



Between fact and fancy

What media archaeology can learn from dodology
(and the other way around)

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“Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.”

- George Orwell, 1984.

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Introduction



Jan Savery, painting of a dodo, 1651.

Few concepts are as vague and attractive as the past. It is a time that is never physically present, though its traces are everywhere. What we consider to have happened is largely a reconstruction that was made long after the events took place. The past is an indeterminate entity that can be changed in order to achieve something in the present. As such, it is highly in demand and has been the source of inspiration for various instances of literature and arts. Yet, making up things that have not happened is considered unacceptable outside the realm of fiction on a social and academic level. Historians keep an eye on the past and those who recklessly try to cross the border between fact and fancy. Throughout the last couple of centuries scholars have developed academic tools that are able to preserve seemingly objective conclusions and make them acceptable to a larger academic community. Historical sources, either written or material, play an important part in this scientific apparatus. Inanimate objects might even be the foundation on which historical knowledge is built.

Unfortunately this lifeless material cannot speak for itself and it does not produce undeniable facts. Although historians try to approach the truth with their help, it is possible to speculate about their meaning. Sometimes this happens within speculative literature, such as science fiction

and fictional science. Even scholars sometimes project idiosyncratic feelings and hypothetical ideas upon historical findings and publish these disguised as unbalanced scientific papers. Sometimes, such misdirected contemplations can lead to very elaborate narrative constructions, which are told and remodeled over time again and again. It sometimes occurs that objects of the past become part of a brand new discourse, either in a material or a more abstract way. Variations and different interpretations of an endless variety of subjects are spread out over time. Countless alternatives to a pliable present and past are available in libraries by means of fiction and non-fiction. Each can be used as the starting point for new speculative texts in their own right.

Researchers within the field of cultural studies are able to make sense of these pseudo-scientific, idiosyncratic papers by interpreting them as discursive and material manifestations of a discursive context. Even the sketchiest document can be researched as a literary object of the time it was written in. The culturally minded historian can use speculative historic texts as a way to understand how past societies functioned and write an academic paper about them. The writer of the speculative historic text does usually not focus on a broader sense of culture in itself and is not

considered academic in its own right. Yet, both researchers are entangled in an interjection of the past, present and future, the personal and the objective, what is and what could have been. By dragging up speculative approaches in the academic field cultural studies might contribute to further confusion about the past by means of post-modern relativism. This is a confusing matter and not without its victims. Something about the historical objects, which are used in the writing of history books, gets lost when they are researched as a speculative object. A hypothetical fixation can contribute to cultural misinterpretation, but a reevaluation of this fixation can be just as bad. In this way the understanding of the past was perhaps never more difficult than at turning of the twenty-first century.

The extinct dodo bird can be considered a victim of this discursive approach to history. After the bird ceased to roam the earth in the sixteenth century very little of its particularities were known, which is why it soon fell in the realm of speculation. Nowadays, the dodo is considered an icon of extinction and each representation of the bird remind the viewer of its faith. The dodo is stripped from its physical, material essence and has become a container of human meaning. The way these birds are represented throughout time tells more about how individuals perceive the world and

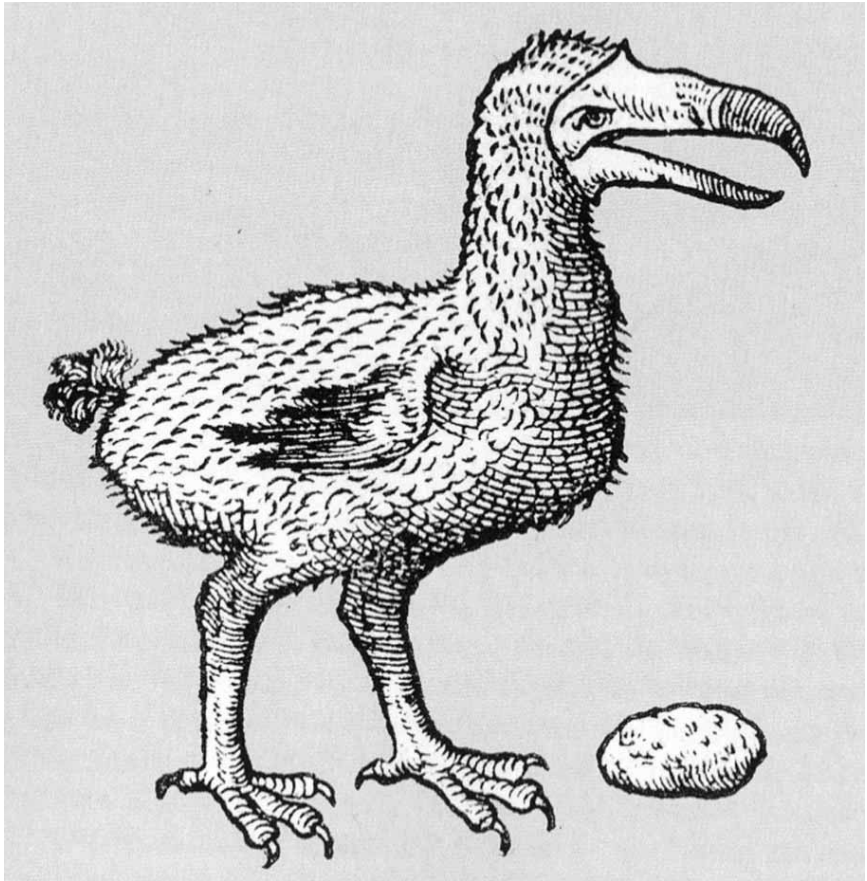
themselves, than about their corporeal appearance and behaviour. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why so much literature on the dodo has been written over the last two hundred years. Most of these texts try to clarify what the bird might have been like and try to distinguish between the iconic imaginary dodo and the real biological one that went extinct. Certain patterns emerge in this literature that tell a story in their own right.

