

Black Box

Device whose parts are unknown or irrelevant, but whose function is understood.

Machine designed to perform a particular task, whose modules are undetermined, undiscovered, not forming part of knowledge in general, but whose function is understood.

Part of something, usually something bigger, whose ingredients are irrelevant, but whose particular purpose is assumed, especially without being openly expressed.

Somebody who acts like a mechanical device; for example, somebody who is very efficient or who shows no emotion or initiative, whose personal details are unknown or irrelevant, but whose pattern of behavior is expected.

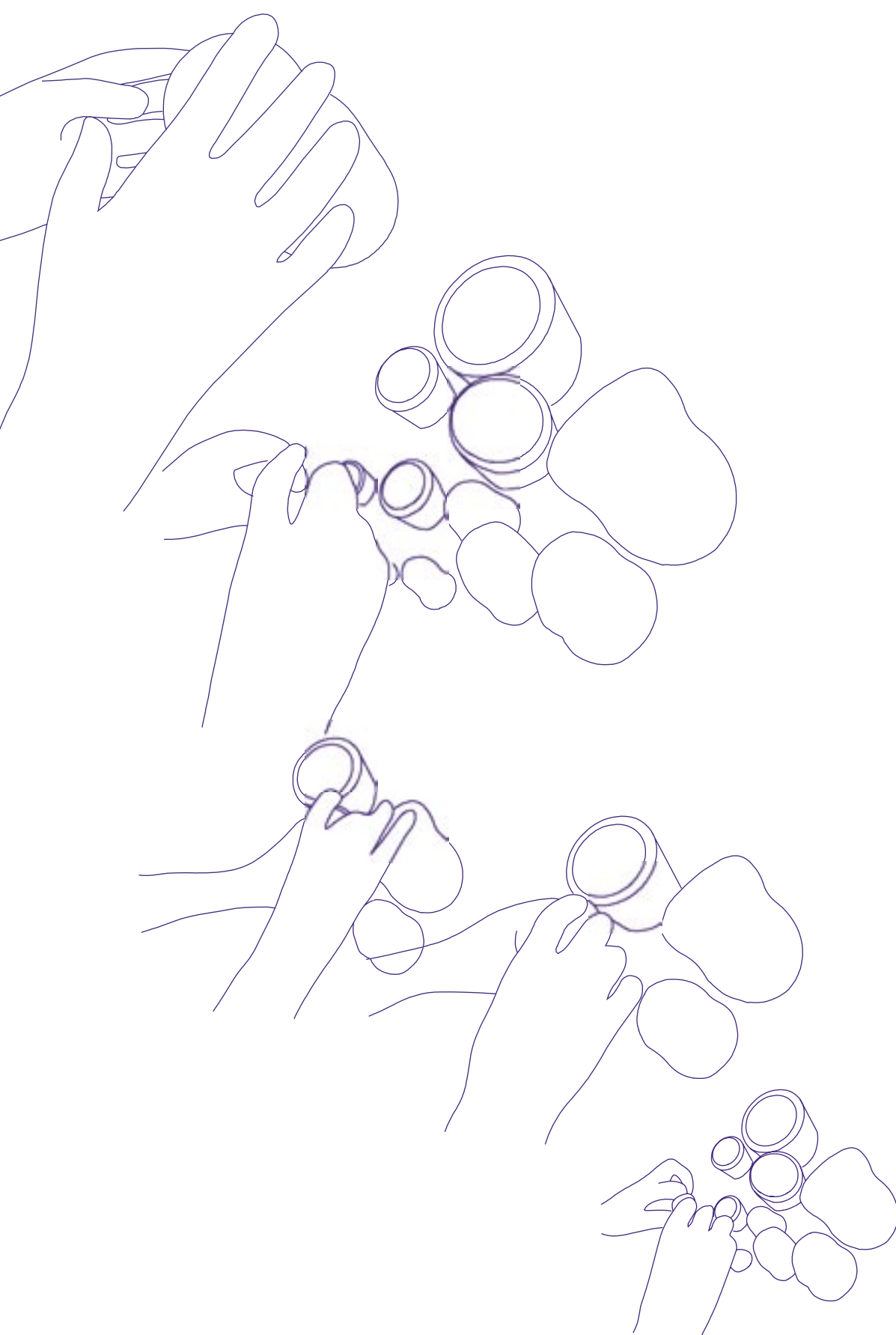
Somebody introduced into a work of literature to produce an effect or to resolve the plot, whose identity is undetermined, undiscovered, not forming part of knowledge in general, but whose role is understood at a crucial moment in the narrative.

A leopard can change its spots.

Somebody who inserts something into something else. A particular person, distinct from others in a group, who lacks a set of qualities that make him interesting or attractive. Who can add new material into the body of something without altering its shape.

One step forward, two steps back.

Somebody, full of suggesting mystery, who produces a deliberately engineered impression in the mind of somebody who sees, hears, or reads something. His presence is not to be noticed, but the effect of his actions is always visible.



