

# Who's Afraid of (Left) Hyperstitions?

By Armen Avanesian and Anke Hennig

## Introduction

The word “hyperstition” is a conflation of *hype* and *superstition*. Hyperstitions are fictions that cause the conditions that subsequently make them become real. They use hype—the fast circulation of ideas—and have actual outcomes by accelerating the differences that occur in reproductive cycles. According to philosopher Nick Land, hyperstition is “a positive feedback circuit including culture as a component. It can be defined as the experimental (techno-)science of self-fulfilling prophecies. Superstitions are merely false beliefs, but hyperstitions—by their very existence as ideas—function causally to bring about their own reality. Capitalist economics is extremely sensitive to hyperstition, where confidence acts as an effective tonic, and inversely.”<sup>1</sup>

Since hyperstitions locate the origins of our present in the future, and in order to regain a (positive) concept of future, it is absolutely necessary to draw a line between right- and left-wing hyperstitions. Our claim is that hyperstition has to become a conceptual practice in order not to just understand contemporary cultural environments but to also operate differently within a globally networked capitalism. By discussing examples of hyperstitional activity, such as the Cybernetic culture research unit (Ccru) and the film *Hyperstition* (2016) by Christopher Roth and Armen Avanesian, we propose temporal characteristics that allow for a differentiation between the purely reactionary spread of fear or panic and the emancipatory hyperstitions that build confidence and cohesion.

In the face of “future shocks” nihilism imagines itself post mortem; In other words, it runs a full-circle apocalyptic present. On the other hand, progressive hyperstitions facilitate a paleo-futuristic transmutation of the past, thereby liberating the present. To claim hyperstitions as part of a left politics becomes more desirable as humorous hyperstitions frequently overcome the post-critical miserabilism of political engagement by acting as agents of a crisis vortex.

## I. The Concept(ual Persona)

Why is it so important to speak of “hyperstition” as an exceptional concept necessary not only for understanding our intellectual involvement with the world but also for actively navigating our present? In order to find an answer to this question or problem, let's first have a look at concepts in general and their use in contemporary culture and art.

### IMAGE Joseph Kosuth, One and Three Tables, 1968

In Conceptual art concepts are denigrated for being abstractions that enjoy the false privilege of a set of objects falling under them. Critical theory, meanwhile, claimed concepts to be active forces engaged in changing the world. But there is something more important about concepts. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari pointed out: “We will see that concepts need conceptual personae [personnages conceptuels\*] that play a part in their definition. Friend is one such persona that is even said to reveal the Greek origin of philo-sophy.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://socialecologies.wordpress.com/2016/02/06/nick-srnicke-and-alex-williams-on-folk-politics-a-future-beyond-work-in-a-postcapitalist-world/>

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 2.

IMAGE Keith Arnatt, Trouser - Word Piece, 1972-89<sup>3</sup>

The friends of wisdom—the philia of Sophia—used to call themselves philosophers. “How, then, is the false friend to be distinguished from the true friend, the concept from the simulacrum?”<sup>4</sup> One might feel profoundly worried about the possibility that, instead of a concept, it might have actually been a simulacrum that convinced one to act in a certain way. Even more troubling is the idea that as long as one continues to think of a concept as the result of a thought-process (reflection), there might not be a way to distinguish between the concept and the simulacrum: what if reflection produces nothing but ever more “critical” reflection or ironic metareflection, an ongoing re-flection in the sense of a mirroring? We’ll also have to ask in the following: what if we need more joyful and humoristic practices—like hyperstition—which, in addition and contrary to critique, criticism, or criticality, actually do have an impact on the future, and can gain traction in the present.

IMAGE Shelly, January 5, 2016<sup>5</sup>

It seems no longer possible to think of real things as being schematized by concepts, but somehow the real manages to escape its imprisonment by way of exceeding the concept. “The simulacrum, the simulation of a packet of noodles, has become the true concept; and the one who packages the product, commodity, or work of art has become the philosopher, conceptual persona, or artist.”<sup>6</sup> Is that good or bad? Who is afraid of the ideological simulacrum and why attribute to it some kind of dark or numinous power that helps in the becoming and therefore the replacing of the real thing?

