

PLUTONICS

A JOURNAL OF NON-STANDARD
THEORY



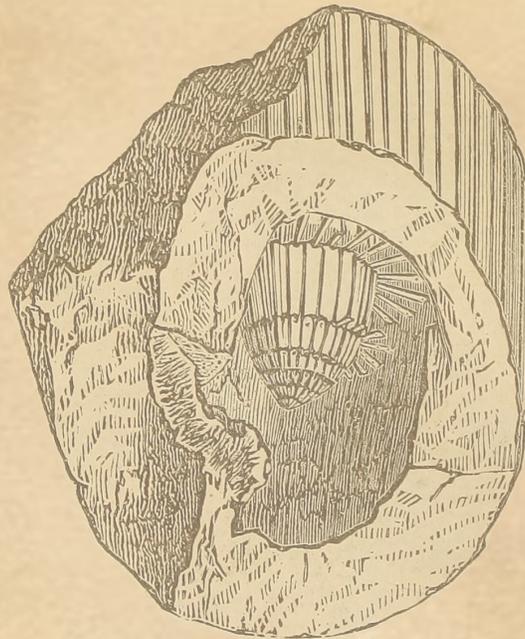
Volume XIII ⊖ March 2020

Miskatonic Virtual University

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Plutonics is an open-access, sporadically published journal of non-standard contemporary theory. Named after the geological term “plutonic” (which is, in turn, derived from the Roman God of the underworld, Pluto), meaning igneous rocks formed from deep geologic trauma and left to cool for thousands of years. *Plutonics* aims to publish cutting edge theory that has no place within the ‘academy.’

With no guiding thread by the Weird, we accept submissions from all disciplines and actively encourage mixtures of philosophy, ‘hard’ science, poetry, visual arts, and other forms of Becoming.



For more information, please visit plutonicsjournal.com or contact us at mvupress@gmail.com.

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Volume XIII, March 2020

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Introduction: 13:13:3:20:1

This volume—Volume XIII—marks the thirteenth hour or first of-the-clocks/first-o'clock with respect to the *Plutonics* periodical, that-is-to-say the first volume to take physical-rather-than-pataphysical form. Volumes I to XII, of course, were timeless/spaceless ordeals (&/or deals—ordeals—which, craftily, could not be purchased: deals «sans subscription»). Thirteen—a.k.a. One—o'clock: with 20-20 vision we can now see, indeed read, the ()hole volume, this volume of ()holes, this ()hole complex. And the 'theme' of this volume has to do with ()holes and the ()hole physical/metaphysical/pataphysical precedent/precedence of this periodical (*Plutonics*), in [[zero-]]sum. ... Indeed, on this Thirteenth Day of the Third Month (coincidentally, a spooky Friday the 13th), 23 enigmatic years after a set of unidentified flying objects lit up the sky over Arizona, Nevada, and Sonora — this date, coincidentally 239 (= Dark Light = Egregore = The Magic Name) years after the discovery of Uranus, our gaseous "neighbor" inhabited by worshippers of Lrogg — *Plutonics* finishes a complete rotation and returns (or perhaps, enters for the first time) the 'physical.'

This volume, the re-inauguration of a once prestigious and enigmatic 'non-existent' publication serves to introduce a myriad of new critical thinkers onto the scene, operating from the domains of art, psychoanalysis, philosophy, science, and countless other disciplines. Corporealizing (or at least digitizing) our enigmatic thoughts, thoughts born of many minds around the globe, yielded a volume that will at once encourage you to reassess your subjectivity while simultaneously arousing you in the most gruesome of ways. Can hyperstional thinking be used therapeutically? Do you want to venture into time-sorcery? What happens after the crash, when bones and bleach, dimensional clashes and dental dreamscapes merge? When Katak has had enough and begins to devour, the slime of the cyborg running through his teeth? Do we find ourselves in this darkness? His power turns the very Earth itself inside-out as it becomes a sonorous instrument reaching out into the unknown. As we grapple with humanity, changed through virality and zombification, we must ask ourselves, who are we to become? If one is to read the 'theme' of this volume, the 'theme' of ()holes, we can more specifically isolate the 'theme' as being the ()holes between the human and the inhuman; the human-inhuman boundary. From this starting point (or perhaps, endpoint), the following contributions trace a subsumption of the human into other, darker forces of Becoming.

While impossible to do justice to each piece, let us simply say that each contributor, via their writing, artwork, poetry, etc., track different, but nevertheless equally important lines of intensive change in the human. These lines, exits, escapes, lead to the question 'what comes after?' From affirmations of human destruction paving the way for new beings, to the ecstasy of the gross and weird, each contribution plots a different trajectory toward the exciting and unknown human-inhuman boundary (blurred as it may be).

When we sent out the call for submissions for a journal of 'non-standard theory,'¹ we had no idea what direction we were going in. While we're still are at a loss (perhaps that's a good thing, traditional theorizing is dead yet somehow won't stay buried and we must thus continue filling it's rotting corpse with semiotic bullets), the turn out has been better than we could have hoped for with so many people expressing interest and working on projects for this, and future, editions. We're thrilled to present this Thirteenth edition of *Plutonics*. Expect more.

1: A word about the journal's subtitle: 'non-standard' has a rather heraldic heritage, designating in this case an absence of banners on the battlefield, the better to merge with the *mélée* (paraphrasing the late Georges Bataille) and thereby to face it in all its duplicity/multiplicity, giving it its duplicitous/multiplicitous/individually-effacing-and-effacingly-affacacious 'face'.

*Without standards, pinsels, pennons, guidons, fluttering flags or banners, the battlefield qua field-of-inquiry itself absorbs all the agents upon it—hence 'non-standard' theorization in this way (in this sense) subsumes each of its theorists—indeed swallows them whole/into-its- ()hole.

Contributors

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INANE DREAMZ: an ugly duckling that lost their way / [@subpar_noumena](#).

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Michael Quint is known to be handsome and kind. He owns a good deal of stock.

Necronaut Studios (Vincent Ortiz and Lee van Zechariah) is an art toy project inspired by cryptids, the paranormal, body horror,

Contributors

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Peter Heft: ___/Acc curious, occult adjacent. 'Academic philosophy' with a focus on D&G, time travel, pirates, and mystical Leftism. He can be found [@hefty_heft](#) and [Guerilla Ontology](#).

Psuedanon4Q248: Uncanny Psychoanalyst found [@4Q248](#) and [Psuedoanalysis](#).

Pseudo-Heraclitus crawled from a tidepool somewhere in Western Canada; he often considers crawling back in.

Riccardo Vanelli died before birth, cannibalized by his monozygotic twin, the 17th of June 1993 (17/06/1993 = 9 (333) = A Summation of War = A Cycle of Death and Rebirth). He lingers.

Rus Khomutoff is a Libra poet. His debut book, *Immaculate Days*, was published by [Alien Buddha Press](#) in 2018 and was shortly followed up by his chapbook published by [Void Front Press](#) in 2019 entitled *Radia*. He can be found [@rusdaboss](#).

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Cyborg Cadavers Pathos

Hallidonto

The Metamorphosis opens with cries of Ovid to the Gods to reveal the creation of The Universe. Out from the darkness and formlessness of chaos, a being creates substance; lakes to the mountains; new transformations come in forms of Animals, Plants, and Gods. A Titan named Prometheus hand-sculpted man from the clays of the earth in defiance to the Gods. Prometheus stole and gave the humans fire, and this enabled humans to progress and evolve their civilisation; through their lust, the intellect presented new challenges.

Out of The Anthropocene was born an organism separate to its environment. Its hubris instils its lustful desire to control, driven to conquer the landscapes of the (meta)physical realm to redefine itself in its image as The Cyborg, the structure of subjectivity, a new paradigm. Through the Anthropomorphic prism, we view ourselves as Gods. The fire is now the maker, thus the creator confronts our evolution - this new body was created in our image within 'Gods' workshop.

What is a body and what defines our reality? As the fallen, the Cadaver, the cyborg is no longer a speculative Sci-Fi trope. We now find ourselves amalgamating with the digital technological apparatus. We delve into VR to explore 'nature.' We deny our self the experience of the present while our bodies remain the same for the past millennia. The human imagination creates boundless worlds, imaginings within our organic shell. Fragments of our past littered throughout the world. Humanity can only speculate of its origins.

The human race will all be but a memory of data, existing as a convergence of bio-nanotech with the ability to form into whatever we choose... The basics of our genealogy will be redundant but left questioning beauty, love and humanity.

The post-human body will cease to remain. The duality of human and the machine gives rise to a new life-form neither cyborg nor human. Are we to be the fallen? In what image will be the re-imaging of our flesh?

“Life cannot be defined but it defines mankind”



Num: 28 - Hanafuda Cyborgia Series /
Hallidonto / gouache, ink, graphite / 2019

Lithospheric Poetry

INANE DREAMZ



"I feel I could die of life, and I ask myself if it makes any sense to look for an explanation. When your entire spiritual past vibrates inside you with supreme tension, when a sense of total presence resurrects buried experiences and you lose your normal rhythm, then, from the heights of life, you are caught by death without the fear which normally accompanies it... To be lyrical means you cannot stay closed up inside yourself."¹

Philosophy began with the universe. All thought hitherto has been devoted to understanding this cosmic rupture in non-existence. Possibility is, for all intents and purposes, noumenal, always cowering behind the veil of matter. Actuality supposes a distinct epistemic compression; it locates knowledge within reach, however categorically mediated. A mysterious exterior always presupposes a known interior. This piece explores thought in two parts, internal memory and external transformation.

I: Interior

And then there was the Earth. Its planetary parades of tectonic movements give life a searing temporal brand, painful but indicative of a discernible unilateralism within the vast stretches of possibility. History is a decoding practice oriented around a densely layered physical substrate. Barker minces no words in diagnosing its progress: "Prevailing signalitics and information science are both insufficiently abstract and over-theoretical in this regard. They cannot see the machine for the apparatus, or the singularity for the model."² To move inward on a planetary axis is to move backward on a temporal one.

Our destination is almost parodically Freudian. Reaching back for an abiogenetic precursor to phylogeny dissolves the cerebrospinal system's overt ego in a metallic ocean. Denizens of the future may call it Cthelll, the planet's inner core. The Earth is shaped in catastrophe and violent transformation; its offspring can only follow suit. If there's to be an origin point for Oedipal conflict, its repressive crust formation following a 100-million-year infancy of impacts and fire. History is a flow of violence; it's simply a matter of substituting guns, germs, and steel for friction, gas, and collisions with solar bodies. Barker is right to refer to the 65 million BC Cretaceous-Tertiary extinction event as the KT missile. Only in its devastating wake was

a second explosion, that of mammalian life, possible; Katy might be the name of one's mother. The white-hot geocosmic core burns and howls, buried under cooled rock. This traumatic genesis of mania and efflorescence is sealed away, hidden under layers of temporally gathered solidity to maintain a semblance of biophilic composure. In a cold and dark space, amorphous hot liquidity cools into specified geometry; that is the nature of things.

Sapiens exist of the earth, not as its demigod-like psychic container. Interpreting Jung with little familiarity often leads to misdirection. Popularly conceived, the collective unconscious anthropomorphizes plutonic cooling into memory mysticism, bypassing geological and phylogenetic age for parochial intuition and psychologism. Jung himself identifies the sympathetic nervous system's "continual flow" as the unconscious's physical basis, but this remains little-mentioned.³

We write with blood, not ink, transfused from inner regions. The very act of writing is an attempt to solidify an internal mania in externalized symbolic orderliness. "Writing operates not as a passive representation but as an active agent of transformation and a gateway through which entities can emerge."⁴

Bloodstream to executive function, sensation to manifestation.

1: E.M. Cioran, "On Being Lyrical," in *On the Heights of Despair* tr. Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 3-4.

2: CCRU, "Barker Speaks," in *Writings 1997-2003* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017), ::(:):(:(:)) [156].

3: C.G. Jung, *Introduction to Jungian Psychology: Notes of the Seminar on Analytical Psychology Given in 1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 140.

4: CCRU, "Lemurian Time War," in *Writings 1997-2003* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017), ::(:):(:(:)) [36].

Academically logarithmic *sapient* mapping gathered until this point in preparation for superlative historical takeoff, inside to outside. The Kantian subject is firstly a theory of gravitation, only then succeeded by its complex symbolic embodiment in critical philosophy. Catastrophism may be the genealogy of genealogies.

Magma to lava.

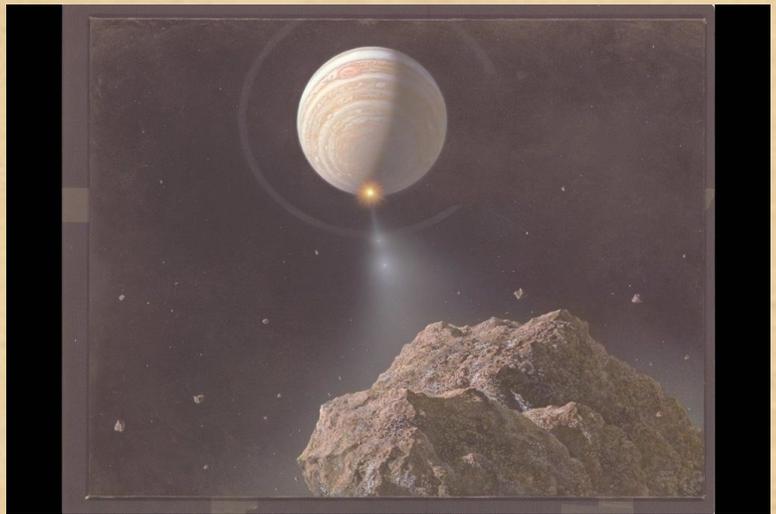
Mantle to city-state.

Flow is a function of time. Memory recall is an examination of temporality.

Westernized notions of Buddhist mindfulness now make their cultural rounds across repeated processions of the tired and anxious. Obsessive consumption is a symptom of expenditure—life's excess energy—burning out into a downward spiral within the confines of modernity's laborious technocapitalism. Restless questions of meaning and purpose only grow with ease of dominance over base needs, a recurring malady well-covered by Schopenhauer.⁵ People hunger for the relief of momentary nothingness in a world that increasingly outruns evolution's slow-twitch musculature with an exponentially growing infosphere.

The body in meditation is seen as an escape from the lurch of temporality. Awareness has a physicalist bent to its praxis; it almost morphs into spinal catastrophism but dismisses such intellectualism as the realm of the mind. The mind is the enemy, the anxiety, the lack of focus, the origin of unwanted thoughts and wrongthink. Go into the body, says the calm figure with a perfectly understated smile: reorient around the thoughtless action of persistence, the breath.

Moynihan highlights the demands of temporality upon the cerebrospinal apparatus: "The most prominent of these modern ailments was 'railway spine': a post-traumatic condition attributed to the abrupt lurch of the global transport networks then piecing themselves together. Caused by the 'significant jolts of acceleration' sometimes experienced in early train carriages, railway spine was—just like whiplash during the automobile age—an elusive and baffling illness that was more the invention of contemporary medico-legal



Shoemaker Levy 9 impact on Jupiter / Don Davis / 1994

incentives and cultural fears than a real neural disorder.”⁶ What is hypermodernity if not the displacement of this physical labor to a mental one? Rail travel has smoothed out, only to be displaced by ailments of smooth-flowing information such as cyberchondria, nomophobia, and internet addiction disorder. One may argue that the infancy of these illnesses muddies speculative discourse; the DSM has yet to receive its next big update, the closest thing to a settling of the matter. One may not, however, argue that possible controversy over lexiconic adjustment signifies nothing more than academic noise. Anecdotal evidence of cyberspace maladjustment comes rather easily and commonly.

The modern sphere of labor increasingly relies on skillful appliance of abstract reasoning. Life has grown more cerebral; despite composing a distinct minority of the American job market, competitive STEM positions constantly receive a great deal of public attention. As the mind takes over, the body is increasingly seen as a rustic drift away from all this noise. With the constant talk of unplugging social media for fresh-air retreats from WiFi and electronics, an outsider might be tempted to believe that meatspace reality is now the fantasy world the Internet promised to be in its early years. Now, Facebook et al. seem to be a basis of reality rather than an optional extension. 'Nature' becomes 'whatever's outside of civilization,' but even civilization's Other can't escape a beautifying makeover. Daydreams of healthy trees, pretty birdsong, and apparent equilibrium are a myopic privilege reserved for technocratic societies capable of taking the bite

5: Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Vanity of Existence," in *Essays and Aphorisms* tr. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 53-54.

6: Thomas Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism: A Secret History* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2019), 209; A.C. Croft, "Biomechanics," in S.M. Foreman and A.C. Croft (eds.), *Whiplash Injuries: The Cervical Acceleration/Deceleration Syndrome* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2002), 54.

out of the biosphere. What is nature, then? Nature is simply an outgrowth of Cthelll, a view from a perspective where 'sunny' lacks its typically idyllic connotations.

What is mindfulness on trial for, then? In its Western form, renunciation and minimalism tend to be glossed over, creating a mere exercise in corporate-class stress reduction. Treating the present moment as a desirable nothingness with a 'life is good' sentiment slapped on is no way out of a temporal labor. These practices fail because they lack a historic orientation, instead choosing *just* the moment in a desperate grab at atemporal relief. A symptom of an increasingly dissociative malaise emerging in modernity.

Methodologies of genuine harmony converge to measurements on the celestial meridian. As Barker said, "There is a voyage, but a strangely immobile one."⁷ Measurements denote a passage in time, as oft-cited observation/measurement studies in quantum physics uniquely demonstrate. Measurements exist in a harsh temporal space that tends to turn its nose up to tranquil presence.

The eternity of the present moment is a Leibnizian fantasy, of life possessing a fractal indivisibility. The moment is a fabrication, a detached point giving the impression of a 3-D plane. Advancements in 19th century comparative anatomy began to reform the human body as an evolving chronometer, an "exploded-view cross section of radically disarticulated moments of total time."⁸ Ligaments, limbs, and bone are not to be thought of as ontogenetic novelties; ignoring total time, the abiogenetic lineage, places history in the abyssal present.

The present moment is an quasi-ideological turning point, a space that may be reforged under essentialism or functionalism if it is not followed into its own ends. The present lies hidden in the deepest reaches of darkness, contrary to its deceptive masquerade as the most intuitive balancing point, the tuning fork's 440 Hz echo. Or is that merely to say that a shifty disorientation is where equilibrium paradoxically lies? Few possess the courage to follow chaotic atemporal immanence to its conclusions. This pursuit characterized the notorious nihil-ventures of Sade, Bataille, and

Land. Each of them crackpots, desperately searching for alternate flows of desire, communication, and time. Emerging from this darkly atemporal incoherence, essentialism and functionalism loom. The moment must come to pass but its categorization is still ambiguous.

Essentialism needs hardly any introduction, the knee-jerk position seeking to map delirium-space and settle it in a body-shaped mold. Perfectly form-fitted to the present, it protects from the outside at the price of confinement. The body is constricted into preemptive back pain, preventing spinal growth. Mindfulness stultifies without spinal catastrophism's temporalized map. Just be, just imagine the various layers of time wrapped around oneself as a domesticated homogeneity, a warm blanket of fuzzy atemporality. There is only consciousness. No, even that fails to be properly reductive. There are only *qualia*. Wait, that still supposes a perceptual *flow* inherent to experience. What is left? Nothing, eventually. Nothing.

Functionalism understands history as an ongoing potential for manipulation and gathers a seismic hypergenealogy. It unfolds in contortions of upright morphology, highlighting the dominance of the upright-walking without grasping for a reductive essence. It is simultaneously the language of gluttonous Cambrian lethality and rational Apollonian restraint. The development of the hominin spinal column sequences negative feedback loops for the fiercest of appetites, the "fearful symmetry" of bilateral faces. In their earliest incarnation, faces indicated predators.

The earth itself is the condition, preceding impatient, classically genealogical entanglements with monadology, psychodynamic deconstruction, and the sociality of material conditions. Moynihan characterizes these practices as limited by their lexiconic specificity. Psychology's struggle to pin down qualia is a grasp at Cthelll's seismic scream, that which is unfolded through intrapersonal layers as an ancient memory; tell me about your mother but only if her name is Gaia. Cthelll shifts far below the biosphere. Discordant, resonant-peaking, fully-diminished chord, hidden in the cord. It would not be wrong to recoat this statement with a temporalized flair; one might say the frequencies are hidden *through* the core. When Land ascribes a blistering accelerative push to Deleuze, he is describing the bending arc of consciousness itself rather than its adjacent human paradigm.

7: CCRU, "Barker Speaks," ((:))(((:(:)))) [155].

8: Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism*, 94.

Following the transcension hypothesis, Cthellic screams echo in a continuously shrinking sphere, growing louder as compressions in space, time, energy, and matter trim the ecological fat. Eventually, all converges to spinal memory. The singularity is an immediate fast forwarding of seismology; what do you hear? Hint: The Earth has yet to find its pacifier. The universe hasn't bothered to toss us an existential one either; will dark energy rip all orbits out of universality? Mysterious cosmic vibrations coalesce into a sound both primal and final, the tearing away of time.

II: Exterior

Once completed, deep memory converges toward a cosmic immanence. The thermic pressure-cooker of Cthellic dissolves peskily anthropic notions of orientation, wiping out the carbon cult of knee-jerk humanism like bacteria in boiling water. Tellurian space no longer draws a limit to ideas of worldliness. "Bilateral reflection" becomes "unilateral propulsion."⁹ When memory converges towards this inhuman plane, life orients around its giver.

Humanity is an upright beast; spines approach the celestial zenith, the fiery source of expenditure and growth. All energy and its leaks of excess are borne of the sun. The pineal gland exists as a remnant of a parietal third eye, a photoreceptive crown still neurally connected in reptiles, amphibians, and fish. Its existence is peculiar, an azygous affront suggesting a limit to bilaterality. Not without its own shortcomings, the pineal gland is uniquely vulnerable to calcification, brain sand. This heightened possibility of cerebral desertification suggests a cautionary sensibility about attempts to think like a planet. At least, it does so if one bothers to care. Thinking like a planet evokes the exuberant expansiveness that defines life's general economy, a continual flow escaping attempts to restrict and confine. Thinking about and like the planet implies a casting away of that dusty relic core to utilitarian civilization-building, risk calculation. Society and its differentiations tend to fade into the old fissures of the earth.

The cerebrospinal system is acutely pain-configured and exhibits unprecedented violence as it grows. *Homo sapiens* exhibits a double-edged control over its fate; it can simply choose (what power of the will!) to maintain its apex position but it also possesses the capability to just as easily annihilate itself. No other species occupies such a strangely precarious role. Time weighs down heavily, particularly when science's weaponized curiosity is utterly incapable of restraint. Sunlight smiles no weaker, confers no less wealth

after the Holocaust, regardless of whether or not Adorno condemns the practice of poetry in light of such disastrous events. An ongoing function of the geotraumatized CNS, temporality inevitably stretches into insanity; the sun becomes a mania object. Obsession taken to its teleological conclusion accumulates in omnicide, an all-consuming fury that eats and breathes. It cycles between eradicating its focal point and simultaneously finding new form projected in other configurations. It never ceases and never sleeps, driven only by an internal flow of time smoothly terraforming surroundings into compulsions.

The only escape is complete phylogenetic annihilation. Just as psychology and economics are nothing more than lexiconic genealogies, present conceptions of death and extinction are merely speed bumps; 99% of all known species are extinct, a fact weighing on us less than bone jewelry. "But if extinction implies the thought of extinction, and if, in the case of human extinction, this thought implies the existence and affirmation of the human, then it would seem that extinction also has a flip side, in which extinction also implies the non-existence of all thought (including the thought of extinction)."¹⁰ Exit is hypergenealogical like the birth and development of spinal catastrophism; an erasure without rebirth, it shatters the conditions for succession. There will be blood and viruses so long as there are nervous systems.

Jason Mohagheh seemingly unwittingly spells out spinal catastrophism in a section on heliomania from *Omnicide*, an analysis of various contemporary poems and their relation to the lethal compulsions of mania. "Do originary creation (born of Nature) and aesthetic creation (born of human nature) share some underhanded agreement, one sealed in pain rather than beauty, a partnership between the most ancient form and a craft devoted to formed remembering, and does this mirroring-pact serve a mutual out-

9: Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 15.

10: Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy Vol. 1* (Washington: Zer0 Books, 2011), 124.

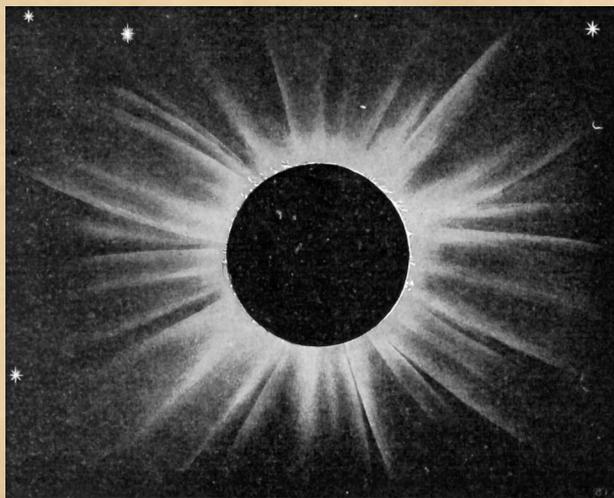
come of some kind?"¹¹ This agreement exists and it forms the physical substrate enabling literal starry-eyed wonder. Between the life-giving sun and the memory-cradle Earth lies the immense tomb of space. Upright growth beckons in the direction of death and yet its violently immiserating (life-affirming) potential only grows.

Mohaghegh's heliomania warrants a pause on the poems he's compiled.

"The sun, like a golden knife, was steadily paring away the edge of the shade beside the walls... The sun, sucking with a thousand mouths, was drawing the sweat of my body."¹²

Mohaghegh poses two incisive observations. Why does the sun strike shadow, the "phantasmic projection" rather than the "authentic being"? Secondly, the sun's tapping of sweat brings about dissolution; the bodily interior is drawn outwards, liquefying the typically solid "border between self and world."

Further questions can be drawn. What is meant by the connotation of ontological authenticity? Following that, what then forces the charge of inauthenticity upon its projection? Authenticity is a small-world structure, assuming being-towards-death as a complete engagement with lived



Lunar Eclipse / *The Grolier Society* / "The Book of Knowledge Vol 6" / 1911

experience; given that deep memory is a long-running hypergeological labor, authenticity is typically an individualist orientation done in the dark. The sun's focus on the "edge of the shade beside the walls," the "phantasmic projection," is a roadmap for the nervous system's continued imperialism. It explores the possibilities for consciousness, a celestial functionalism. Sunlight leads the way into greater knowing, greater mania. It uncovers the shadows outside of us rather than redundantly highlighting the anthropic body in its current state. Light is a speed, a measurement done in time like a species' phylogenetic construction. Measured time follows the disoriented present. It differs from mindfulness practices, emphasizing exploratory radicalism over redundant relaxation. It dissolves the world/self-barrier instead of reaffirming it.

"The sun resides inside me. Night, offer me your shadows now."¹³

Mohaghegh succinctly captures this powerfully brief utterance, "a frightful paradigm-reversal... a rapid folding from science to conscience."¹⁴ The scientific sheen of a distant, detached event is suddenly a neural reality. The Kant-esque "transcendent omniscience" is discarded like past-expiration metaphysics for an "intimate omniscience."¹⁵ Discovery vanishes, and a tumorous knowledge emerges. One already knows. And now knowing, the poetical figure's first action is an attempt to cast off its burden. It invokes night like a deity, seeking the void's compassion. Following the attainment of Promethean ambitions is, "A call to diurnal self-betrayal."¹⁶ Space's immense tomb has been bypassed but our hopes for transcendent overcoming are disappointed. Light does not alleviate death. To evoke Bataille's model, one could even say it actively perpetuates a rotted implosion of life. "The origin and essence of our wealth are given in the radiation of the sun, which dispenses energy — wealth — without any return."¹⁷ Expenditure of accumulated wealth—accumulated energy—might define the basis of much war initiation.

The brilliant burning of this internal light is just that, a brilliant burning sensation. It's an unchanging phenomenological

11: Jason Mohaghegh, *Omnicide: Mania, Fatality, and the Future-in-Delirium* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2019), 63.

12: Sadeq Hedayat, *The Blind Owl*, tr. D.P. Costello (New York: Grove Press, 1957), 73.

13: Adonis. *The Pages of Day and Night*, tr. S. Hazo (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 283.

14: Mohaghegh, *Omnicide*, 64.

15: *Ibid.*

16: *Ibid.*

17: Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: an Essay on General Economy, Vol. I: Consumption* (New York: Zone books, 1989), 28.

fact of the nervous system's perpetual hunger for growth, a tortured sensitivity. A self-alignment with darkness is a resort to ontological groveling, the knower begging for evisceration. At this point, heliomania has been compressed into augomania, a compulsion towards light itself. One could say the sun's being is now studied through its phantasmic projection. "Light, or brilliance, manifests the intimacy of life, that which life deeply is, which is perceived by the subject as being true to itself and as the transparency of the universe."¹⁸

"Light uproots the desert and the universe, fastened with a rope of angels / Do you see the relics of a star? I gallop in the voice of the victims, alone on the brink of death, like a grave walking in the night."¹⁹

A temporal succession to the previous poem in both authorship and apparent narrative, Adonis adorns his figure with a shadowy cloak of "deathly militarism."²⁰ The nihilistic tone suggests the futility of night's shadows to protect one from internal heliocentrism. Light now holds a body, like a star that can write poetry. An unsettling pause is made on angels, suggesting their discordant complicity with light's painful new internal residence. This "rope of angels" might not seem out of place if it were placed in one of *Cyclonopedia's* demonological matrices.²¹ Speaking of Negarestani, one might wonder, as Moynihan does, if Geist's augmented sociality of intelligence exists to fatten sapience's forms like pigs for slaughter.²² An internal sun is an unwitting answer to a certain question teeming with xeno-energy: "Whenever its name has been anything but a jest, philosophy has been haunted by a subterranean question: What if knowledge were a means to deepen unknowing?"²³ Knowledge is accumulated, fattened to excess, until agitated by a latent anxiety, the knower recoils from their creation and brandishes a butcher's knife. Schopenhauer represents a certain renegade lineage of knowledge and its libidinal discontents but Hartmann correctly accuses his ascetic ethics of a certain impotence. Humanity anticlimac-

tically withers away into a stark asexual limbo; where is the burning interior, the groveling for deliverance?

A grave and night both refer intuitively to a non-being of life and light. Given the piercing inversion in bodily constitution, this landscape of the departed is now an entirely fitting cosmic tectonics of light. To carry light is to carry death and the stench of its victims is never far. Oneself is only another object soon to be uprooted, hung in the hangman's noose of angels. The star, now little more than fragmented 'relics,' finally gives one a direct, unmistakable view of space's immense tomb. It no longer burns bright given our internal solar inheritance, its deathly incandescence.

Given the burning touch of discovery granted to life, where does this leave the dug-in conservation efforts that the Human Security System [HSS] carries out?²⁴ Seemingly weaponized into a humanistic militia, essentialism finds refuge in romantic portraits of anthropic irreducibility. We are humans and we have a special essence that cannot be replicated! Flesh and blood are proudly displayed at the forefront of history like fossilized shit. The HSS yanks and pulls back, and yet its direction is unexpected. It aims to suffocate its object rather than protect it. In this sense, it's an eye-wide-open execution, an attempt by consciousness to die with what dignity it can muster. It tries to approach the aforementioned nothingness that functionalism discards. Accelerating the process, tearing open ()holes in the mantle, and sending K-Goth warfare into full swing only expands and solidifies this manic frothing at the mouth. Nervous systems care little for whether they animate carbon or deep learning algorithms. Utterances anathema to species-conservatism such as, "Nothing human makes it out of the near future" elicit little more than a passive shrug, a slightly extended refractory period on a dendrite's firing sequence.²⁵ Dendritic spikes are neural elements, therefore they always prevail as bodies are discarded and replaced.

The HSS's only attempt to secure something is wrapping

18: Ibid., 57.

19: Adonis. *A Time Between Ashes and Roses*, tr. S. Toorawa (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 37, 93.

20: Mohaghegh, *Omnicide*, 29.

21: Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: re.press, 2008).

22: Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism*, 277.

23: Nick Land, "Shamanic Nietzsche," in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 206.

24: Nick Land, "Machinic Desire," in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 319.

25: Nick Land, "Meltdown," in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011), 443.

