

**HACKNEY**  
**ARCHIVED**

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Poster by Sara Nunes Fernandes

With contributions by Rupert Ackroyd, Libby Adams,  
Sara Nunes Fernandes, Tom Morton, Daniel Pasteiner,  
Caroline Rolf, John Summers & Tom Woolner.







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## The world

The world had become a juiceless ball of meat with wet pins sticking out, on the tips of which it housed its best. The wide mass of plane and dry land spread far and empty, and that was it.

## Foreword

### The idea

My first encounter with Hackney Archives was when it was still located in the Rose Lipman building and my father was researching our family history. His side of the family is from Hackney and he spent his childhood in the borough. A number of my relatives are buried at Abney Park cemetery, including both of my great grandfathers but not my great grandmother, whom I knew as a child; when visiting graves she grew to dislike the cemetery's (now iconic) crumbling disorder so much that she threatened to come back and haunt the family if she was buried there, expressing her wishes instead for a tidy modern crematorium!

This family connection lends a familiarity with Hackney for me more than any other London borough. I also live here, and when we moved Art House Foundation to Laburnum Street in 2011 I began to investigate ways in which we could work that would connect us to the area.

I think the main aspect of the Archives that appeals to me is the idea of a catalogued Hackney. Being a big and sprawling borough with a complicated history certainly isn't unique to Hackney, but perhaps partly through its creative connections there seems to be a certain romance and series of fictions associated with it, which increase the mystery and the nebulous nature of it as a concept. A lot of people have heard of Hackney but it may represent different things to each of them.

A portal into an ordered version of Hackney—past and present—fascinates me, and the idea of offering artists the chance to work with it seemed too good an opportunity to miss.

It is the Archives as a mechanism that is of interest here, together with the fact that it is available to anyone. It was always important that we used the Archives as any member of the public could and that there were no prescribed outcomes, so that the work could be completely led by the experience in the Archives. There was no prior discussion with the Archives staff about the project.

#### The work

All four artists were invited to spend time in the Archives with an open brief. The way in which the resulting work became public was expected to be dictated by the work as it progressed.

An Exciting Urban Area: Rupert Ackroyd wrote an essay on gentrification, considering what we really mean by the term and how this relates to Hackney. This text is catalogued in the Archives.

Dorsal Fin: Daniel Pasteiner worked with maps of subterranean Hackney, particularly the waterways and sewage works dating back to Victorian times, to produce a three-part folding decorative screen for the research room.

Attempting to Bury One's Own Head: John Summers made small-scale totems to local news stories about a poltergeist and a deaf and mute beauty queen. These were placed in bespoke vitrines, which partially

obscured the work and were exhibited in the research room over the summer.

Isaac Watts 340th Anniversary Singing: Tom Woolner collaborated with London Sacred Harp to organise a Shape Singing event on Isaac Watts' 340th birthday. This took place on Watts' Mount in Abney Park, the gardens of which he helped lay out while living in Abney House as a tutor. All songs chosen were those using Watts' texts, many written while he was at Abney Park. Minutes of songs chosen are in the official Sacred Harp Singings 2014–2015 publication. A full audio recording is catalogued in Hackney Archives and available through Art House Foundation's website.

The most unexpected aspect of the project has been the way in which it has been embraced by the staff at the Archives. We have been offered wholehearted support from Libby, Elizabeth and all the team from the outset. This would partly be offered to anyone conducting research there, but the continued interest and welcome of the work has been fantastic, leading to Dorsal Fin and Attempting to Bury One's Own Head being exhibited in the research room, Tom and Rupert's work being catalogued and the eventual offer of cataloguing the whole completed project into the Archives. The impact this has had on the shape of a project—made through the Archives and remaining in the Archives—is beautifully simple and unforeseen, so I am very grateful to them.

#### The publication

This small publication provides a glimpse of the project. All the work has been free to make its own

way in the world from the moment the project began, with no expectation of cohesion, so this gathering together only represents an edited moment.

