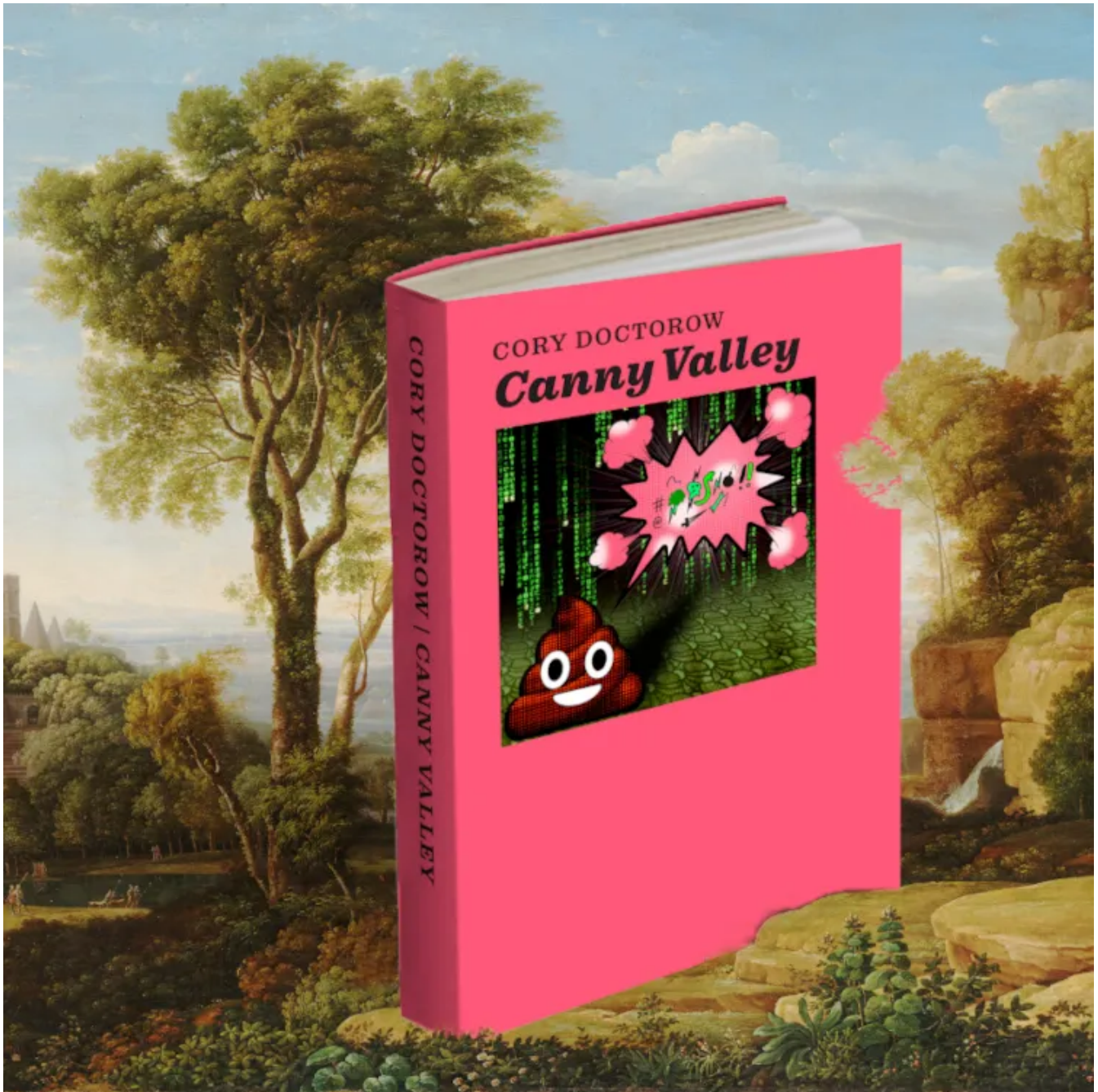


Pluralistic: Daily links from Cory Doctorow

No trackers, no ads. Black type, white background. Privacy policy: we don't collect or retain any data at all ever period.

Pluralistic: Canny Valley and Creative Commons (10 Apr 2026)



Today's links

- 👁 [Canny Valley and Creative Commons](#): Another bite at the apple.
- 👁 [Hey look at this](#): Delights to delectate.
- 👁 [Object permanence](#): Bidenomics needs to be bigger; Al Franken's balanced war budget; Bernie x The Pope; Art is a money-laundry; UK

government condemns copyright trolls; Howard Dean's genocidal pharma sellout.

