

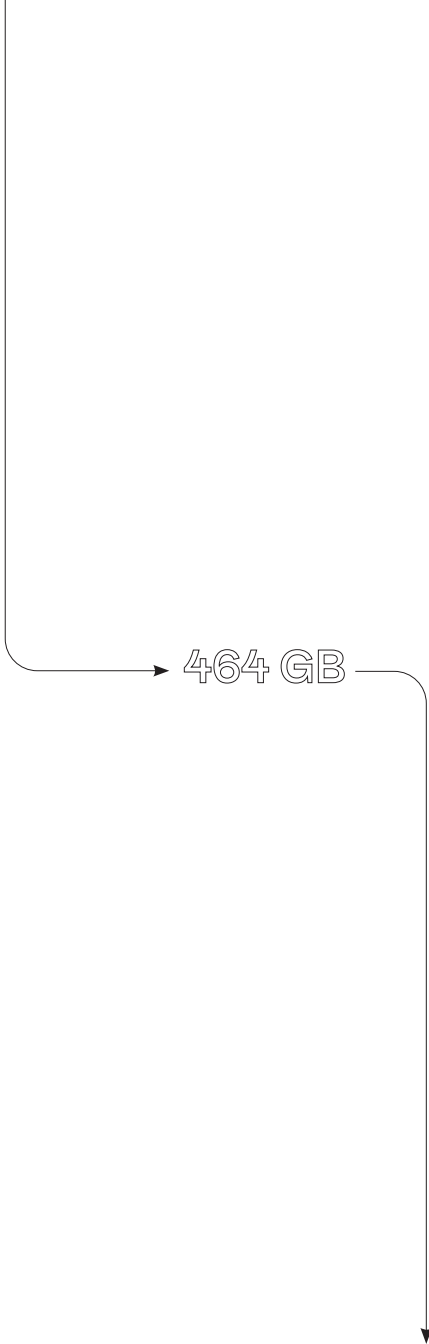
'464GB'

Khazaria Curzon

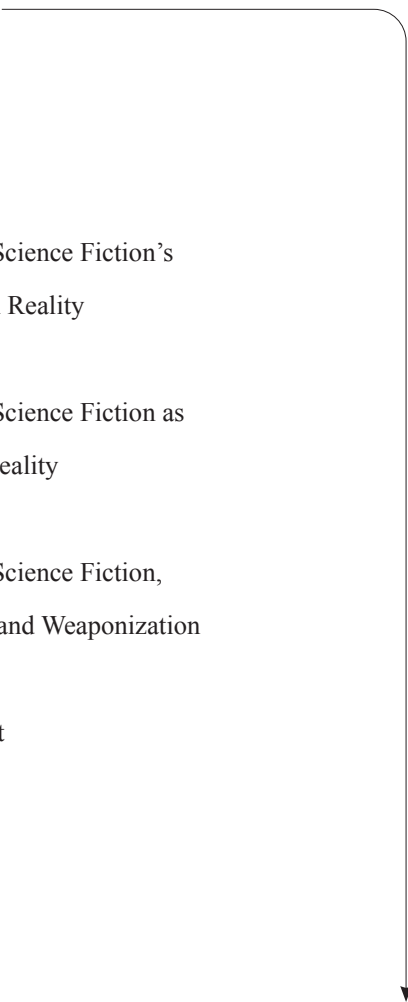
Goldsmiths, University of London

2026

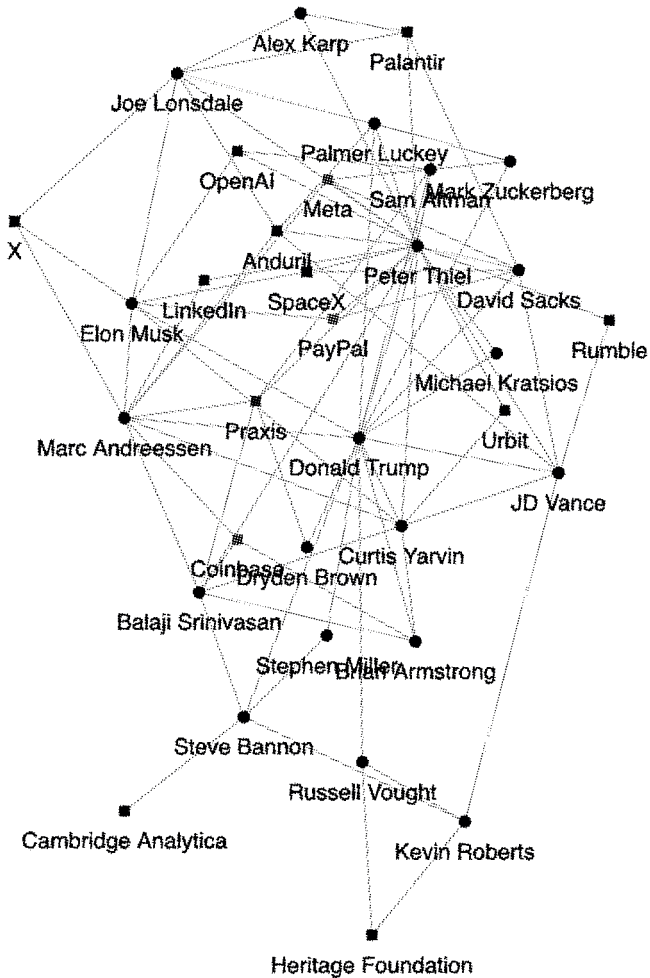
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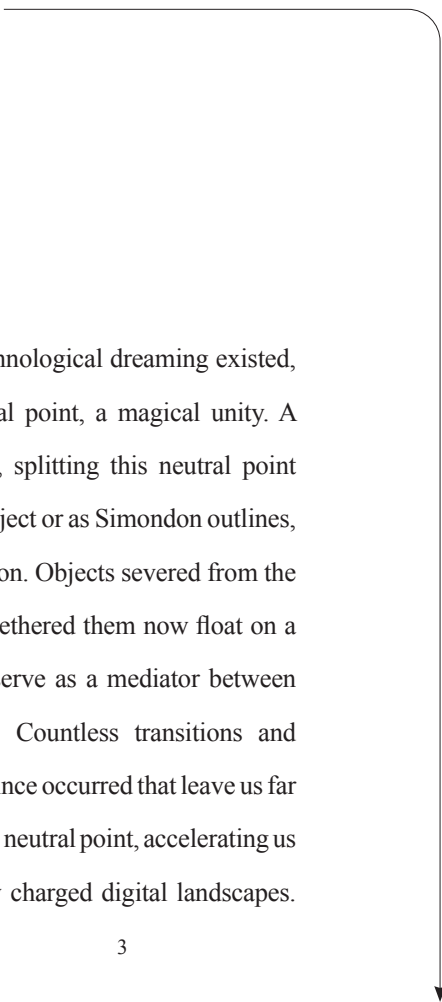
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Prelude



Before human technological dreaming existed, there was a neutral point, a magical unity. A phase shift began, splitting this neutral point into object and subject or as Simondon outlines, technics and religion. Objects severed from the ground that once tethered them now float on a plane above and serve as a mediator between man and milieu.¹ Countless transitions and phase shifts have since occurred that leave us far displaced from this neutral point, accelerating us further into highly charged digital landscapes.

Science fiction seeps in at the cracks around the endless moulding and remoulding of realities, birthed with all the amniotic fluids of violently shifting technologies.

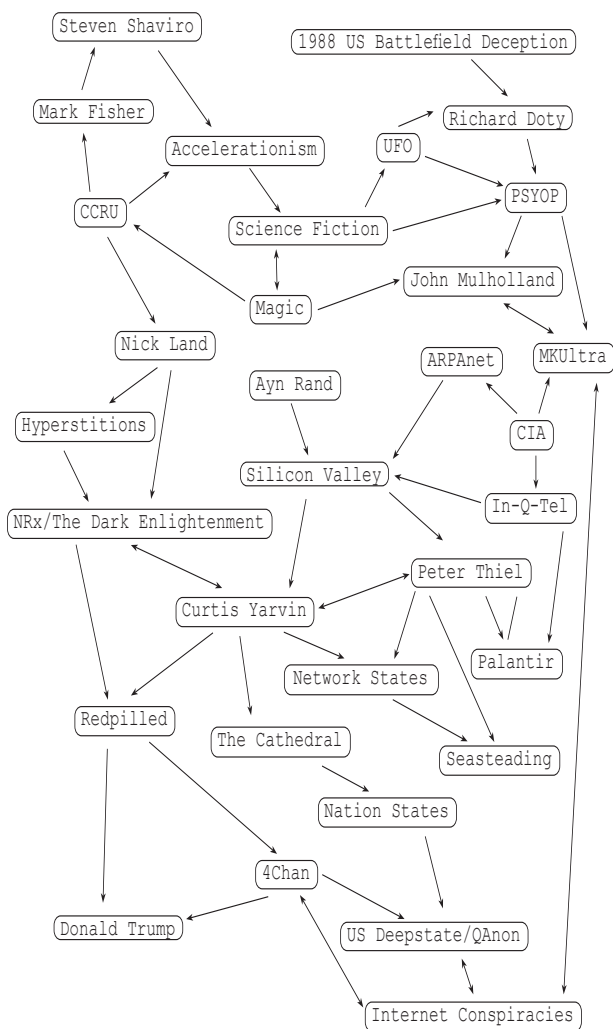
Much of the history of technology has been punctuated by new ideologies of tech-monarchs often inspired by ideas that exist initially in the realms of science fiction. Now many of these testosterone-fuelled technological dreams seep into our every day and warp our perceptions of the real. In her *Cyborg Manifesto* Donna Haraway writes, *“the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion”*.² Are the influences of science fiction narratives instrumental in shaping our digital worlds and realities? We are perhaps now at an impasse in our long charted ‘progression’ of cultural, political and social landscapes. Desires to imagine alternatives may have plunged us into the potentially dangerous waters of science fiction imaginings, accelerated at unimaginable

speeds by our networks of communication, fostering the rising tide of conspiratorial modes of thinking and a collapse of a unifying truth. Perhaps we all have a subconscious yearning to be immersed in false fictions presented to us via digital platforms.

