

國立臺灣師範大學英語學系
博 士 論 文

Doctoral Dissertation
Department of English
National Taiwan Normal University

人類世中的文學：
以超物件閱讀二十一世紀美國小說

Literature in the Anthropocene:
A Hyperobject Reading of Twenty-First Century
American Fiction

指導教授：梁 孫 傑

Adviser: Dr. Sun-chieh Liang

研究生：許 景 順

Advisee: Chingshun J. Sheu

中華民國一〇九年十一月

November 2020

Acknowledgments

Sufficient gratitude cannot be expressed to my brilliant, insightful, and wise supervisor, Professor Sun-chieh Liang. Writing this dissertation has been the most exciting and uplifting journey of my budding academic career, and it would not have been half as stimulating (or fun!) without Professor Liang's guidance.

I am deeply grateful as well to my defense committee, Professors Robin Chen-Hsing Tsai, Hannes Bergthaller, I-ping Liang, and Justin Prystash. Their incisive questions and constant support improved this dissertation immensely. Thank you again to Justin, who as the subject expert helped keep me from going off the rails. And thanks to Claire Yun-wei Huang, who offered administrative and moral support during the exams.

Thank you to Graham Harman for permission to read and quote from his response to Peter Wolfendale in his forthcoming *Skirmishes* in Chapter 1.

Thank you to Ting Han Wei and Kuangwei Shih for assistance in all things digital. They helped me avoid many an embarrassment. I also thank *Textual Practice* for publishing an earlier version of Chapter 2. And thanks to Professor Chun-yen Chen for inspiring me to begin research in this area.

I thank *M/C Journal* for publishing an earlier version of Chapter 3.

Thank you to Timothy Morton for pointing me to his "Ecologocentrism" paper. Thank you also to the organizers of the 2018 International Symposium on Literature and the Environment in East Asia: War and Peace: Militarism, Biopolitics, and the Environment in East Asia, where I presented an earlier version of Chapter 5. And thank you to the organizers of the

Contested Modernity: Place, Space and Culture conference, where I first presented the research that led directly to that earlier version.

Thank you to my composition students for improving my writing by making me mark theirs.

And finally, thank you to my parents, who kept nagging me to get this thing done.



for August, who left us too soon



摘要

本論文提出名為「超物件閱讀」的後批判閱讀模式，以回應同一現象於不同量尺之下以不同方式體現的人類世量尺差異問題。以往見到的解決方式無法兼顧不同量尺。超物件閱讀藉由向文本內的超物件調和並追尋其輪廓，得以闡釋不同量尺如何受超物件影響。

第一章說明超物件閱讀的脈絡與程序，尤其著重說明人類世、經修正的物件導向本理論、後批判轉折，以及稱為修辭詩學的敘事學分支等脈絡。第二章是三篇案例分析之首，向失能超物件調和以閱讀約書亞·費瑞斯的小說《The Unnamed》（2010）。為彌補醫學、社會與關聯等失能模型之不足，我提出辯證失能模型以闡釋位於身體、心理、物質生態與社會生態之交錯點的平衡生態位。第三章向數位超物件調和以閱讀林韜的小說《Taipei》（2013）。為正確勾勒數位邏輯對類比生命經驗的影響，我將迷因重新定義，並提出名為情感物件的新物件類型用以探索概念層次以下的思維量尺與生死間的觀點分野。第四章向敘事超物件調和以閱讀 Ben Lerner 的說《10:04》（2014）。藉由將主角於小說的後設小說與私小說敘事生態中定位，我描繪以惠特曼式序列化與回顧移位將社會概念化的新方法，以此方法所構成的敘事超物件抗衡新自由主義的敘事超物件。第五章透過史坦尼斯勞·萊姆的小說《索拉力星》（1961）對超物件作概念分析。索拉力星是一星球／外星生物超物件，因而在其身上體現超物件的五項定義性面向：黏性、非定位性、時間波動、分相性與互為物件性。小說的三個主要人物則分別體現對超物件的三種回應方式：終止、倡議人類中心主義，與調和。希冀閱讀文本超物件可提示如何向文本外的人類世超物件調和。

關鍵字：生態評論、量尺差異、物件導向本體論、莫頓、後批判轉向、失能研究、數位研究、敘事學、新自由主義



Abstract

This dissertation proposes a postcritical mode of reading called “hyperobject reading” in response to the problem of Anthropocene scale variance, in which the same phenomena manifest differently at different scales. Previous attempted responses inevitably engaged in trade-offs between scales. By attuning to hyperobjects in the text and tracing their contours, hyperobject reading accounts for the multiple scales affected by a hyperobject.

Chapter 1 details the contexts and procedure of hyperobject reading, highlighting in particular the contexts of the Anthropocene, a modified object-oriented ontology, the postcritical turn, and the branch of narratology called rhetorical poetics. Chapter 2, the first of three case studies, reads Joshua Ferris’s novel *The Unnamed* (2010) in attunement with the disability-hyperobject. In response to the insufficiencies of the medical, social, and relational models of disability, I propose the dialectical model to account for the equilibrial niche at the nexus of body, mind, and physical and social ecologies. Chapter 3 reads Tao Lin’s *Taipei* (2013) in attunement with the digital-hyperobject. To properly outline the effects of digital logic on analogue lived experience, I redefine the concept of the meme and propose a new type of object called the affective object in order to explore the sub-conceptual scale of thought and the perspectival line between life and death. Chapter 4 reads Ben Lerner’s *10:04* (2014) in attunement with the narrative-hyperobject. By locating the protagonist within the novel’s metafictional and autofictional narrative ecology, I sketch a new means of conceptualizing the social and countering the narrative-hyperobject of neoliberalism with another narrative-hyperobject, one constituted by Whitmanian serialization and retrospective shifts. The final chapter approaches hyperobjects conceptually through Stanisław Lem’s *Solaris* (1961). *Solaris*, a planet/alien hyperobject, evinces the five defining aspects of a hyperobject: viscosity,

nonlocality, temporal undulation, phasing, and interobjectivity. In turn, the three main characters of the novel respectively embody the three main responses to a hyperobject: neutralization, anthropocentrism, and attunement. I hope that reading textual hyperobjects can suggest ways to attune to extratextual hyperobjects in the Anthropocene.

Keywords: ecocriticism, scale variance, object-oriented ontology, Timothy Morton, postcritical turn, disability studies, digital studies, narratology, neoliberalism



Contents

Power of Attorney Form	iii
Dissertation Approval Form	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Dedication	ix
Chinese abstract	xi
English abstract	xiii
Contents	xv
List of figures	xvii
1 – Introduction: Hyperobject Reading	1
2 – A Dialectical Nexus of Objects: Disability as Hyperobject in Joshua Ferris’s <i>The Unnamed</i>	33
Excursus on Methodology	83
3 – The Human-Object in an Object-Oriented Universe: The Digital as Hyperobject in Tao Lin’s <i>Taipei</i>	85
4 – Fighting One Hyperobject with Another: Narrative as Hyperobject in Ben Lerner’s <i>10:04</i>	131
5 – Conclusion: Anthropocene Lessons from a Distant Fictional Planet-Hyperobject	183
Terminal	211
References	213



List of Figures

Fig. 1. Attunement and incorporation.	13
Fig. 2. Hyperobject attunement.	13
Fig. 3. The three components, textual objects, and the text-object.	22
Fig. 4. The medical model disability-object.	36
Fig. 5. The social model disability-object.	48
Fig. 6. The Nordic relational model disability-object.	59
Fig. 7. The dialectical model disability-hyperobject.	65
Fig. 8. The “noun-y” construction meme-object.	116
Fig. 9. The thresholds of coherence separating abstract objects, affective objects, and affect-objects.	121
Fig. 10. The metafictional levels of <i>10:04</i>	135
Fig. 11. Literature in the Anthropocene.	210

1

Introduction: Hyperobject Reading

We have entered a new epoch, an epoch whose lived experience¹ is characterized by the realization that no planetwide systemic intereffects are free from human influence. From the way we have constructed our societies and economies, to the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the earth on which we build, human influence reaches to the highest mountain, the darkest jungle, and the deepest sea—even into the exosphere, the beginnings of outer space. The name for this new epoch of human ubiquity is *the Anthropocene*. And though such human-influenced entanglements did not suddenly appear with the newfound recognition of the Anthropocene, its recognition has afforded us the possibility of acknowledging, engaging with, and possibly even affecting by design such Earth-wide phenomena as pandemics, global warming, digitized lived experience, global political movements, and financial chain reactions. These are phenomena existing at both the largest and smallest scales, and whose effects at the largest scale radically differ from effects at the smallest. The stakes have been raised in the search for a new perspective, at once both global and singular.

In what follows, after outlining the contours of this search, I will propose one such perspective in what I call *hyperobject reading*, a mode of reading that can adequately reflect the multiple scales of Anthropocene lived experience, by drawing on the insights of recent Continental philosophy, the version of narratology known as rhetorical poetics, and the reader-response theory of Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser. I will then locate this mode of reading in the

¹ I follow Jean-Paul Sartre's definition of "lived experience," in the form of *le vécu*, as "the dialectical process of psychic life, [. . .] perpetually susceptible of comprehension, but never of knowledge" ("Itinerary" 41).

context of the postcritical turn in literary studies. This will be followed by a chapter-by-chapter outline of the rest of the dissertation, in which I will read a few twenty-first century American novels to serve as case studies to demonstrate the power of hyperobject reading. This dissertation will sketch how hyperobjects cut across (extra)textual worlds, so that insights gleaned from encounters with textual hyperobjects² can help illumine the dimensions and complexities of hyperobjects that impinge on extratextual lived experience in the Anthropocene.

Reading the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene is a term coined in 2000 “to emphasize the central role of mankind in geology and ecology,” which together encompass the vast majority of Earth systems (Crutzen and Stoermer 17), and to epitomize the fact that, throughout the entire planet, there is no separate realm called “nature” that is devoid of human influence (McKibben 97). The Working Group on the Anthropocene, responsible for advancing a concrete stratigraphic proposal, has voted to date it to “the early 1950s,” based on an empirical geological marker, or “golden spike,” in this case the presence of a global layer of radioactive fallout from thermonuclear weapons testing (“Working”).³ At the heart of the Anthropocene is the notion that the human species “*en masse*” now has an outsized influence over our planet, one that individual humans cannot conceivably control (Clark, *Ecocriticism* 147). And yet, we should not confuse “human singularity” with “human supremacy” (Zylinska 20), being “ecological dominants” with being “ecological determinants” (Dodge 8), or weak anthropocentrism with strong anthropocentrism.⁴ In other

² We can call an object that appears in the storyworld of a text a *textual object*. *Hyperobject* will be defined below.

³ This proposal stands in stark relation to previous meditations on the relation of humanity to nature, among which the earliest known equivalent of the Anthropocene as a concept was published in 1778 (Menely and Taylor, “Introduction” 5). Yet we should remember that the significance of the golden spike is not to determine when the Anthropocene began, but to pinpoint a definitive empirical marker for future reference.

⁴ Strong anthropocentrism says that the value *in toto* of the nonhuman realm derives from humans, whereas the weak version says that what is derived from humans is merely the value of the nonhuman realm *for us* (Clark, *Cambridge* 3).

words, we are as yet unable to wield our influence creatively and purposefully, and so our comprehensive impact on the Earth is inevitably subtractive and destructive (McKibben 91). Perhaps the most tragic aspect of the Anthropocene, then, is the fact that we cannot volitionally relinquish our destructive influence over the planet (Stengers 47). Arriving at a means of transforming species-influence into species-agency, even as we recognize that species-agency may not entail collective agency, constitutes the urgent task of our time.

Agency is bound up with how it is wielded, so asking about species-agency amounts to inquiring into what the Anthropocene offers us in terms of affordances, or properties open to access (J. Gibson 127; Felski, *Limits* 164). The defining affordance of the Anthropocene is its “scale variance,” which refers to how “the observation and the operation of systems are subject to different constraints at different scales due to real discontinuities” (Woods 133). That is, the same action can have different and mutually incommensurate effects at different scales simultaneously. The mass use of air conditioning to cool indoor air can result in increased outdoor temperatures, so that the individual and aggregate effects of this action are diametrically opposed. In addressing scale variance, humanity has come face to face with itself as a “trans-scalar entity” (Horton 35). With regard to the use and functioning of technology—this covers the vast majority of human actions—Braden R. Allenby and Daniel Sarewitz identify three distinct scales: “Level I functionality, Level II system complexity, and Level III Earth systems incomprehensibility” (157). Level I is the scale of the individual using technology to accomplish a certain goal, including nourishment, respiration, and the various other goals necessary for continued biological existence (37). Level II is the scale of entangled technologies, and how the interactions of multiple technological systems often give rise to unintended consequences (38-39). And Level III is the scale of technological effects on the planet as a whole, a scale that is

hard to perceive on a case-by-case basis (63). The fact that we have perceived Level III scale effects at all is evidence of the Anthropocene's conceptual validity, so that we can call the Anthropocene itself a Level III scale effect (Clark, *Ecocriticism* 72).

Timothy Clark translates these three Levels into corresponding scales of reading (*Ecocriticism* 99-100). At the first Level is a "personal scale that takes into account [for example] only the narrator's immediate circle of family and acquaintances over a time frame of several years." Level II gives rise to a "second scale [. . .] of a national culture and its inhabitants, with a time frame of perhaps a few decades, a 'historical period' of some kind." And for the "incomprehensible" third Level, Clark proposes a "third, larger, hypothetical scale" that "could be, spatially, that of the whole Earth and its inhabitants," and temporally "a, let us say, 600-year time frame." Though the gap between the scope of Clark's second scale and that of Level III phenomena indeed necessitates a third scale, Clark's model has an obvious flaw: What would differentiate between third-scale readings of similar texts that fall within the same spatiotemporal range? He himself admits that third-scale readings transform "responsible agents" into mere "physical entities" "representing so much consumption of resources and expenditure of waste" (103). At his highest scale, we lose the granularity of the specific text.

Building on Clark's efforts, Mahlu Mertens and Stef Carps read three texts—a graphic novel, a collage novel, and a science fiction novel—to see how well they "represent" the effects of climate change at Clark's three scales, and they conclude that none of their chosen texts manages all three scales at once. They are even pessimistic enough to suggest that, rather than the novel form, "other or hybrid art forms might be the way forward" (151). And when focusing on hyperobjects, which we can think of for now as phenomena that properly exist at Level III, Adrian Tait's reading of J. G. Ballard's *The Wind from Nowhere* (1961) concludes that the

novel's hyperobject, the titular globe-spanning wind, at different times either "manifests itself in terms that generate a simplistic, human-centred disaster" narrative, or is "left to lurk in the margins of the narrative" (362). Neither of these presentations attains the scope of a third scale.

This dissertation aims to offer a mode of reading that, bridging scale variance, can successfully encompass both the micro (Clark's first scale) and the macro (Clark's second scale and Level III) simultaneously. I believe that the above approaches come up short because they subscribe to a mimetic understanding of objects and their relations, one that follows a Newtonian model of causality suited only to Level I phenomena, whereas "Level II and Level III involve complex adaptive systems in which causes and effects are difficult if not impossible to isolate" (Allenby and Sarewitz 51). To properly comprehend hyperobject reading, then, it would be helpful to first acquaint ourselves with a new understanding of "object."

Redefining Objects

The multifaceted ramifications of object relations are perhaps better grasped through the work of Graham Harman, who has proposed a philosophy known as object-oriented ontology. My use of this philosophy is not an intervention into metaphysical debates, but rather a strategically adopted perspective that, I hope to show, can illumine new facets of (extra)textual phenomena and thereby, among other possibilities, afford more productive manifestations of species-agency. Key to object-oriented ontology is Harman's "fourfold" model of objects: There are sensual objects with sensual qualities and real objects with real qualities (Harman, *Quadruple* 107), and these four elements give rise to ten different possible relations between them, including between an element and itself (114-15). What we perceive are the variegated sensual qualities of a changeless sensual object, whose changelessness in an ever-changing context is both anchored and reserved in its corresponding real object. The real object, in turn, is unified by its real

qualities. Since we do not perceive real objects and real qualities, Harman says that they are “withdrawn,” akin to Immanuel Kant’s noumenon (Harman, *Object-Oriented* 259).

In his critique of Harman’s work up to just before Harman’s 2014 book on Bruno Latour (Harman, “Wolfendale” 92), Peter Wolfendale explains why he believes Harman’s positing of the real object to be unjustified. He reconstructs Harman’s faulty logic step by step as follows, in Wolfendale’s words (68-71):

- (i) Our knowledge of things does not exhaust all of their features. There is more to them than we actually know.
- (ii) Our causal interactions with things do not exhaust all their capacities. There is more to them than we actualise.
- (iii) Our knowledge/interactions can *never* exhaust all the features/capacities of things. There is more to them than we could *possibly* encounter.
- (iv) Our knowledge/interactions can never exhaust all the features of a thing, because there is some feature of every thing *qua* thing that we can never encounter.
- (v) Our knowledge/interactions can never exhaust a thing, because we can never encounter the *essence* of the thing. We only encounter the (*sensual*) *appearance* of the thing, never its (*real*) *being*.

Though (iii) does not strictly follow from (ii), it is an intuitively plausible inference. The key error is in moving from (iii), which can still be said to remain within the purview of phenomenology, to (iv), which commits the category error of reifying phenomenological data into ontological presupposition. As Jean-Paul Sartre notes, even though the being of a phenomenon “overflows and founds any knowledge we can have of” the phenomenon, this “does not mean that being is hidden *behind* the phenomena [. . .] , nor that the phenomenon is an

appearance that refers to a being distinct from it.” Rather, “the being of the phenomenon is coextensive with the phenomenon,” and it can “escape the phenomenal condition [. . .] only to the extent that it is revealed.” The name Sartre gives for this concept is “the transphenomenality of being” (*Being* 7). *Contra* Harman, a phenomenon is distinct yet inseparable from its being.⁵

This would be but a minor quibble if the real object had expository force and could help resolve significant philosophical conundrums. But Wolfendale demonstrates how the real object just further muddies the conceptual waters. The most immediate issue has to do with definition: When we talk about a real object, is that real object *qua* subject of discourse a sensual object with its own corresponding real object, thereby invoking an infinite regress (289-90)? Harman’s definitions of “object”⁶ fail to address this issue, sometimes even exacerbating it by emphasizing an object’s unity, as often happens when Harman discusses examples.

Another confusion has to do with causality. Real objects and qualities are posited as the reserve of change, but since they are entirely withdrawn from other objects and qualities (real or sensual), the fourfold model lends itself to “an essentially static cosmic order” (Wolfendale 14). An example that Wolfendale could have given here, but does not, is when Harman calls some objects “dormant” rather than nonexistent—it seems we never have new objects, just previously

⁵ In a forthcoming publication, Harman responds to Wolfendale’s argument by positing that “OOO does not accept the existence of a self-justified subfield called ‘epistemology’ at all, but interprets it as a bad ontology that takes the thought-world relation to be the basis of all others[. . .] I refuse such a strict division, which is based on an acceptance of the correlational circle that I reject outright” (“Wolfendale” 12, 74). The correlational understanding of epistemology, which begins from the “thought-world relation” and has trouble escaping it, is for Harman “an *ontological doctrine*” (74). In this way, he follows François Laruelle in simply stipulating axiomatically a metaphysics outside of correlationism without having to chart a path of egress (Brassier 132, 134). This is a perfectly valid move when discussing first philosophy.

⁶ “Objects are units that both display and conceal a multitude of traits” (*Quadruple* 7). “If something is one, and has a reality that resists any perception from outside, then it deserves to be called an object” (*Circus* 73). Objects are equivalent to “substance” or “thing” (“Response” 74). “An object is anything that cannot be entirely reduced either to the components of which it is made or to the effects that it has on other things” (*Object-Oriented* 43). And, most recently, “For OOO, the object is other than any relation *anything* might have with it” (“Wolfendale” 16).

unperceived ones (*Circus* 71). To resolve this issue, Harman sets forth a model of change that he calls “vicarious causation,” in which a real object is fused with a set of sensual qualities from a sensual object in a process called “allure” (*Quadruple* 103-04).⁷ The problem here, according to Wolfendale, is that Harman’s examples of allure are exclusively cases in which “there is some *effect*” inherent in the action or relation chosen as example. In other words, allure is not causality but rather a specific type of causality, begging the question of causality itself (101-02).⁸ Perhaps in response to this criticism, Harman later describes another form of causality called “symbiosis,” in which an object changes due to key interactions with, or incorporations of, other objects. “Symbiosis suggests,” he adds, that “entities have neither an eternal character nor a nominalistic flux of ‘performative’ identities that shift and flicker with the flow of time itself,” thereby repudiating both real and sensual qualities in one stroke (*Immaterialism* 47). How far Harman has strayed from his fourfold model can be seen in the fact that his symbiotic analysis of the “real object” of the American Civil War reads as if he is analyzing it as a sensual object (*Object-Oriented* 115).

In light of the evident unwieldiness of Harman’s system even if we accept his responses, we will here employ a modified understanding of object-oriented ontology that does away with the fourfold model. Instead, we will say that an object has perceptible and imperceptible *sides*, in the metaphorical rather than spatial sense, much as how quantum physicists refer to a quark’s six “flavors” in a metaphorical rather than gustatory sense. Much as a real object and its qualities are the withdrawn reserve of change, an object’s imperceptible side for us is the *locus* of its as yet

⁷ There might be change between real objects and real qualities as well, but since both are withdrawn, we would never know.

⁸ Wolfendale does not dwell on whether it would be meaningful or even possible to define causality as such. Indeed, he notes that Harman’s model of causality is a form of “local occasionalism” with case-by-case mediation (99), but, in his demand for “some good [external] reasons” for Harman’s position, he does not seem to recognize that the lack of a consensus model of causality makes Harman’s position the default.

unpresented facets, its transphenomenality. There is always the possibility that, from its imperceptible side, another, previously unpresented, facet of an object may manifest in its perceptible side. This bipartite structure entails that objects are finite (one object is not another) yet limitless (there is an inexhaustible number of possible facets), and it salvages Harman's numerous definitions of "object" listed above.

Objects can be not just physical objects (such as "medium-sized dry goods" and people) but also "social objects," like the Dutch East India Company (Harman, *Immaterialism* 117), as well as what we might call *conceptual objects* (such as a squared circle) and *abstract objects* (such as faith). This typology is not definitional, but merely one way to organize the plethora of objects. Other typologies are possible: Harman deploys, in addition to social objects, "real, fictional, natural, artificial, human," and "non-human" objects (note the equivocation on "real" objects) (*Object-Oriented* 12), and Levi R. Bryant posits a more theoretical typology of "dark objects, bright objects, satellites, dim objects, rogue objects, and black holes" (10).

As a "flat ontology" (Harman, *Object-Oriented* 54) in which every existent is an object, object-oriented ontology sees the conventionally understood subject as an object, too. Just as humans each have their own subjectivity, so too does every object have its imperceptible side. This reframes the subject-object dyad, so that the essence of subjectivity—be it "individualism," "the Cartesian subject," "*homo economicus*," "the sovereign self" (Clune 243), "identity" (247), freedom, agency, creativity, minimal difference, human nature, or what have you—is now understood as the human-object's⁹ imperceptible side, its *locus* of the yet-unpresented. If every object has what we would conventionally call its own subjectivity, then just as we cannot

⁹ Since every existent is an object, "human" and "human-object" refer to the same existent, and the suffix is merely added to highlight the object-oriented logic of the discussion at hand.

comprehensively know any human, we cannot comprehensively know any object. Timothy Morton conveys this idea when he describes an object as a “strange stranger”: Objects are “strangely strange. Their strangeness itself is strange. We can never absolutely figure them out. If we [thought we] could, then all we would have is a ready-made box to put them in, and we would just be looking at the box, not at the strange strangers” (*Ecological* 41). By “ready-made box,” Morton is referring to the conceptual limitations of perception, in that, in our terms, we can only ever know the perceptible side of an object and not the object itself.

In addition to physical, social, conceptual, and abstract objects—among other possibilities, for “typology” is itself an (abstract) object with its own imperceptible side—there are also what Morton calls “hyperobjects,” objects “that are massively distributed in time and space relative to humans” to the extent that they may be difficult for us to perceive (*Hyperobjects* 1). Time and space are dimensions, so another way of understanding hyperobjects is as objects that manifest in more dimensions than we can simultaneously perceive. Morton offers the classic example of how, when a sphere passes through a plane, it will first appear as a point, and then grow into a circle with a gradually increasing diameter before finally, past the halfway mark, shrinking back again into a point (70). Just as the sphere itself, merely conjectured, is never fully present (we ourselves can never actually see an entire sphere), neither is a hyperobject, as at any given point in spacetime a hyperobject only manifests its perceptible side (38-39, 60). To be clear, I am not placing hyperobjects in parallel with the other object types. Though the four types are most likely mutually exclusive, an object can be both one of the four types and a hyperobject, as long as its spatiotemporal scale makes it hard for us to perceive it. The chosen scale of perception determines what is and is not a hyperobject, and as this dissertation deals with the

problems posed by Anthropocene scale variance for humans, the chosen scale of perception here is a human one.¹⁰ Global warming is Morton's main example of a hyperobject. Other examples:

A hyperobject could be a black hole. A hyperobject could be the Lago Agrio oil field in Ecuador, or the Florida Everglades. A hyperobject could be the biosphere, or the Solar System. A hyperobject could be the sum total of all the nuclear materials on Earth; or just the plutonium, or the uranium. A hyperobject could be the very long-lasting product of direct human manufacture, such as Styrofoam or plastic bags, or the sum of all the whirring machinery of capitalism. (*Hyperobjects* 1)

Or a hyperobject could, indeed, be capitalism itself (Morton, *Humankind* 60). Starting from the premise of nothing but objects, object-oriented ontology can thus account for phenomena ranging from subjectivity to spatiotemporal dimensions.

With this new understanding of objects, we can now turn to object relations. In place of Harman's allure, we will substitute *attunement* and *incorporation*—two perspectives on the same mereological relation. The flat ontology of the object-oriented paradigm admits of objects and only objects; hence, relations must also be defined via objects. And since the universe in its entirety is itself an object on equal ontological footing with a human-object, with its own imperceptible side harboring inexhaustible possible facets, we have no access to a universally objective and/or all-encompassing perspective on any object (Kastrup et al.),¹¹ let alone on every object. An object-oriented paradigm is not Newtonian, or even Einsteinian, but Bohrian (Barad 352), a paradigm of entanglement under which an object always manifests as an “object-for”

¹⁰ I therefore side with Ursula K. Heise, who rightly notes that, when Morton says “every object is a hyperobject” (*Hyperobjects* 201), he dilutes the concept of its expository force.

¹¹ This includes text(-object)s (Iser 53).

another object (Morton, *Hyperobjects* 118).¹² An object's perceptible facets are perceptible because they emanate what Morton calls "zones of aesthetic causality" (*Hyperobjects* 141). When object A perceives object B, it is because object A attunes to object B through the latter's zones (or: object B tunes object A through the former's zones), and the resulting perceiver-perceived dyad is itself a new object, object C. A zone is an object, too, the shared part-object linking objects A and B into object C. Morton calls them zones of "aesthetic causality" because perception causes relation (171), and *attunement* describes this relation from within.

From without, though, this relation is one of *incorporation*. When object A attunes to object B, object A is incorporated into a new object along with object B, and both objects A and B become part-objects of this new object, C (fig. 1). But in instances in which object B already presents many facets, the similarities between objects B and C can be so extensive that it would be more convenient to consider object C as just object B with newly presented facets (fig. 2). This is often what happens when we human-objects are incorporated into hyperobjects (*Hyperobject* 1).

We have said that objects are always objects-for, and we have seen how being an object-for involves incorporation. By syllogism, then, we must conclude that every object is composed of other objects, and that every object is simultaneously a part-object of at least one other object. Does this not create a new infinite regress of "objects all the way down"? Here we should remember that an object's imperceptible side ensures that a part-object is always more than just a

¹² The difference between the Einsteinian and Bohrian paradigms is that the former posits determinate spatiotemporal perceptions for any possible observer, while the latter premises determinate perception on there being an observer in the first place. In other words, the Einsteinian paradigm does not admit of indeterminacy—"God does not play dice with the universe." This difference is what Heise criticizes Morton for eliding over. My point here is that an object's perceptible side, being perceptible, must be directly or indirectly entangled with the perceiving object.

part-object of another object, and that being a part-object is but one of its facets. A part-object is not exhausted by the whole-object of which it is a part, which is why a zone-object can be shared between two objects in attunement. A whole-object is therefore not ontologically greater than the

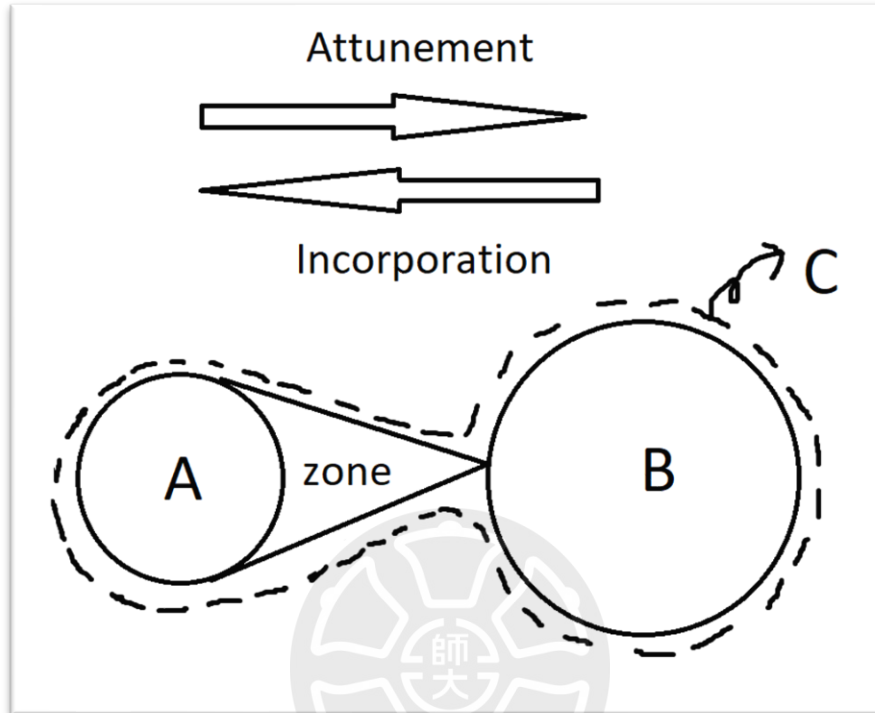


Fig. 1. Attunement and incorporation. The dotted line represents object C.

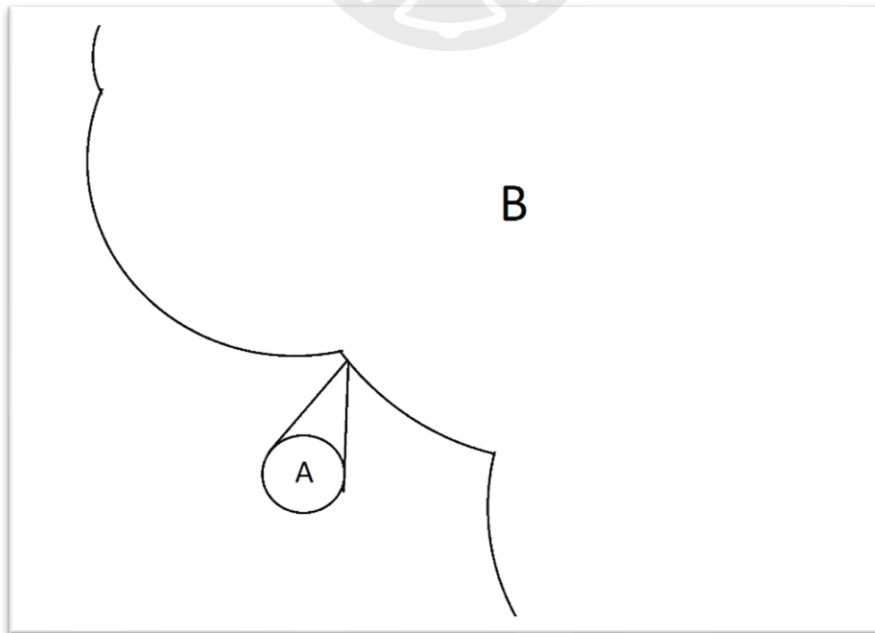


Fig. 2. Hyperobject attunement. The entire figure represents object C, but it is more convenient to refer to it as hyperobject B with newly presented facets.

sum of its part-objects (Morton, *Humankind* 106; Phillips 69)—Morton says that “wholes *subscend* their parts” rather than transcend them (102). The relation of incorporation is consequently not unidirectional (“all the way down”) but multidimensional, even crossing between object types, so that the known universe (a physical object) is a part-object of the whole universe (which is an abstract object, or maybe even a conceptual one). The more objects for which we account, the more dimensions are invoked in which incorporation can occur. This multidimensionality explains why causality as we usually understand it grows blurry when we examine Level II and Level III phenomena. The more pertinent concern, then, is not infinite regress but “context explosion,” the idea that “the context of relevance is *structurally incomplete*” and has no horizon (Morton, *Being* 42). To avoid this, any analysis of these complex phenomena must take a specific perspective, according to which a center can be provisionally located, and its margins defined by a practical limit, as we will see below in terms of textual interpretation. Object-oriented ontology, it turns out, is perspectivist.

The shortcoming of Clark’s proposed third scale thus has less to do with the scale itself and more to do with how Clark has neglected his model’s intrinsic perspectivism. He has quite by default followed the perspective of a specific hyperobject: the carbon cycle, which does not manifest very differently for different humans, or even for most extant animal species. It is no surprise, then, that Clark finds it hard to avoid a third scale that amounts to “an *unframing* of both the first and second scales” (*Ecocriticism* 104). With an informed choice of hyperobject perspective, Clark’s third scale can be made to yield a meaningful literary analysis, one that maintains focus on individual experience while accounting for the vast phenomena by which individual experience is shaped, and which individual experience helps shape in turn (Hooley 196). The third scale will look different depending on which hyperobject is chosen to frame the

reading, but every hyperobject perspective will—by dint of how “hyperobject” is defined—encompass Level III phenomena.

Having found a course correction for Clark’s argument, we should be careful not to repeat the mistakes of Tait or Mertens and Craps. The object-oriented paradigm leads us to see that the relation between a hyperobject’s presence in a text and its extratextual correlative is not simplistically mimetic. We have difficulty enough perceiving hyperobjects in the lived experience of our “world”;¹³ the mimetic approach, which seeks to represent this lived experience within a text, sets yet another hoop to jump through. Rather, I believe that there is no formal or structural difference between textual and extratextual hyperobjects—which is to say that the only possible differences are in the facets that each presents—and that narratology, the formal study of narrative texts, therefore has theoretical resources to offer us in coping with extratextual hyperobjects. I specifically draw on James Phelan’s rhetorical poetics, because its emphasis on the individual reading experience harmonizes with the perspectivism of hyperobjects and, by extension, hyperobject reading.

Hyperobject Reading

Phelan distinguishes between the “authorial audience, the hypothetical group for whom the author writes,” and an “actual audience” in time and space (7), thereby implying that the same text will be perceived differently by each reader, even by the same reader at different times (Iser 149).¹⁴ Under the object-oriented paradigm, we can only indirectly comprehend an object

¹³ I define *world* as *the sum total of (the perceptible facets of) the objects in one’s perspective at a given time*. This redefinition is necessary because hyperobjects bring on the “end of the world,” in the Heideggerian sense of “world” (Morton, *Hyperobjects* 148); see Chapter 5.

¹⁴ This idea is similar to Grant Hamilton’s object-oriented call to “reject the very idea of a privileged reading. You are the most important reader of the book in your hand” (120). But Hamilton’s proposed methodology aims to explore literature “as a form of expression that interrogates the gaps that open up between the world and our image

per se, as opposed to comprehending just its perceptible side (Bogost, *Alien* 64). For example, my reading (object C) of a literary text is always of the text (object A) as it attunes to me (object B) through the zone of a particular instance of reading. It (object C) becomes a part-object of my world. Since a text presents different facets when tuned by different readers, the purpose of literary criticism (understood simplistically as the record of a particular reading) is not to establish universal truths, which exist only as conceptual objects, but to present the reader of said criticism with another facet of the text-object that is being read. The same logic applies when the text-object is literary criticism, so that different readers will tune the same literary-critical text in different ways and perceive different facets. Object-oriented ontology may not be “objects all the way down,” but an object-oriented paradigm of reading is “interpretations all the way up”—or as Stanley Fish says, “interpretation is the only game in town” (355). Even if we agree on every single point of hyperobject reading outlined in this chapter, it is more likely than not that we would arrive at substantively different readings built atop the same text. Given the idiosyncrasies of these interpretative heights, to speak of hyperobject reading as a distinct and coherent mode of reading, and to group together the results of individual hyperobject readings, only make sense if we share an understanding of how hyperobject reading operates. In this introduction, I seek to ground this shared understanding in Phelan’s structural components of the narrative text; the following three chapters will each read a literary text to show what some of the interpretative heights might look like.

According to Phelan, each narrative has “mimetic, thematic, and synthetic components.” The mimetic component refers to textual objects as “hypothetically or conceptually possible,”

or experience of that same world” (24), whereas hyperobject reading seeks to bridge those gaps and traffic concepts and strategies across them.

possible in extratextual terms, wherein “textual object,” as per the object-oriented definition, can refer to characters, their motivations, their relationships, elements in the spatiotemporal setting, symbols, systems, information, and so on; colloquially speaking, the mimetic component comprises every object that is “in” the text. The thematic component refers to the “issues being addressed by the narrative” and by the latter’s textual objects and their presentation; we might say that it comprises all that a text “says.” And the synthetic component focuses on “the larger narrative [and its objects] as artificial constructs,” and the processes and aspects of their construction (11); in brief, it comprises how a text’s mimetic and thematic elements are conveyed through the selection and arrangement of the “words on the page.”¹⁵ As we can already see, these three textual components are mutually and dialectically constitutive. Let us take these three components in turn.

The mimetic component is not as straightforward as it might first appear. Marie-Laure Ryan points out that readers “construct fictional worlds as the closest possible to their model of reality, amending this model only when it is overruled by the text,” an idea she calls the “principle of minimal departure” (376). Cognitively speaking, the text would indeed make no sense if readers did not follow this principle, but underlying it is the further assumption that some textual objects *will* differ from the reader’s extratextual understanding of them, and that even a textual object that exists extratextually may present (or lack) different facets compared to its extratextual correlative. Even if a textual object seems identical to its extratextual correlative, there may always be a latent difference in the imperceptible side of the textual object and/or its

¹⁵ Phelan also notes that readers will have “cognitive, affective, ethical, and aesthetic responses” to the text, the lattermost referring to the quality of the overall reading experience (10). Though at one point he talks of “cognitive, affective, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions” of the text and equates them with the three components (258), it should be evident that they are not mutually determining, and that one can have, for example, an ethical response to a text’s synthetic component.

extratextual correlative. So if we accept the consensus understanding of “speculative fiction” as referring to fiction that, even if it employs a recognizably realist style, is not tied to portraying what extratextually exists (Gill 72-73; Oziewicz; Eysteinsson 196-97), then we can take literally Damon Knight’s assertion that “every work of fiction [is speculative], to some degree” (3-4). As Iser reminds us, when a textual element “is presented in such a way that it simulates reality, this is not an end in itself but a sign for a broader meaning” through interpretation (181). Ryan defines the storyworld, what she calls the “textual or fictional world,” as “a container filled with the characters and objects referred to by the text. Reference, in this sense, does not require [extratextual] existence: a fictional text refers to a world even though this [story]world does not exist independently of the text” (369). Whereas Harman categorizes “fictional” and “real” objects as types of object (again, this is not the “real object” that complements the “sensual object”), here we are differentiating between objects that, respectively, are and are not part-objects of a text. By extension, then, the sum total of differences between textual-extratextual object-pairs constitutes the boundary of the storyworld itself. And the principle of minimal departure suggests that this boundary is always a porous one, an *ad hoc* boundary determined by each reader at each moment of reading.

The next component, the thematic, refers to the themes and issues, large and small, that have a textual basis and can be gleaned from the text’s mimetic and synthetic components. “Textual basis” here includes the synthetic orientation of mimetic elements, and themes mentioned explicitly in the text, but also themes that are merely implied through association or as the reverse of a binary. As Ben Lerner notes, “what *doesn’t* happen is also caught up in our

experience—is the negative element of experience” (“You’re”).¹⁶ Such a definition raises concerns of context explosion. In other words, what theme does *not* have a textual basis? Indeed, a given text can say everything and anything. The emphasis on having a textual basis is not a logical constraint but a pragmatic one: Practically speaking, one must confine a thematic reading to what can be grounded in the text within the space allotted to the explication of said grounding and within (a reasonable estimate of) the time available to the reader for comprehension. For the non-professional reader, these could be understood respectively as the reader’s mental space and recreational time. The nebulous yet undeniable textual presence of the thematic component echoes the nebulous yet increasingly undeniable extratextual presence of hyperobjects. And so, just as comprehending Level III phenomena is possible only by attuning to hyperobjects one by one, each hyperobject reading focuses on a single theme-object to explore its entangling effects on the micro and macro scales of the storyworld. As it pervades a storyworld, a hyperobject will be felt on both the level of individual characters and that of the systems with which they are entangled. From Clark’s ill-advised non-choice of hyperobject, we can intuit that, for a given text, some themes lend themselves better to a hyperobject reading than others. The chosen theme should have a strong textual basis, perhaps even to the extent that readers view it as the prevalent or dominant theme, however these terms are defined by each reader (and in each reading).

Iser has it that a particular reading is always generated by the interaction between reader and text, in that the reader supplies textual elements to fill in the connective and combinatory “blanks” in between what is explicit in a text (182), and that “the explicit in its turn is transformed” by what the reader supplies (169). These blanks are “prestructured by the language

¹⁶ For instance, texts without explicitly ecological mimetic elements can (and arguably should) still be read ecologically (Clark, *Ecocriticism* 64; Morton, *Ecology* 79).

of the text,” by its affordances (21), and this textual basis provides the standard according to which a reading is only valid if it is “defensible [. . .] intersubjectively” to other readers (230). This intersubjective constraint is echoed in Fish’s “interpretive communities,” in which readers are bound by a set of interpretation-guiding conventions (14-16) and recognized interpretative procedures (345). As there is no absolutely correct “master” interpretation, interpretive communities will “replace or dislodge” each other over time (16). But the examples that Fish conjures up to describe the birth of an interpretive community tether the seemingly limitless possibilities of his consensus-based perspectivism to a biographical paratextualism: “It would begin with the uncovering of new evidence (a letter, a lost manuscript, a contemporary response)” (347). Having renounced textual formalism, Fish cannot bring himself to leave its general vicinity, and his insistence on biography can itself be transformed into a textual element via a brief two-step detour through (i) Michel Foucault’s foregrounding of the textual presence of the author *qua* institution in his “author-function” (1485) and (ii) Wayne C. Booth’s “implied author”—a figure generated by the sum of all of the synthetic elements of a text (Phelan 196).¹⁷ It would seem that there is always a text in Fish’s class.

In the end, Iser and Fish approach the same problem from opposite ends, one from text to reader community, the other *vice versa*. Taking them together, we might say that readers are free to single out any theme as the dominant one, but that the choice will always be influenced by the mutual entanglement of the affordances of the text on the one hand and said readers’ interpretive community on the other. Textual affordances are determined following Monroe C. Beardsley’s classic principles of interpretation, the Principle of Congruence—the “logical and physical possibilities” in the “clashes and interlockings of words”—and the Principle of Plenitude—that

¹⁷ Arguments against the implied author as distinct from the actual author will be reviewed in Chapter 4.

“all the connotations [or interpretations] that can be found to fit are to be attributed to the” text (144). And under the influence of their interpretive community, readers may ground their reading in any theme that can orchestrate the textual elements in a way that would strike other readers as valid, these other readers being, at a minimum, fellow members of the same interpretive communities, narrow and broad. I would further posit that the evaluative standard for a given reading is primarily its persuasiveness for those who accept it, and only secondarily the breadth of the interpretive community that finds it valid—intensity over breadth.

The synthetic component, finally, deals with the mimetic component’s artificial construction in the selection/omission, presentation, and sequencing of its elements. The synthetic component has to do with the mimetic component’s artificial construction *in terms of the text’s thematic component*. For any textual element, the three components are inseparable: what it is (mimetic), how it is presented (synthetic), and—in aggregate with other mimetic elements—the grounds for its presentation (thematic). At the outer limit, the synthetic component constitutes the boundary of the storyworld, Ryan’s “container,” and a theme-object presents as a textual hyperobject (fig. 3).

A *hyperobject reading*, then, is a reading that treats a text’s dominant theme-object as a textual hyperobject. Its motivating question: For a given text-object, how does the construction of textual objects, and of the text-object itself, afford (and/or complicate) a coherent reading along the lines of a chosen theme-hyperobject? Hyperobject reading thrives on exploration and illumination rather than on critique, aligning itself with the recent postcritical turn in literary criticism.

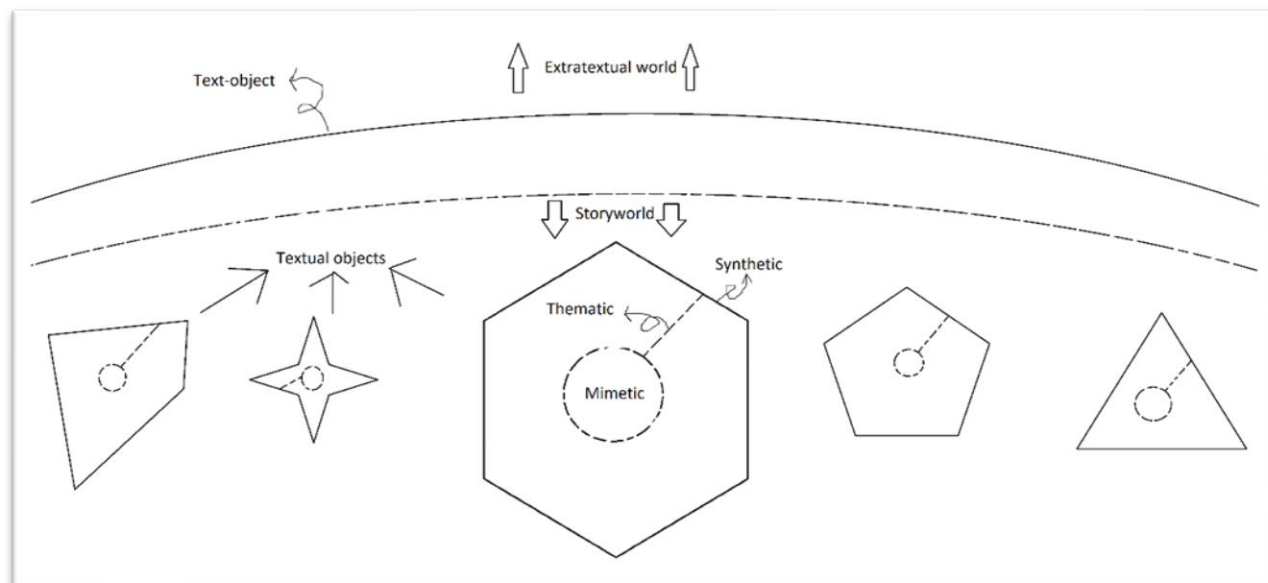


Fig. 3. The three components, textual objects, and the text-object. The storyworld boundary dotted line represents the fact that characters do not know they are in a storyworld. Most of the dotted lines representing the thematic component are at the same angle to represent the unity of the theme-hyperobject.

Postcritical Reading

The most prominent development in the postcritical turn is the methodological rebellion known as “surface reading,” first set forth by Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus. The term invites criticism of how the binary surface-versus-depth metaphor of reading on which it draws oversimplifies the act of reading, and most of these criticisms are justified (Baskin 88; N. Brown, “Close” 145, 162n1; Lesjak 30; Noys 296; Song 69n37). But such criticisms mostly miss the point of surface reading as a concept. Advocates of the postcritical turn are not interested in choosing between textual depth or surface, close or distant reading, critique or description; indeed, it has been argued that post-critique is but the latest development in critique, “a response to the uncertainty of how and what texts mean and how we might know them” (Beckman and Blake 425). Rather, post-critique takes as its target “the asymmetry that defines a certain critical posture” (Felski, “Response” 386), or what Carolyn Lesjak labels “reified protocols of reading”

(30). Morris Dickstein clarifies this reified asymmetry in an essay based on a presentation he delivered in 1991, almost two decades before Best and Marcus introduced the world to surface reading in 2009, and nearly a quarter-century before Rita Felski first articulated her postcritical position in *The Limits of Critique* (2015). Dickstein observes, “What has marked so much of our most advanced criticism is the suspicion and hostility with which it performs these operations [of critiquing dated ideological formations]: its failure to distinguish art from propaganda, literature from advertising, its fierce resistance to the mental framework of the works it examines.” There is an overemphasis, he says, on the question, “how is the author trying to seduce and deceive us, even indoctrinate us? Some of our recent ideological criticism turns the social understanding of literature, which can be intrinsically valuable, into an all-too-predictable exercise in debunking and demystification” (229). Another way of phrasing Dickstein’s point is to say that “so much of our advanced ideological criticism” is too uncharitable to entertain the notion that the text (or its author) may be sincere and in good faith. Best and Marcus call this “symptomatic reading,” or “the hermeneutics of suspicion” (1-2).

Surface reading, in contrast, wagers that an illuminating reading may not have to mistrust the text, and that other approaches are sometimes more productive. In seeking to sketch these alternative approaches, surface reading asks us to, among other things, pay “*attention to [the] surface [in] a practice of critical description,*” a practice which entails seeing the “*surface as the location of patterns that exist within and across texts.*” We should “attend to what is present rather than privilege what is absent” (11). And critical description is elaborated on in a later essay by Marcus, Heather Love, and Best as to “*foreground and attend to the protean nature of what we describe,*” to “hono[r] the object described” (12, 14). These suggestions, especially seeing “patterns that exist within and across texts” and “honoring the object described,” align

with hyperobject reading's focus on the entanglement of the thematic component, which cuts across storyworld boundaries, with the mimetic and synthetic components.

A more comprehensive exploration of the hermeneutics of suspicion can be found in the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a key precursor to the postcritical turn. For Kosofsky Sedgwick, the hermeneutics of suspicion or "paranoid reading" is, among other things, "a strong theory" providing "an explanatory structure" that "may be experienced by the practitioner as a triumphant advance toward truth and vindication," while a non-practitioner "may see [it] as tautological[ly]" discovering what it already assumes is there (135). In pursuing its foregone conclusion, paranoid reading "is a theory of negative affects," a cynical mode of reading that leaves no room for "a sustained *seeking of pleasure*" or other positive affects (137). And paranoid reading "places its faith in [the] exposure" of its singular cynical truth, overlooking the possibility "that a fully initiated [paranoid reader] could still remain indifferent or inimical, or might have no help to offer" (138) in addressing "social formations in which visibility itself constitutes much of the violence" (140). We can even intuit a causal relation among the three aspects of paranoid reading: In its conviction that exposure of a hidden truth is the best, most efficacious, or only goal of interpretation, paranoid reading overgeneralizes in always assuming such a hidden truth, and this unjustified assumption generates a cynicism that sees all other interpretative results as suspect.