An elementary particle having a strangeness number other than zero.

The way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become.

Learn the tricks of the trade pretty quickly or you won't get your stories.

Somebody who comes from a different place belongs to a different kind, showing the quantum characteristic of strangeness. He is reserved and shy, often because of being unfamiliar with people. It is pointless to give a description of his features since he uses makeup and other appearance-altering accessories, for example false hair. Absent without leave, an amount of something is noticeable along his path.

Escape artist

Somebody who is skilled at escaping from restraints or confinement.

He would free himself from jails, handcuffs, chains, ropes, and straitjackets, often while hanging from a rope in plain sight of street audiences. Because of imitators and a dwindling audience, the escape artist put his "handcuff act" behind him and began escaping from a locked, water-filled milk can. The possibility of failure and death thrilled his audiences. The escape artist advertized to the public that he made his escapes by dematerializing. In his most famous act, the Chinese Water Torture Cell, he was suspended upside-down in a locked glass and steel cabinet full to overflowing with water. The act required that the escape artist hold his breath for more than three minutes.

Can we fly?

Can we stay underwater for longer periods of time?

Can we find a weak link in the chain?

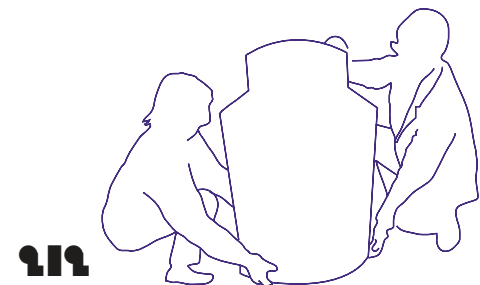
Is this escapism?

I have always had reservations about the negative meaning of the word escapism. For a prisoner, to escape has always been a good thing, and an individual escape can be a first necessary step toward a collective escape.

Hide and survive

Eye on a mirror

A hole has developed into something that reflects light without diffusing it so that it



gives back a clear image of anything placed in front of it. Somebody invented a device for making distant objects appear nearer and larger. He observed a cosmic entity that kept his attention for years, finding no point of comparison in the immense firmament with what he could see through the lenses. It was colorful and changed very fast depending on light alterations. He made a precise cartography of the object, describing and naming seas, mountains, and slow-motion thunderstorms. His discovery was so important that he let nobody touch the instrument, scared that his images would be stolen. One night, while his eyes slowly closed from exhaustion, a curious colleague got into the room furtively and looked through the instrument. The intruder realized that the inventor was not looking at a special entity in the sky; the object in question was even closer than he could ever expect, it was a magnified image of his own iris in the lens.

Dust makeup

Very small dry particles of a substance such as sand or coal, either in the form of a deposit or a cloud used to change the appearance of something. Somebody had an amazing collection of porcelain figures. The pieces were scattered all over his house, a small and dim apartment. This made a strange contrast between the dark environment and the shine of the white porcelain figures all over. It was wartime and he needed to escape or die. Friends and relatives recommended that he sell the collection in parts and then leave. He could not imagine that the perfect order and constellation that his figures occupy in this very specific space would be suddenly spread all over grandmother's living rooms and children's shelves.

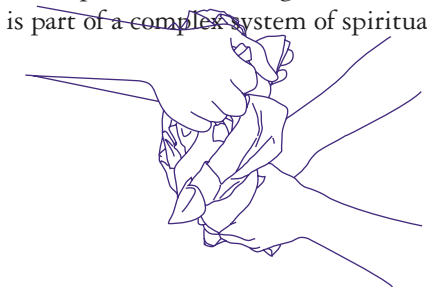
A policeman opened the door, the interior was dark, and the windows and curtains closed, the light coming from the outside when the door opened made visible a white cloud of dust that covered the whole room. The walls were dark but the floor had a sparkling reflection. Broken bits and pieces of porcelain lay all over the place. All of the hundreds of pieces smashed on the floor. There was a sort of dedication in this destructive act, as if each piece had being smashed one by one.

Mystic legal representative

Somebody legally empowered by a document to make decisions and act on behalf of somebody else with a belief in a divine meaning beyond human understanding.

Somebody working in a makeshift laboratory made the first xerographic image.

He believed that the world was ready for an easier and less costly way of making make copies—but he was also motivated by a deeper passion. The ideas behind this invention went far beyond a simple technique for the reproduction of images into a metaphysical realm in which the xerographic image is part of a complex system of spiritual devotion



and revelation. The Mystic patent attorney adapted the xerographic principles of light, conductivity, charge, and imprint into a higher spiritual order. He used the term “psi” as the totem for both the xerographic process itself and for the One World program he supported through the United Nations. “Psi” implied both the potential unity of minds and, also, a universe of latent images waiting to be “dusted.”

The Mystic patent attorney, personally funded American Zen Buddhist, J. B. Rhine’s Laboratory of Extrasensory Perception, the American Society for Psychological Research, and Shanti’s Foundation’s for the Study of Auras.

