concentrations of publishers in London and New York, the buzz-generating rights clearing house of the Frankfurt Book Fair—and their peripheries, the hierarchical structure of power relations described by Casanova as the "world republic of letters". Book cultures intersect at multiple points with different industries— publishing, film, television, game and other media industries; but also with what Fuller and Rehberg Sedo call the "reading industry," which includes libraries and media programs (17-19)—alongside other government and non-government policy structures (Brouillette). Book cultures are enmeshed in technologies, including digital platforms and printing services, and have material forms (with which we have experimented in Driscoll and Squires, "Oh Look a Ferry"). Book cultures create social relations, and are located in class and cultural hierarchies (see Griswold, "Regionalism").[5] Books are situated in time, allowing for the shift, fade, fall, and re-emergence of genres, in relation to societal shifts, to algorithms, to some bright new idea or the recurrence of an old one.[6]

We recognise that not everyone likes books and reading. The study of book cultures is in many respects a low stakes game, articulated as peripheral in the twenty-first century (Franssen and Kuipers 292). Yet this off-to-the-sideness is what enables book culture studies to be playful and even satirical, to be a space where life can be breathed into academia and society. Relevance (or lack thereof) is a bugbear of the arts and humanities in the twenty-first century, placing their scholarship and institutional bases in crisis mode. Scholars have exerted themselves to defend the value of the humanities, to emphasise the importance of critical thinking and of taking our work to the public (see Small, Nussbaum, Fitzpatrick). We endorse these efforts, but also call for an additional response: more larking and spreeing. Playful and mischievous modes, we argue, offer an expanded repertoire for the study of contemporary book cultures, producing an epistemology that does not simply describe but actively creates bookish situations.

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Contemporaneity complicates the object of research. We are studying the now. The *what*, exactly? Periodisation is always fraught: naming and defining periods is a power move, an act that colonises time. There is scholarly capital in being able to identify, articulate and neologise a cultural period; such capital accumulates through a cycle of recognition, acceptance and challenge.

The period since the turn of the twenty-first century has already been characterised in a number of ways, often, but not only, linked to the rise of digital technologies within an already-established global mass-market. This period is the "late age of print", and subsequently "algorithmic culture" (Striphas, "Late Age", "Algorithmic Culture"), and 'the age of Amazon' (McGurl). Twenty-first century technological conditions for book culture have been charted as the "digital literary sphere" (Murray, "Digital Literary Sphere"). Sociological readings of this period are inflected by questions of demographics and democracy: "books for everybody" (Collins), the "new literary middlebrow" (Driscoll), and social "reading beyond the book" (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo). The mode of these claims is that of the overview, but local detail (or, in scholarly language, the case study and the empirical example), can disrupt these overviews, thereby calling for revisions, or renamings. Producing overviews from *within* the historical moment itself has the challenge of trying to incorporate (or even predict) ongoing changes.[7] As Carroll articulates, while earlier "periodizing terms are employed with the benefit of hindsight [...] the contemporary describes a condition in which the moment of cultural production and reception are identical." This complication, then, also enables the activist potential of our epistemology, the possibility that our scholarship can influence the object of our study, the "richness" which derives from the contemporary's "status as crucible of the near but as yet unfixed future; in its analysis we can see the forces at work in the making of possible future histories, including forces implicated in inequalities of power" (Carroll 19-20).

The twenty-first century is growing longer by the day and, due to technological developments, its rate of change can seem to be accelerating by the minute. Such apparent rapidity creates anxiety, an ever-exacerbating sense of everything being in flux that affects scholars, journalists and literary critics alike. Responding quickly to new books and publishers, to shifting reading patterns, and the decisions of gatekeepers, is, in part, the work of cultural journalism: the books section of *The Guardian* or *The New York Times*, for

example, or televised coverage of a major literary prize. Such accounts not only report news, but narrativise progress and decline. They tell stories of continuity and change:[8] of the rise and fall of print books and ebooks; the emergence of new genres and the death of others. They depict the hubbub of voices above clinking glasses at the literary prize announcement that confirms the status of a famous author; they inscribe and reinscribe the story of the long and difficult route to publication for a debut author whose book went on to sell millions of copies. This storytelling mode draws people in with the weight and dexterity of narrative. As researchers, we sometimes do this too. We pursue an academic mode of narration that readers can follow and enjoy; a way, perhaps, to intensify or soothe anxieties about change, as well as to navigate between disciplines and between academia and the public.

Academics, however, should interrogate this mode of knowledge production. Well-written narratives can seem true without being so. Alongside storytelling, academic research can use other modes for addressing the present, including imaginative, creative, dystopian and utopian thinking. Contemporaneity also allows for experiential methods of knowledge-getting which are not accessible to the historian: forms of ethnography, including participant observation and autoethnography. Producing work from within the present also offers the opportunity, through its situatedness, to effect change.

