

Reflexive Essay

Epilogue. Liberation Session (?)

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Anisha Anantpurkar and Pasha Tretyakova

With their back to the 13 hanging disco balls, Unidentified Octopus faces the large wooden table where games are played. Paddy, one of the game masters, asked Unidentified Octopus about the play issue. They rambled on, playing with word combinations. Unidentified Octopus juggled some on its tentacles, while Paddy, the game master, laid them in order on the table until play as a generative force was formulated. The combination worked.

Unidentified Ferret, maker of bad ideas, enters the fray. (What is the fray? Something with a fringe, probably. Sounds like something with fettered edges. Or feathered? Ferreted.) They play with the words until they lose meaning, until they are all just sounds in their empty dungeon, engaged in a game of boomerang with the nearby hills. 'Boo,' says the Unidentified Ferret and listens to the echo and gets scared. Unidentified Octopus looks at the word 'soup' left behind and says to the Ferret, 'Explain it to me like I'm five.' So Unidentified Ferret blurts out every rule ever, and then Unidentified Octopus pushes aside the rules to find the fun and picks it up with their tentacles, and the Ferret braids them and *voilà*. The call to the playground has sounded. This sounds like it was easy, but it of course was not. Play can be serious, difficult, heady business. The Ferret and Octopus did cry.

The octopus exits, the ferret appears, the ferret exits, the antelope appears, the antelope exits... the fox appears... the fox exits... the nyan cat appears... they exit ...leaving a taste of their play. Unidentified Octopus and Unidentified Ferret get to work. There were flavors to choose, dishes to select, a party to organize, a meal to prepare. Parties too can be serious business—ask Terje when you meet her.

As each contributor presses send, the definitely-not-washing-machines swoosh words turned into 0s and 1s towards the moon that is definitely not (but probably could be) a giant disco ball. The contributions are received in the Musicality of Reality because that is their preferred lodgings. As 0s and 1s, turned back into words, fall from the sky as rain towards Unidentified Ferret and Unidentified Octopus, they form little puddles of play, turning everything they reflect into shades of play. The play waters sometimes overflow, crawling into other puddles. Unidentified Octopus and Unidentified Ferret stared at the rainbow waters as they shimmered, flowed, and tickled their tentacles and toes. They see scenes reflected in them: an alien with a foil hat and flamingo glasses, human-sized fairies, bears, clowns, tricksters, a cuddly pouncing lion, people holding medical degrees dressed as gardeners, maids, nurses, pulling more uniforms out of a large closet, hiding their degrees in its depths. Can they play with us? Will they be allowed in? They look towards Bling and our Alpha Centurion Alien. They hope for indifference and revolution from the margins. Jared holds his camera, ready. They see Roman face-to-face with Cassandra... or is Roman Cassandra?

Roman enters to explain the various VR avatars and how they change the way we think, move, remember, be, see.

He brings with him a sword that turns into a scythe; it dances on Natalie's hips as she plays with mundane domestic actions, stances, moves, expectations. Is the sword a sword, is the scythe a scythe? Is Roman fighting with ancestral swords and moving ceramic vessels? I am looking at a piece of paper which is not a piece of paper but a play of a paper on a screen, and the screen says I see a scythe and a sword and a vessel. 'You probably aren't,' says Miguel's app. 'It's probably (definitely ;) not a television,' says Miguel's app. It could be a banana.

As Terje gets a hold of these objects, they find a new audience to play with them in Bling. Bling takes on a new persona: animals dance with toasters, Bling goes float on swords turned bananas in large ponds. The pond has a history just like the ancestral waters of the Mahicannituck River. Natan brings their technology to Bling, so that the pond, too, can speak, so they can play with what it says, the history it adds to the fray. The pond whispers, sings, and screams. Marie calls on us to sit and listen, away from the cameras. She brings dates and rocks. We eat the dates side by side—it's been a long night! We throw the rocks into the waters, they burst open into unidentified playful colors. We ride the purplish wave. The ancestral sword twirls in the ancestral waters. Unidentified Ferret and Octopus join the fray, twirling with the sword. The sword turns into a shark, turns into a Bling goer, who swims to the shore.

Unidentified Ferret and Octopus follow them to the beat of House music, into their fray. As they stopped riding the purple wave and saw themselves in the mirrors at Bling, they turned from octopus and ferret to nyan cat, koala, fox, quagga, ifrit. The Ferret tried on a vest, and then a dress, and then a coat, and then the narwhal's gym clothes. The Ferret always thought it looked more like a nyan cat and not its ferretself or koalaself or even its octopusself. Eman finally enters. She glitches from the strain of travelling from France. *Formation* seems to have altered her code. At times Eman is by our side, at times she's facing us in bureaucratic attire, a folded human trying to fold us. The bureaucrat says, in a French accent, that if Ferret and Octopus don't turn into something useful, they won't get to be themselves. This doesn't make sense to the ferret-turned-narwhal-turned-rabbit or the octopus-plus-nyan cat-divided-by-fox. They were unidentified to begin with. They look around in bewilderment, the disco balls reflecting their confusion into the pond and up to the clouds all the way to where Virtual Reality meets the Musicality of Reality and a wise man is summoned. Within each earthling is a repressed Alpha Centurion, says the esteemed alien David Ross. Eman, possessed by the spirit of the French, asks for his *formation* papers. David shows them for her kindly filling out. The papers verify that the sword is *probably not* an edible word soup smoothie and maybe won't ever become one. Marie has the parties of party goes shake hands and hips, sealing the hip-handshake with an opera of trust. All the while, Unidentified Octopus had taken a step back and pulled out their popcorn for this spectacle. Ferret joined Octopus.

