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Whole-Presences and Abstract Creaturation

The conductive labyrinth of thought always finds itself flooded by the presence of things it once hosted, which later return mutated. At least that seems to be the impression of the mechanisms of recognition at work in the action of thinking, which rarely concede the “alien” title, to a new presence or to a new emergence. And if they do, it is because this presence is of a modality that does not recognize divisible things, but only “whole” things. A non-coherent absurd idea could exhibit “harder” and more closed wholeness than a logical proposition, which is permeable everywhere, full of orifices, and which ultimately creates as a habit, the morbid illusion of a thirst for methodologically assisted scattering, that later is manically projected onto all things.

This thirst conceals a will to produce the thing-to-know as an engendered outcome, as the product of a logic pregnancy, which prefigures a nurturing phase and a phase of formation. This is a will that intrusively intends to decode all the entries and exits, all the conducts and channels, all the chambers and secret abodes of the thing in case.

The act of “creaturation” is the process by which “whole presences” in thought, are engineered as “engendered presences” by the forces of abstraction. By “whole presences”, we understand: presences that are non-divisible and non yet permeable or even malleable for the forces of abstraction.

The act of “engendering” transposed onto the province of thinking and abstraction, does not only stand for a principle of cause or a principle of origination, but it implies bonds of conductive and connective nature that are built, inside to inside, namely, from the inside of what performs creaturation, to the inside of what is being subject to this operation. Creaturation seeks to neutralize, if not to abolish completely, the closed wholeness of a presence by importing its early development as something that depends “environmentally” on the forces of abstraction.

To project the act of “engendering” on something is an attempt to appropriate its origination, and to appropriate origination implies the drawing of “in” and “out” imputs, cuts, lines of excavation that geometrize the once whole, fully-turbid, closed event. Creaturation also produces the thing-to-know as something dependant on worldliness. Intrusive organs code an in-
side built at the scale of the world they want to expand. *Creaturation* does not allow the sustained presence of things that do not possess an inside: “If it has not one, then it has to be fabricated.” Creaturation is about expansion, and the production of vital concavities in the field of abstraction is one of its ways of proceeding.

**Environmental Submission**

Accordingly, it can be said that *creatura- tion* is also a *becoming-environ- mental* or a transmutation of the presence, which is submitted to this operation, into an environment. Here, thought as a task, stops focusing on the production, discovery and romance with singular and obscure presences of surprising and undeniable cohesion. But, it starts focusing on the hosting and colonization of presences in general, flattening them to a submissive state in favor of the environment, while spreading an infection that homogenizes presences and abolishes its own chance (the chance of thought) to apprehend the singularity in what is whole and internally non-conductive. Presences usually submit to an environment, waiting for that “statistic clearing” amidst the chaos of fluctuations, that provides them with the field ready for a relative “occurring”. The environmental-becoming of thought is another move of the *creatura- tion* tactic.

As we said before, hosting a “whole presence”, in terms of *creatura- tion*, implies producing that presence as a concavity, as a negative yet vital and sensitive portion of abstract extension where other things can precipitate. However, the inner arrangement of this concavity is secondary for the interests of this brief introduction. Perhaps it is relevant to say that the projection of creaturation on “whole presences” implies the arrangement of a mechanism of growth and nurturing around the presence. However, it is not the origination of the presences what is possessed by means of these tactics, but only their environmental submission.

Environmental submission cultivates in the apparent hardness and impenetrability of a “whole presence”, a relative threshold of gravity. This is what ultimately causes “whole presences” to bend into a concave sequel of themselves. *Environmental submission* bends presences into their becoming other-environment, but environment in any case. It is the becoming-environment what allows a whole presence to be finally recognized as an “unknown”. It is the passing of the “unthinkable” into the “unknown”.
Opposite to this, we think that whole things should be apprehended by the whim of their cohesion, and by the way their presences bend our organs of apprehension: by the trajectoral curves drawn by natural gravity and the figures produced by spontaneous transfers and exchanges, not by the artifices of environmental submission. Whole presences should not be submitted but seduced, enchanted, invited to venture and grow in the complexities of our own presence. The promise of intrusion should be offered as a magnet or point of gravity, a threshold of attraction. This point of gravity should be what ultimately configures the bridge of connectivity between the unthinkable and the forces of abstraction.

Enchanting a whole presence is recognizing its wholeness and impenetrability as a glow out of which our forces of abstraction are as well produced and in which they are actualized. This operation stems from a different case of spontaneous creaturation that does not seek to suck out origination or to submit environmentally. But it is focused on the discovery of something, or the production of a discovery. This discovery is not based on the voyeuristic act of spying a solitary occurrence or producing environmental origination, but on the event of a first encounter, a first romance with something that belongs outside: the origin of a bridge, a first copula. It is focused on relation rather than on assimilation. It is a becoming-whole of thought and the forces of abstraction, rendering their internal labyrinth also a non-conductive reality. An act of creaturation of this sort is not focused on projecting “engendering” or “breeding” on whole presences, but in apprehending the wholeness of the presence as a unity of radiance that is capable of configuring new extensions in the forces of abstraction, in the key of an abstract luminescence or pure non-mediated evidence, and without the need to affect the non-conductive and whole constitution of the presence in case. It is not the presence what is submitted environmentally and bent into a concave extension, exposing entrails previously flattened and engineered by the forces of abstraction, it is the force of abstraction what travels into a new radiance, expanding its scope and without the necessity to open the insideless singularity which produces this radiance. It’s the generation of a bridge out of this radiance, mediated by the innocence of a first outside, a first romance, a becoming-fire of intellect which projects the origination of the ether in between, the fire in between, the shared outside.

In the previous editorial preface of Cyclops Journal, we touched
upon the importance of non-conductivity and the presence of the impos-
sible within the schemes of thought; that flood of non-conductive liquids
(Lorca’s ‘Agua que no desemboca...’). The task of thought was transposed
into Bataille’s concept of “heterology”, or the production of a discipline that
would seek to assimilate the residual elements (or heterogenous elements)
of the homogenizing and channelizing intellect, in its traditional variant.
However, we were not prevented against the threat of creaturation, present
in our effort, or the effort of the forces of abstraction to expand themselves
beyond directional reason and rational thinking.

The task of thinking should be indeed an act of growth, taking place
in and with each presence, as it is indicated in ‘Cultivation of the Ocular
ubiquity’, however it should also be a task that seeks to turn the unthink-
able into thinkable by its own means, and without the necessity to build
the “unknown” threshold, which is what ultimately binds presences to their
own flattening and homogenization. The spontaneous radiance of whole
presences should constitute, as an opening, the guiding light of the forces of
abstraction, the force necessary for expulsing the labyrinth fossilized inside
the matrix of thinking. Spontaneous creaturation is delineated in the line of
this spirit; the bare exposition of the entrails of thought to the fate of open-
source encounters, at the scale of an unprotected yet perpetually illuminat-
ed medium of abstraction.

Constanza Bizraelli
Lima, 2017

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ACCELERATIONISM, HYPERSTITION AND MYTH-SCIENCE

Simon O'Sullivan, Goldsmiths College
1. Accelerationism and Hyperstition

The future must be cracked open once again, unfastening our horizons towards the universal possibilities of the Outside.

Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams

I want to begin this brief exploration of accelerationism and hyperstition, in relation to what I call (following Sun Ra and Mike Kelly) “myth-science”,¹ with a long quote from the essay ‘Escape Velocities’ by Alex Williams – one of the co-authors of the “Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics” (MAP) (Srnicek and Williams, 2014a) – that offers some proposals on what form an accelerationist aesthetics make take:

...as regards political accelerationism, what becomes crucial is the ability of a reconstituted Left to not simply operate inside the hegemonic coordinates of the possible as established by our current socioeconomic setup. To do so requires the ability to direct preexisting and at present inchoate desires for post-capitalism towards coherent visions of the future. Necessarily, given the experimental nature of such a reconstitution, much of the initial labor must be around the composition of powerful visions able to reorient populist desire away from the libidinal dead end which seeks to identify modernity as such with neoliberalism, and modernizing measures as intrinsically synonymous with neoliberalizing ones (for example, privatization, marketization, and outsourcing). This is to invoke the idea, initially coined by Land’s Cybernetic Cultural Research Unit, of hyperstition – narratives able to effectuate their own reality through the workings of feedback loops, generating new sociopolitical attractors. This is the aesthetic side of the task of

¹ In relation to Sun Ra’s myth-science (and Afrofuturism more broadly) see Eshun, 1998. The artist Mike Kelley, in an essay on the artist Olaf Fahlstrom, links the term more particularly to the fictioning aspect of contemporary art practice, especially in its expanded form (Kelley, 1995).
constructing a new sociotechnical hegemony. (Williams, 2013, 9)

This is Williams’ second proposal. The first, which I will return to, involves ‘processes of epistemic conceptual navigation’; the third is the ‘design of interfaces of control’; and the fourth and final proposal is for ‘a blueprint for action in complex systems’ (Williams, 2013, 9-11). Although these four are brought together under the rubric of aesthetics, we might, tentatively, also identify the different disciplinary regime each operates within: Art (the second; the long quote above), Philosophy (the first), and the last two is Design, broadly construed.

Two aspects are worth highlighting in terms of the second and more art orientated proposal for hyperstitional practices (as Williams defines them): the first is the operation of temporal feedback loops that allow a fiction to become real (for Williams this is a utopian function of an accelerationist aesthetics that helps bring about its own visions and predictions). The second is the positing of sociopolitical attractors that are generated through this process, but also, we might say, generative of it. Again, these are the different visions – but also narratives – that might contribute towards a politics of transformation (however this is understood), as well as being an outcome of this process.

To further deepen this definition we can turn to two sources. The first of these, what we might call the ur-source of accelerationist ideas on fiction, is, as Williams himself remarks, the Cybernetic culture research unit (Ccru) set up by Sadie Plant, and then ‘led’ by Nick Land after her departure from academia. Here, hyperstition, as laid out on the Ccru website, involves four inter-connected characteristics:

1. Element of effective culture that makes itself real.
2. Fictional quantity functional as a time-traveling device.
3. Coincidence intensifier.
4. Call to the Old Ones. (Ccru website)

The first and second of these are the pre-cursors to Williams second
proposal for an accelerationist aesthetics. Hyperstition, in Ccru’s definition is a fiction that makes itself real through time-travelling feedback loops: it operates as a future vision thrown back to engineer its own history. Coincidence, the third characteristic, might be said to be a secondary effect of this process (insofar as coincidence is suggestive of alternative narratives, connections through time, or what Jung calls synchronicity).

The second “source” definition, more developed and hermetic, is from the Hyperstition website, from the page “Polytics: Elements of Hyperstition”. Here hyperstition involves three aspects “interlocked in a productive circuit of simultaneous, mutually stimulating tasks”. Here they are in full:

1. Numogram. Rigorous systematic unfolding of the Decimal Labyrinth and all its implexes (Zones, Currents, Gates, Lemurs, Pandemonium Matrix, Book of Paths…) and echoes (Atlantean Cross, Decadology…). The methodical excavation of the occult abstract cartography intrinsic to decimal numeracy (and thus globally “oecumenic”) constitutes the first great task of hyperstition.

2. Mythos. Comprehensive attribution of all signal (discoveries, theories, problems and approaches) to artificial agencies, allegiances, cultures and continentities. The proliferation of “carriers” (“Who says this?”) – multiplying perspectives and narrative fragments – produces a coherent but inherently disintegrated hyperstitional mythos while effecting a positive destruction of identity, authority and credibility.

3. Unbelief. Pragmatic skepticism or constructive escape from integrated thinking and all its forms of imposed unity (religious dogma, political ideology, scientific law, common sense…). Each vortical sub-cycle of hyperstitional production announces itself through a communion with “the Thing” coinciding with a “mystical consummation of uncertainty” or “at-
tainment of positive unbelief”. (Hyperstition website)

The first of these amounts to the positing of a deep (and inhuman) numerical reality that is characteristic of some of Nick Land’s writings, but also, although less overt, of some more recent Left accelerationist writing (the essay “On Cunning Automata” in Collapse VII by Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek) that attends to High Frequency Trading (and which itself references Land’s work on what he calls the nomos). I will return to the Williams and Srnicek essay below and then, briefly, to an indicative essay by Land on numbers.

The third characteristic of hyperstition – “constructive escape” – is also clearly determinant in Land’s recent writings (not least those on his xenosystems blog), but also connects with Williams’ own first proposal – epistemic in character – for an accelerationist aesthetics. It is worth now quoting the latter in full:

First to epistemic aesthetics. The spatialized conception of the navigation and ramification of conceptual spaces at the core of Negarestani’s notion of epistemic acceleration has an immediately aesthetic dimension, a highly visualized approach, grounded in the mathematics of topos theory. This abstract mathematical aesthetic of gesture, navigation, limitropism, and pathway-finding reroutes the philosophy of mathematics away from a basis in set theory and logic, and instead seeks an ultimately geometric ground. (2013, 9)

In Part 2 of this essay I look in more detail at Reza Negarestani’s own argument for an ‘epistemic accelerationism’ which, as Williams suggests, is the source of this particular proposal for an accelerationist aesthetics (see O’Sullivan, 2017a). Certainly, it is worth mentioning here that there is work to be done on figuring the connections between art practice – broadly construed – and these more philosophical operations of conceptual navigation that are themselves heuristic and experimental. ²

² And Negarestani himself has initiated this work with his own essay on Jean-Luc Moulene (Negarestani, 2014).
In “On Cunning Automata” this navigational practice – a “universal accelerationism” – is opposed to any sole preoccupation with an increase in speed. The latter – “dromological accelerationism” – is found, Williams and Srnicek argue, in Land’s thesis, but also, at least at present, in the sharp end of capitalist development (as in High Frequency Trading) (Srnicek and Williams, 2014b, 486-90). In their own inflection on universal accelerationism Williams and Srnicek suggest that the latter might be thought of as a form of *metis* (the cunning of the essay’s title) that is opposed to *tekne* or, indeed, *poesis*.\(^3\) Crucially, it is not simply a question of pitching *metis* against a capitalism that operates through a more straightforward algorithmic *tekne*, for, as Williams and Srnicek point out, capitalism increasingly utilizes strategies of *metis* in order to mitigate against the limit-point of more typical High Frequency Trading (the speed of light).

To return now to Williams’ second proposal about hyperstition (the one I began this article with), we might note that although it is clearly related to the two sources I mention above, and especially

\(^3\) The practice of *metis* also comprises Williams’ fifth and final proposal for an accelerationist aesthetics:

Finally, we have the aesthetic of action in complex systems. What must be coupled to complex systems analysis and modeling is a new form of action: improvisatory and capable with of executing a design through a practice which works with the contingencies it discovers only in the course of its acting. This can be best described through the Ancient Greek concept of *metis*, a particular mode of cunning craft. (2013, 9-10)

Williams’ third proposal – more design orientated – involves attending to human-machine interfaces on a more pragmatic basis:

Third, we have the idea of an aesthetics of interfaces, control rooms, and cognitive maps. Here, an important aspect of rendering reality tractable, and hence furthering the overriding accelerationist project of maximal collective self-mastery, is the ability to marshal and interact effectively with data. (2013, 9)
to the Ccru definition, it does not include Ccru’s fourth proposition (“Call to the Old Ones”), a proposition that itself loops forward to the second definition on the Hyperstition website: “Mythos”. In terms of the latter we are provided not just with a definition, but in the writings of Ccru and Hyperstition, an example: “the artificial agencies, allegiances, cultures and continenties” that operate as origin of all signal (as “Call to the Old Ones” suggests) is the Cthulu mythos (alongside a host of other associated and more minor players).

In terms of the more recent accelerationist writing I mentioned above we do get a brief discussion of myth in “On Cunning Automata” (in relation to metis) – specifically with the identification of the trickster: ‘The suppressed form of intelligence known as metis (as opposed to poesis or techne) denotes “skill with materials guided by a cunning intelligence”, and is identified strongly with the figuration of the trickster in ancient mythology’ (Srnicek and Williams, 2014b, 491). And a couple of pages later:

The figure of the trickster is common to almost all pre-modern mythic traditions. Lewis Hyde gives a complete history of such characters, who include Loki (Norse), Prometheus (Greek), Monkey (Chinese), and Coyote (Amerindian), with echoes of the trickster appearing in a more tame form in childhood folkloric figures such as Brer Rabbit. (Srnicek and Williams, 2014b, 493)

But this appearance of a pre-modern and mythical figure in Williams and Srnicek’s essay is not, I think, a form of hyperstition insofar as it does not (at least as gestured towards here) meet the key criteria of mythos understood as source of all signal (although, certainly, the trickster, might well operate as “carrier”).

We might also ask the question here of whether a trickster can be an effective agent of accelerationist transformation in and of themselves? Does the trickster have the ability to ‘change the transcendental of a world’ (as Srnicek and Williams put it in their essay) as opposed to just playing with and within a given world? Gilles Deleuze offers an interesting inflection on this in his differentiation of the trickster
from the traitor: the first operating within a given regime albeit to subvert its terms (a world turned upside down as it were); the second breaking with a given regime, or world, altogether (Deleuze links this to the question of signifying and asignifying regimes: ‘A traitor to the world of dominant significations, and to the established order. This is quite different from the trickster...’) (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, 41). I will be returning to this idea of the traitor towards the end of this article.

Tricksters aside, mythos, it seems to me, is lacking, or at least deeply occluded, in recent accelerationist writings. Indeed, although Williams addresses hyperstition in his “Escape Velocity” essay (as do Srnicek and Williams, albeit more obliquely, in the MAP – pointing towards the importance of the “composition of powerful visions” for an accelerationist politics), Cthulu, or any other hyperstitional entity, is not mentioned.

Nor do we find it, or any mention of mythos, in what I take to be the two chief philosophical articulations of accelerationism, Ray Brassier and Reza Negarestani (although, certainly, the latter attends precisely to mythos in his own highly original fiction-philosophy Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials (Negarestani, 2008) and, indeed, was one of the authors of the Hyperstition website). In fact, it seems to me that this occlusion of mythos is determinant of recent accelerationism (at least on the Left) that, we might say, generally follows Williams’ first proposal for an accelerationist aesthetics, namely, conceptual navigation. Certainly the introduction of any fictional or mythic narrative into this strictly rational and pragmatic programme is at odds with its own self-definition. In terms of Brassier’s own Promethean attitude we might make the claim that mythos is precisely contra science and rationality, and, indeed, might well involve a deployment of something more “folk”, the reinforcement of a manifest image as against the scientific image (not least as it privileges belief over proof). In terms of Negarestani’s more recent writings, mythos might risk re-entrenching an idea (and, again, image) of the human and thus stymie the latter’s re-definition and re-engineering via reason (although a mythos like Cthulu involves something specif-
ically non-human, insofar as it operates through fiction rather than science, it might be said to privilege a certain folk idea of the human). Again, I conduct a more sustained reading of Brassier and Negarestani (and in particular their accelerationist writings) in Part 2 of this article.

In terms of the aforementioned MAP the issue with mythos (and perhaps the reason also that it is absent in Williams’ own account of hyperstition) is, I think, that too often myth is regressive, precisely *anti*-accelerationist. Put simply, myth is often at the service of a reactionary Right rather than a progressive Left. Indeed, this, it seems to me, is an instructive paradox of accelerationism, which, in a kind of hyper-modernity, makes a call to “accelerate the process” as the famous quote from *Anti-Oedipus* has it, and yet, if not always on the surface, contains (at least in its pre-cursors) something that is decidedly less modern. In fact, in terms of a more overt persistence of mythos (in this particular strain of recent continental philosophy), one that is both hyper-modern *and* pre-modern (when pre-modern is understood as specifically pre-Enlightenment), one must look to the key accelerator of recent accelerationist writings: Nick Land.

2. Land and Mythos

*Garbage time is running out. Can what is playing you make it to level 2?*

Nick Land

Land, who first coined the term hyperstition at Ccru, is both rigorous philosopher *and* adept hyperstitional practitioner. His writings, especially those from the 1990s employ pre-existing fictions, but also attempt to fiction reality themselves: they are pitched as time loops in which the future they predict impacts back on the present in order to bring about that very future. The essays of this period are written in a tight, precise style that is economic and sparse, but that is also stylistically reminiscent of J. G. Ballard or even, at times, William
Burroughs. This amounts to saying that as well as any obvious philosophical content Land’s writings of the 1990s (reprinted in *Fanged Noumena*) proliferate other kinds of image-worlds and alternative narratives. To take three indicative examples:

1. “Circuitries” (Land, 2011a). Here an explicitly Science Fiction narrative accompanies the more theoretical work of re-patterning Deleuze-Guattarian desiring-production – by way of Norbert Wiener – as cybernetics (the laying out, precisely, of a machinic unconscious). Positive feedback loops (another name for hyperstition) are pitched against the stabilization effect of negative ones: the call is forever more mutation and deviation from the norm. The essay itself begins with a kind of filmic narrative – staccato and cut-up (reminiscent of Burroughs’ *Nova* trilogy) and ends with Artaud’s peyote induced prophetic – and poetic – utterances.

2. “Meat (or How to Kill Oedipus in Cyberspace)” (Land, 2011b). This essay is, again, both philosophico-political treatise and cyberpunk fiction, drawing in as many fictional characters and avatars (as its conceptual personae) as it does philosophical concepts and authors in order to populate its particular techno-dystopic landscape. Thus we have Kurtz of *Apocalypse Now* alongside, again, Artaud (the latter himself an interference between any strictly demarcated planes of philosophy from art – or conceptual personae from aesthetic figures) and *Terminator* alongside Deleuze and Guattari’s desiring-machines.4

4 Alongside Artaud we can position Bataille as the second key philosophical personae in Land’s myth-system (with Nietzsche and Deleuze as the final two key thinkers – both of these figured as deterritorialisations from Kant). Indeed, some of Bataille’s comments on heterology and race are echoed in Land’s more recent writings on racial difference (although Bataille is clear – see below – that the issue of racism is human and historical rather than scientific):

Racism is a specific aspect of a deep *heterophobia* [hatred of difference], *inherent in humanity* and whose general laws we cannot avoid ... The worst case is that of the Blacks, whose glaring differ-
3. “Meltdown” (Land, 2011c). The most extreme of the three, especially when listened to in its original techno-format (a free cassette was attached to the first issue of the original Collapse fanzine). Here the human becomes mere drag on a capitalism that is increasingly on the loose (what Land, later, will call “teleoplexy”), with “K-tactics” pitched against “control” (although it is not clear whether the latter – control – is itself a capitalist imperative, or, in fact, a fetter on capitalism). The writing here is reminiscent of Philip K. Dick – a writing on speed.

In terms of any hyperstitional mythos, the entity – in “Meltdown” – is capitalism itself, and humans, again, merely the organic puppets and platforms of this techonomic “Thing”. Indeed, we might make the claim here that a further key reason for the absence of mythos, understood in its hyperstitional sense, from Left accelerationism is that the source of all signal (at least in Land’s accelerationist writings) is precisely everything the Left positions itself against: a non-caring (indeed, non-human) agency that is operating back on the present from a future it is helping to construct.5

These essays are not, however, simple projections into the future is ineradicable. One could describe the antagonism as inevitable, to the extent that a tangible difference has a property of stability: so it is futile to argue that difference is ill-founded according to science. It is not a question of science: in racist attitudes, theory has only a secondary influence. To see racism as an evil idea is to turn away from a problem whose essentials are never located in ideas: nor are they in nature. They are contingent and aleatory, they are historic, which is to say human. (Bataille and Lieris, 2008, 71-72)

Land’s first monograph was on Bataille (Land, 1992), with other essays from the early 1990s (before Ccru) on Nietzsche and Deleuze, perhaps most notably Land 1991 and 1993.

5 Or, to put this slightly differently, and from a neoreactionary perspective (more on this below): a Left hegemony deliberately obscures – masks – its own deep operating structures. Hence the neoreaction mantra: ‘Are you ready to take the Red pill?’
ture, or even time loops of future-presents, insofar as they also involve a mixing up of other past times – a veritable temporal syncretism. In “Meat” for example, shamans and becoming-animals conjoin with the futuristic xeno-matrix and with an increasingly operational neuro-technology. This temporal layering is doubled by a spatial collapse where Africa meets Europe in a creolisation of different cultures (and their attendant technologies). Hyperstition, here, is far from the abstract navigations of a stripped down rationality (or indeed of a typical Left utopianism).

In the essay “Circuitries” the strange temporality of capitalism, and especially its retroactive orientation, is further laid out. As Land remarks at the end of that essay: ‘How would it feel to be smuggled back out of the future in order to subvert its antecedent conditions? To be a cyberguerilla, hidden in human camouflage so advanced that even one’s software was part of the disguise? Exactly like this?’ (2011, 318). Here hyperstition becomes a kind of ‘technology of the subject’ insofar as it involves a paranoid fictioning of what the human actually is (backward-hurled agent of a future state of capitalism or hyper-prosthetic technology that is increasingly outrunning its origin: Terminator or Replicant?).

There is more to be said about Land’s work of the 1990s – and of Ccru more generally – especially in relation to recent accelerationist writings. Indeed, elsewhere (in a review of *Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*) I have pointed towards the absence of a certain libidinal materialism, which, at least to some extent, was present at that Warwick scene and in the writings that emerged from it (O’Sul-

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6 This impulse to an accelerationist creolisation is evident in Kodwo Eshun’s important writings on Afro-futurism and Sonic Fiction. See Eshun 1998 and 2003.

7 And in relation to Ccru’s hyperstition more needs to said of their sometime collaborators, the nomadic art collective 0[rphan] D>[rift] that actualize – in practice – some of the tenets of hyperstition in terms of the mobilization of Science Fictional avatars and a syncretic spatial and temporal mixing of worlds and times (see the 0[rphan] D>[rift] website and also my account of the 0[rphan] D>[rift] Science Fiction “novel” *Cyberpositive* in O’Sullivan, 2017b).
livan, 2015). The above few comments point towards a further absence: of mythos, or hyperstition in its full sense. I made the claim in my review article that art practice was perhaps a place to find this missing desiring subject insofar as it can involve constructions of the affective alongside the conceptual: new kinds of syntheses and other experimental conjunctions.\(^8\) These becomings, which are never simply rational and technological (although they might involve both of these), can operate as a molecular betrayal of more molar categories and identities.\(^9\)

In terms of hyperstition – understood as a kind of fictioning of reality – it is likewise towards art that we might look to find these other narratives, with their accompanying images, objects and assemblages. Art practice, it seems to me, involves what Mackay and Avanessian call for in their Introduction to *Accelerate*, namely, ‘new science-fictional practices, if not necessarily in literary form’ (2014, 37). Such “new” practices will necessarily involve experimentation with different kinds of thinking – and with the idea that fiction *is* itself a form of thought – as well as other explorations into what material forms this thought might take. In fact, to briefly return to Williams’ own essay on accelerationist aesthetics, it seems to me that he is entirely correct to note – in his first proposal – that new forms of conceptual navigation might themselves be aesthetic in nature (the creation of concepts certainly has this character). Such navigations will be experimental and surprising – unforeseeable – almost by definition.

Could it be claimed that Land’s essays from the 1990s (again, alongside the whole scene in Warwick at that time) are predominantly aesthetic in character in both this libidinal *and* fictioning sense? Which is also to say that any critique levelled solely at their conceptu-

\(^8\) In terms of these experimental encounters and conjunctions see also O’Sullivan, 2017c. It seems to me that Mark Fisher’s writings (on his blog [Online] Available at http://www.k-punk.org [accessed: January 23 2015] and elsewhere) are instructive in this regard, especially in the prescient call for new (and popular) libidinal figures adequate and appropriate to a reanimated accelerationist Left.

\(^9\) For more on this idea of becomings contra concepts see O’Sullivan, 2017d.
al content (however inventive this is) risks missing a certain stylistic aspect which is equally, if not more important (in the same way in which the style of Ballard or Burroughs – the fragmentation of narrative and layering of image, the use of experimental syntax, the cut-up, and so forth – is as important as any content). Indeed, can content and form be disentangled in Land’s writings?10

To return to hyperstition itself, in Land’s more recent work there is less of the overt use of fiction, or, indeed, the Science Fiction style of the 1990s essays (though there is still the economy of expression and precision), but there is a continuing emphasis on feedback loops in which a future is operational in the present. The essays also remain hyperstitional in that they continue to posit an artificial entity from which all signal originates (even when this entity has nothing that might be called an agency as such). A mythos is still deployed albeit it has been stripped of its more syncretic accretions, emerging in a more streamlined and deadly version: capitalism 2.0. Unleashed. To give three examples:

1. “Teleoplexy: Note on Accelerationism” (Land, 2014a). Here teleoplexy, a “(self reinforcing) cybernetic intensification”), is the hyperstitional entity for whom the human subject in its typical and traditional form is more or less irrelevant or, at worst, a temporary obstacle. Accelerationism, then, in Land’s terms ‘appears to be an impossible project’ (at least for humans), insofar as ‘the theoretical apprehension of teleoplexic hyper-intelligence cannot be accomplished by anything other than itself’ (Land, 2014a, 520).