- 👁 [Upcoming appearances](#): Montreal, Toronto, San Francisco, London, Berlin, NYC, Hay-on-Wye, London.
- 👁 [Recent appearances](#): Where I've been.
- 👁 [Latest books](#): You keep readin' em, I'll keep writin' 'em.
- 👁 [Upcoming books](#): Like I said, I'll keep writin' 'em.
- 👁 [Colophon](#): All the rest.



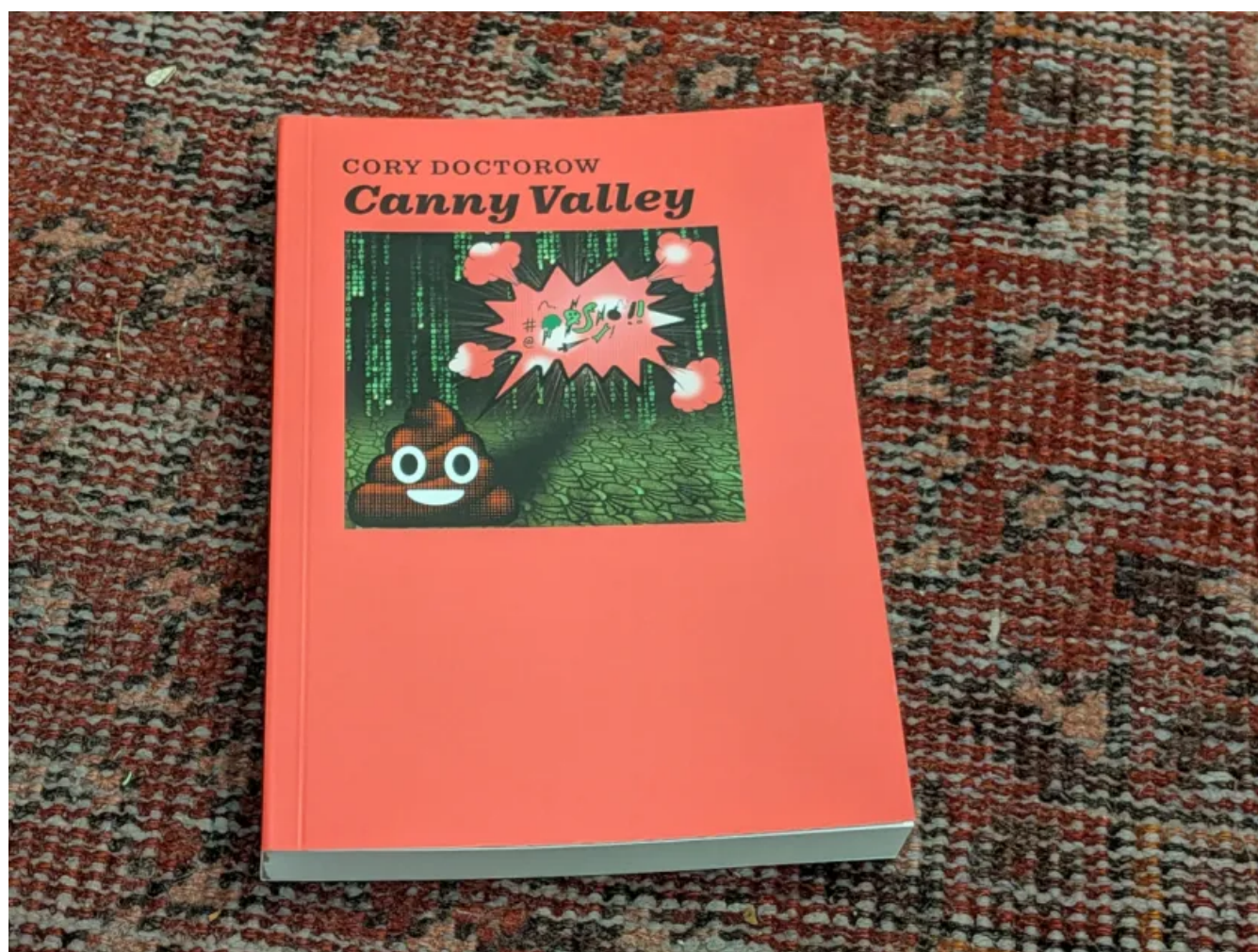
Canny Valley and Creative Commons
([permalink](#))

Last year, I ran a wildly successful Kickstarter campaign to pre-sell my ebooks, audiobooks and hardcovers of my book *Enshittification*, which went on to be an international bestseller, selling out 10 printings in the first 11 weeks:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/doctorow/enshittification-the-drm-free-audiobook>

If you'd like an essay-formatted version of this thread to read or share, here's a link to it on pluralistic.net, my surveillance-free, ad-free, tracker-free blog:

