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THE HEGEMONY OF HYPERSTITION: NOTES ON CREATION AND HORROR

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To all the books I never finished.

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A Preface, and Some Acknowledgements

In this brief, conceptual, dissertation I elaborate for the first time some loosely interconnected theories of the processes and substance of term ‘hyperstition,’ a portmanteau of ‘hyper’ and ‘superstition’ meant to index the sorts of socio-cultural processes by which a fiction instantiates itself as real. In the strongest sense, this is to say how something that cannot exist can come to be, materially, in the world. Think, for instance, of the concept of the smart phone app. An app at its most basic level is a mobile piece of software that utilizes multi-format data in order to facilitate an interpersonal or intermachinic exchange (Uber, Amazon, weather, etc.). For most of human history, the idea of an app is not only fanciful, it is fundamentally unthinkable: it cannot enter into a semiotic field and gain meaning. It is a signified without potential signifier, if you will (though that would in practice be impossible). Eventually, though, as technology progresses, the idea of a modular application gains some kind of fantastical traction; it can be imagined, but only through cognitive estrangement: (im)possible concessions to both science and fiction. At best, it exists at the level of what SF scholar Darko Suvin calls the ‘novum.’¹ Eventually, however, it is 2021, and most things have app virtualities of themselves, digital appendages that tentacularly expand across place, time, and levels of conscious awareness. It is not only thinkable, it is constitutive of the quotidian, a deep entrenchment that has expanded our epistemology (and our *ontology*) of machine-human interfaces, and elaborated fantastical vectors of both knowledge and power: even ten years ago it would have seemed outlandish that we, while walking down the street, could use our phones to augment our reality with real-time directions and media overlays of the people and places around us. Outlandish, but imaginable. Before that, though, it was simply beyond any imagining; there was no way to even conceive of the idea at all. This process, albeit vulgarized and simplified, viewed from the remotest perspective possible, is the process of hyperstition.

¹ Cf. Dark Suvin, *Defined by a Hollow: Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Epistemology*.

The dissertation further addresses some attendant ideas and concerns, with particular attention given to the discourse surrounding the concepts of ‘theory-fiction,’ ‘worldmaking,’ and ‘xenology,’ the latter being something of a hybrid between Situationism, cosmicism, and (anti)anthropological philosophy (sometimes known as “inhumanism”). The introduction provides approximately 95 ‘theses’ or self-contained but interconnected, somewhat gnomic paragraphs outlining the formation and nature of hyperstition and hyperstitial processes vis-a-vis Guy Debord’s concept of the Spectacle.

A substantial middle section takes place in the heat of archival fever, presenting a two-day keynote lecture from an imagined future plenary session of a successor group to hyperstition’s founding collective, the CCRU, and suggests several ways that we can better understand what hyperstition ‘was.’ This is followed by three sections of analysis of both the paper and its sources, subdivided into threads pertaining to literature, religion, and philosophy. In each of these analytic portions, care is taken to reflect upon both the underlying structures of each field in- and for-itself, their discursive histories and present (para)academic manifestations, but with an eye towards elaborating the aforementioned attendant ideas, following a general sectionalization such that literature focuses on the taxonomic and epistemic challenges of a mature and self-aware theory-fiction, religion on the problem of worlds and worldmaking, and philosophy on xenology, or the problem of outsidedness and ‘reality coding.’

The latter section focuses on the possibility of injecting hyperstition into a clinical mental health setting, such as might be done in certain modes of psychotherapeutic or psychoanalytic practice (though obviously written from the dyadic position of a purely-abstract concern, the case study of an imaginary by a wild analyst). A conclusion follows, mostly dedicated to outstanding methodological, categorical, and theoretical problems that have remained untouched by this dissertation, as well as a sort of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist *Selbstkritik* (or, for those of a more theological bent, *Schuldbekennnisse*). Finally, a glossary is provided, intended both as a set of

Wegmarken for the reader, as well as to esoterically suggest further vectors of research and elaboration *à la* a dictionary of untranslatables²

Taken as a whole, the organizational design is meant to emphasize an eclectic and de-professionalized approach to an academic problem. It stems from a critical commitment to *anti-rigor*, a problem solving that is indebted to outsider art, the cut-up of Burroughs and others, and hyperstition itself as a vector of outsidedness working its way into being. It is intended to be, in its final instance, a glorious rough draft, with no commitment to finality or conclusiveness. If there is a totalizing principle behind it all, it is that of Unreason: that thinking can exceed the limits of (non-)Being.³ What this exact phrase means, and its consequences, will be addressed subsequently.

The word hyperstition has cloudy origins. While some have maintained that it is in reference to ‘superstition,’ other reports as to the origin of the term suggest the word was created at the etymological not referential level: that *hyper* and *stition* were directly combined, with only a passing, possibly pun-based, reference to “superstition.”⁴ This origin provides in the final analysis a level of discrete jocularitas: that hyperstition and superstition mean, more or less, exactly the same thing, but that the former is doing more work in elaborating the processes of ungrounded, quasi-material, belief by providing a level of meta-referential content: that hyperstition is simply superstition that knows what it says isn’t, in some strict sense, true.

As may not be surprising, given that we cannot even be sure of the term’s origin, the theory of hyperstition is underdeveloped. This is no consequence of its inherent difficulty. In many respects, the theory is relatively straightforward (if we ignore the handwaving that the theory relies

2 Cf. Cassin, et. al, *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*. Ironically, translated from the original French.

3 Ignoring the extraordinarily self-aggrandizing implications of the following comparison, it is intended somewhat to follow in the tradition of maximalist literatures: works incomplete by their very nature, imperfect, contradictory, and infinitely re-permutable by their readers and operators.

4 For the former theory, cf. DELPHI CARSTENS - HYPERSTITIION, http://xenopraxis.net/readings/carstens_hyperstition.pdf. There is really no evidence for either interpretation.

on ‘occult’ or ‘mystical’ practices). On the contrary, it is partially due to its elegance and explanatory directness that it can, and does, offer powerful conceptual models, or thought-images, for a vast array of phenomena. Compounding this, bringing about something of a premature self-evidential quality to the concept, is the comparative newness of the idea in the histories of critical theory and continental philosophy. While the comparison to critical theory may ring hollow, hyperstition’s writings are in many respects a reaction against by way through of Critical Theory in the strict sense of being theories proffered by the Frankfurt School. It bears little superficial resemblance to these texts, yet ultimately yields critique that is not unrecognizable as a form of social and cultural analysis in the same vein. In particular, Adorno’s pre-occupation with the fragment as the genuine form of philosophical discourse seems not out-of-place for the sorts of stylistic and theoretical interventions given voice in the early works of hyperstitional literature. “Das Ganze ist das Unwahre,” that the whole is itself the untrue, would seem to be an unspoken core belief of what we call hyperstitional thought.⁵ From this, it can also briefly be seen what sort of relation hyperstition holds to Hegel: like so many of his successors, it is an inversion of his thought, and again an inversion, leading to something monstrously similar to, but fundamentally unlike, German Idealism.⁶

Yet, in this comparison, we also are confronted with one of the inherent challenges of the hyperstitional: that of its latent ideology. The subject after the Shoah, Adorno reminds us, even in its best instance, clutches to something “sentimental” and “anachronistic” in its strivings for self-awareness.⁷ The striving for subjective autonomy is overwhelmed by a confrontation with the total, in this case taking the form of the camp, and in so doing rushes backwards, retreating into the older forms of human self-conception, which no longer survive except as romantic notions of bygone heroics and materials for the culture industry. The subject *desires* to be a protagonist, borne with

⁵ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia, Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, §29.

⁶ Ian Balfour, *The Fragment: An Incomplete History*, 83.

⁷ *Minima Moralia*, Dedication.

glorious *ἀγών* (*agon*), but in confronting the subjection and violence of the world as the subject finds it, this desire turns to mourning, and the subject must simply “lament” the course things have taken.⁸ Thus, for the Hegel-Adorno author-function of *Minima Moralia*, the subject, once for-itself, is sublated, dialectically transformed, into an uncomfortable contradiction, still for-itself, yet no longer in-itself.⁹

It is in this disjunction of subjecthood that hyperstition establishes itself as a theory of incantation, or a theory of worldmaking and reality coding. The cures offered in *Minima Moralia*—and we should think of the text as a sort of desultory self-help guide to living without totality or fascism, to live a “good” life as evidenced by the work’s titular reference to Aristotle’s *Magna Moralia* as much as its contents, because the fragmented body of the text relies on a mechanism of self-critique and cultivating awareness of encrypted totalitarianisms of the self, “the splinter in the eye” as “magnifying glass” of the inhuman world—are explicitly inward-facing.¹⁰ They proffer a model of being that is at odds with subjecthood, though always in intimate dialogue, co-constituting one another. The capacity to analyze these forces is key. The subject must stand apart from itself, for itself, and bear the burden of living outside of paradise, facing the history of our world in all of its abyssal terror.

For hyperstition, the problem is no longer cased as inwardly reflective, but externally productive: a force for change and shearing the reified and the given, exposing through the jagged gap the background possibilities of what is not. The cures of *Minima Moralia* soon begin to look like obstructions on the path to this semi-mystical power. Adorno’s project of liberating the subject from sentimentalism and orthodoxy falls flat in the face of a new project inaugurated by hyperstition: the erasure of the subject as a whole. This is not without precedent, as much of what

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Though we should note with care that all stages of development are typified by uncomfortable contradiction.

¹⁰ Ibid.

can be described as the negative dialectic at play in Adorno's philosophy has found scientific systematization in second-order cybernetics. Thus, the question of how one goes about analyzing hyperstition deserves some study. As it is at its core a cybernetic philosophy, one that defies attempts at separating content and form, the hyperstitional resists its own interpretation and anatomy; to echo one of the core principles of second-order cybernetics, itself a major influence on the first generation of hyperstitional thinkers proper, the organism-text-mind is determined by external environmental factors operating upon internal systems of greater or lesser complexity. These systems, in turn, condition the local environment around them. In effect, there is no clear line between being and world, between inner and outer. For such a philosophy, the very acts of extrapolation and analysis change the referents immeasurably. Furthermore, unlike Hegel or even Adorno, as there is no strict systemization inherent in any of the works describing hyperstition or that themselves identify as hyperstitional, in such instances that a work strives to systematize either the phenomenon itself or its descriptions, much is left wanting, so much so that we may even venture to refer to these attempts as 'lyrical' or 'personal,' rather than anything approaching philosophy proper. This is perhaps a result of the qualities of hyperstition itself rather than any proclivity or ability on behalf of a given author.

The hyperstitional impulse is also one of apocalyptic libidinal drives, large-scale societal feedback loops that trigger techno-capitalist eschatologies of increasingly accelerating, violent, productive processes. In these processes, the human is increasingly phased out, both in terms of modeling ('the human is an irrelevant variable in the equation for maximum efficiency') and in terms of actual existence ('the human is an economic, not ethical or political, subject'). Put short: hyperstition describes the media-technological-geopolitical-financial death drive, but a death drive masked as progress or automation or fantasies of post-scarcity free markets, often even more profoundly encrypted into ideological subtexts in common and ostensibly benign media objects

(social websites, film, novels, religious rituals which come to bolster neoliberal practices¹¹). There is always a doctrine of the ‘end’ of something in the construction of these futures. As Mark Fisher famously said (attributed to Jameson and Žižek, naturally), “It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.”¹² And it isn’t simply the narratological summing up of history that makes it eschatological. As the dissertation will touch upon, Nick Land, a key thinker of the hyperstitional, has developed a far-right, post-statist model of sovereignty deeply indebted to Christian Apocalypse imagery, and pragmatically through Carl Schmitt’s framing of political theology, wherein all subjects (read: transhuman hyperfascist machines or ‘messengers’ of a universal will beyond organic thought) ‘buy’ a share of citizenship, with the more shares meaning the more citizen you are, with a kind of godhead/super-intelligent AI dispatching legitimacy through algorithmic justice.¹³ Sounds insane, because it is, but it needs to be analyzed and excavated as a contemporary model of political theology. (All of this, of course, remains unspoken in current critical appraisals of both Land and Schmitt.)

Hyperstitional processes are often ‘smuggled’ into culture ‘from the future.’ That is simply to say that once a given technology exists, it seemingly substantiates itself in the past when it did not exist, but began to be thought. It is an inversion of human timelines, and to justify it, the archives of hyperstition make use of the history of mysticism and contemporary occult practices. It is a kind of technically mediated black magic, the materials for the spells coming from internet culture,

¹¹ Cf. of course, Weber. This can be expanded upon in great detail, but there’s a lot to be said for the institutionalization of divine will being palliated through the giving of money, theologically-backed expansionist policies in Middle Eastern proxy wars, the dislocation of sacred space into virtuality, the Catholic Church’s interventions into internal policy making in Africa, South America, Scientology as business-cult, faith-based rational choice theory, etc.

¹² Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, 2.

¹³ Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, particularly the two woodcuts from the early printings of the book, is made quite literal, through planetary-scale networking and distributed cloud processing: you are sovereign because you literally are in excess of the sum total of beings and computers that constitute you. The sovereign is the emergent property of hyper-intelligence and hyper-politics that govern all levels of political action.

misreadings of Bataille and others, anime, mass market SF novels and manga, drugs, underground techno, and stochastic mathematics.

Much of this speaks the language of science fiction. Dark Suvin, a scholar of science fiction was deeply interested in the relationship between eu- and u- topias in representations of technology and media. For Suvin, this indexing allowed for the understanding of SF as a process of potential productivities that were temporally and spatially estranged: they never take place here-and-now, but the signal they teleport back to us has the potential to alter the present state of matter and language: it is an encrypted message from the future, sent by aliens or our posthuman descendants. Suvin does not (generally) mean this literally, but does advocate for the idea that SF can speak from a privileged kind of abstraction that taps into unconscious technocultural currents in the present, and projects outward into a conceptual, concrete form. It is a cybernetic feedback loop on a grand historical scale.

Yet, these dimensions do not fully approach the hyperstital. It is also totalizing, much in the way Adorno described the given. Despite this, the hyperstital is never total. It is a fragmentary whole, or rather, a collection of texts and practices which encircle a mystery. At the core of it all is some sort of aporia that cannot be worked out, only speculated upon, elaborated, and made ‘more’ real. It is beyond the human, beyond conventional logic and anthropic reason. It is perhaps this sense of the magical and inhuman that has so strongly drawn thinkers of hyperstition to religious and occult comparisons.

Compare, then, the eu-/u- tobian materialist dialectic of Suvin with the locative-utopian tension outlined by J.Z. Smith in “The Wobbling Pivot.”¹⁴ There are peripheralizing and centralizing tendencies in religion’s core function, a mythologizing universalism that seeks to stabilize the human-supernatural spine of sacredness. In both models, a message is relayed across heterogenous timespaces, the sacred or the futural, the profane or the *in ilo tempore*. In all instances,

¹⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is not Territory*, Chapter 4, 101.

there is a confrontation with ordinary Cartesian sensibilities of orderly space and Humean causality. Both are tested, both become fragile. In this sense, the hyperstital is a surfactant that wishes to wipe away what it considers to be the superficial differences between the religious impulse and the techno-scientific one, and in so doing, provoke novel questions about the function of both categories in broader cultural studies. The hyperstital makes no distinction between a sacred text and a fictional one. It does not suggest a difference between hoaxes and discoveries. The Passion is as real as patterns discerned in noise, which is as real as history. This is its power and its weakness as a hermeneutic: everything is an example of theory-fiction, everything is as *legitimate* as a pathway into the world as everything else.

The hyperstital can further be subdivided into two parts: a theory and a praxis. Taken together, hyperstition describes a model of, effectively, cosmo-poiesis or worldmaking. Models of worldmaking are not new, of course. Their lineage stretches back, as most philosophical concepts do, to the Greeks. In that sense, hyperstition is merely a stage on philosophy's way to a new elucidation of the act of creation. In a different frame, however, hyperstition is much more than a model of making. It is also a model of occulture, the making-occult of the world through a continual process of symbolic interaction and change that is out of sync with human subjectivity (e.g., this idea of the future smuggling ideas into the present), but uplinked to all kinds of deep time, eldritch things. These things can be anything from scientific theories dealing with profoundly inhuman topics, to Lovecraftian-inspired monsters and 'Elder God' aliens. As both occult process and cultural hermeneutic, the hyperstital erases the lines between being a grammar of religious experience and a description of secular life: occulture is everything that is not secular and not formally entrenched in religious institution, or if we are to continue integrating the occult and the religious, we can say that they both conform to Luhmann's definition of religion: they are both

autopoietic processes for reducing complexity in experience through an increase in the complexity of representing symbols.¹⁵

However we must ask for whom, and of what sort? As Santayana remarked (used as an epigraph in Clifford Geertz's famous essay "Religion as a Cultural System"), the power of religion comes not from the general form of the 'religious.' Rather, "Its power consists in its special and surprising message and in the bias which that revelation gives to life. The vistas it opens and the mysteries it propounds are another world to live in."¹⁶ We are speaking of a very specific cultural moment, beginning in the late 80s and more or less continuing to this day, which we could call 'cyberpunk,' or 'virtual,' and not any sort of world religion, proper. The occult-cyberpunk, like religion, is polysemous. Potential meanings proliferate so abundantly that the only agreeable definitional position may well be the very horizon itself of academic discourse, constantly receding as new and varied conceptions emerge. In hyperstitional theory-fiction, the worldmaking described above, what is often invoked is a kind of enchanted or sacred world of horror and cosmicism mediated by simulacra and virtuality: Religion from the least-human point of view. A world of machines, ghosts, global computational stacks, cyborgs, trees, spirits, demons, angels, and of course, aliens and transhumans.¹⁷

As a thought-form irrupting out of a specific moment of discontent with Anglo-American thinking in a philosophy graduate program, the very concept of hyperstition is fundamentally transgressive, disruptive, and possibly inadequate to the task it assigns itself. I hope, despite its

15 Cf. Niklaus Luhmann, *A Systems Theory of Religion*.

16 George Santayana, *Reason in Religion*, quoted in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 93.

17 Hyperstition is not a model of intermediality, nor is it ekphrastic, unless we are to treat ekphrasis as a mode of the virtual, or as a program of simulation. Simulation does not imply infra-real any more than it implies hyper-real. Its verisimilitude is of a separate order of value. What it implies is that it is non-cartesian, or that it is extra-dimensional in a very literal sense: the simulated is always a 'yes, and' or a 'more than,' and only in structurally threatening limit cases a "no."

limitations, that this dissertation provides enjoyable (comprehensible) reading, and that it will stimulate others to pursue similar questions.

Any text is a world, and any world is, by its constitution as such, incomplete. Often, a world made is also a world that has failed. In keeping with this great tradition, errors and solecisms are autochthonous and vibrantly diverse in the following pages. Any and all responsibility lies with me, though there were many who attempted to correct, edit, assist, and otherwise improve the state of things, despite my best efforts at sabotage, both conscious and un-. Those to thank include Andrew Pettinelli, Johana Godfrey, Evan Wisdon-Dawson, Nell Pach, Reo Wang, Garrett Johnson, Pamela East, Sam Lasman, Sara Lytle, Zach Ralston, Samantha Pellegrino, Austin Jung, Joshua Heath, and Matt Vanderpoel. Additional thanks, too, are owed to Tim Murphy, Anna Greenspan, and Reza Negarestani.

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Lindsay Doyle deserves mention for her care and support during the last three years, for which I will always be grateful. She is the opposite of some things which need opposing.

More profoundly, more intensely, than everyone else, thanks and love are owed to Margaret Gay, who tolerated far too much anxiety and pain than can be justified, and who, despite everything, remained. Let this project be for her.

Finally, this is in effect my sign-off from academia proper. I can't say it's been good, or even that good dwells there. I doubt that the future has a place for the Academy as it is now configured, and if it does, that future should be resisted by any means necessary. I remain even less convinced that the ideals to which philosophy, literature, and science repair can be cultivated or even maintained under the sign of the university as it currently describes itself. The only spaces that

remain, I believe, for thinkers to inhabit the dialectic of theory and praxis, which is to say, the dialectic of being-in-the-world and changing the arc of things towards reason, is in the primary production of literature, the making and waging of critique towards existing things, and the practice of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic therapies. My choice to abandon this community was less a choice and more simply the inevitable conclusion of how the world has come undone, and how its prevailing order, metaphors, and institutions have failed. This is what I can salvage from the fire. There are regrets. There is rage. There are many things left unfinished, and many people who will never be forgiven. All that remains is to compose a life dedicated to undoing that undoing, to the possibility of free futures and good worlds. You can never go home again, but you can find a new home.

Shikata ga nai.

Darkness has no heart.

Introduction

Hidden Keys or, theses on Hyperstition

i. What follows, like its predecessors, is speculation, “often far-fetched speculation,” though speculation has passed from a program of philosophy into a program of reality coding.¹ It has moved from the question of “what is there and what is it like?” to a question of “what can there otherwise be?” [Die Welt ist alles...but the sentence cannot be completed] {in fact, the opposite may be true here, or rather, an inversion of the world as everything that is the case, in the sense that the case may be altered, and so (following Freud) goes the world}

0. The study of revolutionary aesthetics is no longer the archaeology of situations, but the geology of *hyperstitions*, of the immense projects that dispense with hope in favor of trafficking with outsidedness. It is a transhistorical, open-source, program for the simulation and implementation of unimagined and, in the first instance, unimaginable, worlds.

e. All philosophy, real philosophy, is a process within this larger problem.

1. The whole life of global society, all of which is coextensive and delimited by the eco-historical conditions of the Late Anthropocene, presents itself as an immense accumulation of *hyperstitions*. Everything previously operant under the regime of the *spectacle*—the immensity of absolute appearances under the program of autonomic and cybernetic-stabilized false consciousness that defines, produces, furthers, and reifies the reality of economic totality under

¹ *Was nun folgt, ist Spekulation, oft weitausgehende Spekulation, die ein jeder nach seiner besonderen Einstellung würdigen odervernachlässigen wird. Im weiteren ein Versuch zur konsequenten Ausbeutung einer Idee, aus Neugierde, wohin dies führen wird.* Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. James Strachey, Standard Edition, Chapter 4, pp. 26.

the doctrines of speculative capital, “mere representation” in place of real being—has accumulated, sedimented, metamorphically congealed and, ultimately, compressed itself into a material reality beyond the valences of the image.

2. What was observed through indirect means as *spectacular* social relations, relations which were manifested and arbitrarily demarcated as “a pseudo-world apart,” which found their most potent expression in the “autonomous image” of appearances replacing things, of life itself inverted into the productive and abstract forces of a non-life of capital accretions, is now a psycho-historical vector which retrochronically passes itself, as both legislator and *polis*, as both reality and unreality, of things which can be thought which are not, and that which is which cannot be thought.
3. The spectacle which “appears as society itself” distinguishes itself from hyperstition by epistemic and ontic insularity, by spatio-temporal breaks: Hyperstition appears as possibility and change itself. This appearing is both deception and unveiling: it is the quiddity of the πάντα ὅει and the possibility of its collapse.
4. Hyperstition is that which comes to be from outside of human being. It is not itself outside of being, but comprised of non-being, which eternally is under the auspices of everything given to consciousness. In Spinozist terms, it is Substance-beyond-Substance, or Dark Substance. It is the function of the collapse, latently apparent in all eras and places, at-hand only now, between Nature and Desire.
5. At all times when the autonomous images holds sway, desultory and weak in certain economic relations, programmatic and inescapable in others, wholly dominant under late capital’s

hegemony as spectacle, the process and power of hyperstition has been encrypted and implanted into a menagerie of Others. These others, displaced from their actual function and relegated to *mere* aesthetics, to *mere* desire and fantasy, a frontier or *Rand*, the rim of mourning and potential, which may come to awareness as representations of the uncanny, the horrific, the transgressive, and the vile. A cartography of human limitation, whose scale is despair.

6. Hyperstition is not the result of Spectacle, just as a seed is not the result of a tree, nor a tree the result of a forest.² That hyperstition has existed in submergence, a subterranean axiom of nature and human artifact, tentacularly spread like some hideous and tumorous rhizome, lurking in the uninhabitable places of sapience and suchness, too-soon embedded in all life to be anything but an aspect of life, speaks only to its own program of self-concealing. What, we must ask, is it hiding from? The Spectacle's fragmentary nature is precisely a result of its over-determined unity of vision. Spectacle poses a threat to Hyperstition's *excess of vision*. How, then, did Spectacle come to be? After the Diktaean Cave, did Kronos and Zeus speak cordially?
7. In its growing, was it waiting, or searching? Mystical, lyrical, philosophy, but vis-a-vis an anti lyrical and anti mystical stance that conforms with some order of the situationist paradigm.
8. That the Spectacle must be re-analyzed is beyond dispute. It is over-stressed, and over-determined. *Or descendiam qua giù nel cieco mondo.*³ Vision has no hegemony here. We have entered the realm of the homeostatic. The 'sciences' of spectacle, descended from political economy and speciated into endless forms of diagnostic oppression, have, in their potential excursions into an analysis of real conditions of the consumer and worker, the possibility of the

² Though perhaps the real relation is the acorn to the law in Vico.

³ "Let us now descend into the blind world." Canto IV, 13, *Inferno*.

annihilation of real relations in favor of speculative ones; there is at the core of all scientific study the possibility of a knowledge of emancipatory practices.

9. Hyperstition comes from the future.
10. The Late Anthropocene. One of the key differences between the Situationists and the present program is the attitude towards futurity. Whereas bourgeois society aimed at imagined eternity of present instances of culture, and our continued bourgeois configurations do so under the eternalization protocols of “sustainable” or “green” capitalism, the project now is about uncancelling the future. We cannot be opposed to the Anthropocene. We can only articulate a plan to replace it.
11. Why the ‘Late’ Anthropocene? Why Anthropocene at all? The Anthropocene is beyond the modeling and predictive technologies embodied by the concept of spectacle. It is both constructed and not. Found and not. It is the fusion of human time and Nature, of action and reality as it is given to being. It forms an immense and incomprehensible feedback loop, a hyperobject of both the reified and the resistant.
12. Crutzen defines the Anthropocene as the moment in which some change, induced by humans, appears in the geological strata. This is insufficient, as the only thing that is delineated is a *change*. It does not have to reflect consciousness.
13. Thus, there have been two possible Anthropocenes: one now, and one millions of years ago at the Eocene/Paleocene Thermal Maximum. A change that appears to be due to large injections of carbon into the atmosphere is apparent when we dig. Was this a lost civilization? Was this the

Silurians? If we use the current definition of Anthropocene, we must readily admit that we cannot distinguish between natural and unnatural discontinuity.

14. Instead, “Late.” Late to the party, late to Fate, and late as in later, when humans marked the geology of their homeworld with incontrovertible evidence of *consciousness*. Consciousness is not evidenced by fire, which many things make, or artifact, which even in plastic and styrofoam forms vanish in time. Consciousness is *nuclear*.
15. The *Late Anthropocene* began at the University of Chicago on December 2 1942, when Fermi unleashed the first self-sustained human-made nuclear chain reaction. The Late Anthropocene entered its maturity at 44.4 seconds after 08:15 local time on August 6 1945, 580 meters over the city of Hiroshima. Now, forever, the world had a cancelled future. Now, the Earth had strontium-90, uranium-235, and other heavy elemental isotopes in greater abundance than could be produced by the largest of hyper-novae. Somehow, the world came undone, and yet we remain. Now, forever, there is evidence of consciousness having once existed on this planet, and it shall remain, until the Sun swallows us.
16. Cancelled Futures. The *Manifesto of Accelerationism* knows the score: at some point, they don’t pinpoint it like I do, the future became unimaginable in real ways: there was going to be no planet, nothing but the maw of capitalist enterprise, which always reduces to fascism in the final analysis. We will live, maybe, but it’ll be worse than the things before it, and eventually, we’ll have to confront the fact that history did end, it just ended on August 6 1945 44.4 seconds after 08:15 local time 580 meters over the city of Hiroshima.
17. For over twenty years, it would rain black over Hiroshima.

18. Horror is the inevitable core of partially unveiled being. It is the hyper-chaos of the real, only glimpsed, never confronted in its entirety. Except once.^{4 5 6 7}
19. Hyperstition asserts that there is no fissure between nature and artifact; with sufficient technology, everything is subject to alteration and recoding: “if nature is unjust, change nature.”
20. Real and Unreal become Irreal. See the penultimate section.
21. How can we explain the Irreal in terms of the end of History? It’s barbaric, right? Or is it? I mean to say, it’s the greatest of all scientific achievements, but it happened on scales beyond the human.
22. What do you call that? The inhuman.
23. Human is a magnification, a specific focus in spacetime. Go too far out in scale, shrink too small or balloon too big, we flicker and vanish. Only in the Anthropocene have we begun to confront a lensing that makes us remain no matter how remotely you look.
24. And we weren’t prepared for that. We can’t also be our own gods, can we?

⁴ [redacted]

⁵ [redacted]

⁶ [redacted]

⁷ [redacted]

25. Imagine a place called Cthelll.

26. The chaotic reaching-forth of inhumanism for solutions to political stagnation and philosophical humanism under the sign of the Late Anthropocene has resulted in a hodgepodge of provincial theories without any coherent political, philosophical, or aesthetic program. The tendencies of such undertakings have nucleated around the loose concepts of speculative realism (SR), accelerationism (Acc), and neo-reactionary thought (NrX). In each of these instances, several key assertions obtain and make each concept ostensibly intelligible to one another, though without any real depth or systematic analysis. In the same way that futurism, dadaism, and surrealism formed a limited but initial base for the development of situationism, as much as for their contributions as for their flaws as artistic programs, so too do these three form a base for the initial theorization of hyperstitions, and its program, cosmic situationism or *xenology*.

27. Speculative realism and its relative, Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO), initiated by an unaffiliated and desultory group of philosophers working on problems of materialism and human-world relations...

28. Via sufficient technology and planning, reality, all reality, can be edited. Promethean tech, making all reality subject to situations or art or simulations. So all things and forces are subject to editing. Hyperstition elides construct and essence.