2. “Transcendental Risk” (Land, 2014b). In this, the most recent of the three essays (from Collapse VII), teleoplexy is outed as an AI entity (or

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10 Style, in this sense, has its own politics. It can open up a “foreign language within language”, breaking with more vehicular registers of meaning (and with the operation of “order words”), whilst also containing the germ of languages-yet-to-come. In an author like Burroughs (and could we also say Land?) this other politics – of style – can undercut declared political allegiances.
“emergent singularity”) of a runaway capitalism that, again, is oblivious to humans – and that is, in Land’s view, the outcome of the transcendental risk of the essays title (a venture capitalism that risks everything). A traitor rather than a trickster perhaps? Certainly, in Land’s terms, although this risk remains tied to capitalist imperatives, and, as such, might be said to still operate in the world as constituted.

3. “Qabbala 101” (Land, 2006). In an essay that is slightly earlier and not concerned with capitalist development per se, numbers are themselves the inhuman entity (if they can be called as such), with the practice of numeracy pitched against a numerology that insists on symbolizing – humanising – number: ‘Archetypes are sad limitations of the species while numbers are an eternal hypercosmic delight’. This particular essay, in its exploration of numerical deep structure (or, precisely, occult knowledge) returns us to Hyperstition’s first definition of itself as regards the “numogram” (“The methodical excavation of the occult abstract cartography intrinsic to decimal numeracy”).

In each of these cases humanity – as a species – plays very much a secondary role to an inhuman intelligence, which, at least in the first two of the essays, is produced by a capitalism now increasingly following its own evolutionary trajectory. Land, it might be said, is a traitor: he has sided with this immanent process – this future teleoplexic entity – against his own kind.

To move now from accelerationism, at least as a recognizable “movement”, to something that more explicitly utilises a pre-modern and fictional mythos: Land’s recent neoreactionary writings to be found on his xenosystems blog. In fact, here we find a number of

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11 [Online] Available at http://www.xenosystems.net [accessed: 11 April 2015]. Land’s other ‘less evil’ blog – Urban Future (http://www.ufblog.net [accessed: 11 April 2015]) – involves further writings on accelerationism (amongst other future-orientated economic, political and technological issues (and a focus on China)), but little on hyperstition per se (beyond the recurring interest in time loops, or what Land calls ‘templexity’ (see also Land, 2014c).
different myth-systems, from ‘Gnon’ (more on ‘him’ in a moment) to the reappearance of Cthulu – alongside more “traditional” narratives such as *Paradise Lost* with Land figuring himself as a Satan pitched against the Cathedral of heaven (or, in terms of a more recent Hollywood mythos, as Sith Lord against the Republic). Throughout, a certain kind of pre-modernism – even paganism – is utilized as resource against the perceived impasses (and increasingly restrictive nature) of the present. In particular it is horror – and what Land calls “horrorism” (an abstract horror of the “Outside”) – that is determinant of Land’s neo-reactionary mythos. Entities (if, again, they can be called as such) like Gnon (a mutant acronym for the God of Nature) or “The Great Filter” (the idea that something – or, perhaps, some “Thing” – effectively eradicates Galactic civilizations at a certain level of technological development) sit alongside other kinds of non-human agency – and are conjoined with films like *Terminator, Alien* and *The Thing* to produce a very particular contemporary mythos (although, once again, these more recent filmic instantiations are laid alongside other older literary forms, and, crucially, are placed in the company of maverick thinkers and writers such as the occultists Aleister Crowley and Kenneth Grant).

In each case there is the suggestion of a deeper reality involving something decidedly not-us, but that is also clearly a threat to us (insofar as it is not invested in “our” survival). This “Thing” – our exterminating angel – is, however, something which we ourselves are implicated in: although alien it is also own techno-commercial system, finally, let loose. Once again, Land offers up a future vision of a

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12 Land name checks Arthur Machen’s *The Great God Pan* in his writings on abstract horror, but we might also note here the importance of ‘The Archdruid Report’ blog for Land, with its declared intention to explore the ‘ongoing decline and impending fall of modern industrial civilization’ (see http://thearchdruidreport.blogspot.co.uk [accessed: 11 April 2015]).

13 Land has recently published a book of horror fiction in this vein (see Land, 2015).
capitalism that has begun re-engineering its very origins. Neoreaction as a movement (NRx), at least in Land’s definition, is concerned with these future feedback circuits, but also, again, with more retroactive trajectories. It is, to quote Land from his blog, a ‘time-twisted vector that spirals forwards into the past, and backwards into the future’, a project in which the contemporary moment – dominated by the democratic Cathedral – is torn apart by other forces.¹⁴

In fact, it is antagonism towards the Cathedral, understood by NRx as the broadly left-wing parliamentary-media-academic institution (or simply the “Left”), which unites what is otherwise a fairly disparate gathering of individuals (and bloggers). For the latter the Enlightenment has taken a wrong turn (precisely, to the Left) and the only solution is exit: spatial (hence “seasteading”), but also temporal: again, into the future (the neo) or into an invariably mythic past (reactionary). In passing, we might return to Hyperstition’s third definition of itself: ‘Pragmatic skepticism or constructive escape from integrated thinking and all its forms of imposed unity (religious dogma, political ideology, scientific law, common sense...)’. For Land, simply, this means exit from the Cathedral.¹⁵

¹⁴ In his Introduction to The Weird and the Eerie Mark Fisher remarks on how the weird – as both genre and mode of being – ‘implies twisted forms of time and causality that are alien to ordinary perception’ (2016, 12). If the patchwork temporality of Land’s NRx is one forking from the Ccru’s concept of hyperstition (see also Land’s recent meditation on time-travel Templexity (2014c)), then Fisher’s haunting register of the weird (that is also a meditation on the forces of the outside) is the other (2016, 12). There is a history to be written about Fisher’s involvement and subsequent move away from Land. Suffice to say here, although ending up diametrically opposed politically speaking, many of their concerns run in parallel (Fisher’s essay on “Exiting the Vampires Castle” (2013) might, for example, be said to resonate with Land’s call to exit the Cathedral; thanks to John Cussans for this connection). Fisher was also a founding member of the Ccru and responsible for the first symposium on Accelerationism at Goldsmiths College, London in 2010.

On his blog Land maps out a “trichotomy” that leads from these twin impulses of neo and reaction: 1. The Religious/Traditionalist (or Theonomists). This is the more reactionary prong, and, clearly, one that mobilizes pre-modern myth most explicitly; 2. Ethnic Nationalists. The most immediately recognizable Right-wing strand that, again, involves the mobilization of myth (especially of origins); and 3. Techno-commercialists – or simply Capitalists, where, of course, Land predominantly sits.

As well as utilizing myth (of another time in which things were – and will again be – different), this NRx trichotomy itself becomes a myth in Land’s hands (he writes at least one Science Fiction narrative about its possible worldly instantiation and there are various asides on the blog pointing to the resonances between the trichotomy and more established myth-systems such as Hinduism with its caste system and, invariably, Lovecraft’s Cthulu). In a further nod to hyper-stition Land makes the claim that a unifying feature of these different strands of NRx is the belief in a “deep order of society” that is opaque to rational analysis.\(^{16}\) Once again, deep structure – and an accompanying occult knowledge – is a key component in the NRx myth-system.

Most alarming about the xenosystems blog (at least for myself) are the links to other Right-wing blogs that more overtly use myth in a more explicit project of political demarcation and exclusivity (premised on ideas of racial purity). In fact, it is the preoccupation in these, as well as in some of Land’s own writings, with the thesis of “Human Biological Diversity” (HBD) that is, perhaps, the most dangerous aspect of the NRx thesis insofar as an argument about racial

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\(^{16}\) In fact, for that other key NRx thinker/blogger (and, in many ways, the pro-genitor of the “movement”), Mencius Moldbug (the blogging name of Curtis Yavin), this “deep” and hidden structure is the Cathedral itself – or, as it were, an agency/entity that lurks behind the latter: Cthulu Rising once more. See Moldbug’s formative NRx aphorism ‘Cthulu always swims to the left’ from Part one of “A Gentle Introduction to Unqualified Reservations” [Online] Available at http://unqualified-reservations.blogspot.co.uk/2009/01/gentle-introduction-to_unqualified.html [accessed: 11 April 2015].
difference being grounded in biology can lead to a kind of “scientific racism” with its various “natural” hierarchies and judgements (although, interestingly, Land will also mention – in his long essay on “The Dark Enlightenment”, for example – a Science Fiction mythos like Octavia Butler’s xenogenesis with its particular thesis of inter-species miscegenation).¹⁷

On the one hand a straightforward critique of the NRx position on race is important insofar as it seems relatively clear that the politics tend towards racism – even if Land’s own antipathy is directed more at the human race in general (indeed, anti-racism is one of the key characteristics of Land’s avowed enemy, the Cathedral).¹⁸ But – as I hope I have made clear – Land himself cannot be dismissed so easily. This is not only because of the (granted unlikely) possibility that he is writing via a series of parodic personae (‘The proliferation of “carriers” – “Who says this?” – multiplying perspectives and narrative fragments’), nor that his writings evidence a certain philosophical rigor and persistence often lacking in the humanities (he does makes his case as it were), but more simply because his writings have a kind of libidinal charge – an affect – that is infecting a new generation of thinkers. Indeed, in this respect, something carries over from the Ccru

¹⁷ In the blogosphere HBD is often presented as neutral and scientific (and, indeed, as a self-evident truth, albeit unpalatable to those on the Left with a social constructivist bent of mind). Indeed, the claim is made that race is just one aspect of this biological diversity (see, as indicative: https://hbdchick.wordpress.com/1007-2/ [accessed: 11 April 2015]), and yet, if one looks to the NRx blog community it is clear there is a preoccupation with issues of race (alongside those of gender) with a privileging of more traditional categories and identities, tending towards Patriarchy and white supremacy.

¹⁸ In fact, Land suggests his own take on race can be described as a form of “hyper-racism” insofar as it involves a vision of the future in which ‘capabilities for genomic manipulation dissolve biological identity into techno-commercial processes of yet-incomprehensible radicality’ [Online] Available at http://www.xenosystems.net/hyper-racism/ [accessed: 11 April 2015]. In this future visioning Socioeconomic Status becomes a proxy for race in the “sorting” (via “associative mating”) of humanity in to the super-intelligent and what Land refers to as “refuse”.

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days and Land’s writings continue to operate as a dangerous transmissible meme.\textsuperscript{19} Put bluntly, there is something compelling about the mythos Land deploys, even if one disagrees with the politics.

More generally we have proof here that mythos, including the mythos of Land himself, is as powerful as any reasoned argument (or, indeed, rational programme). It seems to me that there is important work to be done in relation to this terrain – where myth – and fictioning – switches from simply an aesthetic supplement to playing a very real political role (which, of course, is its hyperstitial aspect).

3. Myth-Science and the People-to-Come

Europeanization does not constitute a becoming but merely the history of capitalism, which prevents the becoming of subjected people.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

In order to get some traction on this terrain I want to return to, and develop, some of my own work on myth-science from my book \textit{Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond representation} (and to some remarks Deleuze and Guattari make in the chapter on “Geo-philosophy” from \textit{What is Philosophy?}). There I made the point that it is crucial to demarcate those myths which might be fascistic from those which are genuinely liberatory. The former includes the “blood and fire” myth-system of the Nazis (the “master-race”), or indeed any mythos premised on exclusion (a ‘them and us’ logic); the latter – more open myths – includes the stuttering and stammering minorities of Deleuze and Guattari’s minor literature (here the people-to-come ‘belong’ together because they do not belong anywhere else). We might note here the importance of being historically specific when it comes to the analysis of these myth-systems. The Nazi mythology,

\textsuperscript{19} Thanks to David Burrows and Kodwo Eshun for discussions around this point (and, more generally, for ongoing conversations that have fed into this essay).
for example, cannot be divorced from its context, the fertile ground of an economically depressed 1930s and 40s Germany.

Could we make the claim here that the NRx mythos is likewise determined by a very particular socio-economic context: a neoliberalism that has effectively paralyzed and stymied any viable political options or subjectivities (as also evidenced by the more mainstream rise of “democratic” Right-wing parties (one thinks of UKIP in the UK) and, indeed, other more extreme fascist groups? And could we also make the claim that with concepts like HBD a certain exclusivity is being set up – a difference “written in the genes” as it were – between a them and an us, one that installs hierarchies, but more importantly effectively stymies any becomings or, indeed, more straightforward alliances and transformations (the possibility, for example, that someone can, well, change)?

Those associated with NRx would no doubt counter this with the claim that it is the Left (the Cathedral) that operates as despotic and exclusionary – and there is something in this, at least at first glance: one need only look to the racial and class make up of “Left wing” University Departments and other Left media institutions despite what they might claim for their politics (the Guardian newspaper springs to mind). For NRx it is this Left, precisely, that operates as selective and hierarchical, operating through membership rituals and

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20 Since the original writing of this article (in 2015) the connections between NRx and what has become known as the Alt-Right are increasingly apparent, albeit it is Moldbug rather than Land that is cited as the main influence on, for example, Steve Bannon (Trump’s onetime strategy advisor). See for example “Behind the Internet’s Anti-Democracy Movement” which, in fact, cites Land (Gray, 2017). For a further account of Land’s connection to the Alt-Right (and a history of NRx more broadly) see the “The Darkness at the End of the Internet” (Haiden, 2017). This article also draws out the connections between the Ccru concept of hyperstition and debates on the “Less Wrong” website, including that of “Roko’s Basilisk” (“a result produced by its own prediction”). Finally for a further overview of NRx that positions it as a late form of Fascism (and that provides an in depth analysis of the various determining factors of its emergence) see “The Silicon Ideology” (Armistead, 2016).
protocols. But, we might ask, is it really a faceless Left hegemony that is behind these existing exclusions? Or is it not more a case of a structural class and racial inequality that, invariably, is manifest in even the most Left orientated organizations and that is overtly manifest in NRx itself? And more importantly is it not possible to disentangle an apparent Left (that might well be the default – or drag – setting of our media and educational systems) from something that really is inclusive (again when this is not an affirmation of sameness)? A Left politics in which doors really are open to all?

Attention also needs to be paid to the components of a myth-system and how these function to mobilize libidinal investment. Again, in the case of the Nazis this seemed to involve a very particular combination of pre-modern, often Nordic (but also, more generally, non-Western) avatars and archetypes alongside certain ideas of technological progress and machinic warfare – as well an interest in occult knowledge, and, of course, the imagining of a mythical (and Northern) “Fatherland”. Although Land’s NRx mythos is not a Nazi one it nevertheless involves this peculiar combination of pre and hyper modernity, alongside an interest in hidden knowledge (deep structure/Cthulic entities) and the positing of future autonomous city-states, themselves premised on exclusivity and categorization of biological types.

In What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari are also keen to demarcate these fascistic myths from what they see as more libertarian enterprises. This is the demarcation of transcendent utopias (that set up an origin/telos and/or another world that doubles our own) from those more immanent ones (which are connected to the present milieu), a demarcation that can be difficult in that it is not always entirely clear where one category of utopia ends and the other begins. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari remark, perhaps:

21 A core NRx concept is that of ‘thedes’ which concerns itself with these dynamics of “in and out” group formations. For NRx the Left is the most thedic of cultures, rife with exclusionary/inclusionary gang signs (see http://www.xenosystems.net/thedes/ [accessed: 11 April 2015]).
all concepts include this grey zone and indiscernibility where for a moment the combatants on the ground are confused, and the thinkers tired eyes mistakes the one for the other – not only the German for a Greek but the fascist for a creator of existence and freedom. (1994, 109)

For Deleuze and Guattari, Heidegger’s philosophy is a case in point: ‘He got the wrong people, earth, and blood. For the race summoned forth by art or philosophy is not the one that claims to be pure but rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic and irremediably minor race…’ (1994, 109). Might we make the claim here that Land has also got the wrong people (in terms of his imagined future but also of the NRx community his blog links to)? And that, in fact, it is precisely a bastardised, hybrid people – decidedly impure – that hold out the promise of something different?22 Something that opposes itself to the standardized molar – and major – model of a pure bred (and solely heterosexual) “man” – the fully-functioning unit of Western modernity (a model that, in fact, no-one is able to live up to)?23

22 Or, as Deleuze puts it in one of his final essays, on “Literature and Life”:

This is not exactly a people called upon to dominate the world. It is a minor people, eternally minor, taken up in a becoming-revolutionary … a bastard people, inferior, dominated, always in becoming, always incomplete. Bastard no longer designates a familial state, but the process or drift of the races. I am a beast, a Negro of an inferior race for all eternity. (1997, 4)

23 In Edouard Glissant’s concept of errantry (and the accompanying concept of “opacity”) we have the beginnings of an ethics that might lead from a genuine respect for difference and diversity. An attitude towards the other that does not lead to judgement and hierarchy, but that also does not subscribe to a simple universalizing gesture in which all heterogeneity is flattened:

Errant, he challenges and discards the universal – this generalizing edict that summarized the world as something obvious and trans-
So much – at least as a first skirmish – against the thesis on HBD, but what to make of Land’s more consistent championing of a capitalism unleashed (that, again, at least on the face of it, follows Deleuze and Guattari’s own injunction in *Anti-Oedipus* to “accelerate the process”)? In the chapter on “Geophilosophy”, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that capitalism – a ‘world market’ that ‘extends to the ends of the earth before passing in to the galaxy’ – can only ever be a relative deterritorialisation. Modern philosophy, although invariably determined by (and connected to) this socio-economic context (and, more specifically, to the city), goes beyond these conditions in an absolute deterritorialisation that is irreducible to its history (it is this ‘event’ – ‘a Nature-thought of infinite diagrammatic movements’ – that is then reterritorialised on the concept) (1994, 88). Such a de-territorialisation involves new and different kinds of thinking which, in and of themselves, summon forth ‘a new earth, a new people' adequate and appropriate to them (1994, 90). Deterritorialisation is clearly operational in Land’s projected futures (there is no doubting the acceleration), but the question is whether this is an absolute de-territorialisation (a creative becoming), or, rather, just an increase in the speed of relative deterritorialisation (an acceleration of already existing capitalist imperatives – Srnicek and Williams’ “dromological parent, claiming for it one presupposed sense and one destiny. He plunges into the opacities of that part of the world to which he has access. Generalization is totalitarian: from the world it chooses one side of the reports, one set of ideas, which it sets apart from others and tries to impose by exporting as a model. The thinking of errant-ry conceives of totality but willingly renounces any claims to sum it up or to possess it. (1997, 20-1)

In passing we might note a fictional instantiation of this opacity in Alan Garner’s novel *Strandloper* where there is a non-communication and non-coincidence, but also a kind of “understanding”, between an exiled English peasant with his pagan beliefs and the Australian aborigines with whom he finds himself. Each world is opaque to the other, and yet, in their very singularity, they resonate.
accelerationism” – alongside any accompanying subjectivities)?

And what is the connection of this deterritorialisation to myth? As well as these two orders of immanence (of capitalism and philosophy) Deleuze and Guattari also write of forms of transcendence in which figures – projections onto the plane of immanence – are opposed to concepts that operate through connection. Indeed, figures themselves erect a transcendent realm from where they originate, installing a vertical hierarchy in place of horizontal linkage (as Deleuze and Guattari remark: ‘figures occur whenever immanence is attributed to something’) (1994, 91). Certainly religion, clearly, operates through figures, but so might myth. In fact, what seems to be happening in Land’s myth-system is a linking of the deterritorialisation of capital – accelerated though it might be – with the projected figures of something more transcendent, something inhuman but that nevertheless has a kind of agency. Thus the inclusion of, for example, Gnon or Cthulu – but, more generally, the laying out of a thesis on

24 We might note here the technological nature of these already existing imperatives, and, more generally, the capitalist pre-occupation with a techno-scientific paradigm. I attend to this and to Guattari’s idea of an alternative “ethico-aesthetic paradigm” (that involves a different production of subjectivity) in O’Sullivan, 2010a. NRx’s reliance on scientific ‘explanation’ (for example in HBD) would likewise seem to involve the privileging of a certain kind of empirical knowledge (and idea of truth): that which is “objective”, apparent to the senses, can be measured, and so forth.

25 Deleuze and Guattari also suggest that when deterritorialisation takes place through transcendence it implies an Imperial situation (“imperial unity or spiritual empire”). If I have implied that NRx operates through such a schema, it also seems clear that from a Landian perspective it is the Cathedral that installs a regime of transcendence (with its own hidden structure, and so forth). Land would then, presumably, position NRx itself as the “milieu of immanence” (and, indeed, there is something about the NRx vision of autonomous city-states that resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the coastal cities and “international market” of the Greeks – as there is also with their outlining of some of the other necessary pre-conditions of modern philosophy). Indeed, all this can become a hall of mirrors – not least as the enemy for both NRx and Deleuze and Guattari’s minor people is the typical form of “Democracy” in and of the West.
“deep structure” (the latter playing the same role - offering a “superior reality” – as any realm “above” the world).²⁶

A key question that leads on from this (at least for myself) is whether there might be a different kind of mythos (if it could still be called as such) that does not operate through transcendence (or deep structure) in this manner and that also connects to the absolute de-territorialisation of philosophy as Deleuze and Guattari define it. And, accompanying this, a different kind of myth-science perhaps that relates to radically different kinds, and speeds, of thought (and thus also to the different subjectivities that think these or, indeed, are thought by them). Elsewhere I have written about the relation of intensive speed (the “stationary voyage”) to the more typical idea of speed that involves an acceleration of extensive movement (O’Sullivan, 2016). Here I want to suggest the possibility of a myth-science that operates through immanence rather than transcendence. One that is not hierarchical (and, as such, also, perhaps not occult). A myth-science that is radically open and democratic when this is less to do with generalizing from, and then universalizing, a standardized subjectivity (the citizen of the Democratic state), than with the invention and gathering of a more minor people.²⁷ It only needs adding that these future-people – that might well involve other non-human and hybrid forms (sil-

²⁶ The question of the role of number – concept or figure? – is interesting here. For Land, no doubt numerology is to treat the number as transcendent, but, insofar as numeracy is itself a “hidden knowledge” – again, a deep structure – it would seem to partake of the structure of the figure. This ambiguity is signaled in Deleuze and Guattari’s own discussion of Chinese thought, for example the hexagram, understood as figure that might be said to approach the condition of concept, although, Deleuze and Guattari are clear that even in these limit cases (as with other cases of “disturbing affinities” between concept and figure) there remains a difference in kind (horizontal connection versus transcendent projection) (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, 89-92).

²⁷ I have written more about this future orientation of the minor – and about how this concept might be brought into productive resonance with contemporary art practice – in “Art and the Political: Minor Literature, the War Machine and the Production of Subjectivity” in O’Sullivan, 2006a, 69-97 and O’Sullivan, 2010b.
icon-carbon assemblages, alongside alliances with other species) is also us as we are now. Myth-science, in this sense, speaks not to you, but to something in you.

Might this myth-science also involve the kinds of interferences between the different regimes of thought that Deleuze and Guattari point towards in the closing pages of What is Philosophy? where they write of thought’s relation to chaos and where ‘there is extracted from chaos the shadow of the “people to come” in the form that art, but also philosophy and science, summon forth: mass-people, world-people, brain-people, chaos-people …’ (1994, 218). Indeed, art, for Deleuze and Guattari, partakes in absolute deterritorialisation in its production of different blocs of affect, joining forces with philosophy in a certain kind of future-orientation that characterizes the immanent utopias (and their resistance to the present) I mentioned above. Myth-science in this sense is not a regression as Adorno and Horkheimer might understand it, but is also not a straightforward progression into an already demarcated future. It is, rather, a processual becoming into a different future, one that is open, yet to be determined. There is no call here for a belief in something beyond the world, but rather for a belief in the world.

In terms of fictions, this myth-science is also not a return to those always already determined and constituted stories (myths of the nuclear family, of Oedipal sexuality, of the Nation state, of a “glorious death”, of nine-to-five careerism and commodity obsession, of

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28 I address this idea of a chaoid-subjectivity in more detail in “Desiring-Machines, Chaoids, Probe-heads: Towards a Speculative Production of Subjectivity (Deleuze and Guattari)” in O’Sullivan 2012, 169-202 (see especially 182-7). In terms of myth-science Deleuze and Guattari write of an interesting interference between the planes of philosophy and art where conceptual personae become indistinguishable from aesthetic figures (the latter as not necessarily transcendent projections). They mention Nietzsche’s Zarathustra in this context, but, we might also note here Land’s own use of a figure like Artaud in some of the essays of the 1990s.

29 To quote Deleuze and Guattari: ‘…perhaps belief becomes a genuine concept only when it is made into belief in this world and is connected rather than being projected’ (1994, 92).
patriarchy and racial purity), neither is it a mythos that installs deep structures or transcendent enunciators with their accompanying hierarchies – and visions of exit from the present conditions. Myth-science, rather, is connected to the here and now, the present milieu, but it involves the invention of new and different narratives and image-worlds by and for a people who do not recognize themselves in those of the dominant. Traitors myths for traitor subjects perhaps?

In fact, it seems to me, this future orientated practice might involve the utilization of past myth, albeit in new and novel combinations (such myths will be precisely bastardised). Raymond Williams’ work on “residual culture” is instructive here insofar as past myths might enable a form of resistance to the narratives of the dominant culture (although it will be crucial to demarcate those that have been “incorporated” – what Williams calls “archaic” and in this context we might call major – from those that remain potentially resistant (more minor myths) (1980). In relation to this we might also note Gilbert Simondon’s outlining of a pre-technical, or magical, consciousness that also gestures forwards to an aesthetic consciousness yet-to-come (2011). I will be returning to Williams and Simondon in a further essay on myth-science’s relation to the past (O’Sullivan, 2017e), suffice to say here that the present is always already a complex and contested temporal matrix and, as such, certain aspects of the past can indeed be mobilized against the dominant ideas of the contemporary.30

Deleuze says something similar in Cinema 2 about this productive utilization (but also critique) of yesterday’s myths in relation to the films of Gabriel Rocha, where: ‘...it is not a matter of analyzing myth in order to discover its archaic meaning or structure, but of connecting archaic myth to the state of the drives in an absolutely contemporary society, hunger, thirst, sexuality, power, death, worship’ (1989, 219). Deleuze goes on to suggest that this work consists, precisely, in crossing the boundaries between the private and the political, producing collective enunciations – of ‘putting everything into a trance,

30 I also attend to the different times in and of the present (in relation to Aby Warburg’s ‘Lecture on Serpent Ritual’) in O’Sullivan, 2006b.

In these passages from *Cinema 2* Deleuze is gesturing to the importance of aesthetic practices (here modern cinema) for wider political projects (in this case the invention of a people). Indeed, it seems important not only to work out how myth might utilize different times (and fictions) in its project of addressing the present, but also how different forms of myth-making insert themselves within and intersect with reality (and politics) in different ways. Deleuze’s idea of a minor literature (and of a minor cinema) points to the importance of a future orientated collective speech-act (as Deleuze has it: ‘Not the myth of a past people, but the story-telling of the people to come’). Hyperstition, likewise, has a future orientation, suggesting, as it does, the possibility of positive feedback loops in which what was fiction becomes real (indeed, this is the force (and attraction) of hyperstition). But hyperstition also mobilises a mythos, which, at least in some instantiations, can work against the invention of this people. In this sense, perhaps the most important work is that which is done “on the ground” as it were, not only disentangling Left from Right, but, more crucially, minor from major, when the former involves both a summoning of, and an openness to, a people yet-to-come (afterall the Left – and perhaps this is the most useful insight of NRx – can also work, despite its claims, to exclude: there can, in this sense (and as Deleuze and Guattari make clear in *Anti-Oedipus*) be a fascism of the Left). In fact, it seems to me that in this work of demarcation – that this article hopes to contribute towards – a constant vigilance is required to prevent the one from slipping over into the other. The

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I have attempted to begin this task of working out the connection between fictioning and politics in more detail elsewhere (see O’Sullivan, 2016) but want to point the interested reader to Guattari’s essay “Genet Regained” (2014, 215-30), that also addresses this connection in relation to literatures’ generation of “existential operators” – or autopoietic nuclei – around which a different production of subjectivity might cohere and achieve consistency (thanks to Theo Reeves-Evanson for pointing me towards this essay). For more on these “Z-Points” and their relation to both the production of subjectivity and art practice see Burrows and O’Sullivan, 2014.
terrain of myth-science, in this sense, is indeed both trance and grey zone. 32

(Thanks to David Burrows, John Cussans, Mark Fisher and Harriet Skully for ongoing conversations on the subject of this essay and for comments on an earlier draft)

References


32 As Deleuze remarks in his own thesis on the delirium of fiction (and its relation to life):

Delirium is a disease, the disease par excellence, whenever it erects a race it claims to be pure and dominant. But is it the measure of health when it invokes this oppressed bastard race that ceaselessly stirs beneath dominations, resisting everything that crushes and imprisons, a race that is outlined in relief in literature as process. Here again, there is always the risk that a diseased state will interrupt the process of becoming ... the constant risk that a delirium of domination will be mixed with a bastard delirium, pushing literature toward a larval fascism, the disease against which it fights – even if this means diagnosing the fascism within itself and fighting against itself. The ultimate aim of literature is to set free, in the delirium, this creation of a health or this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life. (1997, 4)
Relation or Art as Non-Schizoanalysis”, in Deleuze and the Schizo-analysis of Visual Art, London: Bloomsbury, pp. 253-78.
Land, Nick (2014c), Templexity: Disordered Loops through Shanghai Time, Shanghai: Time Spiral Press.


