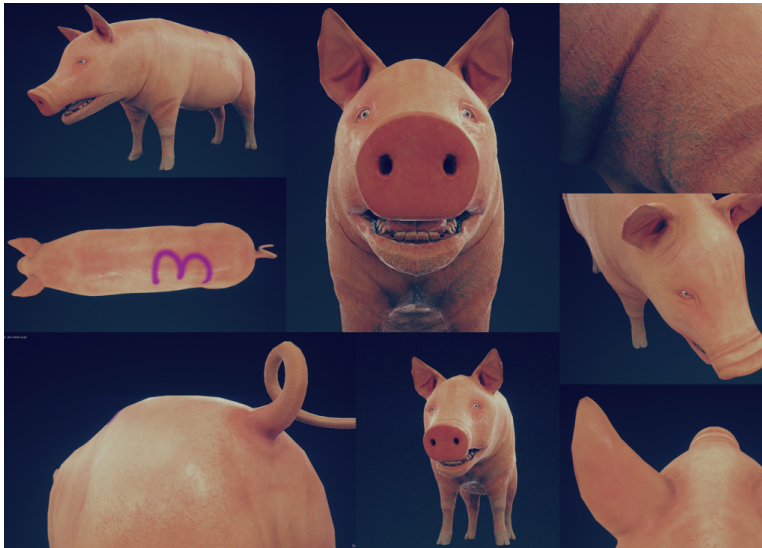


### 3.0 Becoming-user: Pig Simulator and World-Making



Isermann, *Pig Simulator*<sup>1</sup>

#### **Introduction**

*Pig Simulator* is a virtual reality [VR] game that follows pigs in their last moments through the slaughterhouse and processed into consumables.<sup>2</sup> Launched in early 2016 by German programmer Stephan Isermann, the game functions with virtual reality display head mounts, gaming remotes, or computer keyboards on standard operating systems. The game user has a single point shooter vantage point and never receives a game character. The game's environment and narrative are incoherent and inconsistent. In entering the game assuming the Stack and planetary-scale computation, I read *Pig*

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: all images in this thesis are my own as documentation of the artwork or the creator's (i.e. the images in each chapter artwork should be read as the artwork discussed in the chapter and as cited in the bibliography).

<sup>2</sup> The game can be downloaded here: <http://www.pigsimulator.com/>.

*Simulator* as enacting the departure from *being* as an anthropocene-human-User-subject into *becoming* a post-anthropocene-entity-user.<sup>3</sup>

Before I commence my game analysis, I detail my theoretical framework including the Stack as concept, *becoming*, and User/user. Then, I analyze the game's threshold room as a visual metaphor of the space between the anthropocene to the post-anthropocene, in the expansion of planetary-scale computation to the point of its collapse as cyberspace. To start the game, the game-player must relinquish their traditional expectations of subjectivity. By not receiving a character and by the game's incoherence and nonnarrative, the game-player can only situate herself by the unexpected movements of other game entities. The game-player is an intersectional site within the game environment. As a result of this, the game inflicts within the material body of the player the affect induced by this refusal of body. And, this makes an opening to becoming an immaterial, computational, information-operating agent.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Bratton claims that the Stack "...stage[s] the death of the [one kind of] User... [by] the eclipse of a certain resolute humanism..." (*The Black Stack*). This death, by the inclusion of nonhuman entities as equivalent to and potentially in composition with inhuman and human entities, means the end of life as the determination of being. Cyberspace becomes the critical global infrastructure in "...the multiplication and proliferation of other kinds of nonhuman Users (including sensors, financial algorithms, and robots from nanometric to landscape scale)..." (*The Black Stack*). The nonnarrative *Pig Simulator* commences only by this death of this one kind of User as the User-subject:

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<sup>3</sup> My experiences with the game have ranged first from at Transmediale Festival 2016 with the VR Oculus Rift headset and controller to many times since on my mac laptop computer.

the one embodying this “resolute humanism.” This is the User-subject of the User-layer in the forming infrastructures of planetary-scale computation as the anthropocene-naming, undifferentiated human. This is the human Kathryn Yusoff articulates. And, the subject of modernity/coloniality as defined by Walter Mignolo.

The User layer in The Stack, which is co-occupied and composited as equally determining agents by the *differentiated* inhuman and human, can easily retain the language of the User-subject. This is especially so, considering that planetary-scale computation is an accidental result of the actions that realized the anthropocene as unraveled in the previous chapter. The threshold of the game captures this death. And, it captures what the Stack’s architecture permits as a pre-emergence, a *becoming*, of a different kind of *user*- subjectivity. The experience of *Pig Simulator* asks what can the production of subjectivity look like when the constitution of being (in both world-and life-making structures) reorients to be both immaterial and material?

I use *becoming* with a few influences. First, I do so as an ontological movement from one conception to another. And, a turn in the formations of subjectivity: what and how this subjectivity is housed. In *Pig Simulator* this is from an enclosed materiality like a body to something immaterial, open, and porous. I emphasize that becoming-user is one in which agency is present, with exterior forces. For this, I quote *A Thousand Plateaus*: “To the relations composing, decomposing, or modifying an individual there correspond intensities that affect it, augmenting or diminishing its power to act; these intensities come from external parts or from the individual’s own parts. Affects are becomings” (Deleuze and Guattari, 283, 256). I use affect in terms of a charge or charges before it may or may not shape into something recognizable (for example a physical sensation

before identifying it as fear or excitement).<sup>4</sup> What emerges by the immaterial into the materially-oriented political body and territory, as a product of modernity/coloniality, territorializing the geologic (as the anthropocene), and the end of material territory?

