SYN
THE
SIS

Introduction

I came to this course interested in Indian popular culture: a mass media that shapes how people live yet remains understudied, and whose absurdity invites a parody I want both to analyse and to build with. In Unit 2, I first built a speculative museum of flattened Indian identities, juxtaposing canonical memes with ancient Indian artefacts. The artefacts were curated by colonial institutions such as the British Museum, the memes by a neocolonial one, the internet. The museum argued that a system that does not understand a culture can still define it, and that this definition, repeated enough, becomes reality. Nick Land and the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit called this hyperstition: a fiction that brings about its own reality.

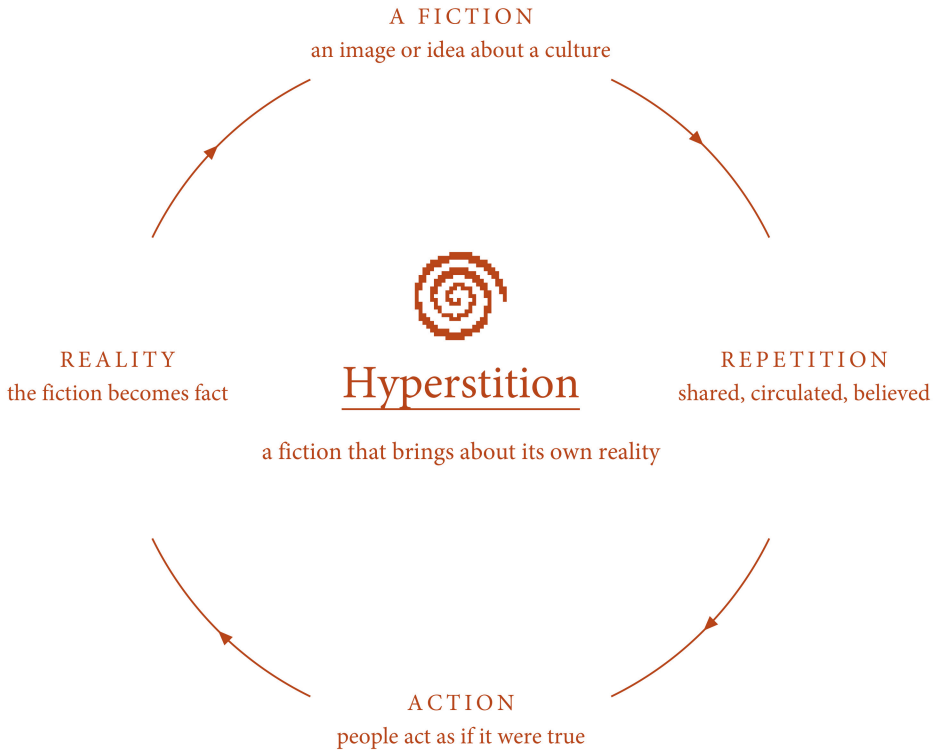


Fig. 1. **Hyperstition:** how a fiction about a culture becomes its reality.

△1: Studio Practice

Over the summer, new readings restarted my practice. In "AI, Democracy, and the Problem of Collective Disempowerment" (2026), Chiara Cordelli describes AI as an alien and uncontrollable force. Cinema, from The Avengers to Arrival, has long rehearsed alien invasion. Yet faced with an alien of our own making, we neither prepare nor resist, leaving ourselves at the mercy of its supposedly superior powers. I encountered the idea of technodivinity in Joshua Bushman's video essay Analyzing Divine Machinery as an "Art Movement", and an MIT Press Reader article on Silicon Valley's quasi-religious relationship with AI supports it. Gods, aliens and AI are all non-human intelligences produced by human imagination and believed to be real.

Fig. 2. Gods, aliens and AI as non-human intelligences imagined by humans.

	GODS	ALIENS	AI
Non-human intelligence	●	●	●
Imagined by humans	●	●	●
Believed to be real	●	●	●
Built by humans	○	○	●

AI is the first non-human intelligence humans have actually built.

Believed to be superior, it is met with submission rather than resistance: technodivinity.

I set this AI invasion in Noida, my hometown, rather than on default Western ground. Noida holds competing ideas of modernity: skyscrapers from a fallen Western dream left mid-construction, rapid urbanisation over rural social structures, and globalisation imposed without time to negotiate its arrival. The machinima draws on this hybrid reality, and my question of what AI is expanded to include how a place like Noida would receive it.