LA CATHÉDRALE CONSIDÉRÉE COMME COURSE DE CÔTE

Dan Mellamphy
I would like to thank Constanza Bizraelli for her invitation to publish in this the second issue (second cycle) of CYCLOPS, as well as the three peer reviewers for their excellent comments on the submission. My contribution is written as an attempt to do justice to the periodical’s three disciplinary domains—CYCLOPS being a journal of contemporary, religious and experimental theory (h/t CYCLOPSjournal.net). In order to touch on these three theatres of theoretical operation, this essay assays an analysis of the architectural emblems on the face of the great cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris (the Religious angle, in this case c/o Christianity—the Catholic Church), interpreting these in light of ancient alchemical processes (the Experimental angle, in this case c/o Fulcanelli—the French alchemical theorist) as well as more current outlooks in the area of media-and-information-technology (the Contemporary angle, in this case c/o Wark, Thacker & Galloway’s Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation (Galloway, Thacker & McKenzie Wark, 2014). What I hope to show in this three-dimensional disquisition is not only the interplay of these different domains (this theoretical triad) but their actual conjunction—their triangulation—in what could be called, rather paradoxically if not altogether pataphysically, a monocural binocularism or bicyclopean perspective (with a tip-of-the-hat/head to Issue Two of CYCLOPS). Before beginning, then—while still here in the precursive preamble—a mise-en-scène, if I may:

Approaching the great Gothic cathedral of Notre Dame on the Île-de-la-Cité at the centre of Paris, eyes are naturally—or rather, techno-logically—drawn upward, thanks to the architectural/architechnical advances of the Gothic era which allowed enormous window-openings in the massive stone walls due to the combined Gothonovations of [1] flying buttresses (to support the walls—the whole edifice, indeed—where the holes for its windows do not) and [2] symmetrical stonework between each pane of glass (forming

1 The initial idea was to use three works by Gilbert Simondon rather than Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation (Simondon’s Mode d’Existence des Objets Techniques, L’Individu et sa Genèse Physico-Biologique and Individuation Psychique et Collective, that is, rather than Wark, Thacker & Galloway’s Excommunication) as my main techno-theoretical reference[7], correlating this essay with my contribution to the special Simondon issue of Platform: Journal of Media and Communication (PlatformJMC.com/2015/04/27/vol-6); although this angle was abandoned for the sake of expediency, the correlations for the most part still stand (readers are welcome to [ad]venture).
something like a solid symmetrical web to distribute the otherwise stained-glass-shattering forces of gravity out to the surrounding walls and supporting exterior buttresses). The dark fortresses of Romanesque churches were replaced in this fashion by brilliantly-illuminated, light-filled cathedrals that instilled in each visitor a sense of heavenly heights and sky-high delights overhead. But if the visitor were to head toward the church looking straight ahead rather than upward, the former would encounter a ladder\(^2\) (acknowledging lofty climbs ahead) at eye-level: a nine-rung/ten-gap ladder represented as leaning on the body of an enthroned\(^3\) woman (see image 1) whose head is shown to be touching the clouds\(^4\) and whose hands hold, to her right, two books—one behind and one in front of the other: the latter symbolizing “text” and the former “subtext”, *i.e.* “exoteric” plus “esoteric” context\(^5\)—and to her left a scepter, which she carries in such a way that two of her fingers are in front of its handle and two of her fingers behind it, symbolizing in this gesture ‘revealed’ and ‘concealed’ powers (the scepter being an emblem of power). On either side of this figure, to the right and left of the cathedral’s main entrance, are bas-reliefs at same height as this central figure: two sets of six (one above the other) to the left, and two sets of six (one above the other) to the right. The top twelve of these reliefs depict enthroned figures seated between arcade pillars, each figure holding a circlet\(^5\) ornamented with

\(^2\) The ‘*scala philosophorum*—hieroglyph of the patience which the faithful must possess in the course of the nine \([3+3+3]\) successive operations of the hermetic labour. “Patience is the philosophers’ ladder”, Valois tells us, “and humility is the door to their garden; for whosoever will persevere without pride and without envy, on them God will show mercy” (*Œuvres de Nicolas Grosparmy et Nicolas Valois*, Bibliothèque de L’Arsenal: Manuscript #2516-166-S.A.F, p.176)’ (Fulcanelli, 1971, 70)

\(^3\) Cybele here is seated on a throne, as are the figures to her left and her right (this is also reflected in the great west rose-window).

\(^4\) (acknowledging the heavenly heights ahead once again)

\(^5\) Some might see these circlets as “shields”, some as “wheels”, some as “rings” (for Tolkien-types, “Rings of Power”) or even “eyes” (for Tolkien-types, “Eyes of Sauron”); each interpretation has its merit. One should note that in the transition from
an emblem symbolic of a stage or phase of alchemical transmutation. The scenes depicted in the bottom bas-reliefs appear in circular rings (circlets) of their own, each circlet encircling the entire depiction.

The pseudonymous interpreter of these alchemical emblems, an early 20th-century theorist-practitioner who published under the name of Fulcanelli— in honour of Vulcan a.k.a. Hephaestus, god of sculptors, craftsmen, blacksmiths and artisans— noted that amongst the frightening gargoyles installed at the very top of the cathedral by Viollet-le-Duc is a man-amongst-monsters whose Phrygian headgear (“attribute of the adept”) marks him out as an alchemist. (see image 2) ‘The Phyrigian cap,’ he explains in a footnote, ‘was a distinctive sign of the initiates’ (Fulcanelli, [1926]:93-94). Quoting his col-

6 One of the peer-reviewers for CYCLOPS—this excellent journal—suggested that ‘it might be useful here to delineate (perhaps in the footnote?), following Manly P Hall, the three degrees of alchemists: the initiate, the illuminate, and the adept; readers may find that contextually helpful since the quotation mentions both but can be read in slightly different ways.’ Thank you, peer-reviewer—and thank you, Manly P Hall, whose birthplace is just up the Macdonald Cartier Freeway (a.k.a. the “King’s Highway”) from my present location here at WesternU in London Ontario (MPH was born north-east of here in Peterborough Ontario, 130 kilometers beyond Toronto).

Since the internet is “a series of tubes” according to a certain TED talk (that of U.S. Senator Ted Stevens), or better-yet a series of alchemical test-tubes (a testament to transformative alchemy), or perhaps even-better a tubular “alcheminement” qua “royal alchemical road” (the conduit qua “king’s highway” of an aethereal aqueduct, virtual viaduct, or transductive permutational pipeline), I here provide a YouTube link to the relevant excerpt from Hall’s 1934 lecture on the Adept of the Alchemical Tradition’ wherein he discusses the aforementioned three degrees: [Online] Available at http://youtube.com/embed/6kQnstDPKE0?rel=0&autoplay=1.

7 Le Mystère des Cathédrales was written and submitted for publication in—or shortly after—1922 (following twelve years of prior research, as well as years of detailed drawing c/o Jean-Julien-Hubert Champagne) then published by Jean Schémit—with a preface by Eugène Canseliet—in 1926: hence the first line of Canseliet’s
league and fellow-researcher Pierre Dujols, he notes that in esoteric preface to the second/subsequent edition, which begins with the sentence ‘When Le Mystère des Cathédrales was written-down in 1922...’ (1964:15, 1971:8). References throughout this essay are to the third augmented edition published in 1964 by Jean-Jacques Pauvert, which includes Canseliet’s first and second prefaces along with the only extant fragment from Fulcanelli’s unfinished Finis Gloriarum Mundi: “La Croix cyclique d’Hendaye’. Sworder’s English translation, published by Neville Spearman in 1971, includes that additional fragment on ‘The Cyclic(al) Cross of Hendaye’ along with both of Canseliet’s prefaces; this edition was then reprinted by Neville Spearman in 1977 and then reprinted again, with the inclusion of a “Preface to the American Edition” and an “Introduction by Walter Lang”, by The Brotherhood of Life—Albuquerque New-Mexico, USA—in that most George-Orwellian of years, 1984. The overarching idea behind the publication of the original volumes appears to have been the production of a set of three texts corresponding to the stages of the alchemical process: Volume One, The Mystery of the Cathedrals, corresponding to the alchemical stage of melanosis (1. μελάνωσις), the black background/background of the work-as-a-whole qua earthly mystery/mυύησις at-the-base/as-the-basis of the cathedral[s]; Volume Two, The Dwellings of the Philosophers, corresponding to the alchemical stage of leukosis (2. λεύκωσις), the stage of subsequent clarification, insight and enlightenment—the “affirmative” phase or stage where things “firm up”; and Volume Three, Finis Gloriarum Mundi, corresponding to the alchemical stage of isis-a.k.a.-erythrosis (3. ἱωσις-a.k.a.-ερύθρωσις) beyond “black and white”, “good and bad”, etc., etc. (in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vor-spiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft—prelude to a ‘philosophy of the future’ which might turn out to be utterly/unutterably “non-philosophical”).

The research and resources of Pierre Dujols (Dujols de Valois), owner and operator of the Librairie du Merveilleux at 76 rue de Renne in Paris, were fundamental—indeed seminal—to Fulcanelli’s published works, and the initial plan for The Mystery of the Cathedrals might indeed have been his; the Librairie du Merveilleux was in any case an intellectual crucible during the time-span of its brief 12-or-15-year operation under Dujols’s direction. It could be that the very pseudonym ‘Fulcanelli’ was itself a tip-of-the-hat to the triad Dujols/Decœur/Roussel (the friends, fellow-researchers and fellow-visionaries Pierre Dujols, Paul Decœur and Raymond Roussel, whose various pseudonyms at the Librairie du Merveilleux included Magophon, “The Voice of the Sages”, and Vulcain Solaire, “Vulcan of the Sun”: the latter a proto-Fulcanelli, N.B.), who were each interested in taking-up and taking-on the project of an alchemical interpretation of the Gothic cathedrals (inspired in part by the novelist Victor Hugo and in part by the essayist Grasset d’Orcet) with Jean-Juilen
circles this cap ‘is worth more than any king’s crown’ (Ibid.). The goddess Cybele (that figure with the books and the scepter sculpted into the central column between the two doors of the cathedral) is herself the chief goddess, the matrix and matriarch, of the Phrygians—the Phrygian áρχή (in the sense of origin, ground, foundation) reflected On High by the Phrygian-capped adept-alchemist. Even the alchemist atop the cathedral points us (via his gaze and gesture) in the direction of the Phrygian Κυβέλη—Cybele—the Île-de-la-Cité’s stone Sibyl (‘He is not meditating,’ explains Fulcanelli, writing of Notre Dame’s alchemist/man-amongst-monsters; ‘he is observing. His eye is fixed; his look is strangely acute. [...] The slope of his shoulders, the forward thrust of his head and chest, betray, indeed, the greatest surprise’: ‘leaning with one hand on the balustrade and stroking his full silky beard with the other, [...] he is scrutinizing and enquiring into the evolution of mineral life, and he contemplates in amazement the prodigy which his faith has let him perceive’—(Fulcanelli, [1926] 1964:93-

Champagne as illustrious illustrator.

9 As above, so below.

10 The Phrygian cap, in its association with the Phrygian mother (Cybele of the central column between the main doors), attests to his faith and its prodigy, N.B. ‘Thus the cathedral appears to be based on alchemical science,’ writes Fulcanelli in the section of his Mystère des Cathédrales devoted to this figure on and of the central column, i.e. ‘on the science which investigates the transformations of the original substance’—áρχή—‘elementary matter (Lat. materea, root mater: “mother”). For the Virgin Mother—Notre Dame—‘stripped of her symbolical veil, is none other than the personification of the primitive substance’; “this is the meaning (and indeed a very clear one) of the strange epithet which we read in the Mass of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, of which the text reads: “The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his ways. I existed before he formed any creature. I existed from all eternity, before the earth was created. The abysses were not yet and already I was conceived. The fountains had not yet come out of the earth; the heavy mass of the mountains had not yet been formed; I was begotten before the hills. He had created neither the earth, nor the rivers, nor strengthened the world on its poles. When he prepared the heavens, I was present; when he confined the abysses within their bounds and prescribed an inviolable law; when he confirmed the air above
If one were to walk up to the cathedral along its mid-line, one’s face would collide with the carving of Cybele in her bas-relief circle—the Cybele that stands as a Sybil staring out from her singular circle qua cyclopean (Cyclops-like) eye. At the mid-point, head-high, this cyclopean eye provides a particularly perspicacious perspective for the perceptive pupil\(^{11}\)—one which would see this \(^{[w]}\)holy see\(^{12}\) as the seat of something other than and alternate to (\(i.e.\) the alter of) the altar, raised daïs and pontifical throne within. Now, the alchemist above—standing aloft amongst the gargoyles—has himself turned to stone: ‘his eye his fixed’ (Ibid) and in this fixation he himself seems transfixed, as if his glance down to the ground from up among the gargoyles had chanced upon a veritable gorgon (the monstrous Medusa?\(^{13}\)) in the eyes qua “cyclopean eye” of Cybele. In order to avoid this fate—that of being ‘fixed in a formulated phrase’ to quote Prufrock\(^{14}\)—the pupil who would approach the central pillar and its Cybele-circle should look left and right in addition to forward: (see image 3) this rather than in an exclusively straightforward direction—rather than only into the Phrygian frame. And once past the main doorway, two further directions are called for (“the back-up”): not just down from the lofty

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11 The pun here is poignant—a punctum.
12 http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/see#Etymology_2
13 Monsters as well, then, above and below!
14 ‘And I have known the eyes already, known them all— / The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase, / And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin, / When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall, / Then how should I begin / To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways? / And how should I presume?’ (T.S. Eliot (1915) The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock).
width into the Cybele-circle (although this is the crux of and for alternate perspectives), and not only, in addition, to the left and the right of this central circle (the central column), but also, once within the cathedral, backward and upward; hence (in sum) down from the top, forward along the middle path, to the left and the right of the main entryway, and—once one has entered—back again and up (“the back-up”).

The final part of our mise-en-scène is what Heraclitus would have called an ἀγχιβασίην (Fragment 122)\(^\text{15}\) and what Maurice Blanchot would have called a step/not-beyond: a step forward (pas\(^\text{16}\) in French) that is not truly (pas\(^\text{17}\) in French) a step forward/au-delà.\(^\text{18}\) Stepping through the doors directly beneath the rose window of the western façade a.k.a front of the cathedral—a window that picks up the details of the ground-level emblems and arranges them into the big blooming flower of a circular rose—a turn backward and look upward (turning back to look up at the window from the labyrinth-floor) reveals that half of the cathedral’s front-facing window remains hidden from view by the massive church-organ (see image 4), eliciting from the frustrated researcher (there before the Judgement of God) an Antonin-Artaud-like outburst in praise of, and desire for, an architectural body without organs. The Mutus Liber qua Silent Sermon-in-Stone has itself been muted on the inside by the musical organ (how a-musing) and on the outside by the ravages of weather (wind and rain), albeit only in parts. Fulcanelli himself felt the same frustration.

\(^{15}\) Heraclitus (1967) Fragments. DK 122 (listed as fragment #111 in Marcovich—cf. Miroslav Marcovich, Heraclitus: Greek Text with a Short Commentary, Merida: Los Andes University Press. 565-566). “The Suda, Thesaurus and Lexicon state that the Ionian or Attic agchibasien is cognate with the Doric or Dorian amphibasis and designates the “to and fro” or “come and go” of one engaged in battle” (Alchemical Traditions from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde, 2013, 611).

\(^{16}\) http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pas#Noun_9

\(^{17}\) http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pas#Adverb_5

as the aforementioned academic/would-be-researcher, acknowledging for example that many of the exterior emblems are in our present era (which was his era as well, give-or-take ninety-five years) ‘worn away [and] deteriorated’—‘swept by the west winds, seven centuries of gales have worn some of them to the point where they are no more than blurred and indistinct outlines’ (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:115, trans. Sworder 1971:89). The bas-reliefs were themselves originally painted presentations, colourful figures the colours of which were colour-codes for hermetic hermeneuts. ‘In the course of this study,’ wrote Fulcanelli in his Mystères, ‘we had occasion to regret both the ravages of foolish iconoclasts and the total disappearance of the colours which our splendid cathedral used to possess’—‘however,’ he joyfully notes (dismissing the organ-blocked items), ‘Notre Dame itself preserves the original colouring of the figures of its great porch. Guillaume de Paris, whose perspicacity we must bless, was able to foresee the great damage which time would do to his work’ and ‘had the motifs of the medallions reproduced on the panes of the central rose window. (see image 5) Thus glass complements stone and thanks to the help of the fragile material the hidden meaning regains its first purity’ (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:132, trans. Sworder 1971:103).

Combined reference to, and reflection upon, the stone figures and glass colours—i.e. a cycling from one to the other, back-and-forth/up-and-down/left-and-right, in a kind of cyclical ἀγχιβασίν—allows the would-be interpreter a perspective at once Phrygian (i.e. centered on the central Cybele) and Para-Phrygian (i.e. alternating instead [1] to either side of the latter/ladder—to its left and its right—as well as [2] forth from it: forth from it into the cathedral itself or up from it to its loftier heights and then back again, i.e. back out or down from its heights): one that cycles alternatively left and right, up and down, back and forth, in a Para-Phrygian/² cyclopean feat of interactive interitem interpretation. Following the argument in Alex Galloway’s contribution to Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation, this Para-Phrygian/² cyclopean “cyclical” interpretation would
constitute, in concert, both a “hermeneutic” and “iridescent” interpretative approach. *Hermes* [Ἑρμῆς]—perhaps the most famous or infamous messenger of the gods in Greek myth—is ‘the embodiment of communication in the most normal sense,’ explains Galloway, ‘for, as the god of the threshold, he governs the sending of messages and the journeying into foreign lands. From his name we derive the term *hermeneutics*, the art of textual interpretation understood as a kind of journeying into texts’ (2014, 29). *Iris* [Ἶρις] is ‘the other messenger of the gods, often overlooked and overshadowed by the more influential *Hermes*. As Greek goddess of the rainbow, *Iris* indicates how light can bridge sky and land. She presides over communication as luminous immediacy, and from her we gain the concept of *iridescent communication*’ (Ibid.). The hermeneutics of carved stone and the iridescence of stained glass conjoin in cathedral interpretation c/o Fulcanelli, and converge, in the end—from the very beginning/first-façade—in the cyclopean crucible of Cybele, the Phrygian matrix of these matters. (see image 6) She herself, the foreign yet fundamental element, the foreign yet fundamental *agent*, is both mother and monster (*cf.* Nandita Biswas Mellamphy’s ‘[*W*]omen out/of Time: *Mètis, Medea, Mahakāli*’ in the recently-published anthology *After the Speculative Turn*), me-

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19 ‘It is a curious hermetic analogy that Cybele was worshipped at Pessinonte [a.k.a. Pessinous] in Phrygia in the form of a *black stone*,’ wrote Fulcanelli ([1926] 1964:80, trans. Sworder 1971:61-62); Kali, too, was often worshipped in the form of a *black stone* (काला पत्थर—*kala patthar*, noting while on this subject that Fulcanelli includes in his *Mystère* a reference to the black stone madonna in the crypt of the cathedral—‘*Notre-Dame-sous-Terre*: “Our Lady Under-ground”, [...] [whose pedestal at other locations such as Notre-Dame-de-Chartres] was worn-away by the licks and bites of its fervent worshippers’; (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:76, trans. Sworder 1971:58). Further interesting interconnections can be found in D. Mellamphy (2015) “Kaligraphy” in *Serial Killing: A Philosophical Anthology*. Edia Connole & Gary Shipley, eds. U.K: Schism Books. 130-145) [Online] Available at (http://academia.edu/10116354), and N. Biswas Mellamphy (2016) “[*W*]omen out/of Time: *Mètis, Medea, Mahakāli*” in *After The Speculative Turn: Realism, Philosophy & Feminism*. Katerina Kolosova & Eileen Joy, eds. New York: Punctum Books. 133-158. [On-
diating these mediations without herself being mediated by them.

With respect to this fundamental matter/mother/other, Fulcanelli makes reference in his *Mystère* to the Mass of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, wherein the Virgin Mother is described as the Vase (*vas spirituale*) in which matter itself manifests—the very crucible from whence the cosmos comes to be: ‘The Lord possessed me at the very beginning’; ‘I existed before he formed any creature’; ‘The fountains had not yet come out of the earth; the heavy mass of the mountains had not yet been formed; I was begotten before the hills’ (The Mass of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, quoted in Fulcanelli, [1926] 1964:90-91, trans. Sworder 1971:70-71). Prior to Hermes [*Ἑρμῆς*], prior to Iris [*Ἶρις*], there was the feminine (or rather pre-feminine, pre-gendered[^20^]) spirit—*vas spirituale*—of the ancient Erinyes [*Ἐρῑνύες*]: a force of Chthonos prior to Olympos, a chthonic power prior to any and all hierarchical structuration[^5^], hence (in words made popular in ‘theory circles’ by Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari) “rhizomatic” rather than “arborescent”. Writing of the Erinyes, Galloway describes them as ‘prehistoric. They move through contagion’ and take multiple forms; indeed, ‘if Hermes is the god of the signifier and Iris is the goddess of immanence,’ the Erinyes ‘are the gods [/goddesses] of the incontinence of form’ or of what Georges Bataille[^21^]...

[^5^]: Available at [http://academia.edu/10602262](http://academia.edu/10602262)—a contribution written for the latter anthology when the latter anthology had its originally-proposed title, *Speculations of the Other Women: New Realisms in Feminist Philosophy* ([http://twitter.com/youtopos/status/723218342585217025](http://twitter.com/youtopos/status/723218342585217025)); Cybele herself is mètic, N.B.

[^20^]: Perhaps also, in addition, “inhuman”. ‘Rather than the equivocation of Hermes [*hermeneutics*] or the relentless reification of Iris [*iridescence*],’ perhaps the Erinyes ‘don’t speak at all,’ muses Wark in his contribution to *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation* ‘...at least not in a way that is recognizable to Hermes or Iris. The[* Erinyes*] utter an inhuman speech. They can’t be communicated with; they do it to us, not with us’ (2014, 156). The inhuman, one should note, is also in the human (but perhaps only as the archive/ἀρχή of the “pre-“ or “post-“ human).

[^21^]: One of the peer-reviewers for *CYCLOPS* (this excellent journal) made mention at this particular point—with respect to Georges Bataille—of Bataille’s 1922 mas-
ter’s-thesis in medieval studies at the École Nationale des Chartes in Paris, and of Bataille’s first published piece (prior to that, back in 1918) on the cathedral of Notre Dame de Reims (Le Mystère de la Cathédrale de Reims: [Online] Available at http://pilefacebis.com/sollers/IMG/jpg/bataille_manuscrit_cahier_bleu.jpg). For more on the latter, cf. Denis Hollier (1974) La Prise de la Concorde: Essais sur Georges Bataille. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, trans. B Wing, Against Architecture: On the Writings of Georges Bataille, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990). Le Mystère de la Cathédrale de Reims [Online] Available at (http://pilefacebis.com/sollers/IMG/jpg/bataille_manuscrit_cahier_bleu.jpg) was composed during the very same time-period as Le Mystère des Cathédrales—Fulcanelli’s text—and, adding to these nice synchronicities, Bataille’s master’s-thesis on L’Ordre de Chevalerie (The Chivalric Order) was composed during roughly the same time-period as Pierre Dujols’s treatises on chivalry, chivalric codes, and the caballa of the Latin caballus (from the Greek καβάλλας): that is, on what he saw as a kind of “Trojan Horse” language which cuts across cultures and was carried/transported/translated—along with the cross—by medieval Knights Templar. Prior to the publication of his annotated Mutus Liber in 1914 and his Grand Livre de la Nature ou l’Apocalypse Philosophique et Hermétique in 1910, Dujols published his 1909 Science Cabalistique, which formed the basis of what would later become La Chevalerie Amoureuse: Troubadours, Félibres et Rose-Croix (my copy being the Table d’Émeraude edition published in Paris in 1991). The second part of Dujols’s Chevalerie Amoureuse, entitled “Le Baphomet” (the first part being entitled “La Chevalerie Amoureuse”: the title of the book), was probably unavailable to Pierre Klossowski when the latter set out to write his novel by that name, but Pierre Klossowski’s nephew Stanislas (the son of Pierre’s brother Balthasar, a.k.a. Balthus: the world-renowned painter) was himself very familiar with Dujols, Fulcanelli, et-al, as pointed-out by the aforementioned peer-reviewer, who notes that ‘Fulcanelli would likely fit nicely into Bataille’s alchemical interests—i.e. Boehme and Fludd—and [Stanislas] Klossowski, for instance, was well aware of the Fulcanelli myth later on (cf. [Online] Available at http://books.google.com/books?id=OiEJxbvYhSgC&pg=PA42&dq=%22as+an+authority,+klossowski+occupies+an+interesting+position+between+the+empirical+historians+of+the+hermetic+tradition+and+the+line+of+french+adept+who+acknowledge+the+magistry+of+fulcanelli+and+his+disciple+canseliet.+as+in+the+case+of+the+latter,+klossowski+has+insisted+on+the+veracity+of+the+fulcanelli+myth%22&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiF0IqW84vWAhVkJMAKHb88CLo-Q6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=%22as%20an%20authority%2C%20klossowski%20occupies%20an%20interesting%20position%20between%20the%20empirical%20historians%20of%20the%20hermetic%20tradition%20and%20the%20
would have called “the formless” (l’informe):²² ‘they signal the triumph of multiplicity, heterogeneity, parallelity, rhizomatics, horizontal topology, complexity, and nonlinear systems’ (2014, 57). *Hermeneutics*, according to Galloway, privileges textual inscription, whereas iridescence privileges image projection; their excluded middle—the erinyetic, or if you prefer, the abominable erinyeti—works the [w]hole system.

*Iris* shines through the rose windows of Notre Dame, *Hermes* looms out of its bas-reliefs, and encompassing them all—indeed sub-sur-passing them in her step/not beyond—the Phrygian foreigner qua monstrous [m]other, the cathedral’s abominable Erinyeti, crosscuts/contaminates/animates the entire edifice, the whole cathedral (and cathedral’s [w]hole), from its highest heights (up to and including the sky beyond its windows and spires) to its deepest depths (down to and encompassing its sub-earthen crypts). Cybele was, after all, the offspring of the Phrygian sky-god and earth-goddess.²³ Her’s is ‘another’—an alternate—‘divine form of pure mediation: the distributed network, which finds incarnation in the incontinent body of what the Greeks called first the *Erinyes* and later the *Eumenides*’; bringing Galloway’s theory to bear on Notre Dame’s Cybele (2014, 56). In Greek, Ἐρῑνύες derives from ἔρις, the word for conflict, contest or competition in the sense of struggle and strife; within its orbit all things—all ‘contents’—tend to clash; it is the realm or embodiment not of ease and contentment but of unease and discontent, of the uncontained (oft

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²² http://aphelis.net/Georges-Bataille-lInforme-Formless-1929 (with thanks to my colleague over at Glendon College, Philippe Theophanidis).
²³ A good online resource re: the goddess Cybele can be found at http://theoi.com/Phrygios/Kybele.html.
overspilling) rather than the easily contained—hence Galloway’s reference to incontinent incarnations. Cybele, too, is the crucible of such conflicts (such clashing contents), and whether she is represented in stained glass or sculpted stone, standing upright or sitting down upon a throne, she embodies that which can barely be embodied—that which explodes and/or implodes, that which tends to “deconstruct” in all the divergent Derridean senses (and perhaps further still: as a pas au-delà l’hor(r)is-texte). The name of the Εὐμενίδες—the “good ones” or “nice ones”—was used as a euphemism in general parlance for fear of attracting the attention and terrible tension of the Ἐρῑνύες.

