Alfred Jarry's Semantics: a web of disambiguation, mirrors, energy, machines, and potential collisions

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In order to unpack the links and the leaps that connect Jarry’s iconoclasm and semioclasm, at the time when typewriters were becoming more widely used, to our era of bits and bytes of information traveling from similar keyboards in a digital age, Jarry’s definition of ‘Pataphysics is ground zero.

Defined by Jarry most rigorously and painstakingly in Exploits & Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician, neo scientific novel, [2] he begins his definition of ‘Pataphysics by specifying that “An epiphenomenon is that which is superinduced upon a phenomenon…” and he continues with the ground-breaking assertion that it “is the science of that which is superinduced upon metaphysics, whether within or beyond the latter’s limitations, extending as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond physics. Ex: an epiphenomenon being often accidental, pataphysics will be, above all, the science of the particular, despite the common opinion that the only science is that of the general. Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one; or, less ambitiously, will describe a universe which can be—and perhaps should be—envisaged in the place of the traditional one, since the laws that are supposed to have been discovered in the traditional universe are also correlations of exceptions, albeit more frequent ones, but in any case accidental data which, reduced to the status of unexceptional exceptions, possess no longer even the virtue of originality.” Then we read an explicit and succinct “DEFINITION. Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments.” He goes further: “Contemporary science is founded upon the principle of induction: most people have seen a certain phenomenon precede or follow some other phenomenon most often, and conclude therefrom that it will ever be thus. Apart from other considerations, this is true only in the majority of cases, depends upon the point of view, and is codified only for convenience—if that! Instead of formulating the law of the fall of a body toward a center, how far more apposite would be the law of the ascension of a vacuum toward a periphery, a vacuum being considered a unit of non-density, a hypothesis far less arbitrary than the choice of a concrete unit of positive density such as water? (…) Universal assent is already a quite miraculous and incomprehensible prejudice. Why should anyone claim that the shape of a watch is round—a manifestly false proposition—since it appears in profile as a narrow rectangular construction, elliptic on three sides; and why the
devil should one only have noticed its shape at the moment of looking at the time? — Perhaps under the pretext of utility. But a child who draws a watch as a circle will also draw a house as a square, as a façade, without any justification, of course; because, except perhaps in the country, he will rarely see an isolated building, and even in a street the façades have the appearance of very oblique trapezoids. We must, in fact, inevitably admit that the common herd (...) is too dimwitted to comprehend elliptic equations, and that its members are at one in a so-called universal assent because they are capable of perceiving only those curves having a single focal point, since it is easier to coincide with one point rather than with two. These people communicate and achieve equilibrium by the outer edge of their bellies, tangentially. But even the common herd has learned that the real universe is composed of ellipses, and tradesmen keep their wine in barrels rather than cylinders.”[3]

‘Pataphysics does not replace but goes spiraling beyond metaphysics just as the Semantic Web is an extension springing from the current Web and is not its replacement.

For example, as Pablo Lopez suggests, because string theory is speculation based on theories that are or have been themselves speculative, such as general relativity and quantum mechanics, string theory cannot in fact be considered physics, but rather, should be understood as pataphysics. Likewise, string theory and quantum calculations do not portray an actual reality, but are mathematical pataphors.[4] Extended metaphors that create their own context, pataphors inform the patadata of the Semantic Web. As coined by Jim Hendler in 2008, “patadata” are “data interpreted through the truth of contradictions and exceptions” which is “as far from metadata as metadata extends from a databased representation of reality.”[5] The Semantic Web, like all things “pata”, foregrounds uncertainty, exceptions, and contradictions.[6] It supports what I call a messy, joyful yet sober, oscillating ontology. These language-based activities often seem to attribute equal consistency and equal weight and truthfulness to the, in fact, serendipitous semantics and structures of a data field. This furnishes ways to share and repurpose information thanks to the combinatory formats that become possible. As we learn from Jarry, who invented a code and culture of rotating points of view and kaleidoscopic perspectives, of new structures that accord equivalence to motifs and language observed and evaluated from different virtual angles, paradox as a semantic strategy creates parallel and potential universes. In one universe, we can say that we all generate data such as spending and income or storing wine in barrels or cylinders; let’s say that, then, a government agency collects and links that data into one database of content-rich metadata. This is another, superinduced, universe. Likewise, the data about that data, patadata, with all of its equivocal and equivalent information, provide an accessible way to find supplementary input about any group.