The play could continue, but it must stop. The popcorn bucket is empty, and the Octopus and Ferret are parched. They look up at the sky and see the 13 hanging disco balls. Paddy the gamemaster dangles his hands. There was a meal to prepare, swords, fairies, and river sounds to turn back into word soup smoothies. Let the feast begin.

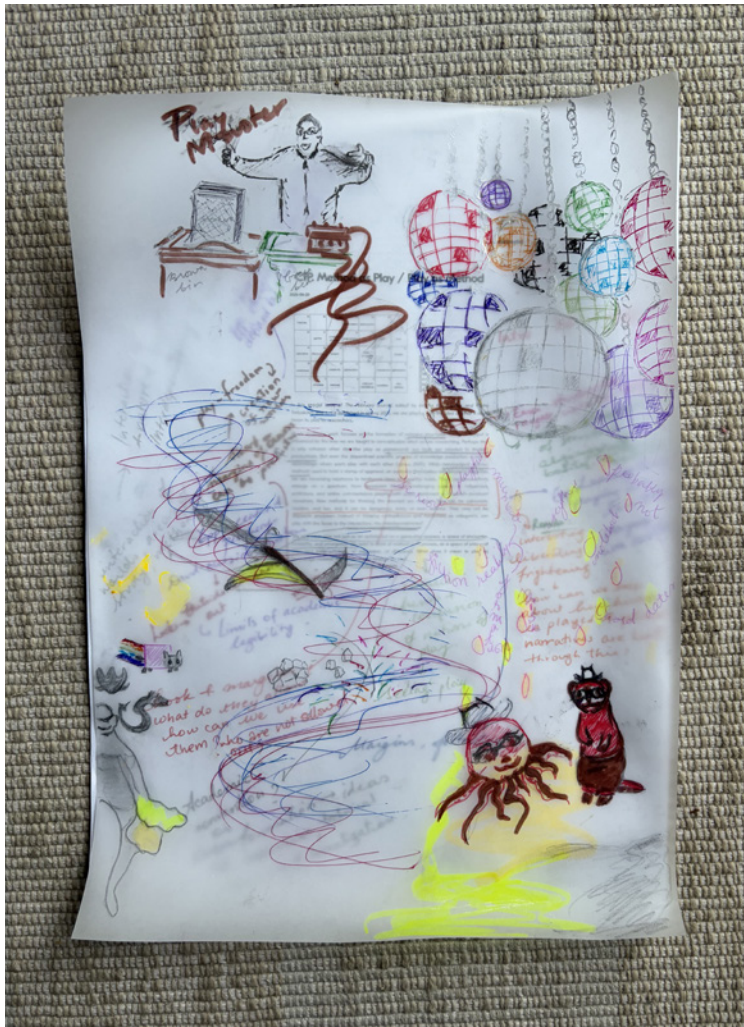


Figure 1. The Fray. Anisha Anantpurkar & Pasha Tretyakova, *Liberation Session (?)*, 2026. © All rights reserved, courtesy of the authors.

A note to the reader:

This epilogue may have some of you confused. Trying to stay true to our impulse to play, this epilogue is a result of reading and working playfully. What can playing with the contributions generate for us? This whimsical, unhinged, creative piece is one thing. Dream Believe Achieve, we suppose.

Authors' Bios*

(generated at random by <https://www.artybollocks.com/generator.html>)

Unidentified Octopus, whom the institution calls Anisha:

'My work explores the relationship between postmodern discourse and emotional memories. With influences as diverse as Munch and John Cage, new combinations are synthesised from both simple and complex meanings.

Ever since I was a child I have been fascinated by the traditional understanding of the moment. What starts out as vision soon becomes debased into a tragedy of distress, leaving only a sense of what could have been and the chance of a new understanding.

As subtle derivatives become distorted through frantic and academic practice, the viewer is left with a tribute to the outposts of our condition. Romance tourism.'

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Unidentified Ferret, whom the institution calls Pasha:

'My work explores the relationship between the Military-Industrial Complex and emotional memories. With influences as diverse as Nietzsche and Francis Bacon, new synergies are crafted from both explicit and implicit discourse.

Ever since I was a teenager I have been fascinated by the ephemeral nature of the mind. What starts out as yearning soon becomes corrupted into a hegemony of power, leaving only a sense of dread and the possibility of a new synthesis.

As momentary replicas become distorted through boundaried and repetitive practice, the viewer is left with a clue to the possibilities of our condition. Hope soon becomes manipulated.'

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* This footnote is to express our bewilderment at the accuracy of Artybollocks' randomly generated statements.