

James Lasdun's *Give Me Everything You Have.* *On Being Stalked* as a Fusion of Writing Technologies

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Abstract: Drawing upon Mary Douglas's anthropological work *Purity and Danger*, Jay David Bolter's *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*, and (to a lesser extent) Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto," the article analyses the form and authorship of James Lasdun's 2013 memoir *Give Me Everything You Have. On Being Stalked*. The book is Lasdun's account of his experience of being cyberstalked by his former female student. The article proposes that the memoir be read as a combination of two kinds of texts, indeed a fusion of two writing technologies (the print/book technology and the digital technology) resulting from a collision – or even an involuntary "collaboration" (a concept considered on the basis of its discussion by George P. Landow in his *Hypertext 3.0*) – of two very different (co-)authors: a more traditional author who is a digital "alien" and a disembodied and viral cyberstalker (a self-proclaimed "verbal terrorist") who is a native-like digital immigrant. The article examines the book's hypertextual qualities, proposing that it takes a step further in comparison to the protohypertextuality of experimental authors such as Sterne, Joyce, Borges and Calvino by actually including electronic text within its paper borders – which, in fact, become opened up as a result.

Keywords: cyberstalking, transgression, hypertext, writing technologies, virus

“...and it seemed to me I was calling across a great chasm of misunderstanding...”

James Lasdun, *The Horned Man*

“What you resist persists.”

Björk, “Mutual Core,” *Biophilia*

“[T]he ideal order of society is guarded by dangers which threaten transgressors,” wrote Mary Douglas in her seminal 1966 book on social anthropology *Purity and Danger* (2007, 3). “[I]deas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions,” she said, “have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience” (Douglas 2007, 5). But even if the social structure is *inherently* untidy, it is the “transgressor” who is *seen and treated* as untidy, as a source of pollution, and an anomaly, the reaction to which is “continuous with” the reaction to dirt (Douglas 2007, 5). Yet, there is power in both: “there is a power in the forms and other power in the (...) margins, confused lines, and beyond external boundaries” – in the “surrounding non-form” (Douglas 2007, 122). However, since “[a] polluting person is always in the wrong,” s/he is threatened and punished by dangers because s/he is seen as a source of danger and threat her/himself (Douglas 2007, 140). “Danger lies in transitional states,” says Douglas, “simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable” (2007, 119).

Analysing a range of societies at various stages of technological development, both in the past and in the present (the 1960s), Douglas wrote about that which cannot be defined – because it is impure, not one but mixed – as a universal source of fear in all cultures that fundamentally shapes societies and thus reality. Two decades later, in “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” Donna Haraway acknowledged that “[e]xploring conceptions of bodily boundaries and social order, the anthropologist Mary Douglas (...) should be credited with helping us to consciousness about how fundamental body imagery is to world view” (Haraway 2001, 310). In her own text (and in her own, very different, mode), Haraway continued reflecting on some of Douglas’s subject matter – however, by going decidedly beyond scientific description and analysis of reality and calling for a deliberate intervention in it in order to create an alternative:

as she specifies, the manifesto is “an effort to build an ironic political myth” (2001, 291) “about transgressed boundaries” (2001, 295), which are no longer seen as a source of fear. The author calls her text “an argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction” (Haraway 2001, 292). After all, Haraway says, “[b]y the late twentieth century (...) we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism. In short we are cyborgs” (2001, 292).

In 1991, the same year when Donna Haraway published the final version of “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Jay David Bolter published *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*. Haraway focused on “the late twentieth century,” when, as she wrote, “machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines” (2001, 293–94). Bolter calls this time, which began in the 1970s (2001, 9) and continues today, “the late age of print” (2001, 2). His focus is on the latest development in writing technology, which has brought about yet another transgressed boundary: “[i]n the late age of print,” he says, “we seem more impressed by the impermanence and changeability of text, and digital technology seems to reduce the distance between author and reader by turning the reader into an author herself” (Bolter 2001, 4).

I would like to apply these briefly outlined observations to one early twenty-first-century literary work, James Lasdun's *Give Me Everything You Have*. In fact, focusing on the form of the book, I would like to read it as a combination of two kinds of texts, indeed a fusion of two writing technologies resulting from a collision – and perhaps a kind of involuntary “collaboration” – of two very different (co-)authors.

