Commonplace •

5 Things with SJ Klein, Underlayer at the Knowledge Futures Group

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What is the shape of life, of thought?

Is it really possible that I
misapplied the mould?

1. Ideonomy : Idea topology of Patrick Gunkel

Patrick Gunkel, cataloger, [cat lover](#), futurist, and idea cartographer, developed the idea of **Ideonomy** — a scientific study of ways to generate ideas, and shapes and visualizations that could capture their interconnections. He spent his life illustrating this with examples, in both [writing](#) and in visual diagrams.

Along the way, Gunkel met [Marvin Minsky](#) and [Whitman Richards](#) at MIT, and maintained a long friendship with them, hosting his catalogs, diagrams, and books at ideonomy.mit.edu. His friend [Om Gnawali](#) helped set up his archive at MIT and has continued to digitize his books and longer works in recent years.

Table of Contents (Papers) For Patrick Gunkel's Book "BRAIN HYPOTHESES AND THEIR BROADER IMPLICATIONS": (1972-1974)	
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"Catoptromancy"	1
"The Brain Proceeds In A Self-Descriptive Way"	1
"Definition, Certainties, and Probabilistic Exercises"	1
"Averaging Between All Different Dimensions"	1

courtesy of Gunkel archivist Om Gnawali

2. 40-fruited tree : Grafted the most, by Sam Van Aken

Testing the boundary of speciation, the [Tree of 40 Fruit](#) is a single tree that grows forty different types of stone fruit including peaches, plums, apricots, nectarines, cherries, and almonds. Created through the process of grafting, the Tree of 40 Fruit blossom in variegated tones of pink, crimson and white in spring, and in summer bear a multitude of fruit.

3. Spider colony : Topography of a 100-million-spider city

Being part of a colony changes the natural social and geometric impulses of spiders.

Orb weaving spiders, known for their circular webs, normally have one web per family.

However they have also produced the largest spider colonies ever seen, architecting webbed cities that span multiple trees or entire buildings.

Laminar webbing in a corridor ceiling of an abandoned building. Source: <https://www.entsoc.org/PDF/2010/Orb-weaving-spiders.pdf>

The largest known spider colony, the “Back River Arachnotopia”, spanned four acres over a running source of water, housing 100 million spiders from multiple species in 4,000 cubic meters of webbing. The colony had almost no regions that looked like individual webs, but consisted of long laminar sheets and volumetric three-dimensional regions. Sampling the webs at various regions suggested that different areas specialized in housing different ages and types of spiders, and the webs strung over the waterways were again specialized to attract and catch insects.

4. Glazed bowery : Frozen time in trees, water, and light

Glaze ice, after a long slow drizzle, when the temperature is just right, can sheathe forests in a skin of ice for days. It highlights the space between the fronds of trees, solidifies light, and hangs in the air as a reminder of the boundary between fall and winter, liquid and solid.

It is a microclimate stretched out on time, waiting for transformation's touch ~ And the light chime of branches in a still breeze sounds ancient and heavenly.

a crazed glazed branchlet

5

. Topic galaxy: Literary synthesis of Open Syllabus

A conceptual embedding of books and topics, mediated by the world's syllabi, hints at how current teachers link writing and thought. Imagine seeing this change over time and place, and through the lens of different ages and approaches to presenting the thought of others: by similarity or by contrast? as progression or as mixture of possibility? (Zoom around yourself: <https://galaxy.opensyllabus.org/>)

Bonus: **Grey Bull** - the shape of identity

Visit the web version of this article to view interactive content.

'Grey Bull' Short Film

[On the shape of identity](#), and remaining Sudanese in Australia.

With extensive cameos by kindness and honesty.