The constitution of body-as-information, as a User, in a world constituted by computational entities, is not a reduction of life. It is a reorientation of how subjectivity may form without life as centrifugal force. This is towards a different kind of territorialization through multiple entities' temporalities and spatialities kept in motion (as opposed to a territorialization by a universalized, linear, conception of time and space like the anthropocene). To help describe key ideas from my analysis of *Pig Simulator* and the openings permitted by Bratton's Stack with the concepts addressed in my previous chapter, I make use of select terminology of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I suggest that *Pig Simulator's* game experience of *becoming* can be read with Félix Guattari's development of subjectivity, as he provisionally defines in his final book, *Chaosmosis*, in mind. This is "The ensemble of conditions which render possible the emergence of individual and/or collective instances as self-referential existential Territories, adjacent, or in a delimiting relation, to an alterity that is itself subjective" (Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 9). I enter my analysis focusing on the game's lack of subject and narrative - *worldlessness*- as a method for keeping-complicated the multiplicity of spatialities and temporalities made possible by becoming-computational user.

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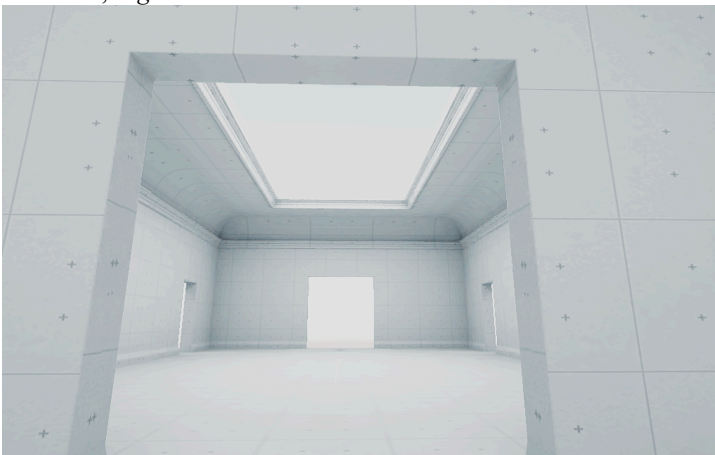
<sup>4</sup> My use of affect is predominantly based on Brian Massumi's *The Autonomy of Affect*, Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism*, and Deleuze and Guattari from multiple texts. In a most basic understanding, I consider it to be a felt energy/charge/intensity that is precursory to an emotion or (re)action. As soon as it is labeled, it leaves its definition of affect. For example, being in a crowd at a football match and knowing when to "wave" with the crowd. Or leaving the football match in the crowd, a charge felt by and through the crowd may transform into an action to which judgments may be imposed (rioting from winning team out of ecstatic excitement, partying from losing team out of remorse, positive – negative connotations to either of these scenarios).



I propose this common element of computability of entities is a repositioning the Stack opens. That is, away from constituting *life*-forces (like conatus and zoe). The lack of neither game character nor narrative in which to situate oneself shifts the meaningfulness of the body to something beyond being as a life-constituted subject or world-maker. In its immateriality yet agency, becoming a computational entity as one among many is a move past bio-, geo-, and geontopolitics. The game experience leaves players in the affect of their own reactions, an experience of pre-emergent subjectivity. Framed within the emerging scene of the interface and game entities, it keeps ambiguous how a past/current body-as-subject may develop as a current/future entity-in-cyberspace.



Isermann, *Pig Simulator*



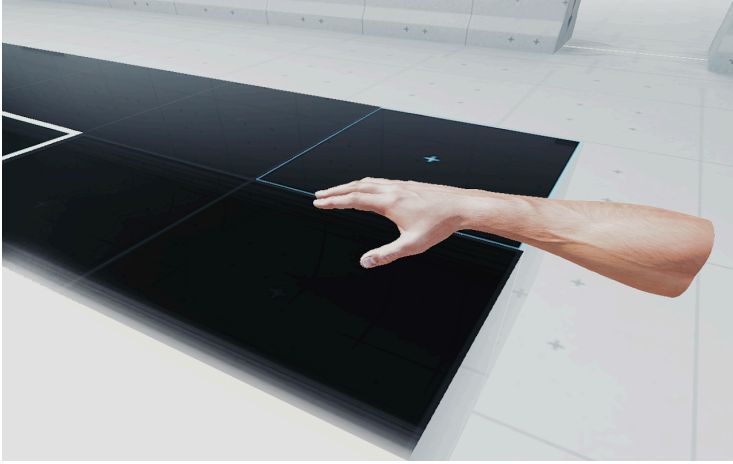
Isermann, *Pig Simulator*

### **Threshold Room and In-Between the Manlimbs**

I find myself in an empty white room, brightly lit from an unknown source through stark skylights and thresholds and sky-lit doors in a few large empty rooms in three directions. All non-lit surfaces, the ceiling, floor, and walls, are square-gridded with four check marks in each of the squares. The space appears digitally mapped and ready for a more detailed cartography. The walls curve as they meet the ceiling's edges and have moulding details at their borders. Because of the light, the rooms seem like they are possibly floating. There could be a larger world beyond. This interior architecture feels like the intersection of sterility and limbo coated in a neoclassical aura. It expresses a certain kind of human construction, no visible variation in the extended rooms. It makes two references architecturally, where neoclassicism meets the holodeck (the *Star Trek* fictional VR facility often used for recreation activities) (wikipedia.com). The former refers to an idealized architecture rooted in the western world with modern ideals/colonial practices, and the latter to the technologically idealized future for the contemporary of that man. Both are constructions of man as world-subject and world-maker. That is, human-subject determining physical and temporal orientations in conceiving the future as an exterior, something to progress towards. The space is enveloped in an echo-y gentle machinic humming. Likewise, my computer breathes heavily under the computational weight of the application on my kitchen table.

