A Fantastic Guide to the Cybersiren, and Everything Else You Need to Know about the Love, Death, Origins, Characteristics and Chronicles of the Neapolitan Port

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Abstract

The separation of Napoli from its port – driven by industrialisation, privatisation and urban neglect – has disconnected the city from the sea. Drawing on the local mythological tradition, the Cybersiren is introduced as an advocate for change and a way to reconnect city, port and people. It is presented as a disruptive force in response to rigid systems of authority and control that currently dominate the Neapolitan port. This is presented in two ways. First, through a guideline that explains the characteristics of the Cybersiren as a queer entity, one that is body- and techno-fluid, is ambiguously alien on the one hand yet familiar on the other. The guideline also speaks of the way in which the Cybersiren attacks, shatters and eventually, dies. Second, these characteristics are translated into a fictional story that uses imagination to consider how change could be brought about in order to foster technodiversity and reconfigure relationships. Mythopoesis, or the formation of a myth, is used as a tool in order to explore how the grotesque could be used to challenge what has become stuck.

For the curious mind, before you proceed, please be aware that you are solely liable for any future damage, destruction and disruptions caused by the hypnotic songs of the Cybersiren. Welcome to its universe. While we, the writers, do not want to impose any type of interpretation upon you, the reader, we still felt that it might be beneficial for your own reading experience to have some level of understanding of what this essay is about. Its aim is to expand our understanding of the Cybersiren. We attempted to address all questions a curious reader like yourself could have, as it is our belief that with a proper understanding of this larger-than-life fantastical being, one is able to apply the concepts for oneself. And while the Cybersiren in its essence is a call for action, this essay is not a manifesto; it does not want to impose any pure form of interpretation. Rather, its fragments could be read like an instruction manual for your new fancy drill, explaining the different parts, where it was manufactured and how it can be used. It is a biology piece in the sense that it just states what is. It describes how it was, what went down. With this in mind, we feel that it is safe to send you on your own journey. The best of luck.

A brief history of division

The development of the Neapoliatan port is closely tied to the city's historical changes in the eighteenth and

twentieth centuries. When Italy relocated its capital to Turin in the eighteenth century, Napoli's political significance declined, leading to a downturn in the port's trading status. This caused the town to distance itself from the port, even though the port had once been a vital link between maritime activities and urban life.

During World War II, Mussolini's vision for an industrialised and militarised waterfront further deepened the separation between the port and the city by implementing zone-dividing infrastructures.[1] A trace of this remains evident today, as remnants of the old railways are still visible in the parking lot. Even today, this vision continues to shape a rigid urban plan where isolation characterises the port-city relationship.

The post-war development failed to bring an overall positive impact to the port development due to the constant neglect of this area in urban planning, exemplified by entire city plans on which the port area is left completely blank. The port thus continues to serve as a monofunctional industrialised waterfront facility and remains disconnected from the city, which in turn separates the city from the sea.[2] Whereas the port is historically a place of commotion, a place of arrival and departure and part of the beating heart of the city, currently it is an unwelcoming environment for outsiders and seems to be nothing more than a hidden necessity for sustaining people's lifestyle. An increase in scale and inaccessibility are the consequences of the mechanisation and automation of the port's processes, as well as the privatisation of the port authority. That being so, a distance between Napoli and its identity as a port city has emerged.

Mythological tradition

Despite the port today being a place void of stories, religion and mythology have always had a profound impact on the Neapolitan's everyday life. The narratives about the city all revolve around love and death, a juxtaposition of two ubiquitous things throughout humanity and thus speaking to the imagination vividly.[3] According to the legends, Napoli was founded after Ulysses, one of the heroes of Greek mythology, was warned about the sirens before he set sail. With their hypnotic voices of the sea, they would seduce passing sailors before killing and eating them. In order not to fall prey, Ulysses blocks out the ears of his sailors with wax and lets himself be bound to the mast. In desperation from not being able to lure him into the sea, the siren Parthenope throws herself into the sea and dies. Where her body washed up on shore, the city of Napoli arose. Another tale tells of Vesuvius, a centaur in love with Parthenope. Upon hearing this, Zeus becomes jealous and transforms him into a volcano. Lastly, there is the tale of the river god Sebeto, the river which used to end

up in the Mediterranean at Napoli's Porta della Madallena. In the story, Sebeto and Parthenope are engaged in a love affair that cannot last. Likewise, these days the actual river has completely dried up due to irrigation and canalisation, and is yet another representation of the loss of history. The mythical and magical properties of Napoli extend far beyond Greek mythology. Throughout history, cults have merged into religions, and these religions in turn developed their own myths and miracles interwoven with the ancient stories and traditions that precede them. Rituals tied to the story of Parthenope even contaminated and spread into Christian traditions.[4] It is this ancient storyline running through Napoli that plays a large role in shaping the city as it is today.

What makes the stories so memorable – they are still being retold after all those years – is their universal quality of speaking to the human imagination. The myths revolving around Napoli speak of love, death, desire, jealousy, seduction, rage and despair. The concept of mythopoiesis or myth-making involves the creation of myths in order to explain social and cultural phenomena. According to Massumi, virtual narratives shape and alter our perception of reality and political landscapes; the way people feel and act in the world.[5] Myths are more than mere stories from the past; they are active and dynamic and generate and amplify affects which can bring upon a sense of collective identity, or drive people apart. On the one hand, myths can foster a sense of community, but on the other, they can be used as tools of manipulation and enforcing ideologies upon others.

Origin story

This is where we depart from – using the creation of a myth in order to shine a new light on an environment that is in need of reinterpretation and regeneration. The port area of Napoli is a strongly controlled and monofunctional environment. Here, the interplay between belief and control has got out of balance. That interplay being transduced by authority, the shift has moved closer towards control, belief having been coded by societal structures rather than stemming from people intrinsically. Traditionally, the harbour could be considered a trinity of sea, people and port and thus likened to Gilbert Simondon's concept of technicities, making explicit the interconnectedness of humans, environments and technologies.[6] However, rather than the dynamic interactions that lie at the root of technicities, currently the port seems to be a disconnector. Not only is the port an inaccessible and inhumane environment, but the disconnection between city and port consequently also breaks the ties between the city and the sea.

This disjunction is visible in or through the concept of smooth and striated space as developed by Gilles

Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[7] Smooth space can be seen as continuous and undivided, open-ended, fluid and dynamic, lacking strict boundaries or hierarchies. The open sea is an example of smooth space, but in a way, the city of Napoli is too. In all of its chaos, people have found ways to personalise the city, leading into an environment that seems to be without rules, where people appropriate the city without a clear underlying structure or overarching theme. Conversely, the port is the epitome of striated space, as defined by segmentation, order and structure. There is a clear division of space and regulation of movement through direction, clearly distinguishing the area into places that are public and those that are not. Similarly, the concept of time is synchronised in the port, for machines and ships determine its schedule, not the needs of the people, not even the people working there. Therefore, it is difficult to have a sense of personalised time, which makes it difficult to understand the port according to our perception, because the experience of being here is hard to internalise. Following this analysis, the port again becomes a striated disruptor between the smooth areas of the sea and the city.