The idea that exposing a hidden truth could be an impotent or even harmful act may seem counterintuitive, so used are we to demystification as the goal of close reading. An example might prove illuminating here. Peter J. Rabinowitz posits the notion of "'fragile' texts, texts whose performative success requires the complicit silence of precisely those who know the most

about it” (205). Based on his experience of teaching Nella Larsen’s queer novel *Passing* (1929), he argues that,

by providing one student with a key to the novel, we may be draining the novel of the value it might hold for another student in the same class: its supportive value to a closeted student, for instance, in its simultaneous acknowledgment of her situation *and* its agreement to maintain the secret—as well as its provision of a secret metaphor through which she might talk about her situation without having to claim it or even name it. (207)

Since being (or having been) closeted, a core facet of queer identity, largely consists in having secret knowledge (the knowledge of one’s own queerness), a text that conveys the closeted identity of its protagonist *only to those who can relate to the phenomenology of closetedness because they themselves are or have been closeted* would be “outed” by the interpretative disclosure of this closetedness. This disclosure, by exposing the secret knowledge of queerness held by closeted or formerly closeted readers, would deprive these readers of the novel’s affective solidarity. Moreover, beyond the theoretical background of queer studies that he shares with Kosofsky Sedgwick, Rabinowitz suggests the relevance of his argument for other critical discourses, asking of postcolonial interpretation, “Isn’t it possible that we’re doing something similar as we ‘interpret’ colonial and postcolonial or other resistance texts, giving our students interpretive keys to cultures that have been trying to counter precisely the cultural forces that the American academy represents?” (208). His arguments serve as an uncanny reiteration of the idea that particular acts of reading by particular readers can yield radically different results.

Given how paranoid reading is so tautological, cynical, and methodologically limited to exposure, we can understand Kosofsky Sedgwick’s worry that “the broad consensual sweep of such methodological assumptions,” their reified asymmetry, “may, if it persists unquestioned,

unintentionally impoverish the gene pool of literary-critical perspectives and skills” (143-44). She is quick to add that “to practice other than paranoid forms of knowing does *not*, in itself, entail a denial of the reality or gravity of enmity or oppression” (128)—a sentiment echoed by Best and Marcus (18)—but rather enables the pursuit of other “important phenomenological and theoretical tasks that can be accomplished only through” non-paranoid forms of reading (145).

Her proposed notion of “reparative reading” would, for instance, “attune [. . .] exquisitely to a heartbeat of contingency” that is foreclosed to the tautology of paranoia (147); allow the reader to “learn best to apprehend, fulfill, and bear company” with “one another immediately” (without mediation) rather than bring to bear the negative affect of cynical suspicion (149); and “assemble and confer plenitude on [a text-]object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self” in engaging with what paranoid reading would merely expose (149). In affording and even encouraging contingency, being-with, and the adaptive bolstering of the self, Kosofsky Sedgwick’s reparative reading blazes a trail for modes of reading that seek to do more than just reach an abstract and tautological understanding, that seek to move beyond “a secure critical vantage point that would exempt the reading itself from” entanglement (Menely and Taylor, “Introduction” 13). Attuning to a contingent hyperobject by engaging sincerely with a text’s evident themes, thereby reaching conclusions that can help us navigate the lived experience of the Anthropocene—this is precisely the reparative paradigm under which hyperobject reading operates.

Throughout, I have been emphasizing that hyperobject reading has as its aim to account for Anthropocene scale variance. This mode of reading might thus seem to have a singular fixation, perhaps strike some as tautological, or even carry a whiff of the paranoid. The difference is that, unlike the cynical affect and foreordained ideological conclusions of a

paranoid reading, both the affect and the ideology of a hyperobject reading are determined by the chosen theme. The influence of some themes leads to an affirmative and positive affect for the protagonist, while that of others bestows a more ambiguous affect; and the ultimate ideology of a given reading is wholly contingent on the chosen theme-hyperobject. To truly appreciate what hyperobject reading can do, then, one must compare between more than one reading. As Alenka Zupančič notes, “There is a perspective (on things) that emerges only when one shifts perspectives. It does not exist as a separate perspective with its own point of view; yet it is a perspective” (113). Grounded in the perspectivism of object-oriented ontology, hyperobject reading follows particular readings of particular texts by particular readers.

Particular Readings of Particular Texts

The following three chapters will each offer a particular hyperobject reading of a twenty-first century American novel as a demonstration of the validity and possibilities of this new mode of reading. Here, *twenty-first century American novel* refers to novels published after 2000 and written by authors who both live in the United States and identify as American. I choose 2000 as the watershed because it is the year that Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer published their influential paper positing the concept of the Anthropocene, and though the concept itself has a growing prehistory (Menely and Taylor, “Introduction” 5), even these archival excavations are conceptualized according to the term as Crutzen and Stoermer proposed it in 2000. The point is not when the Anthropocene began, which is an ongoing debate, but when it emerged into wider consciousness, and I believe that Crutzen and Stoermer’s paper catalyzed this emergence. I focus on American novels in the belief that the cultural and technological hegemony of the United States grants its novels a unique vantage point on the Anthropocene, along with the

literary affordances to address it best.¹⁸ In defining a novel as American, residence trumps citizenship because the latter criterion also includes (in addition to exiles and those with foreign job postings) expatriate citizens, who by their willing residence outside the United States demonstrate an at best tenuous identification with American culture. Hence, though defining American literature is an ongoing project (Delbanco 37), one possible definition might be “literature written or produced in the United States of America and its preceding colonies” (“American”). Undoubtedly, fiction and literature from other cultures, and from subcultures within the United States, deal and have dealt with the Anthropocene, but in terms of proposing an entirely new mode of reading, taking aim at the largest target should yield the most striking results. The thematically varying hyperobject readings on offer in this dissertation illumine a single mode of reading. If it prove valid, hyperobject readings of texts from other (sub)cultures will afford avenues of future research.

I have chosen three novels with which to demonstrate the potential of hyperobject reading. Chapter 2 will read Joshua Ferris’s *The Unnamed* (2010) in terms of disability as a hyperobject. This theme aligns with most other readings of the novel, and the relatively familiar angle of approach ought to provide an accessible first encounter with hyperobject reading. *The Unnamed* presents us with Tim, who suffers occurrences of walking, when his legs suddenly start walking until he is on the verge of physical collapse. This has predictably disastrous effects on his personal life, and on his professional life as a high-powered Manhattan lawyer, but it is also catastrophic for his wife and daughter. I will explore Tim’s condition from the prevalent perspectives of disability discourse: the medical model, the social model, and the relational model—all of which are insufficient to account for Tim’s lived experience. I will thus build on

¹⁸ Proof of this assumption, and whether such a proof is possible, lies outside the scope of this dissertation.

the ecosomatic paradigm to propose the dialectical model of disability, which treats the medical-social-body-mind nexus dialectically, and show how it can shed light on Tim's condition and, in turn, on the theme-hyperobject of disability. As I note elsewhere, the fact that Tim enjoys every social and material privilege and yet cannot find a cure or other means of returning to his previous life routines only serves to more starkly portray the irreducible effects of disability *per se*, on people both with and without disability ("Forced"). And the fact that his physical alienation leads to social and mental alienation—that is, the entanglement of body, mind, physical ecologies, and social ecologies—is an apt perspective on humankind in the Anthropocene. By expanding the scope of disability discourse, this chapter will show that the innovations of hyperobject reading come not at the expense of insights gained through older modes of reading, but rather seek to diversify "the gene pool of literary-critical perspectives and skills."

Chapter 3 will begin to showcase these new perspectives and skills by reading Tao Lin's *Taipei* (2013) in attunement with the theme-hyperobject of the digital. The novel follows novelist Paul as he drifts in a drug-fueled haze through literary events in New York City, where he lives, and other places, including Taipei. The core of the digital is discretization, through which the digital tunes lived experience and thereby restructures thoughts and affects into externalized objects. I have previously analyzed how the products of this digitization manifest in the presentation of the novel, such as in the frequent use of quotation marks (for uses other than quoting) and digital metaphors, and in how the style of the novel is rigidly grammatical, with little "consideration for the rhetorical impetus or even the breathing rhythms of the reader" ("What" 1276). This synthetic component is the result of how the novel's mimetic component is guided by its digital thematic component, much as how we ineluctably find ourselves attuning

extratextually to the digital-hyperobject. The digital undergirds our awareness of our Anthropocene species-being. By the end of the novel, Paul's attunement to the digital-hyperobject is total, and by linking the third scale of technological evolution to the first scale of subrational affect, the novel sets out how, in our time of ubiquitous digitality, human-objects attuning to the digital-hyperobject may not be as drastic a change as we might think.

Chapter 4 will read Ben Lerner's *10:04* (2014), a metafictional autofictional account of an unnamed protagonist who has previously published a novel to great critical acclaim, as well as a story in *The New Yorker*, based on the latter of which he writes a novel proposal that gets six figures at auction; the short story is included in its entirety. His best friend, Alex, wants him to be her sperm donor. He has a heart condition that could kill him without warning. He tutors an undocumented Salvadorian grade schooler after school, and they cowrite a book about the history of the brontosaurus. He goes on a five-week residency, where he reads Walt Whitman's memoir, composes a poem about the residency (selections included), and decides to write his proposed novel as a metafictional narrative instead of what he had originally proposed. That novel, we begin to realize, is precisely *10:04*, and its narrator not only recounts the above main events of the protagonist's life, he also includes the narratives that people tell the protagonist at various functions, events, and gatherings. These narratives are fascinating, but perhaps more so are his own meditations on life and art in the age of neoliberalism. The title of the novel refers to the film *Back to the Future* (1985), in which the lightning strike of the clock tower at 10:04 p.m. gives the time-traveling DeLorean enough power to take Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) back to his own time, and it expresses the narrator's hope that, by constructing a narrative-hyperobject out of all these encountered narratives, by orchestrating them via a retrospective shift into a new conception of the social, he can illumine an escape route from the neoliberalism-hyperobject—

the hyperobject behind so much of humankind's destructive tendencies in the Anthropocene.

10:04, he hopes, will be that narrative-hyperobject. The variegated readings of these three chapters, convoking a diverse yet necessarily limited array of hyperobjects, will offer concrete and singular examples of the efficacy of hyperobject reading, not just for literary criticism, but for the task of coming to terms with the Anthropocene.

Finally, the concluding chapter will pull together threads from each preceding chapter to discuss hyperobject reading from a meta-interpretative perspective. In a departure from the previous three chapters, which treat hyperobjects as a methodological provocation, the concluding chapter will approach hyperobjects analytically through a reading of Stanisław Lem's novel *Solaris* (1961) and its two film adaptations (Tarkovsky 1972, Soderbergh 2002), in which the hyperobject in question is not the dominant theme but the planet/entity of Solaris itself.¹⁹ Following Morton's lead, I will highlight the five aspects of hyperobjects, which can be seen in *Solaris*, as well as three possible responses to hyperobjects that are respectively embodied in the three main human characters of the novel. The last of these is a successful attunement to the Solaris-hyperobject, and by understanding how this character succeeds where the others fail, I hope to gesture toward a means of navigating our Anthropocene epoch via attunement to the various hyperobjects that hang, like the proverbial sword of Damocles, over our dominant-species heads.

¹⁹ Though this novel may not be a work of twenty-first century American fiction, it deserves nonetheless to be included here for the indispensable role that it has played in the genealogy of the hyperobject as a concept, as I will argue. And its treatment of humanity as a species-hyperobject pitted against its equal (or better) unquestionably belongs in a study of literature in the Anthropocene.



2

**A Dialectical Nexus of Objects:
Disability as Hyperobject in Joshua Ferris's *The Unnamed***

Tim Farnsworth, husband to Jane and father to adolescent Becka, is a criminal defense attorney, a partner at a prestigious Manhattan firm. One day, his legs start walking outside of his control; he can neither stop them nor change direction. They only cede back control when he is utterly exhausted, too tired to make his way back home to the suburbs. He calls Jane, who drives over to pick him up. This happens again the next day without warning. And again the next day. And the next. For four months (Ferris, *Unnamed* 32). This period of time is the first of four occurrences (194, 247).

Such is the premise of Joshua Ferris's *The Unnamed* (2010). In the previous chapter, we sketched a new mode of reading called hyperobject reading and located its historical and theoretical contexts. This chapter, the first of three concrete case studies, will add meat to the bones of the abstract model. I will outline how the disability-hyperobject tunes the mimetic and synthetic components of this novel, exploring the ramifications of the single extraordinary element of uncontrollable walking for Tim, his job, his family, his health, his relation to his physical and social ecologies,¹ and the way he ultimately leads his life. In the first two occurrences of walking, Tim and Jane search fruitlessly for a medical diagnosis and treatment. The strain of caring for a husband who has an undiagnosable and untreatable condition leads Jane, during the third occurrence, to develop alcoholism and fantasize about leaving Tim. She recovers and stays, and, after the third occurrence ends and Becka leaves home for her music

¹ I say physical and social *ecologies* rather than *environments* or *surroundings* to highlight how they are inseparably entangled with the human-object whom they incorporate.

career, they lead a charmed life in the city—cut all too short by Tim’s fourth occurrence, which never ends. After the first walk of this last occurrence, he decides for Jane’s good not to tell her where he is, and he never again settles into his old, familiar life. They eventually divorce when she tells him she has a suitor, but she cannot bring herself to marry the man. Meanwhile, on the road, Tim at first wages war on his body, committing suicide by attrition, but when his legs bring him to a hospital and he gets treated, the struggle is internalized into paranoid schizophrenia.² Gradually, he develops a daily routine to manage his physical and mental well-being, and even attends one of Becka’s concerts in California. After the show, Becka tells him that Jane has cancer, and Tim resolves to fight his body and walk cross-country to reunite with her. His body barely holds out long enough for him to make it, and his miraculous reappearance spurs Jane’s will to live. She recovers, and they move back in together. And yet, all this time, Tim never stops walking, each time circling back by sheer force of will. He eventually loses the sense of urgency motivating his return trips, and he heads back out on the road. He dies, not happy, perhaps, but at peace with himself.

Ferris has said that he wrote this novel about an invented disease to explore illness *per se*, illness without preexisting medical, intellectual, or cultural baggage (“Tracking”). He has largely accomplished this goal, and the fact that Tim’s condition is chronic, untreatable, and disruptive to the lives of his wife, daughter, and himself argues for a hyperobject reading in terms of disability. Disability is often conceptualized as a lack or inability and so may seem inapplicable to Tim’s condition; indeed, walking is paradigmatic of ability in mainstream culture (Oliver 98-100). To be clear, the disabling inability for Tim is being unable to rein in his legs, to curb their excessive walking—his legs are, in this sense, “broken through their refusal to obey the mind”

² Beginning in 2013, the diagnosis of “paranoid schizophrenia” has been changed to just “schizophrenia.”

(Conrich and Sedgwick 156) in a case of what Anna Mollow might call “somatic noncompliance” (197). This expanded definition of brokenness hints at the broader understanding of disability that my hyperobject reading aims to explore. Disability is a textual-hyperobject because it not only convokes the entanglement of Tim’s physical and social ecologies as well as body and mind, but also affects every facet of his lived experience, deconstructing (but not necessarily discarding) a number of social institutions along the way (S. Murray, “Ambiguities” 100). In this sense, Tim’s utter alienation from conventional life reflects the uncanny experience of living in the Anthropocene and its Level-III phenomena.

I will first delineate how Tim’s condition is inadequately accounted for by the three prevalent understandings of disability: the medical model, the social model, and the relational model. I will then posit the *dialectical model of disability*, an understanding of the disability-hyperobject that accounts for both the individual-ecology relations (physical and social) and the mind-body relation of the disabled person, and show how it can do discursively what the novel attempts aesthetically—present disability as such in lived experience.³

The Medical Model

The most common understanding of disability is as an individual pathology that can (and should) be cured through treatment or, if incurable, mitigated through isolation. This is the medical model (Straus 462; Goodley 7). In object-oriented terms, the medical model’s disability-object is created when a human-object attunes to the medical institution (a social object) by the zone of diagnosed—and therefore pathologized—impairment (fig. 4). There are benefits to the

³ I am interested here in disability more as a tuning hyperobject than as a political movement, though the latter is part of the former and is, moreover, of immense importance to the everyday lives of disabled people. In fact, it is in large part due to the significant gains in civil rights won through the hard work of generations of disability activists that I perceive the requisite discursive space to pursue my admittedly more abstract line of inquiry. But the political work is far from complete, and I leave it to those with more political experience, knowledge, and skill.

medical model to be sure, such as the provision of a cure or a mitigation strategy for those who want it, and the sense of hope and possibility that a diagnosis can afford. But the drawbacks can outweigh the benefits. The medical model places the responsibility of treatment on the disabled person to whom medical services are offered, and this individualizing perspective tends to extend to the cause of disability, so that blame is placed on the individual's personality or lifestyle at the expense of such possible systemic facets of the disability-object as poverty (Davidson 170-71, 174), racism (Easton 83; Price and Stewart 31, 33-34; C. Murray), or exploitative capitalism (Puar 64-65). The novel, in attempting to explore as straightforward an experience of disability as can be imagined, declines to address these systemic issues directly, instead crafting as its protagonist a healthy-at-the-outset White middle-aged cisgender heterosexual American man, with a loving wife, and a stereotypically rebellious teenage daughter who is moody and overweight. Tim's walks sometimes lead him to encounter authority figures and people of other (sub)cultures, but in stark contrast to the police arrests and killings of Black people even when they fully comply with given instructions, especially in the US (Thomas), Tim's relatively unrestricted and unharassed wanderings are undeniably afforded by his privileged sociocultural

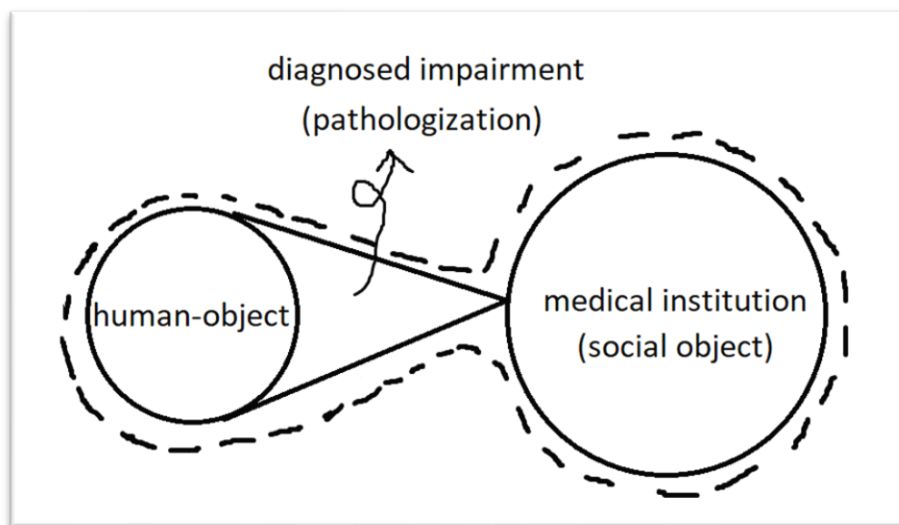


Fig. 4. The medical model disability-object.

status. In seeking a “pure” experience of disability, the novel gives us a simplified one.

Beyond the medical model’s pathologizing of the individual, the objectifying character of the medical gaze can lead to the othering of disabled people (Quayson 15) or, in extreme cases, to their eroticization (Steintrager 97-102). This is despite the fact that, as Tobin Siebers argues bearing Lacan’s mirror stage in mind, the true Other is the abled body (60). Various disabilities lead people to think and behave in various ways, and every one of those diverse ways, no matter the degree of diversity, is held to be different from the norm of an able-bodied person and hence “abnormal.” By incorporating human-objects into the medical institution through their zones of specific impairment only, the medical model leads to a partial presentation of the disability-object whose constitutive lack is manifested in the ideal abled body.

A further demerit of the medical model is that, when disability is seen as an individual pathology, disabled people are pressured to accept medical intervention despite the sometimes significant physical or cultural risks. For instance, with the advent of the cochlear implant as a medical intervention for deafness that, rather than amplifying residual hearing, directly stimulates the brain with electrical signals, the pressure to receive an implant has become so great that the US Food and Drug Administration’s requirement that a person be at least two years old to receive one is often ignored (Solomon 89-91). Medical intervention of any kind for an infant is risky, but even for adults, the cochlear “implant destroys all residual hearing,” which can be devastating for those who had previously depended on it, as the implant provides not sound but a mere semblance of sound (Solomon 92-93). And yet, parents who choose to implant it in their deaf children most often raise them as hearing, thereby depriving them of the support and sense of belonging of a rich and varied Deaf culture (92). As psychologist Andrew Solomon notes, “parents can learn Sign and always speak awkwardly to their child, or they can push their

child toward oralism and know that he will always speak awkwardly to them” and everyone else, including Deaf people (93). These parents face the dilemma of choosing for their child either a relatively familiar and conventional nuclear family bond, or an understanding and supportive community of which they themselves are not a part. Both choices are valid, but neither is optimal. These issues notwithstanding, most people who have not thought about the pros and cons of medical intervention into disability tend to assume the medical model by default.

The Unnamed opens *in medias res*, just after Tim finishes the first walk of his third occurrence. The novel recounts the various (pseudo)treatments he had previously sought out in vain, a desperate litany that includes a “naturopath,” MRIs, psychiatrists, a Swiss specialist, “colonics,” a “marmalade fast,” an orange juice cleanse, worry-relief (whatever that entails), birth reenactment, an environmental psychologist, redressing “karmic imbalance,” pharmacological cocktails, the Mayo Clinic, “bat-wing extract,” Sufism, yoga, Reiki, Panchakarma, and a technology ban. Just about the only thing he had not tried is “genealogical healing” (38-49).⁴ Yet all he had gotten for his troubles was the purely descriptive diagnosis of “benign idiopathic perambulation”—in other words, a walking whose cause is unknown and that by itself is harmless. But Tim takes “exception to the word *benign*. Strictly medically speaking perhaps, but if his perambulation kept up, his life was ruined. How benign was that?” (41). The diagnosing doctor might as well have called it “a fascinoma,” a label with which a psychiatric patient is saddled later in the novel (226). Tim accepts one last attempt at a diagnosis, donning a bicycle helmet retrofitted with the latest in brain scanning technology to capture his brainwaves as he walks (86-87), but the scans ultimately reveal nothing, merely granting “greater inconclusiveness, additional absence of evidence” (107). From this, I find it hard to agree with

⁴ This seems to be a satirical jab at therapeutic practices such as “Transgenerational Integration” (Gaillard).

Stuart Murray, who groups *The Unnamed* into a cluster of “neuronovels” most of which feature a condition that “invariably stresses cognitive difference” (“From Virginia’s” 253); the lack of determinate evidence for or against a specifically cognitive difference—or any specific difference—is the point of Tim’s diagnostic ambiguity. Rather, this long list of failed treatments and diagnoses underscores the need in disability studies for what Jack Halberstam calls “modes of not knowing, unknowing, and failing to know” (McRuer and Johnson 152). After this, Tim loses interest in diagnosis, etiology, or treatment (127).

Obtaining a diagnosis would not have just been the first step in seeking treatment, it would also have created a supporting medical literature that could reassure Tim and his family and allow others to understand his condition. When Tim loses his phone on a walk and Jane, working as a realtor, calls every hospital he might have ended up in, she cannot explain the situation to her concerned colleagues: “She stared at the blank wall of explanation. She could have asked have you ever heard of... but there was no name. She could have said it’s a condition that afflicts only... but there were no statistics” (51). Not having the condition herself, she can only comprehend it by analogy with male incomprehension of menopause symptoms, concluding, “She didn’t know what had its hold on him. She didn’t care. He couldn’t know about hot flashes and she couldn’t know about walking” (23-24). Just as Tim could never understand the phenomenology of menopause, she does not understand his walking but simply accepts his experience as valid. Even Becka still thinks during his third occurrence, “He could control it if he really wanted to” (23). Only when Jane asks her to “babysit” him over the summer (94) and she sees him walk unflinching in blistering heat does she finally accept his own account of his condition (103). Linguist Anne Pycha notes that, in contrast, both Jane and Becka benefit from the clarity of having a diagnosis (alcoholism and obesity, respectively), even if only Jane is

“cured” (“Language”). Tim brings a winter travel pack with him to the office in case he walks; to explain it, and his occasional sudden disappearances, to his boss, Mike Kronish, he gives the same excuse he gave for his first two occurrences: that Jane has cancer (47-48). Mike accepts this explanation on its face, despite the fact that Jane’s supposed cancer cannot explain Tim’s actions—“That,” Tim thinks, “was the power, the enviable, unlucky power, of a fatal and familiar disease” (58-59). Pycha points out that this use of the word “cancer” is possible because, even when used accurately, the word itself is merely a “cover term” for the myriad forms of cancer and does not convey actual information about the specific cancer at issue. Tim’s having divorced the word “cancer” from the disease and attached it to his walking, she argues, is why he says “I don’t know what that means” when, late in the novel, Becca informs him against Jane’s will that Jane actually has developed cancer (Pycha, “Language [Part 2]”; Ferris, *Unnamed* 263). And when Tim is studied in *The New England Journal of Medicine* and finally has medical literature to show others—the results are inconclusive, with the psychiatrists and neurologists kicking the can between them (100-01)—it prevents him from being fired outright for lying and misconduct, instead getting him demoted to the non-partner-track position of staff attorney (130).

There is one possible diagnosis, noted by reviewer Christopher Taylor, that the novel does not seem to consider: dissociative fugue, also known as ambulatory automatism (Hacking 36), a medical diagnosis created in 1887 and still extant today, but that refers to behavior that has “been known forever” (8). I can locate no instance of Ferris mentioning dissociative fugue, or any dissociative disorder, despite his acknowledgement of the extensive “literary tradition of

walkers” (“Involuntary”).⁵ Or maybe this is because dissociative “fugue as a specific syndrome has not evolved its own” literary tradition (Hacking 59). Is Tim, then, a fugueur?

We can approach this question by examining the zones of aesthetic causation—pathologized impairments—for both benign idiopathic perambulation and dissociative fugue, to see if they give rise to the same disability-object. In *Mad Travelers*, philosopher of science Ian Hacking uses dissociative fugue as a case study for what he calls a “transient illness,” a mental illness that “exists only at certain times and places” (in his case, late nineteenth-century France) as determined by an “ecological niche” composed of at least four vectors: that the illness be medically taxonomizable, symbolic of a cultural polarity of virtue and vice, observable or documentable, and a release valve for certain cultural pressures (1-2). We can understand these as four facets of a mental illness-object, with “transience” being a fifth (temporal) facet. We have already explored the extent to which Tim’s condition is ultimately documented (Hacking’s third vector), and we will explore the cultural symbolism (second vector) in the next section. The fourth vector does not seem to match: “Fugue was an inviting escape for a particular class,” Hacking writes, “men who had steady work and a certain amount of independence. Their circumstances of income and family kept them this side of leisured travel” (82); the typical “fugueur was not from the middle classes. But he was urban or had a trade” (27) and “was not your Paris lawyer” (44). Tim, in contrast, is a solidly upper-middle class lawyer who, before the onset of his walking, “always had a trip in the works” (Ferris, *Unnamed* 4).

⁵ The four section titles of the novel are taken from Emily Dickinson’s poem “After great pain, a formal feeling comes” (1862)—“The Feet, mechanical” (line 5; Ferris, *Unnamed* 1), “the Hour of Lead” (line 10; Ferris, *Unnamed* 119), “First—Chill—then Stupor” (line 13; Ferris, *Unnamed* 185), and “then the letting go” (line 13; Ferris, *Unnamed* 245)—the conceit of the novel is reminiscent of the restless urban walker of Edgar Allan Poe’s story “The Man of the Crowd” (1845) (Charles), and the title and physically deteriorating protagonist pay homage to Samuel Beckett’s trilogy of novels about walking and bodily disintegration, *Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951), and *The Unnamable* (1953) (Ferris, “Involuntary”).

Lastly, the first vector, that of medical taxonomy, is only superficially similar.⁶ The debate in the novel between psychiatrists and neurologists is echoed in the debates over whether dissociative fugue had a hysterical or epileptic etiology (Hacking 81). There is the walking, of course. But even Taylor concedes that “Tim doesn’t lose consciousness or his memory,” which were such significant symptoms of dissociative fugue that the disease was sometimes diagnosed as what today is commonly known as multiple personality disorder (Hacking 26, 201n10).⁷ Tim, when he walks, is lucid: “He looked down at his legs. It was like watching footage of legs walking from the point of view of the walker. That was the helplessness, this was the terror: the brakes are gone, the steering wheel has locked, I am at the mercy of this wayward machine” (33); in Jane’s words, the walking is “a hijacking of some obscure order of the body, the frightened soul inside the runaway train of mindless matter, peering out from the conductor’s car in horror” (24). When Becka discovers that “he could fall asleep even as his body continued to walk” (127), it is an independence of the legs, unlike for paradigmatic fugueur Albert Dadas, who, when he “*moves his legs in the bed as if he is pedaling or walking*,” sometimes “bursts into tears, his face becom[ing] even more flushed, *his legs mov[ing] more rapidly*” (Philippe Tissié, qtd. in Hacking 169). This description of Dadas suggests a psychological element, as does his own admission that he experiences “an irresistible impulse to walk two or three days before the attack [of walking] that forces him to leave,” but one can see the room for ambiguity between a diagnosis of hysteria or epilepsy when he adds that, at the same time, “he becomes morose and taciturn[;] he experiences a violent headache accompanied by profuse sweating; he has a ringing

⁶ For a novel about a fictional woman who *is* diagnosed with dissociative fugue, see Robin Wasserman’s *Mother Daughter Widow Wife* (2020), which draws on academic sources, including Hacking.

⁷ Multiple personality disorder was renamed “dissociative identity disorder” in 1994. It is perhaps not especially relevant that Hacking considers this a transient illness, and that, in his own words, “I dislike the [advocacy] movement and many (but not all) of its practitioners” (97).

in the ear, dizzy spells, and a nervous trembling[. . .] He becomes absentminded; for example, he holds out a knife instead of a glass when he is served drink” (Hacking 151). Tim’s experience of his first recurrence makes reference to an epileptic attack: “He knew halfway down [his driveway] that he would not be back for the third [trash bin]. He knew the sensation as an epileptic knows an aura. As an epileptic feels the dread of an oncoming seizure, he was crestfallen, broken-hearted, instantly depressed by what was now foretold. *It’s back*” (32). Crucially, however, the similarity with epilepsy is not in the experience but in the foreknowledge, not phenomenological but epistemological, and notwithstanding the use of “foretold,” it transpires only after the walking has begun, when the legs have already taken over from the will. There is a more similar fugue diagnosis called “dromomania,” in which “fugues begin abruptly” and “the fugueur feels himself a passive witness to his journeys” (Hacking 212n54), but this is the interpretation of only one doctor (74), whereas dromomania itself was coined by another doctor as a catch-all term for unclassifiable fugues, “a generalized fugue-for-all-seasons” (45). The zones of impairment do not match up.

Other similarities between benign idiopathic perambulation and ambulatory automatism seem not just superficial but circumstantial. Just as Tim worries that the walking will ruin his life, Dadas, in a medical interview, “wept because he could not prevent himself from departing on a trip when the need took him; he deserted family, work, and daily life to walk” (7). But as we have seen, Dadas enters a disturbed state days before he walks, even planning a bit beforehand by gathering some money and his identity papers (24), whereas Tim’s walking is unanticipated. The end of a walk for Dadas “is accompanied by yawning and tears, after which he feels completely dejected” (152), and for Tim it results in narcolepsy (12-13)—but who would not feel tired after a day of vigorous walking? Both walkers exhibit a sense of self-preservation during a

walk, but whereas Dadas eats, drinks, and maintains good hygiene, without recalling having done so (152), Tim does not stop when tempted by food or drink (151-52, 168), his self-preservation taking the form of “some failsafe mechanism [that] moved him around red lights and speeding cars, moved his legs with a cat’s intuition around any immediate peril” (46). The novel thus draws on Jungian archetypes, according to which “instinctively feet know when to stay put or carry us away from danger even before the head has got the message” (Archive 424). Over time, both Tim and Dadas start wanting to walk: Tim desires liberation for his already-moving legs (136, 141, 225), while Dadas, at first, continues his journey voluntarily to avoid taking responsibility for his abrupt departures (136), and later loves the feeling of walking the open road (155), which clears the headaches that presage an attack of walking (175). And both walkers develop a form of irrational anger. Tim’s anger is transferred from being directed at his condition to being directed at his caretakers, who are most closely associated with it: his doctor (116), wife, and daughter (127). On the other hand, Dadas’s anger at his wife stems from hallucinating that she is cheating on him (185-86).

Hallucination is a particularly interesting point of comparison. Dadas’s case is more straightforward, and his hourlong hallucinations often take the form of uncanny similarities to his actual physical ecology: trees, but without foliage; a room instead of a prison cell (152). They are a direct symptom of his dissociative fugue. Tim hallucinates, as a form of denial, that a Waffle House booth is his office, that the waitress is a pool secretary, and that Becka, having lost weight, has come to visit him (234-39, 242, 244, 262). Moreover, for much of *The Unnamed*, the reality of one plot point is kept ambiguous. When Tim’s third occurrence strikes, he is lead counsel in the defense of R. H. Hobbs, a major client of the firm’s corporate services who is accused of, and denies, murdering his wife, Evelyn. The evidence is circumstantial, but the

police have no other suspects (37-38). Then, on one “forced excursion” (Sheu, “Forced”), Tim is accosted by a man who walks up alongside him holding up a butcher’s knife in a Ziploc bag, claiming that it is the missing murder weapon and that “R. H. Hobbs is an innocent man” (61-62). The man stops, expecting that an intrigued Tim would also stop, but of course Tim cannot, and the incredulous man is disinclined to keep walking. R.H.⁸ does not recognize a sketch of the man based on Tim’s description (74). Tim later sees the man on the street by chance and tails him, but when he tries to confront him, the streets of New York City are suddenly empty of cars and people, and he is thwarted by the man’s evident combat training (174-77). The scene ends with Tim observing that they “seemed to be the only two people in the entire city at the moment of their encounter” (177), opening up the possibility that at least part of the scene is hallucinated. But the man himself is real: Much later in the novel, after R.H. has been convicted, gone to prison, and committed suicide, the lead police detective on the case comes to Tim with a blurry photo of a man they suspect of other murders similar to Evelyn’s, as well as of harassing the defense lawyers in those cases as he did to Tim. But by then, Tim’s memory has faded (292-94).

Then there are the uncanny coincidences when Tim’s condition and dissociative fugue faintly echo each other. For example, Tim’s brain-scanning bicycle helmet echoes Dadas’s sentiment that a headache-clearing walk gives him “a feeling of well-being, of having had an *iron helmet* lifted from his head” (167). Another echo is in how both Tim and Dadas manage to exert force of will against their walking. Dadas congratulates himself on the first time he is able to fend off an oncoming attack of walking (157), while Tim spends forty of the last forty-seven pages of the novel fighting through his post-walk narcolepsy to return to Jane (264-303). And both walkers have a patchy memory of their walks. Dadas’s memory is described as “a

⁸ The novel leaves out the space between his initials when omitting his surname.

photographic plate of which certain parts are blurred, while other parts had come out well” (151), tending to only recall what Hacking describes as “rather suspicious touristic details about the sights on the way” (24). Tim, for his part, mostly just notices the major businesses and artificial structures that organize day-to-day life, such as houses, stores, churches, cars, billboards, stoplights, and train tracks (33, 198, 211, 214). We will explore in the next section how it is only much later that he truly appreciates what he sees.

One facet of the disability-object incorporating nonvolitional walking that goes unmentioned in Dadas’s case file is the possibility of medical complications. When Tim leaves home at the start of his fourth occurrence, he is determined to kill himself by attrition (220), and by the time his legs walk him to a hospital and he collapses at the entrance, “He had renal failure, an enlarged spleen, sepsis-induced hypotension, cellular damage to the heart. He had trench foot and a case of dysentery. He required assisted breathing and intravenous antibiotics. He did not wake day or night,” nor does he walk during the two months of his hospitalization (222-23, 228). After discharge, he still has occasional seizures (229). And his cross-country walk back to Jane brings on a host of problems: at first, infections, inflammations, aches, cricks, tweaks, cramps, contusions, retentions, swellings, fevers, tinglings, hackings, spasms, limps, displacements, dizziness, stiffness, chafing, agitations, confusions, staggerings, spells of low blood sugar, “the normal wear and tear of age” (269), chills, a fever (275), confusion, visions (276), and “pneumonia with the leathery rales of pleurisy” (279); then, conjunctivitis, leg cramps, chafing, blisters, shingles, bug bites, ticks, fleas, lice, sun blisters, heatstroke, dehydration, rhabdomyolysis, at risk for ventricular tachycardia, splintering leg bones and other “osteal complications,” and “myositis, or muscle inflammation, which would lead through an inevitability of biological cause and effect to kidney failure by the time he was hospitalized in

Elizabeth, New Jersey, ten miles as the crow flies from his final destination” (278-79). When he is finally hospitalized, he is unconscious; has acute respiratory distress syndrome, excess fluid in his peritoneal cavity, and brain swelling; and needs dialysis for his liver and heart (279-80). This is in addition to the frostbite that costs him six fingers (234) and at least three toes (80, 116)—and he ends up wearing glasses, too (291-92). But “the charnel house of his body” (279) is the focus of only the first understanding of disability.

The Social Model

Seeking to rectify the harms of the medical model, the social model approaches disability from the opposite direction. Rather than as individualizing pathology, the social model construes disability as societal discrimination against people with impairments—or “ableism” (Goodley 79)—not only in the neglect of those with impairments by artificial environments and social institutions, but also in how society others disabled people, leading to “social isolation, economic dependence, high unemployment, inaccessible housing and institutionalisation,” among other forms of marginalization (13-14). We might say that, under the social model, the disability-object is formed when a human-object attunes to the social norm-object through the zone of determined impairment (fig. 5). Unlike under the medical model, a human-object would be disincorporated from the disability-object not when the tuning object (the medical institution) “cures” a pathologized impairment, but when the tuning object (the collection of social norms) has determined a condition to no longer be a societal impairment. The social model takes as its target of intervention the social norms, not the disabled person. By assuming the political discourse of civil rights, it aims to de-other disability by demarginalizing disabled people, increasing their visibility, and rendering the status of being disabled unremarkable. It gathers disabled people around the common goal of equitable treatment, building a community out of

diverse individuals. Though the medical model is the default unreflective paradigm of disability, the social model is the dominant paradigm for most social welfare policy. For instance, the currently prevalent model of social work offers services only to those who fit the criteria of membership in the group targeted by those services (DePoy and Gilson 272-78); in other words, one must be determined to be disabled before being eligible for the relevant social services, regardless of actual (medical) need.

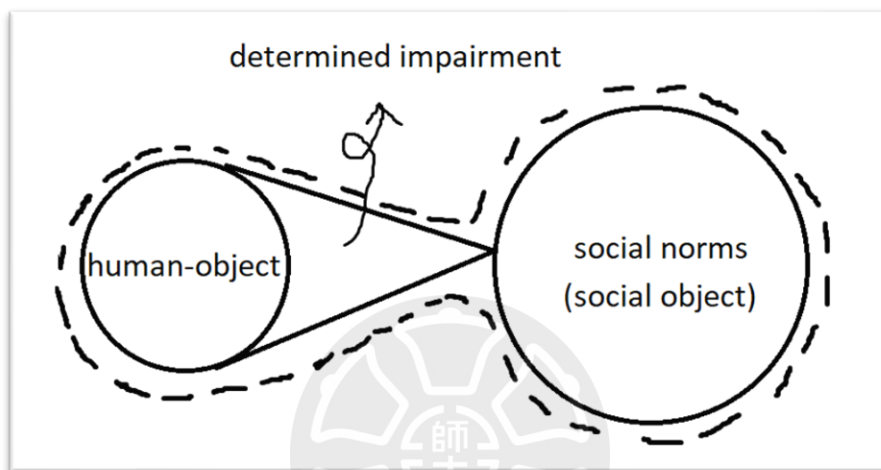


Fig. 5. The social model disability-object.

Positioning themselves as a minority fighting for civil rights, disability activists take on the particular burdens of that discourse, and it is these burdens that constitute the main shortcomings of the social model. Tom Shakespeare notes that the social model is “effective *politically* in building the social movement of disabled people,” “effective *instrumentally* in the liberation of disabled people,” and “effective *psychologically* in improving the self-esteem of disabled people and building a positive sense of collective identity”—but it is so effective because “it generates a clear agenda for social change” by being “easily explained and understood” (“Social” 198). This simplicity, he argues, is based on three core dichotomies:

disabled vs. non-disabled⁹ people, the social model vs. medical model, and disability vs. impairment (197-98). Let us examine these in turn.

That some people are disabled while others are not seems, on the face of it, unobjectionable. The problem is that the social model seeks to build a movement atop a fixed identity grounded in one's socially determined disability, and one's disability may change. Take, for instance, Susan Wendell's category of "healthy disabled" people,

people whose physical conditions and functional limitations are relatively stable and predictable for the foreseeable future. They [. . .] regard themselves as healthy, not sick, they do not expect to die any sooner than any other healthy person their age, and they do not need or seek much more medical attention than other healthy people. (162)

Healthy disabled people are impaired but otherwise indistinguishable from non-disabled people. Wendell adds that this "is a category with fluctuating and sometimes uncertain membership. Many people who seem to have stable disabilities now will encounter illness and changing disability later in life" (162). After all, disability is a universal issue (Zola 20), narrowly in that very few of us will have the good fortune of maintaining perfect health in our old age or of being unaffected by the impairments of others, and broadly in that we all begin life in the care of someone else. Another potential reason for changing disability status is that medical advances may afford the neutralization of a pathologized impairment. Drawing a clear line between disabled and non-disabled people ignores the fluidity of disability and of identity in general, and as Emma Kisivild reminds us, we must "see that self and ability are changing all the time, that experience is changing all the time, and therefore that [disability] epistemologies [should be]

⁹ I use *non-disabled* instead of *able-bodied* advisedly. The latter gestures toward an impossible ideal, while the former affords a broader spectrum.

changing, too” (McRuer and Johnson 160). Rigid demarcation places an extra burden on disabled people to have to fight for their own civil rights (Goodley 14), while at the same time unduly deterring non-disabled people from joining the movement by taking non-leadership positions (Shakespeare, “Nordic” 297).

A similar issue presents itself in the dichotomy of the social and medical models. As can be seen from the comparisons made at the beginning of this section, there is indeed a tension between the medical and social models in their respective focuses on pathology and identity, and addressing one focus often has consequences for the other. We have touched on this tension earlier with regards to the debate sparked in the Deaf community by the cochlear implant: Should hearing parents of nonhearing children intervene medically to neutralize the impairment as much as possible? or should they raise their children as disabled but with a supportive Deaf community of which they, the parents, are not members? Disability activists have gone further, crafting the social model to be the diametric opposite of the medical model and going so far as to assert that disability is *entirely* due to societal discrimination (Shakespeare, “Social” 199). The motivation here is understandable, given the history of institutionalizing and otherwise making parochial decisions for disabled people (Goodley 7), against which disability activists have created the slogan “Nothing about us without us” (13); but once most activist policy goals are realized and we turn to sociocultural change, we must acknowledge that effective de-othering is harder to achieve when we take such an uncompromising stance. The antidote to “terrible purity” is “the corruption that comes from interconnectedness” (Johnson 506).

This brings us to the most conceptual of the three dichotomies, the one between disability and impairment. By completely separating the one from the other, disability activists hope to put more pressure on social reforms that can neutralize disability, as has indeed been the result. But

it is at present impossible to eliminate every single source of disability in society without regard for impairment. The most we can do is create “barrier-free enclaves” of a limited scope for specific impairments (Shakespeare, “Social” 201). And even this is a bit harder to do in a workplace: Wendell notes that an adjusted workload and flexible schedule for disabled workers highlight the ableist assumptions of wage labor, and that “accommodations of pace and time” can often give rise to a “politics of resentment” on the part of non-disabled coworkers (168). For Tim, who is a workaholic (Ferris, *Unnamed* 36, 55), such a barrier-free mode of work is possible, to an extent. Stuart Murray argues that, under “the twenty-first century [. . .] consolidation of a neoliberal, post-industrial conception of work that [. . .] increasingly revolves around ideas of speed, productivity and efficiency,” the novel’s portrayal of the relations between Tim and his work “unmasks the extent to which ‘success’ is constituted through many vectors of ableism: the compliant body; the idea of a unified, and humanist, self; the internalization of the need for competition; and the heteronormativity of family” (“Reading”). The first three are perhaps especially important in the practice of US criminal law. But the novel is not as pessimistic as Murray depicts: For instance, he says that Tim “fails to hold down” his demoted job as staff attorney, when in fact he resigns, and not even during one of his occurrences of walking (Ferris, *Unnamed* 183). Something like Norway’s “right to roam” law¹⁰ could help Tim by staving off harassment from authorities. And though some of Tim’s work requires his physical presence—R.H. often asks for what Tim calls a “hand-holding” meeting (57)—much of it can be done remotely, something that the COVID-19 pandemic has made abundantly clear. With rigorous planning to separate work that can be done on the phone from work that cannot (Ferriss 26), Tim could still have been a valuable member of his firm. What

¹⁰ Norway’s right to roam law allows anyone to camp for up to two nights anywhere that is at least 150 meters away from the nearest residence, cabin, or caravan (“Right”).

seems to preclude this adjustment strategy is the law firm's hyper-masculine culture (Ferry 55). The partners talk in aggressive profanities, and when Tim mulls over telling Mike about his condition, he imagines Mike "respond[ing] in kind with a show of sympathy he's never demonstrated" (58). This exacerbation of disability by toxic gender norms underlines how considerations of identity "intersectionality" must account for "how each [identity] supports the constitution of the others" (Goodley 33), without befalling what Jennifer James calls "the dangerous anti-intersectional logic of larger classificatory systems" that ignore how "intersectional identities" are "inherently inconsistent and irreconcilable" (McRuer and Johnson 165).

If disability were entirely an identity issue, as the social model posits, then disability would indeed have nothing to do with impairment (Nocella 18). But though the issue itself may involve identity alone, the identity in question is grounded in the material existence of determined impairment. Social model ideals notwithstanding, "disability [i]s the socially constructed disadvantage based upon impairment" (Wendell 164), and so impairments that cannot be entirely neutralized affect our understanding of disability. By completely divorcing disability from impairment, the social model "leaves little room for thinking about the body itself" (Barker and Murray, "Introduction" 6) and "fails to account for the difficult physical realities faced by" many disabled people (Siebers 57), such as "those disabled people whose bodies are highly medicalized because of their suffering, their deteriorating health, or the threat of death [. . . ,] some [of whom] very much want to have their bodies cured, not as a substitute for curing ableism, but in addition to it" (Wendell 161).

The fact that "impairment is far from being natural and more an embodied experience shaped by culture" (Goodley 28) constitutes one of the main thrusts of critical disability studies

today. Wendell calls on us to “focus our attention on the phenomenology of impairment, rather than accepting a medical approach to it” (165). Some disabled people with brain injuries, for example, have impairments that “are more like impairments of chronic illnesses—transitory and unpredictable—than those of paradigmatic, stable disabilities,” and their impairments can “frequently involv[e] pain, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, weakness, depression, and/or other impairments that are hard to ignore. Everything [such a disabled person] does, including politics, must be done within the[se] limitations” (165-66). No change in social norms can eliminate the effects of these symptoms. Chronic illnesses, and disabilities with similar impairments, can present few external physical markers, leading to issues of “invisible” disability. Younger people in this situation can be incomprehensible to a society that expects them to be more productive with the long life ahead of them (163-64). Women, despite usually having a longer lifespan than men, are more likely to develop a chronic illness (162), and the chronic illnesses that they are likelier than men to develop tend to feature “pain and/or fatigue a[s] major sources of impairment” (165)—they are also much more likely to have their ailments misdiagnosed or dismissed outright (Seegert). This gender discrepancy is yet another complicating factor of disability that *The Unnamed* ignores. Wendell strikes an optimistic note in arguing that “knowing more about how people experience, live with, and think about their own impairments could contribute to an appreciation of disability as a valuable difference from the medical norms of body and mind” (165); but Mollow reminds us that this is not guaranteed, as one of the most disabling aspects of disability is “its radical resistance to meaning” (200). Siebers adds that

pain is an enemy. It hovers over innumerable daily actions, whether the disability is painful in itself or only the occasion for pain because of the difficulty of navigating one’s environment. The great challenge every day is to manage the body’s pain, to get out of

bed in the morning, to overcome the well of pain that rises in the evening, to meet the hundred daily obstacles that are not merely inconveniences but occasions for physical suffering. (62)

The one lesson that the pain of disability is guaranteed to teach is that it is painful.

Much as how the social-model disability-object is a societal determination, Hacking believes that the epidemic of dissociative fugue in late-nineteenth-century France was symbolic of a cultural polarity in society (his second vector) between the “virtuous” wandering of romanticized tourism and the “vicious” wandering of criminalized vagrancy (81). The mid- to late-nineteenth century was “the age of tourism” (27), the time of the flâneur, and “the golden era of travel journalism” (28), and Dadas’s doctor even describes his walking as “pathological tourism” (Tissié, qtd. in Hacking 27). Dadas “always remembers the fine landscapes that he has seen and the monuments that he has admired. When he was a small boy he liked travel stories, asking what was remarkable about this or that country, this or that city” (151). On the other hand, it was also a time of great worry about “*vagabondage*,” which at the time connoted not homelessness but crime and “racial degeneracy,” and “vagrancy was straightaway medicalized” (68-69). These popular notions inevitably made their way into medical diagnoses of ambulatory automatism, and Dadas fit the zeitgeist so well that he was often recognized as “le voyageur de Tissié” (“Tissié’s mad traveler”) and offered assistance on that basis (25, 111). Even the titular protagonist of *Forrest Gump* (1994) becomes famous after two years of running,¹¹ yet Tim is still anonymous after over a decade of intermittent walking, presenting “a certain type, mute and suspect,” and “asking nothing of the passing cars and leaving town without having uttered a word” (306-07). He passes through small towns across the country without leaving a trace.

¹¹ At least in the film version. He does not run in the original book (Peeke).

Before the first occurrence, Tim and Jane took regular vacations to places like Turkey and Egypt (4), and they especially cherish their trip to Scrub Island, calling it “the best vacation we ever took” (8-9). Each uses a vacation as enticement for the other to recover from their respective ailments of walking and cancer, Jane reminding Tim of Scrub Island (230), Tim bringing up the Kenyan safari they never went on due to his walking (4, 288). Tim pays little attention to the sights when he perambulates, but by the time his body is breaking down on his cross-country walk, he begins to notice that “beauty, surprisingly, was everywhere” (279). At Jane’s hospital bedside, she asks him to describe what he sees, smells, and feels on his walks, to bring “the world inside for her” (295), and so he starts paying attention with the aim of sharing, even if what he shares is fragmentary: “I saw a woman in a leather apron outside a beauty salon, smoking a cigarette. I saw two cops standing around the remains of an accident, broken reflector bits on the pavement. [. . .] I saw the last of the last of the light” (288-89). Peter Ferry argues that Tim has become a *flâneur*, and that this new identity “gives Tim a greater sense of selfhood, a belief in the significance of his own existence” (59), making up for the emasculation of losing his job (57). Yet Tim’s *flâneurie* is not for himself but for Jane, a means of bolstering their relationship. Of the two social objects to which he attunes, it is his work that he finally gives up, and he does the near-impossible in returning to Jane, his family.

To find a connection between Tim’s walking and his (rather than Dadas’s) *zeitgeist*, we can turn to the novel’s portrayal of unpredictable natural phenomena. In a novel that is fairly vague about the progress of time—be it the time of day, temporal length of a walk, or number of elapsed years between narrative events—there is an inordinate amount of attention devoted to

natural lighting.¹² The distribution of clouds in the sky is another point of interest,¹³ and the various forms of precipitation are also noted.¹⁴ These weather events are to be expected in the general run of things, but they keep our attention on the weather and gestures toward climate as part of the novel's mimetic component.

