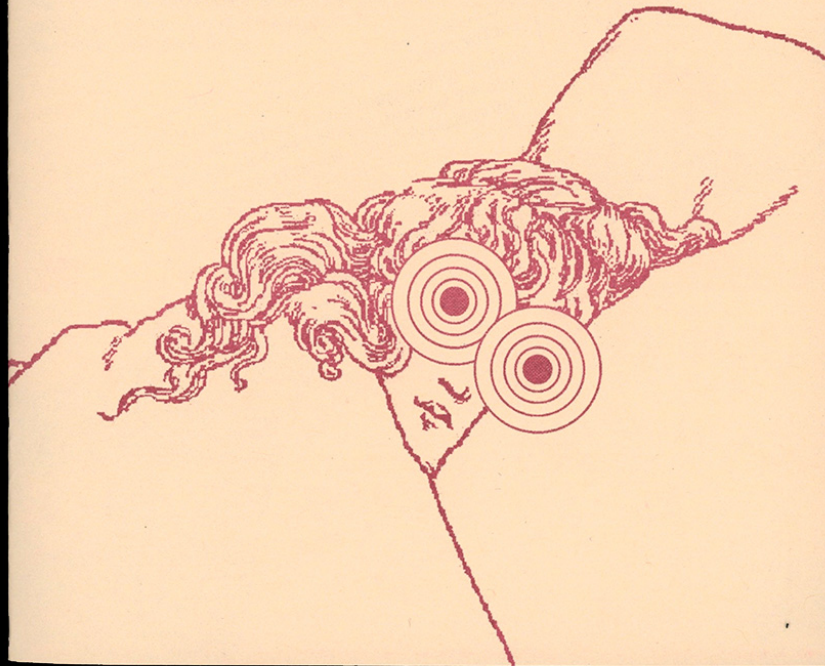


**Bedtime
Stories for the
Despairing
Precariat by
Hans Christian
Andersen**

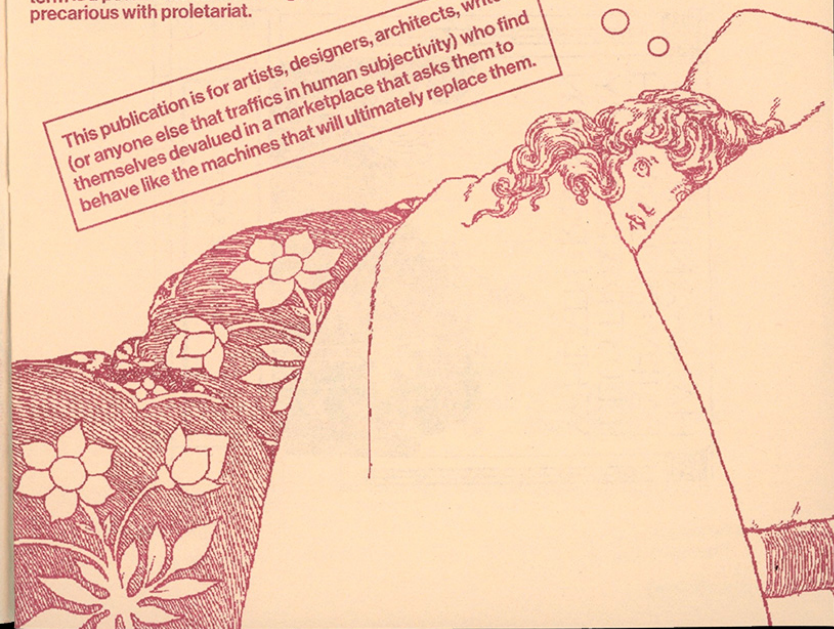
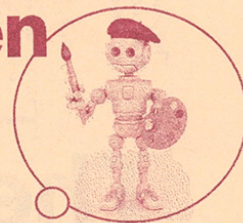


Compiled and Annotated by Sally Thurer

Bedtime Stories for the Despairing Precariat by Hans Christian Andersen

The precariat is a social class formed by people suffering from precarity. It is a condition of existence without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare. The term is a portmanteau that merges precarious with proletariat.

This publication is for artists, designers, architects, writers (or anyone else that traffics in human subjectivity) who find themselves devalued in a marketplace that asks them to behave like the machines that will ultimately replace them.



The Princess and The Pea is about cultural capital—connoisseurship as a flex—the idea that refined sensibilities are what separates the royalty from the rabble.

But like The Emperor's New Clothes and The Nightingale, the other stories in this booklet, it is also an interrogation of pretense.

The prince's inability to discern fake from real calls into question his own refinement. Is he even a real prince?

THE REAL PRINCESS

THERE was once a Prince who wished to marry a Princess; but when she must be a real Princess. He travelled all over the world in hopes of finding such a lady; but there was always something wrong. Princesses it he found in plenty, but whether they were real Princesses it was (impossible for him to decide) for now one thing, now another, seemed to him not quite right about the ladies. At last, he returned to his palace quite cast down, because he wished so much to have a real Princess for his wife.