We are passively engaged in large scale psychological operations, played out on the stages of digital networks in which new social orders and ideologies are experimented with and that we consume in the abstract shapes of millions of terabytes per day. Are we susceptible to believing in science fictions and alternative realities and are they weaponised by tech-moguls in removing us all from the real? Are science fictions used to structure false worlds that become realities existing in digital spaces, mining our hopes and dreams through our algorithmic profiles? Is much of the science fiction literature of the late 20th century hyperstitional, installing narratives in a fusion of technology and fiction, into realities?

These are important questions to consider when imagining ways in which to design through the confusion specifically for generations of younger audiences, an extensive and undefinable demographic who are influenced by influencers and socialised within digital echo chambers which contort the foundations of truth, evoking dissociative and apathetic mindsets. The paradox of engaging with a corroding truth and imagining a concrete reality is challenging for younger individuals whose existence has been characterised by an online identity. Through endless acceleration of technologies that have led us to leaderless vacuums of fake news, the lines of the real and fake are blurred, injected with heavy syringe loads of paranoia. It becomes a challenge to differentiate between the real world and rendered fake ones and navigate right wing ideology under the guise of science fiction. This intangibility brings into question the existence of agency specifically when considering design





as a force that may offer alternatives within network media. The collapse of a unifying reality and its distortion of the real provides unstable grounds in which a comprehensive analysis of contemporary culture is riddled with conspiracy and individual agency is replaced by the psychotic structure of technology. Throughout this writing, a global web of conspiracy and influence will be analysed to provide insight into the shifting patterns of internet ideologies. It is a web that weaponizes the languages of science fiction and incubates extremist discourse, mobilising vulnerable and chronically online individuals.

Uncertainty and unease dominate discourse around futures. Digital spaces propose recycled versions of science fiction narratives that cloak minds with offerings of utopias. We exist in networks that reflect our dreams back to us but are these really ours or are we passively influenced by the dreams of others, tech-elites that control the flow of

narratives and the architecture of the networks they are delivered through. Multitudes of social imaginings thrive within these spaces many of these propagated by the tech-elite that supply to us the ‘freedom’ of communication networks. Technological progress arises out of the human need to exteriorise our memory and essence through something beyond ourselves. As Bernard Stiegler argues it is “*the pursuit of life by means other than life*”.³ Through this outsourcing we are in the continual process of transforming our memory into data. Through the constant phase shifts of technologies, are we also now displacing ourselves further from the ‘Real’? Within the confusion we embed ourselves deeper within technological extensions and further within fictions that facilitate conspiratorial modes of thinking.

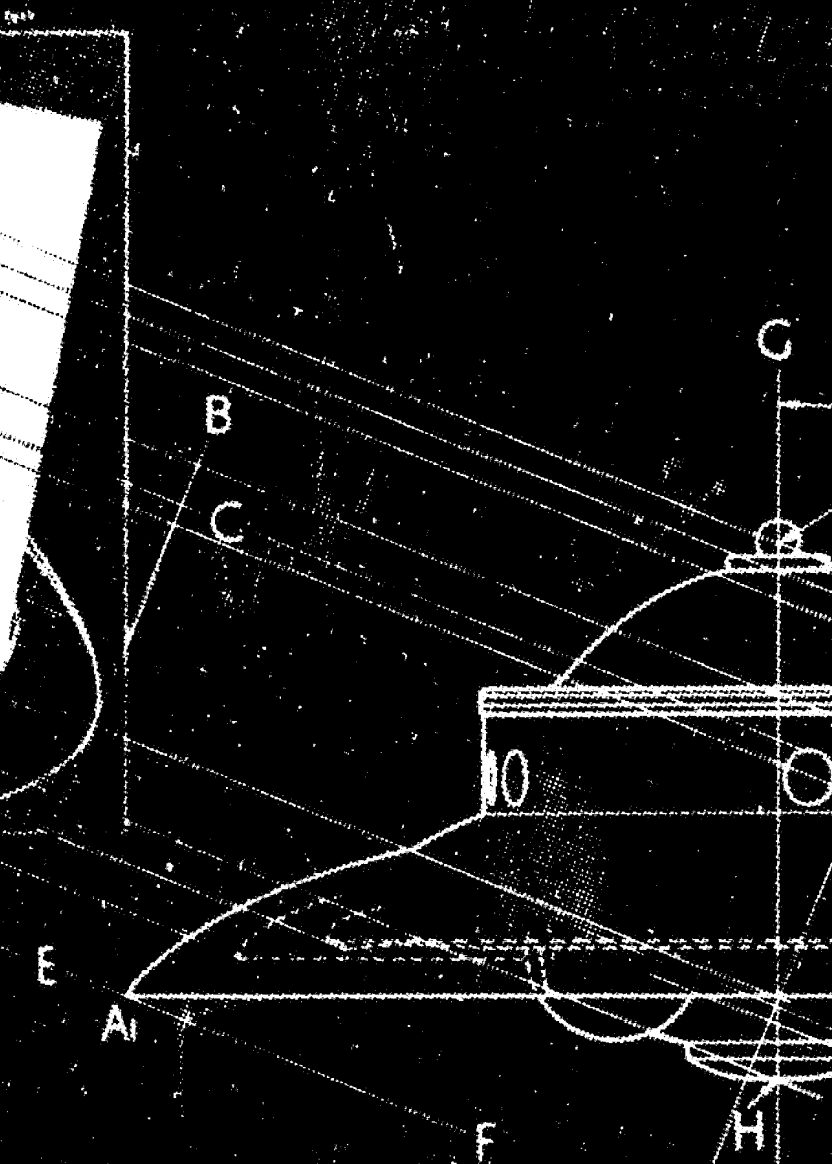
With memory and information now codified into a digital network too vast and intangible for individuals to grasp they have become what Timothy Morton calls

‘Hyperobjects’. The network operates “*outside the scope of human awareness*”.⁴ With this inability to perceive the ways in which this may act upon our consciousness, this breeds the paranoid sensibility that we are now all victims of psychological operations (PSYOPS). We are targets that are mined for value through a constant surveillance of our likes and clicks. The network is omnipotent and maybe a dangerous weapon. This is a place where the real is scarce, and layers of fictional alternatives distort our experience of reality in a process of removing us from the real, maintaining corporate dreams. These mind games play out on the stage of military operations, but also more subtly enter our networks of communication shaping our individual realities in which we all exist in science fictions of our own algorithmic shaping.

There are three ways that a weaponisation of science fiction narratives could be discussed. Firstly, that science fiction has been weaponised in influencing reality.

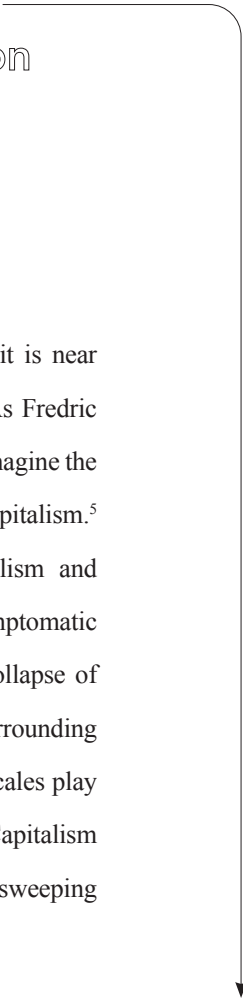
Secondly, realities are now rewritten as science fictions by the class of tech-oligarchs, proposing new imaginings of futures. Lastly, through military information operations, the aesthetic language of science fictions has been used in a literal sense in the development of technologies that target and extract value from individuals. These are exemplified through the fictions that have inspired technological development, technological infrastructure that fosters the existence of fictions through the architectures of feedback loops and finally the weaponisation of fictions in collaboration with military installations and contemporary technological projects.





