Brian Rappert

Revelations

A Sociology of Uncovering

REVELATIONS

From tabloid headlines to scientific discoveries to investigative documentaries, the claim that truth is being revealed is commonplace today. Such attention-grabbing claims can conjure allure, sell products, launch careers, cement authority and much more besides.

And yet, despite the familiarity of revelation-talk, this notion has been subject to limited academic theorizing to date outside of matters divine. *Revelations* sets out to examine how the making available through revealing is accomplished as well as the implications of revealing. In other words, it is concerned with how revelations are realized and what is realized through them. Central to the argument will be treating attempts to make available as processes that can entail mix – that is, as processes that combine treating truth as publicly demonstrable but also as beyond simple verification, as alternately intelligible but also as unknowable.

In taking the pervasive appeal to revealing as its topic, and through drawing inspiration from a range of disciplines, this book should appeal to a variety of audiences, including those interested in secrecy, conspiracy, expertise, celebrity, science and technology.

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CONTENTS

FIGURES AND BOXES

Figures

Box

PREFACE

From tabloid headlines to scientific discoveries to investigative documentaries, appeals to revealing are commonplace today. Such attention-grabbing claims can conjure allure, sell products, launch careers, bestow authority and much more besides. And yet, despite the familiarity of revelation-talk, this notion has been subject to limited academic theorizing to date outside of matters divine.

Through an unflinching commitment to detail, *Revelations* provides an unprecedented examination of how the will to disclose infuses topics such as authenticating artwork, apprehending gambling scams, writing life histories, leaking classified documents, outing workplace harassment and more besides. Ta-da.

As elaborated in the pages that follow, however, the real story of revelation is more nuanced. Through drawing on a range of insider accounts, this book illustrates how revelation can entail more than an attempt to establish a firm grasp on the world. Revelations and the visions built upon them will be shown through this book to not just derive from the assertion of definitely exposing. Instead, movement and mix – belief and skepticism, investment and divestment, 'things are what they seem' and 'things are not what they seem' – will be shown as together entailing what it means to reveal. Ta-da.

And not.

And not because in taking revelations as its topic for study, I want to avoid lapsing into the kind of language that featured in the previous paragraphs. Claims to 'the real story', what is beyond the surface and, more subtly, the very positing that there are acts out-there in the world that go by the designation of 'revelations' are the very kinds of commitments that often

underpin revealing. These commitments need to be topics for examination rather than argumentative rhetorical devices.

And yet, despite my intention to refrain from claiming to expose the (real) (hidden) (untold) true story about revelations in this book, there is no easy getting away from this logic. As with other revelations, this book seeks to enact a contrast. Whereas revelations have been understood in certain ways, through this book I want to offer an understanding of them in another way. And while I try to hold lightly distinctions between what is apparent/real, frontstage/backstage, inner/outer, fact/fiction and so on, such contrasts do subtly and grossly imbue the argument that follows.

For these reasons and others, there is no easy way to leave the rhetorics of revelation behind.[1] I offer *Revelations* not as a way out of – but a way into – the pulls, tensions and possibilities of making available. The aim is to promote awareness and sensitivities associated with our practices for attending to the world.

Note

1 To paraphrase the call made by Nathaniel Tkacz in his fascinating study of the politics of openness, see Nathaniel Tkacz, *Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 38.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCTV	Closed-circuit television system
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
KIA	Killed in action
NAS	National Academy of Sciences
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
WIA	Wounded in action

1

INTRODUCTION

An Initial Rendering

Revelations make available what was previously otherwise.

The political exposé is an archetypical form of revelation. Take one prominent example – journalist Bob Woodward's book *Fear: Trump in the White House*.[1] Centered on a globally recognized figure and written by an investigative reporter who had become a household name for many in connection to the Watergate scandal, *Fear* had the starting credentials to be regarded as a noteworthy account. Its publishers billed it as such in promising that Woodward:

> reveals in unprecedented detail the harrowing life inside President Donald Trump's White House and precisely how he makes decisions on major foreign and domestic policies…The focus is on the explosive debates and the decision-making in the Oval Office, the Situation Room, Air Force One and the White House residence.[2]

Beyond portraying the tumultuous inner workings of sequestered corridors of power, *Fear* also depicted a White House beset by division. Officials were said to limit information from the President himself due to concerns over his fitness for the job. Woodward's ability to get his interviewees to divulge lucid details despite the way they were otherwise said to strategically withhold information from their coworkers gave further reason for imparting *Fear* with import.

Such hefty exposés stand alongside other attention-grabbing kinds of revelations – the tabloid column that depicts the sordid affairs of a celebrity,

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the press conference that blows the whistle on a powerful corporation, the telltale gossip of the everyday and so on. There is also the subtler kind of revelation, often implying insights forged from painstaking work. The British Broadcasting Corporation's 2020 documentary 'Pompeii: New Secrets Revealed with Mary Beard' pitched itself as making such a contribution. There are also the solidarity-promoting revelations that seek to find public recognition for previously personalized troubles.

Such revelations enact a contrast. In its most general formulation, the contrast sought is between this and that. Whereas a celebrity, a corporation or Pompeii was previously understood in *this* way, post revelation it can be understood in *that* way. A more specific contrast is between appearance and reality. Another is between what was taken for granted and what is really the case. In distinguishing between this and that, revelations can rely on and perpetuate splits between before/after, inner/outer, knowledge/ignorance, fact/fiction, surface/depth, real/pretend, oppressive/emancipatory, public/private, sacred/mundane, manifest/hidden, esoteric/exoteric, etc.

The previous points speak to the conative and cognitive aspects of revealing. Not just any kind of making available will count as a revelation in this book though. As in the examples mentioned previously, revelations do not just entail making available, they entail a *charged* making available. In its most general formulation, charge is understood affectively as a 'lack of indifference'.[3] As will become evident in the arguments that follow, this lack of indifference is multifaceted. In general, charge derives from the ways making available is:

- *Ascribed with significance:* Significance is understood broadly as a designation that refers to the recognition of an offering rather than accord on the status of what is offered. Some may trust in the claims made, others may reject them. Those doing the revealing may or may not believe what they are asserting or implying.
- *Evoking:* Allure, bewilderment, joy, indignation, wonder and intrigue are just some names for emotions associated with the telling and hearing of what was previously untold or unknown.

These two aspects are interrelated as the generation of emotion and attributions of significance can feed each other.[4] Ascribing can prime emotive responses. When emotions are aroused, then what has been placed on the table can feel ever more noteworthy.

The stirrings associated with how we meet the world are provocatively gestured toward in an extract of the Buddha's *Fire Sermon*:

> The intellect is aflame. Ideas are aflame. Consciousness at the intellect is aflame. Contact at the intellect is aflame. And whatever there is that

> arises in dependence on contact at the intellect – experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain – that too is aflame. Aflame with what? Aflame with the fire of passion, the fire of aversion, the fire of delusion.[5]

This quote also signals the stakes in how we meet the world. The Buddha depicted lived experience as burning to underscore how we can be bound into patterns of thinking and feeling that serve us poorly. Clinging on tightly to views, including images of ourselves and others, provides sustenance for these fires of passion, aversion and delusion. For instance, iconic photographs said to reveal some skullduggery might 'be *taken* – but we are also taken in *by* them'.[6] In everyday language, we can get hooked. Conversely, at times, what is made available can be responded to with dismissal. This form of imputing has its own troubles.

The responses and fixations pointed to in the previous two paragraphs relate not only to what has been revealed but also the want to reveal. The desire to open a closed door, to 'uncover the cover-up',[7] to bring matters out into the light, to unveil, etc. are infused with expectations, vestments and longings. Indeed, the energies associated with the prospect of peering into a keyhole or unwrapping a gift can far exceed those that follow from learning what is inside.

Revelations offers a multidimensional analysis of what revealing entails. Through examining diverse instances of charged making available from the worlds of art, politics, religion, entertainment and current affairs, the intent is to ask how appeals to revealing across these domains can inform one another. More than surveying across topics, this book seeks to promote a dialogue between varied academic disciplines. However, insomuch as the focus is with how revelations are organized, performed, contested and experienced, the analysis provided could be characterized as sociological.

A Further Rendering

In offering some initial sketches, up until this point I have moved between using revealing, revelation and revealed as terms for identifying the topic for this book. However, the use of terminology demands more precise consideration because wording choices offer alternative conceptions of what is at hand.

Take the base word 'reveal'. Reveal can be a verb in the way that someone might reveal a secret. More specifically, this is a transitive verb; meaning it requires an object (in this case, a secret) to receive the action. Without a specified object, speaking with the language of 'reveal' as a verb makes little sense. Reveal, though, is also a noun. As a noun, the term directs attention to a specific thing; an instance of unveiling or some fact dramatically disclosed. 'Revelation' is a noun along these lines as well. That is, a noun

that refers to action, as in the Latin term *revelatio* that the English word 'revelation' derives from. Directing attention to acts is aligned with a concern about what is done by revealers. Revelation can also serve as a noun that signals some communicated content, such as when the term is taken to apply to theological beliefs. Herein, revelation refers to both a process and the result of that process. 'Revealing' serves as both a verb and an adjective. As a verb, it is typically taken as referring to the actions of revealers. As an adjective, it signals the qualities ascribed to what has been made available (as in 'a revealing biography'). Both the verb sense of reveal and revealing can be made more object-like if they are preceded by the definite article 'the' (as in 'the reveal'). With these alternative choices of terminology, alternative senses of what is at hand are implied.[8]

Secrecy Studies illustrates the importance of how topics are conceived. A central concern in the past in this field was with categorizing secrets. For instance, distinctions were drawn between 'mundane' and 'crucial' secrets.[9] However, recognition that nearly any claim – no matter how trivial or inconsequential in the abstract – can be fashioned into something noteworthy with the right kind of orchestrations has encouraged scholars to shift attention toward the practices associated with secrecy. Today in Secrecy Studies, the starting concern is predominantly with *how* more than *what*. In the spirit of how, secrecy is depicted as established through doings; spatial, temporal, socio-material, embodied, situated and cultural practices that bring about secrets and dissipate them. The central preoccupation is with understanding how secrecy is constituted.[10] William Walters advocated such an orientation to secrets by treating them as the outcomes of processes:

> we should see the secret not as a self-standing object but rather as the correlate and effect of a whole range of practical activities and social relations which themselves bring new identities and layers of material reality into the world.[11]

Such a process-minded orientation informs this book.[12]

And yet, even if I declare an interest more in processes than things, there are still diverse ways revelations can be conceived. Revelations could be determined from a third person point of view. Herein, that certain actions have been undertaken – an admission is uttered – would justify concluding that a revelation has taken place. Alternatively, subjective experiences might be regarded as crucial to what gets defined as a revelation. Herein, it would only be those actions that affect — the admission that stirs listeners — that would merit the label.

In treating revelations as acts characterized by a lack of indifference, the previous section was premised on the need to attend to subjective experiences.

And yet, even if we do so, still further questions such as 'Affect for who?' and 'In what respect?' need to be addressed.

Consider. A performer can gather a group of spectators around to demonstrate an astounding mental feat. In doing so, something of a shared base level lack of indifference might be said to be secured. Individual audience members might not be particularly excited by the prospect of what is to come, but inasmuch as they make the effort to attend to this scene rather than something else, it can be said that they are not indifferent. The performer can then undertake a set of preplanned actions. This could consist of asking a random audience member to think of any object, to draw that object on a piece of paper and then to display the drawing to others present. The performer could then reach into her jacket side pocket to produce a sealed envelope. Inside the envelope is a folded sheet of paper. Once opened, the paper could be shown to have a drawing of the very object sketched by the audience member. Ta-da.

With the displaying of the second drawing, some of those looking on might feel a sense of wonder, some not. Some might know how the feat was accomplished, which may – or may not – matter for their emotional response. The performer may – or may not – offer a disclaimer that the feat was not accomplished through some sort of psychic ability. This disclaimer may – or may not[13] – matter for audience members' subsequent beliefs in the paranormal. The performer herself is unlikely to regard the feat as miraculous since her ability to do so derives from many hours of mundane rehearsal. However, she may well be relieved if the audience is emotionally stirred. Or, if nothing else, that the audience pretends as if they are stirred. In attending to others, and in attending to how she attends to others, the performer might come to gain a newfound insight about herself and those around her. In attending to the performer's expressions, audience members might come to gain an insight into her inner wants as well as their own motivations for watching the show.

This example not only raises questions of 'For who?' and 'In what respect?', but how to superimpose the designation of 'revelation' onto a multifaceted scene. What, in this imagined scenario, for instance, might count as the revelation? Is it merely the showing of the drawing at the culmination of the performance? This action is what magicians themselves term 'the reveal'. Possibly, but doing so simply begs the question of how to understand what else is going on. Taking revelation as a process, it makes little sense to isolate the opening of the folded sheet from what else is taking place, since the showing of a piece of paper is only significant because of what preceded it. But then, taking the scene as a process, where should the boundaries around the 'it' in question be drawn?

In this book I take the slipperiness associated with what is being pointed to through terminology as underscoring the importance of curiosity regarding

how the topics at hand are conceived. My concern is not so much with either definitively categorizing what is revealed or describing the practices of revealing. Instead, my concern is with how possibilities for understanding the world emerge through instances of making available. This entails examining how notions of revealers, the revealed, the means of revealing and audiences are bound up together.

In this vein, consider one area in which the notion of revelation is commonplace. Perhaps nowhere have questions about the status of revelations come into sharper focus than in relation to matters divine. Revelations herein are noteworthy because of what is potentially at stake – transcendent truths. The significant stakes go hand in hand with the supreme authority of the ultimate source. In theory, that attributed authority should result in divine revelations being held apart from the typical demands for justification that would accompany other non-faith kinds of claims.[14] Sometimes this is treated as so. For instance, an epiphany can be defined as the revelation of a definite and insightful truth plainly made known to someone who regards themselves as merely a passive receiver.[15]

And yet, over time, divine insights have had a much more contested status than simply being treated as straightforward pronouncements.[16] Much of the attention to the interpretation of divine revelations within Abrahamic religions derives from the manner they have traditionally been conceived of as acts of communication.[17] That is, acts in which God seeks to convey a message.[18] That God has spoken, be that through scripture or testimony, has been central to how Abrahamic religions have differentiated themselves from false beliefs. As an act of conveyance, though, the problems of transmitting metaphysical truths to all too human recipients have not been ignored.[19] Within Christianity, for instance, varying theological traditions have emerged for making sense of revelations that do not portray them as literal inscriptions of God's will.[20] Sometimes divine revelations have been treated as pre-verbal insights highly mediated through cryptic visions and symbolic dreams. Sometimes they have been treated as deriving from the determined but mundane toils of saints and prophets who are able to fashion (partial) insights.[21] Sometimes they have been treated as personalized messages from God but ultimately only made knowable through acts of faith.[22] Sometimes toil and faith have been taken as mutually reinforcing. Even the ability of distinguished prophets to take on board divine truths has been called into doubt through their being regarded as active interpreters, not mere passive transmitters, of divine messages. Indeed, it could not be otherwise insomuch as it is the individual dispositions, experiences and commitments of prophets that are often taken to be what enables them to receive God in a manner others cannot.[23]

Such interrelations between messages, tellers, recipients and modes of conveying are hardly unique to matters divine. One meaning of 'revelation'

in the *Merriam Webster* dictionary is 'an act of revealing to view or making known'. To view something and to make something known are not necessarily the same though. A photo, a fingerprint or a sales chart might be put on show for many to see, but its true significance may be regarded as only really accessible to some – those with specialist training, those with beginner's eyes, those without preconceived biases, those who adopt the right slant, those of a certain social position, those able to take a detached view and so on.[24] That the undertaking of certain acts might not lead to matters becoming known raises definitional choices about what we call a revelation and who can speak for what it means. Revelations might be treated as acts that *could* make known (if their recipients prove rational, competent, etc.), that *should* make known (because there is a reasonable expectation that recipients will be able to appreciate what is before them) or that *do* make known (because recipients 'properly' get what is before them).

The use of the word 'available' (connoting an offering) rather than 'known' (connoting an accomplishment) in my initial rendering of revelations is intended to acknowledge the range of ways recipients can be positioned.

Matters of Language

With a starting interest in the guiding orientations associated with ways of knowing and feeling, the previous sections sketched out a characterization of revelation. In part this was done by reference to commonplace usages of the term. Revealing has affinities to disclosing, discovering, divulging, declaring, admitting and other labels that we can place on forms of doing that make manifest what was previously unknown, unrecognized, unintelligible, unacknowledged and so on. In seeking to differentiate revelation from other terms, I have suggested it involves a charged contrast. Revelations intervene into the status quo and affect. They deliver difference.

Or at least for some. One of the challenges associated with conceiving of revelations is the need to accommodate for the varied kinds of contrast, significance and feelings attributed to revealing and the revealed. For instance, in early 2022, the British media was replete with stories regarding social events held at Number 10 Downing Street during COVID pandemic lockdowns. The *Daily Mail*, for instance, carried a frontpage headline 'Boris rocked by new party revelations'.[25] Predictably, the 'Partygate' news revelations centering on British Prime Minister Boris Johnson elicited a wide range of appraisals among journalists, politicians and publics. This included the assessment that nothing of worth was disclosed. As such, for some, the very talk of 'revelations' risked investing far too much credence onto the claims trumpeted. Conversely, advancing talk of revelation can also be disputed because a matter of significance should not be regarded as surprising, hidden

or so on. Reflecting on the television documentary *Untold: Inside the Shein Machine*, one commentator said of the fast fashion firm:

> the conditions documented by *Untold's* undercover reporters – exhausted people working for up to 18 hours a day, often seven days a week, to meet strict quotas, being paid 2-3[pence] per piece sewn and incurring heavy penalties for mistakes – cannot be a revelation. One look at Shein's prices tells you something is up with how the product is made.[26]

Even when what is being revealed is not clear, the use of the term can serve as a meta-instruction that primes expectations. Consider. In April 2020, the *Guardian* newspaper's frontpage headline read 'Revealed: Cummings Sits on Secret Science Advisory Group'.[27] Even if you do not know who Cummings is or what topics this headline refers to, you probably have some well-founded anticipations for the story's general tenor and sense of definitude.

In part in recognition that the very labeling of something as a revelation is consequential, in this book what counts as 'revelatory' will be treated as open for disagreement. The centrality of tussle marks this study out from others. As part of surveying the concept of revelation in the development of Christianity, Christoph Schwöbel, echoing a phrase of Gilbert Ryle, characterized revelation as a 'success word'. He did so to point 'to the fact that we can only speak of revelation when a revelation has in fact occurred for the recipient'.[28] In contrast, in the pages that follow, I want to attend to how recipients and other audiences can differ (and agree) regarding whether a revelation has 'occurred', how both can advance differing understandings of what has been made available over time and so on. 'Revelation' will be taken as a success-*seeking* word insomuch as the use of this term will be treated as aiming to affect an understanding of what is what.

Likewise, this analysis differs from others in not starting by taking certain revelations as genuine or ground truths. Instead, what gets taken as genuine or true, and by who, are topics for examination.

In response to the acknowledged scope for contest, one approach for this book would be simply to ask how, when and for who 'revelation' is a relevant denotation. Cataloguing common usage in this way, however, risks conflating rather than clarifying concepts. Consider. The previous argument depicted revelations as acts consisting of revealers, the revealed, the means of revealing as well as audiences. Yet, in everyday language, not all of these elements are treated as necessary. For instance, a revealer may not be needed for a revelation. The falling levels of a lake outside of Las Vegas might be said to reveal the bodies of those murdered by the mafia.[29] Herein, there is no identifiable agent that is the doer of the revealing. Trying to accommodate the varied ways revelation figures within English to theorize it would almost certainly result in an incoherent picture.

In any case, this is not a volume on etymology or cultural linguistics. What is of central focus is not the usage of the specific word 'reveal', but certain consequential ways of attending to the world. Given the points in this section, a tension that will run throughout this study is how to both trade on common meanings of revelation and call them into question. That tension will be complemented by another one: How to open to the historical and social variability of what it means to reveal, while also advancing a sense of the term.

Turning away from everyday usages of revelation-speak to consider its place in the vocabularies of specialist communities provides additional reasons for treating its meaning with caution. As argued by Eric Livingston, a common starting premise within the field of sociology is that sociologists need to peer underneath the visible order so as to identify the underlying dynamics that shape action and meaning.[30] In this vein, Pierre Bourdieu stated: 'The function of sociology, as of every science, is to reveal that which is hidden'.[31] Characterizations of this kind both suggest that the world is not as it appears and ascribe social researchers with the task of unveiling assumptions,[32] marking the real,[33] detecting secret orders,[34] opening black boxes,[35] deciphering hidden meaning,[36] spotting common patterns,[37] locating subterranean rhetorical structures,[38] detecting underlying causes,[39] naming unconscious phobias[40] and so on. While some social phenomenon was hitherto understood in one way, scholarship takes its task as the 'revelation of concealed realities'.[41] Likewise, philosophical inquiry into the place of metaphors in language can be said to 'reveal the limitations of the myth of objectivism'.[42] More widely, as Ludmilla Jordanova has detailed, the idea that science 'lifts a veil' has framed many knowledge pursuits over recent centuries.[43]

Attempts to posit a hidden order that needs to be uncovered through specialist methods and theories have come under criticism from numerous quarters within social research itself.[44] And yet, despite such suspicions, many social scientists of varied stripes take it as their role the making visible of what is otherwise unnoticed, marginalized or unappreciated: Lives forgotten, lives discounted, lives ignored.[45]

In acknowledgment of the potential for this analysis to get ensnarled in the presumptions and forms of attention attributed to its topic of study, the pages that follow repeatedly revisit questions as follows: Should this book seek to 'lift the veil' on revelations?[46] What are the necessities of doing so? What are the troubles of doing so? If we do not set ourselves the task of getting as firm of a grip as possible on the world – that is, if this volume is not simply an attempt to expose the (real) (hidden) (untold) story about revelations – what other possibilities might exist?

In terms of its basic orientation, my intention is not to lift the veil on revelations. This is because there is no desire to posit that there are preexisting

objects out there in the world with inherent and definite qualities that make them revelations that are just waiting to be named. Instead, the starting tact is to treat this term as a contingent designation. More than just contingent, the term is consequential; it is bound up with the production of what counts as evidence, what should be regarded as noteworthy, whose knowledge and experience matter and so on. As such, this book does not set out to simply study a phenomenon so much as offer sensitivities for apprehending, sensitivities that themselves undeniably help constitute a sense of the world. My labeling of certain acts as revelations is thus a contestable attribution, but one that is meant to prompt reflection.

The Bounds of Revealing

In the varied ways noted in the previous paragraphs, a recurring notion in this book is the imperative to consider how revelations entail something other than just laying bare. A further aspect of this notion is the manner revelations direct attention. By suggesting some to look 'here' rather than 'there', revelations invariably cast regard onto some matters over others.

Still further, in this analysis I want to ask how claims about what has *not* been made available are integral to understanding the relevance of revelations. Let me elaborate. To begin with, what is made available can be couched as uncertain or limited, such as the innuendo of celebrity news. Further, attempts to make available invariably lay down markers for what is still yet absent. This is so because while revelations make something available, there is always potentially more to know.[47]

Beyond concerns about indefiniteness and incompleteness, efforts to get beneath appearances seed a sense of behind. As Michael Taussig argued, 'vision thrives upon reality as a two-layered entity with a surface and a behind, thereby attaching more importance and mystery to the unseen than to the scene…the scene of the screen promotes depths mysterious and remote'.[48] The sense of beyond sets up the possibility for a next round of efforts to get behind surface appearances through the outing of some, as yet still, hidden or unknown consideration.[49] In this manner, potentially, we can invest much promise in one set of revelations on a given topic, only then to do the same later for another, and then another…. For instance, instead of providing decisive answers, government inquiries can raise further doubts and questions that demand investigation.[50] Thus, the very effort to gain insight sets up the basis for disappointment as well as affirmation. Along these lines, this book will illustrate how belief and skepticism, investment and divestment, solidity and fluidity, the sense that things are what they seem and that things are not what they seem, and so on mix in attempts to make available.[51]

Still further, one of the hopes sometimes associated with revelations is that of spurring action.[52] By establishing what's what, the expectation can

be that revelations shift relations.[53] In societies in which transparency is taken as central to realizing democratic principles, revelations are often invested with such promise. And yet, in practice, this can prove misplaced. The broadcasting of dramatic acts of racism and misogyny, as an example, need not lead to significant displays of remorse, the empowerment of citizens or the withering away of obscenities.[54]

Moreover, the airing of doubt about the sufficiency of revelations to lead to action can itself be a feature of revealing. To return to the exposé that opened this chapter, the broadcaster CNN was one of those that hailed Bob Woodward's book *Fear*. One CNN report was titled 'Woodward's Revelations Raise Disturbing Questions about Trump'.[55] While repeatedly attributing *Fear* with much credence, the report also suggested that this may well not matter:

> For any other President, such charges would trigger a national debate, action from within the administration to address the national crisis and perhaps hearings on Capitol Hill…Yet the lesson of Trump's presidency is that controversies that would hollow out a normal White House often leave him untouched. … The question it is impossible to answer right now is whether the Woodward storm will thrash through Washington and blow itself out – as the history of Trump the politician suggests it might – and things will go back to normal until the next damaging exposés.[56]

By incorporating such doubts within CNN's initial coverage of *Fear*, the scope for irrelevance becomes something not extraneous to revealing, but integral to it. The anxiety expressed in recent decades about how the saturation of the media with graphic images and stories of suffering results in 'compassion fatigue' goes one step further in contending that the attention given to topics might itself drive dismissal.[57]

Overall then, while it is sometimes the case that revealing is accompanied by the belief that the resultant recognition will lead to some sort of response,[58] this need not materialize.

Renderings to Come

The previous argument treated revelation as a charged act; that is, it is an active (if not necessarily consciously intentional) doing. Yet, it is more apt to portray my interest as one of attending to interactions; that is, as unfolding dynamics through which those that reveal, those that mediate revelations, audiences, objects and ways of attending emerge together. Those emergences turn on and shape notions of who is able to utilize or contribute to making meaning.

As such, revelations are poorly understood in isolation. For any event, action or instance where the term 'reveal' might be applicable, we can turn back in time to ask what came before. Similarly, we can turn ahead to ask what follows. Revelations within the family, for instance, can be examined for how they shift notions of identity, trust and closeness, how they condition cycles of action–reaction over time, as well as how they establish expectations for future disclosures.[59]

As a way of speaking to this backward–forward relevance, I want to set out an idealized cyclic model for revelation – a model that speaks to how revelations are realized and what they realize. See Figure 1.1.

As an analytical construct, the cycle is a representation of occasion making and meaning making. It was derived by drawing out aspects of the instances of revelations examined in this book in order to fashion a summary abstraction. This abstraction though also structures the analysis of those instances.

Each chapter addresses one realization – vesting, becoming, figuring, splitting or staging. This breakdown provides the structure for this book even as each realization in the model depends on the others.

Chapter 2, however, begins with a narrow concentration on the discrete moment of dénouement – when the curtain gets pulled back, when someone stands up to make an admission, when the folded sheet is opened up.

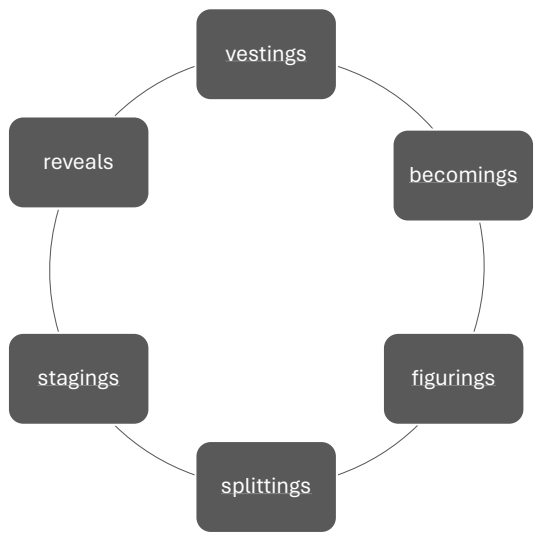

FIGURE 1.1 A cycle of revelation.

Through doing so I attend to how press conferences, magic tricks and other activities are oriented to and 'done' *as* revelations. That doing is a practical activity involving material objects, comportments, dispositions, skills, social conventions and so on. The remaining chapters illustrate the arbitrary confines of narrowly attending to end culminations by orientating to revelations as extended processes. These processes make possible but are themselves made possible through the forms of realization that provide the headings for the remaining chapters.

Chapter 3 attends to *vesting*. Its main topic is one of the most prominent instances of disclosure in recent political history – the online posting of American war logs and diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks in 2010. The machinations of statecraft have long been matters of dread and fascination. In a series of releases, WikiLeaks and collaborating newspapers brought to the public what was before only available to a limited coterie. The topics addressed could hardly be more significant – thousands upon thousands of civilian deaths, a new 'Great Game' afoot, intelligence gathering on both diplomatic friend and foe alike, and complicity in torture. Repeatedly and prominently the leaking of these documents was said to open the lid on hidden areas of statecraft.

To foreshadow some of the argument of this book, however, this chapter is not simply a story of investment, but of simultaneous divestment in what has been made available. One of the curious features of revelations is how quickly and thoroughly their solidity can melt into the air. Investments made in what is revealed – say about the import of a photograph – can turn sour. A photo can be faked. Or it can be dismissed as faked. A recurring theme in all the chapters is how belief and skepticism, investment and divestment, the sense that things are what they seem and that things are not what they seem, and so on, *together* can constitute attempts to make available.[60]

It is not just facts about the world that are constituted through revealing. Pronouncements about what the world is really like inextricably bear on the identity of their pronouncers and audiences – who is good, culpable, naïve, in the know, etc. In particular, this book attends to how acts of making available are bound up with the relational formation and display of expertise and ignorance – who knows what, with what certainty, etc.[61] In offering a break in understanding, revealers position themselves as in command of some noteworthy appreciation – a command that helps define them and others. Sometimes revealers messaging explicitly positions audiences as being shown the facts in full, other times that they are being told the facts, other times that they can discern the facts for themselves, other times that the facts resist any easy comprehension, etc. As a result, audiences are varyingly barred, invited, deterred and demanded to partake in meaning making. Chapter 4 takes *becoming* as its realization: How identities come into being through revelations – for revealers, those revealed to and those

revealed. This is done, in part, by examining how autobiographies across a range of genres make available hitherto unappreciated details – details about the world and details about the author. While revelations are treated as constitutive of notions of identity, notions of identity are also treated as constitutive of what counts as a revelation. Through surveying a diverse array of instances of making available, the chapter considers how identities are established, maintained and transformed vis-à-vis notions of truth, authenticity and disclosure.

Individual identities do not exist on their own. Facts do not exist on their own. What is taken to be the case, and therefore what can count as a revelation, depends on how assertions align with wider expectations, beliefs and practices. How personal disclosures of sexuality are received, for instance, depend on how they align with every day or community-based forms of narrating experience.[62] If they do not, the disclosure (and thereby its teller) can be dismissed or ignored. With the recognition that the potential for revealing depends on so much more than what a specific individual does, Chapter 5 asks: Who can reveal? When does the appeal to revelation become cogent? What gets valued through revelations? It does so by attending to the *figurations*[63] – the network of connections, relations and interdependencies between individuals and groups – that create the conditions for revelations as well as how revelations foster figurations. In particular, this chapter asks how efforts to make available take their meaning from and shape the meaning of professional and everyday values, norms and codes through examining varied examples: the self-disclosures of celebrities, the apprehension of miracles, the outing of sexual violence and the creation of commercial markets.

As contended above, in offering to make available what was previously not so, revelations rely on and perpetuate contrasts between inner/outer, knowledge/ignorance, fact/fiction, etc. Chapter 6 investigates *splitting* as a feature of revelations. Its main aim is to trace how the splitting between a 'this' and a 'that' generates and is generated by vestings, becomings and figurings and, thereby, how splitting allocates notions of responsibility, credibility and culpability. The topics addressed include stories behind the story of the rise of WikiLeaks, investigative efforts to authenticate art as well as the contestation of photographic evidence from the Apollo Moon landings.

Chapter 7 turns to how the potential for revelation gets crafted through efforts to manage audiences, time, place and space – what we can label *staging*. While staging is conceived as an effort to settle meaning, the recognition that staging might be at play also provides the basis for questioning what is what. As such, within this chapter, the work of creating splits between frontstage and backstage, genuine and contrived, as well as appearances and reality figure as central. Considering staging in relation to marketing

demonstrations, scientific advising and confidence scams will bring us back to the topic of Chapter 2 – the reveal.

Presented as a cycle, Figure 1.1 depicts what is realized through revelations as well as how revelations are realized. As an abstraction, the figure offers a heuristic – a general formulation that provides a guide for making sense of individual instances. In its generalness, it is question begging regarding the possibilities for deviation. For instance, while the realizations are presented in series, this is done for the purpose of drawing out their interrelations. It is not intended as setting out rigid time sequenced steps wherein, for instance, matters of becoming invariantly follow on from vesting, etc. As the subsequent chapters illustrate, in attending to any individual realization, the others are typically not far away. Staging might be taken as logically preceding vestings, but vesting can serve as part of the staging for yet another reveal.[64]

There is another advantage of a cyclic model. That is the manner in which the sequence can be followed forward or backward. Acts of revealing might be intended to make the facts of the matter plain. However, that a case for the facts needs to be made itself provides the basis for questioning what has been made available. Such attention can, in turn, lead to a questioning of the underlying presumptions of what is claimed, the manner of how this latest act of making available relates to previous ones and so on. In this respect, revelations are taken as paradoxical; in seeking to settle what is what, they provide a basis for questioning what is what. To state this is not to imply that revealed data, information and the like can never prove decisive. My approach, however, is to treat proverbial 'smoking guns' or *res ipsa loquitur* instances as the contingent result of the specifics at hand.[65]

More than just a shorthand sketch of relevant dynamics though, the model provides a form of diagnosis. The chapters that follow identify some of the troubles associated with revelation – the manner in which coherency and logic are fabricated, the fixations that develop around certain ideas, the longings for closure, as well as how discussions get locked into predictable, reactive and sterile patterns. A task for this analysis is to open to the entanglements associated with ways of knowing and feeling.

More than a cool dissection, in the pages that follow, I invite you as readers to take part in the cravings and the aversions of revealing. My motivations for doing so are in line with John Dewey's contention:

> It is more or less a commonplace that it is possible to carry on observations that amass facts tirelessly and yet the observed "facts" lead nowhere. On the other hand, it is possible to have the work of observation so controlled by a conceptual framework fixed in advance that the very things which are genuinely decisive in the problem in hand and its solution, are completely overlooked. Everything is forced into the predetermined

> conceptual and theoretical scheme. The way, and the only way, to escape these two evils, is [that] a problem must be felt before it can be stated.[66]

As with Dewey, feeling is taken as essential to the project of understanding revelation. Anticipation, yearning and repulsion might be some of your responses to the examples discussed in this book. But this is something for you to assess. Through doing so, you can become aware of what is becoming.

The invitation to partake in the excitable dimensions of revelations is not intended as a way of fastening views, but rather as a means of encouraging awareness and receptivity. If we can navigate a path between getting swept away and dismissing what is made available, then perhaps this offers a kind of freedom. The freedom is one of selecting appropriate ways of thinking, feeling and acting.

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2

THE REVEAL

Voilà. Presto. A-ha.

In making available what was previously otherwise, revelations offer the prospect for apprehension. That offering can come condensed into a culminating moment of directed attention signaled by exclamations such as 'voilà', 'presto' and 'a-ha'. This chapter examines this moment, what is being referred to as 'the reveal'. Or, to be more accurate, it asks what attending to the happenings of the world through the notion of the reveal brings into consideration.

Take, for instance, the photograph and caption in Figure 2.1 of the English artist Tom Keating. Keating had been on the run since being implicated in large-scale forgery. Let us consider the following question through the notion of revelation and the reveal: 'What's this?'

While not explicitly billed through the language of revelation, the photo and caption illustrate the kinds of invested ways of attending that characterize revelations as set out in the previous chapter. First, the caption makes clear a contrast was at play. Whereas previously Keating was in *hiding* and therefore beyond reach, at this conference he *appeared* before others. The orchestrated manner of Keating's entrance – with reporters and photographers kept waiting – served to create a moment of dénouement in which the curtain was figuratively pulled back to reveal the artist.

Further, the press conference is presented as a charged making available. That a press conference was being held at all, of course, was an attempt to mark that something significant was at stake. This was no run of the mill press conference, though, but one where reporters and photographers *massed* in number since *every national newspaper had been searching the*

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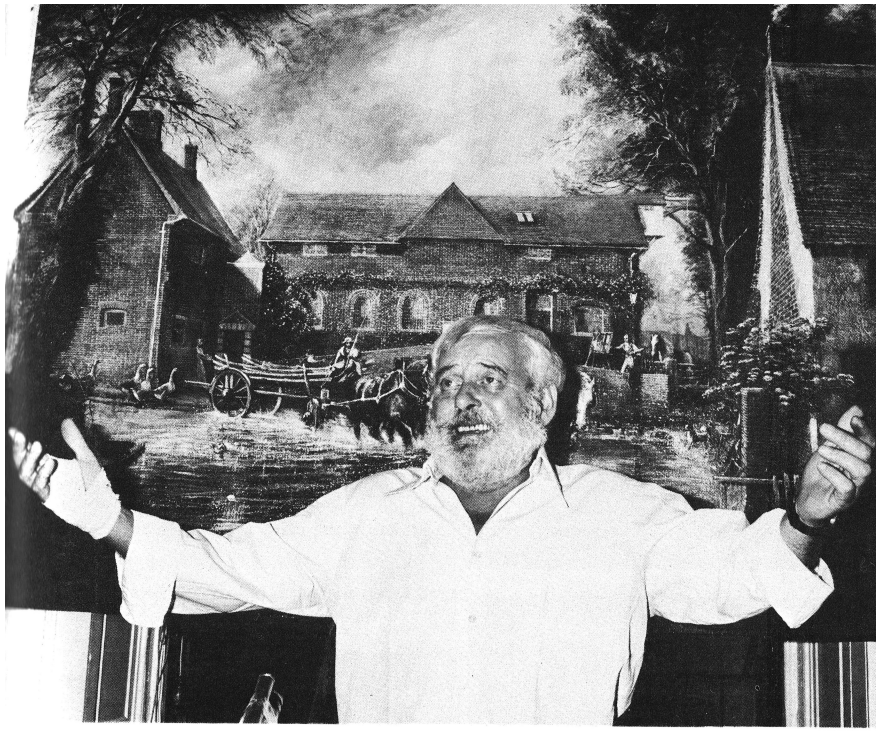
country for him. Keating's exuding expressiveness invites us to share that sense of animation. In the caption, Keating was described as taking a *bow*, signaling there was some accomplishment of note for which he was able to hold the floor. The event was also charged because something significant was made available. The significance of Keating's appearance for those present is indicated in the ways the photographers *surged forward* in response to his entrance as well as how Keating expressively reacted to this surge.

And yet, even as the caption has the hallmarks of revelation, it is not clear from the text itself what exactly was made available. If we return to the photo for clues, one way of interpreting Keating's throwing up of his arms is as a meta-communicative admission of culpability: 'OK, here I am, it was me'. But even if this interpretation were taken as valid, still what exactly is made available is not definite. Was it the location of Keating, given that he had been on the run? Was it that a previously unknown forger was identified as Keating? Was it that the author of the featured painting was Tom Keating? On the last of these interpretations, the *Keating-Constable – The Hay Wain in Reverse* certainly occupies a prominent place in the photographed scene. In the manner the painting is outlined by Keating, as Keating is outlined by it, it is integral to what is presented. That would seem to suggest the painting's authorship is at stake. As such, one way of interpreting Figure 2.1 is this: At last, *The Hay Wain in Reverse* is being connected to its 'actual' maker, who, by throwing up his hands and laughing, assumes responsibility for his creation. 'Here I am', says the forger, and 'here it is': The truth revealed.

