



Chris Bond
A Stranger in the Mirror

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Five strangers emerged from a mirror in 1995.

I was in the first semester of my second year of undergraduate study at RMIT. Shy and eager to please, I'd forced myself - against every instinct telling me to stop - to try my hand at reading French critical theory.

Baudrillard seemed a good place to start. I'd seen fellow students walking with his books, discussing semiotics and semiology in group tutorials, and I didn't understand a word of it. I felt that I should.

A few days later I was in RMIT's Storey Hall Library flipping through his classic text *Simulacra and Simulation*, a light beige coloured, thin hardback with a drab grid design below the title. Very unappealing, but I took it under my arm intent on giving it a go.

I took a detour back through the 130 call number area, a favourite haunt of mine with books on paranormal phenomena and the occult, when a slim hardback caught my eye. It was wedged between Edwin Humbridge's *The Medium's Gift* and Jane Ibsen's *Paranormal Encounters*.

The spine of the book that held my attention looked virtually identical to the one I was carrying, Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*, but was instead titled *Simulation and Simulacra*, and was very worn, almost falling apart. I drew the book out of the shelf and had a good look at its cover. Apart from the reversed title, the only difference was the library barcode sticker on the rear. It wasn't from the Storey Hall Library at all, but from a place called the Jennings Fox Library. Opening the book, I found to my surprise that it was printed entirely in mirror, with the last page first, and the first last, and all of the text running backwards.

I took the two Baudrillard books to the front counter and tried to borrow them both. When the Jennings Fox Library book didn't scan the library assistant just shrugged his shoulders and handed it back to me. 'This must be yours,' he mumbled.

I sat down at one of the library computers to try a little googling, hoping to find out more about the Jennings Fox Library. After about half an hour trying to work out Internet Explorer I managed to get onto a web database that listed library institution addresses. The library was located only a couple of suburbs away in Richmond.

The next day, with little else to do, I got onto the train with a hand drawn map of Richmond's backstreets and set about trying to find the library, with the well-meaning notion of returning the book to its rightful repository. I walked around confused for well over an hour, before, out of sheer luck, I found myself in front of a white two-storey Victorian residence with a wall mounted brass plaque that read 'Jennings Fox'. I pressed the gold coloured doorbell and waited.

After a minute or two the door opened a crack and a tiny elderly woman with scratched horn-rimmed spectacles peered through. 'Yes?'

'I, um, I'm here to return a book,' I said nervously.

'And which one is it?'

'Um, this one,' I replied, as I took *Simulation and Simulacra* out of my backpack, passing it into her outstretched hand.

Her face immediately broke into a grin of recognition. 'Oh my,' she cackled, 'you have done well, very well. Thank you.' She gave me a friendly nod, before quickly closing the door.

I stood on the porch for a while, unsure of what to do. I leant in to press the doorbell again, but stopped myself. Disappointed, I trudged back home.

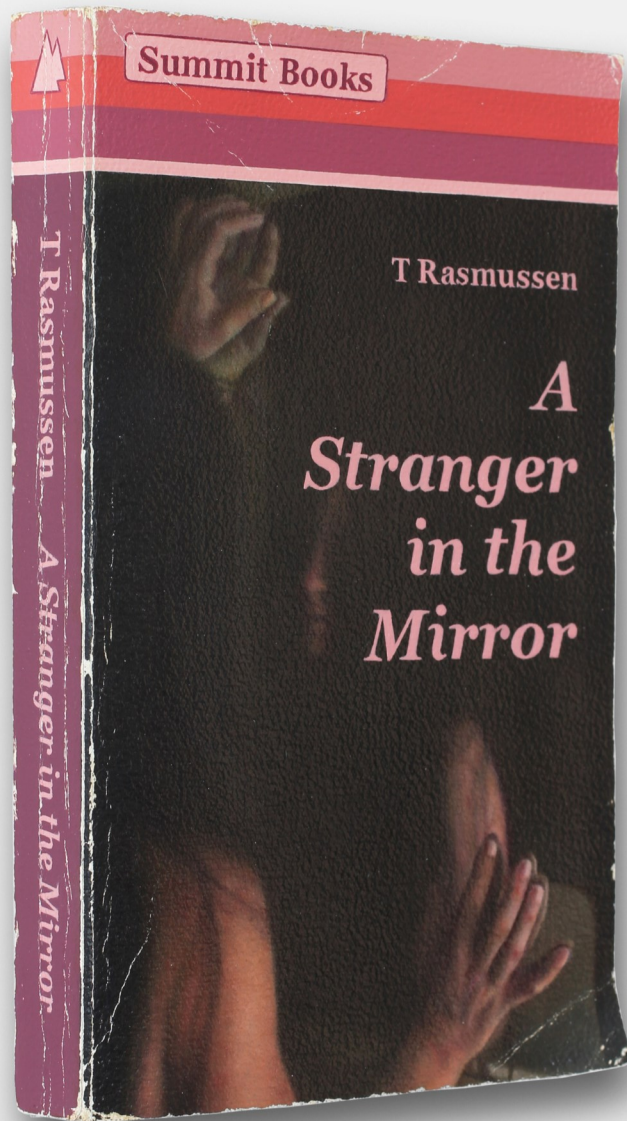
About a week later I heard a thump at the front door and went out to find a large, brown-wrapped package addressed to me from the Jennings Fox Library. I have no idea how they found my address, no idea at all. Inside the package were five library books. Each appeared freshly printed with new library barcodes on the back. Each was a classic text of French critical theory, but with reversed titles and mirrored text inside, just like the Baudrillard I'd returned: Foucault's *Punish and Discipline*, Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, Lacan's *Self the of Language The*, Kristeva's *Language in Desire* and a new printing of Baudrillard's *Simulation and Simulacra*.