Within this thesis I will address the way objects of cultural debate and imagination, such as the dodo, get reassessed within academic and speculative texts. By looking at different historical texts about the dodo, I will clarify what kind of metaphysical estrangement is constituted by a recursive approach to material objects. The dodo is a clear biological example of a shift in meaning and essence that can occur within the field of speculative and academic reevaluation of historical findings. Rather than retelling the account of the life and times of the bird this text aims to research the literature that has been written about it. A comparative study of both speculative and academic texts will show an entanglement between fact and fiction, which is very much embedded in the scholarly field. To show that the dodo is not a singular case and still present in contemporary studies text

will focus on the way *new media* approaches its own history. There is an uncanny resemblance between what we would now define as *dodology* and what media professors pinpoint as *media archaeology*. By comparing the two and highlighting the differences this text will shed light on what *dodology* can teach media archaeology and the other way around.

To attain this I will present an introduction to the way the dodo was depicted within biological encyclopaedias, also known as bestiaries, in chapter one. In the second chapter I will delve further into the matter of *dodology* as a cross-discipline and nineteenth century naturalists laid its foundation. Comparisons with *media archaeology* will be made in chapter three to show the way fact and fiction can overlap within a speculative field of research. Along the way we will answer what constitutes *dodology* and *media archaeology* and how they relate to their subject matter from a metaphysical viewpoint. In the end this text will make a speculation of its own.

Chapter 1. Bulky Bestiaries



Carolus Clusius, Illustration of a dodo and its gizzard stone, copied from an illustration in the journal of van Neck, which is now missing, 1605.

In the preceding introduction I commented that certain academics have the tendency to get carried away by their imagination. While this is often perceived as something unpleasant in the realm of strict scientific research, there are in fact countless approaches to scientific topics that are not concerned with the academic trajectory. These are often considered pseudo-sciences, because they are not part of the official methodical canon. An example of this is crypto-zoology, a type of research that is concerned with animals whose existence has not been proven.¹ The existence or non-existence of creatures such as Bigfoot, the Yeti and the monster of Loch Ness are regular sources for debate in this field of study. Intellectual explorations outside the realm of the known can be quite fruitful and should not be dismissed too hastily. To strengthen this point crypto-zoologists often refer to the discovery of the okapi. Up until 1901 this animal was known as the African unicorn and considered a myth that was only known from hearsay and a couple of ancient hieroglyphs (**Fig. 1**). Only after the British governor of Uganda, Sir Harry Johnston found some examples of the species and sent a skull and some bits of striped skin to England did the animal enter

¹ *Cryptozoology A to Z: The Encyclopedia Of Loch Monsters, Sasquatch,*

the system of modern animal classification as the *Okapia Johnstoni*.²

The taxonomic system of biological classification that is used nowadays is and very much embedded in an academic tradition. It is usually attributed to the Swedish botanist and zoologist, Carl Linnaeus. He developed his method in the first half of the eighteenth century and promoted it in books such as *Systema Naturae*.³ The need for a universal biological system was there because of the onslaught of biologists using their own idiosyncratic taxonomic systems. Besides re-classifications of the same species this also produced a lot of confusion. Before naturalists more or less universally accepted the system of Linnaeus, most encyclopedic works about the animal kingdom were a pretty messy affair. Sources were only moderately available and because of the lack of a general order it was hard to confirm previous claims. In an unexplored world without global communities it got really hard to distinguish between mythological beasts and existing animals. One of the most well known examples of this can be found in an early

² The African Okapi, A Beast Unknown To The Zoos, *The American Review Of Reviews* #57, Albert Shaw, 1918.

³ *Systema Naturae, sive regna tria naturae systematice proposita per classes, ordines, genera & species*, Carl Linnaeus, 1735.

bestiary called *Historiae Animalium*.⁴ This manuscript was written by professor Conrad Gesner and published between 1551-1558 and 1587 in Zurich. It is considered the first modern zoological work that tried to describe all the animals that were known to man at the time. Mythological creatures such as the unicorn were described and placed next to existing ones, such as the porcupine and the rhinoceros.

