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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Embers of the Twilight Rune: Cotard, the Loop, and Listening Futures

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Master of Arts

in

Music

Michelle Helene Mackenzie

Committee in charge:

Professor Amy Marie Cimini, Chair
Professor Charles Rector Curtis
Professor M. Leslie-Santana

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University of California San Diego

2022

Dedication

I would like to express deep gratitude to Amy Cimini, Charles Curtis, and M. Leslie-Santana for their wisdom, patience, and guidance with this project. A special thanks to Stephen and Suzanne Mackenzie for their encouragement through my studies. To Justin Patterson, Michael Loncaric, Dylan Godwin, Nanna Kruse, and Ryley O’Byrne, whose insightful comments, suggestions, and unwavering support were integral to the completion of this work. And to Merle, my everything, my “constellation in an ocean whose rivers run no fresher than a trickle of saliva” (Mina Loy).

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Abstract of the Thesis

Embers of the Twilight Rune: Cotard, the Loop, and Listening Futures

by

Michelle Helene Mackenzie

Master of Arts in Music

University of California San Diego, 2022

Professor Amy Marie Cimini, Chair

Embers of the Twilight Rune is a portrait of a certain apprehension of time that, since the late 19th century, has treated the future as an already-obiterated rather than as a yet-to-be-realized state of affairs. The text proceeds as an unearthing of this morbid (and loopy!) temporal schematism within an array of novels, films and sonic theoretical treatises: Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, Charlie Kaufman's *Synecdoche, New York*, and MIT Press // Urbanomic Art Editions's edited volume of sonic and musical oddities, *AUDINT-Undead/Unsound*. Coordinating all of these texts is the figure of Jules Cotard, a neurologist whose clinical research came to focus on "delusions of negation"--most notably, the condition of living subjects who reported that they were in fact dead. Instead of balking at this delusion or treating it as an bizarre footnote in a history of madness, EOTTR will treat it as fully resonant with the economic and cultural logic of modernity, such that Cotard's Syndrome (as these delusions came to be called) ought to be appreciated as an interpretive key to the present (sensed a site of foreclosed possibility

We will begin with the time of death and the futures thereafter. The future is impossible to hold down in the first place, of course, especially in times formed without ends of history, but we will see if we might rest comfortably, and maybe even strike a chord from the rasping of market noise.

Bad information
June 28th, 1880

Doctor Jules Cotard presents a paper at the *Société Médico-Psychologique* in which he describes a patient who believes herself to be dead. Cotard introduces her malady as a form of delirious hypochondria. The patient, Mlle X, affirms that she no longer possesses a ‘brain, nerves, chest, stomach or entrails’; all that is left of her, she believes, are ‘the skin and bones of a disorganized body’ (*la peau et les os du corps désorganisé*) (Cotard, 307). This *delire de negation*, or negational delusion, extends into metaphysical ruminations. The patient renounces God and the devil and, believing herself to be the remains of this disorganized body, does not think it necessary to eat. Setting herself afire, Mlle X believes, is the only way to rid the world of her remains, and so she repeatedly asks to be burnt, and attempts to do so herself on various occasions¹. The syndrome is characterized by nihilistic, paranoid delusions, a tipping of Cartesian logic beyond its limit, a negation or skepticism with a denial of world or others culminating in the belief that ‘*I think, that I am not*’² and an urging for the total destruction of her disorganized remains.³

¹ These descriptions are my translation of Jules Cotard’s *Études Sur Les Maladies Cérébrales et Mentales*, Paris, Librairie J.B. Baillière et Fils, 1891

² Though I wrote this sentence in 2014, I discovered an uncannily similar formulation in *Undead/Unsound*: “It is rebooted into a system state understood by AUDINT to simulate inverse Cartesianism— ‘I think therefore I am not’—thereby deceiving the system into believing it is a walking corpse.” Is there meaning in this synchronicity? People have been short-circuiting the cogito since at least Lacan (“I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think. I am not whenever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think.” — *Ecrits*)

³ Cotard syndrome might initially appear to be some kind of proto-Deleuzian body without organs. Deleuze and Guattari in fact briefly mention Cotard syndrome in *Capitalism and*

C—M—C

A linear progression, one with beginning, middle, and end, regulated by use. A Platonic rhythm, metric, governed by the anticipatory, the laying forth of a theory of value constituted by mortal objects. The future of such movement is knowable: it is constituted by the death of the commodity.

M—C—M

From line to loop, a tautology at that. A circular, repetitive rhythm. The birth of infinitely circulating movement. This is the movement of an eternally returning figure: money. The future links back to its beginnings. The origin becomes the goal⁴.

M—C—M1

The work of sorcerers. Motion constituted by motion in excess of itself. The universal equivalent conquers the whole of the loop, bursting the seams. The time of capital has no end, is caught in a loop of things that refuse to die and which infinitely produce more of the same. The dead loop

Schizophrenia, in a reference from the section on ‘*How to become a body without Organs*’ where they write, quoting the above case study of Cotard’s, “The BwO: it is already under way the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them. A long procession. The *hypochondriac body*: the organs are destroyed, the damage has already been done, nothing happens anymore. Miss X claims she no longer has a brain or nerves or chest or stomach of guts. All she has left is skin and bones of a disorganized body. These are her own words”³. The Cotardian body without organs does not, however, easily fit into any of the BwO subsets: the cancerous—endlessly reproducing—empty—fully disorganized and nondirectional—or the full—productive but without hierarchically structured organs, and closer to virtual BwO-scape governed by connection and movement. The Cotardian body is disorganized, governed by chaotic movements, and is, in a sense, caught in a repetitive, obsessive desire for total destruction of their remains.

⁴ In reference to Benjamin’s Kraus quotation in *Theses on the Philosophy of History*.

expands outwards, across the edges of the knowable, the visible, and seeks to possess all silences, chasms, questions, and empty time.

How might the dead turn against infinite linear time, find its break?

The figure of Cot(t)ard⁵, the walking corpse, I would like to claim, provides a means of braiding and unbraiding particular forms of subjectivity, time and the future under capitalism, as well as revolutionary time and temporality in Marx, which is, as Sami Khatib describes, of a dual nature, on the one hand, “a homogeneous, cyclical, and ultimately ‘time-less’ time of capitalism” and, on the other, “a disruptive, revolutionary opening-up of historical time” (*The Time of Capital and the Messianicity of Time*, 47). It is as much an obsession with the present as an existential rejection of the time of capital- one which ends in annihilation, but nonetheless opens the door to possible alternate temporalities.

Akin to Laurent Berlant’s concept of cruel optimism, Cotard is a symptom, instantiation, and negation of the time of capital: it allows us to examine the failures of history with particular clarity⁶. The following will explore a Cotardian archive: three texts which explicitly reference and express the constitution and contradictions of Cotard, thereby offering a means with which to historicize the periods which formed them. We will begin with the allegory of Cotard under monopoly capitalism in the early twentieth century, in Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, then move to the finance capitalism of the 2000s, in Charlie Kaufman’s 2008 *Synecdoche New*

⁵ Emil Régis coined the term “Cotard Syndrome” which was popularized by Jules Séglas. (2) Cotard Delusion or Syndrome?: A Conceptual History; G.E. Berrios and R. Luque, *Comprehensive psychiatry*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (May/June), 1995: pp 218-223

⁶ Thank you to Dr. Amy Cimini for this formulation/complication.

York, and conclude in the late digital/information age, in the teens, with MIT Press//Urbanomic Art Edition's 2019 *AUDINT-Undead/Unsound*. Each work directly references and exposes Cotard's *delire de negation* while expressing its respective configuration of memory, temporality, history, and experience.

Cotard ushers in multiple trajectories, multiple futures and fires, some that direct its listeners toward total annihilation, and others toward creative destruction and force⁷. Futurity in Proust and Kaufman runs backwards and out, in clusters of time past and doubled. The speculative imaginary and distributed vibrational force of *AUDINT's* sonic futures seem to offer an out to dead ends. Unlike the Proustian loop of individual, sifted time, and Kaufman's ever-expanding loop of architectural, archived cultural memory, *AUDINT's* interstitial redistribution of matter through the mobilization of the speculative seems to provide an out. Yet *AUDINT's* Cotardian mode is imbricated in its time. While awakening a speculative, futurist imaginary and redistributing time, sensation, and experience, the text also demonstrates the limits of sensorial undeadening, the potential for the undead time of capital to seize perception, thin and distribute death, and focalize presence in an eternal, anaesthetized forgetting. It is only, I propose, a re-examination and multiplication of the very concepts of 'ends' and 'loops', a loosening of eschatological impulses and knots, and perhaps a turn to new concepts of rhythm that might lead to elsewhere.

Mark Fisher has suggested that capital is itself an 'eerie entity'— structuring not only affects, but also forms, genres, disciplines, and 'modes of being'⁸ (The Weird and the Eerie, 11; 9). As we span the last century, we will begin with Cotard in the mode of the literary: individuals move

⁷ Here I'm thinking not only of Marxist formulations of creative destruction, say in the work of David Harvey and Manuel Castells, but also its theorization as creative force in Indigenous theory, say in the work of Robin Wall Kimmerer.

⁸ Page 16, Fisher.

through looped, doubled time, Cotard is a character (Dr. Cottard), but also the conceptual, affective shadow haunting *In Search of Lost Time's* protagonist, Marcel, and its author, Proust himself. Kauffman's filmic space offers an architectural, staged mode—the novel's representational grid is made three dimensional as a Cotardian mode is dispersed into the structure of the city space: the undead environment rots and poisons its inhabitants, yet they live on. Finally, we will conclude with sonic, auditory Cotardian formations, with ephemeral, unknown vibratory sounds that operate in a matrix of sensation, in fragments, silences, whispers and speculative, multidimensional times. As we traverse the literary, filmic, and sonic, Cotard will serve as an undead formation expressing modes of being, genres of feeling, and relationships to time.

