Shooting the Image into the Nervous System: Burroughs' Algebra of Need and Rainer J. Hanshe's *Dionysos Speed*

The Algebra of Need in the Age of the Network

The century of data is the century of addiction. William S. Burroughs, prophet of circuitry and control, foresaw it when he named the *algebra of need* — that equation of hunger and power in which every fix installs a master.[1] For him, the addict was not an anomaly but a model of modern man: the subject rewired by the object of his dependence. Need was an algorithm long before code.

Rainer J. Hanshe's *Dionysos Speed* inherits and mutates this algebra. It transposes Burroughs' junkie into the figure of the digital slave — the user who cannot exist without the device. The syringe becomes the screen; heroin, the feed; the rush, the scroll. The same grammar persists: stimulus, craving, satiation, withdrawal. Only the medium has changed. Silicon replaces morphine; dopamine, data. The new masters call their clients "users," a word with an unburied genealogy.

Hanshe's writing inhabits this transformation from within. His book is not reportage but infection — part poem, part diagnosis, part exorcism. In its 21 sequences, he traces how the algebra of need has colonized the nervous system, how the logic of the market has entered the optic nerve. "Images are injected into the eyes," he writes, "as junk once entered the vein."[2] To see is to be used.

Yet *Dionysos Speed* is more than critique. It is revolt. Where Burroughs cut and spliced language to jam the circuits of control, Hanshe cuts the circuits themselves. He writes with a voltage that discharges theory into praxis, poetry into sabotage. His prose acts. It performs the resistance it describes. In this sense, *Dionysos Speed* belongs to a lineage of avant-garde insurgencies — Dada, Surrealism, Situationism — for whom art is neither mirror nor escape but weapon.

What follows here is an attempt to map the system and its counter-system: to read Hanshe's book through the algebra of need, through Foucault's architectures of discipline, through Debord's spectacle and Deleuze & Guattari's lines of flight, and to show how it all converges in Hanshe's *detournément* of digital metaphysics — a new religion of light, a new colonization of time, and the violent dream of its undoing.

Burroughs and the Algebra of Need

Burroughs' phrase, coined in the 1950s, defined addiction not as pathology but as pattern — a political mathematics of dependency.[3] The addict, he wrote, "needs his junk to live, and the dealer needs his need."[4] Need is reciprocal yet asymmetrical: a system of exchange that feeds on imbalance. Burroughs exposed the structure of control long before data or dopamine became commodities.

Hanshe resurrects that grammar in a new medium. For him, the digital subject is a user addicted to connection. The dealer's corner has become the global platform; the drug, the algorithm. "Need," Burroughs warned, "is the ultimate monopoly."[5] The same monopoly governs the screen. Each touch, each scroll, each refresh reinforces the circuitry of submission.

Hanshe extends this to the level of ontology. In *Dionysos Speed*, need is no longer confined to substance but permeates the texture of being. It is epistemic, aesthetic, planetary. The algebra of need has become the algebra of life itself.

Digital Metaphysics: The Virtual Afterlife and the Erasure of Duration

Digitality, Hanshe suggests, is not simply a technology — it is a neo-metaphysics. Its kingdom is not of this world, and yet it governs every nerve, every eye. The dream of transcendence once deferred to heaven has migrated into code. The believer's afterlife has become the user's cloud. The metaphysical *elsewhere* returns, stripped of gods, gilded with pixels.[6]

If the religious imagination once turned upward — toward an invisible realm of the blessed — the digital imagination turns inward, into the glowing interior of the screen. There, salvation is measured in bandwidth and the eternity of the feed. The digital believer's creed: *always be connected*. The paradox: in this permanent connection, nothing touches. The senses fall silent, the body goes still, the pulse of actuality vanishes beneath the hum of circuitry.

Hanshe's diagnosis is Nietzschean in tone: a new Apollonian order has arisen, a sterile Olympus of perfect light and endless semblance. This is the world of *Schein* — of surfaces, simulations, appearances — where being is replaced by reflection and duration by display.[7] To live in such a world is to exist in the pure present of refresh, update, swipe. The user's time is no longer kairotic, thick with potential; it is atomized into pulses, micro-moments, refresh cycles — time reduced to the interval between notifications.

In this, Hanshe sees the consummation of the Western will to transcendence: the flight from the earth that Nietzsche condemned as nihilism reborn in digital form. The other world is no longer celestial but virtual; no longer promised but streamed. "The body," Hanshe implies, "has been uploaded." The senses, once our means of knowing the world, now serve as conduits for its erasure.[8]

Yet *Dionysos Speed* refuses lamentation. Its critique is not reactionary but insurgent. Against this sterile metaphysics of light, Hanshe unleashes a Dionysian physics — of the body, of flux, of matter itself in revolt. His language detonates the clean syntax of code, reintroducing noise, grain, sensuality. The book becomes an act of counter-programming: to write, here, is to rewire perception; to awaken duration; to recall that time — like the body — is not a file to be compressed but a force to be lived.