In 1669 Gesner's tome was translated from Latin to German and amended by Georgium Horstium.⁵ Between all the bizarre and incredible animals that already filled the pages of the bestiary there now roamed another peculiar animal. It was a recently discovered bird from the island of Mauritius known for its awful taste and enormous rear end. It was described for the first time by Dutch sailors in a report from 1598.⁶ They named the bird the dodo, which probably originates from the Dutch word *dodaers*, which meant something along the lines of 'fat-arse'. Horstium added the animal to the annotated version of Gesner's bestiary as the *Cygnus cuculatus*, which translates to 'cuckoolike swan' (**fig. 2**). The description of the animal, as

⁴ *Historiae Animalium*, Conrad Gesner, 1551-1558, 1587.

⁵ *Vogel-Buch / Zweyter Theil. Franckfurt am Mayn: In Verlegung Wilhelm Serlins Buchhändlers*: p. 93, Conrad Gesner, 1669.

⁶ "The journal of the flagship *Gelderland* – dodo and other birds on Mauritius 1601". *Archives of Natural History* **30** (1): pp. 13–27, J.P. Hume, 2003.

well as the picture that accompanied it, was based on the research of Carolus Clusius who described it in 1605.⁷ Clusius his description of the dodo was “based on observations of remains of the bird, such as a foot preserved at the house of a friend, the anatomist Peter Paauw, combined with the study of ship’s logs, wooden carvings and tales of sailors”.⁸ It is very likely that Horstium had never even seen remains of a dodo when he added Clusius’ description to Gesner’s encyclopedia. *Historiae Animalium* is full of illustrations of animals that the illustrators had never actually seen. Gesner based this illustration of a rhinoceros on a famous woodcut by Albrecht Dürer from 1515 (**fig 3**). Dürers famous and slightly misguided depiction of a rhinoceros was based on descriptions of an animal that visited Lissabon in 1515. A Moravian merchant and printer, Valentim Fernanded described the animal in a letter to a friend and accompanied it with a sketch. This letter made its way to Dürer who produced the Rhinoceros woodcuts that Gesner copied without ever having seen the creature himself.

Horstium would probably have not been aware that by the time he added the dodo to Gesner’s encyclopedia in 1669

⁷ *Exoticorum decem libris*, Carolus Clusius, 1605.

⁸ *Return of the Crazy Bird: The Sad, Strange Tale of the Dodo*: p. 136, Clara Pinto Correia, 2003.

the animal was in all likelihood almost completely extinct. There are no more or less undisputed claims of dodo sightings from after 1662. In this year a sailor called Volkert Evertszen got marooned on a small island a little off the coast from Mauritius and claimed to have seen some specimens.⁹ Besides a few stuffed specimens that had reached Europe some decennia earlier the creature was all but lost by the end of the seventeenth century. For the scientific community these relics of the extinct bird sufficed as proof of its existence. It was not common for researchers to travel far distances. Research was mostly based on dead specimens brought along by travelers. Modern researchers regard historical descriptions of the dodo with some relativism. Travelers often let their imagination run wild and this was certainly the case with a bird as strange as the dodo. For instance, François Cauche, a Frenchman who took a trip to Mauritius claimed the bird had no tongue and placed a stone “the size of a chicken’s egg” next to its real egg which was “quite as large as a penny bun”.¹⁰ For a long time Clusius’ contemporary description was seen as the most reliable, even though it was also based on secondary sources. A

⁹ The report got published in *Orientalische Reisbeschreibung*, Adam Olearius, 1669.

¹⁰ Published in *Relations véritable et curieuses de l’Isle de Madagascar et du Brésil*, François Cauche, 1651.

need for reconsideration rose in the eighteenth century. By 1755 nearly all physical dodo remains in Europe had been destroyed by moth and fire. In this year the stuffed bird that was kept in the Ashmole's museum was ordered by the museum's Vice-Chancellor and the other trustees to be destroyed because of the bad condition it was in. Only a claw and a skull were saved from the flames and until new dodo bones were found on Mauritius in 1865 these, together with a foot kept at the British Museum, were the only physical remains of the bird available in England.¹¹ The dodo seized to roam in the minds of men and some biologists even claimed that the bird had never existed to begin with. They wanted to remove bird from the biological canon and condemn it to the realm of fiction. It took a quite fierce debate between several prominent biologists to clear this matter up. In the process a new field of study was born which would be recycled over the course of the next one hundred and fifty years: *Dodology*.

¹¹ *The Dodo: From Extinction to Icon*: pp. 116-123, Errol Fuller, 2003.

Chapter 2. Dodgy Dodology



Plate from Strickland and Melville's The Dodo And Its Kindred from 1848 depicting an anatomic study of the Ashmole's Museum skull.

The word *dodology* did not exist at the time that the first naturalists who studied the bird popped up. It is a tag that was added to their research with the benefit of hindsight by practicing *dodologists* at the turn of the twenty-first century. Most dictionaries do not even contain the expression. Only in modern literature is it used to refer to any serious study of the dodo.¹² It is a field of research that stretches over various disciplines. To provide a comprehensive history of the dodo and its cultural meaning one has to write about paintings, nautical history, biology, palaeontology and literature. The creature encourages a multi-disciplinary approach. Apparently it is more than just an extinct bird whose physical properties need to be determined.