In its ambiguity, this instance is in line with many other revelations in which the presence of fanfare alone does not in itself provide a defined sense of the intended object of regard. To seek to understand what Keating's entrance meant to those in attendance, we could set about to put it in a context. The caption and photo in Figure 2.1 did not just materialize from thin air. Instead, they were included as an insert in the book published by Hutchinson *The Fake's Progress: Tom Keating's Story* authored by Tom Keating, Geraldine Norman and Frank Norman.

The Fake's Progress consists of two main parts: A version of Keating's life penned by Frank Norman and an account by Geraldine Norman of her work as a correspondent at *The Times* newspaper that led to the identification of Keating as a forger. That process of identification began when Geraldine Norman was notified by a small auctioneer that it was planning on selling off rare drawings by the nineteenth-century artist Samuel Palmer. Her account in *The Fake's Progress* for accrediting the 'Palmer' drawings to Keating was one of dogged detective inquiry, chance encounters, forensic analysis and entrenched art establishment resistance. After eventually publishing articles in *The Times* calling into doubt the authenticity of 13 drawings attributed to Samuel Palmer,[1] Geraldine Norman tracked down



On Friday, 27 August 1976, Tom Keating came out of hiding and made his bow. Every national newspaper had been searching the country for him, and they turned up in force when a press conference was announced at the publishers' offices. Facing the massed reporters and photographers was a Keating–Constable – *The Hay Wain* in reverse. Tom Keating entered the room and, as the photographers surged forward, threw up his arms in amazement and burst out laughing. (*Associated Newspapers*)

FIGURE 2.1 Tom Keating meets the press.

Tom Keating to his cottage in a small English village. Following a conversation with Keating in which he refused to discuss forgery, Geraldine Norman named Keating as the real author for the disputed Samuel Palmers as well as other works in articles for *The Times* on 10 August.[2] Keating responded by writing a letter to *The Times* published on 20 August admitting to passing off forgeries. He also phoned Geraldine Norman which, as she stated, set the preparation for their collaboration on *The Fake's Progress* 'in motion'.[3]

Informed with this history, Keating's entrance before reporters and photographers on 26 August did not so much expose him as a forger. He had already been named. Beyond this though, the intended and taken meaning of the photo caption are more difficult to determine. In terms of the significance of *The Hay Wain in Reverse*, while it looms large in the photo it only

figured in passing in *The Fake's Progress*. Clues can be identified elsewhere. In a *Times* newspaper article, Geraldine Norman indicated that the painting was taken from Keating's cottage where it had hung over the mantelpiece.[4] It would appear to have been brought to the press conference in order to stand as proof for Keating's artistic abilities.

Thus, the conference's principal offering seems to have been a corporeal one. Whereas Keating was previously in hiding, now he was made present before the press. That presence meant both that he could claim credit for his deeds and that he was made to account for them. The backstory account Keating provided at the conference for what he did and why he did it included speaking to his anti-art establishment motivations, the considerable extent of his artistic work (some 2,000 'pastiches' over 25 years[5]) and what (little) financial rewards accrued to him from his endeavors.

As the previous two paragraphs indicate, the reveal depicted in Figure 2.1 was only one in a series of dramatic instances of revelation associated with Keating's forgeries. His entry into the press conference serves as a particularly remarkable moment of making available only in relation to those previous revelations. As a single book insert, Figure 2.1 was only one element within the much wider behind-the-scenes story given in *The Fake's Progress*. The nested aspects of revelation in this case are even further entangled because this press conference was organized by Hutchinson Publishers to announce plans for Tom Keating, Geraldine Norman and Frank Norman to write *The Fake's Progress*.

Of course, that particular 'sites' or 'moments' are worked up as significant by those revealing does not guarantee how meaning will be made of them by audiences. For instance, both those present at the press conference and those that subsequently viewed Figure 2.1 in *The Fake's Progress* witnessed Keating standing alongside *The Hay Wain in Reverse*. But what did this juxtaposition show? Nowhere in Figure 2.1, or *The Fake's Progress* as a whole, are any arguments made regarding what this painting was intended to stand for. And yet, as stated previously, it seems reasonable to suggest that it was meant to serve to illustrate Keating's artistic (even forgery) prowess. This is so, in part, because of what is *not* stated. Viewers are not treated as needing any assistance to get what is on offer. Instead, the scene is presented as 'just-there' and ready-made in meaning. Keating and his painting meet the press.

And yet, perhaps not everything was as plain as this. The day after the press conference, another article appeared in *The Times*. In this, Keating himself reportedly said he was a 'terrible faker', citing the very *The Hay Wain in Reverse* painting that featured conspicuously at the press conference as proof of his *lack* of skill. As reported, he 'could not understand how people had been taken in' by it.[6] Thus, Figure 2.1 should stand not as ready proof of Keating's abilities for all to see, but a refutation that there is much of anything to see. Indeed, it also stands as a refutation that there are many

people able to discern, properly that is, what is in front of them. Beyond the instance of *The Hay Wain in Reverse*, *The Fake's Progress* recounted how Keating introduced flaws into his art as well as used materials inappropriate to the period of imitated works. Such features should have given away those pieces as blatant forgeries. However, these telltale signs were repeatedly overlooked or disregarded by those in the art world.[7]

From a Reveal to Reveals

The previous section took a representation of Tom Keating's entry into a press conference as an example of a reveal – the culminating moment of revelation. In doing so, I sought to illustrate in a preliminary fashion how moments are built up, how their meaning is open for contest, as well as how reveals figure as part of wider sequences of action. These are themes that will be returned to in subsequent chapters as the question 'What's this?' gets posed, again and again.

As only one instance, however, its details pertained to a limited set of considerations. As a way of broadening a sense of the reveal and revelations, this section contrasts the reveal of Keating to other instances.

The Ordinary and the Extra-ordinary

Perhaps nowhere is 'the reveal' as a phrase more prominent than in relation to crime mysteries. The witticism by the crime fiction writer Jim Thompson that 'There are thirty-two ways to tell a story, and I've used every one, but there is only one plot—things are not as they seem',[8] speaks to the manner such storylines typically rely on contrast. As Benedict Singleton further elaborated: Within the crime thriller:

> there's something out of place, something not where and when it should be—a state that indicates that our knowledge about the world is incomplete. We might've thought life to be playing out predictably in one direction, but suddenly the scene before us provides evidence that the structures that underlay our anticipation are more tenuous than we had assumed, and some kind of enigmatic mechanism appears to be in motion. Stumbling on a secret, we are, in a word, intrigued. Intrigue involves a state of generalised suspicion, in which we must discriminate between what is relevant and what is not.[9]

In a classic Agatha Christie novel, the plot progression to find out 'Who did it?' builds up into a dramatic finale in which Hercule Poirot or Miss Maple assembles the suspects together. Astute conjectures and cunning hunches on the part of the investigator are aired, discarded and confirmed. Perhaps most of all, though, previously unremarkable matters – someone is not wearing

a watch – are transformed into noteworthy clues. Bit by bit, conjectures, hunches and clues build toward naming the guilty party. Gotcha.

'Who did it?' reveals typically seek to enact a contrast between what the reader took to be so and what was actually so. This can take place many times within one story. The scene reconstituted through a reveal at one point in time sets the stage for subsequent notable disclosures that can build up to the next dramatic 'gotcha' moment, which, in turn, sets the basis for further notable disclosures. In storylines such as Agatha Christie's play *Witness for the Prosecution*, the plot twists and turns as one dramatic reveal sets the groundwork for yet another and then another. Within these movements, a revelation at one point in time can invalidate previous ones. While not exhibiting the same level of breathtaking acrobatic flare, Geraldine Norman's story of how she identified Tom Keating as a forger likewise pitched itself as a detective-like unearthing of noteworthy facts, nagging incongruencies and colorful accusations that hesitantly but eventually pointed toward Keating.

Reveals, however, need not be built up to by the piecing together of surprising disclosures, noteworthy clues or extra-ordinary moments. Take entertainment magic. 'The reveal' in magic designates the culmination of a trick – when the proverbial or actual rabbit is pulled out of a hat. That moment is made dramatic by the choreographed steps that preceded it. Audiences are brought into a room and orientated around a stage, a magician makes an entrance, a silence descends, the magician meticulously works through the props on stage to demonstrate there is nothing in her hat, under her table, up her sleeve and so on. With her hat placed on the table and perhaps the wave of a wand, the scene is set for a spectacular reveal: Ta-da. One fluffy rabbit. Cue applause.

As a form of reveal, this kind of appearance stirs by the 'juxtaposition between the conviction that something cannot happen and the observation that it just happened'.[10] In a series of publications, psychologist and magician Wally Smith has sought to elaborate how reveals are built up to in popular styles of entertainment magic. To begin with, he notes that magical effects, such as the appearance of a rabbit, are not typically based on the stringing together of the extra-ordinary. Instead, they are routinely preceded by 'the disclosing of facts which are not surprising, things which are completely in line with expectations, things which drive home the ordinariness of the situation'.[11] The magician's hat, the table on which it is placed and the stage on which they are set, for instance, are often rendered as everyday. The establishment of the scene as known-as-ordinary enables the production of a rabbit to serve as an expectation defying feat.

To expand, as Smith has detailed, much of what goes by the term of 'modern magic' today is not simply based on hiding the methods at work. Instead, prevalent presentational styles conceal the possibility that there could be any hidden methods at all.[12] In other words, a concealment of concealment is sought. To unpack this notion, Smith compared how magic is often done today with playing cards, coins and other small props against the stage shows

that were prevalent in mid-nineteenth century Europe. The latter typically relied on extravagant stage setups, bulky clothing, conspicuous props and other features that provided ample scope for obscured objects, secret compartments, trapdoors and the like. With audiences' growing appreciation of the dissimulation potential of paraphernalia, magic on and off the stage has, overall, become more minimalist and naturalist since the mid-nineteenth century. In the case of the rabbit being produced from a hat, its affective power depends on the audience's conviction that there is nowhere a rabbit could be hidden. Concealment of concealment thus serves as the basis for creating the juxtaposition between what cannot happen and what has happened.

As another dimension of dissimulation, to drive home the point that there is nothing concealed, a frequent technique employed in modern magic is for performers to demonstrate to audiences that there is nothing in the magician's hat, under her table, up her sleeve and so on. Audiences generally go along with magicians' demonstrations that the scene is 'just so' because it is just those sorts of proofs that are expected to assure everyone that nothing is untoward. And yet, it is just such demonstrations that often serve as the basis for magicians to undertake the sleights or other actions necessary to pull off a feat.[13] In this manner, magicians use audiences' very anticipation for deception and the need to illustrate no jiggery-pokery is afoot as the basis for deception.

As Smith notes, dissimulating through a presentational style that emphasizes the ordinary and uninteresting has long been recognized by practitioners as troubled.[14] Simplicity risks being boring. A prime response has been for magicians to incorporate verbal patter within their performances regarding how magic relies on hidden methods such as sleight of hand techniques. The incorporation of (more or less complete, more or less accurate) elaborations of such methods within performances is so pervasive that it has its own term today – it is a 'reveal'. Through providing explanations with verisimilitude, magicians not only engage with audience's suspicions. Performers can confound them by using gestures and words to suggest a trick is done by a certain method only to perform it again in such a manner that it becomes evident that it need not be done through that method at all. Through such self-reflective patter, magicians cultivate beliefs about magic to drive home a felt contrast between what cannot happen and what has happened.

Noticing and Overlooking

The previous section drew out a contrast between reveals that are built by an emphasis on the ordinary with those that figure the extra-ordinary. By way of further developing a sense of reveals, this section turns to another dimension of variation.

Pulling a rabbit out of a hat or stepping forward into a waiting crowd are embodied and situated accomplishments. In part, as accomplishments they

rely on efforts to direct the attention of those present. Verbal statements, physical movements, gaze, comportment and so on affect what is heeded. To return to Keating's entrance, the manner he threw up his arms served as one means of marking what was of note there and then. It also later served as a prominent representation for the press conference through the image taken by a photographer. And yet, as contended, even if Keating's throwing up of his arms could be taken as some sort of expression of culpability, it was not certain precisely what was signified.

As a way of appreciating the diversity of reveals, we can further unpack how attention is directed so as to influence meaning-making. In his classic study of the 1993 trial of the police officers involved in the beating of Rodney King, Charles Goodwin examined how expert witnesses can seek to enroll others into non-commonplace understandings.[15] In particular, Goodwin focused on the testimony of Los Angeles Police Department Sergeant Charles Duke. Duke made specific aspects of the video images of the beating salient (for instance, the bending of King's leg) by pointing and circling. Enrolling was also sought through coding images. For instance, King's leg bending was labeled as 'aggressive'. Goodwin elaborated how highlighting supported coding and coding supported highlighting. Such efforts can be convincing. Highlighting and coding can play their part in persuading juries to acquit officers on assault charges even as they are filmed striking and kicking a man 40 times.

Subsequent chapters in this book consider the literal and figurative forms of gesturing associated with revelation. In this, pointing and other gestures will be treated as mediating expectations for the possibility of 'getting at' what needs to be gotten at. As part of efforts to secure an understanding of a situation, what is being gestured at can sometimes be a specific object, as is often the case when pointing with an index finger. Gesturing, however, might also mark out an area for regard, as when we direct attention to what is behind an opening curtain by extending a palm. Indeed, of interest in later chapters will be how particular 'sites' and 'moments' for revelation are alternately worked up and divested from attention through gestures and other acts.

The aforementioned actions designed to promote *noticing* can be contrasted with actions designed to promote *overlooking*. To do so, let us return to the example of entertainment magic. As mentioned above, magicians can spend a great deal of time crafting verbal statements, physical movements and gaze in order to draw audience's attention to certain aspects of a scene – the emptiness of a hat. Securing attention is integral to generating an audience response. Unless you are convinced there is nowhere a rabbit could be hidden, its production is unlikely to astound you. It is just someone bringing out a rabbit.

As in any other instance of focusing attention, making salient some matters invariably has the consequence of relegating other matters to the

background. Far from being unintended or unconscious, in the case of magic, backgrounding is often a deliberate strategy honed through many hours of practice. 'Misdirection' is the umbrella term within magic for actions that are intended to manipulate audiences by directing their attention.[16] That directing, to paraphrase psychologists Peter Lamont and Richard Wiseman, seeks to take audiences toward the feats on display and away from the hidden methods at play.[17] The former is typically accomplished through driving home the ordinariness of the scene. The latter is often accomplished by directing attention elsewhere than the hidden methods involved.[18] Magician Darwin Ortiz spoke to a basic principle underpinning misdirection in advocating magicians should treat as important what they want the audience to treat as important, and disregard what magicians want the audience to disregard.[19]

Practices for manipulation in magic performances, however, are much more permeating and subtle than one-off physical actions that actively direct attention here or there. In the style of modern magic with its objective of concealing concealment, magicians aim to make their actions appear as expected, justified and 'just so'. In other words, natural. In appearing natural, the magician's actions do not attract attention. In not attracting attention, the actions do not so readily enter into audiences' memories. In not entering into memories, audiences struggle to later reason out how a feat was accomplished.[20] What sticks from watching a show instead are the emotional sensations associated with inexplicable phenomena – such as a rabbit materializing from thin air.

Being natural, however, is not a simple task. Reaching for a wand should seem as nothing more than a magician reaching for a wand. But more than this is required. It is not just such isolated individual acts that need to be taken as expected, justified and 'just-so' by audience members, but the demeanor of magicians as a whole. Variations in tempo, attitude, posture and the like all can attract audience's attention and thereby arouse suspicions about where and what kind of methods are at work. Whether or not those suspicions are well-founded, their mere emergence is typically assumed by many magicians as fundamentally undermining the affective power of performances. Thus, performers scrutinize themselves for what they intentionally 'give' by way of signals and might inadvertently 'give off' to audiences.[21] The imperative to deliberately and consciously monitor their own actions applies retrospectively and prospectively. This is in the sense that actions taken at some point in time (for instance, rolling up one's sleeve) can serve as a basis for making sense of what has already happened or what is about to happen.

Thus, magicians engage in concerted actions that seek to both get audiences noticing aspects of what is taking place and disarm them of the need to attend to what is taking place. Part of the skill of being a competent magician is the ability to weave these two together.[22]

Absence and Presence

The previous chapter defined revelations as charged instances of making available. The 'something' made available is intended to be interpreted broadly. A magician can produce a rabbit. She can also reveal that a rabbit has disappeared. What is made available in the latter example is a noticed absence.

Thus, the charged contrast enacted through revelation can be between what is and what is expected. Along these lines, in contemporary times, a number of artists have opted to unveil art exhibitions that consist of little more than white walls and empty rooms. Although 'nothing' would be regarded as on display according to the cultural conventions of exhibitions, much can be said to be revealed through such acts – such as audience's taken for granted assumptions about what counts as art and the aesthetic economies of contemporary museums.[23]

The relation between what is present and what is absent can be understood in varied ways. In recent years, images of blacked out redacted text in the media have served as instances in which notions of presence and absence (as well as surface and depth, visible and invisible, etc.) intermingle.[24] In 2022, for instance, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) obtained a warrant to search former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. The justifications for this search subsequently became a matter of fractious partisan dispute. When the Department of Justice published the affidavit setting out the justification for the search relating to the improper removal and storage of classified information, the affidavit's mixture of readable and redacted text provided the basis for contrasting lines of political argument.[25] As one dimension of contrast, some orientated to the redacted text as an exercise in *subtraction*. The lack of transparency caused by the extensive amount of blacked out passages was said to weaken the cited justifications presented in the rest of the text for the Mar-a-Lago search because those justifications were not sufficiently substantiated. Others took the relation between what was readable and redacted as an exercise in *addition*. The many and extensive blackened lines were taken as providing yet further grounds for concern than what appeared in the readable text alone. For instance, the potential crime of obstruction was cited in the warrant for the search, but whatever was written in the affidavit regarding obstruction was blacked out. One conclusion derived was that still more incriminating information might follow.

If an absence can serve as a kind of presence, so too can presence imply absence. For instance, a photo captures a scene at a point in time. Yet, in giving a snapshot, photos can be interpreted for what remains outside the frame. What is made available through the photo also attests to what is no longer so. In this vein, Susan Sontag suggested: 'To take a photograph is to

participate in another person's (or thing's) morality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt'.[26]

Or, at least, presence can imply absence for some. As a site of community self-representation to wider audiences, heritage museums can be approached for which stories they do not tell as well as which they do. Yet, the ability to recognize what is not on display – the painful histories and sacred truths of a people – is limited to some, as is the very sensitivity to look for what is not on show.[27]

In other forms of telling, what is missing can be actively paraded. In a historical examination of Hollywood in the early twentieth century, Richard deCordova traced how the formation of the cinematic star was propelled by a sense of what was still outside the public's purview. As he contended:

> The fascination over [actors'] identities was a fascination with a concealed truth, one that resided behind or beyond the surface of the film. The actor first appeared as the revelation of the mystery of the labor behind filmmaking; the picture personality appeared as the revelation of the 'real' names and personalities of the actors; and the star appeared as the revelation of the picture personalities' private identities outside of films. Each of these stages introduced a level of secrecy and truth beneath or beyond the previous one.[28]

And as deCordova detailed, the interest in knowing about the private identities of actors eventually included regard for their most sequestered realms, notably their sexual lives. Such a positing of a sense of what was not yet known was integral to the cultural economy of pleasure and fascination that gave rise to the Hollywood star.

The examples in the last few paragraphs suggest adopting an expansive sense of 'making available'. They also signal the intricate potential relation between what is absent and present in any revelation.[29]

From Reveals to Revelations

As a way into offering an understanding of revelation, this chapter has considered how reveals – as the culminating moment of revelation – are undertaken. Beyond mapping diversity of how charged contrasts are enabled, a number of themes that will be returned to in subsequent chapters have been initially aired. These include how reveals

- Emerge from a sequence of other meaningful actions and events just as they help give meaning to those actions and events;
- Align with previous understandings, but also offer something novel;

- Entails an unfolding dynamic in which a sense of tellers, audiences, objects, ways of attending and methods for communication are mutually constituted;
- Are acts wherein what has *not* been made available can be as integral as what has been made available;[30]
- Are often treated as speaking for themselves, and yet, considerable efforts can be made to speak for them;
- Entail a mix between the sense that things are what they seem and that things are not what they seem;
- Are accountable undertakings wherein preexisting expectations for how individuals ought to act provide the basis for generating charged contrast.

At this point, this analysis could go forward or backward. Forward in the sense of moving on from the moment of the reveal to consider how revelations are consequential. Backward in the sense of unpacking how revelations are made possible by moving further back in time. As indicated in Figure 1.1, in the end either choice will do because following either will return us to where we are now, with the reveal.

Let us, though, move forward.

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3

VESTING

As set out in the Introduction, in this book revelations are being conceived as charged instances of making available. One way that revelations are characterized by a 'lack of indifference' is that they are ascribed with significance. In other words, revelations inform us about the world in a telling way.

While investing import to revelations is commonplace, the argument so far has already suggested ways in which a thorough understanding of revelation requires considering the contrary: Divesting import. This has been illustrated in the manner the attention cast 'here' results in something over 'there' being ignored, how the yet latest revelation supersedes or negates what was so dramatically claimed before, how doubt gets aired about whether what has been made available actually matters and so on.

Investing–Divesting

As developed in previous chapters, a promise often aligned with revealing is that what is made available can be taken as definitive. As in the case of exposés such as Bob Woodward's *Fear: Trump in the White House*,[1] revelations can be said to be exceptionally insightful in sifting fact from fiction.[2] Figuratively speaking, in this vein making available enables a *grasping* – that is a firm taking hold of the world. What is revealed – by virtue of being previously closed off, unrecognized, unintelligible and unacknowledged – gets regarded as solid and sure.[3] At its extreme, information can be regarded as stand-alone, without the need for other supplementary information and without the need to be treated as a re-presentation. In this sense, revelations not only entail building up certain facts, but also subscribe to the underlying presumption that there is a truth out-there that can be unearthed. As such, it

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can be hankered over. A danger with the treatment of the revealed as literal, incontrovertible, or unassailable is that such dispositions can lead to the refutation of other possibilities and the closing down of questioning.

Of course, what one person claims to reveal, another can dispute as mere pseudo-revelation. For instance, the then US President Donald J. Trump reportedly responded to the publication of Woodward's book *Fear* by contending its exposures were 'made up' and 'a con on the public'.[4] More widely than this one book, of course, Trump popularized the term 'fake news' as a means of argumentative rejection. Instead of warranting a grasping at, herein the making available should bring a *pushing away*.

Whatever evaluation is made, proclamations about what is really so come with commitments which might well be deemed problematic, such as in treating truth–lies, knowledge–ignorance, fact–fiction, etc. as stark binaries – binaries that some individuals purport to be on the correct side of.

Visual records, such as photographs, can contrastingly figure as evidence within revelations. On the one hand, visual records can be orientated to as fact-like, authentic and faithful documentations. Seeing merits believing.[5] On the other hand, visual records are also widely recognized as unreliable. Photos can mislead in what they include, what they leave out, and how they are susceptible to alteration.[6] In providing only a snapshot that freezes time, they can be regarded as lacking the capacity to tell anything like a whole story. As a result of this doubleness, the factual status and proper interpretation of a photograph can be subject to considerable dispute.

Today the possibility for manipulating digital imagery provides numerous bases for investing and divesting. As Adi Kuntsman and Rebecca Stein examined in relation to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories in the early 2010s, digital imagery came to play an integral part in warfighting but also one in which fairly predictable orientations were taken to the truth status of the imagery.[7] Through social media platforms, it became commonplace at this time for Israeli soldiers to share personalized images of themselves. Such images were typically regarded by domestic audiences as offering 'as-is' views into the day-to-day experiences of those in military service. Whereas such imagery was unproblematically seen, other imagery needed to be seen through. As Kuntsman and Stein contend, images associated with Palestinian suffering were routinely scrutinized in Israel for signs of their being doctored, deliberately staged, or repurposed. Indeed, suspicions were rife on all sides. Misgivings were directed along partisan lines that undermined the authenticity of opponents' visual evidence. An outcome of the pervasive casting of doubt was that the human costs of conflict became abstracted into digital pixels that were conveniently dismissed as phantasmic; a dynamic that would replay into the future.

Elsewhere, the (non-)fact-like status of photographs has been subject to more nuanced positioning. Take one dramatic case – the long-standing accusation that the visual records of the Apollo Moon landings in the late

1960s and early 1970s were staged by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The Moon landings have provided some of the most iconic images ever recorded. Since the time of the landings, however, various arguments have been put forward that, if inspected closely, official NASA photographs and footage *themselves* provide proof of simulation. This includes works such as Bill Kaysing's *We Never Went to the Moon: America's Thirty Billion Dollar Swindle,* Ralph René's *NASA Mooned America!,* Mary Bennett and David S. Percy's *Dark Moon* and the film *What Happened on the Moon?*.[8] Within such works, viewers are prompted to behold objects in shadow that are clearly visible, the American flag brightly lit no matter its orientation to the Sun, images with identical backgrounds that were said to have been taken in different locations, sources of light in the astronauts' visors too big to be the Sun, video and film evidence of the same events with different details, uneven illumination suggestive of artificial lighting, the strange lack of any disturbance to the surface from the rocket thrusters of the landing Lunar Excursion Module (see Figure 3.1), etc. Revelation along these lines entails bringing attention to what is theoretically perceptible but often overlooked in well-known visual records.

As another such account, Gerhard Wisnewski's book *One Small Step?* juxtaposes photographs purportedly taken on the Moon with those taken in a hangar as part of official training simulations.[9] Through such efforts, readers are drawn into the practical activity of comparing similarities and differences between photos – here generally accompanied by commentary by Wisnewski concluding that they are so similar as to be suspicious. Part of the questioning *One Small Step?* involves doubting the authenticity of NASA's photos based, not on their apparent deficiencies, but on their observable *perfection*. Despite the challenges of setting exposure times, focusing, looking through a camera view finder when wearing a bulky spacesuit, etc., Wisnewski notes the high resolution, clarity and overall quality of the photos taken. In addition, he calls attention to the lack of signs of damage from cold, heat or radiation despite minimal physical protections in place for the films.

Seeing thus enables believing, but only after the seeing is properly directed, namely towards noticing features in the images that are incongruous or congruous. In this way the photos serve as evidence, but determining their meaning requires going deeper than a casual glance. As argued by some voicing doubts about the authenticity of the landing photographs, prevailing cultural beliefs and loyalties (the triumph of human ingenuity, national pride in America's accomplishments, etc.) mean many individuals stay at conventional surface level readings.[10]

Most responses to hoax allegations have sought to debunk the claims of hoax advocates. One prominent approach for doing so has involved rehabilitating the visual evidence. Against the charge that a photograph was doctored because the shadows don't look right, or inexplicable marks are

visible, or there is no landing blast crater, an explanation for the occurrence of such features is offered that restores the images standing as a genuine record.[11] For instance, in their article '(In)visible Evidence', communication scholars David Perlmutter and Nicole Dahmen set out to:

FIGURE 3.1 What's this? Being directed toward the lack of disturbance.

> ask specifically how (some) moon-hoax advocates and opponents use images as evidence for their cause and what that tells us about how human beings contest for meanings even in images whose meanings seem incontestable. We note that both sides of this controversy employ similar tools of visual analysis; for both the hoax-believers and the scientific defenders, seeing is indeed believing.[12]

Perlmutter and Dahmen proceed to offer a side-by-side comparison between what hoax advocates say is seeable in a set of iconic Apollo photographs and what their opponents say about those same photographs.[13] That comparison

for Perlmutter and Dahmen is intended to establish that hoax advocates engage in mere pseudo-revelation.[14]

Perlmutter and Dahmen's work is of particular interest for the tension it exhibits in dealing with revelation and definitude. This tension pertains to the authors' wish to examine how 'seeing is believing' is mobilized in relation to the visual record of the Moon landings by both hoax advocates and 'scientific defenders' alike. And yet, while engaging in this even-handedness, Perlmutter and Dahmen are anxious to declare themselves firmly on the side of the scientific defenders. They do so by promising to take seriously the arguments made from both sides, but also overtly signposting the limits to such symmetry:

> The authors of this article believe that there was a moon landing and that the moon-hoax conspiracy theorists – or, as they would prefer it, the moon-landing debunkers – are plain wrong. However, at the suggestion of a reviewer, we have endeavored not to cast the moon hoaxers as crackpots. Rather, we focus on how they contend to have uncovered visible evidence in the moon-landing photos that indisputably offers proof of their theory. As we found, that evidence is – on the surface – quite superficially compelling, especially to the non-scientist.[15]

By positioning Moon hoax advocates' use of evidence as 'superficially compelling', Perlmutter and Dahmen pave the way for an analysis that investigates how diametrically opposing claims are made on the basis of the same visual evidence. The symmetrical setup *makes sense* because *of* how Moon hoax advocates assert their arguments. The symmetrical setup is *made safe* vis-à-vis the authors' expressed anxiety to locate themselves on the side of the scientific defenders by emphasizing the mere superficiality of that evidence.

Perlmutter and Dahmen conclude their analysis by contending what is really going on in this controversy is that 'believing is seeing, rather than the reverse' – or at least for some.[16] Specifically, this is why Moon hoax advocates come to radically unconventional conclusions about 'images whose meanings seem incontestable' – they see what they want to see.[17] While 'believing is seeing' is offered as a depiction of one side, no attempt is made to apply it to those identified as scientific defenders. Instead, hoax advocates alone are biased and this can often be ascertained by simply relying on one's everyday senses:

> Some of the claims of the moon hoax conspiracy theorists do not need to be vetted by scientists using calculus beyond common understanding. For example, anyone who has taken a flash picture on a starry night has noticed that the background sky in the resulting print is pitch black.[18]

Both by rendering Moon hoaxers' claims as pseudo-revelation and by switching from 'seeing is believing' to 'believing is seeing', Perlmutter and

Dahmen attempt to account for, and at the same time dispose of, the traction achieved by Moon hoaxers' interpretations of the Apollo landings.

As suggested in this brief survey of the Apollo photos, all those involved agree that the photos serve as proof, but they differ dramatically regarding proof of what. How readily that 'what' could be recognized hinged on how distinctions were made between surface and depth as well as the manner doubt and scrutiny get cast.

The Vestments of Leaks

The previous sections examined the way in which revealed material was either invested or divested with import. Such lively negotiations of meaning are in line with the suggestion in the Introduction about the importance of regarding revelations as more than just individual acts of unveiling. Instead, they need to be understood as unfolding interactions in which notions of revealers, the revealed, audiences and ways of attending emerge together over time.

And yet, thus far the vestments have been cast in fairly distinct terms. Sides have been drawn in which some have elected to ascribed what has been revealed with import, while others have sought to deny it. The remainder of this chapter maps out more intricate interweavings of investing and divesting.

As unauthorized disclosures, political leaks are frequently sites for the kinds of invested ways of attending that are associated with revelation. Political leaks tap into deep-seated contemporary thinking that regards state secrecy as suspicious.[19] By offering a glimpse into secluded corridors of public office, hidden machinations come into view.

Such orientations were evident on 25 July 2010 when some 91,000 US military log reports dated between 2004 and 2009 were posted online by WikiLeaks.[20] WikiLeaks initially collaborated with the newspaper *The Guardian* which then led to further collaborations with *The New York Times* and *Der Spiegel* in both analyzing and publicizing the logs. These and other postings of leaked material in 2010 would transform WikiLeaks from a little-known group into a household name.

On the day of its release, *The Guardian* ran with the front-page story 'Massive Leak of Secret Files Exposes True Afghan War'. As that story began:

> A huge cache of secret US military files today provides a devastating portrait of the failing war in Afghanistan, revealing how coalition forces have killed hundreds of civilians in unreported incidents, Taliban attacks have soared and Nato commanders fear neighbouring Pakistan and Iran are fuelling the insurgency.[21]

In such ways, these leaks as well as others by WikiLeaks and collaborating newspapers were billed as enabling a clear and even unprecedented view into the maneuverings of statecraft. The documents released provided not only the building blocks for popular media accounts at the time about warfighting, but also subsequent academic scholarship setting out the nature of US power.[22] The 'radical transparency' philosophy underpinning WikiLeaks developed by its founder Julian Assange was itself premised on the idea that freely disclosing material on the web would not only lead to insights about statecraft, but also challenge the authority of entrenched institutions.[23]

Similar dynamics about what was disclosed and what insights were made available would play out again later that year. In October 2010, some 400,000 US documents related to the war in Iraq were released, consisting of daily Significant Activity Report logs detailing the outcome of use of force incidents. Again, this was done in collaboration with *The Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *Der Spiegel*. As with the Afghan leaks, repeatedly and prominently the disclosure of these Iraq logs were said to open up hidden areas of security. *The Guardian* included fairly assured arguments along these lines. The article 'Iraq War Logs Reveal 15,000 Previously Unlisted Civilian Deaths' by David Leigh began by stating:

> Leaked Pentagon files obtained by the Guardian contain details of more than 100,000 people killed in Iraq following the US-led invasion, including more than 15,000 deaths that were previously unrecorded … The mass of leaked documents provides the first detailed tally by the US military of Iraqi fatalities. Troops on the ground filed secret field reports over six years of the occupation, purporting to tot up every casualty, military and civilian.[24]

The 15,000 unrecorded death numbers in this quote referred to civilian deaths not previously identified through the individual-by-individual tally of civilian deaths compiled by Iraq Body Count; a total largely derived through adding together deaths reported in English language news accounts.

Another article ('WikiLeaks Iraq: Data Journalism Maps Every Death') mentioned the following figures of death between 2004 and 2009:

Total deaths

- The database (of Significant Activity Reports) records 109,032 deaths in total for the period
- The database records the following death counts: 66,081 civilians, 23,984 insurgents and 15,196 Iraqi security forces.[25]As part of the online version of this article, *The Guardian* newspaper used the Iraq military logs as a dataset for geographically pinpointing the location of fatalities through an online interactive map as part of a news story 'WikiLeaks Iraq Logs: Every Death Mapped'.[26]

In short, the leaks became objects for investment.

And yet, while the logs were headlined as laying bare what was previously out of sight, accompanying such claims were other ones that made space for uncertainty and doubt.

Consider. As part of its coverage of the Afghanistan leaks, *The Guardian* created two web-based resources – a set of 300 log reports of significant incidents and a set of the logs related to improvised explosive devices. For both, an online graphic interface was produced to enable readers to call up logs for themselves. For those that wanted to go a step further – 'to download this data to play with it yourself'[27] – Excel spreadsheets were compiled. Thus, not only could readers see how the numbers of improvised explosive device attacks per year and by location fluctuated over time through reading *The Guardian*, they could conduct their own analysis. In this way, the quantity of data was regarded as calling for an unconventional relationship between journalists and readers. Readers were invited to play an active role as users, not just consumers, of data. The news report 'WikiLeaks' Afghanistan War Logs: How Our Datajournalism Operation Worked' ended with a then novel appeal to readers: 'Can you help us make more sense of the raw info?[28]

While appealing for help in making more sense of the logs, in other reports, writers for *The Guardian* also provided many cautions. At a basic level, the logs – their structure, the categories used, the abbreviations, the content of many entries, etc. – were said to require tutelage to decipher. As a result, the newspaper produced a glossary of terms as well as a 2 m 41 s video on how to read the logs that indicated, among other matters, what information was important.[29] WikiLeaks too produced a related supplementary Reading Guide for the Afghan logs.[30]

According to the very terms of reporting at the time, making sense of the logs was presented as tricky beyond such basic readability points. Cross checks done by reporters at *The Guardian* and elsewhere on the Afghan logs were said to indicate the wounded in action (WIA) and killed in action (KIA) entries were 'highly unreliable'.[31] Such appraisals, especially without further elaboration, seemed to have stood against the possibility for readers to make sense of the logs as 'raw info'.[32] Such deficiencies were not presented in *The Guardian* as rendering the logs completely useless. However, they did demand additional knowledge and skill to interpret. The status of the logs figured as a recurring theme in news coverage in 2010 – but seemingly a tension ridden one. While another story in *The Guardian* suggested the logs provided an 'unvarnished picture' of the conflict, it was also noted the log entries were of poor quality, uncorroborated, incomplete, written in a cryptic language, simply false or subject to other caveats.[33]

Diligent readers of *The Guardian* would have other reasons for pause about their ability to make sense of the logs. Doing so was presented as complicated within *The Guardian's* coverage because there was both too

little and too much data. The logs that were released on 25 July 2010 about Afghanistan only represented a portion of the documents obtained by WikiLeaks. This partiality could be taken by some as making it problematic to situate specific incidents within a sense of the overall context provided by all the logs. Conversely, in other respects, there was simply too much data. As one *Guardian* reporter characterized the situation, there was data '[i]n spades. With bells on'.[34] Processing this amount of material was said to require non-conventional skills associated with the then emerging field of 'datajournalism',[35] least the sheer volume of what was available confound meaning making.

Definite statements about the state of the war in Iraq also gave way to later qualification. To the online version of 'WikiLeaks Iraq: Data Journalism Maps Every Death' article, an update was added two days after its publication. An American academic with existing access to the dataset pointed to various limitations with it. These included that the figures only noted deaths in which the Multi-National Force in Iraq were on the scene, where units had time to assess the situation, and where there was a relative certainty in outcomes. In addition, recording standards varied between units and over time. In response to this update, Simon Rogers from *The Guardian* responded 'So, although the data paints a grim picture, the facts are likely to be much, much worse, because of underreporting. Be careful how you use the data – or at least bear this stuff in mind'.[36]

What then was one holding when clutching onto the leaked Afghan and Iraq military logs? The previous argument suggested that even within *The Guardian* newspaper's coverage, diverging responses would need to be offered to this question. On many occasions, the logs were taken as supplying clear insights into formerly obscured matters about the conduct of the US forces. In providing well-formed and meaningful data about the world they could be defined as vital information sources. In supporting non-trivial truth claims about the state of warfighting in Afghanistan and Iraq,[37] it could further be argued that they represented definitive sources of knowledge. Such insightful attributions to the logs relied on making a distinction between what appeared to be the case (as portrayed by officialdom) and what really was so (as made apparent by the leaks). The release of the logs also created a defined distinction between what was understood about the world pre- and post-leaks.

And yet, while such definitive portrayals were prevalent within *The Guardian* and elsewhere, at other times, more qualified (if not downright questioning) tones were evident. Such tones suggested the need to step back from what was literally written down in the logs. While such portrayals called forth a distinction between what appeared to be the case and what really was so, the release of the leaked logs could not itself be the basis for grounding a definitive sense of what was really the case.

The prevalence of the airing of doubt about the definitiveness, literalness and sufficiency of the logs within coverage attributing the logs with definitiveness, literalness and sufficiency suggested the need for caution. The outright rejection of the logs as data sources would seem overly hesitant. Yet, a danger is that they could be taken as more solid than would be justified. Assessments about the status of the logs along these lines were highly consequential. Claims of what was exposed were bound up with determinations about who could speak with credibility (and who could not) about what took place in Afghanistan and Iraq. While at times the general public was said to be empowered to make sense of the conflicts through the logs, reasons were also elsewhere given directing them back to reporters and data journalists who had invested their time, training and energy into the checking, contextualizing and otherwise analyzing the leaks as a whole.

Cables and Controversy

As a way into further understanding how a sense of leaked material, those revealing them and the audiences for revelations emerge, I want to consider one final round of disclosures in 2020. In November, WikiLeaks posted its third major set of disclosures for that year – a subset of the 251,287 diplomatic cables sent by US embassies around the world, with additional cables released in a piecemeal fashion thereafter. *El País* and *Le Monde* joined *The Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *Der Spiegel* in supporting these disclosures.

'Cablegate', as it became known, would become a subject of considerable commentary.