In the 1890s, Jarry perfected this purposefully accidental, happily coincidental semantic tactic. He uses sampling and layering to showcase his innovative primary concepts of Pataphysics. In the benchmark tragi-comedy Ubu Roi,[7] first staged in 1896, Ubu concocts a very data-abundant epiphenomenal soliloquy of logical nonsense. At first glance this does not seem surprising. After all, the character Ubu and the science of Pataphysics developed among Jarry and his highschool friends at the Lycée de Rennes during the previous decade. Ubu took form from a much ridiculed physics teacher, Monsieur Hébert, whose name evolved to the silly-sounding Ébé and into the thunderous monstrosity Ubu. The pranksters performed puppet plays, inventing a series of misadventures for their anti-hero. Nevertheless, under 23 year-old Alfred Jarry’s pen, Ubu’s soliloquy gives ample evidence of a radical and visionary pataphysical esthetic. The deceptively simple speech integrates fragmentation, juxtaposition, shifting semiotic borders, creative destruction, playfulness, decentralization, mirroring and data linking. War and death and gardening merge to become a platform for an unexpected but meaningfully serendipitous semantic relationship. A pretentious and hilarious funeral oration by the greedy, blustering, cruel, and cowardly dictator King Ubu in Ubu Roi upends language itself while incorporating the coextensive aspects of ‘Pataphysics and the semantic web:
In miniature, this passage mimics Jarry’s theories that privilege connectivity and creativity. It is a revelation of his consistent, foundational, poetics that articulate and organize spaces and shifts between universes beginning with his way of perceiving an object be it linguistic, semiotic, material, or virtual. Jarry’s texts are decipherable by rendering transparent his machinery tightly regulating the tangential, the parallel, and the marginal.[10] This Ubu Roi quotation serves as a prototype, as Jarry’s Beta version, of languages and tools for annotation by a Semantic Web. It is a self-contained system but it has unlimited creative imaginary potential. The sign series “sont fauchés, faux, faucheur, fauche” forms a network of signifiers and signed connected by letters, phonemes, morphemes, and so forth, as well as a signifying network that links this enunciation and this play to other texts that do not stop here. Alfred Jarry had no interest in }

But être fauché also means “to be broke” as Jarry often was but Ubu was determined never to be. These opposites are themselves equal. Faucher, in familiar slang, also means to steal or “pinch” money. The semantic field shuttles from scythe to falsehood to mathematics to grass cutting to being mowed down in the street to questions of solvency and collection, and also confirms the malleability of language. The word binet is translated by Barbara Wright as “mugs,” and while it does refer to a “face,” in this case that of poor Rensky, in French it has a double meaning and binette is also a gardening tool, a hoe, similar in some respects to a scythe. The scythe links to yet another semantic search in another of Jarry’s texts, La Dragonne.[11] Here it enters another network of the lance or musket or saber or dragoon, so-named because the guns the soldiers carried “breathed fire” like a dragon. The dragon, here also the “she-dragoon,” (la Dragonne) routes us to a related domain of dragons, monsters, Jarry’s definition of beauty,[12] as well as sexual ambiguity, hermaphrodites, and phallic swords subsumed in the category of Ubu’s weapon of financial torture, itself thus linked to the network of the faucher metaphors and pataphors, that is, the sabre à finance, the finance saber, used to extract payment from Ubu’s subjects. In Jarry’s novel La Dragonne, the character Fleur-de-sabre loops back to the gardening data in King Ubu’s tribute to his dead soldier. Her name itself links flowers and blades. Moreover, Jarry himself was an avid and competent fencer, photographed and painted with his saber. The semantic boundaries of art and life are mirrored by Jarry’s textual universe. In a game of copies and counterfeit, the scythe also links to the saw, in French the scie, that Jarry makes clear is the semantic and phonemic building block of The Science, La Science, 'Pataphysics. We read in his 1902 The Supermale, modern novel,
disambiguation; he designed a multiverse that integrates the contradictory and the paradox, antinomy and simultaneity. It transmits all potential meanings and allusions at once, and sets in alignment unexpected links in a semantic pattern. Patadata concerning the scythe, that is, information about its potential semantic equivalence to an imaginary universe, conflate death, as indicated in Ubu’s parodic and poetic eulogy, to time. Time is typically the force of entropy, the bearer of death, often imagined as an old man wielding a scythe. But in the pataphysical dimension, time collides with space and flows in two directions. As Jarry postulates in his essay on how to construct a time-exploring machine, "Duration is the transformation of a succession into a reversion. In other words: THE BECOMING OF A MEMORY."[14]