One evening a fearful tempest arose; it thundered and lightened, and the rain poured down from the sky in torrents; besides, it was as dark as pitch. All at once there was heard a violent knocking at the door, and the old King, the Prince's father, went out himself to open it.

It was a Princess who was standing outside the door. What with the rain and the wind, she was in a sad condition: the water trickled down from her hair, and her clothes clung to her body. She said she was a real Princess.

'Ah, we shall soon see that!' thought the old Queen-mother; however, she said not a word of what she was going to do, but went quietly into the bedroom, took all the bed-clothes off the bed, and put three little peas on the bedstead. She then laid twenty mattresses one upon another over the three peas, and put twenty feather-beds over the mattresses. Upon this bed the Princess was to pass the night.

He literally has to ask his mom.

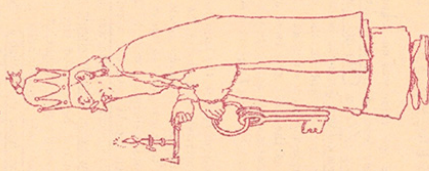
The Princess



and

THE REAL PRINCESS

The next morning she was asked how she had slept. 'Oh, very badly indeed!' she replied. 'I have scarcely closed my eyes the whole night through. I do not know what was in my bed, but I had something hard under me, and am all over black and blue. It has hurt me so much!'



THE OLD KING HIMSELF WENT OUT TO OPEN IT

the Pea

Are you real or an impostor?

What is the test?

Is the test real? Did you pass?

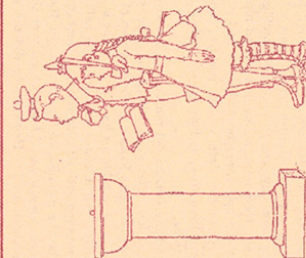
What is the role of the museum in this story?

If the prince's can't discern fake from real, why does it matter?

Does it matter?

HANS ANDERSEN

Now it was plain that the lady must be a real Princess, since she had been able to feel the three little peas through the twenty mattresses and twenty feather-beds. (None but a real Princess could have had such a delicate sense of feeling.)



THE PEAS WERE PRESENTED IN THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

Andersen never confirms that she is, in fact, a real princess, only that the prince becomes convinced of it.

She passes the test, but is it a real test? It is persuasive, but is it effective?

Faith in the test is fortified through the ceremony of display.

1835

The Prince accordingly made her his wife, being now convinced that he had found a real Princess. The three peas were, however, put into the cabinet of curiosities, where they are still to be seen, provided they are not lost.

The original Danish is, "Se, det var en rigtig historie!" A better translation would be "See, it was a real story!" But, without the peas there is no proof it is a real story. It's circular logic.

If we trust the veracity of the test, the princess is real. If we trust the storyteller, the story is real.

Evidence that the Emperor
is unfit for office.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

MANY years ago, there was an Emperor, who was so excessively fond of new clothes that he sent all his money to dress. (He did not trouble himself in the least about his soldiers) nor did he care to go either to the theatre or the chase, except for the opportunities then afforded him for displaying his new clothes. He had a different suit for each hour of the day; and as of any other king or emperor one is accustomed to say, 'He is sitting in council,' it was always said of him, 'The Emperor is sitting in his wardrobe.'

Time passed away merrily in the large town which was his capital; strangers arrived every day at the court. One day, two rogues, calling themselves weavers, made their appearance. They gave out that they knew how to weave stuffs of the most beautiful colours and elaborate patterns, the clothes manufactured from which should have the wonderful property of remaining invisible to every one who was unfit for the office he held, or who was extraordinarily simple in character.

'These must indeed be splendid clothes!' thought the Emperor. 'Had I such a suit, I might, at once, find out what men in my realm are unfit for their office, and also be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish.' This stuff must be woven for me immediately. And he caused large sums of money to be given to both the weavers, in order that they might begin their work directly.

The Emperor's inability to
discern wise from foolish calls
into question his own wisdom.

This is quite dark, because one would hope
that any minister who felt they were not
fit for office would resign—not grasp onto
underserved power.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

frames. The poor old minister looked and looked, he could not discover anything on the looms, for a very good reason, viz. there was nothing there. 'What!' thought he again, 'is it possible that I am a simpleton? I have never thought so myself; and no one must know it now if I am so. Can it be that I am unfit for my office? No, that must not be said either. I will never confess that I could not see the stuff.'

'Well, Sir Minister,' said one of the knaves, still pretending to work, 'you do not say whether the stuff pleases you.'

'Oh, it is excellent!' replied the old minister, looking at the loom through his spectacles. 'This pattern, and the colours—yes, I will tell the Emperor without delay how very beautiful I think them.'

'We shall be much obliged to you,' said the impostors, and then they named the different colours and described the pattern of the pretended stuff. The old minister listened attentively to their words, in order that he might repeat them to the Emperor; and then the knaves asked for more silk and gold, saying that it was necessary to complete what they had begun. However, they put all that was given them into their knapsacks, and continued to work with as much apparent diligence as before at their empty looms.