My computer's breath is a literal and metaphoric nod to the game's call for an active role of awareness of myself as human-subject in my virtual reality experience. I begin to understand this entry room as a metaphor for the contemporary in-between of eras: embedded in cyberspace, the computational world, with immaterial and material elements (my gamer body, the immaterial game space, the material and immaterial

signifiers in the VR) reorienting the method of formation and kind of being I may embody. I look for indications of what I am to be within this game space.

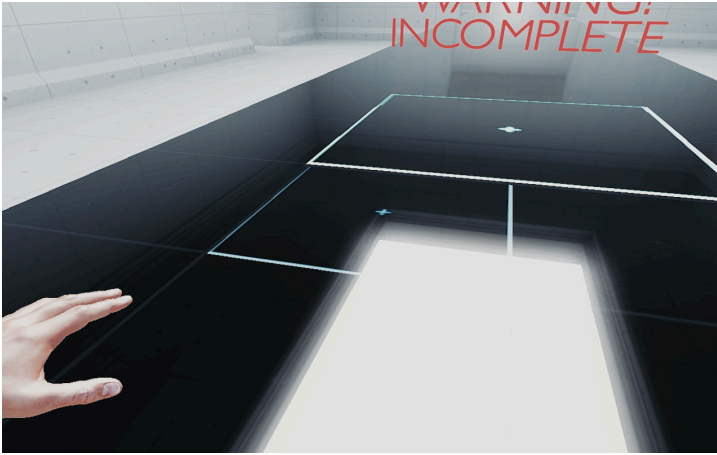


Isermann, *Pig Simulator*

Looking down, I see two suspended whitemale hands, open with fingers outstretched like they are ready to grab, use, animate whatever they may be immediately able to grasp. They have lower arms until a cut below the elbow and are positioned on either side of the floating position of game-player. While albeit heavy-handed (pun intended) in their *highly energized to act on something*-appearance, these castrated malearms indicate a very particular kind of universalized concept of human. This is human as the subject of modernity and icon of the anthropocene. The castrated manlimbs are healthy and thick with strong veins that seem to call for me to use them.

Ready to play, I click the track pad and hit the keys. Slowly at first, presuming I can access them, but my clicking quickly turns manic as the manhands remain inanimate in their ready-position. Instead, I receive oinking and sniffing sounds with my clicks. The manarms I am not permitted reach out towards a bright reflection from the skylight above, or an opening below to sky, on the black runway-esque platform extended in front

of me. This rectangular reflection or opening looks like the size of a human body, like the negative space of a coffin waiting to be filled, or, fallen through.



Isermann, *Pig Simulator*

This coffin-like black reflection is directly in the line of the entrance to commence the game. Depending on what buttons I click, the game credits and “warning incomplete” hover above and a stride past it. Every click and oink reinforces the refusal of access to the manhands. I begin to understand that to start playing, I must relinquish the possible use of- and more importantly- the desire for use of, these hands. I still trust that while I may not yet know what my character (and agency and subjectivity) is to be, that it is likely in opposition to the whitemanlimbs that I am so emphatically denied. In this threshold, I am an unembodied game-player situated in between two castrated arms, at the edge of a reflective coffin or opening. Pig sounds and rotation are my only game-player expression. I decide to relinquish the limbs, and pass through the coffin to play.

### **Reading the Threshold**

In assuming it lies within the world of planetary-scale computation, what is occurring in this threshold space? The gridding of the room, albeit simplified, suggests that it is able to be mapped with information and that entities within it are locatable through its coordinates. While simplified, I read this scene as one of computation,

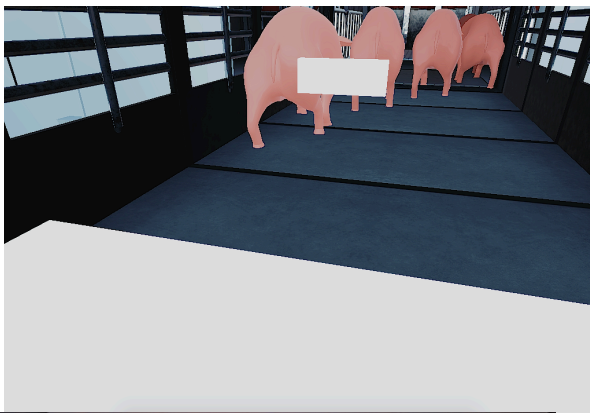
oriented first by data. By being designed and left open for additional rendering (i.e. why it is a grid rather than a landscape, or databank), it acts as a metaphoric realm of the end of territory. Everything has been outlined. This subsumption of the space within a computational grid represents cyberspace. It begins to engage the "...[placing of] the biological materiality of the human subject onto a common plane with other actors and events" (Bratton, *The Stack SS*, 271). It presents a knowable world, but possibly not knowable for me as game-player. But the game and I know that I am there. My self-awareness as unembodied yet situated player is for now most specifically oriented by the two broken manlimbs. I am not sure yet what makes me as game-player "knowable" in the game, but I am able to "move through" the coffin reflection or opening to start the game so I understand that I exist.

As birth of game-player I am defined within the grid and specifically posed as in between the manhands as my site. And, in between a scene in which I presumed a subject (in the shape of a character) upon entering (as game-player), but am so far not given. I have no signifying material body. This temporality and spatiality is not human or human-virtual (via a signifier), nor of the space beyond it (earth or cloud). As game-player I cannot make something from it. I cannot form a subjecthood from this realm nor understand it beyond an in-between site. I am forced to be in the grid, and with pig noises as my only expression, I must move through the coffin or opening to play.

