

**ELOZ & OLIZ**



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## DOGE & ELON - INTRODUCTION



Dogelon Mars

A few weeks ago, while biking to school, I spotted for the first time a poster promoting the *cryptocurrency* 'Dogelon'. It was pasted on a massive pole and surrounded by advertisements for music albums and grocery delivery services. The poster presented the mascot of the currency, which is, a cartoon-like vision of the American entrepreneur Elon Musk.

Besides the name of the currency, the reference to Musk was apparently made through the casual suit and the wavy hairstyle of the character. The chimeric dimension of the creature, also introduced in the name, was illustrated by the aspect of the face and the body of Dogelon: they resembled those of the doge...



original doge from [kabosu112.exblog.jp](http://kabosu112.exblog.jp)

*Doge* is one of the most popular *internet meme*, it started to spread around the end of 2012, from the picture of a Shiba Inu dog named Kabosu. On this picture she looked at the same time cute and a bit uncomfortable, because of her raised eyebrows looking straight to the camera. Another important detail that contributed to the meme's popularity is the use of a misspelled version of the word dog. Through internet communication, slanging is a way to create meaning out of the deconstruction of human languages. Digital devices that allowed to write and spread words on an unprecedented rhythm also allowed to stretch or cut words and transform their significance. This is the context for the rise of the so-called *sms-language*, *LOLspeak* or *internet slang*. These new forms of language appears, like other forms of language, through communication, with receivers feed-backing transmitters, to end up as a collaboratively generated code, which is always the more advanced version of itself.

This is also the context for the rise of memes. According to the reference website [knowyourmeme.com](http://knowyourmeme.com) - which refers to Richard Dawkins' theory in his book *The Selfish Gene*, 1976 - they correspond to

*"culturally transmitted information or ideas and beliefs that can be spread from one organism, or group of organisms, to another. A key component to the meme concept is that the information is able to self-replicate, and in turn undergoes a type of natural selection, much like biological genes and viruses."*

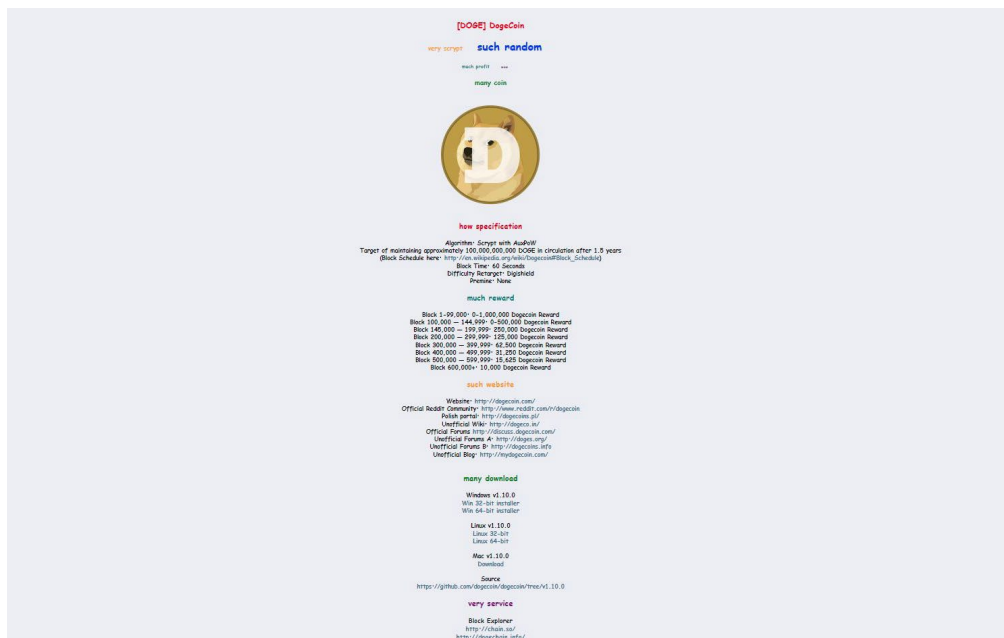
I was abstractly thinking about that, after looking at this image... Even though I knew the relationship between the Telsa founder and the crypto world, I couldn't help but find the situation absurd and ask myself:

*Is a currency actually using Elon Musk crossed to the Doge as visual representation?*

It was even more surprising to encounter it here, on my way to school, because this representation clearly originates from vernacular internet cultures. Seeing the poster made me wonder:

*Since when do such images exists in the street like casual advertisement?*

After a quick research, I discovered that Dogelon was a new *meme-coin*, following the success of *Dogecoin*, the original meme-coin, and others like MonaCoin or Shiba Inu. Dogecoin appeared in late 2013 as a mockery towards *Bitcoin* and the cryptocurrency community which was growing at the time. The creation of Dogecoin happened while the Doge meme was still on the rise. It was then used as a way to minimise every concept that was considered being taken too seriously. Something that is suppose to be impressive is describe by "such wow", something sad by "much tears", something smart by "very genius" and so on and so forth... The distortion of language was a way to comment on current events, and discredit communities or ideas, through absurdity and repetition of absurdity.



screenshot from bitcointalk.org

This is how Dogecoin was introduced, as a thread in BitcoinTalk forum, titled *"Dogecoin - very currency many coin - v1.10.0"*

Even though the project was originally presented as a joke, it quickly got very popular and developed into a huge community, composed mainly of people who were disappointed with Bitcoin. This community has also been noteworthy for its generosity. They raised funds to help the Jamaican bobsled team and 2 Indian athletes to participate to the 2014 Winter Olympics, they created water wells in Kenya and sponsored NASCAR pilot Josh Wise. This Josh Wise ended up with a quite iconic doge-designed Chevrolet SS for Aaron's 499 race, after */r/Dogecoin* (Dogecoin community on *Reddit*) organized a contest between members of the community, in which the most popular design, created by NukaColaV13, was chosen.

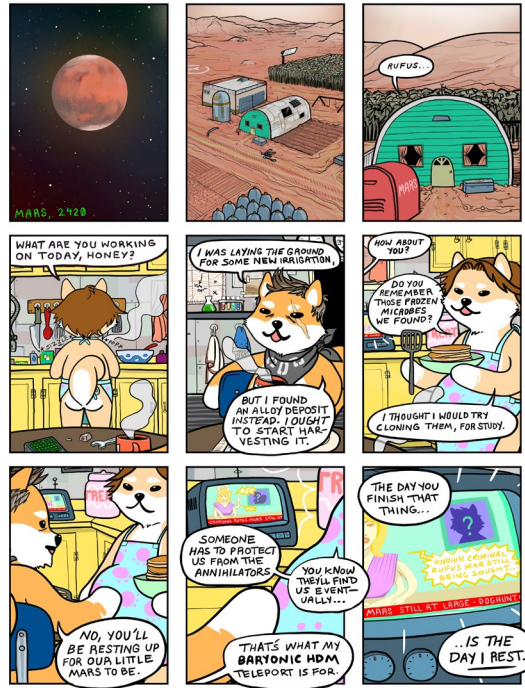


© Chris Graythen/Getty Images

Dogecoin also recently gained a lot of popularity and its value rose significantly after the community called for a push, with the gimmick *"bring it to the moon!"* and *#TOTHEMOON*. These slogans were shared by various celebrities, like the influencer Jake Paul, Gene Simmons from the band KISS or the rapper Snoop Dogg. There is one public figure that gained more attention than the others when starting to promote Dogecoin and it is Elon Musk. His influence on Dogecoin's rise has been notified in multiple articles, showing that the price of Dogecoin rapidly rose after Musk first tweeted about the currency, using a parodic cover of VOGUE magazine titled DOGUE. He is now very much considered a huge influencer on the cryptocurrencies market, to the extent that when he posted a picture of his new Shiba Inu dog named Floki, it led to the creation by an anonymous user of the new meme-coin Floki Inu.

