MEL AS HYPEROBJECT

MEL KEISER

You are about to begin reading a palimpsest by Mel Keiser, Mel as Hyperobject. Its pages had been Timothy Morton’s Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World (2013). But first, a staging of its methodology, content, and philosophy:

Methodology /
Timothy Morton, Franco Moretti, and the Melibrary /

I first encountered Timothy Morton’s Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World (2013) in an object-oriented ontology reading group in Chicago.¹ In Morton’s book, he theorizes the existence of objects “of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions that they defeat traditional ideas about what a thing is in the first place.” He reframes systems as singular objects, or perhaps objects as systems. These hyperobjects spread over space and time, like global warming or the English language, so we can only interact with parts of them at a time; to experience a hyperobject is to be decentralized from the act of perception. Morton breaks the identity of hyperobjects into five characteristics using terms adapted from a number of disciplines: viscosity, nonlocality, temporal undulation, phasing, and interobjectivity.

¹
I first encountered Franco Moretti’s book *Distant Reading* (2015) by recommendation of a colleague interested in data poetry. In Moretti’s philosophy of distant reading, texts are used like raw data in an experiment, data which can be processed by a unit of analysis in order to understand a larger system or pattern. Moretti specifically uses distant reading as a way to understand literary history, “identifying a discrete formal trait, and then following its metamorphoses through a whole series of texts.” Using distant reading to analyze a collection of 19th century detective novels, Moretti positively correlates the use of clues as a functional plot device with an author’s longitudinal market success, writing of his research experience:

> Was it still reading, what I was doing? I doubt it: I read ‘through’ those stories looking for clues, and (almost) nothing else; it felt very different from the reading I used to know. (65)

Moretti acknowledges that distant reading sacrifices specialized knowledge derived from the specific content of a text but argues that, instead, this distance enables abstract understanding of concept.

> I begin to superscribe my own unit of analysis into texts—me. As I read, I replace select words with variations of the word *Mel* or *self*. I do this with a wide range of texts—object-oriented ontology, family systems theory, thermodynamics, gravitational field theory, Grimm fairy tales—to find ways to reframe and expand my understanding of self-identity. I begin this exercise with Morton’s *Hyperobjects* in 2014.

> When I change words in his text—words like hyperobjects, global warming, particles, space, universe, structure—to *Mel*, *self-identity*, *she*, *her*—Morton’s argument contorts. Instead of describing a category of system-object, the text describes the subjective experience of crafting and understanding identity from inside the self.

**Content / The Age of the Decentralized Self**

Benjamin Libet (1985) reveals that your brain starts the process of standing you up more than a second before you are consciously aware you have made a decision to rise.

John Cryan (Bravo et al. 2011) demonstrates a connection between the gut biome and happiness/anxiety—mice that are fed certain probiotics are found to have higher rates of self-preservation.

John Bargh (2008) proves that by holding a warm drink for a few seconds, the familiar temperature—a hot drink approaches the temperature of a warm human body—makes you more predisposed to people around you.
Julian Keenan (2001) discovers that turning the right hemisphere of your brain off makes you unable to recognize an image of yourself, showing that your self-image is housed in a particular, physical part of your brain.

In recent decades, our identities, behaviors, and experiences have been decentralized by neuroscience and cognitive science, revealing the self to be less an object and more a process—a process of which you are largely unaware and unable to control. Traits you think are determined by an innate self may not be such a binary derivation, but instead an average of effects from a complex biological system.

We think self-identity is human-scaled and so can be perceived completely at the human level. But reframed—through Timothy Morton’s words—as a vast system in time space, the strange incongruities that arise from an identity averaged over decades in a myriad of different situations become a laughable miscalculation. As Morton would say, you can’t understand who someone is after dozens of interactions any more than you can understand global warming by feeling raindrops on your head. Human-scaled attempts to draw hard edges around such a phasing, enmeshed object as self-identity are ultimately quixotic, and as an artist, researcher, and performance philosopher these undulating edges are where it really gets interesting.