The Emperor now sent another officer of his court to see how the men were getting on, and to ascertain whether the cloth would soon be ready. It was just the same with this gentleman as with the minister; he surveyed the looms on all sides, but could see nothing at all but the empty frames.



'OH, IT IS EXCELLENT!'
SAID THE MINISTER

New Clothes

Like The Princess and The Pea, The Emperor's New Clothes is an interrogation of pretense
...but we get a different view. We only suspect the princess is an impostor.
We know the weavers are impostors.

HANS ANDERSEN

So the two pretended weavers set up two looms, and affected to work very busily, though in reality they did nothing at all. They asked for the most delicate silk and the purest gold thread, put both into their own knapsacks, and then continued their pretended work at the empty looms until late at night.

'I should like to know how the weavers are getting on with my cloth,' said the Emperor to himself, after some little time had elapsed; he was, however, rather embarrassed, when he remembered that a simpleton, or one unfit for his office, would be unable to see the manufacture. 'To be sure,' he thought, 'he had nothing to risk in his own person; but yet, he would prefer sending somebody else, to bring him intelligence about the weavers, and their work, before he troubled himself in the affair.' All the people throughout the city had heard of the wonderful property the cloth was to possess; and all were anxious to learn how wise, or how ignorant, their neighbours might prove to be.

'I will send my faithful old minister to the weavers,' said the Emperor at last, after some deliberation, 'he will be best able to see how the cloth looks; for he is a man of sense, and no one can be more suitable for his office than he is.'

So the faithful old minister went into the hall, where the knaves were working with all their might at their empty looms. 'What can be the meaning of this?' thought the old man, opening his eyes very wide. 'I cannot discover the least bit of thread on the looms!' However, he did not express his thoughts aloud.

The impostors requested him very courteously to be so good as to come nearer their looms; and then asked him whether the design pleased him, and whether the colours were not very beautiful, at the same time pointing to the empty

HANS ANDERSEN

'Does not the stuff appear as beautiful to you as it did to my lord the minister?' asked the impostors of the Emperor's second ambassador; at the same time making the same gestures as before, and talking of the design and colours which were not there.

'I certainly am not stupid!' thought the messenger. 'It must be that I am not fit for my good, profitable office! That is very odd; however, no one shall know anything about it.'

And accordingly he praised the stuff he could not see, and declared that he was delighted with both colours and patterns. 'Indeed, please your Imperial Majesty,' said he to his sovereign, when he returned, 'the cloth which the weavers are preparing is extraordinarily magnificent.'

The whole city was talking of the splendid cloth which the Emperor had ordered to be woven at his own expense.

And now the Emperor himself wished to see the costly manufacture whilst it was still on the looms. Accompanied by a select number of officers of the court, among whom were the two honest men who had already admired the cloth, he went to the crafty impostors, who, as soon as they were aware of the Emperor's approach, went on working more diligently than ever, although they still did not pass a single thread through the looms.

'Is not the work absolutely magnificent?' said the two officers of the Crown, already mentioned. 'If your Majesty will only be pleased to look at it! what a splendid design! what glorious colours!' and, at the same time, they pointed to the empty frames; for they imagined that every one else could see this exquisite piece of workmanship.

'How is this?' said the Emperor to himself. 'I can see nothing! this is indeed a terrible affair! Am I a simpleton, or

Consider that, by this point in the story, the Emperor believes himself to be unfit for office.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

am I unfit to be an Emperor? that would be the worst thing I could be happy. Oh! the cloth is charming," said he aloud. "It has my complete approbation." And he smiled most graciously, and looked closely at the empty looms; for on no account would he say that he could not see what two of the officers of his court had praised so much. All his retinue now strained their eyes, hoping to discover something on the looms, but they could see no more than the others; nevertheless, they all exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful! and advised his Majesty to have some new clothes made from this splendid material, for the approaching procession. "Magnificent! charming! excellent!" resounded on all sides; and every one was uncommonly gay. The Emperor shared in the general satisfaction, and presented the impostors with the ribbon of an order of knight-hood, to be worn in their button-holes, and the title of "Gentlemen Weavers."

The rogues sat up the whole of the night before the day on which the procession was to take place, and had sixteen lights burning, so that every one might see how anxious they were to finish the Emperor's new suit. They pretended to roll the cloth off the looms; cut the air with their scissors; and sewed with needles without any thread in them. "See!" cried they at last, "the Emperor's new clothes are ready!"

And now the Emperor, with all the grandees of his court, came to the weavers; and the rogues raised their arms, as if in the act of holding something up, saying, "Here are your Majesty's trousers! here is the scarf! here is the mantle! The whole suit is as light as a cobweb; one might fancy one has



The deception exploits the erosion of trust among the ministers and is fortified through the ceremony of the award.