However, we will see how conceptual hyperstitions set off exactly where the simulacrum is indistinguishable from truth or reality—albeit with the exact opposite result to ideology, which lives off the unrecognizability of the fictionality of the present—and additionally use the intuition of a power present in concepts. As Deleuze and Guattari indicate, the relationship between the concept and the persona perhaps goes beyond friendship—philia being also one of the Greek words for love. So we have to ask how “person” relates to “concepts”; or to put the question in more general terms: what kind of conceptual subjectivity does hyperstition champion?



<sup>3</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/arnatt-trouser-word-piece-t07649>

<sup>4</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 9.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.stuckinplastic.com/2016/01/photo-challenge-2-make-an-exact-copy->

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 10.

The Ccru (Cybernetic culture research unit) was founded by Sadie Plant and others at the University of Warwick during Nick Land's time. The Ccru did not just invent the concept of hyperstition; **it was itself a hyperstitional movement**. What kind of conceptual persona was it then? Interestingly, the Ccru named itself a unit. A unit is a particle in a structure that is connected to multiple other units, but is clearly different from a collective; it is to be understood as a set of individuals whose character as a unity must come from somewhere else. With regards to historical collectives, one can even go so far as to say that they were haunted by unity. For example, the Russian revolutionary collectives had either committees that represented them or leaders that united them; totalitarian collectives acquired their unity via the sacrifice of one of their members in repeated purges. It is fair to say that **the collective's nightmare remains the enigma of its unity**. In order to be able to fully/further explain why and how the unit (the swarm, the Deleuzian *molecular*) is the exact opposite of the collective unity (the *molar*), **we will have to distinguish the hyperstitional approach to communization with the concept of a speculative collectivity addressed by Peter Osborne as fiction of the contemporary**. In order to understand how hyperstitional fiction manages to create its conditions of becoming real, **the (temporal) mode of fiction as well as the mode of collectivity need to be clarified**. Our thesis, that hyperstition operates through an understanding of time as grounded in the future, has two consequences. **First, it manages to articulate a conceptual persona as a movement or swarm that is able to navigate the tension between fiction and the real precisely via the intuition that fiction is a mode of time. Secondly, it will help us to explain why hyperstitional concepts gain traction in reality.**

## II. Post-Conceptual or Hyperstitional?

Discussing the work of the Atlas Group Peter Osborne implies that it acquires its collectivity through a speculative allure to a fiction of the contemporary. (Unfortunately but tellingly, Osborne uses the concepts of fiction and speculation interchangeably. Both of them hint at a kind of unity—though empirically ungraspable—of either times or personae). The Atlas Group is an artistic collective that doesn't consist of real artists—it is a fictional collective, and therefore basically still a very traditional form of conceptual persona. The collective's video *We Can Make Rain But No One Came To Ask* features a fictional character named Joseph Bitar, but because of its documentary forms the fictionality isn't discernible through markers of genre. **What makes it fictional, according to Osborne, is the staging of contemporaneity. What is at stake here is the way subjects act in their environment by forming hypotheses about how they act over time. True contemporaneity here is something that in reality can only be created by "contemporary" artists, who manage to combine different presents into one contemporaneity—although this coincidence of concept and persona only rarely happens, according to the philosopher.**

IMAGE The Atlas Group in collaboration with Walid Raad, Bilal Khlbeiz, and Tony Chakar, *We Can Make Rain But No One Came To Ask*, 2006<sup>7</sup>

But does the contemporary really produce a speculative and fictional unity of past, present, and future? This proclaimed unity remains illusionary, as even in Osborne it is only produced by capital and its constant critique. For Osborne the concept of contemporaneity takes on a historical contour by being placed in relation to Conceptual art as the past of contemporary art. **Cutting a long story short, contemporary art for Osborne falls under the concept of post-conceptual art. While Conceptual art presented the problem of the relations between concept and object, contemporary art, at first sight, implies that the enigma of their relation can be solved by investigating the temporal relationship between them.** How is it that contemporary art isn't contemporary but post-conceptual? Does it refer to the past or does it refer to the

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), p. 29.

present? Osborne's concept of "fiction" doesn't address this asynchrony within "post-conceptual" art. It essentially can't because it thinks that unity is the contemporary art's "fiction" that the past and present (and future) relate to each other. The nonfictional ontology of art is expressed by the relation of contemporary art to capital. Beyond that documentary side of art, Osborne encounters more a perceptual illusion than a proper fiction. What we get is an illusional collectivity in an illusional contemporaneity of capital "in its most recent guise as the time of the globally transnational."<sup>8</sup>

Contemporary art qua post-conceptual art thus necessarily tells the history of a failure because its documentary foundation in capital remains untouched and unquestioned by its fictional side. Even worse, the conceptual use of fiction remains unclear. This means also that—beside the dialectical sophistication so typical for the critical academic establishment today—the progressive and manipulating role of (hyperstitional) concepts here remains unspecified.