Aside from Tim's walking, the first sign we see of "nature out of joint" is a small flight of bees repeatedly knocking themselves against the window of Tim's office "so many floors up" (121). "They were really winding back and slamming themselves against the window," Tim thinks. "They must be knocking their little bee brains out." The bees "hit and rebounded and fluttered up and returned to hit the glass again" (122). Going out for lunch, Tim steps on what he thinks are fallen leaves (153) but turn out to be "a thin blanket of dead bees" (157). Later in the novel, Tim witnesses a whole flock of blackbirds drop dead from the sky (217). Neither of these striking events is at all explained. And it is not just the birds and the bees. Camping near a suburban playground, Tim is awoken by a herd of feral pigs, who are summarily tranquilized and trucked off (273-74). Excessive heat, that most politically sensitive of weather events, is mentioned multiple times at more or less regular intervals throughout the novel (103, 234, 304), as if to keep global warming in the back of our minds. And Tim encounters two wildfires (104, 268), the first of which is characterized as striking near "frightened cities that had just barely adjusted to the flash floods of a swift and freakish spring. Disaster once confined to the west had

¹² Moonlight (10, 20, 55), dawn (10, 207), sunshine (103, 184, 275), cold or winter sunlight (121, 289), and "the occult light of a sky gone prematurely dark" (191).

¹³ "Overcast was riveted to the sky as gray to a battleship" (59); "the sky was draped in folds of purple shrouds" (197); "lightning cut a vein of silver across a cloudy opaline sky" (207); "a cold and still afternoon under solid ashen clouds" (209); "clouds of broken granite covered the sky" (211); "daubs and strokes of rainless clouds" (266); and "belly-white clouds foretold the coming blizzard" (219).

¹⁴ A single raindrop (176), a downpour (190, 195), freezing rain (218), a cloudburst (248), night rain (249), slanting rain (267), and a drizzle (296); a first snow (220), "a sanatorium of snow" (267), night snow (267-68), and a blizzard (308); and terrible storms causing widespread damage (182), flooding (271-72), and a tornado whose aftermath is indelibly described (277-78).

migrated, a wayward animal confused by scrambled weather” (104). These uncanny natural phenomena in Tim’s physical ecology call to mind the uncanniness of the natural world in the Anthropocene, in which the most natural of phenomena are tinged with traces of the human.

To bring the point home that it is human actions that have altered the climate, the novel highlights a few instances of specific distortions. At one point, Tim comes across a corporate ranch of Black Angus cows so overcrowded that he can sleep among them on his haunches, stay upright, and be kept warm from the winter cold (270-71). And trees are mistreated: Tim sees trees “choked at pavement’s end with crushed beer cans and soggy newspaper” (197), “a refugee tree in a metal grate” (199), and “a copse of trees that had been corralled at their trunks by orange plastic fencing” (217). At the time *The Unnamed* was published (2010), the scientific community had known for almost a decade that trees communicate with each other and thrive near others of the same species (Grant). That the trees and cows suffer at human hands strongly suggests the same for the bees and that flock of birds.

At the other end of Hacking’s cultural polarity lies vagabondage, something with which both Dadas and Tim are exceedingly familiar. Dadas is frequently jailed for lack of papers, either because he loses them or because he forgets them at home in the first place. As for Tim, if Jane cannot find him after his walks, he ends up sleeping out of doors. Sometimes he is found first by the police, who can be deferential (84-85) or caustic (216). Once, he is almost raped by a homeless man and fights him off with excessive force (112). He even, when rudely awoken by a policeman, rants against the criminalization of vagabondage: “‘One might as well ask if the State, to avoid public unease, could incarcerate all who are physically unattractive or socially eccentric,’ he called out. ‘Mere public intolerance or animosity cannot constitutionally justify the deprivation of a person’s physical liberty!’” (216). This sentiment closely echoes the aims of

disability activists and activists of minority groups across society. And yet, similar to the shift from tourism to climate, the novel attunes the vagabondage-object to, not the criminality-object, but the ecology-object. When Tim leaves home to walk indefinitely, Jane professes to be unable to fathom the idea of permanent vagabondage (205), yet the last third of the novel culminates in Tim's attuning to a disability-(hyper)object that affords him a harmonious relation with his world. We will explore this in the fourth section of this chapter, after a discussion of the relational model.

The Relational Model

This section will examine two versions of the relational model, the Nordic relational model and the ecosomatic paradigm. The Nordic relational model “positions itself between the individual and society-based views of disability” (Tideman 227) and emphasizes “the complex and situated interaction between individual factors and the environment, [. . .] both in the relationship between the individual and the environment and in the relations between different individuals” (Gustavsson, Tøssebro, and Traustadóttir 33). In object-oriented terms, we might conceptualize its disability-object as comprising the tuning of both the medical institution and social norms by a human-object's impairments. In contrast to the medical model, the Nordic relational model is relatively unconcerned with pathology; and against both the medical and social models, the ontologically greater object in the Nordic relational model is not the medical institution or social norms but rather the disabled individual that these two serve together (fig. 6). The relational model originated in Scandinavia in reaction to the medical model, and so early on, “deinstitutionalisation, normalisation and integration/inclusion stood out as *the* major issues” (27), with a “broader range of themes,” such as feminism and gender, being considered near the end of the millennium (31). Eminently reasonable, the Nordic relational model has the

significant downside of affording a backslide into the parochialism of the medical model (Goodley 17-18), especially since the social model has had little influence in Scandinavia (Shakespeare, “Nordic” 298). Despite the broadening research interests in the Nordic countries, social welfare policy is still the dominant research paradigm, as a glance at the contents page of *Resistance, Reflection and Change: Nordic Disability Research* (edited by Anders Gustavsson, Johans Sandvin, Rannveig Traustadóttir, and Jan Tøssebro) will show.

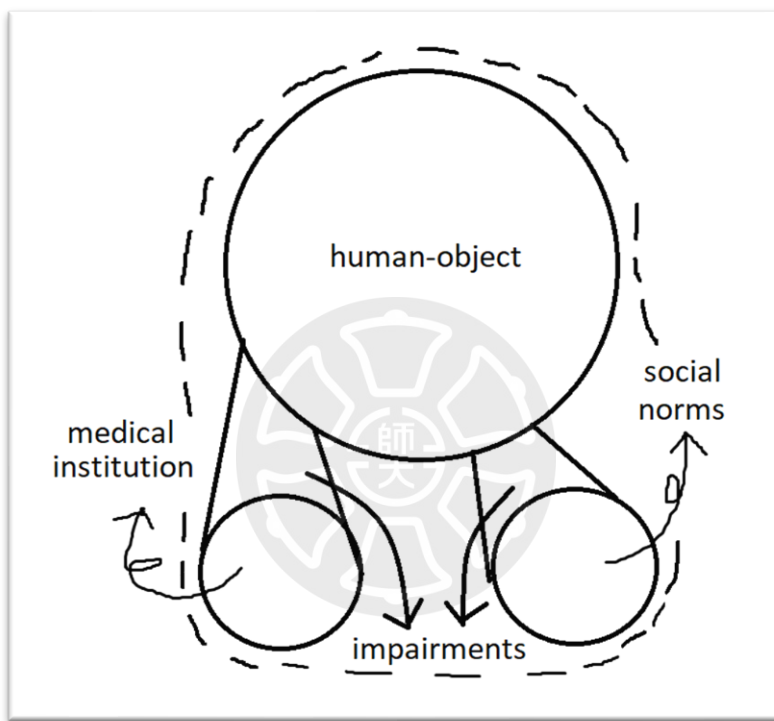


Fig. 6. The Nordic relational model disability-object.

Matthew J. C. Cella approaches the disability-object from the opposite direction, as comprising disabled people incorporating their physical and social ecologies. His “ecosomatic paradigm foregrounds the inseparability of ecological context and somatic experience: as a metaphor, it calls into consciousness and makes tangible the ways in which our bodies and the places we inhabit are ‘continuous with each other’” (585; he is quoting Casey 255). It has as its “basis” “the deep entanglement between bodies and places,” or “the dialectic of embodiment and emplacement” (574-75), that underlies “social-model theory” (584); “highlight[s] the role the

mind-body plays in the process of emplacement[;] and [can] thereby have the capacity to reorient our sense of and behavior toward both the human body and natural world” (587). It does so by deconstructing Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s intersectional concept of the “normate,” “the constructed identity of those who, by way of the[ir] bodily configurations and cultural capital,” are granted “authority” and “power” (Garland-Thomson 8); we can think of the normate-object as an abstract object of social privilege that incorporates the conceptual abled body-object. Without getting into his variant understanding of the social model, we can perhaps summarize Cella’s ecosomatic paradigm as a deriving of new insights into the body and its ecologies (both within and without) by dint of their continuity.

Cella offers two case studies in support. The first is of Cormac McCarthy’s classic dystopian novel *The Road* (2006), in which an unnamed father and son walk across a barren postapocalyptic United States. Cella argues that “the human body’s relation to space and place in this postapocalyptic landscape is altered completely” (581). He offers four examples. First, since the uniformly “ashen wilderness makes its demands equally on all comers, the category of disability is [. . .] stripped of its meaning” (581). And yet, even in McCarthy’s hellish landscape, a non-disabled person would be more likely to survive than a paraplegic or someone with bipolar disorder.

Second, in McCarthy’s storyworld, most living things have perished, so a person in good health must be consuming the only common food source left: humans. Consequently, “the figure of the normate in the preapocalyptic world—the healthy and unimpaired body—is reinscribed by McCarthy in the new world as a sign of moral corruption,” so that being “emaciated and weakened” is a sign of “moral fortitude” (582). But some might say that, given the global poverty created by imperialist capitalism, the normate is already morally problematic in our

extratextual world, as it subsists on the privilege of enjoying resources (and the resources enabling access to those resources) that are not available to those who need them more. To take just one example, obesity is most strongly correlated with the distortion of biological systems by high-sugar, low-fiber foods, which can cost up to eight times less than healthier foods, meaning that those with fewer resources are less likely to resemble the normate (Hobbes). Even if we do consider extratextual good health to be morally justified, the reason would most likely be because it leads to a longer life of less pain and physical suffering—this logic would still hold if the primary nutritious food source were humans. Inside and outside the storyworld of *The Road*, the normate is the same.

Cella's third example is that almost all color is leached from the storyworld, so that colorblindness has in effect become the norm (582-83). But he himself mentions that the father "stares in awe at the orange flames of a forest fire" (583), undercutting his own argument, for surely people who can notice a forest fire from a distance, before feeling the heat, are more likely to survive.

His last example is that the postapocalyptic storyworld requires the son's innate communalism and trust in strangers, reversing the suspicious individualism that the father inherits from our extratextual world (583-84). But this argument neglects the many communal societies throughout the world, including in areas of the United States. And even if we do confine the discussion to individualist societies, this point has little to do with disability—humans are social animals, and non-disabled people cannot live isolated and alone, either (Habermas 100).

Cella's second case study is of Linda Hogan's novel *Solar Storms* (1997). The novel is a *bildungsroman* that follows the fostered "Angel Jensen, a young woman of mixed Cree and Inuit

descent who has deep scars on the bottom half of her face” caused, unknown to her at first, by “her own mother,” as Angel traces her roots by returning to her “ancestral homeland,” now “broken and scarred, ravaged by an ambitious hydroelectric development project that has altered the face of the region” (Cella 587-88). Angel is indubitably disabled by the stigma that comes with her facial scars (595n5), and Cella draws a parallel between her acceptance of herself and her acceptance of her homeland, both of which, he argues, depend on the reversal of the normate: “If we apply this theoretical approach [of the normate] to the land-community, we can see how the strategies used to define and represent the disabled body as a deviant Other have been employed (and continue to be employed) to direct the development of natural resources and the exploitation and destruction of whole ecosystems” that are said to be lacking in fertility (591). That is, both disabled people and “disabled” ecosystems are opened up to exploitation through othering. Rhetoric notwithstanding, the understanding of the ecosomatic paradigm proffered in this second case study is limited by the fact that, in extending disability discourse to encompass the concerns of ecocriticism, Cella overgeneralizes disability discourse and loses track of its one indispensable element: the composition of the disability-object. The formulation “the strategies used to define and represent the disabled body as a deviant Other” already presumes to know what “the” disabled body *is*—and as we have seen, this is a key shortcoming of the social model’s idealism. Though Cella recognizes this idealistic shortcoming of the social model, it is effectively irrelevant for him, because his main interest is in how the social model invites considerations of “the social and natural environments” of disability rather than of the disabled body (580). And his examples are confined to physical and social ecologies. Though he often uses the term “mind-body,” his analyses are seldom if ever to do with mental disability (Greenspan 93).

If it seems as if I am being too harsh on Cella's ecosomatic paradigm, I have dwelt so long on it precisely because of its immense discursive potential. It recognizes the limit of both the medical model (the entire burden is placed on pathologized individuals) and, though he does not address it, the social model (neglect of the disabled body), and his key insight—that it is the body that tunes to its surrounding ecologies, and not *vice versa* as in the Nordic relational model—is instructive. But it still does not adequately account for the disabled “mind-body,” as Cella calls it.

If the Nordic relational model errs on the side of the medical model, then the ecosomatic paradigm leans too far in the direction of the social model and physical disability. One resembles the medical model with social model characteristics, while the other is akin to the social model writ large, to a fault. Hence, the above readings of *The Unnamed* remain unchanged when read through the Nordic relational model or the ecosomatic paradigm. This understanding of the Nordic relational model and ecosomatic paradigm points up the reification of conceptual categories in disability studies, an “essentialism” at which Nathan D. Frank takes aim in his deconstructive reading of *The Unnamed*, and that shows how, “by allowing Tim Farnsworth’s condition to remain *undiagnosed*,” the novel “exceeds not just mental and physical categories, but disability itself as an essentialist category.”¹⁵ Expanding the disability-object to showcase not two but four facets and highlighting their entanglements can help fend off such a deconstruction, in the process bringing out the disability-object’s hyperobjecthood. This is what I will do for *The Unnamed* with my proposed dialectical model of disability, which I posit not as just another disability model, but as a means of bridging the gap between the variegated individual

¹⁵ This is somewhat hyperbolic rhetoric, as, by deeming disability an “essentialist category,” he is more or less referring to “the incoherence of the category” upon exposure to a deconstruction of its founding binaries (n4).

experiences of disability and the multifarious complexity of the physical and social ecologies in which (disabled) people find themselves.

The Dialectical Model

The medical model disability-object shows how human-objects attune to the medical institution through pathologized impairments; the social model disability-object shows how human-objects attune to social norms through determined impairments; and the relational model disability-object shows how both the medical institution and social norms attune to human-objects through individual impairments. In contrast, under the dialectical model, the disability-object comprises human-objects who attune to their physical and social ecologies through those ecologies' affordances specific to individual human-objects. The dialectical model therefore aligns with Frank's goal, following Michael Bérubé, of deconstructing disability studies categories with "radical individuation." Moreover, the physical and mental facets of the human-object are treated as part-objects in their own right, and the dialectical relation between them is also accounted for. The disability-hyperobject takes shape therefrom (fig. 7). Whereas the medical model aims for treatment, the social model aims for de-othering, and the relational model aims for community integration, the dialectical model aims to locate an individual human-object's metastable¹⁶ *equilibril niche* within these ecologies in order to resolve what Siebers says is *the* challenge for disabled people: "to live with their disability, to come to know their body, to accept what it can do, and to keep doing what they can for as long as they can. They do not want to feel dominated by the people on whom they depend for help, and they want to be able to imagine themselves in the world without feeling ashamed" (69). In short, the dialectical

¹⁶ Defined by Jean-Paul Sartre as "highly precarious" and subject to sudden changes or transitions (*Being* 91). My point is that people's equilibril niche changes along with their relation to the two ecologies, which are always in flux.

model of disability meets the standard set forth by Janet M. Duncan of “assum[ing] the [disabled person] as capable and competent” (39), and aims to en-able a human-object to the greatest possible extent.

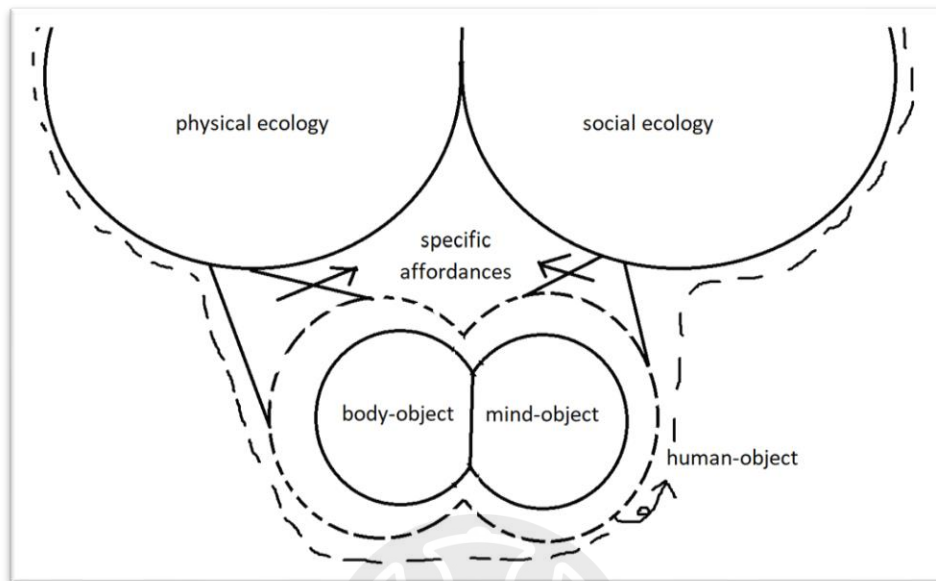


Fig. 7. The dialectical model disability-hyperobject.

We have seen how the medical model fails Tim, and how the social model is of limited benefit to him. He thereafter begins to navigate his own embodied relation to the world. Medical terminology having been found lacking, Tim describes “his inner experience of being” in his own idiosyncratic terms: “brain fog,”¹⁷ “mentally unsticky,” “jangly” nerves, “hyperslogged” muscles, a “floaty” left side, and “bunched up” breathing (126). With no treatment available, he can only experiment on his own—trying to exhaust himself on a walk, only to find that his legs do not stop when his stamina ends; by chance starting a walk on a treadmill, which his legs promptly step off (43-44)—or with the help of caretakers, including doctors—using muscle relaxants, which work, but whose aftereffects lead to “his longest and most miserable walk” (44)—and Jane—“He had Jane lock him inside the bedroom. The tidy circles he was forced to

¹⁷ This has since become a more common phrase describing “mental fatigue” (Higuera).

walk made him dizzy and half-mad. [. . .] They bolted an O-ring into a stud in the wall and tethered him with a chain and a belt made of leather. After a couple of days, that sort of containment was just too barbaric” (43-44). As aesthetician Jenefer Robinson observes, a person’s environment “is often another person” (274). Tim’s caretakers are part-objects of the ecologies to which he attunes, but unlike his physical ecology, his social ecology incorporating specific human-objects changes as these human-objects, from their own perspectives, attune to Tim.

Being Tim’s primary caretaker exacts a steep cost from Jane. Describing her roles during Tim’s first two occurrences, the novel relates how she becomes Tim’s nurse, driver, support staff, counsel, sounding board, cheerleader, and “quiet, supportive presence that said simply, I’m here, said without a word, you are not alone” (21), all in addition to mothering Becka. When the second occurrence ended, Tim returned to work “in a mad dash to catch up with his life,” leaving Jane to somehow “resume ordinary life after so many arguments with doctors and late-night car rides to random street corners[, . . .] as if nothing had ever happened[. . . .] She needed a purpose not entirely predicated upon other people, loved ones, the taking care of loved ones. She earned her license and started selling real estate” (21). Tim recognizes the cost his condition exacts from her—at one point he thinks, “He was ruining her” (113)—but he does not seem to think her suffering to be as important as his own, in the sense that she should have an equal voice in making relevant decisions. As Jane thinks when he mentions suicide, “He was the only one in the body. Everyone else was locked out. But this misfortune was not his and his alone!” (27). After Tim leaves home, he urges Jane to “go on with [her] life” and even “remarry,” to her incredulity (253). Only when he learns that Jane has gone on vacation to the south of France with a man named Michael does Tim realize that “he had told her to go on with her life only because her

love and constancy had been so true for so long, he never dreamed they would actually be taken away” (258). Michael, whom we never meet, proposes to Jane, and Tim agreeably signs the divorce papers by fax (258-59), but she cannot bring herself to marry him (263). Even so, Michael remains besotted (284).

The Farnsworth marriage is a strong one, and they call each other “banana” in moments of closeness (5, 54, 88, 106, 133, 190, 258, 283, 305), but Tim’s ordeal gets Jane thinking about the meaning of marriage, the vows that keep her by his side, and what it would mean to break those vows. “In part,” argues Stephen J. Burn, “exploring what it means to do something for love is exactly the goal that Ferris’s novel sets out to reach” (“Neural” 22), and I agree. At first, Jane thinks that marriage is an existence of banalities, both good and bad, but that when a crisis occurs, “when the vows kick in, you don’t even blink. You just do” (20). Later, when Tim stages an intervention to get Jane to address her drinking problem, the novel explores the mysterious depths beneath those banalities. Addressing Jane’s drinking means, ultimately, addressing all the factors that have strained their marriage, and, recognizing this, they are not argumentative or recriminating in their conversation but, rather, intimate and bonding: “They stared into the essential mystery of each other, but felt passing between them [. . .] the recognition of that more impossible mystery—their togetherness, the agreement each made that they would withstand the wayward directions they had taken and, despite their inviolable separateness, still remain” (170). Their strong marriage bond is an inexplicable mystery, so when Jane is tempted by other men, she does not need a reason in order to reject them. In fact, all the reasons are arrayed in favor of her leaving. She imagines the concept of a “*medical prenuptial*” that would allow one party to leave the marriage if the other “turns too human too quickly” (90). The “grief and heartache of being nursemaid and watchman” (90) is exacerbated, in her case, by the abyss of knowledge

regarding Tim's condition: "If he just had an expiration date," she thinks, "of course she'd sit with him." But for all anyone knew, the walking "could go on forever. Is that how she wanted to spend her life?" (116).

She is tempted by two men, one fleetingly, the other seriously. At the grocery store, she lines up at the meat counter behind a man who "finely match[es] her ideal of physical beauty," and she fantasizes about having with him "a place in the city set high above the noise where music played across the open loft and the walls were hung with contemporary art" (67-68). Even though the "entire moral structure" of marriage "had collapsed" in that fantastical instant, she still manages to curb her desire by abandoning the meat counter, grabbing two bottles of expensive wine, and rushing back to the car, where a waiting Tim complains, "You could buy wine but not veal?" (68-69). Jane's fantasy foreshadows the later and more serious temptation, when she indulges a similar fantasy while showing a place to immaculately dressed art dealer David: "She pretended that they were looking at the place together, that she knew everything there was to know about contemporary art, that her name was not Jane, that she went to parties with painters and eccentrics, and that as they looked at each room, they wondered what piece would go best on what wall" (191). To her surprise, he asks her out for drinks afterward, and when she reveals that she is a recovering alcoholic, he immediately pivots to dinner (192-93). Jane is "flattered, mystified, exhilarated. She was also, after a moment, steady." And yet, and yet. At that precise moment, Tim calls to tell her that his fourth occurrence had begun, in response to which, instead of offering to pick him up, she asks him to do what at the time he had never managed on his own: "Come home" (194-95). He chooses not to even try, and she regrets her decision immensely. When she finally tracks him down at the Waffle House where he hallucinates, she tries to persuade him to return with her by appealing to their marriage, saying,

“I know you think you’re doing this for me. I know you think it’s saving me by freeing me up to live my life. But that’s not living. My life is you” (243). He, however, sticks to his guns.

In between these two temptations is Jane’s drinking, which the novel frames as a form of infidelity: “She hadn’t fucked anyone, she hadn’t left him for someone new, but that was only because it was easier to drink” (165). It starts with the mental illness—object of depression, Becka’s availability on weekends to care for Tim, and a long drive to nowhere, “driving just to drive” (162). She makes it to Stamford, Connecticut, where she stops for lunch at a Bennigan’s, orders a drink, orders another drink, and just keeps going. At night, a cab takes her to the nearby Holiday Inn, and the next day she does it all over again. She returns home Monday morning (162-65). This goes on every weekend until she causes a ruckus and is banned from the Bennigan’s. “From then on, she started drinking at the T.G.I. Friday’s” (167). The next time we see her, she is leaving rehab (180). This episode shows how being incorporated into Tim’s social ecology and attempting to tune his physical ecology depletes not only her time and energy but also her mental health: her sense of agency and belonging in her own life.

Jane’s mental health—object often finds an objective correlative in real estate, and her housing dimensions at any given point in time can be seen to symbolize how “at home” she feels in her life at that point. In contrast to Tim, who is bound to a hospital bed at home during his third occurrence, Jane has her choice of rooms to sleep in; but the empty space of their vast suburban home with eight beds gives her a “massive crushing weight” (166), much as how Tim’s condition weighs on her. When spending the night at the Stamford Holiday Inn, she pays a surcharge for rearranging the furniture so that the room, which is “too big,” becomes “the size she liked”—the rearranging and the drinking both return a sense of agency to her life. She enjoys her stay in rehab because, in part, “there she had only one room with one bed, her life stripped

down to the simplicity of self-survival” (180), the simplicity of her own needs. And at the beginning of the brief period of domestic bliss between Tim’s third and fourth occurrences, he buys a brownstone he comes across on a voluntary stroll that “was a tenth the size of their house in the suburbs. It had charm and character and windows full of sunlight, hardwood floors and a remodeled kitchen, and a restorer’s touch around the woodwork. It had an antique chandelier and claw-foot tub” (184). They move in, and Jane never moves out, even when Tim leaves for good. It becomes a symbol of their lasting marriage bond, the bedrock of the mean to which Jane regresses as part-object of Tim’s social ecology.

The relation between mind-object and body-object is another facet of the disability-object under the dialectical model. On the road, Tim’s alienation from his body manifests in the fact that he refers to it as something apart from himself: “‘You and me,’ he cried, ‘you son of a bitch!’” (197). Tim refers to his body as “he” and “the other,” and monologues to complain about how his body lacks reason and intention (205-06, 214-15), invoking what Tanja Reiffenrath calls a dichotomy of “civilized and brute,” and what Marina Ludwigs sees as an allusion to Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) (123-24).¹⁸ But the antagonism between his mind and body had arisen much earlier. Soon after the third occurrence begins, Tim offhandedly tells Jane that he will “buy a gun” and “blow my head off” (27). He

¹⁸ Reiffenrath argues that the novel’s Cartesianism, while affording “discussion of issues of self, agency, and control” and “creating [. . .] a counternarrative to the materialism the sciences of the mind propose,” nevertheless “contribut[es] considerably to the incoherence of the narrative.” But her main evidence of such incoherence is the “loose sequence of paragraphs” that constitute the “fragmentary account of the events finally leading to the protagonist’s death”—in other words, a montage of vignettes—and in any case, what she sees as incoherence I find a reflection of the central conflict of the novel. Indeed, noting that Tim’s somatic noncompliance literally “makes it impossible for the narrative to follow a straight and intelligible path to a destination,” Ludwigs asserts that the novel is an allegory of narrative, “a story about story-making” (126). I would rather say that the necessarily bounded yet ateleological form of the storyworld approaches the amorphously unbounded perception of ateleological lived experience, making the novel particularly suitable for a hyperobject reading. An exploration of narrative proper will come in Chapter 4.

takes it back (28), but after the bicycle helmet yields no results, he does get a gun and stick it into his mouth. And yet, “his body, which spoke a persuasive language of its own, singular, subterranean, objected with the most fundamental repulsion” (109), and he desists.

Thenceforth, suicide and death are portrayed as the field on which mind and body join battle, a “field most people never realize exists until the final days and moments of their lives” (109). Walking under a highway, Tim contemplates climbing up and throwing himself into traffic, but “that was letting the son of a bitch off too easy” (199). Instead, he wages a war of biological attrition, ignoring his body’s warnings of hunger, a deep cut on his leg (207), and the cold (214), until he lies in the snow in nothing but his boxers, “euphoric with the certainty of physical death” (220). Alas, his body has one last trick up its sleeve: His very next forced walk brings him to the doors of a hospital, and no more walks occur until he is cured and released in two months.

Tim’s body fights back in more ways than one. As Tim monologues against “the other,” his body’s warnings take the form of mute speech—at first single words like “food” and “leg” (207), then short phrases (“leg is hurting” [213]) and sarcasm (“Deficiency of copper causes anemia, just so you know” [216]), before developing into self-advocacy (“I’m evolving, replied the other” [217]) and, while Tim is incapacitated in the hospital’s intensive care unit, a “co-opt[ing of] his powers of recall and discourse” (223) to conduct sadistic interrogations:

Q: You believe in the soul now? [. . . W]hat accounts for your sudden mystical impulse?

A: Without God, you win. [. . .]

Q: Are you aware that you can be made to forget words, if certain neurons are suppressed from firing?

A: Certain what?

Q: And that by suppressing the firing of others, you can be made to forget what words mean entirely? Like the word *Jane*, for instance.

A: Which?

Q: And do you know that if I do *this*—

[inaudible]

A: Oof!

Q:—you will flatline? And if I do this [sic]—

[inaudible]

A: Aaa, aaa...

Q:—you will cease flatlining? Do you really want to confuse that for God's work? [. . .]

It's just you and me, pal. Forget God. Act like a man. It's what we are.

(222-25; both instances of "[inaudible]" in original)

Tim desperately tries to escape his body-object by escaping his bed, so the hospital ties him down, "which made him thrash and weep and cry out without sound because hell was a bed, hell was a bed, while life, down the corridor and through the door, was out there—life and death both, it didn't matter which" (225). Thoughts of God and the eternal soul blossom into full-blown "God talk and end-of-days ranting" (248), in which the struggle between his mind-object and body-object morphs into the eternal battle between God and the devil, and he is diagnosed with "paranoia and schizophrenia" and moved to the psychiatric ward (226). This is an ironic reversal for a man who, on the one hand, was desperate for a diagnosis but, on the other hand, is adamant that his walking is not due to mental illness (66), even despite lacking evidence of a physical or neurological disorder. After being discharged, his body even monologues, switching

roles with Tim entirely (231-33). When Tim tauntingly yells at his body in an early monologue, “Speak to me!” (214), this is surely not what he has in mind.

Tim has always led a life of the mind. He stays late at his office as a rule (36), and when the motion-sensor office lights turn off on him, he is “surprised again—not just by the darkened office. By his reentry into the physical world. Self-awareness. Himself as something more than mind thinking” (36-37). He works so hard in order to tunnel himself “out of the physical world” (236). This is a part of his office culture: Mike, his boss, once billed a twenty-seven-hour day by crossing time zones (57). As his body forces Tim to walk time and time again, he shores up his sanity by doubling down on his belief in the sovereignty of his mind. He does not know why “it meant all the difference in the world” to him to avoid a diagnosis of mental illness for his walking (66), but Stuart Murray believes it is so that he can “admit to a disability while preserving the sense that, psychologically, his mind is intact” (“Ambiguities” 99). “He refused to believe” that “mind [is] just body more refined” (81), and he briefly entertains the notion of learning to recognize the birds and other nonhuman beings on his walks, for, as he puts it, “Name a bird and master the world. [. . .] That was something the other could never do” (212). “He could say the words ‘autonomic nervous system,’ whereas the autonomic nervous system just was; therefore he was superior to the autonomic nervous system” and can ignore its distress signals (214). But he soon gives up birdwatching and retreats to something with which he is already familiar: He starts reciting case law, thinking (mistakenly, as we have seen) that the refuge of the legal world “was refinement purely of the mind, many layers of sophistication above what the other could ever hope to achieve” (213). Soon, walking starts taking a toll on his mind. He hears two homeless men conversing in English, but cannot understand the semantic content: “They corset cheese to blanket trinket for the whole nine. Bungle commons lack the

motherfucker to razz Mahoney. Talk, knickers! Almost osmosis for the whole nine. Make snow, eye gone ain't four daze Don" (153). And a man with a garbage bag that he meets on the road asks him, "'You got the poison?' [. . .] Eventually [Tim] nodded" (218-19). "The poison" functions as another vague cover term, and later, when Tim turns the question on others, it is taken by a veteran to mean post-traumatic stress disorder (219-20), and by Tim's fellow psychiatric ward patients to refer to whatever ails them (226). He tells his psychiatrist that what the latter diagnoses as schizophrenia is not a voice representing his body, but "a point of view" representing "Death" and "inevitable decay" (227)—the inner life is the only life that counts. He leaves the hospital with several psychotropic prescriptions, which he considers "a legitimate tactical advantage" against his body (228). A condition reducible to neither mind-object nor body-object has metastasized in both, suggesting how the disability-object of which his walking is a facet is in fact a multidimensional disability-hyperobject.

After leaving the hospital, Tim comes to terms with the disability-hyperobject and carries on as best he can by developing, through trial and error, a routine to keep himself well. He makes sure to take the medication for his schizophrenia and refill the prescriptions when running low (228); otherwise, his God talk starts up again (304-05). He buys a tent, bedroll, and pack, sheltering wherever his walks take him, and packs up immediately upon waking, lest a walk make him abandon everything (248-50). Other things are shorn of their importance: He avoids indulgences like beds or bars, which make the subsequent walk that much harder (252, 262), and he alone remains unperturbed when the power goes out at the restaurant where he chats with Becka after her concert (261). The important thing is to keep walking in the direction of Jane's hospital bed, "stopping for water or food if necessary, and making an end that got him out of the weather. He hoped not to be taken away by a walk, but otherwise nothing much else. And if he

was taken away, there were other days to do this. It had waited a long time already” (283). But, as we have seen above, his body is destroyed by the cross-country journey, its disintegration ecosomatically entangled, even on the level of syntax, with his location and itinerary. Each step he voluntarily takes is a step that his body cannot handle; he fights it heedless of how it is tuned by his physical ecology. To take just one of many examples, “he let himself fry from Mount Pleasant to the western border of the Mississippi before the sun blisters appeared and he realized it was too late” (278). He has not yet found his equilibrial niche.

In fact, none of this torment is necessary. Becka offers to “drive to where you are, we tie you up and throw you in the trunk or something, and drive you back here,” which Tim admits to himself is “a perfectly reasonable proposition,” though he still does not accept the offer (268-69). It is perhaps scenes like this that lead Graeme Macdonald to categorize *The Unnamed* as “ambulatory fiction” and post-oil literature, one of a number of “post-automobilic narratives” (20), though it would behoove him to remember that Tim’s first three occurrences involve lots of driving on Jane’s part. Tim turns Becka down and puts his body through the meat grinder, not in protest at global warming and the fossil fuel industry, but because psychotropically holding the mental intrusions of “the other” at bay is only a stalemate; he wants to win once and for all “against his weak and determined body” (269), to prove “that there was no circumstance under which he could not walk if he put his mind to it” (303). And so he walks.¹⁹

Becka has tipped Jane off about Tim’s self-imposed ordeal, but Jane has already “made peace with dying” (300). And yet, when he walks through the door of her hospital room, it is as if both of their mindsets were just a passing fog, obscuring the immutable foundation of their

¹⁹ Ruth Maxey calls what ensues “the American Dream turned nihilist American odyssey, as one individual walks across the country, witnessing the effects of climate change and the limits of health care” (214)—somewhat misleadingly regarding health care, as he is treated and cured of almost everything but his walking.

marriage bond: No longer “intent only on making the distance,” as soon as he sees her lying there, “he knew at once what it had all been for, [. . .] and it wasn’t to win, it wasn’t for God[. . . .] All time and distance between them collapsed, and without any mental searching for the word, he said to her, “Hello, banana,” and then reached out to take her hand” (283). His miraculous return inspires her own miraculous recovery (300); but, as if her health were a symbol of their marriage, Jane suffers a recurrence after Tim leaves home for good, and this time she makes sure that he does not know until it is too late. Tim calls her as soon as he receives word, “but Becka answered and told him that she was already gone” (305). Jane has lost the fight against her own body, as Tim soon will, as must we all.

By the time he leaves Jane for the last time, Tim has finally found an equilibrical niche among his physical and social ecologies:

He regained an eye for those locations that best served his needs for rest and renewal. [. . .] There were occasional run-ins with unsympathetic authorities who pressed on him their provincial dogmas of safety and propriety. [. . .] He made no appeal to their sympathy. He simply packed up and moved on. [. . .] He maintained a sound mind until the end. He was vigilant about periodic checkups and disciplined with his medication. He took care of himself as best he could, eating well however possible, sleeping when his body required it, and keeping at bay to the extent his mind allowed it a grim referendum on life, and he persevered in this manner of living until his death[.] (303-06)

Ruth Maxey says that Tim is “forced to endure a rugged, classically American existence of wilderness survival” (214), but it is not forced but chosen, and he does not endure—he thrives. At peace with his body with the help of the medication, “the other” no longer intruding, Tim can finally notice, for his own sake, the beauty and splendor of the world in its particulars, “as Jane

had taught him,” recognizing birds and their calls without needing to know their names (306).

And his death, when it finally comes over him, poses a conundrum for Cartesianism. Lying in his bedroll with his eyes closed upon awakening, he listens to the howling blizzard outside his tent, to his pumping heart and pulsing blood, and to the hallucinated (or remembered?) sounds of the period of bliss in the brownstone with Jane; above all, he desires a thirst-quenching drink of water. Then, he notices that he no longer hears anything:

He never had to rise again, the silence informed him. Never had to walk, never had to seek out food, never had to carry around the heavy and the weary weight, and in a measure of time that may have been the smallest natural unit known to man, or that may have been and may still remain all of eternity, he realized that he was still thinking, his mind was still afire, that he had just scored if not won the whole damn thing[.] (310)

But just as it seems like mind has won over body, the novel offers one last metaphysical twist in the final line: “The exquisite thought of his eternal rest was how delicious that cup of water was going to taste the instant it touched his lips” (310). Tim’s desire for satisfaction of his body-object after death argues against Cartesianism, for Cartesianism lies not in the fact of individually existing mind- and body-objects, but in denying their mutually constitutive entanglement.

This rebuttal of Cartesianism is also conveyed at various places in the novel through a formal device. Usually in a realist novel, we can expect to have a general idea of where a scene takes place and how it fits into the story (fabula or *histoire*). With the modernist invention of the stream of consciousness, that is no longer always the case. *The Unnamed* sometimes plays the trick of opening a chapter with a tightly focalized perspective in the modernist vein (mind), and only broadening the focalization to include the setting and chronological placement (body) when

it adds to the thematic component of the scene. This mixing of modernist and realist techniques might have earned *The Unnamed* the label of “postmodern,” if not for the fact that there is an extratextual element in its thematic component, what Burn calls “the deep metaphysical ache that lies at the heart of post-postmodern fiction” (“Mapping” 45). In his own reading, Burn highlights the novel’s exploration of Tim’s “mind, his will, his soul (he did not know the best name for it)” (Ferris, *Unnamed* 252), construed literally rather than ironically or metaphorically (“Mapping” 45-46). Tim’s hallucinating in a Waffle House about being in the office is slowly revealed using this formal device. To give another brief example: Chapter 18 of the first section opens with the line, “He was prodded awake by a billy club” (83). We assume that Tim has fallen asleep after another walk, even though the previous chapter did not end with one. A bit later, we read, “Tim had no idea where he was. The cop asked him to step out of the vehicle” (83). This is unexpected, as so far we have never seen Tim take shelter in a vehicle after his walk, and we wonder if he has broken into it. But then the mystery is solved: “The steering wheel in front of him was a big round toy. The van or truck had no door. [. . .] The three of them [including two cops] stood between the truck he’d slept in and another just like it. It said Utz Potato Chips on the side” (83-84). It is a toy truck ride, the kind often found outside supermarkets and strip malls. Presenting the scene in this way underlines Tim’s confusion upon waking from a post-walk sleep.

A more powerful example is the chapter right after Jane retrieves an almost-raped Tim. Preceding the chapter break is a discussion at their kitchen table of how Jane can best take care of him, which Tim begins by saying, “I can’t keep doing this to you,” and which Jane continues by replying, “Sit down next to me” (113). The subsequent chapter opens in Jane’s head as she contemplates the meaning of marriage, the meaning of being married to a man with a chronic

illness, the meaning of being married to a man with an undiagnosable chronic illness, and leaving that man. Then, Tim “shuffled into the room” and says, “I can’t keep doing this to you.” Jane thinks, “He looked contrite and sad and ten years older. He was thin and desperate and as needy as a child” (116). She pours herself another glass of wine and tells him to sit next to her, signaling to us that this is the same scene, made more powerful by the knowledge of how close Jane had come to actually leaving Tim.

The novel does something similar after the one day of married bliss depicted in the novel, which sees a sudden afternoon thunderstorm and is capped by Jane, having just finished showing a duplex to art dealer David, receiving a phone call from Tim post-walk and telling him to “come home” (195). The following chapter opens on a thunderstorm and tells us that Tim’s “body moved him down the sidewalk” (195). We follow him through his walk and his search for shelter after waking from his post-walk sleep. Finally safe, he “reached for his BlackBerry” (198). After a paragraph break: “Jane was standing with David on Greenwich Street just south of West 10th” (198). In the space of a single paragraph break, we feel the contrast between Jane’s perfect day and Tim’s waking nightmare of a recurrence, and more palpably understand Jane’s wavering.

Perhaps the most powerful example of all is the chapter immediately following the one just discussed; that chapter does not end with the phone call but continues through Tim’s next walk and decision not to return home. The subsequent chapter opens from Becka’s perspective, as she listens to her mother recount the immediately preceding events, and contrasts them with her own numerous memories of accompanying her mother to pick up her father. Jane concludes her account by saying, “Then he called and said it was back, and my first instinct was to abandon him,” to which Becka replies, “But look where you are now[. . .] Look at what you’re doing now.” With this, we are returned to a concrete scene, namely, “inside the lobby of a police

department in western New Jersey” (202). Again, the tight modernist focalization forms a strong contrast with the realist setting in order to heighten our moral sympathy with Jane, who the novel thus portrays as a good woman who suffers a moment of weakness. It is debatable to what extent Jane’s morality in staying with Tim is a feminist one, especially since Tim finds his equilibrial niche only after Jane more or less exits the story, even if she has not yet died; on the other hand, she is a fully developed character who makes choices of her own volition for considered reasons, and we should not downplay her agency. In any case, the moral force of this scene lies not in *what* she decides to do, but in *how* she recognizes her betrayal of her own chosen morals. And the force of that recognition is conveyed by presenting separately what she thinks and what she does, her mind and her body, before overcoming Cartesianism to bring them together for the reader.

Conclusion

We have seen how Tim’s condition cannot be adequately accounted for by the medical, social, or relational models of disability. The medical institution tries and fails to cure him. His walking takes him out of stable society, “for everywhere was a wilderness to him who had known only the interiors of homes and offices and school buildings and restaurants and courthouses and hotels” (Ferris, *Unnamed* 247). Community integration is impossible without a stable and fixed community (H. Brown 135-36). And recognizing that his disability is entangled with his physical and social ecologies is but the first step. For Tim to attune to the disability-hyperobject, he must pursue medical intervention when useful, navigate the perils of permanent vagabondage, attune to the limits of his body, and forgo the mirage of the absolute sovereignty of his mind. The disability-hyperobject comprises these four objects of widely varying scale—

medicine-object, society-object, body-object, mind-object—and attuning to it means locating the equilibrial niche at their nexus, specific to each person.

Though nobody can realize the able-bodied ideal, this is not to say that everyone is disabled. One may not benefit from medical intervention, need to beware the breaking of social norms, be abled in the way that is expected, or ever doubt the power of one's will over oneself. But for those who may, the dialectical model of disability, grounded in the object-oriented ontology that powers hyperobject reading, can offer a way to conceptualize the diversity of lived experience that links it to our large-scale ecologies while minimizing the harms of binary thinking and disability labels. If disability is a universal issue, as many have argued (Morton, *Humankind* 43), then it is but the latest name for what used to be known as *la condition humaine*. Jane thinks of physical/mental deterioration as “turn[ing] too human too quickly,” and one of Tim's many doctors says to her, “Try your best that he doesn't forget what it means to be human” (117)—but it is only near the end of the novel, and of his life, that Tim learns that being a human-object means attuning to hyperobjects and locating one's equilibrial niche.

Inevitably, more could be said about disability in *The Unnamed*. The dialectical model of disability, for example, could be refined much more from the rough sketch offered here, in order to afford the generalization of singularity while bypassing an essentializing reification. Nevertheless, I hope to have shown that hyperobject reading, as a mode of reading, can offer productive insights into the micro and macro scales of a text, and their entanglements, while contributing to thematically relevant fields, in this case that of critical disability studies. The next chapter will essay a hyperobject reading of an area of inquiry that is of more recent vintage—the digital.



Excursus on Methodology

Having completed the first case study, we can pause here to meditate on how it was accomplished. In Chapter 1, I called hyperobject reading a “mode of reading.” This raises the question of methodology, in particular the differences between a mode, a method, and a methodology.

By *mode*, I mean a subset of a method; a mode is a way of operationalizing a method, a way which carries with it its own perspective, assumptions, and priorities, yet which shares with the other modes of the method a common discursive framework and value system. By *method*, I mean a coherent, consistent, and (to the degree possible) delimited discursive framework that is grounded in a value system. By *methodology*, I mean a method that is only weakly delimited and thus affords a non-deconstructive degree of reflexivity; or: a method operationalized on another method (or on itself) with the second-order priority of preserving the latter method’s operationalizability.

Hyperobject reading is a *mode* of the close reading *method* from an Anthropocene perspective, a mode that assumes an object-oriented paradigm and prioritizes the (attempted) resolution of scale variance. In its operation, it resembles thematic reading, but it extends the chosen theme beyond its conventional bounds in seeking to account for a scale variance that is unified at a higher order by the Anthropocene as a perspective. Close reading is a *method* of research that is delimited to the operation of discoursing on a text (broadly defined) and that values sincerity, consistency, and rationality (or at least communicability). This excursus is a *methodology* that could be continued further, but at the cost of the operationalizability of hyperobject reading for the following two case studies. So it ends here.



3

**The Human-Object in an Object-Oriented Universe:
The Digital as Hyperobject in Tao Lin's *Taipei***

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the ubiquity of digital technology has already become undeniable, at least in the so-called Minority (First) World. Computers can be found in almost every grade school classroom; it is inconceivable for even those who lack reliable internet access to not have an email account (unless it is by choice); and social media websites such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* have achieved a global reach. The proliferation of smartphones, which began to outsell so-called dumbphones in 2013 (Svensson), the year Tao Lin's *Taipei* was published, means that the time we spend away from digital technology is rapidly diminishing, and pandemic-induced lockdowns only accelerate this trend (Sullivan). As digital technology becomes entangled in ever more facets of the lived experience of our world, prevalence has gradually translated into influence, and a shift in the mode of that experience has gradually manifested. Perhaps such a shift may be found in the immediate access to relevant information granted by internet-connected digital devices (Tolkin)—but this disregards the multifarious influences of the digital on facets of lived experience that can take place at least partly offline. More pertinent is how near-instantaneous digitally afforded connectivity is indispensable to our “becoming-species” (Morton, *Humankind* 16)—our newfound self-awareness as a species-hyperobject—and to our advent into the Anthropocene (Tsitsovits and Vermeulen 200). As the handmaiden of Anthropocene awareness, the digital calls out for explication. I believe that such an explication of the digital can be found in the work of N. Katherine Hayles, specifically her distinction between digital and analogue, a distinction that penetrates to the level of human-objecthood.

In this chapter, I will argue that the digital understood as such constitutes a coherent hyperobject, and that its influence within the storyworld of *Taipei*, encoded in the very form of the novel, is prevalent to the extent that it even tunes mimetic elements usually conceived of as analogue. *Taipei* is a semi-autobiographical novel that follows New York City-based writer Paul, of Taiwanese descent, through about eighteen months in his mid-twenties. In six chapters, we see him break up with his girlfriend, Michelle, and visit his parents in Taipei; return to New York and meet acquaintances at various parties and social functions; embark on a book tour with another girlfriend, Erin; marry Erin in Las Vegas on a whim; honeymoon by visiting his parents in Taipei; and find himself apathetically disengaging from his marriage back in New York—all while writing a novel that resembles *Taipei*.

Rachel Sykes calls *Taipei*, with its “explorations of interiority through unstable, closely focalised, metafictional narratives filled with quasi-autobiographical content” (4), a “quiet novel,” defined as a novel that features “a quiet protagonist” who “privilege[s] thought over action” and “seek[s] out quiet spaces” such as “art galleries, universities and bookshops”; to which consciousness is a “central” theme that motivates the “narrative action”; and in which “very little happens” (8-9). Located in the realm of interiority and contemplation, *Taipei* lends itself to the argument of this chapter that its digital-hyperobject pervades its storyworld, from the structure of the universe as perceived by Paul all the way down to subrational affect-objects.

This argument will proceed in two parts. In the first section, I will sketch the presence of the digital in *Taipei* by outlining the significance of the digital and its difference from the analogue; explicating the novel’s unique style; viewing through the lens of object-oriented ontology the novel’s own understanding of the digital and its related conception of the universe; tracing the genealogy of the agency of technological evolution and its relation to genres of

fiction; and enumerating the various forms of metaphor and human-object attunement through which the digital-hyperobject is presented in the novel. The subsequent section will zero in on a particular object called the *meme*: After redefining the meme along object-oriented lines, I will enlist it to analyze the novel's use of quotation marks and improvised scenarios, before conceptualizing the affective realm beneath the coherence threshold of abstract objects in terms of what I will call *affective objects*, on a par with physical, abstract, conceptual, and social objects, and tying my analysis together with a close reading of the novel's conception of death and incorporation into the digital-hyperobject.

The Object-Oriented Digital Universe

Given how the digital permeates every facet of our analogue lives, it may be helpful to recall the difference between the two. The analogue deals in measurements and readings derived from “morphological resemblance” between that which measures and that which is measured, and the readings “vary continuously along a spectrum”; think of a glass thermometer filled with mercury. In contrast, digital readings and measurements involve a conversion into discrete units, such as the numbers on a thermometer's digital display. As a general rule, analogue processes are more accurate, while digital ones afford “much finer error control” because they better afford manipulation (Hayles, “Intermediation” 101). Our biophysical lived experience is generally thought of as analogue. To render analogue lived experience as digital information, the continuum of analogue information is discretized (split) and then quantized (bunched) into digital units; this is how a digital thermometer renders analogue measurements in discrete numbers (“Digitization”). Digitization is achieved at the base level of the central processing unit, the “brain” of the digital computer, by routing an electrical current through a threshold called a logic gate. Among other functions, the logic gate decides whether there is or is not an electrical

current on that particular circuit at any given time. Hence, digitization is the process of analogue information (amplitude of electrical current) being binarized (there is/is not an electrical current). Binarization affords the use of Boolean algebra in software code (which is easier to read but cannot be directly executed by hardware) and machine code (which is usually compiled from software code and is executable by hardware). Working together, software code and machine code can afford the hardware execution of user intentions as presented in the user's input, undergirding our current ecosystem of digital technologies ("Logic"). As the functioning of the logic gate makes clear, digitization by definition results in a loss of information: An electrical current whose peak voltage amplitude falls just below the threshold of a logic gate is entirely discounted, as if there were no current at all ("Analog-to-Digital"). Yet this loss of information means that digital information takes up fewer memory resources and is more easily transmitted. And as all digital information shares a Boolean foundation, digital information is much easier to convert between different interfaces, such as between different software programs or devices.

Digitizing information means deciding what informational losses are insignificant for any given interface, just as textual interpretation involves emphasizing some textual elements over others for any given reading (I cite or discuss one passage but not another). Hence, the digital can be said to be the result of an interpretation (Galloway, *Interface* 76). And just as hyperobject reading highlights how the synthetic component of a text is the guiding of the mimetic component by the thematic component, so, too, is each particular digitization of analogue information guided by the interface which is meant to use that information. The synthetic-mimetic-thematic triad corresponds to digitization-information-interface. But interfaces are formulated by analogue human users to achieve analogue goals. There will thus always be an irresolvable mismatch between digital information and the analogue conception of its uses,

between digital-objects and human-objects at both the input and output ends, even if the mismatch is imperceptibly minuscule.