In addition to the four works there are contributions from Sara Nunes Fernandes, our incoming Writer in Residence, who organised an event to coincide with the opening of the exhibition of work in the research room over the summer, and Tom Morton, our outgoing Writer in Residence, who has lived and worked in Hackney throughout his career.

Sara's writing extends from the Hackney Motley event, where she attempted to weave together all four research areas through a fictional narrative.

Tom has contributed an excerpt from the latest chapter, set in Hackney, from his novel Doggerland, which he has been working on throughout his time with Art House Foundation.

The project is fully catalogued at Hackney Archives.

With thanks to all contributors and Libby Adams, Elizabeth Green and the team at Hackney Archives.

Caroline Rolf  
Director, Art House Foundation

## The Hanknee Archives

The Hanknee Archives stood high above the planes of Cidade-nivago. Its walls shone a fresh pine green that clashed with the sunken drought below. Mountain slopes flushed downwards like centenary roots which seemed to hold the land together like flour on a stew. The dead city stood beneath devoid of people and animals and rusted dry by the nine years that had passed since someone had remembered to spend the night. Other hilly tops would sprout in the distance, unreachable and hurt, full of meat and gums and public opinions. For a decade now there had been no room up there.



### The-catalogued and the Yet-to-be-catalogued

Yet-to-be-catalogued information generated intimate and intuitive accounts of history, constantly updated by the randomness and unpredictability of the present. The-catalogued information helped build the foundations of present moments through the accumulation and vertical storage of processed data. Before the incident of the Crop of 1005, the world was divided into fluid patches of catalogued and un-catalogued material. The-catalogued and the Yet-to-be-catalogued swirled around each other in a way that generated enough energy for the Hanknee Sorting Servers to run, well enough. This energy would then activate a sorting machine (inherent to each sorting cell in the Atmosphere-of-the-catalogued) that would function at regular intervals of intensity – also referred to as crops. After the incident of the Crop of 1005 the fluidity of the system got corrupted and transformed into thin and solid columns of catalogued information (renamed The Hanknee Archives) and gaseous to non-existent un-catalogued information.







## *Doggerland*

On John's last birthday, his father sent him a card printed with a cartoon from *The New Yorker*. The setting was a cave, and the protagonists a pair of Neanderthals, cooling their heels following a long day's hunt. Fuzzy chin in fuzzy hand, the Neanderthal on the left was depicted leaning in towards his companion, the speech bubble above his head reading: 'Something's just not right—our air is clean, our water is pure, we all get plenty of exercise, everything we eat is organic and free-range, and yet nobody lives past thirty'. The Neanderthal on the right just stared back in silence. Aside from his prognathous jaw (an anomalously Australopithecine detail, this), and the bony visor of his supraorbital ridge, he was a pretty modern looking guy—you might imagine him working behind the counter at an independent record store, or doing doctoral research. His hair was even cut into a Paleolithic approximation of a French crop, although his feathery fringe didn't quite disguise the onset of male-pattern baldness. Inside the card, John's father had written: 'Congratulations on making it into your fourth decade. Here's to human progress!' Since Gordon Young had retired, he liked to joke about obsolescence—his own, and that of others. As John passed the card across the duvet to Annabelle (they spent birthday mornings opening presents in bed, according to their couple's custom), he had pictured his father in his cottage outside the middling market town, listening to Bob Dylan as his new wife made him coffee, or smoothed and patted at his heavy sheaf of silver hair.

This Saturday morning, though, was not John's birthday, but Annabelle's birthday, and having found her fridge empty of anything but a carton of rotting almond milk, he announced he was going to walk the short distance from her flat to Broadway Market, where he'd pick up a 'proper birthday breakfast' to

bring back to bed. Hungry as he was, John had a more pressing motive. It was three weeks into the autumn term at the Forest Academy, which meant another week until payday, which meant that he hadn't bought Annabelle a present. This was a problem that he now set out to solve.