The Cosmic Dream Machine: The Optic as Needle, the Dream as Code

The sequence titled "The Cosmic Dream Machine" detonates like an electric storm. The reader is dropped into a hypnagogic field: a laboratory of nerves and light where the dream itself has been mechanized. "Tele-intimatic virotics," "fiber-optick spider webs," "digitized innervation" — Hanshe's language fuses the lexicon of neurology and poetry, as if Burroughs' tape recorder had begun to dream.[9]

This is not description but operation. Each phrase performs what it names, splicing the reader's sensorium into the circuitry. The screen becomes a syringe. The image, a narcotic. Burroughs' junkie reappears as the 21st-century user, shooting photons instead of heroin, the fix delivered through pixels. "Enter the body as image," is the command Hanshe describes, collapsing subject and medium. Vision becomes ingestion; seeing, a form of use.

In these pages Hanshe dissects the nervous system of late capitalism. The optic nerve is now the primary site of capture; addiction has migrated from blood chemistry to attention. To scroll is to dose. Each image, a micro-injection of need, administered by the algorithmic dealer.[10] And yet the prose itself resists. Its syntax splinters, its rhythm spasms; the page behaves like a disrupted feed. The reader's cognition is forced into arrhythmia — a counter-training of the nervous system.

Philosophically, "The Cosmic Dream Machine" exposes the conjunction of spectacle and surveillance that Debord foretold: the world converted into representation and the spectator into commodity. But Hanshe extends this by showing that the spectacle now enters the bloodstream. The body is no longer passive; it is the medium itself.[11] His Dionysian counter-aesthetic seeks to re-embody the image, to make perception again tactile, rhythmic, mortal.

In the closing pulses of the sequence, light fractures into noise. "All signals jammed," the voice intones. What remains is static — the sound of freedom, the white hiss of disconnection. Here Hanshe reaches Burroughs' dream: the cut-up not as literary device but as neurological intervention. A politics of interference. The book becomes the jammer, the act that restores the possibility of silence.

Terra Nullius: Toward the Unwired Earth

If "The Cosmic Dream Machine" maps the interior colonization of the body, "Terra Nullius" turns outward to the planet itself. It reads as both prophecy and cartography: a survey of a world entirely wired, mapped, surveilled. "Cables beneath the sea, satellites in orbit, sensors in every room." The total net. The earth as apparatus.[12]

Hanshe names this condition with bitter irony — *terra nullius*, the colonizer's term for "nobody's land." Here it signifies the inverse: a world so claimed that no free space remains. The digital masters have drawn their invisible grids across ocean and soil; even the sky is striated by signal. Yet Hanshe's use of the term is insurgent. He writes toward the

possibility of a *new* terra nullius — not a territory to seize but to liberate, a wilderness of signal-silence where thought and body might again converge.

In one of the book's most violent passages, Hanshe speaks of the "niggerizing of the brain."[13] The phrase lands like an explosive. It does not seek comfort. It exposes the racialized genealogy of disposability that underwrites both slavery and its digital successor: the extraction of labor, of data, of thought itself. The slur functions analytically, not provocatively; it reveals how cognition has been racialized, how the subject of digital modernity inherits the colonized nervous system. The mind becomes plantation. The interface, the overseer.

Through this shock Hanshe connects the algebra of need to the history of enslavement. Addiction, servitude, and code form a single lineage of domination. Yet within that same lineage he locates the potential for revolt. The final pages envision black-clad figures moving through the night, "opening the black hole," "short-circuiting the feed."[14] These are not metaphors but actions: acts of sabotage, ritual, refusal. Equally important is Hanshe's insistence on creating spaces of non-capture. He uses the term "terra nullius" to theorize unwired domains — peripheries, margin zones, and designed 'hyphen-spaces' where the nets of platform capitalism have not fully set or set at all.[15] These are not utopias but intervals — breaks in the signal, fissures in the circuitry — where the world, briefly, breathes again. In *Dionysos Speed*, such spaces are made, not found: hacked into existence through acts of linguistic sabotage and poetic *dérive*, through *détournements* that short-circuit the algorithm's flow. Against the total colonization of space — cameras in every room, cables beneath the sea, satellites in orbit — Hanshe calls for deliberate interruption, for the construction of hyphen-spaces that are both link and rupture, joining and disjoining, a syntax of resistance written directly into the infrastructure of perception.

"Terra Nullius" thus performs its own exodus. Its syntax loosens, its imagery darkens; language itself seems to unplug. Silence re-enters the field as a political resource. The world, briefly, *un-wired*. In this blackout Hanshe glimpses a physics of liberation: the return of duration, of body, of planet. The Dionysian earth reasserting itself beneath the empire of light.