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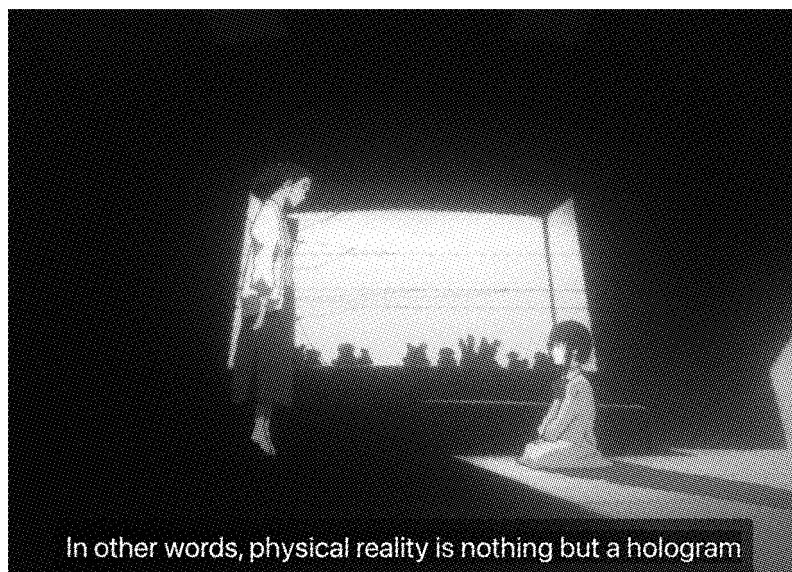
Section 1: Science Fiction's Influence on Reality



In the confusion of late capitalism, it is near impossible to imagine alternatives. As Fredric Jameson claimed it is now easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.⁵ The general malaise of late capitalism and failure to generate alternatives is symptomatic of what Jameson identified as the collapse of temporal scales. We exist in a surrounding sphere in which our collapsed time scales play out at once, dominated by pastiche.⁶ Capitalism morphs reality as well as temporality, sweeping

the stories of yesterday out from beneath us as it offers us new improved fictions. Lacan's distinction between the 'Real' and realities offers that the Real is a dark void, one to be avoided at all costs, covered up and suppressed by realities that sustain a capitalist system. Capitalism and digital spaces are a simulacrum.⁷ We exist at an impasse; the systems of control and governance that have dominated neoliberal order no longer describe the digital moment we have arrived at.

The lens of accelerationism proposed by theorists such as Steven Shaviro is a concept that offers a way through. Shaviro, writing from a Marxist perspective, suggests that capital operates through tendential processes or as Deleuze states a virtual mode, a plane of existence yet to be actualised, a space of possibility. Shaviro argues that Science Fiction operates within this virtual space that it is a potential of futures not yet materialised into the actual. Through the accelerationist method

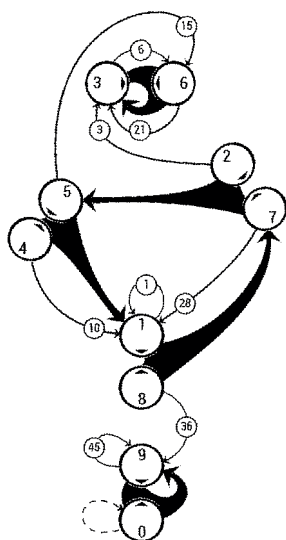


In other words, physical reality is nothing but a hologram

of thought, we can imagine these potentials and perhaps speculate at something beyond the current state of late capitalism.⁸ However, the accelerationist perspective on futurity has a tendency, as a concept, to become colonised by a darker alt-right vision. Mobilised by the thinking of Curtis Yarvin, accelerationism becomes a means to imagine what can only be described as a tech-fascist dream promising a ‘freedom’ from authoritarian political systems. Through the instrument of technology, a new anti-democratic order is proposed through digitised and militarised states ruled by the governing hand of a sovereign CEO.⁹

It is easy to understand the desire to create digital spaces that attempt to exist outside of systems of control. Many of these imaginings have typically turned to science fiction as offerings of alternatives, the shiny promise that endless possibilities do and could exist with the correct framework. Silicon Valley ideologies where birthed from such fictions. Ayn Rand’s

writings inspired a generation of cyberutopians. With her ideas of objectivism, the backbone of her fictions, she claimed that man is alone in the world and must attempt to free himself of any political and ideological control, guided only by their own reason and desires. Through this, individuals would be able to become heroic figures much like the protagonists of her books, namely *Atlas Shrugged*. Man's primary moral purpose is the achievement of his own happiness.¹⁰ Government and politics are the suppressant, working to controlling the selfish individual. Rand's highly individualist message was adopted by Silicon Valley idealists who believed that state intervention within individual's lives was limiting freedom. The emerging internet was a means to bypass government control and live freely from the restrictions of the state. The Silicon Valley entrepreneurs were the embodiment of these Randian heroes but further than this, the internet promised a vision that all who 'jacked



in' to its vast web could too become one of Rand's heroes, free from state control and able to live out their dreams as nodes within a decentralised network.

Fiction has its long reaching tentacles embedded within tech-utopian dreams. The philosophy of accelerationism grew from the esoteric writings of groups like the CCRU (a group including Mark Fisher and Nick Land) and figures such as Nick Srnicek and Steven Shaviro. Srnicek argues for the unbinding of materials from capitalist structures to transform them into ways to construct a new freedom. Media networks can accelerate humans beyond current limitations.¹¹ These concepts, although written years later, echo (unintentionally) the Randian ideals of Silicon Valley tech-utopians. Accelerationist thought places science fiction narratives at the centre of the aesthetic imaginings. Steven Shaviro in his essay collection, 'No Speed Limit', offers that science fiction is accelerationist by nature.

We can push late capitalism to its most bizarre extremes through the narratives of science fiction. Shaviro writes, “...*science fiction as a genre does not claim to actually predict the future. Rather, it works to extrapolate elements of the present, to consider what these elements might lead to if allowed to reach their full potential...science fiction is not about the actual future but about the futurity that haunts the present*”.¹² We are as much living in future moments as we are in the past and present. Science fiction offers an analysis of these potentials, it is a fiction about the potentialities of the present.¹³

In Carlo Bramanti’s ‘Conspiratorial Design’, he emphasises the importance of image generation in materialising a fiction. Fiction can analyse and provide the primary step in realising an aesthetic imagining but images are required when synthesising the totality of a reality. The role of the disciplines of design and art is the creation of this

imagery.¹⁴ World building through a fictional process is a form of what Deleuze described as ‘virtual existence’ while visual simulation leads towards a concreting of concepts into actuality. Mark Leckey noted a similar divide in a recent talk at Goldsmiths University calling the chasm of internet culture an immaterial space which calls for a physical to orientate oneself, echoing a splitting of object and subject or Simondon’s technics and religion. Leckey’s work draws a certain physicality out of a virtual existence and moves towards what Marisa Olson calls post-internet art, creative work only existing through the collection of internet culture,¹⁵ a product of one’s activity online, a fiction of present potentials.

The writings of the late J.G. Ballard are described as ‘about the next five minutes’ and the possibilities that exist within them.¹⁶ Much of Ballard’s novels describe a near future, evoking familiar concrete landscapes of racing bypasses, metallic bodies of machines that haunt

our every move and high-rise architectures that change notions of social control. Ballard lays before his readers a description of, as Enrico Monacelli observes, an “*alien alteration of the psycho-social sphere produced by the technocapitalist acceleration*”.¹⁷ Ballardian thinking offers us a collapse of time into what Nick Land and Anna Greenspan describe as templexity. Material processes reach back and forwards into time that inform our present and shape temporality. Ballard’s temporality is not a linear process but instead are complex geometries that divert and warp the course of the present.¹⁸

Ballard’s novel *Highrise*¹⁹ offers a perverted future in which physical architectures shape psycho-social landscapes. Nick Land and Silicon Valley software developer Curtis Yarvin’s writings claim that the leftist democratic order existing to control individuals is a Cathedral. In comparison, the physical structuring of the *Highrise* is an attempt at

organising social order through a hierarchical system. The Cathedral is metaphorical of the organising force of western democracies that encompasses universities, media and civil service that Land and Yarvin claim shape our thinking to maintain democracies, it is ‘leftist mind-control’.²⁰

Through the course of Highrise, shifting geometries of social orders are explored collapsing finally into a form of anarcho-primitivism from a strange course of feudalism. It is the initial feudalism that is can be applied to the thinking of Curtis Yarvin’s new reformed digital landscape in which he proposes a patchwork of privately owned states. Yarvin as the voice of Neoreactionary (NRx) or Dark Enlightenment argues for a collection of network states run by a monarch-like CEO. Democracy is dismissed as broken and a return to a ‘feudal’ system of power is practiced.²¹ NRx patchwork states and their politics of ‘exit’ are in Yarvin’s own words

*“smashing” the “crappy governments we inherited from history’ as they are ‘replaced by a global spiderweb...of sovereign and independent mini-countries, each governed by its own joint-stock corporation without regard to the residents’ opinions. If residents don’t like their government, they can and should move. The design is all ‘exit,’ no ‘voice’”.*²²

This is analogous with the architect character in Highrise, Anthony Royal, installed in the topmost penthouse of the building commanding control over his kingdom.