In a chapter of Faustroll on the subject of heraldry and Tarot cards, during an interview of a Geometer by Mathetes (a disciple of Christ whose name is etymologically akin to mathematics), Chronos, called Father of Time or of Life, takes form from perpendicular vertical and horizontal lines becoming the upper case letter H.[15] This generative spinning of dimensions imitates the motion of the simultaneously plus sign, minus sign, and circle which is also said to be the “egg or the zero” that is the fruit of what Jarry calls the mutual “fecundation” of signs that forms the letter “H”. Jarry specifies that this is a “demonstration (…) of the identity of opposites” performed by the gyroscopic bâton-à-physique, described in this exegesis of time and space as a “mechanical engine”. The bâton-à-physique, the stick or staff whose manifestations of “meta” and “pata” equate it to divinity, to Ubu, to the Antechrist, to King Ubu's scepter, as well as to the protein phallus, is thus also an engine designed to facilitate navigation from the mathematical signs of the manifest content to the incongruously poetic subversive semiological signs. According to Jarry’s intertextual characters viewing the baton’s acrobatics, this shifting, spinning signifier is itself an imaginary solution: at once a line and a circle, negative and positive, man and woman, sex and spirit, and more. Its plurality of content is contained in its geometric motion.[16] Time initially becomes spatialized and approaches the spatial imaginary of the Web with its domains and sites.[17] In his “Commentary to Help in the Practical Construction of the Time-Machine,” Jarry plans the construction of a machine that would explore time by means of exploring space. For the Time-Machine, the present is multi-dimensional and appears as a sequence of solid geometric shapes. But, as Jarry predicted, it now, eventually, organizes flowing streams of information as blogs, feeds, video, and especially data, so that we are able to see on our screens what is occurring everywhere at once. He hypothesized that the ideal exploration of this pataphysical space would require that we “remain immobile in absolute Space, along the Flow of Time.”[18] He surmised that this coincidence of flow and synchronicity as principles of information sharing allow for varying and sometimes undetermined speeds. Evidence of this relativity underlies The Supermale (Le Surmâle) in a race by a 5-man cycle team nourished by Perpetual-Motion-Food against a locomotive.[19]
He would probably approve of the diagram of a bicycle composed of two circles and an outline of a house, the accidental representation of his scientific perspectives on watches as timepieces and facades of houses as trapezoids, elucidated in his definition of ’Pataphysics.

Fast-forward to about a century later when Steve Jobs comes across a 1973 Scientific American study on a bicycle providing superhuman velocity to its human rider.[20] Jobs, a self-described “bike lover, a curiosity jockey, and a techno-optimist,” adopts a logo combining his belief and his brand.

He takes the data and states, “What a computer is to me is it’s the most remarkable tool that we’ve ever come up with, and it’s the equivalent of a bicycle for our minds (…) a metaphor that I (…) want to shake in the face of every false prophet pedaling techno-dystopia.” The pataphor already existed in the machinery of Jarry’s patadata.
Another prototypical semantic search generated by the *Ubu Roi* text sample connects a network linked to the flower *coquelicot*, “poppy,” itself already surprisingly linked semantically to the scythe. The poppy continues to be a metaphor for death and for war, used widely today as a reference to the horrors of Flanders Field during World War I.[21] This flower is also a metaphor for all manner of narcotics and directs us to the pataphor of opium smoking and a hallucinatory ether breathing and hashish session in Jarry’s novel *Days and Nights*, *novel of a deserter* (*Les Jours et les nuits, roman d’un déserteur*).[22] In this case, the data are collected from Jarry’s own military service, cut short in 1895 at thirteen months. The poppy, chosen by Ubu to give meaning to a fallen soldier’s sacrifice, equally stands as a promise of clairvoyance and of sleep. The seemingly delirious comedic raving of King Ubu mirrors the serious and tragic hallucinations of soldiers who desert the battlefield in another way. Jarry himself, by means of subterfuge, taking swigs of liver-damaging, skin-yellowing picric acid (a battlefield explosive and an element mentioned in alchemical writings), exited the military ignobly via the infirmary. Additional data informing this sequence are statements in the deathbed letter Jarry wrote to his friend Rachilde, specifying that it was Ubu speaking, thus creating another mirror image of himself. The letter articulates his theory that death is the ultimate act of creativity. In powering himself down, the machine-man, as he saw himself, by means of his decomposing brain gives himself over to sleep and dreams that function beyond death. In this act of “going beyond” to a supplementary universe, Jarry as Ubu announces that he follows a pathway to Paradise and that this process communicates his esthetics.[23] The scarlet color of the poppy also redirects the viewer to a supplementary universe, signifying a promise of resurrection after death, all things being equal.