I read this room as the metaphoric site of cyberspace appearing in-between eras: the consumed material world by computation as an act of the humanitas-anthropos, and its displacement of the human-as-maker-subject within it. By this necessary metaphoric "death" or "birth" or "transition" or something different via the reflective coffin or lit

opening, I accept a displacement from being a modern-human-subject. In doing so, the game begins “...to consolidate and then explode [the *User-subject*’s] humanist register...” by starting the game user as ambiguously existing in reference to game entities rather than an offered subjectivity (Bratton, *The Stack SS*, 271). This is “...the existential incorporation of information into the *User-subject*...” as the way to move forward into the realm of cyberspace, a becoming for a future already upon the world (Bratton, *The Stack SS*, 271).

### Truck Bed to Factory, Getting Left Behind



Isermann, *Pig Simulator*

Upon hitting x key, the screen goes black and opens with the sounds of motor vehicles passing on a highway and gentle oinking. As player, I gain a pig snout that floats in the front of my vantage point. It orients my movement button and permits me to oink and sniff. I am among complete-bodied light pink pigs in the back of a long blue truck

bed, with a low ceiling and dark metal fence-like sides. It is bright outside and there is a permanent strip of light green grass beyond the highway. I am unable to make eye contact with the pigs. I can only look at their bodies and their heads but not face-on. The pigs' bodies seem to breath. It is impossible to gauge how to stick with them as the game's scene changes from the moving truck into the factory. Sometimes, I am able to move along into the factory kind of near them, lagging behind at different paces I can't control. In other game sessions, my movement button simply isn't quick enough to even lag. I get left on the truck bed in the factory loading dock, and that is the end of the game. Or rather, the game stays on until I decide I am tired of thinking I can figure a way out to head to my death with the rest of the crew.

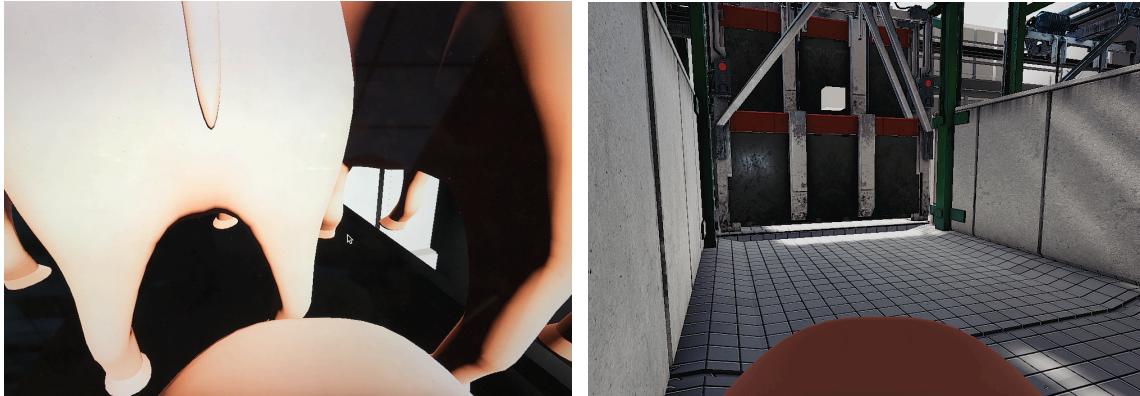
### **What Makes me Knowable?**

What makes me operational with the other computing game entities and interface? The game is functioning and as a player I am still animate but not as a subject or object. This unembodied animation starts to expose the difference between merely being in the position of a User-subject, which was my presumption that I would take on a character to, versus entering the scene of *becoming-user* in a pre-eminently computational realm. I see visual signifiers (grass) and stints of aligned progressions (truck to factory) but they do not add up or correlate to a logic of allowed movements afforded to me or what I am. In moving through the coffin as merely a space that is not attributable to myself, I am animated by signifiers of the game of which I do not actually know and cannot learn. My composition is instead a determined site "... fully infused and overcome with extrinsic flows [of vectors of inhuman game-entities' data] such that the coherence, stability, and confidence previously invested in the visual [biopolitical subject-User] fade away"



(Bratton, *The Stack*, 270-271). My “...outline of the *User* perforates and liquefies because the biological apparatus itself [my body] comes to observe its own becoming from the temporal perspectives of the inhuman forces congealing to give it form” (Bratton, *The Stack*, 270-271).

### I make it to the Factory, sometimes



Isermann, *Pig Simulator*

I’m able to see sterile factory workers as they walk and work in the assembly line. Their bodies blend. I can’t acutely separate them from the factory and other environment indicators. Their movements lack lucid gesture. There is no felt exchange of energies, no comprehensible touch, between my nonexistent yet desired pigbody and their structure, nor the machines really. I observe that I still think about my nonexistent subject-objecthood in reference to a pig, I am still presuming a pig-to-pork narrative, near factory men. Sometimes the workers are whited out and their rectangular-block-bodies sway. Once I am around the action of slinging pigbodies onto hooks. Prior to the slicing of their

