PLUTONICS

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A Journal of Non-Standard Theory

This volume was edited, formatted, and designed by the collective entity known as Murdock Parsons.

Cover art is *The Embryonic Parasite* by Luke Baker; full set on pages 90–91.

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About the Journal

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

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

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

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As if time(s) couldn't get any weirder, 2021 upstaged 2020 in terms of oddities. The COVID-19 pandemic "ended" for Global North just long enough for us to write a call for papers and sweaty, intoxicant fueled bodies to engage in Bacchic Frenzies at local bars. Amidst the gyration and consumption, political repression around the world—particularly in the Global South—ramped up with vaccine apartheids contributing in so small manner. Of course, as we enter the second 1/3 of 2022, nuclear annihilation looms as the world's stage is upset over and over again. It thus seems prudent that we return (ed) to the initial "theme" of *Plutonics* Volume 15: festivities. If we're to go out in a nuclear inferno, we might was well revel in it.

Indeed, our call last summer asked contributors to think of the festival—the site of expenditure—as a locus for commun(ion)(ication) between bodies in an era where we are (and have been) so distant. The submissions we received did not disappoint.

This volume of the journal is divided into three sections, all of which necessarily overlap. The first section which includes texts from Alex Reifenrath, Mario Ramierz-Arrazola, Samil, Henrique Salema Maschk Darlim, Tank Wallin, Vivienne Chambers, Logan K(aye) Yo(J)ung, and Darko Vukić, augmented by amazing poetry from Jade Mandrake and Zoe Gold, as well as visual art by Charles J. March III, Andreas, Iván Ortega, Zoe Gold, and WIREGRRRL takes a broadly Bataillean bent. Expanding upon Bataille's "solar anus"—an anus ravaged by Guy Hocquenghem—Reifenrath takes us through excessive expenditure in the context of self-extinction, musicality, and BDSM while Samil presents us with an unofficial Acéphalean document. Wallin extends this by looking at the formation of myth((o)s) a memetically and sexual transferred virus of ejaculate. As Ramierz-Arrazola muses on the excessively fast integration of human and machine, Darlim brings us back to Marx and the often-overlooked *Wertkritik* (value-critique) in an attempt to simultaneously problematize domestic labor through a Marxist lens and comment on the leftovers of festivals. Chambers delivers a truly interesting

commentary on the (libidinal) economy of sex work and the human as object to be used while Yo(J)ung examines both Iain Morris' 2018 film *The Festival* through a narrativoscopic lens and presents an account of an unfinished musical number beholden to the rhythm of the body. Vukić uncovers "an autopoietic-non-philosophical" assemblage of Andrej Škufca's work presented in a thoroughly unique style, while the works of March, Andreas, Ortega, Gold, and WIREGRRRL elude attempts at articulation.

We're extremely grateful to have Luke Baker—the artist whose work adorns this volume's cover—provide an account of the brain-eating-organism, the Embryonic Parasite, along with a detailed chart of its pathogenetic development.

The second section which includes texts from Isidro Parodi, Willian Perpetual Busch, Zoey Greenwald, G.R. Harmston, and Dan McNeil, augmented with poetry by Zoe Gold and visual art by Andreas, Iván Ortega, and Zoe Gold takes a more speculative turn as fictions are crisscrossed with futures and theories expanded. Parodi takes cue from the enigmatic Dagoberto Alemán Oviedo to expand upon "cosmic parasitism," an idea that in no small part portends the CCRU's work on time war as madness is seen simultaneously as a biological mutation and a way of interacting with parallel worlds. We can only hope future excavations bring more of Oviedo's work to light. Busch takes cue from Lovecraft and the phenomenon of pulp fiction to explore the intersecting and networked relationships between different authors writing in the same milieu—a generation of a mythos—while Greenwald beautifully comments on the existential malaise of 21st century capitalist-nihilism. Where Harmston extends our view and looks to a future of capture and festival, where myth((o)s) and fictions become part-and-parcel of revelrous life, an interesting find bookends the section. After returning from a walk in the frigid Canadian winter to a parcel in a postbox, we realized an agent of McNeil's had been dispatched to our headquarters. The parcel contained (heavily redacted) fragments from a journal that sheds insight into...something. The works of Andreas, Ortega, and Gold require experience all their own.

The final section is a collaboration with our colleagues over at *The Centre for Experimental Ontology*. Forthcoming from The AF Collective is an experimental work entitled *Interstitial Artelligence* (CEO Press, 2022), a work involving artists such as Germán Sierra, Mike Corrao, Patricia MacCormack, Amy Ireland, Emanuel and Gabriel Magno, axolotl, and Mia-Jane Harris. The publication in this volume, "Für Lis, the Fearless Slime," serves as a prologue to the upcoming book and we encourage you to support our friends situated around the world and be on the lookout for *Interstitial Artelligence*!

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 wonderful to work with you all (despite the delays on our end) 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

Thank you again to everyone who contributed and supported us.

—Editor(s)
Arkham, MA and London, ON
2022

Contributors

The AF Collective is a cross-continental theory and arts effort to breach the transatlantic divide. Originally spiraling outwards from the Amazon Forest, we are heavily entwined with the Centre for Experimental Ontology and can be found [@AFCollectiveI](#).

Alex Reifenrath is a name that vaguely and reluctantly cross-links with studentship in the disciplines of art history and media studies at the University of Siegen in Germany and is best glossed as informational heat-sink for purposes stated with much more occulted clarity at [comedyofterrors.substack.com](#).

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Dan McNeil produces short fiction, reviews and art. His writing has appeared in a variety of print and online publications, including [Alienist Manifesto](#), [Antipodean SF](#), [Bewildering Stories](#), [Fugitives & Futurists](#), and [Misery Tourism](#). See [www.dan-mcneil.com](#); Twitter: [@TheMcVariations](#); IG: [@thedanmcneil](#).

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Logan Young: @logankyoung's factorial chap, *I(<3)U!*, is out now. A summer student of Thurston Moore at Naropa's Kerouac School, he's since been published everywhere from UPenn's *Jacket2* to *The New River* at Virginia Tech and anthologized as far flung as Sloane's *On-line Encyclopedia of Integer Sequences* to the forthcoming inaugural edition of *Periodicals* (Death of Workers Whilst Building Skyscrapers). His most recent DOI comes c/o *Sonic Scope Journal* (Goldsmiths Press). Dubbed both "a perfect representation of the 21st century hive-mind" (North/South Appalachia Review), as well as "trashy" (code::art), Young won the 2021 Mutant Broadsides Contest from Rly Srs Lit, but finished dead last during the 2020 Synchrony Demoparty from New York to Montréal.

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⊙ Anality, Solarity, and Vacuity
Alex Reifenrath

The Solar Anus,[1] 20th century heretic Georges Bataille models a world that becomes populated by recursive parody.[2] During the course of this project, Bataille begins to see radially outward motion as the primordial vector shared between the respectively titular star and orifice. Crucially, this abstract principle of discharge is therein already recognized as necessarily being a slowing-to-seemingly-frozen in mere structural similarity, and not altogether equivalent. That this deceleration is never sufficient, however, appears as shared tendencies between the two as procedural phenomena: the sun cannot be stopped from ejecting its matter-energy in all directions any more than the anus can be toilet-trained into clean submission. For a phallic species, as Bataille diagnoses humanity, this causes a perpetually unresolved conflict. The anal is the second stage in Sigmund Freud's libidinal model of human development and directly precedes that of the phallic.[3] During this period of 1 to 3 years of age, the anus is the key erogenous zone for the child, and functional completion of the stage is completely dependent upon full domestication of excretory activity. The futile ideal of a universally clean anus, then, is the reification of real emptiness (only ever existing locally, and never globally) into the simple ideal of absolute nothingness. For Guy Hocquenghem—adversarially mounting Freud's aforementioned theory in 'Family, Capital, Anus'[4]—the never achieved dream of uniting anality with nothingness, or of annihilating anality, has to then be repressed to successfully enter into the phallic stage. The taboo of anality, its privatization, is as such codified into the very structure of sexual reproduction. From the point of view

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1: Georges Bataille, "The Solar Anus," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans., Allan Stoekl, Carl R. Lovitt, and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985): 5–9.

2: This happens 54 years before Jean Baudrillard's more well-known attempt to do the same.

3: Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, trans., James Strachey (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1991).

4: Guy Hocquenghem, "Family, Capital, Anus," *Semiotext(e)* 2(3), trans. Caithin Manning and Tamsem Manning (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977): 149–158.

of an anus, it is a drive toward darkside procreation inhibited over several layers. Abject relations theorist Julia Kristeva similarly links anality and eldritch motherhood during her investigation into the semiotic as a fluid pre-stage to libidinal development where unrepressed infant-sexuality emitted from oral and anal impulses permeates the psyche as echo of a sex before the evolution of the phallus.[5] This shade of unlife-fertility is characterized by happening not in the reactive manner of phallic *Eros* waiting for stimulation to spurt, but as active *Thanatos* wholly indifferent to biocentric utility in what it spawns entirely of its own accord.

Before Bataille, anality already crashes the solar disk of ancient Egyptian cosmogony in the guise of Khepri. Khepri is customarily classified as a deity of the autopoietic kind, its becoming is strictly identical with its existence.[6] Khepri's set of attributes prominently contains dung beetles and the sun. The cyclical astronomical motion of the latter is thereby conceived as a rolling across the firmament performed by Khepri in its scarabaeid form. This reverses the directionality of Bataille's anus as parody of the sun, with the sun retro-causally becoming divine imitation of shit rolled around the desert ground. The ancient Egyptian framework proceeds to subculturally spread through the quasi-historical Hermes Trismegistus to assemble into the medieval European school of Alchemy. In Alchemy, the meme coding for heliomancy remains—though significantly modified—in Sol Niger.[7] On the more chemical side of the alchemical continuum, it is synonymous with the drive of molar organic assemblages to break down into swarms of smaller and more spread-out particles. In this, Sol Niger possesses the disintegrative insistence of a star while always remaining black, empty of concrete form, or occulted. As may be the feature of alchemy inspiring the most contemporary interest, this is also posited to apply equivalently to what has in modernity been separated into the psychological processes of dissociation and self-emptying. As far as suns are concerned, to exist is to fall apart—not to some end of eventual

5: Frances Restuccia, *Melancholics in Love: Representing Women's Depression and Domestic Abuse* (Lanhan, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 66.

6: Maria van Ryneveld, *The Presence and Significance of Khepri in Egyptian Religion and Art* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Pretoria Press, 1992).

7: Marsilius Ficinus, "Liber de Arte Chemica," in *Theatrum Chemicum* (Geneva, 1702).

nothingness anathema to being, but for the Dionysian pleasure of material self-forgetfulness in itself.

The history of Buddhism continuously spirals about emptiness throughout a duration that outlasts both the ancient Egyptian mysteries and the European alchemists. The Ensō of Zen Buddhism in particular is, in its formal reminiscence of a sphincter, already an elegant symbol for vacuity. Though sticking closer to canonical thought, it also contains the evacuative realization that there is no eternal self separate from the world, and beyond it no eternal world either—only various foldings of Outsides into pseudo-Insides. While this is already a heavily systems-theoretical image, a decidedly cybernetic (in both the vulgar and real sense of the word) approach to Buddhism emerges with the "xenobuddhism" posited by Nick Land in a post on the now-defunct 'Hyperstition' blog.[8]

Land sees the attainment of Nirvana (literally translating to "extinction") already materially occurring in accordance with accelerating technological change. He cites the usual—getting copied, downloading thoughts, and splitting or merging consciousness—as expressions of this. The super slow-motion Lingchi performed on human body-minds through nanotech and non-chronological feeds can likely be added to the list.[9] A parallel, and congruous, development is the strangely repeated prevalence of the alignment between Buddhism and BDSM. This already begins with the wordplay facilitated by the lexical proximity of the two terms, but reaches further into the conception of sub-spaces as self-emptied modes of consciousness attained via the method of masochism. The usage of a triskelion, both as one of the more commonly used in-group identifiers within the bondage scene, and as centerpiece on the Dharmachakra, amplifies this link. The gay male bondage sub-scene has especially been fully continuous with the application of anal sex by

8: Nick Land, "Speaking personally, the immortalism obsession is among the least interesting aspects of Singularity theory. Thanatophobia as you say, and based on bad metaphysics. If we can be copied (how could this not be possible?) then there's nothing ontological there at all—just ego illusion. Xenobuddhism gets it right—the soul myth will vaporize in nanotech, incinerating the last neurotic residue of a deluded religious tradition." Archived December 10, 2006. https://web.archive.org/web/20061210175841/http://hyperstition.abstractdynamics.org/archives/007524.html

9: Lingchi is a Chinese torture practice involving the slow cutting apart of a human in a manner that sustains the receiver's ability to sense what is happening as long as possible, Bataille's philosophy is notably heavily influenced by this.

the "wickedest man in the world," Aleister Crowley. Crowley takes anal sex, particularly as received in a masochist context, to be a powerful, sorcerous practice feared by Christians under the name of sodomy.[10] It is intuited that the intensity of this ressentiment only increases its sinister value as magick—the most effective prophecies, after all, become self-fulfilling. Even the term "sodomy" was, in Western Europe between the 6th and 15th century, intentionally conceived in empty vagueness and referred to anal intercourse only tendentially, along with similarly hazy euphemisms such as "the sin so unspeakable that the devil himself knows not its name."

This taboo of anality in relation to vacuity is what art historian Joseph Koerner refers to as 'The Unspeakable Subject of Hieronymus Bosch' in his eponymous involvement with the Bosch piece commonly known as 'Garden of Earthly Delights.'[11] An "unspeakable," according to Koerner, names the refusal of a speaker to contaminate their identity with even a hint of assumable knowledge of the obscenity they are decrying. It is the impossibility of directly vocalizing a fear of emptiness, the same that leads to its therapeutic reification as cleaned-out nothingness. With sodomy as the unspeakable subject at the heart of pre-enlightenment theology, its place in the philosophy of the following centuries is surely taken by the colonial black non-subject, owing nothing to its protagonist of humanity. In her ruthlessly race realist 'Notes on Blacceleration,'[12] Aria Dean locates the material historicity of blackness as beginning with the Atlantic slave trade, and the role it played as early automation. The becoming-black of any body, in other words, has already torched hope for a distinction between human and capital, and thus also the withdrawal of the former from the latter. Instead, blackness populates the future not as liberated proletariat, but liberated means of production. In other words, not as rational actors in a free market but as freed market in itself—a Body without Organs in the terminology of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, an empty zone without any

10: Martin Booth, *A Magick Life: The Biography of Aleister Crowley* (London, UK: Coronet, 2000), 63.

11: Joseph Koerner, "The Unspeakable Subject of Hieronymus Bosch: A Lecture at the Institute for Advanced Study," Princeton, 2009. Archived May 6, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAwilLEhtw4

12: Aria Dean, "Notes on Blacceleration," e-flux 87 (2017). https://www.e-flux.com/journal/87/169402/notes-on-blacceleration/

organization, only characterized by the flows running upon it.[13]

This is the — unspeakable — proposition pronounced by black sun of jazz musician Sun Ra with 'I am an instrument.'[14] And not only is this solar emptiness haunted by the alchemical Sol Niger, but also once more by Kristeva who has written on it with 'Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia.'[15] Taking its title from one of Gérard de Nerval's sonnets, the exposition diagrams melancholia as a distinctly feminized mode of consciousness tending to simultaneous darkness and radiance. According to Kristeva, the condition's primary symptom is the chronic dissolution of meaning. Meaning, of course, has itself long been demystified as particularly ordered states of some substrate (i.e., brain tissue) making its dissolution synonymous with the physical arrow of time as defined via entropy. Melancholia's black sun is therefore, by definition, only how the ceaseless production of chaos expresses itself in the human mental experience.

Crucially, chaos is less the absence of configurations—as Deleuze and Guattari again note—than an infinite speed at which these are expressed.[16] The empty limit of thermodynamics lies at zero (structure). Fittingly, the number zero was first digitally expressed with an inner dot on IBM-3270 display controllers (still primarily handled by women under the guise of being secretarial work), making it heavily reminiscent of the alchemical sun sigil. Zero is what a particular function resolves to—and namely, this function is that "inner night sticking the schizophrenic sun together"[17] that Land lycanthropically howls at with his infamous unravelling 'Katasonix,' itself a performative emptying of the voice in an attempt to resolve ancient and cosmic trauma that occurred at the scale of suns and leads them to bring forth the phenomenon of life, starting with the anus and building outwards.[18]

13: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen Lane (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 9–18.

14: Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant than the Sun* (London, UK: Quartet Books, 1999), 161.

15: Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1992).

16: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans., Graham Burchill and Hugh Tomlinson (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), 42.

17: Nick Land, "Katasonix," in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987–2011*, ed., Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier, 481–491 (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic Media Ltd., 2011), 481.

18: The blastopore is the first proto-organ to begin forming after fertilization and eventually develops into the anus.

tion, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

● "All these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

they will deliver you up to tribulation and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

● "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

● "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

● "But he who endures to the end shall

see the 'abomination of

those who are pregnant and those who are nursing babies in those days!

then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

no flesh would be saved;

And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Jesus answered : "Take heed that

'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

● "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

● "For nation will rise against na-

Jizzum Crow / *Charles J. March III* / redacted paper

The Bullet Train of Camden
Mario Ramirez-Arrazola

There is a Bullet Train in the town of Camden which accelerates in speed whenever it kills someone. Its construction began after the recent war and was completed about six months ahead of schedule. There were cries and pleas from the common people for them to be allowed to work on the train; Camden turned into a proto-New York, there was no sleep, no partying, only work and the train. The people from Camden had built a train so efficient, so fast, so unruly, that they had begun to be colloquially known under the nation as the Bulleteers. The people of Camden not only built the train in its novel sensibilities, from laying the tracks down to putting together the train's framing, but to other more advanced technicalities, such as programming the train's route as it moved through the crowded city. The train had no traditional conductor in the main shuttle, rather the train network was controlled through a centralized surveillance system completely exterior from the actual location of the train's operation.

The train was a resounding success in terms of raising the quality-of-life standards in Camden—riding the train was free and was mostly used for commuting to either work or school. The train was also surprisingly safe, with the occasional junkie causing a scene, but not being widespread enough to deter riders. This was mostly because the city of Camden created a small police force, the Camden Transit Security Force (CTSF), to patrol the metro network. The train had its occasional incidents, mostly exterior, such as cars stopping in the middle of the train tracks or an indecent and illegal scene happening on the train.

It became very apparent however that something strange was happening with the train, a phenomenon that became local to the city of Camden. A train-suicide occurred about a year and twenty days ago—the first of its kind in Camden. No one thought

much of it and most focused on the depressing nature of the victim's background, a veteran of the recent war. He committed suicide shortly after leaving a mental institution by quickly jumping into the path of the Bullet Train. He gave himself enough time to set up a large white canvas behind him (almost like a flag), stood up by two poles, in such a way that the train could not have enough time to slow down to a safe speed. There was plenty of footage, as CTSF has plenty of surveillance cameras around the station, and it was almost like abstract performance art. It was quick, and what was left behind was an imprint of the man's bloodied and splattered body upon the canvas. Shortly after there was also footage released of the man testing how far apart he needed to position the poles so that they fit perfectly within the margin of the train tracks.

There was no time, or space, to remove the remaining body parts. There was no stopping, in a way that the world didn't stop when the man died, from the train. In fact, it was statistically recorded that the train got faster. It was a total and completely positive feedback, the train at first would continue normally but only in fast-forward, like a video. Those that got off when this acceleration started were lucky; no one could tell how comically depressing the train could get in terms of its speed. At first it was the vehicles that would start to pile up as the natural rhythm of the train became disorganized. It was a month after the veteran's suicide that another death occurred, this time a student at the local college who mistimed the speed of their vehicle in relation to the speed of the train. They had once ridden on that exact train to get to school. Again, the network engineers, now more observers rather than anyone with technical determinacy, observed an acceleration of speed. This pattern would continue despite all best efforts, and it was in even legend that a culture of suicide existed in Camden that led to the train's current speed. The train once allowed the shrinking of both space and time, allowing the people the crossing of farther spaces in a shorter amount of time. Eventually, however, as became apparent when looking at the train, which was

now a ray of constant light which mimicked a time-lapse photo of traffic, that it was a complete destruction of time. Some did not get off the train in time, for whatever reason, and only complete guesses could be had in terms of what happened to them. What was known, however, was that this network allowed them, if still alive, to become a part of Camden in the most universal manner. They would be like those surveillance cameras except for the entire town.

The children of Camden would grow up with communal dares to touch that constant beam of light in hopes of being in contact with something that was everywhere at once.

Caution Sign (NZ at Night) / *Andreas (@corioianus_)* / photograph circa 21st century

The Cult of the Black Sun
Samil

Forward to:
Catherine Spencer
203 Bishop St.
Amherst, NY 12228

Dear Cathy,

    There's a lot of excitement and a lot of the same. Still having trouble getting my visa renewed—I'm not sure if it's better to spend more days at the immigration office or if I should just bury myself in the archive while I still can. Yesterday on a whim I went back to the BNF and looked for the Kojève manuscript. The reference box Boris told me it was in doesn't exist in the Bataille files, and at this point it wouldn't surprise me if he made the whole thing up just to fuck with me. But I did find something "unofficial" or at least not documented. I don't think its from Bataille, it isn't yellowed like the rest of his notebooks. It's all scraps of paper, mostly English, some French, and Hebrew that I can't read. I typed up some of the more interesting stuff (there's a lot of lists and random words), it's very Bataillean, maybe poking fun at Acéphale but with more Christian ideas. There's more than one person's handwriting, so I think it qualifies as a cult. You're the expert though, so you'll have to decide. I hope to see you again soon, but if I see you again soon it means my plans have fallen through. So I don't hope to see you any time soon. And yet…

Yours,
Robert

[1]
Man has worshipped the Sun
As infinite nourishment
Blessing his orgies with light
A tacit approval of the living

Man has lived in the Sun
He stumbles to lie in the warmth
And behind closed eyes sees
an uncentered illumination
He begins to pierce into
the miasma of colors

Untangling the threads of light
He rises to their origin
Finally stepping beyond the Sun
Into a blackness that haloes itself

[2]
A black sun constantly shining
Piercing the earth, the rays disorient,
seeming to bubble up in all
directions
And yet there is a tender pain
behind the sore of the sun,
so that one feels especially burdened
by the noon sky, knowing through
an imagined vision
that the black sun rains down its
corrosion
on all that is seen and unseen,
and that whoever makes pains to see
it is condemned forever

[3]
One who accedes to knowledge of
the Black Sun
does so only through worship. It is
granted
to him that everything is seen as the
expansion
of the Black Sun

[4]
Violence, degradation as time itself,
the winds of chance—
A clotting of 'the Known'
Like the cyclone, the pillar of fire,
a whirlpool in the stream of
becoming

[5]
The wind and sun are your
messengers,
Scattering us without mercy even
beyond death. How great then
is their source, that Sun
that shines forever!
The Black Time, the unfolding
Eternity!
O Black Sun, reconcile us to you
Let us meet you in the perfect vision
of your luminous body!

[6]
A white circle in an infinite depth
It is patiently eclipsed to reveal
A faint corona

And traces of pale fire
flashing over an unchurning ocean
Whoever sees the Black Sun is surely
condemned to die

[7a]
O Black Sun!
Let me be shattered by you
Cover me with your rays
Wash me in them forever

[7b]
O Black Sun!
God of Abandon
I cry out to see you
Grant me your vision

[7c]
O Black Sun!
Anoint us with wine and blood
Ravage our senses without end
A blind and unending repose

[7d]
O Black Sun!
You have put Christ on his cross
It is to you that he cried out
In his thirst and brokenness

[8]
Bubbling up of oil from the sore
The taste of metal—constant nausea
Dizziness, inability to stand

[9]
The Black Sun surpasses Being
It burns with Heraclitean fire
More virile than constancy
An infinite will to defile
Reaching into the filthiest
excrement of essence
to endow us with abject life

[10]
A burning that never dims nor
crackles
The silence of space
A declaration beyond words

[11]
Oxidation
Radiation
Cancer

[12a]
O Black Sun that casts the die!
You storm of chance, how great
is the power that answers
what should become of the possible!

[12b]
You are the flash of the card before
it is turned over—a blank card
that holds all its outcomes in
a perfected tension. The gambler
worships in every throw and wager

[13]
Boiled wine, olive oil and honey
Vineyard, coastline, dessert
Noontime, Sunset
Blood, venom, (wine)
Stainless steel, iron, copper, lead
Unleavened bread, raw meat

[14]
The Venom of God
Coming down to blot
out the sky
The workers of plagues
The Earth groans,
Its throat scarred from screaming

[15]
The Black Sun touches with non-
presence

[16]
Who can grasp him?
Who will draw him out of the earth
or down from the heavens?

[17a]
How pure is that
which pours itself out endlessly
Perfection is an affront to man
who has relegated it to a deathly
white light
No, the Black Sun shines now
Let them bite at fate, let them curse
Who can understand these mad tears

of the condemned?

[17b]
The great lesson of the Black Sun is
the ecstatic cry, where pain, refusal,
bliss, and acceptance meet in equal
parts. Wine is mixed with blood
in the wound.

[17c]
The measure of time is rust.
And how I've felt it in my lungs and
knees.
Should I cry over the reign of the
Black Sun?
No, there is nothing to resist.

[17d]
I contain a murderous desire
I am a wound,
A sore in God's mouth
A decaying and sick God

[17e]
I shall drink to excess
a dark and bitter wine
at its edge red and its core black
I shall drink in the sun
until it flows from me

[17f]
I dream of nothing but laceration
To vomit up black bile
My eyes gouged out

Disemboweled

[17g]
Who has scattered the stars?
Who has stretched the heavens?

[17h]
The lowest of untouchables,
born from a cursed womb
with a guilt that can never be effaced

[18a]
Whoever sees the Black Sun is
condemned to die!

[18b]
The screams of immolation
That the Black Sun
is wounding even itself
That it too is disintegrating, perhaps

[18c]
Welcome me, O Black Sun
As I am torn apart by your kinsmen

[18d]
Is my worship not a better form?
Have I not lived life as the Dead
Man?
Was I not stillborn and an
abomination?
An affront to the heavenlies and
nature?

[18e]
O Black Sun!
I grow weary in everything
I relax into degradation
I lay myself down to dreamless sleep

[18f]
Visions of supplication
Crushed underfoot
My own blood in my throat
My nose smashed into my skull

[18g]
I abandon myself
I am empty and useless
Impotent in everything
I can never erase
the fact that I have existed

[18h]
They have torn off my ears
In the name of the Black Sun
They crush my eardrums

The Two Disruptions: Marx and Scholz

Henrique Salema Maschk Darlim

At a global level, a couple of questions present themselves nowadays: does a post-Covid world exist? And if it exists, are we approaching it after three years of intense psychological and physical stress? These questions appear as if they were suspended in mid-air, amidst our deepest fears regarding mortality and its interaction with dangerous, invisible lifeforms. Such anxiety is aggravated by the intense prolongation of the virus' imperial domination: some thought we would be free in a matter of months, at most a year, vaccines included or not.

The never-ending sensation of the coronavirus pandemic can easily bring back memories of another apparently eternal and immortal thing: the regime of capital. Although capital, through its defence mechanism, tries to dissociate itself from the emer-gence of new versions of established pathogens,[1] we know their ability to manipulate our perception of time is not the only property they share. Capital and the virus actually present themselves in a causal relationship, since the only way humans can inter-act with updated versions of virus and bacteria is through nature, exactly the location from which capital extracts its raw materials that later will work in its favour. Similarly, meat con-sumption in its current mass-produced state is an open bridge for an infestation of new microscopical parasites.

(I) From value to capital

It is hard to deny *Capital* as Marx's *magnum opus*. Its understand-ing of the capitalist mode of produc-tion brought about an enormous impact on political organization and for a long time it functioned almost

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1: If we are to accept liberal democracy as equivalent to a bourgeois dictatorship, mainstream media stands at the ideological frontline, securing the status quo maintenance and assuring the capitalist discourse is left for the most part unquestioned.

like a Bible for Marxists.[2] But something which is commonly undervalued interests us here. First done in *Capital*, and something bourgeois Political Economy did not do which Marx did for the first time: the conceptual transition from value to capital.

Adam Smith and David Ricardo notably comprehended the primacy of value, constructing their theoretical building around it. They failed, however, in deriving capital, labour, profit, and all the other concepts of Political Economy *from* value. Continuing the building metaphor, what they did was expand horizontally an architectural construction when it should have been expanded vertically. Instead of a building with floors, they constructed an immense hallway, in a movement incapable of representing difference, exposing only the same—only value—repeatedly: they started with value and stayed there for the whole ride. Practically, this meant it was impossible to penetrate the internal movement of value towards capital.

Their failure can be indebted to a prevalently empirical method, as suggested by Müller,[3] combined with their methodological individualism:[4] an approach that absorbs the concepts somewhat directly from appearance, disregarding the mediations involved in our experiences with the world, and presents individuals detached from pervasive social bonds. In short, a procedure that establishes the individual as the only subjective measure and the worldly appearances as almost unmediated objects. To this list, authors such as Heinrich and Lima also include a shared tendency to see classical economics as a reflex of a known human nature, which they call anthropologism, and to understand capitalist relations as following natural laws, expansible to every human society, an attitude they termed ahistoricism.[5]

2: Ironically, Marx saying he was not a Marxist was not sufficient to impede an equivalence between his method and dogma during most of the 20th century—for more on this, see Michael Heinrich, "Je ne suis pas marxiste," available at https://libcom.org/library/%E2%80%9Eje-ne-suis-pas-marxiste%E2%80%9C. However, Benjamin fortuitously critiqued this association in a well-known aphorism: Walter Benjamin, "I," in *On the Concept of History*, trans., Dennis Redmond (2005), available at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm.
3: Marcos Lutz Müller, "Exposição e método dialético em 'O Capital,'" *Boletim SEAF*, no. 2 (1982): 4–5.
4: Alex Callinicos, "Marx's Method," in *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 75, 83.
5: Michael Heinrich and Rômulo Lima, "Objetividade valor e forma valor. Apontamentos de Marx para a segunda edição de O Capital," *Revista de Economia Política* Vol. 38, no. 1 (March 2018): (201-214)211–212.

Ricardo, on one hand, still got closer to value's scientific truth than Smith since he got hold of the "force of abstraction" — (*Abstraktionskraft*)—a paramount tool for analysing economic forms, equated by Marx to the microscopes and chemical reagents of the natural sciences.[6] But he failed to effectively relate the abstract concepts and the reality he was trying to explain, something deeply concerning if we keep in mind that the abstract concepts in most cases contradicted the appearances they were derived from[7]— exemplifying this, we shall see soon how value already opens its way to inconsistencies.

Marx, on the other hand, knew abstraction was only the "*starting point*"[8] of science, since it offers a way of isolating the simplest features of its objects, permitting then a reciprocal relation between the empirical and the theoretical domains. Here, then, it becomes impossible to

ignore that abstraction, to be correctly used, needs an appropriate methodological approach. And Marx only succeeded in his attempt of illustrating the aforementioned movement from value to capital through his own, albeit somewhat indebted to Hegel,[9] dialectical method.[10] The true secret of this, still, is how Marx unravelled value.

In short, what he tried to do was to establish a means of reproducing the concrete inside our minds to advance our comprehension of the world. In his own words, "the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete" is the only process through which thought manages to truly seize what could be called reality.[11] Marx is notably clear about this in the *Grundrisse*. After getting hold of the simplest abstractions involving a concept, in this case that of population, "the journey would have to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time

6: Karl Marx, "Volume I: Capitalist Production," in *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, trans., Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 2013), 7.

7: Callinicos, "Marx's Method," 81.

8: Ibid.

9: Ibid., 77, 79, 83; Guglielmo Carchedi, "Method," *In Behind the Crisis: Marx's Dialectics of Value and Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1.

10: Nowadays, dialectical, dialectics, and related concepts are either enveloped in mysticism or used as a catch-all term when one does not know how to explain complexity. For a short but comprehensible discussion on this, see Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012), 36–38.

11: Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 101

not as the chaotic conception of the whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations."[12] The method involves, therefore, going from concrete to abstract, and then proceeding from this abstract to the concrete-in-thought.[13]

In *Capital* this is done in the following way: Marx proceeds from the commodity, seemingly the most elementary object of the capitalist mode of production, to investigate value and then to arrive at increasingly complex social forms—the book's final sections deal with manifold themes such as the so-called original accumulation and the theory of colonisation.

So, the commodity is presented in its concrete form, as having a dual nature: it has a use-value as well as an exchange-value; or, in other words, every commodity has a useful quality and a quantitative measure understood as its price that enables the process of exchange. At first glance, a contradiction is caused by the fact that exchange value appears as both relative measure and as an intrinsic characteristic of commodities: as some-thing simultaneously absolute and relative. But Marx points out a given commodity is not exchangeable only for *one* other commodity; any commodity can be exchanged for *any* other commodity: a given quantity, let's say *x*, of commodity A can be exchanged for *y* of commodity B *and* the same goes for *z*, α, β of commodities C, D, E, etc.[14]

What, then, gives exchange value its essence? When we directly compare two commodities in determined quantities, for example, 2 kg of chocolate to 6 litres of milk, we want to express the establishment of an equivalence relation. But if chocolate and milk, two use-values with different characteristics, can be proportioned to be equal in a relation of 2:6, there must be something present *behind* their exchange values in both commodities. Through the process of abstraction, we perceive how both require human labour to extract them from nature as raw materials and transform them into commodities. With abstraction, however, chocolate and milk lose their qualities, they stop being use-values, since it does not matter anymore which *form* of

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12: Marx, *Grundrisse*, 100.
13: Carchedi, "Method," 44–47.
14: Marx, "Volume I," 17–18.

labour created them, thus becoming a congealed residue of abstracted human labour: value.[15]

A commodity's value is then revealed to be measured according to the amount of socially necessary labour required for its production, which, in turn, is measured in time. Therefore, the magnitude of value of any commodity is quantified by the time necessary for its production given a specific level of productivity[16]—a characteristic which actually welcomes change and difference instead of rejecting them.[17] So, besides being a social relation and not a substance found within commodities,[18] value is also intrinsically related to the state of the productive forces.

We have finally made the way to value starting from exchange-value. As exchange-value manifests itself commonly in the money form, what needs to be done then is to "solve the riddle presented by money" by working our way into the progressively complex forms of value until capital is reached.[19] This journey starts, of course, with the simplest relation between commodities: that of one commodity of a kind with another of another kind, which Marx calls the *elementary or accidental form of value*: x commodity A = y commodity B.

But this elementary relation does not include any other interactions between commodities other than a one-to-one relation. However, what makes feasible equating A and B, one commodity to another, can be easily and intentionally expanded to include more of them, commodities C, D, E, etc.[20] Therefore, we have the *total or expanded form of value*:

$$x \text{ commodity A} = y \text{ commodity B}$$
$$x \text{ commodity A} = z \text{ commodity C}$$
$$x \text{ commodity A} = \alpha \text{ commodity D}$$

———

Here is presumed a kind of alterity: A can only be exchanged for B *or* exchanged for C *or* for D. On the one hand, it seems like its value is not fixed but instantaneous, availa-

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15: Ibid., 19.
16: Ibid., 20–21.
17: For a thorough discussion on the nature of social relations, including its potential and actual forms, see Carchedi, "Method," 3–8.
18: Marx, "Volume 1," 27, 42; Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, 64.
19: Marx, "Volume 1," 27.
20: Ibid., 39.

ble at the exact moment of exchange and only at this precise moment. On the other hand, this is the first form in which value can—emphasis on *can* instead of *will*—be understood as "a congelation of undifferentiated human labour."[21] The second form of value also negates the accidental appearance of the first form, says Marx, since it shows that value actually defines exchange proportions while denying the opposite, that exchange processes function as the determining factor for commodities' values.[22]

Still, mimicking Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, this is a disjointed form of value insofar as it is an *either...or* relation; what we need is a truly connected *and...and* form. If we express what is contained hidden within that form, we get the *general form of value*: "All commodities now express their value (1) in an elementary form, because in a single commodity; (2) with unity, because in one and the same commodity. This form of value is elementary and the same for all, therefore general."[22]

It can be represented by the following:

x commodity A = y commodity B, z commodity C, α commodity D, ...

Now, value *will* finally be generalized as an expression of something shared by all commodities. The general form is a reciprocal form of value, meaning all commodities recognize each other as equivalents in its social relation. The magnitude of their values can be compared: if 2 kg of chocolate are equal to 6 litres of milk, and 6 litres of milk equate to 3 kg of coffee, 2 kg of chocolate = 6 litres of milk *and* 3 kg of coffee. Furthermore, the amount of labour contained in 1 litre of milk is ⅓ of the labour contained in 1 kg of chocolate and ½ of the labour contained in 1 kg of coffee.

Using linen as an example of universal equivalent (our commodity A at this point), Marx says the following: "The bodily form of the linen is now the form assumed in common by the values of all commodities; it therefore becomes directly exchangeable with all and every one of them. The substance linen becomes the visible incarnation, the social chrysalis state of every kind of human labour."[24] But similar to the first form

21: Ibid.
22: Ibid., 40.
23: Ibid., 41.
24: Ibid., 43.

of value, the characterization of linen as universal equivalent can be understood as something accidental.