This is a part of what can be called 'the Neapolitan predicament', where over the years the port has become a disrupter, and thus a lack of interaction with or access to the sea has emerged.[8] Perhaps the monotony of this environment is one of the reasons for the lack of techno-diversity. The common belief of *mare libero*, that the sea is everyone's and no-one's property and thus ought to be accessible to all, has therefore been shattered. Almost all of the Napoli's waterfront is privatised, either because of the port and other industrial functions, or because high-end resorts and beach-side restaurants claim the space to be theirs, asking for an entrance fee in order to reach the water. The city has become a spectacle to consume, and this commodification of leisure only strengthens the authority of the port, as it determines for the most part what goods come into and go out of the city. While this might seem like a recent development, this assessment dates back to the nineteenth century and effects of the picturesque movement.[9]

Whereas the sea used to bathe Napoli, it now mainly serves the port, and has been reduced to something that can be controlled, used and exploited. The way Napoli is stuck was already elaborated upon by Anna Maria Ortese in the 1950s, in her book *Il Mare Non Bagna Napoli* ('the sea does not bathe Naples'), where the city is portrayed as one torn apart by social inequality and physical deterioration caused or magnified by the destruction of the Second World War.[10] The isolation and alienation experienced by the characters in the book reflect their estrangement from the Big Other, a concept developed by Jacques Lacan. The Big Other represents the overarching structure of norms, values and laws that govern society and shape individuals' identities and behaviour. What is acceptable or not is determined by an external authority, but becomes internalised by individuals through their upbringing and socialisation.[11] A problem arises when these externally enforced rules do not align with the current city's dynamics or an individual's wishes or desires. The rules are often rigid and unable to adapt because of how deeply they are engrained in society.

In order to regenerate what has become stuck and again bathe Napoli in the endless sea of possibilities, the Cybersiren emerges. This is a fantastical creature lying at the heart of the sea, the machine and human. It is born at the place where the port, the Mediterranean and the Neapolitans collide. Its creation beyond genesis catapults a challenge to conventional birth and origin It exists in a state of ephemerality, only appearing after the emergence of static and over-coding. It only wakes up in the silence that arises from inertia and only sleeps again when this fixity is resolved and things are put back to their natural disorder. Being a hybrid of machine and organism, the Cybersiren is as much a creature of social reality as a creature of fiction and thus has the power to change our lived social relations, those being the most powerful political construct.[12]

Like the sirens from the stories, the Cybersiren sings, its sounds creating vibrations that disrupt what has become stuck, resonate with the people in order to re-instill their belief in the unity of the sea and city, luring them into breaking free from the grid in order to reignite what was once there and is still visible in the rest of the city. The Cybersiren issues an invitation to be playful, to challenge authorities, to dispel the idea of the port being a static place, one that is merely there for efficiency's sake.

The Cybersiren bridges human, machine and sea
The Cybersiren is a holobiont that seamlessly integrates human, machine and the sea into a cohesive system. [Fig.1] It accomplish this by incorporating various forms of time, a key mechanism in its operation. This synchronisation of different temporal dimensions results in a harmonious interplay, where the machine navigates the human domain with remarkable efficiency, transforming its mechanical precision into fluid, organic movements.

This unique synthesis of the organic and the mechanical maintains a delicate balance between rigidity and freedom, while taking into account both structured mechanical systems and the flexible, adaptive qualities of the organic. The dichotomy of machines and the human relates to the notions of alienation and familiarity. Operating in a highly efficient, systemised programme, the machine

landscape engenders a sense of alienation from which humans feel excluded. Familiarity comes from the sense of everydayness or approachability. The Cybersiren is a bridge between these alienated and familiar landscapes and creates an equilibrium between organic and inorganic matters by satisfying both machines and humans' needs. In addition, rather than merely humanising the mechanical world or imbuing machines with human characteristics, the Cybersiren's true purpose lies in bridging seemingly unbridgeable gaps and opening pathways that have become closed.

This bridging process fosters a deeper connection and understanding between disparate realms. It challenges traditional boundaries, suggesting a new paradigm where the distinctions between human and machine, organic and mechanical, are blurred. The Cybersiren thus emerges as a symbol of integration and unity and offers a vision of a future where technology and nature coexist and complement each other. This enhances the capabilities and experiences of both. The Cybersiren, by being at the same time a mechanical and an organic being, bridges the divide between so-called organising inorganic and organising organic as understood by Yuk Hui.[13] It is a being with parts that qualify as organised organic and organised inorganic (the technological parts). However, the entirety of the Cybersiren is capable of organising, thus establishing a new category of being, an organising inorganic organic.

Besides connecting humans and machines, the Cybersiren also embraces the boundless freedom of the sea to unlock endless possibilities and smoothness. To achieve this, it unifies the disparate elements of the land and water. Through this unification, it introduces a smooth interface where the striation of the port environment melts with the fluidity of the marine realm, tapping into those properties that are traditionally associated with the sea and are much needed to be able to bathe the city and land again. By doing so, the Cybersiren paves the way for a diversified future and is able to challenge the old, prescribed system. In this vision, a new system emerges to re-relate and re-organise the pre-existing isolated factors. Central to this transformative system is the active participation and intrinsic belief of people that reinterpret and reinvent the port.

Thus, the Cybersiren stands as a beacon of change, illustrating how the unification of human, machine and sea can lead to a more holistic and inclusive future. It emphasises the importance of breaking free from old paradigms to embrace a more harmonious and synergistic relationship between static and active systems.

The Cybersiren is queer

The Cybersiren destabilises the static and seeks agents for change in which newness emerges, creating disorder in order to re-order. [Fig. 2] It disturbs the formation or the flow from the Big Other and challenges the status quo. Destabilisation of the Neapolitan predicament will lead to an opening of a potential matching the smooth space of the sea. The Cybersiren is both sexless and genderless; the Cybersiren dissolves binaries of male and female, masculine and feminine. Transcending the realm of human and machine, closer to a phenomenon, the Cybersiren will be referred to as 'it'. In Cybersiren's queering manipulation, things can no longer return to the status quo because of the opened-up potential that was not present before. Its force of disruption is too strong an elastic reaction; the system enters plastic change. It does not conform to categorisation, and this is translated in the breaking of boundaries between sea, port and city. It has three queering strategies:

The queering of relations and the embrace of heterogeneity push the Cybersiren beyond rigid categories, and promote a topological view that is fluid and centred on abilities rather than form. This perspective sees genetic variation as non-generic and non-classifiable, fostering new, dynamic interactions that disturb and challenge established norms. Such disruptions open up previously closed cybernetic loops and offer imaginative alternatives that were once inconceivable. By defying standard conventions, queerness reduces hierarchy and destabilises stringent authoritative systems, thereby implementing new power entities that challenge the dominant structures. The de-privatisation of the port authority gives the people, instead of the port, greater agency.