<https://pluralistic.net/2026/04/10/canny-valley#limited-edition>



I've done many of these Kickstarter campaigns now, and I always try to come up with something special for backers – some limited edition

book or tchotchke that lets me scratch my own itch for making beautiful physical things, and also lets a few backers splash out on a truly special item. I've come up with some doozies, like:

- A hand-copied manuscript for the original, never-before-seen ending for my novel *Little Brother*

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/doctorow/attack-surface-audiobook-for-the-third-little-brother-book/rewards>

- Hand-annotated pages making fun of Robert Bork's *The Antitrust Paradox*, displayed in shadow boxes:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/doctorow/chokepoint-capitalism-an-audiobook-amazon-wont-sell/rewards>

- A leather bound, *extremely* limited edition copy of *Red Team Blues*, with a secret miniature bound copy of the unedited manuscript for *The Bezzle* in a hidden cavity:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/doctorow/red-team-blues-another-audiobook-that-amazon-wont-sell/rewards>

- And, for *Enshittification*, *Canny Valley*, a limited edition book of my collage illustrations from Pluralistic, made from Creative Commons and public domain sources, with an introduction by Bruce Sterling:

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/doctorow/enshittification-the-drm-free-audiobook/rewards>

I put 100 copies of *Canny Valley* up for sale in the *Enshittification* Kickstarter and *all* of them sold out in a matter of days. However, as promised at the time, there is a second chance to get a copy of the

book, through the Creative Commons 25th anniversary fundraiser, which has just kicked off:

<https://mailchi.mp/creativecommons/were-turning-25-book-giveaway>

The whole print run for *Canny Valley* was limited to 500 copies, and it is the only run I will do for the book. 100 copies were sold to Kickstarter backers, I kept 25 for myself, and the remaining 375 are now available as a thank-you gift for people who make tax-deductible gifts to CC.

I have been a great supporter of Creative Commons since its inception – literally, I was around when Aaron Swartz, Matt Haughey and Lisa Rein worked with Larry Lessig to design the data scheme and user interface to create, use and re-use Creative Commons licenses. My debut novel, *Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom*, was the first book ever released under a CC license:

<https://craphound.com/down/download>

Creative Commons arose out of the copyright wars of the early 2000s, in which the severe deficiencies of using copyright as the primary form of internet regulation were becoming ever clearer. Then – as now – the internet was filling up with material that everyday people produced together, incorporating one another's work, as well as popular works that had meaning to them. Virtually all of this material violated copyright law, and bringing it into compliance would cost hundreds of billions of dollars in billable lawyer hours to draft, negotiate and sign all the licenses needed to avoid both criminal and civil liability.

That's where CC came in: a team of international lawyers standardized a set of legal licenses that did something new and necessary: facilitated sharing and remix, rather than restricting them. Simply apply a CC license to your work – say, a Wikipedia contribution, a

Flickr photo, or a story on A03 – and others would be able to reproduce, adapt and recombine that work with other CC licensed works. What's more, thanks to the heroic efforts of the international CC team, these licenses were able to span borders, languages and legal systems, meaning that a Japanese animator can create a short based on a French story, using Australian 3D assets and a Croatian soundtrack:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/list.en>

It's hard to overstate what a heroic feat of lawyering this is. Making a set of documents that allows creativity to spread freely across 45+ (often very different) legal systems is arguably the most ambitious piece of applied IP legal research ever undertaken. Today, *tens of billions* of works are CC licensed, including (to name just one example), all of Wikipedia.

I rely heavily on CC licensed works to make the images that run over my posts on Pluralistic, my CC-licensed newsletter. I combine these with public domain images in the GIMP (a powerful free/open Photoshop replacement that runs GNU/Linux, MacOS and Windows) to make my collages, which you can download in high-rez (and freely re-use, thanks to the CC licenses I apply to each of them) from this Flickr set of 350+ items:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/doctorow/albums/72177720316719208?sd>

Canny Valley collects 80 of my favorite collages in a *beautiful* book that was printed on 100lb Mohawk paper on an Indigo digital offset printer and bound with PVA glue that will last a century, at Pasadena's Typecraft, a family-owned print shop that's been in business for more than 100 years:

<https://www.typecraft.com/live2/who-we-are.html>

It was designed by the type legend John D Berry:

<https://johndberry.com/>

And the introduction was written by my friend and mentor, the cyberpunk pioneer and digital art impresario Bruce Sterling:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Sterling



I published a long post that explained my creative process last year, including Bruce's intro (which is also CC licensed). I'm going to reproduce Bruce's intro below, but you can read the whole post here:

<https://pluralistic.net/2025/09/04/illustrious/#chairman-bruce>

I love these little books and I love that there's a chance for a few more people to lay hands on their own – and I *especially* love that this will support Creative Commons, an organization that produces digital public goods for a new, good internet:

<https://mailchi.mp/creativecommons/were-turning-25-book-giveaway>

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INTRODUCTION

by Bruce Sterling

In 1970 a robotics professor named Masahiro Mori discovered a new problem in aesthetics. He called this "bukimi no tani genshō."