Contemporaneity, or in other words, thinking through and operating within the present, is important to us—so important, in fact, that we want to refrain from catchy labels and attractive, reductive periodisations. Our epistemology avoids rigid periodic labels. In the same spirit, we challenge research models and methodologies that have ossified along disciplinary and conventional lines, even when they are applied to newer fields and with regards to the present. Addressing our second complicating factor—multidisciplinarity— means eschewing static theoretical models and research methodologies.

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We believe a plurality of approaches and methods is important in the study of contemporary book cultures and, following situationist Alexander Trocchi, that "Our methods will vary with the empirical facts pertaining here and now, there and then" (48). However, this also means being thoughtful about each choice, and interrogating dominant conceptual and methodological approaches.

In particular, we need to rethink our scholarly and ideological relation to data. It is not enough, in a data-overloaded world, simply to chase more of it. This is particularly the case if we want to maximise the potential contribution of other approaches, including those brought by creativity, informality, and satire. Some research modes, even collectively, are not sufficient and should be minimised. We call these over-used modes collecting, counting, and modelling.

Collecting is a predominant sociological mode in book culture studies, in which empirical data—on a small scale—is gathered, analysed and used to construct case studies. We have previously adopted this mode ourselves, in studies of individual literary festivals and books (Driscoll, "Local Places"; Squires, "Marketing Literature"). The information collected is often extremely rich on a local level, but can struggle to assert its greater applicability and relevance. Researchers therefore begin work on other research sites, producing case study upon case study, each with a new geographical focus, historical moment, and set of research participants. This laborious, painstaking collecting of sociological data is productive, but also without end.

Digital humanities and allied methods in the social sciences—including the assembly of large-scale textual databases, automated counting processes, computational analysis, statistical modelling, cultural analytics and data visualisations—have been positioned as saviours for some of the issues of localised case study approaches. In contrast to case studies, the hermeneutic force of digital humanities work comes from its very large scale—its "big data". Yet big data doesn't solve everything. To charges of bias and reductiveness levelled against the digital humanities,[9] we add the critique that digital humanities scholarship is, often, a case of building what we call chocolate biscuit machines:[10] complicated apparati that focus on the gathering, presentation and circulation of data rather than the production of new insights. The "DH Machine" gets pointed at things, and spits out mostly quantitative results—counting without necessarily engaging with, or deepening understanding of, cultural formations.

In fact, digital humanities encounters the same challenge as the case study: collection, whether on a small scale or very large, takes the life out of shifting, complex, and nuanced experiences. In her ethnography of the Book-of-the-Month Club editors' reading practices, Janice Radway understood the risk of her research process as that of the lepidopterist to the butterfly, with "the categorizing imperative to fix, to pin down, and to control," and therefore miss "the beauty and the magic of lilting, living flight in the appreciative act of preserving a remarkable example of the species" (14). Similarly, digital humanities projects produce

collections of dead butterflies, data objects that have been isolated and arranged in a collection thoroughly divorced from their dynamic context. When it comes to researching the contemporary, this feels especially acute, because we can see the living culture from which the data has been ripped. Counting and collecting, two of the key modes of digital humanities, are insufficient when it comes to generating knowledge about contemporary book cultures.

What, then, about modelling? To start with, there is the question of what size to make the model. Small, or faraway? Big, or close? The position we take affects our understanding of scope and size, as well as shaping the knowledge we gain. Is it true that the Frankfurt Book Fair "offers the world in miniature," as one recent commentator suggested (Creative Scotland)? Do we understand the Fair better from the viewpoint of an escalator descending into one of its halls, from behind the reception desk of a small nation's collective publishing stand, or via the digital map in the Fair's app? Each researcher of contemporary book cultures occupies, simultaneously, a variety of positions: reader, writer, friend, lover, rival, tourist, informal publicist, teacher, employer, target of harassment, and so on. The multiply-situated academic may bring all of these perspectives to bear on the object of research, or just one. As a result, the object changes. A book culture may appear distant or close; apprehended coolly, or with the warmth of personal connection; as a small "*pocket* within commodity culture" (Frow "Cultural Studies" 86),[11] or a sprawling field that traverses media and geographical boundaries.

Diagrams are an exercise in modelling: in abstraction and the taking up of a faraway position. In scholarship on book cultures, Bourdieu's (1993) schema of the field of literary production is frequently employed, while Darnton's communications circuit (1982), another widely adopted diagram, was an attempt to wrangle "interdisciplinarity run riot."[12] (We note that there have so far been few actual riots related to book cultures research). Models have strong appeal due to their clarity and comprehensibility. In our previous scholarship, we have explored the value of models as tools for communication by creating or adapting them ourselves: the eight key features of the middlebrow (Driscoll, "New Literary Middlebrow"), and a twenty-first century update of Darnton's circuit (Ray Murray and Squires). However, highly abstracted models such as these can close off opportunities for more intimate, involved perspectives on local phenomena. Examining book culture from the mid-level is one way to attempt the unification, or at least co-location, of both perspectives: evidencing super-structural arguments, for example, or informing understandings of particular events through larger knowledge bases. Both Frow ("On Midlevel Concepts") and Murray ("Digital Literary Sphere") suggest mid-level thinking as a way of mediating between the large and the small.