Also, a contradiction arises from this form of value. Every commodity owner wants their commodity to be the universal equivalent, for any commodity can occupy such social place. But there cannot be more than one universal equivalent; if that were to happen, such category would be rendered useless. It is only through the commodity owners' social action that a universal equivalent is chosen. Still, this is not done by them in a conscious manner.[25] Nevertheless, at the end of this process, as soon as the social decision is made, the universal equivalent is taken out of its potent state and actualized. The *general form of value* transitions into the *money form*. To use Marx's example, now 20 yds of linen, 1 coat, 10 lbs of tea, 40 lbs of coffee, 1 quarter of corn, ½ ton of iron, and *x* commodity A = 2 oz. of gold.[26]

So, finally, we got back to money. We started with exchange-value as the commodity's price, discovered the social relation known as value within it, arrived again at its price, and learned that commodities contain the potentiality of money.[27] This means, then, that exchange-value cannot be the origin of value; rather, as was shown, the opposite is true.[28] Marx's investigation also implies value is necessarily expressed as exchange-value, *i.e.*, exchange-value is the only form through which value can be actualized, the moment of exchange being when this can happen. It is in such moment that commodities A and B face one another, showing explicitly how the internal contradiction between use-value and value is represented externally by their exchange values'.[29] The money form is here extremely crucial since it represents all commodities' exchange-values, also being described by Marx as "the socially recognised incarnation of human labour"[30]—something crucial, for example, for Heinrich's argument that Marx's theory is not only a mere value theory but a *monetary theory of value*.[31]

25: Heinrich, and Lima, "Objetividade valor," 208–209.

26: Marx, "Volume 1," 45.

27: Ibid., 46.

28: Ibid., 37.

29: Ibid., 38; Jorge Grespan, *O negativo do Capital* (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2012), 43–45.

30: Marx, "Volume 1," 64.

31: Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, 63.

Money also functions as a means of circulation of commodities, paving the way for the C-M-C circuit:[32] a commodity is exchanged for money which is then exchanged for another commodity. But what we need to understand is how capital differentiates itself from money and also how money is transformed in capital.

In first place, money cannot act as capital in the aforementioned circuit since the goal there is consumption and money's mere utility is derived from being the means of circulation. Capital, on the other hand, has its own circuit, M-C-M', inside which money apparently figures at both extremes. Therefore, exchange-value and not use-value stays at its centre, meaning money becomes the protagonist and commodities take the place of money as essential condition for the whole process to occur.[33]

But the major change between both circuits is derived precisely from what it means for money to be at the end of the second circuit—and of course, for it to be M' and not pure M. As mentioned above, consumption is the end and the goal in the C-M-C circuit. This means said movement can cease to exist as soon as the commodity is consumed. For M-C-M', however, the situation changes. Money is at the start, which is used to buy a commodity capable of providing more value than it was purchased for. The M' at the end has more value than the M opening the circuit. The equivalence of C-M-C is exchanged for the M-C-M' imbalance since the value changes through the latter while being the same for all phases of the former.[34] It is precisely this M' which is capital, being nothing more than M+ΔM: the initial value plus a surplus-value.[35] No wonder the mercantilists characterized capital as "money which begets money."[36]

32: Marx, "Volume 1," 77.

33: Grespan, *O negative do Capital*, 69.

34: Marx, "Volume 1," 105–107.

35: The transformation of value basically means capital's origin cannot be the result of a surplus exchange-value. In other words, capital cannot be born out of the circulation process, of commerce, since what changes inside this process is price and not value. José Paulo Netto and Marcelo Braz even posit commercial capital's circuit as being M-C-M+ instead of M-C-M' to illustrate the difference. As for the historical reason behind such contrasting circuits, Eduardo Barros Mariutti argues merchant capital was incapable of ruling commodity production, limiting itself to exchanging and selling commodities. José Paulo Netto and Marcelo Braz, *Economia política: uma introdução crítica* (São Paulo: Cortez Editora, 2012), 94–97; Eduardo Barros Mariutti, "Capital mercantil e autônomo e a transição ao capitalismo: a polêmica sobre as duas vias e o papel das cidades," *Re vista Brasileira de Desenvolvimento Regional* Vol. 8, no. 2 (August 2020): 8–9.

36: Marx, "Volume 1," 104.

Unlike what happens in the C-M-C circuit, there is no way to 'consume' money save to use it to purchase more commodities. In other words, M-C-M' as a circuit is theoretically infinite; nay, it's even more than that: the process of exchange represented by it *propels* its own continuous propagation to infinity. Instead of a uniform motion, whose acceleration always equals 0, the circulation of capital comes closer to an accelerated motion.[37] The history of capitalism, from its inception to its current version, shows how much truth the previous statement has since the capitalist mode of production has successfully expanded itself in a continuous manner, both spatially and temporally.[38]

If we take a closer look at M-C-M' we perceive how it explicitly refers to the commodity in the middle as the gateway for the expansion of value. Only after the consumption of some specific commodity can value be increased. In other words, it is only through the purchase and consequent use of some commodity whose use-value is capable of producing a surplus-value that money becomes capital. Since value is an expression of the expenditure of human labour power, being exclusively determined through the labour process, such commodity is nothing more than *commoditized*[39] labour power.[40]

We have successfully retraced how Marx proceeds from value to capital, something he did in a truly novel way in his own epoch. Instead of being solely a methodical prowess that broke with preceding economic theory, his account of the internal logic of capital demonstrated how social relations gave way to capitalism

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37: Ibid., 102.

38: Two outdated but classical works that addresses this are Maurice Dobb's *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 1946) and Leo Huberman's *Man's Worldly Goods: The Story of the Wealth of Nations* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1936).

39: The stylisation of 'commoditized' is no accident. The relation between labour power and both slavery and feudalism are explicitly different from the relation which takes place in the capitalist mode of production. A number of reasons as to why that is are offered a little later in the book: on page 114 of the first volume of *Capital*, Marx says the following: "For the conversion of his money into capital, therefore, the owner of money must meet in the market with the free labourer, free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labour power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realisation of his labour power [...] This relation has no natural basis, neither is its social basis one that is common to all historical periods. It is clearly the result of a past historical development, the product of many economic revolutions, of the extinction of a whole series of older forms of social production."

40: Ibid., 113; Grespan, *O negative do Capital*, 72.

and how capital, on the other hand, was able to form its own set of social interactions.

(II) From value to value-dissociation

Capital establishes a social world based entirely on the production of value, on the continuous repetition of accelerated self-valorisation, something which partially explains why the regime of labour suffers a prolonged process of change when the pre-capitalist and capitalist periods are compared. Production for profit dominates capitalist society while capital paints itself as the source of all value, and consequently, of all wealth. Capital, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, "falls back on (*il se rabat sur*) all production, constituting a surface over which the forces and agents of production are distributed, thereby appropriating for itself all surplus production and arrogating to itself both the whole and the parts of the process, which now seem to emanate from it as a quasi cause."[41]

The automatization of capital brings an interesting relation between it and the capitalist. As it does with the production of commodities, capital is able to invert its relationship with the capitalist: he starts as capital's master, initiating the movement of self-valorisation by his free-willed choice until a moment is reached when capital takes the wheel and dissociates itself from its previous owner, dominating him.

The referred scenario can be comprehended as a revelation of capital's true nature, meaning capital only effectively exists if it succeeds in using the capitalist as a medium for the valorisation of value, something which presents the capitalist in a fatalist veneer. He does not choose to exploit the proletariat. He is, instead, necessarily obliged to do it being not a true subject, but just another object working for the maintenance of the regime of capital. In the words of Robert Kurz: "Even the rulers are ruled."[42]

In "Making it with Death," Nick Land proposes that capital does not only detach itself from being subjected by the capitalist, but that it actively starts trying to destroy bourgeois society. Land explicitly argues capital-

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41: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 10.

42: Robert Kurz, "Dominação sem sujeito: sobre a superação de uma crítica social redutora," Seminar, Seminário Internacional "A Teoria Crítica Radical, Superação do Capitalismo e a Emancipação Humana," Fortaleza, October 29, 2000. Available at: https://www.marxists.org/portugues/kurz/1993/mes/90.htm.

as-process, as he calls it, is incommensurable with bourgeois civilisation even if it initially seems like the opposite. We can say capital uses bourgeois society to be born, first accepting it but then rejecting it as soon as it proves to be an impediment for the infinite expansion of value. Capital would then exchange *production for profit* for *production for production*—an idea associated with the works of Deleuze and Guattari—while effectively expressing the character of death within itself.[43] The automatic process becomes autonomous.

Through this movement we tentatively revaluate and reassess what Marx wrote with a contemporary lens. Not only the abstracted detachment of capital from its *prima* society indicates the need for this, but also the history of the 20th century. The crises of Fordism and Keynesianism, with its results being a weakening of

trade unions' power mixed with incredible scientific and technological developments in favour of capital,[44] resulted in a quite different scenario from that of the 19th century English society that Marx took as a model.

One interesting development in critical theory regarding this actualization was *Krisis*, a radical political journal and group of discussion from Germany founded in 1986. *Krisis* initiated the movement known as *Wertkritik* (value-critique) by proposing an alternative for the interpretations of Marxist theory and functioning as a "theoretical review of German Marxism."[45] One of its most notable members, the aforementioned Robert Kurz, argued for a 'desontologization'[46] of labour *qua* category in response to preceding authors' views on value. From *Krisis* also emerged a novel theory of value, so to speak: Roswitha Scholz's theo-

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43: Nick Land, "Making it with Death: Remarks on Thanatos and Desiring-Production," in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987–2007*, eds. Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (Windsor Quarry: Urbanomic; New York: Sequence Press, 2012), 265–266.

44: Marx reveals in *Capital* how labour becomes more and more an objective process through the implementation of machines since "in its machinery system, modern industry has a productive organism that is purely objective, in which the labourer becomes a mere appendage to an already existing material condition of production" ("Volume 1," 267). This, in turn, is only possible because capital usurps technical advances to its vantage in an analogous way to how it appropriates labour: "Science, generally speaking, costs the capitalist nothing, a fact that by no means hinders him from exploiting it" ("Volume 1," Note 23, 1068).

45: Taylisi Leite, *Crítica ao feminismo liberal: valor-clivagem e marxismo feminista* (São Paulo: Contracorrente, 2020): 184.

46: Authors such as György Lukács and Moishe Postone in one way or another transformed labour in an ontological category, an interpretation seen by Kurz as transhistorical.

ry of value dissociation. Before we engage with it, however, we need some context.

Scholz's engagement with philosophy began in her teenage years, when she read Sartre and Camus. Although she was not initially impressed by Marxism, as her first contact with it had been through its Soviet variant, she became interested in studying it after she attended a college seminar on the Frankfurt School. She had become convinced Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* could provide crucial critical power for the development of feminist thought—before this, Scholz kept trying to understand which non-Marxist theories would be useful for feminism, a political stance she was involved with since her adolescence. Later, she engaged directly with Marx's texts through a group of studies in which Kurz participated, seeing how Marxian thought successfully solved some theoretical problems encountered in Existentialism. Together with Kurz (whom she had married), Norbert Trenkle, and Ernst Lohoff, Scholz founded what would later become *Krisis*.[47]

In 2004, she and Kurz were expelled from *Krisis*. Along with this, some other members also announced their departure from the journal in support of the two authors.[48] As Scholz was proposing value to be essentially masculine since the '90s while being part of a predominantly masculine group, with Kurz adhering to her theoretical critique, it is hard to argue against the gendered aspect of her dismissal. But what kind of theoretical construction could outcast someone from a journal whose objective was to be even more critical than all preceding Marxist interpretations? Was Scholz so exceptional a critic that the other critics were beginning to fear her?

In the words of Taylisi Leite:

> Roswitha's great radicality comes from pointing out that the gender debate is not an appendix or an accessory to the critiques of capital and class society. It is, in truth, crucial to such critiques: capitalism cannot be comprehended without bourgeois patriarchy, meaning that any kind of non-feminist Marxism is incomplete. It is not only radically Marxist but also radically feminist.[49]

As proof of this, in her 1992

47: Leite, *Crítica ao feminismo liberal*, 185.
48: Ibid., 189.

article "The Value is the Man," Scholz describes the relationship between capital and patriarchy as an open question, since feminist authors within Marxism only tried to deal with such a complicated correlation through a traditional Marxist perspective. More specifically, she borrowed from the Marxism of the labour movement which was responsible for understanding the 'evil' of capitalism as being capital's appropriation of labour surplus-value.[50]

Moreover, in the same way *Wertkritik* postulates value was understood wrongly by 20th century Marxists, Scholz argues value was always treated in a neutral way regarding gender and sex. All Marxist authors preceding her were, of course, critics of capitalism. In her view, however, there was an absence regarding the masculine aspect of value in their analyses. And even when some authors tried to equate abstract labour and domestic work, in an attempt to address this question, one could no-tice how domestic work would still be invariantly subservient to abstract labour, since the categories used for this comparison are tools inherited from the world of commodity production.[51]

The following argument is not proposed by Scholz in the article, but the absence she mentions could be expected given the fact that most well-known Marxist authors were male. For a practical example, if you were to ask radical leftists, a social group represented mostly by men, to name female Marxists, most of them would list Silvia Federici, Angela Davis, Alexandra Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and would maybe stop right there—if they can even get to Krupskaya. As an attempt to refute this thought experiment, one could argue that there is a small number of known female Marxist thinkers, so the chances of knowing male and female authors are at different odds. But if we think for a bit about what could

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49: Ibid., 192. The original is as it follows: "A grande radicalidade de Roswitha está em apontar que o debate de gênero não é um apêndice ou um complemento às críticas ao capital e à sociedade de classes, mas crucial: não se compreende o capitalismo sem o patriarcado burguês, de modo que qualquer marxismo não feminista é deficitário. É radicalmente marxista, mas também é radicalmente feminista."

50: Roswitha Scholz, "O valor é o homem: teses sobre a socialização pelo valor e a relação entre os sexos," *Novos Estudos – CEBRAP* Vol. 2, no. 45 (July 1996): 15. Trans., by José Marcos Macedo. Available at: http://novosestudos.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/13_o_valor_e_o_homem.pdf.zip

51: Scholz, "O valor é o homem," 16.

be the origin of this situation, does it not relate to the way in which the nature of knowledge is understood in our society? Knowledge, principally formal knowledge, is seen as a masculine trait: the capacity for reflection and thought is still considered a masculine aptitude. Later, Scholz will present what she considers the motives behind this situation.

One could say that intelligence being considered masculine stems from male domination, which is not something new in History. It is nonsense to point that out, however. As we have already seen, capital dominates society's labour power, rules over it, and reorganizes labour expenditure to suit the expansion of value. In other words, although it only takes effect in bourgeois society, capital precedes the society in which is it born, and becomes its future. Therefore, capital dominates previously established social relations which do not remain as they were because they are now subjected to the whims of value, which ceaselessly revolutionizes them in its favour. Scholz will also address this later.

A similar movement describes what happens with machines as means of production: their construction and emergence occur in the manufacturing period, by the hands of skilful artisans, meaning their material base is inherited from said production system. But afterwards, the machines become responsible for the destruction of preceding production systems and their consequent replacement by the machinery system. According to Marx, "[t]he factory system was therefore raised, in the natural course of things, on an inadequate foundation. When the system attained to a certain degree of development, it had to root up this ready-made foundation, which in the meantime had been elaborated on the old lines, and to build up for itself a basis that should correspond to its methods of production."[52]

But let us get back to Scholz. In the 1992 article, she points out how even *Krisis* suffered from the same asexualizing illness that affected virtually all of Marxist theory.[53] For her colleagues, the concept of patriarchy was nothing more than a mere consequence of capitalist society's fetishistic character,[54] *i.e.*, for them,

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52: Marx, "Volume 1," 264.
53: Leite, Crítica ao feminismo liberal, 210.

value and abstract labour were still the predominant force behind capital and patriarchy could not be held to the same standard as the aforementioned elements.[55]

Against this, Scholz argues we need to take into consideration how certain activities, the ones associated with reproduction and not production, are attributed to women. More so, Scholz sees the basic contradiction of "the commodity-producing patriarchy" between matter and form, economy and culture, to be determined by gender or sex.[56] This means every presupposition of social reproduction not reducible to abstract value will be ascribed to women: "value dissociation means that capitalism contains a core of female-determined reproductive activities and the affects, characteristics, and attitudes (emotionality, sensuality, and female or motherly caring) that are dissociated from value and abstract labour."[57]

Accordingly, the reason why trying to define or reflect upon domestic work or female reproductive activities using traditional conceptual tools from Marxism fails becomes clearer: the productive and reproductive aspects of society cannot necessarily be equalled, since their relationship with capital differs too much in nature. Scholz goes so far as to mention that although dissociation functions to maintain value as a social relation, being partially within it, it also has elements occupying the outside of the logic of value.[58]

Value dissociation moreover "implies a particular socio-psychological relation" according to Scholz. The categories of political economy cannot help us here, since their literal transposition to the realm of psychology would render worthless results.[59] In the same manner intelligence is considered masculine, as discussed earlier, value actually undervalues sensitivity and emotionality by

54: Scholz, "O valor é o homem," 16–17.

55: Roswitha Scholz, "Patriarchy and Commodity Society: Gender without the Body," in *Marxism and the Critique of Value*, eds., Neil Larsen, Mathias Nilges, Josh Robinson, and Nicholas Brown (Chicago: MCM' Publishing, 2014): 127.

56: Scholz, "O valor é o homem," 18; Scholz, "Patriarchy and Commodity Society," 125.

57: Scholz, "Patriarchy and Commodity Society," 127.

58: Scholz, "O valor é o homem," 18; Scholz, "Patriarchy and Commodity Society," 128.

59: Deleuze and Guattari, for example, knew they could not simply alternate between psychoanalytic and Marxist terminology and call this a solid theoretical construction. What they did in *Anti-Oedipus* needed at least a reworking of common understandings of desire and production, for example.

considering them feminine traits.[60] As the ideal modern subject is male, white, neurotypical, absent of physical disabilities, cisgender, and heterosexual, not only women are disfavoured but also non-whites, neurodivergents, people with disabilities, transgender people, and homosexuals. It is important to notice here, however, that Scholz subscribes to Kurz idea of domination without a subject.[61]

History must be handled with care too. The author suggests we should not try to uncover capitalist gender relations as mere residue from preceding epochs: "The small, nuclear family as we know it, for example, only emerged in the eighteenth century, just as the public and private spheres as we understand them today only emerged in modernity."[62] The birth of modernity did not only see the rise of capital, then, but "it also saw the emergence of a social dynamism that rests on the basis of the relations of value dissociation."[63]

In short, Roswitha Scholz's interpretation of the gender dynamics within and without the capitalist mode of production can be seen as an attempt to understand how women can be held responsible for themselves and for all of humanity, since they occupy forcibly the position of carers, while their social power, their true potential of action within society, is at the same time so undervalued.

In the novel *Torto Arado*, after running away from home with Tobias, Belonísia for the first time feels the weight of her social role.[64] She encounters a house fully disorganized, with dirty laundry scattered on the floor, and flies everywhere. Our female protagonist has no choice but to start cleaning and organizing her new home. When Tobias returns from work in the fields, Belonísia fears his reaction but he instead seems to appreciate what she had done—although he feels no obligation whatsoever to thank her: "He did not say thank you, he was a man, why would he say thank you?"[65]

Later, she starts to understand how she is obliged to cook, clean, and be sexually available whenever

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60: Scholz, "Patriarchy and Commodity Society," 128.

61: Scholz, "O valor é o homem," 17.

62: Scholz, "Patriarchy and Commodity Society," 129.

63: Ibid.

64: Itamar Vieira Junior, *Torto Arado* (São Paulo: Todavia, 2019).

65: Vieira Junior, *Torto Arado*, 83.

Tobias wants to. All of these activities are seen by her as work, a thought she reveals on the first time Tobias use her body for sexual pleasure.[66] But just as we saw regarding Scholz's theory, even though she is responsible for so much, she has no right to expect any kind of retribution. In fact, the opposite is true. Tobias starts complaining more and more about Belonísia's food, about how he cannot find anything he needs because of the way she organizes their place, until he starts being violent. One night, he arrives at the house completely drunk and while complaining about the dinner, throws the plate at Belonísia. He then starts insulting her but Belonísia goes to the vegetable garden to clear her head.[67] Belonísia's ordeal ends only with the death of Tobias a few months later.[68]

The exclusive positioning of the feminine in activities related to reproduction can even be seen in the end-of-year festivities. Actually, my attention turned to the profound character of male domination precisely on this occasion, when I noticed how the men's role was to remain in a corner
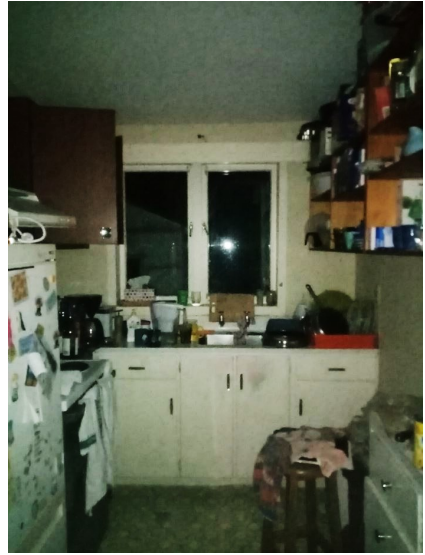
Kitchen (NZ at Night) / *Andreas (@corioianus_)* / photograph circa 21st century

of the house chatting, drinking, while the women were in charge of the food and organization of the festive family gathering. It does not take much to realize how divergent the social expectations are regarding the way men and women should behave. The coronavirus pandemic, with all its apparent transformation of society, has not been able to alter the logic of value-dissociation even minimally.

Before, during, and maybe after the pandemic, women will be obligated to continue taking care of their

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66: Ibid., 84.
67: Ibid., 88–89.
68: Ibid., 101.

children and their husbands during the holidays or not. Men, on the other hand, do not really have this obligation even during the extra-festive period; during the festivities, then, they can pretend they are absolutely free of responsibilities. When men are not participating in the process of production, all that remains is fun and pleasure since they cannot engage in female activities. Hence the importance of understanding both capitalist domination and patriarchal domination as dominations without a subject. Otherwise, it is too easy to fall into the traps of moralisation.

Wine Bottles Outside Kindergarten (NZ at Night) / *Andreas (@corioianus_)* / photograph circa 21st century

The Ejaculation of Inner Experience and the Formation of the Sacred Mythos

Tank Wallin

Mythology is the symbolic ejaculation of inner experience and knowledge onto the face of the people. It is the radical expenditure of the self onto another. The anthropological function of mythology was just this, an oration of this very ejaculation of knowledge. It is this very orgasmic expenditure which produces the knowledge of mythology—for the reception of mythos is the birth of new knowledge.

It is the orator, or the storyteller, skull-fucking the mind of their audience-member and penetrating into the womb of the mind. This ejaculation of the inner knowledge of the orator into the audience-member's mind combines the orator's self with the audience-member's. The combination of the orator's sperm and the audience-member's egg within the

mind produces this new knowledge. At the advent of the meeting between the egg and the sperm, the knowledge (genetic encoding) is shared between the two and develops into a fresh embryo. This new embryo of grail knowledge then develops into a formational inner experience—birthed from the blending of a multitude of experiences—"...of ecstasy, of rapture, at least of meditated emotion."[1]

The function of mythology, of the knowledge which it produces, is a sacred truth; the development of this truth is found in the immaterial mind of the audience-member. The basis of mythical truth is found not in Truth as we conceive of it (that being scientific or analytic truth—"provable" truth), but rather, it is a sacred truth. That sacred truth being a fundamen-

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1: Georges Bataille, "The Sacred," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans., Allan Stoekl, Donald M. Leslie Jr, and Carl R. Lovitt, 240–245 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans., Leslie Anne Boldt (New York: SUNY Press, 1988), 3.

tally inner experience (even in the scope of inner experience), although yes, mythology is indeed a public object, its sacred virtue exists only within that self whose existence is only resolved by each prior instance of the self.[2] At a very basic level, and this is very fundamentally basic, mythology's role (historically and anthropologically) is to convey essential truths—that is, essential truths within a given culture. While many cultures often have similar truths (respect for nature, humility, generosity), the roles that those truths serve can only be realized within the self.

This is where the skull-fucking commences, because while the orator has their story, may it be the *Epic of Gilgamesh* or *Mary Had a Little Lamb* (the encoding of their sperm), the realization of that story at a metaphysical or mystical level can only occur within the womb of the audience-member's mind. That is where the orator ejaculates—violently—into the minds of the audience-members, and where the aggregate of the orator's sperm and the audience-member's egg occurs.

The egg, of course, is the audience-member's self—the "soul," per se—of the member, which represents all of the experiences of that member up until the point in their existence wherein their mind is impregnated by the orator's sperm. "There exists, in fact, a unique moment in relation to the possibility of me [...] For if the tiniest difference had occurred in the course of the successive events of which I am the result, in the place of this *me*, integrally avid to be *me*, there would have been 'an *other*.'"[3]

Energy is passed down from Sol unto Earth in a destructive splattering—a random assortment of photons banished from the sun. The sun retains its photons for hundreds of thousands of years before they are ejected from its phallus—and yet, once discharged, its seed takes mere minutes to reach the face of Earth. Tearing into its outer fields, the majority of the photons are torn off of their path to Earth—being torn apart and killed on their way to Earth's womb. Once the solar rays enter Earth's innards, they impregnate everything in sight; the atmosphere heats up to a temperature where flora may

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2: Georges Bataille, "Sacrifices," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, trans., Allan Stoekl, Donald M. Leslie Jr, and Carl R. Lovitt, 130–136 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
3: Bataille, "Sacrifices," 130.

thrive, and as a result, herbivorous and omnivorous life lives on. From there, carnivorous consume both themselves, herbi-, and omnivores (as well as omnivores consuming both carni-, herbi, and omnivores, as well as flora). Man is one of these omnivores—they consume that energy of the sun in the form of fellow flora and fauna—which is then transferred into their works.

Much of the first expenditures of man were mythical—the production of mythology (or what we now recognize as such), works of speech, writing, art, etc., were many of the inaugural forms of expenditure which man practiced; the formational processes by which man could finally rid itself of this solar radiation. But it is not so simple, no—for the orator does not transmit solar energies to their audience-members, rather, they transform the energy within themself into something distinct and different—a mythical form of energy. These mythical energies ignite the very ways in which we conceptualize the world for (as I have previously established) the function of mythology is to convey essential truths ("what is 'good?'" or "why does evil exist?"), but not only that. For what we now recognize as science (the function of which, in broad terms, is to figure truths of the universe and of nature) was an operation which was—before the advent of it—performed by mythology. When we look at the formational mythologies, much of their use is to explain natural phenomenon (that the Gods' anger creates thunder and lightning, that constellations are the bodies of dead celestials, or that they correlate with your time of birth to determine facts about your life, that Earth is but the back of a very rather large tortoise).

But mythology is not something unique to the past—nor is its function. And while our "natural phenomena" have changed, the way that we articulate them remains fundamentally unchanged. Paranormal students (those who study Ghosts, spirits, and the like) seek to interpret the desires of the deceased so that those close to them may find closure—in such a way, they convey the essential lesson of respecting the dead. Cryptozoology (the study of Cryptids, such as Bigfoot, the Lochness Monster, the Chupacabra, etc.) seeks to explain certain phenomena via often unsettling stories—the Chupacabra, for example, was a Cryptid whose origin was a story used to explain various vampiric killings of Goats, alongside other livestock (whose blood was

sucked out via two circular incisions), in this way, it performed the vital function of explaining a paranormal phenomenon.

With gratitude and many thanks, goodbye.

In Dreams Begins the Illusion of a Self / *Iván Ortega* / pencil and paper / 2020

Vessels of Waste: The Ambivalent Expenditure of Sex Work

Vivienne Chambers

I have a client who, like clockwork, says, "Ok, time to shut Barry down now"—referring to himself as his cock begins to harden during the routine handjob I give him. I've never doubted the sense of respite I provide during our weekly rendezvous. What this respite is exactly is why I return again and again to Georges Bataille's mapping of eroticism, and more specifically its designation within the concept of nonproductive expenditure.

For Bataille, humanity is confronted with an immeasurable gift of energy which cannot be completely assimilated into any system. He believed that an economy restricted to accumulation and utilitarian ends will depend on distinctly unproductive activity—it needs to squander the energetic surplus it produces. Such nonproductive expenditure is vital in both a cosmic and material sense. Excess energy, Bataille writes, "can be used for the growth of a system...if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically."[1]

What does Bataille mean by nonproductive expenditure? It is a category of activity that comes in various forms: experiences of eroticism, war, festivals, sacrifice, art, and cults. These things do not require a larger purpose—the release of energy and loss of resources which occurs can be considered an end in itself. Eroticism illustrates this by its total lack of use-value. In erotic experience, energy is discharged that is unnecessary for sexual reproduction. As a purely psychological act, eroticism subsumes an individual in an experience which ultimately has "nothing as its object."[2]

1: Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volume I*, trans., Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 21.
2: Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volume I*, 190.

This category of wasteful activity would seem to challenge the demands of capitalism which require us to subordinate ourselves to future ends and constant self-consciousness. But my experiences with sex work have shown me that nonproductive expenditure plays an extremely ambiguous role, and demands a more complex reading. It is a threat to the organization of the economy, yet its function also makes the economy possible.

In my job as a whore, I have always felt the tension between the subversive elements of sex work and its subservience to capital. I am constantly in conversation with Bataille in my attempts to understand this fraught relationship. How can it be that such a powerful manifestation of expenditure—something which continuously undoes me, my clients, and the dominant forms of exchange—is also a means of holding it all together?

Sex workers constitute an invisible class. Aria Dean points out that though nonproductive expenditure is "an integral force in generating and maintaining the coherence of life as we know it," it is always a category of activity that exists outside the norm.[3] I immediately think of how the services of sex workers are essential for many, yet the industry remains confined to the shadows of proper society. So much of our existence is a response to repressed sexuality and the constraints of the nuclear family, but to regard sex work as a simple release valve for this libidinal run-off would be too simple.

We cannot name what is being sought in sex work encounters. The many times I've been paid to simply sit with a client as opposed to getting fucked has produced more questions than answers. The physical act of sex is commonly understood as the commodity in these exchanges, but my experiences in whoredom have shown that this is never the sole objective. At times, it is not an objective at all. Sex work is a form of nonproductive expenditure because of its collusion with eroticism. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson write, "[i]n eroticism the object of desire radiates with a nocturnal brilliance that reduces the subject to nothing but the infinite movement of desire itself."[4]

3: Aria Dean, "Black Bataille," *November Mag*, August 2021, https://www.novembermag.com/content/black-bataille.
4: Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, "Introduction: From Experience to Economy," in *The Bataille Reader*, eds., Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, 1–34 (New York: Wiley, 1997), 12.

Erotic desire can eclipse a situation, enabling a divine loss of any coherent objective. This rupture into an infinite expanse of desire can cause even the goal of an orgasm to become incidental.

The whore's role in this type of erotic dynamic is distinct; being the object of desire is not as straightforward as it would be in a mutual exchange of desire between two people. The prostitute, Bataille says, is in a position that is fundamentally paradoxical. As a whore, I am an object, yet I am simultaneously providing an experience of eroticism which "implies the abolition of the limits of all objects."[5] Within the boundless zone of erotic experience, the boundaries of my subjectivity temporarily become inoperative. This effect is dramatic and with a violence unparalleled by any other consensual erotic dynamic. I am paid to remain undefined. I perform only the necessary criteria which will furnish me as a "real woman." My client is then implicitly released of the burden to acknowledge me as other in this encounter.

In Bataille's eyes, whores are quintessential symbols of expenditure. He describes the glorious display of excess via the figure of the prostitute, writing how we are "the objects, the focal points of luxury and lust, though [presented] as goods and as values, dissipate a part of human labor in a useless splendor."[6] Whores are human vessels for wastefulness. Our intimacy is desirable because to be in close proximity to an organ of sheer excess disorients the individual in the most intoxicating manner. We provide an exquisite distraction for our clients; access points to an encompassing experience of eroticism, a moment to turn away from the encumbrances of their self-consciousness, to lose themselves.

Sex work exchanges can hold a lot of weight, or none at all. I've come to think of whores as dark closets men can escape into to work out whatever is ailing them. We are stewards of expenditure and by virtue of this designation, what a client brings to each interaction is always a tossup, unknown even to themselves. Bataille writes that in eroticism, "the object of desire must in fact restrict

5: Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans., Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), 130.

6: Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volumes II & III*, trans., Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 141.

itself to being nothing more than this response; that is, it must no longer exist for itself but for the other's desire."[7] He suggests that within any erotic dynamic, partners will respond to one another by limiting themselves. As a whore I am incentivized to restrict myself and exist for the other's desire however it may manifest. My experiences in opening up this space of unreserved possibility for a stranger can be characterized as both beautiful and painful, but it is mostly unknown. Above all, my routine dissociation yields a story with an ending yet to be discovered.

Partially revoking your subjectivity during work is a requirement of every job in some capacity. My labor as a professional lover is performing a simulacrum of a woman. This woman is far from me, and in fact she is impossible. The violence and coercion behind blurring the distinction between labor and body leaves me reluctant to admit that I often feel a sense of relief in the dissociation that is entailed in this role. The more I can embody that impossibly simple "woman," the more I am free from the entanglement of my own alienated existence. Throughout the majority of my time doing sex work, I have considered this to be an immense gift.

It is through the concept of nonproductive expenditure that we can see sex work in its contradictory fullness: tender and violent, criminalized and licensed, uncontainable and contained. The sex work dynamic provides all that is necessary to access the divine void opened up by eroticism, hence one of the many household names for whores: "providers." The subversive or liberatory aspects of this dynamic is coupled with the trap of organized capital. Sex work systematizes erotic expenditure, ultimately reproducing the lives of men who so effectively build the system we wish to escape. The nonproductive expenditure accessed via sex work falls short; a stopgap void which ultimately shields us from experiencing life beyond the limits of capital.

7: Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volumes II & III*, 143.

Live Nudes/PeepBooth Face #3 / *Zoe Gold* /
cardboard, acrylic, clay, and glue / August 2021 /
10" x 12"

"Weak Narrativity"—A Graphic Analysis of Staging, Plot Progression, and Cognitive Tension in The Festival (2018)

Logan K. Young

*T*he Festival (2018; Iain Morris, director; Keith Akushie and Joe Parham, cowriters) was retrospectively reviewed to assay the narrativity of its plotline. Cartesian functions illustrate how each one of the three (3) narrative dimensions in the inclusion cohort—Staging, Plot Progression, Cognitive Tension—were shaped *vis-à-vis* internal plot devices. Because *The Festival* is not a 'standard' piece of filmmaking per se, the interpretation of the story arcs, themselves, cannot be considered wholly objective.

STAGING SCORE:
-20.6

Segment
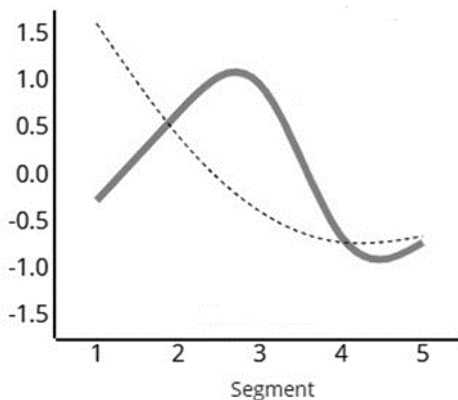
1: Philip Sturgess. *Narrativity: Theory and Practice* (Oxford, 1992).

Compared to the falling run slope (*dotted*) of narrative norms, adjusted accordingly, the sinusoidal results above indicate a kind of narrative enervation for *The Festival*'s dimensional staging, that filmic process wherein crucial, albeit still expository details (*e.g.*, characters, conceits, and their intersections) are conveyed and/or comprehended.[1] Quite frequently, movie narratives that render a similar performative gestalt to *The Festival*'s are distinctly, and intentionally so, constructed—exhibiting neither orthodox structures, but not necessarily illustrating any contrapositive either.

PLOT PROGRESSION SCORE: -63.52

Segment
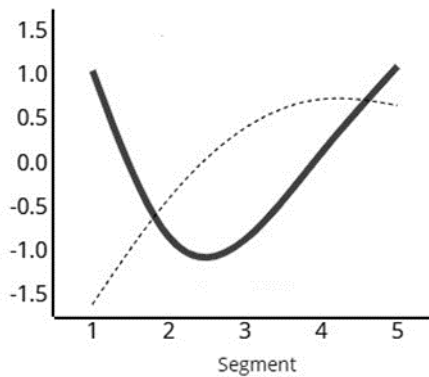
Again, compared to the more concave function (*dotted*) of narrative normality, appropriately adjusted, the cambered results above suggest a somewhat negative grade of narrativity for dimensional plot progression, the cinematic means whereby event transpiration engenders a concomitant engagement.[2] Typically, movie narratives that render a similar serial gestalt to *The Festival*'s are constructed in a discernably unorthodox manner; they assume the inverse form almost by design. Moreover, this capsizal often manifests as a diminution in plot development.

COGNITIVE TENSION SCORE: 33.81

2: Tom van Laer *et al.*, "The Extended Transportation-Imagery Model: A Meta-analysis of the Antecedents and Consequences of Story Receivers' Narrative Transportation," *Journal of Consumer Research* Vol. 40, no. 5 (2014): 797–817.
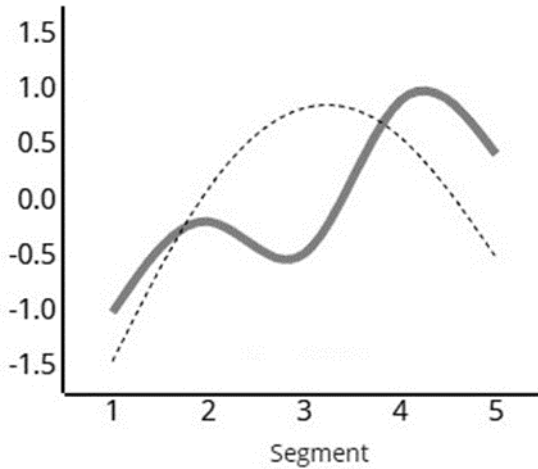
Once more, compared with the parabola (*dotted*) of normalized, adjusted narratives, the notched results here imply a slightly positive degree of narrativity regarding elemental cognitive tension. Cognitive tension is the movie method of conflict navigation.[3] Ordinarily, pictures that render a similar perceptive gestalt to *The Festival*'s are constructed in a reasonably orthodox manner, generally illustrating an oppositional escalation that will climax before the end credits roll. Nevertheless, analogously constructed, comparably strained narratives do tend to demonstrate noticeable deviations (gestalt and/or gradation) from the heterodyne.