By “irresolvable mismatch,” I do not merely mean an “unbridgeable gap,” for after all there is always already an unbridgeable gap between any two objects, as encapsulated in an object’s imperceptible side (Harman, “Everything” 122). “Mismatch” here refers to how the gap between two *types* of object, analogue and digital, affords structural analysis. In fact, I have elsewhere argued in light of Hayles’s distinction between analogue and digital subjects that this mismatch is a perspectival difference: On one side is the interiorly coherent analogue object, based on “a depth model” whose elements correspondingly “posses[s] a natural integrity of form and scale that must be preserved”; while on the other side is the emergently coherent digital object, constituted by “emergent properties that appear [only] at the global level,” beneath which is not coherence but “drastic fragmentation” (Hayles, *My Mother* 201-03; qtd. in Sheu, “What” 1272). The tension between these two irreconcilable perspectives lies at the heart of *Taipei*. Frank Guan calls “the first novel to successfully assimilate to literary art the mutant sensibility of [the] new mass medium” of the internet; for Alice Bennett, the experience of reading the novel itself “feels just like looking at the internet” itself (10).

Not every critic of the novel sees this irresolvable mismatch. Aislinn Clare McDougall reads *Taipei* as straddling the gap between these two types of object via her concept of “cyber-consciousness,” “the literary embodiment of the intermediation between human cognition and the digital machine,” an intermediation achieved through “character consciousness and narrative strategy.” By “character consciousness,” she means “how human consciousness [. . .] functions like the digital technology that so heavily mediates it,” and by “narrative strategy,” she refers to the role of the digital in “a post-postmodern narrative mode that actively amalgamates modern

sincerity, flâneurie and stream of consciousness, and postmodern hyperreality and self-parody”

(6). As her line of thought covers some ground that is similar to my own and attempts to reach a similar conclusion, it is worth exploring her study in detail.

Let us take her two arguments in turn. In terms of character consciousness, McDougall views protagonist Paul as a “cyber-flâneur.” She first notes that his urban perceptions are depicted as inherently digital (11)—but in fact they are the result of the novel’s focalized use of digital metaphors. She then says that, by recording his urban wanderings on his MacBook, Paul is “quite literally” digitizing meatspace (12)—but the digital in this instance is just a remediation of film, and from recording to playback the digital itself is elided over. Lastly, McDougall asserts that the novel’s employment of digital concepts in Paul’s streams of consciousness evinces a “digitization of interiority” (14)—this basically sound conclusion will be developed further in my argument below, but I take issue with how she arrives at it. She gives three examples of such streams of consciousness,¹ and yet it should be apparent that these are not streams of

¹ Here are her three examples (I will have more to say later about the first and third):

An earnest assembling of the backup life he’d sketched and constructed the blueprints and substructures for (during the average of six weeks per year, spread throughout his life, that he’d been in Taiwan) would begin, at some point, after which, months or years later, one morning, he would sense the independent organization of a second, itinerant consciousness—lured here by the new, unoccupied structures—toward which he’d begin sending the data of his sensory perception. The antlered, splashing, water-treading land animal of his first consciousness would sink to some lower region, in the lake of himself, where he would sometimes descend in sleep and experience its disintegrating particles—and furred pieces, brushing past—in dreams, as it disappeared into the pattern of the nearest functioning system. (Lin, *Taipei* 15-16; qtd. in McDougall 13-14)

The unindividualized mass of everyone else would be a screen, distributed throughout the city, onto which he’d project the movie of his uninterrupted imagination. Because he’d appear to, and be able to pretend he was, but never actually be a part of the mass, maybe he’d gradually begin to feel a kind of needless intimacy, not unlike being in the same room as a significant other and feeling affection without touching or speaking. (Lin, *Taipei* 14; qtd. in McDougall 15)

[...] for a few seconds, visualizing the position and movement of two red dots through a silhouetted, aerial view of Manhattan, [Paul] felt as imaginary, as mysterious and transitory and unfindable, as the other dot. He visualized the [...] arcing line representing the three-dimensional movement, plotted in a cubic grid, of the dot of himself [...] He imagined his trajectory as a vacuum-sealed tube, into which he’d arrived and through which [...] he’d be suctioned and from which he’d exit, as a successful delivery to some unimaginable recipient. Realizing this was only his concrete history, his public movement through space-time from birth to death, he briefly imagined being able to click on his trajectory to access his private

consciousness but rather flights of fancy that are self-contained enough to be block-quoted. As examples of stream of consciousness go, McDougall could have chosen some more convincing ones that are less self-contained, such as this passage taken from a party scene:

Paul sat with strangers on a crowded staircase and drank a beer while looking at his phone, sometimes staring at its screen for ten to twenty seconds without thinking anything, before maneuvering through a crowded hallway into a medium-size room. [. . .] Paul walked directly to a two-seat sofa (golden brown and deeply padded as the upturned paw of an enormous stuffed animal) and lay on it, on his side, facing the room, and closed his eyes. After a blip of surprise, which disintegrated in some chemical system of Klonopin and Valium and alcohol instead of articulating into what would've startled Paul awake—that he'd fluently, with precision and total calm, entered a room of dozens of people and lain facing outward on a sofa—[he] was asleep. When he woke, an unknown amount of time later—between five and forty minutes, or longer—he observed neutrally that, though he was drooling a little and probably the only non-dancing person in the room, no one was looking at him, then moved toward the room's iPod with the goal-oriented, zombie-like calmness of a person who has woken at night thirsty and is walking to his refrigerator and changed the music to "Today" by the Smashing Pumpkins. (Lin 73-74)

I quote this passage at length to show that, because Paul is here both thinking and doing other things, this example (like many other similar passages) does not completely satisfy the *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 10th ed., definition of stream of consciousness as an "*unbroken* flow of perceptions, memories, thoughts, and feelings" to which McDougall appeals (Abrams and

experience, enlarging the dot of a coordinate until it could be explored like a planet. (Lin, *Taipei* 24-25; qtd. in McDougall 16; her brackets and ellipses)

Harpham 380; qtd. in McDougall 13; my emphasis). She could have selected only the continuous part of a passage that evinces stream of consciousness so defined, but its brevity would still have undermined her contention that the stream of consciousness technique speaks to Paul's (cyber-)flânerie.

McDougall's second argument, regarding narrative strategy, begins with the assertion that the post-postmodern, at least with regard to literary cyber-consciousness, is metamodernist, "characterized by the oscillation between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment" (Vermeulen and van den Akker; McDougall 6). More specifically, the "pure sense of new (modern) sincerity is complicated by the twenty-first century's heavy [digital] mediation, reducing our sense of reality to a more postmodern sense of hyperreality" (McDougall 7). The modern half of this argument comes from the "modernist stream of consciousness narrative" that we have just examined, while the postmodern enters the picture when stream of consciousness and flânerie are digitally mediated, producing a sense of "hyperreality" (18). Though she cites Jean Baudrillard's definition of the hyperreal (and of simulation, which she omits) as "the generation by models of a real *without origin or reality*" (Baudrillard 1; qtd. in McDougall 18; my emphasis), and though Baudrillard later reiterates that simulation "bears no relation to any reality whatever" (6), McDougall very quickly moves to a reading of "postmodern hyperreality" in *Taipei* in terms of "the ways in which Paul suffers from an inability to distinguish between his life online and what he calls his 'concrete reality'" (20).² Having established her binary, McDougall drags Paul back from hyperreality toward (new) sincerity by noting how his "perception of a simulation [sic] is self-conscious of that hyperreality

² The conclusion of my own argument happens to align more with Baudrillard's notion of simulation in that Paul's concrete reality, what I call his lived experience, *becomes* digital, in a sense that renders the comparison between simulation and reality irrelevant—notwithstanding the fact that I explicate this in terms of object-oriented ontology rather than simulation.

in a way that removes the postmodern hyperreality from itself” (21). That “itself” is ambiguous. It could refer to “postmodern hyperreality,” but I am not sure what it would mean to remove postmodern hyperreality from postmodern hyperreality. A more sensible reading would be to have it refer to Paul’s “perception,” but to remove hyperreality from the perception of simulation makes no sense, as simulation just *is* hyperreal. The most generous reading of McDougall’s assertion would be to say that she sees Paul reinstating reality into simulation, but then she would be discussing not simulation but what Baudrillard calls “*dissimulating*” (3; my emphasis). We might conclude from the fate of McDougall’s arguments that the analogue and the digital are destined to be mismatched. But as we will see below, this does not foreclose the possibility of crossing from one perspective to the other.

Starting from *Taipei*’s second chapter, Paul continually “ingests,” as the novel calls it, psychoactive substances ranging from coffee and alcohol to prescription drugs (without a prescription) and illegal drugs, sometimes more than one simultaneously. At one point, Paul says that he is “on like eight things now,” two of which are Codeine and Flexeril (228). And yet, as one reviewer notes, “Drug culture is no longer a counterculture,” and so “*Taipei* is only incidentally about drugs,” presenting them simply as “tools to help individuals adapt to the world as it already exists” (Lim). Indeed, as his drug use progresses, Paul decides to “only appear in public if he’d ingested sufficient drugs to not primarily be a source of anxiety, bleakness, awkwardness, etc. for himself and/or others” (87), and he drafts a drugs schedule, a single-page printed plan of when to use how much of which drug during his book tour—from which he very quickly deviates, and yet nobody finds the consequences of his deviation worth mentioning, if they even notice (92-93). The inherent logic of this attitude toward drug use culminates in a brief discussion with Erin to plan their wedding, in which Paul says that the marriage license office

will “think we’re on drugs if we’re not on drugs. We’re normal when we’re on drugs” (149). For Paul, responding to his mother’s concerns about his drug problem,

there was no such thing as a “drug problem” or even “drugs”—unless anything anyone ever did or thought or felt was considered both a drug and a problem—in that each thought or feeling or object, seen or touched or absorbed or remembered, at whatever coordinate of space-time, would have a unique effect, which each person, at each moment of their life, could view as a problem, or not. (98-99)

Anticipating the argument a bit, we might say that, to Paul, drugs are just another type of object, one whose significance mostly lies in helping Paul “adapt to the world as it already exists,” thereby catalyzing his experiences and musings into his work.

These thoughts and experiences are expressed in a literary style that is at once both minimalist and maximalist (Lytal). This element of the novel’s synthetic component is achieved in part by adhering to a “style guide” Lin formulated for the writing process, which features “tight guidelines” or “formulas,” including “specific techniques for sentence structure and lists of grammatical rules” (White). Within these limits, scenes of mundane daily occurrences and interactions are presented in a banally straightforward manner, for example by describing Paul and Erin high on ecstasy in a bookstore as, “They sat holding each other on the floor in the fiction section and decided to not ingest their remaining two ecstasy and to be apart from each other four hours a day” (204). This at first seems like a run-on sentence because of the repeated use of “and,” but closer inspection shows that the second “and” is hypotactic relative to the first; the breathless use of the same conjunction here de-emphasizes the relations between the events while still remaining firmly within the bounds of correct grammar. Conversely, flights of

speculative fancy are readily expressed in a sometimes dizzying arrangement of subclauses and interjections, as in this (also rigidly grammatical) childhood recollection:

Sometimes, half mock scolding, mostly as an amused observation of human nature (she'd also say she recognized the behavior in herself, that she was the same way, with certain people), Paul's mother would tell Paul, who almost always answered her questions, her attempts at conversation, with "I don't know" in a kind of vocal cursive, without disconnected syllables, that he shouldn't only talk to her—to his "poor mother," she'd say—when he felt like talking. (227)

The main structure of this sentence simply says that Paul's mother used to tell him to talk more with others. As if aware of the wide gap between these two extremes, the novel sometimes presents a sentence whose deliberate awkwardness could almost be satirizing Lin's rigid adherence to his style guide, for instance when Paul describes an internet video as seeming "to be a grotesque parody, or something, of something" (49).

The novel's particular style poses a problem for traditional methods of reading fiction. Maria-Christina Kyrvei argues that the style is one of "emotional detachment" in how it conveys "the pain and difficulty," "boredom and strain," of Paul's isolation and disconnect (35). And yet, when faced with the novel's passages of affective perspicacity, she concedes that they "cannot possibly belong to the same person whose awareness has otherwise been presented" as alienated to such a great degree (61). Attempting to understand the novel's focalized third-person narration through the lens of analogue subjective consciousness produces an incoherent reading.

To achieve a coherent reading, we can start from Jason Gladstone's observation that the "novel isolates what would usually be understood as aspects of interior or subjective experience in order to divest them of both interiority and subjectivity" (87). As a result, "persons and

environments are reduced to neutral information,” and “the contemporary condition” is shown to comprise “mere externalities.” The novel presents its characters in a way that forecloses our “sympathy or empathy,” thereby precluding our identification with them (90). Zadie Smith goes one step further, saying that, in reading the novel, “you don’t simply ‘identify’ with the character” across the intersubjective gap implied by sympathy or empathy—“you effectively ‘become’ them,” an effect she calls “narrative claustrophobia.” Her reading is echoed by Johannes Voelz in what he calls the “literary hospitality” of novelists like Tao Lin, a concept that describes how “the private world of characters” (and the author) “is offered [to the reader] before it has been requested” (“New” 210, 223n17). Gladstone believes that this sympathy-precluding proximity is effected “to represent the inoperative modes of personhood” that populate the digitized contemporary condition, people who “are structurally divested of subjectivity and, thus, [of] a basis for action” (77). But this is true of only *analogue* subjectivity. If the digital is not (simply) a negation of lived experience but just another of its facets, then *digital* subjectivity is an equally valid basis for action. And digital subjectivity, or human-objecthood attuned to the digital-hyperobject, is what is conveyed so directly through the novel’s style.

Lin’s adherence to his rigid style guide can be seen as a “use of constraints and algorithms” in composition (Bernstein 290), and this inhuman use of algorithmic writing in the synthetic component finds its mimetic correlative in various passages in which Paul contemplates a cold, even inimical, universe. Aimlessly seeking solace after dumping Michelle early in the novel,

Paul distantly sensed the implication [. . .] that the universe in its entirety was a message, to itself, to not feel bad [. . .] and he was troubled by this, suspecting that his thoughts and intentions, at some point, in April or May or years ago, in college or as a child, had been

wrong, but he had continued in that wrongness, and was now distanced from some correct beginning to a degree that the universe (and himself, a part of the universe) was articulately against him. (12)

He feels that there is solace in the universe, that the universe itself *is* solace, but that the disconsolate part of him is outside the universe and so unable to access the solace that it is. Here we see the utility of an object-oriented paradigm: How can he be at once both inside and outside of the universe, entirely of solace and entirely bereft of it? We can make sense of this paradox if we think of the Paul-object as consisting of two part-objects: Paul-as-part-of-the-universe and Paul-apart-from-the-universe. At the beginning of the block quote, the “implication” that Paul “distantly sense[s]” is a manifestation of the cleavage between the two part-objects. On the traditional understanding of subjectivity, a subject rent in two might pose a problem. But since in object-oriented ontology the whole-object is always less than the sum of its part-objects, the discovery of two part-objects that seem to contradict each other poses no new threat to the whole-objecthood of the Paul-object—similarly paradoxical cleavages are constitutive of objects in general.

At this point, we should clarify a common misunderstanding regarding the relation between object-oriented ontology and object-oriented computer programming languages, a misunderstanding that Harman himself exacerbates. Despite noting that he took nothing more than the “object-oriented” moniker for his work (“What” 15), he contends that there is a similarity in how object-oriented programs “can make use of programming objects already written elsewhere for different purposes, bringing them into a new context without needing to change their internal structure”—in other words, he believes that these programming “objects” follow the same relational rules as his own ontological “objects” (*Object-Oriented* 11). Though

he is correct, the point is trivial: Non-object-oriented programming languages, such as procedural languages, can *also* treat of a defined element individually across contexts, via exporting and importing, within the boundary of its defined space (such as within the limits of a subroutine). “Nomenclature varies between the two, although they have similar semantics” (“Procedural”). We can see another dissimilarity in an argument by Alexander R. Galloway; he asserts that object-oriented programming evinces a “metaphysico-Platonic logic,” in which “classes (forms) define objects (instantiated things): classes are programmer-defined templates, they are (usually) static and state in abstract terms how objects define data types and process data; objects are instances of classes, they are created in the image of a class, they persist for finite amounts of time and eventually are destroyed” (*Interface* 21). As a flat ontology, object-oriented ontology militates against any metaphysics built on such a form-substance binary.

As object-oriented ontology and the digital do not intrinsically go together, it is worth pointing out how the novel links them. Recalling the aforementioned distinction between analogue and digital subjects, we see that it is the analogue perspective that requires interior coherence, and that only from the digital perspective can two incoherent parts give rise to an emergently coherent whole. In this sense, then, the fact that the Paul-object exhibits the aforementioned paradoxical cleavage speaks to how a reading of *Taipei* under an object-oriented paradigm *is* a reading carried out under the sign of the digital. In fact, the novel explicitly links the motif of an inimical universe to this object-oriented understanding of the digital in one of the few passages to be presented as a block quote, from one of Paul’s book tour readings; the unusual presentation of this passage and its location near the center of the novel suggest its importance: “The transparency and total effort, with none spent on explanation or concealment or experimentation, of what the universe desired—to hug itself as carefully, as violently and

patiently, as had been exactly decided upon, at some point, with gravity—was [something]” (139; brackets in original). The “[something]” is a placeholder for a few considered options, one of which is “an actualized ideal, inside of which any combination of parts could never independently attain.” Echoing our previous block quote about the solace of the universe, this passage and addendum together suggest that the universe exists for its own sake, following its own predetermined path, and that its part-objects have no independent existence *inside itself*. In other words, its part-objects are whole when considered by themselves, but lack that wholeness when considered as its part-objects. How fitting that, when giving readings, Paul reads not from a paper version of the book he is selling, but an excerpt from a work in progress “off his MacBook screen” (139)—for Paul, the universe, by way of object-oriented ontology, is digital.

So it should come as no surprise that, when Paul directly ponders the digital, the logic of his musings resembles that of his meditations on the universe hugging itself. For Paul:

Instead of postponing death[, . . .] technology seemed more likely to permanently eliminate life by uncontrollably fulfilling its only function: to indiscriminately convert matter, animate or inanimate, into computerized matter, for the sole purpose, it seemed, of increased functioning, until the universe was one computer. Technology, an abstraction, undetectable in concrete reality, was accomplishing its concrete task, Paul dimly intuited[, . . .] by way of an increasingly committed and multiplying workforce of humans, who receive, over hundreds of generations, a certain kind of advancement (from feet to bicycles to cars, faces to bulletin boards to the internet) in exchange for converting a sufficient amount of matter into computerized matter for computers to be able to build themselves. (166-67)

Paul calls it “technology,” but by describing it as “an abstraction” that is “undetectable in concrete reality” and positing self-constructing computers as the end result, he signals that the digital is his true topic, much as how Bernard Stiegler differentiates between “visible, material devices” and “technology in general” (129). Just as the universe does, for Paul the digital exists for its own sake, following its own predetermined path and consuming its part-objects (bicycles, cars, bulletin boards, the internet), depriving them of their wholeness when considered from the perspective of the digital itself, rendering them “networked but not interconnected” (Gladstone 74). Moreover, just as Paul is unable to directly and confidently assert his conclusion regarding the universe, instead hedging it with the use of square brackets and multiple options, here, too, he can only “dimly intuit[t]” these thoughts on the digital, for he is a part-object of the universe, as well as of the digital through his membership in the “multiplying workforce of humans,” and as such has no perspective on either whole-hyperobject.

The idea that technology has agency and pursues its own goals has a storied lineage. Humanity has always been shaped by its technologies (Hayles, “Intermediation” 102). Stanisław Lem writes in *Summa Technologiae* (1964), his treatise on technological evolution, that technology’s “future-oriented consequences of a systemic, habitual, and ethical kind, as well as the very direction in which it is pushing humanity, not only are not a subject of anyone’s conscious intention but also effectively defy the recognition of the existence of such significance or the definition of its nature,” because “technology reaches much further than just the lifetime of each individual generation” (12). This is to say that each new technological solution to a given problem invites new problems (Simondon 186-87), because the elongated timescale of technological evolution precludes our intentional comprehension and anticipation of it. Lem later links this limitation to the ateleological history of science. “Civilization lacks knowledge that

would allow it to choose a path knowingly from the many possible ones, instead of drifting in random tides of discoveries,” he notes, so that the more we discover, the more there is to discover, resulting in an “embarrassment of riches, the deluge of information that engulfs man as a result of his cognitive greed” (235). In short, when dealing with technology, not only do we know not what we do, the more we do the less we know. Writing in the 1960s, Lem observes that technology has in many cases become “cleverer” than its “human designers,” but that “‘cleverer’ does not yet mean ‘rebellious’” (40). By the time Stiegler is writing in the 1990s, the tune had changed. He notes that the contemporary digital media ecosystem has replaced “human rhythms that [. . .] integrate the analogic, numeric [or digital], and biological” with digitally “synthetic biological medi[a]” that serve as Derridean supplements to memory. This dominance of the digital has given rise to “an artificially accelerated evolution, in which the very nature of evolution is changed” (99). For Stiegler, the fact that the *locus* of memory dependence has shifted from the human subject to digital exteriorized media has fundamentally altered our species evolution. Hayles echoes this sentiment in her worry that people “are literally being re-engineered through their interactions with computational devices” (“Intermediation” 102). And the character and evolution of the collective memory technology we call culture (Gleick 183) is unlikely to have escaped unscathed. Given our diminishing agential control over its unfolding, one could say that technological evolution is gradually departing the realm of the moral (Lem 19), and it is perhaps the accelerated development of digital technology in recent years that has rendered this departure more visible. As Ian Bogost writes of malfunctioning digital technologies that were meant to solve problems created by malfunctioning (digital) technologies, “Technology’s role has begun to shift, from serving human users to pushing them out of the way

so that the technologized world can service its own ends. And so, with increasing frequency, technology will exist not to serve human goals, but to facilitate its own expansion” (“Why”).

Have we entered the province of science fiction, then? Bedeviled by the problematics of genre, *Taipei* ponders the same question. In a passage that pointedly includes a reference to the exteriorization of memory, Paul thinks,

That the universe was how it was, and that certain things seemed incomprehensible[;] that Paul couldn't, without increasingly unexertable amounts of effort, remember what he didn't store outside himself [. . . ; and] that remembering seemed to require as much, or much more, energy as imagining, all seemed, while on LSD, in a context of science fiction, explainable in excitingly interconnected and true-seeming ways. (201)

Paul's world, the storyworld of the novel, is a realist one, but if he places his experiences as delineated in this passage into “a context of science fiction,” and with some psychotropic assistance, they seem to coalesce into an interpretative order. We are thus reading a realist account of a person whose lived experience finds its highest level of coherence in a science-fictional context. This is different from saying that the account itself is science-fictional. Andrew Hoberek notes that, in the American literary landscape of the 2000s, “it is no longer possible to distinguish realism confidently from genre fiction,” because they “are no longer fixed, oppositional categories but have become points on a continuum.” Furthermore, the point on the continuum that represents realism has been relocated, so that “‘the naturalistic story’ can itself now be seen not as the genre-less epitome of literary fiction but as ‘another genre’” (67-68). Seeing literary realism as just another genre echoes Stanley Fish's assertion that (realist) lived experience, what he calls “the standard story,” is “on a par” with all other modes of discourse, both fictional and nonfictional. The standard story includes “a *claim* to be in touch with the real,”

but this claim is itself part of the standard story, a product of its institutional conventions, and so unable to arbitrate between it and other modes of discourse (239-43). When John Searle, Fish's target of critique, implicitly defines "brute facts" as "physical or psychological properties of states of affairs"—this is one of the many established formulations of the standard story—the definition already has the institutions of physics and psychology baked into it, according to whose conventions we are to understand these facts, and outside of which institutional understanding the "facts" would presumably make no sense (qtd. in Fish 240). Hence, deeming something to be science-fictional can no longer be said to necessarily entail its difference from realism, and anxieties over whether *Taipei* is science fiction, or over how valid Paul's insights are if he locates them "in a science fiction context," are unfounded. The novel itself seems to parody these unfounded anxieties when Paul and Erin, on their honeymoon in Taipei, record documentary footage of themselves in a McDonald's and then, after the fact, decide to turn it into a science fiction film (201). But the distinction is in fact meaningless, for their "documentary" is an "improvise[d]" one, which is to say that they were making up stories as they went along, with no basis in fact (168). "Documentary" is also just another genre.

Indeed, the difference between realism and genre fiction pales further when we recall from Chapter 1 that all fiction is speculative—even the fiction that we construct out of our lived experience.³ According to Nick Chater, memory—our recollection of, and our basis for interpreting, lived experience—is not "a coherent archive," but rather "the remnants of past interpretations of past perceptual inputs" (197). And the distinctions between perceptual inputs, memory traces, and imagined coherences can be blurry, as suggested in Paul's observation that it is harder for him to remember than to imagine. Chater reports on a series of experiments

³ We will explore this idea at length in the next chapter.

exploring “choice blindness,” in which participants were offered a choice (between two political preferences, two attractive faces, or two jam flavors, depending on the experiment). After they had made their selections, the experimenters surreptitiously switched out the selected choice⁴ and asked the participants to explain their (false) choice (112-16). The majority of participants not only did not perceive the switch,⁵ they were able to offer convincing explanations for choosing what they did not in fact choose, and, the unique context of a controlled experiment notwithstanding, “analysis of the content of these explanations (their length, complexity, fluency) found no difference between cases where the ‘trick’ had been performed and where it hadn’t” in the attractive faces experiment (115). In addition, follow-up observational (rather than interventional or interrogative) investigations found that the preferences based on these false choices persisted,⁶ suggesting that false perceptual inputs and imagined coherences had become true memories (116). Taken together, these experimental conclusions support Wolfgang Iser’s claim that “the traditional realistic novel can no longer be regarded as a mirror-reflection of reality, but is, rather, a paradigm of the structure of memory, since reality can only be retained as reality if it is represented in terms of meaning”—and that the process of meaning production in the realist novel is no different from how “the gestalten of memory extract meaning from and impose order on the natural heterogeneity of life” (125). In the famous 1928 formulation of

⁴ The political preferences experiment made use of “a simple conjuring trick with sticky paper” (113), the attractive faces one “a devious card trick” (114), and the jam one “a double-ended jam jar (each end containing a different jam)” (115).

⁵ Chater reports that, in the political preferences experiment, “just under a quarter of the switched answers were spotted: in these cases, people tended to say that they supposed that they must have made a mistake and corrected the answers” (113). For the other two experiments, he simply states that most people did not notice the switch.

⁶ Chater notes this phenomenon for the political preferences and attractive faces experiments, as well as for an experiment in which participants taking an online survey on political attitudes who were “nudged” toward the right by an image of the American flag in the corner of the screen—these made up half of the total pool of participants—were found to be “significantly more likely” to have voted Republican in an election eight months after the experiment (117).

sociologists William I. Thomas and Dorothy Swaine Thomas, “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (572).

Indeed, Lin says that *Taipei* was edited from a “first draft of maybe 25,000 pages” of “his memory,” and that since memory for him is not “accurate or static,” the novel is more “‘fiction’ than ‘autobiography’” (Lin, “Tao”). We can catch a glimpse of this editing process in action when Paul recalls a previous dinner with Michelle, takes notes to later incorporate this memory into the novel he is currently writing, and “then vaguely remembered another time when he had remembered the same dinner and had also felt surprised that he’d forgotten” (222). That earlier remembrance also appears in the novel (52-53). Leaving for the following chapter the question of how this reflexivity affects our understanding of narrative, I merely reiterate here the view that a text-object (the text itself) can never be a textual object (an object in the text), so that when Paul recalls remembering the dinner with Michelle, the fact that the first remembrance is also in the novel means not that Paul is writing the novel we are reading (this would hold true even if Paul were named Tao Lin), but only that the two novels bear an uncanny resemblance—the linearity of the narrative produces not a closed loop but a spiral, a *mise en abyme*. And Sian Petronella Campbell argues that this logic extends in the other direction, too, so that “digital content” on social media and elsewhere should also be considered part of “a work of autofiction,” or autobiographical metafiction.⁷ Metafiction, it turns out, is realism as well.

The novel’s realist storyworld is permeated by metaphor-objects that employ facets of digital technology—objects as their vehicle, and that speak to the extent to which the storyworld is enveloped within the digital-hyperobject. The novel deploys three main types of digital

⁷ The definitional problematics of “autofiction” will be explored in the next chapter.

metaphor. One type is the reference to digital forms of visual mediation. This could be construing memories as “images” that can be “arrange[d] into slideshows or [. . .] GIFs,” which are an animated series of images (118); describing visual perceptions in terms of “pixels” (33) and digital imaging “resolution” (20, 98); or envisioning movement through spacetime as conceptualized through a mobile map application such as *Google Maps* (24-25).

Another type of digital metaphor in the novel goes beyond superficial similarities to compare an action or experience to the experience or process of using a software program. When Paul starts an ill-advised face-to-face pitch for a book idea, he describes feeling “a sensation not unlike clicking ‘send’ for a finished draft of a long email” (122). At the moment Paul and Erin’s marriage is officially completed, a door opens and a woman appears, congratulating them. Erin thinks of her as a “‘pop-up ad,’ because ‘it went through the door’” (152). Making a series of faux pas at a book party but feeling unembarrassed, because he is high on Klonopin, a clueless Paul describes the experience as “beta testing the event” (65), referring to the phase of software testing that, after the closed environment of alpha testing, includes a limited number of public users. At another party, when Paul stands too close to an interlocutor, he thinks of it as “a maybe too-close distance, as if after an unskillful teleportation he didn’t want to underscore by fixing” (26). He invokes the common comedic trope of pretending an unintentional action is intentional to preclude the possible awkwardness of social judgment, and the action itself is characterized with reference to teleportation, the science-fictional technology of abstracting an object’s informational structure (which is “numeric” in Stiegler’s sense) and reconstituting the object by arranging different matter according to that structure. And at one point in the novel, Paul awakens disoriented, forgetful of where he is and how he got there, and compares the act of remembering to “unzipping” or decompressing a “PDF file” of memory—the novel even

presents in list form some remembered major life events (35-36). This launches an extended recounting of Paul's life up to this point, and he describes attending Friday grade school classes for "gifted" students as "a new and challenging situation without assistance or consequence for failure—a feeling not unlike playing a difficult Nintendo game alone, with no instruction manual" (37).

The third type of metaphor conceptualizes a previously amorphous experience by appealing to digital technology. Paul characterizes a life made up of banal daily routines, so that "forty or fifty years [. . .] could appear like a single year that would then need to be lived repeatedly," as "windows on a computer screen, maximized on top of each other," presumably multiple windows each running the same program (53). Early in the novel, vaguely recognizing that his relationship with Michelle is doomed, Paul thinks that it is "as if there was a problem to be solved, but there didn't seem to be anything, or maybe there was, but he was three or four skill sets away from comprehension, like an amoeba trying to create a personal webpage using CSS," the computer language that governs the presentation style of a webpage (10). Alluding to the difference in capabilities between an amoeba and a webpage designer offers a framework for the reader to comprehend just how far Paul is from being able to salvage their relationship, or even to discern the possible presence of an isolable problem. When drunk and unable to recognize the entrance to his own place, or anything in the immediate vicinity, Paul thinks that "his inability to recognize anything began to feel like a failure of imagination, an inability to process information creatively" (34). He knows that he should recognize the area, because he arrives there by taxi and the street address is correct, yet he feels no sense of recognition—just as a program may fail, not due to a lack of information, but because it is unable to process the information correctly. And Paul's relation to the city of Taipei, his conception of it as a place, is

constitutively bound up with the digital metaphor that he uses to describe it. Moving to this city of people whose language he barely speaks would require of Paul not just a physical shift but a shift in consciousness, and he conceptualizes this shift by imagining that, after moving to Taipei, the “backup life” he has constructed over the many brief periods of his life spent there would attract “a second, itinerant consciousness [. . .] toward which he’d begin sending the data of his sensory perception,” and which he would allow to become his primary consciousness (15-16). This notion of transmissible sensory data recalls such classic digitally mediated science-fictional technologies as the simstim pack from William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984) (56) and the monitor from Orson Scott Card’s *Ender’s Game* (1985) (23). As Emily Witt says of *Taipei*, “even interactions in the physical world, IRL [in real life] and AFK [away from keyboard,] are only so much coding” (“Gpistolary”).

The digital also envelops the characters and their everyday lives. Email, for instance, has not only replaced the daily function of phone calls, but also affords its own spatiotemporality. As might be expected, Paul uses email to communicate with faraway contacts, such as a friend in Seattle (20), a friend traveling through Latin America (86), and his mother, in Taipei (206); but he also uses email to communicate with people in the same city, even if they have just seen each other that day or are planning to meet soon (53, 81). Email has replaced phone calls for work-related tasks, as when a journalist writes to ask “if she could email-interview him” (22), or when Paul replies to urgent voicemails from his publisher by writing them an email and asking them to write back (the novel does not show them doing so) (110). Though entangled with everyday life, email can have a temporality of its own, as when Paul describes how he converses over email with Michelle “like once every three months” after they break up, but that the conversation itself reads “like we were emailing every day” (137). More remarkable are the times when Paul and

Erin converse over email despite being in the same room. One is when both are “wearing earphones and doing things on their MacBooks” (154-55), and another is because they had previously “agreed to type, not talk, whenever one of them, currently Paul, felt unable to speak in a friendly tone” (242). These two examples gesture toward how the digital-hyperobject affords not only its own temporality but also its own spatiality: It exists in a literal other dimension, to which human-objects often attune. One might object that these scenarios could be afforded just as well by analogue writing, which itself is a hyperobject—referred to in the Enlightenment West as the “republic of letters”—but the different speeds at which each conveys information mean that these two hyperobjects exist at different (spatio)temporal scales, with the digital one moving at a much faster and more variegated pace (Gleick 301-02). The corollary of attuning to the digital-hyperobject is that unattuned experiences can seem surprising. When Paul asks a new acquaintance for a business card and unexpectedly receives one, not only is he surprised, the acquaintance is slightly embarrassed as well (24). And Paul is always surprised by the few times, only thrice or so throughout the novel, that he lies in bed without “looking at his MacBook” (85).

Another way in which Paul is attuned to the digital-hyperobject is in his use of *Gmail*, *Facebook*, and the internet in general as a memory extension. Over the course of the novel, memory extension gradually becomes memory exteriorization, the aforementioned Derridean supplement analyzed by Stiegler. Paul uses *Gmail* to store “to-do lists and unfinished projects” that he is constantly “finding” (22), along with important information, such as a photo of a friend doing cocaine (80). Slowly, he finds it hard to remember without being reminded by *Gmail* such basic information as the existence of Erin, his girlfriend and future wife: “Whenever more than two or three days passed since they last communicated, which they did by email, every five to ten days, [. . .] Paul would have a similar realization of having forgotten about her for an amount

of time” (109). Paul’s unaugmented memory of a significant other’s existence only lasts for at most three days. The situation deteriorates to such a degree that,

unless he wrote about it, storing the information where his brain couldn’t erase it, place it behind a toll, [. . .] inadvertently scramble its organization, or change it gradually, by increments smaller than he could discern, without his knowledge, so it became both lost and unrecognizable, he probably wouldn’t remember most of [a recent in-person conversation with Erin] in a few days and, after weeks or months, he wouldn’t know it had been forgotten, like a barn seen from inside a moving train that is later torn down, its wood carried elsewhere on trucks. (118)

Writing a memory down—presumably by typing it into his phone, as there are only four points in the entire novel at which someone writes with a pen (86, 128, 161, 201)—is the only way for Paul to successfully remember something, to fend off his brain’s attempts to “erase it,” make him pay a disproportionate cost in energy to access it, “scramble” the information (itself a digital concept, as analogue information is not scrambled but distorted), or “change it gradually” without his noticing.

The exteriorization of Paul’s memory leads him to intuit that there is a “brain of the universe, where everything that happened was concurrently recorded as public and indestructible data,” and that “the etching of [the information of his existence] into space-time was his experience of life” (124). In the words of Clint Burnham, what he intuits is the “big Other of the digital world (an order, a system)” (161), the internet as Other, in the psychoanalytically “transferential way” that it “knows us, and knows what we know, and even knows what we don’t know we know” (21). Or as Guan puts it, people and experiences in the novel are “meaningful only insofar as [they are] registered as electronic data.” If memory does form “a coherent

archive,” it does so outside the human-object. Burnham calls the “big Other of the digital” “an order, a system”—in our terms, it is a hyperobject.

Quotations, Memes, and Affects

As the novel’s thematic component, the digital-hyperobject can also be perceived at the micro level in how the mimetic component is presented via the synthetic component. Here, employing an object-oriented paradigm again proves fruitful, for it is striking how the synthetic component of the novel construes so much of the mimetic component in terms of objects. One example is the novel’s use of quotation marks around phrases that at first glance seem arbitrarily chosen, as if they “were generally available features of the world that happened to be accessed by Paul” (Gladstone 89)—in other words, objects. McDougall argues that this usage is in line with “the removed, hipster irony of the twenty-first century” (22), and in an interview published a few years before *Taipei*, notable for being partly included in the novel (125-28), Lin confirms this theory, saying, “I put it around like clichés, or like, things that normally I wouldn’t say without changing my inflection” (Lin, “~2.5-Hour/IRL” 4). But in interviews published after *Taipei*, Lin proffers other motivations. One is that “Twitter has changed my brain[. . .] I’ll think in tweets now. I’ll think like, ‘I thought, “It’s hot””” (Lin, “Interview”). Given how the novel is semi-autobiographical, this is a remarkable corroboration of my argument regarding the influence of the novel’s digital thematic component on the protagonist’s lived experience. The other reason Lin provides is that he uses quotation marks to emulate academic citation and be “as specific as possible” (Ehrlich). In fact, the novel seems to offer cases of all three of Lin’s stated motivations, which I will take in reverse order.

Citation for accuracy’s sake can be seen, for example, whenever Paul reports, in English, written or verbal conversations with his mother, who almost exclusively uses Mandarin. The rare

occasions when she uses English are particularly citation-worthy, as when, describing his childhood personality, Paul thinks at one point that he “was loud and either slug-like or, his mother would say in English, ‘hyperactive’” (37).

What Lin calls “thinking in tweets” we can understand in more general terms as thinking in memes. Richard Dawkins first coined the term “meme” in 1976 to refer to “a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*” (192), but the meaning of the term—the meme of “meme,” if you will—seems to have evolved away from his original conception and toward an emphasis on a meme’s unicity and transmissibility. Hence, of the examples of memes that Dawkins offers, “clothes fashions” and “ways of making pots or of building arches” (192) no longer seem to fit comfortably within the definition due to an excess of creative possibility that makes it difficult to confine these ideas to an easily transmissible “unit.” To my mind, what distinguishes a meme from a mere concept is its ease of transmission, which is grounded in how receptive to it people are upon initial encounter. This in turn has to do with how easy it is to comprehend it as a discrete unit and how well it resonates with people’s lived experience. Consequently, I believe a better way to understand a *meme* is as *a discrete unit of conceptualized experience that is readily shared and understood throughout a given (sub)culture or (sub)cultural space*, such as (in the latter instance) a social media platform. Another way of putting this, drawing from Bogost’s use of “unit” to mean “object” in the object-oriented sense (*Unit 5*), is to say that a *meme-object* is an *abstract object that is highly transmissible within a certain (sub)culture or (sub)cultural space*. The majority of arbitrarily quoted phrases, such as when Paul feels “more like he was ‘moving through the universe’ than ‘walking on a sidewalk’” (3), or when he describes some chairs in a friend’s home as “‘found on the street’” (68), have a sense of discreteness or objecthood because they are more meme than phrase. Quoting these phrases highlights their cultural associations,

which are invoked whenever these phrases are used as discrete units—meme-objects—rather than as everyday signifiers.

One could argue that Lin does something similar when he quotes phrases to mark them as clichés, the main difference being that the predominant cultural association of a cliché is its clichéd quality, its status as a cliché. Highlighting a cliché as such signals the sentiment, *Others may use this phrase unthinkingly in this way, but not I*. So when a friend urges Paul to “‘test-drive’ a foot massage machine” (47), the quotation marks mostly serve to highlight what a cliché the phrase is, and any associations with driving (such as how both the foot massage machine and the act of driving involve the use of one’s feet) come in a distant second. And when Paul invites a couple of friends to a “‘book party’” (60), this is primarily an ironic juxtaposition of “book,” the writing of which he finds meaningful, and “party,” a kind of event he considers mostly meaningless, given his stated position that he “viewed friends mostly as means to girlfriends” (7).

A test case for the reading of quotation mark usage as invoking memes can be found in the way a couple of well-worn phrases—“interim period” and “to work on things”—noticeably drift into and out of quotation marks. For now, let us focus on the first phrase, “interim period.” It first appears, in quotation marks, when Paul describes how he conceptualizes a period of time between the narrative present and the beginning of his upcoming book tour as “an ‘interim period,’” during which his ambivalent avoidance of social gatherings solidifies, so that “if he felt urges to socialize,” he can simply remind himself that “he would be extremely social, he envisioned,” after “the ‘interim period’” ends (22). Here, Paul is tuning the meme-object of an “interim period,” and its cultural association as a relatively insignificant period of time between two other, more significant, periods, through the zone of (not) socializing. The result is a Paul-

object that is firm in its refusal to socialize during this period of time, and the phrase-object “interim period” comes to refer to the abstract object of “a period of time whose boundaries are defined by periods of time that have higher frequencies of socializing”—an abstract object that is now a part-object of the new Paul-object.

When the phrase next appears, it is shorn of its quotation marks, because the new Paul-object has fully incorporated the phrase and so it no longer displays the discreteness of objecthood: “Paul felt more committed, after [a social gathering full of communication failure], to viewing the time until September as an interim period” (23). The following appearance of the phrase is in a mental list of recent events in his life (36), and since he is recalling not the interim period itself but the genesis of the phrase “interim period” as a meme, it has here retreated back into quotation marks. And the last time the phrase appears, it comes in quotation marks: “When he thought of himself in terms of months and years, he still viewed himself as in an ‘interim period’” (74)—this is as he is delimiting the context to thinking about periods of time (“in terms of”), so the “interim period” is once again considered in its part-object facet, as a discrete meme-object.⁸

Another example of meme-objects is the novel’s use of the “noun-y” construction, such as when referring to “a soil-y area, lower and darker than the sidewalk” (11); “the salad-y remains of [Paul’s] burrito” (21); and an area of a party “emanating the language-y noises and phantom heat of four to six people” (45). Gladstone argues that, in these instances, the base noun is “an object [that] is rendered as a concrete instance of the type of object it is, while the aspects of that object are specified only to the degree that they are aspects of that type of object” (88). A

⁸ A similar logic governs Paul’s use of quotation marks for the phrase “to work on things,” so I will refrain from boring the reader with a repetitive argument.

comparison here might prove enlightening. A “soil-y area,” for example, might more commonly be rendered as “a soil-filled area”; in this construction, the area is described as filled with soil and not as soil *per se*, the difference between the two invoking a (necessarily fuzzy) definition space for the word “soil.” But by tacking on the purely adjectivizing “-y,” the definition space is not invoked, and what we have is merely, in Gladstone’s words, “an instance of the type of object it is,” with the connotationless adjectivizing of the noun “soil” abstracting out of the noun its mere adjectival “aspect” of being “that type of object.” Gladstone’s use of the terms “type,” “aspect,” and especially “object” differs from ours. If we rephrase his argument in object-oriented terms, he seems to be saying that the novel’s “noun-y” construction is a meme-object comprising the incorporation of a physical object into an abstract object through the zone of the physical object’s perceptible side (fig. 8).⁹ When compared with other possible adjectival constructions, this connotationless construction seems, in fact, more accurate in the contexts of these three specific examples: A soil-y area is not a soil-filled or -covered one but simply has a sufficient quantity of soil to merit remark; the salad-y remains of a meal are not actively salad-littered or -scattered, let alone constituting a salad-object,¹⁰ but are merely populated with the dregs of a consumed salad; and language-y noises are not, precisely, language-like—they *are* language, even if indistinct.

A third kind of meme in the novel is the bit, or brief performance, usually improvised. Characters in the novel often find themselves doing bits in everyday interactions. The friend traveling through Latin America sends missives that “had taken on the tone and focus, after two

⁹ This rephrasing, incidentally, erases the hierarchy that is implied in Gladstone’s language of “types” and “objects” and that echoes Galloway’s aforementioned conception of the “metaphysico-Platonic logic” of object-oriented programming, reiterating how object-oriented ontology affords no hierarchical difference between types of object.

¹⁰ The salad dregs-object differs from a salad-object. We will discuss object thresholds below.

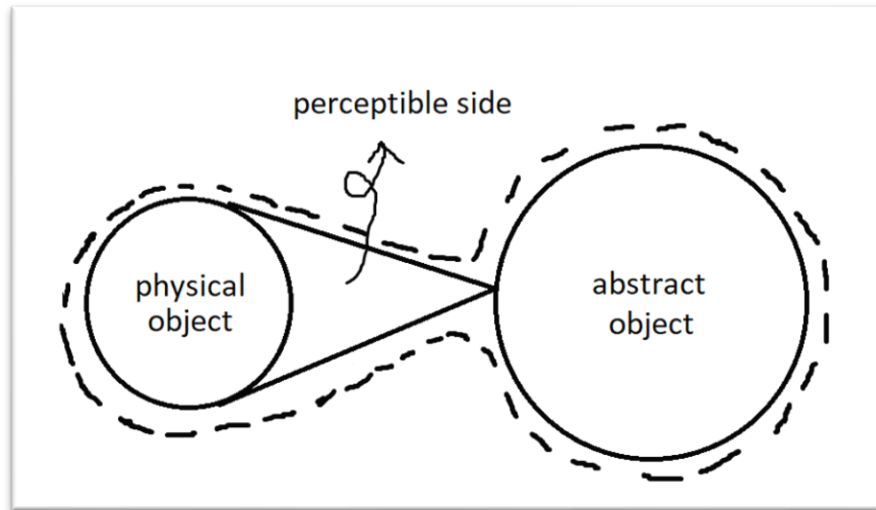


Fig. 8. The “noun-y” construction meme-object.

weeks, of a comedic sitcom” (86), and at a party, another friend takes on the persona of “an unruly tyrant” ordering Paul around (29). Films also serve as memetic inspiration. Pretending to be clueless journalists wielding incoherent questions against people on the street, Paul and Erin make their egress by “walk[ing] away mumbling to each other, attempting to parody, Paul felt, a stereotypical comedy in which two high-level professionals are egregiously demoted into positions where they struggle to regain their jobs while nurturing between them an unlikely romance and mutually learning the true meaning in life” (140). And in a flight of physical improvisation, Erin “grasped the floor of an invisible opening midair” above her head, reacting to which

Paul, staring with earnest astonishment, imagined a ventilation-system-like tunnel and pulled her arms down while trying to feign an expression of “feigned disgust unsuccessfully concealing immense excitement,” as if Erin had unknowingly discovered the entrance to a place Paul had recently stopped trying (after a decade of research, massive debt, the inadvertent nurturing of an antisocial personality) to locate. (192)

Erin's physical movement evokes for Paul an associated meme—"feigned disgust unsuccessfully concealing immense excitement"—that transmits a ready-made backstory. The ready-made portable contexts of these bits mark them as memes.

The novel also features what we might call *affective objects*, a type of object that has less coherence, for below the threshold of the signifying order of memes (and abstract objects in general) lies the order of unbridled affects. According to Brian Massumi, the affective order is "a different order of connection operating in parallel" to the "signifying order" (85). Much as how "emotion is qualified intensity [or affect]," is "the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity [. . .] into function and meaning" (88; J. Davies), meme-objects are the selective organization of affective objects into resonant and easily transmissible units. This does not mean that affects lie *within*, or are ontologically lesser than, emotions or memes, as one would expect under an analogue paradigm. Rather, they "operat[e] in parallel," and the threshold that they do not cross is an epistemological one.

This threshold of organizational coherence can be seen in two scenes. In an argument over a disputed recollection, Paul responds to Erin's assertions that she is "really sure. I'm ninety percent sure" with, "Only ninety percent? That's, like, 'unsure,' I feel" (106). And in another conversation with Erin, Paul is "unsure if he was confused" (130). In both instances, regardless of quotation mark use, we can discern a definition-threshold for Paul's use of the respective abstract objects "lack of surety" and "confusion." For a belief to be "sure," Paul expects it to cross a threshold of certainty, degrees of which are also conceptualized digitally here with the use of quantized percentages. And "confused" for Paul implies a threshold of coherent organization of affects into the pattern he recognizes as "confusion," below which threshold he can paradoxically be unsure as to whether he is, in fact, "confused." A more nuanced case arises

when Paul develops the ability to “deliberately sto[p] thinking” about something “without full awareness of what he’d begun to think”:

Whenever Paul sensed familiarity in the beginnings of a thought or feeling he would passively focus on intuiting it in entirety, predicting its elaboration and rhetoric in the presence of logic and worldview like a ball’s trajectory and destination in the presence of gravity and weather. If he recognized the thought or feeling, and didn’t want it repeated, he’d end its formation by focusing elsewhere[.] (114)

This passage deals exclusively with thought processes below the threshold of the abstract object of “thinking,” with how Paul intuites and, if he chooses to, manipulates these affective objects. For Paul, then, “thinking” refers only to the act of forming complete thought-objects, and not to thinking that never rises above the threshold from affective object to abstract object.¹¹

The novel sometimes dwells in this below-threshold affective space alongside affective objects. If emotions are affective objects inserted into the signifying order, so that an emotion-object comprises an affective object attuned to a particular signification, then affective objects themselves, which require custom significations to be comprehended, extend the signifying order, and so their presentation is usually lengthier and more complex; an affective object comprises a signification attuned to an affect-object.¹² We have already seen an affective object, in the earlier block quotation comparing the objects of Paul’s exteriorized-deteriorating memory to something “both lost and unrecognizable, [. . .] like a barn seen from inside a moving train that is later torn down, its wood carried elsewhere on trucks.” The paradox of something being “both lost and unrecognizable” (if it is lost then recognition is a moot question) is explained by means

¹¹ Note also that “thought or feeling”—the latter meaning emotion—is here made up of “elaboration and rhetoric,” elements that speak to the inherent transmissibility of thought-objects and emotion-objects, their necessarily memetic presentation.

¹² We will discuss affect-objects below.

of a custom signification, in which a barn is both lost (the train moves on) and unrecognizable (“torn down”), and the final detail of “on trucks” underlines how Paul thinks of this experience, not just as passive forgetting, but as a specific action taken by his brain. Another affective object is generated when Paul describes people “dancing to loud music with faces that seemed expressive in an emotionless, hidden, bone-ward manner—the faces of people with the ability to stop clutching the objects of themselves and allow their brains [. . .] to react, like trees to wind, with their bodies to music” (73). The faces here are not just withdrawn but “hidden,” even “bone-ward”; the corresponding selves are characterized as “objects” and divided into the part-objects of “brains” and “bodies”; and the brain’s reaction-facets to music are presented in the body in the same way that “trees [react] to wind.” In a single descriptive sentence, the novel articulates an object-oriented understanding of the relations between self, brain or mind, body, and music. The novel’s affective objects can even display a vertiginous sophistication, as in this backstage interaction, before a panel discussion, with “a cofounder of *Vice*,” the digital-first news organization, who

reacted to Paul’s robot-like extroversion with what seemed like barely suppressed confusion, which Paul tried to resolve by overpowering any possible awkwardness with his temporary charisma, which resulted in what seemed to be intimidation but was maybe an intimidation-based attempt at a non-antagonistic guardianship, which caused Paul, who felt he solely wanted to interact with mutual sincerity, to hesitate a little, which maybe the cofounder of *Vice* sensed as anxiety because he slapped Paul’s shoulder three times painfully. (112)

As seen in the repetition of “seemed” and “maybe,” the entire affective exchange is driven by the misinterpretation of affective objects on the part of both participants, producing gestures that

require custom signification (“an intimidation-based attempt at a non-antagonistic guardianship”) to comprehend.¹³

Then there are situations in which the affective order is so distant from the signifying order that not even affective objects can be articulated. The novel’s marker for these situations and affect-objects is the grin, the most common facial expression in the novel. Two paradigmatic examples should suffice. Discussing with a friend sleeping over what they should do after having just awoken, Paul says with a grin, “I really don’t know what to do” (69). And Erin, unexpectedly meeting Paul’s brother for the first time and having exhausted the conventional pleasantries, is left “vacantly grinning” (154). Both situations call for some kind of decision or gesture, but neither offers clear guidance as to what it should be. The affects in play are unable to be organized into a “thought or feeling” that crosses the threshold of coherence—they do not even afford custom signification—so they can only be signified with a grin, the mark in the novel of the affective order itself. Abstract objects, affective objects, and incoherent affect-objects each follow different structural logics, as the object-oriented logic of the digital affords them (fig. 9).