Over the next two weeks I paraded through the corridors of RMIT's fine art building holding my stack of reversed French critical theory, attempting to read them in front of a mirror in the studio complex. It was hard work and I didn't get very far. They remained strangers.

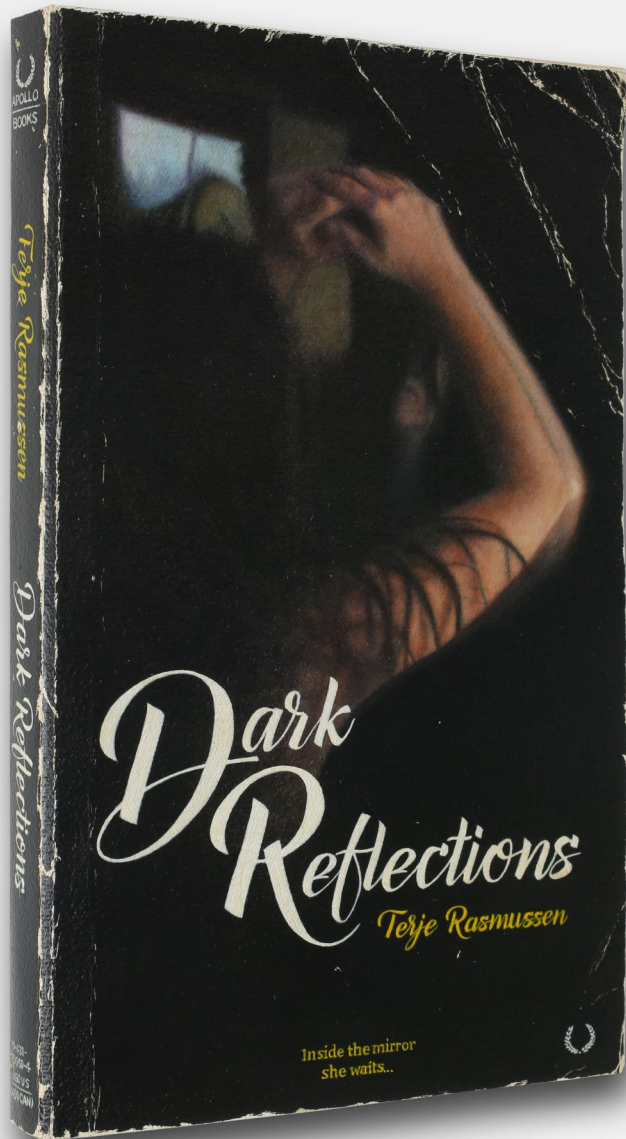
A month later I'd had enough. I thought about returning them to the library in Richmond but thought it might work better to simply put them back into circulation. So I went back to the Storey Hall library and found odd spots to hide them, one in the Zoology shelves, one in Russian Literature, one in Earth Science, another in Japanese Garden Design, and the last, Baudrillard's *Simulation and Simulacra* back in the parapsychology section, exactly in the spot where I'd found the first.

And that was the last I saw of them.

