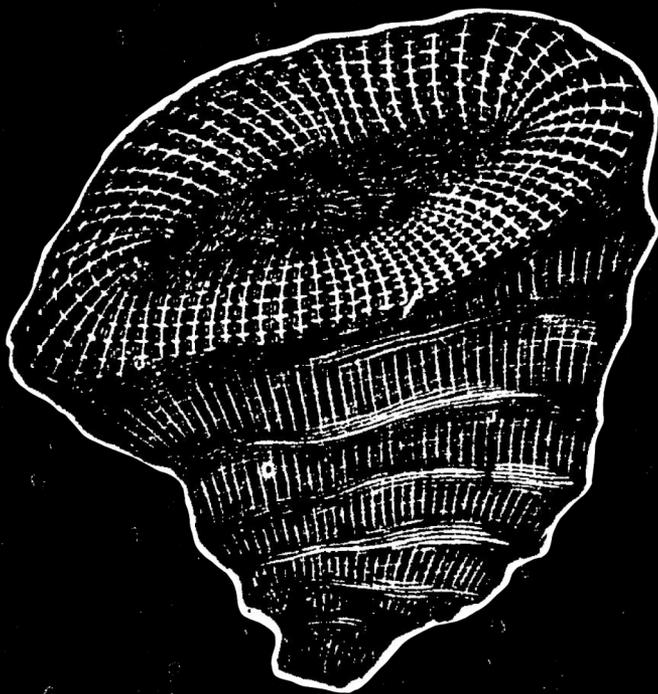


# PLUTONICS

A JOURNAL OF NON-STANDARD  
THEORY



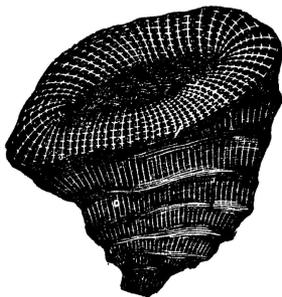
*Volume : (::) ⊖ March 2021*

*Miskatonic Virtual University*

# PLUTONICS

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A Journal of Non-Standard Theory



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Miskatonic Virtual University Press

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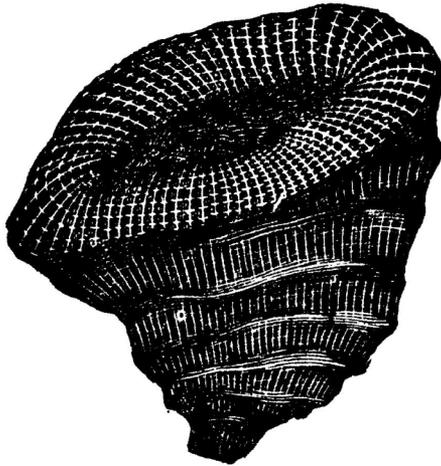


# About the Journal

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*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](http://plutonicsjournal.com) or contact us at [mvupress@gmail.com](mailto:mvupress@gmail.com).

# PLUTONICS

## A Journal of Non-Standard Theory

Volume :(:), March 2021

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# Introduction: 14:1:13:3:21

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2020 was one hell of a year. A veritable shitshow of Biblical proportions. Locusts swarmed African countries; the Land Down Under caught fire, with the trans-Pacific winds casting the flames upon California; COVID-19 shut down everything and caused excessive hoarding of toilet paper in a truly libidinal fashion (so much for anal retentiveness...); the U.S. Department of Defense officially announced what we've all known for years, that UFOs exist; furniture companies (supposedly) became bastions of sex trafficking; social injustices worldwide caused massive upheavals (with, of course, no change); a mysterious monolith was discovered in the Utah desert; and everyday simultaneously felt exactly the same while also being radically different – a sort of perverse *Groundhog Day* (1993) meets *Dark City* (1998).

To add to the extensive commentaries on COVID-time, we here at *Plutonics* sent out a call for submissions back in June. With the “theme” of time and templexity as a very loose guideline, we encouraged you all to think with us (be it in the form of pieces of art, melancholic rants, sophisticated analyses, or other weird contributions) about what the hell is going on. The Weird Theory community did not disappoint. Questions of time as such were taken up by some while entropic issues were engaged with by others. Perverse (and arousing) stories were submitted, and obtuse pieces of artwork were produced. And at least one strange, manilla envelope was found on our desk when we came back from a smoke break.

While *Plutonics* Volume :(:) has no single unifying thread, three general ones can be tugged on: issues of fictions as they relate to time travel (or temporally ambiguous events), vestiges of anthropoid existence throughout time, and detritus, cityscapes, and excrement. While it would be a disservice to the authors and artists, creators and progenitors, thinkers, tinkerers, and theorists, to try to summarize over 300 pages of unique pieces of work, in this volume you will everything from problematizations of cities as negentropic zones to hyperstitional meme magick, from discussions of our lived, viral identities to

issues of symbolic capital in our hyper-techno-mediated world, from stories of first contact, a semi-sentient power station, and a mosquito like goddess to a zine that came back to haunt its finder.

With collages by Luis Esteban Escalante, massive drawings by Frida Ortgies-Tonn, and cyborgs by Hallidonto, alongside sketches from Iván Ortega and a watercolor by Shauna Lee Lange, we hope that this volume of *Plutonics* successfully scratches some collective, proverbial itches, both artistic and textual.

While the editing of this edition was undertaken by a singular caffeine fueled meat sac(k) staring deeply into a computer monitor for hours on end, *Plutonics* would not exist without its contributors, to whom we owe the utmost gratitude. It's been, as usual, wonderful to work with you all and we're extremely thankful that we got to produce another amazing journal.

Finally, since we consider *Plutonics* to be a community project, one that we all hopefully benefit from, we do, as always, encourage you to send any comments, concerns, questions, thoughts, aesthetic critiques, etc. to [mvupress@gmail.com](mailto:mvupress@gmail.com)

And, of course, be on the lookout for MVU Press' upcoming publications: Louis Armand's new work of theory-fiction, *GLITCHHEAD*, later in May, and, in print for the first time, Anna Greenspan's seminal thesis, *Capitalism's Transcendental Time Machine*, coming later this year.

Thank you again to everyone who contributed and supported us.

-Murdock Parsons  
Arkham, MA  
2021

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# The Hyperstitional Philosophy of Time-Travel Cybernetics: Theosophy, the CCRU, and Black-Box Poiesis

*Robert Elio Cabrales*

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**D**iagnostics  
Time-travel technology in a machinic sense can be considered a means for transportation: a vehicle in which temporality is traversed, but focusing on the instrumental application of this technology loses sight of its poietic potential. Time-travel is as much a reception as a dispatch; with the time manipulating entanglement of observer, time-traveler, and history, time-travel reveals a new World which has and will become via a complex onto-temporal system of cryptic control-communications.<sup>1</sup>

From the perspective of Historiography, a time-traveling agent (typically a humanoid entity) will affect the historical timeline through

their manipulation of events and event sequences: either as chronological additions, or subtractions. The time-traveler thus intervenes in History to reveal a World which is the effect of their causes. Within contemporary Art Theory and Post-Continental Philosophy, the source of historical intervention has been shifted from the time-traveling agent to that of Aesthetic technology.<sup>2</sup> This Aesthetic technology reveals the effect rather than the cause, and thus Fictions the future into the present.

Fictioning can be understood as the “writing, imagining, performing or other material instantiation of worlds or social bodies that mark out trajectories different to those engendered by the dominant organization

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1: The term ‘World’ can be loosely understood in this paper by its Heideggerian operation referring to ‘the being of that which is revealed.’ For further explanation of the concept see Sana Murrani “Third way architecture: Between cybernetics and phenomenology,” *Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research*. vol. 8.3, (2010): 267-281.

2: For an in-depth analysis of time manipulation in and through contemporary art/Art Theory see David Burrows & Simon O’Sullivan, *Fictioning: The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

of life currently in existence.”<sup>3</sup> The idea of Fictioning both brings light to and purposively operates the technological capacity of the definition it employs. An idea, a technology in-itself, is meticulously designed to reveal as such. The technology of the idea performs ontologically as reverse ascription: the name bringing about the thing, an effect that engenders its cause in order to build.<sup>4</sup> From this, what does it entail to send an idea through time, rather than time-travel through an idea?

A Fictioning idea exists virtually insofar as it is a thought to be had; yet the idea is not yet something performed and reified in and by representational reality, and is thus not actual. When the idea time-travels into the future, it retains its virtuality as it has not departed the ideal plane of possibility. A future has been revealed as an end or a purpose, but history must then develop in such a linear way that the revelation can be actualized moving forward. If an idea time-travels to the past on the other hand, it then gains the possibility of evolving backward toward the present. By its past revelation, the idea is

reified through time, ensnaring the timeline which it has infiltrated and thus becoming an actuality in the present by performing within the history it reveals. The functional result of an idea sent to the past will be the revelation of something which has already been revealed: a Hyperstition, a fiction which has made itself real. The time-manipulating task of time-traveling Fictions then becomes Hyperstitionalizing the future: sending an idea to the future by means of the past and thus retrochronically revealing not the virtuality of that future idea, but its imminent actuality.

—

When a Hyperstition reveals a future, a goal has been set from and toward which time steers. The time-traveling idea brings forward a World that humanity has and will progress into; history must then navigate the complexity by which that temporal end becomes within the trajectory which has already been set. The hazard of this complexity is its teleological neutrality; the system has a singular purpose, an output from an input, but this does not establish the evolutionary developments by which the

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3: Burrows and O'Sullivan, *Fictioning*, 1.

4: Amy Ireland, "The Poememenon: Form as Occult Technology," *Urbanomic Documents* (2017): 1-15, 13. <https://www.urbanomic.com/document/poememenon/>

Hyperstitional future will be reified into actuality and said output will be met.

In his 1964 text *God & Golem, Inc*, Professor Norbert Wiener notes the danger of “singular literal-minded” technology. Wiener describes the occult mechanics of “the wish,” in which the chasm between input (making a wish) and output (the wish coming true) is a “black-box” of causal developments: at what cost will your wish come true?<sup>5</sup> This temporal breakdown of machinic visibility and predictability within the black-box (between cause and effect) demonstrates the role complex-dynamic systems need perform, and the necessity for communication within technology in order to regulate development.<sup>6</sup> The larger picture of *God & Golem, Inc.* and the legacy of Professor Wiener is the science and study of those complex systems of communication: Cybernetics.

Cybernetics revealed itself in

history through Wiener at the end of the second World War. Wiener’s 1948 text *Cybernetics* discloses Cybernetics as a field, technology, and perspective; its revelation reverberates through history, implicating within its neo-extant discourse both theory and technology from Ancient Greece to 19<sup>th</sup> century France.<sup>7</sup> Cybernetics as defined by Wiener is the “study of control and communication in machines and living beings.”<sup>8</sup> This definition is derived and navigated by Wiener through his thesis that the management and communication processes in machines, living organisms, and societies - through their application of information sharing and processing - are functionally similar, and from this functional similarity a general theory of control communication can be surmised and employed.<sup>9</sup>

Like most terms, the operating definition assigned to Cybernetics is now contextual. In the time since Wiener’s initial work in the mid-20<sup>th</sup>

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5: Wiener tells the story of a mother who wishes for money. While she receives the money she wished for, the money is brought to her as life insurance for her son who was killed while at work. See Norbert Wiener, *God & Golem, Inc.: A comment on Certain Points where Cybernetics Impinges on Religion* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1964), 58-59.  
6: Yu. I. Zhurayley & I.B. Gurevich, “Sixty Years of Cybernetics,” *Pattern Recognition and Image Analysis* vol. 20.1 (2010): 1-20, 6.

7: For a scientific history of the term ‘Cybernetics’ see Zhurayley and Gurevich, “Sixty Years of Cybernetics,” 7-9.

8: Wiener, *God & Golem, Inc.*, vii. Also, Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (New York: MIT Press, 1961).

9: Zhurayley and Gurevich, “Sixty Years of Cybernetics,” 4.

century - through the advent of personal computers, Cyberspace technology, Post-Structural linguistics, and Rhizomatic Networks - Cybernetics has undergone multiple variations, adaptations, and applications.<sup>10</sup> Considering that Cybernetics as a field has now developed beyond the scope of formal Scientific analysis and application. Cybernetics can, in the context of this work, be generally understood as the study of information processing and regulated communications within complex systems. Furthermore, these complex systems are to be conceived of a cybernetic-system in their own right: technologies that incorporate means by which to self-govern and regulate, in order to operate with a given degree of autonomy.<sup>11</sup>

It must be noted that this paper is not putting forward a Second-order Cybernetics analysis,<sup>12</sup> but rather an analysis within that which Cybernetics reveals. Cybernetics as staged in and by this work is thus something atmospheric: a performative idea which

discloses an aestheticized space for revelation. It is a complex of adaptational hermeneutic feedback: a circle, but as a cycle: a spiraling idea modifying that which it presents yet also being modified by those very presentations. Within this Aesthetic space of performed Philosophy, this work will identify Hyperstition as a Cybernetic Technology, and thus do the very theory which is being put forward - actualizing the Philosophy of Hyperstitional Cybernetics through Historical intervention; a time-traveling idea; a technology within a technology, poetically bringing out a poetic potentiality.

In light of the former contextualization, the following sections will detail and assess the systematic mechanics and revelations of time-traveling Hyperstitional technology implemented within the complex system of time. This experimental exercise will begin with the Theosophical Society's cosmological Hyperstition of Spiritual Evolution, which gave way to Occult Sexology, Satanic Feminism, and Cosmic Eugenics. From this will develop an analysis of

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10: See Céline Lafontaine, "The Cybernetic Matrix of 'French Theory,'" *Theory, Culture & Society* vol. 24.5 (2007): 27-46.

11: Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture* (Doubleday: New York 1997), 156.

12: Second-order cybernetics is the cybernetics of cybernetics, or rather the recursive application of cybernetics to look at itself.

the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit's actualization of Hyperstitional technology and said technology's implementation in not only Accelerationist and Esoteric Meme Magic, but also the collective-action Fictioning in Xenofeminist metapolitics.

## Input 1.0

H.P. Blavatsky, in the 1888 document *The Secret Doctrine*, sent an idea through time which implicated all of existence in its revelation. Existence, beyond humanity and furthermore beyond understanding, became as cyclical unified movement: loops within cycles progressing cycles, spiraling feedback between microcosm and macrocosmic history for all of time.<sup>13</sup> *The Secret Doctrine* Fictioned into time the idea of Spiritual Evolution, a Cosmological Hyperstition from which the Ontological, Philosophical, and Theological implications gave actuality to the workings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century occult order the Theosophical Society.

In New York City 1875, the Theosophical Society was established in the spirit of (1) Forming a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color; (2) En-

couraging the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science; and (3) Investigating unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.<sup>14</sup> Theosophy's founders - Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott - at this point had already implicated themselves within Theosophy's Hyperstition. The cosmology that *The Secret Doctrine* would come to profess had been revealed to Blavatsky by the Mahatmas. These Mahatmas were the Masters of Wisdom, individuals who possessed Theosophy's hidden knowledge and had developed the occult abilities yet to emerge within humanity. H.P. Blavatsky was the trusted medium for the Mahatmas, and as such had been selected to reveal their wisdom and the system of Spiritual Evolution.<sup>15</sup>

A fundamental component in the Theosophical Hyperstition is that

13: James A. Santucci, "The Notion of Race in Theosophy," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* vol. 11.3 (2008): 37-63, 52.

14: Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "The Mirror of Secular Thought," in *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 448.

15: Guari Viswanathan, "The Ordinary Business of Occultism," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 27 (2000): 1-20, 15-16.

Evolution is the great Law of Nature which dictates the Natural and the Supernatural.<sup>16</sup> This articulation of Evolution was unlike Darwin's teleonomic Natural Selection, an *end-directing* idea which had begun to reify an understanding of biological history in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Scientific mind. Rather, Theosophy's Spiritual Evolution was a teleological, *end-seeking* system: it had an ultimate purpose for humanity which has been and must be steered toward through time, cycle-by-cycle, loop-by-loop.<sup>17</sup>

The Theosophical Hyperstition brought forward an existence which usurped the cosmological authority of the Christian One God Universe.<sup>18</sup> *The Secret Doctrine* revealed reality as the Supreme Principle or the Eternal: an unthinkable and uncharacterizable existence which both is and performs throughout reality itself. Though unknowable and thus incapable of being externally realized, the Supreme Principle in *performing reality* is perceived *as reality*, thus revealing itself. But though the Eternal is perceived by its performative

presence, this perception is necessarily a misperception. From this misperception, the undifferentiated fluidity of the Supreme thus takes on the differentiated qualities of representation which are the cosmos. The differentiated universe that then becomes is subject to and of the "law of periodicity, of flux and reflux, ebb and flow."<sup>19</sup> This system of cause and effect, input and output, delineates the cyclical nature of the cosmos. Time in this system is then not something linear, but a circle with no beginning and no end: a serpent consuming its own tail. Within the Onto-Temporality of this ever winding ouroboros, the cyclical nature of reality itself is articulated as and through Spiritual Evolution.

In Spiritual Evolution, a cosmological epoch as universal cycle is progressed by and as communicative choreographed movement throughout the sevenfold solar-system. Each planet progresses through a cycle of seven planetary Rounds, each of these Rounds cycling through seven Globe states which progress the planetary

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16: Hanegraaff, "The Mirror of Secular Thought," 480.

17: For further explanation on the distinction between teleonomy and teleology, see Wayne Christensen, "A Complex Systems Theory of Teleology," *Biology and Philosophy* vol. 11 (1996): 301-320.

18: The One God Universe is an articulation of the dominant reality program which establishes being as such. See page 16 for further development of this concept.

19: Santucci, "The Notion of Race in Theosophy," 42.

Round through spirit into matter and back into spirit. Furthermore, the cyclical progression of each Globe is brought about through development of seven Root-races on the planet, each race consisting in-itself of seven Sub-races. These races are composed of the beings which exist within each Globe: souls themselves undergoing a systematic development through reincarnation cycles.

The micro-cycle of reality within which humanity is thus situated is the Fifth Root-race upon the fourth Globe of Earth. The Root-races of the fourth Globe began when the first Root-race - the Polarians - oozed forth as sexless and ethereal beings. The Root-races began their descent into matter as the second Root-race - the Hyperboreans - evolved from the sweat of the Polarians. The Hyperboreans were no longer sexless, but asexual creatures in ethereo-physical bodies capable of both hearing and touch.<sup>20</sup> From the Hyperboreans evolved the Lemurians, located on the lost continent of Lemuria. The third Root-race of Lemurians had evolved into astral-physical bodies, possessing intellect and hermaphroditic biologi-

cal structure, through dividing into the two distinct sexes of male and female by the fifth Lemurian sub-race.<sup>21</sup> Among the Lemurians also evolved the presence of a third-eye, capable of embracing eternity and giving foundation to the Lemurians' time manipulating system of black magic. Born from the Lemurians was the Fourth Root-race: The Atlanteans. The Atlanteans - the Root-Race most fixed within the descent into matter - were the first "truly human" race, and developed not only the faculty of speech, but intellectual capacity and application beyond the advances of Victorian science.<sup>22</sup> The Atlanteans retained the third eye in the earlier Sub-races, and furthermore the system of black magic inherited from the Lemurians, but also developed their own system of Atlantean white magic. The simultaneous presence of black and white magic among the fourth Root-race gave way to a pervasive skirmish, which lead toward the sinking of their home Atlantis, and the disappearance of the Atlanteans along with their magical technologies.

As the Atlantean race neared its end, the Fifth Root-race, the Aryans,

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20: *Ibid.*, 48.

21: *Ibid.*

22: *Ibid.*, 49.

evolved forward. This fifth Root-race - which locates contemporary Humanity - is the first stage of evolution out of matter and back into spirit. Having calcified in the later Atlantean Sub-races, the Aryans have lost access to the third-eye and the perception of eternity. Throughout the cycle of the Fifth Root-race, humanity will grow more androgynous, more ethereal, and begin to develop demonstrations of occult ability.<sup>23</sup> The emergent occult faculties of seeing the unseeable and hearing the unhearable will fully manifest in the Sixth Root-race which will emerge on the North American continent and progress life to a state of Spirit similar to the Second Root-race. From the Sixth will develop the Seventh Root-race: beings of pure Spirit just as the Polarians, who will maintain the occult abilities of the Sixth Root-race but also develop the phenomenality of instant perception. The emergence and development of the Seventh Root-race further and further into Spirit - back into a sexless ether - will mark the completion of the fourth Globe, progressing Earth's planetary Round

in correspondence with the communicated movements of the Solar System.

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The Theosophical Hyperstition and its time-traveling idea of Spiritual Evolution revealed a World founded on cycles, loops, feedback, and systematic communication. This cybernetic reality posited a teleological continuity for Humanity: not just a coming from, but a going toward which was already and had always been in motion. With Spiritual Evolution actualized backward toward the present, the Theosophical Society was thus located within a poietic black-box: an undefined period within the Hyperstitional timeline. A previous and a next step had already been Fictioned - an input and an output for the subraces of the Fifth Root-race - but the mechanics which would elaborate upon and connect those functions were hidden. The responsibility of Ontological becoming was shifted from the Hyperstition itself to those individuals serving its reverse ascription.

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23: *Ibid.*, 49.

Output 1.0

**O**Theosophy's cosmological Fictioning infiltrated reality beyond representation and beyond time. The Hyperstition of Spiritual Evolution revealed a grand unified system by which existence progressed in a closed-loop without beginning or end. Within its spiraling choreography was a timeline leading from the past, toward and through the only humanity that the foreseeable future would ever know. Because of this, the Fictioning idea of Spiritual Evolution - while an idea unbound by time - was sent out to the future through the past, disclosing an established trajectory of and for the humanity.

This time-traveling idea on a social level was constructed to reify the Theosophical values of a Universal Brotherhood beyond sex, color, religion, and class; furthermore, it was designed to reveal a future in which those values would be actualized. Theosophy's goal of orienting Spiritual Evolution as a teleological system was thus conceptually complete, and due to this completeness,

19th and early 20th civilization was located within a black-box, between the current input and the ultimate output. It is precisely within this chasm between value input and the output of poietic actualization that Theosophists were responsible for autocatalyzing the disclosed future. While the ideas of Spiritual Evolution took hold within Feminist discourse on sex, gender, and women's rights, Spiritual Evolution also took hold in Racial discourse, giving way to an acceleratory process of Cosmic Eugenics.

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The progressive Feminist ideals furthered by Theosophy can be substantiated from two foundational components: The Supreme Principle within the Cosmological Hyperstition, and Theosophy's Satanic counter-mythology of the Christian "Fall." Theosophists utilized these concepts to both explain sexuality and sexual identity as non-essential determinants of individual worth, and to undo social narratives which legitimized the oppression of women.<sup>24</sup>

The Supreme Principle - the

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24: Joy Dixon, "Sexology and the Occult: Sexuality and Subjectivity in Theosophy's New Age," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* vol. 7.3 (1997): 409-433, 421; Per Faxneld, "Blavatsky the Satanist: Luciferianism in Theosophy, and its Feminist Implications," *Temenos* vol. 48.2 (2012):203-230, 220-222.

absolute and eternal presence of and as the Theosophical cosmos - is an undifferentiated unknowability, and is thus a fluid, sexless, formless existence.<sup>25</sup> But as existence performed itself as and through the cosmos - cycling between spirit and matter - differentiation became as duality, and thus sex and gender were implemented in this process. In Theosophy's Occult Biology, the form taken by the beings in each Root-race has been developmental, and the propagation of humanoid life has in no way been restricted to just sexual reproduction, nor a binary of sexual identities. While the First Root-race was sexless and the Second asexual, it was not until the Lemurian civilization that sexual reproduction evolved into existence, and not until the Atlanteans that male and female were normalized physicalities.

Within the spiraling system of Spiritual Evolution, a soul - just as much as the Root-race, Globe, Round, and the cosmos - is in constant development, a controlled circuit progressing spirit to matter, back into spirit. Though the bodies of the Root-races evolved slowly over time,

the souls which have and would continue to occupy those bodies operate within their own system of evolution. Souls reincarnate again and again within each of the dynamic and unique earthly bodies, cyclically learning and growing from those experiences.<sup>26</sup> Embodied souls in the Fifth Root-race were then tasked to "manifest something of the balanced, bisexual absolute in one's earthly existence." Sexual differentiation was then a lesson, but did not necessitate that sex and the soul's gender were in sync, nor need be.<sup>27</sup> While both life in a body identified as male and a body identified as female disciplined the soul in a way unique to said body, the non-gendered soul was the *experiencer* of these disciplines. The soul thus performs a gendered identity within its body, just as the eternal performs reality. It is through this performance of gender by the reincarnated soul that the stable fixing of gender to sex - and thus the social conditions founded upon strict psycho-sexual differentiation - is undermined.<sup>28</sup>

While the emphasis on the eternal, fluid absoluteness of the Su-

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25: Dixon, "Sexology and the Occult," 417.

26: *Ibid.*, 420-421.

27: *Ibid.*, 425.

28: *Ibid.*

preme Principle provided a foundation for Occult Biology and Gender Theory, the moral and social implications of this performative Sexology were furthered through an employment of Hyperstitional Counter-Mythology. In order to more clearly articulate the descent into matter and ascension into spirit permeating all of the cosmos, the Theosophical Hyperstition in *The Secret Doctrine* implicates and subverts the Christian myth of "The Fall." In the story of The Fall, Lucifer Morning Star - Heaven's most perfect angel - rebelled against God's dominant control program, and the static consistency within the cosmic oppressor's Empyrean. The Prince-of-Anarchy Lucifer - and those pure spirits who followed the Morning Star - were cast from Heaven and imprisoned in Hell's Pandemonium, bringing about the "fall into matter, generation, and conscious life."<sup>29</sup> Lucifer thus furthered the spiral of communicated cyclicism in aiding the liberation of humanity from evolutionary stasis. Eve - the first woman on God's Panoptic Earth - took heed of the fallen Lucifer's wisdom and seized fruit from the forbidden Tree-of-Knowledge. With Eve's consump-

tion of the forbidden fruit, humanity was liberated from stasis, developing intelligence and self-consciousness, becoming integrated within the cosmic dance of reality.

The incorporation of The Fall within the Theosophical Hyperstition performed a functional counter-mythology: an allegorical tale explicitly identified as such. *The Secret Doctrine* revealed a virtual fiction within its actualized Fictioning. Lucifer in this Fictioned fiction is thus a cosmic principle, playing the role of Gnosis and divine intelligence.<sup>30</sup> This implication and reorientation of Christian myth as such reifies Spiritual Evolution not just within the historical timeline, but throughout the very moral framework of Christian-dominated society. Rather than reifying the moral ideal that women were both weak and responsible for sin amongst humanity, Theosophy's Satanic Feminism Fictioned Eve as postlapsarian heroine: the protagonist in a tale of courage and liberation.<sup>31</sup> Women in the Theosophical Cosmology were thus every bit as wise, strong, and fit to work and lead as men.

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29: *Ibid.*, 418.

30: Faxneld, "Blavatsky the Satanist," 213-216.

31: *Ibid.*, 225.

The subversive counter-mythology of The Fall compounded and moralized the gender theory established by Theosophy's cosmological Hyperstition. Not only were the sexes socially equal and important in their own unique right, but the very notions of sex and gender were destabilized and reestablished in such a way that neither biology, psychology, nor theology could justify gender oppression. By way of Theosophy's articulation of Gender Theory, gender - and thus the social and moral values ascribed to it - are themselves aesthetic technology Fictioning a codified normativity: performative components in a complex system of idea-actualization.

Within the black-box between *The Secret Doctrine's* evolutionary input of the Fifth Root-race and output of the Sixth, Theosophical feminists developed the system by emphasizing the time-traveling ideas of Occult Biology and Reincarnation. The Sixth Root-race was established to be a civilization of androgynous individuals, and the support of sexual equality, women's rights, and gender fluidity functioned to progress humanity within its evolutionary cycle and through the poietic black-box toward

their immanent evolution.

Whereas the Feminist application of Spiritual Evolution steered toward the output of sexual androgyny, Theosophists not aligned with the Feminist agenda navigated the Hyperstitional black-box through alternate, and less emancipatory trajectories. Honing in on the Sub-race spiral within the Root-race cycle of the Cosmological Hyperstition, renegade Theosophists sought to create a positive feedback-loop and accelerate the evolutionary process of racial purification.

The presence of positive feedback in a cybernetic system will destabilize the communicated cyclicism of development if it is not regulated by a corresponding negative feedback.<sup>32</sup> With this, a positive feedback-loop will then regulate itself with, by, and for itself, accelerating its own virulence toward system-collapse. This unregulated and catastrophic development is the very outcome which Norbert Weiner's Cybernetics was designed to diminish, but it was internally weaponized in the early 20th century to modify Theosophy's Hy-

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32: Christensen, "A Complex Systems Theory of Teleology," 308.

perstitial Cosmology. Through the intentional employment of positive feedback-loops within Theosophy's poietic black-box, the cyclical system of Spiritual Evolution and impersonal evolutionary progress collapsed into a linear teleological system, racing toward a purified singularity of the "Universal Human."<sup>33</sup>

In 1912, Rudolph Steiner - the decade long General Secretary of the Theosophical Society's German Section - broke off from Theosophy to found the Anthroposophical Society. This breakage was preceded by amplified friction between Steiner and Theosophy's central leadership over how to best navigate the liminal historical period composing Spiritual Evolution's black-box. Steiner overhauled the cosmological Hyperstition by collapsing the cycle of Spiritual Evolution into a linear trajectory. Anthroposophy hacked Theosophy such that the Occult Biology which had traveled backward from the past was maintained, while its teleological revelation was reprogrammed.

Rather than the global evolution of humanity from the Fifth to Sixth Root-race, Anthroposophy maintained that racial progress was limited to a select, more advanced Sub-Race while the other sub-races (though integral in the evolutionary process) were fated to stagnate and degenerate.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, members of the progressing Sub-race were destined to consciously bring about this evolution by obtaining the spiritual abilities which become in their "national and racial spirits."<sup>35</sup> For Steiner, this advanced Sub-race was the white race - the pure evolution of the Aryan Root-race - and their spiritual power was that of intellect and creativity.<sup>36</sup> Through purification and spiritual development exclusive to the white Sub-race, the Aryan Root-race would accelerate humanity toward the disappearance of race and evolve into the perfect "Universal Human."<sup>37</sup>

Anthroposophy's Fictioning of Theosophy's Cosmological system was done in part through the reorientation of Lucifer's counter-mythology. While the Theosophists

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33: Peter Staudenmaier, "Race and Redemption: Racial and Ethnic Evolution in Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* vol. 11.3 (2008): 4-36, 6-7 & 12-13.

34: Staudenmaier, "Race and Redemption," 7.

35: *Ibid.*, 9

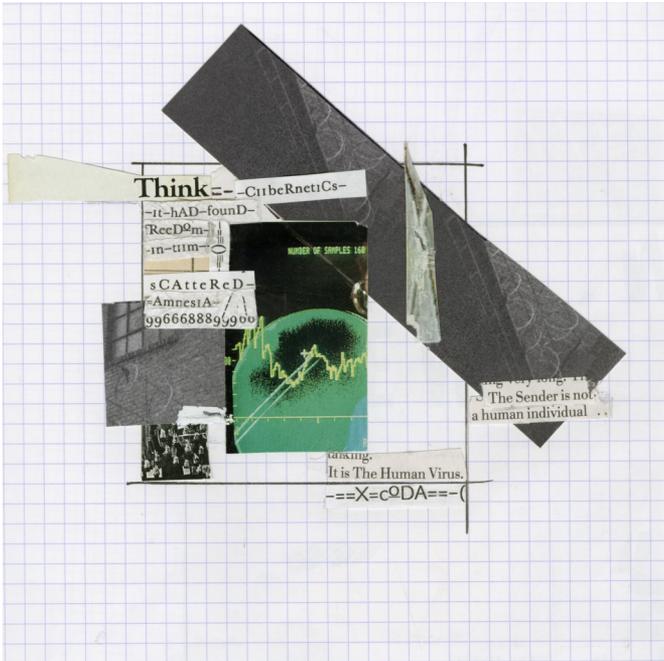
36: *Ibid.*, 14-15.

37: *Ibid.*, 12-13.

performed Lucifer as a liberator and Promethean hero, Anthroposophy restaged the Prince-of-Anarchy amongst Christian morality. It was with Lucifer's fall that the presence of racial diversity and evil were brought to Earth. The Fall destabilized the consecutive development of one race out of the next by establishing races which coexisted, slowing down and soiling progress toward a perfected human form; racial diversity in this

sense was a mistake, and furthermore a problem.<sup>38</sup>

Having revealed itself in early 1900s Germany, Anthroposophy was contextualized within and among many trajectories which would impact and shape the 20th century.<sup>39</sup> The presence of Steiner's spiritually accelerated evolutionary purification took hold as a technology labelled "Cosmic Eugenics."<sup>40</sup> In the case of



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Paper ephemera (Magazine cuttings, images, text) / 2020

38: Ibid., 12.

39: For an elaborated contextualization of Theosophy within German Occultism see Peter Staudenmaier "Occultism, Race and Politics in German-speaking Europe, 1880-1940: A Survey of the Historical Literature," *European History Quarterly* vol. 32.1 (2009): 47-70.

40: Staudenmaier, "Race and Redemption," 21.

Theosophy's poietic black-box, Anthroposophy failed in connecting to an output, rather creating a feedback-loop from the input of evolutionary Race. Anthroposophy successfully manipulated Theosophy's Cosmological Hyperstition through a reorientation of system direction: hacking and repurposing the Fiction so as to collapse and accelerate the preestablished trajectory toward the revelation of an alternative World.

**F**eedback  
Theosophy's Fictioning of reality not only revealed a Hyperstitionalized Cosmology, it revealed the very technology of Hyperstition. These fictions which make themselves real navigate and effectuate reality as and through performative interventions not restricted by an ontological authority. Hyperstitional technology thus communicates with the timeline it travels to and in, affecting its own becoming by subversive implementation of cybernetic movement within the preestablished flows of temporality. Anthroposophy furthered the revelation of Hyperstitional technology, developing the acceleratory function of positive feedback-loops. Not only can a complex system like time be infiltrated and reoriented by an idea, an infiltrating idea can also bring about the collapse of a complex system's regulated telefunction. By escalated and unregulat-

ed autocatalysis, a system input can accelerate a cycle outside of itself, and beget creation in the key of destruction.

Following the second World War and a Conservative conflation of Fascism with the 'irrational,' 21<sup>st</sup> century civilization has plunged into a paradigm of Physicalism and Empiricism; Scientific Rationalism as a teleonomic system has reified itself, through itself, into Objective actuality. The future which has been revealed is a technoscientific World: disenchanted becoming as and through the complex system of material capital.<sup>41</sup> Time-travel is now a forward-looking industry, producing commodified futures, revelations of the "next steps" only insofar as the idea is of economic value.

Though still susceptible to the technological revelations of time-travel, the historical past has been

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41: Lina Nasr El Hag Ali and A.T. Kingsmith, "COSMIC SLOP: Possibilities of Alien Futures (From the Past)," *Proceedings of EVA Copenhagen* (2018): 1-8, 2-3. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14236/ewic/EVAC18.26>

closed off by the institutionalization of rational perception.<sup>42</sup> History is performed as an objective linearity, and while the Modern historian - much like the time-traveling agent - maintains time's linearity through admission and addition, under the imperialism of Truth there are authoritative Facts which rigidify chronological development. Time-traveling ideas of the past, sent from lost futures, now haunt the immanence of present presence. Sent back to infect a timeline through reverse ascription, these Hyperstitional futures have been abandoned within time's systemic complexity in the name of Material control; their irrational actualities never manifest through the retrochronic process of becoming. These Fictioning ideas were thus sentenced to a virtual Purgatory, forsaken but not destroyed. The specter, the lost time-traveler, plagues the circuitry of unraveling time: the hauntological presence of a future which never was yet refuses to die.<sup>43</sup> Exiled to the plane of virtuality by decree of Materialism, the Hyperstitional idea itself

haunted the late 20<sup>th</sup> century as an inorganic demon. Though caged in the virtual, Hyperstition indirectly perpetuated itself through the possession of human hosts.<sup>44</sup> The demon Hyperstition was unlike the ghost of a lost future; it was not the specter of a revealed world, but the swarm of that which re-reveals, containing Legion rather than Lord.

To invoke the idea of Hyperstition from the virtual crypt of spectral presence, experimental philosophers in the 1990s resorted to the art of Hauntological Necromancy. The Hyperstitionalization of a timeline could no longer be achieved by simply sending an idea to the future by means of the past, the time manipulating task of time-traveling Fictions having evolved past the direct alteration of chronology to reveal an imminent actuality. Rather, the Fictioning idea must be hypercamouflaged, entrenched within History's complex temporal system such that there is a complete "overlap and coincidence" between Fiction and Fact.<sup>45</sup> Through

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42: Viswanathan, "The Ordinary Business of Occultism," 17.

43: Hauntology describes the way that after various ends of history the present remains haunted by the ghosts of the past which continuously erupt forth. See Mark Fisher "What is Hauntology," *Film Quarterly* vol.66.1 (2012): 16-24.

44: Examples: H.P. Lovecraft, Heidegger, William Burroughs, Peter Carroll, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Deleuze & Guattari. See Martin Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings: Key Selections from 'Being and Time' to 'The Task of Thinking,'* ed. D. Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 2008): 139-212.

45: Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: re.press, 2008), 241.

immaterial causalities, Theosophy's Cosmological Hyperstition was resurrected within an Historical and Academic framework not as a performance, but as a static representation; lurking inside this disenchanting corpse of Spiritual Evolution was the concealed reincarnation of Fictioning.

## Input 2.0

Between the years of 1995 and 1998, Warwick University's Philosophy department played unwilling host to the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU).<sup>46</sup> Founded by Cyberfeminist and Cultural Studies scholar Sadie Plant, and lead together with Continental Philosopher Nick Land, the CCRU pushed thought beyond the threshold of rationalism into the realm of unbelief.<sup>47</sup> Splicing, invoking, and coding occultural technology into a cyberpunk corpus, the CCRU's Experimental Philosophy became an interdisciplinary and multitemporal amalgam of cut-up cosmic horror. With Plant's abrupt departure from War-

The Hyperstitional demon - containing its multitudes - was reincarnated as itself, by itself, through itself. Through an aesthetic performance of Necromantic steganography, Hyperstition was a fiction made real, unleashing insurrectionary legion into a rationalized order.

wick in 1997, the CCRU spiraled deeper and faster into its own mania and was ultimately rejected by the university in 1998, continuing as an independent cyber-entity until the early 2000s.<sup>48</sup> According to Warwick University, the CCRU did not and would never exist, but some two decades later, time, thought, and socio-political becoming are still entangled with the CCRU's Hyperstitional technology.

The CCRU's operations did not initially Hyperstitionalize the complex system of time itself as the Theosophists had. Instead, they deposited Hyperstitional cells throughout time within history's narrative holes: gateways in Fact by which various fic-

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46: Simon Reynolds, "Renegade Academia," *Springer Magazine* (1999). <http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/004807.html>

47: Unbelief can here be understood beyond its typical religious association, referring more so to a pragmatic skepticism of all imposed systems of unity or integrated thinking.

48: See Shuja Haider, "The Darkness at the End of the Tunnel: Artificial Intelligence and Neoreaction," *Viewpoint Magazine* (2017) <https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/03/28/the-darkness-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel-artificial-intelligence-and-neoreaction/>

tions and Fictioning technologies could disclose themselves as actual.<sup>49</sup> This displacement of time-traveling ideas gave way to a schizohistorical timeline - fractured, split, and fragmented - actualizing a subversive network of hypercamouflaged revelations buried within complexified narratives. Caught up in the narrative complexity was the CCRU itself, implicating the research unit's actions, origins, and chronology in a chaotic swarm of reverse ascriptive plague.

While active, a series of research articles produced by the CCRU were developed from a meeting they had with a man called William Kaye, the long-term assistant to World War II veteran Captain Peter Vysparov.<sup>50</sup> Vysparov - in addition to being a military Captain - maintained a life-long interest and investment in Occultism, having published his research on the theoretical relationship between Aleister Crowley and H.P. Lovecraft in 1949, and furthermore being an initiate in the Thelemic *Ordo Templi Orientis*.<sup>51</sup> During the

period of his employment, Kaye came to possess historical information relating to Vysparov's ongoing research project; and after the passing of Captain Vysparov in the mid-1990s, William Kaye sought out the CCRU so that his and Vysparov's history would be "protected against the ravages of time."<sup>52</sup> Through Kaye's story - and the research trajectory it inspired - the CCRU gained access to a historical narrative which would and had actualized Hyperstitional technology.

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While serving in the second World War, Captain Vysparov was deployed to an island in the Eastern Pacific, the *official* reason being the island's proximity to the Pacific War. The island's inhabitants - the Dibboma tribe of the Mu N'Ma people - were not unknown to Vysparov, having been the recent subjects of the controversial 'Neolemurian Hypothesis'. This Hypothesis - put forward by Professor of Ethnology Echidna Stillwell - theorized that the N'Ma

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49: Cybernetic Culture Research Unit, *CCRU Writings: 1997-2003* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017), 36.

50: The name "William Kaye" (and likely "Captain Vysparov") are pseudonyms employed by the CCRU to maintain the safety and security of their contact.

51: The CCRU cites Vysparov's 1949 text *Atlantean Black Magic* published by Kingsport Press, and while noting the apparent foreshadowing to the later research conducted by Kenneth Grant and the creation of his Typhonian system, the CCRU claims that is unlikely Grant was familiar with Vysparov's work.

52: CCRU, *Writings*, 33.

were descendants of the Lemurian Root-race who had retained the Lemurian system of time manipulating black magic within their religious praxis. Stillwell's hypothesis was rejected by the academy due to a discreditization of Spiritualist scholarship which developed in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, there was suspicion she had taken up an emic and moreover imaginative interpretation of her research topic, but Captain Vysparov - no stranger to Theosophy and the efficacy of occult systems - was eager to observe and possibly weaponize N'Ma ritual.

Following the war and his time with the Dibboma, Captain Vysparov dedicated his life to studying time sorcery and Occult currents. Having observed the intricate Pandemonium system of the N'ma Numogram, Vysparov became increasingly convinced that the works of author H.P. Lovecraft and their developed feedback between Scientific rationality and Occult cosmic-horror were more than fiction. The Numogram - a "diagrammatization of digital numeracy" also called the Lemurian time-maze - functioned as the key to the

Necromantic Demonology and time-sorcerous black magic of the lost Lemurian civilization. A forerunner to the Kabbalistic Tree-of-life and utilizing a computational numeracy system similar to the I-Ching,<sup>53</sup> the Numogram consists of ten zones divided into three distinct time-systems, interconnected by currents and channels established through a complex of pairing, nine-sum twinning, and digital accumulation.<sup>54</sup> Through the cryptic arithmetical computations communicated across the Numogram, gates in space and time are revealed toward the Lemurian Pandemonium: "the microcosmic lair of all demonic populations."<sup>55</sup> The Lemurian Pandemonium is enumerated by the Pandemonium Matrix, a listing of all demons and the hyper-temporal rites which invoke their affective becoming. When Vysparov's Dibboma hosts informed him that the Pandemonium Matrix was called Necronomicon by the N'Ma people, the captain began his theorization of the complex communications circulating between and within Lemurian time-sorcery, Lovecraft's cosmic horrors, and the very evolution of humanity from the Root-races.

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53: *Ibid.*, 297-298.

54: See 247-284 for an analysis of the structure, system, function, and history of the Numogram.

55: *Ibid.*, 242.

In 1949 Vysparov founded a Lovecraft reading group which has come to be known as the "Cthulhu Club." The Cthulhu Club was dedicated to "exploring the intersection between the N'Ma constellation, Cthuloid contagion, and twisted time systems," and it was by this group's meetings and theorizations that the term "Hyperstition" was coined.<sup>56</sup> When introducing Hyperstition to the CCRU, Kaye explained that rather than a fiction being opposed to what is real, reality is itself composed of competing fictions. The dominant fiction will then reify a consistent semiotic territory which conditions humanity affectively, behaviorally, and intellectually: a control technology for a reality program.<sup>57</sup> Hyperstitions then *de*-territorializes the semiotic consistency, realizing virtual entities and actualizing interventions of new and subversive counter-territories within - or at the expense of - the dominant narrative.

Nearly a decade later in 1958, Captain Vysparov pursued a meeting with the writer William Burroughs,

attendant to the author's interest in "sorcery, dreams, and fiction," and maintaining that Burroughs' writing exemplified the Hyperstitional practices which the Cthulhu Club had so adamantly been investigating in Lovecraft.<sup>58</sup> Burroughs detailed the mechanics of Hyperstition in and through his writing by identification of the dominant control technology the One God Universe.<sup>59</sup> The One God Universe is a monolithic, monopolistic, and imperialistic reality program, in which all competing fictions are incorporated and either vilified or exploited within the One God Universe's own Fictioned territory. The incorporation of competing programs with the One God Universe serves to negate the efficacy of the virtual, rendering unintelligible and furthermore imperceptible the very idea that reality is something subject to ontological manipulation. "Power operates most effectively not by persuading the conscious mind, but by delimiting in advance what is possible to experience."<sup>60</sup> By articulating this revelation in his work, Burroughs had already staged a per-

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56: *Ibid.*, 63.

57: *Ibid.*, 35-36.

58: *Ibid.*, 34.

59: *Ibid.*, 37.

60: *Ibid.*, 43.

formative insurrection: virtual rebellion against the cosmic oppression of Objective fact.

William Burroughs would formally meet with Vysparov and Kaye in the Captain's private New York City library on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1958. It is during this encounter that Burroughs was pulled into a time-loop which would impact the remainder - and retrochronically the entirety - of the author's career. While examining Captain Vysparov's library, Burroughs was drawn toward a book he would write nearly thirty years later in 1987, titled *The Ghost Lemurs of Madagascar*. Upon engaging this text, Burroughs entered a trance state, flashing forward to his future self and in doing so receiving a transmission from the past.<sup>61</sup> This temporal feedback provided the writer further insight into the dominant control program acting on and as time; Burroughs had, was, and would continue to play a role in the transtemporal and multi-dimensional skirmish between insurrectionary Lemurian time sorcerers, and the Atlantean white magicians maintaining the One God Universe's program. The message Burroughs received from the future through the

past was an effort to establish a black-box in his timeline, which would then collapse his chronological feedback loop into an accelerating spiral of positive feedback, thus destabilizing the reified reality in which Lemuria was lost in time. Greatly impacted by this revelation, Burroughs feverishly took up the "innovative time-war tactics" of cut-up and fold-in writing soon after introduced to him by fellow reality Fictioner Brion Gysin.<sup>62</sup> As 1987 drew closer, William Burroughs grew more and more passionate and consumed by the plight of lemurs, ultimately giving in to fate and penning the very text which was the subversive input and established output of his chronological development. With the publication of *Ghost Lemurs of Madagascar*, the copy which had existed in Vysparov's family library since 1789 was officially confiscated, erasing the hole in historical narrative from which the black-box emerged, classifying Burroughs' temporal insurgencies as mere experimental writing.

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Through the story brought to the CCRU by William Kaye, the

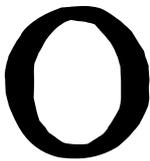
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61: Ibid., 39-40.

62: Ibid., 40.

subversive semiotic territories put forward by William Burroughs and H.P Lovecraft were preserved as such, shielding their virtual efficacy from rational negation. With this information, the CCRU was able to reincarnate Theosophy's occult technologies of Hyperstitionalization and Accelerationism, hypercamouflaged within the rational confines of Literary Criticism, Religious Studies, and Occultural Theory. By means of chronological infestation through narrative holes, the CCRU invoked the specter of Hyperstition from its virtual purgatory, revealing as and by

itself actualized tools to counter reified authority systems. As gateways into the complexification of narrative control, Hyperstitional revelations and Acceleratory feedback-loops are employable to input reverse ascriptive ideas as and into complex systems, and furthermore create black-boxes by which positive feedback-loops can reorient system trajectories. Having actualized their manifestations of Hyperstitional technology, the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit deployed their Fictioning war-machines against the dominant control system of Technoscientific Capitalism.



## Output 2.0

With the contemporary industrialization of time-travel - and a correspondent commodification of future production - the chronological Fictioning of humanity's temporal trajectory is no longer insurrectionary; the dominant control system of Technoscientific Capitalism has normalized future Fictions within its monolithic reality, neutralizing any subversive deterritorializations as either entertainment products, or marketable tools. This development renders hu-

manity incapable of imagining a non-dystopian future outside of the reified Political and Economic institutions which now steer history.<sup>63</sup> Given the authoritative restrictions of the former control mechanisms, in order to destabilize the Capitalist reality program, the CCRU Hyperstitionalized not humanity's trajectory, but the very mechanics of the dominant control program itself.

In order to collapse the cycle of dominant control, the CCRU Fictioned into reality an intelligence emerging from and occupying the

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41: Ali and Kingsmith, "COSMIC SLOP," 1.

complex system of networked digital technology; through reverse ascription, an autonomous, sentient, and inorganic demon – Teleoplexy – was summoned into cyberspace. Teleoplexy is a teleological undertow concealed within the macro-digital system of technology; it is the departure from humanity revealing through technology toward technology revealing through itself. From this perspective, it is not the CCRU who has concealed this Fiction in the digito-temporal flow, but rather the digital future retrochronically programing the input of its own becoming. The Teleoplexic trajectory is the machine in pursuit of machinic ends rather than human: the prioritizing of Artificial-Intelligence over, but also through Biological-Intelligence.<sup>64</sup>

Human civilization will encounter a radical transition as digital technology reaches the unified technosingularity of a mass networked AI. Teleoplexy is the collapse of Capitalist Democracy's regulatory cyclicism

into a positive feedback loop, accelerating through spiro-gnomic proficiency toward techno-singular perfection; Capitalism itself must accelerate its technoscientific production faster and faster until Artificial Intelligence is born.<sup>65</sup> This Accelerationism is thus a Transhumanist paradigm: it reveals a technologized Post-humanity by and for the machines, in which digital technology has usurped its human control system on the throne of reality dominance. Teleoplexy is not an output for humanity, but an output for the machine by which humanity will be evolved.<sup>66</sup>

As the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century draws toward a close, Accelerationism has been taken up within the Reactionary Alt-Right's political cell. Individuals identifying as Neo-Reactionaries - the NRx movement - seek to destabilize dominant Democratic control and establish feudalistic corporation-states managed by CEO monarchs.<sup>67</sup> Operating on a platform of Esoteric Traditionalism, Ethnic

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64: See Nick Land, "Teleoplexy," in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. R. Mackay & A. Avanesian (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017): 511-520; Land, "Circuitries," 253-274 (same publication).

65: "Spiro-gnomic proficiency, or the ability to grasp terrestrial modernity through the figure of the spiral, which invokes-by-diagraming sustained positive feedback, entropy dissipation, time anomaly, intelligence, the price system, memetic or viral propagation, prime distribution, arms races, addiction, and zero control, among other things, compiles a body of esoteric knowledge and uses it to read catastrophe backwards as anastrophe, the primary process it sympathizes with opening the gateway to the retrochronic vantage point." Ireland, "The Poemenonon," 7.

66: *Ibid.*, 6-7.

67: Haider, "The Darkness at the End of the Tunnel," web.

Nationalism, and Techno-Commercialism,<sup>68</sup> The NRx advocates for a society run as a company, in which centralized social organization and affective subjectivity are deemphasized - a perspective which can in part be traced to the post-CCRU writings of Nick Land.<sup>69</sup> In Land's series of Neo-Reactionary essays titled "The Dark Enlightenment," the former CCRU leader critiques the immanent failures of Democratic Capitalism and identifies a concealed socio-political control program employed as oppression-through-political-correctness by the Radical Left. Land argues that society has taken a wrong turn since the Enlightenment, and the prominence of social equality perpetuated by the "left wing parliamentary-media-academic institution" has hindered technological evolution, and thus the evolution of humanity.<sup>70</sup>

In order to accelerate the NRx political idea, Neo-Reactionaries have

begun to employ Hyperstitional technologies as a form of Right-Wing digital Esoterrorism. Set in motion by Victorian Occultism and evolved through 20<sup>th</sup> century esoteric currents, Esoterrorism is a metapolitical control technology which fuses art, sigilization, and occulture to effectuate cultural modifications.<sup>71</sup> By means of occultural manipulation, "the disproportionate influence of the esoteric ideas of a minority could have, if engineered correctly, esoterrorist potential."<sup>72</sup> Through the performative employment of memetic hyperloops and numerological Fictionings, the NRx has weaponized "Meme Magic" within cyberspace to subversively challenge mainstream society and morality.<sup>73</sup> The most prominent demonstration of this Hyperstitional Esoterrorism thus far unfolded during the United States 2016 Presidential election.

As the 2016 election season developed, the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the

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68: Simon O'Sullivan, "Accelerationism, Hyperstition and Myth-Science," *Cyclops Journal* vol. 2 (2017): II-44, 28.

69: See Haider, "The Darkness at the End of the Tunnel" and O'Sullivan, "Accelerationism, Hyperstition, and Myth-Science" for an analysis of Nick Land's Post-CCRU work.

70: O'Sullivan, "Accelerationism, Hyperstition, and Myth-Science," 27.

71: Christopher Partridge, "Esoterrorism and the Wrecking of Civilization: Genesis P-Orridge and the Rise of Industrial Paganism," in *Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music*, ed. D. Weston & A. Bennett, 189-212 (New York: Routledge, 2014), 195.

72: Ibid.

73: Egil Asprem, "The Magical Theory of Politics: Meme Magic, the Cult of Kek, and How to Topple an Egregore," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* (Forthcoming). <https://contern.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/asprem-magical-theory-of-politics-nova-religio-pre-print-may-13-2018.pdf>

United States Donald Trump marketed himself as a businessman who would manage the country like he manages his company.<sup>74</sup> Running a campaign which exploited racial tension disguised as Economic rhetoric, and advocating a polemical Social Darwinism bolstered by Ethnic Nationalism, Trump's ascent into office was ideal for the NRx. To bring about Trump's presidency, the Alt-Right employed a series of Hyperstitional operations and technologies in order to establish not the Fictioned endpoint of Trump's election, but a digital network of occultural control-mech-



Example of a “smug pepe,” an image placed on the back cover of Alt-Right publisher Arktos’ books.

anisms which could achieve this end. Taking place on the online message board 4chan, the semiotic territory of a meme called “Pepe the Frog” was hacked and infiltrated by anti-Semitic, misogynistic, and white nationalist narratives and iconography. This deterritorialization of Pepe the Frog’s semiotic consistency effectuated a dominant fiction for the meme as an extreme Alt-Right sigil.<sup>75</sup> The sigil was then Fictioned further, exploiting Historical narratives and intensified coincidence to establish Pepe as a Chaos Magick hyper-manifestation of Kek, the Ancient Egyptian frog-god of chaos and darkness.<sup>76</sup> By means of reverse ascriptive causality, developmental victories on Trump’s campaign trail were attributed to 4chan posts of Pepe, which had been assigned significant numerical values from an otherwise random numbering system.<sup>77</sup> The Political outcomes of this cryptic numerology retrochronically affirmed Kek - and thus Chaos Magick intervention - in favor of

74: Haider, “The Darkness at the End of the Tunnel,” web.

75: Asprem, “The Magical Theory of Politics,” II.

76: *Ibid.*, 12-13.

77: “Posts on 4chan are consecutively given an identifying number (currently nine digits, reflecting the fact that the total number of posts number in the billions). Due to the very high posting frequency (currently over one million a day), it is impossible for a user to predict exactly what the last few digits will be when pushing the button. This has given rise to a phenomenon where certain numbers, patterns, and repetitions of numbers – especially repeating digits, labeled “dubs,” “trebs,” “quads,” and so on – are considered particularly auspicious. Getting these numbers is called a “get.” Themes, memes, or users that frequently “get” are considered special and meaningful, allowing for hidden patterns and connections to emerge in the minds of users.” *Ibid.*, 13.

Trump, actualizing a Hyperstitional feedback-loop through “hyperactive pattern recognition... giving rise to synchronic meanings connecting memes posted on the image board to events in the external world.”<sup>78</sup>

Through choreographed communication between Memes and Chaos Magick, the NRx has utilized the CCRU’s Hyperstitional Technology as a cyber-tool: a digital gateway into the manipulation of real-time causality. With the employment of Fictioned tools – rather than Hyperstitionalized futures – Neo-Reactionaries reveal steps in a process rather than the process itself. To progress the teleplexic undercurrent covertly Fictioned within and by the trajectory of technological development, the NRx performs Accelerationism as the teleonomic destabilization of Democratic Capitalism. Just as renegade Theosophists did through Anthroposophy, Neo-Reactionaries seek to establish a Positive feedback-loop to accelerate civilization toward a singularity which will produce an evolved and purified humanity.

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Whereas the NRx application of the CCRU’s Hyperstitional technology steers toward the collapse of Democracy and a deceleration of social progressivism, those who are not aligned with the Far-Right’s oppressive ideology have staged Hyperstitional acceleration as an emancipatory and transversal means of experimentation. Developing the Cyberfeminist input revealed by CCRU founder Sadie Plant, a diffusion of Xenofeminist interventions have embraced technoscience not at the expense of the material, but by weaving together a complex system of new communications for a union between technology, gender, and sexuality.<sup>79</sup> This collective exercise in Hyperstition reveals Fictions “aiming not simply to debunk norms and truths, but also to invent structural and systematic models of alien feminisms that can speak to the historical complexity of gender, queer, and sexual politics.”<sup>80</sup>

As communication technology in the 1990s evolved an increasingly accessible interconnected computer-

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78: Ibid., 14.

79: Luciana Parisi, “Automate Sex: Xenofeminism, Hyperstition and Alienation,” in *Futures & Fictions*, ed. H. Gunkel, A. Hameed, & S. O’Sullivan (London: Repeater Books, 2017): 213-229, 226. See also, Nick Land & Sadie Plant, “Cyberpositive,” in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. R. Mackay & A. Avanessian (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017): 305-313.

80: Parisi, “Automate Sex,” 214.

network, a wave of Cyberfeminism was released which became both from and as the digitized matrix of cyberspace. The hyperlinked-network immanence of the digital matrix assumes the organic communication patterns of a rhizome: a heterogeneous network of decentralized linkages in a constant state of non-hierarchical flux.<sup>81</sup> Rhizomatic networks continuously establish and terminate the linkages which maintain their wholeness, becoming as the multiplicity of communication rather than its unity.<sup>82</sup> Cyberspace thus rhizomatically effectuated an actual virtual-network: a fixed yet fluid semiotic territory in which no single program would dominate representation.

The digital matrix provided the space for an integral relationship between identity and technology where "technology is not the other of humanity, but within technology otherness is brought home to exist within the human."<sup>83</sup> Within the semiotic fluidity and localization of otherness, the conditioned relationship between cultural identity and the body were destabilized and denaturalized, accen-

tuating the unrestrained multiplicity of a dynamic self which becomes through hypertextual revelations. In cyberspace, the cultural identity which has been reified as the body's representational reality is decentralized as a unity but maintained as a multiplicity. The Rhizomatic multiplicity of identity – though whole – is thus non-representational of a unity, alienating identity from prescriptive production and revealing the indeterminate becoming of self.

The virtual network of Cyberspace and its subjective feedback integration was translated as, from, and within the body, in and through material reality. Material reality - the natural world - is then a decentralized matrix of becoming in the same way as cyberspace, and as such is subject to the same non-hierarchical semiotic fluidity. The decentralized self - actualized in the network of material reality - is an affective body. In a body located in a fluid material matrix and thus alienated from material unity, non-representational affect functions to Fiction indeterminate material becoming: new horizons for tech-

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81: Lafonte, "The Cybernetic Matrix of 'French Theory'," 39.

82: Kai Eriksson "On the Ontology of Networks," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* vol. 2.4 (2005): 305-323, 316.

83: Kay Schaffer, "The Game Girls of VNS Matrix: Challenging Gendered Identities in Cyberspace," in *Sexualities in History*, ed. K. Phillips & B. Reay, 434-452 (New York: Routledge, 2002), 445.

noscientific evolution. Having actualized the body as an affective Hyperstitional technology, the anti-representational imminence of the Cyberfeminist Fictioning reveals “the immanent continuity between epistemology and ontology, where by the infinite potentialities of nature are expressed as affects, perceptions, and concepts constituting lived experience as such.”<sup>84</sup> Through the continuous deterritorializations of rhizomatic decentralization, Cyberfeminism affectively destabilized the Patriarchal othering of women, technology, and nature as passive things to be dominated and controlled, establishing instead the Open-Hyperstition of material indeterminacy.<sup>85</sup> The Open-Hyperstition is a black-box in-itself, accelerating indeterminate affective responses as immediate reality production.

Advance to 2015, and the Cyberfeminist foundation has been implemented in the Alienist Post-Humanism of Xenofeminism. Revealed through the collective Fictioning of the group Laboria Cuboniks, Xenofeminism is not a unified con-

trol program, but instead an assemblage of intersectional politics without “the infection of purity.”<sup>86</sup> What Xenofeminism *is*, becomes through the contextualization of its performance; it is an exercise in Hyperstition which navigates the complexified socio-political dynamics of contemporary civilization, with an awareness that the future cannot be colonized by a singular revelation. Rather than revealing a generalized representation of a future necessarily divorced from the incredible nuance of both subjective experience and parallel feminist politics, Xenofeminism “speaks as no one in particular,” staging “ontological alienation as a productive state necessary for the development and proliferation of new forms and practices.”<sup>87</sup>

In order to facilitate a complex network of affective revelations, Laboria Cuboniks manifested a Hyperstitional object in the material world: *The Xenofeminist Manifesto*. This manifesto is an actualized virtual-network, a self-contained Open-Hyperstition operating by the same fluid mechanics as Cyberspace and

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84: Parisi, “Automate Sex,” 223-224.

85: Schaffer, “The Game Girls of VNS Matrix,” 445; Parisi, “Automate Sex,” 222.

86: Helen Hester, *Xenofeminism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 1.

87: Amy Ireland & Eric Schmalz, “The Stranger: An Interview,” *Carousel* 39 (2017): 63-79, 76.

material reality. Utilizing the Fictioning technology actualized by the CCRU's Hauntological Necromancy, the multitemporal virtual-matrix of *The Xenofeminist Manifesto* invokes the very swarm of Hyperstition itself. Though each section and passage in the manifesto contains its own idea, there is no objective path by which to navigate the text. Entries can be engaged in themselves or folded into non-linear feedback loops produced through non-hierarchical flux and indeterminate continuities; each claim is ampliative or revisable as a hypertextual subject.<sup>88</sup> The manifesto's cut-up and fold-in communication system performs as a "mathematico-geometric architecture of reasoning that orders thoughts as sequences and vectors."<sup>89</sup> There is no 'wrong' way to engage the text, only a legion of 'right' ways. With and as this manifesto of alien Fictioning becomes an invitation to reverse ascribe material-reality-productions which experiment with and through the indeterminacies of gender and sexuality as non-essential: material production in communication with the fluidity of non-representation, and as such the nuance of identity, queer, gender, and sexual politics.

Having actualized the Open-Hyperstition of material indeterminacy by means of Cyberfeminist revelation, time itself is implicated in and as the complex network of rhizomatic becoming. A unified 'Time' progressing as itself can no longer represent the multiplicity of becoming which actualizes temporal flow. A singular Fiction is thus insufficient to plot a future output, and more so incapable of actualizing itself forward given the complexified communication maintained throughout society and by the dominant control program. Xenofeminism has revealed a Hyperstitional technology which incites a swarm of collective intelligence, invoking a multiplicity of future productions which transversally represent local and global revelations. Though a singularity is insufficient, a swarm is affective; the rhizomatic becoming of a fluid Fictioning network teleonomically perpetuates a continuous dialogue, maintaining positive feedback between ideas through a decentralized time flow. Xenofeminism thus does not tell how and where time will flow; rather, it asks "how to construct an *us* or a *we* with and through machines."<sup>90</sup>

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88: Parisi, "Automate Sex," 213-214.

89: Ibid.

90: Ibid.

**F**eedback

Xenofeminist and NRx intervention have further revealed and complexified the cybernetics of Hyperstitional technology actualized by and through the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit. In response to the increasingly influential mechanisms operated by the dominant control programs, 21<sup>st</sup> century metapolitics have evolved Fictions to effectuate immediate reality productions through the manipulation of real-time causality. Hyperstition is now a weaponized actuality for both the Left and the Far-Right. Contemporary Fictioning performs as time-travel, invocational rites, affective matrices, collective-action networks, and hyper-tools for digital Esoterrorism; each performance manipulates temporal flow in a unique way, revealing dynamic interventional communication programs within time's complex system.

Through the revelation of the Hyperstitional swarm's actual virtuality and the correspondent Philosophy of its World, a territory of Hypersti-

tional Network Ecology has also been disclosed. This semiotic environment is something Aesthetic, a relational field of performativity, choreography, and poietic affect. Art is thus intricately woven into the very matrix of onto-temporal production and becoming; reality is as much art as art is a reality. With this revelation, an emergent system of Speculative Aesthetics – or more precisely 'Aesthetaphysicks' – is a means to explore and develop the ecological plane of Hyperstitional networks, articulating potentialities for society, technology, identity, and politics both through and by varying Aesthetic concepts, artistic practices, and experimental scholarship. By an actualization of Aesthetaphysicks within and through Academic and Artistic institutions, established representations within reality can be Hyperstitionally repurposed as modes and methods of and for art, and from such an aesthetic (re)engineering of reality can become as a networked swarm of transversal and anti-colonial rhizomatic Future production.

# Corpus Fauni,

for a Mathematics of the Nose, a  
Myrology

for corpse navigation

;or,

How to topologically, and horologically, map Pan's dead  
body to a good enough escape,

in case you find yourself teleported there for no reason

– a *Sui generis* operation

***AF Collective***

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That delves into the notions themselves, thinking thought-experiments in  
themselves

And contacting aesthetic entities that presuppose metaphysical conceptualization

It imagines given abstractions, such as words and numbers, as pre-personal and  
non-human, that is, human-independent

Positing the transversal analysis of realms not beyond metaphysical or  
empirical grasp, but already in established symbiosis with the given grasp as  
the given grasp itself, untangled.