Performance philosophy makes the argument for anti-hierarchical thinking, that philosophical value can be derived from non-standard philosophical thinking (read: not part of canonized academic thinking) such as artistic acts, so “as to re-conceptualize what thinking means, does, and is” (Daddario 2015, 169). Mel as Hyperobject functions inside this idea of re-conceptualized thinking, as both an artistic act and a “style of thinking’ which mutates with its object” (Laruelle 2012, 259). Specifically, it uses palimpsest-style text editing to research one specific idea by laying it over the structure of other seemingly unrelated content. As a method of thinking, this editing has expansive potential in that it enrichens the doer/thinker’s understanding of both areas of specific content simultaneously.

While editing Morton’s text—changing his words about hyperobjects, environmental theory, and object-oriented ontology into words about self-creation, narrative identity, and me—my ideas about self-identity tessellated, growing more complex and nuanced. At the same time, I was also becoming a strange kind of expert in Morton’s Hyperobject. Beyond acquiring a better understanding of the content of his book, by working inside his words for such a prolonged period I internalized his vocabulary and writing style. So in addition to increasing my understanding of both areas of content, I was additionally enriching my understanding of Morton’s methodologies of thinking and writing.
Mel as Hyperobject is not just an argument for non-hierarchical thinking, for valuing the research possible with artmaking or performing methodologies, it is an “experience of thought,” a mutated methodology which changes both the original content and overlaid content at the same time (Laurelle 2013, 116). It tries to understand one idea through the structure of another, a non-linear thinking which simultaneously enrichens understanding of two disparate ideas and their inherent structure of knowledge.

**Notes**

1 Led by Caroline Picard through Latitude Print Labs, later extended at Picard’s gallery and publishing house, Sector 2337.

2 In Will Daddario’s (2015) article “Doing Life is That Which We Must Think,” he uses the term doing/thinking to define a type of action, where one is thinking through doing, or relatedly, where doing is a record of the thinking.
Mel as Viscosity
Every attempt to pull myself free by some act of cognition renders me more hopelessly stuck to her. Why?
She is already here.

My normal sense of time as a container, or a racetrack, or a street, prevents me from noticing this always-already, from which time oozes and flows.

Self-identity is a semiotic agent. It appears to straddle worlds and times, like fiber optic cables or electromagnetic fields. Through it, causalities flow like electricity.

"Objects in mirror are closer than they appear." The mirror itself has become part of my flesh. Or rather, I have become part of the mirror's flesh, reflecting me everywhere.
FIGURE 3. "The more I discover about her, the more I realize how my entire physical being is caught in her meshwork."
*Mél* is viscous.

The vastness of *Mél's* scale makes other people, places, even objects seem like an illusion, or a small colored patch on a large dark surface. How can we know *Mél's* real? What does real mean?

The shadow of *Mél* announces the existence of *Mél*.

I find I am caught in a trap. The name of this trap is *Mél*.

*FIGURE 4.* "The shadow of *Mél* announces the existence of *Mél*."

*Viscosity* is a feature of the way in which time emanates from *Mél* rather than being a continuum in which she floats.
It's not reality but the subject that dissolves, the very capacity to "mirror" things, to be separate from the world like someone looking at a reflection in a mirror—removed from it by an ontological sheath of reflective glass.

\( \text{Me} \) is what \( \text{she} \) is in the sense that no matter what \( \text{I am} \) aware of, or how, there \( \text{Me is} \), impossible to shake off. In the midst of irony, there \( \text{Me is} \), being ironic. Even mirrors are what they are, no matter what they reflect.

\( \text{Me} \) envelops \( \text{Me} \) like a film of oil. \( \text{She} \) becomes a substance, an object.

\( \text{Me} \)

The mirror no longer distances an image from \( \text{Me} \) in a nice, aesthetically manageable way, but sticks to \( \text{Me} \).