But we do not accept the seeming authority of the scale, and its privileging of certain perspectives (micro, meso, macro) over others. An alternate approach is "off-to-the-side," as we articulated in our article "Serious Fun: Gaming the Book Festival." Our aim in proposing game-inspired thinking was to open up an understanding of literary festivals that did not rely on either methodological empiricism or abstract theories, thereby allowing us to play with (critique, rearrange, reshape) the dynamics of both big- and small-scale activity. Alongside such thinking, we also advocate the use of metaphors. Models, which visualise and abstract phenomena, are a form of metaphor; these gain greater power, we argue, when materialised (as with the games in "Serious Fun") or literalised (as with the ferries we discuss in "Oh Look, A Ferry"). Shape-shifting tinkering, as a form of active critique, makes models more productive.

We argue, then, that we need a new epistemology of book culture studies that draws on, but moves beyond, collecting, counting and modelling; that works with, but is not subsumed by, a set of metaphors about close and distant, near and faraway, home and away, large and small. How might contemporary book culture research comprehend, act upon and operate with both texts and context? It begins with a situated methodology.

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 "Situatedness is a tricky affair" in research methodologies (Given 2008). Situated research is intimately related to its context, even if it is not entirely contained within it. Such enmeshment is a crucial aspect of our book cultures epistemology. Rather than being above the research context, like an observer seeing a city from a distant cliff-top vantage point, as researchers we operate from *within* the context. Our research does not set out to provide seemingly objective reportage, although it is evidenced and built upon considerable knowledge of book cultures. Neither does it claim book cultures through naming them, no more than it produces a structural overview or definitive diagram. Our approach is not that of the lepidopterist; it is more than capturing instances, collecting and counting them. Our research is closely involved with its object; moreover, we propose moving beyond a merely reflective mode of situatedness by adding disruptive possibilities. We embrace the creative and political tricksiness of the constructed situation, in an epistemology where knowledge arises from sensing, thinking and doing.

Sensing, thinking and doing can happen in any order, but sensing often comes first. What does a publisher's office look like, how does the whisky at a publishing party taste, what is the sound of reading? Sensory observation is heightened through action, especially when on a dérive: hearing the sound of your voice when you ask a question, or choosing to go on a boat trip and dip one hand in the water while holding a book in the other. Thinking can happen after gaining sensory data, or—as we discuss in more detail later—in the absence of sensory data. We smell a book, we hear someone tell us a story, then we think about it: recalling memories and making connections with other sensory experiences; deciding whether we trust someone; extrapolating, developing or adding emotional layers to the sensory data. Thinking creates a chain of ideas which may become increasingly abstract, which may move sideways, which may be metaphorical, creative or critical, and which may lead to détournement.

The third aspect of gaining knowledge is doing. Our epistemological mode is more than merely reflective as we immerse ourselves in the book cultures that we are studying. We read books and judge them for prizes, we teach graduate students who will become publishers, we prepare reports for industry bodies and speak at book festivals and trade events. Our doing is oriented by our observations and embeddedness, our thinking and conceptualisations. We repeat the cycle of sense-think-do in order to refresh our experiences, learn from and generate new thinking, and create more actions, as Fig. 1. illustrates.
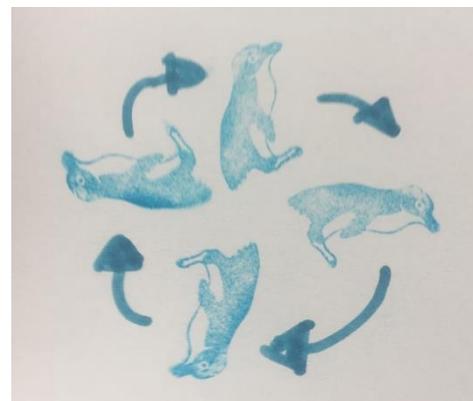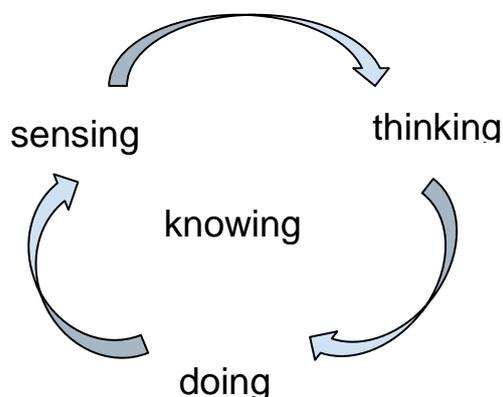

Fig. 1. The Sense-Think-Do-Repeat Cycle, with Added Penguin

Our use of the situated, Sense-Think-Do Repeat model, is enriched by the incorporation of two situationist modes of action: the détournement and the dérive.

