The Disconnect

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HELLO

open to interpolation

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NECESSARILY
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THE NARI
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FRAGM

—BEL

YES ON A
No on E

SHH! SECRET BALLOT!

I attended a graphic design conference in San Francisco where rationales but they resided elsewhere, being too long to learn if it was possible to go, in the words of the for the type-byte of public display. Coming straight from conference title, "Beyond typography." Numerous theories the typography conference, it seemed as if it had infected were proposed there of how design broadly, and the populace with its debates. However, all subtleties were typography specifically, might operate in culture. New stripped away. "Yeah," I said, looking at a sign taped to a thinking about letterforms was deemed necessary. After lamp post, "I'm against *that* L. Ugly font." Then a thought the conference, I strolled around the city, sightseeing. I presented itself: why not *have* that election? What if encountered numerous signs promoting stances on a designers put forth referenda on typefaces – but didn't variety of referenda in the upcoming elections. The signs advertise it? We might, surreptitiously, legislate good were terse, reducing complex issues to their ballot design! Why not? Few people actually investigate the designation: a letter. Voters were urged to support or issues they vote on. Think of the possibilities! You could reject characters with no explanation. Of course, there get...just what we have now...

YES ON F
YES on L

10 X 10 TO THE CENTIMETER
19 X 25 CM.
KEUFFEL & ESSER CO.
46 1521
MADE IN U.S.A.

Instead of deriving new ideas and terms, maybe we need to spend some time breaking apart these linkages that corrupt meaning.

Now this thing called pedagogy fairly is, I think, our discourse is fairly clogged with a host of other meanings, to change that idea, and put another in its place.

say the word, you get them all.

most terms are fairly dense with meanings and associations that have been injected, accreted, and snuck in over time.

I got called a "vernacular relativist" once. I'm still not sure what it means, but I know it wasn't a compliment.

"To have
you must DES
ALL
To go mad
a
of

—HENR

"There seems **NO PLAN** because
there seems **NO CENTER** because"

• C.S. LEWIS

in the Co. of estrangers

If you want the definitive lens through which to view all manner of conflict, choose the "dis." Originally the province of homeboys homicidally defending their manhood, people of all walks and classes are avenging the dis. Entire countries are acting out. It extends beyond the boundaries of the U.S. Terrorism is often sparked by dissing some culture's mores or god. The sign of the dis-response is force out of all proportion to the perceived insult. And it's essential nihilism. By any rational measure, the cause under defense is sullied more by the brutality expressed in its name. You get feared but not respected. If a religious faith is involved, basic tenets of non-violence and respect for life are obviously betrayed. Is our distemper worse today? There's more of us with an expectation of privilege because of where we were born, who we worship, what group we belong to. In a way, it's evidence that an awareness of basic human rights have disseminated widely. Has there ever been a time in history where so many different people have felt in charge of their destiny? And ready to defend it? The pity is that the best defence follows a small offence. I could say more, but I've probably already pissed someone off.

it is ALL PLANNED
because it is

DISORDER
TROY
ORMS of order.
you must have
errific accumulation
SANITIES.

Y MILLER

join or die.

WHAT SOFTWARE ARE YOU RUNNING FROM?

~~In 1984, Thomas Pynchon~~

In 1984, Thomas Pynchon published the essay "Is it OK to Be a Luddite?" the writer discussed the fear of technology (and, maybe, the technology of fear) through history, beginning with Ned Ludd's pogrom against mechanical sock knitters. For Pynchon, Ludd was the first Badass, an irresistible, large-scale force not to be Fucked With. The Badass was an indirect product of technological development, the supreme unintended consequence. Doctor Frankenstein's monster is the archetypal Badass on an individual level. Pynchon's essay suggested that in the nuclear weapon, mankind had achieved the ultimate Badass. The Bomb could take us all out—pull the plug on the world. Nothing could be Bigger or Dadder than that. Pynchon also considered the computer and its potential as a Badass. 1984 was a significant time to do this, it being the year the Macintosh is introduced, publication of William Gibson's novel Neuromancer, and the release of James Cameron's first Terminator film. The computer had too much good will going for it, Pynchon felt. Sure, there had been some AI run-amok sci-fi tales (such as Harlan Ellison's infamous "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream" which inspired Terminator) but the potential for good outweighed the menace. It wasn't going to be a race to see who'd reach the off switch first. But I wonder if the Techapocalypse will be subtler, the Badass as a computer would be, by nature, calculating, not impulsive. A Big Bang blowout of humanity isn't in keeping. The vicious cycle of 'upgrades' looks more ominous every day. Maybe Pynchon got Ned Ludd wrong. He wasn't the Badass, he's the Trickster.

NOTHING MAKES NONSENSE ANYMORE!

Has meaning come so unstuck, disjointed? We regularly hear of "disconnects," instances where contradictory opinions are held shamelessly, logical inconsistencies blithely made policy. Sign and signified float lazily away from each other, untethered. No one cries as sense drifts upward and away. We just watch it soar, wondering where, or if, it will come to earth. What happened? Consider the over two million commercials that the average (Western) person will view over a lifetime. How many thousands of 15- and 30-second dramas will we witness, composed of millions of flash-cut images, splicing together meaning?

We've been force-evolved to derive narratives out of a sequence of unrelated pictures. All bound together by a catch phrase, a musical score, a logo. We've evolved an ordering consciousness unlike anything seen before. Add to this the structural alternatives to narrative promoted by literature. And most of all, the regular disconnected proclamations of politicians: weakening rights to strengthen freedom, destroying to save. In this irrationality millions of people find sense. We crave order, enough to condense it from **air.**

BEST
do not
ED TO
know
ed in its
ETY,
need to
conquer
FIVE AS
ple,
know in
ENTS.

Biography

Kenneth FitzGerald is a Professor of Design at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. He is the author of the book *Volume: Writings on Graphic Design, Music, Art, and Culture* (published by Princeton Architectural Press), and has had work published in *Emigre*, *Print*, *Eye*, and *Idea* magazines; the book collections *The Graphic Design Reader*, *Culture Is Not Always Popular: Fifteen Years of Design Observer*, *Total Armageddon: A Slanted Reader on Design*, *Graphic Design and Reading*, *Thought Experiments in Graphic Design Education*, and *The Education of a Graphic Designer volume 2*; plus the online journals *Design Observer*, *Voice: AIGA Journal of Graphic Design*, and *Speak Up*. *The News of the Whirled*, his novel in the form of 4-issue limited-edition magazine, received awards for excellence from the American Center for Design and AIGA, and is in the collection of Goldstein Museum of Design at the University of Minnesota. Kenneth is also a member of the founding Editorial Board of the academic journal *Dialectic*, and served on the Steering Committee of the AIGA Design Educators Community from 2013 to 2017.

He can be found at www.ephemeralstates.com.