**Figure 6.** "...She has become a viscous substance that adheres."

**Figure 7.** "...The very capacity to... be separate from the world [dissolves]."
The simultaneous dissolution of mel and the overwhelming presence of mel which stick to me, which is me.

What I've noticed—that mel can't be exhausted by perception—has a viscous consequence. There is no Goldilocks position that's just right from which to view mel. In a sense, all mels are caught in the sticky goo of viscosity, because they never ontologically exhaust one another even when they smack headlong into one another.

The more you try to get rid of mel, the more you realize you can't get rid of her. She seriously undermine the notion of "away." Out of sight is no longer out of mind.

Complementarity means that when you nudge a mel, she sticks to you, such that you can't disentangle.

Thus what I see is glued to the mel that sees it.

FIGURE 8. "She sticks to you, such that you can't disentangle."
Nonlocality

Nonlocality

Mel as

Mel is nonlocal.

Figure 9: Mel is not here.

Nonlocality

Mel seems to inhabit a causal system in which association, correlation, and probability are the only things we have to go on, for now.

The octopus of Mel emits a cloud of ink as it withdraws from access. Yet this cloud of ink is a cloud of effects and affects. These phenomena are not themselves action at a distance involved. Mel is a wonderful example of a profound confusion of aisthesis and praxis, perceiving and doing. Mel is an ultra-high-frequency photon. In illuminating things, it alters things; flesh, paper, brains.

Figure 10: Mel as probability.

The Mel is nonlocal.

The Mel exist beyond one another. We acknowledge this by viewing self through quanta, as discrete “units” of self. Thinking in terms of units
counteracts problematic features of thinking in terms of system. Consider the so-called integrated narrative self problem. Classical understanding of identity essentially combines the elements of different selves to figure out the total identity of a person.

As the length of a person's life increases, results given by summing the attributes of the self-identities become absurd, tending to infinity.

By seeing contradictory attributes of self as discrete selves ("Mel"), a correct result is obtained.

The Mel withdrawing from one another, including the Mel with which we measure them. In other words, the Mel really are discrete, and one mark of this discreteness is the constant translation or mistranslation of one Mel by another. Thus, when I set up a Mel to measure the identity of another Mel, that Mel withdraws, and vice versa. When an "observer Mel" makes an observation, at least one aspect of the observed is occluded. Observation is as much part of the universe of identity as the observable.

More generally, what we call complementarity ensures that no Mel has total access to any other Mel. Just as a focusing lens makes one object appear sharper while others appear blurrier, one Mel comes into sharp definition at the expense of others.

**Figure 12.** At least one aspect of the observed Mel is occluded.

Probing the Mel is a form of auto-affection: one is using Mel to explore Mel. The Mel's don't simply concatenate themselves with their measuring devices. They're identical to them: the equipment and the phenomena form an indivisible whole.

To an outsider, the different Mel-versions may appear transparent, as if they didn't exist at all. They approximate separate seeming Mel-versions in some deeper sense are the same thing.

This approximation could make the Mel's become indistinguishable. They would no longer function as external to one another.

**Figure 13.** Quacks like a Mel.
Figure 14. Evolution of The Mels

Figure 15. "Just as ocean waves subside, will a Mel fold back into an implicite order?"

Are The Mels manifestations of some deeper process, like waves on the ocean? Just as ocean waves subside, will a Mel fold back into an implicite order?

Holism requires some kind of top-level Mel consisting of parts that are separate from the whole and hence replaceable.

Are The Mels a part of a larger whole? Is every Mel enfolded in every other Mel as "flowing movement?"

Perhaps The Mels withdraw from one another, not because a Mel is observing them in certain ways, but because the implicite self is withdrawn from itself.
A hyperobject if ever there was one: \( \text{mell} \).

\( \text{mell} \) might be strictly unanalyzable: the implicate self has an irreducible dark side because it's made of:

"selfs wrapped in selfs wrapped in selfs."