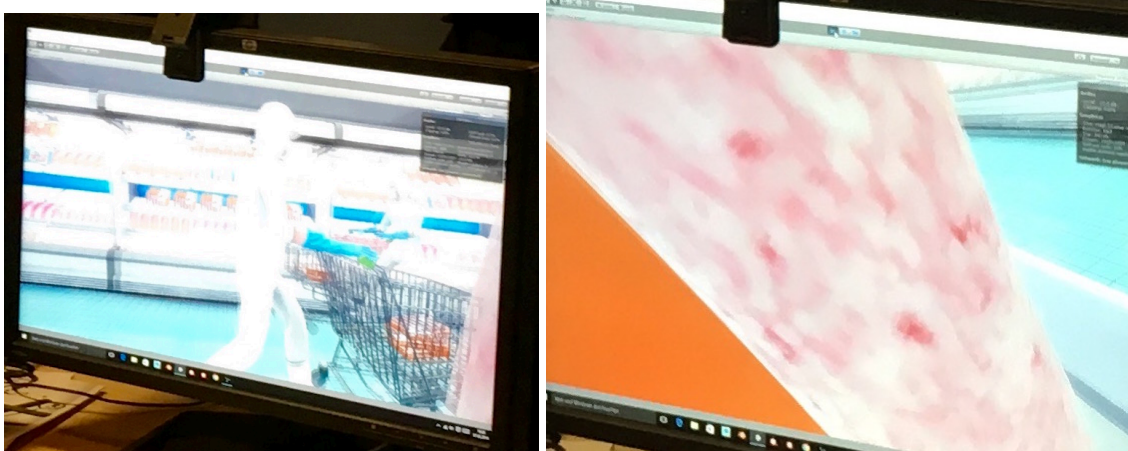


bodies, blood squirts around and below the site of me, as well as out of the pigs hanging ahead of me and behind me. Sometimes around these motions I lose my sniffing and oinking functions.

I feel restricted. I know this feeling means I am still occupying this game as a human-subject expecting a character. I can make different experiences of the game, peer out of the truck, get closer or farther from the metal factory walls and pig bodies, I lose control of my movement, my oinking and sniffing, at different points. I itch to get to the “end” in which I may get to dangle again between pork. I believe that this will give me some contentment. Possibly because I have been there once before, and possibly because it mitigates my frustration at the inconsistency of having a pig snout but not getting to be a pig. By having a kind-of destination. By resolving that I don’t get to become-anything, and that I can’t figure out an orientation, a space or time. I am “...drifting through an architecture of displacement and suspended proprioception...symbiotically reliant on the apparatus [of *Pig Simulator*], itself a machinic *User* of the wider infrastructural systems around [it, providing]...an artificial somatosensorium...[a] massive mutual... form of nested parasitism...” (Bratton, *The Stack SS*, 280).

The game’s farthest scene is the most relieving one. I get to feel like I dangle in the shelf in a refrigerated aisle at the end point of the factory between dangling encased pork. I like to take full advantage of my only remaining function of rotation, affirming still that I don’t even get to be encased pork. I start to think of this moment as a post-pork presence, the reality between other material realities. It is an ongoingness, defined by the pork-cylinders surrounding me that continue to have an immediately comprehensible form and animation. I try to observe my reactions to this. I feel the most satisfaction and

sense of success between these pork amalgamations, between the material and energies that transformed my own and fellow pig bodies into in-betweenness and pork. I trust that really this fulfillment is probably just because that it is the longest time I have spent in the game and reached the most different spaces of it.



Isermann, *Pig Simulator*

### **Embodiment with No Subject**

The game's play with textures, breath, the varying level of visual and aural details, and (im/)materialities are inconsistent (the pig faces highly detailed but you are denied relationship with them; the humans in lab coats as whited-out blobs; the random allocations of rectangular negative spaces to emphasize the holes and filters across layers of nonlife, life, machinic). These unreliable or confused signifiers help as a form of rehabilitation in dejecting my assumptions deriving from humanitas-anthropos narratives. So, I don't get to become pig, I don't get to become anything but a site I know exists based on being able to enter the game, having an experience. The game's incoherence and lack of character to "play" keeps me as game-player from the ability to "master," or know, any narrative. And without a character, I am defined in the space in between other game entities.

Instead of asking “When “things” are [entities]... what are the “apparatuses” that provide platform subjectivity to *Users?*,” *Pig Simulator* presents an experience of being a user/User on a platform where there is no existing platform subjectivity (Bratton, *The Stack SS*, 270). Its experience frames the precursory moment just of things becoming entities, and provides a platform for my reaction to that to unfold. That is, in the inconsistency of these other entities, it permits the emergence of my reactions to being denied a subjectivity. In the displacement of presumed subjectivity or subjecthood or objecthood, the game experiences makes a capture of player-affect from leaving the subject-body, to existing among other entities within an entire environment or sphere governed by a non-knowable, and non-masterable, logic. In its operability with me as game-player, I start to understand that it may not “...unwind human privilege into formlessness; it leverages and augments its form with other, perhaps livelier post- human (nonhuman, inhuman, ahuman) agents and subjects” (Bratton, *The Stack*, 271)

### **Worldlessness as Method**

The interface of *Pig Simulator* is unique in its inconsistency and nonnarrative, inhibiting a subject-mastery. This exposes the merging of the biopolitical- the immaterial, inorganic, and organic (real and virtual)- within a geography, or world, that cannot be made sense of from a particular human subjectivity. Worldlessness works as a method within the VR realm for creating a space of emergence between entities and interface (as compared to traditional world-making structures, or human-subject/territory to exteriorities [humanitas-anthropos]).

As a metaphoric realm of movement from the anthropocene to the post-anthropocene, *Pig Simulator* shows the potential opened by planetary-scale computation

within the architecture of the Stack for a displacing one human subjectivity as the User-subject and world-maker. It creates a world by the multiplicity of entities. And, uses the inability for game-player to “learn it” as method for keeping this multiplicity in movement.<sup>5</sup> This is why its ambiguity is key, and why I refer to the game experience as one of a pre-emergence. It exposes computation as the interoperability of agents taking a particular course of action to achieve a particular result. In this case, it is the operability of the game interface without a masterable, or knowable, narrative.