At times, these cables were treated as providing a graphic, un-spun and unadulterated (and thus highly insightful) 'raw look at US diplomacy'.[38] As such, they were treated as revealing definitive facts about US statecraft: Deals struck to get prisoners out of Guantánamo Bay, a warning to Germany not to enforce arrest warrants for CIA agents that mistakenly kidnapped a German citizen, covert US efforts to remove highly enriched uranium from a Pakistani research reactor, etc. Repeatedly, in the media coverage, reference was made to secrets – secret meetings, secret plans and secret documents. Trading on the status of the material leaked as formerly 'secret' was arguably central to its attributed ability to provide a basis for insight. The leaked cables mattered and had gravity because they had been exposed. This firmness meant they provided an antidote to typical public relations (mis)information. As late as 2022, the newspapers supporting the release of the cables argued that 'Even now … journalists and historians continue to publish new revelations, using the unique trove of documents'.[39]

As in the case of the images of the Moon landings, many agreed the cables served as definitive proof, but they differed on proof of what. In contrast to condemnations of US dealings, some political pundits and officials – such as former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton – contended that the cables illustrated how little there was by way of misdeeds or a split between the public face and backroom dealings of diplomats.[40]

Whether damning or laudatory, the leaked material was repeatedly attached with the qualities of sufficiency and literalness. The thinking of officials and the deeds of security personnel were recorded in the cables and these had come into public view. Treating them as such then enabled commentators to debate questions : Did the cables provide a damning indictment of US activities or not? Did they say anything new or not?[41] It also set the stage for those central to the leaks to treat them as another instance of the 'eternal battle between those in power, with an interest in controlling information, and the journalist and citizen who wants it to be free'.[42]

And yet, as with logs, multiple orientations were evident too in relation to the import of the cables as being able to speak to the facts. While contentions that the logs and cables rendered the facts out there for all to view granted a sufficiency to them, such attributions sat somewhat uncomfortably with the human voice that presented them. Unless reporters, investigators and commentators simply mouthed the words written, human agency – skill, judgment, interpretation, identity, motivations – should have mattered in making sense of the cables.[43] For instance, one aspect of that agency cited within the coverage of the cables was the need to understand any single one within a wider 'context'.[44] While a cable – indicating, for instance, the shipment of missiles by North Korea to Iran – might seem definite and damning at first sight, the situation was said to be proven otherwise through the 'wider window' enabled by journalistic investigation and expertise.[45]

Of course, the verifying, identifying, contextualizing and otherwise analyzing of information are often regarded as the hallmarks of journalism and the source of its authority. What is noteworthy in the case of WikiLeaks is that appeals to such tradecraft rested uneasily with the frequent emphasis on how the logs and cables told their own story. Especially because the material was posted online in an act of whistleblowing that sought to empower readers, much emphasis was invested in what the once secret, but now exposed, leaks clearly made visible and available for public inspection.

As part of the media coverage of the cables, portrayals of the cables as definitive proof of the nature of US diplomacy would readily mix with alternative depictions that suggested they could not stand on their own. To take a prominent example, in 2012, the British Broadcasting Corporation produced a two-part television series *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower*.[46]

Self-dubbed as 'the first in-depth television analysis of the secret cables', it began with the following mix:

Audio Voices	*Visual Imagery*
'It was the scoop of the century'.	Aerial scenes of Capital Hill Presenter walking in urban setting
'WikiLeaks lifts the curtain on the secret communications between Washington and the diplomats that we have stationed all over the globe'.	Footage of television news broadcast Aerial scenes of Capital Hill
'I'm not aware of any release of information in human history comparable to the amount that was released, um, via WikiLeaks'.	Close up of man with glasses in darkened room
'These are cables that showed a superpower's secret thoughts'.	Close up of presenter speaking. Lights against dark background.
'It was hard for me to, um, look Secretary Clinton in the eye when she'd say 'How did this happen?"'	Close up of man in darkened room. Presenter walking.
'A quarter of a million US diplomatic messages, apparently stolen by one of their own soldiers, turned into a global sensation by a whistle blowing web site and its controversial founder, Julian Assange'.	Photographic image of young man, zoom in x2. Lights, computer imagery. Scene of group walking out of building, flash photography.
'I like crushing bastards'.	ABC News footage of man with brilliant white hair. Zoom in.
'I think every diplomat around the world will have had one overriding thought, "Thank God it was not me and thank God it is not us"'.	Close up of man in darkened room.
'In the first in-depth television analysis of the secret cables, we lift the lid on how the world's greatest superpower does business and how it gets what it wants. We reveal a superpower on a mission to change the world. But a superpower that sometimes fails to live up to its own ideals'.	Lights. Computer screen images in darkened room. Zoom in on computer screen formatted text. Presenter outside White House. Split screen, imagery of the United States.

Carrying on in this vein, *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower* included repeated and explicit claims proposing that the cables spoke for themselves. Thus, it was said that 'The cables reveal what American diplomats say when they think the world will never know, who they trust and who they mock, what they want and how they get it'. Over three dozen

assertions were made: 'The cables showed..., 'The cables revealed...' and 'The cables allow us to see...'. In only a few instances in the program were explicit qualifications of any sort inserted, such as that 'The cables seemed to suggest'.

And yet, despite the many references to the face value meaning of the cables in *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower*, at times the program also spoke to a non-readily apparent meaning. While much ground for criticism of US foreign policy was said to be evidenced by what the cables demonstrated, the program presenter also spoke of reasons to praise the work of officials:

> The cables reveal aspects of US diplomacy that America did not want us to see. But the *real* story of the cables is more complicated. These *secret* documents show US diplomats apparently trying to do good. In country after country, even behind closed doors, they are raising issues like freedom, democracy and human rights… And yet, the cables show a real tension in US diplomacy. The US wants to spread its ideals across the world, but struggles to reconcile this with its other interests, like protecting some of its unsavory alliances.[47] (emphases in delivery)

This third layer, the 'real' story of struggle, was provided by the in-depth analysis of the cables given in *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower*; an analysis that relied on interviews and other forms of supplementary evidence. Within programs such as *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower* then, leaked material both spoke the truth and needed to be spoken for.[48] It was both imparted with significance and emptied of it.

Gotcha, Gotcha Not, Gotcha, Gotcha Not...

Through the means of modern online information technology, in 2010, citizens around the globe were invited to scrutinize for themselves what the former US National Security Advisor John Bolton characterized as the biggest release of information in 'human history' up until that point in time.[49] Repeatedly, and prominently, the logs and cables were said to lift the lid on the machinations of statecraft. Knowing was treated as a matter of figuratively reaching out and seizing hold of the documents. As with other efforts to make information openly available, much debate ensued in the case of WikiLeaks about the virtues and vices of these disclosures.[50]

And yet, in this chapter I have contended that the 2010 releases were also orientated to as much more negotiated, much more subtle acts than plainly lifting open the lid on state secrecy. While at times the logs and cables were portrayed as straightforwardly containing truths, at other times they needed to be imparted with substance. In order to make sense of what was disclosed,

commentators of various persuasions forwarded notions of what was missing based on their professional tradecraft. Those varied ascriptions were consequential in supporting contentions about who could know what about the world through reading the leaks.

As revelations, the WikiLeaks releases were not simply treated as informing readers about US statecraft. Such contention mixed with doubts raised about the basic worth of the logs and cables as well as qualifications and hesitations surrounding their interpretation. Once we treat the releases in this dual fashion, a sense of inquisitiveness is required for appreciating how offering up can come coupled with withdrawing away.

Going beyond the limitations explicitly flagged as part of the media reporting on WikiLeaks, it is possible to impute other ways in which the presence of the leaked material faded just as it was positioned as enabling ready viewing. This can be done by following out the logic of the arguments given.

Consider a bind created within the reporting: How treating the leaked material as definitive relied on ending the doubt that the leaked material itself was said to prove was justified. To elaborate, as mentioned previously, the record of private diplomatic meetings given through the cables were often treated as a means to see through public speeches, official platitudes and interview responses.[51] What was said in private (as indicated by the leaks) was positioned as telling the lie of official public statements.

To take certain documents as definitive and piercing, however, relies on an assumption that could well be regarded as problematic: The kinds of 'strategic interactions'[52] associated with statecraft – the moves (and countermoves and counter-countermoves) by individuals to influence each other and manage their self-image – effectively end in certain situations. Whereas the public persona of an official on TV is taken as crafted for the camera, the suggestion is that once the office doors are shut, their true face emerges.[53] To assume the cables provide a definitive picture of US statecraft requires sidelining concerns about (1) the fears, priorities and perspectives of officials within a particular state, (2) the demands of the setting in which they were made, (3) the differential power relations between states, (4) the preoccupations and agendas of record keepers, etc.[54]

As a second bind, reference to a hitherto secret world to the leaks provided the seeds for further questioning. Unless what was revealed through the logs and cables was taken as providing a complete-for-all-purposes disclosure, questions can be asked about what is still left out of the public domain. As one example, in *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower,* cables relating to Egypt were spoken to in this manner:

> Presenter Voice-over: [W]e can see in the cables that the Americans were warned that the Mubarak regime was under threat. A prominent opposition activist, Ahmed Salah, told them of plans to make 2011 the year of

> change. He met with US embassy officials and the details were wired back to Washington.

The following cable text then appears on the screen:

> 30 December 2008
>
> [Salah] claimed that several opposition forces…have agreed to support an unwritten plan for a transition to a parliamentary democracy involving a weakened presidency….before the scheduled 2011 presidential elections.

US officials' purported dismissal of such threats to the Mubarak regime was cited in the documentary to argue 'the Americans' were out of touch with what was happening in Egypt. While they were dutifully gathering intelligence, the presenter of *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower* claimed that the US interpretation of that intelligence was faulty. This then is what lay behind the United States' failure to anticipate the Egyptian Revolution in 2011 that led to the toppling of the Mubarak regime.

However, such a reading is open to question. Any individual cable such as the 30 December 2008 one could be, perhaps radically, reinterpreted depending on the answers given to the following questions: How many false claims about a pending transition had been made in the past? How many other meetings took place with opposition forces? What where oppositional candidates saying to the United States in the years after the referenced 2008 meeting, particularly before the revolution in nearby Tunisia in early 2011?[55] Answers to these questions would affect what sorts of appraisals about US officials could be justified based on the individual 30 December 2008 cable. While any individual cable might 'open up' a view, that this is only a partial view means more information can be demanded. In such respects, making available is invariably bound up with a sense of that which remains outside of it.

Investments and Divestments

As part of examining what is realized through revelations and how revelations are realized, this chapter has considered how revealed material gets attributed with significance. In one respect, this is a question of interpretation. Are US diplomats trying to do good around the world? Did NASA land on the Moon? What was it like to work in the Trump White House? To answer such questions people have turned to records such as military logs, photographs, official minutes and the like. This chapter has surveyed some disputes resulting from alternative readings of such material.

However, rather than simply staying at the level of interpretation, much of this chapter has attended to a more preliminary issue of how individuals position the potential of records to settle the facts. Attending to 'fact-ness' in this manner indicates some of the underlying presumptions at work in disputes. One common promise often attributed to revealed material is that it is well-formed and meaningful. In this way, leaked minutes, interview accounts and visual records serve as discrete nuggets or building blocks for making claims. And yet, in the case of the topics examined in this chapter, as well as many others, the ability of documentation to settle the facts has been called into question. Through doing so, grand expectations associated with the 'killer chart', the 'telltale' photo or the incriminating scrap of DNA get called into doubt.[56] Herein, settling meaning requires more work than just some supposed base of unmediated facts to be put on display. As a result, efforts to make available what was previously otherwise often fail to secure the definitiveness, literalness and sufficiency sometimes attributed to them.

Appeals to revealing not only involve epistemic questions regarding what can be known about the world. Affect is at play too. Claims regarding reveals and pseudo-reveals matter often precisely because they stir hope, dread, excitement, bewilderment and much more. Frequently such affects are generated through positing a lack in what is known that acts as a spur for further investigations. For instance, offering a reading of the philosopher *Žižek*, Jodi Dean contended:

> a key technocultural fantasy is the 'the truth is out there.' Such a fantasy informs desires to click, link, search and even surf cyberia's networks. We fantasize that we'll find the truth, even when we know we won't, that any specific truth or answer is but a momentary fragment. Still the fantasy keeps us looking.[57]

In this sense, seeking knowledge is bound up with the production of desires and disappointment. The want for evident, definitive and self-sufficient information eventually gives way to the pain of acknowledging that a bedrock of certitude is not out there.

Although disappointment – and conviction – might be common experiences associated with seeking to make meaning of the world, in this chapter I have sought to consider how the two can come bundled together. As argued for the example of WikiLeaks, the emotions associated with revelations need not just derive from the assertion of definitely exposing or the acknowledgement that the truth is frustratingly out of reach. Instead, I have sought to be open to how movement and mix – between belief and skepticism, investment and divestment, solidity and fluidity, 'things are what they seem' and 'things are not what they seem' – can establish the affects associated with revelations and the visions built upon them. In the

analysis of WikiLeaks, it was not simply the case that individuals contended their claims were facts while opposing claims were mere opinion[58] or people tried to advance their reading of what's what as authoritative.[59] Rather, a recurring theme was how multiple and seemingly tension-ridden arguments about what had been made available through the leaks were offered.

Within this chapter, initial attention has been given to how claims to reveal are bound up with claims about expertise. In continuing to examine what is realized through revelations and how they are realized, the next chapter turns to how revelations entail forms of becoming.

Notes

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2 As too with documents released under Freedom of Information requests, see Brian Rappert, *How to Look Good in a War: Justifying and Challenging State Violence* (London: Pluto, 2012).
3 Agnes Ku, "Boundary Politics in the Public Sphere: Openness, Secrecy, and Leak," *Sociological Theory* 16, no. 2 (1998): 172–192.
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5 Errol Morris, *Believing Is Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 2014), Chapter 4.
6 See, for instance, William J. Mitchell, *The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994); Errol Morris, *Believing is Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 2014).
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8 Bill Kaysing and Randy Reid, *We Never Went to the Moon: America's Thirty Billion Dollar Swindle* (Pomeroy, WA: Health Research, 1976); Ralph René, *NASA Mooned America!* (Passaic, NJ: René, 1994); Mary Bennett and David S. Percy, *Dark Moon: Apollo and the Whistle-Blowers* (Adventures Unlimited Press, 2001); David Percy (dir.), *What Happened on the Moon? An investigation into Apollo* (CORE International, 2000), youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W79mIGx9Ib4.
9 Gerhard Wisnewski, *One Small Step? The Great Moon Hoax and the Race to Dominate Earth from Space* (East Sussex: Clairview Books, 2008).
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12 David D. Perlmutter and Nichole Smith Dahmen, "(In)visible Evidence: Pictorially Enhanced Disbelief in the Apollo Moon Landings," *Visual Communication* 7, no. 2 (2008): 229–251, 232.
13 This conclusion is justified, in part, through the contrasting use of qualifiers and modalities. Hoax advocates are said to 'claim' and 'believe' things to be evident about the photographs, while opponents, in response, 'point out' things that 'one must consider' and 'one must recognize'. See pages 239–240. On the significance of the use of modalities and qualifiers in the production and closure of scientific disagreement, see Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), Chapter 2.
14 The notion of 'pseudo-revelation' is my term. The assertion that Moon landing hoax claims are superficially compelling, but ultimately fake revelations, appears in Richard Holt, 'Apollo 11 Moon Landing: Conspiracy Theories Debunked', *Telegraph*, 15 July 2009, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/space/5833633/Apollo-11-Moon-landing-conspiracy-theories-debunked.html; Steven Thomas, *The Moon Landing Hoax: The Eagle That Never Landed* (London: Swordworks, 2010); and Paolo Attivissimo, *Moon Hoax: Debunked!* (Research Triangle, NC: Lulu.com, 2013).
15 David D. Perlmutter and Nichole Smith Dahmen, "(In)visible Evidence: Pictorially Enhanced Disbelief in the Apollo Moon Landings," *Visual Communication* 7, no. 2 (2008): 248, note 2.
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19 Eva Horn, "Logics of Political Secrecy," *Theory, Culture & Society* 28 no. 7–8 (2011): 103–122, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276411424583
20 In the years that followed WikiLeaks becoming a household name, the composition, rationale and history of the organization would become contested between those (formerly) within it as well as outside of it. As a basic background, WikiLeaks was established in 2006 under Julian Assange. While initially seeking to post hacked materials online, it developed into an organization dedicated to publishing materials sourced from other parties (see Charlie Beckett and James Ball, *WikiLeaks: News in the Networked Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012). WikiLeaks posted its first document in the year of its foundation. This chapter though examines the releases made during 2010 only.
21 Nick Davies and David Leigh, "Massive Leak of Secret Files Exposes Truth of Occupation," *The Guardian*, 25 July 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/25/afghanistan-war-logs-military-leaks
22 Salih Bicakci, Deniz Rende, Sevinc Rende, et al., "WikiLeaks on the Middle East: Obscure Diplomacy Networks and Binding Spaces," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 4 (2014): 459–473; Martyn Frampton and Ehud

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24 See David Leigh, "Iraq War Logs Reveal 15,000 Previously Unlisted Civilian Deaths," *The Guardian*, 23 October 2010.

25 See Simon Rogers, "WikiLeaks Iraq: Data Journalism Maps Every Death," *The Guardian*, 23 October 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/oct/23/wikileaks-iraq-data-journalism.

26 Simon Rogers, "WikiLeaks Iraq war Logs: Every Death Mapped," *The Guardian*, 23 October 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/datablog/interactive/2010/oct/23/wikileaks-iraq-deaths-map

27 Simon Rogers, "Wikileaks' Afghanistan War Logs: How our Datajournalism Operation Worked," *The Guardian*, 27 July 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/jul/27/wikileaks-afghanistan-data-datajournalism

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29 Simon Rogers, "Afghanistan War Logs: The Glossary," *The Guardian*, 25 July 2010, See http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/datablog/2010/jul/25/wikileaks-afghanistan-war-logs-glossary as well as http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/datablog/video/2010/jul/25/afghanistan-war-logs-video-tutorial?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3486

30 http://www.wikileaks.org/afg/event/2009/03/AFG20090301n1640.html

31 Simon Rogers, "Afghanistan War Logs: The Glossary," *The Guardian*, 25 July 2010, See http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/datablog/2010/jul/25/wikileaks-afghanistan-war-logs-glossary as well as http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/datablog/video/2010/jul/25/afghanistan-war-logs-video-tutorial?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3486

32 Despite such caveats, elsewhere this dataset has been treated as a 'detailed insider's description of the military machinery of the world's largest power', one taken as 'a reliable description of the Afghan war' based on said 'systematic verification efforts' noted at the *New York Times*. See Andrew Zammit-Mangion, Michael Dewar, Visakan Kadirkamanathan, and Guido Sanguinetti, "Point Process Modelling of the Afghan War Diary," *PNAS* 109, no. 31 (2012): 12416.

33 David Leigh, "Afghanistan War Logs: Secret CIA Paramilitaries' Role in Civilian Deaths", *The Guardian*, 25 July 2010; The Guardian, "Afghanistan War Logs: The Unvarnished Picture," *The Guardian*, 25 July 2010.

34 Simon Rogers, "WikiLeaks' Afghanistan War Logs: How our Datajournalism Operation Worked," *The Guardian*, 27 July 2010.

35 The acquisition, analysis and presentation of large datasets in support of journalism.

36 Simon Rogers, "Wikileaks Iraq: What's Wrong with the Data?" *The Guardian*, 25 October 2010. Under reporting was also noted elsewhere, as in David Leigh, "Iraq War Logs Reveal 15,000 Previously Unlisted Civilian Deaths," *The Guardian*, 23 October 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/oct/23/wikileaks-iraq-data-journalism

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42 Charlie Beckett and James Ball, *WikiLeaks: News in the Networked Era* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 91.
43 For a more general discussion on this point, see J. Teurlings and M. Stauff, "Introduction: The Transparency Issue," *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies* 14, no. 1 (2014): 3–10.
44 For instance, in Aryn Baker, "The Afghan War Leaks: Few Surprises, but Some Hard Truth," *New York Times*, 26 July 2010 and comments made by Julian Assange in *Mediastan - A WikiLeaks Road Movie* (2013) at 14:00.
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47 BBC Two, *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower* (Ep. 2) Originally aired 28 March 2012.
48 See as well, Mustafa Khalili and Elliot Smith, "Julian Assange on the Afghanistan War Logs: 'They Show the True Nature of this War'," *The Guardian*, 25 July 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/video/2010/jul/25/julian-assange-wikileaks-interview-warlogs.
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51 As in an interview of the Kazakh Ambassador to Washington as part of the *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower* documentary. Herein the records of private diplomacy were treated as a way to get 'beyond the public statements and official platitudes'. What was said in private (as revealed by the leaked material) served as a basis for establishing what diplomats 'really say behind closed doors'.
52 Ervin Goffman, *Strategic Interaction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970).
53 Or once under the gaze of a documentary journalist. It is important to note that even within its own terms, *WikiLeaks: The Secret Life of a Superpower* did not follow through such a neat distinction. Throughout the episodes, public statements of various kinds by officials – such as former US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates – are drawn on in an unproblematic way. Interview clips were presented, indicating what American officials had been thinking in 2010, what the cables recounted, what the effects of the leaking of the cables was on US relations afterward, what actions were undertaken in response to the release of the cables, etc. Through drawing on these public statements then, other public statements

were cast as either authentic or inauthentic. But given the said imperative of suspending belief about the accuracy of what gets said in public, it is not clear why some of these statements should be treated as reliable.

54 Consider an alternative track for questioning. To the extent it was maintained that the exchanges recorded were authentic because officials spoke with their real voice, then doubts could be raised about the extent they can be understood by outsiders. Between those engaged in ongoing relations in matters of statecraft, exchanges would likely be laden with mutual expectations about literalness, unspoken presumptions, taken-for-granted understandings, etc. that all mitigate against the uncomplicated comprehension by outsiders from reading of secondary meeting notes. By way of further commentary on this predicament, for see I. Arminen, "On the Context Sensitivity of Institutional Interaction," *Discourse & Society* 11, no. 4 (2000): 435–458.

55 This is particularly salient point in relation to the diplomatic cables because they were released in a piecemeal fashion, with only 220 initially made available online.

56 Alex Stevens, "Telling Policy Stories: An Ethnographic Study of the Use of Evidence in Policy-making in the UK," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 48, no. 1/2 (2011): 97–105; Errol Morris, *Believing Is Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

57 Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret* (London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 8.

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4

BECOMING

In making available what was previously otherwise, the preceding chapters likened revelations to literal and figurative gesturings. 'Here, here, look here!'. Uncovering, unveiling, peeling, prizing, clutching, seizing and grasping have been some of the associated gestures. Once the fervor of such initial claims making have cooled, however, more nuanced notions of what has been made available can emerge. Rather than 'Here!', a more or less subtle gesturing to a 'Somewhere over there…' can come into play.

In relation to the 'it' that has been made available, how attention is directed affects determinations of what is at hand. A given document might be treated as the equivalent of rough scribblings, graphic data or a deep truth.[1] As contended in the previous chapter, so often in revealing there is no simple sense of what has been made available. Audiences for revelations can be invited to see for themselves the giveaway attributes of an image. Or perceiving what is of note can be portrayed as a skilled undertaking in which (the real) understanding is the preserve of those with sufficient expertise to scaffold their reach. In this way, talk of revelation begs questions about meaning making: Who can do it, with what ease, what aids are required, etc.

We can briefly turn to another example in which what and who dynamics have played out. The advent of the printing press as well as the assembly systems for the mass printing of books are often heralded as profoundly transforming European culture and society.[2] Spurred on by Martin Luther's Reformation call for individuals to come to their own reckoning with the Holy Scriptures, the greater availability of the printed word fed the desire for self-improvement. As historian William Eamon has detailed, manuals

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were written in the sixteenth century in Europe on nearly every aspect of daily life. The tradecrafts were not excluded.[3] Dubbed 'Books of Secrets' were produced on alchemy (the industrial chemistry of its day), metal smithing, dyeing, jewelry and the like. Intended for trained craftworkers, self-instructed craftworkers and even the general public, such manuals posed a potential challenge to the entrenched social stratifications in their aim to make widely available what was hitherto restricted to trained specialists.[4]

While some texts sought to demystify what for many people were esoteric if not downright mysterious arts, the extent to which they did so is not easy to establish. As with today's 'How-to' manuals, the limits of such codified instructions as substitutes for face-to-face training were numerous. Yet, in the sixteenth century, industrial production was also undergoing a major reorganization, leading to the simplification of skills that made such books more applicable.

As the market for books about the artisanal trades grew, different texts could be subjected to classification, comparison and testing. Dubbed 'professors of secrets'[5] took up this role and thereby the task of systematizing ways to experiment on the world. The promise held out was that of lifting the veil on the secrets of nature.

What these sixteenth-century publications on tradecraft enabled and for who depended on what they included and what they did not. While the professors of secrets sometimes extolled the virtues of openness, they were also accused by the likes of philosopher Francis Bacon of calculatingly holding back vital information in reserve for prestige and profit. To the extent this was so, how-to books of secrets thus placed proper understanding out of reach through the very terms of what they made available.

Further linking of what and who, this chapter takes 'becoming' as its realization of focus; that is, how relations of identity emerge through the dynamics that characterize charged instances of making available. As with the other realizations, becoming is understood as realized through revelations and revelations as realized through becomings.

Secrecy-Revelation

I do so first by considering how the examination of revelations can be informed by another concept: Secrecy.

As often popularly conceived, these two notions are the inversion of each other. The manner in which secrecy is often defined as 'consciously willed concealment'[6] mirrors treatments of revelation as acts of intentional disclosure.[7] Herein, both are agentic undertakings requiring motivations and competences. Also, revelation is often distinguished from related words such as discovery by its association with the hidden. To reveal, in this spirit, entails unveiling, uncovering, exposing etc. rather than just finding out.[8] Likewise,

we often come to know of secrets because they have been revealed.[9] The presence of secrecy and revelation can be tightly intertwined. As Eva Horn argued, 'Being permanently dedicated to revealing political secrets, unearthing the "ultimate truth" [the mass media] *create* the public's persistent feeling that "there is always something" to uncover'.[10]

In *Revelations*, however, the starting orientation is not to treat revelation and secrecy simply as reversals. In part, this is because the associated conventional counterpart notions of disclosure and concealment are themselves not treated as binary opposites.[11] For many activities – public inquiries, intelligence operations, accounting and so on – it has long been recognized that measured acts of disclosure can serve to conceal a great deal.[12] Conversely, concerted attempts to conceal can signal much.[13] Thus, revelations need to be approached for how they entail forms of concealing, disclosing as well as how the two come bundled together.

Multiple other similarities can be drawn between secrecy and revelation. In terms of the themes of this chapter, one similarity is how both are implicated in the formation of individual and group identities. The English word 'secret' has the Latin root *secretus*, meaning 'to separate' or 'set apart'. As those in Secrecy Studies have long argued,[14] secrecy-keeping and secrecy-sharing are bound up with creating notions of who is 'in the know' and who is not.[15] To be (seen to be) in the know enables individuals to ground their authority in a manner not possible for others.[16] This is one reason why many people – from high office politicians to schoolchildren – widely parade their possession of secrets.[17]

Revelations too can be approached for how they construct identities, set apart and differentiate. What individuals disclose, who they disclose to and how much they disclose help mark a sense of who they are.[18] Newfound identities go hand in hand with newfound relations. Within some schools of theology, for instance, revelation is less conceived as the conveyance of some propositional information from God to another, and more the establishment of a new relation between them.[19] Setting apart matters for affect. As Neale outlined, melodramas are based on discrepant knowledge: The viewers become aware of critical information unknown to at least some onscreen characters: desires, regrets, hopes and fears.[20] Yet, such insight is of no aid to viewers in either changing the events witnessed or in discerning how the story will eventually play out. Instead, we are in a situation of needing to wait powerlessly for what is to unfold – it is the condition that fires emotional drama.

As scholars of secrecy have also argued, though, it is important to emphasize that such partitioning is not simply or even necessarily related to the content of secrets.[21] Managing access to information which would be regarded as trivial or irrelevant tattle, if generally known, can still be the basis for drawing distinctions between who is in and who is out.[22] Revelations can be

approached in a similar manner wherein revealing is consequential for what it mobilizes vis-à-vis relations rather than due to some presumed inherent power of what gets made available.[23]

Secrecy has not just been treated as consequential, but also paradoxical. For instance, within Secrecy Studies, the argument has been advanced that 'it is in the very nature of secrets that they get told'.[24] What is being pointed to here is that secrets are rarely the preserve of one lone individual. Instead, they are shared, sometimes through reciprocal exchanges.[25] The sharing of secrets is paradoxical because the act of sharing what is meant to be secret goes against the notion that it should not be disclosed. Thus, anyone telling secrets must account for why it is appropriate to do so. One way this is done is by tellers prefacing their disclosures with justifications for why it is proper that the secret has been told *in this instance* despite the *general* bar on doing so. Another is by asking those receiving secrets not to spread them further. In this vein, it can be said that knowing how to keep secrets is a matter of knowing how to tell them.[26]

Launching off from these and other points about secrecy keeping and sharing, this chapter turns to how revelations are bound up with becomings related to how some are set apart from others, the relevance of what is revealed for becoming, and the paradoxes of revealing.

The Self (Selectively) Revealed

This section does so by examining how individuals craft self-portrayals within autobiographies. The genre of autobiography often rests on making available surprising, extraordinary or previously obscured matters. *The Guardian*'s newspaper coverage of the posthumous autobiography of the actor Paul Newman billed the book as an astonishing account in which 'the star faces up to his alcohol problems, his fatherly failings – and reveals the secret of his sex appeal'.[27] Even for authors who are household names, by recounting events far from the public eye, a frequent promise of autobiographies is that they make available much more than was appreciated before. By openly admitting to moral transgressions – substance abuse, infidelity, depression – writers can both set themselves apart from readers and also bring readers closer to them by providing access to their inner thoughts and all too human foibles.

More specifically, this section examines revelations in autobiographies vis-à-vis the possibility for how authors fashion notions of authenticity, loyalty and trustworthiness through what is (and is not) made available. As in previous chapters, diversity in how such notions are positioned is mapped in order to promote sensitivities and possibilities for understanding how revelations are done and what is done through them.

Authenticity–Inauthenticity

As Bart Beaty has argued, autobiography has often been distinguished from other genres in its claim to truth.[28] Beating cited Philippe Lejeune's notion of a 'referential pact' as indicative of some of the common commitments attached to autobiography:

> As opposed to all forms of fiction, biography and autobiography are *referential* texts: exactly like scientific or historical discourse, they claim to provide information about a "reality" exterior to the text, and so to submit to a test of verification. Their aim is not simple verisimilitude, but resemblance to the truth. Not "the effect of the real," but the image of the real.[29]

One aspect of producing the image of the real is presenting an authentic self-image.[30]

The potential to advance a self-image through self-writing has certainly appealed to those in the public spotlight. Autobiographies have been utilized to rectify public perceptions by providing the story of what happened – or at least the author's side – 'straight from the horse's mouth'.[31]

Celebrities have long penned autobiographies to both reinforce carefully crafted media personas and to distance themselves from media personas.[32] Whereas the former tact takes authenticity as plain and confirmatory, the latter entails drawing a divide between the inner and external selves to reestablish the potential for being faithful. An inner and external divide also sets up the potential for intimacy – authors share with readers off-screen private or transgressive matters that they previously guarded.

The appeal of self-truth does not just apply to those already in the public limelight. In recent decades, those within marginalized social groups have been able to use autobiographies to air their experiences to an extent not previously possible. Today considerable consumer demand exists for ethnic autobiographies that offer access into the lives of those otherwise ignored or undervalued.[33]

And yet, when truth and authenticity are held as the markers of autobiographies, this sets up the potential to query them for their falsity and inauthenticity.[34] The notion that autobiographies tell the real has gone hand in hand with their being recognized as deliberate self-constructions.[35] Treated as such, they can be questioned for being incomplete, more or less self-serving or even concocted.[36] A result, as Richard Dyer contended in relation to the case of celebrities, is that notions of authenticity are unstable:

> Corroboration that a star is really like she/he appears to be *may* work, but may be read as further manipulation; showing that the star is not

> really like she/he appears to be *may* itself be taken up into the image, its further construction and rereading, but it could shatter the illusion altogether.[37]

Instability is also a product of time. Whatever is taken as an authentic expression of self at one point can appear contrived at another since 'yesterday's markers of sincerity and authenticity are today's signs of hype and artifice'.[38]

Reflecting these contrasting orientations, in the sub-genre of 'ethnic autobiography', authenticity has been presented as fraught even as it is much sought. Being taken as authentic requires autobiographies contend with how to present something readers will interpret as distinct, while also not engaging in forms of exoticization that reproduce prevailing cultural expectations.[39] Authors and publishers often struggle between overtly billing such works as authentic in order to entice mainstream markets, while enabling readers to discover for themselves a sense of authenticity through the text.

It is not only authors and ethnic groups ('Native Americans', 'Aboriginals') that are constituted through ethnic autobiographies. Readers too can be positioned as what Wendy Waring coined 'anthropological tourists'.[40] And yet, too, through acknowledging and working with the tensions of authenticity, some writers have sought to transform ways of conceiving of it.[41]

Betrayal–Loyalty

These preliminary points about truth and authenticity can be expanded through consideration of a specific subgenre of autobiography – the memoirs of military special operators. A central appeal of such books is that they provide firsthand details of lives often subject to popular speculation. As Elspeth Van Veeren has detailed, US special forces memoirs associated with the 'War on Terrorism' were implicated in many forms of becoming.[42] These works not only 'set apart' through marking the specialist knowledge and abilities of military personnel, but set apart by presenting (highly masculine) stories of individual achievement, heroism and mastery.

Noteworthy is the way the very act of writing an autobiography raises questions of group membership and transgression. Traditionally, special forces such as the US Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) teams have prided themselves on being what a former Commanding Officer of Naval Special Warfare Command, Rear Admiral Brian Losey, termed 'quiet professionals'.[43] That is, as those serving their nation without seeking public credit. To seek such rewards through disclosing about military operations poses risks for national security, the cohesion of units and the mythos that surrounds special operations. Active efforts have long been undertaken to ensure that SEAL group membership is predicated on adhering to the ethos of not revealing one's deeds.[44] However, codes of silence have come under strain in

recent years because of the publication of numerous, highly popular memoirs associated with SEALs and other US special force operators. The litany of books brought into circulation includes *No Easy Day*, *American Sniper* and *Seal Team Six*.

As Van Veeren details, when special operators' autobiographies are written, they are often characterized by a play between disclosure and concealment. On the one hand, they are billed as providing a candid glimpse into sequestered matters of high drama: military operations, personal adversities, techniques of disguise and so on. In doing so, readers are able to become part of those in the know. On the other hand, despite writing about their military experiences, special operators can acknowledge the hazards of doing so. One manner authors establish their will to tell but do not present themselves as telling recklessly is by signaling what is missing from their stories. Such present absences take the form of noting some passages have been censured because of military prepublication security reviews, using overtly figurative and vague language, blurring out the details of photos and blacking out text passages. Such acts serve as narrative devices through simultaneously underlying the authors access to important facts, yet noting that they are not being disclosed to readers. Drawing attention to what is missing also serves to justify the author's specific retelling despite the dangers they and others can ascribe to divulging about covert operations.

It is through the play between what is given and what is presented as not given that special operators constitute themselves as what Van Veeren dubbed as 'alluring subjects'. As alluring subjects that are both made familiar and yet remain mysterious, readers of partial revelations are invited to experience the pleasures of being told secrets while secrets are being kept from them.

Truth–Deception

We can expand the points made so far about revelations in autobiography by turning to the place of truth. While US special operators often acknowledge that they have been barred from including sensitive information in their self-narratives, typically this is done in such a way that underlines the importance of the truth. Authors present themselves as having access to the reality of consequential military operations.

Special operators are not the only 'quiet professionals' governed by codes that police community membership by delimiting public disclosures. As an art of dissimulation and simulation, the exposure of methods has long been a matter of professional attention for magicians. Generating experiences of wonder, astonishment and awe has been taken as dependent on keeping the methods for effects hidden.[45] Today, professional societies such as the Magic Circle include provisions for sanctioning members that disclose 'one or more

methods used for achieving magic effects other than in circumstances specifically approved'[46] by its governing council. As a result, when it comes to writing about their life and work, whether and how magicians reveal their tradecraft is a matter of some significance.

Given these considerations, the place of truth in magicians' autobiographies has a troubled status. As an art recognized as involving hiding the real and showing the false, one way magicians as authors can convince readers of their professional prowess is by undertaking dissimulation and simulation within their writing. In doing so, autobiography provides an opportunity for doing more than 'talking the talk' but for 'walking the walk'.

How then do magicians justify what they disclose, while displaying their skill in deceiving, all the while presenting their accounts as anchored in the authentic?

As I examined elsewhere, prominent magicians positioned the truth in varied ways.[47] At one extreme, Dynamo's 2012 *Nothing Is Impossible* presents an account in line with the referential pact of autobiographies. That is to say, it is presented as a truthful portrait of real events. Dynamo details his hardships growing up, the motivations for his style and the history of his rise as a performer in a matter that treats the story given as a just-so depiction.[48] Anyone expecting tell-all exposures of some of his iconic feats would be disappointed, but failing to expose his methods is not acknowledged as posing any doubt about the truth status of what is retold in *Nothing Is Impossible*. In these ways, then, readers are positioned as what might be characterized as 'delayed spectators'; they are invited to relive past events but only granted with bounded access in line with the conventional expectations for what magicians can expose.

This contrasts with his 2017 *Dynamo: The Book of Secrets*. This book combines step-by-step instructions for magic effects while also speaking to his life story. Here too, the text presents itself as a truthful account of real events. For the purposes of this chapter, though, *Dynamo: The Book of Secrets* differs from *Nothing Is Impossible* in important respects. That secret methods are set out in this volume is something Dynamo defends:

> Magicians aren't supposed to reveal their secrets, right? That's true – I keep many of the effects in my repertoire so secret that I haven't told anyone how I do them. But the pieces in this book are different. I have picked effects that are perfect for people new to magic to learn because they are easy to do but get reactions. There is a world of difference between teaching magic and exposing it and I am teaching these effects because they are the perfect starting point to a life (or even a career) in magic.[49]

In this way, the book's telling of secrets is justified through presenting the truth as layered: There are secrets that can be told because they are for

beginners and then there are more coveted ones. Other layerings are marshalled. In the introduction to this book, Dynamo contends that while the instructions will enable the reader to perform amazing effects with everyday objects, 'if you read between the lines, there are even more secrets to uncover.' The second part of this sentence is underlined in red with an arrow leading away to a text written in a different font stating 'I'm serious about this'.[50] Thus, in *Dynamo: The Book of Secrets* the truth is presented as simultaneously made accessible *and* hidden by the author. Individual readers are invited to be set apart from other readers by accessing further truths as well as proving themselves more diligent than others that suffice with surface-level sense making. As such, readers are fashioned by the text as 'speculative apprentices': They are offered access to the secrets of an art form, but also it is clear that this will be a demanding, and perhaps not fully achievable, task.

These two works from a reliable, though guarded, author can be contrasted with the books *Cruel Tricks for Dear Friends, How to Play with Your Food* and *How to Play in Traffic* by Penn Jillette and Teller.[51] Each combines the disclosure of methods for effects with the disclosure of their professional and personal background. Becoming is central to the billed offering to readers. The tricks are depicted as empowering readers to garner prestige and profit while making 'a friend of yours look like a jerk'.[52]

As well, in ways with multiple parallels to classic works of fiction such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the books combine varied orientations to whether the truth is being given as well as whether this ought to matter. For instance, some entries are written in a straightforward fashion that suggests that the truth and nothing but the truth is being relayed. Others are clearly fictious. Some statements are also openly qualified by the authors as phony, including those that speak to Penn and Teller's moral character. Still other entries appear, in my reading, to imply they should be taken as untruthful. Penn and Teller shift between overtly presenting themselves as being frank and upstanding members of the public, while repeatedly suggesting they are most certainly blameworthy and ethically problematic hustlers. In this heady mix, at times Penn and Teller also play the role of self-portrayed 'bullshitters';[53] this in the sense that they do not definitely side with truth or falsity. Instead, they present themselves as purposefully employing both for the sake of a good read.[54]

But more than presenting ground for hesitancy about the truth status of what is written, the playful orientation to the truth makes readers themselves look 'like a jerk'. For instance, explanations to the reader about how to win bets by identifying a spectator's chosen playing card on page 3 of *Cruel Tricks for Dear Friends* are themselves subsequently said on page 102 to be bogus, only then on page 188 for the real(?) instructions to be set out about how to use the instructions on page 3 to fool a friend. By such techniques, readers are positioned through the text as 'dubious confidantes'. Through

methods that advance verisimilitude rather than truth as the goal, *Cruel Tricks for Dear Friends, How to Play with Your Food* and *How to Play in Traffic* adopt, at times, almost antagonistic orientations to their readers. Penn and Teller depict readers as wishing to learn magic secrets in order to make others into 'suckers', but readers themselves are treated by Penn and Teller as suckers.