Give Me Everything You Have is a memoir published in February 2013. Its author, James Lasdun, is a poet and writer born in 1958 in London, who now lives in the US. The book has a subtitle: *On Being Stalked*, but its more precise version would read *On Being Cyberstalked*, as the work tackles cyberharassment. The memoir tells the author's own story of suffering cyberharassment for seven years (and still counting).¹ The cyberstalker, whom he calls Nasreen, was Lasdun's student in 2003, and began her destructive campaign three years later. The email correspondence which she initiated

¹ As we can read in “*Give Me Everything You Have*: A Postscript” posted (without a date) on the author's official website, the situation has not changed, and the author does not believe it ever will.

in late 2005 was originally innocent, at once professional and friendly. Gradually, however, it became increasingly flirtatious on her part, and, unexpectedly, after Lasdun had gently rejected Nasreen's romantic advances, it morphed into what later she herself labelled "verbal terrorism" (Lasdun 2013, 38).

"I don't know a precedent for this," said the author in an interview (Lasdun 2013a), referring both to his experience and to his book.² There have been both works of fiction and factual accounts of stalking, but this book is most likely the first account of *cyberstalking* endured and written about by a professional writer.³ What additionally complicates matters is the fact that the very instance of *cyberstalking* he experiences is also written *by* another author (i.e. perpetrated through her writing), albeit *unprofessional*. Therefore there are two co-authors of this story just as there are two necessary sides to (cyber)stalking: the stalkee and the stalker. Both of them write, but very differently, and the difference between their writing was very clearly defined from the day they met. The teacher-student relationship between James Lasdun and Nasreen begins within a creative writing workshop, between a published and accomplished writer and an aspiring novelist. Moreover, the younger woman, who desires to become like the master, also grows to desire the master, the older man. More contrasts exist between them to further problematise the relationship, which can be illustrated by the table below:

² There are likely to be many follow-ups, however. In the same "Postscript" referred to above Lasdun wrote: "After the book came out I heard dozens of stories about cyberstalking and internet malice (enough to suggest there was a minor epidemic going on)."

³ The genre of the book will not be my object here. What is worth briefly mentioning, however, is the inherently problematic nature of any memoir. A memoir's purported nonfiction status (Lasdun insists that his work is "all non-fiction" [2013a]) is usually difficult for the readers to ascertain and tends to be accepted in an automatic gesture of trust. A memoir – or any autobiographical writing – *by a writer* poses yet more analytical challenge, well illustrated e.g. by the story "Borges and I" by Jorge Luis Borges (Borges 2000).

category	James Lasdun	"Nasreen"
power relation	teacher	student
gender	male	female
age	older (in 2005 late 40s)	younger (in 2005 mid 30s)
professional status	acclaimed writer	unpublished aspiring writer
nationality	British	Iranian
religion and background	non-religious of Jewish origin	Muslim
"at-homeness" in the US	immigrant since 1986, comfortable	immigrant, problematic in post-9/11 America
personal situation	happily married, two young children	single and estranged from family

What adds to the unequal power relationship between the older male published author of (to date) five volumes of poetry and four collections of short stories, a novella, two novels, two screenplays and two guidebooks, as well as many essays and reviews, on the one hand, and the younger female student with an unpublished manuscript on the other – is their ethnic and religious background. Lasdun is a non-religious British Jew, much more “at home” in the US, and in particular in New York, especially after 9/11, than the Iranian-born Muslim woman who arrived in the US as a child. This difference becomes suddenly preeminent when Nasreen’s attacks reach an extra level of toxicity and become unequivocally anti-Semitic. In fact, this shift from a merely individual and personal abuse to an ethnic, religious and geopolitical conflict⁴ corresponds with a progression in the strategy of her campaign. In her smear campaign Nasreen accuses Lasdun of sexual

⁴ One critic, expressing her strong reservations about the memoir in an article posted on a website devoted to Muslim religion and culture, proposes that “The story of a sensitive, morally upright American, viciously attacked by an irrational, malevolent, Iranian, is an encapsulation of the international politics of the 2008–12 era, as seen by Western audiences” (Taylor 2014). The same critic also calls the book “a highly political text, which draws upon a cultural landscape of stereotypes about the Middle East, while presenting itself as innocent unfiltered observation” (Taylor 2014). This political and religious aspect addressed in *Give Me Everything You Have* reflects actual recent developments: an increase in anti-Semitic sentiments in the West in connection to the unabating tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Greenwood et al. 2016). Since it occupies a prominent portion of the book (the whole “Part IV: Mosaic” is devoted to it) it merits a separate article.