△2: Writing

Edmond Y. Chang's "Looking for Asianfuturism" (2025) brought a tension into this work. Examining Asian American science fiction and games, Chang argues that representation must go beyond placing Asian characters in Western-dominated futures, and must question the whiteness, heteronormativity and neoliberal fantasies of belonging those futures assume. I agree, with two reservations. First, Chang does not acknowledge brown people as part of Asianfuturism, grouping them within Afrofuturism. Second, he frames culture through mythology and a precolonial utopia that largely never existed, whereas lived Asian culture is hybrid. It has taken from and given to Western narratives until it is difficult to say what belongs to whom.

△3: Triangulation

My studio and writing practices engage with overlapping concerns. The studio work asks how an Indian region might encounter a technological future; the critique asks which culture such futures should be built on. Critiquing Chang showed me how little the world knows of India's lived cultural identity, and how often its futures are assembled instead from mythology and an imagined precolonial past. Hyperstition explains why this matters. The museum showed the internet's flattened India hardening into fact; the technodivine, a machine gaining power because it is believed to be a god. Speculation built on ornament will be equally self-fulfilling, leaving Indian imagination uninformed and its futures strange, if not disastrous.

Together, they lead to the same conclusion: Indian futures must be built on the culture India actually lives, hybrid, contradictory and shaped by colonial and neocolonial forces, rather than on a past made palatable for external consumption. Next, I will imagine a futuristic Noida, built from its contradictions rather than its myths.

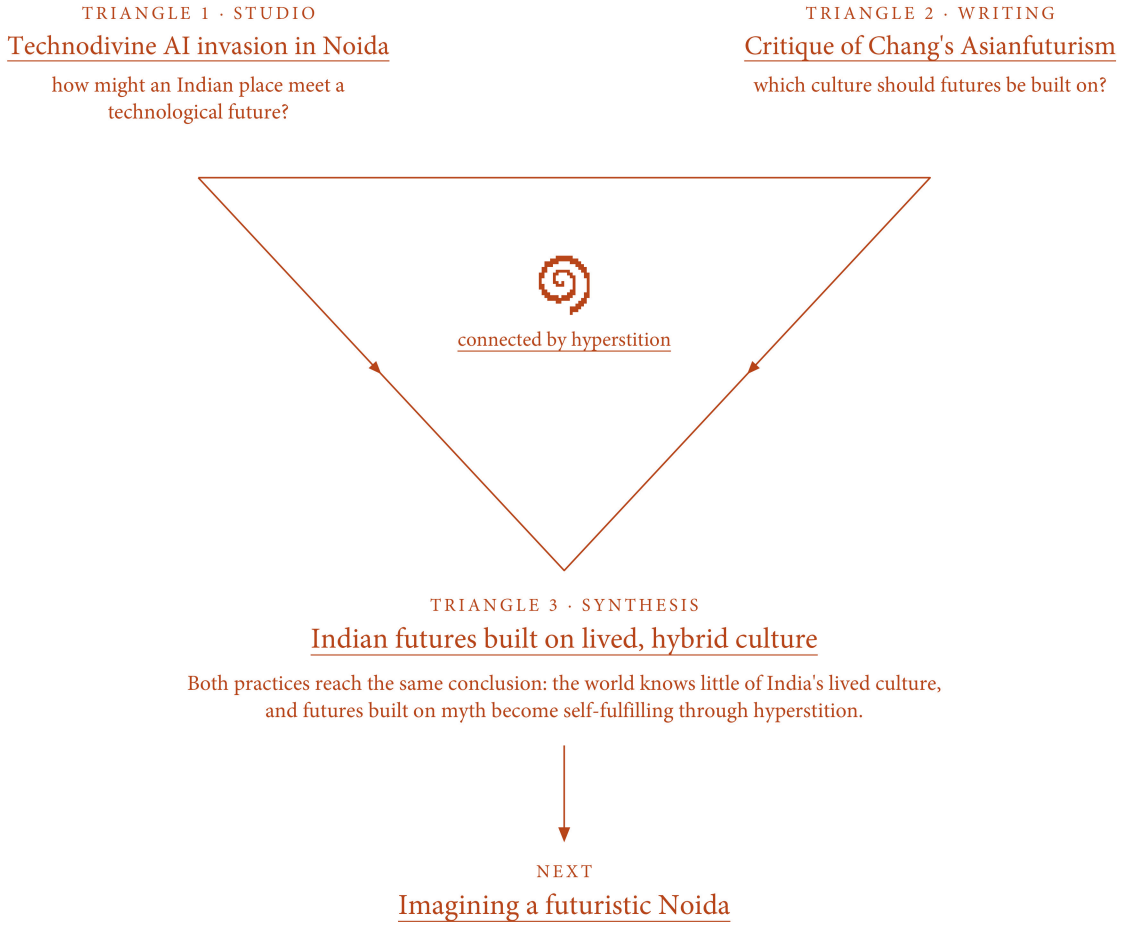


Fig. 3. Triangulating my position.