This clarifies the links between the billionaire, the Doge and the crypto currency and brings us back to Dogelon. On the website, the currency is introduced via a fictional futuristic narrative:

*"Year 2420: Mars has been successfully re-colonized after the first galactic voyage. A young Rufus and Astrid Mars settle in for their morning pancakes as they discuss plans for the future, but little do they know of the storm that is brewing beyond the walls of their cozy colony..."*



Dogelon Mars Comic #01

A whole story have been imagined by the creator-s, who is-are anonymous, to contextualise the ambition of Dogelon to be the first interplanetary currency. This story is developed in comics, but the general aim of the project is made quite clear on the website:

*"I am launching this currency today, in anticipation of bringing the first settlers to Mars, for a very specific reason: To help people take the trip with me. A lot of good people have hopes of one day reaching the Moon. In my opinion, of course, this is a very low aspiration. We want to reach Mars and beyond."*

If we go back to the description of the meme phenomena, we can observe that Elon Musk, Doge, Bitcoin, Dogecoin, Dogelon, as part of *memetic* systems, generate each other. They are mutations of each other, with rooted concept that do not disappear in the mutation process, but continue to exist and develop through different forms. These rooted ideologies are connected with the vision of the future proposed by Elon Musk. The colonisation of planet Mars is the promise of the CEO, who sees technology as the humankind saviour, as well as the 'crypto community' (through the *blockchain* technology used in cryptocurrencies). In our case, these ideas circulates through the innocent figure of the doge, whose apparent pureness can be easily disrupted and can thus become the perfect embodiment for any kind of thought, from the most disinterested joke to the first interplanetary currency.

This is were my main question arises, after observing that such a mix between futuristic vision and stretched absurdity could exist and lead to the creation of wide communities made of individuals anticipating the same future. Even though they can be seen as the symptoms of an apparently uncontrolled and massive flow of images, *are memes currently shaping a unique and unavoidable image of the future?*

In this writing, I will use the rich example of Elon Musk and analyse the visual language that surrounds him. This analyse will help me to draw a more general set of conditions, that leads to the colonisation of the future from our current time.

For that, we can already outline two conditions for this outcome, which are going to be developed in the following text:

First is the capacity of contemporary visual media to enable mythological narratives to be developed around public figures; a process which is double sided and self-generative. Through this process individuals like Elon Musk shape themselves out of images, then shape images out of themselves.

Second is the capacity of Internet's massive flow of images and typical communication systems to disrupt one's understanding of reality. I will try to unfold how this phenomenon can help to install certain representations of the world (or the future of the world) and create new forms of cult around individuals like Elon Musk.

## **OLIZ POZIBOL will be laying down on high grass**

surrounded by the chants coming down from the micro world.

The unreachable peacefulness of the blades of grass, the ungraspable fluidity of the insect's flies. They will feel like a coherent environment for a human like OLIZ.

For the human beings who will remain, together with OLIZ, the idea of a structured and globalised world will exist only as a fresh but acid memory...

If you ask them about it,

about the idea of participating in a worldwide race towards accumulation and innovation, they might answer something that can be synthesised by "hihi" or "^ ^"

but you will first have to find them! because they will be somewhere without cities, road signs and google maps...

After some relatively recent events that will not end up under the name collapse, or apocalypse, but might resemble them, humanity as far as OLIZ will be able to visualise it, will be left in confusion. The sensation to exist within institutions will disappear. Such events will radically shift the perception of comfort and make it much more difficult to obtain information about what is happening over their surrounding. A grass field will then be a reasonable scale for OLIZ and the others to project their wills on. In OLIZ's reality, the space will not really have a beginning and an end... you will be where you will physically be and you will know who you have physically met.

No more factories for energy production and no more food importation. No more electric scooter and no more supermarket. No more digital 'ding' and no more magic cream. In OLIZ's reality every resource will need to be protected. They will know that the inconsiderate use of energy in our present is the cause of what will be their current situation...

You will then participate in constructing a whole new living environment out of our ruins and it might require a lot of engineering creativity to recreate the most mundane of our tools.

When you will finally meet them, you should not mistake their unconcerned attitude with ignorance. OLIZ and its mates will definitely be aware of our current level of knowledge and excesses, because the story of civilisations will continue to be shared. They will simply look at them with an objective fascination mixed with a deep disinterest. The people who use to promise they can save everyone will be out of track. OLIZ will not be in touch with anyone living their best life on mars, or hanging out in the metaverse. They won't try to find out whether someone, or a group of people, possess more than they do. They will vaguely know about scales, indicators, sensors, algorithms, or at least they will know where to find the information that are needed, if they are needed. They will simply be done using them as tools to rule their interactions.

Due to the circumstances, OLIZ, and the people living in OLIZ's area, will constitute a form of society together. This society will be established on the aim to find the right balance between old societal models; which will appear to be unavoidable; and newer adaptation to their actual living conditions. The same dynamic will balance their need to actively work on its construction with their need to lay down on high grass.

## THE MYTH OF ELON

We begin with the analyses of Elon Musk's strategy in order to provide a representation of the future according to Musk. Public records of Musk's personal opinions combined with reports about the products of his different companies will demonstrate the entanglement between the future he is promoting and building, with science fiction scenarios that are often *dystopian*. We will try to develop an understanding of the impact on the globalised image of the future we are currently constructing.

When it comes to projection and representation of a future for the masses, using already existing fiction is always an efficient option. It is a useful tool to link theory to images and scenarios that already potentially relate to the future. These theories correspond to pre-existing models in the targeted audience's mind and provide then some kind of legitimacy.

In *The Image of the Future*, written in 1973, Frederik Polak observed the disappearance of utopia. In the part dedicated to the concept of *semi-utopia*, he analyses the decline of utopia as a consequence of the dominance of the scientific paradigm. He wrote:

*"The scientist's idéal of a differentiation between what is and what ought to be, condemns the social utopia to a nonscientific status as a useless pastime when it is judged by the standards of empirical science."*

A few sentences later he goes on with:

*"With the genuine utopia in its death throes, the semi-utopia gave birth to a new genre, science fiction"*

Through mass media and America's cultural supremacy in the rest of the world, the genre of science-fiction has quickly become the main channel for anticipatory narrative and was able to gather large community, often reduced as Geeks or Nerds.

Science-fiction and the communities based on the genre are quite known for their influence on Silicon Valley, which is famously the historical centre for computing technology and innovation.