If we now take up the point of the collective haunted by the enigma of its unity, we can add that the contemporary global transnational does not provide us with this unity either. Instead of unity (of various presents or different pasts), **hyperstitions are reorganizations of the present with the help of a unit coming from the future.** Obviously the approach to the fundamental question of concepts becoming real raised by Deleuze and Guattari—"the singular point where concept and creation are related to each other"<sup>9</sup>—looks quite different with a hyperstitional unit like the Ccru. Its identity as a research unit is formed neither through a school nor a collective. In one of their glossaries, **the Ccru defines itself as a "cryptic hyperstitional entity, with apparent Neolemurian tendencies, involved in the scripting of various microcultural transmutations."**<sup>10</sup>

Take as an example Afrofuturism. In the first "swarm" of texts on the Ccru website Kodwo Eshun gives the following genealogy: "Afrofuturism comes from Mark Dery's 93 book, but the trajectory starts with Mark Sinker. In 1992, Mark starts writing on black science fiction, that's because Mark's just been to the States and Greg [Tate]'s been writing a lot about the interface between science fiction and black music. He wrote this review called *Yo Hermeneutics* which was a review of David Toop's Rap Attack plus a Houston Baker book, plus someone else's book, and it was one of the first pieces to lay out this science fiction of black technological music right there."<sup>11</sup> **The backwards oriented ontology in his quote is striking: concepts do not become real in the future; they become real from the future and in the past.** In fact, the "science fiction of black technological music" Afrofuturism—has acquired a reality by April 2, 2015, the date it was presented by Eshun at Goldsmiths' Visual Culture Department as a real movement in African technofuturist street music of the past decades.

### III. Retroactive Thinking of Time

Time is not just the sum of past, present, and future, which somehow need to be united to form our understanding of the contemporary. Like objects in general, which as we've seen do not simply fall under a concept, past, present, and future are also not simply constituted under the concept of time. Even more, time seems to have a tendency to destroy its chronological understanding. As Iain Hamilton Grant in the film *Hyperstition* explains via a medieval heretical dispute over the beginning of time, time creates a before that necessarily falls outside of it. The theological debate concerned the questions of why God left the creation of time until so late and what there was before God created time? The fact that this obviously is an unanswerable question doesn't stop it from having consequences, namely that time creates a "before." There is

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>9</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 11.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.ccrunet.net/id\(entity\)/glossary.htm](http://www.ccrunet.net/id(entity)/glossary.htm)

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.ccrunet.net/swarm1/1\\_motion.htm](http://www.ccrunet.net/swarm1/1_motion.htm)

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reason to worry neither about the retroactive creation of a “time before” nor about the circular manner of it being exactly the use of the concept of time that creates the idea of a “before time.” On the contrary, it is instead exactly in this retroactive circle that we can find the *singular point* where the concept of time and the creation of a time (as the time “time before”) are related to each other.

As we have already mentioned, hyperstitions are fictions that create the conditions that allow them to retroactively become real. And using the concept of time has exactly this effect: **concepts of time don't just make time real, they produce even more time. For example, since natural sciences told us about the Archean and Proterozoic eons before humankind, or the Hadean eon even before any life on earth, we are confronted with infinitely more time than the 6,000 years given to us in the Bible!**

Speaking from the (future) present allows for another reading of Quentin Meillassoux' dictum “the past is unpredictable.” A hyperstition does the following: instead of taking its point of origin in the present, it claims a future position. It's from the future that the present becomes real (and not via a unity of time!). One of the important consequences of this is that the hyperstitional concept of time always makes real a *singular* time that never becomes its own time. In other words, neither the present is created by a concept of the con-temporary nor the past by the idea of history. The real time created by the concept of time is asynchronous, as a time before or as a present created from a future position. **To use the field of geological time once more: if we compare the concept of the anthropocene with the concept of climate change, we see that climate change or global warming are classical scientific concepts based on chronological time and prognosis of the future. On the other hand, the concept of the anthropocene has the temporal characteristics of hyperstition; it claims that the lethal altering of the earth's conditions has started before our recognition and its future will necessarily arrive, unless prevented by a serious change in ecological politics.**