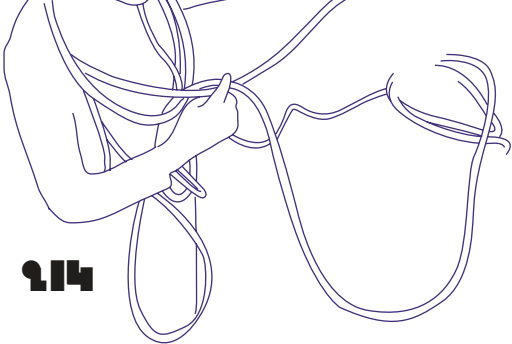
Do you know how to stop?

Somebody was driving throughout the city, in a distant and unknown neighborhood. Suddenly, the car stopped, and the driver couldn’t make it work again. The location wasn’t very good, but she tried to push the car to the side of the road, so it would look parked. She went back home by subway. The following day, she called the car mechanic and asked him if he could accompany her to the car’s location in order to fix it. They looked for the car for many hours, but in vain, as she didn’t remember the street, the subway stop, or the zip code. Two months passed. One day, she answered the phone; it was a police officer asking if she owned the car... with the registration number... The car was reported as stolen by the neighbors, and the police went to pick it up. The car was taken into a police garage. She needed to pay a fine, and a penalty that accumulated every day. She received about forty letters related to the event over two years, at which point the debt was four times more than the actual price of the car. Almost three years later, she received a phone call. It was a police officer, asking if she owned the car... with the registration number... there had been a fire in the garage, and all the cars were burned out. The paperwork and the computers disappeared as well. She would get money from the insurance company covering the price of the car.

Accidental discovery

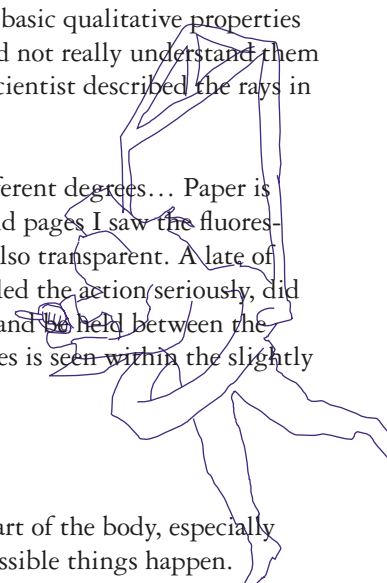
Something new that has been learned or found, not specifically intended and happening by chance.

Just at that moment, however, he noticed a weak light coming shimmering from a point in the dark room more than a yard from the vacuum tube. At first he thought it must be light leaking from the mask around the tube, which was being reflected from a mirror in the room. There was no mirror, however. The scientist found to his amazement that the source of the mysterious light was the little fluorescent screen that he had planned to use as a detector near the blinded cathode tube—but it was lying on the bench more than a yard from the tube. The scientist realized that he had encountered an entirely new



phenomenon. Although he described accurately most of the basic qualitative properties of the new rays in his paper, his acknowledgment that he did not really understand them was indicated by the name he chose for them, X-rays. The scientist described the rays in the following manner:

“All bodies are transparent to this agent, though in very different degrees... Paper is very transparent; behind a bound book of about one thousand pages I saw the fluorescent screen light up brightly [...] Thin blocks of wood are also transparent. A late of aluminum about fifteen millimeters thick, though it enfeebled the action seriously, did not cause the fluorescence to disappear entirely [...] If the hand ~~is~~ held between the discharge tube and the screen, the darker shadow of the bones is seen within the slightly dark shadow image of the hand itself.”



Magic ring

A band, usually made of metal, worn as an ornament on a part of the body, especially around a finger, with a supernatural power that makes impossible things happen.

Fastrada’s ring story. You know? The one where the emperor Charlemagne falls in love with Fastrada. The baron is at his court extremely worried when they see that Charlemagne was neglecting the affairs of state. When the girl suddenly died, the courtiers were relieved—but not for long because Charlemagne’s love did not die with her. The emperor carried the body to his bedroom, where he refused to be parted from it. The Archbishop Turpin suspected an enchantment and insisted on examining the corpse. Hidden under the dead girl’s tongue he found a ring. As soon as the ring was in Turpin’s hands, Charlemagne fell passionately in love with the archbishop and hurriedly had the girl buried. In order to escape the embarrassing situation, Turpin flung the ring into Lake Constance. Charlemagne thereupon fell in love with the lake and would not leave its shores.

The real protagonist of the story, however, is the magic ring, because it is the movement of the ring that determines the actions of the characters and because it is the ring that establishes the relationships between them. Around the magic object there is a kind of force field, which is the territory of the story itself. We might say that the magic object is a visible sign that reveals the connection between people or events.

Klein bottle piñata

Piñatas are used to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas. They consist of a cardboard figure, made from easily breakable materials, like papier-mâché, or clay; the shape can always vary. Piñatas are filled with candies and toys, and then