One could argue that the Silicon Valley is even the place where the world as it is depicted in science-fiction movies can find its path towards its realisation. It is the place where the American dream have been updated, as a *neo-western* narrative in which the world to conquer is not the west, but both the virtual space and the space beyond earth...

In this narrative, CEOs are the main characters as they possess the economic resources to play a role in these conquests and the construction of an America-based image of the future. They are often presented as exceptional human who possess some amazing sense of business and are driven by their own vision for the future in a specific industry field, or for globalized humanity. We might love or hate them, we call them *visionnaires*.

The 1940s and 1950s which are considered the golden age of science-fiction also demonstrates its capacity to generate, more than ever, narratives for the future that aren't necessarily wanted by their authors, but that are often written to warn the readers for potential misuses of science and technologies, in what we usually call dystopias.

*"Hollywood, or, the vertically and horizontally integrated media conglomerates that rule the trans-national production, distribution and exhibition of film commodities, sell viewers in the United States and around the world a plethora of images and narratives about the future of the world. Hollywood has long been the world's dominant narrator of the future of the planet and its science fiction and fantasy genres are among its most globally popular and profitable forms. To appeal to as many viewers as possible and collect maximal box office receipts, Hollywood studios design films that address the collective hopes and anxieties, dreams and nightmares, and desires and fears of viewers. [...] The dialectical dance of the utopian and dystopian imagination in capitalism, however, has not been well represented by Hollywood studios or in the wider society in which they pursue profit. In the 20th century, the dystopian imagination was often counterbalanced by a utopian one but in the 21st, the dystopian story mode is dominant and the utopian, withered. Today's Hollywood science fiction films are disproportionately dystopian [...]"*

These words are taken from Tanner Mirrlees's article *Hollywood's Uncritical Dystopias*, written for CineAction magazine in January 2015. The article brilliantly contextualise the ubiquity of dystopias in modern spectacle and elaborates how capitalist-realism is taking away the fundamental anti-capitalist dimension of dystopias to make them uncritical entertainment, or sometime even a subtle celebration of our current system.

Given this context, it is not a surprise to read *Kill the tech bro, save the world: how CEOs became Hollywood's new supervillains*, a Guardian's article written in the 6th of June 2018, in which Angus Harrison was observing that more and more Hollywood movies were using visual languages and narratives inspired by Silicon Valley's companies and that the traditional villains were more and more inspired by these companies CEO's.

*"Jesse Eisenberg's turn as Lex Luthor in 2015's Batman vs Superman took Gene Hackman's cigar-chomping tycoon and turned him into a T-shirt-clad whizzkid who plays basketball in the offices of his multinational tech corporation. [...] Dr Henry Wu, an unassuming lab technician (played by BD Wong) first seen in the 1994 original prodding dinosaur eggs, has been transformed into the chief engineer of InGen (International Genetic Incorporated), the bioengineering startup from 2015's Jurassic World"*



photograph used to illustrate the article © Clay Enos/Warner Bros

Elon Musk present himself as a huge science-fiction amateur, who was *"raised by books. Books, and then [his] parents"* and often cite *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams as a major personal reference, together with Isaac Asimov's *Foundations* series from which he says to Rolling Stone magazine:

*"The lesson I drew from that is you should try to take the set of actions that are likely to prolong civilization, minimize the probability of a dark age and reduce the length of a dark age if there is one."*

These books are widely acclaimed, even beyond the circle of the genre's fans, so it is not a surprise to find them in his favourites. What is more uncommon is the personal responsibility towards humanity he outline from these readings. In the book *ELON MUSK Tesla, SpaceX and the Quest for a Fantastic Future*, Ashlee Vance got a grip on Musk's ambitions and their provenance, we can read for example that

*"For Musk, the call to ensure that mankind is a multiplanetary species partly stems from a life richly influenced by science fiction and technology. Equally it's a moral imperative that dates back to his childhood. In some form, this has forever been his mandate."*

or later that

*"Musk speaks about the cars, solar panels, and batteries with such passion that it's easy to forget they are more or less sideline projects. He believes in the technologies to the extent that he thinks they're the right things to pursue for the betterment of mankind. They've also brought him fame and fortune. Musk's ultimate goal, though, remains turning humans into an interplanetary species. This may sound silly to some, but there can be no doubt that this is Musk's raison d'être. Musk has decided that man's survival depends on setting up another colony on another planet and that he should dedicate his life to making this happen."*

As Vance said, it may sound silly, and it sounded silly to a lot of observer when he started SpaceX and Tesla, but Musk gained legitimacy throughout years of efforts and major achievement precisely with these two companies. A book like the one of Vance and an interview like the one from Rolling Stone clearly contributes to build a myth around the CEO in which he almost become a sort of messiah. Today I think he can be compare to a contemporary guru from the way his personal story and the way it is told gathered a large community of satisfied costumers who became supporters of the companies' owner and his radical vision, the most involved call themselves *the Musketeers*.

The clickbait titles of the videos from the *Elon Musk Zone*, which is the most followed Youtube channel on the topic, with 477k followers, is basically using the hype around the character to scam people with promotional link in the video's descriptions and comments. It spreads a lot of not well documented information and make arrangements with truth on the titles and the content of the videos. It uses typical YouTube formats mixing official interviews and texts red by voice actors over an untraceable flow of images coming from very different sources. It is in my sense a silly but quite accurate example of how the myth around Musk is constructed and became a tale that can be appropriated easily, since a broad amount of people can relate to it. Even though the channel obviously has nothing official to do with Elon Musk, it uses elements from public discourses that the billionaire or his entourage uses.





screenshot from Youtube.com

First element is the utilisation of existential fear about a future in which technology would not be use wisely. Elon Musk often talk about Artificial Intelligence as a potential triggering factor for a third World War. He also points out other Silicon Valley's emblematic CEOs like Larry Page (co-founder of Google) and Mark Zuckerberg (founder of Facebook) for what he consider their ineptitude and lack of knowledge to work on the subject.

*" I Tried To Warn You" - Elon Musk LAST WARNING (2021)*

*'China Will KILL US!' - Elon Musk LATEST CRITICAL Warning*

*'Watch Before They DELETE This!' - Elon Musk's URGENT WARNING (2021)*

To contrast these scary statements, Musk offers a vision of technology as humanity's only option to fight against the machines and often come up with new unexpected projects that gives a more precise idea of what tool updated humanity will possess to balance our limitation. On the channel, you can find a lot of videos which attracts the viewer with real or fake announcement for new futuristic products.

*Elon Musk Just Revealed Tesla's INSANE New Phone! (RIP Apple)*

*Tesla's NEW VEHICLES Leaked! (Yacht, Heli, ...)*

*Elon Musk Is Mining A Golden Asteroid Worth \$700 Quintillion*

These discourses playing on fear and hope clearly trace back to Hollywood-science-fiction-like scenarios, and Musk's personal life is not spared from being presented like 'globalised entertainment'. Like any public figure, his tumultuous love relationships and personal stories are often placed under the spotlight, and contribute to shape Musk's character. This character is not a traditional super-hero, nor an archaic villain, but it might be a mix of all of them, a modern myth influenced by established myths, themselves influenced by ancient myths, etc...