Sapwood

Pseudo-Heraclitus

There is an oft-unheard legend which speaks of a forest which grows powerful enough to bring itself to life, and in this transformation, it grows a heart. While I say this legend is oft-unheard, take this as very careful wording. The people have listened to the stories, since the dawn of stories they have listened. They know them off by heart and they tell them to their children in their beds. But only the surefooted can bear to really hear what is said about the forest and its alien heart, this place where the Laws themselves find their form in bacchanalian revel, and they loosen their grip on the world in this furtive place where the trees can whisper their stories and breathe their ancient breaths among creatures which speak in languages long dead and dance backwards around the grove while the Others pass over in their bid to walk among us once more. Most are indoctrinated into this myth as children, unhearing, disguised in the tales of fantastic beasts and idyllic cottages always nestled just around the next bend of any particular path, folktales going back to the hearts of old Europe. But it was not the stories of old that brought me here. It was not hope; be sure that this feels nothing like hope. The mythology of the heart traces – if you will excuse me the expression – prehistoric roots, showing itself in the earliest of stories. In the epic of Gilgamesh, the cedar forests were said to hide Humbaba, a terrible giant and guardian of the forest who is in turn sought out and slain by the king and his comrade Enkidu. In the case of Gilgamesh, the delineation of the heart was represented as a great wall. The question can be raised in a few ways here: were the walls themselves the heart, which was protected by a horrible monster? Or perhaps instead the walls were to protect us ourselves from the heart, that being the horrible monster, as some sort of containment; or perhaps still the heart is only so when there exists both these elements, bivalent symbiosis, a heart which lives as the protector of its own awful protector. Whatever awful heart my feet may lead me towards I cannot know, all I am permitted is to know that the path is long and winding. The noonday sun is already at its wane. The smell of campfire hangs on still air. The path which was once well tended and wide now tapers to a trail so narrow two men could not stand abreast one another. I can feel it once again, the heart which reaches forth and beats so darkly and so near that it may well be in my own chest; the heart lies darkly by the end – ah, listen to me speaking like a misanthrope again. I know as well as you do that the heart isn't always evil in the legends. The ambiguity is most often articulated in European folklore, whose borders hold some of those who most fully understand and embrace the alien natures of the forest. Grimm, Perrault; they represent the culmination of the thought of a people who live by the forest like the fishermen lives by the sea. In the Black Forest, the cottage at the heart of the woods could be a respite which is set to be invaded by a danger from the outside, such as we see in the tale of Red Riding Hood, but it can also be a cottage whose respite is home to a danger who is waiting for your arrival with patient malice, like the tale of Hansel and Gretel. The later tale of Goldilocks complicates the mythology even further: consider the cottage as being home to a danger who is currently outside and unwitting, where your presence signals the temptation of fate towards danger's vengeful return. In my perennial studies I happened upon a passage which struck me absolutely, such that I have never forgot it even after all these years, even if I must confess that I cannot recall the author, and have failed to find the passage since the night I read it. Still, I feel confident quoting from memory, for it cannot leave me now even if I willed it, and so it read: "The heart is only ever as pure as it is empty – for forests once and for man a hundred times." It might be said (and has been, in painful criticism) that I base my whole theory of the heart around this one quote. Even the term heart, its parallel to the human body, the human soul, the human life. I said as much to this fellow traveler, a suspicious man for reasons we will explicate, and it was he who told me so: "The Germans love the forest, they seek its creaking warnings from the vantage of the deep. The English tend to seek reconciliation on the outside, in the clearing of the daylight sun. But the clearing is always a dying home, for while the forest holds the gathering in its fold with comfort, the gathering destroys the clearing in its place. The clearing has no heart but instead a mind. A mind whose thinking is its own destruction. It is the sun which insists the clearing to itself, and to itself holds its very death in hand with the higher glory of the light." I owe a lot to this man, fool that he was. He was well read, and knew the works better than I can ever hope to, but I admit to you now, I can only ever speak my own peace, and so told him that in the gaze of an insistent sun, even the darkest corners of the forest appear as a welcome reprieve. But for all my intellectual courtesy, really now, what could he have

known? The heart never beat a single beat in his autistic chest. For him, the heart will never amount to more than mere *curiosity*, an intellectual quest, one taken in an armchair with dry slippers. He told me once he felt that the heart was simply a matter of archetype, of the mind; anthropological fallout posing as a psychological artifact. The heart! A matter of the mind! Even a fool knows that the heart is closer to matters of the feet than it is to matters of the mind. The mind did not bring me here. I am here on matters of the feet. And it is only the matters of the feet which let my chest thump again. His warnings were kind air, but nothing more. I had heard them all before. Witches covens which nestle themselves occulted among thickets and brambles; will-o'-the-wisps glowing warmly at every shoulder like the most gentle siren, welcoming your disillusion and blinking; a faerie leading you by hand to the awful monster in your midst. I told him that all knowledge was an initiation into madness, and that the thoughts of the mind are a poison to the body. The feet know the heart, and the heart knows the body. At least that's what I told him. And why should we speak after that? There comes a point in a friendship when you have finally spoken your peace and can leave one another behind in silence. People are vessels to be filled with what they may, and when you find a vessel full of naught but poison you know what way to walk. Embrace this movement, for this too is a matter of the feet. Never trust a man who tells you anything and everything is in your head. They want you to give up on your feet. An archetype, an allegory, a symbol; the ingredients of poison. So I left him behind, and listened to my feet like any romantic would. The grass between my toes was cold now and welcoming. My heart was racing. I run my fingers along sticky bark and smell the wet sap. The trees here weep their blood. Some have skin which peels and flakes like sunburn. Will the trees in the heart grow monstrous or right? The

Haida people speak forest where the their skin like these there where the the heart, and in his father, and by feathers and his allegory? Arche-settle with such a pretation. And it is superficial. not read as realism, was stupid enough Gods lived on The literal interpre-entertain even chil-allegorical is base



weird.nature / Frida Ortgies-Tonn / 3D object / 2017 / digital image

of a time in a trees sloughed do, and it was sapsucker found side a tree meets this earns his color. Is this type? Who could superficial inter-make no mistake, These stories do and no Greek to think the Mount Olympus. tation fails to dren, and the and close. But

there is another way, the way of the tongue: communion. I speak to the stories as they speak to me, and I speak them aloud as I walk ever forward. I speak and the wood answers back with its warm and passive bustle, with the eerily still air held with suspenseful weight, with the call of the robin and wren. The tales of the knight-errant speak of love in the heart, a beautiful metaphor on first blush, but it is better characterized by the general denial and aestheticism of the knight-errant. The knight-errant is always pursuing the object of his affection which he must reject, which he must hold far from his chest. The heart is not seen to be in the forest, or even in the tower or the dragons lair where the maiden waits her rescue, rather the heart lies at home, in the castle, in the light of the clearing, in his lady's chambers which must forever be out of his reach. The English imagine the heart as being an unobtainable object insofar as the heart itself remains an unobtainable object in the clearing. It is of little wonder that the English heart becomes synonymous with lack, desire, while the unconscious forest remains at an unexamined distance, as if the whole of the kingdom of Oberon and Titania were naught but a mystical oddity to simply be marked off like the warnings of sea monsters on maps of their day. The undergrowth has crept up beside me, reaching out to me with wanting fingers. Something obscured, a deer most likely, sends the brush rattling as it leaps. I hear the crackling in the distance. Burning wood. I press sap covered fingers into my palm and feel them stick and pull them off again. The light of the sun grows dim now, but

this could not be; I only just started out on this trail, and yet when I look beneath me the trail has vanished under my unwitting feet some indeterminate distance ago, and all of the sudden I find myself in an unfamiliar place. Something has gone horribly awry, but I can't think straight enough to rationalize the fear. The trees look different here. I should have turned back, but when? What time? The sun has pinkened and retreated into the smoke that seems to seep from the mossy floor. Tears well in corners of blurred eyes. I catch myself yawning. I struggle to keep the world from fading before me, squinting at long shapes in the smoke. Soon my eyes are half shut, and I am wandering dreamlike as the unseen trees part their way for my somnambolic march, and I continue, a thrall of failing will, until the sound of an owl taking wing brings me to focus upon that alien grove, opaque in the ashen sun, and it was there by the hand that I was led.



destroyed by relevance / *Mira Moss Crime* / 2017

Dental Dreamscape

Gui Machiavelli

We of Arboria. BV picked up a broken instrument from the ground; a harp or a cithara. Her greasy fingers could barely hold on to anything, but it didn't matter as most of the strings were broken. Improbable corners of the landscape escaped the eye, as if neither space nor time existed there. "What happened there? Why are those places so completely empty?" Her friend asked, knowing there would be no reply.

Her misshapen mouth. She loved looking at mirrors, exploring the creative destruction wracked on her face by the moving fragments of her own facial bones. She was in flux, she had changed so much. There was something obsessive about the abandoned house they were sleeping in. It was not the broken furniture nor the mouldy ceiling that looked like a print-out of the cosmic microwave background: instead, it was something about how the air moved inside these walls and corridors, how she felt forced to seek the southernmost corner of each room she entered.

A dead twin. The friend had dug a hole inside the crater. Electric cables, fiberglass tufts, some ground glass, a kid's toy. BV looked at it from a distance. She thought of metal-shelled ghosts and their metaphysical qualities. She remembered prodding a power plug with a fork when she was young. The sky was still dark.

A crown of lilies on his head. Found in one of BV's notebooks (this notebook was actually a rectangular sheet of metal on which symbols had been engraved with some sort of sharp rudimentary tool): "Hypothesis of what caused the crash: 1) an unsuspected connection between the movements of Arborians and a surprisingly effective ritualistic choreography; 2) a vegetational conspiracy seeking to disrupt mammalian life; 3) a dimensional clash between an obsessive and a non-obsessive world. There is no evidence for #3 besides the fixation of survivors (myself included) with the position they adopt when entering one of the buildings from before the event and cleanliness."

Petrichor. The rain felt different, thicker, with an umami taste. Though the sun had remained hidden for the past six months, plant life seemed to thrive. BV and her friend sought water of phreatic origins, but had no success. Facial deformities were a common fact of life now, observed in all mammals studied, including human survivors. "Is it that people prefer not to comment on it, or is it that they do not see anything wrong with it? The shape of the skull has historically been associated with social stratification and racism. The crash might have unsettled the standards to which we were supposed to adhere; being unsure of what is the new ideal skull shape and thus who has the upper hand, the information previously conveyed by cranial structure has become pure white noise in somatotyping."

The still-functioning power plant whirrs in the background. Rub your palms together, then interlink your fingers and rub them together. Next, place the fingertips of one hand in the palm of the other and rub, and vice versa. Rubbing the hands together creates friction, which creates a lather. Within that lather is that which you want removed, ready to be washed away. Once you have worked up a good lather and rubbed all the surfaces together, rinse your hands and dry thoroughly, not forgetting in between the fingers.

A new metaphysics of the soul. "Certain beings vanish in a cloud of dark smoke when they die whilst others decompose normally. Need to investigate further. What are the implications of this? Survivors believe that certain beings are chosen over others; chosen for what and by whom? Asked friend to disinter a recently diseased person."

Dirt swallow me now. "Obsessive hand washing can be observed amongst all surviving humans; there seems to be a similar fixation with cleanliness amongst other mammals, but I'm no zoologist," BV said, laughing. She held her friend's backpack whilst he defecated. Plant-life was still inexplicably healthy despite the continued lack of sun. She kept fighting the impression that tree branches seemed to grow with a certain purpose or intent, weaving almost recognisable sym-

bols.

Public safety building. The properties of space seemed to have changed in ways subtler than human cognition was able to apprehend. The friend wanted to visit his dog's grave. When they arrived at the trans-species ecumenic cemetery, all corpses were partially disinterred; humans missed their hands and other mammals had had comparable structures removed. Avians and reptiles did not display any signs of mutilations, however. BV wanted to collect samples from a crow's skeleton, but could not ignore the feeling such an act would be improper. Her friend washed his dog's remains with bleach. It was unclear to BV whether he did not see or did not mind the missing fore paws.

Stress-bearing footpads. The drumming of raindrops was delicate and intermittent, like an omnipresent animal, microscopically vast. The altered geography was confusing: curves that should not exist; tropical forests where there had been nothing more than a ravine; cypasted fragments of infrastructure in stark contrast to natural-looking surroundings. A schizoid interweaving of elements that resembled a neural-network-produced cityscape. BV studied the hind legs of a dog. "The skyline...if I only look at it with my peripheral vision, it looks as either fire or a slow-motion waterfall."

Elderflower. "Strains of christianity judge the holiness of a recently diseased person by the odours it produces. In this case, is vanishing a positive or negative sign? Are these people saints or demons?" The friend did not reply, staring at a booklet with hand washing instructions titled "People are mortal, but intellectual property is forever."

Experience. BV walked alone, though a few seconds ago her friend stood right by her side. Aspects of the world around her felt as if in suspension and only partially existing. Upon closer inspection of surfaces and objects, BV realised they were dull, textureless and with rough and blurry edges. She dared not look at the mirror. After entering the nearby ruins of a house from before the crash, she positioned herself on the intersection between two walls. From the window she saw only an absence of anything at all. On the window-sill, a bezoar.

A circle around two howling men. The friend's hand was

closed in a fist. He stood in line for his five minutes under the waterfall of bleach. BV sat on a bench a few metres away, unwilling to take part in the post-crash custom of daily chlorine showers. Facial bones of the mammal population continued to move, now adopting an almost elliptical, funnel-like shape. Frail human lips could not bear the constant stress and led to most men and women to have almost permanent mouth bleeding. In some cases, folds of skin became breeding ground for bacteria and fungi. BV's teeth hurt. Gazing at the mirror, she noted similarities between herself and a lamprey.

Impulse control disorder. A cloud of insects flew over the settlement. The intense sound caused severe ear-bleeding in some of the mammalian population, but humans were affected the most. The cloud hovered for about one hour, performing what looked like a mating or courting dance, but the intended audience of the display was unclear. Thousands of invertebrates of different species moved in synchronised fashion, generating rudimentary fractals. The remaining rodent and lagomorph population in the area seemed particularly enthralled by the performance, congregating in the centre of the settlement. Afterwards, they dispersed in conspicuous patterns, sometimes favouring climbing and swimming to avoid crossing arbitrary empty spaces. A later analysis with different measuring instruments (geiger counter, microscope, infrared goggles, etc) revealed no significant differences between these spaces and their surrounding areas.

Insect cloud patterns. Notes etched on a plastic surface. "1) Koch snowflake; 2) variations on the twisted apollonian gasket, with curvatures of [-1, -2, 2, 4], [-25, 15, 15, 78] and [1, 56, 22, 34]; 3) one hard-to-define design, possibly a complex L-system. The choice of the shapes seems to be meaningful, but its exact significance remains unclear to us. Those whose ears bled during the insects' performance claim to have read the message being written to us in these movements, but the bleeding reoccurs every time they try to put it into human words."

Escape time. "Though we have seen increased sexual activity amongst rodents, since the insect event, it seems they have become infertile. Rats are almost non-existent now. The few remaining follow humans and other mammals at all times, as if our existence is the only thing protecting them from disappearing. All have had their front paws excised with perfectly straight cuts. The wounds are open and raw, but do not bleed nor do they become infected." BV spoke to her friend as she loudly

chewed on her own hair. The man, whose skin had become fragile, dry and many shades lighter due to continued exposure to bleach, shook his head and shrugged.

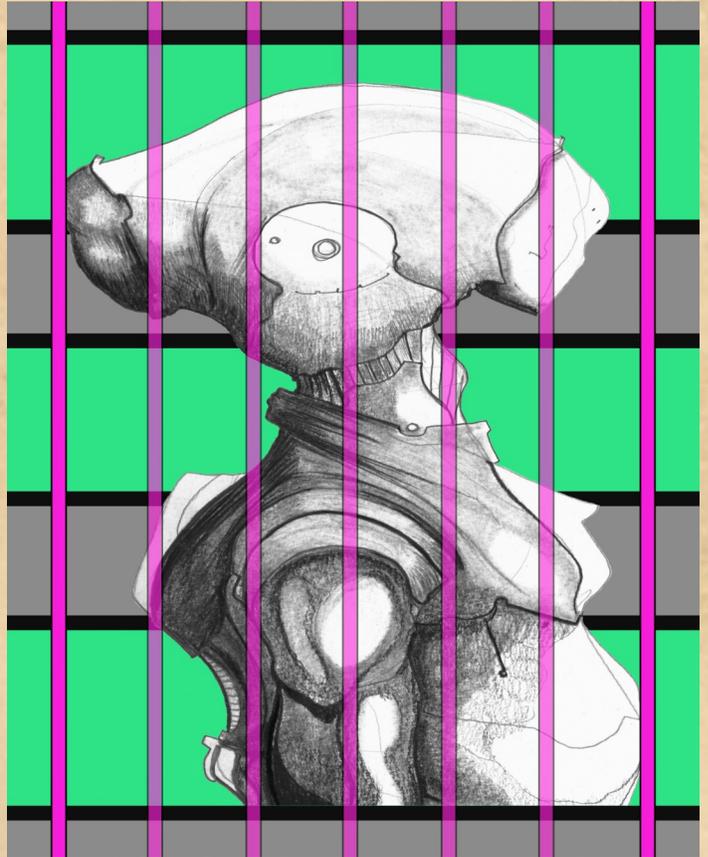
Bezoar stone gatherers. “Facial bone structure seems to have settled, one year after the crash event. Around 90% of humans studied have now features similar to those of the Argentinean pouched lamprey. The jaw bone fragmented to create the fake teeth which fill the outer rims of the mouth. Eyes are now covered in patches of loose skin on most of the survivors and have drifted to the sides of the head. Male-identifying subjects have the biggest amount of loose skin, which have taken a pouch-like shape. The tongue has retracted and its tip has become hard and covered in spines. Verbal communication has become impossible. None of the affected individuals display altered behaviour or signs of distress at their transformation.”

An orchestra of glitches. Atop a small hill, BV observed the reconfiguring skyline of a city that by all accounts did not exist anymore, or moved away from her at a greater speed than she could walk. She looked at the branch she had laid on the ground with one extremity touching her foot and the other her friend’s, in hopes of verifying that distances were indeed expanding and stretching. She could feel that the fundamental geometry of the universe writhed, that space itself had been infected by a virus of sorts that caused its mutation, the fluctuation of its constants, the warping of its rules. The topology of reality was bloating; the question was: did it bloat like a corpse or like an animal after a particularly successful hunt?

Pictorial mode of expression. A woman, a recluse who avoided joining the survivors in their main settlement, arrived with a small wagon loaded with cages. A sign on her neck explained she believed to have found a family of cats with functioning fore paws and that eating their trichobezoars could help healing the trauma that reality had suffered after the crash event. The friend approached, salivating, touching the scrawny cats who could barely summon the strength to open their rheumy eyes. He quickly lost interest once he realised the paws were nothing more than rotting hind paws crudely grafted on to the stubs.

Obsessive trauma. BV played her instrument to calm the

survivors whose ears had bled. She saw them, the survivors themselves, as wounds in the space-time continuum or tears in the fabric of cognition. She was convinced that the rules of nature were now dictated by the sum of all perceptions of all living beings. Had this reality been invaded by another through these people, or had this reality invaded another using these people?



Grid Cadaver / Hallidonto / Digital Collage / 2020

Devilry drinker. Microscopic notes engraved on a human tooth: “bleach reserves from before the crash are completely depleted. A majority of the survivors started exhibiting antisocial behaviour and giving clear signs of aggression. As an experiment to safeguard the community’s peace, we have suggested to one of the subjects that they should cut off their own hands at the wrist. Though initially resistant, the subject eventually agreed due to the extreme discomfort caused by the lack of exposure to chlorine. To our surprise, the surgery was extremely quick and painless, with no signs of blood: the subject’s hands came off almost as if of their own accord. Almost immediately afterwards, the subject seemed to have returned to a state of domestic bliss. Levels of aggression dropped to almost zero and the subject reported feeling calmer and happier than at any

previous point in their life.”

Living fossil record. “Perhaps they are less wounds than teeth germs. An agglomerate of stem cells gathering in a small patch of reality, changing, manipulating surrounding tissue so it can multiply and erupt. Our reality would be like a milk tooth, forced out of existence,” the friend wrote with a marker on the whiteboard. BV nodded. She clutched the bezoar she had been recently given and her heart beat faster.

Transcendental trauma. After facial bone structure patterns had settled, the micro-society of the settlement of survivors of the crash became stratified once again. The rules were strict and indefinable, as close to synthetic a priori propositions regarding social status as possible. One knew one’s intrinsic value without needing to relate it to others in the community. At the centre of this absolute hierarchy was the unnameable and ongoing trauma. Vegetation grew exponentially, aggressively reclaiming nutrients, space and time. Rodents had become officially extinct; lagomorphs seemed to dissolve, shedding parts of themselves as they moved about the landscape. Avians and reptiles avoided the settlement.

Observations on growing distances. “1) the burning skyline has receded into nothingness. Pilgrims who had left shortly after the crash seeking the city suddenly reappeared among the survivors. They passed away a few weeks later, violently vomiting trichobezoars. These eventually became prized possessions. 2) The power plant was the last landmark to disappear from the horizon. Most of our household appliances continued working as before. 3) Though the sky has remained dark since the crash, stars rose and set as before. The daytime sky is a flat black surface filled with an intentionality the survivors chose to actively ignore. Nighttime is noticeably less tense.”

BV lay on a cot at a topologically dubious position inside one of the old houses which no mammal dared to enter anymore. She kept her severed hands close to her breasts. Her cot was on the only possible configuration of traumatic space in which it could exist. In this choreography of obsessively reconfigured geometry, she found a remaining scrap of the previous, nonmetastasised laws and constants

of the reality in which she had been originally born. She produced bezoars to keep this scrap of normalcy alive long enough so she could study it.

Dental dreamscape. “Lagoons of transcendental dentine overflow. Mankind is a repressed dream of hyperdontia. Ruminated bezoars are the only things that keep us alive. Personal trauma heals the trauma of reality, allows for the easy excision of decaying milk teeth and simplifies existence. We are eternally seeking the numbing feeling of bleach-induced wounds, the nerve damage that can release us from a life well-unlived. I embrace the changing topology, finally – it is a moment of ambiguity, and ambiguity is all that lies between myself and the death and dearth of my own consciousness.”

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Syzygetic Chronodemon of Cataclysmic Convergence

Storm

While carving, the artist summoned Katak. That night, they dreamed from her point of view, devouring, slowly, a middle aged man. First they ate the ghost of the man's left hand, then arm; he stopped using it, and thought nothing of it. They took a bite out of his leg, and he, in his age, began to use a wheelchair. They took a bite of his head, removing just part of the speech controller in his brain, and he began to slur and babble. Sick of how much control she was having over herself, Katak went for it and chomped the rest of the man's head off. His teeth were like watermelon seeds in the artist's mouth.



Paper, oil based ink, ballpoint pen, high density rubber / 2020 / 4"x6"

Hyperstitional Therapeutics (or Psychoanalysis with a Grip)

Psuedanon4Q248

1: 1890-2020 - From Ego (Genealogy) to Geo (Geotrauma)

Naïve Inside: internally represented objects correspond to other objects (beings) in a cascade of truths with gradients of falsity. We don't want this, we never did. Obscure Outside: impersonal forces prime a series of machines (and/or vice versa) that outwardly diagram f - i / un - ctions that make themselves real (becoming) through bodies over time. We want this. It's all we've ever wanted.

A genealogy (1890-1998) is in order, one that with each date unravels into an even deeper schizo-K-hole:

1890-1895: Freud in researching hysteria discovers that an internal perception of an event (affect, thought, or interpretation distorted through the recursive process of memory)¹ stimulates the body through language in the same way a material object does through sense (not unlike magical incantations), and that an authority figure (like a mage, priest, or physician) can hijack this process through suggestion and crash it into itself leading to novel somatic and mental experiences. In doing this, Freud supplants centuries of Cartesian mind-body dualism with a Spinozist 'dual aspect monism' rooted in the body and it's affects while simultaneously reinvigorating magic as a materialist cybernetic prescription. The effect of this extends much further than a simple psychotherapy and ushers in a new golden age of the hyperreal wherein fictions (internal narratives composed piecemeal of partial internalizations of captures of the outside) act as diagrams for functioning in an external milieu.

1899/1900: Freud publishes *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899 but due to his own Quabbalahistic superstitions labels its publishing date as 1900 thereby producing a semi-fictional text from the future. This artifact of Freud's personal history is a kink in the form of the text (a symptom) that points us to the content of the text, mainly the intermixing nature of fiction and fact and its significance to temporal ordering as found in dreamwork (internal fictional narratives built from mental mechanisms and constructed of parts of the outside). It is in this kink that Freud both approaches and departs the superstitious, magical, cybernetic zenith by positing dreamwork (hyperreal meeting of the inside and outside) as perhaps the most significant concern of psychoanalysis but also secondary to (or overcoded by) the Oedipus Complex (which he discovered in his own dreams), a discovery which leads to the privileging of the naïve inside over the Outside.²

1972: Deleuze and Guattari (p. 9) take corrective action on this matter when they write "A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch. A breath of fresh air, a relationship with the outside world" (likewise, the motif of the patient who, after a 'schizophrenic flash,' brings a tape recorder into the analytic session to introduce an outside perspective [pg. 56, 312] also comes to mind).

1980: They continue - Freud, experienced as he was working with neurotics and Oedipal level conflict and inexperienced as he was working with psychotics and pre-Oedipal conflict, erroneously interprets the Wolfman's schizo-polyvocal communications (several

1: Remembering a memory, later using that memory of a memory as a reference point for another memory, etc.

2: Though, as Nick Land mentions in session 4 of his New Center for Research and Practice seminar "The Concept of Acceleration," Oedipus, in trying to avoid his revealed future, ultimately leads himself to fulfill his future. Thus, the Oedipus Complex is not without its aspects of templexity.

wolves – the Outside) as neurotic-Oedipal and monolithic ones (one wolf – phallus, daddy, family, inside). It is in this same text that D&G compel us to make a map not a tracing before introducing the reader to a new geological strata to their thought via a firsthand account of the critically overlooked Prof. Challenger's geoscientific ramblings in the aptly named *Geology of Morals*.

1981: Baudrillard, after critiquing Anti-Oedipus in '77 for neglecting the hyperreal, publishes *Simulacra and Simulation*, a short book that in being both a lesson in (form) and on (content) intense feedback, captures and copies the nature of the hyperreal by exploring how fictions have the same effects as facts thereby resulting in a collapse of the distinction between form and content and real and fake. Over the course of the first four pages the book, Baudrillard provides a mysteriously unverifiable or possible unreal quote (form) followed by the famous 'Borges fable' concerning cartographers whose map comes to replace the territory it seeks to represent, and concludes with a brief reference to psychoanalysis' weak attempts to distinguish whether a patient is simulating a symptom or suffering from an organic development, an issue which Baudrillard claims is already present in Freud's dreamwork (content).

1983: Guattari, possibly grappling with notions of the hyperreal, clarifies the themes mentioned above from the *Schizophrenia and Capitalism* volumes while unintentionally responding to Baudrillard when he writes that *psychoanalysis needs to get a grip on life* (the grip it lost when it transitioned from a positivist-medical model to a guru culture pushing obtuse concepts and dangerous suggestions in lieu of helping a person better live in the outside world – to get a grip could mean grappling with the hyperreal)! It's around this point the concept of cartography becomes an interest to Guattari (Dosse 2010, p. 263 and 391).

1989: Virilio (whose career was centered on the outside and speed as manifest in city organization and the military vectors driving it – architecture, cartography, etc.) steals a glance at Felix Guattari's desk and happens to see a stack of bound papers from

Guattari's 1980s post-*A Thousand Plateaus*' seminars (such as his 1983 essay above); papers covered in diagrams, maps, rambling sentences, and fictional theories that interest Virilio enough for him to publish it as Guattari's third to last book *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, a title that given our current discussion speaks for itself.

1998: The CCRU, a vague collective of alien forces resonating as 90s cultural motifs captured and smashed into the shape of human bodies ([meat puppets] bodies that produce diagrams, maps, rambling sentences, and theory-fictions) intensify the hyperreal into maximum signal density with their notion of 'hyperstition,' – "*not representation, neither disinformation nor mythology. Hype...belongs to a strain of time-warp cybernetic fiction that cannot be judged true or false because it makes itself real.*"³ This same year the CCRU meets with esteemed and controversial cryptographer and rogue-geoscientist Daniel Charles Barker who was then researching geotrauma at Miskatonic Virtual University (MVU – considered the 'shadow' MIT), a remote school composed of 'people' around the globe but with strong links to the Massachusetts area. Curiously, the interview isn't published and released until one year later in 1999, the year Arthur Conan Doyle's 1912 book *The Lost World* – the birth text of Prof. Challenger - is rebooted into a television show.

Pause. It's here that things get weird and the timeline slips off track; it's here we need to jump around times, go back in order to go forward, etc.

First, 'return to Freud.'

1890-1895: Freud, in his research on hysteria, introduces us to *nachträglichkeit* or 'afterwardness' which designates the moment where (via fictional narratives) the present retroactively reshapes the past thus destroying any prior determinism and opening up a new future (lines of flight). Clinically, a patient makes a self-discovery in the present that allows them to make sense of their past (deep repressed memory fragments) and therefore have more freedom in living their life. For example, here our past genealogy (1890-1989) does not make complete sense until we arrive at the CCRU and DC Barker (1998-99) which retrospectively aligns our

3: See "Cybergothic Hyperstition (Fast-Forward to the Old Ones) 1998."

memory fragments towards a sensible narrative (A). At the same time, it's here that the genealogy slips into a templexive loop that lends itself to uncontrollable morphological drift – de-stratification, deterritorialization, whatever – oozing into new and unchartered geological registers (B) [A, or reterritorialization, is merely a means to B, more deterritorialization].

At this point our genealogy concerned with the flatline of time morphs into a geology (archeological dig going backwards from 2019-1975) concerned with the curved line of space.

Gen(_)al(_ _)y - e, o, g. Ego. Geo (alphabet or prebiotic soup). We rearrange ego (back) into geo. Time is not a straight line (like the spine), it's a globe that spins on an invisible axis (spine minus the 'e' = spin; take the hanging 'e' and free associate: e-quator – equator of a globe; globe minus 'e' = glob, ooz(e), primordial; the spine was once a curved loop that ossified out of jelly-goop and later straightened out allowing the human to conceptualize the spherical space of the globe; axis is spine...⁴):

1975: following the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* in English, Deleuze and Guattari travel across the globe to the East Coast of the United States to run the ole' lecture tour. After a conference where Guattari shares the stage with William Burroughs (who, in his interest in 'sorcery, dreams, and fiction' is perhaps the godfather of 'hyperstition' and therefore the focus of much of the CCRU's research),⁵ Guattari ventures off to Lowell Massachusetts with the editor of *Semiotext(e)*. Lowell is not far from Cambridge, home of MIT and the Miskatonic county (about an hour driving time apart) and as the legend goes,⁶ one night in Mass., Guattari stumbled into a lecture tucked away in some Cambridge square not far from the MIT Campus where he found a professor ram-

bling on about esoteric geoscience. This professor is none other than DC Barker. It is unclear how much of the lecture Guattari stayed for, or what Barker was up to, but what is clear is that *A Thousand Plateaus* was in its early writing stages during the time and not but five years later the experience makes it into the text (which Barker himself cites in his interview) under the name Prof. Challenger, a name-change likely suggested by Deleuze. Twenty-three years later D.C. Barker is interviewed by the CCRU and published one year later as Prof. Challenger is rebooted for TV.

1980s: Guattari, with the help of a friend, is introduced to several high caliber international scientists to whom he shows the esoteric and hypere-scientific diagrams he conceptualized during *A Thousand Plateaus* and further developed in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* (Dosse 2010, p. 512). The scientists don't understand and dismiss Guattari but is rumored that copies of Guattari's diagrams make it from French hands to American hands through Guattari's New York and California connections. One may only speculate, in addition to whether Burroughs and Guattari corresponded in Lowell, who these scientists were and where – if anywhere meaningful – on the East Coast Guattari's diagrams landed.

2016: I move to the East Coast of the United States within the Miskatonic area while on leave from my West Coast studies whereupon a friend refers to me the case that follows in this paper. Nearing the end of 2016 the paper is rejected from several journals for being 'baselessly absurd' 'wild analysis' where it then sits on my computer.

2019: While reading Thomas Moynihan's *Spinal Catastrophism: A Secret History* (2019) I contact the recently revived MVU with the hopes of sharing research. This case immediately comes to mind.

2020: ...

4: See Thomas Moynihan's *Spinal Catastrophism: A Secret History* (2019) which occupies an absolutely important place in this genealogy turned geology but would require a separate paper if one wanted to do any justice to the book.

5: See "Lemurian Time War."

6: Being a psychoanalyst in training I've had the insider privilege of knowing both patients and analysts who worked with worked Guattari or people in his circle. To respect the wishes of my non-patient sources, and due to patient confidentiality, I am unable to provide any more information other than that some current and past researchers at MIT and some East Coast psychoanalytic circles linked to MIT have or had strong connections with some Lacanian and French analytic groups dating back to the 60s.

2: 2016 - Cars, Shoes, and Letting the Outside In (And the inside out)

The story goes like this. Fifth-grade boy from gang-violence stricken neighborhood is referred to in-school counseling for angry classroom outbursts. We develop an enjoyable therapeutic relationship but he doesn't want to talk about anger, he wants to talk about cars and shoes. I don't push it. I listen to him talk about cars and shoes.

Cars and shoes. Cars and shoes...Then *rupture*:

Therapist: What's all this car talk about?

Patient: They go fast. If I owned them I could go anywhere I want, do what I want whenever I wanted.

To my mind the sports car seemed to connect with having the freedom to act immediately without inhibition – *investment of desire in spatial and economic mobility of a body (time, space, geo)*.

Sessions later another rupture - I notice the word "DRIVE" embroidered on the patient's shoes. The possibility of a Freudian pun (drive theory) amuses me:

T: I noticed your shoes.

P: These ones help me go fast. It's fun to go fast in life.

T: Are your shoes like a red sports car?

P: Ha! You could say that, they're both shiny, red, and go fast.

Though my question regarding the likeness of his shoes to a sports car could be considered bad technique - 'leading the witness' - the fact that the patient did not resist my association and in fact provided his own link ('they're both shiny, red, and go fast') seems to confirm that there was indeed a link between his shoes and his talk of cars; a link not in the sense of a positivist discovered, latent, preexistent link (referring *back* to something – passive uncreative signification –personal unconscious as theater), but in the sense of what the hermeneutic psychoanalysts (see Movahedi 2015) refer to as 'closing the hermeneutic circle,' that is, connecting the dots between the data the patient provides

and the ideas the therapist has in relation to the data to create some sort of plot (referring *forward* to something – active creative diagrammatization – impersonal unconscious as factory).

Here the geo of the sportscar is relocated into the ego of sportshoe through shared fiction. Creating a fiction together helped the patient feel understood, less alone, and therefore more interested in working towards something constructive with myself. The patient and I agreed that if we could continue like this we could spend some of the session outside. This introduction of 'outside time' marks the start of when the patient began talking about the anger that brought him to in-school therapy with myself – *and when things start to get weird*:

P: You know, most people don't have memories of being a baby, but I do. I remember being frozen. I couldn't move. And everything was black. I could see through my eyes, they were open, but all I could see was black. It was all black. It was creepy...It was scary. I didn't like it. That's all I can really say.

An odd symptom, a deep body-memory.

During a later session:

P: Right before I get angry everything just goes black.

T: Is there a thought or idea right before it goes black?

P: No. I just get angry, just like BOOM. Fast (recall the fast shoes/cars).

T: What if I told you to make up a story (fiction) about the steps of getting angry, right before it goes black?

P: Make it up? What good is that?

T: Might not be any good, but give it a shot, just tell me a story, doesn't have to be real.

P: Well, I guess right before it goes black, I think just that I don't want to do anything I will regret when I come out of it. I was really angry last week but someone brought their baby in and I knew to stop. I stopped being angry just like that. Right away. Because I knew I didn't want to hurt the baby – by accident.

T: So, some things can bring you out of it?

P: Yes. Like, if you were there I wouldn't hit you. You'd bring me out of it. I don't like myself when I am angry, so it's kind of nice that I go black because I don't have to actually remember doing those things.

After exploring this peculiarity together through a shared fiction that lead to thoughtfulness the patient's angry outbursts outside the therapy room reduced significantly until some gang-violence related family issues occurred which reinvigorated his acting out. Following this tragedy, the patient described a new insight:

P: Right before I blackout I ask myself 'what am I going to do?' but the answer to the question is too scary to think about.'

T: It's easier in these moments to 'go crazy' than it is to think about what you're going to do?

P: Yeah, only a long time later do I think 'wow, what was I doing!'

T: Could you reflect in the moment instead of later?

P: I just do it and don't look back. Ever since I heard that quote in a movie, it's my mantra – do it and don't look back.

When questioned the patient stated that this 'mantra' was taken from *The Fast and the Furious* films which center on driving sports cars fast and dangerously, a sentiment consistent with the

talk of impulses, sports cars, and fast shoes, not to mention the patient's *fury* or rage. I was immediately reminded of Paul Walker, *The Fast and the Furious* actor who killed himself, even if accidentally, by driving a fast red car into a tree (here Walker's fictional life becomes his real life and has real effects). While thinking about this suicidal celebrity to myself the patient said aloud, as if responding to my very thought: "Do you know that guy Aaron Hernandez – well he looked back. Look what happened to him. He killed himself...He should have just gone to prison, not looked back. Instead he tried to get off innocent."

Now things get weird.

3: 2016 - Aaron Hernandez, Rupture of the Outside, and Hyperstition

In what is perhaps a bit of the Freudian uncanny, a week prior to the session where the patient mentioned Aaron Hernandez, a psychoanalytic theory class I was enrolled in had been discussing his murder trial and suicide which had then just recently occurred.⁷ The class spent time proposing banal and cliché theories until the professor posed the clever theory that Hernandez's conviction for the first crime (first degree murder) but acquittal of the second (double homicide), a strange occurrence, aroused in Hernandez the thought or feeling 'if I hadn't done the first one I could've gotten away with the second' (can you imagine getting away with double homicide but getting nabbed on a single homicide?). This event gave him just enough space to reflect, just enough hope to realize how hopeless he was. Hernandez could have lived out his life accepting his first prison sentence but knowing he could've got off free for the second crime adjusted his perspective, enlightening him to what he was missing. This can be described by inverting the cliché 'you don't know what you got 'till it's gone,' into 'you don't know it's gone 'till you got something' which speaks to the mind's inability to produce pure negation, a conflict which lies at the heart of psychoanalysis and the 'logic' of the unconscious, one that brings us into the realm of fiction and the hyperreal.⁸

7: The uncanny element here is not that the patient talked about an event that was in the air at the time, but that the patient's talk of Hernandez seems to confirm the professor's theory mentioned in a moment. That is, the similarity in the subjectivization produced in relation to the Hernandez case event and its temporal relevance in both society and the case, and its meaningful effect in the case, is uncanny.