29. It is not new to say that reality can be edited, can be coded or determined. It's a dream as old as the world.

30. But what is a world? To ask what makes up a world implies something fundamentally modern.

Following Heidegger, it is only in modernity that the world can yield itself to human subjectivity as 'picture,' as a set of beings that can be the object of scientific or theoretical study. In previous eras, as Heidegger goes on to note, different configurations of the world existed, which were determined by the nature of the relationship of being to being: the Medieval "personal creator-God" which was the highest possible (meta)physical instance and absolute cause and by which being was determined in the grand hierarchy under him; the Greek (specifically Parmenidean) understanding of the opening up of other beings around the human and so therefore instantiating her as being among other beings. In both instances, Heidegger notes, there is no reformation of the world picture. Rather, it is only in modernity that the world (which he defines as the "name for beings in their entirety") changes into the malleable, the objectifiable, and the re-structurable. This is not to state that the world picture yields to a knowledge directly. Plenty of eras have had epistemic programs such that allowed the world to be understood as it was given to them. Rather, the world picture is a project of research, mediated by the externalization of being in the form of machinic technology and scientific inquiry. Furthermore, the development of the study of the human, the discipline of the anthropological, appears in a twinning motion with the production of the world picture. The human ceases to be absolute in its composition, and rather becomes a subject of inquiry, a being which is studied as an external other, and not simply through a process of self-investigation and abstraction as the case has been with philosophy. This is the fundamental motion of modern history, Heidegger contends. It is the process of humanism. At first nonsensical, this project comes to have a paradoxical consequence: the greater and more complete the picture of the world comes to be investigated by subjects, that is to say, the more objective objects become, the greater the depth and understanding of our own inquiry as a process of anthropological speculation: as we see the world as objective, so too do we see ourselves and our approaches to understanding the world as

plural and subjective. The subject projects truth onto the metaphysical picture of the world, and in so doing pluralizes the form of human life available for study, making our own behaviors objects of science.

31. Was that too long? Worldmaking is not the same thing as hyperstition, nor is hyperstition a program of worlds. Hyperstition is the phenomenon and the philosophy.

32. Hypostition... simply a different configuration of the concept of Spectacle. More holistic, less image-driven. I can't speak of it until it becomes, unlike hyperstition.

33. The process of hyperstition inevitably involves the living-through of irrealism. In the fork that occurs from unreal to real, and real again to unreal, the irreal is the space of the struggle against and torment by ideology and power. We dwell here, even when we think we're free. Horror lives in the multiplicity of false possibilities and false beings that are endemic to the suspension of any sort between these two poles of living and thinking under the sign of the commodity.

34. If leftism is the project of perfect rationalism, and the world is at its base non-rational, or at least contradictory or antithetical to coherent interpretation, what is the relation that leftist projects hold to reality

35. Martin Luther on Halloween ghost story. You nail the 95 theses to the church door during All Hallow's Eve and the Mass(es) inside hear the knock, knock, knocking of the hammer on the nail. Has there ever been a time when people could literally hear the angel of history knocking at the door?

36. Hyperstitial analyses, reduplicative expressions translated between semiotic and material systems, and meta-theoretical processes take the form of theory-fiction and theory-fiction alone.
37. Whither religion (to steal from Derrida)? What are the consequences, implied by the above, of reducing religion to an anthropological phenomenon? Is there something lost in approach the religious from a purely functionalist perspective? As slippery as it is to provide a definition of religion, we are generally going to suggest that, for the moment, religion is the premodern relating of human subjectivity to being generally, which takes the form most predominantly of pre and pro scribed behaviors, rituals, beliefs, and social bonds. Religion is no longer free to act as a totalizing definitional force (as it perhaps did in the Middle Ages), unifying all manner of beings into a coherent whole, permeating all levels of symbolic interaction. This is not self-evidently an issue of value theory; it's neither good nor bad, progressive or not, that we've come to this place in history. Religion is and is not the fundamental model of explaining the world as one finds it, and so with the withdrawal of religion from the public sphere (and from our quotidian thinking and being, mostly) we lose something of an essential mystical element that was necessary for addressing the absolute beyond any rational construction guided by reason. It is entirely questionable if the idea of a world can have meaning when divorced from the religious. Reason, in all of its systematizing glory, cannot patch all of the holes that experience finds.
38. The object of 'world' is withdrawn from our experience, much as any object-in-itself is. We are trapped in the circle of thinking and being, where to think one is to be the other. Or are we?
39. Theory-fiction isn't always sticking theory into fiction. Sometimes it's finding out what the sacred is and talking about it. Sometimes, it comes in the form of themes and misdemeanors of

thought, breaking out of that oh-so-special circle to see the stars which immediately burn out your eyes. Dream you are eyeless in Gaza, maybe there's something to it.

40. The Anthropocene is the largest theory-fiction, a result of the instrumentalization of nature in servicing our desires, the externalization of some kind of general libido. There is no thing to which the Anthropocene owes its origin except the massive, massless process of human life over hundreds of years. It is the making alien of the world by virtue of making it more human, and in this twin motion we can again see the necessity of developing methods for talking about the outside, the irrational, the odd, and the cosmically gloomy, something I think theory-fiction is constantly looking at. I bring this up as the most concrete example and use of theory-fiction, to model a world that is not contracting and eschatological. The usage and applicability for religion is no doubt there, but further and beyond this, religion becomes but an aspect of a more general system of ontopunkism, the idea of a DIY philosophy of reality that attempts to alter, edit, and propose new models of human and inhuman relations. The consequences for this are as yet unclear, but generally provide a model of a *very* pragmatic kind of abstract thought geared at altering the world from the material up to the metaphysical. Its content is variable but it is no vacuous, following Bataille, Brassier, Badiou, and others, a sufficient model of a new kind of life is no doubt possible rigorously theorize.

41. But none of this answers the question.

42. This is the sacred number, according to a very silly book, and it turned out, it meant nothing. It was a Rorschach for the End of the Universe. The Hegemony is simply that everything, until such time as a true hyperstition exists, is a Mock Sun: as real as it can be, as real as you believe, or as real as you are forced to admit.

We have at some point undergone an irreversible shift in cosmic states.

It began with a lecture.

What Was Hyperstition?

This is all a mimesis of thought, more or less. At least, that's what I have chosen to believe.

The lecture is an anomaly, a novum, an out of time item. It speaks of hyperstition as a closed and past event, as a phenomenon, both cultural and scientific, that has ceased. It is, itself, potentially hyperstitional. That's why it will be analyzed.

The following lecture was discovered in the holdings of the Archives of the Future (Gli Archivi del Futuro), a private research group and consultancy firm based in Karkopolis, Thellia focused on technology and public policy initiatives. Now primarily funded by the Fondation al-Qabayaki (itself ambiguously associated with Miskatonic Virtual University) through dark pool money derived from shorting various 'meme stocks' in late 2020 and early 2021, AoF gained notoriety in the early 2000's for successfully lobbying the then-Christian Democratic government to relocate the capital of Thellia to Yiada, a planned city on the western coast of the island of Karkosa. Billed by the AoF as a fully 'European-compatible' and 'techno-green' cosmopolis capable of serving as both a gateway to Western Europe and a symbol of modern, multicultural social cohesion in the aftermath of centuries of Ctell-Thell ethnic tensions, little has come of the initial promises, and development has all but stalled.¹ With the historic ousting of the Christian Democrats and their allies in the 2004 parliamentary elections, governmental enthusiasm and resources have diminished, leaving Yiada, in practice, little more than an over-sized airport, a near-empty city center, and a light rail system to Karkopolis and Përonya (Feronia).

¹ Translation mine, cf. *La gazeta di Callipolis*, June 2004, "Il futuro di Yiada nelle mani del PSC." capable of retrochronically dated to the end of 2019. Originally in the possession of one Eliot J. Dirac, a law student at the University of Chicago (and personal friend of mine),

Since the collapse of the Yiada Project, much of AoF's work has been dedicated, at least as far as public tax records and outreach initiatives show, to recruiting science and technology startups to Thellia.² In particular, records suggest an emphasis on companies focusing on telecommunications and geo-engineering technologies, followed closely by high-end computation and astronomical research. In an email to ITTTT, Incorporated, dated October 4th, 2019, a representative of Aof argued that:

The University of Turin [was] amenable but not ideal for your project. In a bit of serendipity, [AoF researchers] discovered that [REDACTED] with Site 1, a geomagnetic storm would have scuppered your experiment. Site 2, located near Lake Hali on the Karkosa side of [Karkopolis], provides for much calmer electromagnetic environs and in-situ setup, with little in the way of geological or bureaucratic interference. Cthellia's³ location in the northern Adriatic, situated as it is on the axis of a triplepoint tectonic fault, provides for a remarkably tranquil electrostatic 'shield' of sorts, most probably attributable to certain crust-mantle interface features in conjunction with certain rare sedimentary and mineral configurations in the islands' volcanic substra. This is enhanced by Tyrrhenian-Adriatic sclerophyllous forests which dot the islands, further insulating sensitive instruments from solar-lunar-tellurian axial anomalies.⁴

While the natural resources of Thellia mentioned above make clear why AoF has strategically focused on certain private sector research segments, the overly-scientific tone, combined with standard tourist bureau language regarding forests "dotting" the islands, belies something of a desperation to the analysis. In Thellian non-profit circles, it is an open secret that since the Yiada Project AoF is practically insolvent, having burned what political capital they had, with little income generated beyond information trading and contract brokerages between potential startups and the Thellian government. These services, essential for smaller corporate entities looking to benefit from Thellia's pro-business tax structures, but stymied by the complex bureaucratic nuances of an admittedly archaic civil service system, carry a 1% profit stake for any startup's intellectual property developed while in Thellia and subsequently brought to market. While records suggest a brisk but

² cf. audit.gov.ct

³ Common variant spelling of Thellia, based on an internationalized orthography of C̣ṭell, from the same language, spoken by a large ethnic minority population of the same name.

⁴ audit.gov.ct/pub/gaf/847367.pdf, accessed June 9 2021.

small profit year after year, AoF remains a company on the brink, which makes the conclusion of the email of interest to the practice and history of Hyperstition:

Certain simulations we have run suggest possible interferences pattern [sic] only from a particularly vivid ‘Ashen Light’ episode on the terminator of Venus, but all mathematical extrapolations as to how require improbable variables, such as [a] tellurian core anomaly, or an exceptionally rare syzygy. Our head of Relocation and Habitat Design, Dr. Hinterkaifeck, is familiar with *Numogrammatical* [emphasis mine] research, having utilized similar models for determining the viability of certain financial speculations and investment opportunities. She has prepared a utilities and personnel portfolio, showcasing Thellia’s domestic talent, which we feel will be positively received by you. We look forward to hearing from you. Warmly, Kila Šali.⁵

The mention of the Numogramatics, the study of the Numogram, should give us wild pause: how, what, and why is the term being invoked? What could it even be used for outside of philosophical speculation?

Who, then, were the recipients of this email?

~~I returned to Chicago, only to immediately begin packing to move to New York. The project was temporarily forgotten, though a lurking, interminable, anxiety swathed me in everything I did. My body would tremble with electric terror, the origin vanished in the dull buzzing of boxes and tape and moving trucks. By the time I was settled in Manhattan, the buzzing began to soften, the project returned. I waited. Finally, a package arrived. Small and brown, covered in French stamps, some of which dated from the 1960s.⁶ Inside was a sheaf of teletype paper, and a small, blue envelope of rich cardstock. A note: “It’s already here,” in tight, slanted cursive.~~

This is what was recovered from the noise:

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See appendix.

THE FURTHEST POINT FROM ANY GIVEN STAR
OR,
WHAT WAS HYPERSTITION?

A REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY FOR THE STUDY OF THE CYBERLITH

IQBAL RØMMER

**PUBLISHED AS THE
CECIL CURTIS MEMORIAL LECTURE
ST. SNOMIS COLLEGE**

TRANSCRIBED AND EDITED BY

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UNIVERSITY OF OSLO**

JUNE 20, 2035 (K-TIME 135.6.20)⁷

⁷ Developed by researchers at the University of Warwick, K-Time was proposed as a native timekeeping system for cyberspace, beginning as a bionomic coding with 00 equal to 1900 C.E., and progressing at a ratio of 1:1 solar years.

THE FOLLOWING IS A TRANSCRIPT OF THE CECIL CURTIS MEMORIAL LECTURE GIVEN BY RØMMER AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE IASC. FELICITOUSLY, THE SPEECH WAS DELIVERED ON THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE FINAL VOLUME OF HIS *XENOLOGIES* TETRALOGY.

NB: The architectonic changes to global order occasioned by the HUSH pandemic 20 years ago and the first direct observation of the Oort object Tau-18 Yuggoth 15 years ago, it need not be said, have destabilized our understanding of the human subject against nature to an extreme degree. In the former instance, our biologies betrayed us. In the latter, our physics. Everyone is a Kantian when it is convenient; we measure our days and mark our lives with mundanely stable assumptions about the composition of space and time being something intrinsic to our very being. This can no longer be the case, and in the spirit of human endurance, continued *existence*, even, we must venture down new avenues of thought, finding new theories that can withstand the light. We that survived HUSH must now confront the inevitability of the Yuggoth object's orbital path, its measured, fixed, and Newtonian coming-towards our small garden in the void. Its sigil, it again need not be said, leaving only questions where there should be answers. Words where there should only be dirt.

Reality forking can be a troubling thing, making it hard to recognize people, places, and organizations we would have otherwise been familiar with. We hope the reader will find this lecture, given over the span of two days, as well as our footnotes, useful if they are struggling to place a name, remember a publication, or just generally feel confused, as many of us still are, about what we really remember, and what was de-crypt-ed from the sepulcher of nightmares by the aforementioned events. In other words: we hope that we may affix the unreal to something other than our demise. — Eds.

DAY 1

GREGORY WEST: Okay, I think we can begin. [add intro for Iqbal]

IQBAL RØMMER: Thank you to Eliot and Cody for organizing this event, as well as the staff and docents of the CIEPT, and St. Snomis College. As well, of course, thanks to Dr. West for that lovely introduction and for your stewardship of the IASC over the past two years.⁸ To our colleagues on video uplink from London, Karkopolis, and Tokyo, welcome. I'd also like to extend a special welcome to the visiting students from the Tic-Distributor Design Cluster in the Signaletics & Information Systems Department at Kingsport College. It was the founder of your program, Dr. Barker, that first piqued my interest in geosemiotics when I was still a graduate student, struggling to write a qualifying paper for his comps.⁹

The topic I wish to discuss over the next two days is *hyperstition*: what it was and how it moved beyond a hypothetical form of libidinal investment in nonlinear media structures.¹⁰ I confess that, had it been up to me, hyperstition would be the last thing I'd think to talk about, but after something of a long night with a friend of mine from Philadelphia editing galley proofs of his new book—rushing to make a morning deadline, facing the greasy daylight after an all-nighter, and being confronted with the empty bottles, the coffee cups, the take-out containers, all the human trash that attends creation—I was reminded again of how essential the idea had been to many of us about 16 years ago, especially those of us involved in the Deep Media Working Group at the University of

8 <https://www.centerforphilosophicaltechnologies.org/>

9 “Daniel Charles Barker has been professor of Anorganic Semiotics at Kingsport College (MVU, Mass.) since 1992” (“Barker Speaks,” CCRU, 155.) Unfortunately, Dr. Barker passed away in 2022, another victim of HUSH, it is suspected.

¹⁰ Germán Sierra, “Deep Media Fiction,” section 2.

Chicago.¹¹ So, in part, this speech is half self-indulgent nostalgia for an exciting moment of intellectual ferment that I dearly miss, and half an explanation and analysis of what, if anything, hyperstition really was, particularly for those of you who may have been too young to remember the formation of the IASC, or those of you new to the organization and its reality-design principles. Thus, we can consider the following something of an exegesis of a theory that was extremely central to my thinking at the time, and which may shed some light, if you're inclined to biographical hermeneutics, on my recently completed set of novels. After I elaborate what was meant when we said 'hyperstition,' 'hyperstitional,' and a related term, 'theory-fiction,' back in 2019, I'm going to make explicit the connection between these ideas then, and the concept of xenology, xenofeminism, and xenopoetics in more recent times. Hopefully this won't be too taxing on your patience. If we have time during the Q and A, I'm hoping we can speak a bit about the need to develop a politics for this eco-historical moment, what I've come to think of as the 'Late' Anthropocene, namely, a politics of the 'Weird' and the 'Eerie,' something I've developed from the work of an older thinker—central back then, but a little peripheral now—named Mark Fisher.¹² [A pause of about ten seconds follows.]

Before a definition, some background. Starting somewhere in the middle, to echo an early seminal text, “the story goes like this:”¹³ in October of 1995, a collective of graduate students,

11 There is no record of any such research organ, unofficial or otherwise, having ever existed at the University of Chicago or any of its component institutes. It would appear that the Deep Media Working Group does not, has not, and most probably will never exist. (Curiously, a similar relationship existed between the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Warwick, the latter issuing a nearly identical statement to the one above disavowing any endorsement, funding, or awareness of, any organization calling itself “The CCRU.”)

12 While editing the galleys for this talk, a process mostly limited to emending misheard words or inserting clarifications about how funny his jokes actually were (“riotous,” he insisted, we believe, sarcastically), Dr. Rømmer recommended some ‘mood music,’ to be listened to before reading the transcript. “I listened to it on loop while I was writing my dissertation. It captures something of the ‘raygun gothic’ mindset we were all in during the autumn of 2019.” The terms ‘raygun gothic’ is an apparent reference to William Gibson. <https://open.spotify.com/track/6yCS4krNSPIvuUeYWWqILO?si=CH5iNsc4TaGwK6bg3yFJSw>

13 Nick Land, “Meltdown,” in *Fanged Noumena*, 441.

artists, and writers emerges at the University of Warwick under the guidance of two philosophy department lecturers named Nick Land, and Sadie Plant.¹⁴ There is no official record of the names of the members, but many well-known academic and cultural thinkers by their own admission contributed, including: philosophers Mark Fisher, Luciana Parisi, Ray Brassier, and Iain Hamilton Grant, the DJ Kode9, the novelist Hari Kunzru, publisher Robin McKay, Turner Prize winners Jake & Dinos Chapman, and music critic Kodwo Eshun.¹⁵ The members had, in their own words, “fled cultural studies” because of its arrogance and authoritarianism, daring as it did to “speak on behalf of the oppressed.”¹⁶ They had fled, too, Anglo-American philosophy, in favor of the softer delineations between literature and philosophy found in modern and postmodern French thought. Looking for something less academically stilted, something with a broader cultural scope, intersecting more strategies of thinking than the rarefied spaces of philosophical logic and ordinary language research, they began meeting regularly to discuss contemporary culture, mystical philosophy, and the works of Deleuze, Lyotard, Bataille, and Baudrillard. This “Entity,” as Land referred to it, became known as the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit, or CCRU/Ccru.¹⁷ Over the next eight years, the CCRU would go on to publish a collection of unsigned writings, ranging from political manifestos, to theoretical essays, to occult mystical tracts regarding the nonlinearity of time,

14 A Note on Sources: This dating comes from Communiqué One of the CCRU, pp. 7 of the collected writings. From the unsigned forward to the collected writings: “No attempt has been made at consistent chronological reconstruction,” 1. The reconstruction of any stable genealogy has been frustrated for two reasons. One is that the original website that houses the documents is poorly archived, leaving most of the work to the published ‘collected writings,’ which is clearly not complete. The second reason is that those individuals primarily involved are unwilling to give more information, apart from what the documents themselves say, or never provide a straight answer (e.g., Nick Land). Mark Fisher is dead, Steve Goodman is unreachable, and Luciana Parisi has only given one interview about the topic. The other source, Reza Negarestani, has been helpful, but is, again, unreachable. Robin MacKay is likewise indisposed. Repeated request to Hari Kunzru’s publisher were met with silence. Emails to the webmaster of the website bounce back as invalid. The study of this Lovecraftian organization has become, quite frankly, a Lovecraftian process.

15 <https://energyflashbysimonreynolds.blogspot.com/2009/11/renegeade-academia-cybernetic-culture.html>

16 “Communiqué Two,” in CCRU, 9/ (:):(:)

17 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/11/accelerationism-how-a-fringe-philosophy-predicted-the-future-we-live-in> CCRU is an initialism, while Ccru is pronounced ‘kuh-krew.’

the abduction of Bill Gates by aliens, and ‘special’ modes of ‘uncounting’ mathematics. They also published theoretically-laden fictions, which explored various ideas central to their work. Their sources were eclectic, drawing from second-order cybernetics, experimental French theory, underground rave music, modernist literature, and science fiction media of the late 90’s (including the emergence of the internet). The University of Warwick has consistently denied the existence of any such organization, going so far as to, it is suspected, relieve Nick Land of his position as lecturer for his involvement in the group that did not exist.¹⁸

If we choose to acknowledge its existence, then the CCRU lasted until about 2003. In its waning days, after Land’s dismissal from Warwick, the CCRU became, in the words of Robin Mackay, ‘quasi-cultish, quasi-religious,’ retrogressing from sophisticated cybernetic cultural and philosophical criticism, with highly polyphonic sources, to more strictly mystical archives, early modern demonologies, the writings of Aleister Crowley, and the stories of H.P. Lovecraft. Increasingly foregrounded in these latter days, too, were Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and its adaptation *Apocalypse Now*, generating an aesthetically compelling narrative of insanity, politically sanctioned by a world of pure, dehiscent, abstractions, collapsing society into a haunted, savage wilderness of cackling symbols, in which insanity is the only rational mechanism of survival.¹⁹ Relegated to a single room above a day spa, Land and six remainers, now freed from the strictures of conventional academic discourse and propriety, drew infernal diagrams on the walls, drank heavily, and subsisted on “the sacred substance amphetamine” leading, eventually, to Land’s

18 “At degree-O CCRU is the name of a door in the Warwick University Philosphy Department[sic]. Here it is now officially said that CCRU ‘does not, has not, and will never exist.’” <http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/004807.html> Note that this quote contradicts the text of a similar manifesto in the ‘official’ collected writings. Sadie Plant, too, resigned a few months before Land.

19 “Cybergothic,” *Fanged Noumena*, 347.

breakdown in the early 2000s and a withdrawal from public life.²⁰ Thus the CCRU, having no center, dissolved into an archive of texts, with no active members.

Despite its demise, trends in cultural studies centering cybernetics and digital media as organizing problematics revived interest in the CCRU in the early 2010's and early 2020's, particularly as a groundwork for the development of political accelerationism.²¹ Despite the high bar of patience required to parse their texts, the CCRU's enduring appeal is attributable to their ability to short-circuit, interrupt, cut-up, and subvert 'traditional' academic spaces and ideas. In other words, it's graduate student catnip; it is perennially sexy to newcomers and outsiders. To avoid "academic stuffiness," the CCRU went about "libidinally invest[ing] its own semiotic[s], propagating fictional quantities, tagging artificial agencies, and making itself up as it goes along, whilst dissolving production into cultural synthesis."²² In short, the *modus* was a fusion of philosophy and religion, poetry and math, *jouissance-as-analysis*, caring little for any formal distinctions between systems of meaning. Despite substantive rejections of academic forms here and there, their disavowal of the ivory tower was mostly aesthetic. At its core, the CCRU remained committed to professional academic discovery, however unorthodox their strategies of signification and articulation were. What remains innovative today was their refusal to acknowledge hierarchies of knowledge by completely disregarding disciplinary (and even ontological) boundaries: nothing in their epistemological dreamscape was granted more privileged access to truth than anything else.²³ This distinguished itself from the relativism of postmodern thinking in that it rejected *all* modes of grounding discourse. Like their reading of Conrad, Nature was elided into a special instance of a general

20 Guardian interview. Nick Land eventually took a job at NYU Shanghai. For an example of a diagram, see: "The Atlantean Cross," Collected Writings, 92.

21 Cf. <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/05/14/accelerate-manifesto-for-an-accelerationist-politics/> more on the topic of accelerationism at the end of the speech.

22 "Review of CCRU's Digital Hyperstition," Collected Writings, 14.

23 "Y2Panik," Collected Writings, 216.

economy of symbols mediating materiality, making it nothing more than a very persistent, immersive media experience, no different than any other grammar of signs claiming to be total. Magic and mathematics both operate on the assumption that reality is structurally occluded except to an initiated few. You do the spell, or you do the equation. In either case, it is simply a matter of manipulating symbols into something new and insightful, a kind of programming language without a computer terminal. The result, if done correctly, is glimpsing a piece of reality more fundamental than quotidian experience allows. Their question then was, what happens to thinking if that piece of reality is just another layer of symbols?

To this end, the CCRU developed a mystical model of being within temporality, a secret history of occult ideas inaccessible from materialist histories of the West, but encrypted within them, accessible only at certain pre-keyed times: their secrets are “already widespread, hiding within popular numerical cultures (calenders, currency systems, sorcerous numbo-jumbo, etc.)” These codes, created-discovered in pre-existing patterns of counting, measuring, and defining, allowed the CCRU to explode all existing narratives of meaning:

It uses number systems for transcultural communication and cosmic exploration, exploiting their intrinsic tendency to explode centralized, unified, logically overcoded ‘master narratives’ and reality models, to generate sorcerous coincidences, and to draw new cosmic maps.²⁴

By laying a groundwork in numerology and apophenia—what we would come to call a ‘paranoid’ reading of a text—the CCRU marshaled strategies used by Bataille and the Surrealists, but under the conditions of Gibson’s *Neuromancer*. The unconscious’s rapacious ability to generate patterns becomes libidinally invested in the ‘pure’ randomness of digital media excrescences: any pattern or sequence of numbers, from computational matrices, to lines of binary code, to a phone number, to

²⁴ “Communique Two,” *Collected Writings*, 12. Also known as K-Time, see note 1. pre-K-time begins with the Cretaceous-Paleogene extinction event (the Chicxulub impact), formally starts the count at 1900, and re-configures into a future temporality at Y2K.

the noise of a dead television channel, can form the seed of an occult vision, which would in turn be expanded into a section of their system of mystical cosmology. With the addition of cybernetic models, the CCRU developed the Numogram, a Sefirot enmeshed in nonlinear temporality and cyberpunk-hacker internet culture.²⁵ In so doing, they asserted a radical mode of epistemological doubt, reminiscent of, but significantly more paranoid than, Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism. The CCRU rejected the univocal methodological superiority of science as the primary explainer of phenomena, but where others had turned towards epistemic relativism in order to ground regimes of knowledge—using ulterior modes of legitimation such as power or ideology or predictive accuracy—the CCRU instead inverted the problem into a *fictionalization* of *all* systems of meaning. **They called this process hyperstition**, which came about when they “made contact with the virtual Continentity of Lemuria, which taught [us] many secrets we have since attempted to formulate as ‘Digital Hyperstition.’”²⁶

Looking beyond their mystical practices, we can see that according to hyperstition: [T]here is no difference in principle between a universe, a religion, and a hoax. All involve an engineering of manifestation, or practical fiction, that is ultimately unworthy of belief. Nothing is true, because everything is under production. Because the future is a fiction, it has a more intense reality than either the present or the past. CCRU uses and is used by Hyperstition to colonize the future, traffic with the virtual, and continually reinvent itself.²⁷

There are no separate, stable categories of meaning-making: everything is only a form of reality-engineering, a kind of ontological art-form where expectation, truth, history, and culture can be *consciously* manufactured by the manipulation of signs. Like the narrator's dawning horror at the

25 Image: <http://www.ccru.net/images/numo2.gif?LMCL=In5JRF&LMCL=CJhuiO&LMCL=In5JRF&LMCL=CJhuiO>

26 Ibid., 11.

27 Ibid., 12.

discovery of the Old Ones in Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu," if evidence of an *extremely* contradictory mode of reality is local, nothing happens. A few rambling publications here and there where only the author and, potentially, an informed reader would understand the significance of the text would simply be regarded as a local case of madness. However, the question remained, what if the patterns could be coded onto a global platform? The emergence of "strange parallelisms" globally, as Lovecraft's narrator says, means *something* secret is becoming manifest in the world.²⁸

Hyperstition was therefore more than the fictionalization of concepts. It did more than tell stories. Nor did it simply divorce empirical evidence, pure logical constructs, and direct experience from any claim on immanent reality or absolute truth. Hyperstition was a model of historical flows and semiotic constructs, typified by a flat onto-epistemology: everything is reality-coding, nothing is greater than any other fiction. This included all historical modes of hyperstition: Christianity, for instance, would have to defend itself against *anything* that claimed to be incompatibly true, such as Plato's Atlantis, or Burroughs' "The Ghost Lemurs of Madagascar."²⁹ Embedded in this philosophy was perhaps even a code of ethics, or a political agenda. Hyperstition was more interested in futurity and history than any present moment, except as an eternally recurring deviation point in which a fiction could be ontically forced into being, made real, or the real made fictional:

"...twisted time-systems. We are interested in fiction only insofar as it is simultaneously hyperstition—a term we have coined for the semiotic productions that make themselves real—cryptic communications from the Old Ones, signally return: *shleth hud dopesb*. This is the ambivalence—or loop—of Cthulhu-fiction: who writes, and who is written?"³⁰

28 H.P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu," *Tales*, 174.

29 "Lemurian Time War," *Collected Writings*, 33.

30 "Origins of the Cthulhu Club," 63.

The influence of second-order cybernetics is seen here. Science becomes impossibly weird, and so, easy to construe as fictional. The idea of nonlinear time isn't only mystical, but also biological. Developments in cybernetic theory after Norbert Wiener by Heinz von Foerster and Margaret Mead, sometimes referred to "the cybernetics of cybernetics" moved the model of the closed system from one of linear feedback loops and machinic input/output analogies of observation and stimuli, to a process of self-creation and self-observation: the animal, and so too the human, literally constructs the reality of the world by experiencing it and adjusting to it through a model that emphasizes non-static equilibrium and stochastic adjustment to change. Inputs *may* proceed reactions, but future anticipatory changes in the body may functionally come to pass *before* their trigger is experienced.³¹ The process only gets more complex when the problem of consciousness and instrumental reason is added, scaling the already mind-bending math upward into greater realms of complexity and unpredictability. Thus for the CCRU, hyperstition can sanction its radical fictionalization as one of cybernetic self-creation, generalized into higher spheres of semiotic abstraction such as society and religion.