The choice for exit exists within the framework of Royal’s Highrise although, in a strangely paranoid sense, is never acted upon, overshadowed by a compelling curiosity to watch it all crash and burn with the anticipation of a new social order rising from the rubble. Highrise accurately predicts the ways in which technological philosophies have created nodes of thought within a larger landscape that structure thinking and new social orders. It

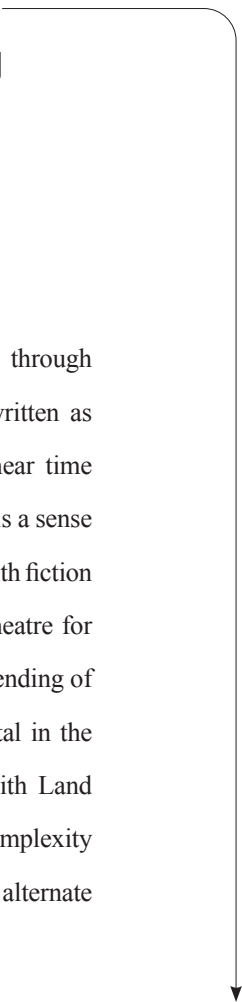


can be re-read now in the last decade through a different lens, as a metaphor for the ways in which characters like Yarvin wish to organise communication networks and structure social hierarchies within them. It is the reformed Cathedral.

NRx's politics of exit have found their way into science fiction toned social proposals. Patri Freidman's Seasteading project, funded by Palantir's Peter Thiel, utilises the aesthetic language of science fiction to embed NRx philosophies into the virtual. Seasteads propose homesteads on the sea beyond any governance by nation states. Here residents will be able to experiment with new societies and social orders. There exists a market of competing governance or exit, homesteads may attach to a realm where a preferred mode of governing is practiced.²³ Thiel's philosophies are heavily influenced by both Land and Yarvin's NRx. Thiel in his 2009 essay 'The Education of a Libertarian', proclaimed that, "*I no*

longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible".²⁴ This statement can be understood in the context of his involvement with projects like Seasteading as an opposition to democracy. Seasteading is the embodiment of a system of decentralised control which values exit above all and seeks to collapse the leftist ideological Cathedral.

Section 2: Science Fiction as Rewriting Reality



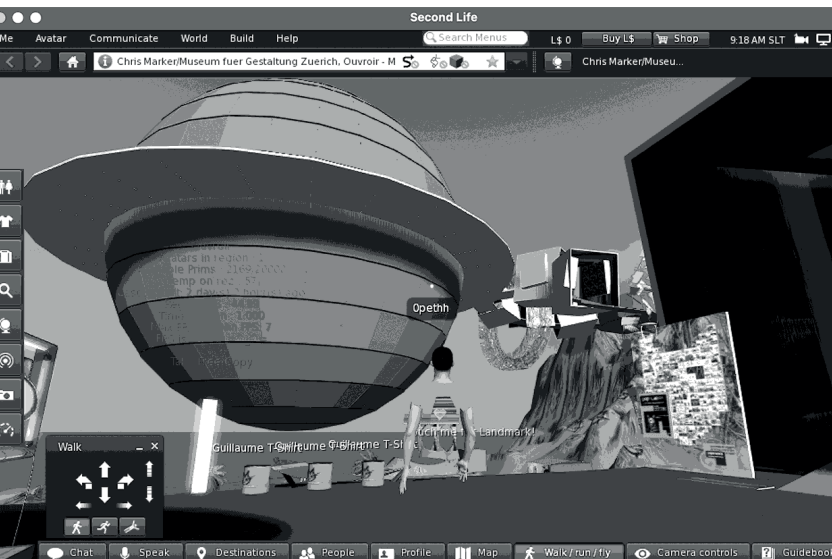
As well as the influencing of reality through science fiction, realities are now rewritten as science fictions. Through the non-linear time loops that Nick Land describes, there is a sense that our technologies in conjunction with fiction are creating the perfect operational theatre for fictions in states of becoming. This blending of fiction and technology are instrumental in the conception of the term associated with Land that is hyperstitions. Land discusses templexity as feeding hyperstitions in a spiral of alternate

timescales. The intricate loops of templexity enable hyperstitions to ground themselves within our networks of communication. Hyperstitions are birthed out of non-linear timescales generating a future existing within the present, dictating what is summoned forth into existence. Land characterizes this as “...*the experimental (techno-) science of self-fulfilling prophecies*”.²⁵ Technologies become the tool for imaginings recode reality. The monstrous tendrils of the future reach back into the present and solidify themselves in social narratives through technological feedback loops in which culture is cast as the main component.

The process of Landian hyperstitions is strangely evoking of a non-human or Lovecraftian-esque alien force, one which operates outside of human perception fuelled by our own fictions offering these back to us detached from subject and beyond control.²⁶ Hyperstitions begin to take on the tone of Hyperobjects. Mark Fisher in his book *Capitalist*

Realism discusses Jacques Lacan's concept of the 'Big Other' as a collective fiction and symbolic structure that operates outside of the perception of the individual, allowing for the continued existence of fictions. This symbolic assemblage is the repeated feedback circuits of desire and fiction in which hyperstitions are returned to us via technologies as no longer our fantasies but that of a 'Big Other'.²⁷ However, the 'Big Other' in this narrative can also be replaced with a much more tangible group of tech-elites who allow for the proliferation of false realities that throw us into paranoid spirals where everything morphs into reals. The ubiquitous nature of technology produces a death of individual agency. How can younger generations hope to envision a world where the network acts as a hyperobject, corroding the possibilities of a user's voice?

The very basis of NRx ideologies is built on a science fiction dreaming. Thiel and Freidman's Seastead project is an example of





hyperstition in action. Though the project is relatively technically impossible, it is more the concept as a fictional entity that is important in defining what is meant of as freedom within digital networks. The project acts as a hyperstition, fostering a space for other individuals existing on the network to devise alternatives fulfilling the Seastead prophecy.²⁸ Seasteads can be considered like many other fictional ideas as spurring on the hyperstitional web. The web draws on the vast bank of human data as it scrapes the network for concrete ideas to latch onto, recoding and rewriting reality as it goes. In these feedback loops, the future is commodifiable and as Steven Shaviro notes, future imaginings exist to be “*made into an investment opportunity*”.²⁹ the investor in question being corporate overlords, figures like Thiel.

Another example of a hyperstitional fiction is Curtis Yarvin’s project Urbit, managed by his company Tlön Corporation,

supported by Peter Thiel's Founders Fund.³⁰ Urbit proposes a network design as if arriving from the near future, it is a self-hosted peer-to-peer network that seeks to replace and re-decentralise the current operations of the internet in "*taking self-sovereign control over your identity*", as Urbit's own website claims.³¹ Urbit's ideology is rooted within Yarvin's patchwork theory, in which he is the 'prince' among corporate run kingdoms.³² Urbit's architecture consists of a digital hierarchy in which users operate in layers of power from planets to stars and further galaxies, domains which are purchasable by participants.³³ The software's architecture fosters the concept of 'exit' replacing democratic voice. Yarvin himself owns 24 of these galaxies which puts into perspective the nature of power in the 'decentralised' network of Urbit.³⁴ He demands his subjects to swear fealty unto him, lest you be banished from his kingdom of code.

In one of Yarvin's blog ramblings

from 2010 he described the project as only (at the time) existing in the realm of design and claims that it may be useful in the future if it emerges as a useable software.³⁵ This is hyperstitional, solidifying fiction and ideology through speculative technologies, embedding NRx concepts into a codable system. Software engineer Francis Tseng notes the link between the Jorge Luis Borges story ‘Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius’, the inspiration behind the naming of Tlön Corporation, in which a secret society constructs the fictional world of Tlön by authoring an encyclopaedia which details it.³⁶ Through a hyperstitional process the fictional description merges with the real world effectively becoming Tlön. Urbit is the manifestation of an alternate world through a speculative fictional process, acting through the loops of hyperstition to emerge as a reality. It is a method of designing reality through fiction.

The digital nation of Praxis is another materialisation of Yarvin’s patchwork theory

reformatted in Balaji Srinivasan's book *The Network State*. Praxis is an alt-right embodiment of accelerationist principles in its proposition that human consciousness can transcend its physical bounds through the mobilising force of technology as well as promising an ascension from traditional political systems, upgrading to tech-sovereignty.³⁷ Praxis website proposes the city will include 'acceleration zones' which focus on the acceleration of technological progress "*in service of national priorities*".³⁸ The Praxis nation is a terrifying performance of techno-fascist ideas that strive for a world order where democracy is rejected and dictator CEO-monarchs control network nations and the flow of information within them. It is the newest mutation of hyphenated fascism that blends militarisation and technology with a dangerous anti-democratic position and installs the already powerful tech-elite in dictator roles at the head of new nation imaginings.³⁹ Praxis, Seasteading and Urbit are all speculative world

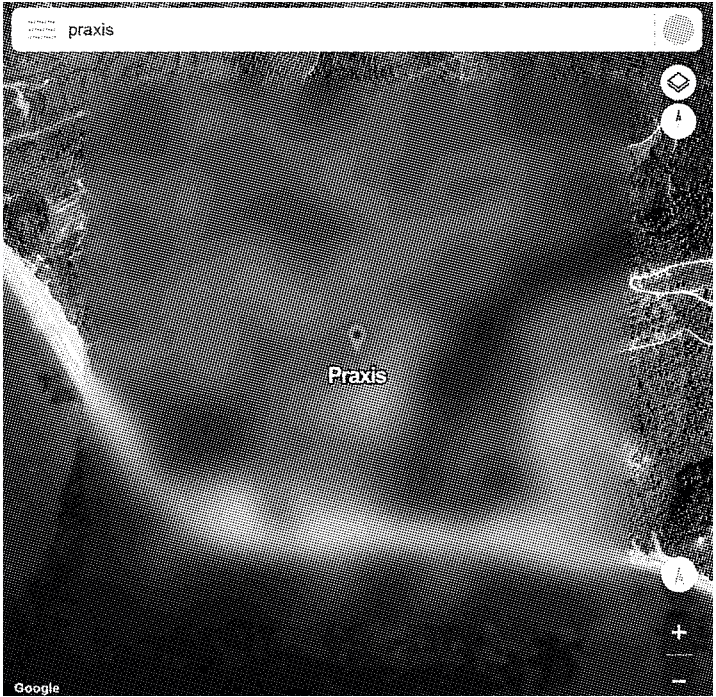


building projects that offer alternative modes of reality through code and hyperstitional feedback. The projects provide the aesthetic imaginings for alternate realities, with the Praxis website providing imagery, created by Zaha Hadid Architects, in the virtual for a potential materialising of the city in the actual.