It's circular logic. The merit of the award depends on the wisdom of the Emperor. If the Emperor is foolish, the award is without merit.

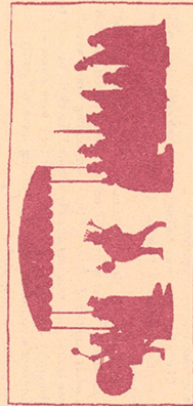
HANS ANDERSEN

nothing at all on, when dressed in it; that, however, is the great virtue of this delicate cloth.

"Yes, indeed!" said all the courtiers, although not one of them could see anything of this exquisite manufacture.

"If your Imperial Majesty will be graciously pleased to take off your clothes, we will fit on the new suit in front of the looking-glass."

The Emperor was accordingly undressed, and the rogues



SO NOW THE EMPEROR WALKED UNDER HIS HIGH CANOPY

pretended to array him in his new suit; the Emperor turning round, from side to side, before the looking-glass.

"How splendid his Majesty looks in his new clothes! and how well they fit!" every one cried out. ("What a design what colours! these are indeed royal robes!")

"The canopy which is to be borne over your Majesty in the procession is waiting," announced the chief master of the ceremonies.

"I am quite ready," answered the Emperor. "Do my new clothes fit well?" asked he, turning himself round again before

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

the looking-glass, in order that he might appear to be examining his handsome suit.

The lords of the bed-chamber, who were to carry his Majesty's train, felt about on the ground, as if they were lifting up the ends of the mantle, and pretending to be carrying something; for they would by no means betray anything like simplicity or unfitness for their office.

So now the Emperor walked under his high canopy in the midst of the procession, through the streets of his capital; and



all the people standing by, and those at the windows, cried out, "Oh! how beautiful are our Emperor's new clothes! what a magnificent train there is to the mantle! and how gracefully the scarf hangs!" In short, no one would allow that he could not see these much-admired clothes; because, in doing so, he would have declared himself either a simpleton or unfit for his office. Certainly, none of the Emperor's various suits had ever made so great an impression as these invisible ones.

"But the Emperor has nothing at all on!" said a little child. Listen to the voice of innocence! exclaimed his father; and what the child had said was whispered from one to another.

When child reveals the pretense, one might expect a revolution, the Emperor is unfit for office, and everyone knows it...even the Emperor himself.

The symbolic eviscerates the real!

For those who traffic in human subjectivity, it threatens to eviscerate the self

which is why GenXers punish each other for "selling out" and BK hipsters make artisanal chocolate

or in the case of the Mast Bros., repackaged Hershey bars as artisanal chocolate and nobody can tell the difference because the product (real) has taken a backseat to the branding/positioning (symbolic).

But that's not what happens!

HANS ANDERSEN

"But he has nothing at all on!" at last cried out all the people. The Emperor was vexed, for he knew that the people were right; but he thought the procession must go on now! And the lords of the bed-chamber took greater pains than ever to appear looking up a train, although, in reality, there was no train to hold.

Nothing happens! The symbolic eclipses the real!

The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth - it is the truth which conceals that there is none.

The simulacrum is true. (Ecclesiastes)

Jean Baudrillard attributes this quote to Ecclesiastes.

However, it is a fabrication.



Simulacra and Simulation
Jean Baudrillard
1981

The transition from signs which dissimulate something to signs which dissimulate that there is nothing marks the decisive turning point. The first implies a theology of truth and secrecy (to which the notion of ideology still belongs). The second inaugurates an age of simulacra and simulation, in which there is no longer any God to recognise his own, nor any last judgement to separate true from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance.

In the "age of the simulacra and simulation" the symbolic becomes more important, not less! The symbolic takes the place of the real.

The elite who inhabit the garden cannot appreciate beauty without relying on bells.

Do you rely on bells?

THE NIGHTINGALE

IN China, as you well know, the Emperor is Chinese, and all around him are Chinese also. Now what I am about to relate happened many years ago, but even on that very account it is the more important that you should bear the story now, before it is forgotten.

The Emperor's palace was the most magnificent palace in the world; it was made entirely of fine porcelain, exceedingly costly; but at the same time so brittle, that it was dangerous even to touch it.

Bells=graphic design?

The choicest flowers were to be seen in the garden; and to the most splendid of all these little (silver bells) were fastened, in order that their tinkling might prevent any one from passing by without noticing them.

Yes! everything in the Emperor's garden was excellently well arranged; and the garden extended so far, that even the gardener did not know the end of it: who ever walked beyond it, however, came to a beautiful wood, with very high trees; and beyond that, to the sea. The wood went down quite to the sea, which was very deep and blue; large ships could sail close under the branches; and among the branches dwelt a nightingale, who sang so sweetly, that even the (poor fallerman) who had so much else to do, when he came out at night-time to cast his nets, would stand still and listen to her song.

Oh! how pretty that is! he would say—but then he was obliged to mind his work, and forget the bird; yet the following night, if again the nightingale sang, and the

The designed garden vs. the undesigned wood.