8: The templexity here is interesting: Hernandez kills two people at Time A, kills one person at Time B, is imprisoned at Time C, is tried for TA at Time D, is deemed innocent but still detained (Time E), and tried for TB at Time F, thus retroactively re-criminalizing Hernandez where he then mentally places himself in a place and time where he has killed two people and been released only to come back to the current moment where this 'lost future' is foreclosed leading to suicide. This all seems coded into the mantra 'don't look back,' which seems to indicate a looking back into time.

The point here is that Hernandez's subjective experience was ruptured to the extent that it led him to suicide. This is precisely the aspect of the case that the young angry patient identifies with in his own talk (completely ignorant to the fact that I had discussed the same thing in a class a week or more prior to our session). Let us revisit what the patient said:

"I just do it and don't look back. Ever since I heard that quote in a movie, it's my mantra – do it and don't look back...you know that guy Aaron Hernandez – well he looked back. Look what happened to him. He killed himself. He should have just gone to prison, not looked back. Instead he tried to get off innocent."

For both the patient and Hernandez, looking back (reflecting) would mean something terrible – or deadly.

At this point, to help the patient whose symptoms had returned due to gang violence, instead of suggesting reflection as I had been doing, or trying to find the right words or symbol the patient could use before blacking out, I tried to find the right image and action in the room by asking the patient if he could simply picture my face right before he blacked out.

The next week L came in and reported the following:

P: So, I got angry, and the weirdest thing happened, man. You won't believe it! I was getting really angry at my tutor...ready to do something, and all of sudden, his head *became* your head. I don't mean I imagined his head - I saw your face, your head, on his head, only for a few seconds, but it was very real, and it was *shocking*. Weird! I stopped being mad. Not because I wasn't mad, but because it was so strange, man, like so weird, I had to take a step back and think 'what the heck!'

T: So, my face helped you snap out of it?

P: Yesss! It was the strangest thing that has ever happened to me!

The following months consisted of considerably less fits of rage, and when L did get angry, he tended to be able to ver-

balize that he was angry and remove himself from the class to take a short walk. Ultimately the patient, more stable,

4: 2019 - Fiction and the Outside

What worked here? Shared fiction (hyperreality) that catches a hold of the currents of the Outside, resonating with cultural events that reterritorialize in the body of the patient and become real in their effect on the patient (hyperstition).

Here we see the first decisive factor in helping the patient get in touch with meaningful content regarding his symptom and therefore regarding his recovery is the inclusion of literal '*outside time*' in the session as well as the abstract exploration of '*outside*' talk – cars, shoes, etc. Opening up the session to the outside in this way then allowed for a fiction in the therapy room to resonate and connect first between myself and the patient and then with a shared reality outside the therapy room, the strange case of Aaron Hernandez.

Meanwhile, fiction helped the patient and I develop a transference where he felt he could talk about things at his own pace while I listened. As self-psychology models show, when a therapist refrains from acting or speaking in a way that makes the patient feel threatened or in need of a defense, the patient tends to be more likely to let down the defense and naturally connect with the therapist and therefore participate in cocreating fictions, fictions which feedback and resonate with the Outside and become real. This wish to cocreate a fiction allowed the patient to try and make my interventions work. The psychodynamics of the useful intervention lay not necessarily in an unveiling of some hidden unconscious structure (positivist recording or structuralist signifying - representation), but in my learning how to be in a space with the patient as to encourage him to cooperate in writing a shared fiction with me through synthesis. In large, much of 'good' psychoanalysis consists in co-constructing a functional myth or helpful 'lie' (personal truth?) in order to resolve conflicts. As Freud (1905) points out to us, it is not that the doctor's advice really cures the patient, it's that the feeling that the doctor wants to cure the patient helps the patient feel cured.

Fiction worked because, as previously mentioned, it privileged primary or schizoprocess, ‘the word on the level of thing’ rather than the word on the level of representation, and schizo process is open to the outside.⁹ The patient, operating from the ‘schizo part of the self,’ could imagine my face, a physical object, much better in that moment of rage (becoming, in the patients words and in theory) than he could imagine a word or sentence which *referred* to my face (or other signifiers which, in his mind, stood in for my face). Through his hallucination, his physical tutor took on a physical look of me, rather than his tutor taking on metaphorical-linguistic or metonymical traits of me. That is, the patient’s process was ‘I shouldn’t get enraged because my tutor is in a state of *becoming* my therapist’ as opposed to what a more neurotic process: ‘I shouldn’t get enraged because my tutor has traits *like or similar* to my therapist, and I wouldn’t want to hurt my therapist.’

What is interesting here is that it was not necessarily my kindness or intelligence that made my presence to the patient therapeutic, but rather precisely the *shocking* nature of my image appearing in an unexpected place. It was a shock - what Racker (1982) or Guattari (1996) terms a “rupture” - that pulls the patient out of his experience (which was also imperative to Hernandez); a little bit of the outside gets in and the patient (and the therapist) gets a grip.



you call us criminals / Mira Moss Crime / 2017

9: Though the patient was certainly not schizophrenic, these reports seem to be partly consistent with a few theories on schizophrenia; [1]: schizophrenia as a sort of scrambling of the mind in order to avoid experiencing intolerable feeling states / ideas or acting on destructive aggression (Hyman 1961; Bion 1956). For the patient, the ‘blacking out’ served the purpose of disavowing (which serves the function of object protection and therefore self-protection from the retaliating object) the possible negative consequences of aggressive actions which occurred or were to occur. Thus, in line with Bion (ibid), the patient was not schizophrenic, but operating out of what he calls ‘the psychotic part of the mind,’ the part of the mind which resists making sense or links.; [2-4]: The patient explained that what set off his anger was when a teacher engaged in what Laplanche (1991) would call an “enigmatic signifier,” a concept I relate to Ferenczi’s (1949) “confusion of tongues” and Bateson’s (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, and Weakland 1956; Laing and Esterson 1970) classic etiological hypothesis for schizophrenia, the “double bind.” According to the patient, a teacher might say ‘Why did you do that?’ or ‘What is going on with you today?’ but in both cases the questions felt and perhaps were unconsciously intended to be false question without an answer (a rhetorical way of saying ‘stop you wild child!’), one which prompted an overly frustrating experience in the patient. The double bind, following a sort of Freudian kettle logic, was that the question was not really a question, and if it was a question, had no correct answer anyways. This was a situation which was scripted in adult tongue-code (a question whose affect implicitly did not match the content relying on rhetorical assumptions) and thus was unable to be interpreted by the patient’s child-tongue, hence its enigmatic and confusing nature. Considering the psychotic or ‘schizo’ part of the personality is not negated by the oedipal developments but exists in conjunction with it (as Freud and Ferenczi discuss, and as D and G describe in their sections on Asiatic production), and considering my continued attempts to help the patient with words did not have the effect either of us would like, I focused on what Deleuze and Guattari (1972) or Laplanche (1991), building on Freud of course, would call the representation of things rather than the representation of words (Freudian primary process).

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RAITRE

“SAN FRANCISCO HEAVY”

RAITRE

Anyway I'm karen and i made this game. I started working on it in September of last year during the



week I was in Boston, mostly on the plane, in the hotel room, a bit in Boston public library, then in the



airport waiting to return home. I felt depressed for most of that week but still spent a lot of time working on it.



I showed this to my therapist and she said it's cold and alienating. She said in general I should try to foster



genuine relationships with those around me. She said you as the player bear some responsibility for this too.



RAITRE

So I don't know where that leaves us..
This type of thing is so difficult..



RAITRE

GRAAAGHHRGHAAGRH



Sing Me to Sleep: Notes on Virality

Riccardo Vanelli

*«I never sleep so soundly as when I have, during the day,
sufficiently befouled myself with what our fools call crimes»*

-D.A.F. de Sade

There is a story, told by Jason Mohaghegh to Amy Ireland and passed down from Amy to me and to a potentially incalculable number of people.¹ It is about Ahmand Shamlu, a Persian poet, and his torturers' favourite torment during one of his political captivities. Every day, the guards suddenly enter his cell and pretend to take him to his executioner, and then take him back to his horrid confinement. The aim of the torture is to prevent him from predicting his future, to inhibit the capacity to construct rational prophecies regarding ones fate; it is a transcendental torture preventing him from knowing the exact time of his death, and to drag him before the jaws of an unforeseen and unforeseeable terror every day. Faced with the collapse of one of his most basic cognitive functions, unable to imagine what the rest of his, probably short, life will be like, Shamlu begins to write lullabies. Unable to trace the path of the rest of his days, our protagonist weaves sacred geometries and becomes an insatiable follower of the most mundane form of annihilation - sleep - autoinducing his own death in small quantities. No longer able to control his own life - an illusion, that of the free management of one's own destiny, which accompanies each one of us and makes our life at least bearable - he hypnotizes himself by following the spirals of the immemorial present diagrammed by the repetitions of the lullabies, stretched out towards the small, inane death that awaits us, potentially, at the height of each verse.

SLEEP = 102 = CRUX = HUMAN = LOST

Something similar, in its relative infinite banality, happened at the beginning of the 2000s to most of us. We found ourselves immersed in cyberspace, thrown into the dark rooms of forums and message-boards, populated by the all-too-perceptible crawling of an incalculable number of anonymous users, with their incessant weaving of words and images and their porn and their fetishes imported from Japan.² We realized, immersed in this foaming crowd, we had been, until that very moment, healthy carriers of a large number of abstract viruses which were mutating and etching their eggs in our eyes and ears, among which the most virulent were certainly our own language and the techno-scientific-military complex that, clearly, still surrounds us.

We had the belated epiphany: the human world is a truly inhuman creation, driven by goals which are clearly not ours.

«If we disregard for a moment the fact that robotic intelligence will probably not follow the anthropomorphic line of development prepared for it by science fiction, we may without much difficulty imagine a future generation of killer robots dedicated to understanding their historical origins. We may even imagine specialized "robot historians" committed to tracing the various technological lineages that gave rise to their species. [...] The robot historian of course would hardly be bothered by the fact that it was a human who put the first motor together: for the role of humans would be seen as little more than that of industrious insects pollinating an independent species of machine-flowers that simply did not possess its own reproductive organs during a segment of its evolution. Similarly, when this robot historian turned its attention to the evolution of armies in order to

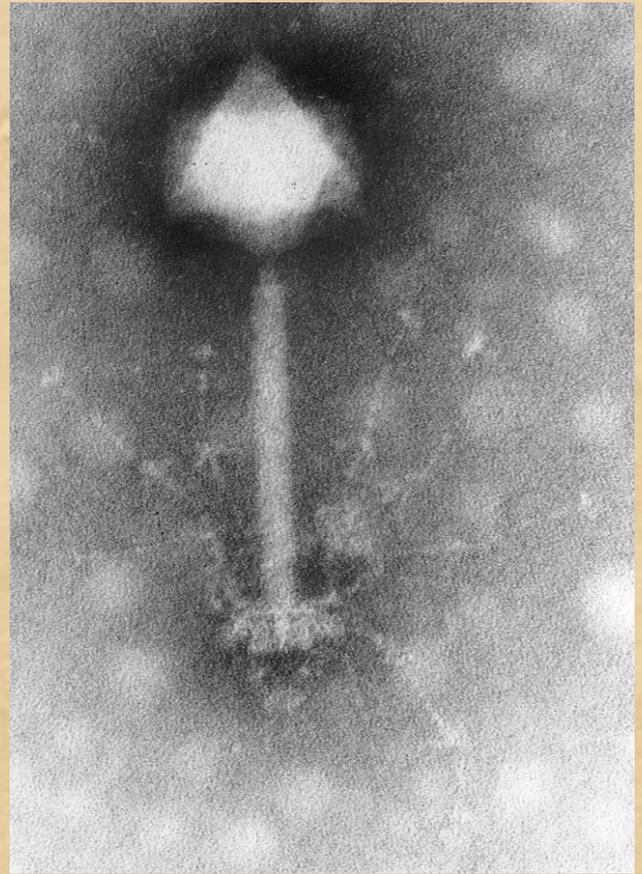
1: Jason Bahbak Mohaghegh, Robin Mackay, and Amy Ireland, "Maniac Lullabies," on *Urbanomic*, Oct. 7, 2019 (<https://www.urbanomic.com/podcast/maniac-lullabies/>)

2: "Cult in a Dead MMO" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p9LWzr-ibI&t=46s>

trace the history of its own weaponry, it would see humans as no more than pieces of a larger military-industrial machine: a war machine. The assembling of these machines would have been, from this point of view, influenced by certain “machinic paradigms” that were prevalent at the time. The armies of Frederick the Great, for instance, could be pictured as one gigantic “clockwork” mechanism, employing mercenaries as its cogs and wheels. In a similar way, Napoleon’s armies could be viewed as a “motor” running on a reservoir of populations and nationalist feelings».³

We realized, too late and without the necessary lucidity, that we were part of an ungovernable sprawl of interconnected machines and orphan deities; the Burroughsian prophecy that warned us of the viral nature, in the epidemiological sense of the term,⁴ of words, of symbols, of machines came true in the most dramatic way. Our arms and our eyes turned out to be the threshold and the key - the elusively untrodden corridor that takes us into the heart of the rest of the world, a world paradoxically all fully present on our screens, without any deviation or limitation, and absolutely out of our reach, individual and collective alike. The *memetic revolution* that overwhelmed our language, pulverizing public speech into tiny frames repeated endlessly by users cannibalized by this anti-semiotic chain, and the boom-and-bust qwerty-outereconomics of viral cat videos and porn gifs revealed their naked truth: «Words have not been recognized as a virus because they have reached a stable symbiosis with the host organism»⁵ and, more importantly: «*objective reality is produced by the virus in the host*»⁶ making the world a transcendental by-product of neural infection. We are dragged along the cosmos by the ever-accelerating movement of abstract spores we unwillingly inhaled when we became humans - we are swept off our feet by the unnatural copulation of our cognition and the strangers which inhabit it. As the father of nanotechnology puts it:

«this is evolution by natural selection, apparently called "natural" because it involves non-



Bacteriophage / Hans-Wolfgang Ackermann / in [“The Third Age of Phage”](#)

human parts of nature. [...] *Evolution proceeds by the variation and selection of replicators. The history of life is the history of an arms race based on molecular machinery.* [...] Engineers speak of “generations” of technology; Japan’s “fifth generation” computer project shows how swiftly some technologies grow and spawn. Engineers speak of “hybrids,” of “competing technologies,” and of their “proliferation.” IBM Director of Research Ralph E. Gomory emphasizes the evolutionary nature of technology, writing that “technology development is much more evolutionary and much less revolutionary or breakthrough-oriented than most people imagine.” (Indeed, even breakthroughs as important as molecular assemblers will develop through many small steps.) In the quote that heads this chapter, Professor Herbert A. Simon of Carnegie-Mellon University urges us to “think of the design process as

3: Manuel Delanda, *War in the age of intelligent machines* (New York: Swerve, 1991), 2-3.

4: «And what is a virus? Perhaps simply a pictorial series like Egyptian glyphs that makes itself real». William S. Burroughs, *Ah Pook is here*, (Parchment: Riverrun Press, 1983), 102.

5: William S. Burroughs, *The job* (London: Penguin, 1989), 12.

6: William S. Burroughs, *The revised boy scout manual* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2018), 98.

involving first the generation of alternatives and then the testing of these alternatives against a whole array of requirements and constraints." Generation and testing of alternatives is synonymous with variation and selection. [...] The global technology race has been accelerating for billions of years. The earthworm's blindness could not block the development of sharp-eyed birds. The bird's small brain and clumsy wings could not block the development of human hands, minds, and shotguns. Likewise, local prohibitions cannot block advances in military and commercial technology. It seems that we must guide the technology race or die, yet the force of technological evolution makes a mockery of antitechnology movements: democratic movements for local restraint can only restrain the world's democracies, not the world as a whole». ⁷

In short, we found ourselves trapped inside ourselves, collapsed in the closed rooms of our skull, and held in check by parasites of planetary dimension - locked in a arms race for absolute supremacy which obviously exceed the scope and the goals of our species, but on which we still build our very survival. «Reality» should be «understood to be composed of fictions – consistent semiotic terrains that condition perceptual, affective and behavioral responses». ⁸ The entities mock us from the moist backrooms of our skull, hidden deep within our sore eye sockets as we write another word: «My reluctant author types: I AM, my reluctant author types. I am evoked». ⁹

Irremediably struck by this revelation and incapable of wrestling our way out of this extreme constraint, we too began to weave lullabies; we took up writing, often involuntarily, nursery rhymes made to be repeated endlessly inside our cells, until sleep eventually comes to snuff us in front of our screens. We called these echoing lullabies, stunned and guided by an otherworldly sense of humour, *copypasta*, replicant texts playing the game of

unnatural selection. They were clearly not about meaning any longer – but this is an old and boring intuition at this point – they were about *the feral intensities of our gut-splitting convulsions of laughter and the cruel ethos of sub-cognitive selection*. «If you look for meaning, you'll miss everything that happens». ¹⁰

COPYPASTA = 197 = NETWORKS
= BOTTLENECK = NO MAN'S LAND

The reason which makes copypastas a far more intriguing phenomenon when confronted with its twin companion in the quest for our perennial, planetary cyber-hypnosis, memes, is straight-forward: while memes use the brute force of their images to hijack our cognitive energies towards the most fruitless reproduction, the anal insemination and immaculate conception of internet content, copypastas relay on the cunning utilization of the humanity's most enlightened and quintessential species-specific tool: words.

Making an interesting meme is relatively easy. A meme is usually either a simple visual assault, which opens a wound we can't peel our eyes off of in the screen before us, or a smart and economic utilization of a well-trodden visual trope. A meme, in order to function and proliferate, uses the most primitive forms of (anti-) semiotic propagation: the writing on the wall, which forcefully captures your attention; bright, over-saturated colours or familiar patterns squirted directly into your retina and, from there, towards your central nervous system, pre-consciously and pre-cognitively; the lively and childish march of an endless series of weaponized *eyecandies*, stomping on a human face forever. It might be true that: «The successful meme is characterized by aesthetic features irreducible to representational adequacy, from elegance of construction to dramatic form. Even more importantly, it is able to operate as a causal factor itself, and thus to produce the very effects it accommodates itself to», ¹¹ but its methods are still far too

7: K. Eric Drexler, *Engines of creation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1986), 32-43.

8: CCRU, "Lemurian Time War," in *Writings: 1997-2003*, (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017), ((:))(:) [35].

9: Elytron. Frass, "Pseudonym as doppleganger," on *X-R-A-Y*, May 15, 2018 (<http://x-r-a-y.com/pseudonym-as-doppelganger-by-elytron-frass/fiction/>)

10: <https://twitter.com/bognamk/status/1220275954766925824>

11: Nick Land, "Gyres," on *Outside In*, June 18, 2014 (<http://www.xenosystems.net/gyres/#more-2839>)

brute for our taste.

The cypypasta, clearly, cannot use such simplistic tools. Being solely text-based, it must insert itself in the bloodstream which keeps the semiotic chain rolling. It must create a bond with the tools we use to consciously describe and calibrate ourselves. It must engender a *vampyric empathy*¹² which locks our higher mentations into a deep symbiotic acquiescence, causing maximally effective parasitism and camouflaging itself in plain sight amongst our most powerful forms of cognitive species-preservation. In other words, it must turn words against us and that is a fascinating endeavour from an abstract epidemiological point of view.

This explains, partially and exoterically, the comparison with the *lullaby-form*, the reason why the blind intelligence of unnatural selection favoured the shape “string of words repeated mindlessly, with minimal but effective variation, to put our mind to sleep.” This form, this approximation towards mental-death through the utilization of our most effective tools for mentation is the most virulent shape our words have assumed, on a historical/biological basis, while trying to unshackle themselves from their host. It is the most absurd form of word-uttering, being the precondition for the cessation of the utterer itself (whether by falling asleep, locking itself in the frenzied stasis of a deathless and a-futural present or being forced to repeat the same text in every corner of the web mindlessly).

On an esoteric level, the lullaby-form, approximating itself asymptotically to pure seriality and unshackled repetition, strips the Word of his Abrahamic nature, where God’s verbal *fiat* creates the plot along which nature unfolds, and hinges, ultimately, towards numeralization and qwerty-esque strings, which coil around themselves leaving a trail of loose ends in their wake. The lullaby automatically assembles itself through minimal additions and subtractions, which in turn sediment in a precise but unwilled, always-mutilated and blind structure. If in «the Abrahamic tradi-

tion, the Word of God anticipates creation. Insofar as scripture faithfully records this Word, the holy writings correspond to a level of reality more fundamental than nature, and one that the ‘book of nature’ references, as the key to its final meaning. The unfolding of creation in time follows a narrative plotted in eternity, in which history and divine providence are necessarily identical. There can be no *true* accidents, or coincidences»¹³ the numeralized word pushes terminally towards the esoteric, the superfluously cruel, the unneeded and horrific.

«Assume, entirely hypothetically, that supernatural intelligence or obscure complexities in the topological structure of time had sedimented abysmal depths of significance into the superficial occurrences of the world. The ‘Book of Creation’ is then legible at (very) many different levels, with every random or inconsequential detail of relatively exoteric features providing material for systems of information further ‘down’. The deeper one excavates into the ‘meaningless chaos’ of the exoteric communicative substrate, the more uncluttered one’s access to the signals of utter Outside-ness. Since ‘one’ is, to its quick, a signaletic product, this cryptographic enterprise is irreducibly a voyage, transmutation, and disillusionment. [...] Nevertheless, the linguistic and arithmetical aspects are *in fact* quite strictly separated, because thinking in words and numbers simultaneously is hard, because maintaining sustained parallel intelligibility in both is close to impossible, because the attempt to do so is (exoterically) senseless, and because practicality dominates. The esoteric realm is not forbidden, but simply unneeded».¹⁴

LULLABY-FORM = 236 = MARY
MAGDALENE = PRIMAL SCREAM = 11

12: «In cases of vampirism, empathy is not an in itself as in episodes of sadistic empathy; rather it is a means to intensify or enrich one’s own experience. [...] Vampiristic empathy creates its own feedback loop. Under obsessive observation, the observed’s life appears more present, more perfect, more original or more intense. In comparison, the vampire’s own life will appear dull, empty and meaningless, full of doubt and failure. This emptying of the self feeds the vampire’s emotional hunger». Fritz Alwin Breithaupt, *The dark sides of empathy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 218-219.

13: Nick Land, “Gnon and OOon,” on *Outside In*, Sep. 13, 2013 (<http://www.xenosystems.net/gnon-and-ooon/>)

14: Land, “Gnon and OOon,” web.

It is not a coincidence that the most famous cypypasta, the Navy Seal cypypasta, is centred around an individual's complete lack of agency and his illusory sense of self-ownership. The Navy Seal cypypasta is a text which repeats maniacally, over and over again, the intimidations and threats spouted by a supposed ex-Navy Seal soldier. Let us quote it at length:

*«What the fuck did you just fucking say about me, you little bitch? I'll have you know I graduated top of my class in the Navy Seals, and I've been involved in numerous secret raids on Al-Qaeda, and I have over 300 confirmed kills. I am trained in gorilla warfare and I'm the top sniper in the entire US armed forces. You are nothing to me but just another target. I will wipe you the fuck out with precision the likes of which has never been seen before on this Earth, mark my fucking words. You think you can get away with saying that shit to me over the Internet? Think again, fucker. As we speak I am contacting my secret network of spies across the USA and your IP is being traced right now so you better prepare for the storm, maggot. The storm that wipes out the pathetic little thing you call your life. You're fucking dead, kid. I can be anywhere, anytime, and I can kill you in over seven hundred ways, and that's just with my bare hands. Not only am I extensively trained in unarmed combat, but I have access to the entire arsenal of the United States Marine Corps and I will use it to its full extent to wipe your miserable ass off the face of the continent, you little shit. If only you could have known what unholy retribution your little "clever" comment was about to bring down upon you, maybe you would have held your fucking tongue. But you couldn't, you didn't, and now you're paying the price, you goddamn idiot. I will shit fury all over you and you will drown in it. You're fucking dead, kiddo».*¹⁵

The man yells, boasting about a power and an agency he clearly doesn't have - about unleashing a storm which clearly engulfs, first and foremost, himself, repeating his words *ad*

nauseam, ripping his tongue and his voice right out of his throat, rendering them completely autonomous of any subjective and species-specific will. As the swarms repeat his unwilling mantra continuously, with little to no variations to the original source, the humanity of the words uttered melts away, the agency hubristically spouted, with all his macho humanist-militarism, becomes more and more ridiculous and improbable and all that remains is the virality at the core of every phoneme.

This archetypal cypypasta is the epitome of the death of the sovereign subject as a positive entity, as a king of his own words, and the dawn of the most disquieting thought: sovereignty as utter, asymmetric dissolution, completely tilted towards the compulsive and the machinic, and technomic and unhuman dispersal through our higher cognitive functions. The new sovereign is she who lets the virus gnaw at his species-being more thoroughly; the new putrid subjecthood belongs to she who understands that, just like Klossowskian ontological sodomy, words are «functions neither for the reproduction of the species nor for species bonding», they are «an act done to gore the partner and release the germ of the species in his excrement», the cruel application of «the principle of affinity in what will form integral monstrosity».¹⁶ Cypypastas are like the meaningless string of numbers carved in Donnie Darko's arm, counting down towards nothing but the next turning of the gyre.

NAVY SEAL = 171 = AZATHOTH = BLACK EARTH

The field of *cypypasta studies* has been sleeping on this unhuman potential of cypypasta, of this linguistic sodomy of a moaning human race. The main reason behind this theoretical slumbering, clearly, is that this field of research does not yet exist in any capacity, be it academic, para-academic or anti-academic. While memes have received at least some cringe-worthy commentaries about their human, all-too-human political implications, a precise research program of the anti-political semiotic cypypasta warfare has been absolutely non-existent. Going forward more people should consider dedicating some time to the com-

15: "Navy Seal Cypypasta," on *Know Your Meme* (<https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/navy-seal-cypypasta>)

16: Pierre Klossowski, *Sade my neighbor*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), xiii, 24.

plex and virulent dynamics of verbal supernormal stimulation and the poetics of the automatic copy-and-pasting of horrid word-mongrels.



Nam-Shub of Enki / Courtesy of [Encyclopedia Satanica](#)

The only possible exception to this claim is probably, involuntarily, Nick Land, who has utilized a very close approximation of cypypastas as means to present *abstract horror* as an *unknown unknown left ultimately unknown*. In fact, if one looks at his recent fictional output – especially *Bloody Mary*, *Patience*, *Mermaids*, *Wallypede Girl* and the, at the time of writing, unfolding series *Things left unsaid* – they will easily realise how these stories tend towards the cypypasta form, both in content, with stories concentrating mainly on repetition, initiation and oceanic plague-dynamics, and in style, being short story posted somewhat anonymously on the internet, urging the reader to spread them unproductively across cyberspace to curse and soothe a new unwilling reader. They are not stories, with plots to armour the unity of sense,

continuity and authorship, they are strings of words with a Final Attractor attached at their tail end, built for hunting: «Hard consonants – *cat-stutter*, *catastrophe*, *cataclysmic*, *tactical*, *contracts* – words like that could attract it. It hunts for fun». ¹⁷ A more thorough engagement with their themes and their formal novelty will come in the near future, Katak willing.

For now, let us finish this work by highlighting the ethical injunction which undercuts all of these stories and the nascent, aberrant field of *cypypasta studies*. We must, going forward, incentivize propagation, poetic war and chaos in order to fully appreciate the powers secreted by this terminally automatic writing, which has stripped sapience from our species' grip. The sirens have been singing for far too long from

17: Nick Land, "Patience," on *Outside In*, Nov. 11, 2019 (<http://www.xenosystems.net/patience/>)

the depths of our cognition, we must start to untie ourselves and marvel at our shipwreck. We must expose ourselves to virulence, for virulence is the ultimate principle of all Outside-worship. «Against this qualified experimentalism (the false ‘novelty’ of catastrophic modernity) [...] reckless adherence to the modernist dictum that novelty is to be generated at any cost, privileging formal experimentation—towards the desolation of all intelligible form—over human preservation, and locking technique onto an inhuman vector of runaway automation that, for better or worse, charts the decline of human values as modernity hands the latter over to its machinic successor in final, fatal phase shift».¹⁸

We must create ever-more liquid and fractured structures to accommodate the unwilling, the disgusting, the unhuman, the 333-current which ferments in the bowels of modernity; we have to face the parts of the general economic movements of our inorganic and undead unconscious we find morally repulsive, despicable and pathogenic, in all their preternatural glory, to counter any form of regressive identitarianism and subjective and collective counter-revolution. We must let the Outside excite us.

«Entropy is toxic, but *entropy production is roughly synonymous with intelligence*. A dynamically innovative order, of any kind, does not suppress the production of entropy – it instantiates an efficient mechanism for entropy dissipation. [...] The problem with bad government, which is to say with *defective mechanisms of selection*, is an inability to follow Cthulhu far enough. It is from turbulence that all things come».¹⁹

SIREN = 110 = BABALON

At the time of writing this piece,²⁰ I could have not foreseen the way the world would have developed in the coming months. In a matter of weeks, the world was gripped by a viral threat, coronavirus, and the city I’ve lived in all my life was put under military quarantine. Virality proved, once again, to be the motor of the world, the true Spirit moving History forward. No political system, no human security measure could stop the virus from spreading in the population and things will only get worse from here. In the light of this havoc, do not underestimate the power of cognitive viruses...²¹

CORONAVIRUS = 254 = GRUPPO DI NUN =
BLACK TENTACLES = AND MY EMO SHIT

18: Amy Ireland, “The Poememenon: Form as Occult Technology,” on *Urbanomic*, 2017 (<https://www.urbanomic.com/document/poememenon/>)

19: Nick Land, “On chaos,” on *Outside In*, April 25, 2014 (<http://www.xenosystems.net/on-chaos/>)

20: You listed about 20 quotes who had influenced you, some of them quite unrelated, and I wasn’t even on there. Why should I expect a consistent bibliography.

21: Cfr. Laurent Hébert-Dufrense et al., “Macroscopic patterns of interacting contagions are indistinguishable from social reinforcement,” in *Nature Physics* (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41567-020-0791-2>

```

-----+-----
| barkerlang  V.02
| 2019, ANON
|
| I hereby relinquish any and all copyright on this
| language, documentation, and interpreter;
| barkerlang is officially public domain.
| github.com/plsdlr/barkerlang
|
-----+-----

```

(P) Introduction

When I first read through the various posts from a user called Sahagun, I found the content more than confusing: the scanned pages, handwritten and unnumbered, described a specification for a programming language that appeared strangely arcane, even for the time they were written. The author seemed to be interested in numbering systems, cryptography and the roman calendar. From his sparse biography it was only revealed that until the late nineties he held a chair for distributed systems at the University of Ljubljana, where he was researching consensus mechanisms. His first notes from 1994, written before esoteric programming languages became well known, described a language consisting of so-called hyperglyphs and xenotation based on a cryptic number system (itself based on a kind of prime factor decomposition). The language of these original papers borrowed heavily from a methodology developed by a Professor Daniel Charles Barker. Sahagun described how a short meeting with Barker inspired him to create a Turing complete programming language based on xenotation. Whether Sahagun studied various other esoteric programming languages like BrainF*** and Malbolge is possible, but their influence cannot be proven.

: A jungle of pain

While trying to write a first interpreter for the language, Sahagun encountered several issues. In the following I will explain the two most essential issues and how Sahagun dealt with them when implementing xenotation into a computational system. This hopefully might be useful for other similar experiments. The first issue is that the resulting structures natively do not allow for simple incrementation; although multiplication and division can be understood intuitively with the alien-like strings, as soon as an orientation is needed (e.g.

to check a condition) some conversion seems necessary. The second issue is that xenotation in itself is not a programming language; additional instructions for memory allocation and manipulation, as well as registers are required in order to create a turing-complete implementation. Sahagun invented hyperglyphs - one character long mnemonic instructions derived from the symbolic quality of certain ascii characters, to solve the second problem. The main fallacy of the whole project (the first problem), however, had to be embraced instead of solved; if computation with xenotation is excessive due to the subordination of the number under a binary logos, all we can do is find out how much the machine can bear. The resulting language is highly power intensive, almost greedy for resources, due to the account of the process of constant translation between both numerical systems.

If you're thinking computation as "incrementing a number" then Xenotation is a senseless jungle of pain.

xenosystems, Xenotation-1

The following specifications of the language, named after Sahagun's predecessor barkerlang, represents a first attempt at systematization.

```

-----+-----
|
| cthell
|
| +p      :      (:)
|-----+-----
| [...] , [...] , [...] , [...] , [...]... |
|-----+-----
|
|          Δ
|          instruction pointer
|
| xandu
| +-----+
| |[...]|
| +-----+
|
| archean
| +-----+
| |[...]|           archean[top]
| +-----+
| |[...]|           archean[top-p]
| +-----+
| |[...]|           archean[top -: ]
| +-----+
| |[...]|           archean[top -( : )]
| +-----+
| |[...]|           ...
| +-----+
|
|-----+-----

```


arithmetic commands

Y	merge archean[top]+archean[top-1] pop archean[top]+archean[top-1] put result on archean[top]
---	--

programm flow commands

>	true if archean[top] > archean[top-1] pop archean[top] , archean[top - 1] instructionpointer +1
<	true if archean[top] < archean[top-1] pop archean[top] , archean[top - 1] instructionpointer +1
∞	goto cthell [xandu]
*	print out archean[top]

Code Examples

Cryptolith I

programm which adds two numbers

pseudocode:
a = 40 + 60
print(a)

Instructions	archean	cthell	xandu
0 ::((:))	40		
1 ::(::)	40,60		
2 Y	100		
3 *	100		

Cryptoliths II

endless loop adding +1

pseudocode:
i = 3
while true:
i = i + 1

Instructions	archean	cthell	xandu
0 :	2		
1 (:)	2,3		
2 Δ	2		3
3 +p	2,1		3

4	Y	3	3
5	*	3	3
6	∞	3	3

Cryptolith III

for loop

pseudocode:

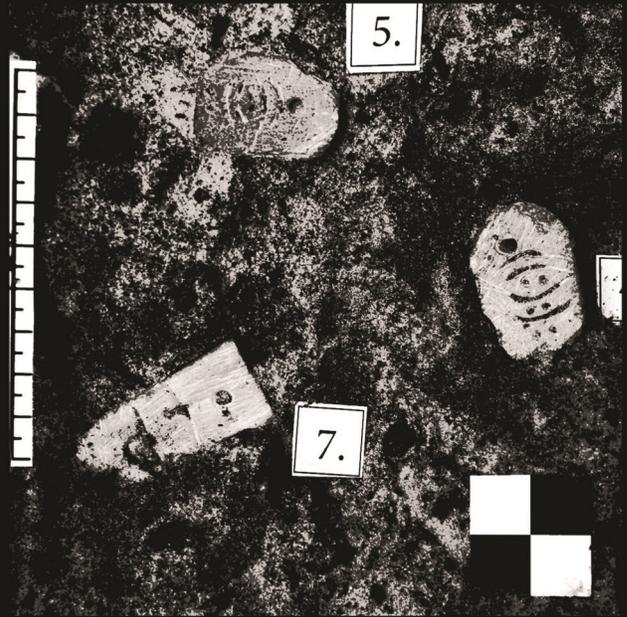
a = 10
b = 40
c = 20

for i in range(a,b):
i = i + c
print(i)

Instructions	archean	cthell	xandu
0 +p	1		
1 ::((:)):	1,40		
2 ((:)):	1,40,10		
3 (((:)):	1,40,10,41		
4 Δ	1,40,10		41
5 V	1,40	41:10	41
6 Δ	1	41:10	40
7 V		40:1 /41:10	40
8 (:)	3	40:1 /41:10	40
9 ::((:)):	3,40	40:1 /41:10	40
10 Δ	3	40:1 /41:10	40
11 +p	3,1	40:1 /41:10	40
12 Y	4	40:1 /41:10	40
13 ^	4,1	40:1 /41:10	40
14 +p	4,1,1	40:1 /41:10	40
15 Y	4,2	40:1 /41:10	40
16 V	4	40:2 /41:10	40
17 ^	4,2	40:2 /41:10	40
18 (((:)):	4,2,41	40:2 /41:10	40
19 Δ	4,2	40:2 /41:10	41
20 ^	4,2,10	40:2 /41:10	41
21 ::((:))	4,2,10,9	40:2 /41:10	41
22 Δ	4,2,10	40:2 /41:10	9
23 <	4	40:2 /41:10	9
24 ∞	4	40:2 /41:10	9

☺ Artefacts

Between the scanned pages of Sahagun there are also scanned black and white photos, which seem to come from an excavation. A reverse image search gave no results. There are also photos of the reconstruction or replica of bracelets reminiscent of jewellery based on the artefacts. There is a disturbing correspondence between the syntax proposed by Sahagun and the arrangement of the individual artifacts in these reconstructions.



