NOTES ON THE SPECIES DIVERSITY OF ARTIFICIAL OBJECTS

"REGARDLESS OF CAUSE, A CONSENSUS AMONG RESEARCHERS CONFIRMS THAT THE DECLINE IN POPULATION OF THESE CREATURES DIRECTLY COINCIDED WITH THE END OF THE SECOND DARK AGE."

Some time in the middle of the Second Dark Age a species of roaming artificial creatures populated major metropolitan cities in an unprecedented abundance. The creatures appeared to cohabitate with humans and other animals during a prolonged time of equanimity. However, as populations ballooned and urban ecosystems became overwhelmed with the pervasiveness of these specimens, a sudden catastrophic event curbed their spread. Pinpointing the exact moment in which this event occurred is hard to determine, since investigations into biological evidence of extinction has yielded no convincing hypothesis. Instead, it appears as though the climactic moment for the species might've been the result of a deliberate act on the part of humanity. Some speculate that legislature was passed in order to modify breeding, others speculate that new technologies made procreation for the species impossible. Regardless of cause, a consensus among researchers confirms that the decline in population of these creatures directly coincided with the end of the Second Dark Age.

Though these creatures have gone into extinction, their terrestrial impact can still be observed. Due to their distinct artificial make-up, researchers have begun the work of mapping their extensive ecosystems. Upon first examination, the species diversity is so vast that analysts have had to subdivide population groups into hyper-local strains in order to differentiate unique subspecies characteristics. Where most analysis of these kinds look at the marco-ecological impact, our team has instead opted to focus on microcosms of activity in hopes of discovering patterns of biodiversity. The purpose of this study is not to pinpoint the cause of extinction, but instead to identify the particularities of species characteristics and their relation to a specific geographical location.

Before delving into the particular characteristics of the geographic sample chosen, some initial discoveries regarding common traits should be communicated. As initially stated, the primary material composition of these creatures is of *artificial* origin. As the species matured, the outer membrane began to contain traces of organic augmentation, due to a generational process of self-replication. However, these trace amounts of organic material did not change or alter the rate of decomposition. Due to the slow rate of decomposition observed in the artificial material of the membrane, current researchers have speculated whether the introduction of organic material was an evolutionary mutation.

As we can see here, the artificial membrane is the primary physical attribute of the creature. Initial research suspected that this membrane was a layer of skin or other protective surface that would be shed over time – a hypothesis that substantiated the theory of organic evolution but also incorrectly influenced population projections at the height of species development. As sociological data began to be incorporated, researchers found that the membrane was not a discarded husk shed from a larger physical core but instead was the entirety of the creature's physical appearance. Much like the physiological design of Class *Scyphozoa*, these creatures display no discernible biological interior for metabolic ingestion. Although the physical resemblance between these creatures and other common jellies is hard to deny, a primary differing characteristic is the lack of any tentacles or nematocysts. This, combined with no discernible nervous system, makes classification particularly troublesome for our research team.

Another common trait amongst all variations and subspecies can be found at the 'mouth'. Where the membrane becomes most open, two symmetrical extensions stretch out to form hoops. Hoops vary in size and membrane thickness and in some recorded samples researchers observed damage to these physical features resulting in stunted breeding.

Due to the lack of any discernible muscular tissue, researchers speculate that these hoops were integral to species mobility. Some analysts speculate that evidence of strain and damage to these areas of the membrane are due to a symbiotic or parasitic relationship wherein the creatures latched onto a mandible of another life form in order to expedite travel and population distribution. Otherwise, the creatures must have traveled much like spores from fungi, relying on wind currents as is depicted in our research simulations. The malleability of the membrane to contract and expand suggests the creature could easily travel great distances from the slightest breeze. This hypothesis is further supported by observing clusters of population density occurring at locations where potential entanglement – as a result of arbitrary air currents – could occur. In the sample area discussed below, sociological data indicates that density spikes frequently occurred where permeable surfaces like chain-link fences once existed.

The two noticeable physical consistencies – hollow artificial membrane (with traces of organic material), and symmetrical hoops – are the only major characteristics found within all population deviations. Physical attributes including size, membrane durability, color, patterning, and average age all appear to be dependent on birthplace or – as our researchers prefer to say – point of origin.

The *Commune Nigris* breed, for instance, could live in the wild for many years and would often travel great distances away from their point of origin. The *Commune Nigris* primarily originated from sites of everyday exchange such as corner stores and what was colloquially called *bodegas*. These sites appear to have been ideal ecosystems for breeding. Dimly lit with wall-sized areas kept at a cool temperature, these points of origin were hubs of activity for a variety of subspecies. The *Commune Nigris* thrived in biogeographical areas that contained several of these breeding sites within a short walking distance. The high frequency of these sites does not seem to appear as a redundant measure when cross-analyzed with sociological data.