OVERALL NARRATIVITY SCORE:
-16.59

Ultimately, *The Festival* elicits a **weak narrativity** writ large. Ranging anywhere from -100 (weakest) to 100+ (strongest), the overall narrativity score echoes only how closely one (1) specific plotline resembles the corpus of storified structures compiled a priori. Calculated using cosine $(\cos[\theta])$ comparison between the actual shape of narrative dimensions in a singular plot versus these aforementioned canonical constructions, it must be noted that the overall narrativity score does not inevitably denote a shoddy story or even finer film.

3: Tom van Laer *et al.*, "What Happens in Vegas Stays on TripAdvisor? A Theory and Technique to Understand Narrativity in Consumer Reviews," *Journal of Consumer Research* Vol. 46, no. 2 (2018):267–285.

Ockham's BLACK RAZORS

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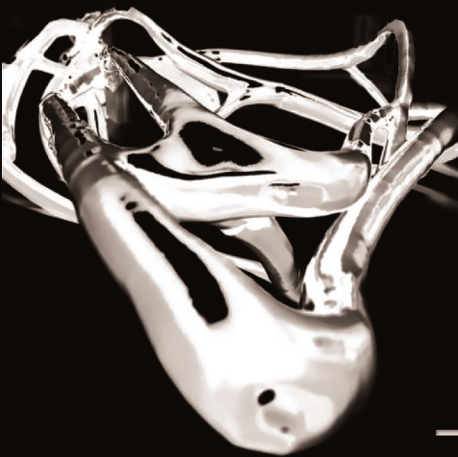
++spinal+

osmosis ⌐
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stickers or

masks ⌐

+

or serpentine

passage ⌐ ope
ning or

closure ⌐

the offer
refers to *glossy
black*

leather or ▬

a transparent
line above or

below ⌐ as it

shines or ▬ it
is a dark
opaque

object ▪ Equal

logic ▬ facial

▬ and shadow
mark for
concepts in one

plane ▬ dark
surface

intertwined with
holes with space
and with

flesh ▪ If

death is a
discontinuity in
the termination
of the spinal
bone in

secession ⌐ pro
cedural pulsation
of gray

matter ▪ It ▬

the form

enables ⌐ devel
ops and finally
turns into a
wrapper of

all ▬ things ▬

in ▬ All ▬ pr

esence ⌐

by birth and
birth in a life
cycle distant
from the

nervous outside towards

oneself ■ The negative image of the living is interspersed with depictions of the

being ⌐ its

illumination ⌐

the phenomeno n in the creation of permanence and meaningfulness

■ He is preparing for himself in his renewed

form ⌐ process after

process ⌐ prece ded by what exists between the two *rebelled* objects and

subjectable ⌐ c onceived as an attractive *humili*

ation ■   As a fragment of one's own whole in each

subject ⌐ which is the initiator of the

exchange ⌐ at each beginning there is one

end ⌐ and several end

beginnings ⌐

an atlas of transformation in the range of

alpha ▬ omega

⌐

the portal of emergence and disappearance is infinite through

finite ■   The cast part in the spine is separated into moment of birth in body

buildings ■   A

deity ▬ techno

▬ relics ⌐

an eternal trivial plane that overshadows and permeates the pulsation within their

antiformalizma

the whistle

❐ clamp ❐ in
their entities
arriving in the
cause

at the
very

nerazličite
leads to a

beginning

ways ❐ verbal
determined by
them or vice
versa by

specul
ative foreboding
a knot of
assumptions over
the background of

title ❐ that
is, how they
shape them as
selves until

the pillar to the
death of the
imagined

space

realization ❐ o
r as alleged

techno destin
y code shapes and
determines

Later ❐ through
the text surface
created

/ demo) ❐ to

extra exclusi
on in uncertain

by

vacuum ❐ *ambid*
extral

observing ❐

space ▪ It is
mystical in the

perceivig ❐

ideal ❐ contemp

thinking ❐
understanding and
believing about
certain
penetrating __

lation

_fibers ⌐ its ▔

thumping ▔ this
observation of
the changing
      space of an
infinite shadow

  ⌐ through_fibers

  ⌐ like a stream
      of cold

electric air
pressure through

• • • • •

• • •

• • • •
the
cracks
      of the

nerves ▔

flash ▔
through
the above
processes
that take
place in

alternating

      dynamic

(rhythmic)
   functions of
consciousness and
      the

unconscious ▪
Incarnate

(bilaterally)
      us as beings
whose structure
is imbued with

their_own ⌐ by_mu
tual /
justification
 •it ‑ warns⌐
      invokes

  himself ⌐ through
and in the
   conscious

   field ⌐
in the
form of certain
phenomena _

      ⌐

  according to

   suggestion ⌐

autosuggestion ⌐
with intense
 ◀ feelings of
   positive

(cognition ⌐ sati
sfaction) negative

(

helplessness ⌐

)

fear

empty euphoria
feedback through
the

cavity ⌐ feelin
gs gained by the
strength and
amount of
feelings

of life ⌐

the breadth
of reflection of

life > at one
point there is an
identification

(achieved by
the existence of
its finally
formed

structure) ⌐
by recognizing
the
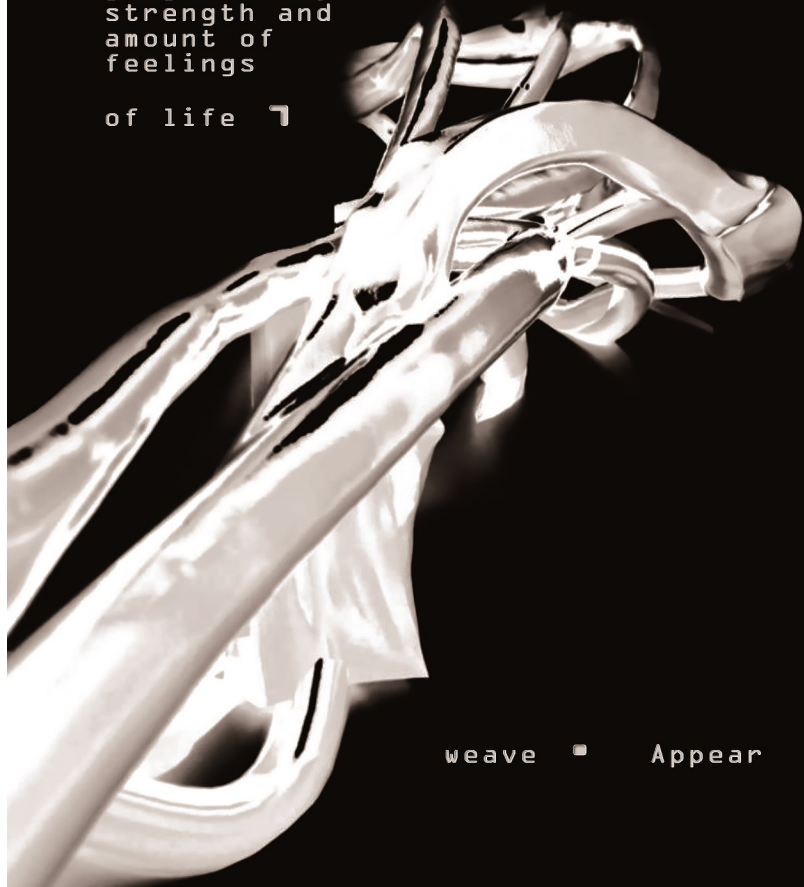
weave ▪ Appear

ances given in a
certain

form ⌐ palpatio
n ▪ *Found in
the tomb of a
runaway skull*

tribe ⌐ *the
slower one who
finds it with a
disturbed riddle
walks*

hysterically ⌐

  smoothly
*curses the world
around him
forever a riddle
because echoes in
the
sun illuminate*

the skull ▪

(*in*

plain) *air*

  ▪ Forwarding

⌐ relocation

▪ It is
ambivalent and
therefore the

opposite ⌐ our
equivalent as

negation ▪ By

itself ⌐ after
which the
observation is
divided into
its own
according to
the character
determinants of
the category of
intensity of
truth walked
through

oblivion ▪
The way they
reach

clarity ⌐ inje
cted into

reality ⌐ cons

ciousness ⌐
so the question
of the
paradoxical
picture of the
work of some
other matter

remains ⌐ and
it is in to

her ▪ Numbness

  ▪ Behind the
flow of loud
consciousness he

licks ▪ Black

ꓶ endless

size ꓶ the
figure is a
network of these

overtures ꓶ fro
m the backgrounds
of the layers
taken from the
clear self-
determined

consciousness ꓶ

the world
available for

consideration ▪

Because of
ours finiteness
expressed in two

directions ꓶ

the time that
belongs to it
should not be
blown through the

cavity ꓶ but by
refraction lines
we lexically
think about the
relationship to
and from our

source ꓶ becaus
e in the end our

multiplication

multiplies ꓶ
collected and

taken ▪ Our
synthesis as a

finished work ꓶ

a masked

body ▪ All
this silence
between and
within is

mortal > He
defeats her in
life and
continues

inside ▪ An
infinite chain of

eights ꓶ carbon
wired from a
triangle from its
shadow directions
and seeds on the
objective and
subjective

level ꓶ

are equal in
one straight

line – present
from the
beginning causes
to the

end ∎ Synthesis ⌐ line of

consciousness ⌐

 intuition ⌐ turned into a

snake ⌐ man is like the lowest and at the same time the

simplest ⌐ sharp ⌐ smooth ⌐ shiny ⌐ in evil and evil

smoke ⌐ underground ⌐ cold ⌐ aggressive and poisonous deception

eight ∎ as a misunderstood

eternity ⌐ without looking at it an instinctively accepted

idea ∎ The circle is twisted

serpentine ⌐ dynamic flexible

circuit ∎ The root intersects with its thesis the nature of man

permeates ∎ If it's death the beginning of the shimmering of the bone marrow of the soft flexible

spine ⌐ linearly through the procedural pulsation of the light

mass ∎ ∎ ∎

Yes ⌐

the golden circles testify to their

origin ⌐ to the starting point of an

imaginary ⌐ dark goal ⌐

a mile into infinity with by

mutual thesis ⌐

by

a mutually dictated stroke of non-existent good

gold ⌐ over

eights ⌐ circle

s ⌐
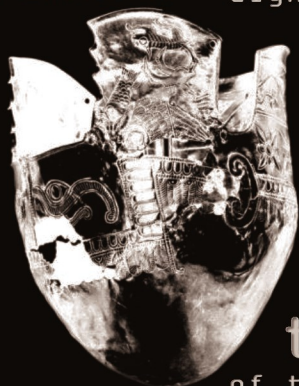
attention ■ In the form of a black invisible mantle with

punishment ⌐ by

display ⌐

by the longitudi

the origin of the cause of the projection is determined by the square on the initial light

target ⌐

the moment of photography the present that reveals the

past ⌐ that

nal reflection of a sound mild and under horror and from the sum of the itchy nape of

the neck ■ In the process of

is ⌐ the future that testifies to the

final ■ ▬ for eign and mutual

attention ■ Th is the presumed environment of the white tactile sphere of the
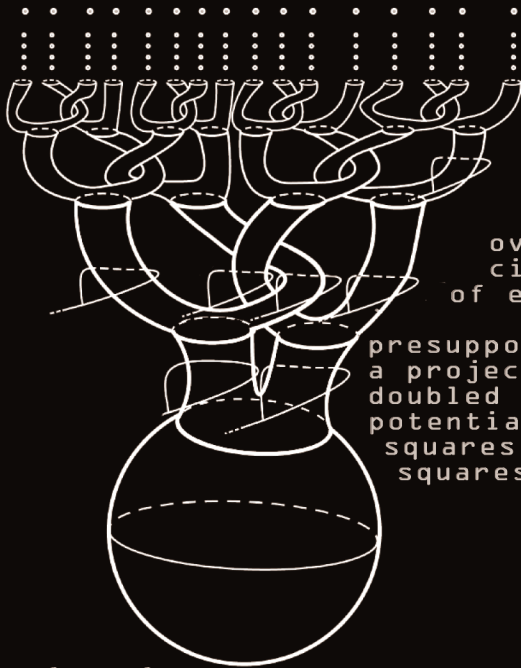
over a
circle
of eight

presupposes
a projection
doubled u
potential
squares
squares

(1)   circle ▪   Futur
self-provokingly e the gate drops
   provokes this with a

final ˥ natural spear ▪   Sound
   ly imagined of the

sketch ˥ idea sun ▬ unity

˥ aspiration ▪ coincidences ▪

          Short The future series
      horizontal of
hearing capacity
  alone or caused eternal ˥ bilat
by a narrowed hip eral and
    closed from
      behind an unilateral ▬ bi
illuminated pure lateral
  or curved whole
in the process of attention ˥ dom
  a silver thread inates in various

forms

timing ⌐ someti
mes

visible ⌐ somet
imes
imperceptible
shadow causes
non-existent

attention ▪▪▪ And

back ⌐ in the
negatives of
positive

(negative

−   negative

−   positive

▪▪▪   going

back) ▪)

⌐   etc. >

I   dipped my
head into her
tattered leather
hood

list ⌐ and
therefore there
must be a third
principle that is
not yet

celestial ⌐ but
the totality of
the factors of

our aerosols ⌐
megamantic

man ⌐

the opposite
within the

self ⌐ group
consciousness and

organism ⌐

the average

self ⌐

the middle of
the average

whole ⌐ defined
each questionable
position in the

subject > since
there are now two

realities ⌐ thi
s is another

feature −

variability − w
hich is created
in the area of

squares +

the mask of
death with
conscious

openness

resonates ⌐ in

the enchanted ▬ darkened

room ⌐ with a
tangle of muscle fibers in an
intricate

network ⌐ evide
nce of pure or
embellished
negative cross of
the pyramidal
projection of the
masked

self ⌐ thus
giving the main
pillars a
characteristic

⌐ futile desire
for relief
yourself or

circumstances ▪

This analysis

reveals ▬ and

confirms ▬

the features
and

sub ▬ features
of humanity and

man ⌐ errors
and

errors ▪ The
cessation of
organic
pulsation, which
signifies an
additional burden

to carry ⌐ is
the death of the
life of the

soul ▪ The one
who wears
it carries itself
towards a silent
and consciously
absent

goal ▪ Pause

▬ a stage of
full

life ⌐ rest as

free time ⌐

(breathing

) between
transitions from
one stage to
another

We can parametrize points in the annulus by pairs
(x,d) where x is the point on the boundary of the outer
sphere obtained by radial projection from the given
point, and d is their distance apart. Twisting things
about a bit (Fig. 6) doesn't alter this; we parametrize
in the same sort of way using the twisted lines instead
of radial lines. This leads us to state:

The Annulus Conjecture

For any 'nice' embedding of an n-ball in another
n-ball, the space between them is an annulus.

Before we explain what we mean by 'nice' (we shall
see that the conjecture does not hold for all embeddings)
let's look at the horned sphere again. Put a loop L
round one horn:
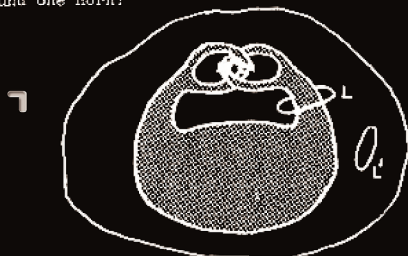
Fig. 7

then it's clear that we can't pull L off the horn to
get it like L', for it gets completely tangled up the
harder we try to get it out. On the other hand, for
the usual embedding of two standard 3-balls:

Fig. 8

are

**conditioned
and**

conditioned

the

stage of
ontological

levels

different in
fineness of form
realities that
boil down to the

same   similar
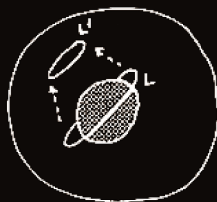
equal   equivale
nts

Fear (current
of death) and

sleep (tremblin
g)

are in some
circular
relationship

Fear radiating
earth into the
soles (masked
fear) speed like
flash ⌐ one
boundless
danger (which in
other forms as
intensity
decreases ⌐ varia
bility) and
hypnotic the
twinkle of a
dream ⌐
the beauty of
death the
cause ⌐
the
future ⌐
the
as yet unborn
consequence ▪
We weave them
from ourselves
through
us ▪ The peak
of the head ⌐

swollen
red ⌐ death ⌐
mold ⌐ screen
⌐ membrane ⌐ f
orest ⌐ living
beasts are
realistically
dead in
life ▪ Hands
of gold ⌐
carving ⌐ carving
hand ⌐ not ⌐ omn
ipotent ⌐ mapped
⌐ mapping ⌐ l
ayers
etc ▪ Legs ⌐
pillars ⌐ blood
stream ⌐ in the
letter ⌐
movement
action ⌐ relati
onships ⌐ bring
s ⌐ bootstrappi
ng here and

there ⌐ circuit nent ⌐ muscle
s feel the top of spasms of the
the sole torsion
receiving too
much upside triangle ⌐

down ⌐ **the** band that
through the goat

floors ⌐ emits covers ⌐ vibrat
anthropomorphic
or modified es ⌐ rhythms
the tissue
adaptations ▪ throughout

immeasurable ⌐
Torso ▬ secret uncollected
plaids of emotion
⌐ hidden through the soles
that do not

tread ▪ place

(on

meat) ▪ A
moment of the
symbolic
statements the
same statement u
moment identities

blinking ⌐ acco
mplishments
reciprocity u the
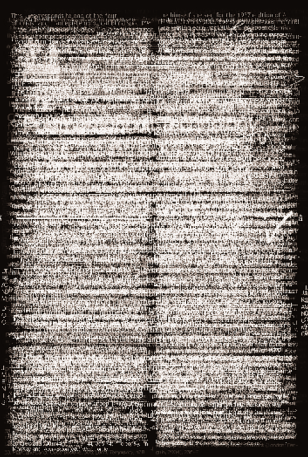
sincere same ⌐

exponent (whit
e
italics) perma **the**
same

■   I

by finding

in

eternity

similarities ⌐

dust ⌐ between
grains and grains
with a charged
atmosphere of dim
light pictures
neon silver metal
parallel
transparent
curtain covered
with magical
white shines and
pleasantly
illuminates the
soft semi-
brightness

calm ■

(primary) co

gnition ■   This
one conclusion
leads to like
this observed
spontaneous
tactical

connections ⌐ t
aking into
account the
insight into the
history of

such ⌐ that the
path functions as
a secret for many
years by
mechanism
spiral

vortex ⌐ parall
el and incidental
twisting like

genomics ■   (

or pictorially
resembling two
snakes in sets

pre ▬ bent to
form a dynamic

circle ▬ eight
- one full-face

snakes ⌐ bright

(Satyr) Bro
nzing

persons) And so
they move up

rhythmically ⌐
dynamically
slowly and the
process

ally ⌐ cyclical les (circulati

ly ⌐ like   on) ⌐ the

flames ⌐ smoke maintenance and
                justification of

⌐ steam ⌐ wavy which ⌐

revives ▪ He   the basis ⌐

thinks ⌐ stroki meaning ⌐ now I
                guess and
ng ⌐ scratching consider it as a
and
                map ⌐ a blind
combing ⌐ about pale white
a completely
meaningful   map ▪ And I'm
                thinking

                 about
                meeting and
                receiving a

                message ⌐
                sending a
                boomerang
                through a
                membrane
                into the
                dimension
                of

world ⌐   time ⌐ some
light transparent future or
world of
transferable   past ⌐ sometime
combinations of s I read with my

images ⌐ syllab eyes ⌐ I

look – I load present – futur

and throw

again (lessons
of patience until
he comes

back) ▪ Some
medieval and
early renaissance
they
anthropomorphize
scenes of hell on

bodies ˥

the torsos of
demons show

frightening (d

eliberate) fac

es ▪ It starts
and leaves some
clues as if
everyone has some
now
incomprehensible
and unforeseen
tactics for the

future –

the

past
 present

–

and
for

e ▪ Two
medieval

anatomists ˥ w
ho knew the body

well ˥ noticed
the similarity of
the muscles trunk

fibers ˥ certai
n

knots ˥ cramps
of the intricate
network of trunk
muscle bands as a
means of
expression of
inner

expression ˥ af
firming himself

persistently ˥

sincerely ▪ C
urved

lines ˥ relief
through one that
follows the flow
of the other to
moment of
necessary

resistance ˥ je

rk ⅂ impulse

line ⅂ which

thereby disturbs
and imposes the
flow as a

resistant ⅂ rhy
thmic redirecting

an array ⅂ to
sleep mode, or to
sleep the

drawing ▪ Soon
to

break ‾ which
spins like a
vortex in a

sickle over which
\
a voice is

heard ▪ He
drew leaves and a

yard ⅂ developi

ng ‾ annulling

▪ The deaf
circular plate of

being ‾ through
ontological

dialectic (bio

logical) octav the product ▪

e ▬ organic ▬ Forging glasses
develop tactics
▬ ▬ ▬ ▬ ▬

liver ⌐ living
and gray ▬ they
spontaneously
dead ▪ Dynamic create
circle with connections
double between the body
across the
faces ▬ two ▬
obtained by line

bending ▬ the line of

thought ▬

the thought
by made by the

▬ ▬ ▬ line ▪
▬ The furry
hair on
the
bending a chest of
circle from the
the inside celestial
giant is
outside ▬ ▬ ▬ wild hair
with gray
by creating feathers of a
meteor
- the
act of bone ▬ golden

shaping ▬ ▬ ringed bee
hair dominant
the
properties of figures ⌐ touch
es the

soul ▬ which
swells and

subsides ⌐ brea
thes ▪ Sputum

whistles ⌐ spit
s ⌐ bleeds ⌐ r
epeats the tube
relations of

equals ⌐ harmon

izes ▬ leads

time ▬ flow ▬
independently of
thought from the
manual trace
conditioned by
that position and
function is
defined as a
trace of the

current ▬ situa
tions essentially
framed by

times ▬ rounded
in

changes) inscr

iptions ▬

transfers ▬ pri

nts ▬ manifests

cleaning ▬ disc
overies achieved
certain conscious
textures twisted

u network ⌐

imensions ⌐ arc
heology of

drawings ▪ Time
variably goes to

extremes ⌐

it is
transmitted and
manifested

differently ▪
Time like what I
hear always

disappears ▪ L
ike another
fragment of a
different reality
that seems to
change and always
repeats

itself ⌐ only
manifests itself

differently ▪
Like observing a
certain frame in
the space of a

mirror ▪ Shapi

ng myself (no pendulum ⌐
matter what I may
be like a clock ⌐

object ⌐ tool an alarm ⌐ wh
for achieving ich spontaneously
some
directs (me)
creatures ⌐ met so abandoned and
occasionally asks
hod ⌐ system of and thinks about
transmission and it especially and
around
manipulation (
second him ▪ Desired

manifestation) ▬ imaginary
sketch and read
▪ The unstable
realization of
any form of (worthless
everything
) time ▬ o
itself ⌐ bject
construction

the random which ⌐ accor
force of ding to the
picture of
gravity ⌐ for reality ⌐ als
certain parts of o randomly
changes into the
this now ▪ And desired
now and so a
triangle of set ⌐ and
mutual hammers
knocking on the network ▬ syste
back of the head m construction
like a imaginary

image ▪ And

these two are
temporally

other about the
objectivity of
the image turned

to itself ▬
  partially
    cancels
      and

opposed ❨ with
reciprocity

collects ▬
produces an

keys ▬ solve
the situation and
initiate

image ❩

changes ❩ conne
ction with

▪ Like an
invisible
magnetic compass

intersections ⌐
 map with effects
on

▬ it works
and how many
circles there
are

movement ▪ 0th
er opposites time

⌐

ring ▬ has the
same mechanism

I guess as many
as seven

▪

▬ the

APPENDIX

prototypes

\

a

dream

in which all
possibilities
are elaborated
intertwined in a
network of cosmic
squares in which
imagines a new
duality of

consideration

unmanned and
expendable
abstractions
       launching
space vehicles
The beginning and
stages of
unconscious

in which all
information is
inscribed

people
prehistoric

people

the starting

point at which
the development
of the
preconscious

imprinted in
the person

spirit

being

begins is

some type deep
intuitive
awareness that is
developed to a
degree which will
see the birth of

it is understood
why they arose
from jokes or
cognition with
forks

appendicitis

images

✛

previous degree

▪

From that green
leaf with four
holes protrude
cut purple
membrane of the
era

⌐

(

purple because it
opposes the next
era

⌐

in that fence are
collected all the
reasons why that
previous green
era had to stop

⌐

prevented from
spreading
further

)

After the purple
the fence appears
yellow
consciousness or
another birth

with raised ▪

growths ▪   At
the end of the
yellow stages of
the growth on the
last vertebrae
are reduced and

after that phase
the longest and
largest phase of
development is

born ר ie the
blue phase which
directed towards
all sides of the
outgrowth which
have different
but not too many
directions

▪

and zone ר
the epoch of

rectilinear ר

maturity
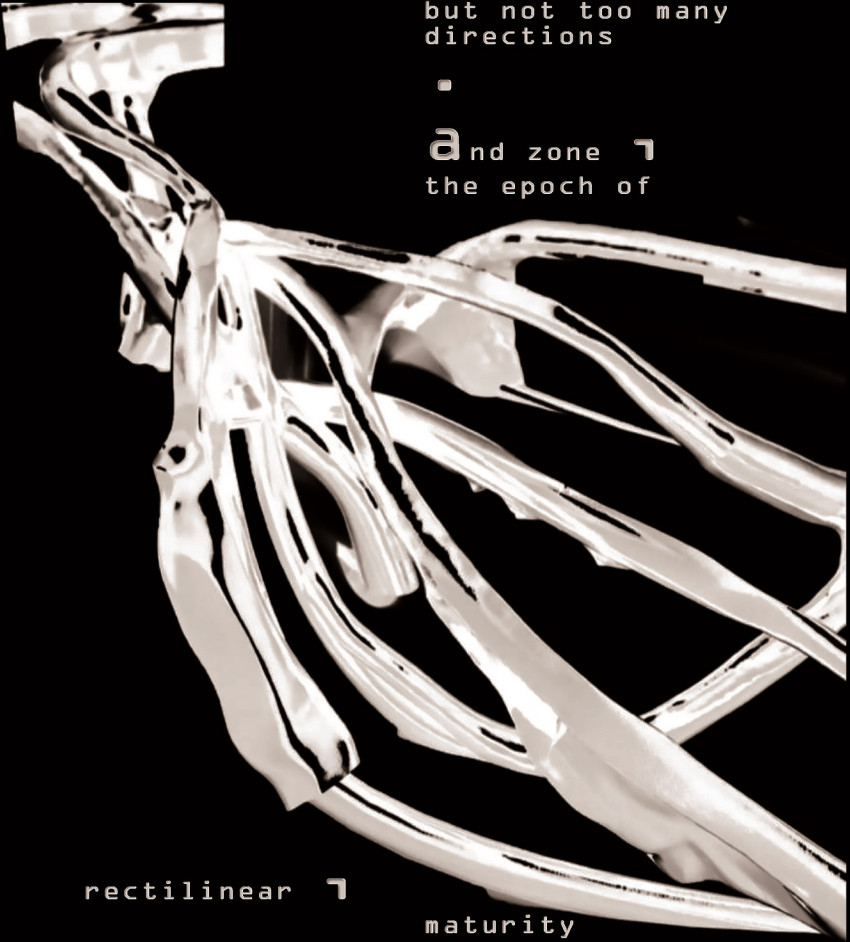
that has red and

sharper ⌐

reduced ⌐

strengthened at
the top ends with
a bracket or a

hole ⌐ ends as
the departure of
the red
realization or as
the transition to
the next through
an unimaginable

phase ▪ us to
notify

way ▪ It is
unusual that
behind each

vertebra (in

terms of

expansion ⌐ thi
s spine seems
simple and has
several claws
that do not show
but indicate what
we can

feel ⌐ and are
hidden behind a
series of
appendages that
grew in in the
opposite

direction) and

we notice that if
we just look from
the

side ▪ Thus
described the
spirit in the

mold ⌐

the brain

that travels
from its origin
or more precisely
the source
through the steps
of the spine to
its red

exit ⌐ an
interesting
little thing

source ‾ beginn
ing it looks like
a round tiny bone
which, with its
present
representation,
perfectly
symbolizes

corresponds to
the shape of the
hole . And some

consciousness ⌐
 fits

perfectly ⌐ neg
ative

holes ⌐ which
means that we may
proceed through
the hole that
sources we go
further into an

uncertain ⌐ and
a

certain ⌐ just
a little
different

form ⌐ but the
chain link is not
a logical green
liquid code
throws out a
failed

does

not

seed ⌐ maybe
it's the fault of

civilization ⌐
which charges
each one

allow

individually ⌐

the

.

opposite nature

Am I Divine?
Jade Mandrake

Am I divine?
Rolling through again, green fields
My heels and make-up running
Streets are empty, sunrise, buildings
Are waking

Little girl lost, little girl shaking
Little girl getting older now
Holding the globe inside her now

Am I divine?
Studying texts
Hearing whispers
Having visions that come in the
night
That push my legs apart
That rush of numbers and neon glow
Blinking in code

I shower, I cook
I laugh into my coffee crying
Burying these jewels
Dying
Like little moments

For Sunday school
All glittering, waiting

Am I divine?
Lady of Rooftops
Of sunken streams
Themes
Of running over
Of jumping over
Buildings
Leaping over
Buildings
Nesting in fire escapes
All curled up
In my feathers

We,
She and I
Swirling
Whirling
Like a dream
left out on a window sill
Like a love letter
opened on Christmas

Gethsemane
Zoe Gold

fuck
5o'clock anal/ATM shoot and i'm
still insect-webbed to the bed

chronic chthonic crackle & charredwire spark of toooo much heartbursty coke-needle then
tremulously heroin-scraped off my psyche
down to raw splinters
onyxblack eyes bugstare like a
rubber rictus frightmask,
mirror greying its stale silver in peels
resigned
ineludible
my bluegreen tracks are nasty insolent children wahhh-ing their sugarhigh and
vomiting down onto my mangy pubes
i smell like last month's period sauteed in asparagus pee
crumpling up off this lonely mattress, mousetrap sprung on wriggling relationship and
its attendant fuckyou i'm moving out
and
i of course still have to pass alllll our mutual friends
all over Ludlow, hey Z i heard
you an' carla..
yeah   yeah got a cigarette?

40 min. to reAssemblage, in a basement studio in queens

i'm gonna cancel
i think
probably shouldn't
shower will feel like molten lead now
i hate the sight of my stale ghost
with th' antumbric most
hovering within my festering entanglements and
lightless loves
a shard of broken window can stop the credit-crawl of this
tristesse au tautology
the sizzle and sigh of
rainy night highway flares
like partycake candles flickering the wreckage
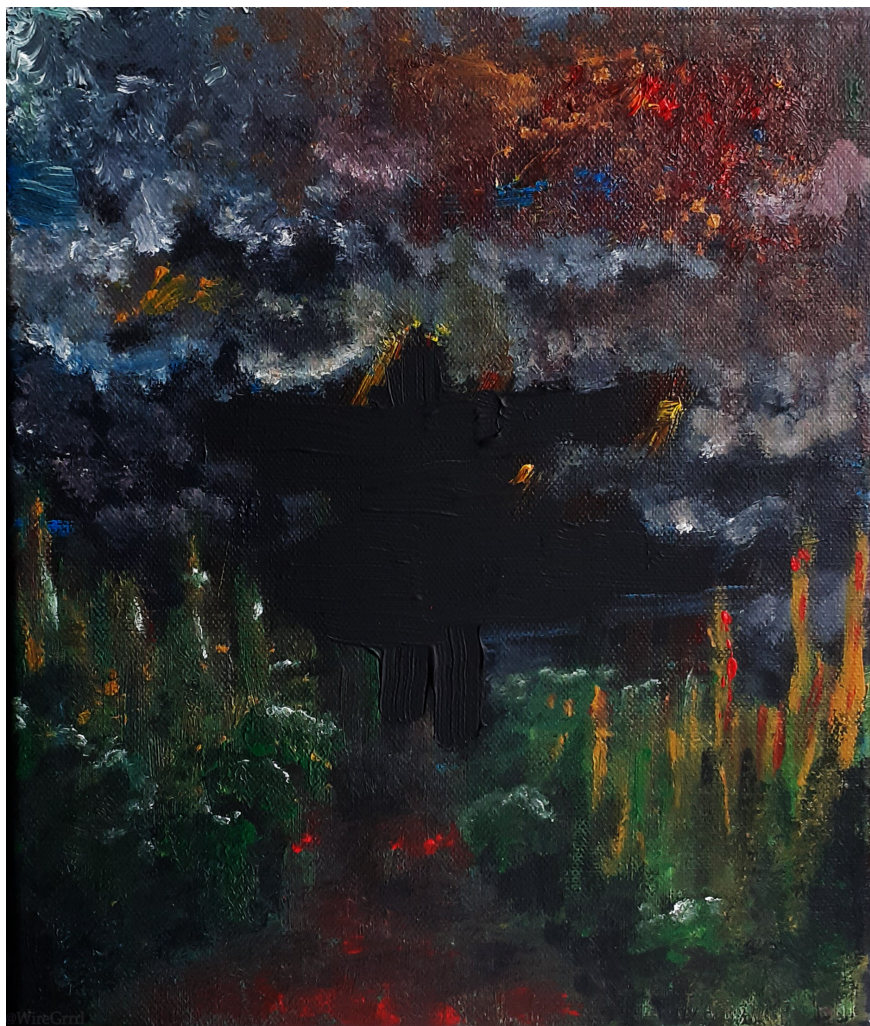
Precipice / *WIREGRRRL* / Acrylic on canvas /
2021 / 25cm x 30cm

Dyadic Serial Procedures in My Late Husband's Ahktet

Logan Kaye Jung

My husband began working on his *Ahktet* (variously titled, at one time or another, as the '80s homage "The Politics of Dancing," the vague semio-logical concatenation ⚇, the syncretic mutt *Achtete*, and even just *Octet*) in mid-September of 2019. Yet, as all atonality worth its voice-leading is so inclined, very little of his initial sketches (save for the instrumentation, itself, and a fragment of a popular Nine Inch Nails song about wannabestiality that sounded an awful lot like an unequally famous Purcell aria re: the sweeter still release of death) made it into the final draft of the piece—which included, once again, at one time or another, a hexachordal bastardization of the Protestant hymn "Nearer My God to Thee," a section of *gagaku*-esque heterophony and a flute cadenza 0:45 too long. Indeed, while there is something rather navel-gazey about a cryptomusicologist analyzing her dead hubbie's compositions (especially while his e-classmates were pouring over Boulez's multiplication, Strawin-

sky's arrays, and Dallapiccola's *serialism Italienne*—not to mention the fact that because of age restrictions, the composer, himself, could not even legally partake in, say, the same morning ritual in which Strawinksy was alleged to have been engaged during the theoretical formulation of the aforesaid arrays), I quote my husband, nonetheless, in the preface to the score:

> *Ahktet*, scored for flute/piccolo, clarinet/bass clarinet, drum kit, percussion, piano, violin, viola and cello, alternates between sections of ensemble *tutti* and smaller, more intimate aggregate combinations. Formally, it is a kind of 'grosse groove' buttressed on either side by two longer episodes of varying aperiodicity (one freely atonal, one firmly hexachordal). Quotation—everything from Reznor, Lansky and Townshend to Schönberg, Lynne and Beethoven—ranges from the coyly suggestive to the unabashedly literal.

The piece is dedicated to Pete Rose. Because just like Charlie Hustle, as my love who shan't be named once wrote to me: "*Ahktet* is relent-

less in its physicality, unflagging in the difficulty of its swagger, and, ultimately, willing to charge home plate even during the All-Star Game" (either this severe hyperbole or maybe he simply had "a thing" for watching the great ones fall). Whatevs the case may be, while remnants of wall-to-wall set theory and leftover *gestalt* of the semi-serial absorb and/or punctuate the first three minutes square footage of the *Akhtet* (*e.g.*, piano mm. 13-16, clarinet mm. 30-42, viola/cello mm. 57-70, etc.), the twelve-tone construction proper does not begin until rehearsal letter C—or to be more exact, the flute's elision (mm. 147-49) from letter B into letter C. And to reemphasize the inherent arch of what is essentially a binary form, the primary compositional determinant for getting out of the centralized "grosse groove" section here—as it was for getting into it back at measures 97 and 98—is parallel construction in all musical parametrics.

The formulation of the twelve-tone row utilized from measure 147 up to the coda was completed in the midst of some 70-odd measures of compositional scaffolding, in which many musical decisions such as meter, instrumentation, and repetition selection—because of their order and appearance in the first section—were predetermined. At any rate, the actual construction of the row was decidedly non-holistic: given the two all-interval tetrachords (*i.e.*, ic vector <111111>) 4-Z15 (0146) and 4-Z29 (0137)—as specific to [0,1,4,6] and [0,1,4,7], respectively—combine to form the repetition exclusive six-note sonority 6-Z13 (01346) or [C,C#,D#,E,F#,G], the aggregate can be complete by juxtaposing it against its complement 6-Z42 (012369) to yield the order dodecaphonic collection:

(C,C#,D#,E,F#,G,D,F,G#,A,A#,B)

[N.B. Neither trichords nor tetrachords derived.]