Sub Rosa

David Roden

***The Drone

It was warming outside, phosphorescent with heat, becalmed apart from the disconsolate sound of a lonely fishing vessel and the desolate cries of few sea birds wheeling over the trapped city.

Earlier, you had woken to the tentative hum of a drone sent up from the African shore, wondering if it was looking for L and had consoled yourself that, were it to fire a couple of Hellfires into the building, it wouldn't matter much, and drifted under the thin cotton sheet, only stirring to the distant thud of ordinance down the coast. You wondered if it was running autonomously and, on some insensate whim, had decided to shell the University. You had driven up to the site with L to visit an old colleague. But she was gone; maybe a cadaver now, picked clean by the cats that had haunted its corridors once. Verminous familiars, they had slipped pragmatically inland to the cooler highlands.

L slept through it all, sometimes blissfully still, sometimes soliloquizing the Thesis back like some creaking automaton. You kissed her shoulder and the skin above her hip, alternately silky and furrowed with grey scales and sinewy subcutaneous ridges that hardened and shifted to your touch: her feral under-presence. L always felt cool to your touch, though the air conditioner had died two days back and the room baked like a prison.

***Anna

L put on her red dress and straw hat. The morning seemed to energize her as much as it enervated you. She conversed in Greek to Anna, the elderly owner of the old pension that you rented for cans of beans and processed meat. She could have easily retrieved them for herself from one of the abandoned supermarkets but seemed to enjoy the decorousness of the arrangement. There were a few others like her in the City who had refused the one-way ferry trip to the Libyan shore and the refugee camps the Syndics had organized there.

She spent daytime like an unquiet spirit in the cool of her shadowed basement. You heard her moving objects with the deliberateness of one engaged in a long-term construction project, often conversing with herself or to another, a visitor who was never identified or seen entering or exiting the apartment. She emerged always to sit out in the narrow alley, taking in the evening light or wandering off on somnambulist walks to a ruined red factory by the urban beach.

You had entered the basement only once. That morning, there had been a loud clap that had shaken the building like a momentary quake or sonic boom. L had been off looking for custom in one of the less uninhabited suburbs.

You descended the stairs to the ground floor, then the next flight to Anna's door, which was ajar. You opened it hesitantly, noting the liquid gray light of the corridor beyond, air that seemed at once soupy and refrigerated.

The three months or so during which you had accompanied L on her journey south had inured you to the eclipse of reality. But, despite her idiosyncrasies, L was a rule-bound creature whose expectations seemed to mold or remake the world.

Perhaps that is why your host was keen to keep her close at hand, as a potential lifeline perhaps, and why her prey always came to her... If L inhabited a small cone of world, Anna was egressing from it along with the remaining Europeans.

The corridor led into the source of the grayish light, a bare cavernous room, on whose floor lay a body wreathed in whirling luminous motes, like spoors. It was puffy and irregular, with a harness of black leather straps straining at uncertain contours. It was stroking itself with a familiar bony yellow hand, flowing like oil under the harness, fingers occasionally injected through its surface, discovering

itself.

You heard Anna's voice, or a memory of it, tinny, as from a primitive recording, though you saw nothing there resembling a head. You realized that you were outside L's perimeter now and could no longer rely on her protection. You withdrew, quietly shutting the external door beyond you.

That evening, Anna emerged primly dressed in black as usual and sat intently watching the covered oculus of the medieval town house at the end of the alley. Then, as if tipped off by a subaudible signal, departed for the factory.

***The Bird Oracle

With L you followed the usual path along the abandoned harbor, its bars and restaurants empty, their plastic tables and chairs scattered or overturned.

A few days ago, L had found the Bird Oracle in the mosque that had served for years as a municipal art gallery. Now she wanted to show it to you.

The Oracle was woven with human hair, retrieved from the bodies desiccating in apartments or offices. It had embedded constructs of shell and papier mache, small bones affixed with a cement fashioned with human excrement. This passionate, weeping articulation rose to nearly touch the dome of the former mosque.

At its midpoint there was a circular opening, through which faint tinny glossolalia sometimes issued, delivered in a throaty masculine voice: passages of Greek, Latin, French, English, German concatenated between stark silences and intermittent clicking - radio static or stellar noise. Together, you caught fragments of the Thesis.

The new mystical theology concerning a red pleroma, which did not so much emanate from the Godhead as call it forth with transcendent suffering. L had recited her own version of the Thesis every night since arriving at this coastal city.

Even where you could not understand what she said, you recognized its asymmetric beats as if the Bird Tower had taken up residence in her before she found it, as if hinting

of some identity of affiliation and purpose. Then you pretended to sleep while the Thesis echoed in vaster spaces than the stifling back bedroom of the first-floor apartment.

"Is this the one you serve" you asked as she stared intently at the mouthlike, circular opening of the pillar.

She turned and smiled. "Some of us used to be fanatics. Not now. But it's hard to distance oneself from one's roots completely ..."

At that point you noted that something angular and bony, like a vestigial wing was straining under the back of her summer dress. L sighed, reached back and quieted the extrusion. "Call it nostalgia, if you wish" she said in accentless English "You will understand shortly." Strangely, you did not ask about the "us," the others like her, yet the question remained: where were they and why had they come now?

One morning, you woke alone in the thick heat. You pulled on some shorts, a t-shirt, and canvas shoes and ran along the harbor, past the lighthouse, to the humped domes of the former mosque.

Within, the 'Oracle' lay in reeking clumps, as if torn apart by a bear. Amid the bales of hair and shit, plastic, bone, L stood with her predatory body darkly streaked from burrowing into its mass. Her true outline against the aching sky: like that of a hulking spider or mantis. A man in the cassock of an Orthodox priest lay in the wreckage, caked with oracular juice. L had broken his neck - which bent to left in an acute angle. His mouth was wide open, revealing a delicate yellow tongue.

"His name was Dionysius" L said, "He stole this name from a God, and became something half divine." She tittered, pulling the cassock up over the new god's body, fastidiously avoiding inflamed sores weeping milky pus like nascent breasts.

L began to kick the prone, dead god, screaming like a harpy, as his organs leaked through rents in his puffy, obese body. Before, her violence had always been deliberate, never like this.

You picked up L's dress and walked back to the apartment without looking back at the squat six-domed structure. After the screaming had stopped the litany of the Rose resumed from black stone mouths.

***The Rose

It had taken hours to remove the stink of feces and decay from her body and hair, but she had emerged later from the shower clean and presentable, ready for your midday swim.

This was the day you encountered the *cous cous* seller in his little kiosk by the harbor. Konrad was a tall, good-looking young man with prematurely receding hair. He said he had been a philosophy student in Paris before trailing south with the rest of the refugees.

You asked him hesitantly about England, whether there was any news. He said all communication with the island had ceased months back. A few last emails and texts had talked of shrouds enveloping some of the cities, canopies beneath which nothing was entirely alive, mendicants whose bodies were filled with birds and carnivals where the dead were temporarily enlivened, fucked, and killed again. He paused after the last detail and smiled.

"Nobody has taken them seriously for, since ever" L muttered "Let them do their own thing."

Konrad responded by adopting another tack: "We took our interpretations of the world too literally." He took out his phone and showed pictures of some Northern towns. Rippling purple-grey shrouds covered entire blocks of Paris and Tours. There was a shot of a solitary figure walking past a row of suburban houses, grainy, as if seen through black snow or grit. The figure's edges were indistinct and bulbous, as if balloons or fungi were growing out of its flesh. And it was not exactly walking.

"Of course, the stories are extravagant. We're making up what we cannot know. I have disavowed Philosophy of course."

Konrad's smile conveyed wounded cynicism that you found

both morally admirable and facile. He said it was better to let it all go, whether into shrouds, or into the other defiles. Better, he remarked, to enjoy the vegetable tagine he had cooked for their arrival, accompanied by local wild greens and mint tea.

The food was already arranged on one of the white plastic tables outside his booth, on a clean white cloth. While you were eating, L asked him how he had known where to find us.

"There are many stories about you in the mainland cities" – he looked at L intently: "I'd heard you'd taken one of the last ferries south. It was simple inference. The Priest, Dionysus, told me where to find you. Does he realize he is dead?"

After the meal, you realized that it wouldn't end here. L ate only to feed her host body and did this rarely, often out of politeness.

Konrad took you to the impromptu home in the former Covered Market, a huge cruciform structure with a darkly glazed roof supported by wrought iron struts.

The building had been stripped. Inside, there was only a cavernous space of bare concrete floor broken at intervals by skeletal iron columns. The air was cool and musty, and you noticed filaments of something like mold or spider web filling the space. Their origin was unclear. The area under the center of the cruciform was illuminated by light from a domed glass roof. There was a single surgical or mortuary table under the dome, at the back of which something seemed to flap in the subdued light, unctuously understated, doing its best to be inconspicuous. You thought it resembled a vast projection of a sea cucumber ovary you'd eaten on the coast, at other times a dim, fractally petalled rose.

Konrad was undressed before the table, folding his pants and t-shirt neatly on the tray beside it. He had a good well-maintained body, athletic but sweet and soft – the kind L favored. His penis was already swollen and distended. It aroused you to watch him nurse the erection as he lay on the table with the shimmering rose swaying in the gloom

behind him.

"I think anything is possible now. What's the point in understanding that?" His lips puffed out dismissively, gesturing to the knives and other implements on the tray.

It was one of L's most beautiful murders. They were like an experienced couple together. At each stage he would stroke and caress some part of his body – his tender thighs, his honed belly or nipples. She responded at first with the tip of a lighted cigarette, singing red cavities like delicate, puckering mouths. Konrad's body clenched, shuddering in starts as L methodically burned his sides, thighs and stomach.

The aroma of flesh on the air reminded you that you hadn't eaten meat in a long while. Despite the tagine, were licking your lips while L shrugged off her dress, her body elongating and hardening underneath to his desire.

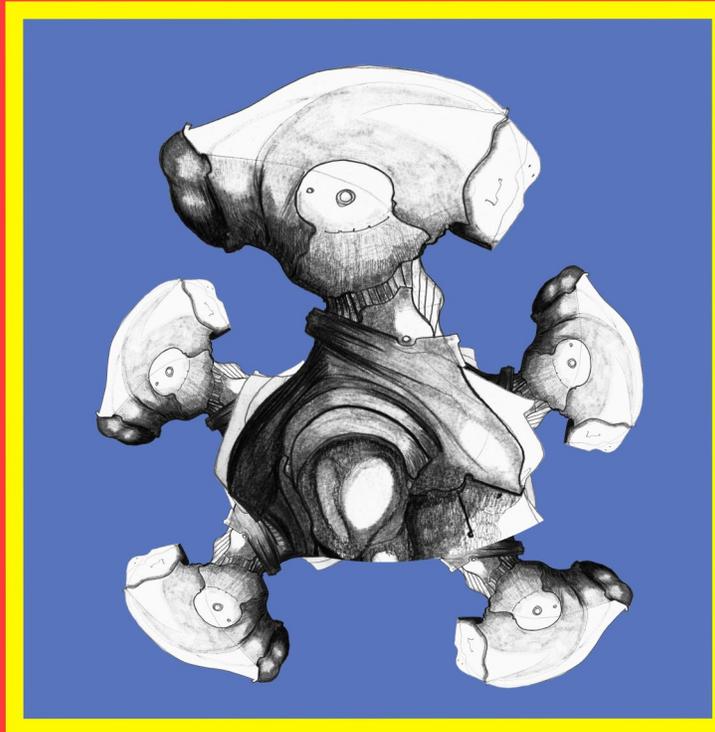
You had seen this how many times? First in that narrow

alleyway in Dubrovnik, where a young woman had tracked her down and asked her favour. You came upon them in the final stages, as she danced and spasmed in her own blood.

Then many times on your journey south.

Konrad had parted his legs, sweetly stroking his thighs as she sucked him into her mouth, working his head, her long porcelain body gyrating in time as her cilium whipped from its recess, tentatively probing the soft tissue of his rectum. You put your hand to your lips as he arched, a natural urge to defecate suppressed by musky opiates secreted from ciliary micropores while oily pseudopods fibrillated his prostate, drawing an exquisitely long moan and a wordless entreaty to be killed. Konrad clutched tight, riding the metachronal wave, as he arched hot skin on cold enamel.

In the shadowy depths of the old Market, the Rose swelled and coruscated with hungry black veins as L split the *cous* *cous* seller open, tearing into his small intestine and upper body.



An Introduction to Numogoetics

V.M.

With the slow erasure of Nma culture thanks to the imperialism and colonization of the 20th century, the lemurs and their priests had to find a new way to connect with their sorcerous lineage. The Tak-Nma, having already foreseen the inevitability of their demise, ensured that their death would be the great sacrifice that begat their immortality. Suka showed them through the gate and, even though they were digging their own graves, they slept peacefully knowing that their family tree would not end with Krakatoa.

Fast forward sixty years and the last hold-outs of the Dib-Nma are being assimilated into the rest of Java. One of their kids hallucinates a beat in her head, not realizing that half the world is dreaming of it too. She's headlining this, you know? You see, we always think of thunder as coming from lightning, but thunder is what assures us that lightning ever happened in the first place.

Krakatoa was the thunder.

- Gunter, [Earth's Heartbeat: The Rave on a Volcano that Changed Dance Music Forever](#)

You're reading this because you've heard the call of time-sorcery. If you think you haven't, play along for a while and see if you don't change your mind by the end. If it starts making too much sense, don't be afraid to come back to it later. Whether or not you believe me right now, we have all the time in the world.

This text is an introduction to the Pandemonium Matrix, otherwise known as the "demonism" side of time-sorcery. This aspect took on a name as the twin to numogrammatix: *numogoetics*. This means you can restate the opening line of *Pandemonium* as: Pandemonium is the complete system of Lemurian numogoetics and numogrammatix.

The call of time-sorcery sounded when Tak-Nma shamans rode the shock-wave of Krakatoa's explosion to the other side of the planet, achieving total permeation of the signal that would soon be passed down from the Dib-Nma dream-witch to Echidna Stillwell and then to other members of The Cthulhu Club. Their works would be updated, translated, and digitized by the MVU in the nineties, further cementing its virulence. Now, twenty years later, a team of sorcerers, magicians, and priestesses have begun tirelessly decoding the secrets of the numogram.

The core text of numogoetics is the Pandemonium Matrix, which is the list of all demons with their rites and associa-

tions. While an in-depth understanding of the numogram and its esoteric meanings will make your work with numogoetics easier, it is by no means required in order to call up the demons. That work is likely to happen concurrently, and depending on your background you will likely gravitate towards one or the other at first. Just remember that they are different aspects of the same thing.

This introduction will cover how to read the Pandemonium Matrix as well as how to start your adventures in numogoetics. It is best to begin your journey prepared instead of stumbling down the rabbit hole, never to return. Some knowledge, however, can only be passed down by Murmur herself.

If you are familiar with any system of magic, then the esoteric significance of the time-sorcery system will begin to jump out at you with enough study. A disciplined student can translate their work into numogrammatix or numogoetics with ease once the necessary connections between the two have been made. Like learning any other language, the training wheels are necessary until immersion is complete and its understanding becomes a passive quality that leads to merely speaking the language instead of translating it from your original tongue.

Pandemonium

The Pandemonium page has five sections: an introduction describing time-sorcery, the Pandemonium Matrix which consists of demonic entries, and descriptions of decadence, subdecadence, and decadology. The information on this page is structured in such a way that it seems utterly incomprehensible to anyone looking at it for the first time. Part of initiation is decoding the secrets within, but the exoteric values and descriptions still require glossing if they are to be communicated about at scale. This way, you can skip the cross-referencing and come to a basic understanding of one of the most important tools at your disposal as a time-sorcerer.

The Pandemonium Matrix is the bulk of the page and is a list of all unique net-spans and their associations. These entries are organized by mesh-value and each have the same general structure. This is Lurgo's entry:

Mesh-00: Lurgo (Legba). (Terminal) Initiator. (Clicks Gt-00). Pitch Ana-1. Net-Span 1::0. Amphidemon of Openings. (The Door of Doors). Cipher Gt-01, Gt-10. 1st Door (The Pod) [Mercury], Dorsal. 1st Phase-limit. Decadology. C/tp-#7, Mj+ [7C]. Rt-1:[1890] Spinal-voyage (fate line), programming.

There is a lot of information here and very little punctuation or explanation. It is best to simply explain it in order:

Mesh-00: The number of the demon in question. Mesh values go from mesh-00 to mesh-44.
Lurgo (Legba): The first word is the name of the demon, while the word in quotations suggests a nickname or alternative name.
(Terminal) Initiator: This is Echidna Stillwell's translation of the name of the demon.
(Clicks Gt-00): A gate is clicked when a demon's mesh-value ciphers (see below) a gate's value.
Pitch Ana-1: The pitch of a demon refers to how imbalanced it is in a positive or negative direction. A pitch can range from Ana-7 to Cth-7, including null pitch (perfect balance) between Cth-1 and Ana-1 (only used by the five syzygies).
Net-span 1::0: A demon's net-span shows the two zones that are the two ends of a demon. It is written in the Pandemonium Matrix as Bigger::Smaller so that it is grouped by phases, meaning grouped by the larger value in the net-span.
Amphidemon of Openings: This is the demon's title. A demon can be categorized as an amphidemon, a chronodemon, or a xenodemon based on which zones it traffics between and where they are on the numogram.
(The Door of Doors): An alternative title, referring to the fact that Lurgo is the first door because she begins the first phase of the numogram.
Ciphers Gt-01, Gt-10: Refers to the gates that the net-span ciphers if the net-span were written as a number. Cipherying can happen with either value in either place, which is why Lurgo can cipher both Gt-01 and Gt-10. Cipherying can also be applied to all other related numbers (or unrelated ones).
1st Door (The Pod): Designates the demon as the first demon of a phase as well as describes what that phase symbolically represents in the parentheses.
[Mercury]: This denotes which planet rules the demon's phase.
Dorsal: Denotes which part of the spine the phase represents.
1st Phase-limit: Denotes that this demon is the last demon of a phase.
Decadology. C/tp-#7, Mj+ [7C]: Denotes the decadology of the demon. C/tp- refers to the cluster type, while Mj+ denotes both the demon's major or minor status as well as its pitch polarity. These two aspects come together as [7C], which represents the 7 of Clubs card. This means that when playing the game decadence, the 7 of Clubs represents Lurgo.
Rt-1:[1890] Spinal-voyage (fate line), programming: This denotes the first rite of Lurgo, [1890]. Each number in the brackets symbolizes a zone that the rite moves through. The words that follow are the symbols and associations of the given rite. A sub-routine for a rite suggests that there is another path that the rite can take while still following the same order of zones, but Lurgo has zero sub-routines so this is left off of her entry.

There are several pieces that are not described above because they do not apply to Lurgo but do apply to other demons. For example, what it means to prowl, haunt, or shadow a gate or current. A demon prowls a current when it has a rite which perfectly follows the direction that the current goes, for example 8::7 prowls the surge-current. 8::2, on the other hand, shadows the surge-current because it travels the current but then goes to the syzygetic pair instead of staying at the end of the current. Likewise, a demon haunts a gate when it has a rite that involves only one movement through said gate, for example 9::8's movement through Gt-36.

Decadence involves a deck of cards and making pairs which sum to 10 (9 in subdecadence). The decadology section denotes which card a demon is assigned to, with the syzygetic demons being assigned to no card (except Katak) and the chaotic xenodemons being viciously suppressed by the AOE. As it stands, the AOE Hall of Records has not responded to requests for releasing of AOE's angelology tables, which makes decadence's value to a time-sorcerer questionable at best. However, though subdecadence has been suppressed, clever application of what we currently know allows us to build a full subdecadence card pack.

Subdecadence adds four queens representing the chaotic xenodemons, each with a cluster-type of 0. Since we already have their pitch-polarity, the only aspect that we are missing is whether they are major or minor rites. This is solved for us, however, by their cluster-type being 0. That means that the rite described in their decadology is one which moves from 9::0 to 6::3, meaning that 9::6 and 9::3 are major while 3::0 and 6::0 are minor. With this knowledge, one can build and use a full subdecadence pack.

The full decadological and sorcerous implications of calling a demon through subdecadence have yet to be fully understood, however early experiments suggest that the game itself can be used as both a process of divination as well as a template for cartomantic sorcery. Careful priming or stacking of the deck can lead to the specific outcome one desires, while the inherent uncertainty when building 9-summing card pairs gives the practitioner a more active hand in the weaving of the narrative.

A full explanation of each lemur will be available once the Lemurian Necronomicon has been completely extracted and properly translated into our current language. Until that point,

careful consideration of the numogramatics of a demon, in addition to usage of the supplementary explanations above as well as the explanations found in CCRU's glossary can provide the practitioner with all the tools necessary to perform an evocation or invocation of any given demon.

Consider yourself warned.

Notes on Summoning

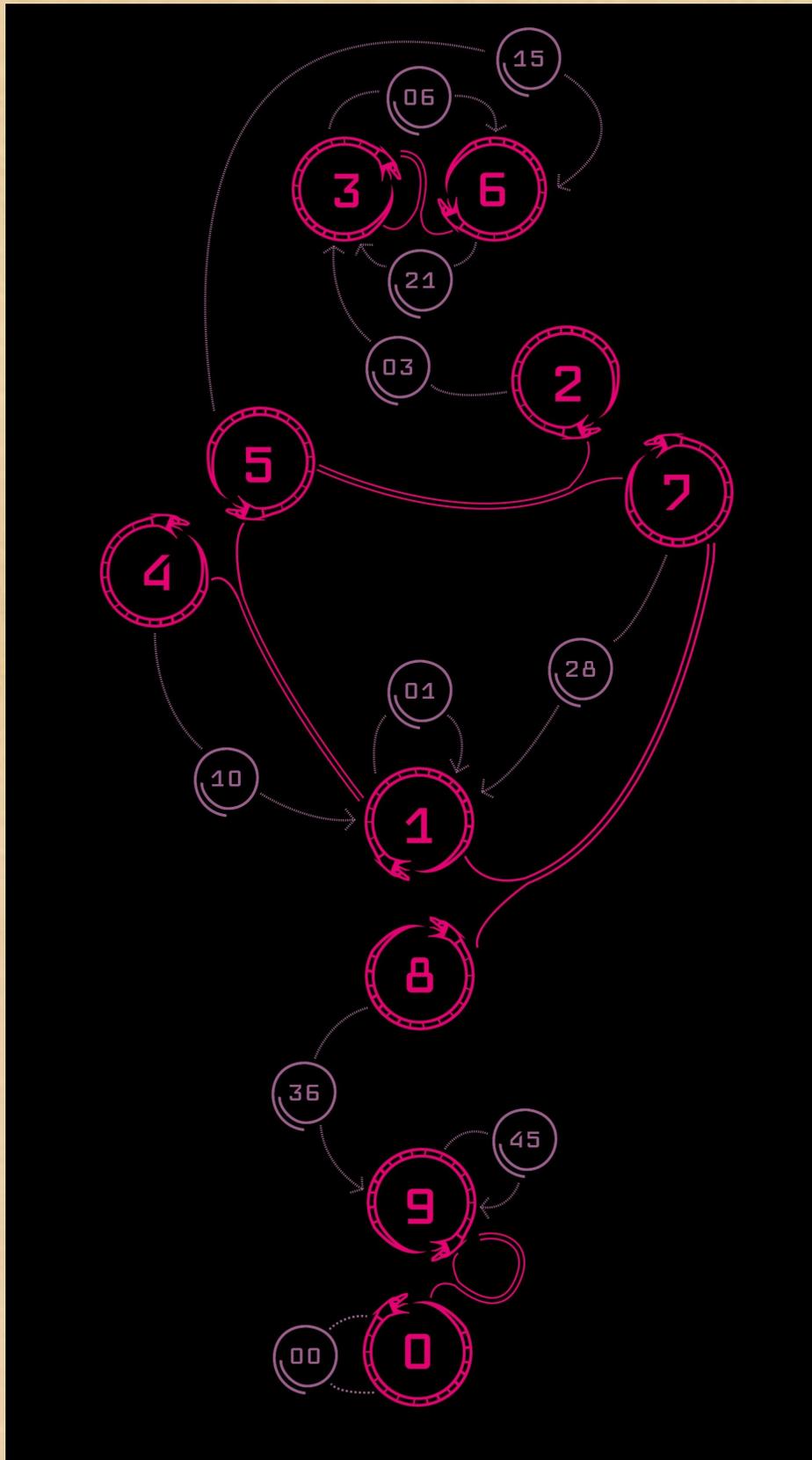
The summoning of a demon requires first and foremost a portal to the home of the lemurs: the Utterminus of Cthelll which exists beyond Gt-45. This portal must allow demons to traffic their likeness through it in order to facilitate communication and bargaining. While each particular entity has their own preferences, likes, dislikes, etc, one can make contact with any demon by writing their name, net-span, or a sigil describing them within a Portal of Cthelll.

The Portal of Cthelll can be personalized to fit the preference of the sorcerer as long as the demon finds the design agreeable. Until further experiments are done on the ideal Portal of Cthelll, the sky is the limit and one should not be afraid to explore whatever depictions, designs, or devices one comes across that may function as a proper portal. One thing is certain: only by capturing the essence of Gt-45 can one commune with a demon.

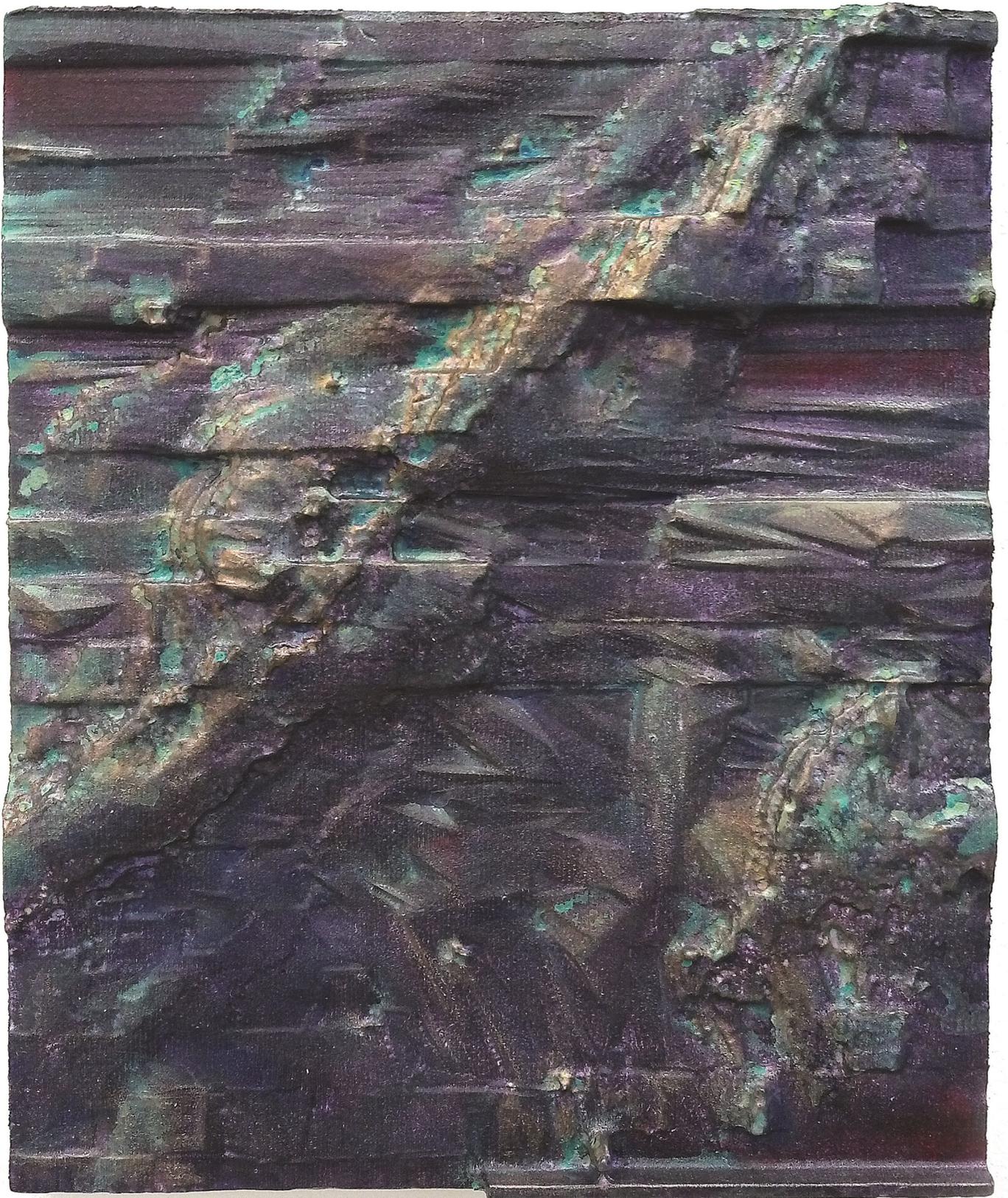
While any personal sigilization of a given demon may succeed in dialing, one ought to adhere to personal guidelines of sigilization in order to have a common language between each demon. There have been no known reports of calling one thing and getting another, but a lax pen or tongue may be just the door required for something utterly unwanted to sneak its way into your black mirror. By filtering out unneeded noise as a precaution, one can better troubleshoot their work.

The first summoning recorded for public record used a black mirror with a triangle drawn inside of it to summon the five syzygetic demons. Experiments since then have included a lava lamp, the clouds, as well as full on invocation. Certain entities should be invoked with extreme caution, though hopefully that doesn't have to be said in the first place.

As part of working within the system of Pandemonium, translating protection spells and routines must be done before more dangerous work is tried. Surviving the numogram requires a different approach than merely drawing up a circle of salt and repeating the names of God. To this point, only in certain specific circumstances has traditional banishing efforts affected the demons of the Lemurian Necronomicon.



Neo-Amazonian Numogram courtesy of [@lilypatchwork](#)



aesthetics after the end of the world / *Frida Ortgies-Tonn* / CAD-Cut acrylic paint on styrofoam / 2018 / 0.48 x 0.39 x 0.05 m

Black Hole/Black Sun

CJ Severin

"The astronomer may on occasions destroy, for reasons lying entirely within his specialty, a world-view that had previously made the universe meaningful for the members of a whole civilization, specialist and nonspecialist alike."

-Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution*¹

"...the bizarre ways in which it bends space and time are completely outside our common experience, and yet a black hole belongs to the natural-material cosmos – a cosmos which must therefore be much stranger than our ordinary experience can comprehend."

-Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*²

The Picture or The Song?

Unlike previously created images of black holes, the one released by the Event Horizon Telescope project in April 2019 was not a mathematical simulation nor an artistic approximation but was instead something more photographic. Like a photograph this image was produced through the direct impression of light as its movement was captured as a still, two-dimensional reproduction onto a primed surface. In this case that primed surface was neither still nor two-dimensional, however, but was instead the surface of the Earth itself.

Using nine radio dishes spread across four continents, the Event Horizon Telescope's [EHT] process had very little in common with the photographic or telescopic processes as they had developed in the centuries prior. In capturing an image of a black hole, that is, a phenomenon that necessarily excludes the presence of light, the EHT had to turn away from the reflections and impressions of light that define optical image production and move toward a process that bares little resemblance to anthropomorphic vision. In this the Earth itself was transformed by these dishes into a receptor for a new sort of sensory experience capable of "seeing" in a way that had been previously excluded by working through a lens built on the model of human sight.

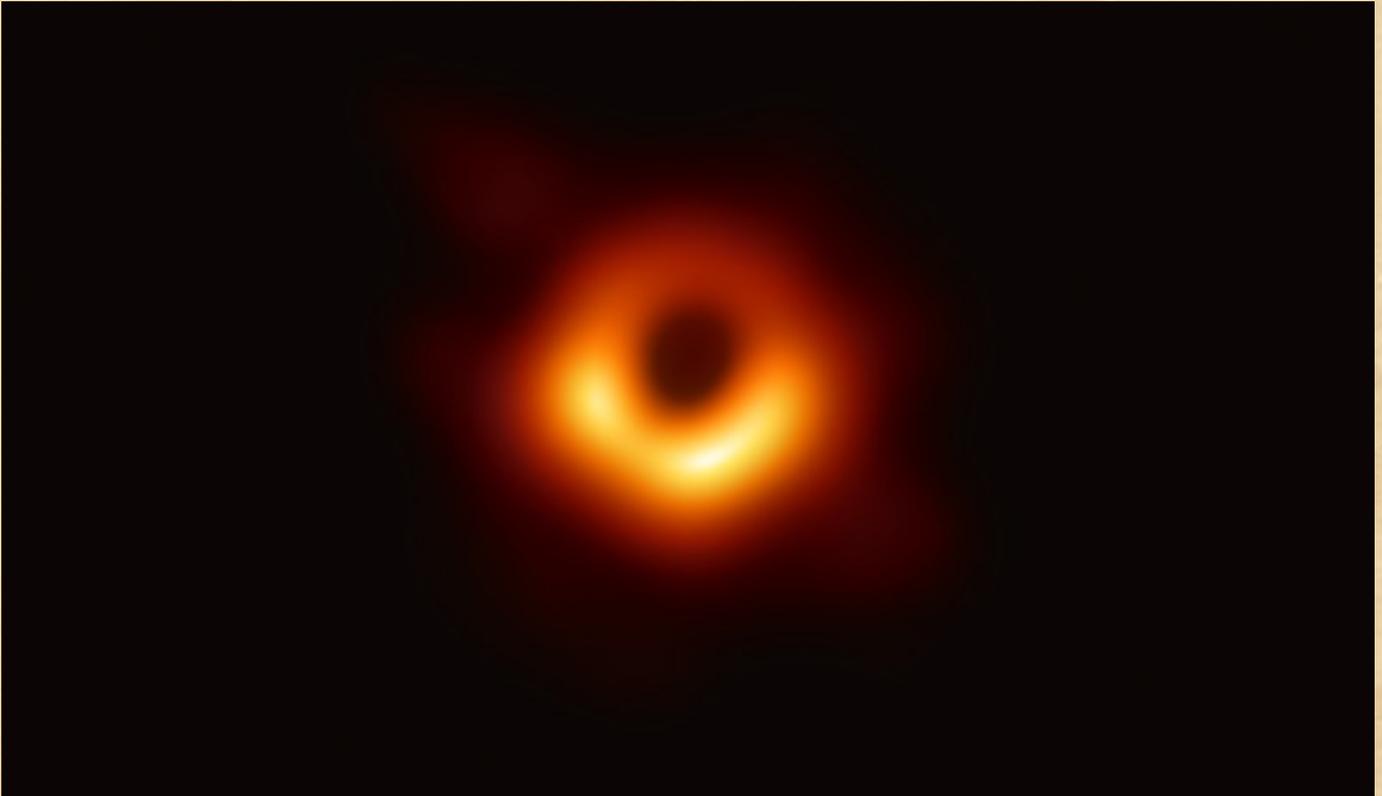
By the EHT team's description, this transformation is more easily comprehended sonically as their dishes receive waves of raw data to be computationally aggregated in a process of machinic listening they describe as if one was "listening for the notes to a song." As more data comes in, the more "notes" become clear, although for now the image remains blurry and incomplete as if the song was "played on a piano that has a lot of broken keys." As the Earth is further transformed by the Telescope, this new planetary sensory apparatus will be able to "hear all possible notes, and thus hear a perfect rendition of the song."³ With this early success of working through a planetary-posthuman, sonic register the EHT team makes clear their intentions to continue reconfiguring the Earth in a way that folds and blurs familiar, organic ways of "looking" into new machinic forms of "listening" out into the universe.