Détournements aka Mischief
We celebrate the mischief-making potential of the situationist détournement, and its later manifestations in hacking, rerouting, culture jamming, subvertising, pranks and punk—guerrilla communications, widely used in cultural and social critique.[13] The purpose of the situationist détournement was aesthetic and political; both "a hermeneutics and a praxis" (Elias 824). It was the act of turning capitalism against itself via a diversion of "preexisting aesthetic elements" ("Definitions" 52). Situationist détournements included altered words in comic strips, mashed-up films, whole novels which played with existing plots and genres, and modified, or graffitied, paintings.[14] Culture jamming, the successor of détournement, aims to produce four emotions as catalysts of social change: "shock, shame, anger, fear" (Sandlin and Callahan 94). For our epistemology, we add the positive emotion of "amusement."

In our scholarship to date in book culture studies, détournement is evident in our subversive reworkings of existing products or practices, such as Bookfestivalopoly, an intentionally amateurish reworking of Monopoly which materialises the neoliberal and neocolonial operations of literary festivals (Driscoll and Squires "Serious Fun"). As feminists, our détournements also set out to undercut patriarchy, a departure from the original ethos of the situationists. Greaney has argued that the situationists gendered the détournement (and all artistic innovation) as masculine: a "virile overcoming of spectacular passivity" (84). The situationists—like many theorists incorporated into the academy—were predominantly men, and the bohemian lifestyle which provided some of their allure was not one in which women tended to thrive. The mass culture critiqued by the situationists and their descendants is often women's culture, or enjoyed by women (Berlant), and is derided in feminized terms (Huyssen). There is room, indeed a need, for a feminist approach to détournement. Acts of détournement subsequent to the situationists have shown the potential for marginalised and disempowered groups to subvert dominant cultures.[15] We are inspired by the Guerrilla Girls, feminist activist artists whose website declares that they "use facts, humor and outrageous visuals to expose gender and ethnic bias as well as corruption in politics, art, film, and pop culture." By bringing détournement to book culture studies, our intention is to call out undesirable aspects of book cultures at the same time as we subvert dominant modes of scholarship in book culture studies.

Détournements rework already existent cultural artifacts and acts: turning a game about property into a game about author events, or turning leers into clicks on the Sleaze-o-meter, an analogue counting device to record sexual harassment in a #metoo era publishing industry (Squires and Driscoll). Such détourned objects and acts re-materialise after a process of abstraction, conveying thought processes that build upon acquired sensory knowledge. Sometimes, however, there is a gap in sensory information, demanding a different method. Absences can be difficult to observe: books that are never written, writers who are dissuaded under financial stress, or face lack of opportunity due to systemic prejudice (Brook et al; Ramdarshan Bold). Just as such gaps can lead to reproduction bias within the publishing industry and book culture, they also cause blind spots in academia. Envisaging different products, participants, arrangements and structures requires acts of imagination.

Imagination is also required to gain insight into hidden data, the contents of people's minds. Internal, creative moments occur during the whole emotional panoply of book culture: nervousness before bookish events and feelings of satisfaction or disappointment after them, the weight of rejections and the simultaneous joy and terror of invitations and acceptances, the creative spark that lights up inside a writer or a reader. We can observe words and actions, but we must imagine and reflect upon the interiority of ourselves and others. Absences, gaps and private thoughts are where the second situationist mode of the dérive can come into play in book cultures scholarship, as a means of actively encountering the emotions inspired by the environments of book culture.

Dérives aka Escapades
It may initially seem that the dérive, a "technique of rapid passage through varied ambiences" (Debord, "Theory of the Dérive" 62) enables an epistemology based on presence, not absence; it is an experiential phenomenology which summons up the possibilities of the playful escapade, conducted in collaboration with fellow scholars. Taken up in the academy largely in the field of psychogeography,[16] we argue that the dérive has potential for contemporary book cultures research, including through its capacity to reveal interiorities, absences and gaps as well as illuminate lived, participatory experience.

Psychogeography models the way in which dérives can work with détournements to produce knowledge. Paraphrasing psychogeography and the dérive as an "anarchic mapping practice," the function of which was to "wrest[...] perceptual control from the panoptic spectacle and returned it to the human body," Elias articulates psychogeography as "produc[ing] all kinds of somatic mappings—emotional mappings produced through dérive,

sense maps that détourned visuality (maps based upon smells, sounds, touch instead of sight), and maps not corresponding to real space (such as those produced by overlaying maps of two different regions)" (825). In contemporary book culture research, our overlapping dérives and détournements are evident in autoethnographic and field work methods such as attending book fairs and festivals, using a library, going to a party, tweeting, or self-publishing a novel on Wattpad[17] (Elias's twenty-first century update notes that the internet can host dérives; we appreciate that these may be both algorithmically enabled and constrained). In such scenarios, our commitment to the dérive means being finely attuned to the moment, registering each tiny physical or digital shift, and correspondingly being sometimes unable to discern larger-picture changes or continuities. Rather than over-correcting for this by jumping to a position of overview, Debord suggests triangulation. In "Theory of the Dérive," he comments that

> One can dérive alone, but all indications are that the most fruitful numerical arrangement consists of several small groups of two or three people who have reached the same level of awareness, since cross-checking these different groups' impressions makes it possible to arrive at more objective conclusions. (63)