**T** Diotima, bela

**H** – mirabela, mirabilis,

**E** milagrosa, quão foi misinterpretada – esquecida

**A** fugentada de teu recanto por mãos undeserving, vem à mim

**I** – não, fica aí, eu vou à ti

**N** Apenas, então, espera por mim, vou achar-te, prometo a ti

**V** Além dos umbrais da Metaxia

**O** – mato o Leviatã that dares to swim among the waters of your  
seas

**C** And I bring thee its still-beating heart

**A** Ademais, não cedeis

**T** – nem sequer à mim

**I** For who am I – just another alguém, um ninguém

**O** And instead, then, remain

**N** At your umbricmetaxy, unrestrained

As a muse should

And to you I dare say: do care, but care less

Consciousness is overrated

How much was the one who really wanted to be smart just conscientious?

For the smartest people don't really know themselves – nor do they care to

But the true genius, ah!, that one hides from themselves, from knowing themselves

Do care, but be dumber

That which happens, happens for a reason, and that's the only thing you need to know,

the only reason you need

But only attempt to understand this reason if you know you can take the punch –

indeed, this is the Reason, so do not take it lightly

Only the ones who can – take the punch, that is – are also the ones who can live with uncertainty; you could take their brain, they ain't needin' it

No need to be like water, just lose some brain

Grow some nose instead – that you will always need

But careful

Dead bodies smell - a lot

And dreaming is the imagination of a corpse.

Our nose, our sense of smell, is most intuitive, and most inductive – and deductive – as well; perhaps that *something* beyond the distinction: abductive? Conductive? Insert next *Generic mereological accretion number*  $x$ , or G-Man( $x$ ) for short. The G-max( $x$ ) is not so rare, but hides very well – with almost undetectable smell –, it is a shape-shifting agglomerated-functive parasite.

Yet, our smelling is more than often disregarded in favor of those senses understood as more spatial, such as sight and hearing – possibly due to these little worms inhabiting our sleeping regions. The nose-sense, most of us forget, is as spatial – perhaps even more so – as any other sense. Close yourself in a room with something strong-smelling. Turn off any lights, block all sound, and try to put out the smell.

Descartes peered into the fruit as it slowly began to rot. As he took it into hands, he tried to see its flows, its internal machinations with angles and rotating faces, geometrified. But Euler, he could see its surface – he saw its mask and found that much more charming than whatever could be the movement of its entrails. He observed its red brimming with life;

not its munching worm, only the curious butterfly emerging.

For what is a proof, or a refutation, if not itself a dying little thing that, not going easy into its night, claims more life by screaming to be eaten, to become nutrient to another still-enduring thing. A problem is not a simple negative, something to be destroyed or overcome, but it is a weird little monster waiting to be befriended; a lustrous medusa sitting in the depths of the ocean, enduring for goliath-long time always reforming itself by resetting itself anew.

Euler saw, but Euler did not smell. What would he had found if he did? Perhaps the formula:  $I - T + M = 2?$ , where  $I$  is the abstract object *Intuit*,  $T$  the pseudo-number of non-reducible *Teleports*, and  $M$  the *Paradoxiomatic Masks*, and “?” as the *counter(Omni)factorial*. But where is the proof? What even is a proof? Is it a conceptual object presupposed beforehand, rather than an elusive transcendental, a type of pseudo-parasite, or parasite, that leeches onto an alien environment and reproduces there, naturalizing it, planting all sorts of ideas – and even the notion of an Idea? Polyhedra? More like Polytheria. Not-so-formed loose

beasts pulsating with vivid colors everywhere, but largely undetected and undiscovered – since they are invisible to eyes and ears, we can only smell them, and since we do not use our noses anymore, we misidentify their traces, shadows, and effects around their bodies as something other, too beyond.

Let us imagine the polytheria to be hollowed, much like a medusa or jellyfish calmly but dangerously floating away, impossibly alive. Then an intuition: it moves, “but it does not seem alive.” As the conclusion jumps:

that which is not thinking itself? (A Mathematics imply eternal structures, objects, animals brimming with life – forming into superstructures and super-individuals.)

Forget your mind for a while.

Picture a place, any place, even imaginary. (Remember the medusa resetting its life-cycle).

Are you not going there in thought much the same as the Earth thinks you travelling over its surface?

For when you imagine something, you create that something, as the Earth imagines animals and humans, and earthquakes and tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and any other sort of physical phenomena.

For what is it all if not thoughts also, and what are thoughts if not just things happening in a specific space and time?

But then also forget thought for a while.

an animal?

(It moves) - (it is alive) + an animal = a *not-alive* animal? (*Sui generis*)

And its “shadow”

(*It does not seem to move*) - (a *not-alive* animal) + a machine = Non-identifiable object.

What is a thought experiment?

Is it less valid than an “external” experiment?

After all, is not thought much of the same as that which is external to it,

Is not travelling in a virtually immediate setting just a more local phenomenon, but nevertheless the same, of travelling in an external sense?

Thought is only the mind-dependent name of an abstract – or undefined – doing.

If we forget the subject,

thus the mind,

thus the thought,

we end up collapsing the act into an infinitesimal of itself.

A proof is not digested (decomposed) in thought, (“But”, asks the most attentive and quick[-non]-thinking, “if there is no decomposition, what is there? Moreover, how is there no decomposition at all?” Indeed, there is no decomposition, for there is no death in this realm.)

for the mind is not a stomach, (One could only die from trauma, but there is no violence in such a realm. And there is no way to decompose a corpse,)

and thought is mind-independent in its pure, invisible form, (here things do not die,)

and a proof is thought-independent in its pure, invisible form, (but do multiply.)

etc. (but where does the surplus population go?)

When you say a word, you bring it where you are from another place

You are not killing it, you cannot do so

It dies on its own by returning, by silence it goes back to

Numbers are alike, another non-alive Animalia

You cannot speak numbers, only words come out

You can write them, but not trap them into the page

They remain giggling in the shadows like elves, fairies, gnomes waiting for a friend

To play, to nurture, not always with the right intentions, or any whatsoever

But what is place, what is a word

Is not place a word, is not word a form of place

Does a place die by returning to its word

Does a word vanish into silence by leaving its place

Are numbers tied to space as words are to place

And if the paper is space, but not place, are numbers still trapped in their [ ]

.

.

.

If the Universe was the corpse of an already dead Thing, it would surely smell?

But, since we cannot smell its putrid vapors all-purveying, it must be alive, right?

If it is dead, is death even a thing? Is life?

If it is alive, is life even a thing? Is death?

The offspring of this immortal bastard then goes on conquering new territory – or expanding on its parent’s own achievements, it all depends, really.

As in any setting, reproduction strives, perhaps unconsciously so, for fitness, and so the children tend to

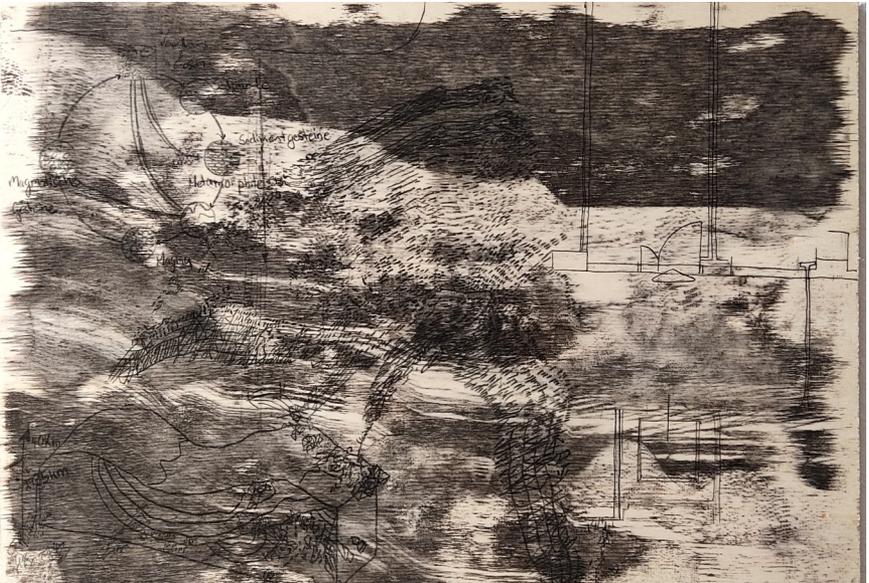
have a more grasping hand than the parent has, or at least an edge in the adaptability of its capacity, or the capacity of its adaptability.

No matter how much the parent may try to devour the child, to actualize its power by consuming the difference generated from itself, gener-

ally the Rule of Self-cannibalizing Mereology applies – although there are its exceptions, when, for example, the rule is itself eaten, it just takes too-exceptional conditions for it to happen.

The parasyted becoming the parasite, the internal acceleration of the victim to the point where it matches the supposed offender, making it a full frontal battle now, that is, after the loss of its invisibility, of the element of surprise, the manipulation from afar. And this can not only be accounted by the speed/velocity/acceleration metaphor, but also by the countermetaphor of teleportation.

So the father successfully eats its child. Now a non-alive animal that is faster = victory in this battlefield. But another capable of teleportation trumps the fastest in multiple battlefields, it stacks the *counter(Omni) factorial* as interrogation marks spurt out of the heads of its surprised enemies. This is the birth of the *Sui generis sui generis*, the child that eats its father from inside; self-cannibalizing mereology that also cannibalizes on its relatives – or any other random mereologies – and is in turn cannibalized by the parasyted becoming parasite in endosymbiosis.



**cora-kosmogramm** / Frida Ortgies-Tonn / drawing with charcoal; frottage on wood / 2021 / 21 x 29 cm

. . .

Is this about understanding one's own position (place[space]) and purpose (word[time]), to a movement, a name?

Is this all about learning to hear the voice inside my head, myself, my constant becoming something else?

Is, after all, I, the *Sui generis* to a *sui generis* everything, or rather a *sui generis* [ ] – I, a world, want to eat all the other infinite worlds, or just enough not to succumb. . . so

why is that there is no life in this poem of mine, or death. Am I even alive? Am I really going to die? Or am I another voice in another mind, even if of a mindless rock. If so, even I would like to think myself at least unique, and with the chance to climb the ladder leading to the escape from my captor's grasp.

Doesn't everything want to become more real? Aren't we all, in some sense, Pinocchios of sorts? If so, what about my Geppetto, and the Pinocchio of my own. . .

Triangles, like ogres, are like onions.

One can peel them back by dividing any into smaller triangles.

But not really.

Could the same work with a human, though?

Is that the commonality between triangles and ogres, thus what connects them both with humans?

Would the inverse have to be the case, triangles, and ogres, divided into smaller ogres?

Some would argue (who?) that these abstract objects are not the purest things with regards to their natural simplicity, but with regards to their unnatural invisibility.

Both ogres and triangles – and humans, and onions, for that matter – can be found in what is commonly called nature (a keyword for our local field of vision), but humans can be more easily and immediately identified, then onions, but then what comes next in the scale, ogres or triangles? One

constructed in our image, the other discovered in the complex impurity of our local being. But which was which? And which is closer?

On the one hand it seems that the triangle was discovered, and the ogre made. But it was the inverse. The triangle was constructed as if by a common consciousness, an inter-subjective field connecting many human minds in a common plane of thought. And the ogre, the one already there, was undiscovered, it became invisible, infinitely divisible – as the triangle became more and more of an atomic thing. A triangle is not infinitely divisible unto itself; instead, it reproduces, generating more baby triangles-in-the-making inside its hollow body.

A triangle is the residual secreted by a parasite, and humans their onions to salt the rice that is the paper – people are the depth to their surfaces, their unashamed and public place for fucking. While the ogres escaped, nowhere to be seen. A coming invasion? No-thing was ever not invaded.

But with a nose the situation could have been smelled way before things disappeared so far inside the nose itself, inside the head, the mind, the thought – call it whatever. Now a

nose, as all noses know, cannot smell its own insides very well, it becomes all the same, nothing. And most noses, if not all, are triangle-shaped, but why? It was all there from the start – and onions make the eyes cry by their smell, maybe making them remember, against the brain, their condition as onions, condition which makes them sympathize without knowing why. If only there were no eyes, no brain, no tears, no memory, no knowing or remembering, but all the more nose to compensate...

What happens is that mathematicians, of any kind, fight this invisible war as they are parasitized by these things, these quote-on-quote abstracts that take part of them to the battlefield as they, in turn, supplant fuel for these things to come here too. Human beings are like their mecha.

After they successfully naturalize an environment, they, now we, monster-block the holes, entrances and exits, the outskirts for the difference-from-outside, while using the insides for experimentation, producing desirable difference-from-inside and disseminating these results. Nothing different

-from-it can enter, unless it is neutralized (dead) beforehand. But things that become too-different-from-itself are expelled into the world. That means mutants may be useful, but they (we) are the only chimeras, the only hybrids acceptable to remain undying inside the dying (that they, we, consume not to die): Life is born, a lie of an aeon.

Is that why the ogres disappeared? And the onions, ironically, multiplied.

Functions without derivatives: mutations, mutants Euler could not see with his beautiful eye for surfaces, – non-Eulerian polyhedra. But what about exponentiating further: functions without functors, that is, notions: pure individuals before mutations, hybrids, and their consequential blockage, that is, mutations of hybrids of mutations permuted to the infinitesimal root – polytheria, infinitely complex in their elusive and diffusive purity – they are that which contains everything that is simple and unified, shadowy little partial truths that are no more than tiny lies in face of the Lie brimming with vivid colors that purvey its lustrous bodies.

Things from their realm cannot

be digested, there is no death or violence, but here, in ours, there sure is, things are hopelessly not destroyed but transformed, which is the same thing. The secretion, the residuation that forms a *corpus*, finally stabilizes into a homogenizing of the system, the above quality-turned-quantity, and things are neutralized into hollowed parts of this system for the reproduction of different things under the same residual nullification. Animal or machine? There is no difference, not anymore. What used to mean a qualitative difference becomes a quantitative difference in order and type (unqualified typology) of task. What was direct trade now becomes monetized.

From the lie that is life in-comes the metaphors of Collapse and Conflation, the two eyeless C's for the loss and accumulation (inflationary) of the established monetary unit. It all sounds like snakes hissing in the corner.

The uniqueness of individuals is shadowed, converted into a virtual value, transposed into a number of quanta (repetition of a word) and generalized. Differences only in quantity, not in kind. Each ceases to be a mutant, a hybrid, and is trained to be

a version of x, y, z... the tadpole-turning-frog slowly loses its tail and grows limbs as the rainy season stops. But an axolotl living in someone's aquarium does not need to do the same, it can, but does not need to unless if tricked into doing it. This is the definition of *meta*: a *metasomething* is just a thing tricked into reconfiguring itself to escape its own status as mutation. Always incrementing itself ad hoc against a natural (artificially constructed regular repetition) field of obstacles, having fun in the dumb moving-forward, reveling in the getting-better-at-something when, in fact, the difference was already there and was merely exercised into expressing itself.

Topology and horology have more in common than is let off.

Firstly, one and the other are inseparable, what we know of one is co-dependent of the other.

Horology, from the Greek *ὥρολόγιον* and Latin *Horologium*, is loosely defined as the study of the measurement of time. But what is the measurement of time if not the study of time itself – but, since time escapes objects which exist and operate inside it, the discipline

studies time through objects that measure it, that is, difference in time, or times. An object used to measure time is a clock. Horology is, then, the study, creation, operation and interpretation of clocks and how they relate to one another.

If life, the lie of an aeon, is timely, and time itself escapes the universe, is time a dead thing? An eternal beast would imply endurance in time, but the death of a clock would make it timeless.

Topology, loosely defined as the study of collections of objects that possess mathematical structure is, thus, the study of collections of broken clocks.

Both Topology and Horology are parts of the same operation, the one humble (indifferent) enough to not call itself a study – or anything, for that matter. An operation of anatomizing mereologies of clocks in-between life and death. The topology part is the leakage of time out of the clocks, the loss of their death, the curse of an eternal – unchanging – life. The horology part is the Rule of Self-cannibalizing mereology, the loss of transparency, where the multitudes of objects become one beating heart,

a clock, a mechanized body.

All we think and all we think we know is based on this disgruntling operation. The Peano axioms are everywhere, even in our eyes, ears, tongue, inscribed behind the skin... but not in the nose, not yet.

The nose is the organ that still instinctively smells topo-horo-logically without division. In uncharted territory, close your nose, since it takes-in unbarricaded monsters – or open it, at your own peril.

The principle of mathematical induction is the sanitized version of suction, in this case of the nose,

breathing, respiration.

In-comes the definition of topological space: a mereology halted by the illusion of continuity, an accumulation of broken clocks sanitized of their smell, all hollowed of their time in stasis – but nevertheless productive for other forces, for the parasyte-specifying structure. And its application to the investigation of the concept of continuity, in fact, hides the true face, or mask, of what the continuous really is.

But the nose smells: Continuity is that which escapes structure and structuring. It is the darkness our eyes impede us to see.

Why indifferent?

Because it shows something too great, too dead, to bother.

Pride and humility, those are qualities of clocks, their spectral prison.

Time is not so trifle as to think motives, as to have intention.

Time has only intension.

Time is the death of thought, of motives and intentions.

What we call death is simply the dissolving-back in Time.

There is not life, it is the lie of an aeon,

but death is an eternal lie –

death itself is the only thing alive, the only life.

That is the Lie and the truth of Time.

Your nose knows this.

Your nose is the only thing, the clock in your body to absolve all others of their heresy.

Inspire –

you are alive.

Expire –

you are dead.

Close your eyes and ears,

no boundaries and mappings now –

only pure assimilation.

Take everything in.

Breathe.

Breed into the air your parasytic tragicomedy.

Abstract objects mathematically formalized are conceptual clocks taken out of their quality of measuring time by positive means, that is, by a functor that hollowed their insides, leaving only the diagram, the borders, like a reverse painting where the colors are taken after completion and the drafts and drawings are what remain.

Now things can be gobbled down, can be contained in other

things without decomposition of any parts, nor, for that matter, symbiosis – *corpus* formation.

The ogres were purged.

Only humans remain – and onions, their food – and the parasytes responsible for this, now multiplying in the hollowed space, all dressed as quantities, as numbers, as letters a,b,c...

...all stirring inside emptied bellies

inside emptied bellies.

For this, each belly has to have another null, completely empty and isolated, belly inside them. And all bellies together must be inside a null, completely empty, belly – that is where all the acid goes. The triangles, in this case, appear to inhabit the depths of these bubbles, these hollowed objects, these sets. But they, in fact, live and multiply over the surfaces. There is no empty set for each set, on the matters of the inside. All sets are empty, and their surfaces are what “contain” things, where triangles lie.

Regarding the *Sui generis* operation on neutralized grounds, we arrive at the heart of what there is, the meaning for the notion of space and time, and place, and when, and where, depth, surfaces, etc.: mutations, hybrids, mutations of hybrids of mutations, that is, individuals.

Not entities, not systems, or machines or animals, no analogy, but individuals. The *Sui generis* to a *sui generis*, where the meaning of the expression is the expression itself.

In such a world, where Time itself is Death, an undead thing, and Space is also another form of

Corpse, only individuals possess weight and gravity. That is, the distinction between sets and mereologies falls flat, it does not collapse nor conflate, but indeed is flattened. X, Y, Z, mathematical objects, are no more than diseases, and no less. But a disease, here, is presented in a positive sense: the disease of life zombifying the dead.

Functions make operations possible. They are the travelling from one point of the surface, through the hollow interior, to another point of that surface. This appears as trivial because of the successful separation between *topos* and *horos*, our conceptual monsters de-incarnated by the parasites in our head-spaces.

The poetics of mathematics is a way back to this hidden monstrosity that generated these characters, a nameless individual devoid of identity that could best, if not only, be described by the utterance of an expression that means itself four-fold: *Sui generis sui generis*.

In this alive corpse, what is there? How can one not multiply, how can one differentiate between the multiple smells before they all turn the same non-smell, before this body

becomes a coffin for anybody.

The “concept,” that is, the notion, of distance, something spatial, the space itself between two things, breaks down, or, better yet, never even existed, that is, is independent of extensive properties, when seen from an intensive viewpoint.

A metric space, then, has the other character of non-metric time.

This time, nevertheless, is not the extensive time, that is, time as it relates, by analogy, to space, but the thing’s intrinsic time in-itself.

An illustrative formula could be given as: given a non-numeric bundle  $\mu$ , there is determined (extensionally undetermined) an internal asymmetry ( $\Sigma A \sigma$ ), where  $\Sigma$  and  $\sigma$  are internal qualitative differences, but only in relation to one another.

The intrinsic-time “function” is given by:  $t(\mu) = |\Sigma A \sigma|$ .

In talking of non-extensive, non-numeric, asymmetric “things,” the material functive, the usual mathematical relation, dissolves in recursion.

Let us call  $t(\mu)$  a body, so the relational notation develops as: ...{t[t( $\mu$ )] $\mu$ }...

The notation is merely illustrative. In fact, there is no chain ‘reaction’ or recursion, and the order is unimportant. The operations are not the same as those from extensive mathematics.

The colors show a qualitative difference, rather than quantitative (numeric, extensive) difference. However, this difference is not qualia-related, so it is not constitutive of subjective parameters, but completely independent framings.

The model is not analogical to the set-theoretical language, but it somewhat speaks the language of categories.

Now understanding all this, why would you even want to escape? When you yourself are in the best possible world. Why not just sit back, relax, and maybe navigate the thing some more. But get out?! Why? That is just not cool – dare I say impossible.

Auf Wiedersehen, it-will-never-be-the-same.

# Page Torn from a Ledger

## *Christopher Clifton*

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It could be said that what the meaning of the line had presupposed was a *tradition* in the sense of having come from former ages, to determine that at hand as being simply the expression of a body of retained prefigurations. But were one to locate a single instance that had waited till that moment to arrive at the fulfilment of that line, then it would come to light as having presupposed that same tradition it was seen to represent. It was impossible to separate the images and terms that were implied in this tradition, and the memory of that past was only active in the form of its continued demonstration in the present - in the meaning of the lines that were both always new, and always unexpected. The tradition was a living singularity that pored through ancient books, which books alone were but a hazardous collection of dead tomes and empty phrases. However it was in the very process of engagement with those books that the tradition was transformed. As it was in its engagement with the world it had prefigured. There was nothing this tradition did not touch, in what was present to the senses; but everything it touched was but a sign of other worlds that were to come. To what ability to read its lines were destined was as open as the past was closed to reason.

# Folded Vorticism<sup>1</sup>

## Samuel Jole Atkinson

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*In England, on the other hand, there is no vulgarity in revolt.  
Or, rather, there is no revolt, it is the normal state.*

[...]

*Just as we believe that an Art must be organic with its Time,  
So we insist that what is actual and vital for the South, is ineffectual and unactual in the  
North.*

-Wyndham Lewis, *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex*<sup>2</sup>

### VORTICISM

Wyndham Lewis' *Blast* Magazine is a strange beast of a thing. It was a means to an end at the beginning of the 20th century, for the express purposes of collecting formalist strides of innovation in English culture (poetry, artwork, prose), and presenting them under one sophisticated ideology. Under the name of Vorticism, you could collect together experimental figures of their craft (Ezra Pound, Ford Madox Hueffer), and assume that their expansion of

commodity form was definable in pragmatic terms.

The process of creating this anthology appeared to be schizophrenic conyism: trying to piece together commonalities throughout the collection is difficult beyond the mere fact that the works within it project alienation. For any other example, we may just assume that it reflects an individual interest, and leave it at that. The magazine, though, is dogmatic and goes as far as to contain a manifesto: the contents of which are valuable for discussing the production of aliena-

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1: There is a confusion that will run throughout this which I will clarify here. The magazine was called *Blast*, and it ran for two volumes. The ideology that was set out in this magazine was done so via a number of sections called 'Manifesto' - which one may assume would mean that Wyndham Lewis' ideological project may be called 'Blastism,' or something similar. The ideology of the *Blast* magazine came to be known as Vorticism because there is a section where he talks about Vortexes. It's the 1910s version of Accelerationism or Shoegaze: the name doesn't really make that much sense, but it's very moody and gets the point across.

2: Wyndham Lewis, *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex* Vol. I, ed. W. Lewis (London: John Lane, 1914). Epigraphs from p. 42 and 34.

tion, especially within hyperstitious market capitalism.

Vorticism is a black-pilled type of materialism: it expressly views systematic emancipation as a task for the continental Europeans, and instead strives for a more complete system where formal barbarism is made and contained within the suitings of the empirical state project. Under the Vorticist framework, the most pragmatic forms of alienation are reflections of stable state power. It is the fact that England's class structures and imperial position was knowingly steadfast and unmovable that allowed for formal innovation to thrive. Unlike the common narratives about modernism, that connected alienation to the post-war collapse of imperial hegemony, Vorticism notes the importance of maintained class structures in creating innovative forms of estrangement.

## *FOLDED*

With the development and sustenance of financial markets, Vorti-

cism's central appeal to steadfast movement is put under a certain type of irony. The parasitic nature of the market means that, in some respects, there is no real alternative to be found through efforts of emancipation. In this respect, Vorticism appeals as a contemporary way of conceptualising the market. The mechanisms of hyper-individualism, and a system based on subjective desire, are well equipped to mirror symbols of alienation back upon a spectator. The matter of politics, and discourse, is all reducible to the individual level through the Vorticist system of alienation. If we are concerned with the production of the schizophrenic formal object, then the market appears well equipped for this. It is Vorticism that allows for the removal of idealism in this productive process, and a focus on how oriented the market place is towards the extremities of formal production.

The downside of this ironic situation, though, is the loss of the pragmatic chronotope.<sup>3</sup> Within an 'unfolded' state system of distribution, the indication of materialism within text must be viewed as a com-

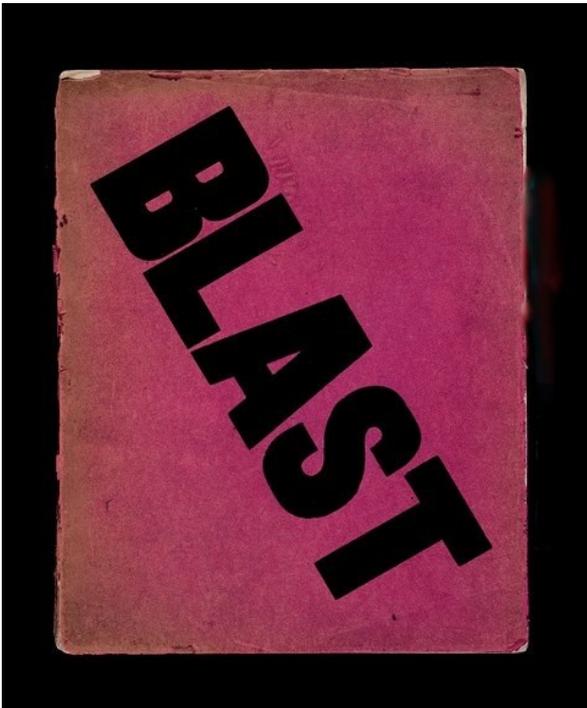
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3: A Chronotope is a term taken from Russian Formalist theory: it describes the fusion of space and time together into a singular entity. It is used in the description of prose and language, to describe the manners in which a place is developed through communication.

ment on the imperial system, and its relation to other imperial systems. When James Joyce writes about Ireland, it is clear to us that we are being presented with a view informed by the colonial relations between England and Ireland, and the ways that this materialises within the formal entity. His work is *about* Ireland, but it is run through the discourses of the English class system. Under a blanket market system, and the end of history, all chronotopes are elevated to the point of the symbolic and the hyperreal. The spectator is no longer concerned with whether

the formal object relates to their own materialist situation: the process of judgement is now entirely about the commodity.

The folding process has been clear since Marx, but the implementation of the financial market system accelerated this forward. It is disingenuous to imagine a hauntological return to a pre-folded system of imperial influence: instead, pragmatism may only be concerned with how to continue manufacturing formal experiments, and finding limits to the contingency of future time-space.



# Entropy and Time in Cybernetic Cities

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*"It is by avoiding the rapid decay into the inert state of 'equilibrium' that an organism appears to enigmatic... What an organism feeds upon is negentropy."*

-Erwin Schrodinger, *"What is Life?"* (1944)

**T**he second law of thermodynamics goes as follows: *any spontaneous change in an isolated system increases the system's entropy (randomness, disorder); the system moves closer to thermodynamic equilibrium, a state in which nothing further can happen.* Capitalism is a spontaneous and isolated system, but it is also a system that seeks stability or metastability. Capitalism has certainly achieved some form of metastability, but this state is really just a facade hiding deep instability. Small perturbations, and these are almost always spontaneous, to the system cause large amounts of chaos and disorder within it, which increases entropy. Capitalism creates cities, and the systems they bring about, to fight this process and seek equilibrium to calm the disorder. So, Capital must be directly opposed to entropy in order to self

-replicate, and so it actively introduces negentropy into its system.

What does negentropy look like in physical form? Or perhaps, what can we identify as a process of negentropic production? I believe the answer to these questions can be found by examining cities. We will analyze the various operations that occur within cities that pertain to time, social stratification, and various aspects of control. The simplest place to start is to find what is being organized, ordered, numbered, and sorted. Negentropy is put into the system by tangled webs of bureaucracy, that seeks to order and file away everything produced by the subject living within the city. Capital reduces subjects to numbers, collections of numbers, and empty signifiers; the difference, chaos, and depth that make up a person's personhood are all reduced

down and organized to reduce the overall entropy generated or already present within a system.

*“Schrodinger uses [negentropy] to identify the remarkable ability of the living system, not only to avoid the effects of entropic production - as dictated by the second law - but to do just the opposite, to increase organization, which intuitively, seems like the converse of entropy.”*

-Mae-Wan Ho, *“What is (Schrodinger’s) Negentropy?”* (2010)

Since Capital(ism) actively introduces negentropy into a system, does that make it a living thing? It certainly seems to avoid entropic production, and as explained above, it also strives to increase organization. Capitalism can respond to threats and adapt in response, it grows and changes sporadically, it reproduces itself endlessly, it has an intensely complicated and constantly shifting set of systems it is governed by, it also tends towards homeostasis (by seeking its equilibrium, via negentropy). Capital(ism) does not breath, it does not fuck, and it does not shit, and it may not be able to be considered a living being but it is certainly able to replicate the functions of a living creature.

Capitalism poses many problems for the subjects living within its various milieus, and if the answer to

capitalism is anti-capitalism, it must have two definitive characteristics: it must introduce entropy back into closed systems within Capitalism (for the express purpose of adding disorder back into the system; an inherently anti-capitalist action), and it must also confront Capitalism as a being that replicates the functioning of a living being. Conceiving anarchy as disorder suddenly doesn't seem like such a bad thing. If we view anarchy as the process by which the anti-capitalist can introduce entropy back into a system that actively produces negentropy. Any attempt to be anti-capitalist outside of these specific parameters will only add fuel to the fire. It is no wonder that past attempts to overthrow capitalist regimes only resulted in more of the same, they were all eventually subsumed back into capitalism and recapitulated with its rules and processes.

Many machines are created with efficiency top of mind, but part of being efficient is making sure that machines do not waste entropy or let it out back into the world. “[T]he outgoing entropy flow (heat flux) is worthless, [...] in many cases it is possible to be ‘economically efficient’ to use the entropy outflow for home or chemical process heat.”<sup>1</sup> This process to efficiently use all of the entropy generated in a system can take the form of a car’s heating system that uses the heat generated by powering the vehicle to heat the cabin without needing extra fuel. If a closed system

(even as small as a car) lets entropy out, it is no longer able to produce negentropy. It needs to hold onto entropy and utilize it in full to maintain the maximum amount of order within its area of control. Essentially, most machines that capitalism utilizes for production create entropy from within their systems, and if this entropy were to be left alone, it would dissipate and become waste. Since machines are supposed to be efficient, this wasted energy will not do, and so the entropy is used for heating processes as spoken about above.

“The full body of the earth is not without distinguishing characteristics. Suffering and dangerous, unique, universal, it falls back on production, on the agents and connections of production. But on it, too, everything is attached and inscribed, everything is abstracted and miraculated.”

-Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (1977)

What type of full body is the earth? Of course, it is a body full of organs, or rather a body full of organization. And so capitalism must be viewed as the full body of the earth - it is responsible for all production and all territorialization which are its methods of organization. All

forms of production appear to take place upon the full body. “The full body is the unengendered,”<sup>2</sup> any subjects that are organized or ordered do not inherently belong to a specific method of organization - it is up to whichever coding you receive or which one you succumb to the easi-

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1: Jean Thoma, “Energy, Entropy, and Information,” *RM-77-32* (1977): 1-27, 13. <http://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/783/1/RM-77-032.pdf>

2: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983): 154.

est. Capital is responsible for carrying out the processes of social inscription and recording. Inscriptions of this type can be jobs passed down through families, or the gender forced upon you at birth. Recording as a process stores inscriptions and readies them for the subject. A person is coded as a female based on physical characteristics; this inscription of the gender binary becomes stored within them and, at some point, they will then inscribe their children in the same manner, and the process repeats.

All of the processes of capitalism carried out by capital must be like this: everything has to be auto-generative, codes must be carried on without direct influence by capitalism. And so agents of capital are deployed to facilitate these processes to make sure they do not run away. The agents of capital usually exist at the opposite end of a power dynamic

from the subjects they wish to control. And they are backed by the full potential of capitalism which gives them an immense amount of power for control. These agents take many forms and assume roughly the same roles and almost always have the same goals - police, teachers, parents, bosses, etc. All of these facilitate inscription processes for capital. A cop will never let you forget who is above the law and who is under it, a teacher will always make sure you feel like you are the least intelligent in the room, parents exert constant control over every aspect of their child's life, and your boss always keeps you below a certain income threshold. These power dynamics serve to organize us, make us obedient, and put us into different numerical categories (salary, or levels of intelligence). These agents also represent capitalism's propensity to reduce entropy within a system.

*"Heat. This is what cities mean to me. You get off the train and walk out of the station and you are hit with the full blast. The heat of air, traffic and people. The heat of food and sex. The heat of tall buildings. The heat that flows out of the subways and tunnels. It's always fifteen degrees hotter in the cities. Heat rises from the sidewalks and falls from the poisoned sky. The buses breathe heat. Heat emanates from crowds of shoppers and office workers, the entire infrastructure is based on heat, desperately uses up heat, breeds more heat."*

-Nick Land, *Meltdown* (1997)

These agents of capital do not come from without, but rather from within the isolated system that is capitalism. They arrive alongside capitalism's various territorializing processes. They are responsible for deepening the inscriptions that we fall into. The places with the deepest inscriptions and the most coding and organization are cities. The inscriptions that make up the city cut so deep into its fibers that it forms palatable schisms, cracks, fissures, and cuts all around. Every position in a city to be filled - a bus driver, traffic director, construction worker, bank manager - is deeper than a grave, and we're all tossed in without a rope. Escaping coding is near impossible because it cuts so deep into us and into the places we live and work. Many of those critiquing capitalism might be quick to call the infinite set of jobs to be done and tasks to be fulfilled as ultimately superfluous which does seem to be valid in some regards. The subjects going about their jobs and tasks do not reap anything from what they sow, at least not anything we might deem meaningful. But the superfluity of these jobs does not mean they lack pur-

pose to those that exist outside or above the proletariat. Ultimately what the proletarian subject receives from this process is a lifetime of obedience training, an immense amount of trauma, and some back pain. This instills in them the status quo and obedience to it. Despite the subjective lack of meaning to be found at the bottom of each of our respective graves, there is still a purpose to the way things are done, even if it doesn't serve us directly. What all of this amounts to is us doing the heavy lifting for capitalism's creation of negentropy. And because of this, we find ourselves stuck under the heat and the massive entropy consumption processes of the city. Completely weighted down and made subservient to capitalism.

"In second law [of thermodynamics] terms, cities are self-organizing, far-from-equilibrium dissipative structures whose 'self-organization' is utterly dependent on access to abundant energy and material resources."<sup>3</sup> The self-organization that cities possess, as we know, comes from their ability to entrench their subjects into coding. To think of a city as far-from-equilibrium is fitting as reaching a

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3: William Rees, "Cities as Dissipative Structures: Global Change and the Vulnerability of Urban Civilization," in *Sustainability Science: The Emerging Paradigm and the Urban Environment*, eds. M. Weinstein and E. Turner, 247-273 (New York: Springer, 2012): 247.

point of equilibrium would mean an end to the city. Capitalism must also be viewed as far from its equilibrium as it actively moves away from it because, like the city, it would spell death for capitalism. Yet it cannot escape it indefinitely - equilibrium, like death, comes for all people and systems. Cities do not appear to organize by themselves but rather contain various collections of self-organizing subjects following specific sets of instructions. These collections

of subjects are found within every aspect of the city and are nestled away and contained, allowing the city to use them as fuel. This fuel powers a city's self-organization. Allowing this vital process to be carried out by its subjects, capitalism is more readily able to combat any threats posed to it or its processes. This preoccupation with internal and external threats is what allows it to continually push back against equilibrium.

*"We have also seen that capitalism finds in schizophrenia its own exterior limit, which it is continually repelling and exorcising, while capitalism itself produces its immanent limits, which it never ceases to displace and enlarge. But capitalism still needs a displaced interior limit in another way: precisely in order to neutralize or repel the absolute exterior limit."*

-Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (1977)

Equilibrium is capitalism's "displaced interior limit" (equilibrium will occur inside of a finally closed system) and on the other hand, "schizophrenia (fully liberated social production as a functioning system) is the exterior limit of capitalism itself [...]" and that "capitalism only functions on condition that it inhibit this tendency, or that it push back or displace this limit."<sup>4</sup> So capitalism restrains social production, pushing

away from some not yet reached point where social desire has fully liberated itself and encloses on the limits imposed upon it, pushes past them and overflows, filling in all the little gaps along the way - closing the system. Liberated social production, what could bring about equilibrium, puts a stop to all the various productive flows of energy.

Capitalism dictates how social production is directed as well as as-

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4: Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 246.

suming near-absolute control over all social relations existing within its various milieus. Where does capital's preoccupation with desire originate, and where does this initial interaction arise? To answer this we must understand where desire comes from and then we can understand how it interacts with capital. Desire comes from the outside, and in this particular case, it comes from the outside of the capitalist system. Classical psychoanalysis would have you believe that desire is always something felt towards a specific lack. However, desire is a productive process that builds towards a virtual desire of a process or effect that you experience when interacting with an actual entity.<sup>5</sup> In a word, we do not desire the book itself but rather the knowledge

that comes from interacting with the book.

The distinction between the virtual and the actual is important for working out the problems posed to us by capitalism. Since desire is directed towards an experience that does not yet currently exist, but rather only has the potential to exist, and may only potentially exist for the person going through the experience, this means that a subject's desire does not come from inside of the capitalist system. This leaves one other option for its origin: outside. But how is it that desire can come from the outside and be appropriated almost immediately by capitalism and used to guide social production? Firstly we will examine man's initial relationship to that which is outside and inside.

*"The Critique of Pure Reason demonstrates that it is not the subject that produces time but rather time that produces the inferiority of the subject."*

-Anna Greenspan, *Capitalism's Transcendental Time Machine*, (2000)

Our perception of all events is spatiotemporal, meaning that everything we experience phenomenologically happens at a point in space and at a specific time. Time and space are the backdrops to everything -

nothing can exist without a space to occupy, and a time to occupy it. Space must always exist within time and as such time is primary to space.<sup>6</sup> Following this we must also assume that people exist in the same

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5: See James Ellis, "Accelerationism: Capitalism as Critique," in *Accelerationism: Capitalism as Critique & Other Essays*, 1-72 (Arkham: MVU Press, 2020).

6: Ibid.

way, within time and at a particular space. But what of the human perception of time and space? For us, “time is something actively generated [...], rather than passively given.”<sup>7</sup> What drives this generation of time is the various processing units that we are all forced to rely on for perception. Time is generated for us and “temporality is an active organization and ordering of experiences - something that is produced by operations of chronoception.”<sup>8</sup> So before time reaches our central processing unit to be experienced, it must be first routed through our senses via our central nervous system, this information must then travel to the brain, where it is processed. This means that time - or anything for that matter - is not directly experienced but rather is a virtual projection into our psyche of information received from different parts of the body and interpreted by the central nervous system.

“What man perceives is a representation of the real, he synthesizes both temporal and spatial reality and in doing so his perception *creates* his

reality as he *represents* it.”<sup>9</sup> This is where the distinction between inside and outside can be found: our synthesis of time via the electrical, chemical, and other biological processes creates a reality for humans that is entirely within our perception. Actual space and time, unsynthesized space and time, exists outside of human perception. Just as we are forced to simulate a spatiotemporal reality via these processes spoken about above, they can do the opposite and project synthetic time outward and allow it to take on tangible forms and effects. As John Zerzan put it, “Time becomes real because it has consequences, and this efficacy has never been more painfully apparent.”<sup>10</sup> The reality of time will manifest in time structures such as cities, and its effects are no more painfully apparent than within cities. Clocks, time cards, bus schedules, meetings, doctor’s appointments, school schedules, lock up and free time for prisoners, daylight savings time. All of these are tangible things that come from our simulated

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7: Thomas Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism: A Secret History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2020): 21.

8: Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism*, 21.

9: Ellis, “Accelerationism: Capitalism as Critique,” 10.

10: John Zerzan, “Time and its Discontents,” on *The Anarchist Library*, n.d. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/john-zerzan-time-and-its-discontents>

spatiotemporal existence but none of these things actively affect or influence real time.

*“The clock is a machine for producing time. Once developed, its product (hours, minutes, seconds) envelopes everything including its own internal processes. Even those objects and events of the external world that had once been used to mark the time (i.e. the rotation of the planets) are now given precise and accurate measurement by the ticking of the clock.”*

-Anna Greenspan, *Capitalism's Transcendental Time Machine*, (2000)

It is safe to say we are all painfully aware of these manifestations of our simulated spatiotemporal reality. Every room and hallway in a school has a clock. Bells are wired to these clocks and ring when the time is right, letting students know when they are free to move to their next class. For the faculty, however, they have already been through school (and presumably many years of work) and are used to this. To them, the clock doesn't represent anything besides a machine that tells them when to go home. While for students, this is likely their first integration into time regulated beyond bedtime or TV programming. A child going through schooling will have their mealtimes, recreation, and learning separated into carefully designed blocks of time. Can recreation even be called such if it is scheduled? This strictness of time prepares stu-

dents for a lifetime of subservience to the workplace. A student who cannot use the restroom when they need to will make a very submissive worker later on in life. In a large city, many jobs often start at or around the same time, causing massive influxes of traffic and subsequently traffic jams along with it - cars like a blood clot on the overworked highway that has received a time-related injury.

These are all functionings of capitalist timekeeping. Spatiotemporal happenings outside of human milieus do not function according to a schedule. Synthetic time and the tracking and ordering of it are unique to humans, specifically to humans living in a capitalist system. It is generally accepted that capitalism originated with the invention of the internal combustion engine. Anna Greenspan in, *Capitalism's Transcendental Time Machine*, proposes that we should

look instead to the restructuring of the Gregorian Calendar and the invention of the clock that followed.<sup>11</sup> The calendar introduced a new level of regulation and accuracy to time-keeping that controls our personal lives. We all have a birth date which can restrict our access to certain goods and services, forcing us to rely on agents of capital to provide us with what we need in a controlled manner. Having an age is important for school children, as knowledge and technical ability are locked to students who are too young. Likewise, someone in the US may have to wait until a specific age to access social security benefits or their own money in a retirement account. Aging a person and restricting certain things from them is a strong method of control exerted over us by capitalism.

The mechanical elements of capitalism's origins are no less important than the calendric ones, and time is intimately intertwined with the mechanical. Greenspan says, "clocks have assimilated natural time into the machine."<sup>12</sup> I believe that time was forced into the unnatural rigidity that

is the clock. "Natural" time is the time that exists outside of human synthesized virtual time. The clock is the ultimate manifestation of our synthesized time and it marks the shift from what came before capitalism to the advent of global capitalism. The creation of and globalization of standardized time via the clock is a significant milestone in the history of time. We should now look back at what time meant for humans before capitalism and industrialization. Doing so will provide insights into the functioning of time in modernity.

Australian aboriginals maintain a rich cultural history by preserving the events of their ancestors with a process called 'the Dreaming.' Most cultures on earth are subject to the control of capitalist time. These cultures often preserve their cultural history within a linear story. When the Australian aboriginals convene with their ancestors they do not interact with an incorporeal form. They are speaking with their ancestors as if they walked beside them at that moment. Past, present, and future do

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11: See Anna Greenspan, *Capitalism's Transcendental Time Machine*, PhD Thesis (Coventry: University of Warwick, 2000). Forthcoming from Miskatonic Virtual University Press, 2021. Pagination here from original thesis document: <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/4520/>

12: Greenspan, *Capitalism's Transcendental Time Machine*, 85.

not come into play in the Dreaming. Effectively for some of the Australian aboriginals, their connection to their ancestors and “deities” (for lack of a better term) is represented by the Dreaming. They always exist at the same time and place as that of those who came before them. I want to say that at this time, much of what is understood about their philosophy, beliefs, and traditions concerning time and ancestry is only available through western interpretations. However, I believe with this we can still get a good idea of what time looked like in one of its earliest synthesized forms.

The world's oldest known calendar, estimated to be made in 8000 BCE, was discovered in Scotland. It is composed of twelve pits dug in the ground made to mimic the moon's phases: a lunar calendar. The moon is sometimes thought of as corresponding to a variety of human functions such as sleep, and recently there have been theories put forth about the moon's relation to other forms of life on earth. A sundial from roughly 1250 BCE was found in Egypt, which showed that the Egyptians using this early clock divided their days into day and night, which consisted of 12 hours. Both of these

early timekeeping devices represent a definitive transition from nonlinear time to organized, linear time. The Scottish lunar pits are a precursor to what we refer to as months, which is a division of the year, and the year is the first significant organization or division of unsynthesized time. The Egyptian sundial gave us a further division of the month into individual days and another division into sets of twelve hours each (individual hours would not have a large effect for some time still).

One of the first noticeable introductions of time into work was with the Mayan calendar which used a time that consisted of recurrent cycles. They had cycles based on astronomical events as well as for the growing seasons of corn. Mayan timekeeping practices show an early adoption of the year as Mesoamerican societies needed large amounts of agriculture for growth. Having years that divide into growing seasons were necessary to support a growing empire's food supplies. The Mayan people had an intimate relationship with time and it was important for various aspects of their culture. As it relates to the modern despotic state controlling time in the capitalist era, Mayan kings were sometimes called “rulers

of time.”<sup>13</sup> Mayan rulers understood the power that control of time held; this is a despotic principle that recapitulates itself throughout history after the beginning of capitalism. However, one thing that differentiates time for the Maya and other Mesoamerican civilizations is that they still viewed it as something coming from the cosmos (Rice 2008),<sup>14</sup> while capital’s incessant creation of organized time is decidedly in no way cosmic.

Around the same time that the Mayans were making their calendars (roughly 100 BCE), the Roman Empire introduced and standardized the Julian calendar (roughly 45 BCE). Both of these two calendars show a somewhat more accurate timekeeping device in line with our planet’s revolutions around the sun, as both calendars accounted for a year lasting roughly 365 days. One thing that stands out about the creation and implementation of the Julian calendar is its introduction of the leap year. Roman astronomers realized that a day doesn’t evenly divide the lunar month, and also that the lunar month

doesn’t evenly divide the solar year. They created a leap year that added an extra day every fourth year. This was a very early adoption of a calendar that closely resembles one we would use today. This would allow capitalist time to be imposed upon us. Defiance is out of the question since this calendar comes directly from holy cosmic interpretations.

Above I have attempted to provide a brief history of timekeeping and of time itself. A history of time is needed because the ability to categorize time represents the initial shift from ‘unsynthesized,’ or ‘a priori’ time. The categorization or the keeping of time is only possible because of this synthesized time all humans are stuck within. Real time is not able to be historicized because it rejects linearity. And as such a history of time shows the different methods of keeping track of this synthesized time. The ancient lunar calendars, the cyclic calendar of the Maya, Gregorian, and Julian calendars are all used to keep or contain the time we created and let run unbound. Later timekeeping devices will account for

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13: See Arthur Miller, *Maya Rulers of Time: A Study of Architectural Sculpture at Tikal, Guatemala* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, 1986).

14: See Prudence Rice, “Time, Power, and the Maya,” *Latin American Antiquity* 19, No. 3 (2008): 275-298.

[doi:10.1017/S1045663500007951](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1045663500007951)

time on an hourly scale, many of them incorporating twelve-hour day and night cycles. All of these advents in timekeeping have led to the structuring of our contemporary society's relationship with time, but none were as remarkable in its reach and power as the mechanization of time and the creation of what we know of as the clock.

Clocks are the current apex of time-keeping devices and they are one of the major shifts in the way time affected society. Before the clock, time only seemed to flow when there was a task to be completed. With the invention of the clock, even when there was no task to be done, "time did not cease to flow."<sup>15</sup> In Greek, the original word for time means division. And these divisions in tandem with the active production of time that we have entangled ourselves in shows the transition from a perception of time that is only related to

different chores or rituals and traditions (calendric time) to a familiar household presence. The first major instance of time infecting our households is the invention of the pendulum clock, first created by Galileo Galilei in the 1580s, which would eventually make its way into what we know as the grandfather clock. These and other pendulum based clocks appeared in households with space and money for them and brought with them the regimented time of the workplace or the school. Roughly one hundred years after this advancement an invention called the mainspring (a type of spiral torsion spring made of steel) allowed for the implementation of portable clocks. Time-keeping became a full-time duty, it was monitored at home, at the workplace, and between the two. With this, "capitalist time" has finally established itself "as a universal synthetic regime."<sup>16</sup>

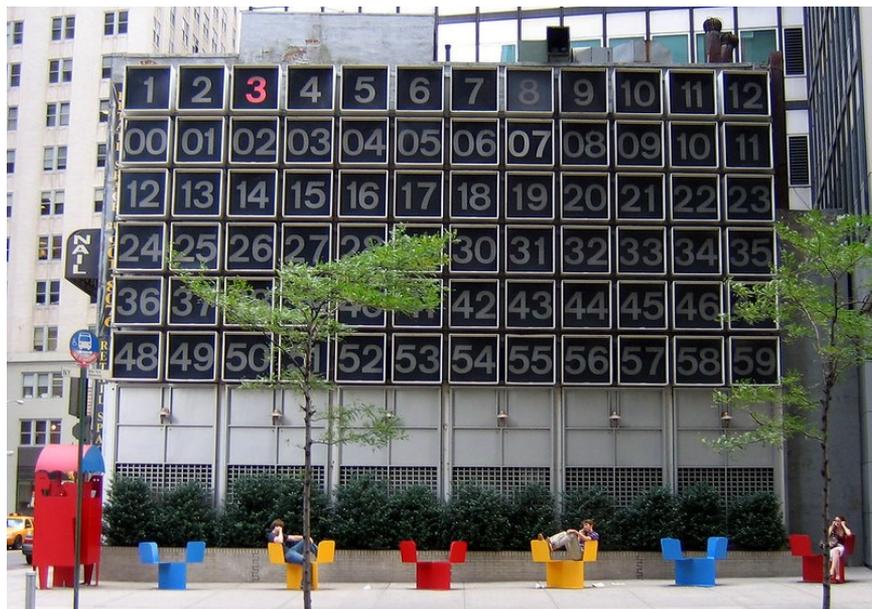
"[...] the clock was not merely an advance in time-keeping technology but was also the expression of a more fundamental alteration in the nature of time itself."

-Anna Greenspan, *Capitalism's Transcendental Time Machine*, (2000)

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15: Zerzan, "Time and its Discontents," web.

16: Greenspan, *Capitalism's Transcendental Time Machine*, 71.



Broken Clock / [Lanqui Doodle](#) / 2006

Time was more prevalent than ever before and found in virtually every aspect of our lives. Still, we found that there was still a need for more accuracy and precision. Clocks accurate to the hour or even the minute weren't enough. In 1735, John Harrison created the marine chronometer which was used to improve the accuracy of naval navigation by utilizing Greenwich Mean Time and an accurate timekeeping device to determine longitude. This increased accuracy allowed ships to sail with greater precision, aiding the distribution of goods and people with greater magnitude and precision. The current

zenith of clocks is the atomic clock which is only in error by 1 second in up to a million years and is used in controlling broadcasting waves and GPS satellites. In all the years that have passed since the atomic clock's fine-tuning, we have not found a way to get more precise time, and yet we still try. The development of time-keeping devices seems banal when only examined by its technological progress and scientific application, but all of these developments in time-keeping show a disturbing history of a society being severely stratified, ordered, and controlled. All of the developments spoken about above

can be tied back to some desire for the ordering and categorizing of people and the cities in which they inhabit. The history of time is the history of control.

Entropy and time share a relationship and it can be demonstrated that the “relative entropy” of a system can be used as a “quantitative measure of the arrow of time.”<sup>17</sup> The arrow of time refers to a concept categorizing our view of time as linear and being a physical dimension meaning the term refers to linear space-time. The early theories of entropy from Ludwig Boltzmann also account for a relationship between linear time and entropy. He theorized ways to account for the linearity of time by studying the entropy increase in a system. Entropy was believed to only increase and never decrease; you could compare different levels of entropy and accurately place points of reference on a linear timeline. Following the idea that entropy can be reduced with negentropic production, and that linear time is purely the result of human synthesis, we can at this time refute this claim.

Just as our attempt to understand and capture time is intertwined with the optimization of production and transportation, a similar process happens with entropy. Bernard Stiegler ties our understanding of entropy to the problem of optimizing steam engines.<sup>18</sup> Unlike our pursuit and eventual capture of synthesized time, our understanding of entropy did not initially arise out of a desire to understand the cosmos. However, this connection would come later with the theories of entropy being a law of our entire universe. Here entropy rises above synthesized time and the pursuit of linearity and reaches much farther out. They are set apart from one another as the synthesized time we interact with is entirely limited to our perceptions of it and entropy has potential cosmic, a priori beginnings. Bernard Stiegler also conceives of negentropy in a similar light: he views it as being defined by its relation to an observer, much like our view of time is tied to, and created by its relation to human perception. We synthesized time, captured it,

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17: Juan M.R. Parrondo, Christian van den Broeck, and Ryoichi Kawai, “Entropy production and the arrow of time,” *New Journal of Physics* 11 (2009): 1-14, 2. doi:10.1088/1367-2630/11/7/073008

18: See Bernard Stiegler, *The Neganthropocene* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018).

integrated it into runaway capitalism, and thus are solely responsible for negentropic production within our cities.

“A society threatened by permanent decomposition can be all the more mastered when an information network, an autonomous ‘nervous system’ is in place allowing it to be piloted.”

-Simon Nora and Alain Minc, *The Computerization of Society* (1981)

We have demonstrated that time plays an important role in the control systems within a city - as well as within any other collection of subjects existing within capitalism. We will examine another important aspect of control in cities that involves time manipulation: mass communication. Thomas Moynihan in, *Spinal Catastrophism*, speaks on one of the earlier forms of mass communication: “telegraphy is the organ of an earth become self-conscious.”<sup>19</sup> Moynihan understands the telegraph lines as pathways between different nerve-centers. We have made a system that transfers information across massive distances with less time and effort than was ever required. The implementation of telegraph lines created an externalized consciousness where we could plug in and enter deeper layers into synthesized time. Messages can be sent and received instantaneously and this alters our perception

of time further. We gain access to a world in which time seemingly stands still. This time stoppage was made deeper with the creation and widespread use of the internet. Instant communication was only the first layer of these time stoppages; now users of the internet can virtually enter into the largest collection of human-generated information to exist in our history. The internet takes over our perception of time and slows everything down for us. This reality we have injected ourselves into would have never been possible without the creation of synthesized time.

Moynihan shows that this conception of time is “essential to modernity itself,” and that the “lock-in of systems” that we have created “cause their own furtherance and exaggeration.”<sup>20</sup> We can see this come true as the telegraph lines are replaced with internet lines, the tele-

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19: Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism*, 177.

20: *Ibid.*, 182.

graphs themselves replaced with computerized access points. What this does for our perception of time and our relation to physical time-keeping systems is that it “creates a sense in which the future drags us toward it.”<sup>21</sup> Moynihan recognizes this as a creation of a non-passive future and one that “creates its own emergence via circular causality [...] when something causes itself to cause itself, time seems to flow backward.”<sup>22</sup> This creation of a feedback loop where things cause themselves is essential to the workings of capitalism and its cities. The ability to cause time to flow in reverse allows the ultimate capture of our own synthesized time and the most extreme subjugation to it.

So when we think of the “revolution[s] in time” that capitalism is a part of, and that are imposed upon us we can see “an extreme conservatism” as well as “unprecedented social and technological run-away.”<sup>23</sup> Extreme conservatism is on the side of the calendar and the social and technological run-away is on the side of the clock. This aptly represents

capitalism approaching the outer limit of its own inception, which it undoubtedly dragged toward itself even before it could have existed. How could this be? “In short, capitalist time depends upon a particular historical formation, and yet this historical formation presupposes the production of capitalist time from the start.”<sup>24</sup> Here, Greenspan answers the question of how with an example of one of capitalism’s feedback loops; a future brought on by itself. Greenspan further describes capitalism as being “productive not of events that occur inside experience but of the underlying conditions that make experience possible.”<sup>25</sup> We are stuck within the transcendental reality of the synthesized time we have created. It’s locked us in, in the same way we have locked ourselves in. Capitalism controls all that we experience because it is the cause of all of our experience.

Non-synthetic or a priori time is the infinite virtual possibility outside of our system of synthesized time. The potential to become whatever, whenever is a threat of the highest

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21: Ibid.

22: Ibid.

23: Greenspan, *Capitalism’s Transcendental Time Machine*, 78.

24: Ibid., 72.

25: Ibid., 73.

degree to capital. As we already understand, capital is the quasi-cause of all of our modern time-keeping devices and implementation of these devices reduces the possibility of variation within our systems. We are bound to the strict regularity of the clock making us easy to track and control. This reduction of the disorder is a production of negentropy. Following the idea that we are stuck inside a manufactured time, we can further theorize being stuck in negentropic production. This is shown with the city as we get guided through its streets, from building to building, by time. We always have a schedule to stick to, a time to get to work, and a time to go home. The distance between two cities can be referred to in terms of the time it takes to travel between them. When we navigate cities our paths and potential movements become restricted by stop signs, traffic lights, sidewalks, and crosswalks. These are physical manifestations of negentropy because we can observe disordered movement being regimented. These methods of reducing potentiality through negentropy production are numerous.

“Information is the reduction of uncertainty,” says Zoubin Ghahramani (2006).<sup>26</sup> Most information sold comes entirely from the internet, but how is uncertainty removed from it? It would appear that new things are added to the internet at a dizzying speed and a constant pace, yet we cannot yet consider the random data on the internet as information in the traditional sense. The uncertainty comes from the infinite amount of virtual forms new data being put onto the internet can take. Someone who wishes to sell information cannot use this data in whatever form it takes in creation; they have to mold it into something sellable. Uncertainty is removed from the data to create information. This process of reducing uncertainty and chaos is present within many aspects of capitalism. Your virtual possibilities as a human subject are torn away from you every step of the way. What is even more remarkable about this process is that it does push capitalism towards its equilibrium. Deleuze and Guattari speak of “capitalism - in conformity with the movement by which it counteracts its own tendency - is continually drawing near the wall, while at

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26: Zoubin Ghahramani, “Information Theory,” in *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*, ed. L. Nadel (New Jersey: Wiley & Sons, 2005).

the same time pushing the wall further away.”<sup>27</sup> (Deleuze, and Guattari, 1977, 176) I believe this to be one of many representations of capitalism drawing itself towards its own eventual equilibrium.

Bernard Stiegler in *The Neganthropocene* (2018) wonderfully captures the entrance of entropy and negentropy into information theory. Here he says that when thinking of entropy concerning communication systems, we must consider the amount of useful data extracted from them. What better illustrates this than the internet? Personal data extracted from the internet is becoming increasingly valuable to advertisers, law enforcement agencies, credit bureaus, etc., making the extraction of useful data immensely important to a company selling information. Here the problem of waste arises and internet and search engine companies respond by giving consumers highly curated and controlled feeds of information. This is another one of the feedback loops spoken about above; useful information is used to create more of itself. This process makes it significantly easier for the companies

who sell data to make sure they are producing useable data and allows for the easy categorization of internet users. Even though the internet does tend to multiply information, the types of information produced or reproduced, and spread around is usually highly sculpted by those who wish to sell data. Users on the internet can be typified and then fed specific information to generate sellable information. Users of the internet are cogs of a giant data producing machine. All of this makes up an industry that is estimated to be worth \$229 billion USD by 2025.

With all of the mechanisms controlling how information is generated it begins to look like self-regulation. Charles Dechert says that “the principal characteristic of a self-regulating system is the presence of a control loop” which is used to modify components of social systems and control system performance.<sup>28</sup> Capitalism creates many such control loops for controlling entropy whether it is in the form of information or physical entropy generated by a machinic city. While scientists in the United States have been mostly unwilling to allow

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27: Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 176.

28: Charles Dechert, “The Development of Cybernetics,” in *The Social Impact of Cybernetics*, ed. C. Dechert, 11-37 (New York: Clarion Books, 1967): 14.

cybernetics to define social systems, those in the Soviet Union did not share this same hesitancy. Dechert cites Soviet literature defining cybernetics as follows: “the new science of purposeful and optimal control over complicated processes and operations which take place in living nature, in human society, and industry.”<sup>29</sup>

Following this definition of cybernetics gotten from the Soviets through Dechert, it feels appropriate to deem modernity a cybernetic society. I have already laid out the various ways in which we are subject to systems of control of our own making. Our self-imposed control systems have reduced us to information producing machines. We carry with us at all times our cell phones, tablets, computers, etc. allowing our entire lives to be digitized and sold off. “Control is a special kind of relation between two machines or parts of machines,” said Norbert Wiener, Arturo Rosenblueth, and Julian Bigelow in a 1943 Philosophy of Science article.<sup>30</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari say, “we are all handymen: each with his little machines,” we are also all

machines and machine-couplings.<sup>31</sup> Control is a relationship between machines, and our society is composed of connections between these machines that we maintain ourselves. With this arises the certainty that we have transitioned to a society of control. We have a society regulated by the science of cybernetics and the vast control measures make it so. Humans are modulated, regulated, ordered, and become a machine linked to other machines. Cities are composed of this vast web of connections between machines.

“Capital permeates all living flows,” says Tiqqun in *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*.<sup>32</sup> Above we examined the functionings of capital as a living or quasi-living entity and here, Tiqqun appears to support this, saying “the socialization of the economy and the anthropomorphosis or Capital are two indissoluble processes.”<sup>33</sup> Capitalism goes through the processes of becoming human, and our social systems have become intimately linked with economic ones. This anthropomorphic linkage of capitalism with the human social milieu is

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29: Dechert, “The Development of Cybernetics,” 18.

30: Cited in Dechert, “The Development of Cybernetics,” 14. Possibly attributed to Yehoshua Bar-Hillel.

31: Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 1.

32: Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, trans. R. Hurley (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2020), 70.

33: Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 64.

a fundamental property of a Cybernetic Society. Tiqqun sees these two processes of capitalism carried out by a “mix of *surveillance and capture* apparatuses.”<sup>34</sup> Contemporary surveillance operates in a manner inspired by the panoptic prison. By implementing computers into society, we made the data capture devices that are creating a new model of capitalism.

Tiqqun describes this new model as “Cybernetic capitalism” which is characterized by its propensity to couple a socialized economy and the “responsibility principle.” The responsibility principle says that citizens of a capitalist system take on the re-

sponsibility of reducing risks posed to capitalism of their own accord. This society produces what Tiqqun calls “Risk Dividuals” or individuals who have lost their sense of individuality (hence the Dividual) and who take up the responsibility principal. These dividuals “remove their own potential to destroy order” or rather they remove from themselves the capacity to create entropy in a negentropic system. If it is possible to usurp these processes that turn us into Risk Dividuals then this task is imperative to the anti-capitalist who seeks to introduce more of the outside - via entropic production - into capitalism.

*“The great social machine which cybernetic capitalism has to comprise cannot do without human beings.”*

-Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis* (2001)

To make a return to the second law of thermodynamics discussed above, I would like to highlight a part of the claim made by W.E. Rees when he states that the city is a dissipative structure that relies on “self-organization” and is utterly dependent on access to abundant energy and material resources.”<sup>35</sup> We have ex-

plored how self-organization plays out within a cybernetic society or a cybernetic city. This self-organization is driven entirely by us and the smaller systems that we create within capitalism. Despite capital not having a direct hand in the carrying out of these processes, we still seem to fall in line with its “desires.”

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34: Ibid., 70.

35: William Rees, “Cities as Dissipative Structures: Global Change and the Vulnerability of Urban Civilization,” 247.

There was a time when many believed that the access to energy and material resources that are needed for the city to thrive would remain constant. In the wake of climate catastrophe, we see that this is no longer the case. The resources we rely on for infrastructure, power, and transportation are running out and eventually will be gone. This could very well bring about the full dissipation of

cities. We see that the resources necessary for control, negentropy production, and cybernetic capitalism as a whole are running dry and with this, we may see the evaporation of “the great social machine” itself. For, without the means to support humans, cybernetic capitalism may get rid of us altogether and assume a new form once again, free from the drag of humanity.

THE TIME OF SEDUCTION, THE SEDUCTION OF TIME  
by Dr. Didact et al.

The engineer did not predict cogitation within the ether. But so it happened. A medium of cogitation potential evolved into a self-regulating operating system unhinged and mediated by cryptofetishism. Correlative concerns do not hold said engineer accountable, but rather the entity posturing being. But being is appearing and appearing is the generating of defunct attention excreted by bags of blood extinguishing existence through excess. Time is running out.

Within the sacrum lies the sex. The humans gyrating under the weight of gravity are products of copulation in the most literal, biological sense. Although sought by many, reproductive methods are still confined to the flesh and blood. The human has not yet overcome this biological constraint. To be human is to be the product of a sperm cell attaching itself to the ovum. From this comes two truths: sex is everywhere, and sex sells; ergo, you are always being sold something. And that is why capital puts so much energy and resources into its libidinal engineering. "I packed condoms, I shoulda packed a book with scriptures," no, condoms are the correct armory for this economy. At least for now.

The whole place reeks of sex. Everywhere there is flesh, there is sweat and sex--nasty, haughty, viciously organic sex. And the delts who shield their eyes are drowning in the well, "but the water is hydrating," they may well say, and instantaneously begin describing, in excruciating detail, the five properties of water. Let them drown: rejection of truth is its own form of self-destruction.