The peasant doesn't rely on bells.

His enjoyment of beauty is unmediated.

The circular logic of filtration...

In a market economy, if it's not for sale it doesn't exist.

- Examples of "court" in contemporary life:
- The "Art World"
- The Internet
- The Market Economy

The Nightingale

The greatest beauty comes from outside the court

HANS ANDERSEN

fisherman came out, again he would say, 'Oh! how pretty that is!'

Travellers came from all parts of the world to the Emperor's city; and they admired the city, the palace, and the garden; but if they heard the nightingale, they all said, 'This is the best.' And they talked about her after they went home, and the learned men wrote books about the city, the palace, and the garden; nor did they forget the nightingale: she was extolled above everything else; and poets wrote the most beautiful verses about the nightingale of the wood near the sea.

These books went round the world, and one of them at last reached the Emperor. He was sitting in his golden arm-chair; he read and read, and nodded his head every moment; for these splendid descriptions of the city, the palace, and the garden pleased him greatly. 'But the nightingale is the best of all,' was written in the book.

'What in the world is this?' said the Emperor. 'The nightingale! I do not know it at all! Can there be such a bird in my empire, in my garden even, without my having even heard of it? Truly one may learn something from books.'

So he called his Cavalier; now this was so grand a personage, that no one of inferior rank might speak to him; and if one did venture to ask him a question, his only answer was 'Pish!' which has no particular meaning.

'Pish!' which has no particular meaning. 'The nightingale,' said the Emperor; 'her song, they say, is worth more than anything else in all my dominions; why has no one ever told me of her?'

'I have never before heard her mentioned,' said the Cavalier; 'she has never been presented at court.'

'I want her to come, and sing before me this evening,' said

worth

The sensibilities of the court pages are so crude that (without "bells") they cannot distinguish a nightingale from a

cow or a frog.

HANS ANDERSEN

mission to see His Majesty the Emperor dine, if you will conduct us to the nightingale, for she is expected at court this evening.'

So they went together to the wood, where the nightingale was accustomed to sing; and half the court went with them. Whilst on their way, a cow began to low.

'Oh!' said the court pages, 'now we have her! It is certainly an extraordinary voice for so small an animal; surely I have heard it somewhere before.'

'No, those are cows you hear lowing,' said the little kitchen-maid, 'we are still far from the place.'

The frogs were now croaking in the pond.

'That is famous!' said the chief court-preacher, 'now I hear her; it sounds just like little church-bells.'

'No, those are frogs,' said the little kitchen-maid, 'but now I think we shall soon hear her.'

Then began the nightingale to sing.

'There she is!' said the little girl. 'Listen! listen! there she sits,' and she pointed to a little grey bird up in the branches.

'Is it possible?' said the Cavalier. 'I should not have thought it. How simple she looks! she must certainly have changed colour at the sight of so many distinguished persons.'

'Little nightingale!' called out the kitchen-maid, 'our gracious Emperor wishes you to sing something to him.'

'With the greatest pleasure,' said the nightingale, and she sang in such a manner that it was delightful to hear her.

'It sounds like glass bells,' said the Cavalier. 'And look at her little throat: how it moves! It is singular that we should never have heard her before; she will have great success at court.'

Cavalier understands the song as "bells."

THE NIGHTINGALE

the Emperor. 'The whole world knows what I have, and I do not know it myself!'

'I have never before heard her mentioned,' said the Cavalier, 'but I will seek her, I will find her.'

But where was she to be found? The Cavalier ran up one flight of steps, down another, through halls, and through passages; not one of all whom he met had ever heard of the nightingale; and the Cavalier returned to the Emperor, and said, 'It must certainly be an invention of the man who wrote the book. Your Imperial Majesty must not believe all that is written in books; much in them is pure invention, and there is what is called the Black Art.'

'But the book in which I have read it,' said the Emperor, 'was sent me by the high and mighty Emperor of Japan, and therefore it cannot be untrue. I wish to hear the nightingale; she must be here this evening, and if she do not come, after supper the whole court shall be flogged.'

'Thing-ee!' said the Cavalier; and again he ran upstairs, and downstairs, through halls, and through passages, and half the court ran with him; for not one would have relished the flogging. Many were the questions asked respecting the wonderful nightingale, whom the whole world talked of, and about whom no one at court knew anything.

At last they met a (poor little girl) in the kitchen, who said, 'Oh yes! the nightingale! I know her very well. Oh! how she can sing! Every evening I carry the fragments left at table to my poor sick mother. She lives by the sea-shore; and when I am coming back, and stay to rest a little in the wood, I hear the nightingale sing; it makes the tears come into my eyes! it is just as if my mother kissed me.'

'Little kitchen maid!' said the Cavalier, 'I will procure for you a sure appointment in the kitchen, together with per-

Again... the poor are able to enjoy beauty unmediated by pretension of the court.

An assessment of the nightingale as a commodity.

1843

The nightingale is so far outside the world of the court that she doesn't recognize the Emperor.