The Japanese robots he built were functional, so the "bukimi no tani" situation was not an engineering problem. It was a deep and basic problem in the human perception of humanlike androids.

 A flayed human face with huge, staring eyes, held open with cruel calipers. The calipers' handles bear the 'As Seen On TV' logos. In the center of each pupil is an Amazon Prime logo. Behind this figure is a static-distorted title card for a K-Tel record of the month club ad.

Humble assembly robots, with their claws and swivels, those looked okay to most people. Dolls, puppets and mannequins, those also looked okay.

Living people had always aesthetically looked okay to people. Especially, the pretty ones.

However, between these two realms that the late Dr Mori was gamely attempting to weld together – the world of living mankind and of the

pseudo-man-like machine— there was an artistic crevasse. Anything in this "Uncanny Valley" looked, and felt, severely not-okay. These overdressed robots looked and felt so eerie that their creator's skills became actively disgusting. The robots got prettier, but only up to a steep verge. Then they slid down the precipice and became zombie doppelgangers.



That's also the issue with the aptly-titled "Canny Valley" art collection here. People already know how to react aesthetically to traditional graphic images. Diagrams are okay. Hand-drawn sketches and cartoons are also okay. Brush-made paintings are mostly fine. Photographs, those can get kind of dodgy.



Digital collages that slice up and weld highly disparate elements like diagrams, cartoons, sketches and also photos and paintings, those trend toward the uncanny.

The pixel-juggling means of digital image-manipulation are not art-traditional pencils or brushes. They do not involve the human hand, or maybe not even the human eye, or the human will. They're not fixed on paper or canvas; they're a Frankenstein mash-up landscape of tiny colored screen-dots where images can become so fried that they look and feel "cursed." They're conceptually gooey congelations, stuck in the valley mire of that which is and must be neither this-nor-that.



A modern digital artist has billions of jpegs in files, folders, clouds and buckets. He's never gonna run out of weightless grist from that mill.

Why would Cory Doctorow – novelist, journalist, activist, opinion columnist and so on – want to lift his typing fingers from his lettered keyboard, so as to create graphics with cut-and-paste and "lasso tools"?



Cory Doctorow also has some remarkably tangled, scandalous and precarious issues to contemplate, summarize and discuss. They're not his scandalous private intrigues, though. Instead, they're scandalous public intrigues. Or, at least Cory struggles to rouse some public indignation about these intrigues, because his core topics are the tangled penthouse/slash/underground machinations of billionaire web moguls.

Cory really knows really a deep dank lot about this uncanny nexus of arcane situations. He explains the shameful disasters there, but they're difficult to capture without torrents of unwieldy tech jargon.

I think there are two basic reasons for this.

The important motivation is his own need to express himself by some method other than words.

I'm reminded here of the example of H. G. Wells, another science fiction writer turned internationally famous political pundit. HG Wells was quite a tireless and ambitious writer – so much so that he almost matched the torrential output of Cory Doctorow.



But HG Wells nevertheless felt a compelling need to hand-draw cartoons. He called them "picshuas." These hundreds of "picshuas" were rarely made public. They were usually sketched in the margins of his hand-written letters. Commonly the picshuas were aimed at his second wife, the woman he had renamed "Jane." These picshuas were caricatures, or maybe rapid pen-and-ink conceptual outlines, of passing conflicts, events and situations in the life of Wells. They seemed to carry tender messages to Jane that the writer was unable or unwilling to speak aloud to her. Wells being Wells, there were always issues in his private life that might well pose a challenge to

bluntly state aloud: "Oh by the way, darling, I've built a second house in the South of France where I spend my summers with a comely KGB asset, the Baroness Budberg." Even a famously glib and charming writer might feel the need to finesse that.



Cory Doctorow also has some remarkably tangled, scandalous and precarious issues to contemplate, summarize and discuss. They're not his scandalous private intrigues, though. Instead, they're scandalous public intrigues. Or, at least Cory struggles to rouse some public indignation about these intrigues, because his core topics are the tangled penthouse/slash/underground machinations of billionaire web moguls.