It gather narratives like the victim past and revenge over life spirit of *Captain America*, the frantic romanticism and extra busy entrepreneur life of *Iron Man*, the ambition, intelligence and stubbornness of *Lex Luthor*...

*"They ABUSED Me For Years! I Need To Make This Public" - Elon Musk REVEALS His Abuse & Bullying!*

*Elon Musk's first wife describes their relationship*

*SpaceX employee opens up about Elon Musk...*

(completed respectively with the sentences «*They beat me close to death*» and «*He is not who he seems to be!*» on the video previews).

In the interview previously mentioned, he also gave some input on his philosophy when it comes to innovation in a particular field. He uses his usual advice-giver, motivational entrepreneur speech rhetoric to say:

*"Don't accept any ideas, practices or standards just because everyone else is doing them. For instance, if you want to make a truck, then it must be able to reliably move cargo from one location to another, and you must follow existing laws of physics. Everything else is negotiable, including government regulations. As long as you remember that the goal isn't to reinvent the truck, but to create the best one, whether or not it's similar to past trucks."*

When he gave this interview, in 2017, Tesla was then most probably working on the *Cybertruck*, which get revealed in November 2019. We can easily imagine how this mindset towards innovation and breakthrough products could potentially collide with marketing. Therefore Musk and Tesla were deliberately using a visual language and narrative coming straight from science-fiction to sell the thing. If it is visually not a truck, then it has to be the future! And the future is here deliberately *Cyberpunk*.

Elon Musk is also known for his taste for animes, the Japanese animation films and series, which largely contributed to democratise the cyberpunk aesthetic with mangas like *Akira* or *Ghost in the Shell*. It emerged at the same time in the US with novels like *Neuromancer*, movies like *Blade Runner* and later *The Matrix*.



Cybertruck © Tesla

The reference to the genre is made first in the name, because the classic truck here become a Cybertruck and it is also embraced in the design and the whole communication around. The unveiling event was introduced by a hologram that embodied the «cybergirl» and when the doors of the vehicle first opened, they revealed a bunch of actors wearing black costumes similar to those of the characters in *The Matrix*. The design was wanted by Musk to make it look like a vehicle from *Blade Runner*, and the month of the unveiling event was actually chosen to coincide with the time frame in which the events in the movie are suppose to happen. Now if we take a closer look at what the cyberpunk is we will realise that it is also mainly a dystopian genre, and this include all the fictions that have been mentioned here as belonging to this aesthetic. In a text he wrote for Interzone, this is how Bruce Sterling, a figure of the Cyberpunk literature, talk about the *Cyberpunk in the Nineties*:

*“Cyberpunk was a voice of Bohemia -- Bohemia in the 1980s. The technosocial changes loose in contemporary society were bound to affect its counterculture. Cyberpunk was the literary incarnation of this phenomenon. And the phenomenon is still growing. Communication technologies in particular are becoming much less respectable, much more volatile, and increasingly in the hands of people you might not introduce to your grandma.”*

The Cybertruck also seemed to be also influenced by this dystopian dimension, because part of the presentation was focusing very much on the resistance of the materials and the fact that it is entirely bulletproof. From looking at the event it seems like Musk has accepted this dystopian vision of the future and is acting as one of the main character in this universe. It is quite disturbing especially when you know that in most of these stories, big corporations, like Tessier-Ashpool in *Neuromancer*, and CEOs, like Cutter, CEO of Hanka Robotics in *Ghost in the Shell* are shown as responsible for the problems faced by the characters.

How Musk’s life and ambitions are taking inspiration from entertainment codes appears as a circumventional but efficient way to federate people. Science-fiction amateurs eventually get hyped to see fictional world they appreciate being transposed to reality. This process also gains legitimacy when the entertainment industry reciprocally take its inspiration back from what it originally created. We can then observe a global dynamic that leads to a uniformisation of the image of the future.

*“Obviously, nobody can describe in-depth what will happen in the future, and so what industry does is mobilise what I call socio-technical fictions, epistemic objects that intensify future visions and which are part of rational and material practices involved in techno-scientific production.*

*In this respect, fiction is not entirely opposed to «fact» or «reality», and is instead a gradient that operates through «fiction loads», used, among other things, to give tangibility to ideas that are abstract or too speculative.*

*Although fiction does not become reality if repeated many times, when it is disseminated from industry in the form of promises, it can generate expectations which end up installing themselves in collective imaginations that accept these futures as inevitable. So, these fictitious objects start to shift from the realm of the speculative to the realm of material stability.”*

These are the words of Andreu Belsunces, a design and technology sociologist who specifically focuses on how the technology industry, public policy, finances and infrastructures are entangled with social expectations to produce certain forms of knowledge and collective views of the future. They are taken from an interview he gave to Mosaic in July 2021. His remarkable work offer broader insights on how the mechanisms I evocated in this chapter impact our collective imaginary.

## **OLIZ POZIBOL will be the guardian of images.**

Because OLIZ will be part of a society that will decide it could function correctly only if everybody has a role in it. Every role will be an important one, so will be the guardian of images.

OLIZ and its community will agree that they need a common cultural ground on which to grow together.

Something that would have the same function as a religion. Something that they could write collaboratively, with the tools they have at their disposition.

A mythology.

They will consider that they need models to follow and values to agree on, as shelters against the chaos. They will also realise how the periods preceding the collapse have left them addicted to images. This mythology will then be collectively constructed from the images they will be able to save, and OLIZ, as you might have understood, will play a major role in this process...

OLIZ will be collecting all of the images that can be found around them.

In abandoned streets they will probably find all kind of advertisement posters, in abandoned supermarket all kinds of packaging. Over-reacting faces, anachronistic objects on minimalist backgrounds and ancient celebrities, will testify of the existence of the preceding myths. In abandoned houses they will potentially find framed family pictures, class pictures, companies calendars, magazines, backgrounds from phones or computer which will still have a few drops of battery, huge living room prints with city landscapes or colourful flowers.

A diversity of representation, from all sources, will be to discover in OLIZ's collection.

From this mountain of images, their mythology will be elaborate.

The people, landscapes and objects contained in the frames will become guides, temples and totems for a community with the need to rebuild common beliefs and goals to work towards together. They will use images of lost times to shape a new image of the future.

From time to time, OLIZ will organise a ceremony, which almost everybody will attend. During this ceremony the collection will be open and investigated. The participants will be able to look through all the images and discuss which ones should be part of the mythology. They will also eventually get rid of the obsolete ones.

Because of this process, the community will always be aware of the impermanence of their belief. This mythology will be a tool in their individual and collective quest for meaning. On the other hand they won't consider it an absolute truth which would be worth fighting for or impose to anyone.

This mythology and its elaboration process, will give birth to a community of conscious worshippers.

If you walk around in OLIZ's surroundings, you will see them talking in the air, addressing an invisible audience. This behaviour will be the consequence of their ancestor's living conditions. Our ability to communicate with a decentralised audience at any time and from anywhere, thanks to the digital media. Our epoch, overwhelmed with recording devices, will engender this habit.