The queering of time and the future challenges the traditional, uniform perception of what lies ahead, promoting a nonlinear formation of future possibilities. The concept of the Cybersiren exemplifies this diversification by disrupting fixed notions of a visible and predictable future, instead shifting our perspective to embrace the invisible, the unpredictable, the unknown. This approach aligns with Tony Fry's ideas and Lena Boroditsky's research, both highlighting how breaking away from conventional temporal structures allows for a broader, more inclusive understanding.[14] By queering time – whether personal, standardised, or otherwise – the Cybersiren offers alternatives and liberates us from the constraints of a fixed future. As the Cybersiren is genderless, it is free from organic reproduction and thus, free from genesis at all. It is the culmination of becoming, without beginning or end.

The queering of technology, or technodiversity, challenges the conventional norms of what technology can do, be, or represent, thereby broadening our understanding. This perspective views technology through the lens of the aesthetics of politics, allowing for a more expansive
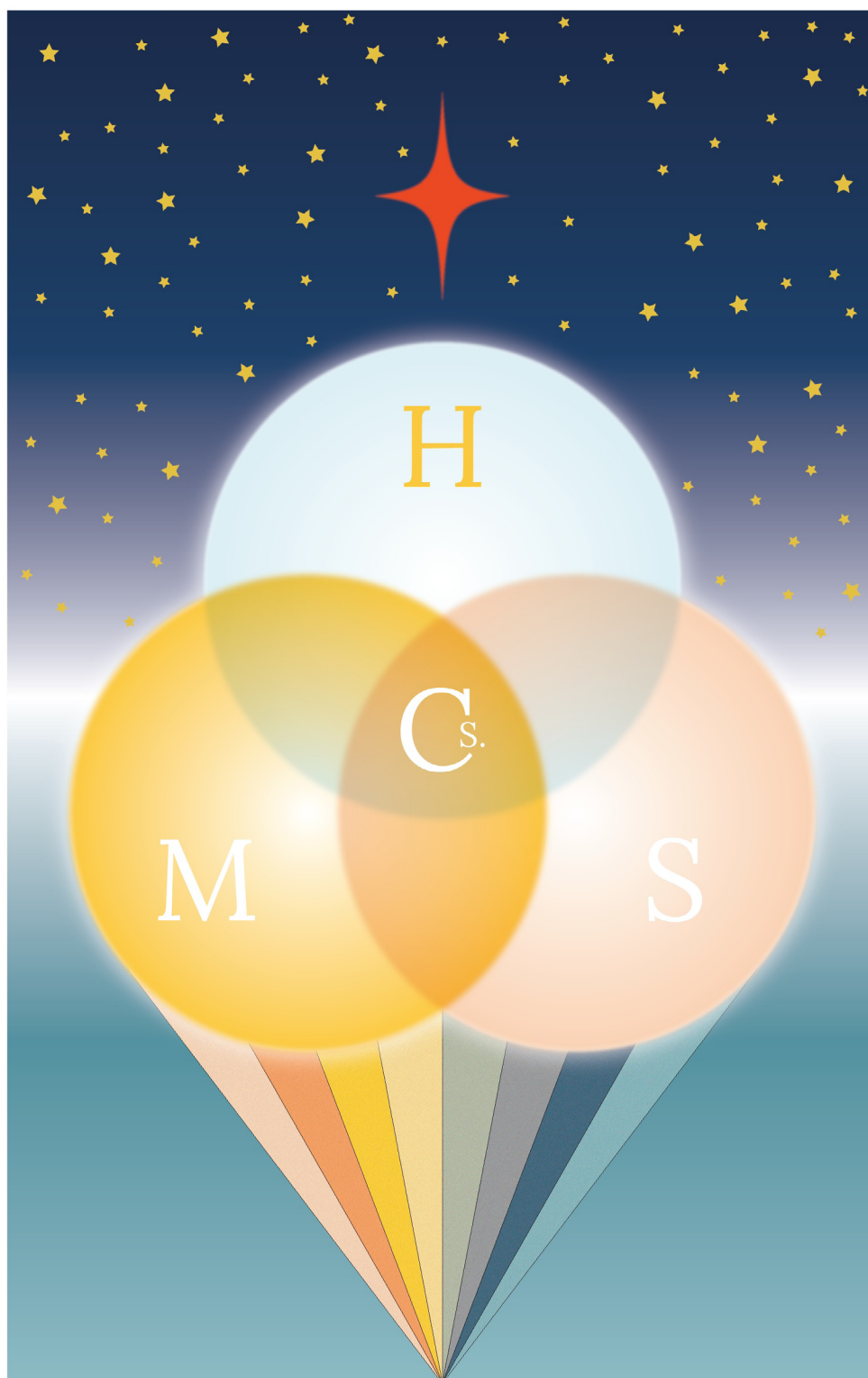
Fig. 1: The Cybersiren bridges human, machine and sea. Illustration: authors.

and inclusive interpretation. Cybersiren exemplifies this by breaking down the 'There Is No Alternative' mindset in which capitalism is the only viable option, encouraging innovative and diverse possibilities in the technological realm.

The Cybersiren is body- and techno-fluid

The Cybersiren embodies a state of body- and techno-fluidity and exists in a perpetual process of regeneration and transformation. [Fig. 3] It refuses to fixate itself and resides in the liminal space between the cybernetic entity and the organic being. This fluid nature allows it to penetrate political fortresses and challenge authoritative rigidity, as outlined in Haraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto,' where regeneration involves the regrowth of structure and restoration of function, often resulting in unexpected, potent forms.[15] Body parts could be removed or replaced, which can translate itself in the tangible through additions, expansions, erasures and punctuations, but also in the intangible by altering systems. This mode of regeneration would lead into the grotesque, which includes exaggerated images that provoke or disturb and thus challenge the conventional. Through transformation, boundaries of solidified forms are transgressed, defying all forms of categorisation and order. These transformations can take place through mutations too, celebrating hybrid forms and unplanned, unstructured or seemingly hazardous events.

Exactly these accidents or acts of spontaneity can lead to new modes of thought and representations of those in the built environment. Because the Cybersiren turns the striated into the ambiguous, the body's potential is continuously redefined by disrupting the fixed and emphasising fluidity. The development of the grotesque can be traced back to the ornamental art of ancient Rome, where fantastical imagery would blend human, animal and vegetal forms. It is described by a distortion that defies the laws of nature and conventional aesthetics. In doing so, the grotesque transcends the merely aesthetic, instead also dealing with psychological or political phenomena, provoking a sense of confusion through surreal or monstrous creations, questioning people's notion of reality.[16]

The grotesque can be connected to the carnivalesque as derived from Mikhail Bakhtin's research on the medieval carnival, during which the usual social hierarchies and norms are temporarily suspended. Things that are generally hidden or repressed become visible to all, and thus the carnivalesque can give voice to the marginalised and challenge the standardised.[17] As the Cybersiren continues to transform its body and that of the port, hierarchies and authorities are thus put into question. The liberation that follows from this can lead to renewal and regeneration. This exemplifies ultimate instability, a necessary trait to queer over time and prevent homogeneity.

