GEORGIOS, GRAVITY & GOD
by DASHA LOYKO

Audio 20min, rock mineral wool acoustic panels,
charcoal, vinyl

Original music, sound design, mixing and mastering
by WORDCOLOUR

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Open 22 July - 27 August, Friday + Saturday 12 - 6 pm
5 August 2 pm: Dasha Loyko in conversation with Alice Bucknell
+ If a Leaf Falls Press pamphlet launch
+ GGG vinyl record launch

Lake, Enclave 5, 50 Resolution Way SE8 4AL London

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The Floor is Lava, Lava is Language, Language is Losing
by ALICE BUCKNELL

Basaltic lava flows the length of this room can form crusts thick
enough to walk on in ten or fifteen minutes, but a molten trail that
rises to the ceiling above you would take years to turn solid. It
doesn't matter either way; you've already lost the game as soon as you
reach the period at the end of this sentence. The ex-lead of Google's
AI and Machine Learning branch suggested in a recent sociology paper
that the mass rise of 'the floor is lava' game can be attributed to
the contagious architecture of postwar American suburbia; I mean, the
floorplans basically drew themselves. A replicable building typology
bolstered by post-trauma economic growth assured the symbiotic
spawning of a folk game conjured by bored kids at dinner parties; a
virus loves its host. Words hold the world on average but rarely move
beyond it. Does a large language model understand the euphoria of a
survival game based on leaps of fate and bad balance, the sheer luck
of high-friction upholstery, or the terror of an empty wine glass
careening over the edge of a side table? Is there ever enough time
buried in any sentence for lava to fully cool?

Leveraging the Stefan–Boltzmann law of thermodynamics, scientists at
the University of Leicester calculated that 'the floor is lava' could
never be played by humans *for real*. The air above the smouldering
death pool would be too hot, for starters; the sulphur dioxide would

have us coughing up blood in seconds, besides. Well, at least now we know for sure. Relegated to the world of pure fantasy, the game becomes realer than the system its designed to model; it does this largely by shedding language. 'The floor is lava' is both name and command, beginning and end. Less a statement than a spell, all those within earshot are necessarily implicit; after the game begins, there is no use for language. Within the increasing gamification of 'natural' language brought about by predictive AI models, words seem less like a currency of trust or tool for scaffolding anything organic and more like a ratio of conspiracies.

And yet we persist. A Brazilian-Czech philosopher offers us a planet of language, with the base reality of daily conversation being its equator, effusive bouts of word salad and poetry hovering somewhere between the tropics, and silence coating its poles: an impossible projection.[1] "How can we know what we don't know???" a theorist muses within a Google Docs comment section abyss, reprinted within the pages of a recent research publication[2] themed on emergent AI and the problems of computability, communication, and (self-)recognition. "All of us map and model the world around us, consciously and unconsciously, and we use language to do this," an AI whisperer, musician, and healer suggests in their contribution nestled in its gilded pages.[3] Within this model, is there a difference between science-fiction and fictitious science? What's the exchange rate between a hypothesis and a fable? How do you adjust for inflation?

Georgios, Gravity & God opens with a thud and something that fizzles like power lines thrashing on the ground after a hurricane. Light and mildly forbidding choir music warbles in and out of either ear, hovering a few centimetres above the skull; an image of two girls in matching dresses creeps in like a cat or possibly something scarier. Its narrator arrives with another thump. She's cool and appraising, her vocal muscles all stretched out by a yoga coach; her language pulls us through a series of nonsensical scenarios, both sharp and vague in what they index. The beat builds up again, almost curdling into a track, and then collapses on itself. Another scene emerges from the white noise, something about a futuristic spaceship, but the details are all perverted: G-force in the hundreds, forgotten utensils, passengers banging on their glass boxes. There's blood

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[1] Flusser, V. and Novaes, R.M. (2018) *Language and reality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

[2] Khan, Nora N. (2022) HOLO 3, Mirror Stage: Between Computability and Its Opposite. Toronto: Holo Media Inc.