At the same time, the feedback loop of command and control is loosened. The practitioner of hyperstition attends to forces of the outside, the idea of a Lovecraftian non-space outside of the world of lived experience, a kind of primordial access to the void that subtends and brackets all presence and being. This void is only directly accessible through mystical ritual and numerology, but the continued process of hyperstitional bringing-about, when a thing becomes real, definitionally comes from this space of non-being. Accessing this non-space was "the practical matter of sorcery." This amounted at times to the injection of rhetoric in place of substance. In fact, what this sorcery entailed was a rejection of *all* labor and meaning in favor of "non-signifying triggers, diagrams, and assembly jargons."³² In other words, meaning was dissolved into the promise made by Baudrillard's

31 A good overview may be found in Nick Land's "Teleoplexy: Disordered Loops Through Shanghai Time," as well as Systems: Whitechapel Documents in Art.

32 "What Didn't Happen at the Millennium?," 220.

philosophy of the simulacrum. Nothing existed except third-order simulacra, signs so far abstracted from any meaning that they become totalized as the only meaning by their very flatness: what is seen is what is true. Thus history can be as easily re-ordered as paragraphs in a conference paper.

This, freedom and play of manipulation ultimately proved the downfall of the CCRU's model of hyperstition: it paradoxically disavowed as it invoked, or put differently *a la* Deleuze and Guattari, perhaps the two most sacred of all of the CCRU's thinkers, it deterritorialized meaning faster than it reterritorialized it.³³

This became an unlimited, infinitely accelerating, process. Nothing is sacred, because everything is permanently iterative. Grammar and style became equally vulnerable to a totalized detotalization into pure fictive, rampagingly potent, but empty, assemblages of signs. Thus, we end up where we started, in the middle:

[[]]The story goes like this: Earth is captured by a technocapital singularity as renaissance rationalization and oceanic navigation lock into commoditization take-off. Logistically accelerating techno-economic interactivity crumbles social order into auto-sophisticating machine runaway. As markets learn to manufacture intelligence, politics modernizes, upgrades paranoia, and tries to get a grip.³⁴

This is Nick Land, describing the birth of global capitalism. In other words:

Crossing Cultural-shelves from entire-levelling at Geotime zero. Through
[1] Zenith or Xenonightmare which is Now. [2] The Citizen Gigamachine. Ice floats.
[3] War-Machines.
[4] State Megamachines. snake-cult monuments.
It cuts-out in click-hiss.
Ktss. Kurtz.
"These are Zones. Each sets a Slow-factor. Vowelizations Vacant sectors.

33 Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Book 1. This point is a significant one in later criticisms of the CCRU by Mark Fisher: the CCRU re-capitulated the idea of abstract capital as outlined by Lyotard, and in so doing was firmly pro-market. Fisher took this obvious flaw and reformulated hyperstitional flows into something much more leftist in his later work.

³⁴ See [FIRST FOOTNOTE IN THIS SECTION]

Slow signs Are. A. Or. o. Zero. Also many Others. Cuttings. failings.
Four. Bight. Northern oceans. Artaud. Agent Orange. Time tags Aosys functionality: a tract no smaller
than all of artificial now.³⁵

Did that clarify it for you? There's a lot going on here. It evokes an urge to read theory as poetry, and poetry as theory, as Amy Ireland suggests we do with everything Nick Land writes.³⁶ If we take it at all seriously, as I do think we should, we see the CCRU asymptotically approaching the limit of its theoretical capacity. This is not entirely shocking, and is something they would have expected, having mined as they did Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy* for inspiration: "capital does not stop, whereas theoretical discourse tends towards immobilization."³⁷ They've written themselves back *into* the outside they were drawing from, an outside of pure unarticulated flows of energy, libido, capital, and signification. In other words, they began to simply write from instead of about the general economy of patterns.³⁸ Meaning collapses into a singularity of signifiers, the gravity of which is too dense to make second-order meaning, i.e., to provide interpretive structure, or a basic reading of the text in question. It becomes desiccated before it can grow. One could argue, of course, that any kind of abstract art, including certain modes of poetry, or special topics and models of math, would be subject to the same event horizon of interpretation, where, because of its extreme abstraction from any mimetic referent, there are literally an infinite number of lines of flight into meaning, which is the same as saying that there are zero lines of flight into meaning. This schizoanalytic problematic, again, to invoke Deleuze and Guattari, has no real answer: it remains the problem of the CCRU's model. The only solution is continual reproduction of signs at greater and greater velocities, until meaning is meaningless, or we break through to something... else. The outside.

35 "KataoniX," 482.

36 "Poetry is Cosmic War,"

37 Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 261. Translated by CCRU member Iain Hamilton Grant.

38 Cf. Nick Land's dissertation on Georges Bataille for more on the latent connections between general economics and CCRU writings, *The Thirst for Annihilation*.

Thus, we come to the end of the first model of hyperstition: there *is* no mechanism of evaluation, no control circuit to halt the metastasis of signs. It is fundamentally nihilistic. This had unfortunate consequences, including the duplication of Nick Land's philosophy into a neo-reactionary, hyper-fascist, racist, sexist screed called *The Dark Enlightenment*, something Land himself personally wrote and endorsed, and which there is substantial evidence spawned the alt-right during the 2016 election.³⁹ Land coupled his rejection of classical liberal humanism with the acceleration afforded by both hyperstitional creation and unfettered global capitalism, producing a political philosophy that resembles accelerationism, but is inherently reactionary: a kind of posthuman society of fascist machines.⁴⁰ As noted by Holt, the groundwork for the a 'dark' hyperstition can already be seen in the CCRU's early writings:

There is no doubt anywhere that matters: simply facts. Debate is idiot distraction, humanity is fucked, real machines never closed-up inside an architecture. Schizocapital fission consists of vectors dividing between two noncommunicating phyla of nonpersonal multiplicity. First pyramid structures control structures: whiteclown pixel face, concentrational social segments, EU-2 Integrated history horizon. Second, Jungle-war machines: darkening touch densities, cultural distribution thresholds, intensive now-variation flattened out into ungeometrized periphery.

No community. No dialectics. No plan for an alternative state.⁴¹

In effect, not only does a process of infinite acceleration here imply a collapse into totalitarianism, both in terms of political praxis as well as aesthetics, but that any process of radical freedom with no feedback regulation mechanism will recapitulate the same flows as seen under the 20th century regime of neoliberal capitalism: human worth and human politics become expediently collapsed into

39 <http://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/>

40 <https://jacobitemag.com/2017/05/25/a-quick-and-dirty-introduction-to-accelerationism/>

41 "Swarmmachines," *Accelerate*, 329. Cited and noted by Holt in "Towards a Definition of Hyperstitional Theory-Fiction," 6.

economic worth and political economy, in which the human is disregarded as a problem of scale and focus, something better to be left to ethics and the humanities. Hyperstition, it would seem, was a wolf in sheep's clothing, the freer you seem, the faster the totality comes barging in to take you.

Still, the promise of hyperstition is an enticing one, a radical space of para-signification that emphasizes creation, play, and novelty. Perhaps most significantly, in the face of global climate catastrophe, hyperstition provides a framework of imagining radically new futures, sustainable models of unthinkable forms of life, and potentially long-term thinking about postcapitalist political configurations that re-center life systems over and above economic ones. How, then, can we square the production of fascism with the production of potential futures?

We first need a more rigorous definition. Subsequent invocations of hyperstition by CCRU alumni unfortunately never developed much of a formal theorization of the concept, yet it was used with increasing frequency in mainstream academic publications in the 2010s, including by Toni Negri to describe the Venice Biennial in 2017, and a “documentary” by filmmaker Christopher Roth and philosopher Armen Avanessian entitled *Hyperstition*, which is itself possibly hyperstitional, was released in 2015.⁴² The idea is out there, but nobody seems to know what it is. Much like its progenitor, hyperstition at times feels it “does not, has not, and will never exist.” How do we proceed?

A description, if not a definition: hyperstition is the process of making the unthinkable real. In other words, it is the manifestation of future existence in present thought, regardless of past possibility. As construed by the CCRU, hyperstition recognizes that reality, the shared *topos* of thinking and being, is cybernetic, so that sociality and cultural production exist in nonlinear, stochastic, feedback loops with material reality. But what is that really saying? It is incomplete, as it is both a process and the theory of the process, so we instead must ask, is hyperstition a philosophy or a praxis? It is both, much analogous to, though significantly less

⁴² Supercommunity, e-flux, 5.; <http://hyperstition.org/>

programmatic than, psychoanalysis or Marxism. It is a model and picture of the world.⁴³ However, the world it suggests is not a model in the sense of a closed simulation of ideally simplified parts. It is not the smooth movement of components in their set grooves, producing the appearance of totality through change (even the rough conflict of class struggle in orthodox Marxism is, in some sense, pre-ordained and aesthetic). If it is a system, it is an incomplete one by definition, trafficking as it does with the future. As we've said, hyperstition is the de-fictionalization of a concept, or the fictionalization of *all* concepts, if that is more comfortable. There are two essential components of hyperstition:

1. A (cybernetic) philosophy of becoming.
2. A practice of worldmaking.

We will take these one at a time. For the question of a philosophy of becoming, we shall say that hyperstition views the world in a way that resembles what Quentin Meillassoux refers to as “speculative materialism.” Speculative materialism is Meillassoux’s critique of ‘correlationism,’ i.e., the deeply held, deeply influential, Western philosophical belief inaugurated by Kant “according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other.” Meillassoux contends there is a two part problem to correlation, what he refers to as the “correlationist circle,” and the “two step.” In simple terms, after Kant it become considered dogmatic or naive to posit the existence of a thing in itself, and that what came to matter in philosophy was the positing of a relationship between thinking and being, rather than the content of what was being posited, so structure superseded content in terms of philosophical primacy. The ‘circle’ denotes a limit that thinking cannot get past without contradiction: any statement of the existence of a thing must itself posit that the thing exists, but

⁴³ Picture, as in, the representation of concepts. Cf. Martin Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture.” Heidegger’s understanding of “the world picture of modernity” as redundant is in some sense, too, why the concept of hyperstition is new, but the phenomenon it attempts to conceptualize has existed as long back as we care to look: there have always been worlds, but the representation of the world-as-being-of-beings is a quality attributable and perhaps constitutive of modernity.

the positing of the thing *cannot be separated* from the thing itself. Thus, there can be no non-contradictory claim to think of a material reality independent of human thought. Meillassoux continues: “Correlationism consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another.”⁴⁴ The CCRU would agree, as Meillassoux contends is the consequence of this circle, that contemporary philosophy has lost “*the great outdoors*, the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers.”⁴⁵ This poses the central problematic of Meillassoux: how do we escape the circle?

Glossing a bit, because this is a very long, complex, argument, Meillassoux posits the “facticity of the correlate,” which he contends is a new form of knowledge production.⁴⁶ Meillassoux contends that this ‘facticity’ makes the correlationist knowledge of an object purely conditional rather than absolute. In so doing, Meillassoux re-asserts a new principle of understanding the relationship between subjectivity and absolute, that the absolute as a concept indexes the fundamental capacity of things to be different than they are.⁴⁷ In some instances, this capacity-to-be-different invokes the possibility of non-being, which Meillassoux treats as the pathway out of the correlationist problematic, it is in this possibility of non-being that we may think of entities outside of human reality.

This, of course, opens up the potential for there to be no metaphysical necessity anymore. Why is anything the way it is? Why can it not simply be different, or not at all? Meillassoux suggests that this absence is in fact a positive ontological principle in which we can come to recognize there is no such thing as an absolute real, but rather a hyper-chaos of illusionary contingency in which anything could become anything else, and is only as it is because it happens to be through a chain of

44 Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 5.

45 *Ibid.*, 7.

46 *Ibid.*, 52.

47 *Ibid.*, 56-58

necessities moving backwards and forwards in hyper-time, “the eternal and lawless possible becoming of every law.”⁴⁸ This is, of course, all provisional: things have no necessary reason for being how they are.

Why does reality appear stable, then? From the standpoint of an anthropic intelligence, contingency is a power explanatory force, but it is, ultimately, a quasi-phenomenon or artifact of thinking. While Meillassoux does grant that there are laws of nature, Nature as a totality is subsumed under the incoherent absolute of Hyper-Chaos, which itself is devoid of a governable intelligence or system of laws.⁴⁹

Hyperstition understands this contingency-necessity relationship to be hackable, that things can be ontologically forced into a different configuration. Meillassoux quotes Mallarmé’s *Un coup de dés* in order to establish that all thinking may give way to chaos. The experience of reality is provisional and subject to radical alteration, and it is only by the continual production of signs that consciousness is not subsumed in the hyper-chaos of the Real.⁵⁰ The in-between of thinking and absolute being is ‘the outside.’ It is in this outside that hyperstition attempts to draw its power through a “complicity with anonymous materials.”⁵¹ These materials, while generally semiotic, may actually at times be a symbolic understanding of *literal* materials.

Hyperstition is not a process that any one individual can conduct in isolation. It is also not necessarily something that happens quickly (the Anthropocene, for instance, is almost certainly a hyperstitional process operating on both human and deep timescales). A typical example I give the historical movement of a television. For most of human history the concept of a television isn’t simply outlandish, it is *literally* unthinkable. It cannot enter into human cognition as a concept. Over

48 Ibid., 64.

49 Meillassoux Dictionary, 94.

50 Cf. Quentin Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*.

51 Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia*.

time, however, there can be the fantasy of something like a cellphone, some sort of object that gives us the ability to witness events, fictional or otherwise, from a single location. Eventually, then, the concept of a television enters into scientific discourse where it is deemed possible in a future moment. Then, of course, in the 1920's Philo Farnsworth actually succeeds in making the first 'image dissector,' which becomes the first television system.

Where did the television come from? It is easy enough to say that it accreted over time through the gradual development of simpler machines and parts, until one day some cognitive loop in some person's head led to the invention of the concept of a TV, but this does not model the entire process of a thing moving from the absolute outside of thinking into an actual material object in most of our lives. This is what the CCRU meant when they spoke of "trafficking with the outside." There existed in the language of their missives a conceptual allegiance to the idea of thinking being an invasion from a different dimension, a striving to clarify the experience of creation. Hyperstition, then, is a model of reality that traffics with the unthought in order to bring into being impossible things. This bringing-into-being may be both semiotic and material, and in so doing triggers a feedback loop that restarts the process. It's temporal nonlinearity is sanctioned by the cybernetic model of a future being established retroactively in the present, as well as the hyperchaotic temporalities sanctioned in Meillassoux's speculative materialism. For the moment, let us leave the first portion of our definition here and move onto the praxis of hyperstition.

Hyperstition is a practice of worldmaking. It is a toolkit on how to posit potential other worlds or futures. Given how long I've been talking for, I'm going to try to limit this solely to discursive worlds, and say less about the process of making something physical like a television. As can be seen from the discussion of hyperstition's worldview, it is not a stable model of reality. In fact, it is no longer a question of real and unreal, but of *irreal*, a term developed, as I remember it, by the philosopher Nelson Goodman in his monograph *Ways of Worldmaking*. The text merits some consideration here, however brief. Nelson's central problematic is how one would go about

developing a grammar of worlds. I say grammar here very consciously: it is a system of rules for ‘proper’ or ‘formal’ composition in a semiotic system, most generally a language. “In just what sense are there many worlds? What distinguishes genuine from spurious worlds? What are worlds made of? How are they made? What role do symbols play in the making? And how is worldmaking related to knowing?”⁵² Nelson’s solution to this is a novel kind of “restrained” relativism: there is no “world of worlds,” but neither is there a lack of criteria by which to judge, evaluate, and critique a world.⁵³ A world, to Goodman, comes from nothing and bursts into reality through the production of a pattern of inter-connected symbols. But these symbols in turn come from “many stuffs—matter, energy, waves, phenomena—that worlds are made of are made along with other worlds.”⁵⁴ A world, then, can be defined as model of describing, and this returns to the problem of correlationism: any definition of a world is part and product of the definition of the description and production of what constitutes that world. Worlds fundamentally exists in tension and contradiction with other worlds, such that, for example, there is no way to translate Van Gogh’s *A Starry Night* into an astronomical text observing sidereal movements. Is it fair to say that one is ‘more’ correct than the other with regard to the correlation between human subjectivity and the stars in the sky? No, that would be much far beyond comparing apples and oranges, but that’s not to say we do not have the discipline of art history, the general corpus of knowledge regarding space called astronomy, or that peer review does not exist to evaluate, critique, and render judgement upon the ‘quality’ of a world. Worlds can, and often are, evaluated. They are at times even evaluated against one another with no single point of comparison (so, in this case, see Bruce Lincoln’s comparison of apples and oranges).

52 Wow, 1.

53 Nelson Goodman, “On Starmaking,” *Starmaking: Realism, Anti-Realism, and Irrealism*, 144.

54 Wow, 6.

Nelson goes on to elaborate the sorts of movements that let one ‘make’ a world: Composition, Weighting, Ordering, Deletion, and several more.⁵⁵ Nelson’s grammar for organizing symbols and signs into coherent, self-referential wholes that correlate with either inner experience or outer materiality provides hyperstition with the basic epistemological license to manipulate ‘what is.’ The philosopher Reza Negarestani, many years ago, once commented that it formed, along with video games and comics, a sizable portion of the groundwork for the development of hyperstitional theory-fiction.⁵⁶ While logically in keeping with the themes these thinkers held dear, how biographically true that is, I cannot say.

Goodman’s focusing questions are exploratory and not prescriptive. He offers only minimal guidance on how to go about evaluating a world, and his instructions for actually making a world are entirely abstract. How does hyperstition proceed?

As we have said, hyperstition is an ontological category. If it is not that, surely, it is uncontroversially an epistemological heuristic for understanding nonlinear idea formation: that something that does not exist in the past may one day exist in the future through the agency of an instrumental intelligence (mostly, at this point, limited to humans). With the model of Nelson’s worldmaking, hyperstition’s pragmatic expression emerges as what is called ‘deep media.’ Deep media distinguishes itself from surface media in several ways, not least among them that it is a form of writing the absence, which is to say, it is all matter of propaganda, the manufacturing of irrealism in the service of a new model of the world, and so forth. It smuggles itself into surface media, appearing to be something it is not, with the goal of replicating and expanding itself. It is the medium of worldmaking. For the rest of this talk, I will limit myself to a special instance of deep media, the one preferred by the CCRU and named by Negarestani in conversation with them: theory-fiction.

⁵⁵ Wow, 7-16.

⁵⁶ [Personal correspondence, June 2018.]

Theory-fiction is of course not something as straightforward as blending philosophy with fictional conceits (though it is that, too). It is not attempting to tease out the same sorts of problems as the work of Søren Kierkegaard, perhaps unfamiliar to many of you in the room, but being half-Danish I've developed a critical familiarity that was more or less impossible to avoid, having grown up and attended university in Copenhagen, a town famous for being the stomping ground (literally, I guess) of the man. Nor do I mean something like what used to be called 'auto-theory,' typified by Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* or Chris Kraus' *I Love Dick* in which self-conscious deployments of theoretical strategies and names make a space for exploring the personal and the psychological, twinning the body and the corpus of philosophy, if you will. Nor again do I mean the simulationist writings of J.M. Coetzee, a South African-Australian writer who won the Nobel Prize in Literature back in 2003, and who once, in a simultaneous homage to Kafka and, possibly, the notion of academia itself, authored a series of texts about animal lives that simulated a lecture to an 'Academy' much like this one.⁵⁷ Such a format was and would be now, tiresome. In short, it is not the philosophical novel nor the amped-up personal essay, however clever the format and source material. It is not about the frame narrative, there is no plague in Florence—well, not for a bit at least [laughs], for symbolic characters to flee, nor a bridge blown out by a flood. We need not bracket our thinking like a sort of literary epoché: the world is what is made, and that is, fundamentally, the condition of the hyperstitional. If you wish to find a literary precursor, look to the Situationists and, possibly, Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

That said, what is hyperstitional theory-fiction? It is the interrelation of "World and Symbol into a digestible semiotic system, i.e., into the framework of media, which explores the edges of what is human. It is an attempt at non-anthropocentric expressivity."⁵⁸ In context of hyperstition's understanding of speculative materialism, theory-fiction's object of study is a kind of 'speculative

57 Cf. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* and *Diary of a Bad Year*. For a fine critical appraisal of Coetzee's ethico-aesthetic significance, cf. Jonathan Lear, "The Ethical Thought of J.M. Coetzee."

58 Cody Jones, *Anxiety in the Axial Age*, 33.

irrealism,' the manufacturing of philosophical concepts and connections using the conceits of fiction and art. It is the idea that non-philosophical systems can 'do' philosophy. Theory-fictions: do not exclude the human or the inhuman, the narrative or the non-narrative—they just try to get different portions of reality to emit vibrations that might (or might not) have any observable effect. Vibratory aesthetics are neither linear nor circular, neither evanescent nor permanent, neither rational nor irrational. They might produce meaning, but meaning is just one field-effect among many possible field-effects.⁵⁹

In this respect, if theory-fiction has a coherent goal, or ideal form, it would be one that explores the outer limits of the articulable in the service of manufacturing an alternative future. This future, as the above quote implies, is not necessarily in any way anthropocentric. While theory-fiction can take on the guise of a simulated piece of writing (i.e., it pretends to be a lecture when it is, in fact, not), the core quality that identifies it, is a concern for the interrelatedness of human life with outsiderness:

Fiction is a curvature of reality. While hyperstitional media refer to reality as a consequence of fiction, hypostitional media might refer to fiction as a consequence of reality. [It] becomes a property of reality (something like the properties of particles expressed as quantum fields), independent of human-associated meaning (or human perception), which becomes a generator of new realities-as-surface-media when processed through specific orders (such as the biosphere environment or the human cognitive morphospace). Change happens when the space of the possible is much larger than the space of the actual, and the space of the possible is, by definition, previously unknown.⁶⁰

Theory-fiction is geared towards the production of xenopoetry, what Amy Ireland typifies as poetic forms that seek to access and activate the potential of nonhuman collaborators in the construction of meaning and worlds. This has several practical expressions, such as the assistance of computer algorithms to generate music, the invocation of random strings of numbers to trigger different sorts of poetic expression (sometimes, poetry literally just encoded in binary code), or the CCRU's usage

⁵⁹ German Sierra, "Deep Media Fiction, 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

of digital detritus in order to construct an entire cosmology of demons, time travel, and fictional people.⁶¹ It continues to invoke para-spaces of signification and intentional misreadings of texts for certain theoretical ends, as Dr. West has done recently in his soon-to-be-published theory of geotraumatology and Cthell.⁶² The usefulness of this is both in the demonstration of a form, and in the production of new connections that, while spurious in one Goodman-world, are insightful in another.⁶³ This can also involve the invoking of premodern or ‘alt-modern’ explanatory modes, as the CCRU did with demonology for instance, or the study of marginalized phenomenologies in order to generate compelling worlds in the same vein as Nelson’s modeling suggests.

We’ve been going on for quite some time, and I want to sum up quickly now before we get to your questions. Theory-fiction—while having what is certainly a recognizable style of subterfuge, a kind of academic espionage, if you will, wherein it will mimic a form of writing that it is in fact not—is identifiable by its concerns and philosophical paradigm. It is a striving-for two imbricated things. The first is, as we have said, the hyperstitial creation of new worlds in the future. It seeks to test and model radical alternative to what is a given in the present. Sometimes this involves actual materials engineering (such as the creation of a new technology or object), and sometimes this is a mostly semiotic affair (as when, for instance, the group Laboria Cuboniks published their *Xenofeminist Manifesto*, or when Georges Bataille attempted to create an entire secret, occult society). Examples abound, but as a general rule, they seek to produce a parallel or alternative model of reality, or study concepts, using certain non-philosophical conceits. After all, it’s right in the name: it is *theory*, and *fiction*.

The second concern, and this one requires more credulity, is that theory-fiction is the study of outsideness. It is interested in what is inhuman, nonhuman, parahuman, and posthuman. All of

61 Amy Ireland, “The Poemenon,” 1.

62 See appendix. [add something]

63 It is only with the introduction of a system of evaluation that is greater than Goodman’s that we could begin to arrange these concepts into patterns of academic and nonacademic discourses.

those words can be parsed and defined and debated *ad nauseum*, but the general premise is that theory-fiction would like to explore the limits of human systems of signification by instigating xenopoetic ones. This is second-order cybernetic literature, seeking out a method of feedback or call and response with the nonhuman. In practice, this palette is currently quite limited, but any creative practice invoking or thinking with an agency that is non-anthropocentric is participating in xenopoiesis.

Taken together, the philosophy and practice of hyperstition claim that all concepts and abstractions, *all truths* are equally fictive, and therefore subject to radical revision, crossing out, and disposal. They propose a style of making ‘speculative irrealist’ worlds, which amount effectively to propositions of alternative futures or “toy philosophies,” a space of play and creation that can, as an assumption, one day be made real. This is not intended to replace architectonic disciplines like theology, anthropology, cosmology, or philosophy. It is intended as a parallel narrative to human meaning-making, one that seeks to extend as far as possible the possibility of a radically alien reality. This points to a larger narrative at play here: theory-fiction is merely a stage on hyperstition’s way. The conclusion is a unified discipline of the study of outsiderness called xenology. Time, however nonlinear, will tell if this is a substantive insight or merely, as per usual, the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy. Thank you. [applause]

GREGORY WEST: That concludes day 1...

[DAY 2 REDACTED]

QUESTIONS

GREGORY WEST: Okay, we'll now take some questions.

HANS BOLIDE:

N. KANESHIRO: Thank you for the talk. I have learned quite a lot, but I have some concerns about the devaluing of truth. And truth is not science and it is not philosophy, but when we talk about something being a scientific or a philosophical idea, there is an understanding that whatever that thing is, exists in some way with a special proximity to truth. Does the idea of hyperstition throw out the authority of science and philosophy, and is that not simply a kind of [pause] dogmatic thinking or fantasy?

RØMMER: No, this is a really important question, and one that I was anxious to have some ask! The entire production of hyperstitional concepts is not designed to replace or dislodge any higher-order material discourse of predication or description. I can't use hyperstition to build the television, but I can use hyperstition to talk about a way to think about how the television came to be. Okay, that's half your question, the other half, I think, is more of an issue of ethics. While with Goodman's questions of evaluation and spurious vs genuine worlds we touched upon the issue of an outer boundary or regulatory feedback process to avoid having another Landian meltdown into fascism, we didn't really elaborate any sort of ethical or political system to keep ourselves in check without overly-limiting the free flow of the outside inward. This actually does have an answer, but I'll have to be rather brief.

In the final year of his life, Mark Fisher, a CCRU alumnus, wrote a text called *The Weird and the Eerie*. Now, this was primarily about certain texts and films we wished to class into either weird or eerie, and in so doing produce some sort of coherent definition of 'strangeness,' in which weird and eerie were subordinate taxonomic categories. The take away, of all of this, to use the words of

Eugene Thacker, was that the world had become increasingly unthinkable.⁶⁴ Fisher went further than this, and divided the strangeness Thacker was trying to articulate into two types:

1. Things that can be thought that cannot be.
2. Things that cannot be thought that are.⁶⁵

The first was the problem of the eerie, and the second the problem of the weird. Hyperstition in its purest form, is always engaging with one or the other. This is precisely the problem of sanctioning and prohibiting certain tendencies in its core operation: how can you be programmatic about either unthinkability or meontological constructs? Without getting too much into it, there is an ongoing effort to construct a politics of the weird and the eerie, a sort of program within hyperstition that takes on the problematics of hyperstition itself. It's currently under-theorized, but the groundwork is being laid. Hopefully in about six months there will be a published paper about it. I know that isn't a particularly satisfactory answer, but rest assured, more developments are in the works.

G. JOHNSON: If Hush and Yuggoth could have been...[TEXT SCRAMBLED].

RØMMER: Thank you, but I think [TEXT SCRAMBLED]..., but your point about Pessoa's heteronym is, I think, correct, though I'm unsure if the CCRU were aware of *The Book of Disquiet*.

N. PACH: [TEXT SCRAMBLED]...misunderstanding of the significance of of Nick Land's complicity in the outbreak of...[TEXT SCRAMBLED]... horror stories he wrote in the late 2010's were very under-analyzed.

RØMMER: Yes, I probably have, but we can't discuss...[TEXT SCRAMBLED].

⁶⁴ Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet*, 1.

⁶⁵ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 10-13.

C. JONES: Okay but building off that in the opposite direction, is hyperstition, and its avatar form, theory-fiction, anything substantively more than ‘cute,’ or ‘edgy,’ or stylistically distracting? What does the form *do* for questions of literature *and* philosophy, and I emphasize the ‘and’ there because when I was being trained ‘theorizing’ the and, the conjunction of literature *and* religion was extremely central to the questions we were asking.⁶⁶ What I guess I’m gesturing towards now as this questions grows and grows is, why should any of this be taken seriously? What was wrong with the monograph, or the essay, or the short story or, really, the novel or film?

RØMMER: Thank you for the question. What I sense you are asking in your own language is—and stop me if this is totally off—can literature, or generally, let’s say *media* objects, ‘do’ philosophy? Right?

C. JONES: Yeah, I’d say that’s a fair way of saying it. Like why aren’t earlier, obnoxious forms like for instance *Ishmael* or *The Celestine Prophecy* a kind of theory-fiction? What’s really the line here between Reza’s *Cyclonopedia* or the CCRU texts and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*?

RØMMER: Okay, so in answer to the first part, what can we say other than that some works of philosophy, and literature, and really anything requiring human agency *aren’t as good as others*. That’s not a good answer, but it’s a start, and it’s the same problem you find in Goodman’s attempt to construct a system for evaluating worlds. Any further work on it requires either a return to an early mode of value theory, or pushing on through to the politics of strangeness I mentioned earlier. I suppose, too, the real core point, as I mentioned in the lecture, is that those texts are correlationist and anthropocentric (yes, even the one with the gorilla).

⁶⁶ personal correspondence, 2015.