Such an epistemological mode might appear impressionistic, or even dilettantist. But, according to Debord, the dérive is not an activity of happenstance. Chance, he states, is "a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a dérive point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones" (62). We argue that global book cultures operate in a similar way, with psychogeographical contours that shape our practices and understandings. In line with our political wish to articulate areas of absence and silence, however, we argue for a sense of the dérive that is highly aware of the areas from which researchers are "discourage[d] ," and of the over-privileging of some geographical areas, book cultures, and research sites (the former might include countries for which there is not reliable sales data, or smaller language groups; the latter the Man Booker Prize, Penguin Books, or the Edinburgh International Book Festival, all of which lay claim to being international, but are based in old colonial centres). Our feminist update of the dérive renews Debord's emphasis on collaboration in terms of knowledge generation. Collaboration in the dérive can also enable us, we argue, to move beyond the "constant currents, fixed points," and to explore and think about "certain zones" that book cultures, and book culture research, enter less commonly, if at all.

Extending, updating and co-deploying this combination of tools—the détournement and dérive—enriches our proposed epistemology for contemporary book culture studies. Dérives

and détournements, in combination, offer powerful methods for sensing, thinking and doing in contemporary culture: producing an iterative and collaborative epistemology. Situationist thinking has tremendous contemporary possibilities, particularly when updated with a feminist reworking. At the same time, we recognise and later address issues with recuperation, temporality and entanglement in enabling détournement and dérive for the twenty-first century.

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Ullapoolism, our epistemology for contemporary book culture studies, is an interventionist autoethnography. Within this frame, how should research projects be designed and conducted? What does it mean to be part of this new movement in contemporary book culture studies? The ultimate aim of Ullapoolist research is not to acquire total knowledge, but to embrace knowledge-getting as a mode for producing change in the world. The guiding question is not "what?" or even "why", but "what if?" Existing scholarship and our own sensing-thinking-doing experiments confirm a number of trajectories in book cultures that give cause for concern: increasing automation along with conservative nostalgia for print;[18] persistent gender, class and race inequities;[19] and ongoing colonial and neocolonial power structures.[20] So, what if we want these things to change? And what if we think others are being unnecessarily resistant to change, or indeed blocking it?

"What if" is a change-oriented question infused with imagination, extrapolating from knowledge of the present to consider future worlds and alternative states, utopias and dystopias. Dystopian thinking leads us to focus on aspects of the current situation and imagine how things might get worse. It highlights threats, such as climate change and authoritarian regimes; magnifying dangers in order to understand and ideally avert them. Utopias, in contrast, should involve envisioning concentrations of the good things in life —— and then through acts of imagination working towards them. Can we imagine a world, an industry, a culture into being? What features would we give it, and how might it be organised? There is a sincerity and hopefulness to utopian thinking that complements the critique involved in satire and Scholarly Direct Action.

Dystopian and utopian modes of thinking establish the two tasks of Ullapoolism, which must be pursued concurrently: destroying and building. The task of destruction involves the elimination of threats that could lead to worse future worlds, focusing initially on targets we have identified: neoliberalism, the patriarchy, colonialism and centres, and (some) institutions. Destruction proceeds from a philosophical base that is not purely negative. For the situationists and other radical activists, the call to destroy capitalism, television, mass culture and/or the media is also a bid for freedom and perhaps therefore joy: as one of the most famous May '68 slogans declares, "beneath the paving stones, the beach." Despite the somewhat grim, austere and bitter tone of critiques by the radical left, there is an undercurrent to these denunciations that hums in sympathy with the playfulness of Ullapoolism. Denouncing something is a *je refuse* that restores a sense of possibility, agency, and common interest.

The danger of destruction as a mode is that it asserts superiority over the thing being rejected. Refusal can be an elitist act. This is most clearly the case when the object of destruction is popular, or associated with mass culture. Destroying—or refusing the pleasures of—television, advertising, genre fiction and so on, means taking a stance against the tastes of the many, in favour of the tastes of the few. Historically, the few have been well-educated white men. In this way, refusals often replicate power imbalances and social inequities. This is something to be mindful of, and to avoid if possible. Listening to the experiences of women, people of colour, those outside metropolitan centres, and from different linguistic and cultural traditions, will enable the joint development of targets for destruction. These may be more specific than the grand targets of previous movements. Instead of complaining about mass media, digitisation, corporations and capitalism in their totality, we might focus instead on destroying a series of obstacles to full participation in cultural knowledge-sharing activities: high ticket prices, metropolitan clustering of events, all male panels at conferences and book festivals,[21] sexual harassment in academia and at trade fairs, unconscious and conscious bias in book commissioning and hiring practices.[22]

The role of research in the task of destruction is to harness the enduring power of critique, and to deploy it alongside observational research methods in a combination of sensing, thinking and doing. It is to make informed decisions about who from, how and why we gather data in collaborative, social knowledge production. It is to ensure space for mischievous creativity within, and against, the instrumentalisation of neoliberal university and cultural agenda. Such destruction should happen in tandem with the positive changes produced by situations—our utopian impulses—creating a balanced and comprehensive research program for contemporary book cultures.