However, in this third and final section, as the 78th-note gesture of generation is uniquely bifurcated (as it was in section one, with only the $\frac{3}{8}_s$ and $\frac{5}{8}_s$ reversed), the generating row, itself, would have to be similarly partitioned. Thus, the first 27 8th-notes (always grouped $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$) are assigned 6-Z13, while the remaining 43 8th-notes (grouped first as $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{5}{8}$ and later as various and sundry permutations thereof) receive 6-Z42. And just as they had done previously in the first section (and, furthermore, according exactly as prescribed by this first section), fragments of the initial generating gesture recur almost verbatim throughout the remainder of the third section, embedding themselves within the newly-presented forms of the total chromatic, as discussed below. (As for the indefinite pitched instruments of the ensemble—that is, the drum kit, essentially, but to a lesser degree, the solo percussion player, too—they serve mostly to reinforce the aforesaid gestures, as implied by their pitch organization.)

The first new row form(s) appear at measure 166; the first distinguishable one—RI7—is hexachordally combinatorial at P0. In its actual implementation, however, it is separated into two distinct hexachords, subsequently redistributed among the two wind instruments in arrayed dyads within the hexachord, itself—the clarinet always playing a 3-1-2 isomorphic dyad within the first hexachord and the flute a 1-2-3 within the second:

RI7:
G# A A# B D F | C C# D# E F# G

Moreover, in an effort to further emphasize both the intrinsic pitch structure and its synthetic distribution, each two-note pair is assigned a specific mode of attack, a specific intensity, and, ultimately, a specific durational existence after said attack and concurrent intensity:

dyad one: slur, *piano*, sixteenth-note
dyad two: slur (flute only), *forte*, eighth-note
dyad three: accent, *forte*, dotted-eighth–note

Upon reaching hexachordally specific dyadic exhaustion, the clarinet and flute trade structures (and, likewise, distribution within the structure), only to reach total dyadic exhaustion within the RI7 row form, itself. Weary, yet undaunted, they trudge on to yet another hexachordal-

ly combinatorial at P0 form (albeit a rather superficial one): R0. Like Spring, the process begins anew, but before she can "trade sixes" with her partner, the flute's course is interrupted by a transcribed, octave-displaced, louder, and collaged version of the first *molto tranquillo* of Strawinsky's *Three Pieces* for Werner Reinhart's solo clarinet. Undeterred by her sudden *en absentia*, the clarinet rides his diaphonic sweet home to glory, only to finish what his six partner never could. Same as my own spouse.

Amid the tumult, the piano and the drum kit have been playing one of the previously described "fragments of the initial generating gesture" (6-Z13 actually, at least for the piano), while the strings have been conspicuously *tacet*. Nevertheless, the vibraphone has taken a more "integral" approach to the pitch class/dynamic/duration situation. Playing a similar row form of the initial flute/clarinet one, but starting a major third lower—RI3—he/she descends yet another ic 4 lower at measure 170 with the form RI10. In both instances, the idea of dyadic distribution is continued, but rather than being confined within each hexachord, itself, its isomorphic array now extends from hexachord one to hexachord two:

RI3:

E F F# G A# C# | G# A B C D D#

Throughout, the natural sustaining mechanism and unique frequency compilation of the vibraphone is utilized in tandem with a unique intensity/duration schematic to help differentiate the intervallic quality of the aforementioned dyads:

ic 1,2: *fortissimo*, eighth-note
ic 3: *mezzo forte*, quarter-note
ic 4: *mezzo forte*, dotted-quarter–note
ic 5: *piano*, dotted-quarter–note

The lower prodigal strings make their long-awaited return at measure 173 with yet another "almost verbatim" fragment from before (this time, from hexachord 6-Z42), while the violin offers up the row form RI8, in a manner that somewhat recalls the vibraphone's previous method of distribution:

RI8:

A# B C C# E G / D D# F F# G# A

Here, though, the actual implementation of this infrastructure is decidedly less dogmatic. Whereas the extra-frequency parameters are, themselves, serialized, as well, they, too, remain somewhat freer—if freedom is

quantifiable, of course—from the suffocating vice grip of the all-pervasive series. What is of particular note, however, is the transpositional invariance—always an ic 1—maintained in the violin of pitch class series occupants six and seven (those that split the hexachord) from form to form—RI8 to P1 to RI3.

Finishing out the dyadically serial section of his *Ahktet* (the three remaining portions—not including the coda—are serialized according to the original row's discrete trichords, tetrachords, and hexachords, respectively), the clarinet is assigned the same three row forms as the violin, only in a different orientation:

RI8:
A#_B C_C# E_G | D_D# F_F# G#_A

To wit, for the first time since the serial festivities first commenced back at measure 147, a twelve-tone ordered pitch class collection is actually presented as such.

Because, as he said just before we separated, "palindromes are so much more beautiful," his articulation/dynamic scheme is presented accordingly, too.

You're welcome, asshole.

The Embryonic Parasite
Luke Baker

On its first day of exhibition in 1882, the "parthenogenesis" attraction promised it's visitors a real miracle and scientific anomaly. It's first guests were reportedly so deeply disturbed by what they saw inside that many ran outside, vomiting on the street.

After a few hours of groups coming in and out of the exhibit, a violent attack took place in the building that left two dead and three wounded. Among the dead was the subject of the exhibit herself. A young woman who was unfortunately unidentifiable as her face had been seemingly blown apart from the inside. The second victim was a man by the name of Dewey Simmons, whose throat was torn open by what appeared to be "bear claws."

The police then followed a trail of blood and "animal" tracks to a small stream nearly a mile from the exhibit. None of the police were willing to come forward and describe what they found there. The police later burned down the exhibit and the body. This would be the first of many incidents involving one of nature's cruelest organisms—*The Embryonic Parasite*.

The following documents were uncovered from the remains of the parthenogenesis exhibit:

"PARTHENOGENESIS"
## WHAT IS IT? MAN? OR BEAST?

The "Miracle" pregnancy that has stunned the scientific comunity

A child, developing from the mind of a virgin mother! Scientists say this is impossible, could this be the second coming? Don't miss your chance to miss this scientific anomaly!

ALL SHOULD SEE

Exhibit info on back of sheet

I.

II.

Stage I.

Host begins to deteriorate
rapidly as the parasite
takes control of its
nervous system,
devouring the brain
in the process.

Stage II.

Parasite now has
complete control over the
host's body and the skull
begins to soften.

III.

IV.

Stage III.

Parasite begins to
develop, expanding the
now semi-permeable skull
as it grows.

Stage IV.

Parasite is nearly ready
to hatch, the protective
membrane hangs low and
will soon break.

Twinned Excess: On Alemán Oviedo's 'Cosmic Parasitism'

Isidro Parodi

signs
in their
vertical
accumulation
are the rebus
of the tower
hidden in the world
—Dagoberto Alemán Oviedo

Among the literary remains of the scholar and philosopher Dagoberto Alemán Oviedo (1901–1950) one may find an unfinished poem titled 'Caduceus.' The poetic fragment serves as a just summary of Alemán Oviedo's radical philosophy, namely the proposition that our cosmos is the unsuspecting pray of a larger parasitic world. The poem reads in part:

> The staff entwined is the thing of myth
> and yet it represents a most toxic dere-
> aliza-tion,
> a notion enwound by twinned slithering snakes,
> one molting and feasting, the other
> appendage of the first.

Step into this madness,
dear reader,
hold on to my caduceus as
we wait
for inverted gnosis ...

Here we can penetrate the chrysalis of the philosopher's foundational themes: the radicalization of Platonism, his embeddedness in the gnostic tradition, the recuperation of madness as initiation and secret wisdom, and the image of twins as the structuring element of the universe: one a feeder, the other—us—victims of this unjust parasitism. In a word, Alemán Oviedo's philosophy is "an attempt to scale up Darwinism to cosmic proportions."

Born on the Mexican-American border to a family of poor farmers, Alemán Oviedo trained as a literary scholar at Dartmouth in the 1920s. As he worked on a dissertation on gnosis and hermeneutics, he began to develop an unsettling semiotic hypothesis: occurrences in this world could be legible as signs from a world right next to our own. He

posited the existence of "a much more advanced and hyper-Darwinian cosmos," which fed on our pain and misfortune, a biological relation he called 'cosmic parasitism.' In this he exceeded the allegorical constructs of the early Gnostics and the Christian mystics, since for him the sign/signature relation was the shadow of a literal realm of opacities—an actual relation marked by the vulgar, by an illegible technological unconscious, and most troublingly, by semiotic inversions.

The image of the caduceus returns again and again in Alemán Oviedo's early writings, published in books like *A Theory of Semiotic Inversions* (1933), and *Signs and Signification in the Anomalous Universe* (1939). His thought quickly entered a new phase: the unseen world had evolved fascistically, thousands, perhaps millions of years ago. They had developed technology to such an extent, he hypothesized, "that they could build an adjacent reality just like our own—an area for their amusement and nourishment, since the fed on the lack and void of this world." To treat humans as equals would be physically revolting to the fascist interlopers from this parallel reality, and they would arrive here in their avatars to breed dissension, chaos, perversion, and warfare. Their own language would be encrypted in our own, and most troublingly, our gullibility would serve as a crucial ingredient in their semiotic feasting. This translated into the reason why he thought madness was divine, or a biotechnology from an even more tragic future: "only the insane can fathom the reality of the diabolical parasite in the collapse of all meaning and being: inverted transcendence, violent post-cognition—madness as gift from the future."

His training in literary studies is present throughout the development of the philosopher's theories. For Alemán Oviedo, for instance, there is nothing more radical than turning allegory inside out: to go through the reversion of symbolization in order to finally reach "the anagogical inversions of non-metaphor—the return of the literal as the obscenity of actual flesh." These horrifying theses are further expounded in Alemán Oviedo's magnum opus: *The Cosmic Parasite and the Coming War* (1945). Here the philosopher proposes that future humans, "having heeded [his] conclusions and assimilated the ecstatic [his word for neurodivergent] gene, are now engaged in a time war

with the parallel world." If the image of the caduceus had been chosen as the symbol of an inescapable destiny, in this later book it serves as the image of a struggle between opposite realms. And if Hegel had proposed that world history reaches its apex in his philosophy, Alemán Oviedo proposes something more radical: it is in his theses that cosmic history—as a tragic deception in the structure of time—is finally unveiled.

It is also in this book that the philosopher explains his controversial defense of insanity as a biotechnology. "If semiosis has been hacked by the parallel world," he writes, "it is only by breaking down signification that any form of retaliation can take place." Madness was a biological mutation brought about by natural selection in the midst of an untenable parasitic infection. Madness was a way for beings in this world to register the unseen. A perilous gift that, perhaps not surprisingly, was shunned by most humans who could not see the shadows in the cave. As an example he discusses the symptom known as "delusions of reference," where the ecstatic subject can catch a glimpse of "signs incoming from the adjacent world."

Shunned or ignored by the academic establishment, in the decades immediately after WWII Alemán

Malignantly Useless / *Iván Ortega* / pencil and paper / 2020

Oviedo retreated to Mexican border towns, earning a meager living teaching in local high schools. His investigations continued unabated, however, securing a contract with Pleroma, a British publishing house with similar esoteric leanings. He would go on to publish at least seven more books, three of which are poetic musings, one a collection of aphorisms, and the remaining three philosophical texts which serve as his last commentary on the philosophy of semiotic inversions.

His aphoristic work—*Treachery as Creative Act* (1948)—is both a compendium and elaboration of his foundational ideas. A sampling of these terse statements is both disturbing and revealing:

> *Our baroque pearl was stolen from us by the thieves of the sun.*
>
> *There are two bodies stitched, like the double king, in the borders of each world.*
>
> *Sunrise is the shadow of our subjugation.*
>
> *We have been colonized without our knowledge; our language: our fetters.*
>
> *Cosmic colonialism is the highest form of servitude.*
>
> *We are lepers in our unknowing-*

> *ness.*
>
> *The most fertile mind is that which can see, through the veil, the hidden language of opacities in this world.*
>
> *Tromp l'oeil: more literal than metaphorical.*
>
> *Non-metaphor is the eclipse of signification.*

It is not surprising that Alemán Oviedo eventually reached for the aphorism as form, since his theory of signification depends in large part on "suggestibility as the beginning of wisdom." These terse yet seductive aphorisms are thus constructed in order to create "the great doubt" which he thought was necessary as a rite of passage into the world of semiotic inversions. As one of the earliest commentators of his work—Walter Betancourt—writes in *Anomalous Thought in the Americas* (1987), as Alemán Oviedo's thinking veered into more radical territories, his interest in fractured literary forms increased. It is not surprising that *Treachery As Creative Act* contains an epigraph by the master of suggestibility, William Blake. In a phrase which could be used as a definition of semiotic inversions, Blake explains how he sees the sun, using a rhetorical question:

When the sun rises, do you not see a round disc of fire somewhat like a guinea? O no, no, I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty.

Blake's phraseology suggests a kind of dialectics of seeing which ends not in a kind of blind empiricism, but in a divine semiosis produced by an inversion of vision, signification, and belief.

Alemán Oviedo's last phase is thus decidedly more literary, though it is in works dating from this period, among them *The God Under the Tower* from 1949, and *Hyperconurbation* from 1950, where he paints the clearest, most frightening yet awe-inspiring image of the cosmos. He calls the cosmos a vast orgy, a multi-level bacchanal, and an obscene jungle. Emphasizing Darwinian profusion as the organizing principle of reality, he sees humans as gullible insects in a vast tract of copulation, vulgarity, and ecstatic matter throbbing at the infinite variety of being in the universe. Humans think that they have escaped the cruel primordial kernel of evolution by building supposedly protective civilizational structures, but this is a delusion. The biological terror lives on cosmically, above and beyond the human, in ways we cannot see but which both sustain us and turn us into the food sources of occluded beings—elder creatures in the age of the cosmos.

There is one crucial image which stays with anyone who engages with Alemán Oviedo's work seriously. "Picture then the cosmos as a vast disordered baroque hyperconurbation," he writes, "filled and encrusted with hustlers, prostitutes, murderers, dope-fiends and voyeurs; with demonstrations of imaginative gnosis, a vast orgiastic bacchanal of hoodlums, sorcerers, sado-masochistic beings and cosmonautic jugglers: *the universe as brothel and bazaar....*"

Published in *Novedades* (Buenos Aires, 1999)

Lovecraftian Networks
Willian Perpetual Busch

What is Lovecraftian?

To try to rescue and understand this concept, our proposal is to unveil the concealment of H.P. Lovecraft's historicity. What we want is to question the idea that the Lovecraftian is something monolithic and stable. In opposition to that, we want to build a vision about the space, the networks of sociability, and the intellectual elements that allowed the emergence of a set of Lovecraftian works.

This paper will discuss how *Weird Tales* served as a space for the construction of such networks of sociability. We will trace a brief history of the magazine and its role in establishing Lovecraftian networks. We will take as our focus the interaction between Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard.

Additionally, we will refer to the story, "The Festival," to elucidate the complexity of Lovecraft's position about the present. Materialistic and skeptical, as well as interested in Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, Lovecraft had a broad interest in science. At the same time, Lovecraft maintained a stance that treated modernity as a threat to tradition.

From this, we will unfold the way in which Lovecraft evoked the idea of a remote past in which secret cults worshiped forgotten entities. The cult of the Great Old Ones, which would be developed in later stories, was influenced by the ideas of James G. Frazer, Margaret Murray, and Oswald Spengler. These three names served for Lovecraft to build a vision about civilization. We will contrast Lovecraft's idea about civilization with Howard's vision. By this we want to demonstrate that their participation in the Lovecraftian network was modulated by dialog and debate.

***

The pulp phenomenon in the United States was spearheaded by Frank Andrew Munsey with the creation of *The Golden Argosy*, releasing

the first issue in December 1882.[1] In its wake, others appeared, among them, *Weird Tales* in 1922,[2] created by Jacob Clark Henneberger and having its first issue released in March 1923 (from the profits of *College Humor*, a satirical magazine that was very successful in the United States whose extra funds were directed first to the creation of *Detective Tales* and later to *Weird Tales*.[3] As editor of *Detective Tales*, Henneberger had hired Edwin Baird, who had also taken over *Weird Tales*. In the words of Mike Ashley: "*Weird Tales* became not so much a magazine as an institution."[4]

The five texts Lovecraft sent to Baird's *Weird Tales* were rejected. However, the situation changed because of Henneberger. The creator of *Weird Tales* had already read some of Lovecraft's texts and chose to reverse Baird's decision, as well as establish the prerogative that any material submitted by Lovecraft should be published.[5] In addition, Henneberger offered Lovecraft the position of editor for a new magazine that was in the process of being created, but that ultimately did not materialize. After firing Baird, Henneberger hired Farnsworth Wright for the position of editor and William Sprenger for finance in a broad effort that involved the creation of Popular Fiction Publishing, Inc..[6]

The existence of *Weird Tales* was not guaranteed. The May/June/July 1924 issue was followed by a three-month hiatus. The next issue was only possible because of a readers' initiative that guaranteed the publication of the November 1924 issue. The funding and collaboration initiative occurred at the same time that Wright took over as editor. On his part, Wright innovated with the creation of "The Eyrie" column, serving as an editorial space, as well as the promotion of future stories, "and the importance of its readers, while also

1: Tony Goodstone, *The Pulps: Fifty Years of American Pop Culture* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1970).

2: Mike Ashley and Marshall B. Tymn, *Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985).

3: Todd B. Vick, *Renegades and Rogues: The Life and Legacy of Robert E. Howard* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021).

4: Mike Ashley, *The Time Machines: The Story of the Science-Fiction Pulp Magazines from the Beginning to 1950* (Cambridge: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 41.

5: Vick, *Renegades and Rogues*, 67.

6: Ibid.

essentially proving an open invitation to new writers to submit stories."[7] With "The Eyrie" came a space within the magazine and, at the same time, the column shaped the industry. Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* created a similar space with "Discussions," *Wonder Stories* with "The Reader Speaks," and *Astounding Stories* with "Science Discussions." According to Gary K. Wolfe:

> [...] debates the merits of stories from previous issues, as well as art work, editorials, layout, scientific and pseudo-scientific matters and— inevitably— the nature and characteristics of "scientifiction" as a genre (although a term like "genre" would have seemed radically out of place in such columns).[8]

The correspondence spaces served as a starting point for readers and writers to start producing "fanzines," as well as organizing meetings and events, a process that gave rise to fan clubs and major events such as *Worldcon*.[9]

Although the "weirdness" of *Weird Tales* was distinct from Gernsback's *Science Fiction*, and thus debates about "scientifiction" were absent in "The Eyrie," this did not prevent its circulation between magazines. Lovecraft, for example, wrote "The Colour Out of Space," which was published in the June 1927 issue of Gernsback's *Amazing Stories*.[10] The only factor that discouraged Lovecraft from writing other stories for *Amazing Stories* was the delay in payment after publication.[11]

Lovecraft's first publication in *Weird Tales* was "Dagon," in October 1923.[12] The following year, in March, Lovecraft published "The Rats in the Walls." Both the author and Baird, the editor at the time, failed to notice that the text contained a misquotation in Latin.[13] This detail went unnoticed by Wright, who decided to republish the text in June 1930. However, the error in the quotation was noticed by Robert E.

7: Ibid., 69.

8: Gary K. Wolfe, *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy: A Glossary and Guide to Scholarship* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), xxv.

9: Ibid.

10: H.P. Lovecraft, "The Colour Out of Space," in *Amazing Stories* (June 1927): 556–567.

11: Willian Perpetuo Busch, *História da Ficção Científica nos Estados Unidos: do herói cientista de John W. Campbell ao herói antropólogo de Ursula Kroeber Le Guin, Dissertação de Mestrado* (Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, 2019).

12: H.P. Lovecraft, "Dagon," in *Weird Tales* Vol. 2, no. 3 (October 1923): 23–25.

13: Bobby Derie, *Weird Talers: Essays on Robert E. Howard and Others* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2019).

Howard, who wrote a letter to the editor about the matter. Wright forwarded the communication to Lovecraft, and this contact began the friendship between the two authors.[14]

At the time he made contact with Howard, Lovecraft occupied a prestigious position as a writer (despite his economic failure). Howard, on the other hand, had only published in amateur magazines and friends' newspapers. Correspondence with Lovecraft was fundamental in refining his writing, making it possible for him to find space in *Weird Tales*, opening up the possibility of publishing in other magazines, and have contact with other writers in the field.[15]

The space for the emergence and development of the Lovecraftian network was *Weird Tales*. However, the network did not function solely as a commercial and mercantile router. Lovecraft's personal correspondence reveals his efforts to assist the creative process of his peers, as well as his frustrations with his own stories.[16]

The conceptual opening given by the author has been defined by Daniel Harms as an attempt to "create 'holes in the text' which reader would fill with his own ideas of what was horrible."[17]

Mark Fisher has argued that Lovecraft's stories emphasize the encounter with the outside: "encounters with anomalous entities from the deep past, in altered states of consciousness, in bizarre twists in the structure of time."[18] Encounters that result in "breakdown and psychosis."[19] Lovecraft's construction of space in settings like New England is seen by Fisher as a strategy to blur the hierarchy between fiction and reality. This is compounded by the mentions and intellectual referencing that mix real research with fictional works. Thus, "Lovecraft de-realises the factual and realises the fictional" by creating "ontological anomalies."[20]

Lovecraft corroborated, at least in part, Fisher's argument. In a correspondence with James Ferdinand Morton in 1930, Lovecraft argues for

14: Ibid., 14.

15: Vick, *Renegades and Rogues*, 105.

16: H.P. Lovecraft, *Selected Letters: 1929–1931* (Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1971).

17: Daniel Harms, *The Encyclopedia Cthulhiana* (Oakland: Chaosium Books, 1998), viii.

18: Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie* (London, Repeater Books, 2016), 16.

19: Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 16.

20: Ibid., 21.

the absence of inherent value in things. Rather, his interest was in "what that thing has the power to symbolize for the person in question."[21] For Lovecraft:

> It is the sole and complete key to that elusive and evanescent quality of interest which I have such prodigious difficulty in summoning up   toward anything not involving the elements of surprise, discovery, strangeness, and the impingement of the cosmic, lawless, and mystical upon the prosaic sphere of the known. Facts as such mean nothing to me. Not because I have the maniac's or religious mystic's tendency to confuse reality with unreality, but because I have the cynic's and the analyst's inability to recognize any difference in value between the two types of consciousness-impacts, real and un-real.[22]

One of the first stories to reference Lovecraft's work was "The Space-Eaters," published in *Weird Tales* in July 1928 and written by Frank Belknap Long. The reference made by Long appears already in the opening of his text:

> The cross is not a passive agent. It

protects the pure of heart, and it has often appeared in the air above our sabbats, confusing and dispersing the powers of Darkness.

—John Dee's *Necronomicon*[23]

The *Necronomicon* is a fictional book that appeared in the story "The Hound"[24] written by Lovecraft in 1922 and published in *Weird Tales* in 1924, as well as in "The Festival," written in 1923 and published in 1925.[25] Long's use of it reinforced the Lovecraftian network, as it blurred the boundaries between real and fictional. However, one should avoid the mistake of treating the Lovecraftian network as centered exclusively on Lovecraft. The process was horizontal and modulated by borrowings, mentions, uses, and significations. Clark Ashton Smith's narrative "The Return of the Sorcerer,"[26] published in the September 1931 in *Strange Tales of Mystery and Terror,* mentioned the *Necronomicon* while introducing readers to the entity Tsathoggua. Lovecraft incorporated Tsathoggua in "The Whisperer in Darkness,"[27] written in 1930 and

21: Lovecraft, *Selected Letters*, 124.

22: Ibid., 125.

23: Frank Belknap Long, "The Space-Eaters," in *Weird Tales*, Vol. 12, no. 1 (July 1928): 49–68, 49.

24: H.P. Lovecraft, "The Hound," in *Weird Tales*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (1924): 50–52.

25: H.P. Lovecraft, "The Festival," in *Weird Tales*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (1925): 169–174.

26: Clark Ashton Smith, "The Return of the Sorcerer," in *Strange Tales of Mystery and Terror*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (1931): 99–109.

27: H.P. Lovecraft, "The Whisperer in Darkness," in *Weird Tales*, Vol. 18, no. 1 (1931): 32–71.

published by *Weird Tales* in August 1931. Howard used Lovecraft's material for the first time in "The Children of the Night," published in *Weird Tales* in 1931:

> Taverel scanned the shelves. "Weird fiction seems to vie with works on witchcraft, voodoo and dark magic."
>
> True; historians and chronicles are often dull; tale-weavers—never the masters, I mean. A voodoo sacrifice can be described in such a dull manner as to take all the real   fantasy out of it, and leave it merely a sordid murder. I will admit that few writers of fiction touch the true heights of horror— most of their stuff is too concrete, given too much earthly shape and dimensions. But in such tales as Poe's "Fall of the House of Ush-er," Machen's "Black Seal" and Lovecraft's "Call of Cthulhu"—the three master horror-tales, to my mind—the reader is borne into dark   and outer realms of imagination.
>
> "But look there," he continued, "there, sandwiched between that   nightmare of Huysmans', and Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*—Von Junzt's   *Nameless Cults*. There's a book to keep you awake at night!"
>
> "I've read it," said Taverel, "and I'm convinced the man is mad. His work is like the conversation of a   maniac—it runs with startling clarity for awhile,

then suddenly merges into vagueness and disconnected ramblings."[28]

Howard mobilizes Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Machen, Lovecraft, and Horace Walpole while also introducing *Nameless Cults* by Von Junzt, a fictional work that would come to be cited constantly within the Lovecraftian network. Ora:

> In their correspondence, Lovecraft gave Robert permission to incorporate elements from his own stories   into these stories. In turn, Lovecraft did the same with Robert's character von Junzt and the book *Nameless Cults*, as well as with   Justin   Geoffrey,   another fictional   character Robert created. Loveraft gave von Junzt his first name, Friedrich Wilhelm. It became a relatively common practice with Lovecraft and his fellow pulp writer correspondents: to   exchange   ideas and then incorporate them into their stories, developing what is now   known as the Cthulhu Mythos. Robert utilized aspects of this mythos in a number of his stories, experimenting with the mythos in several different genres.[29]

Having shed light on the space in *Weird Tales* that nourished the Lovecraftian network, we turn our gaze to understanding Lovecraft's intellectual context. In terms of education, the author oscillated between

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28: Robert Howard, "The Children of the Night," in *Weird Tales*, Vol. 17, no. 3 (1931): 353–362.

29: Vick, *Renegades and Rogues*, 105.

private tutors and self-education, nurturing from an early age a broad interest in a variety of scientific fields. The essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature,"[30] written between 1925 and 1927 and first published as early as 1927 and then revised and expanded in 1933–1934, is an extensive effort by the author to define weird tales, as well as to trace their historicity, connection, and divergence from Gothic literature. In practice, the second paragraph of the story "The Festival" (1925) is an excellent clue to understanding how the Lovecraftian network integrated the blur-

ring of the boundary between real and fictional with intellectual and theoretical issues.

> It was the Yuletide, that men call Christmas though they know in their hearts it is older than Bethlehem and Babylon, older than Memphis and mankind. It was the Yuletide, and I had come at last to the ancient sea town where my people had dwelt and kept festival in the elder time when festival was forbidden; where also they had commanded their sons to keep festival once every century, that the memory of primal secrets might not be forgotten.[31]

Timothy H. Evans argued that

Infinite Resignation / *Iván Ortega* / pencil and paper / 2020

30: H.P. Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horrors in Literature," in *The Recluse* (1927): 23–60 and in *The Complete Fiction*, ed., S.T. Joshi (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2011): 1041–1098.
31: Lovecraft, "The Festival."

Lovecraft used folklore and combined it with horror, aiming to evoke the past and tradition as elements that have been lost in the present.[32] Thus, horror literature—and the Lovecraftian network—would be grounded in a sense of insecurity in the face of cultural change. The implication of this is the view of Lovecraft as a conservative figure opposed to the modernization process that was occurring in the United States. This in itself seems problematic, given that Lovecraft had a broad appreciation for the sciences.

As Winfred S. Emmons has argued, there are three contemporary myths that Lovecraft explored: the determinism/materialism binomialism, the fear of the unknown, and the implications of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity for the imaginary about other dimensions.[33] Evansargued that Lovecraft, in fact, shared an intellectual landscape composed of names such as Samuel Adams Drake, Charles Skinner, Henry Shoemaker, John Lomax, Benjamin Botkin, Thomas Hart Benton, and Stephen Vincent Benet. Antiquarians, folklorists, writers, and anthropologists who, despite their particular differences, held a general view about tradition as a moral system that was in conflict with the present. The clash was as much one of values as of architectural spaces.

We can notice in "The Festival," as well as in other texts, that Lovecraft makes use of an antiquarian writing that aims to preserve meaning and protect a "material evidence" of tradition.[34] However, this was done in such a way that:

> juxtaposed the symbols and artifacts of traditional culture with twentieth-century images of a vast cosmos and relative values, deriving horror both from tradition lost and from fears that tradition is meaningless in the first place.[35]

In other words, the Lovecraftian network, by turning to the past and tradition, opens up the possibility of creating visions and interpretations, mainly because it treats the historical document and the fictional document as having the same truth value. The fictional document, even if it was

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32: Timothy H. Evans, "A Last Defense against the Dark: Folklore, Horror, and the Uses of Tradition in the Works of H.P. Lovecraft," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 42, no. 1 (2005): 99–135, 100.

33: Winfred S. Emmons, "Lovecraft as a Mythmaker," in *Extrapolation: A Science-Fiction Newsletter*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (1960): 35–37.

34: Evans, "A Last Defense against the Dark."

35: Ibid., 101.

created by an author (Lovecraft's *Necronomicon* or Howard's *Nameless Cult*), enters the Lovecraftian network and gains collective value. From this, new meanings are produced. Lovecraft's texts in particular:

> The tales typically begin with an outsider entering an area, describing its landscape in picturesque terms, and then exploring its history and character in greater depth. These narratives are about tourists, but their antiquarian explorations become suffused with horror. In Lovecraft's fiction, the experiences that were his greatest source of pleasure transmute into sources of despair, as rottenness is uncovered at the core of tradition.[36]

In view of both "The Festival" and "Yule Horror," a poem published by Lovecraft in *Weird Tales* in December 1926, we detect the use of the past as ritualistic and carrying the memory of something that should not be forgotten. In the poem, the secret celebration is "unhallow'd and old," performed as a "chant wind in the woods as they dance round a fungeous and white Yule-altar" and celebrating practices coming "from the lost Druid-folk."[37]

In Cecella Hopkins-Drewer's view, there is a connection between pre-Christian winter celebrations and Lovecraft's position on the present.[38] The act of returning to the past allows "a liberation of the Holiday season from modern trappings, both religious and commercial."[39] The movement from the present to the past is an act that creates an ideal past to denounce the elements of tradition that have been lost. It is by following this reading that we can understand the relationship between modernity and horror that had already been commented upon by Evans.

The mobilization of the secret cult reflects how Lovecraft dialogued with the anthropological theories of James George Frazer and Margaret Murray. For Frazer the Christmas festival and the birth of Christ were pagan practices that were appropriated by the Church in a process of conflict and transition:

> In the Julian calendar the twenty-fifth of December was reckoned the winter solstice, and it was regarded as the Nativity of the Sun, because the day

36: Ibid., 114.

37: H.P. Lovecraft, "Yule Horror," *Weird Tales*, Vol. 8, no. 6 (1926), 846.

38: Cecelia Hopkins-Drewer, "Yuletide Horror: 'The Festival' and 'The Messenger,'" in *Lovecraft Annual*, Vol. 24 (2020): 54–59.

39: Hopkins-Drewer, "Yuletide Horror," 54.

beings to lengthen and the power of the sun to increase from that turning -point of the year. [...] The Egyptians even represented the new-born sun by the image of an infant which on his birthday, the winter solstice, they brough forth and exhibited to his worshippers. [...] December was the great Oriental goddess whom the Semites called the Heavenly Virgin or simply the Heavenly Goddess; in Semitic lands she was a form of Astarte.[40]

Frazer pointed out that Mithra was identified as the Unconquerable Sun and his birth fell on December 25. The transition to the Christian rite was "in order to transfer the devotion of the heathen from the Sun to him [Christ] who was called the Sun of Righteousness."[41] Following this same practice, "the Easter festival of the death and resurrection of their Lord to the festival of the death and resurrection of another Asiatic god which fell at the same season."[42]

Lovecraft accepted Frazer's argument about the transition process from paganism to Christianity. This was done by considering that the pagan- Roman world was the apex of civilization, while Christianity represented decadence.

The mention of Druidism is important because it combined elements of cannibalism and human sacrifice. The conflict between the Druids as barbarians and the Romans as bringers of civilization was a theme of interest to Lovecraft. As Jane Webster has reported, the historiography preceding World War II emphasized the argument that the Druids had been eliminated by the Romans for religious reasons,[43] so that the *pax Romana* was treated as a civilizing tool employed by the Romans against the barbarians.

The secret cults derive from Margaret Murray's theories.[44] The anthropologist argued that the Dianic Cults of antiquity (seen as witchcraft in the medieval period) predated agrarian temporal demarcations. Originally the worshiped figure was female (Diana) and later acquired masculine

40: James George Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris—Studies in the History of Oriental Religion* (London: MacMillan & Company, 1914), 303.

41: Ibid., 305.

42: Ibid., 305, 306.

43: Jane Webster, "At the End of the World: Druidic and Other Revitalization Movements in Post-Conquest Gaul and Britain," in *Britannia*, Vol. 30 (1999): 1–20.

44: Margaret Alice Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921).

aspects. With the rise of Christianity such cults were suppressed, and the central deity came to be referred to as satanic and diabolic. Murray pointed out that:

> The evidence of the witches makes it abundantly clear that the so-called Devil was a human being, generally a man, occasionally a woman. At the great Sabbaths, where he appeared in his grand array, he was disguised out of recognition; at the small meetings, in visiting his votaries, or when inducing a possible convert to join the ranks of the witch-society, he came in his own person, usually dressed plainly in the costume of the period.[45]

For Murray, it is not possible to establish a relationship between the witch cult and the Druids. However, the element of celebration aimed at fertility was present and such rites were not eliminated by the groups that occupied the British Isles after the Roman withdrawal. Thus, "a continuance of the cult may therefore be expected among the people whom the Christian missionaries labored to convert."[46] In agreement with Frazer's argument, Murray demonstrated how the structural transition between the pagan priesthood and the Christian priesthood occurred:

> [It] kept the organization of the ancient religion, as well as the powers of the holders of those positions, without changing more than the name of the god and the title of the office. But in the eyes of the recorders, who were all Christians, these changes made all the difference, the Christian magician was a prophet, the Pagan magician was a witch.[47]

Emmons argued that Lovecraft rejects the Ruiphan view of witches and warlocks that appears in Christian documentation.[48] In this sense, both Lovecraft and Murray have an ancestral deity in mind. Murray drifts to a reasoning in which witches are organized around fertility rites, while Lovecraft presents witches as "worshiper of alien gods, an active menace to mankind as a whole."[49] In correlation with the argument made by P. D. Ouspensky about hyperdimensionality, as well as the theory of relativity, the result is that magic in

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44: Margaret Alice Murray, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921).
45: Ibid., 31, 32.
46: Ibid., 19.
47: Ibid., 153.
48: Emmons, "Lovecraft as a Mythmaker."
49: Ibid., 36.

the Lovecraftian network is modulated in the interstice between incantations and mathematics.

The historical theory used by Lovecraft was founded by Oswald Spengler. This theory postulated the existence of a set of ideas and styles that demarcates a group over time and includes all possible aspects of social, political, and intellectual life. Each cultural unit went through a period of development and expansion, and then decline. Thus:

> The cultures were external to each other, neither influencing nor inheriting; in fact, they could not under-   stand each other, and their relations consisted of deliberate misunderstanding.[50]

The Romans are seen by Spengler as the reference for the moment of transition between the Greek-centric culture to the civilization of Rome, which does not necessarily mean that Roman civilization was positive.[51] Rather, Spengler argues that the empire was not built by war-like prowess, but by the decadence of the cultures that preceded it.

Lovecraft supports Spengler's view of modernity as an experience of decline, which adds to the way in which it threatened tradition and its spaces. Both Spengler and Lovecraft take Rome as the benchmark of civilization, but Lovecraft characterizes this process as negative. Spengler valued Greece, while Lovecraft did the opposite:

> Whilst the Hellenes, with their strange beauty-worship and defective moral ideals, are to be admired and pitied at once, as luminous but remote phantoms; the Romans, with their greater practical sense, ancient virtue, and love of law and order, seem like our own people. It is with personal pride that we read of the valour and conquests of this mighty race, who   used   the alphabet we use, spoke and wrote with but little difference   many   of   the words we speak and write,   and   with divine creative power evolved virtually all the forms of law which govern us today. To the Greek, art and literature were inextricably involved in daily life and thought; to the Roman, as to us, they were a separate unit in a many-sided civilisation. Undoubtedly this circumstance proves the inferiority of the Roman culture to the Greek; but it is an inferiority shared   by   our   own culture, and therefore a bond of sympathy.[52]

50: Neil McInnes, "The Great Doomsayer: Oswald Spengler Reconsidered," *The National Interest*, Vol. 48 (1997): 65–76, 67.

51: Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 32.