Or, at least, to some degree. For the hints, allusions, irony, innuendo, double-talk, exaggerations, coded wording, undertones, hyperbole and other forms, obliqueness to be recognized by readers requires they actively consider the real meaning of what is stated. If readers were simply credulous suckers, they would take the meaning of these books at face value and, in doing so, miss the evidence of Penn and Teller's skillfulness in simulation, dissimulation and humor.

Revelations and Value

Taking a cue from the field of Secrecy Studies, the previous section considered the possibilities and tensions of how autobiographers set apart even as they span. As argued, the identities of writers and readers come into being through what is treated as authentic (and not), what is treated as disclosed (and not) and what is treated as truthful (and not). Rather than a simple act of making plain, in line with the previous chapter, I outlined how revelations can make available in a manner that is fraught, partial and uncertain.

This section extends the treatment of revelation by considering yet another parameter relevant for what comes into being through acts of making available: Value.

As noted previously, work in the field of Secrecy Studies suggests the relevance of secrecy for identity need not bear any relation to some objective measure of the significance of the secrets kept. Matters which would be regarded as inconsequential, if known, can still be the basis for some individuals distinguishing themselves from others so long as the appropriate kinds of orchestrations are conducted to build aura, allure or mystique.

As described in the previous section, entertainment magicians have regarded themselves as in possession of coveted insider knowledge that justifies going to great lengths to bar outsiders. Such attempts to establish and police secrets, however, provide the very conditions for dramatic revelations. Exposure programs, such as the 18 episodes of the highly watched television series titled *Breaking the Magician's Code: Magic's Biggest Secrets Finally Revealed,* typically present themselves as noteworthy for the very manner they fly in the face of prevailing 'don't-tell' conventions.

For magicians, paraphernalia suppliers and professional societies, exposure of insider methods has long been seen as undermining the potential for generating awe and wonder (Box 1). As magician Michael Weber has

advocated, 'We don't keep secrets *from* the audience, we keep secrets *for* the audience'.[55]

BOX 4.1 MAGIC THAT IS NOT...WELL...MAGIC

In the spring of 2018, a Nevada state civil court heard a case brought by a British tourist, Gavin Cox, against the illusionist David Copperfield. Cox was injured while taking part in Copperfield's show at the MGM Grand hotel in Las Vegas during 2013 in which audience members disappeared on stage only to reappear at the back of the theater hall. Cox alleged negligence against the illusionist, two of his businesses, the hotel, and a construction firm renovating the hotel.

Despite attempts to completely close the trial proceedings to the public, Copperfield and others were compelled under oath and the gaze of cameras to detail steps involved in the vanishing of audience volunteers. Maps, oral testimony and written documents were presented as part of determining whether any of those involved in the act were liable for Cox's injuries.[56]

While national and international media differed in whether they suggested any parts of the proceedings were still shielded from public view,[57] they generally shared in contending that the evidence presented had exposed the act's central methods. *USA Today* described what was told in the court in these words: 'Jurors learned that in about 60 to 90 seconds, stagehands with flashlights ushered the randomly chosen participants past dark curtains, down passageways, around corners, outdoors, indoors and through an MGM Grand resort kitchen to reenter the theater for the show's finale, according to testimony'.[58] A reporter for ABC News prefaced a breakdown of how the disappearance–reappearance effect was pulled off by stating that the trial showed 'exactly how this trick works. And here's a hint...it's not magic'.[59]

While at times the need to demark and police insider secrets is portrayed as deriving from the considerable labor and ingenuity that has gone into devising magical effects, at other times this perceived need derives from the said *lack* of import of insider secrets. Magician and historian Jim Steinmeyer's contention that 'Magicians guard an empty safe' spoke to the manner in which:

> there are few secrets that [magicians] possess that are beyond the capacity of a high school science class, little technology more complex than a rubber band, a square of mirrored glass, or a length of thread. When an audience learns how it's done, they quickly dismiss that art: "Is that all it is?"[60]

For Steinmeyer and many other magicians, magic is a considered art. This is not because of the mundane methods for dissimulation and simulation, however. It is a considered art because of the care and attention needed to create experiences of the impossible. The problem with the revelation of methods for Steinmeyer is that:

> casual observers, eager to diagnose the gimmick or solve the deception, focus on the uninteresting part and are quickly disappointed, the same way one can always turn to the final pages of a mystery novel.[61]

In this respect, the problem with the disclosure of hidden methods is that they entail a form of misdirection; they take audiences away from what is important and toward what is of minor significance.

As a further point on the theme of the value of what is revealed, it can be noted that information that would be damaging for the standing of secret keepers can be positioned in such a way so as to enhance their allure. As part of Robert O'Neill's recounting of his career in *The Operator: The Seal Team Operative and the Mission that Changed the World,* he stated that in the then recent past:

> SEALs hadn't fired a shot in anger in years. But nobody ever admitted that around civilians, even to their closest non-SEAL friends. We'd pull the old 'can't talk about it' crap, leaving the impression of untold secret missions. We actually referred to the whole charade as 'Living the Lie'.
>
> There is an old saying in combat units: 'Train like you fight!'. We used to make fun of it because we knew the truth. We started saying, 'Train like you train!' because that was all that was going to happen.[62]

Taken as reliable depictions, such contentions suggest SEALs have been able to marshal two common beliefs to enhance their allure: (1) The United States engages in covert special military missions that are publicly unknown and (2) covert operators would be required to refrain from openly recounting such missions.

In one respect, O'Neill's depictions serve as *anti-revelations*: They suggest there is little to be learnt from SEALs about contemporary warfighting. Taken as claims made within the context of an autobiography, however, in another respect the telling of such 'dark secrets'[63] serves as a kind of revelation. The revelation is about the shadowy arts of impression management, rather than the shadowy arts of special operations. Through providing a candid portrayal of aspects of the work of SEALs that have been intentionally kept from the public, O'Neill sets himself apart from other SEALs that still 'Live the Lie'.

Artful Objects

It is not just personal identities that come into being through revelations, but material objects.

Decades of scholarship in the field of Science and Technology Studies have illustrated the efforts necessary for objects to be rendered available. For example, histories of medical and forensic imaging technologies have steered away from understanding images as simply offering transparent representations of the body, and toward detailed descriptions of the labored practices in and through which the body becomes known. What a residual fingerprint is taken to demonstrate today, for instance, is the result of professional and legal contests over many decades.[64] As such, rather than treating the world as consisting of already-existing entities available for discovery, Science and Technology Studies suggests the need to consider how forms of attention and engagement bring objects (and experts) into being.[65] In this vein, the remainder of this chapter examines how art and artists are mutually brought into being.

Fakery and Art

Topic-wise, I want to return to the case of art forgery. In the West in recent centuries, artworks have been regularly portrayed as displaying qualities that constitute them as authentic. They are taken as doing this, for instance, by manifesting their origin – whether that be the 'unrepeatable'[66] historical conditions of their production or their creators' individual personality, proficiencies or peculiarities.[67] Origin might be found in something as simple as the range of colors utilized. Or origin might manifest in the overall composition of a piece. Whatever the form, an essence of some kind or another is taken as locatable in significant artwork. For some, this distinctive essence accounts for the 'spiritual', 'mysterious' and 'lofty' nature of great art.[68]

For instance, when restoring one painting of Jesus Christ previously attributed to a student of Leonardo da Vinci titled *Salvator Mundi* in 2007, conservator Dianne Dwyer Modestini recounted the moment of her recognition of its real author in these terms:

> I had a copy of a book the Louvre had recently published about the Mona Lisa, which was lavishly illustrated (*Mona Lisa: Inside the Painting*). I removed the page with the detail of the mouth and pinned it to my easel. At that moment I realized that the *Salvator Mundi* could not have been painted by anyone except Leonardo.[69]

Herein, a Leonardo da Vinci comes into being through a recognition. But more does too. Modestini's stated ability to recognize authorship

simultaneously makes her into someone of note. In not being provided with a sense of why the juxtaposition of Mona Lisa's mouth and this *Salvator Mundi* led to Modestini's attribution, readers must speculate for themselves whether they could spot what aspects were identified by Modestini and what conclusions they might derive from them.

While this account of attribution asked the reader to defer to an expert, other discussions of this *Salvator Mundi* have provided extensive justifications for the attributions offered. In documentaries, news reports, marketing brochures and the like, commentators have identified areas of interest in the painting – such as the blessing hand, the curls of Christ's hair and his drapery.[70] They have used techniques of pointing out, zooming in, outlining, highlighting and much more besides across normal light, ultraviolet and X-rayed images of the cleaned and restored versions of the *Salvator Mundi*. These acts have been undertaken as part of efforts to advance arguments about 'Who did it?' – whether the painting could be attributed solely to Leonardo, partially to him, one of his students or someone else. At stake in such activities has been the question of who can speak for art and what counts as notable art. But more than this has been at stake. The efforts undertaken by Modestini and fellow colleagues to persuade others that the painting was a genuine Leonardo resulted in an artwork auctioned for $1,175 in 2005 being sold for some $450 million 12 years later.

Against the detailed efforts that can go into making attributions of authorship, a challenge that a forgery poses is this: If trained and seasoned collectors, critics and historians are unable to tell fakes from genuine works, is there really a quality present in 'master works' but not in fakes? Perhaps there is little or no aesthetic distinction that could justify the heightened admiration placed with some objects. If that is so, then the very conception of the essence of art, its transcendental value (above all, perhaps, its market value!) might need dramatic revision. Alexander Nagel captured some of the charge associated with forgery today when he contended the forger:

> …crawls over the surface of art, imitating with obsessive care the appearance of the original. Ultimately, of course, in serving the cult of the authored artifact the forgery aims to subvert it: it is out to prove that an artifact can escape its historical moment, and its author. It claims that the singular can be repeated. The threat of forgery intensifies the pleasurable rituals of art – close looking, the making of fine distinctions – to the point where they turn into paranoid surveillance. Forgery is the harassing bad conscience of the cult of art, shadowing our obsession with originals and mocking our fetishism of the art object.[71]

It is the 'cult of the authored artifact' that opens up a space for forgery, as it does for its unmasking.[72] It is not just the status of the artifact that is at

stake in faking, but the status of those seen as authoring, authenticating and selling arts that stand to be mocked.

Autobiography and the (Un)Making of Expertise

By way of unpacking forgery revelations, the remainder of this chapter turns to a specific genre: insider self-exposés by art forgers and authentication experts. It does so for two reasons. First, the very genre of the insider-account makes a claim to readers, a claim to give access to a hitherto closed-off world. In contrasting what actually goes on in the artworld with the appearance it projects to outsiders, the forger's story goes beyond, as well as anchors itself on, the making, successful passing off and eventual exposure of imitation-art. Second, the art forger's insider-exposés about art fakes take up the question of the perceptible difference between original art and its imitation very concretely by discussing attempts to reduce, muddle or even erase any difference. Together, these accounts provide a sense of how the 'seeability' of a work's real nature is made available.

Take, in this regard, Ken Perenyi's 2012 *Caveat Emptor: The Secret Life of an American Art Forger,* a book billed as a revelation by 'America's most talented art forger,' recounting 'in detail … how he pulled it off'.[73] Perenyi recounts decades of his life, describing forgery, after forgery, after forgery, as well as naming names. The story presented is a shadowy one of duplicity; dealers conspiring against sellers, auction houses complicit in promoting fakes, artists covertly copying their own work and collectors buying items they believed to be stolen.

I want to draw attention to three of *Caveat Emptor's* elements.

The first feature is Perenyi's detailed elaboration of how he learnt his simulating skills. He details at length the education in nineteenth-century American art he received from collector James Henri ('Jimmy') Ricau, who seemed interested in equipping Perenyi to produce credible fakes. Perenyi describes the house of 'the old recluse'[74] full of stacks of paintings, and Jimmy lecturing him, with plenty of examples, on the various schools and the categories of still-life, marine, portraiture and historical painting, on the frames that go with each, on the locations and travel habits of important artists. This instruction, Perenyi claims, provided him with 'an appreciation' of a school of art 'that I'd once thought boring'.[75] It also gave him an insight into the modi operandi of these artists. Nineteenth-century American painter Martin Johnson Heade, for example, 'copied the same birds and the same orchids over and over again in varying compositions',[76] and nineteenth-century British-American painter James Edward Buttersworth made variations with particular yachts and scenery. This, Perenyi argues, made it easy for him to fashion new works in the same manner: 'it didn't take long to realize that identifying patterns in the work of these artists would be the key to making convincing fakes'.[77]

With Ricau's help, Perenyi also made careful study of the materials and technical construction of the original paintings:

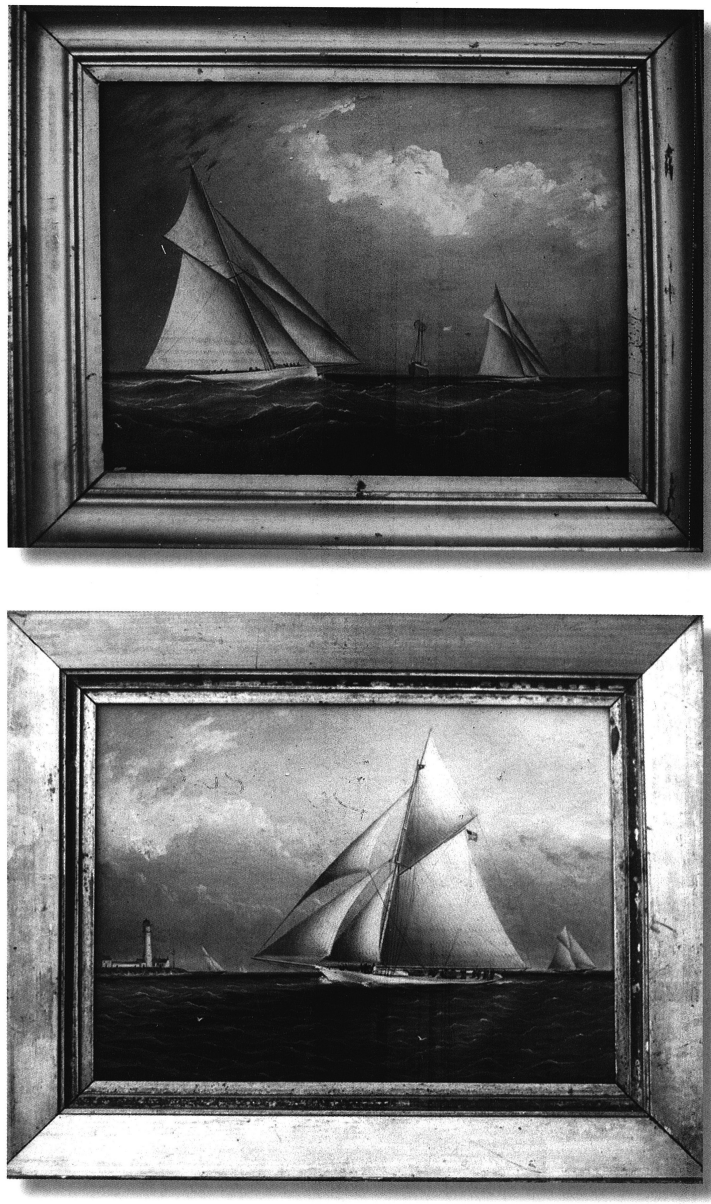
> I photographed the front, the back, close-ups of signatures, and other details of each painting done on academy board. I recorded the measurements and made notes on brushstroking, thickness of impasto, patina, and something I found most interesting: long (and straight) cracks peculiar to the academy board. These cracks were slightly elevated and often ran diagonally across the board.[78]

Later in the book, he describes the trial-and-error process by which he was eventually able to replicate these features, perfectly. For example:

> After I placed the "Buttersworths" in the hot sun for a few minutes, I could feel the academy boards stiffen, as the rabbitskin glue's tensile strength increased. I picked up a board, held it at each end, and gently stressed it by pulling the ends down and forcing the center up. As I did so, I heard a fine crackling sound and could feel it through my fingers. The gesso was cracking, but the cracks were so fine that they were impossible to see. Only after a wash of black watercolor and soap was wiped across the surface of the painting did they become visible. And, to my amazement, they came out as long, straight cracks running diagonally across the board-just as they had on the originals.
>
> Then, as an added bonus, as I examined each panel and held it at an angle to my eye, I was delighted to find that the crack lines actually "stood up." This was caused by the gesso swelling from the absorption of the watercolor. The result was perfect.[79]

These and other descriptions suggest that Perenyi's intensive investments of time and energy allowed him to produce fakes that were virtually indistinguishable from genuine works. In being able to do so, Perenyi set himself apart from others.

A second feature of *Caveat Emptor* is the manner Perenyi presents his art. While making a case for the care and attention he took to his trade, at the same time, Perenyi indicates he had often little trouble in passing off his paintings (or having accomplices do so), even very early on in his career. The 'quality' of the forged work of art, made central in descriptions such as the ones above, disappears in story after story of successful sales involving multiple skills of 'faking it', including impression games in dress, speech and comport. In accordance with this orientation, in *Caveat Emptor* Perenyi reproduces his paintings in photographs without any commentary about why they should be taken as genuine, fake or even high quality. You are invited to inspect one of the insert pages reproduced as Figure 4.1. Herein Perenyi displays paintings done after James Edward Buttersworth without elaboration on their quality or



ABOVE: *After James E. Buttersworth, c. 1979.* BELOW: *After James E. Buttersworth, c. 1990.*

FIGURE 4.1 Caveat lector?: Perenyi on Buttersworth.

without comparison to originals by Buttersworth. In this way, Perenyi presents his works without making their genuineness, fakeness or quality into topics for substantiation. The reader is positioned as able to view what is obvious.

A third element I want to highlight about *Caveat Emptor* pertains to its nature as a revelatory account of art forgery. As with Dynamo and others mentioned in this chapter, Perenyi presents his account as truthful. Despite his years of admitted deception, *Caveat Emptor* is positioned as telling it like it was. The credibility of Perenyi's account arguably derives from reporting detail after detail after detail about his fakery; details that seem intended to establish forthrightness through their sheer accumulation. Little attempt is made, for instance, to explain why the warning of 'caveat emptor' should not apply to readers of the book given Perenyi's admitted deceptions. *Caveat Emptor* does offer a reason for being able to tell his story though. As the jacket cover for the book made clear, by 2012 'the statute of limitations on these crimes has expired and the case [against him] appears hermetically sealed shut by the FBI.' As such, *Caveat Emptor* 'is Ken Perenyi's confession. It is the story, in detail, of how he pulled it off.'

Within other insider exposés, expertise and experts have been fashioned in much more explicitly fraught manners. Contrast *Caveat Emptor* with the revelations in the English born artist Eric Hebborn's 1991 book *Drawn to Trouble: The Forging of an Artist*. In terms of the place of truth, *Drawn to Trouble* provides a self-account of 'what happened'.[80] As with Perenyi, Hebborn too describes his life and career as a forger. He too cites decades of deceiving, adulterating, conning etc., describes forgery, after forgery, after forgery he produced, and names names. And he too makes available the details of a murky art world wherein the small-time scams of individual dealers and collectors complement the institutionalized deception of the art house trade. In these respects, Hebborn sets out the truth.

As Catelijne Coopmans and I have detailed elsewhere, such telling-it-like-it-is is given alongside witty remarks by Hebborn that alert the reader he may – just may – not be giving a straight account in *Drawn to Trouble*. The citation of a fictitious 'Professor Fulldim' to comment on the authenticity of obviously prank drawings, expressed self-doubts about his memory, and the description of his childhood art through highly professional language are just some of the tongue in cheek aspects of his writing. Also, *Drawn to Trouble* brings to the fore what is not given in it through oblique references, implied but unstated events, and conversations with seemingly ironic meanings. As with the books of Penn and Teller considered previously, *Drawn to Trouble* reads in many parts as a monologue in which the author generates an impression that he is *not* telling a completely forthright story – and readers should appreciate this.

This playful orientation to truth infects how the 'seeability' of a work's status gets presented. Whereas Perenyi reproduced his works with little to no commentary about how they should be interpreted, Hebborn offered a much more intricate and destabilizing positioning. In the case of one sketch,

Hebborn uses the often deployed technique of putting side-by-side his 'fake' version and the original by the nineteenth century French artist Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. However, Hebborn does not do so to let the reader see for themselves the quality of the sketches. Instead, he invites the readers to consider (and reconsider) which is which:

> It might perhaps amuse you to test your own abilities as a connoisseur, and decide for yourself which of two photographs (Figs 48 and 49) represent a detail from the original. Even if you happen to be Joe Bloggs in person, you will still have a fifty-fifty chance of being right. Look carefully, take your time, and seek the hesitant line of the copyist as opposed to the strong sure line of Corot. The answer is given at the bottom of the page.[81]

Having teased readers regarding their ability to spot the difference, Hebborn then goes further:

> Now, having read the solution, look at the two drawings again and you will suddenly notice how poor my version is, how faulty the construction, how harsh the modeling, and all sorts of ghastly errors which escaped your notice before.[82]

The issue of how suppositions affect perceptions is a theme Hebborn returns to time and time again in *Drawn to Trouble*. As contended, collectors, dealers and experts routinely perceive all manner of qualities in a given piece depending on whether they believe it is genuine or fake.[83] Hebborn tells of relying on such predispositions to pass off his forgeries. As recounted, his sales tactic was one of refraining from offering false stories of provenance. Instead, he let those in the business of making attributions derive their own conclusions. Hebborn describes encounter after encounter wherein those whose job it was to know art convinced themselves his works possessed qualities marking some reputable origin.[84] In *Drawn to Trouble,* the suggestion that readers are doing much the same in their squinting and peering at the page indicates his trickery is still at work.

As yet another twist, Hebborn carries on from the previous quotation about the side-by-side sketches to state:

> But what if I should now tell you that the answer at the bottom of the page is wrong?[85]

The tongue in cheek doubt cast on which is the real sketch by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot serves to prod readers to cast doubt on their presumptions as well as whether 'the style of an artist's work always reflects the time in which it was made'.[86] Through this and other examples, *Drawn to Trouble* questions commonplace conceptions of what makes art noteworthy.[87]

In recounting the many, many times Hebborn's art was attributed to another hand, *Drawn to Trouble* questions the credibility of art experts. Despite this, he does not offer an unbounded attack against expertise. To unmask it as baseless would render his abilities in faking insignificant. As Hebborn contends, to make mass deception

> worth playing one must choose worthy opponents. Just as there could be little satisfaction in scoring a goal in the absence of a goalkeeper, so it is that to sell a master drawing to someone lacking the necessary expertise to make a proper appraisal of it is at best a hollow victory. In other words, only the experts are worth fooling, and the greater the expert, the greater the satisfaction of deceiving him.[88]

Thus, instead of taking his experience in passing off fakes as undermining the very notion of expertise, *Drawn to Trouble* offers an unstable sense of becoming; both exposing (again and again) misattributions, self-deceptions and bias in the art world, while also reaffirming tradecraft expertise.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to outline how, in making available what was previously otherwise, revelations advance notions of revealers, those revealed about, those revealed to, those not and the revealed. The argument drew on themes in Secrecy Studies as a starting point for asking how revelations lead to such becomings and how becomings enable revelations.

As with previous chapters, revelations were orientated to as involving more than simply making plain. What there is to see and who can see it, for instance, are matters that can be presented in qualified, mixed or ambiguous ways even as individuals give an account of their lives and the lives of others. Likewise, the truth status of what is revealed can be fraught as the truth is varyingly valorized.

As with previous chapters too, this one has illustrated the diverse possibilities for charged instances of making available. As a way of both recognizing and mapping that diversity, the argument has attended to specific instances of making available to ask how they were undertaken. For certain instances, authenticity might figure as central. For others, authenticity and truth are beside the point.

Through mapping the diversity of efforts to make available what was previously otherwise, tensions and paradoxes associated with revelation have been identified, such as how the expertise regarded as necessary to properly interpret what is revealed is treated as an exclusive asset of some, and yet it is also shared between many. More than a one-way process of revelations leading to notions of identity, notions of who is who and what is what

affect whether and what revelations can be offered. The next chapter further attends to these twinned matters.

Notes

1 For an example of this argument in the sciences, see P. Ylikoski, "The Illusion of Depth of Understanding in Science," in *Scientific Understanding*, ed. H. W. de Regt, S. Leonelli, and K. Eigner (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).
2 Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as Agent of Change*, two vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). See also Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
3 William Eamon, "Arcana Disclosed: The Advent of Printing, the Books of Secrets Tradition and the Development of Experimental Science in the Sixteenth Century," *History of Science* 22, no. two (1984): 111–150.
4 For an insightful analysis of how printing challenged specialist knowledge in another domain, see Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and its Philosophical Implications*, trans. Jackie Feldman (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).
5 William Eamon, "Arcana Disclosed: The Advent of Printing, the Books of Secrets Tradition and the Development of Experimental Science in the Sixteenth Century," *History of Science* 22, no. two (1984): 111–150.
6 To take a definition that is aligned with commonplace notions, see Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. four (1906): 449.
7 As in Balázs M. Mezei, Francesca Aran Murphy, and Kenneth Oakes, "Introduction: The Newness of Revelation," *The Oxford Handbook of Divine Revelation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), accessed 21 October 2022, https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198795353.002.0007.
8 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Chapter 2
9 See Clare Birchall, "Cultural Studies Confidential," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. one (2007): 5–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601046881.
10 Eva Horn, "Logics of Political Secrecy," *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 7/8 (2011): 118, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276411424583. Even in analyses in which revelations are not taken as solely characterized by secrecy – such as public revelation of social racism and misogyny – secrecy is still used as a reference concept for conceiving of revelation, as in Casey Ryan Kelly, *Caught on Tape: White Masculinity and Obscene Enjoyment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).
11 See, for instance, Clare Birchall, *Radical Secrecy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2021); Andrew M. Jefferson and Bethany E. Schmidt, "Concealment and Revelation as Bureaucratic and Ethnographic Practice: Lessons from Tunisian Prisons," *Critique of Anthropology* 39, no. two (2019): 155–171; Brian Rappert, *How to Look Good in a War: Justifying and Challenging State Violence* (London: Pluto, 2012).
12 See Owen D. Thomas, Margot Tudor, and Catriona Pennell, "Public Inquiries into Conflict and Security: Scandals, Archives, and the Politics of Epistemology," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (2024), https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481231221473.
13 R. Hutchings, *Soviet Secrecy and Non-secrecy* (London: MacMillian, 1987); William Walters, *State Secrecy and Security: Refiguring the Covert Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2021); D. McBarnet, "Whiter than White Collar Crime: Tax Fraud, Insurance and the Management of Stigma," *British Journal of Sociology* 42 (1991): 323–344.

14 Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," *American Journal of Sociology* 11, no. four (1906): 441–498.
15 Brian Rappert and Brian Balmer, "Rethinking 'Secrecy' and 'Disclosure'," in *Technology and Security*, ed. B Rappert (London: Palgrave, 2007), 45–65; Jossianna Arroyo, *Writing Secrecy in Caribbean Freemasonry* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
16 See B. Bellmen, "The Paradox of Secrecy," *Human Studies* 4 (1981): 1–24.
17 In relation to politics, the parading of the possession of secrets can be prevalent in democratic or authoritarian systems. For the latter see Margaret Hillenbrand, *Negative Exposures: Knowing What Not to Know in Contemporary China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).
18 Neal R. Norrick, "The Dark Side of Tellability," *Narrative Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (2005): 323–343; H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts*, ed. P. Cole and J. Morgan (New York: Academic, 1975), 41–58.
19 Gerald O'Collins, *"Revelation as Self-revelation and Communication of Truth" Revelation: Toward a Christian Theology of God's Self-Revelation* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2006), see https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198784203.003.0001.
20 S. Neale, "Melodrama and Tears," *Screen* 27, no. 6 (1986): 6–23.
21 Jacques Derrida, "To Do Justice to Freud: A History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (1994): 227–266.
22 S. Aftergood and T. Blanton, "The Securocrats' Revenge," in *Government Secrecy*, ed. S. Marget and J. Goldman (London: Libraries Unlimited, 1999), 457–459; M. Teeuwan, "Introduction," in *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*, ed. B. Scheid and M. Teeuwen (London: Routledge, 2006), 1–34; L. Manderson, M. Davis, C. Colwell, and T. Ahlin, "On Secrecy, Disclosure, the Public, and the Private in Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 56 no. S12 (2015): S183–S190. https://doi.org/10.1086/683302.
23 A movement along these lines took place in theology over the twentieth century wherein divine revelations became less associated with their propositional content (in other words, with the truths being delivered) to acts in which God self-revealed his existence to others. See Gerald O'Collins, *Revelation: Toward a Christian Theology of God's Self-Revelation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), accessed 8 October 2022, https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198784203.001.0001.
24 Bellmen, "The Paradox of Secrecy," *Human Studies* 4 (1981): 1–24.
25 Eva Horn, "Logics of Political Secrecy," *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 7–8 (2011): 118, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276411424583.
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38 Richard Dyer, "A Star Is Born and the Construction of Authenticity," in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: Routledge 1990), 141. See, as well, Brian Moeran, "Tricks of the Trade: The Performance and Interpretation of Authenticity," *Journal of Management Studies* 42, no. five (2005): 901–922.

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41 Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic* (London: Routledge, 2001).

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43 Elspeth Van Veeren, "Secrecy's Subjects: Special Operators in the US Shadow War," *European Journal of International Security* four (2019): 400.

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46 See rule 5.12.1 at Magic Circle, *The Magic Circle – Rules* (London: Magic Circle, 2021), https://themagiccircle.co.uk/about/the-societys-rules/.

47 Brian Rappert, *Performing Deception: Learning, Skill and the Art of Conjuring* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2022).

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49 Dynamo, *Dynamo: The Book of Secrets* (London: Blink Publishing, 2017), 11.
50 Dynamo, *Dynamo: The Book of Secrets* (London: Blink Publishing, 2017), 10.
51 Jillette Penn and Teller, *Cruel Tricks for Dear Friends* (New York: Villard Books, 1989); Jillette Penn and Teller, *The Unpleasant Book of Penn & Teller or How to Play with Your Food* (London: Pavilion, 1992); Jillette Penn and Teller, *How to Play in Traffic* (New York, NY: Boulevard, 1997).
52 Jillette Penn and Teller, *Cruel Tricks for Dear Friends* (New York: Villard Books, 1989), 108.
53 See Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).
54 And yet still further in terms of the intricate twists in how the truth is positioned, in both *Cruel Tricks for Dear Friends* and *How to Play with your Food*, Penn and Teller offer scathing denouncements of those that use the methods of magic to claim actual psychic or supernatural powers.
55 https://tomdup.wordpress.com/tag/michael-weber/.
56 The court ruled they were not.
57 Joe Compare Bartels, "Secrets Revealed in Closed Door Court Hearing in David Copperfield Trial," *KTNV Channel 13 Las Vegas*, 14 April 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wm9uig3FYU to other accounts cited in this chapter.
58 AP Entertainment, "David Copperfield Trial: Jury Finds Magician Not Liable for Tourist's Injuries," *USA Today*, 30 May 2018, https://eu.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2018/05/30/david-copperfield-trial-jury-finds-magician-negligent-but-not-liable/654626002/
59 See comments made by T. J. Holmes as part of Mark Osborne, "David Copperfield Found Not Liable for Injury to Magic Show Participant," *ABC News*, May 30. https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/david-copperfield-found-liable-injury-magic-show-participant/story?id=55523224
60 Jim Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible and Learned How to Disappear* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2003), 17. And yet, interestingly, despite such declarations about the lack of significant secrets, arguably it is the (often winding) revelations of details about the mechanics of how tricks were done – How did Houdini fashion a box so that an elephant disappear on stage in front of thousands of people? – that provide *Hiding the Elephant* with much of its affective pull and fascination.
61 Jim Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible and Learned How to Disappear* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2003), 17.
62 Robert O'Neill. *The Operator: The Seal Team Operative and the Mission that Changed the World* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2017), 103. Partially quoted from Elspeth Van Veeren, "Secrecy's Subjects: Special Operators in the US Shadow War," *European Journal of International Security* four (2019): 386–414, https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2019.20: 410.
63 To borrow a term from Erving Goffman that refers to information that teams of people would not want widely known because this would fundamentally undermine the team's credibility in the eyes of non-team members, see Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1956).
64 Simon Cole, "Witnessing Identification: Latent Fingerprinting Evidence and Expert Knowledge," *Social Studies of Science* 28 (1998): 687–712.
65 Helen Verran, *Science and an African Logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
66 Alexander Nagel, "The Copy and its Evil Twin," *Cabinet* 14 (2014): section 12.
67 Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 66.

68 See, for instance, Thomas Hoving, *False Impressions: The Hunt for Big-Time Art Fakes* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 16 and CNN. Salvator Mundi Documentary *CNN* 2001 see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRv-FEPB2eI&t=342s&ab_channel=drcrd.
69 See https://salvatormundirevisited.com/History-of-the-Salvator-Mundi
70 HBO, "Why the World's Most Expensive Painting Has Gone Missing," 5 December 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhzpRYP48is; What Did the Salvator Mundi Really Look Like?: An Investigation and Resurrection of the Painting. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DiPcM4Duaw&ab_channel=ArtvsMachine; CNN. Salvator Mundi Documentary *CNN* 2001 see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRv-FEPB2eI&t=342s&ab_channel=drcrd.
71 Alexander Nagel, "The Copy and Its Evil Twin," *Cabinet* 14 (2014): section 13.
72 As too it could be said between 'cult of the authored artifact' and the imitation. Once genuine artwork can be outed as a mere imitation and what is taken as an imitation can be 'revealed' to be genuine (see, for instance, Agence France-Presse, "Sketch Dismissed as Rembrandt 'Crude Imitation' Revealed to be Genuine," *The Guardian*, 4 November 2022. See https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/nov/04/rembrandt-sketch-raising-of-the-cross-not-fake-revealed-as-work-of-dutch-master).
73 Ken Perenyi, *Caveat Emptor: The Secret Life of an American Art Forger* (London: Pegasus Books, 2012).
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75 Ken Perenyi, *Caveat Emptor: The Secret Life of an American Art Forger* (London: Pegasus Books, 2012), 153.
76 Ken Perenyi, *Caveat Emptor: The Secret Life of an American Art Forger* (London: Pegasus Books, 2012), 157.
77 Ken Perenyi, *Caveat Emptor: The Secret Life of an American Art Forger* (London: Pegasus Books, 2012), 158.
78 Ken Perenyi, *Caveat Emptor: The Secret Life of an American Art Forger* (London: Pegasus Books, 2012), 152–153.
79 Ken Perenyi, *Caveat Emptor: The Secret Life of an American Art Forger* (London: Pegasus Books, 2012), 158–159.
80 Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble* (New York: Random House, 1991).
81 Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble* (New York: Random House, 1991), 226.
82 Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble* (New York: Random House, 1991).
83 Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble* (New York: Random House, 1991), 352
84 For instance see Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble* (New York: Random House, 1991), 148, 302, 304.
85 Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble* (New York: Random House, 1991).
86 Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble* (New York: Random House, 1991), 283
87 Hebborn grounded his own skill as an artist, as well as the skill of others, in the judged quality of the art produced. For him a work of art is what it is: expressive, well crafted, poorly executed etc. What ought to matter is the pleasure derived from the appreciation of a work's skill, design and execution. Fakes might well merit more appreciation in this respect than the works that inspired them. Where the distinction between fake or real becomes relevant for him is with respect to the attribution of authorship. As he contended, 'it is the labeling, and only the labeling, of a picture which can be false, and contrary to popular belief there is not and can never be a false paining or drawing, or for that matter any other work of art. A drawing as a rose is a rose is a rose, and the only thing that may possibly be false about it is its label – its attribution' (see Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble* [New York: Random House, 1991], 357).
88 Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble* (New York: Random House, 1991), 218.

5

FIGURING

In an effort to understand how emotion, meaning, perception and comprehension are bound up with revelation, the previous chapter examined how people and objects come into being. By and large, the focus was with the kinds of acts undertaken by individuals to make themselves, others and the world around them available. Through offering a backstage view into their thoughts and experiences, those crafting autobiographies brought much into being: crusaders, pranksters, trust, suspicion, worth, sacredness, profanity, etc.

Hardly acts consisting of individuals operating in seclusion, the revelations of autobiographies were given meaning against prevalent and interlacing norms, codes, values, conventions, suppositions, principles, etc. that set out community notions of what was intelligible, what should (not) be told as well as how to tell. As Neal Norrick argued, storytelling in general is

> a crucial part of identity construction. Even safe and impersonal stories do much work in social identity construction, by demonstrating recognition of and respect for standard group norms, but dangerous ones, by pushing boundaries, accomplish a different kind of identity work.[1]

The previous chapter examined both those autobiographies that pushed boundaries and those that reproduced them.

And yet, such shared standards were largely positioned as a kind of stable and known backdrop against which individuals reaffirmed or challenged their group membership by how they appealed to and instantiated those standards in words, gestures and deeds. Developing a rich sense of how revelations are done and what is done through them, however, requires a

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fuller approach. Standards – here taken broadly to include conscious and unconscious preferences, values, norms, codes, prohibitions, principles – are not static. They mutate.[2] What is treated as a scandalous affair at one time might generate little regard at another.[3] Mutations in notions of what is appropriate can be brought about through revelations and mutations can transform what counts as a revelation.

In recognition of the potential for dynamic interplay, this chapter shifts the locus of attention somewhat. It tilts from attempts by individuals to advance notions of themselves and the world toward the shifting material and intellectual interrelations of groups, communities and professions which enable and are enabled by revelation.[4] Drawing on language developed within 'process sociology', in taking 'figuring' as the realization for this chapter my intention is to examine how individuals intertwine through mutual orientations, expectations, dispositions, connections and dependencies.[5] While those interrelations often result in relatively stable and predictable patterns of conduct, they are also conceived as needing to be produced and maintained, and thus pregnant with possibilities for instability and transformation.[6] As an associated point, individuals and the figurations they are part of are not conceived of as possessing fixed qualities, but subject to a continual process of reconstitution.

In this spirit, we can revisit autobiographies, and in particular the relations between authors and their audiences. The previous chapter referred to the long-standing referential pact of autobiography as the expectation that these works should provide a truthful representation of events as well as an authentic self-image. Against this general expectation, the previous chapter set out how authors advance notions of truthfulness and authenticity even, in some cases, they cannot retell some matters or that they have a decidedly checkered history of truth telling. As exceptions to widespread conventions, certain accounts by entertainment magicians and art forgers were noted for how manipulation and artificiality were overtly coupled with integrity and authenticity.

Further nuances can be given to this overall picture; nuances that indicate how instances of making available are grounded in and help ground shared standards. As Kirk Curnutt has contended, the self-accounts of celebrities have gone through notable transformations.[7] In 1920s America, the on-screen, 'reel' lives of celebrities were taken as aligned with their real lives. Herein, (even fabricated) revelations of private affairs were taken by publicists as ultimately enhancing the status of celebrities. By the 1930s, however, such an orientation gave way under the weight of repeated scandals.[8] In response to changing public and journalistic sensibilities, prominent actors, writers and others working with their publicists offered self-disclosures that sought to draw a distinction between the media personas crafted about them and their real selves. By advancing notions of the latter, leading figures were

able to acknowledge suspicions audiences might harbor about the manipulative artifice of celebrity, while also still forwarding notionally genuine bases for mass admiration. Indeed, one of the reasons proffered by those in the cultural industries for why the public could admire celebrities was that they were able to remain true to themselves despite the trappings and enticements of being in the public eye.

The avant-garde artist and writer Gertrude Stein was one of those that positioned herself as sincere despite seeking the visibility of fame. She set about developing an image of herself as simply writing as herself. By presenting herself as indifferent to the predilections of others, Stein could portray any public notoriety as resulting from fidelity. Even as she submitted herself to the impression management grinds of lecture tours and the media spotlight (and wrote about both in her book *Everybody's Autobiography*), Stein was able to suggest her fame flowed from the expression of an intrinsic self.