Though the lifespan of the *Commune Nigris* varied to a great degree, one could easily distinguish this breed from others due to a jet black and remarkably thin outer membrane. Sociological data suggests that the thinness and flimsy durability of the *Commune Nigris* membrane would almost appear translucent at dusk – a phenomenon that other breeds also share. Unlike other common organic creatures, the *Commune Nigris* is remarkably never officially classified as a pest.

Due to the overall simplicity of physical markings, membrane consistency, durability, and hoop regularity, many researchers believe the *Commune Nigris* to be one of two primary strains from which all breeds mutate. The other primary strain has been named the *Commune Albis* for having all the same physical characteristics as its sister breed with the exception of being white in color. Though less dominant in population frequency than its darker sibling, the Albis is still considered significant due to the amount of breed variations that have white as their base color. Common mutations of the *Ablis* occur in outer membrane markings and overall membrane thickness. Mutation range for the Albis is so diverse that subspecies and generational breeds have mostly gone unclassified.

One recurring membrane marking closely resembles a type of lettering not all that dissimilar from English print. Though variations of those markings have spelled out several indeterminable phrases, the *patterns* of these markings tends to repeat in horizontal strips. Striped patterns of these markings have began to be classified as *Gratias Iterum Ablis* based on preliminary sociological data gathered from our sample area. Non-patterned markings also exist within *Ablis* mutations, but researchers have found that any potential 'phrases' are similarly indecipherable as the *Gratias Iterum*. It is suspected that because these creatures contained artificial materials, some markings could be the result of a type of branding that was commonly used on livestock. This hypothesis has recently grown in popularity – so much so that some researchers argue that all markings found on creatures are some form of branding. If this were the case, all creatures with a white membrane base color *regardless of markings* would be classified as *Commune Albis.*

Albeit these two primary breeds account for a significant portion of the species population, other strands have also been observed. For instance, the *Sacculum Rubei* – a distinct breed that displays a bright red hue covering the entirety of its outer membrane – was only able to be classified as a unique subspecies after sociological data was referenced. In this instance, the point of origin for the *Sacculum Rubei* was unlike other *Commune* breeding sites in a variety of ways. Due to the geothermal warmth of the site, and the documented sociological account of soul food being distributed from this location, researchers speculate that the species overall must be affected by temperature. Though some argue that this correlation is only substantiated by researchers limited understanding of color theory.

Sociological data suggests that that sites with unique subspecies breeding were places of business that would've regionally been identified as 'locally owned'. This rare form of business was viewed as a type of resistance against larger corporately managed franchises. Though the antagonism between 'locally owned' sites and franchise locations is never explicitly illuminated through subspecies breeding, sites that were not managed by larger corporate entities would rarely use the type of branding more commonly found on Commune Albis mutations. Instead creature breeding at 'locally owned' points of origin often resulted in subspecies characteristics atypical from the vast majority of other subspecies – as is the case with the *Sacculum Rubei.*

This is to say rarer subspecies strains were not always the result of 'locally owned' breeding. The *Smaragdus Sacci* was a bright green breed with a remarkably thin membrane. Often appearing in intertwined pairs – with one creature nested into the other – the *Smaragdus Sacci* membranes were often covered in branded markings as well as containing several holes. Though translation of markings is still underway, researchers have argued that the branding on this subspecies indicates that the point of origin was most likely a franchised place of business primarily distributing grocery goods. Perhaps most significant is that sociological data suggests that the *Smaragdus Sacci* might be one of the first and largest breeds to have gone extinct.

An extremely rare breed identified at the *Eximius Pullum Onerariis* (or EPO) is a significant leap for our research team because it points to an important moment within the genealogy of the species. Initial analysis of the sociological data for the *Eximius Pullum Onerariis* suggests that the creature not only displayed superior physical attributes, but also hosted within its membrane other subspecies. These nested breeds of differing origin suggest accelerated creature distribution would often result in 'packaging' the *Eximius Pullum Onerariis* with other inferior breeds (including the Commune Albis).

This startling discovery challenged all previously held notions about species populations and breed migration. If creatures of dissimilar breeds were being grouped together, with larger and superior breeds playing host to their less evolved siblings, then it could be argued that these creatures were entirely devoid of neurological agency – in which case human cooperation and intervention in species distribution could be seen as the primary force behind the ecological havoc which marked much of the Second Dark Age.

The troubling reality of this hypothesis becomes all the more illuminating when considering the rapid decline in species population that occurred subsequently after accelerated distribution practices became common place. It has been argued that during this time humanity began to see the error of their way, or at least began to contemplate the severe ramifications of species dominance in urban ecological environments. Although little information about species extinction and the catastrophic event that halted subspecies breeding is known, correlations between the appearance of cross-species hosting near the final stages of species genealogy is hard to ignore. As our team has focused on the later stages of the geological time-line of this species, new life forms of similar physical design began to emerge. It is unclear if these new lifeforms prayed on the creatures of our study, or what exactly catalyzed their existence, but the ecological impact of their introduction within this time proved overwhelmingly beneficial.