This is a specific kind of becoming-computational agent among others, permitted by the capsizing of computational world upon the material. This is the contemporary moment of in-between and at the end of material territory. This feels close to Guattari’s ontological process of chaosmosis, as “...the emergence of order from chaos, engendering new autopoietic entities,” (Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 16). But, this world of computation is only possibly chaos from the vantage point of denied mastery/subject, bolstered by the vantage point of single point shooter that gives the sensation of presence, agency, and power, being a subject, seeing others as you do from a body. At first this feels like a juxtaposition, reinforcing the assumption and expectation that you will be given a subjecthood. It serves as a role-playing for keeping ambiguous yet with agency, and a relational element to other entities, the position of functioning without a subjectivity.

### **Affectsphere**

The game affords me temporalities and spatialities determined by everything-as-computable entities around me. And I am read as an entity in a language I cannot learn and narrative I cannot know. I feel my different reactions to it, while being defined by it,

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<sup>5</sup> Worldnessness as method was helped shaped for me by three influences- reading *Pig Tales*, Mireille Rosello’s concept of rudimentariness, and Quentin Meillassoux’s concept and text *Extro-Science Fiction*.

and operating within it. This is the induction of worldlessness as a method. The charges of my reactions to this worldlessness (scrambling to make sense of the game, how I get to function within it) create an *affectsphere*. I use affectsphere to describe a site in which one or more charges meet and create a sort of vibrating or mixed space of affect. This remains as such for a certain time period within and by certain parameters. The affect may “leak” out, change, shift energy levels, i.e., and can be imagined like a swirling ball of gases. Anything that can create affect can create or contribute to the creation of an affectsphere. Its definition is not set. But, it is may have multiple charges coming together for some but not infinite time that are enveloping, tangible no matter the level of charge. Entrance into it is notable and its dissipation felt. Traces may linger.

Within this method of worldlessness, the game permits me embodiment of my affect as my in-between character, but not a game subject. This is a necessary movement in transitioning from User-subject to user-entity. I may take shape as user-entity when I have no more reaction to being denied subjecthood and a world. When I am able to be the constitution of one among and emerging with other users.

No subjectivity is developed, but the space remains operable: it shows that as human I may still *be* without being master. I may be without knowing a navigation, without making the space an exterior because I am always within its creation, and without a singular identification or comprehension of the (game) world. It keeps moving. It is, and I am, emergent by way of the other game entities that constantly change, the temporal and spatial world. It creates a sphere in which the collapse of the computation upon entities and encircling entities as a realm forms an experience of “...chaosmic

entities rather than signifiers—fitting ontological dimensions together in a circular manner rather than dividing the world up...” (Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 126).

My diffuse and encompassing avatar as the embodiment of my reactions as a human-subject being denied my presupposition is a kind of expressive rupture in Guattari’s terms. And, it may be on-going in the sense that the game continues. Because the game does not repeat in its movements, the rupture does not take shape as a repetition. Where Guattari describes, “...when expressive rupture takes place, repetition becomes a process of creative assemblage, forging new incorporeal objects, abstract machines, and universes of value. At this point, the existential event which gives rise to these new assemblages becomes invisible” (Guattari, *Three Ecologies*, 136).

Instead, *Pig Simulator* maintains the sensation of becoming-user by its incoherence and ambiguity, sitting in between affirmation and negation. And, it does so by game-player never taking a subject-form but always operating. And most paramount, the experience of charges within my material body as game-player of my existence spatially and temporally. Through these elements, myself as computational moves to the fore. Maintaining an operational worldlessness as method, *Pig Simulator* acts as a potential purging of a prior state of subjectivity still in practice through my own affectsphere. This remains for however long I interpret the experience as an inhibition to learn the language of the game.

### **Becoming computational/ interoperable**

Through the method of worldlessness and self-reflexive affectsphere of my reactions as game-player subject becoming functioning game-user-entity, I slowly start to experience my being as material-body merging into the immaterial, inorganic, and

organic (real and virtual). This occurs within a geography not built on a particular subjectivity (that I can understand). I straddle this transition from my User-subject self between the VR and in the physical reality and am perceptive to what I read as inconsistencies. As such, I keep a certain proximity to the interface as the "... point of contact between two complex systems that governs the conditions of exchange between those systems" (Bratton, *The Stack*, 220).

This proximity to the interface is an ongoing reminder of my operability within the game despite not being able to "know," master, understand it. It reinforces the experience of the game as a transition from being a non-subject computable entity with agency, but not as centrifugal character or force. This visible and experiential juxtaposition of operability of the interface, and my lack of comprehension of its system for operating, shows me that I am able to function, to be, without being the creator or actor of it. I am becoming- as emergent in the spaces between myself as a site between other game entities, and start open the possibilities Yusoff still imagines within the material world:

If we thought about geological life as both individuated and a cross- current of agential earth forces, life as nothing more or less than the spacing between minerality, and its composition of power and flows. What if....we began to think of "agency" as a fractured force whose immotivations are also determined, such that thinghood may resonate with anthropic intention'...If anthropic intention was understood as resonating with geomorphic forces, in collaboration rather than mastery... (Kirby, 232; Yusoff, 20).

In moving through the coffin, consciously facing my "death," to instead an orientation in the spaces in between the other game entities, I experience the potential of an ontological *becoming-* computational user, rather than life-constituted subject.

My body turns into a computable entity interoperating with other game entities and within the interface (as compared to traditional world-making structures and life-making subjectivities- again as simple as an online profile). Where Guattari describes his subjectivity as being formed from the many actors around him (like, when he watches television he “exists at the intersection” of the many signifiers within the program and sensory intake); in *Pig Simulator*, being exists at the intersection not between self-and-signifiers, but the interoperability of the game interface and its other entities (*Chaosmosis*, 16).