Cory really knows really a deep dank lot about this uncanny nexus of arcane situations. He explains the shameful disasters there, but

they're difficult to capture without torrents of unwieldy tech jargon.



So instead, he diligently clips, cuts, pastes, lassos, collages and pastiches. He might, plausibly, hire a professional artist to design his editorial cartoons for him. However, then Cory would have to verbally explain all his political analysis to this innocent graphics guy. Then Cory would also have to double-check the results of the artist and fix the inevitable newbie errors and grave misunderstandings. That effort would be three times the labor for a dogged crusader who is already working like sixty.

It's more practical for him to mash-up images that resemble editorial cartoons.

He can't draw. Also, although he definitely has a pronounced sense of aesthetics, it's not a aesthetic most people would consider tasteful. Cory Doctorow, from his very youth, has always had a "craphound"

aesthetic. As an aesthete, Cory is the kind of guy who would collect rain-drenched punk-band flyers that had fallen off telephone poles and store them inside a 1950s cardboard kid-cereal box. I am not scolding him for this. He's always been like that.



As Wells used to say about his unique "picshuas," they seemed like eccentric scribblings, but over the years, when massed-up as an oeuvre, they formed a comic burlesque of an actual life. Similarly, one isolated Doctorow collage can seem rather what-the-hell. It's trying to be "canny." If you get it, you get it. If you don't get the first one, then you can page through all of these, and at the end you will probably get it. En masse, it forms the comic burlesque of a digital left-wing cyberspatial world-of-hell. A monster-teeming Silicon Uncanny Valley of extensively raked muck.



There are a lot of web-comix people who like to make comic fun of the Internet, and to mock "the Industry." However, there's no other social and analytical record quite like this one. It has something of the dark affect of the hundred-year-old satirical Dada collages of Georg Schultz or Hannah Hoch. Those Dada collages look dank and horrible because they're "Dada" and pulling a stunt. These images look dank and horrible because they're analytical, revelatory and make sense.

If you do not enjoy contemporary electronic politics, and instead you have somehow obtained an art degree, I might still be able to help you with my learned and well-meaning intro here. I can recommend a swell art-critical book titled "Memesthetics" by Valentina Tanni. I happen to know Dr. Tanni personally, and her book is the cat's pyjamas when it comes to semi-digital, semi-collage, appropriated, Situationiste-detournement, net.art "meme aesthetics." I promise that I could robotically mimic her, and write uncannily like her, if I

somehow had to do that. I could even firmly link the graphic works of Cory Doctorow to the digital avant-garde and/or digital folk-art traditions that Valentina Tanni is eruditely and humanely discussing. Like with a lot of robots, the hard part would be getting me to stop.



Cory works with care on his political meme-cartoons – because he is using them to further his own personal analysis, and to personally convince himself. They're not merely sharp and partisan memes, there to rouse one distinct viewer-emotion and make one single point. They're like digital jigsaw-puzzle landscape-sketches – unstable, semi-stolen and digital, because the realm he portrays is itself also unstable, semi-stolen and digital. The cartoons are dirty and messy because the situations he tackles are so dirty and messy. That's the grain of his lampoon material, like the damaged amps in a punk song. A punk song that was licensed by some billionaire and then used to spy on hapless fans with surveillance-capitalism.



Since that's how it goes, that's also what you're in for. You have been warned, and these collages will warn you a whole lot more.

If you want to aesthetically experience some elegant, time-tested collage art that was created by a major world artist, then you should gaze in wonder at the Max Ernst masterpiece, "Une semaine de bonté" ("A Week of Kindness"). This indefinable "collage novel" aka "artist's book" was created in the troubled time of 1934. It's very uncanny rather than "canny," and it's also capital-A great Art. As an art critic, I could balloon this essay to dreadful robotic proportions while I explain to you in detail why this weirdo mess is a lasting monument to the expressive power of collage. However, Cory Doctorow is not doing Max Ernst's dreamy, oneiric, enchanting Surrealist art. He would never do that and it wouldn't make any sense if he did.



Cory did this instead. It is art, though. It is what it is, and there's nothing else like it. It's artistic expression as Cory Doctorow has a sincere need to perform that, and in twenty years it will be even more rare and interesting. It's journalism ahead of its time (a little) and with a passage of time, it will become testimonial.