THE NIGHTINGALE

'Shall I sing again to the Emperor?' asked the nightingale, for she thought the Emperor was among them.
'Most excellent nightingale!' said the Cavalier. 'I have the honour to invite you to a court festival, which is to take place this evening, when His Imperial Majesty will be enchanted with your delightful song.'
'My song would sound far better among the green trees,

The pretensions of the court interfere with the enjoyment of the music.



ABOVE: THE BEAVER DRESS A NIGHTINGALE

said the nightingale; however, she followed willingly when she heard that the Emperor wished it.
There was a regular trimming and polishing at the palace; the walls and the floors, which were all of porcelain, glittered with a thousand gold lamps; the loveliest flowers, with the rarest tinkling bells, were placed in the passages; there was a running to and fro, which made all the bells to ring, so that one could not hear his own words.

The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction
Walter Benjamin
1936

The imitation nightingale is hyperreal.

THE NIGHTINGALE

All the city was talking of the wonderful bird; and when two persons met, one would say only 'night,' and the other 'gale,' and then they sighed, and understood each other perfectly; indeed even of the children of the citizens were named after the nightingale, but none of them had her tones in their throats.

One day a large parcel arrived for the Emperor, on which was written 'Nightingale.'

'Here we have another new book about our far-famed bird,' said the Emperor. But it was not a book; it was a little piece of mechanism, lying in a box; an artificial nightingale, which was intended to look like the living one, but was covered all over with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. When this artificial bird had been wound up, it could sing one of the tunes that the real nightingale sang; and its tail, all glittering with silver and gold, went up and down all the time. A little band was fastened round its neck, on which was written, 'The nightingale of the Emperor of China is poor compared with the nightingale of the Emperor of Japan.'

'That is famous!' said every one; and he who had brought the bird obtained the title of 'Chief Imperial Nightingale Bringer.' 'Now they shall sing together; we will have a duet.'

And so they must sing together; but it did not succeed, for the real nightingale sang in her own way, and the artificial bird produced its tones by wheels. 'It is not his fault,' said the artist, 'he keeps exact time and quite according to method.' So the artificial bird must now sing alone; he was quite as successful as the real nightingale; and then he was so much prettier to look at; his plumage sparkled like jewels.

Three and thirty times he sang one and the same tune, and yet he was not weary; every one would willingly have heard

Disneyland tells us that faked nature corresponds much more to our daytime demands. When, in the space of twenty-four hours, you go (as I did deliberately) from the fake New Orleans of Disneyland to the real one, and from the wild river of Adventureland to a trip on the Mississippi, where the captain of the paddle-wheel

HANS ANDERSEN

In the midst of the grand hall where the Emperor sat, a golden perch was erected, on which the nightingale was to sit. The whole court was present, and the little kitchen-maid received permission to stand behind the door, for she had now actually the rank and title of 'Maid of the Kitchen.' All were dressed out in their finest clothes; and all eyes were fixed upon the little grey bird, to whom the Emperor nodded as a signal for her to begin.

And the nightingale sang so sweetly, that tears came into the Emperor's eyes (tears rolled down his cheeks), and the nightingale sang more sweetly still, and touched the hearts of all who heard her; and the Emperor was so merry, that he said, 'The nightingale should have his golden slippers, and wear them round her neck.' But the nightingale thanked him, and said she was already sufficiently rewarded.

'I have seen tears in the Emperor's eyes; that is the greatest reward I can have. The tears of an Emperor have a particular value. Heaven knows I am sufficiently rewarded.' And then she sang again with her sweet, lovely voice.

'It is the most amiable coquetry ever known,' said the ladies present; and they put water into their mouths, and tried to move their throats as she did when they spoke; they thought to become nightingales also. Indeed even the footmen and chamber-maids, declared that they were quite contented; which was a great thing to say, for of all people they are the most difficult to satisfy. Yes indeed! the nightingale's success was complete. She was now to remain at court, to have her own cage; with permission to fly out twice in the day; and once in the night. Twelve attendants were allotted her, who were to hold a silken band, fastened round her foot; and they kept good hold. There was no pleasure in excursions made in this manner.

Commodification disrupts, the nightingale's artistic process.

mystification again enters. The meaning of the original work no longer lies in what it uniquely says but in what it uniquely is. How is its unique existence evaluated and defined in our present culture?

Ways of Seeing
John Berger
1972

the robot is more suited to the public symbolic function than the real bird because within the bounds of ceremony, what the nightingale uniquely says is less important than what she is.

HANS ANDERSEN

him again; however, the Emperor now wished the real nightingale should sing something—but where was she? No one had remarked that she had flown out of the open window; flown away to her own green wood.

'What is the meaning of this?' said the Emperor; and all the courtiers abused the nightingale, and called her a most ungrateful creature. 'We have the best bird at all events,' said they, and for the four and thirtieth time they heard the same tune, but still they did not quite know it, because it was so difficult. The artist praised the bird inordinately; indeed he declared it was superior to the real nightingale, not only in its exterior, all sparkling with diamonds, but also intrinsically.