In the gap of wanting to become something in the game, which retains a high charge each time I return to the game, and not becoming anything, I walk an ontological fault line of cyberspace, of becoming-user-entity of the Stack, rather than the User-subject, which I already am. In planetary-scale computation subsuming the material world, it is no longer a separate ecological space. This is why the Stack acts as a concept and design plan: it needs to respond to the formulation of the immaterial sphere as a unique realm (think the cloud- Facebook). But also, the simultaneous reconstitution of specific, local, agent: the datafication, computability, and *becoming operable*, of the self, and anything that might constitute being a user or computable entity, not world-determining User-subject. Hence, we are dealing with new assemblages as Guattari outlines in *Three Ecologies* and *Chaosmosis*, but within a new kind of computational planet. That is, planetary-scale computation moves beyond a world as constituted for support of human life and the geologic as captured by human life. Instead, the inorganic and organic open up the emergence of human life into its reverberations.



## Being not by Life

*Being* within interfaces is not based in a shared *life* force (conatus, zoe) but instead the common element of being computational. This means being able to act within the other entities and within the interface. While it does necessitate literal readability, it is helpful to consider computational also within its formation geologically, in which

...geology is sensible of itself in so much as it has an ordering logic, if it is articulate in its stratifications, reading pebbles, rocks, various kinds of matter, sorting, organizing (Roger Caillois calls this agency ‘computational’), folding, compacting the biological slime of the earth into its various layers, there can be no human that is other to these forces, because the human is an expression of the various constellations of this minerality (Yusoff, 9-20).

This is not an erasure of life or subjectivity, but instead the complication of it in the conceptual moving past of human signature as designer. The function of operability serves as the marker for being an agent-entity, a user, in the formation of planetary-scale computation infrastructures. This makes it possible for the inhuman in its orchestrating languages.

Where the anthropocene opens the platform of the inhuman but binds it within its own logic, The Stack’s design functions by the congealing of inhuman and [varied, rather than universalized] human entities. In that the interface is the gatekeeper for what is seen though of these entities, taking the position of User is not enough for an ontological reorientation. These are what I mean by Bratton’s User-subject, in that it is a citizen and economic-subject of modernity making use of an interface. This is by the platforms that edify their subjecthood through interfacial regimes based on the language of modernity (for example, a social media profile on a platform that shares typical and existing anthropocentric narratives). By refusing a narrative and subjectivity, *Pig Simulator* creates a self-reflexive environment in the transition of the anthropocene to the post-

anthropocene. And, within it opens an ontological reorientation demanded by the immaterial and material constitutions of space, time, the future, and the *becoming-user* in this situation.

In its environment it connects the inorganic, organic, and immaterial layers of the changing era. Moving through the human, geologic, and computational agents to the layering of cyberspace upon us as a possibly self-reflexive moment. A profile or subject would be *reflective* of the bio and geopolitical constituents that made the accident of cyberspace and universalized human into a final material scope (again, determining the anthropocene). Instead, *Pig Simulator* presents the sensation to understand as necessity the reconstitution of agency with other agents, rather than presuming a subjecthood in a world-making designs that deny it in their manifestation.<sup>6</sup> While the posthuman is a concept, discourse, and not the main focus of my thesis, I am in agreement with Bratton that by this displacement of human life as centrifugal force in the Stack, and for me, in becoming-user, the immaterial turn, moving past life-force as constituting being, this in-between moment of era is inherently posthuman.

### **Purging for the post-anthropocene**

*Pig Simulator* presents the post-anthropocene as an effect of and reaction to cyberspace as the immaterial site of the future, in which the undifferentiated human (as man) is removed from the designing position and as the center for the design, as

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<sup>6</sup> This is for a future focus, but I understand this turn as inherently posthuman because of this displacement of universalized human life. Yusoff explains this differently and being stunted within the concept of the anthropocene: "...humanity-as-strata forms an ontological rupture with humanist perspectives of humanity as exclusively unified by social forms. So, it is a rebirth in so much as definitions of being must now acknowledge an eternal but shifting mineralogical root; no one is not compromised or enriched by fossil fuels extraction, and in this sense it is a unity from below, but one that is highly differentiated and shot through with relations of power. So staying with the promise of the Anthropocene is rather precarious because it entails taking up the (inhumanist) space that is opened by the concept while refuting the basic architectures of thought that structure that space (where humanity is used as a term of erasure of material and political forms of differentiation)" (Yusoff, 7).

simultaneous success and failure of his agency as mastery. This is success in the sense that not only has “The earth literally becomes subject to the signature of man” (Yusoff, 13), but that as one entity along with all other inhuman and human, he has (accidentally) displaced himself as subject by technological infrastructures.<sup>7</sup> Where the “Anthropocene authors name humans as an end in themselves – both as a distinguishable trace in the geologic strata and as author of the end – a stratigraphic writer, reader, and agent of geology and nature,” the merging of the immaterial into world-making, and being, cracks open what the nomination of the anthropocene, the end of material territory, refutes (Yusoff, 2).

*Pig Simulator* frames this moment into the post-anthropocene in its threshold room, and to move forward in the game, presents *being* as an *humanitas/anthropos*-purging by having to face the charges of my reactions to this displacement and being intersectionally-determined. *Pig Simulator* presents two frames shaping the development of a post-anthropocene subjectivity: the interface, and the reactions of the human-user-subject- to realizing they are a user-entity, not a subject. The space remaining operable and making an ongoing friction with my lack of subject-character shows that as human I may still *be* without being master, and without a singular identification or comprehension of the (game) world.