Death of the Analogue

One last question remains: How does the novel’s thematic component, the theme-

¹³ What we are calling affective objects Brian Willems, following Louise Amoore, sees as instances of “unanticipation” that, by destabilizing “the meaning of the present itself,” constitutes “a strategy for resisting the [enforced] securitization that risk society enacts,” especially when the novel presents events using either “ambiguous spatialization” (“hidden, bone-ward”) or a chronology (paradoxically “both lost and unrecognizable”) that disrupts the securitization inherent in how “the enumeration of possible futures closes down future possibilities” (230-35). In other words, controlling risk by means of probabilistic calculations forecloses possibilities, but new possibilities can be afforded by “unanticipation” of interpretations of the present. As convincing as this argument may be, it sheds little new light on *Taipei* itself, as Willems does not attempt to characterize the novel’s storyworld as a risk society. Rather, I believe that the novel’s relentless focus on Paul’s thoughts and experiences lends more weight to exploring his human-objecthood and its affective manifestations.

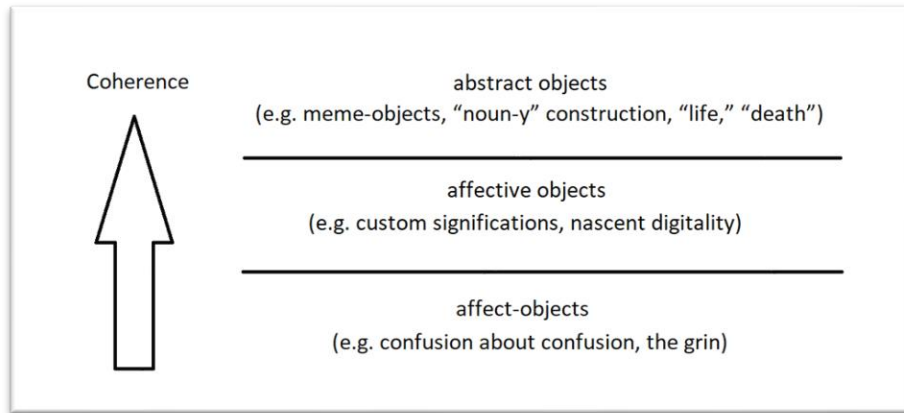


Fig. 9. The thresholds of coherence separating abstract objects, affective objects, and affect-objects. “Life,” “death,” and nascent digitality will come into play in the next section.

hyperobject of the digital, guide the synthetic component in portraying the mimetic component element of (the idea of) death—an analogue concept, as opposed to mere perishing (Heidegger, *Being* 284)? Paul thinks about death at various points, and most of the time he finds it incomprehensible. Death is first mentioned when Paul is standing outside his own place, recognizing nothing: “His conscious, helpless, ongoing lack of recognition—his shrinking, increasingly vague context—seemed exactly and boringly like how it would feel to die, or to have died” (34). Death, then, would seem to be a “lack of recognition,” a lack of “context.” In this sense, the boredom that Paul perceives here is precisely *not* Martin Heidegger’s “profound boredom,” which reveals the “emptiness as a whole” that is itself the prelude to a “*moment of vision*” of knowledge of Dasein’s possibility conditions (*Fundamental* 165)—for Da-sein is being-*there*, being in an authentic existential context, and context of any kind is precisely what Paul associates least with death, which he finds “irrelevant to his life,” “like knitting or backgammon” (61). Paul cannot conceptualize the experience of impending death. On a rooftop during a party, as a drunk friend who is high “on two or more drugs” disregards the danger of falling eight stories, Paul compulsively contemplates the possibility of his own fall: In the event that he were to fall off, “should he close his eyes? What should he try to see? What would his

mother do/feel? Could he grab things to disrupt his fall like in movies? Could one of these be his final thought? What would that mean? Why couldn't he comprehend this?" (88). The antepenultimate question brings up the specific idea of dying, of what he thinks of as a "final thought," yet when he meditates on what that might "mean"—the analogue concept of interpretation—he finds that he cannot "comprehend" the question. Meaning for him has no meaning. Perhaps it is realizing his lack of Being-toward-death that makes him unable "to view his death [. . .] as interestingly absurd or blackly comic or anything except profoundly troubling" (245-46).

Death as contextless non-recognition, against which its other, life, is implicitly defined as contextualized awareness—this prepares us for the final, lengthy, scene of the novel, in which an unexpectedly high dosage of psilocybin mushrooms brings Paul, lying in bed with Erin, face to face with what he views as death, in the process recapitulating nearly all of the key elements of the novel's mimetic and synthetic components, and ultimately presenting Paul's attunement to the digital-hyperobject:

His steady, controlled petting of one of Erin's vertebra [. . .] gradually felt like his only method of remaining in concrete reality, where he and Erin, and other people, shared a world. Sometimes, [. . .] his finger would slow or stop and he would become aware of a drifting sensation and realize he was being absorbed—from an indiscernible distance, beyond which he wouldn't know how to return—and, with some urgency, move his body or open his eyes, seeing grid-like overlays on the walls and holograms of graph paper in the air, to interrupt his being taken. (243)

Already we see the divorcing of life—the "shared [. . .] world" of "concrete reality"—from death—"an indiscernible distance, beyond which he wouldn't know how to return"—the latter of

which is drawing him across the intervening boundary. His efforts to resist it lead Paul to see “holograms of graph paper” and “grid-like overlays”; grids (and their physical presentation in graph paper) are a conceptual key to algebraizing geometry, rendering space numerical. Then,

Paul began to discern his rhythmic petting as a continuous striving to elicit certain information from Erin by responding or not responding to her rhythms[. . .] He felt increasingly [. . .] able to instantly discern changes in her physiology, which in entirety began to seem like an inconstant unit of unique, irreducible information (an ever-changing display of only prime numbers) that was continuously expressed and that bypassed the parts of them that allowed for deliberation or perception or intuition, [. . .] like a thing communicating directly with itself, rendering them both irrelevant. (243-44)

Paul begins to interpret the affective exchange inherent in their bodily contact (“responding to her rhythms”) as a query for “information” that is “unique,” “irreducible,” and “continuously expressed,” like “an ever-changing display of only prime numbers.” Prime numbers are often a key element of digital processes, such as cryptography (algorithmically scrambling and unscrambling information) and hash tables (a common form of indexing that uses numerical values) (“Prime”; “Hash”), so this metaphor is characterizing the analogue information of physical contact in terms of digital information. From the perspective of the analogue human-objects of Paul and Erin, this digitized information is foreclosed to “deliberation or perception or intuition,” and the way it communicates with itself, making them “irrelevant,” recalls the digital universe hugging itself.

Paul feels increasingly “confused and unreal” and concludes that he is dead (244). Therefore, he thinks that, since “death would seal them into their own private afterlives,” in contrast to the “shared [. . .] world” of life, he must be “permanently alone,” and that Erin and his

room must be “his weak projections” (245). “He tried to fondly recall a memory of his life, of life generally—he would need to learn to be satisfied with his memories, which was all he had now” (246)—and after an extended yet fragmented reverie,

Paul believed again, at some point, that he was in the prolonged seconds before death, in which he had the opportunity to return to life—by discerning some code or pattern of connections in his memory, or remembering some of what had happened with a degree of chronology sufficient to re-enter the shape of his life, or sustaining a certain variety of memories in his consciousness long enough to be noticed as living and relocated accordingly. (246-47)

We now see that “death” for Paul has always been an abstract object with a threshold of affective organization, one from which he believes he has crossed back. “Life,” too, is now understood as an abstract object with a threshold of organization. And below the respective thresholds of both “death” and “life” is the affective state of nascent digitality, in which Paul seeks, in order to cross the threshold of “life,” to “discer[n]” a “code or pattern of connections in his memory”—such as a “sufficient” “degree of chronology”—or, failing that, to at least display a sufficiently diverse set of memories. This is to say that “life” in its guise as a part-object of the digital-hyperobject has presented the new facet of being the recognizable presentation of “memory”; and memory itself, for similar reasons, now presents the new facet of being coherently organized information, the sufficiency of whose coherent organization is determined by the digital Other that can “notic[e]” Paul.

After a cliffhanger section break that elides over whether he has successfully crossed the threshold of “life,” Paul rises from bed, enters the bathroom,

and disinterestedly thought “it’s not going to work,” as his hand idly turned a knob, and was surprised by the rupture and crackling of water, its instantaneous column of binary variations. He moved his hand into the water and was surprised again. “I didn’t expect that . . . to feel like that,” he said with a serious expression. “That’s really weird.”

Realizing he had no concept of what water felt like until he touched it—cold, grasping, meticulous, aware—he [. . .] realized [. . .] that the surface of things was shinier and more dimensional from greater pixilation, [. . .] which he viewed as evidence he was successfully convincing himself—through an increasingly elaborate, skillful, unconscious projection of a reality he would eventually believe he was exploring—that he wasn’t dead. With an eternity to practice, he realized, he would forget everything he had thought or felt while dead, including his current thoughts and feelings; he would only believe, as he once had, that he was alive. (247-48)

Tap water comes in a “column of binary variations,” recalling the binarization intrinsic to digitization, and Paul is surprised by the experience of water on skin, describing it with analogue adjectives. He then notes the “greater pixilation” of the surface of objects, which he comprehends as a projection sufficiently convincing to dispel, at some future point, his awareness of having once fallen below the threshold of “life”—more to the point, his sufficiently convincing projection just *is* the prerequisite context of “life” as attuned to the digital-hyperobject. Touching the Lethe-like water begins the process of erasing the memory of his nascent digitality, and, leaving the bathroom, he sees one last reminder before oblivion sets in: Erin moving around “not continuous[ly] but in frames per second.” They hug. Then, “he turned around and moved toward the kitchen—dimly aware of the existence of other places, on Earth, where he could go—and was surprised when he heard himself, looking at his feet stepping into

black sandals, say that he felt ‘grateful to be alive’” (248). Paul heads toward the *locus* of biophysical (analogue) nourishment and sustenance; the spatiality of the digital is redefined as “on Earth,” emphasized by the offsetting commas; and his analogue perception of a bodily action provokes the affirmation of “life” that closes the novel, and which is expressed in a quotation that is both ironic cliché and accurate citation—words (and the correlative sentiment) that “are only so much coding.” Fully attuned to the digital-hyperobject, Paul himself has now become a digital part-object—and he may have always already been one.

This conclusion may seem pessimistic, even nihilistic. After all, we saw earlier that the digital-hyperobject’s “part-objects are whole when considered by themselves but lack that wholeness when considered as its part-objects.” And yet, reconceptualizing lack of wholeness as not losing parts but gaining parts can open up a more utopian reading, and shed light on why one might wish to be incorporated into a hyperobject.

To see how, let us home in on the human-object of Paul, often characterized as socially awkward, to which our previous discussions of his behavior can attest. The founding trauma of his childhood is when, playing percussion at band camp the summer before ninth grade, an upperclassman teases him by calling him “so cool” and “too cool,” and though (or because) being “cool” is in fact one of his social aspirations at that age, the teasing leads him to become “increasingly, physically, exclusively critically, nearly continuously self-conscious.” This attitude ramifies into punishment-seeking behavior and a refusal to speak throughout high school, if not longer (38-43). Guan contextualizes this episode in terms of what he sees as the three axes of teenage identity formation—authority, social peers, and mass media. For an Asian “child of the American suburbs in the Nineties, [. . .] if your parents don’t know how to act around [the White majority] in a way [the latter] recognize as human[. . .] and the television has

no face to offer you, then school, your peers, are all that's left." The ostensibly simple episode of teasing is so damaging to Paul, who is based on Lin, because two of the three axes available to him are culturally alien to the (White) mainstream. His parents are, at the time, culturally unassimilated immigrants from Taiwan; and resonant cultural models and guidance are missing from mass media representations. Being teased for the typical social aspiration of wanting to appear "cool" forecloses the third axis, inducing an identity-presentation in Paul that Stephanie Hsu sees as resembling symptoms of autism spectrum disorder (201). Hsu links Guan's insights to "Lacanian theory's singular contribution to critical race analysis: that racism always represents an intolerance of the [psychic or structural] Other's [impossible] *jouissance*." She adds that "hegemonic subjects tend to attribute *jouissance* to women, queer subjects, and people of color in ways that both enforce their social abjection and accord them subversive political power" (193-94). In other words, marginalized people are fantasized by the cultural majority to enjoy certain pleasures and privileges in a way that both abjectifies and empowers them. But Paul is unconsciously opted out of this libidinal circuit when "a non-normative subjective state characterized by [. . .] rejection of the sociality (or the orientation towards the social other) inherent in a relation to the structural Other" arises within him (194). By taking the "embodied responses to the forced enjoyment imposed by an overbearing Other" and subjecting them to a "symbolic binding," the *jouissance* of the structural Other is rerouted into "autistic *jouissance*" (205).¹⁴ Hsu believes that "autistic *jouissance* may represent Paul's last line of defense against the Other's *jouissance*—which, like computerization, entails the manipulation of culture into a state of universal agreement within which his own desire might perpetually be silenced" (207); but she misses how Paul's recourse to autistic *jouissance* also allows him to wield its "subversive

¹⁴ She notes that the term "autistic *jouissance*," first proposed by Jacques Alain Miller and Slavoj Žižek, is deployed "not unproblematically" (194).

political power” to attune to the digital-hyperobject in a way that does not entail his being “silenced.”

In an op-ed for the *New York Times*, Lin expands on the utopian imaginary of the digital. As a child, having been distanced from his parents by the advent of the internet and his headlong participation in internet culture—the same internet culture that played a key role in his career (Guan; Crosthwaite 187-89)—he was

dimly aware of the Internet’s role in the fulfillment of some ancient, human yearning to externalize our private imaginations into a shared space. [. . .] Maybe some part of me believed that, once we were [relocated into the Internet], we would know everything about our parents and they would know everything about us—except there wouldn’t be a “they,” or an “us,” only a [digital] mind, containing the knowledge of both, that knows itself. (“When”)

Lin here imagines that humanity’s full incorporation into the digital-hyperobject would grant us the knowledge of others (“of” in both the subjective and objective genitive cases). Experiencing a shift in identity, we would be sublated from whole-objects into part-objects that would be open to the entirety of what would then be *our* whole-hyperobject, becoming neither networked nor interconnected, *pace* Gladstone, but unified. The digital would, as the prefix of G.W.F. Hegel’s term for the dialectical “opposite” (*entgegensetzen*) suggests, “enter” us “into a new state by *preserving*” us (Maybee, sec. 2), allaying object-oriented concerns about being subsumed into higher levels of emergence. Some facets of the part-object that once made it whole would become imperceptible, but in return it would gain the innumerable facets of the whole-object that incorporates it, at the same moment that the whole-object would gain the perceptible facets of the part-object. Part-object or whole-object—it would all be a matter of perspective. Whether or not

this will actually be the case with regard to the digital-hyperobject is as yet unknown, notwithstanding science-fictional depictions such as in Isaac Asimov's "The Last Question" (1956). But given the current state of digital technological evolution, in particular Elon Musk's Neuralink venture to create brain-machine interfaces, we may soon find out.

Conclusion

We have seen how, in Tao Lin's *Taipei*, the dominant thematic component of the digital, as a textual hyperobject, governs not only the macrostructure of the storyworld but also the microstructure of how the synthetic component presents the mimetic component. In linking the digital conception of the storyworld's universe to the structure of Paul's subrational affective order, we have traced how, as Hayles puts it, people "are literally being re-engineered through their interactions with computational devices." The digital exists as a textual hyperobject within the storyworld, and yet its evocation in the novel—and the ways in which Paul's lived experience is synthetically guided—often echo our own extratextual encounters and entanglements with the digital. Indeed, the novel began life as the memories of its author. In highlighting Paul's attunement to the storyworld's digital-hyperobject while omitting the presumably less-attuned episodes, the novel offers up a hyperstylized and hyperbolic—that is, fictional—account of digital-hyperobject attunement. Nevertheless, its conception of the digital as a hyperobject resonates, to greater or lesser extents, with the lived experience of our own worlds. Though the ubiquity of the digital in contemporary society may seem unique, its anomalous prominence may merely be because, among the hyperobjects that we most often encounter, it is the most distinct, irresolvable mismatched as it is with analogue lived experience.

The previous chapter built on existing trajectories of research to highlight possible object-oriented contributions to critical disability studies through a hyperobject reading of *The*

Unnamed. Here, we have traced the entanglement of object-oriented ontology and the digital to illumine a new perspective on *Taipei*. To be sure, there are facets of the novel, its storyworld, and its characters to which this brief chapter cannot do justice. But I hope that the tools deployed in the above hyperobject reading, including the meme-object and affective objects, may prove useful in the reading of other texts, or even a rereading of this one. In the next chapter, we will find a storyworld in flux between a dominant hyperobject and an emergent one, and outline how the narrator strives to attune to the latter.



4

Fighting One Hyperobject with Another: Narrative as Hyperobject in Ben Lerner's *10:04*

When the academic collective Post45, focused on literature published after 1945, put out a call for papers for a 2016 conference on “*twenty-first century literature and culture*,” the most frequently mentioned author or theorist in the 135 proposals received was Ben Lerner (Chihaya et al.). Lerner was already an accomplished poet before publishing his first novel, but since there were 58 proposals on a fictional work as opposed to 10 on poetry, it is probably safe to assume that it was mostly Lerner’s fiction that was the center of attention. At that point, he had published only two novels, and a story that was folded into his second novel, *10:04* (2014). He has since published a third novel and another short story, but it is that second novel that will be the focus of this chapter.

What is it about *10:04*, named for the time at which a lightning strike affords Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) a return to the present in the film *Back to the Future* (1985), that has captured the critical imagination? To be sure, *10:04* is well-written and psychologically astute, reflecting the intricate insight of a poet’s sensitivity to language and emotion, but if it were merely that, Lerner as novelist would likely have been consigned to the category of the “writer’s writer,” along with authors such as John Williams, the poet-cum-novelist who wrote the perennially underread *Stoner* (1965), among other excellent work (Kreider). Lerner adds to this a convincingly sincere and critically informed engagement with ideas about literature and art (Blair), and his “embrace of theoretical meditation as narrative form” yields a novel that is “less novelistic and more essayistic,” a new genre that Theodore Martin calls “*critical fiction*” (“Contemporary” 138)—as opposed to “fictocriticism,” the practice of writing critical, even

academic, work in forms other than “philosophical analysis or conversation or dialectic in the Socratic tradition” (Blake 371-73).¹ Lerner’s critical fiction conveys ideas both logically, through propositional knowledge, and literarily, by expanding the “space of reasons” and affording us more “propositional knowledge by drawing inferences we could or would not have drawn otherwise” (Huemer 243).

Hence, *10:04* is the rare novel that comes with a thesis statement. In “what would become the opening scene,” the protagonist and his literary agent have just finished eating “an outrageously expensive celebratory meal in Chelsea that included baby octopuses the chef had literally massaged to death,” celebrating the “strong six-figure” sale of his novel proposal based on his short story published in *The New Yorker*, “The Golden Vanity” (Lerner, *10:04* 3-4). When recalling how his agent had asked him his plan for expanding the story into a novel, proposal notwithstanding, he thinks, “‘I’ll project myself into several futures simultaneously,’ I should have said, ‘a minor tremor in my hand; I’ll work my way from irony to sincerity in the sinking city, a would-be Whitman of the vulnerable grid’” (4). Projection into multiple temporalities, the hand, the sincere use of ironic form, global warming–tinged millenarianism, Walt Whitman’s poetics, the first-person narratorial interjection, and even the octopus and the speculative exchange of (literary) art for money—all are major motifs of the novel. They appear throughout several plot strands across five chapters that are bookended by two superstorms, based respectively on Hurricanes Irene and Sandy. The unnamed protagonist is diagnosed with Marfan syndrome; is asked by best friend Alex to donate his sperm for her pregnancy; volunteers as after-school tutor for undocumented El Salvadorean child Roberto, with whom he cowrites a four-page book on the history of the brontosaurus; is maybe-boyfriend to artist Alena; becomes

¹ Blake’s paper is itself a fictocritical text

literary executor to mentors Bernard and Natali; meets people on various occasions and listens to their stories; goes on a five-week artists' residency in Marfa, Texas, where he writes a poem; and traverses lower Manhattan with Alex during a power outage caused by the second superstorm. All the while, he is mulling over how to turn his short story and book proposal into a full-length novel. These disparate yet economically presented plotlines are unified by the narrative that the protagonist decides to write, the very narrative we are reading, that of *10:04*. I believe that narrative, then, is the dominant theme of the text, and the conception of the social achieved through the narrative composition of *10:04* is the theme-hyperobject of its storyworld. As we will shortly see, this narrative-hyperobject is pitted against another social conception—hyperobject dominating the storyworld—the neoliberalism-hyperobject. How the narrator finds a method of countering the ostensibly all-encompassing hyperobjecthood of neoliberalism forms the core of *10:04*.

The novel is therefore a work of metafiction, and the first step to arriving at the narrator's new conception of the social is to locate the narrator within the novel's narrative ecology. In *10:04*, Lerner constructs narratives within narratives (though the *mise en abyme* is not endless), among which only the uppermost level is strictly realist. This is the level of the unnamed first-person narrator in the present tense, who is writing a text-object that is indistinguishable from the text-object that is *10:04*. Immediately below this level is an unnamed first-person protagonist in the past tense who is living through the experiences that will, in fictionalized form, feature in the narrator's narrative, including the experience of deciding to write the textual text-object *10:04*. A third level comprises the various work that the protagonist has already written, including an untitled first-person critical poem (present tense), an abandoned novel about forged literary

letters that is purportedly the narrator's original idea for his *10:04*,² and "The Golden Vanity," a metafictional short story which itself has two levels: an unnamed narrator (present) and a third-person protagonist (past) called, simply, "the author." Perhaps these levels may be less confusing if outlined in reverse. A character named "the author" (fourth level) is the protagonist of a story written by the unnamed narrator of "The Golden Vanity" (third level); on this third level is also the speaker of a poem and "Ben," the protagonist of an abandoned novel. The story, poem, and abandoned novel are written by the unnamed protagonist (second level) of the novel that is written by the narrator (first level) of the text-object *10:04*, the text-object that is the focus of this chapter (fig. 10).³

I will begin by discussing metafiction, past and present, before setting out the definition that will obtain in this chapter. After an exploration of narrative and fictionality, I will then sketch the concept of autofiction and its implications for our understanding of the implied author and the narrator. Following this, a discussion of narrator interjection into the narrative of *10:04* will lead to an exploration of Walt Whitman's project of overcoming scale variance via serialized incorporation, and (with the aid of Alain Badiou) of how the novel serially incorporates the various narrative-objects scattered throughout the narrative-hyperobject. A few of these text-objects have been published extratextually by Lerner prior to *10:04*, and an

² The snippets provided in the text do not tell us its tense or whether it would have been in the first or third person, but we do know that the protagonist on this level would probably have been named "Ben."

³ Some have assumed that the protagonist of *10:04* gives his own name to the protagonist of the abandoned novel and so call the former "Ben" (Bennett 149; Bilmes 1088; Crosthwaite 201; B. Davies 9; Figlerowicz; Gibbons 11; O'Dell 454). And in an interview with Ocean Vuong, Lerner refers to his three novels as a trilogy, so Vuong calls the protagonist by the name of the protagonist of Lerner's other two novels, Adam Gordon, to which Lerner voices no objection (Vuong). But, technically, the protagonist (and therefore narrator) of *10:04* is unnamed, as Rachel Sykes notes (173). That the poem is excerpted from an extratextual poem written by Lerner called "The Dark Threw Patches Down Upon Me Also" (2011), and that "The Golden Vanity" (2012) was published in the extratextual *The New Yorker* in slightly altered form, will be discussed later; but this publication history is, strictly speaking, irrelevant to metafiction as I understand it here.

investigation into modifications made for incorporation into the novel will lead into the idea of the “totaled” work of art, an artwork that, though materially unchanged, has been removed from the logic of the neoliberal market through retrospective shifts in understanding. Finally, we will see how the novel’s serialized incorporation of narrative-objects into the narrative-hyperobject of *10:04* forces the totaled world to come, a conception of the social that is independent of the neoliberal market.

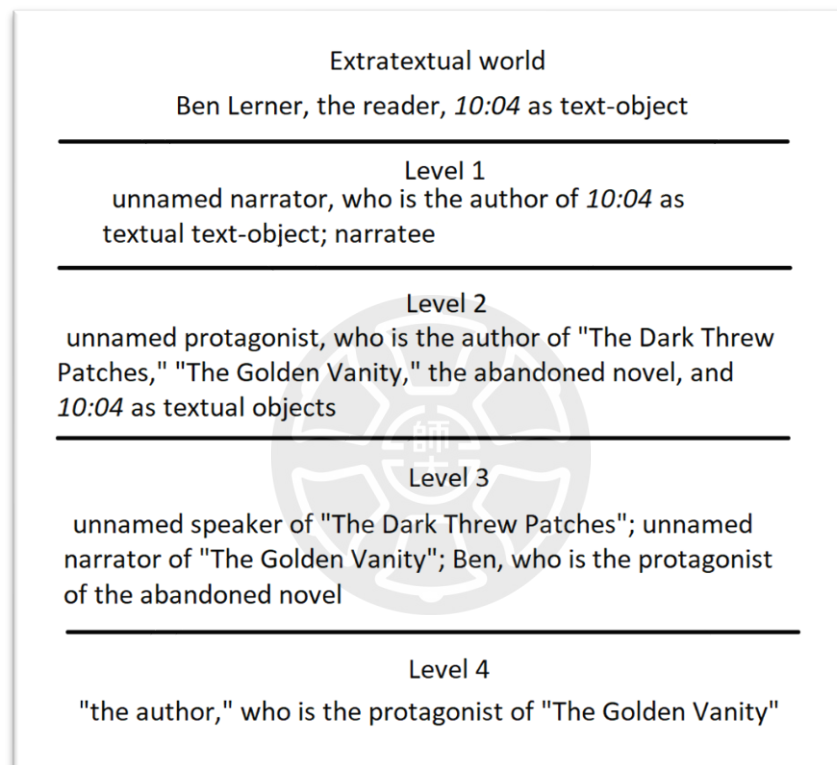


Fig. 10. The metafictional levels of *10:04*. The narratee will be discussed below.

Metafiction, Autofiction, and Narratology

“Metafiction” is a loaded term that now carries a different connotation from during the heyday of its usage. William H. Gass coined the term in his 1969 “Philosophy and the Form of Fiction,” defining it broadly as fiction “in which the forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms can be imposed” (25); in other words, the form of fiction serves as the content of fiction. In 1975, Raymond Federman defined “SURFICTION,” his name for

metafiction, as the “kind of fiction” that “reveals man’s irrationality rather than man’s rationality” and “exposes the fictionality of reality”; its “primary purpose” is “to unmask its own fictionality, to expose the metaphor of its own fraudulence” (7-8). This is a metafiction that makes narrative secondary to the celebration of language as a medium (Kostelanetz 285), aligning itself with a “postmodernism” that “seeks to seduce its audience into compliance with the work” by appealing to “the desires involved in the production and consumption of such products,” before then “reveal[ing] the sources of its illusion” (Eysteinsson 121). In Brian McHale’s influential formulation, “postmodernist fiction” asks questions of “the ontology of the literary text itself” and “of the world which it projects,” what we are calling the storyworld (10). In an interview with Patrick Langley, Lerner says that he is “not interested in that kind of metafiction” (18).

In contrast, metafiction today is focused less on questioning the ontology of a storyworld and more on exploration within it. The mirror image of postmodernists who “had made it a point to show that whatever seemed real and objectively given was in fact a linguistic construct,” metafiction writers today “aim to create the impression that their (semi-)fictions form a part of the reader’s real world” (Voelz, “American” 327). Unlike McHale’s formulation of modernist fiction as being focused on epistemological questions about knowers and knowledge (9), metafiction as it is written now builds on a provisional epistemology to see what can be made of it, and how one can live within what is provisionally made. As Robert L. McLaughlin puts it, “Where postmodernism exposed the uncertainty within totalizing systems’ claims to truth,” contemporary metafiction “explores instead what to do with it, how to live in the world with incomplete systems of knowledge, how various systems of knowledge can be linked together or embedded within one another to create a contingent but useful structure” (221). If modernism is

epistemological and postmodernism ontological, then metafiction today returns to the realist novel's ethical roots (Hale 14, 19). We might even say that it is an ironic form used sincerely (Kelly).

Given the above, I use the word *metafiction* here to mean *a self-referential fictional narrative-object that affords entanglements across the hierarchical levels of its storyworlds*. The metafictional text must be (1) a narrative, (2) fictional, and (3) self-referential; it must also (4) have at least two storyworlds, (5) be organized in a hierarchical fashion, and (6) afford influence and interaction between its storyworlds.

It might seem as if the claim that metafiction is narrative would be redundant. After all, it is hard to conceive of a form of prose text that is *not* narrative in some sense, and an argument could even be made for the narrativity of most verse texts, too, in their linearity. But just as that argument would ultimately run up against image poetry, the notion of prose as narrative must contend with the strange object known as conceptual writing. Perhaps the best-known practitioner of conceptual writing is poet Kenneth Goldsmith, whose work includes *Soliloquy* (2001), the transcribed record of everything he said during one week with no interlocutors' contributions, and *Traffic* (2007), a transcription of 24-hours' worth of traffic updates from New York City radio station WINS. Such work is not meant to be read through. Rather, Luke Skrebowski argues that, as the "conceptual" moniker suggests, conceptual writing follows in the footsteps of conceptual art, which attempted to abstract a pure notion of art out of, at first, the aesthetic object, and then in turn out of the art object, art idea, discourse on art, and finally out of the institution of art. Conceptual art in its ideal distilled form is thus completely independent of any materiality whatsoever, not in the sense of being divorced from materiality, which would be impossible, but in the sense of being insubstantially affected by the chosen material—something

is art not because of, but in spite of, what it is. This is what Jeff Wall calls “the expanded field” of art (qtd. in Skrebowski).

Conceptual writing is ambiguously positioned in relation to the perspectivist line that separates literature from art: Is it “*not art as literature* outside the expanded field,” or is it “*not literature as art* within the expanded field” (Skrebowski)? Skrebowski opts for the former, yet one cannot but wonder if he has muddled his own categories. The two aforementioned Goldsmith texts are readable, even if they are not meant to be read. Yet some of Goldsmith’s later work, such as *Printing Out the Internet* (26 July–30 August 2013), a crowdsourced installation ultimately consisting of ten tons of paper’s worth of printed materials (“Printing”), was impossible to read through in a practical if not literally physical sense. To say that *Printing* is narrative would be to dilute narrative *qua* abstract object to the point of nonsense. Conversely, Skrebowski offers as an example of “not literature as art” the genre of the “Artist’s Novel,” a type of novel that is meant to be considered an integral part of a larger artwork—a mere part-object. But as the relation of part-object to incorporating whole-object suggests, an artist’s novel is still readable on its own merits.

One might object here that considerations of readability and narrative are irrelevant; Skrebowski considers Goldsmith’s work to be “not art as literature” because Goldsmith considers himself a conceptual poet/writer and not a conceptual artist, in contrast to conceptual artists of widely varying mediums, including writers of artist’s novels. Skrebowski, one might say, is simply taking the perspectivism of conceptual art seriously. But the situation becomes more complicated when he discusses *10:04*. He argues that, in accounting for its own material conditions of production and speculative financing, the novel engages in “an Institutional Critique of the literary institution by way of the novel form at both an intra- *and* extra-diegetic

level, one that includes and reflects on not only the novel's conditions of production but also [. . .] the general conditions of literary production, alternating between 'facts' and 'fiction.'" This, he maintains, makes it "more like an instance of a work in the expanded field and less like a novel in the conventional sense," even though he admits that "Lerner has not used the term 'Institutional Critique.'" In fact, Lerner *has* used the term, three years before Skrebowski's essay, in "Damage Control" (2013), an essay on the difference between art and vandalism which argues that vandalism is the more radical institutional critique. The closest that Lerner has come to conceptualism in his own fiction, however, is in calling the insertion of published material into his novel "similar to how readymades work in visual art" ("Interview") or "the literary equivalent of the readymade" ("This Week"), and in how he professes to be "thinking of the novel a lot as a kind of curation; like the way you can stage encounters with works of art" ("Time").⁴ In all of these cases, he compares his novel to conceptualism without calling it an instance of such. Without artistic intent, the perspectivism of conceptualism dictates that *10:04* not be a work of conceptual writing. Moreover, Skrebowski, perhaps influenced by the novel's inclusion of a published text-object, seems to take for granted that the production process of the extratextual text-object *10:04* was as represented in its storyworld. Lerner, though, has said that "the whole thing about getting the advance and all that, none of that's true, I turned the book in finished" ("Time"). There remains a remnant of "institutional critique" elsewhere in the novel, in the "totaled art" that we will discuss below, but it is a mimetic critique of a character's conceptual art rather than of conceptual writing. And as institutional critique is the wedge with

⁴ Indeed, in the introduction to his interview with Lerner, Patrick Langley characterizes Lerner's first two novels "as experiences in themselves: books through which you move the way you move through a museum, or a week in your life" (16).

which Skrebowski categorizes *10:04* as “more like an instance of” conceptual writing, we can safely say that *10:04* is not conceptual writing but a narrative text-object.

There is some debate as to whether narrative entails fictionality. Richard Walsh, for one, is forced to distinguish between narrative and fiction by appealing to cultural mores: “I want to grant full force to the claim that all narrative is artifice, and in that very restricted sense fictive, but I maintain nonetheless that fictional narrative has a coherently distinct cultural role” (15). Both narrative and fiction are artificial, and fictional and nonfictional narrative differ merely in the *cultural* role they each play. But this turns “nonfictional narrative” into an oxymoron. Walsh later joins forces with Henrik Skov Nielsen and James Phelan to propose a model of fictionality that would solve this problem by positing “narrativity” as “a scalar quality that applies to both fictional and nonfictional narrative”; in other words, “degrees of narrativity” and “degrees of fictionality” constitute two different axes (Skov Nielsen et al., “Fictionality” 108). Their model of fictionality is a rhetorical one, with two tiers: A given discourse can have local degrees of fictionality, but it is perceived globally as either fictional or nonfictional depending on the receiver’s interpretation of the sender’s intent (104). As they say of the latter point, **“From the perspective of the receiver, fictionality is an interpretive assumption about a sender’s communicative act”** (“Ten” 66). This fiction-nonfiction binary dovetails with an earlier position staked out by Dorrit Cohn (35), but whereas she defines fiction as “a literary nonreferential narrative” (12)—meaning by “nonreferential” not “that it *can* not refer to the real world outside the text, but that it *need* not refer to it” (15)—Skov Nielsen et al. assert that **“no formal technique or other textual feature is in itself a necessary and sufficient ground for identifying fictive discourse [. . .], even though *within certain cultural and historical contexts* certain textual features”** may constitute predominant conventions (“Ten” 66). As the separate

axes of narrativity and fictionality imply, they include among possible fictional discourses narrative degree zero texts, whatever those may be.

The text-object of *10:04* is a global fiction that includes local nonfictional parts, especially having to do with the author's experiences and previously published text-objects. Along with novels such as Tao Lin's *Taipei*, it has therefore been held up as an exemplar of what is called "autofiction," a term coined by French writer Serge Doubrovsky to describe his 1977 novel *Fils* (Hansen 47). This is how Doubrovsky articulates his self-declared new genre of fiction, in Per Krogh Hansen's translation:

Autobiography? No, that is a privilege reserved for the important persons of this world, in the evening of their lives, and in a beautiful style. Fiction, of strictly real events and facts, *autofiction* if you will; to have given the language of an adventure to the adventure of a language in freedom, without wisdom and outside the syntax of the novel syntax, traditional or new. Interactions, threads of words, alliterations, assonances, dissonances, writing before or after literature, concrete, as they say music. (48n1; my emphasis)

Recognizing the ambiguity of this statement as a definition and noting that there is still no single accepted definition in either the English or French literature, Hywel Dix surveys Doubrovsky's career to tease out three definitional trajectories. The first is stylistic, emphasizing "temporal experimentation" and other high modernist strategies as the source of autofiction's fictionality (2)—"to have given the language of an adventure to the adventure of a language in freedom." The second trajectory is sociological. Unlike traditional autobiography, according to Dix's reading of Doubrovsky, autofiction features someone with (perceived) relative obscurity, thereby reversing the rhetorical logic of autobiography according to which readers are expected to bring their prior knowledge of the author to their reading of the text (3-4)—"Autobiography? No, that

is a privilege reserved for the important persons of this world, in the evening of their lives.” The last definitional trajectory has to do with changing notions of subjectivity. With “the ability of a human subject unproblematically to narrate and represent his or her life story” now in question, autofiction can be seen as “autobiographical fiction written in the subjunctive mood,” deprioritizing mimetic representations of the author’s feelings, thoughts, and deeds in favor of “the speculative question of how that subject might respond to new and often imagined environments,” especially to a changing social environment (5-6)—this is no longer fiction “of strictly real events and facts.”

None of these adequately describe *10:04*. The vast majority of the novel is straightforwardly realist, foreclosing the first definitional trajectory. Lerner had already received—to borrow the words of *10:04*’s protagonist—“an alarming level of critical acclaim” (154) for his first novel, *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011), which is also considered autofictional, so he is not exactly obscure. And *10:04* is not about how Lerner would have responded to the events and experiences presented to the protagonist; though it is mostly a counterfactual narrative, the counterfactuality itself is not the point. The protagonist-object of the novel is “an instrument for examining other things” outside himself as textual author-object (Haas); he “is less a vessel to unpack than a vehicle to navigate through everything else” (Lichtig). My point here is not to invalidate the definition or genre of autofiction, or the classification of *10:04* as autofiction, but to light upon a definition that can, in turn, illumine different parts of the novel, that can help afford insightful readings of this text-object. A definition-object does not tune or incorporate the object that it defines. On the contrary, it attunes to the object, and the attunement lets us see different facets of the object.

Given autofiction's definitional ambiguity, numerous scholars and critics have advanced their own definitions. Critic Jonathon Sturgeon, currently editor-in-chief of online publication *The Baffler*, believes that autofiction is a subgenre of *künstlerroman* in which "the story of the maturation of the artist or the creation of a work of fiction is tantamount to the unfurling of the soul on the page," so that, as a result, "the oeuvre is the soul," the contemporary equivalent to "the religious ideal of the immortal spirit." I admit to being somewhat baffled by his definition. On the one hand, it seems to be trivial, in that we usually assume that novelists pour their "heart and soul," colloquially speaking, into each new work, even if their motivation for doing so may not be as high-minded as simply to produce a lasting work of art. On the other hand, and regarding *10:04* in particular (which Sturgeon has read), it seems to be too narrow, focusing as it does only on the protagonist's individual soul. Lerner's novel has a millenarian aspect that is religiously inflected by its epigraph, a passage from Giorgio Agamben's *The Coming Community* that Agamben attributes to Walter Benjamin, as does Lerner:⁵

The Hassidim tell a story about the world to come that says everything there will be just as it is here. Just as our room is now, so it will be in the world to come; where our baby sleeps now, there too it will sleep in the other world. And the clothes we wear in this world, those too we will wear there. Everything will be as it is now, just a little different.

(Agamben 53; Lerner, *10:04* ix, removing Agamben's emphasis on "Hassidim")

"Everything will be as it is now, just a little different" is a recurring motif in the novel, and we will examine later how the novel accomplishes—paraphrasing its thesis statement—this

⁵ Though the formulation is Benjamin's (664; the translator spells it "Hasidim," unemphasized), the idea in fact originated with Gershom Scholem (Whyte n1).

projection into multiple temporalities. For now, it suffices to note that the novel's scope is not limited to the protagonist alone.

Extending Sturgeon's insight, Christian Lorentzen believes that autofiction is not a species of *künstlerroman* but does resemble it in that "there tends to be emphasis on the narrator's or protagonist's or authorial alter ego's status as a writer or artist and that the book's creation is inscribed in the book itself." Lest this seem too broad, he notes that this definition is primarily meant to distinguish autofiction from "autobiographical fiction" and "autobiographical metafiction." Ergo, it appears that we can condense this definition into *an autobiographical metafictional künstlerroman*. Again, this definition is too narrow, for in autofiction, the protagonist's artistic maturation has broader, societal, implications. Even Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle* (2009–2011), often pilloried as the nadir of navel gazing, in its sixth and final volume turns to a character study of Adolf Hitler, resolving the riddle of why the two men share a book title (Garner).

Siddharth Srikanth defines autofiction as "narratives in which the author is the protagonist, in which the author's biographical background and life experiences inform the extensive nonfictionality of the work, and in which the author combines fictionality and nonfictionality at length" (346). He adds that these narratives "use nonfictive discourse within global fictions" to draw on the "authoritative experience" that bestows "affective and cultural appeal" on "autobiography" (362). This definition places affective and cultural appeal on the same plane, but it seems to me that the latter is a generalization of the former: Autobiography has cultural appeal *because* its readers in general (who make up the relevant section of "the culture") value the affective experience of reading autobiographies. Understood thusly, Srikanth's definition is an affective one: Autofiction imparts a certain affective reading experience, perhaps

one that attenuates the conventional suspicion regarding first-person fictional narratives (Lanser 207), by adducing “authoritative experience.” Alternatively, Srikanth may have in mind the expert autobiography rather than the celebrity autobiography—though even the expert must have a certain degree of celebrity (or marketability) for a publisher to take on the autobiography. The difference, I think, between these two readings of Srikanth’s definition is merely one of emphasis, determined mainly by how abstract or reified the expertise is (including, in the case of celebrity autobiographies, “expertise” on one’s own life) of which the author imparts authoritative experience. Either way, *10:04* handles literary and art criticism with enough expertise informed by authoritative experience to have garnered the label of “critical fiction,” and so would qualify as autofiction according to Srikanth.

Srikanth seems to be building on earlier research by Marjorie Worthington, who argues that the difference between autofiction and memoir is that, globally speaking, the former is fiction while the latter is nonfiction, regardless of local discursive strategies (473). But she concedes that even memoir can offer only subjective truth, “the sense of access to truth” that is “fleeting and in the eye of the beholder,” implicitly differentiating itself from biography (476). Autofiction combines this memoiristic subjective truth with “the gesture toward abstract truth that we typically associate with the novel” to produce a reading experience that is “both emotionally and intellectually engaging” (481). This argument is oddly in tension with her other argument, regarding the nonfictional within autofiction: Despite explicitly distancing memoir from objective fact, she argues that, by blurring memoir and fiction, autofiction makes a case for “the importance of distinguishing between fact and fiction” (474), and that—because the line between fact and fiction also runs between “what is factual about the author/character and what

is fictional”—it “requires a continual recognition of the presence and authority of the actual author” (477).

Being perspectivist, the modified object-oriented ontology that undergirds hyperobject reading does not recognize uncontextualized “facts” (facts originating in a universally objective and/or all-encompassing perspective on an object) in any case, but there are additional arguments against Worthington’s last point—reasons to literalize the slash in Worthington’s formulation of “author/character,” permanently sever the ontological ties between author and protagonist, and to keep the author outside the circuit of metafiction rather than maintain “a continual recognition of the presence and authority of the actual author.”

One mediating layer Worthington has already discarded: the implied author, first proposed by Wayne C. Booth. Phelan argues that it is necessary to separate the implied author, representing an author’s “public, textualized intentions,” from the “private intentions” embodied in the concept of the actual author (204) in order to, for instance, make sense of the “hoax memoir,” in which the intentions of the actual author are at odds with those of the implied author (26-27). Strangely enough, Phelan’s earlier argument that “fictive and nonfictive discourse represent two options for engaging with the actual world” (Skov Nielsen et al., “Ten” 63) contradicts this later position of his, for the receiver’s constant interpretation of the sender as intending to use (non)fictional discourse is already an interpretation of a private intention. Indeed, what would it mean to ascertain authors’ private intentions anyway (Dawson, *Return* 234)? Presumably, we would do so through secondhand sources or an oral tradition, as these intentions are not “textualized,” but then these authors’ refusal to commit said intentions to the page (or their deeming it unnecessary) would also express an intention, a countervailing one, according to which the “private intentions,” if encountered, are to be disregarded. In *10:04*, the

protagonist of “The Golden Vanity” says, “I don’t write by hand and don’t save drafts on the computer,” to explain to his therapist why his papers would not constitute a “mature [literary] archive” (70); this mode of working seems to convey the (private) intention to present his work on its own merits. A further argument against the implied author is advanced by Walsh prior to his collaboration with Skov Nielsen and Phelan. Walsh sees the implied author as a way to “impose upon personality” an unnecessary “uniformity” (83). *Contra* Booth’s assertion that the implied author is one of many “projected—often totally faked—selves,” thereby implying the existence of a real/authentic self (78), Walsh quite rightly notes that personality “is not monolithic; it is not timeless, not unitary, not even necessarily coherent,” and his observation that “novelists” are “likely to attitudinize in diverse ways in their writing” as “an aspect of self-presentation” that does not presume “an independent identity” can apply to all authors with (locally) fictive intent—in other words, it applies to every author, including hoax memoirists (79).

Walsh’s argument also militates against the validity of an extradiegetic narrator between author and character, a narratological object that is on shaky ground to begin with. Gerard Genette notes that the existence of a narrator “take[s] seriously” the assumption “that a story is *being told*” (Dawson, “Ten” 95n5; my emphasis); and Cohn concedes that “heterodiegetic fiction cannot be imaged [sic] in analogy to *any* plausible real-world discourse situation,” but still believes that we should keep the extradiegetic narrator on the “pragmatic grounds” that it is closest to a natural discourse situation (127). Skov Nielsen and friends, who agree with Cohn that fiction-nonfiction is a binary global choice, dispense with these pragmatic grounds altogether, affording “un-naturalizing reading strategies when reading certain fictive narratives because readers do not need to limit the narrative possibilities to what is credible in stories about

non-invented, actual states of affairs” (“Ten” 67). If fiction is completely divorced from nonfiction, then there is no need for fiction to simulate the nonfiction convention of a single plausible unifying authorial stand-in narrator. Instead, Walsh summarizes his argument by asserting that “extradiegetic homodiegetic narrators, being represented, are characters, just as all intradiegetic narrators are. Extradiegetic heterodiegetic narrators (that is, ‘impersonal’ and ‘authorial’ narrators), who cannot be represented without thereby being rendered homodiegetic or intradiegetic, are in no way distinguishable from authors.” This is to say that “fictions are narrated by their authors, or by characters,” and never the twain shall meet (Walsh 84). Henry Ivry’s reading of the narrator and author of *10:04* as the same Ben Lerner (Ivry 10) is therefore ontologically impossible, and Worthington’s argument that the author is more prominent in autofiction is rendered moot.

It is consequently irrelevant that “The Golden Vanity” and “The Dark Threw Patches Down Upon Me Also” were previously published extratextually, for the author is excluded from representation in the storyworld. Ben Lerner does not exist there, and even if he did, he would not be identical with the extratextual Ben Lerner. There will always be an “ontological gap” (De Boever, *Finance* 16). In the end, perhaps the most suitable characterization of autofiction comes from novelist Amitava Kumar, who went on a later residency in Marfa and stayed in the same house as Lerner did: Although Lerner “had chosen just the precise details to describe the room, the street outside, the artifacts,” they are more like “props [that] are very carefully placed and examined and arranged” (492). Autofiction, then, is invention that makes judicious use of some mimetic elements that are indistinguishable in their use from their extratextual correlatives.

10:04 is not just autofiction, it is self-referential metafiction (unlike *Leaving the Atocha Station*, which is not self-referential), and this makes a difference. To see why, we can examine

two solutions to the liar paradox (“I am lying”). One solution has it that this statement can be non-contradictory when uttered as fictional discourse: The speaker is focalizing the perspective of a character who is non-identical with the speaker (Morton, *Being* 142; Ryan 371), as is the case with *Taipei* and its third-person authorial stand-in, Paul. This solution results in multiple hierarchical storyworlds that do not afford mutual entanglement, and if the protagonist seems to be writing the text-object that we are reading, it must be a textual text-object, a novel-in-the-novel that resembles (or is even indistinguishable from) the extratextual text-object we are reading (Ryan 372). In the other solution, first proposed by medieval Indian philosopher Bhartrhari (“Liar”), what Emile Benveniste calls “the instance of *I* as referent and the instance of discourse containing *I* as the referee” (“Nature” 218) are merely separated in time, perhaps between the moments of (speaker) utterance and (addressee) comprehension. Timothy Bewes applies this solution to metafiction, bridging the distance between “author” and “character” by “a temporal or chronological *continuity*” (358).⁶ Putting the two together, we can say that the first-person metafiction of *10:04* affords entanglement across hierarchical storyworlds in a way that makes the narrator and the protagonist the same person, just separated in time. The narrator-object is recounting, organizing, and interjecting into the experiences that lead to the production of the text-object (and narrative-hyperobject) as they happened to himself as protagonist-object. Relegating the protagonist and the narrator each to his own temporality resolves Leonid Bilmes’s awkward argument that “views the narrated Ben as flickering between two orders of temporality” (1092). It would explain why, in the acknowledgments at the end of the book, the person who cowrites a book on the brontosaurus with Roberto is referred to as “the narrator”

⁶ Unfortunately, his argument is based on a faulty reading of Søren Kierkegaard’s *The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress* (1848) that mistakenly conflates the “metamorphosis of continuity” with the “metamorphosis of potentiation” (D. Watts 424).

rather than the technically more accurate “protagonist” (244). It is thus perfectly understandable that most literary critics of the novel (apart from Ivry and those who refer to the protagonist as “Ben”) inaccurately refer to the “narrator” as well.⁷

The narrator does not recount from a detached distance. Rather, his interjections have immediate effects on the text-object. He interjects into the past-tense narrative five times to mention himself in the first person. The first time is the aforementioned thesis statement. The second time, while shopping at a Whole Foods with Alex before Hurricane Irene makes landfall, he says, “I want to say I felt stoned, did say so to Alex, who laughed and said, ‘Me too,’ but what I meant was that the approaching storm was estranging the routine of shopping just enough to make me viscerally aware of both the miracle and insanity of the mundane economy” (19). This intricately crafted sentence tells us that, even at the moment of narration, the narrator is not entirely sure how to express the affective object that is similar but not identical to feeling stoned (and that is different in kind from the propositional explanation of said affective object that immediately follows), for his statement is “I want to say I felt” rather than “I felt what I now recognize as being,” or something similar. The narratorial interjection affords our comprehension of this ambiguity as stable and not requiring resolution—a custom signification for an affective object.