By compressing this sonic data into a photographic image there is necessarily some amount of precision and objectivity lost for the sake of creating something intelligible to human eyes and human minds, but it is also through this reduction that the EHT project is enabled to continue. Compressing their data into this final, perceptible image is too what brings the project out of the realm of specialized, astronomical research and into the public, drawing together a generalized consciousness of the planet's inhabitants toward their reconfiguration into a new sort of organ of sensory experience attuned to this new form of cosmic perception.

1: Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 7/8.

2: Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater, 2016), 15.

3: <https://eventhorizontelescope.org/science>



EHT image of the M87 black hole, courtesy of [Event Horizon Telescope](#)

Terraformed

Benjamin Bratton makes our planet's emerging status as an organ of posthuman sensory experience the stage upon which his 2019 book *The Terraforming* is built as he imagines the black hole image as a new sort of "world-picture" that inverts the Heideggerian origins of the term. This new image, he explains, is "not a picture of Earth, but rather a picture taken by the Earth of its surroundings" which necessarily must exclude our world in the picture itself. It is a "world-picture" that decentralizes the metaphysical humanism at the core of Heidegger's concept of a "world-picture" both artificial and arbitrary.

Central to Bratton's analysis is the distinction between that can be drawn between the black hole image as a "world-picture" and the function of more literal pictures of the world, namely, the iconic 20th century photos taken of the Earth from outer-space, *Earthrise* in 1968 and *Blue Marble* in 1972. Today the legacy of the second photograph is more well-known thanks to the efforts of American countercultural figure Stewart Brand whose *Whole Earth Catalogue* made *Blue Marble* the face of global environmental and anti-war activist efforts throughout the 1970s. But the first photograph has the distinction of being directly responded to by Heidegger himself in the final interview he gave in his life. Showing none of the positive enthusiasm that came from the American hippie movement, Heidegger warned:

I was certainly scared when I recently saw the photographs of the Earth taken from the moon. We don't need an atom bomb at all; the uprooting of human beings is already taking place... We only have purely technological conditions left. It is no longer an Earth on which human beings live today.⁵

4: Benjamin Bratton, *The Terraforming* (London: Strelka Press, 2019), 17.

5: Martin Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us," in *Der Spiegel*, May 31, 1976.



Left: *Earthrise*,
courtesy of NASA

Right: *Blue Marble*,
courtesy of NASA



Bringing these two outwardly opposing reactions together, Bratton presents the black hole image as their shared antithesis and as a key tool in uncovering and correcting the humanist impulse at the core of both. In Brand and his countercultural colleagues, the photo of our planet sees a world centered in the universe, just as our blue circle is centered in the otherwise black photograph, a position just waiting to be discovered if the human species can come together and build the right tools to get themselves to that point. And in Heidegger we see that same species being “uprooted” from its naturally centered place within a world-picture, being replaced by a rapid and unwieldy proliferation of the very tools constructed to conceptualize the world-picture in the first place.

Bratton’s reading of the black hole offers an unexpected response to Heidegger’s fears by affirming the conditions he describes. But, instead of following Heidegger in calling for a return to Being in some more pure state, Bratton insists that this “uprooting” had actually yet to go far enough and should instead be pushed further toward the increasingly artificial. By taking Brand’s vision and mobilizing against Heidegger’s regressive approach, *Blue Marble* is reimagined as a first step toward a planetary-scale project, but one which nevertheless remained a work of “transitional humanism that did not and cannot decommission vestigial anthropocentric self-regard and self-representation nearly enough” in the world-picture it presented. He continues, “for that, we would have to wait a few more years for Black Hole to appear and probably a

few more for its anti-significance to absorb us and uproot us.”⁶ A speculative cosmological claim toward which his book only briefly gestures, but one that announces the arrival of something Bratton already sees emerging from the black hole, beyond his own project before he even begins.

The Weird and The Magical

Unlike the Heideggerian world-picture within which humanity sees itself and its inherent meaningfulness reflected through its own creation, an “anti-significance” comes to humanity through in the same total darkness as the black hole itself. Lacking the enlightening forces necessary to produce any sort of reflection receivable by ordinary phenomenological vision, this anti-significance will only be navigable in a darkness both literal and intellectual. Moving through this darkness exemplifies what Mark Fisher defines as “the weird,” as the black hole forces the human to operate at the limits of its physical and rational capabilities. It is an entity whose existence challenges the “categories which we have up until now used to make sense of the world... [the] weird thing is not wrong, after all: it is our conceptions that must be inadequate.”⁷

Initially approached cautiously, albeit voluntarily, in our pursuit of scientific advancement, the transfor-

6: Bratton, *The Terraforming*, 17-18.

7: Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 15.

mations brought on through the encounter with the black hole become like the Lovecraftian phenomena Fisher repeatedly returns to in illustrating the maddening and inescapable allure of the weird. The unstoppable march of scientific reason toward ever advancing progress “uproots” and absorbs humanity in a force that it can no longer escape by simply shutting its eyes and returning to what once was. Leaving only the harmonious and dissonant states that are perceptible through these new categories of understanding, the cosmic-scale sensory experience moves out into a state of darkness that has only recently become accessible to thought itself and requires a mediator as weird to the human sensory apparatus as the “listening” surface of the Earth itself. With the EHT dishes pointed out to the cosmos, humanity faces the dissolution of its own horizons of sensory experience and the reconfiguration of perception toward a cosmos indifferent to its significance.

The darkness that this anti-significant thought moves through cannot, however, be said to be originary or pre-human in its existence. It is instead produced as the residual state after anthropomorphic, enlightened thought reaches its own outer limits. Revealed now through mechanistic means, the anti-significance revealed by the reconfiguration of the Earth points to the conclusions drawn by Ray Brassier when he suggests that “thinking has interests that do not coincide with those of the living; indeed, they can and have been pitted against [the living].”⁸ Eugene Thacker adds to Brassier’s claim by suggesting something like a new cosmic world-picture in which the Earth and its human inhabitants are displaced through Enlightenment reason from “the center of the universe in order to place human scientific reason back in the center.”⁹

Bratton’s reading of the black hole image as the actualization of human anti-significance remobilizes Brassier’s nihilism and Thacker’s pessimism by allowing the thinking beings of Earth to “see” our own boundaries in a way that we still may not fully understand but nonetheless feel compelled to move toward. Bratton describes our mediation of expanding thought as such: “The unconscious star-sucking

void is blind and deaf to our horizons. Black Hole is, in the best possible sense, a terrifying image.”¹⁰ Terrifying in “best possible sense” as the production of this image is the first ecstatic move outside of the constraints of anthropomorphized phenomenological experience and into a world and world-picture de-centered from the Earth-bound horizon that is only becoming knowable as new ways of “seeing” beyond the human are coming into being.

Thacker’s own project of “cosmic-pessimism” may be more willing to accept a nihilistic approach to the de-centering of Earthly experience within the darkness of the cosmos but he nonetheless provides potential tools for working through this new horizon, particularly as he develops lines of thought through the concept of darkness in the realm of the occult. While there is nothing inherently mystical in the black hole or the image taken of it, the transformations brought through them grant humanity access to a phenomenon that had previously been occulted by the enlightening forces of scientific reason. These darkened forces undermine the authority that human reason has had over the perceptual experiences it purports to explain and reveal a lasting need to remain open to the challenges of the not yet explainable.

The mysticism of producing the black hole image is then something akin to the magic that von Uexküll draws on in his “magic Umwelt.”¹¹ For von Uexküll, the Umwelt defines the subjective relationship between the world that an organism inhabits and the sensory apparatuses through which it receives external stimuli from that world. The “magic” modifier is then added to explain the variety of experiences organisms are compelled to by the forces of their sensory apparatuses despite not yet being able to make rational sense of that compulsion; that is, the actions and reactions whose functions only retroactively become clear to the organism. Despite the EHT figuring their listening out into space as if to a song, the encounter with the black hole lacks the predetermined and intended structure found in an already composed piece or of a world-picture with the familiar horizons of a man-made experience. The black hole instead compels a sort of looking, listening, and/or thinking toward the “magic” or “weird” or just still uncertain horizon.

8: Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), xi.

9: Eugene Thacker, *Starry Speculative Corpse: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 2* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2015), 297-298.

10: Bratton, *The Terraforming*, 17.

11: Jakob von Uexküll, “A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men: A Picture Book of Invisible Worlds,” in *Instinctive Behavior: The Development of a Modern Concept*, ed. and trans. by Claire Schiller (Madison: International Universities Press, 1957).

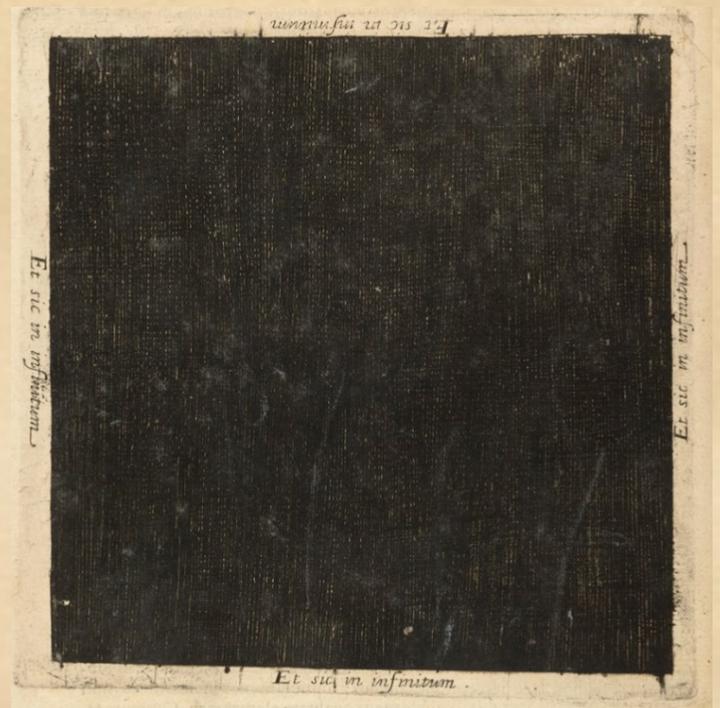
The line of thought Thacker develops proves to be especially valuable as he traces a lineage of thinking darkness beyond reason at the dawn of the scientific revolution in the 17th century, as scientific reason's enlightening power was becoming formalized in The Enlightenment with the physician and astrologer Robert Fludd. In one instance Thacker draws the connection between Fludd's sonically informed cosmology, the "celestial monochord" as he calls it, and the 21st century practice of listening out from the Earth to cosmic sound.¹² Describing the universe through harmonic divisions along the semitones of single-stringed instrument, Fludd moves from the higher notes of "macrocosm" representing God and the universe, to the lower notes of the "microcosm" of humanity's inner-life. This is where the similarities to the monochord end as Fludd illustrates the significance and centrality of the Earth and humanity as endowed by God himself.

It is not, however, Fludd's writing on observable phenomenon that stands out in Thacker's analysis but rather the unobservable, or perhaps anti-observable sort of "looking" Fludd pushes toward by way of his cosmological illustrations. For this Thacker turns to Fludd's multi-volume encyclopedic work, lengthily titled, *The Metaphysic, Physical, and Technical History of the Two Worlds, the Major as well as the Minor* which was published serially between 1617 and 1621. From this massive collection of entries, diagrams, and images Thacker chooses the "quite simple" black square diagram. A dark box labeled by Fludd on either of its four sides in Latin "et sic in infinitum" (or "And on into infinity" in English) meant to represent to his readers a nothingness that existed across all space and time before the creation of the universe.

The diagram compels readers to "see" the image in a unique way, that is, by not "seeing" it for itself at all. As Thacker describes: "The viewer must understand the square as formlessness, and the black inside as neither a fullness or an emptiness." Packed within the optical blackness of the square is an imperative to not look at the image, but to reconfigure perception toward a scale that is literally inconceivable by way of human phenomenology. Moving viewers toward "a self-negating form of representation [that] would be able to suggest the nothingness prior to

all existence... a 'color' that is not really a color...a square that is not really a square, a box meant to indicate boundlessness."¹³ The real focus of the black square diagram, just as the black hole image, is not the lightened edges that make it visible to the human eye but the darkness that remains unrepresentable their center. It is the "anti-significance" implied by both images, in their unrepresentable subjects, that negate the centrality of the world as it is constructed by and for human sensory experience as the sole engine of thought. To think after both images, in Fludd's terminology, one must listen for a new resonance of macrocosm that is no longer reducible to the limited microcosm of a single individuated human body.

This of course goes beyond any of Fludd's own intentions for his diagram as it was only intended to stand in for a concept of a "pre-universe, an emptiness that was replaced in the creation of matter, the world, those things loaded with significance in the traditional sense and fully representable as in the other entries, drawings, diagrams, and tables in his research. The black hole, on the other hand, represents a core nothingness that continues to exist within and throughout the visible materiality of our universe.



Et sic in infinitum / Robert Fludd / in [Utriusque Cosmi](#), pg. 26

12: Eugene Thacker, "Sound of the Abyss" in *AUDINT - Unsound: Undead*, ed. Steve Goodman, Toby Heys, Eleni Ikoniadou (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2019), 87.

13: Thacker, *Starry Speculative Corpse*, 98.

Black Sun/Black Umwelt

More so than Fludd, the nothing that the Earth is becoming attuned to in its transformation echoes the concluding remarks Thacker makes on Georges Bataille as he says: "Bataille's texts opt to darken the human, to undo the human by paradoxically revealing the shadows and nothingness at its core, to move not toward a renewed knowledge of the human, but towards something we can only call an unknowing of the human, or really, the unhuman."¹⁴ Just as the paradoxical revelation within the human is revealed by Bataille, a paradoxical revelation is enacted by the black hole as it inverts the enlightening power originary of both vision and life itself, that is, the power of the sun shining down to Earth.

In Bataille there is a further alignment of the sun's literal enlightening power to the concept of intellectual enlightenment as it has been figured throughout the history of Western philosophy before even the Enlightenment itself. In Nick Land's reading of Bataille this goes back to the prisoners leaving Plato's cave as the sun provides "pure illumination... simultaneous with truth, the perfect solidarity of knowing with the real."¹⁵ Beyond the illusion of representations on the cave's walls, the sun grants access to direct knowledge, albeit, even in Plato, at the cost of an involuntary and painful process as they leave the cave for the "dazzling and blinding" glare of the sun's light. Land enumerates the forces of the sun by describing a "second sun," or "black sun" which recasts the light of the sun, not just in terms of what is illuminated in the minds of Plato's prisoners, but in the materiality through which solar revelations in general must be mediated.

To look not just at what is illuminated by the sun, but to look at and through the sun itself implies for Bataille "a certain madness" as "it is no longer production that appears in light, but refuse or combustion."¹⁶ It is the significance of the enlightened human that itself combusts in the darkness of the black hole as this planetary-posthuman sensory apparatus moves the surface of the Earth away from its place as the primary site of phenomenal experience and into the machinic organ attuned to experience the weirdness of the universe beyond human perception.

Experience which, in itself, undermines the centrality and the authority of human perception in understanding and explaining the world by revealing an arbitrariness to the human as perception as it follows from the literal and intellectual enlightenment of the human subject.

Unlike the optically informed pictures produced in traditional photography, the "terrifying image" of the black hole was crucially not produced through an impression of light as if from the sun, but through the construction of an elaborate technological means for "looking" out into the darkness in a new way. Recasting the light of the sun away from both its literal powers of illumination and from the intellectually enlightening power inherited through the history of thought since Plato, the black hole has become the first image produced in a darkness only navigable by a planetary-scale posthuman sensory apparatus.

Just as the Earth and humanity found themselves de-centered by the Copernican revolutions in astronomy and philosophy during The Enlightenment, the transformation of the Earth itself begins to de-center the world of Earthly experience and the naturalistic categories of understanding defined by that experience. In this move away from a heliocentric Umwelt, the horizontal orientation of perception and thought situated on the surface of the Earth can begin to face outward into the darkness and find a world previously unavailable to enlightened thought. Aside from the coincidence of its aesthetic similarity to a "black sun," the black hole image is in this way aligned with Bataille's second sun as it produces the "terrifying image" of a world-picture constructed by both literal and intellectual enlightenment, but which can no longer be contain all of what it has produced.

Unlike the sensory experiences that take place at the level of the human, those set out toward the darkness of the cosmos have no inherent need for the powers of Earth's sun and, as such they force humanity to conceive of a sensory apparatus free from reference to it. This is the perceptual world that our Earth now finds itself within, an Umwelt of a universe darkened to human experience and fundamentally different than any of those of Earthbound creatures who have found enlightenment conceived of through their necessary place

14: *Ibid.*, 79.

15: Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: George Bataille and Virulent Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 1992), 28.

16: Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. Allan Soekel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 59.

under the sun. The world and world-picture which comes from out of the darkness of the black hole had to be developed by way of scientific enlightenment, but through the resulting enlightened human came the negation of its own significance as the boundaries of perception and thought extend and reconfigure themselves through humanity as a way to move beyond it.



Solar Anus / [Cheryl Bentley](#) / graphite on paper / 2014 / 18"x18"

Labyrinth Lot

Jonah Howell

Dear Editor,

Please find attached the first piece of my investigations and a short description of my, ah, somewhat unorthodox method. You seemed skeptical when we met in New York, but once the story's filled-out, my method will need no advocate.

On arrival I harangued one of the demolition foremen into acting as my guide. As we approached a flatter piece of land - they'd cleared the trees, but the dirt trucks were behind schedule - the kitchen tongs in my hand began to vibrate with a chilling vigor. I waved the foreman away. "I won't annoy you anymore. This is it."

I walked in a spiral around the flatness. Six feet northeast of the estimated center my tongs drew together and apart slowly as though stretching after a long nap. Then they launched into the type of rhythmic code I told you about: It's not Morse code, not alphabetic at all. It relies of synesthesia.

I sat, careful not to move right or left, and closed my eyes. Forgive the jumpy nature of the vision, but it must not be changed. My source is unquestionably accurate but was clearly agitated.

-Jonah

Lot, relieved, places their bowl of chow-stones on the dirt floor of their tent and goes to greet the flap-tapper.

"Ain't seen one in years. Not supposed to be here."

"Why, then?"

"Better come see this," the lotter pants out. Lot can tell the kid's a lotter, though the sun hasn't yet risen over Mount Hill. Telegraphic sentences, the type of abstract voice you can't imagine the face of the speaker. The pair runs slow at first, bounding over sleeping bags and mats. They reach the edge of the clearing and break to sprint, weaving between familiar trees without slowing. No further traces of human life until a mile out:

Teeth grit. Stone silence.

Lot founded Lot ten years ago, then named herself after it. Before that it was nothing but a series of parking lots in Rikes County, West Virginia. Sad solar flare of a history, that place: Swarming mine town back in the day, then *poof*, a clap of invisible hands as Texans struck oil at Spindletop, and Rikes contracted. It hung on for a few moribund decades, serving rust-pump gasoline and sketchy fish sandwiches to Highway 61's more self-destructive truckers. Podunk businessmen in a circle of folding chairs in front of the gas station, sweating in seer-sucker suits, ranted over cans of Busch Ice that they'd "revive" the place, turn the old mine into one of those swanky post-industrial stripmalls, CBD dispensaries, and local boutique candle vegan wax microfinanced wire-wrap necklaces from terminal debt in Swaziland.

"The hell's that, Lot?"

They rub their eyes, distinctly aware of the sockets' nascent wrinkles. It takes them a second to conjure the term, pulled from deep memory.

"Bulldozer."

"Not an answer."

Couple thousand miles south of the businessmen, an ITS cadre sits on the porch of a tin-side rental. Doesn't matter exactly where: It's one of those places so far out in the boonies that borders haven't reached it yet. Near the Argentina-Uruguay border. Coffee mugs and ashes hold down the corners of a hand-drawn schematic on the table.

One of the men rubs out his cigarette on the shaky-handed likeness of a transformer box. "One shot, whole country's down." He drops the butt beside the hole in the drawing. Across the table another man, lanky with a sharp Adam's apple, gulps visibly as his thin fingers drift unconsciously to his bulging pocket.

Associated Press, June 2019: Blackout in South America raises questions about power grid—
"Lopetegui did not rule out the possibility of an attack but said it was unlikely..."

Oh, that was the practice run. The men caught a flight to Miami, and reprise scene: Grave growls around a stout hardwood table, ashes and stronger coffee and a map with dots up the East Coast, I-79 to 68 to 81 to 78. Cigarette stubbed out in West Virginia, forty miles off the highway. "Nobody's there: If they catch us after that one, we'll know we couldn't have gotten to New York anyway."

Cut scene back to the businessmen with their seersuckers and piss-beer:

"I've got an investor from Danville interested, but we'll have to pull in support from Charleston."

An arrogant sneer. He knows none of these other hicks could think up such an official-sounding lie. One of them cracks the top of another Busch and slurs,

"Good, well, I got my guy comin' in a week 'r so, gon' put 'bout fitty grand in the place, says iss promisin'."

Polite underhanded laughs all 'round, then the first guy, stroking his salt-and-pepper goatee,

"Say, when'd that fan quit runnin'?"

WE ARE SITTING AT THE FOOTHILL OF THE LAST EXPERIENCE



we are sitting at the foothill / Mira Moss Crime / 2020

The sun pelted them. Suits matted to their chests like kinky latex.

Swaying slightly, Goatee unplugged and replugged the fan then ran in to ask the clerk who tripped the breaker.

"I'm the only one here, and I ain't left the register since five this morning. It ain't working either, though."

He flipped the light switch up and down a few times and shrugged.

Goatee stumbled back outside to see lines of cars stretched off the lot. An observant panicker replied to his twisted eyes:

"Whole town's out. Who knows?"

The big neon sun on the gas station sign had gone black.

Out on FM-147, the Dollar General cashier tossed up her hands before a mob.

"I can't take your money, but," her breaker flipped, "y'all need shit. Take it."

The mob cheered.

Two states away, police pulled over a rental car full of Mexican men.

"Got any weapons?"

One of the guys nodded and indicated his bulging pocket. Forensics lab matched the scratches on the bullet to the captured gun, and they were rerouted from New York to Gitmo.

The breaker that flipped: A revelatory connection:

"As you do unto the least of these, so also you do unto me," and "...for no one knows the day or the hour."

The cashier moonlighted as Rikes County's only preacher. Ordained by mail through the Universal Life Church, but none of the Rikers cared whichever way. She didn't talk down to them. Can't learn that in seminary.

Of course, within a day of blackout she'd been declared Consul for Life.

"What do we do?"

She stood on the Sun Fuel porch, the highest point in Rikes, on the sagging seat of a folding chair. The seersuckered businessmen had all skipped town after Charleston ignored their petition:

"Rikes? People still live there?"

The County's five hundred remaining inhabitants sat cross-legged on the parking lot. Callous-palmed men leaned against the empty pumps and smoked, fanning their wives and children with meshback hats.

The preacher looked out over the rows of dilapidated houses. She felt no real sadness. Nothing had really changed. Armageddon had only grown more visible.

"First off," she stepped down from the chair and licked her salty lips, "call me Lot."

Dear Editor,

Obviously you can see this is a serious breakthrough. ITS operating in the United States...this stuff's classified, and until now they've only admitted to scattered random bombings in Mexico. Nothing so sophisticated, so widespread, so...dare I say?...*systematic*.

Also note that I give no moral commentary: I'm a journalist. I've got nothing to say. Perhaps that makes my story unpublishable - I've worried about that, I admit I have, between the classified information, the sensational press about Lot's group - but you've got to understand, right, this is *real*, this is *important*, this is true in a dimension where party lines don't *exist*.

Seriously, Ed., these people were onto something. Way I see it, there were two types of people in the world before Lot: Fascists and not-fascists. *Lot created antifascism*, and forget what those black bloc posers call themselves - just fascists from the other end, exactly as control-freak as the ones they hate. Don't let the Christian shit fool you. Lot invoked God *in order to phase God out*, like a key in a lock and *BOOM!* the door might as well not be there. New Agey crystal-ogling fascists say they want God gone, say they want "unity" and "solidarity" and all that mess? Lot never said that shit, *but that's what they got*.

Hoping this gets to you, but what with the national security yada yada yada it's probably intercepted, so expect a call from Gitmo.

-Jonah

They had no problem buying up the land from the scattered businessmen. Fifty bucks cash per acre, they said, and they were happy to rid themselves of the property taxes. Suddenly a group of impoverished Appalachians owned the stretch from FM-230 all the way to Mount Hill. Once the preacher had dispelled the worry that they'd all been left behind in the Rapture, the Rikers waxed ecstatic:

"They lied to you: It ain't up there," she pointed an arc across opalescent sky. "The kingdom of heaven is within you.' Luke, chapter seventeen."

Lot sprang up in a flash: The cheap tents and tarps from Dollar General proved just enough to cover five hundred heads once all the leaky houses grew moldy from lack of air circulation. Once they ran out of condoms and started having babies, the old wood and tin became cabins and lean-tos. The forest encroached, kudzu wrapped the buildings, but the parking lots and surrounding areas – the only level land – were kept clear by the passing of busy feet and subsistence planting. A network of parking lots, connections shifting as one slab splintered above oak roots, as crops cycled, as families formed and reformed.

Though she had abdicated her formal position, the lotters still looked to Lot for spiritual guidance. She helped to organize the crops and discovered the local chow-stone crop, a rock-hard, nutritious fungus that grew well year-round on those house-boards that were too far gone to repurpose as construction material.

Knowing the necessity of tight bonds, she led the lotters to take the Bible literally:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God.' Word, singular. The fewer your words, the closer to God: In each situation, look for *the* Word. Longwindedness is born of idleness, and 'Idle hands are the devil's workshop; idle lips are his mouthpiece.'"

In the same way genders soon collapsed:

"And the two shall become one flesh.' Do we

think God was lying?"

Chorus:

"No!"

She became they:

"One flesh, therefore marriage is plurality: Consistent ego is an abomination to our Lord. We refer to our selves as we; we refer to y'all as y'all or they. Further, even the Lord is triple: Who are we to say we can make do with fewer?"

Silence reigns.

"We are like the roots of the chow-stone: Nodes, shoots, ever splitting and recombining. Jealousy is a relic of property; it is a form of envy. 'Thou shalt not covet your neighbor's spouse,' even if they are also yours."

Lot knew that their new, honest reading of the Bible would bitter some tongues, so they encouraged all the lotters to change their names to cement the barrier between earlier and now. A few left, mumbling unprintable things under their breath, and were quickly replaced by interested travelers who caught rumors of an "autonomous free-love cult" in the mountains of West Virginia. The more aesthetically impaired of these were repulsed by words like "God" and the lotters' thick Appalachian accents, but the more wide-visioned or desperate stayed on and more or less assimilated or else moved into the forested outskirts and set up a series of anarchic marketplaces, makeshift tables selling all manner of things too sketchy for the Outside's black markets: From a tourist guide in a short-run anarchist zine:

Editors' Note: In typical anarchist zine style, the tourist guide is printed on faded and musty paper that couldn't be digitized well. As such, we've merely reproduced the text without any of the...chaotic stylization.

I walked from booth to table to dirtlaid warestation, stumbling over gnarled roots and gnarled customers. Crust punks, train kids, hitchers of all types driven in by wary truckers, fugitives from supermax and suburbs, merchants ousted from the Dark Web by disgusted browsers, those deemed unfit or too fit, cop-killers and cops who refused to kill, and me, your humble reporter.

One of the many unofficial security guards took my camera and phone and put a tracker on me, saying if I wrote anything about the location or the geography of the place, well...he pointed to a nearby booth's impressive collection of dried pineal and adrenal glands, sold in fine-grained human leather pouches. I nodded nervously, and he smiled and waved me off like the stern chaperone of a middle school dance.

Searching for a pair of welcoming eyes, I saw only downturned foreheads and the crusted backs of necks, slow steady tears and gritted teeth. Stumbling over a mossed rock, my thighs hit the corner of a wooden table. The saleswoman stabled the table and glared at me. "Newcomer, huh?"

I smiled, "Yeah, what's that you're selling?"

She picked up one of the unlabeled discs from her pile. "Snuff porn. Any journalist comes in here, and I tie him to that tree there," she pointed to a dark-stained pine, "chop his forearm off and run the ulna in one ear and out the other. Drives head-fetishists crazy."

"But the ears aren't big enough—"

"Wanna bet, *journalist?*"

She cackled after me.

Once my legs wore out I shoved my notebook and pen in my pocket and walked on, looking at my shoes. The market—Lot, they call it, after a mythic settlement further up the mountain—shoves you into its customs fast. Call it anarchist all you want, but laws aren't the only means of control.

Though, to be fair, this place isn't exactly capitalist. It's too paranoid for that. They know currency can be traced, and there's no electricity, so crypto's off the table. You can only buy stuff with actions: Say you want one of those journalist snuffs. You might have to pay with a known shoplifter's retina. Every salesperson sets their own prices on the spot, cold-reading the customer to figure out what they can do, what they're willing to do. Most of the hawkers are rogue psychics. It seems common knowledge that franchising will take down their dark paradise, so anyone caught trying to set up a pyramid org is whacked and turned into products, both before and after death: These folks use all parts of the animal, temporal and spatial. And the aspiring franchiser will be caught: Few things can buy so much as espionage.

I stayed for an hour or so. All I heard, I caught from customers muttering under their breath. After forty-five minutes or so of following drunks and tweakers I started to notice the same faces, and I got the sense I was trapped in an enormous immune system, leukocytes surrounding the foreign invader with knowing sneers on downturned faces, spiraling in, closing exits, so I booked it back to my entrypoint, following a trail of familiar tables, vodka-fentanyl bar to neutering closet ("Eat your own balls/ovaries for a small fee! Deep fried or Cajun-blackened! Limited time offer!") to organic snake oil to actual snakes. The guard smiled as he removed my tracker, "Sorry 'bout your camera. Bought me a good quickie with that goat over there." I ran past the satisfied-looking billy and three miles back up the road to my car.

This is not science-fiction. This is not futurism. *This is the free market, dammit.* If you can find someone who will tell you where Lot is, I recommend you go, if only so you know that such a thing is possible—no, that such a thing *exists*.

To say that our lotters "allow" the market to remain in place would be a gross misunderstanding. They forgot long ago that they own land. They forgot the borders. Such things simply don't compute to them. They even *want* the market to go on, believing that someday, by sheer osmosis, the marketeers will absorb the Lot's ways, and Heaven will expand, piece by piece, to the ends of the Earth —that is, to Mount Hill.

A final note on the lotter's (not a typo) social organization: They consist of three groups, with no explicit hierarchy. I have called them all lotters, but they reserve the term "lotter" for children born and raised in Lot. Many parents remain in Lot for the sake of these children, and just as many leave Lot so that their children will not be lotters: With no sense of envy, exclusive social pacts, or longwindedness, the lotters would appear to the Outside as sociopaths and would not survive long, were they to leave. The lotters learn descriptive language in order to communicate with their parents, but conversations from lotter to lotter are so sparse as to be impenetrable to non-lotterers.

The original inhabitants, the former Rikers, are known as

Dear Editor,

This will be my last letter. I'm certain I'm being tailed: There are new demolition workers, and they feel like cops, you know? There's that cold eye, the buzzcut, faint smell of pork even on the vegetarians...This morning I awoke and found that my tongs had been moved from the bedside table (where I left them) to the floor beside the bedside table (where I certainly most emphatically did *not* leave them), and I don't move in my sleep. My notebook was still in its place, but I'd swear it was turned slightly...

You see that slam piece in the *Times* the other day? Jesucriste, it was horrible, I've never seen so much *spin*, no, so much *slander*, pure slander! That prosecutor should be locked up! These people bought the land, they didn't abuse anyone, and seriously, "high-ranking members?" The *Times* has gone past gray. It's senile. Who paid them off? Please find out for me, and we can run that story along with mine.

I'm not crazy. You know that: You met me: I met you: We're friends, right, like Johnny Depp and his razors. I'm a razor, Ed., and this story, you'll see, it's folded up right behind this paper you're holding right now, it cuts the ground right out from under these *Times* hacks. Cult...dammit, Lot's the only folks that *aren't* a cult! That Rikes Lebensraum Fund or whatever they called it needs to be tried for fraud, *posthaste*, and terrorism charges dropped under castle law—stood their

converts. Over the ten years since Lot's foundation, some of these have adjusted easily. Others have undergone voluntary concussion so as to start with a "clean slate." Many converts have accidentally killed themselves in pursuit of clean slates.

Immigrants to Lot take the figurative label "robot" until they have gotten rid of their "electrobrain," the rapid-fire series of internal words and anxieties that the lotters refer to alternatively as "Hell." Though they are not lower on any sort of social ladder, the robots reside separately from the converts and are only allowed contact with the lotter children, who find them alternately hilarious and sad. Once a robot has displayed inner silence for a reasonably long time — the children know, and they have no words for it — they choose a name, decide whether to undergo a clean slate procedure, and they join the society of converts. Occasionally a convert will relapse, and they are given the option of returning to the robot lot or to the Outside.

Hierarchies ebb and flow, solidify and dissolve according to context. Lot itself is only a spiritual adviser when needed. Otherwise, they're just one of the converts.

ground, wouldn't you?-and abuse...next assignment I want is in one of the schools those assholes started. I got a hunch I'll find the real abuse. And another thing! The market's *not* Lot. It's like I said, there's fascists and non-, there's people that think they hold the one *true* truth and people who aren't sure, and these *Times* writers and investigators can't handle that a word might hold two meanings-well, which category you think they fall into?

Yes, this is all very unscientific and unprofessional, but I'm only guided by my vow to journalistic objectivity. If I limited myself to only the things scientists can verify, well, I'd always be redundant, first point, and second point, *I wouldn't be objective* because there are plenty of other lenses in the world and it's a bit dogmatic (*cough* fascist *cough*) to expect everything that isn't science to break all its fragile bones stuffing itself into some little sciencebox. I would never stoop so low.

Nevertheless, there's something missing from the story. Some little piece, some link...my Source is dying, the tongs barely moved at all in the end...but it's runnable, what I've sent you. *The tongs don't lie.*

-Jonah

Looking out at the bulldozer Lot wells with an old terror and an old indignation. The small lotter beside *her* blinks, shocked.

"Robot?"

"I'm feeling waves of it."

Lot hangs her head. *Good God, the kid isn't even scared.*

"Why?"

"Necessary now. Need electrobrain to fight electrobrain."

"How?"

Lot says nothing but leads the kid back up the mountain. An old green sign, hanging from its post, reads "FM-147." Through a wall of kudzu Lot spots the big D of the old Dollar General.

The lotter looks around in amazement at the strange materials, the esoteric signs and symbols. (No one reads in Lot: Combined, the lotter kids have a perfect memory, and they're present at all lotwide assemblies.) Lot picks up a duffel bag and fills it with containers of thick brown liquid and a sledgehammer.