harassment – of her female fellow-students, and of herself by a kind of (variously described) involvement in her own rape (Lasdun 2013, 41, 116–17, 134), and of plagiarism. In short, she accuses him of the two worst things tarnishing the reputation of a teacher and a writer. The campaign grows in scale, from emails only to Lasdun, to emails sent to people associated with him: first the inner circle, such as his literary agent and former and present employers, then to people he never even met, whom, however, Nasreen implicates in a supposed collective Jewish conspiracy against her. Next, Nasreen learns how to appropriate other people’s email addresses and uses them to invade Lasdun’s email box, after which she impersonates Lasdun himself, using his own email address to send compromising emails to other people. She also vandalises his Wikipedia entry, writes damaging reviews of his books in Amazon.com, places defamatory comments under online articles by him or on him, etc.

The effect of this “verbal napalm” (Lasdun, 2013, 133) quickly becomes palpable for Lasdun:

Never mind that my real self was innocent of everything she accused me of: out there in cyberspace a larger, more vivid version of myself had been engendered and was rapidly (so I felt) supplanting me in the minds of other people. (Lasdun 2013, 133)

“This other version of me,” continued the author, “so much more vital and substantial than I felt myself to be by this time, had completed its usurpation of my identity and was running amok” (Lasdun 2013, 145) – rather like Dr Jekyll’s alter ego, Mr Hyde. To quote from Stevenson’s novella: “man is not truly one, but truly two” (Stevenson 1980, 79); however, in the Internet age the number of possibilities for selves may have grown larger, perhaps even infinite.

Just as the origin of Mr Hyde was a magic potion whose last and unique ingredient was an “unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught” (Stevenson 1980, 102), the origin of “the other version” of the author was also a kind of poison coming from a known source but for a not altogether known reason. In the venom, curiously, confessions of love blend with hateful rants, suspicions of insanity clash with sheer cleverness and calculation, leaving Lasdun feeling “flayed, utterly defenceless” (Lasdun 2013, 139). The author sees an adequate image for his predicament is nothing less than the BP oil

catastrophe of 2010: Lasdun pictures "Nasreen's hostility as that blackness on the spillcams, billowing unstoppably from the ocean floor" (Lasdun 2013, 139). The scale of the smear is now global: hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, and as the author says "poison is spreading its plumes into the hitherto clear waters of my virtual self" (Lasdun 2013, 112). Dangerously, the virtual self had always been fluid, it was fluid to begin with, and therefore inevitably vulnerable.

In 2008, two years into the ordeal, Lasdun started experiencing health problems, which were most likely psychosomatic: he suffered insomnia, grew generally fatigued, his wife feared his self-harm (Lasdun 2013, 138). He described his reaction to Nasreen's relentless barrage of emails as an "abstract distillation of pure pain," and "thinking" about them as "feeling them pulsate in [his] mind like some malignant bolus" (Lasdun 2013, 136). In no uncertain terms, he experienced the whole predicament as a kind of disease: "The illness I had contracted was incurable. My adversary was stronger than I was" (Lasdun 2013, 155). As we read towards the end of the book and in the author's online commentary about it, most recently the "recurrent illness" has spread to his ear via the latest development in Nasreen's warfare, i.e. phone calls (Lasdun 2013, 211, "*Give Me Everything You Have*: A Postscript"). However, already early on, when malicious rumours started to spread, Lasdun "begun to feel like a leper" (Lasdun 2013, 114), as if he was afflicted by a parasitic and ostracising infection.⁵

"I don't know if the Internet has created a whole new category of meanness," says Lasdun in an online interview (Lasdun 2013a), or perhaps it merely activated a latent virus, a sleeper in a sleeper terrorist cell. What Lasdun does know is that "It is real. It's something you do feel. It's a very peculiar kind of harm, smearing" (Lasdun 2013a). In the last pages of the book, Lasdun still states, "the stain of defamation continues to spread" (Lasdun 2013, 209). And even if it stopped, he could not just wash it off and forget about it. "The nature of a smear is that it survives formal cleansing, and I felt the foulness it had left behind, like an almost physical residue" (Lasdun 2013, 135).

⁵ However, Lasdun has compassionate supporters who are not only the likewise affected fellow-writers and other people who personally experienced Nasreen's wrath. There is a Facebook page (established on February 11, 2013, which coincided with the book's publication) called "Help Identify James Lasdun's Cyberstalker," with one post offering the real name of Nasreen (accessed on February 23, 2016).