By such efforts to reposition 'the inner', notable figures such as Stein, Joan Crawford and F. Scott Fitzgerald (in collaboration with networks of literary agents, publishing houses, media contacts and others) more or less successfully sought to negotiate standards for celebrity self-accounts.[9] In doing so, those within the cultural industry helped redefine possibilities for action. This was not only for themselves, but for others. On the back of their efforts, lesser-known celebrities of the day were able to follow. A result of such dynamics was the emergence of a redefined sense of authenticity in mainstream culture, one still enduring until this day.

With redefined possibilities for authenticity, those involved arguably transformed as well. As Curnett contends, the split between what is inside and outside did not just inform Stein's media profile. It also came to inform how she depicted characters in her literary writings during the 1940s.

The previous brief history of the development of celebrity culture suggests that it makes little sense to treat celebrity identities as fixed, given or in isolation; the abilities and dispositions of celebrities were transformed through and transformative of an ensemble of interpersonal and media-based relations involving privacy and disclosure. The manner in which some sought to compose self-accounts in order to remake conventions of their day – but were remade in the process – further indicates the importance of moving beyond treating cultural standards as stable background features.[10] Shared norms and codes are realized through their enactment, and individual enactments can shape the meaning and place of standards. Thus, standards and acts are mutually established in a two-way process.

In approaching a topic like revelation then, it is necessary to consider the actions and motivations of individuals as well as the webs of connections, relations and dependencies between them. Failing to do so can lead to questionable inferences. Take an example related to another domain. Writing in the late 1990s after the proliferation of talk-show exposés such as the

Jerry Springer show, but well before the advent of social media, Atkinson and Silverman contended countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom could be characterized as 'interview societies'. By this, they meant societies that attach much cultural value and authenticity to confessional interviews, life histories and other ways of narrating matters personal and private.[11] Atkinson and Silverman sought to draw attention to commonplace contemporary assumptions underlying the 'revelatory power' of interviews; namely that (i) a true sense of self exists and (ii) that the act of confession offers access to it. Atkinson and Silverman suggested that what often goes ignored or unrecognized is that 'interview-talk' is a highly conventionalized, rehearsed, labored, predictable and consequential form of communication. The failure of scholars to recognize these features lead to both an unjustified authority placed on interviewing methods and the reproduction of cultural beliefs of an internal, real and stable self.

The Prospects for Revelation

To hold together revelations proffered with the conditions that underpin them can be taken along a different line too; namely asking what does *not* get treated as a revelation. That is aligned with asking questions as follows: When is revelation regarded as possible? Who is (not) allowed to disclose? How are such potentials socially distributed?

Consider.

Medieval and early modern Europe was full of wonders that thinkers of the time struggled to comprehend. A hot spring. A two-headed cat. An insect swarm. Comets. What were these phenomena? Did they indicate something? If so, what?[12]

As Lorraine Daston has so eloquently described, during the period from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, the standing of such wonders underwent dramatic transformations – changes that tell of both the developing schisms in the Christian Church as well as the emergence of contemporary notions of scientific facts.[13]

Following on from the theological writings of Thomas Aquinas, many thirteenth-century scholars distinguished between three types of phenomena: God's supernatural actions, the natural processes of the world and preternatural events that stemmed from some sort of extra-ordinary agency. Preternatural prodigies such as a sixth finger or an oddly shaped animal were subject to widespread speculation. What were they a sign of? Such questions were widely contested as people jostled for public recognition of their ability to divine meaning. Part of the acknowledged difficultly was that a prodigy might originate from the workings of spirits, but it might also result from Satan's hand. Determining when a strange event was indeed a sign and who it was a sign from were regarded as tricky since demonic forces

masqueraded themselves through appearing as genuine manifestations of God's will.

By the time of the seventeenth century, though, the in-between category of the preternatural became difficult to sustain. With the increasing prominence of 'natural philosophy' – or what we today would call early forms of scientific reasoning – preternatural phenomena were more and more interpreted as natural phenomena. While attempts were made to retain a role for the Devil as an adept, behind the scenes, manipulator of natural forces, he gradually exited from consideration. This was aided by the growing theological belief that God did not permit the kinds of spiritual insubordination required for the flourishing of demonic preternatural events.

While preternatural prodigies became discredited by the seventeenth century, divine miracles still retained a place within theology and culture. Their place, though, went through a dramatic curtailment. As divine messages, much was seen as at stake in the understanding of miracles. Medieval theologians regarded them as recognizable primarily by their affective qualities. Miracles engendered wonder and awe. In doing so, genuine miracles were regarded as unambiguous and authoritative oratories of God's will, albeit ones tailored to specific individuals. As with prodigies, however, a gnawing difficulty was determining whether such experiences were down to God or authored elsewhere.

By the end of the seventeenth century, much of the impetus to shore up the category of the miracle did not derive from fears about how Satan might promulgate counterfeit experiences, but rather from concerns about how religious zealots might see miracles far too often for the likings of either Catholic or Protestant leaders. In an effort to tighten up who could legitimately see what, the Catholic Church revised its requirements for what counted as a miracle and who could designate them. In Protestant theology, for events to be miracles, they needed to be visible and available for widespread inspection.[14] That inspection could not simply be done by individuals appealing to their sensory experience. The senses could be deceived. Thus, miracles also needed to align with theological orthodoxies. In this – as with so many other forms of revelations – divine ones have often had to reconcile competing considerations: How to break with previous understandings in order to offer something that could be regarded as new, but also to build on what has come before.[15] With these historical developments, miracles went from being treated as personal and intimate sacramental communications to authenticated demonstrations of God's will. As the official designation of a miracle more and more required public demonstration and verification, the number of them recognized by churches decreased markedly. With the start of the eighteenth century, miracles retained a place in Western Christianity, but with a reduced relevance and in a world stripped of much of its wonder.

Thus, both for prodigies and miracles, how divine will was made available depended on how groups of individuals connected, communicated and coordinated between themselves through their means for observation, relations of authority, procedures of investigation and established worldviews. The matter of how to reconcile subjectivity with the demands for facticity in relation to divine revelations continued to prove contentious beyond the end of the seventeenth century.[16] Those with experiences and interpretations that fell outside of the conventions of their day faced dismissal – or worse.

A more modern example of what does and does not get treated as a revelation due to how acts align with prevalent beliefs is given by Lisa Stampnitzky. As she set out, after 9/11, the use of torture techniques by the United States as part of the 'War on Terrorism' gradually became reported on within the mainstream media. However, it was not until the circulation of photos from Abu Ghraib in 2004 that significant condemnation followed within the United States.[17] The question Stampnitzky poses is this: Why did not the initial exposure of state torture bring much condemnation? As she contends, in part this was down to the power of images over words. But more than this, the shock generated by the Abu Ghraib photos was due to the manner the images sat so uncomfortably with the impression that officials within the George W. Bush administration sought to cultivate. 'Interrogation techniques' were portrayed as highly professional, scientific and measured. This is what was said to demark the 'harsh' or 'special' interrogation techniques used in the name of the United States from the barbaric and unacceptable forms of torture exercised elsewhere. With the release of photos depicting scenes of humiliation undertaken for their entertainment value to American soldiers, portrayals of US practices as highly professional were not possible to sustain.[18]

From this analysis, Stampnitzky offered a conceptual distinction between what political scientists should count as exposure and what should count as revelation, 'reserving the concept of *exposure* to refer to releases of information, while … the concept of *revelation* … refer[s] to a collective recognition that something has been exposed'.[19]

The importance of distinguishing exposure to from recognition of is echoed elsewhere. In examining the rhetorics for making sense of the 2008 financial market meltdown, Janet Roitman set out to examine the societal conditions under which events become labeled as 'crises'.[20] As she elaborated, the language of crisis often engenders certain forms of political critique and mobilization. For those who experience a crisis, previous community standards for understanding the past, present and future as well as coordinating actions become unstable if not downright untenable.

Cascading Revelations

The examples in the previous section touched on questions about revelations and the conditions for them that can now be addressed more squarely: When does it become possible to reveal? Why can one revelation lead to another and another and another? What forms of mutual orientation, connection and dependency create conditions that support revelation?

We can begin by underscoring that capacities for keeping and telling secrets can be unevenly distributed. For instance, much of the 'will to disclose'[21] prevalent in contemporary Western liberal democracies is rooted in Enlightenment ideas about the power of information and the corrosive deprivations of secrecy.[22] And yet, as Elspeth van Veeren has contended, this will inflects along lines of race, class, sexuality and gender.[23] In terms of gender, the historical exclusion of females from military and security domains has meant some kinds of secret keeping have been the preserve of men. Women, in contrast, often have been associated with the tittle-tattle of everyday, trivial gossip. When women have been associated with keeping notable secrets, that knowledge has often centered on the body – witches, healers and midwives being prominent role examples.

It is also important to underscore that the mutual orientations, connections and dependencies between people rest on the means of revealing available. In this regard, media technologies shape what courses of action can be undertaken, who encounters who, who can work in concert with who, what vulnerabilities and protections are associated with revealing and so on. As such, some can effectively dominate over others through their greater capacity for action – a situation that can lead to those less powerful seeking new means for acting.

In recent years, social media platforms have come to serve as an important technology for structuring connections and dependencies. For some, revelation is central to the moral economy of social media. With a concern for how scandalous disclosures of racism and misogyny can 'craft an audience dynamic that obscures precisely what it announces', [24] Casey Ryan Kelly contended:

> *Exposure* is one of the organizing principles of new media. New, shocking revelations generate not just viewers and readers, but also likes, shares, retweets, parody videos, memes, reaction GIFs, and livestream commentary. With this transformation in celebrity, it should come as no surprise that the modes of spectatorship that emerge within new media forms *demand* exposure— the more obscene and disgraceful, the more affective intensity it will garner. Relatively new and interactive media forms, including reality television, social networking apps, microblogging sites, viral videos, image boards, and other mediums, traffic in the exposure of private life in public.[25]

The points in the previous paragraphs will be spoken to by considering #MeToo. As with any major societal development, individual characterizations of #MeToo are almost certainly partial and consequential. Partial in the sense that any depiction offers a radically simplified account. Consequential in the sense that what gets included in any portrayal shapes the interpretation of events.

In terms of some basics, though, many portrayals of #MeToo locate its origins in October 2017 with the then accusations of sexual harassment, assault and rape published in the *New York Times* made against the Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein. The widespread media coverage of these claims led an actor and critic of Weinstein, Alyssa Milano, to encourage other women who had experienced sexual harassment and assault to use the designation of 'Me too' to promote recognition of the scale of such acts. No mere spectacle of passive spectatorship, within a short time, millions of posts would be made on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and elsewhere referring to experiences far beyond the entertainment industry.[26] In doing so, women who had only previously retold their experiences and their consequences with a few people or no one found a platform for sharing them with specific and indefinite others. While the types of testimonials varied, the overall picture created was that of pervasive social patterns of misogyny and institutional silence in the face of such patterns. The posting of experiences challenged the notion though that the means of institutional silencing were durable and unassailable. Instead, individuals sought to transform prevalent orientations, connections and conventions in social media and elsewhere and did so, at least in some respects.[27]

Thus, much of what took place under the label of #Metoo could be said to be directed at identifying scandal – dirty secrets of injustice previously known to some, first in Hollywood but then elsewhere. As acts of making available what was previously not widely so, the social media postings of experiences fall under the definition of revelations set out in this book. What was made available was ascribed with significance and affect. Sadness, anger, fear and disgust were some of the emotions that featured within the postings of experiences and the reactions to them.[28] What was made available also created senses of 'we' and 'them' as individuals aligned with, echoed or contested postings.

In seeking to understand the nearly overnight dramatic shift in prominence given to sexual degradation, Giti Chandra argued that the ability of women who were not famous to *limit* what they made available even as they self-disclosed about (hitherto) private matters was integral to the exchange, solidarity building and authentication that was achieved. In particular, the ability to self-post their stories anonymously via social media countered many of the dynamics that previously stifled the airings of sexual violence (such as the fear of retribution).[29] Self-anonymity lessened the prospects for

disbelief and discrediting, even as accounts circulated across multiple platforms and audiences. Self-anonymity was only one kind of limit. Others included the absence of personal details about alleged perpetrators as well as the use of euphemisms in the place of explicit descriptions.[30] Such limitations were consequential; for instance, in directing attention away from perpetrators and toward those in safeguarding roles.

Others seeking to explain the conditions that led to the extensive outpouring of accounts of sexual violence pointed toward the sequencing of self-disclosures. In this regard, two features of #Metoo are relevant: (i) the movement began with high-profile victims and perpetrators and (ii) overtime the possibility for some women to read the disclosures others were making on social media progressively emboldened an ever greater willingness to speak out.[31] In other words, a cascading of revelations was enabled by the networked relations of those involved, more specifically relations of dependency in which the willingness of some to act was conditional on the prior actions of others.[32]

Interpreting #MeToo within the schisms of American politics, Jeffrey Alexander identified its cross-partisan appeal as central to why so many people came forward.[33] As he argued, prior to the allegations made against Harvey Weinstein, other prominent men in the United States had come into the public spotlight for their misogynistic behavior. This included, not least, Donald Trump as the then Presidential Republican nominee as well as the chair and CEO of Fox News, Roger Ailes. As Alexander contended, such exposures were not taken as clear indicators of a systematic social problem because many interpreted news of them as partisan attacks by a liberal media against prominent right-wing men. While these and other allegations were taken as more or less serious, their relevance was largely confined to the specific individuals and organizations that came under the spotlight. In other words, to the extent the behaviors of prominent men were treated as problematic, the troubles were bounded rather than pervasive. In contrast, Harvey Weinstein was regarded as a liberal. The circumstances that enabled him to carry on with abuse that was known by some within Hollywood were likewise presented as at the feet of liberals. As such, the allegations made against Weinstein, on the back of prior attention to sexual workplace violence, provided the basis for identifying a general problem that cut across the central polarizing partisan divide in the United States.

In making these arguments about the salient factors associated with #Metoo, Alexander's analysis takes certain splits as central to the conditions for revelation. For instance, the distinction between what is inner or outer, and what is episodic or thematic. To this listing, others have identified splits between justice and injustice, truth and falsity, as well as perpetrator and victim.[34]

Alexander's analysis also attends to how splits can switch through revelations. For instance, how those regarded as helpless can become heroines, or how those admired can become villains. Not least because of the sheer scale of those implicated by millions of postings of sexual violence, #MeToo became about more than individual acts of wrongdoing. Instead, it brought recognition of a crisis in which everyday ways of acting came under question – at least for some.

Configuring Markets

While the connections, relations and dependencies of social movements can foster and be fostered by revelations, much the same can be said of commercial markets. This was a matter taken up by Tanja Schneider and Steve Woolgar in their examination of the emergence of the field of neuromarketing.[35] Neuromarketing seeks to draw on brain-imaging and measurement technologies from neuroscience to assess consumers' evaluations of goods and advertising. Through surveying key academic, professional and popular texts, Schneider and Woolgar outlined how neuromarketing advanced a notion of flawed customers – individuals that had a poor grasp of their own purchasing decisions. By using brain-imaging and measurement technology, those in neuromarketing positioned it as offering the possibility to peer into the minds of consumers to gauge the real determinants of their choices. Measuring brain activity could cut through the conscious stories people told themselves and others about why they acted as they did as well as the problems customers face in articulating reasons for their behavior. In doing so, neuromarketers presented themselves as being able to reveal what was hidden – the subconscious desires. Schneider and Woolgar characterized this as an ironic form of revelation:

> In the sense that it entails the construction of a contrast between what appears to be the case – consumers' accounts of why they prefer certain products over others – and what can be shown to be the case as a result of the application of the technology – the hidden or concealed truth.[36]

Through marshalling notions of appearance/reality, conscious/unconscious, exposed/concealed, new/old, etc., neuromarketers sought to shift typical ways of thinking about accountability. No longer were customers presented as able to explain their motives. Instead, neuromarketers presented their technology and those that operate it as the ones placed as able to speak to (the real) motives. Since the potential for brain-imaging and measurement technologies to assess consumers' subconscious motives was still recognized as some way off from being realized at the time of Schneider and Woolgar's analysis, the full promise of neuromarketing was

positioned as something that could only be realized in the future. In setting out a future promise of a technology, neuromarketers did more than fashion images of (flawed) consumers. They sought to build demand for brain-imaging and measurement technology as well as for the experts that serviced it.[37]

Analyses such as those by Schneider and Woolgar suggest the importance of understanding expertise within the emergence of connections, relations and dependencies. In doing so, it is possible to note tensions in how what is known by experts gets made available to others. One tension is the manner meaning making can be treated as an exclusive ability and yet get shared between many. Along these lines, as individuals offer accounts of what was previously unknown, they also imperil their distinctive claims to authority. The more they can articulate what they know, how, and why it matters, the more that knowledge is open to being codified, usurped or subjected to fine-grained management. Elaborations of how something is done that are fully exhaustive are not likely to be taken as referring to 'expertise' at all. Instead, they are liable to be taken as common sense, technical familiarity, ubiquitous knowledge,[38] etc. By definition, expertise cannot be widely available to all.[39]

Further, claims to skill and insight are routinely expected to undergo trials of validation. This can include acts of accreditation, demonstration, and verification – often for non-specialist audiences. Claims to expertise that cannot be seen to pass through such trials are not likely to be regarded as such by others. Instead, they are liable to be labeled as quasi-science, folklore, superstition, etc.[40]

And yet, the entanglements associated with claiming expertise are thicker still. In general, it is the case that the more the individuals are able to reveal what they know, the more likely the prospect that their standing is usurped. However, experts cannot exist in isolation. The recognition of forms of doing and knowing as 'expert' depends on enough credible individuals – a community – willing to validate what is done and known.[41] Without such attestation, forms of doing and knowing are liable to be labeled as individual preferences, idiosyncratic reasonings, personal beliefs, etc.

The previous paragraphs suggest the entanglements of making available that which was not so. By forwarding some tensions, binds and dilemmas, it is possible to draw attention to the conditions that underpin claims to expertise and that relations of expertise help bring about. In stressing conditions, an implication is that individuals cannot somehow simply extract themselves from the configurations associated with rendering the world available.[42]

Taken together, the examples of miracles, movements and markets examined in this chapter suggest the emergent dynamics whereby revelation enable (and are enabled by) people grouping together in mutual orientations, connections and dependencies.

Notes

1 Neal R. Norrick, "The Dark Side of Tellability," *Narrative Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (2005): 328.
2 As in the shifting cultural place of satire, see Melinda Alliker Rabb, *Satire and Secrecy in English Literature from 1650 to 1750* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
3 Robert Busby, *Scandal and American Politics in the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).
4 In line with Catelijne Coopmans, "Visual Analytics as Artful Revelation", in *Representation in Scientific Practice Revisited*, ed. C. Coopmans, J. Vertesi, M. Lynch, and S. Woolgar (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 37–60.
5 To paraphrase Nobert Elias' notion of figurations. See Norbert Elias, *What is Sociology?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) and Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000). For an alternative regime framework for pertaining to many of the same concerns, see Stephen Hilgartner, *Reordering Life-Knowledge and Control in the Genomics Revolution* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2017).
6 Anthony King, A. *The Structure of Social Theory*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2004).
7 Kirk Curnutt, "Inside and Outside: Gertrude Stein on Identity, Celebrity, and Authenticity," *Journal of Modern Literature* 23, no. 2 (1999): 291–308.
8 See, as well, Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001).
9 Timothy W. Galow, *Writing Celebrity: Stein, Fitzgerald, and the Modern(ist) Art of Self-Fashioning* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
10 For a similar analysis in relation to politicians, see Casey Ryan Kelly, *Caught on Tape: White Masculinity and Obscene Enjoyment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), Chapter 5.
11 Paul Atkinson and David Silverman, "Kundera's Immortality: The Interview Society and the Invention of the Self," *Qualitative Inquiry* 3 (1997): 304–325.
12 Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 93–124. See, as well, Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1998).
13 Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 93–124; Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1998).
14 For a related analysis of epiphanies, see Sophie Grace Chappell, *Epiphanies: An Ethics of Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), Chapters 4–7.
15 For an analysis of varying conceptions of revelation in Christianity along these lines, see William J. Wainwright, *Reason, Revelation, and Devotion: Inference and Argument in Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Chapter 6; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Marilyn J. Westerkamp, "Puritan Patriarchy and the Problem of Revelation," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (1993): 571–595.
16 See Tuska Benes, *The Rebirth of Revelation: German Theology in an Age of Reason and History, 1750–1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022).
17 Lisa Stampnitzky, "Truth and Consequences? Reconceptualizing the Politics of Exposure," *Security Dialogue* 51, no. (2020): 597–613, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010620904576

18 For a parallel form of argument, see Mustafah Dhada, "The Wiriyamu Massacre of 1972: Its Context, Genesis, and Revelation," *History in Africa* 40 (2013): 45–75.
19 Lisa Stampnitzky, "Truth and Consequences? Reconceptualizing the Politics of Exposure," *Security Dialogue* 51, no. (2020): 597–613. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010620904576
20 The importance of distinguishing 'exposure to' from 'recognition of' is echoed elsewhere. In examining the rhetorics for making sense of the 2008 financial market meltdown, Janet Roitman set out to examine the societal conditions under which events become labeled as 'crises'. As she elaborated, the recognition of a crisis often engenders certain forms of political critique and mobilization wherein previous community standards for understanding the past, present and future become unstable if not downright untenable. See Janet Roitman, *Anti-Crisis* (Durham: Duke, 2014).
21 William Walters, *State Secrecy and Security: Refiguring the Covert Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2021).
22 Koen Vermeir, "Openness versus Secrecy? Historical and Historiographical Remarks," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 45, no. 2 (2012): 165–188.
23 Elspeth Van Veeren, "Secrecy's Subjects: Special Operators in the US Shadow War," *European Journal of International Security* 4 (2019): 386–414, https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2019.20.
24 Casey Ryan Kelly, *Caught on Tape: White Masculinity and Obscene Enjoyment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 128.
25 Casey Ryan Kelly, *Caught on Tape: White Masculinity and Obscene Enjoyment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 8. Italics in the original.
26 Monica Anderson and Skye Toor, "How Social Media Users Have Discussed Sexual Harassment since #MeToo Went Viral," *Pew Research Center*, October 11, 2018.
27 See, for instance, Marleen Gorissen, Chantal J. W. van den Berg, Stijn Ruiter, and Catrien C. J. H. Bijleveld, "Sharing Unwanted Sexual Experiences Online," *Computers in Human Behavior* 144 (2023): 1–10, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.107724; Nancy Worthington, "Celebrity-bashing or #MeToo Contribution?," *The Communication Review* 23, no. 1 (2020): 46–65, https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2019.1704110.
28 Though not necessarily as much as might be expected by some. See Charlotte Nau, Jinman Zhang, Anabel Quan-Haase, and Kaitlynn Mendes, "Vernacular Practices in Digital Feminist Activism on Twitter: Deconstructing Affect and Emotion in the #MeToo Movement," *Feminist Media Studies* (2022): 37–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2022.2027496.
29 Giti Chandra, "The Anonymous Feminist: Agency, Trauma, Personhood, and the #MeToo Movement," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*, eds. Giti Chandra and Irma Erlingsdóttir (London: Routledge, 2020), Chapter 7. For background on the reasons for this, see E. E. Hollenbaugh and M. K. Everett, "The Effects of Anonymity on Self-Disclosure in Blogs," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 18, no. 3 (2013): 283–302, https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12008 and T. Y. Wu and D. J. Atkin, "To Comment or not to Comment: Examining the Influences of Anonymity and Social Support on One's Willingness to Express in Online News Discussions," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 12 (2018): 4512–4532, https://doi.org/10.25384/SAGE.c.4116641.v1.
30 Charlotte Nau, Jinman Zhang, Anabel Quan-Haase, and Kaitlynn Mendes, "Vernacular Practices in Digital Feminist Activism on Twitter: Deconstructing

Affect and Emotion in the #MeToo Movement," *Feminist Media Studies* (2022), https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2022.2027496 and Mairead Sullivan, "Grossed Out: The Carceral Logics of Disgust and the Demands of #MeToo," *Signs* 48, no. 1 (2022): 77–95, https://doi.org/10.1086/720427.

31 Cass R. Sunstein, "#Metoo as a Revolutionary Cascade," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*, eds. Giti Chandra and Irma Erlingsdóttir (London: Routledge, 2020), Chapter 2.

32 See also Susan Faludi, Shauna Shames, Jennifer M. Piscopo, and Denise M. Walsh, "A Conversation with Susan Faludi on Backlash, Trumpism, and #MeToo," *Signs* 45, no. 2 (2020): 336–345, https://doi.org/10.1086/704988.

33 Jeffrey C. Alexander, *What Makes a Social Crisis?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

34 Stavroula Pipyrou, "*#MeToo* is little more than Mob Rule // vs // *#MeToo* is a Legitimate Form of Social Justice," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 8, no. 3 (2018): 415–419, https://doi.org/10.1086/701007.

35 Tanja Schneider and Steve Woolgar, "Technologies of Ironic Revelation: Enacting Consumers in Neuromarkets," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 15, no. 2 (2012): 169–189, https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2012.654959.

36 Tanja Schneider and Steve Woolgar, "Technologies of Ironic Revelation: Enacting Consumers in Neuromarkets," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 15, no. 2 (2012): 169–189, https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2012.654959.

37 Similarly, Coopmans offered the notion of 'artful revelation' to signal the manner in which the promotion of data visualization software situationally traded on the contention that this tool enabled patterns in data to be brought into sight, while also making germane the need for skills, experience, and understanding to interpret visual analytics which, in turn, could put the realization of real benefits of the software just out of the purview of would-be users. Catelijne Coopmans, "Visual Analytics as Artful Revelation," in *Representation in Scientific Practice Revisited*, eds. C. Coopmans, J. Vertesi, M. Lynch, and S. Woolgar (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 37–60.

38 Harry Collins and Rob Evans, *Rethinking Expertise* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

39 For instance, readers of memoirs by fakers and fakebusters alike are frequently invited to 'see for themselves' the differences between authentic and fake pieces through their side-to-side juxtaposition. And yet, the sheer pervasiveness of fakery recounted as part of many memoirs raises doubts about what can be perceived and who is capable of perceiving it.

40 For an extended analysis of the unsettled relation between divine insights and scientific legitimacy, see Tuska Benes, *The Rebirth of Revelation: German Theology in an Age of Reason and History, 1750–1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022).

41 See Michael Mair, Chris Elsey, Paul V. Smith, and Patrick G. Watson, "Warmaking and Sense-making: Some Technical Reflections on an Instance of 'Friendly Fire'' *British Journal of Sociology* 63, no. 1 (2012): 75–96.

42 This conclusion is as relevant to my analysis as any other. At times actively pointing to specific pieces of data for what they show, while at times also forwarding interpretations based on a certain background knowledge, while also at times explicitly devolving meaning making to the reader, this book exemplifies rather than escapes the dynamics which it has identified. The claim otherwise would stand as a refutation of this analysis. The aim of this book is not to escape the condition for and the consequences of revelation, but to come into awareness of them.

6

SPLITTING

The drawing of splits between a 'this' and a 'that' has been central to the sense of revelation offered in this book. Revelations, in other words, enact contrast. In some cases, the distinctions can be taken as definitive. By juxtaposing the self-images, Hollywood, Number 10 Downing Street or US Navy SEALs project of themselves against stories about what really went on, backstories can be taken to make hidden truths available. In other cases, the contrasts achieved might prove confounding. Climactic revelations in entertainment magic befuddle, perplex and entice us by creating a clash between what we witness and what we know is possible. In other cases, contrasts can prove destabilizing. A documentary might expose once prized paintings as 'fake', but might also undermine our general confidence in what could be 'authentic' at all.

Distinctions at one level can support those at another. On the back of the contrasts drawn between what appears to be the case and what is really so, alternative depictions can be advanced for how the world becomes known. Seeing could be said to result in believing or believing in seeing.

Just as splitting is pervasive in the accounts given by whistleblowers, personalities and others, in the previous chapters I argued splitting features in many academic analyses of whistleblowers, personalities and others. Attempts to comprehend the causes and conditions for identified 'crises' – such as the 2008 financial crisis – often pitch themselves as revealing hidden histories.[1] Similarly, exposures of scandals have been said to 'not simply reveal wrongdoing; instead, they reveal society'; with society being, 'the fluid, contingent, and ever-shifting mosaic of social forces, groupings, and constellations that constitute world order'.[2]

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As part of offering a framework for understanding revelations, this chapter attends to the realization of splitting. More than simply noting how a sense of 'this' and 'that' figure in additional instances of revelation, I approach splitting as productive. Previous chapters concentrated on how vestings, becomings and figurings entail splitting. But the reverse can be attended to as well. Splitting supports vestings, becomings and figurings. How this is so will be one of the topics for this chapter. In both of these directions, splitting is bound together with the distribution of responsibility, credibility, authority and culpability. Again, how this is so will be one of the topics for this chapter. Beyond examining these matters, this chapter also considers how splits between appearance and reality, surface and depth, falsity and authenticity, etc., are perpetuated and drawn to a close.

On and On and On...

Let us start by returning to one of the topics covered in Chapter 3: The revelations stemming from the online posting of logs and cables by WikiLeaks in 2010. As set out, WikiLeaks and collaborating newspapers widely presented the leaks of US military and diplomatic documents as opening up the closed world of statecraft. Within such claims making, distinctions between inner and outer, presentation and reality, as well as private and public were mobilized. A prominent underlying metaphor was that of a container.[3] The leaking represented a breach of the seals set in place by national security restrictions.

In terms of what the leaks delivered, previously I elaborated how the logs and cables were treated in multiple and seemingly tension-ridden ways. In many respects, what could be grasped was treated as solid and self-sufficient. The leaks provided a command of events hitherto obscured away. However, this was not always so. Within and between individual reports, the logs and cables were treated as both raw as in needing-to-be-spoken-for and raw as in speaking-for-themselves.

I want to extend the analysis in Chapter 3 by following out the coverage of WikiLeaks further in time. This will be done to illustrate how contrasts drawn at one point can set the basis for subsequent ones.

Splits between inner and outer, appearance and reality, as well as private and public were not just mobilized in 2010. Instead, such themes would feature within portrayals of WikiLeaks for many years. This was most evident in the 'stories behind the story' that were penned by those central to the 2010 leaks. Books, documentaries and films in this vein were presented as revelations in relation to the limited bounds of what was made known in 2010.

For instance, as its one-time spokesperson, Daniel Domscheit-Berg's *Inside WikiLeaks* offered readers an 'explosive exposé of the inner workings

of the whistle-blowing phenomenon'.[4] Individuals at the collaborating newspapers examined in Chapter 3 also came out with book-length volumes (*WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* by David Leigh and Luke Harding at the *Guardian* – hereafter, '*WikiLeaks*' – as well as *Open Secrets* by the *New York Times*). A story behind the story was then also presented in the documentary *Mediastan* as well as the feature film *Fifth Estate* that drew on the books by Domscheit-Berg, Leigh and Harding. Another set of notable collaborative publications included 'Julian Assange's' *Julian Assange: The Unauthorised Autobiography*[5] as well as its ghostwriter's version of the story behind this quasi-autobiography.[6] These narratives were in addition to other outputs with more or less direct collaboration with WikiLeaks members such as the films *Risk* (2016), *Ithaka* (2021) and *The Trust Fall* (2024) as well as Kevin Gosztola's book *Guilty of Journalism*.

In seeking to make previously undisclosed considerations known, each story behind the story traded on the sense that something notable was absent from the previous coverage given to WikiLeaks. Much of this related to the 'texture, nuance, and drama'[7] – definitely drama – of personalities and events. This included the cloak-and-dagger intrigue of the dealings between newspapers and Julian Assange, the perceptions of power and paranoia that developed with the handling of thousands upon thousands of classified documents, the manner in which WikiLeaks as a fledgling organization projected an inflated image of itself to the world, the practices by which journalists both hoarded and shared data, the manner in which WikiLeaks internally descended into a personality cult and so forth. In doing so, the stories behind the story did more than just implicitly speak to the identity of revealers and authors; instead, such matters figured centrally.

Notably too, the inside stories also unsettled the factual status of what had been claimed in 2010 by those collaborating in the release of the logs and cables. At times, this entailed challenging what had previously been concluded in 2010 about US statecraft. For instance, backstage stories about the leaks by staff from the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* noted numerous limitations to the logs and cables, arguably in a starker and more extended manner than in their 2010 news reports. In the stories behind the story, the cables, for instance, were said not only to be subject to qualification about their reliability. More than this, they were also said to be restricted in the overall picture they painted because 'top secret' or higher-classified cables were not in the set of documents WikiLeaks obtained.[8] In addition, the cables' authors were deemed to have agendas – to impress others, to promote their views and to ensure their jobs – so that what was written should not be taken at face value.[9] And yet, such identified failings mixed in a seemingly tension ridden way with a refrain also given in these stories behind the story that the cables themselves provided 'an unprecedented look at backroom bargaining by embassies around the world, brutally candid views of

foreign leaders and frank assessments of nuclear and terrorist threats'.[10] The qualifications given about the logs and cables also sat seemingly uneasily with the inclusion of numerous reproduced cables for readers to pour over without instruction or qualification in books such as *WikiLeaks* and *Open Secrets*.

As a more specific instance of how the inside stories unsettled what had been made known previously, one of the *Guardian*'s reporters (Simon Rogers) was quoted by colleagues in *WikiLeaks* as stating in relation to the Afghan War Diary that, 'In future, data journalism may not seem amazing and new; for now it is. The world has changed and it is data that has changed it'.[11] As the authors of *WikiLeaks* went on:

> One obvious opportunity was to obtain genuine statistics of casualties for the first time. But to do so Rogers and his reporter colleagues had to grapple with realities on the military ground: those realities made apparently enticing datasets into dirty and unreliable statistics.[12]

As *WikiLeaks* identified, this unreliability was the result of realities such as the variations in how units filled in the logs; the difficulties of counting deaths in combat situations; and the belief that combatant death tallies were sometimes exaggerated and civilian deaths intentionally undercounted. As a result, the authors of *WikiLeaks* then contended:

> So it was a tricky task to produce statistics that could be claimed to have real value. That highlighted once again the inescapable limitations of the purist WikiLeaks ideology. The material that resided in leaked documents, no matter how voluminous, was not 'the truth'. It was just often a signpost pointing to some truth, requiring careful attention.[13]

Just how statistics with real value could be produced from unreliable data by collaborating reporters was not elaborated in the book *WikiLeaks* though. The passage above from *WikiLeaks* also unsettled the prospects for readers of the *Guardian* to have realized Simon Rogers invitation in 2010 to download Excel spreadsheets in order to 'help us make more sense of the raw info'[14] (see page 42). How could they have done so given the datasets were regarded at that time as 'dirty and unreliable'?

In certain respects, the stories behind the story queried journalist expertise in a way missing in 2010 news reports. The prominence given in the stories behind the story attached to the journalistic role in making sense of the leaked material – of what otherwise would be an 'incomprehensible mass data dump'[15] – served as the basis for querying conclusions published in 2010. In *Open Secrets*, for instance, Bill Keller as the former executive editor for the *New York Times* questioned the *Guardian*'s 2010 coverage of

civilian deaths in Afghanistan, including whether the logs proved that there were 'hundreds of civilian deaths [from] unreported incidents'.[16]

While such comments queried others' reporting, largely absent from the stories behind the story were self-directed concerns. This was perhaps most vivid in relation to David Leigh and Luke Harding's book *WikiLeaks*. This book chronicled the newspaper's initial engagements, tense collaborations and eventual estrangement from Julian Assange and WikiLeaks. In addition to being the authors of *WikiLeaks*, both Leigh and Harding played significant but ambiguous roles in the unfolding of the events retold. *WikiLeaks* was written in a narrative third person format where actions by these two reporter-authors were discussed in just the same way as others in the 'Cast of Characters' list provided at the start of the book.[17] The authors were even quoted (by themselves) in a journalistic third person fashion as offering eyewitness verifications of what happened. This narrative technique was employed without attention to what this 'self-reporting reporting' implied for the status and bounds of what was written by Leigh and Harding.

Thus, the 'stories behind the story' provided a set of occasions for making claims about what had been made available through the logs and cables. They established new divides between appearance and reality, public and private as well as inner and outer by pitching themselves as going beyond the media coverage in 2010. In this, what was disclosed in 2010 served as a resource for what could be reopened later because previous knowledge claims set the boundaries that could be gone beyond in subsequent revelations. The result was something akin to a series of nested Chinese boxes in which the production of (yet another) inner story was readily possible.

Yet, as I indicated above too, while the stories behind the story traded off on the notion of holding back, they did so with little questioning of what the same individuals or organizations had claimed in 2010 in their own coverage. In other words, while trading on a notion of a past that needed to be revisited and reinterpreted, they were selectively coupled to previous depictions. This overall situation– one in which the latest dramatic story promised to go further than before, but with circumscribed attention to what had been made available before – provided the conditions in which the import of leaks could potentially be revisited again and again over time.

'It is' and 'It isn't'

As suggested in the previous section and in Chapter 3, those collaborating in the release of military logs and diplomatic cables repeatedly sought to distinguish reality from appearance. And yet, as I maintained, contentions about 'what was what' regarding US statecraft were tempered in two respects. First, within and between news stories, commentators varied in their assessment of the ability of the logs and cables to speak for themselves.

The coexistence of opposing senses of 'transparent' (manifest versus see-through) or 'raw' (graphic versus crude) was associated with contrasting claims about what the leaks opened up and who was in a position to tell. Second, through both the overt qualifications in the stories behind the story as well as how they could be read against 2010 reports by the same authors, doubt could be cast on the prospects for the logs and cables to determine what really happened.

This section turns to a different example so as to indicate alternative ways in which splits between 'this' and 'that' both can enable revelations and stem from them. Rather than pertaining to a disperse set of claims offered across multiple outlets,[18] one instance of revelation is examined in detail – the 2021 documentary film titled *The Lost Leonardo*.[19] Sony Pictures described its film in these terms:

> *The Lost Leonardo* is the inside story behind the *Salvator Mundi*, the most expensive painting ever sold at $450 million. From the moment the painting is bought for $1175 at a shady New Orleans auction house, and the restorer discovers masterful Renaissance brushstrokes under the heavy varnish of its cheap restoration, the *Salvator Mundi's* fate is determined by an insatiable quest for fame, money and power. As its price soars, so do questions about its authenticity: is this painting really by Leonardo da Vinci? Unravelling the hidden agendas of the richest men and most powerful art institutions in the world, *The Lost Leonardo* reveals how vested interests in the *Salvator Mundi* are of such tremendous power that truth becomes secondary.[20]

As suggested by Sony Pictures' description, integral to *The Lost Leonardo* are a series of charged contrasts – known/unknown, fact/opinion, love/money, hidden/apparent, art/politics, genuine/dubious and so on.

In addressing the question of whether the *Salvator Mundi* is really a Leonardo, the documentary repeatedly notes the variety of associations possible: Leonardo painted it from start to finish, the master aided one of his pupils with sections of it, the painting derived from one of his workshops, the painting was done by one of his followers, or simply that it was fashioned in his style by an unrelated artist. Despite the diverse ways Leonardo might have played a hand in the *Salvator Mundi, The Lost Leonardo* sets out how discussions of authenticity repeatedly descend into a simple binary question: Is it or isn't it a Leonardo? The prime reason for this simplification is the radical impact of attribution on market value – the difference between $1175 and $450 million.

Such stakes are frequently cited in the film as underlying factors motivating the attributions made by those who were in the business of owning, restoring, displaying, marketing and auctioning the *Salvator Mundi*. Direct

financial rewards are not the only ones noted. The career interests associated with boosting museum visitor numbers, exposing skullduggery, and simply gaining attention are referred to again and again as possible keys for unlocking why specific individuals make certain claims.