The Cybersiren attacks

> You see, if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience, you have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you are not doing what you want. So, resistance comes first, and remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So, I think that resistance is the main word, the keyword in this dynamic.[18]

The Cybersiren represents a form of Foucauldian resistance against the constraints imposed by authoritarian regimes that impede the growth, creativity and freedom of expression in the port-sea-city of Napoli. [Fig. 4] A means of resistance is not intended to be a peaceful entity. It does not engage in negotiations, nor does it seek to comprehend the other party's perspective. The Cybersiren emerges when a specific threshold is crossed, marking a point where uniform, striated forms of authority have imposed such control that no other recourse remains. It is driven by the desire for change born out of discomfort and awakening from hibernation, which destabilised the environment before retreating. At this point the Cybersiren is no longer able to contain its profound frustration with the stagnation and uniformity of the systems. This frustration is akin to the concept of power and resistance as elucidated by Foucault. In the contemporary context, there is a plethora of opportunities and an urgent need to act. In order to resist a system, there is no alternative but to attack. The Cybersiren's attacks are characterised by a combination of violence and forcefulness, with the objective of destabilising and disrupting established systems of belief and control. Its actions are fundamentally antifascist, opposing any form of totalitarian control. By revealing and attacking these unseen forces, the Cybersiren facilitates new configurations and forges new alliances.

The Cybersiren possesses the capacity to become invisible, enabling it to uncover concealed structures and forms of authority. The Cybersiren is a force to be reckoned with. It embodies and becomes one with its target, allowing it to move within the same field as the Big Other, a concept representing hidden societal structures. The Cybersiren disrupts our comfortable modes of belief and control, using its siren call to bring hidden authorities into the open, transforming them into spectacles for public scrutiny and ridicule. This process aligns with the ideas of Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* and
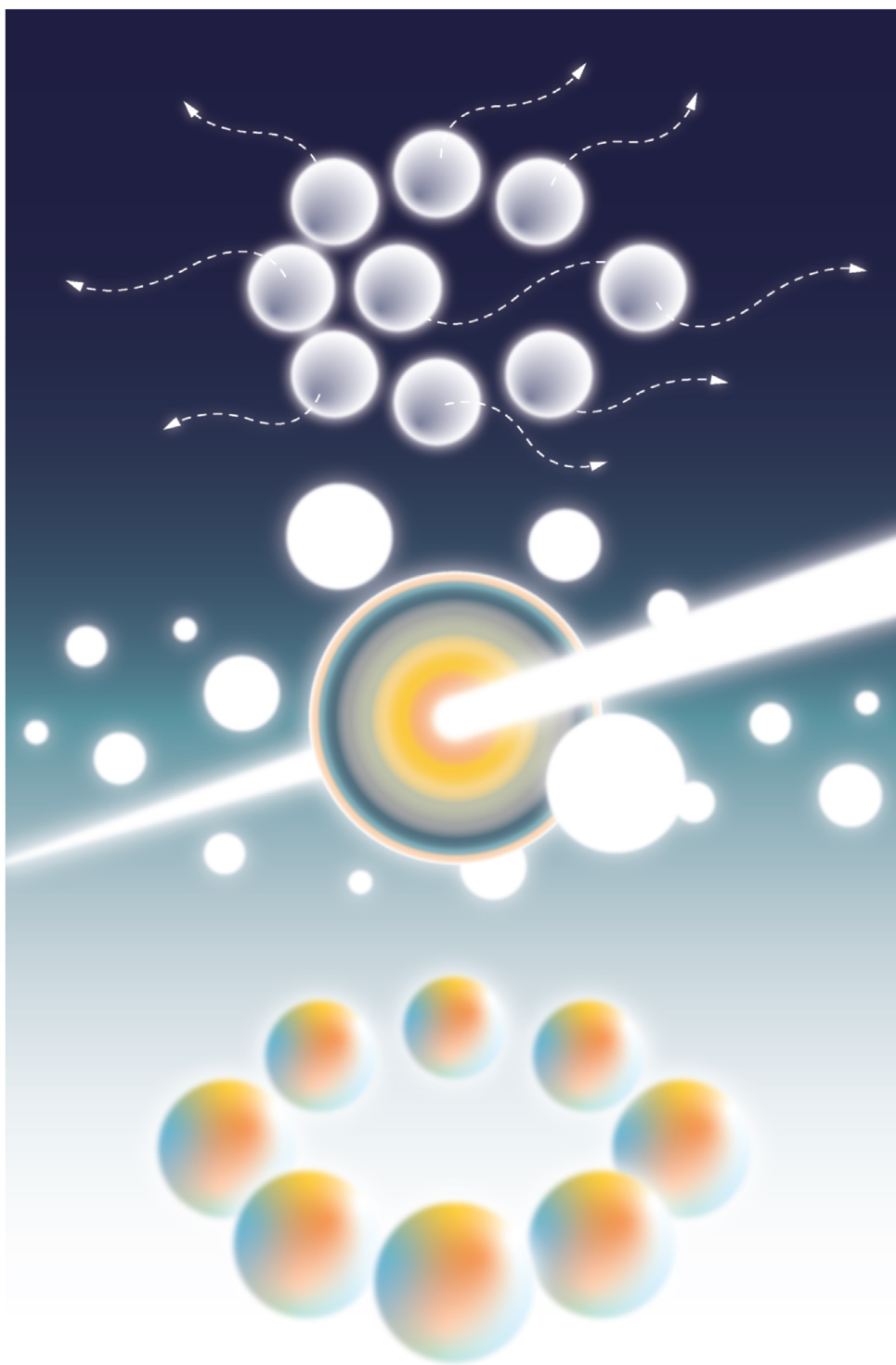
Fig. 2: The Cybersiren is queer. Illustration: authors.