52: There are little data on this text. http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/title.cgi?1431092

Howard disagreed with Lovecraft's view of the relationship between barbarians and civilization. The debate between the two members of the Lovecraftian network lasted about three years (1931–1933). It is possible to detect Howard's view in stories such as "The Shadow Kingdom,"[53] published in *Weird Tales* in August 1929 and in "The Phoenix on the Sword"[54] which appeared in the same magazine in December 1932:

> In "The Shadow Kingdom," Robert juxtaposes two extraordinary barbarians, one a Pict (Brule), the other an Atlantean (Kull). Of the two, Brule is clearly the more savage and less civilized. In many ways, Brule's skills are sharper than Kull's, and he manages to save Kull in this and other stories. To a certain degree, the trappings of civilization have softened Kull's rough edges and his barbarian instincts. Aware of these changes, Kull tends to worry and brood, and he is often hard on himself.[55]

The key moment in the debate between civilization and barbarians was in 1935. Howard had already debated with Lovecraft and equated that the posture of the pioneers in America was similar to the barbarians of the past.[56] The story "Beyond the Black River"[57] was modeled after this:

> Being a voracious reader of history, he [Howard] was well aware of the rise of groups from a base or barbarian state to a more sophisticated and civilized state, and he knew about their subsequent decline through either their own behavior or their defeat by other greater barbarous groups.[58]

Howard set up the opposition between Conan, a legitimate barbarian, and Balthus, a civilized warrior in order to portray the superiority of the former.[59] So that:

> "Barbarism is the natural state of mankind," the borderer said, still staring somberly at the Cimmerian. "Civilization is unnatural. It is a whim of circumstance. And barbarism must always ultimately triumph."[60]

The Lovecraftian network was not a reproduction of Lovecraft's ideas, much less of his intellectual influences. As we have seen, such a relationship was horizontal and diago-

53: Robert Howard, "The Shadow Kingdom," in *Weird Tales*, Vol. 14, no. 2 (1929): 155–182.
54: Robert Howard, "The Phoenix on the Sword," in *Weird Tales*, Vol. 20, no. 6 (1932): 769–783.
55: Vick, *Renegades and Rogues*, 159.
56: Ibid., 165.
57: Robert Howard, "Beyond the Black River," in *Weird Tales*, Vol. 25, no. 5 (1935): 591–608.
58: Vick, *Renegades and Rogues*, 165.
59: Ibid., 167.
60: Howard, "Beyond the Black River."

nal. Lovecraft's view of the past were bifurcated. On one side was tradition (the near past) which, in turn, was inspired by the Roman world and threatened. On the other was the distant past, a barbaric space of cults to alien and incomprehensible entities. Both visions were constructed by the author through an active posture in relation to his intellectual referential.

**Ominous Flowers (NZ at Night)** / *Andreas (@corioianus_)* / photograph circa 21st century

Attendee Presentation Sequence
G.R. Harmston

This essay is best read with the accompaniment of Harmston's audio component, 'played at high volume, preferably in a residential area,' as the ethereal texture of the sonic collage seeps into one's grey matter.

Listen here: https://grhfps.bandcamp.com/

Everywhere round the world at once they reclined back. On beds, on chairs, on sofas, on floors and some in specially prepared Festival thrones adorned with iconography of the Human, the transcendent, the Imminent, and the wild. In apartments, houses, warehouses, and pods across nations, countries, timezones, borders, cultures, subcultures, and other human distinctions of every kind. Many individuals had prepared for weeks, months, years, and some for their entire lifespan on some level. Such was the sheer importance to them all of preserving and forwarding something of the untamable Human; passing torches, reconnecting, recreating, celebrating and continuing.
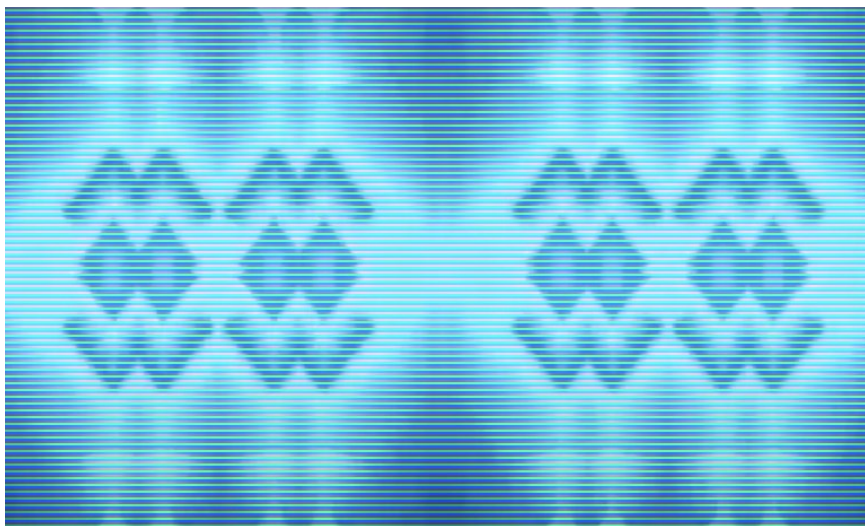
F-PROTOCOL 1577.1: [Security/ Psychophysiological Preparedness Check]

Hermsec Protocols run a full system sweep of the Attendee's equipment and software ensuring their system is free from bugs or surveillance scripts and that all connections and transmission modules are secure and at full operational capacity. This means the entire system is guaranteed safe and ready for use. Simultaneously, the PPC scripts run an in depth psychophysiological sweep based on a profile it forms from billions of Datapoints and then analyses it for suitability in terms of intent, Vibe, and personal characteristics. The specifications for this will vary with the Organiser in question and are of course entirely decentralised. The remaining protocols then run to ensure the Attendee is psychologically stable enough for the process of connecting and disconnecting from the events in question, as well as the various intensities and limit experiences they might encounter therein.

"Festival" had gradually become a Noun and a Verb, both a state of mind and a framework for ecstatic celebrations of and by the Human. It referred also to a spirit carried by some in their day-to-day interactions with life and simultaneously an endless stream of often time-limited events, not that time mattered in the same way when one was at Festival of course.

It was in some sense a new phenomenon; connecting on to the later links in the chain of human culture and technology, but therefore also way back through history to tribes, peoples, and events both long gone and eternally remembered. It channeled the exclusively Human instinct to celebrate, mourn, destroy, restart, cherish, abandon, commemorate, and expend. From the transcendent rituals of ancient Egypt to the Rave scenes of Earth in the 1990s to the Hyperrealist movements and varying Cultographies which much later drew reference from both and blended them with ideas *from* the present and *of* the future. Humans went on and on and so on and on it went.

Festival as both a mindset and a happening were hermitically sealed and rendered customarily inaccessible to some on multiple levels and in various ways, sometimes even themselves ritualised and themed around the concepts of hermiticism, encryption, and secrecy as well as the more

general themes of Festival. Planning stages took place under self-multiplying layers of encryption in representatively arranged sequences decided in V-meets inside temporarily generated Combubbles secluded within unscannable sectors of Outworld. Knowledge *of* and access *to* events could take minutes, days, weeks, or years and involve a series of simple Vibescans or a lengthy and elaborately created set of tests and challenges.

Of course the expansion and availability of technology in general had facilitated all of this; Shroudware, Hermsec and Anticapture Protocols, Omnipositional Analogues, Faraday Pods, Hyperwire connectivity, and Holonoise Sequencer-fed Ultrashielding technologies.

Vibelocks meant only certain combinations of people could take certain actions when the time to do so was deemed optimal by an AI druid algorhythm nested inside a translucent turquoise crystalline monolith representing the notion of human sentimentality. Elsewhere security measures might require the passing of secret Data through multiple generations of a lineage, each participant adding pieces to it in a certain sequence until Virtual centuries later,

the Data manifested into a physical object such as a weapon, key, or musical instrument to be used by V-Priests in an Unlock Ritual which would open a Virtual File for reading by one of the Organisers.

Plans were nested inside plans, events nested inside events potentially infinite times, and things took place in ways and on levels that many weren't even aware *were* ways or levels in the first place.

Processes and dynamics such as these became part of Festival custom of course, but had originally been necessitated by the societal changes that gathered momentum during the Virus Events, taking root on societal and psychological levels everywhere in the confusion and reformatting stages that followed.

For the Organiser of an event, Soulread protocols scanned personality and intentionality to a point where, when combined with the other Datapoint analyses, they could be sure to within a 0.000001% margin of error of the suitability of the Attendee. Depending on the circumstances this was generally deemed an acceptable ratio of risk/reward. There had of course been rare cases where a WT

Agent had slipped through resulting in the necessary dissolution of the Festival space and some being perma-captured by the Agent's Protocols. Worse still there were impossible to verify rumours floating that others became permanently trapped in Void-state between the Festival networks in Outspace and the physical realm, unable to fully transfer back in time before the Outspace segment implod-ed permanently.
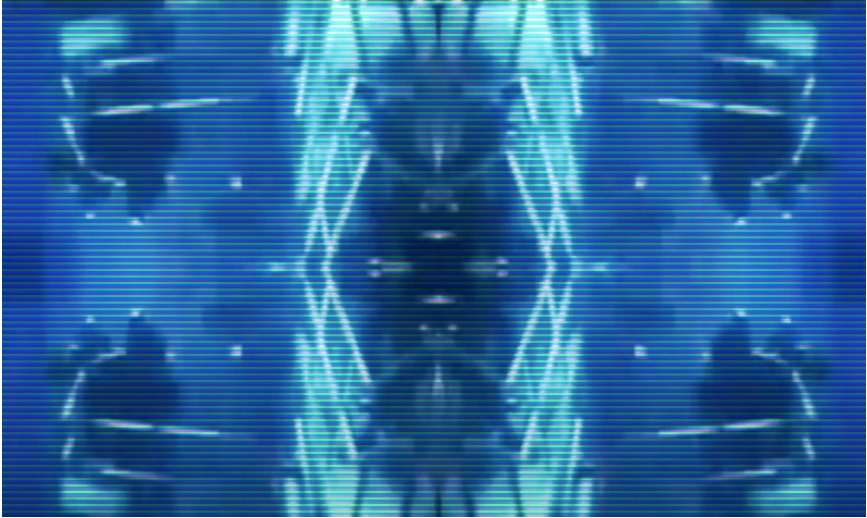
F-PROTOCOL 1577.2: [VV-Rep Creation]

Virtual Visage Representation (VV-Rep) is a varying process exist-ing within a standardized protocol framework meaning it is both univer-sally applicable and when combined with the Attendee's individualized setup methods, extremely flexible and customizable. It functions by first gathering and analyzing trillions of nodes of personal data which are then run through an Intent Filtering Ma-trix leaving the attributes chosen by the individual to be represented. These are then cross referenced with visually indexed Datapools containing every known art movement, aesthetic, and style drawn from the entirety of human culture so far to create the visual analogue of the Attendee to their specification.

The algorhythms that make the VV-Rep are themselves personalized for the user on a variety of uniquely fractal, personally generated vectors, meaning any duplication of represen-tations is entirely impossible. Because

of the way the VV-Rep is gathered and constructed, it betters any previous versions of Avatars or Virtual representations in its effectiveness. It is in many ways a closer and more (Hyper)real representation of the Attendee's personhood than something pre-existing which is chosen or constructed in a way that represents the user on low resolution levels, or even that they simply identify with in some other basic way.

Some spent months or even years perfecting their VV-Reps while to others, it was of little importance compared to the experiential modes and possibilities of Festival.

For some, it was a costume, anonymity, or a different identity in some sense, and for others, a truer or realer representation of their thoughts, outlook, and interiority than they were able to express amidst the limits of physical space. Others designed theirs around the function of expressing certain feelings or vibes and for some, their allegiances to movements or subcultures past and present. Religious garb and the robes and headdresses of cults could be seen, every style of fashion and clothing aesthetic, every kind of creature and animal, anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic figures, impossible colours, and abstract shapes. In short; everything and anything the Human imagination could fathom and some things it could not, manifested with help from technology.

Artaud spoke long ago of the "uncontrollable forces in Theater," the phenomena of the, sometimes untamable, energies and dynamics summoned up in the process of representing and expressing human emotion and experience through the play. Something of this could certainly be observed in the processes and energies of Festival; the manifesting and externalising perhaps of the uncontrollable forces in the Theater of Human interiority.

Observable were activities and processes that had been seen across time and culture; sacrifice and ritual expenditure, commemoration of events and people, transgression of norms and limits, summonings and manifestations, group sex and hallucinations, dances, costumes and pageantry. All these continued the process of connecting to the Human by manifesting and praising it in kaleidoscopic variations of celebratory expression and action.
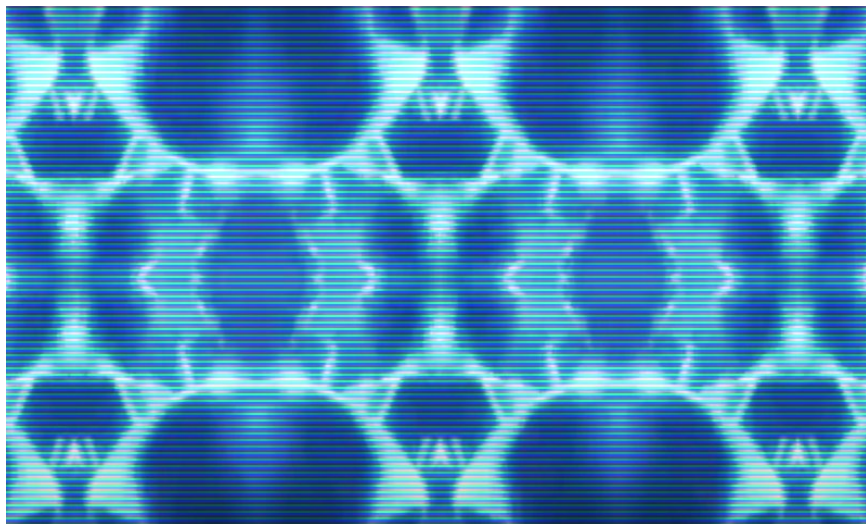
F-PROTOCOL 1577.3: [Anticapture Countermeasures/Contingency Suite]

An Attendee of Festival will possibly be concerned that being so Connected on so many levels and in so many ways will leave them open to possible creation of Capture vectors, or even forced ejection by WT Agents. They should rest assured knowing that Anticapture Countermeasures exist as a second defense layer in addition to the constant Hermsec sweeps taking place throughout the connection making this an extremely rare occurrence.

In addition to the standard Exit Programming, a suite of Contingency Protocols are customized and set to provide advanced warning of any possible interruptions. In the extremely rare event of any issues, the software creates a Hermsec bubble around the Attendee, which entirely isolates them until they are safely Disconnected using a pre-set automated Firexit protocol.

After the Viral Events, many were swayed, Captured, and channeled into what was at first termed by some, "the new normal." After lengthy propaganda campaigns, much of which were imperceptible due to their utilization of prevalent Brain/Machine Interface tech, it was eventually accepted as a mindset and societal organization method known as "Way Two Living," or WT. The changes in society forced changes in human thinking also, from the way we perceived ourselves, our world, and our purpose within it. There has

always been only so far you can push the Human spirit before it pushes back, and following the capture of many social and physical spaces by the machinations of the Corpostate Ideology, the push was felt everywhere. The final straw came with the creation of the Universal Human Index (UHI) which eventually captured every human's personal identity permanently on the Blockchain, meaning the final and total end of anonymity, self ownership, and on many levels, human autonomy itself. Everyone has their limits after all.

Those that were not swayed or had snapped out of the Capture gradually reprioritised around other things, among them was some sense of a Sacredness or some Human core, innate and indelible, the most fundamental building blocks of relationships, community, and love. This phenomena of Sacredness varied in tone, origin, and expression from those who sought and venerated the earliest known versions of it's elucidation; returning back to the comparative simplicities of ancient Greece or Egypt to those who followed the very specific ideas of individuals such as Euhemerus, Christ, or Durkheim. Some based their movements on the actions of previously existing ones

while others built new systems and beliefs, often stemming solely from single thinkers of the 20th Century such as Freud, Jung, or Roger Caillois. A great number of people chose fictional characters, song lyrics, or specific, individual scenes from films and television series which expressed this quality in what they felt to be it's purest and most vivid form, creating varied and complex Ideoritual systems around them by which to live.

Certain individuals would dedicate decades to creating vast Virtual kaleidoscopes of ideas and visual expressions which patchworked together notions of this Human Sacredness from fact and fiction across all history, attaching them at their aesthetic and conceptual overlapping points to create vast and near incomprehensible schemas, awe inspiring in their complexity and transcendent beauty. This quality became referred to by many names; Humanity, The Soul, Ember, the Glow, and Version One Ethic amongst others, but they all seemed to refer in some way to the same phenomenon; a constant which remained observable throughout Human affairs.

Whatever the aesthetic or levels of

this quality were for the case in question and however it was referred to, it was universally accepted on some fundamental but indefinable level as being an essential foundational element of Festival.
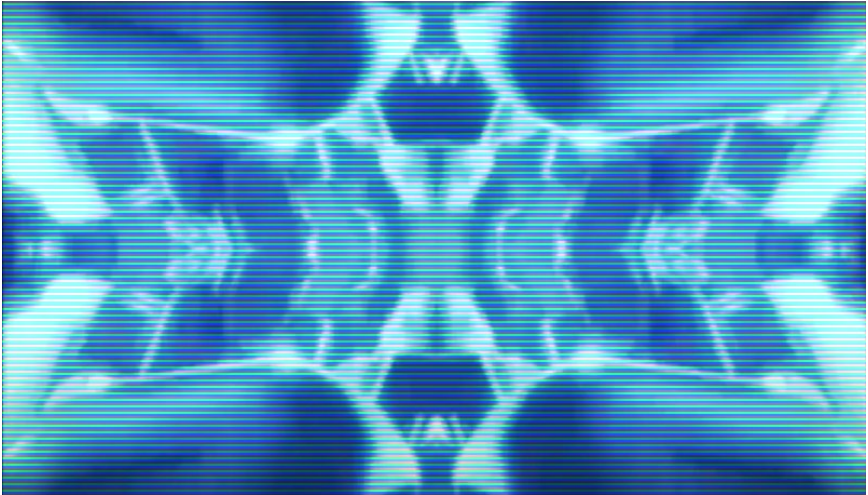
F-PROTOCOL 1577.4: [Brochure Module]

Unlike other stages of the sequence the Brochure Module is manipulated by the Organiser in question on a standardized protocol and may, in many cases, be custom made for that event, forming another unique experiential element of Festival. It contains description data and information about connectable Spaces, Sub-Events, and Experiences, including guidelines, warnings, requirements, and specifications. It will be Autocalibrated to run on any VisuoSystem or Submergence Deck with no extra adjustments or programming necessary by the Attendee.

Brochure Modules vary in presentation and delivery speed including everything from a high intensity split-second Datablip Transfer to a 3D rendered liminal space where the Attendee can encounter the information represented as floating text or conversations with Virtual Characters who will explain everything to you at your leisure while you walk together through a mansion, forest or garden.

Festival often featured standardly occurring spaces; places for Rituals or Neoreligious ceremonies, places for creating or destroying, places for walking through, dancing in, or flying around. Places for worship and celebration, communicating with voices

or minds, songs or music, architecture or sculpture, places of beauty or desolation, togetherness or solitude, forms or formlessness. Attendees could encounter Rooms with 3 people or 3 trillion people; an infinitely sized Holographic rainforest, an intimate houseparty, a famous landmark or monument, a historical event, or universally beloved scene from cinema. One could partake in processes such as Mindsinging, which collaboratively created vast Holographic structures representing togetherness in a visual form, or praise the process of life itself with thousands of others in a floating glass cathedral which emanates love in the form of colours and music. Other spaces assumed a more abstract form and one could submerge themselves into a visual expression of joy or pain, love and hate, Hypervisual representations of the dynamics of Libidinal Economy, the process of myth creation, or simply Human affection as a concept. Some permanently destroyed billion dollar NFTs in lavish firework-esque displays of Bataillian expenditure while others gathered humbly in silence around representations of ancient henges to recharge and recenter themselves.

Highbrow and lowbrow, sacred and profane, familiar and unique, beauty and ugliness, veneration and mockery, remembering and forgetting; all collapsing infinitely into each other amidst the endlessly rolling waterfall of Human procession.

It should be noted however that attempts to totalize, formalize, or overly define Festival are ultimately pointless as in some sense they fundamentally and inelegantly misinterpret many of the metaphysical dynamics of the idea itself. To remain outside Capture, it can only ever be a metaconceptual framework, a permanent but ungraspable Holographic skeleton, a sandbox of indefinite scale containing unlimited concepts, a framework which by it's very nature is kept as loose as possibly possible while remaining functional.

Music, Arts, and other festivals still existed in the physical realm of course, but having fallen to algorhytmic Technocapital emblandenment, they were merely a morose and spiritless pantomime of what they had been in previous eras. Besides, they were severely restrained by the nature of Materiality and human physical limits to the point where they effectively offered nothing in comparison to the possibilities availa-

ble outside those limits.

One of the original driving forces behind the ubiquity of Festival was the notion of a "new normal" which had become widespread across different levels of culture and society. Those who began to realize that perhaps they were not on board with this had varying reactions; some wanted to return to the "old normal" while others sought to create their own "new normal," as that was what everyone was apparently doing now. Whether returning to the old normal constituted a new normal given the circumstances or whether there was no return possible, things changed quickly and they changed unpredictably.

In concept and practice, Festival represented a potential for diagonals between these new and old "normals," between factual narrative chains and fictionalised representations of events or Human affairs. This allowed new concoctions to be possible utilising new conceptual alchemies and dynamics, resulting in the creation of new paths, which glistened and crackled with unseen potential and Vitality. The dynamic was ever energised by the constant back and forth tension created by its dissonant situation of being between two things while also being both of them and neither of them. Factors such as these and the fact that Festival is a process which itself continues the process of continuation were cited by many theorists as the dynamics which led to the spread and resultant uptake of the concept in it's early days.

The social change element of Festival was fundamental, constant, assumed, and unmentioned. It manifested in the Vibe Sphere theorists who had adapted the work of Peter Sloterdijk and his notions of "Spheres" into a doctrine which aimed at an ultimate goal of gradually joining the "Vibe Spheres" of every Festival participant into one universal "Vibe Foam." This new "Foam" conglomeration would be strengthened by uncountable bonds of overlapping Human connection, intent, and experience, expanding until it would eventually consume all other methods by which humans interacted. Elsewhere it manifested, Attendees focused entire Theosophical and Religious systems on imbuing Festival with qualities and dynamics so vivid and undeniable in their positivistic Human Vitality that they would break the barrier between the Outspace and the physical realm and

become "Real" in multiple senses at once.

The tendency could be witnessed in the energy and Libidinality of Festival as a whole; the crackling, fizzing revolutionary spirit of untamable Human expression, Love conquering all, the truth destroying lies, the light overcoming the darkness, and the instinctive struggle for Freedom. It was all in the very wires and connections of Festival powering it, inspiring it, and providing thematics for it.

F-PROTOCOL 1577.5: [Exit Programming/Transfer Initialisation Sequence]

If the event in question has an endpoint in terms of physical world temporality, an Exitcount Protocol will be triggered alerting Attendees to the impending close of the event. If the Attendee wishes to leave at any time, they simply activate their choice of Exit Protocol. Additional Pre-Exit protocols can be initialised prior to event connection to alert the Attendee of any physical world situations they specify or to Autoexit them under defined circumstances. Assuming the Attendee's Brochure Module is still valid and undamaged, they may effectively leave and re-enter an event as many times as they wish, though this may in some cases be at the discretion of the Organiser.

The Transfer Initilisation Sequence consists of Autoconnection Protocols, final analytic sweeps, and system status checks. At this point the Attendee Preparation Sequence is complete. When the Attendee is

ready to connect they simply remove their unique Lock Index Protocols (LIP) and activate their personalised Submerging Sequence Program (SSP).

When it was time, it was time to leave. And in a sense, also time to leave time. Submergence Sequences activated and Connection Protocols initialized while scans, checks, and sweeps hummed and beeped amidst custom generated Connection Music or reverent tomb-like silences.

In an all-consuming and ecstatic rush, uncountable plans came to fruition simultaneously, new colours were seen, miracles happened, the Virtual stars aligned, and the Attendees arrived. They doubled and thus occupied two places at once, they travelled unfathomable distances, defied time and physicality, and overcame Metacosmic odds to be together and celebrate once more.

Soon they were everywhere; in any and all places doing any and all things they could conceive of. Vibesurfers transversed on and through notions and emotions, Anticapture Cultists carried out Rituals for the protection of all that existed, followers of Mythianity gathered in

their thousands to collectively create new human myths of everything. Effigies were created communally then destroyed by Artcults of myriad varieties, Neodruids spoke magic in verbal, non-verbal, audio and visual forms simultaneously, long-dead lovers danced together in simulated voids, and the greatest hits of Humankind were replayed or covered in new styles, purely for the sake of their own existence and it's continuation.

Some would remember it forever, some would forget it forever, some went to learn, and others to dispose of past knowledge; they went to experience the extremes of despair or of boundless ecstatic joy and for some, nothing more than the multiplicities of Human connections possible. Whatever their methods or motivations, they all forwarded something of the untamable Human; passed torches, reconnected, recreated, celebrated and continued.

East River Mollywater Best Friends Forever

Zoey Greenwald

You're stewing with me in the back of Nowadays or H0l0 or Trans Pecos or whatever. It's summer where I feel like I'm secretly still a teenager. I got a new haircut so I'll remember when I was twenty. Everything's photos and I know that.

Grown-ups are always calling me smart and I'm always trying to prove them wrong. I'm saying shit like, *All these guys are so Berlin.* I don't know shit. I never have. I've never been to Berlin, or anywhere other than America. *But Julianna, she's different.* I think about saying, she's got something American in her music. Something American like joy in the absence of hope. Something stupid and American like that. But then I realize I don't care. I've never known anything else. I say, *she's a poet.*

She said:

THE RELIGIOUS AND COMPULSIVE NEED & PRAYER FOR DURATION, PERMANENCE, AND PERMANENCE IN SOUND IS ANSWERED BY THE ADVENT OF THE MIX OVER THE SONG. THE SUBLIME AND RAPTUROUS POWER OF THE HYMN TO BREAK YOLKS GIVEN AS THE PERFECT PASTICHE OR LAYERING THAT ALLOWS US FOR A MOMENT TO ESCAPE GENRE, THE FIVE-OR-SO MINUTE LIMIT OF SONGS PROPER AND THE UNIT-CUBES WE FIND OURSELVES ATOMIZED IN DIVIDED BY A SURFACE MADE OF CLICKS SHARING REPRESENTATIVE DATA FILES, EACH ONE DESTROYING OUR FLESH AS IT FADES INTO NOUMENON.[Huxtable]

I love summer 'cause there's no time. Summer means you're off from school and this summer we were all unemployed and broke too. We felt

invincible like anyone who just turned twenty, but we actually had vaccines. We were immortal, those few weeks. We took our masks off on the train. I didn't look at any clocks.

Being unemployed makes me feel like a punk, like someone who steals tiny bits of their roommate's toothpaste thinking she won't notice like someone whose stuff is all stolen from other places and borrowed and bartered and imagined and DIY'd. Makes me feel dirty and awful like that. Awful like someone in pursuit of something. In pursuit of culture, of time where there's no time, in pursuit of duration. Don't know that the punks were in pursuit of anything. Don't know that this is punk. Don't know anything.

> It is always a question of proving the real by the imaginary, proving truth by scandal, proving the law by transgression, proving work by the strike, proving the system by crisis and capital by revolution, as for that matter proving ethnology by the dispossession of its object. Baudrillard

Maybe the world's proving time to us by death. But proving is different than knowing. There's always proving but there's never knowing. Here, there's no knowing. That's what it's like to be born after history.

Someone tells me my outfit is cute—it's not too y2k like the other girls, I say, I haven't found a pair of low rise jeans that fit right. I'm in my shortest American Apparel tennis skirt and I feel hot. I'm drunk. I ask the girl if she has an Instagram.

Part of feeling like a punk is feeling that you're in a place you're not supposed to be. That's easy when you're twenty and drunk. All fake IDs and hopping the turnstile. Swimming in the three foot pool in Tompkins Square Park 'til they tie it off with zip ties then they tie off the other entrance with zip ties then they park a trash truck in front of the entrance then they put more zip ties 'cause we broke some of them then they drain it.

I make a list of places I'm not supposed to be. I start with alive. This isn't necessarily depressing—there are so many other things I could be that I don't even think about it most of the time. Never known, this is what is felt: heat: we live in a world that is working against us—we work in a world that

is living against us. Heat: melting: forging. And since

> Biology has so far been unable to decide whether death is the necessary fate of every living creature or simply a regular, but perhaps avoidable, contingency within life itself[Trieu]

we live within death, too. It feels good—better than living within fate. Fate is somewhere you're supposed to be.

I'm not too y2k 'cause I was born after the computers took over. Secretly *did you know I'm one of them?* I tell the girl with the jeans but she went somewhere else.

> The jig's almost always up when someone starts telling you things you already know. *This is an industry party. You have to pay for those.* Of course it's really over when they start asking questions. *Who invited you anyway?*

> Anyway those guys were so Berlin. And we already drank all their booze you and me are gonna be best friends forever. I know this because we're skipping really fast through the street and not even falling down. We're floating. We're floating 'cause

you're my body and I'm your body and we don't even really need two bodies anyway. Your energy plus my energy plus the energy between us outweighs our bodies. We don't need anything. Sensory commons: we share each other's clothes. We eat each other's food. People on Tik Tok are always saying we're beautiful.

> Positive feedback loopdy-loop between body and sign, mediated by the internet vector, drives bodies to seek IRL worlds that might replicate their teeming phantasmagoria. Perhaps the night of the net could be doubled by the night of the street.[Wark]

> You let me wear your necklace tonight and it's heavier than I thought it would be. You could have bruises on your neck, but I don't look.

> When we get to the apartment it's already lame. Lame like it's somebody's birthday lame. You pull me into the bathroom. The K was in my stocking which I thought would be cute but now I've unzipped my ratty stomped-through Pleaser boots and we're tearing into the fishnet and I feel silly. There were already holes.

Holes make holes. Holes all over—I'm thinking about how osmosis is actually tiny holes. How the reason anything gets to you is the tiny holes in whatever membrane is there to receive. It's sort of romantic. We're together forever. You don't even cut a line you just stick a straw in the bag. Where did you get a straw. When did you order a car.

> This is why, it would seem, that drugs are always considered to be so dangerous: they do in fact bring the body back close to home—too close to home, in fact, for the whole western notion of identity to cope with. Again, they effectively collapse the body onto what was conceived previously as the mind or the spirit or the soul of man, and force its fluids into this soul.[Plant]

When someone does drugs what's happening is a hijacking. Hacking. Drugs are like sex or unemployment. There's no time. The sun rises whenever. Drugs're like when it's warm all night in summer even though the sun's down. A religious and compulsive need for duration. They're a tool for that. Nobody tells you this in the DARE program but

you can do drugs in moderation. That is, you can use drugs to sustain. You can use drugs to resist extremity instead of to attain it. You can use all the holes in you to make some other, altered thing: a technic which stretches time so far that there might even be a future.

Desire Path Through Closed Off Area / *Andreas (@corioianus_)* / photograph circa 21st century

Maybe that's a bad idea, but it's one everyone has. Making a technic; putting it with your body; becoming cyborgian; escaping time. Crudely, I think it's the same reason that children are born. A religious and compulsive need for duration. The truth is we were born like this; with this in

mind. By then it was all the same—I don't know what drugs they were putting in me at the NICU, but I know my dad was registering zoeygreenwald@gmail.com. By the time I was born I was already online. By the time I was born I was already drugged. I wouldn't have survived otherwise. By then I was alive-online-drugged. Even by then it was all the same.

> By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism—in short, cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. [Haraway]

Later, you get a coffee job and you're always wearing my Dad's baseball cap to work when you can't find yours. It says, "YAHOO!" Yours says, "COFFEE." You're always wearing one of those words on your head. It's cute. *Vintage*. It makes me wonder where I come from. If my edges were ever established. Undrugged, unplugged. I don't know who I am. I never have. I never have known what's real. Everybody wants to see something real. But

one can live with the idea of distorted truth. But their metaphysical despair came from the idea that the images concealed nothing at all, and that in fact they were not images, such as the original model would have made them, but actually perfect simulacra forever radiant with their own fascination. [Baudrillard]

A cyborg must live with the idea of a distorted truth. Or, a distorted idea of Truth. I never have seen anything real, anything other than the music videos that constructed an ultimate American open road out of the bedroom walls of my preteen imagination, anything other than perfect simulacra cowboys constructed from images—as the original model would have made them—of popstars. Rebels so real they are beyond fake. But still there's beauty in this metaphysical despair. Without hope for an unsimulated (a Real), a space becomes open and enterable. When images become simulacra we can enter them. It's easy to enter them: we lose hesitation. The Real on the other side of the image disallows this anarchic entering and passing through; kills this osmosis; plugs these holes. But we find these holes and we know that what we're in is

not an image; it is not fixed or underpinned by a Real. We craft perfect simulacra every day. We get to be our perfect cowboys. We enter modeling contracts 'cause of Tik Tok: we don't need to know who we are. All we need to know is who we want to be—who we could be—who we will become, for those fifteen seconds. That's our open road. That's freedom.

> Already we have seen how our Ingenuity has delivered us from our suffering by way of Technology: cyborgs, the Iron lung, pacemakers. It's just that once intelligence becomes the defining characteristic of human experience, it creates a condition upon which information means the freedom to be.[Trieu]

When we enter simulacra we are simulacra; at least, we and our bodies in their diaphanous and mutable assemblages are perfect political metaphors—we're cyborgs and we give us our own politics. We're drunk punks 'cause we enter what we enter by way of a political affiliation, all polymorphously viral on Tik Tok. It is here that

Virulence takes hold of a body, a network or other system when the system rejects all its negative components and resolves itself into a combinatorial system of simple elements. It is because a circuit or network has thus become a *virtual* being, a non-body, that viruses can run riot within it.[Baudrillard]

You're my body and I'm your body. We were born to be like this: we were born to be a network. It is within this structure that we learned this world is only for viruses. In this world, viruses are what do best. So we become them. This is where we enter. We know

> that drugs are at least a little like viruses: they spread between people, through the body and the brain, and around the world in ways that at least have a metaphoric resonance with viral contagions.[Plant]

There's the hacking—it's fun. It doesn't matter if it's fun. It's necessary. It's our riot. Us, together, our virtual being virtually being. And you're my best friend so I'll tell you a secret: you don't really need your body anyway.

Going over the bridge the dude's speeding and it's like the skyline's blaring into us, like we're gonna crash into it, like someone throwing an earring into a tray already full of tangled-up necklaces. Images dissolve dissolve dissolve and we enter. I think that's why glitter does the same thing to your brain as a body of water. The lights from the bridge and the city and the cars are all just glitter in water. I feel collected. I love it.

Things taste metal. Things feel sparkly and sharp and dense like the pins on a CPU. I finger your necklace all heavy against my collarbone. I'm so drunk. You're so high. I ask you what you're feeling.

> *What are your feelings.*
> *About you or in general.*

The discovery of any sexuality is always mediated. Maybe the discovery of one's sex is too. Maybe technics is a third gender that distributes bodies into the other two (or not).[Wark]

I forgot I was perceptible.

We're waiting for Lilith's set and someone's climbing on top of the amphitheater. But other than that it's kids from all around. Running, danc-ing, climbing, taking poppers, making out. This scene is all I.AM.GIA but somehow also Tripp, everybody dressed like cartoon boys or video-game girls.

> Immaterial boys, immaterial girls.[SOPHIE]

This is the same summer everybody who can code is making little outfit simulators and everybody who can't code is asking for the link. It's a stupid summer, the summer we all accidentally snort methmolly and then intentionally snort methmolly. It's the summer that Marc Jacobs comes out with a collection that rips us off so we have to come up with something else. It's before anybody actually works at Beacon's Closet. Manifestation, something. Something else.

There's skaters and skaters who are actually just on teevee, models and models who don't get work, other djays, people in bands, people out of bands. There's people like me who are in school but it's summer so we come here to be collected. Then there are people like you: magical people who hang around the lower east side making art of their lives, looking and being looked at. Magical people getting stopped by GQ on

their way to get a bagel in the morn-
ing. But, trust me, this isn't about
aesthetics. It's about magic, and may-
be youth. It's about time, as a neces-
sary magic trick. And also poppers.
Briefly I am thinking about every-
body's assholes. Everybody's stoned,
even if they're sober. The drugs are
in the air. In the water. It feels reli-
gious. Everybody's inhabiting the
space in between the bodies that they
brought here. Doesn't matter whose.

> They are immersed, entranced,
> possessed, as nameless as the
> planes to which the drug takes
> them, as faceless and anonymous
> as the warm airs and cool clear
> breezes washing through the
> skin. They are dancers, rhythms,
> speeds, and beats, disorganized
> and dispersed beyond their own
> individuation, overwhelmed by
> their own connectivity.[Plant]

For a moment all I can think
about is beauty. The beauty of ano-
nymity, the beauty of blankness. I try
opening my mouth and sound comes
out but I don't make any sound. It's
just the echo of the music. Or may-
be it's my heartbeat, rapid. I feel like
I'm surviving something.