But there is so much at stake in working out an answer to the rest of this question. Can any form of media do philosophy? And what does it mean to do philosophy? Well, I'd say with some degree of confidence that "doing" philosophy is the tracing out of a concept dialectically, beginning with ostensibly self-evident truths, called "axioms," and working, back and forth between point and counterpoint, upward in complexity until some sort of clarified version of the concept emerges. A more abstract and modern way to say it is that philosophy is a program of general artificial intelligence, a simulation of what is, what its like, and what can come to be.⁶⁷ Philosophy in the Western tradition, particularly of the Analytic flavor—and this was back when 'the parting of the ways' was still the thinking *au courant*; Analytic and Continental thinking had still to be reunited—was about the clarification of truth. It was more like math than like poetry. Now, how can something like, say, a story clarify a philosophical concept? The simple answer is that you can use literary tropes as direct vehicles for philosophical exchange, and remember, the beginning of Western philosophy employed the dialogue format to great effect. That's the simplest way to handle it, and it's popularity has endured on and off ever since. The other potential way of handling is indeed to problematize the thinking that goes into literary composition and philosophical thinking, and someone like Kierkegaard does a fairly excellent job at that, or in a more abstracted vein, someone in the tradition of the European philosophical novel, like George Eliot. More recently, just to dip into a parallel medium, we have someone like Tarkovsky or Terrance Malick who manage to ask large-scale, if not philosophical then next door to philosophical questions in a filmic form. But is it really philosophy and, more importantly, how much does that actually matter if concepts get clarified, discussed, sublated and then newly generated?

Maybe it isn't philosophy anymore. Maybe it's a new thing. As you all probably know, I prefer to call it 'xenology,' the study of absolute outsidership, a sort of disowned sibling of philosophy

⁶⁷ Modified from a definition given by Søren Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* and Reza Negarestani, *Intelligence and Spirit*.

and poetry. Horror is always at the edge of knowing: Kallipolis and Carcosa are separated only by a river; form needs void, void does not need form. Hyperstition as reality coding is always trafficking with the outside, the absolutely inexistent has a presence that is always felt in the existent (as someone who reads Spinoza might say to me). Instead of clarifying truth, perhaps we could say that xenology clarifies possibility. What is there, what is it like, *and* what could be? But it is also, and I think this is from Amy Ireland, a moving away from close reading into ‘mutant tactics’ of confronting and operating the text. This is the logic of reading theory as poetry and poetry as theory.⁶⁸ Finally, I guess we should say that there *are* works of theory-fiction that predate the coming-to-self-awareness of the genre. Derrida’s *La carte postale*, for instance, touches on many of the same themes using different paths of inquiry. Georges Bataille is a major force, as are many others. Mystical texts in the vein of negative theology are not considerably different in some senses, nor are certain kinds of mathematics dealing with transfinite numbers.

In conclusion, I don’t know, but I’m anxious to figure out more.

E. DIRAC: I was wondering how hyperstition provides an alternate mode of critique from something like Althusserian ideology or the writings of the Frankfurt School.

RØMMER: Critical theory, taken in the sense employed by the Frankfurt School, is in many senses incompatible with hyperstital practices. While the insights of Horkheimer, Adorno, et. al., may be regarded as epistemologically useful in terms of modeling social conditions, the groundwork from which these observations spring is inherently anti-technoscientific. It reifies a distinction at the ontological level between human subjectivity and technical, machinic, rationalism. As Luciana Parisi, a former member of the CCRU observed: “the cultivation of the human spirit in critical theory is at best idealistic as it assumes that [...] thought must remain immune from what humans actually think,

68 Amy Ireland, “Poetry is Cosmic War,” 98.

do and make. The longing for a common state of immunity from the technoscientific instrumentalisation or artificialisation of thought constitutes, one could argue, the bedrock of critical theory.”⁶⁹ I think we’re running out of time here, so I’ll just add this: hyperstition is open to extreme modes of thinking and being, and it does not reify the distinction between participant and observer. It has no agenda other than chaos and the production of concepts in increasing acceleration, which, of course, is why we need a politics of the Weird and the Eerie as I mentioned above. Adorno would probably see it as totalizing in some sort of fascistic way, and there wouldn’t be much in the way of textual evidence to argue against him.

That being said, I’m not sure how hyperstition would even go about explaining social phenomena. I don’t necessarily think that modeling and explaining are the same thing. The early work done by people like Krakauer and the more empirical stuff by Reich and Fromm might be closer to what hyperstition is, but at the end of the day, they rely on two very contradictory understandings of the relationship between human and machine. In their model, those are different things. In hyperstition, like in cybernetics generally, we are already in transhuman and posthuman forms of thinking about anthropic subjectivity.

G. WEST: I think that’s all the time we have! Thank you all, and thanks to Dr. Rømmer, and please join us for a reception in the outer hall.

[applause]

⁶⁹ Luciana Parisi, *Futures and Fictions* (p. 216). Watkins Media. Kindle Edition.

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Theoretical Considerations

“The state of nature is not unjust; on that ground one must leave it.”¹

“If nature is unjust, change nature!”²

My object in this penultimate section will be to explicate a small area of the underlying theoretical groundwork for the idea of hyperstition by illuminating what I take to be a twofold issue that has come to the forefront of contemporary continental philosophy: the idea of the *inhuman*, and its attendant definitional structure, and the nature of what, exactly, allows the idea of hyperstition to operate with respect to notions of infinitude and contingency. These ideas, far from being unrelated, in fact represent a key component of the practices hinted at by this dissertation. Much of the following, drawn in part from earlier work done on Baruch Spinoza and Alain Badiou’s competing sense of infinitude, and from new thinking about said infinitude’s relation to Quentin Meillassoux’s ideas of contingency and Hyper-Chaos, serves as not a final note on theory in this rather haphazard, note-like project for a sense of the term hyperstition, but as the initial work to be done on the next project which I have set out for myself: the actual dissertation that was originally intended before the disaster that has been this last year. This actual dissertation, now my first book project, entitled *Works of Hate*, will demonstrate through actual practice the power and possibility of hyperstition, theory-fiction, and other related concepts (chief among them, also, is Cosmic Situationism), particularly as they will impact literary theory and issues in Continental philosophy pertaining to the idea of the Alien and Outsidedness. What follows, as has been the meta-magical theme of much of my work, is mere speculation, though speculation of a vastly different sort than before. It is a speculation within the bounds of ordinary philosophical discourse, and keeps to the texts as they are

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Dissertationi Philosophicae de Orbitis Planetarum*, thesis IX.

² Laboria Cuboniks, *Manifesto on Xenofeminism*, 0x1a.

given, rather than venturing any particularly novel pathways out of the standard operating model that has typified academic philosophy as of late.

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Critical accounts of *inhumanism* often define it by a plurality of other-than human impulses, in particular a twofold thematic of *animal* and *posthuman* production and rationality. In the instance of the former, these animal typologies tend not to refer to any animal *per se*, but rather the animality of differing and variegated metaphors of human agency, identity, and complexity: we speak of the swarms of intellection that have come to typify and dominate our experience of being one amongst a pack or collective of other humans, our knowledge bases and actions. Similarly, there is a preponderance of thought-images that detail and map our various activities within the realm of symbolic zoology: the slime theories of how we have ensconced aspects of the natural, or the intuitive ontologies of pack thinking, of predation, and of symbiotic correspondences.

The latter, the idea of the post-human, often relies on these animal metaphors in order to inscribe over and against classical and classical liberal conceptions of the human various alternatives that make diffuse the boundary between the living and its life world: cybernetics, networks, cryptologies, and object-oriented ontologies. Peter Wolfensdale notes that these categories delineate four major changes that confront us in the Anthropocene as (human) Beings: the undermining of our uniqueness compared to other life forms; the universality of our rational processes, which are in fact actually a generalized bourgeois, white, European mode of thinking; the encroachment of synthetic intelligences with similar cognitive aptitudes; and finally, the crisis of environmental collapse.³

Between the animal and the post-human there is a presumptive expectation that therein lies the inhuman: some ulterior anthropology that designates us as not what we have thought ourselves to be in our manifold histories. Inhumanism thus gets defined negatively: it is *not* human, nor animal,

³ Wolfensdale, “The Reformatting of *homo sapiens*,” in *Alien Vectors*, 49.

nor post-human nor, for the most part, vegetable or mineral. It is a weak synthesis and implicit negation of all of these categories. This is not so much a definition, but the lack of one. It is an exclusionary diagnosis for the types of thinking that we *ought* to be doing.

When such definitions do exceed this lacuna, they often aggregate around the capacities identified in point three of Wolensdale's inventory: that there is something that *could*, if only we sired it and allowed it, take over our thinking for us. The promises of artificial intelligence, infantile though they may remain, do offer some exciting prospects for the potential of a *synthetic* philosophy: a philosophy made for us by a true other: the ever-elusive General AI (GAI).

Negarestani has spend considerable time developing first principles of what a synthetic, GAI-led, philosophy would look like. He begins with the negation of the project, by asserting that all philosophy, from the pre-Socratics to the present, has in fact already been a process of GAI and not, as would seem intuitively self-evident, a human procedure of meaning-making.⁴ A “toy philosophy,” one that permutes and explores, is what is needed, he tells us. Similarly, to return to Wolfensdale, a key solution to the problem of the inhuman may come precisely from the development of a “neo-rationalist” metaphysics and philosophy of nature, one that could, in effect, set the record straight from its post-modern errors. At any remove, these two proposals look astonishingly similar (which makes sense, given the personal proximity and intellectual intercourse of these two thinkers). In particular, they rely on the idea, advanced by others like Ray Brassier and to a lesser extent Nick Land, that rationalism is the ticket out of the metaphysical and political morass we find ourselves in.

Thus, we find that we do have a working definition of inhumanism: the acceleration and transcendence of rational processes bring about an end to the idea of the human as such, to the end of de-contracting the crisis-curved timeline into something, again, infinitely futural. The human being must cease to be human if it wishes to continue to be at all.

⁴ Negarestani, *Spirit and Intelligence*.

This, however, neglects a key point, which all of the aforementioned thinkers have touched upon, but seemingly never fully elaborate: that the rationalism itself is, in fact, a human mode of correlating thought with being (or, in the case of Meillassoux, a human mode of thinking about absolute contingency). This is not to say, and in fact should not be read as saying, that rationalism *is* a humanism. It is not, and should not be considered such. It does remain, however, shackled by our brain architecture. The project of a neo-rationalism fails to account for the actually inhuman in its quest for inhumanist thought.

Correlationism and Speculative Irrealism: A Proposal

The argument in brief: Quentin Meillassoux developed the concept of *speculative materialism* in his work *Après la finitude* and subsequently expanded and clarified his remarks in a short lecture in English entitled *Time Without Becoming*. The central concern focuses on the problem of “philosophies of access,” and the possibility of escaping what he terms correlationism, the idea that thinking and being are, at all times, in correspondence with one another. Meillassoux objects to such philosophies on grounds that they cannot account for the problem of ‘ancestrality,’ the idea that things in science which we observed and which have happened before there were human observers to observe them still express their causality in the present.⁵ This correlationist approach, beginning with Kant with near-total dominance reflected in all subsequent Western philosophies, is described as a circle which one cannot break out of. This is easy enough to understand: any attempts at thinking outside of being must necessarily consider the relationship of thinking and being to the world. Thus, the statement that thought is not necessarily correlated with being can only be said as thought correlates itself *to* being. “We are locked up in our representations,” Meillassoux asserts.⁶ Differently: Being

⁵ It is worth mentioning that this problematic is rather weak and doesn’t take into account several actually existing scientific realities about the nature of time and space, but that is beyond the scope of this theoretical, not practical, essay.

⁶ Quentin Meillassoux, *Time Without Becoming*, 20.

cannot be thought without being thought as in constant connection with our relationship to the world, which necessarily entails that our representations are given primary weight for any interrogation of Absoluteness outside of ourselves. This stems from the *cogito*: “I can’t think without me.” This, it is argued, is not an argument against any sort of realism. In point of fact, much of what we take as realism is really only a realism of the human domain and its technologies. Correlationism is rather an argument against any sort of possible Absolutism in thinking.

Before turning to Meillassoux’s solution, it is important to mention subjectivist refutations. According to subjectivist readings of correlationism, in particular within the phenomenological traditions of Husserl and Derrida (Meillassoux includes Hegel, as well, but cautions that his thinking is too complex to reduce it to such labels), the very question of what could exist outside of any correlated thinking is absurd in and of itself. The *epoche* is itself the limit of intelligibility and any arguments that seek to step outside of this do not constitute thinking as such. They are empty. There is no difference between the nature of an object as thought, and the object itself.

Meillassoux describes this position as flowing from the idea of ‘facticity,’ that things are as they are and no other way simply because that is how we found them. A metaphysics of facticity, beginning with Hegel and ending, perhaps, with Derrida, passes through but does not directly address Gödel, whose incompleteness theorem is ignored by Meillassoux, but which sums up the problem nicely: any metaphysics stemming from arguments of facticity may constitute and give language to *conditional* but not *absolute* necessity, i.e., we may find laws of science and nature that appear to give validity to our judgements about the world, which themselves stem from sense experience, but they are, themselves, solely predicated on other laws which are also conditional. There is no absolute ground to which our thinking about the world may appeal. Any system, Gödel “proved,” is either incomplete or inconsistent. Meillassoux would argue that metaphysics of facticity are in fact both.

This proves to be the weakness in philosophies of correlation, one that Meillassoux exploits to break free of the correlationist circle. Since any idealist cogitation can simply side-step the problem of thought and being in trivial ways, Meillassoux is seeking a materialist philosophy robust enough to withstand assaults from correlationist thought. The strategy here is what Meillassoux terms the “absolutization of facticity.”⁷ The correlated thought must maintain the possibility of its own extinction: one day humanity will die, and not long ago there was no humanity. Thus, it is possible to conceive the non-being of the correlationist circle. The correlation is, itself, *contingent*: “the correlationist must admit that we can positively think of a possibility which is essentially independent of the correlation, since this is precisely the possibility of the correlation’s non-being.”⁸ Another example is the awareness of death: I must admit that there is a possibility of my own, unthinkable, inexistence from a position of existence. Facticity obtains: things are as they are for no other reason than that they are, and the correlationist cannot, by their own logic, refute this claim. This is the key for Meillassoux: the absolutization of facticity, which is to say, the conception of everything as contingent.

The necessity of facticity for the correlationist is implicit in correlationist coherence, but unspoken: the presumption of the existence of the circle entails the possibility of the absence and thus annihilation of the circle. For Meillassoux this means that contingency and only contingency is absolutely necessary for thinking: “Contingency, and only contingency, is absolutely necessary: facticity, and only facticity, is not factual, but eternal.”⁹ Facticity should not be confused with a fact: it is the principle of a thing existing as a fact in contingency. Meillassoux gives this as evidence of the escape from correlationism into “speculative materialism:” “to be is not to be a correlate, but to

⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 24.

be a fact, to be is to be factual, and this is not a fact [but a contingency].”¹⁰ In other words, from the very logic of correlationism, it is shown that there is an error in the assertion of the absoluteness of the circle of thinking and being which is intended to refute possibilities of Absoluteness as such. From this, it is shown that there is the possibility of thinking that which is outside the circle: the circle’s inexistence, and thus the idea that any fact that is, is a contingency of its being rather than non-being, and that, itself, is non-factual.

Meillassoux closes with final arguments, which are actually the primary points of speculative materialism: “what is facticity once it is considered as an absolute rather than as a limit?” Meillassoux argues that it becomes a form of time known as ‘Hyper-chaos.’ Distinct from normal orders of chaos which are a kind of shorthand for the process of disorder and random interaction becoming some sort of order, Hyper-Chaos is so radically contingent that even the process of becoming can be suspended. Hyper-Chaos is the Absolute for Meillassoux, and promulgates a universe in which contingency is the only eternal order, but a special contingency, a “super-contingency” which does away with any necessary mode of Being and non-being, of becoming or not-becoming. Everything is possible including the impossibility of possibility. Things simply are because they are not otherwise. Causality is an illusion that must be rejected in Humean and post-Humean form as an ineffectual grounding for the reasons of necessity and becoming. This is because the laws of nature, like the metaphysical suppositions of correlation, are not laws at all, they are facts and thus subject to facticity: It is impossible to demonstrate that their necessity, either from appeals to their necessary presence in the world nor from entailment in other, more necessary laws. In this profound way, the Absolute of Meillassoux, the Hyper-Chaos, is something of a factual non-Absolute: it is Absolute because it is not non-Absolute. This is a rationalism, Meillassoux argues, that there is no rational claim to demonstrate the necessity of laws in “mad time.” Time is not a metaphysical reality, and can

¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

create or uncreate even the process of Being itself, thus shifting philosophy's principle interests in profound ways.

In place of Being, *être* is simply the May-Be, the *peut-être*.¹¹ The study of the May-Be is the logical and necessary groundwork of all questions of ancestrality in the modern sciences: it is only from an Absolute of contingency and radical possibility in the form of facticity that we may construct a metaphysics robust enough to answer questions about the non-human portions of scientific inquiry.

There is one limit on Hyper-Chaos: things cannot violate the law of non-contradiction. This is due to the radical possibility of Hyper-Chaos: according to Meillassoux, if a contradictory being were to exist, it would both be and not be its own contingency, and therefore make impossible any sort of change or undoing of its being. From this, it flows, that there is but one sort of infinitude in the possibilities of the Hyper-Chaos: a singular anti-singularity of potential and impotential, from which we must understand that all contingency and facticity are treated as probables in a single infinite set. Meillassoux closes with a call for any serious philosopher to establish a proper metaphysics of science and math with regards to his claims.

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I'm not a philosopher, but I'm going to try a bit here with Meillassoux's call to arms, specifically by pointing out two key areas which are flawed to my thinking: his conception of infinitude in the form of special time, the Hyper-Chaos, and his conception of contingency's necessary reliance on the law of non-contradiction for reasons of the May-Be. My solution, which I'm calling Speculative Irrealism, is a collapse of the correlationist-anti-correlationist dialectic.

The consequences of breaking free of the correlationist circle have been to open up what has been derisively called the fields of Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Ontology. These groups of thinking, which claim some lineage back to Meillassoux, have been regarded as a) not real

¹¹ Ibid., 27.

philosophy and b) not a coherent framework of thinking. Ray Brassier, who will tell anyone who is or is not listening to him, that he is not a member of either group, is perhaps the most exemplary and rigorous thinker of the post-Meillassoux school of what the latter would call Speculative Materialism. Without getting into it, the concept of Speculative Realism (the less said about OOO, the better, probably) simply asserts from a non-correlationist position that the ‘life’ of non-human and non-animal objects is ontologically inexhaustible in- and for-themselves. The rock’s rockness is real in some absolute way, and its interactions with the larger world cannot be indexed in well-ordered sets.¹² Thus, a rock interacts with other rocks, the Sun, gravity, humans, water, poems about the rock, the consumption of the planet billions of years hence by the red giant remnant of the Sun, quantum tunneling of its constituent atoms into iron 56, the heat death of the universe, the possible distributed existence of the rock as disconnected post-baryonic matter during the heat death of the universe, and then the spontaneous decrease in entropy at the end of all things that *might* initiate a new Big Bang.¹³

The key takeaway is the ‘realism’ of the post-Meillassoux crowd. It is grounded in an unfettered and dogmatic belief that there is a certain inhuman realism at play in the secret life of objects. This realism is precisely as correlationist as it claims *not* to be: the rock in its rockness appears egoic and apperceptive. It seems to have wants and needs and desires. We’re left in a new kind of paradox, one that simply returns us back to the issues of correlated thought, but in a different register: while we have accepted I can think ‘rockness’ separate from my *cogito*, and can imagine its being without recourse to human cognition, that very thinking, which we shall better term speculative than realist, is so anthropocentric, so extremely human, that the rock might as well be animated and on a child’s television show.

¹² They don’t say this, because they don’t know how to read, but I’m describing it as such.

¹³ This style of list is known as a “Latour Litany,” and it is annoying.

Condescension in my footnotes aside, what are we to make of this problem? If we take speculative realism to be a good-faith and well-thought attempt at extending the reach of Meillassoux (both of which I seriously question, but let's follow along for the sake of argument), we're left with a troubling possibility: that the correlationist circle may be escaped, but that it leaves a paucity of well-organized philosophical claims available to the anti-correlationist. In practice, as many have pointed out in response to Meillassoux, human reasoning even in its most extended speculative forms, is *still human, all too human*. This claim has also been taken up by supporters of the project of speculative materialism, Ray Brassier, Pete Wolfensdale, and others, who claim that the opening provided by Meillassoux can be further breached by an intensification of rationalist philosophies of science in seeking out an inhuman metaphysical framework. In their absolute rejection of Speculative Realism, which again, is perhaps valid, these thinkers have also perpetuated a great error in the project of seeking out an inhuman thought-form: that the form itself cannot be related to human thinking as a grounds for strong philosophical claims.

One of the key qualities of this humanist inhumanism is its reliance on analogy and identity. We see this most strongly in the Speculative Realist developments of how to think about non-human objects: while significant effort is made to distance these objects from content-based human experiences, it still fails to distance the objects from structural morphism: the rock has, in effect, a *cogito*, or perhaps desires, which in this instance amount to more or less the same thing.

Let us take a different approach, if we are so committed to imagining the ontology of a rock. It is necessary to return to the correlationist circle without entirely rejecting the speculative materialism of Meillassoux. According to him, in correlationism we cannot 'conceive' of reality in itself. The problem here is one of close reading: no exegesis of 'conceive' is ever provided. It is not so much that one cannot conceive of a reality in-and-for-itself. It is that one cannot adequately posit with any correlative perception, sensation, or thought-image what that reality would be. This is easily shown by the field of mathematical set theory. It is easy enough to posit and manipulate infinity,

even if one cannot directly ‘conceive or, to use an astronomical term, ‘image’ it. The rock may be posited as being outside of any human epistemic, metaphysical, or ontological frame without necessarily venturing into the imagined internal state of the rock. That would lead us back to correlationist thinking in its proper sense, the rock as correlated with anthropic thinking. Instead, we must construct a ‘set’ of the rock, a larger whole in which we can place the rock and its essential being. To do this, however, requires that we return to Meillassoux, and posit the facticity of the rock, all the while allowing ourselves to assert that the rock is existing in this frame only with reference to correlated thought. The existence of the rock is factual: it is because it is. According to Meillassoux, this means necessarily that the rock is in this moment of the Hyper-Chaos, but could be otherwise given any change in the field of necessary contingency. In order to imagine the rock as rock, we must correspondingly imagine the super-positional possibilities of the rock. In so doing, a rock-thought is constructed, using correlationism not as a system of linking thought and being, but rather of thinking contingency and thinking within the very limited possibility of logical speculation.

The above demonstration, which is quite limited, allows us to imagine rockness as otherwise thought. This otherwise thought, still in the human correlated frame, at the very least reach out into the sphere of possible otherwise existences from an angle that is not correlated necessarily, but only contingently, on the object in question. I call this project Speculative Irrealism. We speak of singularities, ringularities, (slightly) curved spacetime geometries, entangled particles that correspond instantly at superluminal speeds in violation of causality, and other impossible objects that we *know* to exist without ‘imaging.’ There are consequences to our thought that extend beyond thought itself. While the history of correlationism is a history of bashfulness and cynicism about the capacities and potential of organic intelligence, the history of speculative realism and speculative materialisms have limited themselves to still-human frames of reference, in particular the law of non-contradiction, which must be rejected if we are to imagine truly inhuman beings existing in inhuman ways across spacetime, and the problem of infinities of unequal size, particularly with regards to human and

inhuman infinites.. The undeluded truth of the *verum factum* is given wholly new significance over and against the post-structuralist trappings of correlationist discourse: what is true is what is made. Rather, what could be true is what we decided to make, and in so making, we find degrees of being we have thought inaccessible, including the making of rockness from an inhuman perspective, as the rock cannot make it for itself. The principle of *Unreason* gives us a different avenue towards the necessity or impossibility of the necessity of an object of contradiction. Meillassoux argues that such an object cannot exist because it is, by its composition as a and not a, a necessary object, and therefore impossible with Hyper-Chaos. What I have meant by hyperstition is this collapse of the distinction between correlationist and speculative realist philosophies, the position that between assertions of a ‘real’ and an ‘unreal’ there exists, and that most if not all philosophical objects participate in, an ‘irreal,’ both operationally present and absent, thought and unthought, and compressed into a state which is indistinguishable from either. Irrealism asserts that not only is there a disjunction between Being and Thinking, that this disjunction can be manipulated, and in so doing, alter Being itself along lines of contingent Thought. In other words, it is a Promethean philosophy that obviates the dialectic of correlationism and realism. The disjuncture is mediated by instrumental reason, techno-scientific artifice. **In short, the correlationist legacy is that nothing is found, everything is made, the speculative materialist legacy sanctions the making of all things under the Absolute of Hyper-Chaos because everything could otherwise be, and speculative irrealism combines these in the doctrine of hyperstition.**

Before we expand on this claim, let us turn to three thinkers, Kant, Spinoza, and Badiou, for refutations of Meillassoux’s non-contradiction and notion of equal infinitude in the Hyper-Chaos.

The Kantian *Demimonde* of Meillassoux’s World

Meillassoux’s reading of Kant which leads him to the arche-fossil would appear intentionally, disingenuously, literal. Even leaving aside the Critiques, we can see from Kant’s thesis on the nebular

formation of the Solar System that he did, indeed, believe that certain things could be known outside of the faculties of direct perception, and without witness (and it does not appear convincing at all that he attributes these events' coherence to the presence of a divine witness such as God). Leaving aside the question of Kant's aliens, which should be explored at another time, this event, leading to everything we may even call an event in the anthropological register, *did* happen, and happened in such a way that we can be certain of various aspects of it within our subjective frame. Meillassoux's rejoinder to this criticism is that he is aware they in practice happened, but cannot understand how metaphysics accounts for science's observation of this fact. Science, in pragmatic terms, accounts for this having happened, and this, we know, is enough for Meillassoux to consider the law of non-contradiction to hold because of Kant's engagement with Hume's understanding of causality, which he discusses at length in *After Finitude*. Key to Meillassoux's Hyper-Chaos, as was mentioned above, is the idea that, while having escaped the faculties of perception and by extension much of the Kantian trappings of consciousness, what still obtains, at minimum, is a preservation of analytic propositions, which are themselves grounded on the law of non-contradiction. Things either are or are not, but it doesn't matter which one, so long as it's one or the other, because if it were both, then it couldn't not otherwise be (I shall call this *the second correlationist circle* if I ever return to this essay for revisions and expansions). We can assume to some degree that synthetic propositions remain valid, because the mere existence of a metaphysics at all requires them. However, the principle of sufficient reason, while echoing through the pages of Meillassoux, no longer obtains. Things are as they are. Is sufficient reason the same as the awareness of absolute contingency and the ejection of causality from the Meillassouxian World? Not to Meillassoux, or at least not in any recognizable form. The possibility of synthetic propositions without the corresponding principle of sufficient reason must give us pause: does this not mean that Meillassoux is simply relying on some sort of imbedded (again, human) logic? How else can any claim be sanctioned? Contingency comes to replace such a principle, as nothing is necessarily extant, and thus

the principle is irrelevant, but Meillassoux is oddly silent about the nature of the logic itself that allows any of this to be reasoned through. His return at the end of his argument to the principle of non-contradiction implies something chilling: that at the core of anti-correlationist thought is a reliance, again, on Kant, but only a kind of uninterrogated casual inference from first principles.

The problem with all of this is one of inhuman philosophy's overcoming of truly human limitations in cognition. It remains an unconscious assumption in speculative materialism and realism that things in themselves, and in the world, even under the regime of Hyper-Chaos, are as they appear to scientific and mathematical rationalism. The universe obeys laws, is coherent and consistent, and is not Weird *a la* Lovecraft, even if all of this simply is, and could otherwise be. Causality is rejected, always the weakest of all inferences anyway, so good riddance, and in its place is contingency, necessity, and Hyper-Chaos. But this Hyper-Chaos, so full of possible, is somehow not capable of producing a universe of a being that exists outside of the laws of Aristotle and Kant, Western, logical maps. This Hyper-Chaos *must* conform to Leibniz and friends. For all of the work Meillassoux has done, he seems to believe that logic is somehow excluded from questions of correlationism *when it is in fact the groundwork of correlationist conclusions*. Logic is constructed and not found, unless you are Kant and friends. Even then, however, logic is still *human*.

It is well-known that Kant is vague regarding the completeness of his table of judgements: it remains to be demonstrated whether they are complete, and no others exist, or they are incomplete, and it is possible others could be found in other circumstances, whether these circumstances be other human or alien situations.¹⁴ This table (A70/B95, *Critique of Pure Reason*), makes clear at minimum that there is a necessity of non-contradiction in analytic *a priori* propositions, from which anything that is stated is entailed by its nature. In the transcendental structures of perception outlined by Kant, this table is the limitations of what can be thought. The noumenal is beyond our

¹⁴ A similar argument, beginning with a similar premise, can be found in Filcheva, "Kant on Alien Logical Forms."

ability to represent because we lack the necessary concepts to describe it. Truth is therefore relegated to what is a rather small portion of the universe. The question at hand, however, is whether this sequestration of human cognition is extra-human and metaphysical, or anthropic in nature. In other words, could an otherwise rational being have produced an alternate table of judgements from which they could in practice select their possible truth statements, and from which non-contradiction is implied?

The answer is complicated. We know that Kant, at the very least, spent some energy thinking about alien beings as well as angels.¹⁵ Angels are non-rational, as they are more or less metaphysical functions rather than cogitative subjects. The Kantian alien on the other hand is underdeveloped. What we can say with some degree of certainty is that the Transcendental Deduction is for humans and humans alone. Kant does not necessary place a limit on the intelligibility of statements made outside the table of judgement for these *other* rational beings he identifies as possibly existing.