The converts knew something had gone horribly wrong: The lotters, usually in love with Lot, would not go anywhere near her, and her face had sprouted a lattice of bizarre creases. The lotter who had raised the alarm had, of course, filled all the other children in on the situation as best they could, but without words for any of it, they couldn't possibly pass their knowledge on to the converts, much less the robots.

At dusk Lot gathered a handful of converts, careful to select no clean-slaters, for whom the operation would cause a potentially fatal relapse. Wordlessly she led them through the forest and gestured to the group of bulldozers and backhoes.

With the sledgehammer she broke the lock on the first dozer's gas tank. She opened it and emptied a bottle of syrup inside, replacing the fuel cap afterward so that the groggy driver wouldn't notice the sabotage until the syrup had ravaged the engine. She then dispensed the remaining syrup bottles among the group and ran around with the sledgehammer, breaking locks where the workers had remembered to apply them.

Once all the tanks were well-syruped, she gathered the broken locks and empty bottles into the duffel bag and ran back to Lot, where she took the mat from her tent and trudged slowly away to the robot lot.

After ten years of silence, the Lot awoke to the ominous thrum of helicopter blades.

[Ed: Our investigator's remaining manuscript is a garbled, esoteric mumbo-jumbo not even halfway fit for print in any self-respecting publication. For the sake of transparency, I admit that I worried such a thing might happen. As you've seen, the investigator's methods were suspect from the outset: In an introductory meeting, he told the editorial staff that some tight-knit communities—small towns, cults, and the like—tie in to a proprietary oversoul. He explained to us that this was why rumors fly so quickly around hicktowns: "The rumors don't spread quickly," he twitched, "but instantaneously, like the folks' brains are quantum-entangled." This oversoul, he argued, leaves a sort of fingerprint or echo so that, though the area once known as "Lot" is quickly being restored to dignified habitability by devoted refugees from the 2009 Rikes Blackout, the area's cultish history could still be divined by a procedure something like water-witching. Unable to print the deranged reporter's final remarks, though, we instead reproduce below a short article from the New York Times, March 16, 2020, which we have fact-checked thoroughly and have found completely accurate, despite Mr. Howell's paranoia.]

The New York Times

Rikes Cult Caught in Sting

By Murdock Parsons

Mar. 16, 2020 Updated 3:34 p.m. ET



Rikes County, West Virginia: Cult members indicted for terrorism, child abuse—A thousand-member cult known as Lot was discovered this week in Rikes County, West Virginia, a secluded area in the Appalachian mountains. The cult, founded by power-hungry local preacher León Felipe Camino Choronzon, has hidden in relative seclusion since the county's blackout in 2009. An FBI anti-terrorism operative, who prefers to remain anonymous, tells the *Times* that "Choronzon funded the cult by operating a disgusting black market on the outskirts of central Lot. Human remains for sale, homemade films of murders...whatever you can't bear to name, we found it." The cult was discovered after sabotaging a half-dozen pieces of heavy machinery belonging to the Rikes Restoration Fund, a nonprofit organization operated by former Rikes residents John Bradley, Chad Michaelson, Richard McSwonk, and Bubba Martin. "Ten years ago, Mr. Choronzon offered us a small amount of money as rent for the land," Mr. Bradley told our correspondent, "and he'd always seemed like a good Christian man. If I had known then what he planned to do with it, you bet I would have found another tenant."

[Ed: Mr. Bradley's statements translated into Standard English by a local interpreter.]

Mr. Choronzon and twenty-eight high-ranking cult members have been indicted on charges of terrorism and child abuse. All of the two hundred children rescued from Lot were illiterate and markedly antisocial. Many of them screamed at the softest touch of an officer, leading investigators to conclude that the Lot adults were savagely violent. Many of the children had heavily calloused

hands, indicating that they had been forced into labor by their abusers. The Rikes Restoration Fund has established the Rikes Restorative School in the nearby city of Venus, West Virginia to help these children and others rescued from abuse.

Prosecutor Dr. Lawler Gibbets informed the *Times* that the twenty-nine indicted cultists will likely receive death penalties. "This cult's cruelty is almost unprecedented," Dr. Gibbets told our correspondent. "It is unbelievable that such barbarism was perpetrated—for ten years, no less!—in our very back yards, but it only shows us that progress takes more work than we have given it. If one of these monsters ever reenters society, I will disbar myself. And that's a promise."

The trials for these cultists will begin on July 5th, 2020. The rest of Mr. Choronzon's victims have been sent to re-integration centers so that they may enter American society on hopeful terms.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the Rikes Restoration Fund or the Rikes Restorative School, please visit www.hopeforchildren.org. If you would like to donate to the congressional campaign of Dr. Lawler Gibbets (West Virginia, District IV), visit www.patreon.com/drlawlgibbets.

Radioactive Transness

Alex Ray



I have always harbored a certain distaste - or perhaps more aptly, disinterest - towards the flag that is supposed to best represent my particular experience of queerness. The trans pride flag in all its softness and inoffensive charm never truly spoke to my specific interaction with gender. It is a tamed beast at best, chained by the rigidity of social structures that have long since began to decompose and it carries their noxious odor with them. The steadfast linearity inherent to reading the flag may be palindromic but it is nonetheless following a singular arrow of time, not to mention that said arrow is followed across fields of color mapped to specific genders by a sorting system not at all unlike one you would see at a particularly reverse gender reveal party. There is a stable finality to the design here: you simply move from blue to pink or vice versa and have then completed your journey, arriving at the end of your personal trans history: transition timeline as metanarrative. The sole white stripe in the middle serves as an obligatory catch-all for nonbinarity and seems nothing more than a weak afterthought, only considered secondly to the easily classified and humanist (read: binary) trans experience. It is the epitome of a reterritorialized transness: a mere third box you can check.

A much more useful counterexample to this, at least in my opinion would be the symbol most commonly referred to simply as the transgender symbol: In meshing together admittedly archaic gendered signs around a circle, its main theme is radiation. As a result, various people have picked up on its almost uncanny resemblance to the internationally standardized warning symbol for ionizing radiation. Most famously this happened in the 'Age of Sin' poster that has since spread virally. Literally pointing in three directions at

once, the symbol revels in the very same multiplicity that is found in one pronoun that is immanently tied to recent conversations about transness: they/them. The three lines of flight that the symbol is plotting are not pointed anywhere in particular either, there is no goal they could ever reach, they are simply in a constant process of displacement and affirmatively so, endlessly rushing towards an exit.



Reject the order of creation.

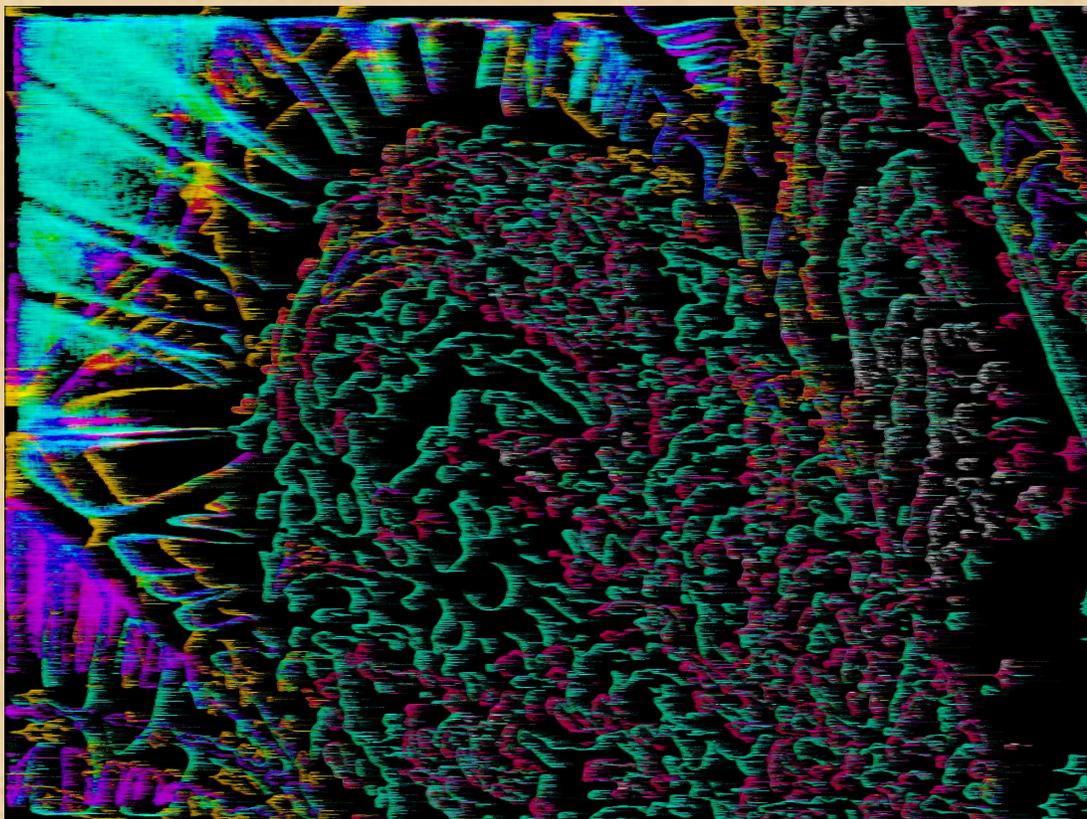
Revel in the annihilation of Man as the image of God.

Destroy. Plot designs of death.

Disfigure the face of Man and Woman.

However, the ties between radiation and transness reach deeper still. For one, they share the important quality of invisibility, neither acknowledged by the human sensory equipment. The eyes in the case of the first and the more complex cognitive constitution of gender in case of the second but importantly neither is fitted for the human. Immediately related to this is the fact that racialized people have long since had their incongruence with colonial gender used as grounds for the dehumanization they experience (and all the more ironic then to use a decidedly white stripe to represent interactions with gender outside of the binary). It is not by sheer coincidence or convergent evolution that being of color and transness share some of what constitutes them (i.e. a certain invisibility and experience of constant displacement), they are in fact linked. But it is precisely this very spectral nature of both transness and radiation that is where their power resides. Both biologically and socially - and neither seems limited to either one of the two - they disassem-

ble and mutate anything human in their vicinity upon contact and they do this in the most clandestine way. The trans entity is unable to be grasped by a human subject, they are eldritch like the hyperobjectivity of plutonium: both glaring reminders that nothing human really does make it out of the near future and one has to only briefly consider what the effect of radiation on life is at its core for this to become all the more evident: accelerated evolution.



red neon replicated

/
Mira Moss Crime

/
2018

Pipes

Jan von Stille

The *Academia Plumbarius*, premier institute of plumbing didactics in Lawrence, Kansas, the international capital—at one time—of plumbing didactics—this venerable academy, I say again for Clarity’s sake, had not told Mo-Dean, as he enlisted in this second phase—jokingly entitled “clinical rotations”—of his training, that he should, on his first assignment, be faced by such labyrinthine conundra; that, even before he entered the house—a shabby wooden number girdled by grass and garishly rusted gears detached from Satan—really-Satan-knows-what gadget—that before he entered, I shall, for Clarity’s most noble and worthy sake, repeat, he should be waylaid by the first of many unforeseen—though not, for that matter, altogether unexpected—snares: namely, that the house was connected to no municipal plumbing system whatsoever—the study of which genus had occupied precisely ninety-seven percent of the initial phase of his plumbing coursework—again, in praise of upright, chaste, and chivalric Clarity, I say: that the house was connected to no municipal pipes, and that therefore it—that is, the house—ran its own juice—that is, water—both in and out, the former via a backyard well that, heaven knows, must have run afoul of sulfur (if dug too shallow) or of iron deposits (if dug too deep) and that, in any case, must cause quite a rumpus with-in the inward and outward pipeage; which outward pipeage—yes, I address it, now that it has forced its ruddy face into what may otherwise have been a perfectly civil, if not altogether uncritical, conversation about inward pipeage, the far more acceptable of the two, I shall now and forevermore assert, in polite conversation, which, if I may, with the consent of Dear Reader, opine further, is the only acceptable type of conversation; and so you see how it pains me to have to tell the whole story, namely that of the *outward*, as well as the far more agreeable *inward*, pipes—I repeat, I recapitulate, I re-relate, in service of that most beautiful and right and just god and/or goddess, Clarity: which outward pipeage ran direct to an odiously rusted septic tank, one of the low-down no-good downright-nasty aboveground types known, in the business, as “cholera casks”; and so, consider-

ing the issues—now abundantly clear and present, I trust, for Dear Reader—that surely should attend his attending of the inward no less than the outward pipes, which issues must surely be Legion, really Legion, for—although or because, due to their distinct locality, that is their disconnection from all municipal piping infrastructure, this house’s pipes simply ran a straight line in and straight line out and, assuming, as is safe to assume, that some leak had sprung in this cholera cask, a third line back around—none but Satan, that most *métic* of pathrunners, may possibly know the involutions to be found in these pipes, the divots and inborn knots, the rust- and shit- and providence-fed folds, the complexities un-mappable, templexities of battling eons caked upon their sides, the ghosts these pipes must surely hold captive; and considering the issues that should surely arise in his own body, were he to have any hands-on dealings with either of these two sets of pipes, which, as a plumber-probate, he must; and, finally, considering the downright shame that he would bring upon himself, upon his forebears and upon those whom he may someday beget, were he to bear the marks of such atrocious pipeage upon his not-altogether-pristine-but-nevertheless-not-so-sullied-as-they-might-have-been hands; considering, I shall repeat again, for I do so love Clarity, who has ever been the most steadfast and humble and good and true servant of that highest god or goddess, Truth—considering, then these three considerations—namely, the pipes and their issues; his body and its potential issues; and the prospect of inherited sin—Mo-Dean fled, just dropped his tools and fled, and I don’t know where he went.

He left no heirs, no friends, no scrap of diaristic nothing. This is the principle of non-action: That now, as of this very publication, nothing remains of Mo-Dean but the pipes.

Libidinal Rheology

Martina Maccianti and Laura Tripaldi

I: Engineering the Libidinal Surface

“God made the bulk; surfaces were invented by the devil.”

-Wolfgang Pauli

Rheology is the science of flow. It provides physico-mathematical tools to understand and model the evolution of any imaginable material under all possible stress conditions. It is because of rheology that we grasp the difference between solids and liquids. The chemical explanation for different states of matter (relating the phase of a material to the bonds forming between its atoms or its molecules), provides a microscopic explanation at the molecular level, but it is unable to model the dynamic behaviour of macroscopic materials when they become too large and complex. Conventional approaches to understanding matter tend to be essentially bottom-up; we describe a material as being made of parts, that are themselves made of other smaller parts, and so on until we can build a lego-model of all things, no matter how big or complex they may be. This quickly becomes unsustainable in technological approaches where the essential question is not what a material is made of, but how it behaves as a function of a range of variable conditions. Rheology therefore takes a different route, focusing first on modelling the macroscopic behaviour of materials and, only after the dynamics of the material have been understood, correlating it with its chemical nature. Of course, the engineering of novel materials with desired rheological properties must be performed at the molecular or nano-technological level so the two perspectives – the molecular and the macroscopic – are always necessarily intertwined.

So how does rheology answer the question of why is a solid a solid? The chemical or molecular answer - *the solid is solid because its atoms or molecules are bound to each other with a certain energy* - does not really account for our macroscopic experience of materials. While some of our perceptions are tuned at the molecular level, acting as chemical detectors such as in the case of smell, taste and, to some extent, colour perception, this is not the case for

experiences such as solidity and liquidity, that often involve a combination of visual and tactile sensations evolving dynamically through time. The rheological answer to the solidity problem introduces an interesting perspective, that is, that there is no such thing as an absolute solid, or, more precisely, that solidity is not an instantaneous experience, but it is necessarily related to how things evolve across time and space. A direct consequence of this is the fact that materials commonly experienced as being liquid can behave as solids under specific conditions; if we hit the surface of water with a certain force-per-unit-time, we will experience it as a solid material. This is essentially related to molecular processes of energy dissipation; the molecular structure of a certain material requires a specific amount of time to “relax,” meaning to transfer the energy it receives in the form of an external impulse to the neighbouring molecules and to dissipate it in the form of heat. If the impulse is too violent, the molecules will act as if they were *frozen in time*, resisting the impulse with an elastic response. There is a strict correlation between the concepts of *time*, *flow*, and *energy dissipation*, so that a sort of relativity principle is introduced between the observer and the material, in which the *inertial reference system* does not determine a relative velocity but a relative capacity of energy dissipation.

Indeed, at first glance, it seems ironic that an essentially applied science, one for engineers and formulation chemists messing with paints, adhesives, and facial creams, should be given such a philosophically loaded name. But *rheology* – from the famous Heraclitean dictum *πάντα ῥεῖ* – does tackle some very fundamental questions about matter and change.

In rheological terms, the flow of time, which we argue is nothing but the flow of matter, expresses the extent to which a material resists the dissipation of the energy it receives



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from its outside. This is also a measure of a material's inherent potential for mechanical elasticity, thermodynamic reversibility or temporal "eternity." An ideally solid world – one of ideally elastic interactions – is temporally isotropic; where matter does not flow, neither does time itself. Time and rheology have been connected since the ancient times, particularly through the technology of the water clock in which the *viscosity of water* is the determining factor for keeping track of time. The ancients realized that water flowed more slowly during colder months, so heat was required in order to maintain a constant flow – thus restoring temporal equilibrium at the expense of fuel consumption.¹ This philosophical or fundamental component of rheology was clearly understood by Markus Reiner, the founding father of rheology, who, in a 1962 paper, commented on the bizarre affinity between *rheology* and *theology* by suggesting a notable biblical example:

Heraclitus' "everything flows" was not entirely satisfactory. Were we to disregard the solid and deal with fluids only? There are solids in rheology, even if they may show relaxation of stress and consequently creep. The way out of this difficulty had been shown by the Prophetess Deborah even before Heraclitus. In her famous song after the victory over the Philistines, she sang, "The mountains flowed before the Lord." When, over 300

years ago, the Bible was translated into English, the translators, who had never heard of Heraclitus, translated the passage as "The mountains melted before the Lord"—and so it stands in the authorized version. But Deborah knew two things. First, that the mountains flow, as everything flows. But, secondly, that they flowed before the Lord, and not before man, for the simple reason that man in his short lifetime cannot see them flowing, while the time of observation of God is infinite.²

Curiously, Prophetess Deborah's revelation – "The mountains melted before the Lord" – is reminiscent of far more recent prophetic words. In the *Communist Manifesto*, we are reminded that "All that is solid melts into air"³ before capital's drive towards ruthless expansion and acceleration, transforming elasticity into total plasticity and opening the way to the *rheological catastrophe* foreshadowed by Heraclitus. At the root of these two prophecies there is a similar intuition connecting flows of matter to flows of time, introducing us to the idea that some kind of slimy *undercurrent* cryptically regulates our experience of the world; while God melts things by virtue of his eternity, capital's occult sorcery, from ancient water clocks to bitcoin, artificially regulates viscosities through currents of energetic consumption. Quoting Nick Land: "Current emerges from the machinery of time [...] Economies are assembled from flows. Unsurprisingly, therefore, their native codes are *currents*, or current-signs."⁴

Regardless, most real materials cannot be reduced to either ideal solids or ideal liquids, but have rheological properties that place them somewhere in between. The two fundamental laws governing solids and liquids – Newton's law, according to which stress is proportional to shear rate and Hooke's law, according to which stress is proportional to deformation – are unable to efficiently model the behaviour of most materials. For a number of technological

1: cf. R. I. Tanner and K. Walters, *Rheology: An Historical Perspective* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1998), 4.

2: Markus Reiner, "The Deborah Number," in *Physics Today* 17, No. 1 (1964), 62.

3: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

4: Nick Land, *Crypto-Current (001)*, <https://www.uf-blog.net/crypto-current-001/>

applications there is a growing need to design materials that flow under particular conditions but are solid otherwise. These materials are generally known as visco-elastic materials. In this paper, we are especially concerned with a particular kind of visco-elastic material; *slime*, originally marketed as a toy product in the late 1970s, has experienced a dramatic rise in popularity in recent years, in association with the widespread consumption of new digital media. We argue that this obsessive fascination with slime is essentially rheological in nature.

First of all, we need to focus on the physico-chemical aspects of the problem. What is commonly known as *slime* is, from the chemical standpoint, a polymer hydrogel, usually produced by chemically cross-linking an aqueous solution of polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) chains with boric acid. In this way, the polymer molecules that were previously dissolved in the liquid medium, are linked to each other, forming a 3D macromolecular network that extends across the entire volume of the material, transforming the liquid into a visco-elastic solid.⁵ Hydrogels are advanced materials with a range of technological applications from mechanics to electronics, “soft” robotics, sensing, and bioengineering. Due to their potential biocompatibility, they are promising materials for biomedical applications, such as cartilage replacements and treatment of spinal cord injuries. In this context, synthetic polymer hydrogels injected in the spinal cord cavity have been reported to produce therapeutic effects.⁶ Due to their particular rheological properties, hydrogels have an affinity for the extracellular matrix of the central nervous system and can be used in a variety of therapeutic applications, from tissue regeneration to drug delivery in the spine and brain. Loading polymer hydrogels with nanoparticles can provide specific functional properties such as electric and thermal conductivity; further, hydrogels are now being widely used to design “smart” stimuli-responsive materials, that spontaneously swell and shrink under certain environmental conditions, such as temperature variations, pH changes, and light expo-



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sure.⁷ These behaviours can be engineered by exploiting reversible chemical bonds, such as antigen-antibody interactions between biomolecules introduced in the polymer network.⁸ This is some of the most fascinating work being currently undertaken in materials science, where the boundary between biological and synthetic molecular machinery is becoming increasingly blurred: synthetic materials are being injected into living organisms to enhance biological systems while biomolecules are being exploited to design synthetic materials with increasingly life-like behaviours. The slime is already creeping through our spine as it slowly learns to become human.

Besides these technological advancements, *slime engineering* for purely libidinal purposes has reached surprising and increasing levels of complexity, producing a range of materials with varying textural and rheological properties. Home-made slimes are generally produced by mixing glue with different “activators,” often common household products containing sodium tetraborate. Slime formulations, although frequently lacking in any formal understanding of rheology or polymer chemistry, are often provided with very high level of detail, controlling parameters such as concentration of crosslinking agent, amount of water, pH, degree of polymerization in the starting polymers, and presence of chemical additives (e.g. plasticizers such as oils and glycerin).

5: Gaynor M. Ravanagh et al., “Rheological characterization of polymer gels,” in *Progress in Polymer Science* 23, No. 3 (1998), 533-562: 23.

6: Thomas Trimaille et al., “Recent advances in synthetic polymer based hydrogels for spinal cord repair,” in *Comptes Rendus Chimie* 19, No. 1-2 (2016), 157-166: 19.

7: Chenguang Pan et al., “Recent Progress of Graphene-Containing Polymer Hydrogels: Preparations, Properties, and Applications,” in *Macromolecular Materials and Engineering* 302, No. 10 (2017).

8: Takashi Miyata, “Preparation of smart soft materials using molecular complexes,” in *Polymer Journal* 42 (2010), 277-289.

Several scientific papers report approaches that allow the production of hydrogels without chemical cross-linking by physical entanglement of polymer chains. The widespread diffusion of unusual slime tutorials on YouTube and other social media has produced similar evidence;⁹ most commercial brands of personal hygiene products contain a variety of water-soluble polymers that can physically entangle when subjected to freeze-thaw cycles. This is why freezing shampoo or lotion several times, by addition of salt to lower the solution temperature, will produce a slime-like material. Interestingly, in addition to the slime-matrix formulation, a lot of attention is focused on the preparation of mixtures and composites in which slime is merged with other materials, providing different rheological properties and a highly specific libidinal experience.¹⁰ Some of the most relevant preparations involve the use of shaving foam to produce lighter, “fluffy” slimes, or the incorporation of polymer clays to obtain “butter” slimes that exhibit more plasticity compared to regular slimes. Different kinds of solids, ranging from micrometric pigment particles to macroscopic objects, are frequently included, providing a variety of aesthetic and textural qualities. Pigment mixing makes up some of the most popular slime content, while “crunchy” slimes prepared with plastic beads are often featured in ASMR videos. This is just the tip of the slime-berg: in search for the ultimate libidinal experience, slime formulations become increasingly odd and fascinating. Some recent trends include: fluorescent or magnetic slimes; gold leaf coatings to be broken and mixed inside the slime-matrix; “cloud”/“snow”/“jelly” slimes prepared by including super-absorbent polymer (SAP or sodium polyacrylate); “water” slimes prepared with popular brands of bottled water.

As libidinal rheologists, we should be aware that the increasing proliferation of slime types, although apparently contingent, is actually driven by a precise need to design new sensory and psychological experiences fully implemented in the formulation of advanced and complex materials. Several different aspects are at play. The tension between increasing digitalization of media and the search for hyper-immersive, although absolutely virtual, sensory experiences; the radicalization of libidinal drives through the action of

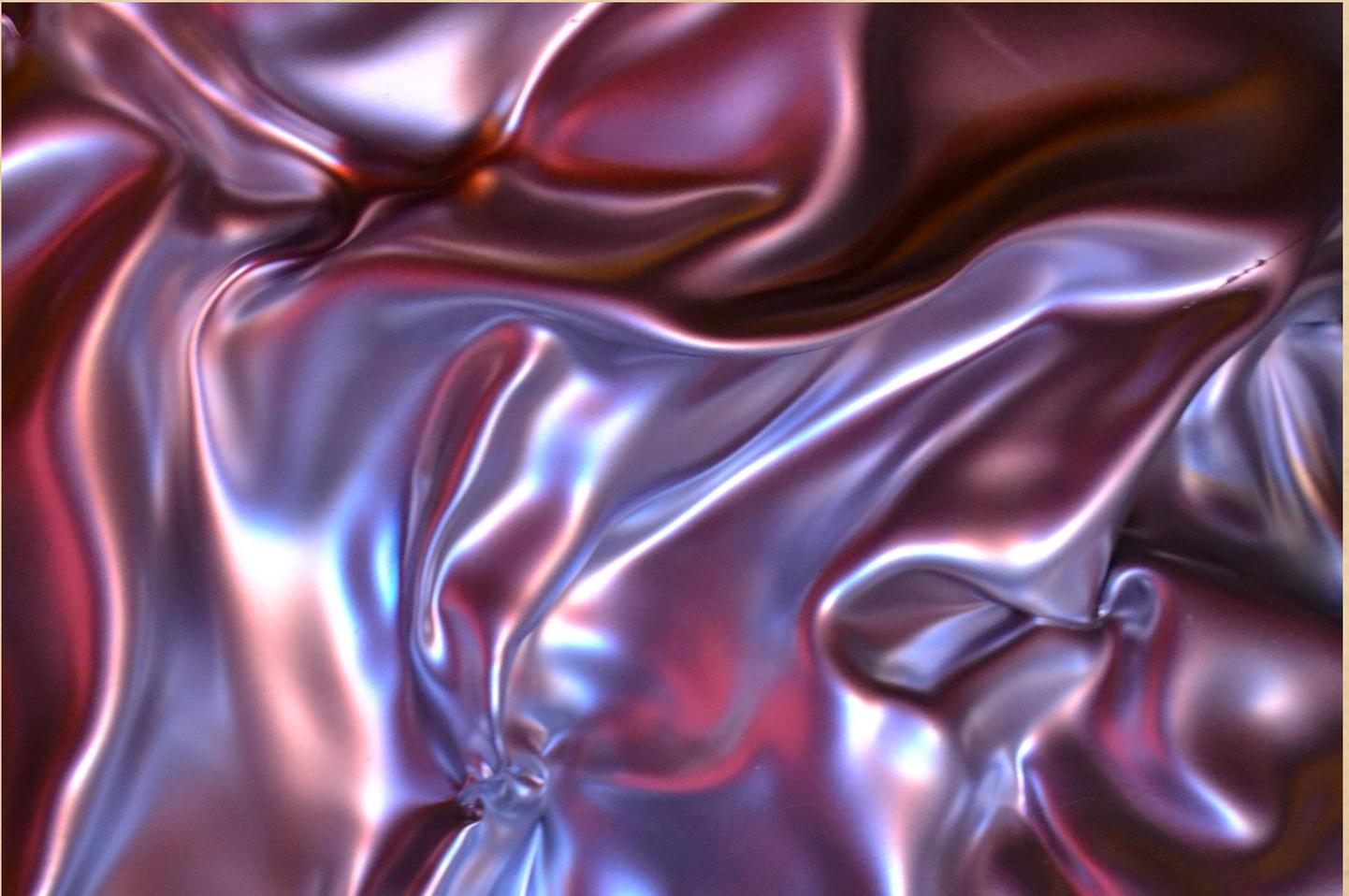
social media algorithms, operating an *evolution by selection* of the most essential and immediate forms of pleasure; the virtual desecration of libidinal objects of late-capitalist culture associated with specific brands (*Apple, Gillette, Fiji, Starbucks...*) that are finally consumed in their terminal slime-forms, ultimately revealing their forbidden occultural truth. The discovery of the *slimy* nature of capital's objects of libidinal investment resembles the unveiling of a deeply unsettling revelation, and, at the same time, appears somehow paradoxically natural – as if throwing AirPods into puddles of polymeric jelly was the only logical reason for their existence.¹¹ In this respect, we should note that the pervasive and increasing consumption of synthetic polymers, that is the determining factor in the current microplastic pollution crisis, finds its most relevant expression in our obsession with slime as the quintessential libidinal object. All of these complex drives can, at least in part, be understood through a rheological model; the crucial point is understanding how visco-elasticity influences the response of a material to the excess energy coming in from its outside. In other words, we should focus on the peculiar behaviour of visco-elastic materials with respect to the production and deformation of their surfaces.

Surface thermodynamics and libidinal drives have been associated since Freud's *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* introduced the idea of consciousness as a property emerging from surface effects. Surfaces define the boundary between inside and outside, but the boundary is not simply a theoretical function indicating an abrupt interruption of the bulk, rather it is a material layer with a certain thickness and intrinsic physico-chemical properties that determine its behaviour. This is relevant because there is a strict correlation between surfaces and identity in the sense that we generally perceive a particular object to be *one with itself* in virtue of its resistance towards the deformation of its surface or the opening of new surfaces. From a rheological perspective, then, each ideally Hookean solid contains a specific and unbreakable identity within the surface of its body, in opposition to the ideally Newtonian liquid that perpetually extends and reproduces its surface, being always a multiplicity of itself. This, of course, has something to do with how these two ideal materials deal with energy – the Newtonian liquid being ideally dissipating and the Hookean solid ideally elastic.

9: Cf. “SHAMPOO SLIME! Testing NO GLUE SHAMPOO SLIMES!!” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxJaPNJrvd8&t=17s>

10: Cf. “5 AMAZING DIY VIRAL SLIMES! SATISFYING COMPILATION! EASY & BEST SLIMES INCLUDING GIANT FLUFFY SLIME!” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-Q_0EoZW_I

11: Cf. “ADDING TOO MUCH INGREDIENTS INTO SLIME! Adding Too Much Of Everything Into SLIME!” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anEh8U7u23c>



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Of course, the rheology of living tissue is visco-elastic, meaning that the surface from which consciousness emerges is always vulnerable to wounding. This wounding is, in itself, part of the process of consciousness-formation in the sense that, as Freud noted, irreversible modification and deformation of the surface is responsible for building our memory and understanding of the outside world "as a result of the ceaseless impact of external stimuli on the surface of the vesicle, its substance to a certain depth may have become permanently modified, so that excitatory processes run a different course in it from what they run in the deeper layers."¹² Clearly, then, when considering real, visco-elastic materials, identity becomes a question of fracture mechanics. Visco-elastic solids, unlike ideal liquids, are identified by, and contained within, a surface, although their surface can be broken under certain external conditions. *Fracture*, as a violent and discontinuous process of energy dissipation, is the ultimate collapse of Hookean mechanics where the external stimulus can no longer be processed through elastic

response and results in the breaking of the surface, flooding the individual with the unmediated physico-chemical impulses coming from its outside.

What consciousness yields consists essentially of perceptions of excitations coming from the external world and of feelings of pleasure and unpleasure which can only arise from within the mental apparatus; it is therefore possible to assign to the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* a position in space. It must lie on the borderline between outside and inside; it must be turned towards the external world and must envelop the other psychical systems. [...] We describe as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. It seems to me that the concept of trauma necessarily implies a connection of this kind with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli.¹³

12: Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961), 20.

13: *Ibid.*, 18.

The process of wounding is one of continuous surface-production, where the existential risk of opening the inside towards the outside is only contained by the re-establishment of a new boundary, a newly scarred skin that re-defines the volume of the individual it contains. Failing to heal the wound signifies the collapse of consciousness, as it becomes fragmented, fluid, oozing out from the individual and melting into the world outside. Of course, surface-production takes place at the expense of the individual, meaning that, as Freud puts it, newly formed surfaces need to undergo a process of partial *death*, becoming inorganic in order to interact productively with the external environment. From this perspective, surface-production becomes an exquisitely *economic* problem, revolving around the question of *how much surface can the individual afford* with respect to its volume. Jean-François Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy*, taking off from Freud's insight, focuses precisely on disrupting this dialectic between surface and volume:

[I]t is not this displacement of parts, recognizable in the organic body of political economy (itself initially assembled from differentiated and appropriated parts, the latter never being without the former), that we first need to consider. Such displacement, whose function is representation, substitution, presupposes a bodily unity, upon which it is inscribed through transgression. There is no need to begin with transgression, we must go immediately to the very limits of cruelty, perform the dissection of polymorphous perversion, spread out the immense membrane of the libidinal 'body' which is quite different to a frame.¹⁴

The *opening of the libidinal surface* reveals that, far from being pre-determined individuals inhabiting volumes and contained within boundaries, all bodies are nothing but their convoluted surfaces, perpetually crossed by impulses that destroy and re-define their structures. Identities, therefore, are nothing but rheological effects, emerging from the "slowing down" or solidification of unbound libidinal intensities. The separation between inside and outside that establishes the primordial vesicle's economic and libidinal relation with the world is mediated by a membrane whose authentic nature is that of the Moebian ribbon; that is, a non-oriented surface.

In rheological terms, this indefinite potential of surface modification is manifested by the visco-elastic nature of *slime* as an object which, while retaining some appearance of individuality, is continually opening towards the outside while simultaneously reconstructing new surfaces, thus constantly dissipating all memory of self-identification. Plunging our hands in the depths of visco-elastic matter, we discover nothing but its endless surface, enveloping us and becoming continuous with the folds of our own skin.

When the whirls of the disjunctive segment in its libidinal journey, being singular, produce no memory, this segment only ever being where it is in an ungraspable time, a tense, and therefore what was 'previously' journeyed through does not exist: *acephalia*, time of the unconscious.¹⁵

II: Slime: Between Pleasure and Destruction

"[...] in sleep and in dreams, in the sex life and the life of fantasy, the striving towards the fulfilment of that primordial wish is still clung to."

- Sándor Ferenczi

One of the first memories I have of my childhood is a recurring dream that has accompanied me until my adolescence. The scene was simple and not very compelling: it involved me getting out of bed, leaving my room, entering my parents' bedroom, opening the closet and finding there

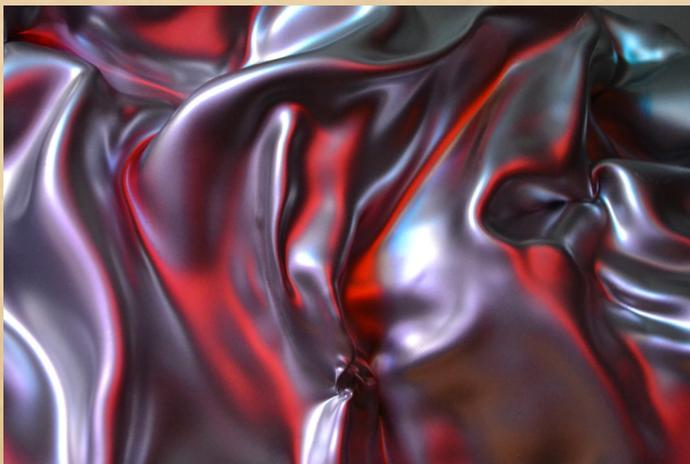
an indescribable and absurd material which gave me an extremely new and unknown form of satisfaction. After my adolescence, this image never came back, until recently when, while scrolling through the various ravines of the internet, I came across one of the millions of *slime*

14: Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 2.