First, however, we will begin with the undead time of capital.

*

“Capital- time structurally necessitates an endless repetition of its retroactive measurement – even though a final measurement is endlessly postponed. Against this form of spurious infinity, Benjamin called for a “messianic arrest of happening” (Benjamin, SW 4: 396) breaking off, interrupting, derailing the historical dynamic of the auto-temporalizing movement of capital-time.... The task of the Benjaminian “historical materialist” is thus to seize this inner loop within time, giving us time to free and retroactively redeem the contracted, congealed time encapsulated in capital-time.”

Sami Khatib, *The Time of Capital and the Messianicity of Time*

Capital, Khatib tells us, contradictorily exists both in time and as a producer of time. Benjamin's late Marxist formulation of messianic time, Khatib then suggests, becomes a way of moving beyond “absolute Newtonian, relativist Aristotelian, or transcendental Kantian time” underlying

orthodox Marxist constructions of time and linear historiography⁹ (48). Capital, Marx writes, is dead labour¹⁰, whereby capitalist production is a “complete inversion of the relation between dead and living labour, between value and the force that creates value”¹¹ (Marx, 160; 214). The time of dead labour is *within* and *of* past time, hours, days, weeks of alienated labour which nonetheless continues to exist in the form of capital. Capital is dead time, but in order to exist, it needs to keep moving. What if this dead labor were to speak; given the opportunity, what would it say about its situatedness in the world, how might it articulate the architecture of its failures?

It would likely begin by asking where it was, and when it was: this confusion would arise from its dislocation from the past without meaningful continuity into the present, as well as its loss of content, its ability to produce value. Sufferers of Cotard syndrome describe feeling a distinctly unreal, dreamlike, out-of-time quality of life, as well as having bodies without content (Debruyne et al). It would describe itself as desensitized, confused by its continued motion as it remains encapsulated in the body of money in motion. Cotardian subjects report bodily numbness and the sensation of a lack of organs (Reif et al). Everywhere it would see and smell rotting things, commodities as the festering casualties of capital, self-verifying signs of a trajectory towards an

⁹ By this I believe Khatib is describing the linear, teleological trajectory underlying certain veins of orthodox Marxist thought, ie the notion of the march through industrialization to a final utopian ‘end’ point (which parallels critiques of certain Marxist strains’ eschatological, Christian undertones, as we see in Benjamin’s Theses on the Philosophy of History).

¹⁰ He writes on page 160 that : Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has purchased of him.4 If the labourer consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist.5

¹¹ He continues on page 214 : An example will show, in conclusion, how this sophistication, peculiar to and characteristic of capitalist production, this complete inversion of the relation between dead and living labour, between value and the force that creates value, mirrors itself in the consciousness of capitalists.

infinite passing. The Cotardian subject no longer finds it necessary to brush her teeth or bathe; her state only confirm that she is, in fact, dead. Dead labour, however, unlike the Cotardian subject, does not necessarily recognize and confront the fact of its ongoing movement, nor the fact of its undeadness. Here Cotardian time offers the potential for thinking through temporalities that refuse the time of capital.

Cotard syndrome involves a transformed relationship to the future, reality, and the body. The Cotardian future, at first glance, appears nonexistent. But it is not that it has disappeared; the future—one's death is always in the future, always beyond the horizon of the visible— has been relocated to the past, a future past that did not carry out its promise, the ultimate promise; the Cotardian subject thus endlessly seeks to return to a future that failed to deliver the only knowable, unalterable fact: the ultimate event, the End. Whereas Cotard syndrome projects its own overcoming as the annihilation of the body without future, Proustian death, or extratemporality, seeks to overcome the limits of the present by reactivating the unseized potentialities of the past, though this ends at the level of the contemplative individual. The Cotardian subject located at the heart of the search for lost time— time not dead in the past but living, wandering there— speaks both from and against the time of capital, a temporality which positions the time of the future as empty time that will be constituted by more of the present.

So death has passed the Cotardian subject by, the future has been relocated to the past. A loop of known textures. This does not, however, mean that the future has necessarily 'become' the past. If by 'future' we mean final event, or death, then here the Cotardian future is in the past.

Marcel Proust publishes *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. George D. Painter, in his biography of Proust, would later write, “the heroic age of French medicine was just beginning,” and among Adrien Proust’s, Marcel’s father’s, contemporaries, was a fellow student— and later friend¹² of Adrien Proust— “whose name sounds oddly familiar, and need only be spelt with a double ‘t’ to become recognizable: his name was Cotard”¹³ (Bougousslavsky 251; Painter 4).

*

How is death figured in Proust, and for that matter, in the future? Does *In Search of Lost Time* enact a glance from beyond the grave, and the time and future of the Cotardian subject? The

¹² From a text on fictional doctors in *À la Recherche*: “Dr. Cottard’s models include several physicians of the time, including Adrien Proust himself. The name ‘Cottard’ was derived from ‘Cotard’, a friend of Adrien Proust, who made his thesis with Charcot on brain hemiatropy, and later wrote a famous paper, ‘Delire des negations’ [17], which is still called Cotard syndrome today” (Bougousslavsky, J, et al, 252)

¹³ It would be too simple to suggest that Proust’s Cottard is somehow modeled on the biographical details of Cotard’s life, or that the character in some way embodies Cotard syndrome; Painter suggests, in fact, that Cottard was modeled after several physicians. What is sure, however, is that Proust would have known of, and likely personally known, Jules Cotard, as well as the peculiar syndrome that would come to bear Cotard’s name in 1893. In *A biographical note on Marcel Proust’s Professor Cottard*, J. Pearn and C. Thorpe argue that Cottard was in fact modeled after the ‘real life figure’, and that their lives show ‘striking parallels’. The authors’ lack of research however—for example their belief that Cottard’s character appears only in volume two of the tome—discredits their thesis. Moreover, even had the research proven more accurate, a biographical parallelism is not of particular importance in relation to this paper.

Proustian future may have fallen through the cracks¹⁴, but does this mean it has been forgotten, lost, abolished, that it is repressed, or that it has settled into the infrastructure of the house in which it sleeps? Does Proustian death smile behind us, hand in hand, *main-tenant*, with a future past?

There is certainly a difference between the abolishment and the death of the future; each involves a different temporality, and perhaps guides us towards the distinction that Khatib makes between the empty, ‘endless repetitive time of capitalism’ (abolishment) and the ‘full, revolutionary time of the discontinuous and disruptive’, the time of the *Jetztzeit*, of historical materialism (death) (*The Time of Capital and the Messianicity of Time*, 56; 47). To abolish the future is to colonize it with the present, or variations of the present, and to give the appearance that it is eternally extinguished, rather than exiled. Once the future dies, however, once death is absorbed by the time of capital, it does not truly die but becomes an unseized potential locked in the past. In Proust, this potential becomes accessible only through the unimportant detail, the fragmented pieces of what was once whole.

That is to say, it is not through the will, through language or a discursive act, through ritual or prayer that involuntary memory—both confirmation of and cure for death in Proust— unfolds. Marcel cannot simply comb through his memories and will an experience of involuntary memory. He tries but fails. Involuntary memory occurs only through an unexpected shock, accident, stumble or catastrophe (and here we can mean little catastrophes: events that disrupt time’s linear pull). In recognizing time’s loop, or doubling, Marcel is thrust outside time.

¹⁴ This is in reference to Fredric Jameson’s *Has the Future Fallen Through the Cracks?; Joyce or Proust?*, which I encountered while taking his graduate course on Modernism in the Spring of 2013 (where I began making many of the Cotardian connections).

Out (with)in Modernity, or Monopoly Capitalism

“What profoundly modifies [thinking peoples’] system of thought is much more likely to be something that in itself seems to have no importance, something that reverses the order of time for them by making them contemporaneous with another epoch in their lives.

And that this is so we may see in practice from the beauty of the writing which is inspired in this particular way: the song of a bird in the park at Montboissier, or a breeze laden with the scent of mignonette, are obviously phenomena of less consequence than the great events of the Revolution and the Empire; but they inspired Chateaubriand to write pages of infinitely greater value in his *Mémoire D’Outre-tombe*.”

Marcel Proust, 749, *Time Regained*

XIV.

“Origin is the goal [Ziel: terminus]”

Karl Kraus, *Worte in Versen I* [Words in Verse]

“History is the object of a construction whose place is formed not in homogenous and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now [Jetztzeit]. For Robespierre, Roman antiquity was a past charged with the here-and-now, which he exploded out of the continuum of history. The French revolution thought of itself as a latterday Rome. It cited ancient Rome exactly the way fashion cites a past costume. Fashion has an eye for what is up-to-date, wherever it moves in the jungle [Dickicht: maze, thicket] of what was. It is the tiger’s leap into that which has gone before. Only it takes place in an arena in which the ruling classes are in control. The same leap into the open sky of history is the dialectical one, as Marx conceptualized the revolution.”

Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*

For Benjamin, revolutionary time involves the displacement of the nightmare of the present.