The relay of semantic information in Ubu’s discourse is extended to another flower, *le pissenlit*, the “dandelion.” This yellow flower and its red counterpart take us to yet another semantic portal, that of Tarot and of alchemy. Alchemical flow and transformations, death and resurrections: these pataphysical interfaces form networks throughout Jarry’s intertext. The *pissenlit*, in French, also links, in apparent contradiction, to the ubuesque or grotesque and slapstick schoolboy humor Jarry favored. Ubu’s data, dandelions, become the reader’s or viewer’s metadata as an emblem of an army of youth cut short, while it self-reflexively and paradoxically leads us beyond metadata to its literal translation, that is coincidentally patadata, of “pissing in the bed,” yet another way of collecting information about young boys playing soldier. Such a cross-referencing of lexical meaning with deconstructing language to discover new meaning by the agency of a search engine that is the text itself opens the virtual and imaginary potential of Web semantics.

Both flowers invoked by Commander-in-Chief Ubu, the poppy and the dandelion, are potentially active for further meaning in Jarry’s reconfiguration of models of interactivity, connectivity, and interoperability. Indeed, the flowers are cut down à la fleur de leur âge, that is, in the prime of life, but literally, in French, “in the flower of their age.” All of these relationships build context. Word play, puns, polysemic and often irreverent neologisms, ambiguity, and slightly modified repetitions such as the *impitoyable* set reinforce the deliberately imprecise systems of ’Pataphysics. Furthermore, the “binette-impitoyable” semantic field serves as a conduit to the texts of a major figure of French Romanticism, Gérard de Nerval (1808–1855), a generation older than Jarry who read his works. Nerval referred to his absent mother’s face as a “binette” and wrote that women, especially with Valois bloodlines, are “impitoyables”.[24] Jarry’s fraught relationships to his mother and other women permeate his fiction, including, by deviation, Ubu’s superficially farcical discourse. Jarry’s books are always appropriating and cross-referencing his other and other’s books. In his *César-Antechrist*, for example, Jarry alludes very clearly to Lautréamont’s *Chants de Maldoror* when the Templar
addresses the *bâton-à-physique* as “uprooted Phallus” and admonishes it “not to jump around like that”.[25]

Jarry might have appreciated Wikipedia’s “disambiguation pages”, which are places where you are not expected to end a search or to even end up.[26] A disambiguation page is a sort of in-between page that lists all the places with the same name where a link may have intended to take you. These are pages for cross-reference and unexpected connections. Similarly, by turning the binoculars around, Jarry studies laws governing exceptions. He mastered the Hapax Legomenon, constituting words appearing only once in an entire language or in an author’s entire corpus.[27] Engineering a lexicon of words such as *instintestincts*, *rhizomorphodendron*, and *parallelirésultante*,[28]

Jarry foresaw, in a way, the disambiguation page, perhaps even imagining a website with no links to it on the internet. A critical appropriation of Jarry’s own semantic configurations would designate his irony as rapier-sharp. Humor is one of the languages at work in the battlefield enunciation and always already elsewhere in Jarry’s writing. Humor is a pataphysical tool for creating disruption of certain meaning. Management of information is sometimes unpredictable, as demonstrated by the experiment in Jarry’s 1902 futuristic novel *The Supermale, modern novel (Le Surmâle, roman moderne)*. A robot is built in order to inspire love in the superhuman robotic protagonist. Tragi-comically, with Jarry’s typically dark humor, the Supermale inspires love in the machine that unexpectedly falls in love with him, reversing the electrical current and electrocuting him.[29] Jarry knew that computers would have to learn in order to reprogram themselves, in order to expand the creativity of algorithms, in order to function by induction.

and eventually welcome reading and writing to develop STREAM, an image suitable for the flow from the Internet to the Web to the Semantic Web, and applicable to his avant-garde pataphysical procedures and formulas.[30]