It was still early, so the Market hadn't yet filled up with its usual crowd of hung-over twenty-somethings, cursing beggars, and stubbled dads idling over the papers, kids called Arthur or Zooey pulling at the selvedge of their Japanese-import jeans. Passing the bánh mì stall, the churros stand, and the droning butcher's van (the pedigree meats making him blush, involuntarily, at his own determinedly lower middle-class flesh), John arrived at the vintage postcard seller. Her wares were kept in long wooden boxes, the kind that once held library index cards, and after a few minutes flicking past souvenirs of the Festival of Britain and various Royal weddings, the raising of the Mary Rose and the opening of the Millennium Dome, he found something that he thought might suit his purpose: an image of Concorde rising up into a blue and trackless sky. Paying for the postcard, and picking up a couple of pastries, two steaming cappuccinos, and a punnet of late-season raspberries on his walk back to Annabelle's development, he stopped outside the door, took a pen from his jacket pocket, and wrote on the back of the postcard:

This voucher entitles the bearer to 2 × flights to a  
European city of her choosing. Redeemable any time  
before Christmas.  
Love you, Jx

The soonest Annabelle would be able to get away was a month from now (her work at the Museum was increasingly occupying her nights, her weekends). By then he'd have money, and could pay his lover's debt. John pushed the code into the entry panel, heard the gate click open, and walked in.

In addition to a pair of yellow Jacobsen egg chairs, and a Nigerian security guy stationed behind a hot pink desk, leafing furtively through *The Power of Now*, the lobby of the development contained a row of numbered pigeonholes, from which the residents would collect their mail. Most of these were empty, save for the odd alumni magazine, or letter from the tax office, but the top of the unit was piled high, as always, with franked and way-billed boxes from a hundred online retailers, summoned here on office lunch breaks, or listless Sunday afternoons. With each week that passed, the size of the pile grew (today, there were enough to construct a serviceable hermit's bothy), and while the building's inhabitants must have retrieved their purchases from time to time, this was not something that John had ever been witness to. Briefly, he considered taking one of the boxes, and presenting it to Annabelle in lieu of the postcard. The security guy wasn't the issue (*The Power of Now* still held him enraptured), rather the chance that, having handed her a promising-looking package, she'd open it to discover it was something she had ordered many months before, then forgotten when the next banner ad or emailed sales prompt manifested on her screen. If the development was a temple to its occupants, and these boxes votive offerings to the self, there was need of a priestly caste to spirit them away. The old gods did not tolerate entrails festering on their altars. England's newer gods, though, lacking experience, and help-meets, could not digest their own tributes. One day, the boxes



would surely stop up the lobby, and those trapped inside would be left tapping at their laptops, ordering shovels and rope ladders, jars of wild honey and protein shake mix.

Annabelle was no longer in bed. Fresh from the shower, she was standing in front of the hallway mirror, hairdryer in hand, its hot roar filling the tiny flat. Noticing John's face appear behind her reflected shoulder, she switched off the hairdryer and said:

'Breakfast's off I'm afraid, or rather there's been a change of venue. Mum and Dad called. They're in town for *Fidelio* at the Opera House, and want to treat us to a birthday brunch at that place on the Market. I think they're rather taken with the idea of hanging out in London Fields, now. Mum said she read a piece about it in the Sunday Times Style'.

John pictured Annabelle's parents, with their Range Rover, their share certificates, their golf club memberships.

'Great' said John 'I look forward to showing them around our little corner of *faux*-bohemia. Here, I've got you a present'.

He slipped the postcard into Annabelle's hairdryer-less hand, image side-up. She took it, turned it over, and a look that was disappointed, then accepting, then finally guardedly hopeful, crossed her pale and pretty face.

'Thank you' said Annabelle, giving John a quick, dry kiss. 'Maybe we should go to Venice? It's weird they grounded Concorde. Like they pulled the plug on the future'

'Come on', said John, 'I should get into the shower'.

'No time' said Annabelle 'You'll be fine as you are'  
She switched the hairdryer back on, its white noise stopping up their ears.