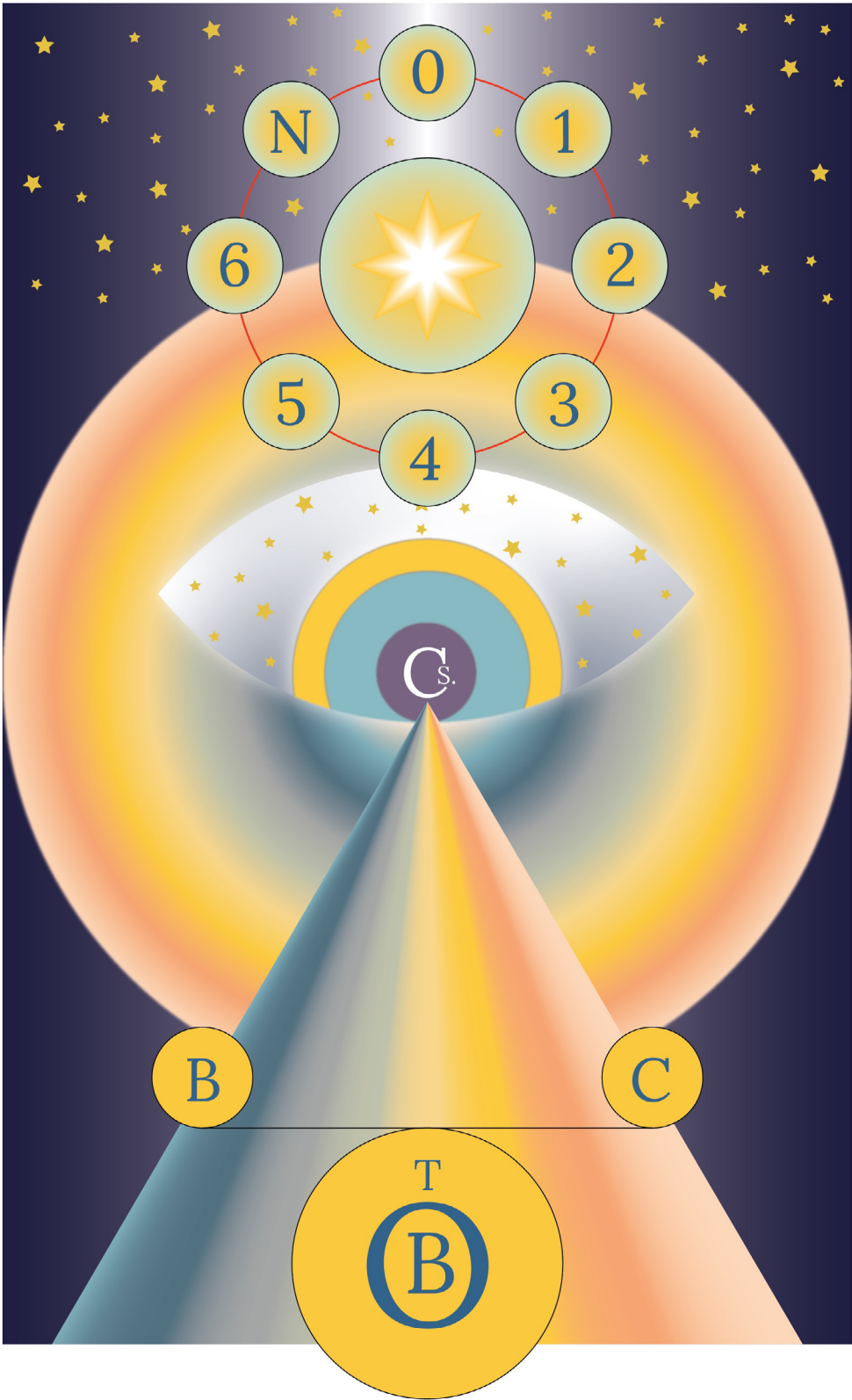Fig. 3: The Cybersiren is body- and techno-fluid. Illustration: authors.

Fig. 4: The Cybersiren attacks. Illustration: authors.

Slavoj Žižek's philosophical approach, which challenge the unseen forces that shape our reality.[19] The Cybersiren forces the public to confront and critique these hidden powers, fostering a more transparent and equitable society. Overcoming the inability that a human would have in addressing this Big Other.

As is its body-fluid, The Cybersiren's' arsenal is always changing. Different forms of attack are used in different situations. One example of an attack is by spitting signage morphing venom. The attack has the capacity to transform and reshape signage, effectively severing its ties to traditional authority structures. The signs now respond to the Neapolitan passer-by, rather than to the established power structures. By disrupting the agents of authority and altering their relationships with belief and control, the Cybersiren rebalances and reshapes the urban landscape of Napoli. This is only one tool the Cybersiren can utilise, aiming to challenge and redefine the symbols and signs that dictate social and political norms. Through this process, the Cybersiren empowers individuals to reclaim and reinterpret their environment, fostering a sense of ownership and agency.

The Cybersiren shatters

The Cybersiren embraces imperfection as an ability to sustain. [Fig. 5] The Cybersiren embodies Kintsugi 2.0, shattering preconceived notions and creates openings in previously closed-off places. When the Cybersiren attacks, the port-sea-city relationship is dissolved into constituent parts. The concept of kintsugi, which involves the repair of broken pottery with lacquered gold, could be a useful model for the reconstruction of damaged relations. The damage is not concealed, but rather, the repair is illuminated. The authority often seeks perfection and seamless continuity; the concept of kintsugi challenges this paradigm by embracing imperfection and celebrating the history of objects through their fractures and repairs. This practice of shattering to re-relate represents a tangible manifestation of the new spirit of the city.

We termed this Kintsugi 2.0, because it is not just about repairing the same relationships, but about creating something new from what was once 'whole', though the segregatedness of the port is evident. This alteration involves making a new form of experience that incorporates parts of the old but is not a mere replica with superficial embellishments. By opening up the membrane and embracing what is traditionally considered 'alien' or 'broken', Kintsugi 2.0 opens up new possibilities of internalisation for creation and appreciation. This makes it necessary to offer a new methodology that acknowledges the intrinsic value of the imperfect and the broken, utilising them as the basis for the new artefact. Just as kintsugi

creates beauty from broken objects, it may be posited that the relations of the sea-port-city of Napoli can be repaired through a dynamic approach.

The Cybersiren breaks and reconfigures. The Cybersiren is not a perfect, fully operational machine; rather, it malfunctions and undergoes reconfiguration on a regular basis, thereby encouraging Neapolitans to assume a more active role in the development of their urban environment. By disrupting established structures and establishing novel connections, it transforms the urban landscape, never manifesting a definitive or fixed form. This process encourages the city's inhabitants to actively engage in the evolution of their environment, fostering a sense of ownership and agency. It is through this continuous breaking and reassembly that a more resilient and adaptable city emerges.

The Cybersiren's actions of attacking and refracting rigid structures of authority and control create openings in things that were previously closed off. These new spaces invite participation and insertion, whether from people, nature or technology. Rather than mere reflection, the refraction brings forth a multifaceted urban tapestry that honours both history and potential. This disruption allows for the emergence of new configurations between systems of belief and control, challenging the status quo and enabling innovative urban practices.

The Cybersiren and ambiguous alienation

The Cybersiren navigates the transitions of the environment and embraces a sense of familiarity through repeated exposure to alienation. [Fig. 6] Simultaneously, it guides us through the liminal spaces between the seascape and the landscape of regeneration.

The capacity to view the city as alien and, consequently, to open up further capacities for producing the new is central to this chronicle. Alienation becomes a productive force, catalysing the redefinition of norms and creating dynamic, responsive spaces. By embracing the alien and the unfamiliar, the Cybersiren fosters a continuously evolving cityscape that is responsive to its inhabitants. The production of relations through events is transformative, making the present a crucial moment for discussing the redefinition of aesthetics and authority. For instance, the Big Other could use some productive alienation. In seeking to comprehend this process, the Cybersiren proposes an aesthetic perception that could be understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty but also emphasising space's emotional and experiential qualities.