[3] Allado-McDowell, K. (2022). 'Mystic Words', in Khan, Nora N. (ed.) *HOLO 3, Mirror Stage: Between Computability and Its Opposite*. Toronto: Holo Media Inc. pp. 136-141.

everywhere. Touchdown and through the blasé purgatory of interplanetary customs but still nothing feels right; I think of the body horror rumours of space travel, of astronauts' bones becoming brittle like those of birds, their eyeballs collapsing under microgravity. I pause my deep listening exercise and Google the latter, only to discover the recent invention (patent pending) of a sleeping bag that gently vacuums the lower body to prevent fluid buildup in the brain, keeping the eyes as spherical as their Earth-bound counterparts. The article informs me that the sucking bag is poised to hit the space travel market any day now. *Am I ready for more formats?*

The girls return, their sinewy song of prayer curling around the subject of their adoration like a crustacean's tail. They're soon usurped by the narrator, whose voice grows haggard and her breathing fractured as she repeats a command that bleeds into the minutes: *Justify how it feels collapsing into yourself for more than two consecutive seconds!* It splits the story floor open, something hot and paranoid bubbling out like lava. Flashes of sketchy concepts appear like sheet lightning, other characters with abbreviated names offering curious truisms alongside mildly undiagnosable anxiety attacks, impromptu hair rebrands, and genius schemes for hatching islands of aliens. The vibe is accelerated and vaguely apocalyptic-feeling, but everyone's having a great time waving flags of surrender. Looped ad infinitum in the gallery, delicately absorbed by charcoal-scribbled walls, sound panels, and the electric luminance of a sticky vinyl lava floor, the score is a protocol to remember the end before it comes, over and over again. "Perhaps the function of apocalypse," suggests Jesse Darling in a publication processing climate grief through the Major Arcana[4], "is to aggregate and give language to a number of significant changes that took place too quickly, and perhaps too quietly, to make sense of as a single phenomenon."

In 1970, the Scottish psychoanalyst R.D. Laing published *Knots*, a text that moves through poetry and language games in pursuit of aggregated emotional affect, collapses in logic, and the ecstasy of nonsense; a few years earlier, a computer scientist at MIT piloted ELIZA, an early natural language processing program and the world's first simulated chatbot psychiatrist. For Laing, recursion was the ultimate cheat code - meaning expands in the layering of repeated language; the chant spirals outwards into infinity. For AI programs, feedback loops are a death sentence, an embarrassing quicksand of bad code; cosplaying as human, the machinic skeleton reveals itself like a broken hammer. Newer Large Language Models (LLMs) including OpenAI's GPT-4 have

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[4] Darling, Jesse. (2019). 'Judgement', in *22 Moons*. London: Ignota Books. pp. 81-84.

largely gotten over their recursive Achilles' heels, but its predecessor, GPT-3, was infamous for collapsing into loose language spirals of unending verb phrases, both razor-sharp and completely unhinged, a fucked-up Jenga tower of feeling.

Late in *Georgios, Gravity & God*, we encounter such an explosive language tower. Here, Wordcolour's treatment is lighter, more sci-fi sounding, with a soft drumming of chords; pared back for maximum linguistic absorption. Across the entire exhibition, but particularly within this moment of the script and audio piece, there's a drive to abandon the desire to cover up one's blind spots, instead stuffing those pores full of collapsing language. The narrator's voice sinks down, becoming subterranean or aquatic, bubbling under conscious precision, stewing in a machinic stream-of-consciousness, chewing on its own uncertainty. The script bores into itself, producing meaning by treating language not like some sacred treatise but as a kind of shared affect. Loyko's letting go of an intelligent structure that builds and builds and builds, instead unraveling it through multiple feedback loops. Somewhere the script got hijacked by a machinic twin: a custom language model fed scraps of narrative scenes drip fed through Instagram captions over the years. Fact collapses fully into fiction, finally, as impossible to disentangle as its human and AI co-authors. It's a game of talking to oneself, which microbiology reveals is also many others, of filling in the blanks together. When we abandon the authority of a singular voice, what can we hear differently this time?

The chant ends and I come up for air. The narrator does too. Everything that's not words communicates something sharper in language's burned-out afterglow: cinematic-grade birdsong, ASMR leaves rustling, *the ocean sounds like popping candy.* Our single-lettered protagonists reconvene atop a hallucinatory peninsula, bask in a bucket of gold flakes, and eat artisanal goat cheese while contemplating the transformation of the self in the presence of others. It seems like they've finally caught a break; a solarpunk utopian ending is in sight. But as soon as the story settles down, its elements erupt, wrecking everything; the only option left is to wipe the floor, call things molten, and play it over again.