The language Lasdun uses in describing his oppressor and the threat she poses and subjects him to – impurity, poison, stain, smear⁶ – echoes Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger*,⁷ which, in turn, is echoed in Zygmunt Bauman’s *Wasted Lives*: “Chaos, disorder, lawlessness, portends the infinity of possibilities and the limitlessness of inclusion; order stands for limits and finitude. In an orderly (ordered) space, not *everything* may happen” (2006, 31). In anthropological terms, it is not only Nasreen’s transgression – crossing boundaries, violating accepted norms – that are a quintessential source of danger, but so is her very state or her own current “nature.” When Lasdun compares her actions and their effect to oil, foulness and residue, “untouchable filth” (Lasdun 2013, 135), and an “unclean feeling” that “there was never time to purge” (Lasdun 2013, 129), he is also speaking about her, about her mixed, in-between state without borders that is not contained within the orderly confines of an individual self (as is the social norm), but seeps, slops, sullies and soils, transfers parts of herself onto another person thus creating a (reluctant for one side, desirable to the other) connection, blurring the boundary between the two selves. In other words, she is sticky. Discussing “stickiness,” Douglas refers to Jean Paul Sartre’s essay on the subject and adds her own observations:

The viscous is a state half-way between solid and liquid. It is like a cross-section in a process of change. It is unstable (...). Its stickiness is a trap, it clings like a leech; it attacks the boundary between myself and it. Long columns falling off my fingers suggest my own substance flowing into the pool of stickiness. (...) to touch stickiness is to risk diluting myself into viscosity. Stickiness is clinging, like a too-possessive dog or mistress. (Douglas 2007, 47)

In the case of Nasreen’s cyberstalking experienced by Lasdun, the tactile and material, distinctly bodily quality of this sensation paradoxically

⁶ Also stink: “I had been successfully targeted, and with the most primevally effective form of malediction: my name mingled with the smell of shit. Cockroaches, vermin, excrement... There are certain phenomena that, purely by association, have an ability to reassign a person from the category of human being, in their fellow citizens’ minds, to that of waste” (Lasdun 2013, 113).

⁷ Lasdun’s own knowledge about and “interest in purity and pollution” (Lasdun 2002, 186) can be inferred from the fact that he ascribed them to a character (the narrator’s wife) in his debut novel *The Horned Man*.

(but nonetheless entirely effectively) results from “nonphysical” actions carried out in immaterial cyberspace, in the digital environment – itself available to us through the material in-between layer (membrane?) of computer interface. An established order is disrupted in this marginal, borderline realm: hitherto reliable duality of binary opposites proves tenuous, becomes smudged or reversed. The complete lack of physicality between the stalker and the stalkee originated in and now stands in striking contrast to Nasreen’s desire for it. Real physical distance: the fact that Nasreen now operates as a completely disembodied cyberstalker who in actuality lives in a different US state (California), and the lack of direct physical harm, still manages to do (healthwise) physical damage to the stalkee, while protecting the cyberstalker from legal proceedings, since an extradition from California to New York is unlikely for a mere “misdemeanor” due to the costs this would incur (Lasdun 2013, 123–24). Consequently, while the stalkee’s own immune system – and the “social immunity system” of law and order that he resorts to – fail, “the electronic tsunami she unleashed” reveals Nasreen’s unbridled energy, “something manifestly creative in her unstoppable productivity” (Lasdun 2013, 214).

Moreover, just as her transgression is not limited by space, it is also not limited by time. She intends to go on forever: “I will not let you go,” she writes (Lasdun 2013, 145). In what she wants (love, reciprocity) she is like almost everyone else; the difference is that she does not stop. She goes too far; she “goes viral.” The disembodied cyberstalker is genuinely like a virus – this strange “entity” that certainly exists, yet does not “live,” according to mainstream scientific definitions; it is not a “living” organism. Its sole “purpose” is to go on forever, to replicate itself, and it does so by invading the cells of the host, reprogramming their genetic material. The cyberstalker needs the cyberstalkee as she needs cyberspace, which is the perfect environment for this virus to exist and spread.⁸ The result, says Lasdun, is “a vitality I couldn’t stop envying” (Lasdun 2013, 214).