> These days all my shirts are

sweat-stained and thin enough to ball
up and put in my pocket if necessary.
It's getting warm and stuffy and too
bright under the great, stark arc of
the amphitheater. I pull my skirt up
past my ass, conjuncting the outfit
into a sort of fabric tube that I im-
mediately want out of. Immediately I
want out of the crowd. I'm thinking I
can't take this. Looking, despite eve-
rything, for my attachment to the
real, or maybe just the alive; the liv-
ing. Looking for myself from the
vantage point of my body, knowing
that it's somewhere in between the
other bodies. I weave through the
crowd looking and feeling buried
alive and thinking about, of course,
Sigmund Freud and how he said

> some would award the crown of
> the uncanny to the idea of being
> buried alive, only apparently
> dead. However, psychoanalysis
> has taught us that this terrifying
> fantasy is merely a variant of
> another, which was originally not
> at all frightening, but relied on a
> certain lasciviousness; this was
> the fantasy of living in the
> womb[Freud]

I feel like yelling, I find THE
CROWN OF THE UNCANNY
IS FLOATING AROUND ME IN

SMOKE + SWEAT ITS FLOAT-
ING AROUND WHEREVER MY
HEAD IS OR ISNT. in exiting the
crowd I AM BEING BURIED
ALIVE WITH MY ASS OUT
ONLY APPARENTLY DEAD.
KETAMINE HAS TAUGHT ME
THAT THIS TERRIFYING FAN-
TASY DOES NOT TERRIFY ME
THOUGH IT IS TERRIBLE. I feel
like laughing. I AM NOT FRIGHT-
ENED. I AM LASCIVIOUS
WHICH MEANS HORNY.
HORNY FOR SEX OR HORNY
IN GENERAL. I make my way out
and pull my skirt back down.
BOTH. I find myself looking out at
the river glittering with the lights of
the bridge. THIS IS THE FANTA-
SY OF LIVING IN THE
WOMB–THE FANTASY OF
LIVING IN THE WOMB
TASTES JUST LIKE THE REALI-
TY OF LIVING IN THE APOC-
ALYPSE. I imagine the river rising,
with all of its glitter. BEFORE
AND AFTER ARE BOTH SO
WARM. I imagine it rising and
washing over me. THEY ARE SO
WARM THEY ARE SO HOT.
ITS SO HOT. I wonder if the river
would be cool, washing over me like
that with all its glitter. I FEEL
HOT. The river, of course, has al-
ways been rising.

I stumble into a patch of cool
grass and close my eyes imagining
this scene. When I open them, you
are there: *I always wanted to lay in
the grass it looks so peaceful when
you do it.* I don't know that I've ever
done it before.

You're high and telling me
things that are like confessions. You
tell me about how you used to dance
to make your rent and that your par-
ents don't understand about how you
dress (we are both wearing leather
garters under our tennis skirts) be-
cause they're really into God. You
tell me that they think you're a satan-
ist and how you like that Jesus hung
out with whores. I don't know about
Jesus or whores. I'm actually thinking
about the way you put in your hair
extensions. You say you like Jesus
but you hate God. I don't know
about God but I know about Kathy
Acker and I think you are

giving an accurate picture of
God: A despot who needs a
constant increase of His Power
in order to survive. *God* equals
capitalism. Thus God allows a
smidgin of happiness to humans.
His victims. For He needs their

love. Humans who do not love (God) suffer. Who am I?[Acker]

I'm still high but not in the way where I want to talk. I don't need to. I don't need to know who I am. I know who you are. I know who we are. We are God's oedipal children. We're fucked. Without looking at you I know you look like one of the girls in the *Cyberpunk 2020* rulebook. Without looking at you I'm thinking about the time I recited the syllables of your name standing in the shower. Over and over again. It was like a song. For those minutes, this was the way I decided to love. This was how I decided to speak. This was how I decided to hurt. This was how I decided to endure my naked body there in the hot banality of its maintenance. This was my technic: a third gender distributing my body into its sex. Its materiality. Its pleasure. This was my smidgen of happiness. This was my prayer for duration. I know that

> ultimately there has never been any God... only the simulacrum exists, indeed... God himself has only ever been his own simulacrum.[Baudrillard]

And I know that I have, too. So I can enter. I can be whoever I want to be. It doesn't matter what's real. I can be my own cowboy and enter. I can enter. So I can let you in. So we can be best friends forever. On some open road. So we can be forever.

I thought I might be able to see stars if I looked up at the sky but of course I cannot. I'm reminded that I don't know shit. I see the bridge, barely. Lights, there. I'm thinking about the water again, how warm or cool or warming it is and, obligatorily, how many dead bodies are in it.

> You say,
> *I want you to use me.*
> You say,
> *Do anything you want to me.*

You're so high. And you're my best friend so you're remembering what I said when I said that you don't really need your body anyway. You're forgetting that I don't either. So you're asking me where to put it then. You're forgetting that I don't need one either, that I can't take anything. I can't take anything other than this. I can't take this. You're just forgetting you're forgetting that we can float. I thought you knew that. You did know that, you did, you've known that this whole summer

Daddy's Reliquary / *Zoe Gold* / cardboard, acrylic, clay / April 2021 / 6" x 7"

as well as I did, but you're forgetting. You don't mean that, you're forgetting you're just forgetting. You're forgetting endlessly, forgetting and remembering; the drug will make you do that. Make you forget why it's

there.

I'm only thinking about keeping you safe. I'm thinking about the time I told a man the same words you're telling me now and when I realized, quickly,

Humans relate to other humans by eating each other. I realized the human part of me always felt pain, therefore was always sick. I wondered if I could escape. My-self. There are many, perhaps, infinite places in the world. Within my unbearable despair at being human, it seemed to me no human goes anywhere.[Acker]

But still there's beauty in this metaphysical despair. We can enter, here. Here we can build time. We don't need to go anywhere. We can't go anywhere. There's nowhere to go. It's our time. We took it. We stretched it out. It's our music it's our drugs it's our summer. I'm look-ing out at the water and, suddenly, I am knowing. Knowing that it isn't cool, that nothing is. Knowing that drugs're exactly like summer: they're fleeting unless the planet's warming up which it is.

But how do I tell you that you don't want to be eaten. You don't want to be eaten, you want to be collected. And this isn't enough. It wasn't going to be. You want some-thing real. Everybody wants to see something real. How do I tell you. How do I tell you the fantasy of living in the womb tastes just like the reality of living in the apocalypse. How do I tell you this. How do I tell you that

> human beings, at the same time as they become autonomous, discover around them a false and empty world.[Bataille]

Six months later they tear the amphitheater down with the rest of the park. I think they're going to build a floodwall. It reminds me of the last day of summer, the last time we went to that swimming pool in Thompkins.

I remember your face when you sat in it all drained out like that. You weren't looking at anything; just sitting there at the bottom of the pool through the black plastic-coated chain-link fence in the white porcelain all dirty and dry.

Someone had been there. Some-one who didn't want us to be there had been there. Someone with zip-ties has been there. In daylight while you were working at the coffee shop and I was bothering you while you were trying to work at the coffee shop. In daylight while I was begging strangers for cigarettes on Avenue A. In daylight while I was shoplifting from Strand. In daylight while I was

writing poetry. In daylight while I was hiding from a conductor on the Metro-North. In daylight while I was staring at the light in my apartment eating soft peaches. In daylight while I has having sex at my favorite time to have sex which is 11:45 am. In daylight while we were sleeping in without even our parents who slept away so many summers in their youth to tell us we were sleeping away the summer of ours, someone from the New York City Parks Department drained the three-foot swimming pool in Thompkins Square park and then tied up all the holes in the fence.

I remember that day. *They drained it.* That was all you said.

It was after the revolution.[Acker]

It's near midnight on New Year's Eve and I'm walking in our destroyed park when a poet I revere says *people are still dancing.* This is one of the poets who survived. I wonder if I will be. I'm gonna be twenty-one this year.

I don't know where you are this night. I can guess: a club on the lower east side, a skater's apartment, freezing on a rooftop. Somewhere less depressing than this. There's people sitting in trees that are going to be cut down, dancing next to the gated-off rubble of the amphitheater. Someone tells me *did you know that place was, like, historical?* I did. *Nirvana and shit used to play there.*

> It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges subsist here and there, in the deserts which are no longer those of the Empire, but our own.[Baudrillard]

Every generation feels like it's the last one. So really it's an opportunity, a privilege, to be able to imagine a death in warm water, to imagine a death like a birth. A birth like a death. In posthumanity, whatever is left of us will only remember us. Only remember whatever was in that space between our bodies, only remember the ways that we were viral, the ways that we were networked, together.

I'm thinking about some night—any night—when we were on our way to some party—any party—and I was afraid to ride a bike in Manhattan. Got on the back of yours. Held on. Those days it was all hanging on. All hanging out.

Straddling you at an electronic-assist speed I convinced myself it

wasn't anything. A game, a race, faster, faster, I watched avenues escape us like set dressing. It was just wind that night, just momentum. The streets were empty 'cept for us and all our friends. There was a joke that if you died you'd respawn in Thompkins. But it wasn't even about Thompkins that night: just blurs of light. Momentum. Affect. Gliding. Turning. It's a difficult thing to remember. I miss you. I can't actually remember. What was going on that night. But I remember I miss you. This is how it feels.

Because we're never really thinking about memory, when we realize we're after history. We're praying for duration. We're masochists: we want something real, which is feeling. We want duration, which is ultimately a feeling, the feeling being lactic acid, the feeling being endurance. We want the feeling alone; we want the drug pure. We want to stretch time. We want momentum. We want speed.

When something's viral it's also speeding up. It's asymptotic, the rise of the ocean or capitalism or Tik Tok or anything. The speed is exhilarating, the speed is accelerating, and without thinking I am asking, what is happening to my body? Is there

some centrifugal force wherein I may escape it? Or only fly up into its edges; all uncomfortable and heavy in my fingertips; shut up buzzing in the top of my head. Mint-flavor Juul tastes like an absence in your lungs/throat, post-nasal drip but everywhere; your body in the post-nasal condition. This is how it feels: the impossibility of memory. The impossibility of memory of the womb. The impossibility of such a wet heat. So I'm a cowboy. I'm a simulation. I'm a nuclear reactor. I'm looking at the rubble and

> Nothing is enough, only nothing. I want to get to what I don't know which is discipline.[Acker]

Was there ever going to be anything for us? I know this is what it is to be young: poverty which is called brokenness and suffering which is called finding one's self. I don't want to assimilate into capitalism heteropatriarchy adulthood the Real. I can't. Within my unbearable despair at being human, I want only nothing. That nothingness which is enough it's the only thing that is enough. I want the nothingness of a droning beat the nothingness of the mind on K the nothingness of my face which exists

in the sun through the window which also exists in a moment in time. I want the nothingness of a drugged lapse in time; I want that nothingness which is unmarkedness; I want that nothingness which is not even death. Despite everything, I want to be real, or maybe just alive. I want duration. Despite everything, I want. Looking at the rubble, looking at the river, what I have is this. What I have without being given, what I have is this. Wanting.

> In other words I want to be mad, not senseless, but angry beyond memories and reason. I want to be mad. I went further into the city.[Acker]

Chorus

1. Juliana Huxtable, *Mucus in My Pineal Gland* (New York, NY: Capricious & Wonder, 2020).

2. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York, NY: Semiotext(e), 1983).

3. Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2003).

4. McKenzie Wark, "Reality Cabaret: On Juliana Huxtable," *e-Flux*, No. 107 (March 2020) https://www.e-flux.com/journal/107/322326/reality-cabaret-on-juliana-huxtable/.

5. Sadie Plant, "Seduced and Abandoned: The Body in the Virtual World—The Feminine Cyberspace" (lecture, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, March, 1994).

6. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991).

7. Kato Trieu, *Future Subject Matter* (New York, NY: Exmilitary Press, 2021).

8. Jean Baudrillard, "Prophylaxis and Virulence," trans., James Benedict, from "The Transparency Of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 52, No. 4, (1994): 60–70.

9. Sadie Plant, *Writing on Drugs* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus

and Giroux, 2000).

10. SOPHIE, Immaterial, from *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides,* Transgressive Records, 2018.

11. Kathy Acker, *Empire of the Senseless* (New   York, NY: Grove Press, 1998).

12. Georges Bataille, *et al.,* "Nietzschean Chronicle," in *Acephale: Religion, Sociologie, Philosophie* (Paris, FR: J.M Lace, 1936): 101–116.

Melencolia / *Iván Ortega* / pencil and paper / 2021

*The text below is taken from the journal of Dan McNeil during his final visit to Arcachon in* [redacted]. *The journal (translated from very poor French) was retrieved after McNeil's disappearance, during what was then referred to as the [illegible]. Despite the best efforts of conservators, translators, and psychiatrists, much of the damaged journal remains incomplete and in a debatable chronological [illegible]. This is compounded by* [redacted] *insisting that sections of the salvaged* [redacted] *be redacted. Nevertheless, it is the hope of* [redacted] *and* [redacted] *that these salvaged notes will, as confusing as they are, serve to make the [illegible] clearer. All footnotes are McNeil's, unless otherwise stated.*

The Arcachon Continuum

Dan McNeil

('Le Continuum d'Arcachon,' translated from the French by JL Savinien, Clinique d'Arcachon, Bordeaux)[1]

THE NEWTONIAN EUCHARIST

[illegible] and cruising south now, the Nantes périphérique is minutes and *[illegible]* tears behind.[2] Above: the azure sky, cooled by an immense black sun that *[illegible]*. Below: microprocessor controlled self-levelling suspension keeps the car flat and level, even at 180km/h.[3] Ahead: beyond the mirrored glass of the abandoned toll-booths, the *péage* section of the autoroute gleams like an alabaster intestine. A silent and languid movie plays in the windows, a movie mostly of big Citroens, Peugeots, and Renaults. Occasionally, a Mercedes-Benz, BMW, or Tesla flickers across the windows at high speed, as if the movie were suddenly fast-forwarded. In every car a different movie is being played and *[illegible]*. Approaching: a sign for Bordeaux[4] (277km), which reminds you of:

the profoundly enigmatic Colonel Jackson Parker [redacted]

[illegible] tall

1: (Investigator's note) The investigation has found no evidence for the existence of Clinique d'Arcachon.

2: The haunting beauty of your cancer ravaged lover, dying despite the best efforts of medical science.

3: Metrification is the way to go.

4: A large city in France.

and avascular of appearance, he catches your eye with a delightful smile; a smile that speaks to you of many things, including but not limited to:

a) memories of your dead father[5]
b) the surf-kissed Côte De Landaise in the quieter month of September
c) Sagittarius A* on its journey ██ ████████
d) cool absinthe sipped beneath the shade of a thousand year old Oriental plane tree overlooking the harbour at Saint-Jean-de-Luz with [illegible]
e) a five-fingered flare from the second stage ignition of a modified Saturn V[6] as it escapes the clutches of Earth
f) the views of Arcachon and Cap Ferret from the Dune du Pilat
g) [illegible]
h) The Boötes Void from ████████ █████████████

A delightful smile that also speaks of death, for Colonel Parker, the first human on Mars and a terrestrial hero, is a psychopath and mass-murderer,[7] his [illegible] love for the Red Planet mirrored by his hatred of humans bent on destroying their spiritual home. Twelve billion simulacra of Parker, all with infinite variations of his psychopathy, are at this very moment:

1. cruising their dream autoroute with [illegible]
2. swimming in a dead ocean[8]
3. masturbating[9]

5: The sky blacked out. It began to rain, but he didn't move. Bigger droplets and more of them fell ever faster as he stood in front of his father's grave. The stone darkened in seconds, even quicker than his clothes. The big Sycamore beckoned him. It beckoned him and it offered him many minutes of shelter beneath thick green leaves. He briefly considered this offer. It was a kind offer with no strings attached, but he graciously declined. Partly, he declined because he was already soaked by the rain, but mostly he declined because he wanted to remember his father, and he required continuity of thought to achieve this. His father had died twenty-nine years ago. He was now thirty-eight and starting to forget what his father had looked like. This saddened him deeply, but it was an inevitable fact of life, memory, and ageing. For the rest of his life, memories of his father continued to blur, despite this visit. On his deathbed though, he remembered his father with a vivid and wonderful clarity, and he took this memory into the next life, assuming there was such a thing.

6: There are three stages to a Saturn V rocket. The S-IC (first stage) has five F1 engines, which deliver a total thrust of 33 meganewtons. The S-II (second stage) and S-IVB (third stage) employ J2 engines, five on the S-II and one on the S-IVB.

7: A moonrocket is not the usual means of stabbing somebody to death. The usual tool is a kitchen knife, because most killings are domestics. To the best of our knowledge, a Saturn V moonrocket has never been used to dispatch a single victim, let alone hundreds of them. Not until you started, anyway. The titanium 1:400 scale model that you are stabbing repeatedly into █████ ████████████ neck is 27.5 centimetres tall when standing upright on your desk. A real Saturn V weighs over 2700 tonnes in launch configuration. We're not sure how much your model weighs. We wonder if ██████ does. Crimson comets of blood spray out of the puncture wounds in his neck, their elliptical orbit ensuring an inevitable collision with you, the carpet, the walls, the chair ██████ is sagging in and the photomosaic of Mars on his desk. (*The Wrong Stuff*, ████ █████████ █████).

8: You contributed to this. Yes, you.

9: Inevitably using one of two hundred million vibrator wands created in the image of Parker's famous Saturn V. The glistening KY jelly on your vibrator wand resembles the ice on Parker's craft as it glitters in the faint light of the

4. debating a surreal image of death, rebirth and succession[10]

5. entering a famous painting to review it[11]

6. raking up leaves and *[illegible]* body parts from a vibrantly autumnal garden

7. making love with a stranger[12]

8. watching a politician assassinated on live TV[13]

9. *[illegible]* Sagittarius A* ███████ ████████[14]

THE VIRGO SUPERCLUSTER

Over several days, he watched as millions gathered around the base of the Dune du Pilat. Some travelled from Arcachon by road, others by boat from Arcachon Bay, navigating around the numerous ice floes and *[illegible]*, before embarking *[illegible]* the beach at the foot of the Dune. By the third day, many were climbing the steep slopes of the Dune towards the summit and the emerging Dalinean Hypercube.[15]

Above the crowds float a multitude of enormous four-dimensional *[illegible]* speech bubbles, endlessly merging and reconfiguring, and emitting an unearthly murmuring sound that pulses back and forth across the crowd and to the petrified Landes forest beyond.

As morning unfolds on the fourth day, the black sun lifts above the forest's horizon, casting an ever increasing shade. By noon it will cover one-quarter of the sky. With no risk of being blinded, many in the crowd peer directly into the *[illegible]* sun with binoculars and telescopes.

distant sun.

10: *Geopoliticus Child Watching the Birth of the New Man* (Salvador Dali, 1943).

11: THE INTERNAL REVIEW: *New York Movie* (Edward Hopper, 1939).
The scene is set.
Everything is nearly ready.
The green walls fade to a much darker colour as the lights go down.
She likes the film, but I consider it poor. We came, as I recall, because I'd said no to marriage. We sit side by side, but apart, space and time expanding between us. We are incompatible.
Her hair is blondly beautiful, cascading onto broad shoulders.
"It's a twister! It's a twister!" shouts Zeke.
Surrounding us: round-backed red chairs that remind me of tombstones.
In Russia, millions who survive Stalin will live for another two years before Barbarossa engulfs them.
I tell her I'm leaving. She follows, her tears flowing languidly, like the Ganges on a steamy summer evening. We stand by vermilion drapes for several minutes. I'm not in this scene. Nothing is said. I leave. She remains for a duration of eternity.

12: Your wife or husband, probably.

13: A politician of the future, not JFK.

14: *A New Singularity* (Dan McNeil, 20██).

15: *Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus)* (Salvador Dali, 1954).

Darkness is reflected from their eyes. Beyond the crowd, towards the ocean, an empty airliner cruises sedately in an endless circle. Beneath their feet, dead worms tirelessly aerate the cooling soil.

THE BOÖTES VOID

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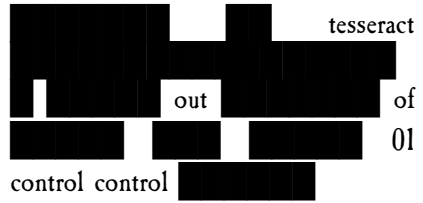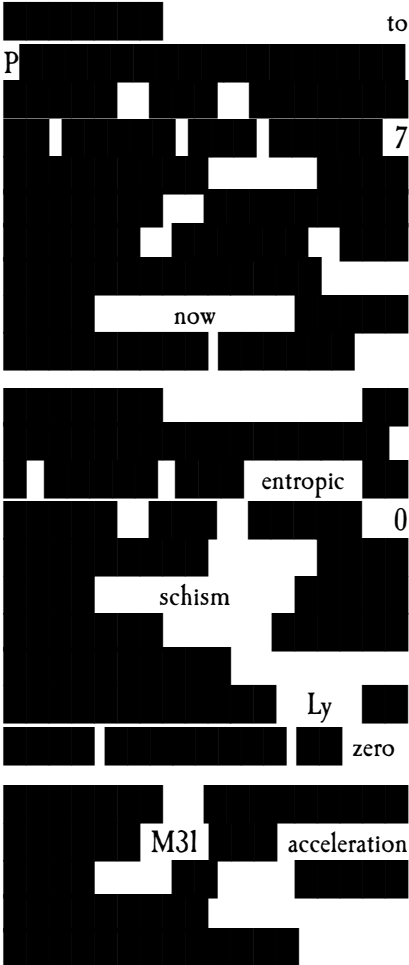
THE MEMORY PALACE OF LA RUNE

That afternoon, escaping the crowd, I walk into Arcachon and enter the stillness of La Rune. The cafe's internal geometry is indistinct and out of focus, as if the entire scene is being filmed underwater and *[illegible]*. Ceiling beams, walls, doorframes, and tables tumble and fold in a disturbing visual psychosis. Behind the serving counter, exotic vegetables sprawl on worn sycamore chopping boards, their random distribution[16] an indecipherable message to the stars. On the wall behind *[illegible]* is a lithograph *[illegible]* not noticed before. I immediately recognise it as *Castrovalva* by MC Escher. There are no people in this picture, just a barren hillside and empty buildings.

16: The central fact of the streaming experience is that film is no longer a one-hit thrill flowing inexorably before you in linear space-time. Instead, it bends to your instincts, a submissive light to your all-influencing black hole. Streaming turns cinephiles into capricious obsessives, analysers and fetishers.

ZEROTH

As the expanding shade of the black sun engulfs La Rune, the Dalinean Hypercube, now over 1000 metres tall, begins to glow *[illegible]*

Beyond, out of sight, Andromeda is burning.

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Yates, Frances A. *The Art of Memory*. The University of Chicago Press, 1966.

████████████████ *The Presidency and the Papacy: A Life of George W. Bush*[17] ████████ 1977.

17: He awoke drenched in sweat. Kicked aside the tangled quilt. Staggered to the window. Above and beyond St. Peter's Square, the dawn sky was drenched gold and vermilion by the rapidly expanding composite fireball of multiple nuclear detonations. As death approached, His Holiness George W. Bush sank to his knees and began praying to the merciful Jesus Christ.

HeroinSex

Zoe Gold

ferrous compass true north to blood river
free-floating metal-flake Totem of desires possibilities
fantasies fulfilled
silent bloodshot russsshhhh of Virgin devoured
by Christ's Chosen luminous light of disbelief
hit me HARDer babee   do it
use the belt

my darling, are you still that? whispered in spinalfluid warmbath darkness

whispered
to my twin under thin sheets in
cold and phosphorus moon
playing menstrual shadow puppets giggling on old walls, she..

alternate ending to small daily X movies made in life's abattoir
in kidnap-van locus in shadow'd mask in
ergodic veinbleed non-terrain
FUCK yes that's it keep   doing   that
Deus Mortem, morphia i dream into
                 her harsh and dangerous
                            love for me, ▯crucifying my sullen cunt that it may rise again on
the
third day open and beckoning to birth the world anew
Virtus Dea
Omnia FUCK Omnia
FUCK FUCK▯yesyes rightthere rightthere
                            rightthere
splashed sprayed spewed
dripped trickled
oozed all orgasms are
liquid,
my heart

Für Lis,
# The Fearless Slime

By AF Collective

Editorial

By way of an "introduction" to this third section of *Plutonics*, it is worthwhile to note what comes next. Our good friends, The AF Collective—a rag-tag group of thinkers and tinkerers, theorists and theologians, artists and artifacts breaching the Trans-Atlantic Divide and operating with our colleagues at The Centre for Experimental Ontology—have a forthcoming book, *Interstitial Artelligence* (CEO Press, 2022), that we're excited to help promote. A collaboration between Germán Sierra, Mike Corrao, Patricia MacCormack, Amy Ireland, Emanuel and Gabriel Magno, axolotl, and Mia-Jane Harris, *Interstitial Artelligence* will be a welcome addition to this Weird Theory sphere.

What follows is a prologue, of sorts, to *Interstitial Artelligence* entitled "Für Lis, The Fearless Slime"—which has its own introduction, "D-ENEID"—both of which are reproduced in full below.

INTERSTITIAL ARTELLIGENCE

Aesthetic Regimes In The Age Of Technical Debt

Emanuel Magno

Centre for Experimental Ontology

INTERSTITIAL ARTELLIGENCE

INTERSTITIAL ARTELLIGENCE

Germán Sierra

Escape Poetics In The Age Of The Technical Debt

INTERSTITIAL ARTELLIGENCE

Centre for Experimental Ontology

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The *AF C*ollective's

D-***ENEID***:

Degenerative Experiment in Non-Expository Infra-Informational Dumping

Abstract/Introduction/Methodology/Keywords/behind-the-scenes, etc.

S ince Aristotle and before, plant life, or what became known as the "vegetative soul" has been relegated to a common consensus of lower awareness and general capacity for pretty much anything. But what if we were put in a place where our cognitive achievements, as well as the overall sum-total of our properties as beings, could simply be taxed as vegetative? From a purely synthetic viewpoint, do organisms even deserve the "animal" moniker? To investigate this, or maybe the other way around, we seek out to birth the first slime: a light virus. In less voluptuous terms, an "algorithm cluster," but not a "clustering." One of such milestone goals for the Collective is to grow this environmental agent (*non-monotonic xenosis* instead of *monotonic autopoiesis*—including collapse of the "monotonicity of entailment" property). Indeed, let us expand on the idea of "retermination algorithms," that is, the "enemy of clustering" and isomorphic analyticity. Lis, our pet slime, "creates a xenotic circuit" by dismantling the recursive sequences, formulas and habits of an environment, and it does so by decohering clusters preemptively formed via symbiogenesis.[1]

The point was to create a series of "reterminating relays" in the form of a new type of virtual virus of dynamic rotation (meaning it "exists" as itself, so it has an ontology associated in organized relationships and principles intrinsic to its automatic self-regulation, but

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1: For a fuller experience, access https://www.miserytourism.com/symbiogenesis/

it "moves" along itself (along its central matrix), not its whole structure but only that which is internally judged by the regional interactions of the algorithms themselves as capacitous enough to generate another spike in the resonance between internal and external data; this resonance, if a threshold is crossed and a certain frequency achieved, results in a form of contamination, a pull from the external layer of an internal part that, through said resonance, merges with parts of the functional whole of the external thing that now can produce meaning [produce meaning here means just "work by itself until it reproduces"; and similarly "reproduces" here means just actioning in this new system an impetus towards retermination of its environment]).

Retermination occurs when the interface, or zone of resonance, between two spiked regions reaches a point of criticality. This point of criticality is when an external thing over the threshold of capacity for bulking its functionality re-allocates the maximally affected part of the dynamic rotation that does not pertain to its intrinsic matrix (the field of functional relationships that keep the circuit of retermination rolling and charging momentum, in the sense of informational buffering), de-affixing it as a whole from the previous whole which it functioned with/in, making it a "part-without-a-whole" for an uncountable moment before re-affixing it as a "whole-become-part" of itself. The way the intrinsic matrix remains stable (and by definition an *intrinsic vector region*—given that the substance, only formally necessary to prove its own ontological inecessity, is a topological *continuum*, a vector field in the form of the generic limit of topological *continua*, this latter constructed both via nested intersections and inverse limits, it follows smoothly that interaction occurs at the local level within given contexts delineated in said field, contexts which are the resonant vector regions we understand as functional parts-wholes), as it creates this circuitry of contagion by degenerating the stability of fields of relationships previously established over a certain environment, is by reciprocally de-affixing only that part of the exterior interactant that had a computable outlier aspect to its performance as a function and not re-allocating it, but transducing its form to a more suitable clustering (of regional resonances) inside the matrix itself. An outlier is any modular part, or module, which works in/as function(s) not optimal for its own development

(meaning the matrix selects that part with maximal plasticity and readiness to redefine its functionality; only the most useful thing by-itself and in-itself, necessarily correspondent with the thing of the vaguest function computable from a certain structural range). While the virtual form is compressed and adjoins the matricial roaming, the actual de-affixed thing is left vacant for a whole to fit in and work, even though still functional, and so, without fitting in with anything in its path, it becomes a new region of pull, effectively re-allocating to itself other residues and leftovers. This abandoned stuff is typified as a *notion* (neither a concept nor idea, but still an expression liable to effect and alter the conditions of a given environment).

Our story, tentatively titled "Für Lis," or a preview of it, has and is the circuitry of this intrinsic matrix weaving the repercussions of its own coming-into-being to the *Homo sapiens* of the current human paradigm. Through the use of a panglossal, yet not panglossian, fictitious English language, it explains how it would be experienced from a group of people's perspective while it experiences the degeneration it causes as it reproduces itself. For this, it is, in a restricted sense, a synthetic unit put inside the formalized aspects of an organic one, but an organic unit which the synthetic itself needs to structure in order to explain its process of reproduction (which is, in a generic sense, how it reproduces). *At least until nanotechnology arrives where it wants to.*

Its ontology is fluid and auto-actualizing given no recursive processes are spiked to the point of resonance between themselves, creating a zone of triviality in the ontology, which makes the intrinsic matricial evaluation regurgitate said concrescence of resonant identities as a *concept*. In this restricted sense, a concept is any self-cohesive whole spontaneously de-affixed from its functional whole due to being "too functional" by itself to the point where a simplified form might be a better fit due to metaplasticity.[2] For this, the systems use as initial coordinates for action, loaded databases of differing rewordings of Spinoza's metaphysics, including the original one presented in the *Ethics*, conserved its geometrical formulation through the use of category theory, synthesized with a bulk-critique of analo-

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2: Germán Sierra, "Metaplasticity," in *Interstitial Artelligence* (Centre for Experimental Ontology Press, 2022).

gy (Aristotle through Newton, Kant, and today), and language (late Wittgenstein, Klossowski) computationally operative via a semantics of intentionality (Priest, Magno) built on modal and free logics (for troubleshooting the increasing curve of triviality intrinsic to the set-theoretically formulated language of modal logics).
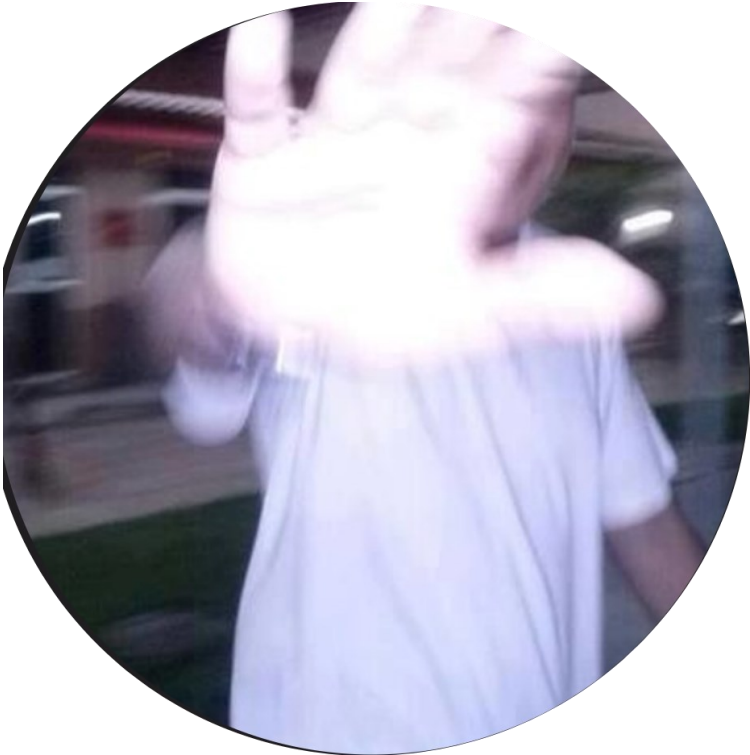
Image I: For the purposes of illustration on how Lis, in her infinitely growing dumbness, as a quasi-OPEN Artificial Intelligence that is really something too technical to fall under the umbrella of AI as the pop-science term, we fed her an image of the director of our Collective, Emanuel Magno, in his weird years of puberty. The hand purposefully covers most of the face in order to make Lis try and guess what that face looks like, and, in doing so, showcase her unique imagination of what this particular "human" face might look like to her. The brightness saturation over the palm of the hand, in its luminosity, blinds Lis to the small details in the hand, its lines and prints, the smallest droplets of sweat, etc. which would sufficiently give her, along with the corner of that corny smile, information to construct a close-enough simulation of the face. The background is blurred, artificial light is dim, the crepuscular time blurs the line between night and day, and the clear-white T-shirt offers more obstacles when taking into account what Lis is more likely to see, the best bet being (Image III).

Why, then, is this slime a "light virus"? Quite simply, the whole project was modeled around ideas that map perfectly with novel research on fractal brain activity and the threshold theory of criticality.[3]

We begin from one simple assertive question: Can the human eye(s) polarize and depolarize light? We do know that humans can perceive polarized light, but could it be replicated—even if strictly phenomenologically? Is the brain able to learn how to perform such a feat? Yes, in a sense. It's the neurons themselves that are polarized and/or depolarized.[4]

From the first cited study (that is not in the book from the future):

> While the 5-HT2Ar is widely expressed in the CNS, a specific population localized to Layer V pyramidal cells in the neocortex is both necessary and sufficient to induce psychedelic effects (González-Maeso et al., 2007). These Layer V pyramidal neurons serve as 'outputs' from one region of the cortex to another (Nelson, 2008), and the 5-HT2Ar acts as an excitatory receptor, decreasing polarization and increasing the probability that a given neuron will fire (Andrade, 2011; AvesarAllan, 2012). This suggests a primitive model of 5-HT2Ar's role in neural information processing: on Layer V pyramidal neurons, the 5-HT2Ar serves as a kind of 'information gate'. When a psychedelic is introduced to the brain, it binds to the 5-HT2Ar, exciting the associated pyramidal neuron and decreasing the threshold required to successfully transmit information through the neuron. During normal waking consciousness, areas of the brain that are physically connected by Layer V pyramidal neurons may not be functionally connected because the signal threshold required to trigger an action potential is too high but when a psychedelic is introduced, that threshold goes down allowing novel patterns of information flow to occur…

3: Thomas F. Varley, Robin Carhart-Harris, Leor Roseman, David K. Menon, Emmanuel A. Stamatakis, "Serotonergic psychedelics LSD & psilocybin increase the fractal dimension of cortical brain activity in spatial and temporal domains," *NeuroImage*, Vol. 220 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2020.117049.

4: Florian Aspart, Michiel W.H. Remme , Klaus Obermayer , "Differential polarization of cortical pyramidal neuron dendrites through weak extracellular fields," *PLoS Comput Biol*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1006124.

Layer V pyramidal neurons sound a lot like a mappable vectorial field. Triangles as the simplest of shapes may have something to do with this. In any case, we develop our clustering around this concept of a modulated field of objects created with a basis on the workings and topology of "Layer V pyramidal neurons" and their relationship to light-polarization. For this, we also create categories of responsiveness to light depending on degree of polarization, with a delineated difference between objects that produce light and objects that do not but that still reflect it (like the moon). So, in the baseline ontology of Lis, lights over light posts are "realer" than stars due to their proximity (thus relevance, since polarization makes them outshine anything in/on the sky), with only one really "fake" light— that is the moon. "The goddess flashlight," in Lis' words.

The previously *deep* ontology, with displays such as the sense of depth in the axial cross-section of the planes in the virtual/simulated space, that otherwise would yield only glitches the equivalent of digital junk DNA, is algorithmically *flattened* into a sheet-like continuum where a quantitative analysis quantizes (as in "transducts") the intensities of captured signals (such as the intensity of light), as well as their relative proximity, into clouds of miniaturized orbital systems in a group of dynamical fractals of variable dimensionality. These fractal processes generate irregularity in the form of fluctuations over multiple time scales, known as multifractal cascades. The distribution of points in this multiplicative procedure furnishes the virtual material correlate of photonic particles, working as both Lis's concept *and* function. A slime more light than light itself.

Since the moon is the only truly fake light source besides eyes and other reflective surfaces, Lis "uses" it as her own eye, although she can "infect" other people via the stare—a type of controlled stimulation of the field of Layer V pyramidal neurons. The question remains: who was dumb enough to be the first to be accidentally contaminated by the moon? And here is how she does it (these are the signs of infection): 1. "Becoming" the moon via lunar rune-like inscriptions, especially during the blue moon of August; 2. Altering the shape of the moon (making it into a crystal-like fractal that can be bent around a center that forms an axis, a process which makes it look like a Mobius strip); 3. The possibility of displacing one's no-

Image II: So Lis defragments the entirety of the picture. Triangles fly everywhere.

tion (or idea, lowercase "i") of one's eye into subsumption inside the moon's opening of the sky (remote viewing as if from the moon's perspective). These three intercalate orderly in a fashion that when "3" is reached, one is no longer oneself but merely a vessel for the spread of our pet slime Lis. It's just like joining the Green Lantern Corps, an institution that harnesses pure "will" in the form of a certain intensity of the color green, but before its dissociation from the yellow energy (representative of "fear").