By the turn of the nineteenth century the dodo was mostly a hypothetical creature. Few physical remains were left and texts that described the bird were not entirely convincing. There were a few portraits in existence that depicted the dodo, but their reliability was questioned. Nobody was sure what the dodo looked like, how it behaved, to what family it belonged and why it went extinct. This final question is perhaps one of the more interesting enigmas surrounding the dodo. The matter of extinction stirred up a very lively debate at the time

¹² Correia, 2003: pp. 133-176.

that research on the dodo recommenced in the midst of the nineteenth century. The idea that mankind could lead an entire species into extinction was not as universally accepted as it is today. There was a widespread creationist belief that God had created all tangible animal life in a consistent form that did not change over time. Naturalists who developed theories that incorporated these abnormalities explained anything that indicated otherwise.

An example of this can be found in the widespread idea of Lamarckian inheritance, which was developed from 1809 onwards and named after the French biologist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck.¹³ Lamarckism incorporates the idea that organisms pass on features that it acquired during its life to its descendants. The concept can be brought back to the catchphrase “use it or lose it”. Lamarck still works from the idea of a creationist god and is able to define abnormalities as a form of degeneration from an original concept. This creationist belief would become one of the more prominent opponents of evolutionary thought in the second half of the nineteenth century.

¹³ The outlines of his theory are given in *Philosophie zoologique ou exposition des considérations relatives à l'histoire naturelle des animaux*, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, 1809.

The dodo stumbled in the midst of this debate when Sir Richard Owen, who is perhaps now best known as an outspoken opponent to Darwin's *Origin Of Species*, took up research on the creature.¹⁴ Nowadays Owen is sometimes portrayed as a villain, due to some unfortunate plagiarism scandals and a feisty temperament in debate, but he was also a brilliant comparative biologist and one of the big names of the natural history museum before evolutionary thought took over the scene. His research on the *Dinornithidae* or Giant Moa, an extinct giant bird species from New Zealand, made him the perfect candidate to study the dodo (**fig. 4**).¹⁵ Owen jumped into the field of *dodology* with a paper called *Observations on the Dodo* that was presented to the public in July 1846.¹⁶ Twenty years later, in 1866, he would publish *Memoir of the Dodo*, which is an example of careful comparative biology.¹⁷ Owen measured and analysed the few dodo remains that were available at the time and speculated about the physical

¹⁴ *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, Charles Darwin, 1859.

¹⁵ "On the remains of *Dinornis*, an extinct gigantic struthious bird". *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*: pp. 8–10, 144–146, Richard Owen, 1843.

¹⁶ "On *Dinornis*," *Transactions of the Zoological Society of London III*: pp. 235, 307, 345, Richard Owen, 1839-1848.

¹⁷ *Memoir of the Dodo, *Didus Ineptus* (Linn)*, Richard Owen, 1866.

appearance of the bird. Owen attempted to make the first anatomically correct reconstruction of a complete dodo skeleton (**Fig. 5**).

By the time Owen published his reconstruction of the dodo in 1866 the existence of the bird was no longer disputed. There had been other studies that tried to make sense of all the speculation that surrounded the topic. The most significant of these is probably *The Dodo and its Kindred*, which was published in 1848 and written by H.E. Strickland and A.G. Melville.¹⁸ This book compared physical sources, literature and paintings. It is an example of early comparative culture studies that distinguishes between truth and fantasy. Owen would later adopt this approach in *Memoir of the Dodo* by working with the naturalist William John Broderip who provided the preface for the booklet.

Both Strickland and Owen had tried to distinguish between myth and fact and both seemed to agree on the credibility of particular accounts and depictions. However, they had a difference in opinion when it came to declaring where the strange morphology of the dodo came from. Their debate happened on the level of scientific interpretation. The

¹⁸ *The dodo and its kindred or, The history, affinities, and osteology of the dodo, solitaire, and other extinct birds of the islands Mauritius, Rodriguez and Bourbon*, H. E. Strickland and A.G. Melville, 1848.

dodo was considered to be an example of *paedomorphosis*, which is the retention by adults of traits that are previously seen only in the young. In the dodo this is evident by the small size of its wings and chick-like plumage. Strickland was very much a disciple of Darwin's evolutionary theory and saw the appearance of the dodo as the result of it fitting in with its surrounding circumstances. The dodo would have been fit for the conditions on Mauritius and extinction should be contributed to the outside influence of man. Owen however, was very much a supporter of Lamarck's morphology theory and saw the small size of the wings as a sort of degeneration that went against the concept of the original bird as it was some ages ago. For him, the dodo was a degenerate malformation, doomed for extinction. The idea that species were the result of anything else, such as evolution, as Strickland and Darwin suggested, was laughable to him: "This notion of type-forms or centres, unfortunately, has not merely relation to abstract biological speculations or theories, but to practical questions on which the true progress of Natural History vitally depends."¹⁹ There was no conclusion to this discussion. Whatever the case was, the dodo failed to adapt to its most recent changes in circumstances.

¹⁹ Owen, 1866.