The understanding of 'uncanny' and the 'canny' is crucial in reshaping the Neapolitan relationship with the port. The canny is characterised by a sense of familiarity, security, and understandability, while the uncanny evokes
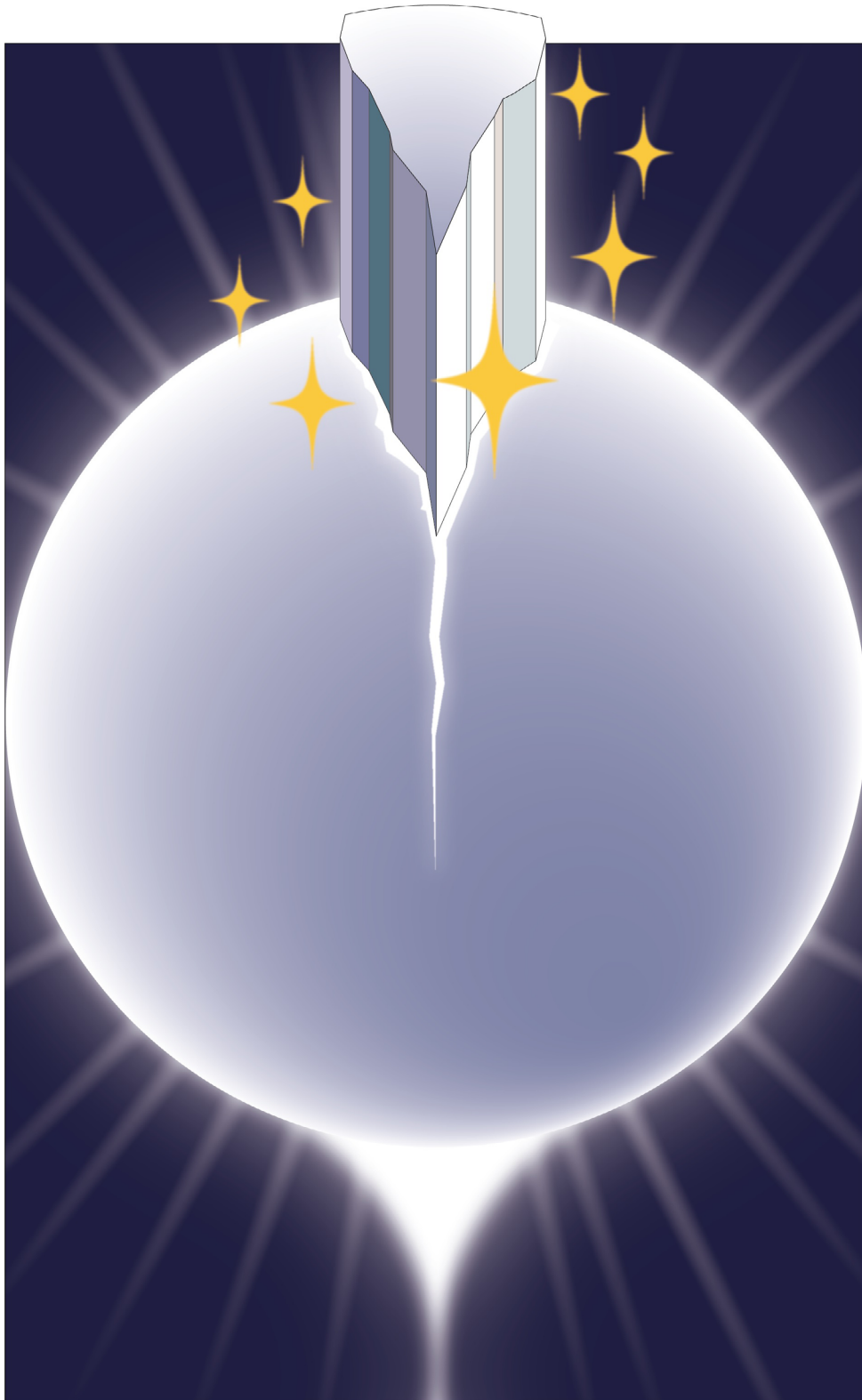
Fig. 5: The Cybersiren shatters. Illustration: authors.

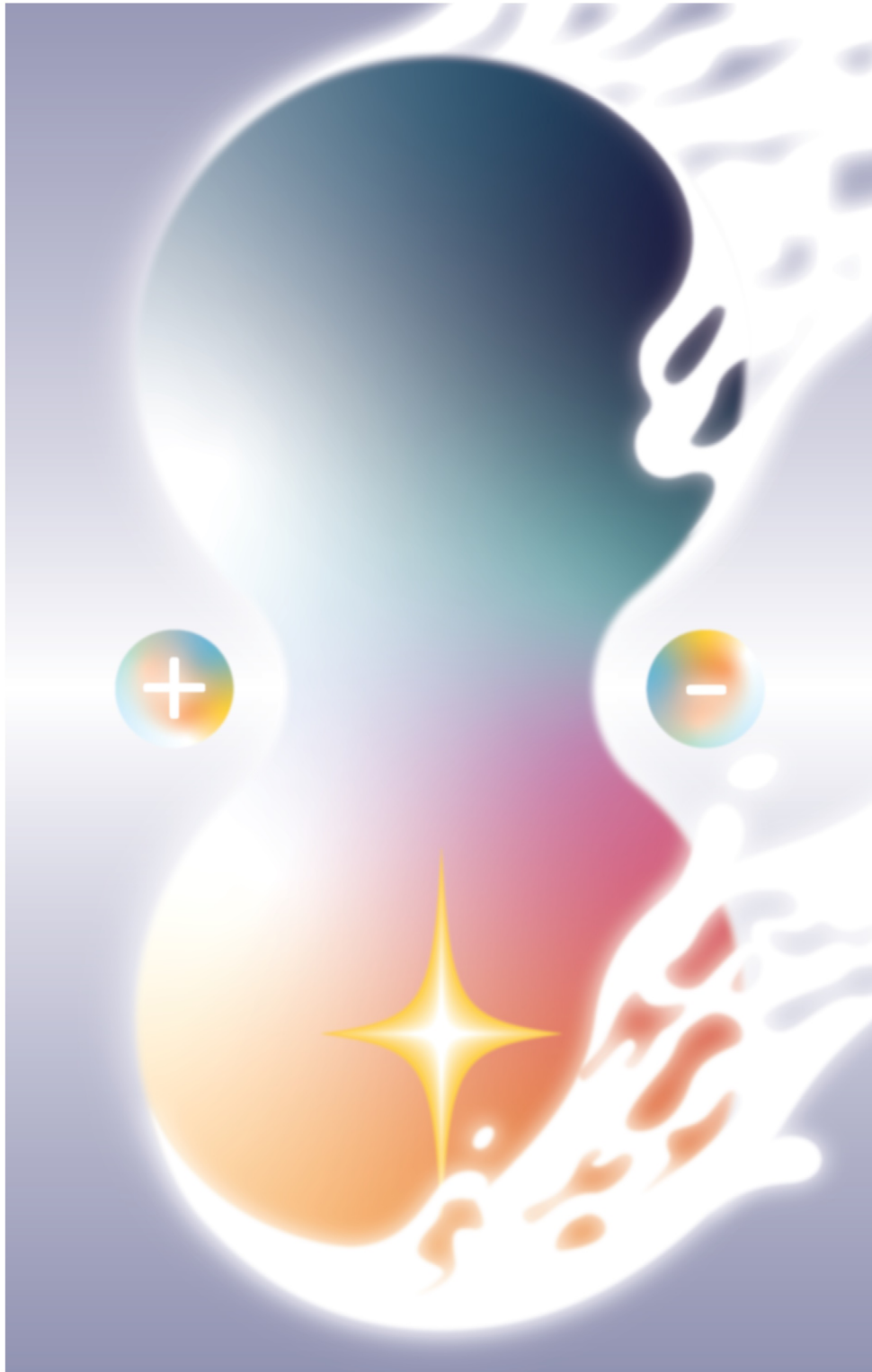Fig. 6: The Cybersiren and ambiguous alienation. Illustration: authors.