A science fiction novel that has become an effective hyperstition is William Gibson's *Neuromancer*. The book published in 1984 coined the term cyberspace, offering a predictive imagining of what would become virtual reality. Gibson's *Neuromancer* leads its readers through a world in which the tenuous lines of virtual and actual are blurred. Readers struggle to orientate themselves, differentiating between confusing architectures of a dystopian world and cyberspace. Cyberspace imitates the actual in a bizarre simulation that requires individuals to 'jack in' in an all-consuming sensory assault. The book is punctuated by characters such as Riviera and

the AI Wintermute who morph and shift their physical form in mocking illusions of reality. Wintermute presents itself as hallucinations or ‘constructs’ of the actual to protagonist Case, as he navigates cyberspace. It appears to Case in Cyberspace as a convincing render of the character Deane, and later in the story, tapping into Case’s dreams and manipulating his memory.⁴⁰

The significant of the AI Wintermute speaks to the confusion felt in online spaces in which human agency is replaced with non-human circuits of hyperstitional fictions which transcended the voice of the individual letting an alien outsidersness in. Mark Fisher in his book *Capitalist Realism* notes that memory disorder is symptomatic of the continuous present that is simultaneously felt, alongside complex hyperstitional processes within online spaces. Fisher notes that *“in conditions where realities and identities are upgraded like software, it is not suprising that memory disorders should*



have become the focus of cultural anxiety...”⁴¹

The disorientating nature of time and memory in *Neuromancer* is eerily foreshadowing of the impact of designed networks on human consciousness, blending with non-human entities that rewrite reality in disorienting temporal loops, modifying memory itself.

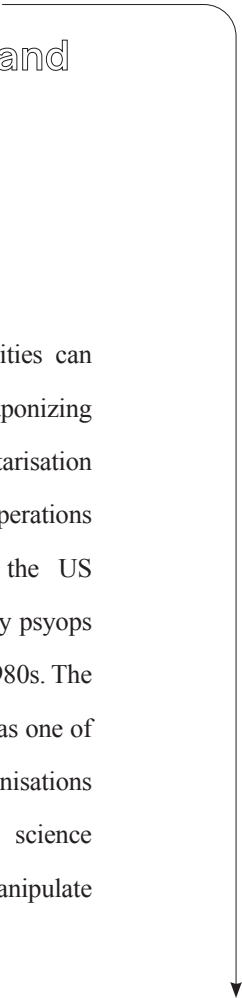
There is a paranoid anxiety which is felt within communication networks that, much like the Wintermute AI in Gibson’s fiction, individuals are under the influence, indoctrinated by science fiction narratives through technological influence. This has allowed for the dangerous influence of Curtis Yarvin (blog name Mencius Moldbug) to take root in testosterone-fuelled online forums, namely 4chan and reddit. Yarvin’s NRx messages propose an awakening to the truth and offer an apparent opposition to what he claims is the Orwellian mind-control state of modern western democracies. Within his blog ‘Unqualified Reservations’, he claims that his

goal is to “*cure your brain*”⁴² with his ‘redpill’ a concept, borrowed from the Wachowski sister’s film *The Matrix* where the choice between the red pill (a waking up to the harsh reality of the world) and blue pill (remaining in the comfort of the matrix), weaponised to describe the ‘truth’ seeking nature of NRx philosophies. Yarvin pitches himself, in further references to science fiction, as a dark Sith lord opposed to the republic. He writes as Moldbug that, “*Jedi mind tricks are blue pills. Sith mind tricks are red pills. Suffice it to say that you’ve been exposed to a lot of anti-Sith propaganda*”.⁴³ His messages, borrowing the language of science fiction and referencing internet and gaming terminology such as ‘based’ or ‘pwned’, conveniently appeal to younger 4chan or reddit users who become subliminally radicalised by alt-right rhetoric. Rhetoric that capitalises off the digital collapse of truth.

Yarvin’s Redpill ideology claims that centralised forms of control create a

prison of the mind, one which he and his alt-right followers are ‘breaking free’ from and awakening to the ‘truth’. His science fiction riddled ramblings promise, to all who follow, the notion of a villainous hero. In Angela Nagle’s book *Kill All Normies*, an insight into online culture wars, 4chan and the alt-right, she argues that NRx concepts adopted by ‘incel’ communities have filled the vacuum of leaderless space created originally by the dreams of Randian-utopians. Nagle claims that this void is the “*perfect space for anything to manifest, taking the dark twisted shapes of alt-right and incel ideologies*”.⁴⁴ The promised ‘freedom’ of a decentralised network is now awash with Yarvin’s rhetoric as his concepts rewrite and shape the fantasies of chronically online incel communities.

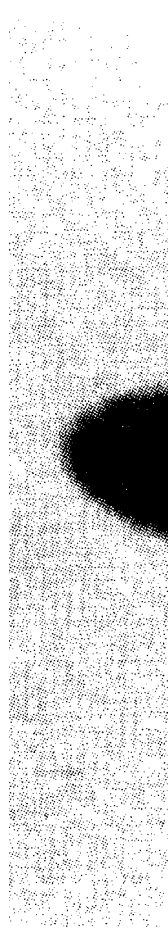
Section 3: Science Fiction, Conspiracy and Weaponization



The final way in which digital realities can be considered in terms of a weaponizing of science fiction, is through militarisation or psychological/information operations (PSYOPS) initially developed by the US military. A notable case of US military psyops was UFO conspiracy theories in the 1980s. The project, led by agent Richard Doty, was one of the first times that governmental organisations such as the CIA had weaponised science fiction narratives to successfully manipulate

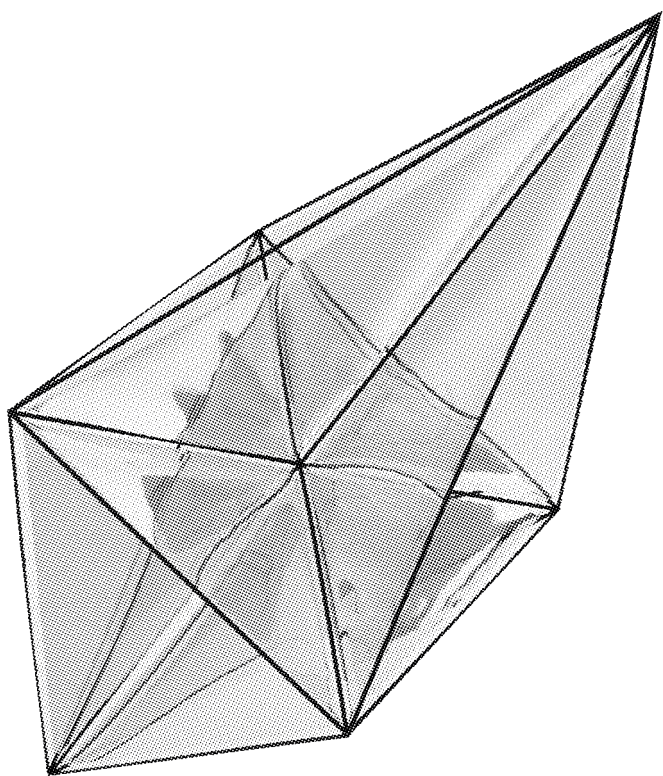
targets creating mass hysteria that the US was under attack by extra-terrestrial beings. The documents leaked by Doty operated to condition behaviours in a pre-internet age.

Doty's doctored documents highlight the deceptive nature of designed visuals that divert the course of truth.⁴⁵ The CIA weaponised tools of design with their documented UFO sightings, utilising photography symbolically representing a visual truth or given fact, and through a process of doctoring is able to create believable fictions.⁴⁶ Visual artist and filmmaker Hito Steyerl discussed the 'Poor Image' in its unsatisfactory resolution, as "*tending towards abstraction*", in "*their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audiovisual capitalism*".⁴⁷ Steyerl argues that poor images encourage conspiracy in their deterioration of a captured reality. The poor image is a way to describe the imagery of UFOs the CIA released as evidence of extra-terrestrial activities. Imagery like these benefits



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from low-res quality, promoting a deciphering of imagery to occur and in turn fictions bleed into the pixel distortions.