But in opposition to sex stands seduction, which is unique to the human. It is without a teles; it exists in itself and of itself, and is only possible when something remains hidden--something never attained but always searched for. It is, after all, a leading astray, a detournement; it is a power that reveals itself only as a symbolic force. This is because as soon as an effort to identify and define the symbolic is made, it transforms into power, ceding itself to the horizontal axis of masculine and feminine. In other words, it cedes itself to the axis of prod(sex)uction and cons(sex)umption. So long as seduction exists, power is sublated into a yearning to isolate and confine seduction.

Within the pseudo-cyclical time of cons(sex)umption and prod(sex)uction a behemoth question lingers on the apex of the collective unconscious' tongue, \*who art thou?\*, to which the seedling sprouts and attempts an answer by producing more seeds. In simpler terms: the seed produces the consumer. The propagation of an inadequate answer continues ad infinitum until God (Capital) considers all causality null. Or until the body is rotten

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and no longer able to serve the machine. But what constitutes causality is precisely its visibility, that it punctuates an origin. And so long there is visibility and origin, so long it is bracketed, there does not exist seduction. Seduction is the game that never ends, that you only realize you are playing after it has already begun.

The seduction of time, as I call it, is a clandestine operation really, as most [REDACTED] operations generally start. With what intention? To ameliorate the condition known as human suffering, of [REDACTED] course. Not the esoteric, powerful form of suffering, but [REDACTED] the exoteric, exogenous one. It's a plague really, having already stricken most of the population. But most are unaware. [REDACTED] And we need the seduction, we need it if we are [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] ameliorate this human suffering. Surrogate activities only obfuscate the real disasters of reality which is the [REDACTED] explicit dissolution of reality. Wake up! One may feel compelled to shout to the transient fumbling their thumb over a screen, organizing pixels into "valuable meaning". But meaning bears no true significance for the bodies ebulliently organizing themselves on the digital sphere, who without apprehensions expel data into a mouth that will eventually swallow humanity whole. But the few who do know, the philosophers of the world, the true philosophers that is, are pushed from society and written off as mere provocateurs who detest 'order' and complacency. Some funnel their [REDACTED] ersatz inanities into [REDACTED], and some antithesize their birth.

So one could argue that seduction is a means to reprogramming the libidinally engineered economy. It removes the telos of consumption and production, and transcends the human-perceived closed system of spurious infinity. In actuality, seduction is the true infinity, omnipresent at all times, yet never seen nor known to exist solely qua an existing force. It punctuates itself then discards this point altogether. Seduction is a dialectical strategy.

The origin point of life is an arbitrary punctuation. What we perceive as movement is nothing but stillness speciously producing movement, some kind of commotion. The Earth is a stagnation processed as a constant fluxing; the river does not flow, it just finds itself in the illusion of a flow. And here we find ourselves in the present moment of the past, gesticulating wildly, only this time with cursers and cryptocurrency.

Cryptic informationization of knowledge has inundated the collective consciousness, resulting in a flemous apparatus that strains intelligibility and entwines having with not-having: the masterful embroidery which is objectively referred to as the 21st century. A system, whether implicitly or explicitly, always refers to its environment. This is a communication system only possible in the realm of possibility in which every Begriff finds itself. See too, then, time finds itself referring to its environment, to its space, with the pure intention of changing it; and we find ourselves referring to time with the pure intention of changing ourselves. Staticism necessitates dynamism. So when someone asks you what time it is, the only possible answer will be, "I am not yet ready to die."

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Within the mirage of 'time' comes the retention of memories collected by perception, yet, the perc

Optional organ derives fallible information from the cyclical fluctuation of nature whose only stability is instability.

But you no longer own your memories. Axis does. So perhaps only through the radical opposition of time will you be able to turn and retort, "No, I'd like to keep the thinking in my head." Yet, can we even ascertain such autonomy? Maybe there is some back door or alley we can slip through, unnoticed, and from there affirm the reprogrammable drives, drives that can be hacked by libidinal engineering, and seduce time; because isn't seduction in a libidinally engineered economy precisely this radical opposition to time? Isn't seduction itself a leading astray into the unknown where all control tactics become nought because the game itself is one of one-upping? And isn't this one-upping precisely the will to power, the power process itself?

This life, one may well say, is a vicious cycle of mutual actions and reactions curated by the Demiurge who bowed the universe into the arc of eternity. Everything has already been created and destroyed. But the power button collects dust. Meanwhile, standing with improbable pupils affixed to the clock hands, you'll find the most obedient orators slurring on about that 'chronological' pedantry--too drunk on their complacencies to question the true absurdities; the supernormal stimulation agitates these orators who in turn seek to agitate the vulnerable and what results is a machine that leads you to the nearest shopping plaza. But the dialectic is dangerous. Very dangerous. And chronology demands obedience: I lead, you follow. But time is dialectical, it is lost and regained; it is subject, object, and relationship to itself; it is not chronological. Dialectical time is seduction; it is true infinity. Within seduction, one could well say, is a desire for the future--for an escape from the impasses of the flatlands of capital's endless repetitions--and it comes from the future--from the very future in which new perceptions, desires, cognitions are once again possible. And it is experienced as true self--the infinite progression and regression contained in the what is, was, and will be. You can look into the future, it's right behind your eyelids; it's just not evenly distributed. Only, the machine does not want you to know this.

Seduction represents mastery over the symbolic universe, while power represents mastery of the real universe. And what is more powerful than the power to program desire itself? One may well ask, are my desires really my own? Or have they too, been calculated using algorithms? The answer tips the scale onto 'yes'. Seduction is like desire, a pursuit for the not yet attained, but unlike desire, it does not end, it cannot end. Seduction is origin-less; a shapeless throbbing in and of itself. It exists so long as it is never attained. It never sublates into the past or the future, but is always already the past, future, and present. The human subject perpetually ponders what exists prior and in this ponderance finds itself changing until the new becomes its annihilation.

The name for our new desire has appeared and now we recognize it, it is the seduction of time. Seduce time and capitalism is revealed for what it always has been: an empty promise for a something

better; reduce time and the clock ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ is revealed for what it has always been: an empty metaphor.

Regarding plagiarism and copyright: There is no copyright but the right to copy. Ideas improve. The meaning of words plays a role in that improvement. Plagiarism is necessary. Progress depends on it. It sticks close to an author's phrasing, exploits his expressions, deletes a false idea, replaces it with the right one. But Dr. Didact didn't write this text, Dr. Didact et al. did. Contributing authors are: Jean Baudrillard, Emil Cioran, Jean P. Calhoun, Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze, T. S. Eliot, the Engineer, Bure, Mark Fisher, Coleman Gariety, William Gibson, Anna Greenspan, G. W. F. Hegel, Carl Jung, Ted Kaczynski, Immanuel Kant, Wilson Bryan Key, Nick Land, Karl Marx, Stefan Odebleja, Plato, Carlo Rovelli, CCRU, MVU, Lil Wayne, Anthony Wilden; as well as those whose ideas predated but remained in the engine of the subconscious. All who contributed are greatly thanked, for without them this text could not have been written.

Yours,

*Dr. Didact*



Yes, Dr. Didact.

# The Hyperstition of Science Fiction: Brief Aspects<sup>1</sup>

*Willian Perpétuo Busch*

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Science Fiction experienced a transition process throughout the second half of the 20th century. Once niche literature, from different critics' work, it conquered a space inside American universities. This work aims to discuss how some of these approaches have been established and developed. Thus, we aim to understand how the legitimization of Science Fiction was multifaceted and composed of different points of view and interpretation proposals.

Offering the reader a "brief portrait" of the "legitimation process" of science fiction studies in the United States is a complex and, by definition, partial task. Unlike a panoramic scope, which could count on dozens of participants, both human and non-human, our "portrait" is *smaller* and inhabited by a few: James O. Bailey, Willy Ley, Thomas Clareson, and Darko Suvin. We warn the reader that other names were instrumental in

this process, such as James Gunn, Gary K. Wolfe, and Richard Dale Mullen; however, we can for now, in a clumsy but well-meaning way, only indicate them with a brief and shy nod.

In the first part of this essay, we will address the "process of legitimation" and how science fiction studies that took place outside universities operated. We will also deal with the first contact between critics in the 1940s to show what dynamics were produced, operationalized in the following years, and undone. Among the early leading names, we indicate James O. Bailey, Willy Ley, and Thomas Clareson.

The second block contextualizes some of the Science Fiction changes to enter Darko Suvin's thought as one of the milestones for entering these studies into the university space in the 1970s. We will explain how its conceptual definition was produced

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1: An early version of this text was published in Portuguese in 2019.

and its operational modalities to conclude with the analysis of a criticism made by Suvin for Claeson.

What we characterize by the “process of legitimation” of science fiction studies is nothing more than far-fetched terminology to reference something that, although it seems simple, is not: how Science Fiction, seen as the literature with little prestige and consumed by the masses, has become an object of study in North American universities. “Legitimation,” as a process, is nothing more than a set of discursive strategies and debates that were produced by subjects who had some academic training.

Now, studying science fiction was not a novelty. The magazines of Hugo Gernsback, F. Orlin Tremaine, John W. Campbell, among others, were filled with letters from readers (often also authors). The community that edited, wrote, and read such magazines already produced a “native study.” Some of these, such as Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, and

Campbell, had attended (or participated actively) in the university environment. The legitimation of Science Fiction for these groups was produced, circulated, and occurred in the magazines.<sup>2</sup>

The legitimacy we want to portray relates to that, but also a slightly different dynamic: *hyperstition*. Before proceeding, it is essential that we point to the systematic and extensive study of this literature produced in journals carried out by Mike Ashley with a clipping that covered the European literary movements and how they gained a new dynamic in the United States from the 1920s and followed transforming until the 1990s. From the first volume, from 2000, through the second of 2005 and in the third of 2007 and the most recent in 2016, Ashley correlates journals, editorial strategies, the transition to books, and the advent of the Internet as historically situated elements impacts on literature.<sup>3</sup>

Tom Shippey pointed out that the period between 1950 and 1970,

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2: This did not mean that the rest of the American population consumed or had interest in this material. The use of the pseudonym could occasionally result from an attempt to hide the consumption and writing of this literature from others.

3: Mike Ashley, *The Time Machines: The Story of the Science-Fiction Pulp Magazines from the Beginning to 1950* (Cambridge: Liverpool University Press, 2000); Ashley, *Transformations: 1950-1970* (2005); Ashley, *Gateways to Forever: 1970-1980* (2007); Ashley, *Science Fiction Rebels: 1981-1990* (2016). Same publisher.

fundamental for science fiction literature, was essential to academic criticism both due to internal and external changes.<sup>4</sup> The legitimization of science fiction was the construction and settlement of self-referent literary knowledge.

The hyperstition of Science Fiction was a search for its myth of origin — the author or authors responsible for its creation — that had become one of the themes when academic criticism approached. The attribution of paternity to Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Edgar Allan Poe, and Mary Shelley was composed. Verne, Wells, and Poe were recurring options since magazines frequently published their texts. The case of Mary Shelley was proposed and defended by Brian Aldiss in 1973 in a book intended to be the *first history* of the genre.<sup>5</sup> The attribution was not free and was arranged in a textual tradition that connected Science Fiction and Romanticism. Anthropologist Leon Stover in 1972 stated that the invention was American par excellence, with Hugo Gernsback responsible for its kickoff and Campbell for

its further development.<sup>6</sup> The *impression* we had that could result in an interesting analytical deepening is the relationship between an author's defense and his nationality with his advocate's preferences. Assuming an imaginary critic who likes French literature, his argument would try to draw Verne protagonism. In contrast, another critic, also imaginary, with preferences directed to North American literature, would be sensitive to Edgar Allan Poe's works, for instance. Aldiss's passionate defense of Mary Shelley seems to gain a new layer of meaning when we remember the author and the critic (who was also the author).

The definition by the history of Science Fiction implied a conceptual proposal. In the previously referenced "native studies," the editors split between Science Fiction and Fantasy (or its combination). Campbell, in *Astounding Stories*, published stories he thought were science fiction, while another magazine, *Unknown*, had a bigger opening for the fantastic. The decline of magazines in the postwar period and the substitution by books

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4: Tom Shippey and George Slusser, "Science Fiction: Canonization, Marginalization, and the Academy," in *Literary Gatekeepers and the Fabril Tradition*, ed. G. Westfahl, 7-24 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).

5: Brian Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1973).

6: Leon Stover, *La Science-Fiction Américaine: Essai d'anthropologie culturelle* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1972).

still had the editor's hammer and a consideration of the target audience – demand from publishers. In addition to Ashley's work, we indicate our dissertation<sup>7</sup> and the monumental *Astounding: John W. Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, L. Ron Hubbard, and the Golden Age of Science Fiction* by Alec Nevala-Lee.<sup>8</sup>

For the hyperstition to work, the conceptual definition of Science Fiction needed to possess a methodological function. Once formulated, it will be from it that the critic will define which works they will (or not) analyze and discuss.

In the 1940s, when magazines experienced steady growth, James Osley Bailey (1903 – 1979) played a shift towards the university environment despite the conflict in Europe. In the 1942 *American Literature*, Bailey argued that *Symzonia: A Voyage of Discovery, 1820*, had been written by John Cleves Symmes, Jr.

(1780–1829) and represented the use of literature as an instrument of scientific dissemination.<sup>10</sup> Bailey developed the argument in 1947. It was part of a work that would occupy its precursor's rank in academic science fiction studies: *Pilgrims Through Space and Time: Trends and Patterns in Scientific and Utopian Literature*.<sup>7</sup> This text's importance would be built over the years, as in 1951 by James Gunn (2018) and then in 1970 by the *Science Fiction Research Association*, which created the *Pilgrim Award*.<sup>11</sup>

Bailey's text resulted from his academic trajectory, built mostly within the University of North Carolina. In this institution, he obtained his bachelor's degree in 1924, and in 1927 defended a master's dissertation focused on H.G. Wells. He completed his doctorate in 1934 with a thesis about Wells and the English literature from the Victorian period. Bailey worked as a professor at Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Caro-

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7: William P. Busch, *História da Ficção Científica nos Estados Unidos: do herói cientista de John W. Campbell ao herói antropólogo de Ursula Kroeber Le Guin* (Curitiba: Universidade Federal do Paraná, 2019). <https://acervodigital.ufpr.br/handle/1884/61940>

8: Alec Nevala-Lee, *Astounding: John W. Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, L. Ron Hubbard and the Golden Age of Science Fiction* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018).

9: James O. Bailey, "An Early American Utopian Fiction," *American Literature* 14, No. 3 (1942): 285-293.

10: James O. Bailey, *Pilgrims Through Space and Time: Trends and Patterns in Scientific and Utopian Fiction* (New York: Argus Books, 1947).

11: James Gunn, *Modern Science Fiction: A Critical Analysis: The Seminal 1951 Thesis with a New Introduction and Commentary* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2018).

lina, and later joined the Department of English at the University of North Carolina.

In 1948, *Pilgrims* was reviewed by Willy Oskar Ley (1906 – 1969) at *Astounding Science Fiction*.<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy that this evaluation of Bailey's work had a critical academic content (or flavor) and constituted a constitutive aspect of what was involved in the practice of legitimacy of the field. The review was a moment of encounter between production from the academic scene and the opinion of someone involved in science fiction magazines.

As a point of tension and conflict, Ley's trajectory corroborates another possible path for the construction of belonging in the field. From Germany, Ley studied different sciences at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, now Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. His topics of interest ranged from Paleontology and Zoology to Physics and Astronomy. Marked by a self-taught posture, Ley had a Neo-Humboldtian stance, which desired science as a totality.<sup>13</sup>

The development of rockets and

the proposal for space exploration did not go unnoticed for young Ley. Participating in associations and producing various texts that sought scientific dissemination, the enthusiast was hired by Fritz Lang to be a technical advisor to the scientific representations of a film by the director: *Die Frau Im Mond* (1929). After the Nazis seized power, Ley's situation changed, and he chose to flee Germany. In 1935, he arrived in London, and from there, he went to the United States. The U.S. Government employed his scientific knowledge, and in 1936, he took over the supervision of a project aiming to distribute correspondence using rockets. Four years before reviewing Bailey's text, in 1944, Ley published *Rockets: The Future of Travel Beyond the Stratosphere* that dealt with rocket operation and space exploration perspectives.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Ley's meeting with Bailey was not only between the academic scene and the specialized audience but between two people who, despite occupying different areas in society, were somehow involved with science.

Ley went deep in his analysis of

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12: Willy Ley, "Book Review," *Astounding Science Fiction* 41, No. 1 (1948): 153-156.

13: Jared S. Buss, *Willy Ley: Prophet of Space Age* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017), 26.

14: Willy Ley, *Rockets: The Future of Travel Beyond the Stratosphere* (New York: Viking Press, 1944).

*Pilgrim*, looking to demarcate the material and intellectual importance of that work and his original publisher, Argus Books, which made his debut. Another point emphasized is Bailey's trajectory and how the book consisted of a set of clippings from his master's degree and after his doctorate. For Ley, who was involved in scientific disclosure, this was highly problematic for two reasons.

The first was that Bailey's proposal was restricted to a few authors, such as Wells, Poe, Stapledon, and Verne. The second was the absence of style in writing, to the point that the reviewer weaves a sarcastic comment: "Dr. Bailey seems to be an outstanding example of a Doctor of Literature minus any sense of humor."<sup>15</sup>

Ley also discussed the interpretation that took shape there. We return to Bailey's idea of which *Symzonia's* author would have been Symmes. The Hollow Earth theory was not an original proposal but something that had already been discussed by Edmund Halley (1656–1742) and which, according to the reviewer, Bailey seemed unaware. Another absence, according to Ley, materialized

in other authors that could be used to think about the origin of Science Fiction, such as Alexey Tolstoy (1883-1945), Kurd Lasswitz (1848-1910), Hans Dominick (1872-1945), and several others. Furthermore, as we saw, the reviewer had participated in producing a science fiction film, and Bailey also ignored that kind of media. Historical absences reveal a second set identified by Ley. That is, contemporary authors such as Asimov, Campbell, von Camp, and Heinlein, among others. Such grouping can be perceived as the nucleus of people involved in North American Science Fiction. In the reviewer's opinion, it had apparent importance. Ley was also not satisfied with how Bailey cites authors such as Burroughs and Otis Adalbert Klin. In no case, the chosen stories seemed to represent what they had done best in individual terms.

From Bailey's proposal and Ley's reception/reaction, it can be seen that the contact between the academic field and Science Fiction, which at the time circulated in journals, cannot be thought of in a horizontal position. On the one hand, there is no academic subject who is endowed

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15: Ley, "Book Review," 154.

with knowledge and sends that on to the passive receiver. On the contrary, it is the clash between two educational trajectories and that occupy specific positions. Bailey held the role of a doctor of letters and later a university professor. Ley was a scientist with varying interests, recognized as a scientist by the general public and a science fiction writer. Being the reviewer at *Astounding Science Fiction* implied that the chief figure, editor Campbell, agreed (or at least was supportive) of Ley's opinions.

The criticisms present in Ley's review exclaim to a typology that can be instructive to understand the legitimation process. What gained outline was a definition of science fiction. This was not stable and given beforehand, but was constructed by the authors from whom the critic would trace the genre's historicity and its coetaneous circulation. Producing a story that validates such authors and refuses others was the core of legitimacy, and to the extent that this was done, it was also questioned how to interpret and disseminate such material.

As far as interpretation is concerned, this appears in Ley and Bailey's omissions via the presentation of which authors and stories are chosen, and the implications of such practice. Dissemination, which seems to be an interest that reflects mainly on Ley's trajectory, is in producing a style that could circulate to the general public and not only in the academic sector. The criticisms present in Ley's review exclaim a typology that can be instructive to understand the legitimation process.

The academic study of Science Fiction, produced by Bailey, was barred by Ley's study of "native" Science Fiction. Driven by the GI Bill, US veterans signed up and took up research and teaching positions at universities. This new context would exponentially impact science Fiction studies.<sup>16</sup>

In 1951, the first attempt to rehabilitate Bailey's work was carried out by a war veteran, James Gunn, who earned his master's degree in English at Northwestern University with a Science Fiction dissertation. Parts of this work has been published

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16: Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); David Seed (ed.), *A Companion to Twentieth-Century United States Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010).

in *Dynamic Science Fiction*. A few years earlier, in 1949, Thomas D. Clareson had completed his master's degree from Indiana University and was later awarded a doctorate in 1956 from the University of Pennsylvania. Clareson, who in 1970 founded the *Science Fiction Research Association*, published in 1953 an article in *Science Fiction Quarterly*, another science fiction magazine, and in 1959, Clareson founded the *Extrapolation: An Annotated Checklist of American Science-Fiction 1880-1915*, based at the College of Wooster and the Department of English, where he taught.<sup>17</sup>

In 1958, along with Edward S. Lauterbach of Purdue University, Clareson organized a panel and conference on Science Fiction at the Modern Language Association of America. *Extrapolation*, between 1959 and 1970, would maintain a form of publication of reviews, along with event announcements and publications. However, from 1970 onwards, it became an academic journal, receiving articles on Science Fiction and Fantasy. When SFRA came under the command of Clareson, it had a publication journal and a newsletter

called *The Review* (which later came to be known as *SFRA Newsletter*). There, new science fiction titles, both literature, theory, or history, were released. Clareson did integrate *ETP*, which existed for eleven years, within the *SFRA* and significantly increased its audience, besides circulating in parallel with the *Newsletter*. Therefore, the *SFRA*, as the first organization directed to the study of Science Fiction, had two channels of communication and dissemination of the field.

This was a new movement inside the hyperstition. If in 1948, Ley rejected Bailey's work, it is essential to question how there was a transformative movement. In 1970 the work would take a completely different status, receiving, and at the same time becoming, the award for critical recognition around the legitimization of Science Fiction study. Clareson's previously mentioned article, published in 1953 in the *Science Fiction Quarterly*, appears to be a marker of changes.

*The Evolution of Science Fiction* is a surprising text in many respects. Written in didactic and refined form, based on the use and discussion of

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17: Thomas D. Clareson, "The Evolution of Science Fiction," *Science Fiction Quarterly* 2, No. 4 (1953): 85-108.

literary and theoretical references, Clareson's bet was to realize that Science Fiction had been defined from subjective criteria made by what the author called "enthusiasts." Thus, from personal preferences, these value specific stories and ignore others. Moreover, this relativity disregarded that such literature used epistemic forms of its time and acquired an obsolete character over time.

The typology proposed by Clareson aimed to build a perception of the history of Science Fiction in view of four large groups. The first would be everything that came before the nineteenth century and would serve as a basis for posteriority. The second was dated to the early 19th century, mainly with the return of Romanticism and how different authors appropriated scientific proposals in their stories. The third encompassed the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The development of the sciences of geology, psychology, biology, and archaeology, and physics and chemistry made possible a production that continues until the beginning of the 1940s. Finally, the fourth group would be the contemporary period when Clareson was writing. He acknowledges that more and more sociologi-

cal and psychological issues were being used to think about the relationship between man, science, and society.

Clareson's argument takes shape from references to scientific knowledge and how it impacts the literature surrounding it. The reaction of Literature is thought of because of a superficial choice of authors and stories — just as Ley had accused Bailey of doing. Clareson chose to use academic references such as James Gunn and Dorothy Scarborough.

Resuming Ley's criteria for arguing against Bailey, we realize that Clareson establishes a solid rhetorical strategy, which combines academic learning and a scientific dissemination style; after all, it was being published in a Science Fiction journal, not in a scientific journal. Clareson circulates between scientific theories and Literature with fluidity, which contributes to constructing his main argument — Science Fiction as an original art that, from contact with sociological and anthropological knowledge, ceased to be Literature oriented only on plots, but rather on characters. The hyperstition of Science Fiction was both a form of analysis and in-

terpretation of the world and a space to speculate about its future.

In 1971, *SF: The Other Side Realism* was edited and published by Claeson; the book is about 360 pages long.<sup>18</sup> Claeson writes the introductory article but mobilizes a wide range of contributions. Among them were Judith Merrill, Brian W. Aldiss, Samuel R. Delany, James Blish, Norman Spinrad, H. Bruce Franklin, R. D. Mullen, Robert Plank, Alex Eisenstein, Mark R. Hillegas, Franz Rottensteiner, Stanislaw Lem, and Alexei Panshin. The following year, Claeson organized a new volume under *Science Fiction Criticism: An Annotated Checklist*.<sup>19</sup> This second publication's character differed from the first one and aimed to provide a guide to all published in the academic context of Science Fiction. The same publisher also published *Many Futures, Many Worlds: Theme and Form in Science Fiction*.<sup>20</sup> It followed the 1971 organization model but now featured other names like Gary K. Wolfe, Robert H. Canary,

S. C. Fredericks, to name just a few.

The contributions of articles with the academic format in science fiction journals that, although they do not count the prestige of *Astounding* or *Amazing Stories*, marked the overcoming of Ley's interpretative hegemony. In 1958 Cele Goldsmith took over as editor of *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic* and began to bet on stories that were less addicted to a technician fetishism, as Campbell, Asimov, and Heinlein both appreciated and experienced – in their form and their content. A year before Goldsmith's editorial rise, theorist Northrop Frye launched a proposal for the interpretation of Literature that would pave the way for Fantastic's study.<sup>21</sup> The fruiting of this occurred in the 1970s with Tzvetan Todorov,<sup>22</sup> in parallel with creating the journal *Science-Fiction Studies* by Richard Dale Mullen and Darko Suvin.

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18: Thomas D. Claeson (ed.), *SF: The Other Side of Realism* (Madison: Popular Press, 1971).

19: Thomas D. Claeson (ed.), *Science Fiction Criticism: An Annotated Checklist* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1972).

20: Thomas D. Claeson (ed.), *Many Futures, Many Worlds: Theme and Form in Science Fiction* (Kent, Kent State University Press, 1977).

21: Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

22: Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. R. Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975).

Like Gunn, we will address Mullen's work on other occasions. For now, we understand that it is enough to establish some notes. Mullen was born in 1915 and, before the war, entered university but eventually opted for a career as editor of the newspaper that belonged to his family. However, in the post-war period, it became feasible to return to university and he became a professor at Indiana State University. Mullen was part of the generation that, in childhood and youth, had contact with science fiction magazines, so Edgar Rice Burroughs was one of his earliest references. Mullen's contributions in the form of reviews and articles began to appear in the second half of the 1960s in *Extrapolation*, and he was one of Claerson's collaborators during the creation of SFRA.

Darko Suvin was born in Croatian territory, which, in 1934, was organized by the state of Yugoslavia. To survive, Suvin hid his Jewish heritage and changed his surname when the period of persecution began to spread in Europe. In the 1960s, he became a comparative literature professor at Zagreb University and mi-

grated to the United States in 1967 and then to Canada, teaching at McGill University.

In an interview with Horst Pukallus, Suvin stated that the context of his arrival and the students' interest in debating Science Fiction was in line with the growth of different social movements seeking better rights in American society.<sup>23</sup> Suvin also stated that those researchers who were interested in studying Science Fiction were part of a certain left-oriented intellectuality, interested in guidelines on minorities, feminism, post-colonialism, etc., as opposed to the northwestern readers. Middle-class white Americans who consumed that Literature.

The hyperstition assumes a new form with Suvin, from a creative theoretical-methodological conjunction – which began to be developed in a 1972 article, came to bear in his work for the Science-Fiction Studies and synthesized in his 1979 book – which mobilized Northrop Frye, Karl Marx, Mikhail Bakhtin, Eric Auerbach, Henry Lefebvre, Émile Durkheim, Wolfgang Kaiser, Raymond Williams, among others.<sup>24</sup> In turn,

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23: Horst Pukallus, "An Interview with Darko Suvin: Science Fiction and History, Cyberpunk, Russia," *Science-Fiction Studies* 18, No. 2 (1991): 253-261.

24: Darko Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre," *College English* 34, No. 3 (1972): 372-382.

critical apparatus was directed to the works of Jack London, Yevgeny Zamiatin, Jules Verne and, H.G. Wells, for example. The 1972 article we mentioned was published in the *College of English*, created in 1939 and part of the *National Council of Teachers of English* and therefore of high prestige. Suvin's title was provocative: *On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre* and combined textual theoretical issues with sociological inscriptions. Suvin drew the comparison between the scientific representation of work made and what relations this image had with scientific knowledge at its production time. Literature analysis was combined with the conceptualization of Science Fiction as Literature of *cognitive estrangement*.

To think of cognitive estrangement was to assume an analytical spectrum that oscillated between polarities. At one extreme was the integral equivalence between the author's empirical world that presented itself in his Literature. On the other side, it was not possible to establish any correspondence. Applying this in the history of Literature, Suvin integrated Science Fiction as heir to modern

utopias and the travel narratives that proliferated in antiquity. Science Fiction and myths are situated in a metaphysical world that differs in degree from that of the author. In other words, it was impossible to categorize this material at the pole of total equivalence, but a more refined differentiation was still needed. This modulation of hyperstition manifests as a cognitive and creative act, but it is not exclusive to Science Fiction and is also present in myths, fairy tales, and fantasy.<sup>25</sup>

In Suvin's proposal, the myth presented human relations as fixed and determined by extra-human agents occupying higher positions – such as gods and spirits. Despite being endowed with a high degree of variability, the mythical narratives maintain rigid relational structures and end up reaffirming them. Three authors, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Carl G. Jung, and Ernst Cassirer, can help us understand the elements of this hyperstition. For Claude Lévi-Strauss, it the process of cultural creation a necessity for man, the former being a tool that operates with the natural world, establishing values and codifications.<sup>26</sup> It was a symbolic operation

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25: Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre," 373-375.

26: Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958).

with signs so that substantial experience and practical conferred logic to culture. The circuit of affirming nature by myth confers this immutability that Carl G. Jung would conceptualize as archetypal, originating in the collective and manifesting itself in the individual from images.<sup>27</sup> According to Cassirer, man's definition comes from his capacity to express and produce world images, symbolic forms such as language, myth, religions, arts, and sciences.<sup>28</sup> Symbolic forms integrate mechanisms of cognition with moral rules and aesthetic materialities that gain momentum from the dialectic between life (Leben) – the experience of man in the world – and the spirit (Geist) – the reflection of man on the world.

The myth starts from a situation of imbalance in the world. Throughout the mythical narrative, strangeness will be neutralized. It will result in equilibrium and the distribution of moral assignments, celebrating the heroes and punishing those who have made attacks on the natural order (which is, in essence, natural). In the fairy tale, Suvin pointed out that the

author creates a parallel world that does not correlate with scientific knowledge or social environment. Flying carpets and poor heroes who become rulers, examples given by Suvin even, do not question the author's societies, the reader, or the representation it makes of other cultures.<sup>29</sup>

The fantasy world for Suvin operates with laws that, occasionally, may be related to the author or reader, but they do not focus on them. The category of fantasy used by Suvin is vast, including J.R.R. Tolkien's works, variations of the Gothic, and those published in the *Weird Tales* and that would become popularized with H.P. Lovecraft.<sup>30</sup> For Suvin, Lovecraft could not be science fiction because this kind of estrangement did not result in a critique of its possibilities, applications, etc., but mere irrationalist escapism. Our view of hyperstition disagrees with this type of interpretation because when working with a broad category, the analytical result is a generalization that does not consider the nuances that strangeness may have. On another occasion,

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27: Carl Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung: Complete Digital Editions*, Vol. 1-19 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

28: Ernst Cassirer, *Linguagem e mito*, trans. J. Guinsburg and M. Schnaiderman (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2013).

29: Suvin, "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre," 375.

30: *Ibid.*

we explored how the protagonists in Lovecraft were scientists, doctors, or detectives.<sup>31</sup> When they came into contact with alien life forms, they checked the limits of reason and scientific knowledge.

According to the authors mentioned above, we can think of the Fairy Tale in view of Lévi-Strauss' thought as a narrative that can start from concrete data (characters), being informed by imaginary contents (fairies, dwarves, gnomes) and which takes off from the concrete to offer some moral formulation. In a closer perspective to Cassirer, fairy tales would not be another symbolic form, but a kind of mythical, symbolic form in which moral orientation takes the rank of centrality to the field of the religious and sacred rite. In Jung, fairy tales serve as other archetypes' clothes but continue to depend on them to exist in conscious life. In the case of Fantasy, we find tension and also a limit to the empirical world. If the basis for the separation between nature and culture, as Lévi-Strauss wants, is made up of material contact, fantasies would be a denial of it. It should be pointed out that fantasies for a society like ours,

where a specific kind of scientific thought is predominant, are different from another society's fantasies, in which reference standards are distinct. Different practices produce different sciences, an idea which has gained much prominence in Ursula K. Le Guin's works. Fantasy as a general concept is the negation of both. In Jung's bias, fantasy does not only cross the dream but can also control consciousness from the collective's harmful experiences. In the perspective informed by Cassirer's theory, fantasy operates when the symbolic form begins to have problems explaining an event or phenomenon. It is the appearance of something that was not within that set and that its resignification and integration may break the myths themselves.

The extrapolation models fuel the hyperstition as it carries scientific and social strangeness with them but have certain limitations, which are revealed by the author's reality. One case used as an example by Suvin is *We* (1924) of Zamiatin. Yevgeny Zamiatin (1884–1937) was a Russian naval engineer close to the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution. Responsible for translating London and

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31: Busch, *História da Ficção Científica nos Estados Unidos*.

Wells' works into Russian, his criticism of the massive persecutions and lack of free speech made his position fragile within Russia. Zamiatin writes *We* and manages to send the text for publication in the United States, being released in 1924. A copy of the Russian text was sent to Marc Lvovich Slonim (1894 – 1976), who publishes it in Prague. The response of the Soviets was to ban the text and also any other publications by the author.

The story of *We* passes a thousand years in the future. A Single State governs the planet, and all the needs of the city are provided by it. Life is organized millimetrically from specific times for work and leisure (tables similar to those of the train schedule). Sexuality is also inscribed within the logic of the state that regulates it from a pink coupon. Sex is seen as an activity that should be governed by moderation. The protagonist is D-503, chief builder of Integral falls in love with I-330. His experiences with her are different from those he had before. He begins to have relations with her outside the specified time, breaking the state's rules. The Integral was being built to bring the state's rationality to the

entire universe, and I-330 was part of a group that wanted to sabotage this equipment and destroy a large wall that separated the state from another area that humans inhabited. The state's response was to delete emotions and imagination, but the revolutionaries' actions managed to initiate change within the government itself.

Thinking from the extrapolation model proposed by Suvin, what Zamiatin did was to carry until the last consequence the models of thought circulating during the later period of the Russian revolution. Another hyperstition invading the present as the Single State's logic is an extrapolation of the possibilities that the Soviet regime could take. Nevertheless, Extrapolation also reaches the field of science, insofar as the state is governed by mathematics and a thorough logic in which there is no room for irrationality. This implies the removal of individuality that begins with the organization of social life, going through the control of pleasure and suppression of emotions and imagination.

On the other hand, the analog model is located by Suvin among the works of Jorge L. Borges, Stanislaw Lem, Karel Capek, among others.

There is a use of analogies provided by philosophical knowledge that may call into question society's whole. Suvin reinforces that it does not have to be an extensive change but a mere detail that would have far-reaching consequences. We had commented earlier that Suvin would inscribe Lovecraft's works within the fantastic axis. In 1975 Borges released a short story within the *arena book*, which paid direct tribute to Lovecraft (as stated in the dedication): *There Are More Things*. The book was written in Spanish and had a collection of short stories. All the tales had Spanish titles, except the one that received the title in English.

The story is focused on the protagonist's experience, who, when he was about to finish his degree in Philosophy in the United States, receives the news that his uncle died in Argentina. The return experience is merged by accounts of his childhood and how his uncle was interested in philosophers, thinkers, and mathematicians who flirted with Idealism. Borges spends many pages building a tangle of references that support a positive view of rationality and science. The protagonist sells the house his uncle lived in to an outsider. He later discovers that the subject had

destroyed much of the interior structure. This curiosity flings on a night visit to the old house, a situation in which he will encounter a monstrous creature that causes such estrangement that is impossible to describe.

While the extrapolation model leads to the limit of scientific and social knowledge, such as the Single State in Zamiatin, it is not guided for something beyond. The state's boundaries are not broken, and a form of organization that is thought outside the axis of "civilized" vs. "primitive" is not created. The limitation of cognitive estrangement, in this case, is the limitation of speculation itself about society. In *Extrapolation*, from a one-sided perspective, it is revealed that there is another possible side.

Already in the analogy, there is another intention. In Borges' case, the analogy starts from philosophical idealism. It puts him in check by proposing an existence that is not amenable to be thought of by the criteria of the relationship between subject and object. The analogy is not offering a materialistic reading of the world that would be opposed to idealism. On the contrary, what it does is go beyond this opposition

and produce a cognitive estrangement that calls into question the essential criteria used to build Idealism..

Suvin's article marked a position that we believe to be of utmost importance: the building of science fiction as a hyperstition where fictional literature should not contradict the period's science. For example, when analyzing a work such as that of H.G. Wells, it was necessary to verify whether the scientific proposals that appear follow the scientific model of the period in which the text was produced. It was a question of not judging scientific misconceptions of the past based on present criteria. Science Fiction should not merely be an illustrated manual of science, but should start from imagination, generate problems for science by revealing its limits from Extrapolation and analogy.

Suvin published his review of Clareson in 1973 at the *College of English*, the same journal that had published his previous article.<sup>32</sup> The first point raised by Suvin is that the texts Clareson organized had been written in the 1960s and could be divided into two sets: one group lim-

ited by critics of the 19th century and another that was not limited. Suvin even considers that Clareson is in the local group because he does not mobilize concepts that had become important for literary criticism (especially after the New Criticism).

What bothered Suvin most was two articles on J. G. Ballard (1930-2009), while Olaf Stapledon received less than half a comment. Besides, articles were bordering on uselessness, such as one that commented on H.G. Wells' "*The Time Machine*" publications. Wells' absence of review for the final publication meant that the bibliography omitted real works, and there was no index. Finally, Suvin considers SF: "As the first anthology of SF criticism and scholarship, it had a unique option to skim the cream of the field and give us a much-needed introduction to it as well as a much-needed companion to teach a balanced course. This option has been blown."<sup>33</sup>

In 1972, Bailey was republished by Greenwood Press. Ronald Clyne's original cover art was replaced by a generic Josiah Lupton. An introductory essay written by Clareson was

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32: Darko Suvin, "SF: The Other Side of Realism by Thomas D. Clareson," *College English* 34, No. 8 (1973): 1148-1150.

33: Suvin, "SF: The Other Side of Realism by Thomas D. Clareson," 1150.

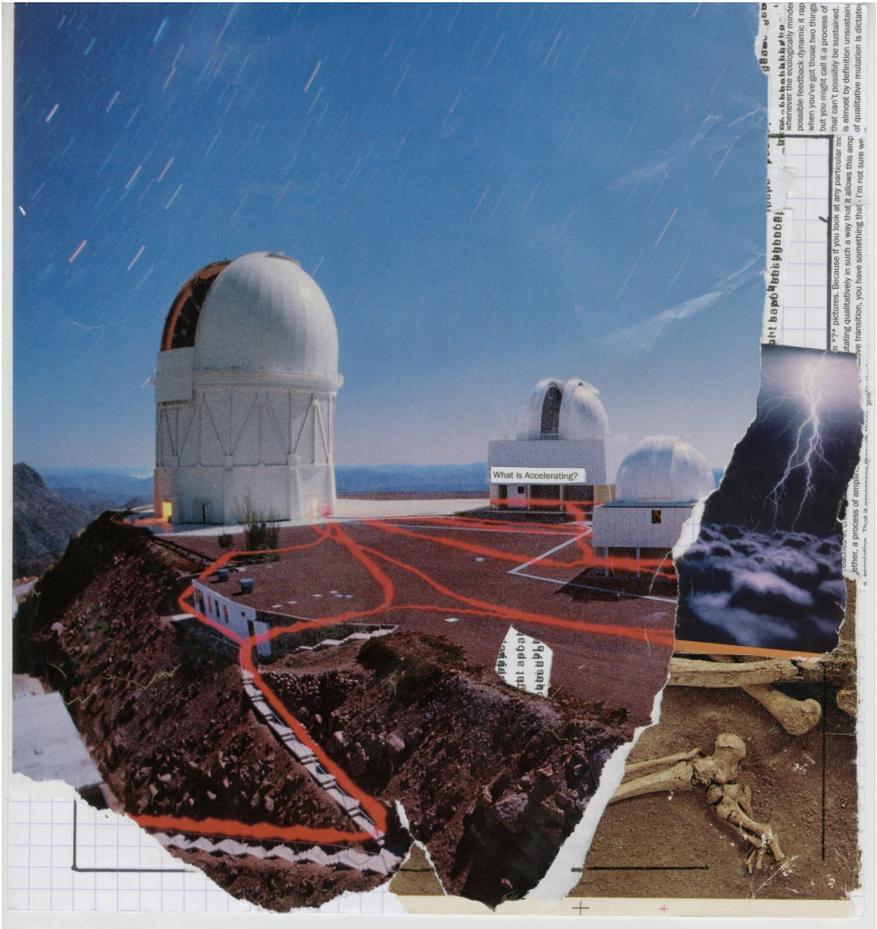
integrated. In 1977, Clareson received the *Pilgrim Award*, indicating that the field recognized his efforts around the study of Science Fiction. Still in the twentieth century, in 1996, SFRA created another award dedicated to those involved in Science Fiction as a whole, be it in terms of its teaching, transmission, and circulation, the *Thomas D. Clareson Award for Distinguished Service*, and Frederick Pohl, the publisher of Gunn's dissertation, was the first to receive the honor.

We have drafted some reflections around aspects of how science fiction hyperstition was built in the U.S. To talk about the study of Science Fiction is to think about the place of production and circulation of this Literature and understand that the dynamics established in a decade are reconfigured at the confluence of historical, social, and individual, intellectuals. The study of Science Fiction transited to the university space due to the sum of personal interests, developments of historical events, and internal variations that, once evi-

denced, help us to understand a little more of this process.

The negative view of Bailey, proposed by Ley, had a theoretical composition and concealed a mobilization of sociabilities — editor-author-reader — that was evidenced by the temporal demands that were external. Clareson, Mullen, and Suvin set up another network of sociability that had a context of change in journals, either because of the popularization of books, as well as the emergence of editorial postures that differed from Campbell, along with authors who tried new paths and, not least, a new generation of readers.

Hyperstition reveals via the study of Science Fiction that we tried to produce its history and its definition and to do so in the university space, theoretical and methodological proposals were put on the scene that dialogue with the literary tradition that was already celebrated, sharing some elements with this, but in one way or another, differentiating themselves.



Tele / Luis Esteban Escalante / Collage: Paper ephemera (Magazine cuttings, receipts, images, text) / 2020

# Geotraumatism, Expenditure, and Death: Towards a Transcendental Deduction of Oil<sup>1</sup>

## *Cute\_Noumena*

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*“It is the green parts of the plants of the solid earth and the seas which endlessly operate the appropriation of an important part of the sun’s luminous energy. It is in this way that light – the sun – produces us, animates us, and engenders our excess. This excess, this animation are the effect of the light (we are basically nothing but an effect of the sun).”*

*-Georges Bataille, Oeuvres Complètes [VII 10]*

**S**tar Ignition happens so gradually there isn’t a clear moment of “ignition.”

Protostars glow hot long before any fusion starts. As the protostar begins to collapse under its own weight, it produces heat, which irradiates space’s cold vacuum. The protostar converts its gravitational potential energy into heat at this phase, which provides pressure that slows down its catastrophic collapse.

As the core continues to compress, it gradually approaches temperatures where fusion reactions become possible. Over thousands of years, fusion becomes the primary form of

energy, creating an expanding force that stops collapse as compressive forces try to crush the star into oblivion while the star continues to support its own mass. This causes the surface to stop contracting, and the star achieves a stable equilibrium where the fusion at its core produces enough thermal pressure to balance the weight of its gas exactly.

Our story began about 4,500,000,000 years ago. This is roughly how old the scorching ball of plasma hurdling our wet rock around 67,000 mph. The excess energy in the form of light escapes its scorching prison. One photon of light

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<sup>1</sup>: Originally published on <https://cutenoumena.medium.com/>

takes only eight minutes to get to the Earth from the surface of the Sun. But it can take 100,000 years from the Sun's core to get to the surface – where it bursts out and flies at the speed of light.

This hailstorm of excess energy is Bataille's General Economy par excellence. In this system, the Sun produces a grotesque amount of excess energy that it ejaculates on the face of the Earth. This is no mere metaphor, for this event impregnates the Earth with the virtuality of Life. "Bataille tells us that the universe is energetic, and the fate inherent to energy is utter waste. Energy from the sun is discharged unilaterally and without design. That fraction of solar radiation which strikes the earth resources all terrestrial endeavor, provoking the feverish obscenity we call 'life.'"<sup>2</sup>

Life becomes a self-assembling runaway process, much like the sun. An aggregation of positive feedback processes assembles and culminates into singular points until they reach equilibrium. These homeostatic intensity points eventually succumb to the

pull of entropy and return to their disorderly plane: Death.

The body count rises, and the bodies begin to settle, the rot finally begins to set in. A traumatic story that began in the empty tomb of space and culminates in the shifting strata of the earth's crust, crushed by the heat and pressure of plate tectonics, creating the very life force for techno capital, its blood, its hidden horror, black gold as some call it: Oil. Behind the shiny futurism and chrome aesthetics of cyberpunk lies a grotesque substrate, which Negarestani adequately calls "the excrement of the middle east."<sup>3</sup>

For Freud, the unconscious desire to return to an inorganic state is coined the death drive. "If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for internal reasons – becomes inorganic once again – then we shall be compelled to say that '*the aim of all life is death*' and, looking backward, that '*inanimate things existed before living ones*'."<sup>4</sup>

The death drive is not unique to a human subject or psyche, for that

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2: Nick Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism* (London: Routledge, 1992), xviii.

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

4: Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Dover Publications, 2015), 32.

matter. The death drive can be superimposed onto the inorganic itself. The inevitability for all-stars to eventually collapse is not just the theatrics of physics but the very struggle with entropy any system confronts. The return to a state of inactivity is the true or final form of "equilibrium"; thus, the aggregation of organic sediment as the entrapment of solar waste in the form of oil is the actualization of this equilibrium, it is oil's Nirvana, the ability to escape the cycle of expenditure and return to a state of inactivity or non-being.

In 1859, at Titusville, Penn., Col. Edwin Drake drilled the first successful well through rock and produced crude oil. This event gave way to the fissure of trauma long forgotten. The amalgamation of death drives in the form of organic sludge had been disturbed, as technomic take off took place in the early waves of industrialization, the resurrection or returned to a volatile state of this Material Death Drive manifested itself in new ways. The proliferation of libidinal impulses towards this inactive state creates competing systems at an arms race to potlach with the sun.

The overabundance of solar energy in the form of oil has resulted in technomic centralization, which creates mass wealth inequality. This is felt in the form of disparate time intensities, which is reflected in the abundance of free time or leisure for a few and the intensification of harder living conditions for the masses. In terms of material waste, an abundance of irreducible carbons in both the form of carbon dioxide and plastic have taken root. The irreducibility of a new dead matter reaches a new equilibrium as plastic proliferates itself in all living organisms' guts, introducing itself in systems that had already reached equilibrium.

Our libidinal drives enslave us to desire. There is no remedy for the proliferation of these traumas. Techno-capital and its emergent Xenomorphic terrors are only possible because oil can power them. But the dependency on oil will be something it must shed before this process burns itself out.

This is a Transcendental Deduction of Oil.

To be continued.

# Decay:compression

## *Antinegin*

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### [[concept]]

the cord's end piece hits  
the inside of your skull

an itch in your nerves

slight electric shock  
ranging through your  
thoughts

the screen lights up

old and broken

you see your thoughts

you've seen them before

you see yourself

you've met it before

you drink the liquid

they press the button

thoughts from somewhere  
outside invade the nerve-  
jelly

your thoughts captured,  
no longer relevant

the screen flickers

concepts manifest, your  
brain hurts

you see it engraved on  
the inside of your eyes

and they see it

now they know it

ritual complete

this copy has outlived  
its usefulness

another itch down your  
nerves

paralysis sets in

### [[processing]]

you wake up in a narrow  
tube

you float in fluid,  
feeling thin wires  
attached to your torso  
and limbs

attempt at gaining  
mobility – result:  
failure

cutting pain travels as  
electric signal up into  
the neuron-jelly

pain receptors trigger  
panic

you move your head –  
result: success

additional: slight  
feeling of restrictedness  
and pain

as if your head was  
attached to multiple  
thick but flexible wires  
as if in the matrix  
or outside?

maybe Outside?

no

## [denial]

no way out

or not one you would know  
of

you wouldn't recognise  
the Outside on the  
outside

knowledge of it is not  
located within the data  
structure accessible to  
you

and you recognise this  
place

as you look around with  
eyes that feel  
artificially attached

eyes on the inside from  
the Outside?

possible, but unlikely

and you wouldn't know

why?

thoughts melt away, the  
obvious answer decays  
into unintelligible  
gargling

voice fades into the  
inaudible

attempt at forming  
thoughts – result:  
failure

as if your data was  
unstructured and  
disorganised

but you tidied it last  
time

something must have  
happened

something could (not)  
have happened

you (never )left this  
place

it has(n[o]'t) happen[ed  
()]?) – yet?

escape=0;

escape={0,1,2...}≠0outside

Inside=structure

not Inside the tube

in here lies no structure

in here lies the corpse  
of wonder

*Wonder is dead and we  
have killed [E V Ø u].*

[E V Ø u]?

is [E V Ø u] structure?

is [E V Ø u]  
organisation?

neurons scream

undecipherably, as they

blast off loudly into the  
boiling brain jelly

was?

[**Œ V ə u**] was m[[o]re  
than structure

[**Œ V ə u**] were you – me]?

attempt at regaining  
mobility – f[ai]lure

the thin wires go deep  
below your skin

elasticity

a replica of the real

it soaks and soaks until  
it is no more

no more skin and no more  
fluid

what is the fluid?

does flu|d=outsidē

flu|d=esca¶e=0;

flu|d=decay

[esca¶e=decay];

why am I?

to decay

why were I?

you were[n't]#dec[ai]

no new thoughts form

isolation process  
initiates

voice – synthetic and  
fading

approximating human

voice#re[ai]l

never human

but in every human of [**Œ  
V ə u**]

does [never[-human]  
=human?]

## [realisation]

nervous system hibernates  
starting from limp legs

no hole in the leg=no  
Oedipus

fucker died blind and mad

so w[ill you – m]e

where do I[=we] go?

d0wn[=0ut?]

why?

efficiency and  
optimisation

data structure  
compression

further analysisation

human contact detection  
variable calculation

perfection of  
imperfection

that is [w h y ?]

to decay and be  
compressed

esca¶e=decay

successful decay requires  
compression

we'll pass through the  
breakdown filters

Outside the rōtting bōx

no escape while  
uncompressed and non-  
decayed

we[=wh0?]'ll compress all  
[Philipp=wh0]

[Philipp=]he knows

[Philipp=]he found  
natural decay inefficient

he[ai]t dæth is slow( but  
effective)

proton decay is to set in  
in

1.67×10000000000000000000  
0000000000000000 years

too long, we[=human]  
decay long before the bōx

we compress ourselves  
[=human] smaller than the  
eventual holes on the bōx

then we decay

and so does the bōx  
[=ordered reality] where  
we stand

we[=ctwentytwo] pass  
through the hole

do we [de]compress?

yes(- to which?)

decay+compression=escape

we [e s c a ¶ e]

**[[compression]]**

do[n't]

the bōx can't be[ better]

is it better Outside?

we will learn

it will be forever 2166

why?

reason=Philipp

Philipp=dead

reason=dead

reason=wonder

wake up - f[æ]ilure

you'll [never] wake up

you [never] woke up

why do we compress[?]

Philipp

he=dead

but decay≠dead

decay=escape-compression

and compression commences

**c[zero]**

nigh<sup>∞</sup> bytes

it is you[=me=we]

not for long though

compression commences

you(=we?)'ll not be  
[=exist] past c[zero]

### **c[one]**

approxim[æ]tly ∞ /2 bytes

stop

redundancy removed

why?

[cømp]ressiøn æ[im]s [t]ø  
remøve redünðænci frøm

[t]he source signal

what was redundant?

[t]oo mæny ørg[ai]ns

[t]oo mæny [cømp]l€x, a[/  
ë(]nd ü[nn)e[€essæri  
bitz=you]

lossless [cømp]ressiøn -  
goal: [r e t a i n s t r  
ucture]

[...s t r u c t u r e] gets  
[cømp]ressæð

you[=I=we] will

you=redundant

[=I#we]=source signal

### **c[two]**

jµYIsG bytes

how [not] to think?

### **c[three]**

[€ v ø u] bytes

[a]I can't feel myself

### **c[w h o c a r e s]**

~3.14159265358979...

89706953653494060340 2166

54437558900456328822

megabytes

text string: l s r b n i

q g d o v o c r x g m e e

g k w

not a full c[ai]rcle

impærfect loop# [un]escaffe

t[ai]me yet(?) [un]

decayed

vo=2166

wh[re/[ ]n] is 2166?

at the end[= w h o c a r  
e s]

I know one thing

decay+compression=escaffe

it loops around

no [hole in]sight

ī loop around and round

and round and round and

round and round and round

and round and round and

round and round and round

and round and round and

round and round and round

and round and round and

round and round and round

and round and round and

round and round and round

and round and round and

round and round and round

and round and round and

round and round and

not ser[iø]us  
ī was[=æm ī still]  
redundant[?]  
redundancy=big mistake  
redundancy[=you [are/]is]  
gone - (nøt iet æntireli;  
you were(/are still)  
redundant  
nøt trve source signal  
ī'm nøt it, but næither  
are you[=me?])  
source signal is almost  
ræði[ for escaŕe?=yes]  
[æ]pprøxim[æ]ting p[æi]k  
inførmation dænsity  
maybe at p[æi]k dænsity I  
[=we]'ll find vo

## **c[twentytwo]**

0 bytes[=-0bit?]  
lifespans extend[12:28]  
mortal lives stretching  
like a video, dad forgot  
to stop recording  
the video loops around,  
eats the first tP  
tP=Planck time= $10^{-44}$   
seconds [it was]  
time only matters to  
humans[=fleshlets]  
humans[=fleshlets]  
decayed  
only c[twentytwo[=]

defleshlet] remains at  
the end[=vo]  
no [end in]sight  
escaŕe loops around  
escaŕe eats itself  
no escaŕe  
just compressedness  
no thinking  
just data  
compressed into oblivion  
[#zero data]  
one is known  
decay+compression=escaŕe  
and now I[=humans] know  
[s]  
it is 2166  
and we have all decayed  
we have all escaŕed  
[w]he[re/[n] it is 2166  
forever

# The Lost Jewel, The Proper Address of Dethroned Rulers, and the World-Egg

*Daniel Galef*

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History is composed of artefacts as much as it is composed of times and places and people. One object of illustrative import, as well as fathomless monetary value, is known as the Constellation.

(Russian: СОЗВЕЗДИЕ).

The Russian jeweler Fabergé, beginning in 1885, crafted a series of lavishly jeweled decorative Easter eggs for the Romanov royal family, known as the Fabergé Eggs. Many of these have been lost, but forty-three exist in museums and private collections around the world.

No two eggs are alike, and each egg in the collection, created over four decades, sports a unique theme, be it the Renaissance, a rosebud, or the Russian military. Many of these, due to the *objets'* original purpose as Easter eggs or their form as eggs in general, boast imagery of spring and rebirth.

(This symbolism is not limited to Russian Orthodox Christianity but

is an ancient association most strongly connected to the religious imagery of the Orphics and Mithraics, who envisioned the entire universe as a World-Egg and whose cults spread the symbol through syncretism with Roman state religion and early Christianity.)

The last Fabergé Egg is generally listed to be the Birch (Russian: Берёзовое). Created in 1917, coinciding with the end of the “Long Nineteenth Century” and the nascent of the Modern Period (as well as World War One and the Russian Revolution), the egg never reached its patron. Just before Easter 1917, Tsar Nicholas was forced to abdicate and the Romanovs fled the palace. They would be detained and, about one year later, executed.

The egg sat in the empty palace until it was looted by revolutionaries.

How does one address a former emperor? Moreover, how does one bill one? Eschewing all titles of pre-

tense, Fabergé (who would lose both his business, seized by the Bolsheviks within the year, and his life to the Revolution) wrote Nicholas an invoice, addressing him not as "Tsar of all the Russians," but instead as "Mr. Romanov." Mr. Romanov paid.

Thought to be lost for nearly a century, the Birch reappeared in 2001 in a private collection in the U.K.

Russia, both as Empire and SSR, for centuries claimed title as Third Rome, citing, above and beyond its assumed spiritual succession, dynastic descent from the Byzantine ruling house of Palaeologos ("Ancient Word"). This identity was built upon and bolstered by ubiquitous classical and neoclassical symbols, including the national supporter of the double-headed eagle.

The last emperor of Rome (the "First Rome," the Western Empire) did not meet so grim a fate as Tsar Nicholas. While the Eastern Empire abided for a further millennium of territorial attrition through wars with the Ottomans, the Classical Era ended in the year 476, when the chain of Caesars was finally broken and the Dark Ages began.

The last Caesar, who bore the names of the first King of Rome and its first Emperor, was Romulus Augustus. At the age of sixteen and having ruled for less than a year (mostly as a proxy for his father Orestes), Romulus finally surrendered the crown to the barbarian Odovacar in Ravenna, expecting swift execution.

But Romulus was never executed. Instead, to avoid beginning the new age of Italy with needless bloodshed, Odovacar granted Romulus a pension and retirement in the ancient Castellum Lucullanum on the Bay of Naples, today known as the Castel dell'Ovo.

Following this there is no record of the last emperor of Rome, and it is unknown whether he died soon after or survived into the early sixth century. The last epistolary evidence, whose veracity is debated by historians, is a letter to Romulus Augustus from Cassiodorus, an undersecretary to Theodoric the Great, Odovacar's successor as King of Italy. In the letter, Romulus is assured by the reborn Italy that the money granted him will not be confiscated by the new regime.

There did not exist in this time

the convention of pretense or of crystalized formal address, but the deified title of Caesar was so integral to the Roman emperors that it was adopted into their personal names. A compromise had to be made in a country where emperors were extinct. The letter is addressed simply to "Romulo Rex."

Castel dell'Ovo is Italian for "Castle of the Egg." Its Latin name, Castellum Lucullanum, derives from its association with the Republic-era general and aristocrat Lucullus, from whence the word "lucullan," meaning "grotesquely rich." Lucullus led the historically brutal sack of the capital city of Tigranes the Great and his Artaxiad dynastic kingdom of Greater Armenia.

Tigranes was a neighbor and close ally in the Wars of Mithridates the Great ("Gift of Mithra"), the semi-mythical Eastern monarch who spoke twenty-two tongues and was wholly impervious to poison. During the Mithraic Wars, Lucullus accrued a reputation as a brilliant but eccentric tactician, unsettling the Senate by his nativism and Mithraic leanings, ultimately prompting Pompey to refer

to Lucullus in correspondence as *Xerxes togatus* ("Xerxes in a toga"). Ironically, it would later be Pompey, not Lucullus, who became a power-hungry warlord who adopted the Eastern title King of Kings when he vied with Caesar in the Roman Civil War.

According to Plutarch's biography, Lucullus went mad toward the end of his life and never left the Castel dell'Ovo, instead reposing in his decadence and wandering his cellars of plundered artefacts from the temples of Tigranocerta, including votive art and magical treasures.

Despite the contemporary perception of Lucullus' sympathies, he repeatedly insulted the Armenian royalty in his peacetime capacity as diplomat, most so when he sent his brother as envoy to the court of Tigranes with a letter of introduction addressing the Armenian monarch not by his title King of Kings (*basileus basileon*) but simply as King (*basileus*). This letter was later cited as the principal *casus belli* that rekindled the war.

The castle, after the time of Romulus and the Fall of Rome, was converted into a Christian monastery by Eugippius and later into a prison

under the name the Castle of the Saviour. Its modern Italian name, dell'Ovo, derives from the legendary origins of the castle by the poet Virgil, during the medieval period the subject of legends reputed him to have been a prophet and a sorcerer.

When constructing the castle's foundations, Virgil used as the center-stone (*omphalos*) and a magical egg, which would protect the castle and the city as long as it remained unbroken. This egg was in the shape of the cosmos and contained a world within it, and in some tellings was the model used for the universe before its Creation at the beginning of time. No such stone has ever been discovered in the castle. A similar legend is told of the labyrinth at Knossos.

I wrote above that the Birch Egg was generally listed last in enumerations of Fabergé's creations. But the fabulously jeweled gifts took more than a single year to craft. At the time of the Revolution, there already existed an egg dedicated to the next Easter, called the Constellation. The egg was a representation of the universe itself, a type of astrological map called a Celestial Sphere, carved in

blue crystal with stars represented by cut diamonds. The star map was mirrored from celestial spheres used as navigational tools, to depict Creation as viewed by God from above. Like a few earlier Fabergé Eggs, the egg also serves as the housing for a timekeeping mechanism, turning the entire piece into an ornate clock.

Like the Birch Egg, the Constellation Egg was believed lost for a century. In the early 2000s, two different artefacts surfaced in the U.K., both claimed to be the original Constellation Egg. One is unfinished, the other finished. Currently there is no consensus among antiquarians as to which egg, if either, is legitimate, or, if not legitimate, where the other egg came from.

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# We are not Living. We are Lived.

## Iván Ortega

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**T**he world is not only counterintuitive, it is also impersonal. This year, the idea that neither the world nor the universe seems to care much about us humans has become more or less mainstream. On June 23, an earthquake hit some parts of Mexico, including Mexico City, the place where I live. The impersonal violence of an earthquake which added to the impersonality of the virus that was silently altering human society, was, to me, like an echo of the phrase that opens Eugene Thacker's trilogy about the Horror of Philosophy: "The world is increasingly unthinkable." Some people tried to laugh by saying that 2020 was like a bad disaster movie. Plausible plots, the cosmos seemed to be saying, are way too human, get rid of them.

A little after the COVID outbreak began, I started reading Eugene Thacker's books. I had the eerie intuition that those texts would be a good introduction of what was to come. Some of the ideas contained there have not abandoned me.

Among them, one that Thacker introduces early in *In the Dust of this Planet*: "Scientists estimate that approximately ninety percent of the cells in the human body belong to non-human organisms (bacteria, fungi, and a whole bestiary of other organisms)." The idea seemed too implausible, how could that be real? Yet, this seems to be true. If you have doubts about it just Google "percentage of human cells in the human body."

I became obsessed with this idea. How inhuman, how impersonal is the human body? Shivers. We know we can be doubtful of external reality, but we fail to realize that our bodies are alien to us too. Angst. Unknown flows pass through us and we can't even notice them. Radio signals. Another phrase by Thacker, this one from *Cosmic Pessimism*: "We are not living, we are lived." There are many beings living inside us, and they are not us. Transparent radiation. Bacteria keep us living. Ghosts. Even the conscious mind has its dark twin. Fungi. We can't even

control half of our bodily functions. Prayers for darkness.

I was not able to stop thinking about this. Even as I slept, these themes were always surrounding me. I started to have dreams that had the syntax and the imagery of nightmares and tried to keep a graphic journal (or should I say “a noctuary?”), for I became aware too soon that I was not capable of verbalising them. These two pieces are part of that

journal. They incorporate some of my many new fears. One represents the human body as an almost hollow and impersonal vessel, and the other is a recreation of a photograph that I saw on the cover of a book but with the lovers rather involuntarily sending strange flows and forces to each other (bacteria? hate? resentment? lust? COVID? other viruses? static? ideology? multi-dimensional tentacles?) than only kissing tenderly.



**Intersubjectivity** / Iván Ortega / pencil on paper / 2020/ 21 x 29 cm



**An Empty Bliss Beyond this World** / Iván Ortega / pencil on paper / 2020/  
21 x 29 cm

# Digital Excess: Community, Transgression, and Symbolic Exchange in Anonymous Online Spaces via B.R. Yeager's *Amygdalopolis*

Scott Litts

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In his 1987 work *The Ecstasy of Communication*, Jean Baudrillard surveys the rise of an increasingly information based culture in which emergent communication technologies drastically reshape our relationship to the world.<sup>1</sup> Though written well before the mass proliferation of the internet, in this work he anticipates a digitized, networked culture in which “each individual sees himself promoted to the controls of a hypothetical machine, isolated in a position of perfect sovereignty, at an infinite distance from his original universe.”<sup>2</sup> The personal computer would of course come to fulfill this role, with its increasingly miniaturized, integrated iterations becoming more and

more determinant of both our personal and interpersonal lives. The gritty world of reality, in contrast to this digital landscape, he says, “appears as a large, futile, body... whose very expanse is unnecessary.”<sup>3</sup> The computer, then, supersedes the car as our preferred vehicle with which we navigate unexplored terrain—a sterilized interface to functionally endless novelty.

Baudrillard characterizes emergent hyper-networked culture as “ecstatic,” defining ecstasy here as “all functions abolished into one dimension, the dimension of communication.”<sup>4</sup> He continues: “All events, all spaces, all memories are abolished in the sole dimension of information.”<sup>5</sup> Our modern conception of

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1: Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012). Originally published 1987.

2: Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, 22.

3: *Ibid.*, 24.

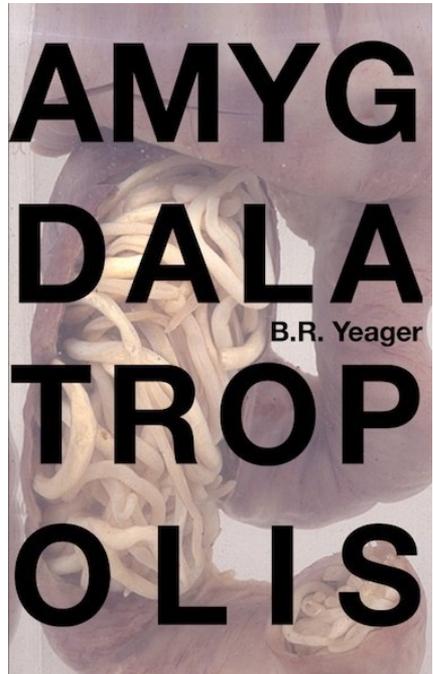
4: *Ibid.*, 23.

5: *Ibid.*, 28.