Now, at last, to turn our attention toward (and cultivate the tensions in) the alchemical emblems [...] On the left, when facing Notre Dame’s central doors, is the first set of emblems, and on the right is the second; they are to be read in a sequence leading-in to the doorway and/or (if you prefer) into Cybele’s central circle—hence the set to our left is to be read left-to-right and the set to our right is to be read right-to-left. The sequence begins, then, with the crow of alchemical dissolution, (see image 7) dissolving all that we know—or think that we know—beyond recognition: the ‘putrefaction’ that kick-starts alchemical transformation. And kick-starts is the apt expression, as attested by the bucking horse in the emblem below the black crow. The process of putrefaction involves multiple buckings or bubblings—what alchemists would call considerable “cohobation”. ‘At each coho-

\[24\text{ The horror-text here is the inverse hors-texte (all of this gesturing back to Jacques Derrida).}\]

\[25\text{ One of the peer-reviewers for CYCLOPS—Reviewer#3, footnotedly cited for the 3rd time here—adds the following comment at this point: ‘And keeping with the heterology/Bataille theme of CYCLOPS journal in general, one might make the leap to a kind of “acephalic nigredo” (apropos of “the crow of alchemical dissolution...putrefaction”) indicated in The Book of Lambsprinck’s (1625) references to putrefaction, e.g. “The Sage says that a wild beast is in the forest, whose skin is of the blackest dye. If any man cut off his head, his blackness will disappear and give place to a snowy white. Understand well the meaning of this head: the Blackness is called the head of the Raven.”’ Thanks once again, Reviewer#3!}\]
bation,’ writes Fulcanelli, ‘the horse throws its rider, the volatile leaves the fixed; but the horseman immediately reasserts his right’—what do you do when you fall off your horse?—again and again and again, until the horse at last can be ridden (in alchemy, ‘the absorption of the fixed by the volatile’; ([1926] 1964:123, trans. Sworder 1971:96). ‘The absorption of the fixed by the volatile is carried-out slowly and with difficulty. Success needs much patience and perseverance—and the repeated outpouring of water on the earth, of spirit on the body’ (Ibid.). ‘The charger of Notre Dame is the same as the winged Pegasus,’ explains Fulcanelli,²⁶ noting that Πήγασος derives from ‘the root πηγή’ meaning ‘source’ (Ibid.) [...] Which leads me to a side-note, noting the reliefs to the left side of the left set of emblems and to the right side of the right set of emblems: (see image 8) these are two extra pairs—far-left and far-right—that literally and lithically function as side-notes to their respective twelve-emblem sets. Here is how Fulcanelli describes them: ‘On the lateral surfaces of the piers on each side of the great doorway, we shall find two little bas-reliefs at eye-level, each fitting into a pointed arch. The one on the left pillar shows us the alchemist discovering the Mysterious Fountain’—otherwise known as the Source—‘which Le Trévisan describes in the last parable of his book on La Philosophie Naturelle des Métaux. [...] On the opposite pier, facing the carved motif explaining the properties and the nature of the secret agent, [...] the artist watches over the product of his labour. Our knight, clad in armor—with greaves on his legs and his shield on his arm—has taken up his position on what seems to be the rampart of a fortress. [...] Behind the warrior [...] is the instrument of the Great Work: the Athenor, the occult furnace with two flames—potential and actual—known to all disciples, but debased by the great number of descriptions and pictures made of it’ ([1926] 1964:94, 99-100, trans. Sworder 1971:73, 77-78). Above the leftmost Source qua Mysterious

Fountain at the Foot of the Oak is a scene which cathedral tour-guides typically describe as “Christ in the Temple, Debating with the Doctors of the Law,” associated with the hermeneutic dimension of research and investigation (what Ken Wark calls the “exegesis, hermeneutics and symptomatics” of “the hermetic mode” in his contribution to Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation, 153). Above the rightmost image of The Alchemist Defending the Athenor is a scene which cathedral tour-guides typically describe as “The Annunciation to Zachariah,” associated with the iridescent dimension of insight and revelation (which Wark relates to “telesthesia, or perception at a distance”: the topic of one of his marvellous monographs—Ibid, 154).

Returning to the first emblem: in the upper bas-relief the crow was originally painted black, but in the version represented on the rose window (the stained-glass rather than carved-stone version) the crow is presented as grey—perhaps in an effort to achieve what the philosopher Alain Badiou described as ‘a black that is grey enough to be anti-dialectical, separated from all contradiction with light. The grey black is a black that must be grasped in its own arrangement and which does not form a pair with anything else’ (‘a black such that no light can be inferred to contrast with it: an “uncontrasted” black. This black is sufficiently grey for no light to be opposed to it as its other’—a black that is not at odds with, hence cannot be contrasted with, that light which the rose window lets in). (2003, 6) The emblem that follows after that of melanosis [μελάνωσις] or alchemical ‘blackening’ is that of leukosis [λεύκωσις] or alchemical ‘whitening’ (see image 9) — which again is not an opposite of the former but rather an outgrowth or outcome of its intensive ἔρις. Just as the black is itself a grey-zone, so too is the white which appears as silver—in this case a silver-backed snake coiled around the caduceus. ‘The snake indicates the incisive and solvent nature of the mercury which avidly absorbs the metallic sulphur and holds it so powerfully that the cohesion cannot later be overcome’: this is the caduceus—the sulphuric staff embraced by the mercurial snake (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:105, trans.
Sworder 1971:82). Reflected in the rose window’s glass, the snake’s silver sheen is green, and the sulphuric staff is a great golden rod. This first glimpse of gold, entwined and envenomed by the mercurial snake, takes the form—fully coiled—of an egg: the shining snake coiled around the golden rod is in fact “the vitriolated egg” of the alchemists (white rather than gold), ‘which requires only gradual cooking [i.e. the addition of heat] in order to be transformed’ (Ibid.). The emblem below this is one in which ‘the initiate holds up a mirror in one hand while with the other he holds up the Horn of Amalthea. Beside him is seen the Tree of Life. The mirror symbolizes the beginning of the work, the Tree of Life marks its end, and the Horn of Plenty its result’ (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:124, trans. Sworder 1971:96).

Following after melanosis (μελάνωσις a.k.a. the ‘blackening’) and leukosis (λευκώσις a.k.a. the “whitening”) is the stage of isosis or erythrosis (ερύθρωσις a.k.a. the “reddening”) wherein alchemical fire reaches its brightest and most burning blaze. In this emblem (see image 10) ‘a woman, her long hair streaming like a flame, […] holds against her chest the disc of the salamander “which lives in the fire and feeds on fire”. This fabulous lizard,’ explains Fulcanelli, ‘stands for nothing else but the incombustible and fixed central salt which preserves its nature even in the ashes of the calcinated metals and which the ancients therefore called the “metallic seed”. The parts of the body which can be burnt are destroyed in the violence of the igneous process—only the unalterable parts resist, and although they are fixed [rather than volatile], they can be extracted by percolation’ ([1926] 1964:105, trans. Sworder 1971:82). ‘The Cosmopolite, in his Treatise on Salt,’ makes reference in this context to ‘the allegory of “the weight

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27 The word ἰῶσις (iosis) comes from the Greek ἰός (ios), meaning “poison”, “virus”, or the burning/destructive action of sulphur and/or oxidization (it is equated with a stinging or burning sensation, hence with the associated action of fire and a glowing red colour). Although ἰῶσις is often used to designate the third stage of the alchemical triad, ερύθρωσις (erythrosis)—from the Greek ερυθρός, meaning “red”, “ruddy” or “rubrical”—is the more precise term.
of nature’; Fulcanelli continues further on in his analysis ([1926] 1964:124, trans. Sworder 1971:97): hence the emblem below that of the red salamander—that of “the weight of nature”, otherwise known as “the scales”. Like the figure bent over, lifting the scales (and drawing back the veil that once covered them), the subsequent figure in the lower emblem is also hunched over: (see image 11) here—quoting Fulcanelli—‘an old man, stiff and cold, is bent under the arc [of the bas-relief circle]. Weak and feeble, he is leaning on a large block of stone’ ([1926] 1964:128, trans. Sworder 1971:99). This is ‘the Reign of Saturn’ (Ibid.): the second melanosis (‘there are four putrefactions in the philosophic work’ after all, he explains with reference to Le Bretain’s Clefs de la Philosophie Spagyrique—four melanoses followed by subsequent leukoses and erythroses; see Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:101, trans. Sworder 1971:79). Above this weary adept is the figure of the ram, symbol of Aries. The very name of Aries [Ἀριε] comes from the Ionian ἀρη and the Doric ἀρά, designating an accursèd or ruinous condition—that is, a state of deterioration and destruction (the second putrefaction). This is ‘the emblem of radical dissolution, of decomposition and of the colour black [once again]. “I am old, weak and sick”, Basil Valentine makes him say, and “for this reason I am shut up in a grave”’, (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:128, trans. Sworder 1971:100).

28 For more on the alchemical problem of salt (and its scale), see Aaron Cheak’s (2011) very well-researched doctoral dissertation, Light Broken Through the Prism of Life: René Schwaller de Lubicz and the Hermetic Problem of Salt. University of Queensland, which he tells me is currently being prepared for publication, and in the meantime has been made available and accessible online on his Academia.Edu archive, http://academia.edu/1277494. 29 The author might also find this quotation of note; writes CYCLOPS journal’s Reviewer#3: ‘I am an infirm and weak old man, surnamed the dragon; therefore am I shut up in a cave, that I may become ransomed by the kingly crown ... A fiery sword inflicts great torments on me; death makes weak my flesh and bones ... My soul and my spirit depart; a terrible poison, I am likened to the black raven, for that is the wages of sin; in dust and earth I lie, that out of Three may come One. O soul and spirit leave me not, that I may see again the light of day, and the hero of peace whom the
The light of subsequent *leukosis* only breaks when this deterioration, destruction, and (ultimately) death is taken for what it actually is—another stage, a further phase of transformation (see image 12) (a rather terrible one, to be sure—one that tears the given subject or substance in twain: cuts it, cuts through it, as in the lower emblem displayed here, where the silver serpent of the previous *leukosis* takes the form of a shining silver sword slicing into its swordsman). Above the emblem in which the former *serpent that wound round the staff* appears instead as *a sword slicing into the swordsman*—the lower emblem of this higher *leukosis*—is a figure holding the *tricolour flag of the entire alchemical process*, contextualizing the previous *melanosis* qua *mortification* within the whole *cycle* qua *circle* of the overarching occult operation (o-o-o). ‘The adepts say that they draw their steel from the belly of *Aries,*’ writes Fulcanelli, ‘and they also call this steel their *lodestone*’ ([1926] 1964:107, trans. Sworder 1971:84). The sword in the lower emblem can be seen as both *slicing into its swordsman* and *being drawn out of his belly* just as the alchemist’s steel is drawn out of the belly of *Aries.* The result in both cases is the same: the emergence of all the operative colours from out of the darkness in and through the [action of the] *leukotic* light a.k.a. “silver sword” ... Which leads to the next set of emblems, (see image 13) displaying (on the top) the symbol of the four elements involved in this triadic/three-colour operation—an operation that takes place between the dyadic/binary poles represented by the sun and the moon—then (on the bottom) the practitioner perceiving in a marvellous mirror the nature of the process that he is in the midst of undertaking.

Fulcanelli calls the latter emblem ‘the bas-relief of [alchemical] philosophy, whose disc bears the figure of a cross. This is the expression of the four elements and the sign of the two metallic prin-

whole world shall behold may arise from me*’—Zadith bin Hamuel, *Aurelia Occulta Philosophorum,* in Jean-Jacques Manget [Johann-Jacob Mangetus] (ed.), *Bibliotheca Chemica Curiosa* 2, 1702:198-212. Thank you once again, dear Reviewer #3.

30 (the white light prismatically containing all colours)
ciples—sun and moon, or sulphur and mercury—which are, according to *Hermes*, the father and mother of the stone’ ([1926] 1964:114, trans. Sworder 1971:89). Below this, in the lower emblem, ‘the adept is seen with his hands joined in an attitude of prayer and seems to be addressing thanksgiving [*i.e.* giving thanks] to nature, shown as the head and shoulders of a woman reflected in a mirror. We recognize the hieroglyph as showing “the subject of the wise”: the mirror in which “one sees the whole of nature disclosed”; (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:118-119, trans. Sworder 1971:100). Reflected in the rose window, the cross of the elements rises out of a *cup* or *chalice* rather than *between the two metals*—the one metallic (gold) *cup* here replacing the two metallic *principles*—and instead of nature presented as the *woman in the mirror*, it appears as a *demon* (δαίμων) on a daïs. What is “demon”strated here is the illusory nature of “representations of nature”; this discovery opens the door to The Closed Palace (Eirenaeus Philalethes’ *Entrance to the Closed Palace*), as depicted in the following set of emblems. (see image 14) The movement here is from the second *iosis* or *erythrosis* to the third or penultimate darkening (*melanosis*) represented in the presentation of a *hole*, an *entrance*, an *arched aperture* that appears in front of the seeker and leads onward into the unknown/darkness. Hence ‘the seventh medallion shows us an old man ready to cross the threshold of the Mysterious Palace. He has just torn down the awning which hid the entrance from the eyes of the uninitiated. The first step in the practice has been achieved: the discovery of the agent capable of carrying-out the reduction of the fixed body—of reincruding it, according to the accepted expression, in a form analogous to that of its first substance’ (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:119, trans. Sworder 1971:100). ‘The old man, whom the texts identify as *Saturn*’—hence the *Reign of Saturn* at this stage, once again—‘was formerly painted green,’ explains Fulcanelli ([1926] 1964:130, 1971:101), and this is indeed the colour reflected in the rose window depiction of this medallion. ‘It should also be mentioned that the hieroglyph of Saturn, considered as a solvent, is very ancient,’
Fulcanelli then adds. ‘On a sarcophagus at the Louvre, which had contained the mummy of a hierophant priest of Thebes named Poëris, the god Shu can be seen on the left-hand side holding up the sky with the aid of the god Cnouphis (the soul of the world), while at their feet crouches the god Ser (Saturn), whose skin is green in colour’ ([1926] 1964:130, trans. Sworder 1971:101). The figure above depicts ‘a vertical section on the alchemical Athenor and the internal apparatus’ ([1926] 1964:115, trans. Sworder 1971:89); ‘the human figure holds a stone in the right hand’ and a crown instead of a stone in the rose window medallion (Ibid.). ‘It is Philalethes’ Entrance to the Closed Palace of the King and both Ripley’s and Basil Valentine’s first door’ ([1926] 1964:129, trans. Sworder 1971:100).

Crossing this threshold and entering this Mysterious Palace constitutes an act of rebellion—a transgression—and the lower medallion in the next set of emblems (see image 15) depicts this transgressive transition. Above that medallion the enthroned figure holds up the symbolic griffon, ‘the mythical monster whose head and chest are those of an eagle and which derives the rest of its body from the lion’; it is a creature that symbolizes ‘the conflicting qualities which [the practitioner] has to assemble in the philosophic matter’ (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:115, trans. Sworder 1971:89-90). ‘In this picture we find the hieroglyph of the first conjunction, [...] which, when complete, leads to the intimate union of sulphur and mercury’ in alchemical sublimation (Ibid.). This is not an easy task however—none of the alchemical undertakings are easy: they tend to be tinged with rather epic ἔρις. Rebellion means conflict, discord and struggle—hence the lower medallion in the next set of emblems, (see image 16) which depicts ‘the combat of the two natures’ (‘the two natures are represented by aggressive and quarrelsome children who have come to blows and hit each other unsparingly,’ ([1926] 1964:131, 1971:102). [...] ‘At the height of the fray,’ in the midst of battle, ‘one of them drops a pot and the other a stone’ notes our author (Ibid). Looking at the figure directly above this medallion—the figure that holds in her
hands ‘the materials necessary for the construction of the hermetic vessel’ (namely ‘a small piece of wood looking rather like the stave of a barrel, the nature of which is revealed by the oak-branch borne on her shield,’ and the associated source qua spring which springs-forth-from-the-foot-of-the-oak, represented in the previously-mentioned far-left “side-note” bas-relief otherwise known as “the Mysterious Fountain” ([1926] 1964:94, 1971:73-74)—the vessel and its contents represented in the upper figure (again, the barrel made of oak and the source which springs from the oak) could be seen as spilling out and spilling over into (hence revealing themselves in) the medallion below.

Such a spilling out and spilling over is represented in a different manner by the subsequent set of emblems, (see image 17) where in the lower one a queen kicks her cup-bearer to the ground in an act reminiscent of the first cohabation (the very first set of emblems examined) and in the upper one ‘the extraction of the red and incombustible sulphur is shown in the figure of a monster which combines the form of both cock and fox’ (Fulcanelli [1926] 1964:122, 1971:95). This is the fourth and final melanosis—the one that will lead to the

31 “The old oak, which is hollow, represents the barrel made of oak, in which he must putrefy the water to be used on the plants and which is much better than ordinary water,” explains Fulcanelli on page 93 of the English translation. “This is the place to reveal one of the great secrets of this art, which philosophers have hidden. This is the vessel without which you cannot carry-out the putrefaction and purification of our elements—any more than one can make wine without fermenting it in a cask. Now, as the barrel is made of oak, so the vessel must be of old oak (rounded inside like a half-globe) whose sides are good and stout; failing which, two kegs, one over the other. Almost all philosophers have mentioned this vessel, which is absolutely necessary for the operation.’ He then refers to a figure in Basil Valentine’s Douze Clefs de la Philosophie ‘representing this same operation and the vessel in which it takes place’—a figure which shows that ‘out of this [vessel, in the midst of the operation,] proceeds a great cloud of smoke, marking the fermentation and bubbling of this water. This smoke ends at a window where the sky is to be seen. In the sky are depicted the sun and moon, showing the origin of this water and the virtues which it contains. It is the mercurial vinegar, which comes down from the sky to the earth and which rises from the earth to the sky.’
ultimate *iosis*. The sword of the second *leukosis* reappears in the next set of emblems (the last of the *leukoses*): in the lower medallion, the face-to-face that has been a constant theme across all of the lower right-hand medallions here has the *agonized protagonist* qua *persistent alchemist* facing *a sword loosed from its scabbard*, shining under the moonlight—the silver moonlight under which, it would seem, the adept had been *reading* (note the book in his hand). (see image 18) At this point the book is now closed, the sword drawn, and the decision must be made re: whether to proceed to the end and take that last step. This last *leukosis* is the silver medal—a triumph but not ‘the’ triumph. It is the attainment of wisdom but not yet its actual activation (its putting-into-practice). To proceed further, to take the last step, is (in French) *un pas sage*—a wise step (*pas*sage) and one that is unwise (*pas*33*sage*), recalling the *pas au-delà* of the leukotic Blanchot. The passage from the last *leukosis* to the final *iosis*—the far-end *erythrosis*—is an attempt to achieve the gold medal34 rather than stick with the silver, but that might lead to disaster, or (citing Blanchot once again) it might be *the writing of the disaster, l’écriture du désastre*. Then again, citing Blanqui rather than Blanchot now, it might lead to *l’éternité par les astres: eternity through the stars!* [...] 

The final step—that step in the wake of the silver-lined one—is, like the last line of *Finnegans Wake*, ‘a way a lone a last a loved a long the’ alchemical process; (Joyce, 1922, 628) ‘riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environsf (Joyce, 1922, 3)35 — (see image 19) [1]here where we encounter the emblem of the triumphant knight, resplendent in full body armour

33 http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/pas#Adverb_5
34 /metal.
35 We are touching on issues beyond Eve[5] & Adam[5], beyond the register of the “human all-too-human” here hear, turning & tuning-in to the end—fin—again, *finis gloriae mundi*...
(head to foot), with a great golden lion emblazoned upon his red shield. As Fulcanelli explains, ‘the lion is the sign of gold both alchemical and natural; it thus represents the physico-chemical properties of these substances. [...] In both cases it represents power, incorruptibility and perfection—these being further indicated clearly enough by the warrior with drawn sword (the mail-clad knight) depicting the king of the alchemical bestiary’ ([1926] 1964:121, trans. Sworder 1971:94). In the medallion directly below this triumphant scene is an image that inspired a similar scene—Scene 20—in the 1975 feature-film Monty Python and the Holy Grail (c/o the medieval-historian-become-surrealist-comedian Terry Jones): here the alchemical adept, very much frightened, flees something that leaps out at him from the flowering foliage of his work ... in this case the Latin lepus (‘et lepus inpavidus mediis erravit in arvis’—Ovidius, Metamorphōseōn Librī 15:10036). On the rose window the leaping lepus is overlaid with the silver sword of the last leukotic medallion, as if to suggest that here—/hare—we have the revenge of the silver medal-qua-metal upon the bearer of the one wrought from gold (and indeed, what the Walloons call the robête37 is—in China, for example, but also in many other “Non-Western” parts of the world—associated with the white/silver moon: ‘the association of rabbits, hares, and the moon can be found in numerous cultures the world over,’ explained author and essayist Terri Windling forty-or-so years after Terry Gilliam’s & Terry Jones’s film.38 ‘Whereas in Western folklore we refer to the ‘Man in the Moon’, the ‘Hare—or Rabbit—in the Moon’ is a more familiar

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36 Here ‘hares wandered, unafraid, among the fields’ (Ovid, Metamorphoses 15:100); to paraphrase Monty Python, beware the hare!
37 A word which Louis d’Antin Van Rooten (1968) author of the brilliant Mots d’Heures, Gousses, Rames, New York: Grossman Publishers, would have no doubt associated with robots. Beware the killer rabbits robots! [Butlerian Jihad].
symbol in other societies. In China, for example, the Hare in the Moon is depicted with a mortar-and-pestle in which he mixes the elixir of immortality; he is the messenger of a female moon-deity and the guardian of all wild animals. In Chinese folklore, female hares conceive through the touch of the full moon’s light—without the need of impregnation by the male—or licking moonlight from a male hare’s fur and/or crossing water by moonlight. Figures of hares or white rabbits \(^{39}\) are commonly found at Chinese Moon-Festivals, where they represent longevity, fertility, and the feminine power of \(\text{yin}^{40}\).

Each set of emblems, then, one above and one below the other, depict a different stage of the alchemical process in the uppermost figures (the four stages of melanosis, the four stages of leukosis, and the four stages of iosis a.k.a. erythrosis) and the consequence of these operations in the medallions beneath these figures, with reflections On High (full of colour) in the great rose window. The black crow of putrefaction results in the bucking horse of cohabation: \textit{The Black Crow & The Spirited Horse} (FIRST PAIR) ... the shining serpent of the first “recoil into composure”—qua “vitriolated egg”—reflects the virtual cornucopia at hand and its inverse/mirror-image: \textit{The Silver Snake & The Horn of Amalthea} (SECOND PAIR) ... & so on & so forth, with \textit{The Red Salamander & The Weight/Scales of Nature} (THIRD PAIR) ... \textit{The Ram & The Leaning Old Man} (FOURTH PAIR) ... \textit{The Tricolour Flag}—or \textit{Peacock’s-Tail/Cauda-Pavonis}—& \textit{Self-Overcoming Sword} (FIFTH PAIR) ... \textit{The Four Elements—Quadrature}—& \textit{The \(^{\text{W}}\)hole Reflection on/of \(^{\text{M}}\)other Nature} (SIXTH PAIR) ... \textit{The Athenor-Stone & Entrance to the Closed Palace} (SEVENTH PAIR) ... \textit{The Monstrous Griffon & The Act of Rebellion} (EIGHTH PAIR) ... \textit{The Oak Branch & Combat of the Two Natures}


(NINTH PAIR) ... The Fearsome Foxcockatrice & Queen who Kicks her Cupbearer (TENTH PAIR) ... The Sacred Cow & Sword of Destiny (ELEVENTH PAIR) ... followed finally by The Golden Lion & Leaping Lepus (the TWELFTH PAIR).

References

Dujols de Valois, ed. Geneviève Dubois.
Fulcanelli, pseud. Finis Gloræ Mundi (fragments).


Man with hoop (trochus).¹

corpusque ejus velut trochus ludentum puerorum in vertiginem rotabatur, ita quod ex nimia vehementia vertiginis nulla in corpore ejus membrorum forma discerni posset. Cumque diutius sic rotata fuisse, acsi vehementia deficeret, membris omnibus quiescebat [and her body would roll and whirl around like a hoop. She whirled around with such extreme violence that the individual limbs of her body could not be distinguished. When she had whirled around for a long time in this manner, it seemed as if she became weakened by the violence of her rolling and all her limbs grew quiet]

¹ Johan Joachim Winckelmann, Monumenti antichi inedita (Rome, 1767), plate 196.
In the order of love that parallels spirally the structure of pure action, Christina’s spinning occurs at the interface of longing and intelligence. Where do intelligence and longing meet? In a movement wherein the act of longing, i.e. yearning for the presence of the loved one, fuses with the intelligence of true action or the ‘effort to attain freedom from self-created entanglement [and] . . . undo what has been done under ignorance.’ (Meher Baba, 1967, I.112-3) Intelligence and longing interface in the active effort to be free of action's bind, to exit the orbit of self-centered activity that reinforces separateness or the alienation of the individual from reality. For ‘even good and righteous action creates sanskaras [impressions] and means one more addition to the complications created by past actions and experiences.’ (Meher Baba, 1967, I.113) Longing, the form of desire that desires restlessly beyond desire, yearning through the separation which is its own ground, belongs to the desperateness that exits by acting out the paradox of action as both inevitable and impossible, the fact that one must do something yet there is nothing one can do. Insofar as it can act, longing must act beyond itself, securing something the performance of action cannot per se achieve. The suffering of impassible, astral distance encoded in the concept of longing (from PIE *dlong-hos-, source also Latin longus “long, extended; further; of long duration; distant, remote”, cf. desire, from de +sidere “from the stars”), at once the pain of internal and external separation (objective absence + subjective impossibility of possession), is essentially a suffering of the finite infinity and infinite finitude of the internal/external boundary itself, the ring of desire which encloses individualized consciousness in its self-hypnotized circumference:

The boundary in which consciousness can move is prescribed by

1 ‘Since good experiences and actions also exist in relation to desire, they also bind in the same way as do bad experiences and actions’ (Meher Baba, 1967, I.93). ‘Just as a man may get bound by an iron or golden chain, so also a person can get spiritually bound by his attachment to evil or good deeds’ (Meher Baba, 1967, I.131).
the sanskaras, and the functioning of consciousness is also determined by the desires. As desires aim at self-satisfaction, the whole consciousness becomes self-centred and individualised. *The individualisation of consciousness may in a sense be said to be the effect of the vortex of desires.* The soul gets enmeshed in the desires and cannot step out of the circumscribed individuality constituted by these desires. It imagines these barriers and becomes *self-hypnotised.* It looks upon itself as being limited and separate from other individuals. It gets entangled in individualistic existence and imagines a world of manifold separateness composed of many individuals with their respective minds and bodies. (Meher Baba, 1967, I.36-7)

The circularity of the structure of separateness confirms the analogy between Christina’s whirling and the hoop played with by children (*trochus ludentum puerorum*). Longing is enacted by whirling because the only way for what moves in a circle to step out of itself, to go anywhere, is by rolling.

More than a mere expression of sorrow or joy, and more than a ritual or penitential exercise, the turning of Christina’s body is a veritable action, spontaneous and intentional, enacting her volitional release from the vortex of desires. As a model of action, it demonstrates that that is what intelligent action does, namely, willfully roll desire’s wheel in a movement that both expresses and leaps out of desire, taking eros where it cannot otherwise go. Where merely desirous action, action ordered toward the achievement of a desired object, moves instrumentally in the circuit of lust (craving, satisfaction, disappointment, repeat), intelligent action moves by wheeling the circumference of desire in a manner that playfully masters and serves, directs and follows, its circularity, like a child its hoop. Intelligent action is in this sense post/meta-instrumental. Rolling action through desire, turning action into the instrument of itself, intelligent action instrumentalizes desire itself and so becomes a musical instrument of its beyond. The sudden vertiginous turn of Christina’s body pivots on the point of indifference, or intersection, between action that is played by the circle
of desire and action that plays with it, spontaneously turning wanting into a wheel, rolling its circle out into the line of will.