How then can this retroactive thinking of time be activated and used for a left theory and practice, which is unfortunately mostly still lethargically stuck in dialectical historical thinking, instead of trying to create more (and new) time. In the recent book *Molecular Red* McKenzie Wark comes up with a potentially very useful paleo-futuristic hyperstition based on the fiction

of what he calls the “*Carbon Liberation Front*.”<sup>12</sup> In Wark’s parody of a paleo-historic narrative, the conceptual persona of neoliberal destruction is an enemy who intends to liberate the element carbon from its geological imprisonment by releasing it into the atmosphere. Taking a future position in relation to the *Carbon Liberation Front* implies considering the destruction of the earth’s ozone layer and the becoming real of conditions on earth that are outside the corridor of human life. Possible activism against this hyperstition having become real—that is, the *Carbon Liberation Front* having been completely successful in destroying the ozone layer—would be, for example, the reorganization of agriculture to produce oxygen instead of food, or to produce ecological fuel instead of edible corn to slow down the carbon emissions from burning coal and oil. Obviously the idea of a *Carbon Liberation Front* still belongs to a traditional left mode of political fiction, mediating the real of a concept via a liberation movement. In such a dialectical fashion a concept becomes real through liberation and resistance: in short, via the inimical conceptual persona of the *Carbon Liberation Front*.<sup>13</sup> But are there also positive hyperstitional approaches for the left?

Maybe this question can be translated in an accelerationist manner: are there any technologically sophisticated approaches for the left? Because most likely any kind of resistance against the carbon-liberating enemy that uses established folk-political gestures like demonstrations (in front of the climate-change summits) will prove inefficient to save humankind. There are good reasons to assume that what is needed is a technological future proposed by speculative thought and inspired by the natural sciences. It is therefore necessary to counter fears articulated in framing the relation of technologically empowered abstraction in terms of the human individual becoming replaced by technology. Hyperstitions are the technological concepts that, so to say, combine technophilia and technophobia; they explore the excitement of technology at the point where it arouses and inflicts anxiety. Hyperstitions are techno-imaginings (Flusser) that take real data from the natural sciences and the real power of technology. Hyperstitions are coming up with a fiction from the future that confronts us with the discovery of an unexpected past that went unnoticed below the radar of our senses and didn’t become recognized through our knowledge. It didn’t become acknowledged by our ways of concept-making and of navigating our world either.



<sup>12</sup> “Average temperatures around the world are rising. One of the causes of that trend is increases in the levels of atmospheric carbon. The cause of that increase is collective human labor. In short, climate science holds that what I am calling the Carbon Liberation Front is real.”

Mckenzie Wark, *Molecular Red*

<https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewBook?id=516E9E4FAF57F72CC9A216A32935366E>, 436–437.

<sup>13</sup> “What the Carbon Liberation Front calls us to create in its molecular shadow is not yet another philosophy, but a poetics and technics for the organization of knowledge.” *Ibid.*, 38–39.

In the film *Hyperstition*, Hamilton Grant also draws from the science-fiction novel *Ring* by Peter Baxter, especially its physical concept of a yoctosecond: the proposition of a division of time immediately after the emergence of the universe through the big bang. Baxter's hyperstitional fiction takes into account the dystopian future of the earth's destroyed ozone layer, or even earth's total destruction. Once the earth has been destroyed, humankind leaves the planet and moves from space into time. Humankind comes to live in the yoctosecond. And that also means that we have to create the physical conditions to survive in the yoctosecond.

However fantastic the hyperstition of the *Carbon Liberation Front* and the yoctosecond may sound, both are hyperstitional in the way they assume the use of the concept of time as productive of time itself; this is by extensification of the timeline on the one hand, and by intensification of time's divisions on the other. The great advantage of what can be called an "intensive fiction" of the yoctosecond over McKenzie Wark's "extensive fiction" of molecular time of carbon is the positive value given to production. The yoctoseconds can be created by an accelerated or accelerationist mode of production. **Facing the destructive drive of capital's postindustrial liberation accelerationism maintains the Marxist believe in the positivity of productive force as such.**