Objects as well as images are tools in the construction of conspiracy and fiction. The ambiguity of the objects presented in artist Trevor Paglen's body of work, namely 'Palladium Variation #4',⁴⁸ evoke feelings of conspiracy and a contradiction to a universal truth. Objects operate within the plane of materiality. It is a kind of world building that welcomes the potentialities of a parallel reality or alternate truth. While objects are weaponised by a military logic, they can too perhaps provide a tool for younger generations of creators to expand beyond the bounds of dominate narratives and the mobilising fictions of the alt-right.

Information operations arose in an era of military research drawing on psychology, illusions, early computational research and CIA mind control experiments such as MKUltra

with the aim of harnessing the human psyche to effectively warp realities. Paglen in his essay on ‘Society of the Psyop, Cognition and Chaos’, discusses how easily human perception is influenced, “...*perceptions are not fixed or objective; they are profoundly relational, shaped by a network of influences: memories, expectations, cultural frameworks, and personal subjectivities*”.⁴⁹ Projects like the CIA’s MKUltra, which by its nature has inspired a whole host of internet conspiracy theories, drew on the influence of the stage magician John Mulholland who demonstrated that human perceptions of reality are glitchy allowing for falsities to be injected into the landscape of what is considered concrete.⁵⁰ These military concepts transferred seamlessly into an information age where misinformation is weaponised through algorithmic structures in shaping realities, solidifying ideas that digital landscapes are a constantly shifting pattern of layers of false and truth. Trust is obliterated and

replaced with countless conspiracies.

The condition of the current moment are social anxieties of the nature of reality which is full of the contortions of fake news and unimals woven into the fabric of online spaces. Trevor Paglen speaks of this moment as ‘PSYOP capitalism’ or, as Daniel de Zeeuw, Clare Birchall and Peter Knight call it: ‘PSYOP Realism’. Through previously developed military techniques, online spheres are shaping perceptions of reality. PSYOP realism, building upon Mark Fisher’s Capitalist Realism where he comments on the modifiability of reality in late capitalism,⁵¹ is the unreality arising out of the merging of military PSYOP techniques, misinformation and behavioural manipulation.⁵² Paglen notes that we have moved beyond the initial surveillance weaponised by online platforms and enter a space that actively dictates and shapes behaviours, a space where the truth itself becomes dangerously destabilised. Truth itself





is fragmented, and “*platforms universalise an operational mode of targeting*”.⁵³ Peter Knight argues, conspiracy is vastly distributed within the impersonal nature of technology.⁵⁴ We exist in a generalised state of conspiracy where everything melts in false fictions nurtured by information networks.

Many internet start-ups arising out of Silicon Valley have been directly funded by the CIA’s venture capital arm In-Q-Tel to progress large scale surveillance and technological research as a means of ‘mind control’. Peter Thiel’s data analytics company Palantir is backed by In-Q-Tel. These are not state-owned resources but private corporations, organised by individuals such as Thiel whose own dangerous ideologies are embedded within. Palantir is a contemporary example of the sinister junction of tech-corporations and military defence.⁵⁵ The company offers the US army the ability to utilise artificial intelligence for information operations with the aim to accelerate decision

making and data analysis. Palantir's project 'Gotham' provides targeting support with an 'AI-powered kill chain', focusing on shortening kill chains by weaponizing data analysis that "*bridges the gap between physical and digital worlds*", replacing the human with the autonomous machine.⁵⁶

Palantir's software was used in collaboration with the New Orleans Police Department to test the concept of predictive policing using the software to place potential criminals.⁵⁷ The notion of predictive policing is perhaps borrowed from science fiction author Philip K. Dick. In his novel *Ubik* characters named pre-cogs possess the ability of foresight and can change and prevent scenarios from occurring in the near future. Pre-cogs famously appear in Steven Spielberg's film *Minority Report*,⁵⁸ based on the book of the same title by Dick, the film reads as a warning of militarisation and control that arises from fascistic systems. It is a science fiction world in which everyone

may become a target of prediction, one which Palantir conjured into reality. Palantir marks a return to Silicon Valley involvement in US military and policing operations one which historically is a long-standing collaboration.

The grand stage of politics has often utilised contradiction to maintain a level of control over the population. Politics in Putin's Russia is one example of the systematic breakdown of trust. Russian politician Vladislav Surkov, influenced by the science fiction writings of the Strugatsky brothers, turned Russian politics into disorientating theatrics, guided by the premise that reality is malleable. Under Surkov's counsel, Kremlin money was used to support various conflicting social groups and back opposing political parties which resulted in a state of confusion within the mass population as they were immersed in contradictory messages.⁵⁹

Peter Thiel's own confusing contradictions have inspired online

conspiratorial analysis, specifically the recent series of lectures that Thiel performed on the theme of the Anti-Christ. The lectures were given on the basis that recording was not allowed, shrouding the talks in a level of secrecy and generating the notion that Thiel was letting the audience in on a ‘truth’ permitted to the select few attending. Thiel claimed his is erratic ramblings that the Anti-Christ “...*is the individual who gets rid of all individuals; the philosopher who ends all philosophers; the Caesar who ends all rulers; the person who understands all secrets. How is this possible in late modernity, where we don’t believe a philosopher-king, tyrant or ruler can come to power?*”⁶⁰ Thiel’s strange muddle of interpretations of the Anti-Christ has sparked discourse that he is inadvertently describing a character that fits the description of him and other techno-sovereign inclined individuals in Silicon Valley. The confusion of Thiel’s messages sparks conspiratorial modes of

thinking which displace the ‘truth’ with fiction and conceal the intentions of individuals like him in positions of power.

Yarvin’s ‘redpill’ message capitalises off this continued landscape of confusion and offers the ‘way out’ as he injects dangerous right-wing rhetoric into enticing anti-democratic ideologies which come at a poignant time where trust in politicians is waning. The very nature of a conspiratorial mode of analysis upholds the notion of a divide between an enlightened ‘redpilled’ group opposed to those under the influence or ‘bluepilled’.⁶¹ States of confusion are the perfect breeding ground for the incubation of internet conspiracy theories. Through the bizarre rabbit holes of forums like 4Chan and Reddit, conspiracies of the US deepstate and QAnon are born. Rising out of fears of government brainwashing, the QAnon conspiracy proposes that at the core of the US democratic left are a satanic cult in which Trump acts as the redemptive saviour,

delivering from evil.⁶² Individuals, fuelled by the knowledge that false realities run unchecked in online spheres, are attempting to think in conspiratorial ways. This comes at a time when Mark Zuckerberg's announcement that Meta will step back from rigorous fact-checking,⁶³ is a bizarre performance of reflexive power, marking a corporate awareness of how truth is governed.

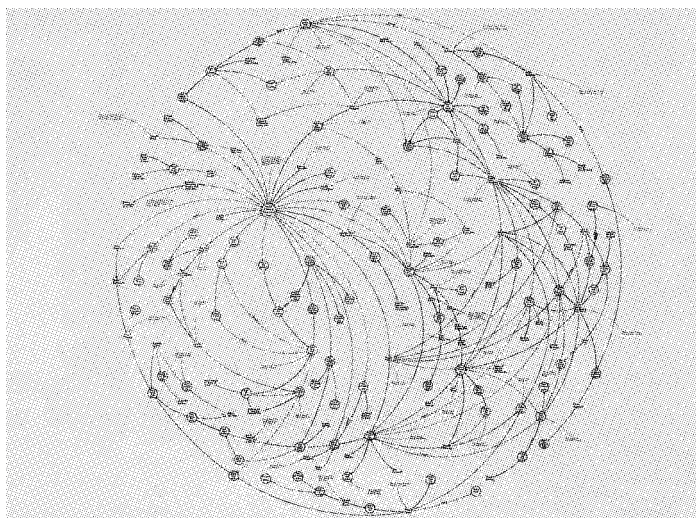
A conspiratorial mentality is illustrated through diagrammatical methods which reveal hidden webs of influence. Mark Lombardi's work included a series of vast mappings that tracked the architectures of power and corruption. His work 'Narrative Structures' implies a conspiratorial web extending beyond the borders of nation states, providing a visual narration of global networks.⁶⁴ There is a fictional angle to Lombardi's work as with most diagrammatical visualisations of conspiracies. Lombardi explained that "*I call them "Narrative Structures" because each consists of a network*

of lines and notations which are meant to convey a story".⁶⁵ There are many examples of the visual narration of conspiracy webs many which exist within the rabbit holes of the internet. Carlo Bramanti's book 'Conspiratorial Design' compares the 'everythingness' of the discipline of design to conspiratorial modes of thought. Bramanti positions the designer as a mastermind, striving for an omniscient analysis on global affairs which sits in parallel to the individuals operating on internet forums.⁶⁶ Conspiratorial Design references various visual mappings of global conspiracies, notably a poster called Abstraction⁶⁷ which was found in a subreddit and the website Superpredator⁶⁸ which Bramanti notes "*could easily pass as provocative graduation projects in a design school*".⁶⁹ It is a grappling with a core 'truth' that ties both conspiracy theory and design together.

Much of the network of alt-right rhetoric that is discussed within this essay is

visualised in a similar diagrammatical form on the website called ‘The Plot Against America’.⁷⁰ The website outlines the tessellations of power dynamics influenced by NRx ideologies that structure the dominate narrative presented through technologies. It is diagrammatical webs like ‘The Plot Against America’ that convey a visual narrative. Diagrammatical mappings are central to a fostering of a conspiratorial mindset. Through graphics like these, the designer is situated as an enlightened individual attempting to uncover a larger truth. The ‘truth’ presented here can verge on psychotic, a displaced truth that weaves fictional elements into the nodes within the map. Diagrammatical representations bridge the fields of information design, conspiracy and fiction and attempt to provide visual analysis of the chaotic nature of communication networks.