Bruce Sterling – Ibiza MMXXV

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Hey look at this ([permalink](#))



- John Deere to Pay \$99 Million in Monumental Right-to-Repair Settlement <https://www.thedrive.com/news/john-deere-to-pay-99-million-in-monumental-right-to-repair-settlement>
- Amazon Pulls Support for Perfectly Fine Older Kindles <https://www.wired.com/story/amazon-pulls-support-for-perfectly-fine-older-kindles/>
- "Fahrenheit 11/9" – This is How Fascism Starts | Michael Moore <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfszwkoSdQA>
- Honda Puts Its Garage Door Opener Behind a Paywall <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=Gb2fEBW0oDA>
- Why Locus Matters More Than Ever <https://reactormag.com/why-locus-matters-more-than-ever/>



Object permanence ([permalink](#))

#20yrsago Al Franken wants a balanced war budget #15yrsago Fake-make: counterfeit handmade objects from big manufacturers

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110410125346/http://blog.makezine.com/archive/2011/04/untouched-by-human-hands.html>

#15yrsago Marketplace for hijacked computers

<https://krebsonsecurity.com/2011/04/is-your-computer-listed-for-rent/>

#15yrsago Fake-make: counterfeit handmade objects from big manufacturers

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110410125346/http://blog.makezine.com/archive/2011/04/untouched-by-human-hands.html>

#10yrsago Pope invites Bernie Sanders to Vatican to speak about “social, economic, and environmental” issues

https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-35999269#sa-ns_mchannel=rss&ns_source=PublicRSS20-sa

#10yrsago Baby sues US government for searching his diapers in racial profiling/War on Terror case <https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2016/04/baby-who-had-his-diapers-searched-at-airport-is-part-of-class-action-suit/>

#10yrsago Tax investigators and bill collectors use Rich Kids of Instagram to uncover oligarchs’ hidden millions

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/03/super-rich-discover-hidden-risks-instagram-yachts-jets>

#10yrsago The international art market is a money laundry whose details are in the Panama Papers

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160408024110/https://fusion.net/story/288515/panama-papers-leak-art-market/>

#10yrsago UK government warns people that copyright trolls are a scam

[https://torrentfreak.com/uk-govt-issues-advice-on-dealing-with-copyright-trolls-160408/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Torrentfreak+\(Torrentfreak\)](https://torrentfreak.com/uk-govt-issues-advice-on-dealing-with-copyright-trolls-160408/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Torrentfreak+(Torrentfreak))

#10yrsago Why the rise of ransomware attacks should worry you

<https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2016/04/ok-panic-newly-evolved-ransomware-is-bad-news-for-everyone/>

#5yrsago Howard Dean's racist, genocidal pharma sellout

<https://pluralistic.net/2021/04/08/howard-dino/#the-scream>

#1yrago We CAN have nice things

<https://pluralistic.net/2021/04/08/howard-dino/#payfors>

Upcoming appearances ([permalink](#))



- Montreal: Bronfman Lecture (McGill), Apr 10
<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/artificial-intelligence-the-ultimate-disrupter-tickets-1982706623885>
- Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, Apr 10
<https://mtl.drawnandquarterly.com/events/4863920260410>
- Toronto: DemocracyXchange, Apr 16
<https://www.democracyxchange.org/news/cory-doctorow-to-open-dxc26-on-april-16>
- San Francisco: 2026 Berkeley Spring Forum on M&A and the Boardroom, Apr 23
<https://www.theberkeleyforum.com/#agenda>
- London: Resisting Big Tech Empires (LSBU), Apr 25
<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/globaljusticenow/2042691>

- NYC: Enshittification at Commonweal Ventures, Apr 29
<https://luma.com/ssgfvqz8>
- NYC: Techidemic with Sarah Jeong, Tochi Onyibuchi and Alia Dastagir (PEN World Voices), Apr 30
<https://worldvoices.pen.org/event/techidemic/>
- Berlin: Re:publica, May 18-20
<https://re-publica.com/de/news/rp26-sprecher-cory-doctorow>
- Berlin: Enshittification at Otherland Books, May 19
<https://www.otherland-berlin.de/de/event-details/cory-doctorow.html>
- Hay-on-Wye: HowTheLightGetsIn, May 22-25
<https://howthelightgetsin.org/festivals/hay/big-ideas-2>
- SXSW London, Jun 2
<https://www.sxswlondon.com/session/how-big-tech-broke-the-internet-b3c4a901>

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Recent appearances ([permalink](#))

- The internet is getting worse (CBC The National)
https://youtu.be/dCVUCdg3Uqc?si=FMcA0EI_Mi13Lw-P
- Do you feel screwed over by big tech? (Ontario Today)
<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-45-ontario-today/clip/16203024-do-feel-screwed-big-tech>
- Launch for Cindy's Cohn's "Privacy's Defender" (City Lights)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuVCm2PUaIU>
- Chicken Mating Harnesses (This Week in Tech)
<https://twit.tv/shows/this-week-in-tech/episodes/1074>
- The Virtual Jewel Box (U Utah)
<https://tanner.utah.edu/podcast/enshittification-cory-doctorow-matthew-potolsky/>