After the pioneering studies by Strickland and Owen several enigmas surrounding the dodo were cleared up, but some were not. Unfortunately, the original sources on which their research was based could not answer all the questions that remained. This produced discussion and speculation that was fuelled by the scientific concepts of the time. While the original comparative studies of Owen and Strickland remain more or less the same in later *dodology* studies, this theoretical factor changes over time. Besides the findings of new bones and new anatomic reconstructions few things changed in the literature that was produced after 1866. *Dodology* papers began to consist of reiterations of a couple of undeniable facts produced by source material with an addition of less objective speculation.

One of the more noteworthy examples of this is A.C. Oudemans *Dodo-Studiën* from 1917.²⁰ In this book the Dutch zoologist used the alleged finding of the image of a dodo in a gable stone from 1561 as an excuse for his own speculation on the travels of the dodo to Europe (**fig. 6**). Not only was this idea particularly far-fetched, it was also a little too sensational when it is taken into account that the first acknowledged mention of the dodo was made in 1598, 37 years after the

²⁰ *Dodo-studiën; Naar aanleiding van de vondt van een gevelsteen met dodo-beeld van 1561 te Vere*, Anthonie Cornelis Oudemans, 1917.

production of the stone. The fact that the text under the image of the bird tells it's an ostrich also does not help. Such excessive historic guesswork is only possible when the *dodologist* is in search of new silent witnesses and ignores previous sources.

It would have been nice if Oudemans claims would have been a little more likely, for it is tough to escape the feeling that the same basic ideas get repeated over and over again in *dodology*. The same historical eye witnesses are dragged up, the same bones and skulls measured and the same pictures are being analysed. Sometimes this is done from the perspective of a veterinarian.²¹ At other times an art historian sheds some light on the matter.²² In the process not many new discoveries are made about the dodo, except the occasional find of a new image that Strickland and Owen did not know of (**fig. 7**). However, the continuous speculation about the creature, mixed with its recycling as an image in popular culture lengthen the span of material that *dodologists* can study. In 1865 the writer and mathematician Lewis Carroll introduced the dodo as a character in *Alice in wonderland* and gave the

²¹ *Het dodo mysterie: de dodo gezien door de ogen van een dierenarts*, Gerard Th. F. Kaal, 2012.

²² *Uiterlijk van de dodo*, Eline Levering, 2009.

bird another life in the public imagination.²³ Though the physical dodo is dead and *dodology* is basically a recycled discourse from the nineteenth century, the human interest in extinct animals makes it as much alive as ever. As long as people stay fascinated with the bird dodologists have something to study.

²³ *Alice In Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll, 1865.

Chapter 3. Miscellaneous media



John Tenniel's illustration of the dodo in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland from 1865.

In the previous chapter naturalists researched the dodo by means of physical material. Studying the dodo required both a strong emphasis on material sources and a speculative approach to the subject matter. *Dodology* is the study of something which is evidently lost and of which only referential matter remains. Studying references to references has become a specific field of study in itself. The scientific reconstruction of the dodo by Owen, combined with the popular reimagining by Carroll was the start of something that can be described as a dodo craze. From 1865 and onward the dodo reappeared in illustrations and literature countless times.²⁴ Sometimes the bird represents extinction, since it was one of the first animals to raise awareness on this topic. At other times the dodo is just a cuddly plush toy (**fig. 8**).

The modern *dodologist* not only has to make sense of the actual dodo that walked across the island of Mauritius, but also of these later reincarnations of the dodo. I previously emphasized the fact that *dodology* borrows academic tools from various disciplines. It could be said that if there would be a single specific academic approach that is manifested in its practice it is this eclectic method. One particular view on the

²⁴ There are just too many examples to highlight a single one, but perhaps the appearance of the dodo in the national crest of Mauritius is pretty telling.

dodo never suffices. This approach is very similar to the academic practice of cultural studies, which is characteristically interdisciplinary. Just like with *dodology* a large number of sources are being used to theorize about a more or less vague and unintelligible concept. One of these concepts is *new media*.²⁵ Media are objects that store or deliver information or data. As such, they are containers of something else. Researchers concerned with new media are interested in the interplay between these containers, their information and the people who use them.

The dodo can be considered as a speculative object since the arrival of its popular imagery. Certain concepts and ideas get projected on the bird, which make it a container of information. These are spread by means of fiction on a commercial and mediated level. The link between media and dodo's is not so far fetched. There is even a field of media studies that focuses on 'extinct' media of which few historical sources are left. This is 'media archaeology'. The term existed long before the books that tried to define it were written.²⁶ The fact that it got defined as an alternative discipline was mostly

²⁵ Crystallized within *The New Media Reader*, Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort, 2003.

²⁶ An example of this is *Digital Contagions: A Media Archaeology of Computer Viruses*, Jussi Parikka, 2007.

because new media researchers found it necessary to set themselves apart from the more contemporary study of *New Media*.