#### IV. Personal Attractors

What is needed is something that Mark Fisher calls "**steampunk hyperstition**." At a recent workshop titled "*HYPERSTITION: Challenging Dominant Reality Today*,"<sup>14</sup> Fisher referred to Anna Kornbluh's book *Realizing Capital* and analysis of the role of personification, which makes the subject aware of capital's soul driving it from within. Kornbluh explains: "This excessive dimension of the subject of capital is called 'drive,'" a notion introduced as the culmination of personification. "As a capitalist, he is only capital personified. His soul is the soul of capital. But capital has one sole driving force, the drive to valorize itself (342)"<sup>15</sup> Capital's drive speeds up blindly. All it reveals is the gap between the personification of capital and the subject of capital. "Drive is the innermost nature of those who are themselves personifications, the soulless soul of the automaton, the essential structure of the artificial person. Without grasping drive, the text has failed, for 'a scientific analysis... is possible only if we can grasp the inner nature (innere Natur) of capital, just as the apparent motions, which are not perceptible to the senses (wirkliche, aber sinnlich nicht wahrnehmbare Bewegung).'"<sup>16</sup> He is neither a real capitalist nor a personification of capital. Is he a real simulacrum of capital's excessive subject? What is the structure of the artificial person, driven by the desire to coincide with the concept of capital? Again and again we stumble over the intricacies of conceptual personae.

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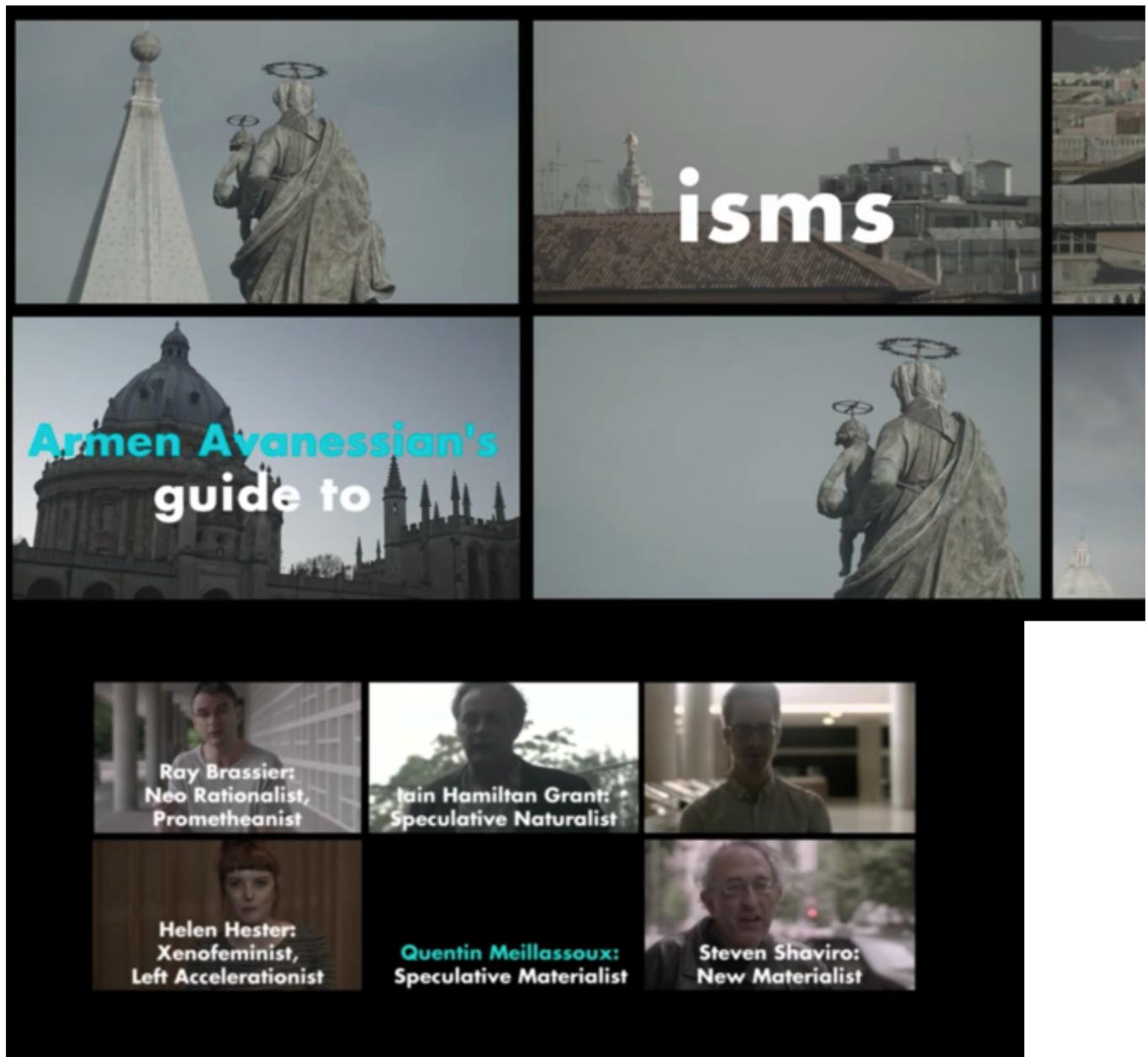
<sup>14</sup>