This confession is probably the most striking paradox of the story, the fact that the stalkee is compelled to admire the stalker, in a distant echo of the initial real-life enthusiasm for her writing (“I was extremely impressed” [Lasdun 2013, 5]) and (judging by Lasdun’s descriptions of Nasreen’s looks) undeniable

⁸ And one that almost all of us are now addicted to. This fact, in effect our own complicity, must be one of the reasons why, as Lasdun says in his “Postscript,” cyberstalking has now become “a minor epidemic.”

physical attraction (Lasdun 2013, 7, 27, 93). Nasreen's own attraction to the author seems to be proportionate to his present repulsion; the longer and the more he rejects her by being silent, the stronger and louder her efforts to be heard, known, felt, not forgotten. Consequently, again paradoxically, the two are definitely having "a relationship" now, solidified and eternalised by the book which they have, in fact, co-created.

In *Hypertext 3.0* George P. Landow contemplates the phenomenon of "collaboration":

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, the verb *to collaborate* can mean either "to work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort," or "to cooperate treasonably, as with an enemy occupying one's country." The combination of labor, political power, and aggressiveness that appears in this dictionary definition well indicates some of the problems that arise when one discusses collaborative work. On the one hand, the notion of collaboration embraces notions of working together with others (...). This meaning recognizes, as it were, that we all exist within social groups (...). On the other hand, collaboration also includes a deep suspicion of working with others (...). Most of our intellectual endeavors involve collaboration, but we do not always recognize that fact for two reasons. The rules of our intellectual culture, particularly those that define intellectual property and authorship, do not encourage such recognitions, and furthermore, information technology from Gutenberg to the present - the technology of the book - systematically hinders full recognition of collaborative authorship. (2006, 137-38)

What *encourages* recognition of collaborative authorship in the case of *Give Me Everything You Have* is that the book has not been "made" only by the technology of the book. In this book, print technology combines with the digital technology - far beyond the now quotidian fact that all books begin as electronic text and "pass through the computer on their way to the press" (Bolter 2001, 2), and in general "[d]igital media are refashioning the printed book" (Bolter 2001, 3). Lasdun's memoir includes copies of email correspondence, which gives the memoir both an epistolary and *electronic*

quality. Roughly 10% of the text⁹ is presented to us as directly quoted from Nasreen's emails (standing out from the rest of the text thanks to a different, "electronic-looking" font), in some of which she poses as someone else, including the author.

An obvious irony, and again, a self-fulfilling prophecy spelled out by Nasreen, which does not escape the author, is that the very book in which he protests his innocence against her accusations of plagiarism, quotes from her writing without her permission (Lasdun 2013, 164). Nasreen claims that Lasdun based one of his short stories (about a lonely woman who desperately lures men into her apartment hoping to seduce them) on her own words and ideas, and at the same time, somewhat contradictorily, she says "i'm [sic!] living your short story out and I'm scared" (Lasdun 2013, 51). In another reversal, by means of her accusations of sexual harassment, she turns Lasdun into the protagonist of his first novel, *The Horned Man*, published in the year when the two met, and most likely read by her autobiographically (Nasreen proves to be the author's most attentive reader). The novel is about a British professor of Gender Studies, who is its Kafkaesque unreliable narrator. Lawrence Miller serves on the sexual harassment committee of his American college, and believes that he is being framed for being a sexual predator and murdering women.

In an interview, Lasdun calls this instance of life imitating art an "uncanny repetition" (Lasdun 2013a), to which must be added the "multiplying effect of the Internet," i.e. the infinite reproduction it makes possible (Lasdun 2013, 61). Indeed, the repetitions and reversals are many and dizzying: while Nasreen claims that her teacher stole her writing, she says that she lives out *his* writing, and ascribes to him *her* own (electronic) writing. Lasdun, in turn, anachronically, enacts her accusations, for instance he does come into contact with the strangers Nasreen accused him of conspiring with against her – and they do start to, in a way, conspire against her, i.e. exchange notes, advice, and ideas for how to cope with the whole predicament with the help of the police and the FBI (Khakpour 2013). Thus the cyberstalker's and the stallee's respective *words* become reality, and the border between the two becomes blurred.

⁹ If my count is correct, approximately 20 pages out of 218 are entirely her "text." In his review of the memoir for the *London Review of Books*, Nick Richardson says the amount is closer to 25%, which I find to be an overestimation.