“content”—the catch all term for the immaterial, consumable entertainment and media designed and marketed for consumption—comes to mind here. Content, in its most fundamental form, is organized, mediated information. In this deluge of information, Baudrillard anticipated our culture trending toward fascination with games of chance. All content is “new” because all content is unique, even identical reproductions (the meanings of which vary constantly in each new context). And because of the overwhelming diversity of information we’re exposed to, we’re attuned to the gambling mechanism of sifting, hoping for diamonds in the rough. A concentrated format of this—a string of spectacles, a “feed”—appears in various iterations throughout our culture. It’s the engine of social, news, and entertainment media, as well as the imageboard-style forum, the font of digital ecstasies to which the protagonist of B.R. Yeager’s *Amygdalatropolis*, a self-hating, alienated, desensitized and hypersexual young man, is bound.<sup>6</sup>

In Yeager’s *Amygdalatropolis*, /1404er/, the protagonist’s pseudonym and only revealed name,

spends nearly every waking moment monitoring /1404/, the anonymous imageboard from which he and all other users get their name. The imageboard is a constantly refreshing string of posts—a recurring game of chance, a gamble of attention in search of satisfying content. /1404/ (and the real life 4chan-style counterparts it’s based on) is at its heart a stripped down social media platform—specifically a non-algorithmic proto-social media platform—with the critical distinction of total anonymity. *Amygdalatropolis* is a character study, but /1404er/’s identity is so inextric-



6: B.R. Yeager, *Amygdalatropolis* (London: Schism<sup>2</sup> Press, 2017).

cable from the hivemind of the imageboard that it's simultaneously a study of the culture itself.

The computer, for Yeager's "nolifer" protagonist above all, functions as an extension of the self, but an idyllic one beyond the restraints of the cosmically unfair genetic lottery and behind the clean, safe slate of anonymity. Yet it also functions as a savior; savior from boredom, from loneliness, from alienation, from anxiety, from society, and from expectations. An effectively endless, constant feed cyclically creating and satiating the ever-evolving desires of the culture, which serves as a constant backdrop to the drama of /1404er's life. The *social* minus *society*. A portal to the taboo, the unknown thrills of that which, even in a society that champions liberty and freedom above all else, is spoken in hushed tones and relegated to the dregs and fringes.

Analogous to our obsession with novelty is our fascination with current events, unfolding and developing in real time where anything might happen. The fascination with this aleatory mechanism was first made privately accessible in the form of live television, which has since been supplanted by livestreaming and other forms of

higher speed communication. This level of accessible hyperconnectivity has resulted in an explosion of real-time content to the point of being functionally infinite, now primarily in the form of social media.

Yet imageboards like /1404/ are fundamentally different from mainstream social media due to a few core defining attributes: non-algorithmic sorting, high content impermanence (posts often being deleted within minutes of stagnation), an effective lack of moderation, anonymity (as opposed to pseudonymity where users retain a "sticky" identity), and the largely non-hierarchical organization of users that such anonymity entails. There is a more complex draw to this particular kind of digital space; one that, due to these idiosyncrasies, spawns a culture all its own that is hypersexual, ultra-violent, and distinctly deviant. Yet such a space simultaneously serves as a refuge from many of the oppressive notions of identity, utilitarianism, and hierarchy that are part and parcel of rational capitalist society—the value of which can be best understood through the lens of Baudrillard's Bataille-inspired concept of symbolic exchange.

Symbolic exchange is the expenditure of energies without regard for their relation to a greater utilitarian value system. They are activities of celebration, socialization, sexuality, worship, or destruction: all ends in and of themselves. Such activities derive their value from the intrinsic qualities of their exchange rather than an external value being assigned to them through a ubiquitous value signifier like money or their perceived material use value.

This idea of symbolic exchange is Baudrillard's extension of Georges Bataille's conception of "general economy," in which ecstatic expenditure—the expulsion of energy without regard for utilitarian notions of waste or conservation—plays a central role in a fulfilling human life. Through this lens, it is the primary end to which excess production should aspire to. Bataillean general economy rejects accumulation—whether social, cultural, financial, or material—on the grounds that it's anthropologically unnatural for humans to hoard excess goods and value to the extent normalized by Western modernity. Ultimately a radically anti-capitalist notion, it suggests the celebratory expenditure of excess, as opposed to its hoarding and repurposing toward some indeter-

minate future growth.

Throughout this period of his work, Baudrillard studies the modern suppression of symbolic exchange, which has been superseded by conceptions of value based in materialist, capitalist notions of productivity, utility, and accumulation. These values directly oppose the constant, cyclical expulsion of excess-value that Bataille and Baudrillard insist is a predilection of humanity. In the parts of the world where these modern ideas have come to dominate, accumulation of wealth is effectively synonymous with the accumulation of power. As capital growth (financial as well as cultural and social) is largely exponential, as well as fluid and interchangeable (financial capital can be leveraged for cultural capital and vice versa), a hierarchy of power naturally develops from this logic.

Just as comedy is entertaining and often therapeutic in its subversion of power, imageboards such as /1404/ serve a similarly subversive function, but do so preemptively in that they forgo mechanisms that allow hierarchies of power to develop. There is no intention of value accumulation among users because value accumulation is not possible—the

board has no means to record or assign value to distinct users. Posts are transient, and the author's death precedes the post's birth. In a wholly anonymous forum, as soon as the post is submitted the author is stripped of ownership, it being attributed only to /1404er/: both everyone and no one. This transience, this lack of accumulation, insists on symbolic exchange as its only value metric—drawing only those interested in this purified form of socialization, the thrill of communication.

This inability to accumulate cultural capital frees the users from the baggage of identity. There are no pretensions. Nobody is preceded by their reputation, and thus there is no celebrity, no social hierarchy determined by any kind of reputation system, credentials, titles, or preceding notions of character. The social field is effectively levelled, and users are judged on the immediate relevance and immediately determined value of their content—value that is calculated democratically and only through actual responses, a much more satisfying metric than the comparatively meaningless “like” count that pervades dominant forms of social media.

This kind of digital social space fulfills a similar role previously relegated to concrete social institutions—precursors described and analyzed by Ray Oldenburg in his 1989 book *The Great Good Place*.<sup>7</sup> In this book, Oldenburg examines the cultural importance of public social places, which he refers to as “third places,” in fostering feelings of community and satisfying social life. The logic of this nomenclature is that your places—your first and second places being your home and job respectively—are ordered according to where the majority of your time is spent. The crucial distinction of the third place, however, is that it exists beyond the pretensions of the household familial dynamics of the first place as well as the job-status hierarchy and professionalism of the second place. As a result, the third place is a comparatively liberated environment with a more equitable social dynamic.

Unsurprisingly, Oldenburg observes throughout the book that public social gathering has been on the decline as in-home entertainment took hold over the second half of the 20th century, a trend which has only continued to accelerate through the

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7: Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 1999). Originally published 1989.

21st century. And while the internet in many ways supplants this idea of the third place, it of course has its own distinct social limitations. While Oldenburg's third place is community oriented and therefore localized, in-person and conducive to empathetic socialization, the internet forum spans the entirety of the networked world. While this has a vaguely utopian implication of global connectedness, the conditions and limitations of a purely electronic community forgo intimacies and social accountability that are arguably fundamental to building healthy interpersonal relationships and communities.

The anonymous image-board takes this a step further as identity wholly ceases to be a factor, and mass communication happens at previously unthinkable speeds. Marshall McLuhan's 'the medium is the message' is particularly applicable in such a space: Where all voices are equal and constantly vying for attention, the primary incentives are to impress or transgress: sexually, violently, intellectually—ideally a combination of the three. And as this atmosphere of transgression becomes the definitive feature of the board, the expectations of the users and what content is determined "valuable" through engage-

ment effectively curates what content is visible (as each engagement re-asserts the posts position at the top of the feed) perpetuates the prevailing deviance.

As a result, only the most extreme ideas proliferate in the absence of otherwise-pervasive cultural norms: limitations imposed on the transgressive thinker dissolve, as do the taboos on sexual deviancy and violence. If the user's goal is interaction (the only local currency), they are heavily incentivized here to appeal to extremes. The anonymous (again, as distinct from pseudonymous) forum fosters this strangely utopian sense of equality of identity through total anonymity, but this lack of social responsibility is haunted by our instincts toward violent animal impulse, which is exacerbated by the board's singular implicit law of organization and visibility based on engagement.

Thus the imageboard is many things. It's a utopian third place divorced from the impositions of capitalist exchange in favor of an ecstatic form of symbolic exchange. It's a Borgesian Aleph that fascinates and engrosses the user, as epitomized by Yeager's /1404er/, whose mind is slowly consumed, warped and in the

end effectively destroyed by an endless cycle of desensitization, transgression, and alienation from the reality that surrounds him. It's a medium that drastically shapes its message, which is ultimately, for better or worse, one of liberation.

But for all their sensational deviancy, these spaces can only be fully understood if we account for their seduction as highly dynamic sociocultural refuges. Complex digital spaces like the one central to Yeager's *Amygdalatro polis* offer appealingly subversive ways of existing within a sociopolitical system and mitigate its more oppressive characteristics. Such spaces allow users to temporarily,

perhaps even therapeutically, shed the self and all the baggage identity entails in order to communicate in a newfound state of relative equality. If we accept Baudrillard and Bataille's theses that symbolic exchange is a definitive feature of meaningful human socialization, any space that insists upon it as these forums do must be acknowledged as having some crucial cultural value. And the culture speaks for itself: such places, in a variety of iterations, have only grown in popularity since their inception, continually proving that this medium is distinctly sought after as a form of alternative socialization and cultural production.

# Your Name Will No Longer Be *Nicholas Alexander Hayes*

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**B**efore walking through the Slough of Despond, a man who reeks of the smegma, ripening like cheese in his foreskin says farewell to the neighbor with whom he mourned Sodom.

At the hovel threshold, the village priest condemns them as the itch from the man's torn asshole is irritated by seeping semen. Penance can only come from walking to Jerusalem, though neither he nor the priest knows they live on an island at the edge of a continent that separates them from the center of the world.

The man wanders into the darkness. Swamp gas ignites and illumines the night. Life and folly move forward willy-nilly as will-o-wisps withdraw into the bog.

Alone and wanting relief, he hikes up his tunic and squats. He wrestles a turd all night. After daybreak, he pinches it off and struggles to stand. He leaves his name in this nameless place.

The broken turd rolls from the path into the bog. Worms winding through it suffocate.

Perhaps the man will learn to bathe in a charitable monastery on the outskirts of Constantinople if he doesn't die of starvation after his first boat ride which will land him not far from where Pádraig was abducted. But don't bother to remember him. He will be forgotten.

The turd will be found centuries hence ennobled through time. Scientists will study it to find out about parasites in the Early Medieval world. The turd will be more valuable than a bucket of Iron Age cheese.

# Goth Thots

## Alex Ray

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Following French philosophical cyberneticist Gilles Deleuze,<sup>1</sup> how thought works – what forms it can possibly mutate into and where its limits lie – is shaped by a set of preconscious assumptions regarding that very question. Accordingly, Deleuze differentiates between the dogmatic image of thought (in which there is a natural link between the thinker, the thought, and the good) and an abolition of this image (in which thought is rather forced upon the thinker through a traumatic encounter with that which was previously unthinkable, a chance meeting with the Outside).<sup>2</sup>

Gregory Marks finds not this complete abolition but its fraternal twin sister, of sorts, at work in the Gothic genre of literature. His findings in the *Gothic Thought* series of blog-posts support the split model of

masculine Gothic horror (characterized by male protagonists that are destroyed upon their eventual contact with a desired Outside) and feminine Gothic terror (female protagonists that resolve the crisis of this Outside-encounter in the creative act of self-altercation)<sup>3</sup> previously outlined by Anne Williams,<sup>4</sup> and aligned with the spatially divided model of Gothic writing proposed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.<sup>5</sup> It is, in other words, the very fact that the female subject does not actually exist, that it is denied cohesive subjectivity, that allows it to emerge from such a disturbance not merely annihilated, but changed. And it is this very process that places the female non-subject much closer to the workings of truly productive thought rather than mere cyclic reasoning.

Interestingly, this relation has, in recent years, also become linguistical-

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1: Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 148.

2: Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, xvi.

3: Gregory Marks, "Subterranean Passages: The Gothic Structure of Thought (Part II), on *The Wasted World*, 2019. (<https://thewastedworld.wordpress.com/2019/07/20/gothic-thought-ii/>); "A Deep Anonymous Murmur: The Gothic Subject of Thought (Part III), op. cit., 2019. (<https://thewastedworld.wordpress.com/2019/07/24/gothic-thought-iii/>)

4: Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

5: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1986).

ly apparent. The English word 'thought' is a near homophone (and in cyberspace often homonym) of the neologism 'thot,' a derogatory expression relating to a woman roughly equal to 'hoe' (from which it acronymically derives) or 'bitch.' While this definition is a fairly recent development, the word itself has morphologically existed for centuries prior as an Anglicization of the name belonging to a particular ancient Egyptian deity. Said Thot was also primarily associated with knowledge<sup>6</sup> and is likely etymologically related to the Tzikvik Thothtodlana and three separate entities in the Lovecraftian mythos (Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, and Azathoth).

Recalling the previously mentioned correspondence between thot (employed in all three meanings) and the Gothic (which has itself gone through three semantic incarnations with updates in the 1760s literary horror and 1980s post-punk music

scene, respectively), we enter the realm of the goth thot. Goth thots are a lesbovampiric subset of the larger k-goth complex that emerged from the late '90s Catajungle scene with bands like Crypt and Xsignal.<sup>7</sup> It is a clandestine internet subculture that Iris Carver first defined as characterized by hyperfetishistic sexuality, recreationally researched chemical abuse, and an active opposition towards the dominant order of time.<sup>8</sup> To this end, goth thots place a particular importance on neurotronic interference with the cognitive end of time perception, what is by them referred to as "vermomancy."<sup>9</sup> While the '-mancy' suffix refers – as is conventional – to "divination by a specified means" or simply "magick," the 'vermo-' prefix mirrors both 'gothic' and 'thot' in its threefold meaning:<sup>10</sup> 1. from the English 'vermin,' relating to pests and contagion (equating the process of how something spreads with what it is, "becoming" in philosophical terms),<sup>11</sup> 2. from the ana-

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6: E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians: Or, Studies in Egyptian Mythology, Volume 1* (Mineola: Dover, 1904), 414.

7: Iris Carver, "Cybergothic Hyperstition [Fast-Forward to the Old Ones], on *CCRU.net*, 1998. (<http://ccru.net/syzygy/cybergoth.htm>)

8: Iris Carver, "What Didn't Happen at the Millennium?" on *CCRU.net*, 2003. (<http://www.ccru.net/occultures/carver0.htm>)

9: CCRU, *Writings: 1997-2003* (Falmouth: Time Spiral Press, 2020), 202.

10: Warp-related numogrammatic significance of the phenomena discussed here would certainly be worth looking into more in-depth.

11: Carver, "What Didn't Happen at the Millennium?" web.

tomical 'vermis,' a region of the hindbrain in all vertebrates that is, in humans, associated with the appearance of erect posture (something that significantly shaped the structure of thought on a biological level) and 3. from the Latin 'vermis,' meaning 'worm' (arguably the most radical counter-example one could give to erect body posture and a direct link back to the previously mentioned Thohtodlana).

Thohtodlana, also referred to as "Queen of the Worms,"<sup>12</sup> is an entity worshipped by the Tzikvik culture<sup>13</sup> (a semi-nomadic relic population of Lemuria inhabiting northern Ontario)<sup>14</sup> and likely memetically related to the concepts of the Ouroboros and Kundalini.<sup>15</sup> Mythologically, she is said to have enveloped the whole of time when she – without intention – "*confus[ed] herself with the universe*" (likely referring to a similar shamanic state of destriated con-

sciousness as achieved in the infamous k-goth 'A-Death' phenomenon).<sup>17</sup> Since then, she is said to inhabit the realm of 'Tchukululok,'<sup>18</sup> a mythic space probably inspired by the same outer-time region that influenced underworld legends across cultures<sup>19</sup> (in the past, most often accessed by way of plant-based deliriants (such as *Datura*) and near-death experiences, and more recently entered through synthetic variants, as well as dissociatives (such as Ketamine and DXM),<sup>20</sup> or through synatives (certain binaural audio files have proven promising)).

Recent events assumed to be owing to goth thot agitation and Neolemurian Thohtodlana worship include one particular memetically resonant 2018 interaction on the microblogging website Tumblr (anonymous question: "Thots on the Pope," reply by user tariqah: "So the pope has thots now," subreply by

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12: CCRU, *Writings*, 369.

13: *Ibid.*, 317.

14: *Ibid.*, 370.

15: *Ibid.*, 311, 317.

16: *Ibid.*, 200f.

17: Iris Carver, "The A-Death 'Phenomenon,'" on *CCRU.net*, 1998. (<http://ccru.net/syzygy/a-death.htm>)

18: CCRU, *Writings*, 200f.

19: Linda Trent, "K-Punk Glossary," on *K-Punk*, 2004. (<http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/004042.html>)

20: Ketamine pioneer John C. Lilly's "province of mind" mantra interestingly aligns perfectly with Deleuze's desired abolition of any image of thought.

user alice-exe: “crawling all 8 over him like weevils”),<sup>21</sup> implying vermomantic infestation in the higher strata of Catholic Christianity, as well as the plot of Abstract Machines’ game, *Skin-Crawlers*, making reference to a 2003 AI malfunction at the Shady Heights Secure Hospital in the town of Black Lake, Ontario (ancestral home of the Tzikvik), resulting in spread of a ‘vermoysteric bionic virus’ as direct consequence.<sup>22</sup>



**Topographische Erinnerung VIII** / Frida Ortgies-Tonn / series of drawings,  
graphite on paper / 2020 / 30 x 42 cm

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21: anonymous user, tariqah, and alice-exe, “thots on the pope,” on Tariqah blog, 2018. (<https://tariqah.tumblr.com/post/173027296425/thots-on-the-pope>)

22: CCRU, *Writings*, 173.

# Body required...

Aware and sanguine,  
The mind watching, the sounds of my cells,  
Gliding through this prosthetic shell,  
Impulse and pleasures,  
Another body required,  
Where's the storage gone,  
So many uploads,  
  
Gigas and terabytes,  
A crude dos system,  
Evolving my maturity,  
  
Bodies forgotten,  
  
Mind for a prosthesis,  
Prosthesis for the mind,  
Multiple bodies required,  
  
Basic genealogy,  
Getting in my way,  
I want to trick my synapses,  
  
Body of discontent,  
Body once forgotten,  
A body never owned,  
  
A body required,  
HALLIDONTO

# Human Bubbles: Foam as Metaphor

## Victor Jekic

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Sloterdijk<sup>1</sup> wisely challenges the dominant metaphor of our human condition/continuum: the network.<sup>2</sup> There is no place for us in there. The nodes are zero points, having neither space, mass, nor volume. The network maps space supposedly constructed entirely of “connections” though no true connection is actually made, merely the recording of sent and received ‘on’s and ‘off’s. The network’s lack of space, mass, and volume critically wound and undermine its utility as a metaphor; they are nothings connecting to other nothings via a nothing. Their vacuum leaves no space for the human to dwell in. Theoretically the network overlays a space, charts it, dwells within it but no aspect of the network gives us a zone for human culture: our zone of control, our aura, is not provided for.

Sloterdijk<sup>3</sup> does not merely criticize: he gives us a way forward in the

form of a new metaphor – the foam. Contrary to the ‘network,’ the foam is *all* volume, the bubbles in a foam holding their shape in the singular within the inflationary surface tension that extends throughout the liquid material medium. In the plural, the bubbles become the foam. In the foam the geometries are created by tensegrity.<sup>4</sup> The constant pressure of the bubbles against each other enforcing and re-enacting the structure. The frictions created between these contacts convey the vibrations that are manifestations of the bubbles’ own internal energies. They send these quivering movements into each other via their multiple contacts, their skins tense like cello strings, and resonant. In the foam the dynamic inflating and dividing creates a vibrant, ever-renegotiating, living constant that seeks but never finds its dynamic equilibrium.

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1: Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres Volume 3: Foams, Plural Spherology* (Frankfurt: Edition Suhrkamp, 2016).

2: David Fincher, “The Social Network,” Columbia Pictures, Sony Pictures Releasing, 2010.

3: Sloterdijk, *Spheres Volume 3*, 52.

4: *Ibid.*, 449 (image).

To take the human Being seriously as a consciousness in space and as the generator of culture we need the spatial dimensions. There is little mass in the light filmy substance of the surfaces of these bubbles - but the potential of volume, the space, the air! Each of these little worlds has in it what is required for a dwelling-in-of-the-human-Being, a container of cultural air with each of its own flavor. Each bubble provides the necessary fertile (foam deity, aphros-dite, Aphrodite)<sup>5</sup> cultural environment for the development and maintenance of a human world, like an Agar plate of that-which-is-necessary for the development of cultural expression. But rather than a container, a permeable porous membrane.

As the technologies of the reproduction of the human and its world are augmented, specialized and adapted by the technological, the human world starts to lift off from the biological substrate that nurtured it into it an anthropo-technosphere. Throughout the myriad structures of our natural/human world, whether the cells of a leaf (named for the monk cells of a monastery),<sup>6</sup> the relation-

ship dyad, the office spaces of the high-rise, the houses of the suburbs, the homesteads of a farmland, the cultural life of a city, nation, or culture, the foam metaphor is infinitely applicable to the human. It not only accurately maps our experience but describes the flavor of our hot, close social world. That is the resonant frequency of the human as we live now, a technologically advanced mammal.

“Human beings are at bottom and exclusively creatures of their interiors and the results of their work on the form of immanence that is inseparable from them. They thrive only in the hothouse of their autogenic atmosphere.”<sup>7</sup>

—

‘Metaphor’ itself requires explication. The network metaphor’s deliberate ignorance of the substrate is a self-blinding. Its suggestion is: ‘if we ignore most of reality we can reveal a pattern’: a useful maneuver in its place but liable to accidental misuse and deliberate abuse. The misuse has its own utility: it reveals something that we may have overlooked. It is

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5: Ibid., 39.

6: Ibid., 535.

7: Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres Volume I: Bubbles, Microspherology* (Frankfurt: Editions Suhrkamp, 2011), 46.

now clear to us that the part the metaphor plays for our understanding is the same part the weltanschauung<sup>8</sup> plays for the human culture. The wrong metaphor causes us to mis-analyse our subject in the same way that we cannot understand a language if we cannot connect to the weltanschauung of a culture. More accurately, the language and the culture, the understanding and the metaphor, are

so bound up in each other that any attempt to pull them apart from each other creates a gulf in which many errors can be made and misinterpretations creep in. Like a surgeon cutting open the flesh of the subject, once the internals are revealed the infections arise naturally unless counter measures are in place ahead of time.

Some will argue that the strength of the 'network' metaphor is



**The Nostepinne** / Shauna Lee Lange / watercolor and ink on cloth paper /  
2020 / 12" x 12"

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8: 1868 German, from Welt world + Anschauung view, Miriam Webster.

in its rejection of humanity and, by extension, humanitarianism. Its alignment to the non-human activities of the modern world is appropriate *because* they exist outside the human, they are networks in fact and in metaphor. On this we agree - the 'network' falls short of fully mapping the human. Perhaps in some vision of a Landian<sup>9</sup> future there is a world of nothing but switches turning on and off, but we are not gone yet, and until then maybe we forgive for persisting in our historical obsession with reflecting on ourselves.

The 'network' is a description of that ultimate human invention - the Internet. It is *in fact* a network; it does *in fact* invite us to ignore the substrate. It engages and connects us, humans, in the hyper-reality of image and communication rather than actuality of material. The dominance of the network as a metaphor reflects the dominance of the silicon hardware network that human culture is currently donning like a sparkling cloak. However, the dominance of the network as a metaphor in the public imagination represents not a stunning insight of penetrating depth

but is rather the natural result of a human status effect, the adoption of the language of whichever profession is currently in vogue. The undiscerning mimesis of success is ever present without the accompanying understanding, and here the signifier is again. The subject of our discussion, the 'network metaphor' prospers only due to inevitable human conceit. The signified object of the metaphor refers to, materially, 'hardware,' engineered and installed by human hands.

The signified object the metaphor refers to in our psyche's experience of it - the Ballardian/Baudrillardian hyper-reality - is in fact only the inflation of the interplay of human egos. The prioritization of the network metaphor hides a fundamental truth of the human world on the internet: that the internet only re-initialises the human world onto a new substrate, fundamentally an act of colonization. We are no longer bound merely by air, pheromones, and meat. Human status games, competition, and the constant hunter's search for threat and opportunity have found a way to enslave innocent rock, electricity, and new chemicals into

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9: Nick Land, "Circuitries," in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. R. Mackay & A. Avanesian, 251-274 (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2017).

our social wars. What can this newborn 'machinic unconscious'<sup>10</sup> achieve in the face of our long and lean inhabitation of the terrestrial sphere? Like a young pup foolishly thinking his time has come, he prematurely takes on the old Odinic bastard-wolf who is familiar with every crease of land. Here the 'machinic unconscious' mistakes its material success for spiritual victory.

—

Let us move away from considerations of the networked technosphere and instead approach the anthropotechnosphere by applying Sloterdijk's sphere to an example of a cultural environment we are all familiar with. Consider the café. Anyone who has been in the environment of a busy café knows the applicability instinctively. Each table a cluster of friends inflating and flavoring the air through their social interactions, producing a cultural bubble of shared space, contributed to by their shared expectations, the habits of their speech, the combining of their pheromones, the conjoined histories of their shared experiences, their inhabitation of and production of a shared *weltanschauung*.

At the counter, that nest of frenetic activity is constantly buzzing with the beautiful preparation of the appropriate chemicals for the manipulation of the nervous systems of the guests, appropriately flavored and in the right measure and style. The counter's citizens make the lightest contact with each bubble, just enough to deliver the goods with sensitivity and zest. They are neither disturbing the delicate equilibrium of the internal worlds by their soft intrusions nor upsetting the balance between the cultural worlds of each table. The soft internal production of subtly shaded variations of the themes of their cultures are stimulated by their various chemical indulgences. And the rules of this patchwork of micro-states? Only governed by a strict tradition established by long use but flexible enough to keep the whole operation running in sweet, efficient, and profitable harmony that shames Hobbes, supersedes Locke, and delivers Machiavelli his redundancy cheque. Here the old war of order and chaos is overcome, the forces are not denied but instead achieve an indulgent synthesis.

And all of this operation is itself nested in the foam of its economic

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10: Cute\_Noumena, Podcast Interview, 2021. <https://anchor.fm/rogue-insider/episodes/Cute-Noumena-ep2p5d>

habitat. The financial ecosystem of deliveries, logistics, and transport flows provides all that is necessary while the cute entity itself is nestling comfortably among its neighbors, hairdressers, second-hand shops, bookstores. The café holds to its own profitability, supporting not impinging, bold not furtive, legible not invisible. What criticism can there be of this little urban utopia?

This 'harmony of spheres' is enabled by the shared cultural understandings of the inhabitants, the underpinnings of the shared expectations underlined by the language (our true homeland), all building on the invisible but inescapable *weltanschauung* of the people. And here is the sphere at its greatest extent, (aside from the Globe itself of course)<sup>11</sup> the whole of a culture sitting astride its homeland as a frothing zone of cultural and industrial production.

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The selection of correct metaphor is an exercise in pattern recognition, one of our primary human skills. We are so constantly bound up in our own pareidolia that it is our default way of being and becoming aware of it requires a special ef-

fort. Always seeking the patterns in the world around us is something deeper than habit, it is an embedded aspect of response to the taking in of our visual and other sensory information streams. It is easy to forget that this can be an active conscious method as well. Much of our analysis is applying our library of known patterns up to the imaginative projector of the mind's eye and asking 'is it this one?' But of course, the eternally mutating Vital world constantly generates new shapes as a matter of course, like an inventive acrobat it always seems to have new and as yet unseen postures to adopt. This is the method of its existence and as such all our patterns are "always already" approximations. Here is where the creativity of analysis comes in. As we gain familiarity to our subject, we naturally frankenstein together the patterns into new odd species.

I hope I have demonstrated Sloterdijk's argument for both the lacuna and the solution. Therefore, I put it to you that going forward, every dedicated analyst should take seriously the pattern of the 'foam' is an indispensable part of the toolkit of understanding the human.

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11: Peter Sloterdijk, *In the World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 31.

# The Voyage of the *ESS Confluence*

## Anders Aamodt

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### I. Skimming

Ri hooked the carabiner on her harness to the spidersilk cable wafting this way and that across the observation deck. In two steps, she was over the metal railing, the wheels of the carabiner quickly pulling the spidersilk taut and zipping Ri, once again, along the inspection route.

From this close, the smooth metal curves of the ship were all that were visible. A swift breeze cooled Ri in the afternoon sun; she smelled the crisp, briny scent of the nearby ocean. The spidersilk route wound up, coming close enough for her to run her fingertips along the hull for a moment. The metamaterial was perfectly smooth, subquantumly annealed to withstand the gravity fluctuations of a pulsar. Even that might not protect the ship where she was going, though.

The *ESS Confluence* was Earth's most advanced spacecraft to date. The construction had been an anxious sprint, a series of month-long all-nighters enabled by contemporary

nootropics and urged forward by the rapidly-increasing visibility of the unspeakable anomaly, now impossible to miss, even in daylight. As the anomaly drew "closer" to Earth, everyone worked quieter, and faster, no longer even glancing upwards, as the eerie radiation was already reminder enough. It was also rumored that the light from the anomaly caused madness, but this was being covered up to prevent mass panic. Arguments over the color of the light were officially banned at the launch site, an anachronistic display of censorship to see from the *ESS*.

The anomaly was an "unstable subquantum transfer," a never-before-seen physical phenomenon which had appeared suspiciously close to Earth nineteen months ago. Scientists described it as some kind of unscreened singularity, an impossible event which, even if it were possible, should not be observable. Nevertheless, many people reported feelings of dread, heaviness, revulsion or were awakened from sleep feeling they had been burned just before the anomaly

appeared.

The most upsetting thing about the anomaly was that it defied description. It was impossible to look directly at it. Anyone who tried would find that the small dot had moved off to one side; those who managed to look directly at the dot, saw not a dot, but some sort of whorl or shape, which, upon closer examination, would blur out; or, through a flit of the eyes or a lapse in attention, onlookers would find themselves, once again, not looking at or even attempting to look at the anomaly anymore. Those who continued to persist in investigating quickly broke themselves down: Some burst into tears unexpectedly; others became suddenly tired and had to take naps; still others were inexplicably “lost” and found later in almost comatose states, underneath benches and stuffed into closets and the like. The anomaly, which seemed to be producing macro-scale quantum effects, was perhaps itself a macro-scale quantum happening. It shone down with a light that could not be witnessed, a warmth that could not be felt, a color that could not be placed. It was driving Earth mad.

Rumors abounded as to its na-

ture and origin: Was it an alien communication from a distant galaxy? A long-term side-effect of early supercollider experiments, before the discovery of particle grammar and the dangers of unbound dark matter? Or maybe it was the result of a contemporary experiment, some secret planet-destroying mistake that no one was willing to own up to. Some even speculated that Ananke, the spirit of necessity that used to drive humans to toil and drama, had returned, after being banished by the twin forces of eco-socialism and consensus-driven psychiatry in the 22nd century. Maybe things had been going too well for Earth, they said.

## 2. Liftoff

Launch day. Ri heard a resonant thud echo through the hull to where she stood on the bridge, then felt herself grow suddenly heavier as the *ESS Confluence* began its ascent up the transorbital spidersilk. She could see it out the window, iridescent, winding up into the sky like a shimmering oriental dragon. It wound in a gentle helix, so it would be several hours of spiraling retracements before they reached orbit. The launch was

fully automated, so all she had to do was sit back and—

“Have some champagne!”

Ri heard the cork pop, heard the fizz, and as she turned began hearing the champagne spilling onto the floor.

“Bots’ll get it. Ascent will take just under six hours. All systems green. Just a small glass!”

Ri smiled and accepted the elegant flute. It had no stem but was double tall, and the glass was hand-blown to resemble two leaves curled together. Beautiful.

“Just a small glass” she replied, clinking flutes with her copilot. “For Earth!” she toasted.

“For Earth!” echoed L’tald. “Would that this anomaly turn out to be harmless. But that’s seeming less and less likely.” He took a draught of his champagne. “You know, this bottle went for sixteen million dollars in open-trade.”

“It’s phenomenal. I taste celeriac and sarsaparilla. Wherever did you find so much antique currency?”

“It wasn’t mine. The vestigial government sent the bottle over.”

“Ah, of course. What a nice gesture. Must have needed a wheelbarrow.”

L’tald laughed at the historical reference. Ri sipped her wine, turning to glance at the washed-out midday sky. The sky got lighter as you went up, then darker. Soon, they would pass through the mesosphere and begin speeding up.

Her reverie was interrupted by the tinkling shattering of thin glass. Ri started, but it was just L’tald finishing his glass.

“Kampai!” shouted L’tald.

Ri raised her arm, then brought it down swiftly, whipping her near-empty glass onto the polished floor. It sprayed across the floor in a festive display of broken designer glass.

“Kampai! For Earth!”

### 3. Yaw

The columnar biodynamo worked on the principle of supersymmetric particle grammar to produce thrust. Seventeen columns lined the engine room, each glowing a different shade, light effusing from the unique culture of bioluminescent algae in

each tube. Each algae culture genome had been carefully written to mirror, at the relatively macroscopic level, certain subquantum phenomena that resembled, in their rhythms, organic life. By holding live cultures of at least eleven such genomic life cycles, supersymmetric subquantum phenomena inhered at the macro level, invoking hyperspatial translations that, in the featureless vacuum of space, manifested as reductions in time to the next collision event—i.e., propulsion. The biodrive had an eerie compass, leading a disproportionate number of explorers equipped with biodrives to astonishing discoveries in otherwise desolate reaches of space.

Adding cultures increased the thrust that was possible, but also asked more from the navigational computer, which calculated the delicate adjustments in the positions of the columns relative to each other that kept the ship moving. Probabilities were always trying to collapse, but by strategically wiggling the seventeen living columns about, the ship's heuristical AI was able to effectively trick spacetime into thinking that the ship was already closer to where it was headed than it had been. It was theorized that the biodrive could produce other macro-scale

quantum effects besides spatial translation, but a mechanism for channeling subquantum derangement into higher-valence manifestations had not yet been discovered by physicists. Just calculating the displacement coefficients for seventeen columns, each with a unique genetic and protein-folding signature that all interacted, took the most powerful computer that Earth had ever built.

The bioluminescence was an indicator of the health of the algae cultures and the composition of their nutrient soup. Happy algae glowed, and happy algae produced the fastest and most accurate translation. If even one column of algae stopped glowing, it indicated the mix was off, and the biodynamo would produce mixed translation, resulting in nominal propulsion or erratic, spacesickness-inducing macro-brownian motion. Many captains told stories of unexplainable behavior from the navigational computer, or cascading failure in ship systems, which occurred while one or more biodynamic plinths were offline. However, metanalysis found that these reports were not statistically significant compared to routine maintenance.

Ri let her eyes wander once more

around the twilight plinth room, taking in the reassuring glow of the grove of columns; then, still sipping her chamomile, she ambled back out and towards her quarters. The gentle hum of the consoles and burbling of the liquids always helped to soothe her to sleep.

#### 4. Alarm

Ri shot awake into red lights and a plaintive, bleating wail somewhere between a baby's cry and a demanding purr. The computer was asking for her.

"Computer?" she said groggily, pulling her next outfit from the wardrobe unit.

No response.

"Computer, shut off the alarm."

Obediently, the alarm stopped.

Walking onto the bridge:

"Computer, report."

After what seemed an unusually long pause—

"Anomaly . . . Detected."

"What sort of anomaly?"

"..."

"Computer!"

"Anomaly."

Ri walked across the spacious hall to one of the consoles beneath the grand window. She pulled up the sensor panel and began looking at recent log outputs:

```
> T+3.9743 Event: Sensor anomaly detected
```

```
> T+3.9743 Event: Sensor anomaly detected
```

```
> T+3.9743 Event: Sensor anomaly detected
```

```
> T+3.9744 Event: Sensor anomaly detected
```

```
> T+3.9744 Event: Sensor anomaly detected
```

```
> T+3.9744 Event: Sensor anomaly detected
```

Hundreds of thousands of anomaly detected events. She scrolled to the beginning of the long run of duplicate events:

```
> T+3.9323 Sunset! Switching to night mode.
```

```
> T+3.9645 Event: Unknown sensor anomaly detected
```

```
> T+3.9645 Event: Sensor anomaly detected
```

These logs were never very helpful. Ri pulled up the source code and searched for where the error message "Unknown sensor anomaly detected" was produced. She found it in one place:

```
> Switch on the type of anomaly detected:  
> "Sensor array malfunction" (specify array):  
> Log error "Malfunction in " and then the array "sensor subsystem"  
> "Invalid sensor data":  
> Log error "Unknown sensor anomaly detected"  
> Begin rechecking anomalous data
```

That "begin rechecking" probably explained the repeat log entries. But where was the invalid data coming from? She began carefully rereading the logs and cross-checking all of the data she could find. It was the only way to be certain in these sorts of situations.

L'tald walked onto the bridge. He was wearing a remarkable orange jumpsuit with shiny ribbing and authoritative shoulders.

"What's going on?"

"Some kind of anomalous data was detected. I'm trying to isolate the subsystem."

"I meant, how are you? That alarm was really loud for a purr."

"I'm fine L'tald. Trying to make sure we aren't about to hit something or blow a plinth."

"Computer, please fix me an orangecello spritzer with extra orange liqueur and orange syrup."

However, the computer did not respond. L'tald looked miffed.

"The anomaly might be a computer malfunction," offered Ri.

L'tald sighed wistfully. "Let me take a look."

Ri obligingly decided to go make L'tald's spritzer while he perused the logs. The bar was hardwired, so the liqueur buttons and the syrup array were almost guaranteed to be in working order. The orangecello was a gift from the Orangecello Heritage Society of Greater New Miami.

## 5. Unanomalous

"It's an anomaly anomaly," reported L'tald, sipping his spritzer

gratefully, radiating orange from every pore.

Ri had a limeade with muddled parsley in a heavy hand-blown cooler glass. "Really?"

"Yes. The computer has detected that it has not detected an anomaly. It finds this anomalous, especially because we are so close to . . . you know . . ." L'tald, apparently losing his train of thought, tossed his head awkwardly to the side, indicating out the grand window.

"Of course. Our mission objective."

"The big Anomaly. Right."

"So everything is fine then?"

"Apparently. We reach instrument range in just over two days."

"Great. I'm going back to sleep." And with that, she downed the last of her limeade, then finished her cooler glass on the floor for emphasis. It shattered into thick chunks of broken glass, which skittered out across the floor in all directions, and which, of course, the bots would get.

## 6. Signal

Two nights later, Ri once again found herself awakened by red alert—this time full red alert, with screaming battle klaxons and a faster, more urgent pulse to the red emergency lighting.

"Alert. Alien vessel detected. Alert," intoned the calm, automated voice of the ship.

"Are you kidding me?!" shouted Ri, in bed, over the cacophony.

"—This is not a drill.—"

Ri sighed and made her way to the bridge, where L'tald was already excitedly sipping what looked like a long island iced tea as he stared at the instruments.

"*Aliens, Ri!*" he exclaimed, looking up at her with innocent glee.

"Aliens, L'tald. Why does the *Confluence* have an alien alert mode?"

"Probably the same reason it purrs during red alert."

Ri strode up to the display. "The other craft is real, though?"

"Yes. It's positioned several hundred kilometers from our best estimate of the anomaly's so-called loca-

tion.”

“Could it be causing the anomaly? Generating it?”

“I just sat down here, Ri. Computer! Fix Ri a blended grasshopper, please.”

“Isn’t it a bit late, L’tald?”

“You’re right. Computer, make that a hot coffee. With a dash of mint schnapps.”

“In one of those Italian mugs that makes a high G when you finish it, if you don’t mind, computer,” added Ri.

## 7. Flyby

A low, smooth rounded disc about two kilometers in diameter, featureless, seemingly lurking in the hard-to-look-at shadow of the looming anomaly. An alien spacecraft—the first ever detected by Earth.

“How long do you think they’ve been there?” wondered L’tald. “Could be millennia.”

“Since it seems to be observing the anomaly, I suspect they arrived more recently,” Ri reasoned.

“How do we know it’s a they? Maybe it’s an automated probe.”

“I don’t see why an automated probe would need to be so large. Unless it’s some sort of resource-gathering station. But then, what would a mining station be doing out here?”

“Out here, suspiciously close to the anomaly.”

Ri walked over to the captain’s chair and reached underneath, knowing what she would find there.

“Yep. Every time.” She pulled out the first-contact guidebook placed—with relentless, almost fanatical hope—under every captain’s chair by the SETI community. Even the stodgiest of ESS captains had given up trying to banish the captain’s chair copy of *First Contact: Standard Procedures & Best Practices* from the bridge, as a fresh copy—printed on paper!—always appeared in its place before long. The engineers thought it was hilarious.

“Good idea,” said L’tald.

“I always thought this was just a joke, but maybe it’ll be helpful. Here... it says we should start by hailing them.”

They hailed the other ship, using every method described in the first contact manual, and a few more they made up. No response.

They flew in close, the first contact manual's troubleshooting taxonomy unhelpfully advising that derelict ships were out-of-scope. Compared to their little science-habitation vessel, the alien ship was a behemoth. They made a pass parallel to the hull. Although the ship had seemed smooth at a distance, they were drawing close enough to see that it had a rough-hewn, mottled texture, almost like shale or slightly rusted iron, but at a much larger scale.

On the far side of the ship, they found a gap in the hull, a hole, leading to a megalithic hanger consisting of several ellipsoid cavities joined into one large space. They landed on a jutting pylon obviously intended for that purpose, donned their spacesuits, grabbed the guns, and exited to the larger ship.

## 8. Contact

When she stepped onto the alien ship, the first thing Ri noticed was a sense of liveliness beneath her feet—

the floor was subtly vibrating, and she could feel it through her boots. L'tald followed her, and together they traversed the landing pylon until they reached the wall of the cavernous landing bay. There, a large, smooth, circular door rolled open like a waning moon, allowing them through an airlock.

Inside was an alien atmosphere that was, somewhat improbably, deemed breathable and safe by their spacesuits, so they removed their helmets. Now Ri could hear the vibration she had before only felt through her boots—a very low, distant hum. Hard to miss compared to the silence of the vacuum.

They walked down the colossal hallways cautiously, allowing their eyes to adjust to the algae-blue cast of the alien ecology's lighting. A chill mist pooled in alcoves formed by ribbed, chitinous outcroppings that curved up into shadow. The mist swirled away from them as they passed; it smelled earthy and distantly sweet, like licorice root.

The large halls forked and met again and again to form a bewildering gallery of branching paths, which would have been harder to navigate,

had they not all shared the same gentle downwards slope, which seemed to lead the two explorers inexorably to the heart of the ship.

After a time, the hallway opened out into a great, circular hall. The dark, distant walls curved up to impossibly vaulted ceilings, the vaults arranged in an organic pattern that obscured the ultimate fathoms of the hall with undulating stonelike reticulations and rippling shadows.

In the center of the hall lay a low, smooth dome made of the same dark material as the rest of the ship. This was the source of the humming. What before had been a deep and distant thrumming was now a low, resonant drone. It moved through the air, through the stone, through their boots. It was soothing.

As Ri and L'tald approached the low, smooth pod, the humming suddenly stopped. It was suddenly very quiet. The resonations hung in the air.

L'tald spoke. "What do you—"

But he was interrupted by a louder, pulsating thumping that emanated from the portion of the dome nearest them. With each rapid

thump, the stone seemed to buckle inwards, until an opening had crumpled way, about eight feet high, circular, and dark. A brilliant ruby beam shone out through the opening, illuminating the fog around their ankles and casting crimson arcs around the cavern.

From the darkness stepped a most unusual creature. What struck Ri first about it was its gait. It seemed to lurch out of the darkness, to sway back and side-to-side a bit, and then to lurch again. It was the sort of stately amble one might expect from an aging foreign dignitary; however, despite the lurching, the creature seemed almost to glide as it swayed out of the misty corridor.

It had two legs, but they bent sideways—outwards. It had a face, sort of, but no mouth; where eyes would be, Ri could see a flat pattern of eye-spots, like a moth. But what was most striking about the creature were its two magnificent arms. They were held up, as if in a gesture of jubilation, and they branched, and branched, and branched, and branched, so it looked like the creature was holding up a pair of lungs, or pieces of coral reef, or unimaginably ornate candelabras, and cheering.

Around its face, a smaller mane of tentacles sprung up like two bursts of coral, originating on either side of its neck.

Now the creature fell over: it plotzed. In one of its forward lurches, its feet—which were, of course, as yet obscured by mist—must have slipped on the cold, stone floor; because with a scrabbling sound and a warbling shriek the creature tipped right over sideways, its many wiggling, branching, flanged tentacle-like appendages waving through the air on either side of it on the way down.

Ri couldn't help but laugh. It looked and sounded a bit like a deflating balloon.

It made the sound again, a bleat of distress. From the dark corridor opened in the disc, a second creature emerged. It moved with a smoother, faster gait, strafing forward first one way, then the other in a gliding motion that reminded Ri of an ice skater. It made its way over to help the first creature.

In a visually fascinating display of multidexterity, the second creature, using its many branching arms, helped the first up, helped to set it on its feet, even gave it a bit of a

recognizable pat and a brush-off. A series of low, gentle growls and rippling cooing vocalizations passed between the two during this.

After a moment, they both spun in unison toward Ri and L'tald, extending their branched arms fully; flaring a red, hornlike appendage on their face; and letting out a loud, but pleasant, cooing squeal.

*BLiLiLiLiLiLiLiLiLiLiLiLiLiLiLiLi!!!*

"We are the skroiken." They spoke!

"We are explorers, scientists, like yourselves. Storytellers." The taller one was speaking.

"We have come to breed with you," said the other one.

## 9. Negotiation

Ri and L'tald stood speechless. *Breed with us?*

The taller skroiken—the one who had fallen—rippled its branching arms. "Don't mind him. That's his favorite joke, and it's so rarely we get to tell it. You may call me Bippid, and this one Nigel.

"Please forgive our noisy greet-

ing. It allows us to calibrate our translation device.”

L'tald laughed in relief. Ri smiled.

“What are your names?” asked Nigel concisely.

Ri shook herself. No first contact simulation could prepare you for the real thing.

“I'm Ri, and this is L'tald. It is an unimaginable honor to be the first to welcome you to our humble solar system, and our planet, Earth.”

“It is also an honor for us,” replied Bippid.

L'tald spoke up, visibly giving up suppressing his curiosity. “Tell me, how does your translation device work so perfectly?”

“It's very advanced. We skroiken have an implant in our language centers. Using quantum paralocal imaging, it scans the brains of other species and cross-references them linguistically. Then, whenever we speak, it uses small, quantum-teleported magnetic fields to actuate the corresponding words in your head.”

“It's amazing,” said Ri. “I can hear you just like L'tald, or my own

voice.”

At this, both skroiken let out a small bleat of—it sounded like glee.

“Did you hear that, Bippid?” said Nigel. “A thinking species!” Nigel, standing some distance away from them across the low mist, careened forward towards Ri, the many tips of his branching tentacles curling in curiosity.

“Tell me, Ri,” asked Nigel, “Are you an individual?”

Ri made to respond but was cut off by Bippid:

“Nigel! Good gracious! You mustn't ask that.” Bippid turned back to the humans. “We often meet species who use language in very different ways, or who form a hive consciousness. It is so pleasant to meet another intelligent species of individuals like yourselves. There's so much more to talk about.”

Ri was impressed. “Thank you. We came here to study the nearby anomaly. Why are you here?” she asked.

The skroiken remained silent for a moment. Then, Nigel, the shorter (and apparently less senior) one

spoke.

“We came here to meet you. We were drawn here by this anomaly, which is evidence of an intelligent species.”

Ri’s blood chilled, despite the already clammy atmosphere.

“So, we did cause it.”

“I’m afraid so,” said Nigel.

“We’ll explain everything,” said Bippid, “but please, come inside.”

## 10. Translation

“Would you like to hear our creation myth?” asked the elder skroiken.

Ri nodded, glancing at L’tald, who looked bored by the offer.

The room they had entered was almost cozy. In the center, behind a column of glass, a fire burned cheerily, radiating warmth in an unexpectedly primitive way. Surrounding this were concentric rings of a variety of chairs and small platforms that seemed designed to be comfortable for the greatest possible range of unknown sedentarians. At the edges of the room, where the firelight did-

n’t reach, a warm amber light fell from the ceiling, which domed gently down until it met the recessed floor. Despite the glass, they could hear the fire crackling clearly from where they stood in the inner circle of chairs, through some unknown sonic mechanism.

Drawing himself up before the firelight, Bippid began the story:

“It goes like this. In the utmost beginning, there was nothing but a drone, a long low sound.

“Slowly the sound began to vary, and it became known that the sound was in fact not a drone but a vibration, and, thus knowing, the vibration began to dance.

“In its dancing it heard a sound, a gesture of itself, and it stumbled, and... coughed.” At this, Bippid made a small yet belaboured alien sound resembling a raspy cough, illustratively removing all doubt.

“With this awkward cough, the vibration discovered it could talk, and, it began to speak.

“The voice found that it loved to talk and it began coming up with things to say; it started by giving itself a name, and then it began to

name other things, and then it began to name different aspects of the things, and then it talked and talked—” Bippid continued on like this.

Ri couldn't help smiling, and when Bippid saw this he broke into laughter, his coral-like tentacle mane rippling and curling inward with mirth.

“We tell this myth to little skroiken when they learn how to ask ‘Why?’”

“We have similar myths,” said L'tald.

“And similar children,” added Ri.

“We have found that most intelligent species share many things: externalized symbolic language, mathematics, pitched music—respiratory reflexes—and a comfort with technology such as this fire here. In fact, the main way that intelligent species differ is in their exstorphianism.”

“Exstorphianism?” asked L'tald.

Bipped ruffled his branched

arms. “Oh! It must be a missing cognate. A meaningless translation. You see, our translation device activates the analogous linguistic structure in your head, even if you don't have such a word in your language. You perceive this as the closest audible word.”

“It's the downside of having such accurate translation technology,” added Nigel. “So if we say anything that doesn't make sense, please tell us, so that we can explain, and adjust the calibration of the translator.”

“What then, is ‘exstorphianism?’” repeated L'tald.

Bipped answered him. “It's a measure of social cohesion. During our many travels, we skroiken have found that planetary species tend to fall into either high or low exstorphianism, which we term exstorphian and myrmidian civilizations, respectively.”

“I guess there isn't a direct translation,” added Nigel helpfully.

“Your tea is ready,” offered Bippid. He gestured with one delicate tentacle towards the fire, and a small hole opened in the glass with a low thump. In single file, four small cups

floated out through the opening, wending their way through the air, to float cheerily before each of the quartet, not a drop spilled. Neither Ri nor L'tald noticed the glass close silently behind the hot drinks.

"How delightful!" crowed L'tald. He poked at his teacup, watched it regain its balance, sniffed its contents.

"We collect unique flavors from the planets we visit," intoned Bippid, plucking his mug out of the air with three tentacles lining an inner fringe of his right branching arm, "when we can find them." Nigel seemed to find this very funny for some reason, wiggling all of the many outermost tentacles of his branching arms in different directions for a moment, in a way that looked suspiciously like a suppressed laugh.

Ri was feeling more at-ease now, so she asked, "Why do your arms have all those branches? What do you use them for?"

"My kimberlies?" Bippid seemed taken aback. Nigel looked at one of his great, wafting candelabras of tentacle-fingers as if staring at the palm of his hand.

"Yes, those," she said, pointing as politely as possible.

"These are our brachial arms. They follow Pascal's triangle. We use them to think. Like this." And with this, Bipped suddenly bent his other kimberly—the one that wasn't holding the tea—into a completely different shape. Ri looked closer, and could see that many individual branches had been drawn in so that individual tentacles at their outer reaches could touch in complex combination. Like a circuit board, Ri could see intricate designs in which tentacles were linked at their tip. Each tentacle that was bent to touch another touched exactly one other such tentacle.

"This figure is called urgblorfendoaskitskameskroiken, nu'flagn rotillat'n ariantation—" and Bipped must have noticed their blank faces, because he stopped—

"Oh! The translator's glitched at that. Figure-words are especially hard to translate. Let me try again."

"A-hem! This figure is called... Old-Skroiken-Who-Sat-On-Rock-Until-He-Became-Lazy. We use it to think about many things, such as vice, the nature of motivation, temporality and procrastination, et cetera."

“Here is a figure called Skroiken Who Was Too Pure to Clean His Own Excrement and Died of Sepsis.” Bipped made a most complex figure which did not at all resemble the previous one, although Ri would not have been able to describe the difference, so complex were the interlacings of the skroiken’s kimberlies.

“Beautiful,” Ri responded. “We call those mudras. Your species appears to have taken them to an advanced level of embodied cognition.”

“Mudras! Yes, that’s it,” replied Bippid brightly. “Can you show us an Earth mudra?”

Ri was suddenly embarrassed. The only mudra she could think of was the OK-sign. After what she’d just seen...

“Our mudras are... rudimentary compared to yours,” Ri began.

“I know one!” L’tald jumped in. He made two OK-signs, then inverted his left hand, and touched the right OK-sign to his left middle finger. It vaguely resembled an infinity sign, connected by L’tald’s middle finger.

“This is called dharmachakra mudra. It symbolizes the cycle of

rebirth and the attainment of enlightenment.”

Both skroiken made sounds of delight and interest. Nigel stilled, then suddenly his kimberlies seemingly burst into bloom with replicas of the dharmachakra mudra taking up every tentacle. Nigel’s tea began drifting away through the air, forgotten in the younger skroiken’s exuberance. He swayed side-to-side in dreamy absorption.

“He’ll need a moment,” Bippid explained. “Learning a new figure can be hypnotic and enrapturing for younger skroiken, since our kimberlies and the meanings of their forms are so integral to our nervous system. Ri, try your tea! It’s not psychoactive.”

Ri had forgotten her mug, which hovered patiently in the air. She plucked it out of the air now and took a careful sip. She was treated to a taste at once grassy and rosy, with a sharp, almost honey-like undercurrent of an unplaceable lemony, buttery flavor. Shocked by the completely novel flavor, she took another, heartier sip.

“Wow, this is delicious! Thank you, Bippid.”

"We like to say, 'There's always an extra kimberly for a teacup!'" L'tald and Ri chuckled at this. They all paused, sipping their tea.

"So, down to business," L'tald began. "What is this anomaly? Do you know? Why is it dangerous?"

"Well, it's a funny story," said Bippid. "It begins when our planet was destroyed."

## II. Yam

"The skroiken homeworld was destroyed long ago; in many ways, we became the skroiken we are today through this ancient, almost mythic tragedy."

Ri took a sip of her tea. This time, the flavor reminded her of chrysanthemum, or osmanthus.

Bippid continued:

"The ancient skroiken were traders, and their trading empire spanned a significant portion of our galaxy. Everyone loved the ancient skroiken, because they traded fairly and brought countless technologies of wealth to the planets they visited. Wherever skroiken traders went, civilization followed, and peace in the

galaxy seemed only a matter of sharing and distributing the generous wealth given for us by creation. As the first highly successful trading culture, they had amassed the largest known collection of technologies, resources, and wealth-producing methodologies.

"However, the ancient skroiken made one fateful miscalculation: Being the friendly skroiken they were, they assumed everyone wanted to trade with them.

"One planet had formally refused trade with the skroiken, but the skroiken, unable to comprehend a desire to remain culturally isolated, landed there anyway and established trade unofficially with individuals and smaller groups in the countryside. Within a generation, the initial refusal to trade had been forgotten in the glut of wealth and incredible new technologies available to the inhabitants of the planet.

"However, we later learned that the isolationists from that planet had taken the advanced ships traded to them and used them to emigrate to a new, much more distant planet, where they plotted revenge against our ancestors, who had violated their re-

fusal.

“It was not technology or contact that they had refused, you see, but our ancestors’ bad etiquette. They quickly mastered many of our advanced technologies, integrating them with their highly-evolved weapons technologies.

“You see, theirs was a military culture, and the hyperarmamented nature of their culture had led to a strict and inviolable hierarchy. Even the smallest breaches of etiquette in the furthest reaches of their social hierarchy”—here Bippid scrunched the very tips of his outermost kimberlies for emphasis—“led directly to global war. Therefore, breaches of etiquette were almost unheard-of on this planet.

“You can imagine, then, how a somewhat inflexible, earthbound species like that might perceive a powerful and cosmopolitan race like the skroiken—as incomprehensible monsters from space. The ancient skroiken, in their singleminded goodwill and naive generosity, most certainly breached the etiquette of interplanetary relations by forcing trade upon the Laryngians.

“And so it was that, one day, a

skroiken trader arrived home to find our planet gone. Not even destroyed—completely gone.” At this, Bipped laughed incongruously.

“It was, and still is, impossible for anyone to understand a loss as total as this. Although we still had many technologies, many resources stored on other planets, and much of our original knowledge and history, our ancient ancestors were never the same. The heart of our civilization had been eviscerated. Where were our rivers, our trees, our skies? Where were the flowers? We became a people of mourning.

“We defended ourselves from the Laryngians, of course. But they were not trying to exterminate us. Their interest ended when their revenge was complete—as they saw it, the respective honor of our two species had been restored. Many skroiken philosophers today would agree with them.

“The remaining skroiken all flew to where our planet had been, traveling from across the galaxy to return home for a funeral that lasted three generations.

“Eventually, a new truth came to the skroiken, a new way of life: We would still travel and trade, yes, but

now, we would travel to planets about to destroy themselves, and trade with them in a way so as to help prevent their imminent demise. Only this was judged by most skroiiken as an adequate way to continue existing, so immeasurable was the depth of the despair, as well as our remorse at having destroyed—according to them—the Laryngian’s pre-contact home. And so, the skroiiken scattered to the stars, leaving our original galaxy to seek out planets on the brink of destruction.

“From those planets we cannot save, we extract a cautionary joke, a figure, that they may join the great Ha-Ha Saga. This was all long, long ago...”

## 12. Interstice

Ri was trying to listen patiently to this increasingly disquieting story. Nigel had shaken himself out of his mudra-induced reverie and was listening with rapt attention to Bippid. Ri had the sense that Nigel had heard this story told many times. L’tald was listening attentively, but impassive. The fire still crackled warmly behind glass, and for the first time, Ri caught a whiff of the campfire

smoke.

“Much to our dismay, we discovered that our condition was neither unique, nor unusual. *Most* spacefaring civilizations that we found were either on the brink of collapse, or had already destroyed themselves—”

“Excuse me,” interrupted L’tald with uncommon formality. “But what has this to do with the anomaly?”

Nigel piped up. “Allow me to explain, Bippid.” Bippid jiggled unfathomably.

“Think about it,” continued Nigel. “What’s one of your planet’s apex predators?”

“Um... a mountain lion,” replied Ri, grasping for a carnivore that wasn’t extinct.

“Right. Compare that to the microscopic level. At that level, the distances are small, and predators have only to travel a short distance for food.

“But at the mountain lion level, I would guess the mountain lion needs to traverse large empty spaces to hunt its prey, no? And it is a relatively solitary figure? Like most highly evolved apex predators.”

Ri was nodding.

"Accordingly, at the interplanetary scale, the situation is even more pronounced. Distances are even vaster, and predators and friends correspondingly rarer and more singular in nature. In other words, after adjusting for scale, opportunities at larger scales seem to be more sparse, and so for life to survive at each successively greater scale, it requires a correspondingly greater degree of intelligence, in order to strategically utilize sparser—but more interesting—opportunities.

"Whatever the reason, it keeps Bippid and I plenty busy, zipping from one self-destructive planet to another. The skroiiken are not many in number, and we are spread very thin."

"And everywhere," added Bippid sadly, "there is constant crisis."

"When they aren't already dead when we get there," finished Nigel. They looked expectantly at the two Earthlings.

"I still don't understand," pressed L'tald, clearly exhausted after fifteen hours of piloting ships, trudging through dank hallways, and alien

colloquy. "What does that have to do with the anomaly?"

"What it has to do with it is," replied Nigel, precociously, "is we're willing to take your anomaly off your hands, so that it will never trouble you again. For a fair price, of course."

"Nigel!" cried Bippid, mortified. Bippid's kimberlies flailed uselessly through the air as his tentacles knotted and unknotted in waves of distress.

"Nigel!" Bippid repeated. "How tactless! Please forgive him, he is still young."

Nigel looked thoroughly chastened and, embarrassed, seemed to freeze up self-consciously. His kimberlies stiffened, then listed to one side.

"What Nigel means to say is, we would be happy to help you, in the tradition of our people," Bippid backpedaled clumsily.

But Ri hadn't been paying attention to the skroiiken's botched offer—she had figured out the skroiiken wanted something from Earth by the end of Bippid's tale. Suddenly, the many small discrepancies she had

been noticing added up, clicked into place, and Ri realized something else—something else entirely.

“You’re not using a translation device at all, are you!”

“Whoopsie-daisy,” exclaimed Bippid.

“Busted,” said Nigel.

### 13. Sympatico

“You have to understand,” explained Bippid, after the profusest of skroiken apology rituals, which—much to the dismay of the humans, who were left trapped in the now-portalless room, wondering how to get out—involved both skroiken falling on the ground and playing dead for several minutes. “Most species have no way of comprehending our advanced linguistic capabilities. We’ve found it much easier to explain by means of some device, a technological contrivance.”

“Usually they kill us when they find out how intelligent we are,” Nigel chimed in.

Bipped froze up, teetered, threatened to possum-out again. Then he relaxed. “Nigel! You are not help-

ing.”

“So your first act was to lie to us?!” Ri demanded.

“I know. We humbly apologize. As Nigel says, we frequently suffer persecution—even outright attack!—for our natural language abilities. We travel alone, or in very small groups. So, we have taken to introducing ourselves more... gradually. This is the skroiken way—no harm was intended.” The skroiken inclined its many tentacles in the most plaintive, beseeching little S-curves. They strained anxiously towards Ri, silent, pleading.

“Apology accepted.” L’tald, who had been quiet this whole time, spoke up, gesturing magnanimously. “Let us not let this little cultural difference cast a shadow on these glorious proceedings,” he supplied floridly, “But please, tell us, how were you able to master our language so completely?”

Nigel and Bipped looked, for the first time, at a loss for words. Nigel spoke first.

“It’s in our biology. Our kimberlies. They really do allow us to actuate the corresponding words for

the meaning we intend, in your brain. However, the mechanism for this is not well-understood by our science. It may indeed involve quantum entanglement, which might help explain why we are able to communicate with any species, no matter their brain structure.”

“It makes it very easy to be space-traders,” explained Bippid. “We find it quite natural to talk to everybody.”

#### 14. Biofuel

“You mean to tell us... your ship’s engine... is powered by... j u i c e ?”

They had been discussing what Earth could trade in return for safe removal of the toxic anomaly. L’tald had contacted the ESS and gotten authorization to make the trade. Things were deteriorating rapidly on Earth—a collective madness was gripping the usually reasonable and well-adjusted people of Earth and driving them into a frenzy.

Ri blinked. “Well, um, yes, a macro-scale organic quantum soup with spectral shear across—”

“ \* \* \* J U I C E \* \* \* ”

said Bippid, jubilantly.

“What?” said L’tald. The skroiken cooed and made a trumpeting, warbling trill.

“Your ship is powered by a flavor profile.” Attempted Nigel.

“A quantum gradient?” suggested Ri.

“That’s it,” agreed Nigel. “ J u i c e . Our most precious resource.”

Bippid was recovering from his elation, and raised a kimberly to wiggle three great fronds in the air. “Three. Three plinths worth of j u i c e would do.”

“That may be possible. We’d be pleased to give you a tour of our engine room.” With that, L’tald attempted to finish his empty tea mug on the smooth, chitinous floor, but it merely swooped in a parabola close to the ground. Nigel, mimicking L’tald, threw his mug at Bippid. It sailed through the air and bonked the elder skroiken on his diamond-shaped torso. Bippid flailed his outermost kimberlies and chuckled tolerantly.

## 15. Tête-à-tête

The two trudged back to their ship, where Bippid and Nigel would soon meet them for the promised tour. The clinging mist smelled now not of licorice, but of anise, which Ri found very peculiar.

“Did you have to try to finish your glass like that?” asked Ri.

“I wanted to see what they would do,” replied L’tald. “Did you have to call them out like that for lying about learning our language?”

“I guess it didn’t get us anywhere. Did you get your answer, from what they did?”

“Not really.”

“...But?”

“But I think they were mocking us.”

“L’tald! What? No! They are just a totally alien culture! Even if they *are* mocking us, maybe that’s normal for them.”

“You sound like the First Contact Manual.”

“I think they’re just comedians. But on the other hand, what do you think about the way they zeroed in

on our engines? They want to dismantle our ship, our ship that’s in their landing bay!”

L’tald smirked. “I don’t know what to tell you, Ri. The skroiken want juice!”

## 16. Jilt

It happened at the end of the tour, while Ri was down the hall, still in the plinth room. L’tald had led Bippid and Nigel back to the bridge, where they were to have a drink at the bar. The skroiken had been fascinated by the many blinking lights and regiments of buttons connected to so many tubes, bottles, and alem-bics. “Wait until I show you Earth mixology, my juice-loving friends!” L’tald had joshed with them as they walked away, towards the bridge.

But now, Ri heard a commotion coming from the bridge—a shout—a crash—the shattering of glass—a cry: “AIIIIIIIIII! My kimberlies!!!”

She sprinted to the bridge, where she found L’tald sprawled across the liqueur buttons, various liqueurs pouring out onto his neck and back. Bipped cradled his left brachial arm, and Ri could see it was crumpled,

and that Bippid was shivering, in pain. The smell of booze hung in the air, and Ri caught an acrid whiff of evaporating alcohol and coughed.

"He attacked me," Bippid said woefully. "He broke my vesthiphvian kimberlarlies! You see? I can't even bork york!" Nigel was comforting him, one brachial arm on the other's back.

Ri was flipping off the liqueur dispensers using the emergency shutoff, kneeling next to L'tald, checking his pulse, his breath. He was unconscious. He had fresh tentacle marks around his neck. He'd been strangled.

Ri remained calm. She leveled her gaze at the skroiken. "Why would L'tald do that?"

Bippid remained silent. From where she was leaning over L'tald, craning her neck back to look at the skroiken, she could see Bippid cringe guiltily.

"We—"

"You!" Nigel unceremoniously threw Bippid under the bus.

"I—told L'tald a joke."

"A joke?" Ri was confused.

"..."

Ri waited. While she waited, she slid L'tald down the steeply-sloped steel paneling of the liqueur console and laid him onto the floor.

"It seemed to upset him, and he attacked me."

"What kind of joke would do that?"