This sort of data display transfers data packets between semantic zones, like a bobbin shuttling from data to metadata to patadata. The science of imaginary solutions encompasses the flow and vortex of information also represented by the experiments with water, wave function, electromagnetism and luminiferous ether studied by Jarry’s pataphysician extraordinaire, Doctor Faustroll.
The spiral imprinted on Ubu’s iconic belly traces the motion of such a swerve of meaning from an original direct denotation of first-degree data to unintended languages. Jarry’s repurposing of the ancient Lucretian atomic theory of matter, the clinamen, makes an unforeseen deviation into an origin myth for the digital age.[31] Pataphysics is an experimental esthetic and science, and is a prophetic textual and speculative machine that could define the internet, the Web, information technology, computer operations, and the move from sharing documents to sharing data. As used and interpreted by Jarry, the word “pataphysics” itself is a pivotal and radical neologism.[32] “Pataphysics” was Jarry’s “neo” or “new” “logos”, his new word or new meaning, his new philosophy that governs and develops the universe. The logic does not lead from “because Jarry” or “because Pataphysics”, then “Semantic Web”. Neither can we hypothesize that “if not Pataphysics” then never “Semantic Web”. Rather, Jarry inaugurated a Zeitgeist propitious for the development of specific strands, coincidences, and principles that pioneer today’s discoveries and exigencies. His “Elements of Pataphysics”[33] plagiarize by anticipation elements of today’s Web science. Ubu and Faustroll are patacessors of our colleagues. Jarry the vanguard poet, essayist, novelist, dramaturge, visual artist, and almanach writer went beyond the codes and meta codes he inherited of Realism, Naturalism, and Symbolism. He went beyond into a non-linear, supplementary, elastic domain that pioneered the way towards Dada, Modernism, Theater of the Absurd, performance art, Zippy the Pinhead comic strips, punk, and the merging of genres. Jarry’s vast erudition extended to science of antiquity and to contemporary physics and mathematics as well, and especially the theories and research of Lord Kelvin, William Crookes, Charles Vernon Boys, James Clerk Maxwell, Henri Bergson, and Jules Henri Poincaré.[34]

Prescient in so many fields—quantum physics, dark matter, and black holes, multiple colliding universes of quantum mechanics, new dimensions violating cause and effect, non-Euclidean calculations, infinite dimensional space of wave function[35]—Alfred Jarry integrates his fragmented narratives, segmented syntax, building blocks of syllables, and concrete linguistic morphologies into data organization that foregrounds viewers’ perspectives, predicting the mirroring of multiple users in front of multiple electronic screens all viewing the same immaterial copied image and uploaded information. In the scientific theories and discoveries of his day, Jarry found common ground with a supplementary universe of interconnected energies described by field theory and electromagnetism. This intersection of esthetic and scientific platforms depends on a system of identity. Identity and equivalence are fundamental to “Pataphysics as both a technique and a philosophy. Mirroring is a blueprint for Jarry’s development of doubling and multiplying language, psychology of characters, fracturing a character into duos and trios and more, and explicitly holding up imaginary mirrors to his readers and audiences. This model remains evident in interpretations by other multimedia artists influenced by Jarry, for example the South African William Kentridge in his 1996 series of etchings “Ubu Tells the Truth”, prepared for an exhibition on the centenary of Ubu Roi’s 1896 Parisian première.”[36]
“pataphysics”.[37] The machines function and, at times, malfunction. What does the pataphysical machine mean and how does it signify? What, Jarry wonders, is the ontological status and semiotic potential of the machine? Jarry understood the capacities and the storage capabilities of machines. He saw himself as a machine, with his motor giving out at the end.[38] Throughout his career and his opus, he used machines in texts and texts as machines[39] to be transmitted as data by a machine of mirrors, just as he used books and their storage capacity as data to imagine an internet library not unlike the massive database of books scanned by Google,[40] a web of copies, a literary map, a cultural geography of links.

Perceptive and canny, Jarry intuits the diagram of a network, of a web, of a rhizomatic organism. Disparate and even contradictory components join together. 'Pataphysics manifests itself via a network of reappearing phonemes, morphemes, syllables, and hybrid words; of mathematical data visualized in fictional narrative; of repeating and reappearing textual passages and of unfinished endings.

In *The Supermale*, the entire novel serves as a library of all books. It is a text assembled from quotations and references that bear witness to Jarry’s prodigious knowledge. This compilation of erudite citations referring to a litany of men with superhuman strength, from antiquity to the modern age, propels the narrative action and mirrors the story itself. Pertinently, in *Faustro lll*, stored information becomes the list of twenty-seven so-called equivalent books (*les livres pairs*) in the Doctor’s library.[41] All of the seemingly incongruous and even incompatible books exist equally and concurrently in Jarry’s coherent mind, like the synapses of a brain. The listed inventory of books serves as data, the chapters of the novel devoted to an exploration of the books serve as metadata, and the voyage around the archipelago of books become islands serves as the patadata of the epic pataphysical cruise within the complex system that is the book.