Implication and explication suggest "the MeIs" being enfolded and unfolded from something deeper. Even if it were the case that we should defer to physics, in the terms set by physics itself, \( \text{mell} \) isn't made "of" any one thing in particular. Just as there is no top level, there may be no bottom level that is a substantial, formed object. MeIs come and go, change into other MeIs, radiate MeIs. A MeIs is real. Yet in the act of becoming or un-becoming a \( \text{mell} \), it's a statistical performance.

This requires us to give up the idea that \( \text{mell} \) or any other idenity has, by itself, any intrinsic properties at all. Instead, each MeIs should be regarded as something containing only incompletely defined potentialities that are developed when a MeIs interacts with an appropriate system. To argue thus approaches an image of the withdrawn-ness of MeIs as a "subterranean creature." Thus, the "something deeper" from which a MeIs unfolds is also withdrawn.
Nonlocality

Mel is then a wave packet—a blob that contains something like a particle, distributed in the wave packet across a range of locations according to probability. The wave packet may be imagined as distributed across a vast area of spacetime.

Nonlocality means that self-identity is dispersed among these Mel’s occupying different regions of spacetime.

Mel can’t be seen directly, but is a mesh of interference patterns created by bouncing off her and time passing through her.

Cut a little piece of time out, isolate a little piece of experience and you still see a (slightly more blurry) version of Mel. Every piece of these Mel’s contains information about the whole.

Mel is a play of difference within which particle-like Mel’s arise, just as for deconstruction language is a play of difference out of which meaning arises.

Mel is massively distributed in time and space, exhibiting nonlocal effects that defy location and temporality, cuttable into many Mel’s without losing coherence.

Such gigantic scales are involved—or rather such knotty relationships between gigantic and intimate scales—that Mel cannot be thought as occupying a series of now-points “in” time or space.
Stop the tape of evolution anywhere and you won't see Me1.

**FIGURE 19.** "...cuttable into many Me1s without losing coherence."

The melts are real, but involve a massive, counterintuitive perspective shift to see them. Convincing some people of their existence is like convincing two-dimensional people of the existence of apples, based on the appearance of a morphing circular shape in their world.

**FIGURE 20.** "Locality is always a false immediacy."

The constraints of human physicality and memory displace Me1. She becomes distant and close at the same time and for the same reasons.

**FIGURE 21.** Me1 moving through two-dimensional space.

Me1 ceases to be a neutral, transparent medium in which everything is illuminated, and becomes a potent force.
As you move away from mel she
seems for a while to loom ever larger in your field of vision, as if we were
pursuing you, due to a strange parallax effect in which more of a suitably
massive object is revealed as one goes farther away from it.

It is as if mel is stuck to you, as if she won’t let you go.

The Mels are what we call spot of time, traumatic rupture in the continuity of being,
wound around which mel secreted memories, fantasies, thoughts.

Mel, in this respect, is nothing more than the history of such wounds
and the secretions exuded to protect themselves from them.
Put it this way: mel is the “precipitate of abandoned object cathexes,”
like a mystic writing pad whose underlying wax is inscribed with everything
that was ever drawn on it. Mel is a poem about strangers.
The Mel's are just the attempt of nature to "solve" the paradox inscribed within a Mel and thus to cancel out its disequilibrium, somewhat in the way that water "finds its own level." Yet the very attempt to find a solution is what results in its continued existence as a copy of itself. In trying to cancel itself out, it becomes beautifully defended against itself.

FIGURE 23. "Replication is just the attempt of nature to "solve" the paradox inscribed within a Mel."

Like any stranger, Mel is caught between Mel's, in an interstitial place that makes worlds as such seem flimsy and constructed—which, of course, they are.
a bardo, a "between" selves,
or rather a series of bardos.