Avant-Garde Revolt and Lines of Flight

Hanshe's response to domination is not nostalgia for an untainted past, but invention — the creation of fugitive forms. His revolution is aesthetic, planetary, physical. In this, he stands with Artaud, Dada, and the Situationists — artists of the rupture, practitioners of the cut. Like them, he knows that in an age of spectacle, the only act that counts is sabotage of representation itself.

Throughout *Dionysos Speed*, we find scenes of insurgent performance: masked figures dressed in black, *détournements* of corporate slogans, sudden apparitions in the feeds. These acts are not symbolic; they are tactical. They turn the master's circuits against him, using the grammar of media to scramble its command codes.[16]

Here, Deleuze and Guattari's "lines of flight" finds its literary analogue. To flee, for them, is not to run away but to break through — to deterritorialize the field of capture, to open it to new becomings. Hanshe's black-clad rebels are precisely such vectors: they move through the net as noise, as glitch, as interference. Their anonymity — their refusal of iden-

tity — is their freedom. They occupy the smooth spaces between nodes, the interstices the system cannot map.

Hanshe's avant-garde lineage extends further: to the pirates of the Atlantic commons chronicled by Linebaugh and Rediker.[17] The pirate, too, lived by mobility and shared codes, striking from the peripheries, carving new routes through imperial grids. So too do Hanshe's figures: they inhabit the margins, the hyphen-spaces, the uncharted zones of the wired world. They are digital corsairs, poets of interference, anarchists of the cosmos.

In these sequences, the book performs what it expounds. Its own language becomes a tool of *détournement* — syntax fragmented, typography weaponized. Each sentence carries both sense and signal, thought and voltage. To read *Dionysos Speed* is to enter an environment of resistance, where the word itself fights for breath.

Toward a Dionysian Physics of Liberation

Hanshe's *Dionysos Speed* ends where metaphysics collapses — in the body, in the pulse, in the black. Having mapped the empire of light, he leads us into its eclipse. There, in the static between signals, another physics begins: *the Dionysian physics of becoming*, where time regains its depth and the body its density.[18]

In this physics, need is no longer algebra but rhythm. Connection ceases to be a compulsion and becomes a beat. The digital slave rediscovers the ancient tempo of breath. Hanshe's insurgent poetics teach that freedom does not lie in disconnection alone but in reconnection with the sensuous world the grid sought to erase — the earth, the body, the raw frequencies of being.

If Burroughs gave us the grammar of addiction, Hanshe gives us its inversion: an anti-algebra, a poetics of subtraction. To cut the feed is not to flee but to return — to duration, to matter, to the unprogrammed. His Dionysos is not a god of excess but of renewal, reminding that every circuitry, however total, hides a void; that even in the most saturated network, there remains a pulse unowned.

The counterfactions of *Dionysos Speed* — the black-clad figures, the pirates of signal, the poets of noise — are not fantasies but forms of life. They remind us that resistance, like rhythm, must be embodied, must be danced. And though the planet hums with surveillance and light, Hanshe leaves us with a final blackout, a silence charged with potential: *the possibility of the un-wired earth*.[19]

In that silence, the algebra of need resolves into music. The book closes not with a formula but a frequency. The revolution, if it comes, will be sonic.

Footnotes

1. William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (1959).
2. Hanshe, *Dionysos Speed*, (2024), p. 155.
3. Burroughs, *The Soft Machine* (1961).
4. Ibid.
5. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, p. 112.
6. Hanshe, *Dionysos Speed*, pp. 150–157.
7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (1967).
8. Hanshe, *Dionysos Speed*, p. 155.
9. Ibid., pp. 152–153.
10. Ibid., p. 155.
11. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1970).
12. Hanshe, *Dionysos Speed*, p. 160.
13. Ibid., p. 165.
14. Ibid.
15. The term "hyphen-spaces" is employed here not as a lexical flourish but as a figure for Hanshe's practice of inhabiting thresholds — zones neither inside nor outside the digital grid. The hyphen marks conjunction and interval at once: it connects while maintaining difference, a sign of both joining and separation. As such, "hyphen-space" denotes a field of potential where meaning, relation, and form are suspended between fixation and flight. It resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "smooth space" — unstriated zones of becoming that elude the control of striated order (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 474) — and with Hanshe's own penchant for hybrid compounds ("fiber-optick," "tele-intimatic," "neuro-spiritual") that bind and fracture language simultaneously. In this sense, hyphen-spaces are not metaphors for escape but intervallic practices: designed fissures in the circuitry of capture, intentional lacunae in the total wiring of the world.
16. Hanshe, *Dionysos Speed*, pp. 152–156; Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*.
17. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000).
18. Hanshe, *Dionysos Speed*, p. 164.
19. Ibid., p. 165.

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