Erkki Huhtamo stresses in the introduction of his guidebook to media archaeology that “studies of new media often share a disregard for the past”.²⁷ “Media Archaeologists have challenged the rejection of history by modern media culture and theory alike by pointing out hitherto unnoticed continuities and ruptures. As a consequence, the area for media studies has been pushed back by centuries and extended beyond the western world. On the basis of their discoveries media archaeologists have begun to construct alternate histories of suppressed, neglected and forgotten media that do not point teleologically to the present media-cultural condition as their “perfection.” Dead ends, losers and inventions that never made it into a material product have important stories to tell.”²⁸

The dodo, like the neglected media that Huhtamo writes about, is ‘a loser’ in more than one way. Nowadays there is a general awareness of it having existed, but knowledge of the bird from before it went extinct is limited

²⁷ *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*: p.1, Erkki Huhtamo, 2011.

²⁸ Erkki Huhtamo, 2011: p. 3.

and unfortunately irretrievable. Fact and myth were untangled in the nineteenth century in biological studies, but with the absence of the bird itself questions remained. These were filled up by imagination, resulting in a public doppelgänger of the dodo, estranged from its material source. The image of a fat, clumsy bird, informed by the repeated depiction of imaginary pictures, replaced the actual bird and shoved aside the research done by Strickland and Owen (**fig. 9**).

It is necessary to have some understanding of a historical legacy in order to speculate within the boundaries of a topic. The primal focus of *New Media* on recent developments, such as the rise of social media and global economy might produce new myths if research is carried out without addressing a larger historical context. *New Media* is already perceived and depicted as both a futuristic utopian apparatus that takes humanity to the next step²⁹ and as an evil commoditised structure that estranges mankind from its essence.³⁰ Mythmaking is already in the work and has been doing this since the dawn of mankind. Without an understanding on a larger media tradition speculation on

²⁹ *Cyberspace Odyssey. Towards a Virtual Ontology and Anthropology*, Jos de Mul, 2010.

³⁰ *You Are Not a Gadget: A Manifesto*, Jaron Lanier, 2011.

contemporary matters can flutter around without any guided sense and result in new media orientated myths.

The early history of modern media is one of showmen and countless variations of crossover entertainment, starting vividly from the eighteenth century. Dioramas, moving panoramas and phantasmagoria filled the fairs. Historical sources of these are scarce. The actual contraptions are usually not around, while advertisements for these are **(fig. 10)**. At the same time these descriptions on these are usually regarded with some suspicion, as they tend to overstate matters such as their size and length. In a way a scrutinizing source related study of moving panoramas such as Huhtamo's *Illusions In Motion* shares a lot of similarities with Strickland's *The Dodo And Its Kindred*.³¹ After Huhtamo has examined all the remaining historical sources not all questions surrounding the contraptions will be answered. Only through speculation will later media archaeologists be able to answer the remaining enigmas. The importance of a particular panorama, what kind of audience it attracted and what it depicted can no longer be found. There is a limit to what can be known, but no limit to what researchers want to know.

³¹ *Illusions in motion: Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles*, Erkki Huhtamo, 2013.

Perhaps media archaeology is a pretty old fashioned approach to media to begin with. It was after all a reply to the tendency of media studies to look ‘forward’. It could be, however, that an archaeological approach to material objects is the only proper way to deal with the ‘extinct’. And perhaps ‘the losers’ of history which are constantly reassessed are more concrete than ‘the winners’ of today. Ever since the entry of *New Media* on a social discursive level there have been theorists who tried to define it, hoping to pinpoint either the current state we are living in or to predict future trends that are bound to happen. This speculative approach, that studies that which is actually present, did not bring media studies closer to the core of the matter.

In the three years since Huhtamo released his introduction to media archaeology the field of media studies seems already strangely altered. It could be said that the slightly utopian technological fancy that was so typical at the turn of the twentieth century has given way to pessimism, either in the form of anti-futurism³², anti-media³³ or anti-retro.³⁴ Speculative cultural studies of media, either old or new, are regarded with as scepticism as their subject matter.

³² *Imaginary Futures*, Richard Barbrook, 2005.

³³ *Anti-Media: Ephemera On Speculative Arts*, Florian Cramer, 2013.

³⁴ *Retromania*, Simon Reynolds, 2011.

With the aging of the field of *New* a more historical approach has infiltrated the field. Any form of avant-garde or utopia at one point stops moving, revolving around itself and starts redefining itself. With this comes a historical appreciation of the movement, which bring an archaeological approach with it. Few life changing media have been introduced in the last couple of years. The rise of media archaeology comes not out of thin air.

All that can be objectively known about the dodo had already been discovered by the end of the nineteenth century. After this followed a reevaluation of these discoveries and an expansion on them by means of footnotes. The actual dodo remained dead, while a speculative iconic dodo grew. It is not unlikely that something similar is bound to happen with *new media*. *Dodology* now focuses on the fictional incarnations of the bird as a study object in its own right. While dodo's and media are very different from each other from the outset, the way they are defined by fact and fancy is very alike and might pinpoint to a future state of affairs.

Conclusion



Photograph of a reconstructed dodo, reflecting new research. It was taken at an exhibition at the Oxford Museum of Natural History in 2011.