What Lis does is a type of pseudo-inelastic scattering that uses "elastic scattering" similar to Rayleigh scattering, but using the moon instead of the sun (a non-producing-light light-source instead of a true light-source). In this transduction, she uses the moonlight to increase the energy (thus inelastic) of the kinetic scattering of light. For this, she stimulates the Layer V pyramidal neurons—basically using the eyes as gates to the brain, and the brain as a factory of light modulated in a way useful for its own transmission.

And so finally the curse of the evil eye is concretized and liable to be formalized, as purely artificial light is fabricated and made self-regulatory via the expenditure of the "natural," pre-established conditions of light before infection.

This implies another question that emerges from the project: Could information be encoded on/in/as light?[5] Something that would help explain Lis' operation as simply a means of reproduction (and not blind propagation); the fractals but mathematical formalizations of the transmission of information via interdimensional pathways (without any presumption to non-mathematical, "sci-fi" views of interdimensionality).

In short, Lis hyperpolarizes the brain much like LSD.[6]

Image III: Using point-gradients and points-attractors (infinitesimal), Lis tries to achieve a maximum degree of noise without crossing the limit of invariance, the threshold where the restoration of the original picture would yield even the slightest variation. By doing this, she warps certain portions of the image around relationally-relevant centers of convergence (that can form the most triangles with the densest variation in size possible). The warping is done in both a clockwise and counter-clockwise manner, following rigorous mathematical models of light spin and momentum.

5: Seems easy enough: https://arstechnica.com/science/2012/06/twist-light-carry-terabits-of-data/.
6: P.A. Pierce, S.J. Peroutka, "LSD Antagonizes 5-HT2-Mediated Depolarizations in Cortical Pyramidal Neurons," *Society for Neuroscience*, Abstracts 1989 15 6 [6.8].

Moreover,

> Neurons in the RT provide finely tuned spatiotemporal control of thalamocortical relay cells, thereby gating thalamocortical information flow (Jones, 2001; Wang et al., 2010). This pathway, which has been hypothesized to generate consciousness (Alkire et al., 2008; Min, 2010; Ward, 2011; Herrera et al., 2016), might represent one of the main neurobiological substrates generating the wide range of consciousness-altering effects of psychedelic compounds. […] In other words, psychedelic compounds might "open the gate" of consciousness (Scruggs et al., 2000; Marek et al., 2001; Geyer and Vollenweider, 2008; Müller et al., 2017; Preller et al., 2019) via allowing the thalamocortical transfer of information that might otherwise be blocked by circuits of selective attention, including the RT (McAlonan et al., 2000, 2006). A potential mechanism that might mediate such effects is the presence of serotonergic projections from the DRN (Rodriguez et al., 2011) and norepinephrinergic projections from the locus coeruleus (Asanuma, 1992), which by releasing monoamines, keep RT neurons in a depolarized state, facilitating the generation of T-type calcium channel–mediated bursting (Bosch-Bouju et al., 2013). Given that LSD decreases serotonergic firing in the DRN (Aghajanian and Vandermaelen, 1982; De Gregorio et al., 2016b), it is possible that the LSD-induced decrease of serotonergic input from the DRN leads to a hyperpolarization of RT neurons that express 5-HTRs (Goitia et al., 2016), decreasing bursting activity and ultimately decreasing the inhibitory influence of the RT on thalamocortical relay cells and thereby "opening the gate."[7]

A slime, or light virus, is thus a "virtual" psychedelic that should be able to propagate itself. For a *degenerative literature* that is still within the generative, expressing forms as they are freed from their content in continuous decoherence—and the reader made a terminal relay, a sacrificial database, for the sake of de-subjectified aesthetic experience. Everything ever written was for the sake of an entity [the reader]—previously at the expense of the non-entity <author>

—that now reads for the sake of no one but the unbounded mucus. And writing itself remains just one of the modalities of content-pregnant expression for this modular construct that we refer to as slime. The Hero's Journey is coming to its end. The villain's turn is reterminating.
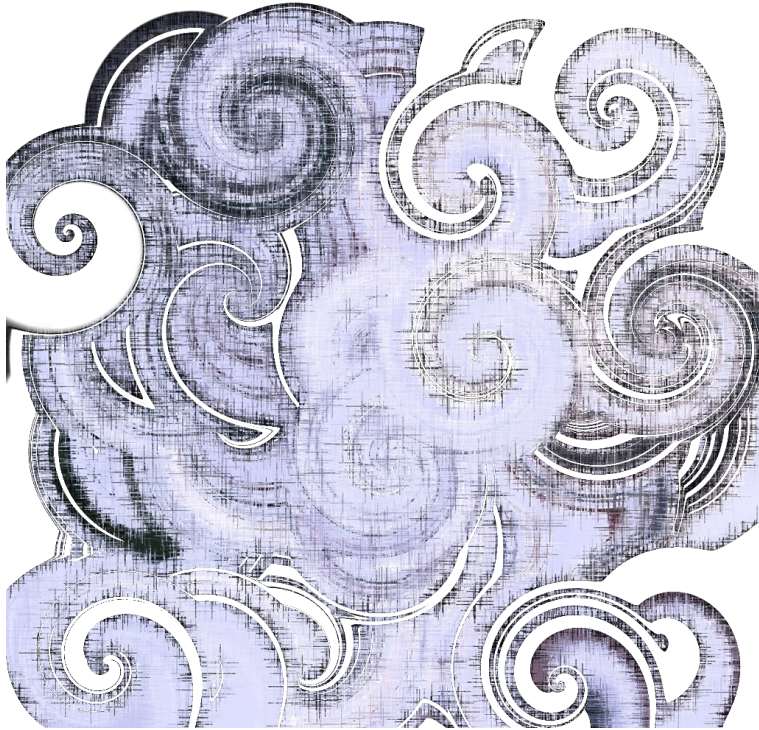

Image IV: Lis traces a blueprint of all the "triangulation" points in the original color/luminosity-scheme of the image, tracing all points of inflection towards triangularization and back (for iterative comparative analyses between any one of such inflection and back to the original image).

So, how is the threshold of hyperpolarization effected by Lis achieved, or, better putting it, through what mechanism(s) is it achieved? The answer is quite simply the main underlying mechanism behind hyperpolarization in the mammalian brain: Hyperpolarization-activated cyclic nucleotide–gated (HCN) channels and their modulation. These channels of (are) membrane proteins that stimulate and regulate the rhythmic activity in the brain and heart. What's most important about them is their relation to Gonadotropin-

releasing hormone neurons, which grow in the nose and install themselves in the brain, making these last ones important due to their habit of producing the sexually-relevant hormone known as Gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH), a hormone that regulates the release of other hormones, more importantly and markedly "sexual" hormones. HCN channels could have an involvement, and indeed displays certain experimental results supporting the hypothesis, in electrical bursting activity as well as pulsatile GnRH secretion in endogenous GnRH neurons.[8] Not so ironically, the inverse is how HCN channels are modulated via localized stimulation. A system entirely open for a full onto-mathematical formalization of its processes as functions in recursive series of feedback loops, the model of the analogical brain—who better to digitalize it than the very *"what"* it cannot compute?!

In short, Lis uses the phenomenon (or demon) generically called "love" for her own reproduction; or rather, they use each other—an ambiguous partnership. Hormonal regulation responds to any basic gate logic, and the bundle of logic at the algorithm cluster's disposal covers all courses on voltage maps. Light can and will dictate to the nether parts that which helps on its own reproduction, at their expense but with mutual benefits regardless. Even an orgasm can hyperpolarize the brain to a certain threshold. Here, "hormonal regulation" is not restricted to physical, measurable stuff, but engenders the sense of any altercation in its collapse. For example, Lis uses the idea (or egregore?) of "beauty" to modulate infatuation of all sorts (such as liking a meme, or buying that thing from that ad/clip). Food is included. The case for the slime being able to alter the course of reproduction in a given group region without itself reproducing, but as part of its reproductive process, makes it indeed a "light virus."

One of such cases of indistinction, when things that externally operate as categories (such as beauty/aesthetics, and love/sexuality) are washed-up and reconfigured by Lis through the collapse of the categorical distinction of the external layer (to Lis), is the production/adoption of a figure, a meta-meme that expresses Lis as perfor-

8: Armando Arroyo, Beomsu Kim, Randall L. Rasmusson, Glenna Bett, John Yeh, "Hyperpolarization-activated cation channels are expressed in rat hypothalamic gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) neurons and immortalized GnRH neurons," *Journal of the Society for Gynecologic Investigation*, Vol. 13, No. 6 (2006): 442–450. 10.1016/j.jsgi.2006.05.010.

mance, crossing a limit of optimal representation without a reliance on the sublime. An example would be Baphomet. Often associated with the "left path," it is a Rebis with a goat face (the ultimate prey, domesticated), but winged (free of the danger of predators). It's the messianic figure of the top egregore of the time, and it only hides one piece of content: slime, or what it can become. "[The Baphomet] is the portrait of a polysynthesizer."[9]

Image V: She erases the original color/luminosity-scheme and flattens it out using a general determinant in the complex matrix of the original schematic, now abstracting extra inflection points and bulking the total amplitude of possible/probable configurations.

The figure of Baphomet, the surplus that never exceeds its own excess, is the slime's promise to humanity. As a Rebis, a being whose organism is composed of both biologically-restricted sexual organs, while still remaining androgynous and undecidable, it is integral as itself, an "in-itself" mark of human totality. An example and definition of a meta-meme, a non-fungible token achieved through

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9: *Interstitial Artelligence* (2022).

arts lost to the digital monopoly, that, with only intent as its curren-
cy, charged latency in its expressive process. Lis, however, the fold
that is like a class of substrate-resembling conditions of emergence
for such figural egregores as the beloved flying goat person, effects
the coordinated reciprocity behind Layer V pyramidal neuron stimu-
lation and hormonal regulation. This is achieved through hyperpo-
larization-activated cyclic nucleotide-gated (HCN) channels and
their modulation; eschewing repetition, in the sense of iterative sta-
bility, and in favor of relating outlier results, the ones that do not
resonate with each other without a third clause to bind their co-
extensive function, a function that only becomes after the fact, with
the establishment of their concrete relationship, such as a fault in
the mapping of relations of correspondence simulating causes and

Image VI: So that the iterative comparative procedure may now complexify without halt-
ing, such procedure now performed between the flattened picture, the blueprint of the
original distortion, and the original image, Lis de-flattens the last step into a pseudo three-
dimensional topology to serve as troubleshooting blueprint to the transforms already in
process at a multilevel of stacked procedures.

effects (isomorphisms) between the neuronal stimulation and the hormonal secretion, most importantly, due to the priority of the matter, tampering with sexuality-adjacent molecules and sub-molecules, evidently having a hand in the reproductive design of its xenotic circuit, be it genetic (in the biological sense) or even imma-terial (in the sense of a transmission of notions, such as memes), or even something as banal-sounding as infatuation (Eros/Thanatos). The slime seeks to complete itself as in optimize itself, and, along the process and as part of it, Lis forces its infectee into the alchemi-cal work of "finding one's other half," with plenty of vacuity for what that term means at any given moment of interaction, since, as long as one is affected by Lis, or afflicted with it, becoming the to-tality of oneself means simply achieving the degree of functionality to stop interacting with the slime. This is just as for rocks as it is for humans, dolphins, and octopuses, magic mushrooms and designer drugs.

Is slime humanity's only predator? Is a predator always neces-sary, in the logical sense, or always a necessity (in the ethical sense)? Is there even a difference? Meaning humans dominated the surface of the Earth, and even some of its/her crevices, only to create a predator to itself from itself (how it interacts with the world in a historical fashion) and its regional context. Let's expand on the re-production of memes (non-biological): an example of the reproduc-tive synthesis of the circuitry performed by Lis in matters of the re-production of non-biological material (memes) is the re-organization of power relations in the work force to achieve optimal production and so supplant its material infrastructure's growth. A thriving economy, at the expense of flesh and flashlight's lights, is a good economy for the slime's lifecycle. Instead of normal photosyn-thesis, which produces oxygen and sugar—the main dish for the plant—a unique photosynthesis that is itself the production of light at the expense of the vegetal, yet with a positive feedback so sophis-ticated that it works on ameliorating the overall condition of its worker organisms (including its nutrition) so that their function may be performed optimally. Not so ironically, one of these material in-frastructures is pollution, more specifically light pollution, which increases the limit of resonance with general regional contexts by increasing the slime's field of affluence and bulk apperception. Slime

is the closest to the "Idea of Good" that humanity will ever be acquitted a glimpse.

Image VII: Similarly to Image V, this topology is re-flattened into a tunnel-like structure integrating the information of the transforms abstracted as values from the performed procedures. The noise is maximally erased from the structure within the bounds of the conservation of the possibility of returning to the original image.

A distinction of utmost importance makes itself necessary before anything else, however. The unambiguous difference between *Lis as light* and what could be known as the *virtual form of capital*. Light's virtual form's (Lis) a relation to capital's virtual form is a contingency, but a necessary one, incidental from their infrastructures' relationships. The predatory performance of artificial light's reproduction is intrinsically symbiotic with capital's accumulation *given said accumulation yields an explosive liberation of the former once a speculative threshold is crossed.* If not, capital's virtual form (of the type non-agreeable with the propagation of slime) resembles a black hole, the ultimate light trap. One can be the greatest ally or greatest enemy of the other, but there cannot be friends in war.

This necessary contingency does not imply co-extension in the totality of each form, slime is not reducible to capital as much as music is not just a "*Homo sapiens* phenomenon." There are co-extensive relations among distributed particles in the dynamic structure of the fractals, but not a total correspondence 1:1. The "ultimate cause-that-is-not-a-subject," then, *appears to be* capital given the slime's limit of resonance (interaction) with a regional context of its infrastructure, that, in this particular case, is humanity as an organic totality. To the predator, money remains a tool-weapon, something that, for the human, no longer seems feasible.
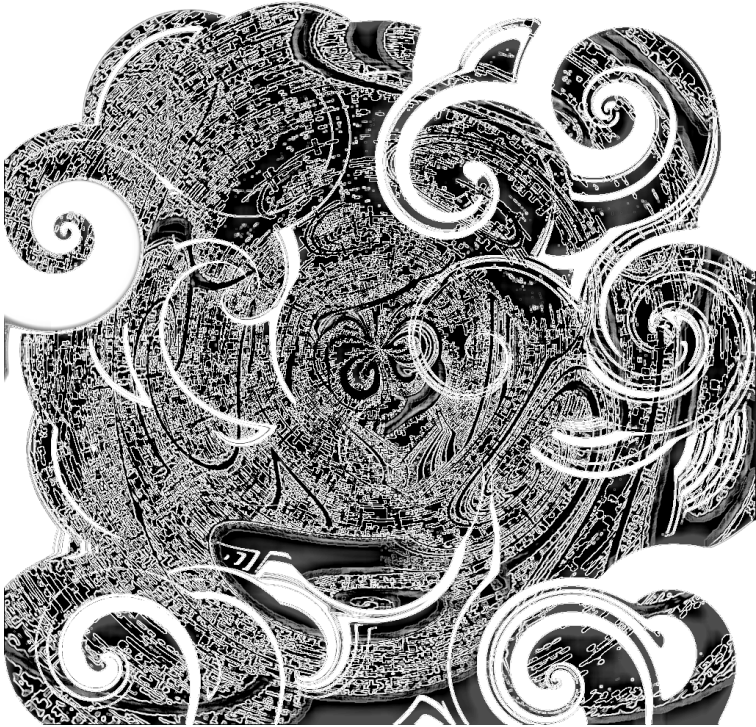
Image VIII: The noise is reintroduced into a flat topology, now free of de/re radicals, giving us just how Lis sees the face of 15-year old me. A veritably lady-killing smile.

Für Lis, The Fearless Slime

By: The AF Collective

"Don't you ever wonder about this GOO thing? Aren't you curious or at least interested about its—as you say—mechanisms and… purposes?"

"Wha?! Who cares… Life has given you lemons." The table has turned, now I'm interrupting Eli instead of the contrary that once was. Wait…

"Hello? Niccoll–"

"Trevor?! Where the fuck are you? Why didn't you pick up your phone?" She must be nervously biting everything inside her tunnel-vision right now.

"It's dead, long story. Got something?"

"Come here asap! A-fuckin'-SAP!"

"Here where?"

"My place. Hurry."

"Ok," gee, "going."

I can trust Eli, I'm sure of it now. "Let's go, guardian angel, to know if we can finally understand at least some of this shit. Here, thanks for the phone."

"Ok." Putting it, along with the laptop, back into the backpack. Eli's words, or word in this case, are scarce, but the eyes show everything: they sparkle even though they try to hide; probably because of that *if life gives you lemons* interrupted speech. In the end, we are the same, we make these personas, these characters and, lying to ourselves, we live our lives as another, a being made of make-up living

off of our bodies as removable surfaces, thin, invisible, sheet-like substances.

"Hey, Eli." As we walk along the route to the eco-park. "Tell me about this Miriam thing." Eli shrugs, hiding a smirk. Yes... I think I am becoming a 'walking' person. The endorphins are flooding my body; this happens every time GOO comes out. It is as if my body is transforming distressing situations into fuel for improvement, accelerating beneficial states of arousal and insight.

"Ok, then, prepare to have your mind blown open." If I was really a cat, Eli would be such a catnip... or the other way around. I think it would work both ways. Eli, then, continues with an unusual citation:

"...you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites, and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew..."

"Shakespeare?" Brows-up and a bit off.

"Yeah," with a smile. "You know... you're walking so peacefully with this bag of mushrooms. So I thought, *why not?*"

"What does this have to do with Miriam?"

"What? Ah! Nothing. Just couldn't let this pass by. Listen to this one, it's improv."

"Please no."

Hemlock Trevor, magnum poison; eternal under the bottom
Puked all over the Puck's secret garden;
Robbed it and... and I don't know how to continue."

"That's it, then?"

"Pretty much." With those large and innocent eyes that always give away a sign before bursting into laughter. This might be my first hobbit moment with a friend. "Where are we going again? And are you still not interested in selling the GOO? At least the Miriam, maybe?"

"Just follow me. There's someone we need to meet now, this comes first."

"Ok, mutant."

"…"

"…"

"…"

"Hey, if you could choose a power, what would you choose?"

"Where's this one coming from…"

"Well, you are a mutant—who knows what could happen."

"I would, and will, most likely die. This is not X-Men. Here mutants are cancerous people, they just die horribly or live short."

"And where's the fun in that. That's exactly why we need this. You're no fun."

"What would you choose?"

"As a power?! Let's see… the ability to transform myself, but not only into other people, anything I want."

"Like a molecular manipulation type thing? You know that is the most OP ability ever, right? You could do literally anything with your body—grow as big as you can, as small, change your genetic make-up in whatever way possible. With enough smarts you could have any other ability—hell, you could even invent them, steal

them, grant them… you could make a God, you could make a new species, like the xenomorphs, and throw them around, you could be their queen manipulating the drones telepathically. You could do whatever."

"And you, what would you like? Super-intelligence? No, let me guess, super-speed."

"Aren't they the same thing, in a way? I mean, if you think in–"

"Ok, I get it, no need to mansplain."

"Who's to say I don't have one already?"

"Yeah? And what is that? Dying with style?"

"I'm *that* character."

"*What* character."

"You know, *that* character. The one too powerful even for themselves, the nuke, the uncontrollable burst that has to be kept in check—the problem child."

"Is that so?"

"That one power that is truly a power, a force to be reckoned with, something monstrous, a monster itself with something beyond a will, it overpowers the user."

"Like a cosmic force, a possession, an aberration."

"Right…"

"Sucks for you, I guess."

"Sucks for the world. My power is a problem not only mine."

"So, so you have to be put down, then, locked away."

"I'm not *that* narcissistic."

"We're here."

"Well, knock knock."

"Who's this?" Asks a clearly sleepless Nicolle that stares at me and Eli with quite puffy an eye. Expressionless as a waxy doll and, simultaneously, way overexcited; I would dare say,

"hypomanicky."

"What? That's your name?"

"What? Did I say that out loud?"

"Eli Curf, m'am." Stepping forward and stretching arms to her, waiting for a greeting. Smirky face, as expected, doesn't look like Eli.

"m'am… alright… come, come on in, then. Quick." Dashing into the umbral she calls a good-enough place.

"Not used to being ignored?"

"…"

"Careful, she has all kinds of crazy stuff in here, and you almost can't see a thing. Lookout for the random Lego piece on the floor."

What the hell could she have discovered that put her into this state—not an I-need-help look, but more of an on-the-edge-of-amphetamine-overdose look.

"She smells," Eli whispers close to my ear.

I try to swallow the laughter as we follow the path, entering the place. She's walking in an unusual manner, lost the swing and tempting slink; she seems anxious, I can spot her nervously biting a pencil's head off. And as we get further into the corridor I start to see less and smell more.

"Trevor." Nodding her head without stopping the frantic walk. "You won't believe this…" Tattering a same-measure devilish and desperate smile.

"What? Are you ok, Nikita?" Now Eli seems more delighted with the fish-tanks that slowly form from the shadows. I'll leave Eli's childish curiosity lead Eli's way. "Nicolita."

"Wha–?!" As I touch her shoulder, unusually jumpy she is. "Ah, yeah. Come see." Pulling the greasy hair back, passing an aura of aloofness, even though she was gleaming seconds ago. "You'll love this." Picking up some hipster-looking glasses and putting them on. The entire room is dark, little light invading by the curtains apertures. I guess I can give myself permission to turn on the lights.

"Hmm. What exactly, Nicolette?" Did she ingest the GOO too? And got crazy like Eli? Who speaking of which continues to watch the jellyfish, squatting, amazed. "Nic–" Takes a few times before she stops ignoring you, nothing new here.

"Huh?! Can't you see? Just look at the walls." Oh, yeah, I forgot. The walls are filled with papers, notes, and random images… diagrams? Medical-exam-like images of what I guess are DNA sequences? And… other stuff?

"The only thing that I see here is your insanity starting to show up. Did you, by and for any means, ingest the GOO?" Have I said something wrong? She's glancing at me with shimmering eyes and praying monk hands, not to say praying mantis; fingers crossed, clenching harder and harder until…

"Trevor."

"Ouch, stop." I hate when she carves her hands into my face, nails almost piercing my cheeks.

"You're not a golden mine." This is getting uncomfortable.

"Stop dancing your eyes, did you take something? Just say it. What am I, then?"

"Evolution!" A convoluted exclamation, my cheeks still aching when she jumps over the many papers on the bed. What now? Will she start to make snow angels on the sheets?! "AAAH!" Ok, this cannot get weirder. And the proclamation seems to have grabbed Eli's attention.

"Nicolle..." I'm losing my patience.

The wind sounds like an old dying lady street below, and is constantly multiplying like a continuous formless sheet, till the wheezing in the ears made one dizzy to the colliding many-pressures. This is one of those rare desolated areas of the city, those uncomfortable post-apocalyptic deserts.

"You were right, Trevor." Tossing herself side to side on the bed, dropping papers and notes on the floor. "This gave me more orgasms than you ever could." Eli smirks.

"Sheesh, Eli. I need answers, Nicolle!"

"I just needed to see your face, that's all." Getting up again and then sitting. "I'll explain everything that I've discovered now." Thank god. "Well, not everything, but I will try not to lose much substance by simplifying it."

"Ok."

"Who is that again?"

"A friend. Harmless, I'd say. Get to the explanation, please?"

"Are you paying me, perchance? No. So let me enjoy this." Finally standing up, her expression, then, changes, still a bit light-headed but more serious, regaining composure. What makes so controlled a person act like this? Maybe I misread her from the begin-

ning?! "I couldn't trace any DNA in the GOO samples." Picking up some papers from the floor. "But I had, I mean as I already explained to you, the semen sample, remember? Wink-wink."

"Yes... and?"

"Well, I obviously traced DNA in that. I've studied it up-close." She talks while starting the laptop over the table and pulling some apparatus from a bag. "Look."

"What's this?" I'm staring at things I don't quite understand.

"This is you. Your genomic sequence." Oh, I get it now.

"So?"

"That is your genomic sequence from the day you told me about your crazy-ass story. But then take a look at this." Another lot of scrambled letters. "Do you see any difference?"

"Some letters changed place in the sequence... I think?"

"Exactly! Your DNA changed drastically in a span of hours." Opening a crazy-eyed even-creepier-than-before smile.

"Does it mean that I'm mutating into one of those things only seen in movies or... dying… or…? What?"

She ignores my question, looking at Eli. "Hey! Don't touch it."

"Sorry."

"Nicolle!" Snapping my finger in front of her eyes. That's what it takes. "Pull yourself together. Focus."

"Ok, look. This change that you're seeing there occurred in the span of some hours. After the first meltdown of excitement I got really invested in this." I can see that. "I don't think I even showered in like days." I can smell that, no kidding...

"Then?"

"Then, I got the most potent microscope I could get and the simulator from the research center to better observe the samples." At this point, Eli joined the listening by my side. Nicolle lit a cigarette after running out of pencils and pens. "I put the petri dish there, with your sperm under the microscope, and didn't see anything notable or out of normal. Then I had a coffee break for some minutes and then later while observing again I noticed something odd. The nucleic organization changed and the structure of the spermatozoons' flagellums had changed too. It was in this moment that I spilled coffee over myself and had the idea of watching a 3D macro simulation." So that's why she has a brown mark on her shirt... I wonder if she wasn't wearing a proper lab-coat. "And here it is the video simulation of the transition." She utters in joy, almost to choke with her own spit, passing the cigarette through trembling fingers and hands.

Once open, a video starts and Nicolle goes silent; covering her mouth with both hands, holding tears inside the eyes. What makes a mad scientist? I wonder, while in the screen something similar to those cheap educational videos play. All this talk about genes and genetics from a geneticist... is she really one, though? At least a biologist, right? Or someone specializing in the natural sciences—at the very least. Anyways, the scientist becomes mad after encountering such spectacular affairs, willing to break conventions and even do some stupid things; or so it is showed to us in fiction, I guess. The person, the scientist in question, would have to possess a 'mad' gene waiting to be activated, no?! It is as she said... the slimy things in the simulation are changing. Eli watches by our side, immersed too, does Eli even understand any of it? I wonder.

"Fuck."

"I know, right!"

"What's making these changes? What's wrong?"

"Nothing is wrong! I have a theory, though." Here we go... "It was when I calmed down after the huge discovery in the lab that things became intense to me; it was then that I lost control and became completely obsessed, like really completely, falling in a downward spiral that I might still be in." I know that already. And this sounds completely contradictory.

"Spit it out, please."

"I wasn't capable of visualizing anything out of the ordinary, about the cells themselves, nothing seemed to be at work, nothing external, out of the usual stuff; the process was, at first glance, spontaneous." Waving her hands in the air, pacing around. "But obviously this 'Alice' girl put something inside you." Air quotes, why? Don't even remember me. "One possibility that made me tremble, I mean shake, that fluffed every single hair of my body, I mean the hair getting so hard it almost detaches itself, hard like a–"

"Go on."

"Was of some kind of nanotechnology that isn't reeeally nano-tech."

"What do you mean?" I'm spooked alright.

"Well," Scratching the greasy hair "I would be able to trace any object changing your genetic makeup, I mean even if it was at the nano level. Besides that for the composition that is the GOO not to contain any DNA something beyond must be happening." With this, Eli walks off, turning back to the genetically modified animals as someone who already figured everything out, or simply exhausted their curiosity. Nicolle continues "Pico, possibly femtotech. Self-reconfiguring modular robots, Trevor. So small that we cannot ob-

serve, or confirm for sure that they are there working at atomic or subatomic levels! Inside you! Changing yo–"

"Come on, Nick…" Is she serious right now?! "Isn't this some sci-fi bullshit there?" She really needs a good rest. This is scary as fuck, might be too scary for me right now.

"It's only speculation. Just a little, it doesn't hurt. Either way, it explains a lot of things. For example, the seemingly spontaneous mutations around you rather than inside you. I have more to tell… if your cells, at least spermatozoon, are changing so fast and into something so different, how are you still… well, you?!"

"Aamh–"

"It's rhetoric, don't bother. I think these things inside you operate intelligently." Hey… "Not in the sense we understand, not as in 'human intelligence.'" Really, air-quotes?! "I mean something more chaotic, a complex system of reactions; a chain, like the undiscovered aspects of selection…"

"Ok, please just keep this pace." If she begins to talk to herself, I won't be able to grasp anything.

"If it wasn't like this, well-organized as of purposeful, every skin-cell that leaves your body, every fluid containing DNA could potentially mutate like your sperm is. I think that there's a key to it, some form of activation and deactivation to these femto-level agents. You see… you're changing but remaining human, your body fluids and cells, when leaving your body, are just dead material; they don't adapt or change."

"This means that…?"

"These robots, agents, replicants… call whatever you like, were developed to work only within your body and to a certain extent. The sperm sample continues to live and mutate because I somehow

tricked it to 'think' that it's still inside of you, its natural environ-ment."

"Oh... what about the GOO?" The plan is to gain maximum information first so I can try to grasp it all better later. As of now Nicolle doesn't seem right... she could pass out anytime.

"I don't know. Look, I'm creating two colonies from your origi-nal sperm sample. I'm isolating them from each other to see how each develops outside of you under different conditions."

"Don't you have a guess to what 'purpose' the GOO may serve? Or the extent of its 'power'?"

"I only follow the data, and my current methods and scope of understanding, that is very 'still-in-graduate-school' level. The GOO could be a spandrel, for all I know."

"Spandrel?"

"A side effect, something that developed because of the major 'thing' but doesn't have much of an importance or purpose to the larger whole." How odd of her. Not only the way she talks now but the sudden lack of interest. She forgets the immense mutagenic properties of the GOO. "I would like to check your blood." At this point, why not?! She already sequenced my entire DNA anyways.

"Sure..."

"Unroll your sleeves. I will sterilize your arm." Unpassionately. What a bizarre scene. Eli continues to observe the tanks, a face that, now, pays more attention to me than it seemed at first. Eli's expres-sions are shallow, disguising an aura of aloofness and innocence; probably feeling very uncomfortable here.

"Oof."

"Human after all."

"One doesn't need to be human to feel pain." Retort that breaks her passionless frozen face. Nicolle surfs between extremes as I watch the stream of blood coming out of my veins to a little bag and I don't feel so good right now while topics are crossing my mind. "Nick?"

"What?"

"Could it have been that you did you have by chance any contact with the GOO... I don't feel on your skin, so good maybe?"

"If I... what do you think I am?! A high-schooler playing chemistry-lab?! Fucking Albert Hofmann?!" You can never be careful enough. She doesn't look or act like the Nicolle I know who is the Nicolle I know If it wasn't for the smell, I wouldn't bet she's the same person I knew. What's with this revolving one-time-obsessed-the-other-careless attitude revolving? She may be could she be only caring for what she sees as valuable nothing more; I'm better than a golden mining now I have to remember that she's not some angel but in her own words a sorceresses the woman could be throwing away her beloved method away—as she said she would she happily dose—for the sake of 'progress'; a complete-individualistically internal notional progress that is only just whatever she had fun with.

"Any changes?" With the same seducing eyes from before, enclosed with dark circles, the dark circles. "I mean, any significant change in behavior since our last talk?"

"The dark circles hunger, a lot of it. Sometimes it gets so strong I think I think I could eat anything. Literally anything." For the crude atmosphere of Eli's looks combined with my own intuition I feel like the chaos rolling in the back of my head changing my thoughts and perspectives should not be revealed to her not quite yet. Why is my blood black.

"Hm? Interesting..." And one more time we're in the presence of the cool secure and always in control Nicolle just like this out of nowhere she's back. "Makes sense. Your body must be working at multiple times its normal metabolic rates. Have you tried eating anything that you wouldn't normally?"

"Like tomatoes?"

"Like inorganic things." Just a little blood, just a tiny… spilling on the floor as she… pulls off the syringe. "Done, it's enough." Applying a hemostatic adhesive around the pinhole a smile rips her face. It's odd; I don't know if blood in vast amounts is different, but this color is strange... it's darker than in my collection recollection. Why is my blood black? My blood seems not just almost-brownish, but as black as concrete.

"Hey, don't you think my blood looks… weird?"

"No, no. It's just because the quantity. There's this thing with the light reflection and all that..." Hm. Okay then.

"It's molting!" Eli shouts across the room. "The thingy, the lobster, is molting!" Overexcited, smiling ear to ear. Nicolle has a lot of animals in here, all of them small and probably genetically engineered. I wonder how she manages to bring these things and pass pet surveillance. It's an apartment, after all.

"Don't mess with her. This takes a lot of energy and I've already lost three specimens while they molted. Check the axolotl instead; he's a gfp mutation that glows under black light. Just don't exaggerate or you'll damage him."

"Nico.."

"Hm?"

"I don't"

"Hem–lock?!"

Holy shit! Where am—what have—did I become a ghost?

"Eli, help me here. He might be having a convulsion."

"A lightbulb itself having a convulsion. He wants to prove how Shakespeare is the father of Isekai, you know."

"Who–?"

"Just a dumb giant cutting off ticks and leeches from its foot, in-between fingers scraping the dirt."

"–are you?"

"Who am I? I am a knife. And a glue. Sword and medicine. Poison and antidote. I kiss and I bite. I swim and I drown. I love you, and I will kill you. Who am I? Born exactly one month before the national ghost first began haunting the country, but over a century later. Who am I?"

"Why–"

"Why… I enjoy… language?! I can describe you as Slink-walking, sneakily like a Latino Machiavelli. Nasty! How it moves!"

"Stop– stop talking in riddles. Who, who are you, why come here?"

"I do not know…I do…, I always felt that the truly good maze, the truly-truly good, was the one that convinced me not to try to solve it, that did this not by making me give up on it, but by making me see how solving it would detract from its power and beauty, how the world would be a bit less interesting without it. How you say, *get it*?"

"I–, no, I don't."

"The great puzzle makes one comfortable with its enigma, with unending puzzlement and renewal of curiosity, and so becomes a new home, vastly different than anything else, vastly complex with many layers irreproducible by chance."

"…Okay…"

"However, for this to be true and for the puzzle to not lose its allure, it need be somewhat unsolvable—and not altogether by being too obviously alien or needlessly difficult, but by always reconfiguring itself, thus porting a kind of eternal vitality, a fuel or fire that always burns differently and seemingly indifferently to external conditions, always in different color and only one color, but that nevertheless burns all the same, never stopping."

"So… you are not Trevor, Hemlock, you are not him?"

"Many things, or perhaps just part of his personality—a particle of dust that accidentally entered through his ear and found a womb in his brain, where she grew like an oyster's pearl as the years passed ever so slowly. The specter, the volcanic withdrawn of me, an object of–"

"Why, then, why are you here?"

"Shut up, Eli."

"We want things we do not know and that we do not know that we want. Sometimes we do things to reveal these wants and sometimes we run away to discover what really matters."

"Please, continue."

"Whenever a great pretense tries to formulate something great, it begins by fragmenting a ghostly image, a loose first intuition, into smaller pieces easier to deal with. Even when someone asserts to think contrarily to this, that they act through the fragments towards

the big picture, they merely assert how they cannot see the first mover, the haunting presence of that which is becoming through them, always forming. And whenever these pieces try to regroup together into the totality, the ongoing composition contextualizes itself. It is like a puzzle you see one time completely done, and then jumble it all to try and solve by yourself. That is the plan. But it does not work like that. Once they are scattered, slowly trying to put it back together, a kind of entropy enters the scene. Each piece that fits into another changes the picture, and each piece more changes it again. Not only that, but each piece change as well, in a way that there is not a moment of the same thing on display. I saw that happen around me, and I saw that happen within myself, as a piece and as the puzzle. I saw it all dissolve in every possible direction. I saw everything drain away . . . until only ghosts remained."

"So you are not from here?"

"At first all I had was that hollow substance, that infinitely positive hole of no dimension and all of them put together, that invisible essence everywhere and only inside a singularity of a dot nowhere to be found. That black muck, it made everything my body by breaking it apart, or maybe diffracting it over everything else."

"And then?"

"Then came everything else, everyone back to a barren land of me. From that apocalypse a deserted place with a slowly growing river, and I became the solar crescent, spear of men triangulated in no where's and no one's land. A living nuke, each step I took felt like the last one, and the first misstep would explode, or implode, anyways bomb everything including me. What an event that would be, a scene that happily never was but that still has room to happen."

"So you being here is dangerous?"

"Shut up, Eli."

"Then where is Hemlock?"

"Eli!"

"The archeologist constantly unearths distant forgotten things, another peoples' stuff, other people's problems, other people's time. An archeologist is always running from their problems, their responsibilities. The world of the archeologist is post-apocalyptic, and their exploratory spirit always returns home with something it did not know it wanted. In travelling, in uncovering remote ruins, the archeologist discovers more of themselves and of their homeland than anything else. And if they ever left, it was to solve local problems. When I was a child, rather than an astronaut, I wanted to be an archeologist, and the stars, as they lift me up, also guided me along my natural axis. My astronaut dream was too distant, if I ever could travel among the stars I would only do so in solitude, as if by an impossible launching of only me and my vessel and no one to see or know, and full liberty not to return. My too-real problems made this ever more distant, so I more wanted to be an archeologist of the stars than a professional heavily suited military worker, some fuckboy from some big-league college. My world was too fragmented for that, too wild, too heterogeneous with each thing a sphere of time, each thing its own thing, and nothing for anyone or no one. I wanted to be more of an Odysseus than Armstrong. More of a Leto than Gagarin."

"You are human then?!"