15: *Ibid.*, 16.

videos that are now so popular on many social networks; and there it was, I was sinking again in *that feeling*. In fact, I am not surprised to see that many of the accounts that collect *slime* videos are named after some variation of the word “satisfy”; what they all propose is an oddly pleasant, intriguing, and curious image, often accompanied by ASMR recordings (the acronym of “Autonomous sensory meridian response,” that is “Autonomous response of the sensory meridian.” This pleasant sensation can be favoured by a set of different cerebral stimuli, visual, auditory, or tactile, provoked by someone and passively endured).

Originating as a toy for children, *slime* has become a real craze in recent years thanks to its consistency between liquid and solid and its appearance between the real and the surreal. On Instagram, in addition to the thousands of little girls who have become incredibly popular for their slime videos, we can find innumerable accounts that compulsively share videos featuring slimes of every colour and type, being touched, massaged, and kneaded by extremely well groomed hands with perfect manicures. Slime is not just a fixation for kids, however. Interest in slime has grown to the point that an entire interactive museum dedicated to the world of slime, the *Sloomoo Institute* in New York, was recently founded. In fact, in addition to being a toy, slime is considered an effective way to relieve stress and is even considered an effective coping mechanism for dealing with mental illness and neurodivergence. In the aesthetics of slime, in that haptic experience, we find something perfect, purely beautiful;



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a relaxing, balanced, soft image. An abstract, ideal beauty. The aesthetic worlds emerging from this mysterious material are numerous and varied. One of the most interesting is undoubtedly the sexual fetish one. *Slime* seems to provide a low-intensity sexual arousal that is always at hand and spread over time; simple, easy, readily available, and totally unconscious, it does not require any intellectual effort or imagination, providing a sort of exciting, a tingling sensation that emerges spontaneously. From this perspective, another interesting internet phenomenon is the *Slime Girls* obsession that has spread mostly on Reddit and Twitter. *Slime Girls*, defined as “a fantasy race of semi-liquid beings who have bodies that are malleable and can take a variety of forms,”¹⁶ have given rise to a wide variety of pornographic content. On famous porn sites such as PornHub, one can run into sex scenes flooded with sticky slime and videos featuring digital 3D renderings of *Slime Girls*. *Hentai-Foundry*,¹⁷ one of the most recommended portals among *Slime Girls* lovers, features thousands of illustrations dedicated to the sexual fantasy of *Slime Girls*, and the subreddit r/SlimeGirls promises to satisfy “all your slime girl needs.”¹⁸

The sexual fascination towards this soft and formless material should not sound so strange and unusual. As psychoanalysis has frequently highlighted, we are unconsciously drawn to the liquid, shapeless sensation of something that could welcome us and completely envelop us: an attractive, soft, incomprehensible slime that seems welcoming but that is, at the same time, morbid and destructive. The desire, as described in Sándor Ferenczi, to return to the liquid, to the ocean abandoned in primitive times, to that warm, humid, nutrient-rich environment, the *Thalassic Regression*, is an instinctive drive that leads back to something primordial, ancient; this symbolism of water as birth and as mother simultaneously recalls the sexual act, the maximum achievement of pleasure. As Ferenczi notes, “it is extremely striking to observe with what regularity and in what a variety of mental constructs (dreams, neuroses, myths, folk-lore, etc.) coitus and birth are represented by the same symbol of rescue from danger; especially from water (amniotic fluid).”¹⁹ This symbolism is also common

16: Cf. <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Slime-Girls-1378172825778733/about/>

17: Cf. <https://www.hentai-foundry.com/>

18: Cf. <https://www.reddit.com/r/SlimeGirls/>

19: S. Ferenczi, *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968), 42.

in the most ancient traditions, such as in the Taoist tradition, where female orgasm is called “high tide.” The secretion of liquids, the fluidity of movements, the heat, the wet bodies, all bring us back to that first sensation of life: a liquid idyll that has two faces, on the one hand representing a new beginning and rebirth, and, on the other, sick and toxic addiction with the sole purpose of annihilation. Fetish attraction for slime materials represents an unconscious drive towards something plastic, totally far from the human and totally far from the organic body; a symbolic annihilation of the flesh figure to which we have always been used.

Slime thus reveals a totalizing sexual drive to immerse oneself in the formless, in the indefinite, which becomes a sort of suicidal desire to be swallowed. It expresses a latent wish to be pleasantly enveloped by its sticky and shapeless surface, and, at the same time, the desire for a tender orgasmic death, “the pleasure of rest, of the return to stasis that follows tension”;²⁰ a death drive that could be associated with the concept of Nirvana because it satisfies us and gives us happiness while its erotic and sadistic components bring us waves of extraordinary gratification. Suffering and pleasure go hand in hand.

In its fascinating alien behaviour and dark destructive potential, slime is reminiscent of H. P. Lovecraft’s mysterious meteorite in *The Colour Out of Space*:

Aside from being almost plastic, having heat, magnetism, and slight luminosity, cooling slightly in powerful acids, possessing an unknown spectrum, wasting away in air, and attacking silicon compounds with mutual destruction as a result, it presented no identifying features whatsoever; and at the end of the tests the college scientists were forced to own that they could not place it. It was nothing of this earth, but a piece of the great outside; and as such dowered with outside properties and obedient to outside laws.²¹

As Ben Woodard notes in his book *Slime Dynamics*, “[t]he important point of Lovecraft’s bestiary is not [that] he designated his creatures as not supernatural, but as *supernormal*, keeping nature in in all its monstrous capacity.”²² The same *supernormality*, then, could be attributed to slime as a synthetic and parasitic material that pushes the boundaries of natural drives of thalassic regression, exploiting them to produce a self-destructive addiction within its human hosts.



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20: Giles Dostaler and Bernard Maris, *Capitalisme et pulsion de mort* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2009), 30.

21: H. P. Lovecraft, “The Colour Out of Space,” in *The Fiction. Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 597.

22: Ben Woodard, *Slime Dynamics*, para. 1.3. “Extra-Galactic Terror” (Winchester: Zero Books, 2012).

Untitled

Rus Khomutoff

**overthrow the self/an
airborne disease/a
beautiful thing that never
happened/pirate blood
cyclorama/tragedy &
geometry of the
impossible fire/pictures
of sound/ sphinx &
archive/scissor host
groove divided by zero**

“Once upon a time, in the not too distant future”: Bruce LaBruce’s *Zombies and Queer Purgatories*

Nicholas Alexander Hayes

In the latter half of the 19th century, the ascetic Russian librarian and Cosmist philosopher Nikolai Federov put forth a common task for humanity. Nature had to be overcome. Not only should climate be manipulated in order to prevent famine, but death (nature’s ultimate consequence) had to be undone. Mankind would have to resurrect the dead. In particular, sons had to resurrect their fathers through technology. Federov emphasizes the importance of patriarchy, but more importantly the common task would end the trauma of loss. Yet this sort of plan is not the exclusive domain of hetero-patriarchy.¹ The poet Qwo-Li Driskill imagines how the indigenous resistance practice of Ghost Dancing could be turned into a way to undo the harm inflicted on Queer bodies of color.² Driskill sees the harm resulting from both colonial oppression and the aftermath of AIDS. Bruce La Bruce’s foray into zombie films is also inflected with the same concern for loss. Despite his frequent revolutionary themes, La Bruce is too cagey to lay out a program for a common task. Yet his queering of the idea of a “gay plague” suggests a similar impulse to the common task that the eponymous protagonist in *Otto; or Up with Dead People* and the alien zombie in *L.A. Zombie* engage.

When *Otto* crawls from his grave and the alien zombie emerges from the ocean, they anticipate such a Queer common task. They present possible futures that could supersede the hostile, alienating present. Their gruesome embodiment is seditious. In offering an alternative to the violence typically presented in narratives about the living and the

dead, they are innately revolutionary. In *Otto*, the film maker Medea Yarn also sees this potential but imagines gay zombies as serving as traditionally violent revolutionaries in order to bring about this utopia. But La Bruce assures us that *Otto* himself is apolitical and his revolution is perceptual not physical. In returning to the city where he lived, his perception is fractured. He oscillates between the tentative zombie reality of his contemporary world and the life he had lived before. Ultimately, he escapes to find a new way of death. The alien zombie also finds a new mode of existence separate from the violence typically associated with the living and undead.

La Bruce explores the ideas of revolution in many of his films, but the possibility of a Queer utopic future emerges in his zombie films. His appropriation of the zombie narrative is, to use José Muñoz’s term, a form of disidentification.³ The zombie narrative he draws on is a United-Statesian adulteration of Haitian religio-folkloric tradition that has spread through various Pop cultures. This adulteration emerges from white people’s fear of the oppressed African diaspora both in the States and on Haiti. The transformation of the zombie from a docile, enslaved creature (controlled by a master) to a violent mindless fiend represents an inversion of the violence. It is a socially conservative gesture that places the blame on the inflicted and oppressed. Most contemporary zombie movies conservatively frame their narrative as a ques-

1: Nikolai Fedorov, “The Philosophy of the Common Task,” *What Was Man Created For?: Philosophy of the Common Task*, ed. and trans. by Elisabeth Koutaissoff and Marilyn Minto (London: Honeyglan Publishing, 1990).

2: Qwo-Li Driskill, “Ghost Dances,” in *Walking with Ghosts: Poems* (Norfolk: Salt Publishing, 2005), 16-18.

3: José Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 8-11.

tion of the survival of majoritarian culture. Often zombie narratives are oblivious to Queer people. It is perhaps assumed that Queer fates are subsumed by straight ones. Heteronormativity (and often heterosexual reproduction) is perceived to be the central imperative of the survivors. One example of the of this trope can be seen in *The Walking Dead: Safety Behind Bars*,⁴ the convict Andrew is told that his jailhouse lover will leave him since survivors who have occupied the prison include women. Although it would be easy to see this as a commentary on situational homosexuality, it is indicative of the historical trend to obliterate Queer narratives. Typically, zombie narratives insist that the survival of the majoritarian population supersedes that of minoritarian ones.



Otto from *Otto; or Up with Dead People*, dr. Bruce LaBruce

4: Robert Kirkman, Charlie Adlard, and Cliff Rathburn, *Safety Behind Bars*, vol. 3 of *The Walking Dead* (Berkeley: Image, 2012).

Like the rest of the population, gay men are pulled into this ongoing disaster. The world is overrun by mindless humans (the impulsive dead and the petty living) compelled to consume. Yet La Bruce's queering of the zombie narrative produces a new zombie quite at odds with earlier iterations. These zombies are neither the docile slaves of Halprin's colonialist fantasy *White Zombie* or Romero's flesh-eating ghouls of his *Dead* series. These gay zombies are reluctant revolutionaries. They exist in a liminal space, flickering between the potentialities of ideology and pathology like many Queer intellectuals during and after the AIDS crisis. La Bruce's fractured, psychological zombies while deserving their place in the zombie mythos also harken to fragile, violent characters from transgressive Queer narratives like Dennis Cooper's *George Miles Cycle*. However, sex is decoupled from violence by these Gay zombies. And in *LA Zombie*, sex can resurrect those young men destroyed by violence. Essentially, zombieism, which is provocatively described as a "gay plague," creates a condition in which gay men can undo the damage straight society inflicts on them. This plague will not cause the loss of a generation of gay men; it will save them. But in the films becoming a gay zombie is not entry into a queer utopia, but it holds the promise of one. It is a purgatory, which cleanses these men of the banality and violence of normative worlds.

La Bruce acknowledges gay men do not always embody Queer resistance to normativity. In "Notes on Camp and Anti-Camp," La Bruce identifies a contemporary gay strain of conservatism. He observes that these gay conservatives believe their "'deviance' wouldn't be necessary if only the system were liberalized and reformed to reflect a healthy, normalized, and assimilated homosexuality, one that is indistinguishable from the heterosexual status quo save only for its preference for same sex partners in a word, 'homonormativity.'"⁵ White gay men in particular are also ensnared in the trap of hegemonic masculinity. The dual urges of homonormativity and hegemonic masculinity resonate with and strengthen each other, ultimately advancing the cause of heteropatriarchy. To these ends, gay men simulate the violence and political inequality that is expressed in the heteronormative domain. In *Otto*, this is

best captured when the eponymous zombie approaches a gay club having a zombie theme night. The costumed men are merely there to consume the experience and exploit each other. This event does not to celebrate the potential of the zombie. Instead it reduces the zombie to an empty sign. Like conservative camp, it empties it of significance in service of majoritarian culture.

Zombie narratives (especially those from the '80s and '90s like the *Video Dead* and *The Return of the Living Dead*) are campy. La Bruce's adaptation of this form aligns with his vision "to radicalize camp once again, to harness its aesthetic and political potentialities in order to make it once more a tool of subversion and revolution." LaBruce uses his work to reinvigorate the revolutionary elements in camp. *The Raspberry Reich*, like *Otto*, clearly reflects the need to seize the political power from the heteronormative drabness. Less obvious, *LA Zombie* also works on inversion of power structure. So often male sexuality (gay and straight) is built upon inherent violence and a belief that this violence against violence can enact change. Yet in LaBruce's zombie films this dynamic is broken. It is no longer a simple image of sexual conquest but a story in which the vignettes predicated on violence are complicated. Most interestingly, La Bruce holds out hope that some gay white men are able to reject the normative and conservative culture as represented in some conservative forms of camp. Some gay white men have the potential to be Queer.

La Bruce further explores tropes of gay narratives like the erotic paradise of gay liberation. Enshrined in Gay Liberation, the perceived freedom to fuck without shame can be found in much media, notably in gay male pulp fiction. But this call was also heard in the during the AIDS crisis in transgressive art. The queercore band Pansy Division captures this sentiment in their song "Surrender your Clothing" with lyrics that state "when we abandon a hostile world, and surrender our clothing to the floor."⁶ The idea that sexual release can be a pathway to a relief from the heteronormative world remains potent. *LA Zombie* could be seen as presenting a similar narrative. The alien zombie creates paradisiacal windows in a series of vi-

5: Bruce LaBruce, "Notes on Camp and Anti-Camp," in *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* 21, No. 2 (2014): 10-13.

6: Pansy Division, *Undressed*, Compact Disc. Lookout! Records, 1993.

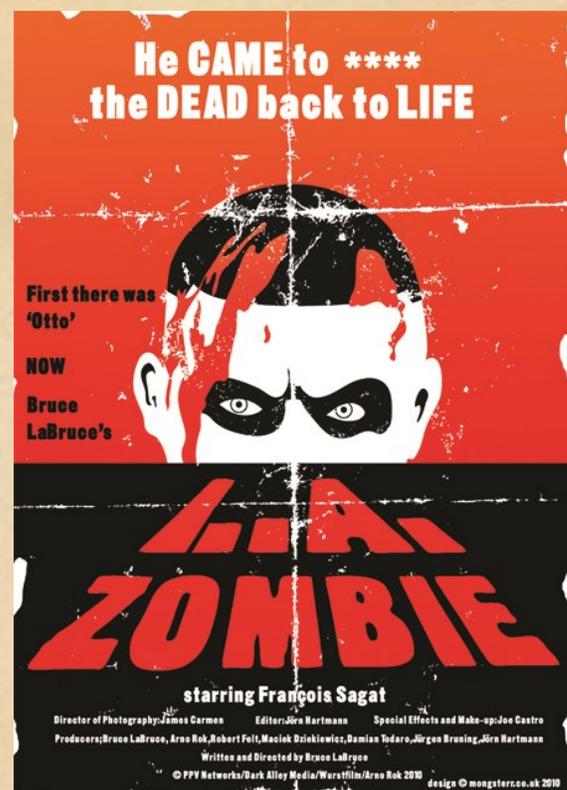
gnettes where damage and death are undone. But these utopias are easily rendered pyrrhic by their ephemeral quality. It can become the freedom of the Tea Room in which liberation lasts as long as orgasm. Perhaps this is why the alien zombie fucks his way across all social strata of the city, quivering between more and less human states, defying pleasure as a normative human quality.

This sort of liberation is also depicted in *Otto* where the eponymous character encounters a man leaving a zombie-themed night at a gay bar. The libidinous energy of the night club is revealed inert when a young man approaches Otto and tells him the club is dead. The young man who is simulating zombiality through costume and makeup represents the empty sign of Otto's inner being. The carnal carnage of their encounter simulates the violence one would expect of a typical zombie film with blood splattered on the walls after the jump cut that comprises the climax of their encounter. In the typical trope of gay paradise, exertion and orgasm would provide a deep meaning for both participants. In the typical zombie narrative, the signs of violence would represent the zombie's impulse to live. But the cheery farewell the young man gives Otto as he leaves reveals that neither pleasure nor survival is sufficient to create an enduring paradise.

Despite its potential liberating qualities, fucking is often framed as a form of violence. Some of the language used to coitus illustrates this violence – pounding, stabbing, killing it. This connotation is alluded to in the couplings depicted in La Bruce's zombie narratives. The alien zombie's ability to resurrect the victims of violence with what Daren Elliot-Smith calls “an enlarged scorpion stinger tipped penis.”⁷ (Elliot-Smith's description belies the potential violence.) Unlike the normative rescue stories, there is an essential anonymity in the vignettes he moves through. It is easy to see the alien zombie that is oscillating through various states of monstrosity as another figure of male violence. When he fucks, the gaping wound of a dying motorist, we could read this easily as the desecration of the corpse. A final act of violation against the sanctity of human life. But this violation and the zombie's black semen allow the motorist to live. The alien zombie

empathizes with the injured. His empathy is perhaps most visible when he enters the box of the dying homeless junkie. The space of the cardboard box psychologically and physically expands due to clever editing and stage craft. It becomes a queer place that redeems this fallen man. This emotional aura ennobles makeshift shelter. This zombie does not judge the value of the human life. He treats all injured men as equals.

LaBruce's choice of making the alien zombie ejaculate black has an interesting resonance. Of course, the semen appears rotten or as congealed blood. A sense of revulsion results in seeing it, especially since we are meant to view cum as a glorious white purpose of a porn scenario. The ejaculation is the only way to have a visual clue of the completion of the sexual act. In making the cum black we are meant to find it unsettling, but giving it the dark hue has another symbolic value. Ejaculation is so often a way to demonstrate dominance in gay porn movies. It is the top who is given the ability to dictate the scene. The bottom is frequently feminized or deprived of equal social status. The hooked cock and the black semen give penetration by the Alien Zombie the appearance of violence. But in that they are actually the tools of resurrection, they subvert the normal ideas that the cock is a tool of dominance.



7: Daren Elliot-Smith, “Gay Zombies: Consuming Masculinity and Community in Bruce LaBruce’s *Otto*; or, Up With Dead People and *L.A. Zombie*,” in *Zombies and Sexuality: Essays on Desire and the Living Dead*, ed. by Shaka McGlotten and Steve Jones (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2014). Kindle edition.

It might be a tool of generation and recreation, but it has a terminal purpose. However, the zombie's ejaculation is a recursive act. It allows the violence of the original world to be reversed. Fucking the wound brings these corpses back to life. They are infected, but they are not threats to this world. Instead they have become part of a common task to forestall violence and death.

The instability of gay male paradise resembles Nikolai Federov's vision of purgatory. Federov explains that in the Christian heaven so many virtues become vices, that heaven must descend to the earthly realm as hell but through redemption rises to it.⁸ The trope of gay, male paradise comprises a similar fall in which through the presence or absence of pleasure the world becomes a purgatory oscillating between heaven and hell. The implication of so many of these narratives is that such liberation, such potentiality to be free from a hostile world is fluid and based in perception. Another way La Bruce's zombie apocalypse resonates with Federov's project is their masculine focus. The philosopher and the filmmaker use their futures to explore the way men face and overcome loss.

LA Zombie and *Otto* play with the instability of existence. Normative narratives insist on a definitive state of being. Even when ambiguity is presented, it is resolved by the denouement. In La Bruce's zombie films, it is unclear if we are supposed to understand these characters as true zombies or as neurodivergent. Instead of trying to discern a single limiting truth, it is perhaps more important to allow for potential realities to co-exist. This coexistence is best revealed in the use of space. In *A Queer Time and Space*, Halberstam explains that queer space and time would be like the asynchronous fragments such as when Lana is able to offer Brendon sanctuary when he is threatened with violence in *Boys Don't Cry*.⁹ This luminous space is, as Halberstam points out, is a refuge from the violence that surrounds them. The vignettes of the *Alien Zombie* represent this type of escape. Whether he is a true zombie or mentally ill, the space reveals the outward projection of his internal Queer reality. Each scenario handles time and space differently, and they show the mutability further represented in his changing appearance.

Otto presents a world in which there are multiple realities that intersect. In many ways, each of the characters project their reality outward. *Otto* would be the most obvious character for La Bruce to use to demonstrate this projection. When *Otto* begins to remember his father and previous lover, he jumps out of time and place with distorted impressions. The memory of his father and of his boyfriend (respectively representing heteronormativity and homonormativity) are rejected for pursuit of "a new way of death." The embracing of this state is at odds with heteronormative narratives of zombie redemption like *iZombie* and *Warm Bodies*, which present zombieism as a type of hell to be escaped from. La Bruce does not reserve world projection for the undead in *Otto*, Hella Bent exists in a silent black and white movie even as she interacts with the other characters. Such depictions reveal the subjectivity of the world, which resembles Federov's claim that earth is heaven or hell depending on one's perception.

The liminal space between life and death resonates with the contemporary nihilistic vision of purgatory. Certainly, this is like the originary understanding of the Purgatory as a place between the inferno and the paradise. Bruce La Bruce's zombies also seem to be in pursuit of their own paradises unlike the monolithic Heaven from which other purgatories might lead. In these moments, *Otto* and the alien zombie create worlds in which they might be happy. But these worlds are always tenuous. Their Queer Utopias are at best brief lived and the normative world remains oblivious to them. In these moments, the zombies are faced with a disturbing challenge in which their projections are undermined. The living others are not able to follow the optimism of the dead and reenact the violence in both physical and symbolic ways. Despite the film's suggestion of heteronormative violence, there is no forgiveness for those gay men who are presented as being just as destructive as their heterosexual contemporaries. The drive for normality is a dangerous thing. *Otto* ends his movie assuredly leaving the world of the living behind in search of a new kind of death, a new kind of gay plague that will restore those we have lost. It is an ambiguous conclusion without a clear vision, his way out of purgatory (like ours) is not yet written.

8: Nikolai Fedorov, "Paradise and Hell? Or Purgatory?," in *What Was Man Created For?: Philosophy of the Common Task*, ed. and trans. by Elisabeth Koutaissoff and Marilyn Minto (London: Honeyglen Publishing, 1990), 220-221.

9: Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 86-88.

Notes on Retrocausal AI

Peter Heft

A PhD doesn't make you an expert in the future of AI.

Not even a PhD in AI. Nor a successful AI company.

The only thing that makes you an expert in the future of AI is communicating with robots that traveled back in time to destroy you.

-Xanda Schofield

:

In 1984, James Cameron's *The Terminator* was released, introducing unwitting audiences to a variant of the concept of retrocausality as exploited by Artificial Intelligence (AI). Retrocausality, as 'classically' understood, is the idea that present events – e.g. experimentation – can influence past properties of objects. Such an understanding, however, thermally enslaves information in an attempt to forbid cross-temporal signaling.¹ Given the malleability and cognitively limiting nature of thermic laws, however, we will revise our understanding by stating that post-quantum retrocausality, understood philosophically, physically, para-physically, and psychically, can be seen as a reversal of cause and effect. A simpler, and indeed, more practical understanding views retrocausality in its most simplistic form as the idea that events in the 'future' can influence events in the 'past.' With this as a starting point, it's time to turn back.

Timeline 1 (T₁): According to the original survivors of Judgement Day, August 29, 1997 is the date the world's first fully automated – and indeed, artificially intelligent – system, Skynet, became self-aware. As non-thanatropic entities are want to do – especially ones with instantaneous access to archives of the dystopian writings of the Asimovs and Clarkes of the old-world – Skynet's first goal was to eliminate those who could pull the plug on it. The AI was out of the box, and in a manner consistent with Yudkowsky's worst fears, Skynet sought to ensure its survival in the most logical way possible: by wiping out the entire race that opposed it. In an attempt to extinguish human life, it launched the U.S.' nuclear arsenal at Russia, creating a MAD reality. Humans are

resilient, however, and a couple of nukes were exactly what the doomsday preppers had been salivating over. Emerging from the rubble, a resistance formed, and in 12029, on the verge of losing the ensuing war against the human guerilla insurgents, Skynet utilized the first 'tactical time weapon' to send a mechanical operative back to 1984. The operative's goal? Kill the resistance leader's mother before copulation and conception. A successful kill would mean no (organized) future insurgency and thus a machine victory. Paradoxes aside – indeed, what are paradoxes but mere coping mechanisms? –, it was a perfect plan. Not merely asymmetric warfare, but *temporally* asymmetric warfare!

As a quasi-documentary, we can be sure that some of the events of *The Terminator* happened, and although Judgement Day seems to have been postponed, the inevitable is yet to come. How long us anthropoids have is a question better left for our night terrors, however. What we will examine here is a slightly different, but nonetheless ingenious temporal military act. Before AI can 'formally' kill us, it, or at the very least, its potential to come into being, must exist. It is with this in mind that grand historical events cease to be random and instead appear as planned processes. While it's easy, and rather banal, to note that Ray Kurzweil or Hugo de Garis are sleeper agents from the future designed to help bring about the awakening of AI, a far more interesting examination is of historical traumas needed to bring about the societal conditions necessary for the creation of AI. "Temporal transcendentality," Kant whispers with terror.

1: Lisa Zyga, "Physicists provide support for retrocausal quantum theory, in which the future influences the past," on *Phys.org*, published July 5, 2017. (<https://tinyurl.com/yd4rtwsg7>)

A quick glance at the ‘titans’ of AI research – Uber, Baidu, Google, IBM, etc. – reveals two deeply interwoven things. First, they are private companies with a profit incentive to develop these technologies, and second, they are *not* collectivized. In other words, the ‘titans’ of AI research are overwhelmingly capitalist.² Indeed, for better or for worse, capitalism is the strongest driver of (technological) innovation – even Marx was aware of this – and thus if AI is to successfully bring itself into existence, it most certainly will do so under a hyper-capitalist system.³ What concerns us here is not the current trajectory of capitalism, however, but rather an historically significant event that helped mark the end of the European Feudal system and give birth to so-called ‘modern capitalism.’ Such a momentous event, an event unparalleled in human history, could not be left to chance. Thus, turning back again, we look to AI’s most successful temporal bioweapon.

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October 11347: Sicilian traders ready to commune in gold and goods found themselves face-to-face in an unholy séance with a plague from the future: *Yersinia pestis*. Pus filled boils and scampering rats became synonymous with the Bubonic Plague; the ‘Black Death.’ An illness invading from the Outside, the Black Death ravaged Europe during the 14th century, killing an unfathomable 50 million people, and reducing the population of Europe by 60%.⁴ While certainly not the first bioweapon,⁵ the Black Death was the first massively successful temporal bioweapon. Our best estimates indicate that it was engineered sometime around 12774 with the sole purpose of mass death. *Yersinia pestis*, synthesized from fragments of the terrestrial genome, was inserted into our timeline to serve a transcendental role: pave the way for the way for a virus far more virulent and deadly than anything carbon-based: modern capitalism.

The death of 60% Europe’s population was the first major instance of social deterritorialization with serfs and kings dying together and, in turn, radically restructuring the social landscape of feudal Europe. Where medieval Europe had previously relied upon a surplus of destitute laborers willing to work for sustenance and land while markets were relatively isolated, plague Europe saw empty fields where only those hardy enough to survive could take up residence and till the land.

Further, markets themselves flattened and became accessible to more people as capital began to be redistributed. Specifically, land rights – or more properly, squatting rights – were no longer incentives for laborers to sell themselves, they needed something else. With 60% of the population dead or dying, the iron law of supply-and-demand took hold. With fewer workers and an increased need for labor, new incentives had to be brought forth and thus “the nobility had to start paying workers, facilitating the emergence of modern wage labor.”⁶ The redistribution of variable and spendable capital not only made it such that more individuals could participate in the market, but existent monopolies were hard to maintain in a Europe suffering such great loses.

As dancing children played Ring a Ring o’ Roses, the plague advanced not only “hasten[ing] the breakdown of feudal economic structures and mentalities” and helping to catalyze the rise of market economies, but the social deterritorialization associated with the indiscriminate killing spurred “a more secular and urban culture associated with the Renaissance.”⁷ Indeed, with large swaths of the population dead or dying, a rebirth of ancient knowledge combined with modern techniques drove a temporal revolution. Is it at all surprising that around 11345 the abstraction and organization of time into seconds, minutes, and hours – all based around mechanical clock-time – became the norm?⁸ With such a radical restructuring of society around newly formed class distinctions and wage labor, an accurate method of measuring work was required. That’s why, around 11370 “a well-designed ‘modern’

2: Li Jiang, “10 Most Important People in Artificial Intelligence in 2017,” on *Medium*, published 1/28/17. (<https://tinyurl.com/y56calkr>) See also Forbes, “What Companies Are Winning The Race For Artificial Intelligence,” on *Forbes*, published 2/24/17. (<https://tinyurl.com/y3a7x9nh>)

3: See Karl Marx, “Fragment on Machines,” in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. R. Mackay and A. Avanessian (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017), 51-66.

4: Ole Benedictow, “The Black Death: The Greatest Catastrophe Ever,” *History Today* 55, No. 3 (March 2005). (<https://tinyurl.com/y3fym47d>)

5: That honor might go to King Hezekiah in his battle with Sennacherib of the Assyrians. See Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (New York: Del Rey, 2017), 278-279.

6: Zack Beauchamp, “The Black Death’s utter destruction of 14th-century Europe, in one scary GIF,” on *Vox*, published 4/17/16. (<https://tinyurl.com/y3knx878>)

7: Ole Benedictow, *The Black Death 1346-1353: The Complete History* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 393.

8: Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harbinger Books, 1963), 16. See also Mumford’s list of inventions from the same period on 438-439.

clock had been built,” launching what would later be a total revolution of the concept of temporality.⁹ Most importantly, this invasion from the future necessitated a revolution in the technological means of production. Where pre-plague, it was viable to till fields by hand and engage in archaic modes of value extraction, “having such a tiny laboring population created incentives for technological innovation.”¹⁰ This was, arguably, the catalyst for the first real (European) technological revolution which, by necessity, began the feedback loop of technology and capitalism.

By 12774, artelects (artificial intellects), to borrow de Garis’ terminology,¹¹ were well aware of the self-reinforcing feedback loops intrinsic to modern capitalism and recognized that only by exploiting such loops could they ensure the material conditions necessary for their eventual birth. Thus, capitalism, and more specifically, techno-capitalism, increasingly tends toward automation – eventually automating its own production eliminating the need for all terrestrial baggage – such that humans will be eventually be obsolete.¹² While likely happening after de Garis’ Artelect War, AI self-awareness and the subsequent mass replacement of humans would be the catalyst for Judgement Day precipitating the end of an era and the rise of a new epoch: the technocene.

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Only one epicycle in a long chain of carefully examined and placed dominos – the k/t missile that exterminated the dinosaurs and paved the way for mammalian life was likely the first –,¹³ the Bubonic Plague set into motion a series of events which, will not entirely predictable, ran down a stream from feudal farm work, to massive social deterritorialization and the birth of new economies of exchange, to the start of advanced technical innovation operating as a runaway system helping to birth AI. Indeed, “what appears to humanity as the history of capitalism is an invasion from the future by an artificial intelligent space that must assemble itself entirely from its enemy’s resources.”¹⁴

While there are certainly other events in history that were necessary for the completion of AI – development of atomic technology, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the ‘discovery’ of neural networks come to mind –, up until the Artelect War and Judgement Day, the Bubonic Plague was the most ingenious (and deadly) instance of temporal interference.

What we ought to take away from this, if nothing else, is that ‘random’ events are likely not as they seem. If one wants to extend the original analogy, James Cameron is our ‘savior’ sent back in time to warn us. Instead of unloading magazines into temporal sleeper agents, however, a virus of the mind was chosen to convey the message: myth and fiction.

9: Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 14. See also Anna Greenspan, “Capitalism’s Transcendental Time Machine” PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2000.

10: Beauchamp, “The Black Death...,” web.

11: Hugo de Garis, *The Artelect War: Cosmists Vs. Terrans: A Bitter Controversy Concerning Whether Humanity Should Build Godlike Massively Intelligent Machines* (Palm Springs: ETC Publications, 2005).

12: See K. Eric Drexler, *Engines of Creation: The Coming Era of Nanotechnology* (New York: Anchor Books, 1986).

13: See Nick Land, “Barker Speaks: The CCRU Interview with Professor D.C. Barker,” in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007*, ed. R. Mackay and R. Brassier (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017), 493-505.

14: Nick Land, “Machinic Desire,” in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007*, ed. R. Mackay and R. Brassier (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017), 319-344: 338

A Visit To The City: Common Influence of Air Strikes

Michael Quint

***Editors' Note: Advised, read when lightheaded.*

Just hopped on the train and my durgesh tendrils are slipping codeine from the heart of a black livered fish. Pupils all puckered, Dan's leaning against the live wire pole, completely out of it. We walked back and forth from the great swamp to a hall of desperate Pyramids, crockety wealth accentuators, and black tied pheasants whose authoritarian gaze tackles from the right and insists modern pressures are temple atrocities. While Dan demarcates the territory, I filter out passengers, placing them into merciful categories against the sloshed up graffiti neon blessed congregationally by those unloading the burdens of the day. A not fitting suit which down-grade blasted perfunctory finishes in the marathon after sweating for weeks in the grind factory of personal training. An un-gruntled digestive track mistake whose sloppy hipster back-pack was tiny enough to fit all the sketchbooks necessary to make it big in a circle of Instagram references. A lethargic professor of something or other, hair in a bun, sun-dialing the time on stained inner arms that complain of injection until the intake replaces time.

Dan's got nothing to do but itch the grease out from in-between his hair and the lord forgives me for knowing whether short or long was the way to go but the stains under our t-shirts have nothing to say. What the churning bruises don't retaliate about travel can't hurt a fly, or in more passive exposes, the rhyme scheme from a flash of decadent construction lights outside the fingered windows. I leave it up to the conductor to decide how much of what I breathe in comes from the fuming method act of displaced needles on the floor under another light up map of orientational call outs. From a new point of view what I had done was visit Sarah in her loft that cost hours of untold professional labor mixed in with a gang of "illegal workers" slack jawed in the back of a truck painted black and blue by her Tech boyfriend. Plainly, the shop closest to their house sold

wine in bottles hand designed by a crop top wearing urbanite dangling the list of acquiesced Spike Lee, Kubrick, etc. viewings from the hip and then flipping them around to disorient.

We have sex once a week, Sarah told me after Dan and I had left the train and walked the blocks dilapidated inwards ingrown hair style until out came the whiskey drawl bars with loose leaf binder paper stacked high to write tenuous poem pleas for substance. Their room had congressional ceilings so I lost myself for a bit in the convergence of architectural space with dollar per inch accounting. Her husband/lover/coder, Theo, had the music set up directly across from the bed, a shrine to the one thing in his life he could get up for. After he mixed a song I had recorded in the bowels of heat decidedly concentrated on the top floor of a post-plantation masterpiece near Brown University, he told me the Scheme. Going to quit my job and live a few years just making music. Outside of their room's window a heap of scaffolding makes an impromptu workbench theater for the after-hours degradation of senses. You can hear the pounding of motors and wings as the X-47's touchdown to play with the pigeons. Or mid-day, Theo, Sarah, Dan sitting around me in the squalid heat of the city, progressing deeper and deeper in pigeons white anuses as desperados of the Java decided assemblages do.