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Latest books ([permalink](#))

- "Canny Valley": A limited edition collection of the collages I create for Pluralistic, self-published, September 2025
<https://pluralistic.net/2025/09/04/illustrious/#chairman-bruce>
- "Enshittification: Why Everything Suddenly Got Worse and What to Do About It," Farrar, Straus, Giroux, October 7 2025
<https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780374619329/enshittification/>

- "Picks and Shovels": a sequel to "Red Team Blues," about the heroic era of the PC, Tor Books (US), Head of Zeus (UK), February 2025 (<https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250865908/picksandshovels>).
- "The Bezzle": a sequel to "Red Team Blues," about prison-tech and other grifts, Tor Books (US), Head of Zeus (UK), February 2024 (thebezzle.org).
- "The Lost Cause:" a solarpunk novel of hope in the climate emergency, Tor Books (US), Head of Zeus (UK), November 2023 (<http://lost-cause.org>).
- "The Internet Con": A nonfiction book about interoperability and Big Tech (Verso) September 2023 (<http://seizethemeansofcomputation.org>). Signed copies at Book Soup (<https://www.booksoup.com/book/9781804291245>).
- "Red Team Blues": "A grabby, compulsive thriller that will leave you knowing more about how the world works than you did before." Tor Books <http://redteamb blues.com>.
- "Chokepoint Capitalism: How to Beat Big Tech, Tame Big Content, and Get Artists Paid, with Rebecca Giblin", on how to unrig the markets for creative labor, Beacon Press/Scribe 2022 <https://chokepointcapitalism.com>

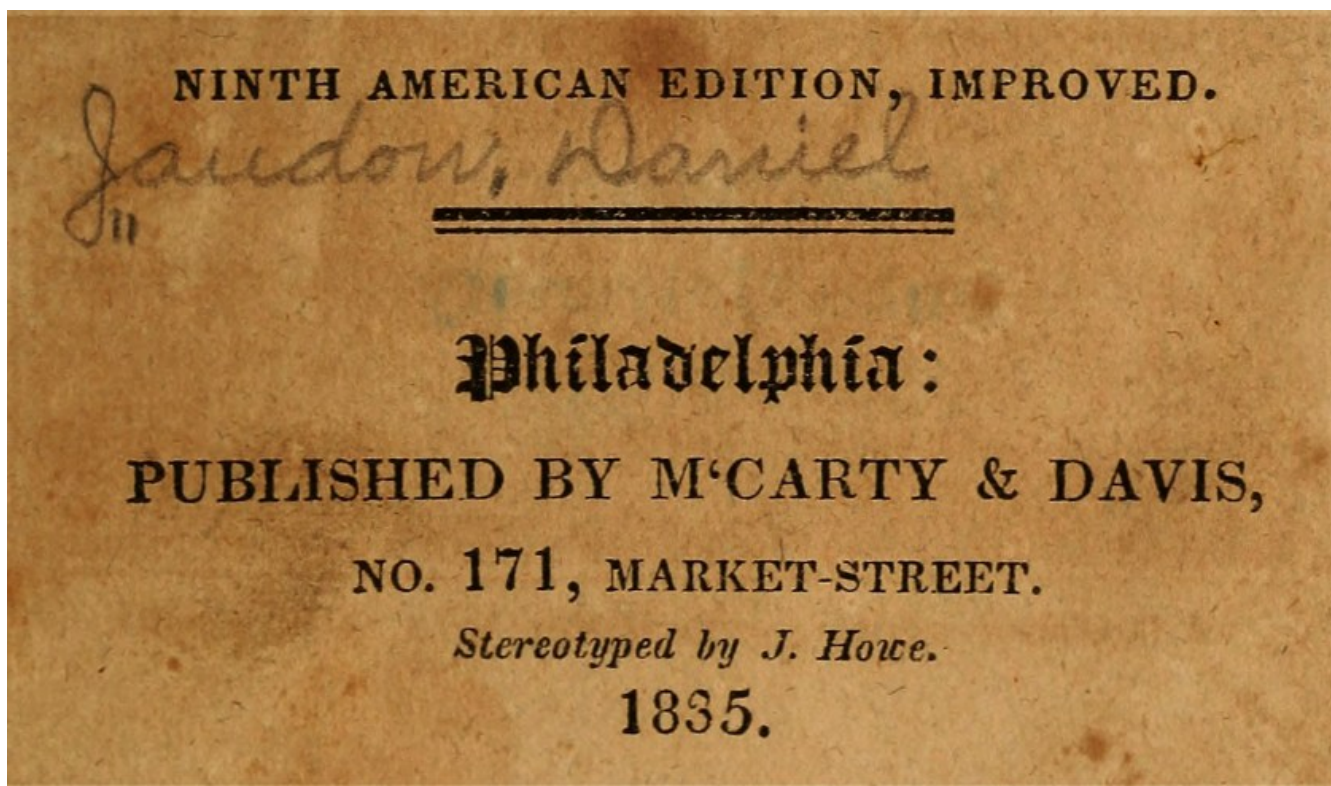
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Upcoming books ([permlink](#))