[http://www.buchsenhausen.at/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic\\_id=16&page\\_id=975](http://www.buchsenhausen.at/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=16&page_id=975)

<sup>15</sup> Anna Kornbluh, *Realizing Capital*

<https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewBook?id=8EC966F6FC09E5C3346673191EC9AAD3>, 325.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.



The hyperstitional conceptual persona is a moving persona, but it doesn't embody capital—neither in the persona of the capitalist nor in the anonymity of capital's imperceptible circulation. This is also why left hyperstitions, contrary to how they have been understood or conceptualized within a Landian realm, don't have to be anonymous. Hyperstitions can be singular and might even have to be personal for ethical reasons. The swarm has the advantage of not putting the subject into the service of the "cause"; it instead translates it into a movement. The decision to swarm, however, must be taken personally. **A swarm immediately forms wherever the hyperstitional conceptual persona appears—and in the same sense the (misunderstanding, individualized) attractor persona ought to be just a point of anticipation for the building of swarms and units.** A swarm has no head (at least as long as the movement resists turn into a school with authorities and mediocre disciples) or leader (since it isn't a modern mass à la Elias Canetti). The swarm also does not consist of (neoliberal) subjects whose consciousness is *apparent* to themselves. **The swarm anticipates; the swarm subjectifies future. Hyperstition offers signifiers that, by the time of their creation, have no referents. They are anticipations of being made real. The very character of anticipation has a liberating effect.** This is not meant in the neoliberal fashion that condemns the contemporary or aesthetic subject to an endless run after "the present," which makes it suffer both from not being on top of his time

and from a constant lack of presence.<sup>17</sup> Hyperliberation from the necessarily failing attempt to become contemporary is a liberation from the ideology of a full present. Mark Fisher describes ideology as “the (anxiety) dream in which we live; a fiction that denies its fictionality.” The denial of fictionality has no political or conceptual value. Instead, consciousness as he puts it is “(in the first instance) = the awareness of that dream (lucidity).”<sup>18</sup>

### V. Hyperstitional Retroactivity

Time is unique in effecting a conception (or creation) of itself and is doing so via cultural forms like fiction or narration. Narrated from a technologically asynchronous future, Hyperstition is an example of the cultural creation and mediation of a retroactive fiction.



A man who introduces himself as Suhail Malik tells the story of a summer school program called “*Emancipation of Navigation*,” which is supposed to have taken place at the *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in Berlin in 2014. The events were “documented” in a film that first appeared in 2016 but later got lost and is “now,” in 2026, reconstructed by Malik: “The relation between the film and the summer school has become the case study of what hyperstition is. The summer school’s thematisation of hyperstition in fact ended up with a film called *Hyperstition*, which was its future. The film was not in place at the time and in a way became the retroactive reorganisation of what the summer school is and in effect even what we now understand to be the primary image—the narrative that we have of the summer school—survives more through the film than anything else. So hyperstition was effected ... It was in fact the very practice of the summer school qua film.”

*Hyperstition* as a form of fiction relates differently to time not just by preferring the future instead of the present. It also marks the point at which fiction relates to creation and to its documentary side, which is capital. The character Suhail Malik continues: “The complexity of *Hyperstition* goes all the way back to its identification and designation by the kind of Landian accelerationism in the 90’s and early 2000’s. That is that hyperstition is acceleration as the very

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<sup>17</sup> On the apparent contradiction between a poetic theory of the postcontemporary (which argues against the aestheticization of presence typical in contemporary art) and the crowds it attracts, Berlin art critic recently stated, “The question used to be: What we are talking about? Nowadays one wants to know: Where shall we go?” See <http://www.spikeartmagazine.com/de/artikel/real-time>.