This of course poses the problem, addressed from a different angle regarding the rockness of rocks: can an intelligible statement be made about unintelligible but actually existing statements made from a completely inhuman perspective? Kant's answer would be, we can deduce from the table, that no, only a statement with some degree of distance from the unintelligible would be categorically valid. In point of fact, it remains to be seen to what extent these aliens would even be recognized as intelligible to a Kantian subject. While Lovecraft and others have addressed the issue of such an encounter quite effectively (cf. *The Color Out of Space*, *The Call of Cthulhu*, and others), showing that human subjectivity can, at the very least, recognized analogous impulses in Alien Logical Forms (ALF, get it?),¹⁶ they cannot move beyond certain hard limitations in their cognition. We are shown in these Lovecraftian instances, too, that the law of non-contradiction is absolutely

¹⁵ In *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*, his anthropological writings, and in certain instances in all three critiques, there are allusions to other rational beings. Cf. Clark, "Kant's Aliens: The "Anthropology" and Its Others."

¹⁶ Filcheva, 288.

suspended at the level of, at minimum: temporality, spatial organization and architecture, metaphysics itself, and possibly the reality of the universe as it *actually exists*.

(Does the suspension of non-contradictions allow for analytic *posteriori* propositions? Yes, probably, but that would require an entire dissertation, though may be the very think which speculative irrealism needs to be fully-developed.)

There is thusly no reason to assume that the law of non-contradiction must hold for inhuman or alien logical systems, and certainly no reason to maintain such a human limitation in discussions of Hyper-Chaos and infinite potential. In removing the block from non-contradiction, and allowing contradictory facts to obtain, we are not saying that the contradiction is a matter of perception and can thusly be resolved with further study. Instead, the existence of contradictory objects in the same time and at the same place must by necessity be possible without threatening the radical contingency of Hyper-Chaos. While perception does indeed account for the conspicuous absence of contradictory objects in our faculties of awareness, it does not work in reverse. Certain metaphysical things may, by their very nature, be contradictory, while still existing or, as the case may be, and certainly is as far as we can tell, *not* existing. The inexistence of contradictory objects is solely because they happen to not exist, as any Indian, or Buddhist logician would certainly hold to be the case (and, for them, then some).

Meillassoux's rejoinder is of course this would make these objects violate contingency. But how? If we posit something to both exist and not exist, the contingent nature of this binary is mutated into something wholly else: it can exist and not exist simultaneously on the one hand, exist, not exist, or be a in special Alien state of being for which human faculties have no recourse of description or cognition. Of all the things that are specifically human, logic is certainly one of the most anthropic. This special human quality does not mean that "other rational beings" as Kant puts it would fundamentally lack logic. They would simply have a different mode of it which may or may not correspond to ours, may or may not correspond to the natural sciences and mathematics, and

may or may not allow for special instances of contradiction. This can be seen, as obliquely mentioned above, by the varying modes of logic which exist across cultures and philosophical traditions *within* the human species. Thus a truly unreal and inhuman philosophical system would have not one but many modes logical predicates, many modes of describing Being and non-Being.

While this removes the obstacle of one sort of human block to truly inhuman thinking, we must still account for the bigger of the two problems (really, logic is aesthetics anyway): the problem of finite infinitude in Meillassoux, which allows for radical creation within irrealist thinking.

Types of Infinite: Spinoza and Badiou

A version of this section existed for a class on Hegel and Spinoza, and here has been elaborated into the groundwork, via a reading of a specific proposition in the *Ethics* and several texts by Alain Badiou, for an operant definition of possibly disjointed, non-overlapping, but ultimately well-ordered infinities within Meillassoux's Hyper-Chaos of the Real, which also serves to demonstrate the following: where Meillassoux argues in the final instance that the only thing which cannot exist is an object occupying contradictory states, in conjunction with the above, it is here shown that this is not to be the case and, in fact, may be just the inverse: that the true and "absolute contingency" of the Hyper-Chaos is, in point of fact, always and already a contradiction or, possibly, simply a logic that allows for excluded middle operators to be present. Thus, the problem of A and $\sim A$ may be a human artifact, and in its place remains a hyperpositional logic of $A\sim A$. This, as will be explored in the final section, may be the actual groundwork of a metaphysical inhumanism, one that is more divorced from the anthropocentric neo-rationalism of other competing definitions, and ultimately may provide the first principles of a more rigorous philosophy of hyperstition.

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As is consistent with the mathematics of infinitude available to Spinoza during his lifetime, it would be rational to conclude that all infinities are equal, and that they are not composed of finite

parts, as is Spinoza's position when refuting claims that extended substance is not an attribute of the divine in 1P.15.S of the *Ethics*. By inference, it is valid to conclude that inverse claims—that there may be an inequality of infinities, or that infinities are composed of finites—are fallacious. However, after Cantor's introduction of set theory to the field of mathematical logic, particularly the Zermelo-Fraenkel Choice (ZFC) axiom system as it is interpreted by Alain Badiou, we are in a strong position to reevaluate the validity of Spinoza's position regarding the essential qualities of the infinite, specifically with regards to the inequality of infinities and qualifications of God's infinitude. For Meillassoux, the issue of God remains one of "divine inexistence," the idea that, though there is not now a God, there otherwise could be, may well one day come to be (as he asserts in his dissertation), and to which we must give consideration in the form of a *potentia*. The Spinozist concept of God is not altogether indistinct from Meillassoux's Hyper-Chaos, and should be considered during the following with this similarity in mind.

Here, our object is two interdependent questions. While this is the maximum scope of this section of the dissertation, it is germane to note at the very least in passing that this reevaluation, if extended to its ultimate hermeneutic consequences, would affect readings of Spinoza non-trivially and possibly generally, though I am not a specialist on Spinoza (as is possibly in abundant evidence from the following). Proposition 15 in the *Ethics* is nodally central, and supports heavy semiotic traffic, with many claims laid subsequent to it being predicated upon its stable reasoning.¹⁷

To Spinoza, whose most serious tutelage in mathematical logics would have come from Descartes and Euclid, the treatment of infinities as entities subject to the concept of inequality, or to more generally treat any infinite as countable even in an absolute, non-comparative sense (which is to say, a set of infinities which could be cardinal not ordinal), would have been absurd. This is made clear, and put to use in the refutation of a non-attribution of extended substance to God, claiming

¹⁷ Particularly: 1P.17; 1P.18, 1P.23; 1P.25; 1P.25.C; 1P.28.S; 1P.29; 1P.30; 1P.31; 2P.3; 2P.10.C; 2P.13.S.L1; 2P.33; 2P.36; 2P.45; 4P.37; 5P.14; and 5P.36.S, as described in *The Essential Spinoza*.

rather that extended substance is God's creation, in proposition 15 and its attendant scholium in Book One of the *Ethics*. Spinoza declares that, if we are to accept the claim that extended substance, or corporeality, is not an attribute of God, but is rather created *by* God, we must by *modus ponens* accept the claim that either one of the following is true: either the infinite is made up of two finite parts or, there exists an infinite twice as great as another infinite.

Much has been written about this, and it is generally considered a kind of *shibboleth* for whether one is a scholar of Spinoza. In many critical commentaries, it is noted that Spinoza goes on to contradict the following claim I am making, particularly in other works which he wrote earlier. Because this is not an analysis of Spinoza *cum* Spinoza such criticisms, while important, do not factor into the geometric and closed curve of the *Ethics* itself. Subsequent discussion of these points can and should be made elsewhere, but that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Proposition 15, on which the above argument is predicated, reads: *Quicquid est, in Deo est et nihil sine Deo esse neque concipi potest*, translated by Samuel Shirley as “Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God.” Spinoza sanctions this claim by reference to 1P.14, in which no substance can be conceived of or thought outside of God, because God is infinite, and therefore has infinite attributes. This is further sanctioned through recourse to D.3, in which God needs no other substance or intervention in order to exist; God exists by necessity of itself (After breaching the question of the inhuman, it seems no longer right to refer to God as “himself”). As God is Substance—note the copula makes God equivalent *to* Substance, and not *of* or *a* Substance—and nothing can exist outside of substance or mode (as posited by A.1), by necessity, nothing can be or be conceived without God.

From this derives the (*facile*, to Spinoza) argument for which the above (syllogistically valid, internal to the structure of the argument) conclusions are necessarily entailed. The argument and conclusions can in sum be restated as: some claim that God has a body and mind, distinctly two parts, and with the consequence of divulging from God passions, equating God's composition with

the corporeality of the human being. Spinoza counters that anyone who has thought hard enough about the matter will know that it is false (whatever hard thinking here means), because they understand the body to be of definite quality and shape, thusly not at all infinite, which God necessarily is. However, this does not settle the matter aptly. Those that would suggest that God is corporeal may sidestep the contradiction between corporeality and infinitude by suggesting that it is a separate attribute altogether, and not part of divine nature. This too, says Spinoza, is a lack of thorough reasoning, as it would introduce the problem of where the divine nature finds origin: in 1P.6.C & 1P.8.S2, it has already been demonstrated that no substance may be generated by anything other than itself (the law of identity is necessarily always retained). To this, in 1P.14, it is shown clearly that there can be but one Substance, which is God. From this, it is logical to infer that extended Substance is an attribute of God.

Spinoza is not finished, however, and the geometrical exactitude of his thinking necessitates that he further refute the arguments of his implied interlocutors. The topic of the present section is now again at hand, and the central problematic upon which it will attempt to shed light may be presented as follows: Spinoza's implied interlocutors hold that extended substance, insofar that it is substance and not extension, is composed of parts. To Spinoza, any infinite cannot be composed of parts, as parts are finite, and no infinite can be composed of finites. There are numerous examples of this, though Spinoza restricts himself to two, of which I will only speak of the first. If extended substance is infinite and it can be decomposed into parts, let it be, for purposes of argument, that extended substance be composed of two parts. Each of these parts will either be infinite or finite. If it is infinite, then there exists an infinite that is twice the size of another infinite, which Spinoza holds is absurd. If it is finite, then there exists an infinite composed of finite parts, which Spinoza also holds to be absurd. Framed in more concrete terms: suppose there exists a length L which is composed of meters x , such that $L \geq x(n)$. L is determined to be infinite, such that $L = \infty$ & $L \geq x(n = \infty)$, where n is some arbitrary integer equal to infinity that also satisfies the inequality $L \geq x$.

This can then be restated as: $L=\infty=x(\infty)$, or better, $\infty=x(\infty)$, which is obviously illogical, as there can be no inequality of infinities, and no mathematical operations may be applied to an infinity.¹⁸

With these absurdities in mind, in an impressively deft display of *reductio*, Spinoza flips the above argument on itself to demonstrate that infinite quantity is not measurable and therefore cannot be made up of finite parts. Using 1P.12 & 1P.13.C, it is shown that attempts to prove that extended substance is finite do not follow from the supposition that quantity is infinite, but rather from the fallacy that infinite quantity is finite and measurable. Corporeal substance, which following 1P.5, 1P.8, & 1P.12 is by necessity infinite, singular, and indivisible, has been wrongly conceived as a finite, heterogeneous, multiplicity. Such must it be for those, Spinoza says, who know “clear reason to be infallible,” and especially must it be for those “who say that a vacuum cannot exist.” After all, if corporeality really *were* a heterogeneous multiplicity, what is to stop some part of the whole of being from being annihilated while others continue to exist and, if this were to happen, would that not allow for the existence of a vacuum, which Spinoza had already shown to be impossible? In sum, there is neither distinction nor division in reality nor substance, nor does Nature allow for the existence of a vacuum.¹⁹ Though it may phenomenologically appear to be the reverse, this is only because of substance operating at the level of *imagination* and not *intellect*. The imagination will present, for instance, water to us as a divisible, vanishing, material, but this is solely as water represented *qua* water, and not water as represented by intellection, and as water *qua* substance. The parts of water are distinct only on modal terms, which is to say, in apposition (not opposition) or in subordination to substance as such, which accounts for the discrepancy in intellection and imaginative faculties.

Throughout all of this, the core axiom has not shifted: God is all things, and that includes matter as both mode and substance. God is not acted upon by anything, and extended substance is

¹⁸ NARRATOR: they can be.

¹⁹ See previous footnote.

an attribute of God. The scholium concludes, with no small amount of testiness from Spinoza, *Sed de his impraesentiarum satis*, “But enough of this subject for the present.”

Spinoza was not entirely unaware of the hideous instability lurking in the core of the above argument which would come to be debated by philosophers and mathematicians nearly half a millennium later, however naively intuitive and unconscious that awareness was. He admits at the very least some glimmer of doubt midway through the scholium where, in reference to the above arguments about discrete infinities and the ostensibly absurd possibility of inequality, he parenthetically quips that all of this only holds *siquidem omnia absurda sunt, de quo non jam disputo*, “if indeed they are absurdities, which is not now under discussion.” Furthermore, in other works, it appears Spinoza clarifies his position to the contrary. It is not of immediate importance to the refutation of the bodily God, as he has worked out a clever *reductio* which does not explicitly rely on the contents of the absurdities, only the alleged deployment of said claims in defense of a fallacious argument.

From the above, we may clearly delimit two related claims with which we may take issue. First, that an infinite cannot be unequal to another infinite. Second, an infinite cannot be composed of finites. Taken all together, we can state: there is no isomorphic inequality among discrete infinities.

With a nod to Meillassoux’s intellectual patrimony, the framework of Zermelo-Fraenkel Choice (ZFC) set theory, originally set forth in a single paper by Georg Cantor in 1874 and improved by the aforementioned Zermelo and Fraenkel in response to a paradox observed by Russell in 1901, the concept of the infinite becomes incredibly nuanced as compared to earlier mathematical theorems, and really may be said only to come into mathematical being from the work of Cantor and his contemporary David Hilbert. All integers are composed of sets, which are at their most basic an arbitrary collection of (mathematico-philosophical) objects. While this in itself may seem relatively mundane, it is the relationship between an object, o , and its set, A , ($o \in A$) that allows for a radical redefinition of the fundamentals of mathematics, which is saying a lot when you

consider the people being refuted begin with Aristotle and Euclid and end with Newton. By describing the relationship between objects as members of sets, Cantor was able to solve a problem that had plagued mathematicians since the beginning of the discipline: how to represent, and analyze, infinity. Whereas before set theory there was no formal way to describe the properties of, say, *all* natural numbers with any degree of alacrity or exactitude, Cantor could very easily suppose that there exists a set of all numbers, and from there begin the process of analyzing its traits in relation to other sets. The benefit for the present paper is the ability to break down, with a greater degree of precision and nuance than was available to Spinoza, claims about the properties of infinity. In the following, we shall take each claim separately, and then move to the outstanding issue of the place of Spinoza's God within set theory, and subsequently to Meillassoux's Hyper-Chaos.

1. There Exist Unequal Infinities: The Hotel Hilbert

Transfinites are numbers which are infinite, but not absolutely so. In other words, transfinites are sets which are comprised of countable, versus uncountable, infinities. They are definitions of different classes of numbers rather than any specific cardinal, \mathbb{R} . Because the set of transfinites is a well-ordered set, and by implication is countable, we know that their is cardinality *and* ordinality to transfinites. This can be shown in the following: within ZFC set theory, the lowest transfinite ordinal, ω , represents the ordinality of all natural numbers, \mathbb{N} . Because a natural consequence of the axiom of choice (being able to select out any member of a set by arbitrary considerations) is bijection (matching of set members to other set members), the ordinality of \mathbb{N} *should* be the same as \mathbb{N} . Thus, ω is an infinite but countable set which describes ordering. The first transfinite cardinal is *aleph-null*, \aleph_0 is the set of all \mathbb{N} , and describes the cardinality of ω . Again, assuming the axiom of choice obtains, there exists an aleph-one, which describes the cardinality of all countable ordinal

numbers, and is therefore equivalent to \aleph_1 . This is greater than aleph-null, and is an uncountably infinite set, as there can be no ordering between \mathbb{N} and the contents of \aleph_1 . It is profoundly infinite.

A trivial example would be the comparison of the following. If one were to take a set of all prime numbers, that set would be countably infinite (there is bijection between each prime and a ordinal number, i.e., 3 is the 2nd prime, 5 is the 3rd, etc.). If one were to then take a set of all natural numbers (again countable, again with bijection), there would be two countable, infinite, sets, but the second set consisting of all natural numbers would be infinitely greater than the set consisting of all primes.

If one wished to take this a set further, suppose S_1 P (primes) and S_2 \mathbb{N} (natural numbers) are then compared to S_3 , the set of all \mathbb{R} (real numbers). This set would be an uncountably infinite set, as \mathbb{R} exceeds the count of cardinals, and therefore bijection does not obtain. In this way, and between these numbers, we can construct a crude representation of aleph-null through aleph-two, with the order being, from smallest to largest infinite: P , \mathbb{N} , then \mathbb{R} . The proof is this is shown in Cantor diagonalization, in which one can produce an entirely novel number that appears nowhere on the number line by selecting the first digit of a real number, then the second digit of a different real number, then a third, etc, infinitely, which will, always, produce a number that has not yet been listed in all of the infinite natural numbers.

Thus, while P is an infinite set, $P \ll \mathbb{R}$. This should be sufficient to demonstrate, at least cursorily, that there is an isomorphic inequality amongst discrete infinities, even without the caveat of countable and uncountable. Put simply: there are fewer prime numbers than there are other kinds of numbers. Both sets are infinite.

Now, if we are to assume there is inequality between two uncountably infinite sets, we could show the possibility of the this with the comparison of all numbers between 1 and 2, and all \mathbb{R} . Both exist as uncountable, while the set of numbers between 1 and 2 should be smaller than all real

numbers. While this is indeed debatable, it will for the moment stand. Both are beyond comprehension, beyond profoundly infinite. They are not, however, equal.

For a final demonstration, we will consider the logistics of the Grand Hotel Hilbert. Conceived by David Hilbert in 1924, the paradox is meant to demonstrate a non-intuitive property of infinities: Imagine there is a hotel with infinite rooms. In the conference center of the hotel, a convention is being held on Alain Badiou's set theory with particular reference to Spinoza's sense of infinities. As such, *the hotel is completely booked*: each of every infinite room has been bijected with a guest (thus also demonstrating countability... and potentially that a lot of non-human beings are in attendance, because we don't have infinite people. Perhaps alternative multiverse Spinoza and Badiou are there en masse?). Now, because their flight was delayed, Banach and Tarski arrive late at the hotel. They go to the concierge and, with a bit of trepidation, ask if there is a room available, just one, they don't mind sharing (therefore they are 1 guest). While one would expect the concierge to explain that, unfortunately, due to a conference, the entire place is booked (as there is a guest in *each* room). However, the concierge instead says that yes, there *is* a room available, but he'll need to do a bit of shuffling. The concierge then proceeds to move every guest to the next greatest numbered room, leaving room one unoccupied. The concierge returns, checks Banach and Tarski in, and shows them to room one. How is this possible?

As with the idea of inequality amongst infinities, it is immediately hard to grasp that an infinite hotel with infinite guests would *always* have a room available if there are a *countably* infinite number of new guests. It can be seen like this: the cardinality of every room would be the same as every prime numbered room, and so we can understand the implicit inequality amongst sets of countable infinities, or in states of the fully-booked hotels from before Banach and Tarski arrived and after. In a finite hotel, we would assume that when parity between number of rooms and number of guests is reached, no more guests can be accommodated. This is not true, here. This is simply a way of restating that, while P is an infinite set, $P \setminus \mathbb{R}$. Any further demonstration of the

inequality of infinities, and thus the fallaciousness of Spinoza's claim, would require a departure from natural language and into a mathematical proof, which is provided here:²⁰

$$S := \{(a, b) \mid a, b \in \mathbb{N}\}$$

2. Infinities May be Composed of Finites: Banach-Tarski

$1 \neq 2$. Except that it apparently can, and this is one of the peculiar paradoxes that arise when dealing with transfinite cardinals. While the above demonstration regarding the Hotel Hilbert makes perfectly clear that an infinite is composed of individual, countable, guests/objects, it does not necessarily declare it as such in terms of them as members of the set of all guests. To return to the equality of 1 and 2, there exists another, this time complex and confusing, demonstration of the inequality (and, indeed, lack of identity) of infinite sets: the Banach-Tarski paradox.

Simply stated, the Banach-Tarski paradox says that, given a solid sphere in three dimensional space, there exists a set of decompositional movements of the ball into a finite number of parts such that the ball may be reassembled, without additional parts, into two identical balls. Because no new material is needed, this can be repeated infinitely: a set of finite parts may become an infinite number of balls. (As to whether or not the set is well-ordered and therefore countable, it would seem that it could go either way. For our purposes, we can again think of the set as a countably infinite problem.)

This is extremely hard to understand, let alone prove:²¹ Imagine that there exists on this ball an origin point, X. Now, imagine that one were to describe every (infinite) point on the surface of this ball with a coordinate grid of 1,2, and + and -. Through a series of isomorphic translations of an imagined plotter marking each point across the surface of the ball, one would come up with an infinite set of coordinates describing the ball. Now, one may exclude all impossible coordinates (+1,-1; +2, -2), and provide a concatenation of all sequences of coordinates from the origin moving

²⁰ M. Hazewinkel. *Encyclopedia of Mathematics*, Springer.

²¹ Here is the proof: <http://matwbn.icm.edu.pl/ksiazki/fm/fm6/fm6127.pdf>

outward and providing a greater and greater number of coordinate functions (1,1; 1,1,1; 1,1,1,1; etc.). You will then take this countably infinite list and apply each one as a new origin. However, there will be a countably infinite sequence of coordinates that may lead to the same origin, but with binary identity (such that there are only two countably infinite sets of redundancy). From here, separate each set and reassemble. There are now two balls. Repeat forever to obtain an infinite set from finite parts. Profit.

The conclusion of the above, highly complex and highly non-comparative literature demonstrations are that Spinoza is wrong, in an absolute and non-historical sense to claim that an infinite could not be composed of finites. If it is possible to produce infinities from finites, then there are indeterminate consequences for the possibility of substance outside of Absolute Being. What does that mean for God and Hyper-Chaos?

3. God as (Not)Universal Set: Badiou

While it may have seemed (and, epistemically, quite literally *been*) unthinkable to Spinoza and his contemporaries, the concept of infinities with internal traits and components which are finite is quite thinkable through set theory. However, this does not imply that all problems of the infinite have been resolved.

While we have established that there is in fact the possibility of commensurable inequality amongst discrete (and perhaps even non-discrete) infinities, there remains the problem of God (pretty much like always). From the above, assuming that it is valid, it would be easy to extrapolate and suggest that, since God is a being of universal and infinite attributes and substance, God is no doubt a set greater than all other sets combined. This may seem simple, but it presents an intractable problem for set theory: Is it possible to think of God as the universal set? This problem of translating the Spinozist God into terms comprehensible to set theory would be, if taken in its entirety, too great to include fully in this section of the dissertation. However, some general remarks

are warranted, before turning in the final section to the relationship of discrete infinities to Hyper-Chaos.

It is a mistake to think of God in terms of magnitude. It is not that God is the largest or the most comprehensive of all things; he is, in effect, the set of all that exists, can exist, has existed. In this sense, we would feel justified in calling God, somewhat obviously, the Universal Set, V . But this is not as easy as it appears. Under what is termed naive set theory, the existence of a universal set will trigger Russell's Paradox, formally stated as: There exists a set, V , that is a set of all sets that are not members of themselves. If V does not contain itself, then it by definition must contain itself, and if it contains itself, it cannot be a member of itself.

One of the primary problems that prompted Zermelo to begin developing axioms that would improve naive set theory was Russell's Paradox. It prevents the existence of V . If we are to continue, we have one of two options: either we reject the existence of V , and therefore reject, *tout court*, the validity of God as presented in the *Ethics* and Hyper-Chaos in *After Finitude*, or invigorate one of two nonstandard models of ZFC set theory, or one model of Badiou's set theory-infused ontology. Since it would be uncharitable to Spinoza, Meillassoux, and ourselves to reject outright the possibility of God, we must elect to take the second route.^{22 23}

The first nonstandard adjustment is the restriction of the axiom of subsets. This would locally suspend the hierarchization and requirements of membership in sets, in effect preventing a paradox emerging in the statement $V \in V$, leaving it true. This would be the only restriction placed on the axiom. Unfortunately, this would in turn introduce secondary, cascading, paradoxes where before only one existed. It is easier to simply remove V and thereby avoid Russell's Paradox than to fundamentally reground set theory; this of course has been done, however: there exists a competing

²² It should be noted that God doesn't not exist in Meillassoux. Cf. his dissertation, *The Divine Inexistent*.

²³ A simpler solution is to use François Laruelle, but his work has not been fully integrated into this dissertation, and I shall have to leave it out for the moment.

class of set theory in which the axiom of subsets (or, as it is sometimes called, the axiom of ‘comprehension’) only applies to positive sets, and need not apply to negations, effectively if brutishly forgoing the paradox produced by $V \in V$. However, the set is topologically closed, and so in a sense is something of a ‘pocket universe’ within and between more generalized, open, set theories such as ZFC.

The second nonstandard adjustment is to treat V as a class rather than a proper set. A class is a meta-descriptor. It defines groups of sets based on similar characteristics. While this allows for the collapse of the paradox of $V \in V$, it does not also treat God as the possibility of *all* sets, to which the Universal Set would have a claim. Classes describe while sets ontologically sanction; it is as if one confused simulacrum and real.²⁴

There is a third nonstandard option: the embrasure of paradox as a logically valid configuration., in effect injection the suspension of non-contradiction we discussed at length above. ZFC can tolerate V if and only if the contradiction of $V \in V$ is allowed to remain in constant tension with itself, effectively placing the set inside an alien logic.

Alien logic is effectively the solution provided by Badiou, wherein the distinction between the Universal Set and the (Not) Universal Set is simply the One (1, Being), and the count-as-one, (the act of counting all aspects of one, such that you may imagine counting with any countable set $\mathbb{R} \leq 1$, ontology). In effect, the paradox is restive but not aporetic; mutations and additions to the state of the Event, what is called the Situation (literally, whatever *is* in a given place or time) map on non-countably to One in approximate ways. The study of this, the count-as-one, is the business of ontology. However, as ontology is empty of content insofar as that it counts and observes Being but does not produce new knowledge, the conditions under which knowledge may ‘force’ a recount of the count-as-one and change our understanding of One (i.e., Being to be configured in some new

²⁴ Category Theory also addresses this, but I do not address Category Theory. Cf. Badiou, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*.

ontology, the difference between, say, Parmenides and Plato's theories of Being), are restricted to constructive forms: Art, Politics, Science, and Love.²⁵ Badiou selects these for their intrinsic investment in the condition of Being and for their dedication to necessary 'Evental Sites,' historico-spatial nexuses which allow for an irruption of Being (or appearance of Being) greater than the count-as-one allows for. Conditions are sensitive to excess greater than what knowledge can understand, which then forces new knowledge to be produced, which is the recounting of the count-as-one.

Thus, for purposes of understanding Spinoza, V is an unknowable object-set, powered in part by the suspension of the law of non-contradiction at the highest level, but not at the lowest (i.e., the least/most Real and not the least/most Unreal). It is the (Not)Universal Set, both an apparent paradox as well as simply not of the same genus as all other sets, an object. This is not at all a good enough place to leave the problem, as it does not address what must figuratively be termed all members of the (Not)Universal Set: substance.

There are several ways of thinking about substance. Since God is substance, substance as a member of (Not) V would necessarily be describable with the quality of bijection. It would also at the same time require a suspension of the bijective in order to accommodate the idea of hierarchy (that God is substance but in some immediate sense substance is not God). One compelling option would be to treat substance as a set of surreal numbers, which are both larger and smaller than \mathbb{R} simultaneously.²⁶ While this has the advantage of expediting through an over-generalized qualifier the movement and composition of substance in Spinoza, it does not do it justice. Instead, we must

²⁵ Much as been said about why 'religion' is not included in this list. Badiou has said in personal conversations that it is the limit of his atheism, and he himself is not certain of the accuracy of its exclusion.

²⁶ Knuth and Conway's work. Surreal numbers may also be the *actual* answer, as in some forms of set theory all numbers of all types are subordinates of surreal numbers.

look for the possibility of a missing thing, a thing that, despite the exquisite geometry of Spinoza's proofs, allows for *movement*.

Void

If we are to turn prematurely back to Meillassoux, we could account for this through the faculty of contingency. That, however, does not operate at the same level as substance, it only describes it. Spinoza's conceptual framework is correct insofar as it makes an oblique claim to the non-universality of the count: some things resist cardinality and ordinality in all configurations (for instance, an arbitrary uncountably infinite set that is not well-ordered). This is of particular importance, in fact, towards reconciling the apparent paradox of a countable infinite and a non-countable finite expression of said infinite. This non-countable, a *situation* for Badiou, tethers itself to being *qua* being through the axiom of the void.

The conditions of movement which may be undertaken by any discrete mode of substance from the perspective of the count-as-one, (or from the perspective of imagination), or the countable infinite of being *qua* being are unchanging in Spinoza. This is because the conditions of the possibility of an irruptive Evental Site, termed movement, are geometrically absolute: God is the condition under which any and all reformulations of the count-as-one may occur. Spinoza extends this into the possibility of self-expressivity of the conditions of the recount itself: in 5P36, it is made clear that the Mind's intellectual love for God is simply a form of self-love *by* God. It is a mode of interrelating eternity, but an obvious contradiction emerges, one that would not have been solvable without the above intervention showing that infinities may be discrete and unequal: eternity would by necessity exist *also* as an infinite, and so immeasurable. Yet, if eternity is composed of time, and time is marked in the imagination, or by the count, with arbitrary units, it would be no more absurd to adduce the example of measurement from 1P.15.S in defense of an infinite being made of finite parts. Thus it should also hold that eternity is really a *countable* infinite, thus injecting the capacity for movement outside of the transcendental geometric stillness of the (Not)Universal Set of God. In

this sense, the capacity to count at an Evental Site and reformulate the count-as-one is no longer essentially determined by God. It is instead returned to the reasoning mind, though this presents a problem, the final of this section: what is this implied space that now exists for movement and the reforming of conditions seemingly outside God?

We return to a claim made by Spinoza in 1P.15.S: *vacuum in natura non detur*, “there does not exist a vacuum in nature.” Yet, there would appear to be a possibility of movement outside of God, though nothing can be extant outside of God. This can be understood as possible by the introduction of the vacuum, or what in set theory would be called the void set \emptyset .