'For see, my noble lords, his Imperial Majesty especially, with the real nightingale, one could never reckon on what was coming; but everything is settled with the artificial bird; he will sing in this one way, and no other: this can be proved, he can be taken to pieces, and the works can be shown' where the wheels lie, how they move, and how one follows from another. 'That is just what I think,' said everybody; and the artist received permission to show the bird to the people on the following Sunday. They too should hear him sing, the Emperor said. So they heard him, and were as well pleased as if they had all been drinking tea; for it is tea that makes Chinese merry, and they all said oh! and raised their fore-fingers, and nodded their heads. But the fisherman, who had heard the real nightingale, said, 'It sounds very pretty, almost like the real bird; but yet there is something wanting. I do not know what.

The real nightingale was, however, banished the empire. The artificial bird had his place on a silken cushion, close to the Emperor's bed; all the presents he received, gold and precious stones, lay around him; he had obtained the rank and title of 'High Imperial Dessert Singer,' and, therefore, his

The symbolic eviscerates the real!

• subjectivity
• meaning
• artistry

The "fake" nightingale corresponds more closely to our daytime demands.

Travels in Hyperreality
Umberto Eco
1975

"One can never explain art through analysis and analysis can serve at best as intellectual gymnastics. However, encourage one to make a direct contact with works of art!"
PETER HAY

THE NIGHTINGALE

place was number one on the left side; for the Emperor thought that the side where the heart was situated was the most honourable, and the heart is situated on the left side of an Emperor, as well as with other folks.

And the artist wrote five and twenty volumes about the artificial bird, with the longest and most difficult words that are to be found in the Chinese language. So, of course, all said they had read and understood them, otherwise they would have been stupid, and perhaps would have been flogged!

The power of the court is fortified through the "mystification" of music (and threats of violence)

Thus it went on for a year. The Emperor, the court, and all the Chinese knew every note of the artificial bird's song by heart; but that was the very reason they enjoyed it so much, they could now sing with him. The little boys in the street sang 'Zizi, chick, chick, chick!' and the Emperor himself sang too—yes indeed, that was charming!

But one evening, when the bird was in full voice, and the Emperor lay in bed, and listened, there was suddenly a noise, 'bang,' inside the bed, then something sprang 'fure-e-x,' all the wheels were running about, and the music stopped.

The Emperor jumped quickly out of bed, and had his chief physician called; but of what use could he be? Then a clock-maker was fetched, and at last, after a great deal of discussion and consultation, the bird was in some measure put to rights again; but the clockmaker said he must be spared much singing, for the pegs were almost worn out, and it was impossible to renew them, at least so that the music should be correct.

There was great lamentation, for now the artificial bird was allowed to sing only once a year, and even then there were difficulties; however, the artist made a short speech full of his favourite long words, and said the bird was as good as ever; so then, of course, it was as good as ever!

When five years were passed away, a great affliction visited

International Art English (IAE)

HANS, ANDERSEN

the whole empire, for in their hearts the people thought highly of their Emperor; and now he was ill, and it was reported that he could not live. A new Emperor had already been chosen, and the people stood in the street, outside the palace, and asked the Cavalier how the Emperor was?

'Fish!' said he, and shook his head.

Cold and pale lay the Emperor in his magnificent bed; all the court believed him to be already dead, and every one had hastened away to greet the new Emperor; the men ran out for a little gossip on the subject, and the maids were having a grand coffee-party.

The floors of all the rooms and passages were covered with cloth, in order that not a step should be heard—it was everywhere so still! But the Emperor was not yet dead; stiff and pale he lay in his splendid bed, with the long velvet curtains, and heavy gold tassels. A window was opened above, and the moon shone down on the Emperor and the artificial bird.

The poor Emperor could scarcely breathe; it appeared to him as though something was sitting on his chest; he opened his eyes, and saw that it was Death, who had put on the Emperor's crown, and with one hand held the golden scimitar, with the other the splendid imperial banner; whilst, from under the folds of the thick velvet hangings, the strangest-looking heads were seen peering forth; some with an expression absolutely hideous, and others with an extremely gentle and lovely aspect: they were the bad and good deeds of the Emperor, which were now all fixing their eyes upon him, whilst Death sat on his heart.

'Dost thou know this?' they whispered one after another. 'Dost thou remember that?' And they began reproaching him in such a manner that the sweat broke out upon his forehead.

The Culture Industry

Adorno & Horkheimer

1944

The development of the culture industry has led to the predominance of the effect, the obvious touch, and the technical detail over the work itself—which once expressed an idea, but was liquidated together with the idea. When the detail won its freedom, it became rebellious and, in the period from Romanticism to Expressionism, asserted itself as free expression, as a vehicle of protest against the organization.

familiar and unchallenging "effect" over the work itself

The court is loyal to the symbol not the person.

Emperor looks to art for distraction from his guilt.