*Doggerland (continued)*



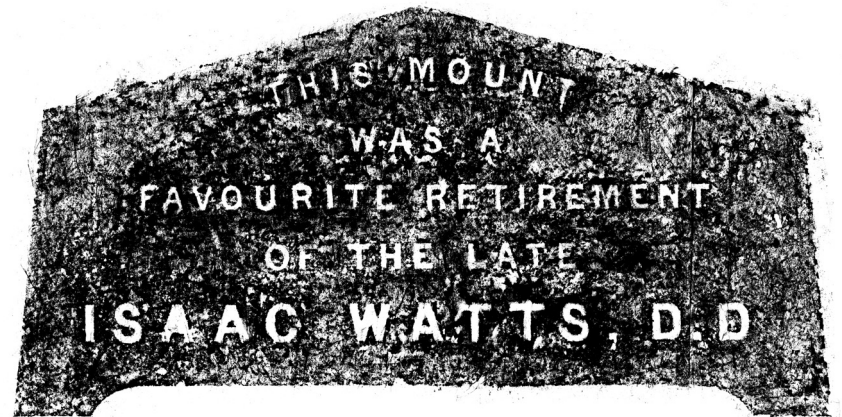
It was the last weekend before the Lido closed for winter. Swimming lengths in the open-air pool, the September sun warm on his back, John saw Annabelle's development rise in the distance, its façade clad with wooden shuttering and candy-coloured Di-bond panels, its tiny balconies crammed with bicycles and potted lemon trees. Each apartment in the building was home to at least one human body, pissing and shitting, tweezing eyebrow hairs and sneezing into tissues, cutting toenails and knotting condoms, the latex sluiced with the fluids of lovers found on dating sites and hookup apps: D&D free and DTF, with strictly NSA. Flushed down the development's lavatory pans, these corporeal leavings met and mingled in the sewers. Londoners might not know their neighbours, but their discarded parts came together beneath the streets, where rats licked them from the brickwork of the Victorian tunnels, growing ever stronger, and always burrowing up. On the surface, and up into the blent skies, architecture protected the city's inhabitants from each other. Walls civilized, keeping the strange beings next door out of Annabelle's kitchen cupboards, preventing them from watching her television, or her soaking in the bath. John thought of Ian Walker, lost (perhaps) on Exmoor, a place with no roof, no system of subterranean chambers. Everything that happened there happened on the surface, witnessed by the endless, crazed sky. John kicked down through the water, letting his stomach graze the smooth bottom of the pool. Last night, as they lay in bed, he had come close to telling Annabelle that he'd thought things over, and was ready, finally ready, to move forward, to move in. This now seemed impossible. Her father was a businessman, and would want a return on his investment. Interest would be expected, at a shattering APR

Previous texts: excerpts from the novel-in-progress, Doggerland, written during Tom Morton's time as Writer in Residence at the Art House Foundation, Hackney, East London.





Isaac Watts 340th Anniversary Singing  
Watts Mount, Abney Park Cemetery  
17th July 2014



reference number



Atmosphere-of-the-catalogued and Atmosphere-of-the-Yet-to-be-catalogued

Combination of fluid masses containing all existing matter at a specific moment in time – in existence before the incident of the Crop of 1005. After the incident the fluidity dried out giving space to segregated solid matter and gaseous spurts instead.





### The incident of the Crop of 1005

The Hanknee Archives are the tips of the tops of what used to be a fuller, plumper world. The empty skies between them and the droughty planes of Cidade-Nivago had once been a swarm of members, voices and thoughts accumulated every hour. On the year of the Crop of 1005, the balance between The-catalogued and the Yet-to-be-catalogued overturned and the then thick surface of the Atmosphere-of-the-Yet-to-be-catalogued gave in to a gaseous fluff of un-catalogued material. Fearing a contamination of the information already stored in the Hanknee Archives, The Entropic Movement for Stability and Curiosity blocked the aspiration of any incoming Yet-to-be-catalogued information, prompting a revolt and escape of the latter from Cidade-nivago.

### The Entropic Movement for Stability and Curiosity

Law inherent to the process of cataloguing. An anarchic endeavour before the incident of the crop of 1005, The Entropic Movement for Stability and Curiosity swiftly turned to despotism after the sedimentation of solid territories around and beneath the Hanknee Sorting Servers.