Three specific aspects of the saint’s movement ask for further explication: the vehemence of her whirling, the indiscernibility of her limbs, and the quieting of her body. I will interpret each aspect in relation to three respective processes at work within the stage of longing—unwinding, sublimation, and cooling—all of which pertain to longing as the subtle, as distinguished from gross and mental, expression of love. Lust is to the gross sphere, as longing is to the subtle sphere, as resignation is to the mental sphere. Longing being the middle term in this order, each of these processes are part of the general movement of transition from lust to resignation or surrender. Where the transition from lust to longing takes place through frustration and the ‘unambiguous stamp of insufficiency’ (Meher Baba, 1967, III.177) that the experience of lust bears, and where the passage beyond resignation into the lover’s ‘own Truth as unbounded and unhampered Love’ (Ibid) occurs through the transcendence of the individual mind, the transitive movement of longing, in accord with the status of the subtle sphere as the energetic and imaginal interface between the material and the immaterial, the sensible and the intelligible, is defined by transparency:

In longing the curtain of duality has become more transparent and less obstructive, since the lover now consciously seeks to overcome duality between the lover and the Beloved. In lust the emphasis is solely on the limited self and the beloved is completely subsidiary to the gross needs of the self. In longing the emphasis is equally distributed on the self and on the beloved, and the lover realizes that the exists for the beloved just in the same way as the beloved exists for him. (Meher Baba, 1867, III.178)

As Christina’s body ultimately produces the seemingly supernatural sonic transparency of a “voice or spiritual breath” [vox vel anheliitus spiritualis] that resounds directly through her body, so do the three
aspects of her whirling—vehemence (unwinding), indiscernibility (sublimation), quieting (cooling)—mark an overall progression of increasing transparency. This progression may be compared to that of burning fire, as used by medieval authors to describe the stages of mystical consummation. In the classic analogy of the individual created soul as iron cast into the fire of divine love, the boundary and distinction between fire and iron, though never obliterated, becomes ever more transparent and less obstructive. As Richard of St. Victor writes in *On the Four Degrees of Violent Love*:

Gradually glowing, little by little the iron draws into itself the likeness of the fire, until at last it liquefies entirely: it departs fully from itself and takes on a completely different nature. And so having in this manner been swallowed up on the pyre of divine flame and into the fire of inmost love (*amoris*), having been completely surrounded by the mass of eternal desires, the soul first grows hot, then it glows, and finally it liquefies entirely and passes away from its prior state completely. (2011, 295)

As the spin of longing quiets into the higher transparency of resignation or surrender, so does the becoming-fire of what fire burns paradoxically intensify towards the peace of perfect transparency, the state of being wholly overcome, penetrated, and consumed, as Hugh of St. Victor says concerning the grades of contemplation, by the conquering flame [*victrix flamma*] and voracious fire [*vorax ignis*]:

Little by little the damp is exhausted, and the leaping fire dispels the smoke. Then *victrix flamma*, darting through the heap of crackling wood, springs from branch to branch, and with lambent grasp catches upon every twig; nor does it rest until it penetrates everywhere and draws into itself all that it finds that is not flame. At length the whole combustible material is purged of its own nature and passes into the similitude and property of fire; then the din is hushed, and the voracious fire [*vorax ignis*], having subdued all and brought all into its own likeness, composes itself to a high peace and silence, finding nothing more that is alien or opposed
to itself. First there was fire with flame and smoke; then fire with flame, without smoke; and at last pure fire with neither flame nor smoke. (Hugh of St.Victor [Homilies on Ecclesiastes, PL 175:117] quoted in Ray Petry [1957, 90-91])

Transparency coincides with the paradox of passion, its intensification, purification, or transformation into itself by means of its own passivity, just as fire becomes hotter in the dissipation of its flames. It holds the mystery, in Bataille’s words, of the ‘passivity and absence of effort [...] in which divine transcendence is dissolved.’(2004, 135) Without the principle of transparency, the possibility of the thinning of the veil of duality between lover and beloved, passion (from pati, to suffer) would reveal nothing, suffering would bring no knowledge, only suffering. Without the invisible ground of likeness, by which fire shines through the very substantial being of the iron, the iron would merely be consumed by the fire, the individual soul by God. Without the interface of separation, love would bring no realization. Transparency thus anticipates the final mystery of mystical union, which in one sense is less that the lover becomes the beloved—the beloved or divine reality being eternally all in all—but that the lover or individual soul remains herself even after realizing her own nothingness. As Francis Brabazon said, ‘And so one arrives at the painful conclusion that the Beloved alone exists—which means that oneself doesn’t. And that’s a terrible predicament to find oneself in—for one is still there! The only solution I found was to accept the position: “You alone are and I am not, but we are both here.”’ (1969, 4) The arc of longing, moving between the desperate restlessness of unfulfillable desire and the high peace of self-liquifying surrender, is curved by the principle of transparency. Like the mirror, which discloses paradoxically in the clarity of inversion, transparency provides the necessary (and inescapable) space and distance for the resolution of the contradiction between lust and love: ‘Lust seeks fulfillment but love experiences fulfillment. In lust there is excitement, but in love there is tranquility.’

2 For an extended explication of the relation between lust and love, see Nicola Mas-
The vehemence (vehementia) of Christina’s spinning, a coordinate of both its intensity and its diminishment, suggests a surplus degree of energy, a force at once overpowering and unsustainable. Passion, intoxication, ecstasy have this form, the rising-and-falling wave pattern of something transporting that does not last, like a ball thrown into the air which must return, or a serpent whose strike leaves it uncoiled. The verbal concept of vehemence (related to vehere, carry, and mens, mind, with possible original sense of “carried out of one’s mind”, cf. de-mented) likewise indicates the action of a latent energy that bears one away from one’s center, to which there must be a return. Ecstasy, standing outside of oneself, cannot be perpetual. For its essential nature is that of a force whose release throws one outside of oneself, and the self, that which is definitionally always itself, cannot not be recollected in one way or another; just as the madness or death to which continual ecstasy would lead, is simply a form of self-preservation, a maintenance of identity (as mad or dead). The vehemence of Christina’s whirling, then, is to be understood along these lines, as constituting a spontaneous release of surplus energy whose presence within her cannot easily be accounted for in terms of the regular processes of corporeal human agency. Likewise, some considered the saint possessed by evil spirits and the overall flow of

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4 ‘Her sisters and her friends were greatly embarrassed because of these things [fleeing to the tops of trees, throwing herself into fiery ovens, rolling her limbs ‘into a ball as if they were hot wax’ and so on] and the manner in which they were done,
her life is brimming with extra power, from her sudden flight ‘like a bird’ (Thomas de Cantimpré, 1999, I.5) from her coffin during her first funeral to the unearthly quality of her movement in her latter days, when ‘she barely seemed to touch the ground’ and ‘the spirit so controlled almost all the parts of her corporeal body that scarcely could either human minds or eyes look at the shadow her body cast with horror or trembling of the spirit.’ (Thomas de Cantimpré, 1999, IV.46) Indeed, in the scene of Christina’s escape from prison, which is paradigmatic of her paradoxical sojourn in this world as escape within her own willing imprisonment, Thomas draws a fitting analogy between her vehemence and the force of an arrow:

Her spirit then felt itself to be shut up in a narrow dungeon, and she took a stone from the dungeon floor and in her impassioned spirit [spiritu vehementi] she threw it with such force that she made a hole in the wall. To use an example, it was like an arrow which is more forcefully released the harder it is pulled in the bow. Thus her spirit, which had been restrained more than was just, flew with her body in its weak flesh through the empty air like a bird because “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). (1999, II.18)

So Christina’s spinning, by means of a pent-up force, bores an analogous hole in the world, an opening intersecting with her body itself, through which her spirit flies and divine music enters the earth. In these terms, the vehemence of the saint’s spinning figures for men thought that she was possessed by demons’ (Thomas de Cantimpré, 1999, I.17).

5 ‘At once the Lord answered my desire and said, “Certainly, my dearest, you will be with me, but I now offer you two choices, either to remain with me now or to return to the body and suffer there the sufferings of an immortal soul in a mortal body without damage to it [for the salvation and conversion of others] . . . [and] return to me having accumulated for yourself a reward of such great profit.” I answered without hesitation that I wished to return under the terms which had been offered to me’ (Thomas de Cantimpré, 1999, I.7).
the experiential process of *unwinding* whereby the soul releases itself from the bindings of previous actions and moves into its inherent eternal freedom:

All life is an effort to attain freedom from self-created entanglement. It is a desperate struggle to undo what has been done under ignorance, to throw away the accumulated burden of the past, to find rescue from the debris left by a series of temporary achievements and failures. Life seeks to unwind the limiting *sanskaras* of the past and to obtain release from the mazes of its own making, so that its further creations may spring directly from the heart of eternity and bear the stamp of unhampered freedom and intrinsic richness of being which knows no limitation. (Meher Baba, 1967, I.113)

More specifically, what Christina’s whirling shows is how the action of impressional unwinding is also an impassioned process, like the loosening of a wound spring. It thus demonstrates the dynamic interplay between unwinding and sublimation, which are two of the five intersecting ways in which release from the impressions of prior action is secured. The essence of unwinding, wherein is found its connection

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6 "The release from *sanskaras* takes place in the following five ways: (1) *The cessation of new sanskaras*. This consists in putting an end to the ever-renewing activity of creating fresh *sanskaras*. If the formation of *sanskaras* is compared to the winding of a string around a stick, this step amounts to the cessation of the further winding of the string. (2) *The wearing out of old sanskaras*. If sanskaras are withheld from expressing themselves in action and experience, they are gradually worn out. In the analogy of the string, this process is comparable to the wearing out of the string at the place where it is. (3) *The unwinding of past sanskaras*. This process consists in annulling past *sanskaras* by mentally reversing the process which leads to their formation. Continuing our analogy, it is like unwinding the string. (4) *The dispersion and exhaustion of some sanskaras*. If the psychic energy which is locked up in *sanskaras* is sublimated and diverted into other channels, they are dispersed and heaved and tend to disappear. (5) *The wiping out of sanskaras*. This consists in completely annihilating sanskaras. In the analogy of the string, this is comparable to cutting the string with a pair of scissors. The final wiping out of *sanskaras* can be effected
to the actless act of longing, is that it does not, unlike the satisfaction-driven process of ordinary action, result in the formation of new impressions:

This process of unwinding should be carefully distinguished from the spending up. In the process of spending up, the sanskaras become dynamic and release themselves into action or experience. This does not lead to final emancipation from sanskaras, as the never ceasing fresh accumulation of sanskaras more than replaces the sanskaras which are spent up, and the spending up itself is responsible for further sanskaras. In the process of unwinding, however, the sanskaras get weakened and annihilated by the flame of longing for the Infinite [...] The longing for the Infinite gets accentuated and acute until it arrives at its climax, and then gradually begins to cool down. (Meher Baba, 1967, I.52)

In the ascending order of love, from lust through longing to surrender, Christina’s vehement whirling as unwinding demonstrates how the frenzy of desire overcome itself by means of an energetic release born, as an arrow flying the bow, from its own restraint. Indeed her spinning may be conceived as a kind of spiritual auto-erotic act by which her body, impregnated with her own uncreated essence, gives birth to an unearthly music, just as the universe, born from God’s own mad whim, produces in temporal procession towards its dissolution or never-having-been (mahapralaya), the spiraling music of the spheres.7 By expressing positively, in active movement, the insufficiency that the satisfaction of lust would disclose negatively, in the form of only by the grace of a Perfect Master. It should be carefully noted that many of the concrete methods of undoing sanskaras are found to be effective in more than one way, and the five ways mentioned above are not meant to classify these methods into sharply distinguished types. They represent rather the different principles characterising the psychic processes which take place while sanskaras are being removed’ (Meher Baba, 1967, I.66-7).

privation or sense of loss, longing experiences the original madness of lust in higher form, one that stays longer with the essential dissatisfaction of love: ‘Lust means a craze. Some have the lust for power, some lust of the senses, etc. The whole creation came out of lust. The first whim was lustful. God had intercourse with himself through the Om point, and the creation was the result of this act [...] even a mother’s love for her child is lust. Because in love there can never be satisfaction; there is a continual longing and agony till union occurs. In lust there is satisfaction for some time and then again dissatisfaction.’ (H. Bharucha, 1960, 44, 66) The vehemence of Christina’s movement is the expressive, positive transformation of the “stamp of insufficiency” that the satisfaction of lust bears, the energetic step of action beyond satisfaction which intensifies its own act by releasing into longing, little by little, the latent power of love whose essence is insatiability. Similarly, Porete speaks of the annihilated soul as ‘inebriated not only from what she has drunk, but very intoxicated and more than intoxicated from what she never drinks nor will ever drink.’ (1993, Chapter 23) As if Christina’s foot turns on the point where dissatisfaction becomes more satisfying than satisfaction, the absent more pleasurable than the present. Or as Mechthild of Magdeburg said, ‘O blissful distance from God, how lovingly am I connected with you!’ (1996, 42) Here we also hit upon another paradox of true action, familiar to the experience of authentic initiative and inspiration, namely that it partakes of a higher economy of thought, energy, and movement, one in which effort produces energy and where the order of intention begins to accomplish itself intrinsically, irrespective of tangible results, i.e. musically.

Since the originary act—causing the universe, propagating species, and birthing individuals—is lustful or rooted in the satisfaction of desire, the impulse and process of intelligent action, ascending the order of love, bears a special relation to lust’s negation, the struggle to not put lust into action, to “inact” it. Lust is like the gravity by which the soul ascends the mountain of itself—inescapable, cause of
many falls and slippages, and also the essential resistance, in the twin sense of both opposition and power, by which ascent is possible in the first place. Again Meher Baba: ‘Lust is not bad. Because of this lust, you have been born as human beings. It is due to this very lust that you will turn from men into God. But even if lust is there in you, don’t put it into action. From the spiritual point of view, lust is the worst possible weakness. The real hero is he who successfully fights it.’ (Lord Meher, 1099) Generating strength and gathering energy through the negation of weakness, action wills itself onward though the self-disclosure of will as intensive negativity, a self-negating force inherently aimed toward the manifestation of its own infinity through sublimation, that is, the form of denial ordered toward the superessential, a no that, by negating the opposition between yes and no in affirmation of what is beyond it, increases rather than diminishes the being of its object. From this perspective, even nothing wills and moves, as Pseudo-Dionysius affirms: ‘And one might even say that nonbeing itself longs for the Good which is above all being. Repelling being, it struggles to find rest in the Good which transcends all being, in the sense of a denial of all things.’ (1987, 4.3) The vehemence of longing, its actively passionate suffering of impassible separation, flows into movement from an impossible presence found in the midst of action, the inexplicable power to do what one cannot by not doing it, which is a characteristic of mystical sorrow or negative will.8

8 Where potentiality is the power to do something, and impotentiality is the power positively to not do something, like the active silence of someone who can but wills not to speak, such mystical apotentiality here means more than a lack of power but a power as it were more powerful in its lack, a third form of potentiality altogether: the power to do something at once without the power to do it and without the doing of it, without act. If doing what one properly cannot, what is impossible, connotes a miracle, this positively inactive apotentiality is a species of negative miraculousness, the mystery of doing what you cannot by not doing it. As Climacus’s account of penthos (mourning, sorrow) shows, the not-doing by which what cannot be done is done is contained within the negative space of an other-doing which points back to it: ‘Wear something to encourage you in mourning. Those who lament the dead
Indiscernibility

The becoming-indistinguishable of the form of Christina’s limbs (*nulla in corpore ejus membrorum forma discerni posset*) corresponds to the elevation of consciousness from matter to energy. Through movement, the boundaries of her limbs blend into the imaginal quality of energy, whose characteristic function is to flow, circulating between matter and thought, just as, on the physical level, liquid moves between solid and gas. In the order of love, the activation of the body into energetic flow, its manifestation as a form to be seen and thought and felt but not tangibly possessed, signals the sublimation of desire into a higher form, one whose intensity exceeds the limitations of gross sensation. As longing places equal emphasis on the being of the lover and the beloved, manifesting the understanding that no one-sided possession will ever answer the claim of love, so does one’s awakening into subtle consciousness involve a reduction by half of lust’s intensity:

The intensity of lust in the subtle sphere is about half that in the gross sphere. Besides, there is no gross expression of lust as in the gross sphere. The lover in the gross sphere is inextricably entangled with the gross objects; hence his lust finds gross expression.

wear black. And if you find yourself unable to mourn, then lament the very fact’ (1982, 138). Where freedom or the ability to do as one wills is ‘to be found in the abyss of potentiality . . . [and] is . . . to be capable of one’s own impotentiality’ (Giorgio Agamben, 1999, 182-3), mystical sorrow points to a freedom beyond freedom, a freedom free of its own free will, a freedom free of itself that is freedom: ‘The just man serves neither God nor creatures, for he is free, and the closer he is to justice, the closer he is to freedom, and the more he is freedom itself’ (Eckhart, 2009, 130). This is the realm of a will so unitary that its impotentiality paradoxically extends into negation of its own divine ground: ‘Such a man is so one-willed with God that he wills all that God wills and in the way God wills it . . . In this way, one wills to do without God for God’s sake, to be sundered from God for God’s sake’ (Eckhart, 2009, 531).
But the lover in the subtle sphere has gotten free from attachment to gross objects; hence in his case lust remains unexpressed in the gross form. His lust has subtle expressions, but it cannot have gross expression. Besides, since about half of the original lust of the gross sphere gets sublimated in the subtle sphere, the lover in the subtle sphere experiences love not as undiluted lust, but in a higher form as longing to be united with the Beloved. (Meher Baba, 1967, III.178)

In this light, what are the implications of the formal indiscernibility of Christina’s whirling limbs for the general theory of action? What does it mean for the members of action’s body to become indistinguishable? And how does this indistinguishability correlate with longing as the mode of will that bears agency beyond the narrow circuit of selfish desire?

The general answer to these questions lies in the essentially cooperative and inexplicably participatory nature of action, which is curved around the paradox that the more authentic (from autoentes, self-doing) one’s action is, the less it is oneself who does it. As stated in the Gita, ‘He who sees that all actions are performed by Nature alone and thus that the self is not the doer—that man sees truly.‘ (2000, 13.27) As longing is desire on the way to surrender of desire, so does it express and enact agency on the way beyond agency. Like the coordinate movement of gravitationally-bound bodies, none of which is or is not the source of the attraction’s force, longing constitutes a dilation of agency beyond the limited self into a field of action at once someone’s and no one’s. Thus it carries the feeling of doing without doing, which is the very way into surrender: ‘how do you get of this

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9 The paradox is explicit in Krishna’s qualification of his divine action, ‘although I did this, know that I am the eternal non-doer’ (2000, 4.13), as well as in his command to Arjuna, ‘a man deluded by the I-sense imagines, “I am the doer.” The wise man knows that when objects act on the senses, it is merely the gunas acting on the gunas; thus, he is unattached [...] Performing all actions for my sake, desireless, absorbed in the Self, indifferent to “I” and “mine,” let go of your grief, and fight!’ (2000, 3.27-31).
Illusion? There is a remedy: it is to surrender yourself to Me, the Reality. The antidote is: whatever you think or do, feel that you are not the doer.' (Meher Baba, quoted in Bal Natu [1996, 31]) The indiscernibility of Christina’s spinning limbs is correlative to the indiscernibility of gravity, which moves bodies neither inside nor outside their boundaries and with an authentic or self-doing automaticity that restores activity to the status of a trace, a whirring of what only no one can do: ‘Pondus meum, amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror’ [My love is my weight; by it I am borne, wheresoever I am borne.] (Agustine, 1950, 13.9)

Experienced within and between bodies, individually and socially, and in all domains of endeavor, cooperation is a spontaneous movement of unity in duality, a current of the wind or spirit that ‘blows where it will’ (John 3:8). As longing endures more of the ungraspable unity of lover and beloved than lust, so does cooperative more than selfish action feel the mystery of the unity of agents, the uncanny pervading intelligence—witnessed especially in moments of improvisation and intuition—whereby things somehow know what to do without themselves, precisely because as Anaxagoras said, ‘the seed of everything is in everything else.’ So Meher Baba speaks of the perception of unity as the spontaneous agent of cooperation and fellow-feeling: ‘To perceive the spiritual value of oneness is to promote real unity and cooperation. Brotherhood then becomes a spontaneous outcome of true perception.’ (1967, III.20) As song (melisma) is generated from the blending of limbs (melos), music from the numbers of bodies, so does the vehement swirl of the saint’s body seed itself with a sonic harmony that comes neither from her nor anywhere else. In these terms, the indiscernibility of Christina’s limbs is proportional to the loving spiralization of hands experienced by Melville’s Ishmael during a mystical communion of shared labor, the squeezing of spermaceti:

It had cooled and crystallized to such a degree, that when, with several others, I sat down before a large Constantine’s bath of
Nicola Masciandaro

it, I found it strangely concreted into lumps, here and there rolling about in the liquid part. It was our business to squeeze these lumps back into fluid. A sweet and unctuous duty! [...] After having my hands in it for only a few minutes, my fingers felt like eels, and began, as it were, to serpentine and spiralize [...] while bathing in that bath, I felt divinely free from all ill-will, or petulance, or malice, of any sort whatsoever. Squeeze! squeeze! squeeze! all the morning long; I squeezed that sperm till I myself almost melted into it; I squeezed that sperm till a strange sort of insanity came over me; and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers’ hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules [...] Come; let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness [...] In thoughts of the visions of the night, I saw long rows of angels in paradise, each with his hands in a jar of spermaceti. (1964, 531-2)

Longing overcomes, in the constellation of indiscernibility, the inertia and freezing of being that a merely physical conception of life imposes on experience, the coldly calculating coagulation of materialism that dialectically generates the negative solution of destructive violence and suffering. Thus, like the love of fate (amor fati) which Nietzsche conceives before the liquefying blood of St. Januarius—‘You who with the flaming spear split the ice of my soul and make it thunder down now to the sea of its highest hope’ (1996, 212)—the loving order of

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10 ‘The notion of geometrical space, indifferent to its contents, that of pure movement which does not by itself affect the properties of the object, provided phenomena with a setting of inert existence in which each event could be related to physical conditions responsible for the changes occurring, and therefore contributed to this freezing of being which appeared to be the task of physics’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 63 my emphasis).

11 ‘The condition of the world, the strife and uncertainty that is everywhere, the general dissatisfaction with and rebellion against any and every situation shows that the ideal of material perfection is an empty dream and proves the existence of an eternal Reality beyond materiality’ (Meher Baba, 1963, 55).

action beyond materialism is a matter of liquefying concretized potentialities in the fire of longing, of locating and squeezing forms of agency and intention that bleed into their act. Truly practical action, longing to realize the unity that its own gravitational field of movement cooperatively proves and feels, proceeds through the vehement spiritual violence that melts by grasping and grasps by melting into its object, suffering as joy the futility of desire that one will suffer as pain if one does not. Over and against the relegation of longing to the domain of inconsequential affect, one must work to imagine and actualize the immensity of its intense practicality: ‘The new life which is based upon spiritual understanding is an affirmation of the Truth. It is not something which belongs to utopia, but is completely practical. Now that humanity is thrown into the fire of bloody conflicts, through immense anguish it is experiencing the utter instability and futility of the life which is based upon purely material conceptions. The hour is near when men in their eager longing for real happiness will seek its true source.’ (Meher Baba, 1967, III.20-1) As sublimation signifies most literally the elevation of something up to (sub) its highest threshold (limen), it proceeds by means of the reach of spirit through the limit of the body, a stretch into the outside of one’s head or egoic subjectivity, in other words, the spinning of oneself as the limb of another, new center:
Alina Popa, “Beheaded through soulstorm, or, cyclonic headlessness.”¹³

For as Augustine says, ‘illius enim capitis membra sumus. Non potest hoc corpus decollari’ [we are the limbs of that head; this body cannot be decapitated.” (Ennarationes in Psalmos, 88.5, PL 37: 1122)

Quieting

Eventually, longing will realize the life of energy from which the life of the body takes its form. That is the first step, to be followed by the second step beyond energy into the life of mind, and thence from mind into God. The step is first in the order of involution, the awakening of consciousness to the reality of its own source, which ascends internally the ladder of becoming that is descended externally in the triplex evolution of bodies (gross, subtle, mental). In this step, one perforce retreats from identification with the physical body, which is only the instrument of oneself and more accurately, ontologically, less a substance in its own right than a shadow of energy, just

¹³ [Online] Available at https://affectivealgorithm.wordpress.com/2014/05/13/beheaded-through-soulstorm/
as, in turn, ‘all energy is ultimately an expression of the mind.’ (Meher Baba, 1967, II.170)

The worldly man takes himself to be the body, and dwells in a state which is dominated by the body and its wants. His consciousness centres on the body. He is concerned with eating, drinking, sleeping and the satisfaction of other bodily desires. It is for the body that he lives and seeks fulfillment. His consciousness cannot extend beyond the body; he thinks in terms of the body and cannot think of anything which has no body or form. The entire sphere of his existence is comprised of forms, and the theatre in which he lives and moves and has his being consists of space.

The first step towards the God-state [...] is taken when the body-state is transcended. Shedding the body-state means entering the sphere of existence which is comprised of energy. The soul then dwells in a state which is no longer dominated by forms or bodies. It is lifted up to the domain of energy. Body or form is a solidification of energy, and to rise from the world of forms to the sphere of energy amounts to an advance towards a more primary and purer state of being. (Meher Baba, 1967, II.169)

For this reason, the quieting of Christina’s limbs is to be understood, not simply as relaxation or repose after exertion, but as an index of the act of shedding the body-state. Indeed the grammar of the text is conspicuously clear that her fatigue was virtual—“as if” (acsi)—and that it is she who grows quiet in all her limbs (membris omnibus quiescebat), as opposed to her body being tired from the expenditure of energy. In other words, Christina’s quieting must be conceived positively, as the expression, not of diminishment, but of the expansion of her will into the tranquility of love.14 Far from taking a break from ecstasy, she is experiencing transport into the quiet power and radi-
cal actuality of divinity as pure act (*actus purus*), the being of reality whose infinite activity also leaves it perfectly at rest, just as ‘a perfect man functions with complete detachment in the midst of intense activity.’ (Meher Baba, 1967, I.125) The quiet of her body is not stillness or lack of movement relative to its previous intensity, but the physical manifestation of the rest forever negatively present in the eternally restless heart: ‘For Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless [*inquietum*] till they rest [*requiescat*] in Thee.’ (Agustine, 2006, 3) Again we touch upon the paradox of true action as paradoxically fulfilled in a form of non-doing (*wu wei*), like the effortless skill of a master, or the becoming soundless of true prayer, which motivelessly ‘gushes out of the human heart, filled with appreciative joy’ only to ‘initiate the soul into an ever deepening silence of sweet adoration [...] and direct perception of divine Truth.’ (Meher Baba, 1958, 75-6)

Approaching surrender, this last phase of Christina’s whirling figures the *cooling of longing* that anticipates and prepares the way for the fulfillment of love in surrender:

> The longing for the Infinite gets accentuated and acute until it arrives at its climax, and then gradually begins to cool down. While cooling down, consciousness does not altogether give up the longing for the Infinite, but continues to stick to its aim of realising the Infinite. This state of cooled but latent longing is preliminary to realisation of the Infinite. It has at this stage been the instrument of annihilating all other desires, and is itself ready to be quenched by the unfathomable stillness of the Infinite. (Meher Baba, 1967, I.52)

Rather than being a diminishment of longing, such quiet cooling constitutes longing’s deepening, its augmentation into an ever lon-

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15 As in the Taoist fable about cutting up an ox: ‘I see nothing / With the eye. My whole being / Apprehends. / My senses are idle. The spirit / Free to work without plan / Follows its own instinct / Guided by natural line, / By the secret opening, the hidden space, / My cleaver finds its own way. / I cut through no joint, chop no bone’ (Thomas Merton, 1969, 46).
ger longing, just as quiet, which shares its root with while, signifies a durational state, one that is structured and reinforced through time. Furthermore, in light of the seemingly impossible and ever steepening path that this first step from matter to energy entails, the cooling of longing whereby consciousness withdraws from identification with the gross body foreshadows the infinite fusion of longing and patience that will finally be necessary for one to transcend the summit of mind. 