Time does not move teleologically towards utopia, with the present as a discrete point in this

trajectory. “The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are "status quo" *is* the catastrophe. It is not an ever-present possibility but what in each case is given... Thus Strindberg (in *To Damascus?*): hell is not something that awaits us, but this life here and now” (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 473). The upsetting of the supposed ‘progress’ of the linear movement of time is, for Benjamin, a radical gesture. Cotardian death involves an interruption of history and in so doing provides an allegory of the messianism of which Benjamin speaks. Cotard’s delusion begins as a misreading, a misreading of events past, as well as a hypochondriac rejection of the world, the body’s referent and the very organs which allow the body to reproduce itself and its labour. How might this misreading, this stumbling into multiple temporalities, present not the desire for an out of capitalism, but an ‘out’ that enters the time of capitalism and transforms its very temporal landscape?

looped Time

The time of Western, European modernity— Marcel’s time, that of monopoly capitalism—is, from the beginning, always already looped. At the level of its narrative, we realize of course that the end of the book loops back to the beginning, that Marcel will write a book about all the events past, a book that we have presumably just read. Does this amount to a total disorganization of time, an outside-of-time-ness, or a book that was always already written, whose future was in fact there, at the outset? In this sense, *In Search of Lost Time* is always read twice, from the beginning, and from the end.

In Search of Lost Time loops back to the beginning, but allows for the possibility that Marcel was content with the book written or that in the end, the book he apparently desires to write will be a different book from the one he set out to write. All that we know, or at least can assume, is that we have just read it. This looping reconstitutes the present in relation to a future that is not constituted by empty time, waiting to be made full by a future present, but one that, in the end, through the end's suture to the beginning, is always already historical. It is no longer the place of the unformed, the silent and empty, but instead the idea of alternate, disruptive action.

If the promise of the future lies in the goal of capture and recapture, or an infinite archival expansion, whereby every crevice of the world becomes 'represented', 'documented', 'organized', we are left with an infinite regression—once Marcel writes the book of his life he will have to write a book about the writing of the book, and then about the writing of the writing of the book, and on and on. The future's utopian potential, however, lies not in some identifiable, delineable point, but in the disruption of the eternal time of capital via the rupture of linear, teleological temporality, through the potential for new relations, new movements between the material once the knowable, the present and past 'as is' have already been declared dead, or looped.

the body as time portal

In *Time Regained*, in the scene in front of Mme de Guermantes's afternoon party, Marcel reflects upon the party's frivolous appeal, and subsequently seeks to recollect, and possibly describe with 'talent' some of the frivolous pleasures of his past. Marcel attempts to capture these 'snapshots',

in particular those ‘shot’ in Venice, but “the mere word ‘snapshot’ made Venice seem to [Marcel] as boring as an exhibition of photographs, and [he] now felt that [he] had no more taste, no more talent for describing now what [he] had seen in the past, than [he] had had yesterday for describing what at that very moment [he] was, with a meticulous and melancholy eye, actually observing” (898).

Marcel tries to locate and enliven reified, dead images, but these signs remain emptied, cold, sterile. Literature, the potential for the sign to say and distribute, suddenly is emptied of life, becomes “less charged with reality than [Marcel] had once supposed” (898). But just as Marcel resigns himself to the idea that all is lost, he is almost hit by a taxi cab, and as he jumps out of the way, trips against the paving stones. After recovering his balance, Marcel’s body chances upon a motion that will stitch together time against time, and in so doing, immure him against the undetermined, chaotic materiality under which he and all of the ‘hes’ of other times are fully interchangeable under signs—whether timely or material— and against the weight of a future that seeks to extract and exploit fragments of the past in order to produce more of the same. As Marcel puts his

“foot on a stone which was slightly lower than its neighbor, all [his] discouragement vanished and in its place was that happiness which at various epochs of [his] life had been given to [him] by the sight of trees which [he] had thought that [he] recognized in the course of a drive near Balbec, by the sight of the twin steeples of Martinville, by the flavor of a madeleine dipped in tea, and by all those other sensations of which [he] had spoken and of which the last works of Vinteuil had seemed to [him] to combine the quintessential character. Just as, at the moment when [he] tasted the madeleine, all anxiety about the future, all intellectual doubts had disappeared, so now those that a few seconds had assailed [him] on the subject of the reality of [his] literary gifts, the reality even of literature, were removed as if by magic.” (899)

Marcel then attempts to repeat the movements, but cannot. The pure repetition of the movement does not allow access to the unseized potentialities of the past. He cannot locate the signs, or snapshot images, of the past through a will to capture; the senses can only chance upon involuntary memory, through irreproducible collisions of bodies in simultaneous movement. Marcel then recognizes the vision, the parallel image: “it was Venice, of which [his] efforts to describe it and the supposed snapshots taken by [his] memory had never told [him] anything, but which the sensation which [he] had once experienced as [he] stood upon two uneven stones in the baptistery of St Mark’s had, recurring a moment ago, restored to [him] complete with all the other sensations linked on that day to that particular sensation, all of which had been waiting in their place—from which with imperious suddenness a chance happening had caused them to emerge—in the series of forgotten days” (900). The body in motion, the gesture and sensation of two feet slung against pavestones as they once fell, years ago, produces a repetition which weaves together moments in time, snapshot images, signs. Involuntary memory thus occurs not through the present’s relation to and rewriting of the past, but through the body’s registering of movement and the relational *as a mode of thought*, through the vertiginous suspension¹⁵ by which the feet in motion act as sinewy tendrils stitching time to time.

“This explained why it was that my anxiety on the subject of my death had ceased at the moment when I had unconsciously recognized the taste of the little madeleine,

¹⁵ Here I reference Maurice Blanchot describing Michel Leiris’s most important passages: “*A great share of the terror which I experience at the idea of death derives perhaps from this: vertigo from remaining suspended in the middle of a seizure whose outcome I can never know because of my own unconsciousness. This kind of unreality, this absurdity of death, is its radically terrible element.*” Blanchot also adds, “we can see from these words which are so clear: the fear of dying is also the fear of not being able to die.... Such a vertiginous suspension between living and dying explains, according to Michel Leiris, that in life, whatever constitutes a simulacrum of death, any loss of self, can sometimes reassure us against death and help us stare it in the face... We do not want something beyond death for its own sake but rather, artificially, we want to see ourselves dead, to assure ourselves of our death by focusing upon our nothingness, from a point situated beyond death, a true gaze from beyond the tomb.”

since the being which at that moment I had been was an extra-temporal being and therefore unalarmed by the vicissitudes of the future. This being had only come to me, only manifested itself outside of activity an immediate enjoyment, on those rare occasions when the miracle of an analogy had made me escape from the present. In the observation of the present, where the senses cannot feed it with this food, it languishes, as it does in the consideration of a past made arid by the intellect or in the anticipation of a future which the will constructs with fragments of the present and the past, fragments whose reality it still further reduces by preserving of them only what is suitable for the utilitarian, narrowly human purpose which it intends them. But let a noise or a scent, once heard or once smelt, be heard or smelt again in the present and at the same time in the past, real without being actual, ideal without being abstract, and immediately the permanent and habitually concealed essence of things is liberated our true self which seemed—had perhaps for long years seemed—to be dead but was not altogether dead, is awakened and reanimated as it receives the celestial nourishment that is brought to it. A minute freed from the order of time has re-created in us, to feel it, the man freed from the order of time. And one can understand that this man should have confidence in his joy, even if the simple taste of a madeleine does not seem logically to contain within it the reasons for this joy, one can understand that the word ‘death’ should have no meaning for him; situated outside time, why should he fear the future? “(904-906).

The interchangeability of the sign and of times in the chaos of an ever-expanding materiality and an anachronistic, out-of-time-ness is juxtaposed against this particular bit of disorganized flesh (the stumbling foot), weaving two movements in time, inscribing the dead signs into a life-after-death. The body registers the two snapshots of time—the scene in front of the Guermites and of Venice—only through motion, through sensations unreadable, uncapturable, unquantifiable by the sign, that are out of time, unseizable by a future that captures in order to produce more of the same (unseizable by future of the time of capital). Movement and the relational—the unreifiable but producible via persons, or bodies— here is staged as a productive mode of thought, as well as that which has the potential to inscribe, arrange, and redistribute signs without fearing the weight of the future.

The loop does not abolish the future, but instead resituates it as congealed potentials, as undead crystallizations of ecstatic possibility. In Proustian time, however, this transformation amounts to little more than the psychological revelations of the individual; through experience, contemplation, and the grazing of his archive of memories, Marcel learns about life, the nature of memory, the future, death, and in so doing seeks out these rare, solitary ‘experiences’ of involuntary memory in order to live a ‘richer’ life, characterized by a ‘coming to terms’ with death at the individual level. Prout’s Cotardian mode expresses a quantitative desire for more time, and a qualitative desire for more control over time.

Here we discover the failure of Cotardian time in Proust. A transformational alternative would involve the obverse the individual, undead subject: the Cotardian subject in Proust believes itself to be individually dead, speaks and writes from the death bed or coffin, syphons memories from the past in order to be freed from the terrifying, undead material remainder that it has become. This is not only the fate of Marcel in *In Search of Lost Time*, but also of Proust himself, who spent the last years of his life in a cork-lined, “tomblike” bedroom in what his biographer Dianne Fuss describes as a “semi-recumbent position, suspended midway between the realms of sleeping and waking using his knees as a desk” (Fuss, 188).