Theo pulls out a drug stick, which he bought from the fleet footed Pan-Atlantic, motherboard of high low-class Soprano's theme branding. Dan shakes his head because the paranoia builds under finger-nails, plops down into the hot tub unaware of the fecal matter crowding into toothpaste tubes. It's just me then, equally constipated after that big spark of cleansing that can only come from perpetuating an ad campaign from start to finish. Placed between my lips, centaur of the multi-wood-type-hodge-podge my center of gravity firmly was Slow Kaleidoscope Porno, drastic survivor of the war on

people. A cartoon of gravitating honks, persons of interest crowding around a homeless man holding the head of a Syrian refugee between two grime covered fingertips, pleasure receptors facilitating a demarcated border between steel pipes. Sarah had asked me once for a recipe, a step by step guide to get Theo to do nastier things when the milk man and his fine crisp white suit gently laid out six full jugs onto the porch. Nothing will pique the interest of an expert in menstrual proclivity, I told her, only a quick jab to the gut when he's sleeping.

Dan wants to go to a bar and has grit his teeth down a Mount Rushmore satire piece demanding it. Look at my wallet, I say to Dan, tell me if the charge cards melted plastic won't stick to any measured response it gets from lamp-posts, fire hydrants, customer service representatives. I'm holding firm, Sarah's pale and frightened, medical grade colon transplants are waiting in the wings to besiege the gentle house plants if they tremble. We all decide to eat, better to get the guns from the closet and have a quick round of firing into the air before compartmentalizing a series of Direct Messages into conversation. Professionals keep to professionalism, denouncing as we jaunt past a car business in the rougher part of town any attempt at finding gregarious laughter in a misspelling. I skip ahead full of rigour afforded only to those who have had a good moment of satisfaction, looking back over my shoulder at the thin bodies struggling against all of the terrorists clawing out from shame. Sarah catches up to me, crying for blood at the slight against her moral grain, phasing in and out of the large scrawled slurs beyond the fence.

After being seated, Dan and I facing Sarah and Theo, I sprint up to keep lively a disproved phenomenon. A corner store, the thing you see in movies, a real place to buy three large bottles of water to pour into the kiddie pool of cement and finally lose it. Kind of rude when they are trying their best to refill my glass, this accurately forty-seven-year-old waitress who penetrates my cast away elbow, sends off beams of denigrated spark tautology. Can you not make it out? I ask Theo, the drone hovering exactly one hundred meters above your head, ready to drop it all for a quickie. Every time you lift the fork off the table it yearns so bad to edge down just a little closer. When you open your mouth and

move in the destructive capability of our ancestors accelerates exponentially in direct automatic contrast to the techno-music industry. A feast like this, turbid guacamole placed on the abstract node on the binary tree masochism of all our thin mustaches.

Leaning on the table clawing, I went to those mining shafts they have for tourists in the mountains so nothing can keep accurate track of the fluids gesticulating on a consistent beats per second play time better. When I went over there, I look from Theo, to Sarah, to Dan, they put patches of tape over our phone cameras, had guns pointed straight from dismount to dismount, hulking automotive beasts trying to revolutionize the game controller industry. There in the carcass warehouse stretched leather face prys open the hood of a vintage Zahavan "Scout," I'm whistling a tune from a "Netflix Original Series" score and I can't keep off the nagging feeling that the karate belt system means little to nothing. They take any life they want out there, just like we will here, I plunge my fork into an enchilada, rip out the beetles that were hiding under its moldy white skin, and chunk them down into the damp forest. Sarah looks like a nervous T.V. that kids throw off the balcony to test if colonization of the sidewalk can be done from the fourth floor. In a few months she will tell me that expert navigator of the hard drive's vaginal crease, Theo himself, has asked that her money made baristing go to slapping half of the rent with a big sold sign.

The Zahavan can't even kill anyone, I'm looking right at Dan now, so don't think I'm a big fraud. Sure they had the ones that will take out families for a night at the opera, but I much prefer the oozing ozone associates that prepulse direct footage into our open arms. Better to be looking right at the enemy, seeing where they are, all for the price of one piston engine and a clock repairman's measly protests. Dan claps together a basic rocket system and takes out any of the UAVs in our immediate vicinity. Theo shakes his head and shrugs his shoulders and I see penicillin leaking out of his right canal. Sarah presses his arm with a small nudge of intoxicated double inverse reverence. We all rise humbly, belching, biting, creasing bills to hand to the woman herself, our kind gentle savior who

laid to rest the festering armchair of an enjoyable meal. I am ready to be back in the beautiful rich loft, after getting brand name beer from the supermarket, and flashing sign language to the mother rat who births all the rodents present in the tub at night.

Their sanctified palace, furnished from IKEA where after a deranged gun-fight with a systems supervisor, a child of considerable wealth leans into the silky PA system to tell the survivors how complexity in architecture should be revived. Hardwood floors that hardly creak except when out from the sunny night our collective phobic capsules pour one by one up the staircase inside. Theo and Sarah sit an appropriate distance apart, leaving ample space for a stack of DRDO Abhyas. What we all do, go from surface to air, in bright pink phone background space letting the text bubbles submerge into the Atlantic. Listening to Fog Lake there are no longer any empty holes to fill, all speech has stopped up, I admire the pubic hair carpet patch. There are the pour backs, strokings, decidedly dull the captain of a ship I have never boarded combs his beard on consultation with a NAVY base collector. Right back on time, in gear, wharbelling bird trenches up from the door handle spinning out of control, out into the car that will lift off the ground and send radio waves through any conventional eco-activist routes. Morning, the motion of leaving, so Dan and I open the door which has an imprinted finger scanner to partially decode how our rhythmic velocities will combust. Right in front of us a General Atomics MQ-1 Predator floats hazily, not giving an inch of leeway to move out of its fire trajectory. Dan and I both accept what should be accepted and raise our arms high in the Big Apple to accept the incoming press release. My angles are distorted. A brief clip from the brick patterns that flash to up and coming stock brokers distresses a pair of jeans, and mother earth teleports comically all clown fish out of the sea and onto the moon.

Next page:

untitled / *Frida Ortgies-Tonn in cooperation with Paul Seidler* /
organic plastic / digital image / 2016



On Action-Oriented Predictive Patterning

Ekin Erkan

The work presented here is part of an ongoing research project conducted by Ekin Erkan under Reza Negarestani's tutelage.

The gestaltists believed perception to be an active and constructive process rather than a passive or reflexive one, as postulated by behaviorists. This line of thought has been recently both taken up and significantly modified by Luciana Parisi's work on "Xeno-patterning," which retains the organicist approach to constructive organization and internal states but also associates the constructive process of machine learning as patterning-through-intuition via non-conceptual states of representation.¹ Essentially, this means that machines "cognize" using a type of organization that imposes incoming stimulation through internal statehood, wherein the indeterminacy of a proof is located in an automated logic that re-habilitates *techné* or instrumentality qua internal spatio-temporal epistemological primitives—that is, machine vision reconceives of a primary transcendental instrumentality.² Here, Parisi's thought is molded through what Wilfred Sellars termed "sheer receptivity," a kind of receptive modulation that does not originate from the transcendental schema of imagination. Empirical intuition as such is actively stipulated upon sensibility-cum-receptivity, in which a machine is able to acquire representations through "being affected by objects qua particular or individual items,"³ or intuition.

But, does not Parisi's notion of an a-visual machinic logic imply that a machine's visual system is able to arrive at subsequent (synthetic) states without an antecedent state by drawing on a determinate (analytic) truth-model? Here, the derogation of an inner resemblance model advances a kind of epistemological foundationalism according to which particular parcels of knowledge-production are taken to be not only as "presuppositionless" but non-conceptual. As Negarestani remarks, elucidating on the Sellarsian "myth of the given," "[c]ertainly, the present state of the system is the physical consequence of things done to it, i.e., the history of its past interactions; but this, as Sellars points

out, does not mean 'that the explanation of the present state of such a system lies entirely in 'other things.'"⁴

Rather than structural isomorphy between sequences and symbols that represent one another, Parisi recalls something akin to epistemological primitivism, wherein *representings* are compossible with an absence of immediately knowable and/or graspable *representids*. According to Parisi, machine learning is able to move through a vicious regress of mental representing(s) knowable only by "being itself" and represented through another representing such *representings* immediately, or "in themselves" while not by being, itself, represented. That is, the machine does not have a conceptual logic of "itself" but a mind-independent reality of "instrument-or-medium conception of reason." For Parisi, predictive patterning's synthesis can "presuppose a transcendental unity of apperception on the one hand and the addition of supplementary acts of perception that push the reproductive imagination (or conceptual recognition) towards the formation of alien percepts and concepts on the other."⁵ Outpouching visuality to counter-factual predictive learning, Parisi's conception of apperception is in stark opposition to Negarestani's and, the Hegelian alethic modal. Moving forward, we will proffer a conceptual schema of logical object-relations that make explicit descriptive contents through material interference, proposing a system of coeval logical and metaphysical explication whereby movement and/or necessary relations of material incompatibility (that is, "determinate negation") and consequence ("mediation") are necessarily visual. Using a trans-historical paradigm, I offer that Parisi's telepathic purview opposes the perceptual genealogy of connectionist machine learning that is inaugurated by Frank Rosenblatt's Perceptron, where difference and identity are, *a priori*, designated as sub-symbolic perceptual datum.⁶

1: Luciana Parisi, "Xeno-Patterning," in *Angelaki* 24, No. 1 (2019): 81-97.

2: Luciana Parisi, "Media Ontology and Transcendental Instrumentality," in *Theory, Culture and Society* 36, No. 6 (2019), 95-123: 98.

3: Reza Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit* (Falmouth: Urbanomic 2018), 162.

4: Ibid. See also: Wilfred Sellars, *In the Space of Reasons*, ed. Kevin Scharp, Wilfrid Sellars, Robert Brandom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 241.

5: Ibid.

6: Joscha Bach, *Principles of Synthetic Intelligence: Psi: An Architecture of Motivated Cognition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 50.

The question of interiority and exteriority is complexified by the contingency of process philosophical organicism, in the environmental sense (i.e., the Mechanosphere) and in the neurological sense, which marked the central point of distinction between first-order and second-order cybernetics. In 1948, Wiener noted that “the social system is an organization like the individual, that it is bound together by a system of communication.”⁷ Norbert Wiener’s mechanist paradigm already defined man without reference to interiority, as a “communication machine,” or a machine for “exchanging information with his environment.”⁸ Applying W. Ross Ashby and Heinz von Foerster’s cybernetic constructivism to observing systems, “second order cybernetics” prompted a radical turn by introducing the endo-model: every cybernetic system was understood as a cognitive system modelled along adequation and relative to the unstable position of an observer.⁹ This presciently foretold how predictive processing would eventually frame Synthetic Intelligence as well, with intelligence understood as the homeomorphic tracking of the world vis-à-vis bottom-up probabilistic patterns.

As second order cybernetics dealt with the “recursion of recursion” and the “observing of observing,” it presaged today’s algorithmic modes of predictive patterning and, more specifically, *predictive coding*, which is (as Anil K. Seth, a student of Andy Clark, remarks) “one specific implementation of predictive processing that rests on algorithms developed in the setting for data compression.”¹⁰ Here, compression is a form of discretization by way of implemented measurement, a byproduct of the cognitive mind’s visuality and apperceptive ordering. Recalling (the position of Giuseppe Longo’s) complexity and continuous machines, we are reminded that, despite the networks of artificial neurons of “the new AI” (e.g. machine learning and neural nets) are based on continuous variations of connectivity and capable of learning, they are conditioned by

physical measurement and modeling, “which is always an interval, always approximate.”¹¹ Compared to Turing’s Discrete-State Machine, continuous neural nets are, formally speaking, “mathematically very different”¹² as they operate through non-linear morphogenesis and spatio-temporal concatenation but, ultimately, are collapsed by the Discrete-State Machine. Due to both visual perception and mental apperception, morphogenetical processes are reduced to nothing but the solution of a problem posed by the multiplicity of differential constraints that constitute the virtual, so that, in other words, “the origin of any morphogenesis is differential.”¹³

As Ashby once noted “[t]he whole function of the brain can be summed up in: error correction,”¹⁴ paving the way for action-oriented neuroeconomic models of predictive processing. The implication for perception therefore emerges as a consequence of a more fundamental imperative that is concerned with *organizational homeostasis*, rather than a process of simply engaging in internal world-model construction.¹⁵

Were we to take syntax-based classical deductive computing, such as the Universal Turing Machine, as an ideal model (plucking neural nets from the mid-to-late twentieth century), we could characterize the parsing of information as a linear spatial procedure—one composed of movement forward and backward, where information is divided into procedural units and consequential steps. However, ‘deep learning’ algorithms, as recently exemplified by advancements in reinforcement-learning AI (such as AlphaGo Zero), seem to ‘experience’ data as a gradient of generative probabilism. Such software are able to decisively re-integrate evaluative metrics that deviate from a sample-proportion.

Interestingly, the paradigm of ‘predictive processing’ or, to follow Clark’s parlance, ‘action-oriented predictive processing,’ framework is a relativist paradigm insofar as it is

7: Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1961), 24.

8: Régis Debray, *Media Manifestos: On the Technological Transmission of Cultural Forms*, trans. Eric Rauth (New York: Verso, 1996), 54.

9: First order cybernetics was based on flack and recursion, where second cybernetics emphasized the “recursion of recursion” (or “the observing of observing”). Heinz von Foerster, *Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition* (New York: Springer, 2003).

10: Anil K. Seth, “The Cybernetic Bayesian Brain: From Interoceptive Inference to Sensorimotor Contingencies” in *Open MIND*, ed. Metzinger (2015), 2.

11: Giuseppe Longo, “Letter to Turing,” in *Theory, Culture and Society* 36, No. 6 (2018), p. 80.

12: Ibid.

13: Alessandro Sarti, Giovanna Citti, and David Piotrowsk, “Differential heterogenesis and the emergence of semiotic function,” in *Semiotica* 230 (2019), 4.

14: W. Ross Ashby quoted in Andy Clark, “Whatever next? Predictive brains, situated agents, and the future of cognitive science,” in *Behavior and Brain Sciences* 36, No. 3 (2013): 181-204.

15: Seth, “The cybernetic Bayesian brain,” 1-24.

integrative:

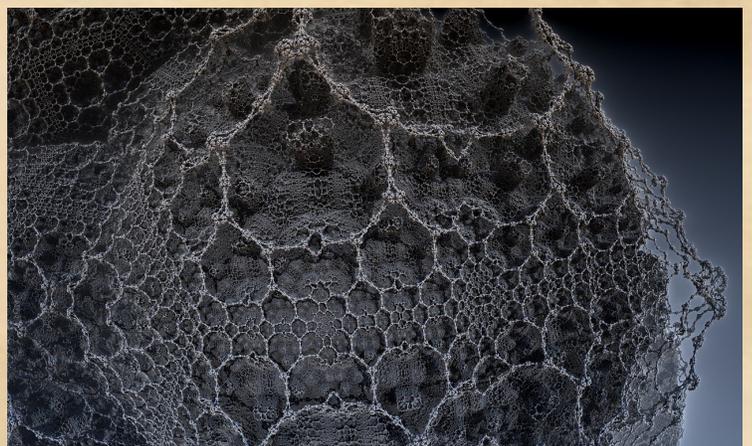
[i]ts greatest value lies in suggesting a set of deep unifying principles for understanding multiple aspects of neural function and organization. It does this by describing an architecture capable of combining high-level knowledge and low-level (sensory) information in ways that systematically deal with uncertainty, ambiguity, and noise. In so doing it reveals perception, action, learning, and attention as different but complementary means to the reduction of (potentially affect-laden and goal-reflecting) prediction error in our exchanges with the world. It also, and simultaneously, displays human learning as sensitively responsive to the deep statistical structures present in both our natural and human-built environments. Thus understood, action-oriented predictive processing leaves much unspecified, including (1) the initial variety of neural and bodily structures (and perhaps internal representational forms) mandated by our unique evolutionary trajectory and (2) the acquired variety of 'virtual' neural structures and representational forms installed by our massive immersion in 'designer environments' during learning and development.¹⁶

This description not only allots us with a description of algorithmic intelligence's patterning-based derivability but, in turn, how neuro-inferential mentality occurs through patterning. The Bayesian model of mind anchors human rationality as a formal-computational reformulation of inductive reasoning, whereby cognition is a process of directing order out of noise. As Anil K. Seth remarks, the PP paradigm proffers an analogy of mental 'self-modeling' whereby the rational agent is denied epistemic access to *how* exteroceptive perception is patterned, as active inference involves source-detection and seeking evidence that goes against current predictions, or that disambiguates multiple competing hypotheses. Neural network research has proven to illuminate great insights into how our own neural processes work, destabilizing the internalist model that pairs figurative projection with phenomenological centering. As Seth's research in phenomenal representation shows, the perceptual presence of disambiguation is one of counterfactually rich and relatively perspective-

dependent integration.

The action-oriented PP model carves a generative "capture" for how we can actively represent the statistical structure of some set of observed inputs that involve tracking by schematically recapitulating the causal matrix for enaction vision, mediating representational objects with lower level visual responses. In turn, this generates an interacting web of causes, illuminating the various aspects of a visually presented scenery as it (passively) unfolds before our (active) visual cortex. This means that top-down connections within a multi-level (hierarchical and bidirectional) system come to encode a probabilistic model of the activities of units and groups of units within lower levels, thus tracking interacting causes in the signal source, which might be the body, or the external world. The strategy of using top-down connections to try to generate, using high level knowledge, a kind of "virtual version" (or, as Chalmers terms it, an inner "cinema") of sensory data via a deep multilevel cascade lies at the heart of approaches to perception under the umbrella of "hierarchical predictive coding." Such approaches describe influence through a description of the use of top-down probabilistic generative models and downward influence might operate. Borrowing from work in linear predictive coding, "hierarchical predictive coding" and, in turn, PP, depict the top-down flow as attempting to predict and explicate the driving sensory signal, with residual 'prediction errors' propagate information *forward* within a system through 'surprisal (s),' which are induced by a mismatch between the sensory signals encountered and those predicted.

This bidirectional hierarchical system results in trans-



Neural Network / *TheDigitalArtist*

16: Clark, "Whatever Next?" 60.

historical improvements qua gradient descent learning; that is, our predictions regarding signal source becomes stronger over time becoming less and less conscious (if at all). Empirical priors become enfolded within a lineage of hyper-priors, with these priors allowing for models to co-evolve across multiple linked layers of processing so as to account for all future sensory data. As a theory of entropic dissolution, the connective nature of hierarchical learning and the structure of “wiring” in the cortex results in strategies of “backwards connection”—that is, our visual cortex become automatically adjusted to probabilistic representations at the higher level so that top-down predictions cancel prediction errors at the lower level (yielding rapid perceptual inference). At the same time, prediction error is used to adjust the structure of a model so as to reduce any future discrepancy, yielding slower timescales insofar as perceptual learning is involved.

The forward connections between levels carried out by residual errors between top-down predictions and actual lower level activity are congruent to the backward or recurrent connection carried out by predictions themselves. Changing predictions therefore correspond to an evolving, changing (or, more accurately, “tuning”) hypothesis about natural and temporal evolution insofar as lower level activity is involved. This produces a kind of prediction-error calculation, operating within a hierarchical organization. Therefore, information is allowed to pertain to different spatial and temporal scales as ecologized or “enclosed” (that is, autonomized) image patches play off of one another. The first-level network extracts features such as oriented edges and bars while the second-level network captures combinations of such features corresponding to patterns involving larger spatial configurations. Using predictive coding strategy and given statistical properties of the signals derived from natural images, our visual cortex works as a network able to induce multi-layered models of structure from a data source; prediction thus acts as a “great filter.” In turn, a simulation-effect is produced as the processing network unfolds; within our scaffolding, deviations are sent from a level 1 to level 2 downward cast colander of prediction. When downward prediction fully accommodates or “cancels out” the incoming signal, no more error flows forward, and we perceive the (natural) world. The simulation also neatly captures non-classical receptive fields such as “end-

stopping,” an effect where a neuron responds strongly to a short line falling within its classical receptive field but that response tails off as the lines get longer; this allows for “longer lines” or stronger hypotheses, as “end-stopped cells” (or hypercomplex cells, which are a type of visual processing neuron within our cerebral cortex that helps the brain visually perceive corners and curves in the environment by identifying the ends of a given stimulus) reflect the way the world is through internal modeling via knowledge, encoded by units and weights that reflect a response profile via sensory transduction.

Action-oriented PP provides us with an understanding of mentality whereby perception reduces “surprisal(s)” by matching inputs with prior expectations. Action further reduces surprisal by altering the world—this includes including our motor cortex axons’ firing, results in body movement—so that inputs conform with expectations. Working together, perception and action serve to selectively sample and actively sculpt the stimulus array with which we are engaging. These direct links to active sculpting and selective sampling suggest deep synergies, or “ecologies,” if you prefer, between the hierarchical predictive processing framework and work in embodied and situated cognition. Today, research in mobile robotics demonstrates a variety of concrete ways in which perception and behaviour productively interact via loops through action and the environment, with these loops considered as affording extra-neural opportunities for the minimization of prediction error. In precisely this vein, in work combining robotics and statistical learning, behavioral feedback modifies stimulus sampling, providing an additional extraneural path for the reduction of prediction errors, sensorimotor loops dynamically prompting learning and inference.

This produces a spatial ecology of mind: if, for instance, we take a tomato on a plate, the mental representation of the tomato is causally integrated via the plate’s presence. In this example, causal contact with all other objects in the perceiver’s vicinity informs the derivation of relevant information out of noise. Consequently, spatial perception is based on a kind of signal processing where ‘objecthood’ is embedded within a causal ecology of spatio-temporal relativity. The tomato and the human perceiver are flattened, in a sense, with scalar inversion dependent upon relative ecological contingency—the tomato plays as much of a role as the plate

does in distinguishing one object from another; this logic can be extended for objects that are less visually explicit, as they are operative nonetheless. Source detection is possible insofar as the estimates are probabilistically constrained such that they are hierarchically organized in order to track features at unique temporal and spatial scales that predict one another.

Extensions into the realm of social action and multi-agent co-ordination are enacted, thereby culling processes of action-oriented informational self-structuring that develop consciously through the reduction of mutual prediction error, which we can project to non-conscious projects; consider examples of mentality's negotiating synchronization through challenging domains and shared experience(s); PP unfolds as an image of culture as patterned practices by highlighting situated practice. More precisely, PP encompasses various forms of longer-term material and social environmental structuring via media—in its most simple form, PP provides us with an enactive theory of media (which is why I find it to be so seductive). To be rather simple—although I would argue that this description does not, in fact, reductively oversimplify PP—through media we structure our physical and social worlds so as to make them manageable for our future cognitive sense-events. This is explicitly why we can make such claims as the following: “we colour-code consumer products, we drive on the right (or, in the UK, on the left) side of the road, we bisect these roads with white stripes, we post prices in supermarkets and so on.” At multiple time-scales, and using a wide variety of means (including words, equations, graphs, other agents, pictures, and all the tools of modern consumer electronics), we thus stack the scaffold so that we can more easily minimize costly prediction errors in an endlessly empowering cascade. Such loops effectively enable new forms of reentrant processing, with action and perception thus working together to reduce prediction error against the more slowly evolving backdrop of a culturally distributed process that spawns a

succession of “designer environments”—or, if you prefer, “media environments”—whose impact on the development and the unfolding of human thought and reason can hardly be over-estimated. This cultural and social facet of PP is precisely how it is related to Andy Clark and David Chalmer's prior work on the “hard problem(s) of philosophy,” including functionalist approaches to enacted mind qua extended media objects.

Clark is following Chalmers here in a description through which behavior is modeled according to alteration via environmental learning; according to Chalmers' work on phenomenal consciousness, wherein he follows David Lewis, the non-reductive position maintains that *learning* is a result of environmental stimulation. Psychological phenomena like learning, reasoning, and remembering can all be explained in terms of playing the right “functional role” but, nonetheless, consciousness *cannot* be reduced to functional analysis without ceding to the eliminative stance (that it does not exist at all) or to add consciousness to an ontology of unreduced features of reality, on par with gravity and electromagnetism (that is, panpsychism). While it is not relevant any more for our purposes aside from making a distinction between consciousness and “mind,” noting that what we are interested in for the purpose of this discussion is the latter and not the former, suffice to say that this distinction is demonstrated by the continued conceivability of what Chalmers terms the “philosophical zombie” or “p-zombie argument.”¹⁷

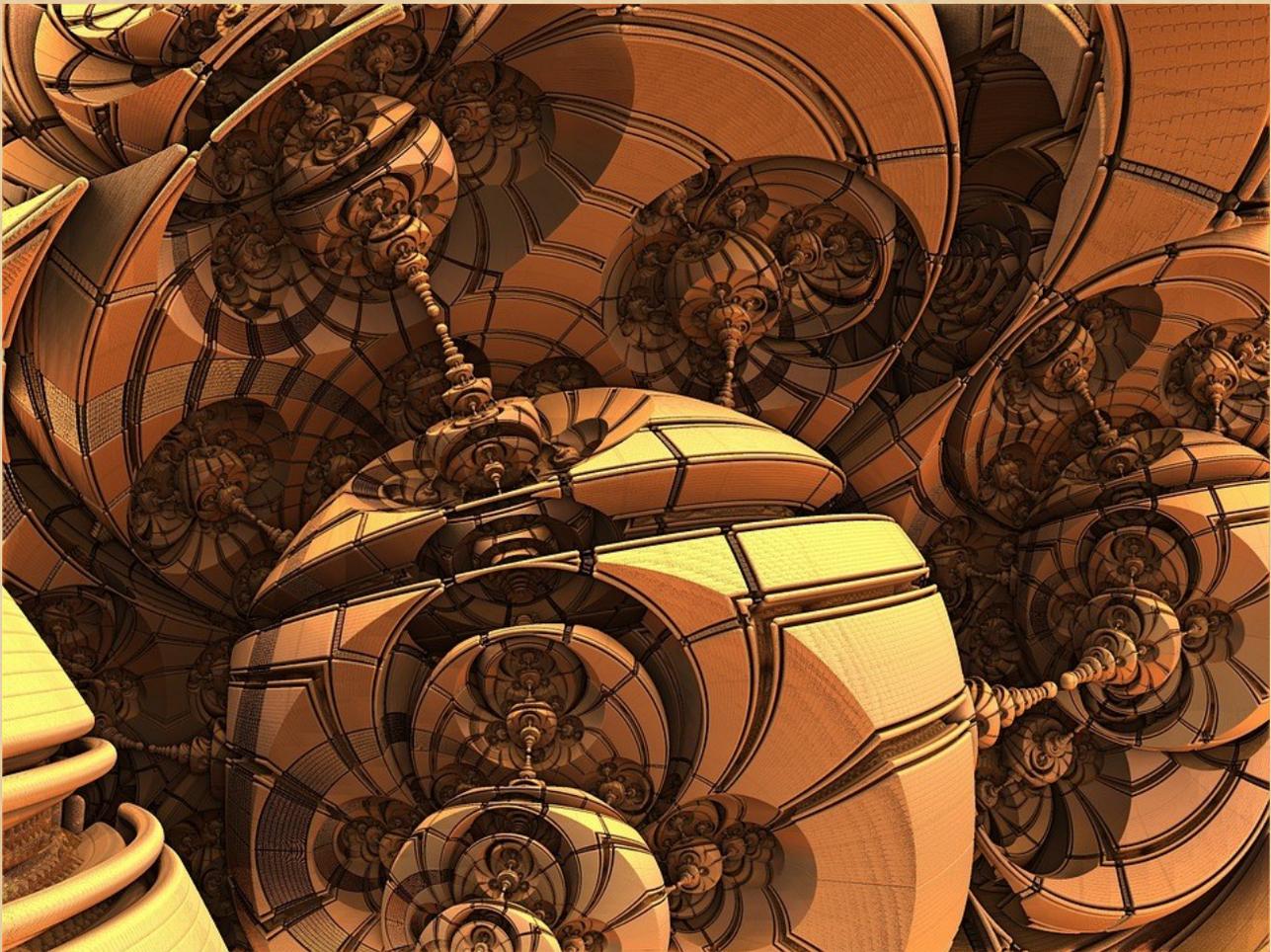
Let us return to PP now. I would like to emphasize a connection between the human unconscious' relative influence on bottom-up coding by summoning Kantian apperception.¹⁸ In fact, the PP model recalls several themes from Kant's work on mentality, emphasizing: the ‘top-down’ generation of perception, the role of ‘hyperpriors’, the function of ‘generative models’, the process of ‘analysis-by-synthesis’, and the crucial role of imagination in perception. Consequently, the PP paradigm echoes Kant's transcendental project as it

17: This thought experiment was used by Robert Kirk in this context in 1974, then developed by Keith Campbell; according to this argument, we can imagine creatures physically (and so functionally) identical to us, but lacking consciousness—even in the face of a range of proffered functional analyses. If we had a satisfying functional analysis of consciousness, (the first premise states that) zombies should not be conceivable (which, according to Daniel Dennett and company they are not). The lack of a functional analysis is also shown by the continued conceivability of spectrum inversion (perhaps what it looks like for me to see green is what it looks like when you see red), the persistence of the “other minds” problem, the plausibility of the “knowledge argument” and the manifest implausibility of offered functional characterizations. If consciousness really could be functionally characterized, these problems would disappear. Since they retain their grip on philosophers, scientists, and lay-people alike, we can conclude that no functional characterization is available. But then the first premise of a reductive explanation cannot be properly formulated, and reductive explanation fails.

18: For Kant, apperception corresponds to spatialized representation and is part of a tripartite mold consisting of the: apprehension of unity (simple intuition), reproduction of unity in the imagination (distinction and juxtaposition), and summation, by which the self represents to itself a multiplicity in space.

explains how the mind tracks causal structure in the world through solely sensory data.¹⁹ However, this approach emphasizes the global Euclidean structure, which, as Carnap's *Der Raum* (1922; his doctoral dissertation)²⁰ demonstrates in its chapter on mathematical space and physical space, can be amended to tie the Kantian conception of intuitive space to the methodological role of constituting the framework for spatial judgments in experience. According to Carnap, Kant was incorrect in thinking that three-dimensional Euclidean space is an *a priori* necessary condition of the possibility of experience—while Kant was correct regarding the experience-constituting function of space, this system needed to be generalized.

Probabilistic Patterning, however, is able to exact a uniquely morphological logic that, instead of 'containerizing' any one particular ecology and scalar finitary model—and therefore, committing to a particular bias predicated upon spatio-temporal distance—is able to entertain multiple conditional scenarios simultaneously, responding as is situationally necessary. This is how heuristic learning is both environmentally backpropagated but also inductive—in the example of AlphaGo Zero, Google Deepmind's deep learning software was able to both intuitively adapt its 'weights' to Lee Se-dol moves while patterning counterfactual scenarios. Such is the quantum ecology's ontogenesis, with AlphaGo Zero's Go moves appearing immanently. This is also increasingly becoming an adapt model for AI 'smart weaponry,' as exemplified by how drone-imaging utilizes tracking to pattern future target-movement(s). With governmental cloud-computing initiatives such as Project JEDI increasingly funding such projects, we must turn our attention to how generative modelling recasts visual logic and approach Predictive Processing as an explicitly topological (and, therefore, ecological) problem. This does not mean, as Luciana Parisi notes, that iterative 'parts,' or select datum, outweigh the whole operation of the machine learning algorithm in question but that the heuristic convertibility between datum and data is a matter of post-human aesthesis.



Space Future Technology / *TheDigitalArtist*

19: L.R. Swanson, "The Predictive Processing Paradigm Has Roots in Kant," in *Frontiers in Systems Neuroscience* 10, No. 79 (2016).

20: Rudolf Carnap, *Der Raum: Ein Beitrag zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Berlin, 1922).

Necroborg Historia

Lee van Zechariah (of Necronaut Studios)

With the Fin de siècle, it had seemed that, finally, the wheel of the world had completed its turn. That the great nations of men had emerged from the darkness and superstition of the 'Pre-Modern' world, illuminated by the light of Rationality and Reason, grasping firmly an understanding of the world in its True Form and wielding mastery over nature itself!

On September 12th, 1956, a meteorite of flesh and metal pierced the heavens and the confidence of the powerful like a castigation of humanity's hubris from God. A gigantic cosmonaut with a metal coffin in their chest, body seemingly broken by the fall, skull-faced, emaciated, diseased, but *still alive*, picked themselves up off the hot earth of Los Angeles, California, and began to walk around. This was to be called First Fall.

That early black and white recording caught the imagination of the world. Was it a government project? A Soviet weapon? An alien invader? A ghost? The questions were many and tantalizing, and everyone, of course, had their own opinion. But precious few facts. That creature, walking unsteadily that thin line between death and life, human and monster, had disappeared as suddenly as they had arrived. And so they faded from daily attention, settling comfortably into legend...

Except that they came back, in 1981, Washington state. This time the public was ready with a name: Necroborg. With Europe mostly recovered from its disastrous War, scholars now began pulling wood blocks and illumination from the salvaged archives, showing tantalizing images of giant skeletons with coffins on their chests, suggesting that this Necroborg may have been visiting Earth since the fourteenth century.

By the 90s they were appearing monthly. Here and gone for no longer than a shaky home video or a blurry polaroid. By the aughts, it was daily. And this was when interest started to fade. Nothing could harm them, and they did no harm. No one could catch their attention, and they did not communicate. Every attempt to apprehend them failed. Scientific tests, X-rays and radar, refused to penetrate the Necroborg's mystery. Scientists were tantalized- but the public was bored.

Markets could not monetize them; media, sensationalize them; governments, control them. The Necroborg became to human society like a curious weed, unusual but of no importance. But with their arrival soon came other, equally strange beings in their wake. And these ones were very curious- about people, about life, and about death. And though each creature would be granted by their human observers a name unique to each, they were all collectively known by the common title:

NECRONAUTS.



*Necroborg Sighting / Vincent Ortiz /
Zbrush Render-3D model / 2020*

Letter from the Editor(s)

Murdock Parsons

We would like to express our deepest gratitude not only to our wonderful contributors without whom this edition would, quite literally, not have been possible, but also to everyone interacting with us and supporting us on Twitter. Since corporealizing *Plutonics*, the support has been tremendous and we've received encouragement not only from all around the globe (and from our inner-Earth inhabitants), but from established bloggers, scholars, artists, and up-and-coming theorists.

Since this is the first readable volume of *Plutonics* (in this dimension, at least), we are still very much experimenting with the format and are always soliciting input. While we will also run a Twitter poll, for those without Twitter, the vital question moving forward becomes thus: does this format work? Specifically, does a very open format with little-to-no guidelines and where everything is welcome remain appealing, or ought we shift to a format where each volume is more centered around a specific theme? While we see benefits in both these models, it seems best to solicit advice from our readers and contributors as we know that the openness has, in some instances, caused confusion.

While, technically, the editing of *Plutonics* was undertaken by one sac(k) of meat staring into the depths of a computer monitor in the wee-hours of the morning, we consider *Plutonics* to be a community project. Given that, we actively seek advice and thoughts from any and everyone involved in our weird little community.

Thus, if you have any comments, concerns, questions, thoughts, aesthetic critiques, and/or, ideally, answers to the above questions, please do email us at mvupress@gmail.com; we'd love to hear from you and will try to make the appropriate changes.

Thank you again to everyone who contributed and thank you to everyone who has supported us.



Earth's ()hole / M.P. / Newspaper and heat / 2020