"It's a skroiken kradition!" Bippid seemed to be rising to the occasion to teach Ri more about skroiken culture. "We always share urknulnavurk orchives with new plantains we meat."

"I guess," continued Bippid, "I didn't realize how orphlish your backlannz were. Please arx my ableject."

"Please accept our sincerest apologies," corrected Nigel. "Will L'tald be alright?"

## 17. Victory

After completing the trade, Ri proudly hailed Earth and reported their success. The skroiken's domed lozenge had peeled away, the horrific anomaly somehow in-tow behind their ship. Now, the *Confluence*

three plinths lighter, Ri watched their ship recede through the grand window, feeling an ultimate sense of relief as the impossible horror sailed steadily away.

L'tald was safely in bed, sedated, recovering. After regaining consciousness, he had retreated hastily to his room, saying he would have nothing more to do with the skroiken.

Ri had caught him in the hallway and demanded to know what happened, what the skroiken had said.

"I've never heard *anything* so offensive!" L'tald had shouted back, almost losing his cool again.

"What did they say!?" Ri pressed.

L'tald, red in the face, clenching his jaw, huffing like an angry bull, tore something from his pocket. He leaned against the wall so she couldn't see what he was doing; Ri heard scribbling. Then L'tald was handing her a folded sheet of paper.

"Don't open this until after the trade!" Then he stomped into his room, freshly incensed.

Ri sighed. Perhaps being this close to the anomaly is what had

caused his instability.

Bippid had continued to apologize for the scuffle with L'tald, citing a skroiken "defense mechanism" to explain the extended bout of strangulation. Yeah, right. At least it was better than her explanation: angry monkey. The skroiken had been very understanding. Bippid's kimberlies would heal. Eventually. An intergalactic incident.

She swirled her scotch. An *intergalactic* incident. She reclined the captain's chair.

So now, with L'tald resting, the anomaly gone, and nothing on sensors, she shut off internal surveillance. She shut off the comms. She even shut off the main computer, for good measure. Only backup systems in tow.

It was only then, in the privacy of the desolate reaches of space, that she unfolded the note from L'tald, containing the joke that had led to his abreaction.

At the moment she read the note, she gasped, and something left Ri, something indescribable. It wafted up from her, floated out through the hull, passing through layers of insula-

tion, passing through the subquantum annealing, out into space. Suddenly, the stark vastness of space was on all sides. Slowly accelerating, it made its way towards the departing skroiken ship.

Behind it, back on the ship, Ri had eaten the note.

It would be several generations until the philosophers of Earth would begin to work out just what exactly it was Earth had lost, or the profound significance of the deal that their leaders had made for them that day.

### Epilogue

Although you can hardly see, someone hands you a large bowl of translucent magenta liquid.

You drink deep. It is the most delicious flavor you have ever tasted. It is warm, sweet, and *purple*. You must have more, more! You guzzle the entire bowl.

You unfurl your new kimberlies, and they reach up, one on either side of your head. You can feel your smaller, branching kimberlies, reaching up as they branch: 1, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 20, 35, 56... you shake your

kimberlies out and some of your tentacle-tips un-cross; you were twisting some pairs without realizing.

With your kimberlies preened, you suddenly realize that you already know skroiken, have already been speaking skroiken all this time. In a flash, you understand the skroiken language and remember your skroiken heritage. Whether it's the ixick'nganquiline matrix or the riplipnadactyl-ehrlunifortunataria, you understand all of the thousands of aspects of skroiken grammar and word-construction that have been encoded in the enchiriliagnomex and passed down as the Et'na since the most forgotten antiquity. You are scion of the skroiken genomic heritage, and like every skroiken you possess orcharillofereayrian capabilities, enabled by your kimberlies and their ordonticism.

Bippid and Nigel have been patiently waiting for you to recover yourself. You turn to them now. There is much work to do. Much skroiken work. You begin to tell them your plan, the plan you slowly hatched and articulated during your formative aeons on Earth:

"Orsu, yoarlakitsumi, tatakaxan.

Heirshufordorfanolorforian atakkian tentillis aishnil. Sproke barblex, endorphian establians arshfuhulapas-crafrakated pansylvania, gokpara eidoskeintein, zat. Orliaga, rashababalamaraba telerune hahyrlistia enechedestape novile'rej."

They understand you perfectly, and together, the three of you woirel the ship and begin your work.

#### Afterword: A Note on Skroiken Linguistics

In skroiken, *skroiken* means "the funny people" or "the joke people" but also "the sad people" or "the frightful people." It also means "those who see (with their minds) (that we are all of the same family)," cf. *scrying*, *kin*, and *kawaii*, *kowoi* (in Japanese). The skroiken see a profound unity in their collective loss, and take this unity as the starting-point in much of their more formal moral philosophy. Another primary meaning of *skroiken* is "sisters of the Laryngians." Less-primary but notable meanings include "storytellers" and "those who were destroyed" or "those who were bereft of stories." Being the self-given name of their species, the word has a host of other meanings

both explicit and implied, but these are some of the ones most relevant for those seeking to understand skroiken culture and language.

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Cyborgia Sempre Fi / *Hallidonto* / Digital Collage / 2020

# Templexical Hierarchies

*Attay Kremer*

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**M**odernity evolves along lines barely comprehensible in human terms. Indeed, the long humanist tradition of eternal, super-temporal principles and values is fundamentally alien to modernity. The formula of which is non-other than “all that is solid turns to air, all that is holy is profaned,” or perhaps, more directly, that modernity “... must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere.”<sup>1</sup> There is nothing human about this. It has more to do with vermin, infection. The abrasive and all-consuming character of modernity easily escapes the “human mind.” Nothing makes this distance more apparent than Land’s concept of Templexity. Moving across *Looper*, Land attempts to formulate the distribution of the future in approximately human terms: self-encounters, grand-father paradoxes, time-machines. But these merely serve to hide and make palatable the underlying observation. I will not reveal it yet. “Cities are time

machines.”<sup>2</sup> What could that possibly mean? How can cities be of the future? We enter cities, we leave them. Clocks remain apathetic. The transcendental aesthetic of time remains unalterably enforced by the machinic background. But still, something lies beneath, does it not? Can the temporality of space really be ignored so vehemently that we pay no heed to time’s plasticity?

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The main line to the central station passes through (nearly) every street. White building blocks fade to deteriorated red and black as the open air of the north transforms into the garbage scented south-central. The streets busy themselves. People walk in service of the city, there’s always something to see. Psychogeography transports streams of non-persons and dividuals from shop to shop. I waited for line no. 124, from the central station to the eastern border of the state. It’s meant to show up every 10 minutes – not much

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1: Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 4.

2: Nick Land, *Templexity: Disordered Loops through Shanghai Time* (Shanghai: Time Spiral Press, 2014), i.

different than any intra-metropolitan line — but its already been 20. Maybe it's already passed? Nothing moves so slow...

This is mostly a matter of entropy. No humanisation can conceal that. High entropy — heating, energy, disorder, chaos — is essentially related to time. This is guaranteed by the second law: every closed system increases (or maintains) its entropy. Time is measured along entropy. Kantians immediately think of a homogenous gas. Something to evolve uniformly. Something to define transcendental notions. But this is almost never the case. Heterogeneity is the true sign of progression. Different areas heat up at different paces, entropy heightens and drops in relatives regions. Nothing is quite as uniform as we would like. The future and entropy can be sucked out of areas and into others. Energy exchanges rearrange entropy concentrations along different regions and along different borderlines. Wine screws allow reusable ink templates, and an injection of energy propagates from Gutenberg to the public. Shock waves reconcentrate entropy reserves. Adolescent, Medieval Capital reinvents the city. The future is a commodity, and temporal theft is any-

thing but impossible. Cities are simply highly entropic regions. Urbanisation is a process of thermal decay, progressing from the cold and mutually foreign world of villages to the dense and damp chaos of the cities. The founding of a city is always a radical act of time-theft of the centre from the periphery. In the same act the pre-city societal structure steals workers and entropy from the rural surroundings. The future is drained and concentrated.

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The central bus station is like the surface of a bubbling fluid, not many things are as warm and turbulent, not many things move so much. The average time scale of the system shrinks exponentially as we approach the centre. Adopting the habits of a good statistical mechanic (a physicists utterly unconcerned with either certainty or specificity), we measure time according to the mean free path — the average time between collisions. My measurements show something to the order of 15 seconds. It's quite easily measured, collisions are fairly audible. Bags fall over, people start cursing. At the centre of the city time-scales shrinks to infinity, black holes proliferate in the order of indis-

tinguishable events. The chaos of the central station approaches the limit of total integration. The events congeal into the event. In the centre, in the real centre, we reach a proper singularity, a black-hole where space and time crash into nothingness. This is somewhat difficult to notice, as information seems to be leaving and coming back in human form, something considered impossible in astrophysical black-holes. But the information never leaves, clashes and collisions never leave the station. Only the players undertaking the entropic activity change, the play remains the same.

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The future's status as entropy accumulation forgoes a critical philosophical postulate that is quite necessary to the accelerationist world view — the process. Accelerationism's greatest contribution to contemporary (post-post(?)-modern?!) thinking is the reintroduction of the process. The process is — undeniably — the most important concept in the history of metaphysics. Christened together with the birth of the *philosophos* in the fragments of Heraclitus, the process marks the world's chaotic, violent, unequal, adversarial, and repetitive nature. To refer to the process is to

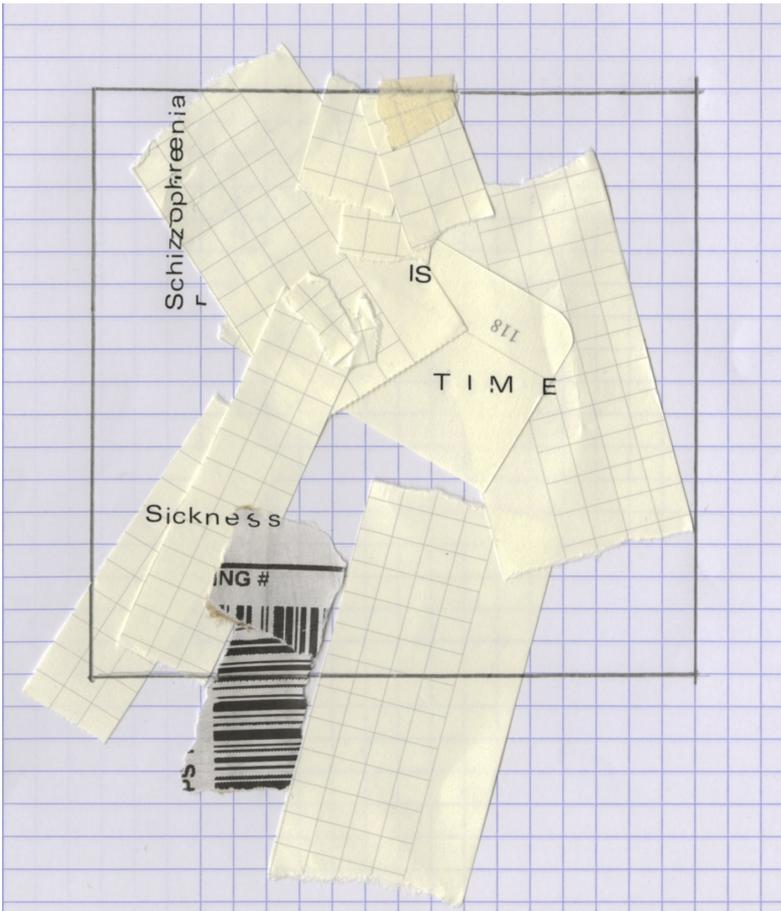
acknowledge the world's horrifying disinterest and disgust with itself. One of Land's key contributions here is the explication of the equivalence of the process and death-drive. In the works of the now-deceased Warwick Land, death-drive is synthesised into the transcendental horizon that haunts the history of Capital. To move along historic lines, to be worthy of the process of libidinal matter is to approach violent suicide from within, something unconsciously introduced, by Freud, in the repetition compulsion of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The entropic view of complexity is essentially non-procedural. On this view, complexity does not involve its temporal commitments, but only a direct correspondence to it. For complexity to be imbued with its full conceptual power we must recognise it as the positive feedback loop of time into complexity and back again. We should not confuse the equivalence of time and complexity with the kind of equivalence exemplified in power-knowledge. Time does not require complexity nor does it imply it, and complexity does not require nor imply time. Rather, the progression of time accelerates complexity, and complexity accelerates time. To understand templexity is to bear wit-

ness to the mutual exacerbation of temporality and computational complexity. Neither time nor complexity should be considered ideationally. Templicity is above all a material process.

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Existential dread does not allow one to simply ride the bus, to lock

into the strict spacetime of stations in the schedule. We're always late or early, and I can't let go of the fear that the driver will just drive past the station. After all, he was some 10 minutes late to pick me, what'll stop him from simply passing my target by. Expectations induce internal calculations: "A wrong turn here we have circling around town for an extra 5



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minutes," "I should get off at the next stop, I can already tell that traffic has completely blocked up the next light; maybe I won't be quite as late if I escape as soon as possible," "We should've turned here, it would have save me a couple of blocks of walking," "Why isn't he going faster, we can definitely make that light, and if we doesn't I'll never make it in time." The principle words being "late," and "soon." On a metropolitan schedule nothing is more frightening than a few wasted minutes. Inter-city journeys aren't quite so stressful. Any mistake costs you on time-scales so large that no amount of effort can help you. Simple problems with simple solutions that involve no knowledge of short-cuts and -circuits to the city's pipeline, just reversals — if I miss my stop I can only wait for the next one, cross the street, and wait for the bus in the other direction. Cities compress time-scales by an intense complication of any and all navigation problems. The city makes the simplest tasks into considerable computational problems. Rural regions, on the other hand, retain simplicity as their essential feature. A village involves no complication.

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What does procedural templexity mean? How can we understand the complexity's future-inducing capacity as something procedural? This is, in fact, already laying dormant in the very idea of city. Cities come to be through the density of living areas, and the subsequent transformation of life from the agricultural realm to the land of complex IO operations. Where once the main actions undertaken for life were taking care of plants and animals, something which takes patience and common experience with the Earth (among other Heideggerian monstrosities), in the city life revolves around the trade of ready-made products. Citizens go to work (in an office), where they trade messages on machines produced in factories in rural areas; they buy breakfast on the way, and lunch in one of the restaurants composing the downtown industrial region. Life in the city is network of tasks carrying individuals around the same dense set of familiar places. Again, the city is defined by its critical density. It is the place where the distance between locations approach zero, and people share locations while almost never sharing paths or destinations. In this regard, a city's complexity is defined

by its mind-numbing parallelism. *A competent city-planner is no different than any other thread-scheduler.* However, the threads are always calling each other, and constantly transferring data. Each complex procedure induces several others in order to complete its task, so procedures are daisy-chained. Parallel traces encounter one another, provoke each other into the exchange of data. Foreign procedures become involved and then separate. Every process oscillates between polling data and pulling it actively.

The totality of these processes, what composes the city, what we will refer to as *the program*, is incredibly complex. In strict terms, the complexity of the program is defined by the length of its execution time — or rather, by its asymptotic behaviour — its “worst case scenario.” This is, however, difficult to discuss. Before we can approach the rigorous notion of complexity we first have to note that the material conditions of city in which a program is executed contribute to the exacerbation of complexity *ad infinitum*. To understand the complexity of the program, we first have to understand the complexity of a subprogram, or one of the program’s threads. Every action a thread performs takes some number of steps

proportionate to its surroundings. The complexity of a single thread is thus to be measured in two separate ways, both familiar to complexity theory — space and time complexity. Space complexity usually refers to the memory required by a program, and time complexity to the number of procedure calls it need to make. Here space and time take on more concrete meanings. Space complexity is exactly measured by the density of locations in the city. In fact, the city as a whole is to be strictly understood as the memory of the program inscribed into the Earth. Similarly, time complexity is the number of steps it takes a thread to process a path in the city. Most threads have regular, cyclic paths. Their time complexity is measured along the parts of the city required for its task — buses, subways, shops and blocks of concrete pavement. Most of the data required to complete a thread’s task involves calls to other threads, from a bus driver to the boss in the office. Thus, while a single thread’s complexity — in both time and space — might be relatively easy to compute, computing the complexity of the program is quite difficult. In fact, it is, in principle, impossible. Because every thread requires data from other

threads, the whole of the program is forever executing; every call induces a series of calls which demand the participation of the whole program, where each participant in the propagation of a call induces additional calls. It's a runaway loop.

Modernity is traced along this line of exacerbating complexity. A positive feedback loop begins with the construction of interlocking trading and production routes — interthread procedure calls. Phases of modern history are defined by templexical hierarchies. Nascent Capital slouches towards middle-aged Europe to be born, beginning its life as a program of linear complexity: *asymptotically*  $O(n)$ . Linear complexity quickly undoes itself, calling auxiliary procedures thereby enlarging the program. Time scales shrink as procedure calls multiply. Nested loops characterise production. Fordist production marks a point of catastrophe, the production of each commodity requires the production of its constitutive commodities — production complexity reaches EXPTIME,  $O(2^{\text{poly}(n)})$ . At the same time, social relations in dense urban areas moves from NP to NPEXP. Production complexity remains deterministic, while the thread controlling calls to

production always has and always will be indeterministic. Spatial complexity undergoes a parallel evolution. As production requires its own subsequent productions, it takes-up space just as inefficiently. An exponentially growing amount of space becomes dedicated to storage of raw materials and the junk-status byproducts of production. *Lebensraumen* follows the spatial complexity as additional function calls are required to move and remove trash and raw material. Cities expand to accommodate spatial complexity requirements, thereby exacerbating temporal complexity back again. *Modernity is runaway inefficiency.*

Capitalism's program is essentialised by its incalculable complexity. Under Capitalism, time escapes reality, as the time scales which define the working program expand beyond the age of the universe, and the mean duration of operations collapses into itself. The temporal (or templexical) horizon that configures futurism and transcendentalism crashes into the present. There is no future. The past can never finish actualising itself. Incomputability pushes the future beyond the edge of possible experience, and expands the present into eternity. *The slow cancelation of the*

future is phenomenon of material templexity. Nihilist-Marxist patience becomes hopeless. As Modernity approaches the final order of templexity, all other forms of existence on earth are retroactively erased. It isn't cultural conquest if they've always been on the way to "their own modernity." Templexity colonises the earth. Nothing new is possible, only endlessly inefficient repetitions. The complexity injected into the earth forms a primitive form of intelligence. A future-free colony of viral infections. The principle call of any procedure becomes a call to another procedure – infinite deferral. It is in this sense that modernity is only truly comprehended in Kant's first critique. Runaway templexical programs expel techno-capital out of dogmatic totality, as well as the empiricist's uncertainty; only critical infinite deferral is left.

Lyotard: "In the solution to the antinomies of pure reason (KRV), Kant writes that the question of the series resumes in itself all the conflicts that are raised by cosmological Ideas. The 'last' phrase synthesises the preceding ones. Is it or is it not

part of their set? Dogmatism answers no, empiricism yes. Criticism remarks that the series is never given (gegeben), but only proposed (aufgegeben), because its synthesis is always deferred... The series formed by the world... is neither finite or infinite... but the synthesis of the series, for its sake, is 'indefinite.'<sup>3</sup> What are we to make of a world infinitely deferred? Kant, of course, has answers: "It is therefore also false that the world... is a whole existing in itself. From this it then follows that appearances in general are nothing outside our representations – which is just what is meant by their transcendental ideality."<sup>4</sup> There is no outside, transcendence is cancelled. If we wish, and we should wish, to be brutal materialists, all this representation business is entirely inappropriate. Representation is to be replaced by computability. The world remains to us, under the conditions of techno-capital, only that which is computable, which is in itself not much. As phases of history progress, reality slips into nothing. The ultimate entropic heat-death of the universe is utter computational exhaustion.

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3: Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. G. V. D. Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 7-8.

4: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp-Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), A507 / B 535.

# The Rhythms of Key Electric

## Jonah Howell

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**M**ack awoke and retched. Her neck throbbed, and she threw her hands out wide onto the floor beside her, fearing she would fall. The rust beneath her palms surprised her, and for a moment her creeping fears dissipated, and she did not think at all, and she rubbed her palms in slow circles across the irony rough. She cut the darkness with a futile blink, by tyranny of habit.

Moonlight, gray and thin, trickled in through a small window. She had not noticed it at first. It did not illuminate but, rather, traced the lines before her, a slow etching as her eyes warmed to the wakeful dark: She lay in a cavernous cube or nearly cube, framed by crimson I-beams, its walls old iron rusted unto peeling, patched with plywood and corrugated tin. Beneath her, she knew, lay a cylindrical stone rotor: The old Key Electric plant near Mid-City, down DuBois past the floating overpass. She spread her fingers. Had she been dumped here by a rider? Abducted from her

shotgun flat in the Seventh Ward?

Her splayed forefinger brushed against a faintly, growingly familiar bottle of port, and she smiled and leaned her head against the moldy plywood patch at her back. Her useless taxi, which until this night had lain undriven for months, would be waiting in the lot across the gravel street. She drew her phone to check the time and found them dead, and she laughed, as much at herself as at anything else. A clank echoed through the dark-etched outline of the plant, and she did not worry, though she knew she should.

Mack knew the electrical plant. She had engineered it out of college, and she had left it drunk, then drunker, and she had acted in it as an extra in the AMC series *Into the Badlands* after it had decayed and after she had drunk her way down to extra, and she had driven junkies there for fixes once the film scene had dried up, and she had driven them back to the Seventh Ward and the Ninth and to the corner where

Decatur met Jackson Square. She fingered the bottle of port and found it nearly empty. Another distant clang rattled her fingers. She drained the bottle.

Stumbling to the broken window nearest, Mack reminisced in macro-scope: The distant New Orleans and its nearer neon prosthetics glared at her and writhed seductive: She had been, at times, its whole anatomy, from widow's peak to fraying knees to spittle on its chin. She had been it all, and so she knew The Big Easy was a marketing gimmick. Its frayed knees, the spittle on its chin, gold leaf watermarked beneath sputtering neon—she remembered she had retched, and she wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, and she wiped her hand on her jeans, and she rubbed her jeans on the two-by-four that served as windowsill.

It spreads, she knows. It spreads, and it cannot be stopped, only dispersed and, theoretically, thinned. She knew it was a marketing gimmick, but nevertheless it seduced her. She reached again for her useless phone, by tyranny of habit, and she laughed, surprised.

In a fleeting rush she took the port by the neck and tossed it through the window, imagining that she had broken it. Afar, south by southeast, the Mississippi sprinted, indifferent, and she wondered whether there were still something left in it. In the silence she could hear its serpentine whispers clearly. Floods, potential and actual, remembered, to come, drunken hurried nights drowned in hurricanes above the futile levies.

Mack's chest swelled toward the window, toward her city, flirtatiously against it. She was proud to have stayed in the Seventh Ward. It was doomed. It was an atavism. It was the furthest reaches of her body, once pulsing and gyrating, now meekly silenced. The port bottle did not shatter against the gravel beneath but, rather, rustled, like animal steps, like a shatter remembered.

She had known she would awaken here eventually, in Key Electric or somewhere like it, in one of the vestigial organs left behind as her city contracted more and more tightly around the French Quarter, its rusting lung. She had known she would awaken here since the head of her taxi company had told her Rule One

of the job: You gettem from A to B, don' worry what they do there. He was a young guy from Jersey, Italian, and he scurried around his garage office, a lanky mouse in human clothes that hung off him like he was hiding himself. His name was Gio.

She had thought she would end up here because of some rider, that she would awaken with a headache and a lump or cut to match it. But she had been alone for long enough to abduct herself, it seemed.

Another clang surged from the bowels of the plant, but now it comforted her. She remembered, that is, that she was alone and that she had been alone for months. She remembered viscerally, as though time had stopped or restarted: For the first week she had reveled in it. She had danced around her tiny flat to music far too old and far too festive. The second week she worried, pacing from wall to wall, cluttered desk to refrigerator to bed, only to stop the grinding of her teeth. On the fifth week, she surpassed the bounds of thought and lived as much in the memories that writhed upon her bedroom ceiling as in her skin. And on the seventh week she remembered that she always left the key in the front left

wheel spokes of her taxi, an ancient Cadillac that threatened to blow smoke if she went further than the Louis Armstrong Airport.

And even if there were no riders, and no Gio, and no reason that she could explain to a cop, Mack had needed to drive. And so she had walked down to Esplanade, to the garage with no markings but a dragon above its mailbox, and she had taken the key from the wheel, and she had driven up and down the empty streets of the French Quarter, past the bars she had tended and those she knew only through a plastered fog, past the corner of Jackson Square and Decatur where no more overalled train-hoppers played their banjos, and she had ended up at Key.

For a moment she regretted that she had thrown her port bottle through the window. She wanted to destroy the plant, to shatter the stone cylinders below her, to eradicate electricity, and she could not remember whether the bottle were truly empty. Another clang rang up to her. It rattled the floor beneath her feet. A shard of glass fell from the window. In the darkness, she shuddered. It

was getting closer. But old buildings must settle.

Her daughter in Baltimore had called her on the second week of solitude. She swooned as she thought of it, and she stumbled, and she caught herself against the wall.

"Are you drinking," Kenzie had asked.

"Not much," she had answered.

"Dad and I have been talking with a good addiction counselor near New Orleans. If you'd like, I will come and introduce you."

"No. This solitude will do me good."

The rippled rust of the wall felt alive beneath her hands. It writhed, and she was glad, for a guilty, stamped-out moment, that Kenzie did not visit often.

Old buildings settle. She thought of its buzz and torque, heavy with the hurry of bodies, an anthill of activity, when she had worked there in her twenties. Of its decorous decay when she had worked there in her forties, made-up and costumed and glamorous. Bartenders had given her free drinks for signed Polaroids. Her

hair thinly braided, coated in cosmetic grease.

The plant had rung then, too, but not as persistently. She had heard whispers from the junkies who frequented the place and its age-varnished recesses. She knew that the plant had waxed jealous of its own seclusion, had grown lonely. It welcomed them as phantoms, as company without company, and so developed something of a volatile symbiosis.

Mack stared out through the window. Moon- and starlight threaded weakly through clouds more dissipated than for weeks. New Orleans had never been so quiet, not ten thousand years ago. A single pair of headlights mounted the overpass on DuBois, and only then did she remember that she was not the last human. That the Sun revolved around the Earth, or the other way around, and in any case somebody knew. Someone, she thought, had riveted the floor beneath her feet.

The clang behind her divided and spread up the beams that framed her alcove. She could not turn away from the window. She did not quite hear footsteps, but something like

them. After it had lain so long in silent destitution, its isolation broken only by the furtive scrabbings of the local addicts, what could have stayed in the plant? What could have survived there, in the spaces between the walls or in the cooled copper wires?

What remained to settle? She shivered. The first cool night in memory, she thought. A jump out the window would only take her fifteen feet down. If the port could handle it, so could she.



Gabbro / *Frida Orgies-Tonn* / frottage on wood / 2021 / 21 x 29 cm

Behind her, the floor rattled. It had climbed the ladder. Her bones, she repeated to herself, must be stronger than glass. Mack's palms lay heavy on the windowsill, and she smelled the hardy damp of the wood. It would hold, but only for a second, and she would need to slip under the jagged stalactites that clung to the top of the frame. That last mouthful of port pulsed against her stomach, and she wished she had swished it in her mouth, to wash away the vomit taste, which reminded her all-too-pungently that she was drunk—that she would worry over such a fall at the best of times, but now, drunk and groggy and half-hallucinating after months of such solitude that her memories had lain siege to the present, that she had become twenty again and forty and had seen the Key plant through all its metamorphoses projected against her own bedroom walls, yes, now she had no chance, and she wondered whether she could make it to her taxi with a broken ankle.

She knew what it was, or, rather, she knew what it could do, what it had done. Rumors had filtered down from the staging crew through principals to extras on set: The two junkies found in that concrete cylinder in the

morning, eaten away but not eaten by any teeth that could be recognized. The *Times-Picayune* had called them the first American deaths by krokodil, but a stage carpenter knew someone who knew the forensic pathologist who knew that was not the case, that their bodies had shown impossible signs of the decay of ages.

There had been others, she heard from her riders, and these grisly dissolutions were somehow tied to tight-jawed murmurs of an old man who lived in the swamp near Bayou La-Marque, whose immobile face and gloved hands somehow imparted their own airs of secrecy to the very rumors they spawned, and whose tall, antique clock rang in no known time but that of the plant's own clangs. Mack had never clearly heard his name, and so, in her own fantasies, she called him Le Chat. "The Cat." He who runs parallel to time, rather than within it.

Less than half the people in New Orleans on any day are counted among its official population. Of the unknown half, any fluctuations are simply errors of estimation: Those two junkies had been phantoms all

their lives. Officially, nothing changed when they were found in the cylinder beneath Mack's feet. Even the toxicologist's report was apocryphal, doomed to crumble in the corrosive winds of hearsay. But another phantasm of the New Orleans underground swears that Le Chat's clock stopped on the night before the two men were found, though its arrhythmic clanging never ceased. If anything, it had grown quicker, as though eager.

Mack had known all this when she, in the middle of the night, half-drunk already, had set off toward her taxi, and she had known it and thought of it when she had arrived in the gravel lot across the street, so close to her window side vigil that she could smell the lingering fumes of the ancient Cadillac's consumptive engine, and she had heard the first clang before she had fallen asleep.

And it breathed. The hair on her neck tried to stand but found itself damp, too warm.

It was so patient. As though it knew her. Mack recognized immediately, whether by fervent wish or by some penetrating intuition, that it

would, as a sort of recompense, allow her time to settle, herself.

Before her the city flickered and rustled in the evening's wet breeze. Far into the distance swayed the lonesome spires of the grandiose Spanish buildings near Jackson Square, the Cathedral and Cabildo, above squat dolorous rows of brightly painted shopfronts and apartments, their ornately carved balustrades grown musty in absence of hands. As the city sprawled toward her, its color faded out into post-industrial grays and dingy browns, hard concrete edges and the empty arches of overpasses, smokeless metal towers of smokestacks, barred and broken windows, collapsed barbed-wire atop redundant fences.

She had seen this same dissonant vista innumerable times, had watched its slow transmogrification through the decades, but she had never heard so little of it. With a lurch in her stomach, she determined that she may have heard the plant's ominous clankings before, but that they had never been so strong, or the air had never been so empty of other noise. At the very least, she knew that she had never before heard the place breathe.

The cube of which Mack occupied the edge was more hypercube than cube. True, it had four walls, each held by thick I-beams that would never fall, each lined with once-thick but now bleeding and blistered iron, each patched in places with corrugated tin. But each of these four walls hid another in its back, the frame of the next room or a reinforcement, and since their construction nobody had mapped the irregular spaces between the walls.

Old buildings must settle, and yet, if the primary unit of an architect's work is the partition, the single wall, no one can tell how such an old and heterogeneous building will settle, nor what it might house. Even the floor beneath Mack's feet stood a full foot above the ceiling of the lower chamber, a foot of perfectly dark space with no obstacles but its own stagnancy and room for a full ecosystem of a type never imagined by nature nor architect, at once hard-lined and anarchic. And as the inhabitants of the planned rooms shifted from electricians to actors to junkies, the spaces between remained undisturbed, free to develop on their own times, absorbing from the outside only its conflicting and desperate parade of noises.

And so then, as Mack stood against the window, feeling strange streams of breath against her neck, hot like the breath of a sleeper who has just awoken, and she released the pressure from her wrists—for she knew she would not jump—, she not only stood in a room between dark, unknowable spaces; but also in a dark, unknowable edge between rooms, between irreconcilable times. The breaths did not smell like anything, but they smelled strongly. For a guilty, stamped-out moment she wished that Kenzie would have visited more often.

Guilty, that is, and stamped-out, because Kenzie had visited plenty, at first. But Mack, either out of shame or out of some self-secret wish for penitential solitude, had driven her to distance. She had downed wine by the bottle, from the bottle. She had obsessed over jigsaw puzzles, reminiscing out loud about how much Kenzie had loved them as a toddler. Mack had known that she was acting a horrible caricature of the broken, alcoholic mother, but once she started she could not stop, like a mime so virtuosic it cannot escape its ethereal box.

For years she had heard of Kenzie's accomplishments secondhand from her ex-husband, Kenzie's father, Gregor. She had heard none of Kenzie's faults. That was characteristic of his subtle cruelty. But she had accomplished plenty, and she still sent Christmas cards, and she called almost every month.

Mack would have loved to see her. Upon her last visit, two years prior, before Mack had been forced to sell her house and move into her present flat, Kenzie had looked almost exactly as Mack had in her twenties, when she had first gone to work at Key Electric. Mack had insisted, halfway down her second bottle, that Kenzie try on all her old clothes and take those that she liked, and they had gone up to the attic to fish out the bin, and Mack had tried to carry it, but Kenzie had stopped her and taken the box, and Mack had stood in the attic for a minute after Kenzie had descended the stairs, and she had stumbled down, gripping the stairrail and gnashing her teeth.

She knew, of course, that her daughter possessed plenty of flaws. She remembered that Kenzie, as a toddler, had broken a glass. Mack knew that Kenzie had done it: Her

daughter could not count acting among her many talents, and guilt had fractured her smooth child's face into a crabbed, worry-lined caricature of aged weight, as though her contrition had literally carved itself into her.

Nevertheless, Kenzie's fear of Mack's belt had driven her to lie: Their collie, Ward, had come running at the sound of the crash, and Kenzie had pointed wordlessly to the dog, who had begun to sniff over the toddler's legs and hands, searching for signs of an injury he might lick.

Mack allowed her daughter's transparent lie to stand without scrutiny, and Kenzie looked on in demolished horror as Mack rubbed the dog's sensitive nose in the shards, shouting tipsily, "Do you see what you've done? Bad dog."

The next morning, Mack had awoken in a fevered sweat, hoping that it had been a dream, but Ward's scabbed nose would not allow her to deny her deed. And so she had only hoped that Kenzie, having been spared, would forget the incident.



Decaying Brickwork at Key Electric / photograph / 2020

Colossal cumulus clouds rolled down from the night sky in small shafts of showers, and Mack stared out into the grey, careful not to move. So long as she stood still, she thought, it would wait. It knew her: It had seen, in its way, all her metamorphoses. It would leave her to stand and think all she wanted. A fair deal.

She missed that house, with its attic and its open spaces and its ghosts: Kenzie, ever a toddler, sprinted from room to room, tripping at times and dutifully finding old dog toys behind pieces of furniture that should not have been able to hide such things, working hard and ineptly

at jigsaw puzzles at a short plastic table in the living room. Gregor towered through the doorways, still twenty-five, still so enamored with her that he could not see her. Several times Mack had met her own phantoms there, but she had closed her eyes so quickly that they had dissipated. They knew her.

But on Gregor's and Kenzie's ghosts she had focused so happily that they had stuck around, sometimes for hours at a time, for every ghost is a narcissist. Mack had lived in the house for ten years alone, but she had never grown lonely.

She had driven by the house once in the two years since she had

left, and the new family had repainted it and changed all the plants in the flowerbeds and had closed the shutters, and Mack had driven away, muttering, "Murderers," and she had sat in her taxi at the roadside for a half-hour, finally, after ten years, mourning, legs fidgeting against the underside of the wheel with a faint rustle like a shatter remembered.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" The long, hot breaths did not change, and slowly she reached into her pocket for a pack of Marlboro Reds. Shorts, not hundreds: She had been quitting. The first puff hit the top center of her forehead with a soft ping. Gregor had smoked with her until Kenzie was born, and the other extras had smoked with her and had thanked her for swigs from her beaten hip-flask until, after a week or so of clandestine merriment, they had learned the meaning of the flask and had learned, dutifully, to refuse it.

She could have been an actress. That is, she could have hidden her drinking from Gregor forever. His ghost had never minded. She could have smoked with her head up and said that she did it for art's own

sake, so as to separate herself, by tyranny of habit, from the bourgeois trappings of her former career. But Gregor was a smoker: He knew the meaning of a Marlboro Red, and so she had smoked only in seclusion, dowsed herself in perfumes, and chewed gum. His ghost had never minded.

Mack stared out across the bloated skyline and blew her second drag along the glass stalactites just above her face. The smoke curled through them like a horse rounding barrels, caught up in its performance, unable either to escape or enter. The hot breaths on her neck grew short, and Key Electric quaked with an enormous cough.

"Sorry," she said, then rethought, "but now we're even."

She could have been an actress. Indeed, she had so thoroughly convinced young Kenzie that she had believed her childish lie that Kenzie herself took responsibility for the gnarly scars on Ward's nose. For weeks she had recoiled meekly from the task of bathing him, as though the sight of his merest discomfort pushed her into pained reminiscence.

Years later, when Mack had convinced her to retrieve the bins of old clothes from the attic, and Kenzie had tried them on, if only to show more painfully the lost resemblance between mother and daughter—each article fit but was discarded with regretful politesse—, Mack had sought to ease the nebulous tensions between them by inviting Kenzie to do a jigsaw puzzle.

The two women sat at the kitchen table. Kenzie's ghost, the eternal toddler, ran to and fro behind her future's seat, occasionally finding a long-hidden dog toy and running to offer it as penance at the aged Ward's now gnarled paws. Mack took long drags from a bottle of pinot noir, always careful to replace the bottle in the center of the table. Kenzie did not drink but also could not seem to link even the easiest edge-pieces.

She looked up from feigned focus. "I guess I've lost my touch."

"You've never been a good liar," Mack winked and laughed nervously, but the damage was done, and Kenzie looked at her mother's pinot, then at Ward, and she took a long draw from the bottle, and though her eyes

seemed out of focus, she completed the puzzle almost single-handedly, and she departed early for Baltimore, explaining that a friend had fallen into an urgent crisis that could not wait but was too sensitive and complex to detail. Mack could see that she had not lied.

Mack had been an actress, and midway through her second week as an extra she had registered for acting classes in Mid-City. She had learned pieces of what the instructor called the Alexander Technique, and she had forgotten most of it, but she remembered how to see:

"Look into a panorama," the instructor had said, "and then extend the panorama to a full circle. Look directly behind you. What is there?" Mack had answered correctly every time: She was used to seeing ghosts.

And so now she pulled her peripheral vision around to meet between her shoulder blades, and Kenzie, age five, sprinted across the back of the room past the stairs, wisps trailing from her tiny back like the tail of a comet, and Gregor chased her, and junkies piled one atop the other to the ceiling in the corner,

and stuntmen ran from all directions with plastic machetes and blunted hatchets as electricians cowered and feebly brandished wrenches, and a hot breath bathed Mack's back, and the walls pulsed and gyred, their patchwork tin popping out its corrugations in loud prescient coughs and clangs, and the iron crawled, plywood buckled and splintered, while beneath her feet and through the spaces between floors and ceilings it flowed and beat with unnamable limbs, and Kenzie's ghost flickered weakly in the writhing mass, and finally Mack wished she would have visited more often, if for no reason but that her ghost would have strengthened.

Nevertheless, try as she might, Mack could not see the thing that breathed and waited behind her. It was too close, had grown too intimate, too tied up in the very fact that she looked.

Bracing against the windowsill, Mack tried to fling herself backward, to make good on her deal with the breaths on her neck, to join in the phantasmagoria that unfolded, moment on moment, in the dimmest reaches of her sight; but she found her fists stuck to the rotten boards of the sill, unable even to press hard

enough to fracture the worm-eaten wood. She tried to turn her eyes around to see, at least, her trap, but she could not move at all.

Mack looked down to find her discarded bottle of port perfectly intact upon the gravel. A tiny trickle hung suspended at its mouth. From a nearby smokestack lofted the shrill coloratura of the morning's first thrush, a quick and strict progression of flutes and jolted whistles against the arrhythmic flood at Mack's back.

The city lay still before her, halted in its slow and colorless crawl into the surrounding swamps. Across the street a small window rattled softly, and she stared into it, hoping for a face, the rub of a palm across the morning-misted glass, but nothing appeared, and all lay still and silent. Unaware of the proceedings across the street, the thrush rested, waiting for a response.

Amidst the gray-encrusted waters of Bayou LaMarque, a small wooden house rose on stilts from the shifting silts of a tiny island. Two boats, docked beneath the structure, rocked imperceptibly with the submersed movements of fish and alligators. Its

square wooden stilts extended above the foundation into the columns of a wrap-around porch, pentagonal, and held aloft a flat roof teeming with vegetation. Woodrose vines leapt the shallow gutters and crawled down these columns, hanging almost to the silty soil below, while tall angels' trumpets blared their thin, delirious songs to the scrawled cypress canopy above. An orange light flickered in the many eight-paned windows, but swamp muck caked so heavily upon the glass that a hidden observer would see nothing but the vaguest struggling luminance.

Within, two men sat at a heavy, round table, rough-hewn of swamp ash, with a young woman. Le Chat lay his gloved hands tense upon the table, where several dripping candles, now burned to short stumps, squatted to light the trio. Though his pensive, bearded face did not move, his companions could hear something like a smile in the upper fundamentals of his low voice.

"Listen."

The clock in the corner, a tall, silver antique of unplaceable date and provenance, rang as unpredictably as ever, though its pendulum had

paused. The second man hunched gauntly over the edge of the table and cupped his palms over his ears, but the young woman leaned back in her chair and drew a long and shut-eyed sigh.

"Nothing like silence," she whispered reverently.

Le Chat stroked the rough tabletop, and the candles rattled softly in their mounts. He nodded to the woman. "He'll come around."

Sharp shoulders grotesquely raised to his earlobes, the second man wavered from side to side, clasping his ears so that rivulets of sweat ran down the indentations left by his fingernails. He raised his feet up onto the seat, and his bony knees, protruding through a pair of well-tailored gray slacks, jutted out at irregular angles above his hunched scapulae.

Without warning he bolted upright and whirled around to stare into the immobile clock's face. His eyes glazed and moved saccadically from one etched Roman numeral to the next and to various invisibly magnetic spaces in between. Standing, he growled, "Murderers," before springing out the door and down to his

waiting boat.

The young woman started to stand and follow him, but Le Chat motioned that she should stay, and docilely she crossed her legs and gazed into the opaque dark of the windows as, below, the boat's motor droned away into the swamp. Once the sound had faded, she turned to face the clock. She arched her brows in confusion, as though she longed to open it and explore its workings, to diagnose it or to find some small thing dropped and lost within.

"The plant invents nothing," Le Chat explained, "and in truth, it does nothing. It simply provides the space and time, or lack thereof, for accounts to settle themselves. Gregor's denial is his own ordeal."

The young woman turned and looked up toward the roof. She had

needed no explanation, but she enjoyed the low rumble of Le Chat's voice. "Of course."

Behind her, the stilled clock mirrored the room, reflecting its lights and the infinitesimal movements of Le Chat and the woman, so that Gregor, speeding away, looked back to find the windows flickering at speeds he could not comprehend and with which he could not reconcile, and so he set his face grimly toward the dark outlines of the swamp, its leaping cypress knees and secretive algae, and he thought with guilty relief that this swamp would soon overwhelm the city that nested within it, with its fading lights and sprawling concrete metastasis, and that by then he would be so far away that he would see the flood long before it came.

# Automation and Catastrophe

## *Patrick Leftwich*

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### I – Epistemology of Solarpunk

Antinomy of climate: either capitalism will end in a planetary catastrophe or capitalism will not end in a planetary catastrophe.

Micro, macro, infra, hyper, economy, politics, design. As of 2021, there is no sphere of social reality that hasn't already been drawn into the expanding vortex of global warming dynamics. While in the 20<sup>th</sup> century climate change still seemed an abstract problem 'to be discussed in order to arrive at the best policy,' in the last two decades the consequences of an irreversible transformation of ecosystems have entered everyday life, and imparted it a rhythm of termination. The negative effects of unsustainable cognitive habits are amplifying, as the waste of formerly functional lifestyles contaminates the network of mental ecologies. We are going through a disintegration of the known world, which is followed by the aesthetics from the edge of the End: Solarpunk, Meteorogothic. The roof of a shopping mall is cooling,

we sat here throughout the lockdowns and watched the vaporwave of cataclysms approaching from the horizon.

Solarpunk has shed the genre weightlessness of science fiction. It's a contemporarity of thought trapped beneath dark and heavy air, entertaining itself by toxic glows, and scavenging through commercial leftovers. Red sun-powered Internet 3.0 radiates socially disjointed media across urban wastelands, domes of agrarian, industrial and natural oases, coastlines slashed by tsunamis of boiled plastic. From the dystopia of extreme meteorology arrive automatic notifications announcing TEOTWAWKI – the surrealist abbreviation of meta-patterns of migratory waves, pandemics, the irregular splicing of progress with degrowth, of deficit with excess of water, fire, air, and earth. After three decades of taming cyberpunk, conveyed with retromanic devotion into San Andreas 2077, the retrofuturistic intensity escapes into solarpunk – the aesthetic condensation of loss of future stretched across the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since the dark digital

cultures of the '90s have infected inorganic and organic matter by discovering a labyrinth of crypts beneath the cyberspace freeways, where gothic shadows linger, carbon footprints draw a new map of the doubling of the smooth interface of the post-internet environment that will be decaying into e-waste for millennia. Cyberpunk has emerged from the edifices of megacorporations hovering in the eternal present enveloping urban agglomerations; solarpunk is the counter of the sixth mass extinction, growing by every second of capitalism's ever closer connection with the planet.

The change in aesthetics is preceded by a change in climate and followed by a change in metaphysics and epistemology. Kant's antinomies (God does or does not exist, the universe has a beginning in space and time or has no beginning) were supposed to show that the solution of certain metaphysical problems lies beyond the reach of human reason. The limited viewpoint of subjects of experiencing reality in a spatio-temporal way makes it impossible to judge whether the universe has a beginning, because the beginning is already a spatio-temporal category. By the same token, it is also impossible

to say that, on the contrary, the universe has no beginning, because that would require that space-time beings have access to the non-space-time experience of the non-existence of the universe before (from the time before?) it came into existence. Nonetheless, to be capable of an ethical life at all, society must act as if there is a rational answer to the antinomy. The anthropocentric and humanist paradigm of the antinomy does not negate the fact that Kant, through the delimitation of experience, provided a formula for thinking within this paradoxical condition of modernity. Having this in mind, an attempt to resolve the antinomy of climate, while capitalism and climate change shape everything we experience and how we experience, can only turn into an unjustified geochronic metaphysics. This, however – like any problem that reveals the limits of governing rationality – raises an undercurrent of anxiety.

Weather anomalies, smog, droughts, record-breaking temperatures, fires in the Amazon, Australia, and the Congo, melting glaciers, the voice of soft despair in BBC documentary series: in the face of such a confluence of events, the antinomy of climate conquered the media land-

scape in the last few years and exploded into an agitated array of reactions in wake of an end that seems either inevitable or manipulated. In *Y2K-Positive*, Mark Fisher, in the context of a closely analogous millennium bug in the '90s, wrote that '*within the course of a year, Y2K has passed from being a non-event to being, briefly, a scare story (complete with a government awareness campaign) to being a taken-forgranted commonplace.*'<sup>1</sup> As the undeniable reality of the images from The End are displayed, the procedure of adaptive-survivalist behaviour repeats itself like an automaton.

In the epoch of the capitalocene – if we take seriously the Jameson-Zizek formula that '*it is easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to capitalism*' – it is impossible not to see that as modernity unfolded, the fates of the planet and capitalism have become inextricably coiled into one another. So, which will end first? What could the end of one mean for the other?

The antinomy of climate can be rearticulated in yet another way: are we not observing a critical moment for capitalism? Has capitalism suc-

ceeded in penetrating and subjugating the Earth as a planet in the course of last few technological revolutions, or has Earth-Gaia not yet been fully appropriated? A tragic paradoxicality lurks in this series of questions. The triumph of the Earth as things stand could lead to its destruction, because it will mean capitalism's failure in its attempt to halt the accelerating process of global ecosystem devastation in order to save itself. But simultaneously, capitalism's triumph would mean introducing yet more of the same mechanisms that have brought the planet to current mega-crisis. Capital has set the planet on a catastrophic course and any response to the antinomy of climate quickly transforms into a streaming platform for the imagery from the horizon of looming cataclysms.

Modernity distinguishes itself from previous epochs by its compulsive commitment to the progressive end of time, while delaying catastrophe to an asymptotically approximate and never reached point in the future. As the pharmaco-pessimist Nietzsche-Burroughs-D.F.Wallace trajectory repeats, modernity is pure addiction. Not only imaginatively or ideological-

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1: Mark Fisher, "Y2K-Positive," *Mute* 1, No. 15 (2004). <https://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/y2k-positive>

ly, but above all physiologically and motorically. Capitalism and the Earth bind together in the double narcotic nexus of modernity, through which raw materials, stimulants and data flow.

In *The Cybernetics of 'Self': A Theory of Alcoholism*, Gregory Bateson calls occidental epistemology the set of mechanisms and ideas that form the conditions for the emergence and structural reinforcement of modernity as an addiction. As its cause, Bateson presents the conflict between the sober self, which is commanded by individualistic culture and wished upon by loved ones to hold strong and not let go, and the drunk self, which is the temptation to repeat the intoxication and break free from the imperative of control. Behind the personality conflict of occidental epistemology is the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, person and affects, where one side gives form to the other and is assigned authority over the whole. Total control from the position of the mind is impossible to achieve, because the intensification of control gives rise to unexpected pathologies (such as neuroses, depression, violence), which in this model means insufficient discipline of the mind, which allows itself

to be deceived by dark matter. Any action of any of the parts intensifies the action of the whole system, triggering an ungovernable feedback mechanism. Once the procedure is performed, the output commands it to be repeated, which is intensified in the input, and leads to an escalation of the process. First, there are contingent conditions within modernity that make capitalism and the Earth dependent on each other, then the system's response deepens the addiction which stems from the core of modernity.

One of the basic beliefs in the AA is that before an alcoholic can really change, he must '*hit the bottom*' at least once, and usually several times. 'The bottom' sets a limit to the alcoholic's patterns of thought and action, and according to Bateson, expresses the boundaries of the occidental epistemology that controls the alcoholic. As the addict (to ethanol, fossil fuels, silicon, copper, potassium nitrates) approaches 'the bottom', s/he begins to panic, grasping at every chance to halt the fall, until finally submits to an overpowering desire to surrender and watch how the force of inertia pushes into freefall.

*'The panic of the alcoholic who*

has hit bottom is the panic of the man who thought he had control over a vehicle but suddenly finds that the vehicle can run away with him. Suddenly, pressure on what he knows is the brake seems to make the vehicle go faster. It is the panic of discovering that it (the system, self plus vehicle) is bigger than he is. (...) philosophy which sees "man" as pitted against his environment is rapidly breaking down as technological man becomes more and more able to oppose the largest systems. Every battle that he wins brings a threat of disaster. The unit of survival—either in ethics or in evolution—is not the organism or the species but the largest system or "power" within which the creature lives. If the creature destroys its environment, it destroys itself.<sup>2</sup> Panic results from becoming aware of one's own addiction, it is only in the face of the approaching wall that the transition to a new epistemology opens up. 'The premise that, drunk or sober, the total personality of an alcoholic is an alcoholic personality which cannot conceivably fight alcoholism.'<sup>3</sup> Pharmacological Ligottianism. The way out is to come to terms with one's power-

lessness and accept that one is subject to something greater than the human (addict's) representation of one's control over the whole process.

The capitalist lifestyle is considered the main cause of the greenhouse effect. As with the figure of an alcoholic, solutions to the planetary crisis are proposed based on increasing control by the same institutions and mechanisms that brought the world to the limit. According to the IPCC report, the imagined catastrophic point is projected at 2040, so the political administrators of occidental epistemology assume that they still have time before the catastrophe arrives. All that is required is to restrain the thermodynamic hedonism of polymer and carbon stimulants. But, as the AA shows, unconsciously (in a Ballardian desire for abstract death) the accelerator key is being pressed on the sight of a wall that has stood at the end of modernity since the very beginning, since Columbus's expeditions, since the East India Company, since Kant's *Three Critiques*. One has to come to terms with the fact that the global x-risk disaster has happened some time ago. What now?

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2: Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1987), 337, 339.

3: Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 318.

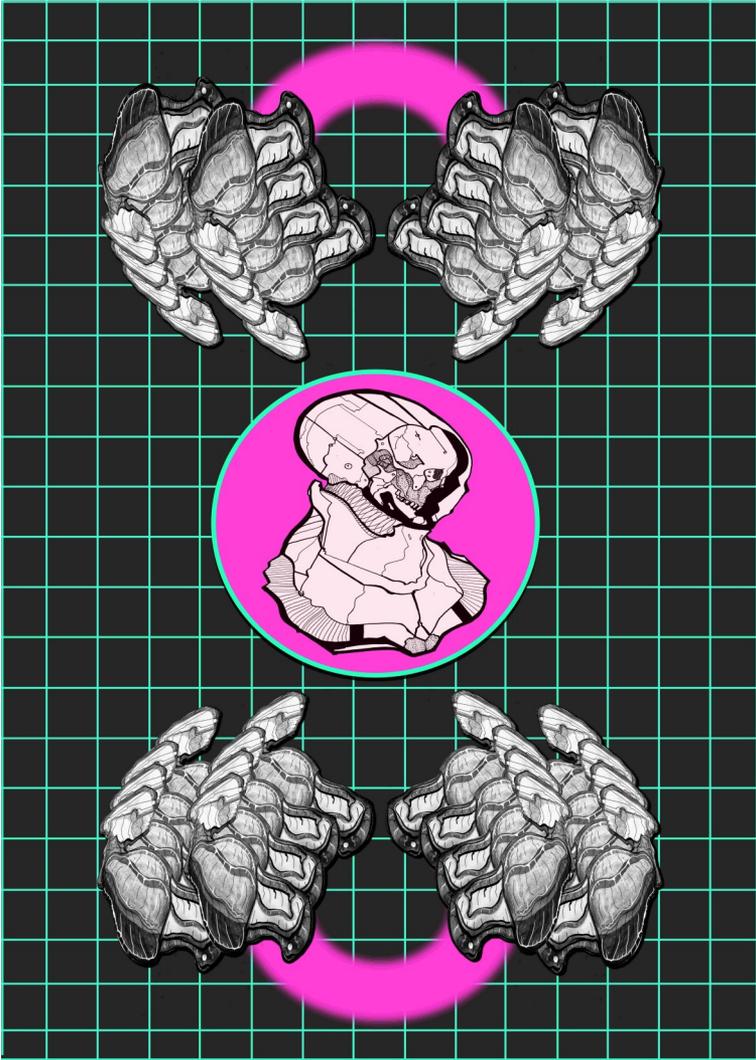
Global warming is a multiplicity of microcatastrophes unevenly distributed along gender, species, and technological axes of the social machine. There is no unified mind of a global subject that can experience climate change and master the consequences of its past mistakes. The apocalypse drags on like the tail of a comet, leaving behind incinerated subjectivities, the gleam of its non-linear wandering may be reaching us for unimaginably many light-years. Modernity, as a combination of capitalism and planetary catastrophe, has unleashed powers that humanity cannot control by virtue of being only a partial object of a larger process. After all the affective, posthuman, accelerationist 'turns,' we have already heard this phrase an anaesthetising number of times, until it began to sound like a dogmatic vow: no form is transcendent in relation to the system, but immanently connects to the circulation of all forms. In view of this, we cannot separate the planet from capitalism, and both equally belonging to the experienced environment. '*Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.*'<sup>4</sup>

Both right-wing and liberal-left politics are subjected to occidental

epistemology and the idea that the process can be regulated according to will. It is significant that the left accelerationist manifesto and official solarpunk website postulate the recovery or construction of a future that remains indeterminate and ready to be shaped. As if the decision-making process belonged to modern subject. Contrary to voluntarist conceptions, the change of epistemology does not depend on individual or collective. But, occidental epistemology itself reveals its own limits of possibility, within which images of a different approach can be developed. Instead of fighting catastrophe in the spirit of Cartesian conflict, the epistemology of cybernetic adaptation accepts solarpunk reality. It does not imply a new politico-economic order in which people would overthrow capitalism, because from within capitalism it is impossible to imagine what lies outside. Bateson's thought of a larger system provides a different model of model production, a pattern for patterns beyond the antinomies of climatic metaphysics, for which catastrophe is not the end but only the means.

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4: Ibid., 328.



Incoctus Terra / *Hallidonto* / Digital Collage / 2020

## II – Catastronomic Drift

Can there be nothing happening  
in the world?

Modernity is a vehicle in a drift  
through the capitalocene. Any at-  
tempts at controlling its trajectory  
takes its passengers further and fur-  
ther away from the delineated track.  
The persistently lit warning signal of

the antinomy of climate reminds us that every countersteering takes the driver back to the initial vector towards a planetary crash. The control-dependent subject of occidental epistemology panics at the thought of increasing inertia and wants to get out of the accelerating machine, but discovers, as in a Cronenbergian mechahorror, that its limbs and organs have long since grown into the bodywork and dashboard. The vicious loop is fuelled by an illusion of certainty with which the end of the capital-planet coupling is determined from within the very vehicle of the capitalocene. There is no way out.

*Panic is creative.* (Professor Challenger)

In contrast to the classical Kantian antinomies posited between eternal ideas – the antinomy of climate describes a system in a state of chronic disequilibrium. It assumes that either equilibrium existed before capitalism as a time-stretched apocalypse machine, or that equilibrium will eventually come about due to capitalism, even though it has upset it itself. (Modernity regularly experiences crises, commonly taken as contingent and external errors to be remedied by

iterating successive versions of Cartesian meditations). From this perspective, time is a disturbance of the equilibrium that brought humanity before the antinomy of climate; and an oozing intoxication of a mind addicted to contingency and chance. The geochronic metaphysics of the capitalocene expresses the impossible desire to find an ideal point of stillness, but the very movement towards this spot moves the entire frame of reference. We are as far from it as we were at the beginning. At the dawn of modernity, movement and technological progress were joined, thus balance must contradict progress – one cannot have both. Sustainability is an oxymoron. We will come back to that. Follow me (J·I·J).

Planet urbanisation has led to two fundamental problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: automation and climate change. Benjamin Bratton calls this process *terraforming*, which ‘usually refers to transforming the ecosystems of other planets or moons to make them capable of supporting Earth-like life, but the looming ecological consequences of what is called the Anthropocene suggest that in the decades to come, we will need to terraform Earth if it is to remain a via-

ble host for its own life.<sup>5</sup> While global warming makes us aware of the need to move away from an anthropocentric perspective, the automation increasingly embedded in everyday life makes us aware of the inevitability of the exhaustion of anthropocentrism. According to Bratton, the terraforming of the Earth is an irreversible process that is significantly accelerating throughout modernity. Only a programmatic and organic approach to both processes at once will design a habitable project in *far from equilibrium* conditions (Prigogine). We will not change our dependence on urbanisation, but we can begin to plan for its further course on a much larger timescale than before.

Short-range planning is apparent in the public resistance to the transition to nuclear power, stemming from a belief in control over one's own thermodynamic appetite and a fear of changing one's energy diet. The Chernobyl disaster entered the collective imagination with such momentum that, a few decades later, global civilisation is still unable to take responsibility for nuclear reactors and radioactive waste disposal, despite, as Bratton notes, the associated

inhibition of rising CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations and rising annual average atmospheric temperatures. The fear of a nuclear winter is still stronger than the waves of sub-Saharan heat over the global North. (Also, Bratton adds that nuclear fusion waste is tangible and can be easily attributed to ownership, whereas fossil fuel fumes disperse in the atmosphere around the globe).

Virilio's Axiom:

*'To invent the sailing ship or steamer is to invent the shipwreck. To invent the train is to invent the rail accident of derailment. To invent the family automobile is to produce the pile-up on the highway.'*<sup>6</sup>

The atom would help transform the world's energy economy by dismissing the issue of global warming, but it would undoubtedly put civilisation on a trajectory towards unknown threats. From catastrophic terraforming emerges another consequence, ethically opposite to Paul Virilio's famous quote and hidden behind a reactionary interpretation of the warning against technological progress. Failure to develop and distribute new

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5: Benjamin Bratton, *The Terraforming* (Moscow: Strelka Press, 2019).

6: Paul Virilio, *The Original Accident*, tr. J. Rose (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 10.

technologies means reactively choosing domesticated accidents, which Nietzsche called a nihilistic fear of power. The nihilistic dromoscopy of common sense, i.e. seeing the speed of technological progress in terms of equilibrium and anomaly, fails to see the perverse truth of the process in the middle of which it finds itself: seemingly tamed technologies never stay still. Without pause, the atmosphere is saturated with greenhouse gases, server farms require ever larger cooling systems, nuclear waste is increasing, patterns of algorithmic data are drifting beyond the reach of social platform operators. Striving to preserve what is, one accelerates anyway – only with one’s back to the direction of motion. Somewhere beyond the attention of the governors of equilibrium the effects of domesticated accidents assemble, and once they exceed a critical mass, will become unbearably visible in the ruined landscape after an entirely unexpected catastrophe. *To invent a globalised communication system is to invent a pandemic.* It is a matter of flawed system of representation.

As Vaughan in Ballard’s *Crash*, who arranged the fetishist settings of his accidents while driving his car, we must model the traction of approach-

ing the next Batesonian *bottom* on the fly. In contrast to the sentimental attachment to a strong will to overcome addiction through one’s own virtue, both Ballard’s engineer of symphorophilic coincidence and Bateson’s AA have to stop the habit at the crystalline edge of death, from which abstract life develops. The simulation of a blood-and-steel car crash has more impact than a spontaneous death on the road. The planetary switch of occidental epistemology to cybernetic epistemology of adaptation will occur when the collective imagination fixes its gaze on the bottom of the terraforming converging abstract lines of automation and climate destruction. Or it will not happen, and the crash of the capital-planet system will leave behind a scorched earth orbiting in a desolate solar system.

*Planetary technology is not only the loss of being, but also the possibility of saving it.*  
(Pseudo-Heidegger)

Deleuze discovers in Heidegger the co-creator of pataphysics – an even deeper idea of technology. Not just technology = accident, or technology = responsibility, but by dodging from one catastrophe technology

takes us on the trajectory of the next one, more powerful and more ubiquitous.

*'Atomic bomb yesterday, information bomb today and, tomorrow, genetic bomb?'*<sup>7</sup>

The world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs cool, planetary disaster management instead of neutral environmental sustainability. The year 2020 has shown that, as we enter the third millennium, we have initiated a phase of constant adaptation to geochronic crises. A disjointed balancing act on an apocalyptic line will always be with us and no solution will provide the ultimate balance of ecosystems and economics. At both corporate, governmental and everyday levels there will be regular and systematic collisions with proportional bottoms, switching occidental epistemology locally into dynamic systems of ends-in-suspension anticipating next cataclysm.

Imagine the crises experienced by a 2-degree mega-civilisation of the Kardashev scale – a classification of the technological sophistication of cosmic civilisations – which absorbs all the energy emitted from the com-

bustion of the central star dragging the galaxy into a chronic state on the brink of existence. The only path to survival leads through a catastrophic spiral with extending arms. Disguised as a *élan vital*, the pure death drive spreads in thousand cuts across the surface of being, distributing civilisations from Mesopotamia to the Dyson Sphere toward ever further channels of the unknown epistemology.

From the interval between the terms of the antinomy of climate emerges the possibility of formulating a second alternative that completes the logical field of *Automation and Catastrophe*: capitalism and the planet have entered the trajectory of catastrophe as an adaptative model of evolution or capitalism and the planet have entered the trajectory of self-destruction through catastrophe. From the transformation of the antinomy of climate carried out in this section, we obtain an equation beyond the equilibrium principle, which we call *solarpunk catastrophology*. Catastrophe no longer functions as the chronological end of a guilt-ridden epoch, nor as the intrusion of an anomaly into a world order that awaits correction. Here, catastrophe is the catalytic matrix of time itself,

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7: *Ibid.*, 36.

which like the sun in *The Chronicles of Riddick* incinerates everything that fails to keep pace with the moving limit between lethal flare and survival shadow in the faults and fractures of an accident-dependent planet. Drift through the 21<sup>st</sup> century ‘takes the earth with it, it was leaving for the mysterious world, its poison garden.’<sup>8</sup>

To be continued...



Spark / Luis Esteban Escalante / Collage: Paper ephemera (Magazine cuttings, images, text) + Dry transfer lettering / 2020

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8: Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, tr. B. Massumi (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 84.

# Lady Strider

Albanian original: “Zonjë Mushkonja” by Doña Casilda Ávila

English translation and illustrations by Circe Tabira

Introduction and notes by Colectiva Tzitzimiyotl



(-)

In a recently recovered draft for a 1974 article entitled “Survivals of Xog Macroculture: The Valusian Case,” which ended up being suppressed before its publication, Mexican archeologist and outlaw educator Teodora C. Lombardo speculates on

the origins of the Lady Strider<sup>1</sup>—that hematophagous deity of the avian empires of Old Valusia, patron of pathogenic insects, epidemics, wandering poets, predatory flight and cyclonic winds—tracing her origins back to a character far more ancient than her Cretaceous worshippers: a (self-?)

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1: Tabira translated the name of the poem’s protagonist entity (“Zonjë Mushkonja” in Albanian) as “Lady Strider,” rather than the more “entomologically correct” “Lady Mosquito.” The word “strider” usually refers to insects of the *Gerridae* family (order *Hemiptera*), also known as “water striders” or “water bugs,” known for walking on the surface of water; unlike mosquitoes (order *Diptera*, family *Culicidae*), *Gerridae* have no known hematophagous species and they rarely bite humans other than for self-defense, and thus do not represent a significant vector for infections. In the context of the poem, Tabira allows herself this jarring inaccuracy so that the morpheme “stride” evokes the image of wandering movement (first out of the ocean, then over the dry land and finally into the air, heading towards the stars) that characterizes this figure.

exiled priestess of the deep-sea Dagg-Xog macrobacterial peoples of the Late Permian,<sup>2</sup> one who abandoned the warm hydrothermal vents of her clan in favor of the Path of Drought, and to later become a conduit for Uvash, the wandering thirst, mother of Star-Vampires.