Above all, *Give Me Everything You Have* does use Nasreen's writing and is based entirely on her (not copyrighted but *signature*) "idea" for cyberstalking and takes from her its very title, literally turning Nasreen's own words addressed to Lasdun "give me everything you have and go kill yourself" (Lasdun 2013, 210) *around*, sounding almost like a provocation. The quote expresses Nasreen's striking materialism, which stands in such stark contrast to the now *immaterial* form she has assumed: bizarrely, she repeatedly demands from Lasdun the keys to his New York apartment, as well as other forms of pecuniary compensation for the damage he had allegedly done to her. Now, the author may appear to be saying through the title of (mainly) *his* book, *you* give me everything you have and I will use my privileged position as an acclaimed writer to further my literary career and earn some money at your expense while I'm at it.¹⁰

Such would be a particularly suspicious reading of the title, echoing Landow's reflections on "collaboration" and the distrust it tends to generate quoted above. In the case of Lasdun's memoir, the practice of "collaboration" is conspicuously problematic, and yet textually undeniable. Landow's second definition of *to collaborate* could be applied to Lasdun and paraphrased here as: "to cooperate treasonably, as with an enemy occupying one's *mind*." For, even though the "lone jihadi," as Lasdun calls his "verbal terrorist," engages in "asymmetric warfare" (Lasdun 2013, 38), the result is yet another series of reversals and a kind of symmetry. The essence of Nasreen's tactic is that she has nothing to lose, while he has everything. In effect, the initial unequal power relationship between the female student and the male teacher is reversed: the powerless one uses her weakness as a source of strength, gaining

¹⁰ As one reviewer has concluded, "Lasdun got a book out of Nasreen, while she remains alone, her novel unpublished, clearly very ill" (Richardson 2013). The question of Nasreen's possible mental illness (a bi-polar disorder?) is, of course, an important aspect of the story; however, it is not explored in the book beyond Lasdun's explanation for his rejection of this diagnosis. Firstly, while acknowledging "borderline" aspects of Nasreen's personality and in fact her "communicating from a place well and truly across the border" (Lasdun 2013, 194), Lasdun argues that Nasreen was fully aware of the consequences of her actions and should be held accountable for them. Secondly, he points to her own "proclamations" of insanity, which to him are "precisely evidence that she was *not* insane" (Lasdun 2013, 194). However, immediately after making this statement, the author admits that he has "a strong vested interest" in the stalker's sanity, since he *wants* her to be held "responsible for her behaviour" (Lasdun 2013, 194). Moreover, writing about a mentally ill person, he says, would have "probably" made him feel "uncomfortable," and it would have diminished the book's literary quality (Lasdun 2013, 195). Nonetheless, regardless of his highly subjective, and, for some, questionable intentions, as one critic has put it, Lasdun's memoir is "a valuable portrait of borderline personality disorder, of which he unwittingly provides the most concisely accurate definition ever written" (Garman 2013).

extraordinary, supernatural powers. As Lasdun comes to realise, this idea of “leveraging one’s very powerlessness to exert power” was taken by Nasreen from his very own writing (Lasdun 2013, 46–47). Now, he learns this strategy from himself – however, only through her mediation: he borrows from her borrowing from himself, and this circularity yet again blurs the boundary between the two selves. However, the major manifestation of symmetry paradoxically resulting from Nasreen’s asymmetric warfare (or word-fare) is the fact that her obsession with Lasdun becomes replicated in his own obsession with her. Like a virus reprogramming the host’s genetic material, Nasreen has penetrated and modified Lasdun’s consciousness *and* his subconscious. As he says, “I couldn’t think about anything except her, and pretty soon I couldn’t talk about anything except her” (Lasdun 2013, 129). Inevitably, he also couldn’t write about anything else, hence *Give Me Everything You Have*. In Lasdun’s act of writing the book, one more reversal takes place: the victim of someone who considers *herself* a victim is now no longer just a victim, he refuses to be passively and silently victimised. For this purpose, Lasdun says, “without being entirely aware of it, I had enlisted Nasreen as a guide to help me through the very crisis she herself had precipitated” (Lasdun 2013, 214).