The fourth time (jumping briefly ahead) is when the narrator sees a pigeon at his New York City apartment window and looks it up online. He says in parentheses, “(I just Googled *pigeon* and learned they aren’t true passerines; along with doves, they constitute the distinct bird clade *Columbidae*)” (213). The parentheses and that “just” tell us that this is done at the time of

⁷ Hal Foster also only refers to the “narrator,” but as his discussion does not actually touch on the protagonist, his usage can be considered accurate. Sykes, on the other hand, refers to the “protagonist” and “narrator” interchangeably.

writing by the narrator, and not in the narrated moment by the protagonist. The significance of this interjection strikes us twenty pages later, when the protagonist refers to pigeons not as “stout-bodied passerines,” as he has been doing throughout the novel (17, 94, 213), but as “*Columbidae*” (234). Despite the protagonist’s not knowing at that moment that pigeons are *Columbidae*, the narrator switches out the terms, highlighting how narration (and the narrative-hyperobject) have more to do with the narrator’s rhetorical choices than with mimetic representation. Paradoxically, this silent narratorial emendation results in a more scientifically accurate appellation for the New York City pigeon—sincere use of an ironic form.

The third time is when the narrator mentions his address in Marfa during the residency. He adds, “I remember the address (you can drag the ‘pegman’ icon onto the Google map and walk around the neighborhood on Street View, floating above yourself like a ghost; I’m doing that in a separate window now)” (163). This sentence tells us that the narrator still remembers the address at the time of writing, and it places the narrator in front of his computer, supposedly actually in the moment of writing (or the moment of procrastinating on *Google Maps*). It also turns the narratee into a character through direct address, albeit ambiguously, for, as Benveniste notes, one must “envisage” a specific second person to avoid the impersonal construction (“Relationships” 201). Here the narratee, which we can conceptualize as Phelan’s “authorial audience, the hypothetical group for whom the author writes” (7), could be singular or plural (or, perhaps, both).⁸ This ambiguity flickers throughout the novel. The first time the narratee is addressed, it is oddly specific. Recounting significant memories tied to specific locations, the protagonist recalls the time that “I received your wedding announcement and was shocked to be

⁸ When asked by Langley about this, Lerner replies, “It’s a complicated question. I don’t think I have an answer to it” (20).

shocked, crushed” (33). We ourselves are suddenly shocked into the recognition that it is not the protagonist but the narrator who is speaking, for the protagonist is not addressing anyone in the storyworld at that particular moment. The occasion (a wedding announcement) and the narrator’s reaction at that moment in the past (deep shock) makes it hard to construe the narratee here as anything but a specific singular individual. The second time the narratee is addressed, when the narrator says, “You might have seen me sitting there on the bench that midnight” (109), he is addressing anyone who might have seen him at that time in a public place, so the “you” is specific yet indeterminate. The third time is the mention of the Marfa address discussed above. The fourth time is an ironic appropriation of the vocative case use of “reader” in the last chapter of *Jane Eyre* (1847). Returning on foot from upper Manhattan to Brooklyn through a lower Manhattan whose electricity has been knocked out by Hurricane Sandy (the subway has been flooded, the buses are full, and no taxi will take them), the protagonist and Alex reach “the threshold of electrification” and, after a paragraph break, the narrator says, “Reader, we walked on” (234). The allusion makes this the most impersonal of the six direct addresses to the narratee. The fifth time, the protagonist walks behind a reporter filming a TV news segment and waves to the camera, and the narrator says, “maybe you saw me” (235). This could be envisaging a specific narratee, singular or plural, but TV news segments air to whoever watches them, so the address could also be construed as impersonal. The “you” is, again, specific yet indeterminate. The sixth time, the protagonist and Alex notice a lit-up building in the middle of darkened Manhattan:

Later we would learn it was Goldman Sachs, see photographs in which one of the few illuminated buildings in the skyline was the investment banking firm, an image I’d use

for the cover of my book—not the one I was contracted to write about fraudulence, but the one I’ve written in its place for you, to you, on the very edge of fiction. (236-37)

Indeed, the cover of the US edition of the novel features the photo by Iwan Baan (2012) of the brightly lit Goldman Sachs building and One World Trade Center construction site amidst a darkened lower Manhattan (Baan, qtd. in Frearson), but it has been reversed horizontally and cropped to highlight the financial district (Shaw 593-94). In the above block quote, after the m-dash, the speaker shifts from protagonist to narrator, and he describes the text-object he is writing as being written “for you, to you, on the very edge of fiction.” “For you, to you” paraphrases a letter forged by Ben (protagonist of the abandoned novel) from poet Robert Creeley, in which he writes, “*One should not—no rather cannot as a practical matter—expect one poet often to genuinely like the work of another—not a contemporary’s. Even when we think we are writing to one another we are not writing for one another and so incomprehension is probably a necessity*” (212). Ben-as-Creeley says that contemporary poets can at most write *to* each other but not *for* each other. As Ben Davies puts it, following Agamben, contemporaneity is “marked by non-coincidence” and aimed at “not now but in a minute, at least” (5, 20n26). By stating both “for” and “to” as his intention, the narrator of *10:04* underscores his intention to communicate with the narratee (singular or plural) as a contemporary, despite their contemporaneity. “The very edge of fiction,” then, refers to the outermost boundary of the protagonist’s world, which to the narrator is the protagonist’s storyworld. It suggests the narrator’s awareness that his narrative-hyperobject is, of ontological necessity, self-enclosed, and yet he hopes to communicate with the narratee through it anyway. In referring to the novel as a whole, this direct address turns *10:04* into a rhetorical act, an instance of “somebody telling somebody else” (the title of Phelan’s book). Moreover, since the narrator uses the present perfect

rather than the present progressive, we can surmise that he has already written the narrative and is, at the moment of writing, editing it. This is a literal interjection, text that is inserted into a completed narrative-object. Therefore, as the reader of the text-object, “you” here is structurally similar to the “you” of the park bench voyeur and of the TV news audience: specific yet indeterminate.

We have seen that the narratee is variously characterized, ranging from the concrete and specific (wedding announcement) to the impersonal and general (“Reader, we walked on.”). So who exactly is the “somebody else” to whom the narrator is narrating? How can we reconcile this wide range? The answer can be found, I believe, in Whitman, and it could offer a new solution to the problem of Anthropocene scale variance.

Walt Whitman and Scale Variance

Whitman first enters the novel through the Marfa residency. The protagonist brings only one book with him to Marfa, “the Library of America edition of Whitman,” to prepare to teach him the following semester (167). Over a page and a half of disquisition, the protagonist reflects on the experience of reading *Specimen Days* (1882), Whitman’s “bizarre memoir,” for the first time (168-69). Its strangeness arises from a tension the protagonist perceives between the memoir as a genre, “full of a life’s particularities,” and Whitman’s literary project of attempting “to empty himself out” to afford becoming “Walt Whitman, a cosmos”—Whitman’s “I” is divided between “an empirical person” and “a pronoun in which the readers of the future could participate.” This is the mirror-image of the second-person ambiguity in *10:04*.

Zach Horton sees Whitman’s effort to resolve this second-person ambiguity between the individual and the nation as one of two possible strategies we can enlist to cope with

Anthropocene scale variance. His reading of Kees Boeke's *Cosmic View* (1957) reminds us that "the medial nature and inherent limitations of any attempt to bridge scale" show how "we cannot change scales without losing as much as we gain" (54-55). Nevertheless, he excavates two historical strategies for overcoming scale variance. One of these he locates in the notion of the microcosm epitomized by Paracelsus, which is a "bidirectional" "mapping" of how "movement at one scale can influence movement at other scales" (43, 45). This is more or less Fredric Jameson's project of "cognitive mapping," seeking an aesthetic spatial mapping of the social ("Cognitive" 353). Horton notes, however, that microcosmic mapping risks the "colonial and instrumental-rationalist" problem in "Western thought" of "*scalar collapse*," in which "conjoining two or more different scales within a single medium, enabling access from the first to the second by homogenizing their differential dynamics and subordinating the second to the first[, . .] produces a 'universal overview,' a mastering gaze that subsumes everything under its single logic" (36). Paracelsus's microcosm does not subsume one scale to another but, in its bidirectionality, cobbles together a new scale that subsumes both; as Horton concludes, "it celebrates intra-scalar difference only to collapse *inter-scalar* difference" (45). Microcosmic mapping has no hold on scale variance and tends to miss the trees for the forest (Sergeant 8). The greater danger of cognitive mapping is not just that we could mistake the map for the territory, but that we might misconstrue the territory as mappable. Mapping should at most serve as a starting point or provocation for thought, what the protagonist of *10:04* calls "a bad form of collectivity that can stand as a figure of its possibility" (239).

Horton's other strategy can be found in Whitman's "Song of Myself" (1892), which takes "a serialized approach that incorporates ever more entities into its model in an iterative fashion" (46). From a singular starting point—the Whitmanian "I"—it accumulates entities "in iterative

waves of incorporation,” preserving the “singularity and difference” of each regardless of any scale variance between them.⁹ Horton’s description of this process, quoting supporting evidence from “Song of Myself,” is strikingly similar to the object-oriented idea that part-objects are ontologically greater than the whole-object that they compose, and that a given part-object can be attuned to infinitely many whole-objects:

It is not that the[se diverse entities] are caught in an ever-widening net so much as they form the fibers of the net itself, conjunctive strands that are at once the raw materials of the poet’s weaving and the woven garment itself. This poetic self, then, is not unchanging, remote, autonomous. It is animated intersubjectively by that to which it is connected, acting as a center but not a whole: “there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel’d universe” (76). This scalar assertion is striking. The part is not to be subordinated to the whole; in this radically dehierarchized ontology, any point, any singularity, can serve as the center to everything. And yet this “everything” is not a totality: “They are but parts, anything is but a part” (73). This is what authorizes Whitman the narrator-poet to assume that subjectively central position; anyone else would do just as well. The key to occupying the position of the hub, the central condensation point for an aggregation of entities at multiple scales, is the perspectival feat of producing universal articulations given only a finite collocation of elements [. . .] while also acknowledging the radical, embodied contingency of this necessary perspective. [. . .] The resulting aggregate is therefore always maddeningly incomplete

⁹ This reading of Whitman perhaps explains why Ioannis Tsitsovits and Pieter Vermeulen see the novel “as a technology for registering and storing data—as a registration machine that, unlike traditional novels, does not immediately convert data into literary significance” (207). It is at odds with Jacqueline O’Dell’s reading of Whitman, which sees Whitman as pursuing a “fantasy of collectivity” that necessitates “erasures” and “subsumes [. . .] differences” (353-54). But I would argue that her position resembles a reading more of *Specimen Days* than of Whitman’s poetry. In “Song of Myself,” the accumulation of entities is not an abstract fantasy but “famously concrete” (Horton 47).

for anyone craving a universal overview, but in its openness to further conjunction, the potential to always add more, it avoids scalar collapse. (48)

That the entities, or objects, themselves are the decentralized “fibers of the net” they form echoes Timothy Morton’s concept of “the mesh,” “the entanglement of all” objects (*Ecological* 47) that “extends inside beings as well as among them” (39); it “is both the center and edge of a system of points, so there is no absolute center or edge” (29). Morton’s object-oriented concept of “subscendence” (*Humankind* 102) just is the idea that “the part is not to be subordinated to the whole.” The “dehierarchized ontology” in which “anything is but a part” accurately describes the flatness of object-oriented ontology, in which anything is but an object that both makes up and is made up of other objects. Under the object-oriented paradigm, being “always maddeningly incomplete” is a virtue. And calling this serialized cosmos a “perspectival feat of producing universal articulations” dovetails with the aim of hyperobject reading: to trace the effects of perspectivist hyperobjects on Anthropocene lived experience.

10:04 transitions from cognitive mapping to unmappable Whitmanian serialization (Horton 50) with the fulcrum of proprioception, the ability to determine one’s spatial positioning. Soon after the protagonist eats those baby octopuses massaged to death, he starts to feel “an alien intelligence, [. . .] a succession of images, sensations, memories, and affects that did not, properly speaking, belong to me,” including “a conflation of taste and touch as salt was rubbed into the suction cups; a terror localized in my extremities, bypassing the brain completely” (3). The octopus comes to symbolize the protagonist: “It lacks stereognosis, the capacity to form a mental image of the overall shape of what I touch” (6). So when the protagonist thinks that “it can detect local texture variations, but cannot integrate that information into a larger picture, cannot read the realistic fiction the world appears to be” (6-7), he is describing himself—or,

rather, what he is becoming. Loss of proprioception in the novel gestures toward a cognitive reinscription made possible by a prior erasure, by an inability to “read the realistic fiction the world appears to be.” The protagonist is a suitable originating singularity for this serialized reinscription, despite the fact that he is not as self-emptying as Whitman (Voelz, “American” 330), for he has a history of “proprioceptive breakdowns”: “lacrimal events and bouts of depersonalization” serious enough to seem to herald “the onset of schizophrenia” (Lerner, *10:04* 148). His cognitive map is easily erased. Such a breakdown recurs at a party in Marfa when the protagonist takes a hit of ketamine, thinking it is cocaine, and has a bad trip, at one point during which “I told my arm to move the cigarette to my lips, watched it do so, but had no sense of the arm or lips as mine, had no proprioception” (186). And his map is erased completely when, walking the darkened streets of Manhattan with Alex, they are accosted by two men, “at least one of them drunk,” and are asked for money: “In the absence of streetlights and established order there was a long moment in which I couldn’t tell if they were begging or threatening to rob us, making a demand; relations were newly indeterminate, the cues hard for me to read, as if, along with power, we’d lost a kind of social proprioception” (236). His complete loss of “social proprioception” in advance of reinscribing a serialization is occasioned by the changed state of Manhattan, “when time was emancipated from institutions” (18), due to the second “once-in-a-generation” storm to hit the city in a year (213). The protagonist hears someone on Al Jazeera say, presumably about Iraq, “Given the gutted institutions, a true transition could take years” (212-13), but the novel suggests that vacating institutions (in a more general sense than Skrebowski’s institutional critique) is precisely what makes change possible. And as Ralph Clare observes, institutions are “more fragile than they appear.”

A single lengthy passage ties together these themes of scale variance, Whitmanian serialization, proprioception, and even global warming and the novel's ambiguous second-person address. After a conversation with Noor, a fellow member of the Park Slope Food Coop (a food cooperative that lets members shop for cheaper and more ethical foods in exchange for scheduled labor), the protagonist describes "the small thrill I always felt to a lesser or greater degree when I looked at Manhattan's skyline and the innumerable illuminated windows and the liquid sapphire and ruby of traffic on the FDR Drive," the "built space" and its "incommensurability of scale—the human dimension of the windows tiny from such distance combining but not dissolving into the larger architecture of the skyline"—which constitutes "an urban experience of the sublime," the "material signature" of "a collective person who didn't yet exist, a still-uninhabited second person plural to whom all the arts, even in their most intimate registers, were nevertheless addressed" (108). The ambiguous narratee, then, is not just the reader; it is the "collective person" that the narrator hopes to midwife by composing the narrative-hyperobject of *10:04*. The protagonist goes on to enumerate some more large-scale "sublime" urban phenomena: "Bundled debt, trace amounts of antidepressants in the municipal water, the vast arterial network of traffic, changing weather patterns of increasing severity"—these are all "bad forms of collectivity" that the protagonist, looking "at lower Manhattan from Whitman's side of the river," resolves to at least "momentarily" turn into "figures of its possibility, a proprioceptive flicker in advance of the communal body" (108-09), by vacating the institutions that undergird them. And then he alludes to Whitman again, as the key inspiration of this becoming-community (the "atom" line paraphrases a line in "Song of Myself"): When the protagonist is "taken in by" the skyline, he feels "a fullness indistinguishable from being emptied, my personality dissolving into a personhood so abstract that every atom belonging to me as good belonged to Noor, the fiction of

the world rearranging itself around her” (109). The sudden mention of Noor acknowledges that the narrator’s Whitmanian project of serialization incorporates her (in both Horton’s sense and the object-oriented sense, which are indistinguishable); more specifically, it incorporates her narrative-object, the “fiction” of her “world.”

Noor imparts her narrative to the protagonist one day as they work together to weigh, price, and bag dried mangoes (99-106). A graduate student from Boston with a father from Beirut and a Russian Jewish mother, she took pride in her Lebanese identity and was active in the relevant political organizations. Six months after her father died, her mother started dating a White friend of the family named Stephen. Six months after that, just as Noor was about to leave on a trip to Beirut, her mother told her (Noor is interrupted here when the protagonist is tasked with restocking the dried mangoes, which he does while speculating about the ending of her narrative; it continues shortly after he returns) that she is actually Stephen’s child, raised by her adoptive father as if she were his own daughter. Upon hearing the news, Noor braced for the information to sink in, but the only difference she noticed was that “my hands seemed to fade,” meaning that they appeared whiter to her. Afterward, all her political and cultural beliefs remained the same, but without a biological tie to Lebanon, she now feels conflicted about her right to inhabit that life, “to have this name and speak the language and cook the food and sing the songs and be part of the struggles.” When the protagonist responds by saying, “I can’t imagine what any of this must have felt like, must feel like,” Noor tells another narrative to articulate the feeling, a narrative about a friend of hers who, over many years, worked up the courage to confront his brother about an old grudge:

And he called his brother up and he said: I just want you to listen. I don’t want you to say a word, just listen. And his brother said okay. And my friend said what it had taken him

such a long time to say, was walking back and forth in his apartment and saying what had to be said, tears streaming down his face. But then when he finished talking, only when he finished talking, he realized his brother wasn't there, that the call had been lost. He called his brother back in a panic and he said, How much of that did you hear? and his brother said: I heard you say you wanted me to listen and then we got disconnected. And my friend for whatever reason just couldn't do it again, couldn't repeat what he had said. (106-07)

The one-sided phone call is still meaningful for Noor's friend, but that meaning is undercut by the fact that his message did not reach its intended recipient. "It's not nothing but it never occurred," Noor says, except in her case, "it was my whole life up until that point that had happened but never occurred" (107). Noor is then called away to do a different task.

Noor's narrative affords many interpretations related to the problematic of identity, and Ocean Vuong praises Lerner for having the protagonist confront "the reckoning a white character undergoes when confronting the white supremacist system he lives in and benefits from," rather than giving him the last word. Vuong does not clarify why this episode manifests a White character's reckoning with White supremacy. Perhaps it is because the (presumably) White protagonist takes Noor's narrative at face value instead of attempting to rationalize it away. Noor developed such a strong Lebanese identity in the first place due to the influence of the mosque/cultural center she grew up going to, which her adoptive father joined not out of religious fervor but "maybe as a reaction against all the racism and ignorance" (Lerner, 10:04 100). Originating in a reaction against White supremacy, Noor's cultural identity is destabilized by the very same biological essentialism that undergirds White supremacist racial discourse, and the fact that she *has* been destabilized shows how ubiquitous that White supremacist logic is in

the American conception of the social. And it is a deterritorialization foreclosed to a becoming-White reterritorialization, for Lebanese and White are not symmetrical identities between which Noor can seamlessly transition. Whiteness is seen as the norm, is unmarked, and few White people in the United States, if any, have to navigate their relation to their cultural identity on an everyday basis as Noor does regarding such banal activities as speaking and eating.

Vuong also praises Lerner for not presenting “the actual embodiment of bodies of color (sans proper research) by writers in order ‘to give voice,’ and thereby creating the precarious project of ‘[insert skin color] face’ as charity,” as he sees many presumably White novelists doing (brackets in original). This also fits with Lerner’s opposition “to the model of fiction that’s like ‘The way I deal with the political is that I pretend to have access to the mind of a nine-year-old boy in Sudan,’” which he sees as politically irresponsible for being untethered from “the material conditions of the book” (Witt, “Ben”). But things are not so simple. The first-time reader of *10:04* will soon discover that the narrator is a character, nonidentical to the author, who actively intervenes in the novel’s composition—astute readers may have noticed this already, for by this point in the novel, the “I want to say I felt stoned” and “I received your wedding announcement” passages have already appeared (19, 33). Most of Noor’s narrative is paraphrased by this characterized narrator; its very first line is, “My dad died three years ago from a heart attack and his family is largely still in Beirut, Noor said, although not in these words” (99). This continues even after the cliffhanger interruption, and after the protagonist twice interjects with an expletive. Only when Noor says that her hands began to fade and the protagonist confirms, “Fade?” (104), is her narrative thereafter set within quotation marks. Narrator intervention thus complicates a reading of Noor’s and others’ narrative-objects as the narrator’s ceding of his narrative to others’ voices to foster collectivity à la Occupy-style

people's microphone, in which people in the crowd loudly repeated a speaker's words to make up for the ban on electronic sound amplification (S. Watts). And yet, this does not negate the power of Noor's narrative. We know that we are reading a globally fictional text-object, so it would be paradoxical if not contradictory to expect such a narrative to be locally entirely nonfiction. By bringing the artifice into the foreground, the novel is more truthful and authentic about the kind of text-object that it is. It acknowledges its "material conditions," if we stretch materiality to include institutionality.

The novel thematically comments on its own use of overt fictionality. The protagonist has the irrational but not uncommon belief that what he writes may have a causal relation to events in his extratextual(-to-him) life, especially when it concerns medical issues (138); and he loves poetry in part because, there, "the distinction between fiction and nonfiction" is "less important than the intensities of the poem itself, what possibilities of feeling were opened up in the present tense of reading" (171).¹⁰ Lerner himself is fascinated by "how we live fictions, how fictions have real effects, become facts in that sense, and how our experience of the world changes depending on its arrangement into one narrative or another" ("Interview"). "We don't experience reality," he says, "we organise it through a fiction—that's what we experience," and so there is always "the possibility of the reorganisation of experience through fiction" ("Time"). After all, our emotional response to both extratextual and (realist) fictional people follows the same process (Robinson 105): "automatic 'affective appraisal'" followed by "'cognitive monitoring' of the situation," only during the latter does (extra)textuality come into play (3, 113-14). "Fictional representation" and "lived experience" impinge on each other (Currie 94). "How do

¹⁰ Bilmes calls this "the more present present of poetry" (1102n58), and as Daniel Katz argues, "it is the reading protocols of poetry which provide the most useful key for unlocking Lerner's prose" (318).

you transpose experience in to fiction? How does it get made back in to fact?” Lerner asks (“Time”). And not just one’s own lived experience, but others’, too—such as Noor’s narrative.

The novel explores these questions by tracing how the narrator incorporates narrative-objects into the serialized narrative-(hyper)object that is the narrative of *10:04*. Lerner gestures toward this idea when he says of incorporating others’ narratives that, “instead of it being about passing something off as yours[,] it’s about language that transcends authorship and an experience that transcends an individual body—the way that the self is a tissue of social experiences and not just a private domain” (“Time”). Experience, according to this view, is never one’s own to begin with; it is always already becoming-serialized. As the object-oriented view has it, being a part-object of its narrator-object does not preclude a narrative-object from being a part-object of other narrator-objects, linguistic conventions regarding possessive case notwithstanding. A successfully serialized incorporation of such narrative-objects by the novel’s narrator is a possibility condition of the narrator’s own narrative-hyperobject. This is why the protagonist’s meditation on the thrill of built space transitions to Noor, his “personality dissolving into a personhood so abstract that every atom belonging to me as good belonged to Noor, the fiction of the world rearranging itself around her” by the end of her narrative.

In fact, the protagonist himself has had an experience similar to Noor’s, in structure if not in theme, which the narrator details in flashback (within the flashback that is the narrative-hyperobject of *10:04*). As an undergraduate, the protagonist had joined in salon-like gatherings at the house of literary heroes-cum-mentors Bernard and Natali, to whom he later becomes literary executor. One evening, he met a young lady for whom he fell head over heels; she said, “I grew up here,” and the protagonist took this to mean that she was Bernard and Natali’s daughter (36). He was too bowled over to recall her name, forgot to ask for her number, and

never had the chance to speak to her again. Only much later, after repeatedly not seeing her at subsequent gatherings, did he work up the courage to ask Bernard about her, only to be told, “I have no daughter,” and that he did not know whom the protagonist was referring to. At this, the protagonist, “felt the world rearrange itself around me” (38), just as he believes happened to Noor. The encounter had happened but, for all intents and purposes bar his own memory, never occurred.

This becomes a recurring theme in the narrative-objects that the narrator incorporates, what the protagonist calls a “kinship” between narratives (42). Bernard once recounted to the protagonist the narrative of how a graduate student came to study poet William Bronk under Bernard’s supervision because the student had often heard from Bronk, whom he knew when younger and who had by then passed away, that the two had gotten along well and shared an understanding—only to have Bernard inform him that they had met only once, over a “lunch or coffee in congenial if mildly awkward silence.” The narrator thinks, “I imagine Bernard saw the world rearrange itself around the student” (40). And again: At a dinner after a literary panel discussion, the protagonist finds himself seated across from a “distinguished female author” (117), who recounts to him the narrative of how, one day soon after her first grade teacher’s daughter died, the teacher looked straight at her and said that she resembled her dead daughter. At this, the young author-to-be involuntarily laughed, “a profoundly nervous response” (121), and the entire class joined in hysterically, in the literal sense of the word. The teacher fled the room in tears, and immediately the laughter ceased. The teacher returned, “and the school day continued, and then the school year, as if nothing had happened” (122). Rather, it happened, but never occurred. Marta Figlerowicz argues that these narratives are cases of “confessional self-expression,” an “expiatory ritual” in which “we tell versions of our lives to others in order that

they may forgive our impact on them”; but it should be evident that these narratives are the exact opposite: They are narratives of what their narrators’ lives are *not*, and convey how *others* have impacted *them*.

Sometimes, the narrative being incorporated flickers between happening and occurring. The protagonist relates a narrative to the distinguished female author that was told to him by Alex’s stepfather. An unnamed young man has a girlfriend in college, Ashley; it is the first serious relationship for both of them (123). She discovers that she has cancer, and he stays by her side as she undergoes chemotherapy. One day, she tells him that she is “not sick,” has “never had it,” and has been faking it all this time, pulling out her own hair (124-25). When, in the protagonist’s telling, the young man asks about the pills that Ashley has been taking, the distinguished female author starts answering for her, “role-playing Ashley”: They are just mood regulators and vitamins. The protagonist says, “Right.” And when he asks, from the young man’s perspective, “Why?” the distinguished female author answers for Ashley, “I felt alone. Confused. Like something *was* wrong with me.” The monologue has become a dialogue; the narrative-object is shown to be a transindividual experience. We learn much later that the young man in the narrative is Alex’s stepfather himself, Rick, when he brings up the narrative in relation to Alex’s mother’s metastasizing cancer. This recollection comes with a twist: “What if Ashley wasn’t faking?” he asks the protagonist. “What if she lied about lying in order to release me?” (205). The story, it turns out, is real (within the storyworld). As the protagonist says at the end of his meditation on built space and Noor’s narrative, a narrative-object that flickers between happening and occurring “still contains the glimmer, however refracted, of the world to come, where everything is the same but a little different because the past will be citable in all of its moments, including those that from our present present happened but never occurred”

(109). What has happened but not occurred is still citable, still exists virtually, as Ashley's cancer does, and so we can trace the transition gestured at in the novel's millenarian epigraph in order to effect it, to bring about the world to come.

Alain Badiou has proposed something along the same lines in his concept of "forcing," extrapolated from mathematician Paul Cohen. Badiou's definition is a technical one: "That a term of the situation *forces* a statement of the subject-language means that the veracity of this statement in the situation to come is equivalent to the belonging of this term to the indiscernible part which results from the generic procedure" (*Being* 403). Put simply, "forcing" is a translational process that retroactively identifies an object perceived in the new perspective ("this statement in the situation to come") as a part-object in the old perspective that went unperceived ("the belonging of this term to the indiscernible part") until an agent-object ("subject") materially (via "the generic procedure") asserted faith in its existence ("a statement of the subject-language"). The details of Badiou's philosophy, and the genealogical link running from Jean-Paul Sartre through Badiou (Sheu, *Existential* 45-81) to object-oriented ontology (Galloway, "Poverty" 348-49), are outside the scope of this dissertation. What is pertinent here is how Badiou outlines a theory of change that consists in a reorganization of existing objects (Sheu, *Existential* 83) rather than a search for new, messianic, ones. In Badiou's philosophy, what has happened but not occurred is still citable; he shows us a way to cite it and bring about the perspectivally different world to come. And just as Badiou shows how the old perspective forces the new perspective point by point (*Logics* 400), the narrator proceeds apace to incorporate each singular narrative-object encountered by the protagonist into the novel's overarching narrative-hyperobject.

Incorporation is not a simple concatenation, and the narrator contends with ethical questions in the composition of his narrative. Just before Rick considers whether Ashley was lying to protect him, the protagonist “wondered if I could put Rick’s story about Ashley in a novel, if he’d feel betrayed” (205). By this time, of course, Rick’s narrative has already both appeared in the novel and been revealed as Rick’s. The narrator has already resolved beforehand this point of forcing and has incorporated Rick’s narrative into the ongoing serialization of the novel’s narrative-hyperobject; he is here merely recounting the point’s emergence. A point can be resolved in the other direction as well. Alex tells the protagonist “a story about her mother she made me swear I’d never include in anything, no matter how disguised, no matter how thoroughly I failed to describe faces or changed names” (143), after which a section break appears in the text.¹¹

The means of incorporation, the synthetic component of *10:04*’s narrative-hyperobject, is part of the ethical calculus. We have seen how the narrator paraphrases most of Noor’s narrative, and hides Rick’s identity when relating his narrative to the distinguished female author. And the description of Bernard and Natali’s nonexistent daughter as having “large gray-blue eyes, a full mouth, long and jet-black hair” (35), and appearing “dusky gold” in firelight (37) should be taken with a grain of salt: In “The Golden Vanity,” Hannah, who we know is based on the protagonist’s maybe-girlfriend, Alena (54), is described as having “gray-blue eyes, what they call a full mouth,” and “strands of black hair” (68); and “dusky gold” is earlier used to describe the beautiful South Asian doctors who diagnose the protagonist with Marfan syndrome (6).

¹¹ To reiterate: We are discussing the gap between protagonist and narrator. Lerner’s lived experience is irrelevant, even accounting for the fact that lived experience is remembered in the form of narrative (Bilmes 1089). To preclude such speculation on the extratextual author, Lerner has even said, “Few real people appear in my two novels” (“Interview”).

Considerations of synthetic component ethicality apply *a fortiori* to “The Golden Vanity” and “The Dark Threw Patches Down Upon Me Also.” Indeed, Nicholas Brown argues that the entanglement of “elements, emotions, and turns of phrase” between the short story and the novel works against “producing a reality effect” (*Autonomy* 89). I stated above that their previously published text-object status is irrelevant. And yet, I do believe that comparing the previously published version of these text-objects with the version included in the novel may yield some insight *into the novel*, for any changes were supposedly deemed necessary and/or so significant that they had to be made in order for these text-objects to align with the novel’s three components. Most of the changes I have discovered were made for consistency’s sake (mimetic component), to be sure, but two changes in particular seem to impinge on the thematic component that guides the synthetic component. In the poem, for instance, the most significant change is that three lines are silently omitted from the novel, as italicized below:

There are men at work on the roof
 when I return, too hot to do by day, wave
 and am seen, an awkward exchange
 in Spanish, who knows what I said, having
 confused the conditional with the imperfect.
 Norteño from their radio fills the house
 I hope they know isn’t mine: I just write here.
Walk back out with a Brita and three glasses,
but of course they have their own water, can
I offer you a cup of ashes, can I interest you?
 Soon they move on[. . .]

(“Dark” 205, lines 110-20; 10:04 172-73; emphasis added)

In the novel, the protagonist tells us that the poem “conflated fact and fiction” (170), and mentions that the exchange occurs as he is leaving, not entering, the house, for the workers *do* work by day (172). And yet, by omitting these three lines, he need not mention that the scene in the novel (supposedly what “actually happened”), in which he verbally offers the men “anything from inside, coffee or water or whatever,” as he leaves, appears *in lieu of* his bringing water out to them, as the speaker of the poem does. Nor does the novel mention that they have their own water, though it would be reasonable to assume so. The “cup of ashes” is a motif that does not appear in the other sections of the poem excerpted in the novel, so we can count its omission as being for consistency’s sake, but the other changes seem to only have the effect of making the protagonist look more ethical. If he had included those three lines, we would have known that (according to the storyworld of the novel; Ben Lerner is irrelevant) the protagonist specifically added this bit of fiction to the poem, the effect of which addition would have been to make the speaker of the poem appear less entitled and secure in his cultural and class relations to the workers, putting him in a better ethical light and, by extension, the author of the poem—the protagonist—in a worse one for being self-aggrandizingly manipulative. By omitting these three lines, the narrator is negating all of this and implicitly making the protagonist, his past self, appear more honest and authentic, especially given how much cultural and class anxiety appears in the other excerpted sections of the poem, even in the block quote above (in the speaker’s rusty Spanish and his hope that the workers do not associate the house with its current resident). We think that, though his behavior is not ideal, it is acceptable; but this might not have been the case if we had had the chance to read the omitted lines. Though we could attribute this decision to the impulse of wanting to avoid the excessive narcissistic neurosis of Adam Gordon in *Leaving the*

Atocha Station, which might have hampered the reader's willingness to engage with the novel as a critical text-object, it still goes against Lerner's stated intention of taking the "material conditions of the book" into account in the text itself.

The other change worth mentioning is that an art foundation intern whom the protagonist helps through a bad ketamine trip is a man in the novel, but in the poem, the intern, who is mentioned only once and without context, is a woman, presented by highlighting "the place where the intern's shoulder curves / into her breast" (211, lines 295-96). This has implications for our understanding of the protagonist's prior, somewhat lecherous, tendency to describe women in terms of their physical attractiveness, including the overlapping descriptions of Hannah, the South Asian doctors, and Bernard and Natali's nonexistent daughter mentioned above, but also including Alex—whom he nonconsensually caresses (23) and kisses (127)—and her "Golden Vanity" stand-in, Liza (80). He experiences an anagnorisis when he finds himself masturbating at the sperm clinic to the image of the attractive receptionist (90), for which he felt her presciently prejudging him when he first arrived (86), and the two instances of desire mentioned in the novel after this come with qualifications and a much less voyeuristic gaze (176, 191). This change from lecherous speaker to self-aware protagonist could be seen as morally problematic because it echoes the protagonist's general trajectory of burgeoning self-awareness, a trajectory that is less prominent in the poem, which presents desire uncritically; it could therefore be argued that, in this case, the poem is more accurate to the narrator's experiences. In other words, this change could be seen as a narratorial intervention for more or less selfish purposes.

Not only does the poem entangle fiction with the facts of the experiences of the novel's protagonist, the poem's language is also attuned to the narrative-hyperobject of *10:04*, thanks to

the novel's narrator. A number of passages in the novel echo or are directly lifted from the poem, specifically from lines not excerpted in the novel. The protagonist describes the plot of *Back to the Future*, which he watches while bracing for the first hurricane as Alex sleeps beside him, by entangling plot points with personal and historical anecdotes, using language taken from the poem (10:04 22; "Dark" 204-05, lines 85-96). When the protagonist helps ground the intern who has a bad ketamine trip, he summarizes a documentary on the Brooklyn Bridge in a way that is almost identical to the poem's summary of the bridge's construction (10:04 191; "Dark" 203-04, lines 59-62, 69-70). And when, the second hurricane imminent, the protagonist tries to mentor a poetry student on the verge of a nervous breakdown, the Fukushima-related fears in the student's rant originate in the poem (10:04 218; "Dark" 211, lines 303-06). One might object that authors have the right to reuse material, and while that is mostly true, these "reuses" are so similar as to approach self-plagiarism. The intention seems to have been to lend these ideas, which appear somewhat scattershot in the poem, the contextual weight of a narrative-object. After all, 10:04 began life as a frame for the poem, story, and essays that Lerner wrote after his first novel was published (Witt, "Ben").

In his interview with Christopher Bollen, Lerner pinpoints "The Golden Vanity" as the novel's specific textual antecedent, the germ that grew into 10:04. In the story, when the author (as its protagonist is called) debates with Liza the merits of local versus global anesthesia for his impending dental procedure, which has been transposed from Alex's dental procedure (54), he says, "And what kind of precedent am I establishing, exactly, if I deal with a difficult experience by inducing amnesia?" (64). In *The New Yorker*, the question mark is a period, marking the question more clearly as rhetorical (Favilla 269). Changing the period into a question mark highlights the author's anxiety and uncertainty: He has not yet completely decided on local

anesthetic and, indeed, will opt for global (65). A thematically more significant alteration appears when, walking across the city at dusk, the author comes across a gaslight and imagines it flickering simultaneously in different temporalities: 2012 (the narrative present), 1912, and 1883 (67). The short story version has 1852 instead of 1883, and the change is significant because 1883 is an important year for the novel. It is not only the year Karl Marx died and Franz Kafka was born, it is also when the Brooklyn Bridge was completed (191), rendering out of date Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (1860), a poem that has been hinted at in the phrase "Whitman's side of the river" and that will return at the end of the novel. Connecting a textual object to an extratextual event allows the author (who is called "the author" partly because he is writing a novel about forged literary letters, the same project on which the protagonist of *10:04* works for a while, and which is based on a narrative related to him by Bernard [37]) to imagine "his narrator standing before it, imagined that the gaslight cut across worlds and not just years, that the author and the narrator, while they couldn't face each other, could intuit each other's presence by facing the same light, a kind of correspondence" (67)—an image that gestures toward the "real effects" of fiction and narrative.

Totaled Artwork, Totaled City

One last significant alteration of the short story is the addition of a picture. The story recounts the author's first date with Hannah. Sitting side by side in a bar booth, they discuss faces, including how bad the author is at recognizing and describing them (68), which the novel later labels "prosopagnosia" (74), and how people often see faces in inanimate objects, which Hannah calls "*pareidolia*" (69). To illustrate, she brings up on her phone a picture of the surface of Mars that resembles a face, a picture that does not appear in *The New Yorker*. The picture is inserted into the text at the exact location in the narrative when the author and Hannah look at it

together, and so we, too, are looking at the picture with them (Lerner, interview with Langley 20). This creates a form of intimacy that is earlier mentioned as characterizing the relationship between the protagonist and Alex. The protagonist says that their “most intimate exchanges” occur when their “gazes were parallel, directed in front” rather than at each other, so that they “work out our views as we coconstructed the literal view before us”; they “did not avoid each other’s eyes[. . .] but we tended to fall quiet when they met” (8). The parallel gaze is the highest form of intimacy in the novel, and the weightiest issues in their lives are discussed on these walks through the city. In contrast, when they supplement intrauterine insemination with coitus, they almost “let hilarity derail” the act (203). The appearance of the picture-object as incorporated into the text-object is thus another form of direct address to the narratee.

Pictures appear sporadically throughout the text. One of these is a diptych, two reproductions of a black-and-white photograph of Claude Roy on the Brooklyn Bridge by Henri Cartier-Bresson (1947). The left-hand panel is captioned “*Our world*,” while the panel on the right has the caption “*The world to come*” (135), but there is only one listed credit in the illustration credits at the end of the book (245). The protagonist encounters this photograph at Alena’s spacious apartment, which houses the exhibits of what she calls the “Institute for Totaled Art” (131). When an artwork is damaged beyond repair, or when the cost of restoration is more than the insurance claim, the insurance company pays out the “total value” of the artwork. It is then declared to have “zero value” and is warehoused by the insurance company (Lerner, *10:04* 130).¹² Alena and a friend are able to convince an art insurance company to donate numerous “totaled” artworks by setting up the nonprofit Institute, which proposes to put up an exhibition of

¹² Unlike a novel’s ideas, we should not take a novel’s account of factual events at face value; but in this case, the novel’s description of totaled art is taken almost verbatim from “Damage Control,” and the novel’s acknowledgments tell us that the Institute “is modeled on Elka Krajewska’s Salvage Art Institute” (243).

them. Upon first visiting the Institute (Alena's apartment after being filled with totaled art), the protagonist witnesses Alena take a fragment of an early red Jeff Koons balloon dog, what he thinks of as "an icon of art world commercialism and valorized stupidity," and shatter it on the hardwood floor: "'It's worth nothing,' she basically hissed" (131-32). Are these still works of art? The protagonist is unsure: "Why aren't you touching anything, Alena said, you can touch them now, and she took my hand and pushed it against what either still was or had once been a painting by Jim Dine" (132). Adding to the ambiguity, some totaled works of art have suffered no damage that is perceptible to the protagonist, Alena, or her friend, even with the help of the "heavily redacted" accompanying paperwork (133).

One of these undamaged totaled artworks is the Cartier-Bresson photograph (his totaled works are referenced in the essay), and the two reproductions that are set side by side in the text-object respectively signify the original work and the totaled one, "our world" and "the world to come," everything "as it is"—as the novel's epigraph (also included in the essay)¹³ puts it—and yet "just a little different."¹⁴ The protagonist calls the unblemished total artwork "the opposite of the 'readymade'" in that it is not a useful object transformed into art, but "an [art] object liberated from that logic" of the art market (133). "What was the word for that liberation?" he muses. "*Apocalypse? Utopia?* I felt a fullness indistinguishable from being emptied as I held a work from which the exchange value had been extracted[; . . .] it was art before or after capital" (133-34). The phrase "a fullness indistinguishable from being emptied" suggests that totaled liberation from the market is a key aim of the narrator's Whitmanian serialization project, in the

¹³ In version of the essay published in *Harper's Magazine*, the word "Hasidim" is spelled with one "s," which differs from Agamben (who also italicizes it) and the novel, but is the same as Benjamin. We should keep in mind that Benjamin's usage is translated, and the essay's style may have been altered by the editor.

¹⁴ It is perhaps irrelevant that, when I copied the two images from the ebook version of the novel and compared them using a computer algorithm, the program said that they are not identical, though the differences are nonlocalizable, diffused throughout the images.

same way that the protagonist's meditation on built space mentions seeing the sublime in capitalist office towers. The institution being vacated by the narrator's serialization is that of the "'living' entity" of "contemporary markets" (De Boever, *Finance* 22), the hyperobject of neoliberal capitalism (Morton, *Humankind* 60).

Neoliberalism is yet another term lacking consensus definition. Here I follow the formulation of Mitchum Huehls and Rachel Greenwald Smith in "Four Phases of Neoliberalism and Literature." They argue that neoliberalism is a gradual process of market logic encroachment on, in turn, the economic, political, sociocultural, and ontological spheres of lived experience. While the first three can be seen as isolable aspects of social existence, the ontological phase is when market logic no longer feels like an encroachment but has a "neutral omnipresence," giving the sense that society "has become post-ideological and post-political" (10). This is the phase to which, as Margaret Thatcher was apt to intone, "there is no alternative"; or as Fredric Jameson once quoted someone as saying, "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism" ("Future"). Everything follows market logic as a matter of course. In the novel, once it is discovered that Central Park is in the flight path of geese, "the city corrals and euthanizes geese" regularly (32). The protagonist conceives of Alex's fertility treatments and childrearing in terms of cost, comparing it to "the annual per capita gross national income of China" (93). An art gallery exhibition opening is "a ritual destruction of the conditions of viewing for the artifacts it was meant to celebrate" (28). The protagonist, reflecting on his jealous relationship with Alena, finds himself "incapable of conceiving of the erotic outside the lexicon of property" (29). The protagonist was infuriated by the fact that Bernard and Natali treated everyone at their salon gatherings equally, reflecting a mindset of market competition (35). Racism and classism are repackaged into "a new biopolitical vocabulary" that, by focusing

on purportedly individual life choices without consideration for structural factors or the disproportionate costs for those with fewer resources, “allowed one to deploy the vocabularies of sixties radicalism—ecological awareness, anticorporate agitation, etc.—in order to justify the reproduction of social inequality” (97-98); Steven Watts calls this a “microeconomic language.” The protagonist’s publisher buys his book proposal, according to his agent, on the strength of the projected “symbolic capital” it would earn, thereby indirectly monetizing the protagonist’s “reputation” (154). And the protagonist translates the money that he earns from the sale into its equivalencies on the market:

I would clear something like two hundred and seventy thousand dollars. Or fifty-four IUIs [intrauterine inseminations]. Or around four Hummer H2 SUVs. Or the two first editions on the market of *Leaves of Grass*. Or about twenty-five years of a Mexican migrant’s labor, seven of Alex’s in her current job. Or my rent, if I had rent control, for eleven years. Or thirty-six hundred flights of bluefin, assuming the species held. (155-56)

Each of these examples is carefully chosen. The IUIs tie into Alex’s plotline and the cost of childbearing. The Hummer is a costly status symbol and notorious gas guzzler that makes an inordinate contribution to global warming, linking the novel’s two superstorms to neoliberalism and situating neoliberalism as a part-hyperobject of the Anthropocene-hyperobject. *Leaves of Grass* (1892) is the original text-object of Whitmanian serialization, here presented as an art commodity-object. Mexican or Hispanic labor, seen as cost-effective, is taken for granted throughout the novel by everyone but the protagonist (91, 117-18, 157, 172). Rent control is necessary for most people to afford living in New York City, highlighting how the right to housing has also become monetized. And in the Anthropocene, who knows how long it will be until bluefins go extinct?

Nevertheless, the novel offers a flickering glimpse of the world to come. The final first-person narrator interjection and second-person address of the narratee both occur in the closing lines of the novel. As the protagonist and Alex cross Brooklyn Bridge from a darkened lower Manhattan, the crowd stops in the middle of the bridge to look back, and the narrator says, “at the time of writing, as I lean against the chain-link fence intended to stop jumpers, I am looking back at the totaled city in the second person plural. I know it’s hard to understand / I am with you, and I know how it is” (240; virgule in original). The narrator claims that the “time of writing” is then, on the bridge, but this is at odds with the other narrator interjections from behind a computer. He then says that he is looking back “in the second-person plural,” which is glossed by the last part of the sentence, ending after the virgule with a modified quotation from “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (the second “I” is added): Yes, the statement is hard to understand, but what it means is that the narrator looks with us, alongside us, and presumably feels the same as we do.¹⁵ What we look at together is Manhattan as a “totaled city,” despite the fact that the Goldman Sachs building still has power, for in the act of totaling, “it is not the work but the commodity character that is damaged” (Brown, *Autonomy* 90). The state of being totaled is not one of material change—the artwork is still an artwork, banks will still be banks—but of a vacating of the institution of neoliberalism: The market has no power over totaled art, will grant Goldman Sachs no fetishistic pedestal. The world to come is indistinguishable from our world in the same way that the “difference between the resolution of contradiction and the mere unawareness of it” is “imperceptible” (Martin, “Dialectics”). And the novel gestures toward the success of this venture by performing its own totaling retrospective shift in understanding: The

¹⁵ This answers a question posed in “The Dark Threw Patches”: “who is being addressed in the last stanza / of ‘Crossing Brooklyn Ferry’?” (210, lines 260–61). But as we will see below, if Lerner is truthful about the edition of Whitman that he brings to Marfa, then this is a paradoxical question.

quoted lines from “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” appear in the 1860 version but were removed by Whitman for the final edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the one that the protagonist brings to Marfa (Katz 329; De Boever, *Finance* 166).

In bringing about the world to come and forcing the totaled city, the precipitating factor is Hurricane Irene. Due to “awareness of the storm[. . .] the city was becoming one organism,” and “every conversation you overheard in line or on the street or train began to share a theme,” combining into “one common conversation you could join, removing the conventional partitions from social space” (17). The “snow day” feel of the impending storm creates a sense of collectivity outside of the social proprioception of market logic, so that, instead of the expected frantic run on necessities, shoppers at Whole Foods “seemed unusually polite and buoyant, despite the presence of police near the registers” (18). And before Hurricane Sandy, the protagonist notices on campus a “leaderless,” “Occupy-style,” gathering that turns out to be “an organizational meeting preparing for hurricane relief” (214). But what “once-in-a-generation weather” brings about is both external and unsustainable, and when Hurricane Irene fails to make landfall, it is as if this collectivity has been “retrospectively erased. Because those moments had been enabled by a future that had never arrived, they could not be remembered from this future that, at and as the present, had obtained.” Like Marty McFly’s hand in *Back to the Future*, “they’d faded from the photograph” (24).

10:04 hints at another solution. Badiou’s forcing is a retroactive procedure, and we have seen how most of the incorporated narrative-objects deal with retrospective shifts in understanding. This is mirrored by an episode in the novel in which the protagonist enters Roberto’s school and is immediately transported to his own elementary school, where/when he

“coconstructs” a diorama for Christa McAuliffe, meant to be the first teacher in space on the doomed *Challenger* launch “a couple of months in the future,” with classmate and friend Daniel, whose arms are always a patchwork of Peanuts Band-Aids and minor hematomas, who will go to the emergency room this spring for inhaling a jelly bean—on my dare—dangerously deep into his nose, who in middle school will become the first of us to smoke, but at the time is known for his habit of surreptitiously ingesting Domino sugar packets. It is sad work to build a diorama of the future with a boy you know will hang himself for whatever complex of reasons in his parents’ basement at nineteen, but that work has been assigned[.] (15)

This passage shows us what a retrospective shift looks like from the perspective of the past, how past events are retroactively colored by present events. The narrator seeks to evoke this perspective when he narrates everything that happens after crossing the Brooklyn Bridge in the future tense (239-40); and to counter the ostensible determinism of A-series linear time (Currie 142), what Jameson calls “the regime of the past-present-future” or “destiny” (*Antinomies* 25-26), he inserts within this narration a single question from the perspective of the past: “In 1986, I put a penny under my tongue in an attempt to increase my temperature and trick the school nurse into sending me home so I could watch a movie. Did it work?” (240). Pointedly, this is a question, an unresolvable ambiguity. Unlike Marty McFly, we cannot actually effect material changes in the past.

Instead, we must work with (but not within) the present that we have. True it may be that “the idea of a ‘present’ is a fantasy at best” (O’Dell 453), yet even fantasy is an object with real effects. Contrary to Pieter Vermeulen, who argues that retrospective shifts render the present “insufficiently meaningful in itself” (670), they turn the present into the staging ground to

change not just the future but also the past, so that the way to bring about the world to come is precisely by changing the present, by continuing to force Whitmanian serialization, the decentralized and object-oriented response to scale variance, in order to create a non-institution (or vacating of institutionality) according to which the present will be found to have already been coconstructed as the world to come. We readers of *10:04*, if we choose to take on the mantle of the authorial audience (De Boever, “What” 171), can pursue “the anticipation of retrospection” (Gibbons 10) by exploring how “the past retains its capacity for future reinvention” via present “narrativisation” (Bilmes 1083). This is what the theme-hyperobject of narrative has achieved for the storyworld of *10:04*, creating not just a totaled work of art but also a “total work of art,” a *gesamtkunstwerk*, that “reunite[s] the arts into the one integrated work [. . .] in the service of social and cultural regeneration” (Roberts 1). And by attributing this achievement to the narrator that the novel so carefully locates within its narrative ecology, as well as by adducing the retrospective shifts in so many people’s narrative-objects, the novel gestures toward the possibility of achieving the same in our own extratextual worlds through the serial incorporation of narrative-hyperobjects to fight fictions with fictions (De Boever, *Finance* 204; Skov Nielsen et al., “Ten” 69). By effecting “a transformation of being” in beings themselves “without necessarily altering them or depriving them of their ontological status,” *10:04* becomes what Jameson calls a realist novel of “immanent transcendence,” a “providential novel” of “systemic change” (*Antinomy* 216-17).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have sketched the logic of interaction between hyperobjects, and as each hyperobject is dominant from its own perspective, that logic of interaction is a perspectivist reorganization of shared part-objects. As complex a text-object as *10:04* cannot be adequately

dealt with in a single chapter. In fact, throughout, we have been examining *10:04* from a distance, treating its instances of direct address as geared toward the narratee or authorial audience. But if a novel is a rhetorical object, as Phelan (5) and Skov Nielsen et al. (“Ten” 62-63) believe, then it has an extratextual addressee. Phelan calls extratextual addressees “rhetorical readers,” “actual readers [who] want to join the authorial audience” (8). The novel may be addressing us, but we must be able and willing to receive its address, must become rhetorical readers, for its intended effect to manifest. The key questions, then, are not what the text-object, or any text-object, can motivate us to do, but rather what text-objects can show us, which text-objects we can enlist, and how.