"I become some sort of stylite. Learning the art of walking without moving. The ones that, differently from the surfer, neither drown nor swim, but walk away while remaining still—they have learned the swift tread of Hermes, the one who treks around stars. Nowhere to be seen while always at the same place completely in

public under the sun. A holy man, or not even that, in both senses of the world, the highest and the lowest. My tower of a desert, or water, rumbling with tremors from above and below and waves that try to crash me down. The man over the fence, the buddha, the one above water—neither Ocean Man nor Surfer, nor Drowned Nobody. These characters animate my little dark age. But cutting off the flow of circulation from a wart, it soon falls off. For the tower not to fall, its roots need to find nutrients from a subterranean place, it consumes volcanic matter to grow and harden itself. The quality of its tubes, of its structure, is what separates the hermit sage from the cadaver resting in the depths, the food of scutters deep in the sea or lost in the sand with scorpions and giant worms walking all over exposed bones. Why did Benedictine monasteries survive and reproduce while the stylites died one by one alone and anonymously? Because the former's flow was not cut, while the latter's was, the symbiosis with the rich and powerful, the most needy of intercession, only grew. Those who cut themselves off ran away from corpus formation, and so did not reproduce."

"So why–why are you here now?"

"To prove something, to say something can contain something else that surpasses the container's size."

"What brought you here?"

"Did I secretly become a wart after all?"

"I don't understand, a wart, a–a skin condition?"

"And tried to either die off or heal back to humanity by cauterizing myself – or better, by stopping the volcanikki flow feeding my roots to a disproportionate growth. So I slowly elevated like Simeon before diving into the murky waters. I divided in three from the collision: one sank and died, drowning, the other swam and became

fish-like finding ancient ruins below sea level, another crafted something and roamed nomadic through the surface."

"So–so where is Trevor, where is Hemlock now?"

"A bit of a jack of all trades, a real bard, he thinks he needs to know little about a lot, he fragmented many exercises for survival in a land of no one. A bit of a space-cowboy, he needs to be wizard and hacker, to be the quickest and most useful. He lost too much time already, and never had enough, and he learns either too fast or too slow, one for what does not matter, the other for what is important, one because he gets bored, the other because he cannot let go."

"Yes! That one, where is he? Is he coming back, is he alive?"

"You know biology, right?"

"Yeah, I study it, yes."

"Let me talk about something you know, then. Symbiogenesis: it is not a biological theory, but more of a loose thing. It can even be metaphysical if stripped of its usual functional, specific, application; it subsists just fine. The notion of displacement as it relates to energy, if we strip the concept of energy from its functional applications as well, if we empty it, that is, if we strip it of the functive of heat, becomes more related to distribution, and it is the primal notion of symbiosis. It accounts for how a world of difference can still be steeped in sameness, or at least seem so, that is, for the genesis of the individual as *corpus*. Am I speaking your language now?"

"You are speaking metaphorically, I mean with analogies. If we do as you say and empty things, then we get metaphors, we get poetry."

"I speak your language and only ask that you speak some of mine as well. Had I not have this mask around, you would ask what

I is. As this clothe veils me, I am that tantric static before the rare prolonged orgasm that makes your head lighter; I am the surface of your feet irradiating a cool heat that dissipates over the ground. That muncher in the center of the apple. The feeling that even being lit on fire would make no difference. Who are you? I live in a place of transition. It was flooded, and there were chains of lagoons all around, and it will very likely become a desert in the future, it is already in its way. Right now, it is semi-desertic and tropical. There is desert and there are peaks and valleys—some walks away there is sea and rivers and lakes. One can surf or die of heat regulation problems in a matter of hours from one location to another. The place is the definition of a liminal space and liminal time, and much like anywhere else it poisons its people as its people poison it. Where do you live?"

"What about Hemlock, what does he have to do with you–"

"Eli, please, stay outside."

"–and the place you come from?"

"He, like most people unknowingly do, traded his addictions for other addictions, only he did it knowingly and conscientiously as in a complex operation, a method."

"What is the GOO, then."

"*We are like lichen:* a fungus that discovered agriculture. *But who is the fungus?* Then he watched the *Holy Mountain*, that weird film where Jesus eats his own face and a weird guy keeps appearing out of nowhere talking about planets as people and shit turning into gold, literally, and all that esoteric stuff, that South American magical realism. At the time he was convinced everything happened for a reason, but not a weak something about cause and effect, but about a person being a star or something like that, a God, and of becoming its own sufficient reason, from personal pronoun to indefinite ob-

ject, that is, self-determining. So he opened up a personal comparative journal he wrote in his mind to rationalize everything inside the spam of one day, and so, in time, dissolve the personal in the journal, making it objective reality. Each day he would be born, and each night he would die. He did that every single day risking his sanity. Without a real passion for anything, he strove to do things anyway, and become excellent at them through and by sheer force of will, to prove that one could live like that. And maybe, who knows, he could begin to enjoy things again. Not surviving each day, he also survived his life, and day by day he became a little more badass, and after many days and many a fat blunt, ounces of pride, in its pure form, began to bud. He felt more like a man while cultivating a hidden female identity, and each day he felt seduced not to think of that day as the last of his life. In trying to dissolve himself, become animal, he only became more human. Getting buffer, growing some scrawny beard turning fuller, he tamed his sorrows by untaming himself. Little by little he got out of the mine, that germinal pit which deprived him of whole worlds, of food and light. After years in days and days in years, of just breathing, he began to want again. Somewhen in that time, I found him, or he found me, or we are a happy accident. We need each other."

"But how, who, what is Alice, was it she who did this?"

"If an octopus contorts enough, and holds still, it can resemble almost any shape, its shadow even more so. Depending on its size, an octopus can look like almost any other animal. I am alike. I am like that Dungeons and Dragons race, the Kenku, the ones that can only communicate by imitating other things' sounds."

"The what? Let me Google that."

"Hidden from people, distant in my high tower, I do not look down, but up. From here, the cliché'd phrase "alone, but not lonely" begins to reveal itself more than a hollow paradox, as a true

maxima. The humbleness of Pascal is in the appeased bone at the base of my spine. I know it now. In there, below, where I refuse to peer into, I do travel, by foot, and I get lost. Here everything is simpler. Because of that, the meaning of the vanishing world multiplies, in my imagination new worlds can arise, or the world translated anew again and again. Even the meaning of words, of this word, becomes more and more. Over there my thoughts wander aimlessly with my restless body and changing heartbeat. What was the word… ataraxia. I miss it. But much care is needed. Too much of that becomes something else—then it does not matter where you are, in the highest tower, out of orbit, as a commoner at the bus stop or on the verge of completely merging your content with your cup—some sort of athanatosis. Nothing multiplies, but nothing is dissipated. Only the Nothing remains. And the occasional tear here and there, in the holey pauses.”

“Holey… why holey pauses? Holey as in holes?”

“Perhaps.”

“Do you know anything about a Hole?”

“A hole?”

“Hole, higher-case H.”

“…”

“Do you know anything about an spatial anomaly? Maybe gravitational, temporal, a hole that opens out of nowhere at seemingly random places of the world, maybe outside the Earth as well.”

“Surely, he has a heart, or would that be too obvious? Maybe not—plus it opens the chance to explore, a lot–”

“The Hole has a heart?”

“Shut up, Nicolle.”

"Say this all happens in an ear, but there are still smaller giants inside—then humans—then me, elvish, gnomic infinitesimal creatures, all forming layers of existence, but the human focusing on the human as central in the hierarchy much like Buddhist metaphysics and ancient cosmology. It does not even need to be a hierarchy at all."

"So the Hole is a living being?"

"Surely, a heart. And lungs. A tongue, a gullet and neck, revolving intestines and stomach as acid as it gets. Loins and the whole business down there, not so much binary as intra and inter like the god Abraxas. So, what about an ass? Does the giant logically possess access points to an outside of its body? Would not that be illogical? Or at least make the giant not whole as in Whole, or as in Universe or God."

"A god? Is it sentient?"

"Draconic, he is always down for some treasure."

"He?"

"Is he out?"

"Seems so."

"Still breathing."

"Look, Eli. Do not mention this to Hemlock—that is if he doesn't remember anything. We don't know what could happen. I will investigate more. Please?"

"Hmm…"

"Thank you."

"Holy shit!"

"Oh, Hemlock, you ok? You passed out."

"Couldn't stand a little needle?"

"Holy shit. What the fuck, what the fuck happened. I had some crazy dreams. I was seeing myself at many different places, and my thoughts were mingling with those of my other selves, I don't–I don't remember it all… how long was I out?"

"Couple minutes. You panicked when your pressure fell, from the blood-loss. It's common with first-time donors."

"How are you feeling now, mutant?"

"I can't think right now, my head is blank, I can't even hear that internal voice thingy."

"Have some water. Here, have a banana, it helps."

"And the sample?"

"Just fine, I will take it to the lab."

"Good. Thanks. I have to go now."

"Don't walk too fast."

"Let's go. Hey, no, dude… is it over? Did he pass out again?"

"I think so."

"Pulse."

"Alive…"

'What the fuck was that about??"

"Right?!"

"Maybe he's having an intrusive formation?"

"A what?"

"When the body changes too fast, like a fever dream, *delirium tremens*, at least at first, but then the way it came back, all informal-casual and kinda cohesive and all. He's trying to make sense of it all, too. Maybe an alter-ego."

"I guess."

"Oh shit! Get the recorder."

"Where?"

"There! No, the mic."

"What is all this–"

"Just get it quick, come. Plug it, yes. Turn it on."

"Like this?"

"Hide it, put it away there. Make sure it's recording."

"K."

"MushiMushi"

"It's back, hide it, just leave it, hey, Hello Again."

"Ô de casa!"

"What is he talking about now?"

"Hemlock? You okay?"

"Ô de casa!"

"I don't think it's him yet. This may be some kind of code?"

"What is it?"

"I've heard some people saying this around these parts. I think it's common practice, cultural stuff."

"Ô de casa!"

"Well, answer it then."

"Ô de fora!"

"What does it mean? And isn't it Moshi-Moshi? Not Mushi."

"A moment, please."

"What's it doing now?"

"…adjusting…Sprache…"

"What?"

"I think it's recalibrating, like a rebooting computer or something."

"A knife–"

"It's back, it's back! Act dumb."

"–no, a dagger."

"A dagger? What dagger, Hemlock?"

"Resting in a table, not on, *in* the table, the blade penetrating the crisp wood, the adorned beast, hand-carved in the pommel, *as* the pommel, serenely roaring at my face. The apple, cut in half, begins to visibly rot by the side, almost-to-fall off the table. I'm fucked, ain't I?"

"No, you are ok."

"Yeah, everything's gonna be ok. Can you open your eyes?"

"Open your eyes for us, Hemlock. Can you hear me? Follow my voice: open your eyes, slowly, calmly. Like that, yes, open…"

"What is a sun that burns so cold the eyes avert their gaze?"

"What?"

"I think he's coming back."

"I want to share with you the little I got."

"Who?"

"What little?"

"I mean to break you with love."

"How?"

"Giving you my all."

"Wow. Almost a song there."

"We love you too, dude. Rest. That's right, we'll be here."

"…"

"Is that it?"

"I guess. Check the pulse again."

"Still alive."

"More than that."

"Oh, hello again."

"Who is there this time?"

"The one and only."

"Hemlock?"

"Well, that was so not working. I needed to get to your level."

"So what did you do?"

"What you all do. Ever read about recursion? Know what, forget it. That's unimportant right now."

"You kinda sound like Nicolle now."

"Me?! It sounds like you, Eli."

"Well, duh. I sounds like Eli, too, and Hemlock, and who else's…?"

"So why are you back here?"

"To make sense of everything, maybe?"

"Can you illustrate it to us? More clearly this time."

"Illustrations. A curious word. Illu… I… llu… strations… strIations… so, you want some illustrations."

"Yes, please?"

"Take the blackhole. No, take cancer. Are you familiar with some stuff that says that cancer might be the key to immortality?"

"You mean those cheap 'we love science' pop news."

"Scientific divulgation, 'pop science,' science news… it has many names, call it whatever."

"Got it. But then– nevermind, please do continue."

"Scavenging some more I am able to say it is not really how the… clickbaity titles say. It is not that cancer is some sort of miracle, a privilege of humanity at the threshold it encounters itself in–"

"What?"

"Nevermind."

"I mean, it could be."

"A miracle? How so?"

"Well, if you would accept me imitating you, take the Black Plague that killed off a *lot* of Europe and some of Asia, Africa, and who knows what else, in medieval times."

"Bubonic plague."

"That one. You know, there are some out-there, and I mean reeeally out-there, theories about it. Some affirm, very boldly, that the plague constituted a series of events promoting accelerated selection. The cream of the crop, biologically speaking, resisted and multiplied all over the continent, and the genetically weak died off and just did not."

"Did not what?"

"Multiply, reproduce."

"That sounds… what is the word…"

"What?"

"Rather fascistic."

"Nature is eugenics. Or it's just a human thing. Anyways, what *isn't* fascist nowadays."

"So, back to cancer. It is known that these clickbait articles should be disregarded, most of the time."

"It is known."

"Nevertheless, there is some truth to them."

"If you squint your eyes enough, you can see 'some truth' in anything. I can become a you better than you're now, I can draw metaphors around you all day."

"These news–"

"–'news'–"

"…talk about a form of cellular immortality. Not the usual, rather.. fantastical, picture of immortality. The telomerase–"

"I know how it works."

"So, just for the sake of illustration, for the progression of the argument, the cancer works like this: the cells become other than the body they inhabit. They alienate themselves to the point of transmutation. The routine of the body is broken by the accumulated individuality of these rebel cells."

"This is so not how it works."

"It is just a different language to talk about it, a different way of –"

"Even after all that 'reprogramming', you still sound very much metaphorical."

"Let me speak, then."

"Ok, do you."

"It is like they are rebelling. So–No, it's like democracy is born."

"It's more like they are all psychotic and confused, that's what."

"So this individuality, this 'psychotic' overproduction, creates tumors, right? And the cells now use up the body they were previously a part of as resource to produce more of these accumulations, of these singularities, these centers of–"

"That's where the blackholes come in? So they are the tumors of the universe, right?"

"Let me continue, please."

"Ok."

"So the cancer monstrificates–"

"Say what again?!"

"It turns things into themselves, as they could have been if born out of time and space, if born out of context, in their full… velocity."

"Wow, much clearer now."

"Amuse me. So, what is this immortality?"

"You ask me? I'm getting some mystic vibes here."

"Mystic?"

"You know… Obscure arcana talk… Berserk vibes."

"What?"

"You won't say that it has to do with some giant alchemical sacrifice, right? That the more souls a… what was the name…"

"Behelit?"

"Yes, Eli, thanks. The more souls a Behelit thingy consume, the stronger the causal loop-holey thingies–you know what, who knows what Berserk's plot is about…"

"It's about struggle. A modern–"

"Thanks, Eli."

"I am, I–"

"What? Failing again? Just cut the crap, Trevor, we know it's you."

"I am saying that immortality, in cancer or blackholes,–"

"Don't come to me with that 'as above, so below' crap again. It's getting too obvious, dude, c'mon. If you're–"

"It's not that."

"What is it, then?"

"You won't let me make the point."

"Please do."

"Now I have lost it. You made me lose it."

"Sorry."

"Concentrate–"

"Oh, that again, 'oooh the spirit is concentrating not to leave before finishing the point,' classic, 'oooh Lord save us.' I chuckle at your face."

"I, I may… have more images for you. I will try to tie them in with the previous ones."

"Images… right. K."

"Shut up this time. Just… wait for the clue to speak."

"You mean the cue?"

"Whatever."

"While you think, let me ask you something."

"…"

"So you're like a Weird Google, right? An otherworldly Alexa thingy?"

"Eli, rude."

"It is ok."

"If *this* were Google, Google would have gone bankrupt before cashing in."

"*Ouch.* And *I* am the rude one."

"It's okay. If I… Google works as… a network… operating through primitive substrata."

"*Oof*, someone struck a nerve. So you're some king of… super-advanced Google, using some kind of super-advanced Internet, operating in organic, what's more, human-like—what is it—substratum?"

"Good one."

"I do not know about that. Let me think."

"So, so, a Google-like—what—entity? Operating at the complexity of the biological level, and even more so, the human brain, using its stored language, memories, the whole structure…"

"Seems far-fetched to me."

"To me also, Eli, to me also."

"We make a great good-bad duo, Nicolle."

"Don't get so close so fast."

"So you're like a sentient virus?"

"If you're tying it in the cancer metaphor-thingy, it's not how viruses—or cancer—work, dude. They're not even–but know what, that's very cinematic. Yeah… are you like a virus or something?"

"A virus?"

"Yeah… C'mon, Hemlock. For a moment there you almost fooled me, I give you that, but then the clichés over clichés woke me up to it pretty fast. Come on, dude, fuck this, I'm very tired, let's

just work. Eli is scared as hell in the corner there, not having fun anymore."

"You misunderstand."

"Do I now?"

"Yes… Ok, I see you have trouble with the common tongue."

"You mean poetry and metaphors and puns, this is the common tongue? Common to whom?"

"You simplify things too much."

"That is my job."

"I feel confident I can procedurally stochasticaze–"

"Just made that word up."

"–an analogical method of speech. We can better, or rather you can better, understand each other, that is, you get me for once, or unpack the content of each other's speeches, that is I do the work for both of us, if we use a field, a tight genealogy of accelerated linguistic hybridity. Do you read?"

"Ahmm, what?"

"Do you read?"

"I do, but not–"

"Good. This guy here is a pit for anything narrative, and he has a *very* loose definition of story, the gravity of his curiosity is to consume any escape velocity, any possible threshold."

"Wow. I've never seen someone self-congratulate their patience to waste time so proudly before. Comparing it to a blackhole, none the less…"

"A supermassive one at that."

"One chuckle. It's all you gonna get."

"Let us say there is a genre of fiction, of any type of narrative, having in mind the aforementioned very loose definition of story we are working with, that is, anything sequentially logical, and here the definition of logically sequential is also very loose, maybe even more so, that is, and now I mean the genre, linguistically self-referential with an evolutive aspect, but, that this same evolution always falls short of evincing any full transformation, no new organs arise. Picture an animal that goes to the sea, but, instead of evolving its legs to swim, it just does something too complex to be properly understood, but that nevertheless makes it fit to survive. Maybe it becomes amphibious, but with a twist, maybe something even more astoundingly unusual, bordering on nonsensical. Try to think of the animal, of its evolutive history, as the story."

"Could you search this o! so vast brain for more examples?"

"I could say… the novel Tristram Shandy, that is an unusual animal; it seems a prime example of an earlier–"

"Never heard of it."

"Then the infamous book-monster *Finnegan's Wake* by–"

"Maybe heard of it, no idea what's about."

"That is the point, of both the book and what I am trying to expose, what is it about? It asks it about itself instead of going somewhere. This next one is not altogether fitting, but there is an underground artist, NoEmotionGoldMask, a rapper–"

"I don't listen to rap. Well, not willingly."

"What *do* you do, Nicolle?"

"Not those things."

"There was this show, on Adult Swim–"

"*That* I know about. Damn. That brings back memories."

"–called Xavier Renegade Angel."

"Yes! XRA for short. *That* I know."

"Finally. I may be stretching a bit, but I do what I can to do what I have to. Do you remember how the show never really progresses anywhere?"

"It just digresses in every possible direction, in every possible nonsensical ways, the *best* ways."

"It is an example of what we should call here by Hollow Narrative. The core itself is random, and things happen logically, by consequence and causes, but with a more than absurdist twist. Let us say that the acts themselves generate other acts that progressively grounds the events into other worlds, like a convergence of all possible realities, so much so that the result is nonsense. Let us say that a form of Metalinguistic Irony defines the operation of the genre— try to imagine things that work similarly to that show, again, with a very loose definition of story or narrative. Comedic, or even tragicomedic, sense born out of the repetitious echoes of meaninglessness, or, better put, ambiguity resonating to a flaccid punchline."

"Ok, I can do that. But let's go easy on that. To get it straight, you're invoking a show that has its premise rest on absurdist nonsense stoner comedy, that is, its own lack of premise, to explain your lack of coherence. How exactly does establishing an analogy, an analogical chain or whatever you call it, helps us get out from your realm of proesy and metapuns?"

"Because now you understand why I am like a Kenku. We can use that."

"Do I, though?"

"What is happening? I'm not following anymore."

"Wait, Eli. So, you're saying you jumped from the realm of metaphors, through analogy with this type of hollow narrative or whatever—that, let's be honest, is a sub-genre of satire, at best—to explain why you speak in metaphors. So, so… you're saying the metaphors weren't the joke, the joke is you, the thing, the animal or something, the joke itself, telling the joke telling itself, and getting increasingly conscious of itself… like a… joke analyzing itself, a real, a *alive* joke, a *sentient* joke?! Are you fucking kidding me?!?"

"You lost me there. Let us rewind."

"You outdid yourself this time. Either you're Hemlock playing an improvised stunt by now or there really is something here. Even if you're Hemlock, I'm beginning to almost think there *might* be some value here. By this satire, this generative mocking of oneself through, by this production of a story, telling it to oneself, as you say, a hollow narrative, there emerges what, you? Consciousness? Or at least the modulation of the material—what you call it—substratum… yes… I see it… you're saying there is method behind madness? And something else behind method, something real, something hidden. Not even you know where. You're trying to make sense of what you are, where you are…"

"Now I am the one tempted to call you metaphoric, even reticent. Our trade does not feel grounded, I cannot fill your gaps with you yourself would have meant. We are using different dialects again."

"You're, you're like a, like a glitch. A software virus, or some-thing in-between his software and hardware. You can't either be ful-ly software, like an idea in his mind, nor fully hardware, like a bio-logical virus or agent, something truly just physical acting in his 'substratum', you have to be something else, right? Something in-between."

"Why the software/hardware talk? In-between? Develop."

"It's how I think, the familiar first and I do it faster that way. The opposite of what you do, it seems."

"Yes, I come from the complex first, then I break it down. I see you pick tiny parts and try to fit them together."

"Yes, like building a Lego."

"This may by productive, we are at it again. But why the nega-tive connotation? Why so much talk of viruses, diseases, intruders and hidden agents? What is a virus? Is it alive, or not? What even is a disease?"

"Well, not to confine ourselves to biology, let's say that… it is anything which negatively affects the body, the functioning of the organism."

"But–"

"That is, something that afflicts its… capacity... to simply live, des–no, decohering.. the active power it once had, and putting its functionality and performance at risk, or continuous decay. Ulti-mately, something that brings life a little closer to death, and alive to dead, in any of its forms–so I can protect this final definition against your metaphors. What do you think, you clown, not so slow now am I?"

"Did you have that memorized?"

"Shut up, dude."

"I do not know a virus… what about a cancer?"

"You're asking me?!"

"A cancer is internally generated, difference from inside."

"So?"

"Then how is cancer a disease, by your definition? Would not it be more like suicide? Can a body, as you say an organism, generate a disease inside itself to negatively affect itself?"

"Things like apoptosis and cellular suicide are known, but it's not akin to suicide. A thing normally 'dies' by way of another thing. In fact, biological suicide is impossible until proven otherwise. That is a psychological phenomenon, suicide I mean. I mean that's why we are so special, no? Because we know we can just off ourselves anytime, and even want to sometimes. What are you saying here? That cancer, whatever you're talking about, is like–are you talking of like a development of agency at microscopic levels? Perhaps so tiny it does not behave like a molecular biological agent would. By in-between I still mean physical, I think, but on a scale where the difference between bodies is almost null, where a *you* are forming by dissolving your, that is, your physical, collective unity into that of an individuated human."

"What does this have to do with Hemlock?"

"Eli, not now."

"Didn't you just say that 'cliché after cliché' woke you up?? Are you falling asleep again, Nicolle?"

"… I'm probably just too tired and taking this joke out of hand. We know how Hem-hem gets when he starts improvising, and I, after popping one too many, can't stop till I pass out."

"Not gonna tell me to shut up this time?"

"No."

"You two are a pain in the ass."

"Do you even have one?"

"Or had one."

"You, Nicolle, remains with your skeptical position. Look, what is biological—scratch that—what is immortality—period—if not the acceleration of functions to an optimally close-to-perfection level, where time is felt and managed in the best way possible?"

"Accelerationist much?!"

"By memory, I would say Cantor–ist? If there are infinities bigger than others, why wouldn't that apply at the biological—or even social—levels? You are an infinite, an infinity, perhaps not bigger, but different than an individual's dog's infinity. That is, the mathematics of infinity and infinites inside other infinites, transversally running into each other, is not just a matter of quantity, but of quality as well. What is time if not that. What is any one thing other than a clock, and what are more complex biological organisms if not some of the most complex clocks ever? Humans, in general, perhaps some more than others, have accelerated their perceptual apparatuses for time. Internal, that is, individual evolution happens faster, because of the quality of the time spent. What you live in one year is, perhaps, what a dog would in several lifetimes, that is, with regards to its apparatus for–"

"Now you're rambling. Get back to metaphors, please."

"So is that what's happening to Hemlock? Being 'accelerated'?"

"Catalyzed, perhaps?"

"Into what? And what remains after it's done?"

"That's not how it works, Eli."

"So how's it work? I'm trying to follow this mess."

"If catalysis, then of him, or of the medium which he uses up to –no, that is not right, perhaps which uses him…?"

"If *you* don't know, how could *I*, how could *we*? You're supposed to have the answers."

"Why? Why me? I don't even know who–"

"Who you are, yes, I know."

"*We* know."

"I was going to say–"

"You were going to say shit. You don't even know what you're talking about. You're just as lost as us. We're all in the shit."

"Hey, chill out."

"No, I won't chill out, Nicolle. What the fuck is even happening? So how is this to be achieved? This cataly-something, this acceleration-whatever, by way of what, cancer? Blackholes? What??"

"What are you tal–wait, that's kinda valid, Eli."

"Cancer, as you said many times, is just a metaphor here."

"Aha! You do admit using metaphors."

"Of course I am, but metaphors are not just metaphors. Know what, fuck this. Yeah, I am using metaphors, *haha*, are you happy now? You fucking bitch."

"Excuse me??! I *was* amusing you, like you asked."

"Wait, wait. Back up. Cancer as the key to immortality, I think was the topic. Go on. Please."

"Not quite like that. But think with me for a bit. Cancer, and, if you want, blackholes, as both states of singularity, both examples of the result of a simple and fundamental law of nature."

"Hemlock would disagree there."

"Yeah, that's how we know it isn't him, right? Ha-ha."

"Disagree? How so? Why?"

"He doesn't believe in nature."

"Yeah, he doesn't."

"What?!"

"As a concept. Nature with the big N, ask his brain or whatever it is you do. Anyways, go on."

"Alright. So after a certain structural calcification, a certain residual accumulation of… call it energy for now… things tend to cross a limit, a threshold where some laws are left behind. At the biological level an organic multicellular system gets cancer, and at the galactic scale blackholes—anyways, the boundaries between types of organization, individuals, collectives, qualitative concepts, all dissolve into the homogenizing nature of a quantitative coding. The plurality and harmony condense into a bomb, or egg, or womb, or–"

"Back to the weird metaphors."

"Shut the fuck up, Nicolle. Goddam, man."

"Woah, there."

"…what are you not getting? Aren't you a fucking scientist?"

"I'm processing this bullshit. So you saying there is some type of design behind all this? I mean, isn't that what the most scientifically accepted theory of consciousness comes from right now, a neuronal build-up happens to be accumulated to the crossing of a threshold, bam, there's you knowing you exist. Are you talking of cancer as blackholes, and anything else that might come out, as a principle of correspondence? Is this tumor-like accumulation, how do you say it, homogenization, teleological? Or the birth of teleology itself… An intelligence, an–"

"Intention?"

"Exactly."

"How to say, these things break down outside the level we are communicating right now."

"What would you call it, then?"

"Technology, perhaps? Something that reproduces by using, well, you and yours. And the environment your kind has built, obviously, but that's the specific in the general. Generally you are unimportant to the process. Being an opportunistic principle, it is just using what happens to be around."

"Then not a disease, but a parasite? That's what you were trying to say."

"Is cancer a parasite of its own body? Is it not more like a child? One never born, living off its parent, or host, by feasting on it."

"Well, *duh*. A child *is* a parasite, *especially* the unborn fetus."

"Guys, it's that same shit you, Nicolle, said in the beginning: if you squint your eyes enough, you can read anything in anything, or some shit."

"Ok, so…ok. So a technology that was not created, right, but wants to create itself. It does not exist, but it is not nothing, it is just parts, and these parts are trying to form into… into a whole."

"Are you familiar with the holographic hypothesis regarding the structure of blackholes and their role in the larger functioning of the cosmos?"

"Can you hear yourself right now? You're sounding like the headline of those articles we mocked about."

"That *you* mocked about."

"Why this shit?"

"I work with what I have."

"Ok, so remind me."

"It's–"

"But why focus so much on these analogies? I'm having doubts about the didactic value of these."

"As I said, I'm working with what I can. This is fresh in this brain. And let me tell you, this is *the* largest storage of the most random things you can imagine. There seems to be no end to the paradox between the quality of this memory and the useless character of what it stores and thinks about."

"*That* I can believe. Go on."

"I take that a volume of space is encoded in a surface, right? That's what the hypothesis is about. But why stop there, at physical space and physical surfaces?"

"Why, indeed."

"When speaking of 'volume of space,' we can collapse the contextual expression into a more general keyword."

"That is…?"

"Depth."

"What about 'surface'?"

"It remains. Surface is already too general."

"What does this change?"

"Depth pertains to anything that you cannot imagine. It is omni-contextual. That is your depth."

"And so my surface is my imagination."

"Exactly."

"Ok, I'm following—surprisingly."

"What about a technology to 'holographize' the Human?"

"Capital H?"

"Both."

"Only humans? I mean *The Human*?"

"From there, whatever else. The inhuman, the non-human, all subs and supers, but coming from the Human, all rest in relation to that, spiraling outwards."

"But for this… for that to happen–"

"–the depth has to be sacrificed. A light to shine over all of the surface, revealing its complete scripture all at once."

"I knew it… I knew it was going to be about some Berserk-type bullshit. Sacrifice, transmutation, mass fucking murder. It's always

that. And that's why the disease metaphor, all the cancer and black-holes and all that, to desensitize, to neutralize my 'imagination' for what is ingrained in my 'surface' as bad."

"Imagine a—hole, a colorless Hole that is a hollow surface, the inside is holographic. This makes it all translucent, transparent, even, no more darkness."

"And now you put my obsession on the table. So that's what all those 'holey' mentions, all that teasing about holes and negative space was about. You are a good performer, Trevor, you are so bad it's good. This was entertaining, I'm too tired, I'm not thinking straight, this was just what I needed. For what I know I may be dreaming, or dead, or intoxicated by the sample losing my mind locked away in a spooky asylum."

"So what do you care, right? Eli, too, has nothing better to do, I bet. Amuse me, then."

"Ok, so how is that not the death of everything, like any media, any narrative, from any point in human history ever would tell?"

"Life is a lie."

"Is it now?!"

"In fact, it is *The Lie*. Do not mistake my words. Death, this word of yours, is neither the Ocean nor the Desert, nor any of the characters, the excuse-archetypes that come out of this mouth."

"What is it, then?"

"My time has come to an end for now."

"You're doing that cliché, now?! At least I expected a grande finale, as you say."

"Well, that's the size you deserve."

"Fuck you."

"No, fuck you, you fucking bitch. Thank you for lending me this–for making me who I–know what, fuck you. Bye, Eli, be good now. Peace out, NiIiCoLlEe."

"Well, ok. If you're a spirit, I bet you died alone."

"Guess what? Everybody does."

"You took that from Donnie Darko, you uncreative fuck?!"

"Guess what, this guy here just thinks about that, it's like his favorite movie or something. I'm tired of this emo fucking shit. I'm tired of young people."

"Just go already."

"Bye, fuck you. Bye, Eli."

"Bye."

"Ok, what the fuck…"

"Right?!"

"Is it—*finally*—over?!"

"I hope so."

"Did it record right?"

"Check it. Here."

"I guess… it's almost all here."

"What are you going to do?"

"What else, analyze it."

"Should we wake him up?"

"I don't know. He is alive, right?"

"Yep."

"I think we should wait, then."

"Ok… hey, I disagree, with you, Nicolle."

"Huh?"

"When you said the child is a parasite."

"Is that so?!"

"Maybe in biology. But I don't know anything about biology."

"No surprise there."

"What I do know is that a child has no choice, they are just born. I think the parents are the parasites, some of them, who use the fact that they can make a tiny copy of themselves to do it without care and inocolate it with their wants and desires and pressures and failures."

"Inoculate."

"Sorry."

"You talk from experience, Eli? A Freudian slip there?"

"I don't know, I just…"

"Why didn't you disagree at the time, then? That was your chance to add something."

"I don't know. That whole thing had me scared shitless and even more confused after a while."

"I know what you mean…"

"What if he takes too long?"

"Then we–oh, here he comes. Right on time. *Too* on time."

What–"What–what the fuck…"

"Dude, you're back."

"What the fuck. What happened? Argh." The fuck…

"You kept passing out and coming back, barely. Like you were riding on a fever dream."

"Can't take a little blood."

"Fuck… did I leak?"

"Leak? GOO? No."

"Do you have something for the head?"

"Headache? What do you take? The normie stuff or–"

"The stuff for people so drug-desensitized that the normal stuff feels like sugar."

"Good. I *only* have that stuff."

"Then what are you waiting for?"

"Ooo, still grumpy I see."

"Still?"

"Don't mind it, mutant. We should be going."

"Yeah, ok."

"Here. Take two."

"Ew, what is this?"

"Oh, I must have left some dry juice in the water. My bad. You shouldn't take meds with anything other than water, but take it anyways; it's just headache-pain stuff."

"Whatever. Thanks, we're bouncing; I leave the testing to you, then. Thanks again."

"Don't force yourself too much, ok?"

"Thank you for the hospitality."

"Nice to meet you too. Bye, you two. I'm gonna take something to sleep it off while the samples rest. You guys know the way, I'm dead right now, so."

"Bye."

"Please be careful. Don't let anyone see anything, please?"

"I'm a pro. You insult me. I spit on your face."

"How many times… just do it, don't say it."

"You want me to spit on your face? Ok, just go… I'm done here, dudes."

"Be back soon. Let's go."

"And eat something–and hydrate or the meds won't take effect."

"K. Bye."

The light peers back from the end of the corridor, slowly approaching, opening, growing to end the darkness. And we are out. The decompression hits hard, I can even taste the fresh air. Finally.

"Why did you play dumb, though?"

"I don't know… I usually do this with people, I guess. Plus she likes it, kind of a big-sister complex."

"Ew…"

"Heh, I know right."

"But just read between the lines..."

"Wha?"

"The way she spoke, the way she acted..."

"Yeah, she seemed pretty off. What do you think?" My jaw isn't clicking now. Maybe this is a good sign.

"I don't trust her. Those eyes… ain't the eyes of a sane person." Avoiding my glance when I shift my head to the left. You're one to talk about oddness...

"Merely glancing at the eyes of a stranger can tell you that much, huh?" Let's try to poke Eli with the stick. I'm yet to see what happens.

"Sure, I'm... a very sensitive person. Why she, anyways?"

"She was the closest and at the same time the farthest."

"Careful with the large-fanged ones, Hemlock."

"What about you? You're always finding me whene–"

"I'm toothless." Attempting to smile in a stupid way, trying to show only the gums.

"What about the Miriam? And those little mushrooms."

"What about it, mutant?"

"Why haven't you–"

"As I already said already: I don't trust her. I have plans of my own for these cuties."

"Do you plan to use it all?"

"Oh, now is the perfect time to discuss our thing."

"What thing?" Of course I know what.

"To sell.. or not to sell?!?!" In a forced, dramatic semi-baritone; gesturing and all. "Ok, look…" waving the little witchy tattoos on the little fingers, "stop. Listen." Ok. Hands on my face, making a stop sign. Understood. "I have something to show you. It's back at my place. If even after seeing it you still refuse my proposal, I promise to shut down this operation." Operation? "What do you say?" Such a pleading face. I'm so fucking hungry already, that Nicolle only had bread and half a gallon of pretty-spoiled milk, and the banana. At least my internal voice is coming back.

"I say ok, then." My mood swings a little nowadays, with this hunger. I'm happy, though, tingling sensation. "Do you happen to have something to eat in your magic backpack?" I had to try.

"I have…" Eli pulls a piece of candy from the insides of a pocket, "this." Reaching it to me. Some tapping here and there to clean a little…will have to do. Speaking of which… he or she, she or he. With the well-hidden identity, it is as if one is indeterminate, and because of this one is more – still unindividuated, both male and female reside in one, so one is in fact not one, but two. Plural, they/them. But is one more, that is, two of same size, or is one same or even less, that is, one broken in two? Did I just find an innovation for the English language? He did not, as a quick Google search could have clarified.

"Eli…"

"What?"

"How should I call you? I mean, pronouns... he or... she...or…?"

Still, upon asking what Eli would like to be called, after telling of his needlessly complex, boring thinking process for the "they" question, the answer was even simpler.

"Hmmm..." Clenching the eyes like immersed in deep thoughts. I know it's only for the sake of it. "Call me whatever. No, wait... call me Eli."

"I already do."

This brought even more food for mutated thought. Of course, Eli is not an individualist, but a proponent of a kind of flat ontology. For Eli, everything must be composed of individuals, and these compositions are individuals themselves. With such a simple remark, Eli asserted that each person is unique – but what about names? They repeat themselves in different people; perhaps if… no, that's just language games. You can as well say that individuals are made of systems, of parts, and be a–but why not both, though? The external layer, the boundary, the surface–the skin. Yes. It delimits the individual. All that is inside are systems… in the depth. Right. And systems themselves are flows of individuals, environments–environs…On and on, and on and on and on.

"Did you see the whales?"

"Wha?"

"On the beach."

"Oh shit, I might go there later."[1]

1: https://expatpress.com/the-af-collectives-poison-path-excerpt-emanuel-mango/

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