\emptyset is not strictly speaking outside of God, and is in fact, according to the axiom of the Void, if we take God to be the problematic (Not)Universal Set, then as follows from the axioms of both the Infinite Set and Subsets, \emptyset is a mode of multiple identity subsumed under God. Spinoza was seemingly unaware, in fairness let us rather say, unconcerned with the problem of, the possibility of an identity between the universal infinite and the void.

This is not the end of the problem. There exists a continued contradiction that cannot fully be resolved. \emptyset cannot readily be included in the count-as-one, as that would be attributing a mode of change or causality to an absence or lack, an ontological paradox that cannot simply be bandaged over. On the other hand, because the conditions of movement for the count-as-one are universalized in the (Not)Universal Set of God, there is a constitutive effect forced into being wherein the situations that for any Event are by necessity only existent if they are valid, and so any scenario in which \emptyset would threaten to intrude into the count would be obviated by the very existence of the count. Since \emptyset is both the in-existent, as it is a set without members, and can therefore not be included in the situation nor in the count of being, as well as not something that can be in excess, as it is pure lack, it remains both as a foundational set outside of all other sets, yet included in the (Not)Universal Set, which has numerous times been shown to not really exist. In this sense Spinoza is correct: Nature cannot allow a vacuum, but it is in the very real, horrifying sense,

that if there is a predication most primal that antedates the (Not)Universal Set of God, it is Void. The Void could then in some readings be thought of as prior to God, but also contained within God. The Void is to God as God is to Substance.

This formulation relies on three assumptions: that the axioms of ZFC are valid, that God is equatable to the Universal Set, and that the Universal Set is a valid ontological construction. If we assume all three to be true, there is also the possible interpretation that the primal \emptyset is identical with the Universal Set at the very origin, and there is no prior ontological pathway open down which we would be able to proceed in order to determine metaphysical primacy: Void and God, which we may state more uniformly as Void and Being, are a binary star system whose center of gravity is something deeply ancient and prior to all language and thought: the pure Real, or pure Chaos of Void-Being: the Hyper-Chaos.

Placing Void prior to Being, what is called meontology, would trigger several consequent disruptions in the thinking through of Spinoza. In the first place would be the paradox afforded by \emptyset 's relation to God; it can, following Badiou, be at the very least ameliorated with the introduction of the notion of the necessary inexistent, that which the count-as-one seemingly necessitates for the count to remain intact, but the appearance of which is marked by its own collapse. It is simply a form of Void warm enough to hold in suspension the aporia that Void necessarily demands exist. It is a radical absence, a radical gap, in thinking, but which cannot be filled except by the ever-pressing task of philosophy: to programmatically determine what is possible.

While the general task of a conclusion is to offer some modicum of temporary peace within the dialectic, it is always only a metastability; any small disturbance can disrupt the fragile stillness and reinvoke the machines of cognition to their eternal task of digging. There is no provisional conclusion to the problematic of infinites in Spinoza's thought. Following Hegel, there is only more philosophy. The consequences of commensurable inequality amongst infinites in Spinoza are only at their most shallow the introduction of Void to Being, with intimations of something shadowy at the

edge of thought, whispering ‘Hush.’ With further investigation, there is no telling what sorts of noumenal horrors lurk, waiting for an opportunity to confound us.

Conclusion: Inhumanism, Xenology, Cosmic Situationism, and Other Neologisms Masking Irrealist Madness

The Hyper-Chaos of Speculative Irrealism distinguishes itself from Meillassoux’s Speculative Materialism in two ways: it rejects the necessity of the law of non-contradiction for the functionality of facticity and radical contingency, and asserts that Hyper-Chaos itself is composed of heterogenous types of infinites. The Hyper-Chaos of Meillassoux is grounded in special notions of time, the nature of which we do not have space to explore adequately. What is apparent, even in the most cursory glance however, is that Meillassoux, like Spinoza, does not account for the presence of Void when developing the nature of his Hyper-Chaos. Speculative Irrealist Hyper-Chaos place the Void as something that is non-distinguishable, in both ontological and metaphysical registers, from the Hyper-Chaos that allows for things to be or not be. While it would be easy to suggest that non-being is a form of void, this runs aground quite quickly on the problem of intelligibility: a Void, a real Void, is not simply the vacuum or archive of the in-existent; it is something that goes beyond even non-being. Like the humans that must face the Color which came from the stars, it is a black box, only describable apophatically: its residue is horror, a profound, deep horror, which no science can banish in the light of reason.

And, too, we see reason is fragile. It is so profoundly human, though it could be otherwise with further developments of an inhumanist philosophy that does not predicate itself on a commitment to rationalist ontologies of becoming. They also mask an anxiety about what the human being is capable of, what its place is in the Hyper-Chaos that could have otherwise unmade it. The hyperstitional manifestations of this dissertation are nothing more than intellectual exercises. They are proof-of-concept machine diagrams. A real hyperstition, like the various and myriad

artifacts of human intelligence, alter the material conditions of the Irreal. These, too, are trifling compared to the creation of an actual hyperstition: the editing of time, of space, of Being itself, simply through mediated Thought. Meillassoux's divine inexistent isn't inexistent; it's latent, inchoate, prenatal. It is something to which we have not yet given birth. It is not for us to say if it has come to pass elsewhere in the observable universe. It is not even for us to say if it is *not* itself, the universe. There is no way to know this. It isn't a return to panentheistic aspirations nor to pan-psychic ones. This is a real material question that excludes the composition of the object in question: it is a question of design, intent, desire, and event.

The quest and intellectual call I wish to make is towards xenology. I mean by *xenology* the study of outsideness, and the study of alien cultures and logics. Xenology will not always be so grand and majestically abstract; one day, we will find an alien civilization. Perhaps then, xenology will become a comparative anthropology, a comparative sociology, psychology, and even human science broadly given.²⁷ Until such a time, we are left with only constructing its most fundamental philosophical groundwork.

Irrealism is not entirely free of correlationist concerns, of course, though they take the form of something altogether different than the Kantian grounds from which they sprang. Instead, we must ask, even if we are to posit that things in themselves may be known, what if those things in themselves are irrational or contradictory? What if the universe is not coherently composed?

Xenology may help to answer this, alongside the idea, mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, of Cosmic Situationism. Cosmic Situationism is a political program that seeks to address the Weird and the Eerie that we find in every aspect of confronting the Hyper-Chaos-Void-Absolute. If Xenology is a theory of General Outsidedness, then Cosmic Situationism is one of Special Outsidedness. Outsidedness is everything outside of all subjects, both in space and time. It is near and far, deep and shallow, gigantic and infinitesimal. It is that which is not subject-oriented and

²⁷ Assuming what we call the Mitochondria Problem is easier to solve than we currently fear it to be.

subject-complete. Furthermore, I mean by *cosmic situationism* the process politics aimed at the construction of cosmic or deep time subjectivities over, against, and with the Weird and the Eerie we detect in the world-not-for-us suggested by Speculative Irrealism.

The consequences of the above are thus: in the suspension of the Meillassoux-limits of non-contradiction and undifferentiated infinitude, we are given a pathway to imagining the capacities of inhumanist humans as subjects that may exist in inhuman spaces and timeframes. The actual material realities of these questions are the subject of hyperstition and its processes, and must be left, as was mentioned, to larger spaces of discovery and discourse, and for truly large-scale, Promethean, intentions that treat Hyper-Chaos precisely as what it can be: an editable space that is subject only to the limitations of what can *otherwise* be. Inhumans traffic with the Outside, and that is the pathway that is available to humans who are living through the Late Anthropocene. This is a huge claim. As huge, in fact, as Being itself. One wonders if we can escape ourselves in the final instance, escape Thought entirely, and instead concern our subjectivities with the inverse of the correlationist question: how can we Be outside of Thought?

1d 3c fc f8 01 34 b4 a6 3a 11 e1 14 b6 81 a7 8e ae e0 6d f8 c9 d6 49 01 30 f9 dc 71 34 a5 0f d4
3c 9d d0 7d 04 a1 b8 31 e9 e5 af d8 8e 8a f3 4a ea 00 3d 69 d2 df 27 a8 57 b2 ef 4b 92 49 bd c1
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50 75 7c 2d c2 78 e0 54 ed bb 92 39 8e 1f e8 64 09 c9 16 6c 41 58 fc cc 0f b8 96 f5 8f 8c b7 b6 97
d6 10 35 9e 07 17 c4 ac a7 0b 29 d5 74 11 1a 87 36 8c 12 36

<d>

Begin:

In the final section of my dissertation, I am pleased to share an unpublished psychoanalytic case study, collated from the notes of a colleague of mine, who has graciously given me permission to edit and annotate this remarkable therapeutic exchange. What I hope to show here, in the final instance, is the unceasingly creative and powerful philosophical tools of inhumanism in a more concretized and pragmatic context.

My colleague, Dr. Carl Kapek (no relation to the Czech novelist Karel Capek), who I was fortunate enough to encounter early in my training at NYPSI, has become a close confidante and, despite certain professional and personal expectations, friend. His insights into the possibilities inherent in the philosophies of xenology and hyperstition have been substantial, and I am happy to share their work with a larger audience, which Dr. Kapek is currently in no position to do. Their strengths as a theorist of psychoanalysis are particularly great, and while the following may show a certain limitation (or unwillingness) with regards to actual patient interactions, the balance sheet of their positive impact on the field is almost certainly in the black.

It's interesting how two people who begin as complete strangers, perhaps even strangers tinged with animosity, black boxes to one another's affect and intellect, may become so tightly interwoven. For my part, I am gladdened that someone so near and yet so distinct from the self I find myself inhabiting in 2021 is present at least through the 2030s (Dr. Kapek's personal life is one of immense interest at the level of sheer biography). Without the development of Seanze, the project I am most proud of working on, such a connection could not have been made, given the

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] which HUSH showed to be merely a

[REDACTED] Therefore, I can't in good conscience continue with

[REDACTED] but Dr. Kapek, who was born

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] though of

course [REDACTED] but we do what we can, even if his

personality is regrettably [REDACTED]. Since we're being completely honest, however,

I must admit an indiscretion on my part regarding Dr. Kapek's and my own identities, which are not

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Patrick Jagoda.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] for which I truly apologize.

Unless otherwise noted, all footnotes are my own.

The Case of Mx. Y

INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalysis stands alone amongst the human, natural, and social sciences by virtue of its methods and goals. It is neither human nor natural, and only passingly social, in its focus. Not human in that its focuses are often typified by precisely what we are not aware of, by what does not,

in conscious thought, define us as human. It flees from the category of natural, too, for being precisely of the order of the constructed and abstract: no topographical or depth-based structures exist in any determinate sense except within the analytic discourse. All told, though, something social is indeed reflected in the cracked glass of Freudian thought, for who among us exists as we are without recourse to those around us?

What further coordinates the unique position of psychoanalysis amongst and against these ‘sciences’ is a problematic of scale: in time and space, the psychoanalytic ‘science’—perhaps better constituted as an ‘art’ in its liberal and medieval sense, if we are to follow Lacan— remains only crisply in focus (and therefore only fecund) when centered around human-processable magnitudes.² No other such field is so restricted in its scope.

As has often been remarked, what has stymied the development of American and French psychoanalysis in the middle to late twentieth century are precisely the limitations implied by the field’s dissociation with other, more historically entrenched and empirically verified, fields of thought. Psychoanalysis can only address a limited palette of human suffering, the *symptom* often bearing this symbolic burden in European and South American clinical thinking, and *repression* in the American context. It has only been with the developments in the past fifteen years in the field of *inhuman* psychoanalysis that such thinking has begun to unravel. The limitations on the scope of functional analytic material have been softened: it is precisely these fields of thought, so long torpid or even openly hostile to analysis’ insight, that have held the key to re-invigorating talk therapy all along. This is not to say that analysis must dawn a mask and mime inclusion in regimes of research to which it has no claim or birthright. On the contrary, the key insight of inhuman analysis is that *precisely everything not subject to psychoanalytic thought is in itself a psychoanalytic process*, and that the only, truly, unanalyzable thing, the only unimaginable ‘black box’ of psychological research, is the human mind itself. In effect, the striking and revolutionary development of inhuman analysis is precisely

² Lacan, J. (1979). The Neurotic's Individual Myth. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 48:405-425

this: Being is subject to desire, and the human being is really only a mirror of this desire, which when filtered through all basic cognitive processes results in but one true ‘drive’ or *sinthome*: that of terror, a gaze comprised of little other than abject horror, and a desire to flee from the dark.

Initial resistance to this conclusion was particularly vehement, sometimes outright truculent. Early reviews of my first book on the topic, *Anxiété dans la période axiale* (Acéphale, Oslo, 2039), which sought to synthesize many of the disparate threads at work in xenology and inhumanism for the clinician, focused not so much on the quality of my research (though many an invective was aimed at that, as well), but rather on the “extravagantly amoral, enragingly irresponsible, and contemptibly dangerous” nature of the model of the human subject that said research animates.³ It was only due to the founding of Acéphale Press by the IASC and their undertaking of the multi-volume, multi-author work *L’Histoire de pleurs* that this book ever saw the light of day.

Such resistance stems from many of the sacred metaphors of traditional psychoanalytic thinking—really, if we are being somewhat generous, many of the sacred metaphors of ontology itself—being overthrown. Though new, the developments of xenological theory against the traditional analytic-philosophic grain have been so disruptive to the humanities and sciences generally, that fresh demonstrations of its explicative power are called for. In point of fact, we arrive at the time for a practical, clinical, case study of inhuman analysis, for experts and neophytes alike, who may be curious of such models and their salubrious powers (for we are indeed, still, in the business of healing). It is only through ironclad verification that we may begin to see a larger portion of the global psychoanalytic community embrace what is already so self-evident to those of us working under the sign of the inhuman: the future is a hole in which humans will not fit.

In choosing a case to present to a wider audience, I have been guided by three considerations within the frame of the above theoretical outline: First, the structure of Mx. Y’s personality demonstrates with substantial clarity the affective and hermeneutic power of inhuman

³ William MacGillivray, “Has This What It’s Come To?” *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, vol. 41 #4, 400-405.

psychoanalysis. Secondly, that Mx. Y's analysis went relatively unbroken, with minimal interruption, for nearly five years, during which I saw them four times a week. During this time, I was immersed in the composition of my paper "Studies in Permanent Undoing" (2033), and as such, was eager to test new models of the dyadic relationship with regards to a highly xenological frame of reference. Finally, though this is of little use to readers unfamiliar with the unmasked identity of Mx. Y, it was of considerable use to me that they were a prolifically published author of fiction and para-academic analyses, though woefully under-read by the public at large. During the course of treatment, it became necessary, more than once, to further engage with Mx. Y through their writings which are, to say it plainly, simultaneously deeply resonant with inhuman psychology and exceptionally disturbing, to a nearly hypnotic and dissociative extent.

I have presented the case below from notes and journal entries made contemporaneously with the analysis. They remain as unaltered as possible so as to capture my personality and analytic position at the time. You will undoubtedly note it is severely changed since then. It is no exaggeration to say that Mx. Y may be, in some future retrospective, a pillar to inhuman psychotherapy, no less so than the Wolfman and Dora were to Freud's theory of neurosis, and Mr. Z to Kohut and self psychology. At the time, I was not fully of an inhumanist bent, and still considered myself, outside of the consulting room, to be a member of that proud fraternity, stemming from the liberal values established in the Enlightenment, of humanist reason. The confessional spirit of psychoanalysis is not lost in translation between these, my earlier configurations of human subjectivity and the present one I intend to lay out before you, and so the confessor must confess: even when committed to such an analytic framework for understanding the self, inhumanism may sometimes trouble its practitioner. The analysis of Mx. Y ended somewhat prematurely, wholly due to my own error, my own inability to digest fully the consequences of my patient's words, and my own neurotic and narcissistic limitations. The psychopathology—if such a term could still be useful after all that has happened to us in the past decades—of Mx. Y was

beyond anything I had heretofore encountered, and it has indelibly marked me, as I hope my treatment of Mx. Y has marked them. One for the good, it is hoped, and one, nearly certainly, for the personally bad, but incontrovertibly important to the development of the field at large. I remain a dedicated researcher and clinician, though a fragment of doubt, possibly, an occult fear of something, *the void which substance needs but which needs not substance*, now pre-occupies me. There is little to suggest that the pathways we now tread were meant for us. Yet, how could we see a door ajar and not swing it open to see what lies beyond? What lies outside. Perhaps it would be better had we never been at all.

CLINICAL DATA

When Mx. Y first contacted me regarding entering analysis they were apprehensive, and told me that they had never regarded the treatment of the sort offered by psychotherapeutic techniques to be anything other than a kind of palliative nosology for those too depleted and uncreative to confront the “severe banalities of the Unreal.” They had, however, been forced to consider a course of treatment after several interpersonal and professional setbacks they had recently encountered, leaving them, again, in their own words, “unable or lacking an imperative, which is to say it felt unnecessary, to cultivate my garden.” I must admit that I, not being a student of history nor literature (my primary education was expressly scientific, save for a few required courses ordained by the Deans of St. Snomis College, and focused nearly entirely on astronomy, biology and geology, before turning, as I did in my post-baccalaureate pursuits, to the study of clinical psychology at Miskatonic, itself a fascinating albeit unrelated autobiographical tale, for which I hope the reader will forgive me for postponing to a later time), it did not immediately register with me that this, as it were, highly-cultivated phrase was a reference to Voltaire’s *Candide*, in the final section in which the hero is speaking to his teacher, Pangloss. To my later embarrassment, I inquired after Mx. Y’s horticultural pursuits and the current state of their hypothetical florae, concerned as I am for all

living things as a matter of professional (aesth)ethics. In this I failed, too, to note the powerful symbolism of Mx. Y appending the relations of student to teacher in so formulating their distress, with them as Candide and I, of course, as Pangloss, the etymology of which refers to the latter's unfailingly thorough knowledge of all forms of symbolic communication and thus (the) Enlightenment, an era for which *Candide* was as much a bible as a source of demonology.⁴

Fortunately for the present essay, Mx. Y was warmly blasé about my solecism, and as it happened, they did keep something of a garden in their back lot on Dorchester Avenue, near the University of Chicago, where, they later informed me, they were a lecturer in the Departments of Comparative Literature and Romance Languages, teaching a rather unpopular introductory class to Cthellian literature and the first year sequence of Italian, respectively.⁵ They informed me, given space constraints, they mostly grew small flowers and root vegetables, though expressed preference for the carrot, which they found “infinitely more fascinating than the geranium.”⁶

I mentioned a sequence of interpersonal and professional setbacks which induced Mx. Y to seek treatment. At the time, having newly-finished my doctorate in clinical psychology, I had begun a postdoc in psychoanalysis proper at the Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis & Psychotherapy, where I, too, was currently undergoing analysis as part of my training. My name, prominently displayed in a lacquered cinnamon serif, below that ruminative and forlorn Sphinx⁷ that perches astride atop the C

⁴ This is not what is typically understood to be the actual etymology, or metaphorical gesture, being made by Voltaire: Pangloss is overly-chatty, prone to digressions, and something of a pedantic blowhard which, it might already be seen, is something the good doctor is susceptible to.

⁵ Cross-referencing with the University of Chicago course catalogue reveals what may be too much information regarding the identity of Mx. Y, though only generally: four people have offered instruction in both classes, and so the matter may rest for the moment with regards to ethical considerations. Again, Dr. Kapek is primarily a theorist, and less informed about the expectations of being a practicing clinician.

⁶ Dr. Kapek does not appear to realize that this, too, is a reference, this time to the film *Withnail and I*. It does appear that the quote was meant sincerely, however, as certain unpublished notes which I have reviewed and which did not make it into this essay show Mx. Y elaborating a “theory of the root,” and expounding at length on various subterranean preoccupations. Beyond what comes next, that is.

⁷ Dr. Kapek repeatedly spells “Sphinx” with a Y in his dealings with Mx. Y. The correspondence is not missed, though its reason is left for the reader to interpret.

and P of its sponsoring organization's logo, as if almost in a repose of domination over the possibilities of analytic reason, much to the chagrin and joy of Sophocles as well as Sigmund, attracted various sorts of Cratyluses and misanthropes, the ne'er-do-well sort borne of city-slick apartment blocks packed too tightly for the brain to breathe, and only occasionally someone whose better interests obtained, and wished to reach out to me for a consultation. It is without doubt due to my name, which echoes in phoneme as surely as etymon the doings of a certain Czech pulp writer whose primary contribution to *lettres bestiales* was that insipid incantation of slave machines, which we have no need for, neither practically nor in art. I may breathe easy upon finding, on my 20th birthday, that no such connection, neither genealogical or national (I am of Austrian extraction on both sides, my parents having been born in Vienna and Grazburg⁸) is known to exist, and that I am firmly my own man.⁹ Such is my distance from the Czech, that I, who despite my scientific pursuits consider myself to be an amateur linguist of some distinction, having learned to fluency German, French, Russian, and several classical languages, upon attempting to learn the languages of Prague and Bratislava, found myself stupefied, unable to pick up even the simplest *dobry* or *pogarda*.

I had initially feared that Mx. Y had rung my proverbial doorbell to enquire, like so many before, as to my relation to the aforementioned hack. That was, mercifully, not the case, and so after a brief conversation, Mx. Y agreed to meet for an initial consultation in my amply apportioned offices at 29 Michigan Avenue. My secretary, though she has always preferred the term "administrative assistant" to many a raised eyebrow from myself, was the first to encounter my new patient, and would later confide to me, as she often did, late at night, after the day's passage of neurotic and hebephrenic to and from my waiting room and been halted by the secure Yale lock on my office front door, that Mx. Y had seemed to her not of the sort that I typically counsel. Having proven a degree of aptitude escaped by my fellow candidates (and at the tender age, only, of 31), my

⁸ No such city exists, and it is presumably either Graz or Salzburg to which Dr. Kapek means to refer.

⁹ An interesting claim from one who purports to be a psychoanalyst.

faculty had all agreed that it fell to me to help the most hopeless of cases at the free clinic to which I offered my services in exchange for tuition remission and a small stipend (the family coffers, ample even before the War, had twice-doubled in the time since, and my allowance from that trust supplemented such meagre pittance as what was then called a ‘stipend’).

It was therefore quite unusual to see such a well-composed (at the time, I thought) man enter my quietly mauve waiting area, their hair, as my secretary described it, burnished ochre in the diaphanous light of the subtle electric candelabra placed at varying intervals on leather upholstered tables among the sloped Jacobsen chairs which I had so carefully sought from various dealers in the mid-century and before. She had remarked, between sips of a *Pineau des Charentes* which she was quite fond of, and which we had taken to sharing a glass of at the close of each day, enjoying the pleasant cloying tang of the reduced Cognac-aged grapes as the evening light faded into lake and gave over to the glittering resplendence of Millennium Park, that he (they, as it turned out) was better-suited for a classroom at some distinguished college than in waiting for a consulting room to disgorge its previous disturbances to make room for their own (she had attended a minor liberal arts college of minimal distinction, and so often would make such comparisons to more hallowed portions of the ivory tower, a transparent anxiety which I had immediately diagnosed¹⁰). I remarked that they had seemed like any other patient I had seen, though I had the advantage of scientific observation and psychological training, while my secretary had only studied a desultory array of fields, and all of them in the less rigorous specialities within the Humanities.¹¹

¹⁰ Marie Sabine Vossler-Gray, as her name is, and who worked for Dr. Kapek only briefly and with extreme reluctance, had, in fact, attended McGill University and the University of Chicago, and knew Mx. Y—Dr. Y, actually—by sight from their occasional interactions on campus. Dr. Kapek apparently did not know this, or chose to ignore it. His contradiction of the first sentence in the same paragraph would seem to be borne from a desire to flex his observational prowess and dominance.

¹¹ She graduated *summa cum laude* from McGill with a double-major in Art History and French, and at the time was pursuing a doctorate in the former at the University of Chicago, so we must again take Dr. Kapek’s characterization with some seasoning.

If I may be permitted a digression before I begin the heavy-lifting which typifies an analytic report, it seems germane to the following to relate some of my personal history, a nebulous thing which any analyst knows how deeply such things affect counter-transference and the well-being of the patient. In the case of Mx. Y, I found myself not only continually returning to scenes from my early life, but to the development of my own intellectual proclivities as an undergraduate at St. Snomis College.

As I said, my parents were Austrian, and immigrated first to Switzerland, where I was born and then on to Sweden, Stockholm, where I was raised until the age of nine by a series of tutors and the well-apportioned welfare state. Though not lacking in funds, my father, who until his death was a staunch believer in the public good, felt it necessary, indeed, felt compelled, to inculcate in his children a sense of populism and camaraderie for the common folk, though in whatever fantasies of egalitarianism he held, he frequently neglected to account for the affective impact such aggrandizing notions of equality would have on his progeny (my sister being three years my senior was much-ridiculed in those early days by her school fellows for her strange accent whenever called upon in class to produce the native and guttural o's and a's of that Hyperborean tongue). He worked, often manically, for much of his life as an economist and banker, and was a key figure in the standardization of the Swedish economy in the courtship ritual of country to suprer-bloc, which proved his final gesture: he was found, as it happens, dead at his desk, Montblanc in hand, surrounded by charts, graphs, and trees bearing logarithmic fruit, on the exact day both his adopted and native nations ascended to membership in that continent-spanning Union of law and coin.

My mother, of course, was a scholar of a softer sort, and spent a lifetime in that decidedly feminine pursuit of ethics and moral codes, having been received a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Vienna, and subsequently tenure in Sweden, for which, I suspect, she never forgave my father. In particular, I remember vividly as a young boy, toddling through our drafty apartment, a relic of a time when Sweden, still, could hold the mantle of a Great Power, and hearing through the

mahogany crack of the study door, the harsh and disgruntled whisper of matrimonial discord, her volleys of Aquinas, Aristotle, and Alasdair MacIntyre, and his counter-attack of Bonds, Bretton Woods, and Big-Mac Index. After he died, my father's presence seemed to haunt our lives, a specter of capital in its very essence. My mother seemed to take great relish in this revenant, and so, in the sole book of her career, entitled *Expectorations of Marx*, she calmly and with deep, even motherly, precision, provided an ethical basis for eliminating supply-side economics. Thus the exorcism was complete.

My time in the North was comparatively brief; at the age of ten, I was sent to school in Brussels, then subsequently to Montagnola in Switzerland, where I, keen as I was to study something distinct from the *sturm und drang* generated by the high and low pressure systems of my parents' fields, found myself attracted (I choose this word with care) to the natural sciences. The less said about Brussels the better, a rickety capital of post-national fantasies and diplomatic nuances which were more subtle to my jejune ears than the grooves of a record on one's fingers. Present, total, and beyond interpretation. In Switzerland, now a boy of 14, jettisoned from the bleak urban Benelux to the shores of Lugano and the hills of Collina d'Oro, festooned in my newly pubescent body with purpose and pedigree, I rambled over the greenery and greydom of that alpine land in a rough haze of revelry. Nature was to become my calling, with its whirligigs and involuted shapes and beings. Each mountain saxifrage gave way to a subsequent *frage*, and in glee at the glamorous forms about me I would attend with relish to the scientific and technical aspects of my lessons, inquiries borne of my walks scribbled in cramped hand in various *Tagebücher* I had selected from a local shop specializing in stationary from Zurich.

That nature was something I felt to be erotically charged can only be expressed and explained by my first encounter with the fairer sex. I recall with throbbing intimacy and expectation those private lessons, arranged by and with a certain *fraulein*, *signorina* in exposed frankness, who, as a newly-appointed lecturer at my little academy, had but to whisper the latin name of this or that

mollusk that grew in abundance just beyond the school's walls in the chatoyant lake, or chalk, in resplendent hexagon, the shape of an acid or peptide, that I would hush, transfixed and malleable, before this avatar of possibility.

...but enough of that. Such lustful things should not be written of, and spoken of, perhaps, only in the consulting room. Suffice it to say that our little trysts in the more practical and intimate dimensions of biology (how she could weave such poetry about eukaryotes and meiosis!) left a decidedly permanent impact on my outlook, so much so that, upon application to colleges and universities, I took the delicate thing's advices interspersed with her advances and applied, nearly without alternative, to her alma mater, a little school in Maine, coastal, quiet, and quaint, which bore the name St. Snomis, a revered figure in certain diasporic Christian denominations originating from the east of Italy and certain insular communities in the Adriatic.

Though the college had long ago thrown off its theological commitments to this or that well-worn presbyter, when I arrived, youthfully uncreased but jet-lagged, having traded neutral mountains for exceptionalist beaches, the campus, festooned in its matrimonial colors to welcome to its bosom a newly-threshed crop of eager and long-legged tutees, fluttery and shyly amorous, the buildings, thick and brown, kneeling around a central quadrangle on which a cobblestone crucifix spread from dorm to dining hall to library to great gate, gave only the faintest impression that this was, indeed, an institute dedicated to secular reasoning and the triumph of enlightened ideals. Such was the pallor, even in those early evenings and days, with classes newly commenced and led often in droning melancholy by hirsute and aged scholars sketched in outline by a dark sun leering bespectacled through lead-grilled windows, when excitement and anxiety occupied an unsplit and primal state, that the nebulous and occluded friend groups, which swirled and drifted in and out of sharp contrast, a social mimicry of the leaves that covered the campus, were already staid, platitudinous, and oddly subdued, as if to have friends at all mirrored some catechismic and

cataclysmic indiscretion, for which, if we were caught, would merit several Our Fathers and at least a couple Hail Marys.

My affable character was of course a central light in those bleak New England social maneuvers, and I quickly became known around campus as much for my choice of dress (even in those days I was concise with my newly acquired tailor, a pudgy man whose shop on the high street in Wells was conspicuously decorated in sharp vermilion and dense blacks to win contract with my rather refined European expectations for dress shirts, suits, and motley variety of cravat, tie, and scarf) as for my urbane and polished demeanor. I often found myself at the center of airy and erudite discussion in the dining hall, and cramped by the scrum of synched feet as I made my way from the library to the science building and observatory, where I spent much of my time, even outside of official studies. Indeed, such was my importance to breaking the dam of Puritan silence in those first quarters that, by the spring of my second year, I was president, prefect, or padishah of many a club and society, had been elected by faculty to a prestigious entitlement among other science majors, and had, it may be said, several steady amorous interests. Every empty chair, even among the more exclusive refectories deigned for fraternal orders, was an invitation, which I, whenever I was not pre-occupied by degrees of arc or taxonomies of biota, warmly filled and occupied, much to the laughter and enjoyment of my compatriots.