From the beginning, this dissertation has aimed not just to propose a new mode of reading, but also—more importantly—to trace how the ability to read textual hyperobjects enables us to perceive, grasp, and agentially influence extratextual hyperobjects. The Anthropocene is an epoch of outsized human influence precisely because humanity has expanded enough, and in enough respects, to register as a hyperobject, thereby engaging with a whole new dimension of objects. Like it or not, the Anthropocene epoch is the epoch of hyperobjects, and it behooves us to come to terms with our hyperobject agency. The final chapter will analyze the concept of the hyperobject in detail to tease out how our readings of the textual-hyperobjects of disability, the digital, and narrative bear on our understanding of hyperobjects in general.

5

Conclusion:
Anthropocene Lessons from a Distant Fictional Planet-Hyperobject

In Chapter 1, we briefly mentioned that some objects, called “hyperobjects,” are ontologically large enough to manifest in more dimensions than humanly perceptible, conjectured to exist only through oblique observation. The need for such observation motivated the in-depth examples set out in the subsequent three chapters, which did not approach hyperobjects conceptually. In part, this was in deference to their hyperobjecthood. When we discuss other objects, we have a phenomenological basis to start from, no matter how strange these objects turn out to be. But to reduce a hyperobject to such a phenomenological basis would not do justice to the fundamental strangeness that differentiates it from other objects in the first instance. In lived experience, we do not and cannot have a phenomenological grasp on a hyperobject precisely because of its hyperobjecthood. The most humanly accurate approach, then, is obliquely, via concrete examples. These first encounters having laid the proper groundwork, we can now more directly examine the concept of the hyperobject.

Of all the ecocritical concepts articulated in recent years, the hyperobject has arguably had the broadest reach, with Timothy Clark incorporating it into a definition of the Anthropocene itself (*Ecocriticism* 25n6). First mentioned in *The Ecological Thought* (130) and then explicated in *Hyperobjects*, hyperobjects can be hard to grasp as a concept, given how it is by definition nearly imperceptible to humans in its multidimensionality and lack of evident boundaries. But there is perhaps one entity that, lacking the baggage of prior knowledge, could serve as a distilled example of a hyperobject. This concluding chapter will explore the hyperobject, and Morton’s *Hyperobjects*, by way of Stanisław Lem’s *Solaris* (1961) and its depiction of the alien entity

Solaris, with occasional reference to Andrei Tarkovsky's (1972) and Steven Soderbergh's (2002) film adaptations. Since I will be justifying how Solaris as setting/character is a hyperobject, the theme-hyperobject of *Solaris* must be something other than the mimetic element of Solaris itself: I believe that it is humanity's ongoing efforts to understand Solaris, to "make contact with" it, so to speak. This chapter will therefore be an analytical exercise, reading more for content than for form.

I will first delineate the many resemblances between Solaris and Morton's five-part conceptual anatomy of hyperobjects, and how two of the three main characters of the novel respectively embody the two reactionary postures toward hyperobjects that Morton outlines, before tracing the protagonist's character arc to see how he learns to attune to the Solaris-hyperobject. Throughout, I will weave in analysis of the previous three chapters' hyperobjects and their characters' responses to them, thereby gesturing toward how we in the Anthropocene can cope with our epoch of hyperobjects.

There are two textual points that should be mentioned at the outset. Lem is Polish, but the English translation in print (1970) is what Justine M. Pas calls a "relay translation" (160-61); it is based on the French translation and has many infelicities, errors, and omissions, some of which were already introduced into the French translation (Johnston, qtd. in Pas 169). A more accurate English translation directly from the Polish was published in 2011, but it is only available in non-print forms due to legal issues (Flood). I will therefore be citing from the new translation but providing pagination from the old; bracketed page numbers refer to where omitted or mangled material should appear in the old translation. Both translations are included in the References list.

The other point is that Morton has read *Solaris*, not only referencing the Soderbergh adaptation in *The Ecological Thought* (110), but offering an ecological reading of the novel and

both films in “Ecologocentrism,” a paper published before *The Ecological Thought*. This is worth mentioning because, though *Solaris* goes unmentioned in *Hyperobjects*, the structure of the latter follows that of the former to a striking degree. The reading offered in this chapter, then, carries a whiff of the genealogical.

Conceptual Anatomy

The novel revolves around the planet Solaris, which is covered almost entirely in a “jelly-like” ([18]) and possibly sentient “ocean,” also called Solaris. Humanity first discovers Solaris when it observes the anomalously stable orbit of the planet despite being ensconced in a binary star system (16). The ocean covers only the planet, but in order to explain its orbit, we must assume that its control tunes the entire star system. Narrator Kris Kelvin is sent to join the mission hovering above the ocean’s surface, which by the time of the novel has already lost its pioneering spirit and is merely awaiting the next budget cut (23). Upon arrival at Solaris Station, he finds it in disarray, and the other crew members, all men, are holed up separately, paranoid and even hostile.

It transpires that each crew member has a companion of sorts, what a chapter heading calls “guests” and the crew refer to as “g-formations,” a euphemism for ghost ([102]). Kelvin is told this only after he himself wakes up to a guest staring at him, for the crew correctly surmise that he would not have believed them without firsthand experience ([67]). Even after Kelvin acquires a guest, this seeing-is-believing logic continues to operate, for after every experiment on or attempt to rid himself of the guest that he undertakes, all of which fail, he inerrably discovers evidence that the others have done similar things. The guests have a strange physicality: odorless ([30]), unaltered in shape by the effects of gravity (47), unaffected by temperature (48), clothed

in garments lacking a removal mechanism (62), needing neither food (96) nor sleep (91), and compositionally empty below the molecular level (98). Most curiously, a guest cannot bear being out of sight of its host. When separated, for instance by a door, the guest cries out in an “inhuman” voice (64) and, instead of opening the door, directly attacks it with superhuman strength without regard for itself. Although injured, the guest then heals quickly, leaving no scar—even recovering from biological death. If a host manages to dispose of his guest, such as by sealing it in a shuttle rocket and firing it off (63-65), a new manifestation of the same guest reappears the next time he awakens, with no memory of the previous manifestation (76). And if the host dies, the guest remains near his corpse (47).

In the formulation of crew member Sartorius, these guests “are not persons, nor are they copies of specific individuals, but rather materialized projections of what our brain contains regarding a particular person.” Kelvin adds, “What’s been selected are the most enduring memory traces”¹—he means that the “particular person” of which the guest is a simulacrum is likely to be someone (or, another character later speculates, something) with which its host has or had the strongest of affective bonds, even though the novel never shows us the guests of the two other living crew members (102). As Morton says, the guest “is literally a text, information written in material flesh, and like a text, [it] is utterly reproducible” (“Ecologocentrism” 82).

Kelvin’s guest is his deceased wife, Harey (inextricably changed to “Rheya” in the old translation), who killed herself by injection years ago after Kelvin had left the house following an argument (70). For Kelvin, there is thus an undertone of panic at guest-Harey’s hazy self-identity. She appears exactly as he last saw her alive, yet she bears the injection mark (55). Like

¹ “Memory traces” refer to the science-fictional *novum* of memory as “an image written in the language of nucleic acids on megamolecular asynchronous crystals” (193).

Kelvin, but supposedly unlike Harey, she cannot cook (96). While Kelvin sleeps, she has strangely free-floating “thoughts” (for lack of a better term), in her own words “as if [they] weren’t just inside me, but further away, kind of, I can’t explain. There aren’t words to express it” (108). And she can remember nothing before laying eyes on Kelvin, nor anything of the outside world, yet she knows of an acquaintance of Kelvin’s that Harey could not have (61-62). This last point is speculatively explained by appealing to the *novum* of the materiality of memory, of which Kelvin says, “in the course of being ‘copied’ the remains of other traces that happen to be in the vicinity are, or can be, included. As a result, the newcomer sometimes shows more knowledge than could be possessed by the real person whose reproduction they’re supposed to be” (102-03). The crew concludes that the source of the guests is Solaris, and after experimenting with beaming at it an encephalogram of Kelvin, “a complete recording of all my cerebral processes, converted into the oscillations of a bundle of rays” (155)—which seems to stop the healing and new manifestations—they devise a neutrino field annihilator to dissolve the remaining guests for good (109-110). Guest-Harey is distraught upon learning of her true “nature” and comes to despise herself, even attempting to kill herself with liquid oxygen, but she finds herself resurrected (139-40). Ultimately, she subjects herself to the neutrino field annihilator, which is successful (189).

For the inhabitants of the Station, Solaris is everywhere. It is “in the air” in the form of neutrinos and neutrino fields, for the guests are undoubtedly of Solaristic origin, and their neutrino construction is confirmed when the neutrino field annihilator proves an effective weapon against them. The name that Morton gives to this facet of hyperobjects is “viscosity,” the fact that “we are hopelessly stuck to” them (29). The inability of the guests to leave their hosts could be a metaphor for viscosity. A hyperobject, says Morton, “surrounds me and penetrates

me, like the Force in *Star Wars*” (28), or the neutrinos of *Solaris*. “They carry with them a trace of unreality. I am not sure where I am anymore”; this is something to which the Solaris Station crew can well attest, having followed the record of Gibarian—the crew member who killed himself before Kelvin arrives—frantically checking his own sanity. “*They are already here,*” Morton intones, and one only later discovers that one has been incorporated into a hyperobject (29).

In *The Unnamed*, too, the disability-hyperobject is everywhere in the storyworld. Conceived as the nexus of mind-object, body-object, and physical and social ecology—objects, the disability-hyperobject is found in every interaction that Tim has with these four facets of his lived experience. *Taipei*’s Paul is digitally connected almost all the time and, even when he is not, still thinks and perceives in digital metaphors and logic. And *10:04*, in addition to being constituted mostly by narrative-objects, is in its entirety literally the narrative-hyperobject composed by the narrator, who occasionally interjects himself into it to remind us of this fact.

Given that Solaris is everywhere, where exactly is it? It is not just the ocean, the geometrical formations that arise from the ocean and last varying lengths of time before dissolving back into it (111-24), the guests, the neutrinos held together by neutrino fields, the Solaris-hyperobject’s control over spacetime, or the dreams that haunt Kelvin between rounds of the encephalogram experiment (178). Solaris is all of the above, which means that no single manifestation is Solaris. No human can see Solaris as such, just as no one can see all six sides of a cube at once. And the causal relationship between these constitutive elements is undefinable: Does the ocean cause the formations? Did Solaris’s control over spacetime cause the ocean? What exactly causes the neutrino fields? “Hyperobjects seem to inhabit a Humean causal system in which association, correlation, and probability are the only things we have to go on” (39),

writes Morton, whose examples of nuclear radiation and endocrine disruptors recall the “viscous” neutrinos of *Solaris*. This is the second facet of hyperobjects: “nonlocality.” A hyperobject is, but it “is not *here*” (38; my emphasis). Specific hyperobject presentations are not determined by what it is, but are rather “a matter of how entities manifest for other entities, whether they are human, or sentient, or not” (39)—the perspectivism of object-oriented ontology. *Solaris* tunes its star system through the aesthetically causal zone of orbit stability; the *Solaris* Station crew attunes to *Solaris* through the zone of their guests.

Though a different hyperobject permeates each of the three novels we have examined, there is similarly no one thing we can point to and say, *This is the hyperobject we seek*. The disability-hyperobject manifests in Tim’s changing relationships with Jane, Becka, his ecologies, and himself, as well as in the reactions of his law firm colleagues. Tim pursues a medical cure, yes, but lack of medical cure does not the disability-hyperobject make, and the etiology of his walking—the origin of the disability-hyperobject—remains a mystery to the end. The digital-hyperobject manifests for Paul not just in his digital devices, but also in the digital metaphors through which he perceives the world and the digital logic according to which he understands affective objects. And his tying of the origin of digitality to “the universe” has no causal relation at all. As for *10:04*, we are never quite sure if what we are reading is the narrator’s narrative-object or his modifications to it, for the novel’s “*reality effect*” (Barthes 148), perhaps brought on by the ostensibly coincidental repetition of motifs (Foster 23), cloaks much of the narrative-hyperobject in the familiar conventions of realism. We can never be sure if we are reading an experience through the protagonist’s eyes or the narrator’s.

How long did *Solaris* take to stabilize its orbit? How long has it been observing humanity before creating the guests? What is its life cycle, if it has one? *Solaris* is presumably a finite and

immanent being, yet the timescales of such questions are so imponderable that Kelvin and crew member Snaut (called “Snow” in the old translation) end up hypothesizing that Solaris is a defective (meaning non-omniscient or -omnipotent) god in its infancy (197-99)—and who can comprehend the timescales of a god? The origins of Solaris, like all life, can be traced to the beginning of the universe, when baryogenesis, a certain unevenness in the distribution of matter and antimatter in the Big Bang (“Baryogenesis”), created a universe-ecology in which Solaris could emerge. Its demise, too, given its stable orbit, seems entangled with the end of the universe, be it heat death or Big Crunch, for once life exists, its tenacity in the harshest of environments has been well documented;² and even if any one species goes extinct, ecologies as a whole are resilient (Botkin 311-12). Occupying its own taxonomic domain—Kelvin points out the absurdity of classifying this unique lifeform under the class “*Metamorpha*” (20), which extratextually is today a genus, or under any taxonomy—Solaris does not just have access to a larger scale of temporality, its immense timescale alters its very perception of time. This is the third facet of hyperobjects: their “temporal undulation.” Hyperobjects exist on timescales not of infinitude, which is comprehensible with the help of the conceptual sublime or abstract mathematics, but of “*very large finitude*,” with which we humans have great difficulty (Morton, *Hyperobjects* 60). Our every interaction with them is connected to this hard-to-imagine timescale. Morton gives the examples of gasoline, which derives from a process begun 65 million years ago, and television static, a small part of which is Cosmic Microwave Background radiation dating from the Big Bang (58).

² Consider that tardigrades, or water bears, can withstand temperature ranges from 1 K (−458 °F; −272 °C) to 420 K (300 °F; 150 °C), “pressures about six times greater than those found in the deepest ocean trenches, ionizing radiation at doses hundreds of times higher than the lethal dose for a human, and the vacuum of outer space. [. . . T]hey can go without food or water for more than 30 years, only to rehydrate, forage, and reproduce” (“Tardigrade”).

Ian Hacking's history of dissociative fugue includes a prehistory that stretches from ancient Greece to twentieth-century Malaya (53-55), suggesting that, though the symptoms do not match well, Tim's walking could be the latest (textual) evolution of a storied (extratextual) illness. In any case, Tim's consenting to be studied for the medical research paper means that, in the storyworld, any future occurrences will have a precedent. The digital is in one sense but the latest manifestation of writing, a genealogy that Bernard Stiegler extends from Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (Tinnell 135-36; Derrida 84), in that a central processing unit "reads" the zeroes and ones of binary machine code.³ In another sense, the digital is the ultimate manifestation of mimesis, for the digital simulates not (just) the phenomenological but the ontological (Galloway, *Interface* 20; Sheu, "What" 1271). And if narrative is *sine qua non* to constituting experience, then the entirety of human history and culture, and the study thereof, can be said to attune to narrative-hyperobjects.

Combining nonlocality and temporal undulation gives us the fourth facet of hyperobjects: "phasing." Incomprehensible as totalities when considered according to human spacetimes, hyperobjects are often perceived as processes. Morton argues that these processes are hyperobjects' phasing in from a higher dimension (70), giving an example first seen in Edwin Abbott's *Flatland*, one we have seen in Chapter 1: A sphere passing through a plane will appear as a point, grow into a circle with a gradually increasing diameter, and then, past the halfway mark, shrink back again into a point (Abbott 88). The process of the expanding and contracting circle is seen from a higher dimension as stemming from the movement of a three-dimensional object, and this is what Morton argues happens with hyperobjects—albeit these hyperobjects are

³ To what extent this "reading" is metaphorical is an open question, as human reading can sometimes (but not always) exceed mere information extraction (Poulet 57).

not as uniform as a sphere, and the difference may be of more than one dimension (72-73).

Another way of understanding this is to think of emergent properties. Emergent properties, by their very name, may call forth an image of patterns that only exist when one conceptually “pulls back” to look at the bigger picture. But hyperobjects exist regardless of the perceiver’s scale of perception—“power is on the side of the object apprehended, not on the side of the apprehending thing” (Morton, *Hyperobjects* 62). This is what I believe Morton is articulating when he writes that “the idea of hyperobjects arose because of,” among other things, “systems-theoretical approaches to emergent properties of massive amounts of weather data[. . .] Yet hyperobjects are not the data: they are hyperobjects” (48). In other words, the properties that emerge from big data analysis are not the hyperobjects themselves, but are at most another one of their facets. And yet, in the very same sentence, Morton asserts a conceptual link between emergent properties and hyperobjects, for it is precisely due to thinking about the former that humanity had first hit upon the latter. The link, I believe, can be seen more clearly if we return to the technical definition of emergent properties: Properties are emergent if they cohere at the global level yet appear drastically fragmented at the local level (Hayles, *My Mother* 202-03), and emergence as an ontological concept is the conjoining of the “twin characteristics of dependence [on] and autonomy [from]” lower-level constituencies (O’Connor). So defined, we see that hyperobjects *are* emergent, in the sense that their part-objects, though coherent, are completely different objects. We thus encounter an equivalence between processes, emergent property–objects, and higher-dimensional objects, an equivalence to which Morton gives the name of “hyperobject.” Hence, when the novel recounts how “solaricists,” or Solaris experts, grappled with the metaphysical facets of Solaris, asking questions such as, “Was thinking without consciousness possible? Yet could the processes that took place in the ocean be regarded as thought? Is a

mountain a very large rock? Is a planet a huge mountain?” (24), it is in fact recounting a debate over the emergent property–objects incorporated into the Solaris-hyperobject.

In all three novels, there is a gradual and cumulative emergent coalescence of processes into hyperobjects, which coalescence I have tried to trace through the arguments of each case study. *The Unnamed* presents, in relatively sequential order, the medical, social, and psychological facets of the disability-hyperobject, before arriving at a dialectical nexus. Over the course of *Taipei*, Paul goes from using digital devices and conceptualizing phenomena through digital metaphors to affectively employing a digital logic of thought and, finally, embodying a digitized human-objecthood. Lastly, as *10:04* progresses, narrative-objects take on ever greater importance, narrator interjections become ever more frequent, and we gradually gain an understanding of the text as a narrative-hyperobject incorporating narrative-objects—including protagonist experiences that are later attuned to narrative-objects (Lerner, *10:04* 42, 61-62, 71, 126, 143), thereby entangling narrative and experience.

If hyperobjects are just higher-dimensional objects, how can we three-plus-one-dimensional human-objects be sure of what is or is not (part of) a hyperobject? To Morton’s credit, rather than backing down and offering an anodyne solution that would diminish the conceptual power of hyperobjects, he goes all in with his fifth facet of hyperobjects: “interobjectivity.” Interobjectivity is modeled on the notion of intersubjectivity, which “is a small region of” the former (81). This is where object-oriented ontology comes into play, for Morton’s position is none other than that objects are the only existent, and that they are connected in “*the mesh*” (83). Intersubjectivity, strictly speaking, would then make little sense as a concept, for as we discussed in Chapter 1, the conventionally understood subject is but the

imperceptible side of objects, and it would be meaningless to separate the perceptible and imperceptible sides of an object and speak of only the latter without the former.

Thus, my reading of *The Unnamed* recasts the medical, social, physical, and mental as objects to demonstrate their dialectical entanglement as part-objects of the disability-hyperobject; my reading of *Taipei* shows how the novel's conception of the digital follows object-oriented logic, making the climactic psilocybin mushroom trip sequence an instance of not only becoming-digital but also becoming-object; and my reading of *10:04* highlights the object-oriented character of the Whitmanian project of serialization that motivates the novel's narrative-hyperobject.

Morton's five facets of hyperobjects do not run in parallel. We have seen how nonlocality and temporal undulation combine to give us phasing, and considering that interobjectivity posits us as human-objects, interobjectivity, phasing, and viscosity together lead into the conclusion that, not only do hyperobjects reside at a higher scale than we do, we are incorporated into them. We have always already attuned to hyperobjects through each hyperobject's various zones of aesthetic causation—it just took the advent of the Anthropocene, when agency in/over hyperobjects became a salient concern, for us to recognize this.

Responses

With the conceptual anatomy complete, it remains to see what reactions or responses we are afforded to the hyperobjects that tune us. Morton's first chapter on human attitudes toward hyperobjects posits the "end of the world," in a Heideggerian sense. "The hyperobject is," writes Morton somewhat melodramatically, "the bringer of fate, destiny, death. This destiny comes from beyond the (human) world, and pronounces or decrees the end of the world" (148).

“World,” in Heideggerian parlance, is the name for a certain conceptual totality, what Heidegger defines as “that ‘*wherein*’ a factual Dasein as such can be said to ‘live’” (Heidegger, *Being* 93), and as Dasein is a phenomenological existent, the main function of “world” so defined is to delineate an outside and an inside, a binary similar to that of substance and accident, or background and foreground (or ground and figure, which Morton does not mention).

Hyperobjects deconstruct all of these binaries (Morton, *Hyperobjects* 101-03), so that disability becomes ubiquitous and the abled body the unattainable ideal, the digital pervades and undergirds analogue phenomena, and narrative constitutes experience. In fact, *10:04* enlists the confusion of foreground and background to thematize this deconstructive facet of the global warming–hyperobject (Klaces 5). As the protagonist walks through Roberto’s school, he notices autumn artwork on the walls, the “foliage changing its Crayola,” in reference to the crayon brand (14). Watching *Back to the Future* projected on a wall the night that Hurricane Irene is supposed to make landfall, he observes that the shadow of the trees outside the window “moved over the projected image on the white wall, became part of the movie, as if keeping time to the zither music; how easily worlds are crossed, I said to myself” (22). And interpreting Jules Bastien-Lepage’s painting *Joan of Arc* (1879), in which, under the gaze of three angels in the background, Joan’s outstretched left hand seems to dissolve into the background greenery, he asserts that “she’s being pulled into the future” by her divine calling (9), thereby linking her hand to Noor’s “fading” hand when Noor experiences her retrospective shift and, through that connection, to the Whitmanian project of serialization, of which Noor’s narrative is one of the most significant objects to be incorporated. Seen in the light of certain hyperobjects, the end of the world can be a liberating event.

Solaris can be read as an encounter between two hyperobjects, humanity—including its social, cultural, and technological facets—and Solaris. This encounter can play out in a number of ways, of which the novel explores three. Sartorius is the Solaris Station crew member who best embodies the conventional way of thinking. When faced with the guests, his response is to quarantine himself from the others until he can control the situation. He hides himself and, even more desperately, his guest, as if the guests were aberrations, disgraceful abnormalities. His driving motivation throughout the novel is to understand enough of the guests to get rid of them for good, and he takes the initiative in proposing experiments to that effect. Stuck in the old paradigm in which humans are separated from nonhumans by their “humanness,” he cannot accept a reality in which “humanness” is possessed by nonhumans. He can think of only one way to resolve the paradox: to neutralize the incomprehensible objects. Every crew member begins in the same conceptual spot, and the first thing they do is check their own sanity, or at least follow the record of Gibarian checking his; but after that their attitudes differ, and only Sartorius is left stuck in the conventional paradigm, sinking ever deeper. In the novel, he is not above attempting to dispose of his guest using excruciatingly painful procedures recalling medieval or totalitarian interrogation and torture techniques, what Snaut cynically calls “*Agonia perpetua*” (184), so that his guest gives out a series of wails that are “remarkably high-pitched, piercing and prolonged,” and “inhumanly intensified,” and that penetrate the soundproofed architecture of the Station (182). Sartorius’s madness is underscored by the fact that his procedure does not cause immediate death, but merely prolongs the moment of dying: The scene takes place after the encephalogram experiment proves successful, signaled by the appearance of a hitherto unrecorded formation resembling the top half of bubbles rising into the sky, after which the guests are no longer resurrected or manifested anew (191). Soderbergh highlights Sartorius’s

mindset less horrifically but in more detail. Renamed Dr. Gordon and played by Viola Davis, she begins her introductory scene by cataloguing her mental state in the form of a lengthy list of psychiatric disorders—a metonymy of what she perceives as the abnormality of her situation—after which she coldly says, “I want to stop it. If I can stop it, that means I’m smarter than it is” (00:17:59-18:37). In her next scene, during the discussion between the three crewmembers of what exactly the guests are—which is held while guest-Harey is present and listens closely, a departure from the novel, in which the discussion is held remotely and guest-Harey seems not to overhear Kelvin’s side (102)—she emphatically says at one point to George Clooney’s Kelvin, “*She is not human*. Try to understand that, if you can understand anything” (00:55:47-53). But according to Morton, humans are not human either. Using the example of the film *Blade Runner* (1982), he writes, “human life already is this artificial intelligence. [. . .] In their very humanity, humans are already replicants: beings with artificial cores, just a sum of memories” (*Ecological* 112). In other words, the part-objects that constitute a human, such as cells, gut bacteria, and DNA, are themselves not human. Our most human part-objects are perhaps our individual memories, and even these are put into question in the film’s sequel, *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), when it is revealed that the memories of the android K (Ryan Gosling) are not evidence of his suppressed humanity, but are someone else’s memories implanted into him.⁴ The bigger shortcoming of Sartorius’s position is that, given how “power is on the side of the object apprehended,” the paradigm of hyperobjects “is the inverse of perspectivism,” “a world of compulsion” (Morton, *Hyperobjects* 62)—perspectivism from the hyperobject’s perspective, not ours. The more he fights it, the worse it gets for him.

⁴ In this sense, the paradigm of hyperobjects is diametrically opposed to posthumanism, which Morton sees as militating against humanism only because the latter is insufficiently human, and hence aiming for an all-encompassing definition of the human—preserving the human-nonhuman binary in the process (113).

The three novels each have figures who correspond to Sartorius. All the physicians, neurologists, psychiatrists, and even Jane and Tim in the early stages try to deal with the disability-hyperobject by, like Sartorius, neutralizing the incomprehensible object—seeking a cure. They cannot accept that compulsory walking is Tim’s new reality, as can be seen in Tim’s willingness to consult pseudoscientific healers and quack doctors. Becka, too, cannot accept it, but her method of neutralization is to deny that he has an uncontrollable problem in the first place. And the various police officers who try to keep Tim from sleeping on the streets have no regard for his disability, and so can also be understood as Sartorius-figures. The women Paul dates before meeting Erin all end up leaving him because they have trouble attuning to the digital-hyperobject to which he is attuned, especially as it is presented in the logic of his affective (self-)perceptions. To them, the incomprehensible object is Paul himself. And Alex is uncomfortable being incorporated into a narrative-object by the protagonist (57), albeit she ends up in the narrative-hyperobject anyway. Moreover, the protagonist of *10:04* originally sets out to write a novel about literary fraudulence, whose past-oriented focus can be construed as denying the presentist orientation of the narrative-hyperobject that he ends up writing. As Alex says to dissuade him from pursuing the first idea, “I feel like you don’t need to write about falsifying the past. You should be finding a way to inhabit the present” (137). The earlier idea also incorporates a narrative-object told to him by Bernard, but rather than serialization, it would have been a direct appropriation that failed to counter neoliberalism’s A-series deterministic temporality, in which “the future is apparently rendered static or tamed [. . .] by a drop-down menu of preselected options” (Clare).

Snaut embodies the second response, that of acknowledging a new paradigm without being able to come to terms with it, which Morton calls “hypocrisy.” As he defines it, hypocrisy

is the idea that a conceptual position exists from which one can gain control of a hyperobject or escape its zones. Moral philosophy often uses ethical dilemmas to illustrate or support arguments or positions, only one lemma of which is “correct” according to a given moral philosophy. But in the paradigm of hyperobjects, “every position [one can take] is ‘wrong’: every position, including and especially the know-it-all cynicism that thinks that it knows better than anything else” (136). This is because temporal undulation does not afford the timescale of individual human-objects, and so “no self-interest theory of ethical action” is an adequate response (135). Throughout *Solaris*, Snaut always speaks from the perspective of himself, a human seeker of knowledge. This perspectival limitation is echoed on a more abstract level in the novel’s account of the development of solaristics, with solaricists running through model after theory after hypothesis until the entire endeavor gradually runs out of steam. Snaut functions as a messenger and coordinator between Kelvin and Sartorius, and as a sounding board for their ideas, but he himself can never overcome the mental impasse that, as he puts it, “this, here, this is a situation beyond morality” (152). He concludes that “it’s impossible not to be” a “bad guy” on Solaris (153). At first, he mostly provides exposition that guides Kelvin through what it means to have a guest. Once Kelvin is up to speed, Snaut starts trying to make some sense of things, not in Sartorius’s language of physical phenomena, but in the language of agency, intention, and consciousness. He posits that the guests are an embodiment of their hosts’ deepest and darkest desires or even fantasies (71), and then generalizes the point, arguing that true “contact with another civilization” is contact with “our own monstrous ugliness, our own buffoonery and shame, magnified as if it was under a microscope!” (73). This is the core contention of Istvan Csicsery-Ronay’s study of *Solaris*, that we are stuck in an anthropocentric perspective and can never truly ascertain contact with the other (12). As we have seen, this logic applies to all

objects. We can never truly and comprehensively “know” an object, for it may always manifest yet another facet originating in its imperceptible side.

This logic applies perforce to the theme-hyperobjects of the other novels. The medical model that fails Tim presupposes understanding, despite the fact that—to take just one example—even today, nobody really understands why psychotropic drugs like antidepressants are effective or not (Mock). The one police officer who is solicitous of Tim’s disability while still trying to get him off the streets is another example (Ferris, *Unnamed* 249-50). And after Jane’s cancer goes into remission, Tim’s fight against his post-walk narcolepsy to return home to the brownstone every day is also a struggle against the novel’s disability-hyperobject, one that he finally deems not worth the effort. Erin tries and fails to understand Paul, for despite their initial chemistry, she is not as attuned to the digital-hyperobject in her logic of thought and perception as he is. They try to communicate about their failing marriage, but the only thing they agree on is that they “felt bad about it, but didn’t know what to do, or what else to say” (Lin, *Taipei* 214). And Paul himself at first tries and fails to comprehend the digital universe, before attuning to it completely with the help of psilocybin mushrooms. *10:04* includes a variety of attempts to escape neoliberal market logic that fail because they do not attune to the narrative-hyperobject. Neoliberal determinism means that efforts to improve the future by transfixing it according to a plan are doomed to failure, as happens when the protagonist departs Alex’s apartment while she sleeps and says, “‘Everything is fine, I’m going home now,’ said it just so I could say I’d said it in case she was upset later that I’d left without telling her” (24): Alex later texts him, saying, “You left without saying goodbye” (31). Or take the Park Slope Food Coop, which—though it is “an institution that made labor shared and visible and that you could usually trust to carry products that weren’t the issue of openly evil conglomerates,” its “produce was largely free of

poison,” and its members “helped run a soup kitchen” and donated money toward rebuilding a burned-down homeless shelter—is still “a node in the capitalist network” whose members are “gentrifiers of one sort or another” (95-96). The new biopolitical vocabulary of racism spouted by one of those gentrifiers (97-98) only serves to point up the co-op’s complicity. And then there is literature, on which so many literary scholars have pinned their hopes of countering, eluding, or otherwise subverting neoliberalism (Martin, “Contemporary” 142). In the novel, the literature-hyperobject is either yet another commodity market with symbolic capital as one of its commodities, or it proves impotent on both small scales and large: Nobody hears the protagonist when he quotes *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) at an opportune moment (30-31), and he complains that he “can’t see my audience”—literally when onstage at the literary panel (116) and figuratively referring to the actual readers of *10:04* (157)—“because of the tungsten lights” shined on him, in the latter case casting himself-as-protagonist as the metaphorical performer of the narrator’s narrative-hyperobject.

It remains to consider what it looks like exactly to attune to a hyperobject, and here Kelvin is instructive. At first, he is disoriented and afraid, just like the other crew members. But unlike the militant Sartorius or the hermeneutical Snaut, Kelvin has another possible channel of communication with his guest: It takes the form of his young deceased wife. The form of his wife presented to him without mediation ineluctably draws out his memories, guilt, and pain, and he tries to atone to guest-Harey for what he did to Harey, even though he knows logically that they are not the same, and knows physically as well, after examining guest-Harey’s blood under a neutrino microscope. He thinks to himself, “I’d decided to do whatever I could to save [guest-]Harey” (125). But he cannot escape the fact that the two are not the same—not least because his fellow crew members keep reminding him in order to try to shake him out of his

delusion—and that he can never make it up to Harey. As he thinks of guest-Harey, “I felt I was the one deceiving her, not the other way around, because she was only herself” (92). When guest-Harey, after being resurrected from suicide, objects to Kelvin’s ministrations on the basis that he could not possibly love her as he does his dead wife, he replies, “Yes. What was then is dead and gone. But you, here, I love” (142). An inverse logic begins to operate, and the love that he has for the absent Harey is transformed into love for guest-Harey. Before, the fact that guest-Harey, this part-object of Solaris, carries the image of Harey impeded his love of Harey; now, the image of Harey interferes with his love of guest-Harey. Specifically, guest-Harey’s felt burden of carrying the visage of Harey prevents her from accepting the possibility that Kelvin actually loves her, Solaris part-object though she be, and so, faced with his love, she assumes that the original logic of loving the absent Harey is still in operation, and wants to end her own life to spare them both pain, his pain of loving someone absent, her pain of suffering a love not meant for her. Snaut at one point suggests to Kelvin that guest-Harey is suicidal because Kelvin’s memory of Harey is as a suicidal person (154), but if my reading is correct, it is the fact of Harey’s having committed suicide and thus being absent, and not Kelvin’s memory of her as suicidal, that makes guest-Harey suicidal—or at least, the memory trace is not a sufficient cause of guest-Harey’s suicidal tendencies. Nevertheless, even though Kelvin professes to love guest-Harey, her form as Harey cannot but be a source of “static interference” (so to speak) for Kelvin; and in the days that they while away together during the encephalogram experiment, happiness yet eludes them. For Kelvin, they exist in a “state of apathetic, mindless suspension” or “a frail, precarious equilibrium” (178). Only when guest-Harey commits irresurrectible suicide while Kelvin is asleep, and he wakes up without her in his line of sight, is he able to fully divorce guest-Harey from the image of Harey: “‘She’ll come back,’ I whispered, closing my eyes. And

for the first time I was truly not afraid of it. I'd lost my fear of her ghostly return. I couldn't understand how I'd once been so frightened of it!" (189). He is starting to see through the Harey-façade of the part-object to the Solaris-hyperobject itself.

In the final scene, Kelvin sits on the shore of an old formation, gazing out at the ocean: "Staring in wonderment, I was descending to regions of inertia that might have seemed inaccessible, and in the gathering intensity of engrossment I was becoming one with this fluid unseeing colossus, as if—without the slightest effort, without words, without a single thought—I was forgiving it for everything" (203-04). Approximating the state of inertia of the ocean, Kelvin finally finds atonement (a word whose etymology is equivalent to "at-one-ment") with the (hyper)object of his love, and he does so without the anthropomorphic likeness of guest-Harey, nor through the institution of language, which keeps Snaut tethered to the anthropocentric paradigm, or even through any intentional effort of his own. He has been tuned by the hyperobject. As Kelvin muses in the last lines of the novel, "I had no hope. Yet expectation lived on in me—the last thing she had left behind. What further consummations, mockeries, torments did I still anticipate? I had no idea, as I abided in the unshaken belief that the time of cruel wonders was not yet over" (204). Hope is an anthropocentric emotion, whereas expectation is neutral, open to the dictates of the hyperobject, of which we can never have any idea beforehand. Attuning to a hyperobject entails the "heeding" of "uncertainty" (Morton, *Hyperobject* 50). The "time of cruel wonders," in which hyperobjects take the lead, is what Morton calls the "Age of Asymmetry," in which, rather than seeking certitude in knowledge by "appealing to the trace of the givenness of the openness of the clearing of the lighting of the being of" an object, for

example,⁵ we would do better to acknowledge the “weirdness [that] resides on the side of objects themselves, not our interpretation of them”—an Age in which thinking is used not to escape, delimit, or control hyperobjects, which is impossible, but to think *through* them and *with* them (159). Only via acceptance and attunement, rather than the “utopian” mindset of “starting over and beginning anew” (Haraway 150), can we “mesh with what is already occurring in such a way as to bring about change” (Morton, *Humankind* 157).

The gap between these two positions, utopian and hyperobject, can be illustrated by a crucial difference between the two film adaptations. Both films change the ending, so that the formation Kelvin ends up on is not a strange Solaristic one but a simulacrum of his home on Earth. In the Soderbergh film, one of the last scenes opens on Kelvin seemingly back on Earth. He is chopping food at his kitchen counter when he cuts himself and starts to bleed, but the cut heals before his eyes. Only then does he understand how he had returned from Solaris: He never left, or in any case he has been incorporated into the Solaris-hyperobject (01:21:53-22:44). This revelation, Morton notes, involves no communication between Kelvin and Solaris at all, no attunement, as if he has merely “been downloaded” (“Ecologocentrism” 88). In contrast, Tarkovsky and co-writer Fridrikh Gorenshcheyn have Kelvin (played by Donatas Banionis) knowingly reside in his Solaristic home-simulacrum. We see him gazing at the pond beside his home. He turns and sees through the window Berton (Vladislav Dvorzhetsky), who is his father and the first pilot on Solaris to report odd phenomena (he was dismissed for it).⁶ They meet at the front door, and Kelvin falls to his knees to embrace Berton at the waist. His embrace not only symbolizes the reunion between father and son, but also signifies Kelvin’s empathetic

⁵ Another example might be a phrase from Chapter 3: “the ‘emptiness as a whole’ that is itself the prelude to a ‘moment of vision’ of knowledge of Dasein’s possibility conditions” (quoting Heidegger, *Fundamental* 165).

⁶ This is different from the novel, in which the name “André Berton,” thinks Kelvin, “meant nothing to me” (39), though Berton’s experiences on Solaris are the same.

understanding of what his father had gone through in facing the strangeness of the Solaris-hyperobject now that he has himself experienced similarly strange Solaristic phenomena. The camera pulls out and up to reveal the Solaris ocean surrounding their home (02:41:03-02:46:35). In the starkest difference between the two adaptations, Tarkovsky's Kelvin knows that he is on Solaris, for he has just been looking outward; and seeing his father there poses no conundrum, for Kelvin has already made his peace with the possibility of loving Solaristic guests. Morton calls this an example of "a profoundly ecological ethics" ("Ecologocentrism" 83), and I believe it is so because of how it shows Kelvin's full attunement to the Solaris-hyperobject.

It appears that the first step in attuning to a hyperobject is to see it for what it is, including keeping intact the incomprehensibility of facets that we cannot comprehend. Hyperobjects, like all objects, have their imperceptible side, and due to phenomena such as phasing, even when a new facet presents itself, it can be hard to reconcile with the facets of which we are already aware. Any such reconciliation will always be provisional and open to reconsideration, sometimes immediately (Latour 198). The more we see and understand, and the more connections we perceive among the hyperobject's various facets, the better we will be able to grasp the contour of those connections. Given hyperobjects' multidimensionality, this is likely the closest we can get to understanding a hyperobject. Grasping a hyperobject's contour is not to control the hyperobject, as in the operation of Orientalism (Said 3), but rather to see how we can attune ourselves to it, for if we cannot change that which threatens us—by *change* I mean intentionally so, according to some design—then we can only adapt to it (Shaviro 56-60). Successful adaptation, in terms of the Anthropocene, means reaching a metastable equilibrium and following the equilibrium as best we can wherever it shifts. There is no guarantee that this will be easy, and the "wonders" to be found will likely be "cruel" ones. In this sense, attuning to

a hyperobject calls for a form of Levinasian-Derridean ethics (Thurschwell 1200-02), directed not at the individual Other human-object, but at the Other-hyperobject.

The necessary vagueness and abstraction of attuning to a hyperobject is what motivates the case studies of the three novels above. At first, there is only Tim's walking, which takes him out into the New England winter for which he and Jane learn to gird him. Jane's repeated pick-up trips, and the continuing lack of a temporal horizon beyond which Tim would no longer have to walk, take their toll on her mental health, and so her alcoholism is yet another facet of the novel's disability-hyperobject, a hyperobject that proceeds to incorporate ever more part-objects from Tim's life: his work, and the murder suspect for whom he cannot stop walking; his mental health, which deteriorates as he loses hope of a cure; his stabilized relations to his social ecology (mostly isolation and conflict avoidance), physical ecology (camping gear and all-purpose clothing and equipment), and mental state (manageable with medication); his relationship with Jane, reaffirmed when he arrives at her hospital bedside after a grueling cross-country journey; and even his relationship with Becka, previously strained by his workaholism (148), and then strengthened by his support of her music career in the forms of buying her albums and fighting his body to attend her show (259-61). When the walking first starts, Tim cannot have known how far afield, both metaphorically and literally, it would take him, but with each newly presented facet of the disability-hyperobject, he (and Jane and Becka) adjust and adapt, seeking his equilibrical niche, attuning to the hyperobject, and following its dictates as best they can.

When we first meet him, Paul is already ensconced among digital devices, uses quotation marks and digital metaphors prolifically, and conceives of people in terms of information: their age and relationship to himself (3). The digitality of the universe—the digital-hyperobject—is constantly on his mind, in relation to both his writing and his childhood memories. As time

passes, the digital logic of his thinking bleeds into his perception and concept-formation, leading him into the realm of affective objects. The logic of sociality among humans mostly follows conventional analogue logic, so Paul's digitality renders him opaque, unsociable, and isolating, reachable only through the shared experience of sharing drugs. The nihilism of the digital-hyperobject universe gives him depression (215), and his joy at marrying Erin (152) evanesces. But the climactic mushroom trip engenders a perspective shift that, in affirming his existence and experiences, once again affords him these forgone facets of the sociality-object and positive affects. The novel sketches how Paul's problems are best resolved not by somehow escaping the digital-hyperobject, but by further attuning to it.

The protagonist of *10:04*, though a poet by vocation, is familiar enough with narrative-objects to have published a novel and a short story, but it is his second novel that will determine whether he is a one-hit wonder. He builds on the literary fraudulence premise of his short story. As he constructs this narrative-object, his life continues apace, and he accumulates narratives of his own experiences and that of others, some of which seem attuned to his narrative-object of fraudulence (125). But the more he accumulates, the less excited he is by his premise (119). Alex's admonition to drop the idea altogether opens his eyes to a new way of appraising these narrative-objects: Rather than seeking those that fit his own narrative-object of fraudulence, he now attunes to what these other narrative-objects actually present, and he sees in them the shared logic of a retrospective shift. This possibility of non-futural change is at odds with the most prevalent narrative-hyperobject in contemporary society, that of neoliberalism (neoliberalism itself is also a hyperobject), and so the protagonist decides to fight one narrative-hyperobject with another. Yes, the narrator sometimes modifies the narrative-objects that tune the

protagonist, in order to better afford their attunement to the narrative-hyperobject of *10:04*;⁷ but he is only able to do so (unless he is fabricating them from whole cloth) if what he modifies affords his modifications. And so, the narrator interjections into the narrative-hyperobject of *10:04* present one more facet of the latter, that of being constitutive of experience rather than *vice versa*, by entangling narrative and experience to the point of indivisibility.

Interestingly, these three possible responses to a hyperobject loosely correlate with Alain Badiou's three subject formations in response to an event, as posited in his *Logics of Worlds*. The obscure subject tries to abolish the new situation convoked by the event, much as Sartorius seeks to neutralize Solaris and/or its part-objects (61). The reactive subject acknowledges the new situation but not the event by which it is convoked, similar to how Snaut accepts the existence of Solaris and its part-objects but struggles to understand them from his habitually anthropocentric perspective (56). And the faithful subject, like Kelvin in relation to the Solaris-hyperobject, is attuned to "the realization in the present of a hitherto unknown possibility" (52), that of the evental new situation. Yet I hesitate to employ Badiou's extensive and comprehensive philosophical system to articulate the hyperobject in any depth, for there is one point of disagreement that is difficult to reconcile. Badiou asserts that, empirically speaking (*Being* 340), there are only four areas to which his system applies, "four types of truths: science (mathematics and physics), love, politics and the arts" (*Logics* 71). It is undoubtedly possible to reduce all of human experience to these four areas, but we should be wary of doing so, for it is the singularity of hyperobjects (and that of other objects, for that matter) that makes it such a challenge to attune to them. The inductive character of his four types of truths affords Badiou's philosophy the self-

⁷ Though the fact of being incorporated into the narrative-hyperobject precludes hard evidence of such modification, I find it oddly convenient that the narrative related by an Occupy protestor barely evinces a retrospective shift, yet ends with him saying that his experiences "make me see the world a little differently, you know?" (50).

declared label of “materialist dialectic,” paradoxically by emphasizing the second half of the statement, “*There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths*”—notwithstanding the appearance at first blush that this second half is the idealist half (*Logics* 4). In this case, appearances are not deceiving, and the (materialist) induction that produces these four types of truths is supplemented by his arbitrary (non-materialist) decision to limit the truth types that he explores to these four only. He calls being a “void” (*Being* 6), and perhaps in some formal sense it is (86-87); but rather than his faithful subject’s prosecution of a truth founded in the wake of a voidal event, attuning to a hyperobject obliges one to seek out unidentified facets of what already exists, and to navigate their emerging contour. Due to this difference, Badiouian analysis tends in practice to be just a (quasi-paranoid) confirmation of his ideas, whereas hyperobject reading always yields new ideas and objects—that is, new hyperobjects.

Conclusion

Many would say that the most pressing hyperobject to which we must attune in the Anthropocene is global warming, but global warming itself incorporates numerous other hyperobjects: resource depletion, energy networks, the material infrastructure supporting ubiquitous digitality (Parikka 6), and rapacious global market arrangements (Klein and Pettis), to name but a few—what the protagonist of *10:04* calls “the majesty and murderous stupidity of that organization of time and space and fuel and labor” (19). The Anthropocene complicates attunement to the disability-hyperobject, as global warming and a society that increasingly is instantaneously interconnected disrupt the metastability of equilibrial niches. It leads to a feedback loop with the digital, as the logic behind Anthropocene-related destructive changes both affords and finds amplification in digital logic (Tsitsovits and Vermeulen 200). And one of the main obstacles to attuning to the Anthropocene is the neoliberal narrative-hyperobject that, as

long as it incorporates us, forecloses any such possibility. *Solaris* is a mirror reflecting our responses to the Anthropocene hitherto, but it is also one that shows us what attunement might look like. To contemplate how much there is to do simultaneously is to run headlong into scale variance once again. Rather, as suggested by *10:04*'s Whitmanian serialization, and as hinted at in the refractive character of this dissertation's case studies, the answer is precisely *not* collective action. As individual humans, we have no agential control over any hyperobject, including the human species–hyperobject. The answer, then, lies not in *collective* agency, but in a diffused *species*-agency—in seeking to attune to these hyperobjects one by one *as individuals*. We must expect—not hope—that others will do so as well, and that we will thereby arrive at a point in the future when we will always already have adapted ourselves to the impossible art of living in the Anthropocene.

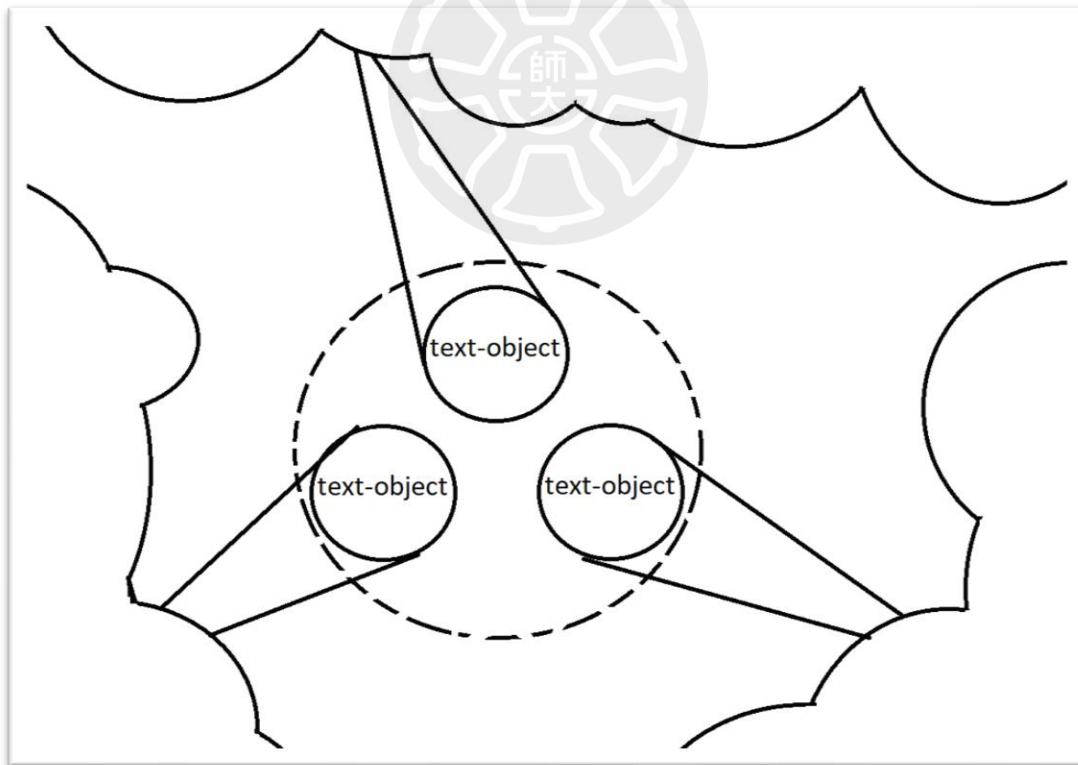


Fig. 11. Literature in the Anthropocene. The dotted line represents the literature-hyperobject.

Terminal

The Anthropocene is taken as the moment at which it is realized that *all* objects must be seen as breaking out of the frames in which human thinking has previously confined them, and are hyperobjects according to the postulate that all things are deeply connected to all others, are withdrawn from human comprehension to a degree, but are also uncanny in their (unmanageable) proximity and their participation in our own being.

—Timothy Clark (*Ecocriticism* 25n6)

In this dissertation, I have presented hyperobject reading as a new mode of postcritical reading that uniquely attunes to literature and lived experience in the Anthropocene. An additional aim has been to draw out the theoretical contexts with which hyperobject reading is entangled, such as object-oriented ontology, scale variance ecocriticism, and the postcritical turn. At a more granular level, each of the three case studies has explored the many facets of a single hyperobject and how they are entangled, in the process bringing the insights of an object-oriented paradigm to bear on the text. In disability studies, I have sketched the dialectical model of disability, which supplements the insufficiencies of current disability discourse and its medical, social, and relational models. In research on the digital, I have traced the extensive implications of digital logic for analogue lived experience, in terms of both language and affect. And in narratology, I have shown how metafictional complexity that affects an entire storyworld can suggest storyworld-changing strategies with extratextual potential.

And yet, there is more that can be said about hyperobjects, hyperobject reading, and the specific interventions of the case studies. I look forward to attuning to these emerging contours. This is not a *terminus*, but a *terminal*, a place to transfer to the next leg of the journey.



References

- Abbott, Edwin A. *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*. 1884. Edited by Rosemary Jann, Oxford UP, 2006.
- Abrams, M. H. and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 1957. 10th ed., Wadsworth, 2012.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*. 1990. Translated by Michael Hardt, U of Minnesota P, 1993.
- Allenby, Braden R. and Daniel Sarewitz. *The Techno-Human Condition*. MIT Press, 2011.
- “American Literature.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 7 November 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_literature. Accessed 19 November 2019.
- “Analog-to-Digital Converter.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 4 March 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analog-to-digital_converter. Accessed 30 March 2020.
- Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism. *The Book of Symbols: Reflections on Archetypal Images*. Edited by Kathleen Martin, Taschen, 2010.
- Back to the Future*. Directed by Robert Zemeckis, performance by Michael J. Fox, Universal Pictures, 1985.
- Badiou, Alain. *Being and Event*. 1988. Translated by Oliver Feltham, Continuum, 2005.
- . *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event*, 2. 2006. Translated by Alberto Toscano, Continuum, 2009.
- Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke UP, 2007.