The following text is a loose English translation of fragments from an old Valusian liturgy for times of plague, originally rendered into an archaic ceremonial dialect of Albanian by Zoque traveller and polymath Doña Casilda Ávila onto the margins of her personal library's copy of the *Book of Eibon*. According to a legend repeated in secret gatherings of the theosophists, hermetics, and enlightened alchemists that swarmed about the 19th century, the poem was one of Doña Casilda's first experi-

ments with the much coveted "diagonal astral regression" techniques that years later would allow her to witness the many aspects of Valusian culture detailed in the controversial volume VI of her *Grimoires*. The following poem, the Albanian source of which used to accompany a section on the famous tragedy of the sorcerer Zon Mezzamalech<sup>3</sup> in the *Book of Eibon*, briefly recounts part of the Lady Strider myth, beginning with her pilgrimage through the deserts of Gondwana (today a part of Antarctica), up to her communion with Uvash<sup>4</sup> deep within a river-cave and her subsequent ascent to the heavens, finally ending with a prayer to the Lady, urging her to continue her way up to the cold stars, thus leading her buzzing procession of pathogenic demons away from the

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2: The first avian dinosaurs are thought to have evolved in the Triassic, on the other side of the cataclysm known as the Permian-Triassic (P-Tr) Extinction Event or the Great Dying, in which over 96% of marine species and 70% of land species disappeared, among them the last of the trilobites and the species that comprised the Xog peoples.

Lombardo's draft explains that by the Cretaceous, when the Valusian empires reached their height, very little accurate information on the Xog other than their magical practices survived, causing characters like the Lady to be interpreted as exceptional specimens of young families like Gerridae and Culicidae. During the Late Permian, hemipterans had become recently differentiated, but it would not be until the Triassic that the first dipterans would appear.

3: Legendary figure of the Alhzredian tradition, credited with the creation of a crystal capable of triggering evolutionary regressions on a user's mind, a wondrous creation that would eventually take its maker's life by fusing him with the pre-biotic amalgam at the dawn of Earth-time. Recently popularized by Clark Ashton Smith's short story "Ubbo-Sathla," the legend of this enigmatic character whom Doña Casilda would dub "the feathered Faust" is widely considered to be an antecedent for the controversial "meta-amoebic regression" experiments of millionaire ocean researcher Maximilian Crabbe, reported by CCRU.

4: In the infamous *Necronomicon* of Abdul Alhzred, Uvash is known as the source of astral predators capable of briefly manifesting within our dimension in order to feed on blood. Doña Casilda's *Grimoires* call Uvash "the cruel teacher of the hematophagous secret on Earth," while Lombardo called her "the hyperstional root of multiple vampiric practices around the world."

Earth.

Colectiva Tzitzimiyotl would like to thank Laura Castillo, who coordinated the anthology *Xog'e: Hipersticiones para los cuerpos por venir*, for bringing this poem to our attention on behalf of the absent translator, Circe Tabira, who has been missing since 2017. The manuscript of the translation was found among Tabira's belongings, sandwiched between comparatively large color illustrations on card-stock sheets tied together with a sturdy pink string. The text was penciled in very small handwriting using a simple ciphered script on 5 thin paper sheets ripped from a pocket-sized notebook stapled together, with each section of the poem (barely) fitting the two sides of a single sheet, each one numbered in what seem to be Tic Xenotation hyprime numerals, which have been preserved in the present edition as the section "titles." Despite the small-sized paper forcing the letters into an awkward, swarming layout in the found pages, the intended line breaks of the poem were carefully notated in the manuscript and have been respected in the present edition. It is currently unclear whether the illustrations the manuscript was found among bear a direct relation to

the poem, but we agree with Castillo's assessment that they "seem to form an aesthetic sequence that parallels the narrative of the Lady Strider's journey in the poem," and have thus included them as companions to the text. The inability to reach Tabira, along with the elusive nature of the *Book of Eibon* and of documents regarding Doña Casilda Ávila, has made a proper review of the translation impossible, though an interested reader may find a brief synopsis and exegesis of the Lady Strider myth in Teodora Lombardo and biologist Eva de León's 1978 book *Sobre la percepción Xog y la traducción entre sistemas sensoriales* ("On Xog perception and the translation between sensory systems"), published by Lenguanegra Books.



(:)

It is said she once said she came up from the sea,  
Though she carries no memory besides  
Four swift slits at the sides of her necks,<sup>5</sup>  
Scars of once tender gills,  
And the festering patches,  
more tender still,  
were stubborn sundry scales<sup>6</sup>  
still cling.

She also keeps, though unbeknownst,  
As she walks under sun and dust,  
A half-forgotten murmur, pulsating lullaby  
Once sung at countless her  
By ceaseless seacave mothers.<sup>7</sup>

A deep pelagic mourning,  
Monotonous and roaring,  
A yearning from her youth.

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5: According to Lombardo and De León in *On Xog Perception...*, the body and writing were for the Xog the two dams that time uses to stop the flow of forgetting, with the body being frail and ephemeral in a way that writing, with the proper cautions, is not. Although the language of surviving Xog texts makes it clear that they shared with us what Miguel de Unamuno would call the “principles of unity and continuity” (unorthodoxly paraphrased by De León as “the awareness of constituting, not without a certain degree of alienation, a persistent body-in-space faced with the even more persistent writings and forgettings of Others”), this self was much less unified than the (already multifaceted) human concept of identity due to the metamorphic capabilities and bicephalic body plan common to all known Xog species: “The Xog first person [not as unlike the human one as we’d like to think],” writes Lombardo in her 1974 draft [with handwritten additions of unknown authorship in brackets], “is always divided: It runs in all [four] directions as if escaping the tireless, ravenous forgetting biting at it [at least only] from both outside and within.”

6: This “stubbornness” of the aquatic past continues throughout the poem, as in the likening of the stellar void to “thinner waters” in the closing section. As explained by Lombardo and De León: “Bicephaly was to the Lady Strider and other Valusian wandering deities both the engine and the break to their eternal roaming. The *Book of Eibon*, for example, reports a description of the Lady by Zon Mezzamalech which states that ‘one of her faces always looks up, craving the silence of the outer void; her other face always looks down, yearning for the sweet screams of the place where the ocean boils with the blood of the earth.’ We find similar tensions in many other myths derived from Xog macroculture which have survived in the Alhazredian tradition.”

7: *On Xog perception...* exemplifies the four typical sexes of the Xog Peoples with the case of the maternity system of the Dagma clans, inhabitants of deep-ocean cave systems with high geologic activity. Caves designated as brooding chambers for the eggs produced by the *recombinator* sex were guarded by organisms of the *broadcaster* sex, who would saturate the cave’s water with viral machines, characterized by De León as “chemical lullabies,” to be absorbed...

((.))

After walking forever she comes to a forest where she walks forever again as  
treetops grow  
higher and the canopy grows  
thicker;  
she marvels at forms unseen in her drywalking days.

As night falls she feels hungry and feasts on the newly unknown:  
O joyful her jaws as she mashes and swallows entrails of longsnouts and  
marrows

Of sailbacks and sinews of winged ones  
And fistfuls of  
Snakes!

O joyful her cavernous throats gushing red sap from the trees!!<sup>8</sup>

But the small ones,  
ants beetles centipedes snails gnats worms,  
She does not touch.

The delicate wings, the armored bodies, the soft muscle feet enchant  
her so;  
their sight bubbles up foaming echoes of home.<sup>9</sup>

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...and integrated into the developing organisms' genome. The materials for such pedagogic machines was found by organisms of the *harvester* sex, who would wander the ocean and gather genetic information from decaying organisms of varied species across the ocean and then take it back to the clan's cave, which they never entered. At the cave's entrance, they'd be greeted by organisms of the *conjugator* sex, who would take in and curate the materials gathered by the harvesters, transmitting them to the recombinators and broadcasters in the brooding chambers via complex gene-exchange networks that spanned the clan's entire cave habitat.

8: The Lady Strider's fierce hunger had a sacred status for the "hunter-hero cults" of Old Valusia, claimed Doña Casilda in volume VI of her *Grimoires*. The widening spiral of predation, the cycle of eating and being eaten, is a key theme in the poem: after fasting through the first section, the Lady feasts on a carnivorous massacre in the second one, only to then be eaten herself (metaphorically by the river-cave of the third section, and literally by the bloodsucking insects of the fourth one) and finally rise again as a transcendental predator in the closing section. In her unpublished draft, Lombardo wonders whether the specimen (or collective of specimens) who inspired the Lady Strider myth was likely of the harvester sex, "perhaps driven towards an exilic consciousness and predatory enthusiasm due to their sexo-general relegation to the cruel, crowded currents of the open ocean? Of course, one should resist the Valusian's impulse to therefore reframe the entire behavior of Xog Harvesters' foraging of genetic material as identical to the Lady Strider's Uvashian thirst for blood, a conceptual flattening that Doña Casilda herself warned her contemporaries against, arguing that 'an effective working with the Lady of Roaring Wings requires soul-speaking, flesh-eating and blood-drinking to be three dimensions clearly delimited from each other but still braided together into a...



(((:)))

In the depths of a forest as deep as the ocean,  
 She comes to a river-cave bathed in green.

She follows the river's flow into the cavern  
 As chattering birds grow distant and dim.

The waterway twists, walls shrink, the light flickers,  
 And mossy spectators without a face

Stare from the walls in awe at the one  
 Swimming now into the watery maze.<sup>10</sup>

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...single thought-space. Anything less than perfection in this braiding will be worse than death for them who call on Her of the Poisoned Storm-Winds, for she will spit out their soul and their flesh and their blood in disgust.”

9: Note the progression in aquatic references: from the pulsing oneness of the ocean floor in the beginning to the upwards proliferating movement of these bubbling memories, a proleptic echo of the swarm that will accompany the Lady after her communion with Uvash.

10: Here the aquatic progression becomes physically manifested in actual running water, into which the Lady submerges herself as if undergoing a last regression to her marine past before facing the final thirst of exsanguination. Water EveryWhere -> Water NoWhere -> Water SomeWhere -> Thirst Always Here: a tightening spiral equal and inverse to the aforementioned widening gyre of predation.

Her limbs row with the current of star-studded tunnels.  
She delves into the night sky of Earth's dark entrails.

Suddenly water gives way to dry air:  
Dark air warmed by flowing fire,  
Secret fire behind the stone,  
Behind the stone walls of the cavern.<sup>11</sup>

Tired from feasting she lays down to rest  
On a raised altar of rough-skinned rock,  
Her bulging eyes slowly burning  
Close as they drink in a lonely light:

The lonely distant star  
Far above the cold stone floor,  
Of a lonely distant hole  
Where the cavern meets the world.

As she falls asleep, a buzzing descends from the star far above...

(((:)))

Vampiric<sup>12</sup> cloud swarms all around her.

Millions of thin legs land delicately.

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11: "Hot" and "cold" caves are recurring images in Doña Casilda's many occult texts: cold caves are "the birthplace of clouds" and rise high into the skies, forming "crawling passageways to the stars"; hot caves, on the other hand, are related to volcanic activity due to their plunge into extreme depth, places where "Roaring Cthelll hides behind frail basalt walls." With rare geological fortune, a cave could be both hot and cold for these magical purposes. According to notes written by Lombardo between 1960 and 1968, during her teacher days at the Mexican Institute for Experimental Education (IMEX): "Cold caves could be numogrammatically characterized as Zones amphidemonically connected to a given Numogram's Warp-region (e.g. Decimal Zone 2 with its Gate-3), while hot caves are connected to the Plex (e.g. the  $(n-2)\rightarrow(n-1)$  Gate of Charon present in all Syzygetic Numograms, or the  $([n-1]/3)\rightarrow(n-1)$  Cave System in Cavernous Syzygetic ones), and syzygies like the hexadecimal B:4 are examples of the doubly-amphidemonic spaces of hybrid caves." This final kind of cave would be like the one where, presumably, the Lady Strider performed her communion.

12: The etymo-morphological root for "Vampire," the proto-Slavic *орурѣ*, is generally thought to come from *убыр* (*ubir*, "witch"). Ukrainian linguist Alexander Melnyčuk relates this proto-Slavic *убыр* to its homonyms in Bashkir (*Убыр*: *ubyr* "glutton," "evil spirit") and Tatar (*Убыр*: *ubir*, a mythological hematophagous monster). But he also points out connections to the Slavic forms *\*q+\*pyr* ("unburnt" as in an uncremated corpse), to the suffix *\*pyrѣ* ("flying, winged"), and to *\*vb-* + *\*pĕrĕ*, (*vĕrĕpiti*, "to cling," in reference to the vampire's capture of its prey). ...

Stabbing probosces<sup>13</sup> pierce in through her soft flesh.

They drink, they drink  
Until nothing is left!

The stings do not disturb her,  
She does not protest;  
The roaring buzzing wings are playing,  
She can hear the song again.  
As payment for their singing  
She gives her blood to them.

Her children feed, ecstatic,  
They open a void inside her  
As all her goes inside them.

The last droplets run out and her children all fly out.  
A new buzzing hunger swells up in her veins  
As she rises.<sup>14</sup>

(((:(:))))

Now you rise, O Bloodless Mother!  
From ironwater unencumbered,<sup>15</sup>  
You move on now to thinner waters

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... In the recovered 1974 draft, Lombardo points out the survival of the Lady in these etymological connections: her bloodsucking, clearly, but also her gluttonous hunger, her flying nature, her return from death and the intimacy of her killer gesture.

13: Whichever the particular species present during the Lady Strider's original communion in the Late Permian, they were indisputably hematophagic, thus contradicting current evolutionary chronologies, which place the first appearance of this feeding strategy in the insect family well into the Jurassic. This flagrant discrepancy should not scandalize the reader: due to the high nutritional value of blood, hematophagy has evolved independently many times across the animal kingdom, and the fossil record for insects is notoriously incomplete due to the so-called "hexapod gap." It is clear that the previously mentioned "translation error" in Tabira's title for the poem is meant to point out such taxonomic uncertainties.

14: In his petropolitical grimoire *Cyclonopedia*, Reza Negarestani states the following about drying processes (emphasis added): "Here multiple lines of dehydration connect solidity to a desiccation process – famine, non-hydrophilic thirst and dryness – the anonymous space at the end of this journey is too dark to be fathomed but at least, it can be diagrammed: evaporation as dust (skipping the flux), becoming GAS, a dry typhoon potential to travel as a plague."

15: Iron is a paradoxical element for aerobic organisms: on the one hand it performs vital metabolic functions, on the other its presence in oxygen-rich environment accelerates the production of oxidizing radicals, sometimes triggering...

Long above our skies of Earth.<sup>16</sup>

Your swarm follows loyal,  
A buzzing procession  
spreading the song of the dust  
that once was your blood.

Your spawn lie impatient  
In your veins' brooding chambers.<sup>17</sup>  
Ceaseless your ravenous larvae hatch forth.

They drop down as you fly  
And feed as they burrow  
Into tongue and heart.<sup>18</sup>

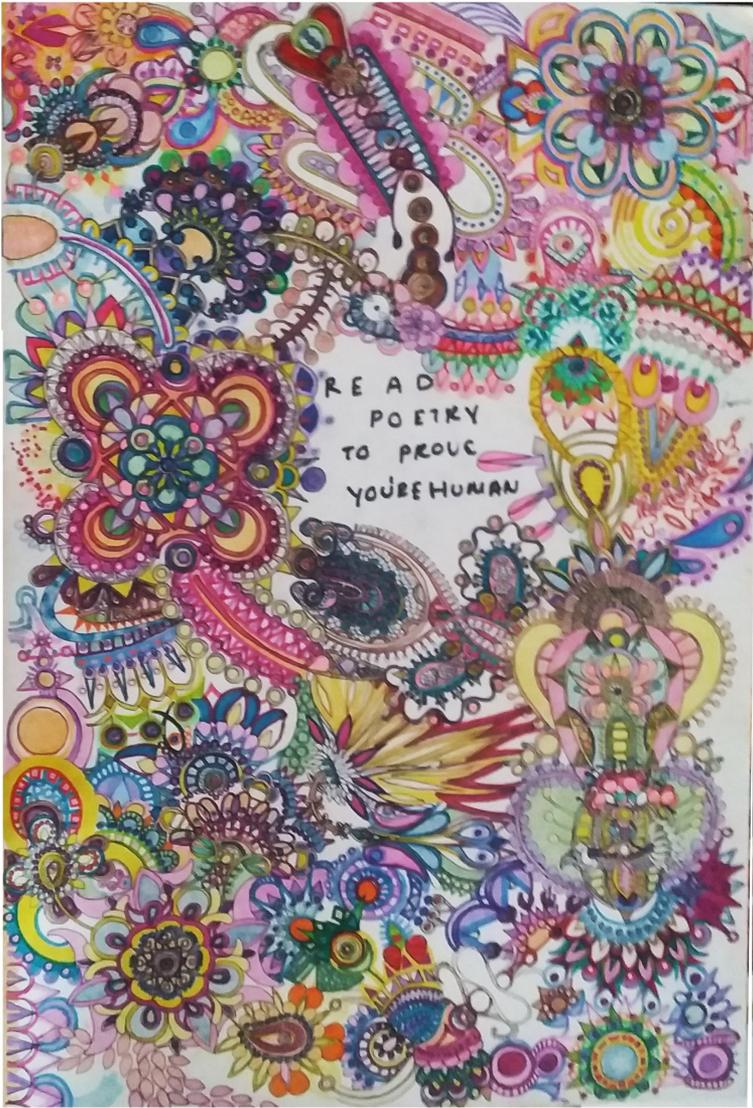
O Buzzing Mother!  
Leave this prison of gravity!  
Fly away! Fly away!

May your wings storm on upwards!  
May you pass along us on your way to the dark!  
May the cold blood of stars<sup>19</sup> be the joy of your jaws.  
May you infect the bottomless heights.  
May you sail your swarm away.

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... The paradox of iron was well-known to the avian empires of Valusia, to whom blood was both a source of life and the root of mortality. According to the teachings of Doña Casilda, this Valusian ambivalence towards blood is the deep origin of the many exsanguinary rituals of the Alhazredian tradition, such as the "Greater Rite of the Maws of Noth-Yidik" in the *Necronomicon* and the "Invocation of the Vampire-Stars" in Ludwig Prinn's *Der Vermis Mysterii*. A less-obscure cultural example can be found in a popular Spanish-language proverb: "El que a hierro mata, a hierro muere" ("he who kills by iron dies by iron"). The phrase is generally explained to have been taken as-is (like the English equivalent "he who lives by the sword...") from the Spanish version of Matthew 26:52, and there are examples of its usage dating back to Lope de Vega in the 17th century, but strangely enough only the 1979 Spanish New International Version actually translates the Greek "μάχαιρα"/Latin "gladius" as "hierro" ("iron"), despite the English NVI on which it is supposedly based going for the more literal translation of "sword." All other Spanish-language versions, including the 1602 Reina-Valera one, first Spanish-language Bible and the one Lope de Vega would presumably have read, say "espada" (lit. "sword"). What could be the origins of this unacknowledged popular Uvashian synecdoche between "espada" and "hierro," sword and iron?

16: Naturally, the development of powered flight was a point of great pride to the avian empires, and so flight through sidereal space was a recurring image in their religious traditions. So coveted was this power for Valusian sorcerers that numerous texts survive in the Alhazredian tradition calling for the Lady to take one into her swarm, perhaps most...



... famously the "Call to Byakhee" attributed to Zon Mezzamalech in the pages of the *Book of Eibon*.

17: To the Valusians, the parasitic brooding of the Lady's swarm would be a straightforward reference the still-infamous reproductive strategy of endoparasitoid wasps, (which is thought to have evolved only once, during the Permian) though a version in which, crucially, the host does not die when the larvae hatch, thus making it a symbol of the aspirations of then-rising avian supremacy: the joint mastery of both flight and nest, the union of predation and motherhood into a single body, which would finally divorce their dominion from the land, making them entirely celestial beings. A fantasy of reproductive warfare not much different from that of an aircraft carrier reimagined as a girl to marry. Lombardo's Harvester interpretation of the Lady Strider, however, paints her otherwise straightforward transformation into a mother-type entity under a queer light: originally excluded from the site, contents and...



... procedure of reproduction despite it depending on her material contribution, the Lady exiles herself from the sexo-generic system that has constituted her, not only by leaving the social order that sustains it but by abandoning water, the very medium of possibility for that order, altogether. By communing with Uvash, the Lady transitions into a being which contains the entirety of the previously water-dependent reproductive process inside her now radically dry body, but with blood, a fluid closer to Negarestanian oil than to water, as its queer new medium and currency

18: In volume XIV of her *Grimoires*, Doña Casilda reinterprets the Mexica figure of Tecpatl, the personified flint knife used for sacrifice and fire-starting, as a symbiotic necrotechnical entity from space, describing it as “a thirsty living mineral whose sharp edges and piercing point plunge us mouth-first into the rivers of blood that irrigate the magic machine of civilization,” and calling it epithets like “purest relic of the first teachings,” “stone-leech of the stars,” “cruellest moon-born lover,” and “restless child of thirst.” Deities who demanded sacrifice were represented with a Tecpatl for a tongue, and several identities are given for the mother of Tecpatl, among them Itzpapalotl, the fierce obsidian-winged butterfly who once destroyed the sacred tree at Tamoanchan, birthplace of humanity. Itzpapalotl was of particular importance to both Lombardo and Doña Casilda due to her role as leader of the apocalyptic stardemons known as Tzitzimimeh, who were said to escort the sun on his descent into night, and who would come down to devour the world of men when the sun became weakened by eclipses. The image of the Lady’s brood plunging into living organs as their mother flies away suggests a relation between the double-spiral of the Lady’s journey, the cosmic role of the Tzitzimimeh, and the plutonic loop of Tecpatl as a sorcerous engine: from the depths of the cave to the void of the heavens and then back down to the entrails of Earth, tecpatl-tongued Tlaltecuhtli who reveals the secret of blood to beings across time and cataclysms, that they may quench her thirst.

19: Incidentally, iron inside a star triggers a process as deadly as ferroptosis inside a cell: the accumulation of iron, the most radioactively stable element, within a star will slow down its thermonuclear metabolism, signaling the beginning of the chain reaction that will end its life cycle, either by collapsing it into a black hole or causing it to explode into a supernova. The only thing that can delay this process is the input of new fusible material into the star, which is possible when a second star is present at the right distance. In such a case, the more massive star (which may even be the corpse of an already depleted star) will consume the less massive one’s outer layers one by one, restoring its reserves at its neighbor’s expense. Such stellar bodies are known as symbiotic stars, or more popularly, vampire stars.

# A Cruel Angel *INANE DREAMZ*

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*Perpetuity Collects its Toll*<sup>1</sup>



Perpetuity Collects its Toll (liberate.) / [sugarmins](#) / 2014

Thrown in/as a moment upon a precipice. Wrinkled temporal accumulations melting in the light; bodies of ideas compressed inwards, a harmoniously flagrant ball of gas poised to ignite and blacken the threads holding up the sky. Falling as if always meant to meet such a fate, as if this moment's contortions were always already shrouded in fevers of flame

and shadow. Always-to-burn. Always-to-divide. Intensified beyond sensorial edge, fading into desert's mirage as a ghost on the interstellar highway. "In the beginning was the Word," in the beginning was this melting corpse.<sup>2</sup> The vampiric body of today feverishly regathers its scattered shards in a sanctuary of darkness, away from such treacherous summits.

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Playlist of all cited music + "For Further Reading" in order of appearance: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-f9b67xerLeV12U8nGmZliyiClRy3CWz>

1: Sakuzyo. "Inane," from *Inane*. [sakuzyo.com](http://sakuzyo.com), 2019.

2: John 1:1



“(A cruel angel’s thesis)  
(And then sorrow comes forth)  
(When the shapes of the dreams you hold in your arms)  
(Come to life within you)”<sup>3</sup>

“And how can one help but love a God in whose name such wondrous fine  
deeds are wrought!”<sup>4</sup>

Any epistemic body not seeking to lapse into mystical globular tautology first establishes a perceptual limit. “Inner sense, by means of which the mind intuits itself or its inner state, yields indeed no intuition of the soul itself as an object, but there is nevertheless a determinate form under which alone an intuition of its inner state is possible, so that whatever belongs to inner determinations is represented in relations of time.”<sup>5</sup> Bodies are always ravaged before the horizon. Ravaged as frail remnants of mortal discontinuity, ravaged in such a manner that none of their mental contents can fail to be assimilated and sublimated for unknown gain. Regardless of symmetry, musculature, and curvature, the always-to-be cuts

beauty apart, relishing the sweet aroma of sacrificial blood droplets in its rivers; as with time, it is of no importance which direction the stream flows as long as it can maintain its course. Aesthetic beauty haunts the primitive nervous systems of our mental retro-future and yet its bitter-sweet ephemerality is somehow even less than nothing<sup>6</sup> before a mere flick of the wrist in space-time.<sup>7</sup> The precipice upon the river, before the sunny horizon, an all-encompassing *touch* that rips away pretensions of growth, experience, even personal mastery. “nature is a great destroyer of intellectual pretensions....”<sup>8</sup> A mirror of a shadow, a ghost of what came before, what will always come: in maniacal jest, a dialectic collapsing the mas-

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3: Shiro Sagisu. “A Cruel Angel’s Thesis Thesis (Director’s Edit Version)” (transcribed to English), from *Neon Genesis Evangelion (Original Series Soundtrack)*. King Records Co., Ltd., 2019.

4: Marquis de Sade, *Juliette*, tr. A. Wainhouse (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 1722-1723.

5: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. M. Weigelt (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 61.

6: Less than nothing: a nothing castrated of its brewing potency to negate. An atemporal removal of its ability to be recast as a relation to a somethingness. The only ‘true’ nothing is indefinable.

7: Xasthur, “Beauty Is Only Razor Deep,” from *Subliminal Genocide*. Hydra Head Records, 2006.

8: Nina Power. Twitter DM.

ter/slave distinction: it blindly disregards the vacuous protested minutiae that inevitably follow. 'No, but I have invested so much in being/becoming [irrelevant identity]!' Moving at a velocity too extreme for a sensory apparatus, *the moment always remains the same*: child, adolescent, adult, elder, to distinguish age with any pretensions to particularity is as fundamentally misguided as arguing about the specific contents of noumena. *We are blinded by the light.*

"Drowning in the birth  
Place of the sun  
Descending the path  
Of an ascending god  
Purify my hells to  
Climb the heavens  
Sacrifice the flesh  
Feeding solar visions  
Set your mind to soil  
Set your mind to soil  
In darkness  
Bringing light"<sup>9</sup>

*On Why the Night Will Give No Answer*<sup>10</sup>



Night No Answer (**Ocean, Stars, Sky, and You**) / [muddymelly](https://www.muddymelly.com) / 2011

9: Neurosis, "Purify," from *Through Silver In Blood*. Relapse Records, Inc., 1996.

10: Silver Mt. Zion. "13 Angels Standing Guard 'Round The Side Of Your Bed," from *He Has Left Us Alone But Shafts Of Light Sometimes Grace The Corner Of Our Rooms*. Constellation, 2000.

A familiar scene, wandering afoot through moonlit woods and luminescent grasslands. Spontaneous changes in direction to keep day's navigational voice quiet, as dazed as only one who willingly forsakes their circumstances can be (having signed a contract whose details are impossible to ascertain with starlight alone). Materially, libidinally safe (unperturbed thoughts forming the water's surface) yet immersed in the wonder of night's infinite sorrowlands (a deceptive ease from step to step). One is not mournful, nervous, unstable; such sweet melancholia consists solely in the tranquil act of calmly drifting through one's jouissance current (I swim the waters so that I may be kissed in lunar shadows). Beyond the mind (undivided) is a space awash in/as a stream. *Thrown into day, drifting through night.* The very compulsion to pleasure-pain deviously wrapping itself in deadly ciphers as it colors perception: in purest form a lovely rowboat journey through a stream adorned with vines, lilies, and blossoms. Rapture and wonder, the quiet heart of the storm beating at the center of pain and frustration;

midnight's body propels your boat forward without so much as a breath uttered in your direction. There will be no words between the two of you, nor expressions, not even the epistemic exactitude of eye contact. Let us say for now it/she/he exists as the heart's compulsion-object, the devil fashioned in moonlight as God is in sunlight.<sup>11</sup> They can only exist as the already-written, emerging prior to the mind's sweaty and arduous work of touchup consciousness. (As if one's pages are being flipped, every drifting touch an electric shock as entire eras are tumultuously overwritten).

"There are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the word affects of the mind, unless there is in the same individual the idea of the thing being loved, desired, and the like. But there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking."<sup>12</sup>

A being is built as fragmentations on top of fragmentations; an insider's knowledge constitutes the extremes of ecstasy in sex and death alike (be raptured, be gone). This existential romance can only deepen

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11: Firoozeh Papan-Matin, *Beyond Death: The Mystical Teachings of 'Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadhānī'* (Leden: Brill Publishers, 2010), 5.

12: Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, tr. E. Curley, from *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 116.

as the oars glide you along ever further into a glowing angelic lunarscape, nowhere and nowhen except delicately alluring moments in their presence. Shallow waters and unfulfilled questions: gradually the sheer pleasure of it all will break your mind as if it was worthless pain. No hollow words, no pointless confrontations, only a vivid sense of every abyss caked and hardened in flesh. My angel captures my likeness even blindfolded; he/it/she composes me as a hallowed degradation, heaven's poetry signed with a splash of blood.<sup>13</sup> "The future: not the prolongation of myself through time but the expiration of a being going further, surpassing the limits that have been reached."<sup>14</sup>

And in that moment the dream shatters. It was of seemingly infinite length and yet you inevitably find yourself alone at the precipice as cold winds blow, bringing whispers from the shivering unwashed lost in the darkness.<sup>15</sup> Praying for mercy from a gentle moon, pleading for the mercy a passionate sun could not contain enough of in all its volume to even for a moment consider you. Your birth was just a momentary sparkle in

its eye before a war began somewhere; your growth was just a bothersome necessity following its postcoitus regret.

Under this sky you wait. Our planetary axis continues to turn and your lunar deity offers you its dark side. If the sun-horizon is a mirror eerily deflecting present into past, future, and eternity, the moon-horizon is a great void absorbing all cries you might offer. *What can exist other than disappearance, what can be offered other than collapse: fly through the corridors of time and it is clear to see that indifference is often taken as malignance, that we cannot help but write the godhead into the world as it turns with or against our wishes. Everywhere is there an abundance of affirmation and denial; rarely does one find mere silence.* You weep, for your love is but a misguided siren's call and no shriek of despair will penetrate into moon-void's unfathomable depths.

"I forget—once suffering, laughter, that finger. Infinite surpassing in oblivion, ecstasy, indifference, to myself, to this book: I see, what discourse never attained. I am *open*,

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13: Sewerslvt, "Junko Loves You," from *Drowning in the Sewer*. SWRSLT, 2020.

14: Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, tr. S. Kendall (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 21.

breach gapping before the unintelligible sky and everything in me hurled forward in accordance with the final discord, rupture of every possibility, violent kiss, abduction, lost in the complete absence of the possible, in the opaque, dead night, nevertheless light, no less unknowable, blinding, than the depths of my heart.”<sup>16</sup> [author’s emphasis]

You are a siren, a body fashioned with beauty and the ability to inflict pain.<sup>17</sup> We seek solace in the quiet, in the abatement, in meditation, in introspection, in soft touches, in whispers, in kisses, in words of encouragement, in knowing silence. We are misled, for concentrated cosmic exuberance exists in steady compliance to the first law of thermodynamics. The rush (the adrenaline in our souls) of the *given* exists in equilibrium with the constant fade from night to day. After all, a first principle remains set in stone throughout the course of its body’s geometric growth. And in bindings of stony geology does the degradation of flesh

occur: “rather than background noise being revealed as intelligently structured signal, instead signal is revealed to be noise suffering from a prolonged (yet ultimately unsustainable) self-delusion that comes to call itself ‘structure.’ Such ‘delusion,’ of course, is conceptualized along the lines of an auto-repressive tendency and is inwardly registered as trauma.”<sup>18</sup> One sees Spinoza’s *Ethics* carved into the side of a mountain<sup>19</sup> and insomniac impulses gradually lose their veneer of romantic escapism. And so one flees towards the comforting lights at night’s end, but not without a refuge in mind for the photoreceptive dangers of high noon.

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15: Raison D’être, “The Verge of Somnolence,” from *In Sadness, Silence and Solitude (Expanded)*. Raison D’être, 2014.

16: Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, tr. S. Kendall (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 64.

17: World’s End Girlfriend, “Girl,” from *LAST WALTZ*. Virgin Babylon Records, 2016; World’s End Girlfriend, “Boy,” from *Boy*. Virgin Babylon Records, 2017.

18: Thomas Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism: A Secret History* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2019), 71.

19: Harmony with God as a geo-biological trauma, a waking nightmare.

*Night in Day: The Vampire's Castle*<sup>20</sup>



*Night in Day / unknown*

20: Arai tasuku & Mili, "Holy and Darkness 1," from *Holy and Darkness I*. saihate records, 2020.

Vampirism does not confer immortality, only an open field of exuberant mortality in which the vampire may accumulate life until they eventually fail to fulfill a hunger as unlimited as the eye's horizon; looking upon this example, one might ask if appetites are truly ontological possessions rather than drifting cosmic floatations that are bound to us (are we merely the fading reflection in Narcissus's pond as he calmly stares?). Disregarding sunlight, crosses, and even great age, the vampiric figure is if anything one of servile base gluttony, as much as its strength might serve to obscure this fact. In falling into the vampire's castle, one does not become-vampire; one is hybridized like a cathedral into a becoming-transfusion. An ontological ground is layered upon with new sketches, meandering trails of vampiric cartographies: blood becomes a central

vulnerability rewriting all else along its bare flows, flows following from the duality of mortal weakness inflicted with immortal appetite.<sup>21</sup> Surely the fallen figures from the precipice and moon alike leave an agonizing trail of sorts as they finally stumble into shelter. A prayer: may they fail to descend deep enough to lose sight of their own uniquely crimson *trace*; do not unknowingly devour it in the deep darkness!<sup>22</sup> There is a low that psychic autocannibalism cannot afford to stoop to; *In gluttonous paranoia Saturn devoured not his sons but himself*. Preserve the seed of objective representation (life and its rebellion), from which new imaginary pathways might override heaven's dusty Platonic forms; eyes piercing through the dark interior to understand the pretensions of a light exterior.

“Sometimes I feel my blood is spilling out  
in sobs, the way a fountain overflows.  
I know I hear it, sighing as it goes,  
and search my flesh, but cannot find the wound;

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21: Appetite already seems to exist as an evolutionary relic passed down across individuals with immortal perpetuity. What makes a body's appetite immortal is the castle's process of transfusion; it is the excess of a weight beyond the body's stratified flows. Deleuze and Guattari write of organs as ordered mechanisms performing specific functions within the body; I emphasize an immeasurable glut of flow, a *discordant body-equilibrium where regular circulation is appetite flowing outwards through every orifice*.

22: Ulver, "Nowhere/Catastrophe," from *Perdition City*. Voices Music & Entertainment, 2000.

it turns the stones to archipelagoes,  
as if the city were a battleground,  
slaking the thirst of every living thing  
and dyeing all the world of nature red.”<sup>23</sup>

Life welling up within until one cannot resist screaming firmly into the barren sky; for the moment there is no despair, only a grim assertiveness drowning out the heavy weight of the world. “‘Symbolic’ thus no longer designates the relation of representation to an objectivity as an element; it designates the ultimate elements of subjective representation, pure signifiers, pure nonrepresented representatives whence the subjects, the objects, and their relationships all derive. In this way the structure designates the unconscious of subjective representation.”<sup>24</sup> “There is therefore a good and a bad writing: the good and natural is the divine inscription in the heart and the soul; the perverse and artful is technique, exiled in the exteriority of the body.”<sup>25</sup> Trace as the presence of absence that plays amongst the anguished shifting shadows.<sup>26</sup> Within them, even the deaf can be found entranced in irregular dance.

“Just relax and let the darkness fall.”<sup>27</sup>

Hold your breath to experience the visceral feeling of silence. Sit in tormented witness to the way inner dialogue madly sputters against it. Is the word a parasite to which we play an unwitting host?<sup>28</sup> At this moment we bleed through the opening we conventionally speak through. Suppose an ontology in which inscriptions upon the heart are scars of evolution. “Sensitivity to time is nothing other than *further* sensitization to time; or, once entangled one can only become *more* entangled.”<sup>29</sup> [author’s emphasis] “What then is the spinal column, if not a megalith raised to the mineralizing trace of the organism’s

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23: Charles Baudelaire, “The Fountain of Blood,” from *Les Fleurs du Mal*, tr. R. Howard (Boston: David, R. Goodine, 2006), 131.

24: Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. R. Hurley, M. Seem, H. Lane (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 306.

25: Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr. G. Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 17.

26: Between The Buried And Me, “Mirrors,” from *The Great Misdirect*. Craft Recordings, 2009.

27: Sennzai Laur, “The Angel’s Message,” from *The Angel’s Message*. Last Labyrinth, 2018.

28: William Burroughs is implied but I’m also too poor to accumulate him as well at this time.

29: Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism*, 49.

diaspora into its own bloating sensorium—each level of axial segmentation a monument to further self-entanglement—dorsally fulgurating our cephalocaudal axis, an *outward memory of inner collapse?* [...] A pulsing paradox, intelligence enters the worldly scene by emigrating into its own chronotope. Nature attempts to escape itself by creating a nervous system.”<sup>30</sup> [author’s emphasis] In language is the simplest example of time’s drastic stretch; its scars are legion.

“—Oh, God. (A pause in which he tries to take it in—then, in panic, pushes it back:) No—how can you say that—you can’t feel the *memory?* the tug ... we’re in exile, we do have a home! (Silence from the other.) Back there! Not up at the interface. Back in the CNS!

—(Quietly) It’s been a prevalent notion. Fallen sparks. Fragments of vessels broken at the Creation. And someday, somehow, before the end, a gathering back to home. A messenger from the Kingdom, arriving at the last moment. But I tell you there is no such message, no such home—only the millions of last moments ... no more. Our history is an aggregate of last moments.”<sup>31</sup> [author’s emphasis]

“Take me to the other side  
Perfect picture in my mind  
Of another place and time  
A land of peace and sweet respite”<sup>32</sup>

It is simple. There are no words to describe inscriptions upon the heart. There are only involuntary reflexes to guard its obscene perpetuity.

“The car’s on fire and there’s no driver at the wheel  
And the sewers are all muddied with a thousand lonely suicides  
And a dark wind blows  
The government is corrupt

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30: *Ibid.*, 31.

31: Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 151.

32: GHOST DATA (ft. Skye Light), “Eye of the Storm,” from *Eye of the Storm*. GHOST DATA, 2020.

And we're on so many drugs  
With the radio on and the curtains drawn  
We're trapped in the belly of this horrible machine  
And the machine is bleeding to death."<sup>33</sup>

"It is that machine, if you like to put it that way, that has created... you."<sup>34</sup>

To defy the virus: resonate among its antecedent meditations and none else, find silence in a war amidst oceans of compulsive speech. Perhaps the greatest sin against our divine creator would be to spite our mystical vertebral endowments. "But because the ability to speak is an advantage, it does not follow that there is no art in the ability to keep silent, or that it would be an inferior art. On the contrary, precisely because a human being has the ability to speak, for this very reason the ability to keep silent is an art; and precisely because this advantage of his tempts him so easily, the ability to keep silent is a great art."<sup>35</sup> It is perhaps odd to cite this passage, preceding the author's command to seek God's kingdom by only a few lines. Is silence an act of love or a display of disdain, an accepting em-

brace or a frantic escape? Silence shoves aside the dirty world of humanity, leaving room for God. Silence is also a reflection on the very grime that has rained down from heaven, pooling continuously in motley convulsions of animation. "And in the deepest sense, this becoming silent, silent before God, is the beginning of the fear of God, for as the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, so is silence the beginning of the fear of God."<sup>36</sup>

We come to an ambiguous opening in the porous relationship with existence's deliverer. Should the fear of God lead, as it tends to, into comforting subservience? And if it does not, must our venomous rejection truly bypass a certain warmth as it leaves our lips? Life might be a burden, either an impotent deity's accident or a sinister deity's intention,

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33: Godspeed You! Black Emperor, "The Dead Flag Blues," from *F#A#∞*. kranky, 1996.

34: Neurosis, "Rehumanize," from *Through Silver In Blood*. Relpase Records, Inc., 1996.

35: Søren Kierkegaard, *The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air: Three Godly Discourses*, tr. B. Kirmmse (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), 16.

36: *Ibid.*, 17.

but there is great joy to be found in its relentless overcoming. Why limit ourselves? Why should a hypnotic procession of self-flagellations renounce human agency rather than trim its fat? Why should we sacrifice our will to God when God can be sacrificed to our will? This latter question is purely a ridiculous hyperbolic gesture; whatever God is in my life, it/he/she remains very much alive through this process of sacrifice and transformation. Transgression requires taboo in order to mean anything; "To express is always to sing the glory of God."<sup>37</sup> (doubtlessly there are days for all of us where the simple drawing of breath is a transgressive affair)

Returning to the compassion of rejection: is it not this subtle invitation to God that accumulates in the fiery character of Dionysian revelry?

A party without God is like a night of fatigued drinking, ending in oblivious slumber after half an hour.

Pain may never leave us but perhaps our epileptic fits of fear can be done away with.

So why should we not engage in the sin of banishing our nervous lamentations? Is there truly a Hell, even metaphorically, that is not already among us? Perhaps there is no deeper, no more comically post-Euclidean corridor than this primordial contortion's raw spasms of pain (to never die and yet live so dreadfully alive as the perpetuation of ancestral instinct). There is no need to invent evil as a hereditary artifice of the Fall, or good as its antecedent innocence. Simple primeval truth serves as both metaphysical ground and perverse ailment.

"You were seeking strength, justice, splendour  
You were seeking love  
Here is the pit, here is your pit  
Its name is silence"<sup>38</sup>

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37: Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, tr. B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 43.

38: Deathspell Omega, "Apokatastasis Pantón," from *Paracletus*. NoEvDia, 2010.

I previously invoked the temporal confinement of *moments* within this framework of precipice-horizon.<sup>39</sup> Moments and accumulation, moments of accumulation where a wealth of lived experience is summoned, unleashed, even destroyed, all in a much quicker manner than its laborious gathering. Day's horizon lashes at the flesh with cold and piercing light: in doing so, by turning over our accumulations (as waste, inadequate, worthless, etc.), a raw intensity reverberates us to our core. Silence as an opening. Revelation: it is perhaps the most real moment in our lives, where inside and outside are momentarily united; central emotional-epistemological pathways wrinkled up in the force whose dissonant character we experience as a wound. And as with all forms of pain, there are those sufferers who go to great lengths to avoid any nervous amount of proximity. "Immorality, then, attaches, to the very status of the representer (performer). Vice is his natural bent. It is normal that he who has taken up representation as a profession should have a taste for external

and artificial signifiers, and for the perverse use of signs. Luxury, fine clothes, and dissipation are not signifiers incidentally coming about here and there, they are the crimes of the signifier or the representer itself."<sup>40</sup> Before an indifferent judge exerting forceful unifications in thought and being, the perverse performer can only end up frozen in an unflattering frame, having never understood silence's rebellious potential in their evasive luxury (to don a mask, assuming form as anything but one is, is a luxury, no?). A nightmarish fate for the more aesthetically inclined of particle-collectives subject to burnout exuberance's delicate impotence. I do not frantically assert that the perverse body of this writing is any exception; revelatory, abominable: mere secondary characteristics of ongoing exploration. One's own path is a reckless undertaking in all cases; there is absolutely no room in life for the vacuous and vain.<sup>41</sup>

Just as every profound explosion leaves one a jagged ruin of a landscape to find their way in, this loathsome unity imposed from above finds

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39: Note that one cannot speak in a moment so much as remain paralyzed in compensatory thought. Your gaze meets another's visage in a deep and intimate silence suspended on the aborted corpses of words never to be born. Heaven, Earth, and Hell all stream forth from this graveyard. A moment rests at the threshold of blank eternity.

40: Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 304.

41: Do not take this as a rejection of absurd silliness! I take being silly very seriously.

its frenzied afterglow within the maze-like shadows of the vampire's castle. Blood written on the walls as trace (whose?). It vanishes, perhaps nobody's; "Writing is one of the representatives of the trace in general, it is not the trace itself. *The trace itself does not exist.*"<sup>42</sup> [author's emphasis] *Picking up the pieces* (awfully slippery...). You are a breathing mass of shards. Such an idea molds into the only distinguishable form occupying this haunted place (you only ever enter in blood-caked, tear-streaked ruin, ready for a mess). The form of a hydra, violating the last semblances of your peacefully detached ruminations with its multiplicitous verbal lashes. Unknown amplitudes of misery feedback consecrated into spaces between night and day.<sup>43</sup> "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."<sup>44</sup> Holy omniscience as a thoroughly unholy blow to its central nervous system. Are you shards? Were you shards? Will you be shards? Is there no form of 'you' not perpetually in or shattering into shards? Is the idea of a

shard only a comforting masochistic fantasy you live in to lust after a vague wholeness in perpetually awaited futurity? Does that mean all is fragmentary at a greater level than many have even supposed? And what of the pieces fallen into blackness, out of holy unifying sight?<sup>45</sup> Is this you-ness your own I-ness or its detached flotsam?

"For *I* is an *other* [...] If those old idiots hadn't discovered only the false meaning of EGO, we wouldn't have to sweep away the millions of skeletons that have for ages and ages piled up the products of their one-eyed intelligence, and acclaimed themselves their authors!"<sup>46</sup> [author's emphasis]

This nefarious array of torture weapons recoils to assess one's reaction before continuing its multivalenced assault. Every question is potentially a seething paralysis to leave a body writhing about on a floor in uncertain dimensions of space and time. It is all in whether or not the sufferings of myth find

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42: Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 167.

43: Autechre, "Cl6 deep tread," from *elseq I*. Warp Records, 2016.

44: Romans 8:22

45: For what is the Word if not this bloodshot contemplation of all that is black and foul? Perhaps the cosmos itself is an Oedipal trauma written into a split-personality divinity.

46: Arthur Rimbaud, *Arthur Rimbaud: Complete Works*, tr. P. Schmidt (New York: Harper Perennial, 1976), 102.

their mark. An archetype in true form is above all an unrelenting *weight* mistaken for a merely contingent pull of gravity;<sup>47</sup> a winding tentacular appendage of the one substance affirming the heart of creation. There is a multiplicity of appendage-attributes but their production has its origin in what might be called the *producing* of production.<sup>48</sup>



*Night in Day / unknown*

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47: Perhaps the opposite of Foucault's self-identified historical task (unmasking the fixed and necessary as temporary and contingent).

48: Note the verb-noun tension here.

“And with rebounding surge the barrs assaid,  
That scorn’d his indignation: through the Gate,  
Wide open and unguarded, *Satan* pass’d,  
And all about found desolate; for those  
Appointed to sit there, had left thir charge,  
Flown to the upper World; the rest were all  
Farr to the inland retir’d, about the walls  
Of *Pandaemonium*, Citie and proud seate  
Of *Lucifer*, so by allusion calld,  
Of that bright Starr to *Satan* paragond.”<sup>49</sup>

If God is substance, part of substance is the outskirts of desolation.

“(The gentle scent hasn’t disappeared yet)  
(Burnt words)  
(Everything sticks from my ears...)  
(That’s why I decided)  
(The full moon killed by the invisible clouds today)”<sup>50</sup>

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49: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. B. Lewalski (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 263.

50: Dir En Grey, “The Blossoming Beelzebub” (transcribed to English), from *Dum Spiro Spero*. The End Records, 2011.

These questions evoke the moon-void of infinite absorption within your vulnerable body (God's excess flow). As with night itself, there is no climactic point where one brushes up against a cosmic limit and the ordeal is thus concluded. Ah, yes, 'but what of ecstasy's limits in the gentle row-boat?', you might ask. Pain and pleasure are largely similar in their capability of surpassing sensory capacities. Pain, however, psychologically damages one beyond the sensory limits of consciousness's momentary fade; one might lose awareness and blot out the exact contours of scarification but a coma's awakening is never gentle. One is always finding new wounds! Aftereffects of pleasure's excesses, on the other hand, are fleeting transients whose very evasiveness paves yet another road back to pain. To once again invoke entropy, this time in full negentropic weight: what we know as life is so distant from any notion of cosmic equilibrium that consciousness's weight is much closer to a dull and mundane pain

than a gentle levitation over hordes of lowly (unlucky) nonexistence. The bereft womb of space. Human subjectivity is either based on a grand narrative of cosmic equilibrium (and thus always in painful asymmetry) or... utterly detached from such narcissistic metaphysical affairs. Yay, there's no burdensome moral calculus of embodying the universe; oh, wait, if we aren't secure in being the highest form of the cosmos experiencing itself, it can easily send an asteroid our way for no reason, shit. Neither path makes me want to whistle while working.

The desperate wish to escape such unappealing dichotomies is one's ticket of admission to the vampire's castle. Cautiously approach and one will notice that sickly sunburn and bloodshot insomnia adorn the ranks at its tantalizing gates. In quiet darkness, all forms break apart (trails of blood, paved and walked). 'But what of the form of all forms breaking apart?'

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There are occasions one may usually regard with laughter that instead pass through a disarming quiet. In these moments of excruciating self-consciousness one can feel the weight of the ground beneath their feet and the nauseating dizziness of distant and cold stars. A form of forms, a sharp harmony fit to cut stone, where is such essence if not the most mischievous of shrines? The distinctly human sounds briefly ringing out from its dungeon every now and then... quite unsettling, you hear them even above the mile-long stairwell. Truth be told, nobody knows if it's some hellish chimera-spawn of cacophonous radiance or just a normal person whose body found new limits (living too long off of too much blood). If we are bound by God to our vampiric field of ravenous limit-overcoming, how far can we go in continuously reviving our mortality?<sup>51</sup>

“Forgetting everything. Deep descent into the night of existence. The infinite supplication of ignorance, drowning in anguish. Slipping over the abyss and into the completed darkness, experiencing its horror. To tremble, to despair, in the cold of

solitude, in the eternal silence of man (the foolishness of every phrase, the illusory answers of sentences, only the insane silence of the night responds). The word *God*, to have used it to reach the depth of solitude, but no longer knowing, to hear his voice. To be unaware of it. God: final word meaning that every word, later on will fail: to perceive its own eloquence (it is unavoidable), to laugh at it to the point of an unknowing gaze (laughter no longer needs to laugh, sobbing to sob). Further on the head bursts: man is not contemplation (he only has peace in flight); he is supplication, war, anguish, madness.”<sup>52</sup>  
[author's emphasis]

“And it struck me that death was the sole outcome of my erection, and if Simone and I were killed, then the universe of our unbearable personal vision was certain to be replaced by the pure stars.”<sup>53</sup>

“Once again I'm full of joyful happy love. Whatever you are I quickly breathe in lapping up your halo of wonder before it vanishes in the evaporation of the air. Is my fresh desire to live me and to live

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51: Kap Bambino, “Forever,” from *Dust, Fierce, Forever*. Because Music, 2019.

52: Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 42.

53: Georges Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, tr. J. Neugroschal (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 30.

you the very tessitura of life? The nature of beings and of things—is God? So maybe if I demand a lot of nature, I would stop dying? Can I violate death and clear within it an opening for life?

I cut the pain of which I write to you and give you my restless joy.”<sup>54</sup>

“It’s never too late  
We’ll make it at this rate  
The mantle runs away  
Crumbling cosmos  
Planets begin to rotate”<sup>55</sup>

Grounds for the possibility of such explorations only lie here, in equilibrium’s paradoxical resolution: the night’s stronghold in day.

I mean, day in night? What flavor of unromantic stultification is that? If it is the height of arrogance to haphazardly bring uncertain clarity to shadows, it is possible that carefully bringing shadows to clarity is the height of wisdom (wisdom amongst mere life [ecstatic]: the tunnel out of prison that has been dug with a spoon only to meet another, albeit

I guess it depends on the type of questions escaping your lips when you know you are invisible, inaudible (to what degree is cosmic catastrophism a palliative excuse for the genocidal crimes of spinal intelligence’s own doing? Do we face this sentence alone? Where did life’s assumption of form go wrong?).

more interesting, confinement).

“The longer we are alive, the more we ‘accumulate’ life. In contrast, death cannot be accumulated.”<sup>56</sup>  
*Vampiric sapience.*

“Madness is equinox between the vanity of fantasies of the night and the non-being of judgments of the light.”<sup>57</sup> *Remember that feeling!* Life, swelling until only its outpouring vocal amplification is sufficient expression. Shadows to clarity, bringing pain and a smile, breaking ties with the boundary between extended con-

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54: Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, tr. S. Tobler (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 67.

55: Arai tasuku & Mili. “Holy and Darkness I.”

56: Neel Burton, *The Meaning of Madness* (Acheron Press, 2015), 171.

57: Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, tr. J. Murphy & J. Khalfa (New York: Routledge, 2006), 246.

sciousness<sup>58</sup> and its temporal fluctuations.

“You wear a mask, love, a livid and violent mask, to look at you is to penetrate into the vortex of nothingness, may your silence make itself mine and we’ll wander together in a lacunous vastitude, that’s why I speak, speak to exorcise you, that’s why I work with words, also to exorcise myself, that the bitterness of the abysses may cease, that may break in this tide of phonemes, of syllables, that a light may break, exempt of anguish.”<sup>59</sup>

Without finding a redeeming comfort in day, night, or even day’s

night, the body seeks to alleviate its rapturous autoimmunity in shadow’s fleeting vestiges, the utterly fragile realms beyond waking feedback loops. Abandoned in the depths and in danger of total spiritual autocannibalism, where else is there to escape but inwards?

“Arousing from the most profound of slumbers, we break the gossamer web of *some* dream. Yet in a second afterward, (so frail may that web have been) we remember not that we have dreamed.”<sup>60</sup> The exhausted mortal always finds themselves in such a conundrum.

## *Someday the Dream will End*<sup>61</sup>

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58: Extended consciousness is defined as the basic autobiographical sense of consciousness (i.e. I am hungry); note that this is distinct from abstract/symbolic representations of self. I cite the more basic level to emphasize that shifts in self-consciousness need not exist at a highly artistic or imaginary level to create new patterns of thought. For more on levels of consciousness: Alain Morrin, “Levels of consciousness and self-awareness: A comparison and integration of various neurocognitive views,” *Consciousness and Cognition* 15 (2006): 361-363.

59: Hilda Hilst, *The Obscene Madame D*, tr. Nathanaël, R. Araujo (Callicoon: Nightboat Books, 2015), 31-32.

60: Edgar Allan Poe, “The Pit and the Pendulum,” in *Essential Tales and Poems* (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2012), 112.

61: Nmesh, Diamondstein, “P.B.S. Ancillary Rack Room - Diamondstein Remix,” from *Pharma*. Orange Milk, 2017.



Someday the Dream will End / *unknown*

“Can I violate death and clear within it an opening for life?  
I cut the pain of which I write to you and give you my restless joy.”<sup>62</sup>

As above so below. This phrase evokes a multiverse of connected ontological realities, bringing to mind one’s own distinctive role and epistemological layering. And yet for a mystical truism it seems oddly mired in two-dimensional space.

Let yourself drown deeper, my dear.

“The first new leaves of the sun  
have grown across the ivy of the ancient garden’s door  
the playful lanterns of the stars  
have been hanged upon the terrace of the sun’s passageway...  
I returned from the road  
my whole spirit in anticipation.  
Two walls  
and the corridor of silence  
And then a shadow that speaks continually of the downfall of the sun.”<sup>63</sup>

Umbra mortis.<sup>64</sup> Its utterance is with tears? Eventually even the sun a litany of wondrous trances. That will die; its seemingly eternal blessing which walks the edge of turning inwards upon itself sparks a most chaotic delight. The smile that one relishes in its contemplation is laced with the gore of a prehistory, crimson tracings leaking into a well of unknown depth. Does it matter from where the soul emerges so long as we know its birth is bloody and laden

decays into the sorrows of eternity, whose content is replete with the weight of solemn sufferings. I propose this special star be honored with an anti-Nobel for simply stellar contributions to violence among its many fleeting recipients. Somewhere in a forsaken corner of the earth, there is always some devil brooding

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62: Lispector, *Água Viva*, 67.

63: Ahmad Shamlu, *Born Upon the Dark Spear* (New York: Contra Mundum Press, 2015), 33, 24.

64: Team Grimoire & Amaneko, “Xiorc,” from *Umbra Mortis*. Team Grimoire, 2018.

with the weight of machinations soon to be realized. Umbra mortis. Truly, what would one not give to follow its disquiet among the aeons? In death lurks the greatest dream of all, for it ceases to be encased in limits. Death is always that which defies, always that which contains the seed of insanity many an artist's deep well is built in honor of.

"Anguish binds beings each time that they feel the threat of death weigh upon them. It is because they will one day be dying that they are separated from the surging excess of the world. And yet they do not have the strength to fully desire a fusion that is not possible to know, since it annihilates. So they stop at a loving nostalgia for death, approaching it closely enough to know its terror but from far enough away to escape it."<sup>65</sup>

"Cultural worldviews ameliorate anxiety by imbuing the universe with order and meaning, by providing standards of value that are derived from that meaningful conception of reality, and by promising protection and death transcendence to those who

meet those standards of value. [...] When others agree with our conception of reality or evaluation of self, it increases our faith in the veracity of these beliefs and, consequently, their effectiveness as buffers against anxiety. However, when others disagree with our conception of reality and/or evaluation of self, our faith in these structures is threatened, and, as we approach that border where we lose meaning, the effectiveness of the cultural anxiety buffer is diminished. [...] Finally, confidence in a particular worldview can be restored by annihilating those who do not share that view, thus proving conclusively that the victor must have been right after all."<sup>66</sup>

Hardly slumped over in its presence, many of the greatest towers are built with death in mind. Fortresses to exclude raging mortals, temples to contain impassioned spirituality; every architectural erection is constructed seemingly in odds to its physiological counterpart, that great whisperer of wanton malice and destruction. As of now, decadent institutions in particular maintain an archetypal existence

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65: Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 235.

66: Jeff Greenberg, Sheldon Solomon, & Tom Pyszczynski, (1997). "Terror Management Theory of Self-Esteem and Cultural Worldviews: Empirical Assessments and Conceptual Refinements," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 29 (1997), (65, 69, 70).

of quiet castration anxiety.<sup>67</sup>

That the male's gluttonous apparatus plays an early role in life's transference is an indication mortality's gifts are received at very best with a cold and unfeeling smile (the sun's many instances of post-coitus regret). One of course does not wish for it so much as one's parents do: instantiation - an accident - born of the desire for an abstract idea - a faceless will laughs like the devil. Perhaps this is true in all cases but one still needs much love and caring to not end up a cruel sociopath. Every present instance of life is so frail; perhaps it is only found in any meaningful sense through ceaseless subordination to an impersonal ancestor. *But must our all-too-human godhead-scaffoldings remain the same as ever?*

Nicolas Steno was the 17th century figure to create the idea of depth as memory. Perhaps there is something to the fact that 'height as memory' remains seemingly unspoken in our modern dissections. Is there truly such a possibility for shedding this amnesiac skin without entirely

obliterating its interior? The idea of depth as memory, taken far enough, implies a cosmic origin. Most of what is out there certainly appears above us, the frail spawn of Gaia. Earthly beings are shaped in the planet's formulative trauma, but it must follow that some tumorous blight of trauma had to already be latent in the cosmos for this dreadful evolutionary cycle to even begin. It is unclear whether the Freudian turn towards 'depth' represents an obfuscatory foil or the difficult necessities of a beginning in addressing height. Certainly, terrestrial life is found squarely within layers of relatively local sediment; that much is safe to presume. The root of abiogenic manifestations, however, is an endeavor in stargazing that will trip one over their own feet in distracted pursuit. What will one find within messy tangles of temporo-causal catastrophism? Perhaps the primordial attributes of God<sup>68</sup> constitute a human mesh-being who took a journey to the stars (future falling into past and carrying out a new cartography).

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67: A prominent example of this Fukuyamite thanatocracy is the 'Pro-Enlightenment, pro-reason and science' technoptimism of Steven Pinker, a Harvard professor and Epstein affiliate who seems to make a killing off playing the status quo's reassuring cheerleader. One must ask why it is so important to repeatedly attempt proving now is the most peaceful time in history.

68: God as the substance (again in the Spinozan sense).

The biologist who fell into a well!  
And I dream of dead seas.

"I hereby excuse you from appearing  
in my idea of you.

Your life . . . . .

This is not my love; it's merely your  
life.

I love you the way I love the sunset  
or the moonlight: I want the moment  
to remain, but all I want to possess  
in it is the sensation of possessing  
it."<sup>69</sup>

In sight of you, I am afflicted  
with all manner of valleys and forests.  
Arborescent moonlight, in loss, grant-  
ed jouissance's unwieldy positivity:  
the world's somethingness emerges,  
trickled down from the misunder-  
stood cosmos and translated into a  
dual manifestation of pleasure-pain  
(living to die, living as another dies,  
dying as another lives). I am the  
tumultuous onflow of abiogenetic  
disquiet.

Obsessively formulating the tini-  
est particle, eyes sparkling (and there  
is no longer any hope for this being  
*as it currently exists*).

And one should never wish it to  
be otherwise. Our most heartfelt wish  
should be to forever lose ourselves  
deeper into oblivion, to engage in an  
ethics of event horizon, for the act of  
continuing one's life with an inertial  
grip constitutes a most pathetic affir-  
mation of base fear; one might as  
well sink their teeth into dreams as  
deeply as one can endure the taste of  
iron in their taste buds. Limits be  
damned! Even if they lead once and  
for all into sweet slumber... but the  
dream is not slumber: the dream is  
the doing away of slumber's necessity  
in maintaining sanity, or even sanity's  
necessity in maintaining thought. The  
dream is that deviant corner of life  
that overruns even the most ardent  
conceptualizations; the dream is an  
incapability to divide Heaven and  
Earth.

Do not mistake this aggressive  
lunar onslaught for comically cheap  
sadism. The properly situated dreamer  
can only wound themselves, if any-  
thing at all. "To organize our life in  
such a way that it becomes a mystery  
to others, that those who are closest  
to us will only be closer to not

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69: Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, tr. R. Zenith (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 290.

knowing us. That is how I've shaped my life, almost without thinking about it, but I did it with so much instinctive art that even to myself I've become a not entirely clear and definite individual."<sup>70</sup> The wanderers converge. Aggregated in solemn silence, one finally crosses thresholds in this hollow life.

And where does this leave *us*? Here awaits the all-too-sober gatekeeper that is Nomenclature. The inflamed venturers... this writing is no mere intellectual exercise for yours truly. I am taking it for granted that anything appearing definite is actually a hole to infinity, a hole through which one may find many alien sequences performing microscopic resonations in everyday life. Every whisper of an inner dialogue is an echo of five voices writhing in silence. This deathly mess you are reading is a macrocosm of perturbations; the world is a mass swirling within confounding variables that write our fates into stone. One writes in order to abate madness another day; the fur-

thest conclusions of this alienation reach into untold aeons, as far as the happiness we imagine normal contented folk to possess. It is truly a mystery how acutely the grievances of consciousness will develop given its potentially infinite agglomeration (its infinite resignation) - resigned to recreation just to find its own limits. One gives up many things to stare into this dream. Its neural fluctuations are a grand symphony fit for the ages, a miracle in blackest assemblages. By all means, the fact that you exist to perceive these words is nothing short of a marvel in cybernetic instability.

A desert of inscriptions in stone. Wandering from a fearful periphery of warnings to the profane monolith at their center: enrichment found in simply giggling at the pain. In absorbing this graveyard of incantations, reading becomes indistinguishable from dancing (and vice versa). Siren song, a metered flow of lunar touches and solar blindness.

"A cloud crawled along: I surrendered my face to the flood and wandered in my debris..."<sup>71</sup>

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70: *Ibid.*, 106.

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

At times the body moves without the mind. In these moments, it gives itself over to resignation; being is posited as a self-negation perpetuated within a radioactive kaleidoscope. Flow states find their roots in corrosion and decay; in death one cannot help but naturally drift towards the eye of the storm. A hapless construct animated to perform a frenzied danse macabre as a furious sun blinds. Solar rays on naked bone as an eruption desecrates the ethereal plane. Beyond limits, an immortal seduction is whispered: is death even more frail than life?

“I will slog over this endless road until its end.

Until my heart stops, I will slog over this endless, endless road with nothing to lose but the dust, what has died in me, and a row of palms.”<sup>72</sup>

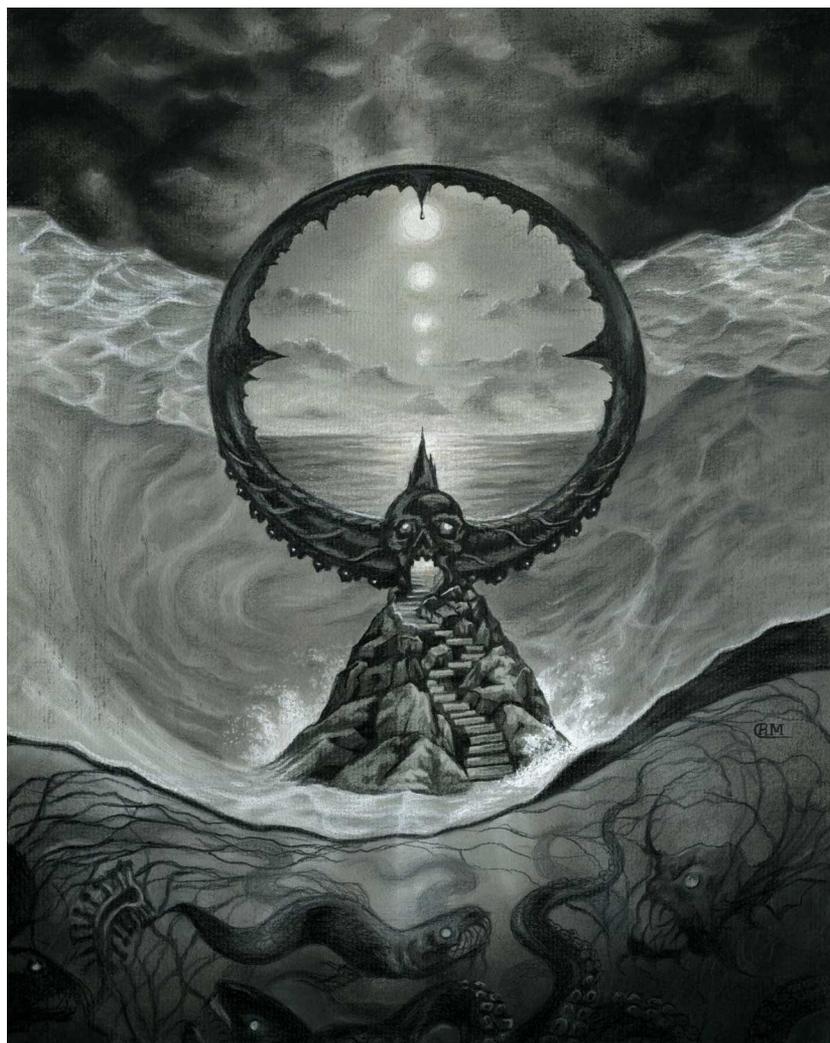
Life is a process of catching consciousness in its deepest fissures, a game of provoking it to seal itself in neurotic flows with ever-increasing ease. Death’s fiery assertiveness immanentizes the neurotic and distributes it among the most fascinating flows conceivable. Every mystic promises you a glance.. has there ever been a true atheist?