Philip K. Dick’s amphetamine fuelled science fiction novel *Ubik* (1969)⁷¹ is prophetic of the confusing nature of digital conspiracies



and misinformation. In Dick's disorientating world, protagonist Joe Chip experiences strange time regressions as he attempts to uncover a plot against his fellow inertials (pre-cogs). The apparent reality that Chip and his comrades exist in seems to shift in bizarre ways that further displace the truth of the plot. It becomes harder to distinguish friend from foe as Chip is sent into increasingly complex time warps. The omnipotent nature of the entity controlling his reality is analogous to the corporations weaponizing algorithmic structures and the feedback loops of misinformation that is PSYOP realism, immersing individuals in science fiction worlds.

The success of Philip K. Dick's *Ubik* is its ability to describe the plasticity of realities that plague digital landscapes, written around the time of emerging military networks of mind control. The characters in *Ubik*, after death, exist in a state purgatory or half-life, mind is detached from the body,

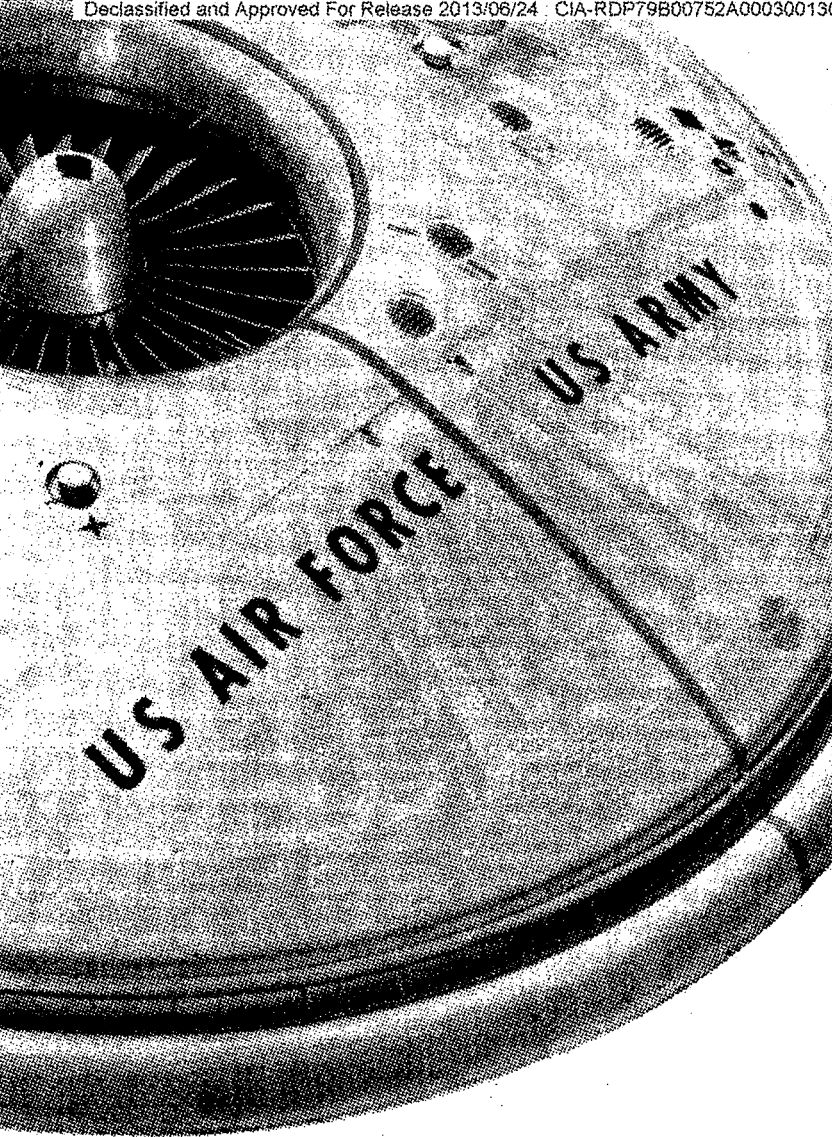
pure information severed from the existence of a physical body. In this state, characters rely solely on the intervention of people existing in the ‘real world’ to grasp reality. The severed consciousness from the physical world and the mediation of the real through simulation allows for fictions to proliferate. While we act on the machine, feeding it our desires, it too offers these back to us in new and improved ways, in ways that are no longer ours but instead a part of a bigger narrative. We become targets as Joe Chip becomes Jory’s target in a game of mind manipulation.

The conspiracy narrative lurks in many examples of media and culture in a time where ‘PSYOP realism’ describes misinformation as the current cultural anxiety, conjecture becomes fact in a distortion of reality. The Japanese anime series *Serial Experiments Lain* (1998)⁷² is relevant for its prognostic summary of the influence of distributed networks of information. Similar to the omnipotent nature of

the entities of control in Dick's *Ubik*, it outlines a 'digital Gnosticism'⁷³ in which material reality is surpassed towards a higher state of being in the distributed system of 'The Wired'. *Serial Experiments Lain* is both an accelerationist and conspiratorial fiction, one which propagates that our organic bodies are inferior to technology and/or a digital consciousness, themes explored in other science fiction anime of the 90s namely *Neon Genesis Evangelion*.⁷⁴ The narrative of *Lain* represents this attitude as a delirious state of existence. Within the virtual reality of 'The Wired' the secret group referred to as the 'Knights' echo contemporary conspiracy groups. The Knights are noted to control and hack the flow of information, spreading misinformation within the network. This piece of science fiction could perhaps be described as hyperstitional, becoming an unintentional self-fulfilling prophecy in our age of post truth and conspiracy.

Film and video offer science

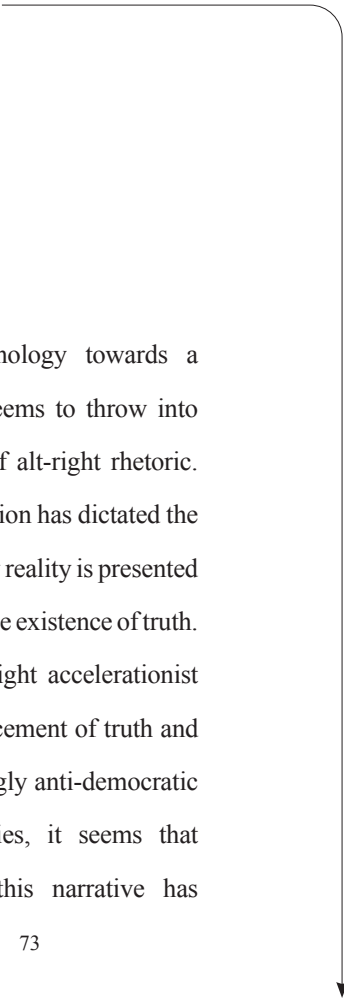
fictional parallel realities, and film editing techniques, namely ‘datamoshing’, represent ways in which to manipulate contemporary technologies. Techniques like this insert a nostalgia for outdated forms of technology and, in turn, present ways in which to resist the relentless force of accelerated tech, a reversion to the residual murmurs of our machines. The imagery produced by datamoshing metaphorically highlights the collapse of a tangible reality as it breaks down into intricate pixelations of what was once a comprehensive whole. The doctoring of video footage can draw upon the boundless archive of imagery existing on the internet to create a web cinema, the audience a collection of dispersed spectators. Chris Marker’s virtual home within *Second Life*, operates as a parallel universe for a kind of web cinema to be explored.⁷⁵ By splicing internet imagery together, the creation of new science fictions or parallel realities is birthed that communicates in the languages



of a demographic of online youth and co-opts technological tools as a methodology.

Film by nature is escapism. Steven Shaviro notes that art within capitalism offers us escapism but fails to provide an actualization of escape.⁷⁶ This speaks to the trappings of the distortion of realities within technology. However, archaic video editing techniques provide a means of escape from the confines of the contemporary architectures of tech. While it connotes an acceleration into unreality and further fictions, it may also enact a deceleration of the march of technological progress.