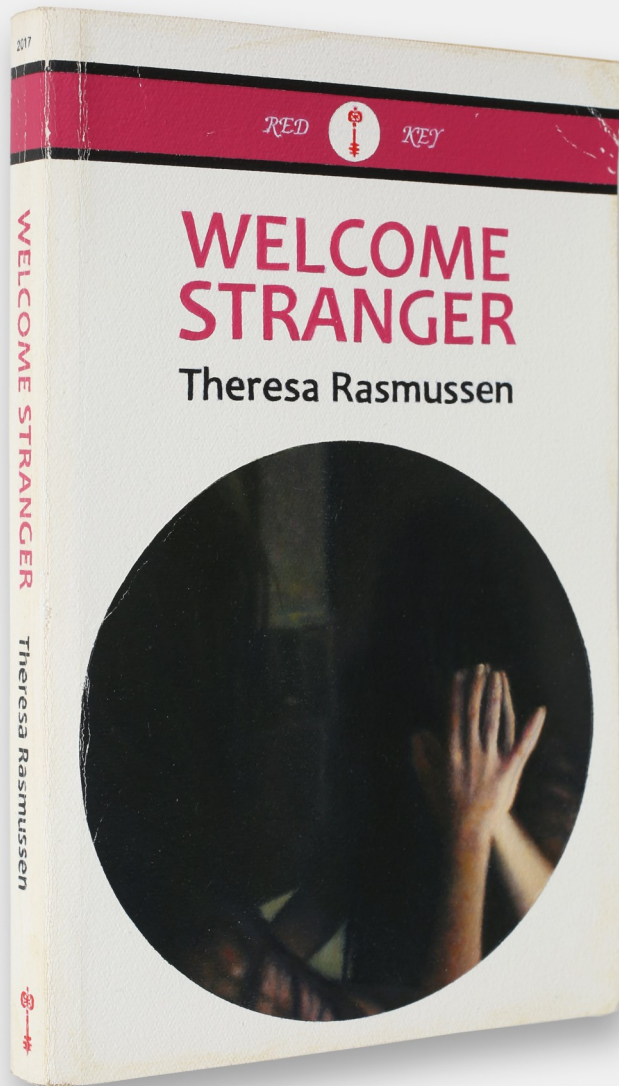
Chris Bond, 2016



A Stranger in the Mirror, 2016
oil on canvas, paper, card
18 x 11 x 1.5 cm



Dark Reflections, 2016
oil on canvas, paper, card
18 x 11 x 1 cm



Welcome Stranger, 2016
oil on canvas, paper, card
17 x 11 x 1 cm



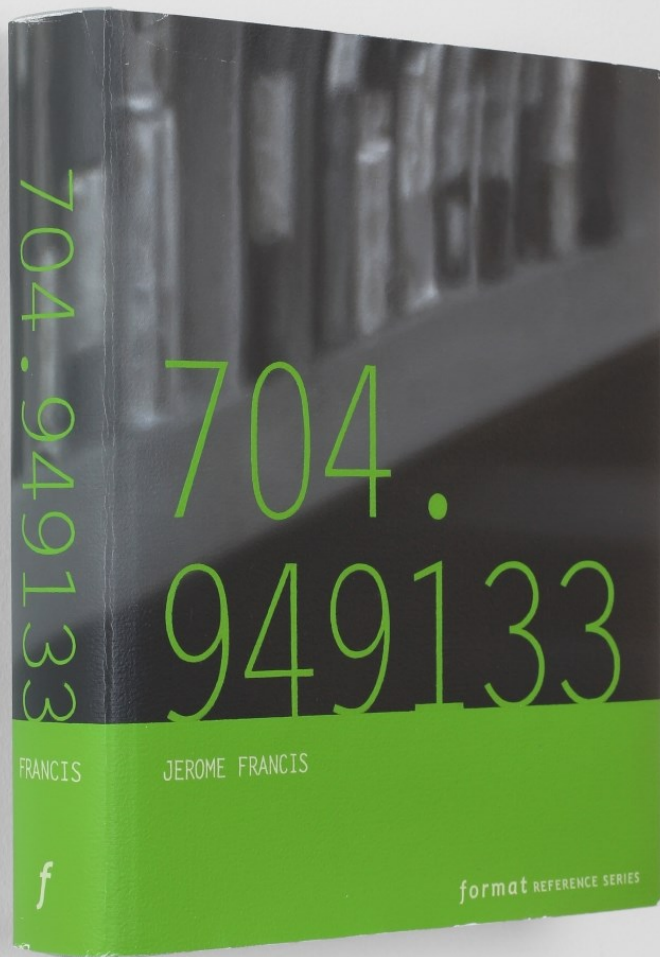
mortgin kinerok eir sig cranchniholtvagen, 2015
oil and acrylic on canvas, calico, MDF
2 x 40 x 30 cm