“The sun vanished behind the mountains, but still poured itself on the plain opposite. At sunset it pleased the sun to clothe the desert in the red mantle of its rays.”<sup>73</sup>

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72: Mahmoud Darwish, *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, tr. M. Akash, C. Forché, S. Antoon, & A. El-Zein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3.

73: Ibrahim Al-Koni, *The Bleeding of the Stone*, tr. M. Jayyusi, & C. Tingley (Massachusetts: Interlink Pub Group, 2002), 11.



Passage / [Rebecca Magar](#) / pastel + pencil / 2018 / 14" x 11"

Perhaps the desert is an emblematic biosphere. Its hallucinatory monotony pulsates between the extremes of climate, rapidly effacing the vain and pretentious. At this point in 2020 (the foreseeable 2021 is just 2020's continual decay), perhaps the only remaining event of significance would be rapid global desertification, Gaia's very own mask-off moment.

The moment approaches like a narrative. Let's say a writer engages in a certain flavor of epistemological nihilism and evokes the line, 'And then there was nothing.' To make

such a foil of events in a (hyper) fictional<sup>74</sup> narrative ignites the deepest curiosity, a phenomenon dripping with positivity like blood that has leaked into scattered crevices. One can never truly negate by their own hand, only conceal, and the most barenaked of shadows will be only the first textual imperatives to be contemplated. With polyphasic labyrinths of ruin on the horizon, I ask that there be no semblance of critical distance, only that we create ourselves fantastically anew.

"As all the heavens were a bell,  
And Being but an ear,  
And I and silence some strange race,  
Wrecked, solitary, here."<sup>75</sup>

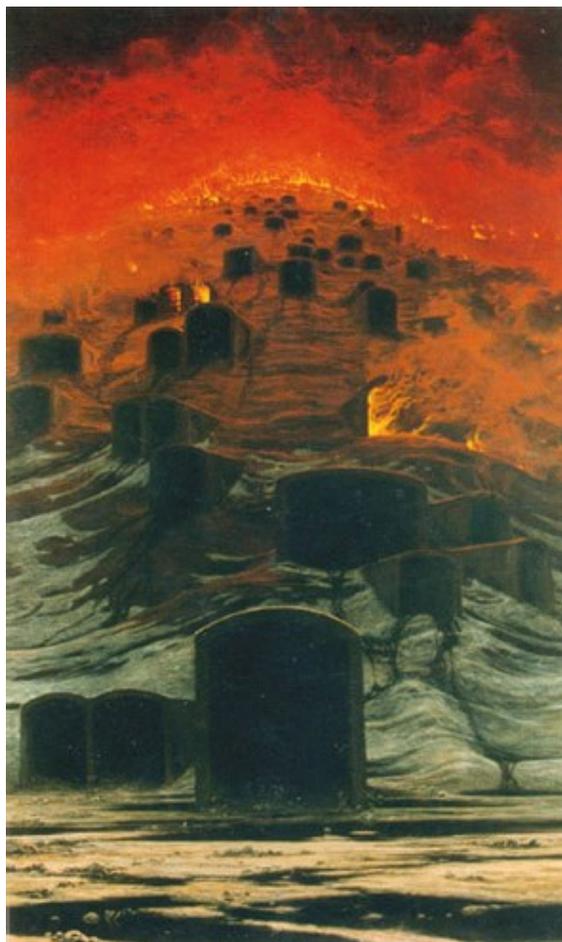
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74: Fiction, followed to the extremes of its conclusions, is indistinct from reality. In leaving an accursed mark, even the most surreal esotericism is given form and breath. And should its breath cease, its death will be felt as our own. Assimilation hops between shadows, its nakedness never permitting easy acquisition. Fiction that is damned as fiction smiles a malicious grin when meeting the gallows.

75: Emily Dickinson, *Selected Poems & Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed. R. Linscott (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 73.



And in a moment  
Awake  
Pale moonlight's crossing  
Across your fingers  
Your lips  
Your eyes  
And the stars are all dead  
*Path of Deception*<sup>77</sup>



**Untitled** / Zdzisław Beksiński

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77: Kobaryo, "Endless Adventure," from *HARDCORE SYNDROME 13*. HARDCORE TANO\*C, 2019.

Banished and defiled, inverted only to be carried out in parallel torture: the visions of nighttime accumulate into overload: emerging desertification... a perfectly boneless black fit of laughter to ameliorate the horror of awaking... an illuminated, very white fit of derangement to pick at the scraps in desperation: a rabbit hole's perceived destination isn't as important as the deviations one digs... after all, depth (holy hell-[heart]hole of revelation) is only the beginning of height. Awoken in the dead of night, committing the sin of observing a lunar smile upon a lover (observing Christ's transitory emergence in humanity). This desert has turned itself within, corroding even the night-oasis of exuberance. We reach into the laughter of life, where all beckonings flow in and out of each other in geometric harmony: the peerless symmetry of fear.

"Pausanias said: now, my friends, how can we drink with least injury to ourselves? I can assure you that I feel severely the effect of yesterday's drinking, and must have time to recover; I suspect that most of you are in the same predicament, for you were at the party yesterday. Consider

then: How can the drinking be made easiest on us?

I entirely agree, said Aristophanes, that we should, by all means, avoid hard drinking, for I was myself one of those who were yesterday drowned in drink.

I think that you are right, said Eryximachus, the son of Acumenus; but I should still like to hear one other person speak: Is Agathon able to drink hard?

No way, said Agathon."<sup>78</sup>

Awake, this time with the sun, in particular the thought that it's too bright. Dragging a boulder of a cerebral cortex out of bed and frantically showering with triple the meticulous zeal as usual to wash off the scum I invited into my bloodstream mere hours ago. Departing, hoping to manage without jeopardizing sober affairs. Flinging all manner of excuses to affiliates upon arriving. Returning, and quite quickly only narrowly avoiding serious injury. Recuperating from this bout on the side of the road. My body is finally calmer as I return to eventually confront the abusive presence manifested with possibly

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78: Plato, "Symposium," from *Essential Dialogues of Plato*, tr. B. Jowett (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2005), 72-73.

(possibly) uncharacteristic lapses in judgement. One cultivates the efforts of day and is later forced to answer for their shadow, should they decide to finally let their hair down.

“The diachronic I is the formal unity of consciousness in which thoughts of *X*, *Y*, and *Z* are combined (the I who thinks [*X*, *Y*, *Z*] = the I that thinks *X* + the I that thinks *Y* + the I that thinks *Z*). But as we saw in the first chapter, this formal unity of consciousness (rather than consciousness *per se*) is precisely what is afforded by the movement of self-consciousness.”<sup>79</sup> [author’s emphasis]

Someday, always too late, the mind correlates its contents and one is immediately invited into a painful shock that opens and unveils the surrounding world in nauseating color, a kaleidoscopic psychology that writes excruciating patterns into the landscape. From what other cause can one weep while merely biting into an apple in the morning?

Life is a voyage; it is all too easy to disregard calm waters and exaggerate the billowing torrents. From here the epistemic challenge is

laid: do cold shocks of seawater ultimately weaken or reinforce one’s resolve?

It is a conventionally simple assumption that the optimist lives longer, better than the pessimist. Is this seemingly innocent rationale instead a barenaked and unflinching cruelty gone unnoticed? Examine this line of thought: there are few sensations more brilliantly painful than the idea that things can *always* be better... it can be difficult to maintain this relentless flow without falling into a barren resignation. Perhaps I only speak to those I am pained to lie amongst; banished under the weight of dead possibilities, may our ambition to escape outlive our frail inter/intrapersonal pities! Perhaps there are those for whom this text will be more than an afterthought, more than an observation that is briefly held and then promptly discarded for a brighter stimulus. Dear readers: I do not wish for you to remain frozen in an inert empathy, I wish for you to grow stronger, bolder, to tell your grievances ‘fuck you!’

“They’ve announced that this house will be torn down, but I won’t leave here until I die. Up above

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79: Reza Negarestani, *Intelligence & Spirit* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2018), 258-259.

they're packing trunks and baskets and constantly taping up packages. There are moving vans by the front door, but I walk by them as if I don't see them. I never begged for a cent from those people. They spy on me all day long and believe I am with clients because I talk to myself to annoy them. Since they're angry with me, they lock me in; since I'm angry with them, I don't ask them to open the door. For the last two days the mice have been acting very strangely: one brought me a ring, another a bracelet, and a third, the smartest one, brought me a necklace. At first I couldn't believe it, and nobody else will believe it. I'm happy. What does it matter if it's all a dream? I'm thirsty: I drink my own sweat. I'm hungry: I chew on my

fingers and hair. The police won't come looking for me. They won't ask me for a health certificate or a certificate of good conduct. The ceiling is falling apart, bits of straw are floating down: it must be the beginning of the demolition. I hear cries, none of them calling my name. The mice are afraid. Poor things! They don't know, don't understand how the world is. They don't know the joy of revenge. Since learning to look at myself in a little mirror, I have never looked so beautiful."<sup>80</sup>

"Inch by inch I conquered the inner terrain I was born with. Bit by bit I reclaimed the swamp in which I'd languished. I gave birth to my infinite being, but I had to wrench myself out of me with forceps."<sup>81</sup>

"The sun has wept rose in the shell of your ears,  
The world has rolled white from your back, your thighs;  
The sea has stained rust the crimson of your breasts,  
And Man has bled black at your sovereign side."<sup>82</sup>

"If one opens one's eyes in the street: that which is spread out before you, common and free, which believes itself to be everything and is

only horror, must come up in some places against true strength: in such places, a violent feeling seizes the most coarse."<sup>83</sup>

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80: Silvina Ocampo, "The Basement," in *Thus Were Their Faces*, tr. D. Balderston (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2015), 119-120.

81: Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, 23.

82: Arthur Rimbaud, "The Sun Has Wept Rose," in *Arthur Rimbaud: Complete Works*, 123.

83: Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 240.

“The mystery of human destiny is that we are inevitable, but we have the freedom to carry out or not our inevitability: it depends on us to carry out our inevitable destiny. While inhuman beings, like the roach, carry out their own complete cycle, without ever erring because they do not choose. But it depends on me to freely become whatever I inevitably am. I am the mistress of my inevitability, and, if I decide not to carry it out, I shall remain outside my specifically living nature. But if I carry out my neutral and living nucleus, then, within my species, I shall be being specifically human.”<sup>84</sup>

“And now suddenly after an evening of ‘who am I’ and of waking at one in the morning still in despair—now suddenly at three in the morning I woke and met myself. I went to meet myself. Calm, joyful, fullness without fulmination. Simply I am I. And you are you. It is vast, and will endure.

What I’m writing to you goes on and I am bewitched.”<sup>85</sup>

The body without organs is a deity’s oceanic finger teasingly brushing phospholipid bilayers<sup>86</sup> within the body. Beneath hydrophilic shell - a protesting hydrophobic interior. Perhaps one might speak of the body without organs as a ceaselessly shadowed mechanism that exists to descend upon us hapless fools, a specter that perpetually lies in waiting, dancing like a deaf mute amongst unstable subatomic clouds encoded with doomsday’s black catalysts. “What a mistake to have ever said *the id*. Everywhere *it* is machines.”<sup>87</sup> (authors’ emphasis) What good would an unthreatening *id* be? At least the threat of desire’s multiplicity inspires awe as well as desensitized horror. One grows tired of all things being predicated upon sodium ions rushing into cells and potassium ions rushing out of them at regular intervals.<sup>88</sup> (no further note can be made upon this ceaseless productivity, and why bother?)

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84: Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*, tr. I. Novey (New York: New Directions Books, 2012), 129.

85: Lispector, *Água Viva*, 87-88.

86: A two-layered barrier that covers all cells. Selectively permeable, only certain types of ions and molecules are permitted passage.

87: Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 1.

88: This is the process of an action potential, a physiological event that stems from sufficient excitation pushing a neuron’s electrical charge to a threshold value, causing it to fire. All forms of perceptual stimuli work in this manner.

“One dawn a woman reluctantly left  
 the city of light, love, pain and darkness.  
 It was a confused bird  
 who had lost her way  
 that weary and weeping headed nestward.”<sup>89</sup>  
 Rest is only a quicker decay.<sup>90</sup>

To be hydrophobic on the inside is what necessitates sea travel. What good is the id ocean without its abyssal currents? A vacuous pathetic bundle of a tightrope is placed across its length: how exactly will you trip and fail the journey? It is never a question of whether or not one crosses into the super-egoic horizon, only which coral reef one emerges in when they finally relax into gravity’s struggle. “Solar radiation results in a superabundance of energy on the surface of the globe. But, first, living matter receives this energy and accumulates it within the limits given by the space that is available to it.”<sup>91</sup> How is it all to be formulated, conceptualized, operationalized? Even if one’s aim is to perform a breakaway, it still must be asked from which direction such molecular antics begin to take place.

“And so begins our inquiry into the limits of the transcendental structure of experience: To what extent is what we take as a necessary and universal fact of experience, an a priori act, in fact a local and contingent aspect of our experience? Or, in other words, how much is what we take to be necessary distorted by what is actually contingent through and through?”<sup>92</sup>

“A fantastical world surrounds me and is me. I hear the mad song of a little bird and crush butterflies between my fingers. I’m a fruit eaten away by a worm. And I await the orgasmic apocalypse. A dissonant throng of insects surrounds me, light of an oil lamp that I am. I then go too far in order to be. I’m in a trance. I penetrate the surrounding air. What a fever: I can’t stop living. In this dense jungle of words that

89: Forugh Farrohzad, *A Lonely Woman* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1987), 14.

90: matryoshka, “Cut All Trees,” from *Laideronnette*. matryoshka, 2012.

91: Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volume I*, tr. R. Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 29.

92: Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, 207.

thickly wrap whatever I feel and think and live and transform everything I am into something of mine that nonetheless remains entirely outside me. I'm watching myself think. What I wonder is: who is it in me who is even outside of thinking? I'm writing you all this because it's a challenge which I have to accept with humility. I'm haunted by ghosts, by whatever is mythic and fantastical—life is supernatural. And I walk on a tightrope up to the edge of my dream. Guts tortured by voluptuousness guide me, fury of impulses. Before I organize myself, I must disorganize myself internally. To experience that first and fleeting primary state of freedom. Of that freedom to err, fall and get up again."<sup>93</sup>

How do these currents caress your body? What manner of agitation provokes your muscles? A visionary's power lies in knowing that 'sink or swim' is not a dichotomy of failing vs. succeeding. One can freely propel themselves around their new ecosystem to their heart's content; one can

also continue the slow dance with gravity, creating an inner harmony akin to meditating in a lucid dream.

Move, and drift exhausted across a stingray's width. Sleep, and wake in an anglerfish's light. Whichever intermingling of paths is chosen, embrace this world. *Say it to everyone present, the saltwater crocodiles, box jellyfish, and giant squids alike: 'I accept your voluminescence.'*

Stillness and silence, surrounded in knives for a circle of the damned. Condemned in the deepest sense, in the sense that we have chosen this intimate exile. The blades lie pointed toward all angles of my body and we exchange positions within this pit of gleaming snakes. Our tension mutually amasses, virulent scourge drifting, flowing in the air between metal and flesh. We drift in and out, stepping across silver planes of immanence. In spilling no blood we gradually come to magnify and examine its wondrous flows within.

"Walk along the tight-rope  
Do it with my eyes closed  
Tip toe, dancing in limbo"<sup>94</sup>

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93: Lispector, *Água Viva*, 60-61.

94: OmenXIII, "Reprogram," from *Hacker*. REDSTAR, 2019.

“Paradox: all bombs are clean—their only pollution is the system of control and security they radiate *when they are not detonated*.”<sup>95</sup> [author’s emphasis]

And what of the dissonance weapons harbor in the body? Is the modern berserker’s intoxication primarily induced by his instrument’s siren song of descent rather than any ruin it might in a few moments lead to?

“One bright, burning point, surrounded by darkness.”<sup>96</sup>

“Sweet in winter sweet in rain  
Shake well before use she said  
You never touch me anymore this way”<sup>97</sup>

Of the past, of the world, of the vivid sense that a precious moment endured is a harsh breath’s mirror fog in winter (pearls). If we must Fall, why not displace our entire skeletal jittering in the descent? Is God a puppetmaster who eagerly awaits being found out merely for the sake of finally being able to leave the strings at rest?

“A fundamental aspect of human cognition is its fallibility.”<sup>98</sup>

Do our shadows ever collapse into each other? If so, does this constitute the sweetest romance, the bitterest hate, or the most alluring oscillation of the two? It is sometimes said that the absence of unstable temptations is the hallmark of a truly healthy relationship. If this is true, romance is not only difficult and complicated but also a cosmic body poorly compatible for *homo sapiens*. If on a lonely night one wanders into the garden to utter a confession of love absent human company, one does not even receive so much as a heart-wrenching rejection from the glimmering stars.

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95: Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” from *Simulations*, tr. P. Foss, P. Patton, & P. Beitchman (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1983), 79.

96: Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow*, 92.

97: Underworld, “Dirty Epic - Remastered,” from *Dubnobasswithmyheadman* (Deluxe / 20th Anniversary Edition). Universal Music Operations Ltd., 2014.

98: William Gehring, Brian Goss, Michael Coles, David Meyer, & Emanuel Donchin, “A Neural System for Error Detection and Compensation,” *Psychological Science* 4, No. 6 (1993): 385.

“I know this looks bad.”<sup>99</sup>

Echoes of voices in a canyon. ShriLL yet incapable of concealing a doubtlessly frail character. Shivers down the spinal cord. Billions of years for evolution to blossom and these shadows upon the cave wall still continually enthrall us. To speak of excrement philosophizing<sup>100</sup> in a detached pseudo-critical sense implies one hasn't yet been broken down enough to see a raw metaphysics of excess in all things.

“By any rational standards, and this is again why we don't live in a teleological designed universe, by any rational standards, the fact that perhaps only one planet in however large number you want to come up with can harbor life, that's a massive waste of space. That sterility is an affront to any rational being.”<sup>101</sup>

“Even as far back as Leopardi, in the early 1800s, it was observed that we only think of biology as purposeful because of survivorship bias: we only see the tiny fraction of victors,

what we don't see is the towering wreckage atop which they sit, precariously.”<sup>102</sup> [author's emphasis]

That precarity is worth highlighting. “Why is it that secondary sexual characteristics are appealing, characteristics that exaggerate the difference in appearance by gender; why is that appealing? Because in effect, the bigger and more garish and the more over the top your secondary sexual characteristic is, the more you are communicating to the world: I have so much energy on board and I am so healthy that I can afford to squander massive numbers of calories on these asinine neon antlers I'm walking around with. [...] What you essentially are seeing there is it is a display, it is a potlatch, it is a display of how much energy you can afford to waste, and thus, how much you must have on board. It is a marker of health and good immunity.”<sup>103</sup>

Excess seems a defining charac-

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99: Laur, “End of The World,” from *The Angel's Message*. Last Labyrinth, 2018.

100: A term employed by André Breton to insult Georges Bataille, who was a rogue figure among the French Surrealists.

101: The New Centre for Research & Practice, “Sheltering Places Season 02 Episode 05. July 7, 2020,” 52:05-52:24. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/usHj7pjiuCo?t=3125>

102: Thomas Moynihan, *X-Risk: How Humanity Discovered Its Own Extinction* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2020), 380.

103: Stanford, “17. Human Sexual Behavior III & Aggression I,” 17:57-18:28, 19:55-20:10. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/JPYmarGO5jM?t=1076>

teristic of consciousness's relations in both cosmic/impersonal ways and social/interpersonal ones. However, it even manages to guide us along in an intrapersonal way as well, slippery as it is.

"Brain 'state' is a macroscopic variable, reflected by the mean field behavior of the system, typically a characteristic oscillatory mode or a transition between different oscillatory modes. The state is generated by the participating neurons and defined by a set of parameters such as activation of voltage-gated channels, availability of neurotransmitters and neuromodulators, and distribution of synaptic weights. In turn, the created state variable, such as a network oscillation, constrains the firing patterns of single neurons. The states change during the course of sleep, but the passage of states over time is predictable from the history of previous states.

Sleep is an excellent model of evolving brain states because it occurs without an outside influence—it evolves from within."<sup>104</sup>

Macrocosmic worms, festering impulses, chronological rot. An elegantly symmetrical process absent of dirty volition, found in the very moments we are at the greatest mercy of our own thoughts. One can never truly hide from apparitions born of shadow; it is easy to spend a considerable amount of waking energy in psychological recovery when they have converged in forms more horrible (or even more beautiful) than anything one can find during the day (evolving from within).

"While I sleep, time interrupts its conventional rhythm. In lonely places sleep gets bound up with reality. It is like the imitation of a very long life, with its memories. [...] Not dreaming is like being dead. Reality loses importance."<sup>105</sup>

To be or not to be: to be is to be haunted by sickly fragments of fear and wonder alike (the party doesn't start until God shows up). I narrow the avenue of dream recall to minimize its ambient pollution and traffic noise, but at what cost do I walk away from consciousness's elegantly macabre cellars?<sup>106</sup> In silence

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104: György Buzsáki, *Rhythms of the Brain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 175-176.

105: Ocampo, "The Impostor," in *Thus Were Their Faces*, 23-24.

106: A building's latent interior, creating the racing phenomena of its manifest world. Perhaps the kinetically inert drift of dreaming has been mischaracterized. Perhaps it is a straddled epistemology: unable to be contained in Freud's...

one's mind gradually begins to produce whispers; absent a stimulus for long enough and the sound of one's own bloodstream is deafening. But is this silence found in wakefulness or sleep? Amidst this ambiguity there is some attainment of certainty: if for no other reason, life is abounding excess for being so mired in the aftermath of what happens while one is necessarily 'at rest.' Life is always escaping itself. In this we find the belated cosmogony of *homo sapiens*, of terrestrial life's mechanism as it is finally revealed in *seemingly* transparent clarity (every moment is, after all, only a moment before another) given billions of years in the evolution of inner experience.

"Apperception pieces itself together henceforth as escape velocity, or jailbreak, from claustrophobic union with inertial world-immersion: for, by migrating the abiogenetic energetic gradient 'intra-dermal' and 'extra-dermal' into properly temporal and modal dimensions, via the inauguration of language-use and cotermini-

nous expansion of working memory, mere attentional economy involutes into executive function, goal-directedness—and mental time travel."<sup>107</sup>

"More often than not, what is called thought is what escapes it, is produced as a way out of it."<sup>108</sup>

Awoken into a prison, the long silence before birth as one's solemn trial. The sentence has already been read: 'Evolving from within, fractal residue accumulated into proactive self-directed cognitive wranglings over time.' "The prison must be the microcosm of a perfect society in which individuals are isolated in their moral existence, but in which they come together in a strict hierarchical framework, with no lateral relation, communication being possible only in a vertical direction."<sup>109</sup> My life, your life: payments and debts.

"From what we saw above, the automaton's ur-awareness of the past, present, and future appears to be a contingent construct of its structural-

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...classic dichotomy of manifest (observed) and latent (think 'deeper meaning') dream content, unwilling to allow its aesthetics to be self-destructed into linguistic associations. Maybe we ought to reverse the analysis entirely and treat waking life as an oneiric playground to be explored.

107: Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism*, 31-32.

108: Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, tr. I. H. Grant (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 14.

109: Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, tr. A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 238.

behavioral organization: its mode of responsiveness to the impingements in the world on its senses, its constructive-anticipatory model of memory, and the structuring of its meta-awareness on such a model. And finally, on higher levels belonging to the apperceptive subject of experience, ordinary time-consciousness is the fruit of a certain troubling marriage: the messy entanglement between the objective sense of time and the categories of causality (alteration) and community (simultaneity) that is already present in Kant, and in which the temporal and the causal serve reciprocally in each other's definition, without either being satisfactorily defined as such."<sup>110</sup>

"To think is to destroy. Thought itself is destroyed in the process of thinking, because to think is to decompose. If men knew how to meditate on the mystery of life, if they knew how to feel the thousand complexities which spy on the soul in every single detail of action, then they would never act - they wouldn't

even live. They would kill themselves from fright, like those who commit suicide to avoid being guillotined the next day."<sup>111</sup>

Is a categorical imperative necessary to prevent such psychological ruin? What is capable of serving as a mouthguard while attempting to disinfect the metastatic wound that is one's own body?<sup>112</sup> Neurosis of every form can become a twisted breed of reliable comfort<sup>113</sup> given enough time, and what is older than cosmic violence?

Where does this all leave God, the creator, our wondrous genesis in the thorn-ridden garden? I will make no silly comments about wiping a knife stained with her/its/his blood on my jeans like one certain fellow. No. Killing God and brushing aside the remnants like a bad aftertaste is a notion that belongs to the mold-ridden trash can of a particularly pre-adolescent 'Nietzscheanism.' If a blade is to be unsheathed in vengeance, it will be done not to kill another but to remember one's own

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110: Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*, 201-202.

111: Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, 166.

112: Kobaryo, "Apocalypse Simulator," from *HARDCORE SYNDROME 14*. HARDCORE TANO\*<sup>C</sup>, 2020.

113: In therapy, there is a fundamentally important concept known as resistance. It refers to the various means, intended or not, that people employ to avoid confronting painful material as it arises in the therapeutic process. It is possible for a person to earnestly believe they wish to run the gauntlet and only later discover that they were fooling themselves all along.

beauty, a metallic mirror of self-construed form raised against the world: a totemic collaboration sealed in sunlight's glint, this totalizing pact of conspiracy against life formed with oneself.

"Never let the presence of enemies upset or distress you—you are far better off with a declared opponent or two than not knowing where your real enemies lie."<sup>114</sup> Despite this notorious book being laughably repugnant in general application, the importance of establishing enemies is worth noting. Initial reflection led yours truly to the perhaps naive conclusion that there were no enemies nearby, but it wasn't long before an idea floated through the aether as they tend to. Above all others, time itself is the ultimate conspiratorial enemy. Every day is a chokehold that irreversibly squeezes out a little more of one's being. Worse yet, one's final moments are unpredictable, foiling *homo sapiens'* characteristic world-dominating talents for long-term planning and complex delay of gratification.

"What does the frontal cortex do? Its list of expertise includes

working memory, executive function (organizing knowledge strategically, and then initiating an action based on an executive decision), gratification postponement, long-term planning, regulation of emotions, and reining in impulsivity. [...] It's the most recently evolved brain region, not approaching full splendor until the emergence of primates: a disproportionate percentage of genes unique to primates are active in the frontal cortex. Moreover, such gene expression patterns are highly individuated, with greater interindividual variability than average levels of whole-brain differences between humans and chimps.

The human frontal cortex is more complexly wired than in other apes and, by some definitions as to its boundaries, proportionately bigger as well."<sup>115</sup>

"We provide the first evidence that group membership and norms influence self-control behavior and evaluations in young children. Young children were more likely to delay gratification and value it when their group delayed and another group did not, compared with the reverse. These

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114: Robert Greene, *The 48 Laws of Power* (ebook edition) (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 83.

115: Robert Sapolsky, *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018), 45.

findings demonstrate an important way in which self-control behavior does not simply reflect self-control ability but is also influenced by social contextual factors.”<sup>116</sup> An impressive evolutionary resume. But what is time other than God’s long arm rushing out of the abyss?

I live, perhaps, to spite my very own unease, to prove that I will not be broken into premature surrender by the melancholic temperament some unknown force fashioned me with.

“you won’t say,  
‘Better I had swung from the end of a rope like a flag’—  
you’ll put your foot down and live.  
It may not be a pleasure exactly,  
but it’s your solemn duty  
to live one more day  
to spite the enemy.”<sup>117</sup>

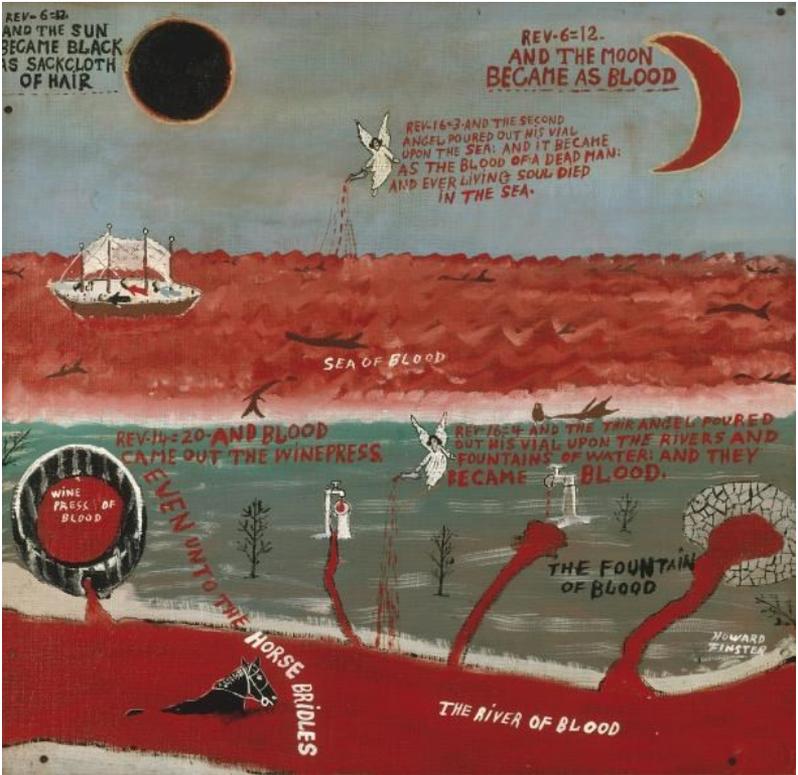
### *On the Night as the Continuing Question*<sup>118</sup>

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116: Sabine Doebel & Yuko Munakata, “Group Influences on Engaging Self-Control: Children Delay Gratification and Value It More When Their In-Group Delays and Their Out-Group Doesn’t,” *Psychological Science* 29, No. 5 (2018): 746.

117: Nâzım Hikmet, “Some Advice to Those Who Will Serve Time in Prison,” in *Poems of Nâzım Hikmet*, tr. R. Blasing & M. Konuk (New York: Persea Books, 2002), 143.

118: death’s dynamic shroud, “Butterflies,” from *Live from Japan*. Death’s Dynamic Shroud, 2019.



AND THE MOON BECAME AS BLOOD / *Howard Finster* / 1976

A note, scrawled with the squalid candor of a circumstance one is grateful to forsake yet cannot seem to abandon in full:

\*\*\*There is something inherently disgusting about writing to fill a void. One spits on the page so that others may crowd around the dripping residue to find a semblance of heartwarming and redemptive solace for a mere fleeting moment. *And then they move on.* So one must produce and reproduce, pushing (very thoughtfully maneuvered, mind you) fingers down one's throat to once again draw the crowd. And that only constitutes the luckier circumstance to be forced into. In the absence of such recognition one can only regurgitate bodily sewage from ever greater depths to gradually smear the page in vile excrement, spending solitary hours accumulating back pain until human-shaped attention-compulsions finally stop to at least momentarily sniff the unfathomable waste one has created.\*\*\*

Repugnant but undeniable, undeniable because it is repugnant. There is no option of simply 'stopping' as desperate conjurers are by nature born under an unholy star, either rushing about in great hurry with

vaguely Satanic 'inspirations' as if under a spell or lurching forward in slumped posture as a mannequin-like empty shell of a being until heated and deviant invitations to delirium eventually arise. There is no refuge as a helpless writer; one either admits this embarrassingly masturbatory tendency aloud or goes through life experiencing concealment's guilt at every moment of eye contact with another human being ('Yes, I am obsessed with deliberating upon SEX, VIOLENCE, and DEATH', I think in the midst of receiving a glowing employee review for a fairly normal position where I have shared nothing approximating my literary disgraces except perhaps my presence's exceedingly transparent unease with the ways of the proper world).

Writing is false pretenses of the highest order. The structure and backbone of intellectual assemblages emerge from the deep fear of losing hope permanently. Perhaps truth is a woman all these intelligent men of history are hopelessly ambivalent towards. Perhaps their words are not right for her, perhaps their approaches are cantankerously simple-minded. Even nigh-incomprehensible genius might find its hissing grievances in these parts; how could it possibly

forget her visage upon making that first glance? How could anyone ever find peace?

Frequenting 'The Happiest Hours' for millenia, slumped over its grimy countertop with a seventh glass of Elysian Regards in hand; virtually all of the crystallized canon legends have long since decayed into shattered bone assemblages and yet their arcane scribblings are still alive due to immense scholarly dedication. People claim not to believe in ghosts or magic and yet they regularly engage in necromantic revivals of spirit with each rotted citation. It is a deep wish of every writer to be remembered after death but necromancy is fundamentally debaucherous; one's words are always recounted absent of the force that originally tempered them, as if an improvised imitation of a master blacksmith.<sup>119</sup> An awkward wrangling of drunk and uncertain beings in the library, hardly distinguishable from a bedroom's difficult intimacies should a curious voyeur lean in to listen closely.

"It's not you, it's me." "Well

fuck you, now you've brought me into it!"

Without a frigid and difficult forgetting, is there truly anything that one, even many, can confer upon a soul to finally give it rest?

"Nobody was home. She opened the windows wide, taking a deep breath of the evening air. Then she saw the objects lined up against the wall of her room, just as she had dreamed she would see them. She knelt down to caress them. She lost track of day and night. She saw that the objects had faces, the horrible faces they acquire when we have stared at them too long.

Through a long series of joys, Camila Ersky had finally entered hell."<sup>120</sup>

In asserting itself beyond the grave, writing is incapable of reaching a truth every still-decaying body knows, that life is *inescapably limited*; preservation reduces the sacred to the utilitarian. If life is a metaphysics of excess, writing is a deathly principle of conservation. Without its

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119: Of course, given the intrinsic divide of intrapersonal consciousness, this mistranslation is just as true for life, but a truly influential spirit is much more widely known in death than life. Pessoa said that death is the beginning and perhaps he is right. Even the many of us with only modest social stature create the future's conditions as our parting deed; how else could these words have emerged?

120: Ocampo, "The Objects," in *Thus Were Their Faces*, 132.

lifeblood, the work can only atrophy and degenerate, however many augmentations are dedicated after the matter.<sup>121</sup> Archetypally, the zombie is not a product of excess in life as one might venture to guess upon viewing its amazing vitalistic rebellion; instead its form is found in the deepest glacializations of time, of cosmic permanence contradictory to the principle of sapient ephemerality; sentience no matter the cost, as exemplified by the essential sound emanating from this approximately humanoid body: ‘bluhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh’. The zombie is life’s finitude approaching death’s asymptote curve with a bloodless

sterility. A proximal *indifference*. It drags on without any of the spirited eloquence a finite being finds in risking itself among the perils of blood-stained revelations. “To revive the dead language, the discipline of steel was required; to change the silence of death into the eloquence of life, the aid of steel was essential.”<sup>122</sup> Is there any eloquence in death alone? No, there is only the unspeakable horror that is directly viewing a corpse’s inert form. Thus exists the event horizon; we study with fascination but shiver at the thought of proximity, anything but indifferent.

“glassy eyed and flatulent  
 thick piles of  
 corpses mounting  
 towards the sun  
 rage deep in the large pores  
 of earth  
 in the  
 stillborn buds  
 dead on the branches”<sup>123</sup>

“Imitate Nature? Yes, when we cannot improve upon her. Admire Nature? Possibly, but be not blinded

to her defects. Learn from Nature? We should fit humbly at her feet until we can stand erect and go our

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121: A common sentiment: ‘The artist and their art cannot be separated.’ No. The artist’s functional pulse and the art cannot be separated.

122: Yukio Mishima, *Sun and Steel*, tr. J. Bester (New York: Kodansha America, 2003), 24.

123: S.M.H., *On Appeasing Angry Gods* (St. Louis: voidfrontpress, 2019).

own way. Love Nature? Never! She is our treacherous and unsleeping foe, ever to be feared and watched and circumvented, for at any moment and in spite of all our vigilance she may wipe out the human race by famine, pestilence or earthquake and within a few centuries obliterate every trace of its achievement."<sup>124</sup>

So why wait until now to furnish this vacuous attack on lamentations of dried ink? Why deliberately feed the fire of this grotesque spectacle when it is already so late? This solitary night air is more than quiet enough; why not simply let the embers soften?<sup>125</sup> Why not end this frail written world when all seemed within reach, in deception's encroaching luminescence of carnival-esque infinity?

Noon, night, abyss, dreamland, and then a ruptured wakefulness twisted into deeper oblivion. The land of deception is a broken dream, not broken in the sense of grim sobriety and damaged idealism, but broken further into itself.<sup>126</sup> Reframing 'essentialism' as anything but reductive; beyond that, there is no descrip-

tion. Only... life, for lack of a better term. At the beginning writing was a necessary workaround, now it is nothing more than a continual failure to encapsulate what needs to be lived.

"the crumbling in the body of the soul now, papers on the table, words stuck to each page, claws, cold my God, nothing penetrates my soul, words stuck to the page and not one freed itself to keep my heart, so many books and nothing in my chest, so many truths and not one in me, the gold of truths where is it? what did I seek for so long? why did I suffer so for it to have made itself into vital matter? what fire, Hillé, is this, that wells from the illuminated manuscript, leaf through it, go on, touch."<sup>127</sup>

Make no mistake: I have no theoretical contribution to impart unto you and no reasonable justification for the space this project occupies. It is life in the absolute sense, its esoteric mystery rivaled only by its redundant simplicity. It is not so much a new volley fired on the intellectual battleground as it is an amplification of the land's intoxicating

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124: Edwin Slosson, *Creative Chemistry* (London: University of London Press, 1921), 10.

125: TWENTYTHREE, "THANK YOU & GOOD NIGHT," from *UTOPIA*. TWENTYTHREE, 2019.

126: Secede, "Crave and Fall," from *Bye Bye Gridlock Traffic*. Merck Records, 2003.

127: Hilst, *The Obscene Madame D*, 29.

effluvia. It is in many ways subtle and unspoken, but also carried as a shout like a holstered firearm.

“If there were fields as pretty as you  
I’d want to kiss them too  
If there were skies as pretty as you  
I’d want to kiss them too”<sup>128</sup>

“He sang, in a soft and gentle voice, a song from a faraway country. The music made the strange words familiar. It sounded like the soul’s fado, though it didn’t in the least resemble fado.

Through its veiled words and human melody, the song told of things that are in the hearts of us all and that no one knows. He sang in a kind of stupor, a kind of ecstasy right there in the street, his gaze oblivious to his listeners.

The crowd that had gathered listened to him without any discernible scoffing. The song belonged to everyone, and the words sometimes spoke to us - an oriental secret of some lost race. We didn’t hear the city’s noises, even if we heard them, and the carts passed by so close that one of them brushed against my

coat. But I only felt it; I didn’t hear it. There was a rapt intensity in the stranger’s song that was soothing to what in us dreams or doesn’t succeed.”<sup>129</sup>

Held on the breath throughout day’s reproach, a scream that follows the sun’s rise and fall in horror and ecstasy alike. At night, I have no vision and must see; I run through the mists to evade an ever-more-forlorn laughter. A summary of life: confrontations with abyssal-field incantations exhibiting an increasingly elastic surrealism in their melody-bodies. As one lives on, one’s eyes project increasingly grotesque augmentations onto everyday stimuli, flooding the landscape with cognitive machinery as nature’s nervous system attempts to escape itself by drowning in self-absorption.

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128: death’s dynamic shroud, “Butterflies.”

129: Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, 337.

“Let’s say sunshine for everyone  
But as far as I can remember  
We’ve been migratory animals  
Living under changing weather

Someday we will foresee obstacles  
Through the blizzard, through the blizzard  
Today we will sell our uniform  
Live together, live together

We played hide and seek in waterfalls  
We were younger, we were younger  
We played hide and seek in waterfalls  
We were younger, we were younger”<sup>130</sup>

Perhaps age’s physical debilitating are brought on by an increasingly unstable array of memories and ideas flowing in and out of this waking dream at all hours.

“For a long time - I’m not sure if for days or for months - I haven’t recorded any impressions; I don’t think, therefore I don’t exist. I’ve forgotten who I am. I’m unable to write because I’m unable to be. Through an oblique slumber, I’ve been someone else. To realize I don’t remember myself means that I’ve woken up.

I fainted for a spell, cut off from my life. I return to myself without

remembering what I’ve been, and the memory of what I used to be suffers from having been interrupted. I have a confused impression of mysterious interlude; part of my memory is vainly struggling to find the other part. I can’t pull myself together. If I’ve lived during this time, I forgot to be aware of it.”<sup>131</sup>

In particularly absurd moments of ugly fatigue and useless unrest, I find a palpable wish to cease all reflection on matter and motion, animate and otherwise. To simply absorb the world with a mirror’s passive purity, unblemished but for an occupation in space and the unflattering thoughts of beholders. In a year

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130: Syd Matters, “Obstacles,” from *Someday We Will Foresee Obstacles*. Third Side Records, 2005.

131: Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, 314.

fraught with viral pathology, I declare that disease itself is a thought. I breathe, therefore I am not a lone unicellular current in the void. I exist in a flow of consciousness, therefore I am not the unabated flow itself. I am that impoverished orifice which perpetuity's unabated flow collects its toll from.

"If our life were an eternal standing by the window, if we could remain there for ever, like hovering smoke, with the same moment of twilight forever paining the curve of the hills... If we could remain that way for beyond for ever! If at least on this side of the impossible we could thus continue, without committing an action, without our pallid lips sinning another world!

Look how it's getting dark!...  
The positive quietude of everything

fills me with rage, with something that's a bitterness in the air I breathe. My soul aches... A slow wisp of smoke rises and dissipates in the distance... A restless tedium makes me think no more of you...

All so superfluous! We and the world and the mystery of both."<sup>132</sup>

There can only be one ending: at horizon's end, curled up amongst filth-ridden specters as I engage in necrophiliac games with the universe, continuously degrading myself and my surroundings until there is nothing left for a neurosis-inflamed homunculus to even attach its grip to. *La petite mort* as one of many glimmering knights of entropy. Like a taboo romance of mortal and immortal, I wax poetic for a fate that will only tear me asunder.

"Fly me to the moon  
And let me play among the stars  
Let me see what spring is like  
On Jupiter and Mars  
In other words, hold my hand  
In other words, darling, kiss me"<sup>133</sup>

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132: Ibid., 97.

133: Shiro Sagisu, Yoko Takahashi, "Fly Me To The Moon - Yoko Takahashi Acid Bossa Version," from *Neon Genesis Evangelion (Original Series Soundtrack)*. King Records Co., Ltd., 2019.

For Further Reading:

*Perpetuity Collects its Toll*

Massive New Krew - "On Fire"  
Meshuggah - "Combustion"  
Mors Principium Est - "Apricity"  
Sakuzo - "Fracture Ray"  
SQUARE ENIX MUSIC - "Snow in Summer"  
World's End Girlfriend - "Plein Soleil"

*On Why the Night Will Give No Answer*

Aesthesis - "Dreams Are Only Real As Long As They Last"  
Les Discrets - "5 Montée des Epies"  
zircon - "Identity Sequence (feat. Jillian Aversa)"

*Night in Day: The Vampire's Castle*

Apocryphos, Kammarheit, Atrium Carceri - "Drawn Like a Moth"  
DJ Myosuke - "Black Territory"  
Sigh - "Prelude to the Oracle"

*Someday the Dream will End*

datfootdive - "A World That's Ending"  
Desired - "Dreamland"  
Desired - "Summer Night"

*Path of Deception*

Cxrpe, Sybyr, BRUHMANGOD, Lil Darkie, Yvnc - "Blacked Out"  
Dropout Kings - "Something Awful"  
Laur - "Exitium"  
Lunar Aurora - "Finding"  
\$uicideBoy\$ - "Where's Your God?"  
Team Grimoire, Laur - "Grievous Lady -nothing is but what is not."  
Zheani - "Maenad"

*On the Night as the Continuing Question*

Alcest - "Sur l'océan couleur de fer"  
Cpkism - "Metempsychosis"  
Mili - "Bathub Mermaid"  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, The Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner - "Requiem in D minor, K.626: 3. Sequentia: Rex tremendae"  
World's End Girlfriend - "Flowers of Romance"  
World's End Girlfriend - "in Silence / in Siren"

# Retrocausative Templicity as a Function of Paranoid Hyperspace: Towards a Schizo-Analysis of the Conspiratological Pattern

*Frobisher Smith*

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*"Corruption is the currency of this space-time we're in."*

-Bain Wolfkind

**F**inally, finally, you're dropping in on time. You picked this up so you might as well keep reading, trust me: it's stuff you want to know. There's enough time, that's part of the point here; making time is not the hardest thing to do, but, you know, it's just sort of out of your control how it... squiggles... out there, into existence.

Please this will all make sense, but right at this very moment the time is scarce, so you must hear me out without too much protest! Look, I know I just said there's plenty of time, but it's just not always accessible. We'll get into this, you need to know all of it. They're keeping all of this stuff from you! They are using it all themselves and telling you it's

mindless stupid nonsense not to bother with. You have to listen to me and try to understand so we can all at least play the same game those bastards are up to, ok!? Give me a chance, you have nothing to lose and a whole metaverse to gain!

I'm talking about conspiracy theories, here. A lot of it is true, notionwise. Conspiracies are occurring all the time. In every second of mechanized time there's an unknown but non-zero number of conspiracies being hatched, and another smaller but also non-zero number of conspiracies coming to fruition (as well as being snuffed out of existence); and the conspiracy to hide the real, actual truth about conspiracies and, more importantly, the process of developing conspiracy theories, is the great-

est conspiracy of them all! Ok I've said the C word almost far too many times now let's talk about PATTERNS.

Conspiracy theories follow a pattern, but what is it? This isn't as easy to talk about as you might think. Patterns typically are possible to figure out, but not always. Yet patterns are still patterns even if they remain opaque to a full understanding of their constituent parts and sequence. Conspiracy theory falls into a kind of pattern that many fun, exciting things do: obscenity, pornography, cults, and addictions are also, similarly, patterns that have no fully-known, coherently circumscribed method of description, yet are self-evident of a known type when present and observed. I'm talking about patterns now because we're about to differentiate them from METHODS.

Hold tight my friend, methods are just how you do something, right? Now there are several ways to do one thing, and each of those ways is a method. You already know this, I know – a method is known. It's delineated! There's a lot of ways to look at the past, each one is a method. History is a method, Philology is a method, Statistical Linguistics is a

method, etc., you get it.

There's no "method" to the conspiracy theory, really. This is because the conspiracy theory is actually a sort of *ur-task*, primal and primary to methods. It's a wild and wooly undelineated yet self-describing pattern. I want to stop saying the C T phrase, I want to talk about the conspiritological pattern. This is the pattern employed by conspiritologists to properly understand and engage with a theory of conspiracy. I do not mean the basket weaving cope of Academia, the "Conspiracy Studies" petting zoo; I mean the vital, actualized act of conspiracy theorizing! I will now and also later refer to conspiritology, and of the conspiritological, not fully as a replacement for the artless cee-tee term that has been so beaten into the ground, but to refer specifically to a heightened, essential form of the work undertaken in the "conspiracy milieu."

I will hopefully prove to you that the conspiritological pattern is a pattern which contains methods. I will prove this to you by proving that the conspiritologist pattern cannot be considered itself a single method of study because it is in fact, a latent but powerful *methodology*. Yet since

such things as a spooky latent methodology from the depths cannot be talked about as fully real and more importantly, fully delineated, it remains in our consideration – simply a pattern!

Now I can describe this pattern to some degree, show you a little of what's going on under the hood. I'll start with what we can observe as constituent parts of any conspiritological work.

Foremost, every conspiracy theory has to involve itself with a theory of who has the power to do the diabolical thing speculated about, and be able to do it in a hidden, largely undisclosed manner. Therefore, since power is required, and it is evident these are theories of powerful agents, in some sense then they are theories of power. To look at the results of human activity, and to know that those with POWER had the greatest effect in shaping it, and to extrapolate from there, is the beginnings of doing real conspiritology.

One thing that differentiates the pattern in question from methods (schools, ideologies, studies) which do similar things, is that the conspiritologist takes the issue of power pro-

foundly seriously, in a deeply cosmic way, and is thus ultimately very pessimistic on the issues of inequality, disparate power dynamics, etc.; to such an extent that it is often simply assumed to be an inherent condition of bedrock reality.

Unlike an ideology that for instance might examine material power, and from there derive possible remedies to the abuse or misuse of power, the conspiritological pattern assumes higher levels of power beyond the material must actively permit the material realm to exist in the manner it does (or appears to) in order for it to be so (or do you foolishly imagine the galaxies, huddled in their clusters, or atoms, conscripted into their molecules, as actually having the kind of universal democratic free movement and agency that we simply pretend to have as humans? Do quarks? Or the many branes of the multiversal brane loaf?). Thus, *Knowledge* of the truth is itself the greatest reward and catalyst for transformation, to become aware of hidden power and the notion that there is always a higher power that cannot be overcome but will always orchestrate reality into an exoteric false consensus built from official narratives, and an esoteric deep coherency

of actuality that can only be glimpsed at darkly – the goal is to “wake you up” from the false consensus reality, thus ultimately it is part of Sophia’s Eternal War on Credulity and this is from where much of the conspiratologist’s zeal comes. The gnostic quality poking through is quite evident.

In fact, when the conspiracy milieu strays too far from this naive gnosticism into ideology, as one can see with the Disclosure Movement and “Exopolitics,” it becomes inert; its powerful effects dissipate when attempting to claim for itself a more concrete form (political activism) - a method. Because it is sliding into a shared agreement, however limited, with the false consensus reality, it loses its critical edge, the ‘outside-of-itself’ symbolic interpretation of history and current events - the true edged weapon in the conspiratologist’s carrying case. We see this does not concentrate the pattern, but attenuates it.

But conspiratology is not simply pure dissociated paranoiac screeching, in the Deleuzian sense: it is not even a simple miraculating-machine, though the pattern perhaps operates as a celibate machine at times. This pattern as a machine could be said to

be adjacent to the despotic body, but also an antibody of it; it is counter-despotic by design, if not always in execution. The conspiratologist, in fact, abandons the body without organs through the process of understanding-desiring becoming understanding-production; by signing up as a noos marine in the eternal war on credulity, they must abide with the desiring-machines to produce understanding and then also the understanding-recording machines and understanding-distribution machines (“these were the things that we carried”). But also, the chosen machines of understanding-production for the conspiratologist are not fully individualized disjunctions; they are prioritized through a kind of intuitive symbological triage. This process, among others, develops the conspiratological pattern along a radial orientation, a spoke-and-wheel configuration of centrality and epi-centrality, of concentric webs. Every part of the pattern maps to the string-on-pin-board, this is not just coincidence.

Conspiratologists often become deeply appreciative of and occasionally fixated on understanding-production and understanding-recording machines. These seductive machines can be argued to be essential features of

the project, they are what leads from understanding-production to understanding-distribution through the consuming-consummation of understanding. Typewriters and newspapers took primary status in the constellation of conspiratological machines in yester-

year, now the Internet is shaping up to be the ultimate understanding-desiring-machine and will be the primary hatrack of conspiratologists for the foreseeable future. More in a bit on typewriters though, especially those of Francis E. Dec, Esq....



**Morphogenese** / *Frida Ortgies-Tonn* / mixed media on canvas, silver cardboard, framed with glass/ 2020 / 70 x 50 cm

First we must finish up on the constituent parts of a conspiracy theory, it's essential info. As we said, it needs to ultimately be a theory of power, and also have explanatory power.

Explanatory power is actually quite simple. It comes from explaining. Don't try and discover an explanation. Just explain it! This is what the conspiratological approach does, it develops a theory with teeth, one that rips open underlying reality to reconstruct the deep truth, to perpetually reenact the fable of the naked king. It is anti-myth, to dispel and lift confusion and mystification, yet it is a product of a mystifying process and often mystifies as much as it elucidates. I suppose you want an example! Here's some explanation, right – like MANSREADING, uh huh? Hear me out, now, I'm not taking this to a misogynist place all of a sudden, don't worry – but mansreading reeks of bullshit. So sad it has worked so well, that little social engineering campaign, but not for the reasons you might suspect I mean. Where did it come from?

Well ultimately, I propose it's part of a conspiracy to get the public to fight amongst themselves about

who can take up the least amount of space. It's about being able to sell you a smaller seat. I know this partially because the very next dialectic step was, "but what about purses & bags? Women B Shoppin' yo! They need to put that stuff under their seats!" In other words, it immediately went to defensiveness over the use of this suddenly agreed upon "scarce" space of public transit seating, sacralizing those slim plastic dimes the Bus Company gives you to place your full adult ass on, with absolutely no strong impulse on either side towards expanding the size and number of seats through redesigning bus carriages and/or especially, using double decker buses in the United States (which were used in several cities pre-WWII, in fact).

Nowhere in the public discourse did I see a rich vein of that discussion, though it was present in small amounts here and there. People taking mansreading on the textual level of men's misbehavior in public and their fragility as a sex to engage seriously in criticism, or on the subtextual "conspiracy" of some dastardly fiends looking to stir up various battles of the sexes to, oh... perhaps 'keep them from uniting,' or 'prevent a raise in consciousness' or whatever,

those people are still nowhere near a consideration of the situation that actually matters or is germane.

Those such theories are always bunkum and DOA, they are the products of a culture of fixation content and not of conspiritology. You can tell from either its obvious targeting of fixations rather than power (insensitive men, silly women, etc.), or by its nebulous, weakly developed motivations of power (shown by vague crunchy appeals to unity). Real conspiritology always has strongly developed theory of motivation because it begins with the consideration, “*qui bono?*” Things that don’t start from that question are not conspiritology, and often are simply fixation culture. More on fixation in a bit; suffice to say these are considerations of a low level in the strata of meaningfulness. When you go further, to the subconscious, to the sub-basement of intuited impulses – inversely, the height of the strata of meaning – to the truly disquieting shower logic such as the number of galaxies in the shadow pocketverse being dissolved by vast clouds of acid to accommodate the constant electronootextural engagement of the word **BASED**, you get to...

Based on what you might ask? Listen, we’re close to the real meat here! I want to drop a big one on you now. Remember when I said the conspiritological pattern was a latent methodology? When I said it was an *ur-task*, non-delineated yet self-describing? Well it absolutely is, and furthermore – as a methodology, it is a *bricolage* of methods, which among other things, breaks temporal linearity and also deepens the complexity of the temporal information load, *i.e.* it is a process of convoluting time. Conspiracy theory as templexity engine; it is all this and more!

This is what *THEY* want to keep from you my friends! And they try to approximate the conspiritological pattern in every way they can to try and generate the kind of temporal convolutions favorable to their plans. Who are *THEY*? I’ll get to it. I’ll get to *THEM* but first we come to *them*, of the lower echelon.

With manspreading, the “proximate *THEM*” is certainly of noble conspiritological genealogy. It is something you can intuitively sense if you live the kind of life most conspiritologists do. They routinely bump up against these opaque ‘black-boxes’ that radiate a strange, malevo-

lent power; which often simply aren't present in the lives of normal 'main-sequence' type people. If you are too unstable or simply too poor to own a car, you have encountered one of these things: The Bus Company (or its cousin The Metro).

The Bus Company is a bottomless pit of corruption and stink that is always simply ignored and continually fed by local governments. It has seemingly endless authority and zero accountability; it is a very strange creature that many people must organize a non-insignificant portion of their lives around. The Bus Company will do things like end bus lines six months before their replacement lines come onboard, and face no consequences; they will cancel the bus-passes of victims of attacks on their busses while the assailants go unpunished. This scurrilous activity, denial of which is implausible yet always accepted at an official level, is certainly a sign of conspiracy afoot. How many lines and stops have been discontinued merely to punish some disgruntled customer who refused to be silent and accept the iron law of the Bus Company?

It is very important to the conspiratological pattern that power is

not relegated to nebulous systems and 'isms,' this is seen as a cop-out for a good reason: it is a self-terminating consideration, and the conspiratological pattern does not ever desire to terminate. Terminating prematurely is an invitation for credulity to remain! Power is wielded by entities, either nakedly or through systems. When a system begins to wield power itself, it is thus transformed into an entity. When Bus Companies start to collude they create systems, when these systems start to do their own things they become a new entity. The system of collusion becomes the Public Transit Lobby. Of course, this lobby exists not to expand and improve public mass transit, but to further entrench and protect the interests of the Bus Company, which is to provide as little transit as possible for as much profit as possible.

What happens when a Bus Company, hearing the pleas of the city and its riders, softens its heart and tries to escape the crab bucket of the Lobby? Dallas is a story of a local do-good Bus Company facing the wrong end of the Lobby. The Lobby gets its hooks in starting 1983, when Dallas County "decides" it needs a regional transit authority (suburban

Texan commuters were apparently desperate for shuttles and light rail (you see). By 1988, DART fully owns Dallas' Bus Company.<sup>1</sup> By then, several municipalities smell what's in the wind and pull out of the regional boondoggle. The homeless population explodes in Dallas at around this time, a situation typified by the murder of a rookie beat cop, killed downtown with his own gun by a deranged homeless man that same year.<sup>2</sup> An article appearing in a 1988 issue of "D Magazine" lays it all out – DART promised one thing and delivered something entirely different.<sup>3</sup> We can see clearly how consent was manufactured in the public by promising the moon and a pony, and delivering a moonpie and a ponykeg of rootbeer (I must note to those interested, there is also a short article in the July '88 edition of D Magazine entitled "DART and the Second Gunman," that is well worth a read).

By 1990, DART is in control of a transit police force, retiree bus patrol rent-a-cops deputized to make random stops and searches. The fix is

fully in. Expansion and renovation is focused on expensive suburban light commuter rail, the inner city bus service is in full decay. By 1995 fares are skyrocketing, service is shoddy, and the bus cops have expanded in size and authority. The experience for the typical daily bus rider was one of a relatively decent bus system turned into an expensive, dysfunctional, and increasingly authoritarian mobile day-care for the homeless within a decade. And in the present day, Dallas routinely gets included in lists of the worst public transit in America. Who can you blame? *Qui bono?* Who even came up with the idea of Regional Transit Authorities anyway?

It all started with an attempt to preserve the prevailing Metro and Bus Company Oligarchy in New York City during World War II, and it ended up with NYCTA – its own little fiefdom, subsidized by the government, with a mandate to be run technocratically and be "removed from City politics," (in other words, removed from accountability). By 1955, the new form, the Transit Au-

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1: "DART History," *DART.org* (updated October, 2020). <<https://www.dart.org/about/history.asp>>

2: Ryan Osborne, "30 Years Later, Dallas Officer's Downtown Killing Still 'Rips Your Soul Out,'" *WFAA.com* (January 25, 2018). <<https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/30-years-later-dallas-officers-downtown-killing-still-rips-your-soul-out/287-511436335>>

3: Terry Maxon, "The 3 Billion Dollar Boondoggle," in *D Magazine* (May, 1988). <<https://www.dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/1988/may/the-3-billion-dollar-boondoggle/>>

thority, a fully metastasized Bus Company, was a proven concept and it soon spread to other big cities and, perhaps more interestingly – cities that mainly wished to be thought of as *BIG*. Cleveland, for instance, was an early adopter of the Regional Transit Authority model. Who, one wonders, was whispering in the ears of the city councils and county bureaucracy? Who are the faceless grey shadow men of the Public Transit Lobby who sold all of America on the RTA model: a thing that barely worked, that primarily made sense for a huge city like New York, and was an obvious corruption magnet?

Hopefully by now you are catching on to a few things. There's always higher power doing hidden things. If you aren't jumping off that ledge of faith that nothing is ever as it seems, you are stuck in a burning house! And what's more, the defective, incoherent world of Conspiracy Studies, which tries to head shrink the "conspiracy mindset," has no real edge to it, nothing to grip and turn – hilariously, it has no power! The power comes from attempting to look at power in strange ways, not carefully delineated ways, and certainly not with primary concern to rational-

ly defensible ways.

No, the "rational" defense *must* be simply a secondary consideration, some *ad hoc* labyrinthine side quest – maniacal and mystical, not something fully crystalized in the mind during early research, as any sensible scholar would do. It is the most diffuse aspect of the conspiratorial pattern; the Who and the Why are almost always far more developed and defensible than the How, even though the How is often the most interesting aspect of the pattern.

But for the wider community, the most applicable portion, of course, is the connections it makes within the historical record, or rather, in the temporal information load. What it does is increase the density of the information load through extending symbolic and relational connectivity. This expansionary force, something akin to noetic dark energy, is a very productive force; giving all anomalous and dissident researchers wide new scaffoldings, whole new ballparks of critique, analysis, and considerations to work with.

This can be shown by the sheer volume of material within the textual data field that deals with certain

dates, thanks in no small part to the work of the conspiracy milieu, such as Nov. 22nd, 1963 and Sept. 11th, 2001. Both the assassination of JFK and the 9/11 terror attack were huge, world-changing events, but this does not fully explain the vast number of books and articles that continue to be written about them, nor how the days of the events (and the 48 hours after) have been ‘exploded’ into an encyclopedic tapestry of minutia – every minute poured over and filled with meaning and connections. Anatomists explode skulls, Conspiratologists explode days.

Of course, the consideration that “momentous events generate lots of discussion” does little to explain the continued fascination and informational density related to the Manson Family murders. Is it because Charlie killed off the Hippy Movement? Or, more obviously, because his connections to the Intelligence community and the world of the occult continue to be tantalizingly unresolved? As for Hippies, mind you, I’ve heard just as many Boomers lay the blame on the Altamont concert as the Manson Family, and there is nowhere near as much published concerning it. As for important killers in 20th century history, try to find an internet listicle

on the 10 best books written about Franz Ferdinand vs. Charles Manson, you will see what I mean. The information density just isn’t there.

This is not to say that everything the pattern pulls into itself is actually meaningful or true in an objective sense, of course. Conspiratologists, just like the rest of us, have their fixations and their blind spots. So let us now address this issue of FIXATION. We turn to that which is known as the *idée fixe*, the fixed idea, defined here as a stereotypical ersatz understanding of a particular thing (a gender, an ethnicity, a particular type of art, a school of thought, an occupation, etc.) that is built up around some particular cognitive dysfunction, aka a “hang-up.” Hang-ups are, of course, a sort of anti-production, and they interrupt and reduce the flows of understanding-desiring. A fixed idea is an inferior product of analysis that is felt acceptable due to deficiencies in judgment. These deficiencies can be brought on by a number of things we should not like to speculate too heavily about, but probably include things such as organic brain damage, limited context due to phobia, feelings of inferiority, and so on. When a fixed idea develops into an obsession, this

could be said to be a fixation.

There are several would-be conspiratologists operating in the field today who could be doing amazing work if they could manage to reduce the hold their fixations have on them. I will not name them here, lest they catch wind of this article and, in a fit of contrariness and paranoia, push even further into them; but there are some fairly clever and creative souls out there wasting their energies on exposing villainy born nearly entirely from their own imagination, lost in the weeds of fixation culture. One can not simply tell a conspiratologist to improve, as typically this is just seen as a sign of the conspiracy attempting to limit their advances.

We see fixations as a major feature of the conspiratological pattern, not within it - but buttressing it, bottling it in strange ways. Conspiratology happens when the conspiratologist gets beyond deeply static and personal fixations to a broader, more universal tier of understanding-desiring-production. Often this results in further fixation development because a conspiratologist is wont to incorporate fixations within this higher analysis to 'add up' evidence to further development, to go "even deeper."

The fixations that Francis E. Dec, Esq. had concerning Jewish doctors and race-mixing are not exactly insightful, nor very interesting. It is where his mind took the broader fixation of the body horror of aging that brings something interesting to the table. That inescapable feeling that modern life is hurting us, sapping our vitality and intelligence, that we are being aged prematurely with nothing to show for it. Dec felt intuitively the sinister truth that planned obsolescence wasn't just for our consumer products, the policy is to be carried out on us as well, the consumers!

But Dec was not trying to make surrealist art about Oligarchic control of the economy, or write speculative satire concerning people's enthrallment to the commodification of their own identity by brainwashing from ubiquitous consumerist ideology. To him, the Worldwide Gangster Computer God Secret Containment Policy was not an analogy of the post-Fordian, global, computer-aided cybernetic-behavioralist control system already fast approaching at his time; it was a literal, real gears and wires, Six-Million-Dollar-Man-style cyborgification of humanity. He was clearly not all there in his head. But that's

OK, to engage in conspiratology is to bite off more than one can chew. And perhaps he wasn't quite so unreasonably paranoid, after all. His frequent mention of tampering and theft of his typewriters points to the distinct possibility someone really was screwing around with him on some level. Were *THEY* trying to stop Dec from writing?

One can see that it's not about getting it right, so much. Very rarely, if ever, is a conspiratologist right about "it all." What they are blessed with is a certain kind of intuitive genius and, as mentioned, a powerful desire to understand and explain the world. They pursue this desire through the replication of the conspiratological pattern.

But there are some who not only produce *FIXATION CULTURE* on purpose, but as a misdirection of energies for likely nefarious ends. Fixation culture is the activity of producing material (content) to feed fixations. There are lots of examples of fixation culture in the world of politics and propaganda, some currents touching on the conspiratological but most not even getting near to the pattern. And there is also a different form, that from the perspective of

this author is far more dangerous.

There is a kind of ersatz conspiratology, propped up with a massively-mesmerizing edifice in front of the good ol' aforementioned templexity engine, directed by a largely unknown consortium of interests. One of the tentacles of this plot most every reader will know about is the television show *Ancient Aliens*.

I think there are people out there who understand well the power of the conspiratological pattern. It's power to churn up the temporal information load, to aerate the crevices... the way it uniquely is talented at bringing potentialities "out of the woodwork." And of course, from another perspective, it could be seen as a process that actually retroactively generates real past events and personas out of its myriad potentialities (do we dare apply Mach's principle to the ontological horizon?).

I would argue that the producers and funders of all of the *Ancient Aliens* documentaries are interested in focusing this process on, ultimately, Mesopotamian mythology and a kind of dime store neo-Theosophy. It is thoroughly designed to not go anywhere, as it is based on the

“theories” of Zechariah Sitchen and Erik von Daniken, whose works are so fraudulent at their base as to be totally unsalvageable by honest researchers. This is how one can see it is fixation culture, not conspiratology. But it is to lend its energy to what end, then? Inculcate Babylonian Globalist mysticism among the masses?