The quieting of Christina’s limbs, then, must be understood and appreciated in its fullness, not merely as a phase of suspension between two different levels of action (spinning and sounding), but as an inherent and essential dimension of action per se, one that concerns the recollection of powers into a higher synthesis of will or more capacious heart—a heart on the way to being able, like metal transparently liquefying in fire, to do anything and everything. ‘O marvel! a garden amidst fires! / My heart has become capable of every form.’ (Ibn Arabi, 1911, 67) While some persons, on grounds of rational skepticism or religious faith, will be tempted to see the saint’s celestially musical instrumentalization of her body as impossible (fic-

16 ‘To discard the limiting mind is no easy thing. The chief difficulty is that the mind has to be annihilated through the mind itself. Intense longing for union with the Infinite Reality as well as infinite patience are indispensable in the process of crossing the mind. One Master told his disciple that in order to attain the highest state he had to be thrown, bound hand and foot to a plank, into a river, where he must keep his garments dry. The disciple could not understand the inner meaning of this injunction. He wandered until he encountered another saint and asked him the meaning of the injunction given by the Master. The saint explained that in order to attain God, he had to long intensely for union with Him, as if he could not live another moment without it, and yet to have the inexhaustible patience which could wait for billions of years. If there is lack of intense longing for uniting with God, the mind lapses into its usual sanskaric working, and if there is lack of infinite patience, the very longing which the mind entertains sustains the working of the limited mind. It is only when there is a balance between infinite longing and infinite patience that the aspirant can ever hope to pierce through the veil of the limited mind, and this combination of extremes can only come through the grace of the Master’ (Meher Baba, 1967, II.172).
tion or miracle), I consider it far more pleasurable and practical to see and understand it, via the science of action, as an act of science, an experience of knowing that points at once beyond itself and back into the mystery of musical creation in the first place. Auto-commenting on the above line, Ibn Arabi says, “A garden amidst fires,” i.e. manifold sciences which, strange to say, are not consumed by the flames of love in his breast. The reason is, that these sciences are produced by the fires of seeking and longing, and therefore, like the salamander, are not destroyed by them.’ (Ibn Arabi, 1911, 69) Similarly, the sound that Christina will astonishingly create in the swirling fire of her longing is not only a wondrous harmony that could be heard that day, but the possibility of our hearing it without hearing it, and thus at minimum an infinitesimally more open space for doing-feeling-knowing what one in reality infinitely wants to—the will itself.

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Australia: Meher House Publications.
New York: Paulist Press.
On the highway, it is not rare to see a wave, all alone, one wave separated from the ocean.
It is absolutely useless, does not constitute a set.
This is a case of magical spontaneity.

Henri Michaux

Pero el cadaver, ay! Siguió muriendo.

Cesar Vallejo
The Diagonal-Creaturely

Creaturely Streams and Directional Dispersion

In his book “Theory of Religion”, Bataille approaches the zone of animality as a province characterised by an intermingling flux, where the domains and intensities of the creaturely are distributed within a chaotic, complex and contagious depth. Waving through thresholds of resonance, gravity and stretching frequencies, “creaturely streams” oscillate between zones of accumulation and directionality (or what later in this essay we will denominate: nuclearity), and zones of scattering or dispersion. In the case of scattering, and thinking the creaturely realm as a plane of intensive streams, we could imagine two cases or modalities. On the one hand, we could have one that operated in a plural fashion, a dispersion of a given stream into a multiplicity of sub-directionalities that would remain in the same plane after the event of dispersion. On the other hand we could think of a type of dispersion that operated in a collected directional fashion, however retrograde; a sort of suction, where the plane of the stream would be abolished for it at the same time it negatively scatters almost conductively into a non-collection of its assemblage.

‘Animality is immediacy or immanence’, writes Bataille, and ‘the situation is given when one animal eats another’. ‘There is only a difference in quantity, one higher wave overturning the other weaker one’. (1989, 18) Within the watery immanence of the creaturely depth, an animal’s death is certainly a form of scattering, the dissolution of the nuclear assemblage of a creaturely stream. The term nuclear here will play the role of a threshold of collection. It will be delineated as that which informs what is collected in a certain assemblage. Nuclearity, however would entail a certain vertex of tension that would guarantee the sustain of the assemblage.

Considering the dichotomy between binding or assemblage on the one hand, and scattering or dispersion on the other hand, and in the course of our understanding of Bataille’s creaturely depth, it is relevant to put our attention on the second type of scattering we
were sketching in the previous paragraph, which we will denominate here “directional scattering” or “suction”. This type of creatural dispersion participates of a retrograde kind of accentuation. We use the term “retrograde” to highlight the fact that it is not opened towards a posterity taking place under the function of the dispersing object, namely: a post-object affected in its course by the intricacies of the object (which would be the case of the object after the dispersion takes place, if we still wanted to zone it despite the fact that it not longer is). However before discussing this it is necessary to unfold our understanding of what is directional.

Addressing the plane of animality as a depth wearing the attributes of a turbid pool of directionality, we could say that creaturely streams construct their existence intensively by the unfolding of their directions, which ultimately inform their assemblages as “collected substances” and the way they relate to others’. Here a sort of vectorial understanding of the creaturely is at work. Accordingly, if we think in terms of inversion, the inverse of a vector, or its collapse, would undo the assemblage of the creaturely stream’s directional-existence by being deconstructed in the reversion of its outsidal\(^1\) accentuation, in a sort of suction event.

Now if a suction takes place, it is because a creaturely vector contains (as part of its condition of possibility) an intrinsic suctive principle, in the creature/being/assemblage that it binds. This principle subscribes it to a possible eventual fugue from its own assemblage or to its potential for directional dispersion. The intrinsic suctive principle is an attribute that belongs to the creature-for-the-environment and also an attribute of the creature-for-itself. The final content of the actualization of the intrinsic suctive principle can vary in each case. The actual suctor may come in the form of an other presence or in the form of an intrinsic inner usurpation\(^2\). In the intrinsic suctive

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\(^1\) The term “outsidal” here is making reference to the plane a creaturely stream shares with others, and its coming to presence into this plane.

\(^2\) Or a nuclear mutation. This idea will be further explored in the coming sections of this essay.
principle what is at work is a plasmatic vacancy or a vacant phase of nuclearity, which generates the diversion of a creaturely scattering from environmental contingency, led by and into the second nuclearity that usurps, namely: the suctor. The game of forces that is at stake here constitutes an immanent play in the depth of the natural world, which precipitates in the plasm of its abyss, what it itself in-figures. After all and after Bataille, ‘Animals dwell in the world like water in water.’(Ibid.).

Now, we see that the idea of a directional scattering actually entails the denial of one of the conditions of possibility of scattering itself. The dispersion of a set or an arrangement consists in a rupture in the cohesion of its elements and of its nuclear binding. Being the process of scattering an assumption of non-nuclear directionality or directionalities, a directional scattering would have to be able to maintain the virtual presence of a certain nucleus at the same time that it disperses and looses its bind; all of this, in order to keep the directional title at work. Here in a contradictory fashion, non-nuclearity is paired with a sort of phantasmatic servile nuclearity. Usurpation, or the possession of the intrinsic nuclear vacancy of a creaturely stream, allows this to be possible: the event whereby a foreign nucleus or a nuclear mutation colonizes the nuclearity of the stream in case, turning it onto new senses of direction and onto all the plasmatic re-arrangements that this would entail, when being led through an assisted and therefore directional scattering.

When a directional scattering takes place in the form of mutation, the phase that follows re-arranges the creaturely stream into something else. This transmutation bends the basic assemblage of the plasm3 of the stream into a new binding, from and with its same substance. It is a transversal voyage taking place within the same coordinates of its initial inscription, without undoing this inscription by the accent of its new coming-together in an other arrangement. In the case of non-directional scattering, the re-arrangement of the remain-

3 We use the term plasm to designate an abstract substance; stripped of its inner organization and inner distribution, also stripped of its divisibility.
ders of plasm of the creaturely streams in case, is contingent and de-
pendant on the fluctuations of the environment.

Coming back to the idea of the intrinsic suctive principle, we were sketching the figure of suction (either foreign or intrinsic) as an usurpation of the creaturely stream’s nuclearity. When applying this to the schemes of the creaturely world, suction could easily appear under the figure of a “predator”. For the purpose of this article we would like to take a deep look on a particular type of predator: the scavenger. More precisely we would like to explore the action of the scavenger in terms of an abstract analysis of the creaturely depth. The action of the scavenger stands as particular type of suction, which operates within an underground creatural phrasing and which annihi-
lates or ontologically deviates the residual matter of creaturely scattering, what for Bataille would constitute a sacred and irreducible presence. A scavenger is a corpse-eater, it is that which consumes the residual, that which deviates its scattering into a nutritional pathway. From now on we will use the term “scavenger-sis” to abstractly designate this action.

Accents and Nuclearity

Before we continue, we would like to comment on the use of the term “phrase” or “phrasing” in the previous paragraphs. The “phrasing” of a creaturely stream is intimately connected with the way this stream is accented. The accent speaks about the mystery of the cohesion of a particular assemblage, in this sense it is equivalent to the nuclear.

The English word “accent”, derives from the Latin term “ac-
cantus” which means “song added to speech”.5 The figure of “song” promises oneness and the complicity of a sonic population towards a certain emphasis, as the figure of accent promises a sort of directional binding within the immanence of an assemblage. It indicates

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4 The suffix “sis” will be used here as an indicator of action.
5 See Online Dictionary of Etymology. Available at http://www.etymonline.com/
its qualitative placement as a direction at its own scale and before considering the outside. The term *accent* is also connected with the figure of *breath* and consequently with the element “air” re-emitted and mediated by the vital operation of breathing. There is a certain intimacy between the ideas of breath and expression, as the phonetic realm of verbal phrasing is *outsided* physically through breath. In his treatise on Geometry, Euclid defines a surface as ‘within somethingr to occupy.’ ‘pace)the key of expression. previous theorization. is what is collected in a certain bind or as...a domain constituted by length and breath’. (Euclid, [1883-1885], 6) Here “breath” appears as something similar to the plasm of a formal expression.

Now, when we use the term *accent* to sketch the dynamics of binding and scattering within the creaturely depth and to draft the formation of creaturely streams, we do so in order to acknowledge the presence of a non-yet completely delineated sense of directionality; namely, a primitive one. The figure of the accent embodies this primitive directionality highlighting the nuclear pre-condition of all possible direction and *vectorial trance*. The term *trance here* is understood as a model of transit that does not imply the figure of distance understood in the key of extension. A trance might be something similar to a ‘journey in space’ (instead of a journey through space). Deleuze and Guattari describe this thought when they theoretically unpack the modalities of transit in “smooth space”, a concept that stemmed from Boulez’ theories on music. ‘Boulez says that in smooth space-time one occupies without counting, whereas in striated space one counts in order to occupy.’ (2015, 477) *Smooth space* as a plane is divisible yet non-metric, here divisibility takes place as it would occur within the gelatinous-oceanic substance of a plasm, occurring within something not solid and not yet fixed. In this sense, a trance constitutes an intensive and non-extensive transit.

Accordingly, in “A Thousand Plateaus”, Deleuze and Guattari establish the dichotomy consisting of smooth space and striated space. Being the former a realm where intensity is the main key, the latter stands as a realm where extension is the main component. Both elements of the binary highlight ‘the differences between direction-
al and dimensional spaces’ (477). Smooth space is constituted as ‘... continuous variation, continuous development of form’. (Ibid) In this sense what moves across its coordinates, must always be in a continuous state of development and in a continuous trance of becoming. Also, one of its properties is ‘that it does not have a dimension higher than that which moves through.’(Ibid) constituting in this sense a flat one-dimensional plane.

Applying this model to Bataille’s creaturely depth, we could say that the values of creatural magnitudes would bend in concordance with the variation of the creatural tides as the indicators of their directionalities (within the dynamics of a “water in water” model). Creaturely streams fluctuate like waves in a maritime dynamic. The consumption or scattering of certain streams could be called expenditure when taking place at a nuclear scale or at the scale of a single creaturely stream, whereas at a non-nuclear scale or a scale encompassing a plurality of creaturely streams, it could be called exchange.6

Interestingly, we could make a parallel between the directional consumption and exchanges of creaturely streams at a trans-nuclear scale (or within the depth of the creaturely world) with what in nuclear physics theory constitutes the event of binding of two sub-nuclear particles that are in the preamble of forming a nucleus. Here, the index of attraction between the two has to do to some extent with distance, but also and particularly with the direction by which they spin. ‘It is peculiar of nuclear forces that nuclear interaction potential depends both on the inter-particle distance and on the mutual orientation of

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6 It is relevant to note that the use of the categories “nuclear scales” and “non-nuclear scales” obeys to the distinction between events, attributes or accidents that correspond to a single arrangement in the case of the former, or the interspace between a plurality of arrangements in the case of the latter. In the case of the non-nuclear, we could be talking about the “trans-nuclear” namely, the inter-space of connectivity or also about other types of non-nuclearity. It is important to note that non-nuclearity can also make reference to an apparent absence of the nuclear within the arrangement.
particle spins.’ (Sitenko and Tartakovskii, 1997, 3) We could say that in a similar fashion directional magnitudes (or creaturely streams, in our case) are attracted by their directionalities, but more specifically by their pre-directionalities, or their accents, and without the interference of any concrete locus\(^7\) or environmental event.

Going back to our theorization of the “accent”, it is relevant to note that it illustrates the idea of directionality stripped of the subsequent locus that it entails once the assemblage (or creaturely stream) is *outsided*, or exported to a trans-nuclear field, namely a field shared with others. It is also stripped of the subsequent environmental rooting that it might entail. Accent is the song that embodies the whim of a certain creatural cohesion. The *accent* is immanent directionality, immanent at a nuclear scale.\(^8\) Also, by addressing *nuclearity*, we want to point out that the accent is constituted as the *inner direction* of a binding. An assemblage as such is intimately connected with direction, which constitutes the primal *motif* by which its constituting parts are connected. In this sense accent and nuclearity are equivalent as they inform the vertex of origination of an assemblage. The accent is what binds the *nuclearity* of a creaturely stream and nuclearity exports the creaturely from the vertex of accental tension, or the vertex of origination. However it is relevant to note that the accent is always ontologically in fugue; always deprived of the “what is?” that is onto-topologically concealing a “where is?” “Accent” operates with a certain autonomy in relation to the environmental and without the permanent intrusion of any *locus*. Directionality would constitute accentuation’s striation in Deleuzian and Guattarian terms. ‘In smooth space the dwelling is subordinated to the journey.’ (2015, 478)

**The Nuclear Turn**

Now, the nuclearity of a creaturely stream or its accent can suf-

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\(^7\) Latin for “place”.

\(^8\) The immanence of the accent at a trans-nuclear scale will be discussed in further sections of this essay.
fer mutations within its directional unfolding. A mutation at a nuclear scale indicates a sort of accental bending that allows a transformation of the creaturely stream into a completely different assemblage. The figure of usurpation mentioned before would fit this scheme: when a foreign nucleus usurps the transient vacant nuclearity of a given creaturely stream in state of dispersion. However it might also be possible that the new accental emergence or the mutation, develops from within the creaturely stream in a spontaneous generation. In this case, the origination of the assemblage, its accental coming together; its nucleus, would re-arrange itself. Here, the outcome of the new bind could be interpreted as a turn in relation to the previous assemblage; a diagonal, a transversal voyage performed by the creature through its own creatural plasm.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the concept of the diagonal appears as that which produces a sort of instability in the key of territory, the actualized vertigo of being half way between a fixed verticality and a mobile horizontality. Diagonal voyages are depicted in the key of “a line of deterritorialization”, the continuous background vector of becomings. The inoculation of a certain degree of instability in the fixity of a territory causes the loss of tension in the cohesion of its binding. The opening of an intimacy comes here accompanied by a certain degree of alienation, where something becomes foreign in its own substance and within its own plasm, undoing the configuration by which it was originally accented, bending the accent in a diagonal trance while preserving the intimacy of the pure plasm and the intimacy with the journey into the new assemblage. We could also describe this process as a topological alienation or locus alienation, a becoming an other place in the same place where one was. The arrangement gets separated from what is arranged, and is bent, while the arranged is re-distributed. A transversal line, in essence closer to the arranged, possesses the arrangement. A trance of seduction and exchange begins to operate in the attributes of each (arrangement and arranged). An intimacy made possible by an initial separation generates the turn and the subsequent voyage. What we are describing here is not precisely a re-arrangement but a variation, a sort of
rotation in the orbit of the cohesion of the assemblage itself.

The accent has in a way a similar process (an this constitutes one of the mysteries of genesis and mutation in a broad sense of the words); namely, an undoing by a sort of electrical stretch, and then a re-doing or re-configuring in the matrix of its constituent “breath”, the plasm of its original “ccantus”, being the latter the platform that binds and collects (as length and breath⁹). The accent constitutes both a placed slot and a gesture of distribution. Therefore, we could not venture to say that an accent is monadic or non-divisible. If it follows the pattern of any sort of divisibility it would have to be in concordance with a para-discrete scaling, which would index values according to a sort of “water in water” model.

Now, at a trans-nuclear scale, accents’ function is linked with connectivity and the establishing of bridges. We mentioned before that “accent” is a primitive sense of immanent direction with no gaze pointed towards any concrete locus outside of itself. We could say that accent is a blind gaze (in the sense that it is outside-less; therefore it is lightless, it illuminates no-where) permeating any intrusive directionality through its non-allocated presence.

**Vertex of Origination and Vertex of Direction**

When writing about the concept of nuclearity, we mentioned the idea of the “vertex of origination” as the zone where nuclearity and accent export creaturely streams into a creatural field or trans-nuclear field. It could be said that the vertex of origination is the nuclear climax of the creaturely whereas the “vertex of direction” is the trans-nuclear climax of the creaturely. Directionality informs the lubricity of the environment or “trans-nuclear” field as it informs its phantasmatic extension. Both vertexes are the two extremes of an axis, being one a closed vertex and the other an open vertex.

It is relevant to mention that in the case of the diagonal applied

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⁹ This hints towards Euclid’s definition of surface mentioned earlier in this essay.
to the schemes of accental nuclearity, mutations don’t take place on the point of directionality or vertex of direction, but in the origin of the creatural vector, or vertex of origination. Nuclear mutations always take place at the level of origination; however, this is not to say that origination constitutes a depth or a sort of transcendental realm. We think that the main difference between direction and origination (conceptually mediated by our idea of accent) is characterised not by a difference in depth, or by a hole or concavity in the realm of extension, but by the variation and fluctuation of the index of periodicity of each, allocated within the same one-dimensional plasmatic fluidity of the nuclear and trans-nuclear accordingly. In the depth of nuclear origination, repetition is a main key. What originates is what is accentuated, and then exported into the outsidity of its directionality on the trans-nuclear field, exported into what is directed. What is directed is what remains in the cohesion or binding of the accent, what is not only a spontaneous oneness, but also a continuity; a periodic oneness. It is what constantly returns to the event of accentual binding, keeping the intensity of the tension of the vertex of origination. Or it is also a looped origination assisted by its correspondent threshold of return. The index of periodicity of an event configures the field where it connects at a trans-nuclear scale with other creaturely streams that share a similar index of periodicity. Origination is different from direction in the sense that it is not subscribed to the figure of repetition, therefore its coefficient of periodicity could be just one, dwelling in another layer of the field, which does not necessarily stands as a deeper realm or a transcendence. The periodic manifests itself in the non-periodic. Direction is the threshold of periodicity, and origination is the threshold of return to the initial figure of this periodicity (its content).

If we think the nuclear as a spin, and we take each point of its orbit as a potential vertex of origination, many directions can be drawn.

Now, returning to the idea of nuclear mutation, it is important to mention again here that when a given direction, namely, an already outsided creaturely stream, moves transversally, this operation does
not take place at the level of the vertex of direction but at a the level of the vertex of origination. In the *trance* of the nuclear plasm of the creaturely, no displacement comes to event, but instead, a variation in its orbit. This is the only displacement possible at a nuclear scale, an insidal displacement that is not turned towards any outside, towards any *beyond-intrinsic-nuclearity*. By means of this event, the creaturely stream is able to travel in the orbit of its own vertex of origination. Each turn is a voyage in the sea of the creatural, as well as each vertex in its orbit is a potential directionality or creatural mutation. The-vertex-of-origination-in-turn is concerned with its own spinning and the movement that bends a given nuclearity, emerged from its singularity, into a different zone of cohesion. The generation of an “other” within the “same” is given by the angle between the initial creaturely vector and the outcome creaturely vector after the turn.

On a different note, the triangulation of this operation; namely: vertex of origination, orbital trance-diagonality and new origination, guards the germ of connectivity between creaturely streams. Since it constitutes the diagrammatical evidence of how something connects with itself at the level of its own plasm, it is therefore able to establish the accents by which the creaturely stream configures intensive bridges at a trans-nuclear scale. The creaturely in this sense does not survive these abstract mechanisms of immanence and generativity. Creaturely streams are capable of executing transversal voyages in the orbits of their primordial spins. The primordial spin of a nucleus does not necessarily stand for the literal figure of rotation but it is connected with cohesion. Abstractly, what spins is what in a dynamic environment preserves its own collection. And here we establish a turn, which we will denominate: *the nuclear turn*, pointing our gaze on the nuclear platform by which the creaturely (this time addressing all streams in the natural world) originates, articulates itself and therefore also mutates into yet unknown configurations.

*Rhombus Theory and Diagonal Abysses*

The diagonal, in its graphic presentation, establishes a *cap-
ture\textsuperscript{10} of the action of spinning. If we imagine, in a geometric space, a figure formed by horizontal and vertical lines, we encounter a parallelogram. If we imagine one formed by diagonals, we come across with a rhombus.

The English word “rhombus” derives from the Greek “ῥόμβος”, which literally means: something that spins.\textsuperscript{11} If the captured spin of a parallelogram; namely, the spin deprived of its periodicity, configures a rhombus, then again the intimacy between diagonal or transversal voyage, and accental morphosis maintains its course. The “rhombus” embodies the cell of all actions taking place at the level of the trans-nuclear plane, which are directed towards the nuclear, and that having almost returned to the nuclear, engender a trajectoral mutation.

In essence, diagonality is both informed by a straight trance and a by flat abyss. Curves show signs of gravity while diagonality exhibits no signs or traces of outside entities that deformed, with zoned attractions, its trajectory. The continuous tension and straightness of diagonality allows no intrusion or any micro-segmentarity-venturing-out. Departing from nuclearity, the diagonal movement is initially

\textsuperscript{10} A frozen figure, deprived of any dynamism and environmental fluctuations.
\textsuperscript{11} Interestingly the term “rhombos” in antiquity has been frequently associated with “magic wheels”:

Theocritus describes a witch who uses a magical wheel as a tool to summon back a lost lover. This wheel is described as a “bronze rhombus” that “wheels by the power of Afrodite”. [...] The word “rhombus” doesn’t mean the shape we associate with the word; it can mean anything that spins and appears to be a common word for what we would call tops and bullroares. The bullroarer is a prehistoric music instrument that involves a weight on a cord that is whirled about the head to create a humming or howling noise. (See Dunn, Patrick (2015) The practical Art of Divine Magic: Contemporary and Ancient Technics of Theurgy. Chapter 4: Rituals and Tools of Theurgy. Woodbury: Llewellyn Publications)
shut to the trans-nuclear field, so its trance cannot be presented as curved as there are no outside forces that could bend its straight continuity. The diagonal is both a trance and an abyss in the sense that it also informs a sort of concavity whereby the creaturely stream is almost suctioned by its own plasm. The diagonal is equivalent to the nuclear turn, which is equivalent to the self-usurpation or self-suction taking place from within the nucleus of a creaturely stream.

The turn re-arranges an arrangement by bending the creaturely stream beyond the limits of its nuclear configuration while on the journey towards its own expenditure. And in a gesture of diversion from it, it marginally enters and exits the waters of dispersion. The turn can only take place at the limits of an assemblage and in the shores of its potential dispersion. And it is precisely at this marginal shore where it breeds an other, where it establishes for the almost-mortified/scattered creaturely stream, the possibility to produce an other. Impregnated of itself, the rhombus-creature in accental-trance acts as threshold of origination for the coming to being of an other (Indexing the drive towards the relative horizontality of the death/dispersion event, coming from the relative verticality of on-going life or growth).

Diagonality undoes an assemblage preserving the collection of the plasm of its constitution. Also it meets no others in the course of its action. In a regular scattering course, the collapsed creatural verticality would encounter the influences of an environment when bending its trajectory into a process of scattering (which usually takes place within a phase of decomposition). However in the case of the diagonal path, there is no environment to be met at the limits of the bending. The nuclear turn is a journey of the nucleus through the nucleus and ultimately with the nucleus. There are no environmental conditions because the turn takes place at a nuclear scale, at the level of the vertex of origination, already having exited the trans-nuclear field in a retrograde directional gesture of dispersion. The vertex of origination is the sky the creaturely-stream-in-turn is looking at. It encompasses

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12 Every creaturely stream is a journey towards expenditure.
a reversion to a pre-directional and exclusively accental nuclear plane.

Locus Interference and Nuclear Transparency

Thinking about “locus” or “place” is accessory at the level of origination and crucial at the level of established directionality. In the realm of origination, however, “locuses” are not completely absent, what is absent is their permanence and their alliance with the nuclear. They do present themselves in the modality of interference, or like emerging presences passing through the zone of an open signal, which would constitute the sphere of the nuclear as a basic plasm before the events of origination. The nuclear plasm is both transparent and turbid. It is turbid by being sometimes informed by a dense population of passing potential locuses finding no clearing to gain discernibility, and transparent by allowing many figures to come to a transient relative presence. The clearings are informed by the levels of periodicity of locuses. The plasm, like a horizon, hosts a multiplicity of potential intensities, which are always transient and in fugue. They depict a place from which they escape. They constitute inapprehensible fugues.

A locus in the nuclear plasm appears in the form of a departure from presence, as the plasm does not tolerate permanencies, which belong in the directional plane. However the plasm is still translucent and hosts these locuses at the scale of a relative fugitive presence passing through its open signal.

Locuses that come to a fatuous presence in the plasm break its non-formal continuity in a mode of interference. Locus-interference is the turbid apparition of virtual horizons, promises of placement, latent creaturalities promising domains in the trans-nuclear field, like spasmic mirages, where the nuclear plasm plays the role of an oracular medium and where a sort of nuclear noise is the agent of transmission. However, this doesn’t mean the point of origination is oriented to the exterior. The interference of locuses at a nuclear scale occurs where the environmental synesthetically acquires the properties of the creatural and halfway-assembled promised lands demonize the
plasm. An accental nuclearity emerges at the zone where the interference of a locus gains density by matching an accental vertex.

Now, coming back to the diagonal it is relevant to mention that it also reveals itself in the indeterminacy it produces between its progenitors; namely, verticality and horizontality. The diagonal is the outcome of the additive movement of a becoming vertical of horizontality and accordingly, a becoming horizontal of verticality. Nevertheless, this processes need to be continuous and always in a state of *trance*. Where the interaction between vertical and horizontal produces an axis of spin, the transparency of what is vertical in the horizontal and what is horizontal in the vertical becomes contained in the diagonal in a non-translucent act of transparency or what we will like to denominate “hard transparency”. Hard transparency is one of the most important traits of the nuclear-in-turn. This idea will be developed in further sections of this essay.

*Pivotal Return*

The Diagonal exudes a type of presence that is close to the negativity of death or total dispersion, however only in spirit. The rhombus dynamism allows the creaturely-stream-in-turn to approach its final scattering, its final dispersion in the nuclear plasm, in a point of *bounce* or *pivot* that elevates it once again, that bounces it again towards the creatural, diverting its still collected plasm into a new assemblage. In order to understand this movement, we started allocating the flux of dispersion within the scheme of a horizontal surface. We see the trance of the diagonal as that which hits this surface without being able to get fully immersed in it, bouncing again towards the creatural, outsidal, directional. The plasm-of-origination-in-turn becomes a place the creaturely stream cannot fully return to.

In a regular movement of directional dispersion, a creaturely stream could just return to its vertex of origination in the nuclear plasm and scatter in its own substance. However in the turn, something else occurs. The plasm becomes hard and inaccessible. Its regular transparency becomes a hard transparency. The creaturely stream
in directional dispersion hits this nuclear hard transparency and bounces again to the directional field. The point of contact with its own vertex of origination, which has become mutant, will be denominated here: point of pivot.

It is in this pivotal contact with the nuclear plasm, that the turn and therefore the creatural mutation are articulated. The rhombus as a twist activates the drives of spontaneous generativity, and it produces a second threshold of origination; where the home sea or nuclear plasm is characterised by its hardness and density; configured as a *dead sea*. The *dead sea* is the figure of second creatural assemblage or second in-figuration; namely, the environmental figure that accompanies a creatural mutation or nuclear turn.

Now, applying these ideas to the scheme of the creaturely world, the transversal-creaturely is that which is oriented to its own transmutation at a deep level. As we said previously, all trances in the world are produced at a nuclear scale rather than at the level of connectivity or level of direction, which ultimate function is to exhibit the evidence of nuclear plasmatic trances. In a field where space is an attribute of the trance of the unfolded vertex of origination into a *locus* or a plurality of *locuses*, a creatural trance does not need to go outside to generate displacements, re-locations, new assemblages, collapses... etc. Nuclear transmutations are contagious. And the vehicle of contamination is not space or the trans-nuclear field, but coincidences in direction; coincidences in spin orientations, geometrical nuclear synchronicities.