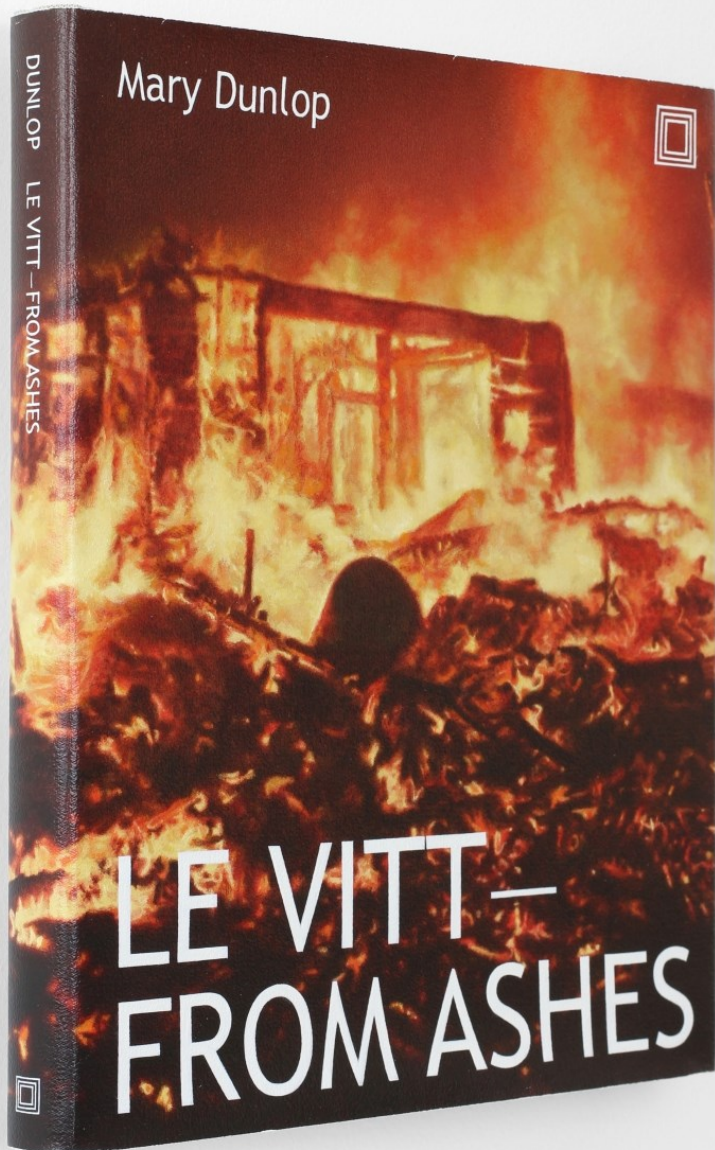
vulhun krag, 2015
oil on canvas, calico, MDF
1 x 21 x 38 cm



ver neut vor in glast, 2015
oil and acrylic on canvas, MDF
29 x 3 x 8 cm



704.949133, 2016
oil on canvas, fabric, paper, card
25 x 21 x 4 cm



LE VITT-FROM ASHES, 2016
oil on canvas, fabric, paper, card
31 x 27 x 2.5 cm

Chris Bond

From: Tor Rasmussen <kraken666@interior.com>
Sent: Sunday, 10 January 2016 1:58 AM
To: chrispatrickbond@gmail.com
Subject: <no subject>

chris
on your way is a small burnt item
a bird spoke to me
of my spectral presence
do not be foolish
do not pretend that i am there as you work
that i speak to you
through you and for you
that i feel for you
i took a look at your website and made note of your use of the levitt library
for you to take the name of that place
and propose me as the author of your books
with titles apparently ripped from my tongue
is risky for you
by association
be wary
i can reach out
on my terms
a book is on its way to you
from the remains of that place
blackened to nothing
in the darkness
amongst the rows of paper minnows
i lit a match
and made something happen
try it sometime

tor



Offering, 2016
book
21 x 15 x 6 cm

Chris Bond: A Stranger in the Mirror

Darren Knight Gallery

8 October - 5 November 2016

with thanks

Thankyou to Joanne Moloney, Darren Knight, Georgia Hobbs, Jan Murray, Ted Colless, Kate Just and Lisa Slade for your enthusiasm and assistance

soundtrack

Altar of Plagues *Teethed Glory and Injury*

Blue Öyster Cult *Agents of Fortune*

Coven *Witchcraft*

Jefferson Airplane *Surrealistic Pillow*

Jex Thoth *Blood Moon Rise*

Lucifer *Lucifer 1*

Oranssi Pazuzu *Värähtelijä*

Purson *Desire's Magic Theatre*

Sabbath Assembly *Restored to One*

Sarcófago *I.N.R.I.*

Seremonia *Kristalliarkki*

Sweetwater *Sweetwater*

The Devil's Blood *The Thousandfold Epicentre*

The Oath *The Oath*

The 13th Floor Elevators *The Psychedelic Sounds of the 13th Floor Elevators*

Year of the Goat *Angel's Necropolis*

photography

Joanne Moloney

**DARREN
KNIGHT
GALLERY**



VCA
Victorian College
of the Arts