Denouement



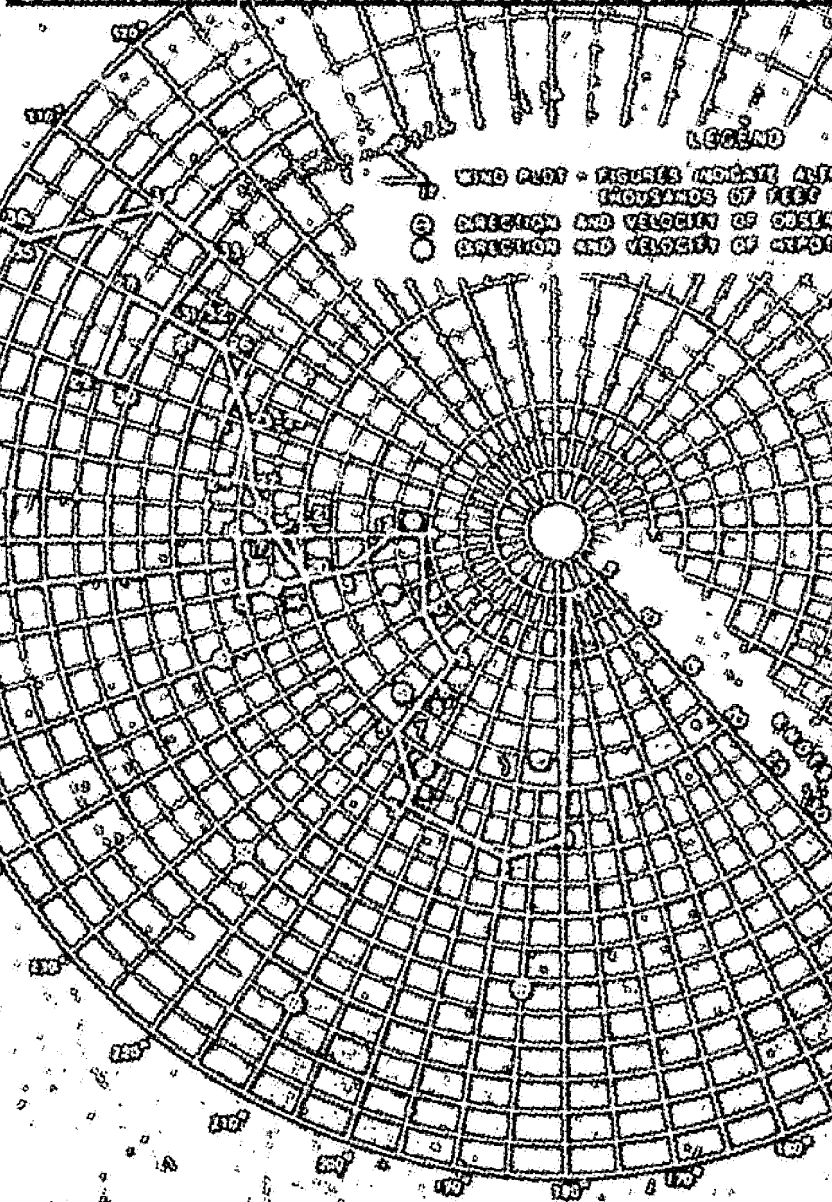
The acceleration of technology towards a climatic system collapse seems to throw into the mix a generous dose of alt-right rhetoric. The language of science fiction has dictated the shapes of our networks, how reality is presented through them and contorts the existence of truth. In a world where the alt-right accelerationist dream has led to the displacement of truth and networks become increasingly anti-democratic haunted by NRx ideologies, it seems that the alt-right version of this narrative has

prevailed, filling the vacuum of decentralised space. PSYOP realism describes a new state of paranoid sensibility, where everyone becomes a conspiracy theorist, in a landscape of *"...uncertainty and antifoundationalism that characterises today's knowledge and information theatre of operations"*.⁷⁷ It is challenging to imagine a digital reality existing post-PSYOP where truth is discernible. Science fiction replaces a tangible reality. For those who operate outside of the internet forums where these narratives mutate and grow, this writing provides an important insight into the deluded fictions of the internet that creep into the online mainstream. It is a call to abandon the dismissive apathy older generations harbour towards online culture in an era characterised by a rise of extremist right-wing ideology that gains traction through internet platforms.

The displacement of reality has nurtured an age of dissociation. In a recent podcast McKenzie Wark claims that perhaps



Official
tracker



ally "unidentified objects", denoted
ed on the radarscope at Washington

dissociation is now the aesthetic of the era. Individuals are suspended in a space of non-presence or dissociation, to be present is not possible.⁷⁸ This is symptomatic of the shifting foundations of reality which seemingly are in continuous states of recursion. Dissociation perhaps describes the conspiratorial mode of analysing in which the 'I' is transcended to examine and analysis the 'bigger picture'. I am aware of this essay's own conspiratorial nature, a linking of concepts in an attempt to provide a 'bigger picture' style insight into the connections between science fictional narratives and the confusion of the digital age with its collapse of a unifying real (although I do not claim to be enlightened or engaged with any myths of an 'awakening to the truth').

To return to a leftist-accelerationist position, it is important to note that there is a notion that technology is not exhaustive of its original premises written by the science fiction plagued minds of tech-oligarchs. Technology is

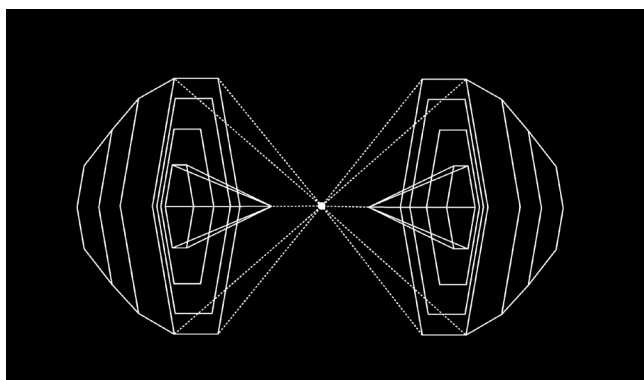
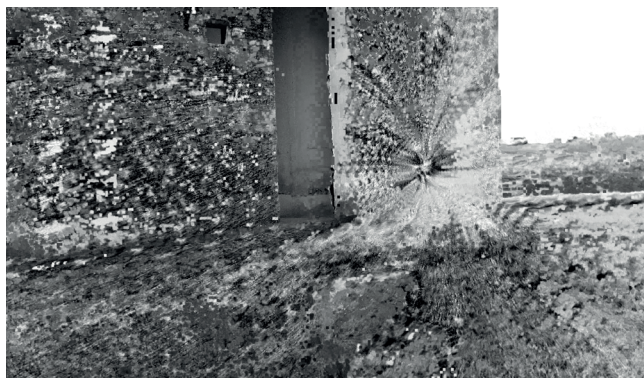
in a constant state of recursion or, as Simondon outlined, a process of individuation in which a persistent reforming of information takes place.⁷⁹ While this has perhaps submerged us in continuous exhausting rewriting of realities it is also further displacing us from the original goals of technologies. Pete Wolfendale notes that computer programming can be considered the science of recursion.⁸⁰ We are enabled, through the logic of recursion, to always generate new, it is the birthing of new concepts and hybrids into existence. This echoes the (darker) Landian concepts of an alien force operating within hyperstitional frameworks. There is no preexisting space of possibility for any technology, and therefore it will always include a space for speculation. It was Marshall McLuhan who argued that new technology, although a somewhat narcissistic representation of human consciousness, always transcends the point of origin.⁸¹ We are able to inject digital realities with whichever narratives

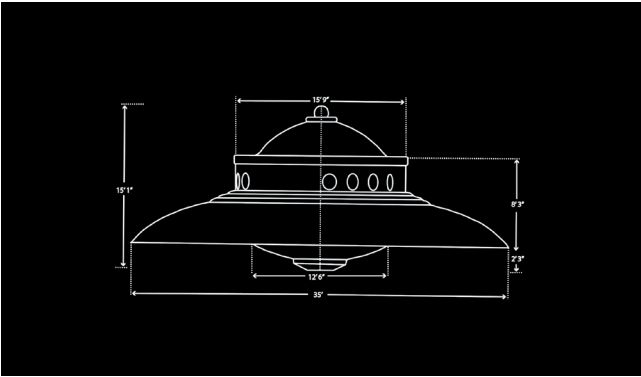
suit, a dangerous but also optimistic idea.

Are the ways in which to design for the antifoundationalism of the network, informed by the notion that users can transgress the Silicon Valley origins of technologies, to accelerate further into unrels or science fictions? Or to embed ourselves deeper within the distortions of internet conspiracy subculture and the bizarre rabbit holes of internet forums to platform the absurdity and confusion of internet narratives. It is the intention of this essay to develop an understanding of the web of influence, and the fictions that inoculate us, in order to begin imagining a resistance and subvert its course. Through materialising fictions and realities via doctored imagery or objects and technological hacking methods, the creation of new fictions is realised. The hacker, in McKenzie Warks words, calls forth a new world and form of being. Hacking of ‘vectors’ (direction and magnitude in the virtual) of information allows for creative abstraction (or

perhaps conspiracy) to bloom.⁸²

Manipulated imagery presents new paths to imagine and communicate the chaotic realism that is presented through technologies. Internet image generation could provide a parallel reality to the dominant techno-fascist ideology, a decolonisation of science fiction and technological narratives. However, it also may sustain the techno-fascist reality. Design and aesthetics can produce an awareness through diagrammatical representations of a collapsed truth, it can position parallel realities through objects and imagery, and it can accelerate further into chaotic unrels through a doctoring of visual material. Steven Shaviro noted in discussing an ‘accelerationist aesthetic’ that it may provide a relief from the dominate narratives. We are all, he concludes, accelerationists⁸³ infatuated with science fiction dreamings.





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Fig 1: Datamoshing a Military Pillbox

Fig 2: Speculative ‘Black Hole’ Weapon

Fig 3: Greenham Common and ARPANET

Fig 4: Google Earth and Abbot’s Cliff Sound Mirror

Fig 5: Train to Greenham Common and Google Earth image of Orford Ness edited in style of Praxis Instagram Image