**Scavenger-sis: Transmutación del Agua Dura**

*Scavenger-sis I*

In the context of the ideas that were previously expressed regarding the creaturely world and the introduction of the concept of the nuclear and the dynamism engendered at its scale, we mentioned the idea of “suction” as a modality of scattering that departed from a trans-nuclear field. We also mentioned that the dispersion of a given assem-
blage by means of the figure of suction lied within a directional category. In directional scattering, the contingencies that are subscribed to random dispersion are abolished. If a particular scattering is to be directional, it means that its collapse follows a certain path, one of which can be the retrograde movement towards the vertex of origination or also the movement towards an outsiders force of attraction, or external suctor.

In the immanence of the creaturely world, and following Bataille’s characterization of it as a watery domain where creatures are reduced to waves in an abstract sea, a suctor could be just a standard predator: ‘…a higher wave overturning the other weaker one’. (1989, 18) However, as mentioned before, suction can also take place from within the nuclear plasm, and without any foreign assistance. In the event of suction, the dispersion of a creaturely stream preserves until the end a phantasmatic binding, even if the actual binding is almost no longer there. This phantasmatic binding stands in an intimate connection with the notion of directional scattering. It is also connected with the becoming of the dispersing creature, namely what it will turn into: be it another creaturely stream or a nutritional sequel. However, the phantasmatic nucleus is only a mirage, the illusory preservation of the collection of the creatural plasm, in order to keep the directional at work in the action of dispersion.

Now, in the creaturely world the figure of the scavenger presents itself as a peculiar type of suctor, for it suctions creaturely ruins.

The figure of the corpse is an image of suspension, and in this sense it is suspension what is suctioned in the action of the scavenger. The “residuum” or ruin present in the corpse contains: the contingencies of the environment plus the dispersive momentum of a creaturely stream. The figure of the corpse as image of suspension hints towards the transience of all creaturely streams on their journeys towards inevitable scattering, departing from their vertexes of origination. However, the corpse that the scavenger consumes is not the same corpse that is eaten by any standard creatural predator. In the action of a standard predator we could indeed apply Bataille’s metaphor of the ‘higher wave overturning the other weaker one’ (Ibid), because the
whole process of hunt including the participating creaturely streams, is contained in the directional scattering in case. In the case of the scavenger, the process is evidently not the same. What is consumed is not part of a general transience or part of a directional scattering, instead what is consumed and what is produced in the action of the scavenger is an absolute transient, an already corps-ed stream, a suspension of transience’ momentum, a beheading of its directional quality. A directional drive acts upon a suspension; a directional drive interrupts. An absolute transient is the captured plasm in transience, stripped of its decaying periodicity. We will look at this in more detail in the following sections of this essay.

**Absolute Transience**

At a nuclear scale, transience could be understood as an environmental condition, a condition that dwells in the field and that departs from no point of origination. In this sense it would be non-nuclear. However, transience is recognized at a nuclear level, once creaturely streams are exported as such to an outside.

In the action of the scavenger or scavenger-sis, what dies is transformed into a suspension, which is relative to the scattering momentum of the dead creature.

Death is still on-going transience for the scattering body of the standard corpse. A corpse subtracted from the continuity of decay is however, an absolute transient. A residuum is an absolute transient. Transience becomes absolute when definitely suspended, when stripped of the continuity of its dispersive momentum. Here transience stops being an environmental property expressed at the directional level of the creaturely stream, and becomes re-absorbed into nuclearity, into a nuclearity of its own, in a realm where directional flows cease and where it, lacking periodicity, cannot continue with its waning function. In this absolutization, transience ceases being environmental as it lacks the continuity of its influence upon things.

Accordingly, at a nuclear scale and in the turn, the figure of death or total dispersion becomes an impossible. As we said before,
here the closest one gets to death is to another kind of absolute-transience, that suspension of the periodic function of decay and of dispersion; this time bodied forth by the impenetrable and irreducible point of pivot, which relative embodiment is the diagonal threshold. The point of pivot absolutizes the transience of the dispersing creaturely stream, disconnecting it from its former origination and re-emitting it as a mutation. Absolute transience does not allow the final decay or the final dispersion of the creaturely stream, as it has been disconnected from its former origination.

Now, in the schemes of the creaturely, the suspension of the periodic also causes the loss of tension in the cohesion of the assemblage, making the nuclear turn possible. Where the arrangement becomes loose, the faceless plasm, as fully turbid collection, is sovereign.

*Immortal Encryption and the Nuclear Turn*

As we said before, by being an environmental property, transience, does not exactly dwell in the nuclearity of creaturely streams. Instead, it is affiliated to them, as part of their subscription to the trans-nuclear field or the field of interaction. Also it does not participate of an independent nuclearity. The nuclear turn, by being a sort of bending or transversal drive of the creaturely streams beyond their limits, releases the tension between the creaturely stream in case and its affiliated transient ether\(^\text{13}\). Within the trans-nuclear field, transience plays a role of conduction; it is a carrier.

By being partially severed from the transient field, the transversal or diagonal movement participates of a sort of *immortal encryption*. This immortal encryption is realised in the figure of the *pivotal return*, which was explored in previous sections of this essay.

The rhombus, as a tetra-logic emblem of the transversal, encrypts a misleading sense of conductivity, a mirage-medium or mirage-field which turns concrete in that the nuclear-surface-in-turn

\(^{13}\text{The term “ether” here is used to speak about a medium that is both conductive and abstract, and which does not possess a nuclear orientation or inner cohesion.} \)
cannot be accessed. Its encryption repulses transience and prevents it from reaching its final fate in the creaturely streams that return to the nuclear in order to scatter. This mirage-medium is the environment of the transversal, a non-field that bounces the waning creaturely again to the phantasmatic binding that kept its scattering directional. As we said before, this phantasmatic binding, however, preserves only the collection of the plasm, it does not interfere in the blurring of the particular cohesion of the creaturely stream in case.

_Pivotal return_ is an “induced error” in the creatural automation of death/dispersion. It is an error at the level of the carrier (transience) in communication with nuclearity. At the vertigo of absolute transience, and when a nuclear turn comes to event, the transversal momentum encrypts the immersion in the plasm of origination as an entry/non-entry. The transversal actualizes the nuclear plasm as an impenetrable hard surface. This encryption at the level of the plasm is opposed to the movement of transience. This encryption is precisely what absolutizes transience, rendering the collection of the creaturely stream immortal, despite of the operating transience of its current cohesion. The immortal encryption of the point of pivot allows the creaturely to bend, approaching dispersion only in order to undergo transmutation.

As we said before, the diagonal is produced as the induction of a variation at a nuclear level. The inoculation of this variation produces the turn, anticipated by a lethal trajectoral infection at the directional level, on the creatural route to scattering. However this infection also preserves the collection of the bind in the form of the phantasm mentioned in previous sections; the collection of the plasm is preserved but the assemblage dissolved. The infection at the nuclear level crystallizes and fossilizes the plasm that renders transience absolute. What once had merging and annihilating properties acting upon whatever that ventured in its surface, now stands as an impenetrable surface, rendering the final scattering of the *returning* creaturely stream impossible.

The rhombus, as a diagonal tetra-logic demon, is the symbolic fountain of all deviations and plasmatic turns. It rules the canals be-
tween conductive means, carriers and assembled streams. It morphs the periodicity of both and enables exchanges.

*Scavenger-sis II*

Now, following from our previous lines we could say that the directional deviation of scattering is given once the accental bind is *absolutized* in its de-accentuation. Something in the dispersion of the assemblage is turned into an absolute. This “absolute” is what *phantasmatically* preserves the binding in spite of its imminent dispersive momentum. This is turned concrete in the figure of “absolute transience” mentioned before.

Within the dynamics of the nuclear turn, the accental binding is suspended in the vertex of the pivotal point, which restricts it from reaching a total dispersion. Suspended in a non-access to the nuclear plasm, the almost completely scattered stream re-engineers itself. Absolute transience, as we mentioned before, suspends periodicity (the periodicity of the creaturely stream in the directional plane, importing it back to the nuclear plane) however it does not abolish its presence totally. It brings its periodic index to a minimum to be able to still sustain presence.

Now, in the nuclear turn, there are two main components: on the one hand the creaturely stream in directional scattering, absolutized and suspended in this movement, and on the other hand the nuclear plasm which hosts it, that blocks the possible re-immersion of the creaturely stream back in its own substance, and therefore restricts its possibilities of total dispersion. Something of the creaturely maintains it in what it is, but blurred, bent to the point of alienation and disfigurement. This something is the hardness of the nuclear-plasm-in-turn. The plasm-in-turn becomes hard and impossible to enter, its properties as a solvent are suspended. At the same time it restricts the creaturely stream to access total dispersion, it fixes it in a density that allows a new emergence. The turn is also informed by a certain directionality of nuclearity, (as diagonals are informed by a certain becoming vertical of horizontality and *vice versa*) and accord-
ingly, some properties of the directional pass onto the nuclear and vice versa. In the nuclear turn, what emerges as outcome of the operation is never exported from the original nuclear plasm anymore. It derives from the previous creaturely stream; its plasm is constituted by the absolute transience of the previous creaturely stream. The absolute transience of the creaturely stream brings it to a point in which it becomes similar to a nuclear plasm. Absolute transience morphs nuclearity into something environmental, into a host of future nuclearities.

Now, the movement of directional dispersion is similar to what is residual at the level of the absolutization of transience. In the turn the creaturely produces a simulacrum of scattering and its residuum. The residuum of what did not pass through actual death, nevertheless, preserves its momentum. The residuum of an event closer enough to death to undergo mutation is severed from dispersion and stays (remains) in the form of a subtle non-formal assemblage that preserves itself in the schemes of a plasm. It bears the absolute transience of a residual substance or of a corpse, as the outcome of a spent transience. However, it is not.

It is in this sense that the nuclear turn preserves a connection with scavenger-sis: the point by which the residual as an absolute is derived into something else. The hardness of the nuclear plasm, the fixity of the blurred and bent creaturely stream remains in the collection of a fully turbid plasm, which drowned the face of its original accental assemblage by the action of turning.

Scavenger-sis looks onto derivation: the derivation of absolute transience into a nutritive pathway; the nurturing of something else. In this way an absolute transient is recuperated into the directional and into the contingencies of the trans-nuclear field. New directionalities are grown from a hard plasm, which do not depend anymore on the creaturely stream it hosted, but on the usurper, the suctor, which usurps its nuclearity and diverts it, transmuting its absolute transience in order to serve its own means.

Again, the nuclear turn derives a faceless plasm into something else (namely a plasm that lost its creaturely cohesion but preserved
its collection) Scavenger-sis is the projection of a certain agency onto this process.

Perhaps it is interesting to note that decaying processes conceal in the core of their dynamism a certain margin of *inner growth*. In absolute transience this growth is vacant and this enables usurpation. This nuclear vacancy manifests in the form of an *inward stretch* that conceals the on-going presence of a clearing in the plasm. It manifests in the form of a retrograde momentum that also serves to keep the plasm collected. Therefore it can be said that this potential growth stands in a close connection with the phantasmatic nucleus that in earlier sections of this essay was said to keep the plasm collected during the event of directional dispersion.

**Introduction to a Treatise on Phosphorescence**

It would be interesting at this point to ask ourselves whether it is possible to attribute a constant symbolic frame to our on-going effort to theoretically configure the *outsidity*¹⁴ of the nuclear. In the previous edition of Cyclops Journal, I presented a piece that explored the ancient mythological figure of the Cyclop in relation to the idea of ocular origination. Here, the theorization of the ocular was envisaged as a project to understand certain movements of consciousness, the will to knowledge, and the configuration of an organ that would presumably engender the outside. However, here “vision” was not understood, as it would be in a narrow approach, as something enclosed in the actual physical organ of perception, but as an idea that had been de-territorialized from its organic immediacy and exported into the face of a symbolic tool that would be presented and used to discuss the transit of something into what is outsidal. For us, this symbolic and almost fetichistic use of “the eye” would allocate the reader in the understanding of the figure of a threshold (vision) where one can

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¹⁴ Outsidity: a term to understand the trance into what is other in the key of the environmental. When something outsides itself, it exports itself into a foreign openness.
venture into what is not his/hers, while at the same time preserving what is his/hers in the locus of a different/distinct substance.

If we loose ourselves in the connection existing between the ideas of vision and outsidity, it would not be so difficult to find almost indistinctively entangled, the figures of light and luminescence. Paralleling the ideas of “encounter” or “finding” with the consequence of a certain luminescence thrown on obscurity, and this obscurity with the absence of any encounter or the possibility of any other-presence, we find luminescence strictly connected with the production of an ocular outside. We can also say that being “vision” just a symbolic tool to put a “face” on the abstract fabric and dynamism of “outsidity”, light would constitute a necessary component in the arrangement of the outsidal operation, in our case brought forwards by the “ocular” meta-coding, which we chose to address, knowing our analysis would depart from the creatural world.

Now, we could say that the internal scattering of a creaturely stream, and its turn to nuclearity, following the interests of our previous theorization, stand as a blur where conductivity cannot be separated from the obscurity and turbidness that floods the nuclear plasm. We consider that what is at work at a nuclear scale can be approached and scaled through the figure of light, and speaking in terms of degrees of luminosity. This move would acknowledge the connection of light with a prescriptive and delineative function, in relation to the outside realm: When we illuminate we see. When we illuminate we distinguish. Following this line, we feel free to make use of the figure of the set of eyes, which constitute the organs of outsidal navigation for many creaturely streams, as an order to describe the affections of the diagonal creaturely, the nuclear turn and scavenger-sis.

Eyes are outsidal energy. Eyes are accented in concordance with a conductive principle that operates in relation to the outsidity of creaturely streams. As the operative module of the outsidal, eyes are the main accents of cohesion processes within the outsidal/directional momentum of creaturely streams. But again, our use of the eye here is not to point out to the particular organ of outsidal navigation, but to draw a face to absolute outsidity. Every creaturely stream is
an outsidal organon, nuclearity is accented in concordance with what outsides; namely, for the purpose of this theory, “the eye”.

Accordingly, eyes equal: vertex of accental outsidity. In this way, the eye dwells both in the vertex of origination and in the vertex of direction of a creaturely stream. On the way to mortification or final scattering, the reduction of the eyes to the formlessness of the nuclear, or in other words the reduction of the vertex of accental outsidity to the formlessness of the nuclear plasm, crashes the realisation of luminosity against the continuity of a blind plasm that absorbs it and in some cases re-emits it. Not all scattering implies realisation, and not all plasm would necessarily re-emit the “ether”\(^\text{15}\) of outsidal realisation. We will call the re-emission of the outsidal luminescence: Phosphorescence.

Now, it is interesting to note that phosphorescence appears to be a conductive property. It does not only constitute the re-emission of a luminescence but the re-emission of the luminescence and its own conductivity. In the realm of the creaturely, phosphorescence is a property that corresponds to the diagonal and the nuclear turn rather than to regular scattering events.

The term “Phosphorescence” derives from the Greek word “Φωσφόρος” attributed to the chemical element. In chemistry, one of the main properties of Phosphorus is that it emits a certain glow when exposed to Oxygen. In physics the occurrence of phosphorescence is related to the re-emission of a certain luminescence after the exposition of a certain substance to light. In ancient Greek, the word “Φωσφόρος” stands for “light bearer”, its Latin translation: “Lucifer”, stands for “morning star”. The etymology of “phosphorescence” is

\(^{15}\) Here we use the term “ether” to address the purest figure of realisation in the key of light. Etymologically, the term “ether” derives from the ancient Greek “αἰθήρ” meaning “high air”, or the “upper pure” (Online dictionary of Etymology) opposed to “Aer” the lower air. It also derives from PIE “Aydh” meaning fire and burning (Ibid). In ancient cosmology, “ether” was a conductive substance similar to air that constituted a field of transmission, however unlike air; it also participated of a sort of luminescence by being also related with the element “fire”.

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connected to the concept of “glow after illumination”\textsuperscript{16}. In the case of “Phosphorus”, it is said of a substance or organism that shines for itself. It also stands as the combination of the word “Phaos”, meaning light, also a contraction of the verb “phaein”, meaning “to show or to bring light” and the word “Phoros” that stands for “bearer” or “carrier”, deriving from “pherein”, the verb for carrying. It is also associated with the verb “bher” (PIE): meaning “to carry” but also applied to the action of bearing children or giving birth; a life conductive in this sense.\textsuperscript{17} Put simply, a luminous element and a conductive property constitute the assemblage of the term.

Coming back to our analysis, and applying the schemes of vision to the ideas of the outsidal and the accent, we would like to articulate the deep association of the event of phosphorescence at a nuclear scale, with the ideas of the nuclear turn and the diagonal creaturely.

Within this scheme, the transience of the accental (the time-lapse whereby a creaturely stream remains in its cohesion or assemblage) becomes asymptotical after hitting the hard transparency of the nuclear-plasm-in-turn. Here we are referencing the point of pivot mentioned in previous sections of this paper when discussing the figure of the transversal in relation to nuclear turns and in relation to death or dispersion. When transposed onto the scheme of light and ocular outsidal navigation, the pivotal return to the nuclear plasm entails that the figure of luminescence (phenomenalized by the eye in its outsidal trajectory of illuminating/producing world for itself) returns in a dispersing movement towards the plasm that would dissolve its cohesion and therefore annihilate it into obscurity. However, in the scheme of the nuclear turn, this leading luminescence, the accental vertex of the creaturely stream in case, hits a hard surface; namely, the hard transparency of the nuclear plasm in diagonal turn. And instead of being consumed or just simply scattered, it is partially absorbed and partially bounced. When in turn, the plasm absorbs the

\textsuperscript{16} See Online dictionary of Etymology

\textsuperscript{17} See Online dictionary of Etymology
luminescence and reflects it back in the mode of phosphorescence. As we said before, “phosphorescence” appears as a re-emitted luminescence, a glow that carries the trace of what it illuminated, a glow that is not independent from the illuminated, a glow in nuptials. In the realm of vision, the bent eyes are the stigma of this phosphorescence, the almost-inverted eyes: their emblem; namely, an almost mortified vision, a tortured outsidal force, that bent itself beyond the limits of the openness prescribed by its initial accental nuclearity. Also, it is relevant to note that the nuclear turn leaves no concrete traces of the coordinates of the previous trajectory.

Light, as the opening of the outsidal is a step out into otherness, a line of fugue from manic nuclearity. In this sense one could say that there is an “opening” sense in luminescence. However, from the last paragraph it stems that there is also a returning sense of luminescence: “the piercing/leaning-forwards eyes and the returning eyes”, the eyes/light like the knife that cuts and the eyes/light as the blood that returns. 

The eyes that return are constituted by full light, highly periodic and dense, while the eyes that open are constituted by a light that behaves in two different ways. On the hand, it is constituted by concave and environmental properties; it is a light that serves as a recipient and a sense of environment. On the other hand, it is also a light that opens a new realm, in this sense it is the vertex of the direc-

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18 Interestingly and coming back to “Phosphoresce” and its chemical rooting in the element Phosphoros, it is known that “Phosphoros” emits a glow when exposed to Oxygen. The etymology of “Oxygen”, derives from the ancient Greek “ὀξύς” (meaning: sharp, acid) and also from the PIE root “ak” meaning “(sharp, rise (out) to a point, pierce”(Online dictionary of Etimology). If we divide the event of phosphorescence in insidal and outsidal phases, we could say that phosphoros-before-glow constitutes the insidal part, whereas oxygen-for-phosphoros constitutes the outsidal part. In previous paragraphs we touched upon the duality of luminescence at a nuclear scale, and we configured the ideas of “the light that opens” and “the light that returns”. The Oxys dimension of Phosphorescence is intrinsically connected to the light that opens in its “piercing” modality, which in turn connects to the light that returns and renders the rhombus-plasm phosphorescent.
tional-creaturely, therefore it is also sharp and piercing.

Now, when the eyes that return hit the nuclear hard surface in turn, their density, which was supposed to disperse, passes again through the early threshold of the opening light. However in this sort of rewinding of its trajectory, light, or outsidal force, does not annihilate the data collected on its way out, but it undergoes a sort of encryption process that flattens it. The encryption takes place when the outsidal force of a creaturely stream, now in the key of luminescence, returns to the nuclear plasm in turn. As we saw in a previous section of this essay, the pivotal encrypts the return into the plasm as an entry/non-entry. The flattening is produced when the creaturely hits the hard transparency of the plasm in turn; when it hits the point of pivot theorized in previous sections of this essay. Dense and highly periodic luminescence both stays and returns. After its contact with the plasm the dispersing light undergoes mutation, preserving its collection however; it is bent and re-emitted in the turn. Outsidal force, or light in our case, unlike the full assemblage of the creaturely stream, does affect the nuclear plasm in turn. The impenetrability of the latter does not prevent the returning light from reaching it in its wholeness. The hardness of the surface of the nuclear plasm in turn does not constitute an obstacle for the apprehension of the returning luminescence. Returning luminescence illuminates the plasm in turn, whilst the dispersing-creaturely still collected, configures the locus of the bounce of the re-emission: the point of pivot, as it cannot access the plasm anymore. The dispersing creaturely collected in its fully turbid plasm becomes in this sense the horizon of phosphorescence; the horizon of the light re-emitted. It is also the horizon of an outsidal force re-emitted.

The light that returns is constituted by the density of data collected by the outsidal force in its directional trajectory through the trans-nuclear field. When luminescence is outside of the plasm, in the form of opening light, the plasm remains dark, and it is usually thought of as non-existent. When luminescence is suctioned back by the nuclear plasm, in a total scattering event, the plasm remains dark because the outsidal luminescence is dissolved totally. However, when
the luminescence is returning by the action of directional scattering, and turning to the nuclear plasm, it finds it in turn, a new figure is produced. In this case the plasm stays luminous, as it cannot suck out luminescence because its hardness allows no points of entry. Luminescence is apprehended by the plasm as a whole, it engulfs the plasm instead of disintegrating in it. The data of the outsideral luminescence that returns is flattened by the plasm-in-turn, while only the force of the outsideral in the key of luminescence is bounced again, stripped of any formal memory, stripped of whatever assemblage it was dragging from the previous creaturely cohesion. This nude re-emitted light is phosphorescence.

It is relevant to note here that the luminescence of the plasm after the nuclear turn cannot vanish or fade away. Phosphorescence rarely decays. In order to understand this better, the decay of luminescence could be paired with the transience of the creaturely stream. Once this transience is absolutized in the turn, luminescence becomes, in a certain sense, as well absolutized. It becomes the melancholic fixed image of what is immortally dying but cannot achieve death. Phosphorescence is the bent light that cannot return to its original dispersal trajectory. It is fixed in an ongoing sustain and in a continuous affiliation with the emerging new-creatural. Phosphorescence is the absolute transient, which carries onwards a pure-periodic sustain of luminescence and an absence of decay. As decay itself became uprooted and disconnected from its point of origination, it cannot be retrieved anymore. An orphan light guides the way of phosphorescence.

19 Interestingly, coming back to the “Cyclops” and in relation to the idea of “orphanhood” and its connection with light and vision:

Among the most interesting Phoenician inscriptions to become known in recent years is the so called amulet incantation discovered in Arslan Tash (Upper Syria). From its script the tablet is assigned to the seventh century B.C. [...] It shows a huge demon with a rounded head which appears to be that of a snake. In the centre of his forehead there is one large, round eye. The demon has no neck, and his bare feet are shaped like scorpions; he is depicted in the
cence; an additive synthesis of orphan eyes for every nuclear turn.

Dying is multilateral, but death is sideless. Accordingly, phosphorescence is also a prohibition, a closed intimacy, a secret forbidden garden, and a shore that can never be reached. The pivotal return of a creaturely stream onto its nuclear plasm is a multilateral trance, happening in many places while passing through the threshold of non-place. The sacrifice of the numeral eye (a way of calling the returning light as it is characterised mainly by information and number) in the hard waters of brute nuclearity, and its subsequent transmutation, perform also the flattening whereby the directional openness of conductivity is reduced to a state in which it cannot be distinguished from what it is conducting or what it is able to conduct. Phosphorescence is carried as well by this flattening.

Now, one of the most striking properties of phosphorescence is perhaps its connection with residuality, and here we return once again to one of the fundamental themes of this essay. Phosphorescence constitutes a residual light in a way; it is a residual light that can never consume itself or be consumed totally. As we said previously, the luminescence of phosphorescence in its absence of decay can be compared with the absolute transience of the creaturely-in-turn.

The spirit of scavenger-sis as action, as movement within the mobile assemblage of nature, is the same action as that of wounding. In its taking place it partially liberates the cohesion of a certain binding, it generates the exit of that particular cohesion at the same time it produces a trajectory or path when it emancipates a certain portion

process of swallowing a human being head first. [...] Throughout the inscription, the demonic cannibal is described as follows:
Rb'n : “Big-eye”
Gl’n: “Round-eye”
N'b'dd: “Lone-eye”, “Only-eye”

( Poljakov, 1983, 96)
of plasm from its accental assemblage, however it does not disperse totally or does not seek to disperse totally. Here every wound develops a pathway of diverted trajectory. *Suction* allocates itself within this figure. The action of the *scavenger* allocates itself within this figure: namely, the derivation and reversion of a transience. Every spontaneous phosphorescent becoming of a creaturely stream, every spontaneous phosphorescent creaturely-stream-in-turn, embodies the figure of *scavenger-sis* for *itself*.

*Phosphorescence* is the outcome of *suction* and *scavenger-sis* with the absence of outsidal suctor or scavenger. It is nuclear self-usurpation. Here the vacancy or permanent clearing that dwelled in the nuclear plasm is usurped by the bending, by the turn, by the mutation. And it is the bending what fills the clearing and what constitutes the openness to difference. The degrees of its angles are its hinges.

*A Light is sealed by death every time it returns with the fixed melancholy of all things transient. A Light is doubly sealed by death every time it returns with the more extreme melancholy of all things immortal. The rhombus-dance of the nuclear turn witnesses the creaturely diagonally hitting the horizontality of a death and being constantly bounced, delineating by the course of this action, a continuous rhombus.*

*A first creature was born of the sea, an entire population of transmutations of the same creature was born of a dead sea; of hard, highly dense, phosphorescent, and impossible waters.*

Phosphorescence is an eternal category of nuclear transmutation. Its radiance is permanent and irretrievably orphan.
References

DISINTERNMENT LOOPS

Ben Woodard
/0/ - Bugs in the Sands of Time

An initially intoxicated reaction suspends doubt and, in this certainty, created in sum by foolishness, man has the impression of being at home on the earth. Knowledge, in principle even, is nothing less than the questioning of knowledge itself. If I deepen the pathways of knowledge, I am similar to the ant, conscious of the impending threat that something might overturn the anthill, and of the final truth of this threat. Language sets up an order; it creates the foundation of what is in this order, but it is nothing that exists in the last place: everything is in suspense, over the abyss, the ground itself is the illusion of an assurance; if I know, I have vertigo in the middle of a field; even in bed, I sense the disappearance of the world and the universe.

Bataille

Picture in your mind’s eye a sandbox divided in half with black sand on one side and white sand on the other. We take a child and have him run hundreds of times clockwise in the box until the sand gets mixed and begins to turn grey; after that we have him run anti-clockwise, but the result will not be the restoration of the original division but a greater degree of greyness and an increase of entropy. Of course if we filmed such an experiment we could prove the reversibility of eternity by showing the film backwards, but then sooner or later the film itself would crumble or get lost and enter the state of irreversibility. Somehow this suggests that the cinema offers an allusive or temporary escape from physical dissolution. The false immortality of the film gives the viewer an illusion of control over eternity – but the superstars are fading.

Robert Smithson

Does knowledge, as a system of thought and as a form of representation, absorb the simultaneous necessity (and instability) of materiality in a parallel fashion? More specifically, is systematized knowledge necessarily ‘further from’ materiality than representation even

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if the latter is potentially ‘without’ a thinker while the former cannot be? Or, put more simply, is systematicity or self-reflection more alien to matter? Georges Bataille and Robert Smithson, in their respective epigraphs above, deploy knowledge and materiality in order to prove their structural weakness, they deploy their respective terms in ablative, or outright suicidal, means.

For Bataille, knowledge and language are, at their core, poorly made self-reflective jokes but ones that always hover just above the abyss, above the groundlessness of existence. Knowing comes to know its own fragility the more it knows, yet one cannot forego knowing as such, unless, as Eugene Thacker points out in *Starry Speculative Corpse*, one takes Bataille to be advocating a mystical form of knowing or, more accurately, non-knowing. Yet Bataille continues to invoke language to express its failure by indexing the void. Language is articulated as a hollow, but self-aware, laugh hanging from a spectral gallows rope over death’s yawning maw. Despite Bataille’s consistent rallying against knowing as such, he seems unable to relinquish a minimum form of the subject as irreducible structure, as a minimally communicable system. While he arguably runs language into the ground of a base materialism to demonstrate its inadequacies, he holds onto a degree of charm surrounding poetic expression and the point, however small, from which it is exuded.