As the itinerary in the archipelago verifies, the design Jarry intuits is no longer the hierarchical “tree” format used for centuries, with a trunk and branches, such as one used to depict a “family tree”.}[42]
His texts are condensed and elegant intertexts. His diagrammatic subtexts are decentralized, asymmetrical, and non-hierarchical. Jarry’s web of meaning foretells internet program files and information sharing. Pataphysician par excellence, Faustroll visits an archipelago, connecting the scattered, clustered dots as he goes along. The archipelago functions as a geospatial virtual environment, with the space between islands indicating a semantic distance. Each visit to an island in the archipelago provides entry into a supplementary literary or artistic universe based on the information in his library.[43]

Jarry’s faustrollian dinghy sets off “surfing” heterogeneous fields and domains of language, of information, of appropriation, of copies, surfing a multidimensional imaginary archipelago like points to be connected in a design network and web structure of format and links. Jarry was a rule-breaker and a creator of new rules. Doctor Faustroll and his crew travel from island to island in a sieve, a scientific exploration, as well, of the surface tension of water, surfaces of no curvature, and other experiments. The vessel itself is a testimony to the validity of paradox. Moreover, we learn that the odyssey to exotic islands takes place on dry land and that it begins and ends in Paris. Jarry once again sets universes colliding, data confronting patadata. Is it dry or wet, land or sea, will the boat sink or float? Before moving to Paris for highschool, the child Alfred Jarry lived in Brittany where his mother had copies of Le Magasin Pittoresque in which Jarry discovered many sources of inspiration for his writing and in which the curious boy would have seen wood-engraved or lithographed images of the Paris floods of 1876 and 1883, each over six meters of inundation in the capital.[44] Flooded Parisian streets and sidewalks would become the setting for an imaginary cruise where opposites are equal and contradictions are both true.[45]
His exploration of new ontologies was logically messy and at the same time precise. What a coincidence that Web Ontology Language, a Semantic Web language whose documents are known as ontologies, is abbreviated OWL.[46] Ironically and serendipitously, the clinamen is at work. Jarry cohabitated with live owls; they were his mascots, his trusty sidekicks. The owl, le Hibou, of course also inhabits Jarry’s fiction.[47] It is no surprise that someone eventually wrote a play called Hibou Roi.[48]

The nocturnal owl possesses night vision, highly valued by Jarry’s characters, and since antiquity it has symbolized not only metamorphosing but apparently contradictory attributes. Ubu and the owl embody and exemplify the elliptical curves specified as representing the real world in Jarry’s definition of Pataphysics. They resemble wine barrels. Ubu describes himself as the “isomorphe” of the barrel in all its beauty.[49] Jarry’s navigation of data, metadata and patadata demonstrates at all times his pataphysical definition of “simplicity” equaling “condensed complexity”. [50] Even on his deathbed, Jarry continued to build vocabularies and link data. In the end, his legendary final request for a toothpick, a cure-dent, engages a semantic selection of the scythe, the dragoon, the saber, the military, death, war, and all of the interrelated searches they target. In military parlance, a cure-dent is a “bayonet”. His context-understanding irony establishes a talisman of sorts offering passage via a toothpick to the supplementary universe and imaginary solutions. And Alfred Jarry, when he set sail into “ethernity”[51] at age 34, broke and cut down “fauché” in the prime of his life “à la fleur de son âge”, as he predicted, found a paradisaical solution by means of his decomposing brain, that ultimate network of knowledge and brainpower.
The rules and algorithms of 'Pataphysics—deviation, conjoining of opposites, and paradox—are semantic tools to harness potential, to navigate and integrate the flow of information, of data, of images, to build interconnections and frames of reference. Jarry’s formulation of ‘Pataphysics at the critical juncture between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries resonated with the potential momentum of deconstructing time and space, much as Paris was newly opened to wide vistas, efficient thoroughfares, accessible and uncluttered corridors of entry and exit; and Parisians attending Fairs were delighting in novel, cutting-edge, state-of-the-art machinery and technology.[52] This decisive paradigm shift disrupts and challenges our understanding and depiction of knowledge and its complexities.