The Lost Leonardo does not simply feature references to distinctions, its overall composition embodies contrast. As in Sony Picture's description, the film offers an 'inside story'. A view of inside is accomplished in a variety of ways. As one, those interviewed speak to matters otherwise confined to specialist professional communities. For instance, an art writer quips that 'The joke circulating around the contemporary art world was that that painting was a contemporary painting because 90% of it was painted within the last ten years during the restoration process'. The restorer, Dianne Dwyer Modestini, features prominently in the film. She not only speaks to the restoration process, but also divulges her inner thoughts. At one point, she recounts how the loss of her husband, Mario Modestini, became intertwined with the restoration of the *Salvator Mundi*:

> Mario dies in January. And I began to work on the *Salvator Mundi* in my studio, alone. I would carry on a conversation with Mario the entire time. I didn't talk to him out loud, except maybe once or twice, but I...but I would...but I would just have this dialogue with him in my head. I could hear him say, 'He looks like he has a toothache.' You know, I would do it over again. Or Mario would say, 'His nose is crooked'. Mario's face and the *Salvator Mundi's* face, you know, they kind of shift back and forth in my mind.

In a similar vein of making available, in the film the Swiss businessman Yves Bouvier openly admits to deceiving the Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev regarding the price he negotiated to buy the painting from Sotheby's in 2013, and the private email exchanges associated with that deception are read off by an investigative reporter.

While in certain respects *The Lost Leonardo* seeks to tell the inside story, this is combined with various types of aired doubt about the potential for the film to establish the facts. Perhaps most significantly, the very object at the center of the authenticity disputes, the *Salvator Mundi,* is presented as now beyond inspection. This is because its whereabouts had been closely guarded since its purchase at auction from Christie's in November 2017 for some $450 million; purportedly by the Saudi Arabian crown prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Another type of limitation stems from secrecy. As an example, the film's contributors note the *Salvator Mundi* was to be displayed in a Leonardo exhibition at the Louvre in Paris during 2019–2020. However, it was not. *The Lost Leonardo* includes suggestions that this was due to the failure to agree

terms on where it would be located in relation to Leonardo's famous *Mona Lisa* painting; a failure presented as imbued with high-level power politics between France and Saudi Arabia. As part of the Louvre's plans to house the *Salvator Mundi*, *The Lost Leonardo* includes reference to a book detailing the technical examinations of the painting conducted by the Louvre. While produced for the Leonardo exhibition, the failure to display the *Salvator Mundi* at the exhibition meant the book was pulled from release, with only a small number of copies sold at the Louvre's bookshop in error.[21] While the book is said to attribute the *Salvator Mundi* to Leonardo, the conclusiveness of this finding is immediately cast into doubt by one historian:

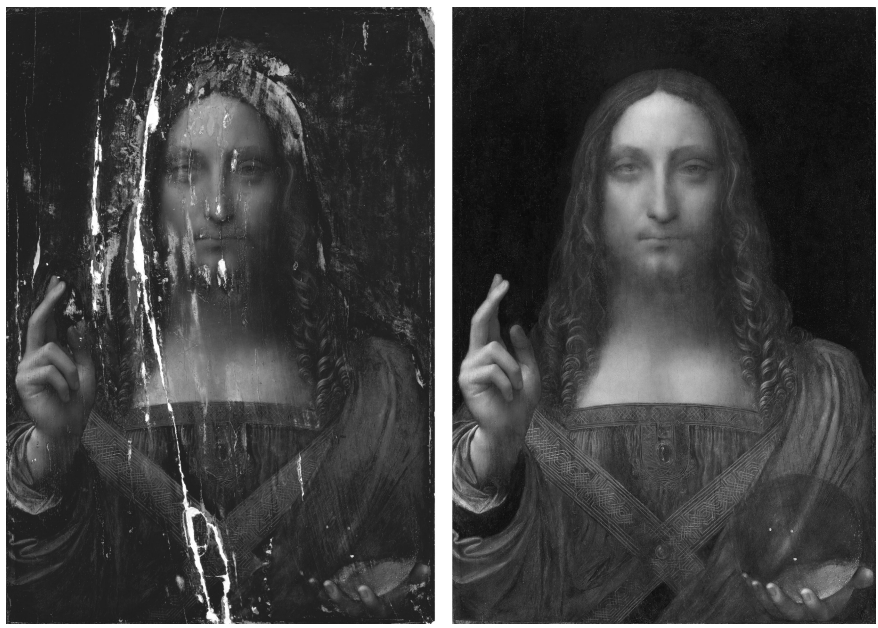

FIGURE 6.1 A contemporary painting?: The Salvator Mundi post-cleaning and restored.

> This is a first time that we have an independent body, really, doing a thorough analysis of the picture. But it's difficult to know what to believe when you've got a lost painting, a lost book and no access to the scientific examinations themselves.

Herein, as so often with revelations, what has been made available defines a sense of what is stimulatingly still not.

Doubt about the potential for establishing the status of the *Salvator Mundi* also stems from overt questioning of art experts. As part of speaking to his assessment that the painting was significantly of the hand of Leonardo,

Oxford University Emeritus Professor Martin Kemp recounted a trip he and other experts took to the British National Gallery in 2008:

> I'm trying, when I'm going to London, not to set up expectations. Expectations are dangerous because you end up seeing what you want to see. I decided to play it as cool as I could, and looked at it, and clearly, it's got a presence. Leonardos have a strange presence. They are very assertive, but at the same time, very ambiguous. And Leonardo does that. Other people can't.[22]

In this contribution, Kemp acknowledges the potential for bias, but also his ability to play it cool. As a result, his attribution of the *Salvator Mundi* as some sort of Leonardo gets portrayed as down to the painting's unique effects and characteristics.

While Kemp's statement taken in isolation presents the facts of the matter as, in the end, speaking for themselves (at least to Kemp), such assured positions are brought into doubt through the organization of the film. *The Lost Leonardo* has no narrator to evaluate the claims proffered, sum up the argument or even transition between points. Instead, the overall narrative is composed from stringing together interviews and related video clips. More than this though, contributions are juxtaposed so as to mark matters of disagreement. For instance, the above statement from Professor Kemp regarding the *Salvator Mundi's* presence was directly proceeded by the contention from Evan Beard, Head of Fine Art services at Bank of America, that 'You're dealing with the ego and dreams of academics. Every academic wants to make a discovery'. Cut scene to Kemp.

Through such editing, without having to introduce a narrator's voice to advance an argument, those associated with the *Salvator Mundi* are put at odds with each other. The numerous instances of fashioned flashpoints are complemented by other forms of editorial juxtaposition. For instance, after the opening credits, the film cuts between several interviewees who offer diverse claims:

> First, let me say this. This is the most improbable story that has, I think, ever happened in the art market.
>
> Everybody wanted it to be a Leonardo. And so everybody took the most optimistic view they could of it as a Leonardo. And perhaps it is a Leonardo.
>
> It's not even a good painting!
>
> I believe that a picture has its own power, and that power is experienced only truly when you're standing in front of it.
>
> This is simply a matter of economics when boiled down to it, and greed. Basic human foible. Money.

In this way, while views are brought together, there is no overarching attempt to set the record straight on the origins of *The Lost Leonardo*. Audience viewers are offered an invitation to align themselves with one of the positions advocated, but they are cautioned against doing so through the juxtaposition of contentions intermixed with repeated references to vested interests and underlying motivations. In this respect, reliance and questioning of expertise go hand in hand.

Rather than presented as a problem, reasons are given for why disagreement between experts could be regarded as productive. Near the end of the film, Evan Beard comments:

> At this moment, it is a da Vinci, and even the debate adds some attractive force to it. Even that there are folks that disagree makes you want to go look in its eye and see for yourself what all the fuss is about.

In this respect, debate – presumably including the debate presented by *The Lost Leonardo*– helps generate expectations, vestments and desires – expectations, vestments and desires not irrelevant to the cultural standing of art.

It is perhaps not surprising given the points above that *The Lost Leonardo* ends without a definitive or even final word about whether the *Salvator Mundi* is a Leonardo. The lack of closure – that is to say the absence of the stabilization of the facts – expresses itself in the penultimate element of the film with the restorer, Dianne Dwyer Modestini. Despite her long-standing conviction that the *Salvator Mundi* is a Leonardo, she states:

> everyone's idea of the picture is now formed by mystery and legend and speculation. It would be very surprising if all the experts suddenly said, 'Oh yes, this is absolutely by Leonardo.' And there are no documents. It cannot be proven … factually, you know, beyond a doubt.

The Lost Leonardo finishes with a montage of audio clips from media presenters that grows into a cacophony of disparate voices about the *Salvator Mundi*.

Closure

The previous sections mapped varying claims associated with two topics subjected to revelation. I sought to recount the manner splits were explicitly evoked by those involved as well as offer my own assessments of how splitting featured within the organization of the arguments presented. In different ways, for both examples I suggested how making available provided bases for yet further revelations that could go beyond what was hitherto made known.

As part of elaborating a sense of how splitting is done and what it does, the remainder of the chapter expands attention to include how closure about the facts can be positioned within revelations. To do so, I want to return to a matter briefly addressed previously in this book – the accusation that the images of the Apollo Moon landings in the late 1960s and early 1970s were, in some manner, faked.

As set out in Chapter 3, discussions about the veracity of Apollo Moon landing photos have been replete with splits. A central one has been the distinction between genuine and contrived. In providing representations of what happened, the visual record has been positioned as able to support a resolution. And yet, at times those imploring others to 'see the proof for yourself' also contended that visual images cannot be understood by merely staying with surface appearances.

In the case of skeptics, audiences have been directed to inspect problems in the visual record of the Moon landings – shadows cast at different angles, astronauts in shadow that are clearly visible, the American flag brightly lit no matter its orientation to the Sun, images with identical backgrounds that were meant to have been taken in different locations, sources of light in the astronauts' visors too big to be the Sun, video and film evidence of the same events with different details, uneven illumination suggestive of artificial lighting, etc. Through being directed to look for anomalies, audiences get brought into awareness of their conventional ways of perceiving.

The mix of seeing for yourself and needing to be told what to see have figured in contributions made by those that would identify themselves as on the other side of the debate too. Philip Plait's book *Bad Astronomy* includes a critical dissection of several claims associated with skeptics of the Moon landings.[23] For some such claims – as in the case of why no stars appear in the Apollo photographs – readers are encouraged to verify his arguments through testing them out in their backyards. For other claims, though, it is said that everyday conditions on Earth should not be confused with those on the Moon. As in the case of why some Apollo photos show footprints so near to where the landing engine thruster should have blown away dust (see Figure 3.1), readers are cautioned that it is necessary to appreciate that in the vacuum of space our day-to-day understanding of how dust disperses does not apply. Likewise, astronauts can be clearly visible in the shadow because of the peculiarities of how light reflects on the surface of the Moon (see Figure 6.2). Thus, readers need to give way to accepting the word of individuals positioned as scientific experts.[24]

Through the kinds of arguments noted in the last two paragraphs, the Moon landing disputes are replete with appeals to notions of specialist expertise *and* common sense as well as to the reliability of perception *and* its fallibility. Through these appeals, alternative senses are proposed for who can assess the images as well as the prospect of resolving disputes.

FIGURE 6.2 In the dark?

What images should really be taken to mean was recognized as in need of management in other respects. For instance, attempts to recreate the Apollo photographs to prove the scenes displayed were possible have simultaneously stood as evidence that the images could have been faked. To expand, in 2008, the Discovery Channel program *MythBusters* sought to refute hoax claims. Through setting up replication models and demonstrations, the presenters maintained they displayed several phenomena: How shadows need not run parallel, how objects can be seen in shadows, how footprints can be made in moisture-less and vacuum conditions, how it is impossible to replicate the motion of moonwalking on Earth convincingly and how a flag can flap in a vacuum.[25] One problem recognized with such demonstrations was that the more 'Moon-like' the re-creations and simulations, the more suggestive they were of what they sought to refute: Namely, that the visual proof of

the landings *could* have been faked. Presenter Adam Savage of *MythBusters* spoke to this doubleness in one of the episodes,:

> So I can hear what you are saying, 'but you guys replicated the moon shot on a set, *and* you're special effects artists; you are exactly the kinds of guys they would have hired to do this kind of thing in the *first* place'. That is not the point. The point is that we are addressing the specific claim by conspiracy theorists that this photo has only one explanation, and that is two light sources.[26]

In this way, Savage seeks to rebut a potential counter claim that audiences might harbor while still advancing a desired interpretation of the simulations.

As noted in Chapter 3, commentators can resort to asymmetrical types of reasoning to foreclose the doubleness of images in ways aligned with a favored position. Herein, only an identified opponents' beliefs are treated as needing to be explained through appeals to (distorting) psychological or social factors. Chapter 3 illustrated this in relation to Perlmutter and Dahmen's contention that Moon-hoax advocates believe what they see, while no attempt was made to consider how those refuting fakery claims might suffer from the same limitation. In this way, academic analyses often take the form of revelations – or more specifically revelations about purported revelations. Herein, disputes about the meaning of evidence often get reduced to portraying one side's thinking as the result of a flawed political culture, flawed psychology, flawed etc. By explaining away the reasons for pseudo-knowledge claims, stark splits between truth and fiction as well as right and wrong can be drawn.

Building on the previous paragraphs about the overall arguments made about the visual images, the next sections examine specific instances of making available that utilize varied ways of splitting between 'this' and 'that'. Within these I am not going to attempt to explain away certain positions. The argument that follows seeks to 'stay with'[27] – rather than get swept along or reactively reject – the lures and attractions of revelations. The aim of doing so is to further an understating of how revelations are accomplished, rather than to adjudicate on the veracity of photographic evidence.

Did We Land on the Moon?

In 2001, more than 30 years after the United States broadcasted the success of its manned missions to the Moon, the Fox television network aired a documentary program titled *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?*[28] On February 15, 2001, and March 21, 2001, its first two broadcasts drew 15 million viewers in the United States. Subsequently, it has been aired in other countries and is now available on the web. Since its first broadcast, the program has been credited[29] – and criticized for – popularizing the theory that the Moon landings were faked. As Philip Plait speculated, 'Judging from the

discussion groups on the web, the radio and television activity about it, and the vast number of e-mails I received in the following months, *something* about that program touched a nerve in many people'.[30] My purpose in this section is to consider at least something of this appeal as it relates to how truth and falseness as well as fact and opinion were positioned.

Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon? features a handful of people who call the landings into question, including Bill Kaysing, Ralph René, David S. Percy and Marcus Allen. Cited justifications for doubt include the motivations behind American actions in the Cold War, the feasibility of any human Moon trip given the state of 1960s technology and signs of staging in video and photo footage of the astronauts. The documentary, in short, positions itself as examining the possibility that people around the world have been duped into believing the Moon landings were real.

Notable, though, is that this is just a *possibility*. While *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* features individuals stating the landings were faked, the presenter voice-over does not conclude that the landings were hoaxed. Also, it does not contend that the idea that America had been to the Moon has been 'busted' (to take a term from the Discovery Channel's *MythBusters*). Rather, the documentary positions itself as a non-directive examination of a debate. For instance, it begins with the written and spoken disclaimer:

> The following program deals with a controversial subject. The theories expressed are not the only possible interpretations. Viewers are invited to make a judgment based on all available information.

In this way, instead of positioning itself as providing a definitive answer, the documentary starts with a proviso: The audience is cautioned about the contentious nature of the claims examined and the difficulty of settling the issues at hand.[31]

Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon? continues in the same vein. It displays the suspicions, technical arguments and evidence of hoax proponents. Viewers are invited to see one anomaly after another concerning Apollo photographs and footage. The voice-over poses *questions* throughout, such as follows: 'Could the government have orchestrated the deception of the century'? As part of this invitation, the viewer gets positioned as the 'virtual judge' on a set of claims and counter-claims.[32] It is a debate that, through its repetition and elaboration, calls for, and periodically also features, responses from NASA or others to counter the allegations of deception. The need for viewers to make a judgment is encouraged through a structure in which 'sides' are identified (broadly glossed as 'conspiracy theorists' versus 'NASA').

However, more than just showing viewers the evidence so that they can decide for themselves, *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* works through a series of movements concerning the visual evidence;

movements that alternate between the possibility and impossibility of determining what is what.

One of these is the movement between showing and not showing evidence of fakery. As previously noted, the documentary begins with the appeal to viewers to 'make a judgment based on all available information'. In this vein, one piece of information after another is offered for scrutiny. However, it is also made clear that not 'all available information' is being presented. The narrator refers to 'photo after photo' and 'thousands of photos' related to the six lunar landings. In contrast, a few photos at most are shown on any individual matter. Of the photographs and video clips displayed, some are analyzed for signs of fakery. However, others are only flashed on screen without commentary. Also, in-depth investigations by conspiracy theorists are alluded to but not elaborated on. Further still, secrecy is offered as one reason why 'all available information' should not be confused with 'all information'. The heavily guarded Restricted Access US Air Force installation Area 51 in the Nevada Desert, in particular, is identified as a possible but ultimately inaccessible site for the filming of the simulated landings.

Another productive movement is whether seeing provides a basis for believing. While repeated calls are made to viewers to look at the evidence, it is argued that more is required than simply relying on one's senses. Background information gets positioned as vital in knowing how to interpret what is shown. For example, Bill Kaysing prefaced a video clip meant to demonstrate the lack of engine noise coming from the descent of the Apollo 11 module and explained why one would expect to hear such noise. In this way, calls to see or hear are mixed with claims that more is going on than meets the eye or ear.

As a third productive movement, proof for faking is sometimes located within particular pieces of evidence. Elsewhere though, it is said to be found in the totality of the evidence. As an example, Bill Kaysing is interviewed, stating at different points:

> When I discovered (the lack of lunar dust) alone, I said no way am I looking at a lunar lander that landed on the Moon.

> My conviction that Apollo was a fake was not according to one specific piece of evidence, but it was cumulative.

The tensions entailed in such varied claims are not commented upon as part of *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* Instead, the possibility of definite evidence commingles with the notion that the hoax theory is not dependent on any specific piece of evidence.[33]

In different ways, each of these movements suggests to the viewer the possible necessity of looking beyond the evidence and reasoning given in *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* Looking beyond is necessary to clarify what happened, what evidence was available, what was really

meant, etc. In short, what the program called for was *more* – *more* evidence, *more* analysis, and *more* attention to the lunar landings.

Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon? ends by holding out the hope that said 'controversy' could eventually be put to rest. Despite the dramatically divergent interpretations of the evidence aired throughout the program, those from different sides of the debate seem to agree that evidence of the presence or absence of Apollo mission remnants on the Moon would resolve the controversy. After noting a Japanese orbiter is to be sent to the Moon in 2003, the program ends with the statement 'Until then, the question remains, did we land on the Moon?'[34]

Closing Debate

Rather than ending the presentation of sides to the Moon landing debate to come down on one, *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* had as its stated purpose that of enabling viewers to judge the evidence as it existed at the time, while holding out the future prospect for evidential resolution (a resolution that, unsurprisingly, did not follow after 2003).[35] Unlike Dianne Dwyer Modestini's closing comments in *The Lost Leonardo* noted in the previous section, what happened is presented as able to be determined – in time. Beyond holding out the prospects for resolution, by appealing to the possibility of establishing the facts, the closing is aligned with conventional expectations surrounding what counts as a balanced, rational and considered examination.

Despite the lack of overt summative declaration that the Moon landings were, indeed, faked, *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* has been portrayed as popularizing just that idea. This is not surprising. As in the case of other topics – like whether human activities are leading to global warming – simply treating the issue as one in which a debate is needed and in which revelations were possible would impart credibility to those questioning conventional beliefs. This notion of the truth, as not yet settled and as something that *together* 'we' can progress toward, has angered people who believe there is *nothing* to be settled. Brian Welch, a NASA spokesperson interviewed as part of both *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* and the 2000 documentary *What Happened on the Moon?* expressed such distain. In the latter program, for instance, after a detailed dissection of identified anomalies of one photograph, Welch is cut to stating, 'To be honest with you I think that is pseudo-scientific nit-picky clap-trap, and again, I don't know why we should spend even a moment trying to judge that'.[36] This position was subsequently brought into question in *What Happened on the Moon?* when the documentary cut back to the program's narrator. The narrator retorted that while Welch might offer his views, the analysis of the anomalies in the evidence for the landings was 'based on the laws of physics'.

Others who stand behind the veracity of the landings and the records of them have sought to engage in detail with hoax theorists, and through this

have endeavored to ensure that science is marshaled on the side of NASA and the historical record. Popular science writer James (Jim) Oberg, who worked at NASA as a Mission Control operator and an orbital designer for 22 years, has been one such person. In 2002, Oberg was commissioned by NASA to write a detailed rebuttal of hoax claims, based on his conviction that 'there is no such thing as a stupid question'. He stressed the need for 'educational outreach', not just to rebut the hoax claims but also to engage the public on 'why such stories seem … so attractive to so many people'.[37] Bearing out his view in favor of questioning and doubting, when interviewed as part of *The Truth Behind the Moon Landings*, Oberg urged the audience not just blindly to believe what he said, but to recreate visual effects on their own. The pamphlet with the detailed rebuttal, however, never came about, because NASA canceled Oberg's contract a few weeks after issuing it. In response, a commentary by Andrew Gumbel in *The Independent* newspaper stated that '[o]fficially, the reason was that the space agency considered the Moon landing hoax to be so preposterous as to be unworthy of a response'.[38] Gumbel continued though noting how this cancellation could be read as really vindicating those supporting a hoax:

> in that realm that is so far off from officialdom as to be absent from reality altogether, there was no doubt what Nasa's decision portended. Almost in unison, every Moon-obsessed conspiracy theorist floating out in cyberspace gasped in amazement: My God, these people really do have something to hide! [39]

In part then, the elusiveness in finding closure about what really happened stemmed from the way in which the simple undertaking of debate had asymmetrical implications for the sides presented given dominant social beliefs in the truth of (the records for) the Apollo landings. In arguing against what many assume to be the case, those advocating for (the possibility of) a hoax faced an uphill task in persuading others. They had to dispute the many forms of evidence offered for the landings and the authority of those speaking for that evidence (Apollo astronauts, mainstream scientists, NASA, equipment manufacturers, space enthusiasts, etc.). And yet, no final declaration that hoax advocates are conclusively right is necessary for their unconventional views to be at least somewhat advanced through having a debate.

For those critiquing any whiff of a hoax, the uphill task was to definitively end the debate, since even the presence of a debate was an anathema. How though could the commitment to rationally weighing evidence be brought to an end in order to declare the Moon landings really and definitely took place and the visual records produced are really genuine?

The 2003 documentary *The Truth Behind the Moon Landings* sought to offer such a resolution. Overall, it cast itself as an assessment of the proof for and against the Moon landings.[40] This assessment took place through

the marshaling of evidence and the displaying of reenactments in which hoax and non-hoax aligned claims were analyzed. And yet, while featuring different sides, the program repeatedly presented evidence as verifying the reality of the Apollo landing and the genuineness of the visual evidence. For instance, in a series of demonstrations set in the Moon-like Nevada desert, the documentary demonstrated several phenomena – how a flag *can* appear lit from different sides despite there being only one light source, how shadows *can* fall at non-parallel directions, how objects in shadow *can* appear lit because of light reflected from the ground and how the contrast from an illuminated surface *will* make stars invisible in the lunar sky. It ended with an evaluation from the presenter that the hoax theory is, indeed after all, a 'myth'. The last words are as follows: 'Perhaps the final proof is this, compared to the difficulties of sustaining such an elaborate scam, won't it be so much easier to build a rocket, and fly it to the Moon?' While also ending in a question, unlike *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* it is one whose answer is treated as obvious and not one the audience need further contemplate given the found absurdity of hoax claims.

A noticeable difference then between *The Truth Behind the Moon Landings* and *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* is how they position audiences in relation to notions of genuine and contrived. *The Truth Behind the Moon Landings* treats the audience as witnesses to definite displays of evidence that refute hoax allegations. In *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* the 'truth' behind the Moon landings was treated as not yet settled. What 'really' happened in the late 1960s and early 1970s is held up as a revealable matter; revealable in people's ability to weigh up the various claims and arguments ('*you* be the judge') and revealable in the unambiguous evidence that may one day be forthcoming. This notion of the truth as not yet settled and as something that can be worked toward *together*. In other words, while *The Truth Behind the Moon Landings* advances a view, *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* extends an invitation to participate in meaning making.

As with revelations in general, such varied positionings of audiences need to be appreciated for their affective dimensions, not just their epistemic ones. In *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture*,[41] Mark Fenster spoke to the allures associated with conspiracy-talk in general.[42] He argued that beyond the distrust and disenchantment that make conspiracy theorists so attached to their views of political life, it is important to recognize the seductive power of conspiracy theory as interpretation, as narrative and as play. The piecing together of evidence of conspiracy theorists is hard work, says Fenster, because it involves the constant scrutiny of the past and the present 'for evidence of some transcendent, all-explanatory thing'.[43] The reward of the investment in time and effort lies in 'provisional and incomplete answers but [also] excitement that builds with each deferral'.[44]

With its attention to how the pulse quickens in the pursuit of conspiracies, Fenster's analysis locates the traction of revelation in the affect generated in its practices of narration and interpretation.[45] In a discussion about the relationship between individual-community and consumer-participant roles in conspiracy narrative, Fenster offers the following further observations:

> Conspiracy theory presumes, and in fact fetishizes, the notion that the revelation finds the individual, and that the real unveiling occurs only through research and contemplation. The innocent comes to figure out the conspiracy by herself; the lone researcher bravely gathers information and puts pieces together to tell the true story of power. For both amateur and adept, the interpretive and narrative practice also offers play and pleasure – the play involved in uncovering secrets and imagining conspiracy and the strange, frightening pleasure in finding conspiracy and telling or hearing its story.[46]

For Fenster, a kind of interpretive frustration is at the heart of conspiracy theories. While they are often spurred on by a never-abating desire 'to learn and know the presumed secrets of power and domination',[47] in many ways the lure of conspiracy is in its potential *not* and *never* to be fully known. The manner in which events such as the shooting of John F. Kennedy, 9/11, Q-Anon and the death of Princess Diana are understood as all-encompassing conspiracies means that while facts are sought about what has taken place, such facts on their own never definitely and finally resolve the matters at hand. This means that the 'practice of interpreting conspiracy is repetitive, endless, and faces continual frustration. As a result, conspiracy theory's relationship to its seeming object of desire – the structure, order, and solution represented by conspiracy – is a complex one'.[48] This complexity contrasts with debunking exercises such as *The Truth Behind the Moon Landings* that strive to make the facts plain and fixed.

A like-minded approach to Fenster is offered by Jodi Dean, who also locates the attraction of conspiracy theories in the way the pursuit of knowledge is framed and organized: 'Conspiracy theorists search for the truth, doubting everything they find, always suspecting that something else remains to be revealed'.[49] The way the tantalizing search for the truth couples with the frustration of not being able to fully uncover it, she concludes, creates a 'paradoxical sense that everything we need to know is right in front of us, but still we don't know'.[50]

In short, conspiracy-talk is a source of pleasure, together with the possibility of recreating or extending that rush because the ultimate resolution is always out of reach.

It is possible to identify affinities between moon hoax advocates' engagement with the visual record from the Apollo missions and Fenster's and Dean's

characterization of conspiracy theorists. When analyzing photographs and video footage, hoaxers make a big deal out of things – graininess, what the action on the tapes looks like when sped up, camera angle and lighting, the placement of optic crosshairs – that others consider insignificant and uninteresting.[51] The detail in the evidence seized upon is constituted as significant by the desire to seek the 'truth'. David Percy's film *What Happened on the Moon* (largely based on his book, with Mary Bennett, *Dark Moon*) perhaps takes the compulsion to find a hidden truth to the extreme in setting out to decode visual anomalies as telltale signs deliberately put in at the time of the Apollo missions by unknown whistle-blowers. Details, both on their own and in combination with other pieces of evidence, then function, in Fenster's words, as 'sites of interpretive control for the conspiracy theorist'.[52]

The dynamics of conspiracy theory and its pleasures, as outlined by Fenster and Dean, provide a framework for understanding how an orientation to the 'truth' of the Moon landings as revealable generates affect through the manner notions of genuine and contrived, fact and fiction, as well as known and uncertain are mobilized. Yet there is, I think, more to be said. As I have sought to contend in this chapter and elsewhere in this volume, the accessibility of proof, and the possibility of resolution, get positioned in many (and at times, competing) ways. It is not always the case that those involved claim 'that everything we need to know is right in front of us'. Likewise, it is not always the case that those involved claim that vital information has been sequestered away or that the resolution of the truth must be deferred. Instead, such varying claims can mix together. In quick succession, audiences can be treated as bystanders to others' judgments, able to make their own appraisal, collaborators in making sense of what has been made available, or flawed viewers that are not in a position to grasp what is before them. The intermingling of such possibilities is part and parcel of the revelation of the hoax (and the revelation that there is no hoax after all).

As one instance of juxtaposition, in 2009 the online newspaper *The Onion* published an article announcing that astronaut Neil Armstrong no longer believed in the reality of his journey to the Moon. The report quotes 'a visibly emotional Armstrong, addressing reporters at his home', as saying:

> It has become painfully clear to me that on July 20, 1969, the Lunar Module under the control of my crew did not in fact travel 250,000 miles over eight days, touch down on the moon, and perform various experiments, ushering in a new era for humanity. Instead, the entire thing was filmed on a soundstage, most likely in New Mexico.
>
> "This is the only logical interpretation of the numerous inconsistencies in the grainy, 40-year-old footage," Armstrong added.[53]

In line with its title, 'Conspiracy Theorist Convinces Neil Armstrong Moon Landing Was Faked', *The Onion* article presents several aspects from Armstrong's mission that he now calls into doubt because of inconsistencies identified by those claiming a hoax: the feeling of weightlessness, the planting of the American flag, the collection of Moon rocks, etc.[54] While the article is directed toward lambasting conspiracy theorists through ridiculing-by-exaggeration, its relevance for my analysis is how it brings to the fore the manner seeing and knowing are positioned as part of revelation. In this respect, against the multiple, varied and tension-ridden appeals to visual evidence presented in this chapter, I invite you to dwell on the close of *The Onion* article:

> To conclude the press conference, Armstrong showed reporters footage of his first steps on the moon to demonstrate that the most damning evidence was "right under our noses." Speeding up the tape and replaying the graceful moonwalk several times in a row, Armstrong explained that the iconic images of humanity's triumphant dance with the cosmos was actually just a film of him walking backwards, slowed down, and played in reverse. … "It's all right here. Everything is all right here if you'd just open your damn eyes and see!"[55]

Closure and Esotericism

Concerns about what remains to be revealed, the accessibility of evidence and the possibility for resolving what is what are not just features of marginal topics such as the veracity of the Moon landing images. Instead, they have been integral to the growth and decline of beliefs in Western culture, as have associated splits between surface and depth, appearance and reality, and so on.

Today the writings of Plato are widely taken as a cornerstone, if not the central bedrock, of modern Western philosophy. The dialogues recorded between his protagonist, Socrates, and other thinkers of Classical Greece are not only heralded for containing profound insights, the form of questioning and answering on display is regarded as a valued method for gaining insight.

Whatever the rationalistic overtones today though, many questions have been posed in the past about just what is given through Plato's writing. A starting trouble is that in the recorded dialogues, Socrates admonishes the capacity of the written word to discover truth. At best, he argued, it could remind people what they had forgotten; at worst it gave a tiresome semblance of truth. Lived joint dialogue – of the kind Socrates undertook in the spaces of Athens – was instead the method for uncovering the truth. And yet, taking such statements of Socrates at face value raises many questions. For instance, what was the purpose of Plato's writing down the dialogues then?

What can be gleaned from reading them? Might Plato have only reduced to writing certain (lesser) teachings?

The notion that only lesser teachings were reduced to writing is supported by the penalty of death leveled against Socrates for his acts of self-expression and a reference to the 'Unwritten Doctrine'[56] of Plato by his student Aristotle.[57]

Prompted by such considerations, in the centuries immediately after his death, many sought out the Unwritten Doctrine. The combination of Platonic thought with Egyptian theology and philosophical ideas from Persia and India in the third century would later come to be seen as the start of the 'neo-Platonist' transformation. Though diverse in thinking, neo-Platonists sought more than abstract philosophy. The works of Plato were mythologized and enacted in rituals.[58] Given prime attention therein was the interpretation of Plato's notion of 'the One' – the cause of all ordered reality. While from it everything emulated, the One remained inexpressible and best left unspoken. Even to give it the name 'One' was a kind of betrayal, as doing so created an ossifying label. Since understanding the true meaning of Plato's writing could not simply be a matter of rational reasoning,[59] neo-Platonist approached its meaning through meditation, magic and symbols.[60]

Many early Christian thinkers actively sought an affiliation with Platonic traditions. As an emerging tradition attempting to establish itself, those advocating Christianity had to contend with a number of legitimacy problems. Around the time of Christ, the credibility of religions typically derived from their roots in ancient wisdom. Christianity, however, was new. Christians also had to account for how the wisdom displayed by ancient thinkers was possible prior to the arrival of Jesus. The solution to these problems?: Assimilation. In a line that traced back to Moses, sages and philosophers of ancient times were portrayed as carriers of wisdom that, while not explicitly Christian, were inspired by access to God. Plato herein was understood as more than a mere rationalist thinker, but rather as a kind of 'mouthpiece' for the divine – a divine that transcended the stilted words of human language.[61]

In this way, for several centuries, neo-Plationists preoccupation with the ineffable sat more or less easily alongside a growing Christianity based on the word of God testified by Jesus. This was so until the sixth century when Emperor Justinian I moved decisively against all those out of line with the Church.[62] Closure was achieved through imposition.

Other periods of Western philosophical and theological thinking have likewise prominently featured splits between what can and cannot be stated as well as between the exoteric and esoteric. In *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, Moshe Halbertal traced the emergence of complex distinctions between surface and depth truths during the medieval ages.[63] As he argues, between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, the existence of secrecy – secret meanings and

secret texts – was central to Jewish thought, as too was finding ways of deciphering, opening up and liberating what was hidden. Thus, central sacred text such as the Torah were oriented to as not simply divine revelations, but revelations that themselves cloaked fuller truths that needed to be revealed.

The said existence of decipherable meaning, in turn, provided the justification for varied kinds of revelations by rabbis. For some, hidden meanings were to be openly expounded within congregations. Others employed forms of coded communication (hints, double speak, symbolism) and restricted who they disclosed to because of fears about who should have access to the unveiled. Still others regarded the hidden truths as ineffable and thereby unspeakable since matters divine were ultimately beyond the horizon of words. Whether attempts to reduce the divine to language was simply futile or dangerously heretical was not a matter for agreement among leading rabbis.

As Halbertal elaborated, the myriad of orientations taken to the existence of below the surface meanings were highly generative. They enabled a flourishing of claims to hidden truths. In defining what could be known as well as who could know it, visions of the esoteric were integral to the constitution of authority and ignorance. Ignorance, at this time, was not solely the rightful theological preserve of the masses, since some rabbis treated the ineffability of divine truth as a condition that affected the high and low of society alike.

And yet, the investments and divestments made into esoteric teachings also gave rise to a number of acknowledged tensions: How could the proper understanding of the esoteric be clarified to believers without hidden truths reaching the young and uninitiated? How could interpretations of holy scripture be distinguished among rabbis when teachings were restricted in circulation or cloaked in obfuscations? How could interpretations of the esoteric be debated without becoming common? How could the use of coded teachings of the truth be both opaque enough not to be understood nor notice by the many, but precise enough to advance theological positions between the few?

As Halbertal contends, it was not so much that such questions were resolved as that they got squeezed out by wider societal changes. The development of the printing press reduced the reliance on the oral transmission between rabbis and their students and congregations. The rise of the Enlightenment, with its commitments to the potency of transparency and the corrosiveness of secrecy, likewise diminished the appeal of the esoteric.

Closing Splits

Appearance and reality. Inner and outer. Genuine and contrived. It is and it is not.

As this chapter and others have argued, the splitting between this and that is integral to revelations. Revelations are realized through the prior existence of splits. Also, revelations draw splits.

Moreover, in distinguishing between this and that, revelations at one point in time can provide the basis for subsequent ones. A task of this chapter has been to elaborate how. As indicated, revelations made at one point in time can be related to other ones in varied ways. In the case of WikiLeaks, the stories behind the story purported to go further than what had become available in 2010, but with limited attention to what those insiders had made available previously. As I suggested, this overall strategy provided the basis for shoring up the authority and expertise of those revealing. In contrast, *The Lost Leonardo* was characterized by the making available of points and perspectives that went further than what had become available previously about the *Salvator Mundi*, but in such a way as to fashion disagreement and irresolvability.

The survey of debates about the veracity of the Apollo Moon landing images drew attention to varied orientations that can be taken through revelations regarding the stability of facts. What is what can be portrayed as a disputable and excitable matter that needs to be delegated to audiences, or what is what can be depicted as resolved in a manner that audiences should appreciate as authoritative. The examples of esotericism pointed to the manner in which the conjuring of a sense of what is beyond words can lead to an insatiable yearning to get beneath appearances, one that might not have a logical end but can come to an end all the same.

Notes

1 See Janet Roitman, *Anti-Crisis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 42.
2 Jamie M. Johnson, Victoria M. Basham and Owen D. Thomas, "Ordering Disorder," *Review of International Studies* 48, no. four (2022): 623. doi:10.1017/S0260210522000183.
3 Taking inspiration from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
4 From the back cover of Daniel Domscheit-Berg, *Inside WikiLeaks* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011).
5 Julian Assange, *Julian Assange: The Unauthorised Autobiography* (London: Canongate, 2011).
6 Andrew O'Hagan, "Ghosting," *London Review of Books* 36, no. 5/6 (2014): 5–26.
7 Bill Keller, *Open Secrets* (New York: Grove, 2011), 18.
8 Bill Keller, *Open Secrets* (New York: Grove, 2011), 14.
9 David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* (London: Guardian, 2011), 143–144.
10 Scott Shane and Andrew W. Lehren, "Leaked Cables Offer Raw Look at U.S. Diplomacy," *New York Times*, 28 November 2010, 54.
11 David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* (London: Guardian, 2011), 107.
12 David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* (London: Guardian, 2011), 107.
13 David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* (London: Guardian, 2011), 108.

14 Simon Rogers, "'WikiLeaks' Afghanistan War Logs: How our Datajournalism Operation Worked," *The Guardian*, 27 July 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/jul/27/wikileaks-afghanistan-data-datajournalism.
15 David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* (London: Guardian, 2011), 100.
16 Bill Keller, *Open Secrets* (New York: Grove, 2011), 10.
17 David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange's War on Secrecy* (London: Guardian, 2011), vii.
18 Though in this case, as with the 2010 WikiLeaks releases, there has been no shortage of other analyses attempting to tell the true story of the *Salvator Mundi*. See, for instance, Antoine Vitkine, dir., *Salvator Mundi: La Stupéfiante Affaire du Dernier Vinci* (Los Angeles, CA: Greenwich Entertainment, 2021).
19 Andreas Koefoed, dir., *The Lost Leonardo* (Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures, 2021).
20 Andreas Koefoed, dir., *The Lost Leonardo* Sony Pictures (Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures, 2021), see https://www.sonyclassics.com/film/thelostleonardo.
21 For a discussion of that book, see Alison Cole, "The Real Reason why the Salvator Mundi didn't make it into the Louvre's Leonardo Show," *The Art Newspaper*, 7 April 2021, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2021/04/07/the-real-reason-why-the-salvator-mundi-didnt-make-it-into-the-louvres-leonardo-show.
22 For his presentation of the Martin Kemp, Robert B. Simon, and Margaret Dalivalle, *Leonardo's Salvator Mundi and the Collecting of Leonardo in the Stuart Courts* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2019), online ed., accessed 18 November 2022, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198813835.001.0001.
23 Philip Plait, *Bad Astronomy: Misconceptions and Misuses Revealed, from Astrology to the Moon Landing "Hoax"* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), Chapter 17. See, as well, for instance, Royal Museums Greenwich, *Moon Landing Conspiracies Debunked*, (London: Royal Museums Greenwich, n.d.) https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/moon-landing-conspiracy-theories-debunked
24 See, as well, the claims made debunking the Moon conspiracy in Phil Stein, dir., *Conspiracy: Faking the Moon Landings* (2015).
25 Both the *MythBusters* program and *The Truth Behind the Moon Landings* also introduced additional (non-image-based) evidence, such as that of astronomers sending and receiving back laser light from retro-reflectors set up by crews of Apollo 11, 14 and 15.
26 Comments made as part of the 2008 MythBusters - Moon Landing Photo Hoax.
27 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 5.
28 J. Moffet, dir., *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* (Nash Entertainment, 2001), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIy8ZqqK5G8.
29 Marcus Allen, *The Apollo Moon Landings: Fact or Fiction?*, 23 March 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mzh-CWImMA.
30 Philip Plait, *Bad Astronomy: Misconceptions and Misuses Revealed, from Astrology to the Moon Landing "Hoax"* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 156. See, as well, Elizabeth Howell, "Moon-landing Hoax Still Lives On. But Why?" *Space.com*, 7 February 2022, https://www.space.com/apollo-11-moon-landing-hoax-believers.html.
31 This messaging contrast with other documentaries on the Moon landings, even those largely dedicated to presenting the positions of those who cast doubt on the authenticity of the recorded images; for instance, Phil Stein, dir., *Conspiracy: Faking the Moon Landings* (2015).