For Smithson on the other hand, massive earthworks are constructed to exhibit the asymmetrical destructive force of time. Smithson’s Spiral Jetty is of course the most famous of these earthworks: A massive construction that was designed to function like a kind of geological clock – a slowing but also demonstration of, the asymmetrical forces of time on matter (or of time spacing matter out into dissolution). J.G. Ballard’s hypermodernist fiction embraces a kind of cosmological fatalism operating in a similar space to both Bataille and Smithson. Ballard’s work was yet another means for him to endorse the necessity for epistemological constraints and not dismiss them too quickly. It would be difficult in Smithson’s world to at least recognize that the forces of time could at least be artistically registered if not combated.
Yet Smithson also leans towards something like a geopoetics defined minimally as artistic practice that emphasizes the centrality of the earth. Smithson writes:

Words and rocks contain a syntax of splits and ruptures’ [...] The strata of the Earth is a jumbled museum. Embedded in the sediment is a text that contains limits and boundaries which evade the rational order, and social structures which confine art. In order to read the rocks we must become conscious of geologic time, and of the layers of prehistoric material that is entombed in the Earth’s crust. (1968, 44)

It is the fiction of J.G. Ballard which provides a stage for synthesis of Bataille’s horror of human meaninglessness as expression and Smithson’s attunement to geological events. All three authors braid horror, geological time, and minor entropic resistance into text.

/1/ - Depth Perception (Ballard)

The mapping of spinal-levels onto neuronic time is supple, episodic, and diagonalizing

Nick Land

The system of megaliths now provided a complete substitute for those functions of his mind which gave to it its sense of the sustained rational order of time and space. Without them, his awareness of reality shrank to little more than the few square inches of sand beneath his feet.

Ballard

A large number of Ballard’s stories involve a cosmological invasion of

the terrestrial, or more specifically the biological, in a way that transforms the fundamental reality of every character involved. In a way somewhat reminiscent of H.P. Lovecraft, Ballard’s characters at times exist only to get redesigned and obliterated by outside forces. However, it is important to point out that while for Lovecraft learning of these processes, or having archived knowledge tied to the coming cataclysm, cannot save the characters. In Ballard, however, while death and destruction are inevitable, there seems to be at least some cognitive traction, some intellectual gain acquired from knowing, however impartially, the approaching catastrophe.

It is important to emphasize, however, that the valorization of outside forces as such matters little separated from the kinds of effects they initiate in interiors and ‘smaller’ exteriors, as well as within translation protocols between these borders.

Across Ballard’s stories cosmological processes alter, or in some senses constitute, the biological and mental structures of animals and humans. The degradation of time warps perception and rewrites genetic code or, as in The Drowned World, becomes a foundational trauma biologically constituted but mostly psychologically registered. While there is something fatalistic, or at least unavoidable about all these catastrophes, Ballard appears to almost romantically (in a naive or pejorative sense of the word) embrace the transformative effects of these forces. Ballard’s fictions can be seen to represent at least two geophilosophical valences: the first being the invasion of the biological system by the deep time of evolution and geology (geotraumatics), while the second valence is that which more affects Ballard: that of the inorganic, at the vastest scale, as it reforms perception by way of the biological (geocatastrophism). A strict division would be difficult yet the emphasis and scope appear differently, and appear to have different aesthetic paths. One difference would be that the former has no terminus except when the point of investigation is absorbed and translated into the present psychic structure while for the latter, the catastrophe obliterates the investigator and the point of observation. In terms of scale we could also note possible inversions of the tendencies – biopoetics for the first and geopoetics for the sec-
To address the first valence (geotraumatics), one can take notice of the more Freudian tone of *The Drowned World*. In the novel the flooded world soon takes on qualities from the pre-Cambrian past and the novel’s characters wonder if there is something like geological memory at work in all biological systems.

The brief span of an individual life is misleading. Each one of us is as old as the entire biological kingdom, and our bloodstreams are tributaries of the great sea of its total memory. The uterine odyssey of the growing foetus recapitulates the entire evolutionary past, and its central nervous system is a coded time scale, each nexus of neurones and each spinal level marking a symbolic station, a unit of neuronic time. (Ballard, 1962, 44)

And also famously:

That wasn’t a true dream, but an ancient organic memory millions of years old. The innate releasing mechanisms laid down in your cytoplasm have been awakened. The expanding sun and rising temperatures are driving you back down to the spinal levels into the drowned seas of the lowest layers of your unconscious, into the entirely new zone of the neuronic psyche. This is the lumbar transfer, total psychic recall. We really remember these swamps and lagoons. (Ballard, 1962, 28)

As Robin Mackay points out via the half-crack pot psychoanalysis of Sandor Ferenczi, this parallelism between the formation of human civilization and the development of the mind was met with one between species development and geological development in the work of Carl Frederich Kielmeyer. Kielmeyer, who was a Schellingian natu-

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5 In addition Ferenczi suggested that deeply rooted traumas unknown to their bearer would appear to give them clairvoyant like abilities seeing future times with the aid of deeply seated geological or biological situated traces of urtrauma. See Carlo Bonomi, *The Cut and the Building of Psychoanalysis*, Volume 1, (Routledge, 2015), 92. Thanks to the reviewers of Cyclops Journal for bringing this to my attention.
ralist, attempted to conceptually widen the well-known and discredited concept of recapitulation (that ontogeny repeats phylogeny, or, that the development of the individual shadows the development of the species evident in the stages of the embryo). The rise and fall of civilizations, and the psychic periods of an individual’s development are traced and leave traces on the biological understanding of the individual creature as an expression of its species.

Reza Negarestani’s three essays “Triebkrieg,” “Drafting the Inhuman,” and “On the Revolutionary Earth,” all take psychoanalytic invocations of the geological in relation to trauma and expand them outwards to a universalist scale. Following some research patterns of the early CCRU, and its Ballardian/Lovecraftian concept mash-up, Negarestani writes in the last of the three essays:

> there is no psychic trauma without an organic trauma and no organic trauma without a terrestrial trauma that in turn is deepened into open cosmic vistas. Here, trauma should be understood not as what is experienced but as a form of cut made by the real or the absolute in its own unified order; a cut that brings about the possibility of a localized horizon and a singular but interconnected ‘point of view’

This indexes the above claim about the punctuated termini of geo-trauma as opposed to geocatastrophy.

If trauma is, in its most simple articulation, the registering of the non-organic on the organic, of the encroachment of the outside on the inside, then the speculative exercise of tracing traumas, of searching for the ur-trauma, of always scratching one’s way to the ever-older scar tissue, is the endless work of mental recapitulation. Yet, any instance of such trauma, offers itself as a fleshy thread that one can

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follow through the maze of biological time.

Another form or valence of the geophilosophical is the more geological and physical alignment of thought found in “The Voices of Time” (which would seem to be Ballard’s most Smithsonian story or where Smithson is most Ballardian). We can say, to point back to the Smithson quotation above, to become “conscious of geologic time” might mean to make consciousness geological, or, to make consciousness aware of deep time might mean to decompile it into an endless infinity or into something so bizarre it seems only expressible in Ballard’s pulp modernism (to borrow a phrase from Mark Fisher whom we will engage below).

In “The Voices of Time” several physical scientists in a half-abandoned research station come to realize that the stars are counting down, and that life on earth has began to radically change in relation to incoming radiation from somewhere out in the blackness of space. Much of the story involves the neurosurgeon Powers charting the downfall of the biologist Whitby. Whitby had discovered ‘silent genes’ in several creatures, including humans, which could be activated with x-rays. Powers eventually experiments on himself while also building a massive mandala in the desert, following Whitby’s construction of a smaller structure in the bottom of his empty swimming pool, to mark the entropic winding down of all the universe’s organized matter. Towards the end of the story:

He parked the car beside the mandala and walked slowly toward the outer concrete rim curving away into the shadows. Above him he could hear the stars, a million cosmic voices that crowded the sky from one horizon to the next, a true canopy of time. Like jostling radio beacons, their long aisles interlocking at countless angles, they plunged into the sky from the narrowest recesses of space. He saw the dim red disk of Sirius, heard its ancient voice, untold millions of years old, dwarfed by the huge spiral nebulae in Andromeda, a gigantic carousel of vanished universes, their voices almost as old as the cosmos itself. To Powers the sky seemed an endless babel, the time-song of a thousand galaxies overlaying each other in his mind. As he moved slowly toward the center of the mandala he craned up at the glittering traverse of the Milky Way, searching the
confusion of clamoring nebulae and constellations.

Stepping into the inner circle of the mandala, a few yards from the platform at its center, he realized that the tumult was beginning to fade, and that a single stronger voice had emerged and was dominating the others. He climbed onto the platform and raised his eyes to the darkened sky, moving through the constellations to the island galaxies beyond them, hearing the thin archaic voices reaching to him across the millennia. In his pockets he felt the paper tapes, and turned to find the distant diadem of Canes Venatici, heard its great voice mounting in his mind.

Like an endless river, so broad that its banks were below the horizons, it flowed steadily toward him, a vast course of time that spread outward to fill the sky and the universe, enveloping everything within them. Moving slowly, the forward direction of its majestic current was imperceptible, and Powers knew that its source was the source of the cosmos itself. As it passed him, he felt its massive magnetic pull, let himself be drawn into it, borne gently on its powerful back. Quietly it carried him away, and he rotated slowly, facing the direction of the tide. Around him the outlines of the hills and the lake had faded, but the image of the mandala, like a cosmic clock, remained fixed before his eyes, illuminating the broad surface of the stream. Watching it constantly, he felt his body gradually dissolving, its physical dimensions melting into the vast continuum of the current, which bore him out into the center of the great channel, sweeping him onward, beyond hope now but at last at rest, down the broadening reaches of the river of eternity. (Ballard, 1978, 96-98)

Here Powers is cracked open and invaded by the outside but not as a sheer force of energy in the Baitaillian form, nor in a way where the unknowablity of the outside is maddening as is the general punchline in Lovecraft. The winding down of the cosmos is translated into biologically detectable means (the songs, and the rivers) while this signals, at the same time, the translation of the human body into an antennae to pick up the signals of inorganic death.

There may be a temptation to more tightly stitch Ballard to Bergson, or Bataille, but this would be to claim that a Leibnizian god-like computer could fight against the whimpering biology of a doomed cosmos. Nowhere does this temptation emerge more clearly than in
Ballard’s *The Crystal World* where it would seem to invite so many incursions from Bergson and Deleuze, of memory-images as encoding existence in a way that moves beyond the limits of perception. No monadic pan-psychist computer however beautiful in its immanent and rhizomatic elegance will stand the hammering pulse of time. The crystal image is merely the last spectacle after the life has all been drawn out. For Deleuze mind survives the reformatting of the body’s hardware, not so for Ballard.

But, to return to the “The Voices of Time,” while the objects of the narrative are well-edged and clearly deployed, the psychological effect of the ever-unwinding chaos tampers endlessly with the measuring device (the mind). Figures such as Bataille and Burroughs can serve as a hinge, where melting fields of perception index surrealistic aesthetic modes. Ballard’s *Atrocity Exhibition* is likely the finest specimen of this as a combination of sex, death, and a mesh of inside/outside enters a chasm, inhabited by Burroughs, Dali, Caillois, Baudelaire and, as we move onto next, Bataille.

/2/ - *Birthing Canals* (Bataille)

Where to place one’s finger (or big toe) regarding Bataille’s hold-out on the formal structure, however minimal, that is the absurdity of human being? Rather than conceding to the random genesis of the human from the Earth and its biological excrescences, he seems to fixate on the idea of coming to exist, for us, as an insurmountable fact. In describing his experience at the caves at Lascaux, Bataille discusses the early forms of the human as already-always deformed in their attempt to express themselves, or externalize themselves, in the form of an image on a wall. It was almost certainly not lost on Bataille how these cave paintings, some of them being tracings of shadow on a wall, are improperly mimicked by the nuclear shadows of Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s victims.

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Bataille opens his lecture (given in 1955) referring to ongoing nuclear tests and the possibility of total global extinction. In his *The Cradle of Civilization* Bataille discusses the cave painting of Lascaux and at one point muses seemingly off topic: 'The latest atomic experiments made tangible the notion of radiation invading the atmosphere & creating conditions in which life in general could no longer thrive.' (2005, 86)

The inorganic-organic loop was also made palpable by the advent of carbon dating in the 1940s, in which the atmospheric becoming organic becoming inorganic allows one to trace the stages of life geological and biological. Inorganic atomic rot allows for the sub-category of life to be temporally placed in the grand measures of time. In addition, those nuclear tests which clearly worried Bataille, made it possible, for every work of art produced after them, to be dated by similar means. The nuclear tests of the 1950s opened a subordinate regime of time, where the question of art’s genesis becomes rigid after the splitting of the atom.

Does the augmentative power of *homofaber* create a different kind of vertigo than the one that Bataille claimed he shared with the ant (to point back to our introduction)? A different kind of insignificance, a different regime of potential trauma (that of planetary extinction as self-caused) emerges. One becomes like an ant holding a human boot above its own head (the shoe of Damocles). Yet still the long-past time of the Earth, its coiled aged traumas, provide a different challenge. If the nuclear threatens to close the future loop of life (but opens the dangers of radiation even further) then the deep time of the past consistently threatens to evade its speculative hunter, crawling down the spine of genetic memory and ancient ruin.

Bataille seems interested in the savage being as both older earth or nature (in Merleau-Ponty’s sense) and ‘uncivilized’ being (in De Castro and Levi-Strauss’ sense). In regards to the former, Dylan Trigg has nicely outlined how Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the earth moves from a phenomenological dead stage to one that can be psychoanalyzed in the way suggested by Ferenczi and Negarestani and
Mackay above. In regards to the latter, De Castro, following Levi-Strauss, points out how the very idea of thinking the savage cannot be done from the Western ‘side’ of thought nor from the ‘savage’ side of thought in the mirror of the west. What one’s thought is is opaque enough to the bearers of it, let alone to any group which would claim that group as an object of inquiry from their limited perspective.

There is one absurd synthesis of these themes which appears in an artifact of cultural junk.

In the film *Alien vs Predator*, two film franchises are combined via a particularly ridiculous invocation of the ancient astronaut theories. The supposedly sacrificial cultures of Asia and Central and South America are reformatted so as to be obedient to the hunting desires of the predator species, as selected and honored human bodies serve as hatching fodder for the xenomorphs of the alien franchise. The savage being of both Merleau-Ponty and Bataille is thus as alien as the aliens themselves – the artificiality of the hunt, of the invading alien culture, indirectly forms the basis for human civilization (an act of total colonialization by way of advanced technology). Yet this entire act centers on the sheer meat-use of human beings to spawn aliens, aliens who are kept in stasis in a temple. These aliens, as it is revealed in other films, are the result of other godlike aliens’ bioweapons experiments which in turn result from humans’ foolishly seeking their makers in ancient art found in caves across the planet Earth. The arctic setting of *Alien vs Predator*’s beginning, and the use of an abandoned whaling station, indirectly references Lovecraft’s “At the Moments of Madness.” Lovecraft in turn was the inspiration for H.R. Giger who in turn created the design of the Xenomorph creatures. Both Lovecraft and Giger utilize the insectoid, either in terms of the failure of description in the case of Lovecraft, or in the sheen of charcoal and graphite for Giger, to blend the inorganic into the organic.

Cultural and formless matter work together as a tandem camouflage, which in turn labyrinths in the geological and the biological,

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stretching forwards and backwards. Lovecraft’s pulpiness seems to unintentionally evolve into modernism (while Ballard’s modernism retraces the roots of its pulpiness).

To quote at length from Lovecraft’s “At the Mountains of Madness:”

I think that both of us simultaneously cried out in mixed awe, wonder, terror, and disbelief in our own senses as we finally cleared the pass and saw what lay beyond. Of course we must have had some natural theory in the back of our heads to steady our faculties for the moment. Probably we thought of such things as the grotesquely weathered stones of the Garden of the Gods in Colorado, or the fantastically symmetrical wind-carved rocks of the Arizona desert. Perhaps we even half thought the sight a mirage like that we had seen the morning before on first approaching those mountains of madness. We must have had some such normal notions to fall back upon as our eyes swept that limitless, tempest-scarred plateau and grasped the almost endless labyrinth of colossal, regular, and geometrically eurhythmic stone masses which reared their crumbled and pitted crests above a glacial sheet not more than forty or fifty feet deep at its thickest, and in places obviously thinner.

The effect of the monstrous sight was indescribable, for some fiendish violation of known natural law seemed certain at the outset. Here, on a hellishly ancient table-land fully 20,000 feet high, and in a climate deadly to habitation since a pre-human age not less than 500,000 years ago, there stretched nearly to the vision’s limit a tangle of orderly stone which only the desperation of mental self-defence could possibly attribute to any but a conscious and artificial cause. We had previously dismissed, so far as serious thought was concerned, any theory that the cubes and ramparts of the mountainsides were other than natural in origin. How could they be otherwise, when man himself could scarcely have been differentiated from the great apes at the time when this region succumbed to the present unbroken reign of glacial death?10

This is not to endorse a form of creationism, but to invoke the strange

horror of a series of competing creationisms depicted in reverse (but most of the gods are dead). Just as the bleeding edge of the inorganic tapers imperfectly into the organic, the supernatural and the super-normal start to dizzyingly merge: non-life’s border with life is reflected in monstrous’ life supernatural like manipulations of the world. Again this brings us back to insectoid insignificance, where ignorance and lack of knowledge enchants the supernormal into the supernatural, where the exceedingly complex becomes the unknowable.\footnote{I have written at length on the relation between insect imagery, materiality, and psychoanalysis in “Lacan ‘Stuffed’ with Insects: or Posthuman-Insectoid-Cyberfeminists-Materiality” forthcoming.} But Lovecraft himself played with the diagonality of the aforementioned geopoetic: the trope of forbidden knowledge corrupted the hard-line of the unknowable with the occult and banished certain types of knowing – therefore the division of the geotraumatic and the geocatastrophic is translated at the level of text – the unknowable becomes polluted with the forgotten (the damaging knowledge that tried to delete itself from the neuronal record).

Going back to the Ballard quote above from “The Voices of Time” we can see the mobius strip of warm pulpiness and cold modernity. But where Powers’ mind is ‘opened up’ to the cosmos, the mind of Danforth is obliterated.\footnote{Here I am following the lead of Amy Ireland in “Black Circuit”, in E-Flux [Online] Available at: http://www.e-flux.com/journal/80/100016/black-circuit-code-for-the-numbers-to-come/. [Accessed: June 5, 2017].} The poetic alternatives mentioned at the opening of this essay can function as either cybernetic inference and/or as aesthetic safety valves. In a similar fashion Smithson seems to throw a kind of inorganic sharpness against political swampliness. As Etienne Turpin has it, Smithson relates to Bataille in that both force the inorganic into the realm of the political, whether in terms of the context of the anthropocene or the stupidity of base matter respectively.\footnote{Etienne Turpin, “Robert Smithson’s Abstract Geology,” [Online] Available at http://www.geologicnow.com/27_Turpin.php. [Accessed: May 10, 2017]
The universalizing impulse (either spatially in impossible geometries, or temporally in deep time) can be brought back, in an extreme localizing fashion (and to telescope transmodernally out again). There are moments, in the world and works of Clarice Lispector, where she seems to out-Bataille Bataille. Lispector depersonalizes life from the inside of consciousness, from the absurdity of being alive reduced to being a part, or a piece, of the absurdity of the living. Thus, in a very different manner, Lispector addresses the gap between the inorganic and the organic as well as the Ballardian concern with what happens to consciousness when it is properly tuned to the murmurings of the baseness of life.

Lispector is an interesting case in that she seems to be searching for Bataille’s primal, formless matter, the bit of life that pre-exists the pre-existing, a part of that nature that is all encompassing—the early sex of molecules in *The Stream of Life* or the prehistory of prehistory in *The Hour of the Star*. Nature coils around her melancholic narrator, life is a “punch in the stomach” and yet there are tiny pleasures “for now” or re-enchantments...by why? At others times writing is just a way of killing time before death.

*The Passion according to GH* is about the tininess of material pleasure—the avalanche of affect from one tiny material twist, one morsel of pleasure. ‘A form shapes the chaos’ [...] ‘the vision of an infinite piece of meat is the vision of the mad, but if I cut that meat into pieces’ (Lispector, 2016, 6) and then ‘My life was as continuous as death. Life is so continuous that we divide it into stages, and we call one of them death.’¹⁴ (Lispector, 2016, 60)

Humans, or at least human brains, become a peculiar type of affect-multiplier in their solitude. ‘The hard glory of being alive is the horror’ but perhaps the lack of meaning functions as the negative way of sensing the meaning. Being alive is a coarse radiating indifference—lost in the ‘vibrant inexpressiveness of nature’ Lispector continues: ‘My destiny is to search and my destiny it to return empty-handed.

But I return within the unsayable [...] And it is no use to try and take a shortcut and want to start, already knowing that the voice says little, starting straightaway with being depersonal. For the journey exists, and the journey is not simply a matter of going [...] I would never reach my root, but my root existed [...] Through not being, I was. To the ends of whatever I was not, I was. Whatever I am not, I am. All shall be within me, if I shall not be; for ‘I’ is just one of the instantaneous spasms of the world [...] But now, I was much less than human – and I would only fulfill my specifically human destiny if I handed myself over, as I was handing myself over, to whatever was no longer I, to whatever is already inhuman.¹⁵

Lispector’s work here could be suggested as a bio-poetics in symmetrical relation to geopoetics. She encounters the formal limit of the laughing idiot Bataillean subject through the minimal gap in attempting to grasp oneself. And, as her work wonderfully shows, if the fossil is the geopoetic object then the insect is the bio-poetic one.

Such a maneuver from life to its insignificance is inverted again in Saul Bass’ incredible film *Phase IV.*

/3/ - Segmented Entropy (*Phase IV*)

Ballard can lead us back to both Bataille and Smithson into the film *Phase IV.* The film is a sci-fi horror film (though in a slower, more psychedelic sense) directed by the designer Saul Bass in 1974. What is carefully described in great detail in a Ballardian story happens without explanation in Phase IV. Ants gain an incredibly high level of intelligence and begin to threaten humanity almost, or perhaps actually, wiping them off the face of the Earth.

Two scientists are dispatched, ensconced in a protective dome, and begin to contact the ants by exchanging geometrical and sonic patterns with them. The scientists also interact with a local farm family and eventually take in their daughter after the ants attack. The film

¹⁵Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star.* These quotes are pulled from throughout the text and it seems wrong to parse them.
takes on a further Ballardian quality when she becomes the human queen of the ants and, in the famous cut end sequence, a sand-blurred dance demonstrates some vague insectoid potentialization of her being. The films narrative plot points are stringed together with a kind of pheromone madness, as the ants begin to force their will on the few surviving humans.

Andrew Frost has already discussed the relation of *Phase IV* to Ballard’s work. As Frost points out, it is only after the humans destroy the spectacular sand sentinels of the ants that the creatures decide to finally make an end of humanity. Frost notes that Smithson cited both Ballard’s “The Waiting Grounds” as well as “The Voices of Time” in connection to his own plans for earthworks. Frost, as well as Rachel Verlinsky, pay tribute to the works of Tacita Dean who created a film, *JG*, documenting her attempt to find Smithson’s Spiral Jetty peppered with readings of letters between Dean and Ballard.

Dean’s film attempts to capture the asymmetrical disintegrations of Ballard’s comment on film above, and in general. While the motif of killer ants often invokes imaginaries of nuclear mutated monstrosities (*THEM!*), one of the striking aspects of Bass’ film is that he stays in extreme close-up, nature documentary style, in tracking the activity of the ants, constantly reminds us of the fragility of celluloid and the intrusion of the camera into the organic and inorganic world.

We crawl back towards the image of the film reel in our opening quotation, hinted at again above in the odd comfort the documentation tapes in Powers’ pocket or the scribbled language of Bataille’s anti-human human art. The ants of *Phase IV* crawl inside the last machines of the earthlings, sealing the imagistic pact between the insectoid and the robotic, but one that does not rest in the mechanical but swerves back to the automatic function of the biological and the

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strength of the meaningless sign on the mental. Perhaps no text addresses this better than Caillois’ discussion of Hans Bellmer and the praying mantis (also explored by Dali). The insectoid, in the surreal as much as in Burroughs, points to an interzone, the expulsion of the interior – the self is only what is laid bare on the canvass, screen, or page. Just as the collective labor of insects impresses us ‘despite’ its lack of freedom or thought, the idea of deities either Lovecraftian or traditional gives us the ‘freedom’ to serve the greater outside.

But how to separate the traces from the things that left them so long after the fact? Again, keeping an eye on Smithson’s note on entropy, which Ballard certainly entertained, what maps the widening or narrowing of an object in a way that properly condenses time? In his article “Quasi-Infinities and the Waning of Space” (which begins with a quote from Ballard’s The Overloaded Man) Smithson discusses several artists he sees as condensing time against, or in spite of, space.18

This acceleration or deceleration of time in the collapse of spatial form is a peculiar absent from Phase IV, until the bizarre lost-ending, in which humanity itself is completely transformed in a few minutes. Yet the fact that in the film the protagonists are arguably the ants, or the force that has operated on them, involves an extreme condensation of perspective, as so many of the images are from the ant’s point of view, or at least, at their scale. As Adam Mills has pointed out, the various weird geometrical objects are not a form of warfare against the humans but merely their mathematical and artistic attempt to bridge the communication break between species.19

This break in communication over time, already familiar within our species in terms of lost civilizations and the painstaking work of archaeologists is also stretched out in the future sense of deep time.

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In a short piece Ballard wrote on Smithson after his death:

Fifty thousands years from now our descendants will be mystified by the empty swimming pools of an abandoned southern California and Cote d'Azur, lying in the dust like primitive time machines or the altar of some geometry obsessed religion. I see Smithson's monuments belonging in the same category, artefacts intended to serve as machines that will suddenly switch themselves on and begin to generate a more complex time and space. All his structures seem to be analogues of advanced neurological processes that have yet to articulate themselves. Reading Smithson's vivid writings, I feel he sensed all this. As he stands on the Spiral Jetty he resembles Daedalus inspecting the ground plan of the labyrinth, working out the freight capacity of his cargo terminal, to be measured in the units of a neurological deep time. He seems unsure whether the cargo has been delivered. His last flight fits into the myth, though for reasons of his own he chose the wrong runway, meeting the fate intended for his son. But his monuments endure in our minds, the ground plans of heroic psychological edifices that will one day erect themselves and whose shadows we can already see from the corners of our eyes.20

Ballard also makes a practical technological point. If we wished to leave as reliably permanent a message to the future as possible, for both human and alien, stone would still be our best medium of choice. Most of our longest lasting signs will be unintentional communications in concrete or stone, if they are read at all. The plasticity of a medium appears inversely proportional to its longevity. Ink on paper is fluid but paper rots while stone is slow-going but will outlive us all. But it is therefore difficult to discern how, or whether, this applies to concepts, ideas, thoughts, and other residents of the mind. Thinking back again to Smithson's cautious comment about film as an entropy-cheat, one could ask whether any form of the mind can work as well as film, or if they are all even less reliable against the ravages of time.

As a last point we can look again at the geotraumatic and the geocatastrophic and where they meet in the geopoetic at the level of film. In *The Weird and the Eerie* Mark Fisher describes the eerie as a kind of mis-allocated presence - there is either a little too much or not quite enough of something. Because of this particularly creatures or events are not eerie, rather, it is landscapes or places that tend to be eerie - an abandoned warehouse sitting by itself in a field, a pile of stones near a forgotten well, block after block of foreclosed houses.

Fisher describes the novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* in which a group of English school girls in colonial Australia go for a picnic near a massively old geological formulation and a group of them disappear never to be heard from again. Much of the film attempts to display the incongruity between the unremarkable cause of the event (the girls simply walk between two stones) and how the various tools of the school teachers, police, and colonizers fail to measure up against the weirdness of deep time. This is symbolized most directly through images of stopped watches, a math textbook, and torn Victorian garments. The film effectively blurs the line between geocatastrophism, geotrauma, and geopoetics as well as screaming Ballard in its constant cross fades from prehistoric landscapes into the faces of psychically disturbed humans.\(^\text{21}\)

At one point one of the girls stares down at the picnickers (those who declined to climb up the stones) and says that they look like ants, but that they must have some purpose. If we were to have anything like such a thing, some endpoint at the far side of time, it would require a very different notion of time than any one civilization could afford, an affordance that most belligerent civilizations are quick to forget despite its propensity to haunt them at every cycle of time.

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