This worldlessness keeps moving, and is emergent by way of the other game entities that constantly change, temporalities and spatialities. And it is functioning. This is an important distinction between Guattari’s chaosmosis and what *Pig Simulator* presents. The VR creates worldlessness as a method and is not chaos- it opens the operability of

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<sup>7</sup> Cyberspace subsumption is the eclipsing of this claim: “The long-held barriers between nature and culture are breaking down. It’s no longer us against “Nature”. Instead, it’s we who decide what nature is and what it will be” (Crutzen and Schwagerl, 2011).

computational world, through the subsumption of life, without life as the subject-maker. When it is viewed as chaos, then you have never left the User-subject position. Once you leave this position, the game acts out the process of "... dissolution of the private human *User* comes...through the plodding evolution toward alternative phenotypes in relation to manic apparatuses, both internal and external. The dispersant is "...an activist attentiveness to the more open geographies available to our composite inhuman alternatives" (Bratton, *The Stack*, 289). This is the opening of planetary-scale computation for potential multiplication of subjectivity through becoming user-entity operating in The Stack.

This distinction and opening is both a new sphere politically, in that governance/global powers of nation-states and corporations function within it and by it. They function within and by it geologically, in mapping all material and immaterial territory-again the nomination of the anthropocene, and computational world. Also, they function by it socially, in the datafication of being as user in life and world-making structures. And, ontologically, by repositioning human-subject as something not special within the User position.

As such, the *Pig Simulator* experience makes the relationships across different constitutions not as one in which the human intervenes, but rather a co-encapsulation, the "...durable interpenetration of actors, mutually embedded one within the other..." (Bratton, *The Stack*, 289). While the affectsphere as the captured response may appear as chaos or in response to the game as chaotic, if the game-player realizes this is the operability of game, the need for signifiers surfaces as the desire to be world-maker or at least world-subject. This maker-and-subjecthood are not inherent in the computational

turn. This is the potential multiplication of subjectivity through the turning from User-subject to user-entity. As Bratton states, it is crucial to “...save the nonhumans from being merely humans, so that they could show us a different way for us to be both human and not” (*The Stack*, 274).

### **Closing**

Let's revisit a couple points. First, Yusoff's critique of the nomination of the anthropocene and that its nomination marks the end of material territory as site for envisioning the future. And second, the capsizing (or expansion, depending on your opinion) of immaterial, critical global infrastructure of cyberspace upon the material world. These motions may be read to enact Guattari's suggestion that “...environmental ecology could equally well be re-named 'machinic ecology', since both cosmic and human practice are nothing if not machinic - indeed they are machines of war, in so far as 'Nature' has always been at war with life! (*Three Ecologies*, 146). The humanization of the geologic is the refusal to acknowledge this war anymore (i.e. modernity only acknowledges itself as a force to reckon with). And conceptually, by the hardening of cyberspace “...the race to conquer the mechano-sphere...” has already occurred (Guattari, *Three Ecologies*, 146). Yet, still without dealing with “...immediate and simultaneous issues as the acceleration of techno-scientific 'progress', and the massive growth surge in the global population” (Guattari, *Three Ecologies*, 146). Bratton's architecture of the Stack shows how this may be possible, particularly in maintaining the idea of “existential reorientations” of the developing relations inhuman and human. But, conceiving of the movement from User to user within its architecture is necessary still. Where Guattari continues,

... in the future that faces us, temporalities of both human and non-human nature will demand just such an existential reorientation. With the acceleration of the technological and data- processing revolutions, we will witness the deployment or, if you will, the unfolding of animal, vegetable, cosmic, and machinic becomings which are already prefigured by the prodigious expansion of computer-aided subjectivity (*Three Ecologies*, 132-3).

In understanding the reconstitution of the body not as an existential question but very much an ontological and political one (by the datafication or becoming-computable-user), world- and life-making infrastructures may be able to imagine imbuing in its development the becomings for which Guattari calls.

The *Pig Simulator* embodies space between the anthropocentric subject – post-anthropocene user, while also revealing through interoperability of agents the inherent posthumanism in becoming-use. It presents the post-anthropocene as an effect of, and reaction to, cyberspace as the immaterial site of the future, in which the undifferentiated human (as man) is removed from the designing position and as the center for the design as simultaneous success and failure of his agency as mastery. *Pig Simulator* frames this moment in its opening room, and to move forward in the game, presents *being* as a humanitas/anthropos-purging by having to face the charges of my reactions to this displacement.

*Pig Simulator* offers to the game-player the experience of departing from a human-subject, singular mode of being as an emergent, interoperable, and computational entity, via its VR interface. This is opened by planetary-scale computation, and it is crucial that this paradigm shift in constitution of being, and thus the inadequacy for regimes of materially-oriented politics and governance of body, and the subject's expectation for this type of regime. As Bratton states,

The potential for a radically agnostic technical-political subject implied by... [the Stack infrastructure] may... undermine how a State segregates citizen from non-citizen and how Markets segregate producers from non-producers. The operative word is “may”. This potential is not a program. The point is not that Platforms are intrinsically better or more egalitarian, rather that their [Platform] politics are not reducible to those of States and Markets and the terms of our participation requires a different geopolitical design imaginary. The sooner we take them seriously and stop trying to interpret them as quasi-States or quasi-Markets the sooner that design imaginary can mature” (Bratton, *Machine Vision*).

Within the Stack’s orchestration, *Pig Simulator* abstractly breaks down the ontological imaginary closely tied to the shifts within the material earth and posthuman body, i.e. the anthropocene-post-anthropocene, the geologic. Alternatively, Holly Herndon’s music video *Home* captures the governance-subject, geopolitical jurisdiction disjunctures of the computational paradigm shift.

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