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[http://www.buchsenhausen.at/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic\\_id=16&page\\_id=975](http://www.buchsenhausen.at/modules.php?op=modload&name=PagEd&file=index&topic_id=16&page_id=975)

model of capitalism which is not the commodity form. Capitalism sells products through the brand. In the image of the brand it projects an image of the future and by the product sold and consumed it produces the very future it has presented. In the very success of the brand the future becomes present.”

“Brand” is a sibling of hyperstition and the reification of hype in capitalist circulation of production, distribution, and consumption. A left accelerationism uses—and a twenty-first-century left should use—hype and cultural infiltration by recognizing fiction as a form of time. The ontology of the present in this case is not articulated as what *is*, but has to be practiced as what *will have become present* through the conscious use of media apparatuses. Its ultimate goal is shifting references. Beyond the simple attempt to occupy more prominent positions of speech—the old strategy of critical academics—this “shifting of reference” implies an ontological changing of the references of the times to each other. There is no speculative realism, but *Hyperstition* narrates its past.

The retroactive concept of time includes a becoming real. Hyperstition follow the intuition that a good concept of the present at least makes/gives/produces/guarantees a real past (like the true past of speculative realism, accelerationism, or xenofeminism). As the Ccru has it “ ... once it’s real, in a sense, it’s always been.”<sup>19</sup> Hyperstition is not blind towards the asynchrony of times and the danger of the belatedness of thought, for accelerationist hyperstitionalism produces a real present through its concept of future. There is no contemporary accelerationism as there is no contemporaneity. There only “is” a post-contemporary accelerationism from the future that claims that (hyperstitional!) navigation and emancipation is possible and necessary. The (always asynchronous) present has to be made different; the lost future needs to be recovered. As the musician Marc Couroux writes, “The notion that art and its constitutive assemblages might become preemptive again, functionally virulent, instead of playing perpetual catch-up to the new (military- industrial-entertainment-etc.) avant-gardes of our era, is absolutely key.”<sup>20</sup>

Hyperstition also offers a strategy to prevent the recuperation of past futures—as the avant-gardes—by institutions, museums, archives, copyright, the carousel of creative industry, the reification as brand in the spectacle of capital. This has a serious impact on how theorizing and its propagation in the twenty-first century must be understood, including the role that fashions, hypes, and so-called hyperstitions play in the process. What does it mean to not reject but, on the contrary, embrace the responding accusation and also turn it into a positive practice for intellectual or cultural practice? According to the Ccru, “hype actually makes things happen and uses belief as a positive power.”<sup>21</sup> Quite a few of the important philosophical platforms of the last decades—Merve in Germany, Semiotext(e) in the US, and, most recently, *Collapse/Urbanomic* in the UK—testify to a hyperstitional efficacy of philosophical theory below the radar of official academia. In the age of social media, of course, other kinds of platforms and communication channels increasingly serve to introduce hyperstitions into the discursive mix, whence they spread and become active.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ccrucru.net/syzygy/apoc.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Marc Couroux, *Xenochronic Dispatches from the Domain of the Phonogregore*. (written for *Tuning Speculation* 1, revised for *Aesthetics After Finitude*, 2015)  
[http://www.academia.edu/5050613/Xenochronic\\_Dispatches\\_from\\_the\\_Domain\\_of\\_the\\_Phonoegregore](http://www.academia.edu/5050613/Xenochronic_Dispatches_from_the_Domain_of_the_Phonoegregore)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ccrucru.net/syzygy/apoc.htm>



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However, as we have already indicated, it is necessary at this point to tackle an important limitation of Land's conceptualization, according to which, "hyperstition accelerates the tendencies towards chaos and dissolution."<sup>22</sup> Hyperstitions indeed break down the intrinsically hierarchic model of concepts (objects *falling under* a concept) and bring them down to micro

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Delphi Carstens, "Hyperstition," 2010, <http://merliquify.com/blog/articles/hyperstition/>

levels, where the yoctosecond is situated, or in which the Carbon Liberation Front supposedly operates. Hyperstition is the cultural form of these micro-level movements.