Barker, Clare and Stuart Murray. "Introduction: On Reading Disability in Literature." Barker and Murray, editors, pp. 1-16.

Barker, Clare and Stuart Murray, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and Disability*. Cambridge UP, 2018.

Barthes, Roland. "The Reality Effect." 1968. *The Rustle of Language*, edited by François Wahl, translated by Richard Howard, U of California P, 1989, pp. 141-48.

"Baryogenesis." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 23 July 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baryogenesis. Accessed 2 October 2020.

Baskin, Jason M. "The Surfaces of Contemporary Capitalism." Huehls and Greenwald Smith, pp. 86-102.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. 1981. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser, U of Michigan P, 1994.

Beardsley, Monroe C. *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*. 1958. Hackett, 1981.

Beckman, Frida and Charlie Blake. "We Have Been Paranoid Too Long to Stop Now." Rudrum et al., pp. 410-28.

Benjamin, Walter. "In the Sun." 1932. *Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 2: 1931-1934*, translated by Rodney Livingstone, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, Belknap Press, 1999, pp. 662-65.

Bennett, Alice. *Contemporary Fictions of Attention: Reading and Distraction in the Twenty-First Century*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Benveniste, Emile. "The Nature of Pronouns." 1956. Benveniste, *Problems*, pp. 217-22.

---. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek, U of Miami P, 1971.

---. "Relationships of Person in the Verb." 1946. Benveniste, *Problems*, pp. 195-204.

Bernstein, Charles. "The Expanded Field of $L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E$." Bray et al., pp. 281-97.

Best, Stephen and Sharon Marcus. "Surface Reading: An Introduction." *Representations*, vol.

108, no. 1, Fall 2009, pp. 1-21, [doi:10.1525/rep.2009.108.1.1](https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2009.108.1.1).

Bewes, Timothy. "Recent Experiments in American Fiction." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol.

50, no. 3, 2017, pp. 351-59, [doi:10.1215/00295132-4194936](https://doi.org/10.1215/00295132-4194936).

Bilmes, Leonid. "'An Actual Present Alive with Multiple Futures': Narrative, Memory and Time

in Ben Lerner's *10:04*." *Textual Practice*, vol. 34, no. 7, 2020, pp. 1081-102,

[doi:10.1080/0950236X.2018.1515789](https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2018.1515789).

Blade Runner 2049. Directed by Denis Villeneuve, performance by Ryan Gosling, Alcon

Entertainment / Sony Pictures, 2017.

Blair, Elaine. "So This Is How It Works." *London Review of Books*, vol. 37, no. 4, 19 February

2015, lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v37/n04/elaine-blair/so-this-is-how-it-works. Accessed 5

August 2020.

Blake, Charlie. "The Day of the Dark Precursor: Philosophy, Fiction, and Fabulation at the End

of the World—A Fictocritical Guide." Rudrum et al., pp. 361-81.

Bogost, Ian. *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing*. U of Minnesota P, 2012.

---. *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism*. Cambridge, MIT P, 2006.

---. "Why Nothing Works Anymore: Technology Has Its Own Purposes." *Atlantic*, 23 February

2017, [theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/02/the-singularity-in-the-toilet-](https://theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/02/the-singularity-in-the-toilet-stall/517551)

[stall/517551](https://theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2017/02/the-singularity-in-the-toilet-stall/517551). Accessed 15 February 2020.

Booth, Wayne C. "Resurrection of the Implied Author: Why Bother?" Phelan and Rabinowitz,

pp. 75-88.

- Botkin, Daniel B. *The Moon in the Nautilus Shell: Discordant Harmonies Reconsidered: From Climate Change to Species Extinction, How Life Persists in an Ever-Changing World*. Oxford UP, 2012. Rev. ed. of *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, Oxford UP, 1990.
- Brassier, Ray. *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Bray, Joe, Alison Gibbons, and Brian McHale, editors. *Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*. Routledge, 2012.
- Brown, Holly. *Sick Men of Late Capitalism: Immunity and Precarity in Recent American Fiction and Performance Art*. 2018. Ghent U, PhD dissertation, biblio.ugent.be/publication/8585709/file/8585710.
- Brown, Nicholas. *Autonomy: The Social Ontology of Art under Capitalism*. Duke UP, 2019.
- . "Close Reading and the Market." Nilges and Sauri, pp. 145-65.
- Bryant, Levi R. *Onto-Cartography: An Ontology of Machines and Media*. Edinburgh UP, 2014.
- Burn, Stephen J. "Mapping the Syndrome Novel." *Diseases and Disorders in Contemporary Fiction: The Syndrome Syndrome*, edited by T.J. Lustig and James Peacock, Routledge, 2013, pp. 35-52.
- . "A Neural Map of Postmodernism." *Shawangunk Review*, no. 24, Spring 2013, pp. 9-25, newpaltz.edu/media/english/shawreview/Shawangunk%20Review%202013.pdf. Accessed 10 July 2020.
- Burnham, Clint. *Does the Internet Have an Unconscious? Slavoj Žižek and Digital Culture*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.
- Campbell, Sian Petronella. "On the Record: Time and the Self as Data in Contemporary Autofiction." *M/C Journal: A Journal of Media and Culture*, vol. 22, no. 6, 2019,

- journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/1604. Accessed 30 July 2020.
- Card, Orson Scott. *Ender's Game*. 1985. Revised ed., Tor, 1991.
- Casey, Edward. *Getting Back into Place: Toward a New Understanding of the Place-World*. U of Indiana P, 1993.
- Cella, Matthew J. C. "The Ecosomatic Paradigm in Literature: Merging Disability Studies and Ecocriticism." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 20, no. 3, Summer 2013, pp. 574-96, [doi:10.1093/isle/ist053](https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/ist053).
- Charles, Ron. "Book World Review of Joshua Ferris's 'The Unnamed.'" *Washington Post*, 20 January 2010, washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/19/AR2010011903945.html. Accessed 25 August 2019.
- Chater, Nick. *The Mind Is Flat: The Remarkable Shallowness of the Improvising Brain*. Yale UP, 2018.
- Chihaya, Sarah, Joshua Kotin, and Kinohi Nishikawa. "'The Contemporary' by the Numbers." *Post45*, 29 February 2016, post45.org/2016/02/the-contemporary-by-the-numbers. Accessed 10 August 2020.
- Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan, Jr. "The Book Is the Alien: On Certain and Uncertain Readings of Lem's *Solaris*." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, March 1985, pp. 6-21, [jstor.org/stable/4239658](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4239658).
- Clapp, Jeffrey and Emily Ridge, editors. *Security and Hospitality in Literature and Culture: Modern and Contemporary Perspectives*. Routledge, 2016.
- Clare, Ralph. "Freedom and Formlessness: Ben Lerner's *10:04* and the Affective Historical Present." *Open Library of Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 19, 2 October 2018,

[doi:10.16995/olh.336](https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.336), olh.openlibhums.org/articles/10.16995/olh.336. Accessed 4 August 2020.

Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge UP, 2011.

---. *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene As a Threshold Concept*. Bloomsbury, 2015.

Clune, Michael W. "Make It Vanish." *Postmodern/Postwar—and After: Rethinking American Literature*, edited by Jason Gladstone, Andrew Hoberek, and Daniel Worden, U of Iowa P, 2016, pp. 241-50.

Cohn, Dorrit. *The Distinction of Fiction*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1999.

Conrich, Ian and Laura Sedgwick. *Gothic Dissections in Film and Literature: The Body in Parts*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Crosthwaite, Paul. *The Market Logics of Contemporary Fiction*. Cambridge UP, 2019.

Crutzen, Paul J. and Eugene Stoermer. "The 'Anthropocene.'" *Global Change NewsLetter*, no. 41, May 2000, pp. 17-18,

igbp.net/download/18.316f18321323470177580001401/1376383088452/NL41.pdf.

Accessed 9 August 2019.

Currie, Mark. *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time*. Edinburgh UP, 2007.

Davidson, Michael. *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body*. U of Michigan P, 2008.

Davies, Ben. "The Darkness-within-the-Light of Contemporary Fiction: Agamben's Missing Reader and Ben Lerner's *10:04*." *Textual Practice*, 8 June 2019,

[doi:10.1080/0950236X.2019.1627404](https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2019.1627404). Accessed 3 August 2020.

- Davies, Jim. "You Can Have Emotions You Don't Feel." *Nautilus*, 8 November 2016, nautil.us/blog/you-can-have-emotions-you-dont-feel. Accessed 28 February 2020.
- Davis, Lennard J., editor. *The Disability Studies Reader*. 5th ed., Routledge, 2017.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. 1976. 30th anniversary ed., Oxford UP, 2006.
- Dawson, Paul. *The Return of the Omniscient Narrator: Authorship and Authority in Twenty-First Century Fiction*. Ohio State UP, 2013.
- . "Ten Theses against Fictionality." *Narrative*, vol. 23, no. 1, January 2015, pp. 74-100, [doi:10.1353/nar.2015.0006](https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2015.0006).
- De Boever, Arne. *Finance Fictions: Realism and Psychosis in a Time of Economic Crisis*. Fordham UP, 2018.
- . "What Is 'the' Neoliberal Novel? Neoliberalism, Finance, and Biopolitics." *New Approaches to the Twenty-First-Century Anglophone Novel*, edited by Sibylle Baumbach and Birgit Neumann, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 157-74.
- Delbanco, Andrew. "American Literature: A Vanishing Subject?" *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Science*, Spring 2006, pp. 22-37, amacad.org/sites/default/files/daedalus/downloads/06_spring_daedalus_articles.pdf. Accessed 19 November 2019.
- DePoy, Elizabeth and Stephen Gilson. "Healing the Disjuncture: Social Work Disability Practice." *The Profession of Social Work*, edited by Barbara W. White, pp. 267-82. *Comprehensive Handbook of Social Work and Social Welfare*, editors-in-chief, Karen M. Sowers and Catherine N. Dulmus, vol. 1, John Wiley & Sons, 2008.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. 1967. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, corrected ed., Johns Hopkins UP, 1997.

- Dickinson, Emily. "After great pain, a formal feeling comes – ([F]372 [1862]) [J341]." *Poetry Foundation*, poetryfoundation.org/poems/47651/after-great-pain-a-formal-feeling-comes-372. Accessed 5 July 2020.
- Dickstein, Morris. "Damaged Literacy: The Decay of Reading." Presented 1991, published in French translation 1992, English 1994. *A Mirror in the Roadway: Literature and the Real World*. Princeton UP, 2005, pp. 223-33.
- "Digitization." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 9 March 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digitization. Accessed 30 March 2020.
- Dix, Hywel. "Introduction: Autofiction in English: The Story So Far." *Autofiction in English*, edited by Hywel Dix, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 1-23.
- Dodge, Jim. "Living by Life: Some Bioregional Theory and Practice." *The CoEvolution Quarterly*, no. 32, Winter 1981, pp. 6-12.
- Duncan, Janet M. "Interdependence, Capability, and Competence as a Framework for Eco-Ability." Nocella et al., editors, pp. 38-56.
- Easton, Hosea. *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and the Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States; and the Prejudice Exercised towards Them: With a Sermon on the Duty of the Church to Them*. 1837. Price and Stewart, editors, pp. 63-123.
- Ehrlich, Brenna. "Cracked iPhones, Angry Gavin McInnes, and Replacing Fiction with Fact: Talking 'Taipei' with Tao Lin." *Volume 1 Brooklyn*, 10 June 2013, v1brooklyn.com/2013/06/10/cracked-iphones-angry-gavin-mcinnnes-and-replacing-fiction-with-fact-talking-taipei-with-tao-lin. Accessed 26 January 2020.
- Eysteinnsson, Astradur. *The Concept of Modernism*. Cornell UP, 1990.

Favilla, Emmy J. *A World without "Whom": The Essential Guide to Language in the BuzzFeed Age*. Bloomsbury, 2017.

Federman, Raymond, editor. *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow*. 1975. 2nd ed., Swallow, 1981.

---. "Surfiction—Four Propositions in Form of an Introduction." Federman, *Surfiction*, pp. 5-15.

Felski, Rita. *The Limits of Critique*. U of Chicago P, 2015.

---. "Response." *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 2, March 2017, pp. 384-91,
[doi:10.1632/pmla.2017.132.2.384](https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2017.132.2.384).

Ferris, Joshua. "Involuntary Walking; the Joshua Ferris Interview." *ReadRollShow*, created by David Weich, episode 1, Sheepscoot Creative, 2010. *Vimeo*, 9 March 2010,
vimeo.com/10026925. Accessed 25 June 2020.

---. "Tracking a Man's Life, in Endless Footsteps." Interview conducted by Melissa Block. *All Things Considered*, NPR, 15 February 2010,
npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=123650332. Accessed 20 June 2020.

---. *The Unnamed: A Novel*. Little, Brown, 2010.

Ferriss, Tim. *Tools of Titans: The Tactics, Routines and Habits of Billionaires, Icons and World-Class Performers*. Vermilion, 2016.

Ferry, Peter. "Reading Manhattan, Reading Masculinity: Reintroducing the Flâneur with E.B. White's *Here Is New York* and Joshua Ferris' *The Unnamed*." *Culture, Society & Masculinities*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2011, pp. 49-61, [doi:10.3149/CSM.0301.49](https://doi.org/10.3149/CSM.0301.49).

Figlerowicz, Marta. "10:04/10:05." *Post45*, 21 January 2015, post45.org/2015/01/10041005.
Accessed 17 July 2020.

Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. Harvard UP, 1980.

Flood, Alison. "First Ever Direct English Translation of Solaris Published." *Guardian*, 15 June 2011, [theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/15/first-direct-translation-solaris](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/15/first-direct-translation-solaris). Accessed 3 September 2020.

Forrest Gump. Directed by Robert Zemeckis, 1994. Paramount Pictures, 1994.

Foster, Hal. "Real Fictions." *Die Wirklichkeit des Realismus*, edited by Veronika Thanner, Joseph Vogl, and Dorothea Walzer, Wilhelm Fink, 2018, pp. 17-25.

Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?" 1969. Translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd ed., edited by Vincent B. Leitch et al., Norton, 2010, pp. 1475-89.

Frank, Nathan D. "Of Non-Mice and Non-Men: Against Essentialism in Joshua Ferris's *The Unnamed*." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 2, Spring 2020, [doi:10.18061/dsq.v40i2.6855](https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v40i2.6855).

Frearson, Amy. "New York After the Storm by Iwan Baan." *Dezeen*, 5 November 2012, [dezeen.com/2012/11/05/new-york-after-the-storm-by-iwan-baan](https://www.dezeen.com/2012/11/05/new-york-after-the-storm-by-iwan-baan). Accessed 1 September 2020.

Gaillard, Thierry. *Shamanism, Ancestors and Transgenerational Integration: Traditional Wisdom and Contemporary Practices*. Ecodition, 2016.

Galloway, Alexander R. *The Interface Effect*. Polity, 2012.

---. "The Poverty of Philosophy: Realism and Post-Fordism." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 39, no. 2, Winter 2013, pp. 347-66, [doi:10.1086/668529](https://doi.org/10.1086/668529).

- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. Columbia UP, 1997.
- Garner, Dwight. "At the Close of Karl Ove Knausgaard's 'My Struggle,' a Magician Loses His Touch." *New York Times*, 17 September 2018, [nytimes.com/2018/09/17/books/review-my-struggle-book-six-karl-ove-knausgaard.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/17/books/review-my-struggle-book-six-karl-ove-knausgaard.html). Accessed 20 August 2020.
- Gass, William H. "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction." 1969. *Fiction and the Figures of Life*, Knopf, 1970.
- Gibbons, Alison. "Metamodernism, the Anthropocene, and the Resurgence of Historicity: Ben Lerner's *10:04* and 'The Utopian Glimmer of Fiction.'" *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 25 June 2020, [doi:10.1080/00111619.2020.1784828](https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2020.1784828). Accessed 6 July 2020.
- Gibson, James J. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Psychology Press, 1986.
- Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. Ace, 1984.
- Gill, R. B. "The Uses of Genre and the Classification of Speculative Fiction." *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 46, no. 2, June 2013, pp. 71-85, [jstor.org/stable/44030329](https://www.jstor.org/stable/44030329).
- Gladstone, Jason. "Network Unavailable: Informal Populations and Literary Form." *American Literary History*, vol. 31, no. 1, Spring 2019, pp. 74-95, [doi:10.1093/alh/ajy046](https://doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajy046).
- Gleick, James. *Time Travel: A History*. New York: Pantheon, 2016.
- Goldsmith, Kenneth. *Printing Out the Internet*. 26 July–30 August 2013, LABOR, Mexico City. 26 August 2013, labor.org.mx/en/portfolio/printing-out-the-internet. Accessed 19 August 2020.

- . *Soliloquy*. Granary, 2001. In modified form in *Electronic Literature Collection*, vol. 1, edited by N. Katherine Hayles, Nick Montfort, Scott Rettberg, and Stephanie Strickland, Electronic Literature Organization, October 2006, collection.eliterature.org/1/works/goldsmith__soliloquy.html. Accessed 19 August 2020.
- . *Traffic*. Make Now, 2007. *Eclipse*, edited by Craig Dworkin, eclipsearchive.org/projects/TRAFFIC/traffic.html. Accessed 19 August 2020.
- Goodley, Dan. *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*. London, SAGE, 2011.
- Grant, Richard. "Do Trees Talk to Each Other?" *Smithsonian Magazine*, March 2018, smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-whispering-trees-180968084. Accessed 3 July 2020.
- Greenspan, Gage. "Ecosomatic Paradigm Through Disability Studies in John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra*." *Language, Literature, and Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2019, pp. 84-95, ellids.com/archives/2019/07/2.4-Greenspan.pdf. Accessed 19 August 2020.
- Guan, Frank. "Nobody's Protest Novel: On Tao Lin." *n+1*, no. 20, Fall 2014, nplusonemag.com/issue-20/reviews/nobodys-protest-novel. Accessed 16 December 2019.
- Gustavsson, Anders, Jan Tøssebro, and Rannveig Traustadóttir. "Introduction: Approaches and Perspectives in Nordic Disability Research." Gustavsson et al., editors, pp. 23-44.
- Gustavsson, Anders, Johans Sandvin, Rannveig Traustadóttir, and Jan Tøssebro, editors. *Resistance, Reflection and Change: Nordic Disability Research*. Studentlitteratur, 2005.
- Haas, Lidija. "'It Made Me Really Crazy': Ben Lerner on Confronting Male Rage and Family Trauma." *Guardian*, 4 November 2019, theguardian.com/books/2019/nov/04/it-made-

[me-really-crazy-ben-lerner-on-confronting-male-rage-and-family-trauma](#). Accessed 13 August 2020.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification." *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 1983, translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen, MIT Press, 1990, pp. 43-115.

Hacking, Ian. *Mad Travelers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses*. UP of Virginia, 1998.

Hale, Dorothy J. *Social Formalism: The Novel in Theory from Henry James to the Present*. Stanford UP, 1998.

Hamilton, Grant. *The World of Failing Machines: Speculative Realism and Literature*. Zero Books, 2016.

Hansen, Per Krogh. "Autofiction and Authorial Unreliable Narration." *Emerging Vectors of Narratology*, edited by Per Krogh Hansen, John Pier, Philippe Roussin, and Wolf Schmid, De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 47-59.

Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke UP, 2016.

Harman, Graham. *Bells and Whistles: More Speculative Realism*. Zero, 2013.

---. *Circus Philosophicus*. Zero, 2010.

---. "Everything Is Not Connected (2012)." Harman, *Bells*, pp. 100-27.

---. *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory*. Polity, 2016.

---. *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything*. Pelican, 2017.

---. *The Quadruple Object*. Zero, 2011.

---. "Response to Louis Morelle (2012)." Harman, *Bells*, pp. 71-77.

- . "What Objects Mean for Architecture." *Is There an Object-Oriented Architecture? Engaging Graham Harman*, edited by Joseph Bedford, Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, pp. 15-23.
- . "Wolfendale Chapter Draft." Draft of Chapter 4 of *Skirmishes*, Punctum, forthcoming.
- "Hash Table." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 28 February 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hash_table. Accessed 1 March 2020.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. "Intermediation: The Pursuit of a Vision." *New Literary History*, vol. 38, no. 1, Winter 2007, pp. 99-125, [doi:10.1353/nlh.2007.0021](https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2007.0021).
- . *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. U of Chicago P, 2005.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. 1927. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Basil Blackwell, 1962.
- . *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. 1983. Translated by William McNeil and Nicholas Walker, Indiana UP, 1995.
- Heise, Ursula K. Review of *Hyperobjects* by Timothy Morton. *Critical Inquiry*, 4 June 2014, criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/ursula_k_heise_reviews_timothy_morton. Accessed 16 November 2020.
- Higuera, Valencia. "6 Possible Causes of Brain Fog." Medically reviewed by Suzanne Falck. *Healthline*, [14 June 2017,] updated 22 May 2018, healthline.com/health/brain-fog. Accessed 25 September 2020.
- Hobbes, Michael. "Everything You Know About Obesity Is Wrong." *Highline*, HuffPost, 19 September 2018, highline.huffingtonpost.com/articles/en/everything-you-know-about-obesity-is-wrong. Accessed 24 September 2020.
- Hoberek, Andrew. "Literary Genre Fiction." *American Literature in Transition, 2000-2010*, edited by Rachel Greenwald Smith, Cambridge UP, 2018, pp. 61-75.

- Hooley, Matt. "Reading Vulnerably: Indigeneity and the Scale of Harm." Menely and Taylor, pp. 184-201.
- Horton, Zach. "Composing a Cosmic View: Three Alternatives for Thinking Scale in the Anthropocene." *Scale in Literature and Culture*, edited by Michael Tavel Clarke and David Wittenberg, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 35-60.
- Huehls, Mitchum and Rachel Greenwald Smith. "Four Phases of Neoliberalism and Literature: An Introduction." Huehls and Greenwald Smith, editors, pp. 1-18.
- Huehls, Mitchum and Rachel Greenwald Smith, editors. *Neoliberalism and Contemporary Literary Culture*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2017.
- Huemer, Wolfgang. "Why Read Literature? The Cognitive Function of Form." *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge*, edited by John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer, and Luca Poggi, Routledge, 2007, pp. 233-45.
- Hsu, Stephanie. "Tao Lin's *Taipei* as an Aesthetic Experiment in Autistic *Jouissance*." *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2016, pp. 191-212, [doi:10.1080/10436928.2016.1207277](https://doi.org/10.1080/10436928.2016.1207277).
- Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. 1976. Johns Hopkins UP, 1978.
- Ivry, Henry. "Writing in the 'Second Person Plural': Ben Lerner, Ambient Esthetics, and Problems of Scale." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 2 July 2020, [doi:10.1080/00111619.2020.1787321](https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2020.1787321). Accessed 8 August 2020.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Antinomies of Realism*. Verso, 2013.
- . "Cognitive Mapping." *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Macmillan Education, 1988, pp. 347-60.

- . "Future City." *New Left Review*, no. 21, May/June 2003, newleftreview.org/issues/II21/articles/fredric-jameson-future-city. Accessed 29 August 2020.
- Johnson, Harriet McBryde. "Unspeakable Conversations." 2003. Davis, pp. 494-506.
- Kastrup, Bernardo, Henry P. Stapp, and Menas C. Kafatos. "Coming to Grips with the Implications of Quantum Mechanics." *Scientific American*, 29 May 2018, blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/coming-to-grips-with-the-implications-of-quantum-mechanics. Accessed 28 April 2020.
- Katz, Daniel. "'I Did Not Walk Here All the Way from Prose': Ben Lerner's Virtual Poetics." *Textual Practice*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2017, pp. 315-37, [doi:10.1080/0950236X.2015.1119987](https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2015.1119987).
- Kelly, Adam. "Dialectics of Sincerity: Lionel Trilling and David Foster Wallace." *Post45*, 17 October 2014, post45.org/2014/10/dialectic-of-sincerity-lionel-trilling-and-david-foster-wallace. Accessed 15 April 2020.
- Klaces, Caleb. "Ben Lerner's *10:04* and Climate Change." *Textual Practice*, 3 March 2020, [doi:10.1080/0950236X.2020.1731583](https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2020.1731583). Accessed 3 August 2020.
- Klein, Matthew C. and Michael Pettis. *Trade Wars Are Class Wars: How Rising Inequality Distorts the Global Economy and Threatens International Peace*. Yale UP, 2020.
- Knight, Damon. "Critics." *In Search of Wonder: Essays on Modern Science Fiction*. 1956. 2nd ed., Advent, 1967, pp. 1-8.
- Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Duke UP, 2003.
- Kostelanetz, Richard. "Twenty-Five Fictional Hypotheses." Federman, *Surfiction*, pp. 283-6.

- Kreider, Tim. "The Greatest American Novel You've Never Heard of." *New Yorker*, 20 October 2013, newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-greatest-american-novel-youve-never-heard-of. Accessed 12 August 2020.
- Kumar, Amitava. "Writing In-Between: An Interview with Amitava Kumar." Conducted by Jeffrey J. Williams. *symplokē*, vol. 27, nos. 1-2, 2019, pp. 487-504, [doi:10.5250/symploke.27.1-2.0487](https://doi.org/10.5250/symploke.27.1-2.0487).
- Kyrvei, Maria-Christina. *The Role of the Author at a Time of Terror and Emotional Detachment: Don DeLillo's Mao II and Tao Lin's Taipei*. Aristotle U of Thessaloniki, 2017. MA thesis, ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/296216/files/GRI-2018-21045.pdf.
- Latour, Bruno. *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. [1999, English trans. revised.] Translated by Catherine Porter, Harvard UP, 2004.
- Lem, Stanisław. *Solaris*. 1961. Translated by Bill Johnston, Premier Digital, 2011. *Scribd*, scribd.com/doc/264265435/Solaris-Stanislaw-Lem-Bill-Johnston. Accessed 1 May 2016.
- . *Solaris*. 1961. Translated by Joanna Kilmartin and Steve Cox, Harvest, 1970.
- . *Summa Technologiae*. 1964. 2nd ed., 1974. Translated by Joanna Zylińska, U of Minnesota P, 2013.
- Lanser, Susan S. "The 'I' of the Beholder: Equivocal Attachments and the Limits of Structuralist Narratology." Phelan and Rabinowitz, pp. 206-19.
- Lerner, Ben. "Damage Control: The Modern Art World's Tyranny of Price." *Harper's Magazine*, December 2013, harpers.org/archive/2013/12/damage-control. Accessed 29 August 2020.
- . "The Dark Threw Patches Down Upon Me Also." *Lana Turner: A Journal of Poetry and Opinion*, no. 6, 2011, pp. 202-12.

- . "The Golden Vanity." *New Yorker*, 11 June 2012, newyorker.com/magazine/2012/06/18/the-golden-vanity. Accessed 7 July 2020.
- . Interview. Conducted by Christopher Bollen, *Interview Magazine*, 4 September 2014, interviewmagazine.com/culture/ben-lerner. Accessed 9 August 2020.
- . Interview. Conducted by Patrick Langley, January 2015. *The White Review*, no. 13, March 2015, pp. 16-25.
- . "An Interview with Ben Lerner." Conducted by Tao Lin, *The Believer*, 1 September 2014, believermag.com/an-interview-with-ben-lerner. Accessed 27 August 2019.
- . *Leaving the Atocha Station: A Novel*. Coffee House, 2011.
- . *10:04: A Novel*. Picador, 2014.
- . "This Week in Fiction: Ben Lerner on Art, Language, and Uber." Interview conducted by Cressida Leyshon, *New Yorker*, 31 May 2016, newyorker.com/books/page-turner/fiction-this-week-ben-lerner-2016-06-06. Accessed 9 August 2020.
- . "Time Is a Flat Circle: Ben Lerner Interviewed." Conducted by Karl Smith, *Quietus*, 8 February 2015, thequietus.com/articles/17190-ben-lerner-interview-1004-leaving-atocha-station-poetry-time-knausgaard. Accessed 26 July 2020.
- . "'You're a Poet; Don't You Hate Most Poems?'" Interview conducted by Tao Lin, *The Believer*, August 2011. *Wayback Machine*, Internet Archive, 10 August 2015, web.archive.org/web/20150810214538/http://www.believermag.com/exclusives/?read=interview_lerner. Accessed 20 September 2020.
- Lesjak, Carolyn. "Reading Dialectically." Nilges and Sauri, pp. 17-47.
- "Liar Paradox." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 17 August 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liar_paradox. Accessed 23 August 2020.

- Lichtig, Toby. "Manspreading: The Sociopolitics of Ben Lerner's Autofiction." *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 November 2019, the-tls.co.uk/articles/manspreading-lerner-autofiction. Accessed 17 August 2020.
- Lim, Audrea. "The Drugs Don't Work: Tao Lin's 'Taipei' and the Literature of Pharmacology." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 19 June 2013, lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-drugs-dont-work-cao-lins-taipei-and-the-literature-of-pharmacology. Accessed 13 December 2019.
- Lin, Tao. "Interview: Tao Lin." Conducted by Emilie Friedlander. *The Fader*, 4 June 2013, thefader.com/2013/06/04/interview-cao-lin. Accessed 9 February 2020.
- . *Taipei: A Novel*. Vintage, 2013.
- . "Tao Lin Talks His Upcoming Novel 'Taipei.' Also, See the Cover. It's Shiny, and It Moves—Exclusive." Interview conducted by Stephan Lee. *Entertainment Weekly*, 1 February 2013, ew.com/article/2013/02/01/cao-lin-talks-his-upcoming-novel-taipei-also-see-the-cover-its-shiny-and-it-moves-exclusive. Accessed 9 February 2020.
- . "~2.5-Hour/IRL Interview with Tao Lin on MDMA: The 11,810-Word Transcript." Conducted by Chandler Levack. *Thought Catalog*, 2 November 2010, pp. 1-4, thoughtcatalog.com/chandler-levack/2010/11/an-interview-with-cao-lin-on-mdma-the-unedited-transcript. Accessed 29 January 2020.
- . "When I Moved Online." *New York Times*, 21 September 2013, nytimes.com/2013/09/22/opinion/sunday/when-i-moved-online.html. Accessed 20 April 2020.
- "Logic Gate." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 9 February 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logic_gate. Accessed 9 February 2020.

- Ludwigs, Marina. "Walking as a Metaphor for Narrativity." *Studia Neophilologica*, vol. 87, no. sup. 1, 2015, pp. 116-28, [doi:10.1080/00393274.2014.981962](https://doi.org/10.1080/00393274.2014.981962).
- Lytal, Benjamin. "Gchat Is a Noble Pursuit: Tao Lin's Modernist Masterpiece." *Observer*, 4 June 2013, observer.com/2013/06/gchat-is-a-noble-pursuit-tao-lins-modernist-masterpiece. Accessed 3 February 2020.
- Macdonald, Graeme. "Research Note: The Resources of Fiction." *Reviews in Cultural History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2013, pp. 1-24, reviewsinculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/11-RCT42Summer2013.pdf. Accessed 14 January 2020.
- Marcus, Sharon, Heather Love, and Stephen Best. "Building a Better Description." *Representations*, no. 135, Summer 2016, pp. 1-21, [doi:10.1525/rep.2016.135.1.1](https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2016.135.1.1).
- Martin, Theodore. "Contemporary, Inc." *Representations*, no. 142, Spring 2018, pp. 124-44, [doi:10.1525/rep.2018.142.5.124](https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2018.142.5.124).
- . "The Dialectics of Damage: Art, Form, Formlessness: A Reply to Jennifer Ashton." *nonsite.org*, no. 18, 9 October 2015, nonsite.org/feature/9500. Accessed 27 August 2019.
- Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." *Cultural Critique*, no. 31, Autumn 1995, pp. 83-109, jstor.org/stable/1354446.
- Maxey, Ruth. "National Stories and Narrative Voice in the Fiction of Joshua Ferris." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2016, pp. 208-16, [doi:10.1080/00111619.2015.1019410](https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2015.1019410).
- Maybee, Julie E. "Hegel's Dialectics." 3 June 2016. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2019 ed., The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2019, plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/hegel-dialectics. Accessed 2 May 2020.

- McDougall, Aislinn Clare. "What Is Cyber-Consciousness?: Digital Intermediation between Consciousness and Computer through Postmodern Tension in Tao Lin's *Taipei*." *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-century Writings*, vol. 7, no. 1, 28 January 2019, p. 1 (pp. 1-27), [doi:10.16995/c21.555](https://doi.org/10.16995/c21.555).
- McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Routledge, 1987.
- McKibben, Bill. *The End of Nature: Humanity, Climate Change and the Natural World*. 1989. Revised ed., Bloomsbury, 2003.
- McLaughlin, Robert L. "Post-Postmodernism." Bray et al., pp. 212-23.
- McRuer, Robert and Merri Lisa Johnson. "Proliferating Cripistemologies: A Virtual Roundtable." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2014, pp. 149-69.
- Menely, Tobias and Jesse Oak Taylor, editors. *Anthropocene Reading: Literary History in Geologic Times*. Pennsylvania State UP, 2017.
- . "Introduction." Menely and Taylor, pp. 1-24.
- Mertens, Mahlu and Stef Craps. "Contemporary Fiction vs. the Challenge of Imagining the Timescale of Climate Change." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 50, no. 1, Spring 2018, pp. 134-53, [doi:10.1353/sdn.2018.0007](https://doi.org/10.1353/sdn.2018.0007).
- Mock, Jillian. "How Antidepressants Work Is a Mystery Scientists Still Don't Understand." *Discover*, 23 July 2020, discovermagazine.com/health/how-antidepressants-work-is-a-mystery-scientists-still-dont-understand. Accessed 9 September 2020.
- Mollow, Anna. "Cripistemologies: What Disability Theory Needs to Know about Hysteria." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2014, pp. 185-201.
- Morton, Timothy. *Being Ecological*. MIT Press, 2018.

- . *The Ecological Thought*. Harvard UP, 2010.
- . "Ecologocentrism: Unworking Animals." *SubStance*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2008, pp. 73-96, [jstor.org/stable/25195186](https://www.jstor.org/stable/25195186).
- . *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Harvard UP, 2007.
- . *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*. Verso, 2017.
- . *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. U of Minnesota P, 2013.
- Murray, Christopher. "Racism Is a Public Health Issue." *Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation*, [4 June 2020], healthdata.org/about/racism-public-health-issue. Accessed 21 June 2020.
- Murray, Stuart. "The Ambiguities of Inclusion: Disability in Contemporary Literature." Barker and Murray, editors, pp. 90-103.
- . "From Virginia's Sister to Friday's Silence: Presence, Metaphor, and the Persistence of Disability in Contemporary Writing." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2012, pp. 241-58, [doi:10.3828/jlcds.2012.21](https://doi.org/10.3828/jlcds.2012.21).
- . "Reading Disability in a Time of Posthuman Work: Speed and Embodiment in Joshua Ferris' *The Unnamed* and Michael Faber's *Under the Skin*." *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2017, [doi:10.18061/dsq.v37i4.6104](https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i4.6104).
- Nilges, Mathias and Emilio Sauri, editors. *Literary Materialisms*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Nocella, Anthony J., II. "Defining Eco-Ability: Social Justice and the Intersectionality of Disability, Nonhuman Animals, and Ecology." Nocella et al., editors, pp. 3-21.
- Nocella, Anthony J., II, Judy K. C. Bentley, and Janet M. Duncan, editors. *Earth, Animal, and Disability Liberation: The Rise of the Eco-Ability Movement*. Peter Lang, 2012.

- Noys, Benjamin. "Skimming the Surface: Critiquing Anti-Critique." *Journal for Cultural Research*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2017, pp. 295-308, doi:[10.1080/14797585.2017.1370483](https://doi.org/10.1080/14797585.2017.1370483).
- O'Connor, Timothy. "Emergent Properties." 10 August 2020. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2020 ed., The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2020, plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/properties-emergent. Accessed 2 October 2020.
- O'Dell, Jacqueline. "One More Time with Feeling: Repetition, Contingency, and Sincerity in Ben Lerner's *10:04*." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2019, pp. 447-61, doi:[10.1080/00111619.2019.1596875](https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2019.1596875).
- Oliver, Michael. *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice*. Macmillan Education, 1996. Originally delivered on 9 February 1993 as the Inaugural Professorial Lecture at the U of Greenwich, London.
- Oziewicz, Marek. "Speculative Fiction." 29 March 2017. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, general editor, Paula Rabinowitz, Oxford UP, 2015-, doi:[10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.78](https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.013.78).
- Parikka, Jussi. *The Anthrobscene*. U of Minnesota P, 2014.
- Pas, Justine M. "The Politics of Relay Translation and Language Hierarchies: The Case of Stanisław Lem's *Solaris*." *Translation and the Intersection of Texts, Contexts and Politics: Historical and Socio-Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Mohammed Albakry, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 157-77.
- Peeke, Dan. "Forrest Gump: 10 Differences Between the Book & the Film." *Screen Rant*, 8 March 2020, screenrant.com/forrest-gump-book-film-differences. Accessed 2 July 2020.

- Phelan, James. *Somebody Telling Somebody Else: A Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative*. Ohio State UP, 2017.
- Phelan, James and Peter J. Rabinowitz, editors. *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Blackwell, 2005.
- Phillips, Dana. *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America*. Oxford UP, 2003.
- Poulet, Georges. "Phenomenology of Reading." *New Literary History*, vol. 1, no. 1, October 1969, pp. 53-68, [doi:10.2307/468372](https://doi.org/10.2307/468372).
- Price, George R. and James Brewer Stewart. "Introduction: Hosea Easton and the Agony of Race." Price and Stewart, editors, pp. 1-47.
- Price, George R. and James Brewer Stewart, editors. *To Heal the Scourge of Prejudice: The Life and Writings of Hosea Easton*. U of Massachusetts P, 1999.
- "Prime Number." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 21 February 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_number. Accessed 1 March 2020.
- "Printing Out the Internet." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 13 July 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printing_out_the_Internet. Accessed 19 August 2020.
- "Procedural Programming." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 26 February 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Procedural_programming. Accessed 2 May 2020.
- Puar, Jasbir K. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Durham: Duke UP, 2017.
- Pycha, Anne. "Language and Thought in 'The Unnamed.'" *Thirsty Linguist*, 2 September 2010, thirstylinguist.wordpress.com/2010/09/02/hello-world. Accessed 15 January 2020.

---. "Language and Thought in 'The Unnamed', Part 2." *Thirsty Linguist*, 17 September 2010, thirstylinguist.wordpress.com/2010/09/17/language-and-thought-in-the-unnamed-part-2.

Accessed 2 July 2020.

Quayson, Ato. *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation*. Columbia UP, 2007.

Rabinowitz, Peter J. "'Betraying the Sender': The Rhetoric and Ethics of Fragile Texts."

Narrative, vol. 2, no. 3, October 1994, pp. 201-213, [jstor.org/stable/20079639](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20079639).

Reiffenrath, Tanja. "Mind over Matter? Joshua Ferris's *The Unnamed* as Counternarrative." [sic]

- *a journal of literature, culture and literary translation*, vol. 5, no. 1, December 2014,

[doi:10.15291/sic/1.5.lc.10](https://doi.org/10.15291/sic/1.5.lc.10), sic-journal.org/Article/Index/305. Accessed 10 July 2020.

"The Right to Roam: Joys and Responsibilities in Norway." *visitnorway.com*, Innovation

Norway, 2020, visitnorway.com/plan-your-trip/travel-tips-a-z/right-of-access. Accessed

17 July 2020.

Roberts, David. *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism*. Signale, 2011.

Robinson, Jenefer. *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art*.

Clarendon, 2005.

Rudrum, David, Ridvan Askin, and Frida Beckman, editors. *New Directions in Philosophy and*

Literature. Edinburgh UP, 2019.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Impossible Worlds." Bray et al., pp. 368-79.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1978. Penguin, 2003.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*. 1943.

Translated by Sarah Richmond, Routledge, 2018.

- . "The Itinerary of a Thought." 1972. *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, translated by John Matthews from *Situations VIII and IX*, Verso, 2008, pp. 33-64.
- Sergeant, David. "Representing the Planet: Affect, Scale, and Utopia." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1-15, doi:10.1215/00295132-8139267.
- Seegert, Liz. "Women More Often Misdiagnosed Because of Gaps in Trust and Knowledge." *Association of Health Care Journalists*, 16 November 2018, healthjournalism.org/blog/2018/11/women-more-often-misdiagnosed-because-of-gaps-in-trust-and-knowledge. Accessed 23 June 2020.
- Shakespeare, Tom. "Nordic Disability Research: Reflections, Not Conclusions." Gustavsson et al., editors, pp. 295-302.
- . "The Social Model of Disability." Davis, pp. 195-203.
- Shaviro, Steven. *No Speed Limit: Three Essays on Accelerationism*. U of Minnesota P, 2015.
- Shaw, Jacqueline. "The Thing with Thingness." *Black Box: Articulating Architecture's Core in the Post-Digital Era: 107th ACSA Annual Meeting Proceedings*, edited by Amy Kulper, Grace La, and Jeremy Ficca, Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2019, pp. 592-95, doi:10.35483/ACSA.AM.107.116.
- Sheu, Chingshun J. *An Existential Ethics for a Postmodern Age*. 2015. National Taiwan U, MA thesis. *Academia.edu*, academia.edu/15171345/An_Existentialist_Ethics_for_a_Postmodern_Age. Accessed 26 August 2020.
- . "Forced Excursion: Walking as Disability in Joshua Ferris's *The Unnamed*." *M/C Journal: A Journal of Media and Culture*, vol. 21, no. 4, journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/1403. Accessed 20 June 2020.

---. "What We Talk about When We Talk about New Media: Digital Subjectivity and Tao Lin's *Taipei*." *Textual Practice*, vol. 34, no. 8, 2020, pp. 1269-84,

[doi:10.1080/0950236X.2019.1580763](https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2019.1580763).

Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Theory*. U of Michigan P, 2008.

Simondon, Gilbert. *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*. 1958. Translated by Cécile Malaspina and John Rogove, Univocal, 2017.

Skov Nielsen, Henrik, James Phelan, and Richard Walsh. "Fictionality As Rhetoric: A Response to Paul Dawson." *Narrative*, vol. 23, no. 1, January 2015, pp. 101-11,

[doi:10.1353/nar.2015.0000](https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2015.0000).

---. "Ten Theses about Fictionality." *Narrative*, vol. 23, no. 1, January 2015, pp. 61-73,

[doi:10.1353/nar.2015.0005](https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2015.0005).

Skrebowski, Luke. "Approaching the Contemporary: On (Post-)Conceptual Writing." *Amodern*, no. 6, July 2016, amodern.net/article/approaching-the-contemporary. Accessed 19 August 2020.

Smith, Zadie. "Man vs. Corpse." *New York Review of Books*, 5 December 2013,

nybooks.com/articles/2013/12/05/zadie-smith-man-vs-corpse. Accessed 22 January 2018.

Soderbergh, Steven, director and writer. *Solaris*. Performances by Viola Davis and George

Clooney, Twentieth Century Fox, 2002.

Solomon, Andrew. *Far from the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity*. Scribner, 2012.

Song, Min Hyoung. "The New Materialism and Neoliberalism." Huehls and Greenwald Smith, pp. 52-69.

- Srikanth, Siddharth. "Fictionality and Autofiction." *Style*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2019, pp. 344-63, [doi:10.5325/style.53.3.0344](https://doi.org/10.5325/style.53.3.0344).
- Steintrager, James A. *Cruel Delight: Enlightenment Culture and the Inhuman*. Indiana UP, 2004.
- Stengers, Isabelle. *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*. 2009. Translated by Andrew Goffey, Open Humanities, 2015.
- Stiegler, Bernard. *Technics and Time, 2: Disorientation*. 1996. Translated by Stephen Barker, Stanford UP, 2009.
- Straus, Joseph N. "Autism as Culture." *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis, 4th ed., Routledge, 2013, pp. 460-84.
- Sturgeon, Jonathon. "2014: The Death of the Postmodern Novel and the Rise of Autofiction." *Flavorwire*, 1 January 2015, flavorwire.com/496570/2014-the-death-of-the-postmodern-novel-and-the-rise-of-autofiction. Accessed 17 July 2020.
- Sullivan, Mark. "All the Things COVID-19 Will Change Forever, According to 30 Top Experts." *Fast Company*, 20 April 2020, fastcompany.com/90486053/all-the-things-covid-19-will-change-forever-according-to-30-top-experts. Accessed 22 April 2020.
- Svensson, Peter. "Smartphones Now Outsell 'Dumb' Phones." *Newshub*, 28 April 2013, newshub.co.nz/technology/smartphones-now-oussell-dumb-phones-2013042912. Accessed 17 December 2019.
- Sykes, Rachel. *The Quiet Contemporary American Novel*. Manchester UP, 2018.
- Tait, Adrian. "Hyperobjects, Human Hubris and J. G. Ballard's *The Wind from Nowhere*." *Green Letters*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2018, pp. 354-65, [doi:10.1080/14688417.2018.1528468](https://doi.org/10.1080/14688417.2018.1528468).
- "Tardigrade." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 31 August 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tardigrade. Accessed 3 September 2020.

Tarkovsky, Andrei, director. *Solaris*. Written by Fridrikh Gorenshteyn and Andrei Tarkovsky, performances by Donatas Banionis and Vladislav Dvorzhetsky, Mosfilm, 1972.

Taylor, Christopher. Review of *The Unnamed*. *Guardian*, 20 February 2010, theguardian.com/books/2010/feb/20/unnamed-joshua-ferris-review. Accessed 11 May 2020.

Thomas, R. Eric. “It Does Not Matter If You Are Good—On Omar Jimenez, George Floyd, Christian Cooper and the Myth of Being Non-Threatening.” *Elle*, 29 May 2020, elle.com/culture/career-politics/a32712287/cnn-omar-jimenez-arrest-response. Accessed 22 June 2020.

Thomas, William I. and Dorothy Swaine Thomas. *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs*. Knopf, 1928.

Thurschwell, Adam. “Specters of Nietzsche: Potential Futures for the Concept of the Political in Agamben and Derrida.” *Cardozo Law Review*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2003, pp. 1193-1259. *HeinOnline*, heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/cdozo24&div=43&id=&page=. Accessed 24 December 2014.

Tideman, Magnus. “A Relational Perspective on Disability: An Illustration from the School System.” Gustavsson et al., editors, pp. 219-32.

Tinnell, John. “Grammatization: Bernard Stiegler’s Theory of Writing and Technology.” *Computers and Composition*, no. 37, 2015, pp. 132-46, [doi:10.1016/j.compcom.2015.06.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2015.06.011).

- Tolkin, Ben. "Homestuck in Review: The Internet's First Masterpiece." *Medium*, 14 October 2016, <http://medium.com/@bbctol/homestuck-in-review-the-internets-first-masterpiece-989a84548767>. Accessed 17 December 2019.
- Tsitsovits, Ioannis and Pieter Vermeulen. "The Anthropocene Scriptorium: Writing and Agency in Ben Lerner's *10:04* and Tom McCarthy's *Satin Island*." *Ecocriticism—Environments in Anglophone Literatures*, edited by Sonja Frenzel and Birgit Neumann, Universitätsverlag Winter, 2017, pp. 193-216.
- Vermeulen, Pieter. "How Should a Person Be (Transpersonal)? Ben Lerner, Roberto Esposito, and the Biopolitics of the Future." *Political Theory*, vol. 45, no. 5, 2017, pp. 659-81, [doi:10.1177/0090591716668382](https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591716668382).
- Vermeulen, Timothy and Robin van den Akker. "Notes on Metamodernism." *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2010, [doi:10.3402/jac.v2i0.5677](https://doi.org/10.3402/jac.v2i0.5677).
- Voelz, Johannes. "The American Novel and the Transformation of Privacy: Ben Lerner's *10:04* (2014) and Miranda July's *The First Bad Man* (2015)." *The American Novel in the 21st Century: Cultural Contexts—Literary Developments—Critical Analyses*, edited by Michael Basseler and Ansgar Nünning, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2019, pp. 323-37.
- . "The New Sincerity as Literary Hospitality." Clapp and Ridge, pp. 209-26.
- Vuong, Ocean. "Ben Lerner Talks to Ocean Vuong About Love, Whiteness, and Toxic Masculinity: The Author of *The Topeka School* in Conversation with a Former Student." *Literary Hub*, 15 October 2019, lithub.com/ben-lerner-talks-to-ocean-vuong-about-love-whiteness-and-toxic-masculinity. Accessed 17 August 2020.

Walsh, Richard. *The Rhetoric of Fictionality: Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction*. Ohio State UP, 2007.

Wasserman, Robin. *Mother Daughter Widow Wife: A Novel*. Scribner, 2020.

Watts, Daniel. "Kierkegaard, Repetition and Ethical Constancy." *Philosophical Investigations*, vol. 40, no. 4, October 2017, pp. 414-39, [doi:10.1111/phn.12169](https://doi.org/10.1111/phn.12169).

Watts, Steven. "'An Eerie Cacophony': Reading Occupy Novels." *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-century Writings*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2020, [doi:10.16995/c21.1438](https://doi.org/10.16995/c21.1438), c21.openlibhums.org/article/id/1438. Accessed 3 August 2020.

Wendell, Susan. "Unhealthy Disabled: Treating Chronic Illnesses as Disabilities." 2010. Davis, pp. 160-72.

White, Rachel R. "Staying Up All Night with an Adderall'd Tao Lin." *Vulture*, New York Magazine, 5 June 2013, vulture.com/2013/06/tao-lin-profile-taipei-drugs-adderall.html. Accessed 12 December 2019.

Whyte, Jessica. "'A New Use of the Self': Giorgio Agamben on the Coming Community." *Theory & Event*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2010, [doi:10.1353/tae.0.0115](https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.0.0115).

Willems, Brian. "Hospitality and Risk Society in Tao Lin's *Taipei*." Clapp and Ridge, pp. 227-40.

Witt, Emily. "Ben Lerner: 'People Say, "Oh, Here's Another Brooklyn Novel by a Guy with Glasses.'" *Guardian*, 3 January 2015, theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/03/ben-lerner-1004-novel-books-interview. Accessed 2 October 2020.

---. "The Gpistolary Novel: Tao Lin's 'Taipei.'" *Daily Beast*, 18 June 2013, updated 11 July 2017, thedailybeast.com/the-gpistolary-novel-tao-lins-taipei. Accessed 9 February 2020.

- Wolfendale, Peter. *Object-Oriented Philosophy: The Noumenon's New Clothes*. Urbanomic, 2014.
- Woods, Derek. "Scale Critique for the Anthropocene." *Minnesota Review*, no. 83, 2014, pp. 133-42, [doi:10.1215/00265667-2782327](https://doi.org/10.1215/00265667-2782327).
- "Working Group on the 'Anthropocene.'" *Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy*, 21 May 2019, quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene. Accessed 15 November 2020.
- Worthington, Marjorie. "Fiction in the 'Post-Truth' Era: The Ironic Effects of Autofiction." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 58, no. 5, 6 July 2017, pp. 471-83, [doi:10.1080/00111619.2017.1331999](https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2017.1331999).
- Zola, Irving Kenneth. "Toward the Necessary Universalizing of a Disability Policy." 1989. *The Milbank Quarterly*, vol. 83, no. 4, 2005, pp. 1-27, [doi:10.1111/j.1468-0009.2005.00436.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0009.2005.00436.x).
- Zupančič, Alenka. *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two*. MIT Press, 2003.
- Zylinska, Joanna. *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene*. Open Humanities, 2014.