### An Exciting Urban Area: A statement of intent

At times the process of gentrification can seem to be inscribed on every surface within the London Borough of Hackney, be that on buildings, services or consumables; the area virtually becoming one and the same as the process. I wanted to explore the nature of this highly visible phenomenon during my involvement in the Hackney archive residency programme. My initial interest was led by two aspects of gentrification. First, its appearance as being new and recent. I'm often surprised when coming across the presence of a new development or refurbishment associated with gentrification but is this change not part of long historical trajectory and therefore shouldn't my surprise be tempered with expectation? Secondly, the vast majority of commentary on gentrification I come across portrays it in a negative light, including from the gentrifiers, but the process continues unabated. What accounts for this mismatch of reported attitudes and effects?

In summary, I found material in Hackney Archive relating to gentrification dated throughout the 1970's and into the early 1980's. This collates with the literature on gentrification in Hackney e.g. Butler (1997) dates gentrification as starting in Hackney in the 1970's in small pockets but becoming extensive throughout the borough in 1980's. It places the current change associated with gentrification as witnessed in Hackney within a whole series of changes dating back to the 1970's, putting some perspective on the process and showing it to be a long term trend of incremental change. Indeed the same pattern was seen across London's inner boroughs and is predicted to continue for decades to come. In answer to my second question a brief review of the academic literature on gentrification made it evident to me that above all gentrification is a phenomenon defined and shaped by its academic discourse. As such the impetus and aims of the



discourse can not but help shape the wider perceptions of gentrification. Most papers, articles and reviews in the academic field cite Ruth Glass' founding work of 1964 that gave name to the process. A dominant strand of this field remains true to her original concern which was that gentrification was above all an issue of social justice and class struggle and that its most important effect was the forced displacement of resident working class populations by more affluent ones. Therefore it is not surprising that the occurrence of gentrification is predominantly reported in a negative light as the subject defines it as negative. As for why the stance of the subject seems to have little effect on restraining the physical realities of gentrification, I think there is consensus as to the negative aspect of displacement but the desire for housing and the lack of any implementable controls supersede this sentiment.

With the above in mind and given that the speed of gentrification in London and especially in Hackney is increasing, it could be suggested that objection to it is slackening. That peoples' attitudes surrounding it are changing, that the framing of the debate is shifting or that the players in the process have new methods. Such suggestions are certainly put forward in the literature on gentrification eg Slater (2006). It is the aim of this piece to test a similar perceived change in Hackney with the use of material from the archive. By comparing documents from the 1970's & 80's to those of today I aim to establish how the form of gentrification, its process and attitudes, have changed since it first appeared in the borough.

#### References

- Butler, T. (1997). *Gentrification and the Middle Classes*. Aldershot: Ashgate.  
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#### The revolt of the Yet-to-be-catalogued

After the incident of the crop of 1005 the Yet-to-be-catalogued were cut out from the worldly movement of free circulation and barred access to processed data. Turned gaseous after the imbalance of the atmospheres, the Yet-to-be-catalogued converged and agreed to re-compress into fluid and sank down the dry grounds of Cidade-nivago, reforming at the core of the world. Whilst underground, they reorganized into a new processing organism and as the new movement: The Allied Sources of Un-catalogued Information.

## The Allied Sources of Uncatalogued Information

Underground movement formed by Yet-to-be-catalogued data after the incident of the Crop of 1005. Its main targets were to overthrow The Entropic Movement for Stability and Curiosity and to dismantle the Aspiration Blockage of 1005, reinstating the free-circulation of data between the Atmosphere-of-the-catalogued and Atmosphere-of-the-Yet-to-be-catalogued. The group's first initiative was to invest against the thicker inward shell underneath the outer rim of the Hanknee Archives, only to discover that its solidity had become completely unpeermeable and undisturbed by the strike. As a result The Allied Sources of Un-catalogued Information sedimented evenly around the core of the world – unused until then – inadvertently accelerating the revolt from within and under.