Our epistemology is action-driven, and therefore post-data. Just as post-digital means the "messy and paradoxical condition" in which digital and other media forms co-exist (Andersen et al), the term post-data signifies that the collection of data must be hybridised with non-data work, including thinking and doing. In an increasingly quantified neoliberal university system, the pull towards more, bigger, total data is strong. Quantity of data is assumed to be linked to validity and reliability. But this is a dangerous illusion, a receding horizon, where the chase ends up obscuring its own meaning; which is not, and never can be, all the data. Data itself can never be complete or final, and to prioritise its capture as an epistemological mode is formaldehype. Rather, there is an endless proliferation of words and activity, within and across different sites. For us, the conundrum of overwhelming, abundant data is addressed by a movement between three states: the case study, being close enough to touch and smell; reflection, stepping out of the moment to produce reflections, impressions, models, metaphors and actions; and then further action at the local level. We call for the conscious liberation of data, one of several possible situationist-inspired, Ullapoolist slogans.[23]

Likewise, we are not creating a new model or an extended set of metaphors. As noted above, metaphors and abstracted models can be ways of understanding and engaging with the world around us. But we need to be ready to let models and metaphors go, before they ossify and prevent new ways of thinking. Models can only be situations if they are dynamic and can be tinkered with. Metaphors need to be easily moved on from. The end point of Ullapoolism is never the metaphor or model itself, but the generation of new knowledge: the creation of a movement of mischievous, playful, activist researchers committed to understanding and changing contemporary book culture.

Now we have established Ullapoolism's approach, the practical steps to be taken require a further discussion of recuperation, temporality, entanglement, and other ethical predicaments. Twenty-first century détournements and dérives must acknowledge decades of practice and their interaction with a changing social and economic landscape. The risk for détournement is recuperation; the critique being folded back into the vocabulary of capitalism itself as a way of defusing resistance. The SI may have articulated détournement as a "means of countering recuperation," but the former's techniques have been frequently taken up in the production and dissemination of mass culture (Plant 158; Sandlin & Callahan), arguably, as Dery posits, as a carnivalesque, "socially sanctioned release valve," one of many "*rituals* of resistance." Whole brands and income streams have been constructed on the commodification of revolution,[24] and the twenty-first century development of digital platforms (Etsy, Redbubble, Zazzle) now means making, selling and buying your

own (literal) badges of resistance is a few clicks away. It is increasingly difficult, if it were ever possible, to shock culture at large. We propose using the détournement, rather, for playful scholarly research purposes. To emphasise this, we make use of amateurism. Amateurism works against the recuperation of our détournements by ensuring that our interventions do not look too slick, and cannot easily be turned into commercial outcomes for neoliberally-inclined universities. Despite détournement's potential recuperation by capitalism, then, we maintain that with appropriate, amateurish safeguards, it can contribute great value to materially engaged, playful, collaborative, satirical scholarship.

Similarly, recognising the failure of the Situationist International in the wake of May 1968 to destroy the society of spectacle, our ambitions for Ullapoolism are to work within, not against, the prevailing modes of contemporary book cultures. These modes include capitalism, which renders books as commodities and their circulation, use and ownership as functions of economic exchange; and nostalgic conservatism, which sees print books as affective objects carrying great symbolic value. Even within these restrictive frames, there are ways to inflect contemporary book cultures that are more progressive, fairer, and potentially emancipatory. These include tenets of bibliodiversity (Hawthorne), alongside cultural and social inclusion. We argue for an active construction of knowledge that feeds back into our objects of situated study, building towards meaningful, incremental change rather than total overthrow.

Dérives, too, had a rather different impact in the mid-twentieth century compared to now. A dérive is not only about place but time; it is an act against the division of time into discrete units. The situationists objected to the division between work and leisure time on the (Marxist) grounds that it defined leisure time negatively—as non-work (Wark). Métro, boulot, dodo (metro, work, sleep), as the famous May 1968 slogan goes, is a wail against the boredom created by this rigid demarcation of a person's life (Moran 49). In the present, there are calls in the opposite direction: the ubiquitous phrase "work/life balance" is an attempt to preserve a division between the two kinds of time, to stop work from bleeding into and consuming leisure, especially through "always on" digital connectivity. Bringing situationist thinking to this contemporary problem suggests another path—the playfulising of work. Let leisure bleed into the workplace, by instituting twenty-first century dérives.

Yet such a version of the dérive immediately raises problems for all workplaces, including academia. Such problems include the false friends of, firstly, ping pong tables and beanbags at work, where play is co-opted into a corporate agenda and leached of its happiness, all the while separating workers from their family and friends so that their only source of identity and

sustenance is a rapacious, soul-sucking corporation;[25] and second, of flexibility and the gig economy, where work is broken down into small units that can be fitted around leisure activities, but at the cost of stability, security and a living wage.[26] In addition to these considerable risks, there are other time-management issues to be addressed, including the mental effort and bureaucratic cost of limiting the banality of work (including academic work) so as to open up space for creativity and play. But the dérive, with its assault on corporatised time, is still worth attempting because it allows sensing and reflecting to take place outside of instrumentalised structures, transforming, enriching and deepening knowledge.