It is not an individual, but a collective Cotardian subject that could disrupt historical, linear time, that could render the time signature of the lifespan as a loop, with death embedded in its repeating form. It is only through a collective, rhythmic push against capital’s time that we might envision

a redistribution of the conceptual, political and material from within the loop¹⁶. The Cotardian mode transmutes across *In Search of Lost Time*, *Synecdoche, New York*, and in *AUDINT-Undead/Unsound*; we find a resonant historiography, a paradigmatic triad of temporality and futurity under monopoly capitalism, finance capitalism and capitalism in the late digital/information age. Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* produces a looping universe of times and signs and brings together the Cotardian body without referent via involuntary memory, an interruption of linear time, and a negation of the infinite nowness of the present. Kaufman's Cotard does extend beyond the individual; that said, the failure of Cotard in *Synecdoche* is that it is dispersed into an architecture and city space that only further partakes in the slow killing of its inhabitants.

in/to Late Capitalism, Dead Space and the Rotting Loop

MILLICENT:

Caden Cotard is a man already dead, living in a half-world between stasis and antistasis. Time is concentrated and chronology confused for him. Up until recently he has strived valiantly to make sense of his situation, but now he has turned to stone.

(*Synecdoche, New York*, 144)

While Kaufman's works deal with themes commonly associated with the postmodern and late

¹⁶ I think of protest via the rhythmic disruption of lines of production and distribution, anarchic, political formations like the Paris Commune, Occupy Wall Street, anti-work movements.

capitalism—multiplicity, difference, depthlessness, simulacra, the image, the omnipresent inauthentic—he is also formally aligned with a more modernist project—his interest in the great, sprawling, unfinished work-of-the-world which is forever in progress, as well as his desire to break from what he has described as formal constraints and restrictive filmic conventions of a newly instituted, rigid artistic tradition¹⁷. An autobiographical, Proustian impulse informs Kaufman’s work, which strives towards the capture of totality; we find a recurrent interest in memory, authenticity, meaning, experience, the passage of time, death, and the problems of representation.

Several common features suggest the link between Proust’s tome and Kaufman’s picture: their looped narrative structures, characters named Cotard, hypochondriac and sickly narrators, seemingly infinitely expanding universes—though in Proust this occurs through individual memory and in Kaufman cultural memory, the multiplication of characters and expanding architectural spaces. This link is made especially explicit after a character is seen reading a book and the viewer gets a momentary glance at the first page of *Swann’s Way*. As the camera returns to her, we see the other volumes of *In Search of Lost Time* nearby. Kaufman surely linked Proust’s Cottard to Jules Cotard, and the cosmological infrastructure that the *delire de negation* animates. The contemporary staging of such a total universe is mediated not through the literary and its temporal structure of *In Search of Lost Time*, however, but with an emphasis on space, through the

¹⁷ Moreover, in several interviews, Charlie Kaufman has described his desire to ‘put everything he knows in everything he writes’. Yet, whenever Kaufman has been pressed to comment on this ambition, he has invariably responded that that he too is “moving through time”, and that the author, the writing, and rewriting of his scripts occur through a subject changing with and against time. Kaufman points not only towards the impact of the movement of time and passing of events as they make up the transforming assemblages with which humans interact, but also the body itself as matrix constantly transforming via its translation of the complex, rhythmic webs within which it is embedded.

moving image, with the stage, performance and the theatre director as narrative focuses.

Synecdoche, New York (2008) traces the fate of Caden Cotard, a severely depressed theatre director whose wife leaves him (daughter in tow) right as he wins a MacArthur 'Genius' grant and, with it, the means to radically 'scale up' his theatrical ambitions. When we meet Cotard, he is in the final rehearsal stage of a production of *Death of a Salesman*; the production is 'ambitious' (it has hundreds of lighting cues), though, as his wife implies, it is simultaneously all too much a part of a standard, easily consumable repertory. After the departure of his family, now with a melancholy-fuelled sense of grandeur, Cotard tries to put 'the whole world' on a stage, in order to see the world 'truthfully', for what it 'really is'. Inside an immense sound stage and its built-up city, he attempts to duplicate the whole world as he knows it. This simulacrum produces a world in which characters mingle with their actor doubles (and also the doubles of those doubles) in an endless rehearsal of a spectacle whose 'final performance' never arrives--and never could arrive.

The potential for scale to create new horizons of the infinite for capital to colonize, as well as scale's representability, or lack thereof, come into question in *Synecdoche*. Cotard's wife makes use of increasingly miniature canvases—until they are only viewable with the aid of special glasses—to this end. Caden's architectural synecdoche expands not only outwards, creating a larger and larger cityscape until presumably he will replicate the entire world, and then the world replicating the world, and so on, but involves the creation of a warehouse within a warehouse staging a smaller infinite universe, and within this warehouse an even smaller warehouse, and so forth.

Kaufman's *Synecdoche* was released at the Cannes Film Festival in the summer of 2008. He had been working on the film for five years ("Charlie Kaufman on his latest"). He had attempted to sell the film prior to its release at Cannes, and while the media seized on the fact that he was not immediately able to do so, what was often omitted from discussion was the fact that eight of twelve specialty film companies had gone out of business that year; the ones that were left grasped at the commercially-viable genre of indie comedy ("DP/30: *Synecdoche*"). *Synecdoche* emerges as finance capital speeds towards the great recession that will produce a doubling in unemployment from 2008 to 2009, record levels of private debt in America, and on and on (Economic Research: Federal Reserve).

This is time through which the prime of M-C-M1 has colonized not only every crevice and silence, but also every liminal and negative space, a virus that has commodified its very disease. It involves the culture of disaster capitalism, planned obsolescence, bubbles pressing up against bubbles, investment in derivatives, debt, and the future, wherein profit is maximized through the engineering of and banking on disease, disaster, death, and 'dead labour past' indebted to the future, past time indebted to a future time further and further deferred¹⁸. The Proustian fantasy of sensuous transcendence is realized in the proliferation of affect-intensifying commodities and entertainment, but the force of chance to disrupt the market has been largely absorbed as a gambling practice of the rich.

¹⁸ These last two refer to debt.

Synecdoche begins as does Kaufman's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless¹⁹ mind*, with a protagonist lying in bed. Unlike *Eternal Sunshine's* Joel Barish, who turns to face soft light, green leaves and branches peeking through clear windows, markers of biological and circadian rhythms and temporality, Cotard turns to the time of the mechanical clock. The narrative structure of *Synecdoche*, as in other Kaufman works, is also looped. Sammy, the character hired to play Caden following his winning of the MacArthur Fellowship is seen stalking him—presumably to do a character study—early on in the film, long before Caden hires him or has begun writing his play.

HAZEL: Yeah. The end is built in to the beginning. What can you do?

(*Synecdoche*, New York, 133)

¹⁹ *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), written by Kaufman and directed by Michel Gondry, stars an unaffected Jim Carey playing Joel Barish, a man who has recently suffered a breakup, and upon discovering that his ex, Clementine Kruczynski (Kate Winslet) has undergone a memory-altering procedure that has wiped him from her memory, he decides to do the same. Much of the film occurs from Barish's bed (another reference to Proust perhaps?), as neurological engineers propel the viewer, and Barish through his memories of Kruczynski—not, as in the Proustian universe, in order to enliven the present via the past, but in order to destroy his memories, to have him relive them and subsequently watch them dissipated, one by one. A horrified and regretful Barish soon discerns the extremity of his blunder, and willfully accesses increasingly repressed and traumatizing memories in order to evade the memory hunters. Like *Synecdoche*, it contains a non-linear but looped narrative structure—the first scene of *Eternal Sunshine*, we later learn, occurs at the end of the film. Much of what the viewer perceived to be a linearly progressing film is fact temporally discontinuous and has occurred after the memory wipe, or death; the buried memories from within this cluster of temporal fragments reveal that the protagonists have in fact chanced upon each other again and have received a second chance at love, and later have it revealed that they had known each other all along. I would have liked to investigate this film's treatment of memory and time, as well as the larger body of Kaufman's work in relation to this paper, but, due to time constraints, am unable to do so.

The passing of time is central in Kaufman's work, but unlike the unified consciousness of Marcel's narrative trajectory—regardless of its production of only dialectically perceivable conceptual clusters (made most explicit by his consistent use of the 'reversal', whether in describing an impression, a character, an idea or opinion)—Kaufman's characters are multiplied and splintered, and as such, Cotard syndrome and Cotardian time have seemingly diffused into architectural space of the city and the set, though without any revolutionary 'undeading'. Hazel does not attempt to set herself on fire, but she lives in a house rendered affordable because it is and will remain ablaze.

HAZEL: I've always loved this house.

REALTOR: Yes. It's a wonderful place.

HAZEL: The truth is, I never really imagined I could afford it.

REALTOR: The sellers are very motivated now.

HAZEL: It's a scary decision. I never thought I'd buy a house alone.

But, y'know, I'm 36, and I wonder what I'm really waiting for.

REALTOR: Home-buying is always scary.

HAZEL: But I mean with the fire and all especially.

REALTOR: It's a good size though, twenty-two hundred square feet. Not including the partially-finished basement

HAZEL I don't know. I'm thinking I should go.

REALTOR It's a perfect size for someone alone.

HAZEL I like it, I do. But I'm really concerned about dying in the
fire.

REALTOR It's a big decision, how one prefers to die. Would you
like to meet my son? Derek?

In a future 2025, Caden and Sammy look out onto a cityscape on fire. The past itself is also dead; Caden seeks no comfort in his dead, empty memories, they are no different from the present, let alone offer the potential for alternate futures. Future time has disappeared, and the future dead in the past is that of the present. Hypochondriacal intensities have spread from the individual to the system as well. There is every reason for the characters to believe that they are in fact diseased and dying. Caden's daughter is excreting neon green feces, Caden's ophthalmologist casually informs him that he needs to see a neurologist—the city is rotting and covered in smog, the water is likely poisonous; why wouldn't Kaufman's characters be suffering from every and any disease? The characters, however, remain willfully ignorant of the disease, destruction, and decay around them. Adele tells Olive that her toxic feces are “fine” and to “just flush”. Caden informs the ophthalmologist that he must be wrong. Hazel buys the fire-engulfed house and lives in it undisturbed.

After winning his MacArthur Genius Grant, Cotard tells Madeline that he is going to create “A theater piece. Something big and true and tough. Y'know, finally put [his] real self into something” (56). The play will be a synecdoche of the totality of his life, of the city itself, but his reproductions of the city feel empty, devoid of authenticity, so he attempts to spatially reproduce more and more of the world in order to achieve the eternally deferred promise of unity, realist capture, and

meaning. Here the dream of the new has died, as has the belief in meaning or authenticity. The *desire* for meaning and authenticity, however, is alive and well, and, like capital, is a machine no longer tied to mortal objects or ideas of completion.

Though capitalism is said to produce the means of its own unraveling, its inexhaustible expansion and manipulation of scale has rendered these tools, as well as those bubbles of unseized temporal potentiality, increasingly difficult to see or hear, let alone decipher, leaving all *at* its wake in Cotardian numbness, sensuously immobilized, immured in a body without future or access to the world. The desire of late capitalism itself has no interest in authenticity or meaning—it is a bloated world-denying hypochondriac that paradoxically seeks only to produce more and more of itself, as well as the rotting world it aspires to deny. As it accumulates more of itself it demands that the bodies propelling its motion become increasingly austere, numb-in-the-world.

Synecdoche thus offers the nightmare of the omnipresent and eternal present time of capital. As far as this map of the world extends, utopia is nowhere to be found. Moreover, synecdoche cannot represent totality not only because of its complexity, illusory command of perception and scale, and constant fluctuation, but also because the synecdoche itself is shown to be constituted by these same structures. These descriptions compel a return to spatial metaphors and analysis, but we should revisit the question of time. How does the obverse of the failed time of *Synecdoche* point towards alternate times?

*

A loop, an interlude

The words above came to rest in 2015 and remained buried for half a decade.

I thought I had left them for dead. During that time, I left a PhD program following a series of disillusionments around the limits of theory, politics, and the various stale ‘isms’ underlying the impotent academic posturing of bankrupt ideologues within the institution, moved back to Canada and began a practice as an artist and musician.

Sometime before this departure, I received a tarot reading in which I was dealt the tower: lightning shot off the tower’s crown, sparks and embers glittered the sky, flames engulfed the tower’s upper carcass and spilled from its windows. Two figures fell head-first to the ground. Catastrophic transformations were to come across horizons. I vividly confronted the separation of aesthetics from the ideal, as well as the seemingly eternal, immutable association in the West (and beyond) of the feminine with (original) evil, falsity, and stupidity. Against this, however, the invaluable magic of solidarity, hypogean resistance, as well as nuanced, agile formations of thinking, feeling, and care. Whac-A-Mole-ing contempt revealed new transmutations as I watched Manichean longings fray communal tapestries everywhere. We’d lose Hoffman, Caden Cotard, in 2014 to a drug overdose and Fisher, theorist of the gothic uncanny and capitalist realism, to suicide in 2017²⁰. But also in that time, communities of artists and musicians produced coral languages; I formed friendships, collaborations and creative relationships that offered sometimes bitter, often ecstatic lessons and joys. I encountered sonic experiments that blew open my assumptions around the linguistic as purveyor of human expression, communication, and experience. I read Moten, Kimmerer, Grosz, and Cheng, and spent a great deal of time thinking about sound, music, and reparative affect.

²⁰ I’d also be personally touched by the suicides of four young women within my extended community.

*

All the while, social media extends yet further into domestic and civic spheres, Western individuation and the commodification of private life intensifies²¹, automated stock trading and the algorithmic logic of finance capital accelerates, and Big Tech’s Big Five replaces the energy industries in becoming the largest market capitalist corporations on the planet²².

In 2009 Mark Fisher, drawing from Fredric Jameson, writes that “it is easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to capitalism” (Capitalist Realism, 1). Achille Mbembe adds in 2021 that when faced with the supposed large-scale redistribution at capitalism’s transmuting ends, “capital would rather abolish democracy in order to save capitalism from a majority dedicated to economic and social redistribution” (33). As the global system faces epistemic reorientation, capitalism not only closes loops and absorbs all in its path; it continually seeks to produce exteriors (Mbembe).

As #Blacklivesmatter²³ and #metoo²⁴— and the decentralized social and political formations that constitute them—spotlights and confronts ongoing global gendered and racialized violence, a reality TV despot mainstreams far-right, populist, conspiracy-driven politics in the US. Anti-reason, anti-intellectual sentiment decries knowledge, reason, and expertise across the political

²¹ There is an increase online shopping, online streaming, portable audio technologies, the rise of Uber, Lyft, Airbnb, through which previously ‘private’ spaces become commodifiable. By individuation I imply that the reproduction of everyday becomes largely accessible with the domain of highly individualized private property— from within ‘the home’.

²² By 2020, the five largest American IT companies, or the ‘Big Five’ (Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Google/Alphabet, Facebook/Meta) would make up over 40% of Nasdaq 100.

²³ Culminating in global protests against systemic racial bias and police brutality against Black people.

²⁴ Largely sparked by the 2017 series of sexual abuse allegations against, and 2020 conviction of, Harvey Weinstein.

spectrum²⁵. If the minor affects of disinterest, irritation, and disgust²⁶ characterized the aughts, rage, moral panic and dissociation²⁷ characterize the teens. The long rehearsed environmental platitudes reanimate globally with catastrophic force. As the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century draws to an end, a worldwide pandemic shocks the world into a standstill whose vastness encompasses the flows and movements of human bodies.

With no end in sight to the Israeli-Palestine conflict, Russia invades Ukraine in February 2022, reviving old cold-war terrors, and in May of the same year, a document is leaked showcasing the US supreme court's draft opinion to overturn Roe vs Wade. In the US in particular, it is a time of reversals, returns, of the unthinkable-always-possible underlying the ground of the tacit and mundane.

In mid-2019, just before the plague to come, Urbanomic Art Editions publishes *Undead: Unsound*—Steve Goodman, Toby Heys and Eleni Ikoniadou's edited investigation of Cotard syndrome and the sonic—and these Cotardian thoughts would be resuscitated in my life.

*

The AUDINT Research group's Unsound: Undead

AUDINT-Undead//Unsound is a third instantiation of Cotard, a book-of-the-world whose 'totality' is constituted by fragmented, indexical clusters of information, archival exploration, historiography, and speculative fiction. The disciplinary category: sound. Since Kaufman's 2008

²⁵ From Alex Jones, 5g and Anti-Vacc movements, to the rise of corporate anti-racism training equating science, writing, and reason with white supremacy (DiAngelo).

²⁶ Sianne Ngai

²⁷ See Laura Jaramillo's *ASMR: auratic encounters and women's affective labor*

staging of his Cotardian universe, I had not encountered an explicit cultural reference to Cotard syndrome. It was published in a time characterized by an intensive (and requisite) proliferation of digital and social media in all aspects of my life— from the personal, social, and creative to the vocational, pedagogical, and civic. I was immediately struck by the text’s turn to a sonic episteme, not only because of the recurrent loop of sonic exploration in my own life, but also because of the ways in which the haptic, vibrational, sensorially-interstitial resonances of sonic materiality provides a timely conceit for exploring the Cotardian mode.

AUDINT’s introduction cites Cotard delusion as an undead inspiration for the text, and circumscribes a collaborative authorial voice as that of ‘AUDINT’—a research unit at the heart of the text’s production, that “has been composed of oscillating liveware for nearly three quarters of a century” and which is currently ‘staffed’ by Souzanna Zamfe, Patrick Defasten, Toby Heys, Steve Goodman, and Eleni Ikoniadou²⁸ (7). In the edited volume, Cotard syndrome moves through the sonic, silence, invisible but sounding spaces/places, auditory/musical technologies, speculative, sonically mobilized futures, haptic perception, and mysterious sensation. The text is split into eight chapters consisting of micro essays, most of which are just a few pages long. Each essay presents a microhistory, a fleeting bubble that invites further investigation. In coming across the text, I was particularly interested in the implications of its formal and epistemological strictures: to return to an earlier question, what does the Cotardian sonic reveal about the failures of its time?

Whereas Proust’s Cotardian loop sutures narrative origin with end, and Kaufman’s loops bloom against infinitely receding horizons, *AUDINT* is not structurally looped, but instead stitches

²⁸ For ease of reference, I will frequently use “AUDINT” as title (despite its partially speculative resonances).

together a cabinet of curiosities spanning time and space. It is both conceptually and formally fragmented, and, via this graded terrain, epistemologically situates an archive of polyphonic voices. While Proustian time, like that of the Angel of History, glances backwards at the heap of rising images of the past, and Caden's time, in the face of its dead past, extends the present spatially outwards, *AUDINT*'s present is a temporally folded mobile made up of future and past infused presents. If time in Proust and Kaufman holds little of the future, the speculative in *AUDINT* comes to represent the impossible and the possible, the alternate trajectories of the contingent. Death talks back, it speaks the languages of organs, objects and time itself. Yet in life, death is increasingly everywhere and nowhere, thinned but always present.

Post-Mortem

Death, François Bonnet suggests, offers “eradication from finitude” (5). In the late information, media-saturated age that we'll call the present, biotech produces a categorical restructuring of death: as “life” becomes intensified, extended, and biologically reconstituted (largely for the wealthy elite, though the conceptual and cultural reach of this shift extends far beyond the limited few for whom these distensions are made possible), it is simultaneously hollowed, anaesthetized, and, particularly for the racially and economically marginalized, shortened and depreciated. Cotard extends outwards and across time—not towards a future, but toward spiraling replications of itself—while thinning the present. Whereas the Cotardian rot blooming through Kaufman's universe is visible but unremarkable (seemingly unintelligible) to those who inhabit it, *AUDINT*'s actors respond to invisible death with fear, confusion, wonder. Unlike the material thickness of Kaufman's architectural and performative synecdoche, Cotard as sonic instantiation is made manifest in ephemeral, ambiguous encounters, in dubious presences and contested memories. Death in *AUDINT* has slowed, disseminates in vibratory presence in time that is everywhere

speeding up yet focalizing presence.

‘Slow death’, Lauren Berlant adds, “occupies the temporalities of the endemic”, occupies the time of permanent, enduring, and endured factors (97). This is not the time of the accident or event, death as a radical end, as transcendence, or transfiguration. Death here lives on, dispersed into the everyday, becomes a mechanism of control while simultaneously alleviating the grief that accompanies Cotardian vision. If the 21st century has demonstrated anything, it is that the paranoiac’s clash with a rotting, toxic, hostile world, is not so paranoiac after all.

For Berlant, *slow death* is a form of *cruel optimism*— a relation that “exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing”, a relation that becomes cruel “when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially” (97, 1). The numbing and denial of world that accompanies Cotardian delusion in this sense acts as both remedy and obstacle to capital’s sensorial capture and dispersion²⁹. Purgatorial living-on creates a buffer between the devastating grasp of present forces, all the while diminishing movement therein. Whereas Dr. and Caden Cotard are figurative anomalies, set within and against their worlds, *AUDINT*’s Cotard is sonically unmoored, is everywhere and nowhere, dispersed as a condition of existence that is felt in the abstract, in silent materialities, and in the everyday, disturbing atoms defining the within and the without. Death disperses.

As finitude’s irreducibility disperses—for some towards expanding horizons and others into the

²⁹ In a dialectical merging of Foucaultian biopolitics— the power to *make live, let die*, and to *force* life to *endure* and *appear* as it sees fit— and Mbembe’s necropolitics —the power to *control* and *distribute* death, with life as the ‘*deployment* and *manifestation of power*’— Berlant provides *slow death* as a concept of the “physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population that is very nearly a defining condition of their experience and historical existence” (95).

banal— the present dilates: as life “expands”, it is rendered anesthetic. “The attrition of the subject of capital articulates survival as slow death. Impassivity and other relations of alienation, coolness, detachment, or distraction, especially in subordinated populations, are affective forms of engagement with the environment of slow death” (Berlant 117). Bonnet describes a similar detachment resulting in a desensitization or anesthetization and an amnesiac forgetting: a dead present. Commodities and the concrete are not simply exchanged. Information, time, attention, and sensation itself, the stream of the ‘microfragmented’ hyper-present paralyzes and submerges life into eternal presence (Bonnet, 38).

It is perhaps notable that Goodman’s *Sonic Warfare*—a text that began exploring deployments of the infrasonic, the affective and vibrational to produce ecologies of fear and/or the utopian — was published in 2011, three years after Facebook’s launch of the ‘like’ button, twenty-two months after the launch of Instagram, the year that Facebook would go mobile, and one year before Facebook would reach one billion users³⁰. The supposed unmediated nature of sensation (not to mention affect) is decisively upended in the information age. As the regime of affective, sensorial discipline reaches across the globe (Facebook accounts reaching one sixth of the world’s population, though of course it does not follow that one in six of the world’s population were using Facebook), theory proposes an ontology (cosmology?) of sonic vibration to make sense of affective ecologies. Sonic warfare is tethered to the capitalization of the haptic.

The sonic thus seems to provide a fitting metonymic Cotardian structure in this historicization of the present and makes sense of the disciplinary shift to *AUDINT*’s auditory sonic Cotard exploits. Though the various misconceptions surrounding the sonic have now been widely critiqued and

³⁰ Thank you to Lisa Nakamura’s *Women of Color and the Worlding Technologies* presentation for the provision of some of these key dates.

refuted within sound studies, Jonathan Sterne's canonical *The Sound Studies Reader* did well to outline the audiovisual litany that circumscribes sonic associations within the Western canon: hearing as spherical, immersive, interior, producing contact, subjective, living, affective, temporal, in-the-world, with the visual as directional, perspectival, distancing, exterior, objective, dead, intellectual, spatial, and outside-of-the-world (abstract). Whereas Proust and Kauffman configure Cotard as individuals stitched through time via literary and filmic narrative—*AUDINT's* Cotard is, like the sonic, able to be dispersed in fragments across bodies, objects, things, times and places, it is distributed in presence's other: in its folds, silences, echoes, and shadows. It is inaudible but felt, audible but alien, it is deeply affective and resonant. The sonic's explicitly haptic, multi-sensorial matrix, unlike the presumed unified field of the visual³¹, thus provides a fitting disciplinary formation for Cotard's movements in the information age.

The call to democratize sensation and destabilize visuality's preeminence within the West is yet another well-established pillar of sound studies³², as is the complication of sound (and for that matter, any sensorial category) as a discrete, divided domain of the ear³³. As slow death is distributed across endured, affective experience and congealed within the mundane, Cotard's sonic, vibrational figuration is similarly dispersed across things, times and objects. The model of the governing sovereign and sensing, thinking, agency-wielding individual protagonist is replaced with the unfamiliar interior (or exterior interior) which speaks back; sensation is captured but

³¹ As well as visuality's association with print culture/the literary and filmic, for example in the work of Marshall McLuhan.

³² See Trevor Pinch and Karen Bijserverld's *sensory studies*, Michael Bull and Les Back's *democracy of the senses*

³³ See Steve Goodman, Michel Fridner and Stefan Helmreich's analyses of vibration as unit of sound, Mara Mills's deaf and disability studies, Veit Erlmann's framing of aurality (and the conditions that give rise to aurality) as a predecessor of listening, as well as Ana María Ochoa Gautier's critique of aurality and listening as producing concepts of the human and nonhuman in nineteenth-century Colombia

resists by means that, in the end, often lead to more of the same.

As capital seizes and disciplines sensation, attention, and distraction, this process of abstraction produces a simultaneous anesthesia and amnesia: the sonic's capacity to operate within the matrix of sensation, at times inaudibly, provides a model with which to chart Cotardian distribution across infra-states. As the 'information empire' runs through people and their sense mechanisms, they become increasingly sensorially overburdened, transfixed, numbed-out, and, importantly, unable to create relationships between sensations. Furthermore, this lost composition of experience, an anesthesia of the present, has a direct relationship to amnesia, to the production of forgetting as a new resource (Bonnet). Planned obsolescence 'ventilate the sensorial field', produces new rhythmic of consumption and distribution (Bonnet, 21). And yet the dead sensations of capital endure, live on.

*

To return to the text. *AUDINT* spins various thematic arcs. The following offers a few pulsing threads. The lines in the text move quickly, so quickly that it can be hard to make sense of, let alone remember, all that has been splayed out. Proust and Kaufman offer narrative, a vehicle for memory; *AUDINT's* rhizome reads somewhat like a manic spray of wikipedic presencing. Its epistemology is seemingly broad, and includes theorists and studies of sonic warfare, the foundational sound studies of the mid-2000s, sound and listening within disciplinary and juridical regimes, speculative design, affect and media theory, border studies, Afrofuturism.

I have paused here at a few braided knots. The first concerns the dispersion of Cotardian sensation and affect across bodies and places, as well as the ensuing categorical disorganization producing scrambled exteriors and interiors, and the second considers the irreducible, non-linguistic sonic

other against the voice's semantic ordering: the siren's scream, the mourning lament, monstrous silences that shatter quantification and rationalization³⁴. The third addresses the sound of the unknown, sounds unlocatable and identifiable, and the fourth, *Recurrence, Forever Nothings*, turns to death's dispersion within life, interstitial zones in which life and death become blurred: the agency-wielding duppy, virtual immortalities in the digital futures, and so on. Finally, the fifth addresses the sonic as time portal, as key to unlocking temporal drift.

The Body Speaks

AUDINT's Cotardian states describe undead whispers of the body: the body which speaks from beyond itself. "Hiccups, stomach gurgling, coughing, teeth grinding"³⁵; presence is renegotiated via *audio-haptic sound* that 'distributes' both bodies and the apocalypse itself (17; 19). The border between body and its beyond becomes unfixed: the proprioceptive sounds the outside and alien, while the outside, that which is rendered from metals, electricity, the welding of forms into uses, become sensing, sensible from the inside. Alexander Graham Bell and Clarence Blake produce an ear phonautograph, which displaces the voice through and beyond a synthetic ear-turned-writing-stylus³⁶. Captain John Noel's obtrusive colonial phantasmagoria tries to capture necromantic 'music of the skulls' in Tibet³⁷; the sonic space of the oceanic in L.T.C. Rolt's literature is both audible and palpable, awakes, invades, and is 'felt' both in ear and body³⁸; and the animal predates the technological in a confirmation of mimetic signals emanating from the cochlea, from the

³⁴ Fred Moten's explication of the scream, the resisting "object", and the "terror of the mundane and quotidian" in 'Resistance of the Object: Aunt Hester's Scream' from *In the Break. The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* is notably absent from the text and would have great enriched it.

³⁵ Olga Goriunova, *The Bodily Sounds of the Abyss*

³⁶ Jonathan Sterne, *The Ear Phonautograph*

³⁷ Al Cameron, *The Music of Skulls I: Bone-instruments*

³⁸ Shelley Trower, *Peripheral Vibrations*

human body³⁹. Crude oil, and its later sonic incarnation, vinyl, is narrativized as an alien remnant left on the earth to haunt and eliminate rationality through its opening of the pineal ear⁴⁰ (the counterpart to Bataille's pineal eye: ie a "subversive negotiation with the impossible"⁴¹ which identifies "not only with life but with the loss of life—with degradation and death") (AUDINT-AUDINT-Undead/Unsound, 37).

The body is fundamentally misrecognized or misapprehended from what it 'ought to be'. The unfamiliar inside returns forgotten pasts. It turns against a geocentrism of the self, or at least enacts a Ptolemaic model, a model which layers loops upon loops to make sense of the impossible, to chart retrograde motion. The human depicted here appears at first glance to exist in a kind of post-identity state: with boundaries unmoored and dissolving, perhaps this describes life after the death of the subject. That said, this is less of a dissolving of categorical limits, but instead the formation of an antithetic generic collage. Beings are not simply made up of unexpected parts, but precisely parts that were previously thought to be 'exterior': death, coagulated and from the beyond, enters life. The exterior is consumed, or osmotically absorbed, but remains external from within.

Akin to the now overwrought concept of the uncanny (*unheimlich*, or 'un-homely'), the familiar/interior becomes strange, doubled. As Freud's 1919 *The Uncanny*—and its exploration of the 'anxious aesthetic'—put forward, the psychoanalyst's Orphic descent to the "psychic underworld of the death drive" reveals the gothic 'uncanny double' central to Western modernity, the return of the formative and repressed: "the intruder was my own image, reflected in the mirror on the connecting door" (27; 33). Yet the intruder here is sonic, felt, haptic sound, sound that

³⁹ Jonathan Sterne, *The Cat Telephone*

⁴⁰ Brooker Buckingham, *The Pineal Ear*

⁴¹ B.Noys, *Georges Bataille: A Critical introduction*, 36, Audint, 31

signals the outside yet resides within. The Cotardian subject is not only a body whose world and centrifugal-self has ceased to exist; the world and its presumed lifeless things have begun vibrating from within—the ocean begins to resonate from *within* the body, the proprioceptive distributes the apocalypse from *inside* the so-called individual in an osmosis of ends.

Traces of Voice that Power

But the alien and unknown in *AUDINT* also exists from the outside-in in this merging of “horror and science fiction” (Fisher, *Weird and the Eerie*, 8). This blurring of inside and outside ultimately corresponds to Fisher’s *The Weird and the Eerie* (2016), which juxtaposes the eerie, the weird, and the *unheimlich*’s ‘treatment of the strange’ (10). *AUDINT* presents voice that exceeds and/or precedes itself, voice that speaks violence through its supra-semantic sonic material. *AUDINT*’s somatic *delire de negation* grounds ‘the scream’ as the foundation of speech⁴², as operating within economies of erotics, fear, and horror whose power fiercely refuse ‘regimes of quantization’ (43-44). Laments channel the alien unseen to the underworld⁴³, the unlanguages of glossolalia and xenoglossia trace ‘infra-linguistic expressivity’⁴⁴, and a library of voices—voices dead, voices past—is conceived in 1878⁴⁵. A 19DB drop in whispers acts as earwitness to escalating brutality in Syrian prisons following 2011 anti-government protests⁴⁶. AI generated voice, like the song of the sirens, reveals the inhuman and alien in/of the human⁴⁷. Ulysses, the exploratory, adventuring ‘Western man par excellence’ is pit against the horror of the ‘exotic’, ‘feminine’ sound of the sirens—an (un)sonic space of newly configured temporality that acts as ‘overpass between the

⁴² Matthew Fuller, *Screaming*

⁴³ Eleni Ikoniadou, *The Lament*

⁴⁴ Agnès Gayraud, *Glossolalia/Xenoglossia*

⁴⁵ Shelley Trower, *Library of Voices*

⁴⁶ Lawrence Abu Hamden, *The Missing 19db*

⁴⁷ Luciana Parisi, *Machine Sirens and Vocal Intelligence*

world of the dead and that of the living' (58)⁴⁸ ⁴⁹. Once again, Cotard is figured as a blurred container, an inside constituted by the outside and superterrestrial, but the inside is also experienced from without.

Fisher's *The Weird and the Eerie* (2016) was published a year before his death and two years after his publication of *Ghost of my Life* (2014), a text exploring Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, *hauntology*, and the suturing of *being* with *haunting*. In a novel complication of Freud's uncanny, Fisher suggests that while the uncanny inserts "strange within the familiar", "operat[ing] by always processing the outside through the gaps and impasses of the inside", the weird and the eerie "allow us to see the inside from the perspective of the outside" (10). Unlike the *unheimlich*'s circumscription of outside from the inside⁵⁰, the weird is constituted by "that which does not belong", that which is decidedly not 'homely'⁵¹, "an insidious intrusion, the confounding juxtaposition, the thing found in the wrong place (10). The strange other within one's own voice, silence as a witness to shift in brutality, the supra-semantic which unsettles symbolic order: *AUDINT*'s Cotardian undead acts beyond standard perception and experience, it is where it ought not be, it sounds and unsettles from within.

⁴⁸ Eleni Ikoniadou, *Falling*

⁴⁹ This is then contrasted with other serene hallucinations. Another tradition, for example, revolves around the fatal, abysmal power of the silence of the sirens. In the work of Kafka, Brecht, and Blanchot, the sirens' silence, which is far deadlier than their song, denies 'aesthetic encounter' and "the accompanying revelation that all knowledge and all experience is made out of elusiveness, ambiguity, and falsehood" (63). This silence "shatters finitude, reason, and truth by opening a portal to the beyond"... it mobilizes "a fear and wonder of otherworldliness that taps into the alienness within" (63).

⁵⁰ Think here of the psychoanalyst's estrangement of the detail, the structuring of the 'haunted outside', the mining of the unconscious in order to narrativize 'family drama' (Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 18).

⁵¹ Fisher points to montage and surrealism (within which I believe we could include film) as appropriate forms of 'the weird' 19

Another knot: Cotardian states of the unknown, the haunted and haunting. If the weird brings together that which doesn't belong, the eerie is found in empty spaces, in human-less landscapes that call agency and origins into question. Capital, Fisher tells us, is itself an *eerie* entity, “conjured out of nothing, capital nevertheless exerts more influence than any allegedly substantial entity” (20). The eerie seems to *act, cry, sound* in desolate spaces. In *AUDINT*, unidentifiable sky booms are reported in Georgia, Texas, Jodhpur, Arizona⁵². Subsonic frequencies, or bloops, that emit an impossible sonic signature of live-ness, are detected off the southern coast of South America⁵³. Unidentifiable cosmic sound is transmitted to the Goddard Space Flight Center, suggesting the existence of non-directional cosmic sound without origin⁵⁴. The inaudible infrasonic Windsor Hum, at 35Hz, causes suffering—'fatigue, insomnia, depression, anxiety, migraines'—produces a *feeling*, a sickening sonic touch, and perhaps messages from the dead⁵⁵.

“Absence insists on presence” (Goodman et al, 107). Cotard departs from a subject who denies world, self, or body. The text invokes non-human, material Cotardian states dispersed within landscapes: here objects and sounds suffer from the delire. At the threshold of perception, Cotard haunts, exists eerily in in-between states of (un)presence. “The metaphysical scandal of capital brings us to the broader question of the agency of the immaterial and the inanimate: the agency of minerals and landscape ... the way that “we” “ourselves” are caught up in the rhythms, pulsions and patternings of non-human forces. There is no inside except as a folding of the outside; the mirror cracks, I am an other, and I always was. The shudder here is the shudder of the eerie, not

⁵² Paul Purgas, *The Jodhpur Boom*

⁵³ S. Ayesha Hameed, *The Bloop*

⁵⁴ Eugene Thacker, *Sounds of the Abyss*

⁵⁵ Kristen Gallerneaux, *The Hum*

of the unheimlich” (Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 12).

Recurrence, Forever Nothings

Onto recurrence, loops. What Fisher clarifies is the extent to which the weird and eerie ‘twist’ fate, warp temporality and the causal in their alien rendering of perception; in so doing, they raise both the question of the agency (who is acting?), and the new (as ‘*that which does not belong*’ in fact ushers in the new) (*The Weird and the Eerie*, 62). The Jamaican duppy— to be distinguished from the Haitian zombie— is an undead entity with agency⁵⁶. Feet turned toward the past as an act of subterfuge, the duppy— like recorded music, the *dead media* of ‘synths, cassette tape, and vinyl records’ that are flattened, dehistoricized— is alive *with* the past: the past becomes equally present (Goodman et al, 152). Duppies exist between worlds, as do the humans with whom they are intertwined. They can be threatening, and might have been an influence for Afrofuturist aeronautics (Goodman et al). Music’s, and the requiem’s, particular relationship to death is framed in dualities: “life vs death, divine vs. demonic, form vs. chaos, harmony vs cacophony” (Goodman et al, 158)⁵⁷.