REFERENCES

‘Un épiphénomène est ce qui se surajoute à un phénomène. La pataphysique dont l’étymologie doit s’écritre et l’orthographe réelle 'pataphysique, précédé d’une apostrophe, afin d’éviter un facile calenbours, est la science de ce qui se surajoute à la métaphysique, soit en elle-même, soit hors d’elle-même, s’étendant aussi loin au-delà de celle-ci que celle-ci au-delà de la physique. Et l’épiphénoméne étant souvent l’accident, la pataphysique sera surtout la science du particulier, quoi qu’on dise qu’il n’y a de science que du général. Elle étudiera les lois qui régissent les exceptions et expliquera l’univers supplémentaire à celui-ci, ou moins ambitieusement décrira un univers que l’on peut voir et que peut-être l’on doit voir à la place du traditionnel, les lois que l’on a cru découvrir de l’univers traditionnel étant des corrélations d’exceptions aussi, quoique plus fréquentes, en tous cas de faits accidentels qui, se réduisant à des exceptions peu exceptionnelles, n’ont même pas l’attrait, de la singularité. DÉFINITION: La pataphysique est la science des solutions imaginaires, qui accorde symboliquement aux linéairement les propriétés des objets décrits par leur virtualité. La science actuelle se fonde sur le principe de l’induction: la plupart des hommes ont vu le plus souvent tel phénomène précéder ou suivre tel autre, et en concluent qu’il en sera toujours ainsi. D’abord ceci n’est exact que le plus souvent, dépend d’un point de vue, et est codifié selon la commodité, et encore ! Au lieu d’énoncer la loi de la chute des corps vers un centre, que ne prête-t-on celle de l’ascension du vide vers une périphérie, le vide étant pris pour unité de non-densité, hypothèse beaucoup moins arbitraire que le choix de l’unité concrète de densité positive eau ? Car ce corps même est un postulat et un point de vue des sens de la foule, et, pour que sinon sa nature au moins ses qualités ne varient pas trop, il est nécessaire de postuler que la taille des hommes restera toujours sensiblement constante et mutuellement égale. Le consentement universel est déjà un préjugé bien miraculeux et incompréhensible. Pourquoi chacun affirme-t-il que la forme d’une montre est ronde, ce qui est manifestement faux, puisqu’on lui voit de profil une figure rectangulaire étroite, elliptique de trois quarts, et pourquoi diable n’a-t-on noté sa forme qu’au moment o’l’on regarde l’heure ? Peut-être sous le prétexte de l’utile. Mais le même enfant, qui dessine la montre ronde, dessine aussi la maison carrée, selon la façade, et cela évidemment sans aucune raison; car il est rare, sinon dans la campagne, qu’il voie un édifice isolé, et dans une rue même les façades apparaissent selon des trapèzes très obliques. Il faut donc bien nécessairement admettre que la foule (...) est trop grossière pour comprendre les figures elliptiques, et que ses membres s’accordent dans le consentement dit universel parce qu’ils ne percevont que les courbes à un seul foyer, étant plus facile de coïncider en un point qu’en deux. Ils communiquent et s’équilibrent par le bord de leurs ventres, tangentielle. Or, même la foule a appris que l’univers vrai était fait d’ellipses, et les bourgeois même conservent leur vin dans des tonneaux et non des cylindres.” Oeuvres complètes, t. I, p. 668-669.

[5]
[13] La Draggone, roman. Oeuvres complètes, t. II, Édition établie par Henri Bordillou with the collaboration of Patrick Besnier and Bernard Le Doze, pp. 419-524. This is Jarry’s final, and unfinished, work. On May 27, 1906, he dictated a detailed outline to his sister Charlotte who completed the text.
[15] “La SCIENCE avec une grande SCIEN…” Le Sarmale, Chapitre ix, Oeuvres complètes, t. I, p. 247. While the final sentence of Faustroll is “La Pataphysique est la science…” (Jarry’s emphasis), a few years later, in Le Sarmale, he interconnects his science with the phallic instrument.


[23] [http://www.cyclelove.net/2013/03/steve-jobs-on-why-computers-are-like-a-bicycle-for-the-mind/](http://www.cyclelove.net/2013/03/steve-jobs-on-why-computers-are-like-a-bicycle-for-the-mind/)

[24] [http://laporteouverte.me/2016/03/19/les-binettes-contemporaines-gerard-de-nerval/](http://laporteouverte.me/2016/03/19/les-binettes-contemporaines-gerard-de-nerval/)


[31] "Our desire is to connect the worlds of leading scientists with international artists through "creative collisions," encouraging both fields to inspire and challenge each other, and pushing the boundaries of their traditional roles and methodologies," Artist@CERN’s director: the European Center for Nuclear Research. March 2016, [http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/cern-seeks-international-artists-full-time-residency-180958488/?no-t](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/cern-seeks-international-artists-full-time-residency-180958488/?no-t)