Twenty-first century dérives raise a further set of practical, ethical issues that derive from situatedness, and which we gather under the term "entanglement." As book cultures researchers actively drift between work and leisure settings, they form social attachments and confront the limits of what can be written about within the confines of academic research ethics standards. Researching from within networks is integral to Ullapoolism. It is a key element of the situatedness of the academic who is not a disinterested observer but an active participant and sometime instigator of the situations of contemporary book cultures. But by following this path, Ullapoolians will encounter ethical predicaments.

A typical ethical predicament for Ullapoolians is: what to do with a scandalous comment that someone (perhaps one of the judges) makes to us at a literary awards event, replete with sparkling wine and canapés? To answer, we draw on our strong commitment to ethical research; a principles-led commitment that involves deep thinking about ethical issues and how these relate to university protocols. The central plank for most research ethics guidelines is that any risks of research must be outweighed by potential benefits. This requirement is most commonly satisfied by reducing the risk of harm to participants and non-participants: by ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. These are principles that we, too, follow—unless there is good reason not to. Normally, we would not quote an utterance made by a (perhaps tipsy) literary judge to a (possibly slightly inebriated) researcher in academic work, because the judge would not expect their words from that night to be used in that way, and because the truth value of the statement may be compromised. Drunken carousing is not a recommended research method for obtaining accurate information. At the same time, for researchers committed to observing and teasing out the nuanced, informal networks through which culture circulates, parties remain a key site of situatedness. Thus, we would listen to these stories as an informal data gathering process to develop knowledge of book culture more broadly.

Sometimes, though, ethical research requires accepting the risk of harm. Sometimes, we might want to cause damage—to established structures that entrench disadvantage, and to those in privileged positions who promote and benefit disproportionately from these structures. The predicament of situated research outlined above is extended by the kind of space that parties are: of necessity, exclusive, and often embodying conservative hierarchies, not least of which is male privilege. Female researchers, researchers who are from marginalised groups, must remain aware of personal safety issues and assess risk as they operate within book cultures; they should not be overly constrained by the potential to cause harm to those in positions of power.

Turning from an academic mode of empirical data collection to a conceptual and activist art practice is more easily done from sites of relative privilege; for us, it is a less risky move, possibly even a luxury, because it is built on established careers. We also operate from the developed, Anglophone world; and through our networks gain social connections, opportunities and information to which others do not always have access. If our mode of knowledge-building is collaborative, we must always look to what communities are being built (do other people want to do this work, how are they resourced, what would AfroUllapoolism look like?), and to what must be destroyed. Knowledge is most powerful when it is linked to action. If, for example, our sensory observations tell us that people who work in publishing industry are largely white, and that prize-winning literary novels are often by and about men, then the next step is to take Scholarly Direct Action. This is epistemologicalism as situationist—using existing knowledge to create situations, "constructed interventions with organized aesthetic aims and political rationale" (Elias 823), which in turn generate new actions and data to be reflected upon. Throughout these acts, it is important to retain outsider as well as insider perspectives. Another of our slogans is "No insight without inside, no inside without outside."

Being part of book cultures networks lets us in, but also might circumscribe or even censor our work. Our work might be received in particular ways because of our enmeshment within particular networks or organisations. We might even agree to people or organisations within our networks delimiting our research; the trajectory of our projects might be directed and instrumentalised by funding bodies, governmental policy, and industry associations. We might keep quiet to protect friends or friendly acquaintances; a conundrum that is typical for journalists and which requires an honest appraisal of connections. Predicaments abound, but can be negotiated; such obstacles are worth overcoming in order to realise the potential of play, satire, mischief and escapades for generating knowledge and shaping contemporary

book cultures. In all research activities, the Ullapoolist must remain alert and focused on the goal of change.

✛

This article—the one you hold in your hands, or scrutinise on the screen—is designed to be used. It lays out a theoretical, epistemological and methodological blueprint that can be taken up and enacted in a range of interventionist book culture projects, which may be communicated in different styles to diverse audiences, inside and outside of book cultures and academia. We want to see experiments with different genres of writing and platforms for publication; in turn the heavily footnoted and the fictional, weaving collaborative creation and generative writing with the occasional flourish. We want other scholars to set up controversial book prizes with surprising eligibility criteria; to throw and attend parties; to tell jokes and create satirical social media accounts; to start fights, maybe even instigate a riot. We want others to imagine and take steps towards a book culture without men, without white people.[27]

The playful fun of this epistemology is inseparable from its critique. Fields are not neutral, and as mischief-making activists, we seek to overcome our identified enemies (the patriarchy; neoliberalism; neo/colonialism; and (at times) institutions). Ullapoolist research is direct action, with a positive and proactive dimension: the construction of new bookish situations. We expect that Ullapoolist scholars will face obstacles—not least, the gatekeepers of disciplines, including journal editors and peer reviewers—but we also expect that their creativity, innovation and close connection with industry and the public will be beneficial within academia, leading to Ullapoolism's strategic use in broader cultural arenas.