## Afterword

Hackney Archives cares for the archives and local studies collections of the London Borough of Hackney and makes them available to the public for research.

Hackney Archives Department was first established in 1965, on the formation of the London Borough of Hackney from the former metropolitan boroughs of Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke Newington. Hackney Archives now forms part of a heritage team along with Hackney Museum, based in the Technology and Learning Centre, Hackney central. Hackney Archives is situated on the 2nd floor of Dalston CLR James Library, Dalston. The searchroom is open to the public and there are regular opening hours; you can find the current opening hours and access information on the website [www.hackney.gov.uk/archives](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/archives).

The local studies collections at Hackney Archives include a reference library of published works about the history of Hackney and east London and printed ephemera, a visual collection of paintings, prints and photographs, local newspapers, maps and some audiovisual items.

The core of the archives collections is the official records of Hackney Council and its predecessor bodies, comprising the records of the parish vestries and metropolitan boroughs of Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke Newington, the Hackney District Board of Works, the South Hornsey Local Board of Health and the South Hornsey Urban District Council. South Hornsey became part of the Metropolitan Borough of Stoke Newington in 1900.

In addition to the official local government records, the archives include the records of local families, estates and individuals, businesses, charities, societies and religious organisations.

The Arthouse Foundation project allowed a group of four artists to approach the collections at Hackney Archives from a different angle. Rather than using the collections to answer a research question or to gather documentary evidence about what Hackney was like in the past, they sifted through the available material looking for inspiration to create a piece of art. The artworks created: small sculpture figures representing and re-interpreting stories from local newspapers; a large folding screen representing and reflecting the paths of local rivers, canals and reservoirs as depicted on maps; a collection of archive material encapsulating gentrification of Hackney and a musical piece inspired by the writings and texts of Isaac Watts, a nonconformist and long-term resident of Stoke Newington. Each piece provided an innovative interpretation of the original source material. Three of the artworks were on display in the Archives searchroom for varying amounts of time in the summer of 2014, which was both challenging and inspiring to Archives staff and traditional users of the Archives.

Libby Adams  
Principal Archivist, Hackney Council

### De-Generative Archives of Hanknee and Sub-Nivago

The passing of time dictated the need for entropic cataloguing; another and lumpier system of categorization was necessary after the Aspiration Blockage of 1005. Perhaps inadvertently a smaller amount of fluid data (composed by the group of constituents of The Allied Sources of Un-catalogued Information) self-reformed into sorting organisms and initiated the cataloguing of its own material from the inside. The makeshift group De-Generative Archives of Hanknee and Sub-Nivago was formed, a self-organized mechanism of internal cataloguing that ran independently and on a tight amount of raw material. Their aim became to sustain a balance between The-catalogued and the Yet-to-be-catalogued on an underground and DIY level. A lack of stamina otherwise provided by the sustainability of their bigger predecessor (The Hanknee Archives) was counterbalanced by their ability to harmonize both Atmosphere-of-the-catalogued and Atmosphere-of-the-Yet-to-be-catalogued.

## Cidade-nivago

Group of flatlands that sit at the crust of the world. Before the incident of the Crop of 1005 the planes of Cidade-nivago acted as a necessary boundary between the Atmosphere-of-the-catalogued and Atmosphere-of-the-Yet-to-be-catalogued and the core of the world. After the incident of the Crop of 1005 these flatlands became porous, uneven and unable to sustain un-solid material above its surface. For that reason is the accidental geology of Cidade-nivago sometimes considered a secondary instigator for the revolt of the Yet-to-be-catalogued.

Addendum: All the material unprocessed and not catalogued during the time between the incident of the Crop of 1005 and the formation of the De-Generative Archives of Hanknee and Sub-Nivago has not been completely lost. It has been reprocessed and documented through the recently developed 'Sort&Store' system, which part-revives lost data into formless and bulky blobs – then flattened and microchipped – a process quicker and cleaner than any other before.

Art House Foundation's residency in Hackney Archives took place during 2014

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