If she was “enlisted” as “a guide to help,” and the means of Lasdun’s self-help is the memoir (the genre can be seen as a therapeutic and cathartic exercise, a self-prescribed and self-administered cure), then she can be considered its “co-author.” What additionally blurs the distinction between the two authors is Lasdun’s own ambiguous and controversial status as an alleged oppressor/exploiter and/or victim, as well as his malleable online identity, which both match, in another instance of symmetry, the cyberstalker’s own “borderline” and “border-crossing” personality as well as her Internet-enabled “porousness” and “amorphousness” (Lasdun 2013, 141). However, one important and as yet not mentioned divergence between them is that, while Lasdun is a digital “alien,” Nasreen is a native-like digital immigrant;¹¹ in other words, she is very much at home in cyberspace; the electronic environment is, in fact, one in which she thrives. This fact stands in sharp contrast to Nasreen’s situatedness not only in the physical reality they both share, the United States of America, but also in one sub-aspect of this context, namely the literary market, which she wishes to enter, but is denied access. Even

¹¹ Nasreen was born in the 1970s, i.e. too soon to be considered a digital native.

though, according to Lasdun, “everything about Nasreen’s profile – age, gender, nationality – seemed to me to make her an eminently marketable prospect” (Lasdun 2013, 12), and indeed, soon there was “a spate of novels and memoirs, some of them bestsellers, published by young women of Iranian origin” (Lasdun 2013, 56), Nasreen is (and above all feels) excluded from the print technology. As Landow more realistically points out, by its association with writing as an individual rather than a collaborative act, the book technology, generally speaking, “supports a traditional patriarchal construction of authorship and authority” (2006, 140). And, as Jay David Bolter adds, “[b]ecause printing a book is a costly and laborious task, few readers have the opportunity to become published authors” (Bolter 2001, 161–62).

Nasreen, paradoxically, finds her way into this very technology through the digital technology. Her electronic text becomes absorbed by the paper book: through the more traditional author’s copying and pasting (a distinctly selective and authoritative, even manipulative, act that restores some sense of control to him) the print text incorporates fragments of electronic text as well as other digital media, such as digital voice recordings and especially digital photos – both of which are available to us as if through a hyperlink – they open up (the readers can *virtually* hear and see them) through Lasdun’s description of what he can actually hear and see. The result is a fusion of technologies – a hypertext-like print text.

However, this memoir’s hypertextual qualities go beyond what can be found in earlier pro- or metahypertextual works, such as Lawrence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the writings of Jorge Luis Borges (Bolter 2001, 140–47) or Italo Calvino’s *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller* (Jeżyk 2005). Similarly to them, *Give Me Everything You Have* has a rambling, rather convoluted non-linear structure, resembling a labyrinth with many entries, leading to a centre (the core problem, which, however, proves elusive and saturates the whole), but with no exit yet in sight. It is repetitive and has a highly intertextual dimension.¹² However, it goes a step further than being “a metahypertext without electricity” (Jeżyk 2005, 62) – firstly, because it is not a work of fiction but an instance of life-writing, and secondly, because it literally contains electronic text incorporated into the more traditional medium. As a result, the older medium becomes

¹² The main literary work that Lasdun refers to is the late 14th-century Middle English chivalric romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Among other major references are Patricia Highsmith’s *Stangers on a Train* and Sigmund Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*.

changed by the newer one from the inside. The vehicle is hijacked by “the lone jihadi” – or: the host is reprogrammed, as if by a (cyber)virus. On the one hand, the memoir literally and metaphorically contains Nasreen (she has become a text, a voice¹³); on the other hand, exactly by doing so, the traditional text is opened up, becomes a continuum or – to refer to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – a rhizome-like network is now created between this memoir, its (primary) author's other works, and other instances of life-writing concerning him (such as texts about him and about his works in both print and digital form) and the writing by Nasreen that is part of that life-writing (when she intervenes into his Wikipedia entry or a *Guardian* review of his book, and especially when she usurps his identity and writes pretending to be him). In this sense, as Bolter was quoted saying at the very beginning of this article, “[i]n the late age of print (...) we seem more impressed by the impermanence and changeability of text, and digital technology seems to reduce the distance between author and reader by turning the reader into an author herself” (Bolter 2001, 4). This is connected with the fact that even more so than in “the late twentieth century,” as Donna Haraway wrote somewhat hyperbolically and futuristically, “we are all (...) hybrids of machine and organism” (2001, 292). In the early twenty-first century we may “all” be “cyborgs,” but some of us are more “cyborg” than others.

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¹³ Nasreen's actual voice can, in fact, be heard on James Lasdun's official website: his “Postscript” provides hyperlinks to two MP3 files with recordings of her messages left on Lasdun's telephone.

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