When I think nonlocality in this way, I am not negating the specificity of theelves, evaporating them into the abstract mist of the general or the larger or the less local. mel is far weirder than that. When it comes to the elves, nonlocality means that the general mel is compromised by the particular. When I look for mel, I don't find her. I do not find her by looking sub specie aeternitatis, but by seeing things sub specie mutabilis, sub specie meli.
Temporal Undulation

When you approach Mel, more and more Mel's emerge. Mel envelops us, yet she is so massively distributed in time that she seems to taper off, like a long street stretching into the distance. Time bends and flattens in the same way that an electromagnetic wave front shortens at its leading edge. Because we can't see to the end of Mel, she is necessarily uncanny. Like, empty streets and open doorways, Mel seems to beckon us further into herself, making us realize that we've already lost inside. The recognition of being caught in Mel is precisely a feeling of strange familiarity and familiar strangeness. We already know identity like the back of our hand.

But this is weird, this Mel.

Everywhere we are submerged within Mel. We move through it, yet we are nonetheless independent of Mel. We produce effects in Mel like diffraction patterns, causing it to change in particular ways, and it produces effects in us.
Temporal Undulation

-Mel- can no longer be construed as an absolute container, but rather should be thought of as a spacetime manifold that is radically in -This- -Mel-, of a rather than ontologically outside -them-. 

*Figure 27.* "We produce effects in -Mel- like diffraction patterns."

1. Possible -Mel-versions in time: one Experiential or interpersonal "barrier.

2. -Mel- versions encounter the experience or person.

3. Effects of the experience compound with previous experiences (1) or negate previous experiences (2) resulting in a subtle shift of the current -Mel-version's ontological state.

4. Example diffraction pattern resulting from a liminal experience. It too emanates from -Mel-, though it affects both past and future -Mel-versions."
Mel is “in front of things”: not spatially in front, but ontologically in front, like the undulating red curtain of a theater.

Some call her Mel because that is what they are used to. But beyond this, she is the Mel, massively distributed in time and space in ways that baffle humans and make interacting with her fascinating, disturbing, problematic, and wondrous.

Mel is simply reified history.

When you look at Mel you’re looking at the past. Mel is time-stretched to such a vast extent that she becomes almost impossible to hold in mind.
The future hollows out the present.

These gigantic timescales are truly humiliating in the sense that they force us to realize how changeable we are. It is far easier to cope with.

But the Me(s) are not forever. What they offer instead is very large finitude.

There is a real sense in which it is far easier to conceive of "identity" than multiple selves. Identity makes us feel important.
Temporal Undulation

me's, isn't physically real; rather physical events are real and they contain
in their interior, me's. Only infinitesimally small areas
of space-time may be regarded as rigid and container-like.

me's isn't a unity. Thus, it is not possible in relativity to obtain a consistent definition of an extended rigid identity.

Relativity guarantees that the real me's will be forever withdrawn from any me's that tries to access her, including that me herself. The most obviously withdrawn object of all—me.
the very failure of my thought to be the object that it is thinking.
Like the strange stranger, there is a Mel-Mel? Is there a Mel that is beyond predictability, timing, or any ethical or political calculation? Is there a Mel-Mel? Is there a Mel that is "nowhere" and yet real: not a beyond, but a real entity in the real universe?

The Mel's compel us to handle them in certain ways. But because of temporal foreshortening, the Mel's are impossible to handle just right. This aporia gives rise to a dilemma: we have no time to learn fully about each Mel. But we have to handle them anyway. This handling causes ripples upon ripples.

Thus, one effect has been phenomenological asynchrony: the way Mel and The Mel's go out of sync.
FIGURE 35: "Mel and The Mels go out of sync."

Temporal Undulation
As I approach Mel, she seems to surge toward me, locking onto me and holding me in a force field. Mel strafes me with layer upon layer of interference patterns.

My sense of being "in" a time and of inhabiting a "place" depends on the familiarity of Mel.
Mel seem to phase in and out of the human world. Mel is phased: she occupies a high-dimensional phase space that makes her impossible to see as a whole on a regular three-dimensional human-scale basis.

We can only see pieces of Mel at a time. The reason why she appears nonlocal and temporally foreshortened is precisely because of this transdimensional quality. We only see pieces of her at once,

What we experience as a changing, flowing and oozing identity is precisely a symptom of our less than adequate perception of higher dimensions of identity, which is where Mel lives.