32 This positioning of virtual judge varies from that of 'virtual witnesses' to scientific experiments in that individuals not construed as participating in ratifying outcomes based on their ability to 'observe' procedures and hold them to account. The witness is an active participant in the weighing up evidence and arguments laid out before their eyes. See Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), Chapter 2.
33 In a parallel manner, those featured on the side opposing a hoax alternatively rebut specific claims and offer a blanket refusal to take hoax claims seriously at all.
34 Predictably enough, the debate about the photos did not end with the (eventual) 2007 Japanese SELENE lunar probe launch. For an attempt to marshal available third part evidence for the moon landings, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third-party_evidence_for_Apollo_Moon_landings.
35 The ending was also in line with the overall casting of the program as (merely) offering proof for *and* against the Moon landings. Such a weighing of arguments for and against characterizes other assessments of the veracity of the photos. For instance, while in *One Small Step?* Gerhard Wisnewski asserts that 'From my point of view, therefore, some of the Moon landing photos even on their own bear out the suspicion that the Moon landing was faked'. This assessment is not advanced as part of an argument that explicitly bills itself as making the case for a hoax. Instead, Wisnewski sets himself the task of assessing the proof *for* and *against* the landings. At times, that entails critiquing claims offered by those advocating a hoax. See Gerhard Wisnewski, *One Small Step? The Great Moon Hoax and the Race to Dominate Earth from Space* (East Sussex: Clairview Books, 2008), 170.
36 David Percy, dir., *What Happened on the Moon?*, (Los Angeles, CA: UFOTV, 2000) at 43:20.
37 James Oberg, "Lessons of the 'Fake Moon Flight' Myth," *Skeptical Inquirer* 27, no. two (2003), http://www.csicop.org/SI/show/lessons_of_the_fake_moon_flight_myth.
38 Andrew Gumbel, "Lunatic Fringe," *The Independent Review*, November 27, 2002, http://rense.com/general32/lunatic.htm
39 Andrew Gumbel, "Lunatic Fringe," *The Independent Review*, November 27, 2002, http://rense.com/general32/lunatic.htm
40 *The Truth Behind the Moon Landings,* see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv4qwII2fZY&ab_channel=JeffWebber
41 Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
42 For a related argument, see Eva Horn, "Logics of Political Secrecy," *Theory, Culture & Society* 28 no. 7–8 (2011): 103–122, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276411424583.
43 Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 107.
44 Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 115.
45 For a related public popular on the participatory and affective allure of conspiracies, see Clive Thompson, "QAnon Is Like a Game—a Most Dangerous Game," *WIRED*, 22 September 2020, see https://www.wired.com/story/qanon-most-dangerous-multiplatform-game/
46 Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 158.
47 Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 100.

48 Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 100.
49 Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 12.
50 Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 48.
51 David Percy, dir., *What Happened on the Moon?*, at 43:25.
52 Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 106.
53 The Onion, "Conspiracy Theorist Convinces Neil Armstrong Moon Landing Was Faked," *The Onion*, 31 August 2019, http://www.theonion.com/articles/conspiracy-theorist-convinces-neil-armstrong-moon,2796/
54 See also William Karel's "Dark Side of the Moon" (Operation lune, France 2002, co-produced by Point du Jour and the Franco-German tv channel ARTE), a 52-minute mockumentary that 'reveals' a high-level conspiracy to fake the moonlanding of the Apollo 11 mission on July 21, 1969.
55 The Onion, "Conspiracy Theorist Convinces Neil Armstrong Moon Landing Was Faked," *The Onion*, 31 August 2019, http://www.theonion.com/articles/conspiracy-theorist-convinces-neil-armstrong-moon,2796/.
56 R. Lamberton, "The ΑΠΟΡΡΗΤΟΣ ΘΕΩΡΙΑ and the Roles of Secrecy in the History of Platonism," in *Secrecy and Concealment*, eds. H. Kippenberg and G. Stroumsa (New York: E.J Brill, 1995), 139–152.
57 But even if it is accepted that Plato taught more than he wrote, a follow-on issue is whether the expounded teachings complemented or contradicted his writings. Edward Moore, "Middle Platonism," *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2005), see http://www.iep.utm.edu/midplato/.
58 As developed in Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and The Academy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Chapter 1.
59 In addition to practices such as the animation of statues. See Dylan M. Burns, "Ancient Esoteric Traditions: Mystery, Revelation, Gnosis," in *The Occult World*, ed. Christopher Partridge (London: Routledge, 2014), 17–33. The neo-Plationist concern for comprehending notions of good, evil and salvation through religious acts would later inspire Renaissance thinkers, see Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971).
60 Daniel Pickering Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1975).
61 Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and The Academy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17.
62 Modern scholars too have tried to assemble a lost oral philosophy from the fragmentary traces given in his students' works as well as searching out hints within Plato's writing. In recent times, the ritualized practices associated with neo-Platonism have often been relegated to the category of 'Underworld of Platonism', as modern scholars have struggled with a sense of embarrassment about how this beckon of rationality became implicated with the occult. See, for example, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and The Academy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).
63 Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation*, trans. Jackie Feldman (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

7

STAGING

As part of offering a depiction of what is realized through revelations as well as how revelations are realized, the previous chapter focused on how a sense of 'this' and 'that' both is brought about through and helps bring about revelations. This chapter turns to the final realization as part of the cyclic depiction of revelations initially set out in the first chapter: Staging.

As elaborated in prior chapters, reveals – the moment a literal or figurative curtain gets drawn back – typically depend on concerted efforts. For the press conference to shock or the rabbit pulled out of the hat to amaze requires cultivating a sense of the scene at hand. Staging refers to the planned management of audiences, time, place and space so as to make possible a charged making available. That coordination can be immediately proximate or extend back in time. Tuberculosis was not just 'revealed' when X-raying became a technical possibility. Instead, the conditions for recognizing tuberculosis were enabled through practices of calibration and comparison, as well as a series of alterations in how hospitals were run.[1] Only through such doings could clinicians begin to recognize signs of cavitation in the lungs.

As with the other realizations, staging is open to being approached for both how it settles a sense of what's what and also how it provides an occasion for questioning what's what. As a form of putting on, staging seeks to influence meaning making. But the very effort to influence can be pointed at to contend that what is displayed is mere contrivance. The art of arrangement herein becomes the labor of artificiality. Let us consider an example by returning to the film *The Lost Leonardo* analyzed in the previous chapter. As part of recounting how the *Salvator Mundi* sold for $450 million at Christie's Auction House in 2017, the film includes video clips of the sale. As

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the price goes up from $125 million to $180 million to then $200 million, applause breaks out in the tightly assembled audience. One of the journalists interviewed for the film then offers her appraisal:

> It was hard to tell how much of the loss of composure was genuine and how much of it was for the crowd. At one point, [the auctioneer] even has the hammer held in the air. There is a certain courtesy about how long you wait for someone to decide if they're gonna make the bid.

Herein, what might be taken as spontaneous emotional expression is queried as potential contrivance even within the orchestrated maneuvers that normally characterize auction houses. Evidence for genuine affect (the presence of applause, the prolonged high holding of the hammer) are the same features that are singled out as signs that the scene could be a manipulative stunt. While *The Lost Leonardo* contains explicit queries, other unacknowledged instances of staging-as-contrivance can be proposed. As part of telling the inside story behind the *Salvator Mundi*, *The Lost Leonardo* includes imagery of those interviewed engaging in the past acts they narrate – running to enter the Louvre to check on the placement of the painting, writing letters, inspecting the *Salvator Mundi,* working in their offices, etc. While these clips convey a sense of what happened in a just-so manner, each one can be queried for how the scene depicted is an after-the-event reconstruction produced for the film. As with the restoration of the *Salvator Mundi* itself, where reconstruction ends and creation begins is an open question.

Thus, staging can ground a sense of what is so while providing the grounds for doubting what is so.

In this chapter, staging is understood through central concepts in dramaturgical theory as pioneered by the sociologist Ervin Goffman.[2] Within dramaturgy, staging serves as an underlying metaphor for approaching the presentation of self. Individuals partaking in social interactions are understood as managing the image of themselves they give off to others through what they display and conceal by way of speech, dress, comport, facial expressions, etc. Further, within interactions, individuals try to uncover others' self-presentations on the basis of what is displayed and concealed by way of speech, dress, comport, facial expressions, etc.

In particular, this chapter conceives of staging as a process of information control. Goffman and others working within dramaturgy have directed attention to how individuals and those collaborating in teams manage what their audiences can perceive.[3] Goffman distinguished between the 'front' which is displayed to others as part of producing a social performance and the 'backstage' in which audiences are not present. Both involve forms of information control. The former through how settings, manners and appearances are intentionally or unwittingly crafted. The latter through who is granted entry.

Within dramaturgical theory, where the boundary is set between front and backstage is part of what needs to be understood.[4] So too with revelations as conceived in this book. As elaborated in Chapter 4, a frequent promise of autobiographies as a form of revelation is that they offer readers a glimpse of what was previously out of view – private conversations, inner thoughts, etc. Exactly what gets brought to the front, though, can vary. In the accounts of the magicians surveyed, readers were diversely offered access to little appreciated personal hardships, sequestered events of the great and the good, the shenanigans behind the curtain, the step-by-step labors required for beginner tricks, as well as the step-by-step labors required for iconic tricks.

The tact of distinguishing between front and behind extends far beyond the examples given in previous chapters. Speaking to basic questions about the role of esoteric knowledge in underpinning political authority, Moshe Halbertal contended:

> In modern democratic society, the ruler is approachable and visible, and he often appears in the media. The authority of power, according to the concept of transparency, is not supposed to be based on mystery and sublimity, but from argument, conviction, and consent. Every frontal appearance of bearers of power in modern media, however, is a staged and planned performance, and the bearer of power is never seen as he is.[5]

To this, it could be added that the modern bearer of power is often regarded by their public as not being as they appear.

Situations in which individuals must manage multiple and misaligned commitments in social interactions have been fruitful topics for dramaturgical theory. Norma Möllers' study of how a group of German university researchers developing software for an automated closed-circuit television system (CCTV) provides one such exploration.[6] She outlined how this group with largely academic interests played the role of 'entrepreneurial scientists' to satisfy a commercially oriented funder. As part of accounting for their progress toward a marketable surveillance system, the academics engaged in intense efforts to cultivate the required front impression of themselves, while simultaneously rendering invisible the concerted doings needed to create that impression. In progress presentations for the funder, for instance, the academics engaged in elaborate legal justifications to mask their lack of progress, refrained from internal criticism in order to display team unity and dressed themselves so as to align with corporate ideals.

In the demonstration of their progress, the management of front and backstage took on further manifestations. Since the researchers were only developing elements of software programming, there was no prototype CCTV system as such. In order to enable funders to 'see the software',[7] a system had to be assembled anew. That system was divided between a front

and a back. The front consisted of a spacious atrium housing a graphical user interface taking the form of a large touch screen that showed surveyed images. Through such an interface, the assembled audience could be granted access to the software even as all present recognized what was shown was only meant to be a simulation of how a CCTV system informed by the funded research might one day operate. The backstage consisted of the rest of the components of the CCTV system that enabled it to function – bunches of computers, servers, cabling and other paraphernalia – all hidden in separate non-stylish rooms. As Möllers contends, 'Hiding the messy infrastructure of their work and revealing the glamorous parts were central to creating a discrete object that would foreground imaginations of future usage'.[8]

Porous Boundaries

While the case of the development of CCTV by entrepreneurial scientists illustrates how the staging of a stark division between front and back can constitute complex identities and technologies, neat splits are not always sought or realized. In his book *Science on Stage*, Stephen Hilgartner examined how the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) has controlled information in a bid to present itself as credible.[9] As a body with a Congressional charter to provide scientific advice to the US federal government, the NAS has produced numerous reports each year that speak to matters of public concern. Hilgartner set out how such reports can entail forms of both disclosure and concealment. In terms of disclosure, persuading readers that the reports were authoritative was accomplished through such acts as making clear the prestigious names and affiliations of advisory committee members. Also, reports typically spoke with one voice despite the many scientists, staffers and others that inform their final makeup. That crafting of unanimity concealed the uncertainties and disagreements aired within committee deliberations. Such concealment was realized through measures, such as the confidentiality rules signed up to by committee members, that created a backstage to which those outside the NAS were not granted permission.

And yet, at least at some times and at least in some ways, the NAS did invite outsiders backstage in order to generate a favorable impression. This was done by giving readers glimpses into how backstage deliberations were conducted, but glimpses that still left much out of view. Matters such as the internal review criteria used within committees have been publicly released so as to at least give some sense of how conclusions were derived. When consensus on advice could be achieved, the reasoning for different views has been elaborated within reports. Some meetings and documents have been made public even as others were restricted from view.

And yet, what became known about the backstage was not determined solely by the official procedures of the NAS. Disgruntled outsiders have had various possibilities for action at their disposal that either posit that there

have been dubious backstage maneuverings afoot or that sought to name them. Internal leaks of minutes, external investigations of conflict of interest and anonymous press briefings were some of the means that could undermine the NAS' impression management strategies in ways that Hilgartner argued 'significantly redistribute control over the stage, alter powers of perception, and change the tactics that audiences use to acquire information and performers to manage it'.[10]

Staging Audiences

The analysis of staging can be taken further by noting that what is (believe to be) made known critically depends on conceptions of the competences of audiences.

Catelijne Coopmans explored this theme with regard to the management of visual imagery during her time with a small start-up company developing prototype mammography software.[11] Through harnessing algorithms designed to factor in the interaction between X-rays and breasts, the software was meant to make available clearer details of disease. Illustrating that this was so to others, however, was fraught with commercial dangers. Coopmans recounts her experience at one exhibition conference where the start-up company was demonstrating its software to possible partners and purchasers. The demonstrations were tightly controlled so as to ensure favorable forms of witnessing.[12] The personal details of visitors were collected with a view to ascertaining their motivations and vetting their level of access. Company employees were given instructions about how to manage interactions so as not to give away commercially sensitive information to potential visitor-spies, even while they sought to respond to visitors' queries so as to entice visitor-clients. Despite such deliberately managed disclosure, the concern that emerged in the company was that by demonstrating the software to representatives of another medical imaging firm, one of the start-up's employees had inadvertently given these visitors commercially sensitive insights. This was taken as so because, at least for these well-informed visitor-spies, seeing a range of the software's functionality enabled a kind of reverse-engineering-at-a-glance. In this way, rather than making plain the clinical utility of the software, the visual interface gave away technical specifications.

In other instances of demonstration, though, the voiced concern was that the staging around the presentation of imagery gave an impression (to some) that was unwarranted. At one computer science conference, a demo was set up showing a standard mammograph that was then visually optimized through the software. When queried by one visitor whether the images could be optimized within the time suggested by the display, Coopmans relates how neither she nor others associated with the software knew whether the closely prepared demonstration represented the real processing time or whether the optimized image was an insert mock-up. It turned out to be

the latter. Coopmans reflected how the ambiguity associated with what the demo was demonstrating placed a demand onto visitors. They needed to possess the requisite understanding of the likely speed of image processing to grasp what was and was not being displayed. Some might approach the demonstration with that canniness, but for others (including some of those demonstrating the software) the ambiguities of the display effectively functioned as 'smoke and mirrors'.

The differences between the above demonstrations indicate how splits between (perceived) appearances and (perceived) realities are intertwined with the staging of technological achievements.

Secreted Stagings

Entertainment magic is an activity in which the distinction between appearance and reality as well as the management of front and backstage are of central importance. As already mentioned in Chapter 2, Wally Smith has chronicled some of the shifting ways European stage magic transformed during its heyday between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[13] Prominent in that transformation were acts of erasure. Instead of the blatant use of 'smoke and mirrors', performances gradually moved toward (seemingly) minimalist and transparent setups that used (seemingly) ordinary objects. The mechanical, electrical and optical apparatuses that underpinned the displayed spectacles were deliberately concealed from audiences. So too were the meticulous labors of stagehands.[14] These and other calculated efforts were taken by leading magicians to keep the methods for their effects hidden.[15]

And yet, while the need to protect trade secrets has been a recurring theme in the history of this art form, in some respects, magicians widely share their methods with audiences. As mentioned already in the Reveal chapter, references to secret methods often figure within performances. For instance, revelatory patter about the techniques of sleight of hand – palming, forcing, glimpsing, controlling, gliding, etc. – are commonplace today. Such parading is designed to tap into audience's expectations about what methods are at play so as to provide an additional layer of intrigue.

However, such notional reveals can function as forms of manipulation. A reveal can posit methods that are both irrelevant and impossible – for example, the suggestion can be proffered that an audience member's detailed thoughts are being read through watching their eye movements. Or a method stated might speak to a principle of magic that is widely used but irrelevant for the specific trick at hand (for instance, the claim that a coin is being 'palmed').[16] In both cases, the performer's patter can lead the audience astray. Over the course of a trick, the relevance of what is revealed can change. A magician could purposefully lead the audience to surmise a trick is being done one way. For instance, she could display how a piece of silk is being vanished into a fake, hollowed out egg. Later, however, she can

demonstrate that the explanation was highly partial at best. The egg could be cracked open to release the yolk inside, minus any silk.

Enlivening performances is not the only reason for incorporating patter about methods. As Francesca Coppa has contended, it is not knowledge of secret methods in itself that gives magicians power. Instead, the ability to garner attention is the real power base. The expectation or announcement that secrets are at play serves to garner attention.

In the respects outlined in the previous paragraphs, it might be best said that the methods of magic are often 'secreted' – this in that secrete denotes both releasing and hiding.[17]

As a way of understanding the details of how concealment and disclosure can come together as part of staging settings, manners and appearances, this chapter could offer a detailed example from the world of magic. However, the basic conundrum in doing so has already been made plain: this requires the disclosure of methods. This is particularly pressing for me as an author because I am a member of the Magic Circle. The Circle requires its members refrain from willfully disclosing 'magical secrets other than to magicians or bona fide students and historians of magic'.[18] And yet, given the pervasiveness of forms of exposure, it has also set out circumstances in which it is permissible. Among the circumstances that the Magic Circle Council may approve on a case-by-case basis include:

> Exposing gambling scams in the public interest, as long as the scams are not described to the public as 'tricks'.

But it asks its members to consider:

> Is it possible to show/ explain that it is a scam without revealing the secret? [19]

Let us then turn to a classic card routine – one not framed as an entertaining 'trick' but a manipulative ruse: The Three Card Monte. Rather than just conceptually glossing staging, the following section invites you to experience it.

Revealing a Gambling Scam – The Three Card Monte

With the first written version of the basic principle behind the Three Card Monte dating back to the eighteenth century,[20] Nicholas J. Johnson summarized the modern version in these terms:

> The wager is a simple one: the con artist mixes three playing cards face down on a table. The sucker has to guess which of the three cards is the odd one out. If they succeed, they double their money. Fail, and the money is gone.[21]

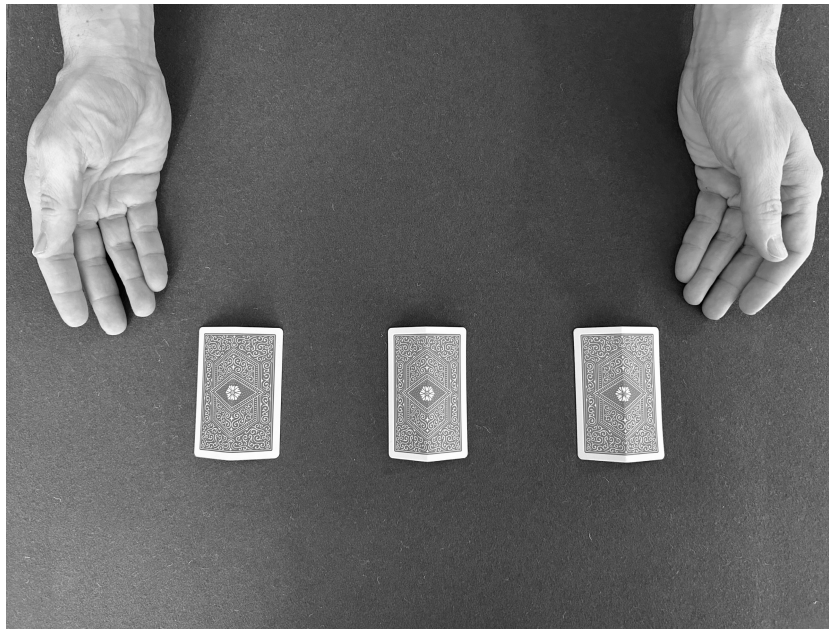

FIGURE 7.1 Which is the Ace?

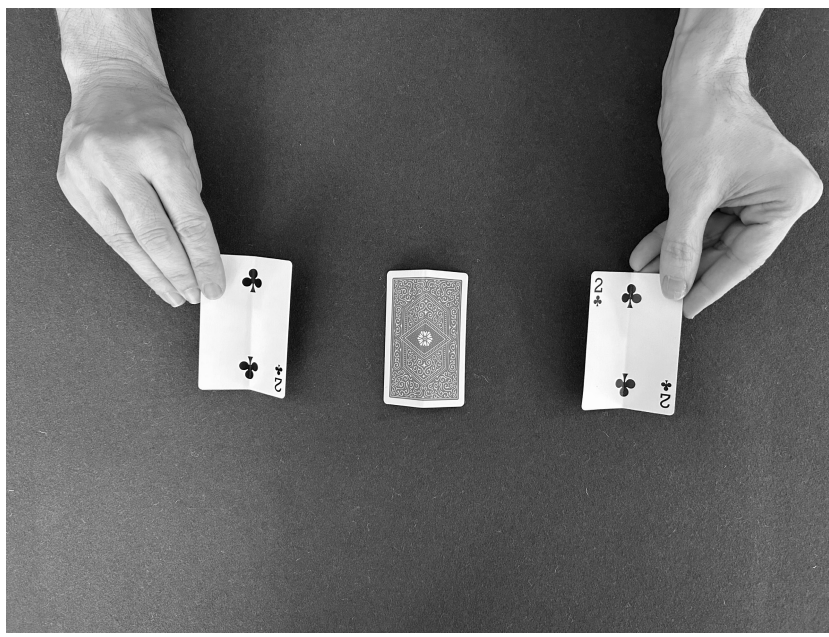

FIGURE 7.2 Two twos.

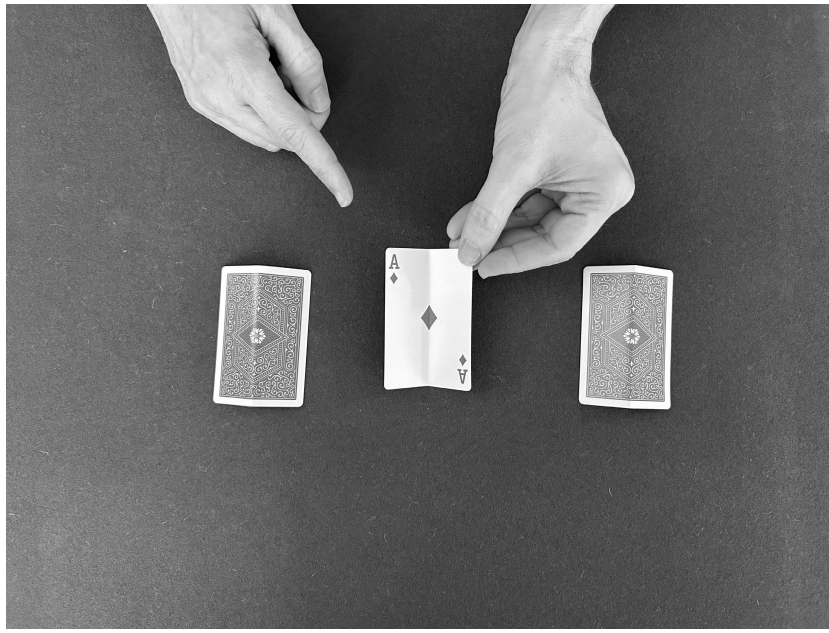

FIGURE 7.3 ….and one Ace.

In what is still regarded as the seminal treatise on card cheating, a card shark taking the pseudonym 'S.W. Erdnase' set out how to undertake the Three Card Monte in his 1902 book eventually known as *The Expert at the Card Table*.[22] As Erdnase contended, central to the Three Card Monte functioning as a deceptive ruse is not distraction, but attention:

> [T]he player's chances are lessened just because he watches the deal. Were he to make the selection at hap-hazard, his chances of one to two, against the dealer's odds of two to one, would make it an even break. The banker's advantage lies in his ability to make the deal or throw.[23]

In the remainder of this chapter, by way of further unpacking the notion of staging, I will work through Erdnase's explanation. Please then carefully attend to the descriptions and approximating photos as what you will take from this likewise depends on your attention.

In detailing how to 'make the throw', Erdnase began:

> Lay the three crimped cards in a row on the table face down [see Figure 7.1-7.3]. Pick up one of the indifferent cards, by the ends, near the right side corners, with the right-hand thumb and second finger [see Figure 7.4], and show the face of this card [two of clubs] to the players.[24]

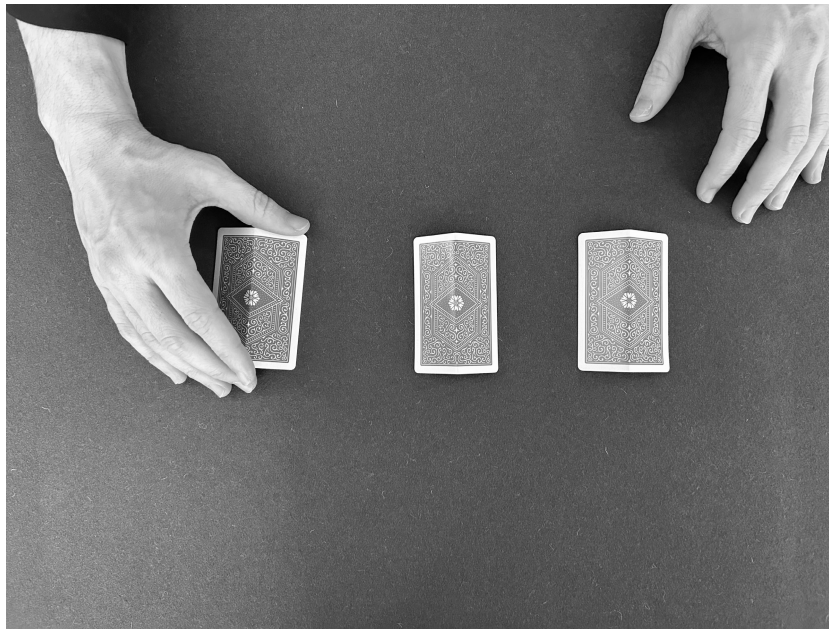

FIGURE 7.4 Reaching for a two.

As he went on:

> Now place this card fairly over the Ace, letting the left sides of the two cards touch, and pick up the Ace with the thumb and the third finger. Now the right hand holds the two cards, their left side edges touching, and about half an inch of space between the opposite sides; the top card being held by the second finger and thumb, and the bottom card, or Ace, by the third finger and thumb. Show the Ace to the company, keep the right hand suspended about six inches from the table [Figure 7.5], pick up the third card with the left hand, and show it to the company [Figure 7.6].[25]

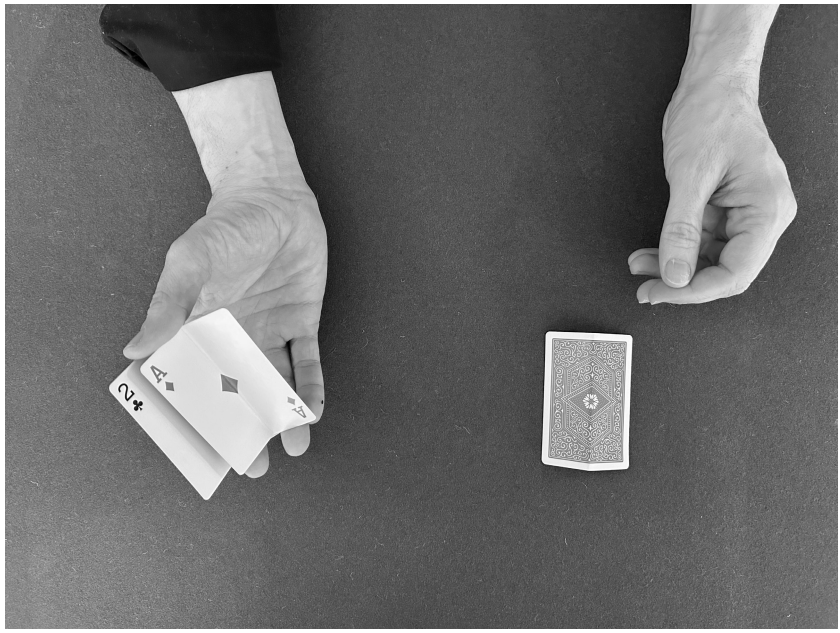

FIGURE 7.5 Showing the Ace and a two.

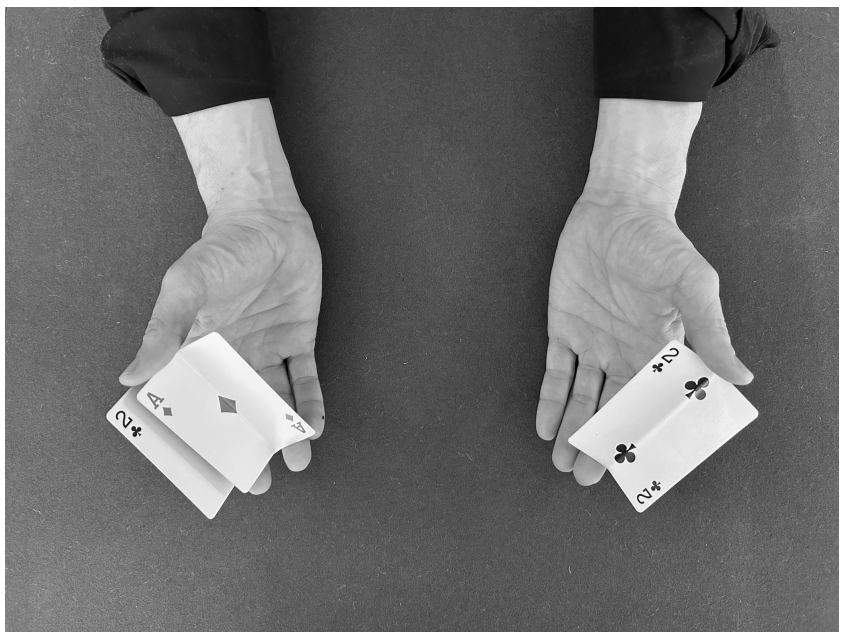

FIGURE 7.6 Showing the cards.

After this display intended to ensure the player is confident about the position of the Ace, the instructions explain the deceptive card ploy. That ploy is as basic as this: 'The right hand apparently drops the bottom card first, but in reality the top is thrown' into the center position.

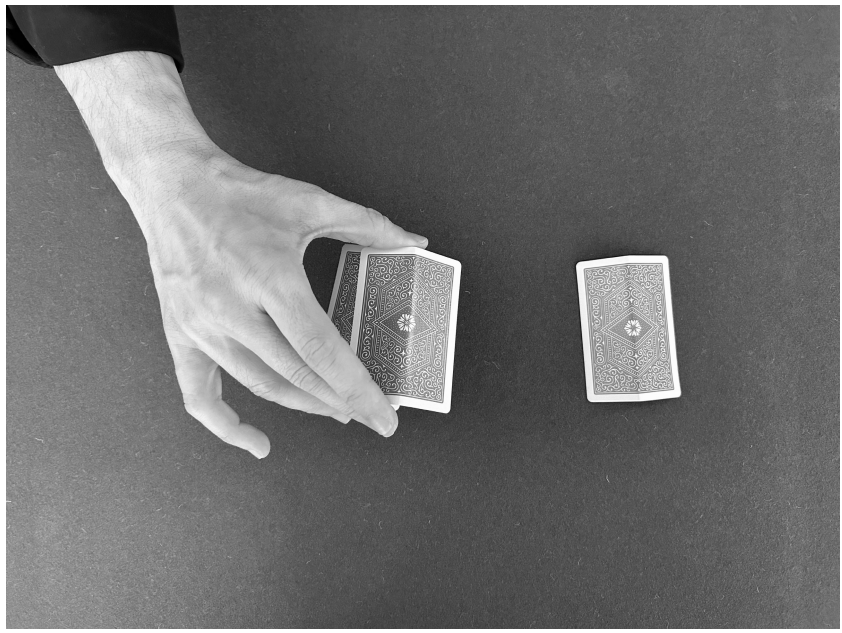

FIGURE 7.7 Turning over the cards.

How to achieve this perception is what Erdnase elaborates. After the cards are turned face down (Figure 7.7), the dealer should

> move the right hand over towards the left and with a slight downward swing release the upper card [Figures 7.8 and 7.9] letting it drop flatly on the left side of the table by quickly withdrawing the right hand to its former position; the rapid withdrawal getting the lower card out of the way [Figure 7.10]. As the right second finger releases the top card it instantly seizes the lower card and the third finger is straightened out, so when the right hand is again stationary at its first position over the table, the players may see that the finger that held the upper card is still doing duty, and the finger which held the lower card is now idle. Now move the left hand over towards the right, and drop its card there, then again move the right hand over and drop the last card between the other two.[26]

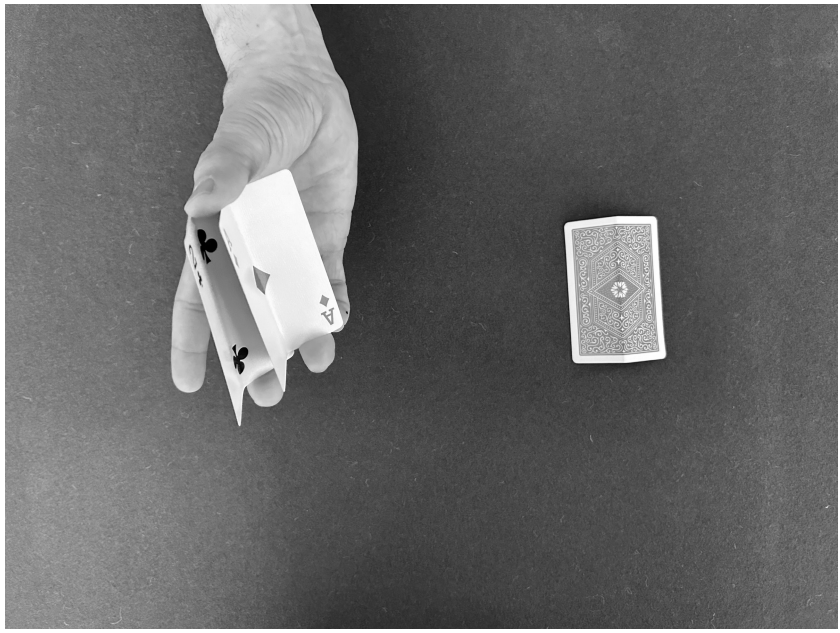

FIGURE 7.8 Starting the switch.

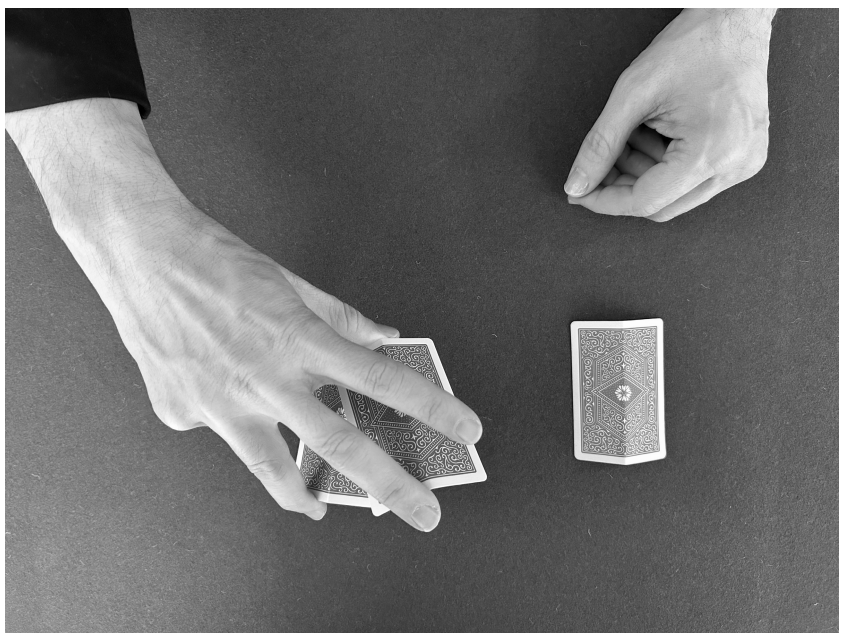

FIGURE 7.9 Continuing the switch movement.

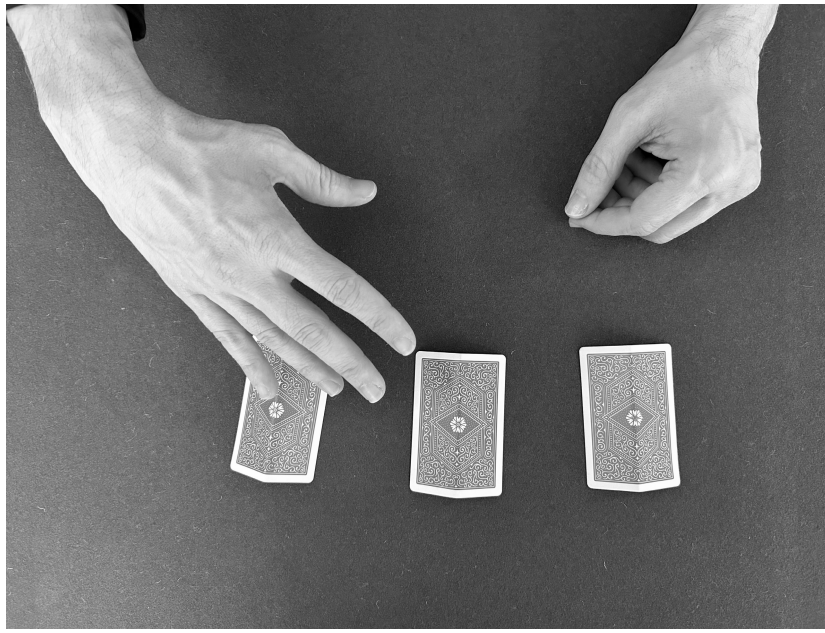

FIGURE 7.10 Placing the two (not the Ace) in the middle.

In setting out these acts, this passage from *The Expert at the Card Table* elaborates the fundamental control move of Three Card Monte. Control applies in two senses: Control of the cards and control of the player's understanding of the scene.

At this juncture, with a secured player's belief that the Ace is in the center, the ruse is nearly complete. All of the three cards can continue to be thrown, as Erdnase elaborates, 'in the natural order, that is, by dropping the under card first'[27] while keeping the cards face down. The throwing of the cards needs to be done at such a pace and for such a duration that the player continues to be convinced of the position of the Ace.