The negative tautology implicit in Land's description of hyperstitions as belonging to a realm of destructive concepts being responsible for destructing reality is not, however, entirely convincing or necessarily the only logic of hyperstition. Hyperstition of the Landian type seems to inflict the same fear that we have encountered in the obsessive anxiety of a simulacrum that takes the place of the concept and eventually becomes the real concept. We argue for a revision of our understanding of concepts (holistic instead of unitarian) that actually does allow for a distinction between concept and simulacrum or sorcery. This distinction was corrupted by a misunderstanding both of the role fiction plays in the formation of reality and of the way fictions work upon our concept of time, so far as time is conceptually constructed by us. Both can be used for what might be called a progressive or left hyperstitionalism that differs from the (slightly "male adolescent") fantastic sorcery games with lego-lemurian simulacra.

On the other hand, the fear of sorcerous (a.k.a. hyperstitional) concepts is theoretically ungrounded. No doubt the tendency of hyperstition to accelerate chaos—as in any shift from a macrostructure to a microstructure—drives macrostructures towards dissolution. Since macrostructures are known to have side effects—totalitarian on the left and fascist on the right—stemming from their hierarchic build, microstructures are politically progressive. However, what is overlooked in the catastrophism of the Landian type of hyperstition is a "chaosmosis" (Guattari), or microgenesis, that can be navigated. What we understand here as a left hyperstitional practice adopts a recursive (the integration of parts into wholes) acceleration that, by the very same procedure, keeps a connection to the past and ever expands the timeline, i.e., discovers even more time before. Hyperstition does not conserve a past we have known; it creates diverse pasts. In these two points (extending the past and creating diverging pasts) hyperstition is distinct from conservatism. The retroactive futurism of hyperstition does not attempt to destroy the past either, as the modernist avant-gardes attempted.

Recursive acceleration is also not in danger of forcing concept and reality into a negative spiral in which they become equal to inimical sorcery. Progressive accelerationism distinguishes between navigating acceleration and blind speeding (the German term *Akzeleration* even differs from *Beschleunigung*, which merely means increase of speed; *Akzeleration* implies the recursive introduction of a difference into a movement that would otherwise remain circular). Accordingly, a hyperstition with progressive effects implies that its viral spread is coupled with an emancipatory element or navigation. But what do hyperstitions know such that they can manipulate heterogeneous systems? What kinds of theoretical and practical systems of knowledge emerge from the transformation of the channels in which they move? It is neither the *formal* force of the network nor the casual constraint of the better argument in regards to *content* that allows hyperstitions to impose themselves in the existing pathways. They know "nothing of [...] meaning." Instead, Cyberhype, which "flattens signs and resources onto nonsignifying triggers,"<sup>23</sup> knows a lot about movements and their impulses, and it repeats the avant-gardist shift from cultures of meaning to material cultures that in the digital age gained new urgency and power.

When Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams recently identify hyperstitions as "heuristic fictions,"<sup>24</sup> it might not have been enough to fully grasp how they actually have a traction on the future (and present). Hyperstitions have and develop an "underlying." The underlying (theoretical,

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<sup>23</sup> Nick Land, "Occultures", in: *Fanged Nouemena*, ed. By Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier, Falmouth 211, pp. 545-572., here. p. 554.

<sup>24</sup> Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, "What Is at Stake in the Future?" in Armen Avanesian and Suhail Malik, *The Postcontemporary*, forthcoming, DIS magazine

philosophical) contents that produce a surplus value of knowledge about the actual consistency of contemporary reality are relevant, and thus suitable for constructing channels that promote a change of (philosophical, academic, political, etc.) reality. This is especially significant because merely negative or defensive practices (such as neutralizing the evaluating powers in the short term or avoiding academic sabotage) won't suffice. On the other hand, new brands, buzzwords, fashions, or hypes only have emancipatory and progressive effects if their intrinsic knowledge of forms of distribution simultaneously lead to a redistribution of speaker positions and a retrofitting of channels of information—and not just to the establishment of this or that new master doctrine (with its masters or leaders), be it object-oriented ontology or neorationalism. In concrete terms: the authority of academic theorizing would have to be relativized in favor of other platforms of philosophical thinking, and philosophical thinking would have to be sought out in other places and be practiced there. If reality changes in an emancipatory way, then and only then can we speak of a progressive acceleration of the sedated proceedings of academic thinking or the effect of left conceptual hyperstitions. For this to happen, the power of of conceptual hyperstitions and hyperstitional personal personas can and must be navigated.