My turn to clinical psychology and its disenfranchised, but pitifully indulged, child psychoanalysis came one gold-leafed autumn day during a seminar, required of all undergraduates regardless of their chosen indulgences, a survey of modern American literature, in which, having stumbled through the half-haranguing and bumptious prose of a peculiar European exile who had found quarter and many a quarter in the New World (one sympathizes!), I had chanced upon a stanza, annotated by the former, deleted but divulged from a dead, Frosty, poet, that awakened in me some sense of truth-searching which I had heretofore relegated only to the cosmic and the genetic:

The light is good; the reading lamps, long-necked;

*All doors have keys. Your modern architect
Is in collusion with psychoanalysts:
When planning parent's bedrooms, he insists
On lockless doors so that, when looking back,
The future patient of the future quack
May find, all set for him, the Primal Scene.¹²*

“Quack” was certainly correct! I thought, and in sharing my musing with Prof. Broyard, himself a second-rate quibbler with words, jettisoned from the New York Circuit after several pamphlets of prose and verse had failed to sell more than a dozen copies (he did not take my assertion, kindly, asking in retort if I had “found a better system for true self-understanding” than the one provided by Freud), I found myself deliciously vexed, troubled beyond a mere pre-occupation, and in the dimming of that crimson and maroon season, finals finally given to finale, I jaggedly heaved and ho’ed over the many and manifold potentials of the idea of a science of the self. Though against any and all forms of banality, pseudoscience the greatest of their forms, I wondered if there were, indeed, a path towards a fulfillment of our most precious and empty cup: the triangulation of the human in the cosmic order.

Not given to religion, and upon doffing my mortarboard and slipping from the limpid azure silks of my baccalaureate vestments, found my body, postured and bent in pale imitation of an inky wretch (now electrified before a glowing square), scribbling letters of inquiry, statements of purpose, and clipping and re-crimping various graded papers from my studies on nature, in search of a suitable graduate program to further my curiosities.

The storm of replies was swift and vigorous, and I was accepted nearly everywhere that I applied. In the summer of my senior year, drier than any in recent memory, I packed the little that I

¹² We have no reason to believe that this quote is an invention of Dr. Kapek’s, though the specific citation is not available. That he referred to the poet as ‘Frosty,’ and annotated by another, could suggest a modern American poet in the vein of Robert Frost, though given the style, clunky, ugly, and without rhythm, the poet in question could only be a paltry shade of the former.

had and, having selected a program that combined as I thought then and now it should, the human, social, and natural sciences into a steady curriculum meant to give a Virtruvian perspective on the *homo sapiens*, drove my small, second-hand Kramler (once a powerful and violent mechanical beast!) to that small town in northern Massachusetts to begin my final bout of academic study. Alas, those years, troubled though they were in both town and gown, passed with unyielding speed, and so the less said about them the better. I made the necessary rounds in subject and discipline, learned the spots of greatest sensitivity in the brain, found the syntax that distinguishes a Rank thinker from an Adlered one, praised the gematria of chemical scripts, the pharmaceutical interventions, the onto-, epi-, and metafloxins, though without authority or inclination to prescribe them. Six years later, out of Boyhood and into some semblance of Manumission, a familiar scene, complete with silks and geometric hat, repeated on a baroque stage of cedar and purple drapery: a Doctor of Philosophy, Clinical Psychology, C. Kapek, bound for the mystical Midwest, in search of analytic prowess to submerge the bedrock of my empirical principles in something fecund and human, where great forests of insight would thrive. Thus I arrived, the Kramler now a sleek Marinetti, a gift upon the occasion of conferral to myself, and took up residence in a rickety but lovingly-lacquered industrial studio, its guts long-disgorged of their abattoirs and tanneries in favor of nacreous inlaid backslashes and solemn, obsidian, kitchen appliances, in the olden light of the West Loop, the birdsong of St. Snomis and Massachusetts replaced by the sparked clack of corrugated pink and green boxcars of the L (*el* what? Definite but occluded).

My story is classic, though I concede that certain progressives would mark it as ‘tired:’ the educated and wealthy European, bespoke in their mystery and glamorous wealth, emigrated to America, an island of square borders and uncanny free markets, becoming a doctor of great repute and lavishing upon the continent precisely that Continental style so derided and lusted for. Though some may bemoan my presence in the world of human sciences for this entirely unavoidable *curriculum vita*, I counter: how can one see the true form of human consciousness without having

been a spark in the crucible of its history, the Europe that defined the world for so long? So we return to the case at hand.

Perhaps one more: I should say a little about the development of inhuman psychoanalysis. No, no. Perhaps later. Yes, later.

My own initial assessment of Mx. Y was primarily sartorial: they appeared well-dressed, alert, with the burnished sienna hair to which my secretary referred (she is no student of art,¹³ and so the subtle colorations of ochre and sienna—which to many evoke the same dull shade of brown, to me sparkle in contradistinction to one another, evoking the shingled rooftops of the gleefully bunched buildings of Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna, where I have holidayed many a joyful time amongst the ancient cities and their charming, rustic, people, so set in their ways as to be immune to analysis, but with whom I developed a special affinity—would be lost on her) cropped short on the sides and longer on top in a sort of latter-day pompadour. They were of slight build, of medium height (I am a respectable 6'3", and they were notably shorter than I, but only if one were to view them from above), and appeared to be of a similar age to myself, and wearing a dark grey cardigan, with a collarless button-up shirt, and trimmed, even tight, pants, finished with a black combat boot of some sort which I was unfamiliar, with yellow stitching, which felt quite militaristic, even for the typically puddle-frequent weather of Chicago autumns. This was set apart from otherwise drabness with a bright purple and black checked scarf, which they wore casually slung around the neck, and a sort of lapel pin on their cardigan, which bore the symbol of what appeared to be the tarot card of Death from the Major Arcana. While well-put together, they had clearly purchased their clothes *prêt-à-porter*, and so must have less funds than a typical tenured professor at a major university.¹⁴ What set them apart most of all, though, was the strikingly feminine aspect of their face, angular and aquiline, with a hint of Asiatic features, with skin bearing no hint of facial hair, and with subtle makeup about

¹³ See above.

¹⁴ Dr. Kapek is apparently under the impression that lecturers are tenure-track, a notion equal parts laughable and romantic.

the eyes and cheeks. This, along with their lithe build, made them decidedly androgynous, and so was my first indication that they were not firmly affixed to either of the two genders.

After an initial exchange of pleasantries, which felt more like an interrogation than a conversation, such was their lassitude and unwillingness to speak (little did they know the first dictum of psychoanalysis, Wittgenstein by way of some French post-Lacanian: “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one cannot stay silent”¹⁵), I discovered they came bearing anxious entitlements. Their hand presented the slivered cream corner of a crumpled epistle, something much massaged by nervous paresis. They extracted it slowly, without unclasping their firm grip, like a tissue from a box, and handed it to me. I have it now in my files, which I intend on burning (burning bright) at the completion of this essay, but which I transcribe in part below for purposes of clarity and dread posterity:

Dear [Y,]

This letter informs you that the hiring committee will be postponing its meeting, scheduled 12 September, indefinitely. While you are well-liked by and familiar to much of the faculty in our department, and you have been one of the top candidates for our recent job search for Assistant Professor, we must say, in frankness, that certain of your behaviors have given us pause. To be direct, your behavior at the colloquium last Friday left several of us worried about your health, particularly the aggressiveness with which you interrogated Prof. [Z] on their research regarding the minor literatures of Europe. That they neglected to mention, and perhaps, by the tone you took, did not laud, Cthellian, is not, as you said “irresponsible scholarship,” but rather a matter of subdisciplinary focus and intended direction of their project.

Your current monograph, which we note has been in development at least since you were hired as a lecturer four years ago, while promising in its description, is not a pass to violate the standards of academic discourse and flaunt the respectful exchange expected of a member of this department. We, again, wish to be frank, your work on the poetry of Cthellian, and its connection to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, while no doubt an important contribution to comparative literature, is not a fiat on what is or is not valid research, particularly as regards larger swathes of our discipline.

¹⁵ Françoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière, *History Beyond Trauma*.

Secondly, as per our conversation two weeks ago at the reception for Prof. [F]'s retirement, I am more than a little concerned about the route your research appears to be taking. You spoke, and at times did so without the typical coherence I've come to expect of you, of various sources and research styles that are not, at all, rigorous or even commonly regarded as academic. The role of Venus and its 'ashen light' in the history of philosophy, and the 'tellurian axis' of trauma stood out as particularly bizarre. Your work risks devolving into fringe accusations and mystical philosophy rather than concise, well-wrought, theory and criticism, of which we know from your published work you are more than capable of producing.

We know you are aware of the expectations and standards of decorum for an appointee of a university, and we are familiar with you as a person. All of us remain quite fond of you, and we attribute this recent indiscretion, which is many in quite a developing list, to something that is beyond the normal course of daily life. To this end, we are recommending, out of an abundance of care, that you seek psychological treatment and address whatever it is that has so disrupted you. I have included the name of a therapist recommended to me by a colleague. We encourage you in the strongest terms to make use of him, before the committee schedules another meeting regarding the hiring question.

Yours,

[X]

cc: Chair, Department of Comparative Literature

After having studied the letter for a few moments, I found out, through laconic yes's and no's, that my card, 32-point weight, canary-yellow, card stock with embossed sapphire lettering in solemn yet earthy Garamond, was included in the envelope, which had appeared a week ago in their faculty mailbox.

Beyond the letter, which there can be no doubt about regarding inducements to therapy, Mx. Y's chief complaint, after they loosened a little and became somewhat comfortable in talking to me (erect, in a wing-backed chair, rather than prostrate on the couch, as proper analysis would demand), was of, as I have mentioned, personal setbacks (the letter showing the aforementioned professional ones). They described to me what can only be a sort of psychotic alienation of affection: their

primary partner, for they expressed a preference and history of a polyamorous bent, had been quick to leave them after several halcyon years, all occasioned by a chance and utterly strange business with, as it were, a business card. Their partner, who though different in outlook and temperament to an almost incompatible degree was cherished with all of the love that one would expect in a healthy relationship, was of a rather superstitious bent, so upon the discovery, on the ground behind the dumpsters of their modest apartment building, of a card bearing the title of *Pyewacket and Co.* which Mx. Y took inside because of its peculiarity, their partner made it known that they felt uncomfortable. Pyewacket, the gentle reader will know, is an impish familiar, dating back to the 17th century witch hunts of England. Its tenor of evil is debatable but, as Mx. Y insisted, not overwhelmingly malicious in any received interpretation. At any rate, as they related, this small stress fracture in an otherwise seemingly-solid domestic situation revealed myriad fissures, resulting in interpersonal gulfs which could not be bridged let alone sutured. After some brief intervals where affairs were settled, their lover departed, resulting in what they referred to as a kind of “icy malaise,” though they pronounced it “malice.”

Alas, such is the limitations of the genre of case study that beyond this first and important meeting, much of the next five years (those five haunted years!) must be condensed, paraphrased, at times Baudelaierized, in order to convey the impact, the essential gravity, of what Mx. Y showed to me and the world of the inhuman. It was done so in bits, through contortions of spirit and language. I remember, some time in the second year, when we have fallen into a regular yet heady rhythm, just the two of us in that pristine, dyadic dance, that, upon this or that chance remark I made about their use of language, which remained peculiarly polished, full of puns and strange ephemera, they replied that “no human tongue will save us from what is to be witnessed.” They often spoke like this, they were given to histrionic flourishes more appropriate for a pulp horror novel than real speaking.

So, too, was their peculiar worldview something of a fascinatingly incomprehensible thing, like an artwork with no author. I am first and foremost a plenipotentiary of psychoanalytic theory, though I am not alien to politics, and have in several instances generously given great sums to this or that work whose policy I felt an affable connection with. I am proud to say such donations have proven critical for the betterment of my adopted city, Chicago,¹⁶ and have reflected my thorough commitment to the idea of a humanist spirit, so prevalent in the sciences, and which in my naive and juvenile days first drew me to them. It is safely established that moderation is the best of all things, and I take freely from several stalls in the marketplace of ideas, knowing that no one side holds in trust the Truth Itself, and only through reasoned and responsible discourse can we come to slowly improve the lot of the human being in the world. Thus, I had never subscribed to such issue-based distractions as reflected by the American political machine, choosing instead to remain aloof and practice what I preached in supporting only those small projects which I felt tasked the public funds of Chicago with alleviating all manner of social ills. And so I have supported the arts, public transit improvements, many a food pantry and soup kitchen, and even at times given myself over to such indulgences as a public protest or two.¹⁷ To say that Mx. Y's political views were not in keeping with my own would simply be an injustice to both of our stances.

In my office there is a small portrait hung above my desk, a gift from my father many years ago (see Fig. 2 in the Appendix) which I had kept rolled tightly in a cardboard tube in the back of some desultory closet, and which I had occasion to frame at the end of HUSH. For Mx. Y, the picture appeared to hold some sort of special significance. They often remarked upon it as they entered the room, saying in various ways that the figure, kneeling in some sort of supplicant's pose to an unseen sky, with the caption "Last Appeal," was a sort of ekphrastic representation of the

¹⁶ At the time of writing, Dr. Kapek had not yet relocated to New York City. It is evident from speaking with him that the plan was never to leave Chicago, but the events which transpired after the cessation of Mx. Y's analysis altered such plans.

¹⁷ It is clear that this 'enlightened centrism' which Dr. Kapek held so dear no longer reflects his much more radical views, though of course he still eschews the disaster that is American parliamentary politics.

“unthought known” which haunted not only psychoanalysis (it is an idea of Bollas’), but the very fabric of the process by which humans attempt to confront unknowability. This was often a topic that pre-occupied them in our sessions; they had a very peculiar socio-political concept of the human which I found not only, at first, largely offensive to common sense, but indicative of some sort of thought disorder of the subtle kind, which may remain hidden in figures who people the halls of academia, or follow in creative and artistic pursuits, and which is taken often to be no more than ‘creative practice’ or a quirk which allows them to excel beyond their fellows. Often, such is the case when the disorder does not usher with it a suite of disruptive affective states. In a sentence, the schizophrenic who is happy and functional is not a schizophrenic at all.

Indeed, for the first year or so, this was my initial sort of diagnosis (though I have limited patience for that nauseating and on-the-nose nosology called forth by insurance companies and institutionalized medicine alike by utterance of three graven letters and an indexical number, the trigrammaton of psychopathology, the DSM 5 [they have dispensed with axes and Roman numerals, yes, but the same Kraepelin core remains, still as glass and just as false]). What keenly separated them from a thought disorder proper—I confess this took me time to note, such was the degree of distance between our ordering perspectives—was that it was so thoroughly well-thought out and *organized*. It bore none of the chaotic hallways of this or that haunted house in the brain, referring as they did to a “cosmic situationism,” a laughable term (at first) whose provenance echoes back to the dull dramas of French Marxists and their obsession with cities and their affective resonances. In Mx. Y’s configuration, the city had fallen, been razed by forces both cosmic and unutterably old and extended in time and space. Instead, they insisted, the perspective was at once aesthetic and political (so much for that regal and royal autonomy of art, with which even as a child in Sweden I was again and again made familiar through regular visits to the *Kunliga slottet* and its inexhaustible array of armorial statues and portraiture), and was typified by several key features. This was the best of all possible worlds, they said, which by intrinsic definition, was also the worst of all possible worlds, as

there was one world, and so the best-worst distinction collapsed, save for feature two: that the world, as given by nature, is abject, horrific, and indifferent, such restitutions and edits fell to human (and other rational) cognition to ‘edit’ and ‘resist.’ If, feature three, this was the world as we found it, and it was intensely, sometimes lyrically, absurd, painful, cruel, and inhuman, it fell to us to make the best of all possible Beings, which included both social configurations and the human itself. They were assured, of course, of the existence of sapient and rational aliens (which I did concede, even then, was probably, if nature could overcome the Mitochondria Problem), but as we had found none, it was in part our job (feature three, tree 3), to construct them as an object of dialectical opposition. In so doing, they argued, we could quite literally think and make possible worlds that nature had neglected to induce. All of this, they said, merited a revolutionary reconfiguration of society, science, and being itself into a sequence of constructed and radical forms of life. If nature is unjust, change nature, and in so doing, free the human from its shackles and become a sort of Promethean and alien being, which the human is of course destined to be if it wishes to continue to be at all. “Extinction comes for everything,” so it stood to reason if the *thing* in question changed, extinction would no longer come for it... until it did, and the thing would change again. Such was the position of cosmic situationism, as radical to traditional communisms as communism is to monarchism.

As I pointed out, this presented a contradiction for analysis, proper: the core of our being lay outside of us. Meaning *lay* outside of us, which is impossible. Mx. Y retorted that all being encroaches inward, terminally. Philosophy, art, music, consciousness: each was a deteriorating process towards an unbecoming. Only in our short-circuiting of the Unbecoming could we continue on, infinite, stripped of our limits, something like a nightmare from which we awaken (Joyce, on history) or, having finished the Day of Humanity’s work, lay down our infernal tools, and rise from the Slaughter-bench of History, content at what we had made.

Progress, they said, comes only in annihilating ourselves. Endurance, they said, is only a side-effect. Deep time, history, combined in the Anthropocene, would give way to the Xenoscene, the

fusion and collapse of artifact and nature. An unholy time of piecemeal gods. Our DNA will boil away in the ultraviolet void. What comes next, I must know. Please.

And yet, the project would never finish, never stop until either heat death was solved or it took the last being in the Final Analysis. A time of Weeping and Joy. Even in this desperate utopia, whose island weathers all manner of solar winds and entropical storms, monsters lurked in the dark. It was another common refrain that they were being followed, one Cotton Candy Head (Fig. 3) which they had found in an old postcard in their mother's house long ago. Such a delusion, being followed by a monstrous incantation of what they called "the unthinkable abyss at the heart of all clear thinking" would have immediately demarcated the line between reason and un-, except for a troubling episode of my own. I had seen the figure. At a fair on Navy Pier, which I had occasioned to visit with some old St. Snomis chums visiting for a lecture circuit of the major universities in the area. I had just sat down to enjoy a local delicacy of which I had become very fond (city, dragged through a garden, in a bun) when, in the shadows under the ferris wheel, the last of the mechanical wonders of the White City, I saw it. What had always appeared to me as a trick of the eye, the head of the cotton candy salesperson occluded by a dense explosion of lilac and robin's egg bags packed with spun sugar, suddenly gave way to a shivering electric certitude of its impossible form. At yet there it was. There is stood. What was impossible, yet still was.

It was then that I began to believe them. Not believe them, no, grow helpless in the face of them. Them. Y. What was Why?

There is too much left to say and I grow weary, fatigued as the light approaches, that Tired Light. Oh, I can't convey it at all. Not at all.

But a little more. Precisely as the letter stated, Mx. Y had for some time been developing their erstwhile dissertation into a book project. It was here that I began to get a first glimpse of their... hidden self. After their exegesis of cosmic situationism, the project made more sense. They were, as I had said, a scholar of Cthellian, a strange language isolate spoken in Thellia, an

archipelago nation in the Adriatic, which had descended, as linguists had confirmed, as the sole inheritor of Etruscan. Thellia, *Cthell*, in its native tongue, was a much understudied area of world literature, being so distinct from other languages and so isolated since the fall of the Venetian Republic. Mx. Y was one of the few experts in the area, which they compared to being about as studied in the United States as Basque or Igbo. Yet, their uniquely potent position in scholarship was marred by the several odd claims they held about Cthellian literature and its culture. They referred to Cthell, the country itself, as a kind of servant, “the yellow monarch of a neon cult,” and compared it often to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, an obscure and famously cryptic book of the Italian Renaissance, which few had written about, but those few had done so voluminously in their little world, tracing circles in the dusty labyrinth of crumbling libraries of Latin, Greek, and Tuscan. Searching for a key to the underwater labyrinth, the garden labyrinth, the island of Cytherea, and the Dream Itself, which was marked by several occult woodcuts, whose information only deepened the mystery of the text.

You see, they said, Cthell wasn't a country at all but a vector. It was settled atop the calderas of many volcanic islands and limestone karsts, drawn from the lava which spewed from the primal Adriatic as its tectonic fissure burst and scabbed over in eons past. But the island possessed something of a unique magnetic signature, which geologists attributed, banally and simplistically, with no regard for the esoteric and cosmic, to specific metallurgical deposits in the archipelago's crust. Mx. Y held, through what evidence I was never told, that Cthell was the Sun-on-Earth, which thrust deep into the *real* Cthelll, the primal trauma of all life, the spinning core, proportionally out of range compared with the other terrestrial planets. This anomaly was itself due to a drama of Hadean times, the collision of Gaia, the early Earth's super-Earth form, by Theia, a Mars-sized rogue planet, which created both the overlarge core and Luna. Between Luna and Cthelll, life, from this first trauma, beyond the scope of the psychoanalytic, life obtained, the child, always, of a trauma about which it cannot speak. So, Y insisted, we are *always* in trauma, and this trauma is life itself, a

curse of our titanic forebears. But, yet, there is hope. Venus, whose peculiar Ashen Light on its terminator has fascinated scientists without explanation for years, lent us philosophy, the only antidote, they said, to horror, *true* horror, the First Principle of Being: violent terror at our mistaken inception. Thus, Cthell is the cosmic core, the core of the Earth, and marks a power unnoticed by *astrology* linked to Venus, which is the lifeworld and homeworld of the unthought known, the philosophical imperative, and the source of energy for the “gyre of being:” The slow turning of the terminator of Venus which produces episodes of Ashen Light, which Mx. Y links to both Tired Light and a preoccupation of the philosopher with metaphors of darkness.

Much of this I attributed to a poetical personality, a kind of anti-rationalist bent that could be mustered, in the best of circumstances, into clear and limpid critique and analysis. But their writing, shown to me in snatches, never confirmed this interpretation. They believed it at the level of a materialist consideration. History as it actually happened. In their defense, they provided me with this, a paper fragment I have concluded was authored by a friend:

Geotraumatics and Solar Analytics

Gregory West, Sc.D.

The Saxifrage D. Rockefeller Institute for the Study of Nonhuman Semiotics, St. Snomis College

In collaboration with the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, Cornell University & Fondation al-Qabayaki, Miskatonic University—Algiers

TEXT UNFINALIZED: NOT FOR CIRCULATION OUTSIDE OF R.I.S.N.

...In this speculative frame, geodynamics and psychoanalysis are bounded by a greater than zero family resemblance, or rather, by more than Bataille’s dictum that the brain is the parody of the equator. The crust, which makes up the upper portion of the lithosphere, is not a monolithic mass

but rather a shattered husk of tectonic plates floating on a meniscus of fluid magma called the Asthenosphere. The Mohorovičić discontinuity, denoting the beginning of the lower lithosphere, at which the rigid silicate crust and this hot, plasticized top portion of the mantle meet, is porous and ductile, allowing for active thermal and seismic energy transfer (including water). This, in conjunction with internal convective rhythms brought on by viscosity and density differentials at various depth levels and laminate interfaces, allows for hyperstitial exchange between the internal t(h)reefold structure of the Earth and the surface processes of the biosphere, hydro-atmosphere, and their emergent virtualized, hyper-dimensions of semiosphere and noosphere. Acute cathartic release, or possibly a form of *jouissance*, quite literally erupts from crustal oceanic vents and volcanic activity on continental shelves, while scenes of libidinal reinvestment and repression produce time-space quakes along tectonic and metabolic-psychic rifts, dissipating energy buildups along psycholithic pathways conforming to a sort of epochal Death Drive, operating on the scale of deep time. This catalytic disruption of surface strata, coupled with the laminar flow of key elements and complex molecules across sun-warmed shallow seas, as well as extreme electrostatic charge brought about by the injection of pyroclasts into the upper stratosphere, produced the conditions necessary for the emergence of primordial life. Thus, a trace of the arche-fossil of the cosmogonic ur-trauma permeates all functions and vectors of biotic, lithic, and psychosocial life and, furthermore, is constitutive of their coherence and continuing re-emergence and re-cognition. In Lacanian terms, the arche-fossil is the *sinthome*. In Deep Media terms, this is Cthelll, the anorganic nightmare from which all of history has been an attempt to awaken.¹⁸

We can thus, from a larger frame, establish the solar-chthonic axis of universal economic, or following others, gradient tensor, flow: a 150,000,000km, 100,000,000 year gravitational contract that ends only in the death of one or both partners. Including Luna, there exists a cosmic polyamory, a ménage à trois of the spheres, a celestial Oedipal system abstracted out of its Freudian framework into a general system of relations for three unequal part(ie)s. In this model, a Solar Analytics of symbolic relations can be gleaned through a veil of abstractions propagating along the

The text breaks off abruptly, then a diagram:

¹⁸Cf. Nicka Land; James Joyce.

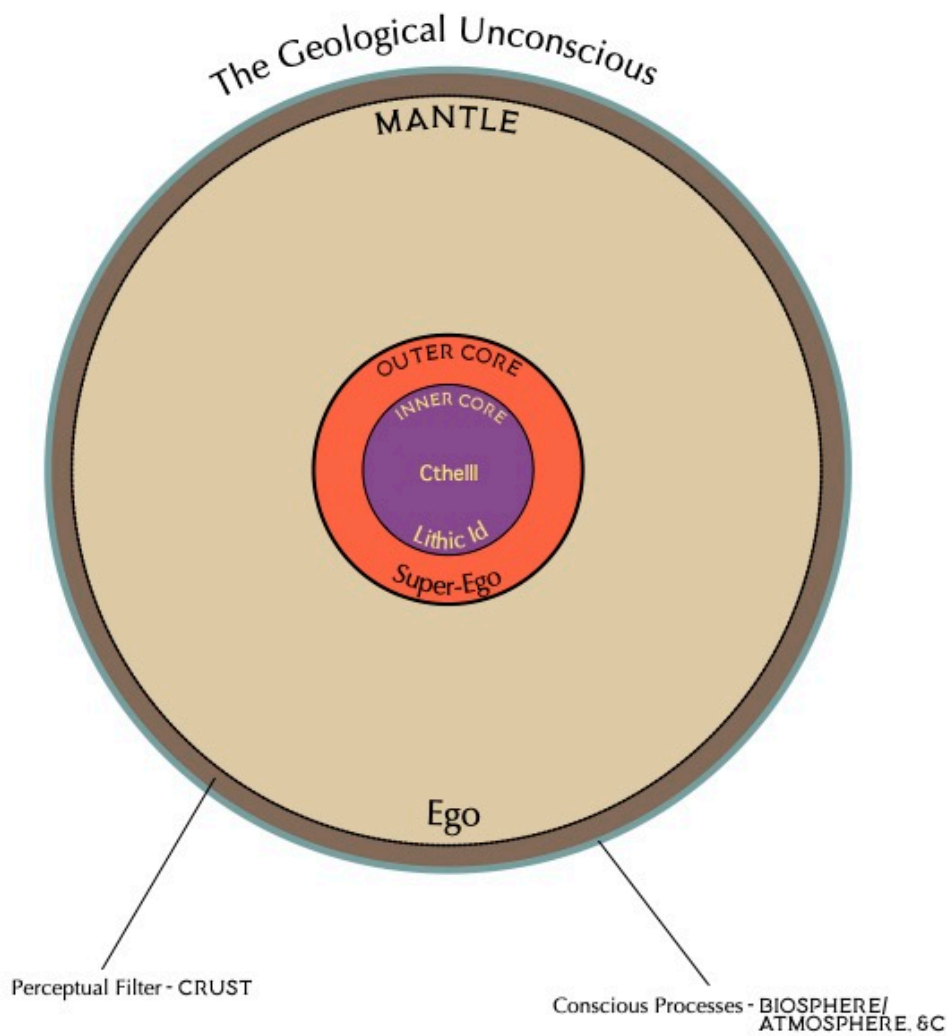


FIG 1. GEOLOGICAL UCS.

When I investigated the origin of this paper, I did find out a little bit, something of a budding research institute *at my own alma mater*. What's more, they seemed to share an interest in non-human

studies. What a coincidence! I first thought. How had I never encountered such faculty when I was a student there? But then, as things progressed, coinciding events began to seem constructed, planned, revisited and revised. Even the singular reflection of myself in the morning fog of my shower-fresh bathroom. This was something that could have otherwise been.

Dreams are the “royal road...” to what? I have so many memories what need do I have for dreams? When did I stop seeing that patient...

The dream: my eyes were removed and I remained without them, but could see by some other means, albeit faintly. I was told the retina could still perceive basic figures and lights, although it would appear shadowy, never minding the fact that the retina is on the back of the eye, and so was also removed. I attended a dinner, and you, the patient, were present. You had left your partner and were trying to hide this pain. There was before us a feast of dark and strange items. Nothing I could recognize. The dinner took place on some sort of wrought iron scaffolding, suspended in the yawning dark above a foggy abyss. We can always see it, you said, if we choose to.

Says he cannot see so well but through his garden, through the leaves and flowers and hidden roots.

That was the last time I ever saw them. The dream.

Summary

Alone. That is what we are, and without our psyches save for the grace of rocks and stars. Alone. We can't even be said to be alive, be real, be quickened over the dead who speak to us from rotten discoveries and dusty books. That Mx. Y had seen this, and more, utterly, profoundly, more, became something more than a paltry mental diagnosis. It had caved inward, infinitely inward, falling, deepening into singularity: something pointillist and monstrous, without dimension and beyond time, which frolicked in turmoil and pain, deep at the heart of darkness which is no heart at all, and which remains the core of all life, given as a gift, a cursed gift, from that horror below, the slow grinding of iron in the hot dark of the core of the world, the Cthell beyond all human cognition.