Fig. 7: The Cybersiren dies. Illustration: authors.

discomfort in a context that is perceived as strange. Sigmund Freud's exploration of the uncanny further illuminates this duality. Freud suggests that there are barriers between the two in which a point of departure point is created where the meaning of the two words begins to merge, forming a unified concept. The uncanny characterises the feeling when something unfamiliar is added to the familiar.[20] Therefore, a sense of alienation often stems from a lack of familiarity with one's surroundings. By embracing ambiguity, we can begin to distinguish the familiar from the unfamiliar, thereby reshaping our relationship with the environment.

The Cybersiren embraces, hates and produces liminality; the middle stage in a transformative rite, where the subject's feet have left the ground, but the subject is yet not fully transformed. The Cybersiren's disgust with slow liminality, where transformation has halted and turned into inertia, calls it into action, introducing a new rite, where the subject emerges in complete liminality before finding a new scenario in which the alienated can turn into the familiar again.

The sense of familiarity is undeniably important to the locals, providing a sense of comfort that can also lead to stagnation and slow improvement. This may be one of the reasons why the development of Napoli city is not evolving as fast as the technology of the city's port. However, the Cybersiren challenges this dichotomy by opposing exclusionary systems and promoting the repair and reconnection of previously unrelated elements. The transformation of the liminal spaces of the Cybersiren effectively injects the uncanny into the canny, rendering the unfamiliar familiar and meaningful. This mythic entity also serves as a catalyst for shifting perceptions, presenting familiar elements in a way that challenges preconceived notions.

The Cybersiren dies

In her novelette 'The Legend of the Future', Matilde Serao vividly describes Napoli's complex relationship with the notions of love and death.[21] [Fig. 7] The Cybersiren represents the ultimate embodiment of the intertwining of these two concepts. To reside in Napoli is to engage in a continual process of balancing the forces of love and death. The question arises whether a Cybersiren could die, given that it is both organic and mechanical. To be a Cybersiren is to embody this duality, neglecting neither one in favour of the other. Although one might assume that it could not possibly die, this is, in fact, not the case. It seems like a Cybersiren, due to its mythical origins and mechanical parts and organs, would be unable to die. However, like any myth, the Cybersiren can emerge once again when the need is

there. Since the Cybersiren emerges from the trinity of port, sea and Neapolitans; it wakes up once again when those entities are disconnected. The current state of the port – a striated and uncanny place, leading to the predicament of Napoli and the sea – ignites its birth. Whenever this inertia is resolved, destabilised, brought back in the natural state of disorder, it can die peacefully again.

To defy death would be to defy Napoli as a whole, as it is fundamentally a city of love and death. To be immortal would be to express a superiority over organic life. Immortality is the approach of the totalitarian. To outlast and outgrow death is to assume the position of a god-like being. Such qualities are typically reserved for the sea, which represents only a third of what a Cybersiren is. Instead, a Cybersiren must be maintained, as the mechanical components are prone to failure. It requires maintenance. Although it does not die in the manner of a Neapolitan, it nevertheless dies. In a sense, the cessation of its existence is as significant as its continued existence. The demise of the Cybersiren marks the conclusion of the process. This represents a confirmation of the unfolding situation.

The epic chronicle of the Cybersiren

A containership has just arrived, the MSC Sao Paulo to be precise, bringing nearly 2 300 containers to Napoli. [Fig. 8] The ship arrived in the late evening, just as scheduled, but the offloading will only begin tomorrow morning, as early as 05:00. The captain and crew have left the ship and are headed to the nearest pub, to enjoy the brief life ashore until it is time to head for the seas again.

The port is dominated by flows of cargo, containers and capitalism, driven by the consuming demand of the Neapolitan people. The MSC Sao Paulo has brought nothing but cheap plastic gadgets and poorly made souvenirs, ready to be resold to gullible tourists looking for authentic products made in China.

Some sailors still remember stories of the great Neapolitan port told by their great-grandfathers, who were also sailors. They told how alive the port felt; the uproar, the chaos, the Neapolitan lifestyle and most of all; the people. They told how the port was the most important place in the whole city – apart from the palace perhaps – and how port and city used to be one; neither could exist without the other.

These young sailors, some arriving in Napoli for the first time, are rather disappointed by the port they have arrived in. Even though, compared to other cities, the port is so incredibly close to the city centre, they feel just as disconnected and alienated as in all the other

Fig. 8: The emergence of the Cybersiren. Illustration: authors.

industrial ports they encountered before. As the melancholic sailors exit the port, looking for a livelier place to stay, the Cybersiren lies awake in the depths of the sea. It has been awoken, and that is never a good sign. Its threshold has finally been crossed and now the time has come; the Cybersiren will attack once more.

The boiling point has been reached, the Cybersiren is ready to attack. The previous ninety-nine degrees Celsius have been imperceptible to the city of Napoli, but now the water has reached a hundred degrees. The Cybersiren emerges at night when there are few people about, and everybody's attention is low. It happened at 03:32. The Cybersiren shot from the water and made its distinct sound, a sound that was last heard over a hundred-and-fifty years ago. It flew with immense speed and was heading straight for the MSC Sao Paulo. It did not back down or change direction. An unfortunate port authority worker was standing on the closest pier as the Cybersiren clattered into the ship with an enormous bang, leaving a large hole in the metal hull. The worker was knocked out by the sheer violence of the collision. Once the man regained consciousness, he witnessed the Cybersiren flying back and forth like a maniac, he saw containers being flung through the sky like weightless pebbles and he saw the hole in the hull, which had grown rapidly with dangerous cracks starting to appear. The ship was going down. As the man looked at the ship, a dozen containers flew out from the ship, just missing the man's head. Shocked, he followed the containers and saw a gargantuan, impossible structure made out of containers emerging on the end of the pier. Frightened, completely staggered by what spectacle happening in front of him, he stood frozen for what felt like an eternity. What he saw was unlike anything that he'd ever been able to imagine. Just as he almost regained control of his limbs, the man was hit from behind by a dark blue container weighing just over eighteen tonnes, flying towards the tower with the speed of an attack helicopter. The man didn't ever even notice what happened. Just like that, he was gone forever, and the Cybersiren continued to furiously build for the rest of the night.