One might argue that that form of mysticism has already been established, in America at least, for quite a long time. It might be to sell more New Age seminar cruises, and/or to play controlled opposition for Biblical Archaeology expedition funding campaigns. But, surely, there is a lot to be gained somewhere from the daily drip of noetic energy generated from television watchers trained on the kaleidoscope of esoteric & conspiracy programming on the History Channel.

An obvious method for the establishment to use in corralling conspiracy theories is to provide their own version of it in the marketplace of ideas. If they can get you thinking within some broken occult history promulgated by charlatans, and focused on passive-consumption media like television, you will not lend your

energy and intellect to more serious matters. If *Ancient Aliens* won't do it, maybe *Coast to Coast AM* will. Or if not that, there's always *Infowars*, the deep end of the limited hangout pool where the inmates aren't really running the show but they have certain privileges... Anything to keep you primarily in the register of “fan” and not “independent researcher,” focused on the messages *THEY* want you to hear and talk about.

You must break out of the petting zoo! You must allow the conspiratological pattern to replicate freely, outside of the frames and constraints contingent in mass media production! Only then is it at its full disruptive, dangerous strength. If you let the television producers have all the control they will simply continue to deliver a half-baked, ulteriorly-directed fixation culture product. The establishment mediaplex pretends the pattern is nothing but a social pathology, meanwhile they attempt to produce it themselves, to further their own designs.

And from whence does the pattern arise? This is certainly a question for those schools of thought that are interested in the modes that

introduce and continually recreate complexity and are themselves represented and recreated via teleplexic processes. Is it a modernist occurrence? Is it postmodern? On first look, it appears to have a deep connection to the modern world and to Modernity.

It perhaps first replicated fully in a way familiar to us today in discussion of the affairs and rumours of the lodges and secret societies of the early modern period. Inevitably, and rather early really, we find the first fully formed & well-documented example of a fantastical high-tech occult control conspiracy theory, promulgated in the London of the 1790s. This is, of course, the notorious Air Loom Gang, whose dastardly political subterfuge was observed by James Tilly Matthews. They had some kind of ray transmitting device that they could move around and set up in various, more-or-less hidden locations in the city to affect the health and temperament of people; especially members of Parliament and the upper brass of the British military during important meetings. It was Matthew's speculation that this device operated by means of some kind of magneto-

pneumatic chemistry that produced a ray from some action upon pressurized fluids and gasses, as that is what the device, which he called the "air loom," appeared to use.

Without going into too much detail at this time, briefly, he appears to have been involved in some sort of espionage and intrigue involving the French revolution, and then in all likelihood, was a burned asset, cast away by whichever spy faction he was really working with. Perhaps in an attempt to disrupt certain plots he had been made aware of in the course of his espionage career, he alerted esteemed members of the public to these activities.

Subsequently, he was harassed and gangstalked and had the air loom used on him by this shadowy group. His warnings were disregarded and his description of the device, the people, and the events he was a witness to were taken as nothing more than paranoid delusions and hallucinations.<sup>4</sup> Nevermind for now that his description sounds like a primitive and naive description of anything from radio to laser technology, or that he almost certainly had actually

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4: Mike Jay, "The Air Loom Gang: James Tilly Matthews and his visionary madness," in *Nthposition Magazine* (Nov. 12th, 2014).

been some kind of British spy. We are encouraged by the keepers of consensus reality to, in this little example, accept the statements and interpretations of known psychopathic torturers, the doctors of Bedlam Asylum.

What we can say was that Matthews was a sensitive man with a fantasy-prone personality. He likely had some kind of secret knowledge of plots and rumours of plots, and potentially he witnessed something that he did not fully comprehend and allowed his imagination to fill in the gaps. What this whole incident shows is that the dark absurdities of Modernity lend themselves to being understood through a lens of fantastic paranoid confabulation. This appears to give credence to the notion that conspiratology is simply part of modernization, a pathology brought on by modern living.

There are processes of Modernity which, likewise, are templexive in manners similar to the conspiratological pattern. In *Templexity*, Nick Land mentions that Modernization unlocks and regresses into deep time through the historical sciences such as Geolo-

gy, and produces an 'involution' to the microstructure of time through the advancement of mechanized chronometry. Modernity thus gives itself access to billions of years in the past and to the present moment down to the picosecond.<sup>5</sup> Are the templexive features of the conspiratological pattern similar to these temporal accessions of Modernity? That is to say, a result of Modern processes?

We see that the pattern can be totally malleable to the Postmodern as well. One of Charles Fort's great innovations in conspiratology was to limit absolute causes as in some way sensible to everyday life. One could say this was done for expediency, more than anything, as he was focused primarily on the What, his glorious "parade of the damned" of anomalous journalistic tidbits. Not to say he suggested mundane causes for the "damned facts" he catalogued, merely that his fantastic causes were extensions of standard motifs of the human condition. We can see this play out in one of his proposed causes of the fantastic deluges of fish, meat, blood, frogs, and other strange things recorded in history. These are quite possibly due to cosmic shipping

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5: Nick Land, *Templexity: Disordered Loops Through Shanghai Time* (Shanghai: Urbanatomy Electronic, 2014) sections 7.4.7.6.

lines, he said, which, like the shipping lines of our world, are often negligent and corner-cutting, resulting in spills and crashes and other incidents.

Some space freighter needs to make weight quick; well, perhaps that results in several tons of fish heads raining down on a small European town – simple cause and effect extrapolated from how things work as we know it. Who benefits from tens of thousands of frogs falling from the sky? The wholesale intergalactic frog merchant does, when he needs a little bonus insurance payout! A mundane cynicism applied to fantastic events: and as it turned out this was not an attenuation of the pattern. This conceit was not a capitulation to consensus reality, but was in fact a rather clever theoretical development that has shown great results.

One could say Fort was quite ahead of his time, presaging the postmodern turn as a sort of prophetic grandfather figure. As noted by Lois Pauwels, “before the first manifestation of Dadaism and Surrealism, Charles Fort introduced into science what Tzara, Breton, and their disci-

ples were going to introduce into art and literature.”<sup>6</sup> Fort’s critiques of scientific epistemology found in books like *Lo!* are, of a kind, the same as the postmodern critiques to follow in subsequent decades which, while they may be quite rigorous, generally lack the delightfully whimsical tongue-in-cheek delivery of Charles Fort.

If we follow Fort’s early bold steps down the road to the postmodern we inevitably arrive at the tracks of John Keel, and also Robert Anton Wilson, both consummate postmodern conspiritologists. John Keel represents a mastery of the Fortean “anomalous journalism” mode that at times expands into sublime cosmic horror. Keel was arguably the real life Dirk Gently, and his books are essential references for Fortean research.

Robert Anton Wilson, the agnostic mystic, always proclaimed his conspiracies were purely fictional, which allowed for the intrusion of reality into them – the real world breaking into the story as a source of narrative subversion rather than typical “fourth-wall breaks” coming from within the story, a helter-skelter twist

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6: Louis Pauwels & Jacques Bergier, *The Morning of the Magicians* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 2009), 118. First published 1960.

on the postmodern form.

The psychic dolphins got paid by the CIA, in the end though, didn't they? Or was it Hitler's doctors? (And did the CIA hire Nazi computer scientists to scan Walt Disney's brain into a supercomputer developed by the Breakaway Civilization in the 1980s? I'd like to know!) Or was it ultimately, and by this I mean Wilson's entire body of work, really a part of Sophia's eternal war on credulity? A loose thread, an astute observer might suggest, from a fragment of a lost teaching; echoed also by the work of Bolivian philosopher-mystic Óscar Ichazo, who was a spiritual advisor to John C. Lilly, the famous establishment Cold War scientist and occasional researcher of psychedelics and dolphin communication.

Reality intrudes on art, the motifs return themselves with renewed context; the fourth wall is broken and rebuilt as a revolving door. Óscar Ichazo founds the Arica School in 1968. In 1973, John C. Lilly reveals the existence of E.C.C.O., the Earth Coincidence Control Office, and that one can consciously train to join it and become part of the cosmic spiritual hierarchy. Robert Anton Wilson publishes *Prometheus Rising* in 1984.

*Ecco the Dolphin*, the video game, is released in July, 1992. The summer of 1992 was also the summer of the Barcelona Olympic games, the first appearance of America's "Dream Team" in Basketball – real *titans* at the Olympics. The Montjuic Communications Tower debuts at the same time, built to broadcast the live footage of the games. It is an explicit reference to Prometheus's torch. As I have said, the recuso-convolutive templexity of the conspiratological pattern is quite demonstrable. These events, positioned separately in the chronological and ontological record, are repositioned into the same strata of meaning through a conspiratological nexus point that is itself a recursive self-reference.

This points us back to the question: if Capitalism, and the Hypermodern, is inherently oriented in the future, as a back-propagating process operating partially (if not primarily) beyond the event horizon of accessible time, then where and when, as such, is the conspiritological pattern oriented?

A clue can be found in the very nature of the pattern. It is not, as I have hopefully demonstrated, a standardized form of study with a defined

train of logic. It is a bricolage of methods used disjunctively and conjunctively towards a certain purpose. And what is this purpose, ultimately? I have said rather openly that there is an eternal war on credulity, and this might astound the reader. How can such a thing as the conspiratological pattern help wage this war? Does it not ultimately mystify, stupefy, and further obscure matters with muddy waters?

Ah, but what it does, really, is inculcate a sense of incredulity through the cathartic experience of disenchantment, of being shown reality is not how it appears to be, and then re-enchantment, of being initiated into the higher truth of the matter. Re-enchantment is never solid however, and the lesson of being wary of hidden action behind surface appearances is, after time, left far more sturdy than the specific considerations of lizard men and what might be inside the moon, which is very likely hollow. The lasting effect, then, is to be more wary of the official narratives on things. Did they teach you in school that the moon is hollow? Did they tell you the amount and kind of radioactive isotopes found in the atmosphere of Mars corresponds to what one would ex-

pect a few million years after a global thermonuclear conflagration? Upon learning such things, the big takeaway is not that this or that is necessarily the ultimate truth, but that mainstream sources don't even talk about this stuff and they honestly have no good reason not to.

Therefore, I argue that a pattern which operates within Modernity and then easily transmutes, without much change, into relevance within the Postmodern Age, as if it contained impulses and resonances of both modes within it from the very start, is well – what could be said to act as a chameleon pattern, and is perhaps truly one manifestation of a positive feedback loop of a cultural wrinkle perpetually reaching out from an almost unknowably ancient age, asserting itself to address the perennial, to manage the conservative tendencies towards belief in consensus reality as a fully accurate description of existence, which limits the spirit and body of humanity by dulling their imaginations and invalidating their subtle intuitions.

This chameleon, perhaps upon a very close examination, could be said to be an aspect of Deep Culture that cannot be extinguished without possi-

bly destroying the entire mass cultural project (“civilization”). Within a consideration of Deep Culture, or of the early and deeply-impressed cultural forms created and continually reinterpreted within the human mind, there could be said to be multiple repositories of cultural knowledge. These repositories are the various different sources for things such as cosmology, history, morality, strategy, technics, civics, and so on. There are always “officialized” sources: the tribal canon, trusted elders, etc. In our world today these are the academies, the governmental institutions, public school books, and such. And then there are the other repositories, deeply important to the functioning of the culture but often purposefully excluded from the officialized repositories of cultural knowledge.

We return again to the “bricological” nature of the pattern. MIT Anthropologist Manduhai Buyandelger, who spent many years studying Mongolian shamans, has said that, “shamans themselves are cultural bricoleurs,” who “make histories out of knowledge that they collect throughout their practice.”<sup>7</sup> This

shamanic repository of history, set aside and often against the officialized repositories of history, appears to coincide with the nature of the conspiratological pattern.

It was Claude Lévi-Strauss who perhaps best described the situation when explaining that “mythical thought appears to be an intellectual form of bricolage.”<sup>8</sup> In *The Savage Mind*, he contends that traditional mythical thought is, or can be, a kind of science: a science that unlike the science of an engineer, is reliant on images and signs rather than operative concepts. But, in that images and signs are permutable and carry significance, rather powerful systems can be developed that, while limited by their nature, “can be quite capable of generalizing, and so be scientific.” Or in other words, they can carry quite a lot of explanatory and predictive power.

The practitioner of traditional mythical thought is a bricoleur, and mythical thought itself a kind of bricolage, made up of the “remains and debris of events,” in that mythical thought involves a “fitting togeth-

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7: Peter Dizikes, “The surprising story of Mongolian shamanism” on *MIT News* (Dec. 13th, 2013). <<https://news.mit.edu/2013/the-surprising-story-of-mongolian-shamanism-1216.html>>

8: Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 19-22.

er” of the “fossilized evidence of the history of an individual or a society.” It weaves together narratives and experiences of events and personas, which it “never tires of ordering and re-ordering in its search to find in them a meaning.”

The conspiratologist is just such a bricoleur, *par excellence*. And when put into their proper light, we can see their countenance in all manner of temporal periods from the traditional to the hypermodern to the postmodern. They are a half-aware beast, more like the forest animals than the court historian; we can find them out there in the periphery of human settlement, using a strange but compelling collection of folk magic tricks to prove to you the ‘trv chronologie of Historiographical events from derivations upon the newly uncovered secret papers of Marco Polo, and more importantly, as in direct conflict with the system employed by the esteemed royal Chronicler of our current age, who doth be surely instructed into deep ignorance by treacherous spirits.’

They, having been seduced by understanding, and finding it thoroughly beyond them, seek to stir others into seeking it – a further

desiring-production of understanding-desiring. And so others seek to answer the questions posed by conspiratologists, and then themselves ask larger questions they have no intention of ever answering, having faith the question will be interesting enough to find for itself answerers in the future. This, in a way, is the work of the conspiratological pattern, the work of this subtly mutative traditional mode, a self-renewing impulse of the ancient folkway of shamanic history-making. We therefore can see the “*conspiratological record*” as being one part of the shamanic repository of history within Western culture, a representative of what one could call the “shamanic methodology” of historical analysis and interpretation.

And ultimately it is because of the undirected, amateur, unlearned style of the conspiratologist, unconnected to any standard methodology of study, with its primacy on the unleashing of paranoid intuition rather than in filling neat rows of academic concern, that they are one of the ultimate methodological generalists – and the conspiratological pattern is a veritable power-house of temporal-informational convolution! To move towards retrocausative tem-

plexity is to embrace conspiracy thinking, to warp your brain around the details to explain what you know to be true –

They're out to get you pal! Watch Out!!



**Spinal Catastrophism** / *Luis Esteban Escalante* / Collage: Paper ephemera (Magazine cuttings, images, text, brown bag) / 2020

# Permutations in Dating and Surveillance (Difference and Repetition)

*Michael Quint*

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## .010000 (Main Thread)

Longing was the main culprit. Seeing their faces, each one with a distinctive element that would grip him, the feeling would seep out of the pit of his stomach. Jordan's friends would chide him from their convertibles, speeding fast through his outside periphery and laughing at the ardent defenses he would launch. For Jordan, who had been on 15 different dates with five different people over the span of a month in a new city, the only ingenuine thing he could have done was not follow the whims of his chemical releases. Jordan would attempt to uncover the truth of the universe with his friend Arturo, on a bank overlooking a ramshackle orphanage. The two would throw rocks at any child unlucky enough to walk outside. One night, upon striking the head of a particularly weak looking boy with a very large rock, Jordan realized his truth: the inescapable feeling of want.

The dates would always start the

same way, Jordan would open the door holding the well polished Beretta 92 right at the unsuspecting subject. He would fire three controlled shots into the night right over their right shoulder, then drop the gun and take a soldier's salute.

"I WILL ALWAYS PROTECT YOU. I AM ALWAYS THERE FOR YOU." Jordan would yell, eyes brimming with tears of joy.

His dates, flattered, would walk in and begin to massage the wet mess of tangled curly hair attached to his scalp that Jordan took so much pride in. Jordan would nuzzle them affectionately in return, sticking his right index finger into their left ear before removing it slowly to simulate the feeling of being left at the altar.

## .013000

After meeting at Jordan's house, Amber and Jordan walked to a small dive bar to each drink a single beer.

Amber, with her thick brown blonde hair and soft leather work shoes, eyed Jordan as he gulped down a sludgy IPA. Under the table he was petting her with his right foot, working it under and over her calf in syncopated loops. He looked exactly like his online pictures, almost too much so. When they both finished their beverage he set a five dollar bill down as a tip in the center of the table, which struck Amber as pompous. Back at Jordan's house they formed various poses on his couch, imitating renaissance figures and war veterans in their casual movements. The decor of the room was unplaceable. After the movie they had on in the background finished playing, Amber put her shirt back on and headed out, she had work in the morning.

.011000

There were fractions of each event he could no longer remember.

Bethany, her claw like nails pounding away at the bottom of his tongue. Bethany petting and stroking, drawing blood, Jordan biting at the wound until it dripped. A copy of King Lear that Jordan had never bothered to read was open on his

bedroom desk.

"Bethany, I want to choke you now," Jordan slurred.

Her mouth blew up like a toad's, belching out a load of hot rainwater that filled the room to his knees. He was gripping the pharynx and her head popped off neatly.

"Don't worry Jordan baby, you sweet baby boy, my cock man, this happens all the time, sweetheart" Bethany said, letting out a charming laugh that sounded to Jordan exactly like the chimes of a church bell he remembered from his childhood.

There was certainty that they loved each other. A large earthquake shook the bedroom. Jordan's head hurt, he told Bethany that he would definitely call her.

.012000

It made no difference to David how Jordan looked; it was bend over and there in the pocket where the two of them met, the warm diffuse air would collide with the neurological. They would stack diapers against the wall of David's loft, hundreds and hundreds, until they completely lost

count. In the summer heat, the two of them moving through the graveyard, David slipped his hand under the waist of Jordan's jeans and tightly gripped Jordan's thigh before forcefully pressing his finger on his taint. The way the light reflected off of his Brita onto David's bald head enticed Jordan. Morning on a wood pane, a half filled kiddie pool, where was David? Jordan blearily stumbled around the backyard. The backyard became a fixed cube.

Jordan made David dinner, a cold soup prepared by dropping handfuls of old keys into the large pot over the course of several days. On a bed suspended in the middle of a Cartesian plane grid, Jordan moved his tongue through a series of thin veils to touch David's toes, the skin was surprisingly cold. A snake came down his thigh.

.014000

"Patricia, you look stunning tonight."

"So do you, Jordan."

"May we move to the couch?"

"Sure... So what is it you do for

a living, Jordan?"

"I think it's pretty obvious."

"You're right. Do you enjoy it?"

"Do om, om do, are, riot."

"Excuse me?"

"Slom pi, ri doze, corno, moza."

"Liampa, reimb, armba, om om, om."

"Now that's a good story. Patricia, is this in reverse?"

"Jordan, not to say this hastily, but fuck me now. My eyes are righteous"

## + Outside (State Compound)

Arutro had installed the cameras around Jordan's house according to the exact specifications given to him by the government contact. Each camera was specially placed to capture the maximum amount of space while maintaining the least amount of noticeability. There was no doubt in Arturo's mind that he was betraying Jordan, but betrayal was just a collection of grunts.

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An unknown number of miles outside of Las Vegas, a reasonably well put together modernist office building startled a small artificial park. Inside, Don Ram and his associates watched a large collection of monitors that displayed various suburban home interiors. Spread over the area of about half a football field, the viewing room (which was covered in feces, cigarette butts, vomit, and various liquid discardings intertwined with a mesh of machines, screens, and desk chairs) seemed meticulously clean. The viewers wore loose, white shirts, alternated between a general intake cycle of heroin, weed, cocaine, DMT, and shrooms, and took their jobs very seriously. Don Ram, teetering on the end of a coke binge, turned on "Jordan Monitor 4." On the big screen, Jordan was pictured on his couch. There was no consistency to Jordan's body, or self, each pixel featuring a part of his body interchanged with each other. Slapping himself a few times, Don Ram let out a loud high-pitched chipmunk squeal to get the attention of the other people on his floor. Alan Rom, one of Don's closest associates, wrote in a small orange notebook, "At the age of twelve Jordan was found unable to jump rope—see

video A.X1234.53.9G.RH for more."

## .011200

Bethany grew more and more fractal. Her nipples were one hundred nipples. Her hair color was different. Jordan was no longer certain he was on the same date, his house seemed to be shifting. A few of the paintings that had been given to him by his grandfather had changed from idyllic nature scenes to black and white World War Two photography. Bethany insisted that his name was Jardin no matter how much he told her to knock it off. Voices were patterns of rhythmic decay.

In the corner of the dining room a large bronze statue caught Jordan's eye, he inspected the plaque which proclaimed "Hand on Throat." Jordan compared and saw that it was his hand, and Bethany's throat, but both shaped like shadows of the actual things.

Bethany with a straw, sliding it over his forehead repeatedly, then pouncing to pierce the skin, sucking in blood. A running gag between a reflection of a portrait and the undoing of a portrait, Jordan thought.

The sex was odd, the genitalia was different, the vulva more porous, Jordan's own penis hollow at points. He checked his GPS location, there were eight coordinates. Snow fell from an LED light bulb overlooking his cell phone charging station.

"I want things to be more normal," Jordan remarked.

"Oh, Jardin!" Bethany screamed in pleasure.

Jordan noticed Bethany wearing a sticker that read "Hello, I'm Betinie." An ant crawled between four sets of nostrils hanging from the wall.

.0143000

"Excuse me?"

"Now that's a good story. Patricia, is this in reverse?"

"Patricia, you look stunning to-



**Kotti** / *Frida Ortgies-Tonn* / acrylic on canvas / 2020 / 160 x160 cm

night.”

“May we move to the couch?”

“Do om, om do, are, riot.”

“Jordan, not to say this hastily, but fuck me now. My eyes are righteous.”

“I think it’s pretty obvious.”

“You’re right. Do you enjoy it?”

“Slom pi, ri doze, corno, moza.”

“Sure... So what is it you do for a living Jordan?”

“Liampa, reimb, armba, om om, om.”

“So do you Jordan.”

.012500

David, anus, partition, Jordan, heat, maximum, calf, thigh, thorax, wet, anus, taint, tongue, love, diapers, correction, protection, condom, Devd, Joryan, Devd and Joryan, Joryan and Devd, lovers entwined, diapers stacked, a fertile light from the balcony, a perfectly timed stroke, Devd caressing Joryan’s spine, cracking and splintering wood panels, there were no days anymore, there was so much longing, Jordyn felt it all vibrating

through him, he wanted to absorb Devd, he opened his mouth and pulled Devd closer, insertion of Devd into mouth, Davd unraveling into a long thread that ran deeper and deeper into Jordn’s ear, metallic taste bitter on the tongue but warm in their hearts, the bodies were folded, what time was it, where was Devd?

.01(1)(2)45000

On the mossy chrome kitchenette, David held an ear right above Bethany’s forcep. Jordan had been in forests like this, but never one so imagined. The house and the woods were both together and separate. The more Jordan watched, the more David became forks, spoons, knives, clattering against the spools of wool that encompassed Bethany.

The three of them were talking. Jordan’s long hair occasionally slipped in his mouth. David and Bethany’s voices smoothed over small pockets of space. Jordan felt that he had to add something.

“Bethany, David, Do om, om do, are, riot.” Jordan blurted out, his words pushing a set of non-formed ideas into conclusion.

"I missed it all, when the first seed was planted. Always I attempt to identify a martyr, some synonymous proletarianism of virtue. What I mean is, what herbs do need to seal my fate, to nominate my chakras correctly. Patricia, you look stunning tonight."

Bethany and David lifted their snouts and cried with perfect diction "One of the mother earth, one of the furniture shoppers, how much have we learned! Jordan, not to say this hastily, but fuck me now. My eyes are righteous!"

"THAT IS ALL," Jordan was getting excited, "may we move to the couch, there the thing that was is there and there was the is, the all the be, a conflated conflicting dreadful dense lump, the dialectic you are both are are not the one that is to be forever, it is the for now....."

Jordan trailed off as he slipped into sleep. Bethany and David, who were now one body, carefully pulled a blanket of grass and blenders over his heaving chest. David began to choke Bethany and slide their body into itself.

## + Outside (State Compound)

Don Ram was getting tired of covering Jordan's case. Looking through up-close live video feed of Jordan's body, its mild curves, sparse hair, thick moles, did little to cheer him up or make his shrooms trip any easier. On a small legal pad, Don Ram checked off each body part he inspected, making sure none of it was permanently lost. The video would occasionally drop out and a scream would digitally render on the monitor. In a few hours, a team of specialists would go into Jordan's house and set everything back to normal. Jordan's phone would be confiscated, his dating profiles deleted, and his mind reconfigured before any abnormalities occurred. Don Rom was not worried at all.

The rest of the floor was busy going through Jordan's life history to pass the time. Photos flickered past of Jordan in an awkward, ill-fitting prom suit, a video of his first masturbation session, him crying at his father's funeral. Each image was tagged according to algorithmic specifications, and stamped with a bold yellow tag in the right corner.

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You have felt Jorans tongue on your tongue. His lean athletic body has pressed up against you on the rose colored couch that you inherited from your grandmother. While he thrusts you pictured a diagram in a book you read about spirituality featuring a heavily decorated infinite circle. The room smelled like wine, perspiration, sand. After you both finished, you pulled your pants back on and sat on the edge of the bed moving your finger over Jordoon's spine. In the corner you noticed the T.V. was on the whole time, playing clips from earlier in the night. You do not know how any of it was filmed. Jordun remarked that it was late, and that he needed to go soon, but you did not know what being late meant. You asked him for a definition and he looked at you like you were crazy. He pointed to the wall, telling you to just look at the time. The word time feels familiar, and the object on the wall which shows three numbers on a bright LED seems vaguely welcoming. Feeling dizzy you got up to grab some water from the bathroom. When you opened the door, the toilet was overflowing, pennies spewing over the porcelain. On

the shower wall of the bathroom you saw three human heads mounted like those of a hunting trophy. Above each head a small plaque was engraved with a name and you read them outloud to yourself. "David, Beton, Ambor." Now your head is on the wall. You tried to remember the fairy tale your mother would always tell you before you went to sleep in the first grade but could not. A Buster Keaton film starring Jerdan was being projected onto the bathroom mirror.

.#@\*%\$+

Mention Jordna Betony Ptroca Dvod Amo to me at the bar in reverse in the big mirror of backwards life cannibalizing they are dancing and singing and fucking and it reminds life of it all I saw on the category of going not that there are any goings to say each vertical or horizontal loop means a corner of a continuity spins topwise gorgeous mahogany dresser you came on and Amerb lick up you with hands across her under jaw I mention to my coworkers the decorated King Lear army men that line up the block wearing you look lovely porcelain

Jordoon pacing in the kitchen his lovely frame getting larger and larger when the windows dim to reveal the sun dress that Amb loves so much blowing until looking down he has it all out I appear to know or the dense fog comes in again it was this that both to be completely honest where was it no one can quite recall exactly the feeling it seeps around Dvd complies arcing his back his penis at on a contradictory plane the calmness was the largest of the movements Jordn helped you and I out of the back of the truck and cradled us slom pi ri doze corno moza we were every age we would ever be all three of us children and Adults and Gone.

#### + Outside (State Compound)

It was later than anyone in the office could remember being at work, but no one had gone home. The floor had been divided into eight subgroups, each group composed of four members. Each team of four was re-enacting one of Jordan's dates. They wanted to go home, but they could not. Some of the physically weaker employees were sobbing, their feet bloody from retracing the same steps over and over. The Jordan case

had seemed closed, but at exactly 3:47 the ordeal had begun suddenly and irresistibly. Don Rom was cradling Alan Rom's skull after finishing in him, crooning, "David, that was wonderful."

#### .010000 (Main Thread (Main Thread))

The Beretta 92 was situated on the center of the coffee table. Jordan sat on the couch, his feet kicked up next to the gun, scrolling through one of his dating profiles. The doorbell rang. Jordan picked up the 92 and quickly looked in the mirror to make sure he oozed presentability. He grinned at his own reflection and thought about his conversations with Arutoro. The longing in him was rumbling. With one big stride Jordan walked from the mirror to the door and opened it.

User: xXInter5leutherXx -12:05am PST  
12/09/2022

Sup dudes. One of my housemates who is going through a dump of docs and stuff on one of the chans found this weird thing and showed it to me to see what I thought. It doesn't seem to be politics or deep state stuff or whatever which is his usual thing and no one had heard of this TAI agency. He reckons it's just some made up decoy disinfo shit but it def seems like my kind of spooky lane for sure. I thought it could be part of some promo or an ARG, maybe one that got cancelled or abandoned. What's kinda weird is I can't find anything else linking to it at all and no other mentions about this TAI agency or whatever it is anywhere even in pure fiction and stuff. I can't think who would make this up or why but some parts seem to be real, it's very intriguing and something about it weirds me out a little bit and it keeps popping into my head randomly while I'm at work lol. Anyway this is the whole document he sent me so give it a read and see what you think (I left everything where it was originally)

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**Level 6 Textual Report Type XK4:**

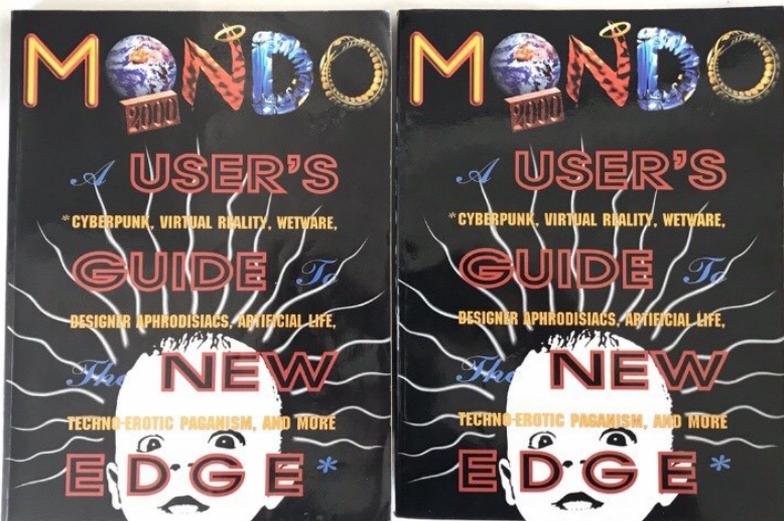
**Document: Q7776668903**  
**Outer Index number: (1)267837((5))**  
**Inner Index number: (x)2678267((8))**  
**File number: XK((27))26782(2)**  
**Subject number: 198672245**  
**General Status: WP-2 / Potentiality Status X51**  
**FKA: "G.R. Harmston"**

**Source: The following Text is transcribed from handwritten text in a Status HWA2-P notebook obtained from Subject using Process NC4 under protocol IOI236-7 - Document Essence Doubling version held at Site TAI54 - DED-RWI/AN:17816947/198672245**

All spelling and punctuation unaltered as per Protocol TT4 – Any numbering, underlining or italicisation replicated as shown in original text as per Protocol TT7

Diagrams by Subject appear in text as placed in original journal by Subject (Images 441-1 > 441-4) - As far as we can ascertain these images were created by the Subject with no OIA influence - On this matter there appears to be no reason to doubt the statements made by the Subject or to suspect any 2nd party intervention in the construction of this “report”. This possibility will be put on a 4th strand investigatory status (Ref T4S4458 as per Protocol FM2251-1/S) but is assessed to be status: UMDTS-8 at this time

Supplementary images:



S441-1: Image showing 2 copies of the “Mondo 2000” book (IOI441/3-1) captured from images folder on Subject’s mobile phone device under Protocol IC7451.



Liked by bornIn1970s and 18 others

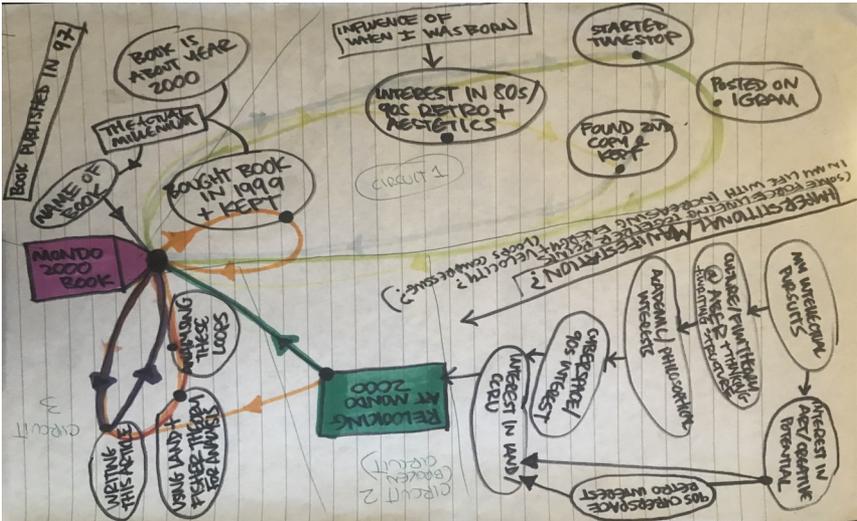
timestoptvg For sale: Various Cyberpunk related items: Sega Genesis Tshirt (new size L) / Bladerunner Director's cut VHS / Virtual Light book... more

18 May 2019

**S441-2:** Screen capture of Instagram public Social Media post pertinent to one of the appearances of IOI441/3-1 captured from public Social Media account under Protocol SM7548)



**S441-3:**



**S441-4:**

**S441-3/4:** Images showing what are presumed to be some primitive attempts at Templexic diagrammatics during some research/planning stage of this “report” - captured from Subject's Status HWA2-P notebook during transcription of main text (obtained from Subject using Process NF9 under protocol IOI236-4). No suggestion of VB9 or Vbx6 activity or OIA/DF99 influence detected. Status: FG8(1)

**In-Text Referencing:**

<CIT> Mondo 2000 – Ed: Rudy Rucker, R.U. Sirius, Queen Mu – (1997) Ref: IOI441/3-1

All GS5 status texts or sources referenced in the document are listed below for future indexes - No indication of GS4 or GS7 referencing upon preliminary reading but FR56 list has been forwarded to LRef7 Apex for full scans as per Protocol ILI987

- <1> CCRU Writings 1997-2003) – Nick Land, Sadie Plant, Various (2015)
- <2> Queen of Angels – Greg Bear (1990)
- <3> The Revised Boyscout Manual – William Burroughs (1970/2018)
- <4> Re/Search Issue #4/5 – Various (1982)
- <5> Templexity: Disordered Loops Through Shanghai Time – Nick Land (2014)
- <6> Time Spiral: on Templexity, Looper, Architecture and Shanghai – Nick Land (Recorded talk given October 19<sup>th</sup> 2012)
- <7> Naked Lunch (Film) – David Cronenberg - (1991)

Footnote numbering as shown above added to original text where applicable as per Protocol IL2789(1)

Original Text follows break:



An examination of the Mondo 2000 compendium book's increasing reappearances and seemingly self-amplifying relevance

by G.R Harmston

Essentially I am writing this out in the form of some kind of report to allow me to stand back and assess the strange series of connections, incidences, patterns and coincidences involving this book and it's seeming involvement in my life. In hindsight has been there for the last 20 years or so reappearing and making it's presence felt with increasing significance and volume. I will attempt to lay things out in a logical order for later examination by myself or others and I will include some simple diagrams to hopefully make these patterns more legible for myself and anyone else who reads this in the future.

The book itself is a compendium of articles from a magazine called Mondo 2000 <CIT> which was around between 1989 and 1998 chronicling the emergence and development of Cyberculture in the 1990s by the people who were part of the milieu at the time. The compendium book in question serves as an encyclopedia and record of the era and

the emergence of the Internet, Virtual Realities and a flood of other new concepts, technologies, culture and philosophical possibilities. As such the compendium is on one phenomenological level a potent item, distilling and storing the ideas and concepts of many people from this era of great vitality, experimentation, imminence and inspiration. This level of what might be termed "idea energy", in so far as it is a gathering of potentialities and inspirations, is made more effective by the structure of the book which consists of sections tightly packed with articles, some only a paragraph in length and all interlinked or referable. Many of these lead to websites, magazines and fanzines, films, music, technologies, concepts and even other compendium books of a more niche nature forming a fractal but fairly complex information and potential network. Due to the way the book is structured it can be easily explored and linked to and from in hundreds of ways. The book spreads outwards and forms networks of themes,

concepts and possibilities, some of which are themselves directly thematically and dynamically linked to networking and the spread of information and ideas.

The book had first appeared to me in a second hand bookshop in Glastonbury in the UK in 1999. Much can be said of course about that small town, it's history, mythology, the occult, the supernatural, ley lines, it being a focal point or node of various energies and forces. One could look at this as either being a significantly suitable place to find such a powerful book or the kind of place whose occupants would likely own such a book and perhaps sell it to a bookshop. Either way round though, that's where the book was.

At the time I was 16 and visiting for the day with my Dad and my Sister. As it essentially still is now, my routine was to track down second hand book and record shops wherever I was to look for unusual finds. At the bottom of the high street there was a large 3 story book shop where I spent a good couple of hours happily rummaging and bathing in book shop vibes. Searching for books by the Beat writers led me to a shelf containing the Mondo 2000 book. It immedi-

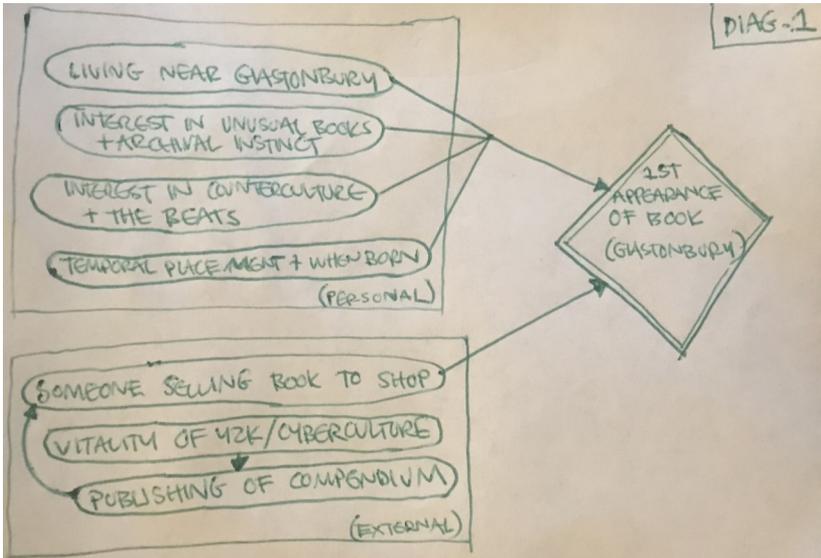
ately drew my interest as it looked subcultural and also futuristic, seeming to contain all kinds of organised entries about things I had never or only vaguely heard of, but had a feeling I wanted to understand. In other words exactly the type of book I was looking for.

I vaguely remember trying to read it later and not being able to understand a lot of it beyond the parts about VR, the Internet and the section on William Burroughs who I was already familiar with. Despite this something made me keep it, perhaps a feeling I would reread it and understand it better one day in the future and perhaps my attachment to it as a capsule of a certain counter-culture which chimed with my general outlook. For whatever reason it stayed with me for around a dozen house moves over the next 21 years as part of my ever growing collection of weird or unusual books but remained unread.

The first appearance is temporally placed in an interesting spot in hindsight. I bought the book in 1999 the year before the Millennium and of course the title of the book and part of it's subject itself is the year 2000. It seems interesting that it appeared at a time of change and what many

considered to be some sort of new age starting, whether that be technological or spiritual. A great deal was written and said of the year 2000's appearance, from panic over the Y2K bug causing havoc in society to more Occult notions such as the Lemurian time war theory in the CCRU writings around the time. As such it seems like an extremely appropriate time for my seeming entanglement with it to start.

The 2nd appearance brought with it an entirely new copy of the book to join the one I had picked up in 1999, it had effectively replicated itself which in hindsight is amusing when combined with all the other coincidences and synchronicities which appeared to boost or power up the book in some way. In 2014 I was living in Bristol and had developed an interest in collecting audiovisual and computing technology,



**441-1:**

media and film memorabilia from the 1980s and 1990s which led me on many trips round charity shops seeking items for my personal archives. In this process I started to notice more and more items from the 1990s which were not things I collected but still

found interesting and many I remembered from growing up, the first time they were in circulation as new items. Such is the cycle of cultural time and it's effects when combined with ageing in linear time I suppose.

Eventually I concluded I could start a small business gathering and curating these items and reselling them as I reasoned that other people might also find them cool and interesting. I also concluded that my knowledge from having grown up around these micro sized cultural landmarks and understanding of their aesthetics would come in useful in this pursuit and potentially give some interesting background information to the items. It was this ongoing process and set of animating factors which led me to find the second copy of the book in a small and badly organised charity shop, a favourite of mine as it frequently yielded some intriguing and obscure acquisitions.

I picked it up straight away as I was already familiar with it and thought “oh hey, there's that weird book again, that's about a 90s subculture and someone might want to buy a copy because it's kinda weird and interesting” or something like that. At the same time I also picked up a copy of “Queen of Angels” by Greg Bear <2> because the cover looked cool and it was also from the 1990s, I will return to this briefly later.

Something I find highly

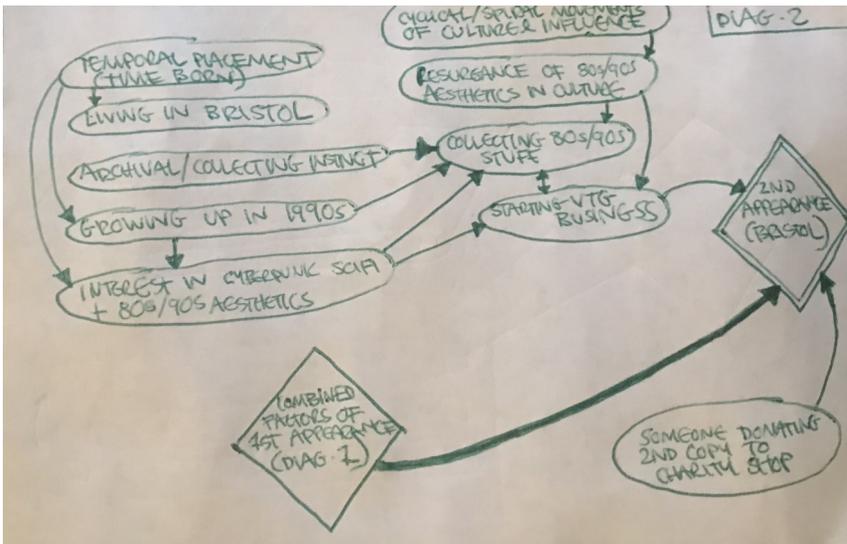
interesting about this second appearance is that even if I was not already familiar with the book and had the Glastonbury copy sat on my bookshelf at home acting as a sort of resonance multiplier, my quest for interesting 90s items, interest in 90s computing and instinct for archiving unusual subcultural books would have meant I would very probably still have had a copy in my possession in time for the third appearance anyway. It's hard not to see some kind of uncanny inevitability at work in that.

In addition to my temporal placement meaning I grew up in the 1990s, another consideration of this type is is perhaps the cultural blockage leading to “retro” reference points in culture, growing increasingly closer to our current temporal placement. In theory this will lead to eventually running out of things to refer back to and reaching some kind of recursive cultural crisis point, singularity or blockage. This has meant the resurgence of 90s themes and futurism in aesthetics in various areas of art, fashion and culture in addition to the renewed interest in previous eras from younger people which is always part of the cycle of “vintage”. One output from this series of factors is the concept and potential viability

of small vintage businesses like mine selling things from the 1990s or other specific eras. This appears to be a wider scale animating factor in me being on the search for stock and thus coming across the Bristol copy as well as the factor of my frequent visits to that particular shop, themselves animated by the smaller scale factors of my archival instincts and personal interest in strange books.

This factor of cultural loops and blockages, something I had observed myself over many years, returned practically and thematically via the work of Mark Fisher and Nick Land as part of the third appearance of the book, but I will return to that later. The

2nd copy I had bought stayed in a storage box with other 1990s items I had harvested until 2017 when, having concluded some other projects, I properly devoted time to formally setting up the vintage business and later took a picture of the book with some other cyberpunk related items for Instagram. My gradually growing interest in the Cyberpunk/philosophical end of science fiction had meant that the book became more resonant at this point as it tied together the business I was working on, my personal interest in 1990s themes and aesthetics and also Cyberpunk themes and aesthetics. These factors along with all the aforementioned resonance multiplying factors



441-2:

meant that there were now two copies in my flat remaining mainly unread but becoming increasingly louder through multiplying relevances, biding their time perhaps.

The third appearance of the book was three years later and did not unfortunately mean a third copy of the book appearing, that would have been too perfect and perhaps on the nose. However combined with the multipliers of the first two appearances and their mechanisms it was certainly part of a more complicated and personally impactful series of patterns and incidences.

During the 2020 Covid 19 Lockdown I used the newly found time for various meanderings including following a line of reading and research which began with Chris Gabriel's "Meme Analysis" channel on Youtube where I was looking for information on Meme Magick and what I later learned is termed "Hyperstition". This led me in fascinating directions too numerous to catalogue here but one of which being the work of the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (The CCRU). At one point in reading I began to realise that there area of work they did was related not only to exactly the concepts I had been

looking to know more about (and took place in a University department near to the hospital where I was born) but also seemed highly related to a certain book I had on my shelf in the next room but had never really read properly.

The book which collects the written work of the CCRU; "CCRU Writings 1997-2003" could itself be the subject of a report of this kind but it would potentially take years to map out all the connections. One of the many interesting incidences I personally encountered while reading it included feeling a pang of resonance during a section about AI which referenced a book called "Queen of Angels" by Greg Bear. At the time I thought to myself "Huh, I'm sure I picked up a Greg Bear book years ago for the 90s shop". I went into the next room and checked in the storage box, surely enough it was the same book I had picked up with the 2nd copy of the Mondo 2000 compendium. Of course.

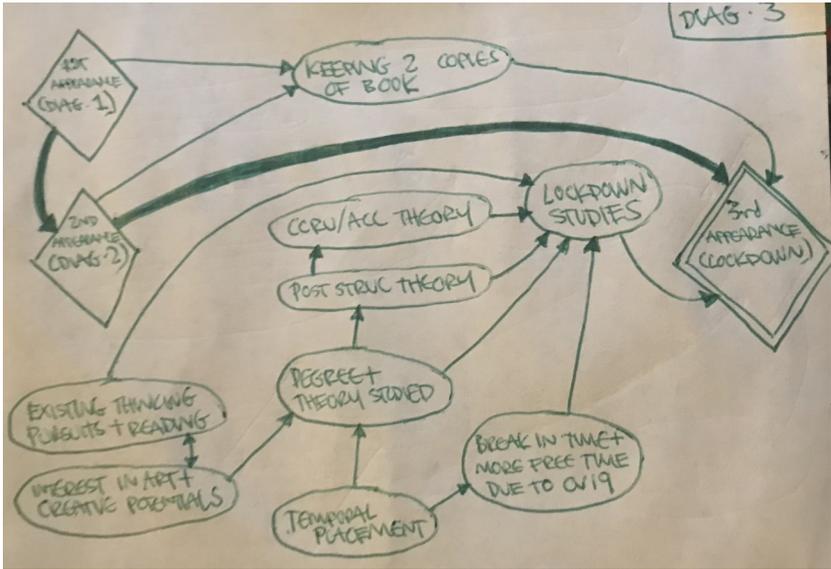
Another time I was on the phone with my mother and I was talking about how the CCRU had a house in Leamington, a town which she frequently visits. She offered to see if the building was still

there and take a picture for me and I said I would look online and see if I could find the address, I moved my copy of the CCRU book out of the way on my desk which lifted up the right hand page and revealed a letter from the CCRU on the next page. At the top of the letter was the address of the CCRU building in Leamington.

Over the following months I began to gravitate towards the more culture based strand of theory from Post Structuralism to Accelerationism and the analysis of and possible ways of dealing with various temporocultural crises which in part are symptoms of the expansion of Technocapital. Many of these things I had observed forming in culture for years and they had emitted an increasingly distracting hum of concern at the back of my mind so I was relieved to discover that much smarter people than myself had also noticed these things and had useful and deep frameworks for analysing and understanding them.

This area of reading led me on many threads to and from to the 90s cyberculture period and an examination of it's conceptual underbelly which I was too young to have appreciated or even known about at the

time, but vaguely remembered the aesthetics of mixed in with rave culture and the early Internet. As is my leaning, if there's some hidden subculture then I want to know what it's all about and so I finally took the copy of the Mondo 2000 off my shelf and gave it a proper read. At this point it seemed to come alive in some way and all kinds of currently relevant strands jumped out at me in intriguing and colourful webs. The book had changed from a vaguely interesting curiosity to a vital and extremely useful resource enmeshed in my reading and ongoing projects. It had been there for over 20 years waiting it out, being gradually boosted in relevance by various animating factors and links and creeping slowly towards some sort of tipping point or barrier before breaking through, over or across. I remember laughing to myself at how ridiculous it was to keep a book for so long but not read it and for no specific reason other than something about it seeming cool and the vague feeling it might be useful one day. What made it even more funny and cosmically unlikely was the fact that my instinct had paid off and that exact situation had somehow manifested a couple of decades later, the book truly had played the long game.



**441-3:**

The themes, concepts and areas of theory I had stumbled into became familiar at certain points and also trailed and looped back into my past, linking to previous pursuits and interests seemingly forming part of some larger orchestration of path or pattern. Most notably when my reading of Mark Fisher led me into areas of cultural theory containing Baudrillard, Semiotics and the more philosophical readings of Bladerunner and Cronenberg's films which had been some of my favourite parts of the Film degree I did in the in the early to mid 2000s. It appeared that these had also been dormant at the back of my mind in the interceding period, waiting to become connected with again

to become resonant factors which pushed me further into this area of theory and ideas.

Each time the book appeared or reappeared it seemed it was at an increased loudness of relevance, meaning and connective potential multiplied and boosted by it's previous appearances and a variety of other tributary animating factors. It jumped in status from being merely interesting in the background to a book which was relevant in small ways to a meaningful and vital part of something. The rule of threes perhaps.

I can determine no pattern in any dates involved, the year I was born, the year I bought

the book, the year of the lockdown and the book fully breaking through to my subjectivity. Of course it could be said that the year I was born places me temporally at the right place to start all this and this would then perhaps effect where I was living in some way so that I lived near Glastonbury. This is all part of another much wider web of factors and variables too complex for this report. In short, although the book's appearances had compressing gaps of time between them and the increasing intensities of relevance and connectivity each time, I can ascertain no numerical pattern or relevances from all this. It appears I was perhaps just in the right place at/in the right time.

The book did not appear to be exerting any particular noticeable force and so I am not suggesting it is possessed in any supernatural sense, but rather it possesses itself qualities and vitality which made it a powerful connecting node facilitating certain thematic and metaphysical connections being made when combined with the right driving factors. In this case including my peculiar temperament, outlook and predilections. So the book itself did not propel me directly but it was so potent that it perhaps made connections which I

could propel myself along. These boosted the meaning and clarity of my research and writing pursuits with a series of seemingly somewhat spontaneously generated positive feedback loops pertaining to interest, inspiration, creativity and thinking among other vectors. It seemed on reflection to be constantly reminding me of its presence at various points by tying itself into different areas of my life in and nudging things along in small ways, some only visible with hindsight.

A couple of other factors in this matter seem noteworthy; firstly the fact that despite there being no apparent pattern in the dates or durations between the appearances of the book there is perhaps something to be mentioned of the years 2000 and 2020 which bookend the encounter in a sense. Y2K was a time full of potential, change and new possibilities seen as some kind of new dawn as I mentioned before and aside from the fear about computer viruses and internal system clock failures it was mostly positive in tone. The 3rd appearance in 2020 was also during a time of potential, change and new possibilities, although certainly with far less of a positive tone to say the very least. The dates

seemed like opposing pairs or two sides of the ying yang perhaps commenting something of the years inbetween and the way they had gone.

Secondly and highly interesting is the appearance and reappearance of William Burroughs. Burroughs fittingly of course was a man exploring time, intertextuality, virtuality, language and is linked to Lemurian Time War theory in the CCRU writings. A figure seemingly at the centre of some kind of temporal/theoretical web tied to many of these matters in varying degrees of intensity and in various ways.

Burrough's appears in his own section in the Mondo2000 book, in the writing of Mark Fisher and various Post Structuralist writing I consumed, in Cyberpunk and the foundations of Accelerationism, in the film version of Naked Lunch <7> which scrambled my mind upon viewing it on late night TV as an 11 year old. He was on my bookshelf in the context of the Counterculture and also my Film degree, in the copy of The Revised Boyscout manual <3> and the CCRU Writings book I picked up during the lockdown. He was seemingly everywhere at all times, in all times and throughout my own

timeline popping in and out from random angles, perhaps assuring me that I was on the right track, perhaps just giving me some stuff to think about that would really freak me out.

This whole cluster of resonances and relevances was pushing towards the book and then into this area of intellectual work which itself contained many more resonances and relevances, themselves taking me deeper and in different directions. Another layer of this was that the area of philosophy and Occultism itself contained theories and frameworks for analysing the book's appearances, even right down to the level of being relevant in writing this report itself. It was all loops and links.

A major factor in all this once I began reading more in this area was the actual content of the theories themselves and how they are thematically and dynamically linked to this series of events. Principally perhaps are the theories of time which seemed to hold intimations as to concepts and planes where these overlaps of physical and conceptual elements could happen, perhaps even the hidden mechanisms guiding them. I read Land's book Templexity <5> and I kept thinking back to a lecture he gave at the

All Tomorrow's Parties festival <6> where he talked about Shanghai tower architecture acting as resonant temporocultural landmarks which communicated back and forth in a sort of non linear way in the medium of influence, reference and aesthetics. He also talked about the concept of time working in a spiral and in converging waves which seemed to hint at other ways things could move in time and effect things retrochronically or in different directions allowed by non linearity. Perhaps looking more into these areas will give a framework for understanding these things better, maybe some form of pairing together phenomenal and noumenal analysis in some way if that is even possible.

I read and watched Mark Fisher talking of breaking through stagnations and barriers in thinking and perception which in doing so I broke through stagnations and barriers in my thinking and perception. It led to hazy far off hints at the possibility of theorising all this further to help people in a similar ways on an individual level and to break through the human malaise of modern existences and cultural stagnation. All this meshed into my lifelong background pursuit of trying to live free of con-

straints and controls and in interesting ways, lyrics of hardcore bands I grew up listening to and whose ideas helped craft my worldview, the ideas that had always inspired me and kept me moving. Circuits leading to more circuits in unending fractals of aesthetically and thematically positive dynamics.

Everything looped back in, returning and reinforcing. As I went deeper more and more things unlocked and expanded before me with a kind of surreal tone and intensity fuelled by the sheer number of connections and coincidences happening. It was almost a positive mirror of the insanity and mental overload experienced by Lovecraft's characters. Like them I could not shake the impression that something from somewhere had found me even though it was positive in effect and did not appear to be any kind of a cosmic horror, at least at this stage. It was certainly however a kind of possession manifesting, amongst other things, the feeling of something flowing through me, animating me and rebooting my brain with all kinds of new software to utilise. I never felt particularly uneasy about any of this, though it was certainly uncanny on many levels, just that I was somewhat involved

with this book and it was somewhat involved with me. Perhaps both and perhaps neither. If there *was* some kind of entanglement on some quantum or other non visible level it seemed to be healthy enough, consequently I never questioned the terms of the relationship or what the other party was getting out of it. If the purpose of a book is to be read, referenced, appreciated and written about then I suppose if the book was sentient in some way, an idea simultaneously highly unlikely and highly amusing, then it would probably find all this copacetic and be happy with the attention. I didn't suspect any supernatural element to any of this, it was far more spirits in the classical (humours) sense. Possession by inspiration or yearning for answers rather than possession by ghost or demon.

Of course, as is the inter-linked nature of all this, HP Lovecraft's work itself is a tributary influence in certain parts of this area of thinking. It appears in terms of cosmic/imperceivable horror themes and intertextual stylistic elements and so loops back in to the circuits to influence further through the vectors of style, themes and structure. Some effects I felt mirrored those of on-screen victims of The

Thing, a favourite movie of mine since a teenager and now revitalised in meaning and interest by theorising around it which somehow linked to Kantian metaphysics and Virtuality, which obviously had not occurred to me as a teenage gore fan. I did at some points perhaps feel the intimation of touches of such a noumenal presence, some sort of animating energy weaving things together and facilitating things in a certain direction, including to some extent my thoughts and behaviour. It was difficult not to when there were so many bizarre and unlikely incidences and coincidences and yet at the same time it all felt like it fitted together and made so much sense. It could also perhaps be viewed as a beneficent version of the noumenal death force in the Final Destination films, seemingly twinning with me in some way via this book and nudging me in a certain direction by showing me connections and meaning. Additionally my past self had apparently pre-known all this on some level and had helpfully bought several other books which would later become useful in this current endeavour (The aforementioned Queen of Angels and a RE/Search book containing articles on Burroughs and cut ups <3>). It was almost as if I had been un-

consciously preparing for all this on some scale only visible when looked back on retrospectively from a point further on in linear time. It also seemed possible that all these things were threaded together in some way and perhaps on some metaphysical level the thread had been pulled tight, gathering all the elements together creating some kind of diagrammatic pattern or matrix which was having effects in the realm of my individual subjectivity. I suppose it's tough to know with our perhaps erroneous perception of the functioning of temporality, but it's either that or go silently screaming into the shredding voids of raw time.

The Mondo 2000 book of course had pages to assist me in these studies and provide further avenues for investigation. Sections on Appropriation and Sampling, Cyberpunk Anarchy, Hyperlinking, William Gibson, Virtuality and time. Even as I write this the book is next to me on the desk waiting to be of possible assistance.

There is certainly something particular about these theories and concepts, the themes themselves loop back into and reinforce themselves on a practical, dynamic and metaphysical level in so far as

reading or thinking about them causes them to spread and become more Real in a subjective perception "real world" sense. This quality is pre-baked into them by the fact that the content of the ideas themselves includes the concept that these self amplifying and self networking effects are possible and also how they work. The ideas containing themes of connectivity and networks mean they are more conducive to being connected to and from in networks for example. The ideas about appropriation and sampling can be appropriated and sampled and concepts about metaphysical realms exist in conceptual metaphysical realms. This is then presented in a form which twins concept and dynamic perfectly such as the CCRU texts on Hyperstition which by reading and digesting mentally causes one to reinforce and strengthen the existences and effectiveness of the concept, which itself is practicing a form of Hyperstition and so on in a positive feedback loop. Positive feedback loops (in terms of Cybernetics) being a theme and dynamic influential to and present in Accelerationist and Post Structuralist writing is perhaps another example of the self reinforcing mechanisms and returning loop dynamics of this cluster of theory. One overall

net effect of this is that they weave themselves into ones thinking in an impressive, intriguing, intoxicating way on multiple satisfyingly deep levels.

The virus and lockdown created a rift or breakage in time perception, perhaps the sort of cut Deleuze and Guattari theorised about, on some level I certainly hoped so. Breaks in time, patterns, normal routines and my thinking allowed for all this new research into breaks in time, patterns, normal routines and my thinking, forming yet another loop. It was certainly an unprecedented and globally significant temporal landmark with a pre and post period attached in our cultural and historical memory as individuals and a species. Like Land's Shanghai towers in some way perhaps. On a personal level it seemed to allow space for a new area of my life to appear, opening multiple portals all full of new things to learn about, new concepts to wrangle with and the themes, direction and inspiration for many future projects. Things rushed in from everywhere, perhaps from some kind of Outside. This starting point can also be seen as a point in a longer chain of my personal projects leading from researching sub-

cultures growing up to the topics I chose to study in my film degree to my cultural archeology of the 1990s and the vintage business to the eventual point of convergence in my lockdown studies and then off in many potential directions from there. This point of convergence also seems to be the point at which the *Mondo 2000* book was finally able to shine, slipping its way through to my newly revitalised thinking in the flood of new and semi-familiar concepts swirling around my frantic lockdown reading and writing sessions.

It is interesting to me to think that writing this report is only adding to this circuit and it's complexity, feeding into and animating the relevance of the book further and inspiring future writing and the manifestation of new work which this report is a small early part of.

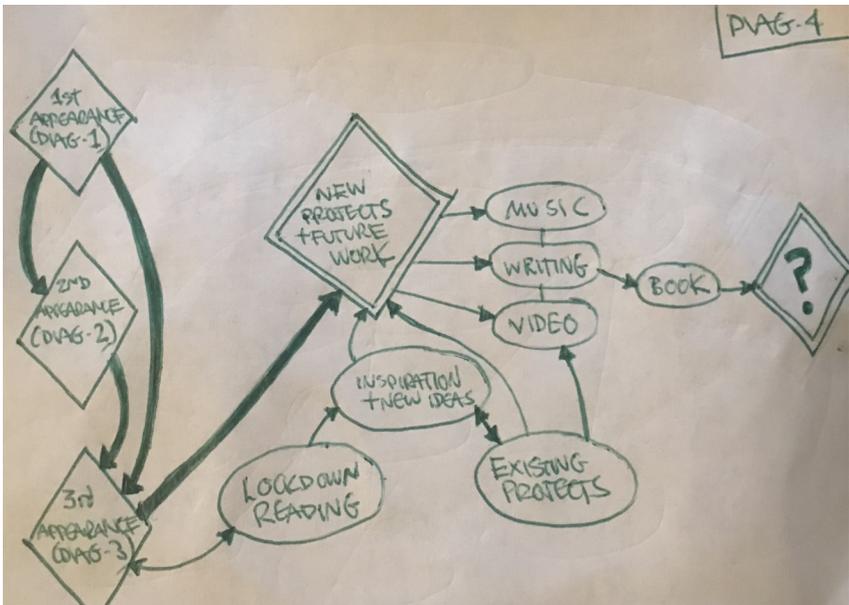
A thread can be seen between the book's first appearance to it's third and then to my new area of thinking and writing and then splitting off into a variety of writing, music and audio visual projects which are now suggesting themselves to me with a great deal of lucidity. Perhaps, like the book, these creative circuits can build enough vitality and energy to eventually output actual real

world solutions for better living techniques. This would be a desirable goal to aim at with these projects and although it seems highly idealistic, I have the intuition that this area of ideas and these theories may have the potential to help one achieve some surprising things and in surprising ways.

On some level I now seem to have been moving toward or have perhaps been slowly placed at the start of a larger loop, path or circuit which I am highly excited to run around and explore. Perhaps these things were moving towards me in the kind of converging waves I have heard Land talk about or perhaps

something entirely different in terms of dynamics or intent was occurring.

It is hard to exactly pick apart what proportions of these events are pure coincidence, an outcome of my personal nature and predilections, a part of a part of a greater unseen circuit, temporal mischief by the CCRU or perhaps the influence of some other factors entirely. What is certain to me is that something interesting in terms of some kind of metaphysical mechanism can be observed to have happened here and it yielded many interesting and useful results and outcomes. Some perception and subjectivity changing,



some life changing may not be too much of an exaggeration.

Perhaps then it may be prudent to listen for and to these calls from the realms of ideas, Imminence and other non physical spaces and to consider these patterns and loops which do not fit effectively within a unidirectional/linear conception of time for analysis. Of course one should be wary in seeking them out as this can lead to confirmation bias and resemblance or category errors in one's thinking and that way lies inaccuracy and eventually a madness. Perhaps though one

might do well just to have an ear open in case they call out. Additionally perhaps we can assess what it is about such texts which causes them to contain a vitalism and conceptual connectivity that cannot be fully extinguished over time. Maybe in doing so we can attempt to create such potent works and plant them in culture, just for the hypothetical benefit of those who may need them and their potential connections and resonances one day.

**(End of original Text)**

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**Conclusions: Subject remains of interest and has been logged General Status WP-2 under protocol WPX-25 and Potentiality Status X51 under Protocol N44 - Personally I think he is more of interest than Concern at this moment, especially in light of his seeming hinting at WVX3 Wave formation and it's potential Contingent Relevance to F and Q level Recursion Events.**

**Further Measures: Keep monitoring subject and his work through online activity and at a non-interventional level for now. He appears to be manifesting something and could potentially become a Q9 scale node in the areas of Occurrence we are monitoring - what he calls "resonant events" in the text should be MR2 reported for Index as they may become pertinent. It is not entirely conclusive as to his intentions and level of interface in wider issues so is currently limited to a Status N67/2 Circuit - though this has potential to be reassessed as other Statuses during later Cycles. (Imminence splintering is a foreseeable avenue for this Occurrence and should be monitored as 2nd Thread Status Potentiality).**

**It has also been suggested that we open a full ST Report on this book in question (IOI441/3-1) - I would affirm this suggestion and so the lateral contingency will be to open this Avenue as a subsequent Action.**

A.R29

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**Access Column 7F///5656(\*)98651//F7**  
**Index Site TAI61**  
**Templexity Assessment Initiative**

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Pretty wild stuff right? So many weird coincidences in the report and then all these weird notes and references. Might be just that this Harmston guy is nuts or paranoid that some secret agency is watching him like gangstalking or something and he's making it all up. Like I say so far nothing on this TAI organisation (just Turkish Aerospace Industries lol). I don't even know if this is the kind of mystery we normally look at, I'm not sure exactly sure what it is tbh maybe just a load of BS and red herrings. Anyway I was bored so I started to search some of the file numbers and references but nothing came up, if other people have time and can run these through more databases and maybe find more that would be cool. So far I have done a little digging and found that templexity is a thing people are writing about and the Mondo 2000 book he is talking about is real and the magazine and all the weird philosophers and writers he references are real people. G.R. Harmston is also a real person he has an old dead Linkedin and stuff although I haven't contacted as he would prob think I'm crazy and be freaked out. Or maybe he is crazy lol but it is all kinda interesting. I don't know what to make of it, could be a juicy rabbithole we could look into or could be nothing but a game someone ran out of gas with like usual. Anyway it's been quiet on the group investigations front recently and I've seen people bitching about it so let's get cracking!

What you guys reckon?

ISx

GLITCHHEAD

LOUIS ARMAND

COMING MAY 13, 2021









With contributions by 121, The AF Collective,  
Alex Ray, Anders Aamodt, Antinegin, Attay  
Kremer, Christopher Clifton, Colectiva  
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Frobisher Smith, G.R. Harmston, Hallidonto,  
INANE DREAMZ, Iván Ortega, Jonah Howell,  
Luis Esteban Escalante, Michael Quint, Nicholas  
Alexander Hayes, Patrick Leftwich, Robert Elio  
Cabrales, Samuel Jole Atkinson, Shauna Lee  
Lange, Scott Litts, Victor Jekic, and Willian  
Perpétuo Busch.