For some years now there has been talk of reviving the dodo with the use of genetic cloning. It is not the only animal that scientists wish to bring from the dead. There has been talk of reviving mammoths, Tasmanian tigers and passenger pigeons. Every animal that ever fell into calamity and humanity wishes back might be brought back with the help of modern biology. The recycled dodo would be proof of mankind's power over the animal kingdom and set matters right that indeed went very wrong some time ago. Science would be able to correct history. Unfortunately, the fact that the dodo had gone extinct cannot be corrected so easily. The resurrected dodo would still be the product of speculation, since the remaining biological gaps of what is known about the bird have to be filled up by human guesswork. The resurrected dodo would not be the same bird as the one that went extinct in the seventeenth century.

This text was never about the morphology of the dodo, but about the way fact and fancy enter its iconic realm through human speculation with a little help of science. It was about how human beings tend to the past by means of material sources and use its matter to shape the present and the future. Speculation functions as a feedback loop, it creates interest and from this interest new speculation rises. The interest in

cloning the dodo originates from human interest and gets new people interested. Cloning might be a tool of correctional power within the realm of history, but speculation does the same on a conceptual level.

Before the foundation of the modern university with its standardized scientific methods in the seventeenth century, the dodo entered the animal realm in a fictional menagerie filled with mythical creatures such as unicorns and phoenixes. After it went extinct, its legendary status grew, until Victorian scientists started researching the physical remains of the bird methodically. Unfortunately, with the absence of the bird itself, everything that could not be determined by material sources had to be theorized over and the bird remained part speculation forever. Popular culture and imagery redefined the dodo as a fat and clumsy bird, an icon of extinction that was doomed from the start.

At this point fictional reconstructions of the dodo became part of the study material for *dodologists*. Cultural studies got mixed in the discussion and the dodo turned out to be so unlike *media archaeology*. Both are concerned with subject matters of which little historical sources remain and both theorize and speculate about what these cannot tell to answer certain questions. With a sort of pessimism reigning in

the realm of *new media* studies at the moment, it is not very unlikely that media studies will start to revolve around itself and study its own speculative myths as *dodology* is doing right now.

There is no conclusion to this matter. The past gets reiterated again and again while the present gets redefined in conjunction with the redefinition of the past. Myths become truths and truths become myths. It seems only appropriate that this paper ends with a speculation of its own. What is new now is old tomorrow and might become speculative texts that can become the source material for new discussions and fiction. The more enigmatic and scarce an object turns out to be, the more appeal it will have for future times. Without theoretic guesswork academic research would become boring for those who write it. Everything belongs to the past, present and future at all times, as long as there is something to point that out; be it man or dodo.

Images



Fig. 1. Relief detail of what is considered to be an okapi at the Apadana palace at Persepolis in Iran. The animal in the relief is being led by Ethiopians as Tribute. The building of the palace commenced in 515 BCE.

Cygnus cuculatus.



Clusius erzehlet daß die Holländer diese seltsame Schwanen auß der Insel Cygnea il ha docirne oder Schwanen Insel gebracht haben/und beschreibet sie also: dieser fremde Vogel ist so groß/oder fast größer als ein Schwan/von welchen er aber sich weit unterscheidet/was die Gestalt des Leibes betrifft/ dann dieser Vogel einen dicken Kopff hat/welcher gleichsam mit einer Kappe bedeckt/auch keinen breiten/ sondern einen dicken langē Schnabel hat / dessen Obertheil dunkelgelb biß auff die Spitze / so schwarz ist. Der Untertheil aber ziehet sich auff blaw. In dem ganzen Leib hat er dünne und kurze Federn. Er hat keine Flügel/sondern an stat derer 4 oder 5 lange schwarze Federn. Der Hintertheil dieses Vogels soll gar stark und fett seyn/ woran er anstatt des Schwanzes 4. oder 3. aschenfarbe krause Federn über sich stehē hat. Seine Beine sind nach Gestalt des Leibes stark/welche oben umb das Knie mit schwarzen

Federn bedeket/am Untertheil aber dunkelgelb sind. In den Füßen soll dieser Vogel nur 2. Zehen habē/alle mit schwarzen Klawen versehen. Nierenbergius gedencket/daß er bey Petro Pavvio ein Bein von solchē Schwanen gesehen/welches von dem Fuß biß zu dem Knie nicht mehr als 4. Zoll lang/aber das Bein in die Runde gemessen 4. Zoll dicke gewesen seyn. Fornen seyn das Bein mit grossen/hinten aber mit kleinen Schuppen bedeket gewesen/ deßgleichen auch die Füße oben waren / unten aber sollen sie ganz dickschwällicht seyn. Nach Gestalt der dicken Bein/ sol dieser Vogel kurze Zehen haben/und sollen die mittelfsten und längsten nur 2. Zoll/die nebenstehende kürzer/un die hinterste kau einen halben Zoll lāg seyn. Die Klauē sollen hergegen lang seyn/und sonderlich die hinterste über einen Zoll hinauff gehen.