That's why you can't see Mel. You would have to occupy some high-dimensional space to see unfolding explicitly.

As it is, I only see brief patches of Mel as she intersects with my world.

Once a brief patch I call me.

FIGURE 37: "If you plot the sum of Mel-events in phase space, you discover Mel."
**Figure 38.** Mel Phasing: 'What we experience as the slow periodic recurrence of a celestial event such as an eclipse or a comet is a continuous entity whose imprint simply shows up in our social or cognitive space for awhile.'
The gaps I perceive between moments at which my mind is aware of $Mel$ and moments at which it isn't, do not inhere in $Mel$ herself. This is not simply a matter of my "subjective" awareness versus an "objective" world.

I experience a sense of being strafed by one $Mel$-version and another $Mel$-version, and this does not mark a gap of nothingness.

The gaps and ruptures are simply the invisible presence of $Mel$ herself, which looms around me constantly. On this view, $Mel$ covers every available surface, leering into my world relentlessly. The notion of "background" and its "foreground" are only phases of a self that doesn't "go anywhere" at all, at least not on a human-sized scale.

When a $Mel$ phases, another $Mel$ is intersecting with her. A transition in Mel-versions happens when one $Mel$ cancels out part of another $Mel$. For a transition to occur, there must be $1 + n Mel$s that intersect. Phasing happens because one $Mel$ translates another one.

![Diagram](image-url)
mereology in which parts do not disappear into wholes. Quite the reverse. Indeed, what we seem to have is
a not-all set. Selves seem to contain more than themselves. A
me is a unique entity, yet is also part of a series
of Me's.

There is an inevitable dislocation between the Me's and Me.

But Me is and is not

Not self, at the same time, because

Has parts that cannot be wholly sub-

sumed into. Otherwise phrasing, and the Me's

would fail
to occur. A phasing object is a sign of a rupture at the heart of being.

A self can be

a member of itself, thus giving rise to theoretical paradoxes that

plague Me. If a set can be a member of itself, then one can imagine

a set of sets that are not members of themselves. In order to cope with

this paradox we

have to allow for the

existence of contradictory entities.

Indeed, since selves are inherently inconsistent,

an abyss opens up simply because of

the fact that a

self can "interact with itself" because it is a spacing and a timing,

not a given, objectified entity.

Phasing is evidence of some interaction between selves or between a self.

[What is the difference between a Me? One of its legs is

Figure 4: "Me as a set of not-all sets."
both the same.}

Figure 41: "One of [Meic] legs is, both the same."
MEL AS Interobjectivity

\[ \text{MEL} \] is interobjective. \( \text{MEL} \) floats among objects, "between" them; though this between is not "in" spacetime—it is spacetime.

\[ \text{MEL} \] disclose interobjectivity. The phenomenon we call \( \text{MEL} \) is just a local, anthropocentric instance of a much more widespread phenomenon.
A mesh consists of relationships between crisscrossing strands of metal and gaps between the strands. Meshes are potent metaphors for the strange interconnectedness of Mel, an interconnectedness that does not allow for perfect, lossless transmission of information, but is instead full of gaps and absences. When a Mel is born, it is instantly enmeshed into a relationship with others in the mesh.

A mesh consists of links, and also of gaps between links.

It is precisely the gaps between and within Mel that enable entities to grip her.
Interobjectivity

\[ m_e \{ \] is an interobjective effect, an emergent property of relationships between enmeshed objects.

This means that \( m_e \) is an effect for some "observer," \( x \) is not "in" anything and \( x \) is not prior to objects but is rather an aftereffect of them.