[32] Jarry defines the *clinamen* as la béte imprévue, (“the unforeseen beast”), that causes a Painting Machine in the Palace of Machines to ejaculate paint on the walls in a modern deluge. So doing, the Painting Machine creates a supplementary universe. “Clinamen,” *Faustroll*, chapitre xxxiv, Oeuvres complètes, t. I, p. 714. The Lucretian theory of atoms posits: “When atoms move straight down through the void by their own weight, from a given place and time, any atom in uncertain places, just enough that you could say that their motion has changed. But if they were not in the habit of swerving, they would all fall straight down through the depths of the void, like drops of rain, and no collision would occur, nor would any blow be produced among the atoms. In that case, nature would never have produced anything.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clinamen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clinamen)

[33] “Paraphysics” first appeared in print in a marionette play staged by Jarry and his highschool classmates in 1889.

[34] “Éléments de Pataphysique,” Title of Book II of *Faustroll. Oeuvres complètes*, t. I, pp. 668-673. This chapter (Book II, chapter viii) contains the definition of paraphysics (cited above in note 3).


[37] http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/10/20/crooner-rights-


[40] [http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/02/05/googles-moon-shot](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/02/05/googles-moon-shot)

[41] The list of Faustroll’s books:

[42] Baudelaire, a tome d’EDGARD POE, traduction.


[44] L’Évangile de SAINT LUC, en grec.

[45] BLOCY, Le Mendant ingrat. [Le Désespéré]


[47] DARIEN, Le Voleur. [Biribl]


[49] ELSKAMP, Enluminures. [Salutations dont d’angéliques]

[50] A volume dépareillé du Théâtre de FLORIAN.

[51] A volume dépareillé des Mille et Une Nuits, traduction GALLAND.

[52] GRABBE, Scherz, Satire, ironie und tiefer Bedeutung, comedie en trois actes.

[53] KAHN, Le Conte de l’or et du Silence. [Le Livre d’images]

[54] LAUTRÉAMONT, Les Chants de Maldoror.

[55] MAETERLINCK, AGLAVINE et SÉLYSETTE. [Pelléas et Mélisande]

[56] MALLARMÉ, Vers et prose. [Divagations]

[57] MENDES, Gog.

[58] L’Odyssée, édition Teubner.

[59] PÉLADAN, Babylone.

[60] RABELAIS.

[61] JEAN DE CHILRA, L’Heure sexuelle. [La Princesse des ténèbres]


[64] SCHWOB, La Croisade des enfants.

[65] Ubu Roi.

[66] VERLAINE, Sagesse.

[67] VERHAEREN, Les Campagnes hallucinées.


[69] In addition, there are artworks: Three engravings; a poster by Toulouse-Lautrec of *Jane Avril*; another by Bonnard; a portrait of Faustroll by Aubrey Beardsley; and an old image, *saint Cado*.

[70] “Plus trois gravures pendues à la muraille, une affiche de TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, *Jane Avril*; une de BONNARD, La Revue blanche l’Estampe et l’Affiche, corrigé en Peintres Graveurs]; un portrait du sieur Faustroll, par AUBREY BEARDSLEY, and a veneil image, laquelle nous a paru sans valeur, *saint Cado*, de l’imprimerie Obertiur de Rennes.”


[72] [http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/02/05/googles-moon-shot](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/02/05/googles-moon-shot)
Important research has been done on tree and network diagrams by Manuel Lima in his work on information visualization. http://www.mslima.com/myhome.cfm

There is a diagram of a Pataphysics archipelago in the press release of Alfred Jarry Archipelago by La Ferme du Buisson, a national theater and contemporary art center in Marne-la-vallée, France. http://www.lafermedubuisson.com/IMG/pdf/lafermedubuisson_alfred-jarry-archipelago_dossier-de-pressed.pdf (pp. 4-5).


Haldernabou, part of Les Minutes de sable mémorial, Haldern asks the owl to protect him, addressing it as "Hibou ocellé". Oeuvres complètes, t. I, p. 225. Identifying the owl with the ocelot renders it a spirit animal, a totem.


The 1990 Paris World’s Fair (Exposition Universelle) featured a Palace of Machines repurposed from the 1889 World’s Fair (where many of Thomas Edison’s inventions were exhibited), but also the innovations of X-rays, wireless telegraphy, bicycles, automobiles, turbines, and cinema, escalators, and diesel engines. (Jarry was living in Paris and in 1899 had published his Commentary on How to Construct a Time-Machine.) The pièce de résistance was the Palace of Electricity (Palais de l’Électricité) connecting the energy flowing to all the pavilions and lighting up the fairgrounds.