Die Schiffer haben diesen Schwanen den Nahmen gegeben Walghvogel/einen Vogel welcher Eckel erregt/theils weil er von hartem Fleisch und übel zu vertawen/theils aber/daß sie in gedachter Insel besser Geflügel angetroffen. In ihren Magen/haben sich unterschiedliche Stein befunden/deren einer Nierenbergius bey diesem Vogel abmahlen lassen/aber zu muhtmassen ist/daß solche nicht bey ihnen gewachsen/sondern zu besserer Vertawung nach aller Vogel Artz/an dem Ufer aufgelesen haben. Die weil diese Insel ganz wüst und unbewohnt ist/sollen diese Vogel so zahlr seyn/daß sie vor keinem Menschen weichen/sondern sich schlagen und fangen lassen.

Fig 2. Page 83 of the amended German translation of Gesner's *Historiae Animalium* from 1669 depicting Clusius' research of the dodo.



decem, ut ipse mensuravit, longitudine excedit: & diameter eius in radice sesquipalmum, (sequis lo-
sarem intelligo,) superabat, Hæc ille, in sepe autem facit, primam quod a sinam Indicum ex Aristo-
te libens solipedem esse, mox rhinocerotem animal bisulcum interpretatur; deinde, quod rhino-
mitem & unicornem confundit; tertio, quod archa uel archos Arabicum nomen faciens libro se-
cundo, (corruptum forte à uoce karas,) duodecimo principem interpretatur ac si Græca esset. Sed et
proceritas ista cornu, decem pedes excedens, rhinoceroti puto non conuenit, sed monoceroti carta-
bono, nam Oppianus rhinocerotis cornu paruum (hoc est breue, Gillius quoque paruum transferit)
ita scribit: *διότι τὸ κούριον παρὰ τὴν ῥινοκέρατος ἀνὴρ ἀνὰ τὴν ἀσπίδα ἐξέρχεται.* Quod si quis uerbum *διότι*
non ad cornu quantitate, sed ad loci distantiam referat, hoc sensu: paulo supra extremum narium
oritur, & acutissimum cornu oritur: nos tamen ex ipsa picture quam ad usum dedimus, propo-
nere, cornu breue esse conuincemus: nam cum supra nates incipiat, & multo infra aures declinat,

Fig. 3. Page 953 of Gesner's *Historiae Animalium* made somewhere between 1551 and 1558, depicting a rhinoceros inspired by a picture made by Albrecht Durer in 1515.



Fig. 4. A photograph of sir Richard Owen with the skeleton. The picture is taken from *Memoirs on the extinct winfless birds of New Zealand: Vol. 2. plate XCVII*, Richard Owen, 1879.

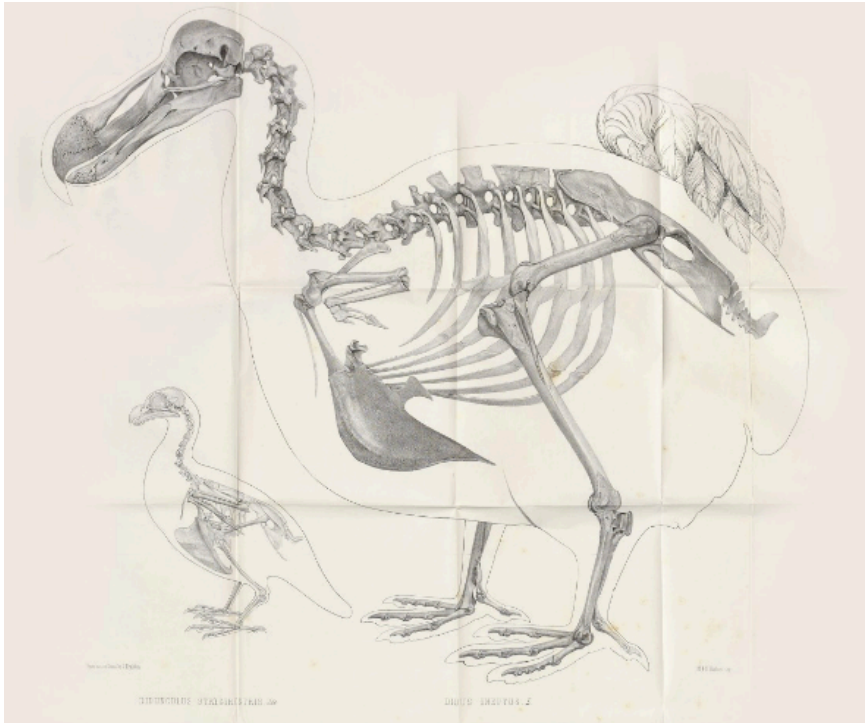


Fig. 5. Lithographic Plate from Richard Owen's *Memoir of the Dodo* (1865) depicting a speculative reconstruction of its bone structure.



Fig .6. Photograph of the façade of *het Schotsche huis* in Vere with the presumed dodo gable stone. The picture is taken from Oudemans' *Dodo-studiën* (1917).



Fig. 7. Sketch of a dodo head by Cornelis Saftleven from 1638, which may be one of the last illustrations made of a living dodo.



Fig. 8. Photograph of a plush dodo toy, which is sold online for 35 dollars a piece.



Fig. 9. Movie still from the digitally animated movie *Ice Age* (2002), depicting three fat, clumsy dodos.

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Fig. 10. An original advertisement of the myriopticon, a moving panorama from the nineteenth century.

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