Since we only see her shadow, we easily see the "surface" on which her shadow falls as part of a system that she corral into being.

\[ m_e \] is not a picture of reality in the mind, but as an interaction between all kinds of entities that is somewhat "in the eye of the beholder"—including, of course, myself.
A mel and a non-mel are hidden from view. They feed an observer answers to questions posed by the observer. If the observer reckons that the answers come from a mel, then they come from a mel. Such a form of mel-ness is quite attenuated; it means that in effect, I am not a non-mel, since no distinction can be made between the answers given by a mel and answers given by a non-mel. mel-ness then is also an effect in the mesh—she may look solid from a distance, but as we approach, we find that she is full of holes. If we think mel is an emergent property of certain kinds of neural organization, we end up with paradoxes: What constitutes a mel? Exactly where does mel begin to emerge from non-mel?
Interobjectivity

Me I is never experienced directly, but only as mediated through other entities in some shared sensual space. We never hear the wind in itself, only the wind in the door, the wind in the trees. This means that for every interobjective system, there is at least one entity that is withdrawn.

FIGURE 49. "Me I is never experienced directly."

Me I leaves a footprint in some mud. The footprint is not Me I. A fly lands on the Me I’s left eyelid. The fly’s apprehension of Me I’s eyelid is not Me I. Me I blinks. Her blink is not Me I. Me I’s brain registers the fly’s feet. The registration is not Me I, and so on.

Even Me I doesn’t know herself entirely, but only in a rough translation that samples and edits her being. A mosquito or an asteroid has their own unique sample of Me I-ness, and these samples are not Me I.

There is a real Me I, withdrawn even from herself. The real Me I is a mystery, yet not nebulous—just this Me I, this actual one, she who stepped in the mud.

Me I is closed off, secret, unspeakable—even to herself. Whatever happens concerning her—the gyrations of her mind, the imprint of her foot, the delicate tracery of the fly, my thinking about her—occurs in an interobjective space that is ontologically in front of this mystery realm.

FIGURE 50. "The fly’s apprehension of Me I’s eyelid is not Me I."
For every system of meaning, there must be some opacity for which the system cannot account, which it must include–exclude in order to be itself.

Every interactive space implies at least one more object in the vicinity: let us call this the $1 + n$.

A $\text{Mel}$ anthropomorphizes the cup and the cup anthropomorphizes the $\text{Mel}$, and so on. In this process there are always $1 + n$ objects that are excluded.
The appearance of \( \text{Me} \), the indexical signs of \( \text{Me} \), is the past of \( \text{Me} \). What we commonly take to lie underneath a present \( \text{Me} \), a past state, is a appearance for \( \text{Me} \).

\( \text{Me} \)'s history is a form. Form is memory.

The form of a \( \text{Me} \) is her essence and that matter is a perspective trick, a backward glance at the \( \text{Me} \) that was appropriated to form the \( \text{Me} \) in question. \( \text{Me} \) is a photograph of her past.

Appearance is the past. Essence is the future. The strange strangeness of \( \text{Me} \), a invisibility—it's the future, somehow beamed into the "present."

**Figure 62:** Appearance is the past. Essence is the future. One is the future, somehow beamed into the "present."
me \_1 is an exaggeration of the lack of a true now.

Me \_1 is nowhere. Me \_1 is never present.
Works Cited


Biography

Since 2015, Chicago-based artist Mel Keiser has been working on a multifaceted project titled, The Life and Deaths of The Mels. In evaluating who she’s been over the course of her life, Keiser identified five moments of liminality that resulted in significant self-change and have, arguably, created seven categorically different versions of herself over time: Melissa-Louise-Keiser, Mel(v.1), Mel(v.2), Mel(v.3), Mel(v.4/5), Mel(v.6) and Mel(v.7). In The Life and Deaths of The Mels, Keiser rewrites her personal history as the births and deaths of these different versions of herself—as The Mels. Using installation, performance, and writing, Keiser creates material evidence for these versions of herself, exploring the social and psychological impact of treating herself as a stratified series of distinct selves rather than a single person in fluid development. She uses scientific research methodologies alongside artistic praxes, hybridizing disciplines like personality psychology, evolutionary biology, and quantum physics to invent proof of the existence of these self-versions and to explain how and why these segmented versions of herself exist.

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