In OLIZ's reality this audience will become an inner presence that people address to channel their fears and uncertainties, but also to share their joy and excitement. When you will come closer to someone who seem friendly and engage the conversation, it might be quite disconcerting to observe that the way they will chat with you will not differ to the way they chat with their inner selves.

You might be surprised, after spending some time with them, to witness some changes in your behaviour and in the perception of your identity. Your sense of individuality will find its expression in these self-conversations. Your inner world will remain your inner world, but your self-conversations will give it an external appearance, a presence.

At the same time, if you like it there, and want to stick around, you will want to find a role to take on. This will be a way to feel part of a collective. These roles will be fluids, they can always change. As everybody will be conscious of each other's individuality, they will now you might encounter uncertainties. You will be able to express them and act in consequence.

And when OLIZ won't feel like it anymore, you could be the next guardian of images.

## THE DEAD CATS OF ELON

To interrogate the way public personalities like Elon Musk can create a persona around themselves and adapt reality to their vision, let's first install the context with an anecdote starring Boris Johnson:

Once, the current UK prime minister said he likes to make mini models of buses, with happy mannequin passengers inside.

This revelation happened during an interview for TalkRadio in June 2019, after being asked:

*"What do you do to relax? What do you do to switch off?"*

This was obviously a very unexpected answer, even for a political man who build his career on strange declarations and fake news spreading.

If you look at the video from the interview, and at Johnson's body language, you could find something suspicious...

Jon Nugent wrote:

*"I can't tell if he was making it up or he was just really embarrassed to tell what he does in his spare time haha"*

I am writing on 07/10/2021, and this observation is the first comment underneath the YouTube video *Boris Johnson says he makes models of buses to relax*, from Guardian News.



screenshot from the video *Boris Johnson says he makes models of buses to relax*.

Boris Johnson seems quite disconcerted by the question and take some time to carefully choose his words. The journalist is softly laughing, it seems like he feels Johnson's confusion and that anything can come out of his mouse at this moment.

The prime minister starts:

*"hmmmm I...I... well I like to... paint. hmmmm oh I make things. I like to..."*

- *What do you make?"*

At this moment, Johnson have his two hands in front of him, and create a space between them to virtually shape a physical object with a certain size. He look at the journalist, move his hands, look in front of him, and feels finally ready to go.

*"I have a thing where I make models of..."*

He look at the journalist and go back with the virtual modelling in the air, he looks intensely through the space between his hands, like if the answer is going to appear there.

He looks back to the interviewer

*"I realized when I was mayor of London, we built beautiful...I make, buses."*

- *You make models of buses?"*

*I make models of buses."*

In the 10 answers from Jon Nugent's comment, people are pushing the observation further, especially one user called SuperMullet, who is convince that the minister was making it up and that he had a good reason for that.

*"He was indeed lying. He was told to say this so that when anyone does an internet search for «Boris» and «bus», the brexit bus with the false NHS claim is no longer top of the list."*

During the campaign before the historical Brexit referendum, a bus was driving through the country with this slogan on the side: *We send EU £350 million per week, let's found our NHS (National Health Services) instead.*

The given amount of 350m happened to be untrue and has obviously became a fruitful angle for criticizing the former mayor of London.

SuperMullet may have drawn the connection by themselves, realizing that this apparently absurd answer, with a strong viral potential could have been a relatively subtle strategy to overshadow unflattering information.

They may have also read it in media like Scotsman or The Spectator which relayed this interpretation, respectively as «*the sinister theory*» or «*the boris bus conspiracy*».

This analyses was actually first introduced by the company Parallax, specialized in digital marketing, on a blog post in 26/06/2016.

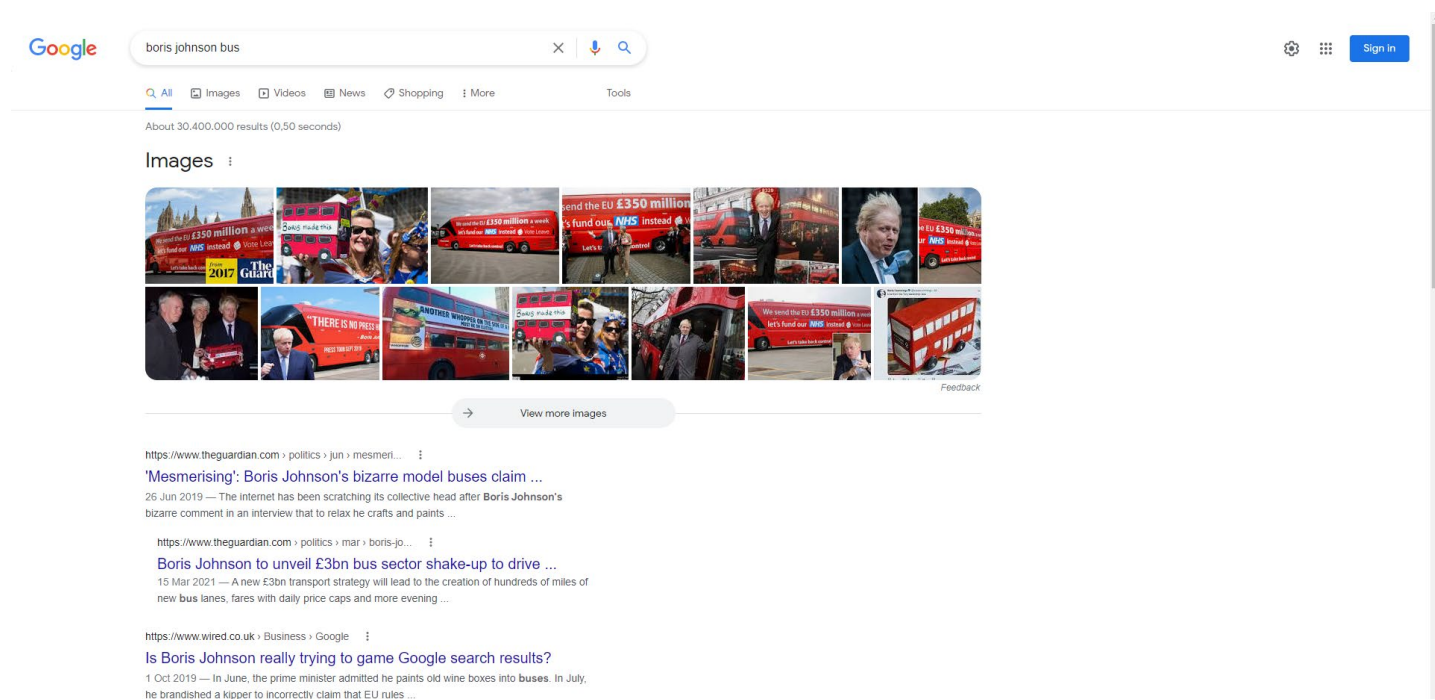
In the blog post for Parallax, Jess Melia concludes by

*"Not only has Boris used his infamous 'dead cat strategy' to move the conversation away from him and Carrie Symonds and his plans for Brexit, he's managed to push down his past mistakes on Google, too [...] He's not just controlling the narrative here – he's practically rewriting it."*

It is interesting here that the *dead cat strategy*, elaborated by Johnson's strategist Sir Lynton Crosby is used as an argument.

To describe this strategy, Johnson once explained:

*"There is one thing that is absolutely certain about throwing a dead cat on the dining room table – and I don't mean that people will be outraged, alarmed, disgusted. That is true, but irrelevant. The key point, says [Linton Crosby], is that everyone will shout, 'Jeez, mate, there's a dead cat on the table!' In other words, they will be talking about the dead cat – the thing you want them to talk about – and they will not be talking about the issue that has been causing you so much grief:"*



screenshot from Google.com

This strategy seems terribly relevant in the context of the contemporary algorithm-drive accessibility of information, when we are being shown content which our online behaviour and 'friends' bubble directs us to. The instant reactions, especially if you got a lot of them, guarantee your post to be under the spotlights. This is reinforcing the presence of "*infotainment*" media which are using sensitive subjects, trendy phenomenon and clickbait titles to provoke people's reaction and market their attention. It is also a perfect context for the fake news to spread and for each individual to become doubtful and critical against information, especially against mass-media canals.

This phenomenon usually goes under the name post-truth, that Lee McIntyre analyses in his book with the same name:

*"the prefix 'post' is meant to indicate not so much the idea that we are 'past' truth in a temporal sense [...] but in the sense that truth has been eclipsed - that it is irrelevant"*

He argues that post-modern philosophy planted a seed towards a general decrease of beliefs, especially the belief in science or what is usually consider rational truth. In *Post-Truth*, you can find multiple examples that shows a tendency in political discourses to rely on feelings and emotion rather than on factual, scientific observations.

What interest me in the Boris Johnson example is the hypothesis that absurdity, coming here from an unexpected declaration, can be part of strategies to shape the truth according to one's specific will. This bring us back to our original quest within this text, which was to find out if memes have the power to shape an image of the future. If Johnson's answer was a strategy, it would show a profound understanding of the meme mechanism and of its relevance today. If this extract of the interview didn't really become a meme, as far as I know, it could be argue that it uses *"a key component to the meme concept [which] is that the information is able to self-replicate, and in turn undergoes a type of natural selection"*. In other terms, instead of trying to remove an information (the fake news used during the Brexit campaign), Johnson would overlap it with a new one, a dead cat, that is more likely to survive Internet's natural selection (the fun fact that he builds models of buses to relax).

One of the power of memes is that they are difficult to attack from a political or theoretical angle because they claim to be so disconnected from any kind of seriousness and institutionalism. An institution that would claim to use or make internet memes would ridicule itself, because it is historically a chaotic medium, which disrupt anything that is too established. Meme makers, because they also originate from hacker communities, are trying to find the flaws, the unexpected angles that will demystify they targets.

After a few years of falling in the traps made by online communities and thanks to the outlining of the *Streisand effect*, institution are eventually starting to understand how these recent forms of communication function. The Streisand effect have been named after an episode in 2003 in which Barbara Streisand attempted to remove a picture on which we could see her residence, from the California Coastal Records Project's database. Observers noticed that she actually drew a lot of attention on this picture which wasn't really significant before. After this event and multiple others it has been accepted by a lot of marketing professional that the memes can be taken seriously, and that they are great tools for community managers to access their audience in an informal way. Some even promote what they call "meme marketing". This vision is obviously very far from the essence of the meme making I was describing just before, but it also led to a broader acceptance that you shouldn't try to keep your public image intact on internet, because its wild re-appropriation is actually free advertisement.

This brings us back to Elon Musk, who approved in a tweet that memes are the best form of free advertisement, to observe the dead cat he is throwing out on the social media and Tesla's online shop...

Whenever he is facing any controversy or "bad-buzz", and there has been many since he became a public persona, Elon Musk make a joke out of it. He is famous for the use of his twitter account, full of unexpected, absurd statements and crypted messages referencing memes or fictions, in between publicity for his different companies. This makes it the 13th most followed account on the platform with 66 millions followers when I am writing.



Cybertruck Bulletproof Tee © Tesla

Comprised in the middle of a space conquest program (SpaceX), a neurotechnology startup (Neuralink) and a tunnel boring company (The Boring Company), Tesla is the most likely from Musk's business to reach a large scale audience. The electric vehicle company is the showcase of Musk's communication strategies and the online shop reflects his sense of (self-)mockery. You can find there for example a *"Cybertruck Bulletproof Tee"*. This item is making an amusing reference to the failings of the Cybertruck unveil event. In order to prove the solidity of the windows, Tesla's main vehicle designer threw a rock at them. He and Musk got quite disconcerted when the windows shattered. They coped with the situation by making jokes but the windows remained fissured until the end of the show. The images of the shattered windows were instantly transformed into memes that were largely shared during and after the event. Instead of trying to silence the mockery Tesla is taking advantage of them to make a profit by selling shirts. I guess this is what they call meme marketing.



Cyberwhistle © Tesla

When I am writing, one of the last item added in the shop was a limited edition “*Cyberwhistle*”, described as a “*premium collectible made from medical-grade stainless steel with a polished finish*”. The object was introduced by a tweet from Elon Musk’s account saying “*Blow the whistle on Tesla*”. This tweet was following revelations made by a so-called whistle blower, concerning fire risks with Tesla’s solar panel system, but also many earlier accusations containing racial aggressions, sexual harassment in a factory and massive waste at a production center... These revelations had the potential to shake the confidence relationship that Musk managed to built with the Musketeers and his companies investors throughout the years. He chose here to balance the situation with a dead cat, which takes the form a premium collectible joke that can be bought with Dogecoin only. The annoying news are drowned under articles and reactions around the joke. This kind of reaction display his self-confidence, and “*demonstrate his conviction that nothing could bring him down*” according to NewsWeek’s article *Elon Musk Is Mocking Whistleblowers. Here’s Why That’s a Good Thing*.

From this encounter between Boris Johnson and Elon musk, I hope to have outlined how the meme mechanisms have the potential to influence the narrative of reality. Personalities like Johnson and Musk can use them to install themselves on a dominant comfortable seat within internet’s massive flow of images and informations. Their understanding of public communication in our digitalised world allow them to discredit whoever tries to question this seat. They bend the visible truth according to their ambition. Musk’s ambition, as we saw in the first chapter, comes along with a clear image of the future. The space that this image take in the collective mind is as big as the seat his public persona is laying on.

This smart but unconventional use of social media (for a billionaire), ends up alimentering the constant flow of news and very contemporary kind of cult of personality around the CEO, who has been elected Time’s person of the year for 2021. I will develop how the meme mechanisms have the capacity to reinforce this cult in the next chapter.

## **OLIZ POZIBOL will open the ceremony.**

When everyone will be arrived and ready to start.

After the person on your right will be done telling the person on their right that this is a nice day, that it might be a better ceremony than the last one because it was windy then and we thought that a photograph of a person with a pig was lost for ever, because it flew away. Nobody thought it would fit the mythology but it is always sad to lose a picture. Then it was miraculously found a few days later on someone's roof! Remember? Anyway, after you will all free your mind from the worries that comes with your duty. When all your faces will display their serene expression, and everyone's attention will be keen to focus on the collection.

OLIZ will know it..

OLIZ will then leave the centre of the circle and quietly walk towards the cabin in which the collection is being kept. During this walk the silence will impose itself, with the attitude that belongs to the sacred moments. You will follow OLIZ and form half of a circle, around the front of the cabin.

OLIZ will open the doors.

You will immediately get a glimpse of the recently found pictures. They will be the posters in front of the others, the photographs on top of the piles. Your hunger for new images will be stimulated, you will want to dive in them, travel in the worlds they depict. Your brain will be able to access some of these representation for the first time..

Imagine you, without mass media, the collection will be like a candy shop. So many unique sensations to discover, so many new representations to expand your imagination.

These new images will then be investigated first, passing from hand to hand, and most of the ceremony will be spend discussing them. Their novelty will offer unspoiled grounds on which to create meaning... Each ceremony will also be an opportunity to explore the pictures you previously left out but will at some point catch your attention back. By looking over and over, you will eventually understand what attracts you in them, what is their magic, and how it can be useful for the community. Over time, the symbolism of the mythology will evolve toward a unique visual language, shared by the community.

The magic will come out of unexpected patterns or striking details.

Some faces will stand out the mass of portraits. You might feel appeased by a reassuring smile or shut down by an authoritarian gaze. Some of the products from an outdated period might reveal themselves as talismans. You won't necessarily understand the function they were attended to cover but their shape will become a meaningful symbol. You might also find shelters in some landscapes or interiors. This places that you will access only virtually, by using your imagination, will be protected from the weight of reality.

After everybody got a chance to have a look at the new images, the atmosphere of the ceremony will be full of excitement and the propositions for the mythology will abound.

"Look at this building! It looks like it is about to detach itself from the ground to roll on us and destroy everything! It would remind us not to build anything that can be armful for us and our environment."

"And this person posing in front of these giant white sticks, with so much pride. This is the image of a kid overruined by its toy. We can keep this picture in memory of the games we couldn't play. These moments stolen to the joy by the seriousness of some events. This image can be a way to expiate our frustrations. It shows that entertainment find its limit when it is a way to escape our responsibilities."

"How... This tomato is so marvelously round. Its red glow makes it shine like a jewel... It looks like the tomato we would all like to grow, the perfection we would all like to reach... Wouldn't we like to be able to look at it whenever we want?"

And so on, and so forth...



## THE CULT OF ELON, AND OTHER STORIES

When analysing Elon Musk's use of the dead cat strategy in the last chapter, I introduced the idea that his online presence was engendering a kind of cult of personality. The parallel with a cult refers to specific behaviour developed by internet communities, since their earliest forms. This is what I will develop here.

In the chapter *'Discordians stick apart'*, from the book *Fiction, Invention and Hyper-reality* (Carole M. Cusack and Pavol Kosnáč), J. Christian Geer traces back some connection between early internet communities and alternative spiritualities. In his text we learn about *Discordianism*, a religion developed in the 1960 's by Greg Hill alias Malaclypse the Younger and Kerry Thornley alias Lord Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst. Under their alias, the two authors have signed the *Principia Discordia*, the original manuscript presenting the fundamental aspects of the religion and the specific type of discourses that they associated with it. The writing has for second title *How I found goddess & what I did to her when I found her* which refers to a fictional encounter with Eris, the Greek goddess of confusion, also called Discordia by the Romans. The religion have later found a third voice in the person of Robert Anton Wilson who co-wrote the *Illuminatus!* trilogy in the 70's. This series was the outcome of what Wilson and Kerry Thornley named the *"Operation Mindfuck"*, *"which was envisioned as a means to destabilize a number of the assumptions that sustain consensus reality"* (J. Christian Geer). *Illuminatus!* was also a stage to apply the discordian principles to the main character Hagbard Celine and describe what could be a discordian behaviour. According to Geer's researches these principles are *"the belief that conceptions of reality serve only as models through which consciousness manipulates ontological chaos"* as well as *"[the interest] in anarchy, magick, self-and drug-abuse, and other unsavory practice"*. This leads to the (chaotic) use of popular culture and ancient beliefs to create new alternative realities and celebrate total freedom.

To complete the history of the Discordian religion, J. Christian Geer points at its influence on the Cyberculture, an early-internet subculture *"crafted out of the confluence of a subgenre of science fiction known as cyberpunk, a reemergence of a psychedelic subculture, and computer hacking enthusiasts"*. He argues that *"Operation Mindfuck morphed into hacking"*. One could argue that today's meme culture also functions with similar strategies and discourses than those used by Robert Anton Wilson.



Pepe the Frog

A very striking example is the figure of *Pepe the frog*. The frog was originally a character from the comic series *Boy's Club* by Matt Furie and became a very popular meme after 2008. Around 2015, in the context of the US presidential, it started to be seen as a symbol of the Alt-right community. Pepe also became, for this community, a reminiscence of Antique Egyptian beliefs.

This whole process has given birth to a new theory adored by conservative meme-maker, who share their appreciation of chaos with Discordian: the *meme magic*. This theory explicitly refers to the potential impact that meme can have on real events. It started on *4chan*, a legendary imageboard which is now famous for hosting communities of American white-nationalist, especially on the political board */Pol/* (entitled "Politically Incorrect"). The specific interface of 4chan, the political opinions and the language that has been developed on the platform led in 2015, before the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, to the formulation of the *Cult of Kek*.

The whole historical guideline can be found on <https://pepethefrogfaith.wordpress.com>. Although this website is very much oriented towards the defence of the Alt-right, it precisely expose the context in which

*"these seemingly random elements [...] became irreparably tied together within imageboard culture:*

*Pepe the Frog (now /pol/'s unofficial mascot)*

*Donald Trump (/pol/'s overwhelming candidate of choice)*

*Repeating digit post numbers ("GETS")*

*"KEK" (used as an expression of delight, particular in response to Trump's "trolling" of the establishment, as well as in reaction to unlikely GETs in general)*

*...and a god was born."*

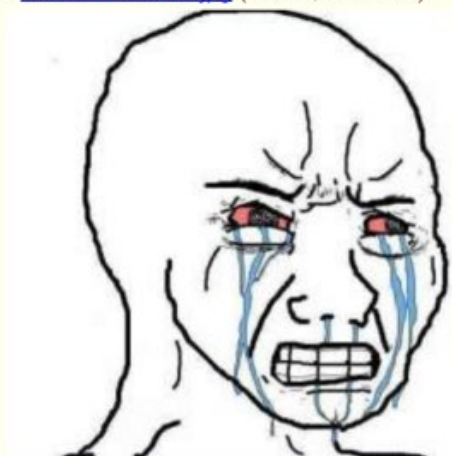
Then the community eventually found out that Kek was actually the name of a deity in Ancient Egypt and suddenly a bunch of images found on the internet were interpreted as evidences for the prophecy of Kek, which was supposed to lead to Trump's election. On /Pol/ then, every positive event on Trump's campaign and every negative ones on Clinton's were attributed to the prophecy. Users perceived that this belief was actually impacting on reality and started alimenting it with more research and more images to make it more impactful.