Once the throwing ends and the player signals which card is the Ace, it can be revealed by the dealer to be – well – elsewhere.

In being seen to be elsewhere, the revelation of the Ace fundamentally shifts meaning. Whereas the previous showing of the cards was meant to serve as a just-so disclosure, the culminating turning is charged with significance. The player is convinced of the location, and yet they are proved wrong.

As a form of staging, the Three Card Monte relies on the management of settings, manners and appearances. Much of the management comes through simplicity and clarity, even when compared to other card games or card magic. The dealer exchanges the cards in a manner that is consistent,

graceful and trackable. The consistency in the way the cards appear to be thrown is meant to render irrelevant the particulars of the way the cards are held in the dealer's hands. Unlike many magic tricks, no instructions are given for how to use intonation, facial gestures, verbal explanations and so on so as to misdirect audiences. Indeed, the dealer's showing of the cards and the straightforwardness of their throwing are intended to ensure the player can (feel confident that they can) follow along. In this sense everything – except for the switching release ploy – is designed to be apparent. Stated differently, there is no perceived backstage – no space in which the player is not present, nothing to uncover.

The Three Card Monte can continue through the methods described above, or, perhaps fearful that the player might catch on that their convictions will most certainly prove wrong, alternative dissimulation methods can be employed.

FIGURE 7.11 Oops! Bending the corner of the Ace.

One way described by Erdnase is meant to make the position of the Ace ever more elusive by making it ever plainer. The dealer in this specific ruse inadvertently makes a noticeable crimp or upturn in a corner of the Ace when showing it to the player (Figure 7.11). Erdnase then describes a scene:

> Then several throws are made, and a player finds he can locate the ace "just for fun" every time. When perfect confidence is inspired, and the cupidity of the player tempts him to cover the odds, a throw is made, the player selects the card with the corner turned, and is amazed to find he has missed the "cinch." (Figure 7.12).[28]

The method by which this perplexing outcome is achieved entails the dealer undetectably pressing down the original upturned corner on the Ace with a finger and then pressing up another corner in one of the other cards as all three cards are thrown this way and that.

FIGURE 7.12 Not the cinch.

The above routines do not just include elements of staging, they can function as stagings in their own right. This is so in the manner one act of fooling establishes the basis for subsequent ones. As in the case of the upturned corner, if a player cottons on to the need to choose a card other than the ostensible one, the dealer can opt for alternative ruses. Recognizing a player who is 'in the know', a dealer can simply move the cards 'in the natural order, that is, by dropping the under card first'. Through such feigning, even those

in the know about the basics of Erdnase's method can be fooled – fooled on the basis of their very insights. But far shrewder strategies have been developed. The history of Three Card Monte is a history of dealers devising ever more novel ways of letting players lead themselves astray; in part, by dealers making use of players' evolving knowledge of the Three Card Monte. By one count, doubtless an underestimation, some 152 versions of Three Card Monte have been committed to writing as well as 347 versions of related routines using small packets of cards.[29] One version of the scam, for instance, only displays two cards.

Consider one further variation.

Let us start with the familiar scenario, the dealer shows two cards (see Figure 7.13).

FIGURE 7.13 The show.

A throw is made (see Figure 7.14).

FIGURE 7.14 Moving through the ropes

With knowledge of the Erdnase's instructions, you as reader-player can appreciate the Ace could be in either position – to your left or in the middle (see Figure 7.15).

FIGURE 7.15 Throw completed.

Now the middle card is exchanged with the one on the player's right; not with a crafty throw, but with the cleanest, most above-board hand movement possible that makes it clear the two cards have, yes indeed, exchanged position (see Figure 7.16).

FIGURE 7.16 Exchanging positions.

Where now, dear reader, is the Ace? The left or the right position? Please consider the details of the photos and the text in light of your knowledge of the Three Card Monte. Left or right? Right or left? (see Figure 7.17).

FIGURE 7.17 Where is the Ace?

It is neither (see Figure 7.18).

FIGURE 7.18 And now for the reveal…

The Ace is in the middle (see Figure 7.19).

FIGURE 7.19 Ta-da!

How?

'How' can be followed back to the conditions of the staging of these photographs. The altering of the images or simply the switching of the cards between shots might well be leading candidates for how the Ace could have appeared in the center.[30] If you take it that such manipulations were afoot, then features that should serve as the basis for convincing you something noteworthy has happened have been transformed into evidence for a crass ruse.

At one level, like any Three Card Monte dealer, my task could be one of dissuading you that any such manipulations were afoot. In this vein, let me assure you that the cards are the same, the table is the same, even the fingers are the same. The cards have been moved in the manner described above and not in any other way. The ruse at work relates not to some operation outside of the presented scene, but through what has been shown all along. This is one of the beauties of the Three Card Monte. As such, the previous versions of the Three Card Monte depicted above have served as stagings for this final one.

Of course, given everything argued in this book up until this point about the integral role of deception in magic, you might have lingering doubts. Previous chapters have elaborated how visual records are characterized by a doubleness: They can be regarded as authentic and faithful as well as

unreliable and selective. Thus, my pleas about the above-board status of the photos might well fall on deaf ears.

Given this prospect, let me offer the last depiction of the Three Card Monte, not as a way of settling what's what, but as an exemplification of how motion and mix – how the truth is treated as alternately publicly demonstrable and beyond simple verification, how a sense of what is laid before and what is still occulted away, as well as how 'things are what they seem' and 'things are not what they seem' – together can characterize revelations. As such, the invitation on offer is one of coming into the experiential pulls of revelations rather than unmasking what is really going on.

To return to the Magic Circle's question about exposure posed at the start of this section, 'Is it possible to show/explain that it is a scam without revealing the secret?'. The answer can be yes, advantageously so.

Notes

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2 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959).
3 See, for instance, Susie Scott, "Intimate Deception in Everyday Life," *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* 39 (2015): 251–279, https://doi.org/10.1108/S0163-2396(2012)0000039011; Stephen Hilgartner, *Science on Stage* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
4 Brian Moeran, "Tricks of the Trade: The Performance and Interpretation of Authenticity," *Journal of Management Studies* 42, no. 5 (2005): 901–922.
5 Moshe Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and its Philosophical Implications*, trans. Jackie Feldman (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 149.
6 Norma Möllers, "Shifting In and Out of Context: Technoscientific Drama as Technology of the Self," *Social Studies of Science* 46, no. 3 (2016): 351–373.
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8 Norma Möllers, "Shifting In and Out of Context: Technoscientific Drama as Technology of the Self," *Social Studies of Science* 46, no. 3 (2016): 364.
9 Stephen Hilgartner, *Science on Stage* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
10 Stephen Hilgartner, *Science on Stage* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 150.
11 Catelijne Coopmans, "'Face Value': New Medical Imaging Software in Commercial View," *Social Studies of Science* 41, no. 2 (2010): 155–176, https://doi.org/1177/0306312710389226.
12 For other instances of staging revelations of new technologies, see Tanja Schneider and Steve Woolgar, "Technologies of Ironic Revelation: Enacting Consumers in Neuromarkets," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 15, no. 2 (2012): 169–189, https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2012.654959 as well as Elana Simakova, "RFID 'Theatre of the Proof': Product Launch and Technology Demonstration as Corporate Practices," *Social Studies of Science* 40, no. 4 (2010): 549–576.

13 Wally Smith, "Technologies of Stage Magic," *Social Studies of Science* 45 (June 2015): 319–343.
14 For instance, see Francesca Coppa, "The Body Immaterial: Magicians' Assistants and the Performance of Labor," in *Performing Magic on the Western Stage: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, eds. Francesca Coppa, Lawrence Hass, and James Peck (London: Palgrave, 2008), 85–106.
15 Jim Steinmeyer, *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible and Learned How to Disappear* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2003).
16 Gustav Kuhn, "'Breaking' the Magician's Code: The Problem with Exposure Rules," *VANISH*, November–December 2022, 1–7.
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20 Source: Conjuring Archive, see https://www.conjuringarchive.com/list/category/2102.
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24 S. W. Erdnase, *Artifice Ruse and Subterfuge at the Card Table: A Treatise on the Science and Art of Manipulating Cards* (Chicago: Frederick J. Drake & Company, 1902), 118.
25 S. W. Erdnase, *Artifice Ruse and Subterfuge at the Card Table: A Treatise on the Science and Art of Manipulating Cards* (Chicago: Frederick J. Drake & Company, 1902), 118.
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27 S. W. Erdnase, *Artifice Ruse and Subterfuge at the Card Table: A Treatise on the Science and Art of Manipulating Cards* (Chicago: Frederick J. Drake & Company, 1902), 119.
28 S. W. Erdnase, *Artifice Ruse and Subterfuge at the Card Table: A Treatise on the Science and Art of Manipulating Cards* (Chicago: Frederick J. Drake & Company, 1902), 120–121.
29 See the Conjuring Archive, https://www.conjuringarchive.com/tree/1247.
30 But no such techniques were used. The cards are the same, the table is the same, even the fingers are the same. Though I appreciate you might not believe me…

8

REVELATIONS REVISITED

Revelations abound

As an activity of occasion making, how to reveal is learnt early in life – such as in displaying a concealed object from behind one's back. Through gestures, intonations, facial expressions, silences and much more, we find out how to make bodies turn, eyes dart and pulses quicken. We do not just learn how to reveal, but how to be an audience for it.

As an activity of meaning making, any single instance of revelation depends on both the particulars of that instance and social conventions that are not straightforwardly locatable in what is at hand.[1]

In proposing a way of conceiving of revelation, at times, I have examined how the term has been mobilized within arguments about what is what. The word typically signals something of note – something that merits reporting.

Consider. In early 2023, 'revelation' was repeatedly linked to the publication of the autobiography *Spare* by British Prince Harry. In this vein, one magazine asked 'What does Prince Harry's book reveal?'[2] Its publisher, Penguin Random House, described the book through this language:

> For the first time, Prince Harry tells his own story, chronicling his journey with raw, unflinching honesty. A landmark publication, *Spare* is full of insight, revelation, self-examination, and hard-won wisdom about the eternal power of love over grief.[3]

Herein, the intended connotation of 'revelation' can be surmised by its associations. Revelation takes its place next to claims to truthfulness

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('insight', 'unflinching honesty'), noteworthiness (a 'landmark publication'), novelty ('for the first time'), perceptiveness ('hard-won wisdom'), intimacy ('raw', 'self-examination') and representativeness ('chronicling'). In casting *Spare* in this manner, the publisher suggested to would-be readers that this is a work when for the first time, Prince Harry tells his own story, chronicling his journey with raw, unflinching honesty. In the face of such self-announcements, either accepting or rejecting the designation of 'revelation' for the contents of *Spare* entails either going along with or doubting this story built around Prince Harry's story.

Rather than simply being directed by usages of the specific word 'revelation', in the previous chapters I have attended to certain kinds of claims making. As set out in the opening chapter, revelations have been understood as charged instances of making available what was previously otherwise. Revelations rely on and enact contrasts – inside and outside, love and grief, before and after, surface and depth, as well as a myriad of other distinctions.[4]

The 'charge' in the way revelation has been conceived refers to a lack of indifference – this in the sense that what has been made available is ascribed with significance. To be sure, significance need not equate with acceptance. As in the case of *Spare*, some can reject the claims made as partial, inaccurate, 'out of context', biased, etc. Instead of *Spare* principally being a revelation about the British royal family, it can be said that 'what the book really reveals is an ultimately complicated man who has been truly traumatized by the preordained details of his birth order'.[5] Likewise too, against intense media interest and all-time world record-breaking sales for a book of nonfiction,[6] instead of simply asking what *Spare* tells us about Prince Harry, it can be said that 'the bigger, unanswered question after this latest tide of revelations is surely: What does it say about us? What does it say about Britain that this fractured and pain-ridden lot are our first family?'[7]

The lack of indifference associated with revelation also refers to how making available evokes. Thus, certain kinds of appeals to revealing have been outside of the scope of this book. For instance, the instructions for the application of one teeth-whitening product reads: 'Tear open foil packet to reveal two whitening strips, one for the upper and one for the lower'.[8] However, in this case, the presence of the whitening strips is not unexpected or moving. Indeed, surprise would result from the packets being empty.

In adopting the wording of 'making available', I have sought a broad conception for revelation. While revelations often entail revealers explicitly communicating what is what, they are not limited to assertions or declarations. In addition, revealers need not believe in what they are proffering. Unlike the manner in which definitions of lying or truth-telling often turn around what the speaker takes to be the case, the definition of revelation has not been tied to revealers' understanding or intent. More widely, I have sought to move beyond treating revelations as necessarily deliberate. Under

police interrogation, for instance, the demeanor of a suspect might be said to reveal much about their guilt, no matter what they contend or intend.[9] In this example, it is the recipients to the revelation, not the revealer, that has undertaken the calculated actions that make available.[10]

In the remainder of this chapter, I want to unpack and extend the portrayal of revelation given in the last few paragraphs through considering a series of themes.

Relating

To make the points in the previous section is to suggest that revelation involves more than isolated acts and entities. In this spirit, I have approached revelations as *relational* undertakings.[11]

To start, this adjective indicates the manner making available should be conceived, at minimum, as a doing involving revealers, recipients, what is revealed and the means by which the revealing takes place. In practice, of course, appeals to the notion of revelation can direct regard toward just some of these elements. To frame an action as a revelation *of* pitches it into an instance of the disclosure of something. What typically takes central stage herein is the transmitted content. Revelation *by* and revelation *to*, in contrast, foreground the someone that reveals and the someone revealed to. These prepositions differ in their connotation from revelation *with* another, which suggests a mutual opening up. Revelation *for* concerns the aims and consequences of revealing, such as in defining who is a group member and who is not.

My use of the term relational also bears on how its constitutive elements ought to be conceived vis-à-vis each other. In taking revelation as a topic, a danger is subscribing to problematic object–subject distinctions. If knowing is simply the action to reveal, then this reifies the object and sets the subject apart from it. In other words, the danger is that we prop up an epistemology that presupposes a world of pre-given entities that exist independent of the conditions under which they become available; a world whose pre-given status provides the basis for a just-so comprehension of it.

Instead, this book has treated revelations as entailing unfolding sequences of actions in which a sense of people and material objects emerge together over time. As a result, revelations are not well understood as composed of varied elements if 'elements' are taken to be separate and independent entities that inhere in themselves. Instead, Christoph Schwöbel's understanding of communion with God, namely that:

> Revelation is always relational. It establishes a relationship, occurs within a relationship or transforms a relationship in such a way that one cannot go back behind a revelation once it has occurred.[12]

has been taken as of wide-ranging relevance for matters mundane and secular. Efforts to settle what the material released by WikiLeaks tells us about US statecraft, for instance, did not only involve questions about the content of the logs and cables. The characteristics of the reporters and others seeking to decipher them were also at stake. Those characteristics noted – technical competencies, political leanings and so on – did not try to offer something like a full understanding of the reporters as people. Instead, the qualities drawn out were the ones taken as relevant to interpreting the logs and cables.[13] In this manner, the logs and cables help define the reporters as the reporters helped define the logs and cables.

The dynamic co-constitution of elements has been my primary object of study. True, for some topics examined in previous chapters, commentators have advanced one of these elements as possessing a fixed, isolated meaning. For instance, a *Salvator Mundi* painting has been said by recognized experts to possess an evident 'Leonardo essence'. In adopting a relational approach to revelations, an interest of mine has been how such arguments about inherent essence can, and so often do, give way. Under questioning about why others do not agree that this *Salvator Mundi* is clearly the hand of Leonardo, an identified expert often retreats to the more qualified claim that only those with the right kind of background or honed perception can properly appreciate what is before them. As a result, the authorship of the painting cannot simply stand on its own, divorced from those that speak for it.

Revelations have been treated as relational too in their 'dialogic' meaning.[14] What counts as a revelation and why a specific revelation counts depends on how a making available stands in relation to what has been made available previously. *Spare* was depicted as full of revelation because it offered a riveting glimpse into affairs of the royal family unknown to the vast majority of would-be readers (including avid royalists). Without this sense of going beyond what was already known, it is unlikely many would have attached the word revelation to *Spare* and it would not qualify as a revelation according to the definition in this book.

As another aspect of relationality, what counts as a revelation and why a specific revelation counts also depend on how they stand in relation to what might follow. Previous chapters repeatedly contended that efforts to get beneath appearances create a redefined scene that invariably implies a sense of what is yet still uncovered. This sense of beyond sets up the possibility for a next round of efforts to get beneath appearances. Along these lines, it was only a matter of days after the publication of *Spare* that Prince Harry and others began alluding to what he had left out and to what might one day be revealed.[15] In the manner that what is made available implies a sense of what has not been made so, revealing can go on and on and on.[16] We can invest much promise in one set of revelations on a given topic, only

then to do the same later for another set, and then another. In this regard, *Spare* itself followed on from numerous previous insider-type accounts by Harry and his wife Meghan Markle.[17] In the course of time, *Spare* will be reinterpreted by being held against still forthcoming life stories about Harry and other royals.[18]

Labeling

Employing the term 'revelation' is tricky because its use is part of how situations are oriented to and done *as* revelations. There are not ready-made, objectively existing entities out there in the world waiting to be correctly named as revelations. To apply the label typically serves as a signaling intervention that appraises – not least in proposing what is noteworthy. Revelation-talk, like secrecy-talk or conspiracy-talk, can pique attention, affect and allure. Moreover, revelation-talk invariably creates the category of 'non-revelations'; matters ascribed some sort of lesser status. Thus, employing the term revelation – at least in the way it is conceived in this book - is to take a stand.

Consider. In early 2023 a presenter for BBC Radio 4's *Today* program, Mishal Husain, interviewed the royal biographer, Jonathan Dimbleby. When initially questioned by Husain about what emerged through *Spare* and other said 'revelations' by Prince Harry, Dimbleby commented:

> I am perplexed. I am at a loss. He is clearly a very troubled man. I'm concerned incidentally that everyone uses the word revelations. Yes, there are obviously revelations about how he lost his virginity, taking drugs, and how many people he feels he might have shot down in Afghanistan from his Apache. But those are the kind of revelations, in part, that you would expect, I suppose, from a kind of B-list celebrity. Much more significant are what are actually not *revelations* but *allegations* – *complaints*, the *anger* and *pain* of what he is saying. His *assertion* that this is his side, because so far there has only been *one* side. It seems to me that I have not heard the *other* side at all because the other side is always silent.[19]

Through these contentions, Dimbleby sought to resist the implications associated with the term 'revelation'. He did so through offering a distinction between revelations and allegations in *Spare*. The former were cast as matters for 'B-list celebrities'. With the examples cited by Dimbleby, it would appear that 'revelations' establish facts or at least the belief in facts. In contrast, allegations were presented as not-yet proven assertions.

Husain went on from Dimbleby's response to ask how he thought his friend and the father of Harry, King Charles, would be 'dealing with the very public nature of the allegations, if we can call them revelations, because

they are revelations about how Prince Harry said he *felt* at various different points.' Herein, rather than subscribing to Dimbleby's categorization of some claims in *Spare* as (mere) allegations, Husain counters that they are indeed revelations – specifically about how Harry was feeling. To this line of questioning, Dimbleby conceded: 'Yes, true, true, true. To that degree. To *that* degree, it is how he *felt* as a revelation. But that is, it is not objectively speaking a revelation as if it is a recognition by everyone of a truth'.

In one respect then, Dimbleby's querying of the appropriateness of the label 'revelation' is a debate about the meaning of terminology. That terminology pertained to the truth-status of *Spare* – could its claims be understood as objective facts? Only if the answer to that question was 'yes' would Dimbleby concede to the use of the term 'revelation'.

More than this though, at stake in the interview were questions about what kinds of truths could be established and by who. When queried by Husain, Dimbleby conceded that Prince Harry could, at least, speak to his own feelings. Given the reference to Henry as a 'very troubled man', this ability was not a foregone conclusion for Dimbleby to grant; he could have instead suggested the prince was delusional to the extent he was disqualified even from grasping his own mental states. In such ways, discussions about the appropriateness of the appellation of revelation can entail matters of power and authority – who can know, who can categorize, who can question, etc.

Previous chapters have considered other consequences from the contests associated with labeling: *Denying* a definite understanding; *devolving* meaning making within an organization; *displacing* understanding to yet other disclosures; *demanding* revealers account for themselves; as well as *deferring* to some individuals.[20] Within these (inter)actions, notions of credibility and authority are varyingly offset in a zero-sum fashion, circulated, mutated or pushed on to somewhere else. The attribution of expertise can be mobilized to deny someone is able to (properly) discern what is in front of them or affirm they have a unique ability to do so.

Holding Lightly

The aforementioned manner in which the appellation of 'revelation' invariably creates a sense of 'non-revelations' also applies to this analysis. The inclusion of some topics in the book as candidate revelations is an exercise of authority. In acknowledgment that applying the label of 'revelation' is a consequential appraisal, I have done so guardedly.

The need for caution has meant refraining from setting out a definitive list of necessary and sufficient conditions for revelations. For instance, in line with David Dimbleby's response, it could be contended that everyone must recognize the truth of what is revealed for it to count as a revelation.

An implication of imposing this bar, however, would be that nearly every topic discussed in the previous chapters would not count as a revelation. To require unanimity would be to sideline the imperative that often drives acts of making available: The desire to convince others about what is what.

Some approaches in theology stipulate that the use of the term revelation requires certain conditions to be fulfilled. For instance, after surveying the place of revelation in the history of Christianity, Christoph Schwöbel derived 12 features of a divine disclosure experience. One feature was that:

> Revelation is always asymmetrical. The relationality of revelation is such that its occurrence, form, content and effect is entirely dependent on the activity of the author of revelation. The recipient of revelation is passively involved in the event of revelation. This passivity involved in the asymmetry of revelation provokes and engages the activity of its recipients, even shaping their capacity for action in all spheres of action whether they are interpretative or symbolizing actions, organizational actions or physically effective actions.[21]

Two contrasts can be drawn between my analysis and that of Schwöbel in this regard. First, it has not been taken to be the case here that recipients are passive. Passivity is a possible orientation, but just one. And even what externally appears as passiveness (an audience politely attending to a magician) can entail much more than this (piercing scrutiny, outright disbelief, deliberate inaction).[22] Second, in my conceiving, any stipulation of necessary conditions requires attending to the question: 'Necessary for who?' Neither the revealer nor those revealed to were required to subscribe to what was on offer. What is taken as an accomplishment to some (for instance, the reception of the word of God) can be refuted by others (for instance, as delusion). Unless an analysis seeks to take sides in disputes about what is really divine, perceptible, authentic and so on, what ought to count as a revelation is a matter to be held lightly.[23]

My adoption of an unsettled sense of what should count as a revelation has stemmed from more than just a sociologically aligned regard for the likelihood for disagreement. The claim to reveal has been treated as containing the seeds for questioning what has been made available. For instance, the very efforts to convince readers about the authenticity of an autobiography provide grounds for doubting its genuineness.

As a result, what has come to the fore in this book has not been some stable features of revelations, but the tensions and binds of revealing. Numerous examples have been proposed. Revelations seek to align with and build on what has been taken to be the case previously as well as to challenge and transcend it.[24] They can both contest as well as affirm expertise.

They can involve understandings only appreciated by some that are shared among many. As such, previous chapters have conceived of making available as processes that can entail mix – that is, as processes that combine treating truth as publicly demonstrable and beyond simple verification, as alternately intelligible and unknowable and so on. To be sure, revelations often entail definitive assertations about what is what. Yet, much more can take place than a unidirectional thrust. The suggestion that the facts speak for themselves, for instance, is often accompanied by strident clamoring to ensure audiences draw the right meaning. And, at some point, the recognition of such clamoring by audiences serves to undermine the self-apparentness of a revealer's proffered meaning.

More than just this possibility, *Revelations* has proposed that it is the *movement* between investment–divestment, solidity–fluidity, here–there, affirmation–negation, what speaks for itself–what needs to be spoken for, laying bare–occulting, as well as the notion that 'things are what they seem'–'things are not what they seem' that can *together* establish emotive and epistemic significance. Thus, the lure associated with revelation derives not just from the claim of exposing, nor in placing knowing tantalizingly out of reach, but in the ways what has been rendered available can be repositioned again and again over time. Subtle, sharp and scintillating alternations can be highly consequential. They help sell software, prop up egos, proliferate gossip and much else besides.

In treating what is made available as highly negotiated, the concerns of this book have differed from other areas of scholarship that attend to how certain claims gain a heightened status. For instance, 'securitization' has been a long-standing concept in the field of international relations.[25] Securitization takes as its focus the social and linguistic processes whereby some matters – say, immigration – become identified as security threats. Scholars of securitization examine the often dramatic acts that seek to convince audiences that a threat exists and that extraordinary responses are justified. Securitization takes place when some individuals persuade others to believe in their depiction of a threatened world. In this way, conceptual labels are tied to the achievement of intended outcomes.[26] In contrast, this analysis has not defined revelations according to the attainment of intended outcomes.

In treating what is made available as highly negotiated, the possibilities accentuated in this book have differed from other areas of scholarship. The philosopher Martin Heidegger advanced the term 'unconcealment' to signal the way the world becomes available to human comprehension. As with my analysis, Heidegger rejected the assumption that the world consists of pre-given entities that exist independent of the conditions under which they become available. As Martin Wrathall has contended, Heidegger proposed

the notion of 'clearing' to suggest how some truths reign over others.[27] Clearing entails keeping back some possibilities to enable others to prevail.[28] In contrast, this analysis has emphasized not only the prospect for multiple and conflicting understandings of some state of affairs between those at odds with each other, but the prospect for multiple and conflicting understandings within certain depictions.

In acknowledgment of the slipperiness of what revelations entail, this notion has not been regarded as referring to a single kind of activity. The revelations in this book have been characterized by what the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein called, a 'family resemblance' of 'overlapping and criss-crossing' similarities.[29] The book has included acts that, by some metric, *could* establish an understanding of what is what; *should* promote an understanding; and *have* secured an understanding (at least for some and at least for a time). Terms such as pseudo-revelations have been offered, but along with the recognition that the appropriateness of such terms is open to doubt because they bake in assumptions.

While many of the revelations examined were epistemic acts that purported to say something about the world,[30] it has also been noted that what is realized through revelation is not simply or even necessarily related to the propositional content forwarded. In some cases, what is made available is an experience beyond words – the ineffable. In a similar vein, the charge of revelation has also been taken to derive, in part, from the ways making available is emotionally engaging. And yet, for many instances that would widely be regarded as revelations, the stirrings experienced by audiences can vary widely and not at all be aligned with the intentions of revealers.

Entanglements

Rather than setting out a definite sense of what is a revelation, this book has sought to develop understandings of the world aligned with a particular way of conceiving of this notion.

Those understandings have directed attention to the stakes of making available – whose knowledge and experiences count, what limits exist to knowledge and expression, how identity markers for social distinctions are fashioned and so on.

While revelations condition what is possible, this book has also sought to understand them as conditioned. In this vein, we can return to Figure 1.1. Each of the chapters has focused on one form of realization – vesting, becoming, figuring, splitting or staging. And yet, too, these realizations have been taken as intertwined. Vestings, becomings, figurings and staging lead to splitting, for instance. However, the reverse can be attended to as well. Splitting can be approached for how it generates vestings, becomings, figurings and stagings.[31]

Within this mutual dependency between consequences and conditions, previous chapters identified entanglements. Take vesting. Efforts to reveal typically seek to impose unity, solidity and resolution. What is revealed, by virtue of being revealed, gets invested with import. This can promote engagements in ways narrow and troubling; for instance, obsessively chasing the false promise of rock-solid facts. One question that can be asked of modes of attention associated with revelations is this: How do we invest more in what is made available than it can deliver? But if over-investment is a recurrent hazard, divestment is another. What is revealed, at times, by virtue of being positioned as revealed, can be dismissed as without substance.[32] In these ways, vestings are associated with affective judgments and impulses – wanting it, wanting to get rid of it, and so on.

Just as revelations produce vestments, so too can vestments enable revelations. The more we invest or divest in certain claims about what is what, the greater the potential charge associated with subsequent contentions that things are, actually, otherwise.

Chapter 4 examined how making available fosters relations of identity. As noted, one of the dangers of what comes into being through revelations is how individuals can assume a status – virtuous or dubious, skilled or incompetent, genuine or contrived, knowledgeable or ignorant and so on. Any particular status in itself need not be problematic. Indeed, even a baseless status can be necessary, anticipated and welcomed all around. Much of the awe generated from entertainment magic derives from the manner magician's gesture toward possessing extraordinary abilities even as the audience know full well that mundane methods underlie the feats on show. And yet, despite the potential for socially desirable instances of unwarranted status, such orientations can prove troubling. Divisions between inside and outside can foster individuals who meet the world with unfounded suspicion or regard themselves as possessing exclusive insights. As developed in Chapter 4, the previous points apply to objects and not just people. Objects revealed can appear to inhere in themselves – solitary, solid and innate. Ascribing noteworthy qualities to objects – such as a work of art – can then lead to those making the ascriptions to become notable too (for instance, art historians, vloggers, reporters, etc.). Becomings also influence what counts as revelations. Whose claims even matter and what kinds of claims making should be taken seriously affect what gets deemed to be a revelation in the first place.

Individuals, objects, facts, data and so on do not exist on their own. Chapter 5 turned to the web of socio-material orientations, connections and reliances both enabled by revelations and that enable revelations. As noted, the sequencing and patterning of revelations can foster new values, concerns, norms and other community standards that affect behavior. In helping establish what should be judged as justified, appropriate, skillful,

virtuous, genuine and so on, revelations thereby help establish what is *not* to be treated as such. But also community standards bear up on the solidity of revelation-talk – what credence we attribute to interviews, tweets and advertising. Some exposures can be dismissed if they do not align with conventional cultural expectations. Alternatively, others can be dismissed if they do align.[33]

The previous few paragraphs have reiterated how revelations are bound up with contrasts between some 'this' and some 'that': Investment/divestment, right/wrong, genuine/contrived and so on. Splitting was the named realization of focus in Chapter 6. In purporting to get beneath appearances so as to offer something of significance, splitting has been taken as integral for revelations as defined in this book. Moreover, in contrasting with what came before, revelations result in splits. Both forms of dividing can be questioned for their assumptions and commitments regarding the manner the world becomes understood as partitioned, static and so on. Commenting on the stark and simplistic distinctions made between secrecy and transparency in popular culture, for instance, Clare Birchall called for the need to 'avoid an uncritical romanticization (of secrecy's potential, for example) and not remain locked within dualistic thinking that lacks the agility needed to properly respond to the demands of the current conjuncture.'[34] Revelations can undermine certain types of splits, but embrace others. For instance, the autobiographies of celebrities can reject the idea that any distinction exists between their inner selves and their public personas. Yet, this claimed lack of distinction can thereby prompt wide-ranging media questioning about what is known about celebrities.[35]

Chapter 7 brought staging to the fore. This chapter and 'The Reveal' one argued how moments deemed as revelation can depend on the elaborate prior management of objects, people, time and space. In turn, though, instances of making available can justify the management of objects, people, time and space. Through both dynamics, we can be enticed into going along with, participating in, and getting hustled by the allures of making available. However, the belief that staging is at play can also lead to the outright dismissal of what is on show.

Altogether, the chapters of this book point toward the importance of examining the assumptions informing and the consequences associated with how revealers, the revealed, audiences and the means of revealing are conceived. Such an examination is needed because any attempt to bring into view through intellectual attentiveness invariably ends up simultaneously occulting away.

Another reason why this examination is so important is the sheer pervasiveness of revelation-talk. As first noted in the Introduction, appeals to revelation infuse scholarly work – such as when individuals posit something

is hidden and take it upon themselves to uncover it. While this analysis has noted such tendencies in others, it has not been able to escape them. As I have explored vesting, becoming, figuring, splitting and staging, I have also engaged in them. Surface-level meanings have been surpassed by deeper ones. Divisions have been drawn and erased. Presentations of self and others have been continually made and remade. As a result, the argument offered here is not a way out of the logics of revelation, but a way into appreciating them. That way has placed at the fore the importance of awareness regarding the commitments of our conceivings.

Awareness though has not been taken as applying only to abstracted forms of thinking and theorizing. Revelations sway. They entail felt experiences – bodily contraction, relaxation, discomfort, excitement and so on. Cultivating an appreciation of the affective dimensions of revelation has been tricky. Much like a magic performance, in this book that cultivation has entailed developing what magician and scholar Augusto Corrieri called 'detached immersion'.[36] That is, you as reader-audience have been invited to partake in the affects of revelations while also invited to step back in order to reflect on the manner revelations are constituted. The result of this twofold task, I hope, has been the promotion of inquisitiveness regarding our conventional responses in the face of efforts to make available. In part that inquisitiveness requires directing an attitude of curiosity toward what is heard, thought, seen and felt.

More than this, thoroughly attending to what shows up also requires asking who is doing the hearing, thinking, seeing and feeling as well as what motivates that hearing, thinking, seeing and feeling. In this regard, inquiry into the sociological relevance of revelation offers an opportunity to peer into the bewitching hall of mirrors that is self-revelation.

Notes

1 For a detailed examination of divergent meaning making of public revelations, see Casey Ryan Kelly, *Caught on Tape: White Masculinity and Obscene Enjoyment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), accessed August 9, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197677865.001.0001

2 Leanne Bayley, "Prince Harry's Book Spare is a Best-seller: All the Memoir Details and How to Get a Free Download," *Hello*, January 27, 2023, see https://www.hellomagazine.com/royalty/20221028155431/prince-harry-book-spare-details-release-date/.

3 https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/727238/spare-by-prince-harry-the-duke-of-sussex/.

4 Such ways of making sense of the world are often aligned with what Lakoff and Johnson described as container orientation metaphors. When the world is oriented to as composed of containers, we can experience ourselves as entities, separate from the rest of the world – as containers with an inside and an outside. We also experience things external to us as entities – often also as containers with insides and outsides… We experience many things, through sight and touch, as

having distinct boundaries, and, when things have no distinct boundaries, we often project boundaries upon them – conceptualizing them as entities and often as containers (for example, forests, clearings, clouds, etc.)
See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003), 58. It is just such divisions between a 'this' and a 'that' that can be enacted through revelations even as what is made available seeks to traverse divisions between inside and outside.

5 Vicky Ward, "The Royal Tragedy at the Heart of 'Spare'," *NBC News*, January 12, 2023, https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/prince-harry-william-meghan-resentment-makes-spare-royal-tragedy-rcna65446.
6 See Sanj Atwal, "Prince Harry's Spare becomes Fastest-selling Non-fiction Book Ever," *Guinness World Records*, January 13, 2023, see https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2023/1/prince-harrys-spare-becomes-fastest-selling-non-fiction-book-ever-732915.
7 Marina Hyde, "It's Prince Harry in One Flew Over The Windsors' Nest," *The Guardian*, January 10, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jan/10/prince-harry-one-flew-over-the-windsors-nest-spare.
8 Polished London, *Polished London – User Manual* (London: Polished London, n.d.).
9 T. Docan-Morgan, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of Deceptive Communication* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2019), Part VII, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96334-1_42.
10 Even without the calculated coordinations of people, objects and scenery, people can inadvertently give off much about themselves to others that would be regarded as noteworthy.
11 In line with Mustafa Emirbayer, "Manifesto for a Relational Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (1997): 281–317.
12 Christoph Schwöbel, "The Concept of Revelation in Christianity," in *The Concept of Revelation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Georges Tamer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 118.
13 Similarly on the theme of mutual dependency, it has been said that 'any event of [divine] revelation also reveals human beings to themselves … Knowing God in a new way necessarily implies knowing oneself in a new way'. See Gerald O'Collins, "Believers Receive Revelation and Are Themselves Revealed," in *Revelation: Toward a Christian Theology of God's Self-Revelation* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2016), 80. Online edn, see accessed January 31, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198784203.003.0001
14 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).
15 See, for instance, Valentine Low, "Prince Harry: Spare too Revealing? You Should See What I Left Out," *The Times*, January 13, 2023, see https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/prince-harry-spare-too-revealing-memoir-royal-family-meghan-df6dmtcbh; Jane Clinton, "Prince Harry: I Left Out Details as I Feared Family Would Not Forgive Me," *The Guardian*, January 13, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/13/prince-harry-i-left-out-details-as-i-feared-family-would-not-forgive-me.
16 For another instance of this dynamic, see Sarah Shaffi, "Second John le Carré Biography to Reveal Secrets held back while Author was Alive," *The Guardian*, March 1, 2023, see https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/mar/01/second-john-le-carre-biography-to-reveal-secrets-held-back-while-author-was-alive.
17 Jonathon Crump, "Prince Harry has 'Plenty more to Spill' as Spare could Reveal Crucial William Text," *The Express*, December 28, 2022, https://www.express

.co.uk/news/royal/1714490/Prince-Harry-new-memoir-Spare-claims-royal-author.

18 As suggested by this paragraph and the previous one, revelations do not just happen in time, but are constituted by and help constitute notions of time.

19 Italics denote emphasis in the verbal delivery. BBC Radio 4, *Today*, January 8, 2023, accessed January 8, 2023, https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001gws3.

20 See, for instance, Kathy Charmaz, *Good Days, Bad Days* (New Brunswich, NJ: Rutgers, 1991).

21 Christoph Schwöbel, "The Concept of Revelation in Christianity," in *The Concept of Revelation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Georges Tamer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 118.

22 Brian Rappert, *Performing Deception: Learning, Skill and the Art of Conjuring* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2022), Chapter 2.

23 This point can be further underscored by noting that what counts as a revelation is shaped by and helps shape notions of culture, society and politics.

24 On this point, it is worth noting that while revelations are often taken to be destabilizing, they can work to reinforce existing power relations when the terms of making available are aligned with elite interests, see Oliver Kearns, *The Covert Colour Line* (London: Pluto, 2023), 11.

25 Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

26 Another example of such approach is given in how 'deceptive marketing' is often defined, see Kim B. Serota, "Deceptive Marketing Outcomes: A Model for Marketing Communications," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Deceptive Communication*, ed. T. Docan-Morgan (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2019), 813–837, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96334-1_42.

27 Mark A. Wrathall, *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

28 Also, keeping back that there is a keeping back of other possibilities. See Mark A. Wrathall, *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2011), 34.

29 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th ed. (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 67. This notion of resemblance, however, is somewhat wanting as it directs attention to the assumed qualities of things rather than the active efforts to impute qualities.

30 In doing so, this analysis differs from certain traditions of economics and game theory wherein revelations are taken as possessing a definite status. Herein, the disclosure of bits of information – prices and preferences – are examined for how they alter behavior between buyers and sellers, agents and principals, donors and recipients, etc. When knowledge is partial and asymmetrically held between those involved, such revelations can be highly consequential in shifting choices. See, for instance, Masahiro Okuno-Fujiwara, Andrew Postlewaite and Kotaro Suzumura, "Strategic Information Revelation," *The Review of Economic Studies* 57, no. 1 (1990): 25–47; Bruce D Grundy and Maureen McNichols, "Trade and the Revelation of Information through Prices and Direct Disclosure," *Review of Financial Studies* 2, no. 4 (1989): 495–526; Eskander Alvi, "Information Revelation and Principal-agent Contracts," *Journal of Labor Economics* 6, no. 1 (1998): 132–146.

31 As such, distinctions between these realizations are somewhat arbitrary.

32 Bearing in mind that investment and divestment can imply each other insomuch as aversion to one outcome can result from desire for another.

33 Joshua Gamson, "Sex Scandal Narratives as Institutional Morality Tales," *Social Problems* 48, no. 2 (2001): 185–205.

34 Clare Birchall, *Radical Secrecy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 175. A project pursued, for instance, in Ana Valdivia, Claudia Aradau, Tobias Blanke, and Sarah Perret, "Neither Opaque nor Transparent: A Transdisciplinary Methodology to Investigate Datafication at the EU Borders," *Big Data & Society* 9, no. 2 (2022): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517221124586

35 Kirk Curnutt, "Inside and Outside: Gertrude Stein on Identity, Celebrity, and Authenticity," *Journal of Modern Literature* 23, no. 2 (1999): 291–308.

36 Augusto Corrieri, "'*What Is This*…': Introducing Magic and Theatre," *Platform* 12, no. 2 (2018): 12–17.

INDEX