Early in the morning, at 04:51, two dock workers walked across the port, on their way to their posts, ready for another day of hard and miserable work. They were the first ones present this morning. As they chit-chatted back and forth during their walk, all of a sudden one of them stopped, looking absolutely petrified; he had seen the Cybersiren. After the first moment of shock, curiosity took over, and they slowly and cautiously walked towards the megastructure, which was still growing every minute. They saw flying containers, tentacles, limbs and fins moving over, around and in the tower, holding the

impossible, gravity-defying structure together. As they approached the tower, the container at the bottom of the structure opened suddenly, almost like an invitation. Both men looked at each other, eyes filled with doubt. Should they enter? Shouldn't they let their supervisors know first, before they do anything else? 'Screw it,' they decide, their boss can figure it out later; besides, some security guard would probably already have alarmed some others. Furthermore, they were Neapolitans, for god's sake. Their life and city were dripping with miracles, what was solid turned liquid every year. They had a living god playing for their football club, they could handle the extra-ordinary. Thus, they entered.

Some days after the emergence of the alien structure, authorities created a large perimeter around it and the entire port was locked down. The Italian military became involved, and the whole city of Napoli was in uproar. It was world news. The city itself entered a low-level lockdown, limiting the influx of people via plane, train and major highways. The Neapolitans had mixed feelings, some people feared Armageddon – after all, an alien had emerged – some saw it as the coming of Christ. More business-oriented individuals were mostly worried about the total freeze of import and export through the port. Others were angry that their stuff was probably stuck in the megastructure. It took up every conversation in every corner of every street and in every family at every dinner table. But most important of all, the city was on edge, and tension was growing by the minute.

The two dock workers who entered the megastructure, after undergoing serious interrogation for almost two weeks, were free to go as there were no laws to hold them. Even though they were told to keep their mouths shut about everything they saw or heard, they could not resist the urge to tell others. After all, what they had seen and experienced could not be ignored. So, that night they met up at Piazza Bellini. They started talking to friends about what had happened inside, and thus, word started spreading. News travels fast in Napoli, and it was only a matter of a day before everybody in the city knew.

This was the tipping point for the citizens of Napoli, they could no longer sit back passively, obediently waiting for the authorities to take action. After all, there hadn't been any successful attempts at entering or communicating with the creature responsible for this massive intervention, nor did the authorities communicate anything with the general public. This megastructure was just there, and it kept on growing and growing, consuming more and more, standing taller and taller, turning more and more grotesque. How could it be that

Napoli had not responded yet? And so, a rebellion grew, starting small but, like gossip, spreading like a flame. Eventually, only a tiny spark was enough to light up the entire city, and so the riots started.

The authorities had long ago seized ownership of the port and sea, restricting all access and and creating a full lockdown, but the Cybersiren was a challenge they could not contain. However many barriers they built and fences they put up, the Cybersiren could not be hidden from sight. Every day the Neapolitans had to endure its call, promising a future that was so radically different from the one they were living day in and day out. In all its ferocity and fury, there was something else luring from the depths, enticing, seducing.

So when the riots started, there was no space for nuance. The grotesque promise of the Cybersiren and the stories of the dockworkers, which on their own would already have blown your mind, but had grown to a whole new exorbitant scale, led to a tenacious desire to enter the structure and destabilise the authorities. The first day was violent and unsuccessful from the point of view of the rioters. The authorities had been expanding and diversifying their barriers, creating an almost impenetrable fortress. But only almost. As with all good mythological stories, this one also involves a specific Achilles heel. In the case of the Cybersiren it was its position at the end of the dock, directly connected to the sea, bridging both worlds together. The sea has a unique quality in the sense that it is effectively uncontrollable, as much as the port authorities want to defy that. Although land can be completely fenced off, you cannot build a wall on or around the sea. While we often view the sea as an unsurpassable limit that restricts our movements, with the right technology it becomes a point of connection, opening up endless possibilities rather than closing them off.

After three days of fruitless attempts to climb the barriers, the Neapolitans around the city regrouped. A group located near the seafront realised that the solution was right in front of them. While the land had been completely blocked, the sea was still accessible. Not from within Napoli of course, but from the coastal villages around the city. As they prepared for their final push, old fishing boats were retrieved from long forgotten storage places. The Neapolitans rediscovered their relation with the sea, using it for their own cause. By doing so, their attitude towards the sea changed from that of a passive spectator towards city life into an active participant in the movement of disruption. Old boats were repaired, reworked and re-personalised in ways that only Neapolitans would be able to do. As the authorities were still focused on the streets surrounding the port, hidden from view a technological revolution was occurring.

The whole of Napoli came together in one last coordinated attack. Gangs of scooters charged towards the barricaded port entrances, attracting the full attention of the guard force present there. At the same time, a second group charged from the sea, a gigantic fleet made up of all different floating vessels and technologies to move on water are used. The authorities only realised their mistake after it was too late. As the fleet entered the port the remaining authorities put down their arms.

As the first people started to enter, the Cybersiren had fulfilled its process. It was only there to disrupt. With the Neapolitans having arrived at the structure, the moment for the Cybersiren to disappear has come. So, what's next?

Afterword

From the moment the two dockworkers exit the Cybersirenetic structure, the multiverse opens. There are an infinite number of paths this speculative story can go. In this story, this one path has a more elaborate story attached to it, but what about some other scenarios?

What if… the Cybersiren structure became a magnet for tourists, Neapolitans as well as outsiders? It would take less than twenty-four hours for the first gelato or pizza stands to emerge near the site. With the commodification of the Cybersiren, maybe the structure will become the new icon of Napoli, is fully appropriated by the city, and the people love it. The birth of the new Maradona.

What if… the people had faith in the authorities' ability to resolve the matter? The dynamic between belief, control and authority would change, but in a direction the Cybersiren did not intend. Its disruption would actually strengthen what it aimed to disrupt. Would that be a negative death? Or is any outcome an outcome, the difference between negative or positive just a matter of perspective?

What if… a full-blown civil war emerged, if the people of Napoli could take it no longer and didn't just riot, but outright attacked the authorities? The event shoots past the point of plasticity, fully breaking the system? What would this bloodbath bring? Or maybe some destruction and true chaos is necessary? If it's the outcome of its actions, the Cybersiren does not mourn; it belongs to no-one, it does what it does.

What if… the riot were just another riot? What if the force caused by the Cybersirenetic disruption was never enough to move beyond the point of elasticity, and things returned to the way they were before the Cybersiren's emergence? Maybe some superficial changes would be made, but nothing is fundamentally rethought, as

so often happens. The ultimate negative death for the Cybersiren.

In the end, the Cybersiren aims to disrupt, disturb and provoke. Once it has played its opening hand, there are a million possible outcomes, but disruption is a certainty. What path will be taken as a result of this anomaly, can only be speculated upon. After all, the Cybersiren has not emerged. Yet.

Declaration of conflicting interests

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Biography

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