Ullapoolism is an activist, post-data, contemporary book cultures epistemology. It draws on mischief-making methodologies including the situationists' détournements and dérives. Ullapoolism's creative critique and playful experimentalism produces situated knowledge, and offers a future program for both cultural analysis and scholarly activism. As we hand over this article to the Ullaschool, we recall Debord's comment that, "Written descriptions can be no more than passwords to this great game." We also bring into play Mary Poppins, the great advocate of the lark and the spree: "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun." We intend, and invite others, to go forth: to stir up mischief, create, escapade, sense think do, and make new knowledge for a better bookish world.

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NOTES

[1] Debord "Theory of the Dérive" 65, Stevenson. The authors would like to acknowledge funding support contributing to this article from Australian Research Council Discovery Project Grant DP170103192, the Macgeorge Bequest, the Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne and the Division of Literature and Languages, University of Stirling, in addition to intellectual support from the Styrofoam head of Michèle Bernstein.

[2] Ullapoolism is named for Ullapool, Scotland, the site of some of our early fieldwork. For more details see https://ullapoolism.wordpress.com/.

[3] See, for example, Murray, "The Adaptation Industry."

[4] We have explored the limitations of the Frankfurt School through our custom tote bag, FFS, which we debuted at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2017. See https://ullapoolism.wordpress.com/2017/10/26/frank-furt-school/ and Driscoll, "Take Bookish Action."

[5] Hence, a sociology of literature, for which see Griswold "Recent Moves", English "Everywhere and Nowhere," Franssen and Kuipers.

[6] See, for example, Squires, "Marketing Literature" 72-74, Underwood.

[7] The satirical twitter account @RobotDarnton does both these, by making the statements and questions 'How will the _____ change the future of publishing?, and 'The history of _____ is the future of the book'.

[8] Inspired by Simon Eliot's work on continuity and change in the publishing industry, we have coined the phrase "the continuity change okey cokey" to describe debates about how much of each quality is observable in the present.

[9] See, for example, Da, Liu, Fiormonte, Grusin, Kirschenbaum, and Klein in the reference list.

[10] Named after the chocolate biscuit machine in 'The Mouse Mill' episode of the children's TV series *Bagpuss*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY_ehvuWt7E.

[11] Frow is, in this quote, writing about "high culture"; Bennett et al 149 suggest this description could also apply to Literature (which we consider to be one form within contemporary book cultures).

[12] Examples of scholars using Bourdieu's model to study book cultures include McDonald, English, Thompson, Sapiro, and Casanova.

[13] For general and academic accounts, see articles by Dery, Eagles, Elias, Klein, Kurczynski, Lasn, Sandlin & Callahan, Wark.

[14] See discussion in articles by Eagles, Kurczynsk, and Wark.

[15] For feminist acts of détournement see Harris, as well as Kuni (including work on the Guerrilla Girls); for antiglobalisation uses see Barnard 119.

[16] See work by Coverley, Self, Smith, and Stein.

[17] See, for example, Squiscoll.

[18] See Squires "Taste and/or Big Data," and Driscoll and Squires "Oh Look A Ferry."

[19] See (again) Ramdarshan Bold, Brook et al, Saha, and on the racialised bias of algorithms, Noble.

[20] See Casanova, Brouillette.

[21] For inspiration, see Stupart's spell to bind all male conference panels.

[22] See McGrath.

[23] Our Top 11 slogans are: DIRECT ACTION, SIDEWAYS THINKING; GAME-INSPIRED NOT GAMIFIED; MINGLE MORE AT BOOK EVENTS; RAPIDISM, AMATEURISM, EPISTEMOLOGICALISM!; NO INSIGHT WITHOUT INSIDE, NO INSIDE WITHOUT OUTSIDE; WARNING: NOT EVERYTHING IS A GAME; SENSE THINK DO REPEAT; BENEATH THE BOOK, THE CARNIVAL; BOOKS ARE BUILT ON RUBBLE; THE SALON IS EVERYWHERE; CONSCIOUSLY LIBERATE DATA!

[24] See, for example, discussion by Larson and Lizardo of the commodification of Che Guevara's image.

[25] Mary Poppins sings that "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun," resulting in making the "job" a "game." While she might therefore be seen to be supporting a neoliberal playfulising of work, her version of play crucially involves actual magic and, as argued by Levin specifically with regard to the Disney adaptation, oppose in addition to standard employment processes, the patriarchy, establishment values, colonialism and the world of finance (117).

[26] For scholarship on work and its cultural representations in a deindustrial age, see Brouillette, Bernes and the *Post45* issue edited by McClanahan on "Deindustrialization and the New Cultures of Work."

[27] A question asked by Padmini Ray Murray at the 2018 annual conference of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing.