JOYOUS IN THE WEB: ANIMAL METAPHORS OF THE NEW, POSTMODERN & GLOBAL FREEDOM

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Abstract: It is difficult to determine the main symbolic animal of Modernism. Was it Zarathustra's serpent, was it the fantastic Phoenix of the so many Gnostic complexes, was it Hermann Hesse's lonely wolf, or the Promethean eagle, also present in America's ascension as a global power? Each of them can be considered representative, but none of them can express clearly and without hesitation the intimate, ultimate identity of Modernism, associated with anxiety, loneliness, a social feeling of the absurd and the specific fears of the authoritarian, mass societies. The Counterculture of the 60s and the coming of the Internet have made things easier to define. The dominant symbols of the new, electronic society are the web and the swarming "global village", as defined by Marshall McLuhan and Jussi Parikka: the insect society. Postmodernism and cyberculture joyously herald the utopia of a future global swarm, formed by people technologically deprived of any negativity, and whose only outcome is the universal, shared freedom. As Richard Barbrook puts it (in his Imaginary Future. From Thinking Machines to the Global Village, 2007), "The imminent arrival of the Net meant that people would soon be living, thinking and working in a peaceful, equalitarian and participatory civilization." Interfering with Jussi Parikka's seminal book, Insect Media. An Archeology of Animals and Technology (2010), this presentation will focus on the main cultural symbols and metaphors of the new, global "web society", trying also to demonstrate that the new cultural and social paradigm goes back to the communal, anti-state feelings of the Counterculture of the 60.

Keywords: modernism; postmodernism; global village; counterculture; animal symbolism; insects

It's difficult to determine which animal can best symbolize cultural Modernism and its structures. Neither can we say whether it was a real or an imaginary animal. Was it Zarathustra's eagle, Darwin's famous monkey, the Phoenix of so many resurrections or the self-biting *ouroboros* of mythology? By examining and deselecting each variant, I've come to the conclusion that there were two: Kafka's strange bug from the *Metamorphosis* and Hermann Hesse's lonely wolf from the *Steppenwolf*, replicated in the Wandering Jew motif throughout Modernism and, a little bit later, in the anti-systemic metaphors of the endless run within the Counterculture of the 60s. Both Kafka's Gregor Samsa (turned into a monstrous beetle) and Hesse's Harry Haller (the ever-wandering "Steppenwolf") are related to the main complexes of negative Modernism: anxiety, social and personal distrust, alienation. Gregor Samsa especially, but in some respect Harry Haller too, raise fear among the others, generate distrust and repulsion. Their structural (in Harry Haller's case) and acquired (in that of Gregor Samsa's) loneliness is deeply rooted in the archaeology of the estranged sociopath, which also proved to be one of the main social and cultural complexes of Modernity. In this respect, man is understood as a lonely and disturbed individual, who defines himself as a creative "difference" opposed to any collectivity or the "masses". The crowd functions here as a twofold negative determination: it rejects each entity which is different, or dissimilar, or, on the contrary, wilily "absorbs" the individual, by turning him into a mass-man, an alienated person deprived of originality and "faces".

Interestingly enough, Kafka's frightening beetle wasn't isolated in the period, since literary psychology (Poe, for instance) constantly referred to insects as a source of fear. In

1897, a highly successful popular writer of that time, Richard Marsh (a pseudonym of Richard Heldmann) published a horror novel entitled *The Beetle*. Its plot ran as a perfect embodiment of Victorian Gothic: a mysterious Oriental – let's say: human – entity sets foot in London, functioning as a sort of mixture between a strange magician and an Oriental sage. No one can precisely determine whether it is a male or a female, since (s)he is both restrained and full of exaggerated sexual desires. This creature can, by shape shifting, turn into a monstrous bug and terrorize its environment. It is not the immediate aim of this paper to get into the multi-faceted labyrinth of Marsh's plot, the novel is, technically speaking, rather interesting by using different narrators and alternative angles of viewing, but we are chiefly interested in Anna Maria Jones's interpretation of the frightening, monstrous figure[1] as a revival of a dormant, malignant energy in the midst of the "civilized" and extremely formal British Society. Anna Maria Jones discusses the novel in terms of a clash between form and energy, evoking expanding thermodynamics (the main industrial issue of the period – and at the same time its principal cultural metaphor), but neglecting to bring Nietzsche into discussion. According to the main *episteme* of the late 19th century, people are torn between the overpowering, superhuman (and occasionally destructive) force of steam and the strivings to keep it under control by limiting it into "recipients" or "forms". Psychoanalysis functions this way, since the disciplined forms of the ego or the "reality principle" try to cope and keep under control the overpowering outburst of the subconscious. Energy, people started to understand at that time, can reach beyond humans, and even replace them, because a steam powered engine is always more powerful and efficient than the best strivings of the limited individual. Posthumanity originates in this recognition, and brings us to the greatest intellectual adventures of the 20th century, and to especially those of the Internet era.

Issued by Nietzsche, the understanding of civilization as an endless process of alternating form and energy (that is: decadence and Dionysian eruption) quickly revolved into a dilemma which is central both to humanism and to technology: will man be enough, or must we look for a new type of civilization, whose model of behavior and life source exceed the intrinsic limits of the humans? According to the main cultural and epistemic models of Modernity, evolution is constantly controlled by a goal, or a *telos*: to make a better humanity, to live history as a dialectics of achieving higher and higher values. As Darwin has put it, evolution means both a competition of power and the spontaneous mechanism of eliminating what is weak inside a group, in order to obtain the most powerful responses to the challenges of the medium. Only the heroes will survive: from Carlyle to the comics culture of our present decades the understanding of life as a fierce competition for survival has put a shade on every other perspective, condemning the poor, the not-so-mighty or those who cannot or do not want to adapt, as we have seen in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* or in Hesse's *Steppenwolf* , whose protagonists are the victims of an *episteme* which doesn't accept by victors.

In 1909, the philosopher Henri Bergson published his seminal *L'Évolution créatrice*, a book mainly written *against* Darwin. In sharp opposition to the master, Bergson states that

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[1] *Conservation of Energy, Individual Agency and Gothic Terror in Richard Marsh's* The Beetle*, Or What's Scarier than an Ancient, Evil, Shape/Shifting Bug?,* in: *Victorian Art and Culture*, Cambridge University Press, nr. 39/2011, pp. 65-85

evolution is not centrally structured as focused on an "aim", and that thus it has no *telos*, but develops randomly, in various directions, due to a decentralized, but extremely powerful life energy, in whose intellectual genealogy we can easily find Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's "blind" will to exist. Life works not by structures, by hierarchy and by centralized control, but by differentiation and dissemination. By analyzing Bergson's work, Jussi Parikka refers to Elizabeth Grosz: "It is a mode of differentiation whose future forms we are unable to decipher. Evolution works by mistakes and deviations, and is far from a linear enterprise of smooth progress."[2] Evolution, as we understand it, is centered onto humans and turns the humans into "master controllers" of beings and forces which truly are more powerful than men.

Judaism has transmitted us a belief like this, rooted into the divine creation of the world related in the Genesis. When creating man, God puts him in charge with everything He has created before, and henceforth man becomes the master of the fields, of the plants and animals. No one truly explained why he was so privileged, as he immediately showed some sort of weakness when meeting the snake. Bergson says that man is a conservative, self-reproductive animal, by privileging comfort over creativity. His obsession with order also proves a sort of reluctance to experiment. Human like "systems": well organized mechanisms of minimalist reactions and transparency, whose enemies are disintegration and the uncontrollable. That is: the abnormal, will Foucault say: everything which exceeds normality, the monstrous, the insane, playful sexuality, or even creativity if it is not clear and well-balanced.

Relying on Nietzsche, Bergson argues that creativity has been altered by humans by linking it too much to the activity of the brain. The life of nature – he states – is more creating than man, simply because it does not rely on exclusive intellectual expectations, but brings into the topic the body. "Animals are in general inventors – Parikka summarizes the idea. – But for animals this invention happens mainly through their bodies, which become pragmatic and experimental probes looking for resonating surroundings."[3] This type of creation does not insist on debilitating the extraordinary diversity of existence by structuring it under well-defined labels, but conceives life as a continuous biomorphic, de-structured dynamic of alternative, loosely knit webs or "archipelagos", which also contains man - not as the centre of the net, but merely as a participant in the general move, whose main mechanism is the never-ending, aesthetic diversity of a multiple cosmos.

The best animal metaphor for this anamorphous, heterogeneous mode of creation is the swarm. Our postmodern, web-oriented, global world is full of swarms and insects. They use to speak about swarm intelligence (SI: Gerardo Beni, Jing Wang, 1989), swarm robotics, ant colony algorithms (Marco Dorrigo, 1992: ants wander randomly around a "soft", non power-controlled "center"), and even about an artificial bee colony algorithm (D. Karaboga, 2005) in order to define a heterogeneous, non-geometric, diffuse and randomly extended social or mind construction which functions by respecting the autonomous dynamics of each

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[2] *Insect Media. An Archaeology of Animals and Techonology*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis – London, 2010, p. 19
[3] Ibid., p. 20

section or web. When, back in 1989, Sir Timothy Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web (WWW), he imagined an open and randomly growing electronic organism, governed by non-symmetric laws of extension. It means that the Internet has both living branches and "dead" ones, which are dormant or definitively abandoned. The living branches can grow incessantly, like a swarming architecture below the surface of the earth, interfering loosely with the other branches, but not conditioning their development.

There were also other principles which endorsed the functioning of the Web. First of all, the new tool for international connectivity avoided any state or political control or interfering, evolving in a "space" which is beyond national or ideological determinations. On the other hand, it suppressed any censorship or "high-brow-culture" discrimination, functioning well beyond of what we generally call the "canon". The precondition of the Internet as a space of uncontrolled freedom had nevertheless a consequence unintended by its creators: cyber-piracy, the hacker society. Again, they function according to the de-structured algorithm of the "system", by generating an endless number of ill-oriented, but very creative individuals, who rarely congregate in a group. They are not rejected by the web, they participate, so they are not alienated. Contrarily, their trickster creativity drives them in a sort of deviant, energetic frenzy, which is closer to fulfillment than to anxiety or dissatisfaction. On both sides, creators and hackers, good guys and bad guys, the rules to display are those of anarchy and not centralization.

There is no lonely ant. To put it differently: it is difficult to imagine an alienated, suffering, rejected insect. Researching swarms, Suzanne Batra coined in 1966 the term "eusociality", which is not very far from that of "eutopia" (place of happiness) used in the literature dedicated to utopias and dystopias. Eusociality means a sort of neutral and heterogeneous social mood of reaching collective happiness. It's not a quest, but an almost spontaneous, organic result. Bees and ants – Batra suggested – are eusocial beings; there's nothing more eudemonic than a bee's "dance" when finding a nice hill with flowers.

Eusociality is based on several principles which surpass the human understanding of life as endless striving for superiority, or power. The freedom of the swarm is predetermined by its random architecture, which resembles to Deleuze and Guattari's "nomad science" from *A Thousand Plateaus*. By contrasting it to the coercive, norm-centered "royal" axiology, built on hierarchy and exclusion, "nomad science" – the two philosophers argue – is based on what is randomly creative, singular and accidental. Each product acquired in this way has a value in itself, being totally independent from the axiological coercions of the "system". Generally speaking, value making is related to comparison and anxiety, even dissatisfaction: I am not as good as the other, my work is not as valuable – or nice and complete – as the other. Within eusociality this kind of anxiety simply vanishes, because the fulfillment or the aesthetic excellence is acknowledged by what is plausible, and not by obligation.

Swarms are "happy" because they function beyond the tensions of sexuality and power. In many modern societies – Foucault was brilliant at demonstrating this! – sexuality becomes anxiety and frustration just because it functions within the perimeter of power. By conceding reproduction to a single individual – the queen - , the swarm gains a liberty which

is unconceivable within the constraints of sexuality. On the other hand, the queen frees itself from the burden to control the entire swarm and to exercise power.

Suzanne Batra's analysis quickly became a strong intellectual tool, being used whenever we encounter a de-centralized, non-homogeneous cultural, social or electronic "being". This paper does not want to extend the archaeology of swarming towards too many predecessors, but I feel obliged to say that it was analogically defined by Huizinga in his seminal *Homo ludens*. Huizinga asserted that we have two main models of play: one which strictly obey rules and is marked by a well-structured and predetermined game choreography, and another one which grows from the very lack of its system. In this second type of play, the growing blossom of lust does not rely on previously established frames, but grows randomly according to each competitor's creativity or imagination.

Let's take two examples, in order to better understand the difference. Rubik's famous colored revolving cube requires from the player the skill of turning "chaos" into "order". When he first takes the cube, its colors and randomly mixed. His task is to make them fit. A great variety of game scenarios are built on the same principle of correcting dissimilarity by turning it into order. Let's take, for instance, the archaic backgammon, played also in ancient Mesopotamia. When starting the game, the two opponents have their rolls scattered all over the box, as if they have wandered randomly away from their house or country of origin. The task of the players is to compete against the other by trying to draw them back into their "house" or "home". A contrary example is a mystery game scenario played on the Internet. Survival horror, for instance: the protagonist is engaged in a life-and-death quest, whose trick is creativity and courage. It might happen that the continuation of the game – and of the protagonist's life! – depends on opening the appropriate door of two and three, a mistake meaning death. William Gibson used this kind of plot in his famous *Neuromancer*: having implanted a malicious chip under his skin, which enables a remote controlled acceleration of his suffering and even death, the protagonist has but one chance, to stay alive by continuously alienating the malicious computer program. Creativity means both life and the very substance of the game: if he stops creating, he is doomed to extinction.

The American biologist Edward Osborne Wilson suggested that studying ants can be more enjoyable than studying humans. A lot of great fields of interest are linked to his name (biodiversity, sociobiology), as well as the swift remark that Marx was actually right: socialism *is* a solution, not for humans, but for swarms: Marx simply got the wrong species. Man is ultimately determined – E. O. Wilson argued – by his anxiety of survival; when this comes into jeopardy, he is capable of everything, and first of all of abandoning all other people in order to mark a personal triumph. Swarm intelligence does not function in an egocentric manner, since individuals are more responsible for the other's survival than of their own. Collective communication and collective instinct explain this kind of behavior. We can add the altruistic creativity: when a group of ants start a new tunnel, they do not do it for themselves, but for the others. The upper land geography of a swarm relies on the same heterogeneous and de-centralized pattern: food search does not create a single, repeated structure, but an infinite number of substructures which means, first of all, experimentation.

Borges was fascinated by the topic and profoundly attracted by creating a swarming, pluralistic, non-linear literature. In 1985, he wrote a preface to the new edition of Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker*, a fantastic novel initially published in 1937. Stapledon was a pioneering genius of his time, whose reputation never blurred, but has been somehow exiled to the realm of the SF aficionados. The WWW episteme repositioned him as a central inspirer of the new, global mode of thinking, According to the *Star Maker*, the universe functions as a "cosmic body" formed by a vivid network of individuals who live on different galaxies and planets. They share an intergalactic "collective mind", being linked by telepathy. Each individual is particular and autonomous, because its genetic principle is differentiation: when God created the "playground", He wasn't interested in replicating beings and forms, but in making dissimilar beings, since diversity expresses the overpowering energy of the life force and is less boring than what is typical. Apart from the swarm principle, Stapledon's exquisite vision relies on his representation of God (or Star Maker) as a playful creator of the existing world. He enjoys His role by generating "toy universes" and by deleting others which are "tired" or exhausted.

Swarm creativity proves to be a constant fascination for our global epoch. The detail might not thrill you, but while I was writing this paper the main issue on television was the Ukraine crisis. Promising to respect the outcome of the presidential elections in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin had a very interesting remark, which goes back to many great analyses of the former Cold War belligerency. Putin said that a multi-polar world is more powerful and efficient than the "one-pole" international order obtained by the collapse of the former Communist regimes. A multi-polar world is a multiple source of life force and energy: you might not agree, saying that we turn ideological adversity into a biological fetish, but you can't deny that it might be intriguing especially for the resemblance with the main epistemic model of our period, that of the alternative, de-centralized, "eusocial" web.

Insects as expanding creatures have always haunted our imagination. George Méliès's 1902 screenplay, *Le Voyage dans la lune* (A Trip to the Moon) is generally considered the first SF movie. In it, Prof. Barbenfouillis, the President of the Astronomy Club proposes a voyage to the Moon by firing a bullet-like starship from a huge military canon. Méliès actively practiced pataphysics, together with Jarry (Ubu's literary father) and other French impenitent, anti-Establishment intellectuals. His tender bias explains the name of the five astronomers who enthusiastically agree to join Barbenfouillis: Nostradamus, Alcofrisbas, Omega, Micromegas, Parafaragaramus. They land on the moon, get shade from snowfall in a cave and discover that it is inhabited by scary insectoid creatures (giant ants) which explode when attacked. The selenites are nothing more than energetic, ever-growing monsters, whose life force is extracted from their magnitude. Apart from men, they do not practice conservation or scarcity, but are huge and excessive, growing randomly in different directions.

In defining cyberculture, *The Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*[4] quotes Mark Dery with his homonymous essay, published in 1992: a far-flung, loosely knit complex of sublegitimate,

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[4] Edited by Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winquist. Routledge, London & New York, 2001. Vol. I, p. 76

alternative and oppositional subcultures…whose common project is the subversive use of the technocommidities, often framed by radical body politics." Timothy Miller[5] has shown that the back-to-the-land romanticism of the Sixties has generated not only an archipelago of countercultural encampments, but a communal solidarity whose essence was alternative creativity. The utopian communities of the Sixties challenged the right of the State to control everything, feared that the supermarket, the global culture and the extent of the exhausted civilization will create consumer conformity, that is an "one-dimensional man" (with Herbert Marcuse's famous formula), and sought alternative sources of life, especially by returning to simplicity, even primitivism, and nature. Pursuing subculture happiness, in a "eusocial" geography which falls outside the constraints of the "squares"[6], the hippies envisaged a "new mankind" whose utopian, Fourier-like "Phalansterian" values included a minimalist subsistence and economy, less – if possible: no – money, brotherhood, egalitarianism rather than hierarchy, ecstasy as a religious attitude, rural idealism, praising what is natural as opposed to what is civilized and especially a new attitude towards time, which abolished duration and valued a sort of eternal, qualitative present. Miller calls them "responsible hedonists"[7] living in a sort of "de-centralized socialism" based on an acute sense of differentiation. Multiplicity, the psychosis of "multi-centrism" also characterized their art, mainly generated by ecstasy and drugs. Timothy Leary has explained that the ultimate goal of the psychedelic experiments is to create unique, unable to repeat experiences. There were no norms, no paradigms or coercive rules within the expansion of the psyche: no experience, but experiences, that is: pluralism.

In 1948, B.[urrhus] F.[rederic] Skinner published a novel which will become one of the countercultural "bibles": *Walden Two*. The title refers to Henry David Thoreau's *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, published in 1854, which tells the story of two years and two months the author had spent in complete reclusion near a lake in Massachusetts. Thoreau went there to heal himself from the wounds administered by the society which had become more and more "dull" in his opinion. People are not free – he concluded. "Men have become the tools of their tools", while society as a whole is nothing more than a resonator of unhappiness and desperation: "The mass of man lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country…"[8]

Ants are still a negative metaphor for personal and social accumulation in Thoreau's economy of thinking ("…we live meanly, like ants…", p. 69), but the solution he offers through voluntarily seclusion in the midst of the forest exceeds the limits of the usual life of a hermit. It is widely known that Thoreau was a transcendentalist, mainly influenced in his chlorophyllic seclusion by Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay on *Nature*. According to Thoreau, "every morning [spent at Walden Pond] was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and may I say innocence, with nature itself"[9]. There is not only the syndrome of

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[5] *The 60s Communes. Hippies and Beyond*. Syracuse University Press, 1999
[6] Norman Mailer's word, from *The White Negro*
[7] *The 60s Communes...*Ed. cit., p. 147
[8] *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, 1854, p. 9
[9] Ibid., p. 69

the Garden of Eden here (Paradise is outside the living world), but, much more, the ethics of becoming again Nature's innocent, playful child. Adults are dull and boring: "I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell anything."[10]

Thoreau's desire to become again, from time to time, a "child" will resonate three decades later with Nietzsche's latter metamorphosis in the *Zarathustra* (camel – lion – child). On the other hand, it suggests that the completeness of nature in a sensorial and bodily experience, not something you can reach through your thinking and intellect. Both Thoreau and – later on – Skinner acknowledge that life is mainly *bodily experiment*, not a process of intellectual crystallization. In *Walden Two*, a university professor and several of his aids (one of them, Castle, is offensively skeptical, but extremely bright) want to know more about a utopian community established up in the woods by a former academic dropout, Frazier. Intellectual approach is irrelevant – Frazier writes them back -: "You've got to experiment, and experiment with your own life!"[11] So the group sets up to encounter an almost heavenly community formed by clean, joyous and sincere people, who are driven by the shared principles of free and de-structured eudemonism, promoted as a "cultural design" or a "cultural engineering" of a society governed by the goal to make its members happy. Utopian communities are generally filthy and ragged: *Walden Two* is not. People are elegantly dressed, they are clean, and their gestures resemble the choreography of angels. They do not practice any regression or the radical return to sub-civilized values. "We avoid the temptation – Frazier explains – to return to primitive modes of farming and industry…our point of view here isn't atavistic…we simply avoid uncreative and uninteresting work."[12]

Religion is optional: if they want to, parents can provide religious training to their children, but it is not compulsory. Everyday teaching is a practical one, deprived of any economic or career-centered connotation. A very interesting detail seems to be decanted from Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation*: there is no burden of history within the community, "history in honored in *Walden Two* only as entertainment"[13]. Practicality prevails: "The main thing is, we encourage our people to view every habit and custom with an eye to possible improvement. A constantly experimental attitude toward everything – that's all we need."[14] The goal is not the adulthood tension, the moral constraint or the frustration, but the entertainment enjoyed by turning each person into an innocent child of the universe: "No ritual, no dalliance with the supernatural. Just an enjoyable experience, in part aesthetic, in part intellectual."

As shown before, one of the visitors to *Walden Two*, Professor Castle remains extremely skeptical and eager to filter what he sees through the lens of devious coerciveness and manipulation. The architecture of *Walden Two* resembles to an anthill: the rooms and social venues (kitchen, library, concert hall, socializing hubs) are interconnected through an

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[10] Ibid., p. 9
[11] B.F. Skinner: *Walden Two*. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1962, p. 9
[12] Ibid., p. 76
[13] Ibid., p. 115
[14] Ibid., pp. 29-30

intricate network of corridors and passageways that reduce anxiety by increasing comfort and commodity. Back in 1992, I was a Fulbright Scholar at Indiana University, in Bloomington and was invited to an academic conference held up north in the state, in Muncie. One of the professors delivered a paper about everyday American conformity. He started by pointing to the interior design of shops belonging to several food marketers (McDonald's, Wendy's): wherever you wander across the States (to Nebraska, Texas, Illinois, a.s.o.) you'll find the same interior design. It is so to reduce the anxiety of adaptation. In *Walden Two* we rediscover the pattern: although not forbidden, outdoor wanderings are not necessary in the community: "We never have to go out the door at all!" – Frazier says.[15]

Such a "Super-organism", as Frazier calls it – which is our, global and consumer society – can achieve this type of efficiency – Castle suspects – only by suppressing elementary human reactions like solitude, fear, rejection or accident. In a normal society, accidents can be devastating: our whole postmodern culture (films, computer games, mass media products) are full of catastrophes, deadly monsters, shadowy vampires and nasty serial killers. Wherever they come from, they trigger reactions, stir violence, that is: activate the dormant life energy within us. In an "anthill", the group takes over the survival instincts of the individuals, "degrading" their power. In order to understand why it is so, we have to return to Freud's interpretation on violence: if not channeled, the violence of an individual living in a group will ultimately turn against the group itself. But here is what Castle says to Frazier: "Intelligence, initiative: you have filled their places with a sort of degraded instinct, engineered compulsion. Walden Two is a marvel of efficient coordination – as efficient as an anthill. […] The behavior of your members is carefully shaped in advance by a Plan, and it's shaped to perpetuate that plan. Intellectually, Walden Two is quite as incapable of a spontaneous change of course as the life within a beehive."[16]

Two more readings, in order to conclude this paper. Both Thoreau and Skinner talk about the methodical suspicion of becoming adult. It's not the intention of our essay to deepen the perspective, but it seems necessary to say that the countercultural psychopath of the late 50s and the 60s was also defined as a retarded person who refuses to grow up. In the introductory scene of the *Rebel Without a Cause* iconic movie (1955), the deviant Jim Stark (interpreted by James Dean) plays with a toy monkey. Norman Mailer's hipster from *The White Negro* is playful and intellectually childish, murmuring the syllables of a subculture not understood by adults. A child is more creative than a "square" adult, "degraded" by a System which asks him to obey. In an inter-galactic belligerence, conformity and idle reactions can be harmful and suicidal, because they are incapable to generate the unexpected originality which can destroy the enemy. It is especially so when the enemy is a swarm. A here we come to Ender Wiggins, Orson Scott Card's renowned child fighter from the *Ender's Game* book series, started in 1985.

The *Dyson swarm* is the model of an inter-galactic network of independent entities and structures (satellites, habitats, galaxies) defined by the famous British physicist Freeman

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[15] Ibid., p. 24
[16] Ibid., p. 253

Dyson, whose fields are astronomy, galactic and mind modeling, cosmic thermodynamics. Only the Nobel Prize medal misses from the walls of his office: he is by all means one of the leading intellectual figures of our era. Universe – he asserts – expands like a swarm, multiplying not only by loosely connected entities (planets, galaxies, "Suns"), but also by new and new forms of energy (metaphorically translated: endless numbers of "eggs" for new civilizations). Mind also expands – he asserted – "infinite in all directions", like a swarm, a bat colony or a beehive. WWW especially favors such a "fractal-like", fissional diffusion: when joining the web, we become parts of a multilayered, multi-centered, non-homogeneous organism, and start expanding the very moment we sit down and open our laptop.

Orson Scott Card's Ender lives in a threatened, intergalactic network of planets, asteroids and starships. Civilization has already experimented two hostile attacks on behalf of the "buggers" (in the later books: the Formics), that is: ant-like, very intelligent and technologically developed creatures in continuous search for new vital spaces. Lead by a mighty Queen, the buggers represent a single, multi-faceted cosmic organism, functioning as a very sophisticated network or shared thoughts or reactions. They need no language, because information is instantly diffused in the whole entity, wherever the individuals might happen to be. They are formidable mind – or computer – warriors, because they are capable of generating innovative programs and plans which go far beyond human programming. For instance, the buggers easily understood that humans reduce thinking to several fixed, repetitive patterns which can be found in all programs, no matter their tools or forms of expression might be. These patterns are based on binary oppositions: 0 vs. 1, cold vs. warm, moral vs. immoral, up vs. down, etc. In order to beat this mode of fighting, the buggers developed non-binary programs and functions, which do not obey a logic order, but go astray like a swarm, some sort of magic or a plural, fractal-like organism. Civilization trains Ender the child to become the commander of the galactic army whose aim is to defend our values from an imminent, third invasion launched by the buggers. Only a child is innovative enough to penetrate the anarchic and randomly sophisticated strategies prepared by the buggers. This is the swarm intelligence: Freeman Dyson's "infinite in all directions", distributive creative mind.

Swarm art is a free-floating web of texts or images not united by space, time and character. Rosemary Jackson[17] asserted that fantasy literature is constructed according to this syncretism: mixed texts and symbols, chunks of different mythologies or stories put together, literary scenarios built on "portals", or passageways[18] which endlessly generate new "realities" or plots. Umberto Eco spoke about literary creation as "knitting"; as for the Romanians, Mircea Eliade discretely relied on these "knitted", non-homogeneous modes of writing, but the master of the genre was I. P. Culianu, who resembled literary creation to a fugue or to the magic dissemination of imaginary programs generated through "mind games".

Our last reading is George R. R. Martin's *Sandkings*, published in the August 1979 issue of *Omni* (nr. 8). The protagonist, Simon Kress, is a collector of weird creatures and

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[17] *Fantasy. A Literature of Subversion*. Routledge, London & New York, 1998, pp. 13-14
[18] See Lori M. Campbell's *Portals of Power. Magical Agency and Transformation in Literary Fantasy*. MacFarland & Company, Jefferson NC and London, 2010

animals, but his collection dies out completely when he is away on a trip. When returning, he decides to replace them, but is not content with what he founds, until he discovers a new shop, Wo & Shade. The owner invites him to inspect a terrarium full of *sandkings*: weird, insect-like creatures controlled through telepathy by a dominant Queen. Kress buys them and forms four colonies: black, white, red, orange. Nothing relevant happens inside the terrarium: the sandkings are seemingly calm creatures, which finish by boring their owner, so he decides to introduce a "diversion" into the program, by starving them. As a response, the sandkings activate a repressed violence and start to compete and fight for food. Eventually, Kress puts them to fight against other animal, some of them bigger and more powerful than the ants: the sandkings win each battle, devouring their enemies.

Kress's girlfriend Cath expresses her disgust and leaves him. On one of her visits she and Kress accidentally smash the terrarium during a fight, the sandkings escape and start to grow incessantly. Kress understands that they grow according to the volume of the space they are put it. The terrarium was rather small, but now the sandkings take over the house and the property, consuming everything, even Cath and Kress. An interesting artistic detail related to mimicry surpasses the otherwise rather simple minded Golem inspired horror story, whose absence could have transformed the scenario into a "déjà vu" one. The sandkings had built rather monochrome colonies, until the former owner, shopkeeper Jala Wo decided to project a hologram of herself in the terrarium. It was immediately taken over by the ants and multiplied as ornaments for their numerous "buildings". Kress repeats the experience of the weird idolatry and sees that the outcome is the same: the sandkings multiply his image too, projecting it as artistry. As such, their violence can be fuelled and channeled: ants are an excellent field for experimenting and manipulating hostility through electronic impulses or information. You can open your laptop and become a monster without even being aware of the transformation.