The digital future suggests a kind of Cotardian inversion: immortality of the immaterial, the preservation of bodiless spirits, organs without bodies. Nikolai Fedorov, grand inspiration to the Soviet Space Program, believed it morally essential for science to resuscitate our ancestors, to raise the dead in a final, eschatological act of radical equivalence⁵⁸. That said, this digital immortality rests upon a Cartesian fallacy. Whether through the creation of digital archives—not so different from their analogue archival counterparts— or through the uploading of ‘mind’ itself, digital

⁵⁶ Julian Henriques, *Duppy Conquerors, Rolling Calves, and Flights to Zion*

⁵⁷ Eugene Thacker, *Days of Wraith*

⁵⁸ Julian Henriques, *Digital Immortality*

immortality's 'fear of the flesh' is located throughout various Orphic, Pythagorean, Eastern (reincarnation-based), Western (Judeo-Christian), and Ancient Egyptian philosophies of death (Henriques). The "digital trace is truly undead, promising immortality not because it never dies but because it never lives" (Goodman et al, 164).

Portals, Time Travel

Finally, Cotard is presented as a sonic time loop into elsewhere. Nguyễn Văn Phóng believes himself a simulation— organs dissimulating and reconstituting, portals opening into both the future and past— Văn Phóng floats vertiginously across time, as 'audio hypnosis' and 'brain-modulating silent sound technologies' are produced in the 2030s which will influence military experiments in the 40s⁵⁹ (Goodman et al, 173). Archaeoacoustics are employed in the West, Kennet Long Barrow's subterranean, 3600 BCE burial chambers, sutures the present to ancient acoustics⁶⁰. The site contains spaces whose resonant frequencies act as a Helmholtz Resonator and emit low Hz waves whose effects (deep meditation/daydreaming/pre-sleep) are used in rituals of liminal, between-world-ness (230). A gate that separates world from purgatory in Dante's *Purgatorio* is a 'thunderous' yet 'harmonious' portal, one which sounds the coming end times, as well as time itself, time eternally in motion⁶¹ (197). We hear the dream (or nightmare) of the beyond-end-time, of time stopped in motion.

Berlant warns readers of their addiction to broken dreams, dreams that, ultimately, participate in their unmaking. The eschatological fantasy of end times, of burning it all down, is deep-rooted

⁵⁹ Steve Goodman, *Death by Euro*

⁶⁰ Paul Purgas, *Archeoacoustics*

⁶¹ Nicola Maschiandaro, *Purgatory*

within the West⁶², and in many places, such as California, where I write, it is a reverie no longer limited to the metaphorical and epistemological. Many critical theorists have posited global and local Cotardian modes of being, have claimed that human “civilization is already dead”⁶³, that in the time of the Anthropocene “the end of the world has already occurred,⁶⁴ that after Nietzsche’s death of god, Barthes’s death of the author, and the post-structuralist death of the subject, all that is left is little more than the ‘skin and bones of a disorganized body’⁶⁵ (Scranton, 23; Morton, 7; Cotard, 307).

But what if we turned from these visions toward other times, other rhythms? “The eerie also entails a disengagement from our current attachments”, ushers in different times (Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 13). As I see it, Cotardian failure guides us to various possible ends: Cotardian desire can long for the eschatological, for fires that annihilate, for paralysis and static time, but it also provokes a reconsideration and reconstitution of matter, time, and ruin. As the litany of theorists circumscribing human and planetary Cotardian modes of being grows, there is a simultaneous call for new and multiple temporalities, planetary resonances, and relationships to others and matter within (un)dead worlds and states of being. Against epistemologies of the eschatological, the purely paranoid and negational, of worlds made up entirely of “dead matter and fragmented selves⁶⁶”, there are also growing epistemologies and archives of enchanted materialism, vibrant matter⁶⁷, assemblages of multispecies, multiply temporal ‘world-making projects’⁶⁸, wherein the

⁶² See the Book of Revelation

⁶³ See Roy Scranton’s *Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene and We’re Doomed, Now What?*

⁶⁴ See Timothy Morton’s *Hyberobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*,

⁶⁵ As described by Mlle X.

⁶⁶ See Jane Bennett’s *The Enchantment of Modern Life*

⁶⁷ See Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter*

⁶⁸ See Anna Tsing’s *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of life in Capitalist Ruins*

future is in other dimensions and times, sometimes sideways or backwards, in forgotten successes and failures. Drawing from Frantz Fanon's assertion that "the decolonized community defines itself by its relation to the future", Mbembe suggests that emancipation from the 'dead force' of colonialism will involve identifying 'the power of the future inscribed in the present', the ex-colonized creation of "their own time, all the while constructing the time of the world"⁶⁹ (226; 229; 224).

In contrast to the fires of hell and annihilating end times, there are also other fire myths. Robin Kimmerer directs us toward many fires⁷⁰: sacred fire, fire for healing, for feeding; fire as 'creative force', as a 'paintbrush on the landscape' that in fact produces greater, abundant life and prevents catastrophic destruction when applied thoughtfully; fires that guide, protect and shelter. In Anishinaabe philosophy, the past is braided into the future in the parable of the Seventh Fire Prophecy: following a series of migrations, the time of settler-colonialism—a time of fragmented, separated, vanishing people, plants, and animals—, and the time of the sixth fire, a time of mourning and existential succumbing wherein "the cup of life would almost become the cup of grief", a new people and fire will need emerge who will to walk together through the detritus of history to rekindle sacred fire (Kimmerer, 367).

"The people of the Seventh Fire do not yet walk forward; rather, they are told to turn around and retrace the steps of the ones who brought us here. Their sacred purpose is to walk back along the red road of our ancestors' path and to gather up all the fragments that lay scattered along the trail.... Not so they can return to some

⁶⁹ Mbembe also suggests that though the world appears as a "lifeless block that testifies to everything except the form of a living and joyful body, disappearing under a double layer of rage and resentment"... the post-colonial subject must strived "the constitution of a subject who, at the origin, would first refer to itself—and, in referring first to itself, to its pure possibility and free apparition, would inevitably relate to the world, to others, to an Elsewhere". (Out of the Dark Night)

⁷⁰ As opposed to the modern, eschatological notion of fire only as producer of destruction and death

atavistic utopia, but to find the tools that allow us to walk into the future. So much has been forgotten, but it is not lost as long as the land endures and we cultivate people who have the humility and ability to listen and learn⁷¹” (367-368).

Benjamin wrote that his *Angelus Novus* was an attempt to “understand a humanity that proves itself by destruction”, an angel that “resembles all from which [Benjamin] had to part: persons and above all things” (Jeffries). It is a parable of a spirit propelled backwards by the storm of progress and linear time, eternally distanced from a past that it gazes upon in a singular vision of history as unified catastrophe, eyes wide and mouth open in a shocked attempt to awaken the dead and piece together fragments. The parable of the Seventh Fire that Kimmerer describes offers a variation on this theme. It presents a polyphony of human and non-human agents moving towards new futures, futures collectively, rhythmically gathered from the embers of this twilight ruin through a particular form of listening, a listening to the stories, songs and non-human lessons of this broken and fragmented world.

The no-future quality that can be heard in Proust and Kaufman’s time need not force us to accept the past, present and future as dead time, it can instead provoke a mobilization of multiple times, render it in Cotardian fashion as undead time of unseized potentiality in a materialist future and past embedded in the looping Now of the present. *AUNDINT* reanimates a futurist imaginary, attempts to locate new futures in the non-human, the alien, in conjured times, unsettling sensations, patterned vibrations, in past crystallin truths. That said, one must remain wary of the eerie, undead time of capital’s constant search for exteriors and new sensations to seize.

Here we might turn to the ‘tradition of the oppressed’ that Benjamin describes, through which the

⁷¹ From Benjamin’s 1931 essay on the Austrian writer Karl Kraus

present connects to this past (Khatib). In *A Non-Nullified Nothingness: Walter Benjamin and the Messianic Libre*, Khatib writes that “access to [the images of the totality of historical time], which can no longer be represented in chronological terms, never opens up through intellectual and contemplative intention, but is available only to the politically involved collective subject at the incalculable moment of historical crisis. Thus, the subject of history is not a transcendent subject,” but “the struggling oppressed class in their most exposed situation” (Khatib, 84). Kaufman’s focus moves from the contemplative volition and experience of Proustian characters to a dead and rotting world. Caden Cotard’s ‘out’ is more literal and follows Cotard to the letter, in that it, in the last scene, involves his being commanded to ‘die’. *AUDINT*, however, seems to gesture toward this collective Cotardian subject, humans webbed together in slow death whose attention is directed toward elsewhere as the planetary unexpectedly sounds from within and without, emerging in empty landscapes, in silence, and in distant times.

Benjamin’s *Theological-Political Fragment* points to the relationship between the profane and the collective social striving towards happiness involved in his concept of the messianic (Khatib, Derrida and Sons). In the mysterious fragment, Benjamin writes that “whereas, admittedly, the immediate Messianic intensity of the heart, of the inner man in isolation, passes through misfortune, as suffering. To the spiritual *resitutio in integrum*, which introduces immortality, corresponds a worldly restitution that leads to the eternity of downfall, and the rhythm of this eternally transient worldly existence, transient in its totality, in its spatial but also in its temporal totality, the rhythm of Messianic nature, is happiness. For nature is Messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away. To strive after such passing, even for those stages of man that are nature, is the task of world politics, whose method must be called nihilism.” (Khatib, Derrida and Sons, 313). Benjamin’s emphasis on rhythm here is notable. The task of this collective time of

passing is particularly fascinating in its reimagining of rhythm—the organization of time— from that of the linear, mechanical clock, to the mobilizing of atomistic rhythm, from synecdoche that captures to the collectively aroused conceit, the tracing and linking of images of dead, unseized potentialities past, not to see what they might represent or show, but what types of listening they provoke, the ways that their vibratory sounding, through an undeadening, reassembles the time of the present.

Against the pull of total annihilation, I will leave this loop remembering the collective turn to other times, other rhythms, other fires.

Twilight Loops...

Cotard and the end from the top again...

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