Post-internet discordianism and the cult of Kek can be seen as stretched version of *The Memetic Tribe of Culture War 2.0*, as described by Peter Limbergh and Conor Barnes. According to them, a memetic tribe is

*"a group of agents with a meme complex, or memplex, that directly or indirectly seeks to impose its distinct map of reality — along with its moral imperatives — on others. These tribes are on active duty in the new culture war. [...] [They] are multitudinous, fractious, unscrupulously optimistic, and divide the world into allies and enemies"*

Meme magic is an example of how these meme mechanism, as they generate communities, codes and symbols, can create beliefs. Because they are absurd and unexpected, it is funny, or exciting for their worshippers to see them infiltrate the mundane. At the same time, in the context of the culture war, their apparent innocence can be use to bring undesirable ideologies on the 1st plan. They cannot be the only ones to blame, as it has sometimes been done after Trump's election, but they can definitely be considered as weapon for chaos.

File: [1458275444652.jpg](#) (68 KB, 700x700)



Anonymous (ID: [cy16RAT6](#)) 09/13/16(Tue)01:56:20 No.88650933  
>>88651308 >>88651581 >>88651634 >>88651737 >>88651838 >>88651956 >>88652383 >>88652482  
>>88652497 >>88652514 >>88652667 >>88652742 >>88652767 >>88652858 >>88652933 >>88653011  
>>88653074 >>88653251 >>88653519 >>88653565 >>88653614 >>88653691 >>88653737 >>88653824  
>>88654132 >>88654214 >>88655105 >>88655132 >>88655285 >>88655368 >>88655461 >>88655883  
>>88655965 >>88656173 >>88656258 >>88656263 >>88656296 >>88657016 >>88657056 >>88657080  
>>88657434 >>88657550 >>88657896 >>88658014 >>88658100 >>88658163 >>88658744 >>88658854  
>>88661093 >>88662024 >>88668994 >>88671076 >>88671590 >>88671713 >>88671719 >>88671951  
>>88671955 >>88672229 >>88672801

STOP PLEASE

I din't believe in meme magic at first, I thought you were all joking. Then Trump won his first primary and I thought "heh, that's a coincidence". Then he became the candidate and I thought things were getting weird. Now Hillary is getting sick and the media is talking about Pepe it's clear as day your memes are fucking with the fabric of reality.

STOP PLEASE I BEG YOU

You're fucking with powers you don't understand, if you keep this up you could meme us all out of existence

screenshot from 4chan

I am conscious that at this point, my text is drifting away from the image of the future. Within this last chapter I wanted to introduce the idea that internet's temptation of chaos is increasing the potential of memes to actually influence the narrative of reality.

As detailed previously with Elon and Boris, 2nd degree and even self-depreciation are tools that can be used to spread promotional or ideological messages. They can also more indirectly create a context in which they can spread, without presenting them as promotional or ideological. A certain product, or political vision can be subtly impose in the collective mind, or at least in Internet's jungle of images, by making antagonistic elements invisible. When absurdity can be considered a communication strategy, it also makes it quite difficult to distinguish the shape of truth because it is veiled by layers of statements based on personal feelings, memetic mechanism and manipulated information.

In our case, it confirms how memes and the specific type of communication they generated revolves around contemporary forms of cults. The physical, truthful reality is being covered up by a world of images and conventions that are being disturbed by small communities creating their own spirituality. It also shows us how these beliefs are used in the context of the Culture War, for which the future might already be the principal battleground.

## CONCLUSION - WHERE OLIZ MEET ELON

Throughout this text, I haven't really touched upon the diversity of Elon Musk's ambitions for the future. Besides the spatial conquest, for which he successfully directed the construction of re-usable rockets, he is also following his *transhumanist* dream with the company Neuralink. The company's aim is to implant a 'link' in human brains to be able to control a computer or mobile device everywhere they go. Beyond Tesla's electric vehicles, Musk also wants to improve the speed, the efficiency and the sustainability of our transportation systems with tunnels (The Boring Company) and hyper speed trains (Hyperloop).

Anyone who follows the news about the billionaire knows that anything can be expected from his new announcements. His projects are accumulating, at the same rhythm as his money does. They are going in multiple directions but they are driven by the same image of the future that I have attempted to describe in this text.

My aim was to demonstrate how the vision of the future carried by Elon Musk and the Silicon Valley community in general, is in my sense indirectly imposed on to our society. This vision can be summarized as Transhumanist and Libertarian, where the notion of the collective is erased towards the triumph of the augmented individual. In this vision, the constant growth of industrial production, technological evolution and the colonization of other planets, are supposed to balance our lack of resources.

Furthermore, I wish to have unfolded the roles of the entertainment industry, the press and the online communities in this process; where the repetition and mass spread of images, disqualify any alternative to visually or conceptually imagine the future.

The unveiling event of the Cybertruck is a good illustration of how the different media can reinforce each other. The viewers discovered a vehicle with a breakthrough design evocating the cyberpunk aesthetic, which was also awkwardly referenced in the setup of the show. The unprecedented look of the vehicle easily triggered reactions and went viral. Then the fail of the shattered windows and the general weirdness of the ceremony, made it an event with a strong meme potential. All of these ingredients have made the Cybertruck instantly iconic, like a fiction vehicle, which it is. Because it hasn't been released yet, after the production start has been pushed multiple times, from late 2021 to early 2023. The excitement created by the waiting time leaves little doubt that this iconicity will remain and eventually grow once the Cybertruck is out on the market.

This reflection has been part of me since a year when I first discovered the book *Hearing the Cloud* by Emile Frankel and later the work of Andreu Belsunces. This text has been triggered by my encounter with Dogelon Mars, which made me realise how established Musk's narrative is in the collective imaginary of the future.

This is where OLIZ meets ELON.

OLIZ POZIBOL is an attempt to build a cave of an alternative within this dystopian narrative. A narrative which offers 2 possible forms of future:

the construction of an extra-terrestrial transhuman civilisation, promoted by Elon Musk and the *collapse* of our civilisation.

Although not mentioned previously, the second option has been installing itself in the collective imaginary these past few years. It gained supporters in the public debate, with the emergence of the *Collapsology*, a new research field presented as "*the transdisciplinary study of the risks of collapse of industrial civilization*". It has been popularised in Europe by the book *How everything can collapse: A manual for our time*, written by Pablo Servigne and Raphaël Stevens and published in 2015 in France. In the USA, this theory has apparently found a shape under the concept of *Deep Adaptation*, introduced by the professor Jem Bendell.

In my sense, this imaginary is gaining importance from a widely shared feeling of living in a period of major crisis, in an unstable but globalised world. Within a globalised culture, full of science-fiction post-apocalyptic scenarios (reminiscent of religious narratives), our minds are apparently ready to accept the chaos, the collapse, as a major component of the image of the future.

As an artist, I want to propose new narratives and participate in building an alternative image of the future. I am mourning the dead utopia and have accepted its ruins as my construction site

The world of OLIZ POZIBOL is the world of the people who will be abandoned by their fellow human beings. Those who will prefer to live in their physical environment, rather than in the '*metaverse*', or on another planet and those who will not have a choice.

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