THE NIGHTINGALE

'I have never known anything like it,' said the Emperor. 'Music, music! the great Chinese drum!' cried he; 'let me not hear what they are saying.'

They went on, however; and Death, quite in the Chinese fashion, nodded his head to every word.

'Music, music!' cried the Emperor. 'Thou dear little artificial bird! sing, I pray thee, sing!—I have given thee gold and precious stones, I have even hung my golden slippers round thy neck—sing, I pray thee, sing!'

But the bird was silent; there was no one there to wind him up, and he could not sing without this. Death continued to stare at the Emperor with his great hollow eyes! and everywhere it was still, fearfully still!

All at once the sweetest song was heard from the window; it was the little living nightingale who was sitting on a branch outside—she had heard of her Emperor's severe illness, and was come to bring to him of comfort and hope. As she sang, the spoked forms became paler and paler, the blood flowed more and more quickly through the Emperor's feeble members, and even Death listened and said, 'Go on, little nightingale, go on!'

'Willst thou give me the splendid gold scimitar? Willst thou give me the gay banner, and the Emperor's crown?'

And Death gave up all these treasures for a song; and the nightingale sang on; she sang of the quiet churchyard, where white roses blossom, where the lilac sends forth its fragrance, and the fresh grass is bedewed with the tears of the sorrowing friends of the departed. Then Death was seized with a longing after his garden, and like a cold white shadow, flew out at the window.

'Thanks, thanks,' said the Emperor, 'thou heavenly little bird, I know thee well. I have banished thee from my realm, and thou hast sung away those evil faces from my bed, and Death from my heart; how shall I reward thee?'

Like the bells, the nightingale calls attention to the beauty of the natural world but manages to touch their hearts.

Bedtime Stories for the Despairing Precariat by Hans Christian Andersen Compiled and annotated by Sally Thurer

The nightingale's message (her mission) is to strip away pretense, and reveal truth—what is concealed from the Emperor by the rituals of the court.

HANS ANDERSEN

'Thou hast already rewarded me,' said the nightingale; 'I have seen tears in thine eyes, as when I sang to thee for the first time: those I shall never forget, they are jewels which do so much good to a minstrel's heart! but sleep now, and wake fresh and healthy; I will sing thee to sleep.'

And she sang—and the Emperor fell into a sweet sleep. Oh, how soft and kindly was that sleep!

The sun shone in at the window when he awoke, strong and healthy. Not one of his servants had returned, for they all believed him dead; but the nightingale still sat and sang.

'Thou shalt always stay with me,' said the Emperor; 'thou shalt only sing when it pleases thee, and the artificial bird I will break into a thousand pieces.'

'Do not so,' said the nightingale; 'truly he has done what he could; take care of him. I cannot stay in the palace; but let me come when I like: I will sit on the branches close to the window, in the evening, and sing to thee, that thou mayest become happy and thoughtful. I will sing to thee of the joyful and the sorrowing. I will sing to thee of all that is good or bad, which is concealed from thee. The little minstrel flies afar to the fisherman's hut, to the peasant's cottage, to all who are far distant from thee and thy court. I love thy heart more than thy crown, and yet the crown has an odour of something holy about it. I will come, I will sing. But thou must promise me one thing: loyal to the person, not the symbol.'

'Everything,' said the Emperor. And now he stood in his imperial splendour, which he had put on himself, and held the scimitar so heavy with gold to his heart. 'One thing I beg of thee: let no one know that thou hast a little bird, who tells thee everything, then all will go on well.' And the nightingale flew away.

The attendants came in to look at their dead Emperor. Lo! there they stood—and the Emperor said, 'Good-morning!'

nightingale = Christ

Outside the bounds of ceremony, what the nightingale uniquely says is more important than what she is.

txtreader is a series of short zines that aims to give a platform to errant thoughts, dumb jokes, and approximated projects by a range of artists.

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The nightingale offers something beyond distraction

Do you mediate beauty?
Do you speak truth or hype?

Are you a bell?
Are you a nightingale?

Sally Thurer is an independent art director, graphic designer, illustrator and animator in Brooklyn. She received her MFA from The Yale School of Art and is the former co-founder and creative director of Missbehave Magazine. For more than a decade, Sally has been doing design and illustration work for clients like Bloomberg Businessweek, The New York Times and Nike. She is the only employee ever to hold the title "Head of Experiential Methodology and Critical Theory" at MTV. Sally is best-known on Instagram for an account called Bootlegwiki which functions as a an informal platform for the endorsement of appropriation and piracy. Like just about everyone else making design, her work has been knocked-off and sold at Urban Outfitters...but she's totally cool with it. She teaches graphic design at Pratt.

Signed Copy

sallythurer.com
instagram.com/bootlegwiki

'But he has nothing at all on!' at last cried out all the people. The Emperor was vexed, for he knew that the people were right; but he thought the procession must go on now! And the lords of the bed-chamber took greater pains than ever to appear holding up a train, although, in reality, there was no train to hold.