- "The Reverse-Centaur's Guide to AI," a short book about being a better AI critic, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, June 2026
(<https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780374621568/thereversecentaursguidetolifeafterai/>)
- "Enshittification, Why Everything Suddenly Got Worse and What to Do About It" (the graphic novel), Firstsecond, 2026
- "The Post-American Internet," a geopolitical sequel of sorts to *Enshittification*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2027

- "Unauthorized Bread": a middle-grades graphic novel adapted from my novella about refugees, toasters and DRM, FirstSecond, 2027
- "The Memex Method," Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2027



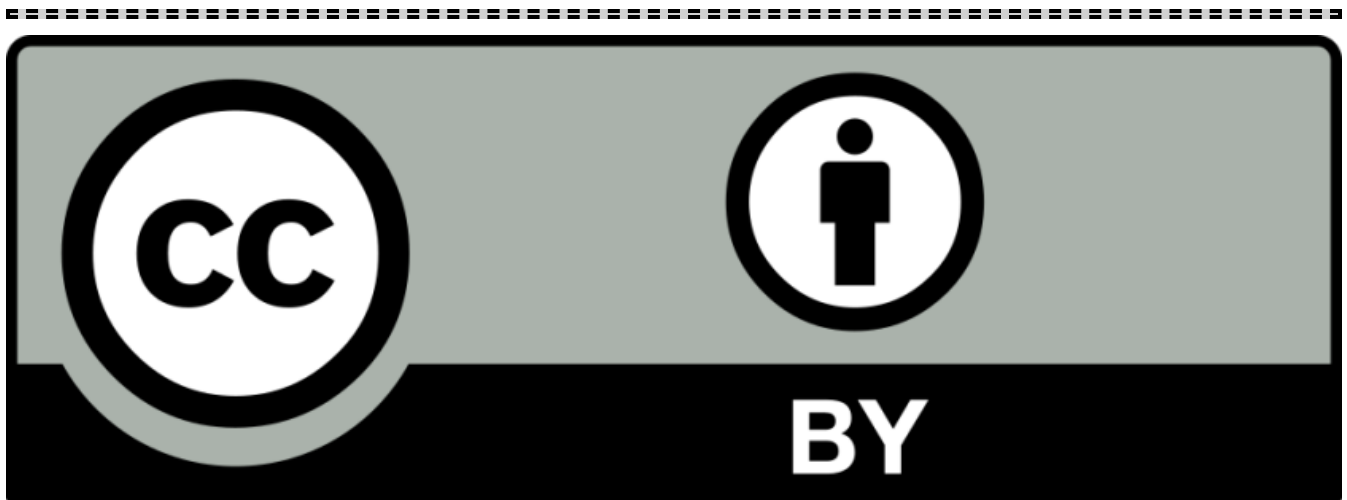
Colophon ([permalink](#))

Today's top sources:

Currently writing: "The Post-American Internet," a sequel to "Enshittification," about the better world the rest of us get to have now that Trump has torched America. First draft complete. Second draft underway.

- "The Reverse Centaur's Guide to AI," a short book for Farrar, Straus and Giroux about being an effective AI critic. LEGAL REVIEW AND COPYEDIT COMPLETE.

- "The Post-American Internet," a short book about internet policy in the age of Trumpism. PLANNING.
- A Little Brother short story about DIY insulin PLANNING



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<https://pluralistic.net/plura-list>

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<https://mamot.fr/@pluralistic>

Bluesky (no ads, possible tracking and data-collection):

<https://bsky.app/profile/doctorow.pluralistic.net>

Medium (no ads, paywalled):

<https://doctorow.medium.com/>

Tumblr (mass-scale, unrestricted, third-party surveillance and advertising):

<https://mostlysignssomeportents.tumblr.com/tagged/pluralistic>

"When life gives you SARS, you make sarsaparilla" -Joey "Accordion Guy" DeVilla

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Cory Doctorow / April 10, 2026 / Uncategorized / books, bruce sterling, canny valley, charitable giving, collage, creative commons, fundraising, gifts, remix culture, remixes

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