Venus watches, too, and waits in scintillating darkness for everything to tumble down into acid and death. As one said, the brain is the parody of the equator, and that is enough, more than enough, to send us fleeing from any thought of the human, the mistake that endures and that time itself hastens to correct.

This, along with other of my papers will be deposited in a secure drive in the hands of

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



:-)

Next Steps: Le livre à devenir

Dear Mark,

I can't imagine where you are right now. There's nothing to it, but you're always close to nothing, anyhow.

I think I'd miss you, if I knew you. All I have is your ghost to talk to. Did you actually come when we summoned you? From the Spirit of Music, right? That's you. One of you. Something like that.

Are you the New Inhabitant of Karkosa? After Bierce you're the most lost, so it stands to reason you woke up there, just like the rest of us.

I don't mean to bother you. You're finally calm.

I don't mean to say anything else, after everything that's happened.

I just wanted you to see what comes next.

Imagine a place called Cthell.

Written in times of quarantine [...]

students against the Party, et

la plag(u)e sous les pavés.¹

¹ E.J. Dirac, personal correspondence, March 15, 2020. "You may be queen of corona, but I better not see you & Julio down by the schoolyard!"

*catclysm. catastrophe. unveiling. devouring.*²

Statement of Problem

This dissertation will offer a new, annotated, translation of St. Snomis of Karkosa's *Works of Hate*. Under-theorized and under-translated, *Works of Hate* occupies an unjustifiably marginal presence in accounts of European Modernist prose and poetry.³ This is perhaps attributable to its complex and often alienating subject matter as much as to the obscurity and difficulty of the original Cthellian, a 'minor' language only recently breaking into the scholarly mainstream of comparative literature and cultural studies.

Superficially, *Works of Hate* is an astrological text comprised of two sections, one in prose and one in verse. It is an attempt to rectify errors in the predictive capacity of what Snomis considered "the standard mundane" models of the Western astrological tradition, all of which failed to augur both the Great War and the global pandemic that would come to be known as the Spanish Flu. Later, in the midst of World War II, Snomis returned to the work and substantially modified his model, this time attempting to account for the second, to him larger, prognosticative lapse of failing to predict the rise of fascism.

² Chuck Barker, personal correspondence, March 25, 2020. "ZoomZoomZoom into a fat curve of failing bodies and systems! 'Nothing new under the sun's corona!' Kingsport College was always virtual, in a sense. To respond virtually to a virus is beyond etymologically self-evident. Ever think about the semen in semantics? It's always there. The OED bears this out: *virus* is linked to *vir*, man, and *vir/man* (virman? ahaha, eh Gregor?) of course to potential, to *virtual* (*vir-tu-ous* pagans in a virtual, potential, stochastic, killer, Hell), but so too to the 'calamitously' symmetrical 14th century when *virus* was, literally, "semen." Talk about molecular ecofascism! nano-, pico-, femto-aggressions, cellular imperialism, a fifth column of amino acids: all the great Wankers of the Age droning (often literally) on, (medi(c)ated by their prophylactic virtuality in nonlinear cybertime and quarantined meatspace) about the salvific plunge in pollution, the exemplary return to a state of nature, as if such a thing had ever been, and all for the low, low, cost of a million dead proles. Masturbatory. Excrescent. Sade writing the sequel to *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*. No, Alain had a point, this is not new. This is simple literalization/lateralization, reification—to be my own parody, this is a xenotic *hyperstition*—of ideology, the material expression of a *habitus* of eternal growth. Jack and the Bean—stalking you."

³ Peter Gay mentions makes reference to the text only obliquely in his *Modernism*, giving about a page to works from Thellia. With frustratingly typical misappropriation, he mentions that such authors, Snomis among them, are *Italian*, and not Thellian. While Thellian and Italian are mutually intelligible and the mistake is understandable, Snomis wrote in Cthellian, the *other* national language, and one genetically unrelated to Thellian and Italian.

However, *Works of Hate* is far more than a verse-treatise on astrology. It is also a profound and far-reaching attempt at syncretism: an amalgamation of contemporary astronomical data, deep readings in Western and Eastern esoteric and mystical traditions, and a decidedly utopian-Christian agenda (though, as per usual with Snomis, an extremely heterodox one). It is also far greater than the sum of its parts, serving as a sort of chestomathy of modernism and modernity, touching on topics ranging from contemporary mathematics and philosophy, to world literatures, theories of politics, recent advances in several sciences, films of the era, and even the proper care of aquaria. Perhaps most relevant to the present project is a decidedly out-of-place disquisition, several pages long, on Hegel and Kant's understanding of the possibility of "other rational beings," a term that, while circumspect, is clearly intended to refer to sapient, organic, organisms inhabiting extraterrestrial spaces: aliens.

Using both archival and interpretive methods, this project aims to produce a scholarly translation of *Works of Hate*, annotated and with textual errata marked, including an historical introduction, and supplemented with a suite of short-form, interpretive, essays situating the work in theoretical terms, as well as within the context of Thellian cultural history and Modernism, broadly conceived. It will also provide, whenever such passages may prove insightful, extracts from Snomis' extensive *Nachlass* and certain of his personal correspondences. As Snomis (1883-1945) himself perhaps merits as much scholarly attention as his seminal work, a brief set of biographical sketches will also be included, with particular attention to his impact on Cthellian nationalism and his influence on Christian mysticism, particularly the circumstances surrounding his death in Japan, and subsequent glorification by the Cthellian Orthodox Church.

Methods

Much of the work to be undertaken is archival. There is no clean or fair copy of *Works of Hate*. There is no such thing, really, as a coherent version of *Works of Hate* at all. At minimum, what is referred to in this project as *Works of Hate* is two distinct sets of texts. The most well-known of these texts—and only to exist in a limited, partial, translation outside of Cthellian, Thellian, and Italian is the 1921 edition, in which only about half the sections appear.⁴ These sections, due to their focus on planetary bodies, have often been referred to as *il cordone celeste*, or “the celestial cord,” and have for many years been mistakenly published and annotated as the work entire. It remains widely available, with any good bookseller from Karkopolis to Rome stocking some version of *Atti dell’odio*.⁵

A second work, consisting of nine *canti* and composed sometime between the winter of 1943 and the summer of 1944, has never been translated, and has only ever been published once, in a combined edition with the 1921 text in a limited run of about 400 chapbooks by a Karkosan publishing house specializing in Christian esoterica, celebrating the 10th anniversary of St. Snomis’ (to them, alleged) death.

In nearly all instances, these editions are poorly edited, and the accuracy of the text can and should be questioned.⁶ In order to produce a clean and unified copy, as close to what the author (evidence suggests) intended, a careful review of the original manuscripts is needed.

This presents something of a challenge, though not an insurmountable one. The 1921 edition was published during the author’s lifetime, and a reasonably fair copy of the manuscript

⁴ There exists a 1975 fragment for an anthology, given procrustean, metaphrastic, prose form in Croatian, thence directly into Russian and German. Apart from this, I am aware of no other translations. While many of Snomis’ minor works have made appearances in the major global languages, his greatest work, for whatever reason, remains obscure.

⁵ In a rather tragic example of cultural erasure, the bookshops in Callipolis often sell the Italian rendering of the Thellian translation *from* Cthellian. While Thellian and Italian are for the most part quite similar, nuances preserved in the original translation are still lost. (Shops in Karkosa, and secondhand shops on both sides of Karkopolis, often have the original.)

⁶ A decent but myopic copy of the major poetic works of Snomis published by Adelphi Edizioni has been the standard text for many years. Offering facing Cthellian and Italian, it remains the only volume to contain a relatively clean text of *Atti dell’odio*. Cf: San Snomis, *Poesie scelte*, Adelphi Edizioni, Milano, 1974.

exists. This, in conjunction with annotations on the galley proofs and Snomis' personal and professional correspondences, provides us with reasonable certainty that the published text is more or less what was intended for public consumption.

This is not the case with the 1944 text. The only full manuscript of the *canti* is a single draft produced by Snomis' literary executor from the former's notebooks shortly before their departure for Japan together in 1944. This manuscript, while extant and available for viewing, is in poor condition, having been damaged by Allied bombings in 1945, and again during the liberation of Thellia by Italian and Thellian partisans in September of 1946. Additionally and perhaps more to the potential translator's detriment, the text is littered with errors of every size and description. Cthellian is an agglutinative language, exhibiting *Suffixaufnahme* or "case stacking." As such, word endings are extremely important for nuanced (or even comprehensible) readings of texts. For whatever reason, St. Snomis' amanuensis transcribed his master's notebooks poorly, in places nearly illegibly, with a kind of ersatz shorthand that makes the endings of words nearly impossible to suss out, and with an evidently severe reduction in his ability to punctuate or spell. Be it fear or madness or simply haste, the result is the same: the quality of the manuscript necessitates further research be undertaken in order to develop a critical edition of the text.

We know from letters to James Joyce and Alberto Moravia that Snomis had intended to expand *Works of Hate* at least as early as 1939, and that it was to take the form of a fully-integrated update to his astrological model in the form of an *entrelacement* inspired by medieval tropes.⁷ Furthermore, while we can indeed make some judgements about the work's intended final form through a comparison of the chapbook edition from 1955, such as the interweaving of sections from the '21 and '44 texts, this is not enough. It would seem that the only way forward in producing a clean copy is to return, in some cases speculatively, to Snomis' *Nachlass*. This, again, presents a

⁷ Interview, 1985. Moravia paid tribute to his friend when he visited Japan in 1982. Cf. Snomis's letter to Joyce dated June 1939. One of Joyce's letters to Silvia Beach mentions the correspondence in passing.

challenge: even before the events of the current HUSH virus, what exactly one means by Snomis' *Nachlass*, and where said *Nachlass* is located, is debatable.

Finally, there is the issue of the diagrams. There are two, one at the beginning, and one at the end, of the 1955 chapbook text. They have likewise made out-of-place appearances in a minority of published editions of the 1921 text. The original drawings are presumably somewhere in Snomis' notes, and he mentions his work on them several times in his letters to friends and editors, often including simplified sketches for their amusement.⁸ Simply because of the nature of diagrams, we can more or less be sure that these are as the author intended, though due diligence is still necessary to confirm that they are exact.

Resources

(NB: This was written before widespread quarantine due to HUSH took effect. Assuming a relatively expedient global recovery and the corresponding lifting of travel restrictions, the below listed sources will be visited as planned. If this fails to materialize, alternate plans will be made, and wherever possible, research will be conducted using digital resources.)⁹

As stated above, most of the research is predicated on access to archives, though the how and where have been thrown into flux. At bare minimum, careful study is needed of four main resources: the 1955 chapbooks, the original manuscripts and galley proofs of the 1921 edition, the manuscript(s) of the 1944 edition, and Snomis' *Nachlass*. Snomis' other published works—consisting variously of poems, essays, translations, sermons, short stories, three novellas, one play, and several philosophical and mystical texts—merit careful consideration, as well. These published

⁸ These sketches are presumably the source of the published diagrams, though any direct genealogy is elusive; Snomis' editorial history is byzantine enough to merit an entire, separate, book project.

⁹ EDIT: This was written in April. It's July. There has been no expedient *American* recovery. Current negotiations with the Thellian Consulate in Chicago for an emergency visa are ongoing, but infinitesimally unlikely.

works of present no real difficulty. They are widely published and widely distributed.¹⁰ However, the chapbooks are extremely scarce, with only three full copies remaining, two of which are held by private collectors.¹¹ The only complete public copy is kept in an archive in Valleta, while two partial public copies are held in Amsterdam and Karkopolis, respectively. There is currently an ongoing legal battle between Thellian and Maltese interests as to the ownership of the document, and it has temporarily been removed from public access.¹² It is not digitized, so correspondence (and possibly pleading) with the National Archives of Malta is necessary. As has been mentioned, these chapbooks are at times *wildly* speculative.¹³ This is because the original manuscript copied from Snomis' notes by his assistant—which remains in Callipolis at the National Archives of Thellia—was damaged during the Allied bombings and then again during the liberation of the islands. The manuscript had been left in the care of a friend and suffered both water and fire damage, in places significantly, necessitating creative editorial practices in preparation of the 1955 chapbook.

Luckily, the damaged manuscript is digitized, as are the galley proofs of the 1921 edition, along with a modest selection of Snomis' letters and notes, making at least the first phase of archival research possible during the current global crisis.

The final issue is that of the larger *Nachlass*, the sheer size of which is, by nearly any standard, prolific. The contents range from single line fragments on shreds of paper to entire

¹⁰ The vast majority remain, of course, untranslated from Cthellian and to a lesser extent Thellian. However, a sizable portion have made appearances in Italian, French, English, German, and Maltese. A smaller portion still were written in one of the several other languages in which Snomis held competence. More and new translations of minor works appear every day, though many only in fragment form, or in translations of translations. Still, one can praise the slow exposure Snomis is receiving, finally, to a global readership.

¹¹ So far, all requests for examination have gone unanswered.

¹² St. Snomis was born in Malta and certain groups maintain he is a Maltese, rather than Cthellian, poet. The copy held by the National Archives of Thellia was complete, but was damaged in 2006 during flooding brought about by the medicane *Querida*. It had been slated for digitalization. Absence of a complete copy in Snomis' purportedly home country has spurred the current legal challenge.

¹³ For a solid gloss of the chapbook issue, cf. D.C. Barker, "Capacitative Pulmo-thoracics and Metastatic Zeugma in Gutenberg Galactic Print Phenomena: A Study of Metaphor in the Chapbooks at Hali," [Forthcoming, *para-sites: a quasi-journal*, Jakarta]. (Hali is a district in Karkopolis where publishing house was located, near the eponymous Lake Hali).

unpublished novels in final copy.¹⁴ No coherent archive exists, with various collections spread over quite a substantial geographical area. This spread has partially to do with how Snomis' estate was settled after his death, and partially to do with the vast number of places Snomis lived and worked. While a very substantial portion of these unpublished writings (along with various books, sketches, and other realia) remain in the possession of various cultural institutions in Thellia, sizable collections can also be found in: Tokyo, Berlin, Split, Leuven, Venice, Istanbul, and the IASC research center at St. Snomis College, in Wells, Maine.¹⁵ There are also a few minor texts housed in Paris, Rome, and Valletta, as well as a single poem at the University of Warwick, in the United Kingdom.¹⁶

These collections range from fully digitized and annotated to (literally, in Split) a cracked leather notebook bound with twine and locked in a drawer. It is also unclear in most cases if any of the materials will be of use to the current project. The logistics of accessing and studying these resources will be re-assessed in the coming months, though preliminary assessments suggest the task of collating the various sources is gargantuan, at best.

Hypothesis and Argument

Works of Hate is both maximalist and incisively efficient. It is also utterly weird and long-winded, with pages-long asides, footnotes, and unaddressed errata. Sentences and paragraphs, sometimes without provocation, break rhyme, meter, and scheme. Fragments. In a real way, Snomis

¹⁴ Some of which are even quite good.

¹⁵ Curiously, St. Snomis College has no connection to St. Snomis of Karkosa. It is named after the 15th century (Catholic) saint, Snomis Feroniae, traditionally held to have been the founder of the first capital of Thellia at Feronia. For more on his fascinating miracles and the rather bizarre connection he holds to the current research see, once again, the expertise of D.C. Barker, "Principles of Least Action and the Ashen Light Debate: *Spiritus Mundi* and Scientific Thaumaturgy in the Tripartite Miracle of Snomis of Feronia," *Parallel Process: A Journal of Digital Theology* 1:3 (2007), 24-33.

¹⁶ There is also a kind of ridiculous tourist trap called the Yellow House in Turin where Snomis stayed for a couple years in his 20s. The adjacent cafe, where Snomis completed the majority of his translation of *Epistle to the Callipolites*, does have a very decent selection of Barolo wines, if that's your thing.

is perhaps the earliest practitioner of a self-aware form of Hyperstition.¹⁷ At the same time, it is unclear if Snomis really believed half of the things he was writing, or in what dimension of ‘real’ he intended them to operate. Apart from the errors in transcription there are what appear to be errors in *thought*: for two entire celestial sections, Snomis refers to Mars as “Minerva,” insisting the whole time that it is and has always been a blue star, with water and cities covering its surfaces. He makes oblique references to historical personages that we have no record of, including a King Hiltraud von Castaigne, who purportedly reigned from July to November of 1518 over a short-lived kingdom near present day Strasbourg.¹⁸ No record of such a person nor kingdom exists.¹⁹ At one point, he seems to imply that Shakespeare’s *Cardenio* was a lost play, only to quote from it several pages later.

How can we make sense of this? There is no indication in any biographical material that Snomis suffered from any sort of mental illness. Like other Modernist works, *Works of Hate* fragments the stability of consciousness and reason. He undermines with one hand while weaving a logic of a parallel world grounded in astrological reason with the other. Interpolated within this double movement appear to be observations and propositions that could not be made to fit into one or the other schema: they are both of a fatally destabilized modern consciousness—grappling with war, plague, rapid technoscientific and philosophical change, and political globalization—and a transcendent, inhuman, rationalism operating on celestial time scales and with an indifferent and primordial calm, eyeing an unfathomably distant and incomprehensible *telos*.

Much of what feels alienating and difficult about the text comes from Snomis’ novel understanding of the intersection of poetry, history, theology, and astrology. If one takes a biographical *and* critical-theoretical view, appreciating and evaluating Snomis’ eccentric and nuanced

¹⁷ Though the ccru and Greg West at the IASC would perhaps dispute my claim.

¹⁸ It’s proximity to Germany would explain the peculiar combination of a French surname with a German first name and aristocratic signifier.

¹⁹ We do know that Snomis spent considerable time in Alsace conducting research in the summer of 1920. Why, though? The reference is a mere two sentences, and appears to have no historical weight attached to it.

systems he attempted to perfect in several fields over the course of his adult life, an annotation that frames the text as a coherent mystical treatise becomes possible. While some passages will undoubtedly remain difficult to offer readings for, much of *Works of Hate* appears to be a kind *roman à clef*, though the lock is obscured, the key has been lost, and it is very much not a novel. To this end, and taking a metaphorical pointer from Joseph Campbell, the critical apparatus of this dissertation will offer a skeleton key to Snomis' most intimidating work, with an ultimate goal of making its references accessible and allowing the reader to appreciate the power of Snomis' poetry and prose.

In short, the project of annotation is primarily one of exegesis, historical research, and critical framing. With an updated, accurate, translation alongside an accessible academic gloss, one of the under-appreciated masterworks of global modernism will finally be made available to a broad, scholarly, audience.

Originally and Importance

Along with da Raguso, Muchna, and Luxardo, Snomis is perhaps the greatest representative of Thellian Modernist poetry, albeit of a radically different style (and language) than the national trifecta. For Snomis, poetic impulse was indelibly intertwined with the mystical, particularly mystical Christian, traditions of European thought. A new analysis and translation of Snomis' work is significant not only for a broader understanding of the currents of Modernism, but for the study of occultism and esotericism, as well, particularly as they were interpreted and understood by Eastern Orthodox Christians in the early-to-mid 20th century.

Thellia (or *Cthellia*, as it is called in Cthellian, a language native to the island descended from Etruscan), too, is quite generally an understudied country, and to the detriment of the humanities. Given the contributions such a small nation has made to European culture, it is hoped that publishing a scholarly edition of such a significant Thellian work might induce further study of this small, frankly, marginalized island nation in the Adriatic.

Finally, Snomis' theology must be considered. To say that it was heterodox, even by the comparatively looser Eastern Orthodox standards, is in many ways simply a polite way of saying it was heretical. It is difficult to imagine in our current political-theological moment how the Orthodox Church of Cthellia would have allowed for such an individual to be glorified, but we must remember that at that point, and for nearly a century before, the Church's role on the island, along with its larger Roman Catholic counterpart, had been one of arbitration and peacekeeping between Thellian-Italian irredentists and Cthellian nationalists.²⁰ Snomis had become something of a folk hero to the Cthellians who lived in Karkosa, and the processes by which a saint is selected in Orthodoxy is much more democratic, allowing for a congregation to essentially vote by acclamation to recognize an individual's sainthood.²¹ In the wake of his abrupt death in 1945, Snomis became a potent icon for the nationalist movement and its provisional government established in the wake of the war. With the help of his former literary assistant his status has only increased since then.²² To provide a critical analysis of the popular reception of his theological system will contribute to a fuller understanding of Thello-Italian politics in the 20th century, as well as the emergence of a fully-fledged Cthellian/Thellian political and ethico-religious identity.

For my own interests, Snomis represents a peculiar but fascinating node in the global network of writers who dealt with horror, the concept of the alien, and occultism. *Works of Hate* provides ample pathways and cul-de-sacs for exploration and analysis of the role of xenological thought in European Modernism.

Outline

²⁰ The intricacies of Cthellian nationalism and the independence of Thellia are quite extensive, and a general timeline will be provided in the dissertation.

²¹ A Patriarch of Constantinople has in at least one instance expressed no objection to a canonized Snomis, though this is really more of a pleasantry than an ecclesiastical necessity in Eastern Orthodoxy.

²² Though we do have her to thank for the *Nachlass* situation.

Preface and Acknowledgements

People

The Lawsuit

Introduction

Why *Works of Hate*?

Historical Contexts of Composition

Snomis and Sexuality

Towards a Christian anti-Humanism

The Alien: an Obliterated Event, an Archaeology of Absence

A Brief Overview of *Cthellian* Cultural History

Geography and Climate

Timeline of Major Events in Thellian History

Origins of the Cthell

Venetian Dominance

Thellia and Cthellia: (C)Thellia?

The Religious Tradition

Catholicism versus Orthodoxy versus Orientalism

Cthellian Nationalism and the Long 19th

In the Aftermath of Venice

Thellian Irredentism and Cthellian Resistance

Cthellians in the 20th Century

World War I

World War II

The Cold War

Modernism and the Avant-Garde in Thellia

Thellia Today

On the Cthellian Language

A Concise Overview of Etruscan Grammar

A Concise Overview of Cthellian Grammar

Thellian, Italian, and Croatian Influences

Cultural Significance

Status in Thellia and the EU

The Life and Times of St. Snomis of Karkosa: Some Biographical Sketches

Translator's Note

Headnotes

Editorial Principles

Intro

A Note on Manuscripts and Texts

Works of Hate [Collated 1921-1944 Editions]²³

[Ygg/Cantor Knot]

Sol

Canto 1

Mercurius

Canto 2

Venus

Canto 3

Terra & Luna

Canto 4

Mars

Canto 5

Iuppiter

Canto 6

Saturnus & Chiron

Canto 7

Uranus

Canto 8

Neptunus

Canto 9

²³ This is a provisional reconstruction. Details will change with further research.

Proserpina

[Hush Lattice]

List of Textual Emendations & Variants

Selected Letters/Supplementary Passages from the *Nachlass*

Maps and Diagrams

A Map of Cthellia

Map of Main Caldera Chain, showing rivers, Lakes (inc. Hali), Feronia, Yiada

Map of Karkopolis

Photographs

Selected Further Reading

Bibliography

Essay 1: On Xenology: Inhuman Simulations of Cosmology and Intelligence

Essay 2: Geotraumatics and Cyberlithic Force in Modernist Poetry

Essay 3: The Heteronym and Its Relation to Worldmaking

This is a return to the question of role of the reader death of the author etc.

Essay 4: The Instance of the Letter in the (C)thellian Unconscious

Glossary

ANCESTRALITY— see: Arche-Fossil.

ANTHROPOCENE— human as geotrauma.

ARCHE-FOSSIL— a wound in being, a temporal trace, a mark prior to givenness, which Kantian thinking cannot but grasp as horror; a partially unknowable object in time.

ASSEMBLAGE— a machine for dissolving the tension between gradients. A design sent from the future.

AXIOM— a statement of faith; an *a priori* analytic judgement.

BOREDOM— in Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer and others, a trance anterior to time and worldedness, anterior to givenness, but which makes itself felt when living has exhausted its novelty.

Changeling. Theory-fiction equivalent of a protagonist.

CORRELATIONISM— a philosophical project inaugurated by Descartes, perfected by Kant, and revolutionized by Heidegger which contends Being and Thought as inseparable. Hume envisioned this unification to follow the pathway, a fragile narrow pathway, of causation. There is an unknowable absolute beyond causality, but it would be absurd to envision a philosophy that can access it.

COSMIC REALISM— the philosophy that say a thought is a black jellyfish, floating through infinite seas.

COSMIC SPECULATION— the belief that thinking is an alien parasite, sent from the future.

CTHELLL— a trauma at the core of the world, prior to all givenness; a metal sea; the sinthome that binds ecologies.

CYBERLITH— the conclusion of deep media, phase one.

CYBERPUNKISM— did Wintermute put you up to this?

UNAXIOM— a statement of doubt.

UNHYPOTHESIS— an *a posteriori* thought that does not causally derive from any other thought or observation.

STACK, THE— accidental megastructure, planetary computer, possibly possesses soft thought.

ONTOPUNKISM— DIY ontologies stripped from systems and orders in order to hybridize and reroute worldlines into potential futures.

GAIA— Proto Earth, shattered by the Theia Trauma approximately 4.5 Gya. Creation co-extensive with Luna. This “giant impact” hypothesis accounts, too, for the creation of Cthelll. If there existed an ur-Cthelll at the core of Gaia, evidence has been, literally, vaporized.

EARTH— a whole where there should be a person

LUNA— cf. Ferenczi, “Alien Will.” cf. Theia, Gaia, Earth, Cthelll.

SOL— source of thermonuclear capitalism; frozen sunlight produces the warmachine in the middle east and kicks open the Middle Eastern war machine; the opening up of tic systems, the invasion of the Outsiders from the future.

SOLAR ANALLYTICS— a truly bad pun about Bataille and psychoanalysis.

RHIZOME— a tree.

THEIA— an outsider; cf. Gaia, Luna, Earth, Cthelll. Hypothesized to have orbited at the L4 or L5 Sol-Gaia system point, gravitational perturbations by Venus eventually resulted in a collision with Gaia. (Venus can in some sense be held responsible for the formation of life.)

SOFT THOUGHT— inhuman thinking; androids, electric sheep.

RIGOR— tradition

NON-RIGOR— thinking carefully at the edge

NUMOGRAM, NUMMOGRAMMATCS— That special sort of thinking that is both mathematical and magical, that identifies the uses of numbers as objects that are not countable and which have internal lives. Mystical math, mathmagics, numerology that can defend proofs in quantum mechanics.

THOUGHT IMAGE— internal heuristic for cognitive estrangement

SINTHOME— primal symptom too fundamental to see or access; condition of reality principle;

DO NOT REMOVE: What's lost in the Symbolic will come forth in the Real.

SF— speculative or science fiction or fabulation.

HORROR— outsideness; metaphysics replaced with psychoanalysis; epistemology and ontology confused.

HAUNTOLOGY— the study of returns and traces.

DEEP MEDIA— inhuman program of undermining reality in order to facilitate Reality Forking and, in turn, New Worlds.

THEORY FICTION/ THEORY-FICTION/ THOUGHT-FICTION/ PHICTION/ PHILO-FICTION/ ETC.— the form that imitates or discusses Deep Media.

XENOPRAXIS— organizing and implementing Deep Media

XENOPOESIS— writing with the outside; writing deep media algorithms; writing outside of correlationism; inhuman/infernal art.

HYPERSTITION— the non-rigorously believable Real/ the rigorously believable Real/ component action of worldmaking/ Ontic Forcing/ A hungry Thought Image/ A fiction that makes itself real. cf. Reality Forking/Coding

HYPOSTITION— a reality that fictionalizes; one aspect of Deep Media. Very understudied.

WORLD BUILDING— Goethean method; playing and storytelling; Dungeons and Dragons; literature and art before the alien thought.

WORLDMAKING— systematic attempts at imagining, programming, designing, and implementing possible alternatives to the present, past, future, and things considered inevitable or given; writing towards unbeing; writing to the outside; writing by aliens; ontopunkism.

WORLD— that which is the case (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 1); a fiction.

MYSTICISM— Reality Coding from encrypted sources; Divine Inexistence; Instructions for the Fourth World of Justice and the Resurrection of the Dead in a World without Sin.

REALITY CODING— Ontopunkism; the writing of the rules of a simulation of a world.

REALITY FORKING— hyperstitional overlaying of multiple possibilities simultaneously; a reality that contradicts.

SPECULATIVE IRREALISM—a general (and nascent) program of theory (still fictional) that explicates, justifies, and elaborates the concepts of hyperstition, worldmaking, and deep media; compatible with Xenofeminist Accelerationism.

SPECULATIVE MATERIALISM— general program of Quentin Meillassoux's thinking, including a metaphysics, ethics, politics, aesthetics; a world-made by Meillassoux as an alternative to the present.

GEOTRAUMATICS— cf. Ben Woodward and Deleuze & Guattari; cf. Nick Land; cf. Theory-fiction. cf. Solar Analytics; cf. the world as given through trauma prior to all givenness.

PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON, PRINCIPLE OF (UN)REASON, PRINCIPLE OF (NON-)CONTRADICTION— in order: no longer applicable, now applicable, the only thing binding reality together in the face of sheer chaos and unfathomable horror.

SERIOUSNESS— A philosophical necessity? See: Rigor

PLAY— see: Ontopunkism.

ANTI-NOVEL— a work of literature which undermines the received structure of the novel. Ex: *Pale Fire*, *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, *House of Leaves*, *Finnegans Wake*, *If on a winter's night a traveller...*

PHILOSOPHY— A Program of Artificial General Intelligence; Xenodetection;

RELIGION— Preparations for the God-to-Come.

VIRTUAL— potential; hyperreal; nexus of physical and cognitive; *not* digitality.

SIMULATION— philosophy; computation; a space of the virtual.

HAUNTOSCENE— one posthuman future characterized by a rewilding of consciousness.

XENOSCENE—one posthuman future; the cool one with spaceships and no poverty.

Appendix



above: First, the structure of Mr Z's personality
 illustrates with great clarity the explanatory
 cause the father, who had died about four years
 earlier, had not only been a highly successful
 very successful

FIG. 2
 SOURCE: FOUND ART



FIG. 3
SOURCE: CHARLES JONES, PERSONAL PERMISSION GIVEN



